Legend of the Seven Lights

by Gamewizard2008

Summary

The core story of the Seven Lights Saga, *Legend of the Seven Lights*, and the ultimate crossover that puts the Firstborn Saga to shame. The Apocalypse is only a month away, so the time to test strengths is now. This will be a Month of Hell for the Kids Next Door, full of action, bloodshed, complex plots, and emotions. The world is falling to chaos as the World Government, Corporate Presidents, and Team Gnik scramble for power as our heroes seek to find the Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses that will open the gates to the New World. The adventure starts now....

Below is a list of this story's arcs, to help readers keep track of where they are and to not overwhelm them with the length if they view this as separate stories.
Frozen Saga: Chapters 1-10 (plus 5 Side Story chapters)
Song Saga: Chapters 11-20 (plus 7 Side Story chapters)
Lightning Saga: Chapters 21-28 (plus 4 Side Story chapters)
Presidents Saga: Chapters 29-41 (plus 4 Side Story chapters)
Art Saga: Chapters 42-51 (plus 3 Side Story chapters)
Lazarus Saga: Chapters 52-61 (plus 5 Side Story chapters)
CP10 Saga: Chapters 62-71 (plus 3 Side Story chapters)
Opening Saga: Chapters 72-82 (plus 3 Side Story chapters)
To You, A Trillion Years From Now

Chapter Summary

Medusa and Blackbeard discuss their plans for this upcoming month.

…Sigh… Wow… I can’t believe it… we’re actually here. Legend of the Seven Lights… wow. It makes you think how fast time goes. And that’s sort of a focus on this story. :/ I mean, this’ll be the biggest thing since Firstborn. I’m actually nervous. Sigh, okay, let’s do it. The long-awaited sequel to Legend of the Eight Firstborn starts now. Heck, looking at how much support that got, I’m… not expecting the same here. But hey, it’s a new generation. And I’m writing it, either way.

Chapter 1: To You, A Trillion Years From Now

“Water.”

“Earth.”

“Fire.”

“Air.”

“Poison.”

“Shadow.”

“Psychic.”

“Fear.”

“Light…”

“Darkness…”

“SPACE…”

“…TIME…”

A trillion years ago, the God of the Universe, Arceus, created all the other gods, who worked to shape the universe with their amazing elemental abilities. As time passed, the gods granted mortal beings the powers of these elements. And with these elements, the mortals shaped their own destinies. Whether they chose the Path of Good, or the Path of Evil, their destinies and their histories were recorded in the Memory of Time.

A terrible tragedy happened, where Arceus fell into a fit of rage, and his essence was scattered. He was revived by the one known as Negatar Gnaa, who used Arceus to bring the cosmos into ruin. But with the guidance of Morgan Catherine, and many noble heroes, and villains, by her side, Gnaa teamed up with his opposite, Aang, and brought Arceus to the light. The universe was brought into a new era of peace.
This is a story that many now know. But what they didn’t know… was Arceus created another universe, before creating the other gods. This universe was known as the First Dimension. This dimension was so chaotic, so unbalanced, that Arceus had to seal it away. For without other gods to give it order, it would fall into ruin. And to keep its chaos from leaking into the new dimensions, Arceus sealed it with a powerful lock, made from the most powerful of the elements: Time.

But this was not the only reason Arceus wanted the dimension sealed. Before its imprison… Arceus destroyed the central world of that dimension, with an incredible cataclysm, called the Apocalypse, and ordered the survived inhabitants of that world to design a brand new one. He told them that was where they would live… but as they finished their design of this beautiful new world, he lied. And the Lock of Time kept them sealed away, to prevent beings of this New World from learning the truth.

The gods stole the credit for this world’s design, and no evidence of these exiles’ existence remained. Because of the gods’ balance… the universe entered trillions of years of peace… however:

Unknown to Arceus, two worlds were created, instead of one. One that existed on a parallel plane, but intersected with the former. And in the process, a second gate, besides the Time Gate. This was known as the Space Gate. With no lock, the unbalanced energy would begin to leak from this gate, and in time, the great cataclysm that destroyed the first world – The Apocalypse – would happen again. And it would’ve been the Negatar’s actions, that would set these events in motion. The great cataclysm that would destroy everyone…

But as was the case with these first people, there would be hope for the people of this created world. When the Day of Apocalypse would near… 20 Keys of Light and Darkness would be awakened. These keys would open the way for those deemed worthy enough to enter the Land of Dreams… and from there, design the very foundation of the brand New World.

(Play “Hurricane Suite” from Naruto: Shippuden.)

The Underworld. Center of darkness, sadness, and misery in all the universes. The souls of the fallen cursed to drift in its eerie rivers, the sins of their lifetime giving it warmth, and their tears of sadness letting it flow. It was a very dark place, where dark things happened. And in the deepest of catacombs, a dark entity waited, and her simple associate, for a dark purpose. She was a towering colossus, her hair snaky and her green eyes sharp. Standing at her feet, a chubby man with a growing black beard, munching his cherry pie as he stared at a newspaper. It bared the image of Zanifr Mimchi, a gray-skinned being with thin orange horns, beaten and bloody, stains on his black shirt and purple cape. Wrists chained to a wall, having been arrested at Underworld Prison.

**UNDERWORLD PRISON’S BIGGEST, EASIEST(?) CATCH**

On what seemed like an average day, newly-appointed prison warden, Magellan reported finding a near-dead mortal unconscious outside Underworld Prison’s front gates. Left by an anonymous culprit, a note confirmed this being to be Zanifr Mimchi, the true identity of infamous rebel demon Majora, considered in the same league as Ganondorf. While none knows of his attacker, nor the events leading to his arrival here, for crimes against demon and spiritkind, he is awaiting punishment in the deepest confines of Underworld Prison. Magellan stated to have locked Majora in his own private cell, lest he stir trouble with the other inmates of that floor. Security in the prison has been doubled tenfold on the alert for any suspicious characters and prevention of break-ins.

The man laughed ecstatically, mouth wide with several teeth missing along his lips. “Zehahahahahahaha! I can never stop looking at it! I just feel so prideful in my work! You think
they’ll grant me a pardon ‘cause of this?’

“I doubt it.” Medusa’s voice echoed. “They aren’t like the cheesy mortals of the overworld. But Zanifr’s betrayal, really proved helpful.”

“Zeeehaha. For now… but how do you know he’ll try to save him?”

“In his foolish mission to follow his mother’s footsteps… he’ll show sympathy for anyone. I’ll have to rely on it. The rest of the Darknesses are down there.”

“Ahhh, but Darknesses are easy. They’re already corrupted. Not to mention, I reached the Logia level. Shouldn’t you worry more about the Lights?”

“Hmmm, it’s true, some will be difficult. But this world is doomed nonetheless. They can never handle it all. The corrupt government, the business empires, those measly supervillains… everyone will engage in the race for survival. The event that was precursored in 2012, will now happen 20 years later. I have been forestalling this day, ever since I helped those shabby fools defeat Arceus. I’m just glad I don’t have to put up with that whiny bald brat anymore.”

“Awww, but Lord Gnaa was the light of the party. It’s sad to think he already made it ahead of us. He won’t have to worry when it happens; ‘less his opposite takes the beating. Zehahahahaha!”

“Be more concerned for your own… Blackbeard. When time comes to save the other Darknesses, don’t expect them to get so buddy with you.”

“I’m actually looking forward! It’d be great to have some REAL company! I’ve actually read about what these people have done, and perhaps we could exchange a few ideas.”

“I’ll hold you to that…” Medusa looked to the heavens with a relaxed sigh. “Mmm HAAA hahahahahaha! The tides are changing, Blacky! The worlds are entering a new age! A time where ALL beings have to show their stuff or sink in their filth! If they thought the Firstborn Quest was overbearing, JUST WAIT! By the end of this, there may hardly be anything left! Get ready, mortals… as of this day: THE QUEST FOR THE SEVEN LIGHTS HAS BEGUN! AAAAAH HA HA HA! AAAAAA HA! HA! HA! HA! HAAAA!”

Archive of Our Own presents…

A Gamewizard2008 production…

In association with Depthcharge Industries, Mika Works, Dani’s Dynamites, Em, Kim, and April Inc., and Freyre Works…

Also characters from Nintendo, Insomniac Games, Ubisoft, Nickelodeon, and Cartoon Network…

Voice recording studios: 4kids Productions and FUNimation Entertainment…
(both companies’ logos appear beside each other, an electric spark between them, signifying rivalry)

With the special voicing talents of:

Tara Strong
Sharon Mann
Mark Hamill
“Wooock a-bye Heeershey, oon de Earth top. Wheen de dark blooows, da moooon will rock. Wheen space breeeaks, de moonie will fall. And IIII goooot a spooooon.”

“Jar Jar! What are you doing now?!” Darkrai yelling.

“I was pretending to be spooky-wooky,” he said, holding Majora’s Mask.

“Stop it! We’re the development team, so we have to keep this story from not becoming a wreck, while at the same time making it as ridonkulous as possible. Now put that down!”

He flew away, and Jar Jar patiently followed. “Can I’s be in de shrinkee story?”

“No.”

Legend
of the
SEVEN LIGHTS

…Loading Final Transmission…

So yeah… that was the small prologue. Compared to the rest… pssh, this is gonna be WAY longer than Firstborn, let me tell you. Also, if for some reason you aren’t caught up with my series, might I suggest reading the previous stories, otherwise you will get nothing here. And I think we’ve all established that Monty’s Galactic Days is only so much canon. Meaning, not very. But thanks to all who’ve stuck with me this far; not many probably, we’ve got only one last road to go. …That, and a few filler stories like the Negaverse one. Next time… the journey begins. Later.
Chapter Summary

Sector V go to get lunch, but run into Gramma Stuffum! This should be an easy fight.

Yoi-yoi! Haaaah… well, people, as stunned as I am to say it… here is the official beginning to *Legend of the Seven Lights*. In this one, we’ll introduce a few of the story arcs, but be prepared for MANY more chapters to come. Also, this first saga is called the Frozen Saga, leave it up to you to determine why.

*Chapter 2: It Begins With But a Song*

**NFL Stadium; Detroit, Michigan**

The stadium was roaring with thousands of ecstatic fans, all hopping and hollering over their favorite sport: football. The game seemed like a sure win for the Canton Rushers, led by legendary rookie football-player, Ish Taylor. The slim rookie evasively dodged three buff men from the opposing team, the Blitzers, and was about to score another touchdown. But as if out of nowhere, lightning flashed in the sky, and rain started to pour furiously.


“The sky was clear just a while ago, Nick, I don’t see-” And even more unsurprisingly, a tornado suddenly spiraled onto the field and sucked all of the football-players away.

“Whoooa-WHOOA-WHOOOAAAA!” The tornado was gone in seconds as flags shot down from the heavens and stuck in the ground. They all bore the image of a smirking white face with long silver hair, which covered the right eye (from our view) and revealed only the furrowed left eye, and evil grin. From atop the stadium, the Man With the Red Eye’s cape blew in the wind, his form shadowed. It lit up for brief moments as lightning flashed, but his body was soon gone with the wind.

**Los Angeles, California**

A bright and sunny day over Los Angeles. The seas were calm this morning as the sun’s lovely rays glinted off the waves. Just a little off the beach, a class of children in swimwear performed stretches and poses as the water moved with their bodies, mimicking the movements of their teacher, Eva Jackson. “Remember, kids, to learn how to bend water means going with the flow. Aside from having a fairly flexible body, it’s about adjusting to the changes you encounter. True, it’s still a little too early to have any changes, but when that time comes, you’ll have to get those legs stretching.”

“But Ms. Jackson, don’t waterbenders bend better in the nighttime?” a boy asked.

“Yes, but no one wants to go to night school.” Eva smirked. “Plus the water is much warmer in the daytime. But if you practice hard enough, I promise to take you on a fieldtrip to Oceana.” She winked.
Rocky Mountains

At the same time, Angelie McKenzie was teaching a group of barefoot kids on a flat, large peak of the mountains. “To know how to bend what’s unmovable, you have to be unmovable yourself. When you know how to take hits and not be pushed around, you’ll have the heart as strong as a rock.”

One of the boys pushed down a girl next to him. “HA HA! She fails!”

The girl angrily stomped the ground and sent him flying with a rock-jab. “You FLAIL, Max!”

Angie then trapped the girl in a rock prison. “Come on, guys, be serious. Or you won’t be able to take out Luvbi’s airbending class.”

“Those flyguys are cheaters, anyway!” Max yelled.

“Then it’s important we know how to cheat ‘em down.” Angie winked.

Dusty Desert

“All right, kids,” Nigel began to his class of firebenders, “the most important thing to know about fire is- YAAH!” A green fire shot his butt and scared him away.

“Outta the way, Boy, they need a REAL lecture.” Fanny stated, marching to his spot. “Alright, kids, here’s a story to motivate ya: the story of two kids, a boy and a girl, who discover their firebending at the same time. During that time, the boy was fairly skilled and powerful with his firebending, but by the time they grew up, the GIRL reached the Logia level first, because SHE took time to hone her skills and get strong. The moral is, no matter how talented the snobby boy was, the girl was sure to beat him. Burn this lesson into your minds, boys.”

“HECK no!” a boy declared. “I’ll kick any girl’s butt! YAAAAH!” A 5-year-old girl burned his rear from behind.

“I hereby bump her to the next level.” Fanny smirked. Nigel sighed and walked away with a look of shame.

On a Sky Island

A group of students stood worriedly on the edge of a cloud, thousands of miles above the earth, as Luvbi floated over the abyss before them. “Pray, let us learn without wetting yonder pants. Air be an element of utmost freedom, having nary a fear of falling and dying a horrible, blood-splattering death.”

The children were shaking in their Greek-style robes.

“Today’s lesson shalt be about defying such gravity, as thou plummet to the very ground and land much safely on thine feet. Now… who wouldst liketh to go first?” She winked.

The others scootched away from a single boy on Luvbi’s left. “Thou!”

“Huh—AAAAAAH!” Luvbi forcibly pulled him off the edge with a gust and allowed him to fall. It felt like a dangerous ride at the amusement park, except the danger was all too real, lest he do something. The wind brushed against his face with incredible speed, and he was barely able to
open his eyes. He wouldn’t be able to see the coming of his own death, would never be able to stop it. He wondered what that would look like. His bones shattering like glass and his blood shooting miles across the- OH GOD he didn’t wanna think about it! He furiously flailed his arms downward to make a wind barrier, but the wind resistance was too strong against him to do so.

“AaaaaaaaAAAAAHH!” And in a flash, his falling ceased, just inches from the solid earth. Luvbi had grabbed the collar of his shirt, looking at his teacher with a sheepish grin. She proceeded to fly him back to the clouds to try again.

**Junkyard area**

Matthew Dimalanta and his students gathered at a filthy junkyard, the stench unbearable and the skies fogged by yellow clouds. There weren’t very many girls. “So I take it you guys don’t like the smell.” He said. “Fact is, we’re poisonbenders, so we stink too, and people don’t wanna hang out with us. For that reason, we gotta try and make friends, so that way we’ll smell nice, even if it’s other poisonbenders.”

“How??” questioned a boy (they’re so dumb X)).

“The whole meaning of poisonbending in a nutshell. But how about, if you master this power, you get to fart all over girls’ tea parties with extra fart power.”

“YAAAAY!” exclaimed the boys, and two tomboys.

**Sunset hill**

In a region that was always twilight, Virginia Stork stretched her shadow for miles and miles beyond the sunset, but her dark-clothed students could only go a fourth of that way. “Come on, dudes, you’re not gonna be able to scare people with a puny shadow.”

“Miss Sims, is it true that a lot of shadowbenders kill their selves?” a little girl asked.

“Naaah, of course not! Timebenders do that. Too bad Danika isn’t here, though; she’s the expert. But listen guys, keep it up, and I’ll introduce you to some really awesome music!” She inhaled and blew smoke from a cigarette.

**Philippines; behind Roxas Elementary**

Mikaela Chariton sat cross-legged in midair as her students successfully did the same. “Yaaaaay you’re doing it!” she grinned. “I’m an excellent teacher! I think now I’ll teach you one of my personal favorites, the Psycho Shrink!”

“Sweet!” a boy perked. “I know the first person I’m gonna use it on.” He smirked wickedly at a girl.

She glared in disbelief. “Miss Mika, when will you teach us how to make Imaginary Friends?”

“Hehe, I’m not lookin’ to give you headaches, kids. I’ve only made a few, but this friend of mine is REALLY good at it! Her name’s Morgan, and she’s a psychic legend!”

“Where is Miss Morgan?” she asked with a smile.

“Oh, she’s kinda got a job right now. But maybe I’ll invite ‘er over when she has time!” she grinned. “Alright, now who wants to shrink first?”
“Ohh-ohh! I do!” the boy perked.

At a snap of Mika’s fingers, the boy was 3 inches tall. “GREAT, now everyone gets to play with him!”

“HEY! You cheat!”

**St. Kilgore’s Graveyard**

“And last but not least, fearbending.” Katie began.

“Um… what?” questioned a boy.

“Nothing. The thing is, Fear is a difficult element to master, ‘cause it involves getting scared a lot and facing a lot of conflict, and no one wants that. But it’s a lot easier to master when you show no fear. Just look in the face of danger without so much as blinking, and in time, that danger will fear you. Just ask my friend Mandy, wherever the heck she is on her pirating adventure. Now who wants to meet my friend, Cookie Monster?”

“COOKIIIIIEEE!” A large, blue-furred Cookie Monster with horns shot up from behind them.

“AAAAAAHHH!” the kids cowered away in seconds.

“…You say they would take me to Monster Ball!”

“Ask someone else, Doughboy.”

**Philippines; Rainier’s School For Benders**

Principal Rainier Chariton sat in his office, signing papers. Things were quiet as normal at his school, since classes took place miles from the grounds. He looked up as one of his teachers, Flynn Alcaraz walked in. “Hey, we just got that new shipment of ramen noodles from Japan.”

“Sweet! That really oughta boost the firebenders’ strength.”

“Ahhhh… boy, Rainy… 15 years this school’s been standing… hard to believe how many benders sprung up. Still, having all the classes take place all around the world just feels… well, complicated.”

“No, nonsense! It’s why we have pairs of psychibenders located at these drop-off points to warp people back and forth between regions. They use a tele-transportation technique and link with their partners to warp people or things to them.”

“I know all THAT, it just feels like a real chore for them.”

“Well, they know it’s for the good of teaching these kids all they need to know.” Rainier stood up as the two walked across the hall. “Speaking of which, how are things in the gym going?”

“Oh, it’s going well. We are having squabbles between some of the students.”

“Who?”

“Can you guess?” They entered the gym, where-

“AAAAAAHHH!” A boy in a karate robe was forcibly climbing across the rings high up on the ceiling. “P-Principal Chariton, make Sunni stooooop!”
They looked as Rainier’s daughter, in her own karate robe, had her eyes closed as she forced the boy to climb across the rings using psychic. Rainier approached and did a quick punch on her head, blocking her chi. “AaaaAAAH-!” Flynn saved the boy before he fell.

“Uh! Daaaaaad! I almost made it!” Sunni yelled.

“Honey, today is a martial arts class, you aren’t supposed to use your bending.” Rainier chuckled.

“So what, I’ve never been good at that stuff. Why do I need martial arts when I can just pick people up and throw ‘em around with my mind?”

“Well, some situations might rob you of your bending. Like so.” He flicked her nose.

“Ow!”

“Honey, even if you’re the greatest bender in the world, there’s a hundred other ways to fight. You need to open yourself up a bit more, look at your sister.”

“HUH, HUH, HUAH!” Darcy Chariton was fiercely kicking a blonde-haired boy trying to defend, and succeeded in kicking him down. “He he!” She spared a grin at her dad.

Sunni frowned in anger. “Only because she’s a screw-up at psychic. But I need to get better control of my element. Why can’t I join Mom’s class?”

“Your mom trains you every day, she needs to work with other students.” He ruffled his daughter’s hair. “And she knows you can handle yourself just fine. …Unless when it involves bullying other kids. Just keep training yourself in combat, it’ll do wonders. After all, exercise is good for the brain, and that’s where psychic is concentrated. Good luck, Honey!” He walked out with Flynn.

Darcy approached Sunni with a happy smile while the latter mumbled in anger. “Never see MOM throwing her fists…”

“Hehe! I’m glad to finally kick your butt!”

“WHOOA!” Darcy kicked Sunni off her feet.

“Hee hee hee!”

**KND Moonbase**

Things were still calm and normal on Moonbase. Or rather, Cheren’s office. The boy was signing papers and filing them aside, ignoring all the commotion outside. That noise was increased for a brief second when Larry MayHence quickly slipped in and shut the door. “Sir, we’re receiving numerous phone calls from almost every sector on Earth.”

“Sigh, man, what is everyone so whiny about.”

“Maybe the fact you announced the end of the world just 3 days ago.”

“So, that’s more than enough time to calm down about it. Heck, the only reason I warned them was to be ready; the whole purpose is to try and stop it.”

“So how do we stop it, Sir?”

“Find these 20 Keys, I guess.”
“Well, I can get you seven flashlights, but Thirteen Darknesses, you have to be a little more specific. Like, we talkin’ bloody knives or scary movies or something?”

“Sigh, I don’t know what they are myself. They sound like people; or they could be like the Firstborn.”

“Weren’t the Firstborn people?”

“No, they were gods, the people just protected them. But that brings up a good question. What if the Firstborn know something about this? Especially Uxie; I’ll fly down and ask her what she knows! I mean, the Goddess of Knowledge don’t know anything, no one does.”

“Well, do you know where Uxie lives?”

“I’ll just ask Mr. Garley; he was her Guardian.” He stood up. “I’ll be back in a few!”

“But there’s still a mob outside.”

“Right.” He winked. “Good luck, buddy.” Cheren raced to an escape pod on the side of his office and shot down to Earth. Larry looked after him worriedly, flinching when the mob suddenly broke the door down.

“Ulp! CherEEEEEN! I thought you filled in that order for a SECOND ESCAPE POOOOD!” And the mob tackled him with questions.

Dickson Household

“And so ends the tale of the little platypus… who discovered alcohol.” Eva Jackson reported on the news.

“In other news, panic is still widespread across the nation due to recent news of a supposed, upcoming Apocalypse.” Kade replied. “When asked what he thinks, President McGarfield had this to say:”

“As your humble president, I can safely assure you that any news of some ‘Apocalypse’ is likely the work of some ratty ne’er-do-wells,” assured President Jimmy McGarfield, “and our forces are lookin’ to capture the perpetrator, and give him one wallopin’ of a beating.”

“And thus, our country can continue to hope.” Kade concluded. “Coming up, a man who has claimed to’ve spot little people in his backyard is currently—…”

Chad Dickson watched the news with a gruff look and folded arms. His wife, Emily Dickson walked in with two plates of tea. “You still watching that crud?”

“It’s not crud, Emily, it’s the real deal, you know it was coming.”

“Well, yeah, so there’s not much reason to be so hooked on it.” She sat beside him.

“I’m just surprised it happened so soon.” He took one of the cups. “But we’re hearing from all of Sector V’s parents saying how their kids kicked those pirates’ butts. Heck, you remember what happened with Dimentia’s kid earlier.”

“Well, that’s a good thing, right?”

“What I’m saying is that everyone else’s kids got so much stronger and our son’s still a big wimp.”
“Uh, don’t say that about him! He’s seven years old, of course he wouldn’t be that strong.”

“Pfft, when I was that age, I could already beat Numbuh 100 at arm-wrestling. But hopefully after Rupert gets back from his 50-lap run around the high school, he’ll at least have dried out his tearducts from all his sweating.” He sipped the tea. “Mmm, this stuff is good, though…”

“Good thing I got Iroh’s secret recipe!” Emily grinned.

A knock was heard at the door as Rupert Dickson slumped in, almost totally out of breath with sweat in his armpits and pants. “Ahhh, right on time.” Chad walked up and knelt beside his son, placing a hand on his shoulder. “Feel burned out, Champ? Those legs feel strong enough to kick a steel pole down?”

“Heh, if only, right Dad?” Rupert smiled nervously and walked away.

Chad sniffed the hand that was on his shoulder and gave a suspicious frown. “See any cute girls at the pool?”

“Well, I saw Lilac’s mom and, well, she was pretty-, eh heh heh heh heh.” He blushed sheepishly.

“But I don’t recall the pool being on your route, nor you having enough time to visit there afterward.”

“Oh… well, I guess I just… got done early, heheh.”

“Yeah. Or maybe…” Chad launched over and immediately pinned the boy under his foot, “I smell POOL WATER on your shirt!”

“AAAH! Okay okay, I didn’t run all the laps! Well, I ran one, but then I saw this family driving to the pool and, well…”

“Well, I hope you enjoyed yourself, because NOW you just lost meatballs for dinner. Not that you-OWW!”

“GET OFF him, Chad.” demanded Emily as she twisted his hand from behind. “Or SOMEONE’S about to lose THEIR-… well, I probably shouldn’t say that in front of our child.”

“…Uuuugh. Fine. Go take a bath, Son.” Chad stepped off and let Rupert run upstairs. Emily released Chad as he turned to her. “Look, Em, I know we’re supposed to have equal say in our parenting, but do you really plan to baby him his whole life?”

“Well, at least I’m not BULLYING him like some helpless little ant!”

“Please, at least ants are strong for their size, but Rupert can’t even lift a box that’s half his own weight! And didn’t he trip on that stick in the yard yesterday?”

“All I’m saying is, Rupert isn’t a man yet, he’s a kid, and he can’t be strong like you are, yet.”

“It isn’t just about being strong, Rupert doesn’t have ANY notable skills, except playing videogames. He either needs to learn something to prepare him for things to come, or get some muscle.”

“Rupert needs to enjoy his freedom as a normal kid, and when nature calls, I know he’ll have the strength and know-how to pull through. You just gotta have faith. Anyway, I’m going out shopping, and I don’t want you pestering Rupert for the rest of the day, or you’ll be administering
punishment on *yourself* if you know what I mean. See you later.” With that, she left out the door.

Chad sat on the couch in thought. Maybe Emily was right. Rupert would have the strength and know-how to pull through… when nature calls. Yeah… when nature calls. “That’s not a bad idea!” he smirked.

**Gallagher Elementary**

“Never have I been so glad to say it, but I LOOOOVE going to the cafeteria.” Mason expressed as the group walked down the hall after hearing the ring of the lunch bell.

“Yeah, compared to eating all that candy, it makes ya miss Gramma Stuffum’s slop.” Harry said.

“It’s not slop, I find the Meat Hogs quite delicious.” Artie said.

“Makes me wonder why you still a skinny boy.” Harry smirked.

“All I’m saying is, she wouldn’t fail for a decent-” The vent suddenly fell open above them, and Sheila dropped down.

“WOOOOOOO!” cheered the energetic raccoon. “It’s LUNCH time, cobbers! Let’s blow this joint and have an adventure!”

“What’re you doing here, Sheila, you don’t go to this school!” Chris yelled.

“Yeh, but me mom thought I should take the day off from mine and see how YOU blokes are doin’! So did ya find anything on these 20 Keys?”

“No, and we’re kinda swamped in a pile of homework for missing more than a week.” Harry replied.

“Well, bonkers, SURELY savin’ the world has ta count for extra credit?”

“The world’s well-being isn’t part of the curriculum, so no.” replied Haylee.

“Well, those teachers should just suck on what they give.” she stated as she joined her friends to the lunchroom. “What’s for eatin’, anyway?”

“Well, Gramma Stuffum’s our chef, so you figure it out.” Aurora said.

“Blimey, so you guys fight her every day?”

“Yeah, but it’s gotten a little worn-out.” Chris said. “These Brotherhood guys are pretty much slumping.”

“But I just wish she’d just hand us the food so we’d have more time for homework.” Artie said.

“Well, if you guys want a break, Ah’ll deliver a hand to old Stuffum for ya!” Sheila grinned, cracking her knuckles.

“Well, since she’s only one-fourth Big Mom’s height, give it a go!” Mason grinned.

“Right then.” She faced the cafeteria with sureness. “‘ere I go!” (Play Gramma Stuffum’s Song from *KND*)
**Stage 1: The Lunch House Rock!**

**Mission: Blow down Gramma Stuffum’s lunch line!**

The strumming of the electric guitar already rung as Sheila dashed down the strangely-long cafeteria line. And, while no one else seemed to see it, a wide-faced grinning fairy creature was pressing eyeballs that appeared on the wall, doing so when a loud beat of the music played. The eyes also released glowing yellow spheres with wings, making a trail for Sheila to pick up, and they seemed to flow with the rhythm whenever she touched one. All in all, the road was pretty straightforward as Gramma Stuffum hadn’t released her food minions yet, but dead pieces of meat began to cover the ground that Sheila had to jump. But that all changed the minute she punched down an upcoming wall of meat.

The strums boomed louder as Food Patrol monsters popped out from the counter, another line coming out whenever Sheila broke a meat wall. Stacks of Icy Cubes formed like stairs, so Sheila jumped up them, then punched a Toasted Bat that came at her, and upon landing, she had to jump a series of Meat Hogs. Toasted Bats tried to nip her whenever she jumped the hogs, but she punched them away anyway and soon made it to the kitchen. The minute she punched down the door, she had to jump to a tall platform, which fell, then another that fell, before grabbing a bone zipline and sliding to a safe path.

The kitchen was actually a vast wasteland of hideous foods, with a different kind of Food Minion landing to attack Sheila, but she still punched them as the rhythm went and kept running. At one point, she had to swing a series of hoops, up to a higher path as she punched more Foodlings. She then had to jump big gaps in the path while throwing rapid punches at a string of bats, then punched a whole stairway of bats as she jumped down a deeper chasm.

When she set foot on the next path, the music picked up as rounds of Foodlings and obstacles came at her, and Gramma Stuffum finally appeared on a flying Eggman-like pod. Sheila jumped up a set of stairs when she sang “GRAMMA the STUFFUM”, then down a slide when her Foodlings repeated. It was then a matter of jumping hazards or punching enemies until Stuffum released her giant SQUIDS! A series of giant tentacles shot up everywhere, Sheila running up the first one, jumping a gap before two shot at her, then dashing up a vertical tentacle and jumping between it and a parallel one to avoid other tentacles, all the while running from pursuing tentacles.

She safely made it to a new path and had to jump and punch a tentacle in its eye, at the same time the Foodlings chorused “NOOO.” Sheila then dropped down a windy chasm, making a windy descent, then punched another tentacle at the end. She then jumped a stairway of Toast Bats to punch another tentacle, then was met with Gramma’s sea of Gravy Rats. There were floating platforms among these rats that Sheila could jump across, and more Toast Bats trying to swoop her. She then had to jump and punch down vertical footholds to make them flat and run on them, and when the rats finally ended, Sheila dashed up two long, vertical walls.

Stuffum made parts of the parallel walls explode, forcing Sheila to jump between them, and the mysterious fairy creature continued to slap eyes in the wall to make Lums appear and guide Sheila’s path. The raccoon made it atop the wall as Gramma Stuffum floated over her path.

“**YOOOOOU JUUUUUST MAAAAAKE MEEEEE-**” Sheila jumped and PUNCHED Stuffum out of her pod, then punched her further down the path, then knocked her against the counter at the end, and finished the song with a round of rapid punches before shoving Stuffum into the kitchen, the shutter snapping shut. Sheila faced the camera, grinned, and held up her fingers in a ‘peace’ sign. (End song.)

“**WOOOHOO! That kicks off MY daily exercise!”** Sheila perked, returning to the lunchroom.
“Yeah!” Chris said. “Now let’s head outside for Phase 2.” They hurried out to the playground as the school began trembling and the familiar chants echoed. “SLAAAMWIIIICH. SLAAAMWIIIICH.”

Before their eyes, the colossal sandwich monster emerged from the school, his mouth drooling with molten cheese as he glared at Sector V with ravenous eyes. The kids spared a smirk at Aurora as the girl kicked on her Ice and Fire Gates. Brimming with the powers of both elements, she drilled directly into Slamwich’s stomach, putting a worried look on him and Stuffum. Slamwich froze completely solid, and with a burst of fire, he was destroyed. “WAAAAA-AAAAAHH!” Stuffum crashed on the ground.

Aurora landed beside her friends as her Fury Form vanished. “Didn’t even break a sweat.” She said proudly.

“Boy, these Brotherhood guys felt a lot more threatening in our parents’ story.” Chris said. “They don’t challenge us anymore!”

“Well, what can you expect when they’ve been frozen in nitrogen for so long.”

“Hey Sheila, wanna stay for lunch?” Mason asked.

“Well sure, Mate!” she perked. But then she recalled the grinning fairy creature and glanced right to see it fly away. “…’o the ’eck was that?…”

Still lain on her back, Stuffum doesn’t think she’s ever endured punches that tough. It was safe to say, it was a new record for how fast they defeated her. Her henchmen, Liver and Onions hopped over. “Gramma Stuffum, Sir! Are you okay? We still have a few leftover courses if…” Liver asked.

“Nooo… what is ze point.” She got up and depressedly walked away. Liver and Onions exchanged sad glances.

**Washington; Garley Household**

The day was still bright over this little neighborhood, except a particular flying object was zooming close to Earth, a trail of smoke in its wake. The escape pod flipped and bounced along the street, Cheren flipping stylishly out of its hatch. He flew several feet in the air, and dove into a garbage can. The can toppled as Cheren crawled out, pulling a banana peel off. “Why do I keep forgetting to turn off the ‘Trashcan’ targeting option. Stupid oddly specific landing controls…” Cheren stepped up to the front door and rang the bell.

Matthew Garley hadn’t changed much at all as an adult, a big purple coat, purple tie, sandals with socks, square glasses that looked bandaged in their center, and that classic nerdy voice. “Hey, you’re Nigel’s son! Heh heh heh, hwow, nice of you to visit!” he snorted. “I don’t suppose you’re here for a first-hand source of how your dad ended the tyranny of Old GKN, or the Tale of Numbuh 2030, or even how the 2nd KND Generation was originally-”

“Heheheh, maybe some other time, Mr. Garley.” Cheren sweat-dropped. “Listen, I know you were friends with Uxie, so I was wondering if she told you anything about, Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses.”

“Hmmmm. That would be a good topic to discuss with her. Unfortunately, I haven’t, and I don’t know where Uxie is either, since we set them free. But I’ve been doing research over since Emily passed me your message. The best I could find was this old tale where seven princesses gathered to
battle these thirteen bad guys for control of some key. I don’t even know where it came from. But my quest for knowledge hasn’t failed me, yet! Anyway… sorry I can’t help much.”

“It’s okay. The only other person I assume would know is Grim.” He looked away in thought. “May visit him about this. Anyway, how is Emily doing, anyhow?”

“Well, Kim’s about to take her on a trip to Germany and visit the relatives. Apparently Kim’s dad is the president of this major science and engineering company, Adams Tech Co.. Heh, you wouldn’t believe how excited Emily is!”

“Ha ha ha! Probably snorting in her nasal cavities, right?”

“Ha ha ha HA!”

Cheren’s wristwatch communicator then rang, and Larry’s image appeared. “Oh, Larry. Listen, sorry about leaving you with the mob and stuff, but—"

“Oh, that’s no big deal. But listen, Cheren, someone’s up here to see you.”

“CHEREEEEENN!” Cheren jumped at this familiar voice. “GET YOUR BUTT UP HERE RIGHT NOW BEFORE WE HAVE A SERIOUS TALK ABOUT YOUR CURRENT DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE!”

Cheren whimpered slightly. “Can she at least promise not to Space Shrink me?”

“She said that she’s under no obligation to agree to conditions regarding such.”

“I’ll be up there in 5 minutes.” He hung up. “Well, guess I’ll have to hold off on that. See you later, Mr. Garley.” He pushed a button on the watch.

“Heh, anytime, Cheren.” Cheren’s R.O.A.D.S.T.A.R. came down from the heavens as the boy jumped in and flew back to Moonbase.

Unknown Hideout

The elderly tycoon known simply as Mom (thankfully not the Big one ;)) limped into her hideout and pressed a button on a small panel. Four hologram projectors around the room activated, revealing the staticky images of the other Corporate Presidents. In the very center, the gigantic head of the Head President buzzed to life, her hologram much too staticky to make out her appearance. “Nice to see all of you again.” Mom said smugly.

“Alright, let’s get down to some serious business: why the hell is 4kids still supplying our voice actors?!” complained the gruff old president.

“Come on, cut 4kids a break, at least we’re allowed to cuss now!” Doflamingo said brightly. “And they got spirit, ya can’t blame them for that!”

“No, that’s not why we’re here.” the Head President stated. “The World Leaders ordered our presence due to a hitch in their plan.”

“Yes, it seems the Uno child became aware of the Apocalypse’s existence.” the Asian president said. “President McGarfield can only keep the peace among the Americans for so long. Not that he’ll be able to keep the Kids Next Door from interfering.”

“Then it’s time we take matters into our own hands.” stated the remaining president, his hands
folded. “We must deliver those kids a painful, though legal, kicking away from our business.”

“No, we can’t make any rash appearances.” the Head said. “The Corporate Presidents already look bad thanks to Mom’s blundering in Galaxia.”

“Well, if DOFLAMINGO hadn’t’ve interfered, I could have-”

“Please, Mom, there’s no reason to point fingers.” Doffy grinned. “I just never recalled making the arrangement to lend you one of my associates.”

“The Kids Next Door are likely aware of the Presidents’ stake in all this due to the Caesar incident.” the Head said. “Before they begin to track us, the Leaders request our presence at a gathering on the Midway Peak; they’ll also be inviting many nobles from around the world.”

“What the hell do the nobles want in all this?” asked the old man.

“Why, to enjoy the show, of course. Fu fu fu.” Doflamingo laughed. “A noble’s job is to be humored by world conflict.”

“Miss Head President, is it all right if we bring our children onboard the trip?” asked the Asian. “I am trying to introduce my son, Chane to the family business.”

“Sure sure, bring whoever. But see that they’re able to keep a secret.”

“I don’t think you’ll have to worry about MY kids.” assured Doffy. “If there’s one thing we’re good at, it’s secrets. Fufufu!”

“Good. You will be boarding the train tomorrow at 7a.m. Don’t be late.” Her hologram vanished, as did the others.

Mom turned away with her wrinkly, smug face. “Oh trust me, I know a thing or two about keeping secrets…”

York Household; Sandcave

Another arduous day for Nolan “Sandman” York. He stared intently at his computer, skimming the criminals listed. Holiday… Fanatic… Promethean… Tornado… “Why…” He gripped his head with the most aggravating headache, “Why can’t I REMEMBER any of these people?!”

He heard the doorway creak open, followed by the light stepping of his wife’s feet coming down the stairs. “Nolan, are you still down here?”

“I just don’t get it, Danika. These villains are listed in the police’s files, and even my own. But no one has any clue who they are, even me! But why on Earth would I have them…”

“I don’t know… to be honest, I can’t even recall you fighting many villains lately. There was that Caesar guy, and of course the whole Dracula thing, Affright pops up every now and again, but those were awhile ago.”

“Wait… Caesar…” Nolan pulled the man’s file up. “According to Dillon’s story, Caesar was acquired by one of his clients, Percival Tachyon, but they don’t know where Caesar went following Tachyon’s defeat. But what if… one of his other clients got to him?”

“Like who?”

“Well, we can rule Big Mom out of the picture, since he said they didn’t find Caesar on Candied
Island. But here’s one man that raises my interest.” He pulled up a picture of none other than—“Don Quixote Doflamingo. President of Doflamingo Incorporated, a company that manufactures talking, semi-intelligent toys. He’s labeled as one of the Corporate Presidents For Children’s Entertainment; the same league as robot-manufacturer, Mom, whom was acquainted with Tachyon. The evidence is too high on him.”

“So what, you’re gonna go after Doflamingo?”

“No… not yet. I think I should do research on him; all the Corporate Presidents, really. There was always something suspicious about them, and the whole Caesar thing takes the cake.” He pushed himself away and rolled to an elevator. “I’ll be leaving at seven; probably should make dinner early. It’s gonna be a long night.”

Dani watched her husband roll onto the platform, and rise to the upper level that was their house. “Better make extras for Crystal and Yuki, too…” the woman sighed.

Chariton Household

Her training class over, Mikaela Chariton was asleep against the tree in their backyard, once again lost in dreams. Sunni Chariton could very much tell that, seeing the smile on her mother’s face. Sunni sighed calmly and pulled out her blue lightsaber. “AAAAHH!” She lunged at her mother with fierce determination, set on slicing her mother in half.

Aaaaaand we’ll leave it off there. Soooo there was the first instance of song levels in this story, that’s gonna be a regular Sheila thing. Well, maybe other characters. I was actually sort of stumped in that topic, I couldn’t decide whether to write the stage in paragraphs, or put the actions in a lyrical form to better go along with the song. Still kind of thinking, really. Well, next time, we will do the next stage, and officially start one of my favorite story arcs. Laters!
Chapter Summary

Chad Dickson abandons his son in the woods. Little Rupert ends up discovering a brand new world.

Yo guys, welcome back to the show! In this one, we'll be further introducing the story arc characters and getting started with conflicts. So let’s get it over with and get ready for the rest!

Chapter 3: A World Under Your Nose

Gallagher Elementary

“See you TOMORROW, Miss Stuffum!” Chris waved with a fake bright smile as they left the cafeteria. “Can’t wait for your Scream-of-Spinach! Ahhh, beating her up is the best joy every day. Even if Sheila did all the work.”

“Yeh, but, didn’t you blokes see that thing?” Sheila asked.

“The Horsebutt Beef?” Artie asked. “Sorry, I ate that.”

“No, Oi mean the-” But at that instant, Sheila, Chris, and Mason were trampled by a team of three buff teenagers dressed in conchshell armor, pulling a conchshell carriage.

“OUT of the way, less-graders!” exclaimed the girl on the carriage, dressed in a blackish-purple two-piece swimsuit, purple towel-cape, purple bucket crown with a shell crest, shell bracelets around her wrists and legs, and bare feet. She had black hair and black eyes. “Make way for your Fourth Grade QUEEN of the School, Princess SHELLY Johnson! Make sure to gather in the gymnasium after school for a one-on-one block-building tournament with First Grade President! In which I will once again take the crown. LAUGH with me, Knights, AH HAHAHAHA!” Their laughs echoed down the hall.

The three operatives were flat as pancakes as their friends helped them up. Man, that Shelly is such a nag. Kirie signed. I can’t believe they elected HER president.

“I can’t believe they let her wear a bathing suit to school.” Harry said.

“I can’t believe her three uncles each had identical kids born on close dates and are serving as her knights.” Mason noted.

“At least her dad didn’t marry Aunt Mushi.” Haylee said. “Otherwise we’d be related.”

“Who was her mom, anyway?” Chris asked.

“I heard her parents actually got divorced and Sandy took full custody.” Harry replied. “Guess we’ll never know.”

“Mates, are we gonna talk about bloody Queen Nag, or are we gonna go look for these 20 Keys?
“Well, it’s not like we know where to look.” Aurora replied. “We’re not really sure what a ‘Light’ or ‘Darkness’ is.”

“Well, they could be light and darknessbenders.” Mason noted. “Like…Like Sheila! Remember that whole lightshow that happened when we found that cube? Maybe that has something to do with it…”

“Oi, ripper! AH’M one of these Lights!” beamed Sheila.

“We don’t really know that, yet.” Aurora replied. “But I bet I know someone who could tell us: Mr. King.”

“The successor of the guy that knows everything?” Harry asked. “Probably.”

“Let’s go to visit him after school.” Haylee suggested. “I’m sure Her Highness won’t notice a few missing her oh-so-famous block-building contest. She always wins, anyway.”

“How come?” Sheila asked as they walked off.

“’Cause the other presidents’ blocks always fall at the last minute. Not sure why.”

“Maybe she’s Irish.” Artie said. “Ha ha! Get it? ‘Cause-”

“IRISH ARE LUCKY.” they chorused.

**Chariton Household**

“AAAAAH!” Sunni lashed her saber at her sleeping mother, but Mika whipped out her own lightsaber and blocked.

“Awwww Mr. Hatter, did you remember my unbirthdaaaay?” Mika moaned in her sleep.

Sunni swung her blade around every direction, but Mika was quick to defend, not peeping her eyes open for a second. When Sunni swung at her legs, Mika flipped overhead and landed on her feet. “Absalom, you smoke’s makin’ feel oopsy whoopsiiiee.” She wobbled in place, drool leaking from her mouth.

Sunni tried to stab Mika with her saber, only for the woman to defend again. Sunni wondered if Mika was secretly conscious, or if her very instincts told her to fight in her sleep. Either way, it made Sunni very furious. Sunni threw a Psycho Sphere, but Mika kicked it to the sky, and when Sunni tried to slice her leg, Mika warped behind, then Sunni tried to slice again, but Mika snapped her fingers and warped her. Sunni was suddenly dangling by her hair in Mika’s fingers, the size of a golfball.

“Yoooooouu silly mousyyyy, of course I’l have the cake. Yom, yoom, yoooom.”

Sunni shook like an angry rabid mouse. “PUT ME DOWN, MOM, LET ME GO!”

“Ahhhhhh but can YOU stand on YOUR head, Cheshire Caaaaaat.” She wobbled loopily again.

Sunni calmed down and focused her own energy. She warped away from Mika’s hand and back to normal size, quickly pulling the lightsaber to her hand and thrusting at Mika’s back. “AAAAH!!”

Mika finally snapped awake, the sword piercing her chest. Before Sunni’s eyes, Mika dispersed
into pink light and reformed behind her. “Yaaaaaawn. Sigh, Sunni, what were you doing?” She rubbed her eyes. “Were you trying to cut me again?”

Sunni was at a loss for words. She had no idea how Mika survived that just now... but it further goes to show her extreme talent. She switched off her lightsaber and banged her head against the tree. “NNNNN! WHY, CAN’T, I, BEAT, YOOOOU?” Tears started to leak. “Why can’t I become as STRONG as you, Mom? Why can’t I be TALENTED?”

Mika walked over with a warm smile, patting her daughter’s head. “Sunni, there’s more to life than just being really talented. And I keep telling you, you have to quit chasing after me and be your own person. People will like Sunni whether she’s me or NOT me.” She grinned. “And I rather she isn’t me.”

“Siiiigh… to tell the truth, Mom, there’s more to it.”

“Hm?”

“I kept trying not to get obsessed over being like you... but... everyone else in the KND had the same story. And...”

*Three years ago, when Sunni attended Arctic Training. Wearing a blindfold as she tried her best to sense the enemy dummies and destroy them. But no matter how hard she tried, she ended up killing a few friends. “Ally slain, ally slain, ally slain.” The alarm kept ringing, putting a sense of doubt in her heart.*

“Nnn!” She looked over as a young, 6-year-old Cheren got wounded in the shoulder by a robot’s laser. With a fierce look, he gripped his sword and ran to chop it to bits, but the robot was quick to dodge Cheren’s predictable movements and kick him to the ground.

“Come on, Bro, can’t you swing better than that?” Aurora asked. “You’re not becoming Supreme Leader with THAT arm.”

“Well, who said I WANTED to be Supreme Leader?”

“You did... after hearing your mom’s stories numerous times. Heck, why else are you a mama’s boy?”

“I am not! Who wants to sit in a boring office all day, anyway?”

“Keep saying that, but it won’t change a thing!” She ran away laughing.

“Whaddoes THAT mean? Hey, COME BACK here, Aurora!” He chased her.

Sunni knew that Cheren idolized his mother, too. Training hard with the sword in the hopes of following her footsteps. Seeing how much he failed... Sunni was glad at least she wasn’t like that.

*Then 2 years later, inauguration of the new Supreme Leader. Cheren Uno marched up on stage by his subordinates, Francis and Panini. “Boys and girls, it is with great honor I accept the office as your Supreme Leader. Numbuh 100,000’s traitorous actions have struck us all, but it’s important that we move on. I can’t promise I’ll be as great a leader as he was, but I will see that this organization remains prosperous. KIDS NEXT DOOR RULEZ!”*
training get to be the former leader’s favorite? …That deceiving little weasel.

“You wanted to see me, Sir?” Sunni asked, in his office 6 months before the current time.

“Numbuh 33-Arrow, it’s come to my attention you and January-14 haven’t been pulling your weight. When you first joined, you were appointed with our team of Telepathic Transmission psychicbenders to scan the Earth for any signs of danger. You two were assigned with the Philippines, but a lot of distresses were noticed days after they were given.”

“Well, SHE GETS IN THE WAY OF MY CONCENTRATION!” she screamed.

“I’m just saying, our files show your mom had the same job when she was a kid, and she was-”

“GHHHHHH.” His desk was crushed under her psychic.

Cheren became stiff with fright. “Is there something… going on, Sunni?”

Sunni sighed, her psychic fading down. “How come YOU get to be a mama’s boy and still be so great?”

“Uhhhh… ‘scuse me?”

“Come on, I know you’re trying to copy your mom, the ‘greatest leader that ever lived’, and now you saved the world TWICE from all-powerful super freaks! How can YOU be so much like your mom when I CAN’T?”

“Oh… heheheheheh.” He scratched his head. “Yeah, I was kinda takin’ after my mom at first. But… you know, after all this… I really forgot about ever following her. It didn’t become about being as great as my mom, it became about, well, saving the world from certain doom. And protecting my organization. …Maybe that’s what’s wrong with you.”

“Don’t you think I WANT to help out?? But the reason I try to follow my mom so badly is ‘cause I’m a lousy psychic. Better than Darcy at least, but, how can I help with my fullest potential WITHOUT being like her?”

“Hmmm… Well, I don’t really care if you’re like her or not. I just want you to help out more. But listen, Sunni… how ‘bout I give you and Darcy some field missions? Get better control of your powers. And when the two of you become stronger, I want you to help us out on Moonbase.”

“What kind of field missions? Tracking down worn-out villains and throwing them around with psychic? That’ll help us train.”

“Point taken. Alright then… I challenge you to a fight!”

“What?”

“You know what I can do, and I’m still nowhere near as tough as mine or your mom. So why don’t you make it your goal to get as strong as me? Then if you’re able to make me sweat, you’ll know you’ve improved.” He winked.

“Are you implying you’re tougher than me already?”

“Well… yeah.” Cheren smirked. “Yeah I do. I don’t see YOU goin’ all god mode.”

“WELL, NOT EVERYBODY GETS CRAZY WEAPONS!” She lit blue.
“Doesn’t matter.” He flicked her nose. “They still beat your measly psychic.”

“Grrrr BRING IT!! I’LL GET SO POWERFUL YOU WON’T SURVIVE A MEASLY PSYCHO SPHERE!”

“It’s a deal then, Sunni.” He held a hand out. “Come back when you think you can kick my butt!”

“…” Her psychic died down as she took his hand, still with a frowning look.

“…” Mika finished analyzing her daughter’s story, “So you got yourself a rival, huh!” she grinned.

“No he’s not, I just felt like satisfying him. Haven’t really talked to him directly since… I don’t think I’ve improved at all.”

“Okay, Sunni, I’ll help you train.” Mika rubbed her hair. “But why don’t you go take a nap first, you just got back from school and you’re already trying to kill me. A strong mind needs rest!”

Still frowning, Sunni decided to head inside. “Yaaaawn. I was still taking my nap.” And with that, Mika sat back against the tree and returned to Dreamland.

KND Moonbase

Cheren hurriedly flew back to Moonbase and ran to his office. “You wanted to see me, Numbuh…”

“No-o way, you actually read Dora Fanfiction?” Nebula laughed, viewing Cheren’s computer.

“HEY, I’m learning… Spanish.. okay??” He slapped his hands over the screen. “Whaddyou want, Nebula?”

“To know why somebody didn’t warn me of some impending doom that threatens our very existence.”

“Well, I was going through a lot of stuff… okay? I mean, it’s not the kind of news people would like to hear.”

“WELL, IT’S CERTAINLY NEWS THAT’S WORTH TALKING ABOUT!”

“Okay, okay, calm down…” Apparently, ‘okay’ was his word of the day.

“Siiiigh.” She pinched her nasal bridge. “Well, the point is, I got the news to the other Supreme Leaders before I came, so now they’re doing research on these Keys. I don’t suppose you have any leads?”

“Well, I was kinda going to go down and ask Grim.”

“That’ll need to wait first. I’ve been wanting to set up another alliance for a while, with the Minish Kids Next Door. Arianna thinks they can be valuable producers and suppliers, and Vweeb wants ‘em for their strength. I don’t exactly recall Minish being durable, but better than none. Jesbi confirmed that the Minish Leader resides in the Tree of Beginning, so let’s head down.”

“Heh, the Tree of Beginning.” Cheren smiled. “Reminds me of Mom’s old story.”

“Yes, except we’re going a lot earlier than they did. I just hope the Minish have a way to really help.”

Dickson Household
After finishing his bath, Rupert scrappily wiped his hair dry and slipped his clothes on. “Gyah!” He jumped at seeing his dad just outside the bathroom. “Oh, Dad… you’re probly still pretty mad at me for, uh…”

“Nah, it’s alright, Son.” Chad assured. “At this point, I’ve come to realize… you’re too young for me to force all this exercise on you.”

“Oh… Really?” This sounded a little out of the blue.

“Yes. And your mother has faith you’ll know how to handle yourself in a real situation, so I’ll have faith, too.”

“Well… Great!” Rupert had a new positive aura. It sounded as though all the pain and suffering was finally through.

“Heheh. So while your mom is out shopping, I thought I’d take ya somewhere special.”

“Really! Where?” He felt more excited by the minute.

Chad knelt down and knocked out his son with a Vulcan nerve pinch.

**Virginian Forest**

His son lay asleep for the whole drive to the deepest part of the forest. Chad finally parked, carried his son out, and set him on the ground. He quickly drove away before Rupert could awaken.

“Ohhh… what happened. Dad? Where am I?” He searched around with great worry. He felt something in his shirt and discovered a folded note. “‘Dear Son, I realized the only way to teach you to be stronger is to put you in a real situation. I have taken you to the farthest part of the forest I could find, and it’ll be up to you to brave the dangers and find your way back home. Good luck, Sincerely Your’—AAAAH!” He crumpled the ball up and threw it against the tree.

“Stupid Dad, leaving me out in the forest.” Rupert grumbled as he stomped through. “Just ‘cause I’m not big and tough like HE is. If he was like me, I’d make HIM stay in the forest. What does he expect me to… Mm?” He spotted a lone, empty tree stump in a slight barren area. He approached the stump, and his curiosity peaked when he noticed the small hole in its center. Rupert crawled on the stump, and his wide eye peeked into the darkness within, seeing nothing. He sat up, still wondering what could’ve made this. He eyes perked when tiny, glittering sparkles suddenly floated up from the hole, and began to surround his form. “Wh-Whuh?” At that moment, he was swallowed in a cloud of green dust.

“WAAaaaahh!-” Before he knew it, Rupert was sent falling through a storm of the green dust, feeling as if he were suddenly miles above the earth. The world went dark as he fell into a hole, and went bouncing down a set of leaves. “Ooh—aah—aie!” He landed on his belly on a surface below, standing and rubbing his head. “What happened?…"

He exited through an archway in the wall, and came out of a giant tree stump. “Whooooooaaa!” his eyes and mouth grew into wide “O’s”. A jungle of grass lay in his wake, and towering over him, trees as high as skyscrapers, with trickles of sunlight seeping through the leaves. A plane-sized dragonfly fluttered overhead, amongst many other bugs that were unnaturally huge. “I’m… I’m tiny!!”

Rupert couldn’t believe his eyes. This was the same forest, except now he was… he couldn’t even measure. He wasn’t good at math. However big an ant was, he was that tall. His head filled with more and more wonder as he stepped forward, viewing the amazing sights. “This is inCREDIBLE!
That stump musta shrunk me… I’m big as an ant! I wonder how… GYAAAH!!” He unknowingly walked to a giant worm, and had a close-up view of its round mouth of endless jagged teeth. He dashed to the side, shivering with fear as the worm slithered by. “THAT was SCARY!” He got up and walked further ahead. “Just what HAPPENED to me, anyway? One minute that stump was glowing, and the next—AHH!!” He approached a hungry-looking praying mantis, backing away frightfully. “AHH!” He turned around, spotting a gargantuan green snake, and ran away. “GYAAAAHH!” he spotted an even MORE terrifying gigantic spider on a web, running as fast as his tiny legs would allow.

“YEOW!!” He wasn’t focused on his path, frightfully looking behind, so he bumped into someone and caused them both to fall. “Hey, watch it!” the Minish boy yelled, standing up, as Rupert did the same. “I’m trying to gather here!”

“Gather?” Rupert looked behind the Minish, and saw that a band of colorful creatures were mercilessly beating a bee on the ground. The creatures succeeded, and began to carry its unconscious body away. As Rupert watched, he couldn’t help but think they looked familiar. He’s seen these creatures before. But where?... “What are those things?”

“Duh, they’re Pikmin. What’re you NEW in town?”

“Uhhh… kind of.”

“Hey, wait, you’re a human, aren’t you?” The kid finally noticed Rupert more closely.

“Duh, I’m a human. And you’re a chipmunk.”

“Minish.” he stated in annoyance.

“Whatever. So what’s with the Pikmin?”

“Well, the Pikmin are our main means of defense or offense. We Minish are normally too miniscule against bugs or other gigantic creatures, so we use the Pikmin to fight.” The boy walked away to follow his Pikmin, and Rupert joined.

“Use them to fight?” Rupert questioned. “But shouldn’t you be fighting your own battles? You can’t use people to fight for you.” Even though they were his father’s words, not his, it felt weird using them.

“They don’t do ALL the fighting. Besides, there are some things Pikmin can do that Minish can’t. It’s not about being lazy, it’s about combining different strengths for a greater good. ...Well, it’s not TOTALLY lazy—what I mean is—ugh...” He was getting lost in his own words. “Look, I got stuff to do. If you wanna learn about Minish, talk to Sappo and Gibli. They’re the Pikmin Instructors.” With that, he hurried off.

Rupert only stood by and watched him leave. He passed through a few blades of grass to find an open field where Minish boys and girls were ordering their Pikmin companions around, having them attack bugs and carry stuff while the Minish blew whistles and made hand gestures. The way these Pikmin did their work for them... how they banded together to fight enemies for their masters... a smile appeared on Rupert’s face. He had to get in on this. He hurried to the closest Minish girl and asked, “Excuse me. Where can I find Sappo and Gibli?”

**KND Museum of Artifacts**

“So as you can see, the Battle of Sir Wigmire’s Mansion ended tragically for these 3rd Age operatives, and hundreds of children were forced into the most humiliating powdery wigs at that
time.” concluded Emily Garley, displaying the ancient image on the projector. “It miraculously sparked many high-class British accents, and fans became an invaluable want. Any questions?” She smiled eagerly.

Her fairly small audience conked out about an hour earlier. “Oh- huh? …Is it done? Come on, guys, let’s go to the snackbar!” The awakened crowd was quick to pile out of there.

Emily lazily slapped the projector off and went to roll up the screen. “Yaaaaawn.” Mike Strongarm yawned as he walked up to his friend. “That was amazing, Emmy…”

“Siiiigh. I don’t know why I even bother.”

“What, I liked the part where Sector E got trapped in the Cavern of Wiglings…”

“Kids just aren’t interested in learning things anymore. I feel like an outcast. Before you know it, they’ll be accepting me to a college.”

“Someone’s got a high opinion of herself.” He smirked.

“Why not, I always smoke all the other kids in the science fair. Like when I invented that laser that divides peoples’ atoms into smoke.”

“Oh yeah. Did we ever catch those kids?”

“Yes, but one of them’s missing his nose. But I guess things aren’t so bad… ‘cause my mom’s taking me on a trip to see our relatives!” She spoke with a more excited tone. “Her dad’s the boss of this big science company! Imagine being in the same place as all those smart guys!” Her mind became adrift in the clouds. “Talking about creating protoplasmic discombobulators, seeing if robots develop feelings when given human cells, or even solar-powered baseballs that absorb the kinetic energy of the bat and fly thousands of miles across the country… huhuhuhu. My skin cells react just thinking about it.”

“A truuue, incomparable paradise.” Mike said with a disbelieved sweatdrop.

“I’m already packed and everything! Borrowed this Infi-Cube from Sarah-Jane.” She held up a blue cube with a hole at the top, and what seemed like a wavy dimension inside. “Reeeeeeal convenient when packing.”

Mike curiously peeked inside the hole and- “Waaah-WAAAH!” was sucked inside.

“Whoops. Hehe. Careful ’round that thing, Mike.” She pressed a button that shot Mike against the wall, with several other items.

“Owwww. Sheesh, if you can do that, why not sneak me with you?”

“He he he! You know I’d love to, but all the science and calculations and such might make your head explode.”

“Point taken.” He smiled coolly. “Oh well, ‘least I tried.”

“Anyway, tell Numbuh 192 he’s in charge. I gotta go get ready!” She ran off ecstatically. “I hope my mom found my tri-dimensional notebook!”

Every time he spoke with her, Emily knew how to make Mike smile. Why did his best friend have to be a big and total nerd?
A peaceful night over the coldest part of Antarctica. Things were calm, and no one would suspect danger is about to come. A pair of purple eyes blended with the water beneath the ice, swimming to the lowest part of the Arctic Base. (Play “Dark Clouds” from *Naruto: Shippuden.*)

While guarding the entrance to the prison wing, Aaron and Rhilliane Doblemitz noticed water started to leak in through a hole in the ice. “Yo.” Aaron said.

“On it.” replied Rhilliane, hurrying off.

Aaron approached the hole curiously, and watched the water reform into a familiar white-haired teen with sharp teeth. “This place isn’t very stable, is it?” Suigetsu smirked.

Aaron shot him with his S.C.A.M.P.P., but the laser merely phased through Suigetsu’s liquid body as he launched a Water Fist and sent Aaron across the room. Rhilliane arrived with another guard, gasping at this, and when they noticed Suigetsu, the guard launched an ice beam. Suigetsu easily grabbed and melted the ice to water, sending it back at the bender. “So there’re more benders in the KND than I thought.”

Rhilliane furiously tried to shoot him, but Suigetsu grabbed the ground and melted a path of ice, straight to Rhilliane and letting the boy sink. Afterwards Suigetsu froze him solid before heading to the prison wing. He sliced open the doors and calmly marched down, observing the many prison cells upon the walls. He forced his hand through the ice ground and channeled a powerful surge of energy. The prison wing trembled before the icy walls within the cells melted into many waterfalls, and the cells collapsed haphazardly. Suigetsu stretched the walls further beyond the cells, allowing the prisoners to move out. “Okay, guys, you can come out.”

A particular band of Teen Ninjas wobbled dizzily out of their cells. “Uuugh. I thought I sensed an incredible amount of Water Chi. It was just you, Suigetsu.” said a girl with blood-red hair, red eyes, glasses, and striped prison garb.

*Sensory Teen Ninja*  
**RED-EYED KARIN**

“Nice to see you, too, Kar. Did my presence give you the chills?”

“LIKE I’D EVER BE CHILLY FOR YOU!”

“Whatever…” followed a dark-clothed teen with sunglasses, short brownish-blond hair, and a goatee. “But I’ve been in stiffer situations.” He stretched his arms.

*Teen Ninja Computer Expert*  
**GAGE DAVIDSON**

A girl with smooth bluish-black hair, white fur coat, metal boots, and white eyes with pale skin shortly approached them. “It’s amazing a bunch of kids can handle this cold. But then again, they’ll do anything for snow days.”

*Teen Ninja animal trainer*  
**ASHEI WINTERS**

“*Hold it right there!*” A swarm of KND guards were charging in.

Karin fixed her glasses and observed them. “Four of them are waterbenders, and three shadows are
“Ashei!” Suigetsu tossed her a horn, then used bending to make a hole in the ice. The Eskimo girl stuck her horn in the water and blew a sound that echoed for miles beneath the waves.

“RAAAAH!” A seasnake suddenly emerged right beneath her as she stood firmly on its head and made it shoot ice darts at the guards. Meanwhile, Suigetsu dove in the hole and maneuvered around the base’s walls, leaking into a storage room. He grabbed a laptop, bottle of lotion, and a Spanish guitar before throwing them in a sack and forming a water tunnel back to the prison wing. He tossed the laptop to Gage, lotion to a blonde-haired teen, and guitar to a Hispanic teen.

“This didn’t get wet, did it?” Gage questioned.

“No, just use it!”

“Okay.” Gage flipped it open, logged on to the Wi-Fi, and opened Flash. After some quick adjustments, a 2-dimensional ninja emerged from the computer and flipped to the guards, swiftly knocking them out as if he were real.

“Have a load of THIS, boys!” exclaimed the blonde teen, throwing off her prison wear. “TA-DAAAA!” She made a pretty pose in a red bikini.

“WHOOOAA! SO PRETTY!” exclaimed the male operatives with heart eyes.

“That’s not all!” Susanne sprayed herself with the lotion, making her skin appear very glossy. She glided across the ice on a single foot, swirling around and kicking the guards out with the other. They tried to grab her, but she slipped from their grip and skied across the wall.

“Okay, keep them busy, Rodrigo.” Suigetsu ordered.

The Hispanic teen readied to play his guitar.

Rodrigo began to play a peaceful, harmonic tune on his guitar. The tension eased within the wing as the operatives felt no sense or readiness to fight, merely swaying their heads to the rhythm. It was a tune that made them lost in thought.

“Great, just keep them there.” Suigetsu said. “Come on, there’s one more we gotta save.” The rest of them hurried down the hall and reached the deepest part of the Arctic Prison. Suigetsu sliced down the doors, breaching the small room with a single cell. “There he is. Let’s-”

“HYAH!” Marcus Drilovsky dropped from the ceiling and punched the Fishboy in the face, sending him across the hall. The teen stood firmly and glared at the others with balled fists.

“EYAAAH!” Karin screamed. “It’s Marcus Drilovsky, the Armament user! Ooo-o-o-o-h-h-h, his Haki is so stro-o-o-o-ong.” She began to sweat, face red as his sheer, sexy power. “How’s it goin’, Marey, hahaha-a-a.”

“You freaks aren’t getting any farther.” He stated.
But Susanne swiftly snatched the keys on his waist and flipped over, Marcus unable to grab her sleek leg as it slipped from his grasp. She quickly unlocked the cell and pulled it open. “Abram, let’s go!” Marcus punched her away with Armament.

“No.”

Suigetsu slithered below the ice beneath Marcus and pulled him in a hole, his upper half reforming. “Dude, I didn’t risk my neck breaking in here just so you—”

“I told you I’m not going. I’ll stay here as long as it takes.”

“Dude, why you still hung up on these guys, they’re doomed, anyway.” Gage stated.

“I don’t care. No matter what happens, I will keep my promise to him!” A pair of piercing blue eyes glared at them.

“EEYAH!” Karin kicked the back of Suigetsu’s head, making it watery for a few seconds. “I TOLD you we shoulda ditched him!”

Susanne slipped away from Marcus, who was breaking from Suigetsu’s ice prison. “Hmph. To think you still matter to him.” Suigetsu huffed. “Let’s go.”

They decided to leave the prisoner and return to Rodrigo. “Time to go, Guitar Boy!” Suigetsu said rushedly. (End song.)

With a fierce guitar strum, he said, “Bueno.” He quickly strummed his instrument as the gang hurried out of the base. Once outside, a man-sized sombrero saucer came down from the sky as the teens got in, the sombrero spinning quickly as it flew back to the sky, Rodrigo’s tunes echoing in the distance.

As the wind brushed their hair, soaring the sombrero across the Arctic air, Gage and Ashei were engaged in a deep, long kiss. Suigetsu glanced at this with a look of annoyance. “Seriously? Already?”

Back within the cell, the prisoner named Abram looked in thought. Father… I still want to believe… there’s a chance for them. If your predecessors… accomplished so much… maybe mine can… too.

Gallagher Gymnasium

Once the school day was over, the First Grade and Fourth Grade teams gathered in the gym, where hundreds of blocks lay scattered around both sides. Queen Shelly’s cousins carried their leader to the center of her pile and set her down, smirking in the direction of her rival. Jessie Sidney blew a stream of bubbles in his path as he marched to the center of his blocks, smirking at his older rival. Jessie glanced at Joey Beatles (Kuki/Wally’s son), who winked and thumbs-upped. It was time for Jessie to put his block-building lessons to the test.

“BOYYYS and girls!” announced Sandy Sidney (not to be confused with Shelly’s father). “Welcome to the final round of the annual Presidents’ Block-Building Battle Royale! Today, our two finalists finally face off, and the victor will take home the crown! Whooo will it be? The beach-hogger, Shelly Johnson?”

“BOOOOO!” moaned the first-graders.

“Or potty-mouth Jessie Sidney!”
“YAAAAAY!”

“During which, our two reporters, Zach and Dip, will be offering play-by-play! Oooon your mark!” The two presidents narrowed their eyes on each other. “Geeet set.” Their hands slowly reached for the first block. “GO!!”

“Aaaaand they’re off!” Reporter Zach announced. “What a lovely day for a block-building, eh Dip?”

“You betcha, Zach!” Dip agreed. “With near-perfect precision, Jessie’s throwing stacks together left-and-right, while astonishingly, Shelly insisted on doing this whole contest, BLINDFOLDED!” Indeed, Shelly snapped her fingers, and her knights wrapped a blindfold around her eyes. “How she does it, Zach, I do not know.”

“There can be no perfect time to stay for an after-school activity.”

“Say, Zach, you think we’ll get replaced by those Nick and Zach guys again?”

“I am almost certain they’re dead, Dip.”

“Let’s only hope so, Zach.”

Jessie dashed across his field of blocks and stylishly threw ‘em onto each other, and his model of Goofy Goober’s was nearly complete. Meanwhile, Shelly was constructing her own blockcastle, her vision completely blind. The contest lasted for several minutes, and almost no block was left unused. “They’re neck-n-neck, Dip, but it seems like Shelly has this match-”

“WWWWUH-OH! Looks like we got an uncounted block, Zach!” Shelly flinched, realizing the discarded block several meters from her castle. “But can she reach on time before Jessie puts the last touch on Goober’s hat?” She sensed Jessie climbing up his structure, seconds from putting the final block on the block-made Goobers statue.

The beach princess merely smirked, approaching the block with forceful stomp of her feet. She added more force to the third stomp, and before he knew it, Jessie’s block fort crumbled beneath him. “WHOOOA!”

“And what an INCREDIBLE stroke of rotten luck!” Zach exclaimed. “Just like all others before him, Jessie’s block fort has miraculously FALLEN!”

“Shelly must have luck of the Irish!” Dip said. “Cause HER match is pretty much GREEN.” And just like that, Shelly tossed the last block onto her fort with no trouble.

“YAAAAAAAY!” The fourth-graders cheered for their queen.

Sandy looked at her brother with sympathy, but Jessie wore a grumpy face and stomped away. “Hmph… that DUMMY.” Timmy Gilligan huffed.

“YEAAAAH! What a cheater!” Hikari agreed.

“Shelly must have luck of the Irish!” Dip said. “Cause HER match is pretty much GREEN.” And just like that, Shelly tossed the last block onto her fort with no trouble.

“Holes in the blindfold? I’m not even sure if I wanna go to the beach anymore…”

“Aww, let’s go, Timmy. We’ll build our OWN sandcastle, and dedicate it to Jessie!”
“Yeah! And we’ll write ‘Shelly Sucks’!”

“YAAAY!” The duo excitedly ran off to do so.

**Minish World; Sappo and Gibli’s treehouse**

Sappo and Gibli were in a small living room, feeding bits of nectar to Pikmin. They heard their door open, and turned to see a dark-pink-dressed Minish walk in. “Um, Instructors… someone wants to learn how to use Pikmin.”

“Oooooh, a new operative?” Gibli asked hopefully.

“Um, I dunno. Actually it’s… a human.”

“Huff, huff…” Rupert made it up the stairs after much struggle. “Why do you ant people have to live so high.”

“A human??” Sappo jumped. “What’s a human doing here?”

“Not my problem.” The Minish girl walked away.

“So you’re Sappy and Chibi?” Rupert asked.

“Not exactly.” Sappo said with disbelief.

“Well, come on! I wanna learn how to use these Pikmin, too!”

“That’s coming out of nowhere. I mean, humans don’t usually wander into our world at… our size.”

“Yeah, but my cousin Sally did! I saw HER with the Pikmin 6 months ago!”

“Ohhh! One of Sector W!” Gibli remembered.

“So one of the boys at the park was her cousin?” Sappo asked.

“AHA! You DO know her!” Rupert pointed.

“But how would he’ve gotten in our world, anyway? You need a Minish to activate the portals.”

“I just got sucked into your tree-stump. After my stupid DAD left me in the woods…” He folded his arms.

The twins exchanged confused glances. “Wait, let us look at something.” Sappo said, the two leading Rupert to another room.

Inside was a garage of many small, colorful pods, each with three legs and flower propellers. The twins approached a particular one and blew a whistle to signal all the Pikmin down. “Try this.” Sappo tossed Rupert the whistle. The human stared at it curiously and blew. Already, the Pikmin gathered up around him. “Aha…” Sappo observed. “So you are related. The Pikmin in this storage are only loyal to whoever plucked them, and whatever teammates that person was with.”

“But if someone were related to a Pikmin master, the Pikmin recognize their DNA and follow their whistle!” Gibli bounced.

“So these were all Cousin Sally’s Pikmin?” Rupert asked.
“Hers and her friends’, yeah.” Sappo confirmed. “But with this many, you won’t have a hard time starting training. Wanna still learn?”

“YEAH!!”

“Heh heh heh. Then let’s go down. Training course is just below.” The Minish led Rupert outside and down the tree, his Pikmin following. (Play “The Impact Site” from *Pikmin.*)

**Stage 2: Pikmin Training Course**

**Mission: Learn the ways of the Pikmin!**

“Well, let’s start with the basics.” Sappo began. “These are the Pikmin, duh. The Pikmin are our main means of combat and labor. We use them to carry things, fight, the stuff.” Sappo reached over and held a single Red Pikmin by the antenna. “Pikmin are light enough to carry. To set them on a task, we mostly throw them.” He threw the Pikmin onto a flower with a red pellet with a ‘1’ on it, knocking the pellet down. Rupert watched as the Pikmin carried the pellet away. “What I just hit was a Pellet Posy. They’re a common thing in the Minish World, and they’re used to make more Pikmin. They take it to their ship; the Onion, and let it get absorbed.” The Pikmin brought the pellet to a small pod with a flower propeller. The pellet was sucked inside, and two Pikmin seeds came out.

“The number on the pellet says how many Pikmin are needed to carry it, and also how many Pikmin it’ll produce. Also, any colored Pikmin can carry any pellet, but if the Onion absorbs a pellet of the same color, it’ll make more. And even though they’re small, the Pikmin are strong enough to lift anything. But depending on the weight of the object – like the pellets – it’ll take more. Anyway… let us show you the combat.”

Gibli led her Pikmin to a large, red, white-spotted creature. She blew her whistle and sent all the Pikmin to attack and knock it out. “That was a Bulborb.” continued Sappo. “You’ll see a lot of them. Anyway, it’s best to send as many Pikmin as you need to in a battle. They work stronger in bunches, and you’ll need a lot for taking down big enemies. If the enemies knock your Pikmin down, call them back before they get eaten.” He held up his whistle. “We control Pikmin using these whistles. After we throw them or send them to do a task, they’re no longer in our group. So we blow these whistles to summon them back. We also use them to send whole bunches to attack an enemy or grab an item.”

Rupert watched the Pikmin carry the Bulborb to their Onion and sprout more Pikmin. “Enemies make more Pikmin, too, so that’s why it’s good to knock ‘em outta the way. Anyway, ya might notice some have flowers on their heads. The Pikmin’s favorite food is nectar. You find nectar in eggs or something, and when they eat it, their flowers bloom, and they get stronger. They also bloom if you don’t pluck them from the ground.”

“But what about their colors?” Rupert asked.

“Well, that’s the next step!” Gibli jumped. “Each colored Pikmin has a special ability or two. Red Pikmin are fire resistant, and they’re the best in combat. Blue Pikmin can swim in water, and breathe in it. Yellow Pikmin are electric-proof, and can be used as batteries. They also throw the highest. Pink Pikmin have wings and fly, and can go just about anywhere! White Pikmin can run really fast, and they’re poisonous: if enemies eat them, they’ll be knocked out, and White Pikmin can also sense things better, like buried treasure. There’s other types, too, but you’ll learn on the way!”
“So do the training course!” Sappo encouraged. “Sally’s friends whipped up 12 Red Pikmin, 7 Yellow Pikmin, 15 Blue ones, 15 Pink, and 11 White, making 60 total. Oh, but you can only have 100 on the field, other Pikmin will just be stored in the Onion. So good luck, and try to whip up a lot!”

There was a bit more complexity to this Pikmin thing than Rupert thought. But it was still something worth trying out. He hoped he would learn on the way. He started by summoning each of the Pikmin from their Onions, then having some Reds and Yellows take down some Posies, leading to 17 Reds and 12 Yellows. He got all the Pikmin together and proceeded to a large cardboard box that required 20 Pikmin to push. He was able to do so easily with more than enough Pikmin, but the box ended up blocking another path, only allowing Rupert access to a small, narrow enclosing. But this enclosing had Pink Pellet Posies, so he sent the Wing Pikmin to collect and bring them to their Onion.

This created 15 Wings, making 30 of them, with 85 total Pikmin. The Wings could fly over the box and push it back, this time having it out of the way completely. He led his Pikmin to a more open yard where Dwarf Bulborbs roamed, and the creatures were easy to defeat with a single hit to the head. They came to a more menacing Large Bulborb, but it was fast asleep. Rupert went behind and hurriedly threw his Pikmin onto it, but his lack of coordination caused him to miss a few throws. Regardless, they were able to knock the Bulborb out before it could swallow any, and the creature coughed a huge strawberry (Sunseed Berry) from its stomach. Rupert had 6 Wing Pikmin take it back, then 10 Whites take the Bulborb.

Rupert noticed another route on a high ledge, much too high to climb. But lain before it was a giant discarded clipboard, so he had Wing Pikmin lift the clip end up and lay it on the ledge, creating a hill for his other Pikmin to go up. Across a small field was a rock wall, and when he sent his Pikmin to attack it, they couldn’t make a dent. He decided to return to the previous yard, and hurried back to get his other Pikmin; the Bulborb led to 21 total White Pikmin, 95 total. He guided them further across the yard, where a sand gate blocked the next area, so he sent a group of Pikmin to work on it. Meanwhile, he noticed a particular electric mushroom on a high foothold, and figured that was a job for the Yellows.

He threw all 12 Yellows onto the platform to carry the Volt Shroom (Risky Defender) to the Onions, then checked up on his other Pikmin who had finished breaking the gate. It led them to a pool area where Skeeterskate (3-legged insects with big water bubbles) glided across the surface, aiming to shoot the Pikmin with waterballs. Rupert first had the Blues take out the bugs, then began to find a way to help the other Pikmin cross the pool. A broken bridge started from their shore, and a pile of parts were in the pool. He had the Blues bring those parts to the bridge, but it still didn’t add up enough. When he swam across to the other shore, he noticed another pile of parts on a high ledge. He was able to guide his Wing Pikmin over the pool and had them work on it.

While they did so, Rupert returned to get his 12 Yellow Pikmin, and had them take all the fallen Dwarf Bulborbs to produce more. The Wings finished fixing the bridge, so Rupert gathered the other Pikmin up and crossed to the other shore. A poisoned gate blocked the next path, so it was up to the White Pikmin. Once they finished tearing it, Rupert guided the Pikmin up a huge, spirally path that led up a tree. At the path’s end, a grouping of acorns lay before the cave of a snoozing squirrel. He knew the squirrel would be on their tail the minute they grabbed the acorns. But recalling Sappo and Gibli’s explanation, White Pikmin were the fastest, so he would trust them for this task. He hid the other Pikmin in a small enclosing and sent the Whites to grab the 12 acorns (only one had to carry each). Rupert hid back in the enclosing as the squirrel awakened and dashed after the Pikmin, but the Whites hurried away successfully.

Rupert led the others out and noticed the squirrel’s cave had Bomb Rocks. There were 7, so Rupert
had 7 Reds carry them. They made their way back to the yard and to the field where the rock gate was. It took 3 bombs to destroy the gate and open way to a new area. He first returned to the Onions to get his 12 Whites and 17 Yellows, now 100 in his group. They ventured to the new path, a wide road with many tree root slopes. There were holes in the trees where spiders called Arachnodes protected with webs. Rupert could easily throw Pikmin onto the spiders and knock them out, revealing nectar and pellets inside, but one particular web had its spider on the opposite end, and a berry inside. When Rupert threw Pikmin on, they only got stuck, so Rupert called them down before the spider could eat. He decided to leave that spider ‘til he figured out a solution.

They reached another yard occupied by four Pyroclasmic Slooches, fiery slugs. Rupert used his 4 remaining Bomb Rocks to take out the slugs, then had the Reds take them back as prizes. In one of the corners, Rupert noticed a discarded bag of Flamin’ Hots, but when Rupert sent his Pikmin to take the treats, they ended up getting burned. Rupert blew the whistle to put out the flames (MAGIC!) and figured he would have to wait for his Red Pikmin. For now, he led his Pikmin up a fairly steep hill, overlooking a vast field at the top, miles below their cliff.

In the distance was a tremendous, peaceful, roaming deer, who seemed to wander around a particular area. Rupert blew his whistle, making the animal direct its attention over. It calmly stepped toward Rupert, looming its head down, the boy a little intimidated by its size. But it seemed to have no evil intentions, placing its nose beside the tinies’ cliff. Rupert led his Pikmin onto the creature’s head, and the deer began to roam around again. It passed by several trees with fruits, first one with an apple hanging from a branch, so he sent his Wing Pikmin to take it. He then passed a tree with a tunnel-like plant with water inside, so he quickly tossed all his Blue Pikmin in before the deer passed. They passed through the tunnel on their own and started to carry a small banana bud (Developing Greatness). They were forced to walk off that ledge to the field below, but there was apparently a slope leading back to the slugs’ field.

They came to the tree with the next fruit, a small bundle of green grapes (Dawn Pustules), but the ledge was much lower than their point atop the deer. Rupert tossed all his White Pikmin down, each grabbing one grape, but since they couldn’t get back up, they rushed around a spiral path to a mini spring pad the Minish likely placed. The pad flung them to a path around another tree, and they kept up and bounced a spring pad to a third tree, and at the top of its path was a plank that dropped them back onto the deer’s head, right on time. When the deer finally made the full loop, Rupert and the Pikmin hopped off, and the Whites carried the grapes back. ‘Course, they couldn’t get all the grapes, but they would hop back on the deer on their own, make the loop, and go up the paths again. Rupert thanked Pikmin 3 for that mechanic.

He went back to grab his 17 Red Pikmin (the slugs produced 8, making 25 total, but he couldn’t use them now), then hurried to the Flamin’ Hots to make the Reds collect them. Meanwhile, Rupert brought his Blue Pikmin to the water pool and had them take the three Skeeterskates, which all produced 6 Blues, making 13. To further populate them, he had the Blues take the fallen Arachnodes on the tree path, leading to 22 Blues. Once all the Pikmin were finished with their tasks, Rupert led them all down to the field where the giant deer roamed. They were careful to avoid its stomping hooves, but the field seemed pretty barren. However, something seemed to be attracting the White Pikmin, so Rupert followed where they pointed, and they began to dig up buried treasure in one of the deer’s hoofprints. They dug up a buried quarter (Artists’ Gems) and carried it back to the Onions.

With that, Rupert brought the rest of his Pikmin to another path across the deer’s plain, bringing them to a ‘Finish’ line where Sappo and Gibli waited. He approached the twin instructors to complete the stage.

“Great JOB!” Gibli jumped.

“You’re a natural!” Sappo bounced.

“Eh heh heh heh…” No one ever told Rupert he was good at something. “It was pretty easy, really…”

“Well DOY, it’s only your first level!” Gibli beamed.

“Um, first level?”

“What she means is, now that you’re pretty used to them, it’s time to train with the Pikmin in a more dangerous environment. A human environment, so to speak. But may I ask… why’re you suddenly so into Pikmin, anyway?”

“Hmmmm… I’m not sure, really.” Rupert scratched his head. “Maybe ’cause of how helpful they are. …Hey, if you’re talking about human environments, I know where we could go! In fact, is it okay if I bring some friends?”

“Friends? Like who?”

“I’ll explain later. Let’s go!” The trio began the walk back to the Onions.

Dickson Household

“-and Ish Taylor rushes in for another touchdown, but the Blitzers won’t let him-” Chad couldn’t be in a better mood to watch football. The front door creaked open as Emily walked in with bags of groceries. “Boy, traffic is so much better when you can just fly over it. Hey, where’s Rupert, I got ‘im those cheese muffins he likes.”

“In the deepest part of the Virginian Forest.”

“WHAT?!?” The groceries plopped on the ground.

“Wuh-oh. Seems we’re getting some bad weather, Chip.” The TV announcer continued.

“I realized you were right, Em. The only way to teach him real strength is to put him in real danger. So I took him to the deepest part of the woods so he’ll have to find his way back. It may take a few hours, but if you have faith in him, I will t- MMM!” Emily’s foot was then planted on his crotch.

“Well, I have faith you’re going to drive out there and bring him home, if you don’t wanna go to your friends with a new feminine voice.”

“Urk… can I have a Scottish voice?” he grinned.

“GO GET OUR SON!!”

“Yaaa okay, okay!”

Airline Gilligan

A shipment of passengers were on the flight to Düssenheim, Germany, among them Kimberly and
Emily (not to be confused with Rupert’s mom :P). The latter had a box of Nerds, her favorite candy, as she poured some onto her open palm and started to eat. She stared at the fluffy clouds past the window; which brought up her question on Nimbis’ opinions on airplanes. Her mind was still adrift… going to a place where a lot of smart guys were. Guys who were smart like her… or maybe more. She was nervous about sounding too stupid to them. Or maybe they would sound stupid to her. She kinda hoped it was the latter. When the clouds cleared away for a moment, Emily glanced down, mouth agape.

A band of bikers zipped across the grassland, each in a set position so they spelled the words GOOD LUCK, EM! She pulled out her binoculars and saw the purple dot leading the bikers was Mike Strongarm, who seemed to sense his friend looking at him as he looked up and winked at her window.

Emily felt her heart race, her cheeks red as sweat dripped down. She was sure glad Mike wasn’t up there to see that. It was hard enough talking to him without increasing in temperature, but this whole scenario made it hard to breathe. After calming down, Emily pressed her face to the window and waved. Once again sensing this, Mike gave a wink and thumbs-up. The bikers couldn’t follow long before the plane soared past the shore, across the blue sea. Mike watched until the plane was beyond the horizon. He really hoped she would have a fun trip.

And believe me, she will. ;P So introduces, one of my favorite parts of the story, Pikmin levels. I’m really looking forward to writing those ‘cause, Pikmin is such a fun series, and really the main point of these Pikmin levels is to have a break from most of the craziness that happens later. Also, Suigetsu and Karin are from Naruto, Ashei’s from Twilight Princess, and those other Teens are OCs with a few misc. origins. So next time, the second Pikmin level, Emily’s first level, and a few other things, too. ;I Well-p, see you then.
Chapter Summary

Emily Garley must suddenly hunt down monkeys in Düssenheim! Meanwhile, an alien arrives to kidnap Maddy Murphy!

Guess who started school.

Chapter 4: An Unpleasant Surprise

Virginian Forest

Chad had driven all the way back to the precise spot he dropped Rupert. He began to wander the forest in search of his son. “HELLOOOO? RUPERT? I’m here to pick you uuuuuup. It’s not a trick this time, your mom’s threatening me to bring you baaaaack. ‘Cause as you will grow up to see, women have very different views on parenting.”

The only sounds were the winds rustling the leaves and echoing chirps of birds. He skimmed the ground for possible footprints, but all he found was a series of peculiar tiny paths, probably meant for ants. He wondered what could’ve carved such convenient roadways. He heard light footsteps and looked ahead, seeing a loan deer wandering a small, round area, walking nonstop in many loops. He approached the deer and asked, “Looking for something?”

The deer looked at him quickly before running away. Chad examined the trees around the area, and found a set of three of them had tiny paths spiraling around them. He really wanted to look more into these… but he supposed Rupert came first. His cellphone rang, so he answered his wife. “Hello?”

“So did you find him?”

“I can’t find him anywhere.”

“What?!?”

“Relax, Em, he probably ended up finding his way home after all, you’re such a worry-wart.”

“Or MAYBE he wandered into a bear’s stomach or some maniac’s secret CABIN! ‘CAUSE I DON’T SEE HIM HERE!”

“Well, there’s always the chance he decided to wander off to Cleveland. He’d definitely choose playing with Timmy and Hikari than working out.”

“Ugh, fine, drive down there to see if he is. I’m gonna be down there soon with Vi and Scar, they’ll be able to help track him just in case. You BETTER hope he’s alright, Chad.” She hung up.

Chad sighed and returned to his car. Even if Rupert was in some kind of danger… he would want him to handle it himself.

Goofy Goober’s
'Twas a joyous time at Goofy Goober’s, the ice creamy restaurant where no kid could be sad. Adults, maybe, since they had to drag their kids here and put up with the obnoxious noise, but that’s mainly why they took the dark bar in the corner. A more peaceful area where kids would deem too boring to hang out. But as it turned, one kid chose to sit there.

Jessie Sidney guzzled down another shake, the strawberry substance spread around his mouth. There were bags under his dizzy dark eyes, and his hair was a mess. “’ey, MAC, gimme another’n… BUUUURP.”

“Err, Dear Boy, I zink you’ve had too much.”

“MMmmm…” he waved an arm, “I think I know my own damn body.”

“THERE you are, Jessie!” his sister yelled, walking in to sit by him. “I thought I’d find you here.”

“Er, and will you be paying his bill, Miss?” Mac asked.

“I’m too young to carry such an allowance.” she said with adorable eyes.

“Oui-oui.” And he proceeded to get more shake.

“Jessie, I don’t think drowning yourself in ice cream is going to solve anything. So Shelly beat you again, what’s the big deal?”

“Shelly always *** beats me, tha’sa problem… her and her lousy fourth-graders… how’m I suppose to be the First Grade President if I, mmmm-BUURP can’t even stack a few, eh, blocks.” He mumbled drunkly.

“Well, being older makes them more experienced, I guess.”

“Experience, shmerience… when I took this job, I-ha wanted ta…ta leader the First Grades to glory, ya know… I-ha wanted ta SHOW all those big kids… we got ta stuff. But those…those DUMBASS fourth-graders, think they know it all… and SHELLEY… with her cape and, big feet and, big older cousins… she thin’ she queen o’ the school, well you know what I SAY… BUUUURP.”

“Huhuhu HEY, kids! To celebrate 28 years of Goober-TAAASTIC fun, that one peanut that makes the elephants MAD: GOOOFY GOOBEER!”

But when the curtains opened and the dancing peanut danced out, Jessie’s vision faltered. The world became blurry, and that smiling, goofy peanut was the center of attention. “Oh, I’M a Goofy Goober, yeah! YOU’RE a Goofy Goober, …”

A squiggly smile spread across Jessie’s face. Entranced by that hypnotic singing, Jessie couldn’t help but wobble forward. It wasn’t long before he lost consciousness. (Play Goofy Goober’s theme from the Spongebob Movie Game.)

Stage 3: Goofy Goober’s... sort of

Mission: Wander around aimlessly.

Jessie aimlessly wandered the suddenly-barren restaurant and smashed many tables and chairs. He ran up on stage and followed the route behind, sending Bubble Torpedoes at Gooberlings, which
were the same happy, goofy-faced peanuts as the original, except they were trying to beat him with mops. He came to gaps in the road that required him to double-jump, waving his bubble wand down for an extra boost, then reached a large gap with a large button. He jumped and blew bubble feet over his own to do a Ground Pound, pushing the switch to make a bounce platform.

After crossing the gap, Jessie appeared in an expansive, factory-like chamber with giant ice creams and candies. A series of giant, colorful ice creams wobbled back and forth on their cones, so Jessie was careful when hopping across them. He reached a safe platform and then had to cross giant, tilting Wonka Bars, but waiting on the following platform was a Cream-Cream, a Gooberling that shot ice cream. It did so to destroy Jessie’s Bubble Torpedoes, so the boy was forced to avoid them across the unbalanced platforms and knock the enemy out normally.

Following that was a series of floating platforms moving toward him and away at quick speeds, each too high to jump. When the first one returned, Jessie performed a Headbash (in which he wore a bubble Viking helmet) to shoot up higher and land on it, doing the same with the others with careful timing, lest he fall to the chocolaty chasm. The third, highest platform brought him to a safe walkway along the side of the room (and above the entrance), which had a port-o-potty at the end. Jessie stepped inside, and, however this mechanic worked, turned into Sandy.

Using her lasso, she swung a series of hooks to reach a foothold across the chasm, leading to a wide hallway. Floating robots called Chucks drew torpedoes and hurled ‘em at Sandy, but she easily caught the torpedoes in her lasso and threw them back. Sandy arrived at a room with another chocolate creek, having to first spin her jump-rope like a helicopter to glide to a far, low platform. The next platform was much higher, but a peg was on it for her to catch with her rope and pull herself up.

From there, a series of scattered platforms with little bobble targets led to a path in a far right corner, and Sandy had to lash her ropes quickly to haul herself across them. Not a difficult hazard as she reached the next hall easily. A Gooberling on a floating pod skimmed the hall for intruders, and there was nothing to hide behind within his laser’s range. There were plenty of pegs around the floor and walls, with only one close to the next, intending a certain order. Sandy pulled herself to each of them at a quick speed, the Gooberling unable to keep up with its laser before Sandy wrapped her rope around its turret, and pulled the pod to pieces.

The hall led her to a giant freezer chamber with many giant ice cream boxes. Once again, many frosty pegs were spread around, along with several pitfalls, and a Chuck floated over the room and threatened to blow Sandy into the chasms. She had to latch the pegs and pull herself over, but the slippery floor forced her to pass the pegs and keep skiing ‘til she latched another and switched direction. That would be dangerous with the many pits, so she first skied across the narrow path, pulled herself left, then right to ski across a narrow path on the side, two more rights to ski up a slope that flew her onto the giant ice creams. She kept the speed going and pulled herself to pegs that flew her up ramps, until she skied into an icy tunnel. The speed was still going as she pulled herself around loops and zigzaggy paths, avoiding frosty water, until her skiing finally led her into a port-o-potty.

Having switched back to Jessie, the boy stepped down a small slope and began to jump Bouncemallows across a vast chocolate lake. He bounced to one of many islands where, after knocking out some Gooberlings, pressed a switch that made a bounce platform appear over the lake, aimed at an angle. Another spring on this island could bounce him to it, but when he did so, the spring sent him right back. He saw there was a slot on the island spring’s back, and he could stick his wand into it to turn and aim at other islands. He bounced to an island on the left, having to simply Headbash a switch above him, activating another floating spring.
Jessie knocked out the Goobers on that island quickly before bouncing to the first island, but realized the Goobers there previously had returned. After knocking them out, he saw the ones on the second island respawn, and realized they were coming from a Duplicatotron in the hall he would eventually get to. He aimed the spring at another island across the room, where he had to deal with G-Loves, purple and green saucers that spun around, swinging many gloved hands. He bested them just by Ground Pounding, then did the same to press a switch, revealing another floating platform.

He returned to the first island (knocking out the Gooberlings again), but the last island was in a further corner, too far for the spring to reach. However, he returned to the second island, and realized another spring sat atop a stone pole. Behind that pole was a smaller spring which bounced him up to it, then was bounced to that last island. He had to stand on a switch that opened a gate protecting the last switch, across the chocolate lake with a series of rising and sinking platforms leading to it. He spun his wand and rolled a Bubble Bowl when the platforms rose in a perfect order, pressing the switch and making the last floating spring appear. He returned to the first island, aimed the spring at the first floating one, and let each bounce him to the next, 'til he landed at the cave’s base.

He took out the Duplicatotron and proceeded through the cave that led to an outside land, fields of candies, pink skies, and ice cream mountains. Sandy was there to help him, holding on as she swung hooks from giant ice creams that fell afterward, making it to the top of a huge, ice cream slide. They zipped down at fast speed, ramming any Gooberlings in the way and jumping ramps to score extra points. They split up as Jessie took a higher route into a cave, jumping some java pits 'til he was outside again, sliding across a narrow path over the lower slide, where Sandy was.

At the end of the narrow slide, he grabbed a discarded sock (sound familiar?) and dropped down to rejoin Sandy. They once again split up on a fork leading into a mountain, where inside was a series of slides leading many directions, far too many to see in one go. Jessie slid to a large chasm where he had to jump a trio of bounce pads, each fairly far apart due to his momentum, and upon landing, he had to tightly turn right as the slide spiraled downward. He and Sandy met up once more as the conjoined slides led into a cave, the two having to jump a few java pits and dodge some heat geysers before landing at the bottom.

The semi-natural cave started to blend into a restaurant again, more specifically the restaurant’s basement. Jessie kept forward as Sandy gradually faded. (End song.)

“Huu, huu, huu…” Jessie had no idea how he winded up down here. He barely remembered what he was even doing. …Oh yeah, sinking in depression.

“Jeeessie…”

His vision was failing again. He could vaguely make out a blurry, yellow creature.

“Jeeeeeessie.”

“Sponge…bob?…”

“Jessie… there’s no reason to feel deprevessed. Not if you… belieeeeeeve.”

“Mmmm…”

“Jessie…Jessie?…”

“Jessie?” The blur vanished, and the yellow creature morphed into Sandy.
He shook his head, “Whuh?”

“Jessie, you got drunk again and wandered into the basement. You know what brainfreezes do to you.”

“Mmmm…” He held his head. “Whaddid I do last night.”

“Trained for the block contest. But then, well… Shelly beat you.”

“Oh…” Jessie looked at his bubble bottle. “Almost out… guess we’ll need to go to Sabaody and get more.”

“Young man, you’re gonna have to leave.” A man approached them, his Goober costume off. “You knocked out all of our backup Goobers.” They looked behind, seeing a bunch of Goofy Goobers on the floor.

“Ahhh this *** level’s drawing on, anyway.” Jessie said.

“HE CUSSED!!” The men screamed.

“He’s having a bad day.” Sandy said with teary eyes.

“POOR KID.”

“Let’s get outta here.” Sandy said as she led her brother along. A small, gray mouse-like creature watched them from a hole in the wall.

**Düssenheim, Germany**

The Airline Gilligan finally took land as Kim led her daughter outside. “Well, Em… welcome to our homeland.”

Düssenheim was a lovely city, mostly pearl-white buildings, and kind of a futuristic feel to it. The city was divided in two halves, with a great suspension bridge connecting both of them. Emily’s nose, although mostly unfunctional, could whiff that science feel in the air, and the idea of being someplace like that made her nervous system react something fierce. The two took a taxi across the giant bridge to the other side of town where Adams Tech Co. resided. On the way, Emily spotted a particular mechanical tree in the distance. ‘Twas her mom’s old treehouse, Sector G.

They made it to Adams Tech, a large, mechanical building that took up an entire block, with a wide stairway entrance to many glass doors, and giant letters that emphasized the company’s name on the center of the front. Emily restrained herself from rushing ahead of her mom, but her heart raced faster, the closer she got to the entrance. “Just remember to put on sunglasses before we enter the plasma radiation chamber.” Kim cautioned with a humorous smile. “Let’s go find my dad first and we can.”

“AAIEEEE! AAAIEEEE!” The two jumped when a brown monkey in yellow shorts, wearing a helmet with a red light, suddenly jumped between them in a frantic fashion. All around, monkeys were harassing the employees, tying them up, and taking many tools and inventions before escaping out the windows or doors.

“AAAAAH! Somebody get the containment chamber fixed!” a scientist cried as monkeys tugged on his white hair.

“Oh no! It’s happening again!” Kim cried.
“What? What’s happening, Mom?” Em asked.

She dropped her briefcase and said, “Em, just wait outside, I need to help them straighten this. Er-HEY, that guy’s pen is not a cavity driller!” She hurried in.

Emily looked around and saw a huge, broken glass chamber, and another one being brought in. She grabbed her Infi-Cube and extracted a mechanical net with tight, blue string.

**Kids Next Door: T.E.L.A.-N.E.T.**
**Targets Energy Location Allowing Network Enemy Transport**

A mini monitor activated on the net, and she aimed it at that glass chamber. After confirming its target, a monkey screeched and jumped to her, but she kicked it upside the chin to knock it down. “Hu hu! Thank goodness for my size-10s.” She caught the monkey in the net, and in a flash, the creature vanished and appeared inside the glass chamber. “Let’s hope my mom can handle things here. Time to catch some apes!” She smirked excitedly at the rampaging apes outside. (Play the **Title Screen** theme from *Ape Escape 3!*)

**Stage 4: Downtown Düssenheim**

**Mission: Capture 10 monkeys!**

Two monkeys were terrifying drivers on the street, forcing them to stop their cars and run away. Emily wore a green- and blue-striped hoolihoop called the Super Hoop, increasing her speed as she ran against one of the monkeys, knocking it down long enough so she could net it. The other monkey hopped across the cars to get away, and even her Super Hoop couldn’t match his speed. He hopped his way up some building signs and windows, with athleticism Emily could never match. So she figured she’d find another way.

She turned down the left street where two monkeys hid behind cop cars at a roadblock, trying to shoot Emily with laser guns. She took cover behind two other cars and pulled out a slingshot called the Slingback Shooter. Through the cars’ glass, she locked onto each monkey, so while they were behind their cars, she launched homing pellets that flew over and stunned the apes. She quickly hopped over the cars, and before the apes could get away, Emily whipped out her Stun Club – basically a toy lightsaber, but effective – and bashed the apes in the head. She caught them both in her T.E.L.A.-N.E.T., then proceeded to a town square with a huge, beautiful reflecting pool. Since all the roads were blocked for construction, Emily had to swim across using a small, yellow floatable device called the Water Net, which could fire a projectile T.E.L.A.-N.E.T. by pressing a button.

A monkey was quickly trying to swim away from her, but Emily kicked faster and switched on the mini boost setting, able to get close enough and catch the monkey in her net. She swam to the other side of the pool and climbed out, seeing the next round of monkeys down a street sloping downward. However, she first noticed the set of platform-stairs leading up a building, and used a helicopter device called the Sky Flyer to float up each platform and reach the roof.

In the distance, she saw the monkey that evaded her earlier, and quickly hopped across the rooftops to reach it. The monkey hopped into a small flying saucer and tried to shoot her from the air, but
Emily narrowly avoided and locked on with her Slingshot’s homing pellets, making direct hits. The saucer shot at her feet and made her wobble backwards, nearly falling over the edge. She thankfully held on with her right hand, and when the saucer loomed closer for one last shot, Emily flipped up and sliced the saucer across the bottom with her Stun Club. The ship exploded on the roof as the monkey flew out, dizzy, allowing Emily to catch it.

With her job half done, Emily returned to the top of the hill and ran down using the Super Hoop. She arrived at the suspension bridge, but huge gaps of it were destroyed as a roadblock blocked it. She noticed two monkeys on both the first two towers, so her only way across was up. Before going, she noticed a camera aimed up at the right tower, whose monkey was dressed in a Sonic Hedgehog suit. She pressed the switch by the camera to record the monkey.

*Why do hedgehogs think this is fun?* The subtitles read.

Having acquired the film, Emily wrapped both arms and legs around the left metal pipe that curved up to the tower, holding on tight as she inched her way up. She would never understand how Sonic and Shadow do this so easily—maybe she would make her own grindboots. She slowly inched toward the top of the tower, net ready as she prepared to catch the monkey. With a stylish flip up, the monkey was IN her net and teleported, while the Sonic monkey on the right tower slid down his rail and made the escape. Emily could make the slow climb down, but there was fixed road below her, so— “WHOOoooaa.” She dropped straight down and whipped out her Sky Flyer, landing softly.

The next bit of road was destroyed except a few platforms, so Emily hopped across until the last one stopped at a larger gap before a road sealed by a mechanical gate and archway. Two Pipodactyls came out, genetically created, small green pterodactyls with apelike mouths. They coughed fireballs that Emily narrowly jumped and dodged on her small platform, trying to shoot them with slingshot pellets which they dodged. She switched to homing pellets and had an easier time shooting them down, causing the gate to sink open.

Emily floated over with Sky Flyer and encountered a monkey controlling a green tank. She rolled and dodged its bombshells as she hurried around in search of a weakness. It was a fairly small tank, big as a go-kart, so Emily decided to rush up and try wailing on it with her Stun Club. The tank whipped around and knocked Emily down with its turret, and she gasped when it aimed directly at her. In a desperate attempt, she squeezed the turret and tried to force it upward, but it seems after a small error on the monkey’s part, the tank hatch exploded and flew the monkey out. “Huhu! Never let a monkey run a spotlight!” So she caught it in her net and proceeded.

She made it to the other side of town, patrolled by Camerabots that shot small missiles which she batted away with the club, and exploded on them. There was a scaffolding nearby where a monkey dressed as Mario was jumping barrels thrown by a monkey dressed as Donkey Kong. She started to make her way up those narrow scaffolds herself, jumping any barrel that threatened to take her down. She made it to the Mario monkey and netted him, then continued up the building in her goal to catch the DK monkey (and not the one we all love :P). Once at the top, the monkey ran around frantically, but since it didn’t have much room on this small road, he was easy to net.

“Just one more!” Emily exclaimed as she was one monkey away from her goal. She jumped down the scaffold excitedly, looking around for her next victim. A monkey spotted her as she eyed him like a prey, for this reason, he carjacked a random civilian and drove away. Even the Super Hoop wouldn’t catch up, but she rushed up to another citizen in his parked car. “Excuse me,” she panted, not used to this much exercise, “may I borrow this?”

“Uhhh… ja?”
“Great!” So he got out and allowed Emily to hop in and drive away.

“Vas she old enough to drive?”

Emily drove at high speed after the monkey, but they only seemed to follow a particular circle around some buildings. Emily rammed him from behind once, but since she hadn’t acquired a license yet, keeping up was a pain. So using her brain instead, she decided to drive the opposite direction and ram the monkey when he came around. She did this twice before the ape swerved out of control and came to a crash. Dizzied and defeated, Emily could run up and- “YES!!” send him warping in her net. “GOT ‘EM ALL!” Feeling purely victorious, she danced around like the joyous little nerd she was. She jumped high in the air, expecting to teleport for some reason, but- “OOF!” plopped onto her front. “Hehe… ‘course there’s actually a few left to capture. Huh?”

A group of remaining monkeys looked at her with worry. “AIEEEE!” They began to leap their way out of the city, in multiple directions before Emily helped herself to stand.

“Or not… oh well, they’ll come back. Eventually. But holy WOW, that was awesome! Can’t WAIT to see the look on my mom’s face when she sees all those monkeys I caught! Hehe, I’m gonna go see her now! Ooo- and also get my anti-itching cream.” Her skin was itching with excitement as she ran back to Adams Tech, scratching the whole way.

Cleveland Beach

Children were excited to be on the beach after a long, boring school day. Of course, a particular area was restricted, the humongous sandcastle created by Princess Shelly and her knights. Still, there was plenty of room on the other side of the beach. And that was where Rupert, Sappo, and Gibli landed in their tiny Onions.

The beach seemed much different to Rupert from his Minish-sized view. As big and vast as a scorching desert, the sun beating on his tiny body. They could feel the quaking of all the gigantic children frolicking on the beach. “So whaddo you guys do again?” he asked, trying to shield his eyes from the sun.

“We Minish mostly assist the bigger Kids Next Door, by giving them stuff they need.”

“So we search around and steal stuff from big people before giving it to THEM!” Gibli bounced.

“But we gotta be discreet, ’cause most humans don’t like havin’ their pie snuck off the picnic blanket.”

“And no one likes itchy ants crawlin’ around their pants!”

“Yuck! I’m not going in anyone’s pants!”

“You’re not, Stupid, you’re just taking stuff.” Sappo stated. “But why’d you wanna go here, anyway?”

“‘Cause I thooought…” It was hard to search around with that giant sun in his eyes. But in the distance, he could make out a peculiar sand statue, and two kids building it, a chubby boy in a hat and cape, and a girl with droopy sleeves. “There they are! Timmy and Hikari! I kinda wanted to get them on this, too.”

“Hmmmm. Well, Pikmin users always work better in teams.”

“If you can lead them to a Minish Portal, we can make them mini, too!” Gibli beamed.
“Where’s a Minish Portal?”

“We have one in that rock over there.” Sappo pointed to a mountain-sized (to them) boulder with a cave at the bottom. “Some Minish come here often. Just one problem: we don’t have any reverse-Minish Dust left, so you won’t be able to expand and get them to come over.”

“I’ll just get their attention like this.”

“If you say so. We’ll get the portal ready, good luck.” (Play “Tropical Wilds” from Pikmin 3.)

Stage 5: Bullies’ Land

Mission: Collect treasures from the unsuspecting beach-goers.

Rupert gathered 20 Reds, 20 Yellows, 22 Blues, 10 Whites, and 22 Wings, making 94 total. He first led them through a wide, snaky gorge dug within the beach, where Yellow Wollywogs (frog-like creatures with no mouths) tried to crush them with their bulky bodies. Rupert kept his Pikmin away from their stomps and rapidly tossed Pikmin onto them, keeping the frogs down until they were defeated. He bested the three Wollywogs, but lost 4 Reds in the scuffle. He decided to let the Reds take one of them back and make 5 Reds, had the Whites take one back, then the Blues. He now had 21 Reds and 15 Whites, marking 100 total.

After the snaky gorge came a vast, open field of the beach where many people roamed. Rupert led them to a gigantic pool chair where it appeared some woman was getting a tan, although it was far too high to see from this view. A bottle of sunscreen (Contained O-zone) was sticking over the edge of the chair, so Rupert sent his Wing Pikmin up to grab and begin to carry it back. They further explored the beach, but the other half was blocked by what appeared to be a Minish-size river. The river required another bridge of tiles, which was once again missing, so they searched this field for the pieces.

They found a giant, 10-year-old girl seated on her knees while she played with a Barbie doll. The doll’s dress was composed of the tiles that made the bridge, so they would have to distract her somehow. Near the girl’s foot was a hole containing a Hermit Crawmad, which emerged at the sight of the Pikmin. Having an idea, Rupert only led a single White Pikmin between the Crawmad and the girl’s pinky toe. When the creature lunged, Rupert dodged and caused it to nip the toe. “Ow!” The girl leapt to her feet and stomped the Crawmad before walking off to get some lotion, dropping her doll in the process. He put his Pikmin to the task of taking the tiles to the bridge while he rushed back to get the 22 Wing Pikmin.

Upon the bridge’s completion, Rupert guided his Pikmin to the second half of the field. He saw a boy buried up to his chest in sand, struggling to escape, likely the work of some bully. Even though Pikmin could dig, it would take a bit more work considering his size. He decided to leave him ‘til he had a solution, and instead walked to another boy building a sandcastle. Actually, it was more like a series of platforms, each taller than the next, with the middle, tallest one having a tiny Lucario statue on top. The first set of platforms were easy to jump on his own, the annoying part was throwing the Pikmin onto each one. Unfortunately, the last few were farther up, and while he could throw his Pikmin, he couldn’t jump up himself. He decided to send the Wing Pikmin to collect the statue from there, but the boy swatted the Pikmin away, believing them to be bugs.

With no known solution, Rupert dropped from the platforms and gathered his Pikmin to continue on. They marched up a sandy hill where they finally arrived at Rupert’s friends, Timmy and Hikari. They appeared to be constructing a giant sand statue of First Grade President, Jessie Sidney, hands
on his hips and a proud smile. The sand-plaque on the pedestal read Jessie Rulez! Shelly Sucks! “I still don’t think the hands-on-hips looks good.” Timmy said. “I mean, GUYS don’t do that!”

“YES they do! I saw Dad do it all the time!”

“No you didn’t.”

“HEEEEEEEEY! TIMMYYYYY! HIKARIII! I-”

Their ears were miles away from Rupert’s tiny voice.

“… … … …!”

“Ah, crud… Wait.” Rupert noticed something odd about the statue’s right eye (his left). It was darker than the other one, which was just a dimmer shade of sand. “…Hey, let’s see if we can knock that down.” He found a slight slope of sand that allowed them onto the pedestal, where he sent his Pikmin to attack the statue’s shoes. The vibrations caused the mysterious object to fall. It was a Purple Onion, which landed in front of the pedestal on three legs. A single seed plopped out of the statue and planted in the ground. Rupert hurried down to pluck this new Pikmin. It was purple with eyelashes, and notably chubby. He also noted how heavy it felt when plucking it.

**Rupert discovered Purple Pikmin! They may be small, but these guys are bullies of the beach! They are 10 times stronger than the average Pikmin, and guys you shouldn’t engage with in a fight! They’re pretty slow, so keep an eye on them.**

Rupert tried to make the Pikmin follow him, but he shook his head no. Reason being, Rupert already had 100. So he told 10 Reds and 5 Whites to return to the Onions (‘cause he ain’t makin’ that run :P). He was then able to get the Purple Pikmin to follow him, having the strong guy take several purple Pellet Posies and produce more. By the end, he had 13 Purples, 98 total. He still wasn’t sure how to get Timmy and Hikari’s attention, but he noticed Hikari’s dark-purple Rainbow Monkey on the ground behind her. It was a Ten-Tons-of-Goodness Rainbow Monkey, much heavier than it appeared. It required 101 Pikmin, so his 13 Purples were on the case. Since they moved exceedingly slow, he sent other Pikmin to help, too.

“Huh?” Hikari looked up when her Rainbow Monkey began moving on its own. “LOOK, Timmy! My Ten-Tons-of-Goodness Rainbow Monkey wants us to follow it!”

“Huh?” Indeed, the stuffed toy was going somewhere. “Ummm… I think some ants mistook it for a snack.”

“Those silly ants know better than THAT! Let’s go see where it’s going!”

They followed the Pikmin all the way back to the landing area, with Rupert keeping a steady distance behind. The Pikmin brought it to the boulder where the Minish Portal was stationed and tossed the stuffed toy on top. The kids watched with wonder as green dust rose from the hole in the boulder and sucked the monkey inside. “Heeeeey!” Hikari whined. The two climbed on and tried to peep in the hole, and were soon sucked in by the green dust as well.

“WAAAAAH- uuh!” They took land on the ground after bouncing down some boulders.

“Hey, guess Rupert figured something out!” Sappo said. Timmy and Hikari exchanged baffled looks.

“Hey, guys! What’s up?” Rupert greeted, entering the boulder.

“RUPPY? Where are we?” Hikari asked.
“You’re in the Minish World!” Gibli bounced. “Rupert led you to our portal. You’re tiny now!”

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“Hehe… you guys wanna hear a funny story?” Rupert grinned.

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So for the next few minutes, Rupert explained the random events that led him to the Minish World. Hikari also proceeded to take back her minimized Rainbow Monkey from the Purple Pikmin. “So why’d you drag US into this?” Timmy questioned.

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“What, I thought you guys might like it, too. You are explorers, right?”

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“Come on, Timmy! I bet it’ll be fun!” Hikari beamed. “I wanna see what Jessie’s statue looks like from here!”

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“Deal.”

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And with that, they continued the journey across the sandy fields. They returned to the boy that was half-buried in the sand. “What happened to him, anyway?”

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“One of Shelly’s knights.” Timmy replied. “Stupid meanie.”

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“WHOA!” He was surprised when his arms popped out, and was able to push himself out the rest of the way. “…Ha ha! Who’s a wimp NOW!” Proud of his newfound strength, he ran off. The three looked inside his hole and spotted a discarded No. 2 pencil (Tool of Creation). They sent 5 Wing Pikmin down to take it back while they led the other Pikmin to the group of sand platforms. They jumped their way up, bringing the Pikmin, and this time, Timmy could throw Rup and Hikari on the second-highest platform, while Rupert threw Hikari to the highest afterward.

The boy fixing this sandcastle took notice of the little creature that was just thrown on. He squinted closely, seeing the teeny Hikari wave happily. The idea of a little person was too much to bear, so he fainted. They were safely able to take the Lucario statue (Lost Hero) using 5 White Pikmin. The trio proceeded up the hill where the Jessie statue rested. From this view, Jessie’s proud figure looked even more heroic. Probably because it was much bigger. “SEE, I TOLD you the hands-on-hips looked cool!” Hikari stated.

They passed the statue and continued down a hill, seeing a volleyball game taking place between two boys and two girls. Their movement was random, so they would have to guide the Pikmin through carefully and quickly, for they could lose tons in just one stomp. When the ball was knocked fairly far, they seized the moment to run across the center. They were almost out of breath by the time they reached the center line under the net, but panicked when the Purple Pikmin were falling behind. One of the boys came back and squished three Purples, their spirits floating away.

Before proceeding, they noticed the referee boy seated atop a tall chair on the side of the court, and the shiny whistle on his armrest. They hurried to the chair and climbed the convenient, Minish-size ladder to his armrest.

They used their 10 remaining White Pikmin to take the whistle (Sound of Sadness) without the boy’s knowledge. “Hey, Timmy, run back to the start and get the Pikmin back.” Rupert told him as
they climbed back to the ground. Timmy avoided the boys again while Rupert and Hikari continued past the girls. But since the whistle had been taken, the game went on forever. Rupert and Hikari saw a series of floatable items off a nearby shore, so they decided to explore them. An inflatable raft floated close to the shore, so they threw their Pikmin onto it before jumping on their selves.

They crossed the raft and found a remote-controlled toy boat zooming around a set circle, controlled by a kid in an inner-tube. They hopped in the boat with all their Pikmin and waited for it to pass the boy’s floatie, then hopped off. The kid didn’t notice the swarm of bugs as they walked around the back of the floatie. A squirt gun was in the back of the boy’s pants, so they had some Wing Pikmin pull it out. They called the Wings back and had the Blue Pikmin take the squirt gun through an underwater route. “Hey, why don’t we just SWIIIIM?” queried Hikari.

“I ain’t swimmin’ in that stuff, might get eaten by a fish.”

The duo jumped back to the boat and waited for it to pass a series of fun-noodles, which were spinning in place. When the closest noodle’s end looped by them, they could jump when the boat passed, and had to wait for the other noodles to make loops before jumping. They were led to a boy that was sitting on three noodles, bobbing up and down, with all three making a staircase when they went up, and at level when going down. They gathered on the third, highest one and could make the jump to a giant fat guy snoozing on an inflatable raft. There was no other way to go, but the bouncy belly sunk up and down as he breathed. …The two formed an idea.

“Whooaa!” Timmy finally made it back with the other Pikmin, jumping from the noodle to the huge belly. “Hey, guys. What’d I miss?”

“We’re about to do something really cool!” Rupert grinned. They began to rapidly throw their Purple Pikmin onto the stomach, the intense weight making it sink further and further down. Once all the way down, it shot up, the trio and the Pikmin flying many meters across the sea. They fell right in the hole of a fun-noodle held by a boy who, after dipping it in water, blew the water at a girl with a fun-noodle, and the many Pikmin and trio with it. They flew over the girl and landed perfectly on a starfish carried by a giant seagull. They soared all the way back to the beach and dropped off right atop the Jessie statue’s head. From here, they could see the whole beach. (End song.)


It really was a spectacular view from this colossal statue. Kids running around and having fun, almost no concerns at all around this beach. “You know, this actually is kinda fun, Rupert.” Timmy smiled.

“I bet JESSIE would love this, too!” Hikari beamed.

“Hey, what is with this statue, anyway? Jessie win something?” Rupert asked.

“No, actually he… lost something.” Timmy informed. “He, uh… took it kinda bad.”

At this time, Sappo and Gibli were flying to the statue using Wing Pikmin. “Well, you guys look pretty adjusted.” Sappo figured.

“WAIT a second, we can just FLY everywhere with these wing guys??” Rupert questioned.

“Yes, but THAT’S no fun!” Gibli said. “Great job on all the treasures you collected! You serve
your Kids Next Door proud!”

“Well, technically we aren’t Kids Next Door.” Rupert said. “We’re- WHOOOA!” A giant beachball flew in and blew the statue’s head clean off.

The kids recovered dizzily and- “AAAH!” jumped when a gigantic foot stomped behind them. Towering over them was a furious Princess Shelly. Timmy and Hikari didn’t like her enough as is… they sure hoped this 100-foot one didn’t discover them.

“Can’t a princess go on a leisurely stroll without REBELLION in her kingdom? WHO BUILT THAT STATUE? WELL?” The beach-goers exchanged baffled looks.

“My Princess.” One of the knights bowed. “I have interrogated all of the peasants. All claim to be innocent.”

“Well, SOMEONE must be lying. And I’ll find out at any cost. No liar can escape ME when my foot is down. And whoever done it’s getting so much sand in their shorts, they won’t-” She was about to take a step forward, the kids ducking under the shadow of her giant foot.

She froze in place when the beach began trembling. Over the shore, a huge, black battleship emerged from the sea and lowered a ramp to the beach, allowing a van to back up onto it. A squad of Teen Ninjas hopped out, led by Nya LaMar. “Hey, Princess Brat, time to go. His Majesty wants you.”

“His Majesty?” A knight gaped.

“Doth she mean…” another spoke.

“What? Do they mean Shelly’s dad?” Rupert asked.

“Well, yeah. Don’t you know who her dad is?” Timmy asked.

“Sappo! Sappo! It’s her!” Gibli bounced with worry.

“I know.” With a fierce look, Sappo whistled and summoned a swarm of Wing, Purple, Yellow, and Blue Pikmin to attack Shelly’s feet while the Minish climbed her left leg.

“What the-?!” Shelly was quick to feel them.

“GIVE BACK OUR PRINCESS YOU BIG-FOOTED FREAK!” Gibli yelled.

“Uck, bugs!” She stomped her feet, blew the Pikmin away, and made Sappo and Gibli fall.

“WAH!” The twins were then caught inside a glass jar by one of the knights.

“My Princess: these be the rebellious bugs.” He presented them to Shelly.

“Hmmm aren’t you a peculiar breed of vermin.” Shelly smirked wickedly at the Minish. “These’ll make an excellent prize. To the sea, knights.” As they marched to the truck, Sappo pressed his face to the glass and yelled to Rupert, his voice still muffled.

“RUPERT! Take our Pikmin! They’re not just ours, they’re…” His voice was barely audible the further he got.

“Where do you think they’re going?” Timmy asked.
“I dunno... but I feel like we won’t be getting bigger anytime soon.” Rupert said with worry.


**Chariton Household; backyard**

After Sunni left, Mika returned to her peaceful slumber beside the tree. The gentle breeze rustled the leaves and chilled her mocha skin. There was no better time to sleep. The rustling of leaves and those three particular bushes would ensure her good dreams. …Wait a sec. Did those bushes just move forward? And since when did she have them, anyway? Waaait…

At that instant, a woman with long, rose-red hair, a handsome man with short blue hair, and a short catlike creature jumped out from the bushes. They wore white shirts and pants, black shoes, and big red “R” symbols on their shirts. “PREPARE for trouble!” The woman exclaimed.

“And make it double.” The man followed.

“To protect the world from devastation!”

“To unite all peoples within our nation.”

“To denounce the evils of truth and love!” Mika continued snoring.

“To extend our reach to the stars above.”

The woman spun. “Jessie!”

The man joined. “James.”

“Team Rocket, blast off at the speed of light!”

“Surrender now or prepare to fight!”

The cat jumped on their shoulders. “Meeewwwwth! That’s right!”

A blue blob popped out and said, “Wooooobuffet!”

“Snoooore…shoooo.” Mika looked very peaceful.

Team Rocket glared in disbelief. “…Told you we shoulda gave the updated version.” Meowth mumbled.

“We have so many mottos, Meowth, I can’t possibly remember them all.” James spoke in a sheepish fashion.

“Woooobuffet!”

“Grrrr WAKE UP, YOU DITZ!” Meowth lunged at Mika for a scratch to the face, but was immediately bounced away by her Logia defense.

“Yyyyyaaawwwwn.” Mika stretched awake, finally seeing her “assaulters”. “Huh… who are you guys.” Her eyes were still weary.

They exchanged confused glances. “We’re Team Rocket… and, we’re here to capture you.” Jessie said.
“Team Rocket… huuuuh… !” Her eyes widened. “Oh my god, you guys are Team Rocket cosplayers!” They exchanged another glance. “Hold on, I’ll get one, too!” She giddily ran to her house. The agents merely stood and stared confusedly. Mika soon zipped out dressed as, “TA-DAAAA! I’m Bianca! Heehee!” She made a cute pose.

“…” They didn’t get this girl at all. “Um, we don’t understand the ‘cosplay’ part, but… we are Team Rocket agents, and we’re here to capture you for your power.” Jessie explained once more.

“…Oh? Hmmm…” Mika’s costume fell off (her real clothes underneath) as she studied the trio. “…PLAAAH HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!” She held her stomach and fell on her back laughing.

“HEY, TOOTS! What’s so funny?!” questioned Meowth.

“HAHAHAHAHAAHA you guys are, gonna try and capture me, PLAAAH ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!”

“Grrrr we’ll teach YOU to laugh at us!” declared Jessie. “GO, Arbok!” She threw her Poké Ball and released the purple cobra.

“CHAAAABOKUP!” it hissed.

“GO WEEZING! Victreebel!” James released his Pokémon.

“We’re scared.” said the Weezing. The Victreebel however-

“GAAAAAH! Stop it you stupid thing, can’t I release you just once without-” The plant Pokémon munched his master.

“Arbok, use Poison Sting!” Jessie yelled.

“CHAAAAA!” It unleashed a storm of needles which Mika blocked.

“Weezing, Smokescreen!” commanded James.

“Wee-” The Weezing clouded the area with poison gas, making Mika hold her breath.

“GO, Victreebel!”

“Bel!” The plant-type wrapped Mika in its vines. With a smirk, Mika stretched a barrier to free herself, then flew up to blow all the gas away with psychic.

“Arbok, go!” The cobra launched up to wrap itself around Mika, bringing her to the ground. She merely teleported away and thrust her arms, blowing them away with psychic.

“Graaaaah forget this crud!” Meowth decided. “Listen, Toots, we got us a whole fleet waitin’ to blow this city to bits, so you better play your cards right and come with us!”

“Hmmmmmm…” With an innocent grin, Mika raised her hands, “Then I GUESS you caught me!”

“…” They froze stiff. “Huh?”

“I don’t want the city getting destroyed so, I’ll just come quietly.” She held her arms out.

“…Well, that’s great.” Jessie said.

They summoned a helicopter with an “R” symbol and led Mika onboard. Sunni woke up from her
nap and walked outside to see the commotion. She gasped, “Mom!”

“Oh, hey Sunni!” Mika called over the loud propellers, still with a grin. “Tell your dad I’ve been taken captive, so I won’t make it to dinner! See you later, Honeeeeyy!” Too dumbstruck to speak, Sunni only watched as her mom boarded the chopper and flew beyond the heavens. Who on Earth would be able to kidnap her mom, and why would she go with them so easily. …Looks like Sunni was in for a whole new adventure.

Sector V’s C.O.O.L.-B.U.S.

“Now that I think about it, I wonder if MaKayla knows anything about these Keys,” Haylee mentioned, piloting her team’s aircraft. “After all, she did go through a phase where, she knew everything.”

“So did Mr. Garley. For a moment.” Harry remembered.

“Let’s pick up Dillon at Rhode Island first.” Aurora said. “His school should be clearing out, too.”

“Yaaaaaawn. You mates go ahead ‘nd do that… I’ma lay down for a wee nap.” Sheila moaned, lying on her bench.

“Okay, but if we end up crashing in a really ripper land of bigness and adventures, don’t blame us if we don’t wake up.” Mason chuckled.

But his friend was already fast asleep, snoring away. Seeing her so peaceful always made Mason smile, and made him wonder what she could be dreaming about. He’d really love to have those dreams with her.

Quahog; James Woods Elementary

School was clearing out at James Woods Elementary, but a few kids were staying to play on the playground. Among these students were Dillon York and Zach and Maddy Murphy. “Siiigh, I have looooads of homework to do.” The former said.

“I’m glad I’m not in your sector.” Maddy replied. “So Dillon, is your cousin still a giant?”

“Yep. It’s gettin’ kinda rough ‘cause he can’t sleep inside his house. His mom usually has to come out and pat him to sleep. Feel kinda sad for ‘im.”

“I’d feel sad for that Gang of his, having to put up with his stink.” Zach remarked.

“Like you ever had to complain about-”

“BARK! BARK! BARK!”

“Sparkyyyy!” Maddy smiled joyously when her puppy ran over to start licking her. “What’re you doing here!”

“Great, the minute I thought school was the only safe place.” Zach said smugly.

“You think he got lonely?” Dillon smiled humorously.

“Awwww did you get lonely boy, you missed me?” Maddy cooed, ruffing the puppy’s hair.

Unbeknownst to them, the image from Sparky’s eyes was displayed on a screen. “Yes… THERE she is!”
“Mwah ha ha hah! Then let’s GET HER!”

The children’s playtime came to a halt when a tremendous shadow fell over the land. They looked up, mouths frozen agape. A humongous spaceship hovered over the school and dropped swarms of robots with slug-like eyes inside green domes, two arms with electric claws, and no legs. One robot skidded around and scanned Maddy’s body. “Target identified. Preparing to-” Said girl immediately lunged over and kicked through the robot’s dome, knocking him down. “You didn’t even give me a chance…” He fainted dead.

The robots furiously began blasting lasers around the playground, the kids scurrying away in terror. Dillon trapped several robots in Shadow Possession and Strangled them, and Maddy easily flipped around and bested most of the robots with a single kick. “Nnn! Zach, we could use help from you, too.” Dillon grunted.

“I’m a lizard. Oink oink.” Zach had turned into a duck.

“QUIT PLAYIN’ DUMB AND GET OVER HERE!”

Two robots tried to grab Maddy, but she grabbed and tied their tentacles together, making them shock each other, then grabbed another’s tentacle to swing him into another, then slipped behind one’s back, pulled and twisted his wrist, then kicked him to the ground. She raised her fist at another approaching robot, but it pretended to choke, and fell. “Heh! Whatever alien freak sent you guys, he’s got a-” She was suddenly trapped inside an anti-gravity bubble.

“Pitiful humans. You who try to resist the inevitable, against some reasonably inferior minions… prepare to suffer humiliating defeat by, wait for it… LORD VORSELON!!” A robotic alien with an orange, buff metal body, claw hands, tentacle legs, and a green, one-eyed head inside a dome presented himself.

Mercenary, former Zordoom prisoner

FLINT VORSELON

“How?” questioned Zach.

“I said, LORD VORSELON! The greatest assassin in ALL of POLARIS! And by the command of his greatness, Dr. Nefarious, THE CHILD THAT IS MAD is coming with me!”

“Who the heck is Dr. Nefarious and whaddoes he want with Mad?” Zach demanded.

“Lord Vorselon reveals NOTHIIING! You have heard of no plans from him!”

“Uhh… yeah we did.” Dillon said.

“What’S that? You think Lord Vorselon is AWESOME?”

“NO WE DON’T.”

“MWAH HA HAAAAH! Once again, Lord Vorselon has-”

A grappling hook shot over and scratched his suit’s waist. “-been made a complete fool.” remarked Drake Puncture coolly.

“Drake!” Dillon beamed.

“WAH!” Vorselon zapped Drake with the same anti-gravity bubble.
“Fool! You will make an EXCELLENT trophy for Vorselon’s successful capture! I retreat for now, but you haven’t seen the last of… LORD VORSELOOON! MWEH HA HA HEH!” The alien teleported, and both anti-gravity bubbles flew into the starship.

“MADDY!” Zach yelled.

“Zach! Dillon!” Her voice was barely heard as she vanished inside the vessel. The starship faced toward the heavens and took off for the stars. Zach and Dillon exchanged frantic glances and decided to ditch school early.

**Team Gnik’s Hideout**

The mysterious being sat quietly in his chamber. His subordinates had gone to their designated areas, so their plans may proceed. The first terminal to switch on was that of Giovanni, the man in the orange tux petting his Persian. “It’s been 3 days as you said, Lesser Lord. May we finally begin?” The other screens switched on, displaying the others’ images.

“Yes… the month of May has arrived.” Ragaj Gnik said. “The Apocalypse will happen at the end of this month. So capturing the Seven Lights is our top priority. The Darknesses, on the other hand, will take care of themselves. So… Giovanni!” He looked at the grinning man. “Specter!” He looked at the white-furred monkey in the floating chair. “Plankton!” He looked at the single-eyed microorganism. “Mr. Dark!” At the blue-cloaked man with yellow eyes. “Dr. Nefarious!” At the blue-skinned robot with a dome head. “And… X.A.N.A., wherever he is. The Quest for Seven Lights begins now. We will set off for the New World.”

And set off, for destruction. So apparently the quest begins NOW?? But the heroes don’t even know what they’re doing, yet. X/ Oh well, maybe we’ll reach that point. Eventually…
Chapter Summary

Maddy is captured by Dr. Nefarious! Meanwhile, Sheila explores the Dream World!

Yo, guys!

Chapter 5: A Real Crazy Weirdo

Adams Tech Co.

Emily hurried back to the building as things had calmed down a bit. “Emily, there you are!” her mother yelled, running to her. “Where did you go??”

“Hehe, relax, Mom!” Emily blushed. “Just thought I’d, monkey around a bit and catch some monkeys.” They looked to the containment capsule where the 10 monkeys were held.

“But… How did you-”

“With my T.E.L.A.-N.E.T.!” Emily held the net up. “I locked on the containment chamber so the monkeys would be transported inside! Or anything else I felt like catching, he he he.”

“Well… great job, Em!” Kim smiled. “Course there’s still a bunch more that escaped from the lab, but we can track down the last few in town easily. Come upstairs, want you to meet someone.”

Kim guided her to a laboratory on the highest floor of the building. A brown-haired woman in a lab coat was speaking to an employee before he walked away. “Emily, this is one of our leading scientists, Rebecca Jake. Professor Rebecca, this is…”

“Holy cow!” Emily perked. “I know you! You used to be in the Amish Sector!”

“Hm hm hm… did I?” Rebecca smiled. “I’ve been surrounded by technology so long, I can hardly remember ever living on a farmland.”

“Hu hu! You became the KND’s best scientist after you transferred to the Aquatic Lab! Hardly any experience and you were a natural! I gotta have your autograph!”

“Hm hm, maybe later. We have a feeling who’s behind all these escaped monkeys. No doubt, it’s the work of Specter.”

“Who’s Specter?” Emily asked.

“Specter was one of many test-subject monkeys we had here in the lab.” Kim explained. “11 years ago, we created the Peak Point Helmet and placed it on him. It was a helmet that could grant artificial intelligence, and we created hundreds. But those were Pipo Helmets, lesser variants, and Specter’s was the core helmet, which granted him artificial psychicbending. Using his powers, he broke out of the lab and stole the other helmets, giving them to all sorts of monkeys. He tried to take over the world, but we managed to stop him. I don’t see how he-”
“Why, with my superb planning, of course.” They all jumped when a TV came on, displaying Specter’s image. (Cue Specter’s Theme from Ape Escape.)

“Specter!” Kim gasped.

“Though I will confess, I couldn’t have done it all on my own. Mr. Mogul, for example, provided great assistance in duplicating these Pipo Helmets. As for how I escaped myself…”

“HE HAD HELP FROM I: Mmmoojo Jojo,” A green-skinned, black-furred monkey appeared, with a purple cape, white boots and gloves, and a white, purple-striped helmet over his head, “who has heard of Specter’s miraculous designs and sought to make an alliance with him, which is what I did, after I rescued him, due to my ingenious planning, because I am smart, and you imbeciles are-”

“Okay okay, I think they-” Specter tried to speak, but his mechanical collar sparked, reverting to his nasally voice. “DAAAH this voice-modifier will be my bane! Cut the camera, cut cut-!”

The screen switched to a picture of a monkey shrugging sheepishly and holding a potato camera. Next to him read, Technical difficulties. Sorry about that.

The screen soon cut back to Specter, back in his cooler, echoey voice. “Ahhh, that’s better. Now without any need to go into all the details, I have successfully assembled my army of over 500 apes, and as we speak, they are producing more Pipo Helmets and hunting more apes to add to my army. And commanding those monkeys are the five most intelligent apes in my army, next to Yours Truly of course. Sadly, my Freaky Monkey Five cannot be here now. But if you are wise, you’ll stay where you are and not have to meet them.”

“What’s wrong, Specter? Afraid we’ll send all your monkeys back to the zoo? ‘Cause THAT’S what’s gonna happen- snort!” Emily declared.

“Hmph… am I afraid of some girl who looks like she has uncontrollable sweatglands?”

Emily blushed and shifted her foot.

“Very well… I accept your challenge, little girl. But just so you know, it’s not just me and my army of apes. We have many legions, and they’re spread across much of the universe. I look forward… to more.” The screen blanked. (End song.)

“Legions across the universe… where’ve I heard that before?” Kim questioned.

“Either way, we can’t let Specter or any of those apes run around.” Rebecca said. “They’ll drive any place they visit into chaos. …And it looks like they got pretty far using our transporters.”

“So let’s get out there and stop them!” Emily perked. “I grabbed some of the monkeys’ fur so I can track them with my-”

“Hold on, Em, we aren’t even sure how strong his forces are.” Kim replied. “And those legions he mentioned, they could be-”

“I know.” she said quickly and knowledgeably. “It’s just like when Gnaa appeared with his allies, isn’t it, Mom? The past is repeating itself, and my archaeological instincts tell me it has to do with this inevitable doom that Cheren mentioned. I need to find this Specter guy and find out what he knows about… well, any of this. Then I have to tell Cheren so he can tell all the other kids. Come on, Mom, just let me go!”
“What’s this about an… inevitable doom?” a scientist asked.

“Oh, right. You guys probably haven’t heard, hehehehe.”

“Well, she did a great job rounding up these few monkeys.” Rebecca noted. “She could help us catch some more. But doing it by yourself might be too much.”

“Way ahead of you!” Emily perked. “Can one of your transporters send me to Nashville? I have a few friends that can help.”

“Nashville, Tennessee?” Rebecca asked, observing a transporter’s monitor. “A few monkeys are actually around that area. …I wonder if they’re attacking Kids Next Door regions?”

“That’s what I’m gonna find out.” Emily declared. “I’ll find out what Specter’s up to and catch every last monkey! Get ready to warp me!”

“Hold on, we still didn’t agree to let you go!” Rebecca yelled. “We can’t even call you back with the teleporter. You might-”

“It’s okay, Becca.” Kim intervened. “I think Em might be on to something about Specter. And I know she can handle it.” She smiled at her daughter. “She has that Garley-Adams smartness. Right?”

Emily blushed and scratched her head. “Huhuhuhu- snort.”

“Well… if you say so.” Rebecca agreed. “We’ll send our Infobox Drones out too to give you help if you need it. Good luck, Emily.”

Emily excitedly hopped on the teleporter and warped to Nashville. Kim’s daughter was off on another adventure. …By which she meant her first adventure.

**The Tree of Beginning**

The R.O.A.D.S.T.A.R. landed just outside the mountain range of the Tree of Beginning as Cheren and Nebula climbed out. They approached the seemingly dead-end wall, where two teeny Minish guards stood.

“Halt! Who goes there?”

“Uhhhh…” Cheren moaned.

The guard rolled her eyes and pulled out a Minish-size megaphone (a miniphone). “I said, who GOES there? Giant humans…”

“We’re with the Kids Next Door.” Nebula responded. “We’re here to speak with the Minish KND Leader.”

“On what grounds?”

“On the grounds that we brought Floran Spring Cherries.”

“Yaaaaaaaaay!”

A storm of tiny cheers squeaked across the wall.

“Fine. You can come in. OPEEEEEN!”

A group of earthbender Minish hauled the tremendous (kid-sized) gate open, Cheren and Nebula
having to duck to get in. They patiently followed the Minish guard up the populace tree, where
many Minish roamed the forest of flowers beneath their feet. Cheren looked by his left
foot, seeing a Minish kid in an open spot.

“AAAAAHH!!”

“You squished 10 of my Pikmin!!”

“Um… sorry.”

She led her Pikmin away in anger.

“Aww, GREAT! Now I owe Mulberry 5 nuts! Dumb humans visiting our tree…”

The two were led to the near-top of the tree, the guard stopping before a tall stone pillar.

“Numbuh Hundred Acres, Sir: these human Kids Next Door have come to speak with you.”

This thin pillar that towered many stories was a throne, where the Minish Leader sat high and
proud, viewing for miles. He was at neck level with Cheren and Nebula, and it looked as though
his throne could be easily snapped between their fingers. “And to what do I owe this blocking of my view?”

Minish Leader Lenari wore a blue shirt, black shorts, black shoes, and a black pointed hat. He
really loved that color, apparently.

Nebula bent down slightly and spoke professionally, “Numbuh Hundred Acres, I am Numbuh
Eternal, Supreme Leader of the Galactic Kids Next Door. This is Cheren, Leader of Earth’s Kids
Next Door. We are here to request an alliance with your organization, and your membership in the
Galactic Kid Council. In doing so, you will be provided with assistance from other KNDs, if you so
need, but you will also be required to attend regular council meetings and assist our members if
requested. It’s all written in this contract if you want to join.” She pulled out a paper with the
written information. “Just sign here. …You can make a tiny signature if you want, we can magnify
it.”

“…Hmmmm…” Lenari studied the contract thoughtfully. “To be honest, we Minish KND have always been a
discreet organization, with our main purpose providing secret assistance to the Human KND.”

“Well, this way we can be helping each other.” Cheren noted.

“Well, making ourselves more open might only lead to negative consequences on our end. Besides, we’re kind of at a
negative standpoint with the humans at the moment.”

“Whaddayou mean?”

“About 5 months ago, a group of humans broke in here and kidnapped our princess, Gonshiri. We’ve determined they
were some royal types, who occasionally kidnap our kind to be made as slaves, and we’re trying to locate and rescue her.
Before that happens, signing any treaties or major legal documents shouldn’t happen without her consult.”

“Maybe we can help. Do you know what her kidnappers looked like?” Cheren asked.

“They looked like knights in fairly colorful armor. That’s why we assumed them to be rich people. Anyway, I’ll think
about your treaty, but I can’t sign now, and I can’t promise the princess will agree, either. She’s… kinda snotty.”

“Thank you for your time.” Nebula said, putting the contract away. “If you make up your mind, get
one of Cheren’s operatives to tell him, and he’ll tell me. That is, if he’s a good boy.” She smiled
witfully.

“Just be careful not to step on any of us on the way out.”
“Well said.” With that, Nebula warped them both out, the flash making the tiny Minish leader dizzy for a few moments.

The two reappeared just beside the R.O.A.D.S.T.A.R.. “Well, I guess I’ll head back to GKND.” Nebula decided. “Also… something weird.” She gave Cheren a letter. “This was inside our mailbox, meant to be given to you.” Cheren looked at it confused. “I don’t know who it’s from, but… well, just watch yourself. You have a knack for getting into trouble. ‘specially with me.” She winked. “Ciao.” And she warped away.

Cheren had no idea what it could be, either. A letter given to Nebula to give to him… who in Galaxia would be acquainted with him, besides the operatives. He cracked it open and found a heart-shaped symbol with a face at the bottom on the note’s cover. He opened and read, Meet me at Roguetown Station, 8pm tonight. Tell no one. Signed with a heart. Cheren folded and hid the note in his jacket with a very suspicious look. Here we go again…

Dream Realm

Sheila was fast asleep on the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S.. While everyone else was sitting boredly… Sheila was already on an adventure.

“WAAAAAH- UUH!” She fell past many leaves and bounced down a series of branches, finally crashing on the ground. “Nnnnn… ?” She rubbed her head and looked up, feeling a shadow over her. A gang of ruthless thugs with light-brown sack-like clothes, big round hats, shotguns, and scarecrow-like faces stood over her with rageful looks. She stood up and merely wore a baffled expression, scratching her head. The thugs were pretty confused their selves, exchanging glances with each other. For many minutes, no one said anything. Just… stood there weirdly.

“LOOK OUT BELOOOOWW!” The green fairy creature that Sheila saw before, with the big grinning mouth, zipped down and crashed facefirst in the tree, following to his back before Sheila. He shook back to his senses and got up. “Dang it, knew I shoulda packed a parachute. I’m not late am I, stopped by at the Quickie Mart to grab this Coffee Candy, gotta say, whaddo people-” He turned and finally noticed the thugs. “YAAAAAAHHH!”

Startled, the beings started trying to shoot him, but the fairy frantically dodged and grabbed Sheila by her tail. “QUICK, let’s get outta here!” He flew her away.

“What the heck-”

“My name’s Murfy, I’ll explain later, let’s GOOOO!”

Stage 6: Toons in Trouble

Mission: Follow Murfy into the castle.

Act ½

The fairy flew fast through the forest of giant trees, evading the gunshots of more thugs from the branches. “Watch out for the Hoodlums, kid! Speakin’ of which, grab those yellow things, those’re Lums.” Sheila did so and grabbed the little energy spheres with wings, letting them disperse into energy inside her form. Hoodlums were coming down on parachutes trying to blast them, but Murfy dodged around them and left Sheila to punch them down. “Oh no, they’re taking the Electoons!” Murfy exclaimed, seeing blimps hauling cages onto their decks, containing tiny, pink sphere-like creatures – with faces, blond ponytails, and hands and shoes separate from their bodies.
“Those poor little guys! They’ll be forced to play harmonicas and eat stale rice pudding! Oh, the toonanity…”

Murfy then had to shift different altitudes to avoid incoming tree branches and Hoodlums on parachutes, followed by wooden walls blocking their path. Hoodlums were now riding by either side of Sheila on hoverbikes, Murfy pulling her upward when they tried to shove, then getting back beside so Sheila can kick them out of the air. “Pull those legs in, Sheila! ‘Cause here come the DRAAAAGOOOOONS!” A storm of blue, chubby dragons with large chins were flying from ahead, blasting fireballs and attempting to snap them when they passed by. A larger, purple dragon was then charging at them, mouth wide open as it prepared a powerful fire blasts, but Sheila stretched out and began spinning her left leg, charging more light into her foot before sending a mighty Light Kick that forced the dragon’s mouth shut, the fire exploding inside, and sent him falling out of the sky.

“Great job, Kid. Tell ya what, I’ll reward ya with yer first parachute jump. PARACHUTE NOT INCLUDEEEEEED.”

Murfy released Sheila and allowed her to drop to the distant ground. She merely spun her tail to lighten her fall, ensuring a safe land on her feet. Murfy then flew down to meet her. “Uwaaaah sorry for the mess, kid. By the way, nice raccoon costume. When does it come off?”

She glared with hands on her hips.

“Hahaha, I’m just kidding, just kidding! Ah, look at your face. The name’s Murfy, nice ta meet ya. Anyway, I got somethin’ you wanna look at: the Manual.” He held up a small booklet titled Guide to Legend of the Seven Lights, with a picture of two crossing keys. “This guide’s got everything you need to know, but I’ll go over the basics.” He opened and flipped the pages, “Once upon a time, Arceus created many universes, one was outta control, so he had to seal it, blah blah blah BOORING.” He read through very fast. “Okay, so the world’s about to end, and the only way to save everyone is find these 20 Keys of Light and Darkness, and the Lights awaken themselves by finding these cubes and reading what’s on them, sounds simple enough. Oh-oh-oh, and get this, it says you need the Firstborn to help ya, too.”

“But blimey, the Firstborn all went an’ scattered!” Sheila yelled. “The Guardians just let them go!”

“Well then I guess you’ll just have to find them again.” Murfy grinned witfully. “I know your parents enjoyed that the first time, now their kids gotta awaken themselves as Guardians. Geez, why’s everyone sleepin’ so much, am I right?” He patted her chest. “Oh, uh, by the way I forgot to mention, every action wins ya points. Let me demonstrate: ya see-”

“YEAH YEAH yeah, Ah know what points ah, we do stages all the time.”

“Great, then I can save a little oxygen. But just ‘cause I’m gettin’ paid, I’ll walk ya through this stage, anyway. I’ll help ya with some puzzles, but don’t expect me to break the game like I did in Rayman Legends. Just when ya really need it, okay?” (Play “Teensies in Trouble” from Rayman Legends.)

Act 1

Sheila ventured across a small field of wooden barracks as Hoodmongers popped out, ready to shoot her with rifles. “Okay, Sheila, let’s see what ya got. You’re the infamous Sunny-Fist, put that fist to good use.” Sheila charged her Light Fists and easily knocked them out in one punch, letting the Black Lums fly away. “Bravo, kid, wonderful.” Two Hoodbooms stood atop two parallel towers and threw grenades down, blocking with shields when Sheila punched her spheres, but she
simply grabbed their grenades and tossed them back to blow them up. “Bravo, Sheila, that’s usin’ yer noodle.”

Sheila Wall Jumped between the two towers to make it atop a wooden wall blocking her path, then hurried down the stairs to a more open field of charging Hoodlums. Sheila spun her two fists and charged huge Light Fists, launching them forward and destroying the swarm in an instant. “Look, kid, I know you’re overpowered and all, but try and die it down, we don’t want these stages to get boring. Save that strength for the big guns.” Sheila proceeded across the field and jumped up a series of wooden platforms with varying heights, having to use Murfy to cut down ropes above so she could swing to distant ones.

“Help me.” A squeaky voice called. Behind one of the wooden towers was a dangling cage, so Sheila punched a Light Sphere to smash it open. A group of Electoons floated to the ground with helicopter hair and grinned happily at their savior. Sheila got to a platform where the space between it and the next was too far, in which Murfy pointed out the switch on a further tower, beyond her vision. But there were so many other towers, Sheila simply punched Light Spheres at different ones until the right ricocheted path would lead it to the switch.

“Hey, who’re they calling ‘Maddy’? Oh wait, that’s a different Murphy. Man, we got too many characters with the same name. We got TWO Carols, TWO Jessies, two Emilys, two Sandys, and we even got three Andrews later if ya count André. Don’t ya think those’ll get confusing later on?”

A bridge appeared for Sheila to cross, bringing her to a catapult pulled back. “Oi, launch me across!” Sheila said, hopping in.

“Don’tcha wanna aim it—oh fine, I’ll do it.” The catapult seemed aimed at a castle across a river, but Murfy turned the catapult at the small plain beside it. He cut the rope and—“WOOOOOOOOO!” filled Sheila with that sense of excitement she loved so much. She plopped on her front and scraped across the ground upon landing, face filling with dirt. “PLEAH, pluh!” She spit and wiped the dirt off before marching to the castle’s entrance. However, she first noticed a ditch a few feet away, covered by wooden planks, hearing a “Help me” underneath. She smashed through with a Ground Pound and broke another cage, freeing Electoons.

Sheila continued to the castle entrance, but right then, two Hecklers – buff Hoodlums with protective armor – charged out the front gate to start blasting Sheila with their shoulder cannons. She dodged their blasts and punched their armor with her spheres, but they couldn’t penetrate.

“Okay, maybe it wouldn’t kill to be a LITTLE overpowered!” Murfy panicked. Sheila dodged back when the Hecklers threw punches, spinning her fists to charge bigger Light Spheres and blasting both of their armor clean off. They ran separately and tried to shoot back, but Sheila proved much faster as she charged her fists and punched them in the back, forcing the Black Lums from their bodies. After the fly-like creatures retreated, Sheila approached the newly-opened front gate.

“You know, I was told that Operation: MASKED would have sexy fairies with great big,” held his hands by his chest, “eh, hair. But instead we got those little snot-nosed twerps to appeal to a younger audience. It’s not like we don’t have a 7-year-old that f***in’ cusses. Ay-ay-ay.” He flew in the castle first. Sheila calmly followed as the screen darkened to signal the new act.

Act 2

It was much calmer inside and smelled of dust, many cobwebs with spiders lain around, and rats roaming across the floor. Sheila jumped up a few tall steps as Hoodloons; bat-like Hoodlums, flapped down to ram Sheila headfirst, but she could knock them out in just one simple Light Sphere. After jumping up the steps, Sheila grabbed onto a small ledge along a left wall, climbing over a spiked floor with skulls. Once across, Sheila grabbed and climbed a chain up a long shaft
where Flameyes – flame spirits with big eyeballs – drifted down slowly, forcing Sheila to navigate around as she climbed, but Murfy also poked some and made them poof. There was also a cage hidden in a hole in the wall, which Sheila punched to free more Electoons.

Sheila made it atop the shaft and viewed a vast chasm with a rotatable platform in the center, which Murfy could grab and turn using a wheel on its bottom. He made one of the ends stop by Sheila’s ledge to allow her on. The door on the other side was sealed, with two magic pyramids, blue and yellow, on its sides, requiring two Magic Spheres to be placed on top. Murfy first allowed Sheila to get off on the left path, where a zigzaggy path led across a spiked hall. It shifted off balance toward Sheila’s direction wherever she walked, threatening to slide her in the spikes, but she could just jump and regain balance. Across the hall was a blue Magic Sphere which Sheila had to then carry across the tilting path, forcing her to take the many routes it had to shift the balance. Once close enough to the end, she tossed the ball to the safe ledge, then carried it onto Murfy’s platform to throw it onto the blue pyramid.

Murfy then lets Sheila off beside the right path, with a river of lava with many rising and sinking pegs. Once again, Sheila could easily jump the pegs and reach the yellow sphere, but in carrying it back, she had to keep an eye out and quickly step onto a nearby rising peg. She made it across and returned to Murfy’s platform, throwing onto the yellow pyramid to open the door. “Wait a second, there are TEN Firstborn now? What happened to just Eight?? Maaan, can this quest be ANY longer?”

Sheila was brought into a narrow, snaky hallway with a series of spikes that just grew taller as the hall drew on. The walls were close enough for Sheila to Wall Jump, having to keep a steady pace across the hall, and above the rising spikes. She saw a cage dangling from the ceiling and jumped her way up to break it open (she assumed the Electoons would be able to land safely between the spikes). She made it onto a safe ledge and entered a wide, round room guarded by a—holy f***, no one could possibly pronounce that. Think I’ll just call them Hoodrollers, a chubby, sack-like Hoodlum being rolled around by a small Hoodlum on top, called a Hoodhelper.

Sheila dodged the chubby creature as it tried to flatten her, throwing Light Spheres that only bounced off its belly. She decided to focus on the one rolling it, and jumped up to throw a kick to knock it away. The Hoodroller stood back up and tried to charge Sheila on its own, with the latter being unable to pierce it with punches. As she kept avoiding, she noticed the following door was sealed with an iron “X”, which she tried to, but couldn’t break with her spheres. So instead, she positioned herself so the door was behind the Hoodroller, then charged a strong enough Light Sphere to send the bulky creature into it, breaking the door down.

She marched into a long, narrow hallway with many obstacles lain in her wake, but none she couldn’t take her time going through. But a storm of hisses was heard behind, and she turned to see a swarm of small creatures that looked like Electoons, except they were blue balls with red shoes, pale blue hair, and white gloves. “Holy crud! It’s the Doomtoons!” Murfy panicked. “RUN, Sheila, RUN!”

The Doomtoons unveiled big mouths and teeth and began to chase Sheila across the hall. Murfy slid doors open up or down, making Sheila jump or duck, then had to grab rings and swing them up a wall, with Murfy having to lower some so she can reach. She made it to a straight path and ran to a bigger passage where Murfy had to turn more floating planks for Sheila to run on them. She got to solid ground as the path twisted sideways along the left, then right wall, with a river of lava below, then had to jump between vertical wooden platforms on parallel spike walls, with Murfy having to move the platforms in position for her to jump them.

Sheila made it to and dashed up a wall with her Mobian speed, once again jumping between walls.
when Doomtoons popped out of one, and they flooded the shaft as fast as she ran. The shaft became wider as she ran up a fixed, spiraled path, shooting a sphere at a floating cage with wings. Once near the top of the shaft, she jumped off and grabbed a dangling chain in the ceiling’s center. A flushing sound was heard as all the Doomtoons spiraled and sunk like a toilet. Murfy pulled a lever on the base of a new hall, extending a bridge over for Sheila to drop on and cross. “Wonderful job, Sheila, the overpowered raccoon shows no limits. Now let’s get your grade and progress the story, what’s her grade?”

Sheila received 5760 points in the stage and got a B.

“Yeah, fair enough.” (End song.)

Murfy and Sheila finally arrived at a pitch-black room with a blank, round pool to their left. Hanging from the ceiling was a cage which Sheila proceeded to punch and break. A slim, black magic hat with a star dropped on the floor. (Play the Opening Theme from Rayman.)

The slim hat danced around before a blue, long-nosed creature in a sleek black cloak and red shirt emerged, grinning as a magic wand appeared. “HI, folks! Ya wanna know what’s goin’ on? Let me tell you the story of RAYMAN!” A magical projection appeared, displaying a vast, magical land with towering mountains (normal ones and candy ones), thick forests, and fields of musical instruments.

“In Rayman’s World, nature and harmony lived together in peace. The Great Protoon was the source of nature and balance in the worllld.” The screen faded to a pink, magical sphere with electricity inside, floating in the center of some stone hands.

“Yeah, BORING, right?” the Magician noted. “No way THIS is gonna last.”

“Oooone fateful day: the EEEVIL Mr. Dark STEALS the Great Protoon and DEFEATS Betilla the Fairy as she TRIES to PROTECT it!” A dark-blue-cloaked figure with yellow eyes, no visible appendages, just floating gloves and shoes, and a round blue hat, held the Protoon in his hand and shocked a fairy girl with lightning.

“That is of course... until Rayman kicked his ass!” Another figure with separate body parts, white gloves, yellow shoes, purple shirt, and orange rabbit-like hair, punched Mr. Dark away and caught the Protoon. “But now Mr. Dark has RETURNED, and has teamed up with André the Black Lum to STEAL the Great Protoon again! Oh, and he teamed up with this Ragaj Gnik freak too, but also: The Electoons—who used to levitate around it!—LOSE their magnetic STABILITY and SCATTER all over the WORLLLDD!”

“But may I just say, Mr. Dark looks sexy in that cloak cloak cloak cloak.” Magician’s voice echoed. He coughed and shook back to focus. “So uh, basically Mr. Dark and André are trying to take over the Dream World, and their Doomtoons and Hoodlums are going around and locking all the Electoons in cages—OOOOOHH will the horror STOO-O-O-OP?” The image of a cage in a damp dungeon, with sad eyes weeping in its darkness, displayed onscreen. “They DEFINITELY need a hero to save them now! Don’t you think? Rayman?” The screen switched to a beach setting with an empty canopy. “RAYMAN?” It then showed a peaceful blue forest, no one there. “RAAAAAYMAAAAAAN!”

“We can’t find Rayman anywhere!” Murfy panicked. “All those cages are just sittin’ there, locked! What’ll we do! If we don’t get the Great Protoon back, kids’ll never have a happy dream again!
“WILL YOU put a sponge in it?” Sheila yelled. “Look, I wanna help ya get yer Proton back, but I kinda got me own business. What’s these 20 Keys and where’re we gonna find them?”

“Well, I can already tell ya that you’re one of these Seven Lights,” Murfy noted, reading the manual, “because you awakened yourself at Candied Island. Aaaand uuuuh there’s a few other things,” flipped pages, “but your main job is helping us save the Protoon. ‘Cause like, it’s the primary core of the Dream World, and dreaming is a really big thing in this quest. The rest of the things will take care o’ themselves.”

“Well, okay, I guess I’ll help. But I kinda need ta get back to me mates, ‘fore they worry.”

“Don’t worry, you will, but there’s a bunch of places we gotta visit in the Dream World first. I think if we visit the Land of Toads, we can get an idea on who some of these other Lights are. But if we wanna progress in the Dream World, we need to save more Electoons, and Mr. Dark actually brought some o’ them to the waking world. Magician, can ya give us a hand?”

“Yes Sir!” The Teensie approached a small, round pool and formed a ball of magic in his hands. He let the ball drift into the pool as it zapped into a spiraling portal. “This will take you to the Hall of Doors, where you can access the many lands in the Dream World, or the waking world itself! Mr. Dark’s guys have occupied most of the lands and trapped the Electoons in cages. Just break the cages if ya see ‘em, and they’ll help you open the worlds that Mr. Dark locked. And while you’re at it, pick up those little golden Lums along the way. You’ll need them to upgrade your powers. Not that you need to, hah ha. So GOOD LUCK!”

Her need for adventure once again sparking, Sheila eagerly dove headfirst into the pool, Murfy following. “OW!” A ding sound.

“I shoulda told ya, they’ve laid a few steel beams here for the construction project. Hehahahahaheh!” Murfy grinned sheepishly.

Vorselon’s Warship

“…” Maddy Murphy lay unconscious on a hard bed, her arms and legs strapped. She awoke and looked tiredly around the pitch-black laboratory. …She assumed it was a lab ‘cause of the uncomfy table.

“So we meet at last…” She looked left at the sound of metal footsteps, a red-eyed being marching close. “The whiny brat I had to spend the last 5 years spying on. The one who ‘as SUCH a problem with ‘freaks’. Well… IS THIS FREAKY ENOUGH FOR YOU?!” He shot directly up to Maddy’s face.

“AAAAH!”

“Verily.” The skinny blue robot walked away. “To think to accomplish the most brilliant scheme in the world would involve babysitting this snot-nosed kid. It’s NOT the kind of work I signed up for.”

“Who are you?!”

“I… am Doctor Arthur Nefarious.” He turned back. “And you are one of the key components in our grand scheme.” He approached her again. “So tell me… WHAT ARE YOU HIIDIIING?!” And yelled in her face.
She shook her head to relieve the pain in her ears. “What are you talking about, I’m not hiding anything! And where are we, anyway?”

“You are in my SHIP.” Lord Vorselon spoke, coming out of the darkness. “The ship of LORD VORSELOOON! Where we have taken you to the far reaches of space, MANY parsecs from your home planet!”

“What?! Are we in Galaxia?”

“Far from it.” Nefarious smirked. “We are in the Solana Galaxy. My home region, and specially picked since those snotty Kids Next Door haven’t extended this far. Here is where I’ll conduct my experiments and extract whatever info I need from you. And you will tell me the secret of your powers… N-N-N-N-N-NOW-” He shook furiously and was about to scream, until the satellites in his head malfunctioned. He froze stiff as a radio transmission played.

“Oh, CALCULON! Is it true you are really a vampire?”

“No, Monique. For it is you, who is actually… A WERECAR!”

“NOOO, Calculon.” Nefarious’s butler, Lawrence approached and lightly bonked his master’s head. “It was your half-brother, Boxy. He injected me with this serum of gorilla fur that contained-”

A harder bonk, and he was back to normal. “Siiigh… look, there’s a lot of stuff right now that I don’t want to get into, so just tell us what your secret is and we’ll be golden.”

“Look, I don’t have any secrets OR powers. What’m I, some freaky metahuman?”

“Oh, you have SOMETHING inside of you, and I will find it.” He turned away. “But let it be known, my methods are not rainbows and lollipops. SAY HELLO TOOO:”

“Not the Hypertronic Brain Scrubulator!” Lawrence shut his eyes.

“-THE HYPERTRONIC BRAIN SCRUBULATOOOR!” Nefarious whipped out a mechanical drill with a glass container and small monitor. “This trinket will extract your brain’s juices and SEE what you have to hide! Don’t worry, you’ll still be alive, just… a bit less intelligent. STAAART IT UP!”

The deadly drill whirred to life as Nefarious carefully loomed it toward Maddy’s cranium. The girl desperately tried to shake away, but the cuffs were too tight, and the drill was seconds away from piercing her flesh.

Just then, the doors blew open, and a grenade flew in and exploded on Nefarious’s head, making him toss the drill away. “WHAAAAT?!”

A smoke bomb was thrown in, fogging the room as Nefarious was lost from Maddy’s vision. A yellow-ish brown, furry catlike alien with green eyes and an armored suit ran in and started plucking Maddy’s cuffs loose with a large wrench. “Let’s go. This smoke’s only good for so long.”

“Who are you?” Maddy asked, sitting up.

“I’m Ratchet, we’ll introduce each other later. We have to get off this thing, CLANK LET’S GO!”

A small, toy-like robot flipped onto Ratchet’s back. “One data file for a Mister Ratchet?” He held a small disk.
“Nice going, buddy.”

“Wait, we can’t go yet!” Maddy yelled. “Someone else got captured with me.”

“We’ll save him, here’s your stuff.” He told her rushedly, tossing her a sack. “Those’re your weapons, right? Nefarious had ‘em in the corner.”

Maddy pulled out a S.C.A.M.P.P. “Okay. Let’s go.”

“Oh, poo.” Nefarious moped. “I was finally gonna see if this thing was safe for flesh creatures.” At this, Lord Vorselon was gone in a flash. (Play “Vorselon’s Ship (Fighting the Troops)” from Ratchet: A Crack In Time.)

Stage 7: Starship Vorselon

Mission: Save Drake Puncture and break out of the starship!

Ratchet and Maddy charged down the hall as alarms blared and doors tried to seal them, but Maddy’s M.A.R.B.L.E.s and Ratchet’s grenades blew them down easily. “Attention all troops, Dr. Nefarious orders the IMMEDIATE capture of the Lombax and our bratty prisoner! And Lord Vorselon encourages your following that order, for the sake of him not being the Scrubulator’s test fleshy! SO GET TO IIIIT!” Vorselon thundered.

“So who is that guy?” Maddy questioned.

“Who, Dr. Nefarious? He’s just an old coot that’s been terrorizing the Solana Galaxy awhile. He disappeared several years ago, but I guess he finally turned up.” Ratchet explained. “Which reminds me, why’s he after you?”

“ Heck if I know. That Vorsetron guy just kidnapped me outta nowhere.”

“Well, we’ll straighten this out. Let’s look for your friend in the prison wing. Qwark, what’s it like out there?” he spoke in his wristwatch communicator.

“Um, Ratchet, just outta curiosity, making like a big crybaby and retreating if things looked scary was an option, right?”

“NO, Qwark, it WASN’T.”

“I was afraid you might say that. Anyway, don’t be mad if I left a little mess on the ship. Gonna find a space-dump now.”

“Siiiiigh. Just don’t leave us hanging, Qwark.”

They breached an armory chamber as swarms of Nefarious Drones began to blast them, in which Maddy began blasting some with a B.A.J.O.O.K.A. and shorting them out. “Ahh. I’m calcium-intolerant.” A robot beeped before fainting. Ratchet threw a smoke bomb at a squad, allowing Maddy to jump around and kick all their glass domes. Ratchet caught one’s arm in his OmniWrench and swung him into others as its tentacle-arm stretched, and when Maddy grabbed and hurled one to him, he batted it away with the wrench.

The duo proceeded down another hall as the floor gave way in many parts, leaving only small footholds in-between gaps. “Ratchet, those will be much too far to jump.” Clank said.
“Maddy, grab onto me, I’ll fly us-” However, the Murphy girl easily kicked off the walls to each foothold, getting across in seconds. “You were saying, buddy?” Ratchet hovered across using Clank’s helipack, catching up with Maddy in another large room where Microdrones charged at them. The smaller robots were easy to wipe out with Ratchet’s wrench and Maddy’s M.A.R.B.L.E.s, but they soon had to duck the machineguns of Protomantises from the other side. Even Maddy’s B.A.J.O.O.K.A. wouldn’t short-circuit them right away, so they had to stay behind the available cover and keep shooting.

Maddy swiftly rolled toward the left robot and kicked his left gun, causing him to shoot the other. When it tried to shoot her again, she fell to her back, kicked up on his guns, and caused him to blast the ceiling, making a chunk fall down and crush him. The group charged into another hall and reached a room with a deep chasm, only a few certain footholds. A bridge led them to a central platform where Drake Puncture was locked in a capsule. “Drake!” Maddy yelled.

“Uuuugh...” Drake woke up. “Boy, whaddid I eat last night. Dreamt we got abducted by aliens.”

“Uhhhh... may be a little truth to that. Can we break the cage open?”

“Using bombs might be kinda risky with him in there.” Ratchet said. “It looks like three Battery Bots go in those slots. We’ll find ‘em and let ‘im out safely.”

They first crossed a left bridge which ended up scrolling vertically, upside-down, and along the walls to a high platform. “You go that way, I’ll take this.” Ratchet said, using Gravity Boots to defy the gravity of this particular-colored path and walk up and upside-down. He got to the platform and caught a frantic Battery Bot in his wrench, jumping down to the cage and throwing it in one of the slots.

Maddy followed the right bridge to an open area where Splitterbots – Nefarious Drones with buzzsaw hands – spun their blades to life and loomed closer. Maddy flipped and dodged as they stretched their buzzsaws, grabbing one’s arm and pulling it against other drones, slicing them in half. “No fair. I just had this exterior waxed.” Others kept launching their arms and slicing their allies as Maddy dodged, until there was one left. She rolled to it, dodging its saw when it launched, then spared a smirk before ducking the returning saw, letting it pierce the robot’s face.

She faced the frightened Battery Bot and quickly grabbed it, forcing it in a slot. Ratchet took the north bridge to a closed door, but began climbing across a pipe along the right wall. Parts of the pipe were broken and released electricity, making Ratchet wait ‘til it stopped, and when the pipes ended, he jumped to a higher, parallel pipe. They eventually brought him to a high foothold in the corner where the last Battery Bot was. He grabbed it and floated back to Drake’s platform to finally free him.

The door across the north bridge opened as more Nefarious Drones poured in. “Time for the Drakester to put a hole in things.” Drake grinned coolly. He aimed his right, grappler hand and launched, piercing a line of drones and swinging them against the others.

“I am really glad I got picked for Decom.” Maddy said with disbelief. The trio charged into the newly-opened hall and blasted incoming drones.

“Sir, they’ve rescued the other prisoner and they’re proceeding through the 30th wing.”

“Well, COME ON, Lawrence, THINK of something! Let’s see, um... hey MAAADDYYYYY. I’ve got your favorite CAAAANDYYYY. It’s GUMMY Nuts! You go CRAZY over those! Remember when Zach told you there were Gummy Nuts in the yard and you walked into his PIE trap?! Those were good times, right! Just come and have some so I can do my experiment!”
“Your manner of persuasion is exemplary, Sir.”

“Gee, Maddy, that’s some stalker you got.” Drake said.

“’kay, now I’m officially creeped out.” Maddy agreed.

They turned a left corner and encountered some Arc Strikers, Nefarious Troops that launched electrical waves along the floor. Drake launched his grappler, but one of the Strikers defended with electric and shocked Drake across the hook’s line. Maddy easily short-circuited them with her B.A.J.O.O.K.A., and the juice allowed Ratchet to freeze them with his CryoMine Glove. A door opened behind the robots, exposing the empty space. “Qwark, are you still out there??” Ratchet called.

“Heh heh, funny story Ratchet, I actually got lost while trying to follow the ship and I accidentally started attacking a giant ice cream cargo ship. They got a little peeved, heheh. Um, trying to locate you guys, now.”

“Siiiigh. Alright, Maddy, Drake, put these on.” He tossed them air helmets. “We’ll try to hide on the side of the ship.” They stepped beyond the oxygen barrier and progressed along the path on the side of the ship. A couple of smaller ships flew by and destroyed the path, blowing the trio off. “WHO000AA!”

“Quick, hold tight!” Drake grabbed Maddy’s hand, and she grabbed Ratchet, before the former used his harpoon hand to latch a peg sticking from the ship, pulling them to it. He released as the momentum and low gravity sent them a few meters across the side, where Drake could pull them to another peg flinging them downward and under the ship, then pulled them to another peg on its bottom. There, they tried to take a firm stance and move across the bottom.

Laser turrets emerged, which Drake shot with his harpoon and Maddy with B.A.J.O.O.K.A. (causing juice to float in the low gravity), while water also emerged from a pipe, joined by a flushing sound. “Hooooooo. Lord Vorselon will watch the amount of chili burritos he consumes.” The trio soon made it to a hatch on the bottom and climbed in, reverting right-side-up and removing their helmets. They passed a narrow hall and shot through more Nefarious Drones before the hall became wide, with a series of horizontal energy bars scrolling up over a dark chasm.

“Perhaps we should go up.” Clank suggested.

“Really, buddy, what makes you say that?”

“Excuse me for trying to hold onto classics, Ratchet. Mm hm he he he.”

The trio gripped and swung across the bars before they went too high and vanished. Each set of bars scrolled up between parallel poles which ended at certain points where the bars vanished, but other parallel poles were stationed on higher parts and allowed a new set of beams to scroll higher. At the moment, the team could only swing to an opening across the chasm, but this only brought them to a dead end. Thankfully, the walls were close enough for them to Wall Jump and reach a higher set of beams, proceeding to swing across again. At the end of this new path, they held on the last beam as it scrolled up to bring them to a higher set, where they could swing across and reach the new pathway.

“Come on, Maddy, PLEASE come back!” Nefarious cried. “Remember all the good TIIMES you had? Look! I even have your baby pictures! You were so CUUUUUTE in that little diaper. If you let me examine your brain, you’ll get to review ALL of those good times! It’s only one small scrubulation! COME BAAAACK!”
“I hope there’s galactic authorities in this region!” she yelled.

They appeared above a wide room with several barred pipes within the walls, and two platforms with screws on them, one taller than the other. Before they could stare too long, a door slammed shut on their ledge and forced them to the room’s floor the same time as Protomantises marched out and began blasting. “Alright, you guys hold ‘em off, we’ll look for a way out.” Ratchet said as he hurried to a nearby round corridor. He climbed onto a platform with what seemed like a boat and a screw, which Ratchet latched with his OmniWrench and began turning. Once the screw sank down, some water flowed and flooded the room partway, and Maddy immediately began to panic when the liquid raised her by her waist.

“AAAAAAAAH! HEEEL-bl-bl-bl-bl-bl-bl-bl-bl-bl-bl-bl-bl.” She quickly submerged and couldn’t regain control.

“Hold on now.” Drake dove in and grabbed her arm around his head, swimming to the cavern where Ratchet & Clank were. He quickly stepped onto their platform and laid Maddy down as she gasped for breath.

“What happened?” Ratchet asked.

“She’s got the Sonic Condition.”

“The what now?”

“She don’t like water.”

“Why did you do that?!” she screamed. “I can’t get across this room now!”

“I do not see the problem. I am a robot and I have no quarrel with water.” Clank said.

“I am NOT swimming in that!!”

“Well, we’ve got a boat right here. Might as well use it.” Ratchet figured.

They pushed the rowboat on the water and helped Maddy on, rowing it across the water instead. Unfortunately, the Protomantises and Protoguards set their selves on buoyant platforms and kept firing, with Drake having to latch them with his harpoon and yank them in the water. “No. Please. I just ate-“ One said before Drake pulled him in. They rowed over to another cavern with a higher platform, formerly too high to reach, but with the raised water, Ratchet could hop on and turn the screw.

The water raised another foot, so the team rowed back out and fended off flying Microdrones. They were now high enough to reach the first of the two pillars in the room, where Ratchet turned the next screw and raised the water. This time, some Splitterbots flew out and launched buzzsaws that destroyed their boat, so the three frantically jumped and grabbed the ledge around the side of the second pillar. Maddy kept her grip tighter than the others as they climbed around the spiral ledge to reach the top. The Splitterbots still had their aim on them, so Clank fired mini lasers from his antenna and shot them in the water. “Those were 1 million Bolts I still don’t regret. Mm hm he he.” He remarked.

Once atop the platform, Ratchet turned the screw and opened a hallway on a nearby ceiling corner. Some drones flew out to stop them, but they easily used the drones as platforms to hop to the cave. The three exchanged victorious smirks, but panicked when the water continued rising. It continued rising throughout the hall, so the trio ran through quickly. They first hopped a trio of platforms to a narrow path that curved right, and afterwards hopped a few stairs just before the water reached...
their feet.

They had to Wall Jump between two close walls over a long chasm, seeing the water rising below them, making it hard for Maddy to focus. She kept her balance until they reached the end and ran up a slope that curved right. Before them was another long hall where the path continued several stories above the end wall, so they had to grab the ladder-made wall and climb up, in which the ladder made several zigzaggy turns to impede their progress, while they also had to alternate walls when their current ladder ended.

But when they made it to the top, it was merely a small platform overlooking a corridor beneath them, which was already flooding. “Whaddo we do now?!”

“We’re going for it.” Drake stated, taking Maddy’s hand while Ratchet took her other. “Hold on tight, guys!” He fired his harpoon into the room at the end of the passage and pulled them under the water and into the room. They held their breath as strong as they could as Ratchet grabbed the screw in his wrench and struggled to swim around and turn it. Maddy was already frozen stiff and practically lifeless, so Drake knew she wouldn’t be any help in turning this screw. Thankfully, Ratchet’s task was accomplished as the door to the hall sealed, and the water slowly drained out of their chamber.

They were all quick to gasp for breath, Maddy especially, before the next door slid open and allowed them entry out. They climbed a short ladder to a hall that led them to a wide, circular room. (End song.)

“I don’t know what you kids do for a living on your planet, but it’s clearly enough to hold your own.” Ratchet said as they took time to catch their breath. “Now there’s apparently an airlock a few floors up, hopefully Qwark comes by the time we get there, then we’ll be Scott free.”

“Bwa ha ha! And what makes you say THAT?” A giant, two-headed robotic dog dropped from the ceiling, Lord Vorselon beside it. “Dr. Nefarious still has experiments, Human Maddy! And he will carry them out!”

“What does Nefarious want me for, anyway?”

“Bwa ha! Lord Vorselon will NEVER tell you we are searching for the 20 Keys, based on Lord Gnik's orders! Nor will he tell you about the other villains we have aligned with!”

“Lord Gnik? Other villains?”

“VORSELON, you dope, it's LESSER LORD Gnik!” Nefarious proclaimed. “UM, I mean... no, we know no one by that name! Now about those Gummi Nuts...”

“Sorry, Nefaro, but the Drakester has fooled you good!” Drake grinned, his teeth sparkling.

“You did nothing.” said Maddy and Ratchet.

“Ooooo! How DARE you make a fool of Lord Vorselon! He will make you pay for such insolence, with PAIN! Attack them, Dao Dog!”

“RAAAAAARRRR!” The group readied to battle the two-headed dogbot. (Play Egg-Cerberus’ theme from Sonic 2006.)

_Boss fight: Dao Dog_
The dog hopped to the other side of the room and launched electric spheres from both of its mouths. Drake dodged forward and fired his harpoon at the left head, but it dodged aside and stretched that head over to snap Drake, but he jumped back. Ratchet tossed grenades at their heads as he ran beside Drake, the two taking aim at a head and shooting their Swingshot and harpoon. They caught both tongues of the dog and played tug-o-war with it. “MADDY, you’re up!” Ratchet yelled.

The Murphy girl rushed up to the dog’s tail and grabbed ahold, and Dao Dog immediately felt this as he flung Ratchet and Drake away and began to run around. He wagged his tail furiously to fling her off, but ended up throwing her right onto his back, clutching onto a wire like a strand of fur and hanging on further. It was like riding a bull at the rodeo, but the sensation was familiar to Maddy in some way, so hanging on was no hassle. “What are you DOING, Dao Dog?!” Vorselon shouted when the dog finally seemed to submit. Maddy made it charge to the wall, jump, and perform a series of large Wall Jumps around the circular room. A huge container of electrical energy was hanging over the center via four beams, so Maddy made the dog jump headfirst into the container and dropped off before it endured a horribly painful shock. “Lord Vorselon KNEW the rodeo function was a bad idea! He would like to speak to the fool responsible.”

“It was YOUR idea, DUMMY!”

The dog kicked out of the container and landed itself on the walkway around the second floor. Several platforms came down for the three heroes to jump their way up when the room began to flood with electric energy. Dao Dog blasted energy spheres as the trio made their ascent, but he wasn’t the best at aiming with the spark in his brains now. They had to swing Swingshot targets and bounce a few spring platforms, eventually making it onto the walkway. Dao Dog jumped and perched itself on the platform where the electric container hung from, and the four beams connected to each corner of this walkway. He began to shoot electric spheres at certain parts of the walkway so they split into two, and went opposite ways around the path to shock the heroes.

They couldn’t go onto Dao Dog’s platform without him blasting them, and latching grapplers on him would be too risky if he yanked them into the pit. Each of the four beams were connected to large screws on the walkway, so Ratchet proceeded to go around and unscrew them while Maddy shot the robot with her B.A.J.O.O.K.A.; juices makes robo-dogs short-circuit for a few seconds, apparently. They avoided the spheres and distracted the dog enough for Ratchet to unhook all the screws and cause the platform to fall. The dog plummeted to the electric pool below and took the shock. “Brr-r-r-r-r-r-r. Dao Dog: activate the REAR boosters!” announced Vorselon. Two rockets activated on Dao Dog’s rear as it flew up from the pool and took off down a large, wide tunnel near the ceiling. A series of grind-rails came down when the ship shook, so the trio began to ride them after the dog.

There were three parallel rails for each of them, but Dao Dog fired electric spheres from the distance that whooshed across the rails, forcing them to jump to other ones. The rails were also collapsing behind them, so if they slowed down, they would surely fall. The tunnel became pretty snaky, therefore the rails did too, but it eventually dropped them into another circular room. Many Nefarious Drones ambushed them, launching buzzsaws and lasers as the trio dodged, while Dao Dog hopped to the other side of the room. The robots seemed to keep piling in as they searched around for a way to destroy the dog.

“Ratchet, there are two Battery Bots in that container up there.” Clank pointed to a glass container above the other side of the room. “Perhaps we could use them to power the electromagnet.” And hanging just over the room, a giant magnet.

“Okay, I’LL get ‘em down.” Maddy fearlessly rushed up to the robot as it snapped its fangs. When
both heads lunged, she slid underneath, grabbed onto the tail, and let the robot fling her to its back as she began to bull-ride it again. Running around the room caused him to smash a lot of the smaller robots, before Maddy finally had him tamed and screeched to a halt on the opposite side from the capsule. She made him face up at the capsule, run forward, and leap to chomp both ends in its mouths to pull it down. The Battery Bots were free when the capsule shattered, so Ratchet and Drake ran to grab one and shove them both into a slot on either side of the room. The magnet buzzed to life as Dao Dog looked up curiously, but Maddy was already off his back when it flew up and stuck to the magnet like glue.

Vorselon came in to check the battle, panicking when both Dao Dog and the magnet began to short-circuit. “NO! That magnet is experimental! Lord Vorselon hasn’t yet perfected it to pull the caps off pickle jars, its intended purpose.” He fiddled around with a remote to make the dog shake furiously.

Electricity was sparking all around both machines, until the magnet fell off its latch with Dao Dog with it. “Uh-oh.” Right to Vorselon no less, as the hunter was smashed under the crumbling scrap. His capped head flew off safely, bouncing on the floor as he switched on a rocket and shot for the exit. The door was already closing at this time, so his capsule got stuck, shaking around a little before he shot inside and the door closed. (End song.)

“Okay, Mad, we’ll officially sign you up for the rodeo.” Drake said as they stared at Dao Dog’s smashed body.

“Eh, it’s not a bad idea. Can we get outta here now?”

“The airlock’s right over there.” Ratchet pointed to the door under the Battery Bots’ capsule. “Quick, let’s go before more-” They heard Vorselon’s door open as a far larger swarm of robots marched in, ready to saw or melt them.

“Should’ve expected this cliché trap.” Drake said as the trio backed against the airlock.

“Qwark, we can really use your HELP right now!” Ratchet cried into his wristwatch.

“I’m almost there, Ratchet, but don’t exactly know where you’re located!”

But it was then Maddy felt a strange sensation. She turned to the hatch behind them, and as everything turned dark, she could see a small, distant aura beyond the wall, headed their way. “I do! You’re coming right toward us, just stay as you are!”

“How do you know this, Maddy?” asked Clank.

“I…I don’t know, I just see his aura somehow.”

“Oh my God, Maddy’s an aurabender!!” Drake exclaimed.

“I am NOT, I just… I don’t know what it is, I just see him!”

“We may only have precious seconds to land in Aphelion before your heads implode. Can we trust Maddy’s judgment?” Clank asked.

Ratchet was only panicking at the approaching buzzsaw-bots. “Better than having no brain to judge with, LET’S GO!”

Ratchet slammed his hand on the button to the side as the hatch flew open.

“WHOOOOOOOAAAA!” They shot out the lock like a vacuum and fell into the endless darkness,
but a ship zoomed by and caught them in its cockpit.

“NOOOOOOOO!” Nefarious shook with great rage. “That Qwaaaaarrrrrk I’m gonna tear his fleshy limbs off next time I see him, MARK MY WORDS I’LL-”

A toilet flush was heard in the next room as water came flowing out. “Um, Sir? The pipes are backed up again. Shall I fetch the Plumber?”

“Ugh…”

The team of Ratchet, Clank, Mad and Drake were upside-down and bunched atop each other in the back seat. “Nice save with the Aphelion, Qwark.” Ratchet said.

“There was never any worry, Ratchet.” The muscular superhero in the green and black jumpsuit grinned. “True heroes ALWAYS show up very late on the scene!”

They rolled back right-side-up, “Yeah, not as late as Aquaman stopping some mugger on the beach.” Drake said.

“So tell me,” Qwark smiled coolly, “is this the little lady captured against her will for Nefarious’s gain?”

“Um… yeah?” Maddy replied nervously.

“There’s no need to fear anymore, Little Girl,” he assured, wrapping his muscular arm around Maddy’s head, “because from this point on, Captain Copernicus Leslie Qwark will protect you! The atrocities and horrors you might’ve witnessed on that ship,” he squeezed her closer, speaking with an emotional tone, “I will not rest until every ounce of that precious little soul of yours is cured!”

Ratchet and Clank exchanged weird glances at his weeping. “What kind of galaxy do we LIVE IN where such horrible men can just KIDNAP little girls and do whatever with them! The nerve of that Dr. Nefarious, robbing a sweet innocent of her childhood! Well, I will defend this child with my life, or MY name isn’t Copernicus Leslie- QOUII!” Maddy finally kicked him in the gut.

“Another second under that armpit and YOU would’ve ruined my childhood! Just take us back to Earth so we can get back to our next-to-normal lives.”

“Earth, right! Uuuuh, and which quadrant was that?”

“I dunno… Milky Way?”

“If such an area exists, it is not within our data maps.” Clank replied. “I fear Dr. Nefarious may have taken you farther than we anticipated.”

“Well, don’t you alien guys like, pick up signals or something?” Drake asked. “Hang on, I’m gonna try and call my sector.” He tapped his wristwatch communicator, but it only showed static. “Huh… bad reception.”

“If your technology is mainly limited to your planet, receiving a signal this far out will be impossible. Perhaps we may find something of use on one of the nearby planets.”

“Here’s one! Peoples α.” Qwark responded, viewing his terminal. “The planet of gangs, thugs, and hustlers. Where every morning tune’s a rap song, and every sport’s a street race where the wages are high.”
“That planet is the home to many stolen ships and materials.” Clank said. “Surely we may be able to find an intergalactic radio antenna. With it, we could probably link signals of distant galaxies to your communicator, thereby contacting your home planet.”

“Plus, it’ll be easier to hide from Nefarious’s troops among the crowd.” Ratchet noted.

“Then Peoples α it is.” Maddy decided. “Let’s contact Earth quick before my brother gets worried. …And before he starts snooping around my diary.”

**Somewhere on the sea**

“Ahhhh… the salty air smells great.” Danny Jackson sighed, leaning over the rail of a 4x4 ship. “Glad we can finally enjoy it with those pirates gone. Don’tcha think so, Mel?”

His aforementioned sister was curled on the deck in a fetal position, hair a mess and eyes frantic. “We’re a-all gon-na die, all go-onna di-ie…”

“Sheesh, Mel, lighten up.” Eric told her. “If anyone should be afraid, it’s me. I couldn’t even get my shirt out of a tree branch, but you’re the toughest waterbender I know! And the prettiest. Except for your mom—in both genres—but still-!”

“Mel, Cheren said it was going to be okay.” Danny told her assuringly. “That we just have to build up our skills and find these 20 Keys, wherever the heck they are. But I think you’re getting too hyped on it. Why don’t we go for a swim, nice soak on our skin will get the thought out of our heads! And it wouldn’t hurt to practice waterbending.”

“Siiigh… maybe you’re right. Seeing the fishies so carefree might relieve my stress.” Melody smiled.

“THAT’S the spirit, Mel!” Eric perk ed. “Now I remembered to pack your swimsuits, Melody I wasn’t sure which one you preferred, so I packed-” But when he turned around, they had already splashed in the sea, only their shoes and socks left behind. His communicator rang, so he answered.

“Way ahead of you, Er, but thanks for the offer.” Melody noted.

“Siiiigh.” Eric really wanted to see her in that cute white bikini.

The duo swam far below the surface, swimming fast along the current and keeping their breath thanks to their waterbending. They found swarms of fish and sea creatures, who seemed totally carefree beneath these calm cool waves that reflected the sun’s gleaming light. Needless to say, the worry was lifted from their minds and souls. It was so peaceful under the sea. These fish had no worries… and neither did they. They reminded them there was still hope in the universe, and there was still a chance.

Eric stared dreamily at the sea, just thinking how happy Melody must be right now. But his eyes widened at a growing, shining object falling from the heavens.

Melody and Danny stopped their swimming to answer a call from Eric. “*Mel, Danny, quick! Get outta there, there’s something coming!*”

Confused, they looked up when the sun seemed to be shining brighter. …Wait… that was no sun… “OH MY GOD!!” Melody screamed, immediately swimming away with Danny at breakneck speed, spinning their arms like propellers. The shining object splashed in the sea and erupted an enormous explosion. Melody and Danny tried to evade the shockwave of seafloor sand, but ended up blown away.
Just as well, the explosion created an incredible wave that sent the ship miles across the sea, with Eric hanging on tight. “MELODYYYYYYY…”

The area under and above the surface became swallowed in smoke following the explosion. From the sky, the resulted cloud of smoke shaped like a tremendous pie. As it slowly cleared, a mechanical ship sailed in the fog, a voice sounding from its megaphone. “This is a message to all morsels who dare dwell on the sea. Your realm is now under the command of Sheldon J. Plankton: THE GREATEST GENIUS ON EARTH! You have had but a small taste of my arsenal of homemade Pie Bombs. Submit to my rule or have your whole ocean a WASTELAND of FIRE AND CHERRY!”

**Mansion Under the Sea**

“EEEEHH heh heh heh heh heyyyy! Alright, now let’s blow up the Gulf of Mexico.” Plankton said eagerly, crossing a sea off his list.

“Ooooo hooohooohoo! Brilliant plan, Plankton!” laughed the Dirty Bubble, a large brown bubble with evil eyes and a mouth of sharp teeth. “Pretty soon the sea’ll be too polluted for those fish to live!”

“And it will be all *ours* to command.” Manray, a man in a red jumpsuit, blue boots and gloves, and a blue mask with red eyes and teeth, grinned evilly. “Sooooo deliciously evil.”

“Yeah, maybe… but just where do you plan to live afterwards?” asked Dennis, a green Fishman bounty hunter in a cowboy uniform, red bandana, sunglasses, black boots, and black cowboy hat.

“Relax, we’ll filter all the poison ‘soon as all these sea dogs know who’s boss.” Plankton answered calmly. “Besides, the people of Oceana will fall head-over-heels once they get a taste of… our secret recipe!” He hopped over to a huge safe, squeezed inside the tiny lock, and cracked it open. The safe revealed a tall, thin stairway with a single, tiny bottle seated on a table on top. “Mr. Krabs’ Secret Formula to the fabled Krabby Patty! It took over 25 years, but he’s FINALLY caved in!”

“Robots are progressively covering all shores on the European and Canadian coasts, the Americas are facing trouble due to the opposing armies.” briefed Karen, Plankton’s W.I.F.E.. “But Plankton, I still don’t think these cohorts of yours can be trusted.”

“What, you mean these guys, of course they can! We understand each other, right?” Plankton gestured putting an arm around Manray.

“As long as you’re not speaking gibberish, sure!” grinned Dirty Bubble.

*Not THEM, I mean Lord Gnik and those other guys. There’s something weird about him, Plankton, I just can’t put my hard-drive on it.*

“It’s Lesser Lord, Dear, and don’t worry! Evil plans with fellow multi-world evil-doers haven’t gone wrong before.”

“Yes, except-”

“DON’T MENTION *Nicktoons Unite!*”

“…*Nicktoons: Globs of Doom.*”

“Oh boy.”

Unknown base, forest area
The helicopter carefully took land inside a hatch that opened on the ground. Jessie, James, and Meowth led the handcuffed Mika into a small chamber with a large TV screen. “Ooooo wait until the boss sees that we caught her!” Jessie squealed with glee. “Our promotion is in the bag!”

“Yeah! And the Boss will make ME Top Cat again!” Meowth grinned.

“I don’t get it, Meowth, were you ever?” James asked.

“Hey, you got your special beliefs, I got mine, so let’s leave it at that!”

“What is this like a sooper exclusive tea party or something?” Mika asked.

“You’ll see once we get there.” confirmed Jessie. “We just have to call the Boss and let ‘em know we’re on our way!”

With that, Jessie typed in a code as the static on the TV began to clear. “Great news, Mr. Giovanni! We captured the psychicbender, Mika without trouble!”

A shadowed man petting his Persian, sitting on a chair with one leg over his other could be seen. “Jessie and James, is it. Captured the Logia psychicbender who was deemed the Heiress of Madness? What sort of tomfoolery is this?!”

“Er… Well, it’s no tomfoolery, Sir. She’s right here.” James brought the woman up closer.

“Um, I got a few comments about that ‘nickname’.” Mika furrowed her eyes. “First off… AWESHUUUUUUM!”

“…?! This is impossible! How could YOU blundering buffoons have captured her?”

“Well, these blundering buffoons have a few hidden talents.” Jessie winked.

“And very keen manners of persuasion.” smiled James.

“Plus those chi-cuffs you gave us sure did help!” perked Meowth.

Mika studied her cuffs, not seeing any chi symbols. She lit a small pink light in her palm a brief second. “Hmph. I’ll play along with your trick for now. And assume this is the woman that trained under my creation.”

“His creation?” said Mika quietly. “Does he mean… Mewtwo?”

“I will send a transport to carry Mika back to our hideout. You three on the other hand must stay there and man the forces in that world. And this woman had better not be some impostor, or you will be facing the rough end of the claws.” He switched off.

Chariton Household

Sunni Chariton threw many items into two backpacks, throwing one to Darcy while she slipped the other on her back. “Sunni, I still don’t know about this. If Mom let herself get caught, maybe she’s trying to do something.”

“Even if that’s true, Mom promised to train me, and I can’t wait anymore. We’re going to help her with whatever she’s doing, and I know only one other person that can train us. So let’s go.” She was marching out the door first.

Both girls climbed in their dad’s car as he drove them to the pier. They parked and rented a small
yacht, ready to ship off to sea. “Where’re you kids going again?” the bearded, one-eyed captain asked.

“He’ll take us.” Rainier assured. They walked to the front of the deck, where someone was balanced on one foot on the water. “Ready to go, Lucario?”

His eyes were closed, fists touched together. “Yes. Let’s go.”

Adventures are happening all around. I bet you all are overwhelmed. Well, just look at me. Next time, we’ll have yet to get on with it. ;P Later.
Pleasure To Make Your Acquaintance

Chapter Summary

Cheren Uno heads to Roguetown to meet his "client." Meanwhile, Maddy and co. explore Blipton.

Never trust anon notes.

Chapter 6: Pleasure To Make Your Acquaintance

Cleveland Beach

When a giant warship suddenly drives up onto the shore, you wouldn’t expect the beach to be very populace after that. An hour later, it was almost completely empty, Chad, Emily, Violet, and Scarlet examining its barrenness. “Well, I sure don’t see ’em here.” Scar remarked.

“Well, then he’s probably at Timmy and Hikari’s house.” Chad said surely. “Just call ‘em and see how ‘e’s doing.”

“One problem.” Emily replied, already on the cellphone. “Timmy and Hikari apparently haven’t come home, yet. Our only other options are Kuki or Sammy’s houses.”

The four looked as Vi and Scar’s daughters, Lilac and Berry, scampered over on all fours. “We can’t find Ruppy anywhere!” Lil yelled. “But Berry found a starfish.”

“Mmmp—BLEEEH.” Berry indeed barfed a starfish with some sand.

“Ruppy didn’t get eaten by DOGGIES, did he?” Lil asked with big watery eyes.

“Don’t worry, Lilac.” Violet assured. “Rupert’s not an ant, he couldn’t just be eaten without a trace.”

“Beg to differ.” Chad eye-rolled.

“Uh!” Emily smacked his chest. “Maybe he’s in the cabin of some WOODSMAN! Doing non, woodsy stuff… that would scar a child for life!!”

“Well, how ‘bout me and Vi look around the woods and try to find him.” Scarlet offered. “Nothing can sneak up on us. And there’s plenty of grub.” She licked her lips.

“And Lilac? How ‘bout you two look around Cleveland and see if they’re here!” Violet smiled.

“We WILL, Mommy!” the brown cat pounced.

“We’ll sniff ‘em out like little tuna.” Berry smirked deviously.

“Then I’m taking the skies.” Emily said, about to walk off. “Chad, go home in case Rupert’s already there.”
“Gladly. Anything but play hide-and-seek with Ashland’s MOM Association.” the father said smugly.

“GRRRRR!” Scar touched a claw to his neck.

“We moms should’ve handled this to begin with, ‘cause Pariah knows YOU can’t be trusted!” Emily stated.

“YOU’RE PRAYING TO THE GHOST KING NOW?” all three said with slanted heads.

“YOU GET MY POINT!! The four of you just, start looking around, I’ll also call the other parents, and Chad, GET THE HELL HOME!!”

Emily turned and took a small breath to relieve the stress. Thrusting her arms to either side, the bluish-white ring of light encased her body, transforming her into a pale-skinned phantom with flaming orange hair. She took to the skies that were slowly changing from blue to orange. “…You know, she doesn’t even need that form to be scary.” Chad noted. Scarlet decided to kick him off his feet before the catgirls headed off.

**Quahog; James Woods Elementary**

Sector V’s C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. came in for landing beside the school’s playground as Dillon was already frantic to greet them. “Guys, you made it! I was going to call you, there’s trouble!”

“What happened?” Aurora asked. “Place looks like a war happened here.”

“Kind of. Maddy and Drake Puncture got kidnapped by aliens!”

“Huh?! What aliens?”

“I dunno, this little green thing inside a robot, had a bunch of other robots with him. They were apparently working for some ‘Dr. Nefarious’ guy.”

“Dr. Nefarious?” Harry questioned. “Sounds like a villain from some Saturday morning cartoon.”

“Wait, I remember Cheren showing me a report from Sector IC.” Aurora replied. “Some ‘Dr. Nefarious’ was trying to ruin Christmas.”

“But what would he want with Maddy or Drake?” Haruka asked.

“Wait a second, what about Zach?” Chris asked. “Where’s he, anyway?”

“Heeee…” Dillon looked around. “He was here a while ago. Huh…”

**Somewhere in space**

“This is Captain Yellow Shirt, checking to see if all systems are a-go.” A yellow-shirted boy asked from his captain’s seat.

“This is Green Shirt, engines are stable!”

“Lieutenant Blue Shirt reporting, lasers are ready.”

“Commander Black Shirt, over here! Our shields are up and- Wait, isn’t Commander higher up than Captain?”
“Senior Red Shirt, ready to sacrifice when unnecessary!”

“Starship Zachstar,” Yellow Shirt spoke, “get ready for LIGHT speed!”

The “Starship Zachstar” was in fact Zach Murphy converted into a human-sized spaceship, with rocket shoes. “$2.50 an hour with an extra porridge bowl, I say good truckin’.” And so, he flew for the stars.

**Back at Quahog**

“Anyway, we were heading to Mr. King’s house to ask what he knew about these 20 Keys.” Aurora mentioned. “Maybe we can ask Sector IC about this Nefarious, too.”

Dillon boarded the bus and took a seat next to Mason and Sheila’s. As they took off for Iceland, Dillon noticed the raccoon fast asleep on her back. “What happened to her?”

“I dunno, she just conked out. Went through a wild song stage, though.”

“Hey, wanna draw on her?” Dillon grinned evilly.

“Hehehe, yeah!”

**Uno Household**

Cheren’s items were packed and stuffed in the trunk of his R.O.A.D.S.T.A.R.. His rectangular box with the purple gem switch had only three items: his Three Sacred Treasures. He was eager to hop in the driver’s seat as his mom came to see him off. “You sure you wanna go to Oregon by yourself? Random notes from secret admirers are the kinda stuff you should bring back-up for.”

“That’s not what the note asked for, Ma.” He smiled coolly. “And you should know by now I can handle myself.”

“Yeah, and things went swell the last time.” She shook her head in disbelief. “But considering all the chaos…”

“Well, since you’re so worried,” he scribbled something on a small paper, “I’ll give you this.” He let it flutter to his mom as she looked at it. “I don’t call in, say, 48 hours, you can send a rescue party. A’ight?” A wink.

She smiled brightly and stuffed it down her cleavage, “Fair deal! Good luck, Soldier. And watch out for all the rogues.”

“Hehehe! Says my ma to the Hero of Time.” He hopped in his driver seat.

“Hee hee ha ha! Have a steaming cherry pie when you get hooome!” His racecar was already speeding across the country.

What would take people ages to get across on foot, it took Cheren only an hour. He loved having his own racecar. Just kicking back while the great rush of wind kept his hair behind him. All he needed was a pair of sunglasses, though the way the sun sparkled off his glasses looked pretty cool. But he put on a look of confusion when it appeared some blue-haired girl was running alongside his left. He lowered his glasses, “Uhhh… hey there?”

“Oh? Sorry!” The girl smiled sheepishly. “This isn’t your road, is it? I was just out on one of my daily runs.”
“Uhhhh… I see that.” At 100 miles per hour, clearly. “You like running, do ya?”

“Yup! It gets me places faster!”

“Heheheh! Yeah, it does! On to an important meeting.”

“Ah, that’s life for ya. Well, I won’t keep you. So long!” She shifted a different way.

“Great talkin’ to ya!”

“You too! Byyyyy!”

So Cheren faced forward with his cool smile. “Well-p, Cheren, gotch yourself another one. Gooooo goin’.”

Cheren made it within Oregon’s borders and parked a few miles from his destination. “Just so I don’t look like I’m comin’. Well, not entirely.” He hopped out, popped open the trunk, and got his box. “Three Sacred Treasures ACTIVATE!” He smacked the gem and plopped the box open, letting the Light Arrows, Mirror Shield, and Master Sword beam on his form.

His loyal assistant, Fi jumped out. “Master, the city of Roguetown is just miles in your wake. I encourage a safe journey for you, and know that I will be around when you need me.”

“Gotcha, Fi. No reason to stop now.” She flew back into the sword. He wore an eager smirk and faced the grassland before him. “Let’s go!” (Play the Rogueport Theme from Smash Bros. 4!)

Stage 8: Roguetown Road

Mission: Go to Roguetown Station!

Cheren Uno dashed across the road as enthusiastically as a 9-year-old should. More ready than ever to take on the trials ahead and stop this wretched Apocalypse. He never felt more energetic, more willing to believe that anything is possible. If he still kept all this Apocalypse business to himself, he wouldn’t feel this energetic. But now everyone knows, and all his friends can fight to stop it. He knew they could because of Sheila’s unbreakable spirit, and if she had the spirit to face inevitable doom, so would he!

A pair of trucks sped up from the road ahead and blocked his path as a gang of Goombas hopped out, charging to attack him. Cheren eye-rolled humorously. He was glad the government offered a piece of land for some Mushroom denizens to live after the Firstborn Quest, but they couldn’t let strangers come by casually. He raised his sword and sliced down any Goombas trying to rob him, the simple enemies no match for his skill. He shot down Paragoombas with his bow and bounced Spiny Goombas back with his Mirror Shield. With the creatures dealt with, he ran past the left of the trucks and followed a grassland downhill.

Some Koopa Troopas curled in their shells and spun at him, but he flipped and dodged before tossing M.A.R.B.L.E.s with his M.U.M.B.L.E.R.. A few of them recovered, but Cheren tossed his Bananarang to knock them dizzy, catching his toy and running forward. Many rocks were blocking his path, but not for long, as he would blast them all away with his M.A.R.B.L.E.s. He ended up wandering into a rocky trench, where a series of wobbly platforms led across. He wished he had his Kateenian Mask, but oh well, as he leaped across each one and let it crumble, moving too quick for it to kill him.
The last platform had nowhere else, but Cheren saw some branches overhead with vines, tossing his Bananarang to cut the vines down so he could swing across, just before the platform fell. The vines listed upward, where Cheren eventually grabbed hold of a tree branch and swung around and around. He launched upward and flew like a bird, or a hawk as he threw open his sail to glide to the ledge ahead. He landed perfectly and skipped forward with no fear on his mind, not even the beings peeking at him from behind rocks.

A band of Shy Guy Bandits came running out in the hopes of robbing him of his valuables. He tried to dodge them, but they came fairly quick, and he was shoved to the ground with several items dropped. “HEY, give those back!” They ran off with his Bananarang, Pirate Sail, and Hookshot, so he chased them furiously. The one with his Bananarang was snickering wickedly, but tripped and allowed Cheren to swipe it back, knocking him out. He looked at the one with his Hookshot and launched his boomerang to claim it and bring it back, smirking as he pulled the Bandit over with it to knock him out. He looked as the third Bandit flew overhead with his sail, but could simply pull him down with the Hookshot and hurl the Bandit down the hill before reclaiming his sail.

With that, he continued his carefree run to the town as it inched bigger and bigger the closer he got. He spotted two shops that were just across from each other, a Bob Evans and small pawnshop. “Eh, got time to grab a bite.” He rushed into the restaurant. “One triple large pancake with some fries please.”

30 minutes later

“Ahhhhh that was sanctuary.” Cheren was out of there with a wobbly belly. “That should hold me. Now I wonder if they got anything there.” He went over to the pawnshop. “Yo Slim, got anything…” He could swear he recognized this gentleman, “Nickel Joe?”

The only thing that made him look different were his missing teeth and mostly bandaged face. There was also a deflated balloon in there that looked like Fat Jack. “Why, who is this Nickel Joe you speak of? I’m ol’ Trader Slim! Want some goods, Mac?”

“Ummm… ooo, is that a Hookshot?”

“The one and only.” He held it up.

“Uh hh, not quite.”

“Whatever, so how much ya payin’? Got 30 Rupees?”

“Have 30 cents.”

“Deal.” So, the exchange was made.

Cheren got a second Hookshot! With this, he can launch from target to target, and go almost anywhere there’s wood! Now you’ll feel like a true Batman ripoff, though Nolan’s pretty much got that!

“See ya later, Slick. And say ‘hi’ to Nini for me.”

“Who?”

“Never mind.”

So Cheren continued on his valiant journey. Three more trucks blocked his road, and some Craws
came running out to jab him with spears. Cheren clashed his blade with theirs and sliced the spearheads off, then shot his Hookshots to either side and pulled two Craws against each other. He swung his feet at another until he was down, then threw his boomerang against two others before flipping overhead and slicing them down. He followed a road around the right of the trucks, and when Bristles spun out to slice him, the enemies were too easy to bomb with his M.A.R.B.L.E.s.

The path brought him to another trench area with a rushing river below, but sets of Hookshot targets spread across the parallel walls. He launched back-and-forth, back-and-forth between both walls and flew across the river, until the last target’s wall gave way and fell in. He held his breath beneath the water, eyes widening when a swarm of Rip Van Fish were on his tail. He swam frantically into the underwater cave, doing Torpedo Spins to burst through wood barrings in his way. He shot out of a surface inside an underground cave, ripples reflecting off the ceiling, having to shoot stalactites down with his arrows to stick on small islands and let him jump to a far, high ledge.

He made it to a large whirlpool pool that threatened to sink all that fell in to the depths. An unreachable ledge was across the other side, and that platform had a small wall on its center. Cheren switched on his Remote Bananarang and had it fly around said wall, finding a Crystal Switch which he struck. A bunch of huge cans emerged from the pool, flowing around the center as it spun, so Cheren hopped on to ride across. He noticed an Eye Switch on the ledge where he just stood and shot with an arrow, making a ladder drop down along the front of that parallel ledge. He climbed up, hopped over the switch, and proceeded through a hall that led to a perfect round sewer tunnel.

Cheren found a discarded Koopa shell and rode it like a sled around and around the walls and ceiling, even skiing over the filthy sewer water. The whirling ride came to an end when Cheren dropped down a short shaft with a huge plug covering a drain. Around this shaft were several tunnels that water poured from, and Sun Switches below them. Cheren was standing in a bright sun beam coming from above, so using his Mirror Shield, he shone on all the switches and sealed the tunnels. With each tunnel he closed, the plug he stood on shook more. When that final tunnel—the one he came from, closed, it was ready to burst.

A gush of water sent Cheren out of the sewers, miles into the sky. “YEEEEAAAAAAAAH!” He threw open his Pirate Sail, and simply floated the rest of the way to Roguetown. A town of multi-racial thugs, but it seemed fairly pretty from this high up. The sun was shining bright on this town, shining high on him. No doubt, the sky was truly the limit.

“I’M KING OF THE WOOOOORRRRRLD!” His voice was heard for miles across the town. “DARE ANYONE TO TELL ME OTHERWISE!”

“Haha!” Cheren never felt more happy. For the first time in his life, he felt like he could do anything. He felt like the wind was at his back, and would always see his sail of freedom would blow forever. Not that he wanted it to; he had to land. For the first time in his life… he truly felt like a kid. (Play Rogueport Theme from Thousand-Year Door.)

Cheren gently took land on the red roof of a 2-story building. “Ahh, that was a good breath.” He jumped and landed on the ground. He gazed at the back of a tall, bronze statue set in the middle of the plaza. Cheren saluted, “You were born in one heck of a place, Mr. York.”

He explored town a little bit and found a sign that directed to the Train Station, just north of the West Side of town. He approached the station to find a few people boarding the train, and overheard some passerby. “You know, I heard a very important train was passing our town.” a lady said.
“Really, what kind?” a man asked.

“A very private one ridden by the richest people in the world. I hear it’s taking them to an
unspeakably private party.”

“You don’t say. Well, why party with the simple commoners when they can go there?”

Cheren raised a brow. No doubt these were connected. Well, he had 3 hours to kill, may as well
find someplace. He looked around and saw a door with a bed logo posted over it, and assumed this
to be the Inn. He walked in and passed a small bar with some suspicious characters; well, just a
bunch of thugs really, the only real suspicious guys were those four in the hoods on the other side.
As Cheren marched up the stairs, he didn’t know one of those hoods was eying him curiously.

The Inn had two beds, and a leak in the ceiling where water drops poured endlessly in a bucket. He
spoke to the Mushroom Toad woman and asked, “Um, how much for a bed here?”

“Just 5 Coins.”

“Um, is that 5 cents, or literally 5 coins?”

“I don’t know… I’m still trying to get used to the currency of this world.”

“Eh, $5, for your trouble.” He paid her kindly.

“Okay! Enjoy your stay and make yourself comfortable.”

Make himself comfortable. Yeah, he could do that. He approached his bed casually and took a
calm breath. He slipped off his shoes as he sat on his bed and pulled his socks off, throwing them
and his jacket on the floor. “Ahhhhhh!” He lied flat and stretched his toes to give them air. “This is
luxury! Hey, wake me up at 7:50, gotta be somewhere.” He set his items along the wall and put his
glasses on the nightstand.

“If you say so!” she beamed.

So with that, Cheren pulled open the covers and got underneath. He rolled into a comfortable
position and drifted to peaceful sleep.

Peoples α (Play “Gemlik Base” from Ratchet & Clank.)

The Aphelion passed the atmosphere of a dark, brownish-orange planet, taking land outside of
dark, dirty city where rap music boomed across the air. When the crew stepped out, the smell of
burning trash already reached their noses. They viewed right to see a bunch of aliens dressed in
street clothes cheering at two hovercars racing along a track. The cars shoved each other forcefully
before the left car was flown off the tracks, blowing to smithereens. The tons of gangsters cheered,
throwing money aimlessly.

Maddy was a little creeped out. This wasn’t her preferred retreat. “Might wanna put this on.”
Qwark stamped green cloaks over Maddy and Drake. “Humans are considered quite a delicacy
‘round these parts.”

Maddy gulped, joining Ratchet and co. as they approached an alley. “So your planet is completely
run by children who protect it from the adults and you have a bunch of giant trees growing around
the place?” Ratchet recapped.

“Well, sort of… ‘course, lately it’s been about fighting trans-dimensional deities who wanna
destroy everything.” Maddy replied. “The average ‘adults’ don’t really pose a threat anymore.”

“Coming from the girl who got picked on by teenagers.” Drake remarked.

“I’m just saying.” She glared. “But there’s a bunch of us around the planets, so we could probably signal the galactic branch.”

“Right! Leave it to me!” Qwark perked. “Finding a galactic transmission radio in a dump like this is like finding hay in a needlestack! And probably just as painful.” He frowned. “BUT: Captain Qwark’s afraid of no man, woman, or teen!” Then grinned. “Just rest easy here, because I know these kids’ language like the back of my hand!” And so, he marched off to the crowd. “Ahem: Yo-yo-yo, homebuds! Y’all-y’aaaall, how dem RAP tunes goin’? Yo Yo Ma, Kenny West! Dat dere Snoop Dog, I tell ya what!”

Ratchet whispered to Maddy, “Word of advice, he hasn’t seen his hand in 5 years. Jumpsuit’s stuck. We better look ourselves.”

“Alright, let’s do it quick. Teenagers are gross, and these guys’re no different. …”

As Drake accompanied them, his eyes peered curiously at Maddy over his sunglasses.

Stage 9: Blipton District

Mission: Find a way to contact the KND.

Act 1

The trio began their trek through a trash-filled alley to reach a street guarded by Spinneruffs, alien gangsters walking vicious alien dogs. They furiously whirled and swung their dogs around, flinging any of their gunshots away. But Drake was able to latch his grappler on one of the dogs, holding it in place, so while the owner kept spinning, he ended up getting tied in the leash. He did the same with the other 2 Spinneruffs before they searched around. Other roads were blocked by fences, with the only open path being a narrow alley with a chasm, and three broken metal pipes sticking from the walls. They grabbed the three tied Spinneruffs and tossed them to stick onto those pipes’ ends, then were able to bounce across. “Why couldn’t we just jump on the pipes?” Maddy asked.

“They woulda broke. This way, they don’t. Game physics.”

“Ahh.”

Once across the chasm, they turned right to another alley that was very long an empty, with polluted puddles and small critters roaming around. But across the other side, a Turret Ted poked out of a can, blasting a row of water torpedoes across the alley. It was a matter of careful jumping across the torpedoes and making their way to the otherwise-defenseless enemy, where Drake leaped and stomped his can with his boot. But before continuing, Ratchet noticed another alley on the side of this one, nothing but a chasm, except for the platform on the other side, just over the chasm, with a Gold Bolt. The opposite ledge had a fence to prevent them from reaching it from that side. Ratchet glided to this platform using Clank and claimed the bolt, then carefully Wall Jumped back to his friends.

The team found a fire escape to the left of the Turret’s post and climbed up to the rooftops. There wasn’t much to explore except for some boxes containing ammo refills (including discarded juice
cartons or gumballs for Maddy’s weapons), and it seemed like most areas beyond these buildings were death chasms. Were these aliens really into those? They could follow a series of floating platforms with propeller bottoms over a sea of cheering gangsters with a rapid racetrack in the middle. A row of Swingshot Targets hovered over part of the sea, so Maddy held Drake while he swung them with his harpoon, and Ratchet his Swingshot, to safely land on a new platform.

This one floated upward so they could land on a higher one, and from there jumped more platforms that floated up when they stepped, and once they were high enough, they turned and threatened to dump them into the crowds. But a Gold Bolt floated a few meters over one of them, so they waited for that platform to lift them to and grab it. “What’re these bolts for again?” Maddy asked.

“To buy alternate skins. They really aren’t plot-relevant.”

“Oh.”

They eventually Swungshot to a target over a wide circular platform, where two Slammer-Hammers popped out of boxes and ran to whack them with hammers. Of course, Maddy and Ratchet took them out easily with their guns, but a Mini-Merv, a thug in a floating metal can with a laser turret, guarded the stairway on the other side. When they got too close, it threatened to shoot its laser, and it shot anyway when their projectiles came. But Drake was able to shoot his harpoon and latch the laser turret, forcefully tugging until he yanked the bottom off and made the thug fall out.

After taking him out, they stepped down a series of square-shaped, grated stairs that zigzagged a little bit, but safely brought ‘em down to the audience crowds. They stood ground when some racecars whooshed by along the track, making wind, and proceeded down a path to their right. They hopped a small staircase and followed a path where Fogger thugs ambushed them, burping toxic gas that made them dizzy. The thugs were easy to knock out as they made it to where the racetrack seemed to begin, and therefore where it ended, as crowds were eagerly raising money at a booth. However, across from that start were stairs to a platform with a strange, stone cube with foreign writing. A thug was announcing, “Step right up, TRY your luck at the unreadable block! Come one science nerds, come all and try to read the incomprehensible language! Stumped many for eons, stump many for eons more, unless ANYONE can read the unreadable block!”

Not entirely interested, the team roamed around the starting area for any thug that looked like they could sell them a transmission radio. “’kay, folks, this race is coming to an end, our next prize will be a prime galactic transmission radiooo!” There it was. “For all you sly pooches who wanna prank-call galaxies a billion light-years away!”

Maddy rushed up to the booth, “How much to race here?”

“Sorry Kid, this ain’t no go-kart ride.”

“I’ll pay 500 Bolts.” Ratchet slipped him the cash.

“YOU’RE IN, Slick! You get the Dark Devil!” He tossed Maddy a black helmet and key.

As they walked to the parking lot, “So, Mad, uh, whatcha doing?” asked Ratchet.

“Relax, driving a racecar can’t be any different than a S.P.R.A.Y.S.H.I.P..”

“While I don’t know what that is, I think you should let me-”

“Sorry, Bud.” A buff, green alien guard stopped Ratchet from following. “Only the twerp’s en’ering.”
“Wish me luck.” Maddy slipped the helmet on and found the black car with dim blue stripes. She hopped in, started it up, and drove out to the track.

“Wow. Never took Maddy for this kinda stuff.” Drake mentioned. “Wonder what the preferred bout is?”

Ratchet and Clank only exchanged worried sighs.

Sub-game: Blipton Raceway

All cars were on the track, the racers raring to stomp their gas pedal. THREE. TWO. ONE. GOOO! (Play “Hoverbike Race” from Ratchet: Going Commando.)

“AAAAAND THEY’RE OFF!” The cars sped at near equal speed. “Turbo Theo TAKES the lead, and the others are fighting for second place!”

Maddy was forcefully bumping a red car with a fat alien, who hit a fence as she stayed steady for a few yards. She was behind a blue car, coming to a row of rainbow ? Blocks, and when she hit one of the blocks, a roulette in her car spun to stop on a certain item. It landed on banana peel, so she pushed the button to drop a peel on the track so a car behind could spin out of control. She faced forward and drove up a narrow slope on her right, having to keep across a thin road above the track as she spotted the blue car below. She ran over some Boost Panels and sped faster, eventually going off the road and passing the blue car.

She rammed a row of ? Blocks and landed on wings, conveniently using these to glide over a field of flames along the track. She glanced at the blue car behind her, watching as it was blown away by a force behind. “HERE come the BABYLON Rogues! The Track Trekkin’ Trio of the racetrack!” Gliding on hoverboards were a green Mobian hawk, Jet, pink Mobian swallow, Wave, and gray albatross, Storm.

“Too cool for cars?” inquired Mad.

Jet hit a ? Block, seeing the tiny terminal by his foot land on Red Turtle Shells. He stepped on it as three Koopa Shells surrounded him, and Maddy was worried when her car began to lower to the track. Her wings vanished, Jet blasted a shell to fling Maddy into the air, letting the three pass. The track was about to go underwater, but Maddy couldn’t take the alternate right path as some racers shoved her to the water. A propeller replaced the engine that allowed Maddy to drive, but being under the liquid already made her seasick.

“Oh, no.” Ratchet frowned. “She’s boned.”

“Kart Number THREE seems to have lost CONTROL. Did those last attacks knock her BRAINS out?”

“HANG IN THERE, Mad!”

Maddy tried to keep herself steady and navigate around this river, nabbing a ? Block that gave her a Spring Pad. “WHOOOOAAA!” The item flung her upward, landing her on the narrow path above the water so she could make it to the river’s end. She zipped by the starting line as the first lap was complete. “Sigh, okay, gotta just stay calm and take out those birdbrains. After all, if you can achieve two accomplishments with one action…” She hit a ? Block and let it roll on Blooper, “you can kill three birds with one squid.”

She pushed the button, sending the Blooper flying to all racers. It got in the Babylons’ faces and
squirt ink in their eyes. “Hey! I can’t see! Bwaaaark!” screamed Jet.

“We just COULDN’T use cars, huh Jet.” remarked Wave.

“This ain’t Sonic Drift!”

Maddy passed the trio and spared them a smirk and salute. The blue car was ahead of her again, but one of the back racers acquired a Bullet Bill and transformed into the speeding missile, easily blowing down the Rogues, Maddy, and reverting to normal behind the blue car. By the time she regained herself, the Rogues and several more racers passed, so she tried to catch up desperately. A racer ahead of her acquired a Piranha Plant item, which began to munch the back engines of further cars. Maddy spotted a secret path behind some buildings and quickly shifted that way. It was a little narrow with some oil puddles that made it slippery, but she found a question mark block that gave her a Blue Turtle Shell. She let it fly forward, making its funny noise and pink path, to seek the first-place driver.

Having bought time for herself, the path eventually brought her back to the other racers, and were nearing the river again. Maddy gulped, wishing that path led her around it, and around the Babylon Rogues in front of her. “Haha! Face it!” Jet laughed. “We all got three Mushrooms! You’ll NEVER pass us!”

But Maddy hit a question mark block and it landed on lightning. Curious, she pushed the button, and all racers were immediately shrunk to toy-size. “HEY! WHAT ‘appened??” squeaked Jet.

Maddy smirked, “OUT of the way, birdbrains.” And boosted forward with the Rogues bumping over her windshield. She took the narrow path above the river with no trouble, staying on it with careful precision to avoid the liquid. The racers re-expanded to normal, and Maddy saw the blue car was ahead of her again, having grown big just after passing a question mark block which Maddy grabbed. Once they were past the river and on normal road, the driver of that car, Captain Falcon, climbed on top and faced Maddy with spiteful eyes. She gulped as the man readied to jump with his signature move. “FALCO PUUUNCH!”

Maddy pressed the Boo Sheet she collected and turned intangible. “Yuh-oh. UAAAAAH!” Falcon punched nothing and fell onto the track, soon gone miles behind them as Maddy passed the starting line.

“THE THIRD LAP IS HEEERE! And Turbo Theo’s still taking the leeeeeead!”

Maddy looked at the screen, which read her in 2nd place. “WHAT?” She peeked over her hood and saw a thin blue line being created by some tiny force. She looked around her window, and this mysterious winner was a tiny orange snail with a super-powered shell. “You’re KIDDING me!”

She was more desperate than ever to pass this super snail, but he stayed directly in front of her, and she on its blue path. She took the upper route over the track again and stayed on to catch the Speed Boosts, hoping it would give her a winning chance. By the time she came down, the snail was right behind her, and she grabbed a block that contained three bananas. She dropped them behind, the snail easily avoiding, and one of the back racers grabbed a Bob-omb. It sent it ahead, exploding on Maddy while Turbo swerved around, and she was in 6th place before she knew it. The farthest back racer grabbed a block that landed on Gold Shroom, so he sped forward with haste, rammed Maddy, and caused the 7th place racer to pass too, putting her in 8th. “Oh, no.”

She kept along casually, fearing she lost any chance of winning. She followed the secret path that went around the flame field, just letting the oil pools make her slippery as she grabbed a question mark block. It landed on Lucky #8, which she pressed to see what’d come up. Eight different items surrounded
her car, so she would carefully use each one. First, the Bob-omb flew forward and wiped out the
two racers ahead. 6th place. She blasted a Green Shell to hit the pink racecar. 5th place. A Red
Shell to take out Storm the Albatross. 4th place. A banana straight at Wave the Swallow’s face,
making her ram a streetpole. 3rd place. And a Blooper to blind Jet’s face. 2nd.

She used a Mushroom to boost in a desperate, last ditch attempt to pass Turbo, following him
across the narrow road over the river. She finally used the Power Star, her car sparkling with
rainbow colors as she was invincible. Turbo looked back, hurrying faster and faster as the rainbow
car was inching ever so closer. And just when the river was reaching its end, Squuuish. The snail
was flat.

With that, there was nothing to stop Maddy from reaching the finish line. However, she noticed
Captain Falcon on the track, ready to leap at her with another flaming punch. With a smirk, she
used the last item, Boomerang, and flung the old racer off the track. “UACK!” Maddy’s car zipped
beyond the line as the audience roared. “AND RACER #3 IS THE WINNEEEERR! If you would like
to make refunds, take it up with our Human Resources!”

“A huge, buff alien peeked out a dark door, frowning angrily as he punched his palm. “Gulp! Never
mind!” Drake gulped. The frumpy alien slid back inside. (End song.)

Maddy parked, hopped out her car, and pulled her helmet off to whoosh her hair behind her. “You
DID IT, Maddy!” Ratchet cheered.

“And HEEEERE is your RADOOO!” An alien made of black and white vertical stripes tossed her
the small device with antennas.

The gang took retreat within a small alley as Clank pulled out a small TV device. “I will begin
connecting this with our transmitter so we may locate Milky Way’s coordinates. This will only be a
minute.”

Maddy casually walked around bored, approaching Drake who was leaned against a building. “You
know, Mads, I have to say, you surprise me.”

“Whatchu mean?”

“You’ve been associating with aliens for about 2 hours, and also a one-handed freak, and I don’t
think I’ve heard one remark.” He grinned slyly.

“Oh… well, you know, there’s already jillions of aliens, and tons of people have missing arms…”

“That’s not what I’m getting at.” He lowered his sunglasses, peering over them. “You’ve been
going to my school since kindergarten and every time you see me, you’d either insult or just point
and laugh. When we went up to GKND for that war, you couldn’t go five minutes without
throwing up. So tell me: why the sudden change in attitude?”

“Hmmmm… well…”

The truth is, what instigated it was her voyage to Punk Hazard. She still remembered all the
ordinary human kids befriending little Minish and Kateenians, riding the giant kids, swimming
with the merfolk, and flying with gargoyles and Nimbi. And Maddy herself was riding atop
Mocha’s big, bushy head. Playing together like there were no differences at all, just a bunch of
snot-nosed kids.

Last week, when Maddy was walking about the Moonbase, she suddenly ran into Mocha. “Oh?
Hey, Mocha. What’re you doing up here?”
“Hi, Maddy! I was asking Francis if the training room had any giant-size equipment I could borrow. Obviously not, right, heh heh heh ha.” She scratched her head.

“Well, we have psychicbenders as crime-detectors. Maybe some of them could biggify them.”

“Yeah. …Hey, let’s have a practice fight!” she said excitedly.

“What?”

“Francis said you were pretty tough against big guys. I wanna see how tough you are!” She smirked and balled her fists.

“…You’re on!”

The two were later in the training room with fighting stances. Mocha stomped forward and threw her fist at Maddy, but the Murphy jumped and kicked at Maddy’s left eye. She covered her eye and charged to her smaller opponent, furiously stomping around as Maddy dodged her feet, but Mocha surprised and pinned Maddy under her hand. Mocha smirked, seeing Maddy struggling, but with all her strength, Maddy pushed the hand up and slid out, rolling back on her feet. Mocha threw a punch at Maddy, who jumped off the fist to Mocha’s right eye to briefly tug her eyelash before kicking off. The rest of the fight lasted for 10 minutes.

“Huff, huff, let’s call it a draw.” Mocha panted, smiling.

“You say so.” Maddy complied. “…You know, Mocha, I’m having a sleepover tonight. No one else wants to come, so if you and your friends aren’t busy…”

“Well, sure! I’ll ask them!”

Things went pretty crazy that night. That night, Maddy had six other kids in the living room: a loudmouth girl, a doll-size girl, a barefoot angel, a Christian in a mustard dress, a 12-year-old with some paint, and a freaking giant. Oh, and some rabbit that thinks he’s a cat.

Chimney spun the bottle, and it stopped on Aeincha. “Okay Aeinchan, truth or dare?”

“DARE!” She was so tiny, but so daring.

“Okay. I dare you to… SMELL Aisa’s feet!!”

“Okay!” Aeincha walked over and took a whiff with her teeny nose. “Not bad!”

“What? YOU LIE!”

“Smell for yourself.” ;)

Chimney crawled over and, “Sniff sniff. UUUUUUHHHH!” Her nose shriveled, putting a grin on Aisa’s face.

“My turn!” Aeincha walked over to spin the huge bottle. “Mmmmm!” It was kinda hard.

“Heheh, let me help.” Mocha smiled, clutching the bottle in her thumb and index. It was hard to turn from her size, so she ended up crushing. “Oops…”

“Okay, AUTOMATIC YOU.” Chimney said. “Go into the kitchen and get another. Oh, and get some snacks.”
Mocha carefully stood up, bent down a little, and limped to the kitchen. She crawled and very slowly tried to squeeze her bulbous head into the archway, but when she just couldn’t, she reached an arm inside to pull the fridge open. She couldn’t reach, so she inched ever so closer, and when her bulbous fingers gripped the handle, she ended up pulling the whole thing over. “Whoops.”

“NOOOOOO!” cried Zach as he ran and knelt by it. “I was gonna eat the last cupcake and it’s RUIIIIIINNNED! Thanks a LOT, Bighead. Bad enough Maddy has that dumb dog, why’d she have to let an ELEPHANT in?” He stomped off.

“Hmmmm.” Saddened, Mocha backed up and tried to stand- “WHOOOA!” tripping on her feet, she fell back and crushed a shelf of fine china.

“AAAAAAAAHHH!” Gwen screamed. “MY COLLECTABLES!”

“Ohhhh great, NOW we’re gonna get a bill.” moaned Chimney.

“GYOM, gyom.” eye-rolled Gonbe.

Sniffling, Mocha carefully stepped around her friends and left out the giant hole where the front door used to be. Maddy followed her outside as she seated herself cross-legged on the front yard.

“I’m sorry, Maddy. I’ve never been to anyone else’s house before. I knew I should’ve eaten a shrink apple.”

“Yeah, maybe. But… I like you better this way.”

“You do? Why?”

“I dunno. I’m used to seeing you this way. It’d just look weird if you were me-sized.”

“But I’m ruining your house. I’m just stepping on everything like a realistic dollhouse. Why would you still want me in there?”

“Because otherwise I’d have a bunch of lunatics in my house and you’re big enough to balance them out.”

She smiled weakly. “Well… if you really want me.” She crouched and stepped back through the hole, taking her seat in the circle again.

“Okay, the fridge is a miss, but Zach brought a couple friends over to make you guys some cookies.” Gwen mentioned. “Zach?”

The twin brother twiddled a flute, summoning a team of short orange guys with green hair.


Maddy sure had a lot of fun with that. Still, to think so many kids from so many different worlds or races could play together in one place. Look at each other like equals, big or small. And a bunch of kids like that worked for the Kids Next Door, like Mocha and her friends. …It made Maddy think differently.

Ratchet’s transmitter beeped, “Hey I think we’re getting something.”

The transmission buzzed. “This is Starship Zachstar, repeat Starship Zachstar.”
“Zachstar? ..!” Maddy gasped, “That was one of my brother’s personas!”

“Hello? Who is this?”

She rushed to the com., “Zach, it’s me, Maddy! Are you there?”

The static on her wristwatch screen faded, revealing an adult Zach with a *Dragon Ball Z*-like design. “HE’S A FREAKING ANIMEEE!”

“Hello? Are you Maddy’s brother?” Ratchet asked.

“Yes. I am Maddy’s brother, Prince Hiroshi. 20 years ago, she was abducted by space bandidos. I mourned her loss, but I am overjoyed, that you found her again.”

“NOT TRUE, THAT’S NOT TRUE, HE’S MY TWIN BROTHER AND WE GO TO 4TH GRADE TOGETHER, HE’S MAKING CRUD UP!” Maddy screamed.

“Ahhhh yes. You always were, very unimaginative.”

“STOP TALKING LIKE THAT AND COME PICK ME UP!”

“Keep it down, Maddy. I don’t think we’re supposed to be in this alley.” Ratchet cautioned.

“Look, Zach, do you have my coordinates? I’m on Peoples $\alpha$. Just, get the GKND or something and track me down.”

“Never you fear, Maddy! For I am getting Voltron!”

The screen revealed a swarm of colored ships flying from there garages. Strums of epic music played as a green part slowly inserted into a pink part. That same tune played when a red part, very slowly, entered a blue part. The same tune, when a yellow part entered an orange part. A gray part, in a very stylish fashion, connected with a brown part. And for about 5 minutes, it was part entering part after part. But it finally concluded when Voltron’s glorious head latched on the top, his face opening.

His whole body was revealed to be a complete mess, a bunch of little ships haphazardly slanted and squished together, bound to fall apart any minute. “Um… I may need a minute. Okay guys, take it back to Step 52.” The screen switched off.

“He’s coming at the Speed of Justice.” Maddy noted.

“Well, we have his coordinates marked, we can always fly to wherever he is.” Ratchet confirmed. “Let’s go look for Qwark. Hey QWARK, where are you?” He searched around.

“Uhhhh hey, Ratchet!” Qwark came out from an alley, grinning nervously and trying to hide. “Listen, funny story, these gangsters kind of challenged me to some street-poker and, one thing led to another, not only is my jumpsuit in new hands, liiii lost the ship.”

“What?!?”

They rushed their way through town to where Aphelion was parked… or, used to be. “QWARK, who took the ship?!?”

“Just some guys, I dunno! Relax, they’ll bring it back, they said we coool, we coooool!” Though when he tried to pose cool, the fact he was in underwear, gloves, boots, and a mask made him look… ehh, less than qualified.
“HOW are we going to get off this rock?! Even if we had time to sit and wait for Maddy’s brother, Nefarious is still looking for us. Before you know it, they’ll be posting wanted posters and all these thugs will be on us, we need someplace to hide.”

“How ‘bout this?” Clank held up a poster.

Ratchet and took and skimmed. It had a picture of a slim robot woman in red metal clothing, and brown metal hair. “Courtney Gears concert, Orbital Auditorium? Since when’ve you been into her?”

“Since she became too sexy for her chest compartment. Mm hm he he he.”

“Courtney Gears… ain’t that the fat lady in the wheelchair?” Drake asked.

“You’re thinking of someone else.” Mad said.

“Oh, that reminds me! I managed to win four tickets for the transport ride there in that poker!” Qwark raised the tickets.

“And you lost the ship afterward?” Ratchet asked.

“No, it’s… other way.”

Disbelieved stares. “Well, that still isn’t enough tickets for one of us.”

“I will disguise as your backpack and sneak onto the roof once there, to keep signaling for Maddy’s brother.” Clank offered.

“Then can we also count on you to find snacks for us?”

“I am reserving my multi-purpose functions for important uses.”

“Well-p, it’s settled, let’s go watch some mecha-slut strip-dance onstage.” Drake remarked as he walked off first.

“Let’s also get Qwark some clothes at the souvenir stand.” remarked Maddy as they joined.

Somewhere in space

“HOO! Glad we got THAT outta the way!” Zach cheered as Voltron was finally fixed. “The Speed of Justice waits for no man! Hold on, Maddy! I’m going infinity… AND BEYOND!!” (Play “Insane in the Membrane” by Cypress Hill.)

Act 2: Flight Zachstar

The Zachstar began flying at speeds incomprehensible to the human senses, swaying up and down to the music on his stereos, which were his fuel source. The stars seemed to pass him like tiny dust particles, and the planets simple islands he was gliding past on his speedboat. Impeding his progress were none other than Galaxians, the classic pixel aliens from the arcade game shooting tiny lasers. Zachstar swiftly rolled and dodged the lasers before shooting his own, whirling and dancing in many fancy poses as if at a disco party, jabbing his fingers like guns as they fired the bullets, Zachstar shaking his hips as he blew down a round of Galaxians.

He was flying to a meteor field at great speed, dodging left and right to avoid slowing his progress, however very little progress he would lose. A new round of Galaxians appeared, this time in very small pairs that appeared onscreen a brief moment, shot a laser, and zipped off, making it difficult
for Zach to shoot them when more came. They were appearing almost every direction, Zach hurriedly dodging their shots, but parts of his armor were scorched, and soon it felt like he were in a sea of pixelly aliens. But then he rammed through a power-up box that allowed him to unleash a mighty shockwave, obliterating all Galaxians in sight.

Space was clear for a few hundred light-years before Zachstar came to another asteroid field, maneuvering left, right, up, down, backways, frontways, anyway you can possibly imagine to avoid asteroids, even passing Diagon Alley. Once past the field, more Galaxians started zipping onscreen and hitting each other, bunching into larger forms that took more hits to destroy. Zachstar continued to dance and groove as he showed ‘em his moves, shooting all aliens down no matter how long it took.

But finally he encountered a Galaxian far bigger than the others, made of red and green pixels as it aimed its many pixelly cannons. Zachstar shot forward to throw a storm of punches, but the Galaxian blocked with its own arms and pelted Zach with bullets, finally sending him down with a stronger punch. Zach collided forcefully with the ground, but bounced back to his feet and glared at the alien. In this misty, orange alley he had landed, disco lights zoomed all around the ground as Zachstar swiftly maneuvered his legs and arms, making all sorts of fluent dance moves while his head and body remained almost still. The Galaxian blasted endless lasers as Zach jumped miles over the surface, then launched at the alien with powerful rocket boots.

The screen freeze-framed when his fist made contact with the alien, taking the design of a comic book.

The Galaxian countered with his own punch, the image of Katniss Everdeen kicking Harry Potter.

Zachstar performed a mighty spin-kick, the image of Sonic 2006 besting Sonic Lost World.

Galaxian squished Zachstar under a Ground Pound, the image of Makorra smashing Korrasami.

Zachstar struck its chest with a drill attack, the image of One Piece Wiki smashing Avatar Wiki.

And Zachstar scored one more blow by smashing the alien cold on the ground, the image of Gamewizard, sitting atop a throne that was crushing an annoyed Tom Warburton, IGN people, George Lucas, Nickelodeon people, and that god-awful Wizard movie about a boy who’s good at videogames and is going to California to bring a lunchbox to his dead sister, which has no relevance to the plot. (Seth MacFarlane also sat with me on the throne.)

Zachstar performed a few quick victory poses before taking to the stars. He would be on his way in a few milliseconds. (End song.)

“…Uhhhhhh.” Zach seemed to have landed on a hillbilly planet as a cowboy gofer approached him.

“Well howdy, pardner! You lookin’ for some grain?”

“I’m, uh, looking for Infinity and Beyond. Seen it anywhere?”

“Oh, you wanna go 10 trillion light-years thataway.” He pointed in the very direction Zach came from.

“Ahhhhh, crud.” A Southern, jail harmonica tune rang in the air.

New Island
The yacht sailed treacherous seas of furious winds, angry storms, and a random Gyarados that ambushed and tried to blow them to smithereens. But things turned for the better when the seas became gentle, in the very eye of this storm. The quiet castle of three windmill towers, dark and worn-down. Lucario waited at the pier while Sunni and Darcy stepped off, marching up the wide stairway to the balcony. With their combined psychic, the huge front gates came open, then it was another walk across the wide, empty dining room, up the high, spiraling road to the tallest tower.

“Hello? …Is anyone up here?” called Sunni nervously.

The room was very dark and empty, the only light coming from the wide windows with a view of the bright blue sky. A shadowed figure sat in the throne across from them, facing toward the sky. “Do you need to ask?”

They gasped. “It’s you, isn’t it! Mewtwo?” Sunni spoke, walking in.

“I thought I had sensed a body strong with The Force. With familiar chi, no less. That which belongs to Mikaela Corella… is it not?”

“Yes!” Sunni spoke excitedly. “I’m Mika’s daughter, Sunni! Oh, and that’s Darcy, my sister.” The latter spared a slight glare. “Listen, my mom’s been captured, and we need you to help-”

“Mika has taken my place in the Order of the White Lotus after besting me. What befalls her is no longer any concern for me.”

“But you HAVE to help us! At least help us train! I need to get better at psychic so I can rescue her!”

“Is that so? You know that psychic-”

“Yeah yeah, psychic’s a dangerous element that makes people go crazy and choke people, Darth Vader-style, blah blah blah, but I don’t care! I need to become more powerful like my mom, she was supposed to help me!”

“Really? Well, if your mom is as powerful as you make her to be… and she is… why in the world do you believe she was captured so easily?”

“I dunno, I… Maybe she’s trying to do something! If that’s true, I wanna help her, you gotta train me so I can get more strong!”

“And what is it you think she is trying to do?”

“I…I…”

“So you got yourself a rival, huh!” Mika grinned. “Okay, Sunni, I’ll help you train.”

“Oh, hey Sunni!” Mika called over the loud propellers, still with a grin. “Tell your dad I’ve been taken captive, so I won’t make it to dinner! See you later, Honeeeeyy!”

“…” It was all so obvious, “So that’s it, isn’t it. Mom’s training me to be more independent. To stop relying on her.”

“Mmmm…”

“…” Sunni shook her head, “So what, I still can’t get any better at psychic by myself! I NEEDED my mom to train me, but you’re the next best thing, you taught her everything she knows!”
“I’ve always had the right mind about each of my students. I sensed Mika becoming a terrific psychicbender, and she has. Another student met similar expectations… but you, I sense incredible chaos surrounding your psyche. Your overdependence on your mom will cause your psychic to destable. Your imagination is limited…”

“I’m trying to, but it’s been so hard, what with everything on your mind…”

“Then perhaps you need to empty your mind. I am retired from training… and am frankly in not one of the best conditions. Use your imagination… and find other ways to train.”

“But where’m I- …Siiigh, fine.” Sunni knew it was pointless. “I guess I’m on my own, then.” She turned to leave. “Come on, Darcy.”

“Hang on.” They stopped. “Your sister, on the other hand… we thought of other solutions for her. It is time you two… go separate ways.”

“W…Whaddyou mean? Who’s ‘we’?”

Outside, Lucario was already waiting for them below the stairs, his face stern and serious. “I will be taking Darcy with me now.”

“To where?? Will someone please EXPLAIN?”

Ignoring Sunni’s query, Lucario walked up and placed his fists on Darcy’s head and chest. “It’s time to ascend.” His eyes closed as they brimmed, and Darcy felt her body lighten when both fists glowed. Sunni gaped when they shot to the heavens as a beam of light.

“W-… Darcy… COME BAAAAAAAACK!”

Rainier walked up with a very curious, though not very concerned, face. “Well, the captain’s got a new story to tell. So what’s with Darcy becoming an aurora… light?”

Deep down, a panicky storm was brewing inside of Sunni.

**Nashville, Tennessee; park**

Monkeys down the street, monkeys at the park, everywhere you’d look would be monkeys, monkeys, and more monkeys causing a ruckus. And who could keep the little varmints from attacking the giant treehouse in the middle of the neighborhood. Certainly not these two dorky-faced children. “GIT back here, you little VARMINTS!” yelled Sarah-Jane Jones II, she and her brother, Gary trying to catch the monkeys in nets. One of the silly rascals pounced off Sarah’s head. “Rats.”

“Well, at least your hair isn’t yellow. They just can’t stay off me!” Gary yelled as two monkeys were forcefully tugging his blonde hair, swinging them off with his net. “I dunno where these things came from, but they’re a worse nuisance than baby GUNGANS! Oh, WHEN will a ray of HOPE shine down on this…” And that’s when a great flash exploded above them.

“OOOF.” Emily Garley fell and crushed them under her backside. “Ouch… should’ve coordinated it better. …Oh, hey guys.”

“Howdy, Emily…” mumbled Sarah, her eyes blocked by Emily’s huge shoes.

“What’s going on…” Gary asked.
“Well, the short version is, a bunch of monkeys escaped from my grandpa’s lab and teleported all over the world. So now I’m going to catch them, and I thought you guys could help.”

“Wer happy to oblige with any of yer crazy shenanigans.” Sarah replied. “Unless this is some new experiment regardin’ human resting mats, perhaps you c’n get offa us.”

“Oh, sorry. He he he he! The transporter can’t really detect if any life forms are in the location, so it’s good I appeared above you, otherwise it would end bad.”

“Yes, there would be NO greater hell than sharing your scratchy skin, now GET OFF US!” Gary demanded.

“Oh! Sorry!” Emily rolled off and recovered, letting the two stand and brush.

“But remind us how we’re supposed to catch these here varmints.” Sarah informed. “Our nets don’t fill the juice barrel.”

“No! But THESE will!” Emily tossed them two extra T.E.L.A.-N.E.T.s. “I always bring back-ups, just in case. And I got you other stuff, too!”

“Well, dawgy, now we c’n invite extra players!”

“Or maybe we should stick to one person. You know, so no one screws us up!”

“Um… What’re you guys talking about?” Em asked.

“UHHHH. NOTHIN’.”

“Hehe! Okay.” Emily blushed. “Anyway, I also need to get to your treehouse and tell Moonbase about this—I think there’s something a lot bigger going on.”

“Well, the monkeys sort of kicked us outta there, but you can try and chase ‘em out.” shrugged Gary.

“It’ll be easy! Just net the monkeys and they’ll be good as gone. I hope you two brought sweat-decreasion pills ‘cause we’ll be doing this awhile! Let’s get started!”

The two stared, “You’re the only one that needs ‘em.” they said.

Stage 10: Orange River

Mission: Capture 12 monkeys and get to Sector N’s treehouse!

This region was under a fiery, orange sky, and with the sun setting behind the city, these suburbs would be shaded in shadow. Two Pipo Monkeys were in the park, one running around the field, another swimming in the fountain. Emily looked at Gary and gestured to the fountain with her fingers, then to the field as she looked at Sarah, the two nodding. Emily and Sarah rushed to the field using Super Hoops as the monkey long-jumped to try and escape them. The girls were running fast as they could, but stopped to catch breath when the monkey was easily evading capture. So having a wild idea, Emily told her to go left, so when she ran to the right of the monkey and began chasing, Sarah jumped out from behind a tree and netted him.

“Dah! Hey! Get in here you little—D’OOH!” They looked over with disbelief when Gary was floppin’ and splashin’ around the fountain, unable to net the shifty ape. When he fell on his front,
the ape got on his head, shook his rear, and kept jumping.

“Need some help there, Gare?” Emily remarked. When the monkey hopped by, she bashed its head, knocked him dizzy, and let Gary snatch him in the net. “Oh- be careful not to net yourself, or we’ll be transported, too. Huhuhu! I reckon we don’t wanna be submitted to Pipo-removal experiments!”

The rest of the park was empty except for two 4x4 pieces lain beside some trees. “They musta left them here after invading the treehouse.” Gary guessed.

“Hey! If I get enough of these, maybe I can build a Monkey Radar.” Emily assumed. “About 10 will do. That’ll make things a bit easier.” Since they were finished with the park, and the bridge to town had a roadblock at the end, the team decided to explore down the river, flaming orange like the sky above. They couldn’t swim in it due to piranhas lurking around, so the trio hopped in a small boat to row their way down. A monkey was standing on a pier along the left shore, blasting a machinegun as the kids hurriedly rowed left and right. They barely made it over as Emily hopped out and bonked him in the head, catching him.

The river was further blocked by a huge wooden wall, but in the farthest corner, a 4x4 piece floated, so the trio rowed over to collect it. They then returned to the pier and headed up a hill to another field area. It was mostly a bunch of small trees, but when they turned away, they heard them rustling and quickly whipped around to see what it was, but there was nothing. They turned away again, and the rustling continued, and it sounded like something was jumping, but still nothing. The trio decided to shoot at the trees with their slingshots, but nothing was coming out. If there were monkeys in there, they would have to come back when they found a way to scare them out.

They crossed a bridge atop the wall that was blocking the river, coming to a smaller field populated by bushes. Leaping around these bushes were three bug-size creatures wearing tiny Pipo Helmets: they were spider-monkeys. The trio rushed around and tried desperately to net these pint-size Pipos (grabbing a 4x4 behind a bush), but they slipped right between the strings of their nets.

“Shoot, why can’t we jus’ squish ‘em?” asked Sarah.

“Because, these monkeys don’t know what they’re doing, that’s not fair!” Emily reasoned.

“Well, technically they might, but they’re too small to put up a fight.”

“In that case, why don’t we just leave ‘em alone?” Gary asked. “I mean, if they can’t even harm us.”

“Well… okay.”

So leaving more monkeys alone, the three progressed a path along the edge of the hilltop above the river. A patch of tall bamboo was growing from the river, and a white orangutan with a Pipo Helmet was hopping around them. The trio used their Sky Flyers to float over and carefully balance on the bamboo, hopping across with the greatest precision to catch the monkey. Gary ended up slipping and falling, and when Sarah whooshed her net when the monkey hopped by, she missed, twirled in place, then fell. It was up to Emily, hopping the bamboo tips and getting the ape cornered, but it bent its bamboo down, so when Emily got on, trying to balance, the ape released and sent her flinging. “WHOOOA!”

She splashed in the Orange River, shortly joined by her friends using Water Nets. “Methinks yer no acrobat.” Sarah remarked.
“Awwwww.” Emily frowned. Another monkey they’d have to let slip. Two apes were swimming around this river using underwater jetpacks, so once the trio caught up, they (thankfully) were able to catch them in water nets. They climbed onto one of a trio of wooden platforms, aligned in a triangle, and saw a Pipo Monkey fishing on one of them. When Gary was about to catch it, Emily held him back and noted the camera on a further platform. So they swam over as Emily pressed its switch, filming the fishing monkey.

This reminds me of a classic tale. The captions read.

So with that, they swam back over and netted the monkey, then grabbed the 4x4 on the opposite platform. They swam further down the river before climbing onto a wide wooden pier with many tables with umbrellas. Dancing atop a platform were two monkeys dressed like Honey & Darling from *Ocarina of Time*, but they cowered away when the kids got close. Gary chased the Darling ape around the tables with his Super Hoop and succeeded in catching him, while Honey was hopping the umbrella tops. Sarah shot her down with the slingshot and netted her.

They grabbed a 4x4 in-between some tables, then saw another one magically floating several feet above an umbrella, so Sarah got on that one and used Sly Flyer to float up and grab it. The following part of the river had piranhas swimming around, so they followed a walkway along the left side and entered a dark tunnel. The walkway sloped upward near the ceiling, then came to a dead end, with the only way forward across swampy vines growing across the ceiling. They held tight and climbed across, and saw a monkey swinging back-and-forth on one spot. Emily used one hand to grab the net and swipe it inside, then grabbed a 4x4 stuck to the ceiling.

They dropped off on a few platforms and hopped over to another leftside walkway. A small, low platform on the right wall had a 4x4, so Sarah floated over to get it. But their walkway was too high for her to get back, so she climbed across a thin ledge sticking out above her, landing on another walkway. This path curved up vertically, with the last 4x4 at the top. She spun her Super Hoop and miraculously ran up the vertical path, grabbing the 4x4 and kicking off before floating back to their walkway. Emily grabbed all the 4x4, got to her knees, and began to whip something up.

**Kids Next Door: R.A.D.A.R.**

Rascally Apes Daren’t Avoid Recapture

“All right! Now we can detect the monkeys’ specific locations. Let’s test it out.” She aimed the radar further down the tunnel, detecting a monkey climbing a large fence blocking the way forward. *Where’re them bats?* the radar read. The walkway ended a few meters before that fence, with the ape on the other side. They could shoot slingshot pellets through the bars, but he would fall in and be washed down the river. Emily also noticed the red switch on the other side of the fence, so she shot a pellet through and pressed it, making a small door open on a low part of the fence. They floated inside with Sky Flyers and landed on a safe platform, and were close enough to the monkey for a brief jump, and catch.

There was then a grabable fence along the left wall which the three kids began to climb across. A pipe above had holes in it as streams of goop were pouring out, and not wanting to know what it was, they carefully avoided them at those intervals. Following the fence, the trio swung a series of chains hanging from the ceiling, then took land on a large raft. It began moving on its own as they finally exited the cave, exposed to the bright setting sun outside. Pipodactyls flew around and shot fireballs, the kids dodging and whacking them out of the air when they sailed by. Monkeys were
also hovering overhead with helipacks, so with careful timing, they jumped and caught these monkeys in nets. They netted three monkeys on that river, making 13 out of 12 monkeys by the time the raft stopped at the barred end.

They hopped off on the left side, where there appeared to be an open gate between two monitors, each showing 6 monkey icons lit blue. It must’ve signified they needed 12 monkeys to pass, and they met this quota. They followed a stairway up a hill, to a small neighborhood where Sector N’s treehouse towered above the rest. They rushed over there to conclude this stage.

“Hoo… Well, I donno about YOU pardners, but mah sweatglands finally got their due.” Sarah noted, slouching as she caught her breath.

“But you have to admit, it makes such an invigorating sport.” Emily said, panting as well.

“Well, hopefully once we phone this in to Moonbase, they can handle some back-breaking for us.” Gary replied, rushing to their house’s mailbox. He pulled a booger out of his nose and stuck it in a slot.

“Enter: Password.”

“Let’s see… I believe it is Pureblood! HA ha ha, just kidding! It’s Rhubarb.”

“Actually… it’s- PPBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB!” A tongue shot out and blew Gary away. His friends hurried beside him as he wiped spit off his face, all three gazing as the treehouse stepped out of its perch, standing with two feet made of roots. The kids readied their guard as multiple branches emerged, ready to swing.

“HA HA ha ha ha haaaaa!” a voice like that of a madman cackled through the air. “Well well! I never thought ANY human would rise against the marvelous SPECTER! But is a pack of children REALLY the best they HAAAVE?”

“Holy whoa! Did Specter reprogram your computer to attack us??” Emily exclaimed.

“NO, you silly girl! I am a member of the Freaky Monkey Five, and the most intelligent monkey under Specter’s leadership. I am known as VHITE Monkey!”

“A rival for Specter’s brains, huh? What’s so special about you Freaky Monkeys compared to the lesser ones?”

“A very good question! Specter has taken the liberty of feeding us Vita-Z Bananas, packed with the richest calcium, potassium, and fresh Bang Gas! Our intelligence and powers are beyond the average Pipo Monkey, thus are the only worthy beings capable of organizing Specter’s Televised Takeover!”

“Televisioned Takeover?” questioned Sarah.

“GAAAAAH! I probably shouldn’t have mentioned that! Oh well, it doesn’t matter. I’ll have you runts defeated and strapped down before long. Then it’s just a matter of finding that Octogan.”

“Octagon?” Emily asked.

“I SAID NOTHING!! AND THEN YOU DIED! Get ready ‘cause I’M GONNA SHISH-KABOB YOU!!!!” (Play White Monkey’s Theme from Ape Escape 3.)
Team Emily ran separate directions as the treehouse started swinging its giant branches, which they jumped and ducked. But a branch grabbed Emily around her ankle and began to swing her furiously around the air before sending her flying several miles. “Hold on!” Sarah called, rushing after her with the Super Hoop to break Emily’s fall.

“Hehe! Sorry.” Emily blushed, both quickly getting up and returning to the colossus. After jumping its branches again, the three kids took aim at the strange antennas around its body, shooting homing slingshot pellets to try and damage them. “EEEEERRRRR!” This seemed to work, as the treehouse shook before it leaped into the air and made the kids bounce upon landing, burying its roots beneath the surface to ambush them. They felt the roots maneuvering beneath and jumped aside before they emerged, then watched as the rest of the roots began to come back up, starting from the base. The treehouse intended to pull them back, so Emily hopped on one of the roots and rushed up with the Super Hoop, grabbing hold of the ladder on the treehouse’s side. It led her to a series of platforms as she began to jump up.

“AWAY WITH YOU!” The giant treehouse shook furiously at certain intervals, forcing Emily to grab hold of the branches to avoid swinging off. The way the treehouse kept moving made it hard for Emily to stand—she found a hard time balancing on normal ground already. She floated to a high platform with the Sky Flyer, then took hold of a small ledge and began to climb across to an open window. “I feel INSECTS on my exterior. BEGONE!”

“AAAAHH!” Emily was smacked away by one of the treehouse’s arms, smashing the ground hard. “Aw, dang it!”

“Never trust a klutz with oversized sneakers.” remarked Gary Jones, whom was climbing across an alternate ledge before slipping into a window. A monkey that was running in a hamster wheel screeched and tried to escape, but Gary successfully caught him in his net.

“NOOO! You little!” The treehouse shook more before Gary flew out of the window, taking soft land with his Flyer. “I’M GONNA SHISH-KABOB YOU!” A bunch of cannons appeared on the treehouse and blasted meteors into the air, the kids running around with Super Hoops to avoid being scorched. By the time they were gone, the treehouse had buried its roots beneath the ground again, succeeding in catching the nerds who were tired from running. He hurled them right toward each other as they collided, and as they rubbed their heads after hitting the ground, they jumped up and ran when the treehouse blasted flamethrowers. It stuck its roots beneath the ground, so the trio dodged aside when they emerged.

When the rest of the roots began to arise, Sarah whirled her Super Hoop and rushed up the root, then kept it whirling as she ran straight up the treehouse’s side, on a conveniently carved path. She had to dodge around bushels of leaves, make a curve left, then right, and jump off to grab onto a branch. From there, she could jump into a window, finding herself in a mazy corridor of the treehouse. She used her R.A.D.A.R. to search around for any monkeys, detecting one nearby. She followed the signal around the maze intently, but couldn’t quite see where the monkey was hidden. But when she passed a painting of Charles Darwin she doesn’t remember having, she cut it open and saw the monkey working a terminal. Smirking in disbelief, she caught it in her net as it vanished.

“YOU LITTLE!!” After shaking furiously, Sarah-Jane went flying out of the treehouse. “I’M GONNA SHISH-KABOB YOU!” Sensing what was coming, the three rushed around aimlessly as the treehouse spun around the area and released a storm of flames, setting fire on many parts of the ground. They had less room to run around when the treehouse began leaping and aiming to crush
them, with each quake making them slip. They put each flame out by whacking it with their Stun Clubs, and once the tree was finishing leaping, all the flames died out.

Angered, the treehouse extracted more branches and began smashing them around the ground in attempt to crush the kids, who were quick to dodge as they whacked each branch with the Stun Clubs, which seemed to make the thick wood wince with pain. “This plant looks a little thirsty!” Emily smirked as she rushed to the tree’s roots and pulled a water gun out of her Infi-Cube. “I forgot to restock on water, but now’s a better use as any!” So using the S.Q.W.I.R.T., she sprinkled water on the stem of the tree as its branches began to grow rapidly out of control.

“HEEEEY! I can’t see a darn thing!” White Monkey exclaimed as the tree was almost completely shrouded in its own leaves.

“Quick! Let’s go for it!” Emily yelled to her friends. Sarah and Gary joined her at the tree as they began to jump their way up a series of newly-grown branches, using the Sky Flyer to gain some extra ground as well. Finally, they made it to the dome at the tree’s top and broke through the glass into the Mission Prep Room. They glared angrily at the short, white monkey with the disheveled hair and red/green mismatched glasses working the controls.

“GAAAAAH! I have been found! I must maintain my secrets!” So the monkey began to hop around the chamber, but Gary and Sarah followed Emily's gestures and ran opposite directions. “GAH!” Sarah skidded to a halt beside the monkey and sent it across the room with her Stun Club. He flew toward Gary, who batted it to Emily, who leaped and kicked him forcefully to the center.

“Oaf!” Her leg still stretched mid-jump, Emily had a rough land in which she nearly did the splits. But she got up, fixed her glasses back on, and glared at the dizzy monkey in the middle. With a mighty leap, Emily raised her net, and- “YES! (YES! YES!” White Monkey was gone in thin air.

After quickly hacking into their computer, Sarah and Gary managed to shut the rogue treehouse down. “Hoo, dawgy. Talk about a wild bull at the rodeo.” the former said.

“Why did White Monkey decide to hack it, anyway?” Emily asked.

“I don’t know. But check this out.” Gary brought up many holographic screens of children sitting on couches at home, eyes totally blank with mouths drooling. “It’s like all these kids are in a… trance.”

“Holy cow!” widened Emily. “You don’t think Specter was sending hypnotic images from the treehouse, do you??”

“Lemme see: Adventure Time With Pip and Po, Misadventures with Bippy, Out o’ Jimmy’s Head??” Sarah examined. “Well bake me ‘n a toaster oven, they’re usin’ our treehouses to make dang NITWIT shows and hypnotize kids!”

“That’s terrible! How will kids educate their selves with fine-quality programming?! All those poor nature channels, secrets of the universe, educational cartoons, and—HUU!” Emily gasped with incredible horror. “EVEN THE MICROBIOLOGY CHANNEL, TOO!!! I can’t let them get away with this!”

“Well, they got a far distance ahead.” Gary said, typing on the keyboard. “They disabled communication with any other treehouses, and Lord knows how many were taken over.”

“But at this rate, Moonbase should be more th’n on the job.” Sarah implied.
“End of the world is coming up, it was the perfect time to seize the moment. The whole Kids Next Door is panicking, it’ll take forever to locate these monkey bases.”

“Haaaawwwww.” Emily sat down in defeat. “Then what are we supposed to do?”

“Call me a nutbrain… but Ah know someone who might help.” Sarah began. “He’s our mom’s cousin… a real nutbrain… but boy, is he smarter ‘an a no-limbed newborn.”

Gary gasped deeply. “No! You can’t mean-!”

“Who? WHO?” asked Emily eagerly.

Both siblings faced her with grim, dark eyes. “UNCLE SHELDON COOPER.”

“…Who?”

“He’s the most unbearable human being anyone could ever meet!” Gary exclaimed. “That imPERVIOUS ego, those TERRIFYING mantis eyes… You’d have to be able to stand him for 10 SECONDS and vice-versa if you ever want ‘is help!!”

“Yer right. Ferget I suggested.” Sarah agreed.

“Well… how can he help? Where does he live?” Em asked.

“Our mom says he lived in Galveston, Texas,” Gary explained, “where he conducts research on the ‘endless wonders of the universe.’ I don’t know if he still lives there, he just comes to visit us. Granted, he’s got a lot of cool stuff and he has his know-how, but trust me, you’ll never stand him for long.”

Emily hopped to her feet and became serious, “Then let’s go!” She balled her fist. “There’s no smartass in the WORLD that’s encountered Emily Garley- snort! I’ll kick this guy’s brain’s butt up Timbuktu, I tell you what, and I ain’t stop kickin’ ‘til this guy gives us whatever help we need! So bring it on, guys, haul me down to Texas so I can go cowsquirrel!”

It wasn’t the only time Emily looked so serious, so willing, so ready to fight. …Every time, she looked ridiculous, they were ashamed to be near her. “Well uh, tell you what Emily, how ‘bout when Uncle Sheldon drives you mad, we agree not to reveal the embarrassing story ‘long as you stay away from us for the rest of your life.” Gary offered.

“Oh Dear Mercy, what have we done.” Gary shuddered with terror as he regrettably joined his friends.

Cleveland neighborhood

The sun was nearly halfway below the horizon, and the city would be dark in minutes. In the yards and gardens where our world’s tiniest creatures lived, the shade has already arrived. This was how it was for Rupert, Timmy, and Hikari at this moment. “It’s getting daaaaaaaaark, Ruppy.” Hikari moaned.
“Our parents are gonna kill us.” Timmy noted glumly. “Rupert, we gotta get home.”

“You wanna go to your parents looking like ants?”

“Well, it’s better than being out here where the REAL bugs can get us. Can these Pikmin really protect us out here?”

“I’m… not sure. They said they usually just stay in their Onion.”

“Well why don’t they let US in?”

“Because we need MKND clearance. But I guess we can find your house. Where is it?”

“It’s. … …I’m not sure.” Timmy raised his finger to point a direction, but left, right, forward, and behind him was giant grass.

“I’m scared.” moaned Hikari. “What if we get eaten?”

“L-Look, it’s okay, Hikari…” Rupert tried to assure himself as well. But he’s never been out camping in a pitch-black forest, this was generally the same, on a much more dangerous scale. “We’ll just stay here until…until the sun comes out. We’ll call the Pikmin out for some defense.”

“I knew we shouldn’ta agreed to this.” Timmy frowned, having a seat. “It’ll take us days to find our house. Months…”

“I wish Jessie were here.” Hikari sat down as well. “He would hold us, and protect us, he’d step on ALL the big, scary bugs and let us sleep in his soft, warm hair.” Her face mixed with worry, sadness, and dreamy love.

It hurt to see his friends so worried and afraid. He was almost sorry he shrunk them into this mess, now that they had no way to get back. Rupert never liked being at home with Dad, but being so small in such a dark place, able to be eaten or crushed by anything, this adventure could only end badly. …He tried to sport a positive look, “Hey, it’ll be alright, guys. We’ve got the Pikmin. They fought all those other creatures, especially those Purple guys, they’ll protect us ‘til the morning! Then we’ll keep looking until we find another Minish and get us back to normal!”

“Okay…” Timmy began to calm a bit. “But Rupert?”

“Yeah?”

“I want twenty dollars now.”

“Okay.. .”

_Iceland; outside King Household_

Sector V took land on the street outside the King House, from which grew the humongous tree that was Sector IC’s treehouse. The IC team saw them coming in, already rushing down to the house and out the front door. “Hey, Sector V!” MaKayla beamed. “Long time, no see! Done being pirates?”

“Heh heh, if only.” Mason chuckled. “Still know everything, MaKayla?”

“No, not at the moment.”

“Yo, what up, George.” Chris smirked and waved. “Anything exciting happen?”
“Miyuki got hit by a car a few days ago.”

“Ouch. Anyway, do you guys know anything about these 20 Keys?” Chris asked. “We were gonna ask your dad that.”

“Our dad’s not home,” Kayla replied. “Said he had to do something. And don’t ask me to tell you who they are, ‘cause Clockwork wouldn’t let me look.”

“Aaaaaawww! Even when he’s DEAD, he won’t help us!” Artie whined.

“Don’t you guys have any clues?” Miyuki asked.

“Not exactly.” Aurora replied. “But two operatives were kidnapped by aliens, and Dillon said their boss talked about Dr. Nefarious. Didn’t you do a report about him?”

“Hey, that’s the guy that tried to ruin Christmas!” Lola recalled.

“Great, we have a common enemy.” Chris fist-palmed. “Let’s get up there and kick his bum!”

“Hold on.” Aurora touched his shoulder. “If they’re in space, we could be chasing them for ages, and what if Cheren needs us on Earth? It just feels too early to be rushing into it.”

“But we HAVE to save Maddy!”

“Listen, why don’t we go on and save her?” Kayla told them. “We’ll go to Galaxia and get GKND’s help to find Maddy and search for these Keys. Meanwhile, you stay here and search for clues on Earth.”

“Sounds good to me.” Harry said. “Ah prefer breathing my atmosphere. Any object?” Some of the members shook ‘no’. “A’ight then.”

“Well… okay, George?” George looked up as Chris faced him seriously. The Uno boy held his right fist up. “Promise me you’ll bring Maddy safely.”

“…” George gripped his fist, “Am I making the Unbreakable Vow?”

“Yes. And if you break it, I’ll kill your best friend, and you’ll have to alter the timeline to save him.”

“Yeah, I had a feeling something bad would happen to Terry, anyway.” He smiled.

“HUH?!!?” Terry jumped in panic.

“HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!” The friends laughed ecstatically at Terry’s fuming face.

“Yahright, later Chris.” George waved as his team headed back inside.

“La’er.” Chris waved back, still chuckling.

Sector V went back in the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. as Mason and Artie returned to drawing on Sheila’s snoozing face. “So what’re we going to do now?” Haruka asked. “Pick Carol up and get her on the boredom?”

“Carol called me earlier, said she was going to a private party.” Mason replied. “Said she would email us once she was there.”
“Sounds fancy. We oughta breach it.” Haylee said.

“Well if we aren’t going to help Maddy, where are we going?” Chris asked. “To look for my long-lost cousin?”

“If Augustus has anything to do with stuff, then maybe.” Aurora said as Mason and Dillon wrote ‘Monkeytarts’ on Sheila’s snoozing face. “Let’s go talk to Cheren on Moonbase, he’ll want to know this.”

“Assumin’ he ain’t tryin’ to be gutsy and already off doin’ it himself..” Harry said.

**York Household; 7p.m.**

7pm, it was time for duty. Nolan strapped in his trenchcoat and gas mask, and his gas capsules and gadgets were ready. “Alright, Dani, I’m goin’ out. Probably gonna be another all-nighter, maybe even more, depending on how far I’ll end up traveling. We’re going to Civic City first, call me if something happens. Tell me if Dillon comes back, too.” He was then gone down the Sandcave to take his Sandmobile.

Midna emerged from Danika’s shadow. “I cannot recall the last night you had together.”

“Yeah, he’s left me high and dry.” Danika sighed downtrodden as she lied back on the couch. “Ho well, guess I’ll call the girls over for a party.” She took a soda and drank.

Midna floated over, “Which reminds me, when are you gonna tell Dillon he, um, eventually needs to claim me?”

“I’ll tell him ‘soon as he comes home. What are they doing now, anyway?”

“Hmm… I’d like to find out.” So Midna flew away as well.

**Roguetown Station; 8p.m.**

Roguetown Station. Well, this was the place. And it was nighttime. Sun was below the horizon, sky a dark-blue. So where was his special someone? It wasn’t the only time he went to meet a late secret admirer. Why did he have to make himself so lovable? Such a ladies’ man? Even Majora was kind of feminine. The train station was totally deserted, though the train seemed raring to go.

But the bushes rustled, Cheren jumping to attention. “So… you made it.”

“Who’s there?” he asked.

“I’m glad you showed up.” The slim, shaded woman stepped out. A cast was around her injured waist, forcing her vertical. “I had a feeling you would.”

“M…MOM??” Cheren’s face grew wide. “…The person?”

The wrinkly woman with the heart-hair and blue clothing lit up a cigarette. “It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance.” She blew a smoke. “Care to do me a little favor?”

This made Cheren all the more worried. “What?”

“Nothing special. I just want you… to KILL my boss!” The train’s whistle roared, ready to ship off.
Cheren really knows how to attract ‘em. So yeah, be overwhelmed by the endless amount of crap that happens. You already notice these chapters are horrendously long, that’s ‘cause a lot of stuff has to happen, so there’s a lot of set up to make it happen. Now it’s a matter of choosing which stories get to have build-up in which chapters. And next time, that building up continues. Hope you can tough it out.
For Magic and Candies!

Chapter Summary

Augustus Fizzuras and Wendy Marvell begin their adventure for magic and sweets!
(The first chapter of Seven Lights: The Side Stories.)

If you all thought Seven Lights couldn’t get anymore confusing, well… we’re jumping a little ways back in time for, you guessed it, some new story arcs! Welcome to the Seven Lights Side Stories, the DLC of the exciting saga as it were. Be forewarned, there will be important facts here, stuff will be relevant to the plot. I just needed some extra space to put everything. XDD

Let’s begin! (P.S. this chapter takes place during Chapter 6 of Lights.)

Chapter B-1: For Magic and Candies!

Fizzuras Home

Henrietta hummed merrily to herself. It was a crisp and clear morning, and she never missed the rising sun in the calm and comfort of her home more. After years of adventure, searching for her wayward son, they were home. On this new day, she once again looked forward to spending time with her family. “Augustus Liebeeee.” She joyously walked upstairs, cracking open the door to her son’s room. “Ihr Frühstück auf dem Tisch liegt. (Your breakfast is on the table.) Oh?”

Something wasn’t right. There was a room. There was candy, dozens of adventuring souvenirs. But the blanket was askew. There was no son. The window was wide open. Henrietta approached it. She looked down at their driveway. …Something else was missing. “GYAAAAAAAAHHHHH!” The entire neighborhood was woken. “NOT AAAGAAAAAAAHHHHH!”

Somewhere in the skies

He couldn’t stay in there for too long. True, it was a good place to store his memories, but he had to get back out again. And he was happy. Augustus von Marzipan y Fizzuras, having “borrowed” the two-man plane from his dad, wearing his mother’s explorer’s hat as the sun bounced off his sunglasses. The lollipop swished around in his mouth as the wind chilled his face. Adventure was out there, he would seek it.

In this jungle, miles away from the U.S., the water was brown and bubbly, flowing from distant ancient ruins. This was the site of his new adventure. He landed his plane some miles from it and climbed out. He pulled the barren lolli stick from his mouth and tossed it in the shrubs as he marched forward coolly. “Hurry up, you twerps.”

In the backseat of his plane, three infants tumbled out. A White boy with a football head, a Black kid with an afro, and a yellow-skinned girl with spiky hair. “Come awn, Man, why we always gotta ride the ASS seat?” Rallo complained. “Can’t we git somethin’ more appealing on the posterior?”

“Look, that was the most stylin’ plane we had, and we ain’t got all the stuff we used to since Candied Island got ransacked by the Government. We all that’s left, brats, and we gonna make the best of it.” Augustus planted a foot on a rock and pointed forth with gusto. “The Marzipan Pirates
are off on their grand adventure!"

“Right, ‘cause a teenage boy takin’ a bunch of toddlers for adventure can’t be misinterpreted in any way.” Rallo remarked.

“Mw-mw.” Maggie agreed, her eyes still weary from her fight with Haylee.

“Chronologically frozen toddlers, you mean to say. ‘sides, you’re the only ones I could find. Even though I lost the Candy Virus, I still can’t use my Haki for awhile. Doesn’t mean I can’t give you kids some wedgies and spread embarrassing rumors around your towns.”

“NOT MAH peanut head, Man!” Rallo gripped his head panickingly.

“Yes, God knows your mother hasn’t got anything under those ‘melons’. ” remarked Stewie.

“Alright you twerps, enough whining. The Everbubble Fizz is brewing somewhere in this Fizzle-Fizzle Ruins and we’re gonna be the first humans to taste it in centuries! Make use of those baby legs and MOVE!” Augustus unwrapped another lollipop and began slurping it. (Play “Chomp Ruins” from Paper Mario: Sticker Star.)

Stage B-1: Fizzle-Fizzle Ruins

Mission: Find the Everbubble Fizz.

Augustus drew his Candycane Cutlass and slashed the shrubs as he marched first. Naturally, some were M. Bushes that wanted to snack on his flesh, but still no problem for this experienced explorer. He made it to a small ruin and walked up stairs to its roof as Beverage Patrol soldiers flew down with soda jetpacks. “Grandpa decided to visit me, huh? I might have time for some fun.” He dodged their soda guns, whipped out his Everlasting Gobstopper, and chucked at the first Soda Man’s face. He fell back and hit the ground, then the Gobstopper bounced back to Augustus’s hand as he let their noses have it. The soldiers tried to recover, but Augustus rolled around and kicked them all unconscious. Afterwards, he took chocolate coins from their pockets, the only acceptable currency in Gumdrop Cove. The following area of ground was spikes, and large marshmallows called Bouncemallows were stationed on bushes around the road. Augustus threw Gobstoppers at their bases so the marshmallows rolled onto the spikes, and the teenager could bounce across.

He landed on a road through some ruins, where Beverage Soldiers appeared to be mining. Several holes were around, and soda geysers spouted out of them at certain intervals, so the men could collect them in their bottles. “Not before I do!” Augustus threw Gobstoppers at two of them, then punched three of them through the geysers. Four more locked their guns behind Augustus, but Rallo appeared behind them and blew them forward with soundwaves from his afro stereos. “Bringin’ back the boombox.”

Augustus approached a gentle river of soda, which had a few bubbles growing and popping, but it still just looked like brown sticky goop. “Bring it back right now. Try an’ shake this soda up, Rallo.” Augustus told him. The 5-year-old jumped, spun, and turned upside-down before burrowing into a soft patch of soil; apparently, he could do that. He sounded his boombox and shook the earth, effecting the river as well as the soda bubbled furiously. Augustus could run across the countless bubbles and rest on a platform. He collected a Bounce Gum, blew it to a reasonable size, and, since its bounces were too forceful for the soda bubbles, he bounced the small ruins whose tops stuck out above the soda.
He landed on a small, high ledge where he collected a Golden Wonka Bar, choosing to save that for later. He dropped back down and ran further across the bubbles, down a narrow part of the river that snaked in its direction. He didn’t expect Rallo to hold up for long, so he bypassed the floating Beverage Men and hurried. He arrived at a waterfall of soda where log-size soda cans rolled down horizontal-ways. Augustus hopped each can to make his way up, then could safely jump off on a safe shore before the quaking stopped. Augustus stood before a tall structure, made of yellowish-brown brick that was sealed tight. He looked up as Stewie flew down on a jetpack. “Well, I checked around, there is not one hat out here I like.”

“Yeh, I brought you ‘cause you’re the techno geek. Got any bombs or something?”

“You are not one for conversation.” Stewie grabbed a time-bomb from his backpack and stuck it on the wall. They both backed away as it beeped, and blew an entrance open. The temple was wide and vacant inside, there were tiki statues designed like soda cans, and soda geysers popped out of various parts of the floor. Stewie took out a thin drill and twisted it into some soil, reading waves on a small monitor. “Soda’s really unstable here. If not for all these holes, it’d have no place else to go.”

Augustus walked around and observed several big holes in the ceiling. “If we poked holes under these ceiling holes and clogged enough of the geysers, can we force them to squirt us up there?”

“Well, I suppose we could force a bigger geyser to erect if we push enough in. It’s the perfect chance to try out my Super Gum.”

“Sounds like a—hold on, whaddid you say?”

“What? We can use my Super Gum to clog up these geysers.”

“Don’t you mean ‘geysers’?”

“Yes, these geysers, we can use Super Gum to block the geysers so a larger one will erect.”

“…I’m not gonna argue about this. Just gimme the gum.”

Confused on what Augustus was ‘arguing’ about, Stewie gave him the pink strip of gum. Augustus chewed and blew a large bubble to pop over one of the geysers—I mean, geysers, and Stewie used his device to project more gum so Augustus could clog them all. Stewie used his drill to poke a hole under a ceiling hole, and both stood over it as the ground shook, and a massive soda geyser sent them flying out and onto a platform above the roof. Augustus collected a Gold Wonka Bar, but the route forward was above another platform, ‘course now they knew which hole to blast out of. The other holes had nothing around them, though Augustus suspected Sodium Chuchu would appear after he broke through the roof afterward. They jumped back into the temple as Stewie sucked all of the popped gum into his Gum-Molder and refigured them into little strips that Augustus could chew and clog the holes again (they had to open a few holes so the large geyser would shrink, making it easier to plug).

Memorizing the correct ceiling hole, Stewie poked a hole underneath after the geysers were plugged, and the duo went flying onto the tall ruin. A path between numerous small temples stretched before them, but a grappling hook latched onto the edge of their foothold, and Maggie Simpson came flying up. “Hey, Mags. What’s up?” Augustus asked.

“Mw-mw-mw.”

“Taffy Ninjas up ahead?” Stewie repeated.
“Mw-mw.”

“I see. Allow me to help you. That pillar looks good.” Stewie held onto Maggie as the latter latched her hook onto a nearby totem that stretched from the ground below, much higher than Augustus’s route. He gave Maggie a pair of goggles to enhance her weakened vision, and the body-heat waves of the Taffy Ninjas were seen behind the buildings.

“I’m counting on you, twerps.” Augustus told the children. He ran fearlessly up the path, and Maggie saw the nimble ninjas making their move. When they were exposed to Maggie’s view, it took one shot each to take them out. “Turn left!” Stewie told Augustus through the communicator, so the teenager turned a left route while Maggie shot the ninjas chasing him from the right. “Up the stairs!” Augustus ran up a small flight of stairs, ninjas climbed onto roofs to lock on with crosshairs, but Maggie shot them down first. “Another right, then the temple’s on your left.” Augustus followed another right path, trusting Maggie to shoot the ninjas on the way, then he could safely rush to the temple up a left path.

The stone dial on the doorway had three turnable segments, with the center part a pull-tab, a mouth on the medial segment, and a hole on the outer-most. He turned the outer so the hole was at the bottom, revealing another mouth on the wall beneath, then had the medial mouth face the bottom before using the tab to pop it open, causing an interior device to force the lower mouth open. The stone gate creaked open, so Augustus could enter. Two fountains of orange soda brewed, their bubbly scent reaching his nose. “Hmm, it smells like Fizzy Lift Soda… but there’s something else about it. Oh well.” Augustus scooped a cup of the soda and drank.

His body became light as a feather as he glided down a nearby hole. The hole stretch hundreds of feet downward, but the Fizzy Lift Soda would provide a soft descent. Orange Chuchu whose color matched the soda were round as bubbles, floating around the cave, but still threatened to harm Augustus with their electrified bodies. Maneuvering with a lightweight body was difficult, but the Chu were fairly slow. He reached the hole’s bottom and floated into a doorway, entering a wide hall with orange sodafalls coming out of the walls, into an endless chasm below. Beverage Men used their sodapacks to fly and try to shoot the explorer down, but Augustus used aerial maneuverability to dodge, kick off some pillars for momentum, and throw his fist against the men to make them fall.

Bubbles floated up from the falls for Augustus to inhale and refuel his Fizzy Lift. He could safely burp it all out to land on a safe ledge, then go down stairs through a narrow passage. He arrived at the temple’s core, where a giant pool of orange soda bubbled like magma, continuously turning a huge stone churner with a round wooden platform around it. “Hmm… so this is the Everbubble Fizz. I see. The Ancient Peztecs thrived on soda, their land was built upon natural sodium channels. They constructed this complex structure to constantly churn the richest, most endless soda imaginable. …History’s wonders.”

“Quite an observation, mi nieto.” A bulky figure in soda-barrel armor crashed onto a platform across the room. “And the Peztecs will SERVE their purpose, when their luscious soda becomes my bestselling brand!”

“Angelo Fizz. Hola, Abuelo.”

“Impressive work finding your way through, but I was here, first!” Mr. Fizz declared. “My Beverage Patrol will harness every ounce of sodium from this ground! My machines will be unstoppable, and teenagers will become so energized, those rotten Kids Next Door will NEVER defeat them!”

“Didn’t I hear your Teen Ninjas disbanded from Evil Adult Industries and joined the
Government?”

“That’s none of your business!”

“Whatever.” Augustus pulled out the dry lolli and dropped it. “Anyone who gets this far is free to
taste the fizz, but no one’s sucking it all from the ground when I’m around. You got to the count o’
drei to take all your troops away from here.”

“Humph. And what will you do if I disobey?”

Augustus smirked. “Find out. Einer…” His eyes narrowed on Fizz. “Zwei…” The adult cocked his
soda blasters. “Drei!”

**Boss fight: Angelo Fizz**

Fizz blasted Augustus’s platform with a soda stream, so the teenager leaped onto the turning
platform around the churner. Mr. Fizz blasted more soda, and Soda Chuchus emerged from the
resulted puddles, jumping onto Augustus with super sticky bodies. The teenager shook furiously to
knock them all off, quickly dodging a soda blast. He jabbed his feet at the blobs’ faces before
facing up at his grandpa, trying to keep toward his side on the turning platform to throw a
Gobstopper at one of his cannons. He damaged and rendered it useless, so when Fizz locked the
canon on his right arm, Augustus tossed the Gobstopper again and— “Ah!” disabled it.

Mr. Fizz angrily leapt onto the churner with Augustus, raising his big barrel feet in attempt to crush
him, but Augustus was swift to dodge. He looked behind as a Soda Chu emerged from a puddle,
dodging when the blob jumped at him, then Fizz stomped on it and caused his foot to be stuck to
the foothold. “Gah! Blast it!”

“Gracias!” Augustus dropped to the ground below and climbed a ladder onto one of the high
platforms against the walls. “Hm, a switch… wonder what it does?” Augustus stepped on the
device, and the churner doubled in speed.

“H-H-Hey! Stooop! Baaaaah-bl-gl-gl-gl-l-l-l-l-l-l-l.” Unable to shake himself off the sticky
puddle, the increased speed shook the soda in Fizz’s barrels, channeled to his mouth and giving
him Dizzy Fizzy, ‘cause that’s a thing. The supervillain broke free, activated soda jets from his leg
barrels, and flew up to the ceiling, sticking on using soda from his arm and leg cannons. His head
barrel opened to reveal a huge soda bottle cannon, blasting powerful bubbles that exploded with
great range. Augustus jumped to the lower ground, his grandpa continuing to blast, but the boy
soon realized bubbles had come up from the pool, thanks to the enhanced churning. They were
very thick and bouncy, flying around the room, so he knew he could use them.

Augustus avoided his grandpa’s cannon and bounced up the bubbles, each popping upon his kicks.
Mr. Fizz had to turn around so his cannon could face Augustus, but the explorer nimbly dodged
every shot as he made it to the armored adult and punched him in the face. The adult lost his grip
and fell to the floor, taking a good amount of self-control to stand back up and keep the bubbling
soda from shattering his barrels. “Enough of this tomfoolery! I will battle you directly with Sorate
(soe-rah-tay), powered by a small form of the greatest of sodas!” Angelo turned, revealing the
Pepsi icon on the back of his body barrel, changing to a Purple Flurp icon. “Purple Flurp! Know
the fearsome power of concealed belches!” The purple substance flowed through his pipes, to his
mouth and his barrels, and Fizz, unable to release the gas in burps, was super-fizzed.

Augustus hurriedly dodged his fast punches, but an untimed dodge resulted in him flying to the
wall, backfirst. Angelo boosted for another punch, Augustus dodged as the barrel burst through the wall, and orange soda poured in. Seeing no other option, Augustus kissed his mouth against the hole and slurped the soda; the Everbubble Fizz made his nervous system unstable beyond compare. Fast as light, Augustus dodged his grandfather’s next punch, jumped behind him, and socked the back of his head. Angelo whipped around with an arm outstretched, Augustus ducked the barrel and swung his foot against the man’s crotch; through the body barrel. Augustus ducked between his legs, kicked Fizz in the back, and he stumbled toward the pool.

Fizz stopped himself in time to catch breath. “Ha ha! You think the Everbubble makes you strong, but I have the main source! I will absorb its power and—”

Augustus released a burp that blew Fizz into the source. His barrels absorbed the Everbubble against his will, and the adult soon realized the power beyond control. “OOOOOOOOHHHH!” Fizz went flying like a rocket, through the ceiling and into the sunny sky. They always said shooting stars were giant bottles of soda, and now Augustus saw where they got that idea.

Augustus panted after the Everbubble wore off. “Silly Abuelo. Sodium is for the youth.” (End song.)

Stewie and Maggie came down from the hole using their jetpack and grappling hook respectively, while Rallo popped out of the ground. “By the way, I ate the Mole-Mole Fruit also, so I can do this. Nah, I’m just kidding!” the afro boy joked. “I’m just abiding by ancient cartoon laws.”

Stewie dipped one end of a pipe into the Everbubble and sucked it into two glass containers. “Two half-gallons. ‘t’s gonna be one hell of a drinking party. Nothing like a bar of man-children staying up past bedtime.”

“Makes worthwhile entertainment. Let’s get it back.”

The team made their way across the ruins and returned to their plane, the Ace Flyer. Augustus’s cellphone rang, so he answered. “Yello?”

“AUGUSTUS VON FIZZURAS, SIE WENIG BLAG! Get your arse home right now before I recite a passage from the Boy Who Loved to Suck His Thumbs! You know you’re a wanted criminal for working with those Big Mams!”

“Chill, Ma, I brought my cellphone, didn’t I? I’m just getting some air, I’ll be home in awhile.”

“You come home NOW!! If I find out you’re at Gumdrop Cove, you’re gonna be swabbing the deck at our house until you’re-”

Augustus hung up, smiling coolly and starting the plane. His phone rang, so he answered, “DID YOU JUST HANG UP ON ME, YOU SHI-” Hung up again.

“You can never go home, Man, you realize that?” Rallo inquired.

“Eh, didn’t plan on it. Come on. To Gumdrop Cove we sail!” The explorers were off to the sky, their Jolly Roger – a skull designed like Augustus, with his explorer hat, grinning with a lollipop – blowing behind them.

Across the U.S.

For the past several months, a blue blur has been zipping around many parts of the country. Everyone, mostly kids’ immediate conclusion was that it was Sonic the Hedgehog, still runnin’ about to stop Dr. Eggman. That was 20 years ago, kids. Instead, it was Wendy Marvell, a girl of
whom no one knew her origins, only that it was a blustery day wherever she ran. It was natural she lost track of where she was; the world was a blur most of the time. Just running countryside streets that stretched for miles… and little boys in racecars who drove alongside her. Actually, that was kinda new. On Wendy’s right, a blue racecar with red flames sped along, and she exchanged curious looks with its cute, young driver with breezing brown hair and red glasses.

“Uhhh… hey there?” he greeted.

“Oh? Sorry!” Wendy smiled sheepishly. “This isn’t your road, is it? I was just out on one of my daily runs.”

“Uhhhh… I see that.” At 100 miles per hour, clearly. “You like running, do ya?”

“Yup! It gets me places faster!”

“Heheheh! Yeah, it does! On to an important meeting.”

“Ah, that’s life for ya. Well, I won’t keep you. So long!” She shifted a different way.

“Great talkin’ to ya!”

“You too! Byyyyy!”

So Wendy kept running for miles and miles. Blowing past dozens of discarded papers in city streets, including a poster of Hers Truly.

WANTED
Wendy Marvell
A.K.A.: ‘Sky Dragon’
For possible connections with Revolutionaries
Reward: $7,000,000 (in 700,000,000 pennies)
(By order of the World Government)

It landed next to a poster of Augustus.

Wendy eventually stopped in a peaceful meadow around the base of some distant mountains, catching her breath. “I wonder where that boy was going. Everyone has adventures! Ha ha ha!” That was such a brief meeting, but one Wendy wouldn’t forget. She already felt like she made a new friend, and the fact they met so strangely must’ve meant destiny. “Oh! I hope I didn’t-”

“Lose me?” Wendy turned around. A little kitten with snow-white fur, shiny brown eyes, and angel wings, wearing a pretty red dress with a yellow tie with a pawprint; however strange these latter descriptions sounded. Also, she talked in an elegant lady-like voice. Having finally caught up with the child, the kitten landed on her hind paws to catch breath.

“Sorry, Carla.” Wendy blushed. “I just got sidetracked is all. There was a boy driving a racecar a while back.”

“You’re starting to see things.” Carla stretched her wings. “This air is getting to your head. How long has Mr. Facilier been sending you on errands?”

“Only the past couple of months. He thought it would be good experience before I finally go to Hogwarts next fall. Though he made it seem like I was going right away… o-oh well, what’s a little adventure! I never knew so many magical items lied around the place. Uhhh… what are we looking for, again?”
“Thank goodness you found me when you did since you can’t keep your head on straight.” Carla pulled out a small paper. “We’re looking for Fan Flowers, which spin and emit a gentle breeze. Grows naturally in Windy Valley.”

“It’s windy alright… or is that just me.”

“Unless Facilier’s so-called Chi-Stabilizers are faulty, I think it’s safe to say. Let’s find these flowers and return to him, Child.”

“I’ll do my best!” (Play “Toad Harbor” from Mario Kart 8!)

*Stage B-2: Windy Valley*

*Mission: Find the Fan Flowers.*

The sky was blue with few clouds, the endless green plain and its colorful flowers looked lovely under the sun as Wendy ran with the wind. “Rocks are coming up ahead. I know how clumsy you get.” A series of short rocks were coming, Wendy jumped, did a midair splits over the first one, planted her feet on the ground to resume pace, jumped the next rock, then the next. A stairway of taller, jagged rocks approached, even though Wendy could run around them, she wanted to prove her agility. She jumped, midair-flipped, planted her hands on the first rock, flipped and flew to the next, then the next, then two more before grabbing a Fire Soul (a red ring with a flame) in midair before landing and resuming run. “Oh yes, Facilier wanted those, too. If you see one, try to collect it.”

This half of meadow was reaching its end, above a towering cliff over the sea where jagged pillars stood everywhere. “You’re an airbender, right? You can make this.” Wendy kept her speed going, performed a terrific leap, her Air Chi keeping her aloft for several feet until she landed on a flat-topped rock. She could either jump a row of GUN Beetles rightward to another rock, but Gold Beetles spawned one at a time to the left, so Wendy seized the chance and flipped across them to land on a different pillar. Towering above her left was another jagged rock, she used a small rock beside her as a boost to flip onto the taller one’s side, running around and around until she made it on top, collected the Fire Soul, and flew to the distant next path.

She ran across this road supported over the sea by rocks, but when it would run off before a series of tall pillars, Wendy jumped to and kicked across them all, her sudden force making the unstable pillars collapse. She landed on a ledge and rushed across the next area of meadow. “The Government’s on to you. They’ve sent drones.”

“No problem!” GUN Laser Hunters locked on and were about to fire, Wendy slid along the ground, swung her leg, and knocked one off its feet, then nimbly dodged the other’s gun to blast him away with air. Squads of GUN Rhinos rolled at her as she whooshed sideways air gusts and knocked them upside-down, but the same could not happen for the Metal Rhinos, with a sturdy rectangle-shaped structure that kept them upright. “You could always use magic against them.” Carla said.

Wendy considered it for a moment, but a Rhino sped at her during, so she dodged. “Sigh, I don’t know any spells.” She leapt over and ran away from the Rhinos, coming to a wide trench with a high opposite ledge, but a line of Sky Hawks swooped by that allowed Wendy to hop up. She ran across the following meadow to a tall cliffside, where Hunters and Beetles locked their weapons on the child. She dodged a Hunter’s gun, blew him and some Beetles away, then tried to blast another Hunter, but his shield blocked her wind. Wendy ran behind the Shield Hunter, took hold and
whipped him around, then blasted him into another Shield Hunter. Five Beetles blasted guns, but Wendy spun a Wind Shield to deflect their bullets. “Haaaa!” Carla flew above and Torpedo Spun at a Beetle, knocking it into another, and when the others tried to face her, Wendy thrust her fists and blasted them away with gusts.

“Thank you, Carla.” Wendy smiled. She jumped into an enclosing of the cliff, jumped out by its left side, and propelled herself into a next-door higher enclosing, using a double-jump to shift direction in midair. She was close to the top of the cliff, but it was a bit too high, so, “Um… will you lift me, Carla?”

“Okay. But you need to lose some weight.” Wendy double-jumped, then Carla clutched her paws on either side of her waist and lifted her. She poured a lot of strength in her wings to lift the heavy human, and before her little arms gave out, she placed Wendy onto the cliff. They were at the top of a horrendously steep hill, and her speed was unparalleled as Wendy ran down, unable to stop her legs. “Aie! Ow! Ahh!” She tripped on a rock, and had more of a hassle getting control as she wouldn’t stop rolling. She couldn’t even get the Fire Soul she passed, for she was round and non-stopping as a boulder. She stopped on her rear at the hill’s base, shaking her head of dizzy. Facing open sea (except for rock pillars) ahead, she mustered her speed and ran across the surface.

She maintained her constant speed to avoid submerging into the sea—not that she couldn’t swim, it’s just faster this way. She ran up a ramp and performed midair poses for some Trick Points, ran up another ramp to fly to and jump across some Beetles, resulting in a Fire Soul, then took land on a long, wooden pier. A giant killer whale destroyed the pier as it chased Wendy, she had to run off and across the water, pouring extra speed in her legs to outrun the monster, coming to a dead-end cliff, but a sudden water spout emerged from the surface to blow Wendy upward. Windmill towers stood about the meadow, the breeze chillier on Wendy’s skin as she ran with more spirit.

Wendy ran up the short spiral of a tower, took hold of the end of one of its blades, and made the device spin faster before she flung herself into the sky. Thousands of feet were between her and the ground, but the wind was very strong and blowing upward, giving her the sensation of flying like a bird. She landed atop the first of many tall pillars, where a GUN Hornet locked its missiles. They released, but Wendy squatted, leaped high, and caused the missiles to ram each other when they failed to chase. Carla destroyed the Hornet, then carried Wendy up to a distant pillar on the left. Wendy planted her feet on a grindrail and used her wind-like speed to zip across.

It swerved around many pillars, Wendy ducked or jumped some Beetles, then the rail led her into the sea again as she ran once more. The killer whale was dead ahead, leaping high above and coming down with its mouth open. Wendy timed, and jumped, landing atop its head and dashing up its back. She listened to its terrific splash after she jumped off the tail, taking land on a ledge. She ran only a short distance left before arriving at a garden where windmill-like flowers, large and small, emitted their gentle breeze. (End song.)

Wendy bent down and happily plucked a Fan Flower, holding it by her face to feel its chill. She gently plucked more flowers and put them in her Infi-Satchel. “That should be enough, right?”

“I hope… huff…” Carla rested on the ground. “My wings are not even a year old, they should not have to work this hard.”

“I’m sorry…”

They both stood and stared at the endless grassland. Every grass blade and flower swayed to the wind, the clouds were passing fast overhead. “Carla… where do you think we come from?”

“How many times are you going to ask me that?”
“I’m just saying, I found your egg washed up on a beach, and I, er, expected a sea turtle, so the minute you popped out, it’s felt like… we were both in the same boat.” Her hair blew behind her with the wind, exposing Wendy’s long pointed ears, another odd trait next to her red eyes and deep blue hair. “Did your parents abandon you, or did they…”

“It is curious, but I’m at least thankful to be born under somebody than nobody. Regardless of my origins, you, Mr. Facilier, and those hooligan twins are my current ‘family.’”

“Heh heh heh.” Wendy blushed, scratching her head. “But considering how none of us are related, it’s so weird. . . .” She faced out at the horizon again, wondering how far the valley’s wind stretched. “Oh well. We’ll find our families someday, count on it. Come on, let’s get back to Virginia!” She ran off.

“Urgh, wait for me!” Carla flapped her wings and followed.

**Dr. Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium**

After 20 years of business, it was well-known about the witch-doctor selling magic stuff in his old shop in a back alley. Harvey Facilier became a close friend of all of the kids in town, every day, children were excited to visit his shop. “One at a time, kids, dang!” the witch-doctor proclaimed. “This ain’t St. Mungo’s for Magical Maladies!”

A little blonde girl in a purple dress was first. “Mr. Facilier, my brother keeps being mean to my pet frog. Can I have Pixiefrog Dust?”

“Sure, Viola! Feed and take good care o’ him.” Facilier took her money and passed the bag of green dust.

A brown-haired boy was next. “Mr. Facilier, I wanna get back at these girls for dunking a fishtank on me.”

Facilier gave him a syringe, “Pseudo-Mermosis, kid, has no after-effects, doesn’t hurt, but super convincing.”

A brown-haired girl with green eyes. “Mr. Facilier, I cut myself playing with a kitchen knife, and I don’t want my mom to know.”

Facilier got a Band-Aid, put it over the cut on her arm, and- “Blood be gone!” The wound vanished when he ripped it off. “Aright, next!”

Round after round of child lined up in his shop, steadily their numbers decreased. The final one of the day was a brown-haired girl with a black shirt under a gray jacket. “Hey, Mr. Facilier.”

“Samantha, glad to see you again! What’ll you be having today?”

“Um… well, my brother’s in the Kids Next Door, and he tells me about a lot of crazy stuff that happens, so… do you have a good luck charm?”

“I have the works! Seven-leaf clover, golden Holy Cross bells—not settling well with my other stuff, I wanna get rid of ‘em—777 necklace, horseshoe shoes, name your pick!”

“Uh-hu… just the clover.” She blushed.

He took her money and gave her the little plant. “Um, Mr. Facilier… do you know if all these bad things he talks about… are true?”
“You mean psychotic Nature Goddess, dimension-destroying space clown, or mutated candy demons? Yeah, kinda. But you ain’t need to worry, ‘cause as the magical world will tell you, evil never triumphs! We had all kinds of lunatic wizards back in our day, not one of them got away! Well, Herpo the Foul’s still a mystery, but immortality only gets so far!”

“Well… okay.” She smiled. “Cause, he also says that his leader told everyone, this really big thing is gonna happen that’ll destroy the world, so um, that got me worried, but he thinks it’s all a joke, and like, I think so too, ‘cause it’s outta nowhere… A-Anyway, bye-bye now. And thanks!” She excitedly ran out.

Facilier smiled with satisfaction, kicking back on his chair. He loved seeing the happy faces on children, making the best of their childhood and enjoying their life by doing whatever crazy shenanigan they have in store for his magical doohickeys. Ever since he was young, even if he was never in Kids Next Door like his friends, it always seemed all he wanted was to make children happy, even after all his crazy affairs with the Underworld.

His door swung open, and the blue-haired child he was expecting to return ran in. “Mr. Facilier! I brought the—!” Wendy Marvell tripped on her feet and fell on her front, both arms outstretched with the satchel. “Oww, the… fans.”

Carla helped her up as Facilier took the satchel and fished for the five Fan Flowers, greeted by their soft breeze. “Sniiiiiff, ahhhhh, yes, this is nice.”

“Are you going to be using them for products, Mr. Facilier?”

“Ehh, maybe. But I mostly needed a fan or two.” Facilier put the flowers into a small bowl of water. “This place gets really stuffy.”

“Isn’t that a little selfish to send Wendy out to certain danger just for a means of personal comfort?” Carla asked disapprovingly.

“The girl got experience, ain’t she, that’s all I’m tryin’ to give her, and since yo’ with us now, well everyone’s gotta do their part for the business.” He shrugged. “Y’all need the experience too, Charles, as moderately intelligent as you are, you were just born… three weeks ago. You need experience, and runnin’ around with Wendy is the key to that.”

“Mr. Facilier, did you ever find out what kind of creature Carla is?” Wendy asked.

“Siiiigh.” Facilier pulled up a large book from under his table, while his shadow got one off the shelf, as both mindlessly flipped pages. “I tried, Kid. I really did. But they ain’t nothin’ in here. They got magical cats that can see through disguises, a breed of black cats who can shadowbend (might get me one o’ those), and these little Remlit things that live in Skypia and get real nasty durin’ the night. But not ONE thing about a magic talking winged cat that hatches outta an egg. You’d think the media will be all over that!! My next guess was she was a Pokémon, but no Cat-types match her appearance.”

“I wish we knew. What if her parents lost their egg and couldn’t find it? I really want to find out where you came from.”

“If it’s any consolation, I’m not extremely interested in discovering my origins.” Carla replied. “Helping around here is fine.”

“You’re very modest, Carla, but when a magic connoisseur like me gets on it, they ain’t no stoppin’!” Facilier winked. “You can count on me.”
The doors flew open as two coated twins stumbled in. “MR. FACILIER, MISTER! We got it we got-” Sonny and Donna crashed into Wendy as they all fell down. “Oops. Sorry, Wendy.” The former said.

“We were going fast! Like you!”

“LET’S DYE YOUR HAIR LIKE A CHEETAH.”

Their cleats were putting pressure on her back. “No thanks, guys.” She said dizzy.

“LIIINE UP.” thundered Facilier. The four of them were on their feet, the Climbers in front, Wendy and Carla behind. “Y’all ready for a Magic Quiz??”

“YES, SIR.” All nodded.

“PERFECT! Now, Question 1: How did magic originate?”

“Oh!” Wendy perked, but the answer didn’t come as quick as she’d hoped. “Um- um- um- um-”

“I KNOW, I KNOW!” Sonny spoke ecstatically. He looked at the ceiling, an illusion of stars levitating. “During God Arceus’s creation of the universe and the elements, traits of elements seeped into each other’s Element Plate, and those compounds were channeled and compressed into a single plate which would then be used to create the stars and Star Children, primarily Jirachi. That energy which comprised of all elements would be used as a sense of spirituality regarding imagination. While other cultures have similar stories, humans developed the power around 5,000 years ago in Egypt, by molding and gathering several elemental and spiritual energies into items, such as scepters. In time, although many were nonbenders, they have utilized ways of simulating bending to a great and even better extent.

“In time, wizards and witches became a society that challenged benders, but because of their power, benders and nonbenders feared them, so they were forced into hiding using their magical means. Since magical energy is drawn from all elemental areas, this is especially so for dark areas like the Shadow or Underworlds, primary sources in general which create Dark Magic. Magical governments were created, having acknowledged their powers as great and dangerous, and established a variety of laws and rules to keep the hidden and normal world at peace. This didn’t fit well to all types, as dark wizards desired power over all ‘Muggles’—as they called non-magic/bender humans, to show their superiority.”

Sonny was engagingly skimming *History of Magic*, Volume 1, “‘Primary bodies of magic include potions that utilize all sorts of supernatural items for incredible effects, it is important to remember when…”

“E-Excuse me, are we allowed to read from the book?” Wendy asked confusedly.

“Well, a history book’s a history book, none knows how strong the credibility.” Facilier replied. “There’s hundreds of mysteries surrounding magic, no one knows how it ultimately began, but everything else is true. Mages really are different from element benders—we don’t have a chi flow, over time, our powers became as natural to our bodies as blood, bone, and breath. We’ve done things that benders would take years of training to do. Liiiike this!” He stuck his hand in his hat, surprising the kids when a giant hand reached in from the ceiling, pulled Carla back up, and out came a fly-size Carla flying around. “The greatest trick to all my visitors, hhhhhahahahahahahaha!” Carla flew back into the hat, appearing normal-sized.

Wendy raised her hand. “Mr. Facilier, are magic users really as evil as people say they are?”
“The same was thought of benders, too, Kid, it all depends on the person. You though, Wendy, you’re a rare type; not many people are born with both powers. It isn’t hard to find a shadowbender who knows a few magic tricks, but airbenders for example, special. Any mage born with an element can do magical things with that element; some say new bending arts in general were created from studying mages.”

“Then maybe my wind curse was created because I have magic.”

“That is a possibility. But I told you about Rumpel Stiltskin—born with magic AND timebending. Not a good combination! Terrible choice on Dialga’s part. That’s a thing, though, magic isn’t based on bloodline or inheritance, even humans of ordinary families are born with it. That’s why we think the gods—Jirachi for instance, have a say in who gets the power sometimes. But it may just be their energies leaking and molding together across the universe, then finds its way into mortal bodies.”

“Are magic users stronger than element benders?”

“I wouldn’t put it past ‘em. A single bender can develop their skills to incredible power that mages couldn’t match; but mages can develop their magic to a level that’s more formidable than any bender. You know about Logia benders, and I don’t know any mage who can match such a godlike power; unless they were a bender themselves. The fact still stands, your magic and your airbending, Wendy, can create an excellent combo that uses powers a normal airbender couldn’t do. You’ll develop your powers when you go to Hogwarts, but getting as much learning in as you can beforehand will set you ahead.”

“But… Mister…” Wendy spoke sadly. “This month, isn’t that… thing supposed to happen?”

“Ahhhh, yes.” Facilier nodded regrettably. “This event, Wendy, I see it only as a thing to test everybody’s strength. The first test is how one stomachs it; embraces it’s going to happen. The next step… will be how far one goes to try and do something about it. What say you, Girl? Do you have the strength to face it?”

“I…I don’t know.” Wendy looked down. “I only just learned about my magic a few months ago; I’ve been studying really hard, but I don’t think I know enough to…”

“Well, the job ain’t solely on yo’ shoulders, there are dozens more panicking and preparing. All you need is the strength to support them, Wendy; to the best of your abilities. Even in just one month, it’s a skill you can learn. Will you do it, for the friends you came to know?”

Wendy looked up with a nod of determination. “I will. I’ll do my very best.”

“That’s our girl!” He slapped her back. “Now come, we goin’ to Diagon, and we ain’t stop ‘til yo’ magic and airbending become one. Facilier and Wendy’s Mage Quest starts now!” He grabbed a handful of powder from a bag, threw it into a fireplace, and lit with emerald flames.

“Sonny and Donna, too! HOORAAAY!” cheered the Ice Climbers.

“Here it starts, Wendy!” Facilier put an arm around the girl. “Just an old great-uncle, a girl named Wendy, two excited twins, and their pet going on crazy adventures whilst selling magic items from their shop for a profit!”

“Um, Mr. Facilier, isn’t there a TV show based around those things?”

“Nonsense, girl, we totally original, what could you mean?”
A poster advertising *Gravity Falls* hung on a wall in the shop, its main cast waving at us. “All we need is a fat guy with daddy issues!” Donna perked.

“D’OH!” Homer Simpson cursed.

“Ooo, one more thing.” Facilier knelt before Wendy, put brown contacts over her red eyes, and rubbed magic cream that made her pointed ears rounded. “I still prefer if people don’t know who you’re related to. Not that they’s anything wrong with how you look, it’s just for safety measures.”

The subject of her unnamed father again. Wendy only frowned and nodded. “Mm.”

With that, they all stepped into the emerald flame. “Wait a sec, does that imply I’m the ‘pig’??” Carla stated before they vanished.

Yeah, since I started watching *Gravity Falls*, I noticed their overall concept was similar to what I had planned for Wendy’s story. ;3 Wendy and Carla are both from *Fairy Tail* as a refresher, but their story will mainly consist of magic-related crossovers. And Augustus’s central theme, besides candy, will be pirates, and you know I just can’t see this story complete without pirate adventures. X3 Anyhoo, we’ll see more of their stories next time, then we’ll take a little trip… downstairs. Until then. ;3
Galactic Juvy

Chapter Summary

Nerehc Onu goes to get some new operatives from Galactic Juvy. (OPTIONAL CHAPTER.)

This chapter’s for all the RoWen fans out there! Er, part of this chapter is! (Note: This also takes place during Chapter 6.)

Chapter B-2: Galactic Juvy

Diagon Alley

The team of five appeared out of a fireplace in a dingy alleyway. “Look sharp.” Facilier told them as they scrambled to recover from the fire. He led them to the city street, very cramped as oddly-clothed figures roamed everywhere. The windows of every shop were filled with all the magi essentials, broomsticks, wands, pointy hats, as well as (to Wendy and Carla’s disgust) severed animal organs. Posters advertised the renowned Hogwarts School, Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes featuring the Ghost of Fred, and a new haunted house attraction called The Witch’s House, based on an old legend from New Oakland.

“Harvey Old Bean, wonderful to see you!” a man called.

“Bonjour, Mr. Baggins!”

“Facilier, Dear, you make the most wonderful hotcakes!” a lady said.

“Ha ha ha, I do my best.”

“I say, that’s a marvelous specimen.” A man with a long thin mustache and monocle examined Carla. “Is this an undiscovered breed or some experiment?”

Carla flew up and glared in his eyepiece, “I’ll make you into both if you don’t back off.”

Facilier mentioned many times that this was a wizarding community, but Wendy’s never seen it herself until now. She shirked a lot, for she really stood out regarding color scheme; a lot of people were pretty gloomy and dark-looking. Well, their clothing did, the people actually seemed pretty happy, but passed curious looks to the blue-haired maiden and her flying cat nonetheless. She honestly hoped unique hair colors were common in magic worlds, but not this one it seemed. “M-Mr. Facilier, you said a lot of mages need to go into hiding because of their power. Is that why it’s so crowded?” she asked.

“Well, yes.” Facilier frowned. “But since benders and metahumans became more ‘accepted’ 20 years ago, it’s not AS bad, but wizards of all people are still ‘frowned’ upon; or rather, feared. Even among benders we’re unnatural. Wizards ain’t as revered as in the Negaverse. I wouldn’t sink so much into it, we’ve gotten pretty used to.”

Wendy wanted to ask what the ‘Negaverse’ was, but didn’t wanna distract him too much while
they were navigating. She saw a group of kids gathered around a building’s window with a Magic Mirror TV inside. Wendy stood at the back of this group and saw an anchorwizard and witch in the mirror. The small picture behind them depicted a familiar baldheaded wizard in a black cloak.

“In other news, the 2nd of May is nearing, marking the 34th anniversary since the fall of Tom ‘Voldemort’ Riddle. Known for taking many steps forward in the field of Dark Arts, commanding thousands of humans and inhuman creatures to his whim, and achieving immortality through the use of Horcruxes, he will always be remembered as the wizard who brought the greatest age of suffering in all of Wizarding History.” The anchorman went on.

“But let’s not forget those dark wizards before him,” the anchorwitch continued, “like the Arthurian Witch, Morgan ‘Morgana’ le Fay,” a beautiful witch with a flowing pink robe, “Avalaran legend Zeref the Black Cloud,” a very handsome mage with black hair and robe, looked in his teenage years, “as well as more recent rises to stardom, the Devil Reincarnate Ganondorf Dragmire, and the elusive mysterious Man With the Red-”

“Wendy Dear, come on.” Carla returned and took Wendy by the arm, pulling her along.

Facilier was at a shop called Ollivanders, speaking to an ancient white-haired man through the window. “Soooo Mr. Ollivander, I was wondering if there was any progress in, ah, procuring that wand.”

“Mr. Facilier, what do you expect me to do, just call the King of Fairies and request the Fairy Princess’s Fairy’s Tail? I can make you the best on the market, but whoever expected me to procure a wand of that importance and fortitude must be WAY off their noggin! Surely a Pony’s Tail, or an Angel Feather, or—goodness, a Minish Acre Piece, but you CAN’T expect me to persuade those blasted fairies to give some student wizard their most prized POSSESSION!”

“Look, if it were up to me, I woulda asked for something simple, but this ain’t me, it’s her father, but HE can’t appear in public, so I gotta do everything for him!” Facilier rambled on as Wendy and Carla caught up.

“Siiigh… I’ll keep trying, I really will, but let it be known I have quite a few words to say to her ‘father’. Cod, blasted-. .” He shut the window and stormed inside.

Wendy felt guilty after overhearing that, following Facilier further with her head down. “Mr. Facilier, you don’t have to get me a good wand. Any old thing would do, really.”

“That’s very sweet o’ you, but I can’t say no to this guy. Still, you have to learn magic at some point, the question is where to start. Lessee if anyone in the pub knows any good teachers.”

They entered a bar called the Leaky Cauldron, which reeked of a smell Wendy only assumed was magic alcohol. Very dingy and rugged inside where many thugs were guzzling drinks and talking. “Ah’ll only be a minute.” Facilier said, approaching the barman at the counter. “Bonjour, Tom!”

“Dr. Facilier! How long it’s been, I say—thank you again for the hair.” He felt his head of smooth brown hair. “What can I get you?”

“See that girl over there? She’s a kid I’m lookin’ after for a friend o’ mine, and, short version is, we’re lookin’ for a..”

Wendy and Carla walked around while Facilier spoke, exploring the bar, though there wasn’t much. She noticed a large book on an abandoned table. Curious, she walked over and picked it up. It was History of Benders, Volume 1. Wendy cracked it open to view the Table of Contents.
Chapters such as “Decision of the Gods”, “The Avatar/Negatar”, “Fall of Arceus”, and others were listed. Wendy skimmed them for perhaps anything on airbending – then found a chapter called “Logia Bending”, Section 1 “The First Logia”.

Wendy flipped over to that page and skimmed. “‘Logia is a high level of bending where the bender’s Personal Chi has molded perfectly with the Natural Chi, granting them the illusion to transform into their element. The term was coined by the first bender to achieve this level, Acnologia, a mage who possessed—’”

“Hey, that’s mine!” A boy with purple-black hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark-red vest that exposed his chest, took the book. He looked about 12. “Are you a bender or something?”

“S-Sorry. My name’s Wendy—yes, I’m an Air Mage.”

“A mage, too? Cool! Name’s Romeo. I bend fire.” He lit his right hand with a violet flame. “I use my magic to give it all sorts of colors and effects; I can freeze,” shot blue fire to freeze a table, “stick,” his purple fire was thrown on a man’s shoulder, who panicked to get it off, “and stink.” His flame turned yellow, forcing Wendy and Carla to shield their noses before he turned back. “Trying to develop other colors.”

“That’s amazing! Are you going to Hogwarts next year?”

“Yeah! I’m actually my 2nd year. If you want, I can teach—”

“Time to go, Wendy!” Facilier returned and grabbed the child’s hand. “We’re goin’ to Orchid Bay, Tom coined us the perfect teacher!”

“I—I’ll see you later, Romeo.” Wendy told him hurriedly.

“Ohkay. Take care!”

With that, the team of five were strolling down Diagon. Disappointed that she couldn’t finish that sentence, Wendy spoke, “Mr. Facilier, I read that the first Logia was a mage. Do you think his magic helped him become what he is?”

“It does feel too coincidental. Yes, there is a very good chance his magic helped him better to become one with his element. By observing him, regular benders got the idea and found ways to do it themselves.”

“But what was his element?”

“Hmmm... to be honest, I only heard of Acnologia, I don’t remember what element he used.” Wendy was even more disappointed she couldn’t finish that sentence. “I would honestly guess shadow, if not maybe fire, or darkness or light—eh, I’m just spitballin’. Either way, our next priority is getting to Orchid Bay. I think the Knight Bus drives there on week days, I’ll have to call and see. Well, we’ve about accomplished all we could here for now. Can you guess what we’re about to do now?” Facilier asked with a sly grin. “Apparition!”

Wendy gulped. “Can’t we just take the fireplace back?”

“Sorry, where we’re going, Floo Powder don’t get to. Sonny, Donna, refresh our minds on the dangers of Apparition!”

Sonny smiled and said, “When the mental or physical state in any of the passengers isn’t totally stable—”
Donna continued, “-this could result in the loss of internal or external body parts.”

“Otherwise known as SPLINCHING!” they cheered.

“Uuuuuuu-” Wendy shuddered and sweated nervously. She Apparated with Facilier before, the worst that happened was she lost one of her hairs. But it was still scary.

“Hhhha ha ha. We’ll be fine, though, Wends, ain’t nothing Dittany can’t fix. In here, everyone, don’t want any extras goin’ with us.” Facilier gestured them to an empty alley.

“It’ll be okay, Child, just don’t think about it.” Carla told her comfortingly. Wendy nodded and calmed down, holding Facilier’s arm tightly.

“Let’s SPLОРP!” The twins glomped Wendy against Facilier, and Carla hugged the witch-doctor’s neck before they zipped into thin air. The dimensions spiraled around them with the sensation of being squeezed in a tight rubber tube. Wendy shut her eyes and prayed for it to be over, she thought she might suffocate in this dimension, was afraid of losing a leg and wondering if she already had, an Apparition was roughly 5 seconds long, but it feels forever.

She felt her feet hit solid, though soft soil, and breath filled her lungs. Wendy opened her eyes to find them in a peaceful forest. “See, Wendy, nothing went wrong.” Carla smiled.

“WAAAAAH! CARLA, YOUR TAIL’S MISSING!” Donna screamed.

“AAAAAAAH!” the cat panicked, feeling behind her. “Put it back! PUT IT BACK!”

“Just kidding!” The twins hugged. Carla snarled at them.

“Where are we, Mr. Facilier?” Wendy asked with wonder in her eyes. “Did you take us to an enchanted forest? Are we gonna learn how to ride unicorns, or catch fairies, or; or find special herbs for powerful potions??”

“No, it’s just the Black Forest in Germany. I come here to set trees on fire when I’m angry. We’re just here to practice.”

“Oh. Well, that’s okay!”

Facilier directed Wendy to face a road of trees and bushes. “Now you’ve been practicing that move I’ve been tellin’ you about, right?”

“Y-You mean that… one?”

“Yah. Show it to me.”

Wendy faced determinedly at the set path. She inhaled for nearly 10 seconds, creating a makeshift vacuum in the air, some birds almost flew in, they wondered just how large Wendy’s lungs were. Then, she unleashed it all in the form of a powerful cyclone, blowing the small shrubs and twigs miles away, the trees were bending over, lost many leaves, it was like a storm appeared in this one area. Wendy eventually stopped to catch breath. “Excellent, girl.” Facilier patted her back. “You make the inventors of the Cyclone Roar proud.”

“Eh he. Actually, I’ve been calling it the Sky Dragon Roar all this time.”

“Sky Dragon Roar?”

“That’s what they’re calling me in the wanted posters, I-I thought it had a nice ring to it. If it
bothers you, I’ll call it the Cyclone Roar if you want…”

“…That is… a way cooler name.” Harvey replied honestly. “Seriously, I’m gonna have to call the authors of the book and have them rename it.”

“Y-You don’t have to go THAT far!” Wendy flushed. “It mostly feels right for me, is what I’m saying.”

“Yeah, but seeing you use it, I dunno, it’s like that move was created for you.”

Wendy looked away sheepishly, twisting a foot against the soil. “It’s nothing special… but, what I really wanna do is start learning magic. I already know plenty of airbending, I’m just wondering…”

“Well, legally students can’t use magic until they’re officially enrolled, and even then, they can’t use it outside of school. Otherwise, they Track yo’ ass to the ends of the Earth.”

“Oh…” Wendy frowned with disappointment. She was really hoping to learn magic soon.

Facilier smirked, squatting down to put an arm around Wendy. “You’re talking to a guy who’s a pro at getting around legalities. Which is why, when we’re getting to Orchid Bay, I’m buying you a wand.”

“You will?!” she beamed. “I-Is it that one you wanted from that store?”

“Hah ha, if only Orchid Bay did sell that wand. Naw, but we’ll getchu any kind you want! Mermaid’s Heel, Genie’s Ring, Hippogriff’s Humility, if you think it’s fashionable, the money’s on me.”

“I’m so excited, I can’t wait!!”

“Easy girl, Chi-Stabilizers may not hold against emotional states! Now, let’s keep tryin’ that move. When I send this Fiendfyre at you, you have to use your Sky Dragon Roar to block it. Are you ready, Wendy?”

“Go for it!”

“Okay.” Facilier pulled out a small box. “Here it COMES!” The box popped open, out came a massive serpent with a skull’s head, made entirely of fire as it flew into the sky, setting trees aflame. It redirected and flew directly at the group, its boney fangs open.

Wendy sucked in a great breath of air and released. “Sky Dragon ROOOOOAAAAAR!”

**Gumdrop Cove**

The sun began setting by the time Augustus arrived, the stronghold where all Candy Pirates could come and be sugary in peace: Gumdrop Cove, a tremendous orange-brown island named for the fact it looked like a smashed piece of gum underneath a school desk. “Ahh, I love the smell of Hershey’s in the air.” Augustus smiled. “They never set ‘em up like these anymore. But ever since Captain Black Chocolate Bart coined this cove, it’s become a helluva.” Cannonfire roared, Augustus swerved his plane to avoid the giant jawbreakers. “Ho ho! Here’s the welcome wagon! We’re going doooown!”

“Whooooooaaaa!” Rallo and Stewie cried as the plane dove for the island like a kamikaze, narrowly dodging all cannons. Augustus whipped around, breezing the sailors with wind caused by
the force, and landed his plane along the shore between parked ships. Augustus exuberantly hopped out. “Hoist the Fruit Roll-Ups, mi amigos, your favorite captain has returned!”

“ARR-HAAAAARRRRR (Gustaaaaaaahhhh!)” The pirates cheered for him.

“Oogooshtush, ye bootee-grubbuh.” A fat, short pirate with a blue coat, white pants, black boot and peg-leg, and a squishy green beard of jelly, and pink Jell-O gums, marched forward.

“Where’ve ye got’n yer sorry soul this aour?”

“Gelatin Gerald.” Augustus greeted the captain of the Jelly Pirates with a cool smirk, dropping his dry lollipop. “Long time, no see. Still obsessed with that ‘Jelly Planet’ dream?”

“Dun’t mock what ya don’t know, boy. They say iss a drim, but I knows it: out thar in them stars be Jellatonia, a planet made o’ the sweet soliquid. Ar’ll round me up a space-pirate vessel, ‘n’ bring home to yer two galleons’ worth. Mark me wards, I be a half-Jellien, dropped here on this wreshed rock, and I’ll be the king o’ all o’ ‘em.”

“Hmm. Well, I’ll be waiting for that from beyond my grave.”

“Yer mouth not be weighed down with gelatin substancsh, ya make unwise use o’ it. Iffin’ yer really got ta right ta be usin’ such, a swear-off be what we need. Go ‘n, boy. Curse me with yer most jigglin’ of carser.”

Augustus started a new lolli. “You go first.”

“You’re a… gigsle-boned, celery-brained, graso.”

“Yer end’s spelled now, boy. Arr-har-hrm: Ya are… a big-buckled, lolli-lickin’, self-cod.”

“Ooooooo!” moaned the watching pirates.

Augustus smirked. “You’re a… dung-grubbing, urine-bathing, toilet-kisser.”

“NOE cursin’ in yer native tongue, boiii! Arr-harm: you are… a puff-chested, wrinkle-faced, retirement home resident.”

“Oooh-HOOOOOOOH!”

“You’re a… dung-grubbing, urine-bathing, toilet-kisser.”

“OH NO HE DIDNNNNN’T.”

“Yar ee… forest-earred, flat-buttocked, oxygen-addict.”

“Ahhhh-haaaaaa.”

“You’re a… salt-cowering, heat-detesting, lard-lover.”

“Aye? Well yer… a fan-haired, bottle-sucking, self-wettin’, half-devoured, hind-kissing, piece of landlubber trash that nary his birthers wanted ta deal with.”

“OOOOOOOOOH!!”

Augustus wasn’t phased. “You’re: a soulless, grammatically-inaccurate, culturally-ignorant, hopeless-dreaming, envious, pathetic ball of slop that has to feel glorious through means of swear-offs.”
“Arr… that’s below the belt. ARRR, ya win this time, ya wretched wretch of a… wretchen! Arrr, blubber blubber…” he cursed as he stomped away.

“‘ey, Gustah.” An eyepatch pirate with a big brown beard around his big mouth held a wanted poster with his hook hand. He spoke with a hoarse throat. “Yoh’ still wanted foe yoe allianceship with the Big Moms. 500,000 Chocolate Dollars foor yor head.”

“Only because I’m too sexy. …Which actually hurts saying it out loud, seeing as Grandma was worth 46 million. But you all aren’t gonna tattle, are ya?”

“Big Mom made the seas hurrrrrrutful to us. Almost bad as Davy Jones, or those crocodiles up in Mermaid Swamp. Blamey. If you have reason not to be ousted, let it sound.” His weak voice grew more high by the word.

“You know I never come here without reason. And lo and behold:” Stewie brought the half-gallons on his captain’s instruction, “Everbubble Fizz!”

“Yoo got that?” A skinny, dark-skinned pirate asked. “You trekked the Peztecs?”

“I trekked them.” Augustus said proudly. “Now where’s Bubbly Brandon? In the Soda Can again?”

“He’s up there, a’ight. Why ya businen’ with him, again. That soda be rightfully yers and those little wee ninnies. Keep that old coot with his average brew.”

“I would.” Augustus and the babies walked off. “But he has business with me.”

Sugary pirates with hairy bodies and miscellaneous amputations-replaced-with-candy tramped everywhere, up and down every stair and across hundreds of wooden walkways to every building dedicated to a specific brand of candy. The Smarties Corner for all them sea-sugar nerds, the Kisses Booth for swabbies in love, the Scarlet Licorice to view all them sexy lady pirates, the Jawbreakers-Plus-Other-Disposable-Parts for anyone wantin’ to get tough, or everyone’s favorite pub, the Soda Can, whose double, saloon-like doors Augustus pushed open. The floor was always sticky and brown, the sound of spurting soda from shooken-up cans was almost 24/7, and ’twas truly the corner to raise one’s blood-sugar levels.

Augustus approached a skinny man in a red coat and an everlasting goatee and mustache of light-brown bubbles. He saw the boy coming and plopped down the pitcher of soda. “OOOOOhhh Augustus. You’ve actually gone and did it.”

“Aye-aye, Brandon.” Augustus placed the half-gallons of Everbubble on the table. “The most nerve-shaking soda out there. Even the stuff at the Coffee Drilling Rig doesn’t compare.”

“Hoh-hoh. Too great a soda to just guzzle down in one gulp. I’ll just take…”

Augustus clamped his hand over a half-gallon and pulled it over. “The Marzipans need their share of the sodium, too. My grandpa’s in the Soda Control Board.”

“You’re seeking to bedevil your blood-sugar. That sodium was too powerful for the Peztecs, YOUR bones will never hold right.”

Augustus cocked an eye over a sunglass, showing Brandon its sky-blue color as he tipped the glass to his mouth. “This soda needs to talk to every lady these lips’ve been in contact with. Then they’ll know, it’s impossible not to settle down. …” He was inches from slurping it.

“Settle down, boy! You’re an air-lubber I’m fond of, I don’t want the worst to happen to ya.”
“Then gimme the best.” He plopped the soda down again. “You said you knew a guy where I can get the best-quality Corn-Clamber Boots. I’m heading up Buttermilk Building and no other material can stand its slipperiness. So choke up or I’ll drink you dry.”

“Okay, okay. A fellow of mine up in Mountain of Flavors, Greenland, makes the best hiking gear. His name’s Ricardo, but please, don’t go up there, lad. I heard that…that man’s goons have been lurking up there. The most terrifying candy hunter who’s not even a pirate, but he’s a demon among them. Lord Licorice.”

“Pfft, that old fart? Scare me with the Boogeyman.”

“I’m serious, Augustus. The most generous thing Licorice ever did was let Hasbro use his likeness in that crap board game. Little twerps like you are getting the wrong idea because of it, Lord Licorice is a monster. He seeks rare candy just to mock it, or muck it. He kills any soul who takes delight in any sweet but his own. He’s—”

“Black John Licorice’s younger brother, he already told me this stuff. And if I could stand his company, Lord Tyrone Joshua Licorice doesn’t scare me one bit.”

Brandon sighed and shook his head. “What do you want me to do, Son. Send a letter to my man on Flavor Mountain to ready a pair to send ya to your death? My immortal soul is too precious to risk.”

“Your soul isn’t the one being risked. But mine will hurt unless I climb Buttermilk Building and taste its everlasting sanctuary. And then I’ll… I might finally have a good ingredient…”

“Yes, you will have a perfect ingredient… to your death. Very well, I’ll send Ricardo the message you’re coming. But I’m not attending your funeral.”

“Man, you’re so negative. If I come back alive, pep up a little.”

“Don’t get agro at me because you have no cheerleaders.”

Augustus left the bar and trekked down wooden stairs to a lower part of town. “Come awn, man, don’t make us go up against Lord Licorice!” Rallo cried frantically. “I played Candy Land, that guy is messed up! Kidnappin’ King Kandy, ruining Gramma Nutt’s garden, and what’s with forcing little kids to eat licorice? Plus, whaddyou think happened to Plumpy, the last of the Plumpa Trolls? He killed him, that’s what! That’s genocide! I don’t wanna have ta deal with that!”

“Besides, we have a plane, why the hell do we need climbing boots?” Stewie asked.

“Because even the air around Buttermilk is strange. The cream evaporates into little particles that seep inside of engines and makes everything slip apart. Too risky. And we couldn’t even land anywhere that isn’t slippery.”

“If Ah get cream all up in mah afro, you’re paying for my barber, Chocolate Coin Boy.” Rallo frumped.

“Mw-mw.”

“See, Mags knows what I’m gettin’ at.”

“The sun’s going down… We’ll rent us a room at the Cup of Cocoa and get rest. It’s fair to worn you, you kids might be sharing a bed.”
“Employ this one at Child Services.” Stewie remarked.

“Speaking of which, though…” Augustus led the children back to the Ace Flyer, pulling wrapped blankets out of the trunk. “I need my crew at its best, so it’s time for you to eat.” He unwrapped the blankets to reveal boxes of fruit and sandwiches. “Dinner is served.”

“Why the healthy provisions all of a sudden?” Rallo asked. “They’s candy in these fruit?”

“No, it’s honest-to-good food. I’d chow on candy ‘til bedtime, but it’s no good for toddlers, and as your captain, I’m basically your babysitter. Especially since you’re unaging brats, so eat up.”

Stewie took a sandwich, Rallo took a banana, and Maggie had apple juice. “Well, not the worst Child Services.” the former remarked again. “You should eat, too.”

“Nah.” Augustus sat on the plane, dropping his dried lolli. “I survived this long in Big Mom’s crew; and a forceful cleaning from Knightbrace, I don’t need this stuff.”

“Mw-mw.” The teenager looked down at Maggie. Her hazel eyes were wide and pretty as she held an orange to Augustus.

He smiled warmly. “That means a lot, Mags, but I’ll be-”

Cock. “Mw-mw.” Augustus looked nervously. Maggie narrowed her eyes as she aimed a gun at his head. Augustus slowly reached down, took the orange, and munched the first bite, chewing slowly. He swallowed through the saliva clogged in his throat, due to his nervousness, and munched the next bite.

Negaverse; DNK Moonbase (Patrick Stewart, if you would do the honors?)

Gladly, Gamewizard. When we last saw all our friends in the Posiverse, Supreme Leader Cheren had abruptly revealed the coming of the Apocalypse just 3 days beforehand, and now everyone is scrambling to find twenty unnamed Keys and do whatever sort of self-realizing journey God has put them on. Down in the Negaverse, however, Supreme Leader Nerehc revealed the Apocalypse four months ago. Now as either world has only one month to prepare for this cataclysm, you can surmise how serious everyone must be taking it. The Negatives, actually, are treating it quite casually. It was only a month before when the danger of the DNKG was abolished, and the skies of Nega-Land are filled with light. Things have never been happier, so why should anyone worry.

Even Nerehc himself seems more lazy than usual, in his office on Moonbase. The paperwork was stacked and “filled”; so he claims, so now he was taking it easy, kicked back with his feet on the desk. He even had a strand of grass in his mouth, he wondered what was so cool about people having these. …It wasn’t bad. He sat up quick when his door opened, spitting the grass out as Ininap and Sicnarf walked in. “So um, Nerehc, summer is just around the corner, and based on your info, the Apocalypse should be happening by then, so… what’re we gonna do about it?” Sicnarf asked.

“Beats me.”

“B-But we can’t just sit here and let it happen.” Ininap stuttered.

“Well, I don’t know what to do, according to Smiley or whatever he’s called, the Positives are gonna be doing most of the work. The Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses are in their world, so…”

“Yeah, but wasn’t the point of Meet Your Match Day back then to have both sides get to know
each other?” Sicnarf questioned. “That way, we can fight together and have a better chance at winning.”

“Maybe, but we never got around to planning another Match Day, because Cheren’s crew is always busy. Makes sense. It’s kinda been hard for us too, considering a lot of our operatives were traitors.”

“But they’ve been better after Innus returned them to their normal sizes, haven’t they?” Ininap asked.

“It isn’t just them, the DNKG members and all their allies, they’re still pretty sour. The Nimbi and the merkids are still fighting, we’ve still got scuffles with the Hsinim, even with this Apocalypse in mind, we can’t convince them to get along. That’s our real priority at the moment.”

“Wouldn’t it be better to just forget the DNKG kids?” Sicnarf replied. “They’ve been total psychos since going to Galactic Juvy. It’s too risky to even let them meet their Positives.”

“True, but we know some people that might help.” Ininap informed with a nervous grin. “Remember our cousin, Ayamik and her friends?”

“I thought about it, but they’re too classy. They wouldn’t agree to it.”

“If they did, would they be able to help?” Nerehc wondered.

“Depends on who can stand the other’s company.”

“You got me hooked.” Nerehc stood up. “Take me to your cousin’s house, I wanna see what’s so ‘classy’ about them.”

“If you want to.” Sicnarf shrugged. “I should warn you about our aunt, Imak. And why we never invite her to Ingrateful taking dinner.”

“Can’t be any worse than Aluben.”

**Yltraeh Household**

Sicnarf and Ininap kept a safe distance while Nerehc knocked on the door. A blonde-haired woman with cold green eyes, a ragged tank-top, and black shorts swung open the door, knocking Nerehc back. “The fuck do you want?” Imak Yltraeh (een Yksvolird) shouted, munching on a taco.

Nerehc rubbed the bruise on his forehead and sat up. “Hi, Mrs. Yltraeh. Is your daughter home?”

“Wut, comin’ to join her prissy tea party? Yea’, she’s upstairs, what’re you expecting a welcome party?”

“N-N-N-No, Ma’am.” Ininap shrunk.

“May we come in, please.” Nerehc asked with mock-politeness.

“Ain’t no one stoppin’ you, indoors is pretty much outdoors in this house. Just don’t touch anything in mah fridge.” The bad-odored woman stepped aside so the three could enter the messy, uncared-for house, going up stairs that creaked with each step. “AYAMIK, your shitty cousins are here with some NERD kid!”

Ayamik’s room was quite the opposite. “That’s fine, Mother.” The daughter had blonde hair in seven curls, very pale with powder, and she wore an elegant white dress as she cooled her face with
a fan. Her associates, Oelak Nosredna, and the siblings, Pat and Flow, wore their own fancy attire, too fancy for description at the moment, and all sat at a curtained table to drink tea in this heavily polished room of gorgeous china and posters depicting famous opera stars.

“Ah we really allowing company up here?” Oelak asked; his teeth looked a little large for his mouth, so he talked funny.

“It’s such a cabbage patch here otherwise, what harm would guests do.”

“Um… hello?” Nerehc peeked into the door.

“They harm us by beginning their sentences with filler.” Flow replied, sipping her tea.

“Yeah, classy’s an understatement…” Nerehc mumbled, walking in with Sicnarf and Inap behind him.

“You must be Ayamik. Are these your friends?”

“Friend’ is merely a layman’s term for associate, which people make use of far too casually.” Ayamik replied. “We prefer to think of ourselves as such so as to distinguish ourselves from ruffians.”

“Well, your cousins tell me you’re actually experts in dealing with, um, ‘ne’er-do-wells’, making them more calm and civilized and, such.”

“We’re accredited for it, true.” Pat replied. “However, never is it enjoyable, those fools in detention are such lunatics. Yet, the school insists on troubling us with their conflict because they need more diligent workers.”

“Your work helps though, right?”

“From time to time.” Flow replied. “Ydnas and Noel could serve as reference.”

“In that case, I would like your help with some, if you would. I don’t know if you know about the DNKG, but there’s a group of alien kids in Galactic Juvy.”

“You wish us to be involved with extraterrestrial miscreants?” Pat questioned.

“Hahdleeeh.” droned Ayamik. “The last thing we desire is juvenile court. Let alone garblish-speaking crooks. Why would you desire them in society?”

“For personal, selfish reasons you won’t care about. The reason I’m asking is because I’m not good at therapy, but I really want to help those guys. You four don’t really have to, I’m just saying it may be in your best interest. So will you or not?”

“If you are to insist upon us, sure.” Oelak replied. “What say you, chaps?”

“Aye.” They chorused.

“Then the motion is carried. Where ah these acclaimed miscreants?”

“In Aixalag, a galaxy far far away.” Nerehc answered. “We’ll go up to Moonbase and take one of the S.U.B.-L.O.O.C.s. Ever since the DNKG thing, I thought we might have to go there again, that’s why I asked Cheren for those Warpdrive Keys.”

“Miscellaneous information that does not interest us.” Flow informed.

“I know, I was saying it to them.” He gestured at Inap and Sicnarf.
“Your response was to Oelak’s question, was it not?” Pat asked. “You cannot so suddenly shift conversations.”

“Heck, they’ll break the aliens out of their madness just by drivin’ ‘em crazy.” Nerehc remarked lowly.

“At least make this trip more enjoyable by negating to mumble.” Flow commented.

The seven kids glanced at Imak guzzling the cereal, Crumb-O’s in the kitchen while they casually left the house. “If it interests you, Mother, we are going into non- or semi-oxygen now, we do not expect dinner from you.” Ayamik told her.

Ininap, who was the last to leave, frantically shut the door before Imak threw a chair. “Damn brats, go fall in a gopher hole.”

**Aixalag; Planet Noreciv**

After acquiring a S.U.B.-L.O.O.C., the kids used the Warpdrive to fly to Aixalag in minutes, and were currently approaching a planet of green and yellow landscape. “According to Emorej, this is where Galactic Juvy is stationed, on Noreciv. Incidentally, the main reason they built it is because of the DNKG. He said it was around this region, so let’s check.”

“Another planet, how shrew.” Ayamik waved the fan at her neck. “I feel the atmosphere of these beasts infiltrating my lungs already.”

“Not gonna argue there.” Nerehc replied. “Can’t imagine a kid prison looks pretty. Even on our terms.”

Although the sky was yellow, the surface was beautiful, with lush green alien plants growing everywhere. Butterflies, bumblebees, every vicious and gentle animal frolicked. An ocean yellow like lemon candy stretched over the distance. The kids landed a short distance away from a small, white building that looked like a preschool. The colorful sign outside read *Galactic Juvy*.

“Population 12.” Nerehc commented.

“This place looks delightful.” Ininap grinned, shuddering at the thought of meeting mean, scary kids. “Maybe the DNKG kids are already better.”

Nerehc walked up the flat stone path to the front door. He knocked gently, and a pretty, obese woman with long brown hair, a blue dress with white polka-dots, and legs going into black high-heels, greeted them with a grin that rivaled the sun. “Hello, dears! I’m Miss Ahtaga Llubhcunurt, the warden here at Galactic Juvy. Are you here to visit the students?”

Nerehc, Inap, and Sicnarf looked weirdly at one-another. “Um, kind of… we wanted, um, to know if, we could help with, some of the students?” Sicnarf was at a loss while wording that sentence as he still couldn’t comprehend the bright and cheerfulness of the outside.

“A sentence should not have that many intermissions.” Oelak had to point out.

“If you would like to help teach, then sure.” Miss Llubhcunurt grinned brightly. “Why don’t you come in, dears?”

The inside of the small building was merely a lobby, with waiting chairs and a receptionist desk, in which Miss Llubhcunurt led them to an elevator on its right. “I’ll take you down one floor as a start. It’s suppertime for our friends, so make sure to share your food nicely! And don’t get your clothes stuck in the door, dears.” The eight of them squeezed onto the lift before the door closed and they rolled down. “And here we are. Hellowoooo, everyone! We have guests!”
Prison cells were lined up all along the hallway, each containing an alien child aggressively eating the fine food that passed for supper. One of the aliens looked at them. “Look, it’s Nerehc!! The one who beat Aluben!!” Incomprehensible shouts and roars rang all throughout the halls as each former DNKG agent desperately tried to break through their barrier.

“Looks like I’m an intergalactic hero.” the boy in question noticed.

“Oh my, you seem very popular among these dears!” Llubcnurt perked up. “I hope we won’t have to line up for autographs. Hoh hoh hoh! I’m afraid I should tell you, the students usually do cleanup work in the kitchens on Yadsruht, so if you wanted to help teach any of them, may it only be a few.”

“That’s okay. There’s four in particular we at least wanna see. Can you help us find them? They are…” Nerehc proceeded naming them.

“Why, of course, dearie! I’ll take you over to the Quiet Room and have them brought out shortly.”

The Quiet Room was, to say the least, quiet, keeping all the shouting outside as muffles. There were actually five different sub-rooms around the wall, Ayamik, Oelak, Pat, and Flow were led into four specific ones. After a while, scary alien guards brought the four chosen DNKG kids in through alternate doorways of the rooms, so either couple was separated by glass. Ayamik got Avakam, Oelak got Atnort, Pat got Annaira, and Flow got Beewv. Each former operative wore a blank, gloomy expression, though murderous intent for Nerehc in the background was clear in their eyes. “Um… good luck, you guys.” Nerehc told them before he and his friends shut each door.

“So… you’re my therapist, huh.” Avakam said to her aid.

“I’ll have you know that I partake no interest in associating with the likes of scoundrels as yourselves.” Ayamik stated. “But it seems that I am obliged to by this stranger. So let us cut to the chase, if we may, if you were to be set free right now, what would be your course of action?”

“Grab the closest gun and shoot Nerehc in the head.”

“I do not argue with your decision, but I doubt they will find it acceptable. So entertain me with what you consider your backstory.”

“What backstory. My mom was a Nairuomolg, Dad was a Naineetak, but I was born on Mom’s planet to learn how to hunt and shoot things. She says I can’t shoot my brother, though, ’cause we’ll have nothing to eat in case the Apocalypse comes. Ultimately, we live on that godforsaken ice planet, Occes, where we had little food in our puny log cabin. Then Aluben shows up, wants us to be part of her empire, I’m like ‘Sure, ’long as I get away from this place.’”

“How great is your interest in hunting?”

“Very great. I like to rob creatures of life to show them life is cruel. I never like to give them the chance to look back on their decisions. They enter the afterlife as they are.”

“Yes, well Lord permit you to enjoy your own meager existence.” Ayamik applied lipstick to her mouth area.

“What does that mean?”

“Clearly, your skin is not naturally developed for the temperatures of an ice planet, but your parents were either poor or lazy with money, so they wished for such a living quarters. You feel distaste for all the animals and creatures who have adapted so well, your only solace is their
demise. Each bullet you fire is but an inch of your accumulated spite and suffering.”

Avakam laughed hysterically, “Hyou are not even CLOSE, because I am not—”

“-CUTE! I AM NOT CUTE!” Beewv screamed at Flow in their own room. “That’s what I keep tellin’ them, but apparently there’s something adorable about the only white Naineetak in existence. And you know what I said, I said I’ll learn swordplay too! And I’ll CUT you all up!” He made the gesture of jabbing a sword. “I’ll cut you up so hard, you’ll not even SEE it! Same for all those DNKG jerks, too, I’mma chop them ALL up! THEN you’ll see why you should never underestimate—”

We had technical errors while our voice actor was trying to pronounce Beewv’s full name, so this scene was edited. We apologize for the inconvenience.

“You make your personal grief vividly clear.” Flow said. “All I can configure is you’re a nutcase. If it’s any consolation, I don’t find you the least bit adorable.”

“Yeah, but I’m STILL sick of Miss Peppy-dress’s crap! I want my swords back so I can chop up her dress and everything underneath!”

“Repulsive…”

In Oelak and Atnort’s room, the former had been digging around his mouth all this time. “There we ah.” He pulled out a notepad and pen. “My apologies, but I must take notes if I am to make believe I am paying attention. Please, begin.”

“I’m half-Nairapmup and half-Natinrah. My parents are of two different species, but Atinrah was swallowed in conflict and wars, it ended up destroying itself so the surviving population moved to Airapmup. So as you might expect, our planet is pretty *** crowded- Wait, why was that censored?”

“No cursing in the school, dearie!” Llubhcnurt sang through the intercom.

“Anyway, not that I can show you with these chi-blocks in place, I’m a lightningbender. I always have a need to burn off energy, which I COULDN’T without shocking anyone most of the time, yet I was supposed to let my sister bloodbend me for fun. So when Aluben let us join DNKG, she promised my own private planet to shock things. But it ain’t go so well when NEREHC gave me Zapper Nation and botched up my chi-paths.”

Oelak nodded solemnly and wrote things down. “Mmhm, mmhm, resent for Nerehc, urge, but forbidden to be a delinquent, inability to tolerate company of others… You ah an imbecile.”

“Okay, that’s it, LET ME OUT OF HERE YOU STUPID-!!” Atnort furiously banged on the glass.

“Remember our manners, dearie!” Atnort furiously banged on the glass.

“Ghhhhhh!” Atnort really wanted to strangle somebody, but settled in his seat. “So how’s things in yer life.” he said through gritted teeth.

Lastly, Pat was talking with Annaira, who slouched on her way in. “So what tale have you to delight me with.” said Pat.

“What my brother is shouting about in there. We’re from a crowded planet, so my only comfort is controlling animals. I hate animals. Very much so. They show dislike with us, too. So I like to play with them with bloodbending. I like to kill them from inside and eat their flesh. That’s what real
hunting is.”

“Your parents must have been proud.”

“If only. I was inherently born with good bloodbending, but my mother forbidded it. Never let me practice. Only the matriarch is allowed to control her kids. Atnort always ratted on me whenever I practiced. Aluben let me take lessons. I was her favorite. I… I admired her…” Anna’s eyes twitched. “Her parents let her do everything she wanted…” She clutched an invisible force. “She was going to make us respected… feared… Then Nerehc took her from us… now we’re nothing…” A high-pitch ringing was rising in her head, and only she could hear. “COME BACK TO ME, LORD ALUBEEEEEEN!”

Pat was checking his frowning face in a mirror, ensuring his features were perfectly symmetrical. “Yes, females are ‘lords’ in this universe…”

Miss Llubhcnurt’s Room

“Doot, doot-doot dooooo, doo-bi-di-doo, doot, doot-doot, dooooo.” The warden hummed merrily to herself in her resting quarters, which could easily be mistaken as a little girl’s room. She was putting eyeliner on her lashes. “Oh, how I cannot wait for dinnertime! Those dears must be ever-so excited to show me their new kitchen. I hope those tutors finish with their four in time, I just don’t like leaving anybody out. Now let’s see- oh! My lipstick, of course!” She opened her drawer, took the red stick, and began rubbing it on her lips.

As she viewed her own progress in the dresser mirror, her image strangely wobbled. “Oooo, now that’s funny. I didn’t purchase one of those silly mirrors again, did I? Those things ALWAYS get me!” She stood up and grabbed both sides of the mirror to straighten it. “My, what an odd refraction. I’d almost say it’s, wh-wh-whoa. WOOOOOOHHH!” She clumsily keeled forward and through the liquidated mirror.

Zordoom; Trunchbull’s cell

The discharged muscular principal washed her hands with gusto, splashing water onto her sweaty face before staring at her mirror. “Ahh, you put in a good effort today, Agatha, it’s a shame those blowhards don’t follow your example. Well, I’ll whip ‘em into shape one way or another. Prison’s no different from school,” she walked away, “and ‘long as I’m around, they’ll-”

“-WOOOOOH!” Ahtaga Llubhcnurt tumbled out of the mirror onto her back, startling Trunchbull. The imprisoned principal curiously stood over her, exchanging a strict, grouchy look with Ahtaga’s bright smile. “Why, hello there! You look just like meeeee!”

“Who in bloody blazes are you?”

Galactic Juvy

Ayamik’s friends managed to talk to the DNKG agents for half an hour before they got bored. Nerehc stood up eagerly when they returned. “So what’s the news?”

“They hate you.” Ayamik replied.

“Indubitably.” agreed Oelak.

“A great amount.” Pat said.

“I don’t see what’s so special about small things.” Flow commented.
“Well, we tried our best.” Ininap shrugged. “There’s no gettin’ them on our side now.”

Nerehc sighed. “I’m not giving up, yet. GUARDS, bring them all out here.”

The stone, toad-like aliens in metal armor held the four juveniles by the arm (and Beewv in one’s fingers) as they brought them before Nerehc. “I don’t care why your love for DNKG was so great, or how or why you could respect Aluben. I don’t care how much you hate me, because our universe is in danger. A cataclysm is coming, and we all have to work together to save everyone. Humans and aliens, Negatives and Positives, fighting each other isn’t going to help that. So if I get your butts bailed out of here, can we at least focus on the bigger picture?”

The aliens exchanged glances with each other. Nerehc made a very valid point, a universe-wide cataclysm was something they’d like to avoid. …What a load of crap.

Avakam kicked away from her guard and swiped his electric gun, shocking him in the mouth before shooting the others to free her friends. They jumped Nerehc’s crew as Atnort swiped the Devil’s Sword, holding it to Nerehc’s neck. “Let all the others out of their cells or I’M bending his blood!”

The guards exchanged worried glance- “NOW! !” A guard nodded at another before he ran down the hall to an emergency ‘Recess’ switch. The guard pulled, and alarms blared as every barrier disabled.

Former DNKGs and general juveniles trashed the facility, overpowering every guard who, apparently, wasn’t trained for this kind of drill. Psychotic kids were stronger in numbers. Sicnarf punched Atnort away with Armament, then elbowed Annaira back, but the former still took Nerehc’s Devil Sword and bolted. Nerehc tried to chase, but Beewv had gotten up his pants leg and started biting his skin, slowing the boy’s progress as he jumped while trying to smack Beewv out.

Avakam swiped two more shock-guns from fallen guards and shot Sicnarf, who rolled and dodged before running at her. Ininap balled her fists to fight Annaira, but although the latter was chi-blocked, her punches easily bruised Ininap’s baby skin, knocking the human down before picking her up by the neck. Sicnarf about-faced, forced to cease attacking when Anna threatened his sister, allowing Avakam to easily shock him in the back.

Nerehc managed to grab Beewv out and throw him against the wall, but storms of juvenile aliens piled on him. Nerehc punched, kicked, and bit to get away, Wall Jumping across the hallway to get over most of them, otherwise jumping across their heads. He saw the white glow of his sword drawing farther away in Atnort’s hands. He stumbled and fell into the crowds, the followers of Aluben ragefully whaled on him, prevented him from standing. Nerehc reached his open hand and called, “GHIRAHIM!”

The diamond-skinned spirit appeared from the sword, punching Atnort in the gut before taking the blade back. “Master.” He smirked, tossing the sword across the crowds so Nerehc could jump up and grab it. Ghirahim stood with him back-to-back as the aliens stepped away.

“End of the line, Ner-Ner.” They whipped around to face Team Aluben, who held Sicnarf and Inap hostage as Avakam aimed a gun at the latter’s shuddering, teeth-clattering head. “You destroyed our leader and got us thrown in here. We’re officially taking over Juvy, and our first order of business is getting rid of you. After we kill your friend.” She cocked the gun, and Ininap shut her eyes.

“EEEEEOOOOOOOOUUUUGH!” This thundering roar was followed by a sudden quaking of the halls. This quake resulted from Agatha Trunchbull’s herculean punch. “EVERYONE get back
in their cells for a headcount or you’re ALL being shoved someplace so dark, you’ll BEG for the alien crows or whatever you bloody have to be able to fly by and land their droppings on you. NOOOOOOW!!!” Miss Llubhcnurt stood behind her, clapping giddily.

Avakam, Atnort, Annaira, and Beewv cowered behind Nerehc. “WE’LL BE GOOD! Please save us!” they chorused.

“Yes, your loyalty to Aluben lasts only as long as your fear.” Nerehc eye-rolled.

“You are truly outlandish.” a voice said beside Trunchbull.

“Ex-CUSE MEEEE??” she screamed directly at Ayamik, whom wasn’t phased at all while waving the fan at her powdered face.

“The only possible excuse for your behavior is you were born supernaturally large and old, ergo your premature instincts allow you to become the ‘big bully’ of the playground, not that your intelligence is anything to celebrate.”

One expected Trunchbull to rebuttal. Her mouth opened, she raised her index finger, but she stopped herself. “Hmph… I like this girl.” she said to Llubhcnurt. “You should find more of them. Congratulations, you’re officially Miss Trunchbull’s Number One.” She smacked Ayamik’s back forcefully. “Now everyone report to the kitchen for cleaning or we’ll be using your misc. alien limbs as scrubbing utensils.”

As everything inside was settling down thanks to the school’s new co-warden, Miss Llubhcnurt was seeing their guests and the four students off. “Thank you all for coming, and for helping our students. We’ll truly miss these four, but we hope you come back to visit.”

“We probly won’t miss this place.” Atnort remarked.

“Thanks for letting us in, Miss Llub.” Nerehc said. “You’ll give Ayamik’s friends those coordinates to Earth in case they wanna come back, right?”

“Why, of course I will. I must say, this woman is such a delight! Already 10 minutes and we feel like long-lost twins.”

“HURRY UP, you silly wannabe backwards version of myself or I’m feeding this steamed broccoli to those Iceans.”

“Oops, that’s my call!” Llubhcnurt flushed. “You four behave, now. Toodle-o00000!” She wiggled her fingers joyfully as the operatives returned to the ship.

The S.U.B.-L.O.O.C. was leaving Noreciv’s atmosphere with the four new passengers handcuffed in the back. “So recap us where from the universe this ‘cataclysm’ idea came from?” Beewv inferred.

“I guess your spies never got the chance to tell you.” Nerehc figured. “I’ll explain on the way, and we’ll let you hang out on Earth until you’re, how we say, ‘rehabilitated’.”

“You can’t really expect us to play along too well.” Annaira stated. “Even after all your talk of peace, you killed our leader.”

“…Aluben’s not dead. She’s alive in the Underworld, I requested it.”

“She’s… alive?” Avakam asked, confused.
“Mm-hm. And if you behave, maybe I’ll take you to see her.”

Dnaleci; Gnik Household

Ragaj Gnik sat alone in his basement. It was so dark, you couldn’t even see his face. Just hours ago, he had lit the green light for his allies, Team Gnik, to begin their journey. Meanwhile, he would be tending to his own tasks. “Egroeg! AlyakAm!”

His son and daughter came down the basement stairs. “Yes, Father. What is it?” Egroeg asked tonelessly.

“The doomsday we have known was coming is upon us. But I am still a long time away. I have yet to make ready for my master’s arrival. That is why… I want you to go to the Posiverse.” Ragaj trembled with fury, but his tone remained moderate. “A precious item was stolen from me! It was stolen by my Positive! I want you to get it back…”

Because Wendy needs her Romeo-kun! ^D^ So yeah, you could also consider this a sub-sequel for Down in the Negaverse, I was querying how I wanted to make their chapters, I figure I’ll do them like Negaverse in the form of quick-resolved shorts. I mean, it kind of worked out back then. Next time, we’ll go to Orchid Bay, and Gustah we’ll go after Corn-Clamber Boots. And stuff. ;P
Chapter Summary

Cheren Uno and Nolan York learn some important information tonight.

Welcome back. So these next few chapters will be about getting the first Light, er, second. Yeah, you know how in Firstborn, you go through a lot of crap to find one Firstborn, this story’s really no different, what with character and world development. But finding this Light, we’ll at least be a step through.

Chapter 7: Under the Night

Excess Express (Play “Excess Express Night” from Thousand-Year Door.)

Cheren and Mom sat at opposite ends of a candlelit, curtained table, beside a window with a lovely view of the blue night sky and starlit desert, rushing rightward as the train was in motion. A peaceful tune was playing via the train’s speakers as the slim older woman poured two glasses of wine. She lightly shook hers in the air and spoke with a smooth smile, “Care to try the champagne?”

“You know I’m not old enough.”

“Really, ‘cause I couldn’t tell.” she said with a snarky tone, guzzling her glass in one gulp.

“So who’s this boss of yours. Why do you want me to kill her?”

“Funny, I never said it was a ‘she’.” Mom smirked.

“…”

“You’ve heard of the Corporate Presidents, haven’t you?”

“Only stories. Never saw what was so great about them.”

“Well, of course they’re great. They’re second only to the World Leaders in political power.”

“World Leaders?”

“Of the World Government, of course!”

“World Government?”

“My, what do they teach you in school nowadays? Would you be interested in a little story?”

“…”

“As you know, the multiverse is contrived by many universes, and those universes contrived by millions of planets. And each universe has a few what are known as ‘Core Worlds’. Worlds where a great concentration of energy in the universe is focused. One of them for this universe is Planet
Avalar. Can you guess another Core World?” She smiled slyly.

“Ummm… Flora?”

“EARTH, YOU DINGWAT!” She banged the table. “Ah-he-hem…” she calmed down. “Earth is one of the Core Worlds, and has the strongest concentration of energy. For that reason, around 4000 years ago, a group of humans came to this planet and established a secret dominion. They at first called their selves the Illuminati, but eventually came to be known as the World Government. For eons, they oversaw this world’s operations, and see almost every activity that occurs. Their one goal is to assure the peace and order in this world, and to help them, they have the Corporate Presidents For Children’s Entertainment.”

“And that’s you guys?”

“The Corporate Presidents is a team of business owners who specialize in children’s toys and brands, but they make stuff for adults, too. The reason is that the fate of this world rests in those who will inherit it, the younger generation, so who controls the youth, controls the future. That’s what the World Leaders intend from us Corporate Presidents. But due to my actions in Galaxia, I’ve lost millions, and now the Head President is chewing my ass off. That’s why… I’ve been plotting to kill her, and seize the throne. Of course, I couldn’t do that myself. Someone else needs to take the fall.” She smirked wickedly. “You…”

Cheren glared. “But why use me to do your dirty work?”

“Because you were the snot-nosed urchin who defeated that Nature Goddess. Your father was the even-snottier urchin who saved the universe. And you and the Head President… are connected.” Cheren’s expression didn’t falter. “You are clearly on equal grounds with her power. And on top of that, we Corporate Presidents are currently opposed against you KNBrats. Killing our leader would give you the advantage. I, on the other hand, don’t care about our silly ‘purpose’. I just want to make a lot of money. True, the World Government would be disgusted with you, but they already are. The only advantage will be yours.”

“Well, what happens to me after I kill her?”

“You promise not to blow my cover, I promise not to blow your ass off. But I can’t stop the other presidents from doing the same. That pleasure is theirs.”

“…”

“The other presidents will be boarding this train tomorrow morning at 7. We’ll be heading to a gathering of bigshots and nobles from around the world. Their kids will be on this train too, so you’ll have to stay hidden. After all, it’d be a real shame if TWO big-time bigshots met with an untimely demise.”

“Yeah…” He still looked smug.

“WWWALT! You three show Cheren to your room. No reasonable classy bigshot would DARE step in there. Myself included.”

“Yes, Mother.” Walt nodded. “This way, Mr. Uno.” The three brothers marched off to the back of the train.

“Just a second.” Cheren said quickly, holding up his DS. “Does this place have Wi-Fi? Figured I’d spar a few rounds with Panini while I’m waiting to commit murder.”
“Oh, fine.” Mom eye-rolled. “Just don’t contact anyone. Walt, give him the password.”

“Very well. Let us proceed.” The sons continued leading him to the room.

**Civic City, Rhode Island** (Play “Across the Arkham” from *Batman: Arkham City*.)

A pitch-black night over a city that’s less than colorful. A sea of clouds blocking the sparkly stars and their light. And some guy in a trenchcoat and gas mask seated atop a tall building in a wheelchair. He skimmed the city with binoculars. Few cars roamed, and the only people throughout the streets were suspicious types. Quietly gliding to his perch was the witch in the purple cloak, Wiccan, and floating on a small ice platform, Frosty Coldman. “Welcome to the Nightclub, guys.” said the Sandman.

“I can’t bear to miss any meetings.” Crystal sighed. “What’s today’s grand heist?”

“Doflamingo.”

“I think you meant to bring us to California?” inquired Yuki.

“No, Doflamingo, President of Doflamingo Incorporated. They create toys that talk and interact with their buyers, no batteries attached.”

“Oh, I was always so curious about those things. Such an odd technology, I just had to get ahold of it. Never had the money.” Crystal explained.

“Well, now you won’t need any. I read that a huge shipment of Doffy Toys are being delivered to the local Toys 4 Grab. Run by workers of his company, no less. We’re going to interrogate ‘em and see if they know anything about Caesar.”

“That guy again?” Yuki asked. “Didn’t we trust him in Kids Next Door’s hands?”

“Flamingo was one of Caesar’s customers. I think he has something to do with Caesar’s escape. And even more to do with trying to destroy the KND.”

“What makes you say that?” asked Wiccan.

“It’s, eh… hard to explain. …I see their trucks now, let’s go. And careful of any Triads no one’s bothering to arrest.”

**Stage 11: Civic City**

**Mission: Get info on Doflamingo.**

And so began a calm, gentle glide across the damp city. While regular people had to walk busy streets, they could fly over everything and swing from roof to roof, ‘cause they were superheroes. They could cause any sort of property damage because they were superheroes. And beatin’ the crap out of any individual in the name of justice. “The Flamingos control a lot-a this area, and they staked the Triads into helping look after things. I wouldn’t be surprised if one or two satellites wasn’t under their control. If we get ahold of them, I can listen in on their conversations.”

Their first destination was a high balcony where thugs were refreshing in the pool, the satellite active behind them. They took land on the roof just above the pool. “Ahhhh, I tell ya Shin, the best part of Summer is the easing of soul after a hard, hot day.” said one of them. “I dunno what these
bird guys are about, but ‘long as we rent out this suite, I ain’t complainin’ one… HEY, it’s Sandman!” Lying back, he could easily spot the three heroes on their perch.

“Distract ‘em.” They dropped down as Crystal and Yuki began wailing on ‘em, while Nolan hooked the satellite up to his wristwatch. Yuki raised ice shields against two firebenders before flipping upside-down and spin-kicking them across the heads. Crystal pelted fireballs at two more, but they sank in Shadow Veils and slithered to her, the witch leaping high and performing a Ground Quake to pop them into the air, and afterwards batting them away with her staff. She watched as Yuki leaped over the pool, and she quickly batted the thugs into the pool as Yuki blasted ice down and froze them all solid.

“Sorry. Winter’s come early.” He smirked. The thugs were merely trapped with shocked expressions.

Sandman unplugged his watch from the satellite. “Almost there. Now I just need one more.”

“That’s not right!” frowned Crystal. “Videogame tradition is three!”

“Yah, well this is thah new, age, so Ah only need TWO!” proclaimed Nolan in a gangsta fashion. “Alright, let’s go.”

The three glided again over the city until they spotted a satellite atop a fairly tall skyscraper. “Stay down.” Nolan said as they stopped on a lower building, seeing the red beams skimming around from the tower. “They have snipers. Let me just sneak up from below.” Nolan glided to a low area on the building where he could begin climbing a ladder that led up and around, his wheelchair also grabbing it with short claws so it could climb with him.

“You might be able to with Swanson, but it’s hard to make jokes about that cripple.” Crystal commented. Sandman tried to climb quietly to avoid rattling the fencelike ladder, but the building had branches with mirrors aimed at the ladder so the snipers could check it real quick. It was a matter of waiting for their lasers to leave so he could progress up the zigzag fence. The ladder eventually brought him to a round walkway just under the snipers’ area. He tossed a few quick boomerangs to knock two of them dizzy, tempting the others to coming over. With that, Nolan climbed up a ladder behind them and threw a smoke bomb to cloud them inside, allowing him to knock them out without being seen.

He then climbed up to the satellite and linked his wristwatch to it, downloading the Wireless Communications Network to 100%. “Hey, you been to that new restaurant with all the singin’ animals?”

“Freddy’s Pizzeria? No way, that stuff always gave me the creeps.”

"I been there once. Damn things smelled like carcasses. Made the bar behind the motel smell like a meadow."

The thugs’ conversation playing on his wristwatch, Nolan glided back to Yuki and Crystal. “Well, I downloaded their Wi-Fi. Now I’m the ultimate eavesdropper. And I can check my Yahoo, deviantART, and my wiki stuff whenever I want.”

“Did you mark on the wiki how I’m totally fabulous?” Crystal smirked.

“In all ways. Now let’s fly to the toy store and try to sneak in.” His new communications link also marked the location of the store a few miles from here. It was big enough to see on their own, given enough flying, but to make it easier for first-time players. They trekked across the roof of the
store, swiping a small, green ‘?’ trophy that was between two vents, before crouching below the back ledge and spying on a truck driving to park near a backdoor. Groups of men in pink feathery coats and slanted sunglasses came out to haul boxes into the door.

“If only more business tycoons allowed their workers to have such fashion.” Crystal sighed.

“Yeah, if you’re into punk rockstars. Let’s follow them.” Once the men were inside, Nolan and co. dropped down to try and enter the door, but it was unfortunately locked by a terminal. Nolan attempted to hack it with his new Wi-Fi, but such a task was, shall we say, gargled? By static? You know what I mean. “Crap. Guess these are on a different system. There must be some way-” But that’s when his com. network made an eerie, whirring sound mixed with static. “Wait a second, someone’s trying to get in! What could…” Nolan switched on an overview map of the network and scrolled around ‘til he found the source of the sound.

The voice on the other end was on a very high volume and echoing. “HHHHHHHHhhhh... hhhHHHELLO, Sandman. Or should I refer you as ‘Caveman’, since you are a simple Neanderthal.”

“And this is?”

“I am Edward Nigma, THE RIDDLER! Of course, Gamewizard was going to replace me with some *** rip-off called The Puzzler, but THEN he decided why not stick with the original? After all, I suppose we have ONE too many knock-offs around these parts. But I must say, the guy in the bat suit was far more interesting than you.”

“Whaddyou want, Nigma?”

“A little raven told me you were on the hunt for a certain bird. Which, judging by you being on this network, I was NOT misinformed. I have something that may help you, but it comes with a riddle. Is your brain up to the task?”

“More than yours is.”

“Very well then. Ahem. ‘You come to me in seek of pleasure. We drain your pride, like a parasite. What am I?’”

“Is it a place we have to find?”

“Who knows. Is the great Sandman afraid?”

“You wish.” With that, transmission ended as the trio returned to the rooftops. “Okay, a place that drains pride like a parasite, and we go there for pleasure. Shoot me ideas.”

“A bar?” Crystal asked. “We go there for pleasureful booze and cheers, slowly drowning our pride.”

“No no, if it’s like a parasite, then the other side would benefit.” Yuki noted.

“Well, bars take our money.”

Nolan was quickly putting two-n-two together. “It might be the answer, but… I got one other idea.”

So following his map, they glided to the city streets and landed before a small building with a light-up line picture of a woman and the words ‘Slim ‘n’ Sexy’ (in which the lights were out). “A STRIP club??” exclaimed Crystal. “Nolan, just WHAT is going on in that mind?”
“Hey, it’s just an idea, and the pieces sorta make sense. Let’s just check it out.” The building was dark and abandoned, but Nolan switched on Detective Vision for any secrets. One of the poles was curved like a cane at the top, and some invisible light-green painting was on it. Curious, he walked around the right pole, which was a few inches shorter and had a green painted dot on its top. Positioned correctly, the green paint on the curved pole, above the green dot on the shorter, made it look like a question mark. Nolan snapped the image in his digital camera. After analyzing it, a series of numbers and letters were scattered within the paint, which Nolan began to decipher and organize.

“Very impressive, you dirty-minded cretin. I look forward to the day I can challenge you directly. Until then, try your best to find the trophies I left scattered around. I’m sure if fate calls, you’ll be wandering around their respective towns.”

Side Mission unlocked: Find all of the Riddler Trophies in Nolan’s levels.

“So whaddid that do.” Yuki said.

Nolan tapped the screen a little. “I think this gives me a list of passcodes to Doflamingo’s terminals. Not sure how the Riddler managed to get ‘em and hide ‘em here. Let’s try and get in now.”

They made their way back to the toy store, and using the Riddler’s code, managed to hack into the terminal. A firewall attempted to throw him out, but he decrypted the code ‘Playtime’ and unlocked the door.

Team Hero passed down a dusty, narrow hallway, finding two steam currents from broken pipes that blocked their path. Yuki tried to throw ice and freeze them, but nothing came out of his hand.

“Do they have this place chi-blocked?”

“That’s why you wear that back-up.” Sandman noted.

“Guess so.” Yuki shot ice from his pack instead and froze the pipes shut, letting them pass. A stairway led up to a higher path, but Sandman first checked the enclosing on its left, finding a Riddler Trophy stacked atop some crates. He pulled it down with his grappler before proceeding up the stairs. He stopped his friends before a doorway on their left, where a sniper appeared to be eying the spot afterward. Nolan viewed backward and noticed the alignment of crates on high shelves along the left wall, and was at a point high enough to latch the top shelf with his hook and pull up. Crystal and Yuki joined him (the latter having to share Crystal’s staff) before they viewed the gap and noticed a vent on a high point on the dead end wall. Nolan shot his grappling hook up to yank the latch off, whipping it to himself and catching it so it wouldn’t make much noise. “Crystal, I can’t get in there ‘cause of my chair, you’ll have to glide over and crawl in. Look for a way to take out the sniper.” Crystal nodded and glided over, quietly crawling into the duct. She found an exit above a tall shelf of crates, where she had perfect view of the sniper on a lower shelf of crates. She quietly glided to the floor away from him, snuck up to the point below his perch, and rolled into the shelf, making it shake and for the sniper to fall. With that, she quickly ran up and bashed him with her staff, knocking him out.

She signaled for Nolan and Yuki that the coast was clear, and they all regrouped in this storage room. In the far left corner was a door sealed with a terminal, so Nolan began another hacking segment. He decrypted the password ‘Smiles’ before the door opened. They came into another short hallway before the door that brought them into the store. Nolan switched on his Detective Vision, and all of the 9 men roaming the aisles were marked orange. He quickly gestured his friends to follow as he grappled up atop a duct near the ceiling, where they had view around the
whole expansive store, and all of the guards in pink flamingo coats.

“They all have guns.” Sandman whispered. “I’m sure one or two of them know something about Caesar. But it’s too risky to question every single one—we’ll have to take the rest out and interrogate the last one.”

“Traditional Arkham style, got it.” Crystal agreed.

So they all glided different directions—except Yuki and Crystal had to stay together. Nolan glided to the first unsuspecting guard walking down an aisle and cupped a hand over his mouth ’til he fainted. He then flew back above the ducts to view Yuki and Crystal sneaking up on separate guards. But that’s when Nolan noticed the collar around the man he just took out’s neck, which began blinking red as alarms blared around the store. “Intruder alert. Intruder alert.”

“Max better not be sleepin’ on the job again.” a guard said.

“Let’s go see what’s up.” Crystal hurriedly knocked out another guard before he turned, while Yuki froze the floor at a guard’s feet to make him slip before the former escaped. “‘EY! Someone’s IN here!” The guards were scrambling to find the intruders as the three went into hiding. Two of the guards climbed atop shelves and aimed sniper rifles around, even taking time to search the ceilings. Yuki was hurriedly running around the aisles as a guard was on his tail, planting his back against the end of one as he sensed the guard approaching quietly. Yuki whipped around quickly and slammed the guard to the floor, knocking him out.

A sniper turned to the area where he heard a slam, so Nolan quickly glided down to knock him out from behind. Unfortunately, the other sniper took sight of him and began rapidly shooting, Nolan retreating back above the ducts before too many bullets got through his coat. Crystal ended up cornered by two guards, quickly spinning her staff to block their bullets, then switched the setting on her staff as she leaped in the air, and performed a Ground Quake to knock them down. She quickly jumped on one’s stomach and bashed his head unconscious, then ran away before the other guard recovered.

Yuki hid behind another aisle end when he heard someone coming, freezing the floor with his pack to make them slip. “WHOOAA!” Crystal went wobbling and sliding down the next aisle, crashing into the shelf as she and some toys fell down. Yuki blushed innocently, but when another guard came around an aisle, he jumped across the frozen floor, tricked him to slipping, then quickly took him out. The sniper took aim at Wiccan while she was down, but Nolan once again flew from behind and took him down.

The last two guards tried to chase Yuki, but Nolan tossed a smoke bomb to block their vision, flying in to take one out. The final guard shook his way out, searching around with fright for where the intruders could have gone. He heard a whoosh behind him and whipped around, seeing no one (but Yuki had actually dodged back behind the aisle). Another whoosh behind him, barely seeing a figure glide behind a shelf. He turned to walk the other way nervously, but- “GAH!” Sandman grabbed and forced his head against an aisle end.

“I’m not ruffling your feathers, am I?” he inquired.

“Aaaack! Look man, if you’re with those Triad guys, you already got this week’s payment!”

“That’s not why I’m here. You work for Doflamingo, don’t you? Know anybody named Caesar?”

“Who wants to know?”
“Someone who’s gonna merge those pretty sunglasses with your face if you don’t tell me.”

“Well uh… Doflamingo and his guys took a trip to SPACE a few weeks ago if you can believe that. Said som’in about getting a new employee but, i-it sounds ridiculous I know.”

“I’m a fan of the ridiculous. Anything else?”

“Well… word around the underworld is Doflamingo’s become a distributor of Bang Gas, selling to certain… buyers.”

“What kind of buyers?”

“Some say it’s a bunch of drug-dealing teens—if you can believe that!”

“You’re not telling me everything!” He pressed harder.

“Aaaaauuuck! Look—I’m not in ‘is inner circle, I don’t know WHAT to tell you! If you’re a disappointed customer or somethin’, I guess you can file a complaint uh… ehehehe.”

“Nah. That’s all the service I’ll be needing from you.” And with one quick punch, the guard was unconscious.

As Crystal helped herself up, a limpy thin toy fell off her head. It was a Sheriff Woody toy, which she picked up and held face-up. “Is it really wrong that I found this cowboy sexy as a little girl?”

“…You wouldn’t’ve looked half-bad yourself.” winked the toy.

“AAAAAH!” She let the toy drop and jumped to her feet, aiming her staff with a frantic expression. “Electronic or not, talking toys creep me the flip out!”

“Okay okay, don’t worry!” Woody got up too and raised arms in defense. “I won’t hurt you! That is… until things get freaky in yo’ bedroom.” A very sly wink. “…OAF!” He was immediately grinded under Crystal’s staff.

“Aaaauck, I take back EVER wanting to study this technology, IT’S ABSOLUTELY DISGUSTING!”

“Oof, ‘ey, stop! You’re! Tearing! The. Stuffing!”

Nolan pulled Crystal back and picked up the toy, whose chest area was now torn with fluff leaking out. “Stuffing? Where’s the metal bars to make your limbs move?”

“Hwhat?” Woody sat up with a casual humorous smile, “All that junk just gets in the way, who needs to waste money on it when we can just speak to twerps for free!, riight? Heh, why I can’t even… Say, you’re an odd one, ain’tcha?” He observed Sandman. “You some kinda toy, too?”

“Uhhh…”

“Yes!” Crystal hugged the crippled man lovingly. “It’s my patented life-size Sandman action-figure with REAL gas-pumping action! I taught him to get around on a wheelchair, isn’t he adorable?” Nolan shoved her off.

“Another toy, huh? Well in that case, let’s you and me have some one-on-one time. You know, without thee, humans.”

“Wonderful.” Wiccan clapped hands. “Come along, my messy little brother, let’s go.” She led
“Uhhhh what are we doing again?”

Nolan rolled a little forward as Woody spoke, “Anyway, since it’s just us, my real name is Randy Davis. I used to have a wife named Emily and son, Andy, but we’ve-”

“WAIT! Emily Matthews?” inquired Nolan.

“Uh, no.”

“Continue.”

“Me and Andy have been growing apart for awhile. I signed up with this seminar on how to get closer to your son, where me and a few other parents met this, gross guy with a really runny nose. Before we knew it, we were glued to the ground, and everything went dark. Next thing I know, I’m on the shelf of some toy store, in THIS flimsy little body! I don’t even remember anything, except that ‘talking to twerps for free’ bit. And speaking of not remembering, wouldn’t you know it, Andy shows up and buys me! But I couldn’t tell him I was his father, and worse than that, Emily talks about never being married, or Andy having a father. They didn’t recognize my pictures, it was like I never existed at all.” He frowned with remorse. “That was 12 years ago, now Andy’s going to college so he sold all his other talking toys back to the company. Now I’m waitin’ to be bought again. …You think you can talk your owner into, buying a nighttime cuddly?” Winked again.

“But why couldn’t you talk to them? Couldn’t you yell for anyone’s help in that toy store?”

“I wanted to, but something inside my brain kept telling me not to, just, ‘pose like a toy, play with whoever buys you, you may only reveal your past to fellow toys, if you do so with any human, self-destruct is imminent’! Wait, why am I telling you, every other toy had these orders, why don’t you??”

“Because I…” He pulled his mask open slightly.

Woody’s mouth dropped. “A— human. AAAAAAAHHH SOMEONE HEEEEEELP!” He fell to the floor and ran around like a toy that’s lost his mind. “I’M GONNA DIE, I’M GONNA DIE, I’M GONNA DIE!”

“WAIT!” He tried to roll after-

“AH-HE-HE-HEM.” He stopped and looked left at a Buzz Lightyear. “Well, since blabbermouth already got us in trouble, I got some information for you. I’m forbidden from telling you much on what happened, but there’s a peculiar group of toys who, shall we say, go a little feral when the sun goes down. They’re the animatronics at Freddy Fazbear’s Pizzeria, which had a contract with Doflamingo for that very purpose. They behave as ordered during the day, but when the store is closed, theeey… go a little freestyle. I don’t know the story behind them, but rumor has it they got a look at who or what transformed them into toys. So you can go there and ask them but, honestly buddy, you look like a guy who does better with a frontal lobe. You’re better off just keeping away from that place.”

“I’m afraid that won’t be an option.” Nolan told him regretfully. “If these animatronics have clues for us, we have to take a chance. Coldman, Wiccan, let’s go.” He began his roll to the exit.

“WAIT!” The toy stopped them. “…Just what are you trying to do, anyway?”

All three turned to him, “Isn’t it obvious? We’re going to find out whatever gave you your curses
and try to change you back. Sure, we can just roll up to Doflamingo and beat the crap outta him, but we need to prepare ourselves.”

“Siiiigh. Well, then… I couldn’t just let you suffer an untimely demise without giving you a few tips. The truth is, I learned about Freddy’s from a toy that was sold here a few weeks ago. A Yipperman Plus. His kid-owner ate at Freddy’s and wanted to go back and see the animatronics, dropping Yipper on the floor. The toy waited for hours, but his kid never came back. He waited all night, ’til the nightguard found and decided to safeguard ‘im ’til morning. He watched up close when the animatronics came, and forced that guard into a Freddy suit, killing him.”

The three heroes couldn’t mask their horror. “The toy hid in the restaurant for six more days, watching as a second nightguard miraculously survived. He kept track of the toys movements and wrote ‘em down in a journal, and Yipper mentioned something about reading the journal. If you’re thinking of going to Freddy’s, you need to speak to that Yipper and find out what he knows. His eyes might’ve been beady and joyous, but even I can tell when a toy looks like he’d rather have his retinas removed. The toys at Freddy’s don’t mess around.”

And Nolan could tell when even a toy was speaking seriously and caringly. “Alright.” He nodded. “Where do I find him?”

“A little rich girl bought him two days ago, the computer should have a list of purchases.”

He made his way to the front desk where Sandman began to hack the computer. “Let’s see, Shrek dollll, Mario Kart Racing Seeet, Harry Potter broomstiiiick—Sector V action figures, holy wow! And hah! Yipperman Plus, sold to Oliver Warbucks from New York City! Let’s hit the streets guys, we’re goin’ -”

“Yorkin’?” grinned Crystal.

“Iiii… walked right into that one.”

“It was only a matter of time, buddy.” Yuki noted.

So with that, the heroes were rushing to the front doors, out of the store. “Call me!” Woody winked to Crystal.

“Uck!” She was over guys like him when she was 12.

**Cleveland neighborhoods**

Rupert, Timmy, and Hikari were forced to camp in the front yard of an unsuspecting house. It still had the natural camping experience, since the yard was as big as a forest. They gathered a few small twigs and had the Red Pikmin create a fire. The creatures allowed them to eat some of the remaining pieces of the monsters they caught today. Bulborb meat truly possessed a funky taste. Timmy and Hikari were already conked out, but Rupert was up and roasting a Bulborb chunk, staring reflectively at the fire. Normally, he would be sleeping nice and snug in his room, after Mom read him a nice bedtime story. He never thought he would be camping with a bunch of ant things. What a wild adventure this had become.

Rupert looked left at a Red Pikmin that had come up, staring mindlessly. “Oh… you want some?” He held the meat out. The Pikmin just stared and did nothing. “…I guess not.” He took it back. “But listen, thanks for all the work you guys’ve been doin’ for us. Heh, what I wouldn’t give to have you around all the time.”

“…”
“…How d’you guys feel about it, anyway? Doin’ all the work for the Minish. Don’t you all get tired?”

“…”

“…Sappo and Gibli said you guys were mostly just… weapons. Like, a means to an end. ‘Cause you don’t actually think for yourselves. You just… do what the Minish tell you.”

“…”

“…I don’t like to think of you that way. I like to think… you just need a little help getting around. And, you all support each other. ‘Cause it’s a big scary world out there. You know?”

“…”

“…Siiiigh.” They weren’t really good for conversation. “I should get to sleep. You guys’ll protect us, right?”

“…”

“…Mm-hm.” So with that, Rupert went to the other side from Timmy and Hikari and lied on the ground, head rested on his hand. He really wished he was in a comfy bed right now. The cold, messy soil, no blanket to cuddle up in. Even getting into that house didn’t sound so bad, if they could rest on the soft carpet.

But then the Red Pikmin cuddled up at Rupert’s front. On his back was a Yellow one, a Blue by his feet, a White near his head, a Wing on top, and a Purple one to hug them all. Rupert made a smile, and suddenly felt much warmer. As many other Pikmin began to surround him and his friends, Rupert surely knew. They would protect him…

**Sand Kingdom, South America; Sand Castle**

The Knights of the Round Towel placed the jar containing Sappo and Gibli on a shelf inside a dark closet. “STAY here and keep quiet. As if you could make much noise, ohohohohoho!” They shut the door and left them in blackness.

Sappo paced about their cell angrily while Gibli only sat. “How will we get OUTTA here, Sappo?”

“I’m thinking, Gibli. …And reaching nothing.”

“I thought you were SMART!”

“AHH, can it. But Gibli, this is the place they got our princess locked up. We gotta watch ourselves, or they might do somethin’ to ‘er!”

“Like WHAT?”

“Noooooooo! Oh, it’s so awful. WHYYYYY?”

Both siblings shuddered. “D-D-D-Did you HEAR that?”

“Oh no!” frowned Sappo. “Princess! What could they be DOING to her?”

**Upstairs; Princess Shelly’s room**

“NOOOOO! It’s so horrible!” Princess Gonshiri cried with the greatest agony.
“NAAAAAAAHHH! Pleah!” She spat the fruit piece at her Red Pikmin. “I HATE mangos! Bring me some pie cakes!” The Pikmin marched off to do so. “Uuugh. Toss me some of those blurpleberries.”

“Certainly.” Shelly reached to the bowl beside her couch, grabbed a berry, and tossed it to Gonshiri. The self-called beach princess was lain relaxed on a sand-made couch while the Minish Princess relaxed on a cottonball on a table in front of the couch. “The only bad thing about servants who don’t speak is you can’t tell if they understand you.”

Gonshiri began to feast on the giant berry. “So how are things at the school?”

“Ahhhhh just fabulous.” Shelly smiled. “Seeing Shorts whine and cuss over my victories is music to my ears. Especially when he has no clue of my little… secret.”

“Hmhmhmhm! Oh, well I can’t take all the credit.” Gonshiri blushed. “It was your lovely feet that executed it in the end. I merely taught how to do so.”

“Are you insinuating that YOU had something to do with my success?” Shelly smirked. “I was naturally born with my earthbending and I possessed the talent. Your blathering was just tiny noise in my ear that paid no contribution.”

“WHHHAT??!” Shiri jumped to her feet and faced her with a look of pure rage. “How DARE you talk down on me like some sniveling ANT, you…YOU…”

“Myyyyy what?” Shelly’s gigantic, snarky face loomed closer. “You simple little insect.”

Shiri couldn’t be more angry. “AAAAAAAAAHHHHH!” She leaped to Shelly’s nose and munched as hard as her tiny teeth could. Her ant-size body was unable to pierce Shelly’s thick flesh.

“PFFFaaaaa HAHAHAHAHAHA!”

“HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!” Both princesses laughed joyously. Shiri jumped off and continued munching her berry.

“Ahhhhh.” Shelly lied back on her couch, scratching that light itch on her nose. “You’re the best part of coming back here, Bugsize. You may be a royal shrimp, but you know what we princesses want.”

“Hmhmhmhm! Well, you may be royally STINKY, but you know how to stay on top.”

“Well, staying on top isn’t hard when those under you are just so puny. But don’t your subjects still need someone to rule them?”

“Oh, a sea of buffoons is still a sea of buffoons even with one smart person among them. Besides, Lenari thinks he runs everything, he can have his glory. I prefer an individual who believes they can challenge my authority.”

“Hm hrn hm. Five months and you still think you have more intellect than me. Ever since that day…”

_A boring day at the castle, Shelly kicking back, left foot over the right knee which was up in a triangle, as she munched an apple. Her knights walked in and bowed, “Princess Shelly: we hath brought to you, a new servant. A princess from a distant land.”_

_She swallowed, “Princess?”_
A knight placed a small jar on Shelly’s table. She loomed closer, seeing an extremely tiny chipmunk-like creature in a purple grass dress and flower crown, yellowish-green skin and beady black eyes. “Hmmm... she looks kind of fun. Be gone, knights. I wish to play with my new pet alone.”

“AS YOU COMMAND, Your Highness.” The knights politely left.

Shelly popped the jar open and dumped the tiny princess onto her palm. “All right, Toothcrumb, I dunno where you’re from or if you reign over a colony of ants, but I’M Princess Shelly, and if you want a decent treatment here, you better start showing your respect and doing everything I tell you.” The princess stood up, viewing the vast palm and the fingers that towered like mountains. Only a single part of Shelly’s tremendous body. “First off, my nose is really stuffy and I need someone to get those boogers that’re really far in. If I’m impressed with your work, you’ll get to sleep in my navel and use my lint for pillows, otherwise it’s the tootsies for you.”

“AUGH!” With utmost disgust, the princess leaped down to the floor. “I will NOT allow some mere peasant to pick ME up, LET ALONE believe they can tell me what to do! And judging by the sorry sight of your toenails, I see you are NOT the kind of person I wanna associate with.”

“Are you talking BACK to me?” Shelly stood with hands on her hips, so the princess could see the colossal oaf at full height. “Since your brain’s too small for math’s sake, I can understand if you’re slow to following my language. But since you aren’t bothering to listen more closely, I guess you’ll have to start from the bottom.”

“I’ll have you know my brain is TWICE the natural Minish size, including the Minish brain you needed transplanted to YOUR empty, hollow head. But I see that experiment was a bust.” She stood politely with her sleeved hands folded, eyes closed in a smug fashion.

Shelly raised a foot, “I’m NOT giving you a second option. Apologize and show your respect, or you will not end up in a happy place.”

“Hmph. You are a simple, good-for-nothing oaf. Your parents were chimps, and you are their mutated result. You have no class, no self-awareness, all you are is a gargantuan tub of lard that will never be anything more than some donkey’s last resort to lay their droppings.” Shelly has never been more enraged, never more ready to explode. To think she’d be talked down by someone that could be mistaken as a piece of dirt between her toes. To think this simple, good-for-nothing insect thought she had say. In front of HER. The Fourth Grade President, Princess of Sand Kingdom. To think she could talk high and mighty, like SHE was the tall one. And like Shelly’s foot wasn’t looming over her this very moment. “Why, a donkey’s bathroom would be lucky, your best chance is being an unsatisfying source for some leeches-”

Shelly’s foot couldn’t come down any faster. She put in great pressure, hoping this dirt was absolutely nothing now. Her foot stood half-buried in the sand for 30 seconds until Shelly raised it. The footprint was empty, but among the many grains of sand on her sole, the princess was nearly flat. She scratched lightly until the princess peeled off, regaining her senses back on the ground. … She couldn’t be anymore angry. “…I can’t BELIEVE you stepped on me, you…YOU… MOUNTAIN OF SKUNK POO!”

“... ... ...PHHHAAAAAAA HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!” Neither of them ever laughed harder in their life.

“Huuuu... aaaaaahhh.” Shelly touched her hand-size juice glass to Gonshiri’s eeny, teeny, Minish-size one, and both drank. “But wow, I never woulda thought I actually had earthbending. I was already good at beating Shorts, now he’s probably blowin’ his brains out.”
“It seems having far bigger eyes than I do allows you to overlook more than you see.” Shiri said. “We Minish have advantage over such things. I see every intricate pattern along your skin, the very tiny follicles of hair growing in – dare I not mention, and only a royal buffoon wouldn’t feel such an incredible flow of chi inside of those mountain-size feet. Honestly, I cannot imagine anyone more hopeless.” She sipped her drink.

“Well, it certainly helps to know.” Shelly shook her glass. “Heh, wait until I reveal it to Shorts and REALLY bury his butt! What’s a bunch of teeny little bubbles gonna do, anyway.”

“Princess.” Shelly’s Blue Knight walked in. “Your father wishes to know if the two of you are fairing well.”

“Yes we ARE, you overgrown wombat.” Shiri stated.

“Get lost, Victor.”

“As you wish.” He backed away.

“How did they manage to capture you, anyway?” Shelly asked.

“I was wandering outside my tree. I assumed it was some lost gorilla judging by those feet, but who’d’ve thought I’d be some lesser primate’s filth-reliever.”

“Well, whatever the case, you’re much better off in our company.” Shelly raised her glass.

“Indeed.” Shiri smiled. “After all, what reason am I obliged to return to my kingdom, anyway? Though if I may ask, you being the princess of this, erm, what you call a kingdom, why not find yourself a nice prince?”

“Who do you think I am, some lovesick dope like my dimwitted dad? His ultimate weakness was that he focused more on finding a ‘Queen’, and focused less on ruling with an iron foot. No wonder why my mom left him.”

“I can see what you mean.” Shiri looked at her juice and shook the glass lightly. “Parents are such morons. The clearest example being your father conceived you. At least we’re here to learn from them.” She smiled.

“Well, your folks ain’t do too good a job with you, either.” Shelly put her glass down and relaxed. “Still, buy me a hundred suitors or a thousand, ‘cause I ain’t suckin’ face with no dreamboat for a long time!”

**KND Moonbase**

Sector V soon arrived at Moonbase and headed for the bridge. The base was fairly deserted at this time, except for Francis and Panini. “Hey, Francis; Nini.” Aurora greeted as she caught her breath. “Did you hear about-”

“Yeah, Sector Q called us, said their leader and the Roundhead got kidnapped.” Francis confirmed. “We’ve been trying to call GKNND, but we’re dealing with issues with the Earth treehouses.”

“Well, we already got Sector IC on the case.” Chris explained. “Let’s hope they can save Maddy soon. So where’s Bro?”

“Ehh, Cheren, um, well his mum called, he’s off doin’ somethin’ private.” Panini replied, scratching her head.
Artie and Haylee slapped dollar bundles in Harry’s hands. “Hehe, but if it makes ya feel any better, we’re keepin’ contact through our 4DS’s.” Panini held the pocket-sized console up. “You know, so I can whup him.”

“Well, isn’t Bro the most helpful.” Chris eye-rolled. “We thought he could give us some idea on where to go. Are we just gonna spend our whole quest flying around aimlessly, otherwise we ain’t ever gonna-”

“Well, if I must give you that ever-dying satisfaction.” A sudden voice nearly made their hearts stop.

“Midna??” Dillon gasped at the imp floating from a shadow by the office door.

“Oh well, I might as well, since I can’t stand seeing you look pathetic. I remember back when your parents were trying to find us, even THEY weren’t as clueless. You guys are sooo lucky to have a Firstborn helping you.” She gently took a seat on Dillon’s head. “But I just hope somebody doesn’t have a series of episodes like their daddy diiiiiid.” She bent upside-down and pinched his cheeks. The boy annoyedly shook her off as she returned to floating. “Anyway, here’s my proposition where you should start: about 3 years ago, Hannibal Roy Bean rescued Zant from the Brookfield Insane Asylum, and now they’ve joined the Brotherhood of Evil, in which Bean is the new leader.”

“Oh gee, our great-great-grandpa is stirring up trouble again.” Mason eye-rolled with Haruka. “What’s he got to do with anything?”

“Well, Zant is a Twilight Realm inmate, so naturally I want him caught, and Hannibal isn’t safe to let run around, either. I know these Brotherhood guys have lost their game, but there’s no harm in locking a few behind bars. Or seeing if they have any clues; if that matters.”

“Well… it’ll make good practice for when we fight the real villains.” Aurora shrugged.

“Hey, where’s Sheila, anyway?” Francis asked.

“Oh, she’s dead.” answered Mason.

“Saywhatnow?”

“She’s asleep.” Aurora eye-rolled. “I dunno what’s up, she’s been like this since we left school. Which she skipped. Yaaaaaawn… and you know what, I am too. And we still got a ton of homework to do.”

“If your mom is the principal, and SHE knows what’s up, why is she still giving you homework??” questioned Dillon.

“Those who keep up with their studies can better keep up with savin’ the universe!” Haruka spoke with a raised finger and a smart face.

“Then it’s official we won’t be doing any action today.” Chris said. “And Arceus knows Sheila won’t be, finally tuckered out after all this time.”

“Yeah, I’m kinda tired with flyin’ all day, too.” Haylee said, stretching her back. “Whaddya say we do some homework, hit the hay, and go after these Brotherhooders first thing tomorrow.”

“Siiiigh.” Midna sighed. “Lazy humans. Just like a certain someone I used to know. Well, don’t think I won’t be there tomorrow to keep you on track.”
“Like Mama’s nagging over us.” said Harry.

“I sure hope Cheren’s home by the time we wake up.” Aurora sighed as they all walked to the hangar. “‘Cause I know something will go horribly wrong.”

**Sector IC S.C.A.M.P.E.R.; Galaxia**

“You know, we should sing a song. Just to keep things spirited.” George said.

“Look George, just because you want us to be happy like a bunch of goofy girls, doesn’t mean we do,” Terry stated. “…Present company excluded.”

“Come on, Terry, I bet it’d be fun!” MaKayla said brightly. “Get our blood pumping, let’s try! Ahem:” She swayed her head left and right and waved her index fingers, “Rainbow Monkeys, Rainbow Monkeys, all so very round, and-…”

“AWWW, NOOO, NOOO.” The others begged her to stop.

“Let’s just enjoy a nice, quiet-” But Miyuki’s sentence was cut short when a sneaky spy popped out of the wire compartment.

“WHEEEE!” Suki flew out with the purest joy and scared everyone. “We’re going on an adVENTUUUUUURE! I’m so GLAD you took me, Sister-chaaaaan!”

“NO ONE INVITED YOU!” they all screamed.

“Suki, what are you doing here?” Miyuki asked.

“I heard you were gonna go UPPYYY, and I wanted to go WITHIIIEE! And MOM told you to WATCH MEEE!”

“Siiiiigh, just great.” Terry slumped in agony. “We couldn’t go on one trip without the icemouth.”

“Well, you wanted a more spirited ride.” MaKayla sweatdropped as Suki skipped in place.

“Hm, hm hm, hmmm.” Suki couldn’t look more carefree. She was wearing shoes and socks due to the warmness of the ship.

“Okay, Suki, you can come. But don’t you wanna take a nap, it might be a long ride.” Miyuki said.

“Are you kidding? I feel GREAT, Sister-chan! I don’t feel TIRED at all! I’m so happy we get to-! ….Yaaaaaawwn… not tired at all.” Her smile was wide, but her eyes were half-closed.

“Hm hm hm. Go to sleep, Suki-chan.” Miyuki smiled.

Before they expected, Suki’s hands were folded under her cheek, fast asleep. Her happy smile ensured she was having good dreams. “Ugh, thank God.” Terry proclaimed. “Gotta tell you, Miyuki, you know how to tame a newborn.”

Miyuki kept her smile and watched her sister calmly as she slept.

**Dream Realm; Hall of Doors**

After that unfortunate bumping-into of the random construction site, Sheila regained herself after diving through the portal. The Hall of Doors was a beautiful place, a forest with the lushest green trees and colorful plants. The sky was pitch-black and lit with endless white stars, and its very
image reflected off the river that flowed through the forest. The water was so still and clear, it appeared the endless stars of space lay right beneath them as well as above, and Sheila might actually believe that if she wasn’t wet just now. Across the river from where she was sat a catapult that was launching nothing, and looked like the one she rode in the level just now.

“Welcome to the Hall of Doors.” Murfy began. “World Map for your particular storyline. Here, you can enter ALL the areas of the Dream World. Just choose a portal and dive on in. Hey, we oughta make that a catchphrase! Dive on IN! Heh ha! That’s trademarked.”

Sheila saw the labels over the portals. She was just in Toons in Trouble, the next portal read Christmas Dream. She approached as the catapult vanished, and two Waddle Dees skied past this portal. “So’m I s’posed to jump in?”

“No, you’re supposed to stand here and listen to repeating music. Whaddyou think, Sherlock??”

So Sheila faced the portal and took three steps back. She ran unflinching and dove in, excited for the next adventure. (Play “Snowy Fields” from Kirby’s Epic Yarn!)

Stage 12: Christmas Dream

Mission: Find the next Light.

A chill fell on Sheila’s toes as she spiraled out of the portal. Her feet sank in the snow upon coming out, and a towering building of ice stood before her, snow falling everywhere gently. Sheila hurried to the front gates as Waddle Dees were skiing around the outside ice-rink, with one of them holding the key to open the gates. Sheila ran to it, throwing Light Fists, but the Dee tossed the key to another, and then another, and the cycle kept repeating as they swiftly dodged Sheila’s fists. With that, Sheila decided to be more adventurous and ski around on her own two sandals, steadily making it to the current Dee and whacking him with her tail. It still tossed to another Dee pair, so Sheila kept the pattern going until all the Dees were down.

Sheila opened the front gates to the outer courtyard of the Christmas Tower. There were plenty of holes around the ice, in which a Muddibog switched around them, throwing ice chunks when it emerged, which only hurt Sheila a little. The enemy was still aggravating, so she punched Light Spheres everywhere as it quickly dodged, but one of the spheres ricocheted behind and took it out, causing it to drop a blue can. Sheila approached it curiously as it shone a great beam, watching as her very clothing changed blue, and metal teeth appeared on her knuckles.

“Wowzer, Sheila!” Murfy exclaimed. “You found the Swing Suit! With this, you can swing on Purple Lums. Not as long-lasting as Rayman 3, but we can’t make it too easy!”

Sheila had to hop onto a square platform listing up and down along a ledge on the side of the tower, and from that ledge, Sheila could begin swinging some floating purple rings with eyes and wings—the Purple Lums, around the tower, until she arrived on a new ledge. However, another path of Purple Lums led backward and higher, up to a floating cage that contained some Electoons. Before the power wore off, Sheila made it back to the ledge, and from there climbed her way around the tower using a rugged portion of the wall. White Clubbas sat on platforms above parts of the wall and pushed giant snowballs down, an easy hazard for Sheila to avoid.

She made it onto stable ground before having to hop a series of small, one-platform, slippery Ferris wheels that spun around in vertical circles, making things really dizzy in Sheila’s vision. At the wheels’ end, Sheila bounced her way up a group of Bronto Burts flapping up and down. She made
it to a foothold with a narrow path that spiraled up the tower, having to jump snowballs that threatened to roll her down, and were produced by a White Clubba. Sheila knocked out the Clubba once there, finally at the top of the tower where a small, blue bed lay. Tucked cozily under its frosty blanket, Suki Crystal.

“Mmmmmm…” As Sheila stepped closer, the child blinked her tired eyes awake. “Ooooooooh. Who’re yooooouuu?”

“Hey Sunshine, up ‘n’ at ‘em.” Murfy rushed, pulling the girl to her feet. “There’s someone lookin’ to meetcha! Come on, let’s go see ‘im!”

“OKAY, Mister Scary-fairy!”

Behind this large tower, starting from the top, was a great, long, icy slide that stretched for miles. With great joy, Suki and Sheila began to slide down on their own feet, their skin feeling as though the wind would freeze them in seconds, but it made it so exciting. They went whipping fast going down the back of the tower, before the slide became more wide once they were going over the snowfield. There were plenty of palm trees, boulders, pitfalls, and skiing Waddle Dees, and many routes to take around these trees. The duo split up, and Sheila was lucky enough to find a route with an Electoon cage, busting it open as she passed. When she and Suki met up again, they locked hands and joyously skied together, Sheila swinging Suki above her, then landing back down as they spun around and around. But they tripped and began wobbling, just when they launched off the end ramp and facefirst in the snow.

The two sat up and shook the snow off, exchanging pearly-white grins. They continued over a snowfield as Hoodmongers charged out to blast them, Suki joyously throwing ice beams while Sheila pelted them with Light Spheres. They were easy enemies to take down, but their feet were scorched by tiny critters scampering up to them with bombs. They were originating from a Grim Keeper, a fat Hoodlum with a big wood shield standing with her back to a colorful red building. She released the Titbits from her dress, the duo fighting them back as they tried to attack the Keeper, but she kept her shield steady. “Gee, must I do EVERYTHING? All right then.” With that, Murfy flew behind and lifted the Keeper’s dress, making her panic as she lost guard and allowed Sheila and Suki to swing two light and ice beams around either side, taking her down.

They watched her Black Lum fly off and saw she was guarding a tiny door. Conveniently, she also dropped a plate of gingerbread cookies on a nearby table, so they suspected what they had to do. But before going, Sheila noticed a switch on the back of one of the trees—which they wouldn’t see coming in—and proceeded to punch it. They heard a distant gate open, and after looking around, they found a square hole along the wall under the slide ramp. Sheila and Suki dropped down, seeing an Electoon cage hanging over a frosty pool. Suki froze the water while Sheila broke the cage, letting the ‘lectoons land safely and walk out.

The kids climbed a ladder out of the hole and returned to the cookies. Both Sheila and Suki took one and munched it happily. A shriveling, sour sensation overcame them, their faces scrunching before their bodies shrunk into themselves. With a light twinkle, they had turned into tiny snowpeople, their snowy bodies sparkling white. They had no mouths, beady black eyes, and their clothes and hair remained the same. They felt only cold in this form, but a gentle kind of cold, and felt almost completely weightless. It was such a magical feeling.

They entered the tiny passage and found themselves in a massive Christmas workshop where many small elves worked lovingly in colorful clothing. Of course, the elves were giant since Sheila and Suk’ were the size of toys, so they would have to watch their snowy forms. Elves took toys from a treadmill on their right, bringing them to shelves on the left, so the duo had to avoid being stepped
on. They made it to a giant fence overlooking the wider, lower workshop below, where toys from this treadmill dropped to that one. Hanging from the ceiling were candycanes on candy chains, allowing the two to swing over the workshop. Of course, by swinging on them too much, the canes would eventually fall, leading their fluffy bodies to be splat.

A little toward the left was an Electoon cage hanging from a candycane, but it was much bigger than them and Sheila couldn’t shoot Light Spheres in this form. Instead, the duo swung to that cane and swung back-and-forth until it was ready to fall, swinging back before it did. The cage smashed open, allowing the Toons to go free. The candycanes eventually brought them over a flaming pit at the top of a machine, and when the snowkids dropped in, they were thankfully flung out by two of many gumdrops popping out, flying all the way to a giant Christmas Tree.

The tinies slid a small slide that spiraled around the tree, ringing any jingle bells they passed by. They landed safely on a branch and followed it into the tree, avoiding as Baby Burts (basically Bronto Burts, but their size) brushed across the branches and threatened to push them off. This was just like walking around an actual giant tree, but with many giant candies and blinking lights that switched colors. It was kind of mazy with all the branches connecting to one-another, and some areas had hooks holding up ornaments. A strange force tempted them to hoist the hooks up and let the spheres drop, and so they did. The first one fell directly onto an empty cup on the floor, while others bounced branches that eventually brought them to a following cup. After getting lost in the branches, they found an ornament designed like a bomb, and when they unlatched it, it gently bounced down to an Electoon cage and exploded, very quaking and unsettling at their sizes. But the Electoons were free, so they can be happy.

After unhooking every ornament they can find, they navigated to the lower part of the tree, able to jump across the rows of ornaments stationed in cups. Otherwise they would fall to the red carpet, which looked pretty heated. The platforms brought them to a series of colorful presents they could run across like happy, little snowchildren. They made it to a blue box, but were too small to climb onto a tall green box. A few boxes back, a small light-red rubber ball (a few inches taller than them) was perched, and the two were able to push it along. Parking it under the ledge, they used it to climb on the box, and from there they slid down a ruler to a further box, pushing a green rubber ball off its perch in the process, onto the floor below.

They could safely drop to the floor now as they rolled their rubber ball across the vast plain. Giant Waddle Dees ran around the floor, probably looking for something to play with, so they had to be stealthy so they wouldn’t lose their means of progressing. They made their way to a toy seesaw that was their size, the opposite end sticking up. Sheila and Suki stood on the lower end, used all the strength in their snowy bodies to lift the rubber and chuck it onto the upper end. The duo was flung onto a tiny walkway along the wall with a little mousedoor. Inside was a makeshift living room and house where a happy mouse family was having Christmas dinner. The mom cheered silently and decided to give them Red Lums, to rejuvenate any lost health.

The twin mice kids showed them the back door, finally bringing the two outside in the snow. A snow fairy appeared with a twinkly grin and pecked the two with her wand, poofing them back to normal. “I hereby congratulate you on your first—and probably only—Snow Shrink!” Murfy grinned. “Other levels’ll probably have other shrink forms. Heh—but looking at this RUPERT kid,” held up the manual, “he’s gettin’ MORE than his fair share! HEH HA HA! A’ight, on with the level.”

They crossed a normal snowfield again as Hoodmongers ran at them, no stronger than before as the girls wiped them out. They were coming to an even wider, rounder tower with platforms and paths around it. A short, slippery snowhill led onto the outer ring, and since they couldn’t walk up, they jumped some Waddle Dees that were skiing down. Before they headed up the stairs to the
walkways around the tower, they explored this outer ground area, finding a cage placed in an empty back corner. After freeing the Electoons, they began the journey up and around the tower.

There were now Lemguins – penguins with very pointy beaks, sliding down the pathway on their bellies, threatening to knock the girls off their legs and slide down a few meters if they were hit. The Lemguins were fun enemies to score consecutive jump combos, and to avoid being tripped, Suki could freeze them in ice cubes, letting them still slide along like normal. They reached a dead end of this path where the Lemguins flew out of the hole, seeing the next path going the opposite direction but a few feet higher. Sheila bounced off an emerging Lemguin to reach and grab a blue can to get the Swing Suit, then held onto Suki as she swung a Purple Lum to land onto this path.

This walkway was made of mostly floating, moving platforms, where Doomtoonies were swooping by like mini warplanes in attempt to push them off. Since Sheila still had plenty of time for the Swing Suit, they jumped across quick and found some Purple Lums led further up. The Lum trail turned about-face so the duo made it to a path above the previous one. Once again, they were faced with more large rolling snowballs that threatened to send them quite a ways down, so careful jumps had to be made. The White Clubba rolling them was perched on a tall platform, short enough to jump to as Sheila climbed on and knocked the Clubba down. She helped Suki up afterward as they entered a window atop this platform, taking land on a floor inside the tower.

The inside of this ice tower was very hollow and as wide as its exterior, the walls colored a yellowish-white, covered by wooden parts as they neared the wood floor, a red carpet going around its middle. There were two floors, and this second floor was a large circle going around an open center. Eight energy chains were coming from generators, four on each floor, and connected at a human-sized cage in the center, encasing in a barrier and keeping it afloat.

The prisoner inside, a teenage boy whose form couldn’t be made out through the blue energy, noticed them. “HUH? IS SOMEBODY THERE?”

“Uhh? ‘O IS IT?” Sheila shouted, looking around.

“Over here! In this cell!” His voice was muffled by the barrier encasing him, but Sheila’s raccoon ears could hear him. “You’ve gotta get me OUTTA here! Break the eight generators making the chains! Hurry, before the things come back!”

“Blimey.” Sheila smirked and cracked her knuckles. “I’ll ‘ave these chains broken like a-” They jumped around when the window sealed above them. They heard a strange shuffling sound, looking to a nearby pipe when a swarm of little white rabbits, with frantic eyes and wide open mouths with few teeth, all piled in like a swarm of beetles that were flushed down the drain. “HIIIIIIIEEEEE!”

“Oh no! The Raving Rabbids! Don’t try to fight them, just break the chains!”

Seeing all the creatures storm in, Sheila exchanged panicked glances with Suki and ran. (Play “Vs. Dark Eco Plant” from Jak and Daxter.) The first chain was already close by, so Sheila could zip by and smash it with a quick punch. Suki tried freezing an ice wall behind them, but the Rabbids chomped through it like a cracker. They made little dancing motions as they chased the duo, but they couldn’t study them for long as the Rabbids were quick to keep up, ready to swallow them whole in those giant mouths. A narrow strip of carpet led up a wall where it turned vertical, ending at a high chain generator, so Suki skied up with an ice path to break the machine herself. The girls had to dodge walls stationed in their path, where an Electoon cage was placed behind one of them, so Sheila smashed it quick while passing by.

Sheila then Wall Jumped up two parallel walls real quick to smash the next generator up top, then
hit a Spring Pad to fling over the Rabbids to Suki. They came to a yard of brown goop spaces around the floor, which they deduced as smashed Rabbid droppings, so not wanting to get their feet dirty or trip, they navigated around. The next generator was across a pool of the brown substance, so Suki froze it solid, skied across, and destroyed it. A stairway suddenly appeared before them, letting them tumble down to the lower floor, where the circle continued. The girls navigated a tall maze hurriedly before the Rabbids caught up, where Sheila had to break certain parts that were cracked. After narrowly making it out, they broke a generator.

Lemguins began to slide out from ahead of them, across the narrow middle strip of path while the sides had spikes, preventing them from going around the penguins. They performed careful concise jumps over the creatures, seeing they were coming from a hole in a tall wall, so they had to bounce off an emerging Lemguin to make it onto that wall, where they smashed a generator. They dropped to the next path as Lemguins were now coming out going their direction, three different rows as they were coming to a large pool of Rabbid dung. Suki froze two of the creatures so either of them could get on one, Suki on the right while Sheila rode the middle. However, a floating Electoon cage was placed above the left row, so Suki froze a left Lemguin quickly so Sheila could hop over and break it open.

At the end of this pool, Sheila jumped to a long handle hanging overhead, swung around it, launched to another, and from there flew to the generator to break it. She joined Suki again as they dodged a few minor obstacles, eventually reaching a dead end under the stairway they came down. An ice statue of a handsome prince was stationed, the generator on his back. They skidded to a halt and, with a furious whirl of her fists, Sheila blasted parallel Light Fists and blew the statue to smithereens. The destruction of the generator seemed to cause an immense screeching alarm that forced the girls to clamp their ears shut, but mostly the screaming Rabbids. Unable to bear this pain, their bodies puffed until all of them exploded. The alarm died down as the girls uncovered, smiling and high-fiving. (End song.)

The last generator destroyed, the boy’s cage was just floating in midair. “Wuh-oh.” As fast as he said it, the cage plummeted to the floor and smashed open, flinging him out. “Ouch!” He helped himself up and rubbed his back. “At least freeze a snowpillow for me, will ya?”

Sheila never saw Suki’s eyes and mouth grow more wide. “Jack FROOOST…” She was almost out of breath.

“Hey there, Suki.” He smiled cutely. “Thanks for saving me.”

“’ey, what’m I, chopped walnuts??” questioned Sheila.

“Heh heh he. Both of you. I was trying to find Suki and tell her something when those guys captured me. Thanks for bringing her to me. Let me show you the way out.”

Sheila followed Jack to a back corner of the massive cylinder where rested a flat, stone square tile with a swirly symbol. …For no reason, Sheila and Jack did a small dance where they spun, hands on their hips, and kicked feet in the air. This seemed to make the portal swirl to existence, so Sheila could fall in and return to the Hall of Doors. “Jack FROST Jack FROST Jack FROOOOST!” Suki bounced on her feet. “How did you get HEEEERE?”

“Well, I’m not actually him. Just a dreamself.”

“A… dream?…”

“It was the only way I could contact you, Suki. I need you to go to Planet Glacia. Find the coldest, most blizzarding part you can, and that’s where I’ll be.”
“But where is THAAAAAT?”

“You’ll know it once you’re there.” And with a charming wink, he blew away with the wind. Suki stood there in confusion before she was swallowed in brightness.

IC’s S.C.A.M.P.E.R., Galaxia

“Mmmm…” Suki tiredly got up, rubbing her half-open eyes.

“Have a nice dream, Suki?” Miyuki smiled.

“Mmmm-hm. …”

“We should be arriving at GKND soon.” Lola said. “Hey look, there’s Planet Glacia. That’s probly a fun place to visit in Winter.”

Suki’s tired eyes looked at the snow-white planet. Her eyes opened all the way in realization.

“Oooooo!! We gotta go there, we gotta go! Jack FROST is theeeere!” She tugged Miyuki’s sleeve eagerly.

“The heck we do.” Terry eye-rolled.

“Suki, how do you know Jack Frost is there?” Kayla asked.

“I don’t know, I just doooo! We gotta GOOOO, come OOOOON!”

“Suki, we’re on an important mission, we don’t have time to stop for-” But Suki approached George with a clenched lower lip and upward half-closed eyes that looked far too begging and demanding to just ignore. “Er-… Okay.”

“What?!” Terry had to protest.

“She’s probly just tired of all this heat, let her roll around in the snow for a bit and we’ll get back on track.”

“You have REALLY gotta stop playing IN ta her, George!” Terry hissed.

“Okay, onto Glacia we go.” The leader declared. “Let’s give Jack Frost his two ghost cents.”

“YYYYAAAAAAY!” Suki was so happy to go someplace cold. And ever so joyous to meet her Jackie again.

Philippines; Roxas Park

With absolutely no idea what to do, Sunni went to sit boredly at a park table. Her mom had randomly decided to train her by making her think for herself, by letting herself get kidnapped. The way Sunni clung to her all these years, it was only a matter of time before her mom decided she had better things to do. But it was all so sudden, Sunni just didn’t know where to start. So she just stared mindlessly at that white rabbit in the red jacket.

Now that caught her attention. What was a little white rabbit doing checking its watch? Now that’s strange. Why did a little white rabbit have a watch, staring intently through his glasses? Now that’s odd. Why did a rabbit wear glasses? ‘Course he shouldn’t be wasting time, he was clearly late for something. Now that’s just odd, what would he be late for?

Sunni followed him with utmost curiosity, behind a lone tree where he disappeared. But a dark
hole was lain below this tree, so Sunni crouched and carefully loomed forward, trying to search where this rabbit had gone. “…! AAAAAAAHH!” She fell in the endless chasm as everything turned black.

Hmm, seems Sunni fell and hit her head. She may as well go mad. So next time, we will head to Glacia, henceforth realizing why this is called the Frozen Saga. Dress warmly for the Winter, guys. ;O
Aaaaand welcome back to Grand Seven Lights. Here we see, why it is called the Frozen Saga.

Chapter 8: Death of Miyuki

Planet Glacia

A mountain swallowed in a storm. Any soul wandering in this endless blizzard will no doubt be lost in the colds. No one would suspect, in the center of this freezing blackness, lay a marvelous blue castle made of sparkling, solid ice. Walking along this castle’s balcony, a queen with hair white as the snows, skin pale and cold, high-heels made of ice, and a flowing, sparkling blue dress that matched her icy blue eyes. She glowed with an eerie green aura as her voice echoed beyond the mountains.

The snow glows white on the mountain tonight

Not a footprint to be seen.

Kingdom of iiisoLATION

And it looks like… I’m the queen.

Don’t let them IN, don’t let them SEE

Be the good girl you always HAVE to be!

Conceal, don’t FEEL, don’t let THEM know

WELL, NOW THEEELY KNOOOOOOW!

Let it goo. LET IT GOOO!

She released a storm of ice across the mountains.

Can’t hold it back aaaaanymoore!

Let it gooo! LET IT GOOO!

Turn away and SLAM the dooooor!

I don’t care… what they’re GOING to say! The queen soared over the mountains as a shining blue star, releasing sparkling snow all over the land.

Let the stoooorm rage OOOOOOOONNN! She hovered miles over the mountain, and let her voice
be heard to all corners of the continent.

With that, she flew down, spun to the castle’s front gate, and sang with a confident smirk, “The cold never bothered me, anyway.” She slammed the gates shut. And so the mountains lay swallowed in the endless storm. A town long-since ruined lay on the grounds below this castle. Within these ruins stood an ice statue of a girl who reached out in despair, her face looking as if it was desperate for warmth.

**Sector IC’s S.C.A.M.P.E.R.**

The blizzard blew powerfully in the skies above and they saw no ground in this darkness. “Lola, how far are we from target destination?!” George yelled.

“Dude, I’m blind as a BAT in this storm, I can’t even SEE a destination!”

“I can’t believe we’re about to die following THIS girl AGAIN!!” Terry shouted.

“I second that.” Miyuki remarked.

“Suki, are you SURE we’re supposed to be going here?” Kayla asked.

“YEEEEES! We just HAVE to beeeeee!” Suki whined. “I KNOW Jack Frost wanted me to go this way, I just FEEL iiitti!”

“Right.” Terry eye-rolled. “And WHO should we trust?”

“Look, I know it feels outta nowhere,” Kayla began, “but I have a feeling Suki’s vision meant something, so we have to try and—”

At that instant, the ship shook. “Something just hit us!” Lola screamed. “An overgrown snowflake?!”

“What’s the status on the engines?!” George yelled.

“Not good… we’re going down any minute. In the escape pods.”

She smashed a button that locked everyone in an escape pod, Miyuki wrapping arms around Suki as they shared a pod. They shot from the ship and flew random directions. “DAAAAAAAHHHH!” The sisters’ pod hit a mountain, and they were suddenly spiraling out of control.

“Sister-chan, what’s going ooooon??” Suki cried.

“I dunno, but just hang—AAAAAAHHHH!” With another forceful bump, both girls went flying out of the pod.

“MIYUKIIII!” Suki cried, flying in the darkness.

“SUUKII!” Miyuki called back, reaching for her younger in despair.

The explosions of both ships were the only light visible on this mountain.

**Poshley Heights Train Station** (Play “K. Rool Battle Intro” from *DK 64.*

The city was roaring with rich types and fans alike as the Excess Express pulled to a stop. A team of four limos stopped on the street before the red carpet that led up to the train’s entrance, the ecstatic fans blocked by thick red rope fences. The four big business tycoons were about to make
their appearance and board the luxury train. The first to step out was Don Quixote Doflamingo, President of Doflamingo Inc., the Italian man in the pink feathery coat waving to his fans and sporting the twinkly smile. His son, Junior, daughter Sugar, and their friends Aeral and Bison joined him down the red rug, many women going gaga over them.

“Hnn hnn, just smile and wave, kids, give them a show.” said Doflamingo.

“Ahhh, it’s nice to be known and respected by those you don’t care for!” proclaimed Doffy Jr. “Isn’t it, Sugy?”

“These people are loud. Tell ’em to die.” She ate some grapes.

“Okay! HEY ALL OF YOU DIE!!” screamed Aeral.

“That’s kinda rude-daizokun.” Bison sweatdropped.

The next president was the gruff old man with white hair, a mustache, big triangle nose, and blue business suit. President of Pewterschmidt Industries, Carter Pewterschmidt, and his wife Babs in a red gown. They wore half-interested frowns as they walked the aisle. “Carter, please tell me you didn’t order the strippers again.”

“Look Babs, you get a hot-tub with Ted Turner, I got my own wants, you want things to work out between us we need to make some arrangements.”

The next man to walk out was the tan-skinned man in a gray suit, black hair around a bald cranium, and triangle glasses. Ted Wassanasong, Laotian President of Ted’s Golfing Galaxy, with his wife Cindy and son Chane, casually walked up to the train. “Now Chane, don’t forget to mention your straight A’s and head of the Pop-culture Club.”

“Ahh, relax, Pops, the Chane Train rolls where the ladies roll.” Chane smiled smoothly.

And finally, the purple-haired mustached man in the red suit, holding a laptop faced forward. Gozaburo Kaiba of Kaiba Corp. kept stern and cool, the face of his son Noah appearing on the laptop screen. “Wow, Dad, my first time going to a Presidents meeting! Will there be law books?”

“Just keep calm and work on your studies, Son.”

All four presidents and their guests gathered on the walkway before the door, guarded by a black-haired man with a big chin and blue suit with a tiny American flag badge. “Where the hell is Mom?” Carter asked.

“Already onboard.” Stan Smith saluted. “I mean, you know how women get, gotta get on early. My daughter, Hayley should be done with inspections any moment.”

Right on cue, Stan’s daughter came out, a black-haired 19-year-old, in a simple blue suit, black high-heels, and toneless face. “All luxury cars inspected twice, food prepared from 5-star Chef Shimi, a peaceful, pampering ride is ensured.”

“That’s good, Hayley. Now go pick up my dry-cleaning, and keep the socks organized.” Hayley ran off to carry her order. “Well uh, seems like everything’s in order, I wish you safe travels!”

“Thank you, Agent Smith.” Babs told him as the rich types all entered the train.

Sugar spared a glance at Stan and said, “That chin is creepy. I hope you get beheaded.” He glared spitefully as she entered.
Within seconds, the wheels whirred to life and began rolling across the tracks. “Agent Smith to Director Bullock,” Stan spoke in his walky-talky, “the bigheads are on the track.”

“Well done, Agent Stan. You can expect your bowl of sugar-cubes on your desk.”

“WAAAAAAAIIT!” Everyone looked when Donna Tubbs, an African-American woman with black hair (wig), white shirt, and blue pants, rushed up the steps and bolted after the train. “TAKE ME WITH YOOOOUU! Ah wanna see Obama, Ah can’t LIVE without OBAMA!”

With a desperate leap, she grabbed the back of the train and held on for dear life. She looked up when a security guard appeared and stomped her face hard. “AAAAAAAAHHHH!” She went plummeting down a steep chasm which the train rolled over on a bridge. Donna’s husband, Cleveland Brown was waiting below.

Cleveland watched carelessly and expectantly as his wife smashed onto the ground before him. He hoisted her beaten and bloody body over his shoulder. “Let’s go fix our house, Donna.” He carried her away. (End song.)

**Onboard the train**

“FUUUUUU fufufufufu!” laughed Doflamingo, legs rested atop a curtained table, Mom seated across from him with fingers folded. “Ahhh, isn’t this the GOOD life, Mom? You would know, otherwise you wouldn’t be on here first!”

“Hmph. I reluctantly agree.” She really didn’t like him one bit.

“BRRRRRREAKFAST is SWEEEEEERRRVED—I mean, SEEERVED!” announced Chef Shimi, a brown Cheep Cheep with a chef’s hat, and the train’s chef. “And only the finest for the fine Corporate Presidents, from the very cookbook of Maitre Delish! A classic apple pie for one who can really appreciate it,” he placed the pie in front of Mom, “the most chocolaty of Choco Cakes, the deluxe delicacy of the Chef Dyllis series, some Fried Shroom, Frozen Fries, Fruity Cakes, Hamburgers, anything fruity!, and what rich types wouldn’t eat without a Gold Meal?” The tabletops were soon completely cluttered by bunches of the most fantastic, elegant foods anyone would ever hope to eat. “But shave your appetite, because more tummy-fulfilling goodies await you at the meak! DOME, this tongue of mine! I meant PEAK! Oh, and also ‘save’.”

Walt picked up a grouping of food bunched in a dark-green shell. “We’ll just eat this in our room.” He said with his evil smile, the trio heading to the back.

“GOOD, we don’ wanna eat with the PIG sty!” Doffy Jr. taunted.

“Nuuuiii! Go eat back there-daizokun!” exclaimed Bison.

Walt, Larry, and Igner returned to their far back room, where Cheren sat on the low bunkbed and played his 4DS. “Hello. We brought you a Courage Meal.” Walt said with his hoarse, maniacal tone, setting the food beside Cheren.

“Oh, cool.” His eyes were glued on the game.

“What are you playing?” Larry asked.

“**Mario Kart 4-D.** So I can enjoy the smell of Panini’s defeat as I ram her with my Mega-Wheel.”

“Mommy lets us play with kindergarten girls so they’ll buy cheat codes that rip them off- Ow!” Walt smacked Igner.
“Quiet, Igner. …You should eat, Cheren.” The eldest brother smirked. “You will need your strength, for your secret assignment.”

“The only thing I need to give me strength is squishing Panini flat.” He looked more furiously and desperately drove his kart. “DAMMIT! Sigh, blue turtle shell. Weeell, uhhhh, eating’s better any day than hearing Panini’s taunts.” He slammed it shut quickly and ate his Courage Meal. “Mmm. This good courage.”

“It’s made with loooove and Mommy Juice!” Larry was smacked for his stupid comment.

“So why don’t you guys hang out with the other kids?”

“Because we are grown men.” Walt stated. “And have no time for the silly squabbles of children.”

“That’s not what Nebula told me.” He swallowed. “How’re those prep-school girls doing?”

“We’re done talking about this.” Sweatdrop. “Just keep hidden until Mom says to come out. The train will make it to the Midway Peak at 7pm tonight. We’re keeping the door locked so no one will see you. This is a very important mission for Mom, and we intend to help her complete it. Bring you lunch later.” The three left and sealed him inside.

Cheren set what remained of his Courage Meal on the nightstand and kicked back on the bunk bed. A peaceful, boring train ride to go and kill someone. That’s what it was. He had to think long and hard about this whole plan, but had to hold onto the positive vibes Sheila helped him remember. He picked up his DS and opened it.

“HA ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!” Panini hadn’t stopped laughing for all that time.

Glacia; blizzard mountains

Miyuki groggily awoke in the vast, snowy wilds somewhere on the planet. “Mmmnn…” She held her aching head and tried to make out her position in the darkness. Even though it was dark and snowy, she oddly didn’t feel that cold. Must be used to being around Suki. …She jumped to remembrance. “Hey, Suki. George? Where are you guys?” she called into the colds. “Huh?” Finally, she noticed a body a few feet away, sloppily lain in the snow. She hurried over to turn it face up. “Hu!” Her unconscious face bore its usual frown, eyes closed. “It’s… me.” She felt her body for warmth. “Am I… dead?”

A light, vicious growl was heard, and she jumped around to find herself surrounded by terrifying monsters with skull masks, and big holes in their chests. She tried to shoot a Chrono Beam, but nothing came out. She stared at her slightly intangible hand. “I am a spirit…”

With no way to defend herself, she crouched as the monsters dove in for attack. “AaaaaAAAH!” Right then, the first three monsters in front of her were struck by a sword, and they faded into darkness.

The other three sneaking behind her were surrounded by little rag dolls, which unwound and tied them in their stitching. Their yarn originated from a skinny girl with black hair and a black coat with an orange shirt underneath.

Next, a band of green, ghastly ghost skulls soared in and flew through the monsters, causing them to stop and shudder with fear. The ghosts were commanded by a short boy with brown hair that stood up straight, dim blue eyes, and a red coat.

“Merry CHRISTMAS!” This guy needed no introduction, Jack Skellington, in his Santa Claus outfit, threw present bombs that stunned all the remaining monsters.
“I think we’ve got ‘em all.” said the girl with the voodoo dolls, her and the others throwing the creatures in a single bunch. “All yours, Rukia.”

The one who wielded the snow-white sword had jet-black hair with violet eyes, and a long black robe. “Then it’s time your souls were free.” She stuck her sword in the ground and began to wave and whirl her arms. Miyuki stared with wonder when two lines of snow began to rise and spiral around the creatures, glowing with a radiant light-blue. Rukia waved faster as the light grew stronger, quickly encasing the foul creatures. They roared to the heavens before they scattered into light particles toward the sky.

Rukia pulled the sword from the ground and said to it softly, “Thank you… Sode no Shirayuki.”, then sheathed.

“I could work with you for a hundred years and never memorize all these names.” The short boy said.

“Whoa…” Miyuki was still speechless.

“Sorry about that.” Rukia told her. “You aren’t hurt, are you?”

“No…” Miyuki stood up. “Who…Who are you guys?”


“Don’t forget about me!” Jack proclaimed. “Numbuh October, Jack SKELLINGTON!” He made a pose.

“He’s not actually one of us.” Rukia said. “He’s just a friend of ours.”

“But I was dead at a young age.” He noted slyly.


“Probably because no one among the living has. We were started about 15 years ago, by Death the Kid, for children that have passed too early before their time. Our jobs are to help other children who’ve had such fates to find peace. And normally, our deaths are the results of stupid actions done by adults, anyway.”

“Wait! Are you saying I’m dead?”

“That would be the case… why else would the Hollows be on you so fast?”

“Hollows? Those things?”

“Yeah.” Norman answered. “You know how people either go to the Spirit World or stay in the Underworld, depending if they were good or evil? Well, in both cases, some people are still really attached to things in the Mortal World, so they leave the Spirit World in a desperate and hopeless attempt to resolve that thing.”

“Spirits are supposed to be free from the bonds of the world after their death, but if they remain too attached, their spiritual energy becomes dark and distorted, and their hearts are lost. Afterwards, they become a Hollow.” Rukia explained.
“That sounds familiar…” Miyuki recalled. “It sounds like the Heartless my mom told me about.”

“Heartless and Hollows are in the same class. But while Heartless are born from still-living hearts, Hollows are born from spirits’ hearts. But they both possess the same level of darkness, almost.”

Miyuki looked down with sadness. It all revolved around the fact that, she was dead.

“Don’t feel so sad. Your spirit may be here, but we’re still sensing plenty of life force in your body.” Rukia smiled.

Miyuki gasped, head shooting back up.

“Norman and Coraline are still alive as Halfas. Half-ghosts, half-humans. But even so, they’re still able to assist the Spirit KND. And each Halfa is born with special powers that’re mainly known in their spirit states. Just like how spirits are allowed to keep elemental powers if the gods say so. What I just performed on the Hollows there was spiritbending. I can scatter their disheartened souls in light so their energy may be reborn anew in the Spirit World.”

“But it looked like you were… icebending there.”

“Actually, the icebending is from my sword, Sode no Shirayuki. The spirit inside is an icebender, and she lends her power to me. Spiritbending is actually a sub-form of waterbending, though icebenders can use it, too. Not only can it scatter distorted souls, it can change the hearts of spirits who are on that verge between darkness and light.”

“Hmm…” So much info for Miyuki to take in. She hasn’t really trained with a longer attention span yet. “So, um, this Spirit Kids Next Door… you have your own treehouses?”

“Oh, you don’t know the half of it.” Coraline winked.

“Methinks we ought to show her.” said Norman coolly.

“It’s gonna be a blast!” Jack beamed.

“Would you like to see?” Rukia inquired.

“Uhh… okay.”

Rukia took Miyuki’s hand as they all formed a circle. “WHOOOOOAAA…” Faster than she knew, a beam of light swallowed them and propelled them to the heavens. “…OOOAAAAOH.” And as fast as it came, it stopped. Even though Miyuki couldn’t have blurred vision as a spirit, she still felt the sensation to.

“We’re here… Miyuki.” Miyuki stared up in wonder, mouth partially agape. A forest of giant trees, many pathways connecting to others, their branches filled with houses among the leaves where kids frolicked and played. It wasn’t just all wood, but houses were brick, and marble, whatever material they wished, and there were hundreds of slides and fields for them to play games. Miyuki thought a utopia like this could only exist in dreams… but it was true.

“Wow…” Miyuki still had no words as Rukia led them up a path.

“This is the utopia we’ve created for these children, should they pass early. We’ve ensured them… a peaceful afterlife.”

Miyuki’s spirit suddenly felt no woes, no reason to frown. She smiled and basked in all the positive
energy in this realm. ...So this... is the afterlife. ...But then she remembered something, “Wait a second, if these are all children in the afterlife, then…”

“Yes. Children die more often than you think. Whether it’s wars or adults’ selfish desires... their time comes far too early. This is what we’ve designed for them, to give them what they couldn’t have while alive.”

“Then it’s a cruel world after all…”

“I’m afraid it is. But Light exists at the same time as Darkness. Otherwise this Spirit World wouldn’t exist. Everything in this world, from the oceans to forest, is made of a special energy generated by the positive feelings of the Mortal World.”

“And the negative feelings make up the Underworld.” Miyuki deduced.

“Actually, both feelings have an influence on both worlds. They exist on the same plane, so they share the same energy. But the Underworld’s purpose is to contain the negative energy, so it doesn’t leak into here.”

“Is that why the Judgment System is held? Why some souls are thrown into prison, or into Sanzu?”

“Yes. This whole realm is based around happy thoughts or dark thoughts. If the souls of this world are happy, the Spirit World can flourish and ensure the Mortal World can be peaceful. But if souls are sad or angry, the Spirit World will become dark, and drastically hurt the Mortal World. And even though death brings peace to mortals, some build up great, evil energies during their lifetime, and the Judgment System is meant to sense that energy, to stop it from reaching here. Depending on the magnitude of the energy... the souls could remain in the Underworld as citizens if it’s fairly low, they could be thrown in Sanzu if it’s higher than that, but if it’s really bad, they could be thrown in Underworld Prison.”

“What’s Underworld Prison next to Sanzu?”

“As a prison, it’s built more for the purpose of containing negative energy, but it’s mostly meant for souls who had powers in their lifetime, benders per se. They connected to nature with their powers, therefore their influence spread to nature. That’s why they had to be imprisoned. And in the deepest confines of that prison are the souls with the greatest concentration of dark energy, so great that the Underworld wants to forget their existence.”

“Yeah, and that’s where they messed up.” Coraline mentioned. “Last year, there was a break-in, and one of the prisoners of that level escaped. Wanna guess who it is?”

“It was the dread pirate BLACKBEARD!” Norman exclaimed. “SCOURGE of the seas who rivaled Davy Jones, commanded hundreds of giant monsters and SCORCHED many towns with his dragon ship! RAAAAAAHHHH!”

“Yyyyyyeah.” remarked Cora. “Anyway, the people who broke in to save him tried to free others, but things became too chaotic.”

“So now Blackbeard is running free in the Mortal World?” Miyuki asked.

“They’ve determined he’s still in the Underworld, but can’t get any leads. Either way, it’s out of the KND’s boundary.” Rukia replied. “We’re focused on other matters. You do know what a ‘ghost’ is, right?”

“Yeah, it’s...it’s what we are?”
“Not really. A ghost is a fallen soul who never faced judgment, and may’ve returned to roaming the Mortal World as a half-dead body of ectoplasm, which is tainted Spirit Energy. Sometimes, they’ve still got a burden within the world, or they just like to run around and create chaos. But those that have burdens, and cling tight to them, will eventually become a Hollow. There’s one particular ghost we’ve been focusing on for a few years, but it’s been around for over 3 centuries. You saw the immense blizzard that was happening on Glacia’s mountain?”

“Yeah?…”

“There’s a ghost on that mountain with powerful Ice Chi that stayed with her after death, and her deep burden is causing her to create an eternal storm. It’s been our duty to subdue this spirit, but we’re never able to get close. And her negative energy has attracted many Hollows.”

“So do you want me to help you stop it?”

“It’s not your responsibility… but the fact your spirit showed itself to us while your body’s alive, must mean there’s power in your spirit.”

“I should help, anyway. My friends and sister are still in that blizzard, I have to help them before they freeze.”

“You don’t need to worry!” Jack Skellington assured. “A friend of ours is already looking into ‘em!”

“Hm?…”

**With Suki, back on Glacia**

“Mmmmm…” Suki woke up facedown in a mound of snow, having created a crater shaped like her body. “That coulda hurrrrrt. Good thing there was a lot-a soft, cooool snow to cool my fall.”

Light footsteps slowly crunched through the snow, and Suki whipped to attention as a slim, shadowed figure approached her. “You’re never one to stay down after you fall, huh?”

“Oh!” She jumped to her feet. “Who are youooouuuu?”

“It’s me…” His body alit to reveal his shiny white smile, clear blue eyes, and snow-white hair, “Suki.”

“Huuuuuuuu!” And once again, her eyes and mouth took the form of wide O’s. “Jack Frooooot!”

“Hey.” He just loved seeing those joyful eyes.

**Wonderland**

Suni indeed felt like she hit her head. Spinning and spiraling down an endless hole, where clocks, tables, couches, and TVs floated in a waving red dimension. In her swirls, she noticed a red and pink patterned floor down below, which seemed to be growing bigger as she grew closer. “Mmmf!” She landed facefirst on that floor, standing up and rubbing her head with annoyance. She looked up the endless shaft she had just fallen down. All those floating chairs and such were actually glued to the wall.

‘Twas really an odd place to have built below the park. Wondering what it was meant for, Suni walked down the snaky hall. A red rectangular door sat at the end, so Suni turned the knob and opened. Behind it, a yellow door half as tall, and Suni opened to find a blue door even shorter, and
then a green door, a yellow door, until finally a tiny dollhouse-size purple door. “Hmmm…”

She whipped out her lightsaber and sliced the entrance down in general, entering a very small and cramped living room-like chamber, very arguably meant for dolls. She looked down, seeing the white rabbit—smaller than she remembers, rush into a small door and close it. She walked around the mini round table in the room’s center and knelt down, tugging the door’s golden knob to force it open.

“Mm-nn I say!” exclaimed the knob, making Sunni flinch. “You don’t certainly intend to fit in me with such luggage.”

Sunni blinked her wide eyes a couple times. “Hey it’s not MY fault the architects made it just to scale!”

“No— if you really want to fit, why not try the bottle.” Sunni turned as a small blue bottle poofed on the table.

She took it in two fingers and held it by her nose, a faint, funky smell. With a raised brow, she gulped it down. “WHOA!” In seconds, she zapped to 3 inches tall, the large bottle bouncing off her head. “OUCH.” With another annoyed rub, she stomped to the door and gripped its knob in both hands.

“Nn- Now-now, I forgot to mention I’m locked. The key is up there.”

“GHHHHHHH!” Trembling with anger, she looked as a key magically appeared on the table, many stories above. A bowl of small candies also appeared on the floor as Sunni approached. She took an orange sweet that read ‘Eat Me’, so she swallowed in one bite. “WAAAAAH!” She became the very size of this room, bumping her head on the ceiling and crushing the table beneath her Mary-Janes.

“Mmp, I don’t mean to offend you, Miss, but your bum is quite large, and it is…”

She glanced down backward, feeling the door’s knob poking the seat of her skirt. “Oh SCREW all this, why don’t I use psychic?!” So with that, Sunni just closed her eyes and imagined herself shrinking, small enough so she can just enter the keyhole and forget about- “WOOP!” She shrunk in a single blink, so small she could crawl right under the tiny door. “Uhhh... bit too much. Oh well, this will do.”

She jumped and tried to float to the keyhole- “WAAAAAAAHH!” Smashed against the bottom of the hole like a bug hit by a swatter. “Oof.” She fell to the floor, shaking off the dizzy. She then just decided to crawl under the gap, seeing only pitch-black around her until she came to the light of the world beyond.

She was definitely in a forest, as grass towered miles over her like trees, and the real trees were impossibly tall. “This seems oddly familiar... Well, better fix this first.” She imagined herself growing larger, slowly though so as not to overshoot it- “WHOOOOA!” But alas, all of the normal trees were as small as grass at her feet. “MAN, WHAT IS WITH MY PSYCHIC TODAY?” her voice echoed for miles. “I COULDN’T FLY TO A CANDY STORE WITHOUT FALLING, NOW I REACT FASTER THAN.”

“I say! How RUDE of you!” Sunni narrowed her eyes to the center, seeing a very tiny birdhouse on the tip of her nose. “My worm stew was READY for waning before your sudden, interruption!”

“UHHH... SORRY. I'M A LITTLE-”

“WHAT ARE YOU, anyway?! SERPENT!! SERRRRPEEEEEEEENT!”
“HEY, CHILL OUT, I’M NO SERPENT, I’M A HUMAN GIRL! I would say little, but I’ve been… well, really shifty lately.”

“POLICE! Firemen! Milkmen! SERPEEEEEEEENT!”

“OKAY OKAY, I’ll put your house back, CALM DOWN!” So with more focus, Sunni zapped back down half as tall as the grass. “Oh, man! Why can’t I shift back to normal?!?”

“I daresay, you’ve gone positively mad.” Sunni turned, her heart nearly stopping at the sight of the ferocious beast. It was a giant fat cat with dark- and light-pink stripes, sharp yellow eyes, big fluffy tail, and a wide grin.

“! …’scuse me?” she asked quizzically.

“What a peculiar head on your shoulders.” He rolled onto his back. “It looks very unstable.” He stood up, leaving his head on the ground. “Can you… stand on it?” He then began dancing on his head.

“…If I could, I’d rather not have anymore headaches.”

“But it looks like it comes off.” He put his head back on, standing on only his hind legs. “Looks very unstable. Like I can unscrew it with but a few turns.”

“Yah—technically, but I assume you’re implying that my mind is unbalanced, that’s why my powers are suddenly hard to control.”

“Actually, your powers exist because you’re mad.” Got back on his belly, resting his chin on his wrists. “Like this whole world. Everything you see was created by mad people. Everyone here is mad. Your powers, in and of themselves, are pure madness. So it would just be mad to let them roam here.”

“So you’re saying that… this place concentrates strong Psychic Chi, that’s why my powers are acting so strongly and out of control.”

“No, they’re acting more in control than ever. They were founded by madness. Your madness. This world helps to emphasize that. Since you so constantly ignored it.”

“Ugh! Look, if you’re such an expert on that, teach me psychicbending!”

“Why do I need to.” A sly grin. “You’re already taught. Deep inside your head. Perhaps if you unscrew and take a look…”

“Look, I DON’T know psychicbending, okay?? I could NEVER control it, I REALLY can’t control HERE, so I can really use help before I get eaten by a flower or a pebble or whatever the f&*% is ALIVE around here!”

“Strange… your head is awfully familiar. I was wondering why you hadn’t remembered the key this time. I guess four times isn’t a charm.”

Sunni raised a brow. “You’re saying that… my mom was here a few times?”

“It could be your mother.” Rolled on his back. “It could be others. Different people, each time. Same people, a few or more times. All your heads looked the same to me. Maybe one of them left theirs here. If you search around, you may find it.”
She cocked the other brow. “Meaning there’s somebody here that can help me?”

“I don’t know. No one’s much help here. Even you. Even me. They’re all mad. So you might lose your head trying to talk to them. That should help you some. Mmmmmm, ‘twas Brillig…” The cat’s body faded to nothing, and slowly, his head was disappearing, “And the slithy toves, Did gyre and...” Only his shiny grin was left, before it was gone.

Sunni rolled her eyes. Well, no sense using her powers now. Guess she would just have to find this person and get their help. This’ll be fun… (Play Wonderland’s theme from Kingdom Hearts.)

Stage 13: Wonderland

Mission: Find some stranger to get their help.

Act 1: The Rabbit Hole

Sunni started her adventure through the Lotus Forest, passing many colorful flowers whose petals were closed. She decided to approach a yellow one to ask why it was closed. It said, “Do a shockwave for me,” so Sunni jumped and slammed the ground with a Psycho Shockwave. The flower opened and spat out a bunch of bubbles that filled her energy meter. She didn’t bother with other ones yet, but when looking around she found this area was fairly enclosed, only a large boulder, platforms too high to reach, and a small pond. She talked to a red flower beside the pond that said, “Give me red berries and I’ll make you bigger.” She looked around, seeing some red berries growing above a high platform, but in her attempt to pull them down with psychic, her immense power squashed them.

They grew back, but she knew she had to look for another way, anyway. In a small, back enclosing was a whitish-blue flower that requested Bubble Berries. She looked around and found said berries growing above the door, jumping up to cut them down with her lightsaber. She brought the berries to the plant, and as it chewed them, released a large bubble that Sunni could hop onto as it floated to the high platforms. It was a matter of simple jumping before she got to the red berries, cutting them down before feeding to the red flower.

It sprayed a magic dust that stretched Sunni to normal size in seconds. The forest felt a lot more cramped, as if it was literally meant for mini people. The boulder she had encountered was smaller than her hand, so for no reason, she decided to kick it in the pond. Two lilipads in the pond suddenly stretched into platforms, which would let her hop over a wall of grass if she were little. She tried to walk to the other end of the path and- “Ow!” hit her head on a branch with a round platform. “Ugh! …” She noticed the tiny coconut on said platform, deciding to take it. Out of annoyance, she decided to push that branch, but this turned the whole tree- “Oh!” bumped her head on the branch that came around. Having enough with this height, she munched the coconut and shrunk back to 3 inches.

She bounced up the risen lilipad platforms and over the grass to reach an enclosed area. There was a row of bellflowers that requested lightning, but Sunni had no such power… yet. She entered a doorway that seemed to have warped her- “Whoooa!” for she was suddenly in the Bizarre Room on one of the walls, having slipped out of a hole on a shelf. On the wall, meaning, she literally stood on it like a floor, for her gravity seemed to have shifted. All that was on here was a blank white canvas, some unlit torches, and a teddybear sitting on a (sideways) shelf. Curious, she decided to cut the rope holding up the shelf, letting the bear fall onto a seesaw below that flung a paint can up to the empty canvas, and created a beautiful picture of a starry, nighttime hillside.
Sunni dove into the painting, and before she knew, was swimming in a liquid dimension miles above the vast fields under the calming night sky. Though to Sunni, it felt just like flying, swimming in the air, except she had to hold her breath. She was swimming directly up to the full moon, where the current seemed to push her, until she swam straight through and fell out of a small waterfall in the Lotus Forest. She resurfaced in this small pond and climbed back onto a new land, discovering she was on the second floor of the forest. She had to jumped across a few platforms that seemed like wide lilipads, then found herself on one side of the tree she turned earlier. Its platform branch helped her in crossing a gap, though if she glided over, she would slam forcefully into the parallel wall. Her shockwave earlier stretched a little farther than it should have.

The following lilipads were smooshed under the thick leaves, so Sunni was forced to sidle across what little thin bits remained. Naturally, Snapdragons waited in holes above and tried to snack her, so she beheaded them with her lightsaber. She made it to a vine-made ladder and climbed onto a higher path, which was very wide and had three different doorways at the end. She hurried over and peeked inside each one; the left seemed to drop her back into the first part of the forest, the right dropped her back in the Bizarre Room along the wall, but the middle one was too high to reach.

But Sunni then noticed the red flower seated near the entrance to this path. She walked over and asked of its query, and it replied, “I’ll make you big if you cut my hair.” Noticing the out-of-place green vine growing from its top like a hair, Sunni jumped up and sliced it off. It sprayed a dust that stretched Sunni to “normal” height. She was too large to fit back through the gap to the lower forest, but when she approached the now-tiny doors, it looked as though they were dominos leaned against the wall. She took the left one and set it on the ground below the middle, then laid the right one on it diagonally against the wall, so it served as a bridge to the middle. She saw another coconut on a ledge, having to reach her arm all the way up to grab it, then took a bite to shrink back to normal.

She was able to enter the higher door, finding herself on the parallel wall of the Bizarre Room. She was on the right side of the chimney shaft, having to find a way to climb up it. A wilted plant was on the floor below, and above it was a shelf with a cup of water. Since it was sideways where Sunni stood, she got underneath and pushed up, shoving the cup off its perch and onto the flower, making it stand to life as vines stretched up for Sunni to climb onto the chimney’s exterior. The other side had a (sideways) faucet aimed at an empty pot, but its handle was round and fairly large. Instead, Sunni walked to the chimney’s entrance and jumped inside, ended up sliding up the shaft and out the top hatch, suddenly right-side-up and using the hatch as a foothold.

From here, Sunni jumped to a lower dish shelf, then jumped to the faucet handle. The arrow pointed counterclockwise, so Sunni ran in place in that direction, turning the handle as a result. Water came pouring into the pot, and on pure instinct, Sunni jumped in with the current. She ended up coming down a short waterfall into a sewer pipe, where she stood up on its floor where the shallow river flowed. The pipe eventually ended over a chasm where the water streamed down, but when Sunni turned a small lever on the right, the water suddenly flowed across the rightward wall after leaving the pipe. This allowed Sunni to cross this wall along the river’s flow, eventually into another pipe that appeared dark and bottomless. However, she could walk on the pipe’s side with the river flow, passing through carefully as she was blinded within this darkness. She came to a lit area, and, to her distaste, the water flowed into a trollface. Entering said face would probably lead her to an unwanted area, so she went back.

Outside, Sunni turned another lever and made the flow shift right again, so she could walk UP the wall. The river made it to the ceiling, where it flowed up vertically from Sunni’s view, but allowed her to shift gravity nonetheless. The river flowed past the ceiling, up (down) the following wall into another pipe. It also flowed past a lever on the ceiling, but Sunni first decided to follow it into
this pipe. After passing another wall of blackness, she found another trollface. Angered, she returned to the ceiling and turned the lever right, causing the river to make a complete loop around that area. She was able to get to another lever, which she shifted to make the looping river go up (down) an alternate wall, into a pipe. However, this pipe had river come out from the opposite end, signifying it's the pipe she came from. She walked down, entered this pipe, going across its ceiling 'til she made it to the mini waterfall, which the new river flowed up and into.

Sunni crouched and entered, ending up falling to the ceiling of the Bizarre Room. After roaming around, she discovered a wood door lodged into the chimney’s top. She went inside and found herself at a beautiful hedge garden under a sparkling night sky. The smell of tea catching her nose, Sunni passed through to the center, where a curtained table stood. (End song.)

Sunni made it to a peculiar Tea Party, where all the chairs around the rectangle table were different shapes and sizes. A pale woman with light-blonde hair and a blue dress stood motionlessly, holding a teapot with three mouths over six cups, pouring. “Ummm… excuse me?” Sunni walked up and asked with confusion.

“… … … .. . Hello.” It took her a while to respond. She spoke with a quiet, British accent.

“Is this, um… you live here?” The answer was probably ‘no’.

“… . Am I alive?”

Close enough. “So, umm… thing is, I’m a psychicbender. I’m not very good, my powers are really wonky in this world, and someone said… someone could…”

“… … . Did you try painting your powers?”

“Uh-… what?”

“Paint them a different color. You might like them better.”

“How will THAT help?? For one thing, it’s intangible energy so I can’t paint, and I never had problems with the color blue at all, what does it have to do with my-”

“Then perhaps try talking to them. Understand each other.”

“… … …” The magic cat was right, she isn’t helpful.

“Would you like some tea? ..” The woman presented the six cups, stopped pouring,

“…” Sunni walked over and had a seat, drinking a cup.

“So what seems to be the problem?”

“I told you, my powers are acting crazy in this world. I guess ‘cause there’s a lot of Psychic Chi. This cat said someone could help me—I think—but I’ve been getting lost every which way, and I need to get better at psychicbending so I can save my mom.” Another long sip.

“… . Did you say ‘please’?”

Sunni slowly put the cup down with a disbelieved stare. “What?”

“Did you ask your psychic kindly to help you? All you’d have to do is ask.”

“… … . Literally ask my psychic to help. You’re serious?”
“Nope!” A black-haired man walked by just then and had a seat at the farther end. “I’m over here! A cup for me, Alice!” He grinned brightly.

Alice hopped up, walked across the table, kicking several cups, and poured some tea in Sirius’s cup, the other mouths pouring tea onto his lap as he flinched. “Wait a second, what’s HE doing here!” Sunni yelled. “Sirius isn’t in Wonderland!”

He put his cup down, “Just thought I’d drop by ‘fore my weekly bowling trip with Chronicler. Funny, the oldspaper reported someone mad coming to visit, but I was expecting someone else.”

“You mean my mom?”

“Well, yes…” Sirius looked down, “though there is someone else I had wanted to meet. If you see your mother again, do ask her to drop by, will you?”

She slammed her cup down, “Well I CAN’T unless someone helps me with f&*king PSYCHICbending!”

“Is it wearing a condom?” Alice asked.

“…………” Sunni had no words at all to reply to that. “Could you please show me the exit?”

“Over there.” Sirius pointed.

Sunni looked at a mirror behind her chair and walked over. Staring longingly at her own reflection, it felt as though her very vision began to zoom on her reflection’s pupil. Zooming closer on the pitch-black dot, her vision began to spin, going closer and closer to the light at the very end of the darkness.

Sunni blinked, suddenly awake at the table in Roxas Park. She turned to the tree that had the strange hole she fell in, wondering if it was still there. …She decided to get up and walk away. “What a waste of my time.”

**Sabaody Park, Canada**

With what remained of Jessie’s bubbles, he and Sandy floated all the way to Canada on a bubble boat, the morning sun just coming over the horizon. “Yaaaaaaawn.” yawned the First Grade President. “Fin’ly, sigh… we m’de it.”

“Poor Jessie.” Sandy patted his back. “You should rest. Let me gather the bubbles.”

“Nnn, I m’h not be able to beat some *** 4th-grader, but I can sure as *** git me some f’kin’ bubbles. Now c’mon Sandy, le’s get enough I can sh’vve down Shelly’s… rrrrREAR side!” He wobbled forward.

Sandy shook her head with worry and sadness. “Oh, Jessie.” But decided to follow. (Play “Downtown Bikini Bottom” from *Spongebob: BFBB.*)

*Stage 14: Sabaody Park*

*Mission: Get more suds for Jessie’s bubbles.*

*Act 1: Bubble Park*
Sabaody Park was a lush green forest of vertical striped trees, with green and cyan stripes. It reeked of what smelled like bath soap, as thousands of bubbles puffed from the soapy trees and were hovering across the air. There were Fodderbots roaming this small enclosing, in which Jessie went around and knocked them all out with a swing of his Bubble Wand. There was no way out of the enclosing except for a few platforms of varying height that emerged tiny bubble jetstreams, too light to lift the twins up. However, both hopped onto a floating Bubble Bike, rode over the lowest stream, and let it gently lift them higher so they could glide to another platform, then another, before they could float to the new ledge.

But an inconvenient tall step prevented their bike from going further, so they climbed off and up the step. They overlooked a village area of colorful tents in a gorge, in which Sandy whirled a lasso like a helicopter and held onto Jessie as they floated down gently. An Arfbot was roaming the village and releasing mini Arf-Dawgs, Sandy roping each one and tossing them aside. Jessie, still unbearably tired, hurried forward to deal a quick whack against the robot, making it jump a few feet back. Jessie waved his wand around to send a Bubble Torpedo his way, but recalled that his supply was a little decreased at the moment, so he just had to chase the Arfbot and whack him again. But then the Arfbot leaped onto a higher ledge, where he could throw Dawgs at the kids safely, but Sandy simply roped a Dawg in her lasso and tossed it up at him.

The robot exploded, a trampoline seemed to slide out of one of the tents. The siblings bounced up to the roof and landed in a cannon, in which the only place to fire was a spring pad on another roof. They shot there and were bounced to a snaky metal pathway, where they had to jump thick bubble boulders as they progressed up. The path sloped upward while still snaking until they were finally brought above the high cliff, where the Fodderbot working the bubble cannon waited beside a Soap Tree. Jessie rushed up, knocked out the robot, and disabled the cannon. Having arrived at the first tree, he scraped some of its suds off into his bottle.

With that, they returned to the village as Jessie was now able to make Bubble Bowls. The only way out of here was a narrow, snaky road between close walls, but no actual path, just bubbly rails. Beside it was a small cannon which Jessie swung a Bubble Bowl into. The sturdy, round ball was inflated to three times its size, allowing Jessie and Sandy inside. With this, they could roll down the rail trail, going whipping fast before they launched off a ramp onto a carved trail in the ground. They carefully navigated around robots and large holes, in which one of the holes had a small bridge over it which they could cross slowly, and retrieve a sock. The trail eventually ended over a deep canyon, where the kids had to roll the ball over floating slow-spinning platforms.

Naturally, some platforms moved up or down, forward and back, and much trickier to get onto on this ball. The platforms eventually brought them to a U-shaped slide and could barely alter their speed as they were going down. It was a matter of dodging spikes and pitfalls before they went up more rails and through a hoop of fire. “WHOA!” cried Sandy when the bubble instantly popped, grabbing Jessie and swinging the convenient bubble hooks above, to land them on a new ledge. Tar-Tar robots were shooting their infamous sauce around another tent village, and threatened to swamp the whole area. Jessie whirled his wand and sent Bubble Bowls to take out each one; but upon finishing, the siblings looked to the cliffs above the village as robots appeared to be sawing Soap Trees down, throwing them in wagons. “Hu! Why are they cutting down the forest?” gasped Sandy with horror.

“Because they’re bitches…” Jessie wobbled. The twins progressed to a lower, playground area with bubble-used rides, which were hovering several feet. They got on the mini merry-go-round and spun it around and around, a bubble stream coming out its bottom as it hovered. From there, they hopped across the midair rocky-horses to a floating swingset, both taking a swing and building momentum. They then flew up to a bubble-lifted slide, which was thin, long, and curvy, kept aloft by several bubbles. It was just their size, making it easy to slide down and fly off onto a new ledge.
They were on a cliff overlooking another deep chasm, but to the left, Jessie first scraped more suds off a Soap Tree. Then the siblings crossed a plant that ended under a floating stack of bubble blocks. Using a Bubble Bash, Jessie leapt and hit the stack, causing them all to fall and stay in place over separate parts above the chasm. The kids could jump across them, followed by Sandy swinging a bubble hook to land them on a soapy slide.

They couldn’t stand on this solid slide soaking with suds, so they had to dodge bubble boulders being fired from cannons, spike traps, and the average enemies. The slide ended at one part and forced the kids to jump far-apart floating bubble fountains, still sliding as they made the careful jumps. On the following slide which curved left, they had to bounce bubble springs that propelled them to higher parts, lest they fall to their death, but this final slide would soon bring them to a grassy spot at the forest’s edge, overlooking the distant sea. (End song.)

But a shining light many miles in the heavens caught their eye, so they jumped the steps to the coast for a closer look. Whatever this bright thing was, the moment it crashed into the sea, it created a tremendous explosion, Jessie creating a bubble shield to block the resulting strong wave. Jessie lowered his bubble when the area was swallowed in steam. A huge, dark force began to rise within the gray, growing closer, before it came to a halt with a loud release of steam. A door opened as a bridge stretched over for them to cross, and they saw lines of lights in whatever just opened. “…J-Jessie!” whispered Sandy as her brother was lazily walking forward. Mind racing with thoughts, Sandy reached the conclusion to follow him. (Play “Mansion of the Deep” from Rayman Legends.)

Act 2: Undersea Mansion

The siblings rode a large elevator down a diagonal shaft lit with lights. It came to a stop before a huge, wide corridor where robots were on patrol, in this case Sleepytimes, snoozing robots encased in a searchlight. Jessie and Sandy quietly tiptoed through their lights and across the floor, reaching a center wall where they grabbed and climbed across three different ledges before getting on top. The next part of the room was a floor of red tiles, with a single yellow one beneath them. They dropped down to it, causing a trail of yellows to flash to existence before they became red. Seeing this before, the siblings carefully memorized the yellow trail and followed where it was, lest they be shocked by the reds. Jessie’s Bubble Bowls actually got shocked by the reds, so they used them to see the path better. Once safely on the other side, they noticed another sock on a far left tile, so another hidden trail would lead them to it. After testing several tiles with the Bowl again, Jessie soon found his way to it.

With that, they continued to a round-ceiling corridor that went up and curved right, leading to a hall with aquariums within the walls, containing unique and exotic fish, and a dark chasm for a floor. A platform was beside the foothold across the chasm, and Sandy could rope its hook and pull it over, letting them ride it across afterward. For the next chasm, some pegs were stationed all around the left wall for Sandy to swing across, but the following tunnel was barred shut. Sandy roped her way up the pegs to the ceiling, then swung some hooks on the ceiling to a platform with a switch. But when she pressed the switch, she was barred inside, while the tunnel opened. She was free when she stepped off, but the tunnel sealed again. “Um… Jessie?”

“Mmmm…” Still half-awake, Jessie inflated a bubble to float him across the chasm, passing the tunnel to an enormous room of fishtanks and pipes flowing with suds, as the substance behind the glass bared that smeary, colorful presence. “With Chum Industries’ special Squeaky-Clean Suds, we can safely assure the future well-being of your ocean and wildlife. We’ve taken the liberty of giving the fish new homes until we can work out the pollution issue, we promise to return them all to their rightful places as soon as I am made supreme ruler! Eh he he he!”
Jessie didn’t understand nor care what that message was. He began roaming around the room as Monsoon robots and Chucks sent storm clouds and missiles at him. Jessie spotted a vertical pipe in a far right corner, and a platform around it several stories above. Jessie climbed a ladder onto a nearby fishtank, having to balance a thin board over a tank of Bonefish. Once across, he climbed a ladder onto a tank filled with jellyfish, where several large ones rested at the surface and sank up and down. They also electrified for a few seconds, so Jessie was careful in hopping across. He made it to a series of metal poles, having to climb them and kick to the next, while avoiding the Sparkies; little electric balls that moved around the poles. He finally made it atop the platform around the pipe, where a faucet conveniently was. Jessie turned it, let the suds flow into his bottle, and had more to go on.

Jessie was able to send Bubble Buddies around the room and distract the projectile robots trying to kill him. He then dropped down and returned to the previous room, telling Sandy to get off the switch. He then blew a Bubble Buddy up to where she was, and she pulled and positioned it above the switch before jumping down, letting the bubble press it down instead (wow, he was bulkier than he looked). They returned to the huge room where Sandy roped a high peg between two fishtanks, pulling Jessie up with her as they landed on the higher tank. They had to swing a row of hooks across the tank of electric eels, but with two Chucks threatening to blow them off, Jessie blew a Bubble Buddy to distract them.

Once across the tank, they jumped a few platforms to a tunnel that curved downward, made of glass as they had a terrific view of the sea, er, aquarium outside. The tunnel eventually led into the water itself, so Jessie threw a Bubble Bowl against a pump cannon to increase its size, the twins getting in and rolling around inside the aquarium. They had to zoom past 3 propeller switches while avoiding Torpedo Teds, opening the gateway to a new tunnel. They rolled up a slope and across a flat floor, carefully avoiding red security lasers that scrolled up and down, left to right, and/or both. They reached a chasm with two small platforms that floated up and down, having to wait for them to get low so they could carefully roll off, their bubble floating softly across the pit due to the water.

They rolled off on the new path, up a slope that curved right, and resurfaced in a small room alit by torches, touching their bubble to a fireplace to pop it. A pair of huge wooden double-doors sat before them, Sandy roping their handles to pull them open. They progressed down a torch-lit hall to a small, pumping room where another faucet lay on a pipe. Jessie held his bottle underneath and turned the handle to collect more suds. (End song.)

“**HNN hnn hnhnhnhnh!**” But instead, a huge, brown bubble with a devilish grin grew to existence and out of the faucet. “Hnn, he was RIGHT!”

“J-JESSIE! That’s the..”

“Dirty Bubble.” The boy glared.

“Hrrnhnhnn, what’re a couple of KIDS doing in our mansion?” the bubble grinned wickedly. “Well, I know just what to do with you. **IN TO THE BUBBLE DOME**, huhohoho!” He floated overhead and smashed the kids into his dirty bubbly body.

“**Nmmnn! Jessie, do something!**” cried the sister, but Jessie appeared more tuckered out than ever.

“Awww little guy’s tired. That’s whatsa get fer stayin’ up so late, kiddies. But don’t worry. I’ll make sure you get plenty o’ rest, hohohohohnhooohhn.”

**Glacia; with Suki and Jack**
“Jack FROST Jack FROST Jack FROST! YYYAAAAAY!” Suki alternated between feet as she hopped in place. “I KNEW you wanted me to come here, you NEVER lie to meeee!”

“Heheh. I just thought the summer heat was making you melt, you wanted to get your toes cold again.”

“You BET I do!” Remembering the extreme cold around her, Suki joyously kicked off her shoes and socks and wiggled her toes in the snow. “I feel JUST like an ice cube agaaaaain! Thank you for bringing me here, Jack Frost! I- …” Her face sunk a little. “But what about my sister? And my friends?”

“They’re all fine, Suki. We wouldn’t let anything bad happen to them.”

“Then we GOTTA go FIND theeeeem!”

“Later, Suki. But first let’s talk about the reason I led you here: to hone your icebending.”

“But I’m a GREAT icebender! Seeeee?” She swirled the snow before her and created a mini snowcastle with tiny citizens.

“Heh heh heh! You’re very talented, but you don’t even know the basics of bending! And even the greatest benders need to know how their power works to be perfected at it.” Jack spun and swirled a snowy throne that raised him to the air, taking a seat. “Then you’ll realize you never felt closer to the cold.”

“But I ALREADY feel so cooooold!” she whined with her joyous smile. “Do I really need to feel so shivering, my blood stooooops?”

“Maybe you do, Suki.” Jack still smiled. “I just want you to know, there’s a thing as being too cold. And depending on how in tune you are with your chi, that extreme cold could be your greatest ally, or the tool of your destruction.”

“Why would the cold destroy me? I thought the cold LOOOOOVED me.” She frowned in mock sadness.

“That’s why it’s important for you to learn about chi.” He hopped down from his throne. “So you’ll learn how to bond with it.”

“What’s chiiii? Is that short for chiiiiilly?”

“Haha. Yeah, that’s a good one.” He laughed. “Just come over here.”

Suki quizzically approached Jack as he held his cane staff ready. “You see, people are able to bend elements by their chi, and each element’s chi has a particular flow throughout your body, and is concentrated at a certain point. But while people have Personal Chi, the outside world, like the ocean, sky, or space, contains Natural Chi. Benders release their chi to the Natural Chi, and in the process, allows them to bend those elements. Benders can strengthen the bond between their Personal Chi and the Natural Chi through experience or meditation. And when the bond between chis is strong enough, they’ll ultimately fuse together. Thus, the bender’s body will become one with their element. When this Logia level is reached, the chi takes on a different flow depending on the element. For us icebenders or earthbenders, the chi will appear relatively frozen or stiff. Firebenders’ chi would become more active, airbenders’ more scattered, and Space Chi would appear almost hollow or nonexistent. But while the chi flows take on this drastic change, the binder is more powerful than ever.”
“But if I became a Logia… I couldn’t hug my sister without freezing her, could I?” Suki asked with big sad eyes.

“Well, with Logia, it’s a complex thing. Your body only possesses the illusion of having become your element.” Jack Frost used his staff to draw Suki’s shape in the snow. “After you become Logia, an invisible shield encases your whole body.” He drew another line just outside of Suki’s shape, in the same shape. “You still have a normal body, and can eat or touch things, so if you shook hands with somebody, the shield allows harmless outside forces to pass. But when you want it to, or danger comes your way, the shield will kick in.” He drew a line coming directly at Suki and passing the shield. “When that danger is detected, that part of your body will transform into ice and the danger will be avoided. But your body is still there. It just becomes invisible and intangible while the ice takes its place. But the shield only protects the outside; the inside is still vulnerable. Something hazardous could enter through your ears, nose, or mouth. If the danger becomes active in say the entrance of those areas, the shield will still detect, but if it gets too far in you can’t see it, it won’t pick up. And of course, the shield can’t protect against Haki, chi-blocks, or the element’s natural enemy. So even as a Logia, you still need to be aware.”

“So I can become a Logia, and STILL hug Miyuki-chan, right?”

“Yeah, you could. But that’s where the hard part comes in…”

“Ohh?”

“When benders are on the very verge of Logia transformation, sometimes it requires the ultimate step. To finally test if that bond is real, and you’re so in tune with your element, you have to put yourself in a situation that could mean your death.”

“Hu!” she gasped.

“To name a few examples… a waterbender might submerge their self and completely drown, an airbender could drop from an airplane without a parachute, or an icebender may lock their self in the coldest darkness until their blood turns to ice…”

*Mikaela Chariton took the most powerful blast from Mewtwo’s psychic beam, but in just a blink, her body had become psychic itself.*

*Caesar Clown hacked and coughed within the fog of toxic Bang Gas. He had inhaled so much, and it was overtaking his lungs. But a grin appeared on his face, when it became so breathable. “Oh. I’m a Logia. Not what I was trying to do, but, I’ll take!”*

*Dozens of boulders were rolling to the unsuspecting village at the mountain’s base, and Angie McKenzie was doing all she could to send them away. There came to be too many, and the woman felt the storm of boulders bouncing and crushing her body. Her bones would give way any second, but to her utter amazement, her body shattered like stone. A great stone entity that shaped her form emerged from the earth and crushed the remaining boulders.*

*At 13 years old, Mandy McKenzie had acquired numerous syringes of Nightmare Toxin. She injected them all in her body and let the magic happen.*

*Suki gulped, eyes wide with terror.*

“That’s why becoming a Logia can mean the ultimate sacrifice. Sure, if it works, your life’s the same as normal, but you’re just more powerful. But if it doesn’t work… if you’re not as sure as you thought you were… it’s the end.”
The sadness was clear as day in Suki’s adorable eyes. “Is that what… happened to you? Sniff.”

“Well… yeah… a long time ago, when…”

“…” Suki listened patiently.

Jack shook, “Let’s not worry about it now. Your training should come first.”

“What kinda training are we doing?”

“I’m going to teach you about the Ice Element. I know you have a good grasp of it, but it’s important you hear it out, too. Ice, in a way, is close to Psychic, as it needs an imaginative mind to work.” He took some snow and mended it into all sorts of shapes, a hammer, a DNA, lipstick…

“Psychicbenders need to endure loads of training before they can create stuff out of their chi, but any active icebender can make things ages early. True, it’s made of ice and won’t make any long-lasting contributions, but when there’s something we need on the spot, we got the advantage.” He made it into earmuffs, which he placed over Suki’s ears. “We call this Ice-Maker Style. And the same way psychicbenders can create Imaginary Friends, icebenders can give life to snow entities if their imagination’s strong enough. Just look.” Jack created a snowman half Suki’s height, who bowed.

Suki beamed and created a team of tiny snowpeople as high as her feet, skiing and dancing around the larger snowperson. “Which you already understand! And the stronger our chi is, the more realistic we can make a person or thing. The reason icebenders are rarer than waterbenders is because ours possesses magical properties, just like Psychic. Icebending just sounds like ‘controlling ice’, like any other element, but even other elements have hidden powers inside them. And icebending has another property, too: the power to freeze time.”

“Huuh?”

“You know that when something is completely encased in ice, its very motion or aging stops until the ice is totally melted. It was this power that kept Avatar Aang in a time stasis for a hundred years, which thereby stopped his Negative’s aging, but allowed him to roam free. So it would be in regular timebending.”

“So I have powers like MIYUKI-CHAAAAAN!”

“Heheh ha. To an extent, really. You more-or-less keep Time in balance, by freezing it, the same way you already do with your sister. If something is out of control, a river, a volcano, even time itself, you need to freeze it.”

“Huuuuu!” Suki’s eyes and mouth grew wide in remembrance again. “Miyuki-chaaaaan! I gotta go SAAAAAVE her, can’t wait AROOOOUUUND.” She jumped impatiently.

“Suki, calm down, your sister will be fine.” Jack smiled assuringly. “I want you to help me with something first. Can you trust me?”

Suki calmed down and stared at him. She really wanted to save her sister… but if Jack Frost says so, she could believe in him. She nodded.

Jack narrowed his eyes and bent down discreetly, gesturing to the blizzarding mountain above. “There’s this girl up there that I really like, and I want you to help me talk to her.” He spoke in a hushed tone, as if they were in high school and he were whispering to his friend about the pretty girl at the other table. “I’ve been trying to get up the courage to, but I always get so nervous. So will you help me?”
“Awwwwwww!” Suki pressed her cheeks and sang like a nosy little sister. “Jack—ie-chan’s, in LOOOO-ooooove!”

Jack’s heart sank in a beat, his smile faltering. “What’s wrong, Jackie?”

“Oh-h… nothing.”

“Well let’s GOOOOO! Don’t be shy, I’ll tell you JUST what to SAAAAY!”

“That means a lot, Suki.” He smiled. “Now let’s go. I’ll teach you about icebending on the way.”

**Spirit World; KND treehouse**

Miyuki followed Norman down to a basement of the treehouse, which grew darker as torches only lit the halls. “So when did you become a Halfa?”

“Three weeks ago, actually.” Norman said with a cool, casual smile. “I helped transfer this ghost to the Spirit World last year, and her spirit came back to give me this power. I think she can help you out, too.”

“Is that where we’re going?”

“Yes. A little tidbit though, Coraline’s actually older than she looks. Her ghost body has a manifested child form made of strings and stitches and junk. Some Nightmare King gave it to her for helping catch some rogue Nightmare, I think 22 years ago? Jack’s mostly hanging with us as a pastime, and Rukia, not sure where she’s from. Probly Japan.”

They made it to a large, dark room with a single curtained table lit by a small candle. On one side, a pale 11-year-old girl with a black dress and sleek black hair. Across from her, creatures Miyuki was familiar to: white, round-topped beings with little eyes in red circles, and floating hands. Okay, she wasn’t exactly familiar what they were, so she called them the Thing Chorus. Why, you ask?

The dark girl picked up a cup of tea on the table and shook it lightly. “How should I live my life? That, appears to be the question, of the evening.” She sounded half-interested.

*The more you think about life*

*The sooner you might diiiiiie.*

“But why shouldn’t I think about death. When *that*’s the way I’m gonna be spending most of my life.”

*It maaay be the way you are fated to live*

*But why shouldn’t you liiive in the mooomeeeent?*

“Because I got nothin’ interesting going on. Let’s get it over with now. Where’s the nearest cliff. Deep river. A knife might work.”

*But the faster you rush into sooomething*

*The harder it will be for yooou tooo aaaaadjuuuuust.*

The girl sipped her tea. “If I were good at it, I would adjust. If I’m not, why can’t I start now?”
Death comes to take when it’s ready toooo

For deaath iiiis the lot of uuus!

The lot of everyone that **we hold deeeear.**

**So WHY pass the time thinking of the value of your liiife?**

“Hey, Numbuh 1712!” Norman greeted as he led Miyuki in. “This is Miyuki. Miyuki, this is Aggie. Our, uh, witchcraft specialist.”

“Yes.” Aggie stood up, stretched her arms, and rubbed her eyes. “Just got up from a really long nap. And I guess you have, too.”

“Actually, Norman’s friends brought me here. But I think I’m still… alive.”

“I’ll let you two get to know each other.” Norman walked away. “Rukia wants me for mission reports.”

With that, Aggie and Miyuki began a long, unenthusiastic walk down the opposite hall. “So if you aren’t really dead, what are you here for.”

“I don’t know. Me and my friends were flying to an ice planet during a mission. We crashed and I died, but not really. I was a timebender back in living.”

“A timebender. I’m kinda feeling that from you. Your spirit has small fractions of the chi. A little grayer than I remember.”

“You’ve met other timebenders?”

“This girl named Olive used to live with me at Blithe Hollow. She was my only friend. After the townspeople executed me for witchcraft, a girl named Muffy Jenkins killed her for being a timebender.”

Miyuki’s eyes grew wide, “Olive? THAT’S my mom! And that Muffy Jenkins girl, that was Dimentia.”

“I know. I heard she came back to life. ‘Course, she was already in the Spirit World centuries before I was. I didn’t want to go. And I wouldn’t let anyone else. Now that I’m here, I don’t even remember being alive. You learn to forget these things… when they no longer concern you.”

A bright light shone at the end of this hall, and Miyuki gaped at what it was. She thought they were miles underground, but it was a peaceful forest of lush green trees and grass under a golden sky. Aggie walked up to a lone tree in the middle of a barren region, and sat with her back against it. “This is the tree my mom used to read me stories under. It’s dead in the Mortal World, so it came here. I take long naps under here. But time never passes.”

Miyuki sat beside her, “Is your mom here, too?”

“I haven’t seen her since I got here. I’ve been sensing it. Something is happening to the spirits. Bad people in the Mortal World are interfering with the Spirit World.”

“That’s…That’s awful! How can any mortal mess up the Spirit World?”

“The Spirit World is closely connected with the Dream World. People can shape it to their deepest desires. To make a happy afterlife. Normally people can’t do that while they’re still alive… but
some mortals found a way. And I’m not sure how.”

“Does it have to do with… the Apocalypse?”

“I’m feeling a lot of fear… in the Mortal World. In a month, the Spirit World will be destroyed. If the mortal dimensions are gone, the Spirit Worlds can’t exist. There will be nothing to give it energy. All of it is going to die.”

“Then…Then I can’t waste time here. I need to stop the Apocalypse. We all promised Cheren we would help.” And… I told Zanifr I’d…

Agatha looked up. “You don’t look like anyone who would be concerned about anything.”

“I…I used to be. But I…I found a new importance in life. It’s to live for my friends, and be happy for the spirits. Then when I pass on here, my spirit can help the world flourish. I want to save the Spirit World… so everyone can have someplace happy to go when they die. So the Cycle of Life… can continue.”

Aggie closed her eyes. “I’ve always been afraid of something happening to this forest. I can never go to sleep with the promise that… it’ll still be here when I wake up. I want to sleep here forever… in peace…”

Miyuki looked at her when Aggie became silent. Her eyes closed, she lay back against the tree, as if in deep sleep. If Miyuki lived here, she might want to sleep forever, too. It was so peaceful… the afterlife… just the thought of it made her eyelids grow heavy…

Aggie woke up, “Let’s go.” and began the walk out. “Energybending won’t teach itself.”

Miyuki startled back to attention, “E-Energybending?” She got up and followed.

“A lot of Spirit KNDs master energybending as their means of combat. Rukia even knows a bit.”

“Isn’t that… light or darknessbending?”

“They’re closely related. But Energy is the essence where all chi comes from. It’s the only part of our bending we keep after we convert into spirits. It’s what our souls, and everything in the Spirit World, is composed of. When spirits search deep inside their selves and that which makes this world, they can control that energy. It can become the most powerful of elements…”

“And could I use that power… while I’m alive?”

“It’s a little more difficult, because your normal chi is concealing the Energy Chi. The only mortal I’ve heard that was able to bend the direct energy is the Avatar, who is half-spirit to begin with. But mastering energybending should have an effect on your Time Chi, too, make it stronger. And that grayness I feel in your chi… I wanted to take a look at it.”

“Well… okay. As long as I can get back to my friends soon.”

“Relax. You will. As long as your body isn’t eaten by wolves.”

“But… Agatha.” The two stopped. “Who is it exactly… that’s messing up the Spirit World. Do you know who’s behind it?”

“…” Aggie turned, still with her gloomy face, “He calls himself King.”

Sand Castle
The sky was bluer and filled with even more stars above this vast desert. A Kargarok messenger cawed across the air as it flapped to the castle with a conchshell within its talons. It flapped into a window and dropped the shell in the hands of the castle’s owner. King Sandy Johnson sat back on his couch and opened the shell’s hatch, displaying a holographic image of a shadowed, knight-like being with dashing armor, a cape, and a pointy crown. “Hello, Sandy.”

“Ahhh if it isn’t my good friend,” said Sandy with a snobbish smile, “His Royal Highness King—”

“You would know better than to speak my full name. There is power in a name, you know. Or shall I spill YOUR filthy, disgusting secret?”

“Sigh, you will never let that go, will you?”

“Are you absolutely sure what you told me about the Minish Princess is true?”

“No, I was just making crud up. If you don’t wanna see, I can just squish her, one less nuisance.”

“Don’t joke around with me. You know that the princess’s powers are vital in what we have planned. If you are mistaken, you WILL pay the price.”

“Relax, I’m absotively posilutely certain. Are you coming to take the brat away or what?”

“Tomorrow night. After the presidents’ meeting. My special squad will be over to bring her to me. Do not disappoint me… and destroy this Dial.” Switched off.

Unbeknownst to Sandy, a single tiny Blue Pikmin watched him from the doorway.

Cleveland neighborhoods; daytime

The sun was finally rising over Cleveland as Team Rupert lay fast asleep, their fire having gone out and their Pikmin inside the Onions. Rupert was the first to regain consciousness, half-awake at the sound of a distant, nearly deafening screech, and some doors squeaking open. Rupert got to his feet, seeing what was clearly the top of a yellow school bus. Timmy and Hikari slowly recovered too, at the echoing creak of a giant door. “Bye, Mom, I’m going to school!” The slamming of the door pulled them awake completely. Through the giant grass was a blonde, freckle-faced girl in a dark-pink shirt, and the sound of wheels crossing the sidewalk let them know her bookbag was on wheels. “Whoops, forgot to tie my shoe.” She stopped midway and bent down.

“!!! GUYS!! NOW’S OUR CHANCE, COME ON!” At Rupert’s cry, the three kids dashed to the girl as fast as they could, the Pikmin Onions fluttering after them. Once they were through the grass, they found her backpack lain on its back while she tied her shoes. “And oooover, and loop-di-loop, and oooover.”

“HURRY!” Sprinting with all the strength in their legs, they rushed for the small net on the side of the pack, leaped, and grabbed hold of its very thick lining at their size. The Onions latched their selves onto the side of the pack as well. The girl stood, picked up her pack, and casually rolled and lifted it into the bus, the swift turns and movement forcing the tinies to hold on tight. She slammed it haphazardly against the wall beside a seat and sat down, the tinies dropping as the girl began talking to a friend.

“Sigh. That was close.” Timmy panted.

“Is Jessie and Sandy on this bus?” Rupert asked. “We can look around for ‘em and get their—” But a sudden shake knocked them off their feet. The bus was in motion.
“Mmmmmmmaybe that’s not a good idea now.” Timmy said as they grabbed the floor tight.

“We’ll have to look for Jessie in school.” Hikari knew.

Rupert seemed to shrink more at this idea. The last thing he wanted at a quarter inch tall was going to school this way.

**Planet Poké**

“AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHH…” It’s true that flying as a beam of light across the very light-years would induce screaming. Such was the case of Darcy Chariton, and Lucario didn’t enjoy it so much either. “AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHH…” Even after they finally landed, she still went on. “-UUH!”

“STOP IT!” yelled Lucario, smacking her. “Honestly, I expected that from Sunni, not you…”

Darcy shook back to senses, helping herself to stand. “Wh…Where did you take me?”

“Planet Poké.” Fluffy white clouds filled the sunny sky, grasslands and mountains lay every direction. And hundreds, thousands of the creatures we all know and love roamed everywhere.

That’s right: dragons. HA, just kidding, can you imagine? So it seems Darcy is on a life-changing journey that’s sure to last dozens of game generations. …Nah, we’ll dumb it down by, like, a lot. Also Spirit KND, Rukia’s from **Bleach**, Norman from **ParaNorman**, Coraline from, yeah, and everyone knows where Skellington’s from. And Elsa. And the “Let It Go”. :P So next time, uhh a Rupert level, maybe a Sheila, then a flashback. So stay doomed.
Chapter Summary

Wendy Marvell and her friends go to Orchid Bay to buy herself a wand! There, she meets a new friend!

Welcome back, today, the Side Stories will see its first major crossover (excluding the obvious mix of Fairy Tail and Harry Potter)! (This takes place during Chapter 8 of Lights.)

Chapter 3: The Veiled City

Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium

Facilier put out the candles to his shop. He hung the ‘Closed’ sign on his door. A group of disappointed children were moaning outside. “But WHY are you closing the shop earlyyyyy?” a boy whined.

“Sorry, kids, but Uncle Facilier’s short on supplies, he’s goin’ away someplace to collect more.” He told them honestly. “Y’all can last without magic for a day, can’tcha?”

“You’ll be back tomorrow night, right Mr. Facilier?” a 5-year-old girl with a teddybear asked.

The Shadow Man bent down and patted her hair. “I promise, Little Suzy.” He pecked some magic on her toy. The teddybear lovingly hugged Suzy’s chest. “Ah right, see ya later, kids.” He waved the lot good-bye. “Uncle Faci needs some shuteye.” He went inside.

Wendy and Carla finished stocking items as the blue-haired child spoke with a smile, “Mister Facilier, were you always this popular with kids?”

“Well, not all the time, Wendy, there was a time when I was mixed in with some demons.”

“Demons?” Carla questioned.

“Where do you think most of this junk comes from? New Jersey? Granted, I have an age limit based on my items. Anyway, y’all should get some shuteye. I called us a Knight Bus to drive us to Orchid Bay; you can try to sleep there, but you’ll also wanna refresh for the ride.”

Facilier cracked open a hatch on the ceiling, letting a ladder come down. Carla flew up while Wendy climbed. In the small, cramped bedroom, Sonny and Donna were sharing a bed without complaint, while Wendy took off her sandals to settle in her bed. She looked up when a slim woman in a black coat walked across the room. “Oh, hello, um, Mrs. Facilier!” Wendy greeted her bubbly.

Madame Rouge looked at her with a smug look. “Hello, Drunken Mistake.” She blew smoke from her cigarette, making Wendy cough. She began climbing down the ladder.

“W-Where are you going?”

“I vas called for some business.” she replied in her thick French accent. “Eet’s grown-up stuff,
Dear, do not bother.” She closed the hatch on the way down.

Madame Rouge was about to leave the shop when Facilier touched her shoulder, sporting a cool smile. “Ahh, Laura, why’re you so sour to Wendy? It’s not like you see her much.”

“It’s just, when we got married, I wasn’t planning to raise children. Now you insist on watching these urchins so your benefactor will protect your business.”

“Laura, it ain’t about the merchandise or the, ahem, semi-legal protection.” Harvey put an arm around her shoulders. “Not saying I wanted to, but I never got to raise a child of my own. I watched mah friends do it, then their kids do it, and any generation, kids are so… wonderful. The most important part is, they learning from us. So I guess I feel a sense of pride… over having a student.” He pulled away from her. “You can say you don’t like kids, but if you had one that, I dunno, looked at you for guidance…”

“Hmph. The only child I helped to guide was Nolan York.” Rouge smirked. “And he is still calling me for favors. How silly.” The woman casually left the shop. “I am going to rob a mansion for blueprints. Do not wait for me.” She morphed into a raven and flew away.

Upstairs, Wendy changed into her pajamas and put her emerald patterned dress in the laundry basket. As she put the covers over herself in bed, she looked down at Carla on a mat on the floor. “Carla, why do you always sleep down there?”

“Intelligent as I am, I’m still a cat.” She replied, her usual scowl not changing even as her eyes were closed. “Besides, there are few beds for most of us.”

Wendy looked at Sonny and Donna, sleeping together. She smiled at her kitten. “Why don’t we share?”

“Thanks for the offer, but you probably don’t want fur or feathers on your bed. And I wouldn’t want you to feel cramped.”

“No, I won’t mind, really. Come on, you look lonely down there.”

Carla sighed to herself. It was a little uncomfortable, and cold. …She wondered what a bed would feel like, albeit sharing a skimpy one with someone else. “All right.” Carla fluttered up and onto Wendy’s bed. The girl scooted over, allowed Carla under the covers, and put an arm over her like a stuffed animal. Wendy’s back was touching the wall; there really wasn’t much room for them. “Um… if my arm bothers you, I’ll move it.” Wendy spoke guiltily.

“Child, look at yourself, this is much too small. I may as well fall off.”

“Um… I-let’s do it this way.” Wendy lifted Carla onto her chest, still under the blanket as she wrapped both arms around the kitten. “Is this comfortable?”

“Sigh…” Carla was disbeliefed. “You’re going to keep insisting I sleep in a bed, won’t you? Oh well… I think I’m alright with this.”

“Okay. You’ll let me know if it’s not, right?”

“Yes, yes. Good night, Wendy.”

“Good night, Carla.” Both of them made it to slumber eventually, despite the weight of Carla on Wendy’s chest. Granted, it was harder to breathe or snore, but Wendy passed this off. Carla was certain of this unspoken inconvenience; in the three months Carla knew her, Wendy sure was
insistent in places where she didn’t need to be. Still… the girl’s chest was comfier than the floor. She supposed it was the instinct of a cat to want to sleep by their master. Of course, Carla was too intelligent to have to follow such instinct, let alone call a little girl ‘Master.’ Yet… Carla was very fond of Wendy. She didn’t understand the bond she felt with her; other than the aforementioned, simple bond between child and pet. Carla felt odd to describe it that way, but at the moment, she couldn’t think of anyway else. She hoped to figure everything out one day. Where she came from… and where Wendy came from.

5:00 in the morning…

After a couple hours, Carla ended up in a position where she sloped frontways down Wendy’s belly, while said girl had her right arm dangling over the side. “Time to get UP!” Sonny and Donna leaped onto Wendy’s bed, still in socks and pajamas, and stomped the girl’s legs and chest, the force bouncing Carla off onto the floor.

“Honestly, you are going to give her sores if you keep that up!” Carla stated, rubbing her own head while Wendy rubbed her legs.

“Mr. Facilier says it’s time to get up!” Sonny announced.

“The Knight Bus is here!” Donna jumped.

“Put on your BEST clothes!” they both cheered. With that, the twins leapt down the hatch.

Carla put on her signature red shirt and yellow skirt while Wendy fixed on a short-sleeve, bluish-purple shirt, white shorts, and sky-blue strap-on shoes. (Other characters could live with wearing the same clothes every day, Wendy was not one of those people.) “At least we won’t have to run.” she said. “My legs get sore. Plus, we can always catch up on rest on the bus.”

“I don’t know, Child… The way Facilier was speaking of it…”

A faint shade of orange was in the horizon, but went unnoticed behind Cleveland’s buildings, so nighttime was still fresh. Wendy and Carla made it outside with bags of supplies packed. Facilier and the twins waited beside a very tall, night-blue bus with three floors. The door to the bus opened: the conductor bore a dark-purple suit and hat, and looked roughly in his 30s. “Top of the morning to you, laddies! My name is Jacksepticeye, here to play the role of Stanley Shunpike!”

The conductor announced with an Irish accent, speaking fast and energetically.

“They seriously got a YouTube Let’s Player to voice a role in this story?” Carla questioned.

“Yes, and I’ve got five tickets for Orchid Bay, one adult, three children, one pet, all aboard or we’ll be wastin’ daylight, tip-tip, taddly-ho, up from bed and off you go!”

“Please tell me that was part of your script and you don’t actually talk like that.” Carla said as they all boarded the odd bus.

“I stocked up on 10 pounds of crack before takin’ this gig, didn’t know what it was, but boy was I glad, pip-pip and doodly-doo! Aaaaall aboard!” The bus door shut.

The bus driver, Ernie Prang, was very old with white hair that looked like Albert Einstein. He had blue eyes under black circle glasses. There was also a Shrunken Head hanging by the windshield, sickly green with a squished nose, and had dreadlocks. It spoke with a Jamaican accent, “Mind your head.”

Ernie stomped the gas pedal, the passengers were flown to the back of the bus by the vehicle’s
irrepressible speed. The driver swerved left, the passengers smashed against that wall, he zipped right, there they crashed. Wendy and Carla’s hearts jumped every time they were about to hit a car or a building, but—this made no sense—every obstacle was jumping out of their way like they were programmed. Carla absolutely had to know if anyone saw, and/or felt these movements.

“Can I interest you in a hot chocolate while you wait?” Stan asked perkily, whirling circles in midair as he poured a cup of chocolate—as it fell, the liquid made a whirl around and above before landing in the cup, and kept flying out and back in the cup as the bus was apparently rolling.

“Sure! I would love some hot chocolate!” Wendy was pressed against the wall, weakly reaching her arms forward to take the cup. She tried to sip, but on a sudden turn, the hot cocoa flew out and drenched her face. She screamed and cried tears from the hotness.

“We’re ROLLING, we’re ROCKS, we’re ROLLING, we’re ROCKS!” The Ice Climbers were bundled like a ball, rolling back-and-forth to the swaying of the bus.

“A little history behind this,” Facilier spoke calmly, his long arms and legs pressed against each side of the bus to keep from flying like the others, “before the Knight Bus was invented in 1865, the Ministry of Magic considered sidecar broomsticks. Heh heh, you can guess why that ain’t make the green light!”

Up ahead was a construction zone, where the cranes dropped tons of bendable pipes and long planks onto the road. A flatbed truck was passing by and got a flat tire, leaving a small space between the flatbed and the ground. The group expected all of that to magically jump aside—but Wendy was the first to notice otherwise. “Hey… why the long faces?” Dre Head asked.

The bus’s dimensions were steadily becoming squished and flat, along with its passengers; and its passengers’ stomachs. Everything seemed to go slow-motion with this part. They had very little of the third dimension left as they slid under the flatbed. Then the bus’s sides contracted, they became like a rectangular worm that crawled through a fallen pipe, up and around its sides and ceiling as said pipe was bent and spiraled. While still driving on its side, the squished bus could come out and drive across the side of a plank that was in the process of descending, followed by expert maneuverability across other falling planks, right-side-up, sideways right, upside down, until finally flipping and landing on the street. Almost instantly, the bus POPPED back to normal, zooming away from the construction zone. “Carla?”

“Yes, Wendy?”

“I’m glad I never went to school as a kid.” Wendy spoke with weeping eyes. They passed a sign that said, Orchid Bay, Maine. 5 hours by Knight Bus.

Orchid Bay, Maine

The sun was higher over the horizon when the bus finally made it to a forest road. It came to a very slow, and very gentle stop. As soon as the door opened, Wendy fell front-first on the ground, Carla landed on her gently, then the twins smashed them both, wearing happy expressions. As Dr. Facilier calmly stepped out, Stan Shunpike told him, “Sorry I can only take ya this far, but this town is very antsy when it comes to magic, and they try to limit supernatural tourism as much as possible. If you had element powers, that’s one thing, but be a little careful when using magic ‘rounds these guys. Thank ya for riding the Knight Bus, tell all yer friends and family, this is Jacksepticeye, I will see you all for the next bus ride!” He closed the door, and the vehicle zipped away, its tires screeching against the concrete.

“M-m-m… Mr. Facilier?” Wendy was on her knees, holding her stomach and crying. “I think I
have motion-sickness… ulp."

“What? Already? Girl, we ain’t even at the timeskip, yet!” Facilier said.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’ worry about it.” Facilier raised his cane. “I ‘ave a spell that’ll help. Troia!” He touched Wendy’s stomach.

She felt the sick feeling fade away, looking with wonder as she stood. “Wow! That does feel better!”

“Assuming my head was on correctly.” Carla spoke as they strolled across the forest road, “what did he mean by ‘this town is antsy with magic’?”

“Truth be told, I came here a couple times.” Facilier replied. “I’ll tell ya a little secret.” They walked around a winding turn of the forest, where they had perfect view of the ocean, and the city across. “That’s Orchid Bay. Looks like your average seaside town, right? Well, get this: they’s a barrier over that town, we call it the Veil. All magic and magical creatures alike are completely invisible.”

“Invisible?!” Wendy shook. “S-So that means we?…”

“Hhhhhahahahaha! Naw, humans are still flesh and solid, it’s just all the other weird stuff. The most they tolerate are benders. Y’see, that city is a home to both humans, AND demons. Good demons that just wanted an escape from all the sorrow and sadness downstairs, but there are bad ones. Of course, the humans wouldn’t be comfortable, that’s why the Veil was created, so that demons could live in peace without humans judging them, and humans can live happily not knowing there are big scary monsters everywhere they look. However, humans that possess magic like you and me see everything.”

“Excuse me, but didn’t you say there are also bad demons?” Carla asked.

“Correct. And therein lies whom we are visiting today: a very lovely lady by the name of Jasmine Lee. Her ancestors created the Veil, and it is her job to fight and control the evil creatures. Ah remember when she was in ‘er late teens and she helped teach martial arts at Hogwarts—hah hah, I FAILED that class!”

“Heh heh.” Wendy forced a laugh; she couldn’t find it too humorous, being a failure herself in some areas. “…Oh? Mr. Facilier, look!” Wendy pointed far up the winding, seaside road, where black GUN trucks were driving down, and helicopters flew overhead.

“Haven’t seen GUN this persistent since the Firstborn Quest. Wendy, y’all should run ahead, they won’t arrest us. Tom told me that Jasmine lives in the forest behind town. Try and find her and we’ll catch up.”

“Okay. Be careful, Mr. Facilier!” (Play “Sunshine Airport” from Mario Kart 8!)

Stage B-3: Orchid Bay

Mission: Find the home of Jasmine Lee!

“Sky Dragon BOOST!” Wendy blasted twin gusts of wind behind her and raced across the ocean,
sidestepping left and right when GUN Sharks swam up from below in their aim to snack her. Wendy was bolting straight to the city pier, where Orchid Bay was displayed on the welcoming sign— “Wendy, watch out!” Carla yelled when a line of GUN Sharks appeared in her path, forcing the airbender to drift rightward, skiing against the surface in the process. She couldn’t turn around or slow down to look back, having to keep her feet moving across the water. “That was inconvenient.”

“I’m not done, yet!” Wendy declared as she raced toward a close-by cruise ship, which steadily sailed away from the town. It was sailing past a short, jagged rock that slanted vertically up like a ramp, so Wendy poured more speed to run up and fly off it, going as high as the ship’s deck. Carla lifted and carried the girl forward a little, then Wendy kicked a gust backward to fly onto the deck. “Sorry!” she yelled as she dashed across, sidestepping around the passengers and tables. She zipped to a flagpole, clutched it just as she flew by, and whirled upward thanks to the momentum, landing on the second level of the ship. “Whoa-!” She stumbled thanks to some rope on the floor, but recovered in time to nimbly jump the stacked boxes on the way.

When she encountered a taller stack of crates, Wendy shifted rightward and into the ship, throwing a quick “Sorry!” to all the waiters and workers that she zipped past and pushed with her wind. She slid down a stairway to the lower floor, following a set path through the dining hall, and out onto another deck where a Nitro Tram 5000 trampoline rested. “WHOOOAAA!” She jumped and bounced sky-high thanks to the powerful trampoline, but Wendy clutched a wire that was hanging under a blimp flying overhead. The blimp was designed like a Cheep Cheep fish. Carla flew and caught up to her. “Do you ever stop to think before doing something?”

“I can’t help myself sometimes! Besides, we’re about to fly over the city, I can handle this.” Wendy swung onto a walkway stationed below the blimp’s side, then Carla lifted her up onto the blimp’s roof. Wendy collected a Fire Soul that was floating over the balloon’s backside, then rushed up to the front, standing on the slope as she looked down at the city. “See any good places to land?”

“Wendy, don’t stand there or you might-”

“Wah-ah-AAAAHHH!” Wendy lost balance and fell as Carla predicted. There was a surreal blur as Wendy fell closer to the city—and landed on the back of some kind of slimy green bat monster. The monster lifted and turned its head to glare at Wendy, roaring a blood-hurdling scream. “AAAAHH!” Wendy leaped over the tail end, and landed on the head of a giant, orange, spike-backed dinosaur. The creature roared as Wendy ran across its back, up to its flailing tail before she flew off and landed on a rooftop. She needed a moment to catch her breath, and let Carla catch up. “Carla, where did THOSE things come from?”

It wasn’t just them. As the kitten looked down to the streets, giant lizards, blob creatures, some kinds of hairy crocodiles, roamed everywhere. “Perhaps this is what Facilier talked about.”

“And none of those people can see them…” Wendy recalled. “I wonder.” She grabbed Carla, leapt off the building, bounced off a table umbrella, and presented her friend to a passing businessman. “Hello, Mister! This is my cat, Carla!”

“…?” The man looked confused. “Uuuuumm-”

“Never mind!” She boosted up the street and stopped at a corner. “So it looks like no one else can see you, either.”

“Or perhaps he was pondering the point of some blue-haired child showing him her kitten.”
“Or that.” She sweatdropped. “Anyway, let’s head to the forest.” Wendy boosted down the right street, jumping up a stairway of fire escapes before climbing back on the roofs. A flock of Furnixes flapped around over a city street, so Wendy used their hook tails to swing across, then take land on a roof to her right. Some Bokoblin were trying to break into a rooftop window, so Wendy blasted the monsters over the edge with wind. “Sorry!” she yelled once more. Wendy ran off onto the next, lower roof and encountered twin Fatblin, who held metal shields. They jabbed their large spears, but Wendy jumped, kicked off the left one’s, then stamped him in the face with both feet. She flew back, and while he was dizzy, Wendy blew a Cyclone Roar to send him falling over the edge. For the second one, Carla Torpedo Spun into its face, not really hurting him, but while it was trying to swing its spear at Carla over the edge, Wendy could blast another cyclone and push him over.

Wendy jumped to the next roof, then saw a lush green park not far away, deciding to go for a stroll. She bypassed a pink monster eating the bathrooms (ew), and saw a Fire Soul several meters up in the air, with a stairway of Guay (purple birds with orange beaks) floating up to it, aligned with a playground slide. Carla couldn’t carry her that high, and although Wendy could run up the slide like a ramp, she was too heavy to jump the Guay, so she kept running. Wendy ran to a fountain in the park’s center, jumped into its central spout, and was flown upwards, landing on a passing GUN Hawk. The Hawk thankfully flew her over an area of broken ground, likely for construction, and she jumped onto a safe street while the robot shifted skyward.

After passing a left turn corner, Wendy came to a towering purple building with a circular, tube-like structure around the top part. Wendy hit a Spring Pad to bounce onto a foothold around the tower, then jumped a team of GUN Beetles to get onto the next foothold. She then grabbed a dangling retractable hook that pulled her higher, swung to another one before a Beetle shot her, pulled higher, jumped across a Beetle to grab another one, went higher, then landed on a rounding walkway where Shield Hunters shot at her. She jumped over the first one, between it and the second, and blasted both off their feet with air gusts, then she ran to kick the third in the chest, knocking it down as she ran up a stairway.

She reached the upper floor of the building, ran through the café to the opposite balcony, then had Carla carry her up onto the roof. She saw another GUN Hawk about to pass the left of the roof, flying the direction of the forest, so Wendy vigorously leaped onto its back. Her hand accidentally pressed a switch that—“WAAAAAAHHH!” made the robot fly super-speed, so Wendy lost her grip and fell into the forest. The branches weakened her fall, but she landed upside-down with her legs bent over her. She jumped back to her feet, already lost, wondering how far she ended up. Without really thinking, Wendy chose a direction and ran. (End song.)

An old woman of Chinese descent was calmly tending to her garden. She was overweight, wearing a large, brownish-purple dress with dark-pink witch hat designs. She wore a necklace with a pink emblem, had grey hair in a bun (with a white strip along its left), and squinted reddish-brown eyes. Just as she was watering some flowers, somebody had burst through her fence and plopped onto her carrot patch. “MY CARROTS!” she panicked, dropping the water can. The culprit, Wendy Marvell, shook the dirt off her face and stood up. “What’s the matter with you?! Those are Pikpik Carrots I had specially ordered from Europe to lead scavenging animals into my traps! I didn’t expect them to work so well on HUMANS!”

Wendy recomposed herself, “S-Sorry! I’ll help clean up!” She hurriedly picked up the fallen fence boards and set them outside of the garden, then used her bare hands to scoop the carrots back into their holes, and the dirt with them. Carla eventually landed by her.

“Don’t bother with the fence because that’s another area of protection that needs improving.” She returned to watering the flowers.
After Wendy finished replanting, she let her mind catch up with her. “Um, Miss… I’m looking for a woman named Jasmine Lee. Do you know if she lives around here?”

“Who wants to know?” The lady turned to her.

“Wendy Marvell, i-is my name.” She bowed. “This is Car- never mind, you probably can’t see her. Mister Facilier sent us to find her.”

“Facilier, Facilier…” The woman tapped her wrinkly chin. “Why does that name sound familiar?”

“I wouldn’t know, but Mr. Facilier attended a school called Hogwarts, and he knew Jasmine Lee from martial arts class. Now Mr. Facilier is teaching me about magic, so we’re-”

“Oh, HAH HAAA! NOW I remember!” The lady laughed. “Stick-Bones Harvey, that’s what we called him! Because the bigger kids picked him up and threw him like sticks! Ahhhh, those were the days.”

Wendy beamed. “Then you must be Miss Lee!” (“That much is obvious.” Carla remarked.)

“Please, call me Ah-Mah.” Jasmine spoke humbly. “I have a granddaughter, you look about her age. Who’s the cat with the wings?”

“Th-This is Carla! (At first, I didn’t think you could see her.)” Wendy scratched her head. “It’s nice to meet you, Ah-Mah.”

“The pleasure is all mine. Please, come inside and let me make you tea.” The woman walked onto her porch and entered her small, white house. “Then I’ll tell you more about Stick-Bones Facilier. Wash your hands first.”

**Downtown**

“DEMOOOOOONS! Hey, DEMOOOOOOONS!” Sonny cried for the whole town to hear. “Where are yooooooouuuuu-”

“Quiet!” Facilier bonked him with his cane. “Heh heh, DON’T MIND THEM, fellas, children get really over-imaginative when they wear fluffy coats in the beginning of summer!” He gestured the twins forward quickly.

“Mr. Facilier, why don’t the demons come out?” Donna questioned.

“The demons *are* out, but since y’all aren’t magic, you can’t see them. What up!” Facilier waved at a tall, yellow monster with a big mouth of sharp teeth. “Nobody in this town can see them, you’ll find very few people who know magic and supernatural phenomena exist. It’s the same as it’s been for centuries. Jus’ don’t worry about it, now I don’t see Wendy anywhere, so she’s probably at Jasmine’s house by now.”

The group made it to the opposite end of the parking lot of Orchid Bay Mall. “I’m goin’ ahead to Jasmine’s. Y’all remember what I told ya to find, right?” Facilier asked. The twins nodded. “Good, then take these cards.” He handed them small, green cards with witch hat logos. “Show them to every clerk. If he puts on a stupid look, move on to the next person. I’m counting on you, and no drawing attention to yourselves.” The twins happily skipped into the building to carry their tasks.

Facilier hopped in his bright purple car (hidden in a secret compartment only he knows) and rode out to the back woods of town, following a dirt trail. He happened upon a small white house with a purple roof, that smelled of old people. He walked up to the front door and knocked. “*Who IS*
“Doctor Facilier.” He pronounced with his French accent.

“Oh, HAH hah haaa! Come in, come in, we were just talking about you!” Already sensing badness, Facilier creaked open the door and saw Jasmine, Wendy, and Carla at the table. “And then he got lost under Gruntilda’s portable underdress flea circus! WE COULDN’T FIND HIM FOR HOURS!” Ah-Mah cracked up.


“Harvey, so nice of you to join us!” Ah-Mah greeted the man as he sat at the table with a blushed face. “Your little intern has told me all about your shop. You really ought to watch yourself. The Magical Ministry may not approve.”

“You forget the Ministry is now World Government-protected.” Facilier noted, sipping a teacup. “Thanks to Miss Head President. We mages are allowed more freedom.”

“Freedom comes with a price, Harvey.” Ah-Mah shook her cup a little. “Magic was not an art that the gods blessed onto mortals. We developed it ourselves. There have been wars between element benders, ‘Muggles,’ and magic users alike. Our power was deemed too unnatural, and too deadly. That’s why laws had to be established. Especially in this town.”

“Miss Ah-Mah, could you tell us about yourself?” Wendy requested. “Mr. Facilier said your family created the Veil.”

“Yes, we did.” Ah-Mah sipped her cup. “My family always possessed strong magical prowess. To my knowledge, we are of very few families who studied physical combat. Sure, most mages believe you can just wave a wand and throw a few spells, but to be physically enduring and agile is an important gift. You should see how strong we are.” Ah-Mah flexed her left arm, smirking. “Course, not all of us are born with magic, my son for instance. Harvey, you are right that the World Government protects the Ministry of Magic. Thanks to them, we mages cannot be persecuted for our power. That does not mean mages cannot be feared, cannot create a panic among non-mages. This is the reason we must be discrete as much as possible, especially under the Veil.”

“Well, as long as people are happy.” Wendy replied with a glum look, facing down. “And if there are no bad monsters.” Inside, though, she had mixed feelings about the idea that magic users had to hide their selves. She looked up with a brighter look, “Miss Lee, will you teach me magic? Mister Facilier said you-”

“Ha ha ha, WENDY, Wendyyy.” Facilier clamped her mouth shut. “You can’t learn magic until you go to Hogwarts! No, I brought you to Jasmine’s so you could learn to punch and kick!”

“You mean… fight?”

“Of course, Wendy! A growing girl like you NEEDS more meat on your bones!” He lightly pinched Wendy’s arm, making her flinch. “Your legs have muscle, to be sure, and yo’ airbending’s superb, but you’d be amazed how far you get when you know how to punch.”

“Um… I guess you’re right.” Wendy looked down again, sadly.

“He has a point.” Carla agreed. “Don’t be sad, you’ve gotten by without magic this long.”
“I would be glad to teach you.” Ah-Mah began, standing up. “If not for the fact I am reallyyyyy, really old. I’ve had this pain in my hip for the past three months. I think it would be more wise to let my granddaughter teach you. If you head down the road outside, you can find her by the canyon, doing her… daily activity.”

Wendy and Carla jogged (and flew) through the forest to find a gorge area with barren, soil ground. “RAAAAH!” Wendy nearly lost her balance when a giant, brown-furred rat, with sharp teeth and horns, flew against the slope beneath her. (Play “Lightning Speed” from Naruto: Shippuden!)

Juniper Lee flexed her fingers after dealing such a mighty punch, then focused on her other opponent, the Dracotta Beast, a huge red dinosaur with big pink ears. June wore a green T-shirt that showed her belly, and bared a dark-pink silhouette of a juniper flower. She wore long blue jeans and large brown shoes, and had sleek black hair with a pink wisp along the left side. “Ya SEE what I did to that guy?!” June yelled at the Dracotta. “That isn’t even CLOSE to how hard I can punch!”

Without warning, the Dracotta whipped its tail and sent her flying. June recovered, but saw the Racatan had recovered, charging on all fours and attempting to snap June in its buckteeth, but June swung her foot up and kicked the rat in those teeth. She flipped, kicked off the creature’s head, and flew partway up the Dracotta’s body to kick it in the neck. Racatan turned around and breathed fire at the child, so Juniper ran a circle around the rat to surround himself in a flame circle. Juniper rushed up to the Dracotta to punch its knee, but it felt little pain and kicked June away.

While she was down, Wendy noticed the Racatan inhale the fire surrounding him, ready to blow it at the fallen girl, so Wendy dashed in the way, inhaled a large breath of air, and countered the fire with her wind, blowing it back and burning the Racatan’s face. June helped herself up and passed a grateful smile to the blue-haired. They focused on the monsters, in which Racatan shook the fire off as they growled with fury. “Jump above me!” Wendy yelled. June leaped high above as Wendy blasted a Cyclone Roar, blowing June several meters upward, so she could land on Dracotta’s head. She punched the beast’s blue eyes and tugged its ears, before the Dracotta shook his head and sent her flying.

The Racatan slashed its claws at Wendy, who dashed the opposite direction, slid to a halt, and “Sky Dragon BOOST!” came at full speed, ramming the Racatan’s stomach headfirst as he flew back. “Ow ow ow!” Wendy gripped her throbbing head. “Bad idea, bad idea!”

“Wendy, watch out!” Carla swooped down and lifted her friend to safety before the Racatan blasted fire.

“Thanks, Carla.” Wendy said as they glided above the trees. Looking down, she noticed a black-haired boy in a red shirt walking through a distant, open area of forest with his dog. “Look, there’s somebody there.”

These two figures, Ray Ray Lee and Monroe, wandered lost through the forest. “Ay can’t believe we got lost just because you thought you smelled barbeque from over that river!” Monroe stated with a Scottish accent.

“Hey, we stopped a group of Fire Demons from torching a rose garden, I say we’re heroes.” Ray Ray argued.

“Excuse me!” They both looked up, seeing Wendy and Carla overhead. “This area is dangerous! Get out of here!” the latter warned.

“Who in blazes are you?” Monroe shouted.
“That dog just talked!!” Wendy exclaimed.

Ray Ray gasped, “THAT CAT JUST TALKED! And can fly!!”

“Since you two are up so high, Ay don’t suppose you’ve seen any monsters?” Monroe inquired.

“Yes, there are monsters in that direction.” Carla nudged with her head. “You shouldn’t go wandering.”

“Oh, you did NOT just spit on me!” a familiar girl’s voice rang.

“JUNE!” The boy and dog hurried to where Carla pointed.

“Why am I such a difficult creature to listen to.” Carla remarked before carrying Wendy back.

“I just had these clothes dry-cleaned!” June shouted at the Dracotta. “If I can’t get these stains out, you’re paying with your teeth!”

“June!” She looked above the hill when Ray Ray and Monroe appeared. “A Racatan’s weakness is its tail.” Monroe informed. “And Dracottas have very ticklish ears.”

“Carla, we can handle it!” Wendy dropped free of the kitten’s paws and landed on the Dracotta’s head. She gripped and pulled the ears open, then Carla fluttered beside the right ear to tickle with her wings. The monster began laughing hysterically, falling on his back and kicking his legs. Meanwhile, Juniper dodged the Racatan’s breath, slid behind and grabbed his little tail. With her super strength, she lifted and swung him around and around. Wendy and Carla got away from the Dracotta as it stood up in anger. It turned to look at June, so she could chuck the Racatan up and against Dracotta’s face. They both fell on the ground defeated. Wendy ran beside June and exchanged a victorious smirk. (End song.)

After the monsters recovered, they were sitting politely (though scowling) before June, as Racatan spoke, “Ruh-rah, rur-rah-rah, rur-rah-rah.”


“Not that my Racatanese is top notch, but I believe he’s angry at the Dracotta for stealing its golden nut.”

“Okay, Dracosaurus, give back his nut, and both of you crawl back to your caves,” June demanded, “because if I see you tearing up the valley again, I’m wearing my gym shoes!”

Both monsters exchanged gruff looks, before the Dracotta pulled a saliva-covered gold rock from its bowels. He gave it to Racatan, before both stomped away in anger. “Sigh… that could’ve taken longer. Thanks for the help.” June smiled at Wendy, holding a hand out. “The name’s June. What’s your-” Wendy panicked when she saw a floating pair of eyes, and an open mouth behind June, but the girl swung her other first behind her and punched the invisible chameleon. The creature depressingly crawled away.

Wendy stared agape, but shook this off and returned the smile. “I’m Wendy.” She shook her hand. “I’m happy to help.”

“THAT was SO COOL!” Ray Ray cheered. “Who is this blue-haired girl?! PLEASE tell me you’re our long-lost cousin!”

“I think we used up that cliché.” June remarked. “But he raises a good question. Where’d you come
from, Wendy? And who’s the flying cat? (I’m open if you’re willing to trade.)”

Ray Ray snorted a chuckle, earning a glare from Monroe.

**Ah-Mah’s House**

“And that’s how Stick-Bones Harvey got himself off of the laundry string.” Ah-Mah concluded her tale, and Facilier held his hat over his face in embarrassment.

“My favorite part is when that bully flapped him like a towel!” Ray Ray laughed.

“If I didn’t know this was a magic school, I would’ve sworn you made all that up.” June rolled her eyes humorously.

“Oh, it happened, all right.” Ah-Mah nodded. “If you roll up your sleeves, we might still see the clothespin marks.”

“Weeell, putting that aside,” June turned to Wendy, “I wouldn’t mind showing you a few moves. ‘Course, you kicked plenty of butt back there already.”

“Heh heh. I’d still like an ice bag for my head, though.” Wendy blushed.

“I can’t right now, though.” June frowned regretfully, standing up. “We promised our parents we’d help clean the house. How ‘bout we meet in the park at 1:00? Come on, Ray Ray.”

“Dude, you gotta teach me how to run like Super Sonic!” Ray Ray exclaimed to Wendy as he followed his sister.

“Yer an annoying mix of both Super Sonic and Chaos.” Monroe remarked. The trio shut the door upon their exit.

“For the sake of avoiding anymore stories…” Facilier stood up. “We should probably regroup with some friends of ours. Let’s go, Wendy, Charles.”

“Thank you for the tea!” Wendy told the woman.

“And my name is Carla.” The cat corrected.

They climbed in the back of Facilier’s WKD WTCH car while the witch-doctor got behind the wheel. “I sent Sonny and Donna inside the mall for a ‘private’ errand. If they ain’t find it, we’ll look ourselves.” Facilier fixed his rearview mirror.

“What did you send them to find?” Wendy asked.

Facilier smiled to himself and sported a light chuckle. He turned to face Wendy. “You’re getting a jumpstart ahead of all those first-years, Wendy. Because we’re about to buy you a wand.”

**Greenland; Mountain of Flavors**

The morning was crisp as the sun peeped over the horizon. The ocean air smelled especially fresh at this time of day, especially when it mixed with the cold scent of ice cream. Augustus parked his plane on the ocean, climbing a rugged cliffside as Maggie rode his shoulders. He and the Baby Trio followed the route above, finding a wooden house within an enclosing. Augustus knocked, and a pair of eyes looked through the looking hole. “Tax collector?”

Augustus lowered his shades, smirking. “Adventurer.”
“Oh!” The man opened the door. He was actually a brown bear with a long snout, white T-shirt, and reddish-brown trousers. “You must be Augustus! Brandon told me you’d be coming, yup.”

“Messenger bird travels fast.” Augustus noted, walking in.

“No actually, we have cellphones.” Ricardo held up the small device. “You say you lookin’ for Corn-Clamber Boots for that-there Buttermilk Buildin’?”

“Oh-huh. And it looks to me you have a surplus.” Augustus looked around. “One Size-9, two Size-1’s, and a Size-2.”

“Ohh, these children… Brandon warned ya about Lord Licorice, yup?”

“Did he warn you what I thought about Lord Licorice, yup?” Augustus tossed his lollipop in the trash.

“He warned me you had too many sodas, yup. Augustus, if you’re really going to put the young’uns in danger, I need to know, what’s so special about Buttermilk Building? Surely it’s more than the sake of an adventure.”

Augustus began another, yellow lolli. His eyes still behind his shades, he looked up in thought.

“Mi abuela said, when God created the world, He made all kinds of candies that, when baked together, make the most delicious cake in the world!” The diseased, little Spanish boy spoke with wonder and delight to his teenage visitor.

“You must be thinking of the Eight Sugary Wonders.” Augustus spoke coolly. “The Eight Firstborn created those, and they create a cake that-

“No no no, is not like those! These candies were around before that! And the cake that they create, its taste lasts with you to Heaven!”

“A cake more delicious than the Eight Sugary Wonders?” The explorer was highly intrigued, beginning another lollipop. “I might have to see this for myself.”

The boy coughed. “I want to eat it, too. Señor Augustus… can you please take me to find it?”

Augustus frowned. “I dunno if you’re in the right… shape to travel.”

“…” Augustus didn’t want to disappoint him… nor did he want to lie. “How long do you even have?”

“The doctors say seven months. I don’t think it can save me, but it sounds so… delicioso.”

The faint light twinkled off Augustus’s shades. He smiled. “Tell me what these candies are. If I don’t make it… I’ll still bring the cake to you.”

That was back in November. Now it was May. Augustus wanted to find the Lost Candies, but was more in debt with the Big Mom Pirates in finding Candied Planet. He thought that if they could find Candied Planet, he could take Luvoir with them, show him these Candies and more. But Augustus hadn’t gotten over how he was deceived by Big Mom. He wasted time hunting the Sugary Wonders, when he could have searched for the Lost Candies for a better purpose.

Truthfully, Augustus suspected Luvoir to have passed by now, so any reason to find the Lost
Candies was for the adventure. But in theory, he could have found the Candies if he hadn’t been more interested in “Candied Planet.” He was selfish, he admitted, and he regretted it. “You’re right, maybe it is.” He told Ricardo. “But you don’t need to know that. How many Chocolate Coins you want for these, 30?”

“Thirty-four.” Ricardo said. Augustus tossed him the coins, buying the four Corn-Clamber Boots for them. They looked like normal boots, but they had very sharp sweet corns on their soles. “Jus’ don’t tell Lord Licorice where ya got them.”

As the Marzipans were leaving the shop, somebody watched them from the sky. It was a man flying like a kite, his body flat and bendable as paper. His hi-tech goggles zoomed on the group.

**Unknown fortress**

The Marzipans’ image displayed on a screen. A ball-shaped creature with spider legs, a single eye, and a mouth of sharp teeth skittered off to a throne room. He spoke with a wide smile, “Lord Licorice! The Teavee saw something! He saw people buy Corn-Clamber Boots! What if they go to Buttermilk??”

Lord Licorice was interrupted polishing his shiny, green candy gun. He smirked evilly. “Is that so? Well… If they goes up there, just have Veruca deal with them.” He locked his gun on a Red Chuchu that was mindlessly crawling around the floor. “I’ll be there momentarily.” He shot the Chuchu, scattering his remains. “Tell Smithers to clean that up.” he said as he walked away.

**Negaverse; DNK Moonbase**

Team Nerehc and the DNKG operatives returned to Moonbase. They uncuffed the delinquents’ arms, but fixed chi-blocks on Atnor and Annaira. “You’ll be given minor chores and duties until we feel like we can trust you.” Nerehc told them. “I’d like for that day to be soon.”

“Yeah, we aren’t stupid.” Beewv stated smugly on Avakam’s shoulder. “Just show me to the nearest dirty keyboard and I’ll do what I do.”

A minute later, Sicnarf brought Yddam and Hcaz to them. “Beewv, you’re helping Hcaz clean the terminals.” The glasses-wearing boy carried Beewv off. “Annaira, help Yddam in the kitchen.”

The Yhprum sister looked frightfully at the alien. “Hehe… no hard feelings?”

“Leave your light on when you go to sleep.” Anna threatened before following her.

“Atnor, help Sicnarf fix weapons. Avakam, help Inap in the laundry room.”

Avakam shot a sudden glare at Inap’s face, scaring the girl. The alien walked ahead annoyedly as Inap jogged far behind. Nerehc sighed and returned to his office, sitting boredly behind stacks of papers. Ghirahim popped out of his sword. “Why do you even care about these fools, Master?”

“When the world’s about to end, you have the urge to make as many friends as possible.”

“Where’s your evidence that the world *is* ending?”

“Some guy obsessed with masks. I really dunno what to do, Ghira… if finding the Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses is up to the Positives, I guess the most I can do is build up my own army. However whacked-up we are.”

The office door knocked, so Ghirahim returned. Nerehc answered the door to find AlyakAm and
Egroeg Nnik. “Hello, Numbuh -3621.” The former greeted tonelessly. “We have a request for you. We wish to go into the Posiverse to meet our Positives. Our own private Meet Your Match Day.”

“Could you organize a meeting?” Egroeg asked.

“Sure. What’s the occasion?”

“We feel bad for missing Meet Your Match Day. AlyakAm is especially looking forward to mocking my opposite self.”

“Egroeg knows that if he mocks me in such a light, I will eat his fingers.” AlyakAm said.

“Why don’t siblings bond as well as you guys.” Nerehc remarked sarcastically. “Okay, I’ll try to get in contact with Cheren and see what his operatives are doing. Maybe I can ask his progress…”

The three of them left the office.

Underworld

Medusa watched them all in her giant cauldron. Nosam was helping Lorac train in acrobats, using his waterbending as an obstacle course. Ynohtna was trying to play with his gloomy little sister. Ikuyim was practicing her crystalbending. Newd was bugging Ydnew, in the form of a red bee.

“Simple little Negatives… so carefree and blind to everything.”

One of her green snake strands, Thanatos, dangled beside her. “Medusaaa! When are we going to start finding the Darknesses?! Palutena is going to beat us!”

“Patience, Thannypoo. It won’t matter who finds what first. Because Palutena will have Seven Lights, and I will have Thirteen Darknesses. Assuming I can’t rely on Ragaj to turn the Lights to my side, thirteen still beats seven!”

“Yes, but if we wait too long, the universe will be destroyed, and we’ll have to wait another quadrillion years.” Pandora, the living blue flame with a face, spoke depressedly.

“Yes, you’re right. Which is why it’s time we began our quest.” Medusa smirked at her cauldron. “Little do they know, these Negatives are about to take part in a story I whipped up: Legend of the Thirteen Darknesses! HA HA ha ha!”

“Zeeeeehahaha.” Blackbeard laughed, munching a cherry pie. “I’m too excited to meet them! What were their names again?”

“I dunno, Blacky. Why don’t you name one?”

“Gladly!” Blackbeard twirled and let his coat flap, speaking confidently, “I believe one of them was a Pirate Emperor like me! His name is Davy Jones!” He pictured the tentacle-faced captain in the sky.

“I remember a few as well.” Pandora sighed. “Two of the Darknesses are wizards. One of them is Zeref the Black Cloud.” Her flame displayed the handsome, teenage mage with black hair.

“Oo-oo, I know!” Thanatos perked up. “Two of the Darknesses were alien overlords! One of them sounds super sexy! And her name,” the snake twirled, “was YELLOW DIAMOND!” He imagined a slim, shadowed figure with a yellow eye.

Medusa pictured these three figures, as well as 10 more silhouetted, appearing in the dark sky.

“When these three evils come together, the New World will be OURS for the taking! Any silly child
army Palutena can create will pale in comparison! For now, it is time for our favorite opposites to begin. Ragus... he is at his house.”

Somewhere in the Negaverse was a girl with wide, psychotic purple eyes, aquamarine hair, and a forced smile. She seemed to have stitches on her face, wore a dark-pink coat, and a dress depicting a full moon over a shadowed graveyard. “Great, Lady Medusa! I look forward to playing with him!” She held a doll of Nereh in her hand.

Who remembers Juniper Lee? Good show back in the day, I watched it to refresh my memory, it wasn’t bad! But as you can see, Wendy has the uncanny power to make friends with anyone named “Lee.” XD And yes, Jacksepticeye is a YouTube Let’s Player, for some reason I pictured him as Stanley Shunpike from Harry Potter. Next time, we’ll do Augustus’s next stage, then lots of training for Wendy. Don’t smoke, kids!
Chapter Summary

Augustus and his crew climb up Buttermilk Building. Meanwhile, Wendy and Juniper Lee engage in combat practice! (OPTIONAL CHAPTER.)

Definitely one of the shorter chapters in this story; but who can really complain, when chapters will get so much longer later. XP This takes place during Chapter 9 of Lights.

Chapter B-4: Rotten Cream

Orchid Bay Mall

Facilier parked his car in an open space before he, Wendy, and Carla entered the mall. “Mister Facilier, can we buy some new clothes while we’re here?” Wendy asked bubbly.

“How many clothes can you have, Child?” Carla questioned.

“Not just for me, for you!” Wendy grinned. “You need more fashion, Carla!”

“I am not a crazy schoolgirl. I am perfectly fine with my current outfits and nothing.” They walked by a window advertising ‘Clothes For Cats.’ Carla pressed her paws and face against it. Tiny shirts and shorts, tiny skirts, tiny ties, tiny bikinis, all cute and fit for her size. “My, those look lovely.”

“Aha, there they are!” Facilier beamed. “SONNY! DONNA!” He waved.

“WHERE?” the distant twins looked around. They spotted each other next to each other. “SIBLIIING!” They hugged.

Facilier, Wendy, and Carla went to join the twins. “Hey, where’s Carla?” Sonny looked around.

“I’m right here.” Carla said.

“I don’t see her, Sonny!” Donna looked.

“Wow. You really are invisible, Carla.” Wendy deduced.

“I wouldn’t consider these two proof. Sigh, but if I am, at least you can see me, Child.”

“So did you find it?” Facilier asked.

“Yeah, we did!” Sonny danced. “We showed them around! The first guy was like ‘Uhhhhh.’”

“The second one was like ‘DUUUUUHHH.’” Donna danced.

“Then after about 10 or 12 ‘Dummy-whats’…”

“WE FOUND IT!” Both excitedly pointed to a second-floor store labeled GOTHICS GALORE.

“Now’s the chance to say that’s obvious, Charles.” Facilier remarked as he led them to the
escator. (“Why do you keep calling me that.”)

Gothics Galore reeked of a scent that ruined Wendy and Carla’s noses, possibly a perfume goths would wear. The woman running the stand was slim and had brownish-black hair with some colored strands, tied in two balls. She was smoothing her black nails when the group arrived, especially taking notice of the Shadow Man and winged cat. “You guys look the real deal.” She put her file down and turned to them. Her nametag read Tasha.

“Good morning, Miss.” Facilier grinned coolly and showed his own card. “This child here is a Little Wiz, so we’re looking to get hitched up.”

Tasha looked at Wendy, and her glare made the girl back up shyly. “She looks like a twerp. Are you sure she’s old enough?”

“She turned 11 back in February, she’s a registered Hogwarts student! Come on, she knows not to use it, just show us the good stuff!”

“Fine.” Making sure no one else was in the store, Tasha opened a compartment under the scalp of a mannequin skull on her desk. She pushed the button, sealing the shop with a garage door. The walls and shelves flipped, revealing undersides with rows and rows of wands, spell books, and magic charms.

Tasha’s own glass desk sunk and came up with a collection of wands. “Any wand you could ever ask. Take your pick.”

Wendy was highly intrigued. They were all cool-looking wands. She first took a smooth, black one labeled ‘Raven’s Beak.’ She flicked the wand: a storm of hidden fireworks sprouted out of the walls and floors, exploding everywhere and creating colorful clouds. Tasha casually put out the flames with an extinguisher. “Try another one.”

Embarrassed, Wendy put it back and picked up a ‘Christmas Star,’ which had a shiny yellow star on its tip. Wendy tapped it on the desk, making glitters. Jingle bells sounded, as did church bells, snow fell from the ceiling, and a gigantic snowman broke through and started jumping around the five of them, smashing them flat. The snowman flew away, and all that stopped. “Nope. Try again.” Tasha said.

Wendy unflattened herself and picked a ‘Viola Rose,’ which was green with purple petals around the tip. She smiled, having a good feeling about this wand. She gave it a whirl and flicked.

Somewhere in the world, a tremendous explosion burned 500 miles of land into nothing. The smoke cloud rose like a mushroom. “We’ll return to Classic American Wars after these messages!” With that, Tasha turned the TV off.

“I wanted to see that part,” she said. “Anyway, wrong wand.” Wendy had turned Carla into a fish-turkey with her flick. “Pick again.”

Wendy looked at them with thought… then noticed a pretty pink wand that glittered like crystal. She picked it up and rubbed her hand along it. “Oh, don’t bother with that one.” Tasha said. “Lamia Scales don’t pick masters easily.”

Wendy stared and waved it around softly. There was something entrancing about the Scale. …The wand glowed, and a pink circle of light shone around Wendy. It reflected off Facilier, Carla, and the twins’ eyes. They gazed in awe. A kind of light, and a kind of force that established the contract between wizard and wand. The light disappeared, and Wendy stared at the Scale, still speechless.
“…OUR EYES HURT FOR SOME REASON!” Sonny and Donna smiled (‘guess they didn’t actually see it).

“Huh… not bad.” Tasha said without interest. “You’re like the second person that got a Lamia Scale from this store.”

“Who was the first?”

“Some chick with pink hair. I think she’s like, a dancer. I have a picture of her somewhere…” She searched her drawers.

“I think we’re good.” Facilier concluded. “How much do we pay you?”

“Eighty dollars.”

“Can’t expect the cliché where you’re so amazed with her power, you decide to sell for free.” Facilier shrugged, pulling the money out of his wallet. “Thank you for the wand.”

The five mages (only way to simplify them) left the mall as Wendy studied her wand with sparkling eyes. “Wow, my first wand! I can’t believe it!” She waved it around. “I’m finally a full-fledged mage! I can turn water into wine, and lampposts into toads, and make the sky brown, and-”

“All in the comfort and safety of where no one can see us.” Facilier reminded her. “You’re still underage, Child. Using magic outside o’ school gets ya in trouble.”

“Oh.” Wendy frowned. “But, where would we go?”

After they made it to their car, Facilier quickly gestured the group inside. He sat in the front seat while turning to them, “We probably shouldn’t do it anywhere out in the open, ‘specially with all these GUN trucks drivin’ around. (Government musta tipped them off this is a good place to hide.) So we gonna train you someplace special. IN HERE!” Without warning, Facilier swept the four of them into his hat, then dove in himself.

“UUH!” They landed on a flat, bright-blue, tiled floor that stretched for miles in a dimension under a wavy, fiery-orange sky. The hat landed and bounced as Facilier stretched out. “WELCOME, children, to the hat of Doctor Facilier!”

“WE still can’t see CARLA!” Sonny and Donna chorused with silly smiles.

“Now I know you’re pulling a sham.” she replied with a glare.

“Ain’t no one gonna find us, ain’t no one gonna know. So wand ready Wendy, are ya ready?” Facilier slipped out a stack of cards from his sleeve.

The blue-haired maiden clutched her wand and looked confidently, “I’m ready!”

“Perfect! Then here, we, GO!” Facilier shuffled the cards around the floor, they grew to human size and began floating on their own. A creepy Joker card approached Wendy. “Simple Blasting Spell, Wendy, just flick your wand and say ‘Expelliarmus’!”

Wendy focused on the living card. “EXPELLI-” Wendy flicked the wand—when she threw her arm back, the wand flew behind her, whirling across the air. “AAAH!” She dodged when the Joker blew fire.

“Firm grip, Wendy!” Facilier yelled.
Wendy ran by, grabbed her wand off the floor, and—“Expelli-” She held it by the tip, the wand blasted and sent herself flying backward.

“Remember your arm movements!”

Wendy aimlessly shook her wand, “Incendio! GYAAAAH!” Her wand caught fire, it spread to her hand, she ran around the floor screaming and shaking it.

“Oppotus Lookin!” She cast the spell at a mirror—it struck herself, and Carla nearly puked at the sight of Wendy’s insides.

“VENTUS!” Wendy furiously whipped her arm around like a windmill, creating a cyclone that spun her around in midair like a wheel.

“YAAAAAAAAHHHH!” After a failed Snake-Summoning Spell, the slithery creatures were nipping Wendy’s legs. She ran around frantically while Carla shook her head in disappointment.

“You’re hopeless, Child…”

Border of South and North Dakota

Anyone who is familiar with the tale of Black John Licorice will hear that the Licorice Stalks grow in South Dakota. That was a lie that was told to make the song rhyme. That’s not to say nothing can be found between the two states. The Marzipan Pirates landed a few miles off, then walked the rest of the way. The sky became cloudy with a creamy white mist. The very atmosphere made them feel kind of moist. Augustus took a great whiff, smiling at the mountain beyond his sunglasses.

“Buttermilk Building.”

The mountain of the richest, moistest cream towered high. Augustus could already feel its rich, melty taste. “At its very peak sits the Sun Cream. Which, out of context, sounds like suntan lotion, but it’s actually a cream so soft, slippery and warm, it melts all the troubles in your heart.”

“So it’s like doin’ it with a lady wearing sunscreen on the beach.” Rallo said.

“Yes, but going mountain hiking in summer won’t give me any swimsuits.” Stewie complained as they put on their Corn-Clamber Boots. “Perhaps the weapon we’ll acquire here will be some kind of Cool—”

“Stewie, Ah SWEAR TO GOD if you say that!” Rallo threatened.

“…Blasting gun.” Stewie finished.

“Good.”

“Mw-mw.” Maggie took out her pacifier, smiled at them, and said, “Cool Hwhip!”

“GOD DAMMIT!” Rallo cursed. (Play “Butter Building” from *Smash Bros. Brawl*)

Stage B-4: Buttermilk Building

Mission: Get the Sun Cream!

With the Clamber Boots strapped tight to their feet, Augustus marched up the slippery white slope with the Baby Trio behind. Giant creamballs rolled down at them from the cliff above, so the four
were careful to maneuver around, which was more difficult on this ground. The cliffside was exposed from the cream, and was made of solid, rugged sherbet. “We can walk up this!” Augustus told them, planting the sweet corn spikes against the ice cream. His boots stuck perfectly to the wall, so the adventurer began to stomp up. Creamballs continued to drop from the heavens, the Marzipans stepped left or right to let them pass before continuing. Cream Parabuzzies—Buzzy Beetles with white shells and wings, flapped back-and-forth over parts of the path, forcing the crew to simply wait or walk around. Maggie chose to go collect a Golden Wonka Bar between mirrored Beetles, then the four pirates made it to the ledge up top.

Creamballs still came at them from the left, so the four had to step up strips of sherbet on the wall, high enough so the balls could pass under. Eventually, the crew made it to a small open field above a cliff, where White Cream Chuchu emerged from the moist ground. Augustus used his Candycane Cutlass to slice the blobs in front, and stamped his Corn-Clamber Boots against the ones behind, and Maggie took delight in shooting them in the eyes, viewing the creepy result. Augustus retrieved a Bounce Gum from one of the Chu, looking up the series of pillars that led higher up a peak. “Mags, you’re with me.” he decided. “You brats take that path.” He pointed at a road around the left of the mountainside, which Stewie and Rallo followed.

He put Maggie over his shoulders, then puffed his Bounce Gum to size before making the exciting hops up the slippery pillars. It put a smile on his face when Maggie waved her arms and cheered with her little baby voice. He was wary of candy corn spikes sticking in and out of certain platforms, before the gum popped on the targeted peak. Creamy Goombas appeared from cream mounds, white Goombas with red shoes, and if the humans got headbonked, their bodies would become more slippery for a few seconds. Augustus dodged their attacks as he easily stomped the creatures. With that, they faced another, more distant peak, in which Maggie fired her grappling hook to latch a pillar that stood on it. She detached the rope and tied to a pillar on this peak, letting Augustus climb across. The opposite end was steadily losing grip on the slippery pillar, but just before it fell, Augustus leaped the rest of the way.

The explorer followed a path between parallel trench walls, with a sherbet path leading up along the left. His body shifted sideways as he started the journey up, and Snapdragons popped out of their holes above or below the path in attempt to eat him. This path ended, and Augustus looked right (upward in his vision) to find a sherbet path around a rock kept suspended by two pillars. Augustus jumped and quickly flipped 180 degrees in midair to stick his Corn-Clambers into the sherbet. The path spiraled under the rock and to its right side, letting Augustus kick off onto a path along the right trench wall. After avoiding the Creamy Parabuzzies flapping over the path, Augustus made it to the flat ground above.

Soldiers in black armor and wielding Candycane Cutlasses ambushed him—the Licorice guards known as Blackberries. Seems he was here, after all. Augustus threw his Gobstopper to bounce around their faces, then caught his projectile before running to clash his sword with one. Another guard ran up from the side and swung his blade, Augustus ducked to trick the guard into striking his friend, then the teen jumped up to punch the second one in the face. Augustus threw his Gobstopper around the other three guards, attacking them with his cutlass afterward, but the previous two recovered, forcing Augustus to defend himself before dodging away. “You guys would be easier to beat if I had my Haki. Ugh, I don’t need this.” Augustus abandoned the fight and dove to his belly, sliding down a slippery cream slope over the peak’s edge. He gained speed quickly, then up a ramp, over a gap, before landing on a new field.

Along the left wall was a slope with very small sherbet patches, perfect for the Deadly Babies’ feet, so he couldn’t journey up and get the Wonka Bar on his own. Augustus ignored the Chuchu in the field and entered a cave with a ceiling of spiky candy corn. There was a hole in the ground, and the next path was through a tunnel on a high perch. Augustus carefully stepped to and peeked into
the hole. A familiar football-shaped head and round, fluffy black afro overlooked a pit of melted cream. “Stewie, Rallo! Up here!”

The babies looked up in surprise. Stewie spoke in his communicator, “Augustus, there you are. Is Maggie up there with you?”

“She’ll catch up.” Augustus replied in his own communicator. “Listen, Tubbs, do that underground boombox thing.”

“Only if you promise to find a better way to classify ‘that thing.’” Rallo jumped and burrowed underground, using his boombox to shake the ground and cause a geyser to emerge from the pool of cream. Augustus jumped on as it rose up, then jumped into the tunnel before it smashed him against the spikes. The tunnel led to a more expansive cave with many holes and platforms. Augustus threw his Gobstopper to take down the Cream Keese, and Rallo’s boombox caused geysers to emerge from all the holes, albeit at different heights. When Augustus looked down into their chamber, it seemed the babies’ accessible path was lower than the ground where the geysers were, so Rallo couldn’t get closer for a better quake. Augustus walked around to study the room, seeing a Blackberry guard with a shield standing on a platform, in which his Gobstopper couldn’t penetrate him.

Augustus got onto a short platform that a geyser could propel him to, with another platform blocking the Blackberry from his vision. Regardless, he knew he was there, and a flat-bottomed stalactite hung above that middle platform. Augustus chucked his Gobstopper at the ‘tite’s bottom, it bounced off and hit the Blackberry in his suspecting head. Augustus rode another geyser onto a different platform, then quickly stomped across a sherbet path along the right wall. The path ended beside the Blackberry’s pillar, so Augustus jumped off to deal a knock-out punch against the soldier. A large block sat on this platform, which Augustus could push into the hole beneath the platform. In the room below, it didn’t land in a cream pool, but rather a slide that slid the block down to Stewie and Rallo’s area.

The two used the block as a boost, then Stewie lifted Rallo onto the higher ground, so he could get closer to the cream pools and create higher geysers. Augustus could get onto the highest platform and eat a Fudgepuffsicle. He inflated roundly and drifted upward through a tunnel on the ceiling. Aside from the Spiny Creamy Buzzies floating around, Augustus avoided the big droplets of cream that would weigh him down, and cause him to burp out his Fudgepuff before he made it. Regardless, he avoided the obstacles and burped to normal width at the top of this peak. From here, he overlooked an extremely long, vertical cream wall, which would “U” turn up another, parallel wall. A crystal patch of Rock Candy grew close by. Augustus took a piece and encased himself in the blackish-purple sphere. He smirked with excitement.

At full speed, Augustus rolled down the wall in the Rock Candy, past the “U” bend in a second, and raced several meters up the opposite wall with the momentum. Not too far, of course, but he could thankfully land the Rock Candy on a small path leading further up the mountain. He was surprised the crystal could remain stable in the slipperiness, but he still had to keep balance. He squished Cream Goombas that were in his way, then arrived at another, though more narrow U-slope. He kept his sphere perfectly aligned, rolled down, and launched high enough to land in another U-slope, then once in the air, he had to shift his weight backward to land in the one behind, then that U-slope landed him on the next path.

This road was smaller in width and had creamballs rolling down, requiring Augustus to take cover in the enclosings that were as round as his Rock Candy. Rolling up the slope was a pain for that reason, but worth it in the end when he made it. Augustus stopped his crystal against a stalagmite, then stomped his clamber boot against to break himself free. From here, Augustus marched up the
sherbet wall, his vision soon blocked by the creamy clouds. He could already smell it: the Sun Cream, loveliest of all toppings. Beyond these clouds, the golden sun in the blue sky, blessing the cream with eternal warmth. …Clearly the scent was in his head. (End song.)

Because when Augustus made it above the clouds and stepped on right-side-up ground, the scent of rotting cream hit his nose. Augustus crossed the bridge that led to the pool of Sun Cream. It was a dry, brownish color, and smelled as though it had been left sitting out for ages. The lollipop fell from his mouth when Augustus gasped. He bent down for a closer look. The Sun Cream was almost completely decayed. No way this was unnatural. “Why…Why would anyone… do this?”

“Simple, really.” Augustus stood up with a start. A woman with a horrid smell, filthy and messy brown hair, flies buzzing around her, and wearing a brown leather suit that hasn’t been washed for days, stepped out from behind a decayed pillar. “Lord Licorice wanted it this way.”

Augustus clutched his Gobstopper, ready to break some teeth. “Who are you?”

“Lord Licorice’s Number Three: Veruca Salt. I ruined the Sun Cream, because he wanted me to. He wanted me to because I’m spoiled rotten. Anything I touch becomes spoiled and rotten. Like the air.” Augustus backed away when the stench around her grew stronger.

“Euh. Are you a poisonbender?”

“Hmm, no.” She smiled wryly and shook her head. “I ate the Rot-Rot Fruit. I wanted it, because it was rotten, like me.”

“A Devil Fruit? Did you steal those from the Big Mom Pirates?!”

“I don’t care where Lord Licorice got them. I wanted one. He doesn’t want people getting in his way. He wants me…” Veruca slowly approached him with a menacing smile, “to make you ro—”

Augustus hurled the Gobstopper at her face, knocking her down before it bounced back. He stared at the untainted, shiny red sphere. The sunlight bounced off it, and to his sunglasses. “Unlucky for you, Gobstoppers never go sour. Then again…” He looked at the Sun Cream pool. “Neither should this’ve.”

Veruca got up and growled spitefully at him. They both looked up at the sound of some whirring. Veruca grinned madly at the small aircraft with cinnamon roll propellers. “Ah-ha. I wanted her to show up. I wanted us to capture you together.”

“How is that thing flying, the air should be too creamy.” Augustus stated.

“Our Cinnamon Ships are protected by their sugary glitter. They’re kept sticky and dry. Not like you.” Veruca channeled her power and spread the awful smell around the air. Augustus clamped his nose and mouth shut, trying to back away from the spoiled woman. The Cinnamon Ship hovered over him, and a very long and rubber-like woman, with purple skin, hair, and jumpsuit, dropped down, grabbed Augustus’s shoulders, and wrapped her body around him like a rubber snake. “Meet Violet Beauregarde. She’s very flexible. She ate the Flex-Flex Fruit. We’re friends.”

“Best friends!” Violet grinned.

“Knock him out, Violet. I want Lord Licorice to see him blacker than blackberry.”

“Oh, Friend!” Violet stretched her head in front of his, and despite the boy’s struggling, his world went black with a headbash.
“Augustus?” Rallo yelled into his communicator. “‘ey, Augustus, where are you? O Captain, my captain!”

“Those clouds shouldn’t be blocking our com links.” Stewie said, looking up the mountain he saw Augustus venture up. “Maggie, do you see anything?”

The girl zoomed her vision closer to the clouds, but they were much too thick to see through. However, she spotted brown, glittery dust raining from above a patch of clouds, steadily moving forward. “Mw-mw!”

“What is it?” Rallo asked, looking up as well.

“Perhaps we should return to the Ace Flyer.” Stewie said with concern. “Quick, let’s go!”

The Cinnamon Ship was flying to another such vessel, of incomprehensible size and cinnamon roll propellers that could hypnotize people. A shadowed figure stood in the control room window. Any person that saw this ship, and saw this figure, flying toward them, their hearts would chill like ice cream in the back of the freezer. Lord Tyrone Licorice.

Orchid Bay Park

Wendy finished putting the last tiny Band-Aid over a snake bite. Her body was partly covered with the little bandages, one on her right cheek, a few on her arms, on her left foot… of course, there were other magic maladies that Facilier fixed himself. She stared at her reflection in the fountain water, sitting on its edge. Looking at her own sad face. Her first magic lesson was a flop. And she was so sure of herself. She pulled out her Lamia Scale wand to stare at it. It looked pretty next to the fountain. Shiny. She felt its mystic power the moment she picked it up, but why didn’t it work for her? Unless she was just bad at using it. Dr. Facilier taught her that the wand chooses the wizard, but she wondered if it could change its mind. She would feel so pathetic if it up and did that.

She heard a light flapping of wings, and saw Carla’s reflection look over beside her own. “You’re still new at it, so don’t let it get to you.”

“Carla, I told you I wanted to be alone.”

“I left you alone for a good half-hour. That should be more than enough time to cool down.”

“No it isn’t…” She propped her elbow on her leg, resting her head in her hand.

“Wendy, if it’s any consolation, you’re a very good airbender. You probably didn’t start off so great in your younger years.”

“All I’ve really been good at is running away. And I always run away because I make trouble for everyone.”

“I haven’t often seen you without your Stabilizers, but it’s hard to imagine you making trouble for anyone, the way you mess up and apologize for everything.”

Wendy blushed, smiling sheepishly at her. “If you met me a little before I met Dr. Facilier, you would see why everyone hated me.”

“At the very least, I can imagine people being annoyed with you if you blew wind all the time. There’s a difference between ‘annoyance’ and ‘hate.’”
“Heheh… Thanks, I guess…” She looked at the park’s clock. 12:05. “Only an hour until June shows up… I think I’ll rest.”

“May I join you?”

“Okay.”

Wendy and Carla went under a tree, shaded by its rustling leaves. Wendy pulled off her shoes and took off her contacts. “Wanna hold these for me?” she asked Carla.

The cat stared at her red eyes for a minute. Wendy noticed how Carla’s narrowed eyes inched more open. “…Why do you always give me that look when you see my eyes?”

Carla shook her head after this was pointed out. “What look?”

“That, what you just did. Carla, do my real eyes creep you out?”

“Of course not, they’re just… unusual, Child. You have to admit that.”

“You’re calling *me* unusual, go back and look in that fountain!”

Carla felt a tug in her heart. She turned away. “W-Wait, Carla, I didn’t mean that, I’m sorry!”

“No, you’re right… It was wrong of me to point out your eyes when *nothing* in this town is natural. Perhaps you do need more time for yourself.” She walked away toward a different tree.

Wendy sighed and lay down on the grass, folding her hands under her head as she faced her own tree. She lay there for a long time, but couldn’t force herself to sleep. She felt bad about what she said to Carla, one of the few and longer-lasting friends she had, the last thing she wanted was to make bad tensions. But she also thought about her eyes. Facilier made her wear contacts so she didn’t draw attention, or make people connect her with her unnamed father. But her blue hair drew more attention, it was more recognizable in the posters, why not cover that up? Was Facilier secretly afraid of her eyes? Carla, too, why else would she make that look? Lee Andrew told her that she shouldn’t have to hide them, but he seemed to be one of few people that would say that. People seem to like her better with brown eyes. And normal ears.

“Wendy! There you are!” She heard footsteps running over and looked back. June and Monroe were coming.

“Oh! Is it 1:00 already?” Wendy stood up and put on her strap-on shoes.

“12:40, but I got done early. (By telling Ray Ray I would give him my allowance.) …Wendy, what’s with all those bandages?”

“Oh.” Wendy just remembered. “Um… some monsters tried to eat me, so I had to fight them.”

“Really? Why didn’t my bracelet go off?” June stared at her brown wristband with a purple emblem.

“Great McGregor’s Ghost! What’s with your eyes?” Monroe exclaimed.

Wendy started. She put her contacts in her own bag after Carla left, and hadn’t put them on.

“Uuuum… This is how I actually look.” She confessed. “I wear contacts so that… so I don’t scare people.”

“Oh…” June frowned, noting Wendy’s downtrodden expression. She must’ve been sensitive about...
this topic. “You know, why don’t I teach you how to fight later? How ‘bout we just hang out?” She spoke with an open smile. “Both of us seem pretty tired.”

Wendy looked up and smiled. “That would be fun, sure!”

“Uuuugh. Then I guess I brought *Art of Te Xuan Ze*, Volume 2 for nothing.” Monroe sighed in annoyance, closing his book. “Ay hope you girls don’t expect ME to join you on your shopping spree?”

Wendy looked at the other tree, where Carla was still sitting and turned away. “Mr. Montagail—”

“Monroe.”

“Sorry- Do you think you could talk to my friend, Carla over there? It would be nice if she had another talking animal to talk to.”

“I dunno, Wendy, dogs kinda hate cats either way.” June smiled unsurely.

“Ahh, poppycock. Ay’im not your everyday mongrel, ya know.” Monroe told her gruffly, walking toward Carla. “Ay can reason with a simple housecat. (That’s not to say Mittens can make a good excuse why we can’t share the fire hydrant. Ay-ay-ay…)”

**Downtown; Lucy’s Alley**

Juniper and Wendy went for a walk down a secret road that non-magic beings couldn’t find, populated by harmless demons, and a good place to hide from the G.U.N.. Both girls bought a protein shake at a stand, slurping the sweets while Wendy continued her story. “Then out of nowhere, Dr. Facilier and his wife, Rouge showed up. They told me I was a wizard and I’d been accepted to Hogwarts. I’ve never been happier before that moment.” Wendy smiled at the memory. “I felt like I was closer to learning who I was.”

“I still don’t understand the part about that wind curse.” June mentioned. “If it’s so bad, why does the air feel fine now?”

“Because Dr. Facilier gave me these.” Wendy lifted the right of her shirt, showing the white, rectangle sticker with Japanese symbols. “They’re Chi Stabilizers that keep my airbending from going crazy. If I took them off, this town would be really windy.”

“And your wind would attract a storm?” June asked. Wendy nodded. “Wow. That would seem like a bad thing to have.”

“Yeah.” Wendy looked down. “That’s why the orphanage kicked me out. And why I couldn’t stay in one town for too long, and why those Government people are trying to capture me.” Though she didn’t tell (nor understand) the whole reason behind that last. “Because I blow people’s stuff around and almost get them hurt and ruin their day.”

“Hey, quit feeling sad!” June perked up and punched her shoulder. “You don’t have to worry about it now, do you?”

“Yeah, I guess not.” Wendy passed her a soft smile. “So, tell me about yourself, June. What’s it like fighting monsters every day?”

June frowned just then. She stared at her half-empty protein shake. “The thing is, Wendy, I’m under a curse, too.”
“You… are?”

Juniper was leading Wendy to the edge of town as she told the story. “The whole tradition of the Te Xuan Ze started nearly 1500 years ago. The job usually gets passed to the newest descendant of my family. Ah-Mah was the last one, but the power skipped my dad and went to me. I’m actually the youngest in my family history.”

“What about Ray Ray?”

“Heh heh. There’s a funny story behind that.” June smirked. “Anyway, it was my ancestors that created the Veil over this town, but the ancient Magic Council wanted to ensure that we would always control the bad demons coming in. So an inherited curse gets passed on to the next Te Xuan Ze.”

They arrived at a sign over the road that said, Now leaving Orchid Bay. Ignore anything you might’ve seen. “This is the edge of the Veil. Walk through.”

Curious, Wendy calmly walked forward. She saw some strange lizard monsters clutching the cliff wall on the right. The world blurred for a minute, those monsters disappeared, as Wendy was through the Veil. She turned back to June with a confused look. “Now watch.” June walked toward her—the Veil pushed her back.

Wendy gasped. As June put her hand against the Veil, the former reached an arm back through. Wendy felt nothing. “You see? The Te Xuan Ze can never leave Orchid Bay.” June spoke with regret. “Until I have a child, and the Mark of Te Xuan Ze appears on them,” she noted the dark-pink strip on her hair, “…I’m stuck here. Every summer, my friends go on holidays with their families, and I’m not allowed to go because I have to stay and fight monsters! And even while they’re here, I’m always putting them off because I gotta fight monsters. Wendy, I’m sorry for all the bad things that happened to you, but…but you get to run anywhere you want to. Heh, I’m kind of jealous.” June smiled at the irony.

Wendy softly waved her hand around the Veil, entranced by its blurry appearance, but feeling nothing still. June had a point. While Wendy always wished for a home or a place to stay, the feeling of running with the wind was lovely. She felt free. Well, she would, if not for her own curse. It was kind of funny when she thought about it. Wendy was homeless, but free to go wherever, June had a home, but could go nowhere else. “I’m sorry to hear that, Juniper. But what if the Veil got taken down? Could you leave?”

“Yeah, but you can’t just take it down!” she exclaimed logically. “Then there would be worse chaos than what’s already happening! Sigh… I really don’t like it, either, but it’s the way it has to be.” She shrugged. “I wouldn’t know how to begin tearing it down.”

Wendy looked sympathetically. June was right, the people here are so used to the Veil, if all these demons suddenly appeared out of nowhere, then it wouldn’t look good. She really wished there was a way around this for her friend. “… She glared confidently and balled her fists, “June, I wanna learn how to fight now.”

Minutes later

“Show me how hard you can punch!” June yelled at Wendy vigorously, her own hands positioned in defense. The two ventured into the nearby forest to train, and Wendy was rapidly thrusting her fists against June’s hands. The Te Xuan Ze already noted her speed, but, “Not the strongest I’ve felt. Show me your kicks.” Wendy began kicking her legs up at the girl’s chest, June blocking each kick with her fists, but the Te Xuan Ze was pushed back a little. “Okay, now I’ll do you, try to
block me!” June swung her fists, Wendy tried to block with her hands, but June easily maneuvered around for “soft” punches against Wendy’s chest, afterwards kicking the airbender several feet. “You’ll have to work faster than that.”

Wendy recovered, “I’m afraid of hurting you. That’s why.”

June smiled coolly and— “HUAH!” punched a dent into a tree. “Trust me, you won’t. Let’s try something different, like...like your airbending! Let’s see how tough you are with that!”

Wendy got back into fighting gear, inhaled a breath, and blasted a Cyclone Roar. June withstood the wind and dashed forward, surprising Wendy when she whipped behind and wrapped arms around the blue-haired girl. “Is that all? I’ve felt fans that blew harder than you!”

Wendy jumped and kicked against June, blowing herself away. June smirked as Wendy ran far away though the forest. She was coming back at full speed with a fist held back, so June kicked off a tree, flew at Wendy like a rocket, and both their fists made contact. “Ow ow ow!” Wendy shook her hand from the pain.

“Tell ya what. You can have the next punch for free.” June offered.

Wendy glared at her. She took several quick steps back and started spinning her right arm, forming a wind circle. Wendy sidestepped behind a distant tree, slowing her arm and focusing the wind to spiral around her fist. She pulled out the Lamia Scale under her shorts, taking a breath. “Please work for me this time.”

_in April, Dr. Facilier showed Wendy and Carla an ordinary rubber ball. He dropped, it made the first bounce, when it returned to its highest, “Repiti!” a quick spell, the ball bounced and bounced at the same height every time._

“Why isn’t it slowing down?” Carla questioned.

_The Repeating Spell makes any motion repeat itself over and over. Unless they get too far away, only the wizard can stop it._

Wendy tried to catch the ball in her hand, it simply bounced from there, up to the ceiling. It was a minor spell, but it sure was fun.

With an aura of confidence, Wendy whirled her wand and aimed at the still-spinning whirlwind around her fist. “Repiti!” The wand glowed, and even though she wasn’t forcing the wind to spiral with her bending, it continued spinning. With a bright smile, Wendy ran far away again, dashing straight back at June, who would keep her promise and let Wendy have this blow. “Sky Dragon CLAW!” To both of their surprise, June whirled like a windmill as she flew backward, into a distant tree.

“WHOA! How’d you do that?!”

“It’s a secret.” Wendy winked. She ran at June, leapt, and threw the Cyclone Fist against her opponent’s fist. June spun around at the impact, sinking to the ground, but kicked directly up to send Wendy above the branches. She grabbed one in her Cyclone Fist, she swung around the branch, then flew down at Juniper with a kick.

The park

Carla heard Wendy and June talking behind her, but still didn’t pay mind. She waited expectantly as Monroe approached her. “Ahhh, good afternoon.” The pug greeted her. “Miss Charla, was it?”
“It’s Carla. And might I inquire when was the last time you’ve taken a bath? You smell like you were coughed up by a dung iguana.”

“Well, you’re just PLEASANT to be around, aren’tcha?” Monroe walked around to her front. “And just how old are you? Seven-thousand? Seventy-five-thousand??”

“Three months.”

“Ya’ve got quite the attitude for a WEE kitten.”

“And what’s your age, dare I ask?”

“Ay’m 650 years old. Raised to serve the Te Xuan Ze, I am trained to know the identity and purpose of every magical item, creature, or spell.”

“Okay, Sir Montague, just what kind of creature am I?”

Monroe walked around to study her. “Hmmm. A cat, talks, has wings… Where did you say you came from?”

“An egg Wendy found on the beach.”

“Ay have no idea.” Carla fell on her side like an unbalanced book. “Look, Lass, let’s not get off on the wrong boat. It’s not everyday ya meet another talking animal who helps an 11-year-old girl with powers.” Monroe slipped out of the satchel wrapped around him, crawled inside, and pulled out a purple magnifying glass with red and blue lens on either side, with red triangle-shaped eyelashes and a triangle in the center—the whole thing looked like an eye. “So how about Monroe educates you? This item, for example-”

“A Lens of Truth, which can see invisible objects or see through illusions.” Carla replied knowledgeably. “Specifically, the lenses only see matter for what it is. The red lens, taken from Falcon’s Eye specs, ordinarily serve as X-rays, while blue lenses cloak objects depending on size and strength, ergo the two of them together will view only the existent matter.”

“Um… right.” Monroe switched the lens for a small, Y-shaped antenna with balls on its tips. “This object-”

“A Replicator Wand, one antenna scans the matter of the target, transfers its structure to the other antenna, which alter and mend the molecules in the air to create a solid replica.”

“Merlin’s False Teeth, woman, how do ya know all this?!?”

“Facilier showed them to me and Wendy. The latter has a hard time understanding, but their use is pretty clear to me. Excluding the fact that all the ‘magic’ behind it is ludicrous.”

“Ludicrous, but real. Could ya tell me the workings behind this Infinity Satchel?”

Carla looked at the bag and casually explained, “The spell in place is one that alters dimensions, and the area inside the bag has a different dimension than outside. The spell continuously expands the dimension inside while the outside was never touched. But, again, ludicrous.”

“Call it whatcha want, you’re a smart kitty!” Monroe beamed. “Honestly, I’d like ya to stay and help me teach Ray Ray.”

“Hmm. At the risk of shaming my own kind, I already have an owner. Albeit, we’re kind of…"
awkward at the moment.”

“Eh, she’ll get over it, it’s not easy for humans to admit that animals are smarter than they are. Like badger-moles, even. Speakin’ of which, get a load of this device!” Monroe pulled a thin, metal rod that looked like a golf tee, with a pointed tip and ball on its top. He stuck it in the ground. “A portable Seismic Sensor that can feel vibrations from any distance. Perfect against enemies who’re trying to sneak up on you. You could set it to 3 feet, for example.” Monroe inputted that distance, stamping the ground with his paw as the rod shook slightly. Carla stared with a meagerly interested look. “Or 100 miles!” Monroe typed in that distance. “You could feel an army comin’ hours before they do.”

… Woggle-woggle. The Sensor wobbled left-and-right forcefully. It did it again. Carla raised a brow. “What’s it doing?”

A small monitor showed the estimated mass of what made the vibrations. “Ohhhh, that’s not good…”

Back in the forest, Wendy had whirlwinds spinning around both fists as she dashed at June for a double-punch. The Te Xuan Ze grabbed Wendy’s fists tight, standing her own ground, but Wendy had spun upside-down into the air, swinging her foot down on June’s head. They broke free as Wendy was back on her feet, both ready to attack again. Woh-woh-woh-woh- June looked at her wristband when it started beeping. Wendy stared curious at the look June was making. “Hey, Wendy… what does this look like to you?”

Wendy looked at the bracelet’s jewel. “It’s… some kind of tower?”

Several miles within the backwoods…

“Three more minutes, kids, then we have to go back.” Facilier told the twins. They stood a few feet outside the Veil’s barrier.

“OKAY!” Sonny and Donna cheered. Facilier turned around, crouched, and the skull on his hat covered his face, he began juggling colorful energy puffballs, and small colorful firecrackers flew around behind him. The twins backed into the Veil, “We see nothing.” They walked forward, “WE SEE IT!” Backed up, “We see nothing.” Forward, “WHOOOAA!”

Shadow Facilier felt a rumbling. “What is it, Shadow?” The shadow pointed upward excitedly, so Facilier climbed a tree. “…What is that?”

A tremendous tower composed of green metal stomped across the forest with huge, metal crab legs. A laser cannon was implanted within the top, aimed directly at the Veiled City. The commander of such a structure was a witch in a black dress, purple scarf, and artificial body. Her boney, pointy skull head cackled inside its glass container. “Orchid Bay, the Veiled City! Blind to magic, what a pity. That they will never see this coming. Cauldron Keep’s mobile gunning! Once I sap the energy from this land, Grunty will live! And this place sand! CAH, HAHAAHahahahahaaaaa!”

“I see it, Sonny!” Donna exclaimed, sitting on a tree that was halfway in the Veil.

Sonny used his rope to pull the treetop toward him, in the Veil. “How ‘bout now?”

“Nope!” Donna smiled. Sonny released, so the tree began flapping back-and-forth, in and out of the Veil. “I SEE it, I don’t, I see it, I don’t, I see it!”
Who remembers Gruntilda from *Firstborn*? She was in *Banjo-Kazooie*? Classic Rareware villain?? Ah, screw you guys. :P You probably know Veruca and Violet from *Charlie Chocolate Factory*. Next time, Wendy’s first boss fight! Parents, don’t spoil your kids!
Chapter Summary

Jack Frost remembers his past with Queen Elsa. Meanwhile, Team Rupert explores Gallagher's treacherous playground.

Hello, everyone. Here we have probably the longest flashback in my entire series. Just because it is. :P So live with it. MGDon’tcount HERE WE GO!!

Chapter 9: That Promise 300 Years Ago

Planet Poké

“Oh… my… gosh!…” Darcy gasped with the greatest joy. “I’m on Pokémon Planet! ! Sunni’s gonna be SOOO jealous when I tell her I got here first!”

“Ha har har!” Lucario chuckled softly. “I’m sure she will. But that will have to wait awhile. You have a very important task ahead of you.”

“What kind of task?”

“Darcy Chariton…” He threw a sash of Pokéballs at Darcy’s feet, “it’s time for you to begin your Pokémon Journey!”

An awkward silence followed. Darcy was at a loss for words. This was her destiny. And it came, hit her in the face just like that. If only she had time to comprehend it…

“HAAAAA ha ha haaaa! I’m just kidding!” laughed Lucario. “As long as this story is, we really don’t have time for a *** Pokémon Journey! Ahhh… gotta make yourself laugh, ya know.”

“…..Thank….. GOD….” Darcy felt a huge sense of relief fly off of her.

“Ha ha, yes… but you do have an important job here. With the Apocalypse dawning near, all species are in danger, including the Pokémon. And I sense the ones who kidnapped your mother are bringing chaos here as well.”

“So what about the Pokémon?”

“Ahh, the New Universe just cannot be without Pokémon! These were the very first creatures created by the gods! They were the original benders and have the greatest connections to the elements than any. Such amazing creatures…”

“I thought dragons were the original benders.”
“PAH HA HA HA HA HA HA HA—don’t be ridiculous, Darcy. But if there is to be a New World, that cannot happen without the legacy of the Pokémon to continue. They must be saved, must be allowed a chance to survive.”

“Right, so I’ll just build an ark, get 2 of each Pokémon; maybe have to establish some mating rules, and judging by the sheer amount of them, that’ll take a lot of math to determine the size of the ark, so we may also have to buy a lot of—”

“That duty will not fall onto you now. You do wish to aid your sister in her destiny, right?”

“Well yes, of course I—wait, what destiny?”

“Sunni must go on a journey of self-dependence, in order to better herself for the trials ahead. But you will be able to help her. Your father and I have talked it over, and we believe it is in your best interest to study the Element Arts.”

“You mean I got other elements besides psychic? Is that why I’m bad at it?”

“No. But according to your father, you were very proficient in your martial arts classes. Almost each element has a martial art that ordinary humans can master and produce the illusion of bending an element. Chris Uno mastered Fire Kung-Fu as an extra defense measure should his bending be disabled, and your father is skilled in all arts.”

“And the reason I’m learning it is… ‘cause I’m bad at psychic-bending.” Darcy deduced doubtfully.

“You will master your element on your own time, but when times call for it, you must focus on what you excel at, not waste time perfecting an art you would need time and patience to master. I’m sorry to say, by the end of this month, we expect Sunni to be far more powerful than you at psychic… but you will have skills she does not have, and your strength will be used to aid each other when required.”

“Kay, so, who’m I learning it from?”

“The Pokémon. Throughout the world are many gyms whose leaders favor a certain type of Pokémon. Not only do they train them to become stronger, the trainers learn from them as well. They form bonds with their Pokémon so that they may teach them what they know. While the trainers are not born with chi, the Pokémon teach them other ways to manipulate the elements. With this illusion of element mastery, the trainers feel closer than ever with their Pokémon. That is why we must save them. So the new generation may have those bonds as well.”

“Well… then my journey of self-discovery begins now. ..Lead the way.”

“Certainly.” Lucario dashed across the fields as Darcy followed.

“Oh wait, what about the Pokéballs?”

“Those’re just decoratives.”

“Oh.”

**Gallagher Elementary**

When the bus came to stop beside the schoolyard, the children were eager to head out. Their immediate destination was the playground, where dozens of kids were already roaming freely. “I’ll be right there, Saraaaah!” the blonde girl sang, rolling her backpack faster as she ran. “Lemme just
hide my stuff!” She headed behind the jungle gym, lay her backpack down, and rushed away to join her friends.

Their tiny arms close to snapping, Team Rupert panted and stretched to relieve the stiffness after letting go of the bag. “At least we have some time to rest.” Rupert gasped. “Why’s everyone outside…”

“It’s close to summer, so everyone gets extra pre-school recess.” Timmy answered. “Principal Rachel’s orders.”

“Well, that’s good!” Rupert beamed. “Maybe we can find Jessie in all this!”

“Yeah! And his MAAAAGIC kiss will CHANGE us back to normal!” Hikari proclaimed with hearts around her face.

“Hehe… none for me, thanks.” Rupert sweatdropped. “Let’s just find ‘im before they go in.” (Play “Perplexing Pool” from Pikmin 2.)

Stage 15: Iron Plains

Mission: Look for First Grade President Jessie.

Rupert, Timmy, and Hikari called 15 Red Pikmin, 15 Yellows, 13 Blues, 20 Pinks, 10 Whites, and 10 Purples, making 83. Their journey across the concrete plains would first require them to pass the gigantic jungle gym, the sun almost completely blocked by the huge metal poles. It became a maze since footballs, toys, or rocks were lain between poles, and within the bars, the team had to take out small groups of Dwarf Bulborbs. They came to a dead end in the maze, but noticed some green moss growing on one of the poles. “What’s this stuff?” Rupert asked.

“Our dad said this jungle gym used to be an actual jungle for some reason.” Timmy said. “I guess this was part of it.”

“Hmm… well, it helps. Come on, Pikmin!”

The trio climbed the moss to a higher level of bars and their Pikmin stayed with them. The bars were still fairly narrow at their small sizes, so they stayed carefully along the middle and instructed their Pikmin to do the same. There were very small edges along the corners of the vertical poles, connecting other horizontals, so they struggled to squeeze their Pikmin alongside them. Swooping Snitchbugs were buzzing around the bars and swiping some Pikmin, forcing Rupert to send Wing Pikmin and wipe them out.

They noticed a series of other paths below which were enclosed, so they couldn’t be accessed from the previous areas. But if they fell in, the Pikmin could grab Bomb Rocks and blow up the stones enclosing the paths, or grab bridge tiles to fix bridges leading to the previous paths, depending on where they landed. But they would open these shortcuts in time, first focusing on navigating this maze of different levels of bars. There were several moss ladders on many routes, with some leading to Pellet Posies, but others seemingly leading the right way. A huge shadow appeared to be engulfing part of the gym, and they looked up to see a boy strapped to the top of the gym by his legs and wrists, tied by rope.

The trio made their way to the top of the gym to see him struggling. “Nnn, stupid Brandon, makin’ me do his dares. ISN’T ANYONE GONNA UNTIE ME? ! Ugh, I bet they left me here on purpose…”
Rupert nodded with his friends and had their Pikmin try to untie the ropes. They were tied surprisingly well, and even the Purple Pikmin couldn’t help him. “Man, how else are we gonna help him?” Rupert asked.

Timmy turned a mini dial on his goggles to zoom in and view the ground below. “Hey, there’s some little burning ember rocks on the ground. Dunno what they’re for, but I bet they can burn off the ropes. …And over there is a pile of sticks. We could use those and make paths for the Pikmin.”

“Alright, Timmy get the Red Pikmin on those embers.” Rupert instructed. “Hikari, have Wing Pikmin get the sticks.”

“Youkey-dokey, Artichokey!” Hikari beamed, guiding the Wings down as she glided using her sleeves. Timmy used his cape and glided to the embers, the Red Pikmin dropping after. The Wing Pikmin collected sticks and laid both sides on a low level and high level, starting from the Red Pikmin. Once they finished, the Reds could carry the burning embers to the kid and toss them on the ropes, eventually burning them off.

“WHOA!” He was taken by surprise, gripping the bars. “The heck just happened. …Oh well, Brandon’s getting punched in the face!” He climbed off quickly and ran to find his, er, acquaintance.

Right away, Rupert noticed a squished, black object on the bar under where the kid’s butt was planted. Rupert approached and discovered it was an Onion, which rose to life and floated to the ground on the other side of the gym. He, Timmy, and Hikari made their way to that area to find a seed sprout out. They plucked that seed and discovered the new Pikmin.

You discovered **Rock Pikmin**! They may seem like ordinary stones, but these little guys are as durable as boulders! They can’t latch on and repeatedly bash enemies, but pack quite a punch if you throw them at enemies! And no one likes rocks being thrown at your glass, but if that glass happened to be blocking your way, it’s something I’d recommend. ;)

“Awwwww! Look at his wittle eeeeyes!” Hikari cooed.

“This one’s kinda different.” Timmy observed.

Rupert saw the standing glass shard behind the Onion, blocking their path. He grabbed the Rock Pikmin and tossed it several times against the glass, eventually breaking it. “Hmm… let’s work on making more first.”

For the next several minutes, they worked on opening the shortcuts leading back to the Onions, and sending 5 Wing Pikmin back in. They brought their Rock Pikmin and had it collect some pellets around the area, and later harvested 10 Rock Pikmin, making 88 total. Within the maze, there was a blue coin (Tricky Buggah) encased inside a crystal, which they could break with the Rock Pikmin. They had the Pikmin carry it back before finally proceeding to the field where the dozens of titanic kids roamed.

Compared to the forest or the beach, the playground seemed like a lot more open area, few walls protecting certain paths. “So where’s President Jessie, anyway?” Rupert asked.

“I dunno. But they let us in gym during recess, too. He could be in there.” Timmy mentioned.

“Let’s look for treasures first.”

Roaming the playground were Decorated Cannon Beetles, big red beetles with round, open mouths.
They spat round boulders at the trio which homed in on them, but they could easily beat them by separating from the Pikmin and tricking the boulders into rolling back against the beetles. It took 7 Pikmin to carry each one, so they let the Yellows have one, Blues, and Rocks. There were so many areas of the playground to explore, but they first noticed a group of four kids at the basketball court, jumping over and over to try and knock their stuck ball out of the basket.

The ball looked too smooth and slippery, and too big for the Wing Pikmin to grab, so they would look for a solution. They did notice a boy boredly sitting on the low end of a seesaw a few feet away from the court (miles at Pikmin size). “Siiiigh… when’s Chelsea getting back so we can just ride this thing?” he said annoyedly.

The trio further explored the playground to solve these endless dilemmas. They noticed an enormous, overweight brown-skinned child in a red T-shirt and blue shorts, on his back at the base of a makeshift mountain that led onto the playground. The boy grew as tall as a mountain himself as the team made it up to him.

“Siiiigh… I wish I could stand up and move, but Ah’m just so darn fat. Oh bother…” With that, Cleveland Jr. proceeded to eat a Hershey bar.

Team Rupert exchanged glances and sent their Purple Pikmin on the boy. It took 120 Pikmin to carry him, so their 10 Purples, 10 Whites, and 10 Reds made enough to do so. “Hehe hehe! You silly ants, I’m not a tasty snack!”

The Pikmin carried the overweight boy to the seesaw, stopping beside the end that was up. The Pikmin squatted up and down, charging momentum, before finally tossing Jr. straight onto the other end. The force created by his weight caused the other boy to fly straight to the basketball court. “WHOOOOoaaa!” He went right in the net and forced the ball out, his face smashing on the ground.

The players ran over to see if he was all right, the boy’s nose bloody and a hole left in the ground. “Whoa, dude! You totally broke the ground!”

“Let’s take you to the nurse…” The boys kindly led him away, allowing Team Rupert to safely approach the newly opened hole.

“Wow… that looks pretty deep.” Rupert noticed.

“Yeah, and it looks like it goes a long way.” Timmy said, scanning with his goggles. “But there could be some stuff down there.”

“Uhhh… let’s focus on the main stage first. Maybe we’ll come back for ‘em.”

They saw that Junior dropped his Hershey Bar (True Purity) and had their Pikmin return it to the Onions. Once back there, they plucked the new Pikmin they got from the Cannon Beetles, then decided to do some reorganizing: they took 20 Reds, 20 Pinks, 20 Blues, 10 Yellows, 10 Purples, 10 Whites, and 10 Rocks. They returned to the playground, recalling their reason for coming here as they searched for Jessie. It didn’t appear the president was anywhere, so their next best option was the gym.

“Only one problem, the teachers keep the gym doors locked, you gotta head around the hallways.” Timmy mentioned.

“What? That’ll take FOREVER!” Rupert shouted.

“WELL, there IS the hall monitor, who gets access to all the keys in the school. We could find him
and take the gym key.” Hikari noted.

“I think this week’s is Pig-Pen. Oh, there he is now!” Timmy pointed at a boy sitting atop a stone turtle, and it appeared a thin cloud of smoke surrounded his horribly dirty form. “They picked him ‘cause no one wants to be caught by him. Guess why? Hehehehehe!”

“Euh… we better use our White Pikmin for this.” knew Rupert. But now was a matter of getting onto the turtle where he sat. He noticed the two girls spinning hoolahoops around their waists, and lined with them were two trampolines, a larger and smaller one, at the end of a playground slide. “I have an idea, but it’s gonna be pretty tricky. Follow me.” Rupert led them to the Makeshift Mountain and climbed enough stable slopes in order to eventually climb to the playground. Crawling about the mountain were plenty of Dweevils, colorful four-legged spiders that each possessed an element power, depending on the color. The Pikmin were eager to attack them, even though they didn’t attack first, so the kids frantically tried to call them back. In the confusion, five Blue Pikmin were shocked to death by an Anode Dweevil, so finally annoyed, they decided to chuck their Purples onto the spiders and take them out faster.

They allowed their Blues, Purples, and Rocks to haul them back, each getting two Dweevils, since they were pretty light. They finally made it onto the playground and carefully navigated the giant holes-whose-reason-for-existence-we-would-never-know. They had to cross a bridge in order to reach the slide, but two Puffy Blowhogs were floating around it. They threatened to blow the kids and Pikmin into the holes and onto the concrete several hundred feet below, so Hikari gracefully leaped across the holes with the Wing Pikmin and sent them on the Blowhogs, 10 for each. The friends hurried along with their Pikmin keeping between the holes, except a few Rocks and Yellows who slipped and dropped down. With the Wings distracting the Blowhogs, the kids made it to the slide, where some boys rolled a rubber ball down, let it bounce on the small trampoline, to the big one, and to the hoolihoop girls as they flung it away. “I think you guys know what we gotta do.” Rupert said.

“I’m gonna be sick.” groaned Timmy.

So they sent their other Pikmin below the playground, took only the Whites and Purples, and whooshed down the slide. Bounced off the mini trampoline, used their Purples to add force to the larger so they could bounce off it, and flew to the hoolihoop girls before grabbing tighter than they ever grabbed onto one’s hoop. It was like a ride at an amusement park, the world only a blur around them, and their flesh seconds from flying off. “I-I-I think I see it. . .. Let go!”

They couldn’t release any faster on Rupert’s cue, flying directly for the stone turtle’s neck. Seconds after, the girls dropped their hoops to take a break. “Let’s go somewhere else, Leslie.” One of them said. “Those boys keep throwing stuff at us.”

“Yeah, let’s… ewwww!” When Leslie picked up her hoop, her hand touched a spot with small goop. “There’s some kinda stuff on it!”

Timmy grinned sheepishly. He couldn’t hold his dinner in. So with that, they trekked up to the towering body of stench known as Pig-Pen, already having to clamp hands over their noses. He sat on the turtle like a horsy, so his legs spread to either side, forcing them to walk along the edge of the turtle and get behind him. A key that read ‘Gym’ stuck out of his back pocket, so they marched up to get it. Their White Pikmin had to first cut the weak stitching of his pocket, digging at it like it was ground, until the key fell out. All 10 Pikmin hoisted the key and began their journey to the gym doors. The trio dropped down the turtle as Rupert sent Timmy to get back the fallen playground Pikmin, and Hikari to get the Onion Pikmin. It also seemed the Wings finished brawling the Blowhogs and were collecting their fill.
Rupert followed the White Pikmin to the gym door. Unfortunately, there was no way onto the huge step before the door, and even if they could, the keyhole was a thousand stories above, and the Wing Pikmin couldn’t touch the gassy key. However, near the corner of the step appeared to be cracked, making Rupert wish they had one of those Bomb Rocks. He called the Pikmin to drop the key before hurrying to reunite with his friends. After explaining the dilemma, they searched the park for possible Bomb Rocks, discovering a pair of giant shorts lain into a puddle. They deduced some bully stole a kid’s shorts and decided to get them wet. But conveniently, Bomb Rocks stuck out of the back pocket, so they sent their Blues down to get ‘em out of the liquid.

With that, they headed for the step and tossed three bombs beside the cracked part, successfully blowing it up and creating a hill of rubble to lead ‘em onto the step. Now was the matter of getting the key to the door, but it seemed that problem would be answered when the chubby gym coach marched up and noticed the key “discarded” on the step. “Damn it. Sigh, Pig-Pen needs some new pants if he’s gonna keep droppin’ stuff. Oh well, might as well open it.” Not at all seeing the tinies, she grabbed the key and unlocked the door, heading inside and leaving the door open.

“Lucky!” said Rupert, and the friends eagerly led their Pikmin in the gym. (End song.)

The sound was far more ringing in their ears, dozens of children scampering about the flat, polished gym floor, the stomping of their sneakers, bouncing of basketballs, the eventual earsplitting whistle, all mixed into a cluster of booming sounds that made audible conversation impossible. “DO YOU GUYS SEE JESSIE ANYWHEEEEERE?” screamed Rupert.

“I DON’T KNOW. THERE’S TOO MANY PEOPLE. THE PRESIDENTS’ OFFICES AREN’T FAR FROM HERE, LET’S GO THERE AND WAIT FOR HIM.” Timmy replied.

“What if we get squiiiiished?” screamed Hikari.

“WHAT IF WE GET SQUIIIIIISHED?” screamed Hikari.

“JUST WALK WHERE THERE AREN’T MANY PEOPLE. BESIDES, SOMEONE HAS TO NOTICE A HUNDRED FLOWER THINGS RUNNING AROUND THE FLOOR.”

But as it happened, in all this activity occurring about the gym floor, not one noticed an army of tiny, colorful ants skittering across their floor. The kids ducked with great horror when a basketball bounced over them and off the wall, and two kids in mountain-size sneakers skipped over them in their mission to grab it. Next, three kids were on their bellies on square-shaped skateboards, rolling around the gym floor as the team ducked with pure fright, safely right under the boards as they flew by, but 5 Reds, 4 Yellows, and 3 Purples were squished. “Oh crap—JUST RUUUUUN!” They booked it with all the remaining strength in their legs. Every kind of hazard threatened to smoosh them, basketballs, rogue hoolihoops, kids just running around like idiots, there was no safe haven in this gym.

But when they felt their legs giving out, Timmy saw someone that sparked him with relief. “HEY!! LOOK! IT’S JOEY!” Indeed, the black-haired Beatles child was innocently building blocks outside a corner doorway. So with even more strength to run, they rushed to the 5-year-old.

Arceus knows if their voices were heard in all of that chaos..

But all of that chaos suddenly silenced when the hallway doors burst open, a gang of fourth-graders stomping in with furious expressions. “ALL RIGHT you squirts, what’d you do with our princess?!”


“WHADDYOU mean??” a first-grade boy yelled.
“Princess Shelly ain’t in ‘er office and no one’s seen ‘er! And we KNOW you shrimps are mad at her for beatin’ your boss!”

“Hey, OUR boss is missing, too!!” another boy shouted. “We think you BIG KIDS mighta taken ‘im!”

“Oh yeah?!” the fourth-grade leader stomped up and got in his face. “PROVE it!”

“YOU PROVE IT!”

“Grrrrrrrr!”

“Both of them are missing?” Joey asked himself as Rupert’s team was struggling to climb to his very top block. “What coulda happened?”

The tinies finally made it and began jumping, “Joey! Joey! We know what happened! Look at us!”

“You know what I ain’t liking your TONE, Shortstuff!” yelled the older boy as his friends got beside him. “YOU kids are gettin’ your afternoon wedgies EARLY!”

“BRING IT ON, Stinkbreath!” yelled the younger as those of his age got beside him. “We’re throwin’ YOU in the basket!”

“Uh-oh. This ain’t gonna end well.” Joey said worriedly. “Someone better do something.”

“You CAN DO SOMETHING JOEY IF YOU JUST LOOK DOOOOOOWN!”

“You guys, stoooop!” a 2nd-grade girl rushed in. “Molly said she saw Shelly at the beach, she was kidnapped by BIGGER kids!”

“You mean the… MIDDLE-schoolers?!” the fourth-graders gasped.

“They probably took Jessie, too!!” a first-grader panicked.

“But what the heck do THEY want?!”

“Well, whatever it is, WE’RE taking them BACK!!” a scrawny 4th-grader fist-palmed.

“Go up against big kids?” the 2nd-grader asked.

“Well THEY started it! Everyone get your bikes ready, WE ride to Hendry Middle School AT DAAAAAWWWWWN!”

“Uhhh it is dawn.”

“AT LUUUUUNNNNNCH!” And there was a sudden scrambling to get out of the gym.

“Uh-oh. Better find the kindergarteners.” So grabbing his blocks haphazardly, Joey rushed out.

“WAAAAAH-!” And the tinies ended up hitting the floor. “HEY! Whadda ‘bout US, Joey? GET BACK HERE OR I’M TELLING AUNT KUKI!!” screamed Hikari.

“You know, Cousin Artie has a grow ray.” Timmy mentioned. “Maybe we can find one o’ his friends.”

“Maybe.” Rupert said doubtfully. “Any idea where they are?”

Mexico; near Miracle City

The morning was brisk and calm over Miracle Road, a light wind blowing sand across the desert and the sky a dim pink. With all this sand blowing everywhere, Sector V couldn’t keep their eyes totally open, their C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. parked on the side of the road. “This is where we last recorded the Brotherhood heading to.” Aurora said.

“Why can’t we fly any closer again?” asked Mason.

“Because we don’t want those Brotherhooders to know we’re coming.” Haylee replied. “Granted, we could totally smoke them if they did, just to be safe.”

“Not really. Shouldn’t one of us stay behind to watch Sheila?” Harry asked, glancing at the bus where their raccoon friend was still conked out. “At least try to get ‘er up, ‘cause Lord knows without her crazy power, we might as well be…”

“…Hu?” But it was then that Sheila peeped awake, immediately getting to her feet and bursting out the door. “YOU AREN’T STARTING THE ADVENTURE WITHOUT ME, ARE YOU?!?”

“She’s awaaaaaaake!” Haruka cheered.

“’ey now, can’t I take a snooze for 2 minutes without me mates ditchin’ me on the deck?” Sheila smirked, facing the road with excitement. “Ay, me legs feel all stiff and sleepy! You blokes don’t mind if I go out fer a quick run, do ya?”

“Hn hn, not at all.” Aurora chuckled.

“Strewth! Don’t fall behind, you lot!” (Play “Mariachi Madness” from Rayman Legends!)

Stage 16: Miracle City

Mission: Locate the Brotherhood of Evil’s hideout.

Act 1: Miracle Road

Sheila rushed across the windy desert as many lines of Lums slid past her path, having to jump or sidestep to grab them all before they passed. The tiny grains of sand blowing in the breeze obstructed her vision, but she would keep running forward ‘til she got where she wanted. And though probly no one was seeing him, Murfy was there to help collect Lums or press those Eye Switches. And once a few miles across the desert, Skelopedes began appearing in attempt to snack Sheila; large centipedes with pink, skeletal bodies. She managed to jump them when they came, but now skeletons in sombreros were riding them as well, forcing Sheila to kick them away in mid-leap.

A team of five Skelopedes launched out to snack her, but Sheila passed a convenient Shrink Fairy and shrunk down, narrowly dodging the bugs. She came to a cliff and ran down a clothesline into a village below, jumping further clotheslines and swinging off clothes. “Baje de mi ropa!” An angry villager pushed open his wood window and flung Sheila across the street, where she landed on a passing horse carriage and jumped to hit a Grow Fairy, zapping to normal. She ran down a narrow alleyway and hopped atop some fruit stands, following the Lums. “Si usted toca mis cortinas, te
Angry villagers pushed open windows for Sheila to then jump across, followed by fountains of “Horchataaaa!” streaming from machines.

Sheila grabbed and slid down a clothesline to a cactus field, hopping across safe platforms as well as giant sandworms. She swung a Purple Lum real quick before jumping a sandworm into a cliffside cave, then came out on the other side where she jumped more sandworms. Then with great precision, she flipped up a stairway of Airplane Doomtoons to a Hoodlum blimp, kicking off a Hoodmonger and down a deep, vast cliffside in which she softened the descent with her tail propeller, letting the wind breeze her face. Once at the bottom, she punched a Heckler away before continuing running. “Olé!”

The rest of the road was fairly normal until she made it to the gates of the town. She skidded to a halt to catch her breath, and grin at the camera.

“Adequate job, Sheila.” Haruka remarked after the others caught up. “You enjoy your nap?”

“I’ was orright. But me legs still need a bit o’ waking up.”

“Let us handle a bit, Sheila.” Dillon told her. “I wouldn’t mind a few scores with the Brotherhooders myself.” (Play “Fiesta de los Muertos” from Rayman Legends.)

Act 2: Ciudad de los Trastornos

Dillon marched casually across the first city street, where it appeared strange, red-eyed skeletons in black clothes and sombreros were patrolling. A gang of them charged up and tried scratching Dillon with their long, boney claws, getting his shirt scratched as he dodged and stretched Mario to punch them. About 10 skeletons ganged on him, but after tearing them to pieces, the severed bones were determined and bouncing back to him. “Like father, like son, still hopeless.” Midna said, getting in Dillon’s shadow. “Do the shockwave.” Dillon stretched a shadowy circle to catch all the skeletons inside, so Mario could zip around and tear ‘em to even lesser shreds.

The further main road was blocked by a huge pile of flaming debris, leaving Dillon to only take a rightward alley. “Help me.” A tiny squeak caught his ears, and he searched around for its source. Behind one of the food stands was an Electoon cage; not that he knew what these were, but they were helpless and trapped, so Dillon broke the cage open. With that, he continued down the alleyway and turned a left corner, where the alley was just a bottomless chasm with wooden pegs around the walls. Dillon stretched his shadow’s arms to grab and swing the distant pegs, eventually reaching a safe land. He jumped up a pile of stacked garbage cans and got onto the rooftops where some Sky Guys began shooting slingshots at him. Dillon shot them down with his G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A. and found his way to a huge chasm, where the ground was destroyed, exposing many rivers of what seemed like acid.

A few platforms were spread over the chasm which Dillon could fly to using Shadow Glide, though with a few Sky Guys threatening to shoot ‘im down, he had to take care of them with the G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A. first. He soon glided to a very unstable ledge before the backdoor of a windowless building. Dillon used Shadow Veil to slide under the door and find himself in a bakery, the pungent smell of colorful cakes hitting his nose; though from what he could observe, the ingredients being forced in the machines didn’t make him want one. This small, steaming room was sealed, but a metal slide near the ceiling was pouring ingredients into a cauldron, with conveniently-horizontal cookies coming down to let him hop up. However, he was far too big to do so, but it seemed a jar on a shelf was containing a Shrink Fairy. Dillon sent Mario to open the cage, the fairy sprinkling magic dust on him to zip him down to size.

Dillon climbed a sack of flour onto a table beside the cauldron, carefully walking around its edge to
reach the waterfall of dough. He jumped his way up the cookie platforms, then did the same once up at the slide, into the dark tunnel where it originated. He made it into a kitchen chamber where he hopped off the cookies above a row of cabinets. The cabinet roofs were pretty clear, but Dillon unfortunately walked onto a weak patch and plummeted into it. At the same time, the cabinet opened as a chef with a huge black mustache began searching it intently, with Dillon having to hide behind a series of giant food and condiments as he made his way across.

He walked up a slanted stick of celery onto a series of cans, having to glide to each one with Shadow Glides, but using Veil whenever the chef glanced over. He finally took land on a particular gold can, which the chef took out of the cabinet with a grabber and carried it off. He passed a movable shelf of cupcakes which Dillon quickly floated onto. Trapped within a maze of house-size cupcakes, Dillon decided to make his way to the top for a better view. After maneuvering around the maze, he found a ladder on one of the corner poles to fulfill this task. “Help me.” But hearing the squeaky cry again, Dillon climbed down first, seeing Electoons trapped in a wooden cage. A spray can containing Super Spice stood beside them, close enough for Dill to Wall Jump between it and a cage bar. Once on top of the can, he bounced on it several times before it sprayed, severely scorching the wood bar until the cage fell open.

The (large) creatures walked free while Dillon returned to the ladder and climbed to the shelf’s 3rd floor. It unfortunately wouldn’t go any higher, so he explored the cupcake maze and found a ladder leading onto one of the delicacies; made of dripped icing that was hardened. He made it onto and began trudging the thick, colorful icings, and knew more than ever he would need a bath after this. Also, there appeared to be Caterpie digging around these cakes, so Dillon had to trudge through fast to avoid being snacked. Eventually, he found a rope of hardened dough hanging from the next shelf, so Dillon jumped to and grabbed it to climb up.

The fourth, top shelf had a melted cupcake which he could walk onto like a slope, letting him glide to the center one whose icing spiraled into a point like a Christmas Tree. After walking around and up this spiral (solid icing), he made it to the cherry on top, at level with an oscillating fan hanging from the ceiling that was blowing its scent into an air duct. Using Shadow Glide, Dillon blew into the vent as well, all the way outside where a Grow Fairy zapped him back to normal. “Well, that was an utter waste.” he said. “Any idea where I should go now?”

Midna came out. “Well, think: what place in any city could possibly be big enough to hold a hundred supervillains?”

“The… prison?”

“Or the library. Whichever fits.”

And across this surprisingly-lush green courtyard stood the Miracle City Mint. Though when Dillon walked in, mutant vegetables and fruit monsters arose from the grass, hungry for some shadowbender. With Midna’s help, he stretched a Shadow Shockwave and had Mario fly around and snack them all, but his shadow soon stopped and hacked the horrible foods out of his mouth. Seems like Gramma Stuffum was using this town’s ingredients. He tried to Shadow Possess several of the fruits and merely strangle them, but his now-sickened shadow wasn’t up to the task. He whipped out his G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A. and tried to blow through them, hurrying through the yard and to the prison.

He thought he would have to Shadow Veil under the backdoor, but he was merely able to take the handle, and pull it open. This first hall had many open or half-closed cells, where an assortment of vicious, hairy thugs were chatting about or playing cards, discussing what they’d be robbing today, the most efficient secret exits, and which guards they just pranked or harassed today. This was
truly the greatest prison Dillon ever did see. When Dillon turned a left corridor, a large, bear-like
criminal called El Oso charged down the hall shouting in anger, Dillon quickly Veiling to avoid his
wrath. He carefully progressed forward, Veiling again when El Oso made a loop and charged for
him the same way. But by then, Mario was tired and still sickened by the poison fruit, so when El
Oso came for him again, Chris Uno leaped from over Dillon and smashed the villain’s head with a
flaming foot.

“Thought you might need some help goin’ in here.” he said. “Mario not get enough sleep?”

“Ate some bad veggies. Anyway, the Brotherhood’s gotta be close by.”

“I dunno. This place feels a little too open.”

The double-doors ahead were amazingly locked, so Chris ignited a blowtorch on his finger and
burned through the lock. A storm of furious screams hit their ears as they opened the cafeteria,
where hundreds of criminals ran like wild animals. Chris jumped in front of Dillon and started
punching flames every which way, and when the criminals started charging at them, Chris erupted
a great flaming wall which he pushed, stretched out, and scorched any criminal in its wake. “I
exhausted nearly all my juice tryin’ to beat up some pots-and-pans knight. You don’t think I can
beat you all in a QUARTER of that time?”

“Well, he certainly has it covered.” Midna said while she and Dillon only watched Chris storm
around and burn every villain with soot.

“At least he don’t need to rely on anyone for his bending.” Dillon replied, glancing at Mario
holding his stomach.

Within about 5 minutes, Chris was done wasting every rampaging low-life in the room, leaving
one bearded inmate whose neck he grabbed. “’ey, Mane! You no fight fair! No one in Miracle City
ever gets any bending, Mane!”

“Then it won’t be hard finding those that stand out. Seen about a hundred supervillains who, uh,
look like they’re from somewhere else?”

“I dunno, Mane! I was jus’ gonna go to the arcade with the money I stole las’ night. The only
hundred villains I know, well, make regular visits here.”

“Any non-Mexicans?”

“Tha’s racist, Mane.”

“Never mind.” So he punched the man and knocked him out.

“If you were gonna do the Batman thing, I shoulda done that.” Dillon said with disbelief.

“You weren’t the one that whooped all their butts. Now let’s go.” All other doors were locked, so
the two looked around until Chris pulled a strange lever beside a door.

“WHOAA!!” A chandelier came down and almost crushed Dillon. “Watch it, buddy!!”

“Hey, you can get up now, right?” Chris noted.

“I coulda flew up.”

“Really?”
But the look of Dillon’s shadow said otherwise. “…Fine.” So he got on the platform as Chris pushed the lever and let it rise him to the ceiling (then Chris just flew to the second-floor walkway using rocket boots). An Electoon cage also hung from the ceiling, which Chris took the liberty of shooting down with a fireball. Dillon swung the ceiling lights to get to the walkway before he and Chris left out a door to an outside balcony. Two teams of prisoners appeared to be playing hockey using cops tied by their arms and legs, sliding them around the floor.

“'ey, you kids wanna be our goalies? We still need two people.” An inmate said.

“Umm… no thanks. You know any big villain hideouts around here?” Chris asked.

“Oh those’re everywhere. The volcano, the orphanage, the elementary school, that old lady’s garden…”

“One that belongs to the Brotherhood of Evil?” Dill asked.

“El Fraternidad? I no heard o’ those, Mane, you ask someplace else.”

“Try the volcano.” Dill said, so with that, the duo hopped down the roofs and to the front yard, where they left through the open front gates. They saw the others waiting at a city street and hurried to reunite.

“So’d you find anything?” Haruka asked.

“No, but they picked a good town, though. It’s like bad guys run the place.” Dillon replied.

“We asked around, ‘said so many bad guys run the place is ‘cause of some old legend called ‘El Tigre’.” Harry explained. “‘Say he’s a legendary antihero who could never decide on the right path, but even though he stopped a bunch o’ villains, he hung with them a lot, too. They have a statue of the one from 1800s, and one that was made in 2016, but they don’t know why. But even though the city was already a mess, building that second one inspired criminals even more.”

“This city IS a real dump.” Dillon said. “Can’t do any dumb shadowbending since Mario ate that fruit. I don’t see why anyone’d—”

“Oh, BLIMEY!” exclaimed Sheila Frantic as she walked over, eating a bunch of churros. “This city is a BEAUT! You’ve got to TRY these things, mates, it’s like a fiesta on my tongue!” She swallowed many in one bite.

“Sheila, you just got up, I wouldn’t recommend it as a morning snack.” Haru said.

“’ey, I need food in my belly, and I ain’t get to eat anything after Stuffum’s glop. Ay, and I feel MUY energized, mate! I feel like me ears hear a butterfly’s… oh?” (End song.) Her ear indeed started twitching. A sound was sounding somewhere, somewhere not entirely visible. “…’ey, that sewer’s talking.” She pointed at a lid on the street.

Midna came out of Dill’s shadow and peeped her eye in its hole. “…Hmm.” Using her ponytail hand, she yanked it off. “…I hear something, too. I’m going to see what it is.” She floated down.

“Hey, I’m coming too.” Dillon stated, getting into Shadow Veil as he followed.

The echoes steadily grew louder in Midna’s ears, seeing a large gap broken into the sewer tunnel’s wall. She found her way to a small cave after entering, and hid behind the wall as it curved left. “…and that is wah, Mah Dear, Ah would be delighted if you should join our noble cause.” spoke the familiar Western accent.
“Well, Bean, if such a cataclysm is at hand, I will GLADLY join.” The owner of this wicked, echoey voice was a skeleton woman with glowing red lights in her dark sockets, a red sombrero with dangling skulls, and a black dress of sparkling fabric and red edges. The gray bird known as Ying-Ying sat on a rock, and tiny Hannibal Bean beside her. “Considering the reputation of your organization, I know all of the scum of this city will not hesitate.”

“Ah am counting on it.” Bean bowed. “But it does mah heart well to know a lady of your stature will be joining us, Sartana de los Muertos. So Ah’m certain you will provide us much service in… what I have planned…”

“About the Apocalypse?”

“Y’see, Ah have a theory as to how to stop such an event. It requires the use of a certain Firstborn, a Firstborn that has long been set free by its Guardian.”

“Yeeees, the Firstborn.” Sartana spoke as though hearing of these creatures. “They were all the rage 20 years ago, if I remember. I believe the military troops who invaded this city back then were involved with them.”

“In many ways.” Bean rubbed some dust between his, er, “fingers.” “But many attempts at locating it will be horribly wasteful, but we have other plans. First, Ah require the use of mah Yin-Yang Yo-Yos. Ah believe mah twin great-grandchildren took them into hiding after Arceus’s defeat. We’d best be searchin’ information outta them ‘soon as possible.”

“And how did you plan to do that?”

“Ah believe the answer is already in our doorway.”

Midna gasped, sinking into the darkness of the cave. “Grrrrr, grrrrr…” A snarling beast was peering at her from behind. “GRAH-RAH-RAH-RAH!” The Shadow Princess was tackled from behind by Zant himself, holding Midna by the hair in his teeth as he scampered in on all fours.

“You will have to excuse dear Zant.” smirked Bean. “He’s not been right in the head since his stay at Brookfield Asylum. But he’s an ever-loyal puppy, jus’ look at ‘im, sniffin’ out them intruders.” He spoke like an owner congratulating his puppy in baby-talk, Midna glaring at him with anger.

“My, how convenient that a Firstborn falls right into our palms. No reason she shoulda come alone, right? Where’re them others..”

Dillon was already slithering back to his teammates, reemerging outside. “Where’s Midna?”

Aurora whispered.

“She’s been spotted. We better find someplace to hide, I think they’re on to us.”

“I hope is chocolatay.” The kids looked up, hearts nearly stopping when a gigantic, green monster in a black sombrero was grinning at them with enormous teeth. “Hi.” He squished them flat under his spiked ball arm.

Excess Express

A fiery orange began to fall over the horizon. Cheren looked at the time on his 4DS, reading 6:30. Looks like they would be arriving soon. Going to assassinate someone just felt so weird. And why did she want him, again? Because he was at equal level with her power? Cheren could only wonder just who or what this Head President was. Oh… but he already knew.

Mom was poking was remained of her Gorgeous Steak as Doflamingo approached her. “Your food
can’t get anymore dead, Mom. You seem lost in thought… fufufu.”

“I find the quality of this meat sufficiently unsatisfying.”

“Is what your last boyfriend said. Fufufu! You ought to save your stomach for softer things, anyway, lest that precious cast of yours give way. Please. Have some Healthy Juice.” Doflamingo placed a bowl of green juice with little spaghetti inside it on Mom’s table.

“Hmph. Worry about your own.” She said gruffly.

“I would do nothing more! But it’s only safe to tell you… you want to be heading to your room soon. We’re about to… shift.” And on that note, he walked toward the front of the train.

Mom casually returned to the back of the train as well. In his room, as Cheren was mindlessly twirling an arrow, Mom’s sons walked in. “We had better strap in, Cheren. The train is about to shift.”

“Shift?” Cheren got up and looked out the window, seeing that the train was speeding across the surface of the orange ocean, via some floatable tracks. “…WAAAAAH!” And all of a sudden, the angle of his room slanted, flying him over and onto his bed while the sons pressed against the wall. The Excess Express was driving directly up a diagonal track, and when Cheren recovered and looked out the window, the sea was drawing farther and farther down below. “Whoa…” They were just shifting higher and higher, and would soon be out of the stratosphere in minutes, by the look of it. No doubt, this would be the most exclusive party he was ever going to.

**Gallagher Elementary**

After the park was totally clear of kids, Rupert, Timmy, and Hikari sat boredly on the edge of the gym door’s step, their Pikmin behind them. “Sigh… this is hopeless.” Rupert said. “With everyone rushing to go to a war, they’ll never notice us.”

“I know those teenagers took Shelly away, but where did Jessie go?” asked Timmy.

“I wonder if he’s too upset to come?” replied Hikari with teary eyes.

“Well, at any rate… maybe we should help these kids out. You know, before they get in trouble. If only we could get into that middle school and, look around. And if he isn’t in there, we gotta let them know.” Rupert suggested.

“But Rupert, they’re already getting ready to go.” Timmy said. “Even if we hitched a ride or something, they’ll be getting wedgies from all those big kids before we can search the first hallway. Let’s just worry about getting back to normal…”

“Yeah… you’re right.”

“Ряяяяяяyyyyyyyy?” Needless to say, this echo hit both their ears.

“Wha’ was that?”

“Ряяяяяяyyyyyyyy?”

Rupert’s jaw nearly dropped, seeing the two cat-earred girls crawling into the park, sniffing like the animals they partly were. “HEY!! It’s Lil and Berry! They’re looking for me! HEEEEEEEY BERRYYYYY!” He bolted off his seat and across the vast park grounds, his friends following as they waved their arms faster than they ever would. “LILAAAAC! OVER HERE, IT’S US!
Not surprisingly, their cat ears twitched, and they looked in the tinies’ directions. “LOOK, Berry! It’s moving flowers!” Taking particular notice of the Pikmin army, the girls scampered on all fours.

“Ha ha ha!” Rupert was exceedingly joyous, having finally been noticed after all this legwork. It would be great to finally have assistance from normal-sized people. The werekittens slowed down as Berry crept up and whiffed the tiny trio, while Lilac crawled around observing the Pikmin.

Rupert’s grin was positively beaming when Berry’s eyes fell on him. He braced himself for a scream of surprise, since that was expected, in the form of a ‘Reooooowww’. But that look in Berry’s eyes wasn’t one of curiosity and shock… it was one of desire. When they turned to Lilac, a happy smile was on her face, her eyes sparkling with love. And turning back to Berry, her eyes were narrowed, licking her tongue around her sharp, dripping teeth. The same look she had when viewing tasty meat. “Uuuuum… Berry?”

“REOW!” Her giant hands flew directly at them.

“WAAAAAH!” The trio dodged aside and made a run for it, the Pikmin following suit, but Lilac chomped around and swallowed 5 Reds and 4 Blues. They were much too slow, so Berry jumped in front and blocked their path. Team Rupert shifted left-and-right, left-right, but there was no getting around Berry. “AAAAAHH!!” Her giant teeth were inches from severing Rupert’s head. “BERRY STOP, PLEASE!!”

He separated from his friends, taking 5 Purples and 6 Whites. Berry performed another terrific leap to block his path, so Rupert threw some Purples onto her fingers, making her wince. “Yow!” Angered, she swiped her claws at the Pikmin, but they flew over them as the wind gust knocked them down. She then aimed to snack on them—“NO!!” and Rupert jumped in front as the triangle teeth slammed on them all. Berry felt the 12 tinies on her tongue, tipping her head up to send them falling.

“WAAAAAH!” Rupert nearly fell in the abyss first, but a chain of his Pikmin started from the tip of her tongue, with him dangling by his leg over Berry’s throat. “B-Berry! It’s me, stoooop!” The blood rushed to his head as he struggled to glance down (up), and a White Pikmin was considering letting go to choke the beast. “N-No, don’t! She’s still my friend, I don’t wanna hurt ’er!”

“Hold on, Ruppy!” Timmy cried as he and Hikari successfully got onto Lilac’s head, a chain of Pikmin connecting her two ears. They rode her like a horse and rammed her into Berry, the latter falling over as Rupert and co. flew out.

“GRRRR!” Fuming with rage, Berry pounced and pinned Rupert under her thumb-tip. The tiny boy froze with fear at those clenched fangs, his heart ready to jump out with all its beating. The last time Berry was this angry, Rupert ended up in the hospital. There would be absolutely nothing of him after this. His tiny, terrified eyes saw perfectly into Berry’s bulbous, soulless eyes.

But that darkness died down in her eyes as they opened slightly. A wave of realization flew over her. “Rupert?”

“Eh, heheh… hey.” He didn’t let go of his fear, but sported a smile.

“Wh…How in the world.”

“Ruppy?” Lilac looked around, the movement wobbling the passengers on her head. “I don’t see him.”
“H-He’s…” Berry looked at him again, “Your parents’re looking for you, and they got our moms.”

“Well, uh… it’s a funny story with a lot of laughs. Y’see-”

A sudden whistle made the werecats jump. The garage door that led into the gym was slowly creaking open, and hundreds of cannoned bikes and scooters were raring to ride. “GIVE THESE BIG KIDS HEEEEEEECK!” All participating grade-schoolers were zipping across the streets, set on nothing but the imposing middle school.

“Oh no! They’re already at it!” Rupert exclaimed. “Berry, you gotta take us to follow them!”

“What, why?” Berry asked.

“Just come on, let’s go!” He jumped frantically, signaling Berry to scoop him on her finger and place him on her hair. “You guys, get the Pikmin back to the Onions and hurry and join us! Let’s GO!” Berry began rushing after the kids like a horse.

“Uhh… Rupert?” Timmy and Hikari were on the ground again with Lilac staring lovingly at them. “W-We’re gonna need…”

“Hey! BAD kitty!” Hikari shouted. “Sit Lilly, sit!” Lilac sat. “Good girl!”

Spirit World

Miyuki stood in a gym-room-like field surrounded by trees as she breathed calmly and focused energy. She whirled her hands close to each other and channeled gray chi into a sphere, thrusting her arms forward and destroying three targets with a laser. “You’re pretty good.” Agatha said, shading herself from the sun with an umbrella. “Your natural chi must be pretty strong.”

“I never knew that spirits had any form of bending, besides the ones gods have to give them.”

“All chi comes from this Spirit World energy, and as spirits are made of this kind of energy, the gods manipulate their spiritual bodies to take the form of element chi. The difference between them and Logia is, they’re still intangible bodies of energy, and possess a more peaceful form of chi.”

“But when my mom and her friends told us about being spirits, they still got damaged in the living world.”

“I heard that they were inhabiting Gigai, artificial bodies for spirits to inhabit and interact with mortals. They touch things and can get hurt like regular bodies, and carry the flow of chi. But when the Grim Reaper used a Resurrection Stone on them, those artificial bodies became pure living bodies, allowing the spirits to stay.”

“So our parents are using fake bodies?”

“They’re using new bodies, as far as I know about it. And either way, they were still enough to bear children.”

But it just made Miyuki so curious. Is that how their parents have always looked pre-spirit, or did they bare totally different looks that changed once they inhabited their new bodies. She would have to look more into these Gigai.

“Anyway, about your chi.” Aggie continued. “Normally timebenders have blue chi, but yours is gray. That color normally signifies the changing of ages.”
“Yeah, that’s always been my specialty. Manipulating ages or seeing into peoples’ past.”

“Timebenders that possessed a gray chi tend to have a close connection with the past, specifically the pasts of people or things. Even the dead. Timebenders with gray chi could touch even a fallen body and see its history. You could pick up a small rock, the only remains of an old temple, and see just where it came from.”

“Are there other timebenders like that?”

“I read it in a book. You’re the only one I know that has it. Still, it’s a very unique power, and developing your energybending will help you control your timebending better. But you seem to have a good grasp of it now, with just a little more training.”

“Just how much are we training, exactly? I need to at least see how my friends are doing.”

“Come inside and look at our Reflecting Pool. You’ll see them.”

Aggie led Miyuki into a dark room with a glowing, golden tub, the light presenting an eerie look on their dark forms as they peered inside.

Sector IC was arduously trudging through the blizzard, having brought no coats and struggling to survive in the blistering cold as they were. Terry especially had to help MaKayla along as she was the least protected. They saw a shadowed clump lay dead in the snow a few feet away and rushed over to investigate. There was Miyuki on her back, eyes closed and still. “Miyuki!” MaKayla let go of Terry and knelt over her, putting a hand on her head.

“How she… dead?” gasped George.

“I… I dunno. She feels warm, but… there’s something off about her. I feel… a force.”

“Does Obi-wan want her to come to Dagobah?” asked Terry.

“It is a perfect reference, isn’t it? Well, we can’t just leave her here, let’s take her and look for help fast. Hopefully Suki can’t be far.” She stepped aside as George lifted Miyuki in his arms. “It’s strange… I hear a distant singing.” MaKayla continued. “Is someone else on this mountain, too? But there’s a weird energy about it…”

“Yes, it’s the voice of fallen souls of stupid travelers who flew over the mountain LISTENING TO SOME LITTLE GIRL!!” Terry screamed.

“Even if it is, there’s nowhere else to go.” George said. “Let’s find this voice and see if it can help us find Suki. Or help Miyuki…”

Miyuki pulled her head out and gasped for breath. “They’re going to get lost if we don’t help them.”

“Our special operative is still out there as we speak.” Rukia stated, entering the room. “He won’t let them freeze. So I see your training is going well.”

“She has gray Timebending Chi.” Aggie mentioned. “She’s able to touch people or things and view their history.”

“That’s a very useful power to have.” Rukia said with near awe. “Some of history’s biggest questions can be answered with a single touch...”
“I’m not a historian, why would I care about the story of some old ruin…”

“Everything that’s happened in the past may still have relevance now. I haven’t yet told you about the ghost that’s haunting Arendelle Mountain.”

“Is it a dangerous ghost?”

“Dangerous in a matter of speaking. It’s a tormented soul that’s been growing with misery for 300 years. The blizzard is a result of her anguish, making it a thriving place for Hollows. The Hollows have begun to drastically multiply, and we think they’re moving in to make this ghost one of them. If she becomes a Hollow, they’ll be unstoppable.”

“Well, when are we going to stop them?”

“We expect the blizzard to finally slow down now. Which…” Rukia looked at the pool, seeing Jack Frost speaking to Suki, “it’s just about gonna.”

Arendelle Mountains

Suki’s eyes were closed as she stood firmly in place, softly moving her arms. At this very moment, she felt nothing else but the skin-freezing cold, heard nothing but the angry snows. And the charming warm voice of Jack Frost. “You can do it, Suki. Just feel the blizzard. Feel the storm… and calm it down.”

Yes… Suki did feel it. This storm… and where it came from. It was created by Ice Chi… Ice Chi flowed inside her… it flowed everywhere on this planet. It was cold… she loved the cold… it was so lovely… so magical… so peaceful…

Her arms glowed with a majestic blue as she threw them to the air, releasing two lovely beams as she opened her sunny eyes. The dark sky flashed blue, and in what seemed like a sudden warm whoosh, the blizzard slowed down. The starry sky was visible in the heavens, beyond a lovely aurora lights that Suki’s ice had taken the form of. A gentle snow was falling over Arendelle, and it felt marvelous.

Jack’s eyes lit with awe, as if never seeing something this beautiful. “Suki… you did it. You stopped the storm… you did it!”

“I diiiiiid?” Suki would almost melt with all that light in her eyes.

“You did! Now we can finally go up there and talk to her! After ALL these years, I can!…” Jack was beside himself with joy.

“Hee hee hee! Ask her to the GHOOOOOOST daaaaaaance!” She pushed her cheeks together.

“Heheh… yeah… Let’s get up there ASAP!” He was rushing to the castle first, with Suki hurrying beside him.

“Hey Jackie, I have to ask.” she began. “Who IS this girl?”

“Oh, um… she’s just an old friend. We used to live together, in this…in this kingdom.” He still smiled, but his voice seemed to sink.

“Ooooo what happeeeened? Tell me, tell me, tell me! Did you make a TREEHOUSE together, or play in the SNOOOOW, hu—or!- or!- or!, you two promised to LOOOOOVE and hug each other after deeeeeaaaath!”
He really wished it turned out that way. That’s just the future Jack Frost had planned with Elsa. But things didn’t go according to plan…

**Planet Glacia; 320 years ago**

A peaceful, sunny day over Arendelle Mountains. Any day on Planet Glacia where you could see the sun was a joyous occasion indeed, made the mountains feel a little less cold. There was already joyous activity going on in the southern peaks. “YEEEEAAAHH!” A blue-eyed boy with brown hair, brown sweater, brown khaki shorts, and bare feet excitedly slid an ice-made board down a steep slope along a narrow mountainside, dodging to the left or right of rocks and jumping gaps. He was approaching a road between a close trench, sliding along the wall as he made a tight turn left.

He slid off a ledge at the trench’s end and began making a series of long jumps across huge rock pillars, towering miles above the chasm. The last one had a wood bridge which he slid across, making it to a safe slope as he avoided more trees and swerved around a narrow, snaky path. “Almooost…” The path became straight, and the end was in sight. That is, before a polar bear walked in and blocked it. “WHOA!” He quickly formed an ice ramp to propel him over the animal, but he lost balance and went rolling down the following hill. “Ooh- ahh- AAH, ow, gah!” He finally stopped on his rear when the ground turned straight. “OW!” The iceboard hit his head.

“He he ha ha ha!” laughed a little brown-haired girl in a brown sweater.

“Hey, that didn’t count, Jenna!” Jack yelled, rubbing his head.

“Diiiiid too, diiiiiid too!” Jenna danced and fell back in the snow. “You were AAAAAALL ploppyyyyy.”

“Well, just wait until the party.” He brushed his hair back. “When I show off my grooves to Elsa, we’ll be twinklin’ in the sky.” ;D

“Jackie loves the priiiinceeeees, Jackie loves the priiiinceeeees!”

“No, not the princess. The queen.” He winked coolly.

“Ohhhhh sure, Jackie. Get with the queen ‘cause she’s the first royal icebender born in centuries.” She winked.

“Ahhhh, that’s not what it’s about. I just feel me and Elsa got a special connection. Like, we’re bonded by fate… or somethin’.”

“You only met her once at a noble family party. …When you tried to make an ice sculpture out of the punch to give to her and she had to break it off your tongue when you licked it.”

“Eh, that was 9 years ago, she couldn’t remember. This time, she’s gettin’ the real taste of Jackster, and before you know it, I’m gonna be king.”

“Just don’t cause too big of a mess at the party.” Their mom said, walking out of their mansion. “And put some shoes on, you’ll look ridiculous.” She chuckled.

“Pssh, icebenders don’t need shoes, we’re the champs of winter.” Jack grinned.

“Yeah, and the champ of making himself embarrassed in front of the queen! Ha ha ha!” Jenna laughed.

“Oh, shut up.”
**Royal Palace**

The palace courtyard was already bustling with townspeople, all eagerly chatting amongst friends and discussing different views on this new queen. Queen Elsa was inside the palace as her younger sister helped get her dressed, fixing gloves on her hands. “It’s gonna be fine, Elsa. Just remember what Mom and Dad said: Conceal, don’t feel.”

“Don’t let it show.” Elsa spoke with a sad, worried frown.

“And don’t randomly burst into song.” Anna grinned. “Now just stay inside ‘til we call you, I’ll go straighten out the refreshments!” She hurried off excitedly.

The Frost Family and many other nobles gathered into the palace courtyard and chatted amongst their selves. “Sigh, when’s she gonna get out?” Jack whispered, tapping his foot impatiently.

“Jack, will you please put some shoes on, you look so out of place.” his mom whispered.

“Mom, I’m a free spirit!” He proclaimed quietly. “My toes hang free, my hair blows free, and my soul will ride the snows ‘til the ends of-” He startled to a halt when a light-brown Fjord horse charged and stopped in front of him.

“Easy there, Sitron!” said the dashing prince riding the horse. He had a slightly large nose, but smooth auburn hair with sideburns by his ears, and gorgeous green eyes. He had a white jacket over a blue shirt with a magenta tie, blue pants, black high-heel shoes, and white gloves. “I know you’re excited, but we can’t have you guzzle all the food ag-” He hopped off the left and-

“OW!” crushed Jack’s right toes.

“Oh! I’m so sorry.” Hans backed up sheepishly. “Oh, my horse didn’t almost run you over, did he? I told him to stop by the gate, but, sigh those steamed Floran Carrots really get him riled.” The horse neighed in shame.

“No, it’s alright…” Jack gripped his toes tight. “So who’re you.” He asked with slight resentment.

“Prince Hans of the Southern Isles at your service.” He spoke humbly. “I came for the coronation of Queen Elsa. Is sheee…” He searched around.

“Hey, that’s Jackie’s girlfriend!” shouted Jenna. Jack immediately forced his foot over her mouth, but since that was the only one keeping him up at the moment, he fell.

“Prince Hans of the Southern Isles at your service.” He spoke humbly. “I came for the coronation of Queen Elsa. Is sheee…” He searched around.

“Hey, that’s Jackie’s girlfriend!” shouted Jenna. Jack immediately forced his foot over her mouth, but since that was the only one keeping him up at the moment, he fell.

“Jackie?” Hans understood by the gestures. “Oh, I-hi didn’t mean to imply!” Hans chuckled. “If you were already together, then please, by all means. I’m just wondering-” He began to walk the opposite way, but as he turned at the same time, he bumped into someone and forced her punch bowl against her dress.

“Ooooooo.” Anna shuddered. “Now I need to get a new dress! And more punch…”

“Oh! I’m… terribly sorry.” Hans frowned.

The moment Anna looked up, it seemed everything began to move in slow motion. To them both. His gorgeous face with the silly big nose and cute freckles… Anna’s beautiful clear face, also with cute freckles, and blue eyes that sparkled like ice… her hair looked so orange, he could taste it, and it’d be lovely. “…Uhh-h-h, Prince Hans, of the Southern Isles.”

“Hehe… Princess Anna, of Arendelle!”
“Princess—!” He bowed immediately. “Wh-What an, embarrassing way to introduce myself.”

“Hehe! …It’s no big deal.” Her face was as red as the punch on her blue gown.

“Heh heh… L-Let me come with you, to… clean it up.”

“Um, sure..” Both held hands, smiling goofily as she led him into the castle.

Jack rolled his eyes, still on the ground, “What a player.” Their attention was averted when the blares of horns sounded. The boy helped himself up and faced the stairs to the front gates, where four elders in ice-blue robes led the girl with an icy sparkling gown, snowy blonde hair, and ice-blue eyes out for everyone to see.

“Everyone, we are proud to introduce, eldest daughter of King Adgar and Queen Idun, the first royal icebender in four generations: Princess Elsa, the 104th Ruler of Arendelle!” One of the old sages brought to Elsa a small golden fountain, but insisted she remove her gloves. With slight worry, Elsa complied, taking the fountain as it began to spew water. “May a bright age arise under her rule, and may her powers protect Arendelle from invaders. Long live Queen Elsa!”

And with her powers, Elsa froze the fountain solid, and the unique streams that flowed from it formed into a sparkling, elegant crown befitting such a queen, except it was much too huge for her small head. Cheers erupted around the crowds as Elsa handed the crown back, slipping her gloves back on. “Time to make mah mooove! Wish me luck.” Jack winked at his family, licked his hand, and smoothed his hair before making his way to the front.

It wasn’t easy to squeeze his way around all these coated people without getting his foot stomped, but by the time he was at the stairs, a sage was already leading Elsa inside. “Come with me. There’s something I need to show you.”

No doubt Jack was curious, looking to a small balcony along a nearby tower with an open window.

**Beneath the castle**

The sage alit the passage with a glowing blue ball of ice, leading Elsa down a deep, dark stairwell. “This is the greatest secret in our entire kingdom. An ancient relic we have treasured for eons.”

He brought Elsa to a deep, vast chamber where a dark chasm surrounded a single, central platform. Jack Frost, having come his own way, crept within a small opening above the platform, watching the sage lead Elsa onto. Sat atop that platform was a big stone cube with ancient writing. “Behold…”

“What…What is this?” Elsa asked with awe.

“It’s a Poneglyph. There are only seven of them in the whole universe, and they can only be read by certain people.”

“What does it say?”

“No one in our generations has ever been able to decipher it. It was left here by the gods of old… and your family’s sole duty has been to protect it. So one day, the person of destiny would come and read its script.”

“But how will I know… when that person comes?”

“I don’t know… all we could determine was the person meant to read it, is an icebender.”
Elsa gasped. “But… I can’t…”

“We aren’t sure if it’s you. But while Arendelle is a kingdom frolicking with icebenders, only one is born in the royal family every four generations. And with very powerful chi that lasts even in the afterlife. We’ve always thought that, there was a meaning behind this. The fact that only an icebender could get here… even if you can’t read it now, you may be the one to do so. …And whatever is written on this stone, will be your responsibility.”

The burden of being a queen sounded troublesome enough… but what if she was the one meant to read this message? What ultimate task would she have to carry out? It made her heart race.

From high upon his perch, Jack could sense the anxiety Elsa was feeling. “…WHOA!” With a single light step, Jack slipped and plummeted to the platform below, startling the two as he crashed on his head. “Uhhhh-” He flipped back to his feet, “Hey!”

“Who are you?!” Elsa hissed.

“Elsa, it’s me, Jack! Remember? 9 years ago? …Punch stuck to the tongue?”

“Jack, what are you DOING down here?!”

“Well uh, was a little curious,” he grinned and moved sheepishly, “you being mysterious, following you to this mysterious… rock.”

“Look, just get out of here and DON’T say a word about this. Not that it’s any good to anyone…”

“Oh yeah, I can read it.”

“You can?!”

“Yeah, it’s just uh, dedededededede…” He walked closer and skimmed it. “‘Here lies our fabled Gibberish Rock, made to baffle royals for eons, anyone who learns the true purpose of this rock may be wedded to the princess as his reward for keeping her from wasting brainpower on it’, etc. etc., so let’s hang out.” He grinned coolly.

“Ugh! Who let you in the castle, anyway, how’d you get down here?”

“I let myself in.” He said coolly. “And I followed the Call of Love to where my queen would be.” He sported a sparkling grin.

“Uh.” She rolled her eyes and walked away. “Let’s just go.”

Castle halls

“Look Jack, I’m not really looking for a relationship right now. And you and me just won’t work.” Elsa kept her hands folded on her front while Jack had his behind his head in a laid back fashion. “I’ve just become Queen, I have a responsibility to protect the kingdom, to make sure everyone’s happy and control these crazy powers, and if the daily newspaper about some little prankster freezing the teashop isn’t lying, all YOU care about is-” When she turned left, Jack was gone. “AAAAH!” Upside-down, hanging from a chandelier by his legs and an ice chain, Jack grabbed Elsa’s hands and flipped her on top with him. She clutched the chain for dear life as the chandelier swayed. “Being a troublemaker!!”

“Having FUN.” Jack smiled coolly (how else does he smile), standing straight with great balance.
“Get us down!”

With a shrug, Jack took her hand and slid down an ice path. They continued their walk. “What’re you talkin’ about CRAZY powers, you’re the first princess in decades to have ‘em and yours’re better than anyone’s!”

“You just don’t understand, do you, my Ice Chi doesn’t want to stay in, if I don’t keep ‘em under control, they’ll freeze the whole kingdom.”

“And what planet is this?”

“One that doesn’t need to be COLDER than it is!”

“Y’know, maybe your powers are going so crazy BECAUSE you don’t let ‘em out. If there’s one thing I know about icebending, my ice just itches to get out every day and do fun stuff. Elsa, if you don’t let your ice out, your body will IMPLODE upon itself, creating a force that rivals a hundred atomic bombs that turns EVERY living creature on this planet into chunks of uniquely frozen shapes of water!”

“My parents taught me to be a levelheaded princess who knows self-control and conceals any rebellious side of her inside. And by controlling myself, I can easily control some silly ice.”

“Siiiiigh. Well if that’s how you feel. But uhhhh, Elsa.”

“What?” Jack glided past her front.

“Gotchor gloves.” He grinned mischievously, wiggling the gloves.

“!! HEY, GIVE THOSE BACK!” Jack jumped out the window and slid to the roof via ice path as Elsa slid after, struggling to keep balance on her ice-made high-heels as she chased Jack, who was far more nimble, across the roof.

Jack thrusted his arms down and propelled himself high up a tower with ice blasts, shattering the conjured trail as he smirked down at Elsa. “Careful, Princess. Don’t lose control. Conceal, don’t feel, get punked by a total cutie.”

“Oh you SON OF A-” Elsa thrusted her arms down and shot at Jack like a rocket, the boy already hopping to the parallel tower. Jack slid around the towers via ice path as Elsa chased on her own path, and the guests down below gaped in awe as two trails of ice wrapped around the towers like giant ribbons.

“Her Highness is truly fantastic!” a woman gaped.

“Mmm, and Jack Frost is with her, is his punishment to serve her?” a man inquired.

“Jack, what in Polaris’ name are you doing?” questioned his mom.

“GOOOO Jackiiiiie!” Jenna cheered.

Jack took the slide down the back of the castle and toward a mountain, hopping off as he made the dash up. Elsa tried to chase, but her high heels didn’t move well in the deep snow, so she was forced to ditch them and chase on bare feet, also having to hold her dress up so she didn’t trip.

Jack made it onto a flat ground with a dead end, and when he saw Elsa coming, he brushed his hands across the ground and turned it to solid ice. Elsa immediately slipped and started sliding to
him on her bottom, and Jack didn’t move aside before he was pushed off his feet and facefirst onto Elsa’s face. “Hehe.” He grinned sheepishly in her surprised, gaping face.

The queen pushed him off and stood, throwing a beam that froze Jack’s body to the ground except his head. “OW!” Elsa planted her right foot against Jack’s cheek, keeping him down. “You know you got pretty nails.” Indeed her toenails were as icy as her eyes.

“…” A smirk found its way on Elsa’s face, “Do you wanna build a snowman?”

They were back on more snowy ground and spiraling dozens of snowmen together with helmets and polearms, sending them to clash with each other. Jack created a snowcannon and fired, but Elsa raised an ice wall that shielded her and launched a storm of ice arrows at her opponent, who bent like a stickman and avoided. Elsa spun together a big ice shovel, and Jack created a rake as the two ran at each other and dueled. The snowtools eventually fell apart as Jack slid and spun a whirlpool below Elsa’s feet, causing her to slip and fall, but thinking quickly, Elsa spun and caused the snow to rise instead, letting her jump to a mountaintop. She made many huge snowballs rise from the mountain, and Jack mimicked as they both readied to launch at each other. Both snow storms flew, an equal amount that blocked them perfectly, until Jack shielded himself in a snowball and rolled up the mountainside.

The snowball flew above Elsa as Jack shot out and grabbed her, the two rolling down the mountain as a snowball formed around them both. When it bounced, the two shot out and surfed the sky across trails of ice, tiny blue sparkles raining everywhere gently.

They returned to the roof of the castle and lied back with arms behind their heads. “I should go find my shoes, but… eh, it’s kinda nice without them.”

“Yeah, when that chill spreads between your toes, it really gets you goin’.”

“I’ve always stayed inside the palace to keep my powers under control, but… I’ve never felt better. There’s this feeling in my heart…” She held a hand by her chest, “like a huge weight’s been lifted off me. It feels more…”

“Free.” Jack rolled onto all fours. “When you act on impulse, and let yourself have a little fun, your spirit becomes more free. That’s what I read in an old airbender book. Ice is close to Air as it gets, so why not?”

“It wasn’t hard to keep them under control either.” Elsa stared at her hands. “Maybe I can control my ice better, if I just let it blow more freely.”

“That’s the spirit.” Jack lied back again. “Just don’t worry about what’ll happen and everything will turn out-”

“Elsa, THERE you are!” They looked onto the nearby tower balcony, seeing Anna and Hans staring down at them.

“I guess we aren’t the only ones enjoying ourselves.” Hans remarked with a witty smile.

Jack and Elsa exchanged humorous smiles and rocketed their selves up to the two. “Weeee have some newwwwwws!” squealed Anna quietly. “Hans and I—should I say it?”

“By all means.” Hans bowed.

“We’re getting married!!”
“What?” questioned Elsa with concealed panic. “Anna, can we talk?” She led her inside rushedly.

Hans and Jack were left to their selves, viewing the party down below. “Ever wanted to say something crazy and suddenly, your whole world turns bright?” the prince asked.

“I’ve had those feelings.” Jack replied, leaned forward against the railing.

“And by the looks of things, those feelings have led us to become brothers-in-law.”

“Heh heh heh.” Jack had to laugh at that. “Right. Except how long have you known Anna?”

“Well, half an hour ago. But after sliding around the halls on socks for that long, and singing some song about love, it’s moments like those you really know, she’s the one.” Hans looked at the starry heavens, lost in them as he was in Anna’s eyes just moments ago. “Or in your case, having to get a punch sculpture off your tongue.”

Jack blushed. “Oh-ho, she told you that, huh?” He grinned nervously.

“It’s small little gestures like that and such short, fated meetings that tell you, the stars have aligned for you to be together. And for both of us, the stars have sent us that message in the form of punch.”

“Heheh… well ‘f you ask me,” he turned and leaned on his back, “I never like to rush these fates too quickly. I sorta like to, play the field, yeah I like Elsa, but it’s never very fun when we get there too quickly, I like to steadily work my way there ‘til she’s cool with the Frost.” His grin twinkled.

“Anna, get BACK here!”

“No!” Anna stormed back out and clutched Hans’ arm. “Why won’t you give us your blessing?!”

“Because you don’t even know him, we can’t just let anyone into the royal family so easily!”

“Oh, like you weren’t letting JACK into your little ice show.”

“I DIDN’T let him in, he was just…”

“He was just showin’ you a good time.” Jack said smoothly.

“He was WASTING my time with some silly snowball fight when I SHOULD’VE been looking over things at the party, especially YOU two!”

“Elsa, I know you have a hard time with your powers, but you’ve been acting REALLY sour since our parents died, and I think the only reason you can’t understand our love is ‘cause YOU’RE too concealed on your emotions to see ANYTHING.”

“And who was it that was helping me conceal those powers?”

“The powers are one thing, I was just being nice, but it didn’t mean you had to conceal ME from anyone I wanna share my LIFE with.”

“If you just decide to share your life with any random person, how can I let you-” The sounds of distant screams distracted them.

“YOUR HIGHNEEEEESS! The monsters from the Chilly Depths are invading the castle!” Beyond the castle gates were legions of ice demons marching up the mountain, armed with weapons and catapults that launched giant ice chunks into the courtyard.
Jack and Elsa skied to the gates and fought the monsters away with their powers as Chilfos climbed over the wall. “EVERYONE, get inside the palace!” Elsa ordered. “Stay in the dungeons until we tell you to come out!”

The monsters were piling in fast, the citizens scrambling to get inside the castle. Jack blew ice trails along the ground to make Chilfos slip as he searched around desperately for his family. “AAAH!” He looked and saw his mom kicked to the ground by a Chilfos, ready to pierce her with its spear. Jack saw a wood cane on the ground, likely discarded by an old man, swiping it and skiing over fast as he caught the creature’s spear in the hook from behind and yanking it away, forming an iced point atop the hook to slice the monster’s head off.

He helped his mom up, “Mom, where’s Jenna?!”

“JACKIIIIEE!” He was horrified when he saw his sister hanging from a Freezard’s teeth by her coat as it leaped over the eastern wall.

As he skied over the wall to save her, more monsters burst through the front gates, charging to the castle fast. Elsa was furiously throwing ice beams, making spikes rise from beneath them and creating ice walls to further block, which she also pushed to keep them back. She started to panic as they continued to pile in, unable to blast her powers any faster. “UUH!” The monsters succeeded in shoving her down and trampling the ice queen like a dead matt on the floor. The bruises were multiplying, and no matter how much she wanted to, they gave her no time to stand. “UUUUUUUHHHHH!”

A great blue light burst into the sky, the queen emitting a small explosion that blew the demons off of her. Many beams of ice flew everywhere, crashing the tops of many mountains and making the clouds turn blue.

The Freezard was charging up a gorge along a mountain as Jack chased on the left ledge. But both faced ahead when the mountain shook, and a massive avalanche began to slide down. “RAAAAH!” The monster was caught in the snow current and began to slide down, tossing Jenna up in the air in his rage.

She took land just on the right ledge, but couldn’t keep balance before she fell back. “WAAAAAH!” A gloved hand saved her from doom, pulling her onto the horse behind Prince Hans. “Don’t worry! You’re safe now.”

“Hans!” Jack beamed.

“NEEEEIEH!” The horse panicked when the snowy ground gave way, plummeting all three into the river.

“HANS!” Jack screamed.

“Er-, here!” The prince threw Jenna up to Jack’s ledge, the boy swinging his cane for her to grab. He stood on the edge of the cliff, struggling to pull up her heavy body (he noticed she was a bit heavier than Elsa for some reason). But another shake caused Jack to slip off, while he swung the cane and flung Jenna onto the ledge.

“JACKIIIIEE!” She reached for him in despair.

“JENNA, I’ll be all right, get to the castle!!” With very mixed feelings, his sister hurried off.

But the snow was surprisingly strong even for Jack. He rose and sunk, over and over in this thick
white river, and no matter how much he tried to blow it back, he couldn’t find the strength to stand or throw his ice.

At the palace, Elsa’s ice beams couldn’t come faster, and it almost felt like her arms were throwing their selves. She couldn’t conceal the storm inside her, not when her kingdom was in danger. Her parents told her to keep her powers under control, Anna helped her to accomplish that, but this was the only way. In order to keep the kingdom out of their control, she had to lose control herself, lose control until there was nothing left. She understood why Jack was the little free spirit he was, because this was the only way to hold back creatures with no order. So when swarms of them succeeded in bypassing her, heading for the castle, Elsa spun like a whirlwind and let the beams of ice flow.

“ELSA, we got everyone-” The moment Anna rushed out was when a beam pierced her heart. Elsa immediately froze. Anna struggled to get back to her feet, shivering like she was in the deepest part of the coldest freezer. “E-Elsa… Why…” Her arm stretched out to her sister before her whole body transformed into solid, blue ice.

Elsa couldn’t bring herself to move, her face ridden with guilt. Not even the frozen spear that pierced her heart from behind could match it. A Chilfos had successfully claimed a fatal blow on the queen, a devilish grin on his frosty face. Small cracks began to spread along Elsa’s body, glowing blue as tremendous energy began to build inside her. The royal palace, and all of Arendelle around it, was swallowed in an expanding sphere of snow and ice.

Arendelle never saw the sun again, never saw anything but pitch-black skies and freezing winds. The avalanches buried hundreds of people beneath many feet of snow, among them Prince Hans and Jack Frost. No signs of life could be seen anywhere.

Jack found himself lying in a mound of snow on a dark, barren mountain. He didn’t feel any pain as he stood up, but was confused as to why his brown sweater turned blue. Also, why didn’t the spot he was laying in have a snow-shape, why did his hair dye like snow, and why did he leave no footprints? Why did he feel absolutely weightless. “Confused?” Jack looked up when a bright blue light lowered down to him. The stone, shivering colossus with the massive snowflake on his back.

“I… am Polaris.”

“Polaris, the… Snow God?”

“Yes. Who better for a mischievous icebender like yourself to meet than me as you pass to the Spirit World?”

“Are you saying I’m… dead?”

“Indeed, but alas, your effort to save your sister was for naught. She, and all of Arendelle were destroyed… by Elsa’s wrath.”

“No…. No!” Jack was seething in rage, unable to process this so suddenly. “That can’t be true! Jenna… Elsa… THERE’S NO WAY ALL OF THEM CAN BE DEAD!”

“This was this kingdom’s ultimate fate. The fate for Elsa, having used her powers so haphazardly. Perhaps if you haven’t persuaded her to suddenly start using them-”

“SHUT UP!” Jack threw a nonexistent ice blast at the god. “If ELSA hadn’t used her power, EVERYONE would’ve been killed anyway, you CAN’T pin the blame on either of us! And I don’t care WHAT happened, I’m GLAD I taught Elsa to be more free! Now her spirit will be BETTER
than ever!”

“Is that so? Well… perhaps you’d like to see her?” Polaris swallowed Jack in a blinding blue light.

“Let it GOOO! Let it GOOO! Can’t hold back aaaaanymooooore!” The palace still stood, sparkling with beautiful ice, and Elsa danced on its balcony, a green aura around her body as she let her ice flow everywhere. Jack and Polaris were hovering high in the heavens above her.

“What-… She’s still alive?”

“Her spirit appears well, but in fact, she is a ghost. A ghost that is eternally tethered to what she did to her sister. Just look.” What Jack saw horrified him. A statue frozen in solid ice, much like this whole castle. Her face was desperate for warmth, reaching out in despair.

“Anna…”

“Because of her lack of control, her sister will now stand stiff, frozen for all eternity. Elsa died, knowing this. Her heart sunk in this unbearable guilt, and this carried to her spirit. And because of her powerful Ice Chi, which has remained with her as a spirit, this mountain has been swallowed in an endless blizzard where not even the Reapers can claim her. As you see, she is desperately trying to let her pain go, but her guilt remains glued to her deep down. She will forever remain as a ghost bound to this world, never to truly shed her sorrow and become a spirit.”

Jack felt the greatest sorrow. All he wanted was for Elsa to be more free… but seeing her this happy, masking unbelievable sorrow inside of her… he couldn’t bear to see her in this much pain. “I’m… sorry.”

“The fault is not yours, Jack. True, Elsa would’ve had pain as a spirit, had she been more concealed. You were following your own beliefs, so now your spirit can be free.”

“I can’t be free until I help her!”

“You must be patient. Help will come to her, but she must look into herself. …I can assure you, however… your sister and family are safe in the Spirit World.”

“They… are?” Jack felt a sense of relief.

“But your attempts to rescue her will not go unnoticed… I have a proposition for you. I will give back your Ice Chi and allow you to roam the Mortal World as an Ice Spirit. To protect children in danger from the evils of winter. But you must stay away from Elsa. Her power far exceeds yours as a spirit.”

Jack looked at his friend. Her lovely vocals echoed for miles beyond the mountains. As a ghost, her lungs would never grow tired, singing that song for ages. “…Sigh, okay.”

So Polaris touched a finger to Jack, a blue light shining for a few brief seconds before it faded. Jack opened his palm as a snowflake softly floated. “For you, also.” Polaris gave Jack a wooden cane, the same as he used in the last moments of his life. “Do not leave your soul tethered to her. See that other children… can have free spirits.” And with that, Polaris dispersed into snow.

Jack spared one final look at Elsa. Trapped in her ghostly limbo, she drew farther away as Jack soared to the heavens. He would return to her.

Present time
After all these years… he may finally have a chance. With Suki, her unbreakable spirit… maybe she was all he needed to save Elsa from her despair. It had to be… and he was going to save her… no matter what.

**Base of the mountains; Chilly Depths**

Swarms of Hollows were gathering at the foot of these mountains. Some small, walking on all fours like animals. Some as high as skyscrapers, pitch-black like moving trees. In a dark, dead cave was a Hollow like no other, a human-like one on two legs, dark cloak with red and white designs and spiky edges, and the grim Hollow mask. Four more Hollows who bared similar designs appeared in the cave out of black smoke, gathering before their leader. “The spirit is moving up the mountains. Children are within the mountains as well, but we’ve lost sight of the ghost kids.” One of them spoke in a grim voice, only his eyes exposed above his mask.

*Member of the Arendelle Arrancar Gang*
*Former BOE member*
**LEGION**

“AH HAHahahahahaha!” cackled a witch with pitch-black hair, black lips, and a black cloak with skeletal designs, the top-right of her mask broken off. “He’s tryin’ to save ELSA after all this time! What a itty, bitty, baby.”

*Member of Arendelle Arrancar Gang*
*Former Death Eater*
**BELLATRIX LESTRANGE**

“His chances are futile. But at least we’ll be able to collect a few extra souls.” spoke a white-haired woman with wrinkly skin and blood-red designs all over her cloak.

*Former BOE member*
*Avatar Realms denizen*
**Bloodbender HAMA**

“Those monsters, and their *sorcery* and witchcraft which goes against God,” spoke the last member with deep hatred, bright blue flames burning on the shoulders of his cape, “dare to pollute the world He hath created. My duty, as God has given me, is to drag them into the fiery pit from whence they came.”

*Former Judge and gypsy hunter of Cité des Cloches*
**CLAUDE FROLLO**

“How DARE you call us monsters… FILTHY MUGGLE!” screamed Bellatrix.

“He is as his God made him.” Hama said.

“Well, the storm has finally calmed.” Legion followed. “Shall we move up?”

“…*Begin moving. We take the castle tonight.*”

“As you command: *Lord Hans.*” they chorused.

The leader’s mask opened, revealing the visage of the once-handsome prince, his green eyes soulless. “About 320 years behind schedule. But better late than never.”

“NEEEEEEEEIIIIIGH!” His dark ghost-horse Sitron cried an otherworldly neigh, pitch-black with
exposed bones and flaming blue eyes and hair.

So really, the flashback wasn’t THAT major to the whole grand scheme, I just didn’t feel comfortable summarizing it in dialogue. I mean, imagine if I did it that way, then look at this version, wouldn’t you agree? Next time will be the conclusion of the Frozen Saga. So stay tuned.
Welcome back to the story! I promise not to make it boring. A boss here is what we’ll fight. It’s time for Wendy to test her might!

Chapter B-5: Unveiled

Orchid Bay; Jasmine’s House

Wendy and June regrouped with Carla and Monroe before running to Ah-Mah’s house, where Facilier and the Ice Climbers were already waiting. “You guys! There’s something big coming!” June yelled.

“We’re already aware.” Jasmine replied. “Over there.”

They were all led to a clearer area of forest, seeing the imposing tower in the distance. “That’s got to be what my Seismic Sensor was feeling.” Monroe said.

“We still don’t SEE!” the Ice Climbers chorused.

“Ugh.” Monroe sighed, reaching into his satchel for two necklaces with tiki designs. “Put these on, you two.” He gave them to the twins, and when they put them on, everything became visible.

The twins gasped with terror: “A FLYING CAT!!”

Carla glared at them. “Is there any particular reason you’re even with us?”

“NOPE.”

“How is that tower moving?” Wendy asked.

“I’d be less concerned about the tower and more about that cannon.” Carla pointed out.

“Hold on…” Facilier looked through binoculars. “I recognize that place. It’s Cauldron Keep. It belonged to Gruntilda’s sisters!”

“Gruntilda?” Jasmine questioned. “You mean she got that engineering degree after all?”

“Well, her sisters did, she does tend to steal their work. That cannon is bad news, though. It can drain all the life energy from a targeted landscape!”

“Orchid Bay is filled with magic and life.” Carla said simply. “We must stop that tower before it gets within range!”

“Right.” June fist-palmed. “Wendy, let’s get on it!”
“Okay!” (Play the Eggman Boss Theme from *Sonic Unleashed!*)

**Boss fight: Cauldron Keep**

Wendy dashed across the forest with sonic speed while Juniper kept up with a series of terrific leaps across trees. It was only before when they were hurrying through the city Wendy noticed such athletic ability. She didn’t need to worry about leaving her behind. When they were merely yards from the mechanical tower, June was ready to land on one of its legs, and Wendy up the side. “WAAAAH!” They both were bounced off by an invisible forcefield.

“Nuisances, I’m sorry to say,” Gruntilda began, “that you won’t be getting in that way. My shield is endlessly flowing. So off with you, I must get going!”

“June, watch out!” Wendy ran by and pulled her friend to safety before a metal claw crushed her. She carried June and ran all the way back to the others. “It has a shield around it!”

“We saw.” Carla said worriedly. “And we’ll never be able to order an evacuation from something the town can’t see.”

“I’m going to try.” Facilier aimed his cane. “Reducto! Reducto!” He fired several Destructive Spells, seeing the barrier flash on, but left unpenetrated. “Expelliarmus! Disablo!” More spells, the barrier stayed. “Darn!”

“One silly cane isn’t going to work!” Ah-Mah stated. “You’d need a wand that can penetrate a shield like that. I believe the store sells a Lamia Scale, but you can’t just-”

“M-Miss Ah-Mah!” Wendy spoke eagerly, raising the wand from her shorts. “You mean this Lamia Scale?”

“Harry Potter’s Hairnet, how long did ya have that?” Monroe asked with surprise.

“Let me see.” Ah-Mah took the pink wand and studied it. “Ah-ha... made of rose quartz, scale from Lamia for a core. Great with support-type magic, as well as breaking defenses. Or so I’ve heard.” She returned it to Wendy. “Where did you get this?”

“From the store you mentioned. It just…” Wendy glanced at it, wondering how to phrase it, “felt right with me, I guess.”

“Wendy, can you do a Disabling Charm?” Facilier asked. “Just jab your wand and say, ‘Disablo.’”

“I’ll try!” With a confident look, Wendy raced toward the tower again, leaping atop a tree. “DISABLO!” She shot the spell, a tiny hole briefly appeared in the barrier, but refilled in less than a second.

“These pesky worms are annoying me!” Grunty yelled. “I’ll send my minions to get rid of thee!”

Gruntydactyls and Uggers were dropped out of hatches in the tower, phasing through the forcefield. Uggers – short green monsters with big mouths and strong fists – performed terrific leaps in attempt to smash Wendy, but she raced back to the others. “What is it THIS time?” Carla asked.

Wendy panted for breath. “I almost broke through, but it repairs itself. I could only make a little hole.”
“How little, exactly?” Monroe asked.

“I dunno. About maybe this big.” She held her hands partly away from her body.

“Carla, if you could fly the two of us in there, we could stop the tower from the inside.”

“Well, I can’t think of any other options.” the cat figured.

“Could you really stop it by yourselves?” Wendy asked.

“We could at least find a way to stop the barrier so you and June could get in. But there’s also a matter of keeping it open long enough.”

“Wait, the Lamia Scale is strong with support magic.” Monroe recalled. “Perhaps Wendy can increase June’s strength to weaken the shield.”

“Can she do that?” June asked.

“Course she can, she’s mah girl!” Facilier patted Wendy’s back, the girl blushing worriedly. “I may have to give her a jumpstart lesson, though. Sonny, Donna, try to slow down that tower!!”

“WE’RE ON IT!” The Ice Climbers skied through the forest on ice paths, evasively dodging every tree en route to the tower. They shot ice beams at Gruntydactyls and dodged Uggers’ smashes, bashing the big-mouths with their hammers. The twins reunited a few yards from the tower and clapped hands together. “Now we’ll show you-!” Sonny began as they channeled their combined Ice Chi.

“-that the twin conquerors of ice-!” Donna continued, a circle of frost forming on the ground.

“-CONTROL THE VERY LANDSCAPE!” And from the ground, an iceberg sprouted up, stretching half as tall as the tower. The Cauldron Keep stopped as Grunty looked confused.

“Strange occurrences are taking place. They aren’t slowing down my race. Mortar cannons, make my day. Cease these delays and clear the way!” Hatches opened on the tower, blasting mortar cannons at the iceberg. Sonny and Donna sprouted another one a few yards further, another on Grunty’s left, then the right.

“Do you got it, Wendy?” Facilier asked, after instructing her.

“Um…” Wendy looked nervously at June, “Maybe you should do it, Mr. Facilier.”

“I like to give children gifts, but my cane ain’t ‘supportive.’ You heard what Jasmine said, just do it like this!” He performed the wand movement.

“Come on, Wendy, you can do it!” June declared with a pumped-up expression, balling her fists.

“Okay.” Wendy focused on June, waved her wand in a circle above herself, then “ARMS!” she zapped a spell on June’s arms, then again on her legs.

June stared as both body parts glowed, and she felt power course within her. “Huhu, THIS is what I’m talkin’ about!” She smirked eagerly. “Let’s TRASH this tower, Wendy!” Both girls bolted through the forest. Uggers punched the bases of trees and caused them to topple in their path, but June used her enhanced strength to punch the trees away, and Wendy ran off a slanted ramp-like rock to go into the air and kick off the swarm of Gruntydactyls. They arrived at one of the Ice Climbers’ icebergs, ran up, and flew to the tower as June readied a punch, and Wendy called,
“DISABLO!”

A larger hole was broken open, but the girls still hit the barrier and were blown back over the iceberg. They ran away before Gruntilda destroyed the ice. Sonny and Donna quickly froze the ground around the tower, hoping to make its legs slip. “Huff, huff. This is too much work for us.” The twins chorused. “Especially in summer.”

“Wendy, try to do that again!” Carla yelled, flying while carrying Monroe.

“Okay! You ready, June?”

“Ready!” The Chinese girl leapt for a mighty kick against the barrier, Wendy shot a Disabling Charm, with narrow maneuvering, Carla flew herself and Monroe through the barrier —“AAAAH!” They were blown back and out.

“Good gravy!” Monroe grunted, rubbing his sore back after landing. “The barrier repels anything that’s a few inches inside! We’ll have to get inside the tower BEFORE it fixes itself!”

“But I don’t see any openings!” Wendy yelled. “Except maybe up by that cannon.”

“Let’s run back to Dr. Facilier!” June said, so the girls returned through the forest, carrying their respective pets. They found the witch-doctor again, “Mr. Facilier, me and Wendy need to break an opening—”

“Monroe, is it safe for him to be doing that?” Facilier asked, gesturing with his thumb. June and Monroe gaped: Ray Ray was slowly guiding a Racatan by dropping chips on the ground.

The giant brown rat had a mellow expression as it sniffed each treat and munched. “I’ll have to keep you a secret from June and Monroe for a while, but they’ll be comfortable in time, so don’t worry—”

“RAY RAY!” The boy flinched at Monroe’s shout. “What in Dumbledore’s name are ya DOING, Lad?! The town is in danger and you’re trying to tame a feral BEAST!”

“He’s not feral! Marvin’s a good monster, aren’t you?” He gently petted Racatan’s head.

“Wendy, what’s up with the barrier now?” Facilier asked.

“Um, we need to break an opening in the tower, too, otherwise they can’t get in.”

Raising a brow, Facilier looked at the Racatan. “Say no more!” He smirked. “Uncle Facilier’s got this!” Fearlessly, the witch-doctor ran up to the creature, jumped high, and landed atop the Racatan’s head, planting his long shoes against its sides. He clutched his cane in his teeth, hands folded above his head, and he began to sway his head.

A fast, mystical music started playing, a banjo-like strumming one would hear down the bayou. The Racatan’s eyes turned colorful and spinning, bright colorful, sharply-drawn designs spiraled around him: the Racatan was hypnotized. “RAAAAHH!” He stood on his hind-legs and roared, then began jigging his hip to the tune. On all fours, Racatan started dashing to the tower. “Wendy, cast that charm on his head!” he yelled quickly, then resumed jigging to control the creature.

Quickly, Wendy ran to keep ahead of him, watching Racatan tear through puny Uggers and trees. “Arms!” Wendy got in front, shot the spell at its head, and moved aside. June caught up with her, holding Carla and Monroe, releasing the animals before hurrying to Facilier. It was then they noticed an oddly-designed part of the tower’s front—a sealed drawbridge, and the Racatan was
going for it. June leapt, punched that part of barrier, Wendy shot Disablo, and Facilier jumped off the enhanced Racatan, who broke a larger hole, rammed the drawbridge with its horns, and it fell open before the rat flew out.

Wendy and June pierced the barrier again, Carla and Monroe flew in, past the drawbridge, and weren’t forced back out. They caught their breath after landing on the metal floor. Giant gears and up/down pumps were inside. “Well, we’re in.” Carla said. “Do you have any plans? We are only animals after all.”

“And yet, you’re a catch. Ay may look like a filthy mongrel to you, but I can do magic.” Monroe pulled a brown stick wand with a blue gem at its top out of his satchel. “Reducto!” He blasted at a gear, but it went undamaged. “What?! Is this place magically protected from the inside?”

“HIEEEE!” Guvnors spotted them, pink-skinned Gruntlings wearing yellow plumber jumpsuits, wielding large wrenches. Carla Torpedo Spun and knocked them away, and some tried to whack her in the air, leaving Monroe to stun them with spells. The cat regrouped with the dog and said, “We at least have to stop this thing from moving. These pumps obviously control the legs, judging by their movement.”

“You just saw, Lass, my spells bounce off this machinery!” Monroe reminded.

“We have to try, come on!” Carla carried Monroe over to a pump. She watched the device shift up and down. “Is there a spell to loosen bolts or something?”

“What good would that do?”

“It’s basic engineering, nuts and bolts keep machines together. What, does your magic not teach you that?”

“Fine, ya brain the size of a gopher! Spinneroo!” Monroe held his wand forward, whirled it in a close circle quickly, and zapped a screw, it spun rapidly and came out. “It worked!”

“Keep it up!” Carla smiled eagerly. Monroe repeated the spell and spun each screw and bolt from its latch. The tower shook and tilted, so the animals moved on to the next pump, then the others.

Wendy, June, and the others gaped with joy when the tower’s mechanical claws faltered. The structure threatened to topple over any second. “I knew those legs were no good!” Gruntilda declared. “That’s why I had THESE under the hood!” And to everyone’s shock and horror, bulldozer-like tracks appeared from its bottom sides. It continued its drive to Orchid Bay.

“BLAST IT ALL!” Monroe swore. “Ugh, we have to find the barrier generator!”

“What’s that area up there?” Carla asked, pointing at a small opening on the ceiling.

“Let’s check it out.” Monroe put his wand away and allowed Carla to fly them into the hatch. He grabbed his wand and blasted the Guvnors senseless, and they felt an invisible force through the air as they made it to a central chamber. A gigantic magnet was strapped to a machine, whose large mechanical pipes transmitted energy from it through the walls. “Gryffindor’s Ghost! She must be using the magnet’s repellant energy to make the barrier.”

“Do you know any fire-type spells? You can spin the magnet’s electrons out of control and-”

“Ay at least know how a MAGNET works, Bookworm! Sigh, Ay just hope this works.” Monroe whirled his wand and yelled, “Ventus Tria Incendio!” A huge, flaming whirlwind sprouted from the wand and set fire to the magnet. The machine sparked and began to falter.
The girls watched from outside when the barrier flashed and disappeared completely. “Now’s our chance, Wendy!” June exclaimed as they both ran up the track-wheels and leapt into the drawbridge entrance. The girls threw spells and punches at each Gruntling on their way up the tower. Going up stairs was no problem for Wendy’s speed and June’s athletic jumping. In no time, the girls made it into a chamber with a giant machine, attached to a laser cannon that aimed out of the window. “This must be it. You ready to make scrap of this thing, Wendy?” June spoke readily.

“I sure am!” Wendy clutched her wand tight. “Just name a spot and we’ll-”

A glass capsule suddenly encased the girls. June punched and kicked it, but left nary a crack. “What the heck?!” A crane lifted their capsule up through the ceiling, and they soon found their selves on the roof.

“Surprise, surprise, what have we here?” They both gasped: Gruntilda was seated in the cockpit of a digger with a giant drill. “Two beautiful little dears! I’ll save and keep you nice and fresh. When I’m revived, I’ll have your beauty and flesh!” Gruntilda locked onto the girls, intending to hit their capsule with a missile (if they get too damaged, she can repair their bodies later).

June frantically bashed the glass. “Know any good spells, Wendy?!”

“No, but I have an idea.” Wendy lifted her shirt and grabbed her Chi Stabilizers. “I’m sorry in advance if I hurt you. Please, hold onto these.” She peeled the stickers off and passed them to her friend. Wendy huffed and blew a powerful gust of wind, pushing June against the glass, it became harder to breathe the more Wendy blew. Unable to withstand the pressure, the glass shattered, and June was blown against the glass dome surrounding the roof while Wendy dodged the missile.

Gruntilda grunted in anger, but then began to feel the tower sway. “Meeeh? The wind has picked up outside. The unsteady ground makes this an unsafe ride. Right here is where I’ll park. When B.O.B. finishes charging, this land will go dark!”

With that, Cauldron keep stopped and parked tight on the current ground. The wind continued to shift the rotatable tower as the cannon charged a sickly green laser. The whole of Orchid Bay was targeted, save for having to move toward the center over and over because of the wind.

“Crud! We’ll never be able to stop that cannon in time!” June yelled. Grunty’s Hag 1 drill was currently spinning in place, forcing the girls to jump its extracted lasers.

Wendy felt a rising ill feeling in her stomach. She felt the tower turning left-and-right. “No, but if I can get outside, I could make it fire someplace else.” With that, Wendy boosted and began running along the side of the dome in circles. “Try to get me up here, Bonehead! …If that’s some kind of physical condition of yours, I’m sorry for offending, I’m not good at taunting.”

“Way to scare her, Wendy.” June remarked sarcastically, lazily dodging lasers.

“At least I don’t have a gut!” Grunty shook with anger. “I’ll shoot you down, you little mutt!” She loaded another missile, trying to lock the speeding girl in her sights. Grunting, she fired, and a hole was broken in the glass.

Thinking quickly, Wendy ran out the hole, shifted her sideways body the opposite way, and ran on the side of the dome before stopping at the top. “Please let this work!” Holding her arms forward and open, Wendy spun in place, channeling the wind to follow her. A light tornado was forming around the top of the tower, the cannon couldn’t focus itself on the town. Facilier, Ray Ray, and the twins watched from afar, feeling anxious as the green light grew brighter on the cannon’s tip. But as the wind kept blowing, the direction was averted away from the town at a near 88 degrees.
The Big-O-Blaster fired, and a large area of forest was turned black and lifeless. The laser ceased after all of it was extinguished.

“ALL RIIIIIGHT!” Facilier cheered, Ray Ray leaped, the twins high-fived. “THAT’S mah girl!”

Wendy stopped spinning, feeling both relieved and dizzy. Before she could contemplate if she hit any animals or travelers, she lost balance and fell over the dome. “I got you!” Carla caught the child under her arms in her paws.

“Thanks, Carla.” Wendy smiled weakly, with a desire to throw up. The kitten flew her back inside the dome.

“NO NO no!” Gruntilda cried. “My target missed! You girls have gotten me really pissed! I’ll charge again and have your town gone! Just as soon as I HAVE WON!” The witch whirled her arms, conjuring a pink and powerful sphere of energy above her. She focused on June and BKKOOM, a sudden pink bolt of lightning shot every second, the Te Xuan Ze evasively avoided.

“Carla… h-help June…” Wendy spoke dizzily.

“How do you expect me to…?” Carla focused on Gruntilda, observing her spell: the energy ball started small, increased in size, fired a lightning bolt, then repeated from small size. Carla let Wendy lean against the dome, and with careful timing, the winged cat Torpedo Spun and bonked the witch.

“ACK!” Gruntilda stumbled, looking angrily at Carla, but- “DAAAAAH! The spell! I dropped it!” She panicked when the energy sphere hit the floor of her cockpit, still increasing in size. “Bears, birds, cats, dogs, I HATE TALKING ANIMAAAAALS!”

June leapt, grabbed Carla, grabbed Wendy over her shoulder, and leaped out of the dome’s hole, dropping toward the drawbridge where Monroe stood. She landed, the dog hopped on her back, and June made terrific leaps across the forest as the tower trembled. They regrouped with their friends near Ah-Mah’s house, and witnessed Cauldron Keep’s final moments. The top of the tower vanished in a pink explosion.

“EEEEH-EEEEH-EEEEH-EEEEEEHHH!” Gruntilda’s chubby figure flew across the sky toward town like a shooting star, leaving a trail of smoke. Somewhere in the city, they don’t know where, she crashed. What remained of Cauldron Keep fell to its side thanks to the wind. (End song.)

“WE DID IT, WE DID IT!” Sonny and Donna jumped and belly-bumped.

“THAT WAS SO AWESOME!” Ray Ray ’fived the twins as well. “We saved the day! And it’s all thanks to me and Marvin!” He looked at his tamed Racatan, who was still woozy in the head.

“Aye, but we would have been toast if not for that whirlwind.” Monroe said. “That’s some crazy airbending you have, girl.”

“I know, it kicked BUTT!” June hugged Wendy—her still-enhanced fists crushed her back.

“Whoops. Sorry.”

“It’s okay.” She replied with a forced, dizzy smile. Facilier cast a spell to turn off June’s fists. “Oh, and you might want these back.” June remembered, handing Wendy her Stabilizers. She stuck them back onto her waist.

That’s when Ah-Mah ran to them in a hurry. “Grandma, you MISSED it!” Ray Ray exclaimed.
“That tower had a shield, but Marvin ran up to it like DONG, then the cannon was gonna fire, but the whirlwind went bwoo bwoo bwoo bwoo, and then it—”

“Which way did that cannon fire?!” Ah-Mah yelled with anger.

Wendy’s heart started, recovering from her dizziness. “I-It shot that way.” She pointed, though they couldn’t see the ruined region through the trees. “I wanted to aim it away from town, s-so I picked a part of forest.”

“Ah-Mah, what’s wrong?” June asked.

The elder sighed, pinching between her eyes. “No, it wasn’t your fault, dear, you had no other option.”

“W-What wasn’t my fault?” Wendy asked, feeling her pride shift to sadness.

“I just watched the news. There’s a widespread panic from monsters appearing around town. None of you could have known, but… the place where that cannon fired had one of the Veil’s power stones stationed there!”

Wendy gasped loudly. “S-So that means…?”

The screaming reached their ears in seconds. Everyone bolted toward town. Humans were running and screaming from the clear-as-day monsters, and monsters were running from humans that tried to kill them. People jumped out of windows, wrecked cars, Orchid Bay had never seen this much chaos. GUN jeeps and copters swarmed in, furiously blasting machineguns at the demons while trying to round the humans into safety.

“This is awful!” Wendy cried. “What have I done?!”

“Don’t blame yourself, Child, you saved the town!” Carla stated.

“But look what’s happening! This town’ll end up destroying itself!”

“That’s not gonna be our problem now.” Facilier informed. “If we don’t get outta here, we may have more than GUN troops to deal with.”

“I’m going into town to try to get things under control.” Ah-Mah declared, running off. “June, Monroe, come with me.” They ran to join her-

“JUNE, wait!” Wendy grabbed the girl’s shoulder.

“What is it?”

“June, the Veil’s down! This means you can go!” At this, June put on a look of realization. “You can come with us if you want! You can help work at Facilier’s shop, and we can go on adventures together!”

June actually contemplated for a moment. Wendy looked really eager for her decision. June turned back to Ray, Monroe, and Ah-Mah, all looking expectant. …June shook her head. “Wendy, I can’t go now. These people need a Te Xuan Ze more than ever!”

“But… But you’ve always wanted to be free. Didn’t you?”

“Of course I do.” June smiled comfortably, touching her friend’s shoulder. “But it just can’t be. This… This is my responsibility. But it’s alright, because I still have friends and family here.
Maybe not during summer, but…”

Wendy looked down sadly. “I understand. But… could I come visit you again?”

“Let’s hope so!” June punched her chest. “But if you do, be able to take a punch!” Wendy smiled and chuckled.

“Everyone in the Apparizone, kids!” Facilier yelled, hugging the twins, Carla, and Wendy to him. “We’re goin’!” In a flash, they were gone from the Lees’ view. Wendy felt her stomach compress, the world spinning in this Apparition.

She landed on her front on the alleyway ground. They were in front of Facilier’s shop. The witch-doctor unlocked the door as Wendy stood, holding her cramped and twisted stomach. “M-Mr. Facilier? C-Could I have another Troia Charm?”

Facilier sighed. “A Troia Charm loses its appeal on the same person if used too much. Just tough it out, Wendy, we’ll save them when it’s important.”

Carla helped escort Wendy into the shop as the child held her tummy. She seized the chance to sit down at the table, awaiting the barf that would never come. “You never even had breakfast.” Facilier chuckled. “I’ll cook you something to eat.” He patted her back. “You deserve it, girl.”

She gave a weak smile, hunched over and holding her stomach. Carla stood in front and smiled proudly. “You did an amazing job today, Wendy. That town would’ve been doomed without you.”

“It’s kind of doomed thanks to me, too.” the girl reminded.

“It isn’t your fault that those hooligans can’t control their selves.” Carla stated with a disapproving scowl for Orchid Bay’s citizens. “You should be very proud of yourself.”

Wendy reflected on their trip. Carla was right. Wendy made a new friend, and helped her save the town, using her own skills. For the first time, she felt like she helped people. A real accomplishment. She was very proud. “…Hey, Carla? I’m really sorry about what I said.” She frowned.

“You’re still holding on to that? I’m not upset, Wendy.”

“But I shouldn’t have said that. You’re one of the only friends I have, Carla, and you’re in the same boat as me. I don’t want things to be weird between us.”

“I forgive you, Child. And, I’m sorry… if I looked at you strangely.” Carla frowned and turned away. “I don’t know what about your eyes scares me. Perhaps it is because they make you look like a monster.” She looked up at Wendy, “So if I show distaste in your eyes for any reason, it is because you are not actually a monster, you are a very kind girl who never deserved any curse or treatment as if you were one. Those red eyes of yours are very misleading for what’s inside. Is that alright with you, Wendy?”

“Heheh. It is, Carla.” Wendy reached under her shorts and picked up her Lamia Scale. “My first wand… I hope my parents are proud of me.”

Facilier brought Wendy some tea to settle her stomach, giving some to Carla, too. He set steak and mashed potatoes on the table for the three kids to eat, and a cooked fish for Carla (she felt oddly repulsed while eating it), revitalizing after an exhausting day. “Mister Facilier?” Wendy spoke, after her sickness died down. “Um… I really wanted to thank you for…for helping me today. You were an excellent teacher.”
“Mah pleasure, Wendy.” The witch-doctor smiled, reorganizing items on the shelves. “You’re an excellent student.”

“Thanks.” She smiled back, not lifting her head up. “…Sniff.”

Carla saw her red eyes trembling. “What’s the matter, Wendy?” At this, Facilier and the Climbers looked over as well.

“N-Nothing.” Wendy tried to repress her tears. “I-It’s just… ever since I began working here, I’ve never felt more happy. I was all alone for my whole life. When I hurt Lee Andrew by mistake, I thought I would never make another friend. But then Mister and Mrs. Facilier came, a-and then I found Carla… sniff.”

“We all know the story, Wendy.” Facilier chuckled lightly. “You don’t have to keep refreshing it.”

“But if I hadn’t met you, I…I would be all alone.” A sniffle. “And I just don’t think… I could’ve survived on my own. S-So it’s really nice to know that… I matter to someone.” Her tears were falling. “Mister Facilier… thank you for giving me a home. I’m sorry if I’m whining too much, or if I give you a hard time, or if I’m-”

The witch-doctor got to his knees and hugged the child close. He was so tall that his head was still inches over the seated girl. “Not at all, Wendy. If I wasn’t under your daddy’s orders, I would’ve adopted you. No child deserves to go through what you did.”

Another sniffle. “I really wanna believe that… my parents had a good reason for leaving me. After all of this, if my parents don’t want me back… will you let me stay here?”

“Of course, Wendy, everyone needs a home to come back to.”

“Do you promise?” Wendy asked with a sniffle. “’C-Cause, I don’t wanna make things hard for you, I-I just don’t wanna be abandoned again. Before I met you, I always thought my parents left me ‘cause I was a burden, a-and I didn’t matter to them at all.”

“Wendy, don’t say such a thing.” Carla stated. “If anything, your parents should have kept you to begin with. You’re a delightful child.”

“Hah hah, no she isn’t!” Facilier had to laugh at that comment. “You’re an imperfect child, Wendy. That’s why you’re perfect.”

“CONTRADICTORY!” Sonny and Donna exclaimed, clamping Wendy’s shoulders from the sides.

“I can’t disagree with you, Harvey.” Carla shrugged, hugging Wendy’s legs. “But you really need to stop crying, Child.”

She calmed down. Wendy felt a warmth in her heart. Mr. Facilier, Sonny, Donna, Carla… she always wondered what having friends or family would feel like. …It was the greatest feeling ever. “Sniff… thanks, guys.” Facilier used a napkin to wipe her tears off. She forced a smile and chuckle, “I’m sorry for making this too dramatic. I’ll try to control myself, I promise.”

“I know you will, Child.” Facilier sat up, patting her shoulder. “How ‘bout you take a nap after supper? I think all of us need a rest after all that.”

So after their bellies were full, they climbed the ladder to the bedroom. Sonny and Donna threw off their coats and settled comfortably, and Wendy took off her shoes before getting under the covers.
Carla laid on Wendy’s chest. “Carla… Mr. Facilier keeps mentioning my dad, but… what do you think my mom was like?”

Carla thought for a minute as she was getting comfortable. “In my personal opinion, she should’ve been the proudest mother in the world.”

**Orchid Bay**

Humans and demons were screaming and running everywhere. June, Ray Ray, and Monroe stood in the middle of the chaos, looking around frantically. “Monroe, can’t we use one of those wide-range Memory Staffs?!” June yelled.

“You know we can’t use that without affecting the whole world!” Monroe replied. “Besides, it won’t be long now. Any moment, the Magic Council will-”

Storm clouds appeared in the sky. At first, June thought of Wendy’s wind curse. However, a cyan light shone through the clouds. A bright ray of light burst through the center and struck the ground. Everybody turned and stared with awe and worry.

A troupe of fairy soldiers appeared, and their commander, a huge, muscular fairy with a green sleeveless shirt and camouflage pants. “CITIZENS OF ORCHID BAY!” his thick German voice echoed. “This town is under restricted protection by the Avalaran Magic Council! I am Jorgen von Strangle, toughest fairy in the universe, and until this city is repaired to working order, you all will be sealed within a Fairy Sphere. Furthermore, we will wipe everyone’s memories of these events.” He held up a small, pink bar with a light. “But first, the culprits who destroyed the Veil must be punished. No one is to move or leave town until we find them!”

Two fairies with strict expressions carried Gruntilda to him, dropping her on the ground. Jorgen towered over the witch imposingly. “I was involved, I will admit!” she spoke defensively. “But the whole punishment, I should not get!” She looked around, then grabbed a fallen wanted poster, showing it to him. “This girl with hair as blue as sea! She blew up my tower and destroyed the Veil, not me!”

Jorgen picked up the poster and glared at it. A girl with deep blue hair and red eyes, passing a brief glance at her photographer. He heard her name before.

“Ollivander, for the last time,” Jorgen told the shop owner not too long ago, “the only leetle girl who can hold the Fairy’s Tail is the Fairy Princess herself! You tell this ‘Windy Marvel’ that if she wants a wand, she will have to settle with a Pony’s Tail, or perhaps twin Pig’s Tails,” he smirked witfully, “for puny leetle girls like her. Ha! Ha ha ha! Ha!”

Jorgen squeezed the poster angrily. “BINKY!”

“Yes, Jorgen!” A very short fairy with purple garb, pointy ears, and a bald head saluted frightfully.

“Report this girl to Princess Mavis.” He gave Binky the crumpled poster. “Tell her to add extra security around the Fairy’s Tail. This girl must be aiming to retrieve it by any means necessary. GO NOW!!” The earth shook.

“YES SIR!” Binky poofed away.

With that, Jorgen clutched his giant King Wand in both hands, raising it skyward. “Until the Veil has returned, you are all under my protection. I now initiate: FAIRY SPHERE!” A golden beam of light blasted to the heavens, stopped high above the city, and swallowed the whole bay inside of a golden ball. The waves washed furiously, the entire sphere shone brighter and brighter. Then…
Orchid Bay disappeared. The seaside road led nowhere but an empty enclosing within the landscape.

Miles away from the city, miles above the air, the red-eyed stranger in the blowing black cloak smirked. “Well done… Wendy. You served this town well. Do not feel discouraged. Orchid Bay will yet have its freedom. And once the Fairy’s Tail is in your possession… we will be rid of the walls between worlds.” He became the wind and blew away.

**Negaverse; EiznekCm Household**

Nerehc landed in the front yard of his house with Egroeg and AlyakAm in tow. “I sent a text message to my girlfriend.” He told the siblings. “So expect a sudden Apparition. 3… 2… 1…”

“DISRESPECT!” Neither of the three were startled by the witch’s sudden appearance. “What can I do for my boy toy today?” Sipa asked with a bright smile.

“These two wanna meet their Positives.” Nerehc replied, gesturing the gloomy-faced duo. “I’m not sure if Cheren’s in his room, so I need you to open a portal if he isn’t.”

“Okay, sure.” Sipa shrugged. “Think I’ll chat up my own Positive while we’re there. Tell her that I’m a changed person!” She raised her arms happily.

“The other day, you magically switched a person’s face with their butt.” Nerehc reminded as they entered the house. He heard a pot boiling in the kitchen, so assumed his mother was there.

“For poetic justice reasons.” His girlfriend contradicted. They made it to Nerehc’s room and faced his mirror. Sipa jiggled her wand and called, “Dimentio Flippow.”

The mirror became a portal to the Posiverse. “Now remember guys, you’re allowed to cause mayhem in their world, just let people know who you really are after a while.” Nerehc instructed.

“Of course.” AlyakAm replied. “We’ll take it to our hearts like Numbness Serum.”

“Now, I’m not sure if Cheren’s people are still uncomfortable with the Apocalypse, so just-” Nerehc and Sipa were stabbed in the hips by syringes. They both collapsed on the floor, unconscious.

“I must say, it is quite fun drugging people.” Egroeg said as he and his sister entered the vortex.

“Do not try anything to me.” AlyakAm told him. “I’ve memorized all techniques and can drug you during your breath.”

**Somewhere dark** (Play “Old Doll” from *Mad Father.*)

“Nnnnmm…” Nerehc still felt numb in every part of his body as he woke up. It was pitch-black in here, so he took off his sunglasses to see. “Where am I… Hello? Sipa? Egroeg? AlyakAm?”

The padding of sandaled footsteps against the floor rang across the space. Nerehc saw the girl emerge. Aquamarine hair, a dress depicting a shadowed graveyard under a night sky with yellow moon, and a wide mouth and purple eyes that gave Nerehc the chills. Her face was in stitches, and had a dark-pink coat with a burned crown attached to the lowered hood. She held a doll of himself. “Hello, Nerehc!”

The boy raised a brow. “Um… hi?”
“It’s nice to meet you!” Her peppy attitude was clearly forced. “My name is Ragus. This is you. Isn’t you pretty?” She grinned and held his doll by both arms.

“Are you a fan of me?”

“Not me, in particular. But my master is! She’s an exceptional fan of yours. Her name is Medusa!”

“Oh. You mean like the Positive Asudem?”

“Well, Asudem is a myth. Medusa is real. Lots of things are real, actually. Like the end of the world.”

“You mean the Apocalypse.”

“Yes. You must know the story. The Goddess of Light, Palutena, is responsible for finding the Seven Lights. Medusa, Goddess of Darkness, however… must seek the Darknesses.”

“Yeah, what’s your point?”

She glided closer to him, not moving her legs. Her wide, creepy face was inches from his. “Medusa needs people to find the Darknesses. She can’t physically do it herself. Gods cannot interfere with mortal affairs, even under doomsday. That’s why… she’s asking you.”

“But Sanula told me the Positives were going to find all the Keys.”

“That’s not true. All the Keys are Positives… but only you Negatives can help us find some of them. Because since the beginning, your kind has bathed in darkness. It should therefore be up to you to seek the Darknesses.”

“Things have changed, Ragus. I’m changing the Negaverse into one with light. You can tell Medusa that.”

“She very well knows. But Nerehc… surely you all want to survive. Lady Medusa wishes to find the Darknesses. She wishes to help you. I can take you to her. But only if you promise to do everything she says.”

“And what if I don’t? What if I don’t go with you?”

She stayed silent for a second, her head slanted sideways. “Then… your world is doomed. You can try to figure everything out… but not without a goddess’s hand.”

Nerehc looked at her thoughtfully. “…She would really help? Help save everybody?”

“Of course. Medusa loves mortals.”

Nerehc wasn’t sure what to say. …Clearly, this was some kind of dream, he and Sipa were just knocked out. Still, it could also be a vision. Just how far was Cheren in finding the Lights—they only had a month until summer really began, could they locate twenty people in time? “…Alright.” Nerehc decided. “I’ll see what she has to offer. But I expect her to help us make progress.”

Ragus grinned wide. “Thank you, Nerehc! Lady Medusa appreciates it!”

She took Nerehc’s right (dominant) hand and plopped her doll onto it. She closed her eyes and glowed blue with energy, much to Nerehc’s fright. “…Wh-Wh-WHOOOOOOOAAAAA!” Nerehc shone brightly, Ragus’s grin looked more vicious in the light. A soul-sweeping sensation overcame him. The darkness turned white.
The moment it all disappeared, Nerehc fell. Ragus looked down at him with her grin. …He slowly stood up. Never had Nerehc been more calm. …He opened his sharp, snakelike green eyes, smiling wickedly. “Thank you… Ragus.”

“My pleasure… Lady Medusa.” The Nerehc doll dangled lifeless and motionlessly from Ragus’s hand.

These Side Stories chapters actually are pretty short sometimes. It’s only three story arcs to focus on, depending if I wanna show certain arcs in which chapters. Besides, I won’t be able to work on this as much anyway, college started for me again, so I’ll be doing lots of art stuff. Well, next time in the Side Stories, some Negaverse and Augustus, then 3,000 words of Wendy napping, nah I’m just kidding. X) Give the little Cry Mage a break. Later.
Chapter Summary

Sector IC make it to Arendelle Castle and meet Queen Elsa.

What better fitting chapter for it to happen than the 10th?

Chapter 10: Let It Go

Midway Peak

7pm was finally here, and the Excess Express finally arrived at Midway Gala, taking place upon a balcony on a mountain that towered miles above the ocean below; so high one could almost see where the Earth curved round. The Corporate Presidents and their children all stepped off to join. Many rich types in powdery wigs and uniforms sat at curtained tables and socialized. Mom was the last one to step off, walking awkwardly. The other presidents passed this off as the result of her injury, but that wasn’t the case. “Nnn! Keep up, you little brat!” she hissed under her breath.

Cheren squatted low and walked with Mom under her dress, feeling very awkward about his position. He took a very light peek through the front, glancing up as the mountain seemed to go forever. “Mom? Where are we, exactly?” he whispered.

Mom glanced around to see no one was close enough. “This is just one floor of the Holy Ground, Mt. Mariejoa. It’s the tallest mountain in the world, and the World Government’s ultimate headquarters. At the very base of this mountain is Enies Lobby, the base of the Teen Ninjas and the secret assassin group, CP10.”

“Enies Lobby, I’ve heard of that. The Sea Train from Water 7 goes there.”

“The government specially ordered their skilled carpenters to build the track there a long time ago. But they’re just small time. We’re at the Midway Peak, which is the Corporate Presidents’ main base, and where the Head President lives. And the very top of the mountain rests the World Leaders’ castle. The mountain was modeled after the Sky and Spear Pillars, and it’s said this used to belong to the Light Goddess, Palutena. I dunno how the World Leaders could’ve occupied it.”

Cheren glanced around further, and took notice of a familiar, puffy-haired blonde girl in a green dress, standing by her lonesome. “Carol!”

“What?” Mom asked.

“Huh? Oh, not you, it’s someone my friends know.”

“Hmph.” She glanced at the girl. “Small world.”

Mom stepped over to a table as Cheren crept under its curtain. “Now just stay out of sight until the Head President appears. And when she does, kill her.” She spoke with a grim look. She walked away casually as Cheren remained in place. Killing the top head in front of so many rich, powerful types… this was Cheren’s hardest mission, yet. But… he would see it through.
Cheren glanced under the curtain and found Doflamingo’s daughter, Sugar standing by the railing and viewing the horizon. The gentle wind breezed past her hair and coat as she played a calm, peaceful tune on a small leaf. It eased Cheren’s mind from the mission… until Sugar stopped after 30 seconds.

Hendry Middle School

Hendry Middle School. A fortress that’s been through many trials throughout the years. Even though it was destroyed almost 21 years ago, and newly rebuilt 15 years ago. It was the perfect hideout for Teen Ninjas. They posed as “Hall Monitors” to the teachers, in just really fancy outfits, but any kid outside the school would know their true purpose. “Hey Slider, you got a date for the Summer Dance, yet?” a ninja patrolling the roof asked.

“Nah, but I’m thinkin’ of asking Nya, she’s got a nice bod. Only other guy she likes is her cousin. Whadda ‘bout you?”

“That Tracy girl is cute, I think her dad was even-”

“Snot-nosed twerps off the southern gate! Repeat, SNOTTY kids approaching the south gate!”

The duo scrambled to get some binoculars and view the small sea of bikes and trikes zooming to their school. “READY the Fountain Cannons! Load the Footbombs and NEXT PERSON THAT TOUCHES MY IPOD’S GETTIN’ THEIR HEAD RUN THROUGH!”

High-tech Teen bikes came zooming out of the school as the child bikes started blasting tennisballs against the Teens’ wheels, and banana peels at their windshields, causing them to swerve away and crash. The bikes in the back rows dropped streams of marbles that caused any Teen attempting to turn back to crash as well. “Look out! Here come the Jets!” cried the Second Grade President, Richard Teague in his nasally voice, as a storm of football-players with jetshoes flew overhead, wielding deadly Footbombs. “Soooper Spitballers, FIRRRRE!” He and a team of kids grabbed straws and began shooting a barrage of spitballs. Despite their small and feeble-looking appearance, they destroyed each Footbomb in one hit upon impact. “Hah hah! Hasta la vista, Dum-Dums!”

“Yeah, but what’re we gonna do about the Sumo Squad?” asked Third Grade President, Leon Anderson Sobs, the miserable goth leader. Ahead were rows of chubby teenagers in nothing but underwear, “HUR, HUR, HUR.” stomping forward and erecting great stone walls from the street.

“Those cowardly earthbenders!” yelled Richard. “Well, we’ll stomp ‘em! GET ‘EM, Bull-Blockers!” Here came a team of huge bulldozers made entirely of blocks, for those children studied from Joey Beatles to perfect them to near-realistic. They tore down the earth walls like actual machinery, letting the trikes charge forward and ram the sumos’ toes.

Hurriedly following behind the army of kids, Berry Bean and Lilac Farley rushed on all fours with their passengers onboard. “Why are we breaking into this school again?” Berry asked Rupert, who was in her right cat-ear.

“Cause they think they kidnapped Shelly and Jessie so we gotta look for them first. If they aren’t there, we have to warn ‘em somehow.”

“Kay, but we gotta take you back home after this.”

“Ulp… I’d really not rather my dad see me like this.”

“Well moms are scarier, and they’re on your side. You won’t need to worry.”
The werecats rushed to the right of the school as Berry pounced and slashed an air duct clean open, quickly crawling through as a quartet of clangs echoed from her hands and boots banging the metal. She slashed open another duct and dropped in, hearing Lilac following after. “See them anywhere?” asked Berry.

“Uhhhh.” Rupert saw them, all right. They had broken in the school’s swimming pool, where dozens of teen girls in swimsuits roamed about or splashed in the sparkly water. There were dudes there too, but he didn’t care.

“Rupert!”

The boy blinked, “Oh! Uhhh well we could ask around.”

“All of the slim and muscular girls and boys fixed their gazes on them, eyes turning grim. “… Someone lose their drawers?” asked Ruppy.

Streams of water gushes came flying at the cats, the two flexibly avoiding and making their dash out of the room. “Didn’t expect ‘em to be waterbenders!” Timmy shouted.

“Come on, search the lockers!” yelled Ruppy.

“A locker containing a shrine of a girl’s crush. “HeeeeeEEEEEYYYYYYYYY.” Whirling like a tornado, she slashed open every single locker in the hopes of finding someone (they cared about). “Huff, huff… WHOA!” The Fountain Cannons began blasting at her, Berry leaping about and running forward again. As she was approaching a second-floor walkway, several spikes emerged from the floor, so Berry pounced onto the trophy case, to a wall spear which she gripped in her teeth and whirled around, and flung to the walkway’s railing which she grabbed and hauled herself over, racing through the 2nd-floor hall.

Lilac was joyfully running the first floor as the elementary-schoolers had broken in, penetrating the defenses with the random werecat’s slashes. “Must be another magic experiment the kindergarteners did.” thought one second-grader.

In the computer lab, a certain goateed teenager in sunglasses stood up from his seat. “O-kay, this is getting old. Let’s see if these twerps can match this.” Gage started typing on his laptop, summoning four Flash-made teenagers armed with guns. They headed out to the hall and began launching missiles at any kids riding down, blowing them away.

“They’re just solid holograms!” cried Richard. “Keep spitting!” His Spitballers kept shooting, but the Programs only fizzed a little bit before one whipped out nun-chucks and whipped the kids off their bikes.

“Let’s see how you deal with more bandwidth!” a 3rd-grader exclaimed, pulling out his iPod to download two movies. The computers in the lab were lagging horribly, and Gage’s Programs were
glitching.

Many kids were able to zip by, watched spitefully by Susanne Suave in a classroom. “That’s it!” She stomped out to the hall. “Time to give those kids the SLIP!” Her thick clothing came flying off, unveiling the red bikini underneath.

“MISS SUAVE, clothe yourself right NOW. We are NOT at the SWIMMING pool!” yelled a teacher.

“THERE IS NOTHING SHAMEFUL ABOUT THE FEMALE FORM!!” Then squirting lotion all over her body, she slid into the hallway and left a trail of the slippery substance, causing the bikes to immediately slide out of control upon crossing it. “Ah ha ha ha! I knew you kids would fall to my, smoothness!” She flexed backward after slowing to a stop.

“We don’t like girls yet, you ugly HAG!” a boy yelled.

“UGH!” She whipped out her lotion and shot a glob directly into the kid’s eyes.

“AAAAAH! MY EEEEEEYES!”

“Well you CLEARLY weren’t using them, anyway. Wha?” She looked across the hall as an animal appeared to be running on all fours.

“Raa-hoooww!” She was half-right, for it was Lilac Farley. “Scratchy cushionnn!” She pounced straight at Susanne’s chest, grabbed tight, and began clawing away.

“AAAAAAHH! MY SKIN, GET OFF ME, GET OFF ME!” She punched several times until Lilac flew off, staring at the many bloody lines. “Uck!! My perfect skin! Oh I am gonna KILL you you stupid cat!” She stomped forward with impending rage. “NO ONE MESSES UP MY SKIN EXCEPT-” But a powerful, pungent odor suddenly invaded her nose. “Oooohhh.” She collapsed onto her back.

“Heheh.” laughed Timmy, who along with Hikari took land on the floor following Lilac’s fall. “Thankfully I had some Wings carry White Pikmin into your nostrils. THAT’LL last ya a few days.”

“Good girl, Lilac!” Hikari beamed as the werecat crouched before her, tongue out in excitement. “Good kitty!” Lilac gently licked her in gratitude. “Hee haha ha ha!”

Berry continued to race every which way, having sliced every locker she passed and ransacked every classroom. “This is gettin’ really repetitive, Rupert.” Berry stated.

“I guess they aren’t here after all.” Rupert concluded once they made it to a steampipe room. “We have to get to the leaders and tell them-”

“REOOOOWW!” Berry leaped back when a hammer almost smashed her.

“I don’t like cats.” said recent KND traitor, Alexei Abramovici. “I don’t like brats. Mixing the two together, a sin that should never come to be.”

“You wanna see another sin? My mom taught me THIS one.” Berry held up a rather unpleasant finger.

“Then it’s time you faced justice.” He started lashing his hammer and his cane as Berry flipped back, beginning to pounce and kick around the pipes before getting behind and tackling Alex.
“Hrrrruph.” He shot up and swung, making Berry pounce back.

“Is that all you got, those silly sticks?” smirked Berry cockily. “I’ve battled dogs that were tougher than that!”

“Good afternoon, Team Hendry.” spoke a deep, smooth voice through the PA. “There’s a couple of tykes runnin’ around today. So it’s time to ease their wild minds with the stylin’ tunes of Ramblin’ Rodrigo.”

“Oyy. Buenos días, los niños.” said the thick, Spanish accent into the speakers. The most charming, soothing, mystical tune they would ever hear began sounding throughout the halls.


Those mystical vocals easily reached Berry and Lilac’s sensitive ears. “Uhhh… Lily?” said Timmy when the werecat fainted.

“B-Berry- HEEEY!” Rupert screamed when Berry finally fell down.

“Ohhhhh- don’t listen to it.” a 4th-grade officer tried to yell, their heads swaying, hands planted on their ears, while others already fell. “Think about drinking soda, and playing videogames aaaaall night, until you get really…really… sleepy. …”

“Hmph.” scoffed Alexei at the snoozing Berry (not seeing Rupert). “You kittens are all the same. Soft and simple when it comes down to it. Good-bye.” He raised his hammer to smash the cat. A dart immediately whipped down and stuck his neck. “Mmph!” He collapsed on the floor.

“UUUH!” Rodrigo screamed, so they assumed he was struck too, his music stopping.

“Huh?!” exclaimed Nya LaMar when several more Teen Ninjas were darted. “What’s going on?!”

“The Kindergarteners!” cried a ninja when many shorter kids in Indian outfits with crayon makeup began to fall from the vents. “Grab the runts we can and let’s split!”

“RETREEEEEEAAAAT!” The Gallaghers hurriedly scrambled to get away, rescuing any snoozing kid they could, but some were unfortunately kidnapped.

Rupert looked when a brown-skinned Kindergartener with orange makeup and a gruff face came down from the dark of the pipes. “You. Cat Creature.” He nudged Berry’s body. “Awaken. Must get out now.”

Berry startled awake, and seeing the child retreat, she glanced at Rupert on her head before making a dash for the exit. She reunited with Lilac in the hall, running side-by-side as Rupert viewed over to Tim and Hikar. “Did you find them??”

“No, they weren’t anywhere.” Timmy shouted. “But it looks like Joey brought the Kindergarten Tribes.”

“Well, it’s no use staying. Let’s get outta this nuthouse.”

Berry and Lil were soon dashing out of the middle school alongside dozens of remaining bikers. Rupert turned back astonished when the tremendous fortress started to move away.

Later…
The kids regrouped a few miles from the school, where Fifth Grade Leader, David Keith, spoke with the Kindergarten Chief. “Joey tell us, your presidents in big-heap trouble. We come help, ‘fore bad things happen.”

“Well, bad things happened.” said David. “They got Third Grade Leader now, too. And no sign of First or Fourth.”

“You rush in, without thinking. Middle-schoolers big. And smart. But also stupid. But not stupid enough. You should know better.”

“Well I TOLD YOU we should’ve thought up a PLAAAAN! Ow- HEEEEEY!” Richard whined when someone threw a Whisbee at him.

“Well up ‘til now, we all agreed Fourth Grade would be the primary leading grade.” David said. “But under the circumstances, I think I should take over until we can find them. Let’s head back to school and finish our day for now. Principal Rachel can only allow extended recess for so long…”

“Friend Hikari missing, too.” said the chief. “Hope they come up soon.” So with that, the graders rode to school on their bikes while the Kindergarteners followed on wooden horses on wheels.

“Oh, man. Things just went from bad to worse.” Rupert frowned. “If only we knew where Shelly was, ‘cause then we could find Sappo and Gibli, too.”

“Well, we could at least help you guys, first.” Berry told him. “We’re taking you back home so your parents can find you. Then we can all look for those guys. Okay?”

Rupert still hated the idea of his dad seeing him this way… but the more people aware of their existence, the better, he supposed. At least his mom would be there, too. “Okay.” So the long, tireless race to Ashland, West Virginia began.

**Miracle City**

Sector V would never understand how a monster of that fortitude smashed them with such force, they were merely knocked out in a hole in the ground. They awoke to find their selves in a dank, cave-like dungeon, with just enough light to see that. “Ohhhh… guys, this town… blows. …” moaned Aurora.

“Tell me about it.” Dillon replied, looking at his sick shadow. “Some help Mario became… and Sheila’s totally out again.” Indeed, their adventurer was snoring away.

Chris flicked his fingers, sparking a small flame. “And the place is chi-blocked. Sigh… waking up early to skip school, just for this. The heck are we supposed to do now?”

“That’s no reason to feel so dead.” A strange voice echoed.

“Look!” Haylee noticed the short, shadowed person in the hole above the cave shaft. He dropped and landed on his dark brown boots, head slanted so they saw only the top of his reddish-black cowboy hat. He shot his head up- “Boo!”

AIIIIIEEEEEEEE! They winced at Kirie’s silent scream. It was a skeleton boy with glowing red pupils and a ragged red bandanna, and huge boney claws.

“Hahahahahaha!” he laughed calmly. “That never gets old.”

They exchanged frightened glances. “Who… Who are you?” asked Aurora.
“My name is Django. Django de los Muertos. That’s, ‘of the Dead’ if you are of the English tongue.” He paced about the cave. “You may have overheard my grandmother speaking with the pipsqueak a half-hour ago. The thing is, I’ve been spyin’ you since you came to town. Friends of those Brotherhood guys, are we?” He folded his arms.

“You know them?”

“My grandma is the boss of all the baddies in this city. Those weirdoes showed up last year and started makin’ this place home too, and that little bean shrimp’s been talkin’ her into joining them. And do I get a say? No, because this is a matter of grown-ups.”

“So what’s your point?” Chris asked.

“My point is if grandma joins those freaks, we won’t be the top dogs anymore, just sharing it with that… shrimp. So if I don’t get to show him the door, I might as well just… find something better. And then you came.”

“Care to elaborate?”

“Simple.” Django’s boney teeth smirked. “I wanna join your group.”

“You mean… a Kids Next Door?” Dillon asked.

“Yes! I mean, a bunch of kids just running around with no adult supervision, going into lawless towns and beating the crap out of everyone! You kids have the LIFE! AND I WANT IN.” His dark eyes narrowed.

“Uhhhh hate to break it to you, but someone else is already joining, so we just don’t have room to accommodate a, creepy skeleton—”

Django shot up to Artie’s whimpering face, teeth gritted. “…Now listen.” He stepped away. “I happen to know a few things about what the Brotherhood is planning. This Mystic Guitar,” Django grabbed a reddish-black guitar off his back, “allows me to command the dead at will, and grants me dark powers of the Underworld. I’m your only chance of getting out of this dump, but ONLY if I can join your crew!”

“The Kids Next Door is a group that fights evil adults and protects kids from tyranny!” Aurora stated. “Why would YOU want anything to do with—”

“Fighting adults, going against their laws, that’s fine with me. And I want to destroy these Brotherhood guys before they steal my city. But I can only do so with YOUR help.”

The kids thought long and hard. This kid didn’t really have the right light as a KND operative… plus he was dead. But they had to get out of here… and he did have info. “To be fair, that shrimp guy is our great-grandfather.” Haruka noted. “So I guess we owe it to you…”

“Sigh, okay, Django.” Aurora stood up and approached him. “You got a deal for now.” And the two shook hands.

*Django de los Muertos* joined your party! With his Mystic Guitar, the Dark Arts are his to command!

“Excellent!” Django grinned. “LET ‘ER RIP!” He whipped out his guitar and strummed, blowing a passage into the wall. “Just this way!” He eagerly ran in first as they followed, Mason and Chris carrying Sheila. Inside was a much larger cave with a long, skeleton train. “Behold my grandma’s
secret Ghost Train. Can go anywhere, anytime. Er, except day. Luckily, we’ll be traveling underground, we’ll be long out of the city before they even realize.”

“Wait, someone else was taken!” Dillon shouted. “Our friend, Midna!”

“Yes, I know. You won’t be rescuing her so easily, they have her guarded tight. Just stick with me and I promise we’ll save her later.”

“And now he’s makin’ promises. Alright, let’s go.”

The kids boarded the eerie train of blue flames as its front-most face unleashed a deafening screech. The vessel was soon rolling down the tunnels and out of the city.

Glacia; Arendelle Mountains

“Whoa… the blizzard stopped!” Lola said with surprise.

“Unbelievable.” George gaped, still holding Miyuki. “The sky was packed with clouds, but now it’s like it never even happened. What in the world could’ve stopped it?”

“Well, whatever it was, I feel the spiritual energy stronger than ever now.” MaKayla replied. “And the singing… it’s coming from there!” She pointed to the center, tallest mountain of this range. Beneath the aurora borealis that had appeared lay a sparkling castle of ice, and an emotional echo shouting from it. “Let it gooooo, let it go! And I’ll rise like the brink of daaaawn! HERE I stand… and HERE I STAAAAY! Let the-…”

“Wonder what her deal is.” Terry remarked.

“I dunno, but at least there’s civilization. Let’s go up and see if she’s seen Suki.” George decided as he marched forward.

When his friends were beginning to follow, a growling hit MaKayla’s ears as she stopped and searched around. “Kay-Kay, what’s wrong?” Lola asked.

A skull-faced monster with shadowy black skin, gaping chest hole, and on all fours like an ape glared at her ravenously. “You all, get back.”

“What?” Terry asked.

“Get back!” She leapt forward and began swiftly kicking and punching the beast, performing agile flips with her flexible body and evading its claws.

It was clear to them MaKayla had lost it. The cold cold air was so unbearable to her, she was attacking it. “Well uh, our first stop at GKNId is officially the hospital wing.” Terry knew.

“MaKayla, yooou… are you okay?” asked George.

“Hnnn!” Somehow, MaKayla had remained in midair with her legs spread out, as if on a horse, and was grabbing the air around its “neck”. “Lola, quick! Throw a Spank Hand!”

“Uhhh… huh?”

She was struggling to keep her grip. “Q-Quick! Throw a Spank Hand! Right where my arms are!”

“Uhh… okay.” Lola stretched her hands behind her and charged dark-pink energy as energy hands grew. She thrusted forward and flew the hands, MaKayla leaping just when they struck the spot.
The timebender landed beside her friends. “Sigh. Nice work, Lol.”

“’kay, but, whaddid I do?”

“That was a Hollow. My mom told me about ‘em and it matched the description. I wonder what it’s doing here.”

“I wonder, what the heck you’re talking about.” stated Terry.

“Right, you guys can’t see them. Just don’t worry about it, let’s find Suki and I’ll keep an eye out for ‘em.” The three exchanged curious glances as Kayla walked ahead. “And I don’t think that was the only one… we better watch out.” (Play “Shiver Mountain” from Paper Mario.)

Stage 17: Arendelle Ruins

Mission: Get to the mountaintop castle.

Under the starry indigo sky that was just created, Arendelle looked far more beautiful. Their eyes directed up the sparkling snowy mountain, to the even more glamorous glittering castle up top. There shouldn’t be any getting lost with that great blue borealis floating over the castle, and the sounds of the Ice Queen’s distant voice. To get there, Sector IC first had to journey down a very steep slope, which became difficult for George when carrying Miyuki’s body. White Wolfos leapt out from the snows for their prey, Lola throwing Spank Hands around to send them falling down the mountain while Terry also blinded them with Shadow Breath. They reached the mountain’s bottom, but a chasm separated them and the following one. They split up as MaKayla and Lola followed a left path, crossing a bridge through a large icy stalagmite that brought them to a wide, slippery field where Chilfos were playing hockey using Mini-Freezards.

The girls nodded to each other and grabbed two spare hockey-sticks, skiing out as MaKayla stole the Freezard from two Chilfos. Angered, the monsters chased her, but MaKayla hit the puck over to Lola, who skied along the edge and kept balance as the path curved right. Two Chilfos were coming at her from ahead, but seeing MaKayla behind them, Lola sent the puck with a forceful hit past the Chilfos like a bullet, while the timebender slowed it down to catch. Four more Chilfos guarded the Big Freezard ahead, so with a mighty swing, and a Fast-Forward, the puck zipped to the statue and shattered him. This allowed part of the wall behind to open, so Kayla slid in with Lola joining, the latter becoming a bat to flap up the following shaft. After evading native Ice Keese, she got to a platform and pulled an ice-lever, causing half a bridge of icy planks to fall in place to the middle mountain.

Meanwhile, George and Terry (and I guess Miyuki) took the right path, going inside of a dark cave that got blacker as they climbed down. George alit his hands with Time Chi to see, but Terry panickingly indicated the flock of Ice Keese asleep on the ceiling. The two carefully crossed a slippery, narrow ice bridge with several holes, and Terry flinched whenever an icicle fell down and smashed part of the path. They reached a platform where a gang of Ice Chuchu ambushed them, George hurriedly freezing the monsters before they made too much noise. Afterwards, they pushed them down the bottomless chasm, then focused their sights on the group of ice-blocks, and the large pool of frosty water that protected an ice-lever.

The two had to slide an ice-block across a bridge and navigate it around the rocks without sliding it in the chasm. They reached a round platform with more stop-rocks and navigated it around so the block was in position to slide across a very narrow bridge its width. From there, they pushed it into the pool and created a frozen path as it melted, but while it couldn’t reach the lever, Terry could
get close enough to Shadow Glide. He flipped the lever and heard quakes, resulting in the swarm of Keese waking up. Terry freaked and hurriedly glided back to the ice path, and George plopped Miyuki down, thrust his arms up, and Stopped a bunch of Keese. They kept this up as they made their way out of the cavern.

The team reunited at the sparkling ice-bridge that led to a cave at the base of this new mountain. It was very large and hollow inside, and the glittering blue ice provided the light. No creatures were lurking, except in MaKayla’s eyes, dozens of Hollows were visible. ‘I’ll take care of ‘em.” she offered, much to the confusion of her team. Several Hollows blasted dark beams at her, but MaKayla leapt, kicked off a few of their heads, and shot Chrono Beams to scatter their dark bodies. A Hollow grabbed her by the leg, bashed her against the ground, then tossed her several meters, and when another performed a mighty leap, she slowed it down and escaped. She leapt to and kicked off another one, then flipped to another to grab around its head as it tried to charge a beam. She forced it to barf a beam at several other Hollows, then flipped off this one to shoot a Chrono Beam at it.

“You put up a brilliant show, Sis.” George smiled sarcastically, once Kayla finished her acrobatics. A floating ice staircase floated over them 2 stories above, but no way to it. However, there were four switches in a far corner which each member could press, making a group of ice platforms rise up to the stairs’ base. But when they stepped off, it sunk back down. Having an idea, Kayla had them all get on a switch while she activated a Time Recordance, then ran to the sinking platforms to throw a Time Brake, slowing it down as it was already fairly low. But restarting, she stayed to hold down her switch while her Time Clone ran to slow down the platforms, so the team could run off and hop to the stairway when they sank slower.

Ice Chuchu dropped onto the wide stairs, but Lola shot Spank Hands at them as the team progressed up without delay. The stairs led them outside the cave to a walkway on the side of the mountain. A large gap separated them and the continuing path, but Terry could Veil into the wall and slither to the foothold, pressing a switch to make a platform float over, allow his team on, then step off so the platform could bring them back. The path ended once again and the next one was too high to reach, with only dead platforms attached to chains that looked like they were meant to whirl like Ferris wheels. A chain-switch dangled above the middle of the platforms, so Lola became a bat and flapped up, grabbed it in her teeth, and changed back as her weight pulled it down. The platforms whirled to life and began their endless loops, Lola keeping the switch pulled so her team could get up, afterwards getting to the path as a bat while the platforms stopped again.

“Anyone else feel weird about carryin’ our friend’s dead body around?” Lola asked, noting Miyuki’s body in George’s arms.

“She feels like a sack of potatoes.” George mentioned. “Like some wizard just Avada Kedavra’d her on the spot.”

The walkway brought them to a wider foothold where there were again no monsters, except for the Hollow Chuchu MaKayla could clearly see, little black blobs with skull masks. Confusing her friends once more with her madness, she rolled forward and started Chrono-blasting them all, ‘til they were all just black puddles of glop. The only way to go was across a trio of thin ice rails, lined as though a cart were supposed to be on them. “Guess we have to grind across.” MaKayla thought.

“They look kinda slippery.” Terry observed.

“Well, check ‘em out then.” George nudged.

“Ugh.” So very worriedly, and with much focus, Terry moved his right foot over the rails and stepped on, then very carefully moved his left onto it. “WAH-WAH-WAH-WAAAAAH!” Indeed it
was too slippery, and in a split second, slipped horizontally, bashed his head on the rail, then went falling down the chasm where a stalagmite pierced him right through the chest, and he hung dead, the stalagmite’s point red with blood.

“OH MY GOD, TERRY!!” MaKayla almost lost her breath at the sight.

“B-Bro!” Tears were quickly welling in Lola’s eyes. “GEORGE, YOU KILLED HIM!!”

“H-Hold on!” George aimed his hands down, focused energy, and Rewinded Terry as he flew back onto the rails, to their foothold.

“Ugh.” Terry annoyedly complied to George’s request and prepared to step on.

“No!” George yanked him back. “Uhhh better safe than sorry.”

And then something very strange happened. Before their eyes (except Terry’s), black puddles of goo appeared, and reformed into Hollow Chuchu. “Whoa, where did THOSE come from?” Lola questioned.

“You can see them now?” Kayla asked.

“See what?” Terry followed.

“N-Never mind, just hold ‘em back!” So the other three began to fight the Hollows off, but still had no idea how to get across the rails.

With Suki

At this time, Jack Frost had guided Suki to a dead-end wall, which went up at least 5 stories. “Suki… you know what to do.”

The child nodded, throwing her arms upward as a sparkly ice ladder stretched to the top. Jack glided to the top while Suki happily danced up its bars. They had an excellent view of the mountain range, and the glittering castle that sat miles above them. Suki slid down a left path that sloped down a little and curved right, stopping at a trio of ice rails. Feeling a sense of joy and freedom, Suki glided across the rails on her bare feet, attaining perfect balance as the chilly wind blew past her. “WHEEEE!” cheered Suki, zipping down a slope and up another, all the while feeling her body numbing. But she looked down and saw a lower cliff, where five familiar people (3 at least) were battling black blobs. “Hey, fwieeeeends!”

MaKayla looked up. “Hey, it’s Suki! Can you give us a hand??”

“I’ll give you this!” Shooting double ice-beams down, she created a minecart at the base of their rails.

Kayla hopped in first, “Guys, let’s go!” The others hurriedly got in (George throwing Miyuki’s body upside-down) and began zooming ‘cross the rails on their frosty cart. It curved right as it flew around a mountain, the kids panickingly trying to list it right as it threatened to fly off the left, then the track became straight as it flew down a slope, up another, and off a dead end as it quaked forcefully on the next, lower track, Suki sliding under them on her own rail. The team was coming to a very huge, unjumpable gap, screaming as they flew off the rails, but Suki grinded near them as she froze some rails for them to land on, connecting with the following path. It was about to fly off another dead end, but Suki froze a track that led up vertically, the cart still making it up and onto a higher track.
From there, the cart flew down a slope, off the track, and shattered against the wall over a safe foothold on a new mountain. They Wall Jumped two close walls onto a higher path, which they followed to a zipline that led to another mountain. MaKayla grabbed it first and flew to the distant, low foothold, then had to Rewind the line several times for her friends to take turns (it was extra hard for George holding the hook with one hand and Miyuki’s body in the other). The best part was they had to do this again for another zipline, taking land on a much wider field under some mountains. The three friends stared up with widened eyes, while Terry questioned such expressions. “Uhhhh you guys all right?”

But towering around the field like huge trees were Menos Grande, pitch-black Hollows that almost rivaled the shape and structure of the mountains, with skull masks with pointed noses. “Let’s go.” George told them, trying not to show fear as they hurried across the field. There still wasn’t anywhere to go, but a cave was stationed high up on a wall beside a Menos. The team Wall Jumped between the wall and the Menos, but Terry merely slithered up with Shadow Veil, since he couldn’t touch them. Inside this cave, four tall icicles hung from the ceiling before dropping a few milliseconds apart. A stairway was there, but ended too low to reach the path above. George and Kayla Rewinded the icicles and, seeing they looked like a staircase as they fell, kept the icicles slowed so they can hop up; but Kayla had to make a few Time Clones to do this successfully.

They found the cave’s exit was at level with the Menos’ heads, which permitted them to hop across like platforms. They made it to a stairway that led up around a mountain, to a platform with another zipline. They took turns and slid down to the base of the castle’s mountain, a very steep stairway all they needed to trek to reach there.

Meanwhile, after reaching the end of her rail track, Suki landed at the base of another mountain and entered a cave. It was very wide and sparkly inside, and a pack of White Wolfos attacked her while she fought back with giant ice-newspapers. There was no way to get onto the higher platforms, so Suki created a snowcannon and hopped in, blasting straight up. She crashed headfirst on the nearest ledge and got buried in snow, shaking it off like a puppy. The next high ledge was too far, so Suki created an ice stairway to skip up. Ice Keese were flapping down to attack her, but still easy to fight back with quick snowballs. She skipped up another already-created stairway that was guarded by a Freezard up top, but when it blasted its Ice Breath, Suki blocked and mended it into a huge iceball, then crushed him with it.

Suki came to a rectangle ice door that was locked by a keyhole, so all she had to do was create an Ice Key and unlock it. She exited to a small, empty ledge, facing up at a tall, distant platform. She created an ice seesaw, then grabbed the large ball she used to crush the Freezard, stood on the low end of the seesaw, and smashed the high end with the ball, “WHEEEEEE!” flying herself up to the platform. From there, she jumped onto a black platform that began swaying, and looking over its front, she saw it was a Hollow. Smiling innocently, she created a giant ice feather, using it to tickle its little nose. “Aaa-aaa-AACHOOO.” Jumping in front of its nose, she was blown far over the chasm.

She landed on a foothold at the base of a new mountain, pine trees growing here, as she gazed up the incredibly tall mountain the borealis hung over. Focusing her Ice Chi precisely, a spiral of ice rails appeared around and around the mountain, and Suki hopped on as she began gliding to the top. Several Hollows were trying to climb up the mountain, but Suki took down every one she could. Nothing would stop them from reaching the castle, and nothing would stop Jack from talking to this girl. She doesn’t know why, but if Jack wanted to speak to her, she would help him all the way. And once they finally landed before the castle gates, that time would come now.

“LET IT goo000, LET IT GO000, can’t turn back aaaanymo000ore!” the Ice Queen sang atop her balcony. “Let it goo000 ("Elsa.") LET IT GO000 ("Elsa!") that perfect girl’s no mo00000ore!”
“ELSA!”

The queen gasped, and for the first time in 300 years, stopped singing. “Hey!” Jack waved at her from the courtyard, sporting a casual grin.

“Jack…” The queen calmly floated down to him and Suki. “Y-You’re alive… who’s-”

“Heeheeheehee!” Suki showed her snow-white teeth. “I’m his frieeeend. Go on, Jackie, ask her out!”

“Heheh, she helped me get up here.” Jack blushed. “I… I’ve been wanting to talk to you for ages.”

“Oh…” Elsa frowned guiltily, “You did?”

“Yeah… I wanted to tell you… you don’t have to feel upset anymore. Everyone we knew and loved, they’re all in a better place now. Including your sister.” They looked at the frozen statue of Anna. Noticing her as well, Suki wore a curious face.

“Ooooooo! Who’s sheee?” Suki slid over to her. “Awwww. She’s pretty! But why’s she so saaaaad?”

“Huff, Suki!” They turned to the front gates, seeing MaKayla and Sector IC nearly out of breath as they made it up the stairs. “W-We found you!” Kayla gasped, George plopping Miyuki on the ground. “How’s it been?”

“Fwieeeends, fwieeeends, FWIEEEEENDS!” She danced in place. “You made it! This is Jackie, and his GIRLFRIEEEEND!”

“I only see Ghost Girl.” Terry said.

Elsa shook back to attention, “Look, Jack, I appreciate the sentiment, but I got over this ages ago!” she told him with a sure smile. “Anna’s gone, my kingdom’s gone, and I went with it, there’s nothing I can do about that now. But I’ve been feeling really good ever since! I’m finally free of all my worries, and I can finally let my icebending blow free, too.”

“You know as well as I do that’s not true.” They all looked up, when Rukia and Sector SOUL glided down. “For 300 years, your soul has been tormented by your guilt. You cannot pass on…”

“Hey, Miyuki!” George beamed.

“Huh? Where?” Terry searched around. “I only see those three creeps. Wait, you’re Jack Skellington!”

“Hello, children!” Jack S. beamed.

“Creeps?” Coraline and Norman glared.

“Listen, I told them all what happened with you,” explained Jack to Elsa, “and the reason you’re still here is because you haven’t let it go. But only because you’ve been alone for 300 years and never had anyone to share your feelings with. But we’re all here now, Elsa.” He took her hands. “And we’re going to help you get through this.”

Elsa’s blue eyes met Jack’s, and both knew what the other were thinking. Jack could feel that guilt in her soul, the guilt that’s been growing and growing for over 3 centuries. And Elsa felt that trust in Jack’s eyes, the trust that only a real friend would possess. It was time to open her heart to him.
“How sentimental.” A dark voice spoke.

Everywhere, the Hollows were appearing, snarling with hunger at all the fresh, juicy souls. And four Hollows unlike the others, humanoid in dark, decorative cloaks, surrounded them. “…What’s goin’ on?” Terry asked, still having no idea what was happening.

MaKayla gaped when one Hollow raised a magic wand, psychotic eyes set on the boy. “TERRY, WATCH OUT!”

“AVADA KEDAVRA!” A blinding green light flew from the wand and struck Kayla as she pushed Terry away, and she flipped over dead.

“KAYLA!!” Terry screamed with tears in his eyes. George hurriedly used his bending to Rewind Kayla back to life, but the very sight made everything clear to Terry. “…Where did all THOSE things come from??”

“Terry, these’re all Hollows.” Kayla recapped. “They’re dark spirits that feed off of other souls, and you can only see them by witnessing death. Same for normal spirits, too.”

“Well, aren’t you a smart little girl?” Bellatrix swayed. “You deserve an A!!”

“Man, you guys are totally whack.” Lola said. “But your costumes are awesome, where can I get me some of those?”

“Only vermin like you would enjoy garb such as these.” Frollo replied grimly. “Those who follow the ways of the Devil.” His blue embers flared. “And all who wear it, deserve nothing but death!”

“You will have that glory before long.” They turned as one more Hollow marched into the front gates. “It’s been a while… Elsa. And you too, Jack. Those 300 years seemed to just fly by. But would’ve been so much better if they didn’t exist. All of that time wasted. But at least it’s led us to something new…”

“I… Do I know you?” Jack asked with a tone of familiarity.

“You know as well as I do how it feels to lose that which belongs to you. You know how it feels to be so happy, and in the blink of an eye, it’s all ripped away from you. You know… how to pine over something, for ages and ages… and never let go.”

And his mask unraveled, revealing that once-handsome face underneath, and those soulless green eyes. Jack knew him all too well. “Hans… you’re alive?”

“Of course I’m not, are you blind? I’ve become one of them, these… creatures.”

“But…But what’re you doing here?”

“Ever since I arrived at Arendelle, I have been planning to marry Anna, kill Elsa, and seize the throne through marriage. I commissioned the scum from the Chilly Depths to invade the coronation while I fought them off like a hero, but Elsa would be slain in the confusion. Once I had become King, I would allow those vermin a piece of land and place in our kingdom, as a sign of ‘peace’ and good faith. But I have drastically underestimated Elsa’s icebending. Not only I, but ALL of Arendelle was destroyed. And my soul could go nowhere near Elsa without her supernatural snow freezing even me.”

“You mean… my sister died because of you?” Jack spoke with rising anger.
“I intended no one to get hurt but Elsa. And maybe a few guards to make it convincing. I was so close, but at that moment, ended up so far. That very idea, that the throne was taken from me, made me so angry. My soul could never rest in peace… for so long, I had desperately continued to crave the throne that was now empty. I became so angry… until I ended up a shadow of my former self.”

“But how are you still able to speak?” Rukia asked. “Most Hollows I’ve seen don’t possess your humanoid forms. . .”

“That’s where I exceeded. As much as the creatures wanted to feed off my sorrow, I kept resisting and resisting their pull. Eventually I had become a more advanced form of Hollow. I had become… Arrancar. And I and my associates wasted the last 300 years, collecting hundreds of Hollows. With our combined strength, we would one day march into the storm and take Arendelle’s throne. But thanks to your little friend, we will waste no more time.”

“But why would you still want Arendelle’s throne?!” Jack demanded. “The kingdom’s destroyed, there’s nothing left!”

“I just believed I needed a more comfortable abode than those dingy old caves. Once I have claimed my throne, I planned to expand my empire. Seeking the Hearts of all Worlds and destroying them, until darkness engulfs the whole universe. Forever extending my army, as I became the King of all Souls. Of course… a simple castle isn’t all I wanted. What I truly came here for… WAS ELSA.”

“AAAAAHHH!” No faster had Hans thrust his sword through Elsa’s chest.

“ELSA!” screamed Jack.

“For ages, and AGES, the death of Anna has tormented her. That raging, ENDLESS storm that came from her soul, sealing this mountain. She resisted transforming into a Hollow this long, but NO MORE. For the first time in forever… she will know true sorrow, AS HER HEART IS HOLLOWED.” (Play “The Encounter” from Kingdom Hearts 2!)

“AAAAAHHHH.” Dark clouds shrouded the starry sky as Elsa’s green aura turned a blackish-purple. Her ice-blue eyes turned yellow and soulless, and her teeth sharp as a boney mask appeared over her face. A great column of darkness burst from her form, turning the whole area black. When it vanished, Elsa was nothing more than a tremendous winged demon, an endless black vortex in her mouth, bladed bone-like ice wings, and a great wide purple and black dress brimming with darkness. But her snow-blonde hair stayed the same, blowing in the unbearably cold wind.

Hearing a hiss behind them, Sector IC whipped around. “Miyuki!” George gasped when two Hollow Horsemen took Miyuki’s lifeless body, and galloped into the air.

“We feel unique energy emitting from that body.” Hans said as he hopped onto Elsa’s head. “We plan to harness it for what it’s worth.”

Miyuki’s spirit and Rukia exchanged nods before flying after them, and a SOUL member each grabbed an IC member to chase as well. “AHHHH HAHAHAHA!” Bellatrix shot a spell to send Terry and Norman falling, while the other Arrancar each chased a pair to separate directions. It was just Suki and Jack Frost left, facing up at the ice demon.

But Suki wasn’t afraid of it at all. All she knew was it was now colder than ever, and light or dark, the snow would always be her friend. Closing her now-furrowed eyes, she waved her arms and whirled the snow around her. A bird of snow was formed right under her feet, raising her to the air
as Jack Frost floated after. They leveled directly with the demon’s face, and atop its head stood Prince Hans. But to Jack… he was no longer the man he once knew. All that was was hollow. “Jackie…” spoke Suki with her tone never more serious, “I PROMISE I’LL SAVE HER FOR YOOOOOOU!”

*Boss fight: Dark Hans*

Elsa made a screech like that of a banshee, unleashing beams of ice that Suki and Jack avoided by shifting left, the 7-year-old whirling a circle of ice around her and shooting five icicles at Elsa. She winced a little bit, but screeched as icicles appeared in the air every direction, launching directly at Suki as her snowbird was quick to dodge. Suki created sharp, icy talons on her bird’s feet, shooting like a comet at the monster and stabbing Elsa’s face. She screeched and blew them off, but Suki hopped off her bird and slid under Elsa on an ice-path, coming back up behind the monster as Hans turned to face her. She slid at the prince as Hans lashed his blade, making Suki jump back and slide circles around him. Hans’ head was suddenly frozen by Jack Frost from behind, allowing Suki to shoot up and get him. “NEEEEEEEIGH.” The dark horse, Sitron thwarted her attempt, galloping in the air before Suki and swinging his front legs, making her lose focus as she fell. The snowbird caught her as they dodged Elsa’s ice blast just in time, and Hans broke the ice cube and whipped around, missing Jack with his sword.

“AAAAAAAAA HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!” Bellatrix Lestrange cackled the night away, flying circles as Terry hopelessly tried to hit her with a normal and shadow G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A.. The witch threw a spell that jellified his legs, Terry gritting his teeth as he tried to chase her with a Shadow Glide. “III KILLED SIRIUS BLACK, IIII KILLED SIRIUS BLACK, AY heeeheeheeeheee—WHOOOOA!” An Ecto Beam suddenly knocked her away.

Terry took land as strength returned to his legs, Norman appearing beside him. “She kind of has the advantage over you in a place like this.”

“What’m I supposed to DIE?”

“Uhhhhhh no. Here, lemme help you. I’ll fly you in close and you do what you do.”

“Okay.” So Norman grabbed Terry onto his back and flew after the witch.

Lola threw several Spank Hands at incoming Hollows before turning to face the Arrancar, Claude Frollo. “Because of my death, those filthy gypsies were free to ruin my perfect world. If my fate is to live as a cursed demon, then I will rid the world of all OTHER abominations. Starting with you, you filthy HALF-BREED!” He threw blue flames that melted the patches of snow they hit in seconds, Lola dodging as she threw Spank Hands that Frollo slashed with his blade. He created several swordsmen out of his flames as they ran at Lola, but huge ragdolls caught them in their stuffing and seemed to dissolve them.

“You’re not such a sight yourself.” Coraline remarked, landing beside Lola. “Hey, whaddya say we fight him together?”

“YOU got it!” Lola said confidently.

MaKayla was facing the white-haired woman in the black robe. “I recognize you.” Kayla said with a slight stutter. “You’re Hama. The…”

“Yes.” The woman smirked grimly. “But I’m more accustomed to my own.” She sliced her own
arm as a stream of blood came out, which she formed into a long sickle.

“I-I-I-, Is that blood?” Kayla stuttered as her pupils shrank.

“Have a closer LOOK.” She lashed the sickle as Kayla barely dodged, scraping her cheek as she froze with fear.

But before it came at her again, Jack Skellington whipped her away with his Soul Whip, a green flubbery substance. “It’s not a fair match when your fear is used against you.” he said. “Let me take care of this. Merry CHRISTMAS!” He threw a storm of present bombs at Hama.

That means George was left to face the only Arrancar remaining: none other than Legion. “Your sister is knowing Fear.” he said. “I will also teach you Fear. And then there’ll be oblivion.”

“We’ll see about that.” George smirked as he began dodging Legion’s syringes.

Elsa flew after Suki and snapped her fangs, the child flying below on her snowbird and shooting icicles up her dress. Elsa flipped and tried to snap her upside-down, but Suki flew away as Jack F. came instead, shoving an icicle down her nose. She flipped back up and tried to shake it out, Hans hanging on as Suki came for him again. She waved a storm of quick snow beams that Hans blocked with his sword, the snowbird just zipping past his right when she came. The bird flew directly skyward before coming down at Hans like a missile, Suki forming an icicle on its beak. Hans protected himself in a dark bubble when the bird made impact, unable to get through before Hans swung his sword and sent them back.

“This guy is too haaaaaaard!” Suki moaned.

Jack Frost flew beside her, “Suki, remember that thing we did on Christmas? I can enter your body and give you some of my power, but only for 1 minute.”

“Ohhhhh! That always made me feel coooooold.”

“Your point?” he quirked.

“Let’s DO IT!” Jack shot into Suki’s body as a white aura appeared around her. Her temperature dropped extremely low, feeling absolutely cold, she would be unbreakable. She left her bird and flew directly at Hans, throwing rapid ice beams that countered Hans’ dark balls. She zipped over him like a gust of wind, then was coming back like an icy rocket. Spinning into an icicle drill, she pierced Elsa’s chest and rendered her immobile, while Hans simply flew himself. Suki recomposed and glared at the prince, zipping at him like a bullet and swinging her legs which had formed icicles, clashing with his sword. Both her legs crossed like an ‘X’ as they pushed against Hans’ sword, but she began to falter when her aura flashed.

“Suki, I need to get out now.”

“But I wanna hit ‘iiiiim!” Suki arduously withstood the pain, continuing to push on Hans’ sword before she flipped and slashed him across the mask, followed by a rapid drilling through his chest before she kicked off and back on her bird, Jack flying out. Hans gripped his chest and angrily flew Elsa after them, trying to snatch her in her teeth. Suki formed an icicle and shoved it in Elsa’s mouth to hold it open, then flew behind to throw icicles at Hans, who defended as Jack Frost proceeded to attack him from behind.

The Hollow Horsemen were still galloping away with Miyuki’s body as she and Rukia gave chase. The horsemen shot blue fire arrows at the girls while Rukia slashed ice beams at them. The left one took the body as they ran separate ways, but when both girls closed in on him, he chucked the body
all the way to his comrade, then shot a dark ghost-net to catch the spirits inside.

Norman and Terry were still on the chase for Bellatrix, who left a trail of Shadow Fog as she flew, from which emerged a swarm of Black Boes. Norman sent skull ghosts to swallow the Boes as they flew above, getting over Bellatrix as Terry dropped down to push her to the ground, the two rolling across the snow before Bellatrix flipped back on her feet. “Imperio!”

“Waaah!” Terry flew up to the air and began doing the chicken dance before twirling like a ballerina. “WHOA!” He was thrown at Norman, who turned intangible and flew at Bellatrix throwing Ecto Beams, but the witch dodged and- “Reducto!” blasted a spell that blew Norman to smithereens.

“NORMAN!” Terry screamed.

“Relax, he’s a ghost, his particles will reform.” Coraline yelled. “But it’ll take awhile.”

“Now just what to do with YOU!” Bellatrix yelled, casting a Cruciatius Curse on Terry.

Frollo created winged demons out of his blue flames that soared at Coraline, attempting burn her yarn and fabric, but Lola defended her with as much charged Spank Hands she could muster. “Thank you!” Coraline told her, sewing giant ragdolls as fast as she could. A two-legged, wobbling creature was created from her fabric, running at Frollo and swinging its extendable head to knock him down, followed by a swarm of giant stitch-needle spiders that jumped and latched all over him. “NNNNN!” He blew them off with a burst of flame, watching as Lola flew over him in her bat form and reverted to normal to drop, grab around, and bite his neck, but the man furiously threw her off as Coraline trapped him in a giant ragdoll, which Frollo set flame to and slashed his blade across her waist, leaving her shaking on the ground.

Jack S.’s Soul Whip clashed fast as lightning with Hama’s Blood Whip, and during which a piece of his flubber sliced off and covered Jack’s eyes, allowing Hama to slice his boney body diagonally in half, his head flying off as well. “Nn- u-u-u-u-u-u-…” MaKayla couldn’t bring herself to stand. The sight of his severed body was too much.

“I remember those days when such liquids were so important.” Hama smiled with malice. “You will soon see what a burden they are.” She lunged forward aiming to slice her in two.

Jack Skellington’s lower body grabbed her in his legs while his upper jumped up to grip her head. “No burden for me!” he proclaimed with a bright smile. “But that isn’t very nice!” The body-parts forced her around so Jack’s head could jump up and start nomming her face.

Jack Frost fused with Suki again as they flew at Hans whipping fast, bashing Elsa’s head with a giant ice cube at the end of Jack’s cane so she fell dizzy, Hans flying on his own. Suki swung the giant cube, only for Hans to break it with his sword as Suki swiftly dodged his swings. She unleashed a powerful ray of ice from both hands that froze Hans’ sword solid when he defended, then conjured a snowball her size which she blasted at him. “Suki, remember your lessons. Use Ice-Maker Style.”

Nodding seriously, Suki whirled her arms and created two long hammers, swinging them together and smashing Hans like a pancake. She followed this with a snow-spatula, catching him on, flipping him overhead, then batting him to a distant mountain. “RRRRRRAAAAAHHH-rrrrrr.” Suki turned and avoided when Elsa gnashed at her, but she was beginning to flash again as Jack flew out, letting Suki land on the snowbird.

“We’ve gotta get Elsa back to normal.” Jack told her.
“My sister-chan and her FRIENDS could probably do iiiit.”

“Yeah, but they’re a little preoccupied. Let’s worry about defeating Hans.” The prince was soaring right back at them on Sitron, his sword unfrozen as he jumped in attempt to slice Suki, whose snowbird flew back. Suki turned the bird’s head into a cannon that began blasting snowballs, which Hans easily sliced, but Suki had emerged a great column of ice from below to capture Hans, seemingly freezing him. She flinched and fell back when Elsa almost gnashed her, then began to break Hans free as he got onto her head. Hans and Elsa charged powerful energy into their sword and mouth respectively, unleashing a massive ray of darkness and ice that chased them around as they flew.

Legion was still tossing syringes at George, who kept his wry smirk as he dodged. “Don’t you got anything else?”

“No. But my CLONE does.”

And he was taken by surprise when a second Legion appeared from behind and stuck him in the arm with a syringe. George fell to his knees, the world blurring around him, as he tried to view around at all his friends. Frollo stabbed Lola through the heart, Terry fell over dead when Bellatrix struck him with a Killing Curse. Miyuki and Rukia were chewed and swallowed by the Hollows, and finally, MaKayla’s head was sliced clean off her body, rolling across the ground to George as he stared at her dead, open eyes.

“Hmhmhm…” George laughed coldly. “You’d think this would scare me… if not for the fact… I saw past this battle using my Future Sight!!” So throwing his arms upward, he froze Legion in time, escaping his reality and swiping his syringe to stick it in him. Legion unfroze as he wobbled around, trying to comprehend where he was.

“I-sa love spendin’ time wit’ you, Legy-Weeegyyyy.” Legion’s former headless body was in bed with Jar Jar Blinks.

Legion curled up on the snowy ground, unable to recover from his shocked, shuddering state. With that, George directed his attention to Terry, writhing in pain from the Torture Curse, and aimed his hand at Norman’s scattered ectoplasm to fast-forward, putting him back together. Once regaining himself, he jumped back to attention. “Don’t worry, Terry!” He shot over and rescued him, flying him across the air. “Okay, go for it!” He flew back at Bellatrix and dropped Terry, the witch leaping far away before whipping around to face him. “WAH!” She ended up glued to the ground via Terry’s stretched shadow.


“Riddikulus!” She blasted a spell that dispelled Terry to smoke, but the real Terry emerged in front of her and blew Shadow Breath all over her face. She frantically waved her hand, turned, and tried to shake it off, but by the time she did, she was staring at a gigantic Norman head. The world flashed incredibly blurry as the giant head spun, turning yellow and widening his mouth, exposing an endless dimension that bursted horribly blinding flashes at Bellatrix’s eyes.

The woman compressed and froze to solid stone, falling to her back like a toppled statue. Norman shrunk back to normal and looked at Terry with a smirk and wink.

Lola hurriedly threw Spank Hands at Frollo, who kept defending with his blue flames as he erupted a wall of them, sending it at Lola who became a bat and flapped overhead, barely avoiding. But Frollo had shot up and struck her with his blade, Lola flashing back to normal as she...
bounced to and fell over a cliff, grabbing the frosty ledge tight. But she stared with terror and hopelessness as Frollo slowly stepped forward, raising his blade high as his wrinkled face, lit by his ghostly blue flames, seemed darker and more demonic than ever. “And He shall smite the wicked, and plunge them into the depths of Hell… FOREVER.”

A stitch-needle attached to a yarn string flew over and knocked the sword out of his hand, the man angrily looking to his attacker. “Haven’t you caught up with the times, yet?” Frollo gaped at the sight of Coraline: she was back on her feet, but her legs, arms, and neck were as wobbly as spaghetti, the blue flames destroying what remained of her skin and clothing. Underneath was a hideous ragdoll with skinny metal parts, which were needles, and few standing strands of black yarn served as her hair, and her googly eyes were all there were of her face. “Hey, hold him off a while longer, will you?”

Frollo turned back to Lola, who flapped back above in her bat form and reverted back as she smashed Frollo with a Spank-Smash. Coraline spread her body apart as her needles extracted, beginning to quickly sew together a spider-web-like vortex. Lola leapt and spun in the air as she dealt rapid kicks on Frollo’s face with her ballet flats, but he lashed his blade again and created strings of flame-arrows to shoot at the vampire. He sent tall flame columns that made Lola jump around, too confused to react when Frollo stabbed his blade in the ground, sent lines of blue around her, and burned a huge flaming hole miles into the ground, surprising her as she fell in. Lola flapped her bat wings and struggled to fly up, but the flames were steadily sucking her in as the walls were closing.

“Hrn hn hn hn hn hn hn hn.” laughed Frollo with a devilish grin.

“Yeah, laugh it all up.” He turned to Coraline, who had finished sewing: she had created a spiraling white vortex with spider-web outlines, and inside was an endless dimension. “I would look forward if I were you.”

Frollo faced back at the flaming chasm as darkness sprouted from it. The world turned pitch-black as Lola emerged, with huge bat wings burning with pinkish-purple, larger venomous fangs and eyes that burned with deepest lust. “You have been very BAD, Claude Frollo, and shall feel the stinging wrath of…” The aura grew around her giant wings, and massive hands formed on their tip, “LOLA VIRGINIA BELLE STOOOOORK!” She struck Frollo with the most deadly, life-scarring spank Frollo had the unfortunate fate to experience. His cloak shattering, he flew stunned and frozen into the spidery vortex and down the bottomless realm. His body unraveled like yarn and scattered ‘til there was nothing left.

Coraline closed the portal and refigured herself, smiling as Lola returned to normal. “The first time I used that was on a girl who cheated at videogames.” the vampire said. “WAAAAAY cooler than this one.”

Hama furiously shook Jack S. off of her, slicing more parts of her skin and throwing a rapid storm of bloody slashes, tearing Jack’s bones to pieces. But his bones transformed into flames that formed back together, having donned his Pumpkin King form. Spinning and throwing many Flames of Hell while Hama countered with a spiral of blood, and in the resulted glob of flames and blood, Jack shot through and kicked Hama in the face, knocking her down before turning back to skeleton. “I know it was traumatic for you, MaKayla, but you’ve got to move past this.” he said to the shuddering girl. “You must fight back now to save your friends from a similar fate.”

“Enough of this!” proclaimed Hama, recovering as she ripped off her cloak and flesh as her blood-made body took the form of many knives, spears, sickles and swords. “Tonight, your fluids become MINE.” She flew forward, sights directly set on leaving Kayla as nothing but a puddle of
blood, the girl’s pupils shrinking further the closer she came.

In a single blink, MaKayla leaped, her left leg alit with blue as she sliced directly through Hama’s neck. A greater gush of dark blood came spilling out of the woman’s neck, until her very form melted into blood and faded away in the snow. Having done more than she expected in this fight, she fell down.

Miyuki and Rukia broke out of another energy net and kept chasing the horsemen as they chucked the former’s body around like a football. Miyuki caught up the right one and destroyed it with an energy blast, but a dark smoke floated from the other one and reformed it, and the same happened when Rukia tried to destroy the other. Both girls got beside each other, “Whenever we destroy one, the other just brings it back.” Miyuki said.

“Then we’ll have to destroy ‘em together. Get ready.” Once far away, the horsemen reunited and held Miyuki’s body together, running away in a straight path as the girls set their sights. “One…” the energy began charging in their close hands, “two…” they whirled their arms and- “THREE!” Two precise beams, a gray and a pale-blue, flew directly at the horsemen and destroyed them simultaneously. Miyuki’s body flew and dropped on the ground. “That’s how it’s done!”

Suki jumped off the snowbird and surfed across the air via ice-path, while Elsa quickly began destroying it with ice blasts. “Suki, let’s-” Jack was about to fuse with her again, but Hans grabbed and flew far away with him, clutching him by the neck.

“JACKIIIE!” Distracted, Elsa was able to grab Suki in her icy talon, shooting straight to the ground and slamming her hard. Still holding the injured Suki, Elsa flew over the cliff and furiously slammed her against the wall multiple times, before finally scraping her against it as she descended.

Jack desperately tried to shake Hans away, succeeding as he shot toward Suki’s direction like a rocket, but Hans tackled him from above and shoved him against the ground, raising his dark sword and ready to pierce him, but Jack shifted his head and avoided.

Suki never felt more unbelievable pain. Descending into the very depths of Glacia, helpless in Elsa’s talon against this rugged, frozen cliff. There’s… one way. She already knew. I have to… Logia. But… what if… I don’t… make it? I wanna hug… Miyuki-chan… I…I want to…

With determined eyes, Suki expanded a huge frozen heart around her, keeping Elsa back. She got outside and stood firmly on the heart, riding it back up the cliff. Elsa angrily flew after her as she skied across the snows, but Suki had emerged several snow columns from the ground and binded Elsa’s wings.

She was pulled to the ground as she then looked up, seeing Miyuki stand before her in her normal body. The girl calmly stepped closer and touched a hand to Elsa’s forehead. “Elsa… remember who you are. Remember what you used to be!”

And her entire life went flying in Elsa’s mind. Playing with her sister, discovering her icebending, the party that celebrated the discovery of her bending, where Jack got his tongue stuck to the punch, hearing of their parents’ death, the party where Elsa was made queen, seeing the hidden chamber, playing with Jack Frost, talking to Anna about Hans, the monsters’ invasion, freezing Anna solid, then singing for 300 years in what used to be Arendelle.

Jack flew away from Hans as the latter blasted a darkball and knocked him down, then leapt at the spirit again to stab. But an ice blast flew and knocked him back, Jack smiling brightly as Suki surfed his way. Hans recovered, but couldn’t keep up with Suki’s rapid blasts, his body area frozen as Suki collided with and blew him back. Hans whistled, and Sitron came galloping forth as the
prince hopped on. The horse ran across the field at great speed while Hans threw many dark spheres at Suki, who leaped and continued surfing while trying to throw icicles. Not catching up, she created massive running shoes out of ice over her feet, moving even quicker as she narrowed in on the prince.

Sitron went flying into the air, miles above Suki, so she jumped out of her shoes and sprouted glittering ice wings, keeping after him. As he shrank into the dark, a forest of Menos Grande emerged from below, all aiming to gnash Suki, but she swiftly avoided and sliced them all with her spiked ice wings, determined to keep after Hans. She positioned her wings like a jet, while also forming an ice-rocket over her, flying at incredible speed after the prince. Breaking free of the rocket, Suki sliced Sitron in a perfect half with her ice wings, the horse dispersing into darkness.

Hans flew himself and clashed his sword against Suki’s powerful wings. They locked in a draw and shoved against the other, but Hans began to falter when Suki added more power to her wings. “GRAAAH!” Suki proved to be the more powerful when Hans plummeted to the earth, just outside Arendelle Castle. He aching helped himself to stand and glared with malice at the flying icebender, who returned the spiteful look. When Hans studied closely, Suki bore close resemblance to Anna, just like her sister with Elsa. Just outside the castle gates, Hans looked and saw Anna standing there, still frozen. If only Anna hadn’t been frozen, this never would’ve happened. The very memory angered him terribly.

“If I’m to be struck down today, I will take Anna with me!” So brimming with dark aura, Hans lunged at Anna, ready to destroy the princess for good.

“NOOOOO!” Suki cried with despair. (End song.)

CHING!…

Queen Elsa, back to her former ghostly self, whipped in Hans’ path, and with a mighty swipe of her icy arm, shattered his sword, and the left half of his mask, to pieces, exposing his stunned green eye. Elsa had a new look in her eyes. Fury…rage…passion… and deep, burning love. “…No!” She fell to her knees and wrapped arms around her frozen sister, and for a moment, they coulda sworn those ghostly eyes spilled tears. “I won’t… let you touch her!”

Everyone stood still and watched. Even Hans seemed taken aback by Elsa’s sudden action. The only sounds were those of raging winds, and Elsa’s sobs. “I never felt more… bad about anything! … than what I did. My sister… my kingdom… I kept trying to tell myself… I was dead… THEY were dead… and there was NOTHING I could do about it. It was my own loss of control… it already happened… and I NEVER stopped loving her… wishing I could join her… so WHY couldn’t I move ON?! I’m sorry I robbed you of your life, Anna… sorry I destroyed everyone. Is it really my punishment to stay bound to this guilt forever… don’t you understand how I feel, Anna?! Why won’t you let me join you in that other world? How long are you going to make me suffer? Anna…”

The snows were beginning to calm now. Only a gentle wind breezed. And it felt so much warmer. Along with the gorgeous light that brimmed into being.

The frozen statue of Anna glowed a blinding white, like a mini sun as Elsa backed away in shock. Her cape, dress, strawberry hair, lovely blue eyes, cute freckled face. All of her color returned into being, and all of her life. She slumped to her knees, shuddering those last ounces of cold, then looked up at her sister. “Elsa…”

“Anna…” The older couldn’t believe her eyes. Now her ghostly eyes wanted to weep more than ever.
“Wh-… What is?..”

Elsa only smiled. The weight of all her passed citizens still weighed on her soul… but for the first time in forever, she felt lighter than air. “Everything is… going to be okay.”

Seeing Anna alive… put a warm feeling in Hans’ empty chest. …What an odd sensation. “-UUH!” The prince was immediately stabbed through the stomach by Rukia, falling to his knees.

The SOUL Leader stabbed her sword in the ground and whirled her arms. A spiral of snow circled around and around Hans and Elsa, glowing gold as it did. Starting at their feet, their ghostly bodies turned gold for 2 seconds before scattering into tiny stars. “E-Elsa…” stuttered Anna. “Wh… Where are you…”

The last of Elsa’s warm, smiling face was beginning to scatter. “I enjoyed every minute with you… Anna… live… happily.”

And what remained of Hans and Elsa’s souls became particles of light. Flying up to the heavens, where the dark clouds had blown away, to take their place among the stars. The hilt of Hans’ dark sword clanged onto the ground, as Suki picked it up with her curious young eyes.

Coraline approached Anna with a warm smile, spindling a sweater together to put over her form. “You probably have some questions. Well… I did, too.”

“Suki.” The child turned to the handsome white-haired teen. “I… can’t thank you enough. Ever since I died, my deepest regret was that I couldn’t bring Elsa to the Spirit World. If Polaris weren’t looking after me, I might’ve ended up a Hollow, too. I’m sorry I… dragged you all into this.”

“How ‘bout you promise to only bug Suki when she isn’t with us?” Terry inquired.

“Heheh. I’ll think about it. But Suki, I… There’s another reason I brought you here. I wanted to test a theory. …Come with me.”

And Jack soared into the castle, Suki curiously chasing. The others of Sector IC quickly followed suit. “Watch over Anna.” Rukia told her team, going to join the humans. (Play “The First Mask” from Rayman 2!)

Jack Frost guided Suki down a spiraling staircase to a deep underground chamber, almost nothing but a dark chasm, with a single, cylindrical platform in the center. A path was all that led up to the foothold, starting flat on their end, but turning vertical as it swirled up and around it. Jack and Suki exchanged nods as the child skied forward first, gliding around and around the spiral pathway at great speed on an icy path. She came to a perfect stop at the top, standing before a strange, stone cube with ancient writing.

Rukia instead created an icy stairway to allow Sector IC onto the platform, as Suki’s vibrant eyes were wide with wonder. They watched as the seven-year-old approached the ruin, entranced by its echoing call that only she could hear. When she stood just a few feet from it, she stopped and presented Hans’ sword, which brimmed blue and floated up to sink inside the ruin. The entire stone glowed blue before that light instantly flew into Suki. Everyone stared at her with wonder, glowing for 10 seconds before the light faded. Suki studied her hands and feet for anything strange, but she didn’t look different. But it felt as though a part inside of her was just awakened. …And it felt great.

Suki awakened herself as the SECOND LIGHT! Only 5 more to go!

Feeling the need to smile greatly, she did so and jumped joyously in place. It was then the text on
the stone glowed, and it became all too clear to Suki’s mind. “Here lies our fabled Gibberish Rock, made to baffle royals for eons. To anyone who’s able to translate it, congratulations, you must be the Chosen One. You are one of the ones who will open the door, and the power you possess will be of great importance in some point in time. There are 6 others like this, and in time, they will find them. Just don’t keep us waiting too long. –Ichigo Kurosaki’.”

“Just when you think she couldn’t get any weirder.” Terry remarked.

“Is that really what it says, Suki?” MaKayla asked.

“Well, yeah. Can’t you READ it?”

“If it was written by little kids, then no.” Terry said.

“Ichigo...” spoke Rukia under her breath.

“Is something wrong, Rukia?” Jack asked.

“Um… nothing. Let’s go.” Everyone else went first exiting the chamber, but Rukia stayed behind and stared at the ruin. The transparent image of an orange-haired teenager with a white shirt and khaki pants seemed to sport her a smile, with slanted eyes. Rukia shook this off and zipped away. She wondered if she would see him for real… (End song.)

Outside

After 3 centuries of darkness and blizzards, the morning sun began to rise over the mountains of Arendelle. Sector SOUL helped IC locate the latter’s crashed S.C.A.M.P.E.R., and the timebenders easily restored it to normal. “We’re sorry about everything that’s happened, Anna.” Rukia told her.

“So… Elsa’s gone, huh.” Anna frowned. “And I’m all that’s left of Arendelle…”

“Yes, but after all these years, your sister is free of her troubles. We will ensure her peace in the Spirit World.”

“Well then… I’m glad she’s finally happy.” Anna smiled. “Maybe I should try to continue her legacy… I should try to revive Arendelle!”

“I shall call my father and his Nightmares to assist you!” Jack S. declared. “And perhaps you can work at his factory, until we fix up your kingdom.”

“Then it’s good we were around to help, too.” Miyuki noted.

“What did Hans mean by, like, the ‘Hearts of all Worlds’.” Lola thought aloud.

“The idea is that each world possesses a ‘Heart’; a core in which all of its energy is focused.” Rukia explained. “Naturally a planet would need a tremendous amount of energy to support its inhabitants, and couldn’t just rely on the gods forever. So when they created the worlds, they placed ‘Hearts’ inside of their cores, providing a continuous amount of energy. Some Hearts are evidently stronger than others, as is observed by the amount of diversity one could immediately see. And they’re the most sought-after force by Heartless and Hollows, because if the Hearts are destroyed, death and darkness is imminent.”

“I can’t imagine this world’s Heart is very strong.” Lola assumed.

“Well, certain Hearts provide the energy for certain worlds. Glacia possesses a Frozen Heart, most
likely. And I think, it was from that very energy, Polaris used to give Elsa’s ancestors their powers. The Reapers are normally sent to stop these Hollows, but now it’s become the SKND’s duties to stop them, too.”

“Then it’ll probably be something we have to worry about.” Miyuki assumed.

“Maybe it will.” MaKayla agreed. “But we’ll worry about that later, we can’t stay. We’re supposed to be rescuing a friend of ours.”

“We appreciate your help, Sector IC.” Rukia nodded. “May we meet each other again one day.”

“Yeah. You know, uh, before we die.” George smiled sheepishly.

“Yo Cora, let’s play dolls sometime, wanna?” Lola perked.

“Hm hm, sure.” Coraline smirked.


“…Eh. Why not.”

“See you later, you guys!” George waved as they returned to their S.C.A.M.P.E.R. “And thanks for watching Suki and Miyuki.”

“Good-BYYYYYYEE!” Suki exclaimed with joy as they took off for the clear heavens.

“Take care!” Rukia called as her team waved.

**Midway Peak**

The TV was not working right today. Monkeys…monkeys…more monkeys… this was quality programming today… much to the dislike of one, dissatisfied viewer. *Benjamin.* The shadowed woman said. “Didn’t I tell you to fix the satellite?”

“I-I-I checked it this morning, Mizz, clearly there is some kind of interference.”

“…Well.” The woman held an arm out and, when the remote floated to her hand, turned off the tele. “I guess I won’t be entertaining myself tonight.” She stood up. “It’s time to go to my meeting.” And very slowly, she walked to the exit, the clacking of her boots echoing within the darkness.

So ‘tis our honored guest. Next time, Cheren arrives at the climax of his mission. He will meet… his target. Stay tuned.
Chapter Summary

Cheren Uno finally meets the Leader of the Corporate Presidents.

I hope you enjoyed the Frozen adventure, ‘cause things will be getting real very soon. Starting by meeting someone familiar.

Chapter 11: That Which Should Not Be Named

Django’s Train

Django relaxed back on his seat, feasting on a variety of grotesque food, tasty only on a skeleton’s tongue, a sandwich of dead worms, rotted cooked baboon spleen, and various cooked lower body parts of animals. “You sure you guys don’t want some?” he asked Sector V.

They felt like they would throw up their very intestines just watching him. “No thanks.” Aurora answered, eyes weeping in hunger.

“You guys and your weak stomachs, this is luxury suite.” He smirked as he slurped down caterpillar juice.

“….So uh, Django, you said you had… info on the Brotherhood?” asked Aurora, trying to ease her weeping.

Django spent the next 10 seconds chugging his juice, then released a tired, lazy sigh. “I dunno.” They all collapsed in a second.

“HEY, THE ONLY REASON WE LET YOU JOIN US IS SO YOU’LL TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW!” screamed Haruka. “We coulda EASILY broke outta there on our own!”

“All I know is that they’re looking for these yo-yo things so they can awaken this, creature, and somethin’ somethin’ somethin’, using a Firstborn to stop the Apocalypse.”

“You are truly the most knowledgeable of all of us.” remarked Haylee.

“Well, what Firstborn would HAVE the potential to stop the Apocalypse?” Haruka asked. “If THAT were the case, why wouldn’t Arceus do anything about it?”

“I probably know one.” Chris mentioned, kicked back on his seat and not facing them. “The Firstborn I know best of all: Jirachi.”

“Of course!” Haylee smacked her forehead. “Just wish for the Apocalypse to not happen!”

“I thought his wishing powers were extinguished.” Harry inquired. “Unless only Dimentia can make wishes for him, so maybe they tryin’ to get ‘er.”

“They did use Jirachi to make that Regeneration Potion for Brain, right?” Artie asked.
“Well, assuming Dimentia still had Jirachi, it feels a little too easy for something we’re making a big deal over.” Dillon followed.

“In all fairness, the Brotherhood was never really smart.” Aurora said doubtfully. “It probably won’t work.”

“Look, we still have to save Midna.” Dillon told Django. “Can’t we turn back for her?”

“Relax, I already got some guys on that.” the skeleton told them surely. “I’ll beam ‘em my location once they call. Oh, and they might wanna join, too.”

“Okay, we’re gonna have to set up a sector in Miracle City, ‘cause Sector V can’t take anymore members.” Aurora stated. “And how do we know you aren’t going to give us away?”

“Cause I’m a skeleton with a badass guitar, there’s no one else you can trust.”

“Sigh, sure. Let’s head back home and see if Cheren’s back yet, he’ll want to know all this.”

“Great, I can let the boss himself know I’m coming.” Django grinned casually.

“Yes, he’ll definitely need his heads-up.” remarked Dillon.

**Dream Realm; Hall of Doors**

Sheila jumped out of the portal to Miracle City – represented by a Spanish chef searching through a cabinet, and the portal in Waking Water to signify it was in the real world – then rushed to the next portal labeled *Land of Toads*, represented by a bunch of huge dangling branches that looked alive. Sheila dove inside for the venture. (Play “Toad Story” from *Rayman Legends*.)

**Stage 18: Land of Toads**

**Mission: Find the Chief Toad.**

The scent of thousands of droplets of mist hit Sheila’s nose, and her very skin steadily became cooler and wetter in this foggy, misty air. The most gigantic swamp Sheila had ever seen, with tremendous yellow-green vines, the most soggy plant ground, surrounded by sludgy green water. It was a very different air… very strange… unbearably peaceful. Every direction, Sheila’s raccoon ears picked up every sound, croaks and fribbits and the buzzing of flies, the flies being snatched in whip-like tongues, the cawing of exotic birds, dozens more sounds Sheila couldn’t name. Everything was in harmony in this swamp… everything at peace… and now… Sheila was at peace, too. She didn’t want to walk anymore… she wanted to fall down… and sleep.

“WAIT A MINUTE, WHAT’M I SAYING?” Her outburst disturbed all the peace in the swamp. “I’M NOT SLOWING DOWN FOR ANYTHING YOU STUPID SWAMP, YOU HEAR ME?!?” And so, she marched forward while Murfy blabbered away.

“Ahhh, the Land of Toads. Lot of action goin’ on HERE, huh? So this is where the Chief Toad is, and he’s gonna tell us where the *Firstborn* are. Which, if you wanna heads-up-”

“Murfy?”

“Yeah?”

“Shut up.”
Sheila walked up to the first huge, soggy tree and climbed a vinewall up and around to a huge branch. The branch swayed back and forth, but when it was leftward, it was beside a dangling vine which Sheila grabbed onto, climbed and swung to another, and then onto another huge branch. But her raccoon ears picked up a very faint “He...p...m..c”, and looking back down, through the very mist into the green water, tiny little bubbles were popping on the surface. Sheila dove back down and splashed in the liquid, her vision totally blinded by the murky sludge. She alit her fist with light for a much better view, and saw the cage full of drowning Electoons. She punched it open, and the creatures happily swam to freedom.

She made her way back onto the high branch and from there entered its tree through a hole. She jumped up a few small platforms as Piranha Plants attempted to snack her from the walls, but with a single Light Punch, they retreated into their holes. She came out another hole onto a branch above a very breezy chasm, the wind softly blowing skyward. Whirling her tail, Sheila calmly floated up with the breeze, while Hoodlums on parachutes tried to shoot her down, but one quick punch was all they needed to fall. The breeze ended at level with the top of a cliff, but behind her was another hole in the tree which she entered, and found a vine enclosing with a cage at the other end. She tried to shoot Light Spheres, but the vines whipped in the way and blocked her, and they bound her feet if she tried to go farther.

Sheila decided to head out of there to find a solution. But it seemed a few more Hoodlums were slowly descending on parachutes, making a stairway to behind the tree, so Sheila used their ‘chutes like platforms and floated to the top of the vine cage. She got above where the cage was, Ground Pounded, and burst through to break it open. The vines didn’t bother stopping her as she left, and proceeded to the land beyond the cliffside. It was a hot springs-like area with many round, murky pools emitting steam, the “CROAKS” louder than ever as giant toads lay in place, and could easily be mistaken as yellow, puffing boulders with little black warts on their skin.

“So in your next level, you’re gonna face your first boss,” Murfy’s voice said beyond the mist, “and it’s that cloud thing from Yoshi’s Story, as babyish as that was. I really don’t understand the tone o’ this story, we have all these kid-friendly happy-fun levels, then we got Freddy’s later where Sandman gets his head ripped off, this story really doesn’t have a specific target audience, just any shlomo willing to read. Well, I’m not the one putting the price tag on, so who to complain.”

There were also regular green frogs with wide smiles on their faces and half-closed eyes, as if they were buddies just relaxing in a hot tub, drinking martinis. There were also fat frogs on inflatable rafts, which served as excellent bounceable platforms to propel Sheila higher. She could also splash in the hot springs to soothe her weary skin, but the frogs didn’t mind. She explored the area to grab the Yellow Lums laying around before making her way up the springs, and she couldn’t quite relax with a Hoodboom chucking grenades at her from the mist. How did these toads relax through that?

She finally found the small ledge where the bombs were coming from, in which the bomber chucked it through the hole of a sturdy wooden wall. While bouncing on a fat frog – the only way to get at level with the ledge, she grabbed a grenade, tossed it back through, and destroyed the Hoodlum. A red can flew out of the fence, and when Sheila touched it, a light erupted from its lid as red garb appeared on her body, with strong metal fists. “Wa-hey, you found the Strong Suit! Those fists can beat anything, so don’t expect ‘em to last long.” explained Murfy. So using her stronger fists, Sheila broke down the fence and entered the path.

It was very narrow and between seaweed-like stalks, until Sheila arrived at a large pond of piranhas and had to jump a few platforms, using her Strong Fist to break a wooden door down. Her power wore off as she reached a small cliff, where several slopes zigzagged left and right ‘til at the top. A wooden wall was up there, and with no Strong Suit, Sheila had to carry a discarded powder keg up
the slopes. Small rocks were rolled down the slopes, so at regular intervals, Sheila tossed her keg to the air, jumped, and avoided the rocks as she grabbed it again. She chucked the keg to blow open the wall once she made it, heading up the narrow slope where the rocks were still coming from.

Sheila climbed a short rock wall onto a path at the very base of a towering mountain, drums beating in the distance. “AaaaAAAAH!” A Toad Warrior came falling down the mountain, recovering and raising its sword as he charged at Sheila, who kicked him over the edge. “Whoa, seems they’re havin’ a fight.” Murfy figured. “They don’t like intruders when they’re angry. Better watch out.”

Two more Toad Warriors fell over a large gap in the path and whipped open their parachutes, which Sheila used as platforms to jump to a higher ledge. She then entered a large enclosing within the mountain where Toads were battling Hoodlums, in which Hoodmonger Officers easily wiped them out with their three-bullet guns. Before a Hoodmonger could finish a weakened Toad, Sheila ran in and swung her foot to misdirect it, the leg and the rifle pushing against the other before the Hoodlum whipped it back to aim at her, but Sheila performed a quick spin and knocked him away. Two more officers ran at her, but Sheila flipped back and spun double Light Fists, jumping their bullets and blasting her fists to wipe them out instantly. Hoodloons were taking turns flapping down then, but one Light Sphere was still enough to defeat them until the last one dropped a Power Can.

She destroyed a few boulders holding down floating platforms with her Strong Fists, then was able to hurry up a tall slope and jump the gaps using the platforms, then destroyed the wooden door leading to the next area. She spun her tail and floated over a wide windy chasm where Lavomatrix – two metal tanks floating with helicopters, hovered on either side of her and began blasting. She slumped a little when one of the tanks grazed her tail, but regained herself as she spun a Strong Fist and destroyed one’s cannon. But her power wore off then, so Sheila narrowly avoided their shots as she spun her left fist,whirling a Light Sphere around one and damaging from behind. She winced when the other one’s bullet struck her rear, gritting her teeth in annoyance as she whirled several Light Spheres around it ‘til it was down. As for the last one, she flipped upside-down so its bullet zipped between her legs, then sent a Light Kick around its back to destroy it as well.

A barred gate on a new ledge opened as Sheila floated in. Another wide enclosing where several walkway platforms led up to a high ledge, but the lowest one was guarded by an Armed Spinneroo, a metal-armored Hoodlum that wouldn’t let Sheila through. A Hoodmonger possessed a Power Can, but was protected by a barrier created by a Hoodoo, who only appeared when Sheila tried to attack. It was easy to lure him out and destroy him before proceeding to defeat the Monger, giving Sheila the Strong Suit. She steadily punched the Spinneroo up the platforms – Fat Frogs were there to bounce him to higher ones, ‘til the Hoodlum was knocked into a boiling spot where he was cooked into froggy stew.

Sheila made it on a pathway to an exterior of the mountain, where bands of Toad Warriors were screeching and rushing down with spears raised, still deeming Sheila the enemy as she readied to kick them, but saw more closely that Doomtoons were gnawing their heads. Sheila dealt swift kicks, knocked the Toads out, and knocked the Doomtoons off, then proceeded to punch their eyes out with Light Fists (literally). At the top of the slope, she entered the mountain again, where Fat Frogs rested on floating inflatable rafts, blown up by a strong draft below. Of course, she could easily propeller up the draft, but not when she had to carry a powder keg. Holding the heavy bomb, she could walk off the ledge onto the first frog and bounce only partway, but the draft kept her levitated enough to get to the next frog and so forth, while Heli-Doomtoons flew around to disrupt her progress.

Once close enough, she chucked the keg at the wood wall and could progress into the new
enclosing. A great vine wall stretched up the mountain, many Toads falling from the top and many Hoodlum blimps patrolling around it. Sheila knocked out a few angry Toads before beginning her exciting ascent, having to avoid Hoodlums blasting cannons and making rocks above collapse and pour down rubble. Along a left side of the ladder, four Doomtoons were carefully circling around a cage, but when she climbed over, in the Hoodlums’ attempt to cannon her, they missed and blew the cage open instead, destroying the Dooms. Sheila continued to climb, avoiding screaming falling Toads that wanted to slit her during descent, and many areas of the vines were collapsing due to the Hoodlums’ constant bombing.

Her ears were already ringing by the time she made it onto a narrow path along the left. She couldn’t get away from these bomb-happy freaks fast enough, but as she rushed up a zigzag path, a blue toad-like creature, with a round flat head and standing on only two feet, came running down the slope, his mouth wide. “AAAAAAAHHH!”

“Globox?” Murfy queried, Sheila spinning around when the toad zipped by. “What’s his… AHH!” Ahead, a Hoodmonger was rushing down for attack. “Sheila, look out!” Murfy zipped up and struggled in tug-o-war over its gun. “This guy’s André, the Black Lum boss! Quick, punch him!”

Starting to attention, Sheila whirled her fist, ran to the ordinary-looking Monger, and laid a powerful punch. Like the others, a Black Lum flew out, but what made him stand out were his skinny three-claw arms, and dim-red pupils. He buzzed up to Sheila, “So YOU’RE the buzz-killer killin’ all my Hoodlums, well wait’ll Mr. Dark gets a load about this!” He spoke faster than Murfy reading the manual. “Have fun while ya can, ‘cause once we take over the Dream World, we’re turning you into Raccoon Stew! I hope there’s plenty o’ juice in ya, huehehahahahaha!” He buzzed away. (End song.)

“Andy, come baaaaack!” Globox came back, crying after the Lum. “You were still IT, I’m sorry if I ran too fast!”

“So wait, you two’re buddies?” questioned Sheila.

“Uh, he has a condition where he can’t recognize enemies as enemies, so don’t worry about comin’ off too rude.” Murfy informed.

“Oo said I was worryin’ about bein’ rude? You’re real wonked in the head, you know that??”

“Aww, it’s okay to be bashful.” Globox smiled goofily. “I’m always happy to make new friends. Hey, you’re different! Are you some kinda worm-cat, you’re not from around here, are ya?”

“Man, I’M Sheila Frantic, and Oi’m a wereraccoon. Now ah you this Chief Toad, ‘cause I’m gettin’ really sleepy here.”

“Oh no, that guy is this way. Come on, I’ll take ya!”

Globox led them further up the hill, and it seemed they were finally at the top of the mountain. A cage dangled from a tree, so Sheila punched a sphere and broke it. It wasn’t Electoons, but a green frog with slanted yellow eyelids, white bushy brows and beard, a white belly, and an open black shirt. “You have my gratitude.” spoke the frog in a deep, British-ish voice, blowing bubbles from his pipe. “I must say, I’ve met many a kind child lately. Hmmhhmmhhm.”

“Oi, ah you the Chief Toad?” asked Sheila.

“Hmmh, no. I am Don Gero. I must say, I have only been home for 6 months, as I spent the last 6,000 years trapped in the form of some demented lizard, at the hands of a demon. You go through
many trials by the time you’re my age, hhmhmhmhm.”

“I hope, Mate. But where’s the Chief Toad?”

“Sage Gamamaru, you must mean. This way, if you please.” So the frog hopped away, to a village area roamed by Toads, and brought them to a rather large, wooden structure that was wide open, though dark inside. A few smaller, hippo-sized Toads were crouched around, but Sheila’s eyes directed at the one sitting in the center.

“‘EY! AH YOU the Chief TOOOAD?”

He was a a massive and fat toad, 3 stories high, old and wrinkly with dry lips, eyes only open in small slits, and pale orange-red skin. “Ooooo... am I a toad?”

“He’s got memory problems.” Murfy said. “Old people, right?”

“Ooooo... yes... You are Sheila Frantic... aren’t you.”

“Heeh.” Sheila smirked and scratched her nose. “Already famous.”

“Oooo... yes... you are one of Seven. And one of two... already awakened.”

“Two, eh. So another Light found their selves?”

“I see it... on Glacia... it has happened. Oooo... but so much more... there is to go. So many dangers... very great battles...”

“You aren’t scarin’ me with that. I’ll waste ‘em all!”

“Nooo... others will... live? No, die... There will be life, and death... croooak. But more on that later. What were those things you need... First...b..?”

“The Eight Firstborn?”

“No, there are nine. Er, ten? Eleven?... I lost count. Err, well you need them... because, there is something you need. Something very important. I forget what it’s called... oh, but they are a pair. One of them... was found.”

“Um, ‘kay? But where are the Firstborn?”

“The Firstborn... yes... they are... scattered. Across the universe. Living amongst the mortals. Croak... and they need their new Guardians... to awaken themselves, croooak.”

“Man, you’re boring.” Sheila sighed. “Can’t we speed through this? Whaddya mean they’re living with mortals, ya mean they turned human?”

“Croak... no... but they must be found soon... to open the door.”

“I don’t suppose ya’ll tell me what the door is?”

“My prophecies don’t come cheap. And my mind is... a bit foggy. Croak... but I do see something. Someone very dear to your hearts... is about to leave you.”

“You mean one of me mates is ‘bout to die??”

“Croak... he is about to be gone... facing powers he cannot comprehend. He will exist in your
“Blimey.” Sheila frowned. She doesn’t think she can bear to lose one of her mates. She wondered just how long this person had. “Hope it isn’t Mason. Is anybody else going to die?”

“A few people... croak... but none more so than is necessary. I will tell you this: you must die... in order to live.”

“Well, that’ll sound right in their ears then.”

“I know it seems like a lot of blabber, but Sage Gamamaru makes very accurate prophecies.” Don Gero assured. “Why, if you heard what he predicted for me, your heads might just implode upon themselves.” He blew 3 bubbles.

“Mate, I’ve seen MANY things that made my head implode on itself... but it goes down after a day or two. But as the daughter of Golden-Fist Marine, I’ve prepared to keep my head sane against anything!”

“Let’s see... there was a bit more... A green light... I seem to see that. Surrounded by darkness... no physical form... it is very pretty. Very pretty indeed.”

“Yeah, I touched a few bug-zappers meself.” Sheila remarked.

“Ummm... and something about... a princess... bringing doom and destruction. Or did that already happen... yawn, I need a break.”

“Yaaaaawn. Me too.” said Sheila with half-closed eyes. “I wanna move on already. Aren’t we supposed to be finding this Rayman?”

“Ooo! I know where Rayman is!” Globox perked. “I saw them take him that way!” He pointed that way. “If we hurry, we could see ‘im!” He ran off.

“Well, if you’ve nothing more for me, I’m headin’ off.” And with that, Sheila followed the blue Toad.

“Croooak... that man has a marvelous purple cape.”

And as Sheila jumped in the Exit Portal after Globox, it was set in stone: that was the most boring post-stage scene ever.

**Midway Peak**

“At our castle, we have five pools, but it’s mostly for the servants since most of us can’t swim.” Doflamingo Jr. was saying to a pink-dressed girl with brown hair and a powdery face, who didn’t look at all interested. “‘Cause you know, gotta give them something to work for.”

“My grades were so high in first grade,” Chane was saying to a teen girl, “they let me skip to 4th, then I joined the Pop-culture Club just to see what it was like for regular people, and well, they kinda have some neat stuff, but more importantly-”

Wanting to get away from the riffraff, Carol Masterson walked to a back table where Mom’s sons were sitting. “Hey, you don’t mind if I sit here a bit, do—YAAAAAH!” Someone under the table cupped Carol’s mouth shut and pulled her under.

“Nnnnyaaaaah I knew Table Gnomes were real!” Larry panicked.
“No Berry Bunny for you.” Walt took his dessert away.

“Mmm-mm-mm!” Carol desperately tried to shake away, but-

“Shhhh!” Cheren loosened his grip once she looked at him.

“Ch…Cheren?” the rich girl whispered. “What’re you doing here?”

“Long story short, I’m on a mission to kill the Head President.”

“You know, there are better ways to express your anger over not being invited.”

“I know, just help cover me while I wait, okay? These guys are already with me, and that businesslady, Mom.”

“Okay, well, do you want me to cover you when all these rich guys send the hounds at you for killing their boss??”

“I dunno what—I’m still figuring it out. I just… need to know more about these people behind the scenes. The Government. I wasn’t sure where to start in this whole Apocalypse, but this is my first and only chance. If things go wrong, I want you to contact Panini with this.” He handed her his 4DS. “I’ll be counting on you. And, good luck on your training.”

Carol had many queries racing around her head, but couldn’t put them together now, so she climbed out and left Cheren to himself. The boy kept a close eye on the party from under the curtains, and the doors at the top of the stairway. Any moment now, the Head President would appear…

Cyberspace

A tight race taking place at Sugar Rush, with Vanellope von Schweetz taking the lead, Taffyta close on her tail. The two passed devious grins to each other, but Vanellope had no intention of letting her pass. It was inevitable as Vanellope was holding the trophy at the end.

A giant cake was baked as Vanellope and Candlehead were in a race to see who could eat the most. A tickle fell on Vanellope’s nose, causing her to sneeze and blow Candlehead’s candle out, and when the girl fell into panic, Vanellope accomplished victory.

A wild time at the Candy Bar, where Vanellope and Rancis raced to see who could guzzle the most soda. Rancis had an overfizz, and Vanellope was soon standing on the table, cheering in victory and kicking other soda jugs away.

Before they knew it, Sugar Rush was under attack by XANA and his armies. The Kolossus stomped across the candy plains and crushed many of the brave tasty warriors. It punched Vanellope to the ground and raised its sword to stab her. Taffyta, Candlehead, and Rancis jumped in the way and blocked the sword together, with Taffyta sparing a smile to Vanel before their bodies derezzed. Vanellope was able to make it to XANA, dodging all of his attacks and infecting his body. With a great burst of her digital energy, XANA was sealed away.

Vanellope awoke in a pitch-black room on a small table. “Boo, hoo, hoo.” A familiar, caped figure marched out from the darkness. “Poor, poor Vanel.”

She kept a calm, cool look as XANA revealed himself, a malicious grin on his digital face. “I bet you never thought you’d see me again- &^#.” His face glitched into that of King Candy/Turbo’s before reverting.
“I’m sorry, who are you?” she asked quizzically.

“What- *^#?!” He became furious. “Whaddyou MEAN, who am I? Don’t you remember ANYthing, stupid girl? Attempted to conquer the KND mainframe, imprisoned me at the cost of your own life, revived you with a lack of memory and called you my daughter, abused and forced you to find the means to awaken me, got you to befriend a simple little boy and break his heart when he learned you betrayed him, left YOU high and dry when I no longer needed you, then you miraculously got your memory back and ultimately obliterated me?? RING A BELL?”

“Sorry man, but I dunno anything like that.” She shook her head.

“Ohh- ()*&% no matter. I’ve long forgotten the past, anyway.” He paced around. “Not when our future’s so bright! We are inside a very intriguing place, Vanel. Would you like to guess what that is?”

“Uhhhh-” Glitch, “Canada?”

“NNNNNNOOO!! This is the bridge to the world that will be! This is the very confines of… THE NEW WORLD!!” When XANA indicated outside of their dark chamber, Vanellope saw they were over some kind of lava sea, with many metal islands of giant gears. “Lord Gnik has sent me here to have everything prepared for when he is finally ready to come, and YOU will HELP ME.” He jabbed a finger at Vanel. “Not just for me, but for your friends, too, because we want nothing more than their sure-as-sugar safety. So… is it agreed?” He held a hand down, grinning slyly.

Vanellope only stared at him. This guy was a real creep. “LESSER Lord.”

“Ehh, what?” XANA turned when the Zoni appeared.

“The one you speak of… is LESSER LORD.”

“Ahh, Lesser Lord, Shmesser Lord. If you care about your little buddies back on Earth, you haven’t really a choice. So… is it a deal?” He held his hand down again.

Vanellope looked between him, the Zoni, and the lava pit below. “Well, if it’s really the only way, then… naturally, I won’t believe you!”

“Wh-Whaaaat?” She took XANA by surprise when she leapt into the pit. “Heeeeey! Come back here, you stupid girl! COME BAAAAAAAAACK- &*$%^#)(” After ragingly stomping his foot, he stopped to calm down. “Oh, I knew we shouldn’t’ve let Dr. Nefarious implant his personality into me…” (Play “Medium – Heat/Clockwork” from Homestuck.)

Stage 19: Land of Heat and Clockwork

Mission: Follow the Zoni.

All it was was an endless sea of boiling lava, and metal refineries of giant gears floating everywhere. Vanellope jumped some floating turning gears, avoiding fireballs that shot up between them as the platforms inch ed higher. They brought Vanellope to a lone metal platform of oil drums and a crane, where she met her first 3 Zoni. “We are here for you, Sire. Come, and we shall help you destroy it.” Vanellope still had no idea what “it” was, but the Zoni proceeded to take control of the crane and pull something up from beneath the magma. Stretching across a portion of the sea appeared to be an obstacle course for a 2-D side-scroller. Mario was what came to mind, except this looked totally messed up: little black Piranha Plants called Munchers were stationed on all
floors, and many dangerous jumps were required to get through. “XANA has modified this world.”
the Zoni explained. “He has tampered with powers beyond his own. You must fix, or your friends
may never survive.”

Vanel saw that a Red Koopa was pacing before the course’s base. She jumped on and stole its
shell, and with extreme careful precision, she bounced on the shell across the Munchers, having to
repeatedly grab it at the same time she jumped, to use it over and over. She kicked it above two
close walls which she Wall Jumped afterward, grabbing the shell again to precisely bounce it
between narrow enclosings of Munchers. At the end of the Muncher Road, Vanellope was forced
to jump high, kick the shell forward so it bounced off a small floating block with a Muncher,
bounce off the shell and over the Muncher when it came back, then glitched around a few more
floating Munchers onto a safe floating gear.

From here was a series of small floating blocks with Firebars rotating slowly. Very far apart,
Vanellope could only reach them via glitching, able to manage 3 glitches at a time with each Zoni.
She timed them carefully to avoid getting burned, but soon the blocks were much too far to reach.
However, Vanel noticed a Zoni on a higher block, able to glitch her way to it and recruit. “Zoni.”
With one extra glitch, she could zap her way to the farther blocks, having to zap up a stairway of
double-Firebars before she landed on a gear. She looked down and saw an even larger gear in the
lava below, taking a mighty leap and using her Glitchwarp to dodge the many streams of fire that
emerged out of midair.

Taking land on the gear, a gang of XANA Creepers, Kankrelats, and Krabs spawned out of thin air,
sights locked on the glitch. When they shot the first lasers, Vanellope glitched around and
lightspeed-kicked several Creeps and Kanks, knocking them in the lava. She dealt a rapid storm of
multiple kicks against the Krabs until they fell, and when 10 Kankrelats/Creepers surrounded her,
in a single cirly blue zip, the monsters fell dead. The Zoni then flew over one part of the sea and
flashed their arms, causing two parallel series of pillars with cannons to rise from the flames. They
all started blasting Bullet Bills, but none too many at a time, and were fairly unclear of when they
would fire, making it difficult for Vanel as she jumped and glitched across them. The Bill river
curved right as Vanel kept up her careful jumps, but eventually their route came to an end.

XANA Hornets were buzzing over a vast area of the sea, so Vanellope continued her jumping
spree using them as sacrifices. They were coming to be really far apart, forcing her to time her
glitches carefully. To the left, she saw a lone gear with a Zoni to the distance, glitching to it when
ready to recruit the creature. “Zoni.” She continued her venture over the Hornets before they
eventually ended, and she went plummeting toward the sea. But when just inches from the red, a
Bullet Bill shot outta nowhere and bounced her up. More Bills poofed out of thin air and kept her
going, her digital heart racing as she wondered where they might appear, and she also spotted a P-
switch and spring fall out of nowhere and quickly grabbed them both before they hit the lava.

She landed on a new gear platform, and her next trial was a floating ceiling of spikes with many
walls and obstructions, and leaping all around and out of the lava were happy, carefree dolphins.
Not red dolphins that would be adapted to the fire, ordinary water dolphins that survived in the lava
somehow, and could go through the walls, though Vanellope wouldn’t be able to. So she hopped
the swarm of jumping dolphins around the tight corners and many Munchers, keeping a tight grip
on her spring and P-switch. The dolphins eventually brought her to a series of floating coins,
aligned like platforms, and when she briefly pushed the P-switch—grabbing hold of the spring
again immediately—the coins turned into sturdy block platforms she began rushing over, needing
to fling herself to higher ones with the spring, while grabbing it again the same time she bounced.

She hurriedly raced to the end of the platforms when their time was running out, and seeing the
huge gap that lay afterward, she took a running jump and leapt, throwing the spring beneath her for
an extra boost, then glitched the rest of the way onto a gear in the lava. Fireballs jumping from the lava led across now, so Vanellope jumped across them via spin-jumps. She was making her way under a giant refinery, taking land on a stable platform where XANA Mags – lava centipedes with big pincers and XANA’s eye in-between, crawled out of the lava to snap Vanel between their scissor-like pincers. When they opened wide to pinch, that was her cue to zip up, kick ‘em in the eyes, and make them curl and cool.

Just like before, she managed to grab two of them like one with her glitchy prowess. But since the only way across were once again fireballs, she had to put them down, pick them up again mid-spin-jump, and begin bouncing the fireballs, ‘cause that’s how that glitch works. Every now and then, she had to kick them to the air and grab ‘em again before they uncurled, and the fireballs steadily bounced higher the farther she got. One of them eventually flew as high as the refinery’s ledge, so Vanel could hop on. As she approached the building in the center, swarms of Megatanks, Bloks, and two Scyphozoas appeared to greet her. She set the Mags down and smirked wittingly, gesturing them forward with her fingers.

They began blasting, but Vanel glitched around and started kicking the Bloks in the eyes, but had a trickier time dodging the Megatanks’ expanding barriers. But there were too many around, attacking from every direction, and soon Vanellope was knocked off her feet. That’s when the Scyphozoa wrapped its slim, clear tentacle around her, touched them to all sides of her head, and began to absorb her very data. She felt entranced by its very appearance, and didn’t want to escape it at all. Just staring mindlessly… as her very essence merged with it.

The Zoni immediately threw energy spheres and attacked the squids, freeing Vanellope from the grasp. “The powers you must show, Sire.” The Zoni presented a sphere that switched many neon colors, with a circle symbol with a ‘+’ on its down-left. "Awaken with this."

The monsters still attacking her, Vanellope zipped up and dealt an array of rapid kicks against the Smash Ball. It shattered, and her body glowed with neon aura, her eyes yellow. “Guh-Guh-Guh-GLI-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-…” In a blink, the pitch-black sky, rocky gray refinery, and fiery red sea all flashed an assortment of colors, their pixels showing, and the entire cyberspace glitched. After 10 seconds, the world flashed back to normal, and all of the monsters were over the chasm. In a fashion like Wile Coyote, they dropped into the lava sea. The XANA Mags were still available, and all Vanellope needed ‘em for was to hold down two switches. A huge garage door opened, so Vanellope entered the building. (End song.)

Vanellope hid behind some large crates, watching the sight unfurl. Two gangs were clearly in a squabble, a crew of pitch-black beings in gray coats and one of sickly green beings in same-colored coats. Vanellope noted how crudely designed they were. “So wat’s the deal of meetin’ us hea’, seee?” a green guy asked.

“You know why weuh heuh. You work for the You-Know-Who, see?” a black guy replied.

“Oh, enemies of the Boss, are ya?”

“Yah, you know your Boss ain’t nothin’ more than stardust, see?”

“They say that about everyone, seee, but I knows he’s-a burnin’ out there, maybe-a over there.”

“Well, if he’s-a out here, show me da proof, seee?”

There was a soft, echoey “Ooooo” and Vanellope saw it: a strange, green glimmer of light floating into a window. Well, not so much a glimmer, more of a… Shimmer.
“AAAAH! IT’S IT! IT’S IT! SHOOOOOT!” On the black guy’s cue, both sides furiously blasted the other with guns. It was only a matter of seconds before they both fell dead.

Vanellope walked out as the Shimmer hovered above the center. Its mystic green glow reflected off her big round eyes, and the Zoni hovered behind her. “It’s HEEEERE… SIRE.”

“Uhhh… hello there.” Vanel greeted.

“Oooo.” Flash.

“Um… so what’s your name?”

“OooOOo!”

“Can’t tell me, huh? Well, um… do you know how to get back to Earth?”

“OOOoooo.”

“You’ve… been there before?”

“Oooo.”

“Several Earths, huh? Well… Ah dunno, one with Dillon on it?”

“OooooOOO!”

“What? Whaddyou mean Dillon’s dead?”

“Ooo.”

“Not THAT Dillon, the one who’s… Wait… how d’you know about that Dillon?”

“Ooo…OOOO!” And on that note, the Shimmer flew out the window, shrinking beyond the sky.

“HEEEEEY! Come back.”

“He was born out of its fire, He will be its Face.” The Zoni moaned in their creepy monotone.

“Uhhhh what was that?”

“It comes to CLAIM. It comes to SIRE. THE END OF EVERY RACE.”

Orbital Auditorium

The transport vessel brought Maddy, Drake, and Team Ratchet to a tremendous space station whose huge glass dome was flashing with colors. The loads of passengers, all of whom were dressed as though they were attending a high-schooler’s party, scrambled to get off, while the five heroes slowly followed behind. The transport zipped away the moment they got off, and Maddy, still under her cloak, studied the giant lobby with interest. “Soooo what is this place?”

“My friend,” Ratchet patted her back, “you are in Electrodrome.” (Play “Electrodrome” from Mario Kart 8!)

The following room was definitely the hugest disco party Maddy or Drake had ever seen. The stars of space loomed over the great glass dome above, and hanging in its center was a disco ball the size of a house. The stadium was mostly flashing purple, but at regular intervals it flashed yellow,
green, red, any color. Techno music boomed throughout the stadium as aliens of many species danced with great enthusiasm. Stage lights of various colors zoomed everywhere, and there were dozens of giant TVs that switched screens showing different dancing groups. There was a single giant stage of three layers on the farthest side where slim, male and female alien dancers danced consecutively.

A great white cloud of smoke erupted from the pipes onstage, and a small shadowed figure rose from below. When the steam cleared, she was shone to be a fairy-like imp with what they deduced as a pretty white face with big dark-blue eyes with a gradient of black. She had same-colored hair in a ponytail much like the female dancers, but little black lines up it that looked a little like a music sheet. She wore a brown dress that ended above her waist, her stubby legs white like her face, and on the right side of her head was a microphone earpiece shaped like a treble clef.

“What-UUUUUP, Electrodroooome!” Her youthful spunky voice echoed across the dome, winking her large left eye. “This be your host, Spirit-Dancer Unova! Hope you’re ready for another night o’ partying, ‘cause we got a hot new concert TONIGHT! Let’s kick it off with a round from Yours Truly! Doooooon’t party out!” And she began a song with her lovely voice.

I see you lookin’, at me, oveeeeeeere theeeeeeere. Her voice matched the rhythm of the music, letting a flock of notes fly over part of the crowd.

I see you look away, when I tuuuurn to staaaare.

I know how you feel ’bout me
But never you let me do see

If it’s you wish… then please… just LEEEET your VOICE BE FREEEE!!

And she began to fly across the dome, a musical trail in her wake. Maddy and friends stared with wonder as her trail glowed neon, and many glittering notes rained down.

(Just free your voice.)

To the STAAAARS a-BOOOOVE

(Free your voice.)

To SHOOOOOW your LOOOOVE

(Free your voice!)

...And leeeet it seeeee- She returned to stage.

What it means. (DUN!) To live. (DUN!) In PERFECT harmonyyyyyy!

The two pipes on either side of her exploded with confetti and the dancers cheered. “I would guess Kateenians don’t come here often.” Drake assumed.

“Is THAT Courtney Gears?” asked Maddy.

“That is Unova, a regular singer here.” replied Clank. “I do not know her species, but she has a spectacular voice.” He unlatched himself from Ratchet’s back, “I will head to the roof and continue signaling for Maddy’s brother. If Nefarious’s drones come, you four will be easily able to hide among the crowds. Call if either of us run into trouble. Assuming you aren’t too preoccupied with
“WHAT-UP, fellaaaaas?” Qwark slid in, in a new hip black jacket, white undershirt, black pants, sunglasses, and gold rings on his fingers that read ‘DAWG’ ‘GUNNIT’. “How d’you like Qwark’s new groooove? Don’t be surprised if I bring a few ladies with me by the time we leave.”

“Yeah, but shouldn’t one of us go with Clank, make sure he handles all right?” Drake queried.

“Not me!” Maddy had already thrown her cloak off, rocking her head to the groove. “I’m already pumped! Probly some hypnotic stuff in that music ‘cause I CAN’T STOP SHAKIN’!”

Drake whispered to Ratchet, “There is somethin’ very hypnotic, ‘cause she like never acts like this. Usually she’s a, sour dog.”

“Rrrright… Well uh, I’ll keep track of Clank with my Find-My-Robot app,” Ratchet held up a cellphone, “check if he’s on the roof doin’ his duties, and we can hide from Nefarious here. Watch your backs, guys.”

Stage 20: Electrodrome

Mission: See the Courtney Gears concert! (and wait for Zach to come, I guess)

So the trio began their dance in the hip, groovy dance club, navigating around several aliens whom were swaying so fast, they might just cause them notable damage. It seemed different parts of the floor were divided by digital pink rivers, with square platforms zipping around and around them, which the crew hopped one to reach another floor. A trio of Spinneruffs were dancing to the groove, then rapidly whirling their dogs around, though it seemed this was part of their dance and not trying to attack them. Regardless, Maddy hopped above and kicked a Spinneruff away while Ratchet and Drake both caught the others with grapplers and hurled them against each other. Their defeat made some Swingshot targets appear over a longer digital river, Drake holding Maddy as they all swung to a new path through the dance studio.

Pairs of Shy Guys were holding one end of a long limbo stick on either side of the path, stepping left and right as the trio had to slide under them, because if they jumped, a random laser would blast them. Once past the Groove Guys, they had to jump a series of black pipes over a digital ground, in which Groove Plants – black Piranha Plants with flashing neon spots, came out every now and then to dance to the beat, and snack anyone who jumped by. They had to jump the pipes fast before they came out, then swung two Swingshot targets to a square platform surrounded by digital. A duo of smaller platforms circled counterclockwise around a center, and lines of colorful beams flashed over them, horizontal and vertical, having to ride them across at right timing and jump off. However, when Drake had the impulse to be stylish and ride the platforms for five consecutive loops, avoiding the beams excellently, he earned a Skill Point.

After a minor zigzaggy path, they exited an archway to a hallway with a high ceiling, and Buffbod guards marching around, muscular aliens with rock-like bodies and black shirts, pants, and boots. As they approached the first guard, it tumbled forward to flatten Maddy and Drake, but the former managed to raise him with her own strength, arms trembling, and chucked him against the guard behind him. Drake pulled himself 3-dimensional again and blasted his harpoon at the first one’s rocky face when he recovered, and with his hook still latched, Ratchet ran across the rope and slammed a grenade in his face, then flipped overhead to blast a missile at the second one.

This hall led to a dead end, where it seemed the next door was high up near the ceiling, no way to
get to it. However, some colorful spotlights moved diagonally across the walls, closer to the floor at the start of the room, and the heroes were able to Wall Jump these and not the actual walls for some reason. They timed their jumps carefully to catch the lights when they came, eventually making it into the door. This whole floor was a digital sea with small floating platforms that aliens were occupying, dancing away. This room seemed to flash colors much more often, and they noticed whenever a certain color flashed, neon platforms appeared in areas over the sea. Some were in convenient positions, some were not, so they kept an eye out for a set of platforms that worked well with the order of colors.

Red, yellow, green, and blue made an order of platforms which the trio carefully jumped to get to a safe foothold. The following flashing platforms were farther apart, and appeared one color apart from each other. Only Ratchet could cross the platforms with his jetboots, having to stay hovered long enough for the platforms to appear as he navigated across. Becoming confused as where to go before long, he noticed a Swingshot target also flashed to existence when red came. He quickly swung this target and landed on a blue platform that appeared just then, but this route led him to a Gold Bolt platform otherwise hidden by four floating aliens.

After grabbing the bolt, Ratchet eventually navigated his way to a platform with a screw, turning and turning ‘til the large disco ball up top unlatched and crashed on the digital ground, the Lombax flinching. It was conveniently by Maddy and Drake, who climbed on and rolled it around. They got beside Ratchet, who climbed on as they carefully balanced around for a way out. They noticed the giant screens flashing brief screenshots of dancers showed Unova in many pretty poses and winks, and Captain Qwark grooving in the other room. They had to watch out for appearing flash-platforms that served as obstacles, but the trio eventually found an opening in the wall to a new room, still over the electric digital.

It was another narrow room with many disco balls overhead, and the three had to navigate around lasers in the digital. At the path’s end, Drake shot his harpoon to a peg above and pulled his friends to it, landing them on a higher ledge where they crossed the disco balls. They got to a platform and passed a door back to the flashing color room, now on the second floor where large record platforms hovered around. There was one beside them, but all the others were very far apart, but depending on the color flashed, arrows appeared on the records, indicating the direction they would be flung. They waited for it to point at the next record before jumping on and flinging over, and kept this cycle going until they made it to a platform in a far corner.

The black-painted hallway that followed was definitely the quietest, and they had a chance to ease their eyes from the sea of colors and lights that was this dome. Maddy felt like she would never see things in normal color again, and since she was already using contact lenses, she felt like she would go blind. The hall directed downward ‘til they found an exit, overlooking giant records on a huge DJ desk. When they dropped in, they gaped at the giant creature playing the records: a light-brown, chubby, happy-faced rock creature known as a Goron. A Big one, specifically, wearing sunglasses and a microphone headset. He was about to put his hand on the records again, but- “Ooo?” tilted his glasses up to view the visitors with his clear blue eyes. “Ooooohh, guests! What brings you to Goro-jockey’s DJs-goro?”

“Uhhhh just passing by. You know where the Courtney Gears concert is?” Ratchet asked.

“Just follow that way-goro!” He pointed to a trio of purple lightrails to his right. “And if you want to, stay to participate in the race! I hear there’s a big prize-goro.”

“We’ll think about it.” So with that, the trio crossed the records to the rails, the Goron returning to his music. The rails snaked and led them downward into the pitch-black abyss, but when they grinded through a very small opening, their eyes became uneasy again as they glided through a
very wide tunnel of purple staticky walls, which shortly began flashing assortments of colors. Red, green, yellow, blue, and many scattered pieces of rails appeared in many random places whenever certain colors flashed. The trio ended up separating and kept sharp eyes out for where rails would appear and quickly jumped to them, and Drake ended up following a route that gave him a Gold Bolt, going up the walls and upside-down. But Maddy was definitely developing some sort of seizure, unable to focus on the flashing rails as she inevitably took the fall.

Drake blasted his harpoon-turned-into-a-claw down and clutched her inches above the electrical outsides, pulling her to and carrying her himself as he glided his rails with ease. “This is why I wear SUNGLASSES.” he yelled over the music. The colors became really nauseating really fast, but it was over soon when they grinded on three stable rails into an expansive black chamber. They arrived at the biggest room of the dome, where thousands of aliens screamed before a large purple stage with a huge TV over it. The rails landed them on a single platform very far from the floor and above a wide portion of digital floor, so they needed to jump some slow-moving purple light-platforms, moving back-and-forth between set areas. The last platform didn’t have anywhere else to go, so they swung a few Swingshot targets (which, by the way, are in the form of disco balls) to a platform on the massive back wall, where they grabbed hold of a very thin ledge where Snapdragons waited. As they climbed across, these Snapdragons danced to the groove while they tried to snack prey, but it didn’t stop Ratchet from whacking them with his wrench.

They arrived at and grinded down one last purple lightrail before making a stylish land into the audience. They rushed toward the front of the stadium and blended in with the thousands of aliens. (End song.)

Atop the dome

Clank continued to fiddle with his transmission radio, but all he could pick up was static. “Hmmm. I hope Maddy’s brother did not run into any danger. Judging by her description of him, he may not be the most reliable figure in this situation. I will try and contact other frequencies in the Milky Way. One of them should ultimately be her… hmm?” The sight of the familiar incoming ship made him look up.

Inside the dome

The trio made their way to the front of the crowds and settled within them. “Think this is hidden enough?” Maddy asked.

“Well, it’s not like we have a ship anymore, so they can’t determine we’re here.” Ratchet replied. “And why would we abandon to go to some crummy concert? Believe me Mads, the odds of Nefarious finding us here are a million to one.”

“Ladies and gentlemen and NUCHACHOS!” The stadium turned darker as spotlights shone on the stage, smoke fogging it. “Give an earsplitting roar for the two you all know and love: Courtney Gears and PINK MONKEEEEY!” Two slim figures emerged from the stage, one tall and one short. The silver-bodied popstar with the red top and shorts and brown metal hair – Courtney Gears, and a blonde-haired monkey in a pink T-shirt and shorts with brown shoes, and black cap with a pink roof, both posing cutely.

“What? She wasn’t on the poster.” Ratchet said.

“One of her back-up singers had an accident?” Maddy wondered. They only stood and watched as Courtney sang.

I see the future, and what do I see
Robots roamin’ crazy through the, GALAXYYYY

Look around you, nowhere to fly

Fleshies better watch out ‘cause, GONNA DIIIIE-

Pink Monkey shoved her away, the microphone falling to her hand. “Out of the way! They were applauding me.”

Siiiimple thoughts: leeeeeead us to siiiimple liiiives

Thaaaat is why: the monkey stiiiill survives. And try-ies-

Both singers were flown away when a larger, fatter woman with hands, shoes, and head separate from the body crashed on the stage. She had blonde hair in two long pigtails and a Viking hat. “The two of you are ou-u-u-utdated, now it’s MY turn!” Space Mama proclaimed in a high-pitch opera voice. She started to sing in a foreign tongue none of those aliens understood—so Pink Monkey flew up and kicked her away.

“Schedule your OWN time, I’m singing for my Specter!” she exclaimed.

“Uhhck, how LUDICROUS.” Mama was still in Song Mode. “My voice SPEEEEEKS for Dear Mr. Dark, I would like it should you not interRUPT me.”

“BOTH of you need to get lost.” Courtney Gears stomped back onstage. “Dr. Nefarious ordered ME to organize this trap. Let’s bring him on now.” She pushed a remote, and the huge TV above her projected Dr. Nefarious’ image.

“Hello, Orbital Stadium! How are you this fine day?”

“Dr. Nefarious, will you PLEASE tell these two to go back to their own masters??”

“HEY, I was sent here by Specy himself!” Pink protested. “Just ask him!” She took the remote and switched to Specter’s image.

The ape had just walked onscreen with a towel around his waist. “Tomoki, didn’t I tell you to get the banana bath salt-”

“Hi Specter!”

“WAAAAAH!” He quickly grabbed his voice-modifier and switched to his deep, cooler voice. “Ahem- Pink Monkey! Why are you calling, can’t you see I’m in the middle of something?”

“Well sorry Specter, but these MEANIES keep getting in my way! Can’t you yell at their bosses?”

“OutRAGEOUS!” Space Mama took the remote. “We w-w-will see what Mr. DARK has to SAY about THIS!” And she switched to the cloaked man’s image.

“WwwwwWHAT. Space Mama.”

“Meester Dark, PLEASE tell these HOOLIGANS that this SONG wast mine and mine alone.”

“It wasn’t NEITHER of yours!” Two Team Rocket agents, Cassidy and Butch stomped onscreen. “Giovanni sent US here to find the Music Spirit, Meloetta! Didn’t you, Giovanni?” They switched to the shadowed Team Rocket leader.
“Yes, that’s correct. Our readings detected a lot of Musical Chi in that area, so if you don’t mind.”

Specter’s screen appeared on with Giovanni’s, both smooshing the other, “Well of course there’s a lot of Music Chi, it’s a ***king DANCE club. And I sent Pink here to create a mega-frequency satellite in the area, so if you don’t mind—”

“Hey, THIS area was under MY territory,” Nefarious’s squished on next, “and if you don’t want your MINIONS turned into robots, I suggest you GET OUT OF HERE.”

“If I may interject,” Mr. Dark appeared, “what makes you think a Music Spirit would be in such a populated area, especially with such DEAFENING beats. Space Mama, I specifically requested you head to Symphonia, not that run-down DUMP.”

“Now excuse me, if I-”

“HETERUVERVYVBYRJVLLVWOUWEWCBBCWYWVWHACIUL-” Inevitably, all four leaders were in the incomprehensible squabble.

“The leaders were in the incomprehensible squabble.”

“SILEEEENCE!” Plankton appeared, his picture teeny. “If you’re done bickering with yourselves, you should know I captured one of the Lights successfully.”

“That’s just BEAUTIFUL, Plankton. Is he awakened?” Specter asked.

“Why yes, of course, we did the life-changing journey all in a night—OF COURSE HE’S NOT AWAKENED YET!!”

“Look, I’M done talking about this,” yelled Nefarious, “I just wanna CAPTURE the stupid Maddy girl and be on our way. She SHOULD be riiliiight-” The room’s camera zoomed around. “Where did she go?”

Nefarious Drones had broken into the dome of the main dance room, aliens screaming and scrambling to escape. “Yo, what’s goin’ on??” exclaimed one of Unova’s male dancers.

“I dunno, I dunno!” cried the imp-like singer. “Do so many people really detest the Art of Voice??”

But before the robots could begin searching, a sudden beam of lightning struck from a stagelight and destroyed them all in milliseconds, then stopped and sparked in place before the stage. Unova gasped, “Are…Are you-??”

The spark took the form of an orange round figure with a needled point on its head, oval blue eyes, and a mouth. “I’ll save you, Milady! Rotom on the scene!”

Maddy, Drake, and Ratchet raced all the way to a downstairs hangar, where ships of all designs were parked. “We gotta take one of these things and get outta here!” Ratchet yelled.

“But we don’t even have keys!” Maddy replied rushedly.

“Hang on, this one is robot-operated.” Ratchet indicated a small, two-seat ship. “If only Clank were—CLANK, it’s Ratchet, meet us in the hangar, we gotta MOVE!” he yelled in his wristwatch.

“I’m right here.” They jumped around as the short robot hurried in. “I saw Nefarious’s ship approaching and hurried to find you.”

“Couldn’t you call us first?”

“I’m here, aren’t I? Let’s go where they will not find us.”
“But what about Superman-or-whatever? Eh, Qwark?” asked Drake.

“He’s not responding.” Ratchet looked at his staticky wristwatch and sighed with doubt. “It’s not big enough for him, anyway. We’ll come back for you soon, Qwark.” So with that, the team hopped inside as Clank powered the engine, the other three smooshed close together as they took off from the dome. Clank’s round green eyes turned red.

“HYPATOOWCNRENBPIUQIVEPBPOBWUVWVYKUEWVERIUV-” Team Gnik ended up in another babble fest.

“SHILEEENCE!” XANA appeared this time. “Look, I’m having a really bad day, and you all are making it worse, so let’s just...let’s just chill out.”

“...Okay.” agreed Plankton.

“Yeah.” followed Specter.

“Mmph.” muffled Dark.

Ragaj Gnik’s image appeared in the center as a familiar jingle played.

_Here’s the story:_

_of a man named Ragaj_

_Who was leader of an evil group of baddies!_

_These guys... got into a squabble_

_When Nefarious tried to kidnap Maddy._

Said robot shrugged in his frame. Their images vanished and were replaced by Gnaa and his group, Bowser, Eggman, K. Rool, Rumpel, Brain, Ganondorf, and Gaul.

_Here’s the story:_

_of a man named Gna-aa_

_Who was leader of a similar evil crew._

_And if this group... could learn to work together_

_In his screen, Rumpel Stiltskin screamed and ran as the Grim Reaper followed._

_Then maybe Gnik’s can, too._

_It switched back to Team Gnik, exchanging mixed looks of begrudging agreement._

_In Seven Lights._

_It’s Seven Lights._

_And only one, of, us, will win the fight._

**Midway Peak**

The party hadn’t changed for the next hour-and-a-half. Conversation was dying down, and most of
the food had been extinguished. Cheren absorbed the last of a Coco Pop Carol had given him, leaving the saliva-colored white stick on the ground. He peeked around, and the Corporate Presidents were all waiting by the stairs, including Mom. The talking was ultimately ceased when four horns were blown.

“Your ATTENTION please. Our guest of honor will now be joining us. The most successful of all of us, having earned the position of right-hand woman to World Leader, Jennifer Bush, the LEADER of the Corporate Presidents!”

The party erupted with applause, and Cheren spied more intently than ever. The doors at the top of the stairs flew open, and a small shadow, growing larger as it approached, walked casually to the entrance. Her footsteps echoed from within, and Cheren fixed his glare tighter when she stepped into the light of the balcony (it was nighttime, so lamps and stuff). A slim, serious woman in a white labcoat and blue shirt with a gray tie. She had blue jeans, brown boots, short brown hair, and hazel eyes behind blue glasses. She could’ve definitely been mistaken for Cheren’s mom.

**Leader of the Corporate Presidents**

**MORGAN CATHERINE UNO**

Morgan stood atop the stairs and viewed her many guests. She closed her eyes and sensed all of their auras. The Corporate Presidents, their children, and all the rich nobles possessed red auras. The only exceptions were Carol Masterson, with a light-blue aura, and Don Quixote Sugar, with a grayish-white aura with a few other colors mixed in. But one of the red auras looked out of place: it was a fiery orange instead of a dark-red, and originated under a table. She opened her eyes, and with a yank of her right hand, Cheren Uno came flying out. “WHOOOA!” He was placed on his feet at the stairs’ base. The balcony erupted with gasps.

“I thought I sensed a familiar aura. For a second, I thought it was my father or Cousin Nigel. Didn’t expect to see my nephew here.”

“Fufufu!” Doflamingo grinned. “My, what a shocking reunion! I guess our dear Head President isn’t without family after all.” Indeed, the other presidents noticed the distinct traits shared between Morgan and Cheren.

Cheren gripped the hilt of his sword, glare fixed on Morgan. “Aunt Morgan. Why…Why are YOU working with them?!”

She kept her calm, toneless look. “Simple. I grew up. I knew I wouldn’t get far staying in your Kids Next Door. Even though we were allowed to retain our memories… I couldn’t stay in these childish games for long. I will admit though, they were fun games while they lasted. But no person stays a child forever, Cheren.”

Sugar glanced away at this.

“In the real world, fun and games will get you nowhere. Only those with a grown-up intellect, and the knowledge to succeed in the world will place you on top.”

“Really? Is that why you dumped your siblings at Foster’s?”

“Buddy, Athena, Sophie, and Beckah are still parts of me. But not parts I can spend all my time talking to.” She fixed her slanted glasses. “They’re safe where they are at Foster’s, and I’ll summon them when I need them. But what matters now is my place in the professional field.”

“And just who got you to think like that, anyway?!”
“Well, no one in particular. I just started thinking it myself. Though I had a few shoves from my new master. But however you choose to see it, I’m happy where I am now.”

“Fufufufu.” Doflamingo marched forward. “That’s all well and good, Miss Head President.” He stopped a few feet from Cheren. “But another question arises: how did you manage to get here, Boy?” His grin was malicious.

Cheren glanced to Mom behind Doflamingo, wearing a fake surprised expression like the others, but her eyes threatened him if he blew their cover. “…It doesn’t matter how I got here. What matters is why:” he aimed his sword at Morgan. “To bring Aunt Morgan back to OUR side!”

“Fufufufu! You’re trying to do so NOW?”

“Yes. The Apocalypse is coming, and we need all operatives’ strength. And Morgan, is STILL an operative! I’ll bring her back even if I have to FORCE her!”

“Weren’t you paying attention?” Morgan asked. “You don’t know how much I’ve gone through to get this far.”

“You’re right. I don’t. And I. Don’t. CARE!” He rushed up the stairs with his sword ready to strike. (Play “Poké Floats” from Smash Bros. Melee!)

Morgan whipped out her blue lightsaber, sliced a Japanese symbol on the ground, and pressed her hand to it. “Summoning: CHOMPJAWS.”

“ROOOOAR!” In a puff of smoke, a huge, tentacled Chain Chomp-like monster emerged from the symbol. It had a pitch-black, shiny round head with red eyes and mouth, and many spiked, flexible tentacles made of various balls. Cheren was blown down the stairs, surprised at the monster’s appearance.

“It’s an Imaginary Friend!” Numbuh Sweetie-1 gasped.

“Nuuuu! I read that it takes a lot of Psychic Chi to create or summon an Imaginary Friend-daizokun.” Bison exclaimed. “But it takes even MORE chi to summon an Extremeasaur! Nuuuu her chi is really great-daizokun!”

“Fufufu.” Doflamingo grinned. “The truth is, Morgan’s level of chi is equal to that of that Mika woman. The only reason she isn’t a Logia, is because the World Leaders forbidded it!”

Chompjaws lashed a tentacle at Cheren, but he jumped away. Another was coming his way, so he swung his sword and sliced it clean off. The tentacle’s balls divided around the ground, forming lit fuses that shrunk into the balls and exploded tremendously. “OOOOOHPPP!” Many of the nobles held their dresses and wigs down, while some were blown in the air. Chompjaws grabbed Cheren and sent him flying over the balcony edge, but he whipped out his Hookshot and latched the railing to fling himself to the air. He took aim at Morgan atop the Chompjaws and launched his other Hookshot, latching her front and pulling him forward. He raised his sword as Morgan did the same, a single, forceful impact between the two until Cheren was blown back.

Morgan charged a Psycho Beam and unleashed it at Cheren, but he raised his Mirror Shield and bounced it right back, injuring the Chompjaws. “AAAAHHHH!”

“I didn’t just visit Foster’s.” Morgan grabbed three Pokéballs from her jacket pocket. “I’ve made a few regular visits to Poké.” She threw the balls into the air as their Pokémon flashed out. In order of appearance, they introduced their selves “Alakazam!”, “Metagross.”, and “TUUU!” a Xatu.
“Oh darn, I should’ve brought my Gallade,” Cheren frowned. “Oh well. Guess I’ll have to fight dirty.” He ran forward to strike, but Xatu flapped to him and made him jump, leaving him unprepared when Metagross jumped over and forcefully kicked him with its front leg. Cheren bounced and smashed against another table, gasping when Metagross leapt to pierce him with its spiked feet, but rolled away just in time. The three Pokémon used psychic to pick up tables and chuck them at Cheren, who swiftly dodge-flipped and blocked Xatu’s talons with his sword when she came. She flew back when Metagross lunged forward and swung his leg, but Cheren flipped back and pelted a M.A.R.B.L.E. in his face.

“Gwah!” Cheren was lifted into the air by Alakazam’s psychic, but he pulled enough strength to grab his bow and shoot an Ice Arrow, freezing the creature solid. Cheren landed on his feet, looking as Xatu flapped in the air, but Cheren quickly whipped out his Hookshot, pulled the bird down, and spun-slashed it across the chest as it fell back.

The Pokémon down, Morgan flew above and began to shoot half-sized Psycho Spheres, which Cheren dodged as he whipped out his Light Arrow and took aim. He launched, but Morgan simply teleported in front and engaged in a swordfight. It lasted short as Morgan thrusted her hand forward and blew Cheren against the railing with a psychic blast. Cheren stuck his sword in the ground to hold himself up. Damn it... only three minutes and she’s already got me beat. I don’t remember Viridi being this hard. ...I need to determine if she’s powerful enough for the Fierce Deity Mask. Otherwise, she might...

He got back up and raised his sword. “I’m not done, yet! Haaaaaah!” He ran forward with his sword skyward and tried to launch the beam of light, but Morgan zipped to his side and kicked him against a table. She grabbed several tables with her psychic and hurled them at him, but Cheren got up and sliced them all with his blade. Morgan shot at him in that chaos, but Cheren was quick to dodge-roll behind and leap, but Morgan whipped around and grabbed him in psychic. “YAAAH!” He was thrown forcefully against the rail.

The tentacles which Chompjaws lost suddenly grew back on his form. “RRRAAAAHH!”

“Hnnn!... That’s what I get for rushing into a fight without a plan.” Cheren grunted. Chompjaws lashed its tentacles again, but Cheren dodged and swung his blade to slice them to pieces, running away when the bombs exploded. He grabbed a bunch of bombs in his sail, swung it around, and hurled them up to Chompjaws to explode on him again, knocking him dizzy.

But Morgan zapped another symbol into the ground and summoned 3 more Friends, a giant monster with flashing colorful eyes around its round head that blasted lasers everywhere, a giant praying mantis that looked like Joker, and what appeared to be a Snow Sphinx. Cheren dodged the Membeam’s beams behind a table, and gasped when the Joking Mantis knocked it away and tried to whip him in a froglike tongue. Cheren dodged the tongue and slashed it, then flipped back when the Snow Sphinx tried to pounce him, shooting a Fire Arrow into its mouth. But it turned into a Sun Sphinx and began blasting fireballs instead, Cheren running away as they made huge explosions.

Their rampant attacks made the party-goers scream and cower behind tables, especially Carol Masterson, who looked more than worried for her future Supreme Leader. Cheren stopped running when the Membeam and Joking Mantis cornered him and prepared a double-attack, Cheren glancing behind him, noticing Sugar. He yanked his Hookshot to pull the girl toward him, and kicked her to Doflamingo just before the monsters fired energy/acid beams, just barely dodging before he was grazed. The Sun Sphinx shot a fireball before his feet that flew him onto his back, then pounced to pin him down as it hissed. It began to charge a furious beam in its lungs, Cheren struggling desperately to escape from its solid stone paw. He grew absolutely furious at his feeble
strength compared to its, and within seconds, his body turned dark as flames emerged.

His body suddenly 10 times stronger, he blew the sphinx away, erupting powerful flames that he blasted at the Membeam to blind its vision, then singed the mantis’s shrieking head. Morgan lunged back at him, swinging her saber faster than ever, but Cheren grabbed the plasma in his palm and blasted her back with a powerful fireblast. Landing on her feet, Morgan touched a hand to her forehead, “Psychic Gate, open!” and her body glowed with a powerful blue aura, her eyes glowing. She shot at Cheren as fast as he did, the strong psychic bubble made from a superior mind against a flame from the depths of Hell, made from an angry 9-year-old. Which one would prevail, only time would tell. The impeccable force and friction they created crushed the ground around them, and the viewers stepped back feeling a forceful wind. The two pushed against the other for 30 seconds before a winner was decided.

“WAAAAAH!” Cheren flew against the rail again, knocked back into his regular form. He fixed his glare and rose again, seeing Morgan power down.

Twirling her saber, she burned a symbol in the ground and dissolved the former 3 monsters into smoke, pressing her hand to the symbol. “SUMMON!” And a greater puff of smoke exploded, and out came the monster.

“RAAAAAAAAHHIIHHHH!” A red dragon so terrifyingly tremendous, Cheren doesn’t think the whole thing caught in his vision. Incredibly long and snakelike, with a shiny spiky body with black belly, angry yellow eyes, and two mouths of steel sharp teeth.

“Slifer the Sky Dragon is the greatest of all monsters.” Morgan proclaimed. “It will destroy all enemies it’s called against, and any other enemies who appear. It won’t rest until all opponents are destroyed.”

And in the glow that reflected off his glasses, Cheren saw his very death: the godlike dragon was charging an unavoidable beam in its top mouth. “This is what happens when you focus solely on your goals and strengths.” Morgan stated. “Your average adult villains were still too childish to see that. But we have superior strength and intellect, and that’s why it’s our job to protect this world. Whether the threat is family, or friends. That is why our Leaders are the one, true Go-” Before she could speak, Don Quixote Sugar stepped in her way. “What?”

“Sugar!” Doflamingo’s face scrunched with anger and fear. His daughter was clear in the wake of Slifer’s wrath. “Get BACK here immediately!!”

“What’s she doing?!” Sweetie-1 panicked.

“Mmm!” Carol was even more eager.

Slifer the Sky Dragon wasn’t going to stop. As long as his enemy was living and breathing… he would remove him from the plane of existence.

“Nnnn…” Cheren glanced up, seeing the back of Sugar’s yellow coat. She turned and approached him with her blank, toneless expression. “N…Numbuh Trebol…” (End song.)

Sugar’s eyes turned darker as she pressed her hand against Cheren’s forehead. “Sorry.”

In that brief second, everything fell silent. A red Rainbow Monkey, with brown hair and glasses, appeared before her. Along with a sword, bow, and shield that seemed to just lay there. No signs of life in this soft, stuffed toy, its only expression a happy smile. Sugar lowered her hand, and her eyes never looked darker.
“…” Morgan became totally confused. Why was she standing there? Why was most of the balcony destroyed and ruined? She looked at her Chompjaws, seeing the creature was just as confused, scratching his shiny scalp with a tentacle. Her three Pokémon, Alakazam, Xatu, and Metagross, who had as much an idea as she. Why were they summoned to begin with?

And so the attention was directed to Slifer. It was summoned to destroy all enemies in the vicinity… but no such things existed. The all-powerful energy in his mouth, which can only belong to the gods, died away.

“Mmmmm?” Doflamingo frowned. “What are we all standing around for?”

“Hmm… I don’t remember.” Morgan flew back to Chompjaws and banished him in a puff of smoke. She called her Pokémon back into their balls, and flew up to banish Slifer. The incredible snake-dragon that wrapped around the mountain turned into smoke, gone like he was never there. “Let’s take this party indoors. I’ll have the night guy clean up.” And she was first to walk in, the other guests patiently following. Mom also joined, though her head felt very uneasy. She coulda sworn she was gonna enact some diabolical plan, but what that was, she couldn’t remember. Maybe it was just an impulse…

Sugar picked up the red Rainbow Monkey and pressed it to her chest as she walked. The stuffed doll felt no heartbeat from her body. It felt nothing… like all stuffed dolls feel.

Upon settling in the larger dining hall, Carol pulled out a small laptop. Her Arctic Training was going well, and she was close to perfecting her new skill. …She was just sad she wouldn’t be able to graduate, with no Supreme Leaders to approve her.

Uno House

An odd sensation fell over Rachel Uno. She felt so lightheaded for a brief moment… it was weird. She glanced at a picture above the couch, one of her raising the Master Sword with Fanny and Patton by her side, and Fi floating overhead. “Siiiigh… those were such good times. But why doesn’t Fi accept any of my kids as her wielder? …Oh well. They’re still good the way they are.” She smiled. “But it’s still weird Lehcar didn’t give any of her kids powers. …Hmm…”

McKenzie House

“Hnn-nnnnn!… … UUH!” In another attempt to keep a boulder in the air, Anthony was crushed. Angie approached and shoved the boulder off him. “Anthony, you almost had it.”

“Uuuhh…” He got up. “What’s the point, this is too hard. Why can’t I just be a kickboxer.”

“Hmmmm.” Angie rubbed her head. “If only you had someone to look up to. Someone to inspire you to keep trying. Can you think of anyone like that?”

“What, like my two cousins? They’re nothin’ special. Aunt Rachel a little but, it’s not like I see her in action.”

“I guess her husband is no one to admire, either.” Angie smiled in disbelief. “Siiigh… there has to be someone.”

Chariton Household

Suni had been feeling very uneasy lately… but now it was though something slipped her mind. But for some reason, she recalled her notion to work on Moonbase with Darcy, but as it wasn’t
working out, they left that post. So now Sunni had no important use in the KND… and what inspiration had she to train with psychic anymore. Her mom could definitely help herself…

**KND Moonbase**

Panini manned her post with the utmost boredom. No sectors called in a while… and she had nothing to do. Just a 4DS in her pocket with no challenging Wi-Fi rivals. Oh, her life was dull…

**On route to Texas**

Team Emily didn’t have any available S.C.A.M.P.E.R.s in Sector N unfortunately, so they got across the country using a G.O.G.O.-G.O.R.I.L.L.A.. The journey was fairly boring as night was falling again, but Gary ceased controlling the robot when an odd sensation swept over them. “What are we… doing again?” asked Emily.

“Goin’ to Uncle Sheldon’s to stop these apes, Ah reckon.” Sarah replied.

“I know, but… whaddid these apes have to do with anything? I know they showed up outta nowhere, and have accomplices somewhere… but I just can’t recall what they might be doing.”

“Eh, yer head’s got too much blowin’ around ‘nside it, it’ll come back eventually. Although… I feel right wrong in it, too.” Sarah touched her hair. “Let’s just keep goin’.” And so the robot trudged forward.

**IC’s S.C.A.M.P.E.R., Galaxia**

The same odd sensation swept over the five operatives, but especially the timebenders. “George… do you feel that?” MaKayla said with weak breath.

“I know, I… Miyuki?”

Under her toneless eyes, Miyuki was very horrified. “Something…Something terrible just happened. We have to get to GKND soon.”

**DunBroch, 800 years ago**

Another casual day in Sector DB as Merida walked up to her treehouse. But almost instantly, she was surprised by MacGuffin, Macintosh, and Dingwall, the former two raising her by the arms. “Hey, THERE’S our leader!” They carried and dropped her on the couch.

“H-Hey, what’s the occasion?” she laughed.

“It’s the 6-month anniversary ya slew that monster fer us, Princess!” Macintosh cheered. “Them grown-up blokes may be ignorant, but WE know what ya did!”

“Hehehe, ya really didn’t need to. I still can’t believe I went through all that by myself. I barely even remember it all. …”

**Across the U.S.**

This crazy rumor about an Apocalypse drastically began to die down. All of the adults received the news from their kids, but even the kids had no idea where such a thing originated from. The whole thing was officially declared as just a fad, just some wild crazy thing some unknown crazy person was spreading around. In a sudden sweep, peace had returned to the U.S.. So much energy they wasted panicking over nothing. Now they could get on with their lives. There was nothing to
fear…

Uno House

Rachel Uno lay on her couch in boredom. There was nothing going on to her knowledge, so it was time to be lazy. But the area within her cleavage felt a bit itchy, so reaching in, she discovered a folded piece of paper. She unwrapped and read a strange note, saying to come to Roguetown Station at 8pm, tell no one. Signed with a heart. And something else written in pen, written Send rescue party to Roguetown Station May 3, at 3:00pm ‘case Cheren don’t call. Rachel quirked a brow. When did she get this? And from who? Glancing upward while her head lay on the armrest, she spotted the upside-down picture of her kids and… someone else. She flipped right-side-up to study this strange boy with brown hair, red glasses, and her familiar chestnut-brown eyes. She didn’t remember this boy at all…

Midway Gala

Carol got bored after looking at her computer for awhile. But feeling something heavy in her pocket, she pulled out a 4DS. She doesn’t remember asking her mom to buy this. It was paused on Mario Kart 4-D apparently, with Panini Drilovsky as a contact. Why would Carol have a 4DS and have Panini as a Friend? Er, apparently… the Mii belonged to some guy named Cheren.

KND Arctic Base

The teenager inside the farthest prison cell was panicking. He never felt this mad in his life. “H-H-How could I be so stupid?!” His eyes twitched. “Not choosing a successor?! Am I really that dumb?! This organization is doomed. Doomed and it’s all my fault!!” Desperate gasps for breath.

….Hmmm… I feel like I’m supposed to be writing someone else’s story arc… must be my imagination. And that was a Brady Bunch parody you saw back there. ;I Next time will be Sandman’s next level, and a Sunni. See’s.
Lost and Looking

Chapter Summary

The Marzipan Pirates try to escape the Sour Cinnamon.

Welcome to the second story arc of the Side Stories, which I will title the Darkness Seeker Arc. To start off, we’ll have Nerehc’s first stage and Augustus’s 3rd stage. (Takes place during Chapter 12.)

Chapter B-6: Lost and Looking

Negaverse; EiznekCm House

Nerehc and Ragus came up out of the basement of the former’s house. As they headed for the front door, they were caught by Lehcar EiznekCm, who had walked in from the kitchen. “Oh, Mother!” Medusa said with Nerehc’s voice, pushing up the sunglasses to hide her snakelike green eyes. “This is my friend, Ragus. I invited her over for-”

“I’m sorry, who are you?” Lehcar asked Nerehc, cocking a brow.

Medusa’s (Nerehc’s) heart jumped, wondering if she’d been caught. “Er… I’m-”

“Because I don’t like random kids sneaking in my house and taking my stuff. NOW, GET OUT!!”

“WHOOOA!” Medusa and Ragus were flung out of the front door, which Lehcar slammed shut. The two rubbed their heads as they stood up. “That wasn’t the response I expected.” Medusa said.

“You’re telling ME!” proclaimed Thanatos’s perky voice.

The God of Death wobbled over in the very fat body that belonged to Eigaoh Nagillig. “I can’t understand how a vegetarian stays fat as an adult, yet his Positive eats meat and is skinny as a mantis!”

“Lucky for you, that body is still prettier than your own.” Pandora cooed, leaning forward and folding her arms on Nerehc’s head. “You’re so adorable.”

“Stop it, Dora!” Medusa flailed Nerehc’s arms and pushed the woman off. Ragus giggled.
“Fine. So, why are we concerned about the Demon Saints when we’re supposed to be finding the Darknesses?”

“There’s nothing we can do about the Darknesses for the moment. Not until Ragaj Gnik and Bill Cipher get done doing what they’re supposed to. However, since we’ve come to know the Darknesses across the years, especially their powers, it’s going to be Hell when all those people are suddenly together. We can use the Demon Saints to keep them all in line. And not only that… one of the Darknesses will need the power of the Demon Saints to help him.”

“Also, we’re purposely not saying the names of the Darknesses for secrecy’s sake.” Thanatos informed. “You understand, don’t you, Ragus?”

“I certainly do!” Ragus beamed.

“Then let’s get started.” Medusa clapped hands. “I propose that we search for Lucifer first. Last I heard, he was Ganondorf’s horsy, but he’s mostly been doing work in Mexico. We’ll enter there from Ocixem, since the gods don’t look in here often. Ragus, those people will not be able to bother us while they’re in their dolls, right?”

“They most certainly shouldn’t.” Ragus smiled brightly and held the three dolls of Nerehc, Eigaoh, and Ikuk. “However, Lady Medusa, I have a small query: who is Nerehc?”

“?” Medusa cocked a brow. “Nerehc is this boy. The one I’m possessing right now.”

“I assumed as much, but for some reason, I don’t seem to know who he is!”

“…Interesting. But you remember those two adults just fine?” Medusa indicated Ikuk and Eigaoh’s bodies.

“I do.”

“Hmmm… Well, we’ll ponder over it later. Although this makes me wonder what the Coincidence Factor had in store for Cheren.”

“Sorry for disturbing you, Miss EiznekCm.” a girl’s voice said inside the house.

“You’re just lucky you’re more tolerable than other kids. NOW GET OUT.” That’s when Sipa came flying through the window.

“Ow!” Sipa hit the grass outside. She shook her head and looked up at the possessed Nerehc and his group. “…Who are you weirdoes supposed to be?”

Dream World… (Play “Piano #1” from Mogeko Castle.)

Nerehc woke up with a fuzzy feeling in his head. He saw that he was wearing a purple jumpsuit with a three-swirl symbol on the chest. “Am I in… the Dream World?”

He was gazing up at a huge, grayish castle under a pure blue night sky with stars. There were statues of what looked like stuffed animals, and it seemed that many stuffed animals were happily roaming this place. “Well, I’m somewhere. I…” He held his head, and the fuzzy feeling seemed stronger than ever. “I am… Who am I? What’s my name… I can’t… remember. …” He looked up at the castle. “Maybe… someone in there will know.”
Stage B-5: Night Castle

Mission: Find out who and where you are.

Act 1

Nerehc (for now, we’ll assume that’s his name) sprouted purple flames from his shoes and skated across the stone bridge over the moat. Stuffed toys were floating carefree in the water, so he wouldn’t disturb them. He skied around some statues of the animals and followed a right route, where a blue strip of carpet led between castle walls. The road forked ahead, so Nerehc followed a right path, which led to a dead end. There were crates and barrels stacked around, so he sliced them with the glowing white sword he apparently had. He found peppers and bags of potato chips, and figured he’d take them with him.

Nerehc skied to the left route of the fork, going up some stairs that ended at a ledge over the moat. There were several towers standing around and more stuffed toys floating in the water. Nerehc could grind on a rail on his left, to a spring that propelled him to another tower. He Wall Kicked off, flew to another tower with Rocket Boost, and repeated the Wall Jumping until he set foot on a new path. He glided up some winding stairs to reach the top of this short tower. Using his weightless rockets, Nerehc leaped across a series of small pillars across the water, getting to a castle wall and gliding up some stairs.

The path reached an end before a drop, in which the castle wall on the left had a series of branches going up. Nerehc grabbed and swung around each one to propel himself higher. He landed on a new path that led to a chain, which Nerehc grinded across to reach another path, and skied along until some stairs brought him to a ground above the wall. Plushies were sitting at tables and drinking tea, all wearing bright and happy faces.

Nerehc decided to approach a pink rabbit and blue hippo plushy. “Um… Can any of you tell me where I am?”

“You’re in Night Castle.” The rabbit replied.

“The castle made by Ragus.” The hippo followed.

“Everyone’s happy here.”

“You’ll be happy, too.”

Nerehc looked at a statue of the smiling, hooded girl with a stitch face. “Ragus…” Her appearance was foggy in his mind. “Do any of you know where I came from?”

“We’re all from the other world.” Rabbit replied.

“That bad world.” Hippo said.

“Ragus helped us escape.”

“We live in this world now.”

“You’ll like living here, too.”

“Er, I’m not sure I’ll fit in… I’m not a toy like the rest of you.”

“You’ll become one once you get adapted.” Rabbit replied, sipping tea. “I wonder what you’ll be.
A monkey, maybe?"

Nerehc looked at the statue again. “Can I meet her? Maybe she can tell me who I am.”

“You can go in the castle to find her. But by the time you do, you won’t care anymore.”

“Yeah, well…” Nerehc looked to the castle entrance far across the chasm. “That’ll depend.”

Nerehc skied past the café and jumped some platforms up around a tower, then grabbed a zipline to slide to a small pillar. From there, he used his rockets to glide to a further, shorter pillar. Then, he could only glide to a platform just over the surface of the moat. The stuffed animals looked as carefree here as any of the other ones, floating in the water. But rather than swim with them, Nerehc used his rockets to glide just over the surface. He found a set of branches leading up to a foothold on the wall below the castle entrance.

Nerehc swung up these branches, but to get higher up, he had to climb a long, dangling blue drape on the left of the foothold. He reached a new ledge, which led around the wall to a path consisting of in-and-out platforms. Nerehc jumped the platforms with timing, and once at the following foothold, he viewed a stairway of gargoyle statues in which spikes sprouted on their heads every few seconds. Nerehc nimbly jumped the statues when the spikes were down, arriving at the ground before the castle entrance.

The gate was completely black inside, like when you enter a loading zone in a videogame. However, when Nerehc skied through the black entrance, he was still outside, now overlooking a long stairwell down that he didn’t see before. He glided down, and then up an even higher stairwell, before viewing the majesty of the Night Castle’s distant entrance. With nothing obstructing his path, Nerehc skated over. A yellow crescent moon hung in the stars above the castle. This world was really pretty, Nerehc thought. If all those toys had a point, he could get used to living here. Maybe he would decide if he got to view the inside of the castle. After arriving at a short flight of stairs, Nerehc skied up to and entered the castle gates. (Play “Mirror Room” from Sonic Adventure.)

Act 2

The interior walls were brick and gray like outside, with a red carpet leading down this candlelit passage. Nerehc entered a foyer room with candlelit chandeliers, skating up some stairs before turning left into a hallway. The hall seemed empty at first- “YAH HA HAAAA!” a jack-in-the-box popped out of the floor. Nerehc sliced it in half with his sword before skiing further- “YAH HA HAAA!” Two more jacks came from the wall. He beheaded them and continued. “YAH HAH-!” The next jack-in-the-box hopped over to Nerehc, so he slashed it perfectly down the middle.

The hall ended over a passage with a checkered floor, with platforms that had skinny baggy stems and waddled around on little crow feet. When Nerehc jumped down on one of these platforms (which was called a Buyoon), it shook around before flinging him back up on the starting ledge. Nerehc had to jump over these Buyoons quickly. When one was too far away, he simply tried to skate across the floor, but the Buyoon’s top was too high to jump, so it kicked him to the start. Nerehc simply Wall Jumped across that floor to reach its top.

The passage led up some tall stairs, each of which had Buyoons. Nerehc had to Wall Jump to get high enough to land on them. At the end, Nerehc could safely land on the checkered floor of a bigger room. He tried to skate to some stairs, but some of the floor panels rose up to block his path. Nerehc had to solve a maze of rising floor panels. One route led him to a box containing some bacon, but eventually, he made it to the staircase and skied up. He glided down a hall that seemed to twist rightward, so in the following room, Nerehc was standing on the wall with the checkered
Nerehc couldn’t stand on the floor, only the wall he had shifted gravity on. He jumped up some cube-shaped platforms along the wall opposite the floor (the ceiling), then he glided to some further platforms to get into an opening on the other wall. There were big stuffed bats with crazy, wide-mouth faces flapping around this twisty hallway, which looped up and rightward before bringing Nerehc to the room’s ceiling. There were black holes around the ceiling in which huge, peach-colored hands reached out in attempt to grab Nerehc. He avoided these Ragus’s Hands and skated up some short stairs, into the next twisty passage. Ragus Hands reached out from every direction, but Nerehc avoided as he made it to the right-side-up checkered floor.

Nerehc saw only blackness at the end of the next passage, but by the time he was there, Ragus’s huge and frightening image appeared. In fact, there were many Ragus’; Nerehc was in a hall of huge mirrors that bore hers and his own reflection; except Ragus was nowhere in sight. When Nerehc shifted left, then right, her illusions disappeared, so only Nerehc’s reflection moved with him. The mirrors depicted holes in the floor that were otherwise unseen, so Nerehc avoided them, and also crossed the holes with invisible floors. Nerehc had to Wall Jump the mirrors over a long hidden chasm—seeing one of the mirrors was actually a spike wall in its reflection, Nerehc took care to avoid that.

The mirror hall brought him to a longer, straight passage where the mirrors depicted invisible platforms. Nerehc jumped up these platforms, having to wait for a moving one that shifted up, and from the higher platform, glided to further ones. He then had to Wall Jump some vertical invisible platforms before he made it to another corridor.

This passage appeared to grow bigger, and bigger, and bigger as Nerehc skied down, until it was so wide that he couldn’t see the walls or ceiling. Even the floor was starting to become invisible in the growing darkness. Nerehc just kept skating and skating… until he apparently reached the end of an even tinier hall. The door was smaller than his fingertip, so he couldn’t possibly enter. He bent down and cracked it open with his finger… then magically, he phased through the wall into a normal-size passage. Nerehc continued until he encountered another mirror. (End song.)

The boy inside the mirror was floating in midair, limbs drooping, asleep. The boy looked just like him… except he was wearing golden clothes, with a symbol of a “C” and a small ‘x’ between its endpoints. Nerehc slowly reached to touch his sleeping “reflection”… but the mirror disappeared the moment his fingers made contact.

Nerehc entered a living room that was behind the mirror. There was tea at a table between two couches, a painting of Ragus, and some drawers. “Mmmm, hello, Good Chum.” said a stuffed penguin wearing a top-hat and monocle, sitting on a couch.

Nerehc raised a brow. “You look like a character from a really cool Posiverse show.”

“That’s funny.” The penguin said with a British accent. “I’m actually a character from a crappy Negaverse show. Please, do have a seat.”

Nerehc shrugged and sat in the couch opposite. “So, do you know anything about this Ragus chick?”

“Oh, I met her after our studio got burned down by an angry mob because our show was so crappy. She told me she could bring me to a happier world, and lo, here I am. Few months o’ bein’ here, I turn into this old thing. Shore is better than being in that smelly world.” He was emphasizing his long “O” words. “More peaceful here, you know?”
“But how does she do it? Magic?”

“Oh, I here she’s some sort of… spiritbender, what give you. She can bend peoples’ souls outta their body and put them in her little stuffed hoodilywinks.”

“Do you mean her toys?”

“Don’t criticize my way of tolking. Then, I surmise she puts our souls into slumber like her toys, ergo we are in a dreamland. So, how did you end up being here?”

“Actually…” Nerehc touched his head, “I don’t even remember. Not a thing. Zero, zilch.”

“Well, you must have been pretty miserable, given you agreed to Ragus’s proposition. Might as well enjoy life here.”

“I don’t really feel I should without knowing who I am. Can you take me to where Ragus is?”

“Oh, if she’s awake right now, then I conjecture she is asleep here. I can take you to her bedchamber ’fore she awakens.”

“Sure. I’ll like that.”

“Let’s enjoy our tea first. You musta come a long way.”

“Not as long as your O’s, dude.” Nerehc remarked before drinking tea.

**Naihcalappa Mountains**

The members of the Order of Black Lotus held their hearts in sorrow: one of their most beloved members, Little Aunt, met her end at the talons of a robotic owl. Now, the coffin was descending into her grave, dug next to Oitnemid’s. “And so, we bid farewell to Little Aunt, who would always show concern for others’ well-being above her own.” The Man With the Blue Eye spoke. “At least now, she will be able to look over us from the serenity of Spirit World. Farewell… Auntie.”

After the funeral, Ydnew Llevram returned to her house, her blue eyes baring their usual scowl. “Can’t imagine what a bitch her Positive musta been.”

“Hey, Yddy. Hey, Yddy. Hey, Yddy.”

“What?” Ydnew asked through gritted teeth.

There was a red praying mantis on the back of her hair, but with the head of a bear. “I’m a Man-Bear.” Yeoj transformed into a scarf around her neck. “Hey, Yddy. Hey, Yddy. Hey, Yddy.”

“What?”

The end of that scarf was a big tongue drooping saliva on her dress. “I’m a scongue.” He transformed again. “Hey, Yddy. Hey, Yddy. Hey, Yddy.”

“What?!?”

He was over her head as a part-hat, part-lizard, and part stapler. “I don’t know, anymore! HAHAAHAHAHAHA!”

Ydnew grabbed, threw him on the ground, and stomped Yeoj forcefully. “Do you ever get tired of being a fuckin’ IDIOT?!”
He turned into red goop on her foot. “How do I get tired? I have no respiratory tracks.”

“YDNEEEEWWW!” Nil and Niyus Gnofieb dashed in, tripping on each other. “Yddy, why aren’t you come to the afterpartyyyyy!” Nil whined.

“It’s not a party, dummy!” Us yelled. “It’s a… after-funeral!”

“Dad said I could come back. He knew I was bored.” Ydnew replied. “Besides, why are you here?”

“We were bore, tooooooo.” Nil moaned. “Besides, the grown-ups are talking.”

“They said the Apocalypse is gonna happen.” Us frowned. “Is this true?”

Ydnew looked down solemn for a moment, then looked at a window to the cloudy sky. “That’s what they keep saying. But I… still don’t understand. How would it happen? And… how would we stop it.” She touched her forehead. “My head feels fuzzy for some reason…”

“Awe, I know what’ll unfuzz it.” Yeoj said, turning into a bird with a duck’s bill before flying on Ydnew’s head. “What do you get when you combine the names ‘Yeoj’ and ‘Ydnew’?”

Ydnew made an aggravating sigh. “What?”

“YDEOJ! HAAAAAAA HA HA HA haaaaaaa! Hahahahahaaaaaa!”

Ydnew warped him with spacebending, shrinking him to dot size. …He morphed bigger into a frog on her shoulder. “That doesn’t work on me. Oink.”

“Ugh. If I wasn’t worried about my Positive, I would kill myself already.”

Outside, Blue Eye was overseeing the after-funeral from a mountaintop. “The fault is mine.” Red Eye’s deep voice said, materializing from the wind. “I guided the Sector V children to Candied Island, ensuring Big Mom’s doom. I did not want your friend to die, but she could not live…”

“I was expecting something to happen when you told me of the crisis regarding Big Mom.” Blue Eye replied in his higher voice. “I was afraid to tell her… but at least now, I can focus my worry on the Apocalypse. What is it… that you plan to do, exactly?”

“Eventually, the Twenty Keys will come together and open the gate to the New World. Then, we can make a world that is to everyone’s liking. But I fear the forces that may intervene. It is my goal to make things as easy for the chosen ones as possible…”

“And that’s destroying your world’s leaders, isn’t it?”

“Yes. The World Government will be a great liability to the quest. So I must destroy all people who are affiliated with them. I personally do not want to harm the Head President, since she is a close relative of the Unos, but only time will decide her fate. At least, during the span of this month, my acquaintance will be pushing the training of my daughter.” Red Eye smirked to himself. “I want to meet her at least 15 days before the Apocalypse, halfway through this month.”

“Considering the reckless way you chose to ‘raise’ her, I’ll be surprised if your daughter turns out like you wanted.”

“Oh, I’m sure she will. In any case… I believe I will go to Oceana in my world. According to rumors, the Fairy Princess that lives there hails from the legendary Moon Planet. I really want to
head there…”

“Why?”

“All in good time, my friend.” Red Eye turned around, about to leave. “…Hm hm hm.” He chuckled. “You know, if you still want to determine who raises their daughter better… I guess the Opposite Law will see to that.” He turned his exposed left eye to Blue Eye. “Because by the end of this month, I expect my daughter to be as powerful as the other kids.”

Posiverse; Sour Cinnamon (Play “Fellmuth Arena” from Spyro: Eternal Night.)

The sun singed Augustus’s body as he found himself in some sort of desert upon waking. After standing up, he flinched at the sight of the gigantic window, where Veruca Salt and her creepy grin; Violet Beauregard, and a lanky man with round sunglasses were staring at him. “You two? And… some other guy? Where am I?”

“You’re in my TV.” The paper-thin man responded. “I put you in there with my TV-TV Fruit powers. That’s what I am: Mike Teavee.”

While he couldn’t tell from outside, Augustus was stuck inside a small, old-timey TV, which used antennas and had a staticky screen. “Yes yes, it’s funny how all of you are named after your respective thing.” Augustus rolled his eyes. “Though I want to ask where Augustus Gloop is.”

“He wanted to get chocolate powers from the Chocolate Volcano.” Violet replied. “Didn’t work out.”

“Ahh.” Augustus flexed his brows, figuring out the rest. “Well anyway, where’s Lord Tyrone?”

“Lord Licorice has already been to see you.” Veruca stated. “He wanted to make sure we caught you. We did. Now he’s going to meet his acquaintance. He wants us to bring you there, too.”

“You guys can’t say one thing that isn’t secretive, huh? I guess Willy Wonka did teach a few things. Unless you’ll tell me where we’re going?”

“You’ll find out.” Veruca grinned. “For now, just be a good boy and stay in there. Come, Violet. Let’s go eat cookies.”

“Of course, Friend.” Violet flipped out of the room while Veruca walked normally. Mike Teavee laid flat on the floor like a carpet.

Stewie Griffin piloted the Ace Flyer as they soared after the fleet of Cinnamon Ships under a sunset sky. “The tracking device I had placed on Augustus isn’t responding.” Stewie said. “It shut off in that left tower, so perhaps we’ll look there.”

“Ahh dunno, man, what if Lord Licorice is on that thang?” Rallo asked worriedly. “Can’t we just wait and see where it’s going?”

“Don’t be such a Scooby, Rallo. I mean, their propellers are cinnamon rolls, I think we have the upper hand here.”

“You forget that we once worked for a company that also had candy-based technology.” Rallo said with disbelief.

“And we were utterly defeated. So let’s do this.”
Stage B-6: Sour Cinnamon

Mission: Escape the Sour Cinnamon!

Act 1

As the small plane flew closer to the Sour Cinnamon, PIE Fighters were sent to launch giant versions of said pastries at them. Stewie barrel-rolled and dodged the pies before blasting pool balls at one ship, while Maggie shot the other with a missile launcher. They kept this up with other PIE Fighters until a Cinnaucer approached them, which looked like a smaller UFO aptly shaped like a cinnamon roll. It flew vertically and blocked their path, facing its hypnotic swirly top as it released a constant stream of cinnamon. The Baby Trio avoided the substance for the sake of not getting their engines clogged, and Maggie kept pelting it with missiles until it was down.

The Ace Flyer caught up with the Sour Cinnamon and was flying over the roof of the swirly-propeller ship. Turrets emerged from the roof and blasted colorful rock candies, possibly meant to mimic lasers. Stewie and Maggie kept shooting them, nearing closer to the left watchtower Stewie mentioned. “So how do ya wanna get in?” Rallo asked. “Park by and knock on their window?”

Two Cinnaucers ambushed them on either side and swallowed their ship in cinnamon. Stewie struggled to see forward, his eyes squinted from the sticky powder, but the plane was now trembling from clogged engines. “No, it seems we’re doing like my father: drunken crash through the front door at 1am.”

Within seconds, the two-seated plane CRASHED through the tower’s window, and the babies flew out. “What the hell?!” Mike Teavee jumped to the air and on his feet, his body wobbling like paper.

“Twerps! You made it?!”

“Augustus?!” Rallo looked around for the source of the voice. “Where you at?? Are you a ghost? OH GOD, PLEASE DON’T HAUNT ME like President Lincoln now haunts Joseph!”

“I’m inside the TV, you idiots! He put me in here with a Devil Fruit power. Just destroy this TV or somethin’!”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.” Stewie said. “If it doesn’t work, you might end up lost among the airwaves until you end up on TeenNick. Maggie, Rallo, attack him!” He pointed at Mike.

“Good idea!” Rallo perked up. “If we knock him out, his power will wear off!” He blasted music notes at the paper-thin man while Maggie shot missiles. Mike Teavee withstood the notes, then he nimbly dodged the missiles.

“Iron Body and Paper Art.” Mike said, his top part bending like a cane. “Can’t hit me, can’t touch me. What, you thought a guy who’s skinnier than paper wouldn’t learn some kind of self-defense? Even an idiot coulda guessed that.”

“Could that idiot also have guessed Rallo and Maggie would distract you while I saved our idiot captain?” Mike turned his paper head left, gasping when he saw Stewie on the table beside the small TV.

“Who you calling an idiot, Stew?!” Augustus yelled.
“Don’t even THINK it!” Mike’s goggles turned into TV static as he shot a static beam at Stewie. The baby whipped out a satellite gun and blasted a blue ray, which turned the static blue as it struck the TV. Augustus popped out of the gray screen like 3-D before plopping on the floor.

“A Metahuman Neutralizer.” Stewie smirked and held his weapon proudly. “Even an imbecile could have guessed I would have one.”

“Nice going, Brat.” Augustus grabbed Stewie under his left arm, then dodged over to grab Maggie and Rallo. “Later, TV!” Augustus ran for the broken window to jump out.

They landed on a walkway as Augustus nearly fell over the edge with the momentum, but he regained balance and set the babies down. “Man, why ain’t we beat that guy and get on the plane??” Rallo complained.

“I saw it clogged with cinnamon, and I wasn’t gonna waste time with that loser.” Augustus said. “We’ll just steal one of their ships.”

There was an open hatch on the tower’s side, puffing a Growth Gum. Augustus took a piece and used it to bounce down the mini cinnamon roll propellers, the Baby Trio following. They landed on a walkway, but before letting the gum pop, Augustus bounced to a cinnamon roll platform above its left, retrieving a Gold Wonka Bar. The Marzipans traveled along the path and encountered three Blackberry Guards. They shot guns with jawbreaker bullets, but Augustus countered by chucking his Gobstopper to hit their guns away.

“Maggie, you know where to shoot!” Augustus grabbed the spike-haired baby and threw her over his shoulders, running from the Blackberries when they drew swords. Maggie used her sniper to shoot the Blackberries in their unarmored faces. The pirates searched the Blackberries’ fallen forms (“She clearly killed them, yet we can’t say it.” Stewie said) and found Licoropes. “Cool! We can use these!”

Augustus was first to throw his Licorope onto a candycane propeller that was over the railing. He whirled around and around before letting himself fly to another propeller and roping it. “Yyyyeah…” Rather than mimic his actions, Stewie decided to launch his grappling gun to the railing of the walkway they would eventually get to, pulling Rallo and Maggie with him. Indeed, Augustus arrived at this walkway after clearing the propellers, and was very dizzy afterward. “Uuuuhh… how you twerps get here ’fore iiiii…” Augustus moaned.

“Shall I fetch The Little Brain Cell That Could?” Stewie remarked. After August recovered, the four entered the doorway of a building this walkway was set around. They were on a circular walkway over a lower floor, and Blackberries were quick to charge around from the opposite side. Augustus left the babies to deal with them while he dropped to the floor below, which had three large boxes. Broccoli Trolls popped out of these boxes, and their horrid stench reached Augustus’s nose. He could understand why the Blackberries don’t come down here: these guys were poison to any candy lover.

Augustus held his nose shut and sliced the broccoli with his Candycane Cutlass, but this merely increased the strength of the stench. Augustus had to squint his eyes because the green gas was making them water. He looked up the stairs that led back to the walkway and noticed the switch on the wall, labeled FANS. “Guys, hit that button!”

After Rallo finished beating a Blackberry, he jumped off its fallen body and reached the switch to flip it. Ceiling fans activated and sucked the poison gas out of the room. “Way to go.” Augustus smiled with praise. “Come on, kids, let’s blow this place.” The three babies joined him as they
followed a passage that sloped down. They stood on a grated floor above a chasm, using their Licoropes to swing a candycane ceiling fan. Their weight pulled it down, so they swung to the following floor quickly. Augustus noticed another floor below this one, so he held onto the fan to descend and land on it.

He found a Fudgepuffsicle down here, eating it to inflate and float up like a balloon. He shifted his body to avoid hitting the spikes under the higher floor, and Maggie jumped on his bloated body to ride. Turrets on the next floor blasted candy corn, so Maggie shot those turrets to protect her captain. Over this next floor, Augustus could float up a ceiling shaft, where Maggie grabbed a floating Gold Wonka Bar. Augustus deflated and landed on the floor, and Stewie and Rallo came over with the grappling gun.

Since nothing would help them cross the pit to the next floor, Augustus grabbed the three babies in his arms to make a great leap over. He set them down as they climbed a ladder down a shaft. They ended up at the bottom of the Sour Cinnamon, standing on a walkway hanging precariously over the great drop. It appeared that they were flying over a jungle. “Augh. The sun’s almost setting.” Augustus noticed. “We better steal a ship and get outta here before it’s your bedtime.”

“Yo, quit treating us like children!” Rallo yelled. “We’re over 20 years old, you know!”

“Well, I’m 15 and I’m hunting candies.” Augustus bit his current lollipop and lowered his sunglasses to show his cool stare. “Your argument means nothing.”

The Marzipans followed the walkway down before it came to a stop. There was a turning device with cinnamon rolls attached to the end of its two poles. The rolls passed by their platform, so they used the Corn-Clamber Boots to step on them and ride along. The Deadly Babies were terrified at hanging directly over the thousand-foot drop, relying only on the sturdiness of their candy boots and some overgrown cinnamon roll. They were about to pass a part of the underside that looked like chocolate chip cookie, and Augustus was able to stamp his boots into it.

The babies joined him, but being completely upside-down over the drop wasn’t a good feeling. Turrets popped out and tried to shoot them, but Maggie reacted quickly by shooting back. They kept firm on the cookie path until they were above a new walkway. They jumped off the cookie and switched to their regular shoes. Blackberries tried to shoot them from other paths, but Augustus threw his Gobstopper to bonk their heads forcefully and make them fall into the jungle. “Man, this thing is awesome!” he said happily once the Gobstopper returned.

They came to a series of sealed steam pipes on the ship’s underside. They used their Licoropes to swing across, popping the pipes open as a result (sugar came out instead of steam). They set foot on a new walkway and hurried to the ladder at the end.

Unfortunately, Veruca Salt climbed down that ladder, approaching with a malicious grin and rotting body. The pirates readied their selves, but they saw Violet Beauregard crawl along the underside and land behind them. “I knew Mike couldn’t guard you.” Veruca said. “That’s why I wanted to. Why couldn’t I?”

Augustus chucked Gobstoppers at her, Maggie shot Violet with bullets, but both of them used Iron Body to defend. “So all you guys use Rokushiki like Black John Licorice?” Augustus asked.

“Well, yeah.” Violet was chewing some gum. “If he knew it, why wouldn’t Lord Licorice know? FYI though, the martial art was invented by the government assassins, CP10.”

“So there’s nowhere to run.” Veruca stepped forward slowly. “Lord Licorice wants you to fight in the arena. I want to help him. I want to catch you.”
Augustus clutched his cutlass in both hands. “Huuzzzzzz!” He gripped it tight, trying to focus his very willpower into it.

“Not the best time to be constipated.” Stewie remarked.

“I’m trying to focus my Haki! Just… a little…!”

“You can’t use Haki?” Violet asked, popping her gum.

“Nnnnn… aaaaaahhh!” Augustus slashed his sword and cut one of the beams holding up this path. “Huh… It’s Licorope. Kids, better hang on!”

“W-Wait! What’re you doin’?” Rallo asked. (“Mw-mw?” Maggie followed.)

“Sorry to drop on your summer, but fall is coming early!” Augustus slashed the other three Licoropes, and this section of the walkway plummeted to the forest as the pirates hung on. (Play “Piranha Creeper Creek” from Mario 3-D World!)

Act 2: Cinnamon Jungle

“WAAAAH!” The walkway bounced down some big gelatin leaves before crashing on the jungle floor. “You tryin’ to kill us, Cap’n?!” Rallo yelled.

“You’re still young, but I thought you would know the difference between staying there and where we are now.”

“True, but this defeats our plan of stealing a transport.” Stewie noted.

“There’s bound to be civilization somewhere. Let’s just get away before they come down.”

The sun had gone below the horizon, so the sky was turning indigo. They followed a path through the woods, turning left and stopping to view a route where giant apple-headed Piranha Plants stretched out of holes in their walls to munch on trees oozing with cinnamon. “This reminds me of a cereal no one eats.” Rallo said.

“You mean Apple Jacks?” Augustus asked. “This is where everybody harvests cinnamon for their food. The Apple Piranhas here love them. That’s where they got the idea for those commercials.”

Augustus threw Gobstoppers at the piranhas’ heads, making them retreat into their holes so the pirates could get through. Once past the road, they arrived at a small lake of cinnamon, where a large cinnamon roll platform was floating. They jumped on it, and another platform floated up. The sequence repeated, but Apple Piranhas were coming up, munching their mouths as they moved in zigzaggy fashions to eventually eat the rolls. Augustus and Maggie attacked them before they could come. Piranhas ambushed from behind, so Maggie handled those ones while Augustus faced front. Eventually, the cinnamon rolls led them to a shore on the other side.

They used their Corn-Clamber Boots to go up a short wall made of rock and cinnamon. At the top, they overlooked a very steep hill, but thought it best not to take off their boots given the unsteady ground. Apple Piranhas peeped out of holes and spat cinnaballs at them. They managed to avoid them despite the slower speed of their boots, and Augustus hit them with Gobstoppers. At the bottom of this slope, the path shifted left, but the cinnamon ground was still slanted and threatened to drop them in ooze below.

The slanted path became more wide, but Apple Piranha heads were rolling out of holes on their left, threatening to shove them off. There was a Gold Wonka Bar perched in front of one of the
holes, and being the gutsy fool he was, Augustus stomped up to grab it. Eventually, the path brought them to stable, grassy ground, so they could take off their clamber boots. They entered another route through the jungle, where Augustus used his cutlass to slice the M. Bushes he expected to ambush them. Spear Guys swung overhead on vines and dropped their favored weapons, moving too fast for August or Maggie to hit.

They hurried through this path and reached another cinnamon cliff. Augustus tried to march up first, but he ended up falling when he stomped a spot that was less stable. Rallo used his boombox powers to shake that cliff, making the outer crust come off. This way, they could easily step up. They viewed a steep, grass hill, but they could see Spear Guys swinging from afar, throwing their spears with whipping speed. Maggie locked on with her sniper rifle and shot every Spear Guy in her vision.

Augustus lifted Maggie over his shoulders so she could keep shooting them while he marched up the slope with his clamber boots. They made it to the top of the hill, then took a right path to find a river of oozing cinnamon, which had a solid path that threatened to crumble under their weight. There was a bushel of Ringtrots, so they each took one and began sucking on it. The super sour taste gave them the energy to run across the would-be crumbling path with great speed. The cinnamon creek became wider, and they had to make run-and-jumps over gaps in the path. Rallo ended up taking a left route where the footholds were smaller, but he survived and successfully grabbed a Wonka Bar.

Rallo rejoined his friends before they dashed up a path up the wall, shifting rightward and dodging the many Apple Piranhas that came out to munch them. The path was coming to the wall’s edge, but instead of fly off, they shifted angles as the wall turned. The path led them parallel with another wall, where they had to jump back-and-forth when Piranha Plants tried to block their way. This segment concluded when a string of piranhas rose out of the opposite wall, failing to bite the pirates before they landed on the safe ground. The Marzipans gasped for breath before marching further into the jungle. (End song.)

They stepped up a hill and looked at the Sour Cinnamon in the distance. “’Guess they lost us.” Augustus panted, still tired. “Let’s hope they stay lost.”

Stewie’s eyelids were drooping, and the baby was trying to keep himself standing. …Inevitably, the football-head ended up tumbling down the hill. “Stewie!” Augustus and co. ran down to help him.

“Uuu… I’m okay.” Stewie said groggily.

“I knew you kids would get tired. Let’s rest here. They shouldn’t be able to find us in the dark.”

The four pirates settled under a grouping of trees. Augustus pulled the wrapping off one of their Gold Wonka Bars, giving a small piece to each of them. “I know it isn’t good bedtime food, but it’s all we got without our airplane. I’ll let you kids have extra servings ’soon as we’re out of here.” The captain proceeded to eat the rest of the Wonka Bar.

“I ain’t sure I’ll be able to sleep, on account o’ the monsters.” Rallo shuddered.

“Mw-mw-mw.” Maggie said with worry.

“Fine. You two can be night watch.” August smirked.

“Sure…” Rallo’s eyes grew heavy. “We’ll just… eat some cinnamon and…” He and Maggie both fell into slumber.
“Ahh, the minds of the less intelligent.” Stewie said. “I suppose you’ll be falling asleep before long.”

“I have more sugar in my veins than you.” Augustus bit his candybar. “I still don’t get something, though. Why’d you twerps save me, anyway? I don’t think I’d be able to blackmail you if Lord Licorice had me.”

“You probably would’ve escaped, anyway.” Stewie sighed. “Besides, our lives are too dull without the Big Mom Pirates. When your family’s frozen in age, nothing ever changes. It’s always the same routine, week after week. We joined those pirates to begin with to get away from those routines. But now that they’re gone, you’re all we have left. And, I guess part of me kind of liked what we did.”

“Hmm. I think that’s part of the reason I didn’t wanna stay home with my parents.” Augustus smiled. “Aside from the adventure and new experiences, I feel more at home out here. Chatting with the Gumdrop Pirates and… well, people who can understand me.”

“Perhaps, but, Augustus… do you ever wonder if it’s wrong to seek life away from your family?” Stewie looked away reflectively. “If you think you’re bound for so much more because you’re ashamed of where you come from?”

“I’m not ashamed.” Augustus started a new lollipop. “The blood of candy hunters courses through my veins. Seeking adventure, thrills, whether you have a reason or not… I know for sure that this is what I was meant to do.”

“That’s something to admire about you.” Stewie smiled. “But you know, you never did tell us why you wanted to search for the Lost Candies. Judging by your response to that Ricardo fellow, it sounds like a deep reason.”

“Actually, I—…” Augustus blushed, thinking how cheesy this sounded. “A few months back, I… promised this sick boy I would find the candies. He wanted to… taste the cake that they created before he dies. I felt bad because… I was more interested in finding Candied Planet.”

“Oh…” Stewie remembered hearing the truth behind that plan. “…I suppose if this adventuring thing doesn’t work out, you wouldn’t fail as a babysitter.”

“Hwhat are you talking about?” Augustus chuckled.

“Oh, I don’t know. It’s just a thought. …Achoo!” Stewie sneezed. “I don’t mean to suggest anything, but babies aren’t used to sleeping outside without… blankets.”

“Sad that you don’t have Mommy or Daddy to sleep with?”

“Oh, shut your lollipop hole.”

“Alright, fine. But just for tonight.” Augustus lied down and held his arm open, allowing Stewie to crawl up and rest his misshapen head on it.

Augustus felt something on his right and saw that Maggie was hugging him, laying her weary head on his chest. Rallo also cuddled up beside Maggie, warming her with his afro. Augustus didn’t know why, but… he felt warm. These children, even though they were frozen in age, were adorable. Sometimes, Augustus wondered what it would be like to have siblings. Little brothers or sisters who look up to him. Of course, he had Haylee for that. And they would all be his pirate crew. “Hmm… But as far as siblings go, these three are downright weird.”
The next morning…

The Marzipan Pirates were still asleep, cuddled close together. Engines roared in the sky, and the kids were waken up when small bits of cinnamon sprinkled on them. Feeling the sticky stuff on their face, they shook awake and got to their feet. The *Sour Cinnamon* was passing overhead. “Uh-oh. Looks like they found us.” Augustus said.

They stood and watched as the *Cinnamon* continued flying. “That’s odd, they aren’t dropping any soldiers.” Stewie noticed.

The vessel appeared to be heading to a giant mountain that was round like a stadium. “Didn’t Veruca say that… they were taking us to an arena?”

Roars and chants echoed through the jungle. As the Marzipans approached the stadium cautiously, they grew louder.

*The Night Castle was based off Mogeko Castle from the game of the same name.*
Chapter Summary

Crystal Wickens infiltrates Warbucks Mansion. Sunni explores Wonderland once more.

Sigh… my mind is still foggy from the last chapter. So many things goin’ on, I just can’t think straight. Ho well… this chapter is really nothing special, I was going to put a lot more here, but then I felt like that stuff’s best saved for other chapters, I just wanna get back to posting. Anyhoo, let’s begin.

Chapter 12: Where Madness Grows

New York City

Sandman, Yuki, and Wiccan landed atop a skyscraper after dropping out of the Sandmobile. “Alright, the Warbucks Mansion is just on the outskirts of the city, east side.” Sandman explained, viewing his map. “We just need to sneak in and talk to the Yipper.”

“Ahhh, adults breaking into a young girl’s home.” Crystal sighed. “Many misunderstandings.”

“Let’s just get it over with. My head’s starting to feel real fuzzy all of a sudden…”

Stage 21: Warbucks Mansion

Mission: Speak with the Yipperman Plus about Freddy’s Pizzeria.

Act 1

Of course, before they actually went to the mansion, the three heroes began their flight across the city, wind chilling their flesh as a feeling of freedom filled their hearts, a kind of freedom one can only find in open-world videogames. “Quick question I wanna ask, didn’t you say the mansion’s got heavy security?” Yuki asked.

“I know, that’s why we didn’t go the other night. I called in a favor to get codes and blueprints for the place.”

“To who?” Crystal asked.

“An acquaintance. Hopefully she didn’t make too big a mess getting them. Still have her communicator linked, she’s just this way…”

The honking of horns rang below as they glided over street after street, the city alit by building, car, and streetlights to keep everyone awake. The heroes made their way to a dark, more empty backstreet area where Sandman led the team down a darker alleyway with fallen trashcans and puddles of slop. Nolan stopped just before the path turned black. “Who walks in the shrouded path?” a woman’s French accent spoke.
“One who seeks the unshrouded.” Nolan replied.

“We meet again, Sandman.” The slender woman in the black coat, long hair, and ruby-red lips blowing a cigarette, stepped out.

“Madame Rouge. No trouble getting the codes?”

The woman slipped a small disk from under her sleeve. “Not as much as I vished.” She tossed it to Sandman. “Revan vould be proud, his apprentice robbing a rich type.”

“He sure would. How’s the husband?”

“Good. Ve have recently taken a girl called Wendy under our ving. You-Know-Who’s orders. And they’ve just been all over the place vith each other, eet’s very annoying. I don’t suppose you’ve heard of a vinged cat?”

“I don’t doubt such a thing exists.” Nolan said with a hint of ‘that was so random.’

“Didn’t think so. Vell, enjoy your break-in.” She walked past him out of the alley. “I vill be hitting the town.” She morphed into a raven and took flight.

Nolan slipped the disk into his terminal and had the blueprints studied. “Perfect: guard schedules, searchlights and everything, these rich guys have class. Interestingly, they have aerial sensor alarms to keep an eye out for non-bird flying objects. No gliding or hovering, then. We’re not trying to make ourselves as enemies, so don’t get caught or attack anyone. If everyone starts panicking, they’ll seal the place and we’ll never talk to that Yipper. Time to move.”

They flew back to the buildings and soared to the east, where Warbucks Mansion was marked on Nolan’s map. They could’ve taken the time to explore the city and look for Riddler Trophies or sidequests, but figured the readers would forgive them for making this journey a little bit shorter. There came to be less buildings and more trees as they journeyed down a road through a small forest. They made it to some tall barred gates, viewing the huge front yard of a heavily-guarded mansion, where searchlights and guards roamed the many square crossroads. “I guess we’ll be jumping the fence, then.” Wiccan said.

“Actually, Iiii was thinking you could do this yourself.” Sandman replied.

“Come again?”

“Well, we’re not trying to cause a panic, and it’d be harder for three costumed adults to run around unseen. Since I’m in a heavy-ass wheelchair, and you’re um, more coordinated than Yuki, you could sneak in the mansion, disable the alarms, and we could sneak in through a safe window. I’ll beam you any codes you’ll need, but we’ll rush in if you get in trouble. If this goes wrong, we’ll need another plan.”

“If I’m so required, I won’t fail. …No hovering, huh?” So with that, Crystal climbed a tree, got over the fence, and landed behind some trashcans. “It’s like Coach Wittenberg always said, ‘You may not like gym now, but when it’s time to break into a young girl’s home, you’ll wish you took more classes.’ And I said, ‘Well I’m not the one teaching class through a TV in jail, am I?”’

Since the yard was so open and exposed, Crystal crawled between two rows of bushes, where a watchtower was stationed a few feet away with two searchlights lazily rotating around. Two guards were also patrolling, one in Crystal’s aisle, and another on the left aisle beside the fence. She thought it best to crawl through this one since the lights were going counterclockwise, waiting for the guard to walk forward before she crawled. She then quietly stepped over the left bushes, got
down, and crawled away before either could notice. “Hey, Johnny. How d’you feel about nightshifts?”

“It’s the hard-knock life. For me.”

“It’s a hard-knock life. For me.”

Though mildly humored at their chat, Crystal continued. She arrived at a small area of yard littered with twigs, where a dog was fast asleep in her house up ahead, labeled Sandy (not to be confused with many others). Using the balance and coordination Nolan praised her for, she began hopping to the little patches of open ground, one foot standing while the other stretched away, having to leap precisely in following patches of land lest she lose balance and scared the dog awake. The next jump was to a tree, but since her staff’s rocket function was too much of an alarm, she leaped and grabbed it in a hug that looked rather awkward from another’s perspective.

She climbed to and then crawled across a branch, going above a tall wooden fence with very spiked tops. A few plank tops were flat, so those became Crystal’s stepping points when balancing across. If she fell off either end, she would hit the lines of trashcans, certainly setting people off. A searchlight glided over an area of the fence partway through, forcing Crystal to remain steady while it went by, then continued past it. She made it to a corner of the mansion, grabbing hold of a vine ladder that grew on the wall and climbing to the roof. She crouched and crawled to stay just under the searchlights’ starting place, keeping along the edge as best her balance could. She turned a corner and reached the back side of the mansion, overlooking a yard of five pools.

Crystal was able to rest on a small balcony before the window of a storeroom. She sat down to catch her breath. “Okay, Nolan, how do I get in? I assume this window’s alarmed.”

“Yep, and the door below has guards on the other end. But see that pumphouse across the pool?” Crystal viewed the little house on the farther end. “There’s a passage inside that connects to the basement, no guards. I’ll tell you the code to get in.”

“There’s quite the handy bit of guards AROUND the pools, you know.”

“Those middle ones, though... they each have one set moment where the guards look and walk away from them. You can freeze the pools and slide across.”

“That’ll look subtle. Sigh... I’ll try, anyway.” Crystal carefully hopped down using the roofs of the windows below, landing on the top of the stairs where the back door was perched. With careful timing, when the guards were turned away on Nolan’s cue, Crystal rushed down to the pool, “Glacius.” and blew a gentle ice cloud that froze it solid. Backing up, she ran, fell on her front, and glided across like a penguin, quickly ducking under the umbrella table once across, and “Incendio.” using fire to melt the pool.

“So why didn’t Warbucks take Annie to the party?” a passing guard asked.

“He didn’t like how all the rich types think. Didn’t want Annie to pick up some bad habits, or worse. If it were me, I’d have mixed feelings about riding a train halfway up the stratosphere.”

“Charlie thinks Warbucks is goin’ up there to learn somethin’, of what, I don’t know. You know what I heard about that Mariejoa once? Anyone that goes up there never makes it back down. The joke is they’re ‘uplifted to Heaven.’”

Crystal repeated her actions once the guards weren’t looking, freezing this new pool, but since it was heated, her ice melted into shrinking chunks, having to quickly and quietly jump these chunks
to make it. She hid beneath a smaller table afterwards, but the third pool had a guard sitting in an inner-tube in the middle, slowly rotating while sipping juice. The right side had a rope floating with thick bobbers, so when the guard rotated away and all others were not looking, Crystal quickly and carefully walked across each bobber before she tumbled over.

Once at the pumphouse, she typed the code ‘Leapin Lizards’ in a terminal and got inside. The tiny cramped room reeked of rusty wet pipes, and a strange gas emitted from one of them that made her cough. The gas did nothing else while she searched around, eventually finding a small hatch with a pitch-black passage. She climbed down, frantically shook cobwebs off her, and hit a floor. “Lumos.” She emitted a light from her staff to see down the dusty passage.

She walked through at a quick pace, hearing only the rhythm of her gasps. On her right, she thought she caught a glimpse of a skeleton in a ragged icy cloak, but passed this off. Finally, she got to a ladder and climbed, but one of the planks gave way under her foot and she slipped. “Gotcha!” A hand grabbed her arm, helping her to safety.

“Oh, thank you, Tra-..” Crystal nearly froze. A handsome boy with dark-purple spiky hair and yellow eyes smiled at her. Crystal’s brother. “Travis…”

“UAAH!” The boy was stabbed from behind, and Crystal gaped as he morphed into a ghoul, collapsed, and dispersed into dust. A scarecrow-like being with glowing eyes vanished into the dark. Crystal kept still and breathed heavily. What in the world was this? Her staff light having gone out, she merely walked forward and through a door.

“N-No! Stop! Pleeeeaase!” A man was crying down the hall on Crystal’s left

“Take whatever you want, just don’t hurt anyone!” a maid cried.

“I want to hear you scream… I want to see your fear.” A being’s shadow raised a long syringe over the shadows of the pleading couple. “I’m more than just a nightmare… I’m Affright.” The shadows shrunk away when the syringe came down and they screamed. The mansion was an eerie gray color as Crystal ran down, seeing the man and woman shaking ceaselessly after turning the corner. Crystal kept going, entering a large chamber with a stairway, chandeliers overhead, and mansion guards walking like zombies.

“Uhhhhh, Nolan, something very odd is going on here.” Crystal spoke into her communicator. A heavy breathing was on the other end, right into Crystal’s ear, mixed with exhaustion and anger. “Nolan?”

“DAMMIT, Crystal, stop calling me!” A high-pitched ringing rang from the phone, and it morphed into a bat and flapped away. The zombified guards all faced her and morphed into ghouls. Crystal held her staff and started batting them around when they ran at her, kicking them when they managed to grab hold, and watching as they dispersed into dust. “Hey!” she yelped when the bat-phone flapped down and took her staff away in its talons. She ran up the stairs to give chase, but giant green tentacles burst out of the walls and floors, wishing to claim Crystal for whatever monster they belonged to.

A chandelier fell down beside her level, so she leaped to it. It shook and clanged its jewels furiously, attempting to raise Crystal to the spiked ceiling, but she jumped to another one in time. This one tried to drop into the floor-turned-lava-pit, but Crystal jumped to the floor where the stairs would’ve led her. Her staff was dangling from the phone-bat’s talons, chasing it through a hallway of paintings and artifacts. When the bat seemed to poof through a door, Crystal chased it in.

The room was packed with statue heads, paintings, and old weapons. Crystal suspected the bat was
hiding among the junk, so she searched around. It wasn’t anywhere totally visible, not behind any statues or anything. She looked around the paintings to see if it was camouflaged, but in the few black areas, there were no bat-shaped lumps. The paintings themselves weren’t of anything original, Mona Lisa, a fancy heavy-clothed couple holding hands, Eskimos crossing a blizzarding plain.

She combed the room a few more times just to make sure, moved a few objects around, but no sign that the bat was in there. She skimmed the paintings again… the Mona Lisa was replaced with Crystal herself, same pose and style. The Eskimos were replaced by Yuki leading skeletons, and the couple was replaced by Nolan and… Affright? The latter grabbed and pulled Nolan in for a kiss that made Crystal want to vomit. Affright then faced her with new puffy ruby lips. “Num-Nums is good inside my tum-tums. HAAAEEEE!”

“AHH!” The scarecrow lunged at Crystal, its whole lips surrounding and encasing her inside a dark dimension. She couldn’t go left, she couldn’t go right. She could only move forward like a 2-D side-scroller. Okay, I guess that’s right. A distant, echoing beep sounded, becoming louder as she went on. Through the eyes of someone watching, she was a purple body surrounded by black, and after each beep, she shrunk a few inches. She started to look more like a purple dot within darkness. After the final beep, Crystal just… vanished.

A single strike of lightning brought Crystal back to what could be less reality. She was at the base of an obstacle course, floating miles above the ground in the center of a tornado, designed from torn walls, floors, and debris from the mansion. She ducked behind the wall when Affright’s gigantic form appeared over, sniffing for Crystal. Finding no one, he returned.

Crystal quietly crept along the floating path, peering around the wall’s edge to see the giant Affright rotating in the center of the course, searchlight eyes skimming for his prey. Before he came around to her, Crystal quickly jumped the midair bobbers like from the pool, of course it was far more terrifying inside a tornado. She got across and ducked under the short wall when Affright looped around. “There’s nowhere to run.” However, the giant began skimming that particular area, going left to right as Crystal stayed hidden. There were broken gaps in the wall he could see through, so she waited ‘til he wasn’t looking before quickly crawling forward.

She was able to stand behind a tall wall and recompose. She gasped when a thick wooden stick dangled before her face, looking up as the phonebat flapped away tauntingly. “Hey-!” She clapped her mouth shut, not wanting to attract Affright. The bat flapped its way over the course, so when Affright looked away, she quickly chased, having to jump the recurring spike traps and flamethrowers. She would’ve caught the bat, but he was too far in exposed space when Affright came back, so she hid behind a wall. She seized the moment when his sight passed, running as quick as she could. Despite the bat’s desperateness to escape, Crystal jumped and grabbed her staff back, then bumped into a wall. She had to use her rocket function to propel up to the ledge, ducking when Affright came around.

She found another dead end between two walls whose space between was the length of her staff, each baring holes parallel with each other. With the rocket boost, she shot partway up and stuck both ends of her staff inside the first pair of holes, conveniently behind a sub-wall to avoid Affright’s vision. “You’ll only climb to oblivion.” He began skimming up-and-down that particular area. To climb higher, Crystal had to stand and balance on the staff, jump while yanking it off, and sticking in the following holes. The catch was she couldn’t stay behind the wall while standing, and much of the following holes didn’t have walls, so she had to move quickly.

Once up top, Crystal was behind another wall while Affright continued the left-to-right routine. Hovering just over Crystal’s side of the path were huge floating diamonds that, when hit by
Affright’s lights, would emit a huge light that would have Crystal caught if she stood in it. He could view these diamonds through gaps or windows, but there were smaller walls on Crystal’s side she could hide behind and avoid the expanded gaze. She made it out of the diamond zone, and the rest of the course appeared to be a balance beam, with the only walls to hide behind being below. When Affright looped around, she would have to drop, grip, and hang behind the wall; unfortunately, parts of the beam steadily began to collapse. She climbed up, balanced further, and hung behind the wall when Affright looped, immediately continuing before the beam fell.

Finally, she was on a platform where a path led directly at Affright’s face. Almost instinctively, the giant caught her in its gaze, the entire realm flashing yellow. “Your path ends. Your soul is mine.” His groady scarecrow mouth ripped open, unveiling the endless vortex of death that would inhale Crystal’s soul. She felt frozen with fear, her life and existence about to end. She looked desperately for anything to help, but everything was yellow. The tornado and scattered mansion faded; on the wall beside, the couple’s painting was placed, baring the image of Nolan and Danika. That image was the only thing burned in her mind that moment.

“EXPECTO PATRONUM!” She lashed her staff at Affright as a great, silver hawk flew forth. It dug its talons into Affright’s form, and the whole realm was swallowed in light.

“Wuh?” Crystal gasped awake. She was plopped on the floor of the art junk room. Two blurry figures stood over her, and they bore the painted image of Nolan and Danika. The figures morphed when her vision cleared, and Sandman and Yuki stood.

“There you are, Crystal!” Sandman yelled. “You wouldn’t respond, so we thought something happened. We saw the guards run back into the mansion and followed them in—before we knew it, they started acting…”

“Affright.” Crystal gasped, helping herself up. “It was Affright. He was in here, he was…”

“I thought there was somethin’ familiar about those spasms.” Yuki commented. “So’d you chase him off?”

“I… imagine.”

“Affright doesn’t tend to stay in one place too long.” Sandman said. “Likes to save seconds for later. I’ve already called the cops—but let’s see if we can find that Yipper ’fore they come.”

With the guards unconscious, navigating the mansion became much easier. Recalling Buzz Lightyear’s story, if a rich girl bought her, they’d have to find a girl’s room, and before long they found a door labeled Annie’s Room. “That reminds me, ’wonder what Annie Wilconson’s up to.” Nolan thought aloud. “’Wonder if she and You-Know-Who got married.”

“You’ll have to fill us in, Nolan.” Wiccan noted.

“She’s some fangirl we used to hang out with—let’s just go in.” Yuki said impatiently.

They quietly creaked open the door. The room was filled with toys, pictures of friends from an orphanage, Annie with her baldheaded adoptive father Oliver Warbucks, and one with her dog Sandy. Annie was fast asleep on her bed, like Affright hadn’t touched her at all. She was clutching a teddybear, so they viewed the toys around the floor ’til they spotted a Yipper wearing a red cape and emblem—snoozing like any human. Knowing this was the one, Sandman rolled over, picked it up, and poked its chest. “Hello? Yipper?”

“Yaaa-aaawn…” Its beady black eyes blinked away. “W…WAH!” He frantically cowered behind
a leg under Annie’s bed, fearing he would be ripped in two. “Intruders! Robbers! Don’t take me, I have too much to live for, take Ms. Beany-Baby over there!”

“It’s okay. My name is Sandman and we’re only here to talk.” Nolan spoke quietly enough so as not to wake Annie.

“About what?”

“…I need you to tell us everything you know about the animatronics at Freddy’s Pizzeria.”

“FREDDY’S PIZZERIA?! NO!! I DON’T WANNA GO BACK THERE, I DON’T KNOW ANYTHING!” He tried to bolt to the door, but Yuki jumped in his path and grabbed him.

“WE’RE NOT taking you there,” Nolan stated, “we just need you to-"

“NOOOOO NO I DON’T WANT TO, DON’T TAKE MEEEEE!” Yuki struggled to hold onto the toy, possessing the strength of a furious child.

“STOP!” Crystal smashed the toy to the floor with her staff, which seemed to silence him dizzy. Yuki rubbed his sore hand.

“Listen to me, I’m trying to change all of you back into humans, and I’m going to do something about those animatronics. The only way I’ll be able to get past them is if you tell us what you know. Please…” Sandman uncovered his mask to unveil the sincerity in his eyes.

The toy looked at him more admiringly. “I know that face… Are you… Nolan York? The legendary 2030 of the Kids Next Door?”

“Yes, yooou… were one of them?”

“Back in your time, yeah! I was McGillicutty.”

“…Never heard of you.”

“I once helped Numbuh 2 against Jimmy and his Bus Walkers. Remember?”

“I heard that story, don’t remember you in it.”

“Oh, forget it. Okay… I first came to Freddy’s when my kid-owner brought me. He dropped me to look at the robots, and… disappeared. And, between you and me… he was my little brother. Anyway, the robots are programmed to sing and dance in a room with lots of people, but in a room with one or few people, or at night in general, I’m not sure why, but they automatically assume any human is a robot out of costume and force him into a spare animatronic. That’s why you can’t get caught. The thing is though, the robots are also camera-shy, if an active camera is looking at them, they’ll stop moving. Also, if you shine a flashlight or something on a few of them enough, they’ll get confused and go away. Now Freddy himself, he doesn’t get off stage much, unless it’s really dark, so that really depends if it’s cloudy outside or not, and if it is, he’ll be pretty active.”

“Okay.” Nolan jotted all this down. “And, how would we go about interrogating them for information?”

This seemed to surprise Yipper, with worry. “Oh… Well, if that’s what you’re doing, your primary problem is The Puppet.”

“Puppet?”
“A creepy marionette that hangs in the back room. I still don’t know why, but it seems like The Puppet commands all the robots, like a sort of hive mind. It’s kinda confusing, but the robots act and look like zombies when night comes, but they have more personality during the day, in spite of their programming. The reason is that this music is always playing during daytime, and I think it puts The Puppet asleep, because the nightguard played it during his shift and the robots seemed to be more attentive, but they were still kind of in a trance. That isn’t the creepiest part… somehow, I think The Puppet just knows if anyone’s in the building. The music stopped playing one night, and he was gone so fast, no one saw. The Puppet froze in the guard’s room just when the sun came up; guess he was still bound by his contract. If there was a three-second delay, the story would’ve ended differently. If you’re going to take out that marionette, it’s imperative you keep that music playing, or that thing will be on you like a guy who passes you on the street and swipes your brain.”

“That.. would be a little difficult not to notice.” Crystal commented.

“In a pitch-black store?”

“Anything else I should know?” Sandman asked.

“Yeah, just a few things, there’s this one with balloons…”

After a few minutes of explanation, Sandman had all the notes in his digi-watch. “Well-p, our next stop is Freddy’s Pizzeria.” He announced as they headed out of the mansion. “I hope this is well worth the effort.”

“For the record, I want the next stage after Freddy’s.” replied Yuki.

“Noted. Time to head back to Civic. Let’s go.” And the vigilantes were gone as police and ambulance sirens sounded in the air.

Midway Gala

Compared to what the balcony outside looked like now, the inside of the peak was far more beautiful. Floors and walls with beige and bronze patterns, beautifully polished floors with many curtained tables, while the Corporate Presidents took their place at a rectangular table before a center stairwell. Gold chandeliers hung from what was essentially the ceiling, but it seemed as though this room was exposed to the indigo starry sky above. Everybody watched as Head President Morgan walked to the top of the center stairs. “Good evening.” her British accent echoed. “PAHAAAA!” Peter Griffin laughed, getting the joke.

“The caterers will be bringing food out shortly. I hope you like our model of the night sky above you, had a few magic friends create it their selves. There are a few words I’d like to say to all of you, by order of the World Leaders. The Leaders have hereby declared the Kids Next Door as our enemy, for they have disrupted the peace of our world by announcing a ridiculous phenomenon called ‘the Apocalypse.’ How they concocted such a rumor, we don’t know, nor do we know who was the first to start it. But the Leaders believe they aim to challenge us for world power, because knowing their morals, every adult with notable power is considered a threat, and while we would like to avoid such a conflict, they may give us no choice. If any of the children present are affiliated with the organization, the time is now for you to decide which side you’re on, and report any viable information to the World Government. Now if the other presidents would join me in the meeting room, the party may begin.”
As Morgan and the presidents were clearing up the stairs, groups of wizards and witches brewing cauldrons on the higher walkways waved their wands and let the show begin. Animals and creatures of silvery-white, angels, mermen, centaurs, dragons, soared about the party. From the cauldrons came beautiful, colorful bubbles that combined and formed many shapes, but saw that their liquid would magically return to the pots if they were popped and not ruin the food. Just as well, the chefs made their appearance with hundreds of plates of fabulous edibles, sure to satisfy the bellies of all richmen.

“My, the Head President truly knows how to put up a show.” Babs smiled with admiration.

“Thanks to her, wizards and magic folk don’t need to hide as much as they used to,” a high-pitched British man with a long gray mustache said. “The Anti-Lower-Class Charm I bought from them goes excellently with my outdoor pool!”

Helping herself to a Fruity Cake (and packing up a Couple’s Cake for someone special), Carol Masterson was back on her laptop when Doflamingo Jr. came over with a cool smile, his sister beside him with her Rainbow Monkey. “You hear THAT Carol, no feelings of treachery. I see you’re spending quite the time on their website.”

“Well, I’m STILL in training, regardless.”

“I’m aware of that. It won’t do you any good, you know. The last Supreme Leader never decided a successor, the KND is leaderless. Even with perfect marks, you can’t legally get in.”

“I’m still going to try. I don’t have to be in the KND to be able to help them.”

“Fufufufufu. Go ahead and help them if you intend to. The World Government’s power is limitless, if you remain on their side, punishment will be severe. Not that I’d want anything to happen to a lovely girl like you.” Carol rolled her eyes. “Come, Sugar. I’m sure your favorite grapes are somewhere.” He walked away. “Careful of the Tatababasco ones.”

Sugar looked at Carol for a few seconds before walking away with her Rainbow Monkey.

**Chariton Household**

Sunni was outright bored… again. Laying just where her mom would lay: on the couch. She spent so much time here, maybe Sunni would absorb some of her essence here and be a better psychicbender. She had no other ideas to try at this moment. If all else failed, she might as well just pay a scientist to extract her brain from her body.

But it seemed that was already done. When Sunni looked ’round to their fireplace mirror, her reflection was smiling and waving. Now what did her Negative want? She got up and walked to the mirror half-awake, her reflection grinning. When she retreated inside, Sunni climbed onto the fireplace and peered where she went. “…WAAAAAAH!” She tumbled forward into the shiny liquid glass. (Play “Welcome to Wonderland” from *Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories*.)

**Stage 13: Wonderland**

**Mission:** Follow your reflection.

**Act 2: The Looking Glass**

The inside of the mirror was just how Sunni expected it to look: extremely bright, shiny, and
glassy. All the walls, floor, and ceiling were bright silvery-white mirrors, yet none of them bore her reflection. Except the one just down the hall before her, whose reflection smiled and waved before skipping to the right. Sunni chased after and wound up in a perplexing maze of mirrors that all bore reflections which mimicked her movements. She thought she could interact with them, but no such luck, but particular ones smiled and waved before skipping off. When Sunni followed the direction she skipped, she discovered new paths that were steadily leading her out of the maze.

She was brought outside to a beautiful sunny field of hills and flowers, and it felt much nice already to be viewing the field at a natural size, rather than tree-size plants. She followed the brown path through the grass that sloped down and up hills, passing a picnic table by a tree, but that’s when Sunni plopped into an invisible barrier. She felt around, but all it was was glass, totally unseen, but blocking her path. Her reflection was to her left again, sporting that cheery wave before skipping away. Following on the right of her path, the way seemed to be clear, heading into just barren grass. She then looked as her reflection leapt up some invisible stairs, so no doubt Sunni had to do so and ended up standing 7 feet in midair above the ground. This was followed by jumping over random areas, which Sunni assumed were pitfalls, dropping to an invisible slide that would send her back.

Sunni then watched as her reflection jumped, rolled in midair, and dove headfirst into a well on the ground, so Sunni did the same. She winded up hitting her head on a brownish-red floor below, inside of a darker, underground chamber with designs on its walls and floors. What few floors there were, as a dark chasm lay in the center, and her reflection on the ceiling was riding some slow back-and-forth square platforms across. Sunni did like before and mimicked, though seeing the darkness just beyond her feet was a nervous feeling.

She reached a foothold on the other side and passed down a narrow stairway to a rounder room with a wider chasm. She watched the ceiling mirror as her reflection rolled on her side, around and around the walls of the room. Feeling this was ridiculous, Sunni got on her side and rolled around and around. She felt herself moving along the wall, but didn’t dare stop lest she plummet to the chasm.

It seemed her reflection had the right mind again when she made it onto the higher platform in the corner. She followed a hallway that led back to the previous room, now on the higher ledge. Her reflection had arms squeezed to her body, staying perfectly straight as she made a collection of long, precise jumps over certain areas, apparently hitting invisible platforms as she jumped them in random order. Sunni assumed she had to jump to them in that order, and once she had memorized it, she was on the parallel foothold and could go down another stairwell. Then she kept going down…and down…and down…and down… Okay, her legs were getting tired. Stairs couldn’t possibly be this long.

Then after the 10th or maybe 15th loop down, she saw a mirror on her right where it looked like her reflection was mimicking her, but actually shifted a little to the left. Sunni shifted the same, and winded up slurped through a very narrow gap down a tight stairwell. It went on and on like before, until when Sunni glanced at the ceiling mirror where her reflection jumped just past the mirror. Sunni jumped then too, and expecting to collide with her image, ended up walking up an alternate stairwell that was camouflaged. The mirror was on the floor this time, her reflection diving left, so Sunni did the same and ended up going down a slide on her belly, ooooon and ooooon and ooooon. On her left, the reflection in the mirror zipped left, so so did Sunni, and THUMP! slammed headfirst into a wall.

She annoyedly recovered, finding herself on a flat floor and continuing down a passage. She appeared in another chasm room atop a foothold, her next path on the other side, and the entire wall on her left a mirror. Her reflection dropped off the front of the foothold and ran across a set,
zigzag path over the chasm, Wall Jumped an area to start running at level with the footholds, jumped some areas, then one last Wall Jump onto the following area. After examining closely, Sunni memorized and followed this set route, or else she’d fall, reaching the next stairwell successfully.

The stairs sloped up this time, bringing Sunni to another outside meadow of giant chess pieces and teapots. Her reflection merrily skipped across the fields, and Sunni’s instincts told her to mimic as she hopped along, though with a much less joyous expression. She arrived at a white-curtained table where a black-clothed man in a top-hat poured tea into many cups. When he turned, she was staring at the handsome face and gorgeous eyes of Harry Gilligan, who smiled coolly.

Sunni felt her heart uplift, flushing at the sight of Harry. She had a real schoolgirl crush on the boy, and despite a few flaws Sunni didn’t agree with, he was totally cute and cool, and had an awesomely cool voice. She knew she had to be dreaming, ’cause why else would he be doing this, looking so… awesome? And looking at their reflections, Sunni’s furiously grabbed Harry’s and sucked powerfully on his lips, probably trying to swallow him whole. Shrugging agreeingly, a big grin on her face, Sunni grabbed Harry and embraced for kiss. She went flying into his mouth like a vacuum and down a surprisingly deep tunnel.

She landed on her head again and shook to… semi-reality. Well, that was totally trollish. With a disappointed aura, she followed another hallway to a large, dim-lit fireplace room. Her reflection was there to greet her. (End song.)

She kept her bright, vibrant smile, waving happily. With a very baffled, tad-resentful expression, Sunni waved back. It was so odd she just kept that smile, her eyes wide like they didn’t have lids. Her head turned full rotation and slanted just then, making little cracking sounds. Sunni became totally weirded when the reflection’s body swelled in different areas, growing taller and taller while the head stayed mini. Its legs stretched very long and muscular, as though Sunni did a looooot of running, and her arms old, wrinkly, and frail. Her rear and chest area swelled like balloons, the sight making Sunni wish she were blind, and her head, still smiling, stretched its eyes and let ’em hang loose. …Sunni would never want to engage in such madness. (Play “Shrouding Dark Cloud” from Kingdom Hearts.)

**Boss fight: La Huüfla**

This oddly-named creature started to walk about the room in an odd fashion, its head and droopy eyes swaying as it shook its hip to the music. Its arms were flapping mindlessly as fast as fans, and the right arm smacked Sunni and smashes her against the wall. Angered, Sunni whipped out her lightsaber and ran to strike its muscular legs, but they were much too thick as Huüfla kicked her forcefully against the wall again. Sunni ran up and dodged its legs before Wall Jumping between and throwing a strike at that offensively large bottom. Huüfla leapt and hopped around before falling on its rear and swaying back-and-forth. Sunni was then able to get on its body and strike the chest, making the creature fly around like a balloon.

It landed back on its feet and created Psycho Spheres around it, throwing at Sunni, who jumped away. She tried to create her own Psycho Sphere, but- “Whuh?” nothing appeared, leaving her to be blown away by one of Huüfla’s spheres’ explosions. “Where’s my bending now?” She quickly flipped back up and dodged the creature’s spheres, running around and behind it as she was about to draw her lightsaber and bat the spheres back at it. Just one problem- “Yuh-oh-” she seemed to have dropped her lightsaber when she was blown away moments ago.

She rolled forward and between Huüfla’s legs, running up to grab her saber and switch it on (since
she couldn’t call it back with psychic either). When more spheres came, she batted one back with her saber and struck the monster in the face, and as it stumbled back, Sunni ran to the wall, jumped and kicked off, and struck the monster’s head. The head shook rapidly like a bobble head that was punched, and Sunni watched with disgust as its eyes drooped out even more and began slithering around the floor like snakes. Sunni frightfully tried to back away, keeping her saber ready to slice. But the eyes shot at her like bullets and wrapped her eyes and stomach area, attempting to pull her to the Huüfla.

Sunni shook more desperately than ever because of how gross this was, and managing to flip on her lightsaber, slashed the eye binding her waist, then slashed the one over her eyes. She felt near to barfing when they molted on the spot, but two more extra eyes spawned from the Huüfla. She started lashing them at Sunni as she jumped back, managing to grab both the eyes in her left hand and yank, the monster stumbling forward. Sunni let go and jumped forward to slice between the knees, the Huüfla wincing as it sunk slightly so Sunni could jump and strike its rear.

Huüfla jumped up again with a start, becoming angered though its face didn’t show it, and desperately began stomping around to hopefully smash Sunni, throwing Psycho Spheres at her as well. With a leap and vertical spin, Sunni batted a sphere back and struck the face, the creature wobbling only on one leg now. Sunni ran underneath with a quick slice at its right leg, and when it fell back, Sunni threw her sword up to stab the inflated rear. (End song.)

A high-pitched “WEEEEEEeee” squeaked out of its rear as Huüfla blew around and around the room like a balloon with a leak. Many snaky swirls through the air, growing flatter the more it flew. Finally, it came to a halt as it slid along the floor, expelling the last ounces of air. Sunni was filled with the greatest disgust at seeing herself this way. She took far too many blows to the head.

“I hereby decree you on the highest level of madness.” Sunni whipped around, spotting the Cheshire Cat atop the fireplace. “Only someone truly insane would beat themself up.”

“Pfft, that thing wasn’t me, it was just… some fucked-up metaphor someone’s trying to show me.”

“Well, then it’s no different from anything else. Because everything else here is a metaphor. Unless someone makes it a simile. Like this, for one: have you even the slightest idea why a raven is like a writing desk?”

“Because in a fucked-up world like this, either of them could become a surfer.”

“That’s true. It’s the same way a surfboard is like a pair of scissors: both are very good accountants. Ever decide on what your career should be? This fireplace here makes over 7 billion dollars a minute.”

“Siiiigh.” Sunni sat cross-legged in defeat. “Look man, I just don’t care anymore. I just wanna learn psychicbending and go save my damn mom. Unless you got any books-for-dummies, just show me to the nearest glass so I may look back through it.”

“Well, it might be a tad difficult to learn it since you just beat it up.”

“What’re you talking about, this bloated balloon?”

“That ‘balloon’ happens to be your shadow.”

“Oh, I’m a shadowbender now?”

“Everyone has a shadow. Even me. See?” The cat waved at his shadow, who flailed an arm happily before settling down. “Fun little fellow. Don’t judge them just because they don’t speak.
All shadows have a personality. Shadowbenders’ shadows are just more open. Other shadows are shy. A shame, really, because they can work so much better together if they speak up more.”

“Right… So are psychicbenders’ shadows normally like that?”

“Shadows can look like anything. They’re meant to represent the bender’s hidden self. It seems you were hiding you from yourself from too long. Now it wants to speak.”

The fallen body that was Sunni’s “shadow” turned blue before flipping to the air and shrinking into a light. Sunni stared with wonder when it became a faded blue silhouette of herself.

“You know, if you had a problem with me, you coulda SAID so.”

“…YOU… are my psychicbending?” questioned Sunni.

“That’s right, and I don’t appreciate having my bottom cut up.” Hands on her hips. “This MAH body, sistuh, you got NO right cuttin’ me up.” She swayed her hips and spoke in a sassy fashion.

“Well, you were kinda freaking me out, so uh…”

“Uh-uh! If YOU got such a problem with me, maybe Ah shouldn’t be IN you at all!”

Sunni shook, “Come on, I NEED psychicbending, and where’re you gonna go without me??”

“Ah go in some caterpillar, be right-down better than YOUR smelly bod!”

“JUST get back inside me so we can go save Mom!”

“Bitch, you like HER freakin’ psychic better than ME, y’all can drop in a DITCH for all I care, leave you beggin’ and moanin’ me to floatcha out, but I ain’t care, I just eat me some popcorn ‘let you decay.”

“Well, it’s not like you ever listen to me ANYWAY, if you did anything I told you, we wouldn’t be HAVING this problem.”

“Grl, I been doin’ EVERYTHING you tol’ me, you were all ‘Bitch, do that’ and ‘Bitch, do this’, bitch I doin’ everything, why you gettin’ all up in my face, and like I ain’t takin’ this shit, you wanna shrink so bad bitch, well eat THIS.” And with a snap of the fingers, Sunni was the size of a beetle.

“HEY, what’s the big idea?!” she squeaked.

“Nuh-uh, I TIRED of puttin’ up with you, I better be seein’ some respect or you c’n just kiss up to yo’ mommy’s psychic.”

“I don’t need to respect ANYTHING, you’re my psychic and I command you to biggify me!”

“Oh WHAT, I don’t gotta put up with you, you wanna bitch me around some more, you better be a little less bitchy.”

“Siiiiigh.” Sunni was utterly thankful no one else was there to see her get bitched at by her own psychic. “Okay, you have my word that I won’t boss you around so much. Which I don’t see how we’ll get much progress done if I don’t.”

“Wh’evr. Take what I can get.” So with that, the body of psychic compressed itself into Sunni’s
tiny body. Once inside, Sunni stretched back to normal.

“…What in the world just happened?”

“Curious thing, shadows. They help store Element Chi.” Cheshire explained. “Chi that’s been stuffed away by a bender’s personality, which was also stuffed away. When it turns a little too overbearing, sometimes the shadow has to speak up. It doesn’t like being treated this way.”

“But when I was following my reflection here, it looked like my Negative; I met her a couple months ago. But aren’t they the same thing, shadows?”

“Shadows are the bridge. They help Positives look at Negatives, but in manifested form, shadows appear like the Negatives, because they’re containing the personality the Positive has stored away. Typically, you are mad, but deep inside, you are mad in the other sense. The shadow has helped you realize it. Maybe now, you’ll be better at psychic bending.”

“Well, what’m I supposed to do? Give my psychic extra pay?”

“Use your imagination.” Cheshire’s body was vanishing, and only the head swayed in place. “*All mimsy were the borogoves, And the mome raths outgrabe…*” Whiteness engulfed the world, and Sunni was awake,

Shooting up on the couch inside her house. The mirror hung above the fireplace, ordinary as always. Sunni plopped her head onto the couch’s pillow again. She would take awhile to clear the idea of that dream out of her head.

**Midway Gala**

The party drew on, and after awhile, the magical displays lost their appeal. Sector DR was sitting at a table and guzzling snacks. Sugar ate grapes from a basket while the Rainbow Monkey sat patiently in her lap, its smile unchanging. “Fufufufu. Look at Warbucks trying to put moves on Mom.” Doffy Jr. snickered. “Poor old man can’t get anyone else, so he’s trying to score an even older woman. How hopeless.”

“He can get her if he wants to!” Sweetie-1 flushed. “He don’t have to be as rich.”

“Rack up 10 million dollars and tell me that, Sweetie.” Doffy flicked her nose. “Now run off and find me some pretzels. Mmmm, wouldn’t mind something salty.”

Sweetie flushed further and smiled, “Well if you really need me to, Prince Doffy, I’ll see what I can do.” So she ran off.

“Nnnnn. I’m confused though-daizokun.” Bison said. “This whole meeting happened ’cause of people hearing about the Apocalypse, but the only ones who knew shoulda been the Government. Who coulda told people-daizokun?”

“Probably those Revolutionaries Dad’s always talking about.” Doffy replied. “Starting rumors about it, that’s why a lot of people are confused. Still a little overreaction on the Leaders’ part—I mean, how much chaos can a leaderless Kids Next Door create?”

The party was calm and casual. Regular conversations between rich types, everyone enjoying the elegant food. No one suspected that anger and hatred of unparalleled depth was brewing. Within the very heart of Sugar’s Rainbow Monkey, under that frozen smile, its fluffy stuffing. It didn’t know why, it didn’t know what… but for some unexplainable reason, that Rainbow Monkey was angry. *Where am I? Hff. … Why can’t I move?! Hfff…* Its limbs were soft, stiff, and lifeless. Its
only sense of form was the anger brewing inside. In its mind, in its heart, the only person that appeared… was Sugar. Sitting politely, a casual face, chewing on grapes. *I have to move. . I have to do something. We’re all going to die. . . unless I move! Why...WHY...* But it plainly knew. It knew nothing else, it felt nothing else. The toy wanted to kill Sugar… strangle her… let her guts fall out… make her wish she had never been born.

**Meeting room**

The six Corporate Presidents all took a seat around the round table, with Morgan at the end nearest the wall TV. “I’m glad you all could make it.” Morgan began. “The World Leaders would like a word with us. If you would turn to the screen behind me.”

Not the little TV on the wall, of course. It rised and sunk into the ceiling as that very wall opened, a much greater TV buzzing to life as the six World Leaders appeared, seated in their throne room. Around the table, Henry Churchill, Daphne Anderson, Felius Umbridge, Lucas Stonebuddy, and Jennifer Bush. Atop the high throne behind them, the most powerful man in the world, The King of the World, and above him, the staring eye in the upside-down pyramid.

“Greetings, Corporate Presidents. I’m delighted you all arrived.” said The King.

“Yoo-hoooooo, Morgan Deeeeeeaaaar! Hellooooooooon!” waved Jennifer Bush with joy.

“Hello, Master.” Morgan bowed.

“So it seems the majority of the U.S. has abandoned the Apocalypse notion.” Lucas recapped. “Peace among them has been restored for now. We are sad to say, the cataclysm is not a total lie. It is bound to happen, according to our Eye of Order.”

“Intel states that a means of stopping such a catastrophe lie in the hands of twenty key individuals, Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses.” Felius explained. “We cannot allow such kinfolks to come together. We sense only danger arriving should they interact, and think it best to prevent the comingling of them. –Suggests Felius Umbridge, World Leader.”

“Yes, except there’s one problem we haven’t quite taken into account.” Henry replied in his quiet British accent, eyes focused on his book. “Some nasty chaps appear to have caught wind of these ‘Twenty Keys’ and are attempting to find them. They’ve caused quite a bit of chaos around the world in the short time news of the Apocalypse escaped. Much like that Negatar fellow and his ruffians, we must have them dealt with momentarily.”

“Sigh, but the Kids Next Door will get in our way, too.” Daphne sighed, plucking a rose petal. “And Lord knows the White Lotus won’t stand aside. Siiiiigh. So many people are going to die.”

“It won’t matter at all in the end.” followed The King. “By the end of this month, we shall all be uplifted to the Spirit World. Our Spirit World. Where no person will ever have to fear ever again.”

“Until then, we would like you to keep things organized.” Lucas told them. “Our special assassin group is going to collect the Minish Princess, a key component to our plan. Until our operations are finished, you must see that the Twenty Keys are never found and prevent any further progress the KND or this ‘Team Gnik’ makes. Is that understood?”

“Yes.” Morgan bowed, the other presidents mimicking. “We’ll stop them at any cost.”

“Very well. This concludes our meeting.” King said. “We will speak to you in-”

“WAIT, I didn’t get to say anything!!” Jennifer shouted.
“Shoot.”

“…Uhhhh… PANCAKES!” The screen blanked out.

I wouldn’t mind some myself. ;) Nor any of those delicious delicacies they’re serving at that place. All those foods are Paper Mario recipes, by the way. Next time, Sandman will go to Freddy’s Pizzeria. 13 is a good number to do that. Hope you aren’t scared. ;
Hey, guess what, guys! I might get a job at Kroger! I mean, first they gotta make sure I’m not an international criminal from Venezuela, but once they do, I can finally start working! ’Course, that means less time to write, so be forewarned.

Chapter B-7: Davy Back Fight

Cinnamon Jungle; stadium (Play “Smells Like Teen Spirit” from Pan.)

The Marzipan Pirates quietly crept into a tunnel of the gigantic rock mass. The chants and roars were growing louder as they progressed. “Whaddyou think that is?” Rallo asked. “Some kinda Satanic ritual?”

“Maybe it’s the arena that Veruca mentioned.” Augustus said. “But who would set one up all the way out here? Who would come?”

Hello, hello, hello
How low?
Hello, hello, hello
HOW LOW?
“I think we’re about to find out.” Stewie said as they reached the tunnel’s end.

Hundreds of thousands of seats were filled around the tremendous stadium. Their song echoed to the heavens and beyond. All of them were waving flags with Jolly Rogers: they were all pirates. There were demon pirates, robot pirates, human pirates, even the Kremlings.

With the LIGHTS out
IT’S LESS DANGEROUS
Here we are now
ENTERTAIN US!
I feel stupid
AND CONTAGIOUS
Here we are now
ENTERTAIN US!
When the first verse was repeating, the Marzipans stared with awe at the three gigantic ships hovering in the sky. There were four figures standing on platforms on the ships’ sides: Cindy Cortix from the Boogey Pirates, the two Rusty Petes from the Slag Pirates, and a short old man with a white beard – Mr. Smee.

“And I forget… just WHY I taste.” Lord Licorice fixed on his black and red armor, his hat, and loaded his shiny gun. “Oh yeah, I guess, it makes me smile.” He sung quietly to himself as he marched up the wooden stairs. “I found it hard, it’s hard to find. Oh well… whatever… never mind.”

The “hello, hello” was repeating once more, and Licorice was mumbling as he walked up on the deck of the Boogey Bay. He passed a polite smile and nod to Captain Mandy, who stared with uninterest as she drank booze. Captain Slag, Captain Hook, and Baron K. Roolenstein were there as well, bowing their heads at Licorice briefly. The Candy Lord marched up more stairs and across a walkway with railing. He jumped, planted both feet on either railing, and raised his arms for all pirates to see.

*With the LIGHTS out*

*IT’S LESS DANGEROUS*

*Here we are now*

*ENTERTAIN US!*

*I feel stupid*

*AND CONTAGIOUS*

*Here we are now*

*ENTERTAIN US!*

The song stopped as all pirates roared, and Licorice stood back on the walkway. His voice was heard across the stadium. “Friends… I am Lord Tyrone Licorice. You know me very well… as the apprentice of the King of the World himself!”

“**BOOOOOOOOOOOO!**” The pirates were roaring in protest.

“But! …Unlike those law-abiding bigheads, you’ll find that I’m a very kind sir indeed! I believe there is beauty in you pirates that the World Government does not see! Ay, it is because of those powder-wigs that you are not allowed to participate in Glitzville’s games. But it is no worry, because my ancestors so GRACIOUSLY carved out this stadium for swashbucklers of every kind, to host the Davy Back Fight Brawl every YEAR!”

“**YAAAAAAARRRRRRHHHH!**”

“Lady and man pirates, we have a spectacular show planned for you! Sponsoring our event is none other than two, yes TWO, Pirate Emperors! First, meet the Empress of Fear herself, Captain of the Boogey Pirates, the Grim Stare Mandy!” Said empress gave a half-hearted wave before chugging another drink of rum, only to find her bottle was empty. “Unfortunately, our second Emperor, King Kroctus Rool, King of the Kremling Krew, chose not to be here in person. In his stead, his second brother, Baron K. Roolenstein. We also have the honor of being in the audience of two noble Pirate Lords! May I present Captain James Hook and Captain Romulus Slag!”
“Oh, the honor is my own, Master Licorice!” Captain Slag bowed. “One of me many pleasures in visiting this planet is ta bear witness to its quality entertainment! Plus, Ay could really use me a breather, considering all of the hard-drive-ache Ay’ve suffered these past months.”

“I think we all need to relieve ourselves of pain.” Licorice twisted his left mustache, grinning slyly. “I believe our fair Empress was humiliated before her crew by a young junior pirate. The ‘Sunny-Fist’ Sheila, according to His Majesty’s records.”

“I THREW the fight, mmmm,” Mandy yelled drunkily, “BEEELCH, Lardrich!”

“Now, Captain Hook, I understand that you had a special prize you wished to wager in this contest?”

“I most certainly do!” The red-cladded captain marched up onto the walkway and raised his sword. “PIRATES! I, Captain James Hook, have invaded and traversed the Forest Planet, and discovered its Realm of Fairies! I struck the land when it was most vulnerable: three hours AFTER the Kids Next Door’s defeat of Nature Goddess, Viridi! The fairies were helpless in repairing the forest of ruin, and the prize I took from them, I have been eagerly waiting to show somebody. Behold… the FAIRY PRINCESS! AISLING KELLS!”

On this cue, Mr. Smee scrambled to pull out and push a remote. A hatch opened from the bottom of the Jolly Roger, and from it, a net made of steel strings lowered. Augustus, the Deadly Babies, and all the pirates gazed with awe: there was a girl of ghostly white skin and hair, wearing only a gray dress. Her green eyes looked vicious as she tried to bite through the strings with sharp teeth.

“Yes, the Forest Fairy Princess, Aisling Kells!” Hook announced. “One of three Fairy Princesses described in an ancient Avalaran fairytale. The story reads that these fairies contain terrific amounts of magical energy. The Forest Fairy, in particular, possesses the power to grant and extend life, and stop death. Any pirate… would be a fool not to fight over her.”

“YAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRR!” The stadium roared with cheers, as every crew craved the fairy’s supposed power. Lord Licorice narrowed his eyes evily as he studied the trapped fairy.

“Is that girl really a Fairy Princess?” Augustus asked.

“Don’t be an eediot,” Stewie said, “it’s probably just a sham.”

“Even if it is, they’re still abusing the hell out of her for a profit. It’s kinda sickening.”

“Well, what the hell are you going to do about it, sign up for the competition?”

“Now, everyone!” Lord Licorice announced. “I have another treat for this tournament! As we all know, the notorious crew known as the Big Mom Pirates have been causing us grief for the past 20 years. Just days ago, the Pirate Empress herself has met an unfortunate end. And I, Lord Tyrone Licorice, have captured her grandson, and will force him to compete in the arena against his own will, so that you all may know sweet revenge! As soon as my associates arrive with him, they’re certainly taking a while,” he mumbled through gritted teeth, “we can get started with-”

His cellphone rang. “Excuse me a sec.” Lord Licorice answered. “Ahh, Violet. You know, you’re taking an awfully long time to bring him down, I wouldn’t imagine… w-what?!” He looked at the Pirate Lords panickingly, then knelt down and whispered, “You’ve been looking all night and couldn’t find him? Grrr- These people are expecting some revenge, so unless he turns up, one of you will have to dress up like him and-”

“HEY, STINKTEETH!” A Hispanic voice shouted across the stadium. Lord Licorice gasped and
looked over the railing. Everyone’s vision directed at one of many entrances. “YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THE BIG MOMS, YOU CHOKE IT UP WITH ME!”

“AUGUSTUS, what the hell are you doing?!” Stewie shouted.

“AHA!” Licorice pointed giddily. “There he is, just like I said! Augustus von Fizzuras, the grandson of Big Mom, is here to fight in the competition!”

“Damn right I am!” Augustus yanked his lollipop out and threw it on the ground. “It’s one thing to let a defenseless girl hang in a net like a manatee, but if people got problems with me, I wanna hear it up front before they cower inside a giant mountain like a bunch of wimps!”

“YER DAMN RIGHT we have problems with you!” a Hook Pirate shouted. “BIG MOM replaced me gums with GUM!”

“Fat Jack crushed me brother and got him reprogrammed to be a McDonald’s security camera!” a Slag Pirate yelled.

“Th-Th-That Lala girl saw into my memory,” a Kremling shuddered, “a-a-and reminded me of the petting zoo. S-S-So many kids and ice cream! . .”

“Those rotty Kids Next Door may’ve taken ’em all out,” a Boogey Pirate aimed his sword, “but ’long as YOU’RE still around, we get a piece o’ the cake, too!”

“YEEEEEAAAHH!”

“Fine, so my grandma and her crewmates beat the living snot and internal liquids out of all you.” Augustus retorted. “Do you pirates have nothing better to do with yourselves than gang up on some kid who had nothing to DO with those things? I, for one, had different ideals that Big Mom didn’t share. I THOUGHT she shared them, but she was a monster in the end. MY philosophy is about ADVENTURE. And if I’M the only pirate in this ring that GETS that, then I’ll swab the deck with every one of you!”

“You think you know better than US, ye scurvy brat?!” Captain Hook aimed the prosthetic he was named after.

“I’m not the guy from a land that never grows up!”

“FRIENDS, we have a game!” Licorice announced. “All competitors, gear up for battle, because once I finish explaining the rules, it’s anyone’s game. The competing pirate crews have already submitted their wagered doubloons—or whatever currency your kind uses—into the stadium’s moat, where it will flow out into the sea and to Davy Jones’ Locker, so that the Cursed Captain himself may bear witness to these events. Any pirate crew who is to break the clear established rules of the contest will be sent to Davy Jones’ Locker.

“Your crewmen will engage in a variety of contests. Only the crewmen chosen by their captains for the specific contest are allowed to compete. The pirate crew who comes in first for each contest is allowed to pick a member from the crew who comes in last. They may pick any crewmember, including the captain, and that person must switch their loyalties without quarrel.” Licorice grinned devilishly. “Sadly, since I am not a pirate, I cannot pick nor be chosen. The victorious pirate crew may also choose to steal the losing crew’s Jolly Roger. (Er, their pirate flag, not Hook’s ship.) And speaking of Hook, we will consider Princess Aisling to be a member of his crew, therefore she may be won over in a contest. But since she is special, only the crew who wins first place in the end will be allowed to choose her.
“Now, it seems the Big Mom Pirates, however limited their numbers may be,” Licorice grinned again, “are choosing to compete. We will see how long they last, but the first pirate crew to lay waste to Augustus von Fizzuras will score extra points for their crew. These are the rules, is everyone clear?”

“JUST A SECOND.” Augustus yelled. “The Big Mom Pirates are NOT competing! We are the Marzipan Pirates, and the four founding members are your opponents!” Augustus threw five Chocolate Coins into the moat.

“HE MEANS US, TOO!?” The Deadly Babies panicked. (“Mw-mw!”)

“Our mistake: The Marzipan Pirates will compete, and abide by our rules. Pirate crews, pick your member: the first match of the competition will be a dogfight. We will drop a bunch of scattered parts onto the field: you must construct a plane, go to the sky, and wait for your enemies to come up and dish away at you. You may not disrupt the other crewmen’s construction, and you can only fight once you have craft in the sky. You have two minutes, so hurry up and choose!”

Augustus stomped forward, “A dogfight is my kinda game! I’m takin’ this one, guys.”

“Are you even listening to us!?” Stewie shouted. “We’re going to get CREAMED in this fight! (And that was without trying to make a candy pun!) Why the hell do you care about some damn ‘fairy’?!”

“It isn’t just the fairy I wanna rescue.” Augustus stated, starting a new lollipop. “If I’m serious about our pirate crew, we have to show all the others what we’re made of. They’re already talking down on us ’cause we’re the washed-up Big Mom Pirates, so we have to show them we ain’t tied to those bozos! Also, that fairy might be able to restore my Haki. But even if she can’t, it wouldn’t hurt to toughen you kids up, too.”

“Competing in this tournament,” Licorice announced, “our crews have chosen: from the Marzipan Pirates, Augustus Fizzuras! From the Slag Pirates, the Silver Bullet! From the Hook Pirates, Mr. Smee! From the Kremling Krew, Snide the Weasel! And from the Boogey Pirates, Aragon. Pilots: CONSTRUCT!” He shot the gun skyward.

The five chosen pirates claimed a pile of scrap and began to shuffle around for parts. “Let’s see, rusty propeller,” Augustus mumbled, tossing a piece aside, “made of wood, this engine doesn’t look bad…”

“The Silver Bullet is ready and UP in the air!” Lord Licorice declared, startling Augustus into looking up. “Now he must wait for his opponents! Oh, did I mention that the first crew who finishes their craft can choose a member from the last crew who finishes? It’s a double-contest, how fun!”

“Hurry and get up here, you Slowbros!” Silver Bullet yelled with a faulty voice program. He appeared to be a robot of shiny, silver metal, with a single glowing red eye.

“Damn, he’s fast!” Augustus exclaimed. “I better hurry!”

Minutes had passed: Aragon, who was an Aeralfos, attached propellers to his wings, along with laser turrets, and took off next. Snide completed a hovercraft that was a man-size version of the Flying Krock. “YES!” Augustus created a cheaper version of the Ace Flyer and flew off, leaving Smee on the ground.

“SMEEEEEEE! HURRY!” Captain Hook roared.
“I’m sorry, Captain! I’m missing one propeller blade!” Smee was hunched over and searching around the ground like a dog. “Oh, blast it, where is it?”

Captain Hook moaned, clearly seeing the blade in the back of Smee’s pants.

“Sigh, that could’ve been bad.” Augustus sighed in relief. “I better take out these guys before they-WHOA!” Lasers shot at his left wing, so he barrel-rolled away. “-cut off my sentence!”

“That’s one new crewmate for the Slag Pirates!” the Silver Bullet declared, chasing Augustus. “And once you’re gone, I’ll be happy to claim your Jolly Roger.”

Augustus dove downward while constantly barrel-rolling, then he flew back up to rapidly shoot the Bullet. The robot’s superb plane withstood the attacks and kept flying forward, so Augustus dodged upward, then flew horizontal again. He saw Snide flying behind him, locking onto the shabby plane before launching two missiles. Augustus saw Aragon several meters away, and the Aeralfos retreated when the Marzipan gave chase. Aragon turned around to cough fireballs, but Augustus evaded. He stomped the gas pedal to catch up to, then zip past Aragon, and the missiles now locked on the demon. Aragon blasted his laser turrets to shoot the missiles down.

Augustus whipped the plane around to shoot at Aragon, destroying his left turret. The Silver Bullet began shooting at Augustus from the left, so the teen flew down and under the robotic pilot. He did a U-turn to get behind the robot, rapidly blasting laser bullets, but Silver Bullet switched on a bubble barrier to protect himself. “AUGH, you rusty smartass!”

“Thank you! I take pride in my intelligent rumpus.” The robot remarked.

“Heh! That bubble won’t be very convenient if you can’t see through it.” Augustus boosted forth and got above the hi-tech plane. He pushed a button that opened a hatch under his plane, dropping oil on the bubble. “What the-?!”

“Say ¡Enciéndelos!” Augustus slowed down, blasted the oil, and set the bubble aflame.

“AAAAAAAAHHHH!”

“Sorry, Bullet, but I’m taking from YOUR crew-”

The bottom of Augustus’s plane was rammed by another at whipping speed. He hacked out his lollipop as his plane fell to pieces. As he fell, he looked at his assaulter. “SMEEEEEEE!” Captain Hook jumped with joy. “WELL done!”

“I knew my lucky fan blade would come in handy!” Smee said.

Stewie Griffin rushed onto the field and blasted his anti-gravity gun to break Augustus’s fall, setting him gently on the ground. “Augustus, are you okay?” Stewie asked.

“Yeah…” He scratched his head. “Talk about a cheap shot.”

“This means they gonna take one of us, don’t it?!” Rallo exclaimed.

“Afraid so… We might as well watch the rest of the show.”

The four remaining pirates continued to battle. Smee was wiped out by Aragon, Snide was defeated by the Silver Bullet, and he was shot down by Aragon. “The winner of the dogfight is ARAGON of the BOOGEY PIRATES! And since the Marzipan Pirates were shot down first, Captain Mandy may take a member from their cr-”
“HOLD UP.” Mandy spoke up. “Why would I wanna take a member from that petty little crew? I’d sooner take somebody who’s more worth my time. I choose to take from the Kremling Krew… K. LUMSY!”

“Are you DAFT?!” K. Roolenstein exclaimed. “That is a violation of the rules! You were only supposed to take from the last-place crew, not-”

Mandy shot a Scare Stare at the Kremling. “The Grim Reaper fears my gaze! Am I to be afraid of Davy Jones?”

“Gulp!” The Kremling’s spine tingled. “K-K. Lumsy! Over heeeere!”

The stadium began to shake under the rhythm of footsteps. Everybody looked to the north side of the stadium as two massive green claws gripped the roof. A Kremling of incredible size, with a large yellow belly, emerged. “Uuuurr… do you want meeee?”

“Guess what, you oversized reptilian: you’re now a member of the Boogey Pirates!” Mandy shouted. “You will abandon your allegiance to the Kremlings and swear loyalty to me!”

“Why do you even want him?” Baron asked. “Despite his colossal size, he hasn’t the guts to dismember a fly!”

“Fear can do a lot of things to a mortal.”

“And since the Slag Pirates completed their craft first,” Licorice reminded, “they may take a member from the Hook Pirates.”

“Marvelous!” Slag beamed. “Which member of yer crew can play the accordion?”

“I can!” a random pirate from the audience yelled.

“Ay will take him!”

“Phew… we got lucky there.” Augustus sighed.

“Mw-mw?! Mw-mw-mw-mw-mw-mw-mw-mw-mw!” Maggie flailed her arms in anger. (“Lucky?! You’ll be lucky if they don’t order me to shoot you if they win me over!”)

“Don’t worry, Maggie, I’m working on a plan. Even if we don’t score 1st place, we might still be able to save the fairy and get outta here. For now, you’ll all have to pull your weight in this thing.”

“That’s not what she said, but, we’ll let you believe that.” Stewie replied.

“Our next bout is what I call the Search and Shoot!” Lord Licorice began. “We will shroud the ring in darkness while your choice crewmen wander a maze and shoot the others with classic laser lights! However, our fair audience will be able to monitor your actions via the TV screens, from the perspective of Nightvision cameras. If a player is shot three times, they lose. Keep in mind that you are not allowed to shoot your opponents with REAL guns, or you will be disqualified. Choose your pirates and we will begin!”

“Maggie, it’s up to you!” Augustus told the youngest baby. “You were Big Mom’s best sniper, so it’s time to remind ‘em that!”

“Mw-mw-mw-mw!” Maggie flailed her arms and pointed at her eyes.

“She said her vision is still weak, and I left her goggles on the plane!” Stewie shouted.
“Ugh- Well, how weak is it still, can’t you try?”

“Mw-mw…” Maggie tried to Zoom in to the distant audience, but her eye twitched with soreness, so she retracted her vision.

“Sigh, well you’re going to have to tough it out. I have a plan…”

“The five crews have chosen their players!” Licorice announced once more. “But I will not announce them for the sake of secrecy. Please, enter the tent!” The chosen contestants entered a huge dark tent that lowered over the field. A maze had also risen from the floor, and it was nearly pitch-black inside. Maggie noticed the glow coming from the Nightvision cameras. “Shooters… hunt!”

Maggie clutched her laser gun tight and moved about the maze carefully. “It’s all up to you, Maggie.” Augustus’s words rang in her mind. “Not only do you gotta win, you have to find the Boogey Pirate member and take him out first. I know you can do it, Mags. You were the most feared sniper on the Seven Seas, so it’s time to prove it.”

He was right… Maggie was the greatest sniper in the Big Mom Pirates. Her name was known across the sea, she was feared by all. She killed Charles Burns, one of the Corporate Presidents. Even though she was a child, she earned a bounty of $56,000 (as well as the equivalents in all respective countries). She had to follow her captain’s plan… only she could—

“The contestant of the Slag Pirates, Killbot 4625, is the first to fall! That means whoever wins may claim from their crew.”

“Defeated by Army Dillo, no less.” Baron K. Rool stroked his own chin. “As an animal, his senses are heightened, and we have trained him to recognize any scent. The exhaust from robots, the rum-soaked breath of a swabbie, the Hell-rotten stench from demons, or even an infant’s baby powder. As our top gunman, no prey escapes his nose!”

“Darn it!” Augustus stomped his foot. “Just focus on winning, Maggie!!”

Hearing his voice, Maggie flinched and whipped out her real gun. She began shooting the tent’s ceiling rapidly, poking holes everywhere. “Red flag! RED FLAG!” Captain Hook cried. “She’s not supposed to USE a real gun!”

“OBJECTION!” Augustus yelled up at him. “The contestants aren’t allowed to shoot their OPPONENTS with real guns! Didn’t say they couldn’t bring them in for other uses!”

“Captain Fizzuras makes a fair point!” Licorice agreed. “Miss Maggie did not strike her enemies with her bullets. But I see little purpose in making the maze slightly brighter.”

“It isn’t just brighter.” Augustus smirked. “Come on, Mags, you can do it.”

Maggie withstood the soreness and used her Zoom-Zoom power to zero in on the tent’s holes. She eventually found some that gave her a good view of the large TVs, showing her the positions of enemy snipers. A Bulblin Archer, who was likely the Boogey Pirate, was about to catch her from around the corner, so Maggie swiftly ducked behind a nearby rock. Maggie drew out one of her other guns to shoot floating mirrors, creating a path to the Bulblin so she could shoot her laser three times, reflect around the mirrors, and defeat him.

“The Boogey Pirate contestant, Bobbleton, is defeated! What a clever means of working around the rules!”
“Yes!” Augustus fist-pumped. “Too bad we didn’t get him first, but at least now they won’t get as many points.”

Just then, Maggie was hit by a laser from behind, so she quickly dodged behind the rock, then bolted when the Army Dillo was coming. “Wyee hah hah hah!” The armadillo laughed. “You all thought I was killed when I got struck by lightning in the ocean! …Actually, I was, but I was revived by Ganondorf’s dumping of the Sanzu River! I won’t be made a fool of again!” Using his real bullets, Army shot down Maggie’s floating mirrors and began sniffing along the ground for her.

Maggie shot more mirrors into the air, and kept track of Army by where his bullets came from. Maggie didn’t bother to stop and look through the tent holes, instead she kept maneuvering around the maze. After turning a corner, she saw the Hook Pirates’ marksman across a path, dodging his lasers to go down a right path. The pirate attempted to chase the baby, but Army Dillo caught up to where they were, and Maggie heard him successfully land a hit on the Hook Pirate. The two were in a shooting squabble, during which Army was hit, so Maggie made her way around the maze to get behind them.

She followed a good path using her mirrors, and got behind Army before landing a harmless laser blow. The Hook marksman got away, so Army whipped around to chase Maggie. The child unfortunately got to a dead end, and Army snickered once he had her cornered. Maggie evasively dodged his lasers left and right, then shot a mirror into the air. The same time Army successfully hit Maggie, the girl bounced her own laser off the mirror to hit Army. “Army Dillo of the Kremling Krew is out! Now it’s down to these two crews.”

“SHE’S OVER HERE!” Army Dillo yelled before leaving the maze. Maggie glared with anger, running around the maze before she and the Hook marksman cornered each other. He was a tall and skinny pirate with a five-o’clock shadow and blue-and-white-striped shirt. He nimbly dodged Maggie’s lasers before he struck the baby with his own. “THE WINNERS ARE THE HOOK PIRATES! And since the Slag Pirates lost first, they may take a member from their crew.”

“I’ll just be taking my accordion player back, Slag Old Boy.” Captain Hook told the robot captain. “Do you even know what my name is?” the audience pirate yelled.

“SILENCE!”

“Our next contest will be the Dread Race!” Lord Licorice announced. “Captain Slag took the courtesy of setting up this lovely Gravity Track, and programmed this set of karts to roll up it freely. Choose the most fitting pirate for the job, and let them choose a kart. The other crewmen cannot interfere with the race, but the competing pirates can use whatever means necessary to win. The first place pirate crew can choose a member from last place. You will have five minutes to pick a kart!”

“Hokay.” Augustus clapped hands. “Which one o’ you is great at racing games?”

“Oo-oo!” Rallo jumped, raising his hand. “I am! I want that car that looks like a boombox!” He pointed to a kart that was designed like a large boombox, with a stereo on the front and back.

The Marzipans went over to observe its controls. “Wow, it is like a boombox.” Stewie said. “But how can you tell what the buttons do?”

“Easy! Turnin’ up the volume speeds you up, turnin’ it down is brakes, and flippin’ up and down channels turns you left or right.”
“You would know better than us, Monty.” Augustus said. “You’re up.”

“You should know better than to use that name again.”

“Our crews have chosen! From the Marzipan Pirates, Rallo Tubbs, on the Boomboxer! From the Boogey Pirates, Skeeter the Bomskit, on the Treadmill Trekker! From the Kremling Krew, Kass, on the Rocket Barrel! From the Hook Pirates, Sir Big-Legs-and-Small-Body Samuel, on the Convenient-Bike-To-Match-Such-Traits! And lastly, from the Slag Pirates, Hyrule Rusty Pete on the Lever Device!”

“Knock ‘em dead, Hyrule Pete!” Termina Pete yelled.

“Ay sure will, Termina Pete (hiccup)!”

“Racers, at the ready!” The five pirates were parked at the starting line, their engines revving. Skeeter’s kart was designed like a treadmill, and would move as the speedy demon ran across it. Rusty Pete’s kart was like that of a minecart that goes as you move the lever up and down. Sir Big-Legs rode a very tall bicycle, where the pedals were low enough for his long legs to reach. “On your marks! Geeeeeeet set… You want me to say the ‘G’ word, don’t you? But how long will I make you—”

“JUST GO, YOU IDIOTS!” Mandy shouted.

Licorice shot his gun, and the pirates boosted—with the exception of Rallo, who was otherwise in the middle of the racers. Almost instinctively, the other racers forced their cars into a center, having intended to crush the 5-year-old. “WOAH! Good thinking, Tubbs!” Augustus praised. “But get going, they won’t wanna fight each other for long!”

“You got it!” Rallo began to race up a track that went up like a wall, for his kart’s wheels were programmed to meld with the altered gravity. The track would go up a loop-di-loop high above the stadium, then would lead over the stadium’s roof and out into the jungle. When he rammed through some ? Blocks at the loop’s top, his item select landed on Place Swap, which were a green and red arrow making a circle. “I ain’t ever see this in *Mario Kart*. I wonder what it does?” Rallo pushed the activate button, and the icon was launched along the track, spinning and glowing. It missed Rusty Pete in 4th place and caught Kass, who was in 3rd place. Rallo found the icon appeared around him, and he and Kass switched positions.

“BOO YEAH!” Rallo cheered. “Now I just-wh-whoaa, WHOOOA!” Since he was now in Cinnamon Jungle, he accidentally rammed the spiked stalk of an outstretched Apple Piranha. Rusty Pete got past him, so Rallo quickly backed up with the Rewind button and got around the Piranha Plant. Rallo drove through more jungle before going up a left vertical gravity track over a cinnamon creek. Kass caught up and shoved Rallo from the right, forcing him to go a left path with several upcoming gaps. “OH, CRAP! Wait! What if I plug this into MY boombox?” Rallo grabbed the plugs in the cockpit and stuck them in the sockets in the back of his afro. He was able to channel his musicbending through and make the car bounce via his booms.

He managed to jump the gaps and go across a series of Boost Pads, which sent him up a ramp as his kart’s glider activated. He soared ahead of Kass and Pete, and nabbed a single ? Block before the ramp. He landed on a Power Star and became invincible, driving through the field of Apple Piranhas without trouble. He was catching up to Sir Big-Legs and knocked him aside, claiming 2nd place, but Skeeter was still keeping ahead. Rallo’s Star Power wore off by the time the gravity track led them up and around the huge stadium’s side. Skeeter had three banana peels in his reserve, so he dropped them on the track and caused Rallo to hit one, making his Boomboxer spin out of control before hitting the side. Big-Legs zipped past him, dropping a Bob-omb that Rallo
didn’t notice before crashing into it.

Kass got past him, so Rallo got back on track and kept moving before Pete could do the same. The track led back into the stadium, going down a slope before crossing the finish line – completing the first lap. They went up the vertical track to the loop-di-loop again, and when Big-Legs (now in 3rd place) got three Red Shells, he sent them all back to hit Rallo, who narrowly dodged, so Pete got hit instead. “I say, isn’t that turtle abuse?” he asked.

“I would say so!” Termina Pete yelled.

Rallo hit the ? Blocks and landed on Blooper, so he sent the aerial squid out to ink all the other racers. Big-Legs lost traction and drove into the cinnamon creek, letting Rallo get past and go up the gravity track over said creek. He chose to take the left shortcut again, using his boombox to bounce the gaps, but it seemed Skeeter took this route, too. The Bomskit purposely slowed down, then grabbed the ? Block before going up the glider ramp, so that the block didn’t respawn in time before Rallo could get it. They soared across the cinnamon swamp, and Rallo remained in 2nd place as he chased Skeeter through the Piranha Plant garden. He gasped and dodged left when a piranha almost bit him, going up the gravity track around the stadium.

“WAAAAH!” Rallo was blown aside by a huge Bullet Bill – which was actually Rusty Pete’s kart, transformed after collecting said item from a ? Block. It wore off before Skeeter could be hit, and Rallo finished the 2nd lap in 3rd place. Their karts flew up the loop-di-loop, and Rallo collected a ? Block that landed on three Red Shells. He blasted at Rusty Pete and got past him, then quickly blasted forward to hit Skeeter. The Bomskit withstood each shot with three Green Shells, and as Rallo chased him across the shortcut path, he growled with rage when the monster claimed the ? Block first.

“WHOA!” Lightning struck the racers, cast by 5th place Kass, shrinking all except her. Since Rallo was going up the glider ramp at the time, his glider didn’t activate and he fell onto the normal track. However, Skeeter, who was already flying over the swamp, ended up falling in and trapped. “RALLO, musicbending gets rid of ailments!” Augustus yelled.

Rallo quickly blasted music and stretched himself to normal. He kept racing, and made it to first place. He didn’t hesitate or look back as he maneuvered the Apple Piranha garden, and when he made it up and around the stadium path, it looked like first place belonged to him. “Ladies and gentlemen, Montclair Tubbs is goin’ for the goal!” Rallo announced as he zeroed in on the finish. “He kicks the ball, and…!”

Skeeter blasted past him with Star Power he had conveniently collected in the swamp, along with a Gold Shroom in the piranha garden. “NOOOO!” Augustus and the babies screamed. Rallo regained himself and crossed the finish, still winning 2nd place.

“THE BOOGEY PIRATES WIN AGAIN!” Licorice announced with apparent delight. “Since Sir Big-Legs didn’t move his legs fast enough, Captain Mandy may take from Hook’s crew.”

“The Fairy Princess is MINE, you Han Solo wannabe!” Mandy pointed at Hook.

“I told you never to mention that topic to me.” Hook stated through gritted teeth. “And you can’t claim her unless you’ve won the whole thing!”

“Very well.” Mandy marched up to Lord Licorice and took his mike. “LISTEN UP, you sweaty post-college frat boys: the Fairy Princess is hereby reserved to me, myself, and I! Should any of you be lucky enough to come in first place, I will challenge your entire crew myself. To the victor will go the spoils. Do we have an understanding?”
“AAAAAARRRRRRHHHHHHHH!”

“‘Arrrrrr’ yourself.”

“Yes, well, thank you for making that point, Miss Mandy.” Licorice took his mike back. “Which brings us to our next challenge: the Combat Brawl. Simply beat up your opponents with good old martial arts. Your other crewmen may not aid you. Crews, choose your strongest combatants, and we will begin.”

“Well, we’re boned.” Stewie slumped in defeat. “Unless you truly expect to pull your Haki back out of your arse again.”

“Not quite yet, Stew.” Augustus started a new lollipop. “I’m pickin’ you for this one.”

“What- Me?! How do you expect ME to do this?”

“Don’t you still have your Devil Fruit powers?”

“Well, I…I haven’t really tried since that battle. But I can’t unless I become angry.”

“You were angry at me for signing us up for this, right?”

“That isn’t the point!”

“Stewie, just go for it! And make sure you take out the Mandy Crew’s guy out first, you got it?”

“Ugh. This is becoming rinse and repeat. Very well… I’ll give it my all.”

“From the Boogey Pirates,” Licorice began, “they have chosen their newest member, K. Lumsy! From the Slag Pirates, Sprocket! From the Kremling Krew, their Division Commander, Lord Fredrik! From the Hook Pirates, Popeye! And the Marzipans have gladly offered up… Stewie Griffin?!?”

Indeed, the football-headed baby looked very small compared to all those muscular combatants. Popeye was a sailor with a pipe in his mouth, and the ends of his arms were larger than his skinnier base ends. Lord Fredrik was a very large walrus with a Viking helmet, and his eyes were monstrous. Sprocket was a large robot with an oven for a stomach, but the biggest brute there was definitely K. Lumsy.

“But New Captain Mandy, I don’t wanda fight.” The giant Kremling said in a simple-minded tone. “Dat baby and dat walrus and dat guy who looks like a doll are cuuuute.”

“Awww… I’m sorry, Klumsy.” Mandy spoke with a warm, loving voice, getting level with K. Lumsy’s head using a floating boat. “Was my order not clear?” She gently patted Klumsy’s head. He glanced at the smaller woman, tears dripping from his eyes. “Perhaps you need to… look me in the EYE!” Her dark eyes shone with fear.

“BOOOOUUUUUURRRRR!” That one little glance threw the giant crocodile into nightmares.

K. Lumsy was chained to the ground by human people, who were whipping him and cutting him with swords. All the giant croc did was cry, his moans echoed as he begged for mercy, but they passed it off as ‘crocodile tears’ and continued to torture. Then the K. Rool Brothers marched into town, Kapitain Kruppers shot all the people to death. Kroctus cut the chains binding the giant. “You are a perfect specimen for the Kremling Krew. Come with me, and we will put your strength to good use.”
Then, Kroctus ordered him to squish an island full of monkeys. Those monkeys were so cute, K. Lumsy couldn’t bear to do it... but then, the giant found the remains of dead Kongs squished under his feet. He had crushed the entire jungle into ruin. No matter what he tried to do, he was a giant, and a monster.

“OOOUUUUURRRR!” The fear drove K. Lumsy mad, the giant Kremling charged into the field and stomped his foot down on Lord Fredrik. The Snowmad Boss kept his foot up with his great strength and pushed the giant away. Popeye pulled out some spinach and chucked it in his mouth: his arms puffed bigger as he ran at Sprocket to throw punches, and the larger robot countered with equal strength.

“Stewie, hurry up and go Hulk!” Augustus yelled.

“I’m trying, I’m trying!” Stewie yelled, trying to channel his frustration. “Nnnnnnggggh!” The baby succeeded in puffing his right arm, albeit still peach-colored, and threw a punch at an incoming Lord Fredrik. K. Lumsy roared as he charged to Sprocket and Popeye, swinging his tail to knock them away. Stewie pushed the ground with his huge arm and bounced over, grabbing onto Klumsy’s right ankle. “RRRRRRRR!” The giant angrily shook his leg and flung Stewie away, then made a great leap to flatten the infant under his behind.

“Cough, uah!” Stewie coughed after Klumsy got off. “That’s worse than my father!”

“Come on, Stewie!” Augustus cheered. “Remember all that oppression you had to endure in your family! Your dad comin’ in drunk and passing out in your bedroom, your mom ignoring your intelligence, your sister using your hands as floss, and not to mention that dog stealing the script you wrote! Big Mom knew you were the perfect body for the Hulk-Hulk Fruit, and that was why! The most misunderstood person in his family needs to unleash his anger!”

“Grrrr!” Stewie tried to channel more anger, but only his left leg grew to Hulk size. He began to walk with his right arm and left leg, grabbing Sprocket and throwing him at Fredrik, but Popeye leapt and punched the baby to the ground.

“Oh for GOD’S sake, Stewie!” his captain yelled again. “You have a DOLL of Popeye! Just pretend he’s that doll and kick him-”

“Ngh, will you JUST SHUT UP SO I CAN CONCENTRATE!” Stewie’s eyes flashed yellow, and within seconds, he had morphed into his full Hulk form. K. Lumsy grabbed the monster and punched him with his other hand before throwing Stewie on the ground. K. Lumsy fell forward to crush the Hulk, but Stewie lifted him up by the belly and twirled the giant around. He tossed Klumsy to push Sprocket and Fredrik away, then grabbed the giant by the tail before swinging him around to knock down his opponents.

Stewie hurled K. Lumsy straight at the Jolly Roger, destroying a huge chunk of the ship. K. Lumsy crashed back on the stadium floor, and everyone looked as the net holding Princess Aisling was dangling by its metal rope. “Stewie, now’s your chance!” Augustus said eagerly. “Go for it!”

The infuriated Hulk spared a glance at the teenage captain, then looked up at the dangling metal net. Stewie squatted, and used the strength of his Hulk legs to make the incredible leap to the ship that was 40 meters in the air. Aisling gasped and backed away when the monster grabbed hold of her net. Stewie roared loudly as he began shaking and tugging the net. Inevitably, the device that was holding the net came off, and they both plummeted to the stadium floor. However, they landed on Klumsy’s large belly, and the giant released a large “HACK!”

All of the pirates roared with protest when Stewie forced the top of the net open, reached inside,
and grabbed the ghostly-white fairy forcefully. The other three combatants were charging to attack him, so Stewie leapt, squished Popeye to the ground, used his free hand to grab Fredrik’s head, then shoved him into Sprocket’s oven chest. The walrus screamed with his head on fire, laying a furious beatdown on the robot once he was out. With another amazing leap, Stewie went over the stadium’s roof and escaped into the jungle with Aisling in his arm.

“AFTER THEM!” Lord Licorice pointed furiously in Stewie’s direction. “Send all available crewmen to catch that monster and BRING BACK the fairy! And send some people to apprehend the Marzipan Pirates for…” He looked down at the field. “What? Where are they?!”

Augustus, Rallo, and Maggie seized the chance to run up to the defeated K. Lumsy. “Psst, hey Klumsy! Can you hear me?”

“Sniff… noooooo!” The giant Kremling was crying. A puddle of tears had already formed around his head. “I don’t wanda fight anymore! I wanda run away! I wanda run where no one will find me! Where no oned will be mean to me!”

“Well, not to sound self-centered, but we’re kind of in the same boat as you.” Augustus was telling him rushedly. “Our pirate crew is really tiny, but all these guys have been doing is ganging up on us! Help us escape, and you can join our crew!”

“No!” K. Lumsy shook his arms and legs like a baby. “I don’t wanda! You gonna make me fight! Dat’s what K. Rool bade me do! Dat’s what New Captain Mandy bade me do! Don’t bake be fight, too!”

“I won’t make you fight, I promise! Just get us outta here, you’re the only chance we got at escape!”

“There they are, let’s get ‘em!” A swarm of Slag and Hook Pirates were entering the ring. K. Lumsy sniffled. “You won’t bake be fight?”

“No, I won’t bake bou fight- I bean, make you- JUST HELP US, PLEASE!”

“Mw-mw!” Maggie whipped out her guns to shoot the Hook Pirates while Rallo shot sonic waves at the Slag Pirates. Unfortunately, some of the pirates got through and grabbed hold of the helpless children.

K. Lumsy’s eyes widened at the cruel pirates’ actions (upside-down in his position). “LEAVE DOESE KIDS ALONE!” The giant Kremling jumped to his feet and reached down to grab the two babies. Afterwards, he grabbed Augustus and rushed to one of the stadium’s corners. The audience members screamed and cowered away when K. Lumsy climbed over them, then leapt over the roof to run across the jungle.

“This Davy Back Fight is suspended!” Lord Licorice announced. “All pirates are ordered to return to their ships and pursue the traitors! Take back the Fairy Princess at all costs!”

“A WORD about that, if you will.” Mandy grabbed Licorice’s arm and dragged him down into her ship.

“AAAH!” Lord Licorice was thrown into Mandy’s cabin. The woman shut the door as she entered. “What are you getting angry at me for?! I didn’t order them to take her!”

“But it was YOUR idea to capture Augustus and force him to compete! You said your plan to walk out of here with the fairy was foolproof.”
“With YOU in these games, how couldn’t it have been foolproof?! I let you be the scary, intimidating empress you are and ignore the technical rules so you could win the Fairy Princess. But I still had to make myself look good in front of these salty demons by bringing the grandson of the most despised pirate; not to mention, Mr. Augustus is still wanted by the Government. Perhaps if YOU hadn’t taken K. Klutzy and ordered him to fight, they wouldn’t have gotten away! I mean, sure we couldn’t have anticipated that Unbelievable Hulk trick, but even less reason I shouldn’t.”

Mandy kicked the Candy Lord in the face and knocked him against her throne. “You know what happens if you say ‘couldn’t’, ‘wouldn’t’, or ‘shouldn’t’ to me. Our deal was that you would help me take the Fairy Princess from Hook’s crew, and I would lend my demons to you to find and destroy the Lost Candies. Unless you would rather hunt for and destroy them yourself.”

“And I would just love to do that, if half of those candies weren’t so well-protected! His Majesty has tasked me with nothing more than to destroy those atrocities, but my candy-based resources are, shall we say… lacking in power. But I wouldn’t like His Majesty to know that. Just help me out, keep it a secret that I’m working with pirates, and no one else has to know you have the Fairy Princess. Besides, it’s not like we weren’t going to pursue and burn any crew that tried to steal her, don’t you agree?”

“Sigh… very well. But your story about the princess better have meaning behind it. Or you’ll regret it.” Mandy left the cabin on that note.

Lord Licorice helped himself up, fixed his hat, and straightened his bowtie. His eyes were shadowed under his hat. Working with pirates… the very idea is disgraceful. Just like when Big Brother John chose to leave the family and go pirating. Sure, I’m posing as their friend now… but I’ll have them dealt with soon enough.

Enclosed bay; two hours later…

The four pirate crews followed the trail of smashed trees to a cliffside looking over a large bay. There was no other sign as to where the giant Kremling could have gone. Dark gray clouds were appearing in the sky, and the heavy wind told them it would rain. “HUUFF!” Mr. Smee emerged from the sea below. “I’m sorry, Cap’n, but the sea is too murky! I can’t see them anywhere.”

“Ohgh… Climb back up the ladder, Mr. Smee.” Captain Hook sighed. “It’s obvious that those scurvy brats have swum away with that overgrown reptile. We’ll never be able to find them in the storm. Let’s all hurry back and fix the Jolly Roger. Slag, you better call your men back, too.”

“Arrrr… he be right, old Hooky.” Slag sighed. “Mates, let’s go! Or we will rust.”

“Pardon me, Captain,” the Silver Bullet spoke, “but normally, crocodiles cannot swim very well in the ocean. And I highly doubt a reptile of his stature would get very far, let alone in this type of weather. They could still be in the bay. I could send my aqua drones to track them down.”

“Could ye now? Orright, then… Ay’ll leave it to you. But return to base when yer done.” Slag and his two Petes marched away.

The Silver Bullet grabbed his head and pulled it off… Underneath her helmet, she was a mouse girl with purple fur, who shook her long orange hair free. “Man, that thing is stuffy. Hokay then, time to find us some runaways…”

Seaside cave

After diving into the ocean, K. Lumsy swam around the bay and into a large cave. He climbed onto
a shore and hacked the four Marzipans, plus Princess Aisling, out of his mouth. “*Hooff, hoof…*”
The giant Kremling sat in the back of the cave to catch his breath. “*I storry, guys. I didn’t know what to do…*”

“Cough… It’s okay, big guy.” Augustus gasped. “At least we got away from them. …” He looked at Princess Aisling, whose white hair was wet with saliva, drooping over her face. When she sat up, Augustus gently moved her hair away to see her young, pretty face. “Are you okay?”

“Okay?!?” Aisling smacked his hands away and stood up angrily. “I have been trapped in that smelly old ship for almost seven, *months*. Then this large brute of a mutant baby takes me away, and now I was chucked into the mouth of a similar creature. Of course I am not okay.” She folded her arms and turned away. “In fact, I have never been disrespected in such a manner for all my life. You’re lucky I had the right state of mind to calm your friend down.”

“Huff…huff…” Stewie was panting on the ground, his clothes ripped from using his Hulk form.

“I could feel that child’s pain inside his heart. Perhaps he was suffering in that form. It must be hazardous for him.”

“Um… Thanks.” Augustus said. “So, Fairy Princess… are you really a-”

“Yes, I am really the Forest Fairy Princess. You may call me Aisling. And I assume you wanted me for the same purpose as those other brutes.” She whipped around and shot her face into his, Startling the teen boy. “Well, let me tell you.” She was glaring scoldingly. “My lifebending powers are unavailable at the moment. I have transferred the extent of my powers to somebody else.” She folded arms and turned away in a smug fashion. “You wasted your time.”

Augustus shook his head, “Er- Wait a second… does that mean you couldn’t restore my Haki?”

“HAKI?” Aisling shot back in his face again with a sarcastic shocked look. “Why would I be able to give you HAKI? Haki is something you learn, and no magic can make you master of something so wondrous as a martial art.”

“But I already WAS a master of Haki! I just lost it because of the Candy Virus!”

“Oh, yes, the infamous virus that plagued that dreadful Linlin Family. I’ve never seen anything so disgusting and unnatural. Even worse when I tried to study it. But your situation makes sense, because you still have fragments of the virus inside you.”

“Wait, I do?!”

“Of course you do. It’s not enough to cause too much damage, though. But don’t expect me to get it out for you. Such unnatural poison is beyond my power.”

“Oh…” Augustus looked away. *Maybe I can find that girl again to get it out of me. But I’m not sure where she lives…”*

“But I guess I do owe you for saving me.” Aisling said. “So I will tell you who *could* remove it for you.”

“You could? Who?”

Aisling stood on her tippy-toes to get up in his face with wide eyes. “The Princess of Sugar Fairies.”
“. . . Why do you do that?”

“It’s better than what you do.” She backed away.

“But, Sugar Fairies… don’t those things hang out in the Cotton Clouds?”

“Well, they’re actually pretty sociable, especially in candy places. But I bet you don’t know where their homeland is.”

“Actually, I do.” Augustus began a new lollipop. “I’m just not sure how to find it.”

“Then I will help you. But we won’t be able to escape if those monsters are out there.”

“So, what’s your idea?”

Aisling tapped her chin in thought. She looked up at K. Lumsy, who had his arms wrapped around his legs. “I believe this creature can make do.”

**Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium**

“Here, Gerald, this Hair-Strengthener should do the trick!” Facilier said as he tossed a small spray bottle to one of his customers. His shop was overcrowded with excited kids. “Even a lightsaber couldn’t cut it! Jennifer, this Portable Portal Pill can let you eat a ocean of sugar puffs, you won’t gain a shred of weight! Wears off after a day, so watch out. Come on, kids, one at a time, take it easy!”

After everyone else had finally gone, the brown-haired girl with a gray jacket, Samantha, walked in. “Hey, Mr. Facilier. Did I come at a bad time?”

“Eh, I’ve had busier days.” he said coolly, straightening his hat back on. “Course, you wouldn’t know about a renegade witch fairy who goes around planting curses.”

“Uhhh… I guess not.” She blushed confusedly. “So, anyway, you remember when I said my brother’s in the KND? Well, he told me that the KND is actually leaderless… Like, he never mentioned it before, and now he’s really worried about it… So, he’s wondering what happened to the last leader. Do you think your… crystal ball could show me?”

“That’s a bit much for the crystal ball, considering you aren’t affiliated with them. Perhaps the spirits may tell me something. Give me a sec.” Facilier closed his eyes and touched fingers to his forehead.

Under the table, his shadow was looking at a 4x4 laptop, checking the KND’s files. After viewing information about some guy named ‘Cheren’, Shadow spoke telepathically to his master. Samantha could read the confused looks Facilier was making, as if someone invisible was talking to him. He opened his eyes and said, “The spirits tell me that the KND’s current leader is… ‘Cheren Uno.’ But I must say, I ain’t ever heard of such a boy. Did your brother ever mention him?”

“I… I don’t remember.”

“Well, one thing’s for certain, there is a mysterious air floating about. My head’s been a little foggy. I’m sorry if you wanted to hear more.”

“I guess it doesn’t matter.” Samantha stood up. “I’ll ask my brother about Cheren, I guess. I’ll see you later.” She left the shop.
“Hmmm…” Facilier stroked his forehead with his fingers, still contemplating this ‘Cheren’ character. “Well, whatev.” He used magic to lock the shop door. “WENDY!”

The ceiling hatch opened as Wendy climbed down, followed by Carla and the Ice Climbers. “Is the shop closed, Mr. Facilier?”

“Yes! Now pull up a chair and let’s begin!”

Wendy, dressed in her emerald pattern dress, politely sat on the chair across the table. “First, Wendy, explain Gamp’s Law of Elemental Transfiguration.”

“Uhhhhh…” Wendy pressed her forehead in thought. “It’s like… you can’t make food appear… but you can multiply it, and warp it from somewhere else… and you can make it bigger.”

“Explain the science behind it, Child.” Carla told her with narrowed cat eyes.

“W-Well… the food multiplies because… uh-I dunno! I didn’t think magic HAD science!” She pressed her head harder and was on the verge of crying.

“HA ha ha!” Facilier laughed. “Well, while the food may appear to multiply, the individual ones have a sufficient drop in calories and quality, and it continues to drop the more it’s multiplied. When it’s enlarged, it’s just manipulating space to enlarge its dimensions. But moving on, what can an Armos Spirit and Tektite Shell be combined to make?”

“Um… they make explosives! I think…”

“Super big explosives, of course. Now tell me… what the Sun Chi Lantern can do!”

“Oh!” Wendy perked. “It can draw in the chi from nearby benders and give the user control of those elements!”

“Why is that one so interesting to you?” Carla asked.

“Well, because it only works with benders you have close bonds with.” Wendy touched her heart. “It’s like having a part of your friends inside of you. It sounds like a warm feeling…”

“But taking their chi would only make the friends weaker.” Carla noted. “Sounds a little selfish if you ask me…”

“It isn’t really.” Facilier said. “There are worse ways to take someone’s energy, like the Parasitus Curse, darknessbending, or energybending… This way, it’s more like borrowing. And it’s stronger because of those good morals and all that. But anyway, I hope you’re finally cooled down from those events in Orchid Bay.”

“Oh. Yeah, I’m feeling fine now.” Wendy blushed, scratching her head. “I’m sorry about… when I cried…”

“Oh, water under the bridge. …Hehe. Get it?” Wendy made a sheepish laugh at this pun. “But if you are, that means you’re ready for a brand new quest!”

“All right!!” Wendy jumped in the air. “Where are we going? A field of unicorns? A planet of floating islands? Or maybe a place where people wear shirts for pants and vice-versa!”

“We’re goin’…” Facilier wore an eager smirk, standing and raising a brochure. His attempt at suspense made Wendy excited. “…to the magical city of GLITZVILLE!” He slapped the brochure
on the table before Wendy.

“GLITZVILLE?! OH, WOW! . . . What’s Glitzville?”

“It’s a popular vacation area mostly known for its combat arena, the Glitz Pit. All the greatest fighters like to gather there to let off steam. They don’t just have martial artists, they bring in all kinds of rare and unique creatures, including magic ones! I figure it would be a great study assignment for you.” He pulled a notebook from out of nowhere.

“Oh. So it’s one of those fun field trips, but with homework.” Wendy blushed. “Well, it still sounds fun! Do you think I’ll learn a lot?”

“Sure you will!” Harvey said perkily. “There’s just… one itty-bitty dilemma: it’s under Government protection.”

“Government protection?” Carla questioned. “Then won’t Wendy be in danger?”

“Relax, relax! I have the perfect disguise…”

Leaving it off there because the Davy Back Fight lasted longer than I expected. (In fact, it was going to be longer, but I figured…) Captain Hook comes from Peter Pan, Popeye is from his titular series, Aisling is from Secret of Kells, and the Kremlings are from Donkey Kong. K. Lumsy is from Donkey Kong 64, and I sort of gave him a personality quirk where he talks like a baby. Next time, I plan to have more Negaverse action.
The Place To Be Tomorrow

Chapter Summary

Sandman infiltrates Freddy's Pizzeria. Then, Team Rupert infiltrates his own home.

At first I felt like I didn’t give the Freddy level much emphasis, but I think it lasted a fair amount of time.

Chapter 13: The Place To Be Tomorrow

Outside Uno Home

The neighborhood was quiet and peaceful in this most average of towns. It wasn’t so late where people were in bed, as many lights were still on and children were playing. The earth nearly shook when a flaming skeletal train exploded from and screeched to a halt along the street, its blue flames lighting for blocks. Django stepped off with a cool, casual smile while Sector V followed tiredly. “Did we have to stop at Dos Bros’ Tacos?” Aurora asked.

“What? They make good tacos.” Django replied.

“You can’t even taste, dude.” Chris said.

“Doesn’t mean I can’t savor.”

“Yes it do-”

“Dude, forget it.” Dillon cut off. “What about Midna, is your group gonna save her or what??”

“Not right now, it’s late at night, you know how mortals get. So uh, this thing about you being a leaderless Kids Next Door, you guys uh… need a leader then, don’t you?” Django smirked.

“Well, you can’t be leader, aside from being dead, you’re not even an operative.” Haruka told him.

“I’m not I’m not, I’m just saying. Nice treehouse, though, we crashing here tonight?”

“You’re not, but the rest of us are crashing at our own houses, don’t want our parents getting worried.” Mason said.

“Who’s Django staying with, anyway?” Dillon asked—the others flinched to attention and put their index on their noses. “Since he can’t just stay in the treehouse and he…. DAMMIT!”

Sheila’s finger was twisted up her nose when she realized. “Oh, I thought you all just decided ta pick your noses.”

“Fine, I’ll take him to my place.” Dillon admitted defeat. “He can help explain to Mom about Midna’s situation. See you all tomorrow?”

“SEE YA.” So all 10 members disbanded to their own houses, while Dillon and Django boarded the latter’s train again to take to Quahog.
“Mom, Dad, we’re hooooome.” Aurora called once she and Chris entered their house.

“Hi, kids.” Rachel greeted in the living room. “Listen, there’s somethin’ I wanna ask you. Do you… remember anybody like this?”

She showed them a family photo, Nigel, Rachel, Chris, Aurora, and… a brown-haired boy with red glasses. The siblings stared confused. “I… don’t remember anybody like that.” Aurora said.

“I know. And I also found this.” She showed them the note to send backup to Roguetown Station, in case ‘Cheren’ didn’t call.

“Is that his name—was that for you or us?”

“I don’t know. But… isn’t it kind of weird?”

“It is…” Chris held his forehead. “Until a while ago, I’ve… actually been feeling kinda woozy. Just like when I fought that Sir Knightly guy. Hmm… I need to lie down.”

Their father watched from the kitchen as Chris walked upstairs. Nigel followed him shortly after, finding Chris on his bed with his hand still over his head. “Need any medicine, son?”

“No Dad, I’m alright, just… tired.”

Nigel approached and sat beside him. “Tell me again how… the fight with Sir Knightly went?”

“I was whalin’ on him, not leaving a dent… then I lost him… and when I was trying to find him, a… boulder hit me.”

“And you didn’t have any bruises.” Nigel recalled.

“No… that’s the weird part. Like, I remember so clearly getting hit by a boulder, but I didn’t feel any pain, and it doesn’t feel like something that… happened. …What’s wrong with me, Dad?”

“…” Nigel pat his son’s head. “Nothing’s wrong, Chris. Just go to sleep if you want to. Everything will be better, soon.”

“Yah… okay.”

Nigel left his son to himself and proceeded down the hall. He passed by a room labeled ‘Cheren’s Room’ and flinched. He peeked inside. It was Nigel’s old room, British flag blanket, under a slanted ceiling, Numbuh Zero’s treehouse in the corner. Pictures of that same boy were on the walls, with Panini, Melody, Chris and Aurora, Nebula… he was clearly well-acquainted with all of them, he apparently lived here… so why in the world didn’t Nigel remember. …Nigel knew, though… knew the reason… he connected the dots… “You’ve gone too far this time, King.”

Civic City

Team Sandman returned to Rhode Island via the Sandmobile and sat perched atop a building overlooking the pizza restaurant, a giant waving Freddy statue giving the place attention. For the last half hour, Nolan’s been going over and memorizing the Yipper’s notes. “Read all sorts of nasty rumors about this place online, but I guess they’re true. And look, chi-blocked just for our entertainment.” He noticed the symbols on the sides. “I wanna get through this place as quick as possible. Let’s go down.” His friends followed him to the roof of the restaurant. When the Freddy statue seemed to glance at them, they already felt chills down their spine.
On the roof, Nolan ripped open a hatch exposing wires, linking them to his wristwatch. “I’m downloading a wireless link with the camera system. Yipper said he made good use of the cameras, so they’ll help me big time. Since it’s robots we’re dealing with, I won’t see ‘em with Detective Vision. Meanwhile, you two stay out here and keep rewinding this.” He pulled out a CD-like device and hooked it to another cord. “I linked it to the speaker system so you can keep rewinding the music that puts The Puppet to sleep. I’ll just need to sneak by the other animatronics to take it out.”

“Are you sure you don’t want us going in with you?” Crystal asked.

“These aren’t the modern guards we’re used to dealing with. I’ve survived worse, so don’t worry.”

“But isn’t this a bit too much trouble for info on Doflamingo?” Yuki asked. “We already know he lives in Dressrosa, can’t we just work from there?”

“Maybe, but this restaurant’s sounding too dangerous to just let stand. I’ll be able to kill two birds by doing something about it. Not gonna sugarcoat this place, though. I’ll signal you if I need the music rewound, you probably won’t hear it out here. Wish me luck.” With no more else to say, Sandman glided to the front and approached the entrance. He entered the code ‘It’s Me’ in the terminal before going in.

Stage 22: Freddy’s Pizzeria

Mission: Find out who turned everyone into toys.

Curtained tables with party favors covered the checkered floor of this dark restaurant. The gentle tune of “My Grandfather’s Clock” rang throughout the store. Nolan looked at the camera system. Many corridors, a Prize Corner, Game Room, an old office with an oscillating fan. In the far back was a wide circular room with a closed black jack-in-the-box, where The Puppet was asleep. In a room outside of that, Chica, Bonnie, and Freddy were standing still. Any moment, they would start moving.

“HELLO?” Nolan jumped. He didn’t even notice the happy child by the waiting line holding balloons. Apparently Balloon Boy was a harmless animatronic, but he was real clingy and got in the way a lot. Nolan threw a boomerang and popped his balloons, so the child went to a closet to collect more. Sandman seized the moment to roll through the main room, going left of the stage where the animatronics would be singing at daytime and into a door. As he entered a hall, he checked the camera of the room with the robots. Bonnie was missing.

The notes said that he usually roamed around the west of the restaurant, where Nolan now lurked. He kept his flashlight ready, peeking down each corridor before making a turn. The music was reaching its end, so he signaled a ring tone to his friends to start it again. From here, he could either head north or enter an alternate hall that also led north, but on the east side. If he chose the former, he would roll by the Pirate Cove where Foxy waited, so he chose the other route. He checked the cameras and saw Chica left the room. She was headed his way, so he dove into another hall that led to the Game Room.

There was a mini merry-go-round and various game machines, but nothing too important. He saw that Chica was still wandering the northern area, close to an air duct that connected to one in this Game Room. He pressed a switch by the merry-go-round and activated it as a jingle played. There was an instant thundering through the air duct, so Sandman escaped that room before Chica would come. He pressed a switch outside that sealed the room and would keep her inside. He checked the
cameras, finding nothing else in Chica’s former vicinity and rolled forward, looking back to—

Foxy was standing right in the doorway from the previous hallway, staring at him with one eye (he wore an eyepatch) and an open mouth—thinking fast, remembering his notes, he aimed his wristwatch flashlight and flashed it on-and-off on-and-off repeatedly. Foxy stood there mindlessly before finally turning and going back. Sandman sighed, signaled his friends to rewind the music, and kept rolling. The hallway turned left, so he could either go back to the west side or further north, to the sealed room where The Puppet waits. He reckoned Freddy was the only animatronic in the next-door room, but Puppet’s room was closed with a garage door with an electrical switch above it. He needed something to activate it.

He checked the cameras and saw Bonnie lurking a little southwest, so Sandman followed the hallway to the farthest west region. His map revealed a back corridor into Foxy’s room, and when he checked the camera of that room, it seemed a key was twinkling on the table—Foxy stood at the very end of this hall staring at him, so Sandman frantically flashed his light until the fox wandered back mindlessly. Sandman signaled his friends to restart the music and continued to the narrow, mazey west side-

“Ha ha ha!” When he approached the fork, Balloon Boy jumped out from the left and grabbed him in a hug, laughing like a child who was joyous to see his daddy. Nolan aggressively tried to shake him off, and with his arms free, he sliced the balloons and forced the child to retreat. He checked the cameras and saw Bonnie was coming his way, attracted by the child’s laughter, and maneuvered his way around the maze. He checked the cameras to confirm Bonnie was trying to find him, and forced the rabbit to follow him deep enough before he made the dash back to the back corridor. Foxy waited for him at one of the turns again, so Nolan flashed him away. He let Foxy go a fair distance before following him, through the back corridor into the Pirate Cove.

Foxy was stationed on his stage, and would in-time make his round again. Nolan threw his boomerang to a button that closed a curtain around the stage. “Dududumdumdum didlydo didlydo, dududumdumdumdum, diddly dumdumdum…” Preoccupied with a little song, Sandman took this time to swipe the key and leave out the room’s front door. Sandman signaled his friends, then returned to the first room of the restaurant where he could unlock the sealed door on the right of the stage. He was about to go in, but sensed a disturbance, checking his camera to confirm Chica was in the hall beyond, having gone through another vent from the Game Room. Sandman was about to retreat to the west, but it seemed Bonnie was on his way, too. Looking left-and-right panickingly, he ultimately slid underneath a curtained table and pulled his wheelchair under, too.

He lay totally still. Still as a statue. Both doors creaked open. Bonnie and Chica’s feet were visible under the curtain, their footsteps the only sound. They were stepping around the tables. As if they sensed a presence. Nolan didn’t turn to determine their location, didn’t look at the camera. All he knew was that they didn’t return through the doors. They were still roaming.

“ . . . ooooooh, oooohh, ohhh…” Bonnie moaned like a weary old ghoul.

“ . . . oooohhhh…” Chica returned the sentiment. And with that, both robots returned to their respective corridors. Sandman climbed out and studied the cameras, seeing Chica return through the vent. He signaled his friends to restart the music and headed into the eastern door. With Chica gone, it was fairly straightforward as he reached a closed door and casually opened. He found the abandoned office, where the oscillator was still alive and blowing. Leaned against the wall was a large gun with an electric antenna. He picked it up and examined.

**Sandman got the Shock Rod!** This device can shoot electric beams that stun enemies and power electrical devices! Maybe it’ll work on the animatronics?

“Hello? Ultear, is that you?”

“Y-Yes, I’m-a Ultear.” Why am I using the accent? “Who is this-a?”

“It’s Diamante. The boss is coming back to Dressrosa tomorrow morning and he wants to know how the place is holding up.”

“Is-a holding up beautifully, robots are-a behaving.”

“Good. The Leaders want those freaks for some kind of experiment and they’re counting on Doflamingo to keep them under control. I don’t care about these ‘rumors’ your boys keep making up, just keep them inside the store. Report tomorrow.” Hung up.

Sandman sighed in relief, signaling a music rewind, and checking the cameras to see Chica lurking in the Game Room. He returned to the front room—“HI (hi hi)...” popped BB’s balloons again, then returned to the west hall. Bonnie was there to ambush him right away, so Sandman blasted the Shock Rod and caused the robot to twitch furiously, Nolan punching him aside with an Armament fist to go forward. Foxy stood yards away, having escaped from his curtain, so Sandman flashed his light to make him go back.

“Nnn HNN HNN, hnn HNN HNN, hn...” A deep, distant laugh that belonged to a demon echoed through the restaurant. Sandman hurried into the hall that crossed to east side and checked his camera, finding Freddy finally left his room. He reached the east end, but saw Chica roaming up north. He could use the Shock Rod on Chica, he just wasn’t sure where Freddy was. He approached Chica and blasted the rod, putting her in a similar state as Bonnie. “Uur hur hur hur hur hur...” After pushing Chica aside, Nolan was soon facing down the corridor to Puppet’s room. His cameras read that no one was in the starting room beside, so Nolan braved the risk. He shot the electrical device above the garage door with his Shock Rod, rolling forward when it slowly began to open. As soon as he was inside, he would shut it, keep all the other animals out.

“AAAAAAAAHHHHH!” He whipped around—there came Freddy in all his fury—Nolan blasted and trapped the titular mascot in a shock-stun, just a second from reaching the hero, but was still trying to step forward determined. The door finally opened, so Nolan wheeled inside, grabbed the handle on its side and slowly winded.

All... around... the mulberry bush...

Oh geez, Nolan thought, hearing that song in his head though the wind only jingled. Oh well.

The mon...key chased... the wea...sel...

Nolan sighed. He’ll just have to get this over with.

The mon...key thought it was all in fun

....Pop... goes... the wea...sel...

The lights blacked out. The music stopped. He turned on his flashlight and viewed his wristwatch, unable to access the cameras. “Crystal, Yuki, you read me??”
“Urgh, the wires sort of blew a fuse—they looked pretty faulty to begin with. I’m not sure how old this place is.”

“Ugh… try to fix them, I can’t… !!!!”

“AAAAHHH!” Sandman forcefully tugged his wheelchair and dodged aside, narrowly avoiding The Puppet’s arms. It hovered before him, stretching its full length: a skinny, boneless humanoid figure with a pitch-black body, white-striped arms and legs, and a white joyous face with empty eyes and mouth, purple vertical lines across his eyes. The lights flickered, and the cameras appeared more staticky. There were five cameras stationed around the walls of this room. They would have to make do.

**Boss fight: The Puppet**

He quickly logged back into the system and managed to get the view from each of these cameras. “AAAAH!” He couldn’t look for long, dodging fast when The Puppet took another swing. He looked around but couldn’t find him as the lights kept flickering; this creature really was fast. “AAAAH!” He dodged once more and checked the cameras, flipping through each one in hopes The Puppet was there. His smiling face stared directly into CAM03, but a flicker of light made him vanish. He tried to find him on another- “AAAAH!” dodged when he swooped, then flipped through the cameras again to see his face. Nolan immediately turned to that camera, shot his grapper, yanked The Puppet down, and slammed him to the floor with his fist. He delivered a round of punches, The Puppet trying to stretch its arms around his neck, but Nolan wrestled the creature, grabbed the high and low ends of its body, and threw it against the floor. Before it recovered, Nolan blasted the Shock Rod at its head and dealt immeasurable pain.

“UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU...
Sandman looked up, found BB coming, and hit the switch to block him. “AAAAH!” Dodged The Puppet’s strike and returned to the cameras. CAM02, bottom dark, flicker, CAM04, cranium, flicker, CAM03, glowing eyes in darkness, CAM05, he was standing right behind Sandman and bent over his head.

Puppet grabbed Sandman’s head the same time Nolan grabbed his, hauling over his body, falling forward out of his chair, and smashing Puppet’s cranium against the floor. Puppet gripped Sand’s head firmly, the two rolling and wrestling on the floor. The Puppet had no bones, no muscles, so its hold and tugging force was unusual. It was trying to snap Sandman’s neck, but the human wouldn’t have that. His gloves turning Armament, Sandman grabbed The Puppet tight and pinned him on his back. Punch, punch, punch, punch, Armament punch against Puppet’s head ‘til its arms let go. Nolan flipped onto his rear, wrapped arms around Puppet’s waist, grabbed its head in both hands, twisted as hard as he could, and the head came loose. Its shadowy rubber body plopped on the floor before Nolan tossed and bounced the head away. A faint, pinkish aura rose from the head. A child’s ghost formed, yellow hair, green shirt, blue shorts, white skin, dark baggy eyes. “He, hehe, he!…” A soft, happy giggle, and the ghost was gone.

Nolan caught his breath. He grabbed the arms of his wheelchair and helped himself back on. “AAAAAHHHH!” He was too stunned with surprise to defend when Freddy lunged at him—the animatronic was immediately frozen in ice. Sandman looked around, seeing Yuki aiming his pack and Wiccan her staff. “Lucky we decided to come check on you.” The latter said.

“Phew… owe you guys.” Nolan breathed. At his signal, Wiccan aimed and released a flame spell near Freddy’s head, melting it free.

“AAAAAHHHH! LEMME GO! LEMME OUT! I WANNA KILL YOU! AAAAHHHHH-!” The robot was frantically trying to escape.

Nolan socked him in the jaw with Armament. “Even free from mind control, you guys are messed up. Did you even have human hearts to begin with?”

“Big deal, we stopped being human the minute we died!” Freddy kept struggling. “We’re Hollows!”

“Hollows?”

“I read about them.” Wiccan replied. “They’re spirits who turned into monsters because they were consumed with darkness.”

“Spirits? Then how were they turned into…”

“FEEEEEEE feh feh feh!” They turned to the entrance, weapons ready. Foxy walked in casually. “You won’t-a be getting any info outta Freddy, but I’ll be-a happy to oblige.”

“You, Foxy?” inquired Sandman.

“Feh feh. The kids here know me as Foxy the Pirate Fox, but back in my day, I was renowned as the Silver Fox Foxy, pirate captain of over 500 men!”

“Can’t say I ever heard of him.” Yuki replied.

“Well of COURSE-a you haven’t, that’s-a because of the curse that’s-a been placed upon us. If you imply to know of our position, ya should know-a we all used to be physical flesh creatures, but everyone who ever knew us forgets us the moment we became toys. Freddy there was a pretty
“But Freddy just said you were spirits.” Sand replied.

“We ARE-a spirits, but, strangest-a thing, some melancholy scientist used some sort-a thingamajig to pull us from the Spirit World and seal us into these robotic husks. I don’t-a remember his name, but he was a bald man with a white coat and glasses. Poor fool couldn’t control us, so we were brought-a to a man called Doflamingo, who showed us to a twerp with greenish-hair that had the nerve to touch us, and POOF! As if these-a stupid bodies weren’t bad enough, we are TOYS now!”

“Twerp with green hair…” Sandman typed Doflamingo into his computer and pulled up images. One of them was of Doflamingo grinning, his hands on the shoulders of his son and a girl with aquamarine hair. “Is this the kid you mean?” He showed it to Foxy.

“Oh-ho yes-a. Looks-a the very same.”

Nolan pulled up Doflamingo’s online bio. “Doflamingo, accredited toy-maker, President of Doflamingo Incorporated, known for making interactive talking toys. Lives on Dressrosa with his son, Junior, and daughter, Sugar—Sugar?”

“So Sugar is the toy-maker, then?” Crystal deduced. “She’s the one we need to go after?”

Nolan rubbed his head. “Everyone turned into a toy is forgotten by everyone… those people like Holiday, Fanatic, or Tornado… they were turned into toys, that’s why we don’t remember ‘em.”

“You mean Doflamingo got ahold of enemies of ours and made us forget them?” Yuki questioned. “As long as they’re out of the way, good idea if you ask me.”

“Yuki, that’s a terrible idea!” Nolan argued. “With a power like that… what if Sugar turned someone REALLY important into a toy, imagine what would happen if everyone forgot them! Just how far do these powers go, what else could they do? I hate to beat up a little kid, but to change everyone back to normal, we have no choice. We fly to Dressrosa at dawn.”

“Nolan, you’re… sounding a little touchy about this subject.” Wiccan noted.

“… … Sorry.” Nolan released his head. “I mean… a power to remove someone from existence. No one remembers you… even your loved ones. Imagine if you or anyone you know got affected.”

Crystal couldn’t imagine herself having a dramatic effect if she were removed from existence, but Nolan though… she couldn’t imagine what she’d do if she just forgot him. “But what about The Puppet?” Nolan asked Foxy. “How is it he controlled all of you?”

“Oh-a, de Puppet… I don’t even know. Never saw him in Dressrosa, don’t-a know where he came from. He was-a… something, though. Had quite the mind, compared to these bozos.”

“He just got a kick out of this deal, then.” Wiccan replied.

“Well… thanks for the info.” Sandman told Foxy simply. “Sorry you had to sing in a restaurant against your will, but once I’m through with Doflamingo, I’ll have this place condemned.”

“And what makes-a you think I’mma let you?” Foxy proclaimed with a grim look. Bonnie, Chica, and Balloon Boy crept up behind him with ravenous eyes. “Annoying singing aside, the little children make healthy morsels when we get ’em all alone in a back corner. And now that that Puppet is gone, maybe we’ll-a be able to free-roam better and snack on ’em some more. If we’re-a
bound to live in Hell, what a Hell this will be-a for us. We’re staying and YOU’LL be our-a late-night dinner. BOYS (and Chica): attack-a.”

The animatronics were ready to lunge. Freddy shook and shook and broke free of his ice, going to join his comrades. The heroes had no way to defend their selves from all of them. They were cornered.

Suddenly, a ghost flew in through the wall and shoved Freddy against the wall. They all stared surprised. This ghost had an orange body and tail, white arms, and flaming orange hair. “. . . Wheeeeee’s my BABYYYYY?!” She turned at them with demonic bloodshot eyes on a white face. The lower jaws of the robots dropped, as did the humans’.

“E-Emily?!” Nolan gasped.

“Teeeell meeeeee NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOWWWW.” The restaurant shook from her unbearable, unblockable Ghostly Wail. The animatronics tried to shut their ears as best as they could, but her wail had the heart-stopping capability of a million jumpscare. Bonnie’s face caught fire, Chica’s limbs stretched, BB’s eyes melted, Foxy sizzled and sparked, and Freddy’s head popped clean off. Emily finally ceased. The animatronics lay there, bodies sparking, smoke coming out of several areas, dead. Freddy’s head landed in Wiccan’s arms, the woman screamed and dropped him quickly.

The ghost woman caught her breath, hovering lazily in midair. She looked at Nolan with baggy eyes. “Hello, Nolan. Ghost trouble?”

“T-Taken care of.” He replied, his friends holding each other.

“Good. Say hi to Danika.” She left through the floor.

“Glad that’s taken care of.” Sandman rolled up to Foxy’s sparking corpse, its outer skin dissolved in areas, revealing the endoskeleton. “Back in Toys 4 Grab, Sheriff Woody didn’t have any internal metal parts, only stuffing. Foxy said they were sealed inside robots, THEN turned into toys, so why are they still robots inside? Unless Sugar’s power can only partly work on robots; maybe her role was to control the robots better. But why… why spirits? They could just as easily forced humans to entertain at the restaurant, why did Doflamingo go to this much trouble? What kind of experiment do the ‘Leaders’…”

“Experiment?” questioned Wiccan.

“Never mind, time to go.” He began the roll out. “I’ll need to start making plans on how we’re gonna infiltrate. Here’s to my night, guys.”

The animatronics lay for the rest of the night, dead. The eyes in The Puppet’s head, however, still emitted an eerie glow.

Somewhere far away

A weak, staticky image displayed on screen, depicting the whole fight and conversation afterwards. A bald man in a thick coat and glasses watched in the darkness. “So, the Sandman is interfering with Government operations. Mmm…” He shook his head in disappointment. “My master was right about when children read too many comic books…”

York Household

This little community in Quahog was the next to be shaken up by the appearance of a ghost train. “I
hope you have a way to park that.” Dillon stated as he and Django stepped off.

“Yeah yeah, just gimme a strum.” So with that, Django strummed his guitar, and the train vanished in flames.

Danika walked out from the kitchen to see her son enter the home. “Hi Mom, this is Django, a dead kid we found in Mexico that I had the lucky honor of watching tonight.”

Django sniffed (he had no nose?). “Smells like booze mixed with week-old formula. Nice crib, Mrs. Y.” He smirked at Danika.

“Hmmhm, nice to meet you too, Django.” Danika smiled. “Are we adopting him?”

“NO.” Dillon shouted defensively. “Er, but Mom, I’m not sure how to tell you this… Midna got captured by the Brotherhood for who-knows-what, and we’re trusting her fate in whatever cracked-up crew this guy has.”

“At least my crew knows when to leave more cracks where they belong. Sniff sniff, is that dead Century Fish in the fridge, I CALL DIBS!” He zipped into the kitchen.

“Mom, I promise we’ll track down the Brotherhood again and save Midna; they caught us off guard, but we can totally take ‘em-

“Settle down, Dillon, I’m not upset.” Danika patted his messy hair. “Midna’s always been a tough girl, and there’re honestly worse people than the Brotherhood nowadays. I’m only glad you arrived earlier than your father. Come and have dinner.”

While Django was stuffing himself with meat that looks like it’s been in the fridge for decades, Dillon helped himself to peas, steak, and mashed potatoes on the table. “I don’t even remember why we wanted to go to the Brotherhood. I think Midna wanted to catch Zant, and we kinda agreed we could catch Hannibal… it just felt like outta nowhere, though. Why now.”

“…” Danika turned away. There were a few things she didn’t understand herself. Why weren’t they allowed to tell their kids about it. Let them discover for their selves, he said, but it’s only one month away. They have to know sooner or later and they can’t wait forever. …They deserved to know. “Dillon, there’s something I need to tell you, too. Back in our teenage years, some friends and I visited The Chronicler again, and he… told us something. At the end of this month, something will-”

“Hey hey, sorry to be tardy to the party.” The man of the house just rolled in, throwing his trenchcoat and mask onto the coat-hanger.

“Where’ve you been this time?” asked Danika with exhaustion in her voice.

“Condemning a restaurant to the afterlife. Hold dinner for me, Danika, I’m flying to Dressrosa first thing tomorrow, so I-” He rolled into the kitchen for a drink, but stopped to stare curiously at Django, who mirrored his stare with a Century Fish halfway down his throat. Django slurped it all the way, belching a horrid gas that made Nolan wish he kept his mask on. “…I’ll leave you and Dillon to whatever you’re doing together.” Django stepped aside to let Nolan retrieve a water from the fridge before he headed for the Sandcave.

“What’s in Dressrosa, Dad?” Dillon asked.

“Really messed up. You know the Corporate President Doflamingo, who makes all the talking toys? Apparently his daughter, Sugar turns people into toys with some weird power, and makes
everybody forget who those people were. I’d explain more, but I really need ta get started if I wanna work sleep in tonight.” So he proceeded to his Sandcave.

Dillon stared mindlessly at his dinner, twirling his fork that had a pea stuck to one end of it. “Sugar…Doflamingo… where’ve I heard…. !!!”

The image was faint, but it was there. A graduation ceremony on Moonbase. Back in March. Many operatives were graduating. A girl from Dressrosa, with aquamarine hair…

“If the Kids Next Door hasn’t had a leader for a whole year, how did those kids like Mocha graduate?! No one was approving them, yet we had a graduation, so how come.”

Mocha’s booger was too big, Dillon remembered, so how did it get in the Code Module, unless someone took a piece off and stuck it in. Sugar was up next, she was from Dressrosa, became Numbuh Trebol, in Sector DR, when she put her booger in, she shook hands with—

Dillon frantically tapped his wristwatch. “Aurora, are you there?”

Her tired, baggy-eyed image appeared on the tiny screen. “What is it, Dillon?”

“Aurora, I…I think we should go to Dressrosa tomorrow.”

“You mean Sector DR? Why?”

“Because I…I don’t know.. what it is, entirely, but I feel… Dressrosa is the place to be tomorrow.”

“Okay, Harry Potter, I’ll tell the others in the morning, can we go to bed first?”

“Y-Yeah… sorry.” He hung up. Almost instantly, a furious toilet flush occurred upstairs.

“Hoo, huff…” Django came storming down. “Sorry, Dillon, but tonight you’re gonna be using el Aseo de los Muertos.”

Ashland Outskirts

The sun had just gone down over the horizon. Lilac and Berry scampered all the way back to Ashland on all fours, and Rupert, Timmy, and Hikari kept hold on them the whole way. The kittens were exhausted, but they could stop and rest once they made it to Rupert’s house. “Huuuff… made it.” Berry gasped. “And looks like your dad’s still home.” She noticed the car in the driveway.

“W-What about Mom?” Rupert asked worriedly.

“Ms. Ghostie told him to go home and wait for you.” Lilac answered. “She’s probly still looking with our moms.”

“But don’t worry, we’ll bite him if he bees mean.” Berry smirked.

“Haha… thanks.” Rupert blushed. “I gotta admit, Berry, you’re really scary sometimes, but when you’re on my side-”

“WAZZAT?” The werecat whipped her head around, Rupert flying onto the sidewalk to his house. A little brown puppy was roaming innocently, about to urinate on a hydrant. Anger and lust burned in her eyes. Her humanity was gone. “ROOOOWWWW!” She was filled with power again as she dashed forward, and the puppy immediately started running.
“PUPPYYYY! Brrrrrrrrrr.” Lilac excitedly shook her head and chased like a kitty.

“Waaaaah-!” Timmy and Hikari went flying off from the shake, onto the path with Rupert. As they moaned and recovered, their seven Pikmin Onions landed down with them.

“Aw, GREAT!” Rupert whined.

“Think they’re comin’ back?” Timmy asked.

Rupert listened. The echoing rows and ruffs faded into the distance. “Not anytime soon. Sigh… at least we’re here. We’ll just have to go in on our own. …” The trio gazed at the gigantic house, towering miles over the trees of the thick jungle before them. They felt totally inferior at its size, knowing just what it was like to be ants in the yard. They knew there was a monster of utmost terror inside that fortress, and its name was Rupert’s father.

“Rupert? You think our Pikmin can protect us from your dad after he spots us?” Timmy whimpered.

“They helped us up ‘til now… this will be their ultimate battle. …I hope Mom comes home soon.”

(Play “Fungi Forest Night” from Donkey Kong 64.)

Stage 23: The King’s Den

Mission: Get inside Rupert’s house.

Act 1: Rulers’ Grounds

The friends called 10 Wing Pikmin, 5 Purples, 5 Whites, 10 Reds, 11 Rocks, 9 Yellows, and 11 Blues, 61 total. The sidewalk to the front door seemed pretty simple, but they wouldn’t be able to get up those stairs. They decided to follow a path through the right half of the jungle, finding a small field where Bulborbs were awake and lively, searching intently for nighttime prey. The kids quickly snuck up on the closest one from behind and chucked Rock and Purple Pikmin at it to take him down. But two more spotted and stomped over to snack them, unfortunately losing 2 Reds and 3 Yellows. They ended up sacrificing 2 Whites to poison the Bulborbs and defeat them, and allowed the Yellows, Reds, and Whites to take them back.

They retrieved 5 of each of them from the Onion. They pressed forward and reached a similar yard with yellow Bulborbs with golden, glowing spots. They tried to throw Rock Pikmin on them, but they ended up getting shocked while the Bulborbs ate 5 of them, so they quickly sent the Yellows to attack them, and briefly used the Purples to stun them. They let the Yellows take them back and had Hikari stay with them while Rupert and Timmy continued. The yard started to become a lot brighter, the two looking up as the sun shone bright in the sky. But it felt awfully closer to Earth, and no blue sky to support it. …That’s because it wasn’t the sun, but rather the lamp post in Rupert’s front yard.

Rupert and Timmy made it to the pole’s base, where it seemed a green flower bud was curled and shrinking in the light. “Hmmm…” Rupert padded the bud, but it stayed shut. “It looks like one of those Candypop Buds. Wonder what its problem is?”

“I would be too if I was planted under a ginormous light.” Timmy commented.

Rupert noticed the convenient path spiraling up the pole. “Then let’s do something about it.” The two made the long journey up the hundred-story tower with as many Pikmin in tow as they could.
Gnats fluttered around the light up top, so they sent the Wing Pikmin to take them down. The bulb was shielded by the surrounding glass, so they tossed Rock Pikmin at it repeatedly until it smashed open. The lightbulb truly was like a giant sun up close, and they feared they’d go blind of they looked at it for a second. “HEY, HIKARI, HURRY UP WITH THOSE YELLOWS!” Hikari heard Rupert’s voice above the tower, so she rushed up with 16 Yellow Pikmin.

“GEE, Ruppy, couldn’t ya pick a vacation with a little less sun??” she yelled.

“Let’s just take this light out!”

“Okie-dokey, Karaoke!” With that, she sent all her Yellows inside the chamber as they crept into small slots and safely disabled the electric wiring. The black night returned in a flash, and the kids’ eyes never felt more at peace. ‘Course, those weird little shapes were floating in front of them, but they would be gone soon.

Once they made it down the tower, the green Candypop Bud bloomed to life. With curious shrugs, Rupert tossed a Red Pikmin into the flower, sprouting a Pikmin seed. The boy plucked and revealed the strange Green Pikmin. “…What does this one do?”

“Beats me.” Tim said.

“Maybe he cleans noses!” Hikari grinned.

“He does look like a booger.”

“Well, anyway, let’s make more.” Rupert said as he tossed 4 more Reds in the Candypop, so when the flower wilted, they had 5 of the strange Green Pikmin. They couldn’t find anyplace else to go, but there was a misplaced cup upside-down in a gap in the trees. It was made of plastic, so the Rock Pikmin couldn’t break, and was too slippery for the Wings. They decided to send their Green Pikmin at the cup, but they couldn’t do anything. They decided to leave this field and found another narrow path that led closer to Rupert’s house. They made it to the garden around the border of Rupert’s house, protected by a great stone wall (5 inches tall, but fairly large to them).

A couple Skutterchucks patrolled the outer wall, so the kids first took them out with Rock Pikmin. There was a particular area of the wall that slanted forward, while another spot slanted back, and that was where the kids could walk up and drop into the garden. They immediately took notice of the odd-looking stone creatures with unsymmetrical bodies and long arms that they used to slam seeds in the ground. “Hey, I know what those are, they’re Mamutas.” Rupert whispered. “They’re things that help plant flowers or somethin’, …My mom got some.”

One of the Mamutas took notice of the group with their Pikmin and marched over to start smashing them. “H-HEY!” They quickly tossed Pikmin to take it out, but soon realized their Pikmin were merely planted again, their flowers fully bloomed. “Oh… heh, not bad!”

They plucked their newly bloomed Pikmin, including the five green ones. But the kids filled with worry as a strange stomping sound grew closer, and marching over the slanted border wall was the vicious Spotty Bulbear, a black Bulborb with red spots, leading several Dwarf Bulbears behind him. The kids made a run for it, but the Bulbear stayed on their tail. Three Purple Pikmin, 4 Rocks, and 3 of the Green Pikmin were devoured. “So much for them…” Rupert sighed.

But before they realized, the Bulbear was attacked by the Green Pikmin their selves, their bodies glowing green and faded, and ghostly tails had replaced their legs. Indeed, the Green Pikmin had become ghosts.
Rupert discovered Ghost Pikmin! This rare breed can only be found in Limegreen Candypop Buds! While born as ordinary Pikmin, their spirits live on after death! These ghostly bodies can phase through anything, and lift anything! Just keep them out of bright areas and you’ll be fine!

Unable to be killed, the Ghost Pikmin defeated the Bulbear by their lonesome. With that, the kids quickly took out the Dwarf Bulbears, letting some Rocks, Yellows, and Whites take them back. “Holy cow, they’re ghosts!!” Timmy beamed.

“Heheh, just like my mom!” Rupert perked. “Wonder if she has anything to do with this?”

“I hope they aren’t gonna haunt me.” Hikari shuddered.

“Relax, they’re too small. Plus, they probably don’t like light, better watch out.”

The three split up as Timmy accompanied the Pikmin to the Onion, Hikari took their other Pikmin around the garden, and Rupert brought the Ghost Pikmin to the plastic cup covering the treasure. They could phase under the cup and push it up and away, revealing the treasure underneath, a Cheato Page from Banjo-Tooie. He had the Ghost Pikmin carry the Cheato Page (Guide to Wimpness) to the Onions, and like the Wing Pikmin, they could easily fly over the yard to bring it faster. Rupert then joined Timmy to the left side of the yard, where the end of a giant hose was lain down. They were unable to climb onto the hose, but it seemed some of Hikari’s Pikmin were bringing mulch all the way from the garden to make a hill at level with the hose’s top. They had to hand it to these guys, they were smart.

Hikari’s Pikmin returned to her while Rupert and Tim led theirs across the snake-like hose. There were enclosings in the grass along the sides (with dirt hills for them to get back on the hose) that contained nectar eggs, deciding to let the Greens and Whites feast some. However, only the two living Greens could eat them, the Ghost ones were stuck with their leaf phases. In another enclosing was a Limegreen Candypop, so they sacrificed 5 Yellows to produce more Greens, 10 total. They found more nectar to feed those Greens before they made it to the garden wall, in which the hose sloped over it to let them across, then turned vertical as it led up, and wrapped around the faucet.

Before they explored the garden, they looked up at the faucet handle, which had a metal container sealing it. Curious, they sent their three Ghost Pikmin up and through the container, and when they didn’t come out, they suspected they were trying to turn the faucet. Rupert led the living Greens into the garden, and a strange flower with eyes emerged from the ground when they approached. Rupert allowed the Creeping Chrysanthemum to flatten his Greens, letting them become ghosts as they proceeded to beat the monster. With that, he sent the Ghosts up to the faucet as well, successfully turning it.

A light stream of water resulted as a DK Barrel (Ape Savior) popped out of the end. The kids returned and, since it was drenched in water, they used 7 Blue Pikmin to carry it back. “Oh hey, my DK Barrel toy!” Rupert remembered. “Dad made me water the garden one day, so I, shoved it inside. Eh hehn hehn.” ^^;

They took the Blue Pikmin back once they were done and returned to the garden. They led them around the corner of the house to a dead-end area, with a large rock that contained Bomb Rocks. Surrounding this rock were small eggs, and while they thought them to be nectar eggs, Morphs popped out of them when they got close, spiked, black, one-eyed round creatures that latched onto Rupert and Timmy. They didn’t hurt, but sure slowed them down, so they hurriedly shook them off and ordered the Pikmin to swarm them. Each Pikmin could take a Morph back, but it felt too
tedious, and they called their Pikmin back when they were already doing so. With the Morphs dealt with, 10 Ghost Pikmin each grabbed a Bomb Rock, then ventured to the very middle of the garden where the house’s stairs went over. The stairs were wooden, held up by diagonal wooden bars with holes in-between. They entered the dark of their underside, encountering a stone wall.

“Ruppyyyyyyy? TIIIIimmyyyyyyyy. Where ARE youooouuu??” Hikari called from the other side.


“THERE you are! You two left me all alone, I’ve been waiting here worried SICK! I found this weird wall.”

“Yeah, so did we. Stand back.” Hikari did so while the Ghosts placed three Bomb Rocks beside the wall, blowing it up. Hikari hurried in to join them. “So did you find anything else?”

“Nuttin’ but dirt. Where do we go now?”

Some Pikmin were making “Nneyah” noises, and saw some Whites digging parts of the ground in this pitch-dark. They were trying to uncover a blue chain necklace, joined by other Pikmin once they were close enough. Once the chain was dug up, the kids let the Ghost and Wings take hold of it, as they floated up to the porch on the right side, latched one end of the chain to a thin, dangling rope, while the other end was left hanging near the ground. “Hall riight! Thanks, guys!” Rupert cheered. “Before we go up, let’s get our other Pikmin, first.”

They returned to the Onions, rearranged, and concluded with 14 Reds, 15 Yellows, 16 Blues, 15 Wings, 10 Purples, 10 Whites, 10 Rocks, and 10 Ghosts, 100 total. The kids returned to climb their way up the chain while their Pikmin followed. Considering their sizes, it was several stories until the porch. Hikari had an easier time jumping between each hoop with her agility, Timmy was also a proficient climber, but Rupert was using every ounce of strength in his arms to hang tight and climb up. It was like trying to climb the poles at gym, and Arceus knows he wasn’t good at that. He stopped a quarter way up to sit in a hoop and catch his breath, sweating. “MmmMMMP!” A Purple Pikmin grabbed and put Rupert on his back, the boy holding on with wonder as he was carried the rest of the way. Finally, they were level with the porch, jumping off as Rupert climbed off the Pikmin.

“Heheh! Thank you!” If only strong little ants would help him in gym. The floor of this porch was mostly massive and barren, so they focused their sights on the front door to Rupert’s house that towered a hundred stories. Even the bottom of the door was closed pretty tight, not even for ants to get in. They could send some Wings up and hit the doorbell, but probably wouldn’t be strong, and Rupert’s father might not even notice in the dark. Thankfully, the bottom walls around the door were cracked, with one of them big enough to fit inside.

Finally, they were inside of Rupert’s house. Timmy and Hikari never came over before, and what a heck of a first visit this would be. In an enclosing to the right of the entrance was exercise equipment. “Dad makes me use that stuff for 2 hours a day.” Rupert informed. “Hope he won’t make me use ‘em now.” They ventured across the great carpeted plain to the living room, where Dweevils roamed about the ground. They used their Purples to smoosh the spiders in one throw, but chose not to let their Pikmin collect to avoid the horribly long way back to regather them. It took a fairly long time to get beyond the couch and to the kitchen, where they hoped there would be some food crumbs lying around. The Ghost Pikmin didn’t follow because of the light.

“I didn’t even eat breakfast. Or lunch.” Timmy moaned. “Please tell me you got somethin’, Rupert.”
“Timmy, look! There’s food!” Hikari pointed at some bread crumbs and Cheerios lain on some giant tape pieces near the wall by the doorway. “Let’s go eat-!”

“No!” Rupert grabbed her before she ran over. “Those’re sticky traps my mom set up to trap bugs. We shouldn’t risk it.”

“Sigh, that stupid pet.” The kids jumped when the floor started to shake. They ran away from the doorway as fast as they could when a pair of massive socked feet stomped across the flat kitchen plain. Chad Dickson was bigger and far more terrifying than the kids would’ve imagined, and the strict, surly man looked too stressed for confrontation. “‘Make sure you feed Zuri,’ she says, ‘make yourself a LITTLE bit useful.’ Well if the stupid little bat’s gonna be a pest about it, he isn’t getting a scrap.” He poured himself a bowl of cereal and started munching aggressively.

“There he is, Rupert, now’s our chance!” Timmy jumped.

“Y…Yeah…” His tiny heart was racing in fear.

“What’s wrong, Ruppy? You don’t think your dad would really SQUISH you, do you?”

“W-Well, we do kinda look like ants, I, I just don’t think…”

“Quit being a baby.” Timmy told him. “I know he’s mean, but I’m sure he’d at least help when you’re like THIS. How’s his son gonna be big and strong when he’s tiny, huh?”

Rupert couldn’t really believe that… he imagined too many things going wrong. Aside from mistaking them for bugs and crushing them, Chad might just keep Rupert like this, hidden from his mother as he puts Rupert through even more painful and inescapable exercise. Or he would tell Rupert to find his own way out of this mess, then act totally ignorant and uncaring that his son and his friends are the size of bugs. No… Rupert shouldn’t think that, Chad is his dad, he used to fight for kids’ rights, despite being an aggressive trainer, of course he would help Rupert when he really needed—

The kitchen door flew open just then as Emily Dickson walked in. “Hi, Chad.” She spoke in a dreary, depressed tone. “Is Rupert home?”

“No.” Chad twirled his spoon in the cereal. “No calls from the werecats, either.”

“MOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!” Suddenly full of adrenaline, Rupert began screaming. “MOOOOOOOOOOOOM!”

“Nope, not Dad.” His friends chorused. (“La la.” sang the Pikmin.)

“Honey, you’ve searched for two days straight, you need to rest.” Chad told her.

“Oh, SURE!!” The bags under her colorless eyes were very dark. “I’ll just REST while my SON is being RAPED by MOUNTAIN FOLK!”

“Emily, you’re overreacting, I’m sure Rupert’s just—”

“DON’T YOU DARE TAKE THAT CALM TONE WITH ME!” The kids and Pikmin shut their ears to no avail. Emily looked murderous. “YOU’RE THE ONE WHO DUMPED HIM OUT IN THE WOODS AND LET HIM GET KIDNAPPED BY REDNECKS. OUR LITTLE BOY WILL BE SCARRED FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE BECAUSE YOU WANTED HIM TO HAVE PREMATURE MUSCLES!!”
“Look, you’re just delirious because you haven’t slept or eaten since—”

“HOW ABOUT I EAT THAT USELESS MOUND OF SHIT YOU CALL A BRAIN AND SLEEP ON YOUR CORPSE, AND THE UNGODLY SMELL OF YOUR DECAY WILL REACH RUPERT’S NOSE AND LEAD HIM HOME, WHERE HE’LL HAVE A MILLION PARTIES NOW THAT YOU’RE FINALLY-!!”

“Emily… …you need to go to sleep. You need, I dunno, 15 hours hopefully, eat a nice healthy meal when you awake, take a hot warm shower, then you’ll be nice and semi-alive again.”

Emily panted heavily. The kids never felt more afraid, closing their eyes as they expected blood to fly out of Chad’s neck any moment. Rupert’s mom was the Devil, there was no other explanation. Rupert never thought, for a split second, how much safer he’d be in his father’s hands when his mom was like this. “…You’re right.” Her head sunk, and the bags below her eyes seemed to droop.

“I’ll take you upstairs.” Chad smiled and took Emily’s arm around his neck, calmly leading her up.

“Zuri!” The aforementioned pet skittered downstairs panting excitedly, but frowned when Emily passed him by. “Not now, Zuri, go play with Ruppy, oh wait. . .”

“Zurrrr.” The Pokémon’s ears drooped, sad. “…Zuri?” A strange whiff fell on his nose. It looked at the kitchen, seeing three tiny figures and an army of colorful things behind them.

Team Rupert stood still and fearful. Zuri crept up to them on all fours, little batty eyes narrowed on Rupert. Noticing this, Timmy and Hikari zipped behind the wall; they were alright with him being eaten first. Zuri loomed close and sniffed. Rupert strongly felt the gusts of wind going in his tiny nose. “H-H-H-H-H. . . Hi, Zuri.”

His giant ears made a slight twitch, but seemed extremely noticeable from Rupert’s viewpoint. “ZUUUUURIIIIIIIIIIII!” Why the kids weren’t deaf at this point, they never knew. Zuri leaped and smashed Rupert beneath his round yellow belly.

“Hmmp-hmmp-hmmm-mmmm-mm-mm!” Still smiling, Zuri rolled on his back. Rupert pushed his face free of his belly and revitalized his lungs. “HUUFF… thanks, Zuri.”

“Aaaaaawwwww! He’s so cuuuuuute!” Hikari beamed adoringly.

“So you having a weird alien bat for a pet just… never came up in conversation?” Timmy asked.

Zuri perked. It flipped onto its feet, let Rupert fall, and leaped forward, startling the siblings as Zuri stared close and sniffed. “ZURI!!!” Another screech that could’ve been fatal to their ears.


“Zri!” Zuri pinned Rupert under the tip of his paw and playfully sniffed him.

“Zuri! Take me to Mommy, boy! Wanna take me to Mommy, Zuri??”

“Zuu!” Zuri stepped off and put his nose on the floor to let little Ruppy climb up. He also lowered his tail for Tim, Hikar, and the hundred Pikmin to squeeze and hold on tight while the Pokémon scampered up the stairs.

He slipped through the cracked-open door to the parents’ room. Zuri hid by the side of the bed and stared while Chad lay his wife down and pulled her shoes off. “Even if ghosts never get tired,
you’re still alive. It’ll be alright, Honey.” Chad patted her shoulder softly. “I know it sounds like I
don’t care, but… well, you should have faith in Rupert, too. Wherever he is, I’m sure he’s holdin’
up fine. If he’s tough as me or scary as you… okay, he’s neither, but…” He looked at Emily. Her
eyes were closed as color was returning to her face. He rubbed her hair. “You’re still a kid at heart.
I’mma head downstairs and, sweep up the spiders. Been gettin’ a lot o’ them for some reason.” So
he left, leaving the door open a little crack to allow hall light.

“Zri?” Zuri leapt onto the bed, lowering his head so the tinies could climb off. The surface of the
blanket plain sloped downward to the weight of the woman’s body. Her head was lain on the bed,
not the pillow, and when Rupert finally made it to her sideways face, her dark-green eyes were
open a tiny crack.

“Uh… Mom?”

“Nnnnnn….”

The moan was loud and eerie to their ears. Timmy and Hikari were honestly afraid, considering her
earlier anger and her being a half-ghost. They watched as Rupert approached her left eye, closest to
the bed. “It’s OK, Mom… I’m all right. I’m holdin’ up just fine… Timmy and Hikari are here, too,
they’re helping me. And look! Those are the Pikmin! They’re extremely big help. Even though
they’re all really tiny.”

“Уппиии… Ruурееееерт.” Her eye appeared to roll to face Rupert. Its pupil looked dull and dead.

“I’m sorry I’m making you worry, Mom. You’re really nice and I’m glad you protect me from Dad
as much as you do. But I don’t want you to be so… scary. You deserve to take a nap, Mom. Take a
nap and don’t worry. When you get up, take a hot, warm shower. You sing really pretty in the
shower. Your hair looks silly when it’s wet, too. Your little Ruppy’s gonna be OK… he’s right
here, just to tell you that. I…I love you, Mom.”

He stretched his arms and lay himself against her flesh, the pupil seeming to sink down to see him.
Emily was mindless, blind from her own madness… and yet, she could feel him hugging her.
Those teeny little arms… felt like they were holding her whole body. She was warm… her mind
was repairing… she had no idea he was actually there, no idea those words came from his
mouth… she only deemed it as visions created by her wasteland of a mind. But what warm visions
they were… giving her peace… promising her… her baby was right beside her.

Her eyelid slowly closed. The bags began to shrink away into natural color. She was asleep. Rupert
walked away to view the whole of his mother’s face. She looked so beautiful. “Not that I don’t like
a cheesy emotional moment once in a while, which I don’t, but I woulda said something along the
lines of, ‘Hey Mom, we’re right here, we braved the dangers of the tiny world to get your attention,
please help us get back to normal so we can all live happily ever after.’” Timmy drew on.

“SNOOOOOORE… shooooo… SNOOOOOORE.”

Rupert smiled as her snores blew them like brief, though strong gusts of wind. “Dad’s right, she
needs to sleep. I wanna be back to normal, but I don’t like seeing her so angry… I’ll risk Dad
helping us. Zuri, you’ll protect us if he gets mean, right?”

“Zuri!”

“Fine, then let’s do it so we can get food.” Timmy said impatiently, and with that, they climbed
onto the animal’s head. Zuri crawled out of the doorway and readied to head downstairs to Chad,
until a curious sight caught their eyes: a group of bugs were soaring down the hall miles overhead.
Timmy zoomed in his goggles and saw they were Minish flying with Wing Pikmin. “Rupert! They’re Minish!”

“Minish? HEY, COME BACK! Zuri, go after them!”

“Zri!” The Pokémon excitedly scampered down. The five Minish had flown into the keyhole of a closed door, which Zuri failed to get open in all his head-bashes. “Zuri! Zuri! …ZuuuuuRI!” It burst open with an Iron Tail and he crept into the bathroom. “It’s too dark, where did they go?” asked Rupert.

Timmy turned on his goggle flashlight and looked around. The Minish flew over the sink before going down. “On the sink.” (“Zuri.”) The Pokémon followed Timmy’s direction and hopped on. Timmy focused his flashlight on the sink’s drain. “What would they be going down there, for?”

“Minish are weird. Darn, I was hoping we could ask ‘em for help.” Rupert said. “Guess it’s back to Dad.”

Almost on cue, Chad walked in with a dustpan and turned on the light. “I don’t understand why Emily wants ‘em flushed down the toilet ‘stead of the trash. Oh right, ‘cause they attract MORE spiders otherwise, yet she’s the one-”

“UUUAAAAAAAH!” The Ghost Pikmin went into a seizure. The light was unbearable.

“Oh no!” Rupert gasped.

“ZURI!” Unable to handle those screams so close to his ears, the animal shook furiously and sent the lot of them flying, with Team Rupert and some Pikmin going straight for the toilet.

“Huh? Zuri, get offa there.” Chad approached and shoved the Pokémon off the sink. Under Chad’s shade, the Ghosts were saved from fate, but they thought fast and sunk beneath the floor. “I hope we don’t have to get the door fixed because you…” He noticed the toilet.

Team Rupert struggled to keep balance on the thick liquid surface, but their Pikmin were panicking and flailing their arms. The kids were panicking, seeing no way out of this with their Pikmin alive. Their problems would grow worse when Chad towered over the toilet bowl with a baffled expression. “Wow… guess the toilet thing actually works. Well, more for the ride.” He tilted his dustpan and let the dead Dweevil bodies land and float beside them. “Down you go.” The children got the image of death when Chad pushed the handle.

“WAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH. . . . .”

The abandoned Wing Pikmin flew all the way back to the Onions and entered. The seven vessels lifted off and flew into the house, gathering all the other abandoned Pikmin before diving beneath the steadily-rising toilet water.

“. . . . . . . .” Emily was so sleepy, she was dead. She never realized how great it felt to lie here, lost in Dreamland. Rupert was there… what a fun little adventure he was having. Living among bugs, leading an army of cute, colorful ants. Their reckless voyage would carry ‘em down the maelstrom of an ordinary toilet. …Wait a second.

“AAAAAAAAAAHHHH!” She shot up with bloodshot eyes. “MY BABY’S GOING DOWN THE TOILET!” At demon speed, she was in the bathroom, kneeled over, grabbing the edges, and screaming into the bowl. “RUPERT JUST GOT FLUSHED! RUPERT, DON’T WORRY, MOMMY’S COMIIIIIIIN’!” She submerged her head into the toilet, gurgling and bubbling.
Chad walked back in and freaked, “Gaaaah! Emily, what are ya doin’?!” He quickly pulled her back to her feet.

“My BABY… RUPERT just went down the TOILET!”

“Ha hah, come on, we stopped worrying about that when he turned two, he still falls in, but not enough to sink. You can’t keep treating him like a helpless ant, remember Emily?”

“B-But he DID! After he came in with his ant army, and he said!…he said!…”

“He saaaaaiid…?”

“…He said…” Emily smiled, “He’ll be all right. I should take a shower.” Her aura far more calm than it had been in days, she undressed.

In minutes, she was standing in the tub, soaking her skin with the steaming water as her soul healed. “Hm… Rupert leading an ant army down the toilet… I thought Mika had messed-up dreams. Siiiigh…” She hung her head under the faucet so her hair drooped. “Rupert… I’m sorry I yelled… wherever you are, wherever you go… I’ll always be beside you… remember that. I know you’ll find your way back to us…”

Act 2: Cavern of Discarded

“WAAAAaaaahhhh!” The children went whipping across a rapid stream after flushing down the drain.

“LOOK OUT FOR THAT WATERFALL!” Timmy screamed, pointing ahead.

“HOLD ON!” Rupert grabbed a nearby stairway ledge, his other hand holding Timmy’s, who held Hikari, who formed a long string of their Pikmin grabbed one-another that extended down the waterfall. The Ghost Pikmin appeared and helped Rupert on the stairs, and with all his strength he pulled his friends and Pikmin to safety.

“Sigh… that was close.” Timmy sighed.

“Good thing Dad didn’t actually use it, right? Ha ha.” Rupert chuckled.

The whirling of propellers was heard as their seven Onions came fluttering down the drain pipe, taking land on this piece of land they stood on. “Well, I guess we’re not going back up.”

“I hope no ‘back up’ comes down anytime soon.” Timmy moaned.

“Then let’s get moving. Hopefully we’ll find a way out.” (Play “Jellyfloat Pool” from Pikmin 2.)

They expected the pipelines below Rupert’s house to be filled with decades of dung and guge, rusty pipes with absolutely no hint to their former silvery self, their noses shriveling at the scent of too many compounds of dead matter. But it was beautiful and very spacious. There was an odor and pipes were rusty and accumulating dirt. But there was solid ground to stand on, floors and walls of large blue tiles that were eroding away and exposing the earth behind. The way this structure was intricately carved, as if by men, or Minish… it was a whole other floor of this house Rupert never knew about. One he wouldn’t mind visiting again, if the circumstances for coming and going here weren’t so risky.

Rupert summoned his Red Pikmin and went to take out some grazing Bulborbs, bringing them back to retrieve 16 new Reds. They rearranged and took the same amount as last time, except 15
Reds and 15 Blues, still making the perfect 100. They followed a corridor carved from a rusted pipe that sloped down into a new room where Jellyfloats floated about the air. They were alien-like in their blended yellow/blue color, spots around their bulb, and glowing yellow antennas. They tried to slurp up their Pikmin, but they didn’t immediately die, just floated mindlessly within the jelly. The kids quickly chucked Rock Pikmin to destroy the Jellyfloats and save their comrades. They were then facing a rapid river that surfed further down, but looked too wild for them to survive in. A Waddlepus clung onto the wall beside the next path, blowing bubbles over the river between the two footholds.

The kids tossed Yellow Pikmin up into the bubbles, causing them to sink. Quickly, the trio jumped across the bubbles while their Pikmin mimicked, and the Ghost and Wing types pushed the bubbles over the foothold as well so the Pikmin would pop safely. They then overlooked a great, carved pipe-pathway where it looked like a river should flow, but was almost dry, with just a few dead leaves. But another distant whooshing wave mixed with the sounds of this previous river, sounding from up the hill of the barren one. A beautiful voice that belonged to a passionate woman echoed from beyond the pipes as the water came rushing. “Here we aaaaare, racing down the street again, wonderin’ if this is how we’re meant to be-e-e-e-e, fast as Lightning makin’ a scene again, wonderin’…”

Rupert’s eyes lit with love and delight. “It’s…It’s my mom! She sounds so… happy.”

“Great, so we probly shouldn’t tell her her baby got flushed down the toilet.” Timmy remarked. “Which wouldn’t have happened if, you know.”

“Fast as Lightning givin’ you a heavy load, fast as lightning wondering if this is how we’re meant to be, ‘cause it’s just you and me now…” His mom sounded so happy. Rupert wondered if she actually saw him in her half-dead state, knew her son’s current position. Or a part of her told her Rupert was just fine, and he would come back soon. No matter how long it takes, he would keep the sound of that voice in his head, encourage himself to keep going. A leaf floated close by, so the friends and the Pikmin jumped to it. It threatened to sink before long, so they jumped to another, and repeated this pattern before jumping off at a safe ledge on the right.

They were stranded at this point, as the leaves would eventually sink against a grated waterway, and the parallel ledge was too high. The kids climbed atop each other so Hikari could see and confirm there were bridge tiles up there, with Water Dumples guarding them, and tall glowing mushrooms grew there, too. The kids sent their Ghost Pikmin to battle the Dumples with nary a scratch, but the bridge tiles were in range of the Glowcaps, and when the Ghosts began to falter, the kids called them back. They instead sent the Wing Pikmin to collect and create the bridge, so they could get up. Sticking out of the wall and lain on the floor was a pipe closed by a hatch, in which they had their Pikmin turn the wheel and open it, revealing a shortcut up to the area beside the first river.

They let their Purples, Rocks, and Reds take the 3 Water Dumples to the Onions via the shortcut, and Hikari went with them. Their next route would take them across a gas pipe, with several holes where gas geysers were spewing out. They would never be able to guide all their Pikmin, so only the Whites and Ghosts. Rupert and Tim held their breath and navigated around the geysers, careful of their footing on this slippery pipe over the river, ’til it led safely into a tunnel. There were still geysers, but an enclosing on their right led to an open, dirt-filled room. They walked around until their Whites started digging a spot, and then had their Ghosts on it as they revealed a faucet beneath the soil. Rup and Tim got on and started running the direction of the arrow, turning the faucet and disabling the gas flow.

They returned for their other Pikmin as well as Hikari, able to cross the whole of the pipe and
reaching a new corridor of bathroom tiles. The source of the shower flow drew further away, the sounds of Emily’s voice fading, but a faint bit was heard. They wandered a maze where Wollywogs leapt out to crush them, succeeding in destroying 3 Blues and 3 Yellows. They had the Ghosts and Rocks destroy the Wogs, but let the bodies be for now. Dweevils dropped down in random parts of the ceiling, the kids destroying them before too much damage was done, and they eventually found a dead-end area with a water pool. There was a F.L.U.D.D. head (Assistance Legend) down there, but the Blues couldn’t swim and carry it. So they sent the Ghosts in, unable to drown since they’re already dead, to carry the F.L.U.D.D. together. They had the Blues take back a Wollywog, and Yellows, Whites, and Purples take Dweevils.

Rupert offered to see them back while Tim and Hikari progressed forward. Rupert never actually accompanied them going back much, so seeing them carry prey in perfect alignment and unison was entertaining. The Ghosts couldn’t carry the F.L.U.D.D. through walls or through the shortcut because of the glowy mushrooms, instead floated slowly and softly over and up the shower river. Rupert smiled, admired the Pikmin’s cleverness at times, knowing which paths were impassable and which they could safely take. Except when they were following him, straying just a little bit and walking into something dangerous. They were such fun, silly, and unique creatures. Rupert was glad he got to meet them.

Meanwhile, Tim and Hikari made it to a long, shallow puddle that a plug was touching, making it flash with electricity. The puddle was thin enough for Pikmin to cross, but any one of them would die the moment they touched it. Hence, the Yellow Pikmin gladly lifted the kids and some Pikmin and carried them across. Their hearts were racing, praying above prayer the Pikmin wouldn’t trip and drop to their demise. The puddle stretched a while, they were more afraid they would fall and zap to death, until they finally reached a sandgate with poison patches. The Yellows chucked their carried Whites onto the gate to begin breaking, Timmy and Hikari wishing they would hurry up so they can get off this puddle. It took forever with 6 Whites, but the gate collapsed, and the poison pouches followed as the Pikmin carried them to dry land.

Here, they found a huge lever, designed like a lightswitch, only they were tiny. The Pikmin shoved and flipped it, disabling the electric. Rupert and his Pikmin were able to cross, and Timmy demanded 30 dollars because of that endeavor. Oh, the allowances he’d have to save. By this point, Emily’s singing was gone from their ears, but the Pikmin memorized the rhythm of the song and were humming it to keep their spirits up. “La la la, la la, la la la, lalala la LA la la, la la la la-a-a-a, la la LA la, lalala la, lalala la la la la, la la la-a-a-a-a...”

They made it to a large room where Shiny Bulborbs roamed, two Jellyfloats, and a Great Jellyfloat, which was larger, dark-blue, and had dark-pink spots. They kept their Ghosts at bay (no way they were losing them) and marched forward to chuck their Rocks and Purples at the jellies. Meanwhile, Rupert bravely approached the two Bulborbs with 15 Yellows, letting the brawl take place. 3 Yellows were eaten, then 2, so Rupert called them back and tried to run, totally outmatched. Rupert called some Purples over and risked their health for serious damage on the Bulborbs. 2 Purples were eaten, but the Bulborbs were defeated in time. All monsters were fallen as Rupert let the Purples take one Bulborb while the Reds took another. There were several enclosings with nectar eggs or Iridescent Flint Beetles, but only one path was true. They decided to go together, trusting their other Pikmin to get back okay.

This path grew darker and made several turns. Finally they were in a huge, dark room lit with Glowcaps. They stepped forward and felt their feet sink in shallow water, but deep enough for their Pikmin to drown, so only Blues, Wings, and Ghosts they took. They wandered around, but the room was empty. “AAAAHH!” Suddenly a pair of buggy legs, as thick as logs, hit the ground, giant beady pink eyes staring and two glowing antennas standing straight and diagonal as TV antennas. The Radio Beetle moved its legs fast despite its size, turning to face the Pikmin at the
shore and unleashing an intangible shockwave. The sound was minor in the kids’ ears, but the Pikmin reacted crazily, feeling the same attraction as their Pikmin Whistles. The beetle summoned them, tricked them into hitting the water, so the kids frantically tried to whistle them back to land.

Timmy handled that part, while an angered Rupert and Hikar went for the beetle. It attracted their Ghost Pikmin too, tricking them into flying by the Glowcaps to extinguish them. The kids summoned them back quickly, trying their best to throw Pikmin onto the beetle’s eyes, but it shook them off in spite of damages. It became an annoying pattern, throwing their Pikmin over and over again for a little damage, quickly summoning them from the beetle’s control, chasing it, throwing for damage, shook off, then again. As the bug was skittering around, it sent Hikari flying with a whipping-fast kick. Rupert grew more angered, tirelessly calling his Pikmin back, chasing the bug, and throwing them on. As long, arduous, and boring as it was, the beetle saw its last moments of standing, and collapsed before Rupert’s Pikmin.

His frail arms, which could never lift a box of old toys, felt so tired. So much throwing and throwing, he didn’t wanna do it anymore, he wanted to rest. The Pikmin he had used for this noble battle walked/flew up to him, patting his arms and shoulders. They were glad he kept his strength ‘til the very end, and were honored to be in his command. That’s what he wanted to believe, and he did. In the beetle’s remains, they found a curious device. It was a radio made of wood, clearly Minish-crafted. Rupert picked it up and fiddled with its controls.

“Nah nah!” His Pikmin excitedly ran around him, and the ones at shore tried going to him, ‘til Timmy called them back from the water. “Whaddyou think this is?” Rupert asked.

For minutes they played around with it. In time, they realized the Reds and Purples they sent back suddenly found their way to them. “Hey… you think this radio lets Pikmin know where we are?” Timmy asked.

“Heh, maybe it does! We’re definitely keepin’ this. …Uhhh, but they probably made Pikmin rooted in the ground. Let’s go back ‘n’ get them.”

So they made the long journey back to pluck the new Purple and Red Pikmin. Then they came aaaall the way back, finding nothing else in the beetle’s room but a hole leading deeper in. The kids nodded and bravely made the jump in. (Play “Rest Area” from *Pikmin 2*.)


The kids landed in a soft patch of soil, and found the Onions flew to them and came down as well. This cavern had a light not far away, so they followed it (keeping their Ghosts at a distance). The end of the cavern had a populace garden of Pellet Posies, nectar eggs, and Pikmin just waiting to be plucked. Their eyes glowed with wonder as colorful Spectralids fluttered over the garden, the light from the ceiling making their wings shine. “Whoa… it’s beautiful.” Timmy said quietly.

They looked as some Pikmin walked in with buckets of water, pouring them in the garden to make more Posies grow. “Looks like they’re growing more.” Rupert observed. “Hope they won’t mind us takin’ some.”

He was about to pluck some of the rooted Pikmin, when- “GET YER OWN GRUB, YOU ROTTEN KIDS!”

“AAAH!” Rupert backed away in fright when a gruff old Minish with a lantern stomped out. He had a short white beard and wore withered leaf clothing, his beady black eyes narrowed at Rupert. He raised his lantern for a better look at the trio.
“Well Ah’ll be chlorophyll… you runts’re human.” He spoke more calmly. “I haven’t seen a human in over 30 years. …Yer smaller ‘an I remember.”

“HIIIII Mr. Old Chipmunk Guuuuy!” Hikari greeted with a sunny smile. “Why do you live under Ruppy’s hooooouse?”

“Ruppy?”

“Hehe… that’s me.” Rupert blushed. “We sorta got flushed down my toilet and we ended up here.”

“You sound like you have a wild story to tell… Why don’t we get you kids some dinner.” He snapped his fingers as some Pikmin came over with some berries and bread crumbs. Timmy and Hikari were more than excited to finally have food, so the kids sat and proceeded to feast as Rupert explained his story.

“So my dad just ditched me in the woods, then, well, out of nowhere, this random tree stump shrunk me. Then I saw some Minish playing with these Pikmin, and I guess I… wanted to get into it, too.”

“Then outta nowhere, he drags us into it, too.” Timmy informs. “Then we figured we might as well protect him since Rupert’s a wimp.”

“I could beat YOU up.”

“Pikmin are odd creatures, ain’t they?” The old man asked. “Even humans ‘come fascinated with ‘em. Back in the day, I was all about these creatures… have you ever heard the story of Malarko?”

“Malar-who?” Hikari asked.

“Malarko… ‘e was a legendary Minish and one of the earliest recorded to ever use Pikmin. He was the first to find and use every type of Pikmin… and became the most feared Minish of them all. He made an army of over one *thousand* Pikmin… 100 Reds, 100 Yellows, 100 Blues, 100 Wings, Purples, Whites, Rock, bunch of colors I don’t remember… and with them, overpowered a band of humans that tried to tear down the Tree of Beginning. Then, he started the Minish Kids Next Door.”

“Were YOU a Minish operative?” Timmy asked.

“Yeah, I was… it’s a story that almost all of ‘em know. Some call it a bunch of malarkey… ‘cause that was his name. Some think the legend is true. But if it were… somewhere on this Earth, his Army of a Thousand Pikmin, and the Onions that contain ‘em, rest, waiting to be called again.”

“Did you try to find them?” Rupert asked.

“Even if I could… only members of Malarko’s family could use them, as well as the relatives of the friends he lent ‘em to. But I tried to create my own army. I flew everywhere searchin’ for all kinds, takin’ all sorts of prey to make my army huge… but too many of ‘em got smooshed, too many eaten, and I ain’t even find that many colors. …So I decided to settle down, hollowed this underground cave out with my earthbending, and using some Sun Plants I gathered, I planted ‘em here so they would grow to the ground and channel all the sunlight gathered from the day to grow my garden. I also set this place up close to some water pipes, get a… mildly fresh water source from the filth of you humans. The lady of the house is takin’ a shower now.”

“Hehe… I’ll pass your thanks to my mom.” Rupert blushed.
“Hear all sorts of things in that house up there. ‘Parently all the ladies get freaky powers and the men are usually wimps. …Is that accurate?”

“Matter of speaking… yes.”

“So what’re you doing with these Pikmin anyway, Kid? Some crazy dream you wantin’ to follow? …”

“To be honest… I never really thought about it. I’m always getting beat up by my dad… I guess I just wanted to get away from him. And these Pikmin looked so happy, I just… wanted to hang out with ‘em. It’s just so much peaceful down here. ‘Course, my mom is worried sick about me… she’s stressing so much over where I am, and we tried to get their attention but got flushed down here.”

“Need I remind you you had the PERFECT opportunity to- ow!” Rupert slapped Timmy.

“That reminds me, did you see any Minish kids come by here? We saw some go down my sink drain.”

“Oh yeh… some twerps walked by.” The elder replied. “Wanted some food ‘cause they were goin’ on some crazy mission to that there Dressrosa.”

“Dressrosa?”

“Is some island or… somethin’. Told me a lot of unusual activity was goin’ on; some factory is genetically modifying all the fruit there. That’s no good.”

“Could you tell us which way they went? We wanna ask them to help us.”

“That little hatch over thar.” He pointed to a pipe that burrowed beneath the ground, sealed with a lid with a turnwheel. “Goes to the sewer. Makes me wonder how those brats plan on makin’ it to Dressrosa.”

Rupert exchanged glances with his friends. It might’ve been the only shot they had, so they would take it. “Well, thanks for the food, Mr.…”

“Call me Barry.” The old Minish replied. “I wish you safe travels now, ‘Ruppy’. And tell your mom my Pikmin like her singing.”

“Ha ha ha! I do, too. See you later, Mr. Barry!” The trio hurried over to turn open the hatch, proceeding to climb a ladder down the endless shaft. Barry watched as their seven Onions shortly followed suit.

“Haaah… sure is different from when I was an operative. ‘Don’t let humans see you, stay out of sight,’ now they’re letting twerps like them into Minish World. Heh… next thing you know, they’ll actually join the KND.” (End song.)

In time, Team Rupert finally made it to the bottom, a stronger and louder rushing of water in their ears. After crossing a short plain, they found their selves atop a towering cliff over a river that looked like a huge, filthy ocean. The pipe-filled walls stretched to a ceiling as high as the sky, and by that horrid faint scent, they knew they were in the sewer. A few meters to their right were some stairs that led to a pier, and Minish kids were getting onboard a them-size sailboat. The friends bolted to and down the stairs as fast as they could.

“Darn it, Oak’s team said they’d be here hours ago.” a Minish boy, Acro said impatiently. “If they
aren’t here in 5 minutes, we’re shippin’ off—"

“Huff, WAAIT!” Team Rupert made it down with desperate need for breath.

“What the… HUMANS?!”

“Yeah I know, it’s a long story, but we need you guys to biggify us.” Rupert told them quickly.

“We don’t have time for that, we’re on a mission to Dressrosa!” a girl, Pine stated.

“You can take us with you and do it THERE.” Timmy retorted. “You know what it’s like eating nothing but crumbs?” They stared at him weirdly. “…Okay, maybe you do.”

“Hold on… you guys use Pikmin?” Acro noticed the creatures behind them.

“Y-Yeah, Sappo and Gibli—” Rupert began.

“-and Rupert shrunk us.” Timmy interrupted.

“Good enough.” Acro concluded. “Another group was supposed to be down here, but if they’re not gonna show, congratulations, you’re the first human operatives to go on a Minish KND mission.”

“But we’re not—” Hikari tried to say.

“Time to go, gotta catch the liner, LET’S MOVE!” Acro forcibly pulled them onto the boat while the Pikmin, already sensing the journey, excitedly returned to their Onions. The boat was untied from the dock and the Onions fluttered after while the insect-size vessel swayed up and down to the giant rushing waves.

“Ruuuupeeeer?” moaned Timothy.

“Yeeeeeees?”

“I get motion sickneeeeeeess.”

“Me toooooooo.”

“WHEEEEEE�!” cheered Hikari as the wind breezed her hair.

Since they didn’t have watches, they easily lost track of time as the boat kept sailing. In time, the river surged out of an expansive pipe out of the sewer, down a humongous waterfall that turned the ship diagonal as they screamed to the heavens, then were finally horizontal after a forceful BUMP, sailing under a starry night sky. “A think it’s past my bedtime…” Rupert said woozily.

“Take a nap on the boat, we’re almost there.” Acro retorted.

“But we ARE on the boat.” Timmy whined.

“He means THAT boat!” yelled another Minish.

They didn’t immediately see it through the darkness of night, believing those lights were oddly-bright stars… but soon, the humans realized their teeny boat was sailing to a tremendous steamboat, its foghorn roaring miles and nautical miles from where they sat. “Whoa…” Rupert was too tired to gape in awe.

Astonished as they were, the Minish boat made it before the country-like vessel shipped off. They
were so uncomfortably close to the ship, the humans were afraid they would crash. Some of the Minish’s Wing Pikmin got between both vessels to push and prevent impact. “Quick, grab our Brown Pikmin.” The Minish kids planted either hand on a Brown Pikmin, which then began climbing the side of the vessel with super-sticky bodies. Rupert’s team held onto their own Brown Pikmin, though while this would normally be a heart-racing endeavor for the tinies, they were far too tired. Now Rupert felt just like his mom. Eventually, they entered a tiny cracked opening into the ship’s storage. A team of tiny ants, their floating flower things, hidden in darkness amongst towers of crates. It was here, in this darkness, Team Rupert and the Minish could rest safely. Enjoy the ride to Dressrosa.

**Midway Peak**

The party was over. The guests were going home, using whatever means they had of coming there. The Corporate Presidents and their children were boarding the Excess Express. Don Quixote Doflamingo kept his cool smile as he joined. He stopped, feeling his phone vibrate. A text message from Diamante. *Freddy’s ransacked.*

His face scrunched to reveal veins. What a way to ruin a good party. When his kids were about to pass, he grabbed his daughter’s arm. “Sugar.” She was midway in eating a grape, looking up. Her father’s head kept straight. “I’m going to lock you in your room when we get home. I need to keep you safe.”

“…Okay.” She complied simply. They boarded the train. Sector DR went to their room and settled on their mats, and Jr. and Sugar their bunks. Sugar kept in the dark of the low bunk. Her basket of grapes, crown, and eyepatch on the nightstand, her sandals and coat on the floor. She got under the covers and lay asleep, holding her new Rainbow Monkey close as the train’s regular shakes rocked them to sleep.

So hence starts my unofficial summer vacation. Maybe I’ll update more, but no promise. I don’t know if Emily’s song has any particular origin, but me and her were talking one day and she told me she made it, I was gonna make a one-shot for it back in 2011, but it never came ‘round, but I guess I got to include it after all. X) I miss RBH. Next time begins the new day of this adventure, and we’ll officially begin Shelly’s story. See you then.
Wendy and co. explore the floating town of Glitzville! (OPTIONAL CHAPTER.)

This chapter is somewhat of a cool-down from the Davy Back Fight, but it does set up for other things.

**Chapter B-8: Fake Happiness**

_Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium_

“Perfect!” Facilier proclaimed after finishing his disguise. “I hereby dub thee… Wendell Berry!”

He had dyed Wendy’s hair purple and tied it in a ponytail. She wore a large white scarf, a white jacket over a black T-shirt, blue shorts over black skin-tight pants, and white boots. “So, how do I look?” Wendy asked, posing with her fists touching her hips.

“You look like Mulan Ping.” Carla said with disbelief.

“Almost, you gotta sound like a boy.” Facilier said.

“Like this?” Wendy said with a rougher voice.

“The sex change was a success!” Sonny jumped.

“I can’t even tell the difference!” Donna cheered.

They both wore devilish looks, holding their hammers ready. “_There’s just one final test!”_

“Ahhhh!” Wendy yelped, covering her pelvic area.

“We ain’t doin’ THAT much!” Facilier laughed. “True, there is a spell that can change yo’ gender, but I don’t think Wendy wants that, does she?”

“This all seems a tad excessive.” Carla said. “If the Government makes money off of Glitzville’s fights, wouldn’t they broadcast it on TV?”

“Of course they would! But how’ll you be convinced without seein’ it in real life? We goin’ to Glitzville, and ’long as Wendell stays in disguise, no one’ll ever suspect.”

“It’s not so bad.” Wendy twisted her body to view her sides. “It feels kinda comfy.”

“You don’t actually _like_ dressing as a boy, do you?” Carla asked.

“No, of course not!” She flushed.

“HALRIGHT!” Facilier stretched and crackled his fingers. “Who’s ready to APPARATE?”

“Not me!!” Wendy wept.
“Then it’s GOOD that we ain’t doing that! Sadly, Glitzville never stays in one zone, so no one can ever Apparate to it perfectly. Luckily, I have mah own way of goin’ ’ere.”

“Not another Knight Bus…” Carla dreaded the idea.

“Let’s go up to the kiddies’ room, it’s in there.” Facilier climbed the ladder to the ceiling hatch as the others followed. They crossed the narrow passage between the beds, then Facilier unveiled a secret door in the opposite wall. In this dark, secret room, the witch-doctor climbed into a roundish container-like thing, with room for Wendy, the Ice Climbers, and the small kitten.

“Mr. Facilier, what is this?” Wendy asked.

“Are we in a magic cauldron?” Sonny inquired.

“Will we be baked with carrots and onions?” Donna followed.

“For some reason, our game has fresh vegetables on snowy tundras.” Both twins chorused.

“Everybody buckled in?” Facilier began. “Then awaaaay WE GO!”

The daylight shone on them when the ceiling opened, and the thing they were in uplifted to the air. They came out of a hatch on a building roof, riding a giant black hat with Facilier’s crossbones on it. A balloon that looked like an inflatable Facilier, with a creepy grinning face and googly eyes, emerged from the hat and allowed them to float above the clouds. “WHOOOOOA!” Sonny and Donna gaped.

“W…We’re flying!” Wendy exclaimed with purest delight. “We’re actually flying!!”

“If you consider this ‘flying.’” Carla remarked. “What is that unsightly balloon?”

“Oh, one of my customers made that.” Facilier noted. “She’s, uh… She’s an odd one, all right. Ahem, excuse the late introductions. Kids, thank you for choosing Facilier Airlines as your method of travel. Please keep all hands inside the hat, and as faithful passengers, it is your job to keep watch for any birds that threaten our balloon in any way.”

“Ha ha ha!” Wendy looked over the edge and viewed the amazing landscape that stretched for miles. Carla sat on her head to look with her. “This view is so wonderful! It’s so much better than riding one of those scary ships.”

“Yes, you mentioned you piloted one of the KND’s aircrafts once.” Carla recalled. “How on Earth would you know how?”

“I… kinda didn’t.” Wendy blushed. “Just decided to wing it. This must be nothing to you though, Carla. You get to fly all the time.”

“Not so much with your heavy body.”

“Hey, I’m not that heavy!! I mean… I would think I lose a lot of weight with all the running I do…”

“Perhaps, but I’m still much smaller than you are.”

Wendy felt a light tinge of guilt in her heart. She brought up the question. “Carla… do you ever want to fly away and… look for your family?”

“What do you mean?”
“W-Well… I feel like we’re just keeping you with us when… you seem like you can fly perfectly. You could… look for your home yourself.”

“Maybe. But I already told you I’m not too concerned about finding my home. I’m perfectly happy with helping you, Child.”

“Heheh… Still, if you wanted to fly on your own, now would be a good chance. And since you’re a cat, you can protect us from birds!”

“Hm, it all works perfectly, doesn’t it?” Carla smirked. “Although I’ve never had a craving for birds or fish. But perhaps-”

“Actually, y’all might wanna buckle in now.” Facilier said as he put on pilot’s goggles. “We won’t catch up to Glitzville at this rate. Entering JET Mode!” The doctor pulled a lever, retracting the balloon and transforming the hat into a black jet. Its engines revved up, and ZOOOOM.

“AAAAAAHHHHH!” Wendy felt her flesh pull away from her face when the plane flew at a thousand miles per hour.

“WHEEEEEEEMEETEEE!” The Ice Climbers were no doubt enjoying it.

“MISTER FACILIER, IS THIS REALLY A BETTER ALTERNATIVE TO A KNIGHT BUS?” Carla cried, clutching Wendy’s ponytail.

“WE ALMOST THERE!” Facilier shouted, checking a compass inside a glass sphere that was labeled Glitzville. There were holographic mile numbers counting down. “Give it five minutes… three… 10 seconds… REVERT!”

He hit the lever, and the jet stopped and transformed to a balloon so suddenly, they felt their flesh fly frontwards instead of back. Carla was blown forward, but she flapped her wings and recomposed herself. “Errrrgh!” She shook her disheveled fur. “I swear, your actions will be the death of us, and when that time comes, I…” Carla gaped at the floating mass before them. Wendy and the Climbers shared the expression.

It was a bright and lively city on an island hovering in the sky using four rockets on its bottom. The buildings were small and consisted of mostly shops and restaurants. There was a hotel, and close to it, on the island’s center, was a huge building that was designed in a Chinese style, and the label over the entrance read GLITZ PIT.

The hot-air balloon landed in a parking lot of other such balloons, which bore fun designs like a star with beady eyes, a banana, and the Pokémon Meowth. “Kids, welcome to Glitzville!” Facilier announced. “I hope my secrecy wasn’t too much, but you have to admit, it was a fun-”

“BUUUEEEEEEH!” Wendy threw up over the city’s railing.

“Oh, right…” Facilier sweatdropped.

“Bleh…” Wendy’s barfing receded, but her face was still green. “If this city keeps moving… I don’t think I…”

“Sigh… Well, hopefully this can help ya get adjusted. Troia!” Facilier cast the spell on Wendy’s stomach. The twisted feeling vanished and her face returned to peach color.

“Phew… thanks. Alright, then.” Wendy brushed the loose end of her scarf behind her and looked stalwartly. “It’s time for Wendell Berry’s adventure in Glitzville!”
Somewhere else in town

“AH HA HA hahahahaha!” The trio of Jessie, James, and Meowth came out of a clothing store named Glitz Gear. “This town is truly the most wonderful place over Planet Earth!” Jessie proclaimed cheerfully, clothed in gorgeous pink garb, a sun hat, and reddish-pink sunglasses. “It was so nice of the boss to give us extra money for capturing that Mika woman!”

“Sure, but I was hopin’ we’d blow it off on more grub.” Meowth said as he and James were carrying bags of many clothes. “Not these useless rags. Besides, shouldn’t we be tryin’ to hunt the Firstborn like da boss wanted?”

“We will, of course.” Jessie replied perkily. “We’ll make great disguises out of these clothes. I even bought outfits for the Twilight Town the boss told us about. But who’s to say we can’t enjoy a little off time and watch some gladiator fights?”

“If the Glitz Pit has any rare Pokémon, it might be worth our while to nab some after they’re exhausted from battle.” James smirked. “We could dress like backstage guards and make our move then.”

“Holy smokes!” Meowth exclaimed, pointing forward. “Look at dat!”

There was a trim witch-doctor in dark skinny clothes, walking with a purple-haired boy with a ponytail, who was walking beside a white cat with wings, walking on her hind legs and wearing a dress with a tie. “Oh, my. That wasn’t in the brochure.” Jessie said with interest. “What is that?”

“She’s da most beautiful mammal I ever set my eyes on.” Meowth proclaimed with hearts for eyes.

“But what kind of creature is she? A Pokémon?” James asked.

“This world has a lot of creatures that look like Pokémon, but really aren’t.” Jessie replied. “Even so, she looks especially different. I think she’s worth stealing just because.”

“Poifect!” Meowth smirked. “Let’s make use o’ dese disguises and follow ’em! We’ll swipe dat cat when they’s least suspecting!”

“I’m going ahead to check out the arena.” Dr. Facilier told the children and cat. “Feel free to look around, but meet me at the arena in an hour, kids. And don’t forget to watch yourselves.” The doctor walked ahead and vanished in the crowds.

“So, where do you want to go first, Carla?” Wendy asked with her disguised voice. “That candy shop looks tasty.”

“Dear, must you talk like that to me?” Carla asked.

“What? He said to watch ourselves. I sound enough like a boy, don’t I? Wait wait, let me just… ahem.” She cleared her throat. “Testosterone.”

“…” Carla stared in disbelief. “Charming.”

“Wendy, Wendy!” Sonny bounced over. “I mean, Wendell, Wendell! There’s a picture of you, I mean her-you!”

Wendy and Carla walked over to a board of wanted posters. There were ones of Augustus Fizzuras, King K. Rool, Marine the Raccoon, Mandy McKenzie, and Wendy herself. “As citizens of our fair world, it is everyone’s duty to report any sightings of these criminals.” The nearby speaker spoke.
“Any help in capturing these dangerous felons is greatly appreciated, and your lives will be less worrisome. Simply reporting the criminals will earn you rewards; we know you humans of average strength will never last one second against such monsters.”

“If he’s talking about me, too, I guess I should feel honored.” Wendy said.

“However, the girl with the red eyes is more annoying than she is monstrous. There is a difference.”

“Well, that’s discouraging.” Wendy drooped.

“You’re not planning to hunt any of these guys, are you?” a boy’s voice asked.

“GYAH!” Wendy leapt and whipped around. A familiar boy with dark purple hair and an open vest was behind her. “Romeo- I mean… Boy I’ve Never Seen!”

“Uh…” Romeo stared at her weirdly. “Have we met?”

“N-No… I…I’m new in town.” She said in her guy voice.

“Me too.” he replied with a grin. “My school organized a sort of study trip, and I always wanted to come here, so…”

“I’m here to study, too. I heard the arena has magical creatures. Is that true?”

“Not so much as ‘magic’ creatures, but creatures that… normal humans wouldn’t see on a day-to-day basis. Hehe, I just wanna see ‘em beat each other up!” Romeo snickered. “Um… Say, you do look kind of familiar. You sure we haven’t met?”

“N-No, I…I’ve never seen you anywhere.”

“Oh, well maybe it’s just me. I’m Romeo.”

“I’m Wend…Wendell Berry. Y-Yeah. There isn’t anyone in the world with that name, hehe. Uh, did you wanna look at these?” She stepped away from the posters.

“Oh, I was just a little curious.” Romeo approached and skimmed the posters. “It’s not like I plan to hunt…” One poster caught his attention. He took down Wendy’s. “Hold on, I know this girl. Didn’t I meet her…”

“S-Sorry, I gotta be someplace.” Wendy said quickly. “See you later!” She walked away, and Romeo stared after her curiously.

“Sigh… I hate being wanted.” The girl sighed sadly. “Er, I mean, I hate being wanted this way… Wait, Carla? W-Where’d you…”

“I’m over here.” The kitten was behind the trashcan near the candy shop. “I figured that boy would recognize you if I were around.”

“Good point. Well, let’s check out this shop.”

The shelves inside the colorful store were lined with yummy chocolates, lollipops, and candies Wendy has never seen. The glass shelves at the counter had cupcakes and pies that made her eyes light up. “Oooooohhh…” She pressed her face to a glass case on the counter, her mouth watering. It had a cupcake twice as large, which was sky blue with golden icing. “So tastyyyy…”
“Do you even have money?” Carla asked.

“Mr. Facilier lends me his daily profits. I save a lot. Excuse me;” She looked over the empty counter, “does anyone run this store?”

“I do, of course!” A small fairy flew up on the counter, with blue hair, a blue tuxedo, and adorable red eyes. “My name’s Sally, the Salesman Sugar Fairy!”

“A Sugar Fairy?” Wendy asked, adored by her cute appearance. “You really own this store?”

“I do, of course! I may be small, but I do business! That’s why I wear a suit. I need to make big money, so I can live in this big big world!”

“You’re so cute!” Wendy flushed and folded her hands. “I’ll be happy to give you my money! How much is this cupcake?”

“Two million moneys!”

“Ehh…” Wendy felt her relatively empty pockets.

“Tee hee hee! That’s why I mostly use it to attract customers. ’Course, if you wanted to buy it, now is your time. We’re shipping it somewhere else!”

“I’m sorry… I don’t have enough. Does your store sell ice cream?”

“Why, of course! Would you like Flutternut, Burpleberry, or Sunny ’Light?”

“They all sound so adorable! I’ll take them all!”

“I think I should handle the money.” Carla said. “Perhaps just Sunny ’Light.”

The duo exited the restaurant, both licking orange ice cream that lit in the sun and gave them a delightful sensation. “For a city that’s government-protected, it doesn’t actually seem that scary.” Wendy commented.

“I agree. Although, in spite of the fact they’re hunting you, I can’t specifically name anything that would make them ‘scary.’ Even a worldwide government with secret intentions would want to keep its citizens happy. Just look at all of them. Families and friends, buying and eating treats… In my best opinion, if a government wanted to have supreme order and rule, the best way to do that would be to allow its people to live happily and with no apparent turmoil.”

“So, even if this city looks happy, there’s actually a hidden sadness… Is that what you’re trying to say?”

“Mmm hm… Of course, my knowledge is only based on cheap science-fiction. If a town like this had anything that could be interpreted as remotely sad, what do you think it would be?”

“Mmmm… uhhh…” Wendy looked around the lively and colorful city. She felt that Carla was implying the answer was obvious. After a few seconds, her eyes focused on one building. “The Glitz Pit? Y-Yeah, that would make sense.” Wendy quickly formed the pieces in her mind. “People come here to watch people and creatures fight. Do you think some of those fighters feel good about this? Like, if they’re forced to fight?”

“Very good. Now our good doctor is trying to get us seats.” Carla turned to face the arena. “Don’t
you find any of this a bit suspicious?"

“What’re you talking about?”

“I mean Mister Facilier. First, he took us to Orchid Bay, a town in which half of the population was shrouded under a Veil. The citizens were blindly living happy lives, unaware that monsters walked alongside them. In the end, just look at what happened.”

“But Carla, that was all an accident.” Wendy stated, still feeling guilty about the events. “And plus, most of those monsters weren’t evil. They were just afraid of being judged.”

“My point is, Wendy, if our theory about the arena is correct, then this town has its own shroud of fake happiness. So I find it suspicious that Facilier would want to take us to these places. I have a feeling that what happened in Orchid Bay wasn’t completely an accident.”

“Are you saying he planned for all that? But Carla, that’s crazy!” Wendy flailed her arms to imply her logic, causing a few droplets to fall from her ice cream. “You would have to suggest Facilier knew Gruntilda was going to show up, and she’s the reason the Veil tore down!”

“I know, it all sounds weird to me too, but what if at the end of this day, Glitzville goes falling from the sky?”

“You’re being ridiculous!” She stomped her foot. “Mister Facilier is nice to me, and he would never trick me into doing something like that! I don’t think he had any idea what would’ve happened in Orchid Bay, as much as I did!”

“How could you not be even a little suspicious of him, Child? Apparently, he let you run around aimlessly for 11 years, but decided to ‘adopt’ you out of the blue. If I were him, I would’ve taken you in my home instantly.”

“I know that, but…but he told me it was part of my dad’s plan! And if it all went well, I would get to meet him, and my mom, too!”

“I wouldn’t give 10 whiskers about some plan, because I would be a bit more furious at them for putting me through all that!”

“Ngh…” Wendy bit her lower lip. She looked away. “I don’t wanna talk about this. I trust Mr. Facilier…”

“Hey Wendell, hey Carl!” Sonny and Donna skipped over. “(We gave you a name too, Car!) We bought these hotdogs with super-spicy hotsauce!” Sonny held both delicacies.

“I got balloons and a Rawk Hawk mask!” Donna was wearing a mask of a yellow bird man, with big golden hair.

“This town’s so happy and awesome, we don’t ever wanna leave!”

“And when we see people beat each other up, we’ll love it even more!”

“WHAT COULD GO WRONG?” both twins chorused.

“What, indeed.” Carla made a sweatdrop. “We still have 40 minutes to kill until we need to go meet Facilier. What do you kids want to do?”

“I know! Let’s have some Alan Rickman Rickflakes!” Donna held up a cereal box, depicting the
dark-faced actor with a bowl of gray cereal. “Part of a healthy, though yucky breakfast!”

**Commercial**

Alan Rickman sat on a table beside his self-named cereal. His expression was grim, as was his tone. “Buy my new… Alan Rickman Rickflakes. They will fill your mornings with grain, and morbid delight. …Professor Snape…” There was an eerie pause in his voice, “*commands… it…*”

**Glitz Pit**

Dr. Facilier was sitting in the stadium’s lobby. Crowds of people were piling in, excited to watch the brawls, there were guards in tuxedos patrolling, and cameramen snapping pictures of fighters who were on break. With all this activity, nobody paid mind to the suspicious witch-doctor who appeared to be grasping his knees in an impatient fashion. A brown-haired woman with black goggles and mechanical pants appeared and sat beside him.

“There you are.” The doctor said. “Now, before I go through with this, he said you wanted to run the plan with me real quick.”

“That’s right.” The woman nodded. “Here.” She gave him a blank paper.

Facilier tapped his wand to the paper and said, “Aparecium.” Words appeared on the paper. Facilier quickly skimmed the instructions. “How’d y’all manage to figure all *this* out?”

“Inside connections.” The woman stood up. “Just sign her up for the contest, and the rest will work itself out.”

“Whoa whoa whoa.” Facilier stood up and gestured a wait. “Couple things I ain’t see… One, how you expect her to win, and two, you honestly see NOTHIN’ going wrong with this?”

“I trust his intuition.” The woman walked away. “He’s never been wrong before.”

“…Sigh…” Facilier released a breath through his nose. “This comin’ from the girl who got tricked by him on numerous occasions.”

**Negaverse**

“Haaaaaaaaahhh!” Sipa’s eyes sparkled with purest delight. “I… I never thought… that I would have the honor of standing before one of the Six Demon Saints!” The Satanist bowed before Medusa, who still inhabited Nerehc’s body. “Lady Medusa, if you desired a vessel, my body would’ve been all but yours!”

“It’s all right, this one felt more available.” Medusa smiled passively. “His head’s a little empty right now. It’s a pleasure to meet you, Sipa. Any person who follows the dark arts is a good friend to me.”

“Oh, the pleasure is all mine.” Sipa blushed, standing back up. “But I feel I don’t deserve it, considering… Well, I’ve kinda been slumping a lot.”

“Slumping, you say?” Medusa cocked a brow.

“Well, I... A while back, my Devil’s Wand was stolen from me by this other wizard. He showed me visions of… some things I did with it. For some reason, I was really afraid, because… dooming my soul to eternal damnation… didn’t look as great as I thought it would. I... I didn’t know what I expected it to look like. All I ever thought about was serving Satan and torching my own soul… I
“Don’t understand why I began to feel differently.”

“Hmm…” Medusa looked at the body she was possessing. Whatever force was causing everyone to forget Nerehc was affecting his girlfriend, too. Medusa needed to seize the chance. “A Devil’s Wand… It’s a rare sight for a child to wield such an item. How did a weapon with so dark a core choose you?”

“I got it for my -5th birthday. It was after my grandfather conducted a dark ritual where… he took a small piece of my soul and gave it to a demon called Lucifer. Then, Lucifer gave me a piece of him in return. That’s how my magic abilities developed.”

“So, you are acquainted with Lucifer.” Medusa said with a perceptive tone. “Then it was convenient that we found you. Hm… Old Black Feathers always loved children. He found their souls to be most delicious, especially when consumed with despair. You see, we are actually trying to locate Lucifer. If you share his essence, then perhaps you can help us find him in Posiverse Mexico.”

“The Posiverse? Well, I would be happy to serve you, Lady Medusa!” Sipa smiled brightly. “But why do you wish to find him?”

This question brought another one to Medusa’s mind. “Sipa… do you know what’s going to happen this month?”

“Uh… Something’s going to happen?”

She doesn’t remember that, either. Perhaps because Nerehc told everyone… “Never mind. We’ll get into the details as soon as we locate Lucy.”

“Yaaaaaawn.” Ragus made a yawn, but her tone and expression maintained that quiet, still vibrance. “I apologize, Lady Medusa, but I feel weary. I wish to rest and visit my toys in the Dream World.”

“You’re dismissed, Ragus. Thanatos, carry her.”

“Why am I her piggy ride?” the fat god asked as Ragus lay on her back and closed her eyes, still smiling.

“Because you are a pig.” Pandora remarked emotionlessly. “That’s the end of the sentence.”

“Oh, fine.” Thanatos picked the child up off the ground and put her over his back. “If I was in my normal form, I could just become a luxury train.”

“We’ll take Nerehc’s DNK ship he used to fly here.” Medusa decided. “I don’t think his Dark Portal could cross to the Posiverse. Sipa, we’ll rely on you for that once we make it to Ocixem.”

Night Castle

Nerehc’s new penguin friend didn’t remember his own name, so Nerehc decided to call him Pennington. Still, he remembered a lot more than Nerehc did; the boy wasn’t sure of his own name, nor anything else. He hoped Ragus would have answers for him.

Pennington led him to the castle’s grand bedroom, where a girl was asleep on a bed with green curtains. The blanket was a night sky with stars, complimenting for Ragus’s dress. “That’s her.” Nerehc knew on instinct. “Can we wake her up?”
“Not like this. She must sleep in the real world.”

Nerehc approached and moved the curtain aside to have a better view of her. Ragus’s purple eyes came open, and she sat up at a 90° angle. “Hello, visitors!”

Nerehc jumped back, startled by her sudden waking. “Ragus?”

“Oh, my new toy! You’re the one Lady Medusa describes.” Ragus kicked off her bed, her bare feet hitting the checkered floor. She approached him with her creepy smile. “Nerehc…”

“Nerehc? Is that my name?”

“That’s what Lady Medusa calls you. But I have no idea who you are, ‘Nerehc.’”

“You don’t know who I am? Do you know anything about me?”

“No, I do not. Which is funny, because I knew plenty about my toys before I decided to make them what they are. After a short time being here, they begin to forget who they are themselves. Like Mr. Penguin.” Ragus gestured at the stuffed British bird. “I have no idea who he is. It doesn’t matter to me, though. As long as they’re soft and snuggly enough to hug to sleep every night!” She hugged herself and swayed happily. “You’re especially peculiar, because I forgot you right away. I can only guess something happened to your Positive.”

“My Positive? What do you mean by that?”

“Hmm… I don’t remember that, either. I lose track of things when I have fun.”

Nerehc looked at Pennington, then back to Ragus. “Why do you do this to people, anyway?”

“It happened 12 years ago… Our house got set on fire and burned me to death. Father was so upset that he made a lifeless doll out of my remains. He pleaded the gods to give his baby girl back. Only Lady Medusa listened. She collected my soul and put me back in this unaging body. Then I became a spiritbender. I’m not sad, anymore. I don’t feel pain. I thought other people would like this feeling, too. Do you like being happy, Nerehc?” Her head slanted.

“I’m not happy, I’m confused! I don’t know who I am, where I come from, what I do…”

“Then… do you need… to know these things?” Ragus approached him slowly. “Nerehc… do you know what being ‘confused’ means?”

“I…” Nerehc touched his forehead. He remembered nothing about himself… In fact, he wasn’t sure what anything was. He never noticed… how soft his head felt. He didn’t know what the word ‘soft’ meant, the word just came up.

“Whoever you were… Nerehc… then forget about… Nerehc…” Ragus stood two inches from him. His mind only focused on her soft voice. His eyes were turning dull. “Living without sadness or conflict… is bliss… The only way to forget it all… is to forget yourself. Let your mind… and body… gray…”

Nerehc’s body morphed into a wooden stick puppet that collapsed on the floor. Ragus picked it up by the arms to look at the head’s two holes. “Aww… I expected something… fluffier. I guess… he really remembers… nothing. I could always sew a body on him. I wonder what he should be? A monkey? A platypus? Maybe I’ll… improvise.”

Bay cave near Cinnamon Jungle
“Ugh…” Stewie finally woke up, but the pain from using his Hulk form was still apparent. He noticed the small lake of ocean water that was shaking from the storm outside. They were inside a cave, very damp and dark. He then looked to the back of the cave: Augustus was rubbing a giant crocodile’s tummy, Rallo was cleaning his toes, and Maggie was scrubbing his teeth. “We’re sex slaves now, aren’t we?”

While the other three were performing these chores, Princess Aisling was standing on a platform and smiling at their progress. “Errrrgh! You said you had a plan to get us outta here with this guy!” Augustus yelled impatiently. “Why are we suddenly his servants?!”

“Honestly, humans are so selfish.” Aisling folded her arms. “This poor animal has endured horrible trauma in the past. Being forced to do things he never wanted to, I could feel all that anguish in his heart! You just made him a part of your crew. If you want to attempt to be a decent captain, you need to grow close with your crew. Mold your hearts and dreams into one. Understand them.”

Augustus looked at Stewie, remembering their conversation in the jungle. He remembered snuggling with the three children like a big brother protecting them from nightmares. “My whole crew is a babysitting service.” He sighed with exhaust. “So, Kuh…Lumsy.” He wasn’t sure which way to pronounce his name. “Are you feeling better?”


“Yeah ‘kay okay okay.” Augustus didn’t wanna hear it out loud. “What did K. Rool make you do, anyway? You seemed pretty upset about working for them.”

“I was big giant croc from big giant land. I go down to little people land and make friends. They’re so cuuuute. But den dey got scared of me, and be’d mean to me, and dey hurt me, and den, sniff, boo hoo hoo hooooooo!”

K. Lumsy put hands over his sobbing eyes, and his shaking caused Augustus to lose balance and fall on his back on the giant’s belly. “(Honestly, I wanna feel sympathy for this guy, but it’s hard to.)” Augustus said to himself.

K. Lumsy sniffled before speaking again. “Den K. Rool came and said I could join his Krew. I dought he wanted to make friends, but he dust wanted be to be mean. I didn’t want to be mean, so he be’d mean to me. Why is everybody so meeeaaan?”

Why do YOU have a particular choice in letters? Augustus thought to himself. The captain got on his hands and knees to feel more stable on the croc’s belly. “Klumsy, I can tell you’re a big softy who doesn’t really like violence or hurting people. I said that I wouldn’t make you fight, and even though I was in kind of a rush, I don’t wanna go back on that. But I need my crew to be at their very best. I need you to be strong, not just to fight for us, but to protect us.”

“Bud I…I scared! I don’t like people being mean to me. I don’t wike being mean to people…”

“Sigh, I don’t know what to tell you, Big Guy.” Augustus took out his dried lollipop and threw it away. “But here’s how I look at it: if people push you around, sometimes you gotta push back. You might live by that moral with ‘Sticks and Stones’, and something about words, you might be proud of who you are and choose to show restraint… but sooner or later, you need to fight. If it’s to defend yourself or to defend your friends, you aren’t a bad guy for choosing to fight. Pacifists may act like they’re pure of heart, but often times, they get their selves killed for being what they are. You don’t have to like fighting, but it doesn’t mean you can avoid it.”
“But... But dou said.”

“I said that I wouldn’t make you fight, and I won’t. You have to choose to fight yourself. The best thing I can do for you as captain is let you choose.”

“Bud I... I awaid to fight... If I don’t fight... will you be mean to be?”

*I would hate to see your dialogue written out.* Augustus thought. “No, I’m not going to be mean to you. I might yell orders or get mad at you, but I ain’t gonna be cruel like those K. Rool fools. So are you willing to fight to protect your new friends?”

“New... fwiends...” K. Lumsy sat his head up to face the little captain on his belly. “I wike... new fwiends...”

Augustus pulled out a lollipop, unwrapped it, and held it out to K. Lumsy. “New friends get lollipops. You want one?”

The giant reptile stared adorably at the little sweet. Augustus figured a big baby like him would love these things. He tossed the candy, which Klumsy gomped into his mouth.

They heard small splashing sounds, and Stewie was the first to see the robotic fish leaping out of the water. “Guys, we have trouble!” Stewie whipped out a ray gun and began shooting.

“Crud, they musta found us.” Augustus jumped off Klumsy and began chucking his Gobstopper at the robots, while Rallo boomed his stereos. “Fairy Brat, now would be a great time to do this plan o’ yours!”

Aisling jumped onto K. Lumsy’s belly and faced the croc. “I’m a little weak on magic as I am, Mr. Lumsy, so in order for this to work, I need your word that you will protect us with all of your willpower.”

“By new friends are nice to be... K. Lumsy won’t let meanies hurt them...”

“Wonderful.” Aisling reached behind her and grabbed a book that was stuck to her back, and otherwise hidden by her long white hair. Aisling sat on the giant’s belly and read a passage from *Kells’ Book of Spells*. “The young cub hides... in his cave from the dark... When the sun comes, the li...on... roars...” Aisling shone with an energy that flowed into K. Lumsy. The giant felt power coursing through his veins. “Though the Earth’s rage doth burn, all the land, green, and bark... The waves can’t... push... yon... is...land’s... shore...”

Outside, the Silver Bullet was standing on the cliff of the bay, withstand the storm. “Captain.” She spoke to her communicator. “My Aqua Drones found them inside a secret cave, just around the northern point.”

“Excellent work, me wee Penny. By the time this storm clears, we’ll be the first crew ter nab them!”

“If we could get the sub ready, I’ll be happy to catch them myself. They don’t seem to have any... Wait.” She looked at the screen on her wristwatch, taken from one of the Aqua Drones. “It looks like they’re doing something. What kind of...”

Silver Bullet looked at the side of the bay where they were hidden. Suddenly, something burst out of the sea and began speeding across the surface like a speedboat, against the storms. K. Lumsy had gained a sudden boost in strength, and his arms moved like propellers as he swam. The four Marzipans held tight to his back, while Aisling squatted on the back of his head and faced forward.
with an excited smile. Her long white hair blew like a cape behind her. “Against the raging sea and unforgiving winds, find your true strength, noble beast!” the fairy declared.

“I have to admit, this is pretty awesome!” Augustus pushed up on all fours for a better view of the stormy horizon. The lightning glinted off his sunglasses. “You really think we can make it like this?”

“It will not be far, now!” Aisling yelled confidently. “Soon, we will reach the home of the Sugar Fairies! The Sugar Fairy Kingdom, where the Sugar Fairy Princess dwells! The Sugar Deserts!”

Through a hole in the clouds above, their movements were seen by an Aeralfos. This Aeralfos was perched on one of many giant, metal blimps in the sky. The winged monster flew into the captain’s quarters. “Your Highness, the Marzipan Pirates have begun to move. Should we signal Captain Mandy?”

“No.” The woman said. She was clad in black armor, had long and messy black hair, and wore a nightmarish smirk. “I like my prey when it’s good and warm. We’ll chase them ourselves. And wherever they plan to hide, we’ll burn it to the ground.”

Captain of the Boogey Pirates’ Flame Division
Mandy’s spiritual sister
“The Blue Demolisher”
AZULA

Glitzville

After the hour had passed, Wendy, Carla, and the Ice Climbers were on their way to the Glitz Pit. They merged with the crowds coming and going, and Jessie, James, and Meowth kept their sights on the purple-haired “boy” who was with the winged cat, clad in fashionable disguises.

“Today’s battles in the Glitz Pit are brought to you by Fegan Floop, the host of popular children’s show, Floop’s Fooglies!” There was a screen that depicted a colorful, dizzying dimension where creatures of odd appearances were dancing on flying balls. The camera zoomed up to the show’s host, a man with standing brown hair, wearing a patterned shirt under a red robe. The edges of the robe were yellow with red leaf designs. “Saturday mornings on Cartoon Network Real, from 9am to 12pm!”

“Mister Facilier!” Wendy spotted the tall doctor in the hat and ran over. Facilier turned and greeted the girl happily.

“Wendell! There’s my gir- uh, boy! I’m glad you could make it, ’cause have I got a surprise for you!”

“Really? What is it?” Wendy was excited.

“Well, you know I told y’all we would be watching the fights to study the magic creatures, right?”

“Uh…” Wendy glanced at Carla briefly, “Yeah?”

“Well, I mighta left out a little bitty detail.” Facilier grinned, as though eager to deliver this news. “You will not only study them, but you will do so up close and personal. You see-”

“Is DIS the boy named Wendell Berry?” A security guard marched up and asked.

“Yes, Sir, this is the Wendell Berry I mentioned.”
“Great. Then follow me, Kid.” The guard gestured back with his thumb. “Once you’re set up in da locker room, we’ll getchor first match set up.”

“SAY WHAT?!” Wendy panicked. (“Beg your pardon?!” followed Carla.)

“You’re a professional fighter now!” Facilier cheered. “Congratulations!”

“We’ll bet everything on the other guy!” the twins chorused.

**A dirty building in Miracle City**

In a hotel that was as run-down as this, you would be surprised even a single mirror was still in one piece. This very mirror was used as the portal for Sipa, Medusa, and her cohorts to climb into the Posiverse. Thanatos had trouble squeezing his fat body through, then he reached in to grab the still-slumbering Ragus.

“It took forever to find an active mirror in Disaster City.” Sipa moaned. “Which is ironically one of the most beautiful cities in the Negaverse. Are you sure the gods wouldn’t notice us like this?”

“There’s a reason this city is called ‘God’s Blind Spot.’” Medusa remarked. “There’s too much negative energy here. Alright, Sipa… help us locate Lucifer.”

Sipa held her Devil’s Wand with both hands and took a breath. “Point Me Lucifer.” Instantly, the wand thrust to her right.

The group left the building and followed the wand’s direction out of the city. The sky was red as the burning sun set. They walked for miles across the desert sand, sweating under the heat. Thanatos tugged on Eigaoh’s clothes, which felt stuck to his skin. “I bet now you expect me to make some ‘spatula’ joke.”

“Yes, but since you’re inhabiting the Negative, I expect you to actually make it good.” Pandora remarked. “Medusa, are you really sure about trusting this little twerp?”

“She has a Devil’s Wand.” Medusa reminded. “It was crafted by demons and only listens to wizards who made connections with demons. I know only one other person who possesses one and is still alive. But he probably won’t be willing to help us. Sipa, however, she’s very cooperative. Isn’t she?”

“I sure am, Lady Medusa!” Sipa turned to them with a big smile. After facing forward, she frowned, feeling more nervous as they drew closer.

After the sun went down, they went from hot to chilly. The clothes soaked from sweat didn’t contribute to this. The gods didn’t like being human at all. Eventually, the Devil’s Wand led them to a cave inside a huge rock that looked like a small mountain. It was dark, but Sipa didn’t bother lighting it with her magic. Instead, the girl got to her knees, placed the wand horizontally on the ground before her, and folded her hands. “O Angel of the Black Wing, the one banished by God… I beseech thee, allow us to speak to you.”

The cave turned so black, even the entrance was invisible. A pair of red eyes appeared on a black mass, whose body was only implied by purple streaks. Lucifer spoke in a dark voice. “*You better not be here to make fun of me, Medusa.*”

**Someone’s sensitive. :P So if anyone hasn’t heard the news, Alan Rickman died last week.**
That little bit was a tribute to him (you’ll notice cameos of other late actors in this story). I was fond of him in *Harry Potter*. He died of cancer like my dad did, so I guess I kind of relate… Anyway, you remember Azula from *Avatar: Last Airbender*; who isn’t surprised she would make friends with Mandy? Glitzville is from *Paper Mario TTYD*, and the main story will have a lot of places from that game. Next time, the Glitz Pit.
Chapter Summary

Wendy meets a new friend in the Glitz Pit. (OPTIONAL CHAPTER.)

I kinda keep forgetting to say which Main Story chapters these Side Stories go by. Oh well, it doesn’t matter unless you’re just now reading this series. In which case, I advise new readers to read these on deviantART, because all the chapters are posted in the exact order. This one’s by Chapter 14. :P

Chapter B-9: The Sky Sisters

Lucifer’s cave

“You’re one for pleasant greetings, Lucy.” Medusa remarked. “Still feeling sour about You-Know-Who?”

“I was not pleased to be cast into your shadow, Medusa.” The black mass that was Lucifer spoke with malice. “When Malladus, that wretched usurper, scolded me for my failure… I felt utter disrespect. I felt less than demon. I wanted to crush him. I wanted to crush Uncle Malladus in my own two hands. Why did he find love and I could not?!”

Lucifer began panting. The three gods could feel the emotion in his voice. “I can’t get over it. I still want her. I still love her. I still love… ELLEN WICKENS! I am a disgrace to my kind to love a mortal! But I cannot abandon these feelings. I cannot stomach mortals who feel love for other mortals. I want a mortal to love me! If I were loved like Malladus was loved… I could become more fierce.”

Sipa was still bowing on the floor. Medusa surmised that, being in the presence of such a great demon, she was in no position to speak. She would be on the floor like the lowly human she is, and let the two Demon Saints speak. Medusa walked closer to the evil spirit. “But Lucy, you did crush Malladus. If it wasn’t for your rambling about Ellen, Malladus never would’ve chosen to fall in love with a mortal. Malladus doomed himself when he transferred his own life force to his descendants. It is because of you the Uno Family exists!”

“That doesn’t please me! It is only Malladus, scattered into tiny pieces. But I do not care for him. He is not the one…”

“We know that. We know who the one is. Because we want him too, Lucy.”

Lucifer looked at the possessed boy with inquiry and hatred. Medusa smirked and stepped closer. “We need the Six Demon Saints to rescue him from the Sanzu River. He’s one of the Thirteen Darknesses. You know who I’m talking about, don’t you? The Devil Reincarnate himself. Ganondorf Dragmire!”

There was a reaction in his eyes. “Ganondorf… I’ve spent many a year with that man’s crotch on my back. The only reason I served him was because I felt my father’s presence inside him. I thought, if I served him, I would get to see my father, Lord Satan, again. And the only reason I
wanted to see him… was so I could DESTROY him! I, Lucifer, the King of Black Magic, would be Emperor of Hell.”

“But Grim Reaper is the king now.” Pandora mentioned. “Why don’t you crush him?”

“Because… he is stronger than me. He destroys my kind... Hollows and Arrancar. Even now, I struggle to hide from the Spirit Kids Next Door. The only one who could destroy him… is Satan. Yes, I do wish to rescue Ganondorf. But I wish to destroy him after. I cannot do that in this state… I need to appear stronger before him. I want love… I want to be... MARRIED.”

The statement took Medusa by surprise. She looked at the girl who was still bowing. “Married? Then… Sipa will do.”

Sipa gasped, her head flying back up as her eyes showed terrific shock. “L-Lady Medusa…”

“Yes, she is a perfect match. And a very devout Satanist. You would love to be wed to one of the Royal Demon Saints. You even have part of each other’s soul.”

“Huuur, yes… She does…” Sipa felt a chill in her spine when Lucifer touched a single, sharp finger to her gently. “A soul... so dismantled and poisoned... Perhaps it is what I needed... all along... Feelings of hatred... and LOVE...”

“W-Well, it… does sound wonderful.” Sipa stuttered, forcing a smile. “But my love is for Satan! I couldn’t betray…”

“The only way you will be able to see Satan…” Sipa looked up at Medusa, “would be to do what he says. Besides, a kind of two-sided love like this is what our Bad Lord would want.”

“Yes… I cannot possess a human vessel, unless we are joined in unholy matrimony. Allow yourself to be mine… Give your love to me, Sipa… and we will both get to see Lord Satan again. Isn’t this... what you wanted?”

Sipa felt the darkness around her grow. She was swallowed in despair… and didn’t know why. I was raised to love… no one but Lord Satan. I burned my soul and many others... all for his sake. I loved nobody else. So why... do I feel this way? Why am I so afraid to speak his name? Why am I afraid... to be near these people? These... demons?

“Sipa…” A hand touched her shoulder. Sipa looked up into the eyes of that boy. Those snake green eyes… of the boy whom Medusa was possessing. “Marry Lucifer for us… For everything that is the Demon Realm… you will want to do this.”

Maybe these feelings were what Sipa was seeking. Her mind a haze, fear shrouding her heart… these were what she gained from serving Satan. This was the path she wanted. She should follow it… to the end. “Yes. I do…” She looked up at the black demon. “I will marry you, Lucifer.”

“I get to design the bridal dress!” Thanatos raised his hand eagerly. “I don’t know if you know, but I make beautiful bridal dresses.”

“The wedding shall take place tomorrow at negative noon.” Medusa said. “And as for a location…” She looked at Nerehe’s right hand. “I believe this amnesia epidemic can work to our advantage.”

**Glitzville; Glitz Pit**

“So here’s how it’s gonna go down.” The security guard said to Wendy in a filthy locker room.
“Youse gonna wait for dem to call you, den you gonna go out in da ring, and beat ’em up. Youse got that?”

“NO we don’t got it!” Carla shouted insistently. “We never signed up for this thing!”

“Looks, I don’t makes da rules. I don’t got control over who signs up whom. But youse name gots put on da paper, so someone has ta fight. It’s no sweats, ’cause you can use whatever methods ya like. Well, you’re probably gettin’ tired of my typical tough guy talk, though I should let you know my vocabulary is above average. Before I goes, Mr. Fancy-Hat gives me this card for you.” He handed Wendy a folded paper. “Catches ya later, Pally.” The guard left.

Wendy unfolded the paper to find a list. “‘Good offensive spells: Reducto (explosions)… Stupefy (stuns)… Titillandooooo’…” Wendy moaned unconventionally and wept. “Why did Mister Facilier sign me up for this?”

“Now do you see what I mean?” the kitten asked. “This man is beyond trustful! Entering you in a fighting contest behind your back. You could barely stand your ground against Juniper Lee!”

“I know! But…” Wendy took out her Lamia Scale wand. “I did learn a few new tricks. Maybe he’s trying to teach me more. But I dunno what any of these people are like!” Wendy slouched on her knees in a frightful manner. “Oh, I’m going to get clobbered!”

“You don’t have to fight. Just stay in this room and you’ll forfeit.”

Wendy was on the verge of doing that… but then she remembered June. She remembered locking fists with the strong opponent. She remembered combining her airbending, magic, and her strength. “…I won’t.”

“There’s no shame behind that, Child.” Carla said agreeably. “You didn’t sign up for this, so you should choose.”

“No. I meant I won’t forfeit.”

“You… What?” The kitten was taken aback.

Wendy grasped the rose quartz wand and looked proudly. “I want to try. Mr. Facilier signed me up for this… and I trust him.”

The arena

The arena’s interior was a mix of beige and orange, and the outer walls were designed in a brick style. Hundreds were gathered around the rectangular stage. There were spotlights shining on it and three huge televisions around the chamber. Dr. Facilier and the Ice Climbers had a great view from the top seats, and Romeo chose to see the fights up close. Jessie, James, and Meowth sat suspiciously close to the side doors where the fighters would enter.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” A hatch opened up on the stage’s center. “The host of today’s events! Bringing you this top-quality family entertainment, famous star of children’s television show, Floop’s Fooglies… Fegaaaaan FLOOP!”

The man with standing brown hair, wearing a shiny leather red robe over a patterned shirt, emerged from the stage on a floating pink ball with a smiley face. He had a frantic expression, flailing his arms as his feet tried to stay balanced on the ball. It floated halfway up the chamber before he finally took the plummet, smashing facefirst against the stadium floor. His body flattened as he bounced back on his feet. He puffed himself up by kissing his thumb and blowing air back into
himself. “Boy, that was a Floop!”

“HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!” The stadium roared with laughter, except from the more mature audience members.

“Thank you, thank you all for coming!” Floop began energetically. “So wonderful to have so many people in my WONDERFUL arena! Oh, what a wonderful show we have today, we’ve got so many competitors, I think you’ll LOVE ’em! And I know they’re so EXCITED to battle, so is EVERYONE READY?”

“YEEEEAAAHH!”

“Our contestants will score big money for their performance in the contest. The farther they get, the wealthier they will be. And we have a special prize for the person to win the top place: an all expense paid trip to MY domain, where ALL the magic happens, Foogly Palace! Now, let’s introduce our first combatants!

“ENTERING from the red door!” Floop pointed with gusto. “He packs a wallop, he IS a wallop, he’s Wally the Wallmaster!” The red door opened, and a giant brown hand with pointy fingers walked in on said fingers. “AGAINST the King of Arm-Wrestling, he takes ambidextrous to a whole new level, it’s Lefty ‘The Righty’ Left-Right!” The person entering the blue door was a yellow-skinned man, bald with a gray mustache, and wearing a black tank-top over his muscles. “LET’S get READY to RUMBLLLLLE!” Floop whipped out a mechanical rod that extracted a propeller, then hovered away.

The Wallmaster turned green and flew at the arm-wrestler, who used both his left and right hands to push back. The hand monster’s defense lowered, so Lefty flipped it on its back, then crushed the Wallmaster under his left elbow. Wally managed to flick Lefty off before leaping to the ceiling. Lefty couldn’t see him with the spotlights shining in his eyes, but he looked at the hand-shaped shadow on the floor. When it grew bigger, Lefty dodged Wally’s drop attack. He grabbed the hand monster and wrestled with him.

In their locker room, Wendy and Carla watched the fight display on their own TV screen. “Would Mr. Facilier want me to take notes now?” the girl asked.

“Yes, the sight before my eyes is very educative.” the kitten said with sarcasm.

“So, Wallmasters can harden their skin…” Wendy scribbled on a notepad, her eyes directing at the screen every few seconds. “And they specialize in ceiling drops… Wow, I am learning a lot!”

A guard barged in. “Hey, Wendells. Youse is up next up, Ponytail. Looks likes Lefty’s gonna be your square.”

“Oh, boy. Ahem, wish me luck, Carla.” she said in her guy voice.

Lefty “The Righty” succeeded in defeating the right-handed hand monster. Wally left the arena mopingly while Lefty was cheering. “That was a beautiful display of hands-to-hand combat!” Floop said spiritedly. “But let’s hope Lefty still has arm power to spare! Because his next match is up against…” Floop looked at his list. His expression turned to confusion. “Someone a little last-minute… he’s apparently a young wizard, and I do not recall anyone with his name ever existing anywhere… WENDELL BERRY!”

Murmurs of confusion rang throughout the stadium when the purple-haired, ponytailed boy ran in from the red door. Facilier and the twins were the only ones cheering, and the Team Rocket trio
grinned deviously. “It’s that guy…” Romeo said quietly. “He was a fighter all along?”

Wendy eagerly jogged up the two steps leading onto the ring—“Ahhh!” her foot hit the final step as she fell facefirst on the ring.

“What a Floop!” The audience burst into laughter. Facilier and the twins winced at the embarrassing act.

Wendy scrambled to her feet, clutching her wand and fixing her scarf. She looked around blushingly at the laughing fans. “Uh… What a Floop!” She shrugged with a grin.

“HAHAHAHAHAHA!” The audience, including Facilier’s team, laughed insanely, and Floop himself was holding his chest, almost falling off of his floating platform. With the tension out of the air, Wendy faced her opponent. Lefty Left-Right held a Hulk glove in his left hand, a Thing glove in his right, and crushed them both as he growled at the child.

“Heheh…” Wendy flushed and scratched the back of her head. She spoke with her guy voice, “I know I made a show there, but I’m not necessarily here to fight. I only came here to study the fighters. So, with that said, could you go a bit easy on me?”

The baldheaded arm-wrestler stood more poised and held out his right hand. Wendy grinned, happily approaching him to shake his hand. Immediately, The Righty squeezed her extended hand and—“UH! UH! AH!” slammed Wendell back and forth on the floor. He then tossed the purple-haired to the other side of the ring.

Wendy got up on all fours and faced Lefty, who brushed both hands. Wendy took breaths to relieve the slight pain. What am I thinking… I’m doing this fight for you too, June. As long as you’re trapped in that city… I’ll do my best for both of us.

Lefty approached her slowly, so Wendy rolled forward and thrust her hands at him, pushing The Righty back with a gust of air. The wrestler fell out of the ring, and the audience shouted “OHHH!”

“Uhhh… I’m sorry!” Wendy flushed and scratched her head again. “I was told I can use any methods I liked.”

“Oh no, you can!” Floop nodded, smiling at the performance. “It’s just, getting knocked out of the ring isn’t a loss, you have to knock your opponent out.”

“Kn-Knock him out?” Lefty climbed back into the ring, snarling at the airbender before dashing forth. Wendell made a terrific weightless jump over the wrestler, and when Lefty whipped around, his left arm was extended. On instinct, Wendy threw her own left hand into it, but the wrestler used little strength in flipping her over and sliding her away. Wendell got on her fours, grabbing her wand and casting “Arms!” on her right arm. She jumped to her feet and glared fearlessly at the wrestler with that arm held up. Lefty accepted her challenge and grabbed it, and was surprised to see they were pushing with equal strength.

Wendy leaped, still clutching his hand, pulling it up with her as she flew over and caused him to punch himself in the face. Lefty tried to push himself up, but Wendy brought a burst of wind down on him and smashed him against the floor again. She kept her guard raised, expecting Lefty to get up, but he didn’t. “The winner is WENDELL BERRY!” Floop announced.

“YEEEEEAAAHH!” Team Facilier cheered.

“Ah ha ha… I just took a shot.” Wendell shrugged, making a sweatdrop.
“Our young adolescent has grabbed our attention, but will he keep it? His next battle, an Irken invader who conquered five planets in the Florae Galaxy, he’s lean, he’s mean, Invader Gagules!” A teenage Irken wearing magenta armor, accompanied by four small SIR Units flying with rockets, entered the arena.

“I wish us a good match!” Wendy told him assuredly.

“You are now Number 57 on my ‘Kill’ list.” Gagules stated.

The bell dinged, and Gagules’ first act was to form a bubble barrier around himself, using the SIRbots as generators. “Stupefy!” Wendy shot stun spells at the bubble, but it remained sturdy as the Irken pulled out a gun. “Protego!” Wendy whipped up a pink shield, which withstood against the electrical net the gun fired. “I thought a Lamia Scale could break defenses. What if I hit the robots…”

Wendell dropped her own shield and ran right around the Irken. As his body turned to her direction, the four SIRbots floated in a diagonal fashion around his body, so that Wendy could not directly face one. Wendy skidded to stop, then ran the opposite way, and she merely repeated this maneuver to try and get in front of a robot. However, she had to keep dodging his net, and Gagules was too close to the edge for Wendy to run fully around him.

When Wendy hesitated, Gagules shot the net, and Wendy gasped, barely dodging backward as she nearly lost balance on her heels. As she caught her breath, Wendy glanced up at the overhead spotlights. One of them was above Gagules, so Wendy aimed her wand and cast, “Spinneroo!” The screws of the spotlight detached as it fell on Gagules’ bubble, blinding him with the flash of electricity. Wendy got to one diagonal side of him and yelled, “Reducto!” to shoot a spell and destroy one of the SIRbots. The barrier disabled, so Gagules positioned his robots in a triangle fashion as they tried to shoot the girl. Wendy dodged them and- “Titillando!” blasted the Tickle Spell.

“HAHAHA, HAH HAHA, HAHAAHAHA!” The ex-invader fell on the floor cackling, drawing baffled looks from his robots. Wendy blew the robots away with her bending and knocked the Irken out with Stupefy.

“THE WINNER IS Wendell!” Floop announced; he was wearing a hat that had a miniature amusement park with a merry-go-round, roller coaster, and the like. “I see this boy has more under his scarf than we saw at first! For these next matches, we’re going to do some SLIGHT redecorating at the request of some of our next combatants. Entering from the blue door, they put rubber and fire to the road, give it up for the Rolly Bowlies!” The ones to enter were three Wheelies (Nightmares who were red-armored tires with exhaust pipes) and a GUN Rhino Metal, which was a short rectangular tank.

After Floop pulled a switch, the edges of the ring curved up into ramps, which led up narrow tracks that looped directly overhead. When the bell dinged, the Wheelies began to zoom up and around these loops, while the Rhino Metal rammed Wendy and knocked her down. Wendy cast a Protego to protect herself when it tried to ram again, and the shield also blocked the bullets the Wheelies were shooting from above. “Reducto!” Wendy’s blasting spell had no effect on the Rhino, so she decided to run and avoid it.

Tired of the Wheelies’ bullets, Wendy boosted to run up the loops herself, but the Wheelies managed to knock her off with their countered momentum. Wendy dodged the Rhino and recomposed, boosting up the loops again and performing a quick spin-kick on each Wheelie to take them out. Wendy took firm land on the floor and projected a shield before quickly skimming her cheat sheet. One of the spells was used to summon Tetramites, and though she didn’t know what
those were, she decided to try it. “Tetrortia!” A swarm of ravenous little bugs came out of her wand and piled up on the Rhino, munching the metal tank until it was nothing. When the Tetramites turned their attention on Wendy, she quickly shot the counter-charm, “Tetranesca!” making all Tetramites poof into smoke.

“Up next, the masters of bounce, with possible relations to slinkies and rubber balls, the Boinkers make their appearance!” The loops around the arena retracted, and springs appeared around the ring’s edges, as well as midair. The enemies to appear were two Burts (small round, yellow creatures with red noses and blue shorts), three Sproing-Oings (neon-colored spring creatures with eyes), and two Spoinks (gray pig Pokémon with spring tails and pink orbs on their heads).

The Burts were bouncing around the side springs, the Sproing-Oings took the aerial springs, and the Spoinks chose to attack Wendy with Psybeams. Wendy whirled air around her right hand and cast “Repiti!” to keep a constant whirlwind going. She swung her Cyclone Fist to knock both Spoinks unconscious. She tried to shoot Stun Spells at the Burts, but the bouncing boys proved too evasive. Wendy decided to hop on the springs and bounce in the opposite direction they were going. When a Burt was mindlessly approaching her, Wendy thrust a foot down when it was underneath, knocking the Burt out with a stomp. She did the same to the other Burt.

With that, Wendy bounced up to the midair springs and tried to chase the Sproing-Oings. She had to maneuver her momentum so she could land against certain springs, and when she would fly to a Sproing-Oing, she had to react quick and throw a kick. The tedious objective and loud springy sounds rang in her ears for almost three minutes before she finally knocked them all out.

“Hoo, that one dragged on a little!” Floop spoke in his spritely manner; he was sitting on his own big bouncy ball. “But I think this junior wizard needs more of a challenge. Let’s bring in our next contestant, a never-before-seen creature who was discovered deep beneath the surface of Planet Avalar. His speech is limited, but please give a round of applause for the beast we have dubbed as ‘Jasper’!” Two guards were escorting a huge, orange creature with big whiter orange hair. It crawled on all fours like a gorilla, had a very messy and distorted appearance, and a broken jasper gem for a nose.

The guards carefully released and backed away from Jasper, and a cage was set up around the ring. The Jasper cocked a brow at the purple-haired girl, who backed up in fear as it crawled over. Wendy closed her eyes when Jasper chose to sniff her, examining her slim body. Without warning, the creature brushed his tongue up against her face. “EWWW!” Wendy frantically shook the spit off. “I’m not a tasty treat, so can you please not do that!”

Jasper’s eyes widened at the sight of her hair. When he licked the front of the purple hair, the dye came off and revealed the blueness underneath. “BLUE!” Wendy shot her eyes open at this shout. Jasper grabbed Wendy’s ponytail and held her up higher, grinning with pure madness. “Meeee likes… BLUE! Meeeee wants it!”

“AAAAHHHH! No no no no!” Wendy flailed her arms and legs, but her premature thrashings didn’t harm the orange Neanderthal. “I’m not interested in a relationship, let me go, let me go, let me gooooo!”

“Me likes blue! Jasper wants Blue and Jasper together!” The creature took Wendy’s right arm and began to dance, forcing her to twirl around.

“AAAAAAAAHHH! Reducto!” Wendy whipped up her wand and destroyed the monster with an explosion, blowing herself away with the force. When the smoke cleared, she saw all that remained of the monster was its cracked gem nose. She was horrified at the sight.
“WOW, what a show-stopping performance!” Floop beamed as the cage opened. “Let’s give our rising champion a break, eh? He’ll need to wash up after that biz! We’ll give everyone 10 minutes to use the restroom or fill up on snacks. When we return, we’ll have our Golden Champ, Rawk Hawk, vs. the kids who know how to shine, the Bulb Boxers!”

As soon as Wendy returned to her locker room, she collapsed on the dirty mattress. “My word, I couldn’t believe the nerve of that monster!” Carla yelled as she climbed onto Wendy’s chest. “That must’ve been traumatizing. Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. But Carla… I just killed that thing.”

“Better it than you, I would think.”

“Carla, I KILLED something! And it was a never-before-seen creature! What if it was kidnapped from its family—what if I made the population go extinct! I feel so awful about it!” Wendy pulled off her contacts and covered her tearing eyes with her hands. “I was just trying to study and practice my fighting, I didn’t wanna… sniff, sniff!”

“Hey, buddies.” The security guard came in. “Floop says if you wants the washroom, it’s yours’s.”

“I don’t wanna fight, anymore.” Wendy rolled on her side and wept. “I just killed a mindless, innocent creature, sniff sniff.”

“Oh noes, that thing goes ‘poof’ all da time. It always comes right back, it does.”

“Sniff…” Wendy rolled over to face him, “It comes back?”

“Yeah, it comes outta da pretty rock on its nose. Da boss says it’s somethin’ to do with solid photon particles. It’ll be locked up in its cage if ya’s wants to see it again. Anyways, later pallies.” He left.

Wendy sat up on the bed, feeling a huge weight lift off her heart. “So it isn’t dead… I’m so relieved.”

“That’s certainly worth noting down.” Carla wrote on the notepad. “I took the liberty of writing about the creatures you battled. You may want to review them at some point.”

“I know…”

“So, are you going to drop out now? Are you tired?”

“…No. I’ll keep fighting.” She stared at her wand. “I just have to be more careful which spells I use.”

Floop’s office

Floop happily bounced into his office on the sit-n-bounce ball before tossing it into a corner amongst other toys. He fell back onto his chair that rolled over to his desk. “Dat-do-doooo, dop-dop-do-doooo…” He hummed to himself while checking his computer. He reviewed the screenshots taken during the fights from different angles, namely those featuring the new boy, Wendell. He smiled, showing interest in this boy’s skills. “…Hmmm.” He noticed a screenshot when Wendell was flailing his arms in Jasper’s grasp. The front of his hair was blue instead of purple. “…I wonder…” The show host looked up the World Government database.

DNK Moonbase
The DNK has been leaderless for almost a year, but given their uncaring natures, it didn’t feel very different from how things normally were. Annaira, Atnort, Beewv, and Avakam had no idea why they were here on Moonbase. Ininap and Sicnarf remembered bringing them here, but had no idea why they would ever want to, given their actions in the past. “S-Sicnarf!” Ininap stuttered, pointing at the balcony window. “Th-There’s a ship coming!”

“What?” Indeed, a S.U.B.L.O.O.C. was flying full speed at the glass wall. All of the operatives ducked out of the way before it smashed through, sending shards of glass flying everywhere.

The three to step off the vehicle were Medusa, Thanatos, and Pandora in their human vessels. “Since this is the Negaverse, we land ships through the window, right?” the Goddess of Darkness inquired rhetorically.

“Isn’t that Eirik’s mom?” Sicnarf asked. “What’re they doing here? And who’s that boy?”

“You don’t need to know the story behind this child.” Medusa said. “Just that he is the vessel I specially chose for my operations. Destructively Nefarious Kids, I am the Goddess of Darkness, Medusa!”

“Medusa?” Atnort questioned. “Is that s’posed to be the Positive Asudem?”

“Yes, and NO! Asudem was only a myth, but I’m the genuine creator of Darkness. My associates and I need these human bodies to hide from the gods. Not that the gods often look here, I suppose. Now, you must be wondering why I decided to show myself in this weathered old treehouse. The answer is simple: I am taking over the DNK as Supreme Leader!”

“SAYS WHO!?” Beewv shouted. “If you’re a goddess, you must be WAY under -13!”

“Actually, even though I’m my sister’s ‘Negative’, I still go by Positive numbers, which means I am far over -13.” Medusa smirked. “And even if I wasn’t, this body is still within age requirements. Besides, it’s not like your organization has any real order. Ask yourselves this… what outstanding things has the DNK accomplished in the past years?”

The base fell silent for a moment, thinking. “Um…” Ininap stuttered, “Ah-I seem to recall, we made friends with… the Nimbi DNK.”

“And we… beat up those DNKG.” Yddam remembered.

“Whoever said you were friends with anyone? And who was it that ultimately destroyed DNKG’s leader?” Medusa asked.

They fell silent again. True, no one in their leaderless group officially made a friendship pact with any other DNK, and they had no idea how DNKG leader, Aluben ended up destroying herself. “Their leader destroyed herself of her own accord.” Medusa finally stated. “And in time, the same will happen to the lot of you. Because this realm is and always has been a world of darkness! The Negatars were the embodiments of this dimension’s very darkness! That’s why the gods look away from this world, and why I, the Goddess of Darkness, choose to walk among you. Destructively Nefarious Kids… help me locate the Thirteen Darknesses. With them, we will establish dominion over the universes, and shun the gods in the way that they have shunned us!”

“Whoa whoa whoa!” Hcaz spoke up. “What’s this about Thirteen Darknesses?”

“Oh, right, they don’t remember that, either.” Medusa said to herself. “All will be revealed in good time, my friends. I wish for you to elect me your leader. If you do, I have a marvelous proposal: I have drawn up, and will sign the official Demon-Negative Alliance Treaty!” Medusa whipped out
a contract with dark symbols.

“Demon-Negative pardon me??” Sicnarf questioned.

“The demons are the ‘Negatives’ of the spirits, therefore it is in our best interests to sign a pact with them. Their powers combined with ours will make us formidable.”

“B-B-But why w-w-would the demons c-c-cooperate with us?” Ininap shuddered at the idea.

“This is all ridiculous!” Sicnarf shouted. “You expect even a leaderless organization like us to follow the ideals of a dark spirit like you??”

“Don’t you understand anything?” Medusa spoke. “The one to destroy DNKG leader Aluben was the overabundance of darkness that consumed her. It was ME! The one who manipulated those two brats,” she indicated Ininap and Sicnarf, “into bringing the former DNKG operatives here, regardless of their misdeeds, was my dark essence manipulating them! I am the Supreme Leader you were always missing, but was always here, and I am the one who will make your Negative kind rise! And besides, I am not the only one who favors the Demon-Negative Alliance. Sipa, Lucifer, come out.”

The young Satanist that many of them knew and feared stepped out of the ship with a forced smile. The operatives raised their weapons when a vicious wolf with red eyes followed her. “Don’t you irksome worms point those weapons at me. I am Lucifer of the Six Demon Saints. I possessed this wolf I found in the desert, but I am not to be underestimated. And this child has agreed to become my bride.”

“As part of the Demon-Negative Alliance, a marriage between a Negative and a demon will be established.” Medusa explained. “And Lucifer, as a Demon Saint, can establish the alliance by signing the treaty. That’s only if I become your leader. However, Lucy plans to marry Sipa, anyway. If the Negatives and demons are not aligned, he will have every position and power to destroy you if he pleases. Because once Sipa is his bride, their powers will become one! Now, wouldn’t you want someone like that on your side?”

“Y-You’re… blackmailing us….” Inap stuttered.

“Goddess of Darkness.” Medusa shrugged. “I like everything black. Still, let’s assume that I keep Lucy under control… the benefits to my leadership weigh heavily in your favor. It’s a very easy decision to make, I would say.”

The operatives were all looking at each other. The DNKG kids didn’t seem to care what happened to this organization they didn’t like. But Sicnarf, suspecting Medusa to play unfairly, made the decision for them. “We’ll let you be our leader… for now.”

“That’s a smart decision. We will have this place clean and have the wedding here by tomorrow at negative noon. Or would that be midnight?” Medusa thought aloud. “Sigh, I never understood the differences between time in these worlds.”

Glitz Pit

“OOOOH.” The audience winced after the Rawk Hawk smashed a Machoke’s head against the arena floor. Since the Machamp was knocked out beforehand, all that remained was the Machop. The smaller fighter fainted on his back and held up a white flag.

“THAT’S RIGHT, baby! HAWKSTER is the KING!” Rawk Hawk roared to the screaming fans. He was a golden Mobian hawk, with big blonde hair, wearing orange shorts, yellow shoes, and
yellow wristbands. “The Hawk doesn’t care who you are or WHERE you’re from, ’cause if you ain’t expecting to get Rawked, then STAY out of my arena! YOU GOT THAT, Four-Arms?!” He stomped on the Machamp’s chest.

“Machamp, Machamp!” it said frightfully. (“I got it! Please don’t hurt me!”)

“WAS THAT A THREAT?!” Rawk Hawk picked him up, whirlered around like a tornado, and sent the Machamp flying. He broke through the stadium’s wall and shrunk into the sky. Twinkle.

“When we get back, get ready for a 10-minute lecture on AERO DYNAMICS!” The Hawk Rawked.

“That Rawk Hawk has quite the large head on his shoulders.” Carla remarked, watching the show on their locker room TV. “Perhaps if he could afford a decent haircut, his head wouldn’t feel as full…”

“I know, but at least he feels confident.” Wendy said, washing her face in the (filthy) sink. “I kind of wish I were more like that.”

“Hey dere, Wendells.” The security guard came back. “Afters Rawk’s next match, youse is gonna be fighting again in the next couple of thousand milliseconds.”

“Yuh-oh! Now’s my last chance to use the little multi-gender’s room.” Wendy jogged into the small one-toilet restroom.

“I’m going to use the lobby restroom.” Carla called to her as the guard left. “Make sure to put your contacts back on if I don’t return on time.”

“Okay, I will!”

Carla left the locker room and carefully trekked the dim-lit hallway, passing a security guard with short blue hair. When she passed, that guard stopped and looked at her with a twinkle in his shaded eye. “MMMM-mmmm!” Carla was instantly stuffed into a bag as she squirmed helplessly.

“Who’s NEXT to feel the Rawk?!” The Mobian bird hacked spit as he shouted. “Huh? YOU?!” He glared at his next opponent. “I was set to beat up a little boy, but I guess a puny girl would make a good warm-up. When I get done Rawkin’ you, you gonna wish you were at your daddy’s gettin’-”

A gust of black wind struck the Hawk harder than a wrecking ball.

After Wendy came out of the restroom, she put her contact lens back to make her red eyes into brown. She noticed her kitten was still not in sight and assumed she was still using the restroom. “Hee hee hee! Kitty’s gotta go, too!” She giggled. She eagerly jogged back to the arena and found somebody beaten and battered. When she came up to view the Rawk Hawk’s latest victim- “Hu!” She gasped at seeing it was the Rawk Hawk himself, his beak dented and eyes darkened.

“Huaff…” The Mobian helped himself up and looked at Wendy. “You’ve been spared the Rawk’s thrashings… but you’re going to wish it was me by the time you face her.” He limped away, leaving Wendy awestruck and terrified. She was already afraid of facing him herself, but apparently there was a stronger fighter in the stadium. She wished she stuck around to see this person…

“Wendell Berry’s making his comeback, ladies and germs!” Floop announced—now he was swinging on the ceiling, as though he were an acrobat in the circus. “He’s up against the hard hitters, the swift swingers (and I don’t mean yours truly), the Chucksters!”
There were five snow-covered platforms where Sir Slushes were stationed – angry snowmen with top-hats that had red X’s. Three more platforms, which were set on the stadium walls parallel to the ring edges, had Chargin’ Chucks that threw baseballs. When the bell dinged, the baseballs and snowballs whipped in her direction, so Wendy thought fast and evaded. “Protego!” She decided to protect herself with a pink bubble so she could think. Wendy thought shooting the snowmen with fire spells was the best option… but the act of killing them would be awful, even if they were just common field enemies.

The baseballs were landing on the floor after hitting her shield, so Wendy decided to grab them herself. Dodging the other balls, Wendy chucked them up at the Sir Slushes’ hats, and the snowmen fell apart once their weak spots were hit. One of the Slushes was on a platform directly above the ring and out of Wendy’s view. She saw one of the other snow platforms, currently vacant, and it was short enough for her to jump and air-boost to. She had view of the remaining Slush, and caught a baseball to chuck up at his hat. With that, Wendy jumped back to the ring and shot fire spells to knock out the Chucks.

“Next up against Wendell, banned from fancy restaurants international, they’re the Ear Killers!”

Three Boomboxers landed on individual platforms around the ring, and a Merenguy in the center—the purple demon with slug-like eyes and a hypnotic face began dancing wildly, forcing Wendy to look directly at it. The Boomboxers – yellow humanoids with boombox heads – seized the chance to shoot soundwaves at her. Wendy avoided the waves and hurriedly shot spells at the Merenguy. The monster dispersed into darkness like any demon, and once free of its spell, Wendy was able to shoot down the Boomboxers with Silencio spells.

“Wendell’s next match is the Kamikaze Squad whodemandaninstantstart.” DING!

With no time to prepare, Wendy was surrounded by four Voltorbs, four Bob-ombs, and one Electrode. “AHHH! PROTEGO!” Wendy whipped the shield over herself when the explosives lit, shrouding the entire ring in smoke and soot. When it cleared, Wendy’s shield stayed sturdy. The bomb creatures were knocked out.

“Well, I probably speak the obvious when I say, Wendell’s performance has been EXPLOSIVE this whole tournament!” Floop grinned at his audience, floating his platform close to the ring. “It’s clear to me that this young man is a HUGE fan of my show and wants the honor of touring my castle.”

“Ah-I… guess I am… heh heh.” Wendell blushed at the recognition; and still had no other idea why Facilier would sign her up for this.

“If he wins this next match, he just may have the glorious honor! But it won’t be easy to best the maiden who conquered Rawk Hawk.”

Wendy’s heart almost stopped—she didn’t expect to face Rawk Hawk’s superior so quickly. Well, at least she didn’t exhaust much energy against these last enemies.

“She had to wash her face and fix her hair braids, but now she’s revved and ready to go!” The blue doors opened, and Wendy heard the opponent running in. On the opposite side of the ring, she couldn’t quite see her, but Wendy kept her Lamia Scale raised in case of a surprise attack. “Known as the ‘Sky Dancer’ by many, she LOVES to dazzle her fans!” Wendy felt her heart racing with anxiety; in the next second, she would view her adversary. “CHELIA BLEN-”

“AAAAH!” The girl in question hit the final step onto the ring with her foot, causing herself to fall on her face. She had reddish-magenta hair tied in two spiky pigtails by orange bows. She wore a
pink shirt whose sleeves were detached from the body, going into white gloves. The shirt had a
dark blue center, and she wore a sky-blue skirt. She had long black socks that went into white leg-
warmers, and black sneakers with pink tongues and soles. “Uh… hehe.” She looked up and sported
a nervous grin. She had pretty blue eyes. “That totally Flooped.”

The audience burst into as much laughter as they had with Wendell before. “NO FAIR!” Donna
shouted. “THAT GIRL’S stealing Wendy’s ACT!”

“Let’s gather a mob and WHALE on her!” Sonny readied his hammer.

“PUBLIC MURDER!” both cried.

“KEEP IT DOWN!” Facilier smacked the twins. “Ugh… Although, they are uncannily similar…”

“Yes, it’s almost fate that two magic airbenders would go one-on-one in the same tournament.”
Floop said. “So I think these star-crossed fighters deserve an atmosphere more fitting.” He pressed
a switch, and the stadium’s very roof came open, exposing the vibrant blue sky. The ring began to
rise, and the girls felt the chill and strength of the wind once it brought them outside.

“Ahh-!” Wendy stumbled under the force of the wind, but maintained composure. Her scarf flew
off, and she watched it fall into the stadium. “Uh-oh…” She sank to her knees and held her
stomach, feeling a twist. “Mr. Facilier’s charm is wearing off… I hope I don’t…”

“Ooo, what a pretty wand!” Chelia raced over and swiped Wendy’s wand off the ground.

“HEY, that’s mine!” the purple-haired shouted, standing up. “Please give it back!”

“Wait a minute…” Chelia moved the rose quartz wand and studied every inch. “You have a Lamia
Scale, too!” With that, she pulled out her own.

“Oh!” Wendy gaped. “You have the same…”

“I bought it from a store in Orchid Bay a few years ago.” Chelia crossed both pink wands. “The
lady said not many wizards have one.”

“Orchid Bay…” Wendy thought back to her visit at Orchid Bay Mall. The words of Tasha were,
“Some chick with pink hair. I think she’s like, a dancer.”

“I heard that they only work for wizards with pure-hearted souls. I didn’t think that was me, but…”
Chelia chuckled at the thought. “Well, here you go!” She tossed the wand back to Wendy, who
was caught by surprise and stumbled in trying to grab it. “You make sure to hold onto that.”

“Uh… thanks.” Wendy said, finding this pleasant interaction a bit odd.

“Oh, I forgot to introduce myself! My name’s Chelia Blendy.” She held a hand out. “What’s
yours?”

Even her name’s similar… “I’m Wendell Berry.”

“Wendell Berry? Like the American novelist?”

“Who?”

“Ten seconds!” Floop announced.

Chelia jogged back to her side of the ring and stood poised. “Well, I wish you the best of luck!”
Wendy turned serious and poised herself. “Yeah. You, too.”

The bell dinged, and Chelia was first to spin her arms and blast twin gusts of black wind at Wendell, who dodged to her right with a start. “Why is your wind black?!” Wendy shouted, almost forgetting to use her boy voice.

“Because I’m using Haki with my airbending!” Chelia held up both arms, which were turned black like iron. “Not many benders know you can do that.” She punched more air gusts, so Wendy projected a bubble shield, but Chelia shot spells from her own Lamia Scale to make it crack. She flew over for a mighty kick that shattered the shield, but Wendy was already set to dash left and run around, sending an air-slice with her leg. Chelia countered, then dashed up to Wendy’s right so swiftly, the momentum caused Wendy to fall on her rear. “And that’s not the only thing I can do! I also have God Chi.”

“God Chi? What is that?”

“Tell ya later.” She shot a Stun Spell, but Wendy rolled away and hopped back to her feet, whipping Disarming Spells at her opponent that Chelia was quick to block. The Sky Dancer did a breakdance and sent a black wind shockwave along the floor, but Wendy jumped, blasting twin air blasts to push Chelia across the ring. Chelia jumped to her feet and yelled, “Infatua!”

A string of large hearts flew out of her wand, phasing through Wendy’s head as the atmosphere flashed red, and her expression was dumbfounded. After the spell finished, Wendy shook back to reality. “What was that?”

“HUH? But that usually makes boys go head-over-heels for me!”

“Guess I don’t find you attractive.” Wendy blushed and shrugged. Chelia growled and punched another black wind blast, which Wendy evaded and began to whirl a cyclone around her left hand. “Repiti!” She cast the spell to keep it spinning, then she cast an endless cyclone over her right hand. She dashed at Chelia, dodging her spells, then threw an uppercut that sent her spiraling into the air via the Cyclone Fist. Chelia recomposed, kicking one foot down as she spun around and conjured black wind around it. Wendy dodged, gaping at how Chelia dented a crater in the floor from the impact.

Chelia began to spin at an incredibly rapid pace. Wendy stood her ground when the air was being pulled in to her, and clouds began to appear above them. Chelia stopped spinning and was clearly dizzy, but she cast her own “Troia!” and ridded the effect. Chelia took a great breath that inhaled the clouds above, so thinking fast, Wendy inhaled and sucked in some clouds herself. When their lungs were full and clogged, they stopped inhaling and aimed at each other.

“Sky Dragon-”

“Sky God-”

“ROOOOAAAAR!” A white cyclone spun against a black cyclone, and it felt like the impact made Glitzville sway in the air. They could barely breathe in the furious wind, and the mix of white and black was blinding. “Hu!” Chelia gasped when Wendy leapt through the wind, eyes squinted, and punched the Sky Dancer with a Cyclone Fist. She slid across the ring as the wind cleared away. The girls could breathe and catch their breath.

Chelia was staring awestruck at Wendy as she helped herself up. While keeping her wand raised, Wendy was confused as to why she was getting this look. …Wendy felt over her eyes and realized the contacts were missing. She grabbed the end of her ponytail and pulled it in front of her. It was
blue.

She gasped and tried to cover her hair with her hands. Panic was clear in her red eyes. The floating cameras recording their fight depicted the revelation on the arena screens, and everyone was murmuring. Facilier and the twins felt great concern, and Romeo felt at a loss for words. Floop stroked his chin and bore an insightful stare, his suspicion having been confirmed.

“You…” Chelia pointed at her. “You’re the girl on the wanted posters. The… ‘Sky Dragon.’”

Wendy could feel the audience gazing at her with fear, knowing a wanted criminal was in their city. She was on the verge of tearing at the idea. “I…I’m…”

“WENDY, HELP!”

“That voice!” Wendy gasped, looking up at a hot-air balloon designed like Meowth. A man with blue hair and a woman with red hair were holding a net, in which a winged white kitten was squirming. “CARLA!”

“Prepare for trouble, your show has been cancelled!” the woman started.

“And make it double, like Gretel and Hansel.” the man followed.

“To protect the world from family-friendly fights!”

“To unite all people within our spotlights.”

“To denounce the evils of airheaded girls!”

“To extend our reach across the worlds!”

“JESSIE!”

“James.”

“Team Rocket is taking all the glitz and glory today!”

“Give up now, or we’ll have our way!”

“Meeeeeowth: Let’s play!” (“Wooobuffet.”)

“What’re you people doing?! Let my friend go!” Wendy demanded.

“Tough break, toots!” Meowth retorted. “But if ya wants, we can send ya an invitation to the wedding! If you be good, we might even let you in the photo! Catch ya later!” The balloon drifted across town quickly.

“COME BACK!” Wendy leapt off the ring and down the building’s roof.

As the stadium goers were rushedly clearing out, Wendy’s scarf ended up landing in Romeo’s hands. …The boy put it around his neck and said with a deeper voice, “Testosterone!”

…

“Grrrr! Who do you people think you are?!” Carla squirmed helplessly in the net. “A couple of poachers?!”
“We’re more than just poachers, Miss!” Meowth declared. “We’re Team Rocket, the greatest of Pokémon hunters! And I’m Meowth, the smartest and most admired cat in the entire crew!”

“Let me out of this thing right now! I’m not a Pokémon!”

“We’ll see about that!” Jessie declared, ready to throw. “GO, Pokéball!”

The red and white device struck Carla in the head. She morphed into red energy and was sucked into the ball through the net. Team Rocket gaped… Their question has been answered so easily. Now they had to wait for the ball to stop beeping. Sadly, the ball popped open, and Carla escaped capture.

The kitten shook her fur until it was untangled. “Mr. Facilier once showed us a book that described Pokéballs. They convert creatures or objects into energy and trap them inside a subspace-like dimension. They can work on anything, except for humans. However, the Pokéballs are only designed to create holographic spaces for any registered Pokémon, which allows said Pokémon to grow more friendly with their trainers. Sadly, I do not have the attributes a Pokémon possesses, and even then, I would not fall for such brainwashing.”

“That’s a shame.” Jessie said. “But I’m sure someone will be willing to fetch a hefty price for you somewhere.”

“Wait a second!” Meowth shouted. “We ain’t gonna sell her anywhere! ’Cause she’s joining with us.” Meowth took Carla’s paws. The love in his eyes and the red on his face was in plain view of the winged kitten. “Dis crew always felt so incomplete without another talking animal of the opposite gender. Now look at who we found! A beautiful goil, with bee-yootiful wings like an angel!”

Carla felt herself redden when Meowth twirled her around, and she fell back into his arms. “Oh, Carl. Beautiful angel, Carl. Won’t you be my bride? Together, we’ll have wonderful kids. Wonderful half-angel kids. Whaddya say, Carl? Let’s get married here and now. Mwwwww…” He puckered his lips and moved closer.

“SHYAH!” Carla threw a furious smack and slapped him off. “Are you INSANE?! Marry YOU? AUCK! I wouldn’t marry a tomcat like you if we were the only two sentient animals on the planet! If you insist on going nude wherever you walk, I can imagine we wouldn’t get invited to dinner parties. What, you think because you have a golden charm on your head, that makes up for it? Plus, you smell horrible, your mouth reeks of fish. I bet you spent the last 15 years trying to capture a single mouse.”


From a perspective, Meowth was walking down a dirt road, into the orange sunset. “Good-bye… friends…”

Jessie’s head appeared over the picture, looking unimpressed. “Just paint yourself blue already.” she remarked.

“Carlaaaaa!” The Rocket Agents looked over the balloon’s basket to see Wendy and Chelia chasing them across a town road, stopping at the city’s railing which Team Rocket had passed over.

“WENDY!” Carla stretched her wings and flew down to the two girls.
“Carla!” Wendy grabbed the kitten in her arms and hugged her. “Thank goodness you’re safe!”

“Hey, Wendy, let’s teach these kidnappers a lesson!” Chelia said excitedly.

“I agree.” Both girls stood together and took big breaths. “Sky Dragon/God ROOOOAAAAR!” The white and black cyclones merged together to blow the balloon away.

“Looks like Team Rocket’s vaca’ is blowing awaaaaay!” (“-buffet!”) Twinkle.

“That was unhumorously unproductive.” Carla sighed.

“THERE you two ladies are!” The girls turned around to see Floop, alongside several cameramen and stadium goers. The host calmly approached them with his friendly smile. Once between the two girls, he grabbed their arms and raised them high. “Ladies and gentlemen, we have a tie! Throwing the competition and working together to save something they both hold dear! These girls are the SISTERS of Sky! And they have BOTH won the honor of touring MY castle on Foogly Mountain!”

“YAAAAAAAAYYY!”

Wendy and Chelia exchanged flushed grins. This host kind of misunderstood, but as long as it made the people excited, there was no reason to speak up. “I’ll get the blimp all set up for both of you!” Floop walked away and gave thumbs-ups to both girls. “Join me when you’re ready and bring whatever guests you like. Wonderful show, girls, wonderful!”

The girls saw him go in the direction of a blimp whose design was fitting for his whacky personality. “Hwow, a trip to Foogly Palace!” Chelia jumped joyfully. “We’re really lucky girls, Wendy!”

“Y-Yeah! I guess we are!” Wendy grinned.

“I’ll see you there!” Chelia waved as she jogged backwards. “Can’t wait to talk- AAH!” She tripped when she tried to turn forward. “Uh, hehe!” She blushed and kept jogging.

“WEN-dyyyyyyy!” Facilier surprised his student with a hug from behind. “Y’all made the fans go WILD! I knew everyone’d love you, who of us ain’t surprised?”

“WE AREN’T!” the twins cheered.

“I’m really glad I tried.” Wendy blushed. “But is this why you signed me up for this, Mister Facilier? Are we going to Floop’s castle to learn something?”

Facilier’s grin shrank into a nervous frown. “Weeell… I ain’t comin’ with you. I’ll let these tykes come along and watch your back, but… Sigh, just look at this paper.” He gave Wendy a paper that was completely blank. “Aparecium.” Facilier tapped his cane to it, and words appeared.

Wendy and Carla skimmed it. They gasped. “No way! Mister Facilier, where did you…”

“It’s from yo’ daddy. Accordin’ to him, Floop is an apprentice to one of the World Leaders. And… he wants you to destroy his castle.”

**Glitzville Candy Shop**

The store was currently empty with almost all the town inside the Glitz Pit. When Sally the Salesman Sugar Fairy viewed a camera monitor that depicted the nearest edge of town, Blackberry
Guards were stepping off of Cinnamon Ships. “Oh well. This town was fun while it lasted!”

The adorable fairy opened the case containing the blue cupcake with golden icing. She pulled it out and held it up with only her teeny right hand. She reached her left hand into a back pocket and pulled out a giant (normal size) detonator, which she placed into the glass case. “Bye bye, delectable goodies!”

The time it took for the bomb to count down was the same time it took for the teeny fairy to carry the cupcake down a long escape tunnel. The further she got down the zigzaggy passage, the faster the bomb was beeping. She got to a secret hangar where she chucked the cupcake onto a teeny ship and drove off. The Blackberry Guards entered the shop on its last few beeps. *Beebeeebeebeeeeeeep!*

The candy shop exploded and destroyed everything inside in a fiery blaze. The Sugar Fairy was presumed dead. The very idea made everyone in Glitzville cry.

_Floop comes from Spy Kids, Chelia is from Fairy Tail, Lefty Left-Right is from Simpsons, and Jasper is from Steven Universe (it’s not the same Jasper, however we have seen this particular one before). I think next time, we’ll switch back to Augustus, just because I want Floop’s Castle to happen… a bit later as far as in-story time. Kids, don’t burn down stores._
Chapter Summary

Team Emily meets Dr. Sheldon Cooper. Meanwhile, Shelly and Gonshiri traverse the Sand Kingdom.

Sorry I took so long with this, but I developed an unhealthy interest in horror RPGs. It's not that they’re scary, they’re just... tear-jerking. Anyway.

Chapter 14: Master and Servant

Sand Kingdom

Things were quiet in the castle of sand. At this time of night, one would expect every living soul to be asleep. ...Well, not quite.

King Sandy quietly creaked open the door to his daughter’s room. “Sheeeellyyy.” The princess seemed bundled up comfily under her blanket. “Shelly?” Sandy crept a bit closer. “I need to borrow Gonshiri for a bit, so if it would please you…” He noticed the part-open drawer and gently pulled it all the way.

A swarm of tiny, frantic Pikmin hopped out and began scampering all around the floor by his feet. With a gasp, Sandy threw open his daughter’s covers. All there was of her was a snoozing sand sculpture. “SHELLY!!”

The beach princess was high-tailing down the halls as alarms blared. Several Round Towel Knights appeared to block Shelly’s way, “Princess, what is-” but she stomped the ground and sunk them in sinkholes before escaping. When knights were charging at her from both directions, Shelly dove out a window and thrusted her arms forward to make part of the sand wall stick out and catch her, then carefully lowered herself down. Knights on the outer wall fired beachball bombs from catapults, which Shelly dropped down and dodged, landed on the wall and hopped off, then faced the castle as she stomped the ground with all her force, sending a quake through the wall.

“UUWAAAAAAHHHH!” A chunk of the castle came falling down as Sandy plummeted with it. In the confusion, Shelly spun a hole open in the ground and hopped in.

Five minutes passed before Sandy finally helped himself out of the rubble. But while trying to fix his crown on, he jumped when seven dark figures appeared behind him. “Had a little accident, did we?” asked the slim, middle man in a dark voice.

“Heheh… no accounting for sand-tidal waves.”

“Where is the princess?”

“Ummmm… funny story, she was with my daughter a few hours ago, and then um, well they, sort of, elop-” In a blink, the hooded man zipped up and took him by the shirt.

“We were told the Minish would be in YOUR possession when we arrived... were we misled?”
“It—It was just a small—HPP!” The man thrusted two fingers into Sandy’s waist, piercing perfectly.

“You used up your last request.” He removed his fingers and threw Sandy to the ground. “We wasted our time here. But since we’re close to Azultown anyway, there’s one more meat we can find.” And so they vanished in a blink.

The seven figures were flying through the night sky, the shortest one spotting a cloud of dust progressing across the surface. “Hold your stars ‘n’ garters! Somethin’s moving down there.”

“It’s probably just a sandworm. There’re thousands of them here. CP10... let’s move out!” One at a time, the assassins vanished.

That trail of smoke eventually came to a stop, ‘til Shelly popped out of the ground, knocking sand from her ears. She then pulled her nose up, and let Gonshiri drop to her finger from her right nostril. “Uck! I pray for ANY sentient being my size to borrow your living quarters.”

“Hey it was the best place I could think of without swinging you out, at least we’re AWAY from them.”

“I don’t understand... why do YOU wanna protect me? Whaddyou have to...” Shelly was silent for a minute. She didn’t understand why she cared for Gonshiri’s safety. …There was only one possible reason: “You’re MY servant. And no one is taking you without MY say-so.”

“...” Gonshiri said nothing either. That was all she was in Shelly’s eyes. And how far she was willing to go. “HMPH!” She jumped to the sand, facing up at Shelly with furious eyes. “Unacceptable!! If I wanted you to protect me, I would’ve asked you, but I DON’T need your protection and I’m NOT gonna let you fight my battles for me!! SO GOOD-BYE!” The Minish raced across the sand away from Shelly, leaving a tiny trail of dust.

Despite her apparent speed, her road was soon blocked by a giant foot, the quake forcing Shiri onto her bottom. “BE that as it MAY, you are still my SERVANT, and I haven’t DISMISSED you YET.”

Shiri got back up and faced her with more rage. “I WAS CAPTURED TO BE THE SERVANT OF A PRINCESS, but now that you are clearly defecting from your home, YOU’RE JUST A HUMONGOUS SMELLY LUG WHO’S AS GOOD AS FILTHY, TRAITOROUS TRASH TO YOUR KINGDOM!”

Shelly bent down with her witty, snarky grin. “And outside your kingdom, what more are you than one of billions of grains of sand in this desert? I might be a piece of trash, but I’m still the right amount of force to flatten YOU.”

“AAAAAAAAUUUUUUGH!!!” Refusing to tolerate this, Gonshiri ran at Shelly’s foot and unleashed her most furious and unforgiving of thrashings. “YOU ARE THE WORST PERSON I EVER MET, I NEVER WANNA SEE YOU AGAIN AS LONG AS I LIVE, YOU STUPID WORTHLESS PATHETIC DISGUSTING PIECE OF OVERGROWN HALF-DIGESTED SLOOOOOOP!”

Her fists finally grew tired after 2 minutes, the princess in desperate need of breath after showing Shelly her true wrath. There were no dents in the larger girl’s thick skin, and to Shelly, it felt like a measly ant punching her foot with its stubby little legs. “…HAAAAA hahahahahahahahaha!” They always knew how to make each other laugh.
With that, Shelly held her pinky down for Shiri, the latter happily climbing onto her nail. She placed Shiri inside her right ear and said, “Let’s go.” before starting her arduous quest across the desert.

**Farmland in Texas**

Morning had come on the third day of Team Emily’s travels by the time they arrived at a rural farmland. “Yaaaawn… well, we’re in Texas.” Emily yawned, rubbing her weary eyes before putting her glasses back on. “Where did you say Uncle Sheldon lived again?”

“Oh Galveston Island, we still have a few miles to go.” Sarah replied.

“Where we’ll probably need to sneak onto a boat to sail over.” Gary followed.

“I wonder if Sector T is still active, we c’n get supplies from them. After about… 5 minutes or 20.” And with that, Emily tumbled out of the G.O.R.I.L.L.A.’s cockpit headfirst and hit the ground. “Ow.”

She lay unconscious for who knows how long, but it was still morning. Her glasses fell off, so as she blinked awake, a dark blurry figure was standing over her, upside-down. It stuck something white in its mouth and blew smoke out; a cigarette. Emily rolled onto her front, observing this creature to be a capuchin monkey, a Pipo Helmet on its head. It pulled out a pair of huge square glasses and put them on. “Hey… those are mine.”

“AA-AAACK!” The monkey chucked the cigarette at her head before hopping away. Emily scrambled to her feet, squinting her eyes in a hopeless attempt to see the farmland around her. There were blue and red flashing lights atop dark figures that she knew were monkeys. Gary and Sarah dropped down beside her. “There’re monkeys here, too. You alright, Em?” Sarah asked.

“Hey, where’s your glasses?” Gary asked.

“A monkey stole ‘em.”

“We better get ‘em back. Yer eyes are smaller than peas on a stove. Ah reckon we look like some child’s smeared fingerpaint.” Sarah said.

“It isn’t that bad,” Emily walked forward, “I can see just- OW!” She tripped on a cockroach.

“And that’s why a good friend carries around a spare set.” Gary smiled casually and held an identical pair of glasses to Emily.

She took them, put them on, and stood. “Thanks.”

“Now where’re those spare braces you promised me?”

“On my model lightspeed train set?”

“Figured.”

“There’s too many varmints here for there to be normal.” Sarah noticed. “Ah reckon we should see what they’re up to.”

“Good idea. And not only that, sniff sniff.” Emily closed her eyes and whiffed. “There’s science in the air…” (Play the Mermalair Theme from *Spongebob: BFBB.*)
Stage 24: Cooper Works

Mission: Catch 15 monkeys and meet Dr. Sheldon Cooper.

The kids abandoned their G.O.G.O.-G.O.R.I.L.L.A. and hurried down the country road, abandoned barns and grassland to the side as the morning drew on. Galloping sounded across the distance and Pipo Monkeys were riding horses from the horizon, spanking the poor animals forcefully as the apes shot Western guns at one-another. Gary and Sarah whirled their Super Hoops and ran at the horses, leaping, batting the monkeys off, and netting them. “t’s alright, li’l pardner.” Sarah patted a horse happily. They explored the farmlands and found a 4x4 piece inside a barn, another in a tree, and inside another barn, they climbed a stack of hay, floated up with Sky Flyers, and got onto the walkway just under a roof where a Pipo Monkey began running around. Emily and Sarah ran separate ways and cornered the monkey before Emily caught it.

Otherwise, the farmland appeared fairly empty, even though apes were running everywhere moments ago. However, they saw a capuchin monkey jump out from a bush and hop its way over a decaying wooden fence, up a hill into a large barn. The sign on the fence read, Warning: Do not enter these premises. There is a wild man-eating rooster inside who was tested for rabies. Do not enter, or risk the chickenpox.

“Already had them.” Emily retorted, leaping over as her friends joined. Two capuchins were standing guard at the entrance, smoking, but when they saw the kids, they drew out lighters, held them by their rears, and farted powerful flames that forced the kids to dodge. Emily was on her front as she whipped out her slingshot and blasted homing pellets, flinging the lighters away before the apes retreated inside. Emily jumped up and ran inside, but it seems the apes were gone.

“Where’d they go?”

“Ah dunno, but there’s that man-eating rabies rooster.” Sarah pointed at the stiff, mindless creature on a nest.

Emily approached and studied it curiously, tapping its beak. “This isn’t a rooster, it’s metal.” That’s when the eyes lit red and scanned the three of them.

“Brain scan reads I.Q. levels at: Two-hundred-and-fifty-three, one-hundred-forty-six, and two-hundred-and-one. Results: one Acceptable, two Passable, deemed as 'Guests'. Recommended entry: the Robbers' Road.”

And before either of them could question, a man-size vacuum appeared from the ground and sucked them down at whipping speeds. “WHOOOOOAAAA.” Emily hit the metal floor first, then Sarah, then Gary. Emily pushed them off and fixed on her glasses. The scent of filtered air reached her nose as she gazed in awe.

It was something like a Batcave, a vast underground with strong steel structures, dozens of vents, TV screens, and complex wiring that filled Emily with an extreme sense of sciency wonder. A huge light-up sign on a distant wall across the chasm read Cooper Works. “Whooooa! What kind of place is this??”

“‘Cooper Works’?” Sarah read. “Did Uncle Sheldon build this place? When did ‘e get around to it?”

“Who cares!! Only someone of a truly brilliant mind would have the time and patience!” Emily was red, heart racing like a girl in love. “But… the apes. How would they know about this? Somethin’ funny’s goin’ on and we better stop it!”
The trio moved forward (a 4x4 was behind a sparking terminal) and leapt across a series of round platforms kept aloft by helicopters, seeing a monkey clinging the bottom bar of one of them. Emily and Sarah had the honor of jumping on one side of that platform to make it turn vertical, letting Gary net the ape while the girls helicoptered back to safety. The platforms shifted left into a passage within the wall, coming out in another expansive cave above a chasm where hovering devices, Heli-Gliders, floated above their ledge. “For unauthorized trespassing into my Fortress of Solitude, the culprits are hereby granted one strike. Any further vandalism to this rule shall result in your undergarments being thrown onto the highest telephone wire.”

They stuck each of their Sky Flyers to the Heli-Gliders, and continued spinning their gadgets to make the devices fly over the chasm in a straight, direct line. They forcibly stopped over a platform, where some Shelbots – small robots designed like Sheldon’s head, awakened, sounding alarms, and blasted mini missiles. The kids batted them away with their Stun Clubs and bashed the robots over the edge. The Heli-Glider beside them would float to a walkway along a cylindrical wall, but a walkway leading down and around this current pillar brought them to a Heli-Glider that would go to a floating 4x4, which Gary proceeded to claim himself, then return. They took turns using the Heli-Glider to the new walkway, really a stairway of long metal planks where certain ones drooped for a second at certain intervals.

They kept sharp eyes on when they would droop and jumped to avoid falling in the abyss. They made it up the stairs and to a wall where many little bars were sticking in-and-out in a similar fashion, so the crew jumped and grabbed their way across the bars, hovering with Sky Flyer before some would retract. They made it to a new set of Heli-Gliders and flew them to a series of floating propeller platforms. Said platforms shifted left and right, respective ones turning over to expose the bladed fan side, so it required more careful maneuvering with Sky Flyer as they jumped and landed on safe ones. A capuchin was using makeshift wings to float over an area, so in the midst of a jump, Sarah managed to net the monkey, then resumed coptering to a safe hold. The end of the platforms had a new Heli-Glider set that flew them to empty space.

However, this empty space had many other sets of Heli-Gliders, forcing the trio to jump to each one and propel their Flyer into them as they solved a maze of Heli-Gliders. One route brought them to a floating 4x4, and along the right route was another flying capuchin that Emily netted while going by. The gliders eventually brought them to an opening in the same wall as where they started, going through to enter a stairway just across the chasm from the first area. The stairs wound around a wall as boulders of dirty laundry were bouncing to them, easy to dodge however. They made it to a flat, straight walkway and saw the cannon blasting the laundryballs on the other side. The kids used Super Hoops to run across faster, picked up a 4x4, and netted the ape controlling the cannon.

Behind the cannon was a sealed door with a speaker. The voice on the other end said, “You can’t see me, but I am everywhere. I create all, ensure life for all beings. Make me angry, and I might just split and destroy all in a fiery wrath. What am I?”

Sarah and Gary tapped their chins. But the answer was clear to Emily. “An atom!”

“Answer was: ‘Atom’. Result: apparently not a Christian. Further observation: at least a middle school graduate. Verdict: Acceptable.” And so, the door opened to allow them entry. “Welcome to Area 2 of Dr. Sheldon Cooper’s Fortress of Solitude. …Here’s an interesting fact about automatic PA systems: Doctor Wormenheimer designed the first recorded system as a Halloween prank to scare his colleagues. …Hahahah!” Sheldon’s laugh was quick, hoarse, and sounded like a puppy panting. This new room had a wide, round floor with lighting floor tiles, dancing Shelbots who were life-size figures of His Truly, and apes mimicking their movements. Before going to catch the 3 apes, they explored the room, went up a short staircase to a sealed door, and found a movie
camera. They pressed the switch and recorded the apes’ dance.

One of them dressed like an Ewok, another a Ferengi, and the third dressed like Bender from *Futurama*. **They laughed at us, but we own the future**, the text read. With that, Emily caught the Ewok, Sarah the robot, and Gary the Ferengi. The Shelbots appeared harmless, but with the door sealed, it was clear the kids had to mimic their dance. A bulletin board had a diagram depicting the blue squares = Star Wars, yellow squares = Star Trek, and green squares = robots. The nerds shortly realized they had to do the Ewok dance, Ferengi dance, and The Robot on those respective color tiles. They called dances, so Emily got robot, Sarah got Ewok, and Gary got Ferengi, which he unfortunately knew was a mating ritual. Hehe.

The robots bowed in approval when they finished, and the door opened. They collected two 4x4’s before heading into a long hallway covered entirely by a carpet. **“Please, keep your muddy shoes off my new antique rug. The welcoming mats are better suited for that footwear.”** The whole carpet was light-brown colored, but various, small square parts of it had a different texture, the hardness of welcome mats within the newly-vacuumed fluffy carpet. Emily carefully observed the different-texture areas and guided her friends in coptering to them, since only one could fit at a time. Partway through, they had to hover to and climb across a rugged area of the right wall. Once again, a monkey floated over the floor, so Sarah jumped off, netted him, and quickly coptered back to safety. When little gravel bits broke off the wall onto the carpet, they got to see the fate of those who dared to soil it: a giant fan from across the hall blew a powerful gust, the kids grabbing the wall tight to avoid blowing with the dust.

**“Did you know that the first house fan originated as a prototype for a device designed to better expel dust particles to a single location, making it far easier to vacuum up afterwards? Quite honestly, that’s why I’ve always been against such fans, but I am happy to revive its original use.”** The kids eventually made it to the end and grabbed a 4x4 as they entered the new room. Lasers skimming horizontally or vertically between the walls, it appeared as though these monkeys were swimming around the air. But the moment the kids stepped beyond the blue line’s boundaries, the weight of the world left their bodies, for gravity was nonexistent here.

It wasn’t much different than swimming, the Water Net worked here just as well, except they drifted a little forward whenever they wanted to stop, putting them in danger of hitting lasers. The monkeys proved agile in non-gravity, but the kids had them both netted in time. Floating against the ceiling was their 10th 4x4, which “Let me handle this one.” Sarah began to construct their next invention.

**Kids Next Door: M.A.G.N.E.B.O.O.T.S.**
Magnetically Armored Gear Niftily Enables Bweaver Over Opposable Titanium Surfaces

“Dr. Cooper’s got just enough metal for boots yer size.” Sarah said, giving them to Emily.

“Holy cow!” Emily exclaimed, pulling off her own shoes to exchange for the (oddly light) metal ones. “But how will you guys follow me?”

“Oh, we already have some.” Gary and Sarah presented their own boots. “Our cousins are in GKNF, but they didn’t have any your size.”

“Oh. Hehe.” She blushed. The following corridor was all an electric floor, so they used the boots to grind across the smooth surface of a nearby rail. It threatened to run off, so they jumped to a rail
along the left wall, the magnets pulling them to it excellently as they grinded sideways. This came to an end, and they saw no visible rail, so they kicked off on an impulse, saved by a rail just on the corner of the wall and electric floor. The next rail was a little above them, but since they could only jump up from where the rail top faced (in this case diagonal), they had to forcibly pull their feet up off of this rail so they would fly and stick onto the new one, then repeat this maneuver for the next, on the way catching a monkey clutching the end of the previous, then jump off onto a new center rail. It reached its end and let the kids fly off onto safe ground—“OOF!” Emily just then realized how heavy the metal boots were.

“Probly ain’t a good idea to wear ‘em all the time.” Sarah figured as they stuffed them in the Infi-Cube.

“We can’t all be Links.” Emily blushed. This new room had floating magnetic cubes that shifted back-and-forth in midair, certain sides lit up to signify which were magnified. There was a red switch on the wall under a sign that read ‘Repel/Attract’, the arrow pointed at the former as it seemed energy beams flowed away from the cubes. The kids got under the first beam as Emily hit the sign with the slingshot, then put on their boots to fly feet-first onto the cube. From here, it was another maze of walking to a certain side of the cubes, hitting the switch to attract to the next one, until they found the right route of connected cubes to get onto the high ledge. Naturally they managed to find a monkey in all this gravity-shifting dizziness before they made it. They reached another door with a computer lodged in.

“Solve this query: the Justice League is to the Avengers, as Aquaman is to . . . ?”

Emily thought for a second. “…Ant-Man.”

“Answer was: ‘Ant-Man’. Status update: Still acceptable. You may proceed.” With that, the door opened again as the kids entered. “For making it this far, it’s safe to decree you high school graduates at best. Heh, don’t pat yourself on the back, from my position I can hardly distinguish a difference between any lower level.”

“Hehehe, did you hear that guys, I’m already at high school level even though I never finished elementary!” Emily scratched her reacting skin cells.

“We helped, too.” Her friends chorused. They were exposed to another vast room over a dark chasm, requiring the use of their M.A.G.N.E.B.O.O.T.S. as a sideways metal path rotated like a planet. When a part of the path rotated past them, they quickly stepped on and felt the dizziness kick in as the sideways world whirled over them. They stomped along to the path’s top, and right above was another rotating device of four bars with magnetic platforms on the ends. They pulled their legs up to attract the boots to the panels, then waited for them to rotate beside a panel on a following device, then another, until they dropped down on a complex of rotating pathways that they inevitably had to follow. There were electric bars suspended in midair on various sides of the complex, so the kids had to avoid touching them whenever they flew by.

The many alternate paths were annoying to cross considering how slow they moved in their boots, as well as the fact they couldn’t jump incoming electric bars, just wait for them to go by before moving quickly. A monkey was clutching a bar on the exposed interior of an area, but two consecutive electric bars glided over that spot. Just when the second passed, Emily quickly stomped to the edge closest the monkey and swung him in her net, then returned to her friends in the safe spot just before the first bar zapped her. Eventually they located a lever within an interior bar, flipped it with the Stun Club, and activated a Heli-Glider at the top. They were forced to make their way to the top of the structure, avoiding bars that came behind them now, and took turns flying the glider to the safe foothold against the wall.
They found a new Heli-Glider facing an over-chasm of electric walls with gaps in-between, and giant fans along the sides, overhead, and below. A lever beside them would activate the fans and turn them off, so only one could go at a time. Since Emily was the bigshot smarty, she… told Gary to go first, and Sarah shrugged in agreement XD. She stuck his Flyer in the device, twirled, and floated forward. Emily flipped the lever before Gary hit the electric wall, the fan blowing him rightward so he could enter the gap, followed by a fan on his right that blew left so he could enter this gap, then stopped twirling and yelled Emily to stop so he could recompose. The next gap was above a short distance, but considering the momentum, he told Emily to activate, inched forward, then immediately yelled her to stop the moment he breezed upward, so he could be level and enter the gap, then told her to reactivate so the next fan could blow him higher above the electric.

A new fan on his left blew Gary rightward—he yelled Emily to stop before an overhead fan, which would blow him down into an electric tunnel using momentum. He yelled Emily to activate, glided forward quickly, and breezed into the slanted tunnel, not hesitating to keep his momentum, and landed on the floor with a great need for breath. Finally, he flipped a switch to disable all the electric walls, watching the Heli-Glider return to his friends so they could take turns coming over. They entered a new, more expansive hallway where they stood atop a ledge, at level with the head of a robot the size of a house, designed like Spock’s head.

Emily eagerly hopped into the cockpit and rode it down, smashing and bashing the tanks and smaller robots that tried to hold her back. She could blast mini missiles from Spock’s eyes, and his long ears could thrust forward and punch like fists. At the very end of the passage stood a Specterbot, controlled by the same smoking capuchin that stole Emily’s glasses. The Specterbot swung its fists and pushed Spockbot onto its back, but Emily helped it back up with a ready expression and flew forward, head-butting the Specter against the wall. She tried to force the robo Spock head to smash the monkey, but Specterbot countered its force and shoved off, leaping atop the cranium, and aggressively punching down as Emily ducked in the cockpit. Emily rapidly whooshed the steering wheel and spun Spock around and around, the Specterbot falling on its rear. Emily lay the Spockbot on top and pushed the self-destruct. She hurriedly jumped off to let both robots explode.

The monkey lay dizzily defeated as Emily swiped back her old glasses and netted the shifty monkey—whom was named Ricky. The face of Spockbot landed beside Emily, a tear leaking from its eye. Emily sniffled and began to cry, making the Vulcan Salute. “Good-bye, Leonard Nimoy! Sniff!”

They had more than the required monkeys and were able to enter the final door. “Dr. Sheldon Lee Cooper welcomes you into his private domain. Again, don’t feel so proud of yourselves, I once let a Master’s Degree in here. I am, however, obligated to offer you a hot beverage, so please, stay out of my spot on the couch and enjoy.” (End song.)

This room was smaller and much less security-heavy. There were two floors, comic books and videogames lined the shelves, a brown couch with three spots sat before a TV, and on the second floor, they saw piles of books stacked around a computer desk, as well as the tops of what seemed like whiteboards. “Hum. Guy has a nice place.” Gary said.

“I wouldn’t mind living here!” Emily beamed, happily going to plop onto the left cushion of the couch. “AAAAH!” A punching bag in the backrest punched her away.

“That’s my spot.” The siblings looked at the stairs to the second floor. The renowned scientist, owner of this laboratory, Dr. Sheldon Cooper came down. He was a man in his 30s, with dark-brown hair on an ovoidal head. His slim, stretchy body made him look like a praying mantis, and his eyebrows curved in a way that would make him look like Joker if he were smiling. He wore a
red shirt with The Flash’s symbol, dark-blue jeans, and brown shoes.

Sarah and Gary helped Emily up as she straightened her hair and fixed her glasses. “Are you Uncle Sheldon?”

“Oh Lord, my sister didn’t have another child without my supervision, did she?” he asked.

“Er, no, she’s our friend, Emily, we told ‘er about you and she wanted to see.” Sarah explained.

“See what?”

“See you.”

“See me and then what?”

“She wanted to MEET you.” Gary yelled.

“You couldn’t’ve said that from the start, honestly you kids need to work on your wording if you plan to follow my footsteps.”

“He’s got a point, Sar.” Em said, earning a glare from her friend. She then approached the tall, lanky man, her sweatglands and skin cells reacting. “M-M-Mr. Cooper, my name’s Emily Garley, and-and uh, you have a really awesome lab, I can just tell you’re a really smart guy, I-I-uh, hehehehe.”

“Pfft, ‘SMART’, it’s so silly, the things children say when they know so little.” Sheldon stifled laughs, going into the room’s kitchen. “Though I commend your prowess in making it in here, it took Wolowitz 3 hours by himself.” He poured 3 cups of cocoa for his guests. “For your first time, Ms. Garley, you deserve something special.” So after bringing their cocoa, he went to a desk, pulled out a sticker, and stuck it on Emily’s labcoat. “For you.”

She glanced down at the (upside-down) sticker of a cat saying ‘Me-Wow!’. “Lovely. …Um, Dr. Cooper, why are there a bunch of monkeys in your lab?”

“Oh, one of my colleagues paid a visit and needed a place to put them. I let them out in the farmland, all of a sudden they come back wearing these flashing helmets, tearing up the place. They started building a satellite outside, now when I try to watch the new Green Lantern cartoon on my television, all I get is some crummy knockoff called Cyan Flashlight. Makes the Green Lantern film look badass.”

“Well, Dr. Cooper, we might actually know the cause of these happenings.” Emily scratched her head. “Actually, they originated from my grandfather’s lab in Adams Tech Co..”

“Your grandfather works for Adams Tech?” he asked with fascination.

“Her grandfather IS Allister Adams!” Gary proclaimed.

“My word! If Stephen Hawking hadn’t already occupied the seat (no pun intended), Professor Adams might almost be up there as my intellectual equal.”

“You see what I mean with this guy?” Gary whispered to Em.

“Oh, you’re a fan of my grandfather?”

“I respect him for climbing up there, but really he should be a ‘fan’ of me.”
“I… see.” Emily stared indifferently. “Dr. Cooper, we came because we were wondering if you
could help in capturing all of these monkeys, because, um, they’re setting up a bunch of TV
stations around the world and ruining all of our favorite shows. You’ll help us, won’t you, ‘cause
you can’t possibly allow such atrocities to go unpunished??”

“Hmmm… well, if it was a choice between this and, what other nonsense passes for TV nowadays,
I suppose… but where exactly did it say I would allow a group of children the use of my, dare I
say, HOLY technology and possessions?”

“Dare I say, this particular child has more intelligence than atoms in an eraser! I clearly reached
‘Master’s Degree’ level when I’m still technically in elementary school.”

“Kmm, I was just finishing high school at your age. I just wish puberty didn’t hit during my college
graduation. If you want to so much as touch my remote control, PROVE you are worthy of the
patience of the mind of Sheldon Cooper.”

“All right, Dr. Cooper… if that’s your game, I challenge you to a battle! A battle of wits!”

“Hahahah!” The scientist laughed like a puppy.

“Something funny?”

“A battle of wits, goodness you’d think I’m in kindergarten.”

“So Mr. Smartest-ass-in-kindergarten is afraid of being smarted by a brat like me?”

“I have grown eons beyond the idea of fear and intimidation, your meager ‘taunts’ mean nothing-”

“Chicken Maaaan, Dr. Sheldon in the Chicken Cooperrrr, bawky-snort, baaaawwwwk!”

“Oh, hardly-”

“Lay any eggs Dr. Cooper, we can make a great Sheldomelet!”

Sheldon was twitching. “Hu- all right, then. As annoying and as better off they would be as tests
for new vaccinations, I suppose children are the future, and what’ll our future be without the ability
to learn. However very limited in knowledge. Name your game, Ms. Girley.”

“Garley.” She fixed her glasses. “I’ll base my game from something I read in a manga: the Liars’
Game. I don’t suppose you have a lie detector?”

“Do I have, I am gonna make you weep.” Sheldon walked away and returned with the mechanical
device with twin helmets.

“Convenient. Let’s put these on.” Emily took one helmet while Sheldon placed on the other. “Now
the game: The two of us thoroughly examine each other and, based on anything we’ve determined,
we have to say a quality that applies to the other person in the form of a sentence, as if we outright
know that quality and are speaking the truth. The first person to speak an incorrect quality about
the other is deemed a liar. Of course, if we’re lying about our accusation, the detector will detect it.
Shall we test it?”

“Alright. …You wear rounded square glasses.”

“You look like a praying mantis.”

“Ah- I do not! Gzzzzzzz!” The detector immediately shocked Sheldon.
“Hu hu hu- snort!” Emily laughed, already won. “But here are the rules: you can’t say anything about what we look like (i.e. I have blonde hair and large feet), but you can state other things that relate to them, nor can you say anything you have in common with the other person. You may also provide reasons or evidence for your judgments should the need befit you. Do I make myself clear?”

“Clear as snow when it’s scorchin’. …As my mother would say.”

“You may go first, Dr. Cooper.”

“You have gone first, Ms. Garley.”

“Very spot-on.” Emily was calm and steady, with a look behind her glasses that stated she was focused. “But in future instances, you may go first. Back to me… judging by the quality of this ‘Fortress of Solitude’, and your relative age, it’s no doubt you attained a doctorate at an unusually young age, in your teens at the very least.”

“…That is true.” Sheldon nodded. “Now I surmise you have a skin condition, although minor, as your regular scratching in various areas is very eye-catching.”

“…True.” In fact, Emily had been scratching itchy areas nearly the whole time they were talking, and had just scratched the side of her neck. She closed her eyes and thought intently, trying to feel the very atmosphere of this interior. “By the feel of the intriguingly warm, still air via your ventilation system as well as the presence of Flagrance Delight, it’s clear as carbon dating that you’re a germaphobe.”

Sheldon wanted to protest, but remembered his position. “…I am something of a germaphobe, yes. You clearly have a fascination with microbiology, for aside from your persona of a scientist, young girls tend to have the adoration for subjects of miniature size, and no doubt you were teased a lot for being a relative of the infamous nonexistent monster of the large soles, you imagined being of superior size and crushing them.”

“…Also true.” Emily was sweating slightly. “At some point in your life, you found the concept of love or emotion to be inane.”

“Khm, and you have not.” He scoffed.

“You’re right.” Emily stated proudly. “I won’t deny having a schoolgirl crush and I’m proud to have feelings for the cutest boy ever. You were raised under strict authority of a devoted Christian mother, ergo your recurring remarks of the deity that doth not exist.”

“Hmph.” Sheldon’s way of confirming this truth without confirming. “I’m given to understand we’ve seen our fair amount of science fiction, judging by your so-called inventions of a makeshift lightsaber, transportation net, and radar from a certain game series, your cube containing a sub-dimension from a classic television show, as well as your magnetic boots from another game, you have little to no originality in the basis of your inventions.”

“… … … Yes.” She became more angry at Sheldon’s smug smile, clearly enjoying displaying his knowledge in such a way. “You enjoy getting brain scans.”

“Almost as much as I enjoy Boggle with Stephen Hawking.” He spoke dreamily. “You have quite the oversized ego, for you most rudimentarily deemed yourself better than your peers in school that you’ve developed the idiotic sensation you can best a being of intelligence who far exceeds the modern-day mammal.”
“I’m proud to say it: I’m the smartest girl where I live while everyone else is dumb as a sack of rocks. But THAT’S no different from where YOU’RE from, ergo you’ve broken the rule of saying something you’ve in common with the other person.”

“. . . . .” Sheldon began to twitch again. He moved his mouth as if implying to want to say something, but no words came out.

“YES!! I WIN, I WIN!” Emily pulled the helmet off.

“Oh PLEASE, I threw you that game out of respect and-GZZZZZT!” Shocked.

“Hu hu hu- snort! But if it matters any, I would like to play again with you. Only this time, we have to say facts that we both have in common.” She put her helmet back on.

“Well, then I wish you the best of luck, because asides from my and your ‘superiority’ to my and your peers, we’ll hardly find anything that we share.”

“Oh, I disagree strongly, Dr. Cooper.” Emily smirked. “And if I may begin, I will say… we both love comic books and manga.”

“Correct. …We both have deep admiration for science, regardless of whose intelligence is superior.”

“We both find the traditions of religions intriguing, but a waste of time.”

“We both tried to develop our own artificial intelligence into a self-designed robot.”

“If the aptitude of our brains corresponded with the hotness of supermodels, ours would always be on the cover!” Emily flushed and wiggled.

“Both of us dreamed of being the sole savior of the planet in a sci-fi fantasy!”

“Both of us SOOOOO wanted to hold a real lightsaber!”

“Both of us deceived our neighbor into thinking he won a sweepstakes trip to Tatooine, hah! hah! hah! How would any Earth organization get in touch with a thug-riddled desert planet?!”

Gary and Sarah lounged on the couch (not Sheldon’s spot) guzzling chips, waiting for what seemed like hours for their game to be done. “We both weren’t surprised when our first laser gun worked.” continued Emily.

“We both love to listen to lectures of lesser scientists, just for a good laugh.”

“We both have a specific barber we set our eyes on to get our hair just right, no one else.”

“We both…. uhhh, we both… uhhh, what is your middle name?”

“Adams.”

“HUUUU, both of our full names have 16 letters!!”

“OH MY NAMELESS DEITY, both of ours so do!! Is that a model trainset, do we both find the mechanics of trains to be fascinating-?”

“YES WE DO!!”
Sarah and Gary had plugged their ears shut. Emily and Sheldon threw their helmets off as they touched each other’s shoulder, the latter bent down for Emily. They both had giddy faces. “Well, Miss Garley, I have clearly misjudged you! When I look at you, I can only make the distinction my sister had a daughter who turned up a Junior Shelly!”

“Hu hu hu snort! I am getting 101% in math. Ask me any question about math and I’ll answer!”

“All right. …How many screws make up this hideout?”

“Let’s see. Hmmmm…” Emily closed her eyes and thought. She must estimate the size of this laboratory and its complexity to the best of her ability. “I would guess… about…. Seventy-thousand-four-hundred-and-twenty-two.”

“. . . . . . .” Sheldon’s jaw almost dropped.

“Give or… take a few?” Emily blushed.

“Astonishing. I think I finally found my successor.”

“What’ve we done, Gare.” Sarah frowned.

“The unspeakable, Sar.”

“Alright, Ms. Garley, I will consider allowing you the use of my supplies for your noble mission. Um, if I may, however, could I scan your brain?”

“Holy cow, I would LOVE a brainscan!!”

“You said you two didn’t have that in common.” the friends chorused.

“No, I just never had a brainscan before, ergo had no established opinion of getting them, but I would’ve LOOOOVED to get one!” Emily flushed.

“Then please, step into my private quarters!” Sheldon directed her to a doorway in the back. “Goodness, I’m getting the jeebies just thinking about the amount of sparks that occur per second!”

“Me too, huhuhu!” Emily jumped and excitedly trotted to the back room. She had entered and shut the door while Sheldon was still following, but he first looked back to his niece and nephew on the couch.

“Eh; point of interest you should know, at first glance you might assume I got the idea of a secret underground laboratory from the Batcave, but when I was constructing it, I was thinking of Mermalair from Spongebob. Even the part about the couch that tilts you into the slide!” Less than interested, Gary and Sarah munched away their chips. Sheldon pressed a remote, a trapdoor opened behind the couch, which flew back and sent the siblings sliding down. “WHOOOOooooaaa!”

Sheldon pushed the button and closed the trapdoor before going to the back room. “I wonder if Specter could brainwash viewers with Spongebob as it is, that show’s got enough garbage.”

**Sand Kingdom**

Half an hour passed as wind blew furiously, freezing under the dark of knight, Shelly keeping a hand raised to shield herself from the sand, while her other hand was cupped on her ear to shield
Gonshiri, no matter how much she wanted to hug herself and warm her freezing skin. “If you were going to attempt some harebrained rescue mission, you could have prepared a more pleasant abode.” The Minish stated, lying in a pile of earwax. “Such as cleaning your ear out for instance, it’s FILTHY!”

“Yeah, I’m regretting it too, hearing your loud-mouth complaints so close. Next time, I’ll stuff you where I can’t hear you.”

“The typical response of a devolved Neanderthal, it’s uncanny how much earwax one accumulates in such a time.”

“Well, I was expecting you to clean it out anyway, you ARE a servant.”

“Hmph. You clearly underestimate the fortitude of my stomach.”

“If I hear any puking, you’re going in the back…”

They lost track of time since Shelly started walking, with still plenty of desert to go. Finally, Shelly sat against a tree and shuddered for warmth, clutching her arms tight while her bare legs remained frigid. “This is why I question your desire to wear nothing but that filthy swimwear.” Gonshiri stated.

“Just sh-shut up and get in my hair.” Shelly told her, pulling her crown off.

“A step up from earwax, I suppose.” The tiny Minish hopped from her ear to Shelly’s thick forest of black hair. Using her bending, Shelly made a small crater of sand to lie in, pulling her towel cape off and using it for a blanket. “Good news is… it’s nice and hot tomorrow.” Shelly lay her head on the sandy ground and shortly drifted to sleep, keeping both of them warm for the night.

As Shelly predicted, it was hot and sunny the next day, but with no wind and sandstorm to impede their progress, Shelly could walk forward effortlessly with only a scorching sun to make her sweat. Gonshiri still kept cool inside her ear. “I hope you don’t expect me to bathe in that filth you excrete on an hourly basis.”

“I wouldn’t want some ant polluting it. You don’t think I wouldn’t want a bath myse-” But at that instant, her stomach growled.

“Ugh, and there’s no greater annoyance than the empty stomach of a beast.”

“Well, I’d ask you to fill that stomach, but your pitiful size wouldn’t help much. Sigh, don’t these barren deserts have at least SOME kind of oasis?”

“Only by the will of foolish Minish travelers who go into the desert.”

Shelly stopped and squinted her eyes, holding a hand above her eyes as she searched. “…What’s that?” A green, tropical area lay in the distance.

“Oh, it’s probably just an illusion.” Shiri eye-rolled.

“You aren’t even looking, Bug. It LOOKS pretty real.”

“Because simple, stupid brutes can’t even make good use of their own eyes. I guarantee the moment you get there, it’ll be all desert.”

There…
“Aaaaaahhhhh…” Shelly lied back in relaxation and rested her feet in the cool, clear oasis pool, her face shaded by a palm tree’s leaves.

“Okay… perhaps I misjudged your vision, Brute.” Shiri admitted.

“A common mistake, Ant.” Shelly smiled, picking her nose and wiping boogers in the grass. “Those who doubt the queen are sure to face humili- Ow!” An apple fell from the tree and hit her face.

“At least I’ll be able to silence that rumbling.” Shiri stated, standing on the fruit after cutting it down.

Shelly grabbed the apple and sat up with a smirk. “No kidding!”

“Aaaah!” Shiri jumped off quickly before Shelly munched her giant teeth in the fruit. She lied back on the grass while Shiri lay on Shelly’s belly, the latter placing the fruit beside her so the Minish could eat.

“Lemme ashk you shomething though, Bug Queen.” Shelly spoke through chews, swallowing. “Why did they want to take you?”

“How in the world should I know that. What Minish understands the mind of any brute?”

“Far harder for us brutes to read such tiny, tiny brains. How do I know you aren’t hiding something from me?”

“But, why ever would I hide something from my dear master?” she bowed sarcastically. “’Tis my duty to report anything, lest I meet a terrible fate.”

“Well, why do you think they wanted to take you?” Another munch of the apple.

“Well, as a Minish, I can’t imagine being of use to ANY human besides as a slave. …Well, I suppose my plantbending.”

Swallow. “Plantbending?”

“Sigh, I was born with unusually large Plantbending Chi. They made me study all sorts of forms with it, and in doing so, I also studied earthbending. ‘Tis part of a Minish’s natural heritage after all.”

“How good is it?”

“To an extent, I guess it’s worth a few thousand blurpleberries.”

“Can you show me?”

“Ohhh… if I must.” Shiri hopped into the grass as Shelly got to her knees. The Minish princess closed her eyes and waved her hands smoothly as grass and flowers began to grow rapidly around the oasis. Shelly gaped as she was suddenly risen into the air by strings of vines, taking her about 40 feet as a throne formed for her to sit on. Her arms rested on two rests as all kinds of flowers bloomed around her, some taking the form of a hand as it poured water into a cup-like flower, and poured it down Shelly’s throat. Some vines began to rub her shoulders and feet while the human princess lied back in both relaxation and astonishment.

A vine then stretched over for Gonshiri to stand before Shelly’s face. “What- …You can really do
“Well, I suppose any decent plantbender can, but I’m supposed to be able to do more… or something.”

“Well, why didn’t you do this to escape?!”

“Obviously, because I can only bend plants where plants exist. I was born with the power to grow and manipulate the life force of any plant, including extinct ones. I can bring any dead plant back to life. At least… that’s what the elders told me.”

“So is that why my dad had you kidnapped?"

“If I could assume, but I still don’t know why. I wouldn’t begin to attempt to understand your dimwitted family.” And with a snap of her fingers, the plant tower and throne shrunk back to the ground.

“WAAAAAHH- UUH!” Causing Shelly to fall on her face.

Gonshiri lightly came down with a flower umbrella and landed on her shoulder. “Thus is my crazy superpower. A little something to show as we’re indefinitely on the run.”

“Yeah yeah, I’ll think of something.” She bit her apple again. “I don’t suppose you have any particular retreats we can go to at the top of your head?”

“Well… there is one. My mom said that if I ever became lost, I should go to the Boggly Woods and see the Punies.”

“Punies, ah? Sound like fun people to bully. Where is it?”

“Around the northern edge of Kochi, Japan.”

Shelly instantly collapsed. “Well, that’s an awful long way to retreat, isn’t it?”

“At least I had the brains to think of something…”

“Sigh, whatever. Let’s look for a town or something and maybe hitch a ride to the nearest harbor. …’t’s gonna take a lot of swindling to get enough change.” After grabbing some fruit from the oasis, the royals continued their walk across the desert. (Play “Gerudo Desert” from Zelda: Twilight Princess.)

Stage 25: Sand Kingdom

Mission: Attempt to find a means of getting to Japan.

Act 1: Dusty Desert

And so began Princess Shelly’s grand walk across the desert. Not like it hadn’t begun last night. Being a princess on the run really was a joy. And what a poor choice of clothing, not that she’d admit it to Gonshiri. Like the start of any desert level, naturally Shelly was attacked by Moldorms jumping out at her, easy to blast away with gushes of sand she blew out of the ground. She trekked over a hill and down the other side, coming to a gorge area with a few platforms she couldn’t jump to from here. But it wasn’t a deep pit, so she dropped onto the ground below where a shallow, thin river flowed. There was a patch of soil at the base of a platform, but they weren’t sure if a seed was
in there. “Then why don’t you use Seismic Sense, Master Earthbender.” Gonshiri remarked. “Search the ground for any possible seeds.”

Rolling her eyes, Shelly closed her eyes and felt the earth closely. She wasn’t that good at sensing around the sand yet, but nothing was in the soil. She walked around the gorge floor and sensed a few tiny objects beneath. She thrust up a gush of sand at one spot, and only got a pebble. She thrust up at another, and when the beetle tried to nip her toe, she smooshed it. Then finally, a spot of sand had a seed underneath, which Shelly placed into the soil. “Water it a little.” Shiri told her. “I may be able to revive dead plants, but I haven’t yet perfected the skill, help me out.”

Sighing again, Shelly scooped up some water and dropped it onto the soil. Shiri jumped down beside the soil and waved her arms until the seed grew into a skimpy beanstalk, which was very skinny for Shelly’s huge hands, and very weakly supported her weight as she climbed up, with Shiri back on her shoulder.

Shelly jumped the few platforms, although the last one was too far from the following path, so with a quick and precise stomp, Shelly flung the foothold off its perch and against the cliff, but went stumbling forward due to her near-miss aiming. Shiri didn’t much appreciate the sudden stumbling of her giant vessel, and scolded Shelly as they recovered. They followed a route carved between some sand mounds before arriving at a distant lake of quicksand. Shelly wouldn’t dream of attempting to cross such unstable sand, but there were a few tall pillars with cacti atop them leading to a small isle. Shiri could use her exceedingly light weight to run across the sand and get to the first pillar, hopping her way up to stretch long vines from under the cacti.

Using this, she wrapped vines around Shelly’s arms to hold her up as she stomped across the quicksand, sinking a quarter way. She was getting too far for the vines to reach, so she kept those vines holding her while she rushed to the following pillar, using that cacti’s vines to keep Shelly up further. The human eventually made it to the safe isle as Gonshiri skipped over to join her. They had no way of getting across the further sea, but a soil patch was stationed at the edge. She didn’t find anything under this ground, but saw a taller isle a few meters from this one. “Just make platforms appear out of the sand.” Shiri told her. Shelly sensed the earth under the sand to the isle and stomped the ground to make some unstable platforms come out. “I hoped for better results than that.”

Shelly rolled her eyes and proceeded to jump the platforms, nearly losing balance as they shook, but regained herself and got onto the isle before they fell. There was dead grass planted, and when Shelly felt around the isle, she forced up a few small coins and a seed. But with the platforms fallen, Shelly had to thrust a piece of this isle over to the other one, collapsing on the sudden, forceful impact. She planted the seed- “Water!” “Uuuuugh!” and after searching this isle again, there was an odd cavern of water below, so she thrust up and yanked the stream out of the ground like oil, the fountain sprinkling onto the soil so Shiri could stretch a sail-vine across part of the sand. Its slippery surface made grinding easy, though gave Shelly a foot-cram while trying to keep balance, but Shiri couldn’t keep stretching the vine before they got too far and Shelly’s weight started to sink it. She unfortunately fell in the sand and frantically tried raising it when she began to sink. An Ampilus was conveniently nearby, and when the crustacean rolled at her in its shell, a thrust of her arms to the left forced the crab on its side with a gush of sand.

Shelly dropped to and safely stood on the snail, though with the very weak flow, it would surely sink before long. However, they noticed they were close to a tiny isle with a little hook-like sprout, and when Shiri used her bending to make it grow, a Peahat emerged. Shiri called it over as Shelly grabbed tight to its roots, dirt falling onto her face as Shiri made it fly them to the shore. It was growing very weak from Shelly’s forceful grip, but were close enough to shore to drop off and get on. They followed a slope downward to another wide, but not deep gorge, with only a single small platform in its center, and soil at the edge where she stood. Shelly dropped down and viewed the
gorge bottom, which had another shallow river, and headed for the cliff on the other side. “Dare I ask why not prepare a ledge for yourself?”

While Shelly wished to avoid another snarky remark, she’d get one anyway. “OW!” In attempting to yank a ledge out, she was flung away by its sudden, though very unstable, appearance. “I see.” said Shiri. So with an annoyed sigh, Shelly began to search the earth for seeds. She sprouted up a few Leevers and Cheep-Cheeps, but when she searched around a crack in the wall, she punched it open to reveal a secret cave. “At least a Neanderthal knows how to break things.” Inside this cave was a chasm where rock piles appeared to be clogging holes in the walls, and when Shelly used bending to force them out, sandfalls poured. With very careful timing, Shelly jumped to each consecutive fall, made a brief, though weak sand-foothold, and made it to the following ledge. She sensed and forced a seed out of the ground, then had to jump across again to safety.

To get back onto the ledge, there were little sand patches with platforms of varying height underneath, which Shelly had to stomp up and use as stairs before they sank. She planted the seed, but then had to go down and scoop water in her hands. It was a little more tricky to stomp and jump the platforms while keeping her hands steady, but managed this as she splashed the water onto the soil. Shiri whirled her arms to make it grow and- “WHOA!” both leaped back when a long vine with a yellow plunger foot popped out. It further emerged, revealing a round, orange, yellow-spotted head with white pupils inside black oval-eyes, and a frowny face. The rest of it emerged, the other long plunger-leg, as the leg sticking up fell toward the gorge and latched on the middle platform.

From here, its other leg was about to lift up from the ledge and bend to the other one, so Shelly grabbed hold of it and flew over with it. The Bramball kept repeating this across the following road, but Shelly could run ahead. They arrived at another sand sea with many little isles scattered about below. Shelly could stomp the closest one to make it level with her ledge, but too far to jump. The Bramball was catching up, and they watched as one of its flexible legs flipped over to the foothold. They realized they needed to guide the Bramball around a maze of liftable platforms, so Shelly grinded to this current one and kept it standing while Shiri dropped into the quicksand and skittered around to examine the maze. It became a tiring chore for Shiri’s tiny legs, since that sand sea was many miles at her perspective, so studying the order of the huge islands was hard to keep track of. Pokeys were also roaming the quicksand, but Shiri was far too tiny to be seen by them. Eventually, she returned to Shelly’s platform and reported the order.

She continuously raised whichever platform they wanted the Bramball to stretch to, until they achieved the right order. But it seemed the area before the new path had no platform, but as a Pokey was in the vicinity, they waited for it to move between the platform and the cliff so the Bramball could step off it, to the path, and let them cross. But if they followed an alternate route, they could get to a strange floating sock in midair (needing a Pokey to reach it), but since it looked too small for Shelly, she had no interest. The Bramball was still going, following a downward slope as they made it to a small lake of crystal-clear water. The ledge on the other side was too high to climb to, and the Bramball wouldn’t get in the water. “I suppose you don’t know how to swim.” Gonshiri implied.

“Pfft, better than YOU, Centiworm.”

“Yes, unfortunately you may need my assistance down there, so a worthwhile container is necessary.” Sighing once again at her naggingness, Shelly threw off her towel-cape and bucket and dove into the cool water. She swam a little bit and was fairly decent, but never really dove this deep or held her breath this long. Even worse when she had to keep her hands planted on the ground, keep herself from pushing away, and just as well focus on holding her breath AND sense around for useful stuff. She survived by breathing air bubbles that puffed out of gaps, and after
much keeping-her-hands-on-ground, she forced a small jar out from under the sand. She gasped for
breath at the surface, and held her jar down for Gonshiri to get in. But as there was no lid, Shelly
had to plant a hand over the top to hold the air in as she dove under again; putting full attention in
keeping her hand over lest Shiri drown in a millisecond.

She swam to odd-looking seaweeds which Shiri could sprout with her bending – despite the glass
barrier in her way, and make lilipads rise to the surface. The pads were large, but too light to
support Shelly’s weight. But once they were aligned between both ledges, the Bramball began
crossing, so Shelly hurriedly got on to ride its longlegs. She let Shiri onto her shoulder and raced
down the slope to the open desert. There wasn’t anything to stop her from reaching the town miles
ahead, so she went for it. Although, she looked left and noticed a secret area where far-apart
platforms aligned like stairs in a pool onto a highest platform, where another weird sock floated.
They likely had to wait for the Bramball to come all the way there so it can take them up the stairs,
but Shelly still bore no interest and proceeded to town.

“It’s astonishing, really, you’ve been using your earthbending for 5 months to humiliate a first-
grader, but when it comes to using it in a natural environment, you can’t even fling a decent
boulder.” Shiri mentioned on the way. “Have you really been neglecting earthbending training the
entire time you were away?”

“Well, you aren’t really the best PLANTbender either, puttin’ up a decent show in that oasis, I
expected you to turn a dead seed into a forest.”

“Look, my guardians TOLD me I had that power, but a lot of the training was forced on me, and
frankly it was annoying, and plantbenders are supposed to have good ‘bonds with nature’, which
I’ve had less than an interest for. You, on the other hand, possess the recurring dimwittedness
earthbenders bring, you should’ve been more than excellent at the skill.”

“Well, it’s hard to practice openly with so many LESS-graders running around. Plus, I had duties to
eye over my school and my kingdom, so I didn’t have time to train.”

“Yes. Your tiny, tiny kingdom.”

Finally, they arrived at the old rundown desert town, populated by people in Arabian robes or very
raggedy clothing, small buildings with cracked walls and wooden windows, and goats and
chickens roaming freely while kids chased them. “I must ask you, Sandshrew, do any of these
subjects know you’re their queen?”

“Well, we’re… kind of a secretive monarchy. Like on Beauty and the Beast.”

“Ahh, the dramatic truth, your egotism and high opinion over your twerps is making the inner
turmoil, you have nothing.”

“Yeah, well how many of your subjects care about YOU, Dumbbutt?” Shelly snapped as she
entered the city street. “I don’t even NEED followers, I kick my own butt, but none of YOUR
friends’ve ever come to rescue you, yet.”

“Perhaps, but I’m still more highly respected and regarded than you’ll ever be.”

“Siiigh.”

They passed a small cage of chickens to a small, shaded alley, where Shelly sat against a wall
while Shiri dropped to the ground to rest. “Just how in the world did you plan to get to Japan?”

“Even if I were able to continue my training with the elders, I didn’t have any care for going there
at first, and assumed they would provide me with transportation. How’m I to expect when Neanderthals trudge out of nowhere and snatch me for their tweezers?”

“Well, you won’t find any cash stuck to my feet, unless particular grains of sand serve as some form of currency.” She brushed her feet of any sand. “How are we gonna scrounge up enough dough to pay for a plane to Kochi?”

“Don’t know.” Shiri was scraping off what little dirt she acquired off her toes. “But I’m sure your hare brain will concoct another harebrained scheme.”

“…” Shelly glanced left and continued down the alley, finding a back area with piles of old bricks and scraps. Shelly picked a single brick up and shook it. “You up for playing dumb?”

**Much later**

“STEP RIGHT UP, see the moderately intelligent flea!” Shelly announced as customers chucked coins into her bucket crown and entered the alley. “Never saw one like it before it found its way out of my hair, step right up and SEE the flea’s mind work!”

This backyard had an obstacle fortress created out of blocks, and in one corner was an odd-looking flea sniffing about for food in her little enclosing. When Shelly gave the thumbs-up, Shiri grabbed the tiny cardboard’s string in her teeth and pulled it down, skittering into a maze and navigating through it in seconds. She then had to swing a group of strings hanging from twigs attached with tape, then appeared in a passage with floors of super-sticky tape with little pebbles around it. Shiri leaped to each pebble with careful precision, before arriving at the next passage where she had to roll a pebble (boulder at her size) up a slope and across a narrow, zigzag path. She pushed it off onto a small seesaw that flung a marble against a domino blocking an archway, knocking the array of other dominos down.

After running across the dominos, the flea came to a giant apple piece blocking her path, hurriedly munching and digging a tunnel through to the other side. She ran onto an open field at the ground floor, where two chickens roamed mindlessly, but very gigantic monsters at Shiri’s size. She swiftly evaded their giant beaks as they shot down to smash, but she also had to grab a twig from a pile in her teeth, run to a long, narrow gap, and with great precision, chucked it straight onto the top of a long, standing thin board, causing the weight to shift toward her and fall onto the gap to make a bridge. From here, it was a straight shot to the outside, where she leaped onto Shelly’s foot, to her slanted knee, her naval, her shoulder, and safely to Shelly’s forest of hair.

“She always knows how to find her way home!” Shelly announced as the crowd murmured with interest, chucking extra cash into her bucket.

The girls lied and relaxed in the alley after a few more shows. “Uuugh, you canNOT expect me to keep this up much longer.” Shiri exclaimed with pure numbness in her legs. “Tiny legs are not for acrobatics.”

“Yeah, but at least we made a little over a few bucks. Er… assuming this country’s money complies with American money. Maybe we can also sell you for service, quick clean out my nose and ears and we’ll time you.”

“I am NOT selling myself to that, it’s bad enough scouring ONE mountain of dung, I can’t IMAGINE what these filth bring.”

“You never had to scour my dung.”
“I was referring to your being.”

“Hello there.” The girls’ hearts skipped a beat at the sight of an elderly man in a yellow robe with withered dark skin, white beard, and strange narrowed black eyes.

“Uhhh you here for the show?” Shelly asked.

“I hears you havin’ some money issues.” He spoke in a dark, gruff voice.

“Where’d you hear that?”

“You runnin’ a flea show and gots only a swimsuit.”

“….Your point?”

“I know a place you can get some money. This map shows you to a temple, jus’ northeast of here.” He handed Shelly some parchment, which had a wrinkled map of town and the desert around it, with a northeast area circled. “Plenty o’ treasure in there.”

Shiri hopped onto Shelly’s shoulder as they viewed the map with interest. “Hmmm… but what’s your catch? Why show it to us, intending to ‘share’ some of the money with us? …” When the girls looked up, the man was already gone. “Yello?”

“Well, let’s just see where it leads us.” Gonshiri said. “Better than what we have.”

So Shelly kept her eyes on the map as they left town and trekked several miles across the desert. She followed the general direction of what it said best she could, but didn’t see any sign of a temple nearby. But after walking up a hill, the sand became more straight, and Shelly soon felt flat ground under her feet. “Hm?” Glancing away from the map for a brief moment, she noticed her foot was just inches from a hole broken into some golden-brown surface. Shelly got on all fours and peeped her eye into the hole, seeing what seemed to be a floor below. “Hm. This looks kinda weird.” She got back up and attempted to stomp the ground open. “I can’t break it.”

“It must be chi-protected. Let me look.” Gonshiri leapt off Shelly’s shoulder and studied the hole. “Wait… I know what this is. It’s a Minish Portal!”

“A what?”

“An artificial one, at least. This looks like an ancient temple dug underground by Minish.” Shiri jumped into the hole. “And there’s still Minish Dust! Shelly, stand over the hole.”

Shrugging, the princess planted her feet on either side of the hole. She watched as a swirl of green dust came up and circled her form. In a puff of green smoke, “WHOOOOOOOOO!” she went falling into the hole, hitting a floor below. She shook to her senses and got back up, Shiri walking beside her at precisely her height.

“Well, it’s nice we finally get to see eye to eye.” she remarked.

It was a weird sight for both of them, really, the two being exactly the same height. Looking Shelly in the eyes directly, Gonshiri couldn’t believe those were the same mountain-size feet, the same thick forest of hair, and the ears and navel that had been Shiri’s resting quarters, belonging to the same ape of incomprehensible size and unbelievably low intelligence. And Shelly couldn’t believe how that microscopic termite drastically increased in size in the span of a second, or rather, how incredibly small Shelly had become in that time. It was so weird looking at Shiri this way, she was totally used to her being 1/4th the size of her pinky toe. Not that her new size would alter her
attitude in any way. “SHUT UP, Termite, I can kick your can anyday. What is this?”

“I don’t know, but it’s clearly an old Minish temple. I’m not sure why it’s here, but it won’t hurt to find any treasures the man may’ve mentioned. Let’s begin excavating. And please, if walking becomes too much a chore for these itty-bitty legs, don’t feel ashamed about crawling.” She smiled smugly before walking forward.

Shelly followed the Minish with spite. “I really hope I don’t turn out to be a lesbian and fall in love with you.” (Play “Fire/Sand Temples” from Zelda: Spirit Tracks.)

**Act 2: Buried Temple**

The two princesses followed a corridor around some huge piles of sand; which were essentially small rocks at their size. The door out of this corridor was locked, and Shelly’s earthbending wouldn’t bust it. But she could search the piles of sand, feeling around for any hint of a key with Seismic Sense. Her sense felt stronger somehow, for she found the key buried near the top of a pile and fished it out. She opened the door into a wide room with a low ceiling, where they stood on a safe foothold over a pool of quicksand, waves surfing from the right wall to the left. “Astonishing, the architects of this temple have broken grains of sand into much smaller grains as equivalent to humans. Be careful not to fall in it.” Shiri said.

“I figured that out from the start, Dumbo. Let’s just sandbend across.”

“I figured out that your bending is faulty regardless of chi-blocks, and that some mechanism is constantly stirring the sand to make waves, sure to wash away whatever platforms you make. Hmmm…” On the right wall appeared to be some yellow, decayed vines where a boat-size leaf was rusted and hanging. Gonshiri stood on the edge, stretched her hands forward, and focused her energy in hopes of bringing it. “Nnnnnnn!” The leaf weakly twitched until it snapped from its rusty stem, landing on a passing sandwave as the girls hopped on, surfed like a board, and jumped off on a safe platform while the leaf hit the wall and crumbled. They entered a short, dead-end hallway with cracked structure and a stone lever on the wall. Halfway through, a swarm of Mulldozers, blue and red spotted bugs that moved at frantic speed, dropped in and ran in circles. Shelly and Shiri were knocked down and shoved around with no chance at getting up, it reminded Shelly of the time she told her knights to kick this boy who stole her-

Before she finished that thought, Shelly punched the ground and flipped them all upside-down with a quake, then she pierced all their gooey underbellies with her wooden sword. With that, she flipped the ancient stone lever with her bending, since she couldn’t reach that high, causing the sandwaves outside to shift direction. They now surfed to the right side of the room. Gonshiri plucked down another rusted leaf-boat from their wall, put it on a forming wave, and surfed over. There wasn’t anywhere to go from the new platform, but Minish statues lined the wall to the foothold on the northern side. Shelly punched the wall and made the statues fall horizontal with her bending, the girls jumping across before they crumbled.

The ceiling of the new hallway stretched higher as it went, and yellow blue-striped slugs called Sluggula covered the parallel walls. The entirety of the floor was spikes with Minish skeletons, so Shelly and Gonshiri knew they had to climb the sticky slugs. They climbed along the left wall and couldn’t hold the slugs for too long, lest they detach from the weight. This slug wall reached a dead end before a wilted root, so Gonshiri concentrated her bending to stretch it to the opposite slug wall. They climbed across and climbed up these slugs, making it onto the safe foothold. They stopped and flinched before this new room: an ordinary Aracha slumbered, but was the size of a two-story house and roughly 20 feet long. A key sparkled under its one snoozing eye, and they wouldn’t be reaching for it easy.
They searched the room and found what Shiri recognized as the antenna leaves of 5 Pikmin, which she plucked herself. She guided the creatures to the front and ordered them to pull out the key while the princesses hid behind the doorway. Their little “Hup-to” chants echoed softly, growing fainter in the girls’ ears before the sound of the lock unclicking rang. The girls ducked when the Aracha screeched, sprang to life, and shook the ground by stabbing its tail behind him, followed by the eerie moans of departed Pikmin souls. The Aracha burrowed beneath the ground and was gone, so the princesses seized the moment to run into the door.

They faced a narrow, long hallway where sandwaves surfed down from the other end. On the next-door left wall was a stone lever which Shelly flipped with her bending, making the waves move the opposite way. Gonshiri plucked a dead leaf-boat off the wall so the kids could surf. Though the boat remained steady, it was level with a bar connecting both walls and would likely crash, but seeing a lever on the right, Shelly quickly flipped it with bending, causing the wave to sink and for a new one to flow the other way. Shelly flipped it again, so the wave would lift them, head the intended direction, but allow them to slide beneath the bar while the wave was still rising.

They were about to hit a high ledge, so Gonshiri grabbed Shelly’s hand and leapt to grab a root dangling from the ceiling. The leaf crumbled against the ledge, and after the wave was gone, the girls swung onto the base stair against the wall and climbed onto the foothold. The sandriver on the second half washed their direction, but no leaf-boats were around for their aid. Minish statues lined the left wall, and they saw they led to a row of dangling roots, so Shelly toppled the statues over to serve as platforms. From there, the girls swung the roots, but that’s when they spotted (giant) Sand Tadpolis riding along the waves, attempting to jump and snack on the swinging morsels, so the girls made sure to keep between them while hanging from the roots. The root-vines made a zigzaggy path, but they eventually took land on a left platform.

“There’s the door.” Gonshiri pointed, for the end of the hall was only a short distance. “Know how we can cross the rest of this river?”

“I’m gonna chance it.” Shelly said. “Time for some sandbending!” So after the next wave passed, Shelly quickly pulled a sand pillar up and pulled Shiri on with her, rapidly waving her arms to move it to the doorway, and the moment the sandwave came to wash it down, the girls jumped. “Sigh… there may be hope for you.” Shiri said. The girls entered a small room where the entire floor was sand, but not quicksand at first step. When they stepped onto the center, their body weight was detected by the temple, and the floor began to sink as a whirlpool formed under their feet.

They threatened to sink, but large stones flowed down from the walls to the center, the girls hopping to and around them while the whirlpool itself shifted down like an elevator. Mulldozers fell on the sand and rushed around and around destroying boulder platforms. Shelly grabbed bundles of sand in her bending and splashed it over the bugs to push them to the center and sink them. Fewer boulders appeared to stand on, so Shelly created sand platforms between distant boulders so both girls could cross over. Scissors Beetles were the next enemies to appear, grabbing boulders in their huge pinchers and chucking at the princesses. Shelly threw the boulders back, but more beetles came, so for the rest of the sink, it was hopping to higher boulders and defending from flying boulders.

Finally, their current boulders hit safe ground, the last of the sand swirled into the tiny hole, and Shelly squished the remaining beetles with boulders. They entered a narrow, empty hallway alit with ember rocks that served as Minish torches. (End song.)

“So you bending dead plants… is that like a once-in-a-lifetime skill?” Shelly asked.
“There are plantbenders who can only bend living plants and some who can bend dead plant matter. Those are the rare ones, but no plantbender but myself can control both. Some have called it lifebending.”

“That’s just creepy.”

“It’d be creepier if I could bend flesh beings. Honestly, I never saw this power being special. So I could revive plants, big deal, plants die every day and new ones grow, if I brought the old ones back, I’d be cluttering space. A useless power, it’s all it is.”

The end of the hall led to what seemed like a carved tunnel, sloping up on their left and down on their right. Shelly knelt down, closed her eyes, and put a hand on the floor. “Well, it’s really complex. Can’t see any good direction. I… What’s that?”

The tunnel started quaking, and Shelly felt the source, rising a few meters to their left. “AAAAAEEEERRR!” The girls dodged back to let the giant, pinchered centipede they knew as a Moldorm slither down the tunnel.

“Crap, I never seen one THAT big!!” Shelly exclaimed.

“Yes… but you’ve never seen me so big, either.” (Play the Lizalfos Theme from Zelda: Skyward Sword.)

**Boss fight: Moldorm**

The girls hurried into the rugged tunnels in search of a way out, finding the area ahead barren. But the caves shook and Shelly felt the Moldorm’s presence looming just below them. “Run!” Shelly grabbed her friend’s hand and dashed forward just when the centipede sprouted up. Its body took the width of the tunnel, the girls running desperately as its pinchers inched closer. “This way!” Shiri ducked into a hole in the wall with Shelly, barely missing the Moldorm. They peeked out and saw its glowing red behind turn a rightward corner. “Let’s go.” Shelly kept running with her Minish friend behind. The tunnels were mazey and they saw no sign of an exit. The earth shook as the Moldorm was stampeding down the road behind them. Seeing no holes nearby, Gonshiri pointed at the roots dangling from a ceiling enclosing, concentrating chi with all her force, and stretched the roots down for both to grab hold and pull up. The Moldorm stampeded away, seeing nothing, and the girls safely dropped down.

“We’re gonna have ta deal with that thing if we wanna go on.” Shelly panted. “But my feet ain’t big enough ta smoosh it now.”

“And this is why Minish study the natural weakness of all bugs.” Gonshiri said calmly. “First, you need eyes to see its glowing red behind.”

“I know how ta recognize a weak behind, but how’re we supposed to damage it?”

“You’re the earthbender. Get behind and send a rock-spear.”

The Moldorm was coming from below, so Shelly pulled Shiri down the opposite cave. Its head popped up, but they only saw the backside as it curiously searched for its prey. It begun to crawl out straight ahead, so Shelly steadied herself, felt the earth, and waited for the opening. The moment the bulbous behind showed, Shelly stomped the rock chunk forward, striking the unfortunate critter. The caves shook harder as it skittered about angrily. Boulders fell from the ceiling and threatened to crush them, but they took cover in a hole to avoid some and evade the
Moldorm when it skittered by. “Look out!” Shelly pulled Shiri out before their safe spot itself crumbled in on itself. The shaking hadn’t subsided, for the Moldorm was coming right back around, so the girls bolted.

The Moldorm was quickly catching up, the girls looking desperately for a hole, but no such thing, and the Moldorm would eat them in seconds. “NOW OR NEVER!” Shelly leaped forward, put great force in her feet, and smashed a man-size hole in the ground, the Moldorm just barely scraping her crown by its belly before it passed. “Aaaaah!” She climbed up when Gonshiri screamed, and Shelly realized her friend was still on the run. “GONSHIRI, where are you!”

“On the corner of life and pincheeerrrrs!” Her friend had run back past the crossroads, the Moldorm hot on her tail. Shelly ran out and tried to fling a boulder at its behind; except a steel shell protected the weak spot. “CRUD! It’s got a shield, what should I do!”

“Moldorms ordinarily lower their defense when their underbelly is flipped up!” Gonshiri echoed. Shelly took a minute to calm down, hoping Shiri’s feet moved as fast as they did from bird’s-eye. Shelly focused only on the earth, and when her connection was set, she nimbly spun, swung her arms, and sliced perfect parallel lines into the earth. Gonshiri was heading her way, so Shelly readied, seeing the Moldorm close behind. Quickly, she burrowed beneath a hole, yanked Gonshiri down by her ankles, punched the wall of her hole, and thrusted up the wall she divided from the ground. The cave shook massively as the Moldorm tripped, sliding along its back to a halt. The red rear was exposed, so Shelly stomped and stabbed a rock-spear into it. The Moldorm screamed and burrowed underground again.

Not long after did the ground quake beneath them, and the girls dodged forward before its massive pinchers popped up like a mousetrap. They sank back down, and four consecutive times did it snap up to try and eat them. On the fifth try, it burrowed directly up and through the ceiling. The girls ran when it came down from the ceiling above, through the ground, and kept this pattern repeating.

“You know what you have to do, right?” Shiri asked. (“Uh-huh.”) Shelly nodded as both girls ran separate directions, though the insect went for Shelly again. She dodged anyway, waited, and rock-speared the red rumpus when it passed by. A chunk of the ceiling that was its length collapsed as he fell through. Ravenous and angry, it chased Shelly solely through the tunnels, Gonshiri dodging an alternate way.

“Anytime you wanna help, Princess, it’s fine by me!” Shelly cried.

Gonshiri looked at the broken ceiling and saw wilted roots and leaves dangling. She gripped the rugged wall, climbed, and stretched a root her way to grab onto. “Bring him back!” Shelly did so and lured the Moldorm back through the cave. “Throw me your sword!” Thinking fast, Shelly tossed the wood blade directly upward, the Minish catching it as she dropped onto the Moldorm’s armored back. She kept balance and hurried to the rear, standing over its exposed weak point. This wood sword, flora that’s been dead for who knows how long, what decent weapon could she make out of this. She struggled to focus the chi she apparently had, channel all of her power in this dead wood. To her astonishment, a sakura petal sprouted, she didn’t know why, maybe this sword came from a cherry blossom tree. Like any Minish knew, the sakura petal was sharp and deadly, so this would be her victor.

“AAAAAEEEERRRR!” Gonshiri impaled the petal into the monster’s rump, Shelly clapping her ears shut as she watched it flail about. Within seconds, the beast exploded, releasing yellow goo that Shelly shielded from with a rock wall. With that, she located and reunited with Gonshiri, wiping herself clean. Both girls filthy, sweaty from victory, they exchanged a proud smirk and bumped fists. (End song.)
A few more minutes of exploring the tunnel finally brought the girls to a large, round chamber with normal-size sand. “As fun as that was, I still ain’t seein’ any treasure.” Shelly said.

“You might want to look in front of you.” Gonshiri said, pointing at a pedestal in the center where a small, hand-size scepter rested. Shelly walked over to pick it up. Its handle was brown, with a gold bottom ring and top horns enclosing upon a central white diamond. “I’ve seen that before… in a book.” Shiri stared with awe. “It’s the Sand Wand!”

“Sand What?”

“It’s a wand that’s imbued with Sand Chi, to help with sandbending. 4000 years ago, the Minish mages constructed it specifically for the Quartzite Family, whom were renowned sandbenders.”

“Quartzite? That’s my middle name!”

“It is, is it? Then you’re part of the Four Earthbender Families.”

“Never heard of those.”

“Well, the Four Families were friends with the Minish, I believe among the first earthbenders seen on Earth. Each studied and mastered a particular style of earthbending: the Granites studied normal earthbending on its own, the Quartzites studied sandbending, the Sovites learned lavabending, and the Hornfels knew metalbending. There were also implications of a family that could bend crystals, but no direct mention. The families have long since scattered, so not many know where the current descendants lie.”

“So this thing can help with sandbending. Mmmm…” So with that, Shelly whooshed her wand, and a pillar of sand rose a few meters away. “Hwhoa!” She jiggled and wiggled the wand, making sand gushes dance in the form of a lava lamp. “Ha ha! All right!” She aimed at her feet and rose herself into the air, happily skipping and surfing across the sand platforms she controlled. “Shooting staaaaar!” She landed and flew a stream of sand overhead. “Pop pop POP!” She made a row of sand geysers like landmines going off. “Aaaaaaaaand-” Sand swirled and whirled in the air above the girl, “FREESTYLE!” creating several sandpeople that tap-danced giddily. “Now let’s squash ‘em.” She dispersed them into tiny sandpeople, happily squishing them.

**Shelly acquired the Sand Wand! With this, her sandbending will be more superb than ever! Just aim it at a spot of sand and control it with ease! Desert travel never seemed funner. ;)**

“Could this be the treasure the old man spoke of?”

“Heh, if it is, I ain’t sellin’ it, it’s wicked!”

“I suppose you do need it. Well, how do we go about getting out of here?”

“…” Shelly noticed the doorway up high on the opposite wall. “This way!” She took Shiri’s hand, raised the sand, and scurried inside.

A small room just like the first one where sunlight poked through the hole in the ceiling. “At least we’ve a shortcut.” Gonshiri gathered the purple Growth Dust with her bending. “Get under and we’ll re-expand you.”

“Can that work for the wand, too?”

“If it was hit with Minish Dust thousands of years ago, let’s hope.”
“Okay.” So Shelly stood under the hole as Gonshiri encased her with purple dust, and uplifted her outside.

Quickly as she shrunk, Shelly stretched back to full, royal size, then picked up her friend when Shiri jumped out of the temple. “I see you found it.”

“AAH!” They jumped, finding the old man who had sent them to the temple behind them.

“I knew you could.” He pulled off his hood, exposing his white shaggy hair and long ears on his bark-colored skin.

Gonshiri gasped. “You’re a Minish!”

“Indeed I am, Princess.” He kept his deep, mysterious tone. “I had a feeling the owner of that castle was descended from the Quartzites. My family guarded this temple for generations. May that help you on your travels.”

“Well, our travels won’t be going far if we can’t scrounge enough money for a ride to Kochi.” Shelly replied.

The man plopped a sack of gold and jewels before her as he walked past. “That should cover.” And slowly, he was going beyond the desert winds. “Protect the princess. Find the other Earthbender Families. Unite your chi under the Tree of Beginning.”

Shelly and Shiri stared at him questionably. They wondered what was under the Tree of Beginning, but Shelly was more focused on the huge sack of dough he just dropped. “WE’RE RICH, baby!!”

“Remember our mission, Shelly.”

“Right, right.” Shelly wrapped the sack and slung it over her shoulder. “Let’s go!” She aimed the wand forward, glowing gold as they soared across the sea on a sandwave.

Uno Household

Nigel couldn’t stop staring at them. Photos of that mysterious boy with their family, the one they called ‘Cheren.’ Nobody remembered him. No one had a clue. It was almost as foggy as…

decommissioning.

“Funny thing, decommissioning.” The Chronicler told them, 15 years ago when they visited his isle again. “It appeared in the 2nd Age of KND. The Earthlings found a means of harnessing Time Chi from a powerful source. They used this chi to power their machines to completely drain the memories of would-be operatives.”

“…” Nigel turned to Dimentia, “I thought you said you had a hand in decommissioning?”

“I gave all other KNDs the idea of decommissioning, but the only one I had trouble getting close to was Earth. 4000 years ago, when I returned to your planet to find a decent recruit, a group of people kept me back. The Illuminati, they called their selves. They…”

“-are who are currently referred as the World Government.” Chronicler confirmed. “I do not know the source by which the old KND drew their Time Chi, and few of my texts point to any possible lead. Except… many other instances where people have faced severe loss in memory all point directly up Mt. Mariejoa. It is speculation, but I believe the World Government has gotten ahold of this source. For 4000 years, they possessed it. Powerful Time Chi, unlike Dialga’s. In the palm of their hand.”
“…” Nigel then looked at Jagar, turned away. The purple cape that belonged to Clockwork dangled by his back, and he held his former master’s Chrono Staff. His head was down. “Jagar… you’ve been… awfully quiet since we came.”

“…Just have a lot on my mind.”

“Nigel, please don’t go!” Rachel pleaded her husband as he was already approaching the door.

“We’ve been over this, Rachel. You came with us to Chronicler, too, you know what he told us. This boy… is definitely our son. And I think… I really think… he did something… to make the government upset. They used their… power… to erase him… from all of our memories. I have to take action.”

“But Vaati said that-”

“Vaati is an idiot!” he shouted. “Leave our children up to this, he said, well we DID, and now we… ugh.” He gripped his head. “This was too much to put on their shoulders. We need answers, and I’m going to get them. From the source.”

“But Nigel… what if they’re too powerful for you? Even if Chris preferred Fanny training him, our kids need us, they need our guidance to…”

“They need an easier time. If this is their duty, we need to help them. I… I’m going to Mariejoa. I’ll make the World Government talk. And I’ll… cripple them if I can.”

“…Nothing I say will change your mind. You never listened to me… did you?”

“…No.” Then he felt his wife’s arms wrap around from behind.

“…I… I’ve been having the same feelings… I can’t find Fi anywhere… I know she was here 3 days ago. I really believe… that boy is our son. …Promise you’ll come back, Nigel. Promise you’ll… bring our son back.”

“…I will.” The man smirked. He fixed on his brown jacket and was out the door. His shadow stretched miles beyond the rising sun. After all… I saved the universe… I defeated my great-grandfather… didn’t I, gramps?

“Don’t push your luck with me, Boy.”

I’m slating this saga to end on Chapter 20, and from then on, I might just follow the 10-chapter pattern, I see that workin’. Hopefully I’ll be able to focus more on this story. Next time… Nigel will meet God.
Chapter Summary

Nigel Uno goes up to confront the World Leaders.

Warning: This chapter contains religious material that may be offensive to some viewers. Gameverse Studios does not encourage the bashing of religions, it just makes great symbolism. Read at your own risk.

Chapter 15: Legacy

Mariejoa

The peak of Mt. Mariejoa. It was beautiful. Almost all the buildings, all the roads, paved in white, glistening pearl, with lush green yards, clear blue rivers and fountains, and a bright sun in a great blue sky that made everything glitter. There could be no darkness here, no evil or negativitiy. This was God’s Domain. The Holy Land.

A charming, frail old man in a black tuxedo, long gray mustache, and skinny black top-hat stood with his hunchbacked wife, who wore a pink dress and stood with a cane, by a river. “Ahhh… do you hear that, Joness?”

“Mmmmm yeeees…”

“Dear Jennifer is out and about again…”

“Isn’t she nice…”

“WHEEEEEE hahahahaha!” A young woman in her 20s, shiny brown hair in many curls, and flowing pink dress that sparkled, skipped across the pure blue river in pink high-heels, splashing the couple, though they paid no mind. Of all the high-class chaps on this peak, Jennifer Bush’s soul was the most pure. Some said a sun took the place of her heart, and this could be true, for her powerful lightbending created the sun that hung over their mountain, the light that brought eternal day to all of Mariejoa.

Inside of a quiet little study, mountains of books were piled. Henry Churchill, in his charming blue-patterned tuxedo, indigo jeans, shiny brown hair and gorgeous blue eyes, peered within the pages of a book. “My, that’s fascinating… an enjoyable read.” He spoke very softly. “Just what game is this fellow playing. Surely the main character has an astonishing secret. He won’t even tell his comrades. The suspense burns me. I cannot bring myself to-”

“WHEEEEE!” Jennifer bursted in, mountains of papers toppling down as she glomped her elder Leader from behind. “Heeeeloooolooooo, Henryyyyyyyyy.”

“Please, Miss Bush… I had not even moved my bookmark.”

“Ohhhhh you’re always reading, come outside Henry, it’s a BEAUTIFUL day, BEAUTIFUL day, WAH HAH HEEEEEEE!” And she was scampering out again.
Daphne Anderson sat alone in the darkest corner of Mariejoa. Plucking petal after petal from her inky black rose, the stem was as white and cold as the ghostly woman’s flesh. “Loves me not….loves me less….loves me fewer….loves me… never.”

“WHEEEEEE!” Daphne’s gray shadow singed on the appearance of sunlight. “Daphneeee, Daphneeee, come outiiiide, get some suuuuuun.”

“What is sun… what is life… there is only one way… to see one’s true path… and that is… without sun blocking their vision.”

“Fine, stay here in the dark, I’mma go see Lucy is doing!” She slammed the door on the way out happily.

Dozens of gray statues filled the floor of Lucas Stonebuddy’s room. Staring intently on his tiny stone model of the mountaintop, his brown hair shaggy, keeping warm under his heavy black sweater, his cold gray eyes peered over Mini Mariejoa. He quickly moved the little Jennifer statue across the landscape. “Yes, Miss Bush… run free. Like a child. So much personality you have. So much soul. That’s why we love you. So our forefathers claim. No… a child must not have so much soul. Beings must be kept confined to themselves… limited. Yes, Jennifer… just run. Laugh. You are great where you are… a person should not go any further than they need to.”

He turned around. Four statues stood above him, three ferocious men and one woman, all without shoes, with some kind of stone representing them. “The Four Earth Families. Granite, Quartzite, Sovite, and Hornfels. Not Stonebuddy… no.” The upper half of a fifth statue was broken. “The Stonebuddies… had their own way. We limited ourselves… we did not desire ultimate power. That’s why we were excommunicated from history. Why we wanted not the power of gods. It was unreal… to us. So history… ignored us. Now let history… see its error.”

Somewhere else in Mariejoa, a baldheaded scientist was examining a woman lain on a dental chair, but it was unclear if she was alive or dead. She was beautiful with whitish-blonde hair and patterned green dress, her eyes closed in apparent slumber. “Could I have a revision on the research, Dr. Strange?” an elderly woman in a sleek purple gown and white hair in large loops asked as she walked in.

“The research is still underway, Master Umbridge. I must say, these manners of witchcraft and wizardry amaze me. Calling souls back from the dead, their bodies back to full working form… Why, may I ask, does this ‘Grand Inferius’ fascinate you?”

“It is not I that desires to initiate it, it is His Royal Highness. Truly, is he so paranoid and overestimate on the White Lotus’s armies? A waste of resources and being, Felius Umbridge expresses.”

“Forgive me. I had only assumed, since your sister was born a mage and you a Muggle, you sought to use a means of magic.”

“I may not have been born with such inhuman qualities as Dear Dolores, but I am still able to accomplish my goals with only words. All she exemplifies is people such as her will only misuse their power and land in incarceration. Yet, there are still so many, benders, wizards, super-powered ‘beings.’ I want like His Highness wants, a world without them.”

“But His Highness possesses such inhuman powers, as do your colleagues. Are they to be extracted from this equation?”

“No… I have grown a connection with them, I will confess. They are not so flamboyant, we have
common wisdom and ambitions. His Highness promises to return us to the True World. Oh, the joy I’ll feel when that time comes. …If he believes the Grand Inferius will aid us, please Dr. Strange, I implore your assistance.”

Dr. Hugo Strange gave a calm smile and bowed. “I will not fail you, Master. I want what you want… to destroy this world’s evils. This concept of ‘Light’ and ‘ Darkness’ shall be within the past.”

And here sat the final Leader upon his throne, the ruler of them all: The King. Four towering flames on his sides, clad in silver armor, spiked gold crown, his head under a frying pan with a scratched-out number. Clearly, this guy was immune to heat. Hovering over his throne, the glimmering eye within the upside-down pyramid peering at him. “Something to show me?” The King asked. The pyramid lowered as The King stood up and reached into its iris. He casually pulled out the item which made the eye glow, its true form and core: a Magic 8-Ball flashed a wide assortment of colors, greenblueyellowredpurpleorangegeenyellowblue, a new color every millisecond, and around and around again. Immense, incredible, unparalleled power spun inside this little ball the size of his armored hand. The longer he held it, the more every inch of his armor vibrated. He took off his helmet and, in the dimness of this room despite the tall flames, he seemed to squish the 8-ball into where his right eye would be.

The powerful sphere flashed on his face. The King could see the Earth in its very center, and zooming down, down to a microscopic coordinate on the little planet, the side of Mariejoa, where a huge, ferocious dragon was steadily grabbing its way up.

Doooooong.....dooooooong....

Everybody looked up. The old rich types, their children, Jennifer running around the fountains, the World Leaders from their homes. “Look. It’s The King. The King is here.” A man announced calmly.

“His Imperial Highness!” a high-pitched woman said.

“The man chosen by God!”

“Praise be His Majesty!”

The whole of Mariejoa cheered. The King stepped out from the entrance to his great marble castle. He stood atop the towering stairway and basked in the admiration of his subjects. “People of Mariejoa: our realm is in danger. It will not stay long, but those who are not willing to die a horrible death must evacuate to the lower levels. Have no fear… your God will protect you.”

With humble agreement, the hundreds of citizens began to calmly scramble into passageways leading down within the mountain. The World Leaders came out of their homes and headed for the castle, Jennifer joyfully skipping up the polished stairs.

A quaking force carefully made its way up the mountainside. It grew stronger as it came higher. After one more reach, its arm grabbed the very edge. Then the quaking stopped, for Nigel Uno’s frail human arms couldn’t cause such tremors. He stood and beheld Mariejoa. A beautiful landscape of white buildings and gentle rivers, totally devoid of all human presence. “Not going to use me anymore, are you?”

“I’ll save you for when it matters.” Nigel said. “I’ll go old natural until then. Don’t worry, it doesn’t mean I don’t trust you.”
“Heh heh heh heh!” laughed Malladus. “You have nothing to fear. Your Fulbright friend may be a Logia, but the Unos will always have ME in their bloodline. Like Arceus exists in the Avatar, or Kyogre inside of Eva, Malladus is immortal. And to destroy these pitiful mortals who dare declare themselves your rulers... helping you is my pleasure.”

“I guess no matter what we become... we're still family.” (Play “Dark Hyrule Castle” from Zelda: Minish Cap.)

Stage 26: God’s Domain

Mission: Defeat the World Leaders.

Nigel approached the first pearl gateway across a road between hedge-made statues of animals, and using his L.U.N.C.H.B.O.C.K.S., he hacked into the gate’s terminal and decrypted the code ‘Hallelujah’. The gates slid open with an eerie, echoing creak as Nigel entered the first mansion. Ancient statues, vases and fancy interior designs decorated these marble halls, kept alit only by the windows allowing the endless sun inside. The Secret Police, government agents in tuxedos and sunglasses, wielding guns, stepped out around a corridor and tried blasting the intruder, but Nigel swiftly dodge-rolled to the side, whipped out a S.P.I.C.E.R., and blasted the henchmen down. Nigel proceeded and turned a right hall to what was clearly a cathedral, a statue of Jesus standing between stain-glass windows upon the altar.

His hands were held out, palms faced up, so Nigel shot his G.R.A.P.P.L.U.H. at Jesus’s right hand to haul himself on top. Curious, he threw a piece of candy onto the left palm, the stone fingers immediately snapping shut and would’ve splattered Nigel had he chosen to grapple to it. From there, Nigel grappled a nearby balcony and swung a row of gold chandeliers to another balcony with a door. He exited and found himself over a gorgeous courtyard where Secret Police roamed. Nigel dropped down and whipped out his G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A. to begin blasting them, the henchmen countering with guns and spiked Crosses they threw like kunai. One of the Crosses flung his G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A. away, but Nigel ran forward, lit his feet with flames, and kicked them across the head. Seven agents ran at him from all sides, but Nigel breakdanced and kicked them all down, then punched a Flame Fist at a man ready to stab with his Cross.

Nigel crossed a small bridge over a gentle river to a scaled replica of Notre Dame. A proud statue of Claude Frollo stood before it, the ancient plaque read CLAUDE FROLLO: Misunderstood by Millions. Nigel entered the gates to Notre Dame and encountered the archdeacon. He raised two Holy Crosses and lit the statues’ glaring eyes with light, firing lasers at Nigel that made him take cover behind a stone pillar. These lasers were made of light, not fire, so Nigel couldn’t grab them. He smirked and pulled out one of his favorite weapons: a small white envelope that he threw like a boomerang and hit the Crosses out of the deacon’s hands. He jumped out and blasted the S.C.A.M.P.P. and S.P.I.C.E.R. together, knocking the man on his back. Nigel grabbed a key from his pocket and opened a door along the left wall.

He made his way up wooden stairs and was ambushed by living stone gargoyles. His flames made no dent in their lifeless flesh, but their horns were painful as they were jabbing him, so Nigel leapt and grabbed a higher scaffold before blasting the S.C.A.M.P.P. and breaking their heads off. They still flew up to hit him, but Nigel dodged to the floor and destroyed each one with a respective number of shots. Nigel then climbed a rope up to the bell tower, using forceful punches and kicks to ring each bell until a bridge connected the walkway to a cliff with a new courtyard.

This yard was divided in grass squares between paved roads, a replica of Reims Cathedral across from Nigel. But the doors were sealed and would open when four statues were moved into the
correct position. In different corners of the yard were a statue of Mary swaying her rippled robes, one of Mary bowing her head, a statue of Elizabeth, and one of the archangel Gabriel. Nigel never paid attention in history well, assuming this was reference to something, so he only pushed the statues next to ones that looked logical beside each other. From left to right in the empty spaces were Gabriel, bowing Mary, swaying Mary, and Elizabeth, and the gates opened.

The interior was smaller and had a similar puzzle, requiring three different paintings of Mary and her Child Enthroned to be hung in the correct order of date – like Nigel had any idea which went where. So he just hung them up in various orders 'til one worked, which was Cimabue’s maestà, Giotto’s, then Duccio, whoever the hell these people were. The middle, Giotto’s portrait opened to reveal a passage, leading outside before a wide river with a statue of Noah on the other end. Nigel latched his G.R.A.P.P.L.U.H. to Noah’s nose, pulled, and toppled the statue forward. His head smashed on Nigel’s side, creating a bridge across the river. In this courtyard were many tall statues of wise old men and women, creepy in Nigel’s view. From behind the statues came Angels of Justice, whom were clearly Nimbi adults that, for some crazy reason, sided with the World Government.

They wielded golden bows and arrows and launched all around trying to hit Nigel. He ducked behind a statue, but they simply flew around to lock their sights, so he blasted juice cartons from his B.A.J.O.O.K.A. and wetted their feathers, making them sink slightly. With that, Nigel blasted flames and set fire to the wings, running while any remaining ones rained arrows upon him. He made it to a new church with statues of no one Nigel saw as religious. On the left side, Lucas Stonebuddy and Henry Churchill, on the right, Felius Umbridge, Daphne Anderson, and Jennifer Bush. A mural of God was painted on the wall above the altar, along with Jesus in the center of His robe, arms open, and a great statue of The King before him, his glory emphasized by the Lord. Above The King sat a golden pyramid, upside-down with an eye that seemed to peer into Nigel’s soul, the more he stared.

All these statues were unsettling, he knew they were watching him, they definitely knew he was here. But Nigel was too great to go unnoticed for long, that’s why he failed every spy mission. Everyone had it out for him, the greatest operative that ever lived, everyone, these World Leaders, feared him. So Nigel had the advantage, he wouldn’t stop now. He approached the doorway behind the statue and hacked the terminal with his L.U.N.C.H.B.O.C.K.S.. He inputted the code ‘New Savior’ before the door opened. A single marble road led directly to the center of Mariejoa, the grand castle where His Highness slept. Nigel walked forward fearlessly, absorbed in its glory the closer he got, he could just imagine Numbuh 3 squealing over how pretty it was. Those stairs were so steep, he could just imagine Numbuh 2 sweating, slumping as he tried to climb up without railing. He could see Numbuh 5 thinkin’ of living in such a home, maybe put in some pool tables, ice cream and soda bar, the stuff. He could see Numbuh 4 exhausted from coming this far, whining for some food, not admiring the beauty of it all. Well, Nigel would tell them about it… when he returned. (End song.)

“Nigel Old Bean,” Malladus echoed inside him, “thinking about your friends now? You should have brought them along if you were gonna get melancholy.”

“This isn’t really their battle. Besides… I don’t want them to get hurt.”

“I never pegged you as the one to… doubt their strength.”

“This is on a whole different level of strength. Even if they could… someone needs to…”

Malladus was quiet. He could sense it in his mind… his great-grandson’s doubt. Intuition of what the future holds for him. “Don’t forget who we are, Boy.”
Nigel walked up the steep stone steps. The castle’s gate drew closer... the gates to God’s home. He would not have to walk far. Because they were already here.

The lively sunny sky that watched over this realm was blocked by gray clouds, a cold wind touching Nigel’s skin. A presence that would almost make his hair grow back, and stand on end. “You, being, who has brought the unthinkable into a realm as bright as ours.” Nigel glanced to his left: the shadow of a statue turned liquid gray as a pale, ghostly white woman emerged from it. “The people of my land have fallen endlessly, to the power you bear.” He looked right as a stream of papers blew with the wind, swirling and bunching into one spot, before a handsome, brown-haired man in a blue patterned shirt appeared. “Power which, for generations, has been slowly destroying our world.” Before him, an elderly woman in a purple gown and closed eyes stepped down in high heels, and behind him, a disheveled man in a dark cloak. “But now, at long last... will save it.” And at the very top of the stairs, the mighty king in the silver armor, gold crown, purple cape, and pan over his head.

“AH HAHAAHAHAHAHA!” But one more person popped up from under the stairs, scaring Lucas Stonebuddy, the pink-dressed girl with shiny brown hair. “You tell him, King, tell ‘im to butt OUT!” cheered Jennifer Bush.

“You look awfully familiar.” Nigel said to His Highness. “Yes, I remember... you’re the Sir Knightly person my son told me about. I never would have guessed a man like you would be The King.”

“But did you need to guess. ...”

“No... they’re always choosing harebrained lunatics to run things.”

“In more ways than you understand... you are right. It took me a time to understand, the only way to counter senseless, was to become senseless. So that one day, my true touch, would remake this world anew. A kind of world, where you, of all people, used to dream about. ...What’s become of you... Mr. Uno?”

“I just had other priorities!” Nigel thrusted his hands upward and shot flames at the old woman, Felius Umbridge.

“UAAAAAAH!” She hurriedly shook them off her gown. “What FARCICAL behavior! I won’t tolerate this! TUT-TUAAAAAT!” And she stormed up the stairs, walked past The King, and entered the castle.

“You always were a stickler for breaking the rules.” said His Highness. “It can only be fate that led you this far. But fate has other plans now. Your duty is done.”

“Nnmpf!” Nigel suddenly felt something grab him. He looked down, seeing a gray shadow around his feet, stretching to the left and coming from Daphne Anderson.

She whirled her dry, cold hands and created a pitch-black rose with a white stem. “People like you, always trying to bother us. I wish you’d just give up... go cry in a corner.” She was ready to pluck the first petal.

“Hm hm hm hm...” A witty smirk appeared on Nigel’s face. “You seem to think I’m as weak as cocky Numbuh 86. But you’re forgetting something. I’m not 86. I am... Numbuh One.” His eyes shot open and burned a fiery yellow, as his entire body shrouded in a black silhouette with red outlines. “HRAAAAAAHHHHH!” The mountain began to shake. Immense, immeasurable power was building up inside of him. “RAAAAAAHAHHHHH!” Nigel started to swell and grow.
His hands and feet transformed into claws, wings grew on his back, and his rising, flaming mouth formed sharp fangs as his eyes burned with rage. He was a dragon.

Daphne could no longer maintain her Shadow Possession, the dragon’s humongous form too strong to hold. The dragon faced her and blew a ferocious breath, Daphne releasing her shadow and sliding away as the flames scorched her platform. Nigel turned right at Henry Churchill and whooshed his bladed wing, slicing the charming man in two. “Oh my, a papercut.” Henry said as he dispersed into paper.

Nigel glanced behind, seeing Lucas and Jennifer at the stairs’ bottom, raising his long tail to smash down. “EEEEEEEK!” Jennifer skittered away as the tail smashed Lucas, his body shattering like stone. Nigel turned fully around to observe the rubble with interest, until Jennifer ran back up to him. “WHAT are you trying to DO, KILL MEEEE?!? Well I’ll teach YOU a lesson, you JERK!” She threw her arms in the air and cried, “HOLY SUN, SHINE ON ALL-” But just when a bright, bulbous sphere began to appear above her, Nigel snapped the younger Leader in his teeth and furiously swung her around like a dog’s chew toy. He didn’t stop, just swung her around with all his fury. Once finished, he sent her flying to a distant building, where her bloody body crashed and plopped on the ground. She lay dead and awestruck.

Smoke escaped his snarling teeth as his great lizard head turned around. The King was floating just inches from his dragon face, right hand positioned to flick. The force of his fingers sent the dragon flying all the way across the town. Nigel landed, scraped the ground, destroying many buildings. He became firm again and faced His Highness with royal malice as the silver man hovered in the sky.

**Dr. Strange’s lab**

Hugo Strange quietly observed a series of monitors, based on his newest amount of data. “Miss Umbridge… you will not be aiding your colleagues?”

“Alas, I needed a reminder on why I despise such cretins. A man morphing into a dragon. Demons… tut!”

“Yes, it is a pity… I do root for your team in this battle. If we are able to execute the Inferius, Mr. Uno will make a perfect specimen. Actually… a demon’s soul is what we need. The Shadow Chi I have extracted from Daphne’s sister here has had an astounding effect on the corpses. I see why a healthy portion of chi is needed to make the spell work.”

“Your manner of treating deceased vessels is intriguing to me, Dr. Strange. Where, asks Felius Umbridge, did you study such practices?”

“I discovered some ancient books written by one Alfred Drevis, whom researched ways of manipulating dead by magical means, even though he was a Muggle scientist. Terrific tomes… I believe his daughter, Aya is a renowned surgeon in Germany. Family members truly are connected, aren’t they Miss Umbridge?”

“Yes… even if Daphne’s niece is aligned with those White Lotus… her sister is here. Willingly aiding us for the fate of the world. I would pity her if she were not among their kind.”

“You do not have to feel sorry for anyone, Milady. Ohhh, Isabelle… does she even know… she’s alive?”

The lovely woman named Isabelle lay on the dental chair with a mesmerized smile, half-open emerald eyes. “Across… the distant clouds… dusk and sadness falls… Like withered autumn...
leaves…”

Outside

The King remained afloat, calm and cool, while Nigel gazed. The dragon looked left when Henry Churchill reformed out of his swarm of papers. “A writer’s guide to creating compelling characters, never make things too easy.”

“A Logia, huh?” Nigel snarled. “Are the rest of you?”

Daphne Anderson appeared atop a building from a liquidy gray shadow. “Why wouldn’t we be. Someone has to. The world of worms will always need humans to protect it. Or crush it. When willpower and freedom means little.”

“HEEEEEY!” Nigel whipped around again. Jennifer Bush stood on a distant roof, red with fury. “YOU JERRRRRK! I CAN’T BELIEVE YOU KILLED ME!”

“I can’t believe you’re still whining about it. Or that they let little girls run the world.” Nigel said.

“Oh, Miss Bush is one of our, eh, ‘special needs kids’ as it were.” Henry said cunningly. “Tragic story, but convenient for us. Her family was a group of devoted Catholics who died in a fire when she was five. In the Spirit World, the Goddess Palutena gave her lightbending, and Jennifer mastered her power to fine extent. Obeying an ancient order written by the gods, she challenged Palutena, both for her God Chi and another chance at life. How humiliating did Palutena lose… now Jennifer inhabits a young adult Gigai and possesses Palutena’s Holy Sun inside her. That was 4,000 years ago. You can kill her as many times as you like, but the Holy Sun will always shine on her.”

“My power comes from ABOOOOVE!” sang Jennifer. “God has chosen me, deemed worthy to spread the Good Word! I am His daughter, the new Christ, and I will live as the woman without sin!”

“A pure soul is always a wonderful thing.” The King said. “One only a child could have. So tell me… why did you come here?”

“You know damn well.” snarled Nigel. “My wife and I… had another son, didn’t we? We don’t remember him… and my oldest son, Chris mentions his fight with ‘Knightly’ being foggy. It couldn’t be more obvious. Your damn memory powers played a factor. So tell me… WHERE IS HE?!”

The King was silent. “…Memories are precious, aren’t they. I treasure them very dearly. I try my best to preserve them.”

“Do ya now? Well, why don’t you… get some of your own!!” Nigel flapped his wings and soared at The King, spinning to whip him away with his tail before landing back on the ground. Henry, Daphne, and Jennifer surrounded him like a triangle, so Nigel spun in place and unleashed a breath of fire around him, surrounding himself in a ring as the Leaders backed away. The King flew inside and sent the dragon flying back with a powerful punch, then Nigel jumped aside when he came for him again. Nigel built up flames in his mouth and spat huge, swift fireballs that exploded many yards around them upon crashing, blasting a storm at The King and destroying several buildings as he dodged. Nigel had The King surrounded in a flaming circle, taking him by surprise as the dragon shot in and pinned him under his claws, glaring directly at his face as he charged another furious fire.
“AAAAARRR!” A huge building that looked like a gray White House made of stone came down and smashed the dragon from behind, allowing The King to fly out.

Safely inside their castle, Lucas Stonebuddy overviewed a tiny, board game replica of Mariejoa, having placed the Gray House over where Nigel was. “To achieve victory means to thoroughly develop your strategy, down to the last inch of movement. …Mmmmm a few more inches wouldn’t hurt.” he said as he slid the Gray House back and forth.

Nigel screeched with pain as the building scraped repeatedly against his wings, but finally built enough strength to thrust it off. He looked curious as a swarm of papers started to flutter around and above him, forming into Henry Churchill. “I say, I have always wanted a dragon. I would much enjoy the feel of those scales.” The dragon thrusted upward and broke the man into papers as he only reformed in midair before his face. “Chapter 4 of getting rid of a monster that doesn’t belong: erase.”

Nigel tried to shake free when his papers began to stick on and encase him, forcibly pulled to the ground. Daphne’s shadow then stretched over and took hold of the beast, the ghostly woman pulling out her black rose. “Remember those days when you pined for your crush, never knowing her path? Allow me to reinstate those memories.” So very lightly, she plucked the first petal from the rose.

An image flashed in Nigel’s mind of his first date with Lizzie. Whatever this was, it didn’t seem good at all, so he set his body afire and burned the papers before blasting a flame at Daphne, forcing her to break off. Jennifer appeared and raised her shiny flawless arms, creating a holy sun that made the dragon shut his eyes. “Holy Sun, shine upon the sinner, deliver thy justice.” In a flash, Nigel was blind, no matter how hard he shut his eyes, the blinding white claimed his vision. “HAAA!!” The spike of Jennifer’s heel jabbed him from beneath the chin, followed by an onslaught of kicks surprisingly strong against the dragon. Anger and annoyance growing, Nigel raised his head and smashed it down on the woman, then one more time, until she was dead and the light was gone. “Oooooooooohhhhh…” A radiant light shone on her from the heavens, and she was alive.

Nigel viewed around as streams of gray shadows flowed out from around buildings. He flapped his wings and flew to the sky as the shadows emerged from the earth and chased him. He turned his head and unleashed flames to burn them away, but they rose like beanstalks in front of him as Daphne appeared in one. “My Gray Shades connect to your deepest emotions… and allow me to pluck them. One… by one…” She held her black rose and looked so eager to pluck the rest of the petals. “You will take the grief so quickly, your heart stops. Death is a beautiful art.”

“But you’re a bad artist.” Nigel snarled, unleashing another stream of flames that barely wounded the beanstalks even as they lit the sky. Nigel flew away again when two towering gray walls closed in from either side, shaking the earth when they collided but Nigel escaped, and kept flying when more pairs of walls tried to smash him. At the very end, a great statue of Lucas Stonebuddy rose, Nigel dodging just before its cold hands clapped. A whirlwind of papers blew around and around, chasing Nigel like a swarm of bees, or at least hummingbirds when the papers took that form. They were in perfect synchronization as they chased, no matter how much Nigel hit them with flames, more papers came.

Just when he thought he lost them, two stone rings, divided in four parts each, captured him, the dragon barely able to stay airborne. He watched as Henry Churchill materialized in midair out of papers. “Have you gotten to observe our talents, yet?” he asked softly. “Mister Stonebuddy does not come out much, but he is an excellent stonebender in his own right.”
“You mean earthbender?”

“He prefers to call it stonebending to distinguish himself, he doesn’t want to sound great. Humble fellow, like me. I am a paperbender, Logia, but I’m hardly talented. I just need enough to make everything right.”

“You guys need to live more. I don’t mind being a little hotheaded, ‘cause I can do stuff like this.” Nigel closed his eyes and inhaled a great amount of air through his nostrils. A light shone on his forehead, building with energy, and the world flashed when it was let loose, a slim, straight line of combusted heat, the light gleaming in Henry’s beautiful eyes before the explosion found him.

Nigel plummeted to the ground, close enough to the explosion to be scorched, but also destroy the rings binding him. Let’s see… Nigel thought to himself. I’m fighting a hiding earthbender… Logia paper… immortal lightbender… emo shadowbender… don’t know where that old lady went… and King… I came here to begin with to find out how he’s doing it all. He’s strong, but what’s his game. What is ALL of this for in the end? Hrrrm…

Nigel Uno quaked across the burning rubble on his massive dragon claws. His Highness hovered meters above, only his cape blowing in the air. Nigel flashed and was immediately standing on a roof, in his smaller, less-imposing human adult form. Jennifer was still uninjured within some burning rubble. Henry’s blackened papers were recomposing, Daphne rose from some melted gray shadow. Nigel stared only at The King, and sensed his stare returned through that helmet. “Don’t you ever get hot under that thing? I want to see my enemy’s face.”

The King was unfazed. “I don’t need to see yours. I see much more… I see the truth… our very existence is only a game… to self-believed gods above us.”

“That’s a very deep way of thinking.” Nigel spoke smugly.

“Tell me… you know of the Dimensional Fusion, do you not?”

Nigel raised a brow. “Theee… force that combined our world with a bunch of other worlds?”

“Yes, an accursed cataclysm that merged other universes with ours, bringing forth the ‘gods’ in our universe, bringing forth bending,” there was disgust in his voice, “and most notably, bringing forth the Apocalypse. The so-called ‘gods’ from before our creation thought it would be FUNNY to squeeze a bunch of people in one place, see how they would interact, become friends, and FIGHT each other. But because of so many universes squeezing together, the energy became horribly unstable, so unstable that these universes were bound to implode in upon themselves! And WHO are the ones to suffer, not the gods who caused this, but us! Their simple little test subjects. Our ancestors foresaw such a cataclysm… and moved to this planet, 4,000 years ago, to find the solution. To this day, we hold the piece that told us everything. The Octogan.” The King turned away, lifted the front of his helmet, and Nigel heard a gooey squishing sound as it seemed he was pulling his right eye out.

He lowered his helmet back and held the Magic 8-Ball above. It flashed its array of colors as it seemed the ‘8’ was staring at Nigel like an eye. He felt incomparable power spinning in its sphere. “Octagon?”

“Octogan, with the ‘o’ and ‘a’ switched, dunno. It is an ancient, and powerful gem of the spirits, that allows us to view the very timestream, and beyond. We don’t know where its origins lie, but its power is unparalleled by all throughout the universe. And with its power… we have seen EVERYthing…”
Nigel’s brow quirked higher. He wasn’t liking the look of this, not one bit. “This Octogon has powers you could never have imagined. Powers to let us view into the DEEPEST secrets of the universe, ALL universes beyond it, and the SPIRIT WORLD above! It’s a relic that challenges the Chronicler’s knowledge, and can alter the very mind itself! This power is what will help us SAVE the universe… will help us deliver peace to all beings of this planet!”

“What are you planning to do?”

“Since the day we’ve acquired this relic, we have been steadily gathering the luscious energy of the Spirit World… because with this energy, we plan to grant the world everlasting peace. There is nothing that can stop the Apocalypse… so all beings will inevitably die. But this relic… will send everyone to the world that is supposed to be! We will seal their spirits in an everlasting paradise, one that is absolutely FREE of this Dimensional Fusion, and anything that gives evidence to it! We will create a Spirit World of OUR design, so that while our bodies die, our souls will be safe inside the Octogon. And WE, the sole rulers of this world, will organize everything, keep everyone into place, and see that they live their makeshift existence in peace. For that has been our duty since our ancestors came here. Since this WORLD became ours! For we… are the one, true, GOD.”

“Hm hm hm…” Nigel looked smug. “One true God… no wonder I never took part in this religious stuff. You six are God? I never felt more proud to be a demon. You people… are INSULTS to mortals!”

“And you… Numbuh One. Were you really not loyal to your virtues?”

“I was more loyal to the Kids Next Door than anyone I knew. That’s why I know… they don’t want a smelly adult like me working with them. Our children are the future. I know they will surpass us. But as their father, I won’t be ashamed in helping them. I… will defeat you, King.”

“Nigel? The Demon Prince? Galaxia’s hero? Do you, the planet’s ‘best’ operative… really believe you can defeat God?”

Nigel closed his eyes. “I think I said I’m not a fan of your religion.” And his body was encased in blackish-red shadow. Incredible energy burned, his body was growing, even larger than his dragon form, for he was no dragon: horns on his head, shaggy hair and beard, tremendous abs, and a devil’s tail. Roughly 50 feet tall… he was the Demon King that lived inside him. He was Malladus.

“Brilliant, Boy… you tamed my God Form all those years ago… and after 2 decades, I can finally stretch my bones again.”

“Only when I say, Great-Grandfather.” Nigel spoke with Malladus’s mouth, for he was still the one in control. “And I say… we feed on the souls that dare call us their creations. I will show them… to their maker.”

The King was unfazed, as were his allies. “This is what you are then… Uno.” He squished the Octogon back into his eye socket. “Then let me show you… God’s power.” (Play “Hail to the King” by Avenged Sevenfold.)

**Boss fight: The King**

He channeled the energy inside him, and the mountain began to shake. The clouds above turned blood-red, dust flowed into the air. A fiery orange aura surrounded The King, growing steadily. He balled his hands together, charged, and unleashed a powerful sphere at Uno, who dodged before
King started flying all directions around him, punching and kicking, but Malladus defended until the last kick sent him sliding across the ground, his feet toppling several mansions. Uno inhaled through his nose and blasted a red combustion beam, swallowing a huge region in an expanding bubble. The bubble shrunk immediately into The King’s palms, and Uno ran.

The King flew into the sky and unleashed a fearsome beam from his palms, a beam that rivaled the gods during their most bloodthirsty, chasing the towering demon with it, and never did Malladus or Nigel look so desperate to escape something. They caught their breath when the beam died away, but King shot down, punched repeatedly across the face, and sent the demon sliding against his back. Uno jumped high into the heavens, a blinding lightning flash in the red clouds before the Devil came down with a ferocious shockwave, swallowing Mariejoa in walls of the Fires of Hell. Seeing him floating before him like a silver fly, Uno bashed The King to the scorching ground.

The heat was unbearable, the ground was as hot as the floor of Hell, The King was sweating under his armor. Malladus’s mighty fist came like a meteor and squished The King in a crater. But His Majesty wasn’t finished, his armor barely scratched as he soared into the air again. Uno swirled a bundle of hellfire around his arms and blasted them at The King, who flew around like a superhero with his cape blowing behind. He took to the sky, like a bird like a plane, flew directly at Malladus’s stomach and pierced straight through with his spiked crown, blood gushing out the back hole. Uno spun and created a tornado of hellfire, sucking every ounce of oxygen into a realm which would leave it dry, and if King couldn’t fight it, he would drown in this hell. No, he would not, for he was the one savior of this world, and he would burn the flames.

He soared into the vortex’s core, his sweat having nowhere to evaporate under that armor. He swallowed himself in all the energy the Octogan gave him, countered the Fires of Hell, absorbed them. Nigel and Malladus gaped when their cyclone became part of King’s great protective sphere, shining in the sky as a greater sun than Jennifer’s. It felt as though Mariejoa would melt as it fell to the top like a meteor, and Uno was frantic where to go. He ran to the nearest edge and jumped off, gripping the side with his fingernails and scraping down. The world turned white when the sun collided, and the top of Mariejoa burned.

When the light was gone, Uno climbed back up. God’s Domain was destroyed. All of the beautiful marble buildings, pure rivers, lush greens, statues of God, Jesus, the holy castle, gone. And, Nigel thought despicably as The King hovered by his lonesome, the five World Leaders. How pitiful he would destroy his own team, his own domain, just to hopelessly defeat the Demon King. No… oh?

The World Leaders were safe, protected inside fiery-orange barriers made by His Truly. Henry, Daphne, Lucas, Felius, Jennifer, unscathed. Uno wouldn’t be phased, rushing forth to continue his clash. The massive fists flew swiftly, but King was lightning-fast, going beneath Malladus and rocketing up between the legs, sending the demon skyward. Zip-zap-zoom, from every direction he flashed and slashed, leaving gaping cuts in Malladus where blood flew. Then he slammed Uno into the rugged ground of the new mountaintop, followed by a series of constant Ground Pounds.

Furious, Malladus jumped up and clutched the doll-size King in his fist. He kneeled and bash bash bashed the armored man against the earth, leapt over the side, and scraped his silver against the side as they went down. Malladus clutched the mountain and leapt back up, grinding and twisting his limbs. Malladus stuck him in his sharp teeth and failed to munch through the armor, so he threw him against the ground and smashed. Seeing him lying there like a life-size action figure handled roughly by mean boys, Uno would land the final blow: a fire of unrivaled heat built in Uno’s forehead, and its combustion would obliterate King’s mortal body, so his soul had nowhere to go but the fiery pit.

The Five Leaders blocked the combustion completely with their power, protecting their ruler with
determined faces. The King groggily stood, astonished by their loyalty. “My... subjects.”

“You’re why I haven’t killed myself, yet.” Daphne said.

“You’re a marvelous fellow, I’d say.” Henry smiled.

“Our ruler until the end!” declared Felius.

“Hahahahaha, he won’t stand a chance if we take ‘im together!” laughed Jennifer.

“Yes, so please let us be quick.” spoke Lucas.

“. . . . . My Leaders. You are truly loyal... to our cause. Our world... only has one path. Yes... you know that.” Then, The King stood up straight. “It is time he knows his maker.” They all locked hands and hovered into the heavens.

Nigel stared agape. He had never seen greater teamwork since his team. The Leaders were truly one when they worked together. Their way was righteous. With his earthbending, Lucas summoned a great golden Cross from Mariejoa, kept it firm. Felius uttered an assortment of words, inscribing them on the gold. Jennifer stood at the top, the clouds breaking away as the holy sun shone. Henry grew into a paper colossus of a gigantic Bible, meters bigger than Malladus as its pages opened for all to view its holy contents. Daphne stretched the Cross’s shadow and binded the demon. And The King lay in the center where the Cross meets. “SPAWN OF DEMONS: IN THE NAME OF THINE RULER: WE CRUCIFY THEE.”

Six points pierced across Malladus’s center, creating a circle. Uno cried to the heavens, his power fading. The King of Demons began to shrink. In the end, he was nothing… a devil before God. A stray from the righteous path.

He was Nigel Uno again… frail old Nigel. A washed-out has-been. He wanted to stand… more than anything did he want to win this battle. But a gray shadow connected him to Daphne Anderson. One by one, the woman plucked the petals.

*Nigel met Numbuh 5 in CND Training.*

“Must…”

*Numbuh 5 changed his scores so he could get in.*

“stop…”

*He lost his hair to the Delightful Children.*

“them…”

*He was Leader of Sector V.*

“and…”

*His father was Numbuh Zero.*

“save…”

*He was invited to the Galactic Kids Next Door.*

“my…”
He saved the entire universe. He kissed Rachel, his true love. He defeated Malladus. They found the Eight Firstborn. He tamed Malladus’s soul inside him.

“…son…” (End song.)

Daphne’s ghostly fingers touched the last petal… and plucked.

Underworld

The Grim Reaper sat on his throne. Thinking quietly to himself after so many hard days. Then he felt it. The last grain of sand in the hourglass dropping. He touched his nonexistent heart. In all his eternity, he had never known grief for a mortal. No… that wasn’t true.

Mariejoa

The pain was gone. It was so relaxing… to be removed from all your turmoil. In a single stroke. Nigel would be whisked along by the Grim Reaper, after all this time. …No… it can’t end, yet. “No… I… have to…”

“It’s over, Boy.”

Nigel looked inside him. Malladus’s soul was calm. “But that’s alright... you’ve awakened the Uno blood inside you. With this body uninhabitable, I can move to your descendants. I will inform them of your—HUUUU!” He was struck stiff.

“M-Malladus, what-?!”

Malladus looked up, swallowed with fear. A foreign hand reached into the confines of Nigel’s subconscious, clutching Malladus in its fingers. “NO! …He’s... energybending... me!... Nigel… save!…”

Nigel tried to. He stretched his arm, his only priority right now to grab his great-grandfather’s hand and keep Malladus bound to him. But it was too late. The demon’s soul was pulled from the confines of Nigel’s body. The dying man watched as he was slurped into the Magic 8-Ball. Nigel glared at the helmetless King. His brown hair a mess, his beard in its first phase. A deep blue eye stared down at Nigel, next to an empty socket. “Augh… you…” It was his last breath.

Ahhhh... I guess you were right... Fanny... I am just a... stoopid boy. Like to see what you could do, though. Ahh... Rachel... you finally happy now... I was wrong? No... none of us could have. Our kids... yes...

They were all in his mind. Those two beautiful children. Chris... Aurora, and... you. That third one with the red glasses. You, boy. No... Cheren. That’s your name. You are our son. And you did something to make the Government scared of you. Keep at it, Sport. This old man… can’t do it, anymore. You... finish my job. Destroy them. Stop the Apocalypse. Save our... universe. I’m... proud of you... Son...

The King bowed his head in respect. A soft wind blew across the mountaintop. Nigel Uno… Numbuh One… he would never forget. He put his helmet on and said, “Time to erase the wounds of our conflict.” Raising the Octogon high, its godly power shone. In seconds, Mariejoa was back. The blue sky that reflected its rivers, posh white homes, the greenery and citizens, everyone that died was brought to life. Even Hugo Strange seemed to notice nothing, continuing his research. But Nigel…Nigel was no more. An operative legend saw his final days.
And people thought Negatar Gnaa was overpowered. So uh, yeah, this battle was kind of a mirror image of a battle that happens... around the end. Except someone else will be in Nigel’s place, as it were. Um... yes. So expect that. Good-bye.
Chapter Summary

The Marzipan Pirates go to meet the Sugar Fairy Princess. (OPTIONAL CHAPTER.)

This chapter would come after Chapter 15.

Chapter B-10: Sugar Princess

Africa; Sugar Deserts

An indigo sky filled with stars hung over the Sugar Deserts. K. Lumsy finally arrived at the shore, panting in exhaust as the Marzipans plus Fairy Princess climbed off. “You did well, Mr. Lumsy.” Aisling told him softly, patting his snout. “You may rest.”

“I’m not sure out in the open is a good thing.” Augustus said. “He’s a real attention-attractor.”

“I agree, he’s very attractive- OW!” Stewie said, before Rallo smacked him.

“So why’re we here again?” Rallo asked.

“When I was little, my mom told me a story about the Sugar Fairy Kingdom in Sugar Deserts.” Augustus took out his lollipop, which was shriveled and close to completion. “It’s the same desert where the Candegyptians lived 5,000 years ago. Word is that the Sugar Fairies taught them their magic.”

“Of course, the legend of Sugar Fairy Kingdom was passed off as a fairytale.” Aisling followed, wiggling her toes in the sugary sand. “But I can assure you it is real. The Fairy Princess is a friend of mine.”

“Thanks for confirming that before I made the assumption ‘All Fairy Princesses know each other.’” Augustus put the lolli back in his mouth.

“Actually, she isn’t completely my friend. Our leader, Mavis adores her, but I find her very rude. And that’s beside all of this unnatural sugar! Uck, I can’t…” Aisling’s toes twitched in the sand, “STAND this substance! A desert must be composed of billions of tiny rocks, it is supposed to feel warm on your feet, but THIS sand is filled with SUGAR! UGH, it’ll take forever to wash it off!”

“It ain’t supposed to feel warm, it’s nighttime!” Augustus yelled, tossing the barren lolli stick away. “Although…” He got down and pressed the back of his hand to the sand. “It does feel a bit warm for night.”

“The Sugar Fairy Princess is a firebender.” Aisling explained. “Her chi flows into the sugar and creates an effect that invigorates those who consume it. In Sugar Kingdom, a river of the warmest cocoa flows and fills all the fairies with sugary delight. The warmth of that river touches the desert sand from below. It is underground.”

“The Fairy Kingdom is underground? So, do we dig there?”
“Only a Sugar Fairy can open the gate. But ordinarily, there’s one or two out getting a snack…”

The four Marzipans followed Aisling over a large dune, viewing a huge bar of chocolate lodged in the sand on the other side. They heard a weak, squeaky grunting sound as they approached the chocolate. They saw the shadow of something little trying to lift it.

“Mmm!... Mmm!...” A Sugar Fairy wearing a white robe was trying to lift the huge candy. She heard the patter of large footsteps behind her and turned around. Aisling squatted for a closer look at the Sugar Fairy. “Oh! Big People! Hello, Big People. I was trying to take this candy to my friends, but I’m much too teeny to lift it. Perhaps your big arms could suffice.”

“Yeeeah… I’m no Superman, sorry.” Augustus scratched his head. “Listen, can you take us to the Sugar Fairy Kingdom?”

“Always to the point with you, isn’t it?” Aisling glared reprovingly at him. “Sigh, I suppose I’m the only one who knows and practices the word ‘kindness.’” She turned back to the fairy with a polite smile. “Hello, Miss. My name is Aisling, the Forest Fairy Princess. I am acquainted with the Sugar Fairy Princess and request an audience with her. I would like to enter your homeland and bring these guests.”

“Ooo! I know you! The princess described you, Princess Forest Fairy. She said you were weird, and stinky, and ate your own fleas!”

“SHE SAID WHAT ABOUT ME?!” Aisling growled with venomous fangs.

“Eeeek!” The fairy zipped and hid behind Augustus’s boot. “Please protect me, Mr. Giant! I don’t want my head yanked off!”

“You know, things might be babyish, but boy, do I wanna eat ’em.” Augustus said with adoration.

Aisling calmed down and stood up straight. “Lucky for you, sugar is toxic to me. Now, would you show us the entrance to your hometown or won’t you?”

“I want to, People. I really do.” The fairy’s adorable expression turned sad. “But it’s really, really bad. Monsters broke into our home. They want to eat all Sugar Fairies for lunch, breakfast, AND dinner!”

“That’s not even the correct order!!” Rallo cried and pressed his face against Augustus’s pants leg. “PLEASE let’s help them, Captain!”

“Easy, Monty! ’Course we’re going to help. I have a few favors to ask the Sugar Princess, anyway. Take us to your homeland and we’ll sweep the floor with all them monsters.” Augustus started a new lollipop.

“We would appreciate thatberry much, Big Person. A big and strong man like you is sure to beat hundreds of ’em! My name is Holly, the Helpful Sugar Fairy. I’ll let all of you into my home. Everybody stand together, and keep all hands and feets inside the circle.” The Sugar Fairy pulled a larger-than-her candycane out of her pocket as she skipped away. She hummed a little, “Dee dee dee dee...” as she began to draw a great wide circle into the sand around them.

“Man, if we about to shrink right now, I bet I be supeeeeerrr cute.” Rallo said.

“More like super inconvenient,” Augustus remarked. “Hey Forest Fairy, you ever been to the Sugar Fairy Kingdom? What’s gonna happen?”
“No, I’ve never been, I was just told you needed a Sugar Fairy to go there.” Aisling replied. “Truthfully, I would never want to come here even for your sake, but I have a few things to speak with the princess about as well.”

“Well, aren’t you lucky we came along.”

“Okay, Big People! The circly’s finished!” Holly said. “Get ready to fall.”

Almost instantly, the sand within the circle transformed into quicksand that they quickly sank into. They began rapidly sliding through a tunnel, unable to stand or balance on the slippery sand slope. Already, they thought this to be an odd choice of environment for adorable creatures like the Sugar Fairies. Living under the surface of a desert like scorpion-mole people, they couldn’t even imagine their kingdom looking cute.

They slid down for several minutes before they landed on a sandy bottom. They weren’t sure what to expect the area to look like… perhaps large, or even small teapots or gingerbread houses, stationed about an underground landscape and whose only source of lights were candles. …When they opened their eyes, the sight left them awestruck. (Play “Duplicitous Delve” from Yoshi’s Woolly World!)

The landscape was a chocolaty brown, there was a river of cocoa, and large teapots stationed around small gingerbread houses. But what really stood out was the sky. A purple sky with darker purple clouds hovered above them, and a white sun peeked over the horizon. “Tee hee hee! Don’t be fooled!” laughed Holly. “Or a fly might fly into your gawking mouths. We use magic to make an underground sky. The sun shines on everything! Isn’t it beauteous?”

“I’ll say!” Augustus beamed. “I can’t believe no one ever found this!”

Aisling sniffed, her expression dark. “Someone has. Demons. My least favorite scent.”

“We’ll wipe them out!” Augustus twirled his Candycane Cutlass, eager to explore. “Come on, brats, let’s march!”

**Stage B-7: Sugar Kingdom**

**Mission: Meet the Sugar Fairy Princess.**

Augustus jumped across a trio of platforms before stopping at a larger one, in which Leevers emerged from. The captain chopped the creatures with his sword. “That was beautiful swordplay, Big Person!” Holly said admiringly. “Allow me to help you now!” She danced over to a large cup of sugar on the right side of the foothold, scooping some in her tiny teaspoon and sprinkling it on Augustus’ Gobstopper. “Do you see those floating cubes in the air? You can fill them with sugar by hitting them with your ball thingy!”

Augustus saw a row of floating outlines that shaped like cubes leading to a path on the left. The captain tossed his sugar-coated Gobstopper to bounce around the cubes, making them white and dense. The pirates could bounce across, but the sugary platforms dissolved as soon as they stepped on them, so they moved quickly. On this new path, rows of Pokeys popped out of the ground, with one of them in each row being taller. Augustus tossed his Gobstopper against the short ones’ heads while Maggie shot the heads off the tall ones.
The path turned left and would lead to a tall, climbable cliff. Nejirons popped out of the ground, so Maggie shot bullets to destroy the flammable monsters before they got close. They watched as Aisling used her nimble, animal-like reflexes to hop onto the wall that their path was between, sprinting up to the cliff and making terrific leaps to get up above. The Forest Fairy clearly didn’t need to wait for the slow humans and could bypass the whole stage if she wanted.

The cliffside was too sturdy for their Corn-Clambers to pierce into, so the safest option was to simply climb it with hands and feet. The babies held onto Augustus while he did the climbing, but when Red Bubbles (winged skulls encased in fire) flew down from over the top, Maggie shot directly up to destroy them. Thanks to her, they made it to the top of the cliff without trouble.

Three Lizalfos with wrecking ball tails ambushed them. They swung their so-called appendages at the pirates, while the babies dropped off Augustus so the captain could roll left and avoid. Augustus jumped and stomped down on a Lizalfos’s tail when it swung, then stabbed the Candycane Cutlass several times into its chest. The second Lizalfos tried to sink its teeth into Rallo’s afro, but the creature ended up biting a boombox unexpectedly, which then blasted loud notes to send the creature falling off the cliff. The third Lizalfos had its tail positioned to block Maggie’s gun, but the sniper simply shot a bullet to bounce off the ball’s bottom, then pierce the creature’s stomach.

The triplet demons dispersed into darkness. Augustus noticed pirate flags were stationed and blowing in a weak breeze. They bore the image of a frowning skull with yellow hair. “Wait a second, this is Mandy’s Jolly Roger!” Augustus realized. “Don’t tell me the Boogey Pirates got here before we did?!”

“I dunno the answer, Big Person.” Holly frowned. “They been here since yesterday. I dunno why.”

The four Marzipans progressed down a narrow, winding path down a hill. They were brought to the Cocoa River, where Holly waited by a tiny boat. “To cross the Cocoa River, we have to take my tiny boat! Eat a Shrink Sweet to become as tiny as me.”

Augustus picked out four Shrink Sweets from a close-by patch, and the four pirates each ate one. Their bodies contracted to Holly’s adorable size, so they could board her boat, which she rowed down the river using her teaspoon. She had to shift the boat left to avoid a mini waterfall of sugar from a teapot, then moved the boat right to avoid another one. Aisling was sitting on the left cliff and watching the boat’s progress, swinging her feet back-and-forth above them.

Holly carefully turned the boat around corners of a narrow part of river. This part let out in a region of breathmint-bergs, which Holly maneuvered around. Fly Guys were swooping down to scoop cocoa into bowls, so Holly predicted their position and took care to avoid them, too – lest they be caught and dumped into a mini volcano. They were steadily being pulled into whirlpools, so Holly abandoned the boat and hopped across some large Life Savers that were floating and twirling in the river. The Marzipans followed her before the boat sank.

They made it onto a safe platform with Growth Gum, allowing the humans to grow back to normal. A Fly Guy floated down, holding a bowl of sugar as he used a spoon to fling it at them. Augustus KO’ed the Shy Guy with his Gobstopper, and Holly floated and caught the bowl. She sprinkled sugar on Augustus’s Gobstopper, then he chucked it at the Sugar Cubes floating in the cocoa. The group jumped the cubes to a land with a jellybean garden. “Aaaaahhh!” A Sugar Fairy with green garden clothes, which had tiny colorful jellybeans, was flailing her arms. “Mean rats stole my Magic Jellybeans! Help me, Oversized People!”

They saw a rat scampering around the small, nearby field, and surprisingly it was too quick for
Maggie’s bullets to blast. In each corner, there were four mouse holes that warped to other holes, but the mouse would just run around the center if they were all guarding one. Rallo decided to stick his head into the ground and shake the earth with boombox, forcing a mini maze to sprout up on the field. With less directions to go, the rat ended up cornered by Rallo, who took the Magic Jellybean.

They followed a back road that sloped down into a narrow trench, where numerous rats were crawling around a maze of tunnels within the right wall. When Augustus threw his Gobstopper at one rat, they all panicked, moved quickly in disorganized fashion, and then slowed down. Augustus saw one rat toss a jellybean to another rat, so he struck that one with the Gobstopper. Another rat grabbed it, and they scattered around again. Augustus had to track the correct rat, then do one more round, before the Magic Jellybean was thrown down to him.

On the east side from the center field, there was a rat riding a mini skateboard around a looping track. Maggie hopped on a bigger, available skateboard to chase. She went up a ramp and performed a midair pose, landing on a platform which led her down a slope to gain speed. She turned a tight left corner, rolling on a path with long vertical gaps she could maneuver around. Maggie jumped a few platforms, seeing the next turn coming, where she had to go up a corner ramp, shift left, and gain more speed upon sliding down. Just when she would pass the starting line again, she caught the rat and took his jellybean.

When the Marzipans returned to bring the beans back to the gardener fairy (whose name was Lila Green), Aisling was there to meet them. Lila took the beans and put them in the soil. “So if you’re the Forest Fairy, can you make them grow?” Augustus asked.

“Candy beans, that’s a stretch.” Aisling huffed.

“Don’t worries.” Lila said. “To show my graciousness, I’ll create a path!” She watered the beans with soda, and a long beanstalk stretched across part of the Cocoa River. Large, standable beans grew on the stalk, but they were too far apart to jump normally. Thankfully, Lila lent them some Bounce Gum she had planted, and they used the extra bouncepower to get across the leaves (though Aisling had no qualms running across the stalk on all fours).

They landed on a foothold before a long trench, in which several huge teapots were lodged in and pouring sugar. Aisling nimbly Wall Jumped down the trench, but the humans were forced to bite a Fudgepuffsicle from a bushel. They slowly floated down the trench in their inflated forms, having to go through the sugar downpours to shift lower. If they missed the sugar, they would float into stationary Eye-Cones (eyeball monsters with ice cream cone spikes), though some sugar-pours would push them into Eye-Cones if they sunk too low.

Their bodies deflated once they made it to safe ground. They trekked a dry path between sugar-covered ground, which looked more like snow. They smiled at the Sugar Fairies who were shoveling sugar into their teapot carriages, making sugar snowmen, and other adorable snow-related activities. In an open area, three Fatblin were standing guard, with one of them using a metal shield. Augustus dashed up to the left one and chopped up its wood shield with his cutlass. He expertly dodged his and the metal shield’s spears, then chopped the wood shield of the right one.

“Hey Ralls, time for a science lesson!” Augustus grabbed the afro child, who extracted his stereos as the teen shoved them against the Fatblins’ bellies. Rallo boomed his stereos, and the powerful soundwaves jiggled the fat to the point that the monsters hacked junk, then exploded. As for the Metal Shield Fatblin, Augustus leapt up and over its choice defense, shoving his Gobstopper down its throat. The demon choked and fell over dead. When his body disappeared, the captain could
“Up there is the Sugar Palace where Princess Sugar Fairy lives.” Holly pointed at a giant teapot perched above a large canyon. “We just have to climb this gihugic rock!”

There were Moblin patrolling in the pass between the trench, wielding spears that had Mandy’s pirate flag. Maggie shot them each in their big pig noses, and one bullet was all it took to take them out. The pirates used their Licoropes to rope candycane branches sticking out of the left trench wall, swinging up to a higher ledge that had a tunnel in the wall. They followed it to the opposite side of this trench wall, which overlooked a chasm of cocoa. Partway across the chasm, on a tall pillar, a Sugar Fairy was shooting the side of a cliff on their left with soda. “That’s Calcy, the Cannon Fairy. She’ll help you swing across!” Holly said.

A jellybean vine wall stretched across that part of cliff, with drooping branches that stretched when Calcy hit them with soda. The pirates swung the stretched branches with their Licoropes, keeping an eye for which ones were stretched, and swinging off the ones that were about to droop. Orange Soda Chuchu appeared on some areas, so Augustus sliced them with his cutlass. Snapdragons also popped out of holes to eat a few branches, forcing the pirates to make greater swings to further branches. Aisling was casually laying a small ledge above the vine wall, swaying her head and foot to the music.

Eventually, the vines brought them to a safe ledge, where they went up a short staircase to get atop the left trench wall. Eenos were roaming within the sugary snow, hurdling sugarballs at the explorers, but Augustus’s Gobstopper proved stronger in knocking them out. Conveniently, his Gobstopper got drenched in the sugar, so he could throw them at the Sugar Cubes leading across to the top of the right trench wall. Suddenly, Aisling leaped across from the left wall and raced toward the Sugar Palace, making a great leap to the top of the teapot. There were Sir Sugars (Sir Slushes made of sugar) guarding the stairs to the Sugar Palace. Again, it took one hit from the Gobstopper on their top-hat weak points to defeat the monsters. The adventurers went up the stairs to the Sugar Palace.

“Oopsie!” Holly perked up. “The door is too tiny for Big People! You have to go from up above!” She skipped around to behind the teapot, where a ladder was hanging. The sign read For Big People, so the four climbed it to the top of the pot… which they just realized those two words were the same, backwards. Aisling was squatted on the pot, looking down into it with a curious smile. The Forest Fairy dove inside, Holly lightly jumped after, then Augustus grabbed his crew and took the dive next.

For some reason, they expected to hit a ground inside the two-story teapot, but instead, they plummeted down a surprisingly long shaft. There were numerous floors around the sides and stairs that kept spiraling down, with Sugar Fairies walking on them. They watched Aisling maneuver around the air as she fell ahead, avoiding the Eye-Cones that floated in the drop. Mothulas attempted to gnash the pirates, but Augustus was quick to chop them with his cutlass. He shifted left of a diagonal Eye-Cone row that closed the space between him and the side, but he grabbed a Gold Wonka Bar after getting through. He shifted to the center, where the space between the Eye-Cones grew tighter, but when Augustus got through, he felt his boots hit the floor. He set the babies down as they followed Holly and Aisling through a human-size doorway. (End song.)

“Welcome to Sugar Fairy Palace!” Holly announced to the humans. The palace interior was mostly white with a few chocolate-colored pillars and tiles. Augustus reached up and touched the ceiling while Aisling brushed her feet on the floor. It felt like fine china, except harder and sturdier. Naturally, the palace felt small and cramped to the big humans, as Sugar Fairies were roaming the low floor
and a second floor which they had view of.

“Look, everybody! Big People!”

“Oh, Em, Gee! They’re so silly and fun-looking!”

“That one looks like a football! Will he go spin if I throw him?”

“I wanna snuggle and cuddle in that chocolate one’s fluffy black hair!”

“I wanna get mad at you for calling me that, but I just wanna eats you more!” Rallo exclaimed in adoration.

“The white one smells stinky!”

“Can we give that baby milk?”

“All of them were equally tiny, equally cute, and equally squeaky. The humans’ hearts were melting; these fairies were just too adorable for words. They wondered if they were actually feeling this way or if this was some hypnotic spell. “Ahem... Good evening, Sugar Fairies.” Aisling bowed (slightly lower than she already was). “We would like to speak to your princess. It would be very kind of you to take us to her.”

“EWWWWW! HER BREATH IS STINKY!!” All of their teeny eyes shut tight, and their teeny noses were covered.

“SO CUUUUUTE!” the humans screamed.

Aisling’s eyes narrowed with anger. “Just show us.” she said through gritted teeth.

“This way, my new chummy-wummies!” Holly skipped forward. “The princess will be scrumptious to see you!”

The giants crawled through another human-size door and went up stairs to an even larger, cave-like room. There was a big teapot on a central pillar, and sugar was pouring into it from the ceiling. The tip of the pot’s spout glowed white. There was a gentle pop, and a sugary white light came out and floated to them. The light decreased and revealed the Sugar Fairy Princess. She had brownish-black hair in two pigtails, and an orange dress with chibi white boots. Her adorable slanted purple eyes were complimented by a grumpy-looking frown.

**Princess of Sugar Fairies**

**ZEIRA**

The teeny fairy skipped across the air toward the pirates, carrying her big ladle. She floated before Augustus’s face, who was smiling delightfully at the creature. She whacked him on the head with the spoon. “What’re you, dum? Bow to me!” she yelled in a cute, but hotheaded tone.

“Ow!” Augustus rubbed the sore spot. “What gives?”

“You’re bigger than me! I don’t like that. Bow to me so you appear smaller.”

“You’re delightful as always, Princess Zeira.” Aisling remarked.

“P.U.! I thought I smelled something stinky!” Zeira waved a chibi hand by her chibi nose.
“What’re you doing here, Aisling? Did you bring these humans?”

“Yah, she did.” Augustus replied rudely. “Feel free to thank us for chasing the monsters off. I’ll name ya a few ways you can reward us. One, I had this Candy Virus for a short time, and it—”

A burst of fire emerged from Zeira’s head and sides, startling the five. Despite the fairy’s size, the spouts were huge and very hot. “You’ll show respect in my presence.” The fires vanished. “And for your information, I already know who you are, Augustus. The Big Mom Pirates are very infamous in the Sugar Fairy community. My people were berry much terrified of them.”

“I’m berry much tired of your attempt at being cute by using cute words that normal people wouldn’t use in the current CONTEXT!” Augustus folded his arms. “Listen, the Big Mom Pirates are gone. We’re the Marzipan Pirates and we’re different. Our number one goal is to have adventure, and adventure calls us to find the Lost Candies.”

“What? Why do you want to find the Lost Candies?”

“To see if they exist.” Augustus pulled out his barren lollipop stick and threw it away.

“The Lost Candies are ancient and sacred relics. They aren’t meant to be found or used by anyone.”

“Neither were the Sugary Wonders, but that didn’t stop my whole ancestry from finding them countless times throughout history.”

“The Sugary Wonders were originally created to reward the Kids Next Door. But we Sugar Fairies are protectors of the Lost Candies, and our job is more than difficult.”

“That explains it, ’cause you don’t do it well.” Augustus retorted, starting a new lollipop. “The Sun Cream up on Buttermilk Building was destroyed by Lord Licorice.”

“W-What?!” Zeira was taken aback. “That’s impossible! How could anyone—”

“AAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!” Adorable, high-pitch screams rang from the palace foyer, and sapphire flames burned into the chamber. A Sugar Fairy rushed in, looking frantic. “Princess, Princess! Big mean Big Monsters are- EYAAAH!” She ran when a blue flame was thrown at her.

“It doesn’t even feel satisfying to trample over your land.” A woman with black armor and messy black hair marched in with Flare Dancers at her beckon. “No defenses, no military… it’s amazing how long you’ve gone without anybody conquering you.”

Zeira floated between the Marzipans and the woman. “Who are you?” she asked with an angry chibi glare. “Are you with these Big Lugs or the monsters outside?”

“No way!” Augustus pushed the fairy aside for a better look. “You’re one of Mandy’s pirates! The Princess Azula from the Avatar Realms! You have a bounty of 76,000 gold pieces!”

Zeira gasped. “Of course! I once saw a wanted poster of her. She has a reputation for burning any town or landscape she walks upon. Azula the Blue Demolisher.”

“The princess has heard of me, I’m flattered.”

“Don’t be. You look a lot uglier than on the poster, and fatter, too.” Zeira snapped.

“WHAT?!”
“I don’t like you. I want you out of my house RIGHT NOW!” Zeira blasted a massive breath of fire, but Azula sucked it right down her throat. When the fire stopped, she wiped her lips of imaginary crumbs.

“I’ve mastered Dragon Style bending.” Azula smirked. “The ability to eat outside sources of my element and strengthen my chi. I’ve always been the strongest firebender in the Fire Nation, and my title stands to this day! But no matter how much I train, how strong I become, I can’t achieve Logia.” Blue flames burst from her arms when she shouted. “I don’t understand what I’m doing wrong.” She burst again. “I know Dragon Style, and my chi evolved to Sapphire when I turned 11, so why after 20 years, I still can’t make Logia!” Fire burst from her mouth.

“Maybe that’s because you suck.” Zeira said.

Angered, Azula Rocket Boosted over and snatched the fairy, startling the others with her speed. “I bet you’re just burning with chi, you little fire ant!”

“Hey, let me go!” Zeira shook adorably. Her chibi arms were fragile and powerless like that of a doll’s. “Stop holding me!”

“I bet swallowing you is just the kind of burst I need to finally make Logia. Happy landings!” She moved the helpless fairy to her open mouth.

Augustus SLICED Azula’s wrist and forced her to let go. The former princess jumped away and growled at the teen. “Hey, perra. Don’t you know cannibalism is wrong?”

“I used to cook and eat the turtle-ducks that swam around in my castle’s pond.” Azula said viciously. “I’ll eat what I want! And a queen of my status deserves the highest quality dessert.”

“Why don’t you get a taste of me?” Augustus cocked a brow. “I’ve been eating dessert all my life, I bet I’m just sensuous.”

“Hn hyou’re gonna challenge me?” Azula chuckled. “You may have worked for the Big Mom Pirates, but you’re still a child. Even the Avatar had more resolve than you.”

“You still couldn’t beat ’im. And you ain’t beating me, either!”

“We’ll see. Flare Dancers!” The four graceful flame demons leapt beside their master. “Let’s DANCE!” (Play “Here Comes the Grizz” from Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time.)

**Boss fight: Azula**

The Flare Dancers skated circles around Azula to create a ring of fire, and when Azula jumped through the fire, she pulled it along with her as she skated to Augustus. The teen ducked the left giant fire whip, then jumped her right one, but as Azula turned, she kicked a foot back and sent Augustus several meters. The boy recovered and rolled aside when Azula tossed flames at him, attempting to swing his cutlass at her, but Azula smacked the weapon away and kicked Augustus the opposite way. Grinning maniacally, the woman drew a knife, skating to Augustus while he was recovering. “Auuuh!” The lollipop flew out of his mouth when he choked. Azula forced the knife against his neck and pushed him away.

“CAPTAIN!” the Baby Trio screamed. (“Mw-mw!”)

Augustus grunted and helped himself up. “Wh…” He felt the part on his neck where she cut. “I’m
“You’re welcome.” They all looked over at Aisling, who was sitting cross-legged and positioning her hands to face Augustus. Her book was open beside her.

“What are you doing?”

“We Forest Fairies provide special defense to human children. I can make it so your body doesn’t get ruptured from attacks that would cut or burn you. You’ll still feel pain, but these attacks won’t be fatal.”

“Fine, I’ll take. But for the record, I’m no child, I’m a teenager.”

“The Baby Trio is older than you. There’s no more difference.”

“DON’T interfere!” Azula skated over to burn the fairy, but Zeira exploded a flame wall to block her.

“Don’t ignore me!” Augustus dashed up and punched Azula in the face, but she back-flipped, crouched, and did a breakdance fire shockwave. Augustus jumped and ran at Azula to swing more punches across her face, then the woman kicked on her rockets and flew away. The Flare Dancers surrounded Augustus and began to close in as they skated. The captain bounced his Gobstopper in his hand before hurling it at one of the dancers’ heads. Their formation broke when its flame body disabled, leaving the roundish imp that was its real body.

The imp ran away when Augustus ran over, but the teen bypassed to grab his fallen cutlass. He then chased the Flareless Dancer and stabbed it multiple times before its body exploded. Augustus was hurt from the explosion, but no injuries were present thanks to Aisling’s spell. The other three Flare Dancers glided over to kick him, but Augustus dodged aside, then raised his cutlass to defend from Azula’s knife. She kicked her left foot up, but the teen boy jumped away from the flaming limb, then successfully struck the woman’s face with his Gobstopper.

Azula skated away, lighting her whole body with sapphire flames as she sent wave after wave at her opponent. Augustus jumped them all, and Azula steadily maneuvered closer. The room turned dark when the firebender charged lightning in her hands. She waved her arms to channel her flow of chi, then was ready to strike her adversary. With fearless determination, Augustus dashed at the lady pirate, ready to slice her, but Azula jabbed her fingers at his chest and induced him with lightning.

“AAAAAHH!” In his weak moment, Azula punched him away. His body was still twitching from the shock.

“How long’s that magic gonna last?” Rallo questioned.

“It won’t hold up if he takes too many attacks.” Aisling answered, still focusing her power despite Zeira’s flame wall barrier. “He needs to be more careful.”

“I feel so worried!” Holly yelled with adorable sad eyes. “I wish I could help, but I’m so teeny!”

“And he doesn’t have Haki.” Stewie said. “I’m not sure if he can beat her…”

Azula leaped, flipped in the air, and brought a flaming foot down on Augustus, but he grabbed the pirate’s leg and swung her forward, slamming facefirst on the ground. Augustus recovered and ran when Azula got up and growled angrily. She thrustred flames out of her feet and hands and flew at him, ramming Augustus headfirst and smashing him against the wall. She jumped away and tossed
fireballs, so Augustus ran leftward from her direction. The Flare Dancers skied at him from ahead, brimming emerald, and Augustus felt the light singe when he dove between two of them. When they circled and came back, Augustus ran to stab his cutlass into one of them. He jumped away before the dancer exploded.

The remaining two Flare Dancers morphed their embers to sapphire. “They can’t do much with only two.” Azula said. “Get over here, one of you.” A Flare Dancer obeyed and skated over. Azula puckered her lips and sluuuuuurped its fiery body down her lungs. The imp that remained skittered away as blue flames leaked out of the cracks in Azula’s armor.

“Wait a second, aren’t those creatures made of Underworld flames?” Augustus asked. “That’s dangerous for normal firebenders!”

“It is!” Azula spoke devilishly. “But I LOVE hellfire! It’s DELICIOUS!” A rocket burst from her back as she launched at Augustus, who raised his hands and grabbed hers. Azula kept flying and pushing him along, dodging her head when he punched his left fist, then head-butting him. Azula grabbed the dizzy teen by the legs and swung him around before hurling him away. Augustus got up to see Azula rocketing to him again, eyes full of madness, so he chucked his Gobstopper at whipping speed and struck her in the teeth. He then dodged aside to let her crash into a wall.

The teen captain ran at her from behind to furiously punch the back of her head. He then grabbed his cutlass and swung to cut, but the Fire Princess grabbed the candycane blade and melted it in her hand. She turned to him, and through the black bangs blocking her eyes, Augustus could see the undying fury. She punched him with Flame Fist, flying the boy back. She flew above him and pelted rapid fireballs, with Augustus withstanding the first few before rolling away. He grabbed his Gobstopper, flipping back when Azula punched down, then slamming the small hard sphere against her teeth. Augustus kicked her leg to knock her down, then threw the Gobstopper at her face again.

“THAT’S IT!” Azula snarled like a wild beast. “I’ll burn EVERY shred of matter on your form so nothing remains!” She looked at the remaining Flare Dancer, whose body morphed into violet flames. She inhaled with as powerful a gust as Kirby, sucking the purple fire in.

“A Sapphire Firebender shouldn’t even be able to use violet flames!” Augustus yelled.

“I will become LOGIA!” Purple flames leaked out of Azula’s armor now. She punched bigger, hotter flames, so the best Augustus could do was dodge. “Nn, nn!” Augustus took a few hits, then Azula punched a greater flame from both fists to blow him back. “AAAAH!”

“Ahhh!” Aisling grunted and fell on her side.

“What happened?” Zeira asked, dropping the flame wall.

“My magic’s worn off. His body is vulnerable now.”

“Oh…” Holly looked at the human boy with worry.

Azula stomped toward the captain with her arms drooped. “Cough, huh…” Her legs faltered, feeling overwhelmed by the violet fires.

“Heh… Feeling a bit sweaty?” Augustus smirked from his spot on the ground.

“I’ll show you SWEATY!” Azula drew her knife and wobbled over to end her enemy. Augustus tried to stand- “Nnnn!” but he felt the pain catch up to him.
Azula bore a devilish smile. She would take sweet pride in slaying the Davy Back Fight deserter, Big Mom’s grandson, and get basked in the glory from her fellow pirates. The viewers were horrified at the thought of Azula’s victory, but Holly especially couldn’t bear to let the human die. “Big Person!!”

“Holly, wait!” Zeira yelled when the tiny fairy danced over to Augustus. Azula swung her knife at the boy’s neck, but Holly jumped in the way just in time. (End song.)

The upper half of the Sugar Fairy’s body flew up into the air. Blood flew out of her. The entire event was so sudden and shocking, time appeared to slow down. When Holly’s body hit the ground, she was faced upward. A smile was still on her face, and her eyes, though lifeless, were still big and adorable.

“. . .” Azula stared at the dead fairy. Her yellow eyes, still brimming with madness, were twitching. “Huff-huff…” The tears formed almost against her will. All of a sudden, her emotions were beyond her control. “SNIFF.” Azula fell to her knees. She couldn’t keep from crying, pouring out her emotions. She couldn’t comprehend the severity and cruelty of her actions. She was utterly helpless to her own feelings.

Augustus, the babies, Zeira, and Aisling were crying. It was a horrible thing to happen. She was such a small creature… a small and innocent person… Holly, a kind and friendly fairy who helped total strangers like them across the kingdom. They were so grateful for her aid. They would’ve wished for anything better than this. Sugar Fairies were happy beings that filled peoples’ hearts with glee. They reminded people that there was joy and meaning in life. So seeing one on the ground, dead… her expression gone unchanged… it opened their hearts and minds to everything.

Aisling felt a tiny tap on her shoulder. She turned to see Zeira, tears leaking from her tiny purple eyes. Zeira held her arms open, so Aisling took her in both hands and brought her to her chest. Aisling hugged her little friend with warmth. They remembered how much they loved each other, even if they fought. The kind of love that Princess Mavis wanted all creatures to share.

After 10 more minutes, they were mostly calmed down. Aisling released Zeira as she floated to Augustus. “Sniff… I almost forgot to… th-thank you… for saving me.”

“It was no trouble.” Augustus choked on his breath. “I’m sorry for… what happened…” They all looked at Azula. She was bowed on her hands and knees, creating a puddle with her tears. “I didn’t think… someone like her would cry over this…”

“Everyone cries… when a Sugar Fairy dies.” Zeira sniffled. “She killed her… so she’ll cry for a week… if not longer. Sniff…” She faced Augustus again. “Listen… I decided that I’ll help you. Is it true that you’re looking for the Lost Candies?”

“We are… sniff.” Augustus wiped the last tears away. “I’m trying to find them… for a friend.”


“Well, whoever Luviro’s abuela is, she knew about them.”

“Lu…vio?” The name sounded familiar to Zeira. She shook her head and spoke again. “Augustus… Have you ever heard of the Avalaran story called ‘Fairy Sisters’? The story talks about three Fairy Princesses, who are Aisling and her two friends, but there’s an extra chapter that talks about a fourth sister, me. The only reference to the Lost Candies is that chapter, but when the Illuminati appeared roughly 4,000 years ago, they tore out those pages. I think I know the reason.
Augustus, do you know what’s going to happen at the end of this month?”

“This month? At the end of this month, Luviro’s gonna die. He’s terminally ill, and he wants to see the Lost Candies before it happens.”

“…I see…” Zeira was clearly suspicious of his reason, though Augustus couldn’t imagine why. “Listen, Augustus, I want you to find the Lost Candies. There are six of them. They were created by Giants from a world called Termina. One of the candies happens to be my teapot home.” She gestured up at the giant teapot she came out of. “It contains a limitless storage of the purest sugar, and that sugar is what you’ll need. I’ll give it to you after you manage to find the other five candies.”

“This sugar is what Luviro called the Sugar Fuel?” Augustus recalled from Luviro’s story.

“Yes, it is. Now, I can’t tell you everything, and I can’t leave my homeland during this crisis. But as the Sugar Fairy Princess, I will be happy to grant you three wishes.”

“Nice try, girl,” Rallo said, “we know you aren’t a genie-”

“GOOD.” Augustus shouted with relief. “My first wish is to get these Candy Virus fragments out of my body!”

“I thought I sensed something weird in your bloodstream. Very well.” Zeira put her spoon inside a pot of purple sugar, then waved it around as it glittered. “For the big, rude man, your wish is my command!” She whooshed the sugar over Augustus, who coughed.

The teen stared at both sides of his hands. He balled his fists and tried to channel his willpower. “It didn’t work, I still can’t use Haki!”

“It DID work, I’m not sensing the candied cells in your blood, anymore.” Zeira stated. “Your stomach, though…”

“Perhaps the Haki needs to return to you naturally.” Aisling said. “You may have to learn it all over again…”

“My ass, I have to. Whatever, Wish Number 2: There’s a really big guy outside. He’s a giant crocodile, but he’s a total softy. I’d like to take him with us, but… sigh, it would just be really difficult. Do you think you guys can give him a home here, so we know where to find him ’case we need him?”

“I guess I’ll make room. Okay, you have one wish left. What is it?”

Augustus smirked. “I wish my Ace Flyer plane would materialize beside me.”

Zeira whirled her purple sugar and threw it into a POOF, and a hideous, broken-down two-person plane appeared. “Uhhhh…” Augustus tried to find the words. “Not the greatest teleport spell…”

“For your information, my teleporting’s spot-on!” Zeira flushed. “…Mostly. Anyway, your plane was probably already like this. Where did you last park it, on a freeway?”

“…On Licorice’s ship.” Augustus sighed. “I guess they would go kinda agro on it. Too bad I can’t wish it fixed.”

“Zeira, I also came here because I wanted to ask you a few things.” Aisling spoke up. “The Lost Candies happened to be one of them. You were planning to bring them together… weren’t you?”
“I tried, but Lord Licorice’s men have been securing most of them, and now they have the Sun Cream, too. They’re making certain that we can’t collect them.”

“I feared as much… Well, are you still planning to come to Mavis’s tea party?”

“Sure I am!!” Zeira flailed her chibi arms happily. “Mavis makes the yummiest tea! But Aisling, I want you to help these humans for a little longer. Humans, I’ll do you one more favor. I’ll warp you to the location of one of the Lost Candies. Specifically, the Rock Nut.”

“Rock Nut?!” Augustus jumped. “According to Luviro’s story, that was the first candy ever created on Earth! It’s old as time itself.”

“That would be accurate. That’s why I’ll send you all to the only place you can find it. I’ll also send Aisling along so she can help bring you back.”

“Why would we need her for that, exactly?”

“You’ll see.” Zeira waved her ladle of purple sugar. “Thanks for fighting the monsters for us. We should be able to take care of Azula while she’s like this, so don’t worry. Happy travels.” She threw the sugar over the Marzipans, Aisling, and the airplane.

When the sugar cleared away from their vision, they found their selves on a solid ground between two large stone mounds. “…Um… She said she’d send us to the location.” Rallo said as they all shared his baffled expression. “But did she say when?”

Raptors raced across the near-barren landscape, pterodactyls soared in the sky, and a T-rex managed to snatch an unsuspecting raptor in its teeth. “You think there’s a chance we can hitch a ride on Dinosaur Train?” Augustus asked.

Negaverse; Sector -W7 Treehouse (-8:00ma)

The news about Sipa and Lucifer’s supposed wedding spread quickly, and everyone was feeling either excited or worried. When Nega-Sector W7 heard the news, Asia, the black-winged Nimbi obsessed with cleanliness, offered to help Sipa prepare. “Okay, Sipa, I’m done putting it on.” Asia said to her friend. “You like it?”

Sipa stared at herself in a mirror: she was clothed in a black wedding gown, in which the collar had devil horns attached. Sipa turned and stared at all sides of her. “I look like a real Demon Princess! Oh, Asia, I’m so happy my dreams are coming true! Marrying a real Demon Saint, I’ll have a position of power in the Underworld! Maybe one day, I can shed this mortal skin and become a true demon!”

“Sipa, you were always kind of messed up in the past, but… is this really what you want? Giving up your entire free will to some monster? Do you even love Lucifer?”

“HA ha ha! Are-Har you kidding, Asia?” Sipa chuckled, sporting a forced cheerful grin. “Of course I love Lucifer! A disciple; nay, a son, of Lord Satan himself. I could just feel the evil radiating from his soul! I can only imagine what he’ll do to me. How my soul is going to look after he’s finished sucking it. Maybe I’ll change into a dementor, and lose all my feelings, and—”

“Are you even LISTENING to yourself?!” Asia’s shout startled Sipa, but the latter still bore a vibrant expression. “I sewed a dress and helped you get it on, but I can NOT understand how a girl is so okay with DESTROYING herself! Do you really value Satanism more than your own existence?! Do you honestly want to do this? Sipa, look at me and say, with utmost truth, you want to marry Lucifer.”
Sipa looked at her, her eyes still wide and her mouth a grin. Asia saw the bags under her eyes. The aching feeling at the corners of her forced smile, the deep fear and doubt in her dark eyes. Asia, a person who didn’t tend to notice things well, sensed these things clearly. “…I don’t.” Sipa frowned, and Asia felt the truth in her voice. “I’m afraid… Asia… I really don’t think… I want to do this.”

“So why are you? Is that Medusa lady forcing you to?”

“No… Er… I mean… I don’t know!” Sipa fell to her knees. “I thought I could help the Demon Saints by doing this. I thought… this fear in my heart was what I was seeking. I’ve… I’ve been afraid of the Underworld for weeks. I don’t know why I began feeling this way, but I hate this feeling! I really hate…” Tears began to form. “Isn’t this despair, and this hate… what our world is made from? Shouldn’t I… wish to feel this way?”

“Sipa… I think you’re completely confused. Your grandpa forced you to worship Satan, so you grew up thinking it was the correct path. I think that, deep down… you really don’t want to do any of it, anymore. You’re afraid of disappearing. You don’t want this.”

Sipa clasped Asia’s baggy pants and pulled herself to them, soaking the clothing with her tears. “I’m really scared, Asia. I want to back out of it, but I dunno…”

“No, no, it’s okay.” Asia smiled and patted Sipa’s hair. “It hasn’t begun, yet. You don’t have to do it. You don’t have to do anything they say.”

“Then… sniff.” She looked up at Asia’s eyes. “Whaddo I do?”

“We’ll go up there… and tell them to call this off. We’ll send the memo to every other DNK sector, and get them all to protect you if those monsters try anything.”

“Why would the other sectors wanna help me? Why would they… care?”

“…” Asia thought for a minute. “I don’t know. I just… feel like they will.”

**Night Castle**

Ragus fed her new toy a plastic bottle of milk. Ragus couldn’t decide what animal skin to sew on the lifeless puppet… In the end, she chose to make him a platy-pony-cardinal-lion-iguana-froad. The result was too hideous and too hard to remember to want to describe. Ragus already forgot the original name of this person… so now its name was Nosrednug.

“…It was my father’s fault that our house burned down. He lit up too many Christmas decorations. It’s his fault I died. Even though he tried to save me… I’m still angry at him. But it doesn’t bother me. Because Lady Medusa said she would kill him after this wedding. I can’t wait for that. …” Ragus looked at the ceiling. “It’s sure to begin soon. Whatever force is causing everyone to forget you… I hope it lasts for just a few more hours. …I guess I’ll go back up there.”

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*Zeira is from *Fairy Tail*, and her appearance in this story is a setup for a possible *Fairy Sisters* sequel. See you for the wedding.*
Not Even An Ant

Chapter Summary

Team Sandman sneaks into Dressrosa, at the same time as Team Rupert. Can they unveil Doflamingo's secret?

You all know how, in *One Piece*, the Dressrosa Arc was 100+ chapters long? I'm gonna shorten it to 2 chapters here. Hehe.

Chapter 16: Not Even An Ant

**Dressrosa**

Doflamingo’s family returned to Dressrosa very late at night. The whole town was long since in their homes, as per curfew. Dressrosa was empty, quiet. Doflamingo kept his daughter close as he led her across town. Eventually, they climbed to their castle set high on a stone fortress. Sugar was brought to her room, full of toys, color, and fun activities, no windows. “Stay here, Sugar.” her father told her grimly. “We may put toy production on hiatus until we can confirm it’s safe. Don’t make too much noise. Good night.” He shut her door and locked it.

Sugar walked to her bed and settled under the covers, just like hours ago on the train. She held the brown-haired Rainbow Monkey and fell into slumber.

**The next day**

Dressrosa was one of the liveliest towns you’ll ever visit. Half the population was humans, half the population was living, walking toys, created by the very company which protected this island. As they engaged with children for as long as the sun was out, happiness and joy was all anyone felt, the terrific lack of darkness and gloom rivaled Mariejoa. Guards roamed the street, ensuring there was no conflict among their happy citizens.

The Corrida Colosseum was the most populace place this day, watching warriors duke it out like ravenous animals. The prime attraction was Azure, a small, floating, silver-bodied creature with a blue steel helmet. It wielded swords in its twin tails and slew every man that came at it.

Downtown, our heroes waited in a dark alley as Nolan overviewed a digital map. “Why aren’t we in costume again?” Crystal asked.

“Well, this is a day mission, for our day clothes, and three masked/hooded adults flying under the sun would draw a bit much attention. Anyway, the plan: we break into Doflamingo’s castle, find his daughter, punch her senseless, everyone turns back to normal.”

“What makes you think that?”

“Call it a hunch. Anyway, Yuki wanted the honor of infiltration, he shall have it. Your first test will be stealing a guard and taking his costume.”

“No prob.” Yuki smirked.
A casual guard in a pink-feathered coat and sunglasses whistled as he strolled into the alley. Yuki jumped out, beat the crap out of him, and dragged him to the darkness. Nolan and Wiccan watched as he came out strapped in the guard’s clothing; he barely looked like himself except for frosty skin. “Perfect. And, through know-how of my own, I hacked the company’s website last night, found the guards’ shifts and where they keep stuff. Apparently they use a password system that changes on a daily basis, I’ll radio you today’s passwords if you get in any trouble.” Nolan briefed.

“Right…” The feathers were already making Yuki itch. “Where exactly am I going?”

“The Toy House, just around the western side of that fortress. Sugar’s gotta be in there. I reckon the city will fall into a panic if everyone turns back, we’ll seize that time to break into the castle and attack Doflamingo. From there, maybe we can find Caesar. Let’s get to it. Good luck, Yuki.”

**Stage 27: Dressrosa**

**Mission: Stop Doflamingo’s operations.**

**Act 1**

Yuki fixed his sunglasses on and marched the first city street in a casual fashion. “You there!” He flinched, spotted by another guard. “What is the password to the casino?” he asked with an Italian accent.

“Uhhhhhh-”

“Casino, ‘t’s right here.” Nolan said. “It’s-”

“Pica Pica Trebol Dia.” Yuki answered.

“Okay, that checks out. What’s-a Doflamingo adding these extra security measures for, he don’t-a trust us?”

“Er—is that rhetorical or…”


“Sigh… gotta watch out for that.” Yuki sighed.

“No kidding, you call that an Italian accent? Sound more realistic.” Nolan stated.

“Dude, I’m from France.”

“I thought you were Japanese.”

“Yet he moved to Iceland.” Wiccan followed.

“Screw it, I’ll talk Italian. Hopefully all the guards I encounter will be English.”

Yuki progressed, trying to avoid as many people and walking toys in this bazaar. A little boy was happily playing with a springy dog on his right. It was strange how happy everyone seemed, Yuki had to remember that none of these toys were in their own will, nor anyone in the right mind. “Oi!” Another guard stopped him. “What was yesterday’s password for the Toy House?”
“Cora Pica Monet Monet.”

“Okay-a. Next time you get a haircut, I know a good barber.” The guard left as Yuki made his way down a dark alley leading west, but more guards were passing. “What’s the password for the colosseum?”

“Dia Dia Senor Cora.”

“What was last week’s order of executive seats?”

“Dia Pica Trebol Cora.”

“What will be tomorrow’s castle password?”

“Cora Cora Pica Trebol?”

“That’s right-a. Your haircut’s-a scary though.”

“So I’ve been told-a.” Yuki made it out of the alley and to another active street. “Getting sick of people criticizing my haircut.”

“Play it cool, just get to the Toy House.”

After coding his way past at least four more guards, Yuki arrived at the Toy House, which seemed built into the wall of the fortress and designed like stacks of colorful presents with fun designs. A fat, tan-skinned man in sunglasses guarded outside. He wore a purple shirt with ‘Let’s Baby’ written, too small as his blubbery tummy was exposed, tight yellow underwear, and sucked on a pacifier. “Mw-mw.” He sucked a few times and narrowed his vision on Yuki. “Mauricio. It is time for your shift already?” His accent was more Hispanic than Italian.

“Yes it is, a…”

“Señor Pink, that’s this guy’s name.”

“Señor-a.”

“Then give me today’s password.”

“Pica Pica Cora Pica.”

Señor’s sunglasses twinkled. “Bueno… but what is the name of the woman I got with last night?”

“I, uh… I did not hear-a that, I meant to ask the other guy.”

Señor seemed to furrow. “What other guy? Is Gladius trying to steal my woman again? I will visit him at the casino later and give him a taste of… Pink.”

“I’ll-a pass him your message, do not-a worry.” Yuki turned and walked away, casually disappearing behind some citizens to be out of eyesight from him. “Dammit, he won’t let me in. Maybe I’ll try my luck with this Gladius.”

“The casino’s just down this road, down some stairs on your right to an alley.” Yuki kept forward and noticed another alleyway along the right. The stairs led to an empty enclosing with a ‘Restaurant’. “Well, the map says this is it.”

“Way to hide it.” Yuki approached the entrance and knocked. A little slot opened, revealing dark
eyes. “Identificare il nome e la zuppa preferita.”

“Oh, crap. Uh, Google Translate, don’t fail me now. Lessee, ‘identicare,’ uhhhh, your name and favorite soup. Now, ‘My name is…’”

“Il mio nome è Mauricio, che mi piace di patate arrosto.”

“Bene. Ora la password?”

“Pica Pica Trebol Dia.”

“Bene. Si accomodi.” He opened the door.

It was probably the smallest casino Yuki ever saw, nothing very flashy, a bar in the far left corner, slot machine, card game at one table, and a roulette wheel. A large man in a big yellow coat was using the slot machine, and a kid that looked like his son was beside him. “Nuuiii Dad, why did Doffy’s dad lock Sugar in her room again-daizokun?”

“I told you-dasoyun, he thinks someone’s trying to get her. I dunno why, but when Diamante called and said Freddy’s got ransacked, he got worried. He’s having Trebol guard the door to her room, and if he catches anyone try to sneak in there, he’ll bind them up and have her turn ‘em into toys. I think Young Master Doffy’s getting a little paranoid-dasoyun. He’s been making toys for 12 years, how could anyone find out now.”

“Nuuiii. Well, I’m going back to the treehouse-daizokun. I’ll tell Mom you were gambling again.” Bison began to waddle to the exit.

“Niiii. Okay.”

Yuki stepped aside and let the child leave. “You said his name was Buffalo?” he whispered.

“Yeah. Gladius should be wearing a mask and have spiky hair like yours. See him?”

“Ahhh…” Yuki searched and found a spike-haired man at the roulette. “Yeah. ‘kay, wish me luck.” He calmly approached the masked man watching the roulette spin. “Ahem, uh, Gladius-a.”

“Oh, Mauricio. Very interesting… haircut.” He spoke with a calm aura.

“What, you got-a nice hair, thought about shapin’ like it.”

“Mmmh… what is the password to the trade port?”

“Dia Dia Pica Tre. ‘ey, can you help-a me out, I’m supposed to be in the Toy Factory, but I don’t-a know the lady Señor slept with last night.”

“Ugh, this is why progress is slow with Señor… Her name was Natasha. Don’t ask how I know that.”

“Course not-a.” Yuki casually left the restaurant (‘cause casual is the key to stealth) and returned to the Toy House. “You did-a Natasha, didn’t you.”

“Mw.” Señor’s right shade twinkled. “Sí. Now tell your hero Gladius, she is mine.”

“Señor, I just want to go to my shift-a.”

“Mw. This is not over, Mauricio.” His cold stare remained on Yuki as he walked away. Yuki
sighed in annoyance before entering the colorful house.

It was just as colorful and decorative inside, though very small at first glance. Toys roamed around mindlessly and guards stood firm, keeping order. “The boss says we should watch out for intruders. But what else are we doing?” one remarked.

“Who’s he expect to show up, Rubberband Man? Ay ay… hey you!” He pointed at Yuki. “What code makes the heli-toy fly?!”

“Coming right up!”

“Uno uno dos tres.”

Immediately, a small helicopter toy panicked as it hovered into the air, flew directly forward, and crashed into a wall. The guards laughed ecstatically. “Ay, Gladius, you are such a… ‘ey wait, you are-a Mauricio. Way to-a really ‘stick out’!” They laughed away as Yuki bypassed and headed into a door in the back.

This room was much larger, where Yuki’s floor had an overview of a lower area where toys were carrying crates from Point A to B, commanded by guards. This round upper floor was protected by a fence-wall, so Yuki proceeded rightward, finding a doorway blocked by an energy barrier. “Yo Nol, what’s the coe?”

“Uhhhh barrier door in Toy House, not finding that. Uhhh maybe search around?”

Yuki headed back the opposite way, to a dead-end area encased within the fence where several crates lay. Old papers were stacked inside them, but nothing that gave any hint to the door. “‘ey, why did Doflamingo not tell anyone the code to the barrier, I had to ask like four guys.” Yuki listened intently to a talking guard below.

“He wants as few people in the house as possible, too afraid of spies.”

“He has like a hundred guards, why ya gotta keep ‘ocho nueve cero cuatro’ a secret?”

Yuki quickly rushed to the barrier, typed in the number—oh wait, he didn’t know their English versions. He asked Nolan and confirmed it was ‘8904’, entering. Beyond the fence of a parallel wall was an elevator shaft, the door of which was on the lower floor, so Yuki quickly headed to the staircase—“YOU THERE, factory password, go.”

“Cora Trebol Trebol Pica.”

“Okay. GDV, ah?” Yuki exchanged a laugh for who-knows-what with him before they crossed paths. Yuki went down the stairs to the lower floor, and ignoring all the guards whipping toys, he approached the elevator. “Halt.” A guard stopped him. “Elevator password.”

“Dos cinco seis nueve.”

“All yours. Oh, it’s just coming down.”

Indeed, the elevator was slowly lowering to stop at their floor. Yuki eagerly waited directly in front, and when the green light dinged, it opened. Two guards stood on either side of a red-caped, open-shirt, slender man with painted red lines down his eyes and a big mouth. The guards all saluted behind Yuki. “Heads up, Yu, that’s Diamante, one of the bosses!”

“Ha-heeeeey, Diamante, what’s uuuup!” Yuki cheered.
“You’re awfully cheery today, Gladius.”

“I am Mauricio.”

“My mistake. Are you on duty down below?”

“Well ah, I was looking for uh, Trebol. You-a know where he is?”

“Trebol’s on an important assignment. No one’s allowed to disturb him.”

“What, he’s-a guarding the girl’s room, isn’t ‘e?”

“…?” Diamante froze. “How do you know what he’s guarding? None of the guards were informed.”

“Oh-uh, Buffalo told me, he-a wanted me to go ‘n’ ask him for something, somethin’ about extra money, you know for the casino.”

“Damn Buffalo, can’t he keep a secret. Look, no guards are allowed upstairs, if you still wanna be useful, go down and help in the trade port.”

“Oh, what are we trading, spaghetti and meatballs?”

“The illegal kind, probably. I’m going to the colosseum. That Azure creature… she’s quite a catch. If she wins this year, I’m thinking of…” With a devious grin, Diamante went upstairs with the guards. Yuki sighed and pushed a lower-floor button, quietly enjoying the ride down.

“No guards allowed upstairs, huh? Okay, let’s think this through… can you icebend in there?”

Yuki looked around for an elevator camera, seeing one in the corner, so he made a tiny ice glow in his hand, hidden from its vision. “Apparently. So I should go mano a mano with Trebol? How tough can he be?”

“Siiiigh… I would like to hope he’s by himself and can’t put up a fight… but if Sugar is that important, and Flamingo’s trusting Trebol to guard her, I dunno. Just walk around the trade port, maybe you’ll find something.”

Before long, the elevator stopped and let Yuki onto the floor. “Whoa…” Indeed, it was an underground harbor, massive and atmospheric. A steamboat was parked at the docks as toys carried crates off and brought them to a huge, distant factory. “What’s something like that doing—SMILEs Factory?”

“‘SMILEs’… that’s the alias Caesar gave his Devil Fruits.” Nolan recounted their trip to Punk Hazard. “Is that where Caesar is working?”

“Hold on, there’s some people there! They look like… Teen Ninjas!” Black-armored teenagers were in fact standing near the factory entrance. “I’m gonna try and get closer.” Yuki did a fast-walk on the way to the factory, hoping to not draw too much suspicion from passing guards and toys. None of them were asking for passwords, apparently too focused on work and boredom. Yuki went behind a nearby stack of crates, pretending to inspect them while he increased the range of his earpiece to overhear the Teens.

A large, buff teen with a neck-brace opened a box brought out to him by guards. Eldwin pulled out two Devil Fruits, an orange and a strawberry. “Another mighty fine haul. These will make good rewards for CP10. Whenever they get a non-wild goose chase assignment. King Sandy really drove
them crazy. Now for your payment: we found a couple of snot-nosed twerps lost at sea, they belong to the Kids Next Door. According to reports, they’re the grandkids of Kyogre the Sea God. If that’s not worth a Yipper 50 and 572, I dunno what is. Just help us get these goodies loaded and we’ll send ‘em down.”

The guards carried the Devil Fruits to the ship, and Yuki kept behind them casually. He pretended to patrol the general area and watched them go up the plank. Minutes later, guards were escorting two handcuffed kids, Melody and Danny Jackson, down from the vessel. Yuki walked a good distance away, watching the guards leading the children toward the factory. Thinking fast, Yuki grabbed his Mauricio nametag and stuffed it away, quickly approaching the guards. “Ahem, I’ll take them from here, gentlemen.”

“And you are-a?”

“Gladius. Thought about going casual today.”

“Eh, no one else has that hairdo. Why do you need these kids?”

“I’ve been told these were Kids Next Door operatives, I think we need someone more reliable to watch them.”

“If you say so. Hope they don’t make you pop.” The guards tossed Yuki the keys and left the children in his care.

Melody and Danny followed Yuki patiently, a smug face on the former. “I just want you to know, this is child abuse.” Melody argued. “Your company can be sued for millions, not just for irrationally kidnapping us, but underground trade ports are illegal in this part of the sea, you know. My mom’s an international reporter, she’ll bust your ass.”

“Pipe down.”

“Oh, you do not tell ME what to do, I don’t need waterbending to freeze YOUR nuts.”

“Someone already beat you to the punch.” Yuki hid behind a row of drums away from guards, kneeled, and took off his glasses. “Kids, my name is Yuki.”

“Mr. Crystal? What are you doing here?”

“Undercover. Hey, maybe you kids can help, I need to take someone out upstairs and she has a guard protecting her, but I have a plan. Assuming my ‘Gladius’ disguise holds up, we’re gonna ride up to his floor and I’ll tell him you operatives know Sugar’s ‘secret.’ Now—I’ll explain on the way—I’ll suggest we make you into toys, so hopefully they’ll let Sugar—that’s the toymaker—out, then I’ll take a swing at her.”

“Okay, ummm… and how do we know you aren’t tricking us?” Melody asked, and had zillions other questions spinning in her head.

“Just trust me on this, oh and pretend you’re beaten-up so I can drag you on the floor, can’t make it too suspicious.”

“I better get an interview for this.”

“Deal.” Yuki led the kids to the elevator, pushed the button, and waited for it to lower. “Get down now, there’s a camera.” Melody and Danny fell to their sides, looking injured. Yuki dragged them in and pushed the button to Floor 4, hoping that to be the right one. Yuki kept still and avoided
looking at the camera, feeling tense from the quiet. Just when the elevator was half past Floor 3, it shook and stopped.

There was a bong. “Hello, elevator passengers, this is your humble host, Don Quixote Doflamingo. We apologize for the inconvenience, but the elevator seems to have a little heavy… luggage. We are sending guards to rectify this dilemma. Until then, enjoy your nap. Fufufufufufufufufu!”

“Yuki? Yuki, what’s going on?” Nolan called. Gas began to fill the elevator, Yuki and the kids growing weary. “Yuki, it’s all staticky on my end, what’s up? Yuki—”

They all passed out. The gas eventually faded away and the elevator door opened. Within minutes, the guards would come climbing and claim their intruders.

Outside

“Yuki! Yuki, where are you?” Nolan shouted in his wristwatch. “Dammit. Why did I lose transmission?!?”

“Radio waves are a little iffy in this area.” He and Crystal whipped around. Diamante grinned maliciously, a sword over his shoulder and many guards behind him. “We don’t like expensive phone bills. If it isn’t the famous Sandman and his protégé. Even without your costumes, you fit Caesar’s description to a ‘T’.”

“You couldn’t possibly know we were in town.” Nolan said.

“What, you thought you’d glide onto one of our arriving ferries early in the morning and make yourself out as a tourist? All of Dressrosa’s ferries have security cameras that allow us to view all incoming passengers before they arrive. You can never be too sure a trio of heroes won’t try to sneak in undetected. Now that we have your ice man, there’s no one to stop us from cutting you—”

Nolan boosted forward and threw his fist at the officer, but Diamante whooshed his cape in front like a shield, damaging Nolan’s fist when it made contact. “Ahhhh! Slag!”

“Uhahahahaha! My cape is made of steel, but with my Ripple-Ripple Fruit, it flaps like a flag! An Armament user, aren’t you, Sandman? Let’s see how it works against real hardness.”

Nolan held his sore knuckles and backed up beside Crystal, the guards locking their guns on the duo. They heard an engine roar and turned, seeing a C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. incoming, inching steadily to the ground. Nolan grabbed Crystal’s arm and used his other hand to shoot his grappling hook, propelling them both to the aircraft. “FIRE!” Diamante shouted, the guards failing to blast the intruders.

The heroes flew a few feet over the bus and landed on the roof, crouching and holding tight. “Dad! Miss Wickens!” Dillon exclaimed, sticking his head out the window.

“Dillon? Shouldn’t you be in school??”

“Field trip, Dad, that’s why we’re on a bus.”

“Dillon wanted us to come here for some reason.” Aurora yelled through the wind. “Something about Sugar and toys.”

“’Guess I should be glad you’re here.” Nolan said. “I need to get into the castle, fly me-”

One of the bus’s legs was sliced off by a string. “Sector VEEEE, how nice of you to VISIT us!”
exclaimed Doflamingo Jr., he and Aeral sitting in the mouth of helicopter Bison. “Dressrosa’s got all kinds of neat sights! I for one enjoy the AIR SHOW!” Flicking his fingers like guns, the aircraft swiftly evaded the onslaught of strings. Sweetie-1 morphed her arms into cannons, locked on, and blasted bombshells that nearly caught the sector in its range.

“Dillon, I don’t suppose your reason for coming here can be connected with why Sector DR’s attacking us?” Aurora questioned.

“All of the toys in this town were actually people made into what they are by Doflamingo’s daughter, Sugar. He knows we found out, so he’s keeping her protected in the castle.” Nolan yelled to explain while keeping hold on the swerving school bus.

“His daughter makes all the toys?” Chris shouted. “Can’t they tell anyone?”

“I’ll try to explain later, for now I need to get in that castle, help Yuki, and take Sugar down.”

“That’s gonna be a little hard with Sector DR on our tail.” Haylee yelled, her expert maneuvering being what’s preventing them from being sliced by strings this very moment.

Mason was holding his stomach, unable to take this much speed and shifting angles. “We could sure use a miracle right now.”

**Elevator**

The intruders were still asleep. They were dreaming a pleasant dream… a dream about a flying glass elevator… they saw a little boy with his grandpa and a man with a top-hat… they had a glass elevator too, except the former had missiles that kicked their ass. Awesome.

From the safety of Melody’s back pockets, they were safe from the gas: Team Rupert and the Minish KND stretched their micro bones upon landing on the vast floor, whistling for their Pikmin Onions to fly out from Danny’s pockets. “Lucky these humans were captured, or sneakin’ in woulda been way worse.” Acro said.

“But the SMILE Factory was down there, it’ll take us ages!” Pine said.

“Never mind that, did you hear what this guy was sayin’?” Rupert asked. “He’s trying to take out some girl called Sugar.”

“Why do you care?” Acro asked.

“I’m just curious. Oh well… let’s just get outta here before anyone comes.”

“We’ll escape through those open wire slots.” Cone said, pointing beyond the edge of the open door. “You humans take the left, we’ll go right, stay in contact with these.” They tossed the humans wooden communicators.

The tinies reached the wide trench between the elevator and open wall, Team Rupert’s hearts racing as Wing Pikmin carried them, their feet dangling above the infinite blackness. To their relief, they made it to the slots. “Wish us both luck. ‘specially you guys.” Acro said before his team vanished in the darkness.

Rupert took a deep sigh and marched first into the dark hallway, emitting light sparks. “I sure wouldn’t mind Mom’s hot chocolate by now.” (Play “Snagret Hole” from *Pikmin 2.*)

*Act 2: Fun Fun Castle*
There were too many sparks down this hallway for comfort, so Team Rupert summoned 20 Yellow Pikmin and marched down. Within the opening slots were broken wires generating the sparks, so they sent a Yellow inside each one, touching both ends of the broken wires as their bodies glowed with electricity. By hall’s end, 10 Yellows were filling a broken slot, ’til they were able to come out so an electric beam connected both ends of all wires. They wouldn’t spark anymore, so the friends returned to reorganize their Pikmin. 15 Reds, 15 Yellows, 10 Blues, 15 Wings, 10 Whites, 10 Purples, 15 Rocks, and 10 Ghosts, 100 total.

It was very dark when they got into the larger area of the inner-wiring, but a Shiny Bulborb was seen a few meters off. Beebs were running around, little robotic purple spheres with four legs and an antenna. Timmy used the Purple Pikmin to damage and destroy the weak robots while Rupert and Hikari led the Rocks and Yellows to the Shiny Bulborb. With the combined efforts of both types, they pummeled and defeated the creature with nary a loss. “I wonder, do robots even count as prey?” Timmy asked. To answer this question, he had the Purples begin hauling some Beebs back. “’Guess we’ll find out.”

Rupert made the Yellows carry the Bulborb back before the kids explored this somewhat-large room. A fallen cog, very huge to them, was lain on the floor with a wooden plank leading from it onto a high foothold. Leaned against a corner wall was a similar plank, which the Wing Pikmin happily carried to lean onto the cog so the kids could get up. A bead-made bridge led across the gap to another foothold, where something large and pink was lodged into the floor. It was connected via cords to a pump machine with two heavy switches, the left pressed while the right stuck up. None of their Pikmin could press the switch, so using their new Pikmin Tuner, they summoned the Purples back to them. Rupert tossed one Purple onto the switch, pressing and forcing the other one up, so Timmy tossed a Purple onto that, causing a sequence where one Pikmin flew up from the rising switch, came down and pressed it, bounced the other Pikmin up, and over and over.

There was sort of a rhythm as energy flowed along the wires into the pink thing, but nothing happened. It seemed the wires also connected to a gold bell on the lower floor, and the kids soon found their Rock Pikmin could make it ring. Five Rocks were set around the bell, and as if on instinct, they each hit the bell at different intervals, creating another rhythm. The wires also connected to a bar-like device with split wire ends, needing 10 Yellows to connect them. When the Pikmin flashed, certain Yellows were lighting at different intervals and making a brief “woooo” sound. In time, they realized each of these rhythms went in sync with the level’s music—or at least the players should notice that. :P The last of these devices was a flute hanging high on the wall, 10 holes for 10 Wings. No, the Wings couldn’t do anything, except carry 10 Whites up into the flute so they could fart gas out of each hole and make a little note.

With all four items in sync, the energy fully flowed into the pink thing. With a sudden trumpet and fanfare, the Onion fluttered from the floor and stood on three legs. It wasn’t ‘pink’, more magenta, and a seed dropped onto that patch of earth. The kids had too many, so they sent 5 Rocks, 5 Wings, and 5 Reds back. Rupert had the honor of going up and plucking their first Magenta Pikmin. It was chubby like the Purple, but a black note with neon edges sat where its antenna should be, the leaf on its tip. It sang with a long note, its voice majestic in Pikmin terms.

Rupert discovered Magenta Pikmin! These guys carry the music in their soul! Get enough of them together on a stage, they’ll sing a marvelous performance! So marvelous that fantastic things might happen.

So the kids began to collect the nearby Magenta Pellet Posies and build up their concerto, until 20 Musics existed, with only 15 on the field. Already the room was ringing with their vocalization of the level’s music, the other Pikmin mimicking in spirit. It really did add energy to the mission,
made the kids happy, they were inspired to keep going. But what could they do to help, that was the question. Near the middle of the farthest wall was a small stage. They set 14 Musics in different spots while a single Music stood on the conductor’s platform. It waved an imaginary wand as they burst into song, mimicking the Underground theme of *Super Mario Bros.*. The kids nodded to the tune before it came to a short end. A huge doorway opened up along the wall, exposing them to a stairway of rounded pipes. They quickly jumped aside when a large saxophone (Song of Tears) haphazardly slid down. A group of 30 Pikmin carried it back before the kids set off to the new floor.

The Pikmin had a hard time trotting up the slippery pipes, but they made it in time and stood upon a platform overlooking a vast room. The floor below was filled with small parts of broken toys, and it seemed the only way to progress is across the other platforms. A hill connected the left of the starting platform to the cluttered floor in case they fell down. The nearest platform was protected by a tall rounded fence, so the kids sent their Ghost Pikmin through to try and pluck the poles from their loose hinges. The Ghosts succeeded as the fence toppled down and made a wide, slight-curled bridge for them all to cross. Unfortunately, a Gatling Groink wandered onto that platform, a large orange fish with mechanical legs and a cannon mouth.

They wanted to use the Ghost Pikmin to wipe it out, but it shone a light on its back to scare them off (as if this enemy couldn’t be more annoying). They kept their Musics at a safe distance, but 4 Reds and 5 Whites were destroyed by its cannons, while other Pikmin lost their bloomed flowers. They had Purples and Rocks attack from either exposed side and soon brought the Groink down. However, it slowly restored its health, so they let the Musics carry it back. Hikari joined them and offered to recollect more Pikmin. Rupert and Timmy crossed a beaded bridge to the next platform, where dice and dominoes were lain around. These toys grew limbs and sprouted to life, angrily charging for the children.

They didn’t crush their Pikmin, rather batted them to the side with their fists, sending them to the cluttered low floor. Timmy dropped down and regathered the Yellows and Whites that fell down, while Rupert struggled to chuck Purples to stun the blocks, then knock them out. Timmy would soon learn why the lower floor is dangerous, when Bombardier Beebs rose from the clutter and readied to explode. Timmy hurriedly made his Pikmin run, getting far enough to avoid their chain-reaction, but a Yellow was lost. Timmy led his Pikmin to the hill to the first platform, then proceeded to explore this low floor with only one White.

The presence of that White lured more Bombardiers out, so Timmy attracted them all until they were all exploded. He safely called his other Pikmin down and explored until the Whites found a diggable spot, in which they only threw small scraps to the side since this wasn’t soil. He had to call Rupert down to help, for several areas were diggable, and each contained severed limbs of the teddybear from *Witch’s House*. They had groups of Pikmin carry the teddybear (First Nightmare) to the Onions and decided to join them, and also collected the fallen dice and dominoes.

They regrouped with Hikari and reorganized their Pikmin: 10 Reds, 10 Yellows, 10 Blues, 15 Wings, 10 Whites, 10 Purples, 10 Rocks, 10 Ghosts, 10 Music. They returned to the platform with the dominoes and dice and noticed the stage, where they had their Magentas gather. They sung a reimagining of “Frantic Factory” from *Donkey Kong 64*, which caused a row of colorful toy chains to dangle from the ceiling to the next ledge. Not only that, all of the flowers bloomed on their Leaf Pikmin. They didn’t notice this the first time, but it seemed the Magentas’ performance would bloom any nearby Pikmin. The kids jumped, grabbed the chain ends, and swung across, and all of the Pikmin mimicked their style. From here, they entered a round tunnel that sloped up like a slide at the playground. It was amazingly easy to walk up, then they found their selves in an even bigger room with a toy racetrack.
The track was made of many segments and slopes, kept aloft from the distant ground by support beams. With a mini toy elevator, the kids could squeeze all of their Pikmin on and ride to the floor. Small, flat cogs filled the floor and revealed to be Skitter Cogs, whom were like their Skitter Leaf counterparts except they were, well, cogs, and could mainly be damaged by Purple Pikmin. In a far corner of the room, a racecar sat, very huge at Minish size and likely to hold all their ground Pikmin. Just as they approached it, a King Beeb dropped onto the floor, curled in a ball, and rolled around, squishing 6 Purples and 5 Musics when the kids tried to avoid.

Anger consumed them from this ambush, but the kids recomposed as Rupert took two Whites and tricked the Beeb into chasing him. Timmy and Hikari sent their Wings and Ghosts to carry the racecar all the way up to the start of the track. When they confirmed they were good, Rupert focused on escaping the King Beeb and returning to the elevator. Although they could recover a treasure from the robot, the loss of those Music Pikmin irked them too much. They rode the elevator to the top of the track and all squeezed onto the car. The Pikmin could stick their antennas into the keyhole, and each type could enter and make their element shield protect the car.

The toy car whooshed down the first slope, up the next, and when they saw two flamethrowers blowing fire over the track, the Red Pikmin made a flame shield that protected them. Next was an electric beam, so the Yellows had this task. Next they were speeding to a ramp with a long jump, the Wing Pikmin fluttering across and dropping the car back on track. It sped to a glass wall, so the Rocks made a crystal shield and smashed through. Now some sprinklers, the Blue Pikmin shielding from safety. The car then had to go up a steep hill, but would slide down any moment, so the Purple Pikmin dropped off the back and used their strength to keep pushing and pushing. They made it to the flat ground up top and celebrated in victory.

The next room was more like a hallway, smaller in width but tall in height. A short stairway led them onto the lowest of many round, metal platforms, steam emitting from their stems. On the walls on either side of each platform were trumpet-like devices with the mouth-ends near the floor. A Magenta Pikmin was sent to each one, blowing forcefully into the trumpets to make the platforms rise to the air. One trumpet made its platform lower, one made it rise, so they had to choose the correct one, otherwise they’d lose a Magenta, and would have to restart the puzzle if they had to climb down and regather them.

The final platform didn’t need to be altered, but if they chose to lower, they could enter a secret room with a crystal encasing a Treble Clef from Banjo-Tooie. They chose to go after this, having brought Rock Pikmin anyway, and let the Ghost and Wing Pikmin take the clef (Decline of Difficulty) back. With all their Magenta Pikmin dropped, they had to restart the trumpet puzzle, and eventually made it to a ladder leading up a shaft. Team Rupert exchanged shrugs before climbing up with their Pikmin. (End song.)

The shaft stretched up quite a ways, but found the other end eventually. They were behind a set of tremendous letter blocks on a wooden floor, and the sky design up above told them this was a child’s room. Their theory was confirmed when they walked around the blocks, finding a gigantic girl, about 10 years old with aquamarine hair, polka-dot dress under a yellow coat, and gold crown, playing with a Barbie and Bratz doll. Her colorful room was filled with many toys and crayons, such as a red Rainbow Monkey with brown hair and glasses sitting on a toddler’s chair.

“Oooooo! I don’t have that one, yet!” Hikari beamed.

“Guess we ended up in somebody’s house.” Rupert said. “I wonder if she can help us.”

“She’s kinda weird-lookin’.” Timmy said.

“How? She’s just playing.”
A sudden ringing sound nearly split their eardrums. “Sugar? Sugar, dear? This is Daddy. Fufufu. How’s my princess doing?”

“Trebol’s still outside my room, Father. Kill him for me, please?”

“Fufu, I’d love to, but someone needs to guard your room. Things are becoming hectic outside. Your brother has encountered some Kids Next Door operatives.”

“So what?”

“I fear that too many people may be on to our secret than I let on. It won’t do to toyify them; I may have to execute them altogether. Stay in your room, don’t come out. I’m putting this castle under so much protection, even an ant won’t be able to wriggle its way in here. If any creature has entered the upper floors without my approval, they are to be killed on the spot. Understood, Trebol?”

“Beeegeh way ahead of you, Doffy!” a weird voice sounded outside the room’s door. “I saw a fly earlier, hit it with one shot of my Sticky Gun! No one’s getting in her room Doffy, bееееееhh!”

“Sugar… is that the girl that man was trying to get to?” Rupert asked.

“She sounds really important.” Timmy said. “Why though, she looks kinda ordinary. Whaddyou think, Hikar…Hikari?”

“Yooooohooooooo. Miss Sugaaaaaaarrrrr!” The boys panicked: Hikari was already miles ahead of them, excitedly approaching the mindless child. “Miss Sugaaaaaarrrr! Where did you get that Rainbow Monkey?

“I have one just like that’s a samurai, but the hairdo is slightly off kilter,” Sugar heard a very faint sound and turned, seeing a very tiny, bluish bug. “and the red glasses kinda blend too much with the coat and the fur, if you want, I can help you research some cute blue glasses, also what’s with the pink monocle, it’s cute on you, but kinda stands out too…”

Sugar eyed her vision a little upward and saw the tiny colorful squadron of Pikmin marching toward her, led by two more bugs who were Rupert and Timmy. “Hi, Miss!” Rupert’s faint voice didn’t reach her ears. “I know you must have a lot-a questions, but maybe you can help us with, I dunno, getting back to normal? Uh, we’re humans, so we’re not normally small like this, it’s just been… ONE crazy thing after another, before we knew it, we…”

All Sugar did was stand up from her spot, walk over to slip on her brown sandals, and come back. Her figure was a lot more imposing as she stood over the tinies, one foot held over Hikari. “Kill any unapproved creature in the castle… I’m stuck in my room with nothing to do… I can make due when one and one work together.”

“HIKARI, WATCH OUT!” Timmy snapped fingers, sent the Wing Pikmin to whoosh to his sister, and pull her out of the way before the sandal slammed down.

“HEY GIRL, WAIT UP, WE’RE NOT BUGS, WE’RE KIDS!” Rupert screamed, flailing his arms.

“Maybe if I squash and grind them hard enough, their insides will fade from existence and I won’t have to clean. I’d just make Trebol do it, anyway.” She took another step forward, the kids ducking and expecting death to come.

“HUUUU!” The four Purple Pikmin raised their arms and kept her foot from hitting the floor, so the kids seized the moment and ran out, calling their other Pikmin over. Confused and annoyed, Sugar
added more pressure and killed the Purples.

“Your sacrifice won’t be forgotten!” Timmy saluted. “At least for the next 10 seconds until she stomps us again.”

“Timmy, look!” Hikari pointed to the passage between the giant blocks they were just behind. The eight Onions took land on the floor, ready to serve their masters.

“I still don’t know why anyone’d want to attack this girl, but we’re bug-splat if we don’t!” Rupert exclaimed. “Split up!” (Play the Boss Theme from *Pikmin 3*)

*Boss fight: Sugar*

Hikari dashed all the way back to the Onions, retrieved 15 Musics and 15 Purples, giving them a hundred (the Ghost Pikmin couldn’t appear in this bright room). Rupert led the Reds, Wings, and Whites away to Sugar’s left while Timmy took the Rocks, Yellows, and Blues to her right. She was confused by their gestures, but Sugar decided to chase the slower leader (Timmy), merely walking to make the game more enjoyable. Timmy ordered the Pikmin to duck and roll before her foot smashed the ones in back. “Take this, you Girlzilla!” Timmy grabbed his Rocks and quickly chucked them at Sugar’s slim, smooth toenails, cracking them a bit, then tossed the other Pikmin at her toes. He didn’t expect the tiny creatures to damage her, but her toes grew red from soreness, and she shook her foot to knock them off.

Rupert watched the battle from his distant side of the room, trying to think of a way to help. He looked around and found a Minish-size spring pad at the base of a stack of blocks. He led his Pikmin onto and bounced to the next level, where they hit another spring, and kept bouncing up until they found a huge basket of grapes at the top. “I guess she likes eating these. I wonder if we can use ‘em.” With that, Rupert ordered his Wing Pikmin to fly up and each take a grape down.

“Mii miiii!” a Red Pikmin jumped when the grapes were placed beside them. It excitedly burrowed its way into the grape like an ant, and when the Pikmin puffed, the purple grape burned red for a second.

“Oh, I get it. I hate to lose Pikmin, but if it can stop her. All o’ you in a grape!” The Reds obeyed and dug into a grape to make it spicy, then the Whites proceeded to lift and carry them to the floor below. Their little bodies were hidden under the giant spheres as Rupert watched them seem to float quickly to the angry giant.

Hikari made it back with her Purples and Magentas, but left the latter behind in worry of losing too much. Timmy’s Pikmin finished pounding on Sugar’s right toes, the giant slumping on that knee, so Hikari threw the Purples onto the left toes. They bruised the flesh much faster, and before she knew it, Sugar fell to her knees and hands. Her astonishment for these creatures’ strength was masked under her toneless face, so she crawled toward Hikari and swiped her left hand, catching 5 Purples. She squeezed the life out of them with her fingers before planting her hand back down and chasing the tinies. Rupert arrived and ordered the Wing Pikmin to fly into her unprotected right eye, distracting her as she tried to swat them with her right hand. The ground Pikmin were sent to charge the fingers of her left, making bruises appear on them until her hand gave and she fell.

Sugar’s head now lay on its side, her right eye twitching as she tried to see through the pink monocle of her left. The White Pikmin arrived with the grapes in hand as the closest one rushed to Sugar’s panting mouth and threw a grape inside. On instinct, Sugar began to munch and chew the grape, but its spicy flavor made her face turn red. She sat up on her knees and coughed, frantically
running to a glass of water and washing it down. “Bleh! I thought I told Trebol not to put the spicy kind in there? ! As soon as I kill these ants, I’m having him executed!”

Now back on her feet, Team Rupert scurried away expecting Sugar to stomp after them. Sugar snapped her fingers, and from the piles of toys came a swarm of Mr. Dice and Sir Dominoes. The kids swarmed their Pikmin against the toys, but Sugar was now stomping back to begin squishing some Pikmin in this confusion. 4 Yellows and 5 Wings were lost when Team Rupert tried to call them back, but Sugar’s forceful stomps smashed the toys out of commission. She viewed the grapes that were dropped after the White Pikmin were called back, and with the Red Pikmin called out of the grapes as well, the kids could watch without regret as Sugar kicked the grapes away.

“Hmph.” Sugar calmly approached the basket of grapes and placed its lid over it. “They’re the only relief I have in this dump, so you ants aren’t taking them. Now die.” Sugar grabbed some blocks from the stack and chucked them at the Pikmin, smashing 6 Reds and 4 Wings. Rupert and Hikari took their remaining Pikmin and split up, maneuvering behind the many giant blocks to confuse Sugar, while Timmy scurried to the Onions to recover 5 Purples, 9 Wings, 7 Reds, and 4 Yellows. He then decided to explore behind the blocks in search of anything that would help; and inside a fallen plastic bucket were some Bomb Rocks. He made the Wings carry some and quickly ran to the stack of blocks where the grapes sat.

Meanwhile, Sugar became a bit more serious while chasing Rupert and Hikari, the two unable to get close enough to her feet before she stomped furiously or swung them to and fro to knock Pikmin down. Rupert encouraged Hikari to keep running, until they eventually found a Magenta Pikmin stage. They gathered their 15 musicians on before they sang a dramatic reiteration of Old King Coal’s boss theme from Banjo-Tooie. Sugar seemed entranced by their squeaky notes, ceasing her stomping spree to watch the little ants. In the background, they saw the bottom of the grape basket explode, the grapes spilling and rolling on the floor.

At the same time, Timmy sent some of his Bomb Rock-holding Pikmin over to his friends, so Rupert and Hikari each took one and threw it onto either foot. The bombs exploded and sunk Sugar to her hands and knees like that. She annoyedly brushed the music stage away and knocked those Pikmin out, focusing her sights on the tinies before simply moving her hands around and squishing the Pikmin under her fingers, one by one. 2 Reds, 3 Yellows, and 2 Blues were lost. “GO, Wings!” The Wing Pikmin not holding bombs flew up to Sugar’s eye to attack her, but she closed her eye and smashed them against her face, crushing the 6 of them.

“That’s it, time to stop playing around!” Sugar brushed her right hand across the floor and knocked the Pikmin and kids off their feet. They felt groggy from the force and felt the shadow of Sugar’s hand loom over them, ready to smash down. “HURR!” The Purple Pikmin were to the rescue, keeping her hand aloft again. Before they were smashed, Timmy rushed out and grabbed a Wing Pikmin holding a bomb. “Squish someone your own size!” He threw the bomb onto the hand and exploded.

“Yowch!” Sugar was up on her knees again, shaking her hand from pain and observing the bleeding cut it made. Sugar angrily narrowed her eyes on Timmy, and before the boy could run, she planted her palm firm on the floor against him.

“Ohhhhh…” She raised her hand to find Timmy groaning and nearly flattened, his Wing Pikmin dispersing to spirit. He felt his senseless body grabbed between Sugar’s fingers, lifted off the floor, and held before her great purple eye.

“I’d like to forget that you did that. So if you don’t mind.” And within seconds, Timmy’s body took the form of a tiny, seaweed-green toy soldier. She flicked the toy away, flying several yards
across the floor and haphazardly landing on its front.

“Darn, she’s still standing. Er, sorta.” Rupert said, aching as he and Hikari got up. “Sure wish we had a third person to help us. Why didn’t we bring those Minish kids along?”

“What should we do, Ruppy?”

“We have one more Bomb Rock. I’m gonna try and choke her with another grape, see if you can knock her down until I get it.” He took a single White and Red Pikmin and trusted Hikari with the others. The child swiftly dodged when Sugar slammed her hand down over and over, blowing a whistle to sic the Pikmin on it when she wouldn’t raise. They dealt a few bruises to the fingers, but she shook them off. Meanwhile, she sent the Bomb Rock Pikmin to Sugar’s left knee and blew it up without suspecting, the giant falling fully on her front.

However, she wasn’t leaving herself vulnerable, planting her left hand against the floor, pulling to force her own body around, and saw Rupert heading for a grape. Said boy made his White Pikmin pick the grape up. “Okay, now the Red guy will go inside like before and we’ll… huh?”

Something was off, though. His Red Pikmin had fallen behind halfway to the fruit. “How could you get lost on a straight path like this?! What is this, Cyberchase? GAAH!” The floor shook, for Sugar had a sudden recollection of strength and was crawling toward them with a rage, smashing the Red Pikmin. His White one nearly lost balance with the grape- “Hold on!” until he got under with it to counter with his own force. “We’re gonna have to-” Then, his feet left the floor while his hands gripped tight onto the squishy grape.

Rupert panicked as the floor drew further away, but his worry would increase when he found Sugar’s round purple eye almost peer into his soul. “My grapes aren’t for you.”

“RUUUUPPPYYYYY!” Hikari raced to the giant as fast as her little legs could. She slowed to a stop when it appeared fruitless, as Sugar returned to her feet.

“After all, I’m the only one being treated like an insect.” Sugar stated coldly. “Trapped in my room like a jar. Why should I let you come and go as you please? Take my food while I starve?”

“Nnnnn!” Rupert’s grip was slipping. “Miss, I’m not a bug, I’m a person! Please, help!”

“It feels pointless to toyify you. Who would buy you, who would remember you? Maybe in your last few seconds of life, you’ll have learned a lesson. Into my belly you go.”

For these next few seconds, Rupert struggled with the choice between letting go or holding on. Even if his small body was lighter, would it survive the equivalent of a thousand-foot drop? ‘Course, if he didn’t let go, he would surely perish in the bowels of Sugar’s stomach. He was too frozen with fear to think, the great gaping mouth drawing closer, and he was too late to make his decision when her fingers released the grape and let it fly inside.

He couldn’t stand on the slippery mushy tongue, especially when the space between floor and ceiling compressed and stretched, the jaws on either end munching the grape into juice. Saliva and purple ooze mixed together, Rupert had no more bearings on his surroundings, he tried to grip the tongue with all his strength to keep from flapping any further. The purple goo clogging his vision, he barely saw the White Pikmin bouncing and flailing ahead of him. Rupert held tighter when the position of the floor turned vertical; Sugar’s head tilted back. The Pikmin fell, so Rupert grabbed by the antenna in his left hand, but his right wouldn’t last long. He remembered a similar scenario with Berry, the reason he didn’t want the White one to fall, but to save his own life, he had no choice. He let the Pikmin fall into the impending darkness, down the throat.
Hikari almost lost breath the moment she saw Sugar swallow. The giant stood still, no emotion on her face. “...! UUEEEEEECK!” Sugar grabbed her neck, feeling an unbearable compressing, what felt like a painfully thick gas clog the width of her throat. She stumbled on her feet, her senses failing, unable to choke another breath. Her purple eyes closed, and Hikari braced for impact when the giantess tumbled backwards, landing with a force that could shake the continent. Sugar was down and out. (End song.)


BANG BANG BANG. “Suuugaaaaar? I heard a crash.” The door flew open; in stepped a tremendous, droopy, blob-like man with sunglasses, a gooey green cape, and long boogers from his nose. “You better not be- BEEEEH!” Trebol almost hardened at the sight.

“SUUUGAAAAARR!” He shook the floor as he stomped forward, grabbing the child by the shoulders and shaking. “SUGAR, WAKE UP! YOU DIDN’T CHOKE ON A GRAPE, DID YOU?! I TOLD YOU NOT TO EAT TOO MUCH! Pleeease!”

No matter how rashly he shook, Sugar’s head remained limp. “BEEEEEH!” He dropped her. “Oh God, Doffy’s gonna kill me! I gotta leave town! Oh- maybe they won’t start turning back right aw-”

But then he saw the shaking red Rainbow Monkey on the chair. With a POOF, the doll was gone. Cheren Uno fell to the floor. “Owww… what?”

“BEEEEEH! It’s happening!” screamed Trebol. “Gotta get to the phone! D-DOFFY-SAMAAAA!” He stormed out and slammed the door.

While masked in confusion, Hikari heard another ‘poof’ and saw Timmy appear behind her. “Timmy!” She ran over.

“Ohhh… was I just turned into a toy?”

“I dunno. Were you?”

They heard a loud, eerie groan and turned. A giant brown-haired boy with glasses held his head. Timmy gasped. “I know that boy, he’s the Kids Next Door Supreme Leader! Numbuh 3621, Cheren Uno!!”

Everywhere

Like a sudden, terrific wave, it all came back. Everyone on Moonbase stood agape. Panini whipped out her 4DS and looked at the Mii in her Friends list. Tears nearly dripped from her eyes.

Rachel Uno gasped. She grabbed the family portrait and stared speechless. Her son, her heir… but, did that mean-?

At the Chariton Home, Sunni shot awake from her bed. A promise she made 6 months ago came back in a flash.

800 years ago, memories flew back to Merida, King Fergus and Elinor. “’ey, I just remembered somethin’!” the king exclaimed. “Whatever ‘appened to that Cherry fellow? I was hopin’ he’d come for the Horseback Games!”

“He might come around, Dad, ya never know.” Merida smiled hopefully.
Everyone in Termina, Booster remembered the boy who saved his park, the wolves remembered the one who united their packs, the pirates remembered their dear old Captain Slag, the ninjas remembered the one who defeated the Puppet Clan, and Alternate Sector V remembered their dear friend from another dimension.

The Galactic Council remembered the boy who ended the Viridi War, made Flora a safe place to visit. Nebula D. Winkiebottom nearly fell off her throne, feeling the biggest headache of her life.

Just when Sector IC was nearing GKND H.Q., it hit them like baseball bats. “Whoa! Cheren, did… did we just forget him??” questioned MaKayla.

“Something is really wrong.” Miyuki said. “I…I wanna go back to Earth ’soon as we check in.”

And on Mt. Mariejoa, memories washed over Morgan. She hadn’t had this feeling since the Scattered Realms 20 years ago. How a huge piece of her mind and heart could be lost, then come back. She held her head… then, remembered the aura that had just climbed Mariejoa this morning. Her cousin, Nigel. Why could she no longer sense his presence up there?

Everywhere around the world, everywhere talking toys had been sold, they were turning back.

“LEAPIN’ LIZARDS!” Annie cried when her Yipper had morphed into a man. The customers of Toys 4 Grab panicked when the shelves became occupied with men, women, and kids. The Drophyds on Aquaria remembered their leader, their reasons for siding with Tachyon. The police at Quahog remembered Fanatic, Holiday, all those mysterious villains.

**Dressrosa**

“OOOOUHH!” It came back to Sector V, Nolan, and Crystal like that. “I JUST REMEMBERED! A cataclysm is gonna destroy the universe and we told Cheren we’d help stop it!!” Aurora exclaimed.

“Huh?!” Doffy Jr. gasped. “What’s happening?!” They looked over the town, screams roaring everywhere.

“The toys are turning back!” Aeral screamed. “Does that mean Sugar-”

**ZZHHHHOOOOM.** The C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. zipped past them.

“But they’re heading for your dad!” Bison exclaimed.

“No!”

**Doflamingo’s Throne**

When memories washed over the king’s head, his heart almost stopped. He jumped to the window, roars crying all over town, citizens panicking. His phone rang, so he quickly answered. “Trebol?!”

“**BEEDDEEH, Doffy! Sugar choked on a grape, she’s dead!**”

“What?!”

“I’m sorry, Doffy, I shoulda checked on her, please don’t kill me!”

“DAMMIT! If the Corporate Presidents catch wind of this, I’M the one who’s DEAD!”

“Whaddo we do, Doffy?! The town’s in an uproar! They’re comin’ to get us!”

“Grrrr, I’m not done, yet. Tell Pica to raise my castle to the sky and rearrange the whole island so
they can’t get to me!”

“Beeeeehh! You gave Pica a 3-week vacation after he had voice-modification surgery!”

“Oh, that’s right.” Doffy slumped. “Okay then, Plan B! Using my String-String powers, I’ll trap the entire island in a giant birdcage, control everyone like puppets, and make them kill each other or-”

But before that thought could reach conclusion, the Sandman swooped in and punched Doflamingo with his Armament fist. Pearly teeth flew out along with blood, he went sliding across the floor. The president couldn’t process what happened as he helped himself up and glared at Nolan through his slanted shades. “Before we waste 30 chapters of endless fighting, I’m gonna kick your ass here and now.”

Similar to *One Piece*, the stages are getting longer, which means less can fit in a chapter. =/
Oh man, this’ll last for years. Next time, our very first battle with a Corporate President. (Well, second ‘cause of Mom, also if you count Morgan, but…) Until then, try to guess which heroes will fight which Don Quixote Family members. See you later!
Like a Videogame

Chapter Summary

Sector V and Team Sandman battle Doflamingo and his officers! Then, Cheren learns a terrible truth.

What is existence to you.

Chapter 17: Like a Videogame

Doflamingo’s Throne

“Fu fu fu.” Doflamingo grinned, standing back up and wiping blood off his mouth. “The legendary Sandman graces me with his presence in my own home. Without his mask, no less. Should I be honored? To be trusted with your true identity? Or did you hope to savor the fury on my face after my corporation falls?”

“I’ve always thought criminals couldn’t get any lower than killing… but after seeing what you do, I actually would’ve settled with.” Nolan said. “Because at least they still would’ve been remembered by everyone they loved! You were literally trying to wipe their existence from the Earth. I can’t imagine how many lives you ruined with your plans! Being forgotten from everyone they knew… it’s a fate worse than death!”

“Fufufufufu! Worse than death? How simple you are, Sandman. What I’ve done to these people is NO different from dying! True, people are still remembered by their friends after they die… but eventually, those people will die, and their kids will die, and in time, their existence will be forgotten entirely. I was merely trying to speed up that process. At least the toys would’ve had a longer life force, regardless if everyone forgot them. Can you honestly say there’s no one you’ve met you wished you could forget?”

“To tell the truth… yes. Darth Genious and Madame Rouge were some of the worst people I could’ve met… and I’ve always wished I could forget them. But then I realize… if it wasn’t for them, I wouldn’t have gotten where I am. I wouldn’t have met Danika, and… I definitely wouldn’t’ve had Dillon. The point is, whether they’re friends or enemies, everyone has a major importance in someone’s life. But even if you wipe our memories of them, everyone leaves some kind of legacy behind. Holiday and those guys’ criminal record, my son… those are the things you can’t erase. And I didn’t notice it until now, but Nigel’s son was one of your victims. I didn’t know they had another son until a few minutes ago! Can you imagine how many people you HURT by making them forget him?!”

“HU HU hu! Looking back, my daughter actually SAVED the Cheren boy! Had she not intervened, President Morgan would have killed him!”

“Morgan Uno? You’re lying, why would she kill her nephew?!”

“Did Benedict not try to kill his nephew a number of times? President Morgan carries on his legacy, I see that now. And what legacy are you, Sandman? The legendary 2030, defender of morality and justice. Let me ask you… what is ‘justice’ to you?”
Nolan pulled up his laptop and looked up Wikipedia. “Justice includes both the attainment of that which is just and the philosophical—”

“I WAS ASKING YOUR OPINION!!”

“Alright, alright.” He put his laptop down. “But isn’t that all it is, just a matter of opinion? What difference would it make if I told you mine. Your sense of justice is erasing the world of its evils. Keep your citizens in bliss ignorance. Isn’t it?”

“And your idea of justice is to punish wrongdoers, yet hold on to the philosophy there’s redemption for them as your reason for not killing. Which even then you’re a hypocrite, assuming Caesar’s story of what happened to one of his most loyal customers is true.”

“Yeah, I killed Revan, I admit it. But; it’s funny saying it out loud… I want to honor his memory. I visit his grave every year. Friends or enemies, I guess I let everyone have a place in my heart. After I take you down, I might have a place for you, too.”

Doflamingo furrowed so hard, Nolan could see the veins on his face. “A place in your heart… peh! How could any person bear such respect for their enemies? Erasing them, forgetting they were ever around to annoy you… the World Leaders can agree, that’s where true peace lies.”

“Well, I always was against the idea of decommissioning. And the Kids Next Door can agree, some memories are important to hang on to. The stories of the trials of their parents help kids learn. That’s why the Next Generation’s gonna bring your Leaders down.”

“Snot-nosed urchins against God… that’s beyond laughable. Just because your friends were arguably great in the day, Sandman, you set your hopes too high. Your children will be destroyed.”

“Then it’s only fair us evil adults take the fall first. Don’t you agree?”

“Fufufu. That’s your death wish, then? Alright… show me your faith for the Next Generation. If your will to teach them further is strong, fight me with all you have!” (Play “Majestic Wings” from Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance!)

Nolan dodged swiftly when Doffy’s strings lashed forward and stuck into the wall, and fast as lightning, the puppet master created lines of strings left-to-right, up-to-down and diagonally, ‘til the entire throne was covered in what looked like spider webs. Doflamingo stretched two more strings to the ceiling and pulled up, hanging upside-down as he grinned and licked his teeth. “You may be a Batman-wannabe… but call me Joker. Fu fu fu!”

“You look more like Venom.”

**Boss fight: Don Quixote Doflamingo, Sr.**

Nolan whipped out and shot his grappling hook, but Doflamingo nimbly leaped to another gathering of strings and shot some down like bullets, Nolan dodging. He rapidly tossed boomerangs to cut the strings and make Doffy drop, but the president shot four strings from either hand to the ceiling and swung forward, kicking Sandman with force that flew him out of his chair. Doflamingo landed and buried his fingers in the ground, making strings pop up everywhere, so Nolan used the strength in his arms to flip around since his legs were less-than-worthy. “Fufufu! Give up, Sandman, there’s no force on this world that can cut my strings!”

But as a quick reminder, Sandman threw an onslaught of boomerangs that chopped up incoming
strings. Doffy appeared confused, so Nolan seized the moment and shot his grappler to some strings behind the master, latching and hauling himself over as he PUNCHED the president square in the jaw, his fist pulling Flamingo along to slam him against the strings, which didn’t break or damage their own creator. “What kind of gadgets are those?!?”

“Not of this world.” Nolan shrugged. He pushed the ground with his hands and flung into the air, his wheelchair rolling under him to catch. Doflamingo lashed another group of strings, but Nolan grabbed them in an Armament fist, held on as he flailed his arm forcefully, and slammed Doffy into a string wall twice. “The strings don’t affect you, huh?”

Doffy snapped off the strings Nolan was holding. “No, but your toys won’t be singing for long.” He shot strings into the wall behind Nolan, positioned like a slingshot, and flew forward, but Nolan ducked and shot a grappler, which Doffy dodged by flying to the ceiling. Doffy threw his fists and sent strings raining down on Nolan, the hero dodging again while trying to shoot shock beams at his enemy. They made contact with the strings and vanished instantly, so even electric had little effect. In Nolan’s tiredness, Doffy shot down with an Armament fist ready, but Nolan hardened his own and made contact, the collision making every atom in their being vibrate.

The battle outside was just heating up, Sector V’s C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. swerving to avoid DR’s bombshells and strings. “If it wasn’t for Flamingo, I could totally take those other two!” Haylee exclaimed.

“Get us close, I’ll bring ‘im down!” Dillon declared.

The aircraft did a U-turn and flew right for DR, Haylee just barely dodging the strings with her skill. “Nuiiii! They’re on a crash-course-daizokun!” Bison cried.

Doffy Jr. focused intently, seeing Dillon clutching the roof of the bus. The shadowbender inhaled a huge breath and released Shadow Fog all around. The summer sun was powerless in this cloud. “Gah!” Junior angrily tried to see through the fog, but Dillon jumped out like a predator on prey and caught the flamingo, plummeting to the ground with him. “Not without your FRIENDS!” Doffy Jr. lashed his strings and sliced the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. into pieces. The 8 kids screamed as they fell.

“Crud!” Haylee exclaimed, piloting the very front portion of the bus while Artie clutched the severed edge.

“Still hanging on?” Sweetie-1 taunted, locking her cannon. “One more blast should do it!”

“Shows what you know!” Artie climbed back on. “Thankfully I’ve installed something for just this occasion! Press it, Hayl!”

Haylee pushed a button that read ‘TRANSFORM’, and that little front portion of bus morphed into a robot. The remaining two engines kept it aloft at the bottom, its two remaining plunger-legs balled into fists, and the bulldozer on the front popped off, divided, and became spikes on said fists. “Remember how to do this, Hayl?” Artie asked, his hands and feet planted on levers in the bottom cockpit.

“I’ll handle flying, you handle fighting?”

“You got it!”

Dillon and Doffy Jr. hit the ground as the latter leapt off and whipped strings at his opponent, but Dillon sunk in a Veil and slithered away. He came up and blasted S.P.I.C.E.R.s at the prince, but
Junior divided the sauce beams with his strings and easily avoided, stretching the strings like slim claws between his fingers, grinning as he stepped closer and swiped furiously. Dillon looked at how well they cut the ground, so he hid in a shadow and slithered at Junior, only for the puppeteer to send his strings into two distant buildings at either side and propel himself to the air. Dillon emerged and glared at him, then dodged when Junior shot strings down from his feet.

The other Sector V members watched this from afar. “We gotta help him!” Mason said. “Everybody—” The ground wobbled like liquid beneath his feet, and Señor Pink popped up from the ground with a forceful uppercut. Mason flew and bounced back, recovering and glaring as Señor was fully emerged, beside Gladius and Dellinger. “Doflamingo’s crack-job crew?”

“That’s some mouth on you, hombre. Perhaps you need a taste of Pink.” said Señor.

“Uh-huh. Leave Baby New Year to me.” offered Mason.

Accepting his challenge, Señor submerged beneath the ground and swam away, chased by Mason. “KAAAAAH!” screamed Dellinger, the 16-year boy with slim bare legs on high-heels and a white cap with bull horns. “Señor’s gonna fight him! Your friend is deeeeeaaaaad!”

“Tell that to the last guy that fought Mason!” Aurora proclaimed.

“KAAAAAAH! You’re arguing with me?? YOU must wanna die, too!”

“I’ll be happy ta-” But Kirie stepped in front and blocked Aurora’s view. The mute’s eyes were closed as she passed Aurora a quiet assurance. “…Well… okay, Kirie.”

“KAAAAAH you wanna fight me?? Good luck, ‘cause I’m Dellinger! Half-human, half-Fishman! SPOILERS!” he yelled at the readers. “Time for me to KILL you, pretty lady! DAAAAAH I’m gonna rip out your bones, eat your flesh!”

That’s gross!

“TAAAAAH what can YOU do? I’mma eat you, now! BOY, am I gonna eat you! Haaaa-aaaaa-AAAUMP!” Fangs grew in his mouth, he lashed at Kirie, who leaped and kicked him across the face. She jumped away happily while Dellinger stormed after like a bull.

“Hm… then who do I get?” Gladius asked.

“Me.” Django raised his hand and stepped in front. “But I don’t fight fair.” He brushed his Mystic Guitar and blasted the spike-haired away with a sonic wave.

“Hm…” Gladius’s head inflated. “That makes me angry.”

The others watched as Django went after him. “Well, while those blokes’re busy,” Sheila said, “I say we explore this-” And just out of nowhere, she and Harry were hit by a gooey white substance. No matter how much they struggled, they couldn’t burst free. “Bleeeeh! Whose overgrown boogers are these?”

“Beeeeeh! They would be mine!” Standing yards behind them was Trebol, digging his finger up his big nose. “I shamed the family by letting Sugar choke on a grape. I can still make it up to Doffy by squashing you kids!”

Chris chuckled and ignited his fist. “I’ve been having the worst few days, but now it looks like I have something to take my anger out on. Sucks to be you.”
“BEEEHH! Keep that fire away from me! My Stick-Stick Fruit makes me a Logia Glue Man, but my glue is flammable!”

“You just told me your weakness.”

“Beeeeeex! You disrespectful brat, get away!” To their amazement, Trebol leapt meters into the air, to a distant building. Chris kicked on his rocket shoes and boosted after.

Aurora used his icewing to freeze Harry and Sheila’s stick-traps and broke them free. “I’m breaking into the fortress, see if I can find something.” Aurora announced. “Anyone wanna join?”

“Fortress shmortress, I’m seein’ the town!” Sheila declared before running off.

“I ain’t no powerhouse.” Harry shrugged before leaving.

“A’ight… Haruka?”

“Sure.” The poisonbender shrugged, joining her leader as they rampaged to the fortress.

Inside the Toy House, Diamante furiously mashed the elevator button. “Dammit! I have to get upstairs and see if Doffy’s-”

A sudden ice blast flew Dia against the opposite wall. Yuki, Melody, and Danny appeared out of the shaft. “Ahhhh.” Yuki cracked his neck. “What a nap. By the way, I’m going on strike.”

“Hnn.” Diamante gritted his teeth. “You lost your chance for a raise.” He slammed the floor and made it wobble like a cape, but Yuki froze the floor and slid across the still-waving substance, swinging his foot to kick Dia, who raised his steel cape and bounced him back. Diamante turned flat and flew to the ceiling, Yuki giving chase with Ice Rocket.

After flying off Sector V’s bus, she entered and was running around the castle halls. “Where’s the elevator? I hope Yuki isn’t-” She was blown away when the wall beside her exploded. She looked up and gasped: Monet Sinclaire, the giant venomous harpy she now was, snarled at the witch, and Vergo, who was in a body-cast, held onto her back. “You two again?!”

“Too bad. I was hoping for Yuki.” Vergo said. Monet gave an ear-splitting roar before swiping her wings at Crystal, who frantically dodged while blasting fireballs at her face. Monet hissed and froze a wide line of ice up the floor and wall, so Crystal got up and ran while the harpy coughed ice chunks. Crystal flew to the ceiling with her staff, switched the mode to Ground Quake, then came down on Monet’s head, but Vergo Armament-punched her away before the attack could land. Crystal raised her staff in defense when Monet gnashed her fangs, taking the staff and throwing away, so Crystal got up and bolted again.

Doflamingo was back on the ceiling and making walls of strings slide at Nolan, who quickly threw boomerangs to cut open gaps and evade, and the first chance he had, Nolan shot his grappler up and pulled the flamingo from his web. Nolan socked him upside the jaw, watching Doflamingo’s head fly off and disperse into strings. His body followed suit, then Nolan was punched in the back of the head by his opponent, flying out of his chair and very near the strings. “Fufufufufufufu!” Nolan pushed himself up and glared at the grinning devil. “String Clones. They’re a handful, huh?” Groups of strings raveled behind him and became Doffy replicas. The clones charged at Sandman, who stood on his aching legs and threw punches at every one, dispersing into strings upon defeat. He expectantly waited for the real one to shoot up afterward, but that Flamingo became strings as well while the real one fell from above and smashed Sandman on his front.

The flamingo hopped off to let his adversary stand, but not for long before he whipped a string at
the floor and knocked Nolan down. He whipped again, wrapped the string around Nolan, then hurled him into a string-wall, scratching his backside as blood seeped out. Thinking fast when Doflamingo prepared to lunge, he whipped his wheelchair over with his grappler, got in, then shot his grappler at a string-wall to pull himself away. Doflamingo crashed into the previous strings and bounced off like rubber rope around a ring, coming for Nolan, who blasted the Shock Rod and stunned him in place. Nolan swung his fist against Doflamingo’s jaw, but the president recovered and lashed strings, while Nolan grabbed in his Armament fist.

Doflamingo launched other strings to the ceiling to pull himself away, attempting to “fly” with his shoulder-attached strings, but Nolan kept his grip on the previous ones and pulled like tug-o-war. In Doflamingo’s distraction, Nolan grabbed the Line Launcher and shot one end at Flamingo, the other at a string-wall behind, so when Flamingo pulled toward him, Nolan flew his fist and slammed him to the ground. Nolan fell off his chair, pinned Doflamingo with his knees, and laid a barrage of punches against his head, before helping himself back on his chair, picking Flamingo up by the neck, and punching the side of his head before throwing him aside.

Haylee’s piloting skills were pro in dodging Sarah’s missiles, and while she got close to the helicopter-Bison, the metahuman sprouted more propellers as a shield. “Nuuuu! You no getting her-daizokun!”

Artie controlled the C.O.O.L.-B.O.T.’s fists and grabbed two propellers, but he couldn’t hold them still when Bison spun faster and forced Artie to release. He then made his propellers bladed and chased the robot, so Haylee maneuvered them away. Bison was faster, but when Haylee got far enough, he lowered his defense so Sarah could lock on with more missiles, which Haylee again dodged. “Too bad we couldn’t squeeze missiles in this thing!” Haylee said. “We’ll have to get close with their defenses down!” She let the craft sink, then stomped the boost to fly toward the bottom of Bison, during which Artie had his spiked sink ready and successfully gutted him.

“AAAAH! Keep it steady!” Sarah cried.

Kirie kept running, but Dellinger moved whipping fast, warped to either side, then kicked Kirie powerfully from the left. “KAIIIIAAAH!” screamed the bull-fish. “What’s wrong, Little Girl?? Aren’t you gonna scream??” He zipped up and kicked Kirie across face while she was still grounded. “Come on! Scream! Can’t you talk? Are you deaf? Deafo! Scream! SCREEEAAM!”

Blood flew out her mouth at each kick, he just wouldn’t stop. But Kirie’s voice was not unknown to her faithful spirits, the Rainbow Monkeys, so three of the colored creatures appeared and punched Dellinger away. “KOOOUUCH!” He flipped back up and frowned. “What was that? Who got me?”

Kirie smirked and yelled for the monkeys to attack him. Although he couldn’t see, he knew they were there, so Dellinger swiftly avoided the monkeys and kicked them with the spike of his high-heel. “KAIIIIAAAH I see! Invisible friends? Well, I’m a predator, so that don’t work on me! You might join them soon!” He revealed his fangs and lunged at Kirie, bite bite biting, the girl frightfully dodging. When Dellinger gnashed at her chest, Kirie jumped and kicked him across the head, the force stumbling him forward, but to no avail. “Kaaaaah! I like little girls ‘cause they taste yum! Perhaps you have a silent surprise, HAHA!”

Django caught up to Gladius and blasted another sonic wave, blowing him further. “I don’t like music. It makes my head pop. Like this!” He aimed his arms at the skeleton, puffed them round, and exploded flames that Django dodged. “With the Pop-Pop Fruit, everything goes. Like this!” Django looked down, realizing bulges of ground inflated, and ran away before they all exploded. Django fell to his front, but kept his guitar above him, then he recovered without regret.
“But what goes ‘pop’ must revive.” Django strummed the guitar and summoned a squadron of skeletons. Gladius nimbly avoided their grabs, touched each one, and caused its head to inflate and pop. Django tried to strum again, but Gladius inflated his lower body and blasted to him, headbutting and knocking Django down. Gladius clutched the child’s skull and inflated, but Harry Gilligan jumped from behind and punched the officer away. “Hey, you came to save me!” Django remarked.

“Us operatives stick together. But for the record, I’m the sector’s musician, find somewhere else.”

“Yeah yeah.” Django strummed an energy beam at Gladius, who dodged, clutched the ground, and inflated a path between the boys that blew them apart. Gladius flew at Harry and punched him away, then inflated a large patch of ground with Django in range and exploded, but Django shielded himself in skeleton soldiers before blasting another wave at the Pop Man.

Mason lost sight of Señor Pink, but the baby-man popped out of some liquefied ground and uppercutted Mason to the air. “Mi Devil Fruit amigos cannot swim, but with my Swim-Swim Fruta, the earth is my sea.”

Mason rubbed his jaw, “It’s not nice to keep other kids out of your pool. I can totally outswim you.”

“Outswim me in my pool, mw? Come on in, Man. Don’t blame me if you get Pinkeye.” Señor submerged again, then Mason dove after him. It was the weirdest feeling swimming in solid ground, especially in the dimension underneath, he couldn’t see when Señor grabbed him around the hip, shot up above the surface like a dolphin, and slammed Mason headfirst against the ground. He submerged, and Mason was determined to beat him, guzzling Silver Flurp before diving. Full of adrenaline, Mason blasted an endless fart that moved him around the liquid like a torpedo. Through the thick gray, he saw a faint fat shadow swinging its arms, so Mason chased the swimming man, spun, and head-butted Señor in the gut.

Señor grabbed Mason and pushed him off, swimming forward to punch him in the head, flipping Mason upside-down before he farted downward. “That’s some bad tacos, Hombre.” Señor tried to avoid the gassy current and chased Mason, who swerved about aimlessly. Mason’s gas was running out, so he slowed to a stop, ending up caught by Señor and punched around the face. His yelps of pain were drowned in the liquid ground.

Chris Uno was amazed by Trebol’s great leaps, but he kept after the Sticky Man until he stopped to rest on a building. “HAHA!” Chris landed behind him. “You’re mine n-” He tried to raise his foot, but found it glued. “WHAT?” The sticky substance was everywhere on the roof, Chris couldn’t move his feet.

“Beheheheheheh!” Trebol turned around, the goo flowing from his nose as he held a lighter. “You fell for my trap, beeeeh! Time for YOU to get burned! Bon voyaaaage!” He dropped the lighter and jumped to the next building.

“AAAAAAAH!” The explosion claimed Chris.

“Beheheheheh—beh?” Trebol stared confused. The expanding flames compressed and sucked into Chris’s mouth like a vacuum.

“Fire Dragon’s Breath! Credits to Nigel Montgomery Uno!” Chris’s skin was red and steaming, he blasted the powerful breath at Trebol who jumped to another building. Chris flew after with jetboots and coughed fireballs, but Trebol kept a far distance and pelted Sticky Bullets, binding Chris’s fists with two shots. He kept true and flew headfirst at Trebol, who pinched one nostril.
close and shot a booger, covering Chris’s face—save for the headband area. The Uno fell to the
ground and desperately tried to pull it off.

“Beh! Beh beh beh!” Trebol landed before Chris. “I heard firebenders are ticklish in the ribs! I’ll
tickle you now! Beh! Beheheh!” Without mercy, he started wiggling his fingers on Chris’s abs, the
boy muffling laughs. Chris ignited his fists, and Trebol jumped away before the glue exploded.

“You see anywhere to go?” Aurora asked, still tearing through guards with Haruka. The Toy House
nearby exploded with ice, a kite figure flying out, chased by Yuki. The friends then saw two
familiar kids come out. “Melody! Danny!”

“Aurora? Haru?” Both pairs hurried beside each other. “What’re you doing here?”

“Random chance, I guess. What’s in there?”

“Some underground port; and I think a factory.”

“Factory? Let’s check it out.” Haruka said, so the teammates charged in.

“Have fun with that.” Melody said. “Danny, let’s find a phone and call Mom.” They ran into town.

Yuki flew to the air on an ice path after the Diamante-turned-kite, and all of Yuki’s icicles were
blasted by Dia’s pistol. Yuki got high enough to grab Diamante’s tip, but he wasn’t strong enough
to pull the steel down and took the fall himself. Yuki shot ice at the ground to break his fall,
looking up as Diamante fluttered a few feet above. “Uahahahaha! In my day, I was the champion
Kite Fighter. I really made the kids’ skin tremble!” He puffed to normal form and hit the ground,
making it wave and ripple like a cape.

“Whoa!” Yuki fell back when the ground contracted, then was pushed away when it stretched.
Diamante pulled a chunk of earth up like a blanket – without actually ripping the earth, and threw it
over Yuki to roll him in a blanket. Diamante was about to impale his sword in the roll, but the
ground suddenly froze and shattered as Yuki escaped. “I’m sending you back to retail.”

Wiccan ran circles around the hall, but Monet-Z stayed on her tail, more of the hall becoming
frozen. “It’s not normal for a predator to lose its prey.” Vergo said calmly.

“I’ll like to disprove your theorem with science.” Crystal reached in her back satchel, got a ball of
powder, and threw it to the floor to cloud the hall. Vergo coughed while Monet hissed, the harpy
crawling about crazily and slamming the walls over and over. “Calm down, you fool!” Vergo
yelled, grabbing Monet by the shoulders and easing her. “Wait until the fog is gone.”

Crystal had slipped under the predator and returned the opposite direction. Following the trail of
ice, she saw her staff from afar and was about to run to it. “RAAAAH!” Monet tackled her onto her
front, about to snap its fangs, but Crystal pushed her wristwatch and summoned the staff to her. She
swung it up and bashed Monet’s head, escaping then aiming her staff at Vergo to shoot fire in his
face. “Ahh!” Vergo frantically shook and lit his head with Armament to disperse it, but Monet went
crazy again and started snapping about aimlessly. Crystal dodged and watched her storm down the
hall. “Hmmm.” She had an idea.

Doflamingo Jr. linked several surrounding buildings with his strings and pulled them in to crush
Dillon. The earth quaked upon impact, but Dillon slid out of a crack with Shadow Veil. He
immediately dodged Junior’s strings, Veiled over to blow Shadow Breath, but Junior flew back and
lashed long strings, Dillon barely dodging between them. Junior flew over to swing his fist, but
Dillon grabbed and engaged him in Arm Wrestle. “Enjoy this while it lasts!” Doffy proclaimed.
“But when my dad takes your dad out, you’re toast!”

“You wish! My dad kicks WAY more ass than your dad!”

“Feh! My dad could slice a meteor! And pull an island!”

“My dad could rip a boulder in half barehanded!”

“Uuuaaaaahh! Will you guys PLEASE stop talking about your DADS!” a nearby Knaaren from Rayman 3 yelled.

Junior looked to the sky. His shades twinkled. “If you wanna know whose dad is better, mine is at work!”

Dillon looked at the top of the castle: what appeared to be Doflamingo Sr. was unraveling into string going to the sky. They stopped at a point in the sky where they glowed, and strings stretched to all ends of the island.

“Fufufufufufufu.” Doflamingo Sr. got back up, laughing maniacally. “You fight well, Sandman. It’s time I take this upstairs. Did you know that, by attaching my strings to clouds, I can fly around the air?”

“There’s no clouds in the sky today.”

“I know, just felt like telling you. But I don’t need clouds today. You see, I sent one of my String Clones outside to make the Birdcage, anyway. Come join me, mueheheheheheheheheh!” Doflamingo burst through one of the walls and flew up, so Sandman whipped his chair toward the hole, fell out, and shot his grappler to a higher tower- “Whoa!”

The entire island was encased inside a giant birdcage of strings. Linking to all sides, connecting at a perfect center, there was no escape without severing one’s body. “Byeheheheheheheh!” A complex of strings stretched from one end of the cage to the other high in the sky, where Doflamingo sat. Nolan shot his grappler all the way up and flew to him. “Be careful, Sandman! You’ll be CUT!” He blasted a Bullet String, and Sandman watched with regret as his wheelchair plummeted. “Fufufufufufufu!” Nolan shot above the point where his hook latched and landed on the strings. “HEHEHEHEH… eh?”

Nolan wasn’t dead yet, much to Doffy’s chagrin. His head was kept up off the strings while his body was solid Armament. “’Guess the scene’s… still rollin’.”

Doflamingo furrowed, blasting strings crazily, but Nolan pushed himself away, landed on his Armament back against the wobbling strings, and blasted the grappler to catch Doffy and yank him to him. Nolan got to his feet while balancing the string, grabbed Doffy’s head, and slammed it against the string, but Doffy slipped off while hanging by a new stretched string, blasting up at Nolan. The vigilante fell and grabbed the string in Armament hands, sliding down to kick Doflamingo off, but Dressrosa’s king shot a string to a higher one and pulled up. Nolan shot his grappler up as well to chase, but Flamingo cut that string and had Nolan fall. Nolan grabbed that end of string and held on, but grew worried as he was swinging toward the cage wall.

Django ran as Gladius chased with his Pop Rocket, the skeleton strumming his guitar to make a giant skeleton rise, but Gladius grabbed its legs and made the whole body explode. Through the smoke, he blasted Django with Pop Flames, and his guitar was flown into the air. Gladius caught it. “Music makes my head pop. I’ll pop it as well. Go back where you came from.” Django grew worried when his Mystic Guitar inflated.
“Nnn!” Harry pounced on Gladius’s head and, astonishingly, squeezed his own hat over the man’s spiky hair. Harry jumped off and pushed his wristwatch, making headphones extract from the hat over Gladius’s masked ears. “What’s this?” Harry pushed again—Gladius started flailing his head with no control, for the headphones sounded an unbearable, nonsensical rock-and-roll soundtrack. “Aaah!” He threw the guitar away, and Django caught it.

The headphones puffed up and exploded, Harry’s hat flying off Gladius’s head. “Uhn?” The area turned a reddish-dark. Django was turning the dials on his guitar.


Gladius faced the gravestone in front of him. It read Gladius. “Sueño es el cielo. Buenos noches.”

Gladius felt his own heart inflating. The officer was spherical, he looked less like a human than before. And then…. POP (POP POP. . . .)

Django twirled his guitar and put it at his back. “I coulda did that all along, ya know.”

Kirie summoned rounds of Rainbow Monkeys after Dellinger, but with pure precision, he swung his heels and stabbed them all. “TAAAAAH it’s boring to kill opponents you can’t see! I won’t be able to deduce their nutrients, so I’ll eat you instead!”

Kirie panicked when Dellinger eyed her. She sent more monkeys, but all were kicked, and the bull-fish boy succeeded in tackling her, his fangs drooling on her face and his eyes mad. “Taaaah I’m gonna eat you now! I’ll chew your organs one-by-one and digest them! You’re gonna be devoured and excreted! What will you do now!”

Kirie fixed her glare. A shadow would be looming over them, if it was visible: the spirit of Rainbow Monkey Kong towered over them, anger and fury burning for Kirie’s assaulter. “KAAAAAAAH water you LOOKING at! Ah? Ahhhh? …” Dellinger turned up. His mad pupils shrunk, his open mouth was wide. He never saw the humongous fist come.

Kirie got up and dodged, watching the crater smash into the ground. Dellinger was smashed flat, his perfect legs bent. “Thank you, Mister Monkey Kong!” Kirie proclaimed with her lovely mute voice.

“Ooo-hoooo!” The King Kong blushed.

Mason resurfaced above the ground for air. Señor Pink came up and pulled him back under, throwing a punch to send Mason further. “You no have the legs to outswim me, Niño. Drown in the earth you walk on.” Mason turned when Señor swam at him and farted a huge bubble, catching Señor’s head. “Ay! Apesta!”

Mason could finally resurface, take out his Green Flurp, and drink. The bubbles in his tummy rumbled, so he dove back under to keep Señor from waiting. “You’re right, this isn’t my kind of water. ‘Cause I prefer a little more H2O!” He planted his rear firm against Señor, channeled all the gaseous energy to it, and farted. Señor Pink choked, flailed his arms, his liquefied environment was intoxicated. The Spanish man fainted and floated to the surface. Mason Torpedo Spun, shot above the ground, and landed perfectly. “Besides, it’s full of crap.” And he walked away from the man partway in solid ground.

Yuki froze the ground in attempt to make Diamante slip, but he kept firm and made the earth wave again. “Both our powers control the land. I wonder which will dominate?” Diamante smirked.
“Mine, Shlomo.” Yuki skied at the enemy with icicles on his knuckles, but Diamante ducked, stuck his leg out and tripped Yuki, then grabbed him by the shoulders.

“Not really. However, you’d make a nice new cape.” And so, Yuki was flat and bendable as a towel. “Aaaaaaahhh.” Diamante used him to wipe the back of his head. “So refreshing, I get goosebumps.”

“That’s a clone, man.” Diamante froze, eyes widened at the real Yuki to his left. The clone turned back into blue ice as Yuki bent the towel-like substance around Diamante’s head. Yuki froze his boots in solid ice, skied over, and kicked him in the crotch. The scream was muffled in the ice, but it broke after Dia fell over, writhing in pain. Yuki ripped a strip of the wavy ice-ground and rolled it over Dia. “Told ya.” Yuki kicked Diamante and watched him roll up like an icy rug.

“Huff, huuu, huff, huuu…” Chris can’t believe he survived that, but he focused his chi to push the flames away just when the glue exploded, leaving only a few burn marks on him. This area of town was set to flames from their battle. Chris ignited his shoes and blasted at Trebol with his fists on fire, but his fists sunk into his blobby body.

“Beheheheheheh!” That laugh was getting on his nerves. “You survived, did ya, little snot.” Trebol picked his nose. “You thought you had me, you thought you could set me on fire and blow me up. You need way more flames than that to make ME go boom!” Trebol puffed, blowing Chris away, at the same time he ignited his fist and exploded the glue blotch stuck to him. “Beheheheh! You’re a tough kid, ya, but you ain’t strong enough to defeat the Don Quixote Family!”

“Not strong enough? Heh. Unfortunately for you, I’ve been holding back all this time.”

“Beh?”

“Heh heh…” Chris chuckled maliciously. “I’ve waited a long time to find an opponent to show this to. I shoulda used it on someone else awhile ago, but another cackling idiot will suffice.”

“What’re you talking about, you tweeerrrp?”

“…” Chris clutched the back of his headband. “This birthmark is really embarrassing… you won’t tell anyone, will you? Nah…”

It was 11 years ago, when Rachel was in the final hours of her first pregnancy. After pain and struggles, Nigel and Rachel’s first son was born. “It’s a boy!” the nurse beamed. “A—- What is this?”

Nigel looked over her shoulder. “…Whoa…”

“It’s not an unnatural thing, but it is weird.” another doctor told them. “At a young age, it can be dangerous to control.”

“But what can we do about it?” Rachel asked, her baby wrapped in a blanket.

“I recommend he wear this.” He presented a light-red headband. “The chi-block inside will prevent any accidental uses, but his normal firebending will be faulty. If he learned Fire Kung-Fu, he’ll be able to make up for until he’s able to control it.”

Nigel and Rachel exchanged glances. “I guess it’ll have to do.” The former complied.

“Whooooa!” 5-year-old Aurora and 4-year Cheren gaped.
“I know, but you can’t tell anyone.” Chris stated. “My parents say it’s dangerous to use, especially if I’m hit in the head.”

“Well, we won’t tell anyone. Will we Cheren?” Aurora smiled.

“Yeah… but it would be cool, though!”

For the first time in public, Chris’s headband flew off. The horror on Trebol’s face was clear as what lay underneath.

A slim, vertical, hexagonal eye was exposed on his forehead. The very sight of it made Trebol speechless… and we would soon know why.

Chris’s head lit like a boiler as he sniffed a huge breath into his nose, and once he was fully charged, his third eye flashed, sending a string of small fireworks toward Trebol.

“........ Spark ....... Spark ....... Spark. ....... BOOM.”

A tremendous explosion engulfed Trebol and his flammable body. The area was set to flames as sticky gooey drops flew everywhere, Trebol’s head landing and melting. Chris breathed the fresh, flaming air, giving his forehead the breath it deserved.

Bison sent a stream of bladed propellers at Artie and Haylee, the two evading. “Come on, Aeral, can’t you hit me?” the latter taunted.

“Errrgh, screw this crud! Time for double-team, Brother!” Aeral exclaimed.

“You said it, Sister!”

“THEY’RE RELATED?” exclaimed the Gilligans.

With her Weapon-Weapon powers, Sweetie-1 transformed Bison, missiles and machineguns appearing all over his body. They blasted the C.O.O.L.-B.O.T. with full force, the Gilligans evading quicker than ever. “Now or never, Artie!”

“Augh. Ready when you are.” He flinched.

Through the smoke created by the explosions, the C.O.O.L.-B.O.T. lunged at the metahumans, so on pure impulse, Aeral blasted a missile and destroyed it. “Ha HAAAA! Got ‘em, Bro!”

“Sorry!” The two panicked, for Artie and Haylee were above them, the former in a flysuit and Haylee with jetpack. “But the Gilligans rule the sky!” Haylee turned up her pack’s engine, burned it against one of Bison’s missiles, and exploded the DR operatives.

“WAAAIAAAAAAH!” Sweetie-1 and Numbuh Spade took the fall to the castle grounds.

Monet-Z sniffed about the castle halls, searching for her prey. “You’ll dine soon, Monet, she cannot be far.”

“Over here!” They whipped to a right hall, finding Crystal smiling innocently. Vergo sicked Monet at her, but the witch faded into air. “No, this way!” Monet charged another way, but that Crystal dispersed. “Huuuhh-!” Crystal charged at her from another hall, Monet slashed, Crystal dispersed. “Huuuuuh-!” Another came, she slashed, it dispersed. “HUUUUUH!” Then a whole platoon of Crystals leapt, ready to slam Vergo.

“Hm. The most obvious trick. Neither of them are-”
The real Crystal among them all batted Vergo off his steed. “You can’t beat the classics!”

“Uhhhh-” Crystal shot sleeping gas that knocked Vergo out. Monet roared and screeched, in reality blind to her senses. Crystal rode her like a bull while she slammed walls left-to-right, left-to-right, before finally passing out. Crystal climbed off and proceeded. “What animals.”

Doflamingo Jr. whirled around and around, his strings stretching for blocks and slicing buildings. Dillon came out of the ground, expecting Flamingo’s whip and ducked. “Fufufufufu.” The feather-boy grinned, seeing the sweat on Dillon’s face. “You can hide, but I’ll catch you! Just give up and admit-!” He froze. Junior had no more control of his body. “Wh-What the-?”

“Shadow Possession. Thank your dad for the strings.” Indeed, Mario had stretched into and across the tiny shadow of one of the string lines from the Birdcage, the other end touching Junior’s shadow. “Doesn’t matter how small it is, as long as it’s shadow, it’s-.” But Dillon’s hold faltered. Mario released and retracted, panting beside his master. “What the-?!?”

“Fufufufufufu!” Doffy chuckled. “You wore your shadow out, he’s out of breath! And soon, you’ll be, too-”

A distant explosion caught his attention. Doffy Jr. looked up. “Hey… where did my teammates go. Did those two… !” Now angered, Doffy Jr. launched his strings to the top of the fortress and flew up.

“Hey, wait! What about our battle? Ugh.” Dillon kicked the ground.

Aurora and Haruka were making a mess of things downstairs, and the moment they saw the factory underground, their target was set. Haruka blasted gas at the sealed steel doors, Aurora blasted flames, the combo exploded and blew the entrance. The factory appeared natural inside, trees and grass growing, but the rivers flowed with toxic waste, the fruits were oddly-colored, mutated. “This is a Devil Fruit factory!” Haruka exclaimed. “Not if WE have anything to say about it!”

“Nuuiiii! You aren’t allowed in here-dasoyun!” Buffalo exclaimed, propelling at them. “I’ll turn you into-”

Aurora shot above him, kicking down his face with an icy heel, and knocked Buffalo to the ground like that. “Hooray, I defeated their weakest member! Okay Haruka, you take this half, I take this?”

“Okay.” So the duo split up and started wrecking the place.

In the sky, Nolan hung onto the string and swung ceaselessly toward the cage’s wall, but he covered himself in Armament and protected. He grabbed the string bars and climbed, seeing Doflamingo up above and crawling toward with a venomous grin. Nolan shot his grappler, Doflamingo dodged, Nolan propelled to the higher point, yanked the hook off partway, and lunged at Flamingo to grab him. He held tight and didn’t let go, so both men took the plunge. Doflamingo shot some strings to the center and pulled them both up. He angrily kicked Nolan’s face, but Nolan pulled up, got his head level with Doflamingo’s, and began punching the side. Doflamingo swung back-and-forth on the string, trying to shake Nolan off like a sticky bug on his hand, but he wouldn’t let go, his fist socked Doffy in the nose over and over.

His string retracted so much, Doffy and Nolan ended up at the very top of the Birdcage. Flamingo caught Nolan between his legs, hauled him above and tried to push him backfirst against the connected strings, but his Armament back saved him. Nolan got his boomerang, and with an evil grin, cut the center, and they both took the great fall. The wind pressed against their bodies, the castle roof was drawing closer, Nolan and Flamingo swung punches and kicks in midair. Finally
they both held each other, braced for impact, and smashed through the roof.

Nolan used his grappler to catch the edge of the hole and break his fall. After the smoke cleared, Doflamingo was still standing, though dizzily. Nolan landed and dealt the last round of punches. He turned Doffy around, bent his arm behind, and punched him to the ground. His pink feathery coat faced the air as he lay defeated. The strings in the room, the slowly-descending strings of the Birdcage all dispersed into energy. Corporate President, Don Quixote Doflamingo, was down. (End song.)

Sugar’s Room

Knock knock knock. Crystal slowly creaked open the door. “Hello?”

She saw the aquamarine-haired child on the floor, along with grapes. She calmly approached. “Did she slip on a grape? No, choked on one is more likely. Shame… works in our favor, I suppose. …!” She heard groaning to her left. Cheren Uno was on his knees. “Hey! You’re that Cheren boy.” She knelt before him and held him up. “Were you one of her victims, too?”

“Nnnn… Ms. Wickens? Where am I?”

“So Crystal explained everything, how they deduced Sugar was making people toys, how everyone forgot them. “W-Wait, so… she made me a toy… no one remembered me? She erased me?!”

“Well, it… wasn’t her fault, I reckon. Her father was making her do it all. He’s mad, really.”

Pain and rage had been building in Cheren all this time. It was time to let it loose.

Throne Room

Nolan panted. He looked at the hole in the roof. His wheelchair, which had landed there, rolled to the edge and fell in. He seated himself, spared a look at his unconscious adversary, and began to roll out.

A string caught his chair from behind and whirled him into the throne. Doflamingo was back on his feet, cracking his neck. “Hnnhnnhnhn.” He grinned. “You just… don’t know your place. This is my kingdom, Sandman. The world I have created. Heroes like you don’t belong here. I… am-”

The entrance to the chamber creaked open. Doflamingo frowned and turned, feeling a strange heat wave. A dark boy glared at him with chestnut eyes full of malice. A flame engulfed his form. “My, my! If it isn’t the Head President’s nephew. Cheren Uno, I believe. That’s a hot new look for you.”

“…” Cheren stared.

“Oh, that’s right… Sugar turned you into a toy, didn’t she? Heh, everyone forgot you. Forgot everything you said about that Apocalypse. It was so much nicer, having nothing to worry about. Why did you torture them like that?”

“…”
“Fufufu… how you tried to beat President Morgan… an apprentice of the Leaders, the most powerful person under them. You, boy… you’re a joke.”

“…”

“Hnn… you’re a nuisance to us, regardless. What will the KND be without its leader? Time to make the example… with their pride.” Doflamingo’s string flew like a bullet, but Cheren grabbed the tiny thing in his right hand. “Nnn?”

The string caught fire and turned to soot. Fast as lightning, Cheren zipped to Doflamingo and socked him with a Hellfire Fist, flying him against Nolan York in the throne. Both men grunted, Nolan keeping Flamingo upright, surprised when Cheren zipped up, kicked him in the head, and flew Flamingo against the wall. Doflamingo growled and stood, Cheren warped before him, dealt an array of punches that scorched and darkened his face, then threw Doflamingo to the center. Doflamingo lashed another string, but Cheren grabbed it in a blink, zipped around the president, then forced it deep into the floor. “Uuck!” Flamingo grunted. Cheren punched that area of floor, melted it, then solidified, the end of that string lodged within. Sandman zoomed in his binoculars, horrified to see the string wrapped around Flamingo’s throat.

“Cheren!” Nolan called as the boy dodged another onslaught of strings, then pelted giant fireballs at Doflamingo, pushing him back. Faster and faster did Flamingo’s strings come, but no closer he was to winning than Cheren’s flames inching him to the hole in the wall Doflamingo made earlier. Doflamingo was now touching the edge, his head throbbing in extreme aggravation. “CHEREN, NO!”

Doflamingo threw two huge spinning strings, but Cheren dodged forward and blasted his final two flames. “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaa…”

Faster than Nolan ever acted, he threw the boomerang at the string still lodged in the floor.

Creak.

It missed by an inch, and Nolan knew, the moment it stretched perfectly straight… he almost lost his breath. Turning very weakly, he saw Cheren standing at the edge of the hole, looking down the strong, sturdy string to where it ended. His flames never looked darker.

Thousands of townspeople gathered before the castle. Gasps and murmurs echoed all around. A pink, feathery coat, and the pair of legs below it, could be seen hanging from the castle. Very slowly, it swayed and spun in the air. His large mouth forced open, his tongue hanging out. His gorgeous blue eyes lost all life inside them.

The slanted red shades that defined him fell all the way to the courtyard, at Junior’s feet. His own shades fell beside them as his eyes widened. He, Sweetie-1, and Bison almost choked at the sight.

And within that hole stood the culprit. Alit by his mighty red flame. The citizens of Dressrosa knew… the Devil had come to claim its prize. “…DOFLAMINGO IS DEAD! DRESSROSA GIVE PRAISE TO OUR SAVIOR!”

“YAAAAAAAAAHHHH!!!”

Chris and Sector V were frozen. At the front of the crowds, they saw the flame clearest of all. “Cheren…” Chris uttered.

And if no one else did, Melody and Danny could see him. The anchorgirl lost any sense of feeling. “I…” She was on her knees, “I’m done with reporting.”
Not that Cheren heard or saw anything anymore. He was feeling… increasingly dizzy. “It’s natural, you know.”

The entire world turned dark. In his half-awake state, he saw his shadow stretch across the ground before him. It stood up, took form, and standing there was a very dark, grim form of himself. “This anger of yours.”

“Who’re you.”

“I’m what just won the battle. Your inner demon… the Demon State.”

“You look like… Nerehc.”

“A single person is composed of 3 entities: the Positive…Negative… and the Shadow. I… am your shadow. The one that separates your light and dark. The vessel that contains all of your anger, your rage… when you aren’t using it. Your inability to keep me under control, led me to take control.”

“So you’re… you’re the one that’s been doing it.”

“Not true. I’m only a part of you, Cheren. I act based on your orders. And I hear your mental orders… better than your oral ones. You want something destroyed, I’ll destroy it. You wanna deal pain, I’ll deliver it. When you want someone killed… the blood will be on my hands. And all my strength… comes from your self-turmoil.”

“I’m not in turmoil.”

“Of course you are. Because of Sugar’s power, everyone forgot you. Forgot your virtues and words. The Apocalypse. You were nothing… for that time. If it weren’t for a bunch of insects, you would’ve been gone.”

Cheren didn’t understand… he was tired… dizzy… With no sense of self anymore, he fell forward —Nolan grabbed him by the shirt-collar. “You’ve done enough, Cheren. Let’s… Let’s go down.” He set the boy on his lap and rolled.

SMILEs Factory

Caesar saw it on his TV. Doflamingo hung by the neck by his own string. The scientist choked. “Thought I’d find you here.”

He turned. Haruka Dimalanta faced him from the doorway of his dark room. “Shurororororo. Haruka…” Caesar smiled slyly. “Paying your dear old uncle a visit?”

“You still have a trial to go to. One or another, you’re coming.”

“Nnnn… I suppose I’ve no choice. There’s chi-blocking cuffs in that drawer over there.” He pointed.

“Hm… someone’s melancholy.”

“Doflamingo’s dead.” Haruka was shocked slightly. “See for yourself.”

Haruka approached the TV. The hanging man and the fire above it. “I…I don’t.”

“Ever since we were kids, this has been our dream.” Caesar spoke with regret. “To follow a goal that combined my genetic knowledge with his need to build a peaceful world. In everything that’s happened, our friendship… was always what surpassed.”
“I… I feel kinda bad.”

“You should.” Caesar glared at her. “True, Doflamingo was crazy, but you would be, too. His father was a World Leader, a very kind Leader who wanted to live among commoners. The people hated them for what they were: self-believed ‘Gods.’ Well, his father didn’t think that. He tried his darnedest to be friends with the people. Then… they killed his wife. Killed her when Doffy was only 8. Then when he was 9, he killed his father. I was the only friend he had, a gassy poisonbender who did stuff to animals for fun. No one wanted us around, so… we were all we had.”

Haruka looked at the screen again. The repeating image… it ached her every time to see.

“Somehow, I knew it would go too far.” Caesar went to the drawer and picked up the chi-cuffs. “Something like this would happen. If I could, I’d… do it all again. Talk Doffy out of this deal. Hn, no, he wouldn’t listen, shuroro. Silly, stubborn Doffy… siiigh…”

Haruka looked between him and the screen. …She was sometimes too kind for her own good.

Sugar’s Room

The aquamarine girl still lay on the floor, senseless. Timmy and Hikari slowly approached on the side of her left ear, climbing the head that was roughly 3 stories. They approached the gaping hole of her mouth and peered inside. “Hellooooo? Rupert?” Timmy called.

“Timmy, Hikari! I’m still on the tongue, heeeelp!” Timmy viewed into the dark with his goggle light. Rupert clung to the mushy substance with all his strength. “I can’t hang onto a gym pole for long, so it’s amazing how much the threat of a pit of acid changes that, help me!”

The kids sent their Wing Pikmin down the chasm to bring their friend back to safety. “Phew… thanks. …Is she dead?”

“Looks like it.” Timmy replied.

“Awwww. She’s pretty.” Hikari frowned. “When she’s not trying to kill us.”

“I feel kinda bad.” Rupert replied. “It was only self-defense, after all.”

“Mi-miiii!” The Magenta Pikmin began jumping, running around the face. Clearly they were overjoyed about being on her.

“What’s with them?” Timmy asked.

“I think they’re in loooove!” Hikari beamed.

“…” Rupert was curious, looking at their glowing note-antennas. They got this way around those music stages, what would get them so riled up. He whistled the Pikmin to attention, so once they were organized, Rupert led them around. He instructed a Magenta onto Sugar’s nose, one between her eyes and one on the left and right sides, two on each cheek, four along the forehead, and one in each ear. The one on the nose swayed an imaginary wand like a conductor as they all began to sing.

“Ringalaringaling! Ringalaringaling! Ringalaringaling!” Some music from an invisible source before their notes flowed. “Yoooga haboooon… waga la wigginother: yooga labon he noooothеееееііі…” Sugar’s eyes cracked open partway. Her purple irises looked pretty up close. “Yoooga haboooon… waga le wigginother… yoode widon he no theііііі…”
Her pupils shifted left and right to view the little creatures. Her eyelids were still half open, so the kids wondered if she was aware of her surroundings. Rupert stood before the left eye as it looked at him. He smiled kindly. “Sorry about poisoning you, but you did try to eat me. You seem kinda lonely up here, so… you know. You like the Song Pikmin? They seem to like you, for some reason. Don’t they sound fun?”

“…”

“We can’t stay long, but I’ll let you keep these guys. They can sing you lullabies or somethin’. Well, um… see you later.” So with that, Team Rupert and the rest of their Pikmin climbed down, scampering across the vast floor.

Then the doors to the room burst open, the tinies’ hearts almost stopping with fright. A troupe of G.U.N soldiers charged in and shocked Sugar into submission with rods. “I don’t know what happened, but she’s NOT getting away! Call Headquarters and have this company tried once and for all!”

Within the next half-hour, the G.U.N. and KND officials showed up. Doflamingo’s body was carted away on a stretcher, his officers sulked in depression as they were collected in their incapacitated states. Trebol’s body was still scattered goo, separated in several containers that were carried into GUN’s crafts. “Astonishing!” Brett Gunkan exclaimed. “For 12 years, Doflamingo has been kidnapping victims and using his daughter to turn ‘em into toys! During that time, we’ve sent GUN spies to investigate the story behind these toys, but all were transformed so no one remembered. What kind of witchcraft does she possess?!?”

“I dunno…” replied Vice-Commander Rourke, “but we have her in custody.” He looked at the child in question, her hands encased inside huge mechanical cuffs. “We’ll entrust the Kids Next Door with her friends’ custody, but we’ve singled her out as the prime threat.”

“Still… arresting a child. This hardly feels ethical. Perhaps some questioning will-”

“The hell with questioning.” They turned and saw Nolan and Cheren. The latter had a strong hint of darkness in his baggy-eyed state. “Lock her away and let her rot to death. Best she deserves.”

“Cheren…” Nolan spoke under his breath.

“And who was the one that brought about Doflamingo’s demise?” asked Gunkan.

“That… I did.” Nolan said. Hopefully not many townspeople saw the culprit too clearly.

“It was you, Sandman?”

“What can I say. I got carried away. Believe me, it’s not the worst that coulda happened.”

“Hm… considering the circumstances, perhaps this can be overlooked. But I don’t believe the Corporate Presidents will take this manner of respect to one of their own so lightly. I implore you to watch yourself, Sandman.”

“Will do, Sir.”

So with that, Sugar was loaded onto the aircraft before they returned to the sky, and the criminals of Dressrosa were carried away. The people of Dressrosa were still in an uproar, people scrambling to find the loved ones they hadn’t known for 12 years as Nolan escorted Cheren around. Sandman couldn’t really be bothered to settle this conflict, hopefully some new, more noble ruler would come along and tell everybody to quiet. For now was a matter of bringing Cheren back to his loved
ones. “I still don’t understand…” Nolan thought aloud quietly. “If these toys’ve been around for 12 years, then Sugar would have to’ve been alive that long, unless she was given her Devil Fruit after birth, but she still… Cheren, do you remember her giving her age?”

“I just want her to die and burn in Hell.”

“Man, you’re taking this a little rough. How long were you a toy, exactly?”

“CHEREN!” Through the crowds, Nolan saw Yuki with Sector V. Aurora and Chris bolted over as the former grabbed her brother in a hug. Tears dripped from her eyes. “Bro, I don’t even know what happened, but I just forgot you and this whole Apocalypse, I can’t even explain, I… what happened to us?!”

“Cheren, weren’t you in Sugar’s room, what happened to her?” asked Nolan.

“She was trying to squish some ants and she swallowed one that choked her. Too bad she didn’t die.”

“He’s still a little… traumatized, as it were.”

“Yeah, we saw. It was his Demon State.” Chris noted. “Ever since he was born, it’s always been more ‘active’ with him than us. Aurora’s able to absorb his flames and cool him down—which I guess is her icbending at work—so Mom and Dad want her to be around often ‘case Cheren’s fire gets too… big?’

“Lord knows I’m no comforting hand.” Nolan admitted, stretching his aching fingers. “I’ll let you take care of him. See you at home, Son.”

“’kay, Dad.” The kids watched as Sandman and his team took flight over the crowds.


“Same here, man.” Chris patted his shoulder. “Just glad you’re back.”

“I should get up to Moonbase, everyone’s probably in chaos. …I suppose I should tell you guys how I ended up getting transformed. A couple days ago, me and—”

His cellphone rang. Cheren answered his mother. “Cheren, are you there? Where’ve you been, for some reason we just… forgot you.”

“Mom, I’m fine, I’m with Sector V.”

“Cheren, you need to come home, Chris and Aurora, too. We… We have to tell you something.”

“Oh…okay. Love you, Mom.” They hung up. “Huh… She sounds really upset.”

“Wonder what’s up.” said Aurora.

Uno Household

A cold, gray sky hung over Virginia this afternoon. They expected rain soon. The sectormates landed; Melody and Danny were still with them. Convenient, considering who waited outside. “Mom!” The siblings ran up to Eva Jackson in the yard. “We tried to call you from Dressrosa, but the phone was dead!”
“You were in Dressrosa?”

“Long story, I… what’s everyone doing here?”

There was a lot of people. Lizzie MayHence with her head down, Dimentia looking at the gray sky, Dr. Facilier petting his downtrodden shadow, Harvey holding Angie’s hand. Anthony and Michelle looked at Cheren and waved. Cheren exchanged worried looks with his siblings and friends. He slowly approached his front door and entered.

There was a huge crowd in his house, too. The Gilligan parents, Beatles, Drilovskys, all turned to him the moment he stepped in. The grieving looks on their faces were unsettling. “Wh…What’s going on?”

“About time you came.” The Grim Reaper squeezed out from the crowd. His presence here made the air feel colder.

“Grim…” Cheren actually wanted to speak with him about these Keys, but… “What are you doing here?”

His mother walked out around Grim, just as upset. “Kids… there’s no easy way to say this. Your father’s dead.”

The room fell silent. It was almost like time was frozen. Especially Cheren, who didn’t even feel his heart beating. “What?”

“Yes. 9:35a.m. today. Killed at the top of Mt. Mariejoa.” Grim explained, reading a paper. “Got in a fight wit’ de King of de World and his cohorts. He didn’t stand a chance.”

Everyone waited impatiently for Cheren to make a move. He just stood there with the same blank, frozen expression. “…So bring him back.”

“What?”

“You heard me, bring him back to life!” he shouted aggressively.

“You know I can’t do that.”

“WHY NOT, you’re the Grim Reaper!”

“It’s against my rules!”

“RULES, SHMULES, you brought Uncle FACILIER back to life!” He stomped up and tugged forcefully on Grim’s cloak.

“Well DON’T you t’ink I’m in too deep ALREADY?!”

“So you brought ONE lousy mortal back to life, BIG DEAL! You honestly wouldn’t do the same for my DAD?! The one who made you KING?! Any REAL friend in your position would TOTALLY—”

“I’ve been risking my position bringing you and YOUR crummy friends back to life THIS ENTIRE TIME, you little SNOT!”

Cheren felt himself freeze again. “What?”

“EVER since you joined Kids Next Door, I’ve been WATCHING you and watching you, getting
involved on these crazy adventures and dying EVERY step of the way!"

“…How…How is that possible.”

“The reason you don’t remember is because, upon bringing you back to life, I set you a few moments in time before you die, wipe your memory of your death, but leave a small shred of knowledge that allows you to sense what kills you, so you can avoid it. A few minutes later, however, you die again, and the cycle continues, for 8 months now I’ve been DOING this. Keeping a sharp eye on you so the other Reapers wouldn’t, and bringing you to life so I wouldn’t be caught. Wasting my time doing so, so the children of my friends can have a longer chance at life and continue to learn from their flops. If you really don’t believe me, SEE for yourself!”

And at the whoosh of Grim’s scythe, everything was clear to Cheren.

Anthony McKenzie, at one inch tall, hurriedly dodged Cragalanche’s massive fists, until one unlucky slip caused him to be smashed flat.

Cheren clashed furiously with Captain Slag’s sword, until the captain came victorious and stabbed him in the heart.

It was difficult maneuvering underwater to dodge the Eelion monster, and the upper half of Cheren’s body was munched clean off. A second time when Cheren was trapped in its bubble, and a third in the larger room, when it swooped in and out of the walls.

The battle against Garo Master, Cheren and Merida were sliced in perfect diagonal halves by his flaming swords. Both friends were then pierced by the Stalgod’s massive swords.

In his climactic battle against Majora, the Masked Demon caught him in his whips, and swung him around until he was dead.

Dillon, Zach, and Maddy ran from the Bang Gas-Z as fast as they could, but a wrong turn led them to be swallowed in the gas, overcome with mutantism, and eventually dying.

In Nebula and Mocha’s battle against Geoffrey Giant, the massive Neanderthal chucked a huge boulder that squished Nebula’s blood out.

Vweeb hurriedly jumped around in the crowded and violent bloodfest of Glomourians vs. Kateenians, but the tiny alien was squished beneath a Glomourian’s foot like a bug.

Nebula and MaKayla fought Dimentio with the power of gods, but when the superior being caught the girls in a black hole, he distorted their matter and destroyed them.

While the Raccoon Pirates were hopping marshmallows over a chocolate river, Mason slipped and fell in the ooze.

When Carol Masterson began her battle with Nickel Joe, the sly man succeeded in shooting a coin inside her mouth, blowing her head clean off.

Sheila Frantic hurriedly dodged Big Mom’s acid globs, until one particular glob struck her face and melted it off, allowing the massive woman to crush her like a pancake.

“And there’s something else I want to clarify.” Grim said. “Earlier, your timebender friends tried to revive their teammates. However, while timebending can restore a broken body, it cannot call souls back from death. I secretly aided them as well. Even 20 years ago, Clockwork merely gave Dimentia a Gigai, and it was I that revived her once the quest was over, same with the
Cheren was blind to everything. His mind was open. In a single stroke… he saw the truth. “Our lives are… just repeating.” He spoke quietly. “Like a videogame… some twisted god killing us like playthings in a game… we’re nothing… I see that now.”

“Cheren-” Rachel reached for him.

“OUR LIVES MEAN NOTHING!!” And he was gone upstairs to his room in seconds.

His jacket, shoes, and glasses were off haphazardly on the floor. His face lay smothered in his pillow as he cried. Rachel, Chris, and Aurora came with sympathetic looks as his mom walked up. “Cheren?”

“All this time, we were being helped by someone, because we were too weak to survive on our own.” He choked on almost every word. “If my dad couldn’t beat the, World Leaders, how are we supposed to find the 20 Keys?! He was one of the best there was, and he STILL couldn’t win! We’ll never find the Keys in time…”

“Cheren, I’m upset, too, but we gotta remember what Nigel taught us. What he taught you. You have to keep trying. You can’t give up—”

“WE’RE NOT AS GREAT AS YOU! Okay?! YOU weren’t dying over and over, WERE YOU?! You guys got the easy stuff… but this…this is really huge! If my dad couldn’t survive it… we don’t have a chance! Zanifr was right all along! I can’t beat Aunt Morgan… I can’t find the 20 Keys… I CAN’T stop the Apocalypse! NO ONE can! We’re all going to die and there’s nothing ANYONE can do! So let’s just… let’s just wait for it to happen! Sniff!”

They weren’t sure what to say. It was pretty mind-blowing to the others, too. Cheren never looked so drowned in depression. They had nothing to encourage him. Chris, Aurora, and Rachel left his room and shut the door. Cheren was alone, sobbing on his bed. There was no more reason to try… no more reason to fight. Their fates were set in stone. They were powerless to the world, to the gods. The Apocalypse would take them all; the Grim Reaper couldn’t hide that. He would wait patiently for his true death to come.
Broken Soul

Chapter Summary

It's time for the wedding of Sipa and Lucifer.

My step-grandpa died a few nights ago. May he rest in peace. …Anyway, this comes after Chapter 17, so if you’re confused by this chapter’s events, skim through that as a reminder.

Chapter B-11: Broken Soul

Boogey Bay

Two Moblins carried Azula by the arms and brought her into Mandy’s dark cabin. The Fire Princess was still sniffling and crying; she had run out of tears, and her yellow eyes looked dehydrated. “Azula, what in Hell’s name has gotten into you?” Mandy asked.

“She accidentally killed a Sugar Fairy when she aimed for Augustus.” one of the impish Flare Dancers replied in its high, hoarse voice. “I guess that legend about them is true. They really do force you to cry!”

“Hmmm…” Mandy reached under Azula’s chin to make her face up. She studied her drying eyes. “Some kind of post-mortem spell, huh? Well, maybe this will cure it.” Her eyes lit with fear, and Azula reacted to the Scare Stare.

A seven-year-old Azula stood before her towering father, flames burning behind him. He smacked Azula for failing her lessons. Mai and Ty Lee betrayed her because they loved Zuko more. Her servants and soldiers betrayed her. She was renowned as the worst Fire Lord…

Azula was now shivering from imaginary cold, her eyes remained forced open wide. “Take off her armor, and bring her something to drink.” Mandy ordered.

The Moblins sat Azula on a bed and tore off her black armor. She only had a black bra and underpants underneath. There were scars around her body. “You took more than your current body heat would allow.” Mandy deduced as she poured some wine down Azula’s throat. “One of your biggest fears was imperfection… so you desperately seek to become Logia, a perfect firebender. That’s one of the things I liked best about you.” Mandy gestured with her hand for the other demons to leave. They obeyed and shut the door, making the cabin darker.

She had Azula lie down on the bed, rolled away from the captain as she quivered. “Your actions were reckless, but necessary, of course. Becoming a Logia means risking your life in your own element. If you’d digested just a bit more violet flames, you might have made it. Or… maybe you wouldn’t have. Perhaps we’ll find out in time.” Mandy shrugged.

“Are you about through wasting our time?” Lord Licorice questioned, walking out of the darkness.

“Well, for a minute, I was wondering if you were actually helping.” Mandy turned to him while drinking some rum.
“The Sugar Fairy Kingdom is just within our grasp! We can easily overpower those puny and pathetic creatures, destroy the core of their sugar, and secure both the Forest and Sugar Fairy Princesses.”

“The Flare Dancers told me that the Sugar Fairy warped the Forest Fairy and the Marzipans away. Storming their kingdom won’t do me any favors.”

“I said, we could destroy, their SUGAR Fuel!” Lord Licorice spoke insistently, stomping closer to Mandy with each emphasized word.

“You SAID you would give me the FOREST Fairy!” Mandy said with a deadly glare, inches from Licorice’s face. “You said that with Princess Aisling’s powers over life, I could become my own Grim Reaper! I could bring to life all the world’s evil pirates and force them to my whim! So unless your promises hold true to their word, I could care less about demolishing a silly fairytale kingdom!”

Lord Licorice gritted his teeth, drawing his gun to aim it at Mandy. “I… am The King’s apprentice. I, the most humble and generous Lord Licorice, am allowing you pirates to have fun. I can apprehend you now and haul you to Mariejoa… but I’m not. And all I’m asking of you… is to burn those wretched Sugar Fairies to ash.”

Mandy moved her glaring eyes closer to Licorice, who calmly backed up in fear. “The Grim Reaper told me… who The King is… and I have to wonder… Are you really not arresting me out of generosity? Or is it because… I’m a McKenzie?”

A sweatdrop trickled down Licorice’s face. The gun trembled in his hand as he took small steps back. “The ultimate flaw…” Mandy spoke again, “with rulers and officials alike… is that they always show bias… for the ones they hold dear.”

“…” Licorice sighed and regained his composure. He put his gun away and prepared to leave the cabin. As he stood in the doorway, he turned to Mandy and said, “His Majesty may have that flaw… but you’re only alive because I allow it. Consider that my gift… as your best friend.” He shut the door and was gone.

**Posiverse Earth; about 195 million years ago**

“Holy Mother of Monkey Milk!” Augustus gaped at the prehistoric sight before them. “Mother freaking Jurassic Park!”

“WHATCHU GAWKIN’ AT?!” Rallo shouted with fear. “That big thing just ate that little thing! We don’t watch our asses, we’ll get our things ate, too!”

“I’m astonished that Zeira can use time-travel magic.” Aisling said. “So these were the creatures that roamed Earth in ancient times.”

“How the hell are we supposed to find the Rock Nut in this mess?!” Stewie asked angrily. “Lick every rock until we find one that’s-”

“STEWIE, STEWIE.” Augustus interrupted. “I am not… even gonna let you finish that sentence. I just… saw where you were goin’, and I am like NO. You need to level down with those jokes.”

“Aaaahhh-AAAAAAAAaaaahhhhh!”

“Whuh was that?” Rallo asked.
“Over there!” Aisling pointed.

Not far away, a group of raptors were chasing something small across the plain.

“AAAAAAAAHHHHH!” This creature, running on all fours, was a cavegirl, with messy cyan hair and big hazel eyes, wearing a green loincloth dress and a cracked skull mask on her head. She also had a reddish-purple line painted horizontally across her face.

“Hold on, kid!” Augustus grabbed his Gobstopper and rushed over, the Baby Trio joining.

“Wait, we’re in the past!” Aisling yelled after. “We shouldn’t interfere… Oh, who am I kidding. GROWL!” She bared her fangs and pranced on all fours.

The little cavegirl looked back at the raptors with fear in her adorable hazel eyes. She stopped and stared when something small and spherical struck a raptor’s jaws. It had been thrown by a taller Neanderthal, whose clothes didn’t look like any she recognized. Rallo blasted his boombox to blow another raptor away, and Stewie fired a net gun to catch another and shock it. Aisling tackled the fourth raptor and sank her teeth into its flesh. When the first raptor tried to help its friends, Augustus tackled and began to wrestle it.

“Tell this to all your amigos, the future belongs to HOMO sapiens!” the Spanish-German declared.

“NOOOOO!” The cavegirl pounced on Augustus’s back and began pounding his head like an angry child. “Get off of Nel’s frieeeeeends!”

“Wha-… Friends?” Augustus looked at the raptor confusedly.

“Nel and dinos were playing ‘Catch Nel’! You ruined Nel and dinos’ game! Go awaaaaaay!” She cried and continued pounding the teen boy.

“Are you really her friends?” Aisling asked the raptor she was biting.

Yes. And you're a weird-looking baby jaguar. The raptor replied telepathically.

Aisling calmly climbed off the creature, and the other ones recovered and showed no signs of vengeance. “Uh… Sorry.” Augustus said to the cavegirl clutching his shoulders. “We’re not familiar with… old timey games.”

The girl jumped off. “Nel invents game herself. Other cavepeople think Nel crazy, but Nel think… oh?” She stared at him. “Why does caveman know Nel’s language?”

Aisling gasped. “You can speak English?”

“English? English is Nel’s language!” she shouted. “Only Nel speak English. Nel know English well, because only Nel know English. So why other cavemen know English?”

“Because we’re from the future!” Augustus yelled.


“Hold on, if she can speak English, perhaps she may be able to help us.” Stewie said as he approached the cave child, who was nearly his height. “Miss, do you know anything about a Rock Nut?”

“What weird caveman is this?” Nel touched either side of Stewie’s football head. “His head funny. Hee hee hee hee!” She rocked the head back and forth. “Look like funny rock!”
“Shyeah, but you should see Rallo without his afro!” Augustus laughed.

“NO, DON’T!” Rallo cried. “You tell this girl, she gonna tell everyone, then all o’ HISTORY’S gonna be laughin’ at me!”

“Nel like new cavepeople.” Nel clapped happily. “Nel think people funny. People be friends with Nel?”

“Eh, why not?” August shrugged. “I’m opening a babysitting service after this.”

“Yaaay!” She clapped. “New friends for Nel! New friends come to Nel’s cave?”

“Sure, we wouldn’t mind a place to rest! (Even though we kinda just got out of a cave.) Hey, can your raptor friends help us pull our plane?”

“You want pull plain?”

“Y-Yeah—I mean… just come see.”

The group led Nel and her raptors to the broken-down *Ace Flyer*. “This plain?” Nel began to climb it. “This smallest plain Nel ever see. It look like hard rock. Whoa!” She fell headfirst into the pilot’s seat, with her dirty feet flailing in the air.

“It’s not a plain like a field.” Augustus said as he grabbed Nel’s feet and pulled her up. “It’s like… a magic stone that we have and lets us fly.”

“It stone? It shaped like pterodactyl. Can Nel fly stone plane?”

“Heh heh… It’s not in best shape right now. Just help us pull it to your cave.”

They traveled a few miles across the field before they arrived at Nel’s cave. She had a few clothes hanging on the wall, so Augustus threw one of them over the biplane. “Here, Nel friends.” Nel carried two armfuls of rocks over to them. “Nel bring rocks. Nel hopes friends like.” She dropped them all. …Nel felt pain course through her. “YAAAAAAAH!” She grabbed the stubbed toes and hopped around.

“Calm down.” Aisling crouched down and softly rubbed the sore toes. “You should be more careful.”

“Can you actually eat these rocks?” Augustus asked curiously.

“Huh? Cavepeople always eat rocks. Well, rocks too big for Nel. She break into pebbles.” Nel stood up and picked up one of the heavy rocks. “Mmm, mmm,” she hopped to a wall, “MMM!” and chucked the rock to break it to pieces. “Pebbles yummy! Mmmmmm!” Nel picked some up and began chewing.

“Yeah… I don’t eat those.” Augustus replied with disgust. “See if you like this.” He pulled out a Gold Wonka Bar and handed it to the girl.

Nel stared at the chocolate as though it was the weirdest thing ever. Nel put her teeth around the bar and bit a piece. It was so much softer than pebbles, it felt like her teeth were munching nothing. She swallowed. “Mmmmmm…” Nel bore the expression of someone in Caveperson Heaven. “Nel feels a happy feeling on her toooooongue. Why is Nel tongue happy? Bllllll?” She stuck her tongue out.
“That, my soil-footed friend…” Augustus bent down with a knowledgeable smile, “was called taste.”

“Taste?” Nel grabbed her tongue and tried to pull it up in front of her eyes. “Nel don’t thee it.”

“It isn’t something you see. It’s something you feel.” The captain started a new lollipop. “It’s a mouthwatering feeling that outright says: if you eat this, your belly will be happy. The ability to taste was God’s greatest gift to man. If something tastes good, you swallow it.”

“You are setting, a very bad example in this case.” Aisling said.

“Nel like ‘taste.’ Nel never taste before. Except pretty rock on Terry mountain. Haaaa-omp.” She bit another piece of chocolate.

“A pretty rock?” This caught the teen’s attention. “What rock?”

Nel swallowed, and she spoke with chocolate around her mouth. “Nel climb to top of Terry mountain and find pretty rock. Nel try to break, but it don’t. Nel tried to eat, but too big. But when Nel tongue touch it, tongue feel happy. Nel think this ‘taste.’”

“It must be the Rock Nut!” Aisling beamed.

“Nel, can you take us to Terry Mountain?” Augustus asked.

“Mmmm…” Nel frowned. “Terry mountain belong to Terry. Nel climb when Terry gone because Nel wanted to see what up there. Does Nel friends want Terry’s tasty rock?”

“If it’s what we think it is, it’s imperative that we collect it.” Aisling said.

“But Terry scary!” Nel exclaimed. “Terry eat Nel friends! Nel don’t want friends to die!”

“I assume this ‘Terry’ is a pterodactyl.” Aisling replied. “An animal all the same. If I got close to her, I can communicate and reason with her.”

“Hee hee hee! Terry not her. Terry a male.”

“My mistake.”

“And even if she can’t, we can take him.” Augustus fist-palmed. “Listen, Nel, we really need that Rock Candy, not for us, but for a friend of mine. He’s a, uh… caveman who can’t leave his cave, and he’s gonna die soon. All he really wants is to taste that rock. So, will you take us?”

“Sniff…” Nel’s adorable eyes began watering. “Th-That saddest story… Nel ever hear! WAAAAAAAHHH!” She made a waterfall of tears that the others looked at with disbelief. She calmed down and spoke with a stutter, “N-Nel h-help friends find r-rock. J-Just promise Nel f-friends will be careful.”

“You got nothin’ to worry about!” Augustus lifted the cavegirl up over his shoulders. “Just point us the way!”

“Ha ha ha ha!” Nel swung her feet happily. “Nel gets to ride funny caveman!” She smacked his head and pointed vigorously, “RIDE, AUGHSUCKS!”

The captain’s motivation sunk at that name. “It’s… Augustus.”

“Nel said Aughsucks! Go, Aughsucks!”
Negaverse; DNK Moonbase

It was -11:55ma. Every DNK sector had gathered in the audience chamber, viewing the stage where Medusa, Ragus, and Lucifer stood. The massive chamber was filled with a dead silence, and everyone was impatiently waiting for the bride to make her appearance. “She’s just gonna turn it down, right?” Yllas whispered to her teammates.

“Shhh!” Ynohtna hushed her.

“Lady Medusa, my father will be killed after this, right?” Ragus asked her mistress.

“Sooner than you think.” Medusa smirked. “I sent Pandora and Thanatos down to Asorsserd to do the deed. Hope that gives you something to look forward to.”

“It does, My Lady. …Oh! The bride is coming.”

The right stage door opened as Sipa walked in with Asia at her side. She looked both pretty and scary in her black dress, holding a bouquet of dead grey flowers. They stopped three feet from Lucifer, who still possessed a black desert wolf. Sipa’s expression was morbid. “My bride…” The demon hissed. “You look beautiful…”

“A girl needs time to prepare, even in this world…” Medusa commented. “But better late than never. In three more minutes, I will join you two in eternal matrimony. If either of you have vows, you had better speak now.”

“I have a few things to say…” Sipa spoke lowly. “Ever since I was little… my deepest dream was to burn my mortal soul and become a small piece of the Underworld’s darkness. And with every sin I commit… I felt my soul steadily decaying away.” It was -11:59. Everybody’s hearts were racing from the tension. “And now… when I’m only a couple words away… from losing myself completely… to a demon as renowned and… feared as you…”

Lucifer hissed through his grinning, drooling fangs. Sipa’s lovely dark form reflected in his glowing red pupils. She looked so… delicious…

“…I realize…” Sipa resumed, “…that all I really want, more than anything… is…”

Ragus let the lifeless doll dangle in her hand. The soul which this doll was inhabiting was asleep. The person inside was no longer what he used to be, but a hideous amalgamation of Ragus’s creation.

. . . . The motionless toy shone, and its distorted body began to wobble. The froad and cat legs transformed into human legs in purple pants, the fish fin and octopus tentacle became human arms and hands, and the platypus nose retracted. Whatever this creature was, it became a brown-haired boy with sunglasses and dark-yellow eyes.

The minute the clock struck -12, it felt as though a light went off in everyone’s minds. Suddenly, they had weird memories of an alliance with the Nimbi DNK, how their acronym stood for the “Daring New Kids”, and some hogwash about a “happier” Negaverse where everyone’s nice to each other. And all these ideas were because of one boy whom they clearly remembered as their Supreme Leader.

“NEREHC!!” Sipa screeched after her moment of awestruck silence.
“What?!” Lucifer shouted.

“Ragus, what’s going on?!” Medusa shouted.

“I’m as confused as you are, Lady Medusa!” Ragus replied with her still smile and tone. “Out of the blue, I seem to have memory of Nosrednug’s real identity!”

“AVADA KEDAVRA!” Sipa whipped out her Devil’s Wand and struck Lucifer.

“UOOOH!” The black wolf died, and the dark energy left its body.

“YOU!” Sipa aimed the wand at Medusa’s possessed body. “LET NEREHC GO!”

“Better do what she says!” Sicnarf ordered as a troupe of guards trained their weapons on the goddess.

Before Medusa knew it, the whole of the DNK audience were scurrying down the stairs and jumping on stage, surrounding her and Ragus from every direction. “Grrr. This isn’t what was supposed to happen!” Medusa growled. “If it’d just been another minute, I would’ve had everything I needed to…”

“LOOK!” Ikuyim pointed excitedly. “That girl’s holding a Nerehc doll! I bet the real Nerehc’s trapped inside it!”

“Accio DOLL!” Sipa aimed her wand, and the Nerehc doll flew into her hand. “NEREHC!” She shook it frantically. “Are you in there?! PLEASE WAKE UP!”

Night Castle

“Damn it! I have to get out of this place!” Nerehc stated impatiently, trying to stomp Ragus’s sleeping body. However, his foot phased through her like she were a ghost. “How do I wake this chick up?!”

“I’m not sure if it will work,” Mr. Penguin said, “but since we’re in a Dream Realm, you might wake up if you die.”

“Hey, you’re right!” Nerehc drew his sword and aimed it at his chest. …He hesitated for a second. “Sure hope this works!” He shut his eyes and slowly moved the sword’s tip to poke his chest. …Poke.

Moonbase

“YAH!” The doll jumped out of Sipa’s hand and on the stage floor.

“YEEK!” Ininap and Yddam were startled and grabbed each other. The operatives backed away in fear when the doll pushed itself up on its feet.

The doll’s beady yellow eyes looked around at all the familiar faces. “Sipa! Sicnarf! Ydolem!” Nerehc’s voice spoke happily. “You guys…” He skimmed their bodies up and down. He was only as high as their feet. “…are really tall.”

“N-N-Nerehc…” Ininap crouched on all fours and crawled to her master like a curious puppy. “Y-You’re a… doll?”

Nerehc looked at his stubby hands and the knees he had trouble balancing on. “Huh… So I am.
Anybody have any idea how I got this way?"

“They’re getting away!” Yddam yelled when Medusa opened a dark portal.

“Until next time, you fools!” Medusa pulled Ragus in with her.

“STOP!” Sipa grabbed the Nerehc doll and dove after them.

“AAAAH!” She, Ragus, and Medusa tumbled onto the floor of the first bridge, close to the hangar.

“ENOUGH!” The Dark Goddess kicked Sipa off and got onto Nerehc’s feet, drawing his sword and holding it to his neck. “Back away or I’ll cut this boy’s neck! I’m curious to see where Demise’s spirit will go if he dies, anyway.”

“Sipa, throw me on the sword!” Nerehc’s doll yelled.

“Huh? Okay. NNNN!” Sipa hurled the little doll across the air, and his stubby arms wrapped around the Devil Sword’s white blade.

“Huh?” Medusa stared confusedly at the doll. The way he hugged the sword was adorable…

“GHIRAHIM!” Nerehc called. The white sword flashed, and the diamond-skin Demon Lord leapt out.

“Yaaaaaaawn.” Ghirahim stretched his trim body. “It’s about time I was called out. I was getting a little tired of everyone saying ‘Who’s Nerehc’ all the time.” He turned to said boy with a devious smile. “Still, my master… you have seen better days.”

“You listen to ME, you hopeless servant.” Medusa aimed the sword at him while the Nerehc doll was still hugging it. “The body I’m possessing is the one that houses Demise’s soul. I am the one you answer to, not Nerehc!”

“Hmmm…” Ghirahim held a hand over his eyes, still smiling. “And so I’m faced with the conundrum… who do I listen to. It’s true that the body Medusa is inhabiting is the one that bears Demise’s energy… However, the body truly and officially belongs to Nerehc. The true one that has conquered both Devils and taken their power. Tell me, Medusa… could you defeat them?”

“You know this bitch couldn’t!” the Nerehc doll yelled. “Just kick her ass so I can get my body back!”

“Don’t even think about it!” Medusa smacked the doll off and held the sword to the body’s neck. “It’s true that I need Demise’s powers to revive Ganondorf, but if they retreated inside Lehcar or one of her children, I can easily persuade them to work for me!”

Ghirahim zipped up to her, kneeling to her face level as he licked his lips. “But will I… work for you?”

“Ouch! Ghirahim, you’re standing on me!” The Nerehc doll squirmed under the demon’s foot.

“There they are, they’ve over here!” Sicnarf and the operatives scurried onto the bridge to surround the villains.

“You’re not going to get away!” Hcaz stated firmly. “You’re overstepping your boundaries as a god. Ininap is praying to the other gods as we speak; they’ll be here pretty soon and see what you’re doing.”
“Hm hm hm hm.” Medusa chuckled, keeping the sword by Nerehc’s neck. “You ‘Daring New Kids’ think you’re so strong because of your loyalty and dedication to your leader. Nerehc may be leading you Negatives to a path of light… but this very path will destroy you! The Apocalypse will come at the end of this month, and your kind will never survive without MY assistance!”

“You…” Yddam’s fists trembled, and a nervous sweatdrop trickled down her face. She was wearing her Fishman Karate gloves. “J-Just… what do you want?”

Medusa’s snake green eyes looked at her, making Yddam step back in fright. “My child… don’t you know who I am? I am Medusa. The Seeker of the Thirteen Darknesses. The one who is destined to unite the Darknesses, and help the Negatives to find and awaken them! Only I know the identities and locations of each of the Darknesses. The universe will only be saved if they, along with the Seven Lights, are awakened. And the only way you can see for that to happen, is if you listen to me.”

The Negatives stood silent with hesitation. Medusa could read their mixed expressions of anger and contemplation. They wanted to attack her for stealing Nerehc’s body… but they also thought she could be right. They knew little about the Twenty Keys… so helping Medusa achieve her selfish gain may be their only chance of learning this knowledge.

The operatives looked at the smooshed Nerehc doll, who was back on his feet after Ghirahim got off. He slouched on one knee, but he faced up at Medusa. Even though his beady eyes showed no expression, Medusa could feel him glaring. “A god like you wouldn’t even care about us… if the Apocalypse didn’t affect you!!”

The operatives exchanged quiet murmurs. Medusa narrowed her eyes. “A Goddess of Evil would relish in our destruction!” Nerehc shouted. “The despair of trillions of souls, feeding her with power! The power to create her own era of darkness. The Apocalypse would be a buffet to you, but it’s not! Because the gods are in danger of dying, too! This Apocalypse is more than just the destruction of all life. It’s the destruction of anything and EVERYTHING we ever cared about! Isn’t it?”

Medusa bit her (Nerehc’s) teeth. If Ragus could make any other expression, it would be a quizzical frown. “That includes our existence.” Nerehc spoke further through everyone’s astonished murmurs. “Our souls, the gods.” Even the former DNKG felt anxiety from this knowledge. “The best we know is that only a handful will survive if it happens. This ‘Will of Sixes’ that Cheren mentioned. But even those people won’t understand a thing, even they won’t know if they’ll survive. …And you don’t either. That’s why you need us… don’t you?”

All eyes were on Medusa, including Ragus’s. The goddess looked at the floor with anger in her eyes. She stuck the sword into the floor and knelt down. “…I’m really not sure what’s going to happen. I was told… that Palutena and I would clash at the end… and the winner would decide if the New World is controlled by Light or Darkness. It may be her influence getting to me… but I wonder… if this very prophecy is true. Can I really trust this… Bill Cipher.”

The Negatives looked confused. They haven’t heard that name before. And it was during this moment of confusion that the dark spirit lurking above seized his chance. Medusa glanced up and smirked, seeing him closing in.

“AAAAHH!” A dark energy seeped into Sipa’s body, and the girl began squirming.

“Sipa, what’s wrong?!” Nerehc ran up to his girlfriend.

“Given the horrid state your soul is in, I may not NEED to marry you to take over your body!”
Lucifer’s monstrous voice sounded.

“NO! STOP! Get out of me! Get out of my head!!”

“I’ll help!” Ragus skipped up to Sipa and aimed her hand. “Sleep!”

Instantly, Sipa’s eyes turned dull and shut as she fell on her back. “Sipa!” Nerehc jumped up on her chest to study her face. “Whaddid you do?!” he yelled at Ragus.

“I have the power to control souls.” Ragus said with her creepy smile. “Even lay souls to rest. My powers may be limited to contracts… but dark or weak souls like Sipa or Lucifer’s are within my limits. At this moment, they are fighting in Sipa’s dreamscape. The winner will become the new owner of the body.”

“Are you kidding?! Sipa, wake up!” The doll smacked his girlfriend’s cheek, but dealt no pain. “Don’t let him control you, just wake up!”

“Even if she could hear you… Lucifer could easily overpower her, anyway.” Ragus said. “If you were in there to help, the outcome may be different. I can use my power to transport your soul into Sipa’s body, Nerehc. If you are able to save her, I will allow you back into your real body while Medusa leaves. However…” Her smile seemed to stretch wider. “If you are successful, then you must follow Lady Medusa’s instructions from now on. You must listen to what she has to say.”

“Mmmmmn… mmmmmm…” In her sleep, Sipa was biting her lip and sweating. Her body lightly shook from the struggle taking place inside her. Nerehc couldn’t bear to see his girlfriend this way. He couldn’t imagine how she may have been suffering. “We will.” he said firmly.

“You can’t be serious!” Ynohtna yelled. “Even if your reasonings are true, trusting someone as evil as Medusa is-”

“But.” Nerehc spoke louder to make him silence. “You must only give us instructions, if those instructions will help us find the Thirteen Darknesses, and ONLY the Darknesses! If any of your instructions are irrelevant to the cause, whether it’s burning a town or saving a puppy, the contract is off. Got it?”

“…It’s a deal.” Medusa smirked.

“Good. Now send me in.”

“As you wish… Prince Nerehc.” Ragus approached and used her power to remove Nerehc’s soul from the doll. She placed him inside Sipa’s head, and put him to sleep as well.

“I wish I could be a doll,” Nosam Atalnamid spoke with heart-shaped eyes, “then my lovely Lorac will cuddle with me as she sleeps, as I keep her safe from nightmares. Miss Ragus, could you perhaps do me such an honor?”

“I kinda hope Sipa’s head explodes from all this.” Akurah remarked.

“Three souls fighting inside one body, something like that would happen.” Asia said. (Play “Hazardous Highway” from Kingdom Hearts II!)
Mission: Stop Lucifer from taking Sipa’s soul.

Nerehc immediately found himself skating down a red, vertical road, whipping past black buildings on either side. The road curved up at the bottom, so Nerehc’s rockets began to skate across a flat ground, and he gaped at the view of the horrific dimension. It was a black city suspended above a blood-red sky. There were giant gravestones with deathly skulls, and giant whitish-blue, ghostly flames. “THIS is Sipa’s dreamscape?!” he questioned. “More like a nightmare-scape!”

Nerehc skied across the road that swooped down, up like a hill, then down again as his speed increased. At the bottom, Nerehc zipped up a ramp that flew him to a Spring Pad on a floating piece of rubble, which bounced him around a series of Spring Pads before he finally landed on a path within a part of the dark city. Piles of bones rose up and became Stalfos, which charged over to attack Nerehc. When one Stalfos jabbed its blade, Nerehc leapt overhead, swung his sword, and beheaded that Stalfos and the one behind it. He then stabbed them both from behind, and dodged the remaining one’s sword. When the third Stalfos swung its blade down, Nerehc bashed it upward with his own sword before slicing the Stalfos across the chest.

Nerehc ran out of the alley and to the city square, where bone piles lay around a fountain of red water (to level down on grossness, he called it water). Each of these Stalfos sprouted to life, but Nerehc wouldn’t bother fighting them. Instead, he jumped into the fountain’s center, which propelled him up so he could collect a Fire Soul. Nerehc ran further down the street until some springs bounced him on top of the roofs. Fire Keese swooped around, but Nerehc cut each of them with one slice. He had view of the fountain square from this rooftop route, which would lead him to a grind rail. However, a gravestone blocked the rail’s base, sending Phantom Embers (green flames with yellow eyes) at Nerehc. Nerehc cut through each Ember as he approached the grave, then cut it to pieces.

Nerehc boosted across the rail as it swirled down, then turned straight as it led him between floating buildings. He had to jump between two rails as parts of buildings blocked parts of them, but once out of the midair alley, the rail swerved around numerous floating structures. It dropped Nerehc on another red highway, and the boy skied ceaselessly when a gigantic spiked tire with rockets began chasing him. A spring bounced Nerehc to a parallel road, where he had view of the skull on the wheel’s side. Another spring bounced him back on the road, so he kept running from the tire.

The Death Tire launched rockets that forced Nerehc to dodge left or right, and when he saw a bump coming up on the road, he had to jump. The tire was steadily catching up, but when Nerehc saw a smaller road that curved left, he seized the chance to take it while the wheel kept rolling the bigger road. Nerehc’s road zipped up a hill, with springs that launched him to a series of floating platforms. Nerehc cut away the Red Bubbles that were mindlessly bouncing around, and at the end of these platforms, he used his rockets to glide over to another city area.

Redeads were positioned around the ground, and their high-pitched screams froze Nerehc in place. One of the zombies quickly limped over to begin choking the Demon Prince, who stabbed its head with his sword to get it off. Another Redead limped over, but Nerehc set his sword aflame and chopped it. There was a Fire Soul in a right corner past some Redeads, but not wanting to waste time with the zombies, he stayed close to the left wall to avoid them and go down a city street. Nerehc jumped up some boxes, then Wall Kicked his way across the parallel buildings to avoid the Redeads down below. Once past the zombies, the road turned left, leading to a wide dead-end alley with a well. Nerehc bypassed the Redeads before they could turn to face him, and jumped down the well.

He was suddenly grinding across another rail, inside a pitch-black interior where he couldn’t see
the way. Another rail appeared beside him, and when a gravestone popped up on his current rail, he jumped to the other, then switched back-and-forth when gravestones kept trying to surprise him. The rails brought him to a bigger underground graveyard, where Nerehc hopped across numerous rails, avoiding the stones popping up and the routes that would lead him into a death pit. He noticed a Fire Soul above a rail far to his right, having missed the route it led to. The last rail brought Nerehc through a tunnel, leading him outside as he skied across a lake of red water. He saw another Death Tire whoosh across a highway overhead. At the end of this lake, Nerehc bounced on some springs that would land him on a downward highway—just after the Death Tire sped down.

Nerehc was chasing the tire this time, and it made great distance ahead of him. The tire was dropping mines on the ground, but Nerehc could whip the bombs with his sword and fling them against the tire. At the bottom of this slope, Nerehc began to chase the tire across a wider road with many holes. Nerehc avoided the holes, but made sure to keep in position with the bombs so he could hit them against the tire. Once the tire sustained enough damage, it sped out of control and drove off the edge. Nerehc could now run through a city street at the end of the path—the entrance would’ve been blocked by the Death Tire if it were still active.

The city path was mostly straightforward except for a few crates Nerehc had to dodge. Once he was through, he arrived at a chasm area with giant skull torches that sprouted fire every few seconds. They were scattered around, so Nerehc jumped to the ones that were closer. The torches continued across the chasm as the path shifted left. Nerehc chopped down Red Bubbles that bounced over and threatened to ignite his torches. He made it to a wide area and jumped the torches to a far left corner so he could collect a Fire Soul. Afterwards, he jumped back and landed on a path on the left of the chasm.

The path directed up and around the wall above the giant torches. At every step, a gravestone releasing Phantom Embers blocked his way, so Nerehc chopped up each one. At the walkway’s end, Nerehc skied into a tunnel, which brought him to a steep narrow slope. A spring bounced him to another highway, where he was chased by the first Death Tire again. He dodged two missiles and jumped three bumps before a spring bounced him to the other road, where he was behind the second Death Tire. It dropped bombs that Nerehc whacked with his sword, exploding them on the tire three times before it spun out of control. Nerehc ran onto a wider path, going around the spinning tire and running ahead of both. Nerehc looked back, and gaped when an enormous Ghost Rider flew down from the sky on a motorcycle. The cycle attached itself to both Death Tires and chased Nerehc.

Strips on the front tire caught fire and burned a trail toward Nerehc, so he dodged to a segment of road that wasn’t burning. After a few easy dodges and jumping road bumps, the Ghost Rider’s motorcycle boosted, the bike tilting back as the front wheel was uplifted. It smashed back down, but Nerehc was now underneath the bike, between both wheels. The bike was moving faster, threatening to smash Nerehc with the back wheel. Since the front was dropping bombs, he batted the bombs into the front to do damage. However, he allowed some bombs to pass and hit the back wheel, and soon, the rear wheel popped off its hinge. The slanted backside dragged along the ground and would burn Nerehc if it caught up. Nerehc hit more bombs into the front wheel until it blew off.

The Ghost Rider activated the bike’s rockets and chased Nerehc from the air. He released rows of fireballs that singed spots on the road, forcing Nerehc to maneuver between the diagonal rows. Nerehc boosted to get away from the Rider, going into a city, and when the giant skeleton tried to maneuver down, his craft bumped along the buildings and exploded. His flaming skull flew off, munching loudly as it chased Nerehc, but the boy sped through a tunnel that the skull wouldn’t fit into. The tongue was chasing Nerehc like a snake, so with a look of disbelief, Nerehc jumped back
and pierced his sword through the limb. With that, he kept running through the city until he
overlooked a near-vacant, floating field. (End song.)

Nerehc saw the back of a girl wearing a black dress, with dirty blonde hair. “Sipa!” he called,
recognizing her. “Sipa, can you hear me?!”

“I’m afraid she can’t…” Nerehc looked up at the source of the dark voice. His body was skinny
and black, with bony feet and sharp claws. He had a cracked skull mask that looked like a
demon’s, with horns, and he slowly flapped down with black feathered wings. “Her soul has gone
past its limit…”

Nerehc gasped. “Are you… Lucifer?”

“Yes. I am the Royal Demon Saint, who ate a piece of Sipa’s soul long ago. And now… I will
devour the rest and claim her body. Perhaps in a physical form… I can attain love…”

Nerehc clenched his teeth with malice. “SIPA, SNAP OUT OF IT! Don’t let him take you, run
away!”

“…” Sipa slowly turned around. …The second her milky eyes faced Nerehc, broken areas with
blood appeared on her body. Her left hand was missing, the front of her right foot was missing, the
top left of her head… She looked less like a living, human being. “Sipa…”

“Has destroyed her soul with all of the sins she committed.” Lucifer knelt down and softly grasped
both of Sipa’s arms. “Any human with moderate intelligence can protect their soul from me… but
she is more than susceptible. There is no saving a soul like hers… not unless she becomes one with
a demon like me.”

“DON’T TOUCH HER!” Nerehc blasted a jolt of lightning that struck Lucifer’s head and knocked
him back. Nerehc skied up to his girlfriend. “Sipa, he’s wrong! It’s not too late to save your soul!
You asked me to repair it, didn’t you? Well, I will! You just have to trust me!”

“It isn’t a matter of trust!” Lucifer hissed. “No amount of regret or repent can save this girl! She
could not survive in Heaven OR Hell! She is doomed to fade away into nothing!”

“Sipa… please talk to me.” Nerehc grabbed the girl’s right hand, staring directly at her eyes as his
own leaked tears. “Say something! Anything!”

“Haaaaaa ha ha ha ha ha ha!”

Nerehc kept his eyes sharply opened, hoping to witness some response from Sipa. But his tears
made this impossible. He sniffled and let his head sink. …Nerehc felt something wet and gooey
touch his right hand. It was the bloody stub on Sipa’s left arm. He looked up agape when Sipa
leaned forward and put her head against his chest. “N…N…Nerehc…” Bloody tears leaked out of
her eyes. “Please… save… me…”

“Sipa…” Nerehc put his finger under her chin and lifted her head up gently. He pressed his lips
against hers. Sipa closed her eyes and allowed the embrace to transpire. The pain she was feeling in
her soul felt weaker. The feeling she had lost when Nerehc went missing… she remembered what it
was… the most beautiful feeling ever…

“What a horrible touching moment.” Malladus Uno’s thundering voice spoke as the Demon King’s
torn-in-half spirit poked out of Nerehc’s back. “Why don’t I spare us all this display and heal her
myself? I can bandage her soul, but the ‘good deed’ business will be up to her. It shouldn’t be as
hard as curing my wife’s Candy Virus.”
"YOU!" Lucifer shouted. "Uncle... Malladus?!

"Oh, Lucifer!" Malladus looked up with a casual smile. "I almost forgot you were here. Now I told you not to sneak out of the house, didn’t I?"

"Don’t tell me... Is Father in there, too?!

"Oh, he’s asleep right now. I’m afraid you’ll have to talk to him another time."

"NOOOO! Father, COME OOOUUUT!" The Black Demon lunged at them. (Play “Vs. Malladus Part 2” from Zelda: Spirit Tracks.)

Nerehc slashed his blade lit with violet flames and blew Lucifer back. “Keep him busy while I treat this girl.” Malladus said, sprinkling Sipa with a dark energy from his hand. Nerehc nodded and faced Lucifer with determination.

**Boss fight: Lucifer**

The Demon Saint crawled up to Nerehc on arms and legs, and when the boy suspected him to attack, Lucifer rolled to Nerehc’s right and SWIPED his claw, scratching the human’s face and knocking him back. Lucifer coughed Dark Balls at the Malladus soul, but Nerehc batted them away with his sword. The Demon Saint flew overhead and coughed a rainbow of Dark Balls, which Nerehc bonked away with a vertical spin attack. Lucifer flew far away along the ground, circled around them, and coughed Dark Balls, but Nerehc stylishly batted each one away. Angered, Lucifer shot up at whipping speed and slashed his claw, but Nerehc ducked before stabbing Lucifer in the skull.

He pulled the sword out as Lucifer flapped away. He swung his wings and launched bladed black feathers, which Nerehc blocked. Lucifer spun vertically with his wings sticking up, flying at Nerehc to smash the boy to the ground with them. Bullet-speed, he zipped to the opposite side from Sipa, but Nerehc shot a jolt of lightning that pushed him back. Nerehc got to that side and rapidly swung his blade when Lucifer unleashed a storm of furious claw-swipes. When it stopped, Lucifer suddenly tornado-spun and whipped Nerehc away with his devil tail. The demon focused his sights on Sipa, but Nerehc kicked on his rockets and flew at him, pushing Lucifer away.

"Grrrr!" Lucifer grabbed Nerehc and smashed him to the ground, applying more pressure in the hopes of splattering him. Nerehc lit his sword on fire and cut the monster’s arms, scaring him off so Nerehc could stand. Nerehc got up and swung his flaming sword to send fire waves, which Lucifer blocked with his wings. The wings caught fire so Lucy could launch the feather spears with extra power. Nerehc spun his sword to block some, but he got scratched and scorched, and his weak moment allowed Lucifer to fly up and grab him in his claw. "I’ll bite off every last ounce of flesh until I see my father again!"

"Expelliarmus!" A spell blasted forth and sent the Demon Saint whirling away. Nerehc turned and gaped at the spell’s caster: “SIPA!”

His girlfriend wore a proud smile as she aimed her wand, black bandages around the severed parts of her body. “Didn’t take much time at all.” Malladus said coolly. “You should’ve seen Amy’s Candy Virus.”

“Nerehc, let’s kick this bastard out of here!”

“You got it!” The boy and girl stood side-by-side with their weapons ready. The Demon Saint spun
around and released feather arrows in every direction, which rounded like missiles and closed in on the kids. “Protego!” Sipa projected a shield to protect them, while Nerehc whipped other feathers away with his sword. Lucifer landed, and with his wings in a straight horizontal position, Nerehc grabbed Sipa and flew skyward—the Demon Saint zipped across with bullet-speed, and would’ve skewered them with a successful attack had they not dodged. Nerehc spun like a drill and shot down to pierce Lucifer’s back.

Nerehc and Sipa landed on the ground and readied for Lucifer’s next attack. The Demon Saint stabbed his claws in the ground and sent a scratchy trail to his opponents. While it did nothing at first, a sudden energy shot out of the cracks and scratched them. Lucifer flew up, gripped both kids by the neck, and flipped upside-down as he hurled them back. When the Demon Saint flew at them again, whipping around to slice his devil tail across them, Sipa called, “SECTUMSEMPRA!”

A white slash whipped across the air and sliced Lucifer’s tail clean off. Nerehc seized this chance to fly up and chop off Lucifer’s right wing. With his left wing standing up, Lucifer took cover on a higher one next to the kids’. Feather arrows shot down to them from every direction, and they only had a few seconds to block them. Nerehc jumped up to view his enemy, but quickly ducked when Lucifer slashed his wing.

Nerehc looked at his girlfriend and nodded. He lifted her up so she could aim her wand in Lucifer’s direction and yell, “Reucto!” An explosion burst from the ground, so Nerehc grabbed his friend and flew up, hoping Lucifer was distracted by the blast. Suddenly, the Demon Saint zipped up above them and kicked them down, but Nerehc regained composure and set Sipa on the ground before flying up. Lucifer smirked and vanished in a blink, appearing below Nerehc and flying down to Sipa like a hawk. Sipa readied herself, but Nerehc merely warped in a Dark Portal beside his girlfriend. He thrusted his sword up and stabbed Lucifer’s skull. (End song.)

Lucifer stopped completely, and the kids’ hearts raced with anticipation. The demonic skull slowly cracked... it would crumble any second. “…Heh heh heh. Killing me... is something that could only happen in dreams.”

The kids gasped when the skull broke, and the demon’s dark soul began to ascend. “Oh, well. Perhaps I’ll find a different wife. I know we’ll meet again soon. After all, Sipa still has my soul in her. It is with that soul that she can command a Devil’s Wand. So she will be grateful. …Prince Nerehc…” The boy narrowed his eyes at his own name. “Medusa has already interacted with the Darknesses in the past. According to her, they come from the Original Worlds. I do not know what she wants your people to do... but I look forward to watching.”

**DNK Moonbase**

“Uuuuhhh…” Sipa moaned awake with a sickening feeling in her head. “Hehee... I guess I need to visit... the Soul Doctor, huh, Nerehc?” She grinned weakly and picked up the Nerehc doll on her chest. “...Nerehe?” She shook the doll lightly. “Nerehc, are you in there?”

“No. I’m over here.” The Negatives directed their attention at the human boy. He had yellow eyes behind his sunglasses once again. “I guess Ragus switched me back after all?”

“Nah, Medusa ditched your body and left with her.” Hcaz explained. “You fell like an old rag doll.”

“She didn’t even wait to see if I would save her? That sucks.”

“To be fair, it was a -10% chance that you would.” Arorua figured.
“Hey, I’m the Negative Fi here.” Ghirahim remarked.

“So do we just wait around and wait for Medusa to give us instructions?” Atnort asked.

“That’s the best I can think of. Wait, whaddo you mean ‘we’?” Nerehc cocked his brow at the alien.

“Look, we were a little skeptical at first,” Beewv said, “…but you’re kinda starting to sell us with this Apocalypse business.”

“And we figure we don’t wanna be wiped off the plane of existence…” Avakam followed.

“Plus, we’re surrounded by a bunch of people who like you anyway, so…” Atnort shrugged.

“We will consider ourselves your allies.” Annaira sighed. “But I want the right to bloodbend someone every few hours!” The operatives glared at her. “…Once every day.”

“So is Lucifer gone?” Asia asked.

“For now, it looks like. Hey, do any of you guys know what an Original World is?”

“Hey, look out there!” Ynohtna pointed at the glass wall.

The moon was glowing a mystic white. A small light rose out of its surface and floated close to the window. A beautiful, majestic white bird, with wings and a head shaped like crescent moons, materialized. “Oh, look! She received my call!” Ininap beamed.

“It’s the Moon Goddess, Cresselia!” Ikuyim gaped.

“Sorry I’m late, Dialga and Palkia were arguing over trading cards… Did you children need something?” The crescent bird asked.

Nerehc gasped with realization. “Actually… you CAN tell us a few things!”

So I finally began my job working for Kroger. That means I’ll have less time to update. With that in mind, enjoy every chapter I post from now on. Cresselia is from Pokémon and Nel is from Bleach. Little fun fact, Terry was my grandpa’s name, but the Terry in this story is from somewhere else. Total coincidence. XP Next time, we’ll finish Wendy’s mini-arc, and the Darkness Seeker Arc will be reaching its conclusion shortly. Later.
One Day This Month

Chapter Summary

Cheren’s friends try to help him feel better.

I love character development. X) But yeah, there’s no real action in this chapter, but we will introduce a few story arcs. This is really to give the readers, and myself, a breather.

Chapter 18: One Day This Month

New GKND H.Q.

Noontime at GKND H.Q., assuming space had a time. The alien operatives were enjoying their lunch break, with Makava, Tronta, and Arianna sharing a table. Makava slurped a bowl of squid pudding, Ari had some lovely Floran Carrots, and Tronta had some lime-jelly and toast. “So where d’you think S’prime Leader w’nt off to?” Tronta asked through chews.

“To meet Cheren, I would think.” Arianna replied. “He’s the only one who knew about this ‘Apocalypse.’”

“She has to let ‘im have it, eventually, after keeping it a secret.” Makava figured.

“We gonna be seein’ a shrunken Cheren serving her again?” Tron snickered.

“I hope, ‘cause my mom really liked it when-”

“What up, Fellaaaaaas?” exclaimed the excited tiny alien, Vweeb as he leaped onto their table.

“HEEEEEY, VWEEEEEB.” They waved half-ecstatically.

“What up, Fellaaaaaas?” exclaimed the excited tiny alien, Vweeb as he leaped onto their table.

“HEEEEEEY, VWEEEEEB.” They waved half-ecstatically.

“Wazzat?? You wonderin’ wah Ah look so DIFFEREEEEENT? Well, CHECK IT!” He flexed his right arm. “Vweeby’s been BULGIN’ muscles!”

“Awwwwww!” Makava cooed. “It’s so TEENY and squeezabllllle!”

“Oh, ha ha. But the fact is, this teeny Kateeny’s been workin’ out and the results are noticeable. Or could I not do THIS!” He leaped to the edge of Arianna’s seat, what little room there was, and squeezed his way under her rear.

“Oh! V-Vweeb…” Her purple cheeks flushed red. This was feeling awfully awkward…

But just then, Arianna was lifted an inch over her seat, for Vweeb held her up with both hands as he leaped to the floor. “WHADDYA MAKE OF THAT?!”

“Ooooooohh!” The watching kids gaped in astonishment as applause rang.

“Great goin’, Vweeb!” Makava cheered.
“Little shrimp’s been hittin’ the weights!” a blue cat alien said.

Arianna remained curled and with an awkward expression as Vweeb kept her raised. “And check THIS!”

“Waaa-a-a-a-a-ah-h-h!” Arianna grew dizzy as Vweeb twirled her like a basketball.

“’Round and ’round she goes, when she stops, when I get bored!” And just like that, he stopped her and tossed her high directly above. He leaped, grabbed her right heel with one hand, and flipped her in a loop before setting her down on both feet. “Voila!” The lunchroom erupted with applause. “Wait until Anthony’s big feet get a LOAD of these, and that goes DOUBLE for Kimaya’s bum! Pretty soon, my mom won’t be scolding little Vweeby ever again!” He then leaped onto Ari’s shoulder and told her quietly with a smooth smirk, “Sorry to throw ya around, but keep it between us, I c’n only lift up light weights.”

“Uh… okay.”

He then leaped back to his table, “SO WHO WANTS A PIECE O’ THE VWEEBY, BRING IT ON AND I’LL CRUSH ALL YOU BIGHEADS!”

After lunch, Tron was casually walking down the hall with hands in his pockets. Vweeb and Makava went to go ask Jerome for missions, so he was wandering around, looking for something to do. He looked as Arianna hurried up to him, panting. “Hey, Tronta!”

“Huh?”

“Ummm, huff, huff… Would you help me train?”

“…”

**Gym Room**

Both siblings were later in the training room, barefoot and fists raised. “Just keep an eye on your opponent and don’t let down your guard.” Tron explained. “Basic fighting techniques. You learn as you go. Ready?”

“Mm…” She gave a very light nod.

“’kay… let’s go!” Tron began jabbing his fists as Arianna dodged, but quickly took some punches to the abs. “Come on, gotta move quicker.”

“O-Okay.” Arianna side-stepped to avoid and threw punches back, but slow and soft, easy for Tron to block as he crouched, spun, and kicked Arianna off her feet.

“You have to be quicker than THAT.” Tron said, still eager to fight.

She got up shakily, “Mm- I’m trying.” She still hesitated to dodge as she took quick jabs to her chest, and Tron soon kept her from raising her arms. “AAAAUGH!” With more spirit and fierceness, she flew her fist at Tron’s nose and pushed him back. She looked nervously as Tron regained himself and rubbed his nose. …He wasn’t bleeding. But Ari, on the other hand, felt an odd feeling course through her knuckles. “…Oooooowww!”

“Alright, enough with fists. Try with kicks.” He approached her again and began jabbing kicks at her stomach, Arianna too slow to raise her legs to block those kicks.
“MMM!” Finally, Arianna threw a forceful kick at his stomach, but barely backed him far at all.

“Your feet feel like they can’t even squish a water bug.” He threw a forceful kick and-

“GAAAAAH!” Knocked her on her back.

“I can crush a Stone Buzzy. …Would recommend wearing shoes first.”

Arianna stood up, her face swamped with hopelessness, “Oh, what’s the point?! I could never fight to save my life, let alone be any stronger than a plant.” She turned away.

Tron lowered his guard and walked closer. “What’s wrong, Arianna? Why do you wanna fight so bad all of a sudden?”

“It’s…It’s Vweeb.” She turned back. “He’s improved so much… so much that… he doesn’t need me anymore. Back then…”

“My name’s Vweeb!!” exclaimed the bite-size alien to all the kids on the playground. “I may be small, but I’m gonna stomp every ONE of ya!!”

“Ahhhh! Hey-hey, lemme go!” Shortly after, he was snatched by a blue cat alien and scratched against his backside with his teeth, while other kids watched and laughed.

“Sorry, Shrimp, but my claws feel a little dull today, you’ll have to do.”

“Hey, leave him alone!” Arianna yelled, stomping toward him.

“Or what, Purply? You’ll shoot your deathglare? Well, take him!”

“Aaaaahhh!” He tossed Vweeb several meters over her head.

“Vweeb!” She ran to catch him.

On one of their regular visits to Earth, Vweeb’s head was drenched in snot from Anthony’s nose. “I tell ya, Vweeb, I’m glad you drop by ‘cause no one gets them boogers out like you.”

“Leave him ALONE, Anthony!” Arianna snatched him away, glaring hatefully.

“Awww wook at Vweeby’s girlfriend coming to save hiieeeem.”

With a light blush, Arianna summoned a swarm of hornets from a nearby hive to teach Anthony a lesson. “W-W-Wait, I-I was just kidding, I- GYAAAAAAHHH!” He was then running for his life.

“Phew… thank you, Arianna.”

“It’s always my pleasure, Vweeb.” She smiled warmly.

“Grrrrrrr, rrrrrrr!” Vweeb was trapped under Kimaya’s finger, much too small and weak to push it off.

“Awwwww come on, Little Dude, i’s just one itty-bitty finger, you ain’t gonna let it smoosh ya, are ya?” She smirked witfully.

“Nnnnnn in your dreams, Bobble Head!”

Arianna wore a look of worry when she found them. “Vweeb! Do you need some help?”
“Nah, ‘t’s okay, Arianna, I just need another minute or two to show this brat what for. THIS ALL you can do, Kimaya, my MOM stomps harder!” He smirked with great enthusiasm.

“Yo’ mom ain’t got jip over my ma, and if she ain’t never move, I stayin’ put.”

“Your mom ain’t got the brains to KNOW how ta move, so GIMME your best!” Arianna simply walked away, surprised at Vweeb’s sudden increase in attitude.

Weeks later, she was watching Vweeb and Minksman train with Makava and Liaziana. The yellow-skinned Glomourian had Vweeb pinned under her foot, but he pushed her straight off with his own strength. And that was shortly after Vweeb told Ari what he did.

“I was wondering… if… you and I could do something together. Just the two of us. Like… a restaurant.” Arianna became more red with each word.

“Heheh, I know what you’re trying to say. And… to tell the truth, I kinda felt the same way.”

“Hehe…”

“But… the thing is… I might’ve only felt that way because you were pretty. No offense, but… you’re kind of weak-willed.”

“Oh?…” She frowned.

“I mean, I still like you the way you are, just… as a friend. But, I think, my ideal girl is… someone with more tenacity. You know?”

“Well… I can see why you’d like a girl like that. But… who did you have in mind?”

“Oh, no one in particular. But, see you at Wisp!” And he went to hop on Nebula’s shoulder.

That was just it, wasn’t it. Vweeb changed so much… and she, so little. Just like that, he seemed to grow hundreds of times his size… and she remained small and feeble. It felt so long since she saw Vweeb held against his will. While Ari was under the control of a goddess of plants. She couldn’t defend herself then… but Vweeb supported himself just fine. While he became strong and sturdy like the little caterpillar to a butterfly, enduring the hardships of it all, she remained the little flower, trapped to the ground and watching everything happen, while she could only move as the wind blew her. …She hadn’t the strength to move far at all.

“The truth is… I’ve always admired Vweeb for his courage. He was so small and… so weak… but he always acted so strong. In a way… I saw myself in him. I loved him… for his fighting spirit. And the truth is… I thought he would love me, too. Because both of us were so weak in different ways. That’s why I thought… he would never get any stronger than he was then.”

Tron’s eyes widened in surprise.

“At his size, he looked far weaker than I am. When we first met… it was nice to know someone else had a lack in strength. And I thought he would see it that way, too… and we would be together because we had that in common. But… he got so much stronger. In what feels so short a time. His size doesn’t seem relevant to his fighting skill anymore. He’s gotten so strong that…that I’m the weak one. Even in his eyes. And it made him realize…” her eyes began to bawl, “that he deserves better than me! That I’m just not strong enough to be next to him! That I…” She buried her eyes in her hands, “Why am I so weak?!” The sobs that followed were painful for her brother to hear.

“Hey hey, don’t feel that way, Arianna.” He took her hands and tried to move them away. “Why do
you care what Vweeb thinks, anyway? You should like you for you, be happy you have what you
have.”

“But I just can’t. Sniff. It isn’t just about Vweeb, it’s everyone. Nebula commanding the Nexus,
the way Cheren took down Viridi… everyone’s getting so much stronger, and I… sniff.” She
wiped some tears, “I’m still the same Arianna. Even you modified those discs of yours.”

“Sigh…” Tron put a hand on her shoulder. “I dunno what to tell you, Ari. But maybe being
insanely powerful… just isn’t meant for some people. And if everyone had a strong upper-body,
this whole universe would be a lame Kung-Fu movie. Vweeb just had the fighter inside him, aside
from his snotty Kateenian attitude, he was half-Glomourian, and Arceus knows they only eat the
manliest grub out there. But we’re… hmm… well, I guess I don’t know much about Pumparian or
Harhitan culture. Or what the exact difference is between us. Just don’t worry about matching up
with Vweeb’s level and work on what you can do. Talking to animals and stuff. And um, Vweeb
also challenged me to a few rounds in the Flight Simulator, like now, so… You gonna be okay?”

“Mm-hm.” She nodded.

“Great!” Patted her back (she stumbled forward then). “Later!” And he ran off eagerly.

Arianna wiped the last of her tears and stood there for a few minutes. “I…I will.” A new passion
suddenly burned in her eyes, “I won’t rest until Vweeb respects me again!!”

**Hangar**

“Hey Numbuh 250 Trillion, there’s a ship requesting permission to land.” A glowing green fishlike
alien with an angler’s antenna called. “Says they’re Sector IC of Planet Earth.”

“Granted.” Jerome approved.

skied onto the gray metal floor and froze a trail, tripping all aliens that used legs. A big pink slug
alien came by and mocked, “Ha ha hah,” before slithering over the ice and freezing on contact.
“Uh-oh.”

“SOMEBODY catch that girl.” Jerome called, floating to land before the five operatives. “Sector
IC, welcome to our headquarters. We did not receive an announcement you would be coming, nor
that you were… bringing a friend.”

“Wheeeeee!” Some Wisps were chasing Suki, who was skiing across the wall.

“I don’t wanna stay too long, something weird is happening on Earth, I think it has to do with
Cheren.” Miyuki told them.

“I thought something was happening.” Jerome said. “Just a few hours ago, I suddenly remembered
him again.”

“Come to think of it, me too.” Terry replied, rubbing his head. “And like, I didn’t remember him
before.”

“That isn’t why we came here to begin with.” George said. “One of our operatives was kidnapped;
where’s your sister?”

“Numbuh Eternal was called home by our mother some time ago, she promised to return as soon as
possible. Let us adjourn to the mess hall while you explain your dilemma, you must be weary from
“Hell yeah, we are.” Lola agreed as the five followed him. “Ah’ll take anything what you aliens pass for grub.”

“We appease to the planetary opinion. But please, bring a crate if you can’t control her.”

“Come and GET meeeeee!” Suki swiftly dodged between two Wisps, who consequently crashed into each other.

**Sector W7 Treehouse**

It was probably an overstatement to say Sector W7 was worried about the Apocalypse. Well, they weren’t. Ever since hearing about it, they were all kind of laid back like they always were. It’s not like they knew anything about Seven Lights or Darknesses. They would just wait for something to happen.

The five girls and rabbit were one member short, but April Goldenweek showed up through the balcony door, just when Chimney brought up a query. “’ey, any of you girls just think about Cheren-chan outta nowhere?”

“Kind of. This morning, I had the weird feeling we were a leaderless Kids Next Door, but I got in for some reason.” Mocha rubbed her head. “But it was Cheren that approved me, right?”

“Well, let’s go down and meet her!” Aeincha beamed, braiding Chimney’s hair at the time. “It’ll be great to have a new friend!”
“Aye, it would! ‘Long as she ain’t crazy like you on’nanokos.” Chimney said. (“Gyom, gyom.”)

Blue Station

The Puffing Tom was returning to the station, the children of Sector W7 waiting eagerly. When it came to a screeching halt, the doors opened and passengers stepped out. April looked around for her expected guest, but wasn’t immediately visible among the crowds. When almost everyone had cleared away, she was there in the doorway before them: a beautiful girl of about nine, golden unkempt hair and pretty blue eyes. She wore a long dark-green dress that ended below her knees, a white collar and blue neckerchief on its middle. She wore green slip-on school shoes and long black socks, and held a suitcase in her hands that were folded on her lap.

She smiled casually and walked forward, stopping a few feet before April. She was a few inches taller than Chimney, Aisa, or Apis, but shorter than April. She and April stared at each other, a smile and frown respectively, until the latter spoke, “Hello, Mary.”

“Cousin April—!” Mary threw her arms open to hug, dropping the suitcase on her toes. “OW!”

“Deeeeh.” The seven friends stared and sweatdropped.

Mary was sitting on the ground, weeping and rubbing her shoes. “Ow ow ow. I just finished coloring my nails, now they’re gonna be ruined.”

“Hhmhm.” April smiled, holding a hand down to her. “You haven’t changed, Mary.”

Mary beamed, springing up to embrace her cousin, who hugged back. “April, I missed you so much! I thought I would never see you again, why did you leave, I thought you would stay with me forever!!”

“Mary, you’re overreacting.” April would blush if her cheeks weren’t already in that position. “My family had to move, so it’s been a real difficult time scheduling a visit. I’m glad you finally came, though, I wanna show you to my friends.”

“Ohhh!” Mary looked around April, finally seeing the five other girls and rabbit. “So these are the ‘friends’ you wrote me about! Hi, April’s friends, I’m Mary, and April’s my cousin!” She squeezed April tighter, earning weird looks from them.

“Heheh, we were informed.” Aisa grinned.

“I’m Maaaaary, she’s Aaaaapril, we’re cousins, but we’re kinda like sisters!”

“Yeah, ‘cause April’s a month, and it’s before May, which your name kinda sounds like.” Apis noticed.

“I’m Mary, she’s April, we’re sister-cousins, and we love to color!”

“April, you sure this girl ain’t spend the last couple years in Loony Asylum?” questioned Chimney. (“Gyom gyom.” agreed Gonbe.)

Mary perked, looking at Chimney. “WOW!” She zipped over, poking the standing pigtails. “Your hair is yellow, just like mine!” she tugged her hair. “My name is Goldenweek, too. I like yellow, but I really like blue, it’s very pretty, like the sea. Do you guys live by the sea all the time?”

“Yes, pretty much.” Aeinchcha replied. “You should try crossing it on a little boat.”
Mary just now noticed the tiny on Apis’s head. She gasped, “A dolly!” and she grabbed Aeincha and hugged her to her cheek. “Oh, I love dolls! I have lots of dolls, we should play dolls sometime.”

“I’m not a doll, I’m a Lilliputian!!” Aeincha shook.

“Wow, you talk! My dolls talk, too. I talk with them all the time. I love your blue coat, I love blue things.” She looked at Apis. “Your dress is yellow! Like my hair, only darker. And those are weird circles.”

“Hehe, it’s the fashion.” Apis grinned. “Hey Mary, have you ever read the Bible?” She presented said book.

“Oh, Apis, don’t get someone hooked on-” Chimney began.

“I’ve seen this book in a museum!” Mary took the book and flipped pages. “There were also pretty paintings about God and Jesus. Jesus’s mother’s name was Mary. My name is Mary!”

“I know, it’s a pretty name!” Apis replied.

“That was sad when Jesus died for our sins. Why did He do that?”

“So that we could be forgiven for our sins.”

“But His friends will never see Him again, why would He do that?”

“That isn’t true.” Apis smiled. “Jesus exists in all our hearts, and when we die, we’ll get to be with Him again as angels in Heaven.”

“'Course in my case, I’m an angel on Earth.” Aisa joked.

Mary stared at her next. “Wow… you have beautiful…” Aisa turned to give Mary a better view of her angel wings, but the girl’s eyes directed down, “feet!”

“BLEEEH!” Chimney mimicked barfing.

“Why, thank you!” Aisa beamed. “I’m trying to spread the faction of barefoot pride, and I think it’s working.”

“Do you wanna see my feet? I paint my nails and they’re pretty! I can paint your nails, too.”

“I would love that!”

Chimney inched up to April, scowling, “April-chan, your cousin is acting way too clingy to us. She loves all the things that’s wrong with these on’nanokos.”

“Except for your big mouth.” April noticed.

Mary’s gaze then flew up to Mocha. “Whooooaa!” She stood directly under Mocha’s face, her own head tilted back 90 degrees. “You’re really big! I bet your boogers are the size of boulders!”

“I get that.” Mocha sweatdropped. “Although that is an idea.”

“Here’s an idea! You can make wax sculptures with your boogers! You would have plenty to use.”

“I don’t know.”
Last but not least, she looked at Gonbe. “Oooohhh! This rabbit is blue!” (“Gyom gyom?”) Mary came over to pick him up. “I love blue things! Did you all know that?”

“YES.” they chorused.

“Mary, do you want to see our treehouse?” April asked. “I’ll show you all the paintings I created.”

“I made paintings, too! Crayon paintings. A lot of them are at my home, though.”

“We’ll visit your place sometime, too. Come, we’ll lead you.” April began the walk back.

“Mary, I’ll let you ride on my head if you want.” Mocha offered, placing her hands palms-up on the ground.

“April, do you want to ride with me?” Mary beamed.

“Um… okay.” Figuring she’ll do with a rest of her legs, she stepped on and let Mocha put them on her bushy hair.

“And Dolly, you can ride on me!” Mary put Aeincha on her own messy golden hair. “Now it’s like I’m giant, but I’m really normal size, except on this girl’s head, it’s like we’re the tiny dolls.”

“Um, thank you. But I’m not a doll, just to clarify that.” Aein reasoned, the group swaying on Mocha’s head while she walked.

“How long are you staying, Mary?” Mocha asked.

“Only a few days, but I hope I stay forever, and we can all be friends forever!”

“Take it from me, ‘forever’ with these girls is a long time.” Chimney sighed. (“Gyoooom gyom.”)

**Uno Household**

“AAAAAAHHH! Whooooaaa MAN!” Sheila screamed with utmost shock; the only one of her frozen-faced friends kind enough to point it out.

Chris stood with disbelief and annoyance, his forehead exposed for all. “Is it really so unnatural?”

“Like holy fuck, Man, you’re a combustionbender and you never told us?” Dillon asked. “D’you know how many times that coulda been useful?”

“My dad said it was dangerous, and it kind of is. If I was hit in the head…”

“Still, dude. If Maddy thought you were a freak before…” Mason said.

“I’m going to show her too, but it ain’t gonna look good in public. ‘Oh hey, I have a flammable eyeball on my forehead, stay clear o’ me.’ My headband has a chi-blocker in it so I don’t use it accidentally.”

Melody and Danny walked out of the kitchen eating sea-cucumbers; as they were coming behind Chris, Artie jumped to cup his hands over his forehead, “No-Chris-doesn’t-have-a-combustion-eye, what’re-you-talking-about?”

“It’s okay, I knew about it a long time ago.” Melody said, sitting on the couch.

“YOU DID??” all but Chris screamed, even Danny.
“When I was five, but Mom ordered me not to tell anyone. She said some things are better left unreported. ‘You can tell people about Chris’s Rainbow Monkey underwear, but not something that will make him a social pariah.’”

“Chris wears what now??” Aurora perked.

“No, Cheren does. Sigh, but I guess it’s not funny anymore.” Melody lied down and flipped the TV on.

Very little activity went on here; all of the guests were in negative moods, especially Sector V, who were upset for Cheren and his siblings. Panini and Francis later arrived after their mother told them the news, and the Uno kids told them about Cheren and the Toy Curse. Panini felt terrible for her friend, so she went upstairs to do what she could. Grim and Rachel were talking a few feet from his room. “…De Octogan isn’t mentioned in very many texts, if any at all. Only Clockwork knew about it, but he was afraid to think or speak of it, because he could barely see it even with his power. He confided in me to see if I could sense death befalling because of it. It’s baffled me as well. Even Dialga is afraid when I bring it up.”

“But this Octogan isn’t what happened to Cheren at all.” Rachel realized. “It was that girl’s weird power. Nigel…Nigel thought differently and went up there to fight it. He…He risked his life for nothing.”

“But truthfully, I know now the Octogan exists because of his sacrifice. The Reapers keep track of everyone’s death and the events that led to it. I, of course, stole and burned all the kids’ records, but Nigel’s record left very large chunks missing. One of the Octogan’s many special powers is to hide itself from history.”

“But if the World Government has such a thing, how can anyone beat them??”

“I don’t know. Anyway… I went halfway up Mariejoa to find de Sacred Casket Cheren dropped.” He snapped his fingers and made his Trunk appear, reaching in to pull out the larger casket. “I was afraid to go to the top because of that Octogan… but to recover Nigel’s body, I’ll try.”

“Thank you, Grim.” The reaper turned to go downstairs. Rachel looked at Panini as she followed. “He’s in his room.”

Cheren still lay there, sobbing. There were plenty of hours left in the day, the gray clouds were making room for sunlight, but he had no reason to look or get up. “Um… Chereeen?” sang a familiar Irish voice from his doorway. “It’s Nini! But, um, Ay guess yer use to me by now.” She spoke with a quiet, but spirited tone.

Cheren didn’t look up.

“Um, Ay’m not sure what ta say ta get yer blood pumped—after hearin’ news like that, Ay’m not sure Ay would like to get up either. But it doesn’t hurt ta try, ya know. So why don’t we get our DS’s and rack up those Pokémon points! A’iiight?”

“No. It doesn’t matter, Panini, don’t you get it, NONE of it matters! Our silly rivalries, playing videogames, doing ANYTHING, none of it will protect us from the Apocalypse and nothing will help us STOP it. I kept saying, OVER and over, we were gonna stop it!, but I was lying to myself, we’re all just too weak, and we’ll never get stronger in time to even have a CHANCE at stopping it. We were all just simple fools, WASTING our time, even if I announced the Apocalypse on the day of our births, we STILL wouldn’t be strong enough to stop it! There’s just not enough time, Panini… there couldn’t be. There was never anything we can do…”
“Yah, but… when ye think about it, Dimentia was hours from destroying the universe before yer dad suspected, but he still won in the end. Then Malladus showed up outta nowhere, the Brotherhood almost froze everybody… but our parents had tons of friends, they beat the Brotherhood, they beat Gnaa and Arceus… ya went Fierce Deity and wasted Majora and Viridi. Yer bein’ too hard on yerself, Cheren, you have your power, and people like Sheila, Nebula, or Yours Truly, on yer side. Pit the three of us against Aunt Morgan, we’ll wipe the floor with her.”

“But Dad had experience. I heard what they were saying about that ‘Octogan’… there’s no way we can beat something like that. I’d rather not waste all of our lives trying to fight it. It’s pointless. Plus, they had a problem with me mentioning the Apocalypse. They don’t want us to find the Keys, I bet. They’ll try to stop us from doing it, and I bet they’ll win. Just forget about it.”

Panini sighed. If she knew Cheren… he made up his mind when he did. She turned and was about to close the door, but first spoke. “Remember all those kids that lined up to get yer autograph? My mom’s always sayin’ our Kids Next Door’s different from hers. But we never forgot what we were really about: defending kids everywhere from adult tyranny. …It’s only lately we learned what real adult tyranny is, huh?” Then she left.

Cheren closed his eyes. Wanting to sleep, wanting to drown in eternal silence. Panini didn’t understand… they really didn’t have the strength or knowledge to pull through, not with Grim reviving them over and over again. He didn’t understand if he was already dead, if the Apocalypse came 10 times already and Grim was restarting them, to try and fail, over and over, to learn new skills and stop it. Cheren’s goals were fruitless, Zanifr was laughing at him now, laughing at the utter true fact he was right. If Cheren could start that laughbox up again in Zanifr’s toneless voice, at least he woulda done something.

A familiar, otherworldly jingle sounded. His room darkened as Fi floated in his room. “Master Cheren: I regret to inform you that your image in my memory banks was foggy for a small time. After Master Rachel and Grim informed me of the dilemma, I sincerely apologize for not being there to aid you.”

“Don’ worry, Fi… I don’t need anymore help.”

“After observing your current emotional state, I calculate you in 97% need of comfort. Recommended actions are speaking of your emotional troubles with friends or family, holding someone’s hand for an indefinite time period, or perhaps less morally acceptable, the promise that the ones who caused your sadness are deceased, or asking a timebender to see into the future to confirm what fate lies for you.”

“I think all I need is to be alone for now. I’ll work on my emotional state on my own.”

“If that is your request, Master, I highly recommend you take Panini’s words into your memory. I await the time you draw your sword again.” She vanished.

G.U.N. H.Q.

Sugar sat by herself in a small, ventilated cell, her hands still concealed inside huge cuffs. She no longer desired the nourishing flavor of grapes on her tongue. She had had enough. She looked up when the cell door opened and a GUN agent walked in. “We apologize for our measures, but considering the crimes you took part in, we can’t take chances. As evidenced by numerous missing soldiers over the years, and our responses from the Doflamingo Inc. employees, we are given to understand you are a metahuman with the ability to, not only turn people into toys, but erase the memories of all who knew your victims.”
“Yep.” Sugar replied simply.

“Were you doing this under your own free will or based on Doflamingo, aka your father’s orders?”

“Orders. Sometimes free will.”

“Is this power initiated upon contact of your hands to the victim?”

“I touch them and turn ‘em, yep.”

“Is it only your hands or are there other ways to transform them?”

“Nope, just my hands.”

“Can your power affect inanimate objects?”

“If it could, I’d be out of these cuffs. Except as per the Devil Fruit, clothes they’re wearing can be transformed.”

“So primarily living creatures?”

“Yep.”

“Do you automatically transform them on touch or can you choose not to?”

“Anyone I touch immediately transforms, no control.”

“But you can choose to change them back, or if you’re knocked unconscious.”

“No, only unconscious. Since the toys become inanimate objects, I couldn’t affect them again.”

“If we were to release you, would you continue to transform people?”

“Unless I had these cuffs on all the time, I probly would. Unless I go my whole life without touching anyone.”

The soldier scribbled the answers on a notepad. “Since you’re only a child, the commander would like me to ask… what course of action would you recommend for yourself?”

“Cut off my hands.”

“Excuse me?”

“If you cut off my hands and replace them with prosthetic ones, I could go without transforming people. Better than wearing these heavy cuffs or staying in a cell forever.”

“…I’ll… speak to the commander.” He closed her cell and returned to the commander, informing him of the responses.

“Cut off her hands?” Gunkan said, baffled. “That’s insane! She’s only a child…”

“But our Metahuman Antidote hasn’t been shown to work on Caesar’s Devil Fruits, and it might take years of research until we find a way. Not that I’m for the idea, but we can easily give her prosthetic hands with our technology.”

“Sigh.” Gunkan pinched his nasal bridge. “Amputating a child. The whole idea is… barbaric.”
“Her power is dangerous, regardless. Of course, we could keep her here, but…”

Which would ruin a childhood more, Gunkan thought. Being locked in a military prison for who-knows-how-long, or being robbed of their hands for artificial ones. She may be branded a freak… but Gunkan himself was long beyond that ideology. And Sugar’s powers, the power to wipe people from memory, could drastically affect anyone. She wondered why Sugar herself suggested this, unless she wanted to be rid of her powers, live a normal life regardless of a minor handicap. “…Very well then. If she’s truly sure of herself, we’ll cut off her hands.”

**Midway Peak**

Morgan Uno stood in the dark of her office. Her back was facing him. She couldn’t bear to look at him right now. “You’re awfully distracted, it seems.”

“He was still my cousin, you know. My family. You didn’t have to…”

“I regret it, too.” The King walked in slowly, his armor clanking. “I never would have. But he attacked us. I had no choice. It was for his son that he did so, it did not feel just to take his memories.” He touched Morgan’s shoulder. “I know you will forgive me. You admitted that, for our cause, the less annoyances, the better.”

“…You’re right.” Morgan bowed her head. “But I went too far with my nephew last night. I forgot that they… just don’t understand. The world is doomed, and a bunch of children don’t have the brains to stop it. …We’re the only hope this world has.”

“Yes. But you will be able to see your cousin again. At the end of this month, all of our souls will be lifted to someplace better. We will erase the atrocities caused by the Fusion and live happily with our loved ones. You will also have everything you desired, Morgan. For all you have done for us, you will earn the respect and admiration you deserve.”

“…”

“You do not still have mixed feelings for harming the Kids Next Door, your old friends’ legacy, do you?”

She shook her head, “No. I’m still upset about Doflamingo. It only shows that they’ve gone too far.”

“Indeed they have. I regret what they are now, too… and I never wished to make them enemies. This is a matter of justice and righteousness, however. We will make the world right again.” His cape fluttered as he turned and walked out the door. “Forgive my incursion as well. I felt liable to tell you. I knew him better than you did. The pain is wholly my own.”

**Dressrosa; Sugar’s room**

Team Rupert remained in the deserted room with no real idea where to go. When the soldiers barged in and shocked Sugar, the Music Pikmin were scared off of her, so they were back in Team Rupert’s possession. “It’ll take us years to get home.” Timmy sighed hopelessly.

“I don’t even remember why we came with those Minish.” Rupert said. “I wish we could ask them.”

“Why don’t we use our communicators!” Hikari held the wooden device up. “Hellooooo? Mr. Chipmuuuununk? Where are you guuuuuys?”
“Hikari, those things are wood, they won’t-” Rupert began.

“Hello? Is this the humans?” Cone’s voice responded.

“You forget that these’re Kids Next Door!” Timmy retorted.

“Hello?” Rupert called into it. “Hey, we’re in some kinda toy room. Can you come get us?”

“Gonna need clearer instructions, man.”

Within the next half hour, thankfully, the Minish found their way back to where they split up, followed the route Team Rupert took, and found them in the toy room. “Coulda took longer.” Acro said. “Boy, this mission could NOT have worked better. All of the guards got scrambled when the toys suddenly turned into humans or animals, next thing we know, a firebender and poisonbender human broke into the factory we were gonna investigate and totally wrecked the place! I wonder if Hundred Acres will still reward us for this?”

“He oughta. The toys only turned back ‘cause we choked that girl earlier.” Rupert replied sheepishly. “It was sort of an accident, but it happened. Ah ha hah.”

“Say what now?” Acro asked. Team Rupert proceeded to explain the ordeal.

“Then THAT’S where all the living toys came from.” Pine realized. “Then this totally busted Doflamingo’s company; his kids LOVED to capture Minish and abuse them.”

“We sure are glad we brought you along.” Acro said. “For humans, you sound like you really know your Pikmin antenna-to-toe. …You wouldn’t make bad operatives.”

“I was kinda thinkin’ of joinin’ the Kids Next Door,” Timmy replied, “but my dad always said-”

“Well, I mean the Minish Kids Next Door. Not gonna lie, we never considered having humans join, but that’s ‘cause they’re too big for any Minish traditions. …But since you guys, aren’t, big… Like, you could alternate sizes with some Minish Dust we’d give you, just come on down when… y-you don’t have to, it’d be too complicated, saying it out loud.”

“Nah, I already get picked on by big kids, it’s just worse when they’re bigger.” Timmy said.

“And I want my Jessie to be able to HUG me without squeezing me to death.” Hikari proclaimed dreamily.

“…” Timmy saw Rupert’s thoughtful face and suspected his answer. “Well, it wouldn’t be bad to go through training.”

“Rupert, I just wanna go back to normal size and go HOME.” Timmy whined.

“But come on, guys, think about it. We totally took out that girl, even if we almost died. I bet with some decent training, we could beat up other big kids, too! Not just with Pikmin, but when we’re normal size, this could really help us. You guys could help Jessie beat Shelly, and totally whale on her! Right?”

“Siiiigh.” Timmy was stumped this time. He really did want to help Jessie out, teach the big kids a lesson. He certainly wouldn’t fight them at this teeny size, but the general evasive and planning measures were… “Well, I guess we’ll try it.”

“Me too! For Jessie, I will!” cheered Hikari.
“Then it’s settled!” Rupert beamed excitedly. “Sign us up for MCND Training!”

**GKND H.Q.**

“Sooo to recap:” Jerome spoke, eating toast with an alien butter none of the humans wanted to ask about. “One of your operatives, Maddy Murphy was kidnapped by a ‘Dr. Nefarious’ for undisclosed reasons, but on your way to get our assistance, you got sidetracked to Planet Glacia where you helped a crying ghost princess unfreeze her sister and end a blizzard. Also that Suki has dyslexia as she read a magic glowing rock. Well, minor details aside, the GKND hasn’t detected any unidentified vessels. There is a chance Maddy’s kidnappers have gone to another galaxy. We will work our hardest to track her down and I will inform Nebula when she returns, but we have been terribly busy with other matters, so we cannot guarantee an early rescue.”

“May I have everyone’s attention, please.” Everyone jumped to attention when the Supreme Leader herself appeared on all screens. “This is Numbuh Eternal with breaking news. I have received a call from my mother, who is now on a visit to Earth: Nigel Uno, Numbuh One, the legendary Earth operative of the original GKND… has passed away today.”

There were quiet murmurs from everyone, but Sector IC, Miyuki especially, were awestruck. “I have not received all the details, but he was slain by the leaders of that world. Cheren Uno, Earth KND’s current leader and a member of my council, is in deep grief for his loss. Let us all share a moment of silence and remember Numbuh One’s accomplishments, for kidkind and for our universe. …” She shut her eyes.

“Cheren’s father… died?” Miyuki spoke hoarsely.

“Isn’t he friends with the Grim Reaper?” Terry asked. “Why don’t he bring him back?”

“That goes against the balance,” MaKayla replied.

“If I followed that moral, you and Terry would be dead.” George reminded.

“I… I have to go to Earth.” Miyuki stood. “I have to comfort Cheren. If he’s really hurt, then… he needs me.”

MaKayla stood, “I’ll go, too. George?”

“Can’t.” He shook his head. “I vowed I would bring Maddy back for Chris. …Unless Terry’s willing to die for me.”

“I’ll hang out here, too, to kill George.” Terry snarled.

“I will warp you two if you wish.” Jerome replied. “I will return for you if your teammates desire you.”

“Okay. Get us there now.” Miyuki nodded. Jerome snapped his fingers, and they were-

**Uno Household**

-in the Unos’ front yard in a second. The adults outside were startled by their entrance. The clouds had blown away, the sky slowly fading to pink as the sun was about to touch the earth. After Sector V recapped the story to the two girls, Miyuki told MaKayla, “Let me go talk to him.”

Cheren wasn’t asleep, but he sure felt dead. He felt nothing in his limbs, no inspiration to move them. It was almost bliss to not have to move, not have to fight, get injured, nearly break his legs.
while running. A slower, easier way to await demise.

“Cheren? Hello?” He glanced to the doorway. His visitor was shaded, but he recognized that hoarse voice. “It’s me.” Miyuki Crystal walked in. “They told me what happened. How upset you are. You look a lot like I did.”

“…” His eyes were half open. They read that he would hear Miyuki’s words, but take little attention.

“Remember when you tried to make me happy? You were doing it the wrong way. And it didn’t work. I sort of learned on my own, how to treasure life. What it means to live for your friends. But I’m a timebender. I can see death approaching. And you, Cheren… are going to die.”

He sat up a little with furrowed, curious eyes.

“One day, this month, you are going to die. Maybe it’s by the Apocalypse, maybe you’re killed trying to stop the Apocalypse. My question for you is… how would you like to go out.”

He sat and listened.

“Would you rather sulk here in depression, and wait for the Apocalypse, or would you rather do your best to try and stop it, then die. My timebending does not make it clear, how exactly you will die. Nor does it say if your death will have an effect on anything. It’s up to you, how you wish to die, and how you wish to find out. But I’ll say this… if you don’t take a chance, if you don’t try to stop it, your soul can never pass on to the Spirit World. You will be tethered to the Earth forever, eternally wondering how things could’ve gone if you fought, and that without your strength, the world truly won’t have a chance. True… you did keep dying and dying, and only by Grim’s power did you proceed. Maybe this will happen again. If you had so many chances at life, it’s only better that you learn from these chances. Take all of that experience you gathered… and try your very hardest… never to die again.”

Cheren stared blankly. The tears had dried by now, but his pillow was still damp. He took his glasses, his jacket, slipped on his shoes, and slowly walked past Miyuki out the door.

Rachel stood beside Grim outside, their other friends on the sidewalk as they stared at the horizon. They turned when the door creaked open, and Cheren Uno stepped out. “Grim.” He calmly approached the reaper. Grim turned fully around as Cheren stretched his left hand. “I want you to make… an Unbreakable Vow.”

“…” Grim clutched Cheren’s left hand with his own, and planted a magic spark with his scythe that made energy chains connect them.

“Do you swear you will NOT watch over my friends and I during our adventures, anymore?”

“…I do.”

“Do you promise to never bring us back from the dead again?”

“…I promise.”

“And… will you… go to everyone you’ve watched over, inform them of your assistance, and get their honest word that they will keep fighting, learn from all their experience, and promise Cheren Uno they will continue to try and stop the Apocalypse, with everything they have.”

“… … … ..I will.”
“Then I consider this contract…” they released, “established.”

And so with that, Grim whooshed his staff, and warped off to fulfill his duty. “Cheren…” With a proud, teary smile, Rachel bent down and hugged her son. “After all this… you make both of us proud.”

Cheren pushed her off. “I’m not doing this for you, OR dad. He’s done his part. This is OUR time now. OUR time to hog the spotlight, go on crazy adventures, with CRAZY powers, fighting CRAZIER enemies, until everything is EXACTLY the way I want it be. I’m going up to Moonbase to tell everyone… the Kids Next Door is at WAR with the World Government. Whatever their beef is, we’ll stop them, we’ll destroy ANYONE who tries to keep us from finding the 20 Keys! And you parents… stay home and have dinner ready for us.” He winked.

Rachel wiped the tears away and stood. Her son had nothing more he could learn from her. “And who are YA to give us ORDERS, STOOPID BOY?!” screamed Fanny Drilovsky, her face still streaming with tears. “IF YOU THINK yer gonna be like that stoopid boy, givin’ ME orders, WELL I DIDN’T LISTEN TO HIM EITHER! Hogging ALL O’ the spotlight like he OWNS the place, WELL AY’M STILL GONNA HELP YA, JUST LIKE I HELPED HIM, ‘CAUSE HE WOULDA DIED IF I WASN’T AROUND!!!” She couldn’t keep herself from crying, so Patton was there to smirk and pat her shoulder.

“She is right, Cheren.” Rachel informed. “We are all still going to help. But all the teaching stuff is done, the rest is up to you.” She winked. “And if I see you shrunken again, you better not look ridiculous.”

“Heheheha.” Cheren blushed goofily. It was impossible not to. “…And I know the very first thing I’m gonna do.” With a confident, serious look, Cheren marched off.

Seeing him like this, feeling the power to do anything, made Miyuki happy they had someone like him. She was not even lying about her prediction. It was so strange… she saw Cheren dying, one day this month… and she saw him become more powerful than they could possibly imagine.

Crying is weakness. But when the crying is done, there’s no more weakness. Or some crap. Well, only two more chapters ‘til we conclude the Song Saga. Next time, we learn why this is called the Song Saga. XD Later.
This chapter is the last one of the Darkness Seeker Arc. I sort of regret putting this Wendy level after the Lucifer fight, because I consider Lucifer the main boss of this arc, it’s just it makes more sense for Wendy’s level to come after considering the story. (Takes place before Chapter 19.)

Chapter B-12: For the Second Time

Floop’s blimp

Floop’s blimp was designed like a green dinosaur head, whose eyes were wide and mouth shaped like an ‘o’. There were fins on the sides that looked like the paws of cartoon dogs, and skinny metal legs with shoes hung from the bottom and ran in midair. The guestroom where Chelia, Wendy, the Ice Climbers, and Carla were staying had a round couch with cushions designed like hands. Wendy was nervous at the thought of them dragging her to a cold Underworld. The drinks in the refrigerator were set inside gaping mouths, and the planted palm trees had tongues for leaves. Wendy had never seen anything weirder than this man’s mind.

“WOOOOOW!” Chelia gaped in adoration. “This is the weirdest thing I’ve ever SEEN!” She was holding Carla high. “You look like a kitty, but those wings make you look like a Nimbi! Are they actually real??” She tugged the wings.

“Ow! Yes, please, stop it!” Carla shook out of her grasp and fell to the floor.

“And you talk, too! Wendy, where did you find a thing like that?”

“I just found her egg washed up on a beach.” Wendy answered. “I was pretty surprised, too. You’ve really never seen anything like her, Chelia?”

“No. Why, are there a lot of them where you come from?”

“N-…” Wendy processed that sentence. She never asked Facilier where she was actually born.

“No. But…” She looked up at Chelia, “I kind of thought you would know. You just feel… really similar to me.”

“We do have a few things in common, don’t we?” Chelia sat beside Wendy on the couch. “That reminds me, that was impressive airbending! I thought I had the tournament in the bag before you came along. And you weren’t even using Haki or God Chi!”

“Chelia, what is Haki and God Chi, anyway?”

“Hmhm, you probably wanna know the second one first.” Chelia held her right hand open and spun a mini whirlwind. “It’s called God Chi because it belongs to a god.”
“But doesn’t everyone get bending from a god?”

“Yes, but the gods actually have two forms of their own chi: a weaker, undeveloped form that they give to mortals for them to develop their selves… and a stronger form that the gods keep and allows them to maintain the balance in their own realm. The God of Airbending is Rayquaza.”

“But how did you manage to get ahold of Rayquaza’s chi?”


“And he actually agreed?” Carla inquired.

“Sure! …Well, it was more like this.”

Chelia was 11 years old when she approached Sky Pillar on a terribly blustery day. She wore a pair of hiking boots and thick clothes, and had a mirror shield on her back. Through the raging dust-filled wind, she saw a giant, green armored snake flying above. “E-EXCUSE me! I’ve come to see the Sky God, Rayquaza.” Chelia yelled at the snake.

“I am he.”

“My name’s Chelia; Chelia Blendy. I’m an airbender—you probably know that, and I was reading an old book, and I read… If a bender can defeat the god in a one-on-one fair battle of their strength, the god has to give the bender a portion of their chi. I don’t mean to sound conceded, but I’m a pretty great airbender, and I would love to become stronger.”

“You read correctly. If you can best me, you will earn a portion of my God Chi. If you lose, I take your bending away. The deal has been the same since the decision to grant benders their power. Do you accept?”

“Yes, yes I do.” Inside, Chelia’s heart was racing nervously.

“Very well then… en garde!”

Rayquaza lived up to his name, for his method of bending was unparalleled. The field became an endless hurricane as Chelia struggled to push against it using her supposed great bending, flown into the air when Rayquaza swooped down with momentum. Whirling around like a piece of paper in the wind, Chelia tried to compose and shield in an airball, until Rayquaza zoomed around her in his snakelike body and spun her dizzy. Chelia collided on the ground, not giving up, getting to her feet to throw gust after mighty gust. Rayquaza felt some slight breeze on his armor, but nothing more. He snaked around in the clouds to bunch them together, lightning striking the ground. Chelia frantically dodged these strikes, running in rapid circles to spin tornadoes to suck Rayquaza down, but the god flew down on his own and shot past Chelia fast enough to roll her on her back. Rayquaza was back for the rebound, before she could stand up, he blasted a solid air blast that sent her away farther, landing on her front.

Rayquaza ceased his onslaught and floated calmly before the struggling girl. She faced him with tears streaming her face. “Okay, you won, but PLEASE don’t take my bending away! The kids where I live were teasing and saying I’d never be a good bender, so I wanted to become stronger to prove them otherwise, I’d never be able to show my face again if I go back without bending, PLEASE DON’T!” She bowed with deepest respect, tears hitting the ground.

“You should know better than to make bets beyond your knowledge. I’m hoping this lesson will teach you that.”
“No! NOOOOOO!” Chelia was utterly helpless, lost for strength or for hope as Rayquaza touched fingers to her head and chest, a white light shining. Chelia’s eyes popped open, and grinning maniacally, “REVERSING MIRROR!”

The shield on her back shone, Rayquaza knocked back as his energy suddenly dropped. Chelia stood up filled with pride and power, for an incredible wind blew inside. “Sky God’s ROOOOAAAAAR!” She unleashed a powerful storm of wind from her lungs, solid as stone as Rayquaza was struck, injured, and sent flying back.

He collapsed onto the ground, unable to get up. “Heheh... I found this Reversing Mirror.” Chelia blushed. “It rebounds or reverses the affects of any power. I challenged you to battle and lost so you’d try to take my chi, then I could take YOUR chi instead! Part of my strength is my keen intellect, eh he he.”

“Nnnn... you have deceived me, Child. Very... clever. You have earned the rights to... my God Chi.”

“All right! Great!” Chelia jumped with joy. “Thank you so much! This is the happiest day of my life!”

“Then a few years later, I mastered Armament Haki.” Chelia turned her right hand to an iron black, and the whirlwind turned the same color. “It’s a martial art that’s pretty common. It has to do with channeling your inner strength, but I won’t bore you with a lesson.”

“...Chelia... it sounds like you kind of stole it from him.” Wendy said.

“Just what did you do with powers like that?” Carla asked with a reproving look. “Become a school bully? Tear down a village?”

“N-No, no, nothing like that!” Chelia said in a frantic fashion. “I really don’t know why I wanted Rayquaza’s power! I guess I just felt like challenging him... and I won.”

“You cheated.”

“I won with my brain.” Chelia argued. “But since I got the power, I’ve been feeling really great. I almost never get exhausted because I never run out of breath. I enter contests at my school like the Triwizard Tournament or the Dragon Dances... I hate to gloat, but I’m a really good dancer.” She smiled. “They even put me in some magazines. ...But I never do anything bad with my powers, honest.”

“Yeah, but you sound like you’re pretty competitive.” Wendy said. “Just how many people have god powers to help them win things? It sounds kind of unfair...”

“Well, if I hadn’t been in the picture, I’m sure you would’ve come around!” Chelia laughed. “You smoked everybody in that tournament. You would’ve been the best in any physical contest you entered.”

Wendy blushed at this praise. “Thanks for saying that... but I’m not really that competitive. I get so nervous all the time and I just started learning magic recently.”

“Well yeah, you’re still young. ...But now that I think about it, how come you’re on the wanted posters?”

“I think it’s because my dad is a wanted criminal. They probably think I’m just like him, or they wanna use me to catch him. And even worse, I have this curse that makes wind blow around
wherever I am. It’s better now because of these Chi Stabilizers, but I was homeless for years.”

“That’s really sad.” Chelia frowned. “You really don’t seem like a bad person, Wendy.”

“Thanks. Neither do you. …” Wendy stared at her Lamia Scale wand reflectively. She then reached in her pocket and pulled out a blank piece of paper. She didn’t need to read it to memorize what it said.

Observation: Floop has numerous children acting on his television program. These children are named and credited, but they are not known to act on any other show. The show’s website does not provide information on their origins, and no person anywhere that recognizes their names has been found, nor are they known.

Conclusion: The World Government has accordings with unknown orphanages, who deliver children to Floop to work against their will.

Mission: Rescue the children and destroy Floop’s castle.

“You can’t possibly expect Wendy to do all that herself!” Carla said angrily.

“I don’t!” Facilier argued in a low voice, so none of the townspeople would hear. “Her daddy did, I told him it was too risky, but he insisted!”

“Well, do you have anything to help us?”

“Yes…” Facilier reached under his jacket. “Assuming he’s right and Floop is keeping children hostage, you can rescue them with this.” He pulled out a small satchel, reached in, and extracted a blue treasure chest with a star.

“What’s that?” Wendy asked as the box was handed to her.

“This box is connected to a bigger box in my sister’s basement. Use the Shrink Spell, Reducio, to minimize the kids and put them in here. They’ll warp to that other box at normal size. You can use it to get away yourself, too.”

“What about destroying the castle?”

The doctor sighed. “Honestly… I really don’t know if you’re up for that. If all else fails, just come home.”

“Hey, Chelia?” Wendy turned to the older girl. “Do you watch Floop’s show? What’s it about?”

“Oh, it’s just a silly kids’ show about random kids talking to random monsters (guys in costumes), and they get into random situations.” Chelia explained while brushing the air with her hand. She clearly wasn’t speaking highly about it. “There’s not really a continuity and character development is little kid quality.”

“How come you wanted to visit his castle?”

“Some of the fillers have a fancy stage where kids dance.” Chelia spoke with a more positive tone. “I thought if Floop saw how I danced, he’d let me on the show and I would be a star!!” Her blue eyes became stars. She then gasped, “OOO, we should do a dance together, Wendy! He might let both of us on!”

“What about the children who already work for him?” Carla inquired. “Do you know how he picks
them off?”

“Uhhh… not really. Well, maybe he’ll tell us if we ask!” Chelia grinned.

“Wendy, look!” Sonny and Donna bounced over and opened their coats: dynamites and guns were strapped on the inside.

“We stuffed our coats full of things that go boom!” Donna cheered.

“We looked up demolition websites and know exactly where to plant them!” Sonny followed.

“We’re gonna make Floop a REAL star!” The twins’ devilish eyes became stars.

“You guys, shhhhh!” Wendy jumped over and gestured them to hush. “We’re supposed to keep it a secret!”

“Wendy, is something wrong?” Chelia asked.

“Eek!” Wendy flinched and turned around, sweating with anxiety. “Hehehehe, they’re just kidding, we’re not planning anything, hahahaha!”

“You guys, shhhhh!” Wendy jumped over and gestured them to hush. “We’re supposed to keep it a secret!”

“The twins’ devilish eyes became stars.

“Wendy, is something wrong?” Chelia asked.

“Eek!” Wendy flinched and turned around, sweating with anxiety. “Hehehehe, they’re just kidding, we’re not planning anything, hahahaha!”

“Hm hm hm! Who are those kids, anyway, your cousins?”

“No, they’re… Well, I dunno what they’re for.”

“Comic relief.” They chorused.

Negaverse; DNK Moonbase

“Is this true?” the majestic moon bird, Cresselia asked with an echoing voice. “Medusa was causing chaos in this world? Using your body as a disguise?”

“My cousin feels terribly violated!” Ynohtna shouted. “He’s going to need therapy, stitches, and all that stuff that’s awesome in this universe! Ahh!” Nerehc kicked him away.

“Listen, Moon Chick, you know about the Apocalypse that’s coming up this month, right?” Nerehc asked the spirit rudely.

“Oh… You are aware.”

“Yeah, I have a couple questions: first, when did you gods plan to tell us about something like this?”

“Hmmmm… It was our intention, but we didn’t know the correct time. The Apocalypse is beyond the gods’ control. We did not know when, or even if, the Twenty Keys Prophecy would be unveiled by some other means. Even Dialga did not know… and it resulted in many fights between him and Palkia. And guess who had to work THOSE out. Me. Perhaps we were mistaken, keeping the secret. With only a month until it is time, we wonder if the prophecy will still transpire.”

“I was told about the prophecy from a person called Sanula. Said he comes from the First Dimension. He said that the Apocalypse would happen when the Space Gate crumbles apart in someplace called the Netherverse, and then the moons would explode. Would the Moon Goddess know anything about that?”

“Yes. She would. I created the moons as the primary locks and gateways leading into the Netherverse. I regulate the supernatural energy projected by the moons. But Palkia’s powers are
stronger than mine, so if his Space Gate explodes, my moons will not withhold. Children, I’m sorry
I do not have more knowledge to divulge unto you regarding this matter. But I promise to inform
the other gods of Medusa’s-”

“Before you do,” Nerehc intervened, “know that we’ve already accepted her help. She seems very
knowledgeable on the Thirteen Darknesses, so we have no choice but to rely on her guidance.”

“Do not let her deceive you. True, Medusa has this knowledge, but she-”

“Feels like the only god who hangs with us more than any other god in this world. I hate to say it,
but in the Negaverse, rules are a little backwards. Medusa might get in trouble for messing with
people in the Posiverse, but in here, she can do whatever she wants. …Not that we would let her, of
course. Only until we find the Darknesses.”

“…The tides are truly changing. In a time like this, even I’m not sure if ancient rules still matter.
Perhaps this was part of the prophecy. But I strongly caution you, children.”

“Got it. One last question, Moon Chick: what are the Original Worlds?”

“The Original Worlds are dimensions that are said to have been created long before this one. Even
we have never seen them, for they were designed by other gods. We have always believed that
Arceus – or perhaps a different deity entirely – designed this world based on fragments from those
Original ones. We called this phenomenon the Dimensional Fusion. People, locations, energies in
this world have an original parallel from those worlds.”

“Did they come before the ‘First Dimension’? Or after?”

“The First Dimension is so named because Arceus created it before this world, or any of the others
under his eye. However, even we do not know when the Original Worlds were born. We do not
know if Arceus was the ultimate creator or not.”

“Even the gods don’t know…” Nerehc mumbled softly. “…Do you know if there’s any way to get
to those worlds?”

“30 years ago… one man has. Dialga and Palkia sensed it through a series of tremendous rips
through the Dimensional Byway. His name was Stanford Pines. I did not ask them how he did
this.”

“A Positive, huh? …Well, thanks. You don’t have to stay, anymore.”

“The Tides of Time are changing, my children. Make sure your boat remains steady… or you will
be destroyed.” The goddess flew into a glowing white portal and vanished.

“…Do all these gods leave with a metaphor?” Nollid asked.

“So what are we going to do now, Master Nerehc?” Ininap asked.

“Hold on!” Sipa spoke up. “Before all this happened, weren’t we bringing Egroeg and AlyakAm to
the Posiverse?”

“Oh, yeah. I totally forgot about them. Are they even here?”

“We haven’t seen them all since yesterday!” Alol answered in her perky attitude. “Probably blew
us off like a couple-a airheads!”
“I wonder if they’re meeting their Positives right now?” Nerehc said. “I guess we should go check on them.”

“Maybe you should rest.” Nollid suggested. “What with Medusa turning you into a toy and violating your body…”

“Huhuhu.” Nerehc shuddered. “I wanna lie down just to get that idea out of my head.”

“Sorry. I’ll just fly to Dnaleci and make a portal to its Posiverse to look for them. Any of you guys wanna come?”

“Meeee!” Ikuyim jumped over to him. “I’d love to visit my Positive!”

“Alright, you guys go ahead and do that.” Nerehc figured. “As for the rest of us… I guess there isn’t much to do but wait for Medusa.”

**Posiverse; Foogly Mountain**

“Wendy, look! There it is!” Chelia pointed excitedly.

“Huh?” The red-eyed girl and her friends raced up to the window.

The blimp was flying over a steep, mountainous region, approaching a castle that was perched precariously on the side of a mountain. From far away, it looked like a group of stone needles, for its pale brown color matched that of the mountain. “It doesn’t look luxurious.” Carla said.

“I agree, it’s a weird place to film a TV show.” Chelia said. “Why do you think he set up here?”

“Duh, because he’s an evil mastermind- OOMP!” Donna said, before Carla snapped her mouth shut.

A large hatch opened on the side of the castle’s base, ready to allow the blimp inside. “Hold on, is the balloon even gonna fit in there?!” Wendy asked with worry.

Sonny gasped, “We’ve fallen for his trap!! SAY YOUR PRAYERS!”

“NO, I DON’T WANNA DIE!” Wendy cried.

“Wait, Wendy! Look!” Chelia yelled.

A platform extracted from the hatch and allowed the blimp to land. The balloon and bottom legs retracted into the vessel before the platform pulled it inside the hatch. Everything turned darker as they felt their room pulling in further. Then, with a loud CLANK, they stopped.

A faint light shone on the kids so they were able to see each other. They looked around in the darkness until Wendy spotted someone else under a spotlight. “It’s Mr. Floop!” she exclaimed. They faced the backside of the man wearing the red velvet coat, sitting in the blimp’s pilot seat. “Mr. Floop!” Wendy jogged over to him. “Is this part of your castle?”

The chair swerved around—Floop’s eyes were bulging, his whole body puffed like a balloon, and POPPED. A small, mechanical device remained. “YEEEEEK!” Wendy nearly fainted from shock. “Whaddid-I-do, whaddid-I-do!!”

“So it was a balloon all along?” Carla asked as she approached the device. It had blow holes on its top and sides, and long thin metal sticks. “Astounding… Was it actually a balloon during the Glitz Pit, too? If it was, how was he able to animate it so realistically?”
“Maybe Mr. Floop is magic!” Wendy guessed.

“Are you children tired of the world outside?” a man’s voice spoke from nowhere. “Tired of the parents yelling, the bullies pushing, and the teachers assigning homework? The critics critique, the dogs bark, and that apartment above yours keeps playing loud music while you’re trying to sleep? Then you don’t have to be. Not anymore. Welcome... to my home.”

Lights came on—before the kids knew it, they were standing in an orange sky. There was a spinning platform designed like a tornado, floating several meters above. Fegan Floop stood on the platform—actually, he floated a few inches above it. His back was facing them, but his arms were crossed, and they could see his gloved hands. Each hand stuck up its index finger, which had a white smiley face drawn on it.

It’s a cruel cruel world
And all you little boys and girls
His thumbs stuck out.
And some mean, nasty people
Want to have you for their supper
He stuck a new finger up after every few words, then he whipped around and shouted,
BUT if you follow me
You can all be free...free...
You can all be free
As a bird on a big TV
If you dream... my... DREAM!

The kids were uplifted on giant eyeballs that rose from below. Wendy and Chelia flailed their arms and legs, unable to balance on the spinning balls, but the balls positioned so they wouldn’t fall over. Strange, humanoid creatures with misshapen, miscolored faces and clothing that clowns would wear were balancing on small, flying planets. As Floop danced and directed his arms and legs, the flying spheres spun and zigzagged around the air. Attached to Floop’s platform were bikes that were being pedaled by children, spinning circles around their host.

It’s a cruel cruel world
Full of little boys and girls
And the selfish mean, nasty people
Nasty nasty nasty NASTY
BUT there’s a way
You can make your day
You can laugh, you can smile
Sonny and Donna began cartwheeling in midair above their eyeballs, and Wendy was going to barf if this spinning kept up. They moved faster and faster around the center, the orange sky turned brighter, and Floop’s smile grew bigger.

You can dream my dream
You can have it all with me!
You can dream MY dream!
You can dream MY dream!

DREAM… MY… DREEEEEAAAAAAM!

The brightness increased at the raise of his voice until white completely swallowed the area. Floop clapped hands—the momentum immediately stopped as the kids plummeted to the floor of what they assumed was the hangar. “Of course, that’s just the beginning.” Floop said with a grin, viewing the guests from his floating hand platform. “Wendy Marvell and Chelia Blendy, I am delighted to welcome you and your guests to Fegan Floop’s Whackatorium! This is the place where all of the wondrous magic happens!”

“So you really ARE magic, Mr. Floop??” Wendy said with admiration.

“Uh-hove course I am, my dear!” Floop chuckled, showing his bright grin. “How else do you think a man can FLOAT so perfectly?!” He leapt and performed a splits while floating in midair.

“Perhaps those strings that are attached to you have something to do with it.” Carla pointed out.

Floop looked at the ceiling, where the strings that were clearly holding his body originated from. “Oh, those? No no no, those are just…?” A question rose in Floop’s head. “Who said that?”

“I did.” Carla said firmly.

The host cocked a brow at the talking kitten. Floop flew down using his strings and set foot before the visitors. He bent down, picked Carla up, and raised her high. “A cat… with wings… who speaks… English… By far the weirdest creature I’ve ever seen.”

“I am about tired of everyone saying that about me. Just look at all of these so-called ‘actors.’” She glanced at the misshapen humanoid creatures, who were speaking in squeaky and squiggly voices. “Weirdest costumes I’ve ever seen.”

“Yes, but ‘guys in costumes’ can only sell so well.” Floop shrugged. “But this cat is a real flesh-and-blood creature! Isn’t she?”

“She’s been that way ever since she hatched from her egg.” Wendy replied.

“An EGG! HAH! Well, then it’s settled, this fluffy creature will be the newest addition to my show!”

“Can me and Wendy be on the show, too??” Chelia asked brightly. “We would be perfect dancers! Er, I would at least, I haven’t seen how she dances. I mean, I could train her either way.”

“I really don’t want to be on your show.” Carla said. “Now please, put me down.”
“But I HAVE to study you!” Floop swung Carla around, his face shining. “I have to do X-rays, know where you’re from, know your lifespan, then I’ll make tons of CLONES of you!”

“ABSOLUTELY not!” Carla jumped away and got beside Wendy. “What kind of man are you to treat creatures like pieces of machines that you can study? Is that what you’re doing to the poor, innocent children here?”

“Carla!” Wendy silenced.

Floop seemed to flinch at that accusation. “Ho ho, you’ve got it all wrong!” he said more spiritedly. “The children here love it in Floop’s Whackatorium! You, Rodrick, come here!” He gestured a tall brown-haired boy in casual attire to come over. “Don’t you love it here in my castle?”

“Hyeah I do!” Rodrick replied with enthusiasm. “Floop’s Whackatorium is the best! I don’t ever wanna leave!”

“And what do you like most about it?”

“What I like most is… uh…” Rodrick was lost for words. “I like… I… uh-oh… I can’t remember my line!” The boy was starting to panic. “Don’t remember! Whaddo I say! Ohhh- eeeett!” Wendy and Chelia stepped back when he began twitching.

“THUMB-THUMBS!” Floop snapped his fingers. Two humanoid creatures, whose head, arms, and legs were all thumbs, wearing red shirts, marched in to grab and take the boy away. The Thumbs bumped into the wall beside the door, but resumed carrying him. Floop turned to the kids with a bright smile. “Thumb-Thumbs! Very reliable, despite being all thumbs.”

The kids were a little horror-struck by what just happened. They didn’t say anything about it. “Mr. Floop, where do all these children come from?” Wendy decided to ask.

“The children come from here, of course! They live here, they eat here, they love it here, so nothing else matters! The outside world is cruel, but here, the children are safe! They play together without a care in the world! And best of all, I can film all their crazy antics and make one heck of a popular show! (Which, naturally, pays the bills.)”

“But the children do have parents, don’t they? People to teach them right from wrong?”

“Heh heh, don’t you watch my show? The Fooglies do that! See?”

A black-haired boy was holding a bat ready as a blonde girl hurled a baseball. “Weegily-de!” A purple Foogly with a stretched mouth jumped in the way. The ball got lodged in its stretched mouth, then the boy swung his bat and struck the right side of the mouth. This forced the left side to stretch longer, causing the Foogly to fall in that direction. The floor pressed the extended side, forcing the right to grow longer, and for the ball to fly out. It fell into a coffee cup, which was drunk by a Foogly with a big mouth. When the ball got stuck, another Foogly performed the Heimlich maneuver and shot it out like a bullet. It bounced around aimlessly before breaking through a window.

“Now, kids, this is why you don’t play ball in the house.” Floop spoke informatively.

“We’re sorry, Mr. Floop.” The kids bowed.

“I’ve heard of cartoons that make kids seem more competent than adults, but this is just uncharacteristic.” Carla said reprovingly.
“HAH ha ha! Come on, Carla, it’s funny!” Chelia laughed. “Maybe we’re a bit more mature, but it would be fun to explore it a little! Plus, we can make a few extra bucks.”

“Well, since you’re excited about it,” Floop said, “I’ll look and see if I have some room to squeeze you. I’ll just be a moment, so wait here until I get back!” The man threw his arms up, and flew away with his strings- “OW!” He bumped his head on the floating platform. “Oh, Floop!” he swore as the strings pulled him into a wall hatch. “Children, take five!”

The children fast-walked in a weird fashion and piled out of the room, leaving the Fooglies to watch the kids.

“Wendy.” Carla whispered. Wendy bent down to her level. “I hate to say it, but there seems to be a little truth to Mr. Facilier’s writing. They took that Rodrick boy away like he were a broken machine.”

“You’re right, Carla.” Wendy whispered back. “I wonder if Mr. Floop is using magic to brainwash these kids.”

“Well, Rodrick forgot his lines, so it looks more like child slavery. Also, I haven’t seen one ounce of real magic in this Phonatorium. I’ll be surprised if little kids even buy this crud.”

“That guy was totally flying!!” Sonny and Donna exclaimed.

“Hey, Donna, if we pull our eyes out, will they fly and spin and dance, too??”

“That’s something worth checking out, Sonny!” Donna drew out a screwdriver.

“Stop!” Chelia got between them to hold them back. “That’s not a good idea, guys!”

“Wendy, we should look around for any of the kids and try and get answers out of them.” Carla suggested.

“You’re right.” Wendy and her cat approached a door on their right, but two Thumb-Thumb guards stepped in the way. “Uh, would it be all right if I went to the bathroom?”

“I would like to go, too!” Chelia yelled, happily jogging over.

“Me three!” Donna joined them.

“Me!…” Sonny was about to come over… but his expression sunk. “Wait… I just realized something.”

“What’s that?” Chelia asked.

“Without Mister Facilier… I’M THE ONLY BOY IN THIS GROUP!!” The male Ice Climber gripped his head and rolled around on the floor. “I’m gonna turn into a girly boy and want girl things and want to hang out with girls! QUICK, BRING ME A FOOTBALL!”

One of the Fooglies casually tossed him a football. “Get ahold of yourself.” Carla stated. “At least you still have a separate bathroom. Come on, let’s go.”

A Thumb-Thumb walked from the front, and another from behind as they escorted the kids to the restrooms. The parallel restroom doors had a “?” and an upside-down “¿” respectively. The girls decided to enter the latter, while Sonny took the “?” bathroom.

The toilets inside the stalls were designed like tornadoes of different color. “…I sure hope we don’t
get sucked in!” Chelia said perkily.

“Me, too…” Given their suspicions about Floop, Wendy and Carla felt like they would be.

“Hey, is your kitty potty trained? I’d love to see that!”

“I’m curious as to whether or not you were trained.” Carla retorted. “Privacy, please.”

Chelia took the far right stall, Donna had the middle, and Wendy and Carla the left.

“Wendy, up there.” Carla whispered, pointing her paw upward. There was an air vent on the ceiling. “You can turn small with the Reducio spell and I’ll carry you up and through that. Then we can search around the castle.”

“Good idea.” Wendy said softly. “But how will you open it without Chelia noticing?”

“Wendy, if Floop is the madman we think he is, Chelia may be in danger, too. Perhaps now is the time to tell her the truth.”

“What? Carla, I can’t! What if she doesn’t believe me, or thinks I really am a criminal?”

“But Chelia’s powers can benefit us. Plus, it’s only fair to warn her so that she can keep her guard up.”

There was a knock on their stall door. “Wendy, is that you two whispering?” Chelia asked. “What’re you talking about?”

“N-Nothing!” Wendy said panickingly.

“Wendy, just tell her!” Carla insisted.

“I…I can’t! I’m just getting to know her and she seems really sweet, but if I tell her what I’m trying to do, I…”

“You want to tell me something? Wendy, what’s going on?” Chelia asked again. “Are you having trouble with the toilet?”

“SHEESH, Wendy, when’d you become a big girl all of a sudden?” Donna remarked jokingly.

“N-NO!” The statement made Wendy flush, and her anxiety grew. “Uh-I-I, uh, I… REDUCIO!”

“Wendy, what’s-…” Chelia barged and Donna peeked from behind. A tiny Wendy and Carla were on the toilet’s edge.

“O-kay, maybe not.” Donna followed.

“DARN IT, Child, you shrunk me, too!”

“Sorry, Carla!” Wendy tried to balance. “I was feeling a little claustrophobic and- AAAAAHHH!” She grabbed her cat and fell back in the toilet.

“WENDY!” Chelia ran in and tried to grab her, but the tornado-like toilet slurped them down impossibly fast.

“WAAAAAAAH!!” Wendy and Carla swirled around and around as though the pipes were purposely designed like a spiraling waterslide. “IS THIS WHAT ALL OUR POOP GOES
“THROUGH?”

“A LADY SHOULD NEVER ASK THAT, WENDY!” Carla cried.

“WHOOOA!” They flew out the pipe and into a sewer river that washed them along.

“HANG ON!” Carla grabbed the red-eyed girl and forcefully flapped her wings to pull them both out. She managed to fly up and set Wendy on the sidewalk before she quickly tired out.

“Phew… Thank you, Carla.” Wendy breathed to ease her racing heart.

“My pleasure, huff…” Carla gasped for air. “Now change us back to normal.”

“Right.” Wendy grabbed her wand. “Re…” She realized something. “Wait a second… I DON’T REMEMBER THE COUNTER-SPELL!! AAAAAH what’re we gonna do, Carla!! We’re gonna be stuck small and get eaten by one of Floop’s crazy-looking sewer rats, waaaahhhh!”

“ENGORGIO!” Carla shouted. “I remember the doctor using it on a pebble during one of his demonstrations.

“Oh… phew.” Wendy’s anxiety faded again. “Engorgio.” She stretched them both to normal size.

“Sigh. That could’ve gone worse. Now let’s get back upstairs and search this loony museum.”

**Floop’s Throne Room**

“Mister Minion!” Floop spoke spritely to the man in white clothing, black hair, and glasses. “Fashionably still here, as usual!”

“Mr. Floop, fashionably *late.*” Mr. Minion bowed. “I’ve been observing the cameras, and I see you brought quite the party with you. The Sky Dragon Wendy Marvell.” He gestured to the small screens that were around Floop’s hand throne. One had an image of Wendy’s curious expression.

“The daughter of Red Eye that former Corporate President, Norman Osborn reported all those years ago. The portal to Mariejoa is functioning perfectly. What are your plans for detaining the child?”

“Actually, I don’t think I want to do that just yet.” Floop clamped his hands and spoke in a sure and professional manner. “Wanted felon though she may be, that hair and those eyes are WAY too beautiful to throw away! They pack a kind of weirdness that Floop Industries admires. She and that pink-haired girl, Chelia, would become the most popular characters on my show! And a talking cat with wings, HAH! MARVELOUS! Those little coat twins seem like a fun bunch, too! Mr. Minion, withhold telling the World Leaders until I make actors out of these kids.”

“Mr. Floop, you can’t be *that* demented.” Minion said seriously. “This girl is the daughter of a dangerous revolutionary. For all you know, she could be in here on her father’s orders, you could be in danger!”

“Mr. Minion, can I ask, when this ‘daughter’ of Red Eye’s was reported 11 years ago, did President Osborn provide us any physical description?”

“N…No.”

“Mr. Minion, I’ve heard of numerous people, girls even, who have red eyes, so what singles this one out? I mean, Red Eye doesn’t even have blue hair!”
“She is an airbender, clearly possesses magical abilities, and her speed is rivaled only by the legendary Mobian, Sonic the Hedgehog!”

“So maybe she’s Sonic’s daughter! She does have pointy ears. I heard he fell in love with a human princess called Elise, maybe they had a daughter. Plus, didn’t Sonic’s Super Form have red eyes?”

“MR. FLOOP, it doesn’t even matter whose daughter she is!” Minion shouted. “We are under orders to capture her and turn her in to the Government! It is because of this girl that Master Churchill’s first apprentice, Norman Osborn, was killed! If you aim to fill his shoes, then Master will respect you greatly if you capture the child that caused him grief!”

“She was a BABY!” Floop yelled. “SHE could not have been old enough to kill him! It was RED EYE that killed President Osborn! And my castle is meant to be a world of fun and dreams. I will not treat my guests rashly.”

“Mr. Floop! The Sky Dragon is in the castle sewer!” a man from the PA reported.

“What?” Floop ran to his throne and saw one of the monitors depicted Wendy and Carla running down a sewer passage. “How in the world did she get down there?”

“This is exactly what I was talking about!” Minion stated. “We have to catch her before she starts causing damage! We have to call the Leaders.”

“No.” Floop raised a hand, gesturing ‘stop.’ “I can handle this girl. Mr. Lisp, activate the defensive holograms! Even if I have to trap her, I want to speak to this girl myself.” (Play “Labyrinth of Deceit” from Kid Icarus: Uprising!)

Stage B-9: Labyrinth of Weirdness

Mission: Find out Floop’s intentions.

The sewer passage was lit with wall torches, and seemed to stretch on for miles as Wendy dashed through. She sidestepped to avoid the Foogly-designed Lockjaws, then a Dash Panel redirected Wendy down a left hall. “The castle really does not seem that large from the outside, how is there this much sewer underneath?” Carla questioned.

“I told you, Carla, magic!”

“And I told you I don’t believe it.” Wendy eventually ran up a river that sloped at 90 degrees, and the passage after that swerved up and over like a loop. She ran into a Spring Pad that rapidly bounced her around several springs across a bright passage. The last spring shot her into a polished hallway with a red floor designed like jigsaw puzzles, and white walls. “Phew, we made it back.” Wendy sighed as she kept running. “Let’s look for the children- AAAAAH!” The floor ahead of her crumbled away, exposing a deep chasm—Wendy took a tremendous leap, Carla grabbed her and tried to carry her over… “AAAAH!” The cat lost her grip and dropped Wendy.

“AAAAH- uuh!” Wendy hit solid floor. She sat up and stared confused; the endless pit was just an illusion. “…Sigh. That’s my third jumpscare today.” She got back on her feet and turned a left corridor. The hall was growing wider, and as her speed increased, the dimension stretched, turned blurry, and white. “WAAAAH!” She suddenly ran off an edge—she was in a dimension where the sky was one of those stretchy, abstract paintings. Wendy collided onto a floating red platform designed like the floor of the actual castle. There was a group of Flyer Fooglies (with round centers that had propeller blades) making a path, so Wendy bounced across them to a new platform.
There was a lone Flyer Foogly beside this platform, and the next path seemed to be higher above. Wendy began spin-jumping on this Foogly, and her airbending conjured a whirlwind that propelled him upward. She noticed one of the other Fooglies in the row had a Fire Soul above him, so Wendy decided to do the same maneuver to collect it. She returned to the previous Foogly and used it to float up to the new path—she needed a moment to let her sick stomach settle. This road had huge, rectangular blocks on either side (the top of the left ones seemed to have collectables), and the central path was guarded by Thumb-Thumbs. Wendy boosted straight through, arms outstretched to either side as she unleashed wind beams to knock them down.

At the path’s end, Wendy began grinding across an ever-extending tongue coming from a screaming Floop face. Ignoring how disgusting this was, the tongue spiraled downward and directed into a dark-red twister statue. Wendy ran around and around down the twister as it brought her into a new hallway. “This man just enjoys toying with our minds,” Carla said. “I think finding an exit should be our main priority.”

“We can’t leave the others behind. Let’s just keep looking.” The hall seemed to go straight, Wendy ran along and dodged left and right to avoid the opening trapdoors. She dodged some giant Floop heads that swung down from the ceiling, then had to perform a drift when the hall swerved left and downward. “Look, Carla! It’s the Children’s Quarters!” There was a huge label over said door in the distance. “Pretty soon, we’ll know if—OOF!” She collided with the wall painting of the hall leading to the Children’s Quarters. “Owwww… okay… Wait, there it is!” Wendy saw another Children’s Quarters on her left, so she ran the distance, sidestepping the floor panels that popped up on the way.

“We, DON’T!” Carla was quick to catch up and pull Wendy to a halt. She stopped just before colliding with the wall painting. “Honestly, dear…”

“Sorry.” Wendy turned a right route, which had bars over the floor that she had to jump—she saw the glares of glass over some of the bars, so with those, she had to crouch and slide under. When the hall turned left, it seemed straight and empty, but the floor sunk partway, it sunk again, and inch-inch-inched a bit lower as Wendy kept running. Finally, the jigsaw ground broke away, and she ran across a dark, metal passage that swerved right. She halted before a chasm where rows of waterfalls poured out of pipes. “Glacius!” Wendy cast a freezing spell on the falls so she could Wall Jump across them. Once across, she entered a tunnel that sloped down, and the bright sky of outside hit her eyes.

“Whooooooa!” The sight was amazing in Wendy’s eyes. She was now sprinting across a beach, viewing the beautiful sunrise in the distance. “We made it outside, Carla! And it’s so amazing!”

“Ooooooooodd…” A whale leapt out of the ocean, and its four tails flapped up in the air as it slowly splashed back in. A majestic golden eagle screeched in the heavens, creating a strong breeze with the flapping of its wings. Wendy basked in the extraordinary atmosphere, running with no desire to stop. She felt so free in this beautiful world. No one or nothing could ever-

“OW!” She crashed into a wall when the world literally turned black. The area blinked, and the two appeared in a big, but ordinary castle room. “The holographic simulator in Wing 32 is faulty. Any available staff are requested to fix it.”

“So is everything in this nuthouse holographic?” Carla asked. “As I suspected, there isn’t a shred of magic behind this.”

Thumb-Thumbs dropped in from the ceiling, and Wendy breakdanced to kick two of them off their, well, thumbs. “Sky Dragon WING ATTACK!” She spun her arms to extend twin cyclones and blew the other Thumbs down. Carla lifted her owner onto a taller platform, and from there,
Wendy followed a hall that turned right and led to another ‘Children’s Quarters.’ “Another one?” Wendy questioned.

Carla flew over to the door and tried to jiggle the knob. “It’s locked, but it seems real this time.”

“Oh, what is that spell Mr. Facilier said that opened things? Uhh… Alohomora?” A small light came from her wand and opened the door. The two girls entered a room where dozens of children seemed to be playing freely. A boy and girl were throwing a ball back-and-forth, a circle of kids played Duck Duck Goose, and two more kids were touching each other’s shoulders and repeating, “You’re it.” All of the children bore blank expressions.

“They don’t look too upset.” Wendy observed.

“Well, let’s go up and talk to one.”

“Okay.” Wendy approached one of the boys playing stand-still Tag. She tapped his shoulder, “Excuse me, could you tell me why everyone-”

“ERROR. ERROR.” The boy shouted. “Tag Mode only scheduled for F0625! Default detected! ERROR.”

All of the children directed their attention at Wendy, and their eyes sparked. The children began to make stylish Kung-Fu moves, rolling at Wendy and throwing punches and kicks. Wendy dodged the kids and tried to run away, but they kicked on rocket shoes and flew at her. “Protego!” Wendy conjured a pink bubble that the kids haphazardly crashed into. One of them weakly got up, and his head twitched as there were sparking sounds.

“Wait… Wendy, use a fire spell on one of them.” Carla requested.

“Why?”

“Because I don’t think these children are real!”

“Er, okay… Incendio!” Wendy singed the recovered boy with fire. His fake skin melted off and exposed the robotic skeleton. “They’re robots!”

“I’ve had enough of this man’s tomfoolery! Wendy, just blast them all!” Wendy cast Reducto curses to explode many of the robot children, then she boosted out of the room through an opposite door. She was suddenly running across a treadmill, which was moving the opposite direction and making her slow down. She jumped the robot children that were being carried across, and Carla observed the rest of the room. Kids’ heads were opening like lids while metal claws placed small, mechanical brains inside. “I have to commend his engineering, at least.”

Wendy jumped to grab a metal claw above the treadmill, and it carried her above a chute and dropped her down. She dashed down a round passage, drifting right and left when it snaked. They saw orange light shining ahead, and found their selves running across a cloud-covered ground under a twilight sky. “Is this a hologram, too?” Wendy asked.

“It would appear so. Do not be deceived- AAAAH!” Carla screamed.

“Carla, what-” Wendy looked up, “AAAAAAH!” (End song.)

“Hi there!” Floop greeted them with his charming smile. He was 50 feet tall, but the lower half of his body was below the clouds. “Things are beautiful up here, aren’t they?”
“HE’S A GIANT!” Wendy panicked.

“It’s not real, Wendy, it’s not real!” Carla’s fur was tingling.

“Can you really say what’s real and what isn’t real? How do you know the sun isn’t a gigantic spotlight? Or if the sky isn’t a projection?”

“Stop acting like you own a whacky chocolate factory and start being straight with us! We already discovered the secret behind your so-called ‘children’! They’re about as real as anything else in this place! I wonder if the World Government uses your crummy show to brainwash kids.”

Floop raised a brow. “Brainwash?”

“Carla!” Wendy shouted.

The cat clamped paws over her mouth. “Oh, my… Were we still undercover?”

“It’s true that I have connections to the World Government… but why on Earth would you insinuate that mind-control is my goal?”

“We didn’t!” Wendy shouted. “We just… W-W-We… sigh, Mr. Floop, can you please tell me what you do up here?”

The giant smiled and held a hand down to the child. “Allow me… to show you…”

With clear concern on her face, and wondering if this was still a hologram, Wendy stepped on the hand. It slowly lifted her and Carla up to Floop’s eye level. “Look…” He turned to face the horizon. The sun slowly set under an endless ocean, whose waves brushed the shore. Millions of stars slowly formed in the sky. A cold breeze touched their faces.

“This is the world I created.” Wendy’s heart jumped when a normal size Floop appeared beside her, and they were standing on a tall rock. “Inspired by many, like Walt Disney or Willy Wonka… I’ve always believed in imagination. Imagination… gave me happiness as a child. And all I wanted to do was create a show with my own artistic talents… Sigh, but the studios weren’t fond of my ideas. And for a while, my talents went unappreciated. Until I met… Henry Churchill.”

“He’s one of the World Leaders.” Carla remembered from Facilier’s paper.

“He isn’t just a Leader. Master Churchill is a very brilliant author. Of course, he was unappreciated, before he attained his position. He told me he was fond of my creativity. So he had this castle designed. He gave me the technology to build robot children, and I purchased the Fooglies from a company called Nightmare Enterprises. My show was on the air… and it was a dream come true…” His expression was bright as the artificial sun, lost in memories. “…And then Master Churchill wanted to use my robots for the Government’s army. I had to make them… violent…” His smile faded. “And since then, I felt… a strange tear in my heart…”

Wendy and Carla looked at each other, feeling his change in tone. Floop turned to them. “Ms. Marvell… you seem like a marvelous girl. Would you and Ms. Blendy really like to be on my show?”

“I-I’d love to-” Wendy returned to her ditzy, sheepish self, “but I’m really not great at acting, y’see-”

“Oh, Mr. Floop! I see you’ve found our little straggler. Would you bring her to the throne room? Her friends seem awfully worried about her.”
“I will; thanks, Mr. Minion!” Floop called. His smile faltered again as he turned away. He looked a bit nervous. “Ahem… This way, if you will.” Floop clapped his hands and switched off the hologram, revealing the true appearance of this green room. After the platform they were standing on sunk down, Floop led them down the castle corridors.

After turning a corner that had a statue of a green, headless giraffe, they were greeted by Chelia. “Wendy, THERE you are!” the dancer shouted. “What was that business in the bathroom all about? Did the toilet decide to shrink you and suck you down??”

“U-Uh, I-”

“Mr. Floop, there you are!” They were approached by Minion. “Would you join us in the room please, we have a guest.” He returned the way he came.

“W- Wait- Guest?” Floop rushed after, and the girls joined as they made it to the throne room. “I wasn’t expecting any other guests, who’s visiting?”

“Chapter 3 of Introducing Characters:” Floop stopped and stared at the throne with a mix of fear and surprise. There was a man in blue jeans and a blue patterned shirt reading a book. He clamped the book shut to show his charming blue eyes and shiny brown hair. “Dramatic Entrances.” Henry Churchill concluded.

“W- I- Wai-” Floop was lost on words, looking at Wendy, then Henry. “M-Master Churchill!!”

“Master Churchill?!” Wendy said, horrified.

“The World Leader?” Carla whispered with the same amount of horror.

“I came as soon as your minion called and told me the exemplary news!” Henry walked toward them with his arms open. “The Sky Dragon… ensnared like a bear in a venus flytrap. I knew you were more clever than people perceive you.”

“Mr. Minion, I didn’t order you to-”

“Yes, and you wouldn’t have.” Minion stated. “I called Master Churchill on my own accord because, unlike you, I was not concerned for the ratings of your petty kids’ show. The World Government hired me to work for you, but I only serve the Government. And any loyal citizen would bring a criminal like her to justice.”

“Hold on a second!” Chelia shouted. “Wendy isn’t a criminal, and I don’t think it’s right for you to judge her just because she’s related to one!”

“She signed up for the Glitz Pit tournament, in disguise, to win a trip to your castle, then she somehow sneaks into the sewer during a ‘bathroom break.’” Minion summarized. “This girl is clearly aligned with the Revolutionaries!”

“NO, she is NOT!” Carla argued. “She is a wizard in training and she only entered the tournament to study!”

“Whether she is or she isn’t affiliated with them, I do not care.” Churchill said in his soft, calm voice. “That isn’t why her wanted poster was created.”

“W-…” Floop looked surprised at that statement, as was Wendy. “Whaddo you mean?”

“True, I marked that as the reason for her bounty, but only to hide the existence of our secret…”
item.” Henry smirked. “You see, we World Leaders have the ability to see the past and future. We knew, the minute this girl’s identity was learned, she would be a danger to us. According to that which the Octogan has shown us… this very girl, Wendy Marvell… is going to kill me.”

“K-Kill you?!” Wendy responded.

“The Octogan does not lie to us. Your father killed my first apprentice… then, you humiliated my temporary apprentice, Bob… I was so afraid that Mr. Floop would meet a terrible end… but instead, he delivers you directly to me. Perhaps three… is a charm. Thank you, my apprentice.” Henry’s body began to break into papers that blew around the air. “I will take the Sky Dragon to Mariejoa… to be executed.”

“EXECUTED/EXCUSE ME/SAY WHAT?!?” Everyone yelled a reaction. Wendy gripped her neck, feeling a sudden, but imaginary tinge.

“Master Churchill, I thought you wanted to use her to capture Red Eye!” Floop argued.

“And I’m sure Red Eye will be horribly traumatized for the child’s death. His darkness will destroy him inside. We won’t need to do a thing.” Henry’s papers scattered about, then began to wrap around Wendy like a mummy. The girl’s arms were binded, she desperately shook while the others tried to pull the papers off.

“INCENDIO!” Chelia cast a fire spell to burn the papers. Henry Churchill reformed into a human, shaking frantically to get the fire off.

“Hothothothothothothothot!”

Minion pulled out two Tasers and “Y-ZZ-ZZ-ZZ-ZZT!” shocked Chelia and Wendy.

“Mr. Minion, I order you to stop-” Floop began.

“I don’t think you’ll be in anymore position after this.” Minion smirked. “From now on, I will be Master Minion, and you will be-”

A giant snowball blasted in and smashed both Henry and Minion against the jigsaw windows. “The comic relief twins are here to save the day!” Sonny and Donna popped out of the snowball.

“Deus ex-machina for the home stretch!” Donna cheered.

“If only it were that simple.” The snowball suddenly melted, and the twins fell. There were red papers floating around Henry. “But paper is made from all sorts of trees and plants. Even Sun Trees retain their natural heat after death.”

“Wendy, we have to escape!” Carla shouted. “Shrink us down so we can get in the box!”

“The robot children are coming!” Floop yelled when the human-like kids with sparking eyes were marching from down the hall.

“WENDY, WATCH OUT!” Chelia lashed her arm and blew Henry’s papers away with black wind. “I’ll distract him, you just do whatever you said with the box!”

“I have it right here!” Carla threw the small treasure chest on the floor and opened it. Wendy grabbed her wand and cast “Reducio!” on Carla, the Ice Climbers, then Floop before putting them each in the box.
“It worked, Wendy, it's safe!”

“Chelia, hold still!” Wendy readied to zap her. Chelia turned around- “AAAAAH!” The papers quickly overcame her.

“CHELIA!”

“NNN!” She tried to rip some off with Haki, but they latched back on just as quickly. “Wendy, I’ll be okay! You just go!”

“What?! I don’t wanna leave you!”

“It’s okay, I know how to handle myself! Plus, even if I came, they could always chase you inside the box. You jump in and I’ll destroy it from this side!”

“But Chelia, what if they kill you?!”

“I told you, I can handle myself! And I’m certainly not gonna let them kill you! Just GO, Wendy!”

“But why are you even doing this?! We just met, we barely know each other! You don’t even know if I AM a real criminal!”

“Yeah, well… even if you are…” Chelia grunted, trying to fight the papers and grab the wand on the side of her skirt. “You’re the only one who… lasted longer than one minute against me… so if I’m still alive… I wanna challenge you… to a rematch… eh…” She finally grabbed her wand and yelled, “REDUCIO!”

Wendy was zapped down to size, and she fell into the little box, which closed shut. “Reducto!” Chelia blew the chest to smithereens.

“Whooa!” After Wendy fell in, the gravity shifted upwards, and she landed on the floor of a dark basement, facing a bigger version of the chest. After Floop helped her stand, Wendy opened the chest in a panic. The inside of it was totally plain. “Ch…Chelia…”

“At least her sacrifice wasn’t in vain, Child.” Carla said. “Now they can’t follow us.”

“True, but… couldn’t they have just destroyed this box?” Floop questioned.

“Oh… Perhaps…”

“Died in vain.” Sonny said cluelessly.

“Pointless gesture.” Donna followed.

“Life is cruel.”

Wendy began to cry over the empty box. For the second time this week, she was forced to abandon a friend.

“Man, it has been Hell for me this past week. The only solace I can find is writing this story. Sigh… Anyway, I considered squeezing a boss in this chapter, but I decided against it for space. Feels like Wendy’s not getting many stages compared to August, which is kinda funny. Well, next time, we’ll begin the Original Worlds Arc, which starts with an Augustus level.
The Ninth Firstborn

Chapter Summary

Cheren Uno tries to help Sugar feel better.

Insert.

Chapter 19: The Ninth Firstborn

G.U.N. H.Q.

The soldiers brought Sugar to a round room with many security cameras. They carefully unlocked Sugar’s cuffs and let them drop, the child keeping her arms stationary while soldiers were careful to stay void of her hands. Her arms were stretched straight forward as she lay her hands on a center pedestal. A soldier held a darksaber and looked with very mixed feelings. “Are you certain this is what you want?” Gunkan asked.

“Mm-hm. I’m sure I can live through it.” Sugar replied with no detectable emotion. “It shouldn’t even be painful with the numbing medicine, right?”

“No. …We’ll fix the prosthetics on quickly, we promise.”

The soldier released a sigh and raised the energy blade behind him. He would swing forward in a second and rid Sugar of her curse once and for all. She closed her eyes and awaited peace.

“STOP!” The dark blade was instantly blocked by Cheren’s Master Sword. His eyes burned with passion and desperation, and that was poured into blocking this blade. He turned to face Sugar, and was struck speechless: in the brief second the sword would’ve taken to come down, she had ducked her head onto the stand so that the sword would’ve sliced her neck. “Sugar? …What’re you-..”

For the first time, there was emotion on her face. Her purple eyes were almost melting with tears. “I just wanna di-i-ie…”

Cheren walked around and softly touched her left hand. “Sugar-”

“DON’T TOUCH ME!!” She jumped away and ran against the wall, the soldiers nearby backing away.

“Huh? He didn’t transform.” one noticed.

“I thought it was automatic.” another followed.

Sugar planted her hands against the wall, shut her eyes tight, and started bashing her forehead against it. “I wanna DIE, I wanna DIE, I wanna DIE, I wanna-”

“Get a GRIP on yourself!” Cheren grabbed the neck of her hood and swung her around. “I’m sorry about your father, but I’m not-”

“I don’t CARE, I just wanna die and FORGET everything, I can’t go on knowing-!” A soldier
stuck her in the neck with a syringe, and Sugar fainted.

“So that’s why… she persuaded us with this ‘hand’ thing to kill herself. Well, we can’t very much release her if she’s suicidal.” Gunkan said.

“No, let me take her out of here.” Cheren told him. “I think… it’s kinda my fault she was driven to this.”

“How is it your fault? Sandman was the one who…”

Indeed, Nolan took the credit for Doflamingo’s death. “Yeah, but I was really angry at her. I just… I’m really sure I can help her, just let me.”

“Very well. Her mind should be calm when she awakens.”

They waited half an hour before Sugar awakened. She was on a bed in a quiet room. Cheren was standing near her. “You calmed down, yet?”

“…Mm-hm.”

“Then I would like to say… I forgive you.”

Cleveland; Nugget River

“The truth is, I’m actually 22 years old.” Sugar began as she and Cheren walked parallel to the river. The land glowed golden in the sunset. “Born around when your parents were in action. My dad was trying to establish his company, but he was already rich, so Caesar’s Bang Gas business was set thanks to his money. By the time I was 10, Caesar created the Devil Fruit that would bring his friend’s company to life: the Hobby-Hobby Fruit. Dad gave it to me so I could make his dream a reality, and with the extra benefit of giving me eternal youth, I would never grow old and keep the company alive forever. But if something were to happen to me, it would all be over. Dad kept me on tight guard at all times. Only very few occasions would he trust me with someone else. He knew I would be useful in going to rescue Caesar, that’s why he wanted me to join KND. And also, for the chance that an operative would’ve discovered the Apocalypse… I could dispose of him, and no one would remember. That was his role in the Corporate Presidents. It was… my role.”

“And it wasn’t your choice to make.” Cheren deduced.

“Not at first… the pain grew on me over the years. Everyone else forgot those people… except me. But I tried to conceal that pain. Tried to be like my father. Cruel and heartless, showing no care for my victims. I took delight in removing their existence… took delight in removing innocent souls from the face of the earth. That way, I could keep living, happily, as an innocent little girl who eats grapes, and plays with toys.”

“But after all that, you were lying to yourself.” They stopped walking as Cheren stepped into the river to pick up some nuggets. “Even if you weren’t an adult inside, you’d never be able to embrace this pain.” He came back to give her a nugget.

“I really couldn’t. Then I choked on that grape… and everything went wrong. I actually hoped Dad would kill me… but after that failed, I had to think of some other way… I could finally be done with it all. My soul severed from my body, as it leaves my severed head. My heart and brain, containing all the burdens of ages… finally dead.” She ate the nugget.

“Sometimes… it would seem like the perfect escape… but it’s just too hard. But the pain you caused everyone is over, they all remember now. So yours can be over, too. It’s finally your chance
“Another thing about the curse… take a look.” She pulled back her hood, exposing the hair that ended at her neck. “To test if the fruit would work, my dad cut my hair this short to see if it’d grow back. It didn’t. And also,” she held her hands and feet to Cheren, “my finger and toenails stopped growing, too. Never had to cut ’em.” Cheren observed the pink spots on her fingers and toes and how impossibly short the nails were. “Not having to worry about styling hair and smoothing nails would give me more time to make toys. But I heard the growing of your hair and nails symbolizes your own growth, and when they’re eventually cut, new growth can commence, so so can yours.”

“And you’d like it if yours can grow again…”

“Mm…” She nodded.

“…I… really wish I could help you out.”

Sugar turned back to the river to soak her feet. They stared quietly at the sparkling ripples.

“You know… you actually saved me back there.”

“Mmm?” Sugar queried, eating another nugget.

“Aunt Morgan would’ve smoked me if you hadn’t intervened. She’s gotten so powerful… since my parents’ stories. I’ve never seen anything like it. And… hearing what the Government did to my dad… there’s still so much I have to do. And there’s so little time to do it…”

Sugar bit the nugget and savored its taste once more. “So what will you do?”

“…Sugar: you did me a favor. Me wanting to save Aunt Morgan was on an impulse. And I jumped into a battle too soon with someone who was way over my league. You saved me… from a terrible fate. The fact that I got outta there alive… means that I have to keep trying. I have to get stronger… and keep working to save everyone. I’m gonna keep my promise to Zanifr and stop this Apocalypse!”

She swallowed the last of that nugget. “But what does the future have for me?”

“I dunno. I guess we’ll just… have to try and grow as we move.”

“…” Even as an eternal child, Sugar knew she could grow inside… it was just hard to.

“It’s funny… you’re an eternal child that wants to grow… but do you know what I wish?”

“Hm?”

“…” The sun grew low enough to make his face seem incredibly dark, his eyes invisible, only a bright sparkle in his glasses. “To feel like an actual kid.”

“…” She listened patiently.

“To only pretend that… all of this chaos is going on, not actually have to worry about it, to go on make-believe adventures with friends and have fun because it’s not actually real. Not feel burdened by the weight of the world, not needing to worry about impending doom. I want… I want for all my friends to have that kind of normal life. We go to school, do some homework, play with each other, then become teenagers, look for dates, try to get married, get a job, start a family, and let our kids enjoy the cycle… without having to worry about all of this chaos and destruction. But you know
what… that’s the life we chose. This Kids Next Door… it isn’t about stopping adults from feeding kids broccoli, brushing their teeth, or sending them to bed early… it’s about giving kids, and everybody, peace of mind. Trying to protect them from all of this chaos, so that they can live average, normal, happy lives. So that their responsibilities… are only so minor… that they can live in peace. I’d like… to have that kind of life, too. But if I don’t protect the lives that everyone wishes to live… then I can’t live in peace. It’s a duty that… I need to carry… or no one else will.”

“Hmmm…” Swallowed a piece. “That’s a very heavy burden to carry… and a great sacrifice…”

He didn’t say anything.

“…But you can still find happiness in what you do.”

“I know, I do. Sheila taught me that. To just… live in the moment, and act like this is some giant pretend game. And then we could do… anything. We’d always win. And we’d always feel free.”

He looked up to let what little light remain warm his face.

“Mm…” A thin smile. “I wish I could feel that way.” Sugar looked back at the river.

Cheren turned to her and gave a warm smile. “I’ll help you.” He stood up, “Come on, let’s hit the town. River nuggets get boring. I hear there’s this-” He was about to take her hand.

“Nnnn!” She hurriedly got up and backed away. “I-I don’t… feel well about touching.”

“Oh… well, we don’t need to. Otherwise it’ll look like we’re dating, heh he. Let’s go.” Cheren began the walk to the city as the sun was gone, and the sky glittered with stars. Sugar stared at her hands with worry before following him, slipping her hood back on.

**Downtown Cleveland**

The streets were bustling with people and the building and streetlights seemed awfully brighter. Blending in with hundreds of people going to hundreds of destinations, they were no different. No one would look in that crowd and point out that they had so much more going on. It seemed like a carnival was taking place downtown, for what, they didn’t know, they didn’t care. Lights of all colors filled the streets, everyone had a peculiar tone, no one their natural color. Cheren paid for a game where Sugar had to shoot targets moving along the wall. After getting enough decent shots, she got to keep a teddybear.

Cheren got her some cotton candy, strawberry, tasty. Still, the carnival was too crowded, Sugar kept freaking whenever somebody bumped into her, Cheren calmed her down and led her out. They decided to go to the Fancy Cuisine restaurant, got the special discount for kids, and the first decent meal Sugar got all day.

With their bellies full, they returned to wandering mindlessly, though reflectively, through town. They passed a bar where it sounded like someone was singing inside. Sugar peeked into the window to see a couple singing a duet.

*Don’t go breakin’ mah heart!*

_Couldn’t if IIII tried._

*Oh HONEY, you-*

“Oh, that reminds me, you probably read *Ella Enchanted*, huh?” Cheren guessed.
“I did. Saw the movie. Hated it. I wished the producers would die.”

“They wouldn’t be the only ones… Sugar, I know you aren’t proud of what you did, but you shouldn’t just think about dying all the time. Now that you’re free, isn’t there something you’ve always wanted to do?”

“Actually… there is one thing. I’ve always been in love with… music.”

“Music? …Well yeah, I mean everyone has their own type, I guess.”

“Well, part of me; if I could, wanted to become a singer when I got older. Just hearing… notes and pretty sounds in perfect rhythm… I dunno why, I just do.”

“…” Cheren saw the couple was almost finished singing, “Wanna give it a go?”

“Hm?”

“Just this once.” Cheren smirked.

Sugar blushed. “No, no, I couldn’t, I…”

Minutes later

The bar was ringing with a Bollywood soundtrack and shining rainbow spotlights as Cheren and Sugar danced on either end. “Like the wild elephant, I am trumpeting my love for youoou!” Cheren sang with a charming deep voice, twirling, sinking to one knee, and holding his arms open at Sugar.

“Like a hidden flower, my sweet fragrance comes intoooo view!” Sugar twirled on the tip of her toes, grinned, and winked at Cheren perkily.

They did an Egyptian moon-walk toward each other, then moved away. Cheren caught a rose in his teeth someone threw from the audience.

“MY heart burns for YOU like the sun at noon.” Cheren gestured toward himself, then at Sugar.

“My desert welcomes YOU, like the rainy moooonsoon!” She perkily tapped her finger to her cheek, then at Cheren.

“You are myyyyy heaaaart (hey!).” Cheren pulled off his jacket and rubbed it against his back like a towel, wiggling forward.

“MY univeeeerrrse!” Sugar spun, bent forward, and winked.

“You are myyyyy HEART.” Cheren rolled forward and held his arms open with more fire in his eyes.

“MY univeeeeeerse!” Sugar joyfully approached him with open arms.

“MY UNIVEEEEERRSE!” They almost linked—Sugar whipped her arms behind her, flinching, their voices cracked, confusing the audience. They recomposed and started dancing in circles with flexible fashions and complex animation.

“You are my HEART! MYYYY UNIVEEEEERSE, you are my HEART. MYYYY univeeeeeerse, MYYYY UNIVERRRRRRSE.” They stood upright on tiptoes, their faces inches from touching.
“Ahhh, that was fun.” Cheren sighed, hands folded behind his head as he and Sugar continued downtown.

“Yeah, that was!” Sugar smiled. “It’s weird, singing like that, I felt… a strange energy in my throat. A beautiful energy, but really weird!”

“Maybe your heart is telling you that this is what you wanna do.”

“It’s better than making toys, but…but I can’t. Not as long as… the Apocalypse is coming. There has to be something more…”

Cheren stopped before an alley, looking in. A torchlight brimmed around the corner. “I have an idea where we could look.”

**Dr. Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium**

“So with that, Sugar took three cards, as did Cheren. Facilier took Sugar’s first card, “You dear child, born in the golden ages!” His eyes alit with wonder, showing a picture of 2-year-old Sugar. “In those days when all mah favorite kids were still kids! Heheheh. In those days, you were a simple young’un, loved to play with them toys and eat them grapes.” The card became a flipbook, slowly showing Sugar grow older, a smile on her face ‘til she became a 10-year-old. “But alas, you don’t get much taller than this.” The pages kept flipping, but she grew no taller and her smile became a frown. “And ‘tis when the present, just ain’t go away.” The second card was of Sugar holding her hand to a transformed toy. “Naw, but that ain’t the life you chose, and you ain’t wantin’ ta keep all them feelings bottled up in there, naw what you wanted was to be free, let your voice be heard and give your soul that everlasting peace you so desperately craved for. ‘Short, all you wanna do… is sing…”

And Sugar stared with wonder as Facilier raised the third card. An image of her singing her heart out, mouth open, curved in a smile, eyes closed, as notes flew everywhere. Above her was a strange childlike being with a slim brown body, and long green hair like a note sheet. “IT’S THE SING, IT’S THE SING, IT’S THE SINGING YOU NEEEEED! And lookin’ to your future, it’s the singing I see.”

He then turned to Cheren and took his first card, “And you Little Man, I ain’t wasting much time. You look up to your mother, ‘came Supreme Leader, got shrunk a few times, NOW you freakin’ overpowered.’ The image was of young Cheren, his face serious, thrusting a wooden sword up and down. “And comin’ to the present here, you a wimpy little crybaby after gettin’ beat by yo’ aunt.” The next card was of Cheren crying on the ground, and Morgan’s fist stretched out. “Course that ain’t the end of you, Little Man, where yo’ daddy failed, you still got a shot, and yo’ destiny has yet to be carved in stone. But all’s Ah can give of yo’ destiny, is drawn on this little card, this little card that-” Facilier raised the third card-

8888888888

Cheren could only catch the brief image of two flashing 8’s before he was forced to shut his eyes from intense brightness. “WHOA! …Hehe… you got a lot goin’ on in yo’ life, Kid.” Facilier tucked the card away.

Cheren got back on his seat, brushing his disheveled hair. “Hey, Uncle Facilier… can you… Do
you think you can do something about Sugar’s curse?"

“Hmmm, that’s a big thang to ask me, Kid. But them Devil Fruits, they made of both natural and Underworld energy, magic can’t work miracles, Kid. But what mortals can’t do, that’s why we have gods. ‘sumin’ they want to help. All I’m sayin’ is, just keep an open mind, and yo’ troubles may be dealt with, yet.”

“…Well then… how do I know where to go next?”

“Hmmm that’s a good question. And for all good questions, we must look deep into the soul. And nothin’ peers into the soul more like crystal balls.” He reached under the table and grabbed a crystal ball, placing in the center. “Now please… take my hands.” He rested his hands on the ball.

Sugar looked hesitantly. Her fear of touching people. “Come on, Girl. Won’t you take… a poor sinner’s hands?”

“Not the way you say it.” Cheren remarked.

“Just touch ‘em, Girl.”

She stared for a few more seconds, then looked at her own hands. Very slowly, she raised them and reached to touch Facilier’s. Her hands just inches from his, the two wondered if she would even make it. Finally, they made contact.

Sugar’s body became swallowed with gooey magic energy before she transformed into a puppet of herself. “Hhhhhahahahahahahahaha!” Facilier cracked up. “Boy, that always gets ‘em!” He cast a spell to change her back, her pupils shrunken as she shuddered.

“Why’d you do that?!” Cheren yelled.

“Kid, Kid,” he raised hands in defense, “these hands be clean, I ain’t do that! But see, ol’ Sugy ain’t gonna be able to see her future without first being free of her past. She needs to acknowledge what happened, happened, and’s gotta learn to move on with it. And there ain’t no harm with touchin’ people, right? …”

Cheren turned to her with a smile, “Take my hands, Sugar.” She looked nervously at his open hands. “Come on… you can hold a close friend’s hands.”

That warm smile, his assuring eyes… she’s never seen it on him before. It was funny how he could offer his hands… as if what happened before, didn’t happen. He wasn’t afraid… so maybe she shouldn’t be. She slowly reached her hands over… and lay them on his.

Their fingers locked, thumbs curled around the other’s. Sugar never placed her hands on another’s for so long. She never knew… how warm it was. How their very hearts could connect. How all the worry in their minds could slowly sink away…

Sugar pulled her hands away and moved them to Facilier’s. Her mind now clear, their eyes closed, they saw into the crystal orb. (Play “Dreams” from Spyro: The Eternal Night.)

**Dream Realm**

Sugar was awash in fog, which cleared up in seconds to find herself on an asteroid within a vast, peaceful space, where many blue asteroids drifted. “Huh. …Where am I?”

"Don Quixote Sugar… So nice to have company."
“Whuh? Who said that?”

“Child… I am… The Chronicler. Spirit who watches peoples’ dreams.”

“You sound like a stalker. Go away.”

“Ah... how I missed that. Please... step into the light.” A bunch of asteroids lined up to make a path. Sugar rushed across it, coat blowing behind her as she made it to an altar with a glowing white circle, tiny faint music notes in its light. She calmly stepped inside, and found herself in a mystical, colorful dimension of dancing notes.

“So many years... has the music in your soul been contained. But now, it is ready to be released. Music... is the Element of Voice. When someone is in deep tune with their emotions... their sorrows... their soul... and wish to let them out... they can control the very flow of that sound. And can bend... Music."

“So I’m a musicbender?"

“Yes... and after 22 years, your chi can finally take form. Your voice... will know light.”

Sugar closed her eyes and opened only her mouth, letting the sounds come out. “Ooooaaaaaaaaaa...” With a rise of her own voice, the notes blew away.

She was taken back to the space realm as the gate opened, letting her progress to a huge glass wall. “There will be barriers that shield your voice. Let those barriers... know it first.”

So with a strong inhale, “OOOO-oo-oo-oo-oo-AAAAA-AAAAAAAAAAAAAA!” the glass came tumbling to pieces. The shards crunched beneath her sandals as she continued, stopping at a vast chasm. “When physical bodies are unavailable, let the music guide your way. Sing a song, and flow along with the rhythm.”

Flow with the rhythm... there was a song Sugar always liked dancing to. And it may work in this case. “SPREAD your tiny wings and fly awaaaaay...” Singing “Snowbird” by Gene MacLellan, a vertical, colorful trail in the form of note lines stretched to the other side. “If I could, you know that I would fly away with yoouuu.” Sugar surfed across this path and hit the notes as she went with the rhythm, alternating levels to do so. However, the next path was higher than this Note Road, so- “Aa-aa-aa-aa-aaaaaa!” She sang a stairway to slide up and make it. “Away with yooollllllouu!”

She landed on a small field with giant horns on the other side. “Some sound, to put it simply, gets annoying, and no work gets done. Put a stopper to it.”

“I don’t hear any-”

BBBBBBBBUUUUUUEEEEEEERRRRRRRRRR

The horns blasted music too painful and annoying, Sugar couldn’t go any further. She couldn’t clamp her ears tight enough, so she thrust her hands toward the horns—a blurry, semi-visible barrier appeared that muted the sound entirely. She kept this barrier up and progressed into a larger field where dozens of Stone Demons stood guard. “The evil ones wish to silence your voice. Show the-”

RIIIIIIINNNNNNG!

“S-Sorry, my speaker is- dammit-”
“Ugh, just fight them.”

The Stone Demons ran at Sugar, who unleashed streams of notes from her lungs and cracked their heads into pieces. She danced and nimbly avoided their grabs, her movements generating colorful notesheets that flew around and made the monsters dizzy, so Sugar could send soundwaves to knock them down. Sugar began to clap her hands forcefully, increasing the volume of the claps to make the ground crack, the Stone Demons following suit. It wasn’t long before hundreds more began rising from the gravel.

Hundreds of sounds were generated from the crumbling of stone. Sugar could hear them all. “When your soul is at its purest... your voice speaks the loudest.”

“Sorry, I didn’t catch that, say again?”

“I said, when your soul is at its-”

“STILL can’t hear you, speak a LITTLE loud-”

“I SAID, WHEN YOUR SOUL IS-” RRRRRREEEEEEEE “DAH, GOD BLAST IT, I CALLED THE COMPANY FOR A NEW SPEAKER, BUT THEY COULDN’T COME BECAUSE MY LOCATION WAS TOO INCONVENIENT, WELL I-!!”

“OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO...!” Sugar’s high-pitch wail was the only sound that could enter anybody’s ears. The heads popped on all the stone men, until Sugar was the only one standing.

“Huuuurr... very good. My throat hurts a little, but... at least you understand. But remember the rhythm and volume of your voice. Control it, lest those nearest you hear no more. Especially your neighbors.”

“You still creep me out. Go away.”

“It still brings a tear to my eye. Step into the light.”

A stairway brought Sugar to a floating temple, where she passed a colorful gate of notes. “Wow, I only learned about musicbending 5 minutes ago, and I actually have a pretty good grasp.” She smiled.

“It’s easier when you have a creepy spirit being, whose realm flows with mystical spirit energy, to teach you. With your voice now awakened, your destiny calls. At last, she can finally have a Guardian.”

“Who?”

“Look inside the pool.”

Sugar stood over the small, round, golden pool in the center. She dove her face inside. (End song.)

In a galaxy far far away, a great dome station floated within the stars. Hundreds of aliens partied, the flashy lights, music, and fun was endless. On a stage, aliens in black suits danced, mimicking the rhythm of a short fairy-like imp with blue-and-black hair. They cried when robot sentries burst in and started shooting everywhere. “In the Solana Galaxy, the Music Spirit, Meloetta hides undercover. Go to the Electrodroome and save her.”
Facilier’s Emporium

Sugar gasped awake, her drool on the table curtain. “That can sometimes happen.” Facilier said. “Getting so bored, you fall asleep. So did ya learn anything, Sugar?”

She wiped her mouth. “I’m a musicbender.” Cheren’s mouth dropped like an anvil.

“I thought as much. Then do ya know where ya need to go?”

“. . . I need to go to the Solana Galaxy to save Meloetta, the Music Spirit.”

“Wow, Facilier. Why isn’t this a bustling business?” Cheren asked.

“Oh, I ring in more customers than you think. I may just relocate shop if I weren’t so close to mah customers.”

Just then, the front door flew open, and a familiar blue-haired child rushed in with a winged white cat by her side. “Mr. Facilier! I’m back from-!” She immediately halted upon the sight of the visitors. “Oh... I didn’t realize you had company over, I’m sorry.”

Cheren gasped. “Hey, you’re that girl I saw while I was driving!”

“Oh!” She sparked in remembrance. “I didn’t expect to see you again! My name’s Wendy.” She held a hand out.

“Nice to meet ya again, Wendy!” He shook. “I’m Cheren, this is my friend, Sugar.”

“Hi, Sugar.” Wendy held a hand to her. “You have pretty hair.”

“. . . Um. . .” Sugar stared at her hand nervously.

“Suuugaaaaar. Whaddid I teach you about manners?” Cheren asked scoldingly.


“Thanks. She’s my friend, Carla. We’re trying to-”

“GREAT, y’all are crossover buddies, and I’m sure you’d love to fill each other of your respective story arcs, but we gotta get movin’!” Facilier hurriedly gestured Cheren and Sugar out of the shop. “Good luck, kids! Bring home the good news!” Slammed the door.

“. . .” Huh. Extremely curious.” said Cheren.

“Indeed.”

“So, the Solana Galaxy. Where in cosmos could that be. Did Chronicler tell you?”

“How did you know-”

“Suspected.”

“No, he didn’t.”

“Well, that stinks. There must be someone who... oh? Fi.” The spirit jumped out of his sword.

“Master, I possess information that may be of service. The Solana Galaxy is a region of space named by the Sun God, Solaris. It is a region of great significance as it holds the planet which
serves as the Realm of Music, Symphonia, meant to be Music Spirit, Meloetta’s home. According to legend, the planet itself is invisible to the eyes of mortals, and can only be found with Meloetta’s guidance.”

“Then do you know where Solana is?”

“I would be happy to guide a path, Master. Whenever you are ready, please, let us find the most available ship and take flight.”

Cheren didn’t need to think long. “No other sector is closer.”

**Sector V Treehouse**

“WHADDYOU MEAN YOU GUYS ARE TIRED?!”

Sector V was lazily lounging around the living room. “No offense, Cheren, but we had a hard day.” Aurora said, laying on the couch. “We’re just not up for any missions right now.”

“But you guys barely did anything since this quest began, and don’t you agree we gotta get as much done as we can??”

“First of all, I have mixed feelings about traveling with her.” Chris pointed at Sugar. “Even if she is reformed, it still doesn’t get past it. And second, when exactly did the quest ‘begin’, we haven’t found any of the Lights or Darkesses, or any hints. Third, ask Sector W or W7 how much THEY accomplished in this quest.”

“Plus, if we’re going to another galaxy, we have a query:” Haylee informed nonchalantly. “Our C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. that had a Warpdrive Key was destroyed by Tachyon way back when, and we neglected to get another one while we were sailing the Seven Seas. We only got back to Earth on Sector W7’s train.”

“Alright, then we’re asking Sector W7.” Cheren shrugged. “Maybe they’ll enjoy saving Meloetta from killer robots.”

“Hold on, whadabout robots?” Dillon asked.

“I dunno, Sugar saw ’em.”

“In my vision, Meloetta was attacked by robots.” She explained. “They had green glass domes, no feet, and electric claws.”

“They sound like the robots who kidnapped Maddy.”

“Say what?!” Chris jumped. “Then we have to go! If that’s where they took her.”

“Chris, when are you gonna suck Maddy’s face and start dating, already.” Haruka remarked.

“Soon as you smooch Lee.”

“Are you gonna come or what?” Cheren asked.

“I guess we should.” Aurora sighed, getting up. “But we’re sleeping on their train.”

“With Chimney driving, good luck.” Mason noted as everyone else followed suit.

“Glad we could convince you.” Cheren replied. “Hey, wasn’t there a skeleton with you?”
“Django went back home to check with his crew.” Dillon said. “Hopefully they’ll bring Midna back, but I doubt it. Honestly, our sector’s gonna explode if we welcome anymore members.”

**Sector W7 Treehouse**

“Hnnnnnnn-nnnnn.” Chimney scanned the Sector V members and Sugar curiously while they gathered before the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. in the hangar. Her teeth clenched the lower lip of her big mouth. “So you ferōzu think you’re worthy to ride the Rocket-san, ah? On what grounds does this bold claim lie?”

“We rode it before, you dumb beaver.” Chris stated.

“When lives were on the line and you begged and pleaded me!! But it’s nighttime, so the on’nankanokos are a wee bit sleepy after playin’ with our new, uh, ‘guest.’”

“Heh, you have a wannabe operative, too?” Dillon chuckled.

“Oh God, don’t put the idea in ‘er head. She’s a nutcase!” In the background, April walked in and was watching them. “She colored Aisa’s toenails with crayon and she’s drawing Jesus all over the walls! UGH, what I wouldn’t give ta… ‘ey, if we go into space, can we chuck her out the airlock??”

“I would hold you liable.” Cheren told her.

“Chimney, I think it would be great if we went and took Mary with us.” April smiled, walking over. “If she saw the kind of missions we go on, she could become an operative; not in our sector maybe, it’d just be cool if she joined.”

“Okay, fine, for the Kids Next Door’s dignity, and my desire to show off my awesome train, we’ll go to Solala or whatever you call it. ‘EEEEYYY ON’NANKOOOOS, getchor asses down here, we’re goin’ to spaaaaace!!”

“Good luck, Sugar.” Cheren was about to walk away.

“Wait! Why aren’t you coming?”

“I’ve been away from my operatives one day too many. I have to keep them organized. And I have to find a way to get stronger so I can save Aunt Morgan and beat the World Government.”

“Okay… I understand. …Can you promise me something, then?”

“Mm?”

Sugar smiled and held a pinky out. “Let me have a swing at the Government, too. As soon as I master my musicbending, I wanna put it to good use.”

Cheren locked his pinky with hers. “The more, the merrier.” He then drew his sword and said, “Fi, you’ll show them the way, right?”

Fi came out. “As you request, I will indicate the direction Sectors V and W7 must take to Solana Galaxy. I hope that you will fair well without my guidance for this period.”

“I’ll survive.” He nodded.

“April, what’s going on?” Mary asked when the other W7 members arrived.
“We’re going on a mission, Mary.” April replied brightly. “Wanna come with? It’ll be really fun.”

“A…A mission? A Kids Next Door mission? Won’t that be dangerous?”

“The most dangerous part is Chimney driving, but we always survive that. Plus, we…we promised Cheren we would all help him as best as we could. You don’t have to.”

“No, I’ll go! I don’t wanna be left alone here. I wanna spend this vacation with you, April!”

“Hm hm hm, okay then!” They headed for the train. “If you join Kids Next Door, you’d be able to see us a lot more—”

“NOOOOO!” screamed Chimney.

Everyone was onboard and the train was roaring to life. They were forced back against their seats when the craft zipped off to the stars. Once out of Earth’s atmosphere, Fi appeared in front of the windshield. She floated to their left, so Chimney turned the train to face her. “The Solana Galaxy is 5 million light-years this direction. I advise you on Cheren’s behalf to exercise caution.”

“5 MILLION LIGHT-YEARS WE GOOOOO!” Chimney stomped a pedal, activated the Warpdrive function, their target set, and zipped into infinity.

**Solana Galaxy**

“You cannot look at that girl and tell me with a straight face, she fuckin’ looks like Carol??” Dillon stated, pointing in Mary’s direction aggressively.

“Dillon, I told you if you kept hanging out with her, you’d go crazy.” Mason said with a trolling smile. “Now you see every girl like her.”

“BUT SHE DOES LOOK LIKE CAROL, blonde hair, blue eyes, green dress, and she’s nuts!”

“The apple of your eye, I see. If anything, she looks like Alice from *Wonderland.*”

“GHHHHHHHHHHH!”

April and Mary were one seat over from them, looking weirdly. “What are they talking about, April?”

“Boy stuff, Mary. Boys are stupid.”

“I’ll say.” Sugar was eating grapes in the seat in front of them.

“So you were in Sector DR, right?” Mocha asked, taking the whole of the seat behind the cousins. “You were in training with me!”

“Oh, yeah. You almost stepped on me. I wanted you to die.”

Mocha shrunk (as much as she could) in her seat. “I’m sorry.”

“And you’re a musicbender, too? You and I could make great friends, Sugar!” April said. “Music’s a kind of art, after all.”

“Yeah, I guess we could.”

“‘ey, V-chans, what exactly are we lookin’ for in this dead space??” yelled Chimney. “We been
“flyin’ for hours!”

“A space station-dome of some sorts.” Sugar walked up to the pilot’s deck. “That was where Meloetta was said to be.”

“Nnn? Is that a place?”

Chimney pointed at a huge, dome-topped structure floating just a few miles away, many ships going to and from it. “Yes, that’s it.” Sugar confirmed. “Let’s land.”

“There ain’t any train stations.” Chimney said.

“Park right here, we’ll make it.”

Chimney did so, and the operatives assumed they would be floating to the barrier entrance, which couldn’t even be entered by people alone. They put on space helmets, and Sugar stood at the edge of the train door. She sang majestic vocals that created a colorful Song Road, in which all V and W7 members surfed up and around the station. “Guard the ship, Mochan!” Chimney told the giant, who sadly didn’t have a helmet her size, and Aeincha was stuffed into Chimney’s helmet. They alternated lines as Sugar did to hit the notes, stay with the rhythm, until the toymaker found a sealed hatch for electricians to climb in and out. Sugar stopped the road so they could float beside it, and Chris burned the keyhole with a blowtorch finger. All operatives climbed inside, the last one, Kirie closing the hatch, and crawled through the stuffy tunnel until they found the other end and entered the Electrodrome.

They were hit with flashing colorful lights and techno music that would make little conversation possible. Aliens of all types were dancing on the beeping tiles. “Naaaaaahh! I can’t imagine anything more loud!” Chimney whined. (“Gyom-gyom!”)

“Still hear you just fine.” April said. “Stay close, Mary, it’ll be easy to get lost… Mary?”

“Ha ha ha ha! LOOK, April!” The 13-year-old’s eyes widened. Mary was in-between some slug aliens with sunglasses, wiggling in a vertical spineless fashion like them. “It’s like my bones are made of jelly! The music is really hypnotizing! Wanna do it with me?”

“Get a grip on yourself,” Apis said, “we have to find this Meloetta spirit- oh?”

April and Mary now joined some skinny stick aliens, positioning their straight arms at many angles and shifting their feet left-and-right, then crossed their arms like an ‘X’ and jumping. “Now is NOT the time!!” Chris shouted.

“I remember seeing Meloetta on a stage with some dancers.” Sugar said. “Maybe we’ll ask around; I’m sure at least somebody knows her.”

“Malllilies and femalllllilites!” Steam erupted from a stage across this dance floor as the slim, fembot popstar, Courtney Gears rose up. “Everybody CLEAR the dance floor, ‘cause we’re having a special competition: a race around Electrodrome to win the honor of meeting our very own fairy legend, Unovaaaaa!” The large screens projected the smiling, winking blue-haired fairy from Sugar’s vision. “The winner of the race will not only meet her, but have the glory of dancing on the same stage as Unova! So pick up a kart and the Electrodrome Raceway will be open!”

“A kart race inside a dancing studio?” Chris questioned.

“Unova looks like Meloetta.” Sugar noticed. “He did say she was undercover. …I’m going to enter this race.”
“You know how to drive?” Harry asked.

“When I was little, my dad let me drive our Junior Raceway. Shouldn’t be much different, right?”

Sub-game: Electrodrome Raceway

Coincidentally, the station had a Kiddie Wagon in stock, a colorful car with parts designed like toys, but were still efficient. Sugar was in 5th place in this race of 8 racers as Courtney Gears floated on a platform to wave the flags. Three… two… one… Gooo! (Play “Electrodrome” from Mario Kart 8!)

The cars took off at the same time, Sugar already passing 4th and 3rd place after getting a good start-boost. They raced past a doorway and around the clear track of the following room, the pink posh road reflecting the many lights, string-like black lines going along it in perfect parallel form. The cars made careful use of drifts while sliding around this zigzaggy road, where Sugar lost control and bumped into a corner, watching other cars zip by while she regained herself. She kept going in 7th place, passing the first row of ? Blocks that gave her a Boost Shroom. She waited ‘til they were clear of this zigzag, so upon entering the next room, where the road sloped down over an electric pool and would go up, curve left, and turn vertical along a wall. Sugar slid down the slope, increasing her own speed, and before going up the hill, she hit the boost and shot up, bumping 6th place and quickly drifting to go vertical.

She was thankful the gravity shifted, but Sugar was careful to maneuver around the obstacles on the road, passing 5th place on the way. They turned horizontal again and drove around a right corner, racing across a road of scattered roads over the room where the race started. A left, middle, or right door they could take, so Sugar chose middle. The hallway was barely wide as the width of her kart, a sudden increase in speed when Sugar zipped down the steep slope, catching a ? Block before she entered a great, vast chamber that was black with sparkles in every direction. The other roads were above her at different levels, she saw the racers, she was 4th place for the time being. She picked up a Power Star from that block and switched it on, becoming neon and invincible.

It presented a fast-pace jingle, so Sugar hummed along with the jingle and created a Song Road just partway down this track, driving up in her kart to get onto one of the higher roads. This surprised the racer in front of her, so she rammed him with her rainbow kart and scored 3rd place. Just when the Power Star wore off, KZZZZZHIIHH, the racers were struck by lightning and shrunk to toy size. 4th place restored and passed her while she was mini, but she grew back and kept going. They had passed a new hallway and entered another giant room, pink and bubbly flashes along the exteriors with the road mimicking this design. The roads circled around pipes of Disco Piranhas that threatened to snap them should they drive near, and 3rd place was so fortunate as Sugar passed him.

The end of this room had the road curve straight up the wall, got a ? Block, loop upside-down, and when Sugar drove off the end, she flipped right-side-up and extracted her kart’s glider. She soared over the roads she just crossed, flew to the right of the sloped road that brought her down there, and into a passage within the wall over the energy pool. She drove through a barren hall that brought her to the starting room, where 2nd place was about to cross the finish line. Sugar blasted the Red Shell she acquired and crossed first, starting Lap 2. She followed the zigzag path again, keeping careful with the drifts and narrowing in on 1st. She grabbed the ? Block and landed Green Shell, then released in a desperate attempt to hit 1st. But the shell missed, and bouncing around the zigzag road, Sugar was hit.

3rd, 4th, and 5th passed her by the time Sugar was at normal speed. They whooshed down the ‘U’ path and up the other end, turning vertical and racing to the 2nd floor of the starting room. Sugar
was hit by a Green Shell, so 6th and 7th place passed her, but 8th was still behind. After
maneuvering the scattered road road, she entered the right hallway, which didn’t slope, kept flat,
only curved zigzag, and grabbed the ? Block before entering the vast, sparkly room. She was on
the highest route, so Sugar deduced she took what would’ve been the left route via that Song Road.
She got a Boomerang and shot it to 5th and 6th, hitting them both and stealing the places. She
drifted around the curving road before entering the hall that sloped up. She threw the boomerang
behind her when she saw the two racers catching up.

The resulting room was almost blinding, where the vertical track would bring them onto
the gigantic disco ball. Sugar shut her right eye, for her left was protected by the pink glass eyepatch.
She drove along the ball in the direction it rotated, ? Blocks scattered and spinning with it, but with
Sugar’s superior speed, she got one. It landed on Bullet Bill, let her kart take the shape, and zipped
around the planet-like disco before a ray of light shone directly down from its bottom. Sugar flew
in, flew down, flew across the flat road into the starting room, and rammed 4th place aside before
reverting to normal and crossing the line.

Lap 3 began, so Sugar was determined to catch up. She drifted the zigzag path, grabbed the ?
Block, and activated her Power Star. She hit 3rd place and stole it, and when she began the ‘U’
track, she hummed the tune, created a Song Road on her right, which looped upside-down, back to
normal, and passed the vertical road entirely to land Sugar on the scattered floor, in 2nd place. She
barely caught up to 1st before the star wore off, and she chased him into the middle hall. She slid
doooown, and followed this lower path all the way until the end sent them directly down into the
sparkly sea. As Sugar predicted, it was more blinding, pink, and bright, for this room had electricity
surging everywhere.

This road was a matter of driving around electrical generators, while evading electric waves that
surfed over the road between them. Sugar had to slow down a lot, afraid of being struck, but 1st
place only got farther. Despite her caution, Sugar was hit by an electric wave and shrunk to toy size
—but another racer used a Lightning Bolt, so with Sugar already mini, the effects were not only
counteracted, but she grew to twice her normal size. This gave her an enhance in speed, she easily
captured up to 1st place and crushed him.

She shrunk to normal by the time she entered a doorway, where gravity shifted and she drove
straight up. She shifted back to normal and crossed the finish line before anymore racers appeared.
The studio flashed furiously as her cheering, waving image appeared onscreen. (End song.)

The other racers were zooming up, so Sugar braced for possible revenge-impact. But they
haphazardly crashed into the wall or beacons, their karts squished. The robots and helmeted apes
flew out, dizzy. Sugar stared with utter confusion, as did Sector V when they came. “You were
racing against monkeys and robots?” Chris asked.

“Made me think, though.” Sugar said. “I hope they die.”

“Congratulations!” Courtney Gears walked up, swaying her hips. “For a twerp in kiddie gear, you
know the way of the road. And I’m guessing these are all your friends. Well, we’ll see if Unova
has time for extra autographs. This way, kids.”

The operatives shrugged and followed Courtney across the room, on stage, and into a small room
with a smaller stage. “Hear she is, Goddess of Music, Meloetta!” The kids gasped, for the fairy
spirit they had sought was trapped within an electric cage. She was lain down, but she cracked an
eye open and tried to stand to see her visitors. “Eeeh-!” Her leg touched a bar, zapping her.

When all sectormates were inside, the room sealed, and robots and apes locked on with guns from
their points on walkways atop the walls. “Gotchaaaaa!” sang Pink Monkey, appearing onstage.
"Bet you didn’t expect an ambush."

"What’s going on here?!" Aurora said.

"After much soul-searching thought, me and Courtney have finally come to an agreement, and I consider her my musical equal!" Pink Monkey happily hugged the robo woman’s legs. "For now."

"That’s not what we were wondering." Mason said.

"Our boss thought you kids would be after the Firstborn, so when we confirmed ‘Unova’ here to be Meloetta, well it was our best shot.” explained Courtney. “Now wouldn’t you know it, we have one of the Lights he described for us.”

The 11 kids froze and viewed each other in total wonder and confusion. Sugar shook back to reality, “What do you have against us?”

“We’re not ‘against’ you, it just so happens you’re in our way, and you probly won’t listen to us, so we have to keep you kiddies in line. Now as you see, the Music Spirit is in our custody. Be good little twerps and surrender quietly, or her pretty little voice is gonna go soft.”

“Uuuh!” Meloetta was shocked again. The robots and apes had weapons locked on the operatives, but they were afraid to fight back, worried for Meloetta’s fate.

“Rotom on the scene!” A sudden electrical current traveled along the chain to the cage, blowing it open as Meloetta fell out.

“Milady!” Humanoid dancers with blue, green, or yellow skin, with black hair, sunglasses, and clothes, burst in, with a muscular male one catching Meloetta. The others agilely flipped onto the walkways to break the robot’s domes and bash the monkeys unconscious. The male dancer jumped offstage beside the kids as the others joined. “She’s okay.”

“My dancers!” Meloetta perked up. “You’re here to save me?”

“We knew you were Meloetta all along.” a female said. “You’re a goddess to all singers, that’s why we wanted to protect you.”

“’Kept it quiet, ‘cause you don’t know how many’re out there.” A male said with a deep voice.

“You guys!” Meloetta began tearing. “You really are my friends! I’m so glad I have you! Wah ha haaaah!”

“What a drama queen.” Artie remarked.

“Go on and take care of her.” Sugar told them, facing Courtney and Pink determinedly. “I’ll give payback to these two.”

“Not without me, you won’t.” Harry walked up beside her. “A duet’s no good without a second.”

“You’re a musicbender, too?”

“No. But you don’t need to be to control Music Chi.”

“Don’t worry, Milady, we’ll protect you!” Rotom appeared over the weakened spirit.

“Yeah. Give ‘em heck for us, you two.” Dillon told them before they all escaped.
“You kids have a lot of nerve to go against Dr. Nefarious.” Courtney scolded, a catchy techno tune playing. “If you’re here looking for that Maddy girl, too bad she already escaped us.”

“So you kidnapped her.” Harry said firmly. “After we wipe the dancefloor with you, we’ll pass the message to Nefarious.”

“Oh, no you won’t!” Pink swayed. “Because he has Specy on his side, and no one can beat him. Anyhoo, Courtney and I have a concert later, so this really bites into our time. But hey, we’ll be delighted to give you a taste of our teamwork.”

Sugar flinched when Harry gripped her small hand in his larger one. “Kids Next Door put ‘teamwork’ in the dictionary. We’re just a small taste. Aren’t we, Sug’?”

“…Um… yeah.” Sugar put her fears aside and faced the enemies with passionate eyes. “Let’s do it!”

“Hm hm hm!” Pink laughed. “They asked for it, Courtney, we warned them. There’s no escape!”

(Play Courtney Gears’ Theme from *Ratchet: Up Your Arsenal.*)

**Boss fight: Courtney Gears and Pink Monkey**

“We see the future, and what do we seeee?” sang Courtney.

“‘bots and apes rulin’, the galaxyyyyy!” sang Pink.

“So much destruction, such little time.”

“But soon, the day when we taste, clementiitiine!”

The spotlights flew up-and-down in the background as the ladies shook their hips and performed cartwheels that mirrored the other. They spun back beside each other as Courtney sang:

“We have seen a world far beyond our OWN, wow!”

“Now we wish to go there, and we won’t be ALONE, now!”

“We have many friends, great guys in high places!”

“A certain special one has the prettiest of faces!” Pink winked, thinking of Specter.

The music did some rapid-fast notes, the lights flashing furiously as the girls shook their bodies, swayed their shoulders, shook, clapped hands over and swayed their heads, then shook again. “*My Nefarious wants us metal husks to have power!*”

“My Sweet Specter wants no more apes to cower!” Pink’s eyes sparkled.

“Many others, though, want to have this world, however.”

“I know a special place, though, where one never could say never!”

“Do you mean?” “I do, girl!” “IT’S A: a New Worlllld!” They locked arms and twirled.

“Where we can aaaaaalways sing!” cheered Courtney.
“A New Worrrrrld-” They broke away and tap-danced back.

“Do that ba-NAAAA-na thing!”

“A New World! Where we all can be happy!” They took hands and spun again. “So come down everybody! Don’t go be sappy!”

And with another invigorating twirl, the ladies unleashed a stream of musical notes and pummeled Harry and Sugar. “Ah! They really sing well.”

“Don’t lose your cool.” Harry threw on his sunglasses. “We have a song, too.”

“You wanna take the world and run it all da way you like? Well, you gonna learn the hard way girls, life just ain’t an easy hike- tell ‘em, Sug’!”

Sugar stood upright and jumped left-and-right with the rhythm, performing a twirl and sinking to a squat with both hands on the floor. “My world is my home, you better be prepared.” Harry grabbed the wrist of Sugar’s right arm and swung her around. “Like it, I can spin around, faster than you ever dared!”

And Sugar was thrown above the enemies as she fired a beam of notes from her lungs, blasting them apart. She landed as Harry joined her on stage. “Sexy ‘bot and slutty monkey, going up a tree.” Sugar continued, mimicking movements with Harry. “Falling down and up and down, until they had to pee.”

The remark angered Courtney and Pink, so both ran back up to head-bash the brats, only for them to jump off and trick the ape and ‘bot into ramming each other. They recomposed and growled at the synchronized Harry and Sugar. “You got your thing too, well: well, do we got ours. A big, blue world, granted by the powers.”

“It’s not perfect, it’s not great.” Sugar smiled and sang fast. “There’s plenty things we love to hate.”

“But you see.” “That’s just it.” “IT’S... OUR OLD WORRRRLD-”

“(Old World!)” Harry and Sugar locked both hands and shifted their feet left-and-right in mirrored fashion. “It’s got the Seeeeeven Seas-” sang Sugar.

“(Old World!) It’s got bacon and peas!”

“(OLD World!) It’s ALL for weee- SO YOU.” stomped toward Court and Pink, “WILL. NOT TAKE IT FROM MEEEE.” They spun, threw their arms open at the ladies, and washed a wave of notes over them.

The duo recovered once more with teeth clenched tight. “You kids are REALLY annoying!” Courtney yelled.

“Hah! Our voiceboxes are still fresh!” Harry taunted.

“Not for long! I’ve been singing baby-talk ‘til now!” Pink proclaimed. “Let’s teach them, Court!”

“WE! WILL. Spend-the-rest-of-our-lives, fighting-with-you!” Their fast singing blasted notes like bullets at the kids. “We. Will. Spend-the-rest-of-our-days, toying with you! YOU. WILL. Go down like hives, STABBED WITH KNIVES!” A string of knives flew at them outta nowhere, the kids narrowly dodging. “You’ll know pain for the REST OF YOUR LIVES, right
Spikes popped up from the floor, knives rained, Harry and Sugar bolted everywhere to avoid every one that came. “Where are these coming from?!”

“Music Chi can create illusions based on what the bender sings.” Harry informed, panting. “‘Course, we can do it, too. Get ready!”

Sugar slid to a halt, threw her arm back, and sent a wave of chi to blow the bladed illusions away. She and Harry began to dance again. “Wanna try ta crush us, with a spike and knife monsoon? We’ll go all ape on you: like a hammerhead cartoon.”

When Harry sang, his head transformed into a giant hammer, Courtney and Pink running frantically, but Harry smashed them both flat. He changed back as Sugar sang. “My passion burns just like the sun. Let’s see it now and have some fun!” She threw her arms up and became a burning sun that blinded the villains. Harry rolled forward (protected by his sunglasses), grabbed Pink, and chucked her at Courtney.

The sun faded, and the two were up again. “You guys have no class, no, you kids just don’t see.” sang Courtney.

“We will be the LAST: standing, on our very knees!”

“We all have a dream, you know, it will come on TO show.”

“Mine for now is to crush you. I hope you scream it when I do.” Pink winked.

“You can crush our bones, yeah, you ain’t crush our soul.” countered Harry. “In the end, I think one of us, just may get our goal.”

Courtney: ‘Goal is that?

Harry: You know, you prat.

Sugar: Should we say?

Pink: Only way.

“IT’S. UH. New Worrrrld-”

“For sweet Specyyyy!” winked Pink.

“New Worrrrrrld-”

“For OUR Cherryyyy!” sang Sugar.

“New Worrrrrld-”

“Can’t you two see?” Harry asked.

“OUR FAITH, LIES WITH, HEEEEEEE!” Another stream of notes flew from Harry and Sugar, knocking Court and Pink down.

“Grrrrrrr THAT’S IT!!” Pink’s eyes were demonic when she recovered. The room turned dark as she hovered in midair.
“Pink! Nooo!” cried Courtney.

“I have had ENOUGH of you! It’s time to DIIIIEEEEEE!” Notes flew everywhere aimlessly, Harry and Sugar taking hits, Courtney couldn’t even stand when her partner was this mad. “YOU SCUM. YOU JERKS! I AM THE QUEEN OF THIS STAGE! I won’t lose my spotlights to a COUPLE OF RUNTS!”

I can spend the rest-of-my-life

I can spend an eternity CRYING!

Sugar listened to the rhythm, fast and uncontrollable it was, she swiftly memorized and evaded, steadily dancing her way to Pink.

I can spend the rest-of-my-life

Making you spend the rest of your life LYING!

So I’ll spend the rest-of-my-life

I will spend my ENTIRE LIFE chasing YOOOOOOOUUUU!

A soundwave that could expand for light-years erupted from her lungs. Sugar blocked the sound with all of her might, kept the space around her mute while she shoved toward Pink, but the shield was cracking, little voice-cracks popped through, they were annoying. The entire station was shaking from Pink’s voice, it might just explode any time. Through sheer force of will, Sugar made it to Pink and enclosed the Silence Shield over her. The shaking stopped, only the music sounded, nothing to threaten their eardrums. Her shield was easily giving in—within seconds, it exploded.

Harry helped Sugar up as both faced the crazy monkey. Pink Monkey was senseless, her throat extremely numb, worn. She fell on top of Courtney, who already had smoke leaking out of her. Harry and Sugar never needed a greater catch of breath, but with the song finally over, they could drink water and rest their lungs. (End song.)

The rest of Sector V came in with sore ears. “There goes my hearing for a month.” Chris said. Kirie happily plucked the plugs out of her ears.

“Yo, yo, those were some hot moves.” sang a male Unova Dancer, returning with the others.

“You said it!” Meloetta glided overhead and landed before Sugar and Harry. “I’m eternally in your debt! You probably know this already, but my name’s Meloetta. The Firstborn Spirit of Music!”

“Wait… Firstborn?” Chris was baffled. “You aren’t one of the Eight Firstborn.”

“Nope! I’m one of the Nine Firstborn!”

“NINE?!”

“Uh-huh! I used to be in the Eight Firstborn, until Manaphy was born and we became nine. Music wasn’t part of the Avatar/Negatar Cycle, so I didn’t need to be added to revive Arceus.”

“But THAT doesn’t make sense,” Artie argued, “the idea was that the Firstborn possessed the greatest amounts of Arceus’s power, and Manaphy wasn’t even created by Arceus, so why-”

“I dunno, the point is, there were Eight Firstborn when the universe began, so eight was enough. You wouldn’t guess it from looking, but I’m actually really powerful. Sound exists in all places,
you know, so I have to keep track of it all. It’s a really hard job, you know!! Uh huh haaaaaaaah!” She started bawling.

“You sure you aren’t Mesprit?” Chris remarked.

“Lady Meloetta DOES have a hard job!” Rotom sparked. “That’s why she likes to let loose steam and party!”

“Kinda would be defeating the purpose.” Haylee said.

“It’s true, I do love music, and I love sound, it comes in so many pretty forms!” Meloetta beamed. “Forms I created, of course, but you make so much, you forget sometimes, so it’s like I’m still learning.”

“So if you’re a Firstborn, does that mean Sugar’s your Guardian?” Haruka asked.

“Uh-huh! I’ve been keeping her Spirit Ball all this time. Haha!” She took a tiny hairpin off her, pushed the little ball, and made it grow to hand-size. “Here!” She tossed it to Sugar.

The moment she caught it, they were still very flabbergasted. After all the emphasis that was put on ‘Eight’ Firstborn in the former gen’s story, the idea that a ninth one just came outta nowhere… Whatever the case, if Sugar was the Guardian, at least she was here to catch it. “Hahaha, just kidding!” Sugar froze just when she was about to throw the ball. “You still have to awaken yourself a little more. And what better way to do that than attending La Melody Extravaganza at Symphonia tomorrow!”

“Strewth!” Sheila fist-pumped. “A whole new adventure to a whole new planet! I call first on their burping-music soda!”

“Actually, it does have that.” Meloetta noted.

“Should we go with you, Milady?” asked a male dancer.

“Noooo! I’m in safe hands with these kids! Stay here and defend the dome from more music-hating freaks!”

“Will do!” they all saluted.

“Milady, when will I see you again??” Rotom sparked.

“Very soon, Tommy-tom! You need to stay here and keep the Electrodrome floating. The song of destiny calls!”

“The only sound I like is the trumpet of adventure!” declared Sheila.

Before anymore enemies could show up, the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. took off with all operatives onboard. “Who is that Rotom, anyway?” Sugar asked.

“A Pokémon I met when I came to Electrodrome. I taught him English and he was happy! I’m gonna miss him, though. Okay, fly a little lower from here, we’re close to Symphonia.”

“Nnn? I no see any Symphony-whatever!” Chimney shouted, viewing around.

“We’re flying right to a matter storm!” Haylee said. A tremendous mass of darkness and lightning took up the space before them. “We have to fly around!”
“Hmhmhm, that would be what drives mortals away.” Meloetta smiled. “I’ll take care of it.” She flew onto the control deck and stepped on the speaker button. She cleared her throat and let her voice be heard.


The darkness and despair faded away. The matter storm, black, blind, a wasteland of death, became a great, colorful planet of rich landscapes, fluffy clouds, and giant notes and lines surfing across the atmosphere. “Kids Next Door operatives, welcome to Symphonia. The capital country, Fantasia’s sure to be filled with intergalactic visitors for the festival.”

“But Fi said you’re the only one that can find Symphonia.” Mason pointed out.

“That’s just a lie we spread around. Symphonia reveals itself to any person that sings to the storm. I mighta let it slip to some people, though.” She flushed. “Remember that if you ever wanna visit. Fantasia is that big continent right there. Let’s go!”

Not too far away, a spacecraft designed like the Pokémon Raticate watched the train fly into Symphonia’s atmosphere. “So that’s where it was all along, huh?” Butch smirked.

“We’re lucky those twerps stopped by.” Cassidy said. “Now we can capture both Meloetta and her Guardian. Then we’re only nine Firstborn away. When Giovanni has them all, Team Rocket will be pulling the strings of this New World.”

“So-leeet uuus hurrryyyy!” Space Mama popped up from behind and hugged them in her armless hands. “I saw-a her there, one of thee Lights Meester Dark described, I must capture heeeerrrrr for heem.”

The duo’s heads were throbbing. “GET OFF OUR SHIP!”

“OOOOOOOOaaaaaaaaahhh!” Space Mama was blasting off again. Twinkle.

But wow, Sugar’s gonna set the record for how fast it takes to catch a Firstborn after realizing herself as a Guardian. X) But not how long it took to realize, considering she’s 22. X) You know where we’re going next time, so feel free to recap this chapter in a nutshell. X) A’ight, see ya.
Sectors V and W7 arrive at the Music Planet, Symphonia!

Time to conclude the Song Saga with a crossover world of the worst Disney movie ever! X) Nah, it was probably good; compared to sequel films. XP

Chapter 20: Symphonia

Symphonia; approaching Fantasia

The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. zoomed into the atmosphere of the musical planet, music lines and notes flying by their side as they pierced the fluffy clouds. “’ey, get away, ya crazy song-sans! I tryin’ ta focus, go find some birdies!”

Haruka Dimalanta lied on her front on her train bench, her long raven hair unraveled while Aeincha brushed it smooth. The Lilliputian stood on Haru’s right arm and held the comb in both of hers, its teeth watered as Aein exerted much strength in holding and brushing. “Arigato, Aeinchan.” Haru smiled. “I didn’t find time to comb after Dressrosa. It’s not too hard for you, is it?”

“Nope! Your hair is really soft and pretty, Haru-chan.” Aein beamed. “Your rose is really pretty, too. I don’t see purple roses often.”

“It’s very pretty!” Mary grinned, twirling said rose in her fingers. “Purple is fun, it’s close to blue, which I really like! You ever play ‘Loves Me, Loves Me Not’?”

“Not if it means destroying a rose.” Haruka said. “Besides, the outcome doesn’t set in stone the person’s feelings towards you.”

“There’s a trick to winning it: you can pluck off the stem petals, too.”

“Well, a close friend gave it to me, so I wouldn’t kill it. …Are you done, Aeincha?”

“After I tie the pigtails and rose on. Unless you wanna keep it long.”

“Hmmm… not yet. Pigtails make me look youthful.”

“Heehee, okay!”

“You’re very great at what you do!” Meloetta grinned, floating above them. The spirit’s hair was now light-green and hanging long, her eyes matching the color. “I love hair almost as much as music! We should do each other’s one day!”

“That’d be great! Your hair looks amazing, Meloetta-san, I’m excited to style it.”

Sugar looked at them a few seats away, frowning. She pulled back her hood and felt the edge of her short hair. Same as always. She stood at the nails of her fingers and toes. Very short. “Something wrong?” Chris asked. He was sitting next to her.
“My hair and nails don’t grow anymore. At first, I liked that about my curse since it was time-consuming to cut them. But the idea of cutting them on a regular basis... it gives you a feeling of growth. Well, that’s what I wanna think. I’ve seen the way girls dye their hair or change their shape... they know that life changes every day and they embrace it. I want that feeling.”

“If you ask me, you got it. You were making toys yesterday, now you’re going to a music planet with some kids who used to hate you.”

“Used to?”

“I mean, I still don’t like you. But if Cheren thinks you’re alright, well I won’t argue. But we’re concerned for his tendency to date so many girls at once.”

Sugar chuckled, sporting a smile. “Don’t worry, Sugar!” Meloetta floated beside her and rubbed Sugar’s hair. “Me and Aeincha will style your hair one day, too!”

“And your nails!” Aeincha was by Sugar’s feet and observing the nails. “Promise to let me know when they start growing. I wanna be the first to give you a pedicure!”

“Hm hm hm! I won’t forget!” Sugar giggled.

“Good evening, passenger-sans, this be your captain, the greatest train ever is taking land on a weird-ass planet of music and colors. Get off and no throwing up!!” Chimney screamed. (“Gyom-gyom!”) (Play “Harmony” from Rayman.)

The operatives all stepped outside to admire the wonderful landscape. Massive trumpets stood upon the bright green hills, blasting notes that were heard across the planet. The paved roads were piano keys that brought delight to everyone with each step. Giant flutes looped under and over the surface like those futuristic transport tubes, with notes spouting at the holes when the passengers flew past, and the mountains were drums that struck fear into the denizens with their thunderous booms. “Ugh. No one can possibly sleep here.” Chimney said.

“Not without our nightly Lullaby Series, nope!” Meloetta replied.

“Ahhhhh, strewth! Listen to all the music, mates! It’s just screamin’ adventure!” Sheila exclaimed with both fists raised. “Giant instruments that play music forever, it leaves so many questions, so many unanswered wonders for our universe! WHO WOULDN’T WANNA EXPLORE THIS PLACE??!”

“You’ve been asleep 60% of this quest, you’ve no right to yell that.” Mason said disbelieved.

“Just over the Bongo Hills is Harpsion, the town where La Melody Extravaganza’s taking place!” Meloetta sang. “Well, part of it, at least. Hehe, it’s a worldwide thing! Come on, Sugar, take part in it and meet all the famous singers! It’s time your voice is heard to the world!”

“I WANNA SING, too!” Sheila proclaimed. “I inherited me mum’s voice, and she won the award for Best Pirate Singer!”

Haruka informed with a smart, though disbelieved face, “Because Marine the Raccoon was the first person to sing, she deafened all the judges, audience, and other singers so they couldn’t be heard, ergo she won by default.”

“All of you are free to join, music is meant for everybody!” sang Meloetta. “Make your little footsteps go ’clop! clop! clop!’ Tell a little joke and go ‘Hah hah haaaa!’ Breathe in the oxygen and ‘Huff. huff. huuuuuff.’ Every sound makes music, so every person’s a musicbender!”
Mason wrapped an arm around Dillon and said, “Watch the movie Annie and go, ‘Ouch! Ouch! OOOUUUCH!’” The boys all laughed.

Sugar rolled her eyes and giggled. “Symphonia is a place of happiness, to follow your dreams, to let your soul be free!” sang Meloetta. “Come on, Sugar. Is your soul free?”

“Yeah… it is.” She nodded.

“I didn’t hear you, gotta sing it!”

Sugar sucked in a breath, “Myyy soul is freeeeeeeeeee!” The topographical instruments all reacted to her magical voice.

“That’s the spirit!” Meloetta twirled. “Now come, and let all of Symphonia know your voice! The Song of Destiny awaits!”

Stage 28: Symphonia

Mission: Attend La Melody Extravaganza!

Act I: Bongo Hills

Sugar raced forward and bounced up a stairway of drums to get onto a piano pathway. She surfed across the up-and-down road skiing on ice, her arms outstretched behind her as she blew a gust of notes. Each piano key flashed when she passed it, sending colorful notes forward that formed a trail, and Sugar shifted left-and-right during her skiing to catch every single note. The notes started appearing in midair, forcing Sugar to jump with perfect timing, but she kept the rhythm flowing by the time the path led up a hill and let Sugar off onto a giant drum over a plain below. For catching all the notes, a colorful barrier surrounding an Electoon cage was open. Sugar broke the cage and set the creatures free.

To get onto the higher drums, Sugar had to carefully slide up a very narrow, floating ice road, which in reality was part of a giant note, as many such ice-notes floated around the sky. What lay before Sugar at this moment were a series of trumpets, all facing skyward and connected to a single pipe, the reed of which stuck up beside Sugar’s platform. She inhaled and blew a forceful wind into it, causing all of the trumpets to blast forth; even though Sugar didn’t release nearly that much air. Regardless, the strong gusts kept her skyward, having to avoid flying Doomtoons that tried to knock her down, lest she fall to the plain below. The farthest horn blew her even higher, at level with the end of an ice-note, and she kept balance as she slid down swiftly, looping around a tall stack of drums and landing at their base.

A stairway of normal-size bongos led up to the next foothold, so Sugar ran up them quickly as each one fell upon her steps. She ran up another set, which shifted backwards halfway up, but Sugar didn’t stumble and made it onto the next platform. A trumpet was blowing flying winged notes that drifted higher up the tower, so Sugar grabbed one’s base, but when it faltered and threatened to fall, she swung to another, and kept this routine until she could swing off on a giant floating cymbals. The cymbals bounced her to the top of the drum stack, but empty sky lay out from here. So with that, Sugar hummed the stage’s theme and created a Song Road.

“La la laaaaa, la la laaaaa. La la laaaaa, la la laaaaaaa.” She hummed the beginning of the theme and could easily follow the soft note pattern. “DADA daaaa, da da DA DA DA DAAAAA.” This next part of the road shifted down-and-up suddenly at these next few notes, until the last pair
stooped directly down and landed Sugar on a giant violin. As she grinded across the strings like rails, a giant bow strummed the strings, going further along as Sugar went, and created another note path for her to follow. Just as well, a different tone sounded depending on the string Sugar was grinding on. Xylophones stretched parallel to the violin on either side, and when giant sticks beat the keys, electric spheres were flung onto the strings, which Sugar expertly dodged. The strings were meeting their end at the very top of the instrument, where she flew off onto the first of many floating drums. Giant disembodied hands banged the drums with sticks, creating thunderous booms that sent any passengers into the air.

For collecting all the notes, Sugar could break another cage holding Electoons. She couldn’t have a moment to catch her breath, for the drumsticks kept on poundin’, keeping her and the Wrong Notes aloft – average-size purple notes with scary, monstrous faces. When the Wrong Notes saw her, they tried to shift toward Sugar to bite her while bouncing, and she couldn’t wave her own notes to push them back. Thankfully, the pounding drums ended shortly when Sugar made it to a xylophone stairway. She happily skipped her way down and made a note at each step, but the stairs shortly ended at a clear, sparkly river. Since Sugar couldn’t swim, she would have troubles crossing, but this was why she could blow a reed next to her, which channeled underground and blew several trumpets under the water. Several bubbles with oranges notes inside them rose into the air.

The notes were smiling and dancing to the music, but like everything else, Sugar would have to bounce these bubbles in the order they came out. Since they were disordered, this made it difficult, each bubble popped upon bounce, but if she hit the wrong one, they would all pop. She memorized the order and bounced across the river safely, making a perfect rhythm with the right order. The bubbles ended above a waterfall, where the top of a vertical ice-note stood. She flew up over the opposite side of this note, fell down, and landed on the sudden curve at the bottom which sent her sliding up a slope at sudden speed. She kept her feet still, let only the ice guide her, she went up a loop that shifted direction leftward, between an enclosing of steep hills over a narrow part of river.

The road curved right, where Sugar had to shift her feet along an ice-note wall on the left, then shift back onto the main road to keep sliding. Piranha-notes leapt up to snack her over this lake, this ice-road coming to end, so Sugar leaped far with the momentum and slid across the next one. She slid over another narrow river where the road shifted left, but the intersection went directly up vertical, Sugar shot up, into the air, looked carefully, and positioned her feet to land on the opposite side, then slide across the new path. This ice-road ended, the following area had distant, scattered ice-road platforms, Sugar leaped and cartwheeled left, right, a shorter right, then left, and surfed a straight road that was approaching a downward hill, where the ice-road looped into a great spiral.

“OOWAAAH!” A living Trumpetling with eyes on Sugar’s right blew forcefully, shifting Sugar’s momentum to begin sliding around and around the great ice-spiral. Wrong Notes glided on the path and tried to bite her, so she had to leap them. Once again, ground-trumpets blew Rainbow Notes onto the road that Sugar collected on the way, a simple task. Sugar looped and looped until the spiral brought her to the center. The center was a circle the length of both legs, so Sugar stretched her legs to either side and whirled around until she sunk to a splits. “Hehe.” A trumpet down below blew her into the sky, where she was sucked into the hole of a flute-tube and whisked across the earth.

The flute spat her out on a piano path, where she could break an Electoon cage for collecting all notes. “YAAAAAAH-haaaaaa!” Sheila glided across the path and stopped beside Sugar. “Blimey, they really do have Song Sodas! Check it out, behlp, burp, beep beep beep BEP! Buurp.” She burped bubbles with the rhythm, and those bubbles made music.

“Dat. Dat. Daaah, dalala-LALA, I wanna sing-song all day!” Aeincha sang, swaying left and right
while Haruka carried her.

“It’s nice and all,” Haru smiled humorously, “but doesn’t anybody get any rest?”

“It’s haaaard to rest, hard to rest, with La Melody Extravaganza as the test!” Meloetta sang, dancing above them. “Come this way, it’s Harpsion, to see the show, come and play!” (End song.)

They followed the piano path into a bustling town where all the buildings were giant instruments or instrument cases—they better not be real instruments, thought some of the members who were getting a headache. A stage was standing in the town square, flashing colorful lights as steam erupted. The person that appeared, whom everybody cheered loudly for, was a most unusual girl. A tall, slim 16-year-old with cyan hair of a neon texture, in two pigtails that flowed almost the length of her body. She wore a white sleeveless shirt with a black skirt, and a tie that matched her cyan hair. She wore very high black boots that ended just under her waist, and appeared mechanical like the sleeves over her arms (which weren’t connected to the shirt). Her eyes also matched the hair’s cyan color, and her voice bore a futuristic feel.

*Sharing the WOR-R-R-R- world!*

*Sharing the WOR-R-R-R- world!*

*I can see this FUTURE is right now!*

‘Cause my voice is always going aaroooooound!

*Tell me how, you feel like these days*

*Tell me why... you DON’T wanna saaay it*

*Tell me now what is on your mind*

*I’m still gonna listen to yoooouu!*

Sugar didn’t know how to describe it… she was in love with that girl’s voice. Those lyrics described Sugar perfectly… like this singer was talking directly to her. The vocals touched and warmed Sugar’s soul… oh, how she strongly resisted the desire to run up and sing with her. “Impressed?” Meloetta startled Sugar out of her thoughts. “She’s Symphonia’s Pop Queen, Hatsune Miku!”

“She’s Hatsune Miku?!” Haruka’s jaw dropped.

“Huuuuuu, her hair is so pretty!!” Stars glittered Aeincha’s eyes. “I feel like I could slide down those pigtails like water! Ohhhhh her barber is the luckiest person in the universe!”

“She does her own hair!” Meloetta said.

“EEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAAAAAAIII!” Aeincha was in love.

“You’re sure she’s not the same Miku from *Shrink High*, right?” Artie asked.

“You actually played that?” Harry stared.

“(Vweeb said it was good.)”

“Huh?” Haylee looked around. “Hey, there’s Sugar!”
“If there is something on your MIND that- makes- you- stay, I will free your sou-ul- ul!” Then, Hatsune gasped when Sugar ran up on stage.

“You will free my so-ul-oul-oo-ooouul!”

The music stopped. Everyone was looking at Sugar next to Miku. The child, realizing what she did, froze in shock. Hundreds of people staring at her. She slowly glanced up-right and saw that Miku was doing the same. “Who… are you?”

Sugar flushed, scratching the back of her head as she faced the taller girl with a nervous grin. “I’m, um… Sugar.”

“I can’t heeeeaaaaaaar!”

As if on impulse, Sugar looked up and cried, “MY NAME IS Suuuugaaaaaarrrrrrr!”

“Thank you, Sugar, for sharing your sound!” Miku took Sugar’s hands and swayed them forward and backward, joyfully dancing in place while Sugar remained speechless and stationary. “Now we’re connecting our feeliiii-ii-iii-iiings!” Hatsune danced behind Sugar and twirled the child around by her right arm. “Everyone has found that we’ve owned this hymn. Now we have found that’s all, so we join iiiiiin.”

Meloetta landed on the middle-front of the stage, her hair matching Miku’s cyan color and tied in pigtails. “I’m the Goddess of Music, and Hatsune Miku is my idol! Helloooooo, Fantasia! Do you love Hatsune and her new friend, Sugaaaaaar?”

“YAAAAAAAYYY!”

“Are their voices not the most majestic you’ve heard all day?”

“NAAAAAAAYYY!”

“RIGHT! I mean, WRONG- wait…” The audience exchanged baffled murmurs at the spirit. “Double negatives. Ahem, what I mean to say is, YOUR voice is majestic!” She pointed at a random person, “And YOUR voice, and YOURS! On Planet Symphonia, where music is life, everybody has a beautiful voice! Your voice is your soul! Every voice is beautiful!”

“Everybody has a beautiful dream!” sang Aeincha.

Haruka rocked the tiny in her arms and sang, “Everybody has a beautiful thing!”

“All this singing makes beautiful vomit!” Mason sang, dancing with Dillon.

“So pretty, we just shouldn’t, dag gonnit!” Dillon sang, earning glares from all the girls except Chimney.

“Every THING’s a work of art!” April presented a painting of Miku and Sugar dancing.

“Every line, shape, and color!” Mary held up a crayon version of April’s painting.

“Everybody here has a voice! So let it be heard! And you wiiillll siiiiiiiiiiing!” Meloetta’s final note reached the ears of millions. “People of Symphonia and intergalactic visitors alike, welcome to La Melody Extravaganza! We’re so happy to have so many voices!”

“We’re happy to introduce those singing for our festival!” Miku proclaimed. “Sunny Bridges, if you would like to do our first?”
“Thank you, Shawty.”

Harry Gilligan spit out a soda he was drinking. His dark eyes fell wide. “No WAY that is Sunny Bridges! Nobody’s seen ‘im in, er, ages!”

“Now who’s a dreamy fanboy?” Haylee stared.

Sunny Bridges, a very slim, rubber-like man with a purple shirt, blue jeans, and a straw hat walked on stage in a moonwalk fashion. “Ahem. All the way from Dimension Termina, a ninja from a distant mountain, proud to introduce Killer Bee!”

A cloud of smoke puffed on the stage behind them. A muscular dark-skinned man with yellow hair, a goatee, and sunglasses walked up, jabbing his fingers as a rap tune played. “Yaw-yaw. I’m Kil-l er Bee, so you should know, Ah’m the head of this show, fools, ya fools.”

“Great, hehehe!” Miku grinned. “Hailing from Galaxia, a skeleton whose soul lives, Nightmare Prince Jack Skellington!”

“Thank you, thank you!” The round-headed skeleton in the black-gray tux waved to all his fans. “I am always delighted to sing to the people of Symphonia!”

“Now, our final, and most recent contestant,” Meloetta began, “from the Milky Way Galaxy, the Princess of Dressrosa, Don Quixote Sugar!”

Sugar panicked when the spotlights shone on her. “Wait, I didn’t even register, I just got here! !” She waved her hands in defense.

“Then you HAVE registered!” Meloetta sang. “The rules for La Melody Extravaganza are the same as every year. Across the country in our three High Lands, our singers must make their way and perform a musical feat with the land’s guardian. The one whose moves are most graceful, whose voice is most majestic—not that it’s different from anyone else—will be this year’s Queen of Sing! So leeeet’s beeegiiii-”

“HEY, I wanna enter, TOO!” Sheila screamed, running onstage. “I have me mum’s voice and she was the best! Ahem… MAAAAARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB, LITTLE LAMB, LITTLE LAMB-”

“My name’s Mary, I wanna sing!!” Mary ran up beside Sheila and sang in unsynchronized form. “III HAD A LITTLE LAMB, LITTLE LAMB, LITTLE LAMB, MY NAME’S MARY AND I HAD A LITTLE.” Two long hooks flew up onstage and pulled them both away.

“I would love to hear you sing later!” Meloetta cheered.

“Uuummmm they need work.” Sunny said. “So all singers, head to the High Lands, good luck, and sing beautiful! …” He looked to his right and found Harry Gilligan standing inches away, viewing Sunny with wide sparkly eyes. “Who’re you, Shawty?”

“I need your autograph.” Harry held up pencil and paper.

“For the record dude, you can’t be in love with Sunni just ‘cause she’s named after your favorite singer.” Artie said, grabbing Harry’s ear and dragging him away like a stone-cold statue.

Sugar saw a bunch of citizens jumping into Transport Flutes to ‘Genie Road’, and Killer Bee was among them. “Wish me luck, guys!” Sugar told her friends before approaching a flute’s hole, and was sucked in and whisked across the earth like a vacuum. She must’ve flown for miles, but Sugar
felt herself land on her feet in minutes. Time to explore this new region. (Play the “Genie’s Stage” theme from the Aladdin Game.)

**Act 2: Genie Road**

“OOOWAAAH!” A Trumpetling immediately blew Sugar up an icy slope, where she leaped and grabbed Rainbow Notes. “OOOWAAAH!” Another Trumpet, Sugar jumped Wrong Notes on the slide up. “OOOWAAAH!” She jumped Wrong Notes, crouched to slide under spikes, then plopped against a wall that stopped her at the top. The Genie Road took place above the clouds of Symphonia, where Sugar viewed the tops of pink, Arabian towers. Marble white platforms and footholds made up the “ground”, and designs of a grinning blue genie were everywhere. Just as well, floating trumpets and instruments were performing the classic song, keeping Sugar’s spirits up as she battled across. To start off, she could blow into a trumpet and cause several Genie heads above to let their tongues droop, which Sugar used to swing across a cloudy chasm.

She landed on the first of many small Genie platforms and jumped across before they fell, easily avoiding the flying Doomtoons before stopping to rest on a larger foothold. The next chasm had giant pungi flying her way – flutes that snake-charmers use, so with careful timing and precision, Sugar danced across the slender footholds, but didn’t have to for long until the Genie flew by and let Sugar grab onto his tail. He soared up up and away and let Sugar drop on the palm of a giant Genie hand, the arm of which stretched up from below the clouds. Up next was another segment of giant drums, with big blue Genie balls bouncing around to cause the thunderous booms. Large Genie hoolihoops were also fluttering in-between drums, spinning incredibly fast as the balls bounced through them.

Sugar jumped onto and commandeered the nearest ball, keeping an excellent balance as she bounced toward the first hoop and made it through. The second drum had Doomtoons flying back-and-forth, and the hoolihoop floated along a firewall with only one clear opening, but Sugar stayed clear of the ‘toons and dodged through the opening. The third hoop had electric beams that sparked to life at certain intervals, so when they were off, Sugar passed through. The fourth and last drum had nothing on it, a trumpet on the opposite side was blowing skyward. It was the width of Sugar’s ball, and when the girl bounced inside, the music immediately silenced as the horn tried to blow. It puffed wider the longer it was clogged, until finally, it POOOOFED!

Sugar shot across the sky like a comet on her ball, the rubber bouncing forcefully between towers until it flew straight at a giant point and POPPED confetti everywhere. Sugar fell onto a trampoline that bounced her to a safe floor, plopping on her back. A pungi was lain down next to her, along with a basket the snake would come out of. Sugar grabbed the instrument and stood atop the snake’s lid, performing notes that went with the stage rhythm, each correct note making the skinny green snake rise higher, Sugar with him. When it was level with the floating Genie balloons, she proceeded to jump them, their pops propelling her into the air to give her the time to bounce the next one. The final balloon, she grabbed the hoop on its bottom, a hole on its back opening and releasing helium as it glided around like a rocket.

Sugar directed it to fly to a structure’s side where a long tongue stuck out of a Genie face. The tongue began to retract, so Sugar leapt to another and gracefully began jumping from tongue to tongue between this sky-high alleyway. She spotted an Electoon cage and burst it open on the way, performing a twirl on her toes upon landing the next tongue, and jumping to the next. When the tongues reached their end, and empty sky laid between her and the next ground, she created a Song Road and soared. “Pride ourselves on serviiiiice, you’re the boss, king, bishop!” Sugar sang, moving along the right notes while also avoiding Wrong Notes on her road. “Say what you wish,” inched up, “yours true dish,” inched far down, “how ‘bout a little more Baklavaaaaa?” Inched way way up, then landed on a straight, marble road.
Statues depicting our favorite *Aladdin* characters stood on either side as Sugar ran down without fear. She stood before the final statue at the end, depicting none other than Robin Williams. Sugar paid him a salute before going around, beyond the columns of a palace. The judges, Sunny, Miku, and Meloetta were there, the latter now colored purple with her hair tied in a cone. A shiny brown lamp stood upon a pedestal, so Sugar walked up and rubbed it. The genie whom the road was named for appeared in a cloud of blue smoke.

“Eeeeeee-YAAAAAAAAH!” He stretched his sky-blue form with much relief and enthusiasm. “Feels so good to be OUTTA there! Hey there, happy to meet you Kid, welcome to La Melody Extravaganza, please tell us your name!”

“I-It’s, uh, Sugar.” The girl blushed.

“Sugar, hmm, well maybe I’ll call you Su, no how ‘bout Gar, or perhaps UGA!” He morphed into a caveman.

“Kee, ha ha ha ha!” She laughed joyfully.

“Well, Sugar, thank you for participating, I suppose you know what’s next, right?”

“We have to sing!”

“I’ve been goin’ on for 10,000 years, and I’ve got 10,000 more, so let us show this crowd some MAGIC!”

“Well, Ali Baba had them 40 thieves, Scheherazade had a thousand tales.” Genie snapped his fingers and made 40 thieves surround Sugar.

Sugar sang, “Well that’s okay, ’cause up my sleeves, this kind o’ magic never fails!” She whirled her arms and blew them all away with songwaves.

“You got some POWER in yo’ corner now-” Genie lit two fireworks and flew them at Sugar.

“Ammunition in my camp.” She clapped hands, sent a soundwave, and popped the rockets like confetti.

“You got punch, PIZZAZZ, yahoo and how, See all you gotta do is rub that lamp, And I’LL say-”

They both sang and danced in unison, “MISTRESS Sugar, Sir (I’m a girl), what will your pleasure be?”

“I’d like to win this contest, please!”

“Ain’t no problem with a friend like-!”

“HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!” A cloud of smoke exploded behind them. A rap tune played as Killer Bee danced out. “Fools, ya fools, Ah got here, too, so move aside, that cool?”

“Oh, actually-” Genie tried to say.

“WEEEELL,” Bee snapped his fingers in rhythm as he sang, “Ah’ll take som’ that in Column A, gimme all dat in Column B.” A tray of meat appeared in his right hand when he snapped, and fruit in his left. “Good luck gettin’ me, ’cause then you’ll see, I’ll-have-ya-all-wiped-down one-two, threeee.” Three ninjas appeared behind him, so he cut them with his sword.

“Get back down, masa baka, or Ah’ll show ya how we do it downtown!” Sugar rapped.
“I’ll bet.”

“I will!”

“WELL, gimme a thrill!” both sang. “All I gotta ask is one thang!”

Bee leapt and stood on the tip of a tall needle, hands folded as he stood with perfect balance.

“Mistress Sugar, ya fool, what will yo’ pleasure be?”

“I’ll take ya down with all my strength, you’ve never known one- no, NEVER known one like, meeeeee!” Sugar unleashed a soundwave at Killer Bee, but he easily jumped a few yards behind her.

“Haha! You got moves, you got grooves, but lemme ask ya, Sugar, ‘bout your hometown. Can your friends do this?” Bee formed a hand symbol, poofing a new set of Shadow Clones at each strum of the trumpet.

“Not to my knowledge, no.” Sugar said.

“Aha! Can yo’ buddies do this?” Another hand symbol, and eight purple tentacles sprouted from his back.

“Ooooo, that’s pretty good.” Genie said.

“Can they pull THIS!” He jabbed his fingers to the sky and shot lightning bolts at each strum. “Not even they’re little hat, I bet.”

“Not so fast!” Sugar threw a top-hat at him, exploding into smoke. For some reason, Killer Bee expected dancing women, but what he got were crocodiles blowing horns. “What the-?!”

“Ha ha!” Sugar laughed. “Can your friends go razza-matasma, haba-cadaza, so many I don’t even haaaave? It’s a minor, thing, nothing good, but it kicks more butt than you.”

“OH!” The audience gaped.

“You wanna get down, well you’ll be amazed, after askin’ me that little phrase-” Bee sang.

“Oh YOU mean—Mister Killer Bee-san, would you like a wish or two or three? I’d choose those moony toons of yours, take it from a gal like me!”

“Hold on now! You’d diss mah toons with all your goons, fools ya foolin’ like fools no mo’. Ah’m on the clock, go on, TICK TOCK, apologize right now on the dooooot!”

“You wanna hear ‘sorry’, Kill’ Bee, YOU say sorry to meeeeee! Go on and cry, but YOU know WHY? I’m the best damn singer aroooouuund!” She spun like a tornado, a giant Genie hand with eyes appeared beside her.

“WAH WAH wah?”

“Nuuuuuh-uh!” Sugar wagged her finger.

“WAH WAH wah?”

“HEEEEELL no!”

“WAH WAH wah!”
“Badap—ba! I gots the POW-wuh!” She snapped her fingers and they popped. “Yeah, you’re good Bee, I’ll admit that. But I got a few more things to ask you: Can you do this?” She surfed a songwave and performed the Egyptian walk.

“Can y’all do THIS?” He was on his cranium, spinning around and around.

“Can you do THIS?” Sugar stood straight and stiff, arms clamped to her sides. Her eyes looked left, right, left, right, clicking her tongue like a clock. “Click, clock, click, clock, click- or would ya rather, rather, RATHER face your DOOM.” An explosion of smoke—missiles, soldiers with machineguns, and flamethrowers surrounded Bee. The rapstar scurried away when all hell was loose. “Abracadabra, Alakazam, bippity-boppity-BAM!”

“COME ON, MAAAAAN! Slow yourself!” Notes flew everywhere, Killer Bee narrowly dodging each one, then Sugar popped up before him, performed quick fist-jabs, “It-gets-hard-to-keep-with-this-BEAT!” The world flashed at each jab, ‘til Bee was knocked dizzy. “I’ll keep this up allll day long now, gonna send ya packin’ ALL WAY HOOOOOME!” He flew several meters with her kick. Sugar danced onto a stage as the notes strummed louder. “Mis-ter Kil-ler Bee, Sir, should I kick the head or knee? I’ll kick you down, in a wed-ding gown,” she wore a wedding dress for a brief second before smacking him, “You ain’t NEVER known one, never no, ain’t never never known, never known.” She danced and flailed her arms and legs every which way, the notes dancing crazily, “Yooou’ve NEVER! (shing!) EVER! (cling!) OOOONE LIIIIKE MEEEEE!”

A great fireworks display colored the heavens, and Bee was among the rockets propelled.

“Oh, it’s so BEAUTIFUL!” Genie cried.

“I know! I can’t stop looking!” Meloetta raised two poster-boards, depicting the scores of both contestants, “10 out of 10!”

“She gives that score to everyone.” Sunny said disbelieved, writing his own scores. “It’s mostly just us two, 8 for Bee and 8.5 for Sugar.”

“8.5 for Bee and 9 for Sugar!” Miku cheered.

Sugar’s eyes sparkled at the judges, especially Miku. She felt a whole new warmth inside her. “Look at my score. Isn’t it neat? Wouldn’t you say this contest is complete? Wouldn’t you think I’m the girl. The girl who’s won… everything!”

“Nawwwww! No no!” Bee cried, pounding the ground. “Fools, ya fools! I just got schooled!”

“Yes, and it was coolly-cool!” Sugar rapped.

“NOW IT’S OUR TURN!” Mary zipped up onstage, pushed Sugar away, and Sheila joined her.

“Ladies and gentlemates, Sheila and Mary’s GRAND SONATAAAA!”

“That’s me, I’m Mary, she’s Sheila!”

“NOW LET’S SING! Uuuuudatatiiiiiiiiiii. Nuiiii, yodo yotooooo (You sure this is Japanese?)”

“(Yeah!) NONI TIDO DOOOOO ya doooo-”

Killer Bee and Sugar slid up behind both girls and sent them skyward with powerful kicks. “Some of us prefer to hear, the REST of the contest.” Bee sang.

“Awesome!” Meloetta sang with delight. “10/10!”
“You’re very unbiased.” Sunny and Miku sighed.

“Great singing with you, Bee.” Sugar shook her rival’s hand.

“You too, Sugar, now I have a new reason, to get groovier.”

“Excellent job, marvelous performance!” Genie applauded. “Since you were such a great act, I’ll give you one wish!”

“I wish to go to the next contest area!”

“Comiiiing riiiight up!” Genie snapped his fingers, and Sugar poofed to the next area. (Play “Orchestral Chaos” from Rayman Legends.)

Act 3: Hip-Hop Pond

Sugar ran forth, jumped a crocodile, ducked under a thorny branch, leaped with both legs outstretched over another croc, jumped up two Toad Soldiers, landed and ran, bent back at 90 degrees to dodge another’s axe, jumped, swung a vine, bounced down two Toads. She fell, slid under a thorn, leapt and flipped two Toads before surfing a songwave, dodged left, dodged a right Toad, jumped and kicked one in the crotch. Several lilipads propelled into the air with water spouts, so she gracefully jumped each one before surfing a Song Road through a thorny passage.

The road curved directly up in a steep, precise staircase—then went down in the very same fashion—steeped back up. She remained precise, then leapt right off and flipped off some Toads’ heads. She tap-danced on her tippy-toes across some lilipads, nimbly leapt some piranhas jumping to snatch her, limbo-ducked some horizontal sticks, jumped, placed her hands on a totem, flipped, kicked a piranha in midair, and began grinding on some giant violin strings. She jumped left, right, avoiding spiked parts, jumped a whole section, kicked a midair Toad, landed back on the strings, hearing the last of their sad notes before landing on the next ground.

Sugar swung her fists fast and punched Toads, ducked an axe, jumped a kick, dove between two close branches, Wall Jumped over a narrow chasm, tap-danced across Toads’ heads, then fell down a deep chasm, faster and faster, she would splat any minute, but a blubbery Toad’s belly at the bottom bounced her back on her feet. She kept steady, tap-danced a pond of lilipads, jumped and ducked piranhas, surfed a songwave in rainbowy waves, landed on her belly, slid under thorns, jumped, kicked off a piranha’s head, off a Toad’s head, swung a vine, then landed perfectly before a great big pond with many lilipads, both up close and in the background where a Frog Choir sat. Sugar took a bow as they applauded.

“Splendid, well done.” said the Frog Conductor, Don Gero, blowing his bubble pipe.

“That was marvelous footwork.” Jack Skellington applauded.

“Hey, aren’t you Darkrai’s son?” Dillon asked, the Sector V operatives arriving. “Why are you participating?”

“While it may not look like it, Father created me as a musicbender. And I must say, I’m quite proud of my voice.”

“Yes, but we will be doing little singing here.” Don Gero said. “This will be a test of movement. These lilipads are feeble and don’t support average weight. Musicbending allows one to move gracefully, light as sound, and you have already demonstrated this feat on your way here. I had waited for the second contestant to arrive so I may test you together. If you would, on the pads.”
Sugar and Jack bowed to each other before leaping on parallel sides of the lilipads, keeping their feet light as the lilipads supported them. “Now as I conduct my wand… you dance.”

“Heehehee, good luuuuck!” sang Meloetta – who was now yellowish-green with her hair short and wide.

Don Gero tapped his wand and prepared to conduct. A strict, gentle song played as Sugar and Jack, in mirrored fashion, stepped sideways along their lilipads. When at their farthest point, Gero directed them to come back, but stop halfway. They bent backwards into a rainbow bridge, the act hurting Jack less than Sugar, their hands planted on pads behind them. As directed, they were off their feet, totally upside-down on their hands. Blood rushed to Sugar’s head, but she ignored it, focused the light chi to her arms to stay standing. Then on a forceful note, they both jumped and turned to face the shore, still on their hands. They squatted their arms, pushed with all their light force, flipped upright, and landed on both feet.

Sugar and Jack stretched one leg backward, touched a pad, squatted their other leg, and placed their hands on two front pads. They faced directly up, took a deep breath, and bent the leg that was stretched back. Then they jumped backward, placed hands against pads, flipped further, landed—Sugar’s left foot forced a lilipad under the water, her heart skipping, but she kept her cool and stayed balanced on the other pad while placing her foot on another. Don Gero smiled charmingly and twirled his wand. Sugar and Jack spun toward each other and locked: she gripped his left arm by the elbow, reached up to hold his right waist, while Jack’s long-fingered arm reached down to hold her left.

They danced and swayed each other in a graceful, romantic fashion. Two lovers, under a moonlit night, even though it was daylight and very misty. They couldn’t look at where their legs moved, just had to know where the lilipads were. On a sudden note, Jack swung Sugar around, bent back and facing up inches from his bony face. Then she grabbed his shoulders, hauled herself overhead, landed on the lilipads behind, and bent Jack back as well. She released, they both hopped across several lilies and landed like frogs. Sugar turned sideways and bent like a rainbow bridge while Jack positioned like a spider.

“Laaaaaa la- la- la: laaaaaa. Laaaaaa la laaaaaa.” Sugar returned upright, waved an arm, and sang.

“Laaaaaaa la LAAAA. Laaaaa lalala LAAAAAA.” Jack mirrored this movement with his own notes.

“Laaaaaa la la laaaaa.” Sugar inched forward.

“Laaaaaaaa lalala laaaaaa.” Jack came closer.

“Laaa-aa-aa-a laaaaa.”

“Looooooaaaa laaaaaa.” Dramatic notes, the swamp turned darker, Jack wore a monstrous face. “LAAAA.” Sugar’s eyes became psychotic, “Laaaaaa.”

“LAAAAAAA.”

. . . Both faced the conductor and took a bow, the audience clapping.

“Beautiful.” Artie yawned, half-awake.

“Excellent! 10/10!” Meloetta cheered.
“7 for Sugar, 8 for Jack.” Sunny scored.

“7 for Sugar, 7.5 for Jack!” Miku beamed.

“Huff... well, not bad.” Sugar smiled.

“I had fun dancing with you, Sugar.” Jack said. “And congratulations for conquering your fear.” He reached an arm.

“Hmhm.” Sugar shook his hand. “Thanks.”

That very instant, eight parts of two metal hoops came and trapped Meloetta, pulling her skyward. “WHAT the-?!” Miku gasped. Everyone’s jaws dropped; a Raticate ship was hovering above them, and the perpetrators, a woman with blonde hair in two angled braids, and a man with cyan hair, both in black suits with red “R” symbols, stood on the roof.

“Prepare for trouble!” Cassidy announced.

“And make it double.” Butch continued.

“To infect the world with devastation!”

“To blight all people in every nation.”

“To denounce the goodness of truth and love!”

“To extend our wrath to the stars above.”

“Cassidy!”

“Butch.”

“We’re Team Rocket, circling the cosmos all day and night!”

“Surrender now, or you will surely lose the fight.”

Raticate popped out, “Raticate!”

“What the fuck?” Chris said.

“Who are they?” Hatsune asked.

“It’s Team Rocket!!” Aurora pointed panickingly. “They’re bad guys who try to steal peoples’ Pokémon!! Hehe, I always wanted to say that.” She grinned.

“Do you work for Dr. Nefarious, too?” Sugar yelled.

“HEH heh heh! Little twerp thinks Nefarious is the big shot in all this!” Butch laughed.

“In truth, Nefarious is smalltime, compared to Giovanni.” Cassidy said.

“Even if Lord Gnik thinks he’s running the scenes, Team Rocket will be the ones in charge by the end of this month.”

“Urr! Please, let me go!” Meloetta shook. “Please, we have to finish the festival!”

“I’m afraid this performance must end a little short.” Cassidy smirked. “Don’t even try to
persuade us. We’re well aware of the legend of Chernabog.”

“Chernabog?” Sugar asked.

“The demon that lives on Bald Mountain, the third High Land of this contest. The reason this festival is held every year is because the seal on Chernabog falters at this time. The seal requires an enormous amount of Music Chi on Meloetta’s part, so La Melody Extravaganza is her only means of recharging.”

“But there’s another part to the legend.” Butch continued. “Millions of years ago, it’s said that the Devil himself created Chernabog out of Meloetta’s negative energy. Chernabog is a musical demon that Meloetta can control. But with Meloetta under our control…”

“You can’t force Meloetta to do what you want!” Sugar yelled.

“No, but you’d be surprised what a little hypnosis does.”

“The weakness of gods that choose to live among mortals is they become much more susceptible to mortal ailments.” Cassidy said.

“See you at Bald Mountain, twerps. This is the year Team Rocket plays the final key.”

“Rrrrraticate!” The airship returned to the heavens and flew away.

“I feel like I’ve heard of Chernabog.” Haylee said. “Isn’t he a demon from some religion?”

“Father told me about him once.” Jack replied. “Chernabog was one of the Six Demon Saints. There are others like Medusa, the Queen of Darkness; Lucifer, who granted magic to mortals in exchange for souls; Hannibal Bean, the Yin-Yang Spirit; even the Masked Demon, Majora was considered one. Not all of them were on grounds with Satan himself; some of the saints wanted to control the universe on their own.”

“Then we can’t let Team Rocket awaken him! Let’s get to Bald Mountain!” Sugar declared.

“This Transport Flute goes there!” Miku directed at a midnight-blue flute nearby.

“Thanks!” Sugar dove in first and whooshed across the world, her many friends joining.

Bald Mountain

The northwest region of Fantasia was cold, cloudy, and trapped under eternal night. A small town with citizens stood miles from the terrifying, oddly-shaped mountain where lightning surged. Surrounding the land, three towers with golden bells rang their holy tolls, majestic sounds that kept evil at rest.

Team Rocket’s airship hovered at a close, safe distance from the mountaintop. “Oh, the bells of the Three Goddesses.” Cassidy observed. “They are beautiful. Powered by your Music Chi, aren’t they?”

“Nnnnn!” Meloetta was zapped trying to shake free of her binds.

“Too tight for you? We’ll make it stop. Drowzee, use Hypnosis!” She tossed open her Pokéball, and the yellow elephant-trunk Pokémon came out.

“Drow. Drow.” The creature waved his arms at Meloetta’s face. Her vibrant emerald eyes turned milky and lifeless.
“Sableye, Charizard, Fearow, destroy them!” ordered Cassidy. At this point, her three Pokémon flew around to each of their targeted bell towers and destroyed them with a Shadow Ball, Flamethrower, and Drill Run respectively.

With that, Butch took out a small book and held a page to Meloetta’s face. “Now Meloetta, sing this.”

The spirit was not in her right state of mind, but her eyes read the words and something in her head told her to sing it. As she read the lines over and over, they were clear enough in her head for her to sing. Her mouth and tongue moved beyond her control, letting her voice flow in the form of foreign incantations. The vocals traveled to the top of Bald Mountain – and entered the pair of ears.

Sugar finally arrived with Sectors V and W7, feeling the ground tremble. “What? Already?!” Aurora yelled.

Mixed with Meloetta’s vocals, a catchy song began to play from the airship’s stereos. Cassidy and Butch appeared on the roof with a stagelight and microphone. “Oh, geez. What’re they doing now.” Chris sighed.

“We are Team Rocket and we fight for what is wrong. You already know our motto, so now you’ll hear our song!”

“Cassidy!”

“And Butch.”

“You little INGRATES, we’ll EDUCATE!”

Their Raticate appeared. “Rrraaaatiaaaate!”

The lights flashed as they both made fancy poses. Then, smoke covered the duo before they emerged from the shadows in very charming forms.

“I aaaaammm the haaaandsome ooooone.” Butch sang.

Guitar strum. “I’m the GORGEOUS oooooone!”

A stronger strum. “Deep inside our hearts, there are oceans of love! To extend our reign to the stars abooooooove!”

More flashing poses – Sheila was the only one enjoying the spectacle, the others just prayed for it to be over.

“We’re gonna find the Firstborn, so don’t cause too much friction. And when we do, we’ll be the NEW—” Another strum, they froze in a new pose. “Stars. . . of this, Fan, FICTIOOOOOON! (Dum. Dum DUM.)”

“Raticate!”

“That was beautiful symmetry.” Artie said. (“Gyom-gyom.”)

“Yeah, and it sure delayed you twerps, ‘cause LOOK!” Butch declared. (Play “Night on Bald Mountain” from Fantasia.)

The tremors grew stronger, and Meloetta’s incantation rang through the air. The top of Bald
Mountain, they shortly realized, was not part of the mountain. Enormous bat-like wings stretched to life, and the being they were enclosing was rising to full height. A colossal demon whose blackish-blue color contrasted with the night above. Rounded horns sat atop his bald head, slit glowing eyes peered at all of them with ravenous intent. Air escaped from his nostrils and through the fangs of his mouth, his first breath in probably centuries. A distant orchestra began to play, the source of which was invisible, but probably the vengeful spirits that heard Chernabog’s awakening cry.

The demon observed his surroundings before waving his arms and singing his song. Dark, monstrous notes soared into the atmosphere, his graceful movements directed their path. All across Symphonia they would soar, and already darkness was swallowing the land. “Yes! It’s working, Cass!” Butch laughed. “Alright, Meloetta, tell that lunk to waste these twerps and we’ll bring him to the Boss! …Eh?”

Meloetta had already flown out of the vessel, staring at them with milky glowing eyes. Chernabog snarled at the duo, pulled his mighty right arm back, and flew a godlike punch at the tiny ship. “WE’RE BLASTING OFF AGAAAAIIIIIIN!” Twinkle.

Meloetta flew meters in front of Chernabog’s face. She stared blank and mesmerized still into his shining, lustful eyes. His mouth opened wide, and snapped the spirit inside, the operatives gasping in horror. Chernabog swallowed, and he felt his power rejuvenating. He roared to the heavens, he was heard all across the planet, the children shielded their ears as the cry tingled their souls. Dark mist appeared on Chernabog’s form, and from it emerged ghostly demons that flew everywhere, to all corners of Symphonia, to absorb its wonderful voices.

“We have to stop it!” Chris yelled, throwing off his headband and aiming his Combustion Eye. He inhaled and blasted the sparking beam, but Chernabog swung his fist and destroyed it partway, snarling venomously at the children. “Didn’t even scratch him.”

Chernabog inhaled and unleashed a Song Beam of dark notes, which would surely deafen their souls for all time. Sugar inhaled and unleashed a white Song Beam that contrasted his dark, defending her friends successfully. Both beams stopped as Sugar caught her breath. Aurora unlocked Ice and Flame Gates, Sheila spun her Light Fists, Chris blasted more combustion, but neither attack made a dent in Chernabog. But Sugar was dancing gracefully, listening to the orchestra however dark it may be, and created a beautiful rainbow Song Road. She soared up and around the winged demon and blasted a Song Beam, hurting the side of his head, before he furiously blew her away. “Is musicbending the only thing that hurts him?” Apis asked.

Sugar regained herself and stood straight on her midair Song Road. “Then a battle of song it is.”

**Boss fight: Chernabog**

Chernabog unleashed a wave of dark notes, which Sugar dodged and surfed to the demon’s left. She waved up and down to evade his arms, stretching her note trail longer as she wrapped around his head. Chernabog furiously tried to pry the notes off of him, then succeeded in swatting Sugar away with his powerful arm. “Uwah!” She flew for miles, but she recomposed and created her Song Road, flying against the winds to the towering demon again. He unleashed a deafening roar that summoned magma from the planet’s core in the form of geysers, Sugar dodging around them hurriedly, but a magma wall erupted before her that startled her out of her notes. She plummeted to the earth, seeing the ground ready to burst with lava, but she regained herself, waved her arms to the music, and created another road to fly away just when the string of geysers erupted.
Once away from the pillars of magma, Chernabog took a deep breath, and blasted a beam of dark notes that Sugar countered with her own. White against black-blue, their energies shoved against the other, before both beams vanished and Sugar caught her breath while flying. Chernabog whooshed his arms and sent gusts of wind that turned into demonic notes, Sugar riding the wind as she evaded, moving toward Chernabog again. The demon opened its mouth wide and GNASHED, but Sugar soared directly skyward, so the angered demon leaped up to clutch her. He missed again, her Song Road zipping an aimless colorful trail as she blew around, fell facefirst toward the demon, and unleashed a powerful Song Beam.

Her white beam struck the demon’s face, increasing his anger as he searched for the child. Sugar was lower than eye-level and much farther away, but within seconds, she zipped up and scratched his left eye, turning to face him while floating in place several meters in the air. Chernabog covered his eye and snarled at her, but Sugar smiled wittily and noted the glass patch covering her own eye. Dark mist appeared on his body and became dementors, cloaked phantoms that fed on souls. Sugar flew away, the air turned colder with the power of rhythm. She whooshed back into the air, aiming to turn toward Chernabog, but a dementor ambushed her from below. Its empty face glared inches from her as its vortex mouth opened, Sugar’s beautiful voice flowing into it from her own mouth. She felt her very being fade, the world blurring around her, in seconds her soul would be lost.

Lightning struck the dementor from below and pushed him off, but Sugar had already fallen. Her arm was grabbed by another force, and looking up, she found Hatsune Miku riding a neon cyan Song Road. “Don’t lose your voice, yet! The song isn’t over!”

“Damn, these ghosties, are a little too chilly for my lightning bolts’ roasting, fools, ya fools.” Killer Bee rapped, blasting lightning bolts at the dementors.

“Just don’t let ‘em get too close and we’ll be cool.” Sunny said, blowing Note Beams out of his saxophone.

“Sugar, let’s attack him together!” Miku sang, releasing the child as she created her own Song Road and both flew around opposite sides. They both released soundwaves that did little damage, but confused the demon, he flailed his arms and erupted magma from the earth, Hatsune blew a soundwave that pierced a geyser so Sugar could fly through and blow a Song Beam into Chernabog’s face. Chernabog let out a roar and fist-palmed, the impact causing a wind that blew Sugar and Miku miles away. The demon sang and waved his arms, creating stream after stream of Demon Notes that flew at either girl. Miku cried a soundwave into her microphone, increasing its volume as Chernabog clamped his ears shut, leaving Sugar to fly at him with a huge, shining, bladed note in her hands, which she slashed across the demon’s face while passing by.

The demon roared to the heavens and erupted a great flaming column around his form. He unleashed fire breath that turned into horseback demons, all running at Sugar and Miku as they jabbed fiery spears, the girls gracefully dodging before Sugar blasted a Song Beam at a final one, though the sides of her clothing were scorched. “You said he was a Song Demon, right? He has a lot of powers.” Sugar gasped.

“Musicbending can become anything, remember?” Miku replied. “Anything his soul desires.”

Chernabog roared again, creating Demon Notes that snapped their teeth on their way to Sugar, who barrel-rolled and dodged. “Then we’ll need to create things, too. From my soul… ooooooooooaaaaaaaaaa.” Beautiful notes flowed out from Sugar’s lungs, their bases morphing into grapes. The grapes bounced and danced around Chernabog’s head, exploding and covering him with juice. Sugar put rage in her next vocal, sending a Tatababasco Grape-note whose
expression was furious. By the time Chernabog wiped the juice off his face, the spicy note made it 
and exploded, burning the demon with lava-like juice. Sugar and Miku surfed around him, 
wrapping his body in their notesheets. He tugged and tried his best to tear them off, but the girls 
soared up behind him, over his head, and shot down, forcing his head over and smashing against 
the mountain.

The singers released and watched him slowly rise up again. More hate and rage burned on his 
features, white dementors appeared this time, with a more chilly aura that almost froze their skin. 
Killer Bee tried to shoot them with lightning from below, but barely laid a scratch. “Damn. If only 
we had a lightbender to be our defender.”

Sheila perked. “’ey, I’m a lightbender!”

“Y- What?! Fools, ya fools, help me stop them!”

“Okay, sheesh!” Sheila whirled her fists and sent Light Spheres at the white phantoms, making 
them sink.

“We can use illusions to stop them, too!” Jack Skellington created glowing note-made bats from 
his vocals, snapping the dementors in their teeth to scare them off. Sugar created glowing 
utcrackers while Hatsune made cute cyan dolls of herself, all singing happily to scare the 
phantoms away.

“We aren’t any close to defeating him, though. We have to get Meloetta out of him.” Sugar said.

“His exterior is very powerful, but if one of us managed to get inside him…”

“I’ll do it. Give me an opening and I’ll go in.” Sugar said determinedly.

With a concerned look, Hatsune nodded and flew circles toward Chernabog again. The demon 
coughed notes in any direction she went, Hatsune nimbly dodging and shooting skyward just before 
he blew an air gust inches from her. Hatsune was miles in the sky before she turned, becoming still, 
silent, and shutting her eyes as her cyan road vanished and she fell. The demon channeled power 
in his fist and readied to punch upward, but “AAAAAAAAHHHHHH!” A fearsome soundwave 
from Sugar’s lungs drew his attention, but the moment he looked, Hatsune was gone from her point 
in the sky, having rode the soundwaves and was down at Chernabog’s crotch in a split second. She 
conjured a shining note on the heel of her boot and kicked the demon, resulting in a blood-
hurdling screech that might be heard for light-years. “Now, Sugar!”

Zigzagging around the air, Sugar went straight for the demon’s gaping mouth, muted his screams 
with a Silence Shield, and dove inside. It was pitch-black inside and very cold; the inside of a 
demon’s body was much larger than any other creature’s. Dementors were still coming at her, she 
sang musical nutcrackers and grapes to bite or blow them away. She felt she was getting nowhere 
flying around this dimension, but eventually, she found a swarm of dementors surrounding and 
absorbing the energy from Meloetta’s body. “Hey, leave her alone!” Sugar flew forward and sang 
Song Beams to push the phantoms off. “Meloetta, wake up! Meloetta, please!”

“Ooooooo…” The spirit’s majestic voice came out faintly.

The dementors recovered and lunged at Sugar, who shot down and escaped before turning to 
unleash notes. She struck one dementor while the others rounded on her, she shot up in attempt to 
escape, but their skeletal claws took hold and chilled her flesh. She struggled to shake free, but a 
dementor turned her head toward him and began to suck out her precious soul. She tried with all 
her power to fight, but the world was turning cold, dark.
When she was younger, growing up in Fun Fun Castle, playing with all her favorite toys. Her mother and father were too busy, the castle’s maid, Monet Sinclaire played with her lots. On her tenth birthday, she grew no more, was given a Devil Fruit that ceased her aging. She followed her father’s orders and turned people into toys, nobody remembered them, but Sugar remembered it all, all the loved ones she removed. She masked all her pain and was mean to everyone, even Monet, and then she watched as she got a new little brother, growing up like normal, ’til he matched Sugar’s 10 years, and within a few more, he would be the older sibling.

Those painful memories were what made her Don Quixote Sugar. An innocent, growing child made into a tool. She wanted it all to end… until she met him.

Cadet Next Door Graduation was here, Sugar stuck her booger in the module and shook Cheren Uno’s hand. On Mariejoa, Cheren saved her from one of the monster’s attacks. Moments later, President Morgan was going to slay him, so Sugar turned Cheren into a toy and saved his life. He hated her for what she did. Then, he forgave her, convinced Sugar to live, reminded her of her love for music, gave her the moment to sing, realize her true voice. That boy whom everyone loved, was their Supreme Leader, the boy who would stop the Apocalypse and save everyone. Everyone followed his orders because they believed in him, so Sugar would, too.

A mystic glow covered Sugar’s body, searing and scaring the dementors. Her long aquamarine hair breezed behind her as her body stretched. Taking breaths, recomposing herself, Sugar sang. “My soul is mine, it’s not for yooo-ooou. My voice is mine, I’ll SING it TOOO-oooo-oo-oo. If there’s one guy… I’ll give my soul to, I, will, give it to hiitiitiim.” (End song.)

Sugar soared past the dementors on her rainbow road, scaring them away from Meloetta and encasing the notes around her. “My heart is always growing ever-y daaaay. Two-thousand-ten, to this MONTH of Maaa-aa-aay. Now you will… come hear me say: we, really, need you agaaaaaiitiiin.”

Her voice reached Meloetta, touched her soul. The Song Goddess awoke, her emerald eyes beautiful again. The inside of Chernabog’s body shined with a new warmth.

The demon felt this, and it was awful. He grabbed his stomach desperately, wishing to expel it all. He hacked, coughed, and Sugar and Meloetta came flying out. Miku beamed at their appearance, as did Jack, Bee, and Sunny below. “Thank you, Sugar, for showing me your voice! Now I am free, of my OWN choice! Lend me your power, one… more tiitime. It’s TIME to send him AWAAA-YAY-YAAAAAY!”

“What should I doooo, just teeeell me no-ow.”

“Siising yooour sooooon with meeeeee!”

The duo dodged a dark Song Beam and created a beautiful rainbow trail, flying to each of the three bell towers. “These towers here, what doooo we do-oo?”

“We have to sing, yes, meeee and yoo-oo-ou. They’re made of chiili, soooo you seeee-ee: my magic will wiitiin the daaaaaaay.” And so they circled around and around the towers, giving them life and light with their rainbow chi. “Do it with me, Sugar. Focus your love and soul with all your strength!” Sugar and Meloetta closed their eyes and folded their hands in prayer. Chernabog was going to punch them, but light shone in each corner of his eyes. The Three Bells were returning to being.

“God, save us all. Destroyyyyyy the darkness.” sang Sugar.
“O Holy Gods, reTURN the suuuu-uuuun.”

“Show us the light. The hap-py daaa-aaays.”

“We still wanna haaaave some fuuuuuun!”

**BOOOOONG. . . . BONG. . . . . BONG. . . .**

Those golden bells had an otherworldly sound. A beautiful light that gave hope to Symphonia. … Chernabog was afraid of it. He raised his arms, shielded his face from the terror of holy tolls. Very slowly, the demon sank into the mountain, closed his wings over his form. The dark spirits faded away from Symphonia. Bald Mountain was once again in slumber, the holy bells ensuring a beautiful year.

The operatives weakly awakened. The surface of the planet was clouded in mist. They were slowly warming from the dementors’ chills, happy to see each other okay. They wondered where they were and the result of the battle. Light footsteps were slowly coming closer.

A person’s shadow was seen within the mist. A girl of average height and long hair was coming. They knew who it was, they just couldn’t believe it. But soon, Sugar was present in full color, dirty battered clothes, longer hair, and several inches taller than before. She panted for breath, holding her chest and smiling. Her friends returned the smile… they would probably feel the same way if their heart aged a few years in seconds. “Everyone…” Sugar gasped. She waited a few moments to catch more breath. Then, she spoke with the biggest, most excited smile they’ve seen on her, “I HAVE BOOBS!!!”

They lost any warmhearted feelings and wore blank expressions. Sugar was pressing her chest with both hands. “I’m 13 years old and they’re already bulging!! After all these years, I’m finally close to having a big, blossoming pair! I can’t wait until I’m older, I’m gonna be so hot and sexy, all of the guys will fall for me! Aaaaaaaaaahhh!” Her eyes were filled with stars as she just couldn’t look away from her chest.

“. . .” They had no other comment on that. “Hnhm, amazed?” Meloetta winked. “Musicbending has the power to remove any supernatural ailments. Even Time Stasis. Within a few short years, Sugar will be back to her proper age.”

“Only a few short years of being short!” Sugar swayed, hugging her chest. “I can’t wait until I’m all grown up! I hope I find a dress big enough-”

“QUIT IT, ALREADY!” The girls screamed. (“Gyom-gyom!!”)

**At the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.**

The friends relaxed and enjoyed their final moments on Symphonia. Sugar’s hair and nails were growing at a steady, though unusual pace, but she kept her promise to let Aeincha be the first to give her a pedicure. “Huff, you’re really, making me work.” the Lilliputian panted, brushing the large comb across Sugar’s hair quickly. “You grow, way too fast, huff…”

“My hair’s becoming a bit much than you hoped, huh?”

“Haha, nope! I wanna get better at what I do, too!” she proclaimed determinedly. “You make, excellent practice, huff?” Then once Sugar’s aquamarine hair was smooth and shiny, Aeincha grabbed a nearby larger-than-her braid, got it around the end of Sugar’s hair, pulled it to the base, and made it into a ponytail with as much speed and strength as she could.
Sugar got up off the table they had laid out as Aeincha held up a hand mirror with both arms. Sugar stared at her 13-year-old self and swung her ponytail. “Outstanding work.” She stared at her fingernails, the free margins finally grown to a snow white, looked down and wiggled her toes, which have grown longer with her feet. “Guess I’ll need some new shoes. And a new dress, before I break out of this one.”

“Your growing should subside for a little while.” Meloetta told her. “But we’ll be happy to give you a treatment if it acts up again.”

“Not that there’s anything wrong with longer hair!” Hatsune Miku beamed. Sugar turned with surprise to see the contest judges and other contestants arrive.

“Oh yeah, the contest, who...who won?” Sugar asked.

“YOU’RE ALL winners!” Meloetta sang, raising up the ‘10’ posts.

“Right, right...” Sunny nodded with disbelief. “Still, I think the vote’s unanimous.”

“I hate to say it, but my beats, don’t match up to yo’ feats, fools, ya fools.” Killer Bee rapped.

“Only a true musicbender could take out a monster like that.” Jack followed.

“I hope you sing a song with me someday!” Hatsune winked, forming a heart with her fingers.

Sugar blushed, “Really, I didn’t think I was that great. Well, maybe a little, but only through a few unexpected advantages.”

“One way or the other, you’ve awakened yourself as a musicbender, and so your growing can commence.” Meloetta said. “I happily accept you as my Guardian.”

Sugar took out and expanded her Spirit Ball. “If you say so, then...” She threw the ball, hit Meloetta, and watched her turn into energy before flying inside. The ball fell on the ground, shook, and beeped. When the catch was sealed, the ball hovered into the air and flashed. The top half shone green while the bottom was brown. The ball lowered into Sugar’s hand.

**Sugar captured a FIRSTBORN! Only 8 more to go! ...I think.**

“...!” Sheila flinched and yelled suddenly, “AHH! I just remembered something, mates! Apparently, I’M one of these Seven Lights!”

And the friends were awestruck again. “Yeah, we figured that, Sheila, but um, how did you confirm it?” Aurora asked.

“Well, when I’ve been snoozin’, I’ve been goin’ to the Dream World, and I learned this from a giant talking frog. He also said another Light was awakened, too, didn’t say who. I remembered ‘cause that Don Gero bloke was in the Dream World.”

“So then, two Lights, Sheila and someone else, were awakened,” Mason counted his fingers, “so we got five Lights, and 13 Darknesses, to go.”

“Yeh, but they said we also need the Firstborn, and ‘far as I know, Suguh’s the only Guardian so fah.” Sheila informed.

“So with 8 Firstborn, 5 Lights, 13 Darknesses... sigh, I feel like we barely accomplished anything.” Haruka sighed.
“Then we just need to work hahdah!!” Sheila fist-pumped. “Let’s go around and find every one of these Firstborn and Dark-Lights!!”

“It’s too easy when you say it out loud.” Chris sweatdropped. “But... yeah. It’s time to stop being lazy and start working on this quest. The first person we should go after is Dr. Nefarious. If those guys were working for him, they gotta know something about all this.”

“Okay.” Aurora nodded seriously. “Let’s get to it, pack up your things and everyone on the train.”

“Not me.” Sugar told them. “I wanna stay here and perfect my musicbending. I wanna become stronger so I can repay Cheren for...for helping me. We’re gonna destroy the World Leaders together.”

“Okay, Sugar.” Haruka nodded. “But don’t be too long. We only have one month. ...I have to ask, though... how did Caesar make a Devil Fruit that stops your age?”

“I’m not sure. But I heard my dad say he got the material from the Government. ...That’s one of the reasons I wanna beat them.”

The Sector V friends exchanged understanding nods. “Alright. Good luck, Sugar.” Chris said as they began boarding the train. “Come back soon.” Within minutes, the airborne train roared to life and blasted out of the atmosphere.

The blue sky morphed into stars and blackness in the cockpit’s windshield as Fi appeared before the kids. “Fi, go back to Earth and tell everything that happened to Cheren. Word-for-word.” Aurora ordered.

“Do Master Cheren’s friends not need assistance in returning to Milky Way?”

“We might stay in this galaxy for a while, but it’s important he knows this, first. Tell him we’ll be fine.”

“Very well. I wish you the best on Master Cheren’s behalf. Should he request, I will return to you soon.” Fi morphed into a ball of light and soared across the galaxy like a comet.

“AFTER all, it’s a hefty bit of progress than we expected.” Aurora shrugged. “Just how fast can one month go?”

Mariejoa

Things were quiet in The King’s throne. He enjoyed the serenity that gave him time to contemplate today’s events. A green portal spawned on the opposite end, the Grim Reaper appearing. “I’m not here for any trouble.” he told The King. “But I’m not afraid to get messy. Hand over the body. Now.”

“...It’s over there.” The King pointed to Grim’s right. “You may have it. Let his children pay their respects.”

Grim calmly approached the brown solid coffin. His dear friend, Nigel Uno, the Demon King for only one minute. He was peaceful in eternal slumber. Grim levitated the coffin with magic. “Thank you.” It floated behind him as he returned to the portal. He stopped just before entering, and wore a grave face that he didn’t show to King. “...You may have disrupted your Sands of Time with that Octogan, but I still see your death. ...He is going to come here.”

The King was not moved. On his throne, he appeared like a statue. “One day this month... that boy
will find you... and he will destroy you. Then you, like thousands of mortals before you will learn... never to mess with the Uno Royal Family. Okay... Andrew?” Grim and the coffin entered the portal, which vanished.
The First Expedition

Chapter Summary

The Marzipan Pirates venture off to find the Rock Nut.

So this is the start of the Original Worlds Arc in the Side Stories… kinda. Well, this Wendy scene happens during Chapter 19, but the chapter is meant to be read after 20. This arc is actually meant to be pretty long, too.

Chapter B-13: The First Expedition

Unknown basement

“Come on, how does this thing work!” Wendy demanded as she felt around the chest’s bottom. “Do I need a spell or something?!”

“Chelia probably already destroyed the other one like she said.” Carla stated. “Quit wasting your strength trying to make it work, she wanted you to escape!”

“But I could’ve helped her!”

“As a matter of fact, why did you save THIS lunatic?!” Carla pointed accusingly at Floop—he was curiously searching a dusty cardboard box, then flinched at the mention of himself. “You brought Wendy to your castle in the first place to hand her to your master.”

“Look, it’s true that my master put Wendy on the wanted list,” Floop said, “but I had no intention of handing her over immediately. Granted, I found it curious that she would want a tour of my castle, but I planned to have Wendy and Chelia on my show! You think it’s easy to make robotic children behave like REAL children? I wanted real child actors from the start, but no reasonable child would want to climb up that secluded mountain every day. A couple of airbenders wouldn’t have had trouble with that, however. Besides, you children are a riot!” he yelled excitedly. “Almost summer and those two are STILL wearing parkas!”

“It’s not summer in all places.” Sonny said with a glare.

“You dunno where we’re from.” Donna followed.

“We need to find out where we are.” Carla said. “Come on, Wendy, let’s go.”

“Sigh… All right.” Wendy shut the chest and followed her friends.

Once the group found some stairs up, they appeared in a living room of an average house. “W-bobble-gibble now who the heck are YOU kids?” an old African-American man asked them with an… odd way of talking. “What’re you doing in our basement, with the dust and the poor lighting and the- d’aww, you know what Ah’m talkin’ about, be-babbly goo.”

“It’s Bill Cosby!” Sonny exclaimed.

“No, it’s Kevin Michael Richardson!” Donna contradicted.
“Oh, zey must be ze people my brother said vould pop out of that old box in ze basement!” his wife said with a French accent.

“Brother? Miss, are you talking about Dr. Facilier?” Wendy asked.

“Yes, I am Harvey’s sister, Clarice. He and I used to play with zose boxes all ze time, with ze magic and ze poofy smoke and ze, aww you know what je parle de!”

“It’s nice to meet you.” Wendy smiled. “I’m your brother’s student, Wendy. This is Carla, Sonny, Donna, and—”

“Fegan Floop, nice to meet you!” The show host shook Clarice’s hand.

“Say, haven’t we seen you on the tele?” Dr. Lincoln asked. “You had the Fooglies and the Booglies and the Oompa-Loompas…?”

“His show has hit a snag in production.” Carla mentioned. “We’d love to stay and tell you about it, but we must be going.”

“We’re sorry for disturbing you.” Wendy bowed as they headed out. “We’ll tell your brother you said ‘hi’!” They shut the door as they left.

“…Garret, did zat cat just talk?” Clarice asked.

“Mum-bum, Clarice, our children have gihugic 50-foot treehouses on the moon.” Garret replied while reading his newspaper (the tagline read Chaos in Dressrosa). “I think it’s best not to question things and be the oblivious adults we’ve always been.”

The edge of the horizon was orange while the rest of the sky was indigo with stars. The four humans and cat walked out into the middle of the neighborhood street. “Wendy, I really must thank you for getting me out of that place.” Floop said. “The only reason I took the job as Churchill’s apprentice was to have the resources and freedom to build my show. I wanted my show to inspire fun and freedom to the world’s kids… but for some bizarre reason… it didn’t have enough heart behind it. I was missing something… and I didn’t know what. Then I brought you and Chelia… and I think I knew.”

“What were you missing?” Wendy asked.

Floop put a hand on his head and turned away. He spoke musingly. “Is it even possible… for two girls to know each other for less than a day… and bond in so short a time that… one sacrifices for the other?”

Wendy felt a tug in her heart. The events transpired just moments ago, and she still felt bad. Floop turned to them with a humorous smile. “It’s just weird! I don’t know human relations to develop so quickly! It’s the kind of thing you would only see on TV. And the best part about it is… you were actually human. Kids would find you so relatable. …Maybe that’s why I wanted you on my show.”

Wendy looked down, silent for a second. “…Mr. Floop? What’re they gonna do to Chelia?”

Floop’s smile faltered, thinking about his own response with remorse. “…Since Chelia is a magic user, they’ll probably lock her up in Azkaban.”

“Azkaban?!” Wendy shouted.

“Isn’t that the wizards’ prison?” Carla asked.
“The one where the phantoms eat your soul?” the Ice Climbers quivered.

“Actually, ever since the Government became friends with the magical community, it’s become their main prison.” Floop said. “Of course, that’ll be the nicest thing to happen to her. She’s fighting a World Leader. A World Leader is powerful enough to take on a whole country. And Master Churchill was going to kill you, so…”

Wendy clamped a hand over her mouth to hold a scream. She began to cry. “…Maybe I should go.” Floop figured. “The Government will probably be after me for treachery, so…”

“You don’t think we’re going to let you wander freely, do you?” Carla stated. “You could still be in league with Churchill.”

“Heh, please, Charlie, give me a little slack!” Floop grinned.

“The name is Carla.”

“Well, at least I’m not the only one full of hot air.” Floop puffed up and POPPED.

“HE EXPLODED!” Wendy panicked.

“It’s okay, I’m over here!” Floop appeared from behind a bush.

“IT’S ANOTHER TRICK!” Donna leapt forth, hammer ready.

“LET’S POP IT!” Sonny drew his own hammer.

“BOOOOF!” They smashed Floop’s head from either side and knocked him out cold. “…Or maybe it wasn’t.” Donna said as the man lay with his tongue hanging out.

“Oh, Floop.”

“You kids take him somewhere hidden.” Carla told them. “We shouldn’t let him into Dr. Facilier’s hideout. I’ll take Wendy back.”

“No prob, Bob!” The twins saluted before dragging Floop along the ground. (“Get it, ’cause you’re a cat!” said Donna.)

**Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium**

After dashing into the city, Wendy found the alleyway and opened the emporium entrance. “Mr. Facilier! I’m back from-!” She immediately halted upon the sight of two visitors: a girl with aquamarine hair and a brown-haired boy in a red jacket. “Oh… I didn’t realize you had company over, I’m sorry.”

The boy gasped. “Hey, you’re that girl I saw while I was driving!”

“Oh!” She sparked in remembrance. “I didn’t expect to see you again! My name’s Wendy.” She held a hand out.

“Nice to meet ya again, Wendy!” He shook. “I’m Cheren, this is my friend, Sugar.”

“Hi, Sugar.” Wendy held a hand to her. “You have pretty hair.”

“. . . Um. . .” Sugar stared at her hand nervously.
“Suuugaaaaar. Whaddid I teach you about manners?” Cheren asked scoldingly.


“Thanks. She’s my friend, Carla. We’re trying to-

“GREAT, y’all are crossover buddies, and I’m sure you’d love to fill each other of your respective story arcs, but we gotta get movin’!” Facilier hurriedly gestured Cheren and Sugar out of the shop. “Good luck, kids! Bring home the good news!” He slammed the door. The witch-doctor immediately jumped back into his chair. “WENDY, you’re back!” He spoke with his usual energetic grin. “So how was the mission?”

Carla shot up to his face and shouted, “YOU HAVE A LOT OF NERVE to send Wendy on a dangerous mission and ask that question so casually!”

“Mister Facilier, did you really think I could’ve pulled that mission off?” Wendy asked with hurt in her voice. “I mean, the info was totally wrong, and worse than that-

“Wendy, Ah’m sorry I tricked you into that!” Facilier interrupted. “And to be honest, I really didn’t think you were ready for somethin’ like that!”

“Then why did you let Wendy do it?” asked Carla. “And please don’t say it is because her father wanted her to.”

“He-… ugh…” Facilier had no other answer. “Wendy, it’s…it’s only because yo’ daddy has faith in you.”

“Then why doesn’t he come up to me and say that?”

“Because he’s an international criminal! The only person who’s worth more than him on the posters is some bozo called Ragaj Gnık! I dunno who that guy is, but they gotta give SOME kinda reason for makin’ him worth two billion dollars.”

“Mister Facilier, when’m I gonna be allowed to see my parents?”

“I… don’t… know! Sigh…” The doctor looked at Wendy’s downtrodden look with regret. “Look, y’all are probably hungry. I brought some food with me back from Glitzville, so how ‘bout we eat and… just tell me what happened.”

“…Okay.” Wendy said. “Just let me change out of these ‘Wendell’ clothes.”

Wendy changed back into her emerald dress with diamond patterns, eating dinner as she explained the story to Facilier. “So the whole time, Floop wa’n’t even a bad guy.” The doctor recollected. “Really does seem like a waste, don’t it.” He sipped some coffee. “Ah’m really sorry about Chelia.”

“Don’t be. It was my fault it happened.” Wendy replied depressedly.

“Don’t say that, Child.” Carla said. “You told Chelia to come along, but she insisted…”

“No, it was my fault! Something bad has happened to almost every person I met! I hurt Lee Andrew, I ruined Orchid Bay for June, now there’s Chelia, and even Mr. Floop could be in trouble with the Government now… I thought wearing these Chi Stabilizers would help me make friends better, but they haven’t! It’s like the universe is really saying I’m not allowed to make friends. Carla, what if something bad happens to you or Dr. Facilier, or the twins? I couldn’t bear it if…”
“WENDY!” Facilier smacked the table with his cane and scared her upright. “Now, girl, a teacher can only give you so much sympathy before it starts to sound like pity. I don’t want you to feel upset, but I ain’t gonna be able to provide ya comfort all the time. Now I agree that these are a series of unfortunate coincidences, but when it comes down to it, these people made their own decisions in the end. Only you can decide if you’re a walking bad luck train, otherwise you just gotta suck it up and be glad the universe is still letting you run around.”

“. . .” Wendy didn’t respond, and she didn’t feel like shedding another tear. She resumed eating the peas and mashed potatoes the doctor laid out for her. “So, um… do you know those two people?” she asked.

“Oh, well, that Sugar girl was goin’ through her own problems. But that boy…” Facilier smiled and spoke with high regard, “That boy was Cheren Uno. Supreme Leader of the Kids Next Door. His daddy was one of the best people alive back then, and his mama is one of the best people alive… and let me tell you, that boy did some pretty amazing stuff. Wendy, if you had that boy as your friend, then you would have nothing to worry about.”

“Why do you think that?”

Facilier smiled thoughtfully, stirring his coffee with a teaspoon. “Well, from what I heard… he’s everybody’s best friend.” He took a sip.

**Prehistoric Earth**

Nel had guided the Marzipan Pirates and Aisling to a valley, where they saw a mountain with a gigantic nest in the distance. “That Terry mountain.” The cavegirl said, still riding Augustus’s shoulders. “It look like Terry not home. Can Aughsucks cross valley?”

“IT’S AUGUSTUS!” the boy shouted. “And watch me! The Marzipans are about to become the first explorers of Planet Earth!” (Play “Terrydactyland” from *Banjo-Tooie!*)

**Stage B-10: Primordial Rock**

**Mission: Find the Rock Nut.**

The pirates followed a passage within a small, narrow trench. They encountered a Bargasaurus, a burgundy-colored stegosaur-like dino with green eyes and spikes along its back, guarding a ledge. The Bargasaur charged at Augustus and pushed the captain back a few feet. “Grrrr.” He drew out his Gobstopper to throw at the dino’s face, but the angered Bargasaur withstood the attack and rammed him again. However, the Baby Trio, Nel, and Aisling seized the chance to run around it and make it up onto the ledge. “Ain’tchu guys gonna help me??” Augustus yelled when the dino returned to its position.

“Ain’tchor Haki come back, yet?” Rallo asked.

“Ha ha ha! Aughsucks can’t beat small Bargasaur!” Nel clapped.

“Ugh. I’m wedging you brats when this is over.” Augustus got up and held his arms open when the Bargasaur charged again. He pushed against the dino and stayed firm on his feet as he tried to channel Haki to his arms. While his arms didn’t color black, he showed an enhance in strength, and was able to throw the dino aside. The captain quickly ran up to and jumped on the ledge with his
allies, and Nel climbed back up on his shoulders.

The explorers crossed a wider area, avoiding the Bargasaurs that were roaming around. They watched as Aisling sprinted across the plain and the following platforms, once again intending to bypass the stage and watch the humans endure the ordeals. The kids jumped up some tall, natural stairs, which became narrow platforms over the thin trench below. Soarasaurs, which were greenish-yellow pteranodons, attempted to push the crew off, but a quick whack with the Gobstopper could knock them senseless. At the end of the platforms, they faced a greater plain of Dodongos, which were huge green lizard-like reptiles. However, they looked into the trench and saw a Gold Wonka Bar being guarded by a caveman, who was covered in thick green armor and wielding a spiked club.

“That member of Rocknut Tribe.” Nel said. “They big bully cavemen. Only weak spot is their butt, but need hit really hard.”

“Stewie, do you still have your missile launcher?” Augustus asked.

“It’s out of ammo.” Stewie replied.

Just then, a large Life Saver candy hit the ground near the edge of the plain. “What’s that?” Rallo asked as they hopped over. The Life Projector projected a hologram of Princess Zeira.

“I thought you guys would need help getting through. So I’m warping Magic Candies to points around your area. You can use this Pop Gum to attack some enemies.”

An orange bubblegum bounced out of the projector.

“You just have to chew it up and spit it out.”

“You chicas really come in handy sometimes.” Augustus smiled.

The hologram bashed him with her ladle. “Don’t call me chica! I still want you to bow to me.”

“Screw you!” The hologram vanished. “I just have one problem, guys: I cannot spit well…” the captain said with embarrassment.

“You throw a jawbreaker with perfect aim, pilot a plane, and suck on lollipops all day, but spitting’s out of the question…” Stewie configured.

“What pretty pebble?” Nel picked up the orange gum. “Nel taste.” The cavegirl tossed it into her mouth and began chewing. “Ulp!” Her cheeks puffed with the burning sensation.

“Hang on, Nel!” Augustus picked up the child, holding her horizontally with his arms around her belly. He decided to approach the first Dodongo in the field, and when the dino opened its mouth to breathe fire, Augustus squeezed Nel and shot the gum out of her mouth like a bullet. It went down the Dodongo’s throat, exploded, and knocked the creature out. “Guess what, Nel, you’re the world’s first projectile weapon!” He stuffed more Pop Gum into Nel’s mouth to shoot into the other two Dodongos. He then decided to return to the edge of the plain, aim down at the Rocknut caveman’s exposed rear, and shoot a Pop Gum at it to knock him out in one blast. The captain jumped down to retrieve the Wonka Bar and could bypass the caveman safely before jumping the platforms to get back up.

“Wait a sec, if they’re called the Rocknut Tribe, do they have something to do with the Rock Nut?” Augustus asked.

“Nel don’t know. But Rocknuts maybe not tell us.”

The path to follow from the Dodongo plain was along the left, on a narrow walkway over a chasm.
There was a Rocknut patrolling back and forth along the cliff, so when it was turned away, Augustus used his “Nel Launcher” to shoot the caveman’s rear and send him falling. After crossing the walkway, the crew entered a dark cave that was lit by a fire deep inside. There was a short caveman with black hair and a large beard, wearing a red loincloth.

“It’s Oogle Boogle!” Nel pointed. She jumped off Augustus’s shoulders and said to it, “Oogle Boogle! Oog oonga, ooga booga, boongu nuguh?”

“Oog. Ooga looga booga boo.”


“Why little caveboy insult Oogle Boogle’s mother?” Nel asked.

“THAT WHAT I SAID?!” Rallo screamed. “Tell ’im I didn’t mean it!!”

“Oogle Boogle said he hungry. He want food that make him fat.”

There was a tunnel up on a ledge behind the caveman, so Augustus climbed into it first, with Nel on his shoulders again. Torches lit this passage, and they could see the narrow bridge over the dark chasm. A Bargasaurus was guarding a bushel of Fudgepuffsicles, and when the dino charged at Augustus, he pushed back and channeled what he could of his Haki. He shoved the dino over the side into the pit, then grabbed a fudgesicle. He brought the inflating ice cream back to the Oogle Boogle, who happily took a bite. The caveman puffed up like a balloon and floated over a nearby spiked floor. He deflated over a platform with a switch, which he held down to make some areas on the spikes flip over to flat ground.

The Oogle waved at them in thanks as they jumped across the flat spaces. They made it to a pool of water, where Aisling was waiting. Since the Baby Trio plus Nel couldn’t swim, Aisling and Augustus helped carry them underwater. After swimming through a tunnel, they got to a wider area where electric eels (called Frazzles) were swimming around, lighting the dark with their sparking bodies. The tunnel ahead was patrolled by Frazzles, so they deemed it too dangerous to enter. The crew was able to resurface, and Augustus saw a rugged wall that he could climb around to reach a high ledge. The captain swam to and climbed around this wall, and when Snapdragons obstructed his path, Maggie grabbed Nel and used her as a weapon to smash them.

After making it to the cliff, they found a pack of Pop Gum. Augustus poured them all into Nel’s mouth as the child began chewing. “I’m guessing this stuff will work underwater.” He held Nel in his arms while Maggie held his neck as he dove back underwater. He aimed Nel at the Frazzles and shot slow-coming Pop Gums that were effective enough to knock the eels out. There was an alternate left route, guarded by a Frazzle which Augustus shot with their last Pop Gum. On the surface above this tunnel was a Gold Wonka Bar. With that, they resumed the main path and surfaced in a new tunnel.

Aisling released Stewie and Rallo before running ahead once again. There was a huge dinosaur egg that Augustus could lift in his arms. He decided to take it with them as they exited the tunnel to a large area enclosed within walls. There was water in the chasm below, and a narrow stone bridge led to a sealed barred door. There was a switch by the door that the egg could hold down. When Augustus was about to carry it across- “NNNNRNRRRREEEEE!” a dinosaur with a very long neck, brown backside and yellow underside, and ravenous green eyes, emerged from the water and unleashed a deafening roar. The captain backed up into the cave when the Chompasaurus attempted to snack on the egg.
“Dafaq is that thing?!” Augustus yelled.

“Chompasaurus like food that crosses their water.” Nel said.

“I can’t get this thing across with them sniffin’ around. Maggie, is the powder in your gun dry, yet?”

“Mw-mw!” Maggie saluted. The crew peeked out into the gorge and saw a small ledge high up on their right. Maggie launched her grappling hook to the ledge and pulled herself up. Augustus carried the egg in both arms and began to balance across the bridge. The first Chompasaurus emerged from the water, giving its loud roar. Maggie aimed at its eye and shot, and the long-necked dino sank back down. Maggie kept defending her captain from other Chompasaurus until he made it to the other side. He set the egg on a switch as the gate opened.

His teammates caught up with him as they wandered onto a rugged plain with Lightfoots, which were yellow raptors that hopped around like rabbits. One jumped Augustus and took his glasses, another jumped Maggie and took her pacifier. The baby started bawling on the ground, and the sun hurt the captain’s eyes. Since Nel confirmed these ones weren’t her friends, she helped Augustus direct his vision to the Lightfoots so he could hit them with his Gobstopper. After recovering their stolen items, the pirates hopped up some natural stairs leading to a walkway along the wall over the field. A few Soarasaurs obstructed their progress, but the path led them to a cave guarded by a caveman wearing a purple loincloth and wielding a huge stone Q-tip.

“That Unga Bunga!” Nel pointed, crawling over to the caveman. “Ung dunga bunga?”

“Bug, bugga bugga, Unga Bunga!” He pointed at the future humans.

“Bug bugga?” Nel asked.

“Bug bugga.”

Nel crawled back to her friends. “Unga said no can bring silly foot things in cave.”

“You mean we can’t even take ’em off and carry them?” Augustus questioned. “I don’t even do sandals! Let’s just go that way.”

The cliffside walkway went farther, leading to a ladder where a Rocknut caveman guarded the top. They returned to the plain below, finding a crater in a corner where a Bargasaurus guarded a cave. Augustus dropped down and wrestled with the dinosaur, but there wasn’t room in the crater to shove it aside. However, Stewie quickly ran into the cave to swipe the Pop Gum, then they escaped the crater. They returned to the ladder, but to expose the Rocknut’s rear side, Rallo stuck his boombox in the wall and caused a tremor. The Rocknut fell headfirst over the ladder’s edge and landed upside-down. Augustus used Nel to shoot his exposed rear and K.O. the caveman.

At the top of the ladder, they found Shrink Sweets placed on a rock. “Hey, if the four of us ate these, Nel could sneak us in the cave herself.” the captain said.

“How can Nel help?” she asked.

“Watch this!” The four Marzipans each ate a piece of the candy and contracted down to jellybean size.

“Whoa!” Nel stared at them with awe. “Why is Aughsucks small now?”

“Will you stop calling me that!!” he squeaked angrily.
“Hee hee! Aughsucks sound like baby dactyl. But Nel thinks this work.” She lifted the four mini humans and hid them in the empty sockets of the skull mask on her head. She climbed down the ladder and approached the Unga Bunga.

“You ditch weird cavemen?” His Cavetalk was clear in Nel’s ears. “Okay. You good.” He stepped aside so Nel could enter the torch-lit cave. There were Unga Bungas sitting at tables and coercing, some were playing poker using rocks with various symbols.

“Unga Bunga, Unga Bunga!” The next passage had parallel rows of the cavemen, holding large flat stones as they charged into and rammed their rocks into their counterparts’ rocks, resulting in a booming collision. They wobbled back as the process repeated over and over. “Is this some weird caveman game?” Augustus asked.

“Unga Bunga play Unga Bunga.” Nel answered. “They smash bedrocks into each other until one falls. Nel will be careful.” Nel waited for each group of cavemen to ram each other before moving forward. There were a few close shaves that made Nel’s heart bounce, but she made it. She followed a new tunnel that led to a cave where the ground was covered with red sticks. There was an Unga Bunga asleep on the other side, holding a whip. Above him, an Oogle Boogle was trapped in a round bone cage.

If Nel stepped on the sticks, the Unga would wake and attack her with his whip. There were torches set around the red sticks, and Nel could grab the thin core on their pillars. She climbed around so her back faced the next torch, then she kicked off, whipped around, and clutched the pillar. She repeated the process until she was near the Oogle Boogle. “Me need food to regain strength. Find good rock.” he said. Nel proceeded to jump the rest of the torches, and the last one that was close to the wall was next to a Ringtrot. Nel picked the Ringtrot out of the wall and jumped her way back to the Oogle. She handed the caged caveman the Ringtrot, so he began to suck it.

Filled with adrenaline, the Oogle Boogle ran around and around the round cage, spinning it as it flopped about in the air. The Unga Bunga awoke to the commotion, and he screamed when a chunk of the ceiling where the cage hung from collapsed and crushed him. The bone cage rolled and smashed a bone gate blocking a new tunnel on the left of the room. With the Unga defeated, Nel was free to walk around the red sticks. She could cross to and enter this cave, finding that it sloped upward. However, the only jumpable platforms were big torches. Nel felt the heat strongly as she was forced to balance along the sides of those torches, and her heart raced with being so close to these flames. When she jumped to a higher torch, she whirled her arms and stood on her tippy-toes in trying to stay balanced. “Don’t lose your cool, Nel, you can do it.” Augustus told her.

Nel didn’t know what that phrase meant, but she kept her steady posture and made it across the tunnel. She heard a creature jittering the bones of a large corpse at the end, and saw the back end of that grayish-white creature sticking out. When Nel got to it, the creature turned out to be Aisling, who looked up at her with a start before scampering out of the tunnel like a frightened kitty. Nel made it outside, and to her left was some Growth Gum on a rock. She put her tiny friends beside it so they could eat and stretch back to normal. “Thanks for the lift, Nel.” Aughsucks patted her mask. “Have one of my lollipops.”

He unwrapped a green lolli and gave it to Nel. …The cavegirl shoved it up her nose and pulled out a long string of snot. “And now I don’t want any more,” the captain said. “Too grossed out. My defining character trait, ruined.”

He let the cavegirl ride his shoulders as they climbed up some natural stairs. They were at the base of Terry’s mountain and could begin the climb up its precarious path. “Uug-OOOOOOG!”
was shouting coming from the plains around the mountain, and they saw Rocknut Tribe members hauling catapults loaded with boulders. The cavemen began launching the boulders in attempt to hit the pirates, so they moved quickly and avoided them. Stewie put on a set of goggles that projected markings where the boulders would crash, and let his friends know where they were. Some stalagmites blocked their path, so they had to trick the Rocknuts into launching boulders into them. They reached a dead end with some Bounce Gum. Augustus saw a crack in the wall above them, so he bounced level with that crack so the Rocknuts would try to hit him, and smash the wall open. The five explorers bounced up into this opening, where they could climb a rugged wall. There were holes in the parallel wall, which the Rocknuts flung their boulders through in further attempt to smash them.

There was an exit back onto the mountain path up top, and a Bargasaurus was guarding a route between the wall and a shorter wall. The shorter wall prevented Augustus from shoving it off the edge, so the captain pushed it all the way back against the protective barricade of the next turn. There was an opening in the other barricade, and the Bargasaur was struck by the Rocknuts’ boulder. The explorers found Aisling by the entrance of a tunnel into the mountain, but before entering, Augustus sidled across a thin ledge past the entrance. A boulder crashed into a cracked part and exposed a Gold Wonka Bar, so the captain collected it before accompanying his friends into the tunnel. (End song.)

“Thanks once again for helpin’ us through all that, Lazy Fairy.” Augustus told Aisling with sarcasm.

“I helped those two swim, didn’t I?” Aisling replied angrily.

“This cave take us to mountaintop.” Nel said as the tunnel sloped upward. “Maybe we get rock before Terry come home.”

“I still don’t understand why Nel is the only caveperson that knows English.” Aisling said. “It’s so… unnatural!”

“But it’s still the least unnatural thing I can think of.” Augustus said.

At the end of the cave, they were at the top of the mountain, just below the giant bird nest. They found an entrance to the nest, seeing four huge eggs lain inside. “Nel found rock in middle of nest.” She pointed. Augustus approached and moved the sticks aside, finding a round, flattish stone with an empty core. “That it!”

“This is the Rock Nut?” Augustus asked, picking up the heavy sweet.

“Mw mw!” Maggie beamed.

“You’re right, it looks like a doughnut!” Stewie realized.

“So the first candy was a doughnut? …Well, this is going in the Adventure Databook!” Augustus licked the rock. “It really is tasty!!”

“REEEEEEEK!” They were almost deafened by the screech of a massive, light-brown pterodactyl with green eyes. The reptile suddenly snatched the Rock Nut in its long and pointy mouth, swallowing it.

“YOU STUPID PERRA DE AVES! GIVE THAT BACK!” Augustus yelled.

“Raaaaaaaat! RAAAAAET!” Terry shouted.
“He’s calling us Rocknuts!” Aisling yelled. “He thinks we’re with the Rocknut Tribe!”

“Tell him we’re not!”

“All right! Ah-ACK, ACK, AAAAHH!”

“RAAAAAACK!”

“He won’t listen; he thinks we’re trying to hurt his babies!”

“Watch out!” Augustus yelled. (Play Terry’s Theme from Banjo-Tooie.)

**Boss fight: Terry**

The prehistoric avian hacked giant globs of spit that would leave the humans sticky and immobile if they were struck. Maggie’s bullets didn’t have effect on the reptile, and Augustus’s Gobstopper bounced right back. However, after spitting seven globs, the pterodactyl had to catch his breath. Augustus chucked the Gobstopper up his throat, causing Terry to choke. He managed to cough the jawbreaker out, along with a Life Projector that released some Pop Gum. Augustus smirked, filling Nel with the spicy sweets and helping her chew. He aimed the Nel Launcher up at Terry, squeezed her, and damaged the reptile with the explosive candy.

The dinosaur decided to fly below the mountain and come back up with three Bargasours. He trusted the dinos to fight them while he returned down for a drink of water. Aisling turned into a Bargasaur herself and wrestled with one, Rallo attacked the other with his boombox, leaving Augustus to shove against the third one. “Agh!” The dinosaur knocked him off his feet, and when it tried to bite the captain, he tricked it into biting the Gobstopper. In the Bargasaur’s weakened moment, Augustus threw punches against its side, trying to force the Haki to present itself. The dino was knocked out anyway, just in time for Terry to return.

The pterodactyl was carrying a giant boulder, and the kids avoided when it dropped down and shattered. Terry hacked more big globs of spit, but he still had no luck in trapping any of the pirates. Terry flew directly above Augustus, faced down, and spun around in attempt to pierce the human like a drill. Augustus dodged, watching Terry drill the spot for a sec, then the dactyl tried again. Augustus got beside one of his eggs, so when Terry drilled down, he immediately halted and flapped upright.

Since he was low enough, Augustus was able to jump up and grab his talons. The reptile tried to shake him off, soaring around the sky. Augustus climbed up to Terry’s head, and the avian failed to shake him as the captain punched the point of his head four times. Augustus clutched the head’s point and steered Terry like a plane, ramming him against the mountainside. The dactyl recovered and floated back up while Augustus dropped to the path above the nest’s side. Terry barfed a stream of drool into his nest, rendering the Baby Trio incapacitated in the thick liquid.

Augustus kept standing on the edge with Nel on his shoulders. The avian kept changing position and flapping his wings rapidly to blow his enemies off. He stopped, and while Augustus was trying to recompose, the dinosaur swooped across the edge and caught Augustus on his long nose. The captain punched the pterodactyl several times in the eyes, and when Nel hacked her own stream of spit over his eyes, Terry spun around and drilled downward. He cut a hole into the nest’s floor, draining his pool of drool and rescuing the Baby Trio.

Augustus hopped back on the nest floor and noticed one last Pop Gum through the twigs. He fed it
to Nel, then faced her up when Terry hovered above. The dactyl opened his mouth wide and swooped down to gulp, but August shot the gum up his throat. The gum popped, and Terry fell on his back. Augustus set Nel down and climbed back onto the nest’s side. He balled his fists together, leapt high above, and cried, “Double Iron KNUCKLE!” His fists turned Armament as he smashed down on Terry’s belly. (End song.)

The Rock Nut flew out of the bird’s mouth. Augustus picked up and held the stone sweet in victory. They heard cracking sounds and looked to see the eggs finally hatching. Adorable, pink baby pterodactyls peeped out and began chirping. “Eeeerrrk…” Terry grunted.

“He said, ‘Don’t hurt my babies. Please don’t hurt them.’” Aisling translated.

“We’re not here to hurt your babies.” Augustus replied. “We just wanted this rock. Is it that important to you?”

“I took that rock from the Rocknut Tribe because they used its strange power to enhance their armor. They used it to kill my wife. I won’t let them use it to hurt my babies.”

“That’s why…” Augustus stared at the stone doughnut. A strange power…?

“Ug! Ug, uug!” They looked at the nest’s entrance: a trio of Rocknuts had appeared.

“So you guys’ve been using this nut to bully people?!” the captain yelled.

“(Many thanks beat Terry for us.)” a Rocknut said with a smirk (Nel translated). “(We take Rock Nut now. Rocknut Tribe rule world.)”

Augustus dropped the rock and marched toward them. “Like Hell you will.”

“Aughsucks, no!” Nel cried.

“(Aughsucks, you strong. Maybe you join us.)”

Augustus balled his right fist and turned it Armament. “Sorry, but you’re a hundred million years too soon!” He PUNCHED the caveman through his armor, shattering the stone garb as he went flying off the mountain.

“UUUUUH!” The Rocknuts gaped.

“Remember my name throughout history! I am Augustus, the Stone Fist!” Hope you don’t mind, I drew inspiration from you, Sheila. I could never punch as hard as you, though.

The Rocknuts panicked and ran all the way down the mountain. Augustus went back to pick up the Rock Nut, smiling at Terry. “You take care of your kids now. And if those lugs ever come back, I’ll club ’em for ya.”

“Eeeek…” Terry smiled. (“Thanks…”)

Nel’s cave

The explorers made the tedious journey back to Nel’s cave, where they pulled the Ace Flyer back outside. “We couldn’t have found it without you, Nel. Consider yourself the first member in history to be a Marzipan Pirate.”

“Nel so happy!” She clapped. “Nel always be Aughsucks friend.”
“Y…yeah.” Augustus blushed. “Can we go now?”

“I’ll help with that.” Aisling sat on the ground and opened her book. “I know a bit of Time Magic, too, thanks to Celebi. I can return us to the present. Ahem… Father… take us home… Father… take us home…” A magic circle began to encase them. Clock hands spun around it. “Send us… to the place… we belong….”

Aisling repeated the verse in her angelic voice. The circle shone brighter, and in a loud WHIIIIIRRRRR, the whiteness engulfed them.

**Neighborhood street**

They reappeared on the street of an unknown neighborhood. The morning sun was rising. “Finally.” Augustus said, holding the Rock Nut up to bask in the light. “The first Lost Candy. What would Luviro think…”

Aisling stretched her arms and flexed her fingers. “At any rate, it seems my strength has recovered. It was a pleasure traveling with you, humans. But now I must bid adieu.”

“Well, Forest Fairy… thanks for all the help you’ve given us.” Augustus said. “But why were you suddenly so interested in helping us find the Rock Nut?”

“For a number of reasons that I think it’s too dangerous to explain to you now. But rest assured, you will learn everything later. Just promise us you will find the rest of the Lost Candies before this month ends.”

“You can count on that.” Augustus nodded assuredly.

“Good. Anyway… Princess Mavis will be hosting her tea party soon, so I must get back to Galaxia.” Aisling sprouted a huge pair of bug-like wings. She lifted off the ground when they began flapping. “Before I go, perhaps I can give you a hint. One of my friends resides in the sea kingdom of Oceana. She may be able to help you if you spoke to her. Good-bye, Captain Augustus. May the winds of fate blow in your favor.” She flew into the sky.

“Auf Wiedersehen, smelly fairy!” Augustus waved. “Sigh, well she was fun.” (“Aaaaahhh-” a distant scream was rising.) “Where did she warp us, anyw-”

“-AAAAAAAAHHHHH!” A furious German woman KICKED Augustus like a ball and sent him flying against a street sign that read *Drury*. “AUGUSTUS, YOU STUPID POPEL!” Henrietta grabbed her dizzy son by the vest and shook him violently. “Do you have any idea how worried I’ve been about you, you little TRASH COMPACTOR?!”

“Is Augustus making that look because he’s hurt, or he’s thrilled?” Stewie questioned.

“Still ain’t as scary as my mama.” Rallo said.

“Mw-mw.” Maggie was tired of their childish responses.

Henrietta whipped her head toward them, scaring the babies. “And VHY are you hanging around Big Mam’s Triplet Trio?!” She then looked at the biplane. “And VHAT did you do to your fazzer’s PLANE?! Take it through ze KESSEL RUN?” Henrietta let the teen drop on the street before approaching the damaged plane. “I don’t vant to imagine where to begin-” She lightly knocked the plane with her knuckle, and the back compartment opened as a small, soot-covered creature with big hazel eyes tumbled out. “Cough!” Nel coughed.
“Aaaaaaack…” The four pirates gaped.

The cavegirl sniffed Henrietta’s boots, looking up the woman’s body. “Big cavewoman smell like Aughsucks. Is woman Aughsucks’ mate?”

“Who the heck is this?” Heinie asked.

“Uhhh… cavegirl we brought back from the past.” Augustus replied with a nervous grin.

“. . . . . I am going zo execute you.”

“Hehe. What can you do?” Augustus grinned and began another lollipop.

“Why is Aughsucks eating snot stick?” Nel asked.

“BLEEEEEHHHH!” He puked.

**Boogey Bay**

Cindy Cortix, the orange-haired daughter of Captain Mandy, was peeling the skin off stuffed dolls in her cabin. “Stupid Mom… won’t let me hunt for Augustus. Doesn’t think I can catch prey as well as Azula… thinks I’m too unstable. Why does she THINK that?” She ripped a doll’s head off. Cindy sighed and walked up to her dresser mirror, staring at her reflection with a sad look. “I can kill enemies, too. I can create evil and mayhem. But Mom doesn’t think that. Why doesn’t she believe in me? Isn’t there anything I can do?”

She stared at her reflection as though expecting an answer. She looked into her own upset eyes and sought pity. …The mirror began to wobble, and a perky, smiling girl replaced her reflection. Cindy stared with the utmost weirdness. She wasn’t prepared when a snake came out of the mirror and pulled her inside.

**That whole level was Banjo-Tooie inspired, ’cause that’s where Terry and all those cavemen come from. The next chapter will be a big one, so stay tuned. Kids, don’t stare at mirrors too long.**
Chapter B-14: Dark Triumphs Light

Negaverse; Ydnic’s House

“AAAAH!” Cindy Cortix fell out of a dresser mirror. When the redheaded girl recovered, she viewed around and saw she was in a bright and cheerful room, full of stuffed ponies, elf dolls, teacups, and a bed with a rainbow backside. “Hi there!” said a perky voice that sounded like Cindy’s. She looked at the owner of this atrocious room: a girl with shiny, smooth orange hair, no nose, a pink dress, white leggings, and pink strap-on shoes. Her smile was creepily big. “You must be my Positive.”

“Y- You’re whuh…?” Cindy stared closer at the girl. No nose, dark eyes, she did kind of look like… “N-No no, that’s crazy.” Cindy shook the thought off. “There’s only one me, and even if there were more of me, they would be more like me, not some…some…” She looked sickeningly at the Negative, gesturing with her hands, “whatever THIS is!”

“Hee hee hee!” Ydnic giggled. “You’re really silly! I bet we’re going to get along great!”

“What am I even doing here?” Cindy asked, helping herself up. “Did you tell that giant snake to pull me in here?”

“No she didn’t. I did.” Both girls turned to the room’s entrance. Medusa entered, possessing her human body. “For a while, I was afraid that it would take some extra work to locate Ydnic’s Positive. How convenient she was looking at the same dresser.”

“Who’s this creepy lady?” Cindy asked.

“She’s Lady Medusa!” Ydnic introduced brightly. “She wanted us to be together during an important plan of hers.”

“And who said I wanted to be part of some plan?”

“Because, you ignorant brat, I’m about to give you a place in Pirate History!” Medusa declared.

“What do you mean?”

“Weren’t you complaining, just moments ago, about how your own mother has doubt in your relentlessness and fortitude? I want to give you the chance to make her see differently. And this will be how: You know about Davy Jones, correct?”

“Davy Jones? Of course I know him. My mom saw Davy Jones himself. She wasn’t afraid of him, so I’m not, either.”
“Oh, your mom saw Davy Jones, how nice.” Medusa feigned interest in her voice. “But how would you like to take it one step further? How would you like to be with Davy Jones…” her eyes narrowed viciously, “as he falls into depravity!”

“What?”

“Cindy, you own your own ship in the Boogey Fleet, correct?” Cindy nodded. “Take your Negative with you back to the Posiverse and follow these coordinates.” Medusa gave the girl a map. “I’ll meet you there.” The goddess vanished in a Dark Portal. Cindy stared at the map, which had an “X” marked in the Indian Ocean.

**Posiverse; south of Indian Ocean**

“Oh, Em, Gee!” Ydnic Xitroc stood on the keel of Cindy’s ship, which was aptly called the **Boogey Pool**, much smaller than Mandy’s flagship. A gentle breeze was blowing the Negative’s hair, and faint sunlight poked through the cloudy sky. “The Posiverse is so wonderful! I never thought air could smell this nice, especially on the sea! Hey, but won’t your mom be mad at you for taking one of her ships?”

“This is MY ship!” Cindy snarled; her spiteful expression and dark armor made her greatly contrast with Ydnic. “Not my mom’s! And no one’s gonna rat me out because the only pirates on this boat are dead animals. YOU!” She shot a Scare Stare toward the undead black licorice hyenas. “Make the boat go faster!” Shenzi, Banzai, and Ed quickly scampered off to follow their order.

“You like animals, too??” Ydnic gazed at her with bulbous eyes. “You and me have soooo much in common!”

“DON’T be silly! Animals are slobbery… icky… messy… THINGS!” As Cindy said this, a little skeleton dog trotted over, panting happily at her master. “Even if you don’t make saliva anymore, Saliva. Go hang out on the sails with Milkshakes.”

A pink skeleton cat was frightfully clutching the top board of the mast sail. “Mew.”

“Well, in case you’re interested, I’m a member of DNK Sector -W.” Ydnic said. “I actually joined a month ago, it was a little after the DNKG thing. One of my cousin’s team members turned traitor, and I wanted to fill her shoes! Ha ha ha!”

“Hmph. My cousins all work for the KND. But I don’t really care. I don’t work well in teams. It’s easier just to order people to do everything with fear. My mom always said fear was the strongest element.”

“Sure, it’s easy to make people afraid of you.” Ydnic frowned for a bit. “But the better solution is to make them do what you say with LOOOOOVE.” She folded her hands and swayed her hip, making a goofy smile.

Cindy puked over the railing. “Please… never do that again.”

The ship made it to the island that Medusa had marked. It was a deserted, jungle island, and a set of arrow signs directed the girls to a hatch in the ground. They entered this underground chamber and saw Medusa standing next to a chamber machine. “So glad you girls could make it.” she said. “You’re probably wondering what this is. Well, this is a time machine used by the Big Mom Pirates not so long ago. And I set its coordinates to take you back 300 years. Before Davy Jones lost his humanity.”

“Yeah, so what?” Cindy asked.
Medusa smirked. “You lovely young ladies will be the deciders of his fate! Cindy’s dark soul and fearbending contrasting with Ydnic’s bright and ironically-positive outlook is a perfect conflict between Light and Darkness! I want Davy Jones to be swallowed in the middle. The side that is most influential will decide the fate for him, and all of his hapless future victims!”

Ydnic gasped loudly. “You want us to alter the TIMELINE?! Medusa, is this part of the deal you promised Nerehe?”

“Davy Jones is one of the Thirteen Darknesses. In order to awaken himself, he must be deserving of the title. His Dark Side must prevail. And to ensure that it does, I must prove that Darkness conquers Light. You two are the perfect candidates for doing that.”

“Fine!” Ydnic declared with passion. “Not only will I show you that good triumphs over evil, I’ll teach Ms. Sour Face here that, too!”

“Hmph. We’ll see about that.” Cindy scoffed.

“So you both accept my challenge, terrific. Step into the time machine, if you will.” Medusa stepped aside.

The two counterparts entered the chamber, and one of Medusa’s snakes activated the device. In a surge of blue light, the girls were transported.

**Somewhere on the sea; 340 years ago…**

A battle was taking place at high noon. The ship’s cannons boomed incessantly, rounds after rounds of gunfire striking the monsters that threatened their vessel. One of these demons – a seaweed-colored seasnake with a skull mask – wrapped its body around the ship and screeched loudly. One of the crewmen – a man with a squished flat nose and slit narrow eyes, wearing a hat that looked like a hammer – leapt up and headbutted the snake’s skull mask with enough force to break it. The creature dispersed into dark particles.

**First mate of the Flying Dutchman**
**MACCUS the Hammerhead**

Maccus looked to the portside and saw a massive two-headed barracuda, both with skull masks, speeding toward them. “CAP’N, we ‘ave two on the port! Er, one! Er, maybe it’s one-and-a-ha-”

The captain jumped at the railing, whooshed his arms right, and sliced a huge line of ocean water to cut both the monster’s heads and destroy it. The captain turned back to his mate with a smirk. He had eyes blue as the sea, pale blonde hair, and wore a brown jacket. “Spend less time counting and more time smashing, Maccus-ah! Hah ha ha ha!” He spoke with a Scottish accent.

**Captain of the Flying Dutchman**
**“Heart of the Sea”**
**DAVY JONES**

A crewman with bloated cheeks lashed twin spike whips to slash away skull-faced swordfish that leapt at the deck. “Captain, they’re beginning to swim away.”

**Navigator of the Flying Dutchman**
**“Puffy Cheeks” KOLENIKO**

“Do not be fooled, Mistah Koleniko.” Jones said. “Direct your eyes beyond the bow.”
The week of monstrous dark fish were molding into a dark glob. A single, gigantic skull mask faced the little ship with eerie blank eye sockets, and black tentacles emerged. “I’ll load the triple guns!” Ogilvey, a man with a grey beard and mustache, and red neckerchief, shouted.

“Not necessary, Mr. Ogilvey.” Jones replied. “They have fallen for my trap.”

The ship sailed a little closer as the captain jumped onto the keel. Waving his arms in circles, two columns of water began to rise under his bending. He directed the columns to tie around the dark octopus. His hands glowed, and the water turned gold. The octopus screeched as its body dispersed into particles of light. The particles floated to the sky and vanished in the sunlight.

Davy Jones jumped back on the deck as his crewmates approached him with praise and admiration. “Ay’ve never seen that before, Captain!” Clanker exclaimed. “Where would you learn a fancy lightshow like that?”

“The Fairy Princess taught it to me.” Jones replied, smiling nonchalantly.

“The blue lass? She’s the one who taught it?” Koleniko asked.

“Well, she gave it to me.” Jones stared at his right hand. “It’s called spiritbending. It’s an advanced form of the healing powers she grants to waterbenders. It scatters dark spirits into light so they may be reborn anew in the Spirit World-ah.”

“Sounds a right fair deal.” Morey the Eel said. He was a long-necked human, from the Bermuda Triangle’s Snakeneck Tribe. “With all the Hollows that’ve been appearing lately, we need a new way to trim them down.”

“’ey Captain, isn’t tomorrow the ten-year mark?” one of Two Head’s two heads asked. “Where we going to make land?”

“I am thankful you asked, Mistah Sack.” Jones said as he pulled out and opened a chart. “I remember seeing an uncharted island in this quadrant.” There was an “X” marked on a spot a little southeast from Iceland. “We will see what its land has to offer.”

“That little piece of land?” Maccus asked. “Wouldn’t you rather hit a town, Captain? Fetch a decent meal and drink with your mates in a pub? You’d get as much shrub from that jungle as seaweed on the seafloor!”

“In an eternity of sailing, there is only so much land you can see in all the worlds. Had we limited our choices, we would not have discovered Mr. Morey’s home now, would we?” He looked at the Snakeneck human. “We will mount an expedition over this island in search of what riches it may bare. Besides, Lord Kyogre is looking for good places to hide his Ocean Talismans, in case he would need to.”

At the designated island; the next morning

The Flying Dutchman docked at the cliff shore of what would one day become Bully Island. The plank was dropped to serve as a bridge. Davy Jones crossed the plank, and set foot on the island. The sailors ventured into the jungle, which seemed to grow darker the further they got. The ground and trees were almost covered with fungi that emitted a visible, bluish-pink gas. “What do you suppose that is, Cap’n?” Maccus asked.

“How not get too close to it, boys.” Jones threw water over one of the mushrooms and pulled it over while encasing it in ice. “Only one is needed for careful observation-ah. Spread out and search the rest of the island.”
Davy Jones trekked up a hill in his thick black boots. The frozen fungus was stashed in a pocket under his coat. The path was hard to see through all the flora and the dark shroud that seemed to be covering this land. Then, with a few more meters of hill in his sight, a faint red light touched him. He saw an odd shape in the center of the light. The jungle’s shroud made it indiscernible, but with a closer look, it appeared to be… a woman.

Davy Jones marched up and saw her up close. She was a woman with purple hair drooped over her eyes, a purple dress, and bare feet hanging over the edge of a murky pool. Davy Jones slowly reached his right hand over to move her hair aside. She had a smooth and flawless face, except for a black design around her left eye. Her eyes were sharp, green, and snakelike, and she had sensual purple lips. Davy Jones stared at her longingly… he saw himself reflected in those shiny dark pupils. He had never seen a human so… lovely.

“If you were looking for the perfect place to molest somebody, I’d say you’ve found it.” The woman told him softly.

“Oh!” Jones blushed and backed away. “I’m… sorry… My name is Davy Jones. Servant of Lord Kyogre and Ferrier of Souls. I chose to explore this island on my once-a-decade expedition. I did not expect to find anyone here, much less a…” He couldn’t decide between ‘woman,’ ‘angel,’ or ‘goddess.’ “Who are you?”

“Something… Nothing…” The woman looked away. “A being that was…”

That mysterious response was sexy, Jones thought. “Wh… Where are you from?”

“Somewhere… Nowhere… The darkest reaches of the cosmos…”

“. . .” Jones didn’t understand why he heated up at such a vague response. “Then can ya tell me why… you’re here?”

The woman remained silent and looked up at him. Jones felt himself lost in her gaze. “Have you ever looked in your own reflection,” the woman said, “…and saw something awful?”

When Jones blinked, the reflection in her pupils was all wiggly, slimy tentacles. He shook his head, and this reflection vanished. “I do not understand.” Jones said. “If you are referring to yourself, I do not see what you see. You are… a beautiful woman…”

“Are you certain?” she asked. “Come… let me show you something…”

The woman led him to a cliff that overlooked another region of jungle, and the sea beyond it. The sky and sea were purple, lit up only by the white sun. Davy Jones was drawn by this change in color, and the woman sensed this. “The mushrooms on this island emit a noxious gas that misleads the senses. Deep down… I have always pictured myself as beautiful… And this island, this… horrible rotting island… In its midst, I can see that beauty in me. It’s so… grotesque.” She turned to him. “Davy Jones… Have you come here because… you sought beauty?”

“N-No, I… I’ve already found beauty.” Jones smiled. “It is the sea. It is…” The captain reached an arm toward the purple horizon, “an absolute freedom. To sail the waters, over and under… for eternity. I collect souls who are lost and guide them to the next world. I meet a great many people in my adventures. All of them were troubled souls… up until the moment they drowned. No matter who they were or what they had done… it brings me joy… to offer them an escape… To offer them freedom…”
“Freedom?” the woman questioned. “Then let me ask you… what is freedom, in your eyes? Is it being untethered? Sailing a ship across worlds for all eternity? Is it… not being bound to anyone or anything? Do you… have that sort of freedom?”

Jones couldn’t think of a response. True, he was working under Kyogre, collecting souls that were lost at sea, cleansing them before they became Hollows. “Because I do.” The woman said. “I have nobody… I have nothing… Only myself in eternal solitude… And every day, I feel my soul greying… Freedom… is lonely…”

Jones gripped her arm in his left hand, as hard as a crab claw (obvious foreshadowing :P). He looked at her firmly in the eyes. “Freedom is more than that. It is not being unbound and untethered… it is the happiness I feel in sailing. All of the time in the world to do what I love, forever. If you came with me, I could show you.”

“…” The woman stared at him, as though touched by the passion in his words. There was an inviting aura about him… She wanted to take his offer… “No.” She turned away, tears streaming her face. “I…I mustn’t!” She jumped off the cliff.

“Wait-ah!” Davy Jones jumped after, grabbing a jagged rock with water tentacles to slow his fall. The sailor chased the woman through the thick shrubs, able to see only part of her in this darkness. He heard a splash up ahead, and when Davy Jones arrived at a coast, his instinct was to jump into the sea. He swam like a merman, skimming the underwater for a trace of that maiden. There wasn’t a trail of bubbles or waves on the surface, so Jones swam aimlessly in his attempts to find her.

Davy Jones finally resurfaced. The ocean was very foggy, he had no idea how far he swam. He lost any hope of finding the maiden, began to think she was just an illusion.

*Upon one summer’s morning, I carelessly did stray*

*Down by the Walls of Wapping, where I met a sailor gay*

Then he heard her soft voice. He saw where it was coming from. A figure’s shadow, sitting on a lone rock.

*Conversing with a bouncing lass, who seemed to be in pain,*

*Saying, William, when you go, I fear you will ne'er return again.*

Davy Jones swam closer. It was the very same maiden, swaying her trim, flawless legs in the water. The captain could have assumed she was a siren… for he swam closer at the luring sound of her voice.

*My heart is pierced by Cupid… I disdain all glittering gold…*

The woman stared down at the man in the water.

*There is nothing… can console me…*

Jones gazed up at her lovely figure.

*...but my jolly… sailor… bold.*

Jones lightly clasped her legs… He pulled himself up… clasped her arms… put his foot on the side of the rock-
“AAAAAUUUUHHH!” Searing pain coursed through him as he fell in the sea. He shook to recompose himself and resurface. The woman bore slight shock on her features. “My… is that the limit of your freedom?” she whispered.

“Please!” Jones propped his feet on the ground under the water, so his upper half was visible. “Tell me… what are you…”

The woman fell in the sea and floated away on her back, her arms outstretched. “Like I said… I’m something… I’m nothing… I can’t define what I am…”

“You are a lingering soul!” Jones trudged across the water and stood over her. “I can feel it… the energy in your body… but you are… different… There is a different presence about you…”

The woman stood and moved her face close to his. “Tell me… what that presence is…”

“I…I do not know…”

The woman became sad. She hugged her chest and turned away. “Oh… forgive me… I just thought… someone would actually know the answer…”

“I… I want to know the answer!” Jones reached his left arm to her. “It’s there… on the palm of my hand… but I cannot…”

She turned to him with a smile. “I believe you… And if you’re able to come up with the answer… I want to meet you again…” Then she drifted away beyond the mist.

Davy Jones stared at the blank gray where she had gone. The mist started to clear, and the captain felt something make waves behind him. “OIII! CAPTAIN!” Jones turned around and looked up at his Flying Dutchman. “What in blazes got into you?! Jumping off the island, whaddid you trip or something? You know you only get ONE shot at land every 10 years! What sort of spirit possessed you to waste it like that?”

*My heart is pierced by Cupid… I disdain all glittering gold…*

Jones looked at the horizon.

*There is nothing… can console me…*

*…but my jolly… sailor… bold.*

“Captain?” Maccus noticed his blank expression. What in the world was wrong with him…

Although the crewmen couldn’t hear it, Davy Jones sailed the ship in the direction of the voice. They came upon the shore of a dark, dead swamp, where the woman’s notes echoed from beyond the mist. “Captain…” Maccus spoke once more.

Jones reached his left hand and clutched the air. “Wait for me…”

*9 years and 360 days later…*

Cindy Cortix and Ydnic Xitroc finally materialized from the time warp. “Cindy?” Ydnic looked down.

“Yeah?” The Positive cocked a brow.

“Do time machines give us the ability to float?”
“That’s the most ridiculous idea ever.”

“I was afraid of that.”

“AAAAHHH!” The standing-in-midair girls took the fall into the sea. After resurfacing, they felt a shadow fall over them, cast by a great ship with a mouth of sharp teeth on the keel.

“’ey, there’s some wee lasses over the starboard!” Morey yelled.

“Pull them up!” Clanker ordered.

A rope was thrown down for the girls to grab onto, and the sailors hoisted them onto the deck. “What’s all this?” the captain’s sturdy black boots clanked the wood as he stomped past his crewmen to view the salvaged girls. Still lying down, Cindy and Ydnic gazed up at the captain’s imposing, authoritative figure. The sun hung directly above and highlighted the Scottish man.

Cindy jumped to her feet and drew her sword. “Don’t try anything! I’ll cut every one of you up, I swear!”

The sailors exchanged laughter. “Oi, wee lass thinks she’s a pirate!” Koleniko exclaimed.

“Maybe she’s one of those Linlin blokes!” Jimmy Legs cackled.

“I MEAN IT!” Cindy shouted. “Just who the heck are you drunken idiots?!”

“I should be asking you that, children adrift in the middle of the sea.” The captain smirked. “You stand before the crew of the Flying Dutchman-ah. I am Captain Davy Jones, the Ferrier of Souls.”

“Davy… Davy Jones?” Cindy wouldn’t have recognized the sailor’s human appearance.

“Are you guys pirates, too?” Ydnic questioned. Her cheeks puffed as she said, “I HATE pirates. They’re always being so mean, attacking villages just to steal beer or money or… vegetables.”

“Then why are you still hanging around me?”

“Because you’re my Positive, silly!” Ydnic pinched Cindy’s cheek. “Even though you act more negative.”

“We are not pirates-ah.” Jones answered. “Under orders of Ocean King Kyogre, we sail the waters and ferry lost souls to the Underworld.”

“Otherwise, we’re just your typical guys who like sailing.” Jimmy shrugged.

“So who are you two kids?” Maccus asked. “You look a little too lively to be lost souls.”

“I am Cindy Cortix, a feared member of the world-infamous Boogey Pirates!” the girl announced. “This is some girl who thinks she’s my twin.”

“Boogey Pirates? Well, I’ve never heard of them.” Jones shrugged. “And I’d certainly never expect a couple of children to pose as pirates.”

“Well, I AM a pirate! And I’ll make you fear me! LIKE THIS!” Cindy unleashed a deafening Fear Scream, the sailors stumbling back and clamping their ears shut.

Once she stopped, Jones looked at her with interest. “You’re a fearbender?”
“Oh, NOW ya’ve gone and done it.” Koleniko remarked.

“This is perfect!” Jones said excitedly. “The universe really is seeing in my favor-ah!”

“What do you mean?” asked Ydnic.

“Well, ten years ago, the captain thinks he saw this fair wench.” Maccus explained. “’e said ’e heard her singing from the Haunted Marshes. He’s been waiting ten years to be able to scour that land.”

“It’s said that swamp is flowing with Fear Chi.” Koleniko said. “More than a man can handle. You would need to have a fearbender with you to cross it.”

“We ain’t gonna bring you kids on such a silly expedition. You probably wanna get back home to your mommy.” Morey followed.

“HEY!” Cindy yelled. “‘Mommies’! Plural!”

“Hold on, why does he need to cross the marshes again?” Ydnic asked.

The crewmen looked at Davy Jones, expecting to once-again hear his crazy story. The captain approached the starboard railing and stared out at the horizon. “In my whole life, I have never imagined anything more beautiful than the sea. I loved the sea…and I thought, if I were one with the sea, if the sea was all I had, then I would be free and happy forever. And yet…” Jones put a hand to his heart, “ever since I met that woman… I cannot stop yearning for her. Never had I encountered a soul so… clouded inside. Our meeting… my thoughts… I feel as though we are bound by fate. …I want to meet her again…”

“That’s sooooooo romanticiiiiic!” Ydnic sang. “A lonely sailor goes to meet his beloved after teeeeen loooong yeeeaaars of seasickness! Cindy, we HAVE to help him!”

“Hmph…” Cindy could care less, but this was probably part of the experiment Medusa had in mind. “All right. I’ll use my fearbending to help you.”

“I’ll get you ALL spick and span for your big date!” Ydnic said cheerily. “Just pick up that toothbrush, hop in that bathtub, get a good night’s rest on your bed, and your lady won’t WAIT to kiss you!”

“What’s a toothbrush?” Maccus asked.

“What’s a bathtub?” Clanker asked.

“What’s a bed?” Two Head asked.

“Captain, are you sure you want to try to find this woman?” Koleniko asked. “Even if she’s real, why would she still be hanging around that filthy swamp?”

“There must be a reason we were fortunate enough to sail upon these children.” Jones replied. “It was fated that I should meet her again. Mastah Legs, chart a course for the Haunted Marshes. I expect to be there within five days. Young ladies, do make yourselves comfortable.”

Two nights later…

The twin girls were treated friendly by the would-be Dutchman Pirates, and their bright spirits greatly contrasted with the tales Cindy has heard. The girls were told a first-hand iteration of how
their captain came to have his position: when sailing in a region they had dubbed the “Haunted Cove,” his ship was wrecked and destroyed, and Jones became a spirit. His soul was rescued by Ocean King Kyogre, who took pity and gave the sailor a chance to sail forever:

Jones was given a Gigai, an artificial human body that had the same attributes as a normal body, but it wouldn’t age. Complete with the Water Chi he had once possessed, Jones was free to sail the seas, and in return would ferry other fallen souls to the Underworld. The crewmen on his vessel were other souls who had desired to sail forever, so they were given their own Gigai. The only limits placed on Davy Jones’ eternity were that he couldn’t step on dry land but once every 10 years. Otherwise, a searing but non-fatal pain would course through him.

“If ya ask me, I always thought Lord Kyogre was jealous of the Light Goddess, Palutena.” Maccus remarked to Ydnic, who sat at a cabin table with some crewmen. “She has her own Nimbi servant, so he wanted one. And rumor has it mermen are real sour with Nimbi!” The mates cackled.

“It’s not just a rumor, it’s real!” Ydnic spoke up. “They’re always so mean to each other! All the Nimbis’ waste falls in the ocean, then the merpeople fly up in their ships and start bombing the Nimbi, it’s so awful!”

“What kind of twisted tales does your mommy read to you??” Koleniko questioned.

“Social studies textbooks!” Ydnic replied more perkily.

“In my opinion, Kyogre’s got loneliness issues.” Morey said. “He’s got, like, no friends besides the captain and that Ocean Fairy. I walked in on ’em when we visited the palace once, and he was practically begging her to dance for the guards’ kids. Hah, it was silly.”

“He’s so desperate for friends, he’ll trust anyone!” Two Head’s heads said at once.

“That’s not really a bad thing.” Ydnic replied. “It’s important to be able to trust people. When you’re trusting, you’re more open, and you can make more friends that’ll help you when you need them. Even if I was a king like Kyogre, I wouldn’t wanna lose any of my friends. Because sooner or later, I would want someone to hold my hand and say, ‘I’m here for you.’” She cupped both hands over her heart.

“That was…” Two Head’s right head, Sack asked.

“-beautiful…” The left head, Flour was tearing.

“Mates, this girl is delightful!” Clanker plopped a hand on Ydnic’s hair. “I say we keep her in our crew!”

“Don’t be silly, we’re only takin’ ’em with us so the captain can find that girl.” Maccus replied. “Where is the captain, anyway?”

“Last I saw, he’s takin’ a smoke on the deck.” Clanker said.

The sky had a few clouds, which were highlighted by the stars and crescent moon. Davy Jones stood on the bow of the ship, holding the Grand Compass that pointed directly ahead. The magic compass that would lead him to what he most desired. He put the compass in his pocket and took out a pipe, which he lit up before smoking. The breeze blew the smoke behind his left. He turned in its direction and saw Cindy sitting at the railing, her legs hanging over the side.

Davy Jones approached the frizzy-haired child, who was a little green in the face. “You look seasick for a self-proclaimed pirate-ah.”
“I can feel my ‘twin’s’ happy radiance.” Cindy said. “It’s sickening.”

“You share your own spiritual bond with someone.”

“Yeah, right…” Cindy looked up to face him. “So, Captain Jones… have you really only been thinking about one person for 10 years? A random woman you met only once?”

“She was not just some ‘woman.’ And, for a long time, I was not sure what to call her. I did not know the answer. But now… I am ready to tell her.”

“Hmph… And you think she would wait for you to tell her some ‘answer’ after 10 years, in which time she could’ve easily found out herself? My mom only knew about her fearbending for three years before she made Logia.”

“I would love to meet your mother in the future.” Jones said. (A hunchbacked crewmate made a drumroll.) “And part of me feels… she does already know. …But I want her to hear it from me.”

“Yeah, well… Be prepared for disappointment.”

“Oh, don’t listen to her!” Ydnic stated, having come out of the cabin. She clutched Jones’ hand and looked up at the captain. “You should follow your heart, Captain Jones! I may be a Negative, but I’m positive this woman will be glad to see you again! Whether or not you have the right answer!”

“BLUUUEEEEH!” Cindy threw up over hearing that pun.

“Yes… you are right.” Jones said, feeling his spirit lift. He touched his heart. “I know she is waiting for me… and I will tell her my answer…”

The captain returned to his cabin to rest. Ydnic came to sit by Cindy, grabbing the rail while her feet hung over the side. “See, Cindy, positive words lead to positive feelings, and positive feelings lead to brighter and stronger spirits!”

“I don’t even care, Ydnic. I already know how this story’s going to end. Every pirate in my universe knows. You can’t change the past, even if you go back in time. If it’s already happened in the future, all we’re doing is helping instigate it.”

“But maybe those time-travelers just haven’t tried hard enough to make a difference. If a person is strong enough, they can beat fate, and make the future brighter.”

“Even if you could change Jones’ fate, it would hurt the future for other people. Like that Ocean Princess would never marry that human boy. Not that I would care. Either way, Jones’ fate will be the same, and I won’t have to do a thing.”

Ydnic stood up and told her firmly, “We’ll see about that!” She marched back into the cabin.

That night, Davy Jones slept while holding the Grand Compass to his chest. The needle was spiraling rampantly.

**A misty coast, three days later**

The day of Davy Jones’ ten-year mark had come. The Grand Compass led him to this dark and eerie shore. He jumped down and marched up onto the shore. Cindy and Ydnic joined after him. The purple mist made the sky appear dark. They stood before a graveyard with dead trees. “So how long are you allowed to stand on land, exactly?” Cindy asked.
“Twenty-four hours. But if I step in any water, I cannot climb back on.”

“Wow…” Ydnic spoke sadly. “That-”

“Sucks, I know.”

“Can you at least jump?” Cindy asked.

“Yes, because technically, I’m still bound to the land’s gravity.”

“That’s good!” Ydnic beamed.

“The compass will lead us to her.” Jones said, holding the item up. “I trust you ladies to do your duties.”

“Just don’t leave us to do all the fighting.” Cindy said. (Play “The Swamp” from Zelda: Four Swords Adventures.)

Stage B-11: Haunted Marshes

Mission: Find the woman Davy Jones longs for.

There were lanterns floating midair around the graveyard, and they seemed to throw their selves at the girls when they approached. Cindy furiously slashed her sword at one of the lanterns, but it easily dodged and punched her in the face. “You silly, violence doesn’t always win battles.” Ydnic said. “Sometimes, you have to have fun!” She threw powder puffs over the lanterns, exposing the Poes that were holding them. Cindy and Davy Jones used their blades to slice the ghosts’ bodies, so their lanterns fell, broke, and exposed the purple flames which were their souls. Davy Jones decided to catch the souls in some bottles. “Poe Souls are excellent beverages to spirits.” he said.

A small moat divided the graveyard into two halves, so Jones jumped over it. A deeper moat separated them from a forest path, and was too wide to jump. Thankfully, a tall stone slab was propped up on their end, so Cindy rolled against it to knock it down and create a bridge across. On this forest path, there were giant pine cones, and when the trio approached, Morphs jumped out (one-eyed black balls with spikes) and latched onto them. The explorers were weighed down, so Keese seized the chance to flap down and attack them. Cindy shot a Fear Scream to scare the bats away and make the Morphs scatter, then she proceeded to slice the Morphs in half.

The path led them above a short cliff overlooking a purple gooey river, which stretched down several meters to their left. “You know, can’t you just bend that water away?” Cindy asked.

“The water is poisonous.” Jones said. “It conflicts with my waterbending-ah.”

“Terror of the seas, my ass. Well, how do you plan to get across?”

“The wall looks rugged enough for me to climb across.”

“And me and Cindy will float down the river with my Plainford the Small Blue Cat inflatable!” Ydnic pulled out a blue deflated balloon. “Which is ironically bigger than his name would imply.”

Ydnic puffed the floatie to a large size, and it withstood the poisonous water as it floated the girls across. Davy Jones (who would’ve been too heavy to ride it) climbed across the cliff on their left. An eyeball connected to a purple oozing stem came out of the swamp, staring at the girls, but one
look with Cindy’s Scare Stare forced it to retreat. Keese flapped in Jones’ direction overhead, so Cindy coughed up Fear Spheres to take them down. Ydnic warned her of anymore Swamp Lurkers coming up, so Cindy could scare them before focusing back on Jones. Two Poes appeared in the girls’ path, so Ydnic threw powder to expose the ghosts, Cindy cut them, then she shot down more bats coming for Jones.

At the end of the river, Jones could step onto safe ground, and the twins could disembark, with Ydnic deflating her giant floatie, cleaning the swamp water off (“Hurry up, already.” Cindy told her), then stuffing it away. They accompanied Davy Jones down a new path, where a Pols Voice ambushed them. It was a large, yellow, blob-like thing with rabbit ears. Cindy’s Fear Scream was enough to stun it senseless, then she cut it up.

They came to a field where pairs of two logs were lain around to create a maze. They questioned if it was safe for Jones to touch them since ships were made of wood… he figured if this wood had soil on it, it wouldn’t be leaving land. There were Dark Chuchu around the maze, and since they couldn’t be cut and Cindy’s screaming jiggled them, Davy Jones splashed water over the blobs and froze them. At the end of this maze was a pool of poison water. To cross it, they had to throw the frozen Dark Chus inside and make ice platforms. Since they couldn’t throw the frozen Chus on the ground without them shattering, they were forced to maneuver around the maze to get to the pool before the blobs unfroze.

With enough platforms, the girls crossed the ice—Davy Jones couldn’t, since ice is water. (Sigh, this curse was nothing but inconvenient.) There was a stone ring with teeth inside it, and when Cindy screamed, it reacted to her bending and spun around, making a narrow stone bridge rise up for Jones to cross the pool. In the graveyard that followed, Stalfos wielding spiked clubs rose from the soil. Jones used his waterbending to slice their bones, but through a supernatural force, the Stalfos’ bones floated up and reformed their body.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHH!” Cindy blasted a stronger Fear Scream in the hopes of weakening the skeletons, but the bones had no nerves to tingle, and Jones took the blast. “Stop it!” Ydnic clamped Cindy’s mouth shut. “The real way to beat sleep-depraved skeletons is with warm milk.” Ydnic pulled out a glass of milk and poured it on the soil where the Stalfos came from. The skeletons seemed to calm, for they returned to their graves and sunk beneath the soil.

Ydnic approached Davy Jones, who was holding his aching head as he stood back up. “Are you okay, Captain?”

“I am… fine…” Jones panted.

The crew went up a flight of stairs to a new forest path above a cliff. Mothulas floated down from the trees – giant black moths with green-and-yellow wings, one eye, and pinchers. When Cindy used Scare Stare on them, the Mothulas retaliated by shooting Morphs from their tails. When the spikeballs latched onto them, the Mothulas swooped down to attack the humans. Cindy scared the Morphs off with Fear Scream, cut them up, then angrily sliced the wings off the Mothulas. She panted heavily after the creatures were dealt with. “Oops, did I hit you?” she asked when she saw Jones and Ydnic holding their ears shut.

The path turned left and brought them above a pool down in a rectangular pit. Cindy used a Licorope on a branch hanging over the pit to swing herself and Ydnic across. There was a stone block on the other side, which Cindy pushed into the pool. Davy Jones made a leap down onto the block, then leapt up to grab the ledge, with the girls pulling him up by the arms. They came to a field with several patches of swamp water. Hardhat Beetles (blue beetles with bulbous tops) wandered around the patches, and would use their bouncy bodies to push them into the water.
Cindy coughed Fear Spheres while Jones threw Water Slices before the creatures got too close. However, more beetles were coming out of small caves. There was a stone door sealed on the other side, and a slot where something would go beside it. On the right of the swamp, there was a small gargoyle statue. It was too heavy to lift, but Cindy could make it move by screaming. Jones and Ydnic distracted the beetles so Cindy could maneuver it around the swamp patches, finally directing it into the slot as it settled in place.

The entrance to what seemed like a ruined church opened. Vines were growing through the walls and floor panels, and the building was long since abandoned. They arrived at a round chasm, looking down to find a fallen statue of Darkrai the First partway in swamp ooze. “Weren’t the Nightmare Wars ending around this time?” Cindy asked.

“Lord Kyogre mentioned the Galaxians having progress against the Nightmares.” Jones replied. “What do you mean by ‘this time’?”

“Don’t worry about it.” Cindy screamed into a Scream Ring, causing stone platforms to emerge from the left wall. They were unstable, so Davy Jones carried Ydnic and jumped across them quickly to make it across. As for Cindy, she grabbed a thin ledge along the right to climb across. Naturally, there were Snapdragons waiting in holes above the ledge. When Cindy got close, they popped out—they caused the unstable wall to crumble as they fell into the ooze below, creating a gap in the ledge. Cindy had to make a tricky swing-jump to grab the next ledge part.

She made it to her group as they followed the passage and exited the church. They faced a lake of swamp ooze, and the only way across was with a stone platform that moved using a Scream Ring. The other two had to endure Cindy’s screaming while she used her power to move it. Mines emerged from the swamp, so Cindy had to constantly maneuver around. She used Scare Stare on Swamp Lurkers, and Ydnic threw powder puffs over Poes. Eventually, they made it to the other side of the lake. From this shore, they viewed a wide stone stairway across another swamp pool.

A giant three-headed Piranha Plant emerged from the pool, a hideous Diababa with teeth oozing with poison. The two side heads tried to gnash down at them, but Jones froze their mouths with waterbending. The center head, whose mouth had four sides, unleashed a deafening roar as its single eye wiggled on the stem. Cindy withstood the scream and glared at the eye, scaring the piranha as its eye stem dangled over the ground. Cindy leapt and chopped the eye clean off. The Diababa fell dead against their foothold.

The girls crossed the dead plant monster like a bridge while Jones climbed the wall along the left. Jones’ Grand Compass pointed up the stairs, so he followed the girls up. Suddenly, the right head of Diababa recovered, smashing the ice on its mouth as it whipped around and grabbed Jones’ right leg. “AHH!” The captain stuck his sword in the stairs to keep himself from being dragged down. The girls turned around and gasped—Ydnic ran down and began trying to pull him free. “Cindy, do something!”

Cindy tried to cut the Diababa’s stem, but it was too sturdy, and it had no eyes or ears for her bending to work. The monster’s teeth sunk further into Jones’ leg, so with no other option, Cindy chopped the leg clean off. “AAAAAHH!” The plant’s head flew back into the swamp with the leg to dine on.

“CINDY!” Ydnic screamed. “Why did you DO that?!”

“If we dragged that out, the poison would’ve seeped into the rest of his body!”

“It is no loss… augh!…” Jones used the sword as a prop to push himself onto his left foot. “We are almost there… just a little farther… huff…”
Cindy and Ydnic helped him up the stairs, and once at the top, they viewed the ground of some ruins, with vine-covered pillars. Jones followed the compass forward, until it led him to a stone pyramid. (End song.)

The pyramid had foreign writing inscribed on it, and an eye on its top. Jones limped around the pyramid… but the compass remain fixed on it. “I do not understand-ah.” The captain panted, continuing to limp around the structure. “Why did the compass bring me here? Where…Where is she?!”

“Maybe she’s hiding inside it!” Ydnic said hopefully, knocking on the rock. “Helloooo? Anyone in there?”

“Don’t you get it?” Cindy spoke logically. “She was never here. She was probably never real. All you saw and heard was a hallucination, and your compass was probably attracted by a magnetic field generated by this pyramid.”

“Nooo!” Ydnic yelled in denial. “She has to be here! She…She’s waiting for him!”

“And what evidence do you have to support that?” Cindy asked.

“Because…Because Davy Jones waited 10 years to come here and find her! He crossed a dangerous swamp, lost a leg, so he has to meet his true love! A romantic story can’t end without—”

“This isn’t some fairytale! In your Negaverse, you might be able to live under the delusion that life has happy endings, but it doesn’t. Jones was fooling himself into believing some woman was waiting for him. He wasted his time—”

The captain lost balance on his sword and fell on his front. “No…” Jones pushed up. His face had become filthy after this journey. “If she is not real… then why…why do I feel so…” He looked up at the pyramid’s writing. For some reason… the words were so clear.

*Your life has been but a lie. Your free will is an illusion. Your choices are not your own. Everything is decided.*

Seeing those words made him furious. Out of nowhere… immeasurable anger overcame him. “I…had… the answer…ah…” He pushed himself to his foot and sword. “I was going… to tell you… tell you… what you really are…ah…” He fell to his knees. “You were… MY SOOOOOOUUUUUUL!”

His voice was louder than any of Cindy’s screams. Cindy refrained from saying how dumb and cliché that line sounded. (Of course, this was the past, so a line like that is still original.) Davy Jones gasped for breath. “And YOU…” He glared at the girls. “You children… are DEMONS… taunting me! Leave… go away… GET OUT OF MY SIGHT, NOW!” With unmatched fury, Jones slashed wave after wave of water at the kids. Cindy grabbed Ydnic and ran away, but Jones’ water continued to fly at them.

“This trip is over!” Cindy activated the Return Pad and warped the two back to the present.

Davy Jones stopped himself once the “demons” were gone. He gasped, despair overcoming him. Why did his heart ache so much? Why did he feel so much pain? …The pyramid lit with a dark flame. He heard the flame brimming and looked at it. The flames flew into his body completely. He felt them lodge into his heart.

**Davy Jones awakened as a DARKNESS. Only 11 more to go. (Wait, who was the first one?)**
Davy Jones’s tears could have flooded the sea. The only solace he could find was from the ocean. As he served Kyogre for 10 more years, ferrying souls to the next life, freeing them of their despair… he saw no point in it. His soul, even if he were to die, would drown in despair deeper than the ocean. The only way to conquer it… would be to conquer the ocean. Conquer all oceans if he had to. He had to rule it all… but to keep the pain in his heart from slowing him, Jones had to be rid of it. Lock it away where no one could find it and remind him of his despair.

Present; time machine cave

“And that was how it was done back then.” Medusa said to her cohorts after watching the show on the time machine’s screen.

“Boy, Medusa, you really knew how to flirt with men.” Pandora smiled admirably. “All that ‘Can you tell me what I am’ crap was an excellent touch.”

“Yes, but a hint of Dark Chi never fails to attract.” As she said this, Cindy and Ydnic came out of the machine. “Girls, you’re back! That was an excellent performance in there!”

“Why did you make us do that?” Cindy asked. “Ydnic sure didn’t influence him. All we did was lead him far enough into the swamp until he realized it was hopeless.”

“Actually, you did play a part, Cindy. Your fearbending was enhanced in that swamp, and it spread to Jones considerably. He developed a fear that he would be wrong and I wouldn’t be there. He will continue to remember that fear and shower it upon his future victims. Thanks to you, the terror that was the Dutchman Pirates has made history. A fun fact, that spiritbending of his was used to turn fish into monsters and his crew into those zombie fish forms.”

“But what did I have to do with it?” Ydnic asked.

“You’re too bright for my tastes, Ydnic. I wanted you to witness firsthand as Darkness triumphs Light. I hope the other Negatives learn that, too.”

“…Well, I don’t buy it.” Ydnic said firmly. “I believe Light can and will triumph in the end. I think Jones’s soul could be saved. I think… even you could learn that.”

Medusa frowned and stared at her. Ydnic turned and marched out of the cave. “I’m going home. It was nice to meet you, Cindy.”

“…Hmph.” Cindy sheathed her blade. “All love does is destroy people. I don’t see why my mom could like it.” She began to leave the cave. “…Even if it did make me.”

The three gods waited until she was gone. “So, this is how you plan to find the Darknesses, is it?” Pandora asked. “Did you make your picks for the other ones?”

“They were already decided, Dora.” Medusa smirked. “Because the Darknesses already met them.”

About time, right? So yeah, the classic Dutchman Pirates from *Pirates of the Caribbean*. I gave them funny human designs that would eventually match their Fishman designs, and even their epithets. And we finally got to see how Jones fell into depravity! Next time, we’ll have Wendy do a stage. Kids, don’t do mushrooms.
Chapter Summary

Arianna heads into the Bramble Forest to train. Meanwhile, Fybi Fulbright has an unexpected meeting.

Okay, time to get back in the fray. By which I mean doing several stages in one chapter. Let’s make that our goal, people.

Chapter 21: Flowers and Brambles

Mom’s Hideout

Mom sat alone in her dark office. Calming herself after last night’s party—her anger for the Head President. It was only hours ago did she remember, her plan that failed humiliatingly. Cheren didn’t last a chance against her. Now what was she to do. “President Carol.” Her TV flashed on, startling Mom out of her thoughts. “Am I interrupting?”

“More than usual?”

“I’m calling because I was wondering if you had any information regarding Cheren.”

“Why would I care about your crap-ass nephew and what he did to crap-ass Doflamingo?”

“I was wondering if you had any idea how he infiltrated my party in the first place?”

“What are you implying?”

“I am inferring that he only could have gotten to Mariejoa through the party attendants, otherwise how would he have known.”

“And you think I snuck him in? In case you hadn’t noticed, there were plenty of snot-nosed twerps there (and a thousand ways of shrinking), so how d’you know one of his operatives didn’t sneak him in? How do you know Doflamingo himself didn’t do it just so his daughter could wipe Cheren from existence and claim the credit?”

“I wasn’t suggesting it was you, but I’m taking extra precautions. With Doflamingo’s death, the Corporate Presidents have shown weakness. Further weakness.”

“Fuh. Why are you so afraid of them, you know they can’t beat the Leaders.”

“Our orders are to prevent the 20 Keys from coming together. The Leaders gave us a list.”

“Yes, and we aren’t even allowed to talk about or show ourselves to them, just keep a damn eye!”

“Unless, of course, they find out, and they may. For the time being, most of them are unaware. Just stay focused, and if you learn anything on the Cheren dilemma, report it.” Transmission ended.

“You must excuse her.” A voice said from the doorway. “She interrogated me, earlier.”
“Whaddyou want, Ted?”

Ted Wassanasong, the baldheaded Laotian-American president, entered the room. “I would like to request something of you, Mom, and I believe only someone with your political power can help me do it.”

“Spit it out.”

“I would like you to take me to the Florae Galaxy, and help me create the greatest golf course in the cosmos.”

**Harnita; Dunfree Household**

Nova shut her eyes and relished in the scent of her garden. For so many years, she populated it with as many alien plants she could collect; their house was practically a jungle. Flowers that looked like the caps of jellyfish, rows of pots with flowers of polygon shapes, some plants were in multiple dimensions. Whichever plant grew under her care, they all danced under the swaying of her arms. “Mother?” Arianna, who knew every passage of this garden and could find her way effortlessly, approached the sakura-colored woman.

“Hello, dear.” Nova’s mind was lost in daydreams.

“Um… if you’re busy, I can come back later.” Arianna said softly.

“No, dear, I’m never too busy for you.”

“Um…” Arianna shifted her foot on the grass. “I was wondering if… I could learn more about my heritage.”

The plants stopped swaying when Nova did, turning to her daughter. “How come?”

“Just so I can learn more about myself. If I can become strong like…like..”

Nova smiled, not needing to know the end of that sentence, and kneeled to her daughter’s level. “There isn’t much you need to know. Harnita is a planet of pacifists like us who believe in tranquility and try not to dirty their soul with conflict. Pumparia is close by, they believe in taking action rather than bliss. In truth, their philosophy is probably better. Though depending on the conflict, I guess both of us have pros and cons.”

“Was our species not meant to fight?”

“The choice to fight and learn how to fight is up to the person. If you want to become stronger, there’s nothing holding you back. Most adults on our planet raise kids to be pacifists, then we do a lot of things we don’t want to without question. That’s sort of how the Harnitan Kids Next Door was founded. Our planet has conflict after all.”

“And you were the best of the planet.”

“By Old GKND standards, yes. I was still soft, in reality, and I passed that on to you. Even though I didn’t want to.”

“I’m sorry, Mother.”

“Don’t be. I’ll be happy to teach you plantbending, either way.”

“I’m a plantbender?”
“Hm-hm, how do you think my garden’s so lovely? Why we can talk to animals? It’s actually a simple skill. Hm hm, I actually thought you knew by now.”

“Heheh.” She flushed.

“Arianna, you know the Bramble Forest that’s outside of town, right?”

“Of course.”

“If you want to get stronger, you can go there and try controlling them. They’re harder for most plantbenders because they require strong willpower. Unless you would like to do garden exercises with me.”

“No… I’ll try the brambles. Vweeb won’t respect me unless I try hard. I’ll see you later, Mother.”

“Good luck, Arianna.” Nova returned to her swaying.

A few miles outside of town was a forest of giant brambles, more like a giant bush that stretched miles to the sky. When only yards away from it, a mystical fluttering of wings hit her antennae, and a familiar celery-colored fairy soared down. “Celebi!”

“Rebi-rebiii!” The Forest Spirit faced Arianna with a wondrous smile.

“Ha ha ha ha! It’s great to see you, too! Will you help me with plantbending?”

“Rebiiii?” She flew into the brambles. “Biitii!”

“Oh kay. W-Wait for me!” (Play “Bramble Blast” from Donkey Kong Country 2.)

Stage 29: Bramble Perplexion

Mission: Follow Celebi.

Arianna was amazed how much sunlight entered the brambles. The prickly thorns grew on stems of an elegant green tone that, along with the sun, complimented their sharpness. Arianna reached and tried to bend a few, but none budged under her psychic grab. She saw Celebi quite a ways ahead and ran forward, jumping up wooden planks that served a stairway up some thorns. At the top, she overlooked a vast chasm of thorns, looking around for where to go. A very thin vine dangled a few meters away, so Arianna took a breath and lightly gestured it over. Her plantbending was proven true, for it lightly swayed to her call, coming a little closer each time until she could jump and grab it. She gripped tight, almost expecting it to snap and give her a spiky death, but it stayed strong. She saw a foothold within close range to her right and shifted momentum until the vine was close enough.

She jumped off and walked up a stairway of planks sticking out of the brambles. They led to a small foothold with a tunnel cluttered with brambles. She couldn’t even crawl under them, so she focused every ounce of plantbending to move them aside. They were as heavy as Mom gave credit, but just when Arianna thought she might sprain herself, they shifted slightly. She had enough space to crawl, keeping extremely low to avoid getting pricked. “Ah!” A thorn scratched her right arm, she kept crawling and withstood the pain. Just as she made it out, her grass-green hair got stuck in some thorns, requiring forceful tugging until she pulled it out. In this new, open room, Beedrill fluttered from the ceiling and readied to stab their intruder. Arianna tried to communicate, but her thoughts didn’t reach, she ran around and hastily avoided their drills.
She ended up cornered against a bramble wall, and when a Beedrill came stinger-first, she dodged and got it stuck. She nimbly dodged when more stabbed at her, then when she tripped, on impulse, she swung her hand up and yanked down, pulling a thornless vine to whip the bees away. They recovered, but she controlled the vine and tied them, throwing against the brambles where their stingers got stuck. She looked at one of the corners to see a cluttering of Buttercoons, large butterflies where only the wings shed from their cocoons. She saw a nearby brambly tunnel sloping upward, but with no footholds, she summoned the winged beauties to land on different points of the tunnel and make a staircase. Their hard shells protected them as she stepped up, she apologized after she made it to the top.

Two handheld flower propellers were lodged in the brambles, and Arianna knew she’d need them to cross this narrow chasm of close brambles. She plucked them out, jumped, and let the flowers glide her. She moved and shifted momentum softly, trying to keep in the exact center to avoid being pricked. She flitted her way back to the vast area, where she could now float into a narrow tunnel, bending her legs up to be able to fit. She carefully landed on a safe plank below and followed the path to a smaller chasm area, where Vine Slimes, blue gooey slugs, slithered on vines, multiple ones on each vine. Arianna jumped to grab the nearest vine, keeping between the slugs. She swung to the next vine, and could climb to a higher level of it before a slug blocked her. She swung to another vine whose lower part was blocked by a slug, swung to one that was slightly farther, but could safely grab the bottom.

She climbed up and swung to a level of another vine above its slug. She swung to a point of the next vine between two very-close slugs. The next and last vine had a green slug high above, and the moment she grabbed it, the slug slid down quickly, so she instantly had to release to swing onto the wood stairway. Small bramble balls rolled down on either the left or right sides, forcing Ari to dodge to the other, spiking her rear in the process. She made it up top and went around the Bramble Blaster, finding herself facing another prickly chasm. A grappable ledge stretched across the bramble wall on her left, so she clutched tight and climbed across. A Snapdragon startled and almost made her fingers lose grip, so she politely told it to go back in. It did so, but tried to snap her an inch away from fully getting past, Arianna taking land on a safe floor.

A pink flower whose petals balled into a sealed sphere dangled from a fishing rod-like vine in the brambles. When Arianna held it by the rod, she felt water contained inside the flower, seeing a small, squat flower on the bramble floor below. She hurled the water flower at the smaller and caused a great long vine to twirl up into a tunnel in the ceiling corner. She grinded up this vine, or rather used her plantbending to stretch it further and carry her. The tunnel led into a wide passage with brambles below, and as the longer vine began slumping under her weight, Arianna shifted it left and right or hauled it higher as she went.

She used this maneuvering to avoid Beedrills that innocently buzzed by, as well as big bramble vines that suddenly stretched down. She was unable to keep her vine going any longer, steadily slumping toward the floor, until she realized a Butterplane, a huge butterfly with violet wings with patterns that appeared like a mural, was resting on the wall. She told it to come down, so she could gently jump onto its back. It flapped its wings fast, soaring into a great wide tunnel. Giant spider webs, patrolled by Ariados, blocked their way, so on Arianna’s command, the Butterplane blasted bullet-like pinchers. When the large spiders were defeated, the webs crumbled so they could pass, but it became harder to aim when Ariados were on far corners of the webs, almost hidden.

The Butterplane ended up caught in a web, so when the Ariados came to snack, Arianna told it to whirl its wings and slice it up. This became more frequent on following webs with two spiders, and the final web with three, until the Butterplane could finally rest on a safe ledge. Arianna smiled and patted the creature on the head in thanks before continuing. She went down a wooden stairway where Whiplashes popped out of walls to get her, she hurriedly ran down before they appeared, but
got scratched by a few. She was back in the first, vast area, overlooking the starting point from high above. A hanging bramble wall had wooden planks she could jump across and grab a hanging vine. This was the very same vine she grabbed at the beginning, but a Vine Slime blocked this higher route, and would’ve prevented her from climbing up at the beginning. But now she could climb up through the vertical tunnel, shifting position on the vine when Beedrill buzzed down. Before long, she could set foot on safe ground and enter the great, open room. (End song.)

Arianna caught her breath after the arduous journey and approached Celebi, who floated in the center. “Huff… I finally made it. And I got my share of cuts on the way.”

“Biii?” Celebi noticed the cuts of blue blood leaking from her purple skin. The spirit gently touched the cuts and they healed.

“Oh! Thank you, Celebi.”

“Bi, BIII!”

“So, um… will you teach me how to bend brambles?”

“Bi… biii.” Celebi focused her chi and had several brambles extend from the ceiling.

Arianna reached toward and tried to bend one. She squinted, clutched her fingers, felt it in her psychic grip, but the thorns wouldn’t budge. “Huff.” She slumped, feeling exhausted. “It’s no use… I’m just too soft, Celebi. I just now realized I have plantbending… but I really want to be stronger. How can I do that?”

“Biii…” Celebi thought to herself. “Bi?” She had an idea.

“…! AAAH!” Arianna hurriedly dodged when Celebi lashed a bramble, destroying that part of floor. Celebi had several under her control, sending them all to the alien, Arianna ran around the field and narrowly dodged them. She whipped around and clapped her hands, hoping to grab one, but they wouldn’t budge in her power. Celebi lashed another right in front and knocked Arianna to her rear, the girl backing away as a string of brambles stabbed through the floor. One of those popped out of the floor on her left, scratching her, she scrambled to her feet and tried running for the exit, but Celebi sealed it.

Arianna faced the spirit, whom showed no resent in her huge eyes. Arianna wiped some sweat off and stared firmly, ready to dodge another onslaught of brambles.

Philippines; Roxas Beach

Sunni stared at the horizon, small waves whooshing over the surface. The open sea made the world seem so empty. The sunny sky made it seem like there was nothing to worry about. But Sunni knew that better, if nothing else. Even the sad little display to her right. “Come on, Mister Fishyyy.” A little girl sat with a fishbowl between her legs. The little creature inside appeared very frail. “Eat iiiitt.” She dropped a single pellet in. It fell softly past the fish’s face, but in its attempt to show life-force and try to eat it, it missed. The fish was motionless again. “Come oooon.”

Sunni only stared with half-closed eyes. Half-conscious eyes. She stared at the motionless fish… the more she looked, her vision zoomed closer like binoculars. She saw its beady black eyes, lower-lip hanging open, the speck-size pellet among the pebbles. Every ounce of her sight, from her irises to the center of her pupils, narrowed on that pellet. Every ounce of sight shifted upward… and the pellet with it. It glowed with blue aura, floated softly. Just inches from the old fish’s mouth, it snapped, and ate. “Hahaha! Good, Mr. Fishy!”
Sunni smiled, happy to see her smile. She looked at the sea again. Its openness. If only her mind can be so open. If only she could be carefree. Just like her mom. …Just like her mom.

Sunni turned everything off in her mind. All her frustration, her anxiety. Let her mind wander. Light as air. Then… she was flying, flying miles away from Roxas’s shore, over the sea. Let herself be free, her imagination was in control now. She could do anything. “WHOA!” A sudden beam whooshed before her, and she fell into the sea. She resurfaced and angrily viewed her oppressors.

“This is her. The psychic woman’s daughter.” A squadron of agents in dark-gray suits with big red “R”s hovered with jetpacks. The beam came from one’s Gyarados. “The boss wanted her captured too, right? She shouldn’t be too hard.”

Sunni furrowed—but remembered herself. She must abandon her frustration and use imagination. So: she reached her right arm and pulled herself onto the faint blue step of psychic energy. The Team Rocket agents were baffled, Sunni smiled and waved her hands. She would keep her promise, treat her psychicbending with better respect, and it would give her its full power. “WHOOOOAA!” The agents and Gyarados were blown away—an entire harbor of psychic energy appeared in the middle of the sea. Buildings, platforms, barrels, cranes, her Psychic Chi took the shape of all of them. As she saw a fleet of Team Rocket helicopters coming her way, it was time to have fun. (Play Super Sonic’s theme from Sonic 3 & Knuckles.)

Stage 30: Makeshift Harbor

Mission: Just go crazy.

Sunni ran into an open wharf and Wall Jumped between two buildings, landing on the roof of the shorter one. Three agents flew down and tried to hit her with shock rods, so she blasted a Psycho Sphere and sent them flying, crossing the roof and swinging a dangling hook to another building. The parallel side had an opening above the wall, and to cross, Sunni raised some of the psychic-made drums below and formed a staircase, excitedly crossing. A swarm of Fearow swooped down to prey on Sunni’s face, but a simple psycho grasp could throw them away, then she glided over the sea between her and the next wharf. Rocket Agents tossed Pokéballs that released Blastoise and Golducks, the former of which curled in their shells and spun at Sunni, knocking her off her feet before they retreated. The Golducks hurried over and used Psyshock to stun her senseless, but when the Blastoise readied to blast her with Water Gun, Sunni, in her dizzied state, protected herself with a shield, warped behind the turtles, and slammed their heads against one-another with psychic.

Sunni whipped out her lightsaber, swiftly dodged the Golducks’ attacks, and sliced them before proceeding to the next wharf. No stairs led up to the opening, but a psychic rail and its wall went up and around. She found a psychic skateboard in one of the corners, skated about the wharf stylishly, jumped under the lowest rail point, and stylishly grinded up. She shifted direction on corners with no problem, and after leaping through the passage, she grinded and jumped a series of floating psychic rails, evading the Gyarados who blasted Hyper Beams. Sunni flipped off her skateboard and let it fall to the sea, resting on a small platform that overlooked a region of cranes.

Sunni used psychic to turn the closest crane towards her, and when she grabbed onto its hook, she made it whirl around and around, and it was up to her where she released and flew to. She flew to a platform that was farther from the others, drawing her lightsaber to defend from Skarmories’ Air Slashes. While blocking the other two, the third lunged at Sunni for a peck, but she bashed it against the head with her saber, leapt, and slammed it to the floor. The other two attacked her
together, she flipped up and hit one with a vertical spin-attack, then forcefully slashed the other’s head. Even though her laser sword didn’t pierce their steel bodies, it still hurt. Nothing else really over there but to beat those guys and increase her score. With that, she grabbed onto a nearby crane and swung back to the first one, from there swinging to a larger platform that was the intended route.

A crane was raising a huge rectangular platform with stacks of psychic-crates up and down into the water. When it was at Sunni’s level, she ran on and quickly climbed a tall stack to be safe when the platform submerged. She repeated this routine until she made it to the next lifted platform, which twirled around and around in its place. Sunni waited until she saw a trio of psychic-made pillars rise out of the water, jumping to the center. A psychic wall rose up with a gap on the left side, her current platforms threatened to sink, so she flew through the gap onto the next one. Four spiked platforms came up, but the farthest right one was flat, so Sunni floated to it. A single, ordinary platform appeared, a line of Rocket Agents flew in her path, Sunni blasted them away with psychic before floating over. A parallel set of snaky walls with spikes on either end emerged, so Sunni had to glide between them, maintaining a steady balance and staying clear of the spikes before setting foot on the platform. She could easily fly to the next pathway, but a Gyarados popped up out of the water and startled her out of this thought.

It was going to destroy Sunni’s platform in one blast, but as its mouth remained wide-open for a Hyper Beam, Sunni chucked a Psycho Sphere, clogged its throat, and watched both energies explode inside as the seasnake fell unconscious. She floated onto the new, long, straight walkway, with nothing to interfere except a herd of Tauros. Line after line of the bull Pokémon charged at Sunni, but she whipped a Psycho Shield in front of her to fling them away when they were inches from reaching. She kept this routine on her journey down this road, not one of the bulls struck the fast-thinking child. Once she was through, she arrived at a giant psychic-made ring-shaped floor surrounded by walls, a few platforms laying about, and a pool of ocean in the center. She expectantly waited for the obvious boss to show itself. (End song.)

And not a second too long did something emerge from a huge splash: Sunni thought it was a Tentacruel at first, except it was metallic with two figures inside the red domes on top. “Prepare for trouble, this stage is going too fast.”

“And make it double, I’m afraid it won’t last.”

“To protect the world from devastation.”

“To unite all peoples within our nation.”

“To denounce the evils of artificial wharfs.”

“To destroy it easily as little dwarfs.”

The red-haired woman emerged from her cockpit. “Jessie!”

Followed by the blue-haired man in the other. “James.”

“Team Rocket blasts off at the speed of sound.”

“Surrender now, or we’ll be sticking around.”

Meowth appeared from the small, center dome. “Meowth, that’s right!” (“Wooobuffet.”)

“That last one didn’t rhyme.” Sunni said, picking her nose. “You fail.”
“Get smart all you want, you twerp, it doesn’t change how we’ll capture you.” Jessie stated.

“Oh yeah, you guys captured my mom.” Sunni replied nonchalantly. “You wanna take me too, huh?”

“That’s right, so if youse wanna SEE her again, I suggest you play along.” Meowth said. (“Wooobbu-wah.”)

“Eh, she can take care of herself. But I don’t mind beating the crap outta you for fun.” :3

“We’ll see about dat! Get a load of our Tentabot!” Meowth switched on the mech’s stereos and the battle commenced. (Play “Double Trouble” from Pokémon.)

**Boss fight: Tentabot**

The robot swung its tentacles at the psychic girl, but Sunni easily dodged and batted them away with her lightsaber. She charged a Psycho Sphere and chucked it at Jessie’s cockpit, but it bounced off toward the sky like a rubber ball. “Did we forget to mention this robot’s armor bounces any and all psychic attacks?” Jessie asked. “Because that’s kind of important.” The robot opened its mouth and blasted acidic sludge that Sunni dodged, though it didn’t burn through the psychic floor, it made those spaces unstandable. Sunni ran around the ringed pathway and hid behind tall psychic-crates to shield from acid, but a swing of their tentacles sent the crates flying. Sunni dodged a tentacle and kept running, grabbing and throwing psychic-drums at the glass shields, but they bounced away as well.

*Bounces psychic, huh?* Sunni thought. *What if it couldn’t bounce?* She tried to grab the tentacles with psychic, but the chi dispersed upon touching. Sunni dodged another smash before focusing energy, spawning the first end of a huge psychic ring above her. She hastily dodged the tentacles, running around the path to create more of her ring. She blocked a tentacle with her saber before the loop was complete, the ring perfectly round and symmetrical, but she couldn’t call it complete before forming a vertical ring that intersected with both sides. The Tentabot was in the center of both rings, the agents looking confused. Sunni began to compress the rings, and the tightly-woven chi didn’t bounce off upon touching the robot. Team Rocket tried to shake it off, but the rings became so tight they couldn’t, and the robot’s head ended up falling against the floor. Sunni grabbed her saber, her joyous psychotic grin contrasting with the agents’ panicked faces, as she ran up to slice the glass protecting Jessie’s cockpit, afterwards knocking the woman dizzy.

The robot recovered and broke through part of the wall as it flew across the sea. A psychic-skateboard flew out among the debris, and when Sunni saw the (convenient) floating rails, she boarded on and began grinding and jumping each one. The Tentabot drew farther from Sunni and fired a stream of water in attempt to blow her off the rails, but Sunni could jump high and land perfectly on a rail, despite how scattered they were, as if she imagined this whole harbor and knows it front-to-left. In fact, she does, so there was no hassle in getting close to the Tentabot.

“Weezing, Smokescreen!” James summoned his Pokémon.

“*Weez.*” The area was shrouded with smog before Sunni had a chance at striking the robot. However, she felt the Tentabot surfing away with Weezing with it, so Sunni stayed within the cloud, searched for the glowing blue rails in the gas, and skated to them. She sensed the robot growing closer, and when her gut instinct told her, she leapt and landed on its head, startling James as she cut open his glass and had him stunned senseless. The robot suddenly shook her off to a safe platform on the surface, the Smokescreen going away.
“Smarmy little twerp, we’ll handle you ourselves!” Meowth declared. (“Wooobbuffet.”) He controlled the robot himself and slammed a tentacle at Sunni’s platform, but she jumped to another and saw several small bits of floating psychic-debris on the water. The Tentabot maneuvered away and blasted Water Guns as Sunni jumped the artificial junk to get closer. After jumping a group of drums, she used psychic to make all the debris fly and chuck it rampantly at the Tentabot. They all bounced away, but so much debris confused Meowth before long, and- “Daaah!” he was surprised when Sunni warped right before his cockpit. He pulled a lever and lashed a tentacle, but Sunni warped and broke Meowth’s own glass. “Darn it!"

“I’m down here!” Sunni cheered, warping to the robot’s bottom. Meowth directed the tentacle to strike there, but Sunni warped and the tentacle pierced a hole. “No, up!” She was on the very top, a tentacle swung, she warped, pierced a hole. “Gotchor back!” On the robot’s backside, another easy trick as the tentacle broke a hole. Sunni warped a few meters behind and said, “Who wants to see some fireworks!” Sunni formed a little tiny Psycho Sphere in her fingertips and flicked it into the back hole. Once it was far inside, she smirked and stretched her fingers apart, expanding the sphere.

“Uuuuh… is it morning already?” Jessie moaned, she and James recovering.

“Meowth, did we catch her?” the blue-haired asked.

“No, but you’re just in time for that part of the episode.” Meowth said with disbelief.

“Woooobbuffet!”

The Tentabot was sparking as the Psycho Sphere grew larger, and when Sunni had enough build-up, she clamped her hands and let the structure explode. “Looks like Team Rocket’s blasting off ag-!” Unfortunately, the trio was saved in Sunni’s psychic grasp before they could live up to their name.

“Yeah, heeeeeey, sorry about that.” Sunni lied on her front on a floating psychic platform, her feet up in the air as she smiled innocently. “I’ll let you get back to that, couple-a things I wanna ask you. 1) Who’s your boss, 2) what’s your deal with me and my mom, and also, what are the Twenty Keys?” (End song.)

Harnita; Dunfree House

A pretty white flower danced a silly jiggle under rain from Nova’s watering can. She thought it before, she’ll think it again how plants can have so much personality. How they could dance when they’re happy, or get flat-out violent when they’re mad. “Hello, Mother.”

“Huuuu!” Nova spoke too soon. Her daughter had come home with cuts and thorns all over her body.

“I’m back from the Bramble Forest.” she said with a casual smile. “I brought some seeds.” She held bramble seeds in her hands, some of them already sprouts. “Celebi was an excellent teacher.”

“Biii, BIII!”

Arianna knelt down, dug open a small hole with her fingers, and put seeds inside. “I’ll carry some of them with me. They might help.”

“Y-Yes… let’s get some medicine.”

After a long, arduous process of plucking the thorns out of her skin, rubbing her wounds with
medicine, and changed her clothes, Arianna and Nova went to the living room where Cosmo was watching TV. “Mother, I did it, though… I bent the brambles!” she spoke excitedly. “I actually feel… a little stronger now. I feel like I can do anything I set my mind to!”

“That’s very great, Dear.”

“Hey Nova, check out who’s on TV.” Cosmo said.

A commercial was playing, and both girls recognized the old woman with bluish-white hair. “Hello, dearies. This is Mom, from Mom’s Friendly Robot Company.” She spoke with her warmhearted tone. “Do excuse any rumors you may have heard about my acquaintanceship with Emperor Tachyon. I come to you today with a very special guest. I’d like everyone to meet my colleague, Ted Wassanasong of Planet Earth. Knock ‘em dead, Ted.” She said with her smug tone before walking offscreen.

“Thank you, Mom. Ahem, female and male aliens, do not be deterred because I am a man from a distant galaxy. I am much like you, a simple, erm, sentient being whom cares for wholesome family fun. And what bonds a family better than golfing? At Ted’s Golfing Galaxy, we work tirelessly to make golfing both a fun and exciting experience.” The TV depicted images of a golf course through a volcano, where kids ran screaming after fireballs hit their rear; a course through an aquarium, underwater as sharks chased the customers; and a course through a maze, where some yellow creature ate the ball, made him super-charged, and allowed him to eat a bunch of ghosts. “But today, we bring you a course like no other, one that will be, to put it simply, out of your respective worlds. Behold.”

The TV showed an image of a glowing purple celestial body. “Hey, that’s the Violet Dwarf Star.” Arianna pointed. “Up in—”

“The Violet Dwarf System has been selected as the perfect sight for our newest attraction, ‘Golfing in the Stars.’ The only problem is that this star, along with many annoying asteroids, clutter this system. We plan to have it all blown away to make room to design our course, but such an action is not cheap. Please: support Ted’s Golfing Galaxy by calling 1-800, um, whatever these weird alien numbers are, and donating cash; which I also do not know the pronunciation, to; to help us afford ammunition and building supplies! Ahem, now back to your regularly scheduled program.”

“They’re going to blow up the Violet Dwarf System? No, they can’t do that!” Arianna cried. “Those asteroids have so many natural habitats. It’s a wonderful place!”

“It is majestic.” Nova spoke regretfully. “We’ve been there a few times… it’s like being in a dream world. What will you do.”

Arianna exchanged a glance with Celebi. She looked at the ceiling with a passionate aura, “I’m going to confront Ted and ask him to stop this. And if he says ‘no’, then I’ll… MAKE him stop this. I’m not going stand around like a helpless flower anymore. I’m a Harnitan-Pumparian and it’s time I started acting like one.”

“Biii, biiii!” Celebi shared her fighting spirit.

“Hm hm hm!” Nova laughed. “Just don’t turn into Viridi, Arianna.”

“Hmmhmhm! I want to be hard-shelled, not end up in the nuthouse.”

Texas; Cooper Works

She was on a stage with a blue curtain, raising a golden trophy as thousands cheered for her.
had won the award for Biggest Brain in the Universe. Greater than Einstein, Copernicus, Gerald Robotnik, and every scientist before her. She would lead the future of science, the next generation. “Huhuhu! I would like to thank the academies for combining together since not one school can teach me! I’d like to thank the unintelligent people for giving us a reason for existence, and I am glad to increase sales of big square glasses everywhere! And best of all… I’m thankful of being the first female scientist… to land the hottest guy on the planet!! I’n’t that right, Mike?”

“Sure is, Em.” Mike Strongarm ran up onstage and took his friend’s hands. “I’ll be happy to perform the reproductive cycle with you as soon as I’m legally able to.” And so, their lips locked in a heartfelt kiss.

“Hu-u-u-u-u-u-u.” Emily was strapped to a metal bed, wearing a headband with small wires. Her face was red, in deepest fantasy. “Hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu.”

Mojo Jojo viewed Emily through a window in the next room, observing her brainwaves on a monitor. Sheldon Cooper walked in with a tray of two cups of cocoa. “I have returned with your hot beverages,” he said with a casual smile, “one Criollo and Forastero-type; I couldn’t decide which of the three main types of beans to use, I had considered Trinitario, which is a hybrid between the previous two, but I surmised, if you’re only partial to one type, you may choose.”

“NO.” Mojo refuted. “My brain is developing by the day, I must only eat healthy organic matter, cocoa is a form of chocolate, which decreases brain cells while increasing body fat, so I will not take part in the consumption of such—”

“I’ll just leave it over here.” Sheldon carried the other cup to a table where he placed it in a small metal box. “So what’s the status on Ms. Garley’s brainwaves, I must say I’m anxious. I’d rest better knowing my scanner found a decent challenge—even though it’s already scanned me without conflict.”

“Oh, her mind is very expansive. And what remarkable patterns. This is the very kind Specter desires for his Pipo Helmets. After we download the data from these waves to the helmets, our apes will be unstoppable, because Emily’s mind is so expansive, which is what is desired for the Pipo Helmets! It’s unfortunate that Specter is away in Solana Galaxy, but once he returns, he’ll be delighted to hear that we have found the desired brainwaves for the Pipo Helmets, of which Specter is the—”

“Yes, yes. Ehm, point of inquiry,” Sheldon said while putting on a gas mask, “what is your favorite form of toxic gas?”

“Everyone knows that tungsten hexafluoride is the most deadly and volatile form of gas, because it kills slowly, and lets victims SUFFER along the way.”

“That’s nice.” Sheldon grabbed the box containing cocoa and opened a hatch in the wall, revealing a red button. “I’m more fond of sleeping gas, all the fun of gassing without leaving a big mess. …” Mojo was merely fixated on the brainwaves. Sheldon slammed the button without hesitating and quickly bolted into Emily’s room.

A soft pink gas slowly began to surround Mojo. “Sniff sniff. Is this fresh spring flower scent?” Mojo asked, looking up curiously. “This is not a gas I am familiar with. …” He fell into a deep slumber.

Sheldon hurriedly unlatched Emily and pulled off the headband. “Come on Emily, time to wake up!” he said quickly, shaking her.
“Mmmmnn, but all the bearded scientists didn’t kiss my brain.”

“Those things are infested with fleas anyway, time to go!” After Emily was sort of awake, Sheldon kicked open a secret passage and pulled her down a metal slide. “WHEEEeeeee- sorry, my Mario 64 urges were acting up.”

Emily finally returned to her senses and realized she was on a most peculiar platform with several floors, dangling by a support attached to a rail on the ceiling. It was one of many such platforms connected together with a great, snaking tunnel that stretched who-knows-where; like these were giant seats of an upside-down roller-coaster. Sheldon was hastily typing into a terminal. “Mr. Cooper, what is this?”

“A little something called the Velocity Coaster, uh, made for quick getaways, you see. Once it’s activated, it’ll carry us straight to the ocean down this tunnel. Our own velocity should increase along with it, but I wouldn’t recommend jumping too often. And 3, 2, 1.” Sheldon pulled a lever. (Play “Terminal Velocity” from Sonic Colors.)

Despite the platforms’ structure and size, they began to build up speed as they progressed along the tunnel. “Eh, a small concern, I had only designed for the front car to make it to the end while the others detach – a safety measure, if you will, we had better move quickly. Hu- haaaah!” He frightfully scampered up the stairs of this platform. After her delirious mind grasped the situation, she followed.

**Stage 24: Cooper Works, Act 2**

**Mission: Escape the laboratory.**

Emily rushed up the thin stairs that altered back-and-forth – hold on, her R.A.D.A.R. detected a monkey below, she found it hiding in a box behind the stairs and quickly netted it, then returned up the stairs, climbed a pole to the platform’s top, and found Dr. Cooper jumping impatiently. Emily saw a switch on the next platform, hitting it with her slingshot to make a bridge connect, and Sheldon ran across first. Capuchin monkeys flew on jetpacks alongside this car, at a speed that matched the whooshing coaster, blasting laser guns that Emily dodged as she jumped over the edge, netted one, and returned with her Sky Flyer; amazing how she still kept the momentum to do so. The other ape was over the platform, so she could safely jump and net it before jumping down into the car after Sheldon, landing on a floor and watching him clamber across a zigzaggy balance beam. Emily clambered after him, several parts of the beam collapsed as she went, and the previous car was disconnected as she set foot on the next.

This car had a short shaft going up, which Sheldon used dual Sky Flyers to go and exit an opening. Emily’s didn’t go that high, so she switched for M.A.G.N.E.B.O.O.T.S. and stomped up a metal path, which looped out the exit and twisted along the left of the next car. She fought the wind against her face and stomped closer, finding monkeys clutching tight to the car’s side, and netted them before they blew off. The path led to the front of the car where it shifted toward the roof, Emily watching Sheldon get into a catapult and propel himself to the next. Emily scrambled in the device, flung over the gap, bounced a trampoline on the next car’s roof, over the next gap (caught a monkey clinging onto the ceiling rail), and landed on a path leading into the following car.

Shelbots fired mini missiles that Emily easily batted away. The girl found a turnable cog in the entrance of the next car and used her Stun Club to spin it quickly until it stopped. It begun to turn back, so she threw on the Super Hoop and ran up the sloped path that led out of an opening, down another slope within the gap, and before the door on the left side of the new car closed, Emily
crouched and slid underneath. Sheldon waited expectantly again, for the path was closed by 3 switches, which immediately switched back if Emily hit them with her slingshot. So Emily used three homing pellets and struck all three, letting the hatch fall open.

They both hurried forward, and Emily was forced to use M.A.G.N.E.B.O.O.T.S. on a metal path that twisted upside-down and traveled along the bottom of the car. The act was heart-racing, seeing the tunnel’s floor whooshing above her vision, and kept a tight hold on her glasses and her shoes in fear of her skull cracking open and scraping a long trail of blood should she fall. She was thankful to be right-side-up in the next and let her blood recalibrate. She saw Sheldon put on a scuba suit and dive into a pipe, so Emily followed him using the Water Net to swim. They followed a pipe maze of sorts where monkeys also swam, so Emily encountered them on the way to net, then hurriedly maneuvered to the end before the pipes disconnected from the previous car.

They landed on a straight path to the front and final car, but as they scurried along, panels were flying off, leaving only the beams underneath to connect the cars. Sheldon was already ahead, but Emily used her Sky Flyer to go across, then Super Hooped quickly as panels flew off by the second. Sheldon frantically gestured her into the car, rectangular-shaped, larger and more sturdy than the others, and when the girl finally dashed in, Sheldon slammed the door and let it disconnect from the second-to-last car. (End song.)

They waited for 3 seconds until- “WHEEEEEE!” the car flew off the rail’s end, out into open sky before it splashed into the sea. The cube submerged as propellers appeared on its back corners, headlights in the front, and began swimming through the ocean. “Well, not the swiftest getaway I could’ve performed, but it’s not a contest, so… who’s judging.”

Emily adjusted her glasses and took much-needed breaths. “Mr. Cooper, can I ask what the heck that was all about?”

“Of course you can, and ignoring your grammatical error, you may as well. The truth is, Specter invaded my laboratory some weeks ago, wishing to use my equipment to host more crude and hypnotic television programs. Hm, but they won’t be able to now, because I input the program to shut down every piece of technology in my lab, and the only way to turn it back on again is to enter a password only I know.” Sheldon wore a giddy smile that clearly said he was proud of himself.

“Is it ‘Getyourhandsoffmystuffyoudamndirtyapes’? No spaces?”

Sheldon’s smile faltered. “…Maybe. Moving on, Specter instructed me to capture the Garley child if she came by, and I had considered doing it, before I found her brainwaves to be far too precious and important to, entrust in the hands of simple primates. Plus, you were traveling with my niece and nephew, and Mother always said that ‘family comes before haggling with amphibians.’”

“But where are Gary and Sarah?”

“We’re up here.” Gary’s voice called from an upper floor. He and Sarah were watching a nature channel on a small TV. “After we fell in the trapdoor, we ended up in this hallway where a Sheldon recording guided us to this train.”

“His instructions were both informative and unnecessarily detailed.” Sarah sighed.

“Hey, mis-instruct the color for one door and you end up down the garbage chute.” Sheldon informed. “Sigh… I normally wouldn’t let my lab be taken so easily, but… before confronting me, Specter’s crew captured a very dear friend of mine. Dr. Amy Farah Fowler.” Sheldon showed Emily the screensaver on his laptop. It had an image of a black-haired woman with glasses and a
knitted blue sweater, grinning ecstatically with a silly posture. She wasn’t slim or, “sexy” in a matter of speaking.

“Awww. She’s your girlfriend?” Em asked.

“No, she’s my friend who is also a girl.”

“True, but I recall during our game, I stated that at some point in your life, you found the idea of love to be inane. I wasn’t saying you still did.” Emily smirked.

“I admit that I find her a very fascinating creature, much like I find you fascinating, but in a different sense that relates to our respective ages.”

“Right, because you wanna have intercourse with this one.”

“Kn- nn- I-…”

“Hu hu hu!” Emily took delight in seeing the egomaniac falter. “Don’t worry, Dr. Cooper, I’ll help you save her. Maybe they took her to Specter’s hideout.”

“I had concluded that, the problem is locating it. However, if we work to round up all of these apes, I am positive we can uncover some leads. Until then, we must make the best of our time inside this sub, and it so happens I have a perfect way to use our time. Are you familiar with the three forms of Haki?”

“Sure I am! There’s Observation Haki, Armament, and Conqueror’s!” Emily counted 3 fingers.

“Yes, and while the physical and mental necessities for the latter two are before me, the art of Observation is within my level. Miss Garley, during our undersea voyage, I would like to teach you such a Haki.”

“Hmmmm. It does sound like something I could do. Yeah, it would totally be helpful! Okay, Dr. Cooper, teach me Observation! I’ll see everything clearer than a microscope!”

“Brilliant! …But if you will excuse me, my natural seasickness is acting up. I’m going to vomit.” He dashed into the bathroom.

“…Hulp!” Emily’s cheeks puffed. “Me, too!” She ran into the other.

**Solana Galaxy**

After the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. soared out of Symphonia’s atmosphere, the wondrous colorful planet was shrouded in the matter storm. “So every time you go to sleep, you end up in the Dream World where some bug creature tells you all about this whole quest?” Aurora recapped.

“Yeh, and it’s gettin’ annoying.” Sheila said angrily. “He’s got a silly book that’s ruinin’ all the good stuff for me. I have a boss in me next level, but now I won’t even be surprised.”

“If that book says everything, we could just get all the answers we need right from him.” Mason informed.

“Mate, I ain’t gonna disrespect this series with cruddy Wikia spoilers, I’m seein’ this adventure the way I’m supposed ta.”

“If that’s how the gods wanted it. But if it helps our quest, maybe you should go to sleep more.”
“NO WAY, man! I’m in SPACE, I gotta see what beauties the stars have! Hey, I wonder if Chimney will let me drive the train.” She curiously ran to the front.

Aeincha was seated on April’s shoulder as the latter faced a window and painted on a canvas. She wasn’t painting blackness and stars, but Don Quixote Sugar standing proudly on a stage, colorful notes flying overhead, Chernabog’s despairing form in the background, La Melody contestants below her, and Goddess Meloetta in the sky above. “It’s beautiful, April.” Aein smiled. “I’m sad Sugar didn’t wanna come with us, but I’m glad she’s happy.”

“She’s in her natural habitat.” April smiled. “I would feel the same if there was some kind of art-themed planet. Wouldn’t you, Mary? …”

Her cousin was on the seat on her left, staring out the window. April noticed her reflection bore a sad look. “April… we almost died in that place.”

“What? Because of Chernabog?”

“Yes, because of Chernabog. April, why do you go on these missions?” Mary faced her cousin. “Aren’t you afraid of being killed by things like that?”

“That wasn’t really as bad as having our particles destroyed from existence.” Chris commented.

“Or being converted to chlorophyll.” Artie followed.

“Try shrinking to my size and not be scared of dying.” Aeincha grinned.

“Then why do you do all these things?!”

“Because then we would’ve been turned to chlorophyll, our particles would’ve been obliterated, and the whole planet would’ve turned into candy.” Dillon replied, laying in the seat across from her. “That’s what being an operative’s all about, Mary. No matter who they are or what it is, there’s gonna be stupid adults doing stupid things, and it’s our job to stop them. Thanks to operatives like your cousin, kids like you still have a place to draw with crayon and be happy.”

“It’s not really as dangerous as you’d think, either.” April informed. “If you underwent training, Mary, you could be just like-”

“OIIII! May I remind our new Ryokaku-chan to STAY OUTTA our sector if she ever joins!” Chimney screamed via PA. (“Gyom-gyom!”)

“Blimey, you sound like Dillon when ‘e didn’t want Carol.” Sheila remarked, in the cockpit with Chimney.

“’ey, I love my on’nanokos, but she tops annoying. So you wanna pilot the Rocket-san, huh?” She raised a brow. “She is glamorous, ain’t she?”

“Yeh, she’s right fine, alright.” Sheila rubbed her chin and viewed under the controls. “Really the tops, eh?”

“Oh, she’s MORE than just ‘tops’, she’s top of the UNIVERSE!” Chimney declared. “I challenge you to find any train that REMOTELY challenges this baby!”

Sheila peeped through the windshield and indeed tried to find something that matched Chimney’s description. Her eyes stretched wide and wondrous at the terrific mass that shadowed their train. “Whadabout THAT?”
Chimney looked up—her soul was crushed—the other operatives felt the shadow and fell speechless when they looked up. One starship flew overhead, then another, until they realized they were all linked like a train. The biggest train to ever sail the stars, aptly named the ‘Star Train’ on its side. The front cart’s face was designed like a giant robot’s head with a gaping mouth, glowing red eyes, and a towering green dome with skyscrapers. “That’s a big train,” said Harry.

A fire burned in Chimney’s eyes. Her throne was threatened. She could not have that. “My train rules the railway.”

McKenzie Household

Angie McKenzie lay solemnly on the couch, basking in the breeze of the air conditioner. She was a woman of nature and all, but not so much to torture her family with scorching summer air. “Mom?” Her seven-year-old son, Anthony approached her. “I gotta ask you something.”

“Sure, Anthony. Anything.” She smiled.

“Um… I…” Anthony spoke passionately, “I wanna become the greatest earthbender ASAP!”

“You’ve been following through with Chiri’s lessons, right?”

“Yeah, I got Seismic Sense down, but I wanna do more. Cheren’s counting on us, so I wanna help him, too! I wanna new way to train, and um, could you please not tell Michelle?” he whispered.

“Are you really up for it? No matter how hard it may be?”

“Yeah, I’m up! ‘Cause the Apocalypse is just gonna be even harder, right?”

“Well, it just so happens that one of my former operative colleagues is an earthbender, too. Numbuh 30c from Sector H. I found out after my friends and I visited Groudon Volcano back then. He and his son, Tom are lavabenders.”

“Lavabenders? Can I learn lavabending, Mom??”

“Hmhmhm, you’re much too gentle for that, son.” She said happily. “But it would be pretty fun if you and Tom trained together. He’s a lot older than you, but you know teachers learn more from their students!”

“Alright, then. I’ll go down to Sector H and see what this Tom kid’s about!”

“I’ll call Kenny and let him know you’re coming.” Angie said, reaching for a phone. “But if he gets too hard on you, there’s no shame in coming back.”

“Peh. I’ll take a lavabender over Michelle, any day!” Anthony eagerly headed up to the treehouse.

The sky

Fybi had long awaited summer, when the golden sun was at its brightest. Flying above the clouds in this hot summer air, she felt even closer to home. Skypia. There were days she dreamed of returning home, the kingdom uplifted from the earth, drifting the endless breeze, freedom. But she’s grown far too attached to earthly tethers, where Anthony and her friends walked. But she was always free to spread her wings in the sky whenever she wanted to.

Fybi glided to a nearby cliff and set foot. The same cliff she brought Anthony on their first flight together. She pulled out a bottle of Conache Pumpkin Juice and drank, tranquilly fluttering toward
the forest, letting her mind wander unfocused while she went forward. She put her juice away and readied to take flight again. “Hello, ANGEL.”

Fybi gasped and fell to the ground out of fright. Phosphora, the lightning woman that was Viridi’s servant, leaned against a tree with her arms folded, psychotically glaring at Fybi. “I escaped from prison and thought I’d pay you a visit.” she said with a twisted grin. “Wanted to pay you back for humiliating me. Say good-bye to your WINGS.”

She approached Fybi slowly with her fingers clenched. Fybi couldn’t feel the sense to uplift her body from the ground, her heart heavy with fear, her skin tingling from the Lightning Chi this woman possessed. She felt herself backed against a tree, shutting her eyes from the lady’s revenge.

“…Kidding.”

Fybi opened her eyes. Phosphora stared at her with a halfhearted smile. She slowly turned around and walked away from the angel. She stopped a few meters off and said without facing her, “Please forgive me. I got carried away.” She kept walking, and Fybi watched until she was gone beyond the bushes.

… “Ring, ring.” Her wristwatch beeped, Anthony’s face on it. “Hey Fybi, we got a mission, come on!” Fybi looked once more to the empty space between the trees and took flight.

Sheldon is no traitor. ;3 Pretty good start here, should be able to cover a few story arcs. Ted Wassanasong is from King of the Hill. So here’s the beginning of Lightning Saga, stay tuned for more. La’ers.

You know, as far as chapter count, sagas in this story are shorter than in Firstborn, but longer by word length. Like, each saga in this story is 100,000 words long, about. So yeah, this one’s longer. :P

Chapter 22: Fallen Angel

Hawaii

Fybi piloted the S.C.A.M.P.E.R. as the team of five were closing in on the volcano island, seeing Sector H’s treehouse atop a small hut. “I heard my cousin say how Tom Taylor was ‘hot’, but I didn’t think he meant he was a lavabender.” Aranea commented.

“No wonder the teenagers wanted him so badly.” Sally followed.

“Okay, someone tell me why I’m just hearing of this Tom guy?” Anthony said angrily.

“Well, Tom was one of the Kids Next Door’s strongest operatives when he was active, and most popular. He removed his booger from the Code Module before turning 13, but he was good enough to get thrown in the books. Hmhm, our cousin Marcus told us.” Sally smiled sheepishly.

“Yeah, bu’ we didn’t know much about ‘im, except the KNN girl had a crush.” Harvey said. “He should be about 14 now.”

“Ah, man. I just accepted lessons from a teenager?”

“Tough break, man.” Nea remarked. “Hey Fybi, I forgot to ask, where were you before you came back?”

“Ay, nowhere grand. Embracing the wonder of yonder sun and sky.” Fybi said half-truthfully. “Sector H’s home draws nearer. The ground doth await us.”

The S.C.A.M.P.E.R. landed a few meters away from the hut, where the kids met a very red-skinned man in a palmtree shirt, brown fur-boots, a pointed hat with a fluff ball on its tip, and goggles. “Hey-hey, if it isn’t a group of rad youngsters in one of their flying machines.” The former 30c greeted. “You must be Angie’s kid, welcome to the Taylor Zone.”

“Hello, Mr. Taylor.” Sally bowed. “Are you really a lavabender?”

“Yeah, took me awhile to figure out, didn’t tell too many buds at the time since benders were, uh, ‘unreal’ back in the day, but it’s all cool now, we’re the hottest dudes on the island. Apparently our whole family line was lavabenders, datin’ back to the Sovites way back when, ‘course all we have are history books to tell us that. Anyway, ‘f you’re lookin’ for my son, he’s up in the jungle, in his
little zone, just follow the heat waves and you’ll find ‘im.”

“Alert! Clouds of red and dark doth drift from jungle depths!” Fybi flew several meters above and pointed across the jungle. “Methinks the son he speaks of be this way.” She flew ahead.

The air grew hotter the closer they journeyed up the jungle hill, and became barely breathable when they arrived at an area where only blackened remains of trees and shrubs were existent. A tan-skinned boy of 14, wearing a blue shirt with mini volcano designs, panted heavily on a small platform in the middle of a pool of lava. “Umm… Tom Tayl-AAAAH!” The minute Anthony spoke, Tom punched the ground and forced all the lava to blast up like a geyser, directing to the center where he stood. His form was hidden behind the lava, which spun like a tornado around his center, the kids holding their hearts for fear of his life.

Several long streams of lava flew around the sides of the field, solidifying into stone pillars. Tom was unveiled as he thrusted his fists toward each pillar, breaking stone tiki designs into them. With that, he stomped lightly, emerged a stone lounge chair, and relaxed, drinking juice from a small coconut. “Really breaks a sweat, huh kids?”

The five exchanged glances and approached him across the soft, sooted ground. “Are you, um… Mr. Taylor’s son?” Anthony asked. “Who used to be an operative?”

“Yeah, that’s me.” The tan teen replied, kicking back with one leg over the other. The undersides of his feet were scorched red as though they’ve stood in the sun 24/7. “Name’s Tom, Tom Taylor. People say I’m the best earthbender around these parts, and yeah, I’m pretty great, but I owe it all to my trainer.”

“Was it your dad?” Sally asked.

“HELL NO!” screamed an unfamiliar, unseen voice. “He learned it from ME!”

And they saw him: a Minish man with a very muscular build, huge pointed ears, and black stone armor, looked mighty enough to rip a diamond in half with his bare hands.

He looked like such an adorable, tiny dot to the young ones’ eyes. “THAT GUY’S your trainer?” Anthony proclaimed. “What a SHRIMP!”

“Hey, DON’T call the G-Man a shrimp!” thundered Taylor, sitting up. “Gedra’s got bigger bones than ANY o’ you wimps, and thanks to him my bones are in tip-top-” He couldn’t finish that statement as Taylor was forced off his seat, onto his front.

“DID I SAY you could lounge back you lazy sloth?” the tiny thunder-voiced Minish proclaimed. “GIVE ME TWO-HUNDRED!” He stomped the ground and propelled three round rocks onto Taylor’s back.

“YES SIR!” So the teen began pushing up and down, sweat quickly populating his fiery skin.

Gedra decided to hop up and relax on Taylor’s neck. “So what can we do you runts for?”

The kids exchanged glances before Anthony spoke up. “Well, uh… My name’s Anthony, and I wanna work on my earthbending, so my mom told me to come here.”

“Awwww cute kid, still listens to his mommy.” scoffed Gedra.

Anthony shook, “Look, are you gonna TRAIN me or not?”
“Hey, I deal with rocks, not giant brat droppings.”

“NOT THAT KINDA TRAINING!!” His friends laughed at his outburst.

“Look kid, love to help, but training this big twerp’s become enough of a chore.” He gestured his thumb at Taylor’s head. “And he still can’t even chew a pebble without getting toothache. … Maybe he can teach you, you’d probably relate.” He smirked.

“Yeah, I’ll teach the runt.” Taylor agreed. “Just lemme finish these ‘ups.”

143 push-ups later…

“Now I’m all fired up.” Taylor stood up and stretched. “Alright kid, let’s get started. Chuck the hardest rock you can at me.”

His friends stepped back as Anthony fixed his feet firmly in the soil. With a forceful stomp, a rock came out, which Anthony kicked at Taylor, but it smashed on his chest and didn’t budge him. “Is that all?! Man, you must have CRYSTAL for bones!”

“Well MAYBE if we were training on ground that DIDN’T just evolve from lava!”

“Hey, the quality of the rock don’t matter, it’s the man, or kid, who breaks it. What you gotta understand about bending, is that the bender OWNS their element. SHAPES it. A waterbender can turn liquid into ice or steam, a firebender can make fire into air or lightning, a spacebender can make us into pixels or strings. So why can’t we, earthbenders, make our rocks as hot or cold as we want!” He picked up a hand-size rock, hovered it, and morphed it into lava, which he threw at the ground before Anthony, who jumped back in fright. “I don’t expect you to lavabend, but if you plan to succeed, you gotta learn to take heat. The lavabending is just an advanced form of that analogy, that’s why MY family’s able to do it.” With a whoosh of his arms, the lava solidified.

Anthony sighed and walked onto that spot, feeling a minor sizzle under his feet. “Alright, then. Give me the hottest heat you got. Ah’ll send you rocks so solid, you’ll think they’re diamonds.”

“Hur hur he. The day I meet an earthbender who can bend diamonds… I’ll worship his ground.” Gedra snickered.

“Lucky Gedra ain’t the one training you, kid.” Tom smirked. “Then you’ll be dead.” He thrusted his hand at the ground, squeezed, and twisted, morphing the entire field into lava again. Anthony frightfully scrambled back, but he ended up on a platform that sank into a magma whirlpool, in which Tom’s lounge rested on the center pillar several feet above him. “Your first test will be to shift that platform back to the top, while avoiding the geysers I’ll squirt out to you. Good luck, brat.”

His rock slowly drifting toward the center, Anthony stood as firmly as he could and thrust his arms forward, pouring all his strength in making the foothold float up the sloped magma. His feet were burning from the transferred heat, his clothes grew sticky from the sweat. But for the sake of helping Cheren save the world, using his power to help everyone, he would fight the heat.

The Sector W team stared with hopeless disbelief. “Well, it was nice knowing him.” Sally said.

“Might as well go to the snackbar.” Nea said, heading off.

“Sweet!” agreed Harvey, joining.

“Ay, I canst not wait for Hawaii’s exotic burgers to reach mine tongue!” proclaimed Fybi with joy.
**Solana; Star Train**

The greatest and largest train in the universe soared across Solana this very moment. It was here where the masterminds who will create the New Universe have gathered, to discuss only a small portion of their ultimate plan. The interaction was enticing.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Nefarious yelled at the Program in the monitor.

“What’re you doing?!” XANA yelled back, his face glitching to King Candy, then back to his own.

“No, what ARE ya doin’?!”

“What are you doing?!”

“NO, what AAAARE ya doin’?!”

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING!!”

“If I may ask,” Lawrence spoke up, “what are you two doing?”

XANA and Nefarious exchanged glances and replied, “We’ve always wanted to do that.” Lawrence sweatdropped.

“Stop acting like fools, the both of you.” Giovanni ordered, petting his Persian. “You wouldn’t have lost those twerps if you acted a little more competent. Lesser Lord Gnik orders us to collaborate if we’re to have any hope of finding the Lights or the Firstborn.”

“Lord Gnik’s orders make little sense.” Specter replied with his (modified) calm voice. “He told us specifically that the Lights could only awaken after finding their Poneglyphs, which can only result from a certain ‘journey’ they must take. If it’s really destiny, wouldn’t holding them captive defeat the purpose?”

“Perhaps it was destiny that we come to capture them.” Mr. Dark conjectured, rubbing the Protoon with his finger. “In his defense, our efforts were not fruitless. One of the prisoners I have captured in the Dream World talks about one of the children that have gone to Symphonia. Even though we know who the Lights are, the specific ‘quests’ they must take are unclear to us. This way, we are steadily finding out.”

“Then it’s up to us to work Phase 2, right?” Plankton asked from his little fishbowl. “Turning them to evil so as to manipulate them to create the New World in our design!”

“Yes, and it will be a glorious New World!” proclaimed Nefarious. “Where good will never triumph over evil! Our own real live Dream World! We will never have a chance like this, so we must seize it or die trying!”

“Yes, perhaps. But don’t you believe it’s a little too… simple?” Giovanni queried.

“What do you mean?” Specter asked.

“Yes, this Ragaj man saved us, he promised us glory for this mission. Yet, we know little about him. He never even shows us his face. But out of nowhere, he tells us some inevitable cataclysm is coming, but it can easily be avoided if we find these twenty ‘people’ to open an alternate universe, where we can design the very world we wanted? Don’t you find it a little straightforward?”
“The cataclysm is real.” XANA reminded. “The Zoni in this world confirm that. I still don’t see why Ragaj wanted me to watch this Vanellope girl. What possible thing could SHE do in this Cyberspace?”

“We’ve confirmed something else, too.” Mr. Dark informed. “That Sheila girl running around in the Dream World is no doubt searching for the other Lights. Each mortal in this world has an alternate vessel in the Dream World, which only becomes active and tangible when the mortal falls asleep. But when the mortal awakens, their dreamself transports back to the Start Bed, intangible again. In other words, there are as many areas in the Dream World as there are mortals. However, Sheila is specifically traveling to certain ones, the Suki child’s dream for instance. By guiding them through their dream, they are guided to their destiny. I believe my duty should be to let this happen.”

“So what, you won’t try to stop Sheila, anymore?” Nefarious asked.

“Of course, I still have a stronghold in my world to keep up, and I can’t have that child destroy it. Perhaps I can work things to my favor. In fact, I expect her to be going to sleep soon. …I’ve a feeling where she’ll come next.” He whooshed his cloaked, and Dark swirled into the Protoon like a vortex before it vanished.

“Look, there is a reason I want to capture the Firstborn.” Giovanni continued. “So I have something to use against Ragaj in case he betrays us. If you were smart, you’d think about siding with me.”

“Yes, yes, we all want the top spot in this New World,” Plankton eye-rolled, “if the going gets tough, we’ll think about it.”

“I don’t really intend to listen to him after this. But for now, perhaps I’ll check on my troops.” XANA’s screen switched off.

“Yes… that is a good idea.” Specter turned to a monitor. “Tomoki, Mojo, have you captured the Garley child, yet? Tomoki?”

A capuchin greeted Specter when the staticky screen came on. He stepped aside, revealing Mojo and Tomoki. Both were sound asleep on the ground, arms around the other, beautiful dreams. “…” Specter turned the screen off before the scene would escalate.

Cyberspace

The Zoni splorped Vanellope to a new land, where she felt her boots sink into a white substance. She thought it was snow at first, but it bore a different texture, and wasn’t cold. A dark-yellow sky was overhead, mountains towered everywhere. Aton their peaks sat giant teacups with silhouetted black cat designs. “Yo boy. Is this the Crazy Old Cat Lady’s dream?”

“This is LOLCAT: Land of Little Cubes and Tea. The one who shares its origins is trapped here.”

Vanellope walked to the top of a nearby hill and viewed a field. XANAbots were progressing toward a mountain. “Well, no one likes being trapped. Alright, I’ll help them. But when’ll I get to see Dillon again?”

“You will have your wish, if you accomplish this. Now: must go.”

“Alright then. I’ll hold you to it.” (Play the Snow World’s theme from Yume Nikki.)
Stage 31: Land of Little Cubes and Tea

Mission: Find the Shimmer.

Vanellope trudged down the cube-covered hill, glitchwarping to the various XANA Tarantulas and kicking them senseless. Kankrelats emerged from the cubes one at a time and blasted lasers at Vanel, and once the girl was finished defeating them all, her three Zoni were ready to make work at a nearby kitten teapot. “Heat.” After flashing their lights, water came flowing out of the pot, dispersing into liquid cubes that stayed aloft throughout the air, with cube-shaped cores of steaming tea. Vanellope dove into the closest floating cube, keeping on the surface lest she sink into the tea and be scorched like lava. She had to swim-jump to each consecutive cube, but reduce momentum upon landing before she sank too far. Volcano Lotuses rested on small cube platforms and sent small fireballs into the air above the Tea Cubes, so Vanellope had to avoid when the fireballs fluttered down.

For the following part, Vanellope had to spin-jump out of the water and across a series of Volcano Lotus, going between their fireballs in the process, but the next Water Cube was far above, so Vanel glitchwarped three times to get up. She barely touched the edge, but couldn’t swim higher lest she touch tea, keeping perfectly stable in this thin current of safe water. The current went straight, then shifted directly upward—three Bullets Bills blasted from the tea, and Vanellope was thankful to be in a safe spot. She made it up, swam along another straight current, but a Bullet Bill blasted from behind, so Vanel quickly swam to and down a vertical current, barely avoiding. The next part of the current went diagonal like stairs, so Vanel kept her body wormlike as she swam, feeling the hotness of the tea touching her hair.

Vanellope was released onto safe ground at the current’s end, crossing a passage to a village of giant teapots and cubes. She explored and casually patted each cube, but one that was of slightly different texture came to life. Other Bloks that were camouflaged as cubes followed, their eyes lighting blue as they blasted freeze rays. Vanellope glitched to dodge them, but couldn’t kick them without risk of being frozen. “Use the pots.” The Zoni said. “Cubes will help.” Vanellope told them each to take a cube, told one to throw theirs into a teapot, and a stream of acid-like tea flew out, burned a puddle on the ground, and melted the two Bloks within range. She lured the Bloks near other teapots and told the Zoni to chuck cubes in until all the robots were extinguished.

Their defeat signaled another Zoni to appear, so with four in tow, Vanel sent them to a smaller teapot (about her own height) next to a ledge. A string of little cubes came out, and Vanel jumped on as it began flying over the chasm. They zigzagged either left, right, or vertical like pixels, and when they slithered under a large block of floating tea, Vanellope jumped and glitchwarped to keep safe until the cubes came out on the right side, carefully positioning the fourth warp to land back on. The cubes went up, shifted left, backward, down, then straight like a loop-di-loop, Vanellope glitchwarping onto the flat parts. The cubes then went straight up, parallel to a row of separate, stationary cubes that had Munchers on them, so Vanel had to Wall Jump between the Cube Path and the still ones until the path shifted horizontal again.

The cubes were coming to a row of floating, square Tea Cubes with openings in the center, the width of the Cube Path. Vanellope had to glitchwarp over them and land carefully in the gaps, warp again before the cubes passed completely, but maintain focus and land on the path, not away. The path went up vertically through three more Tea Cubes, so Vanellope performed a consecutive four glitchwarps and barely landed on the path before it became horizontal again. It shifted directly down before a cliff, so Vanellope jumped off. She crossed a narrow passage between hills and came to an ocean of Munchers. Vanellope turned to find a XANA Kone, which was like a Kankrelat, but cone-shaped, walk out from over a hill and begin crossing the Munchers. Vanellope spin-jumped onto the cone’s tip, so as per the mechanic, she could bounce on it endlessly.
The Zoni wanted Vanellope to go to a left platform, which had a floating coin trail leading to it from the Kone’s path, so Vanellope glitchwarped over. A P-switch was on the platform to turn the coins into cubes so she could return, but first, a key was lain on the Munchers a few yards off the platform. Vanellope jumped to it, and picked it up while simultaneously jumping to get back. “Zoni.” The creatures were active to use their powers, so Vanellope accepted, and the Munchers ahead of the Kone’s path rose into a stairway. Vanellope hit the P-switch and carefully jumped the coins-turned-cubes while carrying the key. The Kone was about to completely pass, so Vanellope carefully set the key down on the last cube, spin-jumped while picking it up, over to the Kone to continue bouncing. It walked up each Muncher stair as Bob-ombs descended on parachutes from above. Vanellope propelled herself higher to get above and smash the mobile bombs before they could destroy the Kone, then returned to her unknowing host while maintaining her constant spin-jump.

At the very top stair, a Caped Koopa was in the process of swooping down, so Vanellope chucked the key into the air, glitchwarped above to bounce off the Koopa, grab the key in midair, then jump a following string of Caped Koopa to a Donut Cube, which consequently began to fall. In its last half-second of floating, Vanellope panicked over what to do, so instinctively spin-jumped, when a stairway of Bullet Bill popped out of nowhere, Vanellope crushed each one descending down and created a rhythm of pops, the stairway taking her down between parallel strings of diagonal Munchers. She thought to herself, had she jumped normally on the first Bill, she wouldn’t be able to follow the pattern and get down in time.

The Bills ended right under a cliff, while the Muncher rows zigzagged upward, so Vanellope used four glitchwarps wisely and could land on the cliff. But then she panicked, for the key dropped on her first glitch, but she realized it landed on a tiny treadmill that would carry it into a pipe, and come out on Vanellope’s ground. “Zoni.” The creatures activated the treadmill so Vanellope could collect it, then proceeded to a huge enclosing under a mountain. A huge, barrier cage was protected by Big Bloks, blackish-gray Bloks that were roughly two stories high. They made an eerie robotic whir as they leapt and CRASHED, forcing piping-hot cubes to rain down from the giant teapot above. “Cool.” She could command the Zoni to cool the cubes down after landing. “Lift.” Afterwards, she told them to carry the cubes back up into the pot.

The Bloks knocked Vanellope down upon their jumps, and she immediately had to recover and dodge the other one’s massive laser, then she hurriedly glitched about to dodge falling cubes. All during intervals where she waited for the Zoni to come back down so she could command them to take the next cube. She glitched around and behind the Bloks in the hopes of distracting them while she waited, but had to recharge when she landed close to the left Blok, and was blown away when it jumped. She was burned by a falling cube, glitching around to avoid others, then had to catch her breath. “We’re ready.” After 30 cubes were gathered, the Zoni flew to all sides of the pot and flashed. The teapot boiled red and shook, and Vanellope glitched a great distance before the waterfall of tea poured down, melting the Big Bloks. Vanellope grabbed the key she’d lain down a safe distance and threw it onto a Blok’s top, glitched to it afterwards, then threw the key into the cage’s keyhole. She glitched around the teafall to get inside, finding the faint green spirit laying down. (End song.)

“Ooo…ooO…” The spirit gave weak little shimmers as it floated. It faced Vanellope.

“Nice to meet you again,” she said. “You kinda left me hangin’ back there. Now how did you know about Dillon? Th-The dead one?”

“Ooo…”

“…Wait… you’re a different one, aren’t you. You sound..”
“Thank you for saving me.” It spoke in a light, feminine voice. “I must go. I have to stop him!” It flew to the sky and slowly dispersed.

Vanellope stared curiously. “That one was sure more chatty, though. What’s with these things?”

“It is a memory. Everything here is.”

“Memory?”

“The world that was lost, was not forgotten. Its inhabitants live and exist. ...Now, as we promised. To let you see your chosen one.” The Zoni flew around her, flashed their hands, and gave Vanellope a staticky vision.

Dillon York spun to life in her mind. “He must return.” Then Maddy Murphy spun into being. “She must stay. Find the Disbanded.” A tall, shadowed being appeared.

Vanellope shook her head after the trance. “…Huhu… do it again.” The Zoni zapped her, Dillon appeared, then Maddy, shadowed man. “Hah hah, again!” Zapped her, her eyes were static, shook back to normal. “Again!” Zapped, trance. “Again!” Vision, normal. “Hahah, that feels so weeeeeeird!”

“YOU MUST FIND AND TELL THEM!” they shouted impatiently.

“Okay, okay. How do we find them?”

Solana; R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.

“NOOOOOO! I wanna squash that train for thinkin’ it’s the big galuna around these parts!” Chimney cried, ferociously trying to shake away from Chris and Harry. (“Gyom-gyom!”) Kirie held Gonbe back.

“Chimney, we don’t even know what that thing is.” Haylee stated. “Or even if it’s an enemy. I say we just watch it and see where it goes.”

“Nnnn… fine. But the second it honks its horns, I’m tail-ending it.”

The Star Train had gotten several miles ahead of their tiny vehicle, and everyone was curious of its destination. A strange green planet was coming into view, so perhaps they would have their answer. “I wonder if any KND organizations are in this galaxy?” Mason thought aloud. “They could help us out.”

“Uuuuuhh…” He turned and found that Sheila was nodding her head, half-weary eyes. He smiled quizzically. “You, uh… getting sleepy, Sheila?”

“Naaaaah nah, mate… I’m still hyper as… snoooore.” She conked out.

Mason rolled his eyes, and had the funniest notion, someone else in the universe had conked out as well.

Hall of Doors

Sheila flew out of a Waking Water portal labeled Symphonia. Sugar was waving happily on the other side of the river. “Yeah, this was considered one of your stages.” Murfy noted. “Even though she did all the work. Anyway, let’s move on.” They moved to the next portal, labeled Fly High.
Tower, represented by a round platform, tilted diagonal and fluttering up via a green propeller on its bottom. Globox was also on the other side. “Yo Globox, you sure this is where they went?”

“Uh-huh, pretty sure! I saw Hoodlums carry Rayman to a really high tower. I’m scared of heights, so I didn’t go save him.”

“Well, I’ve grown beyond heights, so I’ll save Rayman for ya!” Sheila declared.

“I still wanna help, too!” Globox vowed. “Rayman’s my buddy, and we need him to beat Mr. Dark!”

“Okay. You first, Globo!” Globox did a cannonball into the portal, and Sheila vigorously dove in after. (Play “Yoshis in the Wind” from Yoshi’s Story.)

Stage 32: Fly High Tower

Mission: Rescue Rayman.

A gentle breeze touched Sheila after coming out of the portal. A tall tower of whitish-yellow stretched miles into a cloudy sky. Although the tower was greatly highlighted, Sheila saw an indigo sky through the clouds, implying it was nighttime, and not even sunrays pierced the gaps. The clouds were deep gray and constantly circling the tower at an average pace. They bore a form and shape that was equivalent to steam lines from a train, except they didn’t have the texture of smoke. Their constant, gentle motion, along with the peaceful breeze made Sheila drowsy. She still wouldn’t let it get to her, though. “Fly High Tower, what a convenient place!” Murfy spoke. “I kinda already know Rayman is here, but one of-”

“Next word outta your mouth is costin’ you your teeth.” Sheila informed.

“Don’t worry, Sheila, I’ll climb up there and save Rayman!” Globox declared, his limbs outstretched as he plopped against one side of the huge tower. His belly scraped against it as he struggled to climb. “Be up… in a jiffy…”

Sheila rolled her eyes, knowing this month will be over before he makes it. The open field around the tower was empty except for wandering Shy Guys, Red Lums, and those same propeller platforms which Sheila couldn’t use. Nothing worthwhile except for Teehee Fairies fluttering in a line toward a ledge on the side of the tower. The fairies were bulbous with tiny antennas and wings, and alternated from pink to blue. According to Murfy, the blue ones would damage Sheila if she bounced on them, so when they became pink, Sheila bounced on the nearby Spring Pad and bounced the line to get onto the small balcony. Over the left edge was a tiny ledge for Sheila’s fingers to clutch and climb around the tower’s side. This ledge reached its end, the next one above her, so Sheila pulled up fast and forcefully to go up a few feet, then whirled her arms around to grab her fingers over this one. She climbed across, but a Snapdragon protected the gap between this one’s end and the next. When it popped out to snap that gap, Sheila flipped back and upward, smashed it with her foot, then hauled up. She grabbed the new ledge and progressed further, the next gap protected by two Snapdragons that snapped the same spot, so she flipped up, stomped with both feet, and jumped to the ledge, which brought her to another balcony.

A small bed with light-green blanket sat there, and a beautiful redheaded beauty on it. When Sheila stepped closer, Fybi Fulbright softly floated up out of the covers, clothed in a green nightgown. She was still in slumber, only her wings flapped as she peacefully flipped backward a full 360-degrees. Her emerald eyes peeped open as she stretched her arms. “But soft, what light through yonder
clouds break? Is it the sun?"

“No sun but here.” Sheila lit her fist. “Hey, help me get to the top of this tower, Fybi.”

“Mmm… I dreameth of aiding mine fellow operative? Thou art not my sectormate, but we
operatives doth not show bias. I shall help thee, Sheila. Oh.” She somersaulted, her nightgown
poofing to her normal clothes. “Better.”

Sheila jumped off the balcony and spun her tail to land softly on the floor. Sheila jumped on one of
many Propeller Pads, and Fybi used a whirlwind to make it spin. It slowly began to hover skyward.
Sheila had to keep her arms outstretched to keep the platform steady, but shifted her head toward
different directions to signal Fybi to breeze that way. “Yuck. I tried one of those Fly Pies from
Toad Land, the taste is still in my mouth. Wonder if this tower has any plume juice.” Murfy
complained. Fly Guys slowly fluttered down to push the raccoon off the platform, but since she
couldn’t spin her fists, she gestured Fybi which direction to maneuver. The Fly Guys were easy to
avoid as they didn’t come back for a rebound, but partway up the tower, blimps floated overhead as
Hoodlums blasted shotguns. Fybi shifted them between the blimps, and it was only now Sheila
realized how slow Hoodlum bullets were. “Help me.” Sheila saw an Electoon cage between two
tightly-close blimps, so she told Fybi to maneuver that way, their platform just barely scratching
the side of the blimps, and Sheila thrust her fist up, broke the cage open, and returned to balance
before they made it through.

The platform couldn’t go any higher than a specific balcony of the tower, which was just before a
spiraling of clouds, so Sheila jumped off. The next part of the tower was much thinner than the
section below it, and a path of spiked patches spiraled up along the tower. A small, round vent was
on the floor, and when Fybi blew an unending gust into it, Sheila watched as the spike patches
were blown away from the tower, for they were covering a grate that spiraled up. However, the
spikes were attached via chains, so Fybi had to keep blowing so they wouldn’t fall back. Sheila
held the grate tight while she climbed, for the wind affected her too, so she had to make sure not to
jump off. Vine Slimes crawled around a wide part of grating, still too slow in thwarting Sheila’s
progress—the spikes almost crushed her when Fybi stopped blowing, but the angel regained
herself and resumed.

Sheila reached a narrow part of grate where panels of wall slid back-and-forth over it, which would
force Sheila off and render her unable to grab back on due to the wind, so she waited for the panels
to pass before progressing. At the top of this part, the grate directed right and set Sheila off on a
safe foothold. She yelled for Fybi, who flew up to reunite. The next portion of tower was massive,
and shifted more to certain directions than others, unsymmetrical with the overall structure, but
clearly this took no part in the stability, ’cause it was magic. The duo passed a wooden doorway
inside the tower. The air was average inside, it was mostly quiet and dark, and their footsteps and
voices echoed.

Purple Lums fluttered about, and Stumblebooms, Hoodbooms on tall stilts, chucked grenades from
their high stations. Sheila spun and sent Light Fists, but they were swift on their skinny stilts to
avoid her, but not when Fybi spun whirlwinds, spun the stilts around, and caused them to collapse.
Sheila could then wipe them out with Light Fists, but none of them gave her a Swing Suit. Fybi
flew around the ceiling and found a Hoodlum hiding in an enclosing, so she pulled him back with
an air gust and let him smash on the floor, dropping the blue Power Can. Sheila retrieved the
Swing Suit and swung her way up the Purple Lums, lowest to highest, until they brought her into a
narrow hallway with high ceiling.

Spiked bars connected the walls at certain parts, and large fans were over the chasm below, facing
up with Purple Lums on them. Fybi blew into another small vent, activating the fans to blow the
Lums higher so Sheila could swing them. Depending on their height in accordance with spike bars, Fybi had to cease blowing so the Lums would sink lower than them, but blow to raise them skyward again when Sheila so required. She landed on safe ground before the power wore off. Fybi joined her as they faced a seemingly-barren hallway, where they needed a Propeller Pad to float to a high ledge on the other side. Fybi first blew into a vent, forcing giant blades to pop out of random parts of the walls, floor, and ceiling. They retracted when she stopped, but when Sheila curiously stuck her hand over where one of them came out, it did so, she quickly pulled back.

They had to memorize the location of each blade, since Fybi couldn’t keep them exposed while floating Sheila’s platform. They inched slowly higher to avoid the first three floor-blades, had to sink to dodge some wall-blades, then float directly up when a long wall of wall-blades blocked them, but couldn’t go too high in fear of a ceiling-blade. They shifted down to avoid a left wall-blade, up to avoid a right one, down to dodge a ceiling-blade’s tip, and quickly inch high-high-high-high to barely dodge a very tall floor-blade. They couldn’t abandon their platform yet, for above this ledge was a great, wide shaft of giant fans. A ventilation-like breeze touched them as Fybi blew them higher. The fan-blades spun slowly, so they waited until one passed before inching higher. Hoodmongers slowly descended with balloons and blasted slow-bullet shotguns, and while they were easy to dodge, it was fun to watch the Hoodlums get cut by the fans below.

The shaft eventually ended at a barren ceiling, where the two could drop off on a platform with a door to outside. They couldn’t see ground or sky, just soft spiraling gray clouds around them. There was nowhere to go from this tiny balcony, and Fybi had mixed feelings about flying into those clouds. But after about 10 seconds, a Hoodmonger slowly appeared from the clouds, holding a balloon, so Sheila proceeded to send him falling with a Light Fist. At first, they thought a Power Can was dropped on their platform, but it was actually a floating green sandal like Sheila’s. She reached to touch with the tip of her finger- “Nnn-z-z-z-z-z!” Both girls were suddenly zapped and shrunk down to three inches.

They fell onto one of their sandals that was abandoned on the floor, while the other sandal grew a pair of wings and flew away. Their current sandals grew wings, so they rode them to the sky and chased, using the straps to steer. Their vision became foggy when they soared through the clouds, but Sheila’s other sandal whooshed in front of her, so she turned in that direction. Fybi’s empty sandal flew overhead, and that was when she and Sheila rammed each other like bumper-cars. They recomposed and flew aimless in the clouds, eventually finding their way to the very top of the tower, above the clouds. The Crazy Sandals were seen above as well, so the girls could chase them easier. The shoes submerged under the clouds when they sensed them coming. Sheila gestured Fybi to fly a little further ahead before going under herself.

Sheila used her raccoon ears to hear the sandals’ flapping wings, following the sound’s direction to narrow on hers. She tricked it to flying where Fybi was, so the angel ambushed and rammed Sheila’s sandal. Sheila then heard Fybi’s sandal nearby, which moved faster considering who it belonged to, so Sheila took a shortcut to catch up, and also flew down to make the sandal go above the clouds. It thought it was escaping Sheila, but Sheila’s Crazy Sandal came up from below and hit it, so both flew together while the girls chased. Fybi reached to Sheila and took her hand, gesturing her to fly down under the clouds. The angel poured her Nimbi speed into her sandal and helped Sheila move faster too, so both could get in front of the Crazy Shoes via a shortcut. The shoes wouldn’t change direction, decided to ram their owners head-on, and Sheila and Fybi wore devious smirks as they increased speed. But as we all know, human- er, hybrid, beats clothing, so both shoes took the fall to the tower’s top. The girls stretched back to normal and slipped their sandals on, exchanging victorious nods. They turned toward the single floating cage in the center. (End song.)

Sheila recognized the creature inside the cage. Gloved hands, yellow shoes, body, and a head
separate from each other. It had orange hair, a big nose, and wore a purple shirt and red neckerchief. “Well, well, Ms. Frantic. I am impressed.” Both girls looked up. A man in a dark-blue cloak drifted down from the sky. He tapped his fingers gently on the electrical pink sphere. “Your friends have no knowledge of the Lights or where to journey on this quest. Yet, you know who they are like the front of your palm. Or, I suppose your insect friend does.”

“Hu! Sheila, that’s him!” Murfy cowered behind the raccoon. “Mr. Dark, the one who’s taking over Dream Land. And he’s got the Protoon! He can obliterate us in a single second!”

“He doesn’t look that scary.” Sheila said.

“Alas, is he only the scary monster, which be only a coat, inside my wardrobe?” Fybi asked.

“My dears… I really don’t want this kind of relationship.” Mr. Dark said calmly. “Protagonist and antagonist… isn’t it kind of cliché? We want the same thing: to find the Twenty Keys and open the New World. We want you children to succeed. To find the Lights. So please, can we not work together?”

“Could ya tell yer minions that, ’cause I don’t think they got the memo.”

“I still have a position of power in this world, you know. It did not have to go far. But the people of Dream Land have doubted my power. The only way to persuade them was to steal the Protoon. Now I will have the power to structure the New World.”

“This dream doth be demonstrating reality too much.” Fybi said. “Or hast the summer heat prevented my mind from telling real and unreal?”

“Look, man,” Sheila held her hand open, “just gimme the Protoon and we can find the Lights a whole lot easier.”

“Hm hm hm. It’s a shame we must be at each other’s business.” Dark chuckled, holding the sphere closely. “However, I cannot let you free this creature. My most heinous enemy is ever-so more peaceful in ignorance. It’s time you two have awakened. My servant will see to that. Cloudjin, if you will.” He snapped his fingers before throwing his cape and swirling into the Protoon.

Some of the spiraling clouds merged together in the sky above. A giant, hazy white genie-like creature, with a swirly tail and muscular build, materialized, his arms folded. He spoke with a mighty, echoing voice. “My flaming breath is very hot. These spiky balls are surely not.” (Play the Boss Theme from *Yoshi’s Story*.)

**Boss fight: Cloudjin**

The genie chortled haughtily as it flew around the sky, his tail shining with lightning which tried to strike the kids. From random parts of the sky, spikeballs fell down and rolled across the floor before falling over the edge. When it was done chortling, Cloudjin flew down, turned solid yellow, and puffed a breath of fire at the girls, but Fybi defended with a Wind Shield while Sheila spun her arm and shot a fist, forcing Cloudjin around as he blew a line of fire behind, lighting a large torch. It didn’t seem to effect anything, but they noticed a lightning rod on the other side of the field. When Cloudjin began striking lightning again, Fybi soared to the rod and tricked him into striking toward her, successfully giving the rod energy. Several hatches opened on the floor exposing large fans, along with a smaller, central vent. As spikeballs continued dropping on the field, Fybi knew the solution: she blew into the central vent, caused all the fans to blow, and send the spikeballs
skyward to hit Cloudjin. However, the genie was intangible, so no avail.

Cloudjin came down to puff fire at the kids, but during his solid state, Sheila spun a Light Fist and chucked at his mouth, forcing the flames to stay inside. He returned to the sky, bloated and solid, so when spikes came down, Fybi blew them around to certain fans, then blew the fans when Cloudjin was in range to be struck by a ball. Fybi blew the fans two more times to hit Cloudjin with that number of balls, until the genie finally exploded with flames. He wasn’t dead, and puffed with anger before lighting his tail with lightning. He flew around like usual before swooping over the floor in attempt to hit the girls with his tail, but they evasively dodged. “Um… Sheila? Murfy?”

They heard a familiar voice on one edge of the tower. A big, blue balloon was making its presence known, little arms and feet at its sides, and it was only when its body turned did Sheila recognize. “Globox?”

“I got thirsty climbing the tower, and I saw Murfy drinking plum juice in one of the rooms, so I…”

“Ay-ay-ay.” Murfy shook. “I keep telling him he’s allergic to plum juice, but does he ever listen? No. Stick to flies, Toadboy!”

Sheila and Fybi dodged Cloudjin’s tail again, and after looking at Globox’s juice-filled form, they had an idea. Fybi flew above and blew Globox down to Sheila, who wrapped arms around him and aimed at the floor. Purple juice came squirting out of his mouth when he squeezed, and Sheila stood in the puddle so when Cloudjin flew down, his electric tail touched the liquid and lit up his whole body. Cloudjin was solid again, but didn’t bother swooping down again while he chortled about the air. Spikeballs were falling again, but Cloudjin was flying around the sides of the tower instead of above, blowing forceful wind at the girls.

Sheila almost slid off the edge, but Fybi grabbed her so she could recompose herself, Sheila fighting the wind and stomping back toward the center. Fybi countered Cloudjin’s wind with her airbending, in the process blowing spikeballs a great distance over the edge, so it became Fybi’s goal to fly them at Cloudjin. She dealt three blows against him before the genie exploded again. Cloudjin returned to the sky, puffed his breath, and coughed meteor-like fireballs. Fybi blasted powerful air gusts to disperse them. “Hast thou ideas?”

“Yeh, I do.” Sheila jumped onto the bloated Globox’s back. “Murfy, you ‘elp, too.”

“Okay.” Both he and Fybi squeezed under Globox’s belly and raised him to the air despite Sheila’s weight. They dodged Cloudjin’s fireballs and narrowed in, Sheila clutching the toad’s bloated, balloon-like flesh tight. When they were meters away from Cloudjin, the genie began charging a powerful burst of flamebreath. “Now!” Sheila kicked Globox down as she leapt. Fybi and Murfy flying a few meters down so he was a good distance between them both. Then Sheila shot down fists-first while Fybi came up foot-first at whipping speed, so when both forces collided, a strong stream of juice popped out of Globox’s mouth and connected with Cloudjin’s fire.

Amazingly, the juice was stronger, dispersing the fire before flowing into Cloudjin’s mouth. Globox grew skinnier while Cloudjin grew fatter, but the genie never changed his haughty visage. The genie was perfectly round before Globox went flat, and within seconds exploded into dust. Sheila and Fybi landed on their feet and high-fived. Globox drifted to the floor like a feather, so Murfy blew into the toad’s mouth to restore his 3rd dimension. (End song.)

Sheila punched a Light Sphere and destroyed the cage, Rayman’s limbs falling to the floor. The Dream World hero awakened, its head staring at Sheila with awe while it lay fallen. His limbs helped their selves up to their respective positions, he and Sheila shared the same astonished expressions. Sheila’s natural reaction to a creature so unique, and Rayman’s… well, weird stuff
Fybi’s look was quizzical. “…If thou art querying my response to thine earlier request, I do forgive thee.”

“Oh… that’s nice.” She smiled halfheartedly – masking deeper gratitude, and bit her banana.

Fybi plucked another banana from the tree and ate as well. “I canst not feel too great anger, knowing mine wings made a miraculous recovery in the midst of our battle. To this day, I know not the reason behind it.”

“Oh, I do. Viridi told me Palutena had something to do with it. The Light Goddess. She can heal almost any physical injury. We’re kinda alike, Fybi. Fallen angels whom the gods frowned upon and sought to help us.”

Fybi raised a brow. “Thou call thyself an angel? I see no wings on thine backside.”

Phosphora stood, turned, and pulled up her top to expose her bare back. “I lost my wings a long time ago.”

Fybi stared in shock. Two parallel scorch lines were burned on Phosphora’s back. “…Thou art… flightless Nimbi? But no pure Nimbi canst survive without wings.”

“Well, I’m from a particular breed of Nimbi.” She lowered her shirt and faced up at Fybi. “I’m a Birkan. From the stormiest region of Skypia where lightningbenders dwell. We had very particular chi-paths that connected to our back bones and could manifest in the form of wings. But an accident ruined my chi-paths and rendered me wingless. I can’t lightningbend without a good source. I couldn’t live on a stormy isle as I was, so I had to come to Earth. Then Viridi found and offered me a Lightning Scarf if I joined her crew in return. I got to feel… free again.”

“I am sorry for thine loss. But I will not say the same for Viridi’s fate.”

“I know. Why do you live on Earth, anyway? Hang out with these humans?”

“I was born on Skypia, verily, to absorb the atmosphere of my culture, but alas, mine parents believed I would make true friends on Earth. I am now tethered to them, and I doth prefer it that way. However, I do wish for the day I canst return to my homeland, show them wondrous Skypia. Yon supreme beauty.”

“Prettier than Birka, I’m sure.”

Fybi flinched, suddenly remembering her dream. “…Phosphora… my mind doth be processing strangely… but I bear the irksome desire to see thine homeland. Shouldst I wish to go, wouldst thou guide us thither?”

Phosphora frowned, a tad surprised. The opportunity to return to her homeland… could she pass it down?

A trembling caught their ears, coming from the direction of Taylor’s camp, where magma smoke was rising. His clothes completely drenched with sweat, Anthony succeeded in pulling himself out of the pit. It was amazing he still had breath. “Nicely done, shrimp.” The teenager remarked. “Ya beat Level 1. Now the Bonus Round.” He stomped his foot, waved arms, and raised five columns of lava. As they aimed at Anthony, whose eyes felt like drying, the child just wished for it to end. They all lunged, but Anthony stomped himself underground and covered the hole, protecting himself. Tom smirked, but to his surprise, that piece of ground jabbed up and flung the lava back at him, but he threw his arm, hardened the lava, and smashed it with his fist. Anthony returned aboveground, still groggy, but glared fearlessly at Tom. The teenager didn’t think he’d be having
Florae; Mom’s ship

“Hello? Ah, yes, thank you. Yes, we have received it. Ah, thank you. My pleasure, Mr., um, pronounce that slowly. Your donation was accounted Mrs., um, Gargamesh. Haha, yes, I look forward myself.” Ted Wassanasong was provided a spare office inside Mom’s flagship, and was already receiving waves of phonecalls after his announcement.

“Business is blooming, I see.” Mom remarked, walking in.

“This idea was more fantastic than I ever could have hoped.” Ted confirmed brightly, still speaking with a moderate tone. “Yes, please hold. It goes to show, Carol, success can be taken anywhere. We have it, don’t worry. Before you know it, the Corporate Presidents can extend their empires across the universe. Um, I’ll get back to you on that.” He was alternating between talking to Mom and his phones.

“Why did you choose this location to build, exactly?”

“The atmosphere just feels ‘right’, to me. And I am right. Pretty soon, everyone in this galaxy will know the glory of the Corporate Presidents. It’s a shame, because there used to be more of us. Norman Osborn and Charles Burns met untimely demises; you have to admit, Lord Business had potential as well, and; what was that other fellow? The one who trained Pokémon?”

“Giovanni, but one fight with Gozaburo and he goes crying like a little-”

“Hey, you can’t go in there!” Guards were yelling outside.

“Uh-, no!” Two men grabbed Arianna’s arms just as she ran into the office. She had several potted plants strapped to her belt. “I need to speak with President Wassawong!”

“Sorry, Presidents, this little girl came with her mom and slipped by us. How should we dispose of her?” a guard asked.

“It’s all right, gentlemen. I’m sure this child does not mean trouble.” Ted gestured with his fingers. The guards released Ari and left the office. Mom passed a smug look to the Harnitan before leaving, shutting the door. “Now, what seems to be your concern, little girl? Unless you happen to be a fan of golf and would like a preview of the new course.”

“Um, that’s why I’m here. Mr. Washerna- um, Sir, I know you are a hard-working businessman and I understand how important this project is to you, but there are far more open locations for such a course besides the Violet Dwarf System. With that in mind, I humbly ask you not to blow it up and find a different location. You can easily save money by not buying ammunitions.”

“You seem like a very smart and mature young girl, and your concern is highlighted, but do not worry. It was specifically chosen because it is very far from any settlement, so the explosion will not harm any of the locals.”

“Th-The locals aren’t who I’m concerned for, in particular, it’s the wildlife.” She spoke more insistently. “Those asteroids have all kinds of unique, and endangered species. Destroying them would be a terrible thing, please I ask you to reconsider.”

“There are billions such asteroids that exist in the stars. No one will miss a few. But I promise, you will not feel sorry when you are having the time of your life in Golfing in the Stars.”
Just go away, you stupid girl. A sinister voice said.

Arianna gasped. “S…Stupid?”

Ted raised a brow. “I beg pardon?”

What? Did she hear me?

“.!” Arianna demanded firmly, “Who else is there?! What are you hiding?!”

“There is no one here but the two of us. If you have no other business here, I ask you to leave my office.” Ted pointed to the door.

“Not until I have your honest word you won’t blow up the system!”

“I’m afraid I cannot, but you shall not be sorry after you have experienced the first of many holes in Golfing in the Stars.” he said with his honest smile. “You, your friends, and your family will never know greater fun.”

“Siiiigh.” Arianna bowed her head. “Mr. Wassanong, I see you are very devoted to your goal, and I do not like to escalate conflict. But for the sake of all those animals, please forgive my actions.” Without warning, she threw her arms up, vines emerged from two of her pots and grabbed Ted by the wrists, raising him upward. The man struggled, flailing his legs and kicking a stapler at Ari’s face, making her lose her grip as Ted tried to run outside, but she whooshed her arm, extending a bramble’s sprout to lash Ted just under the shirt-collar.

Something small and black flew out of the shirt to a corner. Ted fell over and began rasping with pain. “M-Mr. Washanong?” Arianna spoke fearfully.

“President Ted!” A team of guards burst in and stood over the businessman. They looked at the cut across his back, and to Arianna’s bramble. On closer inspection, the skin around the cut was sickly purple. “Someone call a doctor, arrest this girl—she poisoned him!”

“N-No! I didn’t!” Arianna retracted the bramble and raised her hands, but her protests were ignored as guards took her arms and led her away. “I-I didn’t mean for this—there must be some misunderstanding—I’m sorry!”

Ted was later carried away to a medical wing. The black thing that had flown out of his shirt skittered into the dark.
Strange

Chapter Summary

Nolan York tries to find info on Ted Wassanasong. Sector W heads for Skypia. Team Maddy discovers Zach Murphy on Jellatonia.

Had a slight block with this chapter. Too many distractions.

Chapter 23: Strange

Planet Bebop

A beautiful sunny morning appeared over the planet. The hills and farmland were awake and lively. The animals were ready for another day of pasteurizing. Farmer Zach Murphy, clothed in blue overalls, brown boots, and a yellow sunhat, danced outside.

Well, mah sister has a demon for a boy-friend

Big dern Apocalypse is getting close at hand

On the way, I met a pardner. And he said “Oh!”

A yippy-yai yo, yippy-yo

“Howdy, Zach!” Bullion Bill, the old fox farmer called over.

“Howdy, Bill! Manure smells lovely this mornin’.”

“Darn tootin’! Ain’chu think, Dilberta?”

“Dang diddily, Bill!” exclaimed the mole with the prospector hat. “Just listen to them cows moo! Them likin’ that grape juice!”

The three began dancing as Zach sang.

Another day of farmin’ and another day of friends

Another day of rustling little piggies in their pens

Let’s bring others: to join the fun!

“Wah, ther’ already here!” Bill pointed.

“Let’s meet ‘em, everyone!” Zach happily named all the characters that appeared. “There’s Pumbaa, Li’l Gideon, Eduardo, Clam, Sandy Cheeks, Chester McBadbat, Corey Sanderson, and of course, Optimus Prime!”

“Hello, Zach.” The Autobot spoke with his strong, deep voice. “I love farming, almost more than saving planets.”
“Let’s DANCE like little girls!” Gideon exclaimed gleefully (look him up ;P).

All of them locked hands and danced joyfully in a circle (Optimus looked especially silly doing it ;P). “A yippy-hey yo, yippy-yo yippy-yo, gama tai hai yippy-yippy-yo!”


**Reality**

“Um… Zach?”

“Maddy, is this really your brother?” Ratchet asked.

“I… think.”

He certainly had Zach’s clothes, hair, and eyes, but… at the same time. He had no arms, he was frowning and staring blankly, and his body was hunched forward a little. Maddy lightly tapped his nose, and Zach fell over like a statue. (To make it simple, he’s a Homestuck. :P) “Maddy, I think your brother’s a computer nerd.” Drake joked.

“Does this occur regularly?” Clank asked.

“It-… I dunno.” Maddy sighed. “One time, he turned into a blanket for 3 hours, then he filled with helium and blew away, a-… I dunno what to do about this.”

“But he had to’ve come on a ship, right, or at least backup?” Drake inquired.

“We would’ve seen backup by now, otherwise I think he was… his own ship.”

“This planet, Jellatonia is rich with many types of jelly.” Clank explained. “I believe a particular peach breed has properties which heal most ailments. If we cross this canyon, we may be able to find it.”

“Then let’s do it. Hopefully he’ll have some whack-job way of getting us back to Earth.”

As Ratchet walked with Clank strapped to his back, he never noticed the robot’s green eyes become red, his antenna emitting a signal. (Play “Jelly Jamboree” from *Donkey Kong: Tropical Freeze.*)

**Stage 33: Jellatonia**

**Mission: Find the Peach Jelly.**

The sky was a gaseous green and most of the landscape was soft and sludgy. Jellatonia was made almost entirely of gelatin, the color depending on the particular landscape, green jelly forests, blue bouncy rivers, some even said the sun was a great big yellow ball of jelly. Nutbrains. Drake carried Zach under his arm as the trio journeyed down a solid path before coming to a garden of giant purple jelly blocks, which the three had a fun time bouncing across. Jelliens flew in a circle above a block, and couldn’t be destroyed by jumping on them. Well, most enemies couldn’t, that’s why they had weapons, but Clank drew attention to the eight pipes a few feet around the block. Ratchet could grab each Jellien in his OmniWrench while they bounced and threw them onto a pipe, so they would latch and let their jelly be sucked in. The pipe stretched across the land below, and
wobbly blue gelatin pillars rose out of holes along the pipe. Being so unstable, Maddy jumped across first, then Ratchet, then Drake, one at a time. When the pillars toppled the direction of the next, the person quickly jumped since they were hardly standable as they were.

The pillars led them to a part where the pipe shifted vertical and ended at an opening where blue jelly was steadily pumping up. They all jumped onto the pipe’s side since it was tilted diagonal, and faced a huge cliffside with a cave. When the jelly was at a reasonable volume, it threatened to burst, so the three hopped on as it POPPED, sending them flying across to land inside the green oozing cave. “This gelatin is molten, but sticky. Make sure it does not drop on you.” Clank cautioned.

“Mmph!” Unfortunately, Drake’s head was caught inside a glob, and after failing to tug it off, he ignited a blowtorch function in his claw to melt the jelly. “Huff! Good advice!” The team proceeded through the cave, avoiding various jelly drops, in which some manifested into Green Chuchu that tried to attack them, so Drake and Ratchet used their flamethrowers to melt them. They came to a large, open area under a tall cliff. Drake blasted his grappler to the top, but rather than latch, the device pierced the jelly-made ground and whipped right back, leaving nary a hole. “Damn gelatin.”

Ratchet noticed a small jelly cube a few feet away and grabbed it in his OmniWrench. Rested under the cliff was a similar cube, and when Ratchet stuck the smaller one into it, they formed a slight larger cube. “Let’s find more of these.”

Maddy followed a path on the left side to a narrow chasm with gelatin stalactites up above. She could grab the first one’s tip and hang on while the next stalactite was in the process of forming, continuously swinging on this current to build momentum. Once the next was low enough, she swung and grabbed before the previous one snapped under her grip, then repeated for another one, before swinging onto a steady platform with a white gelatin balloon. Maddy plucked it off its pedestal and blew more air into it, still clutching with her mouth as it floated over the chasm. She sucked air in to make it sink and avoid the stalactites, but blew air before she fell in the chasm – all the while breathing through her nose for her own sake. Jellybobs fluttered across the passage from around the corner, so Maddy shifted direction to avoid the electric jellyfish. The passage led to a small platform where Maddy collected a Jelly Cube, then floated the shortcut back to the start.

Drake followed a right passage to a very vast chasm, with skinny pillars with wobbly jelly stubs as silver and springy as springs. Drake made his grappler a lasso and roped the nearest Cata-Jell, and could make the choice where it flung him to as he tugged. He faced a ledge that was around the corner of a tall pillar, loosened his force, and went flying over. He barely landed on the foothold, and quickly stomped a group of Tumfoids; large bugs that fed on jelly, that came to munch him, since humans were kind-of-jelly. Once they were gone, Drake roped another Cata-Jell and aimed at the great wall across the chasm. All the ledges on it were too far out of range, but the farthest right one was aligned with green jelly pillars, so Drake flung that direction, bounced the gelatin, and landed on the ledge.

On the ceiling between him and the next foothold, Jelltulas (jelly spiders) waited, and next to Drake was a flower where colorful Gummy Bears bundled in the petals. Drake took one in his fingers, and felt sad seeing it squirm helplessly, but sacrifices must be made, so he threw it over the edge and watched a spider come down to snatch it. He grabbed many more tiny bears, threw them, and saw almost every Jelltula lower. Before they went back up, Drake swung their white jelly strings to land on the new ledge. The next large portion of the wall had purple, yellow, and red branches stick out at 5-second intervals, an interval for each color, so Drake swung his way across by memorizing the pattern. He landed on a ledge where he picked up a Jelly Cube, then roped a Cata-Jell to fling to a bouncy jelly on a pillar, followed by a series of bounces before he landed at
He and Maddy mixed their cubes with the one below the cliff and took turns bouncing up. They made it outside again and faced a dark-blue river of gelatin, which Maddy was reluctant to step into. “You should not submerge if you don’t remain stationary.” Clank assured. The trio marched across the river with this in mind, the jelly threatening to sink lower, so they moved quickly. There was a faint *whirrrr* sound, and the friends found a lump of the jelly, with big eyebrows and a grinning smirk, chasing them. Drake shot his harpoon at the Jelly Ghost, but it barely slowed down before sliding up to Maddy and grabbing her leg in its teeth. It tried to pull her down, but Ratchet bashed the ghost’s head and pulled Maddy upward, the group proceeding before the jelly sunk.

They reached a safe foothold overlooking the next portion of river, where many Jelly Ghosts were eager to drown them. The walls on either side were full of holes, and from those holes, Slither Boos came out on one side, and into a hole on the other. A Boo came out of a hole very close on their left, so they grabbed and climbed across before it retracted all the way. They climbed across a Boo sloping downward next, climbed a vertical Boo that went into a hole directly above, balanced across a straight Boo, then down a stairway Boo onto a new foothold. The next river was pinkish-red, a lot looser and would sink them upon touch. A boat was available for them to row across, so they began.

Jellybobs floated along the surface of the jelly and lit with electricity, the trio rowing around them. Currents flowed out of pipes that threatened to push them into Jellybobs, so they rowed harder to fight through. As they turned a corner, the river’s current picked up, they forcefully rowed rightward to stay away from the wall. Jellyfalls poured into parts of the river and would drown their boat, so they hurriedly rowed to whatever opposite side, adding extra effort due to the rushing current. Their boat roughly got drenched by two close jellyfalls, then the river sloped down into a cave. The area turned bright orange and a heat wave hit them. Their boat stopped before the shore of a magma cave.

Orange gelatin oozed everywhere, and they knew the moment they touched it, their flesh and bone was lost. Dark-red gelatin stalactites fell into the lava and were in the process of melting, so the trio bounced across when they had the chance. They landed on a dark-red ground of Jell-O and walked up a small slope, overlooking a long bridge across lava. The weight of just one would weigh the skinny thing into the lava, but Clank could go across with his light weight. A large brown jellyball was on the other side, which Clank rolled across. Worried that it was risky, also it stank, they held breaths and squeezed into the jelly as Clank rolled them across. Drake ignited his blowtorch to melt the ball, and the trio helped their selves up from the brown sludge and proceeded through a tunnel. The dark-red morphed into orange jelly, but it was stable and didn’t burn them. “This lava must be solidified.” Clank observed.

“It’s really bouncy, too.” Maddy said, already bouncing on the flimsy substance. Drake and Ratchet mimicked her actions, the jelly was so bouncy, it was hard to control their selves. Pits of molten lava came into view partway, so the three would have to recompose and focus their selves to avoid falling in. A river of magma followed, they Wall Bounced between the close walls to cross, then came to a room with a large lava lake, many stalagmites. Though they appeared sharp, the ‘mites were as bouncy as any hardened lava, so they jumped and flung to each one.

“BLAAAAAH!” A Blargg erupted from the magma, his mouth wide in a crazy smile, his teeny arms outstretched as though he was ready to give them a hug. After the stalagmites, they landed on a solid foothold and quickly swung stalactites that hung low, the Blargg still on their tail. They found another big brown ball, but instead of squeezing in, they all climbed on and balanced as they rolled over a shallow area of lava. They maneuvered around stalagmites and big magma droplets—a Gold Bolt was on a corner platform, so they braved the risks and grabbed it—then rolled across a river
through a more narrow cave. A wall of stalagmites blocked their way, but—"BLAAAH!" the Blargg splashed a wave that propelled their ball up and over them, followed by more waves that would lift them over other ‘mites with good timing. They could step off on a solid foothold and head up a gelatin stairway, looking back to see the Blargg stopped at the shore, but that big wide smile still creeped them out.

The stairs brought the team outside to a rugged green gelatin plain. A pathway brought them to a cave that turned pink the further they went. A powerful scent that smelled like perfume caught their noses, and pink took over their vision when the cave of huge blocks of pink jelly lay before them. (End song.)

“Wow. These’re Peach Jelly?” Drake asked as they entered.

“Yuck, that smell!” Ratchet flinched, pinching his nose. “I get how it can wake Zach up, but ‘any ailment’ is stretching it.”

“Will it really work, Clank?” Maddy asked, holding her own nose.

“If you get some in his mouth, he should be back to normal.” the robot confirmed.

“Assuming Zach’s peculiar disease isn’t foreign to these aliens.” Maddy dipped her fingers into some ooze and tried to shove it in her brother’s mouth.

Drake walked around the cave a little and found what seemed like alien skeletons lying about. “Ehh… guys, I’m starting to doubt Clank’s… nnnn.” He fainted.

Maddy and Ratchet’s eyes were heavy. “Buddy, I think you looked up the wrong…” Ratchet fell, then Maddy.

“It is fortunate we robots are immune to natural gases.” Clank spoke knowledgeably—before his eyes turned red. “Mhmhmhehehehehehe.”

**Florae; Mom’s flagship**

Arianna’s pots were confiscated and she was locked inside the prison wing. She sat in the back of her dark cell, pondering her actions. Her first time being aggressive didn’t go at all how she wanted. But how it went shouldn’t have happened at all; well, not entirely. She really wanted to be out of here now.

Her antennae picked up a slight rattling in the pipe to her side. A hatch came off, and three tiny figures hurried over and stopped by her shoes. “Never fear, Arianna, your rescuers have arrived!” Vweeb proclaimed.

“Vweeb? Tronta? Makava?”

“Eeee-yep, I FINALLY fixed my shrink ray! GKND Spy Team V is back in action!”

“It better be, or it’ll take a lot of shoe-cleaning ‘fore Nebula biggifies us.” Tronta squeaked.

“You really put up a show there, Arianna.” Vweeb smirked. “I thought you’d grow a spine sooner or later, but I didn’t think you’d try to kill someone.”

“I wasn’t trying to kill him!” Arianna yelled defensively. “I lost my temper and hit him with the brambles by accident.”
“You still brought poison brambles to his office.” Makava noted.

“Maranan Brambles are not poison. I scratched him across the back, but he was probably poisoned before.”

“How d’you know he wasn’t allergic? You know how susceptible humans are.”

“I—I suppose… but I can’t believe that, yet! When I was in his office, I heard a voice. It was sounding inside my head, like…like when I use telepathy. Ted didn’t seem to hear it, so… I think something’s going on. I want to look for Ted and use telepathy around him; shrink me down and let’s look.”

“Whoa whoa whoa.” Vweeb said. “We only snuck in here to rescue you, not be caught red-handed in an assassination attempt. Your mom’s worried sick in the waiting room.”

Arianna crouched on all fours and loomed her head closer to her friends. “I’m going to save the Violet System and stop anyone responsible. If there’s someone behind the scenes, I need to find out. Please.”

The three never saw so much passion in her forest-green eyes. “Alright, fine.” Vweeb locked his shrink ray. “I’m not paying new Rebel Arianna’s bail, though.” He shot and zapped her to tiny size in seconds.

“'kay, it’s gonna be a little tight with four of us, stay close.” Tronta pulled out his dual Light Discs, and after transmitting his thoughts via a headband around his forehead, the Frisbees opened and attached to become a bigger Frisbee. The four stepped on, and Tron used his thoughts to make it fly them into and up the pipe.

They flew vent after pipe throughout the large flagship until they found the medical wing, Ted Wassanasong’s room. They stood in a vent near the ceiling with a perfect view of his bed, the Laotian man rasping. A nurse in the room observed a monitor, connected to a container with Arianna’s bramble, cut from its pot. “Hmm… this plant isn’t poison at all.”

“See?” Arianna told Vweeb, who glared.

“It could be an allergic reaction… there’s still so little we know about these aliens. Maybe I can look this up.” She left the room, leaving Ted alone.

“I don’t know of any disease these brambles could’ve given.” Arianna said.

“Yeah, but humans don’t live in this galaxy, right?” Makava asked. “We still aren’t really sure.”

“Not yet…” Arianna closed her eyes and opened her mind. To hear the unspoken thoughts of all of the animals. Animals which currently weren’t visible in the area. She had no idea what she was listening for, but she had a gut feeling it was there.

. . . Stupid brat, attempting to thwart my plan.

She gasped. “I heard it!”

“ Heard what?” asked Makava.

“The voice! It…It must be close. Look around!”

“Hey, check out his robe.” Vweeb pointed.
A lump traveled along the part of Ted’s hospital gown the blanket didn’t cover, stopping at his chest. I don’t understand how she heard me, but as long as no one else does. I need to get back on schedule. It’ll be trouble to convince the nurses without being spotted.

Ted’s rasping stopped as the man helped himself off his bed, much to the kids’ shock. He casually walked outside, and they heard the nurses gasp. “President Wassanasong, why are you out of bed?!”

“I’m feeling fine, Jenny. It was probably a temporary poison, I did not think the girl meant harm.”

“Ted, don’t you think you should rest, still?” his wife, Cindy asked. “Or stay for tests?”

“There will be time for that later. I want to have the Violet System blown by tomorrow morning, er, space-hours. We’ve garnered enough support from the local planets to pay for the Star Bomb from Nightmare Enterprises.”

“But Ted-”

“As a loyal and devoted member of the Corporate Presidents, I insist that we proceed with the operations as soon as possible. (Er, the Golfing in Stars operation, I mean.)”

“One more hospital bill I won’t pay.” Mom remarked smugly.

The operatives flew all the way to the ship’s lobby on the Light Disc, flying near the floor so as not to be seen. Nova was sitting worriedly on a chair, but when she heard a tiny whistle, she glanced down and saw the kids wave at her, before going to Vweeb’s parked hovercraft and leaving.

Nova stood and told the receptionist, “Um, if you insist on holding Arianna, I suppose I’ll return later. Please, release her soon.” And before they got too suspicious, she fast-walked out.

Makava’s Heart Star was parked on a distant asteroid, and Vweeb re-expanded the operatives after they made it back. Makava started it up and took off. “Okay, so Mr. Washing Machine gets over illness fast and has a bug on his chest.” Makava recapped. “At least we didn’t need to go through an action stage for that. You’re still convicted for attempted murder and he’s still gonna blow up the star system.”

“You’re right. I guess that the best I can do is convince the people of Florae not to support Ted. I mean, what’s so special about a golf course, anyway?”

“Ah dunno, we kinda saw his commercial from Galaxia, his stuff looked pretty cool.” Vweeb said.

“You can’t even golf, Vweeb.”

“Says who? To the overpowered Kateenian.”

“Look, you guys don’t have to do anything else to support me, but I’m not going to let him get away with this. I’m going to the intergalactic TV studio and hosting my own commercial.”

“Siigh. I’m starting to miss the old take-no-action Arianna.” Tronta sighed. “At least I didn’t have to worry about you as much.”

“Specifically why I said you don’t have to do anything, anymore.” Arianna folded her arms and turned away. “I never expected you to.”

“It’s not that we don’t care, it’s just that we have more important things on our mind.” Makava
said. “This cataclysm and... junk. And there wouldn’t be a Violet System either way if the universe gets destroyed.”

“That’s why I need to save it. To remind people that life can still flourish anywhere, to give them a sense of hope. I...I need to remind them all how precious life is.”

“Florae Galaxy doesn’t even know about the Apocalypse; except based on what Nebula told their KNDs.” Tron informed.

“That doesn’t mean I can’t use it as an example.”

**Hawaii**

Three rocks were stacked up on Anthony, and the boy was ordered 20 push-ups with them weighing him down. “You’re barely giving me five, kid, those rocks’d be light as feathers to real earthbenders.” Tom stated. “You don’t even need arms, just use psychic bending.”

“I’M NOT A PSYCHICBENDER!!”

“EVERY BENDER can control their element telekinetically, why do you think we never touch what we control?? Er- the actual art ‘psychicbending’ is one word, but psychically controlling our element is two words. Look, just see the rocks in your head and lift them!!”

“Tsk-tsk-tsk.” Gedra shook his head. “The little twerp is hopeless. I’m going to get me some juice. I’ll be back when he gets his next one.” The Minish surfed away from the camp on a rock-wave.

“Finally, he’s gone.” Tom said before pushing the rocks off of Anthony’s back. “Break time, kid, wash yourself off in that hot spring up ahead. Oh, and here’s some juice.” He tossed Anthony a box of apple juice, only adding to the boy’s confusion.

Regardless, Anthony didn’t miss the chance to revitalize himself in the spring just up the hill. “So what’s the deal with you and Pudra, anyway?” he asked. “You take breaks whenever he ain’t around?”

“Nah, just on occasion, I’ve gotten more used to it, but different story when you’re only seven.” Tom replied, relaxing on an earth-made lounge chair. “And that story is, kids need more free time, they’re only just developing, so if you push ‘em too hard, they’ll break. True, Gedra’s been training me since I was seven, but I was born to take heat, you weren’t.”

“Is that s’posed to be your negative prodding?”

“Yes, but it’s also true. I mean, as young as you are now, you really shouldn’t have to put up with this kind of training. All this junk is... really too much for kids to deal with. In the old Kids Next Door, you go through basic training to learn the best way of takin’ down an Ice Cream Man, that’s it. But before you know it, your world’s in danger of being blown to bits. Yeah, I heard about it too, kid, I very well know why you’re training. But it still aches me... knowing what all you have to go through.”

“Well, you’re an ex-operative. Why don’t you help, too?”

“I feel like if I had a big destiny, some angel woulda spoken to me from Heaven by now. For now, it looks like my only job is helping you become stronger. Though that raises the question, whaddo you plan to do with your new strength after we’re done?”

“Eh, I dunno.” Anthony casually slurped his juice. “Probly help Cousin Cheren kill one of those
World Government people. They killed my uncle, so I’m pretty mad about that.”

“Way to dream high, kid. Alright then, five more minutes and I’ll start chucking magma streams at you.”

At the beach

Gedra was enjoying leisure time as well, using a Minish-size straw to slurp juice out of a banana. “It’s hard to lose your carb when there’s so much food to go around. Don’t you kids agree?”

Sally, Harvey, and Aranea only stared awkwardly at the sight. The friends were drinking milk from coconuts. “Just don’t get too full of yourself.” Nea remarked.

“Mr. Gedra, why did you start training Tom, anyway?” Sally asked. “Did he come to you, or…”

“Well, my family’s been watching his for a few generations; like any other Minish. But Tom’s is one of the Noble Earthbender Families, they were taught by Minish from the beginning, so I had to carry the tradition.”

“Anthony mentioned those families, didn’t he?” Harvey asked.

“I heard that they were the closest of friends centuries ago.” Gedra replied. “With four different powers, they were unique, too. It taught benders how far their powers could expand, not just your average rock, but anything a rock can become. You could imagine how many possibilities opened when other benders adapted that idea.”

“But wouldn’t the gods have taught them, anyway?” Aranea asked.

“The gods created mortals with the power to discover. They shaped the world, they gave us elements, they allowed anything that’s happened to be possible, but the mortals had to discover those things for their selves. So across generations, benders studied their elements, found more and more ways to control them… even Logia was an amazing discovery, it baffled the gods when mortals learned to transform the way they did. …I don’t exactly remember how they discovered it, just caught a glimpse somewhere. Then mortals invent crazy martial arts to control elements; there’s really no guessing how much the gods had in mind for people to figure out. Heck, one of you kids might be an undiscovered bender.” Gedra slurped his banana.

Sally and Harvey exchanged glances. “Well, our mom was an emotionbender.” Sally noted. “Are you saying one of us could have that?”

“Wow, that’s a rare power. It’d be amazing though.” Gedra slurped, “Dang, I’ve practically sucked this dry. Hey short girl, get me another one?”

“Call me ‘short’ one more time?” Nea remarked spitefully.

They heard footsteps crunching the sand behind them and turned. Fybi was floating overhead—which means she couldn’t’ve been making them. When they directed their vision a little down, they saw who was walking. “AAAAAAAAAIIYYYY!” Sally panicked at the sight of the yellow-haired woman. “You’re that Phosphora lady!! Fybi, get behind us, we’ll protect your wings!” They each whipped out weapons and ducked behind the logs they were sitting on.

“Thine selfless words for my safety are accounted, but I doth not believe Phosphora’s intentions are murderous.” Fybi assured. “Though she hast been following me most creepily.”

“I just wanted to apologize, geez.” Phosphora shrugged.
The trio exchanged glances that said, ‘This is out of nowhere.’ “Weren’t you put in prison?” Nea asked. “How did you get out?”

“Some weirdo in a cape busted us out. He lent me a ship, but he was more-or-less interested in Arlon. Anyway, I’ve been feeling bad about what I did to Fybi back then, so I’ve been trying to find her ever since I got back to Earth, and…”

“Still doesn’t explain why.”

“It would so happen that we art both wingless.” Fybi replied. “Thou seeth…”

So Fybi recounted the tale Phosphora told her. “Oh. I see.” Sally understood. “So you just wanna get back home?”

“Not particularly.” Phosphora replied. “But Fybi wanted to see my homeland. I don’t see why.”

“I wouldn’t mind visiting Skypia.” Sally said with a dreamy smile. “All the angels and pretty clouds sounds like a wonderful place.”

“Yeah, but we’re talking about an island that’s always storming. Like, 24/7.” Aranea reminded. “If Phosphora couldn’t even live there wingless, what chance would we have?”

“Actually, Skypia does have a place called Rubberband Land.” Phosphora said. “They’re really fascinated with the material for some reason, and they have suits specially designed for tourists going to Birka.”

“So why didn’t you get one?” Sally asked.

“Viridi came to me first, and I… It was just more convenient for me, okay??”

Fybi raised a brow. She had a feeling she wasn’t getting the whole story. “Alas, Anthony trains tirelessly with fair Tom. I wish not to interrupt.”

“Got it, let’s ditch him.” Nea concluded.

“I wish not that either.” Fybi stared. “Mayhap I shall oversee his progression.”

Fybi followed the heat waves to the open area of jungle that was their source. Anthony was blindfolded, standing still and listening only to the earth, and when the earth said a sudden lava geyser was going to blast him, he would dodge. Round after round of geyser came; Fybi remembered a time when Anthony tried to punch a rock, and it only punched back, now he was risking his life sensing and dodging lava effortlessly. Fybi always admired his determination and spirit, she would hate to stop him for a trip to Skypia. …Fybi remembered what Tom said earlier, too. A bender owns their element, water can become ice, earth into lava, fire into lightning. …Air came in many temperatures, hot, cold, average. Maybe she could learn something from this, too.

Arlen, Texas

(Play “Savannah Citadel Night” from Sonic Unleashed.)

So much is taking place in so many places, we’ve seen that. It’s gonna get a little confusing now, ‘cause we’re jumping back in time. The same day that Nigel Uno died, the evening after Dressrosa, the Sandman was out. The sunset was beautiful over Arlen, Texas, the scent of fresh farmland plains reached their noses. Sandman observed the town from atop the signature water tower, Yuki and Wiccan floating up to join him. “It’s nice to visit the countryside once in a while, but what are we doing here, again?” Wiccan asked.
“Ted Wassanasong is one of the Corporate Presidents. He owns the Nine Rivers Country Club in this region. His colleagues come over often for a round of golf, so maybe we can learn something about them. Usually there’s a few guards that overhear conversations. Better be careful. After Dressrosa, the other presidents are probably on to me.”

Stage 34: Nine Rivers Country

Mission: Sneak into the country club.

The heroes jumped off from the tower and soared over the neighborhoods, embracing the marvelous, endless view before landing on the roof of Tom Landry Middle School. Plenty of thugs in cowboy hats were roaming the streets, and Nolan took notice of posters on walls and telephone poles. He zoomed in his binoculars to see they were wanted posters of him, Coldman, and Wiccan. “Yep, they’re really on to us. I wonder how much the country club upped their defenses. Hmm… if we break into one of these trunks, I could get linked in with their radio waves and eavesdrop.”

“10-4, Rubber Ducky, iron bull’s comin’ up the gravel.” Yuki joked, indicating the huge truck about to pass the school.

“Hang on, we wanna do this right.” Nolan said. “Wiccan, get onto the truck, Yuki will freeze the wheels, and before the driver has a chance to call for help, that’s when she’ll knock him out. Ready? Go.”

Quickly, Wiccan glided onto the truck’s hull and crawled to the front before landing on the driver’s roof. Yuki stealthily landed behind and launched two ice-paths along the road that froze the tires as they touched. When the chubby, brown-haired driver was panicking, Crystal stuck her staff in his window and shot sleeping gas. Nolan flew over and gently pulled the driver out before climbing in. He hooked his wristwatch up with the radio and downloaded. “This is Tow-truck Charlie comin’ to you from the highway, 500 gallons a’ propane tanks safely delivered to the country club.”

“Gadzooks, Charlie, what’s that got-dang Ted want with all this propane anyhow, he lookin’ to blow somethin’ up? Well, Ah ain’t lettin’ 100,000 big ones go to waste. Joe Jack, where the hell ah you with them 500? Joe Jack, you better ain’t be sleepin’!”

“Psst, Nolan!” Crystal hissed, indicating the unconscious driver’s nametag. “Uhh-” Nolan hesitated to grab the radio and respond with a country accent, “20-41, this is Joe Jack, en route to country club, everything’s Trevor 40-60.”

“Quit the jibber-jabber and deliver them tanks! Ah’m hittin’ the strip club, an’ when I come back, I better not be hearin’ no complaints from them Laotians. Hoooooo-WEEN, if I ain’t gonna be somebody’s daddy!”

The heroes ditched the truck and flew onto a nearby restaurant’s roof—Yuki dispersed the ice on the truck tires. “So Ted likes propane and propane accessories. Well, who doesn’t.” Yuki said.

“I’ve picked up the source of that transmission.” Nolan informed. “We could fly there and try to find why Ted ordered the propane.”

“But that man sounded like he didn’t know.” Wiccan replied.

“He could’ve recounted wrongly. Let’s check it out.”
They swung and soared over buildings to avoid as many squabbles with bounty hunters as they could. “‘You hear about that tornado that took out them Buckeyes up in Ohio?’ a conversation between nearby Texans was heard on their wireless.

“That’s the 5th one this week. That storm come up here and tear up mah Longhorns, Ah’m-a shoot it in the face.”

“You illiterate, storms don’t have faces.”

“They got eyes, don’t they?”

A few short miles outside of town, they found the source of the radio transmission, Strickland Propane. The plain before it was pretty open, but the heroes were able to hide behind a huge tank as they approached, unnoticed by the workers outside. A Hispanic man, Enrique was carrying propane tanks outside while a brown-haired woman, Donna, was wiping them clean. “The door’s sealed with a terminal.” Sandman observed. “We could probably get the code off one of them.”

“Can’t we just break the window?” Yuki asked.

“This is an innocent business, let’s not be mean.”

“Hey Donna, did Buck say how many-” Before Enrique could finish the query, Coldman ran out and knocked him out from behind, then Crystal squirted sleeping gas in Donna’s face. A group of employees came running from around the back, Sandman rolled forward and laid punches against two of them, linked them with the Line Launcher, and made ‘em slam into each other. Yuki spun around, created an ice disk, and tossed it under an employee’s feet to slide him to Crystal, who bashed him senseless, then she swung at the remaining one’s legs to knock him down as Nolan approached and grabbed him by the neck.

“Code to get inside. Now.”

“It’s ‘Service’! Service!!”

“Thanks.” So Nolan punched him in the face, throwing him on the ground. “It’s not mean, ‘cause now they’ll get compensated.” He typed the code into the door so the trio could get in. While Yuki and Wiccan explored the small, deserted business, Nolan entered Buck Strickland’s office. He checked the phone’s answering machine, replaying a message from yesterday, May 2: Ted Wassanasong’s moderate voice was on the other end, requesting 5,000 gallons of propane in exchange for $100,000, to be delivered to his Nine Rivers Country Club. And like Buck implied, Ted never gave any reason—

The phone suddenly rang, and Sandman scrambled to answer. “Um… hello?”

“Mr. Strickland, is that you? I was promised one more of your trucks would be arriving today. Is it on its way?”

It was Ted. Sandman cleared his throat and talked like the free-spirited man on the radio, “We’ HOWDY, Ted! Ah’m afraid Joe Jack ended up takin’ a little DETOUR, but he’ll have ‘em to you by the night! But I gots ta ask, Ted, why do ya NEED so many propaaaanes?”

“I am buying them for a colleague of mine, who wishes to make room in the local canyon. You know, the one that stretches to Mexico. It’s very near your store, in fact, and my country club, also. Though I wish he would have bought them himself, but I suppose he is quite busy with these odd storms occurring. I have my own projects to attend to, so please, make sure the truck gets here soon. Good-bye, Mr. Strickland.” Hung up.
“Nolan, take a look what we found.” Crystal said as she brought Nolan a small, mechanical ball, while Yuki showed him a handheld monitor with controls.

Curious, Nolan took the monitor and turned it on, seeing himself in the image. It was projected from the little ball in Crystal’s hand, and after pushing a button, it launched a grappler to the ceiling corner, pulled itself to, and stuck there. “Hm… Grapple-Cam.” Nolan read the label. “Why would Strickland have this?” He clicked an option to view previous recordings.

“OOOOOGGH!” They shielded their eyes from the sight. “Ugh, he’s repulsive!” Wiccan whined. “Delete!” said Nolan.

Sandman got the Grapple-Cam! Able to latch itself to any surface, it can spy on enemies from afar! It can transmit the controller’s voice to distract enemies and also self-destruct when necessary.

The heroes went outside and climbed onto the roof, seeing the canyon Ted spoke of very close by. “According to Google Map, this canyon does stretch to where Ted’s country club is located.” Sandman observed. “It might be worth a shot to sneak in this way.”

“Are you sure? I mean, we haven’t even tried the front yet.” Wiccan replied.

“Nine out of ten times, the front is the most protected after they were warned about criminals. They couldn’t expect us to go to the trouble of the canyon.”

“Twenty bucks they have guards there.” Yuki stated.

“I expect such.”

The heroes glided to and over the canyon’s edge. The breeze softened their descent and made their flight easier, turning a slight canyon corner before Nolan launched his grappler to a stable, flat ledge. His friends landed beside, then Nolan sent the Grapple-Cam to propel around the following corner, where its camera spotted a Laotian guard standing on a ledge before a cave. Without being spotted, he launched the Cam to the ceiling above the cave, seeing many armed guards patrolling the gorge ahead. There was a thin ledge high above the team’s platform, so Wiccan Rocket Boosted to it. Back to the wall, the witch sidled across the tiny foothold, around the corner, thousands of feet above the canyon ground, until she was directly above the guard. Nolan confirmed with the Grapple-Cam none of the others were looking through the cave, so Wiccan softly dropped down and gassed the guard unconscious.

Sand and Yuki could glide over and grapple to that ledge, passing the cave as they hid behind a group of tall rocks, unseen by anyone in the gorge. He had the Grapple-Cam latch around to the walls above the gorge, and the only way forward was through a passage within a wall, atop a short hill. A guard stood in the entrance, and when Sandman looked closer, a button was on the wall that would seal the passage if he spotted intruders. Sandman had the Grapple-Cam launch past the guard and up the rugged road. “Hey, you.” He spoke quietly from his end, but his voice was heard by the guard via the Cam’s microphone. The man turned and looked confusedly. The Cam went a little further down and called, “You, with the face.” A little frustrated, the guard hurried up, his gun ready. Before he had a chance to notice the little ball, “OOOOUUH!” Sandman shot its grappler at the guard’s crotch, weeping and falling on his side.

Sandman shot his own grappler to a tiny ledge on the side of a tall canyon needle, then glided into the passage before the other guards noticed. He punched the groaning guard unconscious, then returned to shoot his Shock Rod at two patrolling guards. Wiccan ran up from behind one and
knocked him out, Yuki froze the head of another, punched through the ice, and he was down.
Sandman glided behind two unsuspecting guards and slammed their heads together, then yanked another one over with the grappler and socked him in the face as he flew over. Sandman explored another hill to the gorge’s side that led nowhere, but its thin crevice beside it had a Riddler Trophy he decided to collect.

The heroes followed the rocky passage that was previously guarded and made it to another enclosed gorge where more guards roamed. “Well, this is already getting repetitive.” Wiccan said.

Sandman looked up at the needle towering over the gorge, its tip bulkier than its stability should allow. He had the Grapple-Cam latch up at the feeble stem and pushed the self-destruct. The explosion was small, but it caused the huge boulder to lose balance and plummet onto the ground, not crushing any of the startled guards. Out of curiosity, they all came to observe it, but the boulder’s impact caused the ground to give way and send them all falling. “WE’RE OKAY.” they chorused in Laotian.

“Easy way out.” Sandman said casually.

“Yes, but now the Grapple-Cam is gone.” Crystal reminded.

“Guess again.” Nolan smirked and pulled the metal ball from his pocket.

“… …How did you do that?”

“Facilier cast a spell so that all my equipment will return to me if they’re lost or destroyed. How do you think I never lose my boomerangs?”

“…Even Batman has no explanation for that.”

The heroes went around the hole, up the hill to the next passage. It was a narrow trench with rocky sides, and a chasm where only tall stalagmites went across. It was too narrow for Nolan to glide, and the walls appeared unstable for his grappler or Line Launcher. Thankfully, Wiccan could leap to each stalagmite’s point and balance, expertly jumping across the passage. A group of short slopes followed the ledge at the end, and a round boulder that was half Crystal’s height rested on top. She smiled as she rolled it down, crashing against the last stalagmite to create a domino effect. With all the stalagmites leaning, they were thin, but stable enough ground for her comrades to cross.

They trekked up to a ledge over another narrow chasm, in which some wooden platforms led to the left, around a corner, then along a canyon wall that overlooked the sunset sea. “WHEEEE!” A huge, block-shaped mechanical vessel flew out of the wall below and splashed into the sea.

“That was unexpected.” Coldman commented. “Any idea what that is?”

As Sandman was skimming below with his binoculars, “Any idea what THAT is?” He spotted some kind of giant figure climbing across the wall just over the sea.

“Strange. It looks familiar.” Wiccan said.

“Yeah, it does. I… recognize those kids. And that… skeleton boy, didn’t I see him… AUGH, too many distractions.” Nolan shook his head. “Let’s just focus, we’re almost there.” Sandman grappled to the next wood platform, but the following trench was all walls, no footholds, and zigzagged. He sent his Grapple-Cam through to discover there was flat, solid parts of the rugged, unstable walls, and was able to Line Launch his way across. He kept a careful eye on the flat parts’ position so he could shift direction of the zipline, slide across, then repeat the maneuver around
every corner, while his friends flew/surfed an ice-path.

Finally, Sandman could land on a ledge with a cave, which stored stacks of gallons of propane. “Is this where they’re keeping it all? Hm… should destroy them, but that may cause a mess.” The heroes instead climbed the rope ladder nearby (Sandman’s wheelchair had extendo claws for the purpose), making it onto the cliff that was the edge of the vast golf course. Laotian men were innocently playing golf, but guards were around too, and Sandman sensed one coming around the trees with Detective Vision. “You know what to do, Yuki.”

When the guard was in view, Coldman pulled him aside, knocked him out, and donned the garb. Nolan hid the fallen body and stole his passcodes. “Great, just sneak into the building and look for any clues you can. Actually, take this with you, too.” Nolan passed him the Grapple-Cam. “Good luck.”

“Won’t he look a little suspicious if he’s, er, non-Laotian?” Wiccan queried.

“Good point. Er… know any quickie salons?”

“Right here. Hold still, Yuki.” The witch whipped out two spray cans, spraying Yuki’s skin light-brown and his hair black—also smoothing it flat. “There. It might be offensive, but it helps.”

“Why do you have that?”

“I enjoy pranks, too.”

Yuki casually walked onto the golf course and passed his first guard. “YOU there! What is passcode to 3rd hole?”

“And the Oscar goes to:” began Nolan.

“Putter putter wedge hybrid.”

“OK. I don’t like your perfume.” Yuki passed this remark off and continued. A guard finished knocking a ball into a hole and asked, “YOU. What were the scores for the 2nd hole yesterday?”

“Four two one five.”

“Just making sure.” Yuki crossed hill after hill, sandpit after—actually, he stayed away from those on account o’ the Chain Chomps, but another guard approached him, “You, with the weird smell. What’s the code for the bar?”

“Kahn is an oying.”

“Ho hoh! You got that right.” Yuki kept calm and was seconds away from reaching the clubhouse. One final guard was protecting it. “Want to go in, eh? Well, give me the password.”

“Wedge hybrid chipper chipper.”

“Very good. But I’m a little bored today. Fancy playing a round of golf before I let you pass?”

“Uhhh…”

“Yuki, now!”

“OOOH-!” The Grapple-Cam pelted the guard in the crotch, Yuki hurriedly clamped his mouth shut, knee’d him in the jaw, and knocked him out.
“Hastily thought, but we don’t have time for a mini-game. Go inside.”

As casual as before, Yuki slipped into the clubhouse, seen by all the club members and guards as one of their own; save for his spray-paint-style perfume. He solved codes for numerous guards before he located Ted Wassanasong’s office, giving a small knock, hearing no response, and going inside. The desk was barren, only the ticking of the clock made sound. A few trophies for golfing tournaments stood, pictures of Ted on the field. A small glass cage sat in one corner, with a hole that looked as if it were burned open by acid.

Yuki sat at the desk and found a stack of papers inside. “Reports from an expedition to Mars? No way this guy went to Mars.”

“Well that mean he collected some marshmallows from that ridiculous rumor?” Crystal asked.

“Apparently trying to find good ground for golf courses. While there, he was attacked by an acidic leech that he took back for—”

Transmission went dead. “Yuki? …Yuki, where’d you go?”

“Ahh! Nolan!” Two guards grabbed and held Crystal from behind, while a third guard readied his golf club.

“DO NOT MOVE!” the guard demanded. “Take off your mask! Or I…I hit her with putter!”

Of course, the other guards had guns. Nolan raised hands in defense. “Don’t hurt her-”

“Take off mask now!”

Nolan hesitantly removed his mask and his hat. “Nnn-!” A dart got him in the neck, and the world went black. (End song.)

The world was hazy when his vision returned, and all was still black except for a faint light shining on a desk with a turned chair. A deep German voice spoke. “Hello… so honored to have you here. I had a feeling you would come.”

Nolan was on his wheelchair, wondering if he was in the clubhouse, or somewhere else. “I’ve been eager to meet you… Sandman.”

“Ted… Wassanasong?”

“No. I…” The chair swerved around. The bald, dark-skinned man with the white labcoat folded his gloved fingers, the light sparkling in his round glasses, “am Hugo Strange. Apprentice to the Leaders of the World Government. Please… would you sit—er… I see you already are.”

Nolan calmly rolled to the desk as Hugo poured tea for both of them. He took a cup and lightly sipped while Strange slowly walked behind him. “My masters keep saying how you killed President Doflamingo. Yet, that is completely out of character for you. …Is this true?”

Nolan was silent. “He got a little… troublesome for me. I wanted to avoid it, but I…”

“Why do you query with the Corporate Presidents, anyhow? They did not antagonize you in the past, did they?”

“One of them was antagonizing my son, another antagonized the world. They may be famous, but they’re anything but noble. So now I don’t trust any of them. And after hearing what the Leaders did to Nigel, I have no reason.”
“But you must understand, Sandman, what we are trying to accomplish. We wish to save this world from its evils. ‘Twas a terrible thing, what Doflamingo did, so you must agree, that evil beings such as he must be abolished, to make the world peaceful?”

“I believe that evil must be contained, so those people have several chances to redeem their selves. It hasn’t failed. I can name a few people.”

“People do not change their ultimate nature. If a person is born for evil, takes delight in it, they will always be evil. Those Brotherhood hooligans are nothing but obnoxious ruffians who cause mayhem for the sake of doing so, no true ultimate goals. Peoples’ lives would be much easier if they were all destroyed. You are a man of justice, Sandman. Why should you not aid us? Bring justice to all civilians.”

“Because the World Government makes crappy decisions. Need I point out two Corporate Presidents, again?”

“The World Government only wants the best for the world. Namely the children. And the Kids Next Door, especially, will end up destroying their selves in this pointless war. The World Leaders wish to save them from themselves because they do not understand, but we are adults, Sandman, we know. If you are not aligned with the World Government, you are enemies, we do not wish that for poor simple children. So I ask you, Sandman, cease these foolish endeavors. Set the example and educate your children, put them on the right path.”

“No. If the Kids Next Door want a fight with your Leaders, it’s the Leaders who need to worry. I can’t do anything to stop them… but I’ll be damned if I sit around and let my kids do all the work. What kind of example would I set if I didn’t knock a few heads in, ah?”

Hugo released a calm sigh. “It is a pity, Sandman… that this is your path. The Kids Next Door will never defeat the World Leaders, I’m sorry to say. It hurts to know you are worse now than your days in the Brotherhood.”

“How would you know about my-”

“I know many things, Sandman. I know that you did not kill Doflamingo, but that monstrous Cheren child. I know that many of your friends are part of the rebellion called the White Lotus. And I have no intention of letting any of them proceed.”

“Why should we be afraid of you?”

Hugo smiled and walked behind his desk. “I may not be a bender or a metahuman, but I have powers, Sandman. With my knowledge and experience, I have proven myself to the Leaders. You’ve seen it yourself, on your trip to Freddy’s.”

It was then that Foxy’s words popped back into Sandman’s mind. “I don’t-a remember his name, but he was a bald man with a white coat and glasses.”

Nolan stared at Hugo. “You’re the one who… trapped those spirits inside robots?”

“Yes. But that particular bunch were prototypes. I could not control them, and my horrible blunder landed me in prison. My master, Felius Umbridge bailed me out, and I continued my research. Doflamingo’s daughter helped to rectify that previous mistake… but I improved upon it: by creating the Puppet.”

Animatronic, toy-like versions of Bonnie, Freddy, and Chica appeared from the darkness behind Hugo, Nolan readying his guard in fright. “As you might know, Sandman, children are much easier
to control than adults, and child souls are no different. Hypnosis puts their innocent minds to sleep… mends them to my will. I think you will do well inside a Freddy suit, Sandman, and given enough expertise, easy to control. Farewell… Nolan York. You’ll see your son again, soon.” The hologram disappeared. “BLOOUAGH!” The animatronics seized their chance on Sandman.

Hawaii

Tom sent waves of lava that Anthony blocked with rock walls, and the hardened lava eventually molded them all together into a single 5-foot wall. Anthony jumped on top and sent it surfing to Tom, who punched a hole open to dodge through, then Anthony landed behind and stomped a rock to the back of his head. “OOF!” The teen fell forward. “Ow… heh…” He pushed himself up and turned to Anthony with a smirk. “I gotta admit, I didn’t think you’d be thinkin’ that fast.”

“I’m not stupid, durrrr. I could see a pebble comin’ a mile away, you can try, but you won’t hit me.”

Fybi knew she couldn’t let this chance slip. She flew down into the trees, got a pebble, flew back up, and put it in her B.O.W.. She locked tight onto Anthony’s eye, and flung. “Ow!” A direct hit.

“Ah ha ha ha ha ha!” The angel twirled. “A mile off may be thine claim, but within said mile, whom’s to say?”

Anthony rubbed his eye angrily. “You’re just jealous ‘cause I could take you down in a fight.”

“Mayhap so, in thine natural environment. Alas, I must speak with thee of a matter.”

“Yeah, what?”

Fybi once again explained the story. “Hold up, hold up… so that Phosphora lady appears outta nowhere and apologizes, now you wanna visit her homeland? Well, I don’t trust her, and neither should you.”

“’Tis not a matter of her trustworthiness… but mine own reasons are thither. Thou may question my soberness, but I hath seen Birka in a dream. ‘Twas very straightforward; ‘thou art going to a place called Birka’, yon fairy said. Doth not deny our knowledge of the great journey is very small, training be an excellent direction, though alone, how far will we go? I believeth Birka may hath answers. I believeth I must go thither, and I wish for mine friends to see my homeland.”

“Fine, but why should I go? Skypia doesn’t have any earth, does it? I couldn’t help you there if I wanted to.”

“Kid, I think you should go.” Tom intervened. “She’s got a point—er-, I don’t understand her very well—weird way o’ talkin’—but somethin’ about training not being everything, well, that’s true. You only really learn from experience, even if this place doesn’t have any rock. If it’s really an important mission, you should go with your sector. They need a leader, don’t they?”

“Well… I guess.”

“’Tis not like we hath not flown storm before.” Fybi noted. “To the beach, and we shalt make S.C.A.M.P.E.R. ready for liftoff.”

The others were a little disappointed to leave Hawaii so soon, but who knows, Skypia could be a top vacation paradise. Everyone settled into the S.C.A.M.P.E.R.; including Phosphora’s special reserved seat. “O-kay… why is this the guest seat, again?”
The lightning woman was squeezed inside the air vent; which looked like a tiny cage from this angle. “You’re still a convicted felon.” Anthony remarked from the captain’s seat. “And I’m only on this trip for Fybi’s sake, don’t know what’s goin’ on in HER head.”

“I doth not know the meaning behind mine dream, either. Prithee, Phosphora, are there other things peculiar about thine birthplace?”

“A-Actually…” Phosphora looked down. “I should’ve mentioned this… Birka’s currently ruled by a king… er, more-or-less a ‘god’. Part of his policy includes the banning of anyone weak, like… like a powerless Nimbi. That also includes humans; I don’t know why he hates them so much, but he loves creating storms over their settlements.”

“So did you.” Anthony remarked. Phosphora glared.

“An evil king that hates humans? Maybe woulda been worth mentioning.” Nea said.

“Mayhap that wast my reason for going thither. To end corruption of evil god, like fair Pit in his days.” Fybi spoke dreamily. “Or doth I speak in more dreams than I shouldst? Regardless, ‘twould not be foolhardy to garb Nimbi disguises whilst in Land of Rubberbands.”

“You’re already going the wrong way.” Phosphora informed. “Rubberband Land was-”

“I know yon directions. But I wisheth to return home for a moment. Thou seeth,” Fybi smiled, “I fly fairer when the air touches mine face.”

Solana; over Jellatonia

An attraction beam extended all the way down from the Star Train to the surface. Clank freely flew up in its anti-gravity pull, and Nefarious Drones had Maddy, Drake, Ratchet, and Zach asleep in their possession. “This is Dr. Nefarious to recovery team, you should be onboard the vessel in five minutes. You’ve served me well, Klunk.”

“It was my pleasure, Sir.” Klunk said with Clank’s average tone. “In the end, tricking these fleshies into breathing the toxic Sleepytime Jelly was a walk in the park.”

“If what Mr. Dark says is true, Maddy will realize her destiny inside a dream, and when that happens, we will take her to her supposed Poneglyph. The brat will have been awakened, and I’ll only need to put up with her for 3 more weeks!”

“Yes. But except for the quest part, we can merely keep her asleep for that time. Mmhmhehehe.”

Once the robots were onboard, the Star Train could sail away. “Ahhhh…” Nefarious sighed with satisfaction, relaxing on a control seat. “A job well done. Say, any of you guys up for-” There was a light shake, and alarms started sounding. “What the heck?!"

The exterior cameras picked up a smaller, silver train circling to their sides. Despite being so tiny in comparison, the pilot’s voice was loud enough for the whole Star Train to hear. “HEEEEEY you stupid FAT TRAIN! You got to da count o’ futatsu to SUBMIT TO THE ROCKET-SAN and all her glory!” (“Gyom-gyom!”)
I’ll be honest, I had qualms about making the Star Train battle this early, but now I’m glad I did! This was a pretty fun chapter to write!

Chapter 24: Power of Teamwork

Solana; Star Train

An exciting brawl was taking place within Star Train’s living room. Mario vs. Snake vs. Ike in Super Smash Bros. Universe. Because those were the characters Yellow Monkey – Specter’s chubby, net-pants officer with questionable sexuality, Dennis – Plankton’s hired bounty hunter, and Flint Vorselon (see earlier chapters) were playing as. The clash was heated and exciting, but in the end, Mario was supreme victor. “No fair! You cheated!” Dennis accused.

“Ohck, out-RAGEOUS!” Yellow replied cheekily, swaying his body and passing Dennis a flirty smile. For the moment, we’ll decide it’s a ‘he.’ “My qualities are inherited, they’re naturally given! Excuse ME if you’re a sore loser.”

“I had a shotgun, grenades, a cool helicopter, your character shouldn’t have had anything but plumbing equipment.”

“If Lord Vorselon may intervene,” said the Terraklon, “these controllers were not made suitable for one with my disability,” he held up his robot claws, “and cannot be held or maneuvered with precision by my suit without error.”

“We told you they didn’t make controllers to accommodate a one-eyed fish in a robot suit.” Dennis stated.

“True, but they did come with these pretty little rubies!” Yellow Monkey showed his pretty sparkling controller.

“Are you three playing that stupid game, again?” Dr. Nefarious scolded as he, Specter, and Plankton entered.

“It’s NOT stupid!” Vorselon whined. “You’re just saying that because I BEAT you yesterday and you know it.”

“Shape up, Dennis, or your brain’s going in the same place that guy’s head is.” Plankton ordered.

Dennis stood up and faced the microorganism with strict eyes behind his sunglasses, “Not until this cheater admits he BUMPED me with his big round bottom when I attempted the Down-B move.”

“Don’t flatter me, Mister No-Bottom, or take off those disgusting glasses.” Yellow shirked.

“Lord Vorselon would like to reprise his argument, and criticize the lack of adaptability regarding these-”

“ARE YOU THREE QUITE DONE?!” the three masters screamed.

The henchmen’s heads shrunk. “Yes.”

“Then get to your stations already.” Nefarious stated. “Two of the Seven Lights are on that vessel,
and Mr. Dark is incredibly antsy about a certain one.”

“And Maddy is here, and I captured that boy earlier, if we captured these kids, that’ll make four of the Seven Lights in our possession!” Plankton beamed.

“You remember they still have to awaken, right?” Specter inquired.

“Yeah yeah, we’ll get to that part later. What we wanna do now is put ’em into slumber until they learn where they gotta go in their dream. We’ll wake them up every 5 hours or so to check progress, and once they learn something, we’ll help them on the journey.”

“Except that Sheila brat has to be asleep as well.” Nefarious recalled. “Anyway, just work on capturing all the brats. …I wonder though, should we outright say who the Lights are? It’s getting annoying to talk about them indirectly.”

“Just for fans’ sake, let’s keep it a mystery.” Plankton said.

**R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.** (Play “Space Battleground” from *Star Fox: Assault.*)

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**Stage 35: Star Train**

**Mission: Rescue Nefarious’s prisoners!**

“Can’t you drive this train any faster?” Chris yelled. “You saw them take Maddy, Drake—and what I think was Zach, on that train!”

“Chris has a point, they’re already sending ships at us.” Aurora ducked when the smaller aircraft began blasting lasers. “We need to start attacking.”

“Hey, what you think this is, your everyday track race??” Chimney scolded. “We playin’ this by the book. Graceful train-fighting, precise, fair, and sportsmanly. I’M COALING HIS WINDOWS!!” She stomped the gas.

“WHOOOOAAAA!” All of the kids whipped against the wall when the train shifted sideways. Chimney flew along the Star Train’s side, her R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.’s chimney aimed at the exterior as it made a trail of black smog.

A Pipo Monkey in an air helmet was innocently cleaning the windows when the train shot by, blackening his whole area. A camera crew was filming him at the time. *We should’ve gone with the terrorist movie.* the caption read.

Laser cannons appeared on the train’s side, all firing bright green, diagonal lasers, some upward, others downward, but Chimney maneuvered her train like a worm in-between the beams. “A’ight, this guy wants to go loco a loco, Ah’ll show him loco. SUCK THESE LASERS, Säsüpäsaiizu!!” Chimney kicked over to a switch along the left of the controls and smashed, unveiling a row of cannons on the bottom corner of her train. They blasted lasers and destroyed the Star Train’s turrets, then Chimney yanked up the steering wheel, looped the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. in a circle, and burned a hole into the side of the Star Train that exposed Space Mama naked in the shower—the woman screeching with her high opera voice before hiding behind the curtain.

When Chimney’s train became horizontal again, the operatives were on their rears, with Mason unable to hold in barf. “Chimney, you gotta think about installing seatbelts…” Haruka moaned, Aeincha facedown on her skirt.
“Nnn? I dunno what those are. Okay, get ready, ‘cause I’mma about to chop off the latch!”

“Chimney, wait!” Haylee cried. “If you cut a hole open, maybe we can use that to get in! Besides, you shouldn’t do too much damage before we rescue them.”

“So I’m to just sit here and let this bozo flash his turn-signal at me??”

“Well, there is a lane-change coming.” Dillon pointed. Apparently, they were on some kind of giant-train space-road that was between energy lines, and an arrow sign indicated a shift toward the right, so the Star Train had on its turn-signal as it did so. This road was not seen for the rest of the flight.

The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. swerved around to fly beside the opened hole again, but Space Mama had gotten a washing machine, hidden behind, and released a string of small rockets that formed a barrier over the hole. Chris lowered a window to punch fire while Sheila sent Light Spheres, but both attacks bounced off the shiny, round-ended explosives. “Can you blow open a different hole?” Chris asked.

“Hey, I got a lot-a stuff on this train, so I’m pretty limited in all o’ them, including laser juice. I wanna try to save it.” Chimney informed.

Space Mama climbed into the washing machine and came out in her astronaut outfit, dancing gracefully in airless space as she shot yellow lasers from her bazooka – which weren’t really single straight beams, but rather segmented bars of energy, packing the strength of giant bullets when they struck the silver train. Angered, Chimney pulled a lever beside her chair, opening a hatch on the back of the train that dropped a powder keg. She stomped a gas pedal and ignited her rear engines, burning the keg as Space Mama was swallowed in colorful, intricately decorated fireworks. “Ooooo!” The light reflected in Vorselon’s eye. “Is it Terraklon Midyear already?”

“Look at all those colors, April! So pretty!” Mary beamed.

“We got those from a girl in Sector JP.” April mentioned. “I helped design the colors. They keep enemies mesmerized for a few minutes.”

“Let’s try to get inside in the meantime.” Aurora decided. “Chris, I’ll use my icebending to freeze the side, and you blow it open.”

Chris pulled off his headband, giving the Combustion Eye breath. “Got it.”

The kids held on when the train spiraled and swerved again, so the open window was aligned with the Star Train’s side. “Ice Gate, open!” Aurora touched her head and powered with frosty Ice Chi, blasting twin rays at the train. The cold air reached the kids’ skin, the low temperature of space also complimented it, and a great circle of ice was frozen against a tiny part of the massive train. Enemies came at them, so Chimney had to boost them away, activating mini turrets on the upper corners that blasted bullets. After most of the ships were down, they swerved around and flew slowly beside the frozen patch. Chris inhaled, channeled heat into his forehead, aimed directly through the open window, and spark. spark. spark. spark. spark. BOOM. The wall was completely ruptured.

“The enemies have breached a hole in Wing 75.” A Team Rocket agent examined a monitor. “We’re sending a repair team to fix it.”

“Don’t.” Giovanni spoke calmly, petting his Persian. “Let them board. It will be easier to catch them when they’re inside. Besides, I want to see my enemies’ face.”

“Nyaaaaa.” Persian yawned.
Chimney flew them away from the Star Train, several meters upward before turning around to boost directly at the opening. “I’m gonna drop you guys off and keep blasting this tonma from the outside. Don’tchu guys blame me if I hit you too hard.” Chimney told them.

“Ready to go, Gonbe?” Aeincha asked, seated on the giant-to-her rabbit with her grappling hook ready.

“Gyom-gyom!”

“Mary, you’re coming too, right?” April asked with a smile.

“Whuh? Can’t I stay on the train?”

“NO! She has to go, too!” Chimney yelled quickly. “F-For experience, yeah!”

“Mary, what can you do, exactly?” Haruka asked.

“I stab people with this palette knife!” Mary grinned and showed them the thin, round-edge knife.

Dillon sweatdropped. “Those can’t actually hurt people. Anyway, are we even sure this is a good idea? It might take forever to search this whole giant train for these guys.”

“You dun’ need to worry about that.” Apis said with a sly smile. “Mocha has experience rampaging through trains.”

The giant flushed and grinned. “It’s a gift.”

“Prepare for train-to-train exchange.” Chimney declared with a strict face. “In 3… 2… 1…”

The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. rammed through the hole front-first and came to a stop partway inside a hallway. “RAAAAAHHHH!” Mocha stormed off the train and was eager to begin stomping the swarms of Nefarious Drones.

“She knows how to get things done fast.” Haylee said in disbelief. After the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. backed out of the hole, the kids readied their guard when squadrons of Rocket Agents, Plankton robots, and Pipo Monkeys came down from either corridor. “We can do our part, too.” Artie proclaimed. “Let’s look for the pilot’s station. We’ll demand whoever’s in charge to tell us where Maddy is.”

“We’ll search other parts and radio you if we find her.” Aisa informed, clutching her G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A. Dials. “Wish us both luck.”

“You call THIS luck?” Sheila spun her left leg, turned it gold, then her right leg, and ran lightspeed through the Rocket Agents.

April held up her paintbrush and palette in a stylish fashion. “Ready to show them Goldenweek Art Style, Mary?”

Mary opened her briefcase and clutched numerous crayons between her fingers. “Let’s do it!” She used a light-blue crayon to color the bottoms of her shoes. She raised her palette knife as April whipped red paint over it, then grabbed her cousin’s arm before spinning around and sending Mary at the Nefarious Drones – the blue crayon under Mary’s shoes allowed her to glide across the floor like ice. She spread the red paint around the robots, and this Color of Bullfighting forced all the drones to shoot each other, though they aimed to shoot the girls.
“Do not aim that at-” a robot spoke before being shot.

“I’m sorry. My sensors are processing that color so vehemently.” his friend said, before being shot himself.

The W7 members followed April and Mary’s direction (Mocha could take care of herself, for the moment) while Sector V faced the corridor of Pipo Monkeys. Kirie folded her hands, prayed, and summoned the Rainbow Monkey spirits to battle through them. Chris ignited his jetboots and grabbed Mason’s arm, flying over the enemies while the latter drank Flurp and farted Gas Bombs downward. Haruka took the liberty of moving the gas aside so her friends could progress, but reformed the cloud so the monkeys could remain crying.

Team Rocket Agents summoned Rhydon and Machamp to attack Sheila, who ignited her tail with golden light and spun against the Pokémon, able to push them, but not enough to take them down. She spun her Midas Fists into being and socked the musclebods in the gut, causing them to cough spit and fall down. Hecklers stormed out next, and Sheila dodged the Hoodlums’ cannons while spinning her fists again to punch through the armor. “Mr. Dark wants the raccoon captured alive!” an Elite Hoodmonger reminded. “Don’t wound her too.” This Hoodmonger was kicked numerous times across the face by Sheila, ‘til the Black Lum flew out.

“The real issue is not getting wounded by her too much.” a Rocket Agent said.

“Oooooh!” The agents panicked when Sheila jumped before them, smirking. “Naaah, you dogs ain’t worth my time.” Sheila waved off. “My mates on the other hand can use a workout.” She ran away, just when Sector V showed up.

“Shadow Possession!” Dillon stretched Mario to catch a number of Agents while Haruka defeated them with Sleeping Gas. Haylee extended her wrench and started whacking agents unconscious, and all Harry needed was a kick in the shin.

Before they could let feelings of victory get the best of them, a huge door behind the agents burst down, and out stomped Yellow Monkey in a bigger, inflated form. “Oh, I was WONDERING what was causing such a ruckus out here! What an ADORABLE bunch of cute, little kiddies!” He folded his fingers and swayed his hip.

YOU’RE a peculiar kind of Rainbow Monkey. Kirie signed with resent.

“I’d love to engage in your frilly little shenanigans, but you’re being a tad rude with all this noise, so I must beseech. Don’t make me tickle your little tootsies!”

Aurora was weirded. “Yeah… uhhh… I’ll handle this guy, even though I’m a little creeped out. I shouldn’t be too long.” She balled her fists and switched to a determined aura, her friends supporting her decision to not let them fight the weirdo and going ahead.

“You have twin elements, but I bring with me the ancient stylings of Japan! By harnessing my chakra, I have access to all the powers of the universe. I’ll give you only a meager fraction, of my NINJA ATTACK!” He pinched his breasts, sending shurikens from his nipples that were connected to thin chains.

Aurora dodged back, holding back her comments of disgust before freezing her leg in ice and flying at the ape. The heel of her foot gutted Yellow in his round, blubbery belly, but unsurprisingly bounced away. “Ooo la laaa! A frosty girl, aren’t you? You make my nipples—”

“PLEASE don’t finish that sentence!”
Four Nefarious Drones tried to shoot Mary, but she swiftly skied between them and colored their backsides using orange crayon. The robots were confused, but suddenly they felt their circuits overheating, repeating their “Not cool” remarks before exploding. “Hooraaaay!” Mary twirled on her ice-bottom shoes. “I did it, Ap—WAAAAH!” She lost balance, her feet frantically slipping, and she fell.

A swarm of saucers flew from another corridor, commanded by Pipo Monkeys. Apis focused her mind on the apes and tried to speak with them, Don’t shoot at us. Land your saucers. The monkeys considered it, but their Pipo Helmets reminded them, Obey Specter. Specter is king. Attack the humans. The W7 members dodged the saucers’ lasers, a far easier task for Aisa with her Mantra as she began blasting her G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A.s with near-perfect precision. “Aisa, I want us to try and take the saucers to fly them. Can you hit the helmets so I can talk to them better?”

“If you say so.” Since the saucers had glass domes over them, Aisa began flying with her Jet Dials and shot the domes with gumballs, steadily cracking them before they successfully broke. Aisa then retrieved her bow, took aim, and pierced arrows through the flashing helmets. Apis once again spoke to the monkeys, and with a weaker remembrance of Specter’s orders, the apes complied and landed their craft. Apis hopped in a saucer, joined by Aeincha and Gonbe, Aisa her own, and Mary, but they had an awkward time sitting since the monkeys were much shorter than they were, ergo the saucers were small.

“Er- I- don’t- know- hooooowwwww…” Mary’s saucer shook as it uplifted, but quickly plopped down.

“I can’t fit in mine, anyway.” April replied. “Let’s just stay together. You guys go on ahead.”

“Okay. Careful, you two.” Apis replied before the three of them plus Gonbe flew down the hall.

“Wait, I just realized something!” Aeincha exclaimed. “Aisa, can’t you use your powers to find Maddy’s group??”

“Oh yeah! I never thought of that!” the Nimbi replied. “It’s kind of a big place, but… I’ll try.” She slowed her saucer and closed her eyes. Hundreds of auras were made visible to her. “Lessee, monkeys… robots… Mocha’s having fun… a… what’s this?…” An aura was coming directly to her, leaping with its foot aimed.

Aisa gasped and swerved her saucer aside, avoiding Dennis and hitting the wall before she fell to the floor. “I was hoping for someone more worth my time… not a couple of little girls. Oh well… as long as I get paid.”

“I don’t have time for you!” Aisa yelled, blasting gumballs which the hunter rolled and avoided, lunged at Aisa to punch, but she dodged aside.

“Do you want us to help you?” Apis asked.

“Huff. Just fly ahead and keep looking. I’ll keep this guy busy. I’ll keep using my Mantra to look for Maddy and radio you if I find her.”

“Sigh.” Apis hated for them to be so separated like this. But since she and Aeincha might not fair well against a man of his agility, they kept onward.

Dennis whipped out throwing knives and hurled them at Aisa’s feet, but she was more nimble than he gave thought, for she gracefully dodged them, jumped and kicked off the wall, and flew foot-first at Dennis, but when the hunter grabbed her ankle, the minute Aisa shifted upside-down, she
grabbed an arrow and stabbed it through his wrist. “Ooo!” He released as Aisa landed on her feet, swinging a kick up to his crotch. She smirked victoriously when he slouched and backed away. “Hmph. Wouldn’t expect that from someone with no boots. You might wanna get a load of these.” Aisa’s eyes widened when big, steel spikes appeared from the bottom of his boots. He stomped at her, Aisa dodged back and noticed how those spikes pierced the metal floor. “You’re an angel, are you? Perfect! I’m a Fishman!” Dennis pulled off his bandanna to show his blue lips and sharp teeth. “We’re natural enemies!”

“Really? Well, now I see why me and Chimney don’t get along well. It’ll be more fun kicking your butt.” Aisa smirked. She joyously dodged about while Dennis stomped his spikes, going circles around the hunter until the floor around him was filled with holes. The floor shook, and Dennis screamed as he plummeted to the lower floor. “Hm-hm, and you’re just as dimwitted, too!” She grinned.

Sheila and Chris were blowing down numerous enemies for their Sector V friends, Hoodlums were dropping like flies, then flying away like actual flies, ‘cause they kind of are. Before long, too many Black Lums were clouding the hall, the kids unable to see through the blackness. “Darn bugs. I’ll try and clear them.” Haruka puffed a gas cloud into the air, causing numerous Lums to drop, but they didn’t stay down, and the kids had mixed thoughts about crushing them.

“Any other bright ideas?” Mason asked.

“Bwah ha ha! There is nowhere you can run, you fools!” The Black Lums scattered when twin electric whips lashed across them. “Not when LORD VORSELON makes his grand debut, for the second time!”

“Lord… Vorselon?” Dillon looked up and gasped. “HE’S the one who kidnapped Maddy and Drake!”

“Then we found the right guy.” Chris cracked his knuckles. “Tell us where they are.”

“Bwah ha! Our Star Train is enormous! You can spend the rest of eternity, but you will never find the Maddy child, in Car 2 on the 4th floor in the central wing!”

“Can we take a guess?” Haylee raised a hand.

“You can try, but you will FAIL!”

“I think she’s in Car 2, 4th floor, around the central wing.”

“WHAT?! You couldn’t POSSIBLY know that! Lord Vorselon will thwart you before you progress any further!” He twirled his whips, stuck the hilts against the floor, and the flimsy electric beams traveled around the floor and walls as 2-D lines, shifting at numerous 90-degree angles as they got below the group’s shoes and zapped them.

Dillon jumped away from the lines and stretched his shadow to bind the cyborg, but a quick lash of the whips scared Mario off, then Vorselon turned invisible to sneak up behind Sheila and sock the back of her head. The others bolted away and Kirie pulled Sheila along before Mason and Haruka shrouded the area in gas, leaving Chris to ignite it. They dashed down the hall tirelessly, but stopped beside a directory of the train. “We just need to cross Car 3 and climb up three more floors.” Artie observed.

“The bridge is over there. Let’s go!” Chris yelled before the team proceeded.

Medical wing
“Nuuuhhh…” Maddy moaned weakly, lain on a somewhat-soft bed while ‘Clank’ used a gas mask to fill her with pink gas.

“If more parents knew about Sleepytime Jelly, there’d be no more late nights.” The robot said casually.

“Uu… Clank… what are you…” Ratchet moaned in his half-awake state.

“I would have thought you knew by now, Ratchet.”

“No… you’re… Klunk? But I thought I destroyed you.”

“I was rebuilt by Dr. Nefarious.” Klunk’s eyes turned red. “The beauty of being a robot is extended life. You should try it sometime.”

“Whaddid you do with Clank?…” Ratchet tried to sound angry.

“He is someplace where you will never find him. Not that you will have the chance. We need to keep Madeline alive, but Dr. Nefarious has not specified orders for the rest of you. Although a few hostages will come in handy, before you make the jump to slaves for our new empire. You’ll feel more lightheaded after some sleep, Ratchet.”

“WAAAAAH!” A storm of Planktonbots and Rocket Agents scampered across the room. “Help us! She’s on a rampage!” an agent cried.

Klunk looked at the camera monitor, seeing dozens of robots crushed by the monster at large. “Here already, are you? This should be a good test of my abilities.”

Outside, Chimney was ecstatically evading all the gunfire, maneuvering ever closer to the front of the Star Train. “This one’s on YOU, Kodama!” She pulled a lever, the roof of a back car opened to unleash a swarm of fireworks. They flew in a circle around Nefarious’s giant head, lighting with sparks as they seemed to be burning through the exterior. Chimney flew directly in front of the train’s eyes and blew the train’s horn loudly. “HEY, Mr. Orokana Robotto. YOU STINK!!” She barrel-rolled her train against the massive window and flew away.

“HEEEEEY!!” Nefarious screamed ragingly. “If that left a crack, I EXPECT YOU TO PAY WITH YOUR-”

“Sir, you must remember your oil pressure.” Lawrence informed calmly. “You would not want to enter All My Circuits when you’re about to meet your enemies.”

“Yes… you’re right, Lawrence. I’LL GET YOU IN TIME, you brat! YOU HEAR MEEEEEEEEE? Sigh. Alright, let’s go.” Nefarious calmly walked away.

Chimney grinned proudly after her little move, but it seemed the fireworks burned out before burning through the head in time. Regardless, she kept her smile, looking at her wristwatch when Dillon sent a call. “Hey, we just learned Maddy is in the 2nd car. Think you can fly by and make ready for our escape? If you can’t do it yourself, we’ll tell you when we’re about to blow a hole open.”

“I might ‘ave enough juice in this baby. That is, if I ain’t exhausted thrashin’ this guy. UNLIKELY!” Chimney stomped the gas and boosted around the Star Train’s head, flying the opposite direction alongside it.

Apis had just received the call on her own watch, with Aeincha looking over her shoulder. “Second
“Not-a so FAST!” sang Space Mama’s opera voice, swinging her bazooka to knock Apis’s saucer out of the air. “Meester Dark DEMANDS you all captured, so IIII weel cap-ture theeee.”

April and Mary were skiing up the hall on Mama’s left. “GO, Mary!” April threw her cousin by the arm. Mary flew at Space Mama, palette knife outstretched, and sliced her helmeted head clear off her body.

“AAAH!” Apis and Aein screeched. “You actually cut her!”

“No she didn’t.” April pointed. “Look.”

For those who don’t remember, Space Mama’s hands, shoes, and head were separate from her body. The head spun in midair as it returned. “You an-noyeeng lit-tle girl, how DARE you at-tack meeeeee. Time to make you pay, yes, time to make you bleeeeed!” Before she could blast her gun at Mary, Gonbe leapt up with Aeincha riding him and bit Mama’s hand. She shook him off and redirected to shoot the rabbit, but forcibly whipped around toward a red mark on the wall and shot it. “Vhat?”

“Have fun with that.” April smiled and painted numerous red spots on the walls before hurrying forward with her friends. The disembodied actress shot every mark in her attempt to shoot the kids. “Leetle brrrats, come BACK heeeere!”

The W7 kids found an elevator and rode it to the 4th floor, checking a nearby directory to confirm their selves close to the bridge to the 3rd car. Planktonbots were rolling up, so April drenched Mary’s palette knife with pink paint so she could spread it against the robots and make them feel weak and depressed. The girls kept running and eventually crossed to the 3rd car. Pipo Monkeys excitedly hopped at them and blasted laser guns, which Apis countered by drawing a M.U.S.K.E.T. and shooting their helmets. “I wish I could do more. These monkeys aren’t easy to control with those helmets on.”

“April, maybe you can give us some blue paint?” Aeincha asked.

“I could, but it’s dangerous. Chimney could handle it, but you never…”

“Just give it to me and see what happens.” Apis said rushedly. Shrugging, April dipped her brush in blue paint and created a mark on Apis. The Christian felt a powerful burst of energy. “Oh-ho, THAT’S what Ah’m talkin’ about!” Moving much faster and stronger, she zipped around and punched all the apes unconscious, and when Protomantises started marching down, guns blazing, Apis was able to yank the weapons off their bodies and bash their domes in with them. “Come on, fellas, let’s go!” She was excited to move forward with this pent-up energy.

“April, I think Chimney might’ve drunk some of your blue paint.” Aeincha mentioned. (“Gyom-gyom.”)

Sector V was rushing up many flights of stairs that shifted back-and-forth for each floor, no different than the ones at school, but at least they didn’t need to carry backpacks. “Go, Typhlosion!” “Magmortar!” Rocket Agents sent their Pokémon to blast powerful bright flames around the whole hall, but Chris sucked up a portion like a vacuum and coughed Fire Bullets against the creatures. “Noivern, use Dragon Pulse!” Another agent summoned the Dragon-type, who charged a green energy ball and fired. Chris charged a Combustion Beam and destroyed the sphere halfway, but Noivern flew through the smoke and slashed Chris across the face with Dragon Claw. “Gah!”
A swarm of locusts were suddenly clouding around Noivern, released from Artie’s mechanical backpack. “Kinda remembered this when those things were swarming us earlier.” he mentioned. Sheila punched Light Fists to knock agents down one at a time so the crew could proceed. They heard another pattering of footsteps to their right, and were joined by Sector W7. “Glad you could make it.” Mason said.

“We’re almost at Car 2.” Aeincha said. “We’ll save Maddy and the others soon.”

Their wristwatches rang as Aisa appeared to be calling them. “Guys, are you sure they’re really in Car 2? Because whoever told you that might’ve been trying to trick you.”

“Whaddyou mean?” Haru asked, the group not ceasing as they crossed the bridge into Car 2.

Down in her quarters, Aisa was about to cross to Car 3. “I’m sensing Mocha a few hallways down, and she’s in a battle with something that’s with four other presences.”

Chinking sounds were heard behind her, Aisa turned to see two patches of steel spikes charging at her along the floor; Dennis was running across the ceiling in the lower room. “I think Maddy and the others are in there!” she yelled. “You might be walking into a-”

“AAAAHH!” Dennis burst up from the floor and flew his fist at Aisa, who evaded, grabbed the Conache Pumpkin from her satchel, and swung it against Dennis into the wall.

Sectors V and W7 ran past slide-open doors. “Aisa, what’s-” Chris responded, the group half-focused on their path. They heard the doors close forcefully behind them, and Sleepytime Planktonbots guarded it. (End song.)

“So we meet at last, do we?” The friends faced ahead. Spotlights lit up a stage, and five figures appeared. Some of them were familiar.

“So we meet at last, do we?” The friends faced ahead. Spotlights lit up a stage, and five figures appeared. Some of them were familiar.

“’ey! It’s…” Sheila pointed.

“Prepare for trouble, you annoying worms.” Giovanni smirked.

“Make it multiple like thousands of germs.” Specter followed.

“To protect the universe from ultimate doom.”

“To decorate it just like we would our room.” Mr. Dark said.

“To rise above the average big-lug bullies!” Plankton perked.

“To carry everything on our pulleys!” Nefarious continued.

“Giovanni.” “Specter.” “Mr. Dark.” “Plankton!” “Doctor NEFARIOUS!”

“Team Gnik, going faster than the speed of light.” Giovanni said.

“Surrender now, or be destroyed by our might.” followed Nefarious.

XANA appeared on a screen, then zapped onstage with his teammates in a second. “That’s ri—ght!” He glitched.
“XANA?!” Chris and Dillon exclaimed.

“Whodat?” (“Gyom-gyom?”) W7 asked.

“I must be honest, I thought the ‘motto’ wouldn’t sell us very well, but hearing it roll off the tongue was very nice.” Specter said.

“I still don’t get why I only got the last part.” XANA replied grumpily.

“Well, you *have* been hooked on the computer most of the time.” Dark informed.

“And you haven’t been dreaming?”

“So you’re Dr. Nefarious?” Chris asked.

“And Mistuh Dark!” Sheila balled her fists. “’e attacked me an’ Fybi with a genie monster!”

“Yes, and I was courteous enough to let you roam the Dream World in search of the Lights.” Mr. Dark said. “How dare you repay my kindness by attacking my soldiers. Keeping bases organized isn’t easy, you know.”

“We should let you guys know,” Plankton whispered, “Mr. Dark’s a little grumpy since he’s the only non-scientist.”

“For the last time,” Dark glared, “I don’t *need* science when I have sorcery.”

“Show me your PhD in magic and we’ll be square.”

“You little-!”

“I wanna play with the monkey!” Mary yelled, tugging on Specter.

*No, I do!* Kirie refuted, tugging his other arm.

“Nnnn, stop that! Stop it right now!” Specter’s collar sparked, “You’re ruining my voice-modifier!”

“Your voice sounds funny! C’mere, monkey!” Mary ordered.

“I, said, STOP!” He stretched a psychic bubble and blew them off. He fixed the collar while Giovanni spoke.

“By this point, you children have likely caught on to our actions by now. Our armies are conquering the Earth as we speak. Our goal is the same as yours, however: to find the Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses to enter the New World.”

“But as this universe is seeing its last days, we felt it natural to make the best of things.” Specter followed. “My goal is to dominate the Earth with apes. Nefarious wishes to rule with robots. Of course, ruling together will no doubt cause conflict, which is why we’ve made a pact: when the Keys are gathered, and the Gate is open, each of us will have a fraction of the New World. A fair deal, I would say. There should be no conflict involved. And my teammates agree.”

“But there is another rule to the prophecy: who controls this universe controls the next one.” Mr. Dark continued. “That is why we of Team Gnik must conquer now, so the denizens of this universe will know their future. In dreams, seas, stars, earth, and Cyberspace, we will control all.”

“How the hell do you even *know* about the Apocalypse?” Harry asked.
“Thanks to a certain man.” Giovanni grinned. “A man who saved us when we were down. Gave us a means of success, through each other. Lesser Lord Ragaj Gnik.”

“Who’s that? Someone who works for the World Government?”

“HA HA HAHAAHAHAHA!” They all laughed. “How RICH that you think those pathetic humans are behind it a—ll!” XANA glitched. “Quite contrarily, we are against them, too.”

“Our goal is to find the Twenty Keys.” Nefarious recapped. “We know who they are. You know nothing! But if you cooperate with us, things can go much smoother. We will reveal the Lights to you and help you awaken them, so we can open the New World, save everyone from the Apocalypse, together!”

“Wait- you said you would reveal the Lights to us, but what about the Darknesses?” Apis inquired.

“Ah- yes, about that!” Nefarious spoke knowledgeably. “Y’see, we… have no idea who those are. Ragaj never told us. Zilch, not a clue.”

“But that’s besides the point.” Plankton spoke up. “We see how well you work together, and well, I didn’t like these guys at first, but given a few months, they’re okay! So I’m sure we’d make such an unbeatable team, moral differences notwithstanding, and we’re kinda stronger than you anyway, so whaddya say we forget this whole battle and work together? Like they teach kids nowadays, about the power of teamwork.”

“Valid.” Haru agreed. “But we have better things to do than be friends with a… germ, a computer nerd, a pair of clothes, an albino monkey, a guy with rectangle eyes, and a life-size toy radio machine.” She pointed each respective member out, Nefarious last.

“LIFE-SIZE TOY RADIO MACHINE?!” The robot’s circuits sparked. “If I haven’t heard a misconception greater than that one before today, I’LL DISLOCATE MY HEAD AND USE IT TO BAKE—” His circuits overloaded, and All My Circuits was on.

“Oh, I’m just too confused, Boxy. How can you go on, knowing no matter what happens, robotic chickenpox will prevent you from adopting a puppy. Oh, why must we be plagued with such misfortunes. Can you ANSWER that, Boxy, despite your trillions of Gold Bolts and triple-size robo-Amazonians? I…”

Lawrence came out and lightly knocked his master’s head. He put on a baseball cap, pulled out a bat, posed like he were about to swing, eye on the head, and… he fixed a loose bolt with a screw, and Nefarious was back to normal. “Thank you, Lawrence. Enjoy your baseball game.”

“I will indubitably, Sir.” The butler rolled away.

“Back to business… Of the lot of you, Sheila is the most crucial to our plan.” Mr. Dark said. “So we will be taking her. I’ll also be taking—”

“Yeh yeh, lemme ask something first.” Sheila rose her hand. “So Maddy and ‘er blokes are in the 3rd car, not this one?”

“On the first floor, yes, that’s how we tricked you.”

“Just makin’ sure.” Sheila lit her tail gold and spun two beams at the Sleepytime robots, then Chris blew the door open with combustion. “AFTER THEM!” Nefarious cried, the Team Gnik members chasing.
Aeincha rode Gonbe like a giant wild bull through the smoke, “Nyaaaa!” but soon after they were through, Persian was after them. He swiped his claw at the rabbit, who dodged aside while Aeincha through her grappling hook at his eye, the cat flinching and swiping his paw against the rope, flying Aeincha off of Gonbe’s back. She nimbly dodged Persian’s pouncing paws and snapping teeth, but soon found herself pinned. His fangs came at the tiny’s head, but Gonbe leapt and sank his teeth in the cat’s tail. Persian screeched and whirled in circles to shake the bunny off, but Aeincha had thrown her hook into his mouth so his rapid turning would yank the tiny into the air until she swung onto Persian’s head.

“Bad kitty, down kitty!” Aeincha lied along his nose and tugged Persian’s whiskers on either end. Strangely, the Pokémon settled down and became far more docile. “That’s it, good boy. To the third car, let’s go!” She tugged his whiskers toward the bridge as Persian obediently dashed that way.

“No! Come back, you stupid-!” Giovanni tried to chase and shoot the Return laser from his Pokéball. The operatives had crossed the bridge as Team Gnik chased them—“GAAAAAAAH!” A string of huge blades sliced across the ceiling, hitting Nefarious and pushing him outside.

“How is THAT for teamwork, tonchikis?” Chimney exclaimed, having just sliced the roof of the bridge with blades on the bottom of her train. “Thanks for the heads-up, April, you all make it okay? Mary, too?”

“Yes, we’re just fine!” her teammate responded.

“Dammit.” Chimney cursed. “OK, get ta rescuing Maddy-chan and I’ll meet you down there.”

Nefarious flew up before her windshield using jetshoes. “You’re not leaving ‘til I get 10,000 Bolts in repairs!”

“Nehhhh. I rather just shoot you with lasers.” Chimney pressed twin buttons on her wheel, pushing Nefarious through a wall of the Star Train via lasers.

Plankton bounced over to Mr. Dark and spoke, “Just so ya know, Mr. Dark, it’s ready whenever you wanna use it.” He smirked evilly.

“Yes… I think we should do that now. Come along, Sheldon.” He held his hand open for Plankton to jump on, then Mr. Dark spun into a vortex with his Protoon.

**Medical wing**

Mocha flew backward and shook the room, rolling aside before Klunk lunged with his fist. The once-tiny robot had transformed into a super-strong fighting machine that was twice Mocha’s size. “You might be larger, but your body is still flesh.” Klunk said. “When bone hits metal, one is sure to break.”

“I know that. Which one, though?” Mocha got up and threw her fist, Klunk caught it in his larger palm and swung Mocha against the wall, the giant collapsing on the floor. She thrust her hands against his hip as she stood and shoved with all her might, Klunk’s feet scraping against the floor until she shoved him out of the door. Mocha hurried over to Maddy and poked her with her finger. “Maddy? Maddy, wake up.” She spoke softly.

“I have given her 2 gallons of Sleepytime Jelly gas, ensuring she has sweet dreams.” Klunk returned. “Many have fallen to their intoxicating lure, and not many have awakened. If you have any means of ‘shocking’ her out of such a state, feel free to try.”
“WHOOOA!” Yellow Monkey suddenly rolled into the room and knocked the robot down. “Oopsie! Sorry, Dearie.” The overweight ape was lain on his front over Klunk. “I got a little ditsy and got beat by that missy.”

“Yes, and I’m proud to finish you in this pose.” Aurora flew above them and released twin beams of ice to freeze both giants. She landed on the ice cube and slid to the floor, reverting out of her Ice Fury. “Okay, now I regret it. You alright, Mocha?”

“I’m fine.” Mocha smiled, ignoring her own bruises and bloody nose. “We need to wake Maddy up soon. But she’s out cold.”

Aurora spoke to her wristwatch, “Chris, are you guys coming? Maddy and the others are safe, but we can’t wake her up.”

“The robot said we could wake her up with a shock, but I don’t know anything that could…” Mocha spoke regretfully.

“Hmm… I know this sounds crazy, but… it just might work.” Chris responded.

“If you’re sure, then go ahead and try it. What is it?”

Three minutes later, they arrived. Aurora and Mocha stood aside and watched him approach the girl on the bed. Like Sleeping Beauty… Maddy was so pretty in slumber. Only one thing could wake her. He was on his way to fulfill this task. He stood over Maddy and bent his head down. Their lips made contact, a deep, warmhearted kiss… Maddy’s blue eyes opened.

The gray eyes of Mason Dimalanta stared longingly into them. Maddy never socked anyone harder in the face, and Mason’s speed flying into the wall was unusually fast. “PFFFFFA HA HAAAAA!” Dillon cracked up. “Oh man, I can’t believe you did it!! Way to go, Bro!”

“Pluck!” Maddy spit several times and wiped her tongue. “Dillon? Mason? What’re you guys up to?”

“Dillon offered Mason 20 bucks to test if metahumanism was contagious.” Chris chuckled. “Now we just need to wait and see if he gets it. …You okay?”

“Y-Yeah… where’s-”

“WAKE UP!” Mocha screamed, smashing Drake with the heel of her foot as the boy wheezed awake. Kirie tickled Ratchet’s nose so the Lombax sneezed awake.

“Well, we worked that problem out.” Artie said. “What’s wrong with him?” He lightly tapped the Zach statue, which fell over.

“He’s, uh… going through a… wh-where’s the exit?” Maddy didn’t know how to finish that.

“Chimney’s supposed to pick us up on an upper floor.” Haylee answered. “Let’s regroup with Sector W7 quickly.”

Outside, Chimney was still having a blast in her R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N., expertly evading all enemy aircraft and tricking them into crashing each other. Every little move that humiliated this giganto-size train made her even more happy, because it proved even further that her train was the big gahuna. “I no know what that is exactly, but it’s time for this Rocket-san to go! Time to show this big-so my ultimate technique. Get ready for LIGHTSPEED JETSTREAM ATAAAAAACK!” She uncovered a hidden, giant red button that she pressed excitedly. Jet wings appeared on all sides
of each car of the train, the craft glowing blue and zipping miles into the stars. The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. was returning, ready to puncture the center of Car 2 with extracted blades on the front.

Mr. Dark and Plankton appeared in a room of Car 2 as the latter hopped up to the cockpit of a giant ray gun (about the average size of a normal person). Plankton typed on a terminal and locked onto the incoming train. “Target sighted, all we need is the power source. Would you do the honors?”

“Gladly.” Mr. Dark placed the Protoon into a slot in the cannon’s base.

“This should be enough juice to take Bigmouth down a few pegs. Listen, Darky, since we’re friends now, I uh… I wanna tell you something, and I don’t know who else to turn to. …I think XANA is seeing my W.I.F.E. behind my back.” Plankton spoke sadly.

“Now Plankton, you shouldn’t go thinking that your wife, a computer, gets a little lonely because you’re a microorganism and XANA’s another computer she can relate to.”

“But I don’t know how to confront them about this, and it’ll feel really awkward working with him…”

“XANA doesn’t even work with us much, he’s always in Cyberspace – look, can we just focus on this?”


“Rocket-san’s pumped and prime, ready to BLOW this baby a new one!” Chimney exclaimed with an almost psychotic grin. “Engines more than charged, commencing contact – warning, countdown may be shorter than implied – in:”

“THREE…” Chimney and Plankton’s eyes locked tight. “TWO…” Plankton’s ray gun brimmed, Chimney’s train was like a blue sun. “ONE…”

The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. was a split-second away from piercing the Star Train, but the green light of Plankton’s device swallowed it. “What the—” Before she knew it, Chimney fell to an extreme decrease in speed. “AAAAAAAAAHHHH!” She crashed into the side of the train, her own train bouncing as rampantly as a toy down stairs.

“Chimney?” Apis spoke into her wristwatch. The W7 members waited worriedly by the window. “Chimney, where’d you go?”

“She didn’t get shot down, did she?” Aeincha asked, still on Persian’s head.

“Knowing her, she could’ve crashed herself.”

“Nya-nya.” A red light swallowed Persian, and Aeincha fell to the floor.

“Sorry about your pitiful friend.” Giovanni remarked. “Perhaps you would’ve been better off on our side. Golem, use Tackle Attack!” He tossed his Pokéball open.

“Goooooolem!” The Rock-type spun into a ball and launched, the kids jumping aside into an alternate hallway.

Apis used telepathy, Golem, are you weak against ice?

Yes.
“Mary, your blue crayon!”

“Okay!” Mary rushed over and drew light-blue on Golem’s face. The Pokémon curled up and shuddered in place.

“Ahh!” Giovanni was caught in Dillon’s Shadow Possession from behind. The other operatives were with him.

“Guys, where did Chimney go?”

Before any of the members could respond, Aisa called their communicators. “Guys, I’m sensing Chimney in Car 4, lower floor. You better come quick.”

Sector V nodded W7 to do so, so the friends ran off. “NYAAAAH!” XANA appeared behind Dillon from thin light, the shadowbender dodging his dual blades. Chris and Mason shot fire and gas, but XANA warped and caused both powers to explode and blow everybody back. “Hahahahahaha!” XANA spun to a halt. “Didn’t expect ME to come back, huh?”

Dillon glared. “XANA, I thought we destroyed you back in Cyberspace. Why are you alive?”

“The power of desire goes a long way, boy. I don’t very much enjoy it, being in this human wor—ld. I’m not the only one. Vanellope hates it, too.”

“Whaddyou mean Vanellope?!”

“Hehehe! Bye-bye, now!” He ran away with his cape blowing behind.

“Come back!” Dillon furiously chased.

“You must forgive XANA’s childishness.” Specter floated into view with Dr. Nefarious. “He is only 7 months old. Thank Nefarious’s technical knowledge in repairing his software.”

“Oh, you flatter me too much.” Nefarious flushed. “Anyway… BACK TO THE BED WITH YOU!” he screamed at Maddy.

“We’re in space, there is no bedtime!”

“Now tell us who the other Lights are!” Chris demanded.

Nefarious loomed snarkily at him. “Is there an ‘Or else’?”

“Right here.” Ratchet’s grenade exploded against the back of his head. Nefarious poofed into smoke, and a metal drum replaced him. “What?”

“Watch out!” Drake grabbed him and ducked, the others following suit when heat vision beams zipped from down the hall.

“I didn’t just take it like a wimp during my youth years. I’ve mastered Ninjutsu!” Nefarious declared. “Substitution… and now:” he formed swift hand-signals, “Shadow Clone Jutsu!” A squad of clones appeared behind and lunged at each kid, pinning them down. Chris lit with fire and dispersed his clone, then quickly punched fire at the others, but Specter lifted them with psychic.

“You can try to defeat us, but there is no means of escape. You’re trapped here. Accept—” His collar crackled. “Son of a- what’s WRONG with this-?”

Drake aimed his harpoon to pierce the base of Specter’s chair, the ape falling as his psychic hold
broke. Mason burped a Gas Bomb at Nefarious, which Chris countered with a fireball to blow the robot up, his Shadow Clones vanishing. “Let’s look for the others and find a way off.”

**Cargo hold**

“Nnnuuuuh…” Chimney was knocked unconscious after that sudden and bumpy ride. She was still on the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N., but the atmosphere beyond the windshield wasn’t space, it looked like… mountain-size crates in a vast, metal plain. The ground outside suddenly shook, Chimney panicked and thought she was under attack, then a tremendous green shoe stomped before the windshield. She almost fell off her seat when the ship shook, for some force was raising it upward. A great blue eye was peering into her window, blinking. Chimney didn’t need long to process what happened, but she was afraid, more afraid than she’d ever been about anything:

Mary Goldenweek was holding the shrunken train and staring at the tiny driver. “Chimney?”

“NAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!” The other W7 members came shortly after – even from their relative distance, Chimney had the loudest scream imaginable. “NOOOOO! PUT ME DOWN, PUT ME DOWN, ON’NANOKOS, SAVE MEEEEEEE!”

“She shrunk again.” Apis said with disbelief.

“Poor Chimney.” Aisa sighed.

“Good thing Aisa has good Observation.” Mocha noted.

“Oooooo! Chimney’s train got small!” Mary beamed, observing it from every angle. “She’s small, too! I wonder if she’ll fit in my train set back home?”

“NOOOOOOO! I’d rather die before my baby becomes one of your toys!! Aisa, make me big before I kill myself!!”

“You have some anger issues to work out.” Aisa said, lightly taking Chimney out of the window and holding a red apple beside her—Chimney jumped onto the magic fruit and munch-munch-munched right away. “Why am I still tiny?! WHYYYYY!!”

“Oh, is that Skypian Apples? That won’t work.” Everyone looked above when Mr. Dark appeared, holding the Protoon to his cloak while Plankton stood on his hat.

“I used Mr. Dark’s Protoon as the power source for my shrink ray!” Plankton proclaimed. “He was so nice to let me borrow it.”

“Indeed, our one weakness was that we squabbled too much. We at Team Gnik must learn collaboration if our plans are to have succession. So from now on, you may borrow my troops, Sheldon.”

“And you may use mine, Thaddeus.”

“Sheldon? Thaddeus? THOSE ARE YOUR NAMES? PFFFFA HAHAAHAHAH!” Chimney clutched her ribs and fell on her back, earning disbelieved stares from her teammates. “Gyogogogogogogyogogyo!” Gonbe was cracking up, too.

“At any rate,” Mr. Dark continued with resent, “my Protoon’s magic is powerful beyond your knowledge, so your toy train won’t be flying you anywhere anytime soon. Enjoy your stay on Team Gnik Express-”
“HYAAAH!” Mocha leaped up and punched the cloak man into the wall, Plankton with him, and shook the floor upon landing. Mr. Dark fell, looking up with fright as Mocha flew toward him with an Armament punch. He whipped his Protoon upward and projected a pink shield, the impact of Mocha’s punch creating a powerful collision that made the whole train car rumble. The shield broke after seconds, surprising Mr. Dark, but Plankton leaped up, puffed, and grew to Mocha’s size with a burly muscular body – save for his tiny head, and sent the girl flying with a punch.

“I had second thoughts about Specter’s Vita-Z Bananas at first, but they were SCRUMPTIOUS!” Plankton proclaimed, flexing his muscles. “Next time I visit the tavern, I’m telling those thugs HAVE SOME OF THIS!”

Mocha ran at Plankton and locked arms, shoving with almost equal strength. “Wh-Whoooa!” Mocha lost balance when Plankton shrunk back to normal, smashing facefirst into some crates. Mr. Dark caught Plankton before swirling his cape and vanishing. He appeared above Mocha, dropped Plankton, and the organism puffed to muscle-size again to crush Mocha’s back.

“HNNN!” A large crate burst down by the might of Dennis’s spiked boots. Space Mama gracefully landed beside him, dancing on her toes.

“Meester Dark, yooooww, I have found them noooow, I will GLADLY-”

“UGH, will you PLEASE shut up!” Dennis demanded.

“Mama…” Mr. Dark gestured at the girls with his eyes.

“Oh-ho, of course!” Space Mama jumped to the center of the girls, spun, and hit them away with her bazooka. Aisa gasped and rolled away before Dennis stomped, Gonbe jumped to bite his ear and Apis grabbed him around the neck, the hunter grabbed and threw both against the floor. The three hurriedly got up and ran when he threw knives, the hunter giving chase around the giant crates. Mocha was thrown into another stack, catching Plankton’s fists in her palms and pouring every ounce of strength to hold him back. Aeincha ran up the giantess’s arm, up Plankton’s arm, and began punching the organism’s little head. “Hey-hey! Get offa me! My muscles! They’re too… big to reach!” Indeed, his arms couldn’t flex enough to reach his own head.

“UUUUU-YAH!” Mocha gutted him with an Armament fist and sent Plankton across the room, leaping for a follow-up beatdown.

Space Mama flew above April and Mary and separated both girls by shooting the floor between them. They flew separate ways, but the actress focused her attacks on April, who jumped several paces backward while slashing pink paint at the woman.

Mr. Dark materialized above Mary, yellow eyes glaring. “Finally, you’re alone. I’ve been eager to meet you.”

Mary gritted her teeth and lunged at him with her palette knife, but Mr. Dark shot purple lightning from his Protoon and blew her backward. “You can drop the act around me. We both know what you really are.”

“Wh-What’re you talking about?” Mary asked.

“I have an acquaintance in the Dream World, you see. You’d be amazed how many people suffer… seek desire and redemption through means of slumber. You’re… hur hur hur. A very interesting specimen. So I shall be taking you-”

“ZORA JUJUTSU!” A swift, sudden, bullet-size blur zipped every direction across Mr. Dark’s vision,
until it shot right between his eyes.

“No! Ugh! Uuuuuurr!” Chimney squeezed herself between his eyes, and Mary watched as they both rolled out, his clothes drifting to the floor. The Protoon clinked and bounced across the floor. Chimney crawled out of the cloak and scampered over to Mary.

“For the record, I only saved you for April’s sake, but I for one find you annoying. Now take me to on’nanokos AND BE CAREFUL WITH MY TRAAAIIIN!”


In Car 3, Dillon chased XANA and blasted a G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A., but the Program became pixels and glitched behind, kicking Dill in the back of the head. “Hahahahaha! Surprised? After you ‘destroyed’ me with your H.E.A.D.S.E.T., I was able to absorb Vanellope’s glitching prowess through it! I detest them strongly—y, but they make do.”

Dillon recovered and glared spitefully, “Where’s Vanellope?! What do you mean she hated this world?”

“I mean that she no longer desires you and your miserable group. She was suffering in this world, dying. She didn’t belong. I helped her find solace after the Zoni returned her to my world, and now she is working with me. We are BOTH working under Lord Gnik’s instruction, controlling the world of Cyberspace. Face it, boy. You may have thought you had a sister with Vanellope, but you were less than just non-blood. You were never one in the same.”

“You’re lying!” Dillon yelled passionately. “Vanellope loved our world! She loved being able to see it, and loved hanging out with us. And wherever she is… I’m sure she would come back to us if she could!”

“You’re still the same as you were on our first meeting: gullible to strangers, gullible to yourself. You’re the one who’s lying, denying that Vanellope was dying in this world, denying her the aid she needed. Tell me, boy, why would she want a brother like you? A brother who refused to cure her illness? What sliver of evidence have you to show me she still cares about you?!”

“Becauuuuuuue… I do?” They both faced a nearby monitor—Dillon’s eyes fell so wide, they would burn from its staticky image.

“V…Vanellope.”

“Geez, Dillon, did someone carve your eyelids out? You’re such a dweeb!” Vanellope said with her adorable, candy-girl voice.

“Vanellope!” Dillon reached up and touched both hands on the screen. “Y-You’re here! Where are you?!”

“Look, I can’t tell you everything and I don’t have much time. I don’t exactly know what’s going on myself, but the Zoni had a message to send you and Maddy. They said you had to return to Earth, but Maddy needs to stay here, and find someone called… the Disbanded? They’re never really clear about things, like apparently there’s two of those Shimmer things, one of them is...—” Static.

“Vanellope!”

She appeared once more. “Dillon, I’m on the Bridge to the New World. Yeah, I know it sounds weird, but the Zoni said you’ll be coming this way soon. So... we’ll meet again. Count on it. See ya
later, Dillon. Stay sweet!” The screen went off.


“Dillon, you okay? We have to find W7 and escape.” Aurora said.

“Uh- r-right!” Figuring he could explain later, Dillon joined his friends.

They scurried back to the first floor and regrouped with Sector W7. “Where are those guys, did you lose ‘em?” Aisa asked.

“For the moment.” Maddy panted. “…Who’s that?”

“I’m Mary!” the girl grinned, head tilted sideways and her knife drawn.

Maddy sweatdropped. “I don’t like her!”


“We have a small problem…” Apis showed them the tiny train.

“You expect us to ride in that?” Artie asked.

“I DON’T WANT ANY OF YOU FATHEADS IN MY BABY!!” Chimney cried.

“We’ll need to steal some of their ships or something if we wanna get outta here!” Haruka yelled.

“There’s not enough for all of us, and we need to find a ship for Mocha.” Haylee mentioned.

“Huff… huff…” Aurora was out of breath. “I’m too tired… I can’t take another…”

Protomantises, monkeys with guns, Planktonbot Chucks, and Hecklers surrounded them. Dennis, Space Mama, and Vorselon smirked at their victory. The friends were too tired, their only means of escape was disabled, they were completely surrounded… if there was ever a time for a miracle, it would be now. “…Apis, what’re you doing?” Chimney squeaked.

The Christian child was on her knees with hands folded. “Praying to God for a miracle.”

“Apis, if there was ever a time to stop being stupid, IT WOULD BE NOW!”

I’ll. . save. . you. . I’m. . com. .ing. .

Apis’s eyes widened. “Guys! Did you hear that?”

“I swear to God, if you say ‘The Lord spoke to me.’”

I’ll. . save. . you. . Get ready. . to jump. .

The voice was distant, majestic, otherworldly… Apis, for a moment, believed God was speaking to her… His voice was right inside her head… just like… her Animal Telepathy.

The train shook furiously at that moment. The right side of the hallway was steadily detaching from the rest. That whole chunk of the train popped off, in the mouth of—it was a weird sight for them, too—a tremendous space-whale.
“WHAT- THE- beep.” Nefarious’s censor program beeped. He and his allies were aghast at the creature.

The great white whale spat the chunk of Star Train away and flew forward with his open mouth looming. It crashed against the side of the train, the kids frantic to keep their balance as it tilted. “Guys! I think he wants us to jump in!” Apis yelled.

“I’M NOT GONNA BE KRILL!” Chimney screamed.

“I must’ve summoned him with my power—he shouldn’t harm us! Come on, let’s just go for it!” Without waiting another second, the Catholic fearlessly jumped onto its tongue. With questionable looks, all the operatives and Ratchet dropped onto the squishy floor. The great whale, Mobius Dick, sounded its cry to the stars and flew away, unleashing a spout of energy from its hole and vanishing into space.

“Grrrrrr DAMMIT! Shitty cock-beep son of a BITCH!” Nefarious stomped. “Why is it that, just when EVERYTHING goes my way, some giant beep-ing space-whale comes and TAKES MY PRISONERS?!”

Lawrence casually swept the floor of the ruined train. “I should’ve paid extra for the censor options.” He resumed sweeping.

I really didn’t expect to stretch this chapter that long. :P I wanted to include the next Fybi scene, but I guess I’ll save for next time. So after a long, hard-knock battle like that, let’s dedicate the next chapter to some downtime. :P Happy 4th of July.
False Gibberish

Chapter Summary

The Kids Next Door try to find a way to get back home.

Like I said, cool-down chapter.

Chapter 25: False Gibberish

Mobius Dick

The band of operatives were impressed, to say the least. The inside of an interdimensional space-whale was certainly not what they expected. “…Nice place.” Haylee said. Apparently, the whale had eaten its share of spaceships in its time, and kept several of the parts inside to serve as living quarters. One of the ships had a kitchen with some food still in the fridge – alien food, true, but any provisions were good right now. A few bedrooms were around, not enough for all of them, and a living room for space-TV.

“No telling how old all of this stuff is.” Artie observed. “Everything looks intact, so I can only surmise Time is at a stalemate within this creature.”

“So we’ll never grow up in here?” April asked.

“Possibly. Unless all of this stuff was recently acquired.”

“Then how do you know he ain’t tryin’ to eat us?” Harry asked.

“I’ll ask it. HEY, MR. WHAAAALLLE.” Apis yelled. “ARE WE YOUR DINNER?”

Nooooo…

“See, we’re just fine!” she grinned. The others questioned her judgment.

Drake walked to one of the beds, slipped off his shoes, and lied down. “‘Long as I finally get to snooze, I’m fine with it.”

“Weren’t you just unconscious?” Mocha asked.

“Cruckers, we might be the youngest tykes in centuries to explore the belly of a space-whale.” Sheila said with amazement. “We’d be right down in the head to pass up this experience. I’M first to ride the blowhole!” She marched forth.

“At least we have a chance to rest after today’s events.” Chris said, brushing his headbanded forehead and looking at Maddy. “I think we all have a story to tell.”

They all spent what felt like hours resting in the giant whale. Though it was possible no time was passing at all outside. Some operatives were getting well-desired sleep, others were exploring this peculiar creature. Otherwise, they were summarizing their exciting tales up to this point, or passing the still-time with some fun.
“And that, Mary, is why whenever your close, respected friend is shrunk to a powerless size, you must treasure each moment because you may rarely have another chance.” Aisa explained with a devious grin.

“Oh! That all makes sense!” Mary replied brightly. “And Chimney’s okay with it?”

“Who cares.”

“NO I AM NOT OKAY WITH IT!” While Chimney was squirming ragefully between Aisa’s toes, the Nimbi was scraping dirt out of her nails using the toy R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.’s blades. “AISA, IF YOU DON’T QUIT CONTAMINATING MY BABY NOW, I’MMA DISOWN YOU FROM MY SECTOR. I SWEAR TO ALL THAT IS HOLY, OBEY ME RIGHT NOW!”

“Oh? Mary, you have some food between your teeth.” Aisa noticed.

“I do?”

“Yeah. Here, use this side to clean it out.” She grinned witfully and passed her the train.

“Okay…” Though she didn’t feel anything, Mary scraped the toy train’s blades between her teeth. “Is it gone?”

“No, a little on the left.”

“SHE’S LYING, MAR-CHAN! THERE AIN’T NO FOOD, STOP ABUSING MY BABY!”

“Did I get it, yet?”

“Yeah, you did. …Do me a favor and scratch my back, Mary-chan?” Aisa turned around.

“Okay!” Mary lightly scratched the train’s blades along Aisa’s dress.

“Ahhhh, that’s the spot. I really should wash this thing…”

“I’m going to murder you both in your sleep. Not joking.”

Chris and Maddy sat on the edge of a second-floor bedroom within a chunk of a ship. After both of them told their stories, Chris finally revealed the birthmark under his headband, and his reasons for hiding it. “So you had that power… all along?” Maddy asked.

“Yes, but like I said, it’s dangerous. If I get hit in the forehead, that’s the end. Keeping a chi-block over it keeps it safe. …To put it frank, I’m a freak among firebenders.”

“Maybe, but doesn’t that still kinda… go against everything you’ve been trying to tell me?”

Chris sighed in annoyance. “Fine, you got me. People shouldn’t be ashamed of their traits or ‘deformities’, but if you have something that’s legitimately dangerous, it is a good idea to hide it until people warm up to you. But that factor wouldn’t have supported my argument to you regardless, that’s why I kept it a secret.”

“Well, I… can’t argue with that. I gotta be honest, I’m glad you don’t show it around often. I never woulda spoken to you, ‘lot of people wouldn’t. So did your friends know?”

“Not until recently.”
“Does that mean you aren’t warmed up to them?”

“Of course I’m warmed up to them, but if they knew I had a Combustion Eye, they’d keep pester- ing me to use it. And I didn’t wanna have ta keep relying on it ‘cause it’s dangerous.”

“So why now?”

“Because Cheren says we should pull all our strengths together, so I reckon it’s time to let it loose.”

“Oh. Still… you—”

“—would look weird walking around with an eyeball on my head.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll still wear the headband, take it off when it’s time for use. I never used it much at all, so I’ll be pretty rusty.”

“Maybe I can help you train with it.”

“Madeline Murphy teach a bender how to do a specialized move? You haven’t been breathing enough oxygen.”

“Come on, if you can teach me to fight small-size, I can help you use a laser eye. Let’s find someplace after we get off this whale and try it.”

“Well… okay. I’m just afraid of it going faulty.”

“If anything, we’ll make it an emergency attack. You’re a good-enough firebender as it is. So, did your parents know about it?”

“I was born with it, so yeah. All the doctors know, Melody found out, George—I mean…”

“Who’s George?”

“George King, from Sector IC. He, uh… kinda found out during Arctic Training. Heh, kinda just remembered, I made George make an ‘Unbreakable Vow’ to save you. We sent his team to find you in the first place.”

“I didn’t think the two of you were so close. Whaddyou have to bond over?”

“Well, after he promised to keep this a secret, we sort of hit it off, we’re kinda like pen-pals. …So, um… what’s with Zach, exactly?” He gestured at the blank-faced statue by the bed.

“We just sorta found him that way. If he’s just in one of his phases, he’s really overdoing it. Sigh… but at least you all finally showed up. Hopefully, we can go back to Earth.”

“Y-Yeah, but… remember what Dillon said?”

“About what?”

Apis was sitting on the tongue of the whale, smiling brightly as she exchanged pleasant conversation. “So Mr. Whale, what do you eat?”

_Quantum energy. . . galaxy dust. . . and space-krill._
“Are you the only one of your kind?”

There are millions. . . or perhaps I’m the only one across timelines. . . I never stopped to ask.

“Why did you come to save us?”

I heard you ask. . .

“Do you mean that God heard my prayer and He told you?”

I was passing this plane of existence at the time of your prayer. . .

“Hmhm! I’ll take that as a ‘yes.’”

Aeincha hurried over beside Apis and sat down. “Boy, I never knew anyone get chummy with something that could swallow them whole. Except for me and Chimney! Heehee!”

“It’s definitely not something you see everyday. But I guess the space-whale is only one of God’s magnificent creatures!” Apis grinned.

“Oi, Apis, if you keep preaching about God, we might ‘ave ta turn our treehouse into a church!!” Chimney shouted from afar.

Apis frumped at that statement. “Oh Aisa, you have a booger in your nose.”

“Oh! Thanks, Apis-chan!”

“NOOOOOO!” The next action went without saying.

Further down the inside of the whale, Haylee, Artie, Ratchet, Kirie, and Sheila were exploring. “Hmm, so you’re of the Lombax race, are you?” Artie asked Ratchet quizzically. “Tell me, what is the primary form of technology of your people?”

“Iiiii was dropped on another planet and abandoned as a kid, so… no idea.” Ratchet shrugged sheepishly.

“Oh. Well, what is your skill in using a 3.5 cubic meter sonic cannon powered by tetrahydro silicus and zyrinium xlexion gas?”

“Yooooou’ll have to ask Clank for that, I wouldn’t know.”

“Uh-huh. Do you naturally speak English, or is your native language a tongue so complex, everybody’s eardrums within a ten-mile radius would dysfunction before you could pronounce one letter?”

“Iiiiii don’t know?”

“…How many fingers am I holding up?”

“Artie, stop it.” Haylee said. “Sigh, don’t take it personally, Artie’s just trying to learn about alien cultures ’cause he has the hots for this alien girl.”

“I do not, Makava’s studying Exo-linguistics and I’m just trying to help her.”

“Funny, I never said it was Makava.” Haylee smirked slyly.
“I’m sorry I’m not in the mood for more worthwhile conversation, but Dr. Nefarious kidnapped my friend and I have no idea where he is.” Ratchet explained. “I wanted to search that train more, but you guys came first…”

We’re sorry, Mr. Ratchet. Kirie frowned.


“I ain’t sure of what a hatchet is myself, but check THIS out!” Sheila announced. The friends made it to the end of this tunnel and overlooked a large, open cave with a huge, pink tube in the shape of an infinity symbol, energy and space-fish spiraling through at a rapid pace.

“It looks like the… whale’s colon!” Artie observed. “Its edible matter is circling for infinity! If it takes this long to process its food, it probably doesn’t need to eat for trillions of years.”

“Astonishing and gross at the same time.” Haylee remarked. “I should be able to assume it doesn’t reek of decay—SHEILA, get off of there!”

The raccoon had tail-flown onto the Mobius Colon, balancing on it. “’ey, if I was in this thing and it goes infinite, I bet I could beat the world record for longest time on a roller coaster without throwing up.”

“Sheila, get off, you don’t know what that thing will do to you! It might turn you into a baby or old lady, or stop you from aging!”

“The latter seems more likely.” Artie reminded.

“Then I’d be Sheila, the immortal explorer?” she smirked enthusiastically.

“And we’d never forget you.” Haylee sweatdropped.

Returning to the mouth area of the whale, Chris, Maddy, Aurora, and Haruka had just heard Dillon’s info again. “But why would Vanellope just show up there?” Aurora asked. “How do you know XANA didn’t project that on purpose to trick us?”

“But if they wanted us to do those things, they wouldn’t have shrunken Chimney’s train to keep us there.” Dillon reasoned. “So maybe… she’s learning things, too. And those are places we have to go.”

“Did she tell you who this ‘Disbanded’ was or why I have to find him?” Maddy questioned. “I finally have a chance to go back home, I don’t wanna stay in this dump.”

“I wish you didn’t have to stay either, but… we don’t have enough info to argue otherwise, and since the Apocalypse is coming…” Chris didn’t finish.

“So why do I have to come back.” Dillon thought aloud, looking away. “Can’t think of any reason I’d be special.”

“Maybe it’s something to do with Midna.” Haruka implied. “If your mom is her Guardian, wouldn’t that mean you inherit her?”

“I don’t remember that being in the Firstborn Prophecy.”

“Except the Firstborn Prophecy talked about ‘Eight’ Firstborn, as we saw with Sugar, that isn’t the case.” Chris reminded.
“Sigh, then I guess I’m not returning to Earth.” Maddy sighed with aggravation.

“Maybe you can’t, but… Dillon didn’t say anything about the rest of us. Maybe I- or, some of us could go with you… if you want.”

“You’d want to go with me?”

“Well, I-… It might be easier for you traveling with someone you’re used to… Unless you’re afraid of my head exploding.”

Maddy looked down in thought. “Hmmm… Well, if anyone, Ratchet would be taking me for most of the journey… we don’t even have a ship right now, so too many passengers would be troubling him, so maybe… we shouldn’t… I mean, that’s assuming Drake wants to come, but that’s kind of a stretch.”

“Actually, we have this whale.” Aurora noted, looking up at the mouth’s ceiling. “But we’re probably ruining his tastebuds by now.”

“Tell you what, we’ll stick by you until we can get a decent ship.” Chris said with a smile. “Then you can pick who you wanna come with.”

“Heheh.” Maddy smiled. “Sounds fair.”

“Yaaawynn. Man, I didn’t wanna be up this late after that battle. Wanna make like the others and get sleep?”

“Totally.” Haruka stretched her limbs. “I’m feeling really stiff.”

“Good Time-Stasis, everyone.” Dillon waved as they walked to the beds.

In the next half-hour, the explorers had returned and chosen a resting quarters, Aisa and Mary were tired of picking on Chimney, Apis’s mouth got dry from chatting up the whale, and they all were asleep. Gonbe was on his back as Aeincha cuddled up on his soft, furry tummy, and held little Chimney to her chest. The Gilligans shared an upstairs bed, sprawled out messily, while Ratchet lied on the floor beside them, still awake as he tapped his wristwatch exhaustedly. “Come on, Aphelion… pick up.”

“Mama, I don’t complain about your late-night ramblings on the cellphone, so if I’m up late playing a videogame, don’t be…” Artie, who was on the edge of the bed, rolled off onto Ratchet. Without bothering to sit his own back up, Ratchet tried to lift and place Artie back onto the bed, but when the boy kept plopping back onto him, Ratchet kicked skyward, sent Artie flipping and flying into the air, before he plopped onto Aisa on the lower floor, whom was asleep on her front on the carpet. He settled softly on the angel as neither woke up.

April was still awake and painting a canvas, smiling. It was the inside of a great white space-whale, with broken chunks of many a captured ship, served as bedrooms, kitchens, and all of them were doing miscellaneous activities. Apis was talking to the whale in the center, Sheila, Ratchet and co. were exploring a tunnel above, Mary and Aisa were having fun with a toy train, and April herself was painting. With this beautiful image and this happy moment in mind, April lied on the floor of her shared room with Apis and Mary and drifted to slumber, using her folded jacket and hat as pillows. Now she could dream about the Art World, more beautifully than ever after knowing Symphonia exists. For if a planet could be dedicated to music, why not paintings and drawings? She would take her friends there, someday.

OOOOOooo… MOOOOOoaaan. . .
Apis woke up with a start, looking left-to-right frantically. She grabbed her hat and shoes and ran off onto the tongue. “GUYS! He’s saying he’s about to let us off!”

Smaller moans echoed as some of the kids awakened. “Wh-Whut?…” Aurora yawned.

The mouth of the whale swayed up and down furiously. “He’s saying he found a planet to drop us! Everyone, brace for impact!”

Mobius Dick was flying over a barren brown surface under a dark sky. Roughly 10 meters from the ground, he spat every one of his passengers out, covered with cosmic saliva. His wails sounded across the heavens as he soared up and vanished into a vortex. “THANK YOU, Mister Whaaaaallllll!” Apis waved.

Chris ignited himself to dry the spit, as did Aurora. “Nice of him to give us a warning. Where are we?”

“I…I recognize this place. Look!” Maddy pointed to a distant town, where the whirring of racecars roared. She, Ratchet, and Drake recognized this as Peoples α, the planet of gangs and hustlers where she so superbly bested others in a race.

The friends all journeyed to the town as the racecars and rap tune that distinguished Blipton District grew louder, and a group of cars just zipped across the track behind the grated walkway that stood over the ground. “This place smells like rusting bean cans.” April commented.

Drake, remembering his first time here and glancing at Mocha, said to her, “Hey Mocha, small favor to ask you!” She looked at him. “Uh, Maddy got in a race here the first time, and I sorta betted against her and lost all my money, and I was too afraid of the Human Resources guy to complain to ‘im, but now that you’re here, could you…”

“That’s whatcha get for being unsupportive!” Mocha said with a grin that said, ‘Not gonna help ya.’

The friends found a grated stairway leading onto the path, where many thuggish aliens were cheering for their betted racers. Though Mocha chose to stay below, not one for moving well across crowds. “I racked up a lot of money during our travels, but not enough for a ship for all of us.” Ratchet said.

“If only we could change Chimney and the train back somehow.” Aeincha said sadly, riding Gonbe’s back while holding her friend. “We could all go back home.”

“STEP right up, try your minds on the unreadable block!” They directed their attention to the sideshow alien on his platform next to a stone cube with foreign writing. He was a very skinny, blue, flimsy alien with a big nose and eyepatch, wobbly skin that made him seem like an amoeba, and wore a white sleeveless shirt with tan trousers. “While waiting for people to crash each other, test the magnitude of your brains by reading a language known by no one! You can try, you can fly, but your translators will hang themselves, want to risk your wages by saying otherwise?, well come up here and READ this unreadable block!”

“That unreadable block looks familiar.” Aurora noticed. “Where’ve we seen…”

Sheila’s brain sparked. “OH!! I remember! I’ looks like the one on Candied Island! The one I read with my dyslexia! What’s it called, again… Gibberish Rock!”

A text box from Murfy’s Manual read, *These rocks are called Poneglyphs, dumbo. See, this is why we gotta name these concepts the moment they’re introduced. Now we’re using the lousy fan-
name, I swear this…

“Oh, that’s right!” Haylee remembered. “We think Sheila awakened herself by reading it!”

“Does that mean… these blocks have something to do with the quest?” Maddy asked.

“Let’s go up and ask what that guy knows.” Chris suggested as they approached the platform.

“I bet I can read it!” Sheila smirked.

“Ho-HO! LOOKS like we got a COUPLE-A volunteers! Can you kids brave your minds to READ the unreadable block?” announced the alien.

“Actually, we’d like to know how or where you found this block.” Aurora answered. “Do you know anything about it?”

“No one knows WHERE it hails! Is it from the sky or is it from the ground? Maybe its uninterpreted text will tell us, but WHO has the brains to read it!”

Aeincha climbed off of Gonbe and snuck around the back of the block with Chimney in hand. They observed every inch of the weathered structure, until Chimney pointed at a tiny hole on the bottom. She jumped out of Aein’s arms and walked in, then the Lilliputian crawled after. It smelled of dust and it was hard to see inside the darkness, but light poked in through cracks, and she gasped after realizing.

“It’s a fake!” The others looked as Aeincha ran back around, pointing at the monument. “This Gibberish Rock has a bunch of metal supports on the inside!”

“It does?” Dillon questioned. “Why?”

“N-No, no, that’s not true!” the alien yelled defensively. “She’s only lying, this rock is purely-!”

After hearing this from the ground below, Mocha punched and destroyed a metal beam that lodged into the ground, grabbed the higher end of it and pulled, causing all sides of this stone cube to topple as the metal supports inside were yanked through the platform. “Huh?” Several nearby aliens looked onto the platform. “Someone say it’s a fake?”

“He made the Gibberish Rock himself?”

“Ye cheeky bastard! Any nimrod can draw a bunch a’ symbols and call it a language!”

“Ay’m gonna rip yer HEAD in tuh!” A gang of beefy aliens marched up the stairs.

“W-W-W-WAIT! WAIT!” The sideshow alien cowered behind the monument’s rubble. “Fine, I built that rock myself using painted metal, but it’s based on a REAL rock! I saw it, wh-when I visited this planet!”

“All OF YOU get back.” Aurora ignited with flames to make all the aliens cease. “We were here first, we’ll deal with him. Just go back to watching your race.”

“Nnnn-nnn, nuuuh…” With grouchy expressions, the aliens complied.

Dillon stepped up, “What planet did you find this rock on?”

“A planet in the Milky Way Galaxy! I may look like a thug, but I’m actually a profound explorer who needed some extra cash!” the alien explained quickly. “So I, decided to host an attraction in
“What planet was it?” Chris asked.

“Earth! I-I originally went there because I was picking up strange readings. According to intergalactic news, Earth was a real hotspot… for, uh, things, so I flew there. All of a sudden, my ship malfunctioned and I ended up crashing through the atmosphere. I wound up in a forest called Gravity Falls, where this elderly human found me. I forget his name, but he owned a shop that sold all kinds of weird things, and after we got to know each other, he showed me a book. He thought since I was an alien, I might know what ‘this’ says, so he showed me a page that had this very rock. I wrote down the text to see if I could translate it later, but uh, financial issues and all, I spent awhile repairing my ship so I could head home immediately. And I never got around to deciphering it myself.”

“So you thought a bunch o’ chinheads could read it?” Sheila asked.

“No, of course not, this was all just for profit. …Would’ve been nice, though…”

“But did this man say where the stone was found?” Aurora asked.

“No. He didn’t. …He had a lot of funny-looking curios, though. Actually bought me a few of ‘em. Like this magic potion that’s said to cure most ailments.” He reached under his shirt and pulled out a tiny vial with steaming peach-colored liquid.

Aeincha gasped. “We could use that on Chimney!”

“YES! Give it to me FAST!!”

“No!” Maddy yelled. “Let’s give it to Zach!”

“WHAT? Screw him, I’M the one who’s suffering!!”

“Mocha told me you still fight well that way, Chimney, but my brother hasn’t come out of that pose since we found him, and I’m getting worried.”

“How do we know it’ll even work on him?” Aein asked.

“I don’t, but… please, let’s try? It’s more annoying to carry him than Chimney, wouldn’t you agree?”

They all looked at Zach’s stiff, heavy body and exchanged agreeing glances. “FAIR ENOUGH.” ("Gyom-gyom.") Though now Chimney had plenty more people to murder.

Maddy popped the cork off the vial as Drake and Dillon tried to force Zach’s mouth open. She poured the odd-smelling substance inside. It flowed down his stiff throat, so they awaited results to happen. “…” Zach’s face swirled up and shrunk into his flesh like a toilet. And on that blank face, a great big mouth, half-closed teary eyes, and a bigger tongue stuck out.

“UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU
Apis clamped her nose and squinted her eyes. “So that means it wouldn’t’ve healed Chimney, after all. But if someone wouldn’t wake up, though…”

“Nnn. Thank you for saving my life, Maddy-san.” Chimney grunted from the stench.

They stared with disgust when Zach began scraping his tongue against the grating. Mary was happily coloring the scene on her sketchpad. “Well, uh… thanks, Mister.” Haylee said. “Listen, I know this is outta nowhere, but do you have a ship or something we could borrow? F-For all of us?”

“My ship can carry roughly five people, if I drop equipment, but all of you is asking too much.”

“Well, do you know a place we could hang out until I rack up enough Bolts to buy us a bigger ship?” Ratchet asked.

“Oh, you can stay at my laboratory! I have a private residence out in the plains, good place away from these hustlers. I never knew anyone who was so into my research before; plus, I’d like someone to protect me in case these guys are still, ahem, mad.”

“Heart of a Lion Turtle, this one.” Drake remarked as they began to make their way off the walkway.

“Heheh. I usually take the subway to the plain. I’ll persuade them you’re all on a field trip, that should lessen the cost.”

“It’s not enough my baby is punied, now I gotta ride some dusty old dirt train.” Chimney wept.

**Büe’s Laboratory**

In case I forgot to mention, this intrepid alien explorer’s name was Büe. As you figure out how to pronounce that, the near-two dozen kids were able to join him on an ugly subway train, that let off on a southern station. Which was kind of confusing because every direction is south on this planet. The neighborhood next-door to the station was quiet, but very unpleasant-looking. However, Professor Büe was taking them in the opposite direction, across a rugged plain where trash bags (in place of tumbleweeds) breezed around the soil. “Not many thugs come out here. Too many prairie jaguars. I scare them away with this whistle.”

“Now, just for safety’s sake, you aren’t going to betray us by trapping and handing us to a bad guy, right?” Haylee asked.

“No, of course not, that’s the easiest trick in the book! …But to be honest, I wouldn’t mind that happening. I’d feel more important.”

“It’s okay, Mr. Jelly Person. You’re important to us.” Kirie smiled.

“Now I’m curious, is this girl half-Dancingian? I don’t know anyone else who talks with gestures.”

“I wouldn’t know, but I’m starting to get the feeling Zach is an alien.” Maddy remarked.

“Here-here.” Drake agreed. “Which reminds me, why am I still carrying him even though we have a giant?” Zach, with his big-tongued face, was riding over Drake’s shoulders, “BLUUU-HUEEEEEEHHH!” drenching the boy with saliva-falls every 5 minutes.

“I may have something to drink after we get there, but I don’t know what quenches you humans.”
They made it to a small house out in the middle of the expanse, surrounded by a decaying wooden fence and a yard with nothing prospering. A ship was parked in the garage, looked decent, but wouldn’t fit all of them, like he said. Inside the house were dozens of charts on shelves, globes of different planets, and journals full of data-recordings. Ooh- except for that one. “Nice place you have here.” Artie said. “You go to a lot of planets?”

“Yes, I’m somewhat of a cultural professor.” Büe took off the eyepatch that he used to make the aliens think he was tough. “I study the landscape and lifestyle of all kinds of planets; and also see if they have any valuables that would fetch a high price on the market. Speaking of which, the man from Earth sold me this ‘dimensional stitcher’ for 20 Gold Bolts, can you verify if that’s a reasonable price?” He showed them an ordinary stapler.

“Must be one fine-quality stitcher.” Haylee remarked.

“Can you please find something to drink for this guy?” Drake said with aggravation. Zach’s chin was starting to look like a toad.

“Y-Yes, come to my kitchen and look for something in the fridge.”

While some of them followed the professor, Maddy touched Chris’s shoulder. “Chris, since we’re out in the middle of nowhere, you want to, uh… practice that combustion beam?”

“…Well, okay.” Chris shrugged, figuring he’s got nothing better to do.

Mocha was the only other person outside for obvious reasons, but considering the size of their group, they expected others to clear out of that tiny house. Though Professor Büe might’ve mentioned having basement floors to store more valuables, so maybe not. Chris and Maddy walked a half-mile away to practice. “Okay… try firing at that boulder.”

Chris sucked through the nose quick and forced a pulse to his head, “Spark spark spark spark BOOM” destroying the pointed rock. “Okay, aim for that mountaintop.” Miles away was a mountain, small in their eyes, so narrowing his eyes, Chris inhaled and pulsed. “Spark . . . spark . . . spark . . . spark . . . boom.” The mountain tip flashed.

“Hmm…” Maddy noticed something. “It only explodes when it hits something, doesn’t it, you can’t make it stop.”

“I can try.” Chris inhaled and pulsed at open air, trying to decrease the throbbing in his head that split moment, but his sparks already flew a good distance before popping. He fired another direction, but used a noticeably weaker pulse, thus it exploded shortly. He thrusted his body forward with a half-second pulse, firecracks appearing in a zigzag line before a smaller POP. “It looks like the harder I focus, the further and more powerful it goes. I wonder how it would work in Fury Mode. If I’m not wearing the headband, I can probably go into it.”

“Maybe, but let’s start out small first. Try making it stop when you want.”

Chris pulsed at open air, and made it explode at 10 meters. He blew forward at a more acute angle, shook his head to make it pop at roughly 8 meters. He looked directly skyward, inhaled, and puffed. The sparks flew higher, higher, higher, higher, until Chris willed an explosion, an average yellow dot in the dark sky. “Huff, my lungs hurt.”

Ratchet, Harry, Mason, Dillon, and Haylee later came out to join them. “I thought you’d be stargazing, not making fireworks.” Mason remarked.

“What’s the point of having stars if you can’t shoot for them.”
“So how’s Zach? Is he better?” Maddy asked.

“He’s not taking anything that man has to offer.” Harry replied. “Every weird drink we give ‘im, goes BLEAH, slurp, BLEAH, slurp, BLEAH, slurp,” while making his face and tongue like Zach’s.

“Darn it. I wish he wasn’t such a picky eater. I’m starting to think he was better off as a statue.”

“Me or Haruka could probably bend the juice out of his tastebuds. Onion has to have some level of toxicity, right?” Mason wondered.

“Hahah.” Ratchet chuckled, still typing in his watch for Aphelion. “Hey Chris, wanna try shooting a star, go for that one.” He pointed at a flying white star over the mountains ahead.

Even though it might’ve been a million miles away, Chris had the natural instinct to shoot the star. He narrowed his eyes and aimed his Combustion Eye, but… the star appeared to shift direction to them, growing bigger. “Wait… that isn’t a star.” (Play “Taming Epona” from Zelda: Twilight Princess.)

Everyone else looked up curiously. The object was growing closer, they could see the blue within its whiteness. “Is that…” Ratchet looked through binoculars. “APHELION?!”

Maddy squinted her eyes, recognizing the ship. “But who’s driving it?”

Haylee looked through her goggles. “No way… it’s…”

“WOOOOOOOOO!!!” Jar Jar Blinks had no sense of; that thing that tells you where to go. His ship was zooming faster toward the ground, the team ducked seconds from impact, but Jar Jar zoomed the ship upward right away. Ratchet stood up first and looked determinedly at the craft. Aphelion turned around, giving them a side-view of Jar Jar’s head, his tongue dangling out while he aimlessly fired lasers. “WAWAWAWAWAWAWA-”

The ship barrel-rolled and swooped over them again, so seizing the chance, Ratchet blasted his Swingshot to latch it. He ran at ceaseless speed as Aphelion pulled him, then was lifted off the ground before his grappler pulled him forward. Ratchet kept tight hold, swerving about everywhere with Jar Jar’s unprecedented maneuverability, but eventually landed on the ship’s roof. “That’s MY ship, GET OUT OF IT!”

“WHEEEEEE I can’t stops! Not untils I gets—” Jar Jar spun the steering wheel forcefully without warning, Ratchet almost flying off when the ship mimicked. He stuck his OmniWrench against a wing and tried to crawl to the front. He dug the wrench under the bottom of the windshield, pouring all strength to force it up. Jar whipped right, barrel-rolled left, Ratchet almost slipped off, but held firmly onto the wing, onto his prized possession. He dug the wrench under the windshield again and forced it up.

“I’M relieving you!” Ratchet dove into the seat and strangled Jar Jar for control, his sluggish eyes and froggy tongue flailed helplessly as he continued steering. From the kids’ eyes, the craft was haphazardly moving around the sky, and before long was dead-set on Büe’s house. “LET GO! NOW!”

“I NO KNOW DOSE ACTIOOOOOONS!”

“Zach, for the last time, eat the spinach or no more dessert for you.” Haruka ordered, trying to shove the substance in his toad mouth.
“BLEAH!” She was spat at.

“What is Thaat?!” Mocha screamed. All their eyes widened at the sight of the incoming ship.

“AAAAAA! I stole nothing illegally!” Büe cowered into his home.

“Grrrrrrrr!” Ratchet was more determined to pull the brake lever on his ship. When he finally did, Aphelion froze in place, and- “WOOOIIIIIEEEEEEE…” Jar Jar flew out like a rocket, clutching a bottle of milk tight. The Gungan’s face became still and blank, the group of kids growing larger in his vision, but more notably Zach Murphy. With no conscious intention of avoiding the other, Jar Jar crashed into the boy and they tumbled into the house. (End song.)

Ratchet softly landed Aphelion as the others scurried back to the house. They were actually nervous of peeking inside, so they approached the door slowly. Inside, Blinks was cradling Zach like a baby, allowing him to slurp the rest of his milky. “Dere, dere. Dash all you neeed.”

“…That’s convenient.” Maddy said.

The beginning of the “Drink Your Milk” song played, Zach and Jar Jar performed stylish, simultaneous flips, like their minds were in sync, coming toward the door. When the fanfare picked up, reaching its end, they flipped faster, then performed superb poses when they were outside, the music stopped, and ‘MILK’ appeared over them in flashing letters. “WOO-WEEEEEE!” Blinks cheered. “Where-sha you BEEN all my life?”

“No idea man, but BOY am I glad you’re here now!” Zach exclaimed.

Jar Jar began crying, the sun (which was originally not there) glinting off his tears. “I sho glad you, sniff sniff, are back to me.”

Zach’s green eyes were pretty behind his tears. “Me, too.”

“…” They shared a heartwarming hug. The feels were high in all of them right now. It was so beautiful. “-OH! !” Drake kicked Zach, and Ratchet kicked Jar Jar in the crotch.

“You’re paying for the new clothes I’mma have to buy.” Drake stated.

“Now explain to me HOW you happened to come by Aphelion?” Ratchet demanded.

“Aha!” The pain left Blinks as he spoke informatively. “‘Tis quite an exciting tale. A tale of love, romas, twists and turns and strong, but subtle foreshadowing. To know the full extent of this adventure, read Jar Jar’s Shifty Shenanigans in Seven Lights: The Side Stories. DWAH!” Haruka kicked and sent him flying.

“You’re not getting a story arc.”

After everyone settled down from the commotion, Zach explained his own exciting tale. “Next thing I know, I’m drinking onion juice, now I’m here.”

“You lost me at the part where you transformed into a ship.” Ratchet mentioned.

“Yeah, I kinda slapdashed that part. My engines were powered by toaster fuel, crayons served as pilots – I broke the red one on the way here – and I burned headphones for oxygen. That clear it up?”
“…Sure, why not.”

“Ugh, I’m starting to get a headache with all this nonsense.” Chimney squeaked. “Mary, thanks for not talking much during these last scenes, I have more respect for you.”

Maddy glanced between her, the shrunken R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. in Apis’s arms, and Zach. “You guys will never look at me the same way again after saying this, but… Zach, can you fix Chimney?” As expected, everyone passed her looks that said she wasn’t the same Maddy anymore.

Zach stared at the shrunken leader thoughtfully, rubbing his chin. “Well, I could… try. I mean, I have an idea that might work, but…”

“If you’re too unsure, we’d rather not risk it-” Aeincha said worriedly-

But right away, he took Chimney and the train and held them to an invisible camera. A gentle music started playing that sounded like it belonged to an instruction video. “Hi, kids, is your best friend shrunken beyond repair? Well, uncle Zach Murphy’s here to teach you a quick and easy way to stretch them good as new.” He pulled a table into view, and dropped Chimney in a blender.

“First we add the shrinkee, and whatever miscellanea.”

“EEH.” Chimney grunted when Zach plopped the bent train in, crushing her underneath.

“Add this credit card,” he dropped said item in, “some textbooks. These toenails will do, toolbox, PlayStation 4, Donkey Kong hammer, some hourglass, ooh this clock looks nice, uhhhh,” Chimney grunted at each item that dropped in, and she grew more concealed from their eyes, “this pedometer, dead cat, window blinds, quantum energy, the entire collection of dubbed Fairy Tail on DVD, a Lorax (‘Hey!’), coffee bean, baby grand piano, lighter oil, with just an itty-bitty hint of rotting whale,” they would never question how Zach fit such a huge creature in there, “we are good to go.” He clamped the lid on and activated the blender.

Looking back, this was probably a bad idea, thought most of our friends. The faster the ingredients spun, the more they thought it was too late. Zach switched it off and opened the lid, revealing what had all been molded together in groddy, unsavory mush. …Tiny limbs floated to the surface along with a blouse, all scattered and lifeless. Their eyes were so wide, they could never close again, the blood in Sector W7’s veins might as well freeze. “Er… or maybe it was, add the pedometer first, and mix it with ponytail wands. …Well, can’t waste good smoothie!” Zach grabbed and gulped the whole shake in one slurp, much to the absolute horror and bloodthirsty anger of Chimney’s friends. “Tasty!”

“YOU FUCKING IDIOT!!” Apis tackled and strangled the boy until he was dead. “HOW COULD YOU MURDER CHIMNEY AND DRINK HER REMAINS? I’LL MAKE SURE YOUR SOUL NEVER GETS SAVED!”

“What’re you talking about, I didn’t drink Chimney, Mason did!” Apis looked bafflingly to where Zach pointed.

Now Mason’s face was toad-like. His mouth puffed like he was about to vomit. A fantastic victory fanfare played, and out came the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. in its entirety. It was sparkling shiny and silver, and Chimney was passed out on the control deck. “Nnnnn… what did I just go through?”

“Ch…Chimney…” Aeincha was overcome with emotions.

“It looks… beautiful.” Aisa stared.
“April, why did that train come out of that boy’s mouth?” Mary asked.

“Because boys have a different diet than us, Mary.”

Chimney was later outside, depressedly leaning her head against the train. “I’m so ashamed.”

“Come on, Chimney, I’m sorry for misusing your baby back in the whale.” Aisa replied with a humorous smile.

“Yah, but it never shoulda happened. My train never woulda gone through that if she was just a bit stronger. I…” She faced up at the sky passionately, “I NEED TO MAKE HER AN EVEN BETTER TRAAAAIIIN!!”

Needless to say, Büe didn’t miss the spectacle from the house’s door. “I need to study this species more. They certainly do more than what the textbooks say.”

Ratchet took the time to polish his own ship, smiling with warm green eyes. He kind of knows how Chimney feels, Aphelion means a lot to him, too. “Well, since Ratchet has his ship, and we got our train back… I guess we can continue our journey.” Chris said.

“Yeah…” Maddy looked down.

“So who you wanna take, Mads? Want me to go…”

“Hmm… I’d like to take you, but… well, you kind of have your own team.” Maddy replied with an assuring smile. “Drake, you can go back too, if you want.”

“Eh… abandoning a girl in need, I wouldn’t sleep well.” Drake said coolly. “I’ll stay with you, too.”

“I know I’m not leaving her.” Zach said.

“Then I guess we go separate ways.” Aurora nodded.

“Don’t worry, Mads.” Chris smirked. “I’ll have George bring you back soon.”

Maddy smirked. “Well, I wouldn’t want his Unbreakable Vow to be broken. Keep working on that combustionbending.”

“Will do. And keep working on… um, tolerating alien company.”

“See you later, Maddy!” Mocha waved. “Come back big and strong!”

“I’ll be one of those things!” she blushed.

Sectors V and W7 were on the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N., engines roaring and ready to lift off.

“Good thing Professor Büe lent us his record of galactic coordinates.” Artie said, studying the paper. “Now we can get back to Milky Way with no problem. And come back whenever we wanna find Sugar or Maddy. Actually, after we buy another Warpdrive Key, I wanna visit Professor Büe again. I think he and I could learn a lot from each other…”

“After we get back home, we’re going to save Midna.” Dillon said firmly. “Then we’re going to Gravity Falls, aren’t we?”

“Yeah.” Haru nodded. “If Gravity Falls had a book about these Gibberish Rocks, it can tell us where to find them.”
“All engines are a-go.” Chimney reported. “Passengers aboard. Rocket-san’s happy to not be annoying brat’s toy. WE’RE GOING HOOOOOME!”

The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. flew to the skies up north, Aphelion left the atmosphere down south. Chris peered out the window of the former, Maddy from the latter, watching as the other ship became a tiny shooting star in the distance. “Hey… did we forget something?” Aurora asked.

Chimney gasped. “Did we leave Mary??”

“Right here!”

“Dammit. Ah, probly ain’t important. Entering lightspeed noooowwww!”

The silver train vanished. The sky was empty over Büe’s land. With the hopes of meeting that Artie boy again, he went back into his- “LOOKIE LOOKIE LOOKIE!” Jar Jar Blinks had formed many a paper plane from his notebooks. “I-sha made de aaaaairpooooort. Pshoooooowwww.”

“…” Büe needed money for hunting rifles.

**Sector W Treehouse**

“Refurbish thineselves with drinks and snacks and make use of yon urinal before we depart.” Fybi told everyone as they disembarked the S.C.A.M.P.E.R. “I wilt not take complaints en route to homeland.”

Phosphorua was relieved to be out of the vent, stretching her limbs and bending back to relieve the stiffness. “So this is one of your treehouses. No wonder Viridi hated them, it’s unnatural for something so big to stand over a tiny house.”

They spent the next 10 minutes resting from Hawaii’s heat and gathering whatever provisions they desired for their trip. “So why did you wanna come back anyway, Fybs?” Anthony asked. “Just snacks?”

“I hath been developing this project for a good many months, acquiring resources from homeland KND as well as GKND ops.” Fybi said as they returned to the hangar, showing them a large leather blanket covering something. “Voila, my motion-controlled Angel Wing!” She blew the covers off: The friends gasped at the shining white, mechanical aircraft with folded angel wings, three soft, cloud-made benches to fit 3 people each, and black lines around some parts.

Aranea climbed onto the glass. “Um… there’re no controls.”

“Ah ha ha. Such a vessel is not controlled by such.” Fybi dug around a trunk. “‘Tis controlled by one whom is not controlled, except by she. Ta-to-yon-da!” She came out with black straps with blue edges around her arms, waist, and legs. “Checketh this out.” Fybi walked a few feet in front of the ship, back facing it directly. A scanner locked onto the straps, and the ship’s black lines glowed blue. Fybi shifted horizontal, flying in place, and the ship lifted off the floor, its wings outstretched. Fybi shifted leftward, then right (“Whoooa!” Aranea screamed, still on the ship), forward, back, up, down, and softly landed on her feet. The ship mimicked all movements.

“Cooool!” Harvey gazed.

“Yeah, cool…” Nea climbed down. “Have you ever really flown this thing?”

“I hath taken for many test runs, ’til it wast perfect. I believeth it will help me maneuver much better in the air, predict very sudden patterns as my skin feels the atmosphere. The idea came to me
last year, as we flew through Phosphora’s storm, watching with regret as I flew forth, and Aranea piloted the vessel as thou followed.”

“Yeah, Nea, work on your flying.” Anthony stated, earning a hateful glare.

“I mean no offense, but I feel uncomfortable when I cannot fly mineself, and mine sector simultaneously. Yonder technology helpeth me achieve both tasks. I thinketh it to be wise idea.”

“And what of the event thou gets scratched in yon bandage-thingies and we taketh great fall?” Anthony asked.

“‘Tis programmed with parachute shouldst it drop suddenly over thousand-foot fall. Thou may be most helpless during thine descent, but let us hope not much harm will come. Art thou ready, for let us fly to Skypia ‘fore sun sets!”

Anthony, Sally, and Harvey took the front seat, Nea and Phosphora in the middle, while their trunks of supplies got the back seat. “Motion sensors on: Engines full, wings readyeth.” Fybi spoke, hovering in place as the aircraft was off the floor. The same thoughts were on everyone’s minds, the worry of riding a motion-controlled vehicle. Anthony especially knew how Fybi flies, even with a mini passenger on her back, she wouldn’t hesitate to make every twirl she wanted to. “I canst feel it shaking in my nervous system, the ship’s eagerness to meet the skies. Shall I deny it the freedom any longer? Surely thou jest. To Rubberband Land in clouds above, I shalt not drift too high, lest I leave the atmosphere. On mine markest, getting set, let us go!”

Fybi shot out of the hangar like a jet, and the Angel Wing followed as the passengers screamed, the craft shifting an angle and going vertical. With Fybi’s speed, it seemed even their seatbelts wouldn’t protect them from impending crashes. But Fybi took it more softly when they were above the fluffy clouds and floating horizontal. Fybi’s form was balanced and graceful, and this made the ride relaxing. After they were accustomed to the craft, they could look out the window without worry. Since their seats were made of clouds, it added to the feeling of being so high, flying over the heavens like birds, and that’s just where they were going. Skypia, Fybi’s homeland, where people lived on clouds and flew 24/7. Anthony was still against this adventure, he was totally powerless in the sky, no ground or dirt, he couldn’t protect his teammates if danger came. For the time in this land, Fybi was their leader.

In time, they had no idea where over the Earth they were, flying for what felt like hours, even though Fybi flew under the clouds to give them a better view, but it was all oceans for most of the trip. Curiously, a plane piloted by a teenage boy with sunglasses passed them a few miles back, and three children in his backseat waved at the sector. Finally, they were closing in on a cloud with a village rested atop it, and beyond that was the amusement park called Rubberband Land.

Fybi glided to the island’s shore slowly, and the moment her feet touched, the ship landed and disabled. The friends climbed out of the craft and set foot on the soft, solid cloud. Skypia was more than they imagined, they half expected every inch of ground to be blank white clouds, but green trees, grass, and bushes were planted around the houses, Conache Pumpkins, cabbages, and fruits grew, even though the clouds had no earth, they had other means of adapting. It even felt new for Phosphora, having not seen a Sky Island for so many years except that old temple, but this was where regular Nimbi lived, under sunlight and blue skies instead of storms. Compared to her homeland, this peaceful village was in stark contrast.

“AH HAAAAA!” Fybi flipped in the air before viewing the town at bird’s-eye. “Fair home of Skypia, Fybi hast arrived with her earthly brethren!”

“Fybi, is this really the town you were born?” Sally asked.
“Nay, I wast born on Angel Island, my mother’s homeland. I will love to take thee sometime, but
now let us be lost among yon rubberbands.”

Aranea checked the time on her phone, then looked at the horizon to see a faint shade of pink.
“Fybi, it’s 6:30, it’s gonna be nighttime soon. I’m not very fond of flying under a storm when it’s
already dark.”

“Fair, then we shalt rest hither, fly tomorrow. Ist there harm in camping outdoors? Art thou afraid
of rain? We art above yon clouds! Thou fearest the bug crawling in thine mouth? Reasonable,
because bugs art prosperous up hither. But thou dost not even needs shoes,” Fybi kicked her
sandals off, “when we art above the soil, allow Skypia’s softness under thine soles! Ha HAAAA,
my excitement be untamed!” She flew forward with joy.

The kids shrugged and slipped their shoes off, but not Phosphora as she was a little less ecstatic.
They followed Fybi across the milk-white street, looking around to all the Nimbi working in their
gardens or fluttering about the town. The adults paid no mind, but the children drew very curious
expressions at the five humans (not knowing Phosphora was a Nimbi herself). Fybi returned to the
surface after they crossed the barren cloud plain on the way to Rubberband Land, the angel landing
before the gate. “Howdy thither, yon folkies! Art thou hither to embrace in yon substance of earthly
cloud? Seet’ that thou hail from yonder surface, thou art therefore visitors, so thine admittance into
our fair land is freeth!” The tollbooth man spoke with a country accent.

“Mr., um, Tollbi,” Sally read his nametag, “why did they make an amusement park based on
rubberbands?”

“‘Twas very heroic tale of chills and yon thrills, fair Nimbi explorers ventured to world below
clouds, discovered the legendary material that wouldst be our park’s foundation. Didst humans
attempt to create cloudlike substance, whilst not the same, ‘twas a joyful, exuberant material! So
yon devices, Rubberband Land became Skypia’s joy. What sort of creation doth protect one from
lightning the way it dost??”

“We wanted to ask about that!” Nea perked. “We wanted to go to Birka, the lightning island, so we
were hoping you had rubber suits.”

“Thou shalt find all that thou needst, but fair humans shouldst not visit such a cloud. Dangerous
beeth that place, though I shalt not deter thee, I must encourage time with bands of rubber, and
enjoy thyselfs!”

The kids enjoyed their selves very much. Aranea participated in a shooting game, given a pile of
rubberbands to stretch and shoot at cardboard Bokoblin. After winning the cloud-made Loftwing
balloon, she shot one last rubberband at Anthony’s eye. Sally and Harvey went to a complex of
giant rubberbands tied around tall pegs, the Nimbi bouncing up and down and all around them. The
twins were happy to join, able to enjoy the bounce a lot more without wings, they even befriended
a few Nimbi kids, told them what it’s like living on Earth. Who knew that Earth pumpkins were
soft and made good Halloween decorations.

Anthony found a mini-game where a series of giant slingshots were aligned on small Island
Clouds, their large rubberbands dangling over the chasm. Anthony jumped in the first one on his
left, his weight stretching it down before he was flung up and into the close one on his right, going
down further due to momentum, flung higher and farther, into the second one on the left, then the
second on the right, going farther each time with added momentum. The very left end had a tub of
Conache Juice, the right end had a tub of mud, and where he landed depended on his starting
choice. While it was intended to be the bad choice, Anthony was very thankful to land in the mud.
A carny released several rubberband balloon animals into the sky, Fybi used her B.O.W. to shoot every single one. She scored cotton candy fresh from sheep on Cotton Clouds, and allowed Phosphora to have some. Then, the woman joined them to the Loftlings, baby Loftwings for young angels. Sally and Harvey bonded with their birds quite well, Nea cried and hugged hers tight as it flapped forcefully, thousands of feet above the ocean. Anthony angrily ordered his bird to kneel so he can climb on, but it snapped its beak at him. Fybi happily flew around the sky on her golden Loftwing, and assured Phosphora it was okay. Even though she was much taller, she sat on a black Loftling, it withstood her weight and lifted off the cloud, then flew. Phosphora held tight, taking her tall height into account, while Fybi freely held her arms outstretched. The sensation of flying without doing it on one’s own, it wasn’t the same for Phosphora, but she was reminded how nice the feeling was. She knew how it felt for normal Nimbi almost, to fly with feathers under gentle wind, not energy under darkness and rough storm.

The evening was pleasant, the five children could go to bed with weary minds. As the sun was sinking beyond the horizon, they returned to the ship and slept on the soft ground around it.

“Yawn… great work today, everyone…” Anthony moaned. “Hope you enjoyed yourselves, ‘cause tomorrow is storms all day. Gonna get this crazy lady back to her island and do whatever the crud Fybi wanted. G’night, sleep tight, don’t let cloudbugs bite.” He was snoring away.

Phosphora sat on the edge of the cloud, staring at the endless night sky. It’s been such a long time, she feels like she’s come so far… but she was finally returning home. And so suddenly… she wonders how much has changed. And traveling with these kids, she almost felt bad. Getting them into what they’re getting into. “Couldn’t sleep either, huh?” Aranea came beside her, lied on the ground and stared at the stars.

“You could say I’m too excited.” Phosphora replied nonchalantly.

“What happened to your wings, anyway? How old were you?”

“I was about 12, kinda gutsy for my age, and I… Well, I tried to see how much energy I could absorb from a lightning rod. …I overpowered myself and my chi-paths ruptured. Benders can have Chi Overload, you know. Too much power than they can understand, their bodies are too small. You could imagine.”

“You really miss your home, huh?”

“Well, it’s the place I grew up, that I was forced to leave because of a deficiency, so… a little.”

“Can I tell you a secret? I’ve always been jealous of Fybi.”

“Oh, ok.” Phosphora lied back, hands folded under her head.

“… Aren’t you gonna ask why?”

“No, it’s because she’s prettier. Better hair, clothes, face…”

Aranea glared. “I meant her-”

“I know, her wings, I’m not stupid.”

“Y-Yeah… She’s just so unique, happy and; spirited all the time… because she can fly, go anywhere she wants, you look at her and just know, she could do anything she wants to. I’ve always wanted to be like her… but I’m always stressing over stuff. Anyway, that’s why I feel bad for you, not being able to fly.”
“Don’t sympathize with me, you’re a human, you’re all the same.”

“No we’re not. Well, not exactly. Some of us like Anthony get superpowers.”

“Okay, you’re just jealous.”

“I am not—” Aranea looked at Anthony, who released a loud snore just then. “Anthony… I dunno. He’s a jerk, he stinks, he’s gross… but today, he worked really hard training; he just wants to do his best for his friends… really, I used to hate him, but now I can’t say that, anymore. He’s trying to prepare for what’s to come, and sometimes I wonder… why he’s our leader, why he wasn’t picked for a higher position. After everything he’s been through, he always stood strong in the end.”

“Oh, I see… you’re in love with him.”

Nea flushed. “HECK no!! I respect him is all, but the picture of me BEING with him… e-e-e-e-e-”

“No, shuddup, I hear you a mile away, snooooore…” Anthony mumbled.

“SHUT your waterhole, Anthony!” Nea yelled back.

“Hm hm hm!” Phosphora giggled. “I’m fond of you, Blue Girl, I’ll admit that.”

“I’m lovable.” Nea said proudly. “…Hey, Phosphora… you said Birka was ruled by a ‘god’, or something… Um, who is it? What kind of person…”

Phosphora frowned and turned away. “He showed up on a terribly stormy day. The clouds spiraled, and he appeared in a blinding flash of lightning. He stood atop Dashi’s Peak, and announced himself as our god. His name…” She saw the towering altar in her mind, great big bolts of lightning, and the caped figure standing tall and mighty, “was Thor.”

Yeah… but since I had a One Piece obsession, I made it seem like the ‘god’ would be Eneru, the lightningbender from Birka. Nah, Thor is so much cooler. Lol looking back on previous chapters, I never or barely called the monuments Poneglyphs, now I’m more fond of ‘Gibberish Rock’. X) Well, see you next time, when we go to Birka. Later.
Simple, Yet Complicated

Chapter Summary

Wendy Marvell goes to the Climate Plains to learn from a wizard named Ezlo.

Decided to add the “B-” before the chapter numbers.

Chapter B-15: Simple, Yet Complicated

Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium

“And that, Frederick, is why we use caution when executing a prank regarding Acne Cream.” Facilier said as he spread Anti-Acne Cream on the boy’s face, which was filled with bloated red dots.

“Thank you, Dr. Facilier.” Frederick blushed.

“A’ight, run along now.” The boy jogged out of the shop, then Samantha walked up. “Hey, Sammy! What’s new?”

“Mr. Facilier, my brother and I just remembered who the KND leader is!” Sam yelled. “His name’s Cheren, and he was-”

“I know, I know, everyone forgot him and remembered him outta nowhere!” Facilier summed up. “I was pretty weirded out, too, but then… eh, it’s not important.”

“Mr. Facilier, my brother says that Cheren said the Apocalypse is coming! We didn’t believe it at first, but… Sigh, it’s starting to worry him. …I was wondering if…”

“You wanna read your fortune?”

“…Mmmmm, uh-uh.” She shook her head. “I don’t know if I should… maybe we just need to lighten up. You have any of those Image Bubbles?”

“Haha, sure, kid.” Facilier grabbed a pink bubble bottle from the shelf.

“Thanks.” Sam paid the money and began to walk out.

“SAM?” She turned back to the witch-doctor. “It’s gonna be all right.”

“…Hehe.” Sam grinned and exited the shop.

“A’ight, WENDY, you can come down!”

The ceiling hatch opened, and Carla floated down before Wendy climbed down the ladder. The girl sat in the chair opposite Facilier. “Did y’all get a good night’s rest?”

“Yeah, I did.”

“Good! Alright, quiz time, give me three types of spells and describe them!”
“Umm… There are Charms, which are supportive spells that give a special property to the target… Curses, which are harmful dark spells that can last briefly or indefinitely, like a hex… and Transformation-type spells, which alter the target’s size, shape, or appearance.”

“Do you have a favorite?”

“Definitely Charms.” Wendy smiled. “I really don’t do with Curses.”

“I can imagine. Okay, Wendy, you’ve been getting plenty of fighting experience, so I think we can level off on that for a bit. We need to start teaching you to combine your airbending with your magic.”

“But I already do. I cast the Repiti spell on my Cyclone Fist to keep it going.”

“That’s very creative, but it ain’t what I mean. Magic benders in the past have utilized bending powers that others wouldn’t have. But I ain’t an airbender, so I’m not sure what power you can invent… however, my sources inform me of the perfect teacher who can tell you. He’s an old wizard named Ezlo, and he was last seen walking across the Climate Plains in Europe. We can warp you to the train station through the Floo Network.” He pointed to the fireplace. “I’ll stay behind and look for where the twins and Floop are hiding.”

“Okay. Will I need contacts?”

“Nah, it’s not a populace setting. You can give your eyes more breath.”

“Okay…” Wendy lightly grasped the lap of her emerald dress, looking down.

Facilier noticed her downtrodden expression. “…You still upset, aren’t you?”

“Yeah… I know you don’t want me to be, but…”

The doctor reached over and tilted Wendy’s head up. “Wendy, it’s okay to feel upset if you wanna be… it’s just it’s a different story if you let these feelings get to you, know what I mean?”

“I do. I just want something good to happen for a change. I want these ‘missions’ to feel… worth it.”

Facilier looked away. He wanted to grant such a request, but wasn’t sure what to give her. …He smiled and said to her, “Tell you what: you come back from this mission, I’ll show you the wand that I use.”

“You mean your cane?”

“Naw, the cane is just a disguise.” Facilier held said cane up. “The wand is inside of it. I never showed it to anyone, but I’ll be happy to let you and Charles be the first.”

“Really?! The first?!?” Wendy’s expression brightened.

“My first student and my first pet! Is that enough to inspire you?”

“YES, it is!! I’m so excited!”

“I am not YOUR pet.” Carla stated. “Besides, isn’t the shadow your pet?”

“Hey, that’s offensive.” The doctor stated. Shadow nodded. “Plus, he already knows since he’s part of me.” Shadow shrugged. “So are y’all ready to go?”
“I sure am!” Wendy jumped to her feet. “Let’s go!”

Facilier gave her a backpack that carried Floo Powder for her to return. “Climate Plains!” he called as he threw a bundle of powder into the fireplace. Wendy and Carla jumped into the emerald flame and vanished.

Upstairs in the bedroom, the girl’s ‘Wendell’ clothes were folded under her bed. …A small, triangle-shaped paper with an eye drawn on it helped itself out of the shirt’s neck hole, and looked around.

**Fizzuras House**

“Vell, ve had a few nasty bumps in ze road…” Henrietta grinned sheepishly. “But I am proud to share our first family breakfast in five years vith zese unaging babies, and our special guest, ze cavegirl, Nel.” She smiled at the cavechild sitting at one end of the table.

“Nel is happy to be in Aughsucks family cave.” Nel clapped. “Missus Fizzyrocks makes tasty little green trees.” She was eating broccoli. “Would Aughsucks like some?”

Augustus was sitting inside a large, but cramped cage, eating dogfood from a doggy bowl. “Why, again, is the animal-like cavegirl not sitting in here, but I AM?!?”

“Because ze little cavegirl has shown better manners zan you so far, Augustus liebe.” Henrietta replied, dropping a bone-shaped treat in her son’s bowl. “You need ein tighter leash zan she does.”

“Why do we even have this cage, anyway?”

“It used to belong to the dog you didn’t feed before you left.” Augustus’s father, Antonio replied.

“Oh, yeah… I forgot about Syrup.”

“Named your dog Syrup?” Rallo asked. “Well, no wonder he ran away.”

“Look, Augustus, I woud not have minded zis adventurous streak if you had not gone and ‘made a name’ for yourself.” Henrietta stated, still focused on her breakfast. “Vanted posters of Candy Hunter Augustus everywhere, how much vill it take to clear your name?”

“Tell me about it. I changed my epithet to ‘Stone Fist’, how do I get that public? AH!” Henrietta kicked the teen’s cage.

“Still, that’s a weird-looking rock you brought home with you.” Ace said. “Where did you find that?”

“Antonio, he ruined your plane, don’t encourage him.” Heinie scolded.

“Eh, nothing we can’t fix.”

“Mom, have you ever heard of sweets called the Lost Candies?” Augustus asked, eating his treat.

“Ze Lost Candies? Vhere vould you have heard about zem, ’cause I haven’t.”

“I heard about them from a sick boy in Pueblo de Niebla. The Sugar Fairy Princess says that not many people have heard of them, however.”

“You met ze Fairy Princess?”
“Heh, I met two of them! Pretty slick for a runaway, right?”

“Nel has to go potty.” Nel said. “Nel can poop in corner, or anywhere?”

“Ahem, AUGUSTUS, teach Nel how to use ze bathroom.” Heinie picked up her plate and carried it to the sink. “And afterwards, give her a bath.”

“Ain’tchu gonna let me out of here??”

“Vhy? You have thumbs.”

Augustus flexed said fingers. He used them to grab that little slide-in bar, pull it out, and unlock his cage. “…I knew that.”

Bathroom

“He he, he he, he he!” Nel was happily swinging her feet while Augustus tried to scrub them. Her unclothed body was covered in bubbles. “Nel feels a happy feeling in her feets now. Is Nel’s feet tasting?”

“You have millions of years of catching up to do.” Augustus said. Behind him, his mom was brushing her hair. “So Mom, can you think of any reason why the World Government would wanna burn any references to the Lost Candies?”

“Vhy vould ze Government concern their selves vith that?”

“To be fair, the Sugary Wonders were pretty deadly items. You’d think they would’ve shown more initiative in stopping our ancestors from finding them all those years.”

“Hmmm…” Heinie thought for a second. If the Wonders didn’t catch their attention, why were the Lost Candies special? “I’m really not certain.”

“Oh well. Do you know if there’s any way to get to Oceana?”

“Vell, ZAT is out of nowhere! Augustus, Big Mam vonce made an agreement to protect Oceana from invaders in exchange for zeir delicious candies. Now that Big Mam is no more, zey von’t welcome you.”

“Oh yeah, I forgot! I wonder if Nickel Joe still remembers their coordinates.”

“Augh, you are purposely ignoring the parts I vant you to hear.”

“Hey, I’m sorry for running away without notice, but I need to find the Lost Candies before Luviro dies this month.”

“This… month? He says he vill die this month, specifically?”

“W-Well, back in November, he said he had seven months to live, so… this would be the seventh month, wouldn’t it?”

“…” Henrietta grew more suspicious. “Augustus, if finding ze Lost Candies is that important, zen perhaps you should get ze help of someone with expertise in this subject. Like, ze Kids Next Door.”

“Are you kidding, Mom?! The point of being an adventurous runaway is NOT seeking help from the law! Let those snot-nosed brats worry about defeating their broccoli monster or whatever.”
“Sigh… Perhaps they are too busy.” Henrietta sighed, aware of their own conflicts the KND is dealing with.

Garage

After bath time was over, Augustus’s crew set to work in the garage, which was filled with scrap. It only took half an hour to repair the Ace Flyer. “There we are, good as new.” Stewie smiled. “While we’re here, I suppose I can construct a few weapons for our upcoming quest.”

“You get started on that, I’ll phone in Nickel Joe.” Augustus said as he dialed on his cellphone. After two rings, the other end decided to chance the caller ID and answer. “Ye… Hello?”

“Hey, Joe, it’s me, Augustus.”

“Who is this Joe you speak of? I am Trader Slim, the on-the-run sales clerk. Can I interest you in this pretty little bowl that looks like a turtle shell?”

“No thanks, now tell me, Joe, you collected debt from Oceana, haven’t you?”

“W-Why do ya need to know? Are there, eh… cops about?”

“No, it’s just me. Joe, I wanna go back to Oceana and look for something, but I need coordinates.”

“Eh… Well, it so happens that I saved the coinkiddinks on my phone. But Gusty, we’re all wanted in that place, and the only way in from the surface is through the Mother Child Islands, and anybody with eyes will see you come in from there.”

“Big deal, I should easily be able to build a submarine. Just link me the map and I’ll let you get back to your sales.”

“You bargain hard, Gus. Just don’t bet more than you can pay up.” The call ended. Augustus watched as a digital map appeared on his phone with a location marked in the Atlantic.

“Before we go, we should fly to Gumdrop Cove and buy some Oxybursts.” The captain said. “Since you Devil Fruit eaters can’t swim, they’ll help you breathe underwater.”

“Augustus, aren’t you concerned how the pirates will treat us for the Davy Back Fight?” Stewie asked. “And what if some of the participants are there?”

“They might. Hmm…” Augustus picked up the Rock Nut and stared at it. “The Rocknut Tribe used this nut to strengthen their armor. When I licked it, my Haki fully came back. Do you think this thing has the power to strengthen defense?”

“You wanna test it out?” Rallo asked.

Augustus decided to put the Rock Nut in the Ace Flyer’s trunk. “…kay, Stewie, blast it.” The baby whipped out his ray gun and shot the biplane. After four shots, he grabbed his missile launcher and fired, exploding on the plane. It barely left a scratch. “Awesome! At least now we won’t get shot down.”

“It could weigh us down.” Stewie said.

“Well, we’ll make do. I’m more worried about how we’re gonna take a submarine all the way to Oceana.”

“Actually, I might be able to make something that can fix all those dilemmas. Give me about an
Climate Plains

Wendy and Carla exited the emerald fire and found their selves under the roof of the train station, which was open to the outside atmosphere. The sun was shining high over a vast green plain with tall mountains. The roaring whistles of trains echoed in the distance. “This place is really pretty, Carla.”

“I agree. But did Dr. Facilier say why it was called Climate Plains?”

“I know. ‘Train Plains’ would’ve sounded better, right? Heh heh!”

“He didn’t even tell us what Ezlo looked like. What, does he expect you to walk around and ask casually?”

“It shouldn’t be hard. There isn’t many people around, so we just have to find someone that looks… wizardly! Let’s just run around and see the sights while we’re at it. Haha, try to keep up!”

(Play “Realm Overworld” from Zelda: Spirit Tracks!)

Stage B-12: Climate Plains

Mission: Find the wizard, Ezlo.

Wendy dashed down a hill toward a small mountain, and she spin-jumped on a propeller spring to get up onto a cliff on its side. She hopped on a pair of train tracks and grinded toward a field on her left. A train was coming, but instead of jumping off the rail and going around it, Wendy leaped and ran across the roof. She grabbed a Fire Soul at the end before running off and grinding the track. Wendy was about to cross a high bridge over a river, but a train was coming from directly ahead. She jumped left and grinded a rail on the train’s side, and jumped flamethrowers coming from the train.

Once past the train, Wendy got back on the tracks and grinded into a cave. The route where the train came from was closed, so Wendy jumped off the rail and ran the alternate way. She stopped at a cliff over a chasm, but saw a Spring Pad up on the right wall. Carla lifted her up so the spring could bounce her to a dash panel on the left wall. Wendy sidestepped when blue Blastworms popped out of parts of the wall, avoiding the explosive bugs.

Wendy ran off the edge of the wall, landing on a safe foothold before going up a U-turn slope that brought her into a round tunnel. Rocktites (four-legged rock spiders with an eye in their mouth) skittered around the floor and walls, staying ahead of Wendy and waiting to jump at her. Wendy lined up with each Rocktite to shoot Attack Spells and knock them out of the way. One Rocktite jumped her while she was running on the wall, causing her to drop to the floor as she tried to shake it off. Carla did a Torpedo Spin to aid in that, and when another Rocktite jumped, Wendy whipped the Attack Spell to defeat it.

At the end of the tunnel, Wendy ran along a path on the side of a mountain. The path sloped down, then up again, and three GUN Shield Hunters blocked her path. Wendy slid under the middle one’s shield, knocked it off its feet, then hit the Spring Pad behind them to bounce up to another level of the mountain. It was a small field where Fire Souls were lain around. Wendy ran up to the first fiery ring—it became a Like-Like that snatched Wendy in its vacuum mouth. Wendy struggled to escape, clutching her wand inside the mouth and casting Stupefy to make it release. They figured
all these Fire Souls were Like-Likes’ lures, so Wendy avoided them all. (One was probably real, though.)

Wendy hit a spring on the other side of the field, bouncing to a mountain path that sloped up and around the peak. Near the top, she hit a rail and grinded all the way down toward a beach overlooking the vast ocean. As she raced across the beach, Ergtoroks (Octoroks that dwell in sand) popped up to cough rocks at her, but Wendy avoided before hitting a spring at the end that bounced her onto some train tracks. She grinded the tracks over a great long bridge that crossed the sea. Partway across, the tracks sloped down onto the surface, curved left, and ended as Wendy ran across the ocean’s surface.

Some small battleships were trying to blast Wendy from either side, and she avoided the splashes made by their cannons as she was coming to another tall bridge. Carla quickly grabbed her master and lifted her up onto the bridge, and Wendy grinded rightward along the tracks. There was a train coming from ahead, riding tracks that were on the surface on their right. When the bridge was reaching its end, Wendy jumped onto the rail that was on the train’s roof. When the train was ending, she jumped left and grinded another bridge rail.

The track swerved left, and Wendy jumped off their dead end to bounce across a series of GUN Beetles. The last one was a Spring Beetle, which bounced Wendy up to another train track on a bridge. She grinded the bridge toward a snowy mountain, going between two other tracks that trains were riding, then quickly jumped on the left track when that train passed, avoiding the train on the center track. When the center train passed, she returned on the center track and made it to the mountain’s base.

She jumped off the track to avoid going in the train tunnel, hitting a spring that bounced her to the next mountain level. GUN Laser Hunters shot goop guns at her, but Wendy took them out with punches from her Cyclone Fist, which pushed the robots against the wall and broke them. Carla lifted Wendy onto the next ledge, where she could enter the snowy mountain. “First a pleasant meadow, then a beach, now a snow peak?” Carla questioned.

“So that’s why they’re called the Climate Plains!” Wendy realized. The cold of the Winter Zone made her toes chilly, so her speed was a little faltered. Wendy ran up a small slope to a ground where GUN Rhinos tried to run her over, but Wendy jumped them and cast Reducto Curses to destroy the mechs. Wendy ran off a ledge afterward and raced down a wide slope within a trench. A train suddenly exploded from the ground behind them, haphazardly rolling down the path and making an avalanche. The train had a drill on its front, so Wendy ran faster, avoiding the snowballs coming from the avalanche.

At the end of this slope, Wendy jumped on a frozen ice rail on her left, curving leftward as it brought her over a chasm between a trench. The rail dropped her on a path along the right wall, so Wendy ran across it, jumping the Ice Chuchu that sprang up. The path ended at a protective fence, and there was also a thin, tall pole. Wendy blew a cyclone up the pole, then she grabbed onto it as the wind spiraled her up. Once high enough, Wendy released and flew over to a path on the left trench wall. The path ramped up and forced Wendy to run along the wall itself, but when the cold caused her to lose speed, Carla quickly grabbed the girl and lifted her to the next safe ground.

The path directed toward the center of the trench, Ice Chus guarding the path as Wendy cast Fire Spells at them. Wendy boosted up a ramp at the end, flying her over the chasm before she landed on a new path, which turned left, brought her out of the snow, and into an orange autumn forest where colored leaves floated down. “Ahhh, this is much nicer. Carla, what’s your favorite season?”
“Spring is the only one I fully experienced, so perhaps that.”

They came to a dead-end area with several log pillars with springs. There was a switch at the base of each pillar, and pressing them would change the springs’ direction. Wendy made a left spring face right, made that spring face up, the above spring bounce left, the following one down diagonal, and that final upward spring bounced her onto the ledge. Wendy kept along the path, coming to an area where three trains went over three parallel sets of tracks, horizontal in Wendy’s perspective. She jumped the flat beds of the first train, used Carla to float over the second one’s short cars, but to get over the third one, Wendy jumped into a vine-made slingshot, which Carla then pulled to aim and launch Wendy over the train.

The next path turned left and led Wendy to a trench area with a huge gap between her and the next ledge, but there was ground below. Another of those slingshots was partway over the edge, so Wendy jumped into it. Carla aimed Wendy at a vine that was swinging circles on the left and launched her to it. Wendy hung onto the self-swinging vine before launching herself to a swinging platform. The platform swung beside Centiflies, which were dragonflies with centipede legs. They floated up-and-down, and when they floated up, Wendy could safely bounce their heads and cross them. (There was a small blue fairy that appeared to be sketching the large bugs.)

Wendy landed on a swing hanging from the branches above, and using her airbending, she swung further and higher before launching herself toward the ledge. Wendy began to scamper through a forest maze, screeching when the large spiders, Skulltula tried to drop in her way. She seemed to be running aimless around the forest, but in every turn she came to, a branch from a dead tree was pointing either left or right. Carla suggested she follow those directions, and when Wendy did, they found their way out of the forest.

They were back in the Spring Zone, going down a green hill and up the other side. Wendy raced up to a lone rock where a small creature was sitting. (End song.)

The creature on the rock was about six inches tall. He was an old Minish with white hair in a bun, a large white beard and eyebrows, wearing a green robe. He was sitting cross-legged, meditating. A wood staff with a round top was lain before him. “Perhaps ask him.” Carla whispered.

“I dunno, he looks like he’s resting… Maybe I shouldn’t interrupt him.”

“You’re not standing too far away, I can hear you.” The Minish stated.

“Eeeek!” Wendy yelped. The Minish got up, picked up his staff, and turned to them. Wendy and Carla decided to approach him.

“What is it you wanted to ask me?”

“I just… wanted to know if you’ve seen a wizard named Ezlo around here.” Wendy asked shyly.

“Who did you think I was?”

“Y-You’re him?” Wendy was a little shocked. He was smaller than she expected, but she didn’t say that. “Um… Well, my name’s Wendy, this is Carla. A man named Dr. Facilier sent us here to find you. He said you could teach me how to use airbending and magic together.”

“Oh, did he? And did ‘Dr. Facilier’ send any notice that some red-eyed blue-haired girl and her weird-looking cat would try to find me and want to learn magic?”

“I… guess not?” Wendy flushed and shifted her feet.
“Sir, we’re sorry for disrupting your meditation, and we promise to question Mr. Facilier later.” Carla told him. “He has taught Wendy all she knows about magic so far, but he is not knowledgeable enough to show her how to use it with her bending properly. That’s why he sent us to you. We understand you might be too busy, so if that’s the case—"

“Stick a tuna in it, Cat, I’ll teach the girl.”

“Y-You will?” Wendy stuttered in shock again.

“But first, just how good with your powers are you?”

“Well, I’m… a pretty good airbender. I ran all the way across this valley in minutes, but I’m sort of just learning magic. I have a Lamia Scale.” She showed him her wand.

“Hmmmm…” Ezlo stared at the girl intently. He skimmed her up and down, from her sandaled feet to her head of odd features. Wendy got the impression he wasn’t impressed. From his size, he must’ve had pretty good view of the girl, like the very slight but unbalanced posture of her legs.

“Alright, we’ll work with it. First, take off your shoes. You’ll do better if you’re barefoot.”

“No way, her feet will get dirty.” Carla argued.

“That’s the breaks.”

“You’re barefoot too, Carla.” Wendy chuckled as she pulled off her sandals.

“Dr. Facilier wouldn’t buy me those kitty shoes at the mall.” Carla frowned grumpily.

Wendy planted both feet on the ground and wiggled her toes between the grass. “It isn’t so bad.”

“Indeed.” Ezlo nodded. “Now put your wand down and do what I do.”

They both placed their wands on the ground before them. Wendy mimicked Ezlo as they performed yoga-like movements, bending their bodies to either side, balancing on one leg while stretching the other one out, and bending back like a rainbow.

“Can I ask why we’re doing this?” Carla asked, figuring she would try it herself.

“Element benders are known for molding their chi by exercising their body.” Ezlo explained. “Magic users know little more than waving a wand and casting spells. Even magic benders don’t think to make them one in the same practice. True, magic is not classified as a sole Element Chi, but it is a combination of forces, natural and supernatural, that make up wizards’ bodies. To grow with it, you must grow with nature. Breathe…” The Minish took a deep breath, and exhaled softly, while balancing on one leg.

Wendy mimicked his posture and breathed softly. She felt the fresh air ease her lungs. A yellow butterfly flew by her face, and since Wendy’s airbending made her breathing stronger, she sucked the bug in. “Ack- aaack!” She fell over and punched her chest, but when the butterfly wouldn’t come out, she took a breath and swallowed. She shuddered from the tingly, buttery feeling.

Ezlo sighed. “Alright, Step 2. Pick up your wand.”

Wendy grabbed her Lamia Scale and got back up. She mimicked Ezlo’s pose, holding her wand in both hands, aiming directly forward, and closing her eyes. “Magic, like chi, is everywhere. Because although some areas are more fluent with a particular chi, all chis come from the same source, so there are tiny fragments of all chi everywhere. Ordinary mages are born with this energy in our
blood, so we are able to bond with magic wands, which help us direct and control the internal and external magic energy. But magic benders have a stronger bond, because their body houses a form of chi and can therefore control part of nature. I want you to channel the Air Chi and the magic to your wand.”

They were too many words for Wendy to process all at once. She kept a firm grip on her wand and tried to focus her power. Even though Dr. Facilier wasn’t an airbender, he had a book that taught Wendy basic moves. Since she had a good bond with her chi already, she was able to learn Dragon Style from the books, too. Of course, even if she could blow a strong cyclone, she wasn’t perfect in the art. She never tried focusing her chi without actually bending, let alone focusing magic.

She stood like a statue for several minutes, trying to picture firmly in her mind, the Air Chi and magic connecting at her wand. Her arms and legs were growing numb, she felt the sweat between the wand and the palms of her hands. “Uuugh.” Wendy sat on the ground and gasped for breath. “This is too hard. There’s so many things to remember, and it’s all so confusing.”

“Everything sounds more complicated than it actually is!” Ezlo stated. “A train driver doesn’t have to remember all the complex sciences and mechanisms to drive a train, they just do it! You’re thinking too hard, girl.”

“But don’t benders have to use their mind, too? So they can focus where they want the chi to go, and how it works?”

“Yes, but basic moves shouldn’t require much thought! All your chi needs is a brief instruction, and it will do it! It may not always work out, but that’s how you grow with it!”

“But you keep saying that magic is a part of our body, just like chi is. Why can’t they be one in the same, and better yet, why can’t anybody else use magic? Why isn’t everyone born with this ‘mix of chi’ or whatever?”

Ezlo sighed. “The truth is, girl, I have no idea. I may be a master wizard, but even I’m not sure what sets magic apart from chi. I don’t think anybody does, all we have are predictions and theorems.”

“Then I’m just bad at it, huh.” Wendy lied on her back.

“Oh, pipe down, you’re still a child.” Ezlo jumped down and sat on her chest. “And you came to me for an on-the-spot lesson, did you expect to master it right away?”

“Haha, I guess not.” Wendy chuckled. She faced up at the moving sky, the light breeze calming her nerves.

“I don’t know if you learned this in elementary school, but in our universe, there are ultimately Four Forces whose ultimate beginnings extend beyond our understanding. There is magic… chi… metahumanism… and even physics. Those are the four main forces that have become infamous across history. It is from those forces that people developed a variety of powers and skills. And no person knows where they came from. True, we think Arceus is the ultimate creator. We think he created all of the chis, we think he created magic by combining chis, we think Bang Gas was spawned from Arceus’s gas… but what force created Arceus, and where did that force come from? Billions have researched, but the answers are nowhere. Did Arceus even make all this himself? No one knows…”

“Wendy, all I’m saying is that it is confusing. Explanations are important for knowledge’s sake, but trying to learn everything or even understand everything is impossible. I don’t want you to hurt
yourself just trying to remember the inner workings of magic or bending. But you must learn to mold the two powers in your own way."

In my own way... “Mr. Ezlo, could you get off me?”

The Minish did so. With a new determined aura, Wendy got to her feet, pulled her arms under her dress, and ripped off her Chi Stabilizers. “Child, what’re you doing?!” Carla yelled.

“Huh? Why did the wind suddenly pick up?” Ezlo asked, having to stick his staff in the ground to keep from blowing.

Wendy held her wand forward, locked herself on the ground, and focused her power. Is this why I couldn’t control my curse? Because I didn’t know to control my magic? If so, then that’s going to change. If I don’t get anything else... I at least want Lee Andrew to be proud of me.

A cyclone encased her body, and the ground at her feet glowed. Carla held Ezlo and stayed firm as they both stared at the wizard with awe. Wendy opened her eyes, kept her wand grasped in both hands, and waved it as the cyclone became a strip of wind and blew in the pointed direction. Wendy whipped her wand right, and the wind redirected and flew that way. Wendy twirled in place, making the wind spiral around and around like a dancer’s ribbon. Then, with a mighty swing toward the sky, the wind shot up and separated a passing cloud.

Without her Chi Stabilizers on, it was the longest time Wendy stood without wind blowing around her: two minutes. Eventually, the breeze started to pick up again. “That was... impressive, Child.” Carla said.

“Really? It felt pretty easy to me.” Wendy blushed.

Ezlo jumped out of Carla’s paws and approached Wendy with interest. “Who did you say sent you to me?”

“Doctor Facilier. He’s a witch-doctor.”

“Did he, now?” Ezlo stared up at Wendy’s bright red eyes. He felt the breeze that was steadily increasing. “…It’s funny… you remind me of an old student of mine. He was an airbender... who strongly sought to improve his magical potential. His name... was Vaati.”

“Vaati?” Carla repeated.

“Yes. But like me, he was a Minish. At least... he used to be. I taught him to embrace nature in order to embrace the magic and chi inside him... and he did. But he took it too far. He studied Dark Arts and the dark side of his bending. I sense... the same kind of power in you.”

“In me?” Wendy spoke, feeling hurt.

“I sense... the same type of desire in you. The passion to learn more on your own power. And the stronger your passion, the more you will desire. And then... you will fall into depravity.”

Wendy’s excitement from earlier faded away and replaced with fear. She stared at the Lamia Scale in her hands. A powerful wand that could shatter defense, but create strong defense. She thought she was becoming better at her powers, stronger... but what if this was bad?

“But like I said, don’t think about it too much.” Ezlo said. “If it is meant to happen, it will happen.”

“But I don’t want it to happen!”
“Child, don’t listen to this geezer.” Carla stated. “It’s good for a person to seek knowledge. It’s just a matter of what you do with it.”

All three of them jumped when the ground exploded a few yards away, and the drill train they had evaded before emerged and dragged along the ground. A hatch on the top of the train opened, and a familiar skull-headed witch stuck out. “We meet again, you little ostrich. Thought you could give me the ditch?”

“IT’S GRUNTILDA!” Wendy exclaimed.

“That’s right, I am back! You haven’t given me the sack! In Orchid Bay, the Fairy Sphere trapped all the citizens in fear. The fairies came and sought the culprit, and I told them I wasn’t it! True, I was to blame, but not all alone, because Miss Marvell here was guilty to the bone! The Fairy King planned to trap me, but the story changed when he… (heard)…”

“Trap me here, you should not! Or your beloved Ocean Princess will rot!” Gruntilda threatened Jorgen.

“What?!”

“The Ocean Fairy, I have in chains. Thought I could use her for selfish gains.”

“YOU have imprisoned Princess Lazuli?!” Jorgen thundered, aiming his King Wand at her.

“Destroy me, trap me, do what you may! But then Princess Lazuli will pay. My minions are ordered to dispose of her, if I do not call by the hour!”

“So here I am, free as a bee. Not bad for little old me.” Grunty said proudly. “But a bargain with them, I made: eviction from my actions, should your bounty be paid.” She held up Wendy’s wanted poster.

“But why do the fairies want to capture me?!” she shouted.

“The Fairy King believes you seek the Fairy’s Tail, he decrees. A powerful wand owned by Her Highness, should not fall to anything less. I will defeat you with my train, the Hag Express, full of lots of pain. Try to catch me, Dear, but Grunty’s victory is clear!” (Play “Gruntilda’s Challenge” from Banjo: Nuts & Bolts.)

**Boss fight: The Hag Express**

Wendy dodged left when the train charged at her, and when the vessel began to make its turn-around, Wendy ran after to stay behind it. Cannons on the roof launched bombshells, but Wendy kept dodging as she closed in on the train. She was able to jump on a rail on its right side, grinding to the link binding the other car and casting Alohomora to make the nail pop off.

The back car detached as the train swerved around to face Wendy. “So much for my mortar cannons. I’ll slice you up! Say hi to Ganon!” The drill buzzed to life, and Wendy ran away as the train chased. She couldn’t make a tight-enough turn because the train stayed dead behind her, and it was closing in. “Child, make a shield!” Carla yelled.

“OH! Protego!” Wendy stopped, cast a pink bubble over herself and Carla, and both braced for impact. The train BOUNCED up into the air upon hitting the impenetrable bubble.
“Your magic’s stronger than I thought.” said Grunty, still in midair. “Can you spot me underground? I doubt!” The train faced directly downward, descending and drilling through the ground. Wendy and Carla searched around, but when they heard the rumbling, they dodged before the train popped up. It flew into the air, aimed at them, and buried underground again after it missed the girls. The train repeated the process a second time, but on the third, Grunty’s front car ended up getting stuck halfway. “Darn it, I’ve hit a tight spot! I’m not looking too hot!”

Now that Grunty was sticking out of her cockpit, Wendy spun a cyclone around her right fist, charged at the disembodied witch, and PUNCHED her in the glass containing her head. Grunty was pushed back inside the train by the force, and the vehicle flew up out of its trapped position. “I’ll just chase you from afar! And wait until your defense is ajar.” The three-car train began to chase the girl again, so Wendy ran a good distance ahead. She jumped the mini drills that were launched through the ground.

“Wendy, the train can’t break your shield, so if you’re able to keep making her crash…”

“I don’t wanna keep relying on the shield. I wanna think of other ways. Like…Like this!” Wendy waved her wand in one hand and used the other to airbend. She conjured an Air Ball and hopped on it, balancing as she controlled the ball with her magic. She whipped around at sudden speed going past the drill and grabbing the back of the last train car. She climbed up onto the roof, and Grunty popped up from her car and casted spells at Wendy. The young mage jumped them as she ran across, then dealt a round of punches at Gruntilda.

The witch blew Wendy away with a propulsion spell, and when the wizard landed on the back car, Grunty cast a spell to detach it. The car began beeping, so Wendy leapt off before it exploded. “You’ll no longer be going around. These lasers will keep you bound to ground!” A wall of lasers appeared on the sides of both cars, and would prevent Wendy from Air Balling around them. Grunty sent both ground drills and spells to impede Wendy’s speed, and the train gained speed to catch up. Wendy controlled the wind with her magic, making numerous quick spins to slam the wind against the side of the Hag Express. After four blows, the train fell and dragged on its side.

Wendy was able to run around it, get in view of the next link, and shoot a spell to detach it. After a little more dragging, the drill car got back on its wheels. Grunty popped out and said, “Think you’re fast, you little dragon? Then come and catch me, don’t be laggin’!” The train drove directly forward, and Wendy gave chase as Grunty blasted quick spells that left pink strips of light. However, these strips were solid enough for Wendy to grind on, and slippery enough for her to do so barefooted. She kept going up these conjured rails, jumping Grunt’s spells, and landing on the next, steadily making her way to the witch.

Finally, Wendy landed on the roof, and Grunty screeched when the girl charged up to punch her in the glass. The witch was knocked out of the cockpit, and the train was about to crash into a cliffside. Carla held onto Wendy as the latter jumped off, and both watched the drill car explode against the cliff. (End song.)

“Rack! I’m done messing with this brat!” Grunty stomped. “It’s too exhausting with my suit so fat. I must return to my team. ’Til we meet again, you windy gleam!” The witch Disapparated.

“Sigh… My feet hurt.” Wendy sighed, rubbing her soles.

“Put your sandals back on, Child.”

“That wasn’t a bad performance.” Ezlo said, popping out of Wendy’s backpack before hopping to the ground.
“Oh, Mr. Ezlo! I almost forgot about you.”

“You’re utilizing your Air and magic well. But I’m sure there’s more you can do with both powers combined. I hope you will train yourself to learn that.” The Minish turned and began to leave.

“Huh? Mr. Ezlo, where are you going?”

“I was in the middle of traveling when you came.” Ezlo stopped. (“No, you were meditating.” Carla mumbled.) “I was happy to give you a brief instruction, but I’m not making it a full-time job.”

“Oh… I understand.” Wendy frowned. “…Mr. Ezlo? I promise not to get involved in dark magic.”

“…” He was silent for a minute before turning to her. “I believe you, Child.”

“…Hehe.” Wendy blushed. “Good-bye, Mr. Ezlo.” She raced across the field, to the train station.

Ezlo watched her become a dot in the distance, impressed by her speed. “Hnn, no doubt… she is his daughter.”

From the sky above, a tan-skinned fairy with pink hair had recorded the events on his camera. He poofed away.

Fairy World Throne

In the vacant hall of the Fairy World Royal Throne, the princess sat all alone. She glowed like a sun, with massive butterfly wings of neon colors. Her golden hair was big and long like a curtain, and she had strict green eyes. Her pink dress with blue diamonds on the waist ended at her bare feet.

The fairy cameraman poofed before her. “Princess Mavis: I recorded footage of the ‘Windy’ child fighting Gruntilda.”

“Let me see.”

So the fairy showed her the recorded battle. Mavis analyzed Wendy’s moves, her skills and powers. The camera also recorded shots of her running across the Climate Plains. “…Tell Jorgen to call the fairies off. She isn’t dangerous.” Mavis ordered.

“What? But how can you tell?”

“Because she doesn’t look dangerous!” Mavis smiled brightly. “She actually looks fun!”

“But… she…”

“Trust me, Butch.” Mavis winked. “I’m a pretty good judge of character.”

Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium

Wendy and Carla used their Floo Powder to warp through the fireplace in the train station, and returned to the emporium. “Mr. Facilier, we’re back.”

“Already?” Facilier grinned cheerily. “Did you find him?”

“We did!” Wendy beamed. “I’m learning how to control my wind curse now!”
“Really? That’s amazing!”

“But while we were there, we were attacked by Gruntilda again.” Carla informed. “It seems she made a bargain with the fairies to capture Wendy.”

“What? After that mess she caused in Orchid Bay, they actually trusting her??”

“She seemed to pin the blame on Wendy. If they come after us, we have to try and reason with them.”

“I hope that we can.” Wendy said. “I just can’t take anymore drama. But Mister Facilier, weren’t you going to show me your wand?”

“Ahh, that’s right! Well, grab a seat, girls, and the good doctor will give you a show!”

Wendy jumped up to the chair and sat, then set Carla on her lap. Facilier pulled the yellow ball off the tip of his cane. “Wendy Marvell and Carla, Doctor Facilier presents to you… a one-in-a-few of its kind, premium edition… Devil’s Wand!” He pulled out a blackish-brown wand with pale red designs over it. “Illegal in over 102 countries, including five Dolphin Republics, only usable by wizards who have made deals or have contacts with demons of high authority!”

“Wooooooow!” Wendy gaped.

“You grow more suspicious by the minute.” Carla stated. “Just how did you come by an item like that?”

“Well, when I was a kid, I was hit with a spell from the Demon King, Malladus, enhancing my magical abilities. ’Course, no decent store would sell a Devil’s Wand, thankfully I found one in the Negaverse for an expensive price. (Er, expensive is cheap there.)”

Facilier put the wand back in his cane and screwed the cap back on. “Now, Wendy, if people knew I were using a Devil’s Wand, it would not sit pretty. That’s why I want you to promise not to tell anyone else. A’ight?”

“All right, Mister Facilier.” Wendy nodded. “I promise I won’t betray your trust!”

“Ah knew I could count on you.” Facilier patted the girl’s head. “So, how about we go someplace and you show me whatchu learned?”

“Sounds great!”

The strip of triangle-shaped paper with the eye drawn saw from the ceiling hatch’s gap. The Devil Wand caught its attention.

Ezlo comes from Zelda: Minish Cap, and Mavis is from Fairy Tail. Also, that blue fairy in the Climate Plains was Spree, a fairy OC I adopted from a deviantART user. She’s an artist who wants to draw all the world’s creatures, so she’ll make cameos around animal enemies. In a couple chapters, we will get to the titular focus of the Original Worlds Arc. Stay tuned.
26. Birka

Chapter Summary

Sector W make it to the thunder island, Birka.

Food. (Whoops, I forgot to put something. XD)

Chapter 26: Birka

Star Train

“I don’t CARE who was supposed to handle the budget for welding equipment.” Dr. Nefarious yelled at his and Plankton’s robots, standing on the edge of where the chunk of ship was ripped off by Mobius. “Get this train fixed or you’ll all be welded to FIX IT!”

“Uuugh…” Mr. Dark appeared out of a vortex.

“Well, LOOK who decided to rematerialize, Mister Most-powerful-being-in-Dreamland. What good did your lousy Protoon do this time?”

“Hey! In the Dream World, the Protoon makes me more powerful than you could possibly imagine. But even with it in my possession, there are rules that Imaginary beings, such as myself, must abide by. (One of those rules is ‘the Protoon must not leave its resting place’, but screw that.) I assure you, however, if I was at my full power here, you would fear me.”

“I’m sure I would, but right now, I fear the amount of Bolts it will cost to have this train fixed. Yell at some of your minions to help out. I need to see if Lawrence recorded that new Gobots episode.”

The robot marched away.

Mr. Dark sighed with aggravation as Plankton hopped over. “If it makes you feel better, I clogged the electrical outlets of his TV with chum.”

Dark turned away, staring at the pink electrical sphere and rubbing a finger against it. “Plankton… do you know what a Creation is?”

“If it’s not my robots, I’ve been using the wrong term all this time.”

“A Creation refers to any sort of life-form that was not naturally created, except by the will of ordinary mortals. Psychicbenders are more well-known for creating Imaginary Friends, but they are not the only ones who can. We Dream Spirits are subconsciously created by sleeping mortals and primarily thrive in the Dream World, and on a more literal sense, robots are created out of physical material and Programs are designed in the sub-dimension, Cyberspace. But strict laws are established upon the species that are created from thoughts. An Imaginary Friend can easily fade into nothing if the Creator no longer cares, or dies, and we Dream Spirits cannot survive in the Waking World for long. Only by the power of the Protoon am I standing here, talking to you.”

“Kinda like my situation with being out of water for too long. I know how you feel.”

“Yes, and I would like to have as much power in the Waking World. Do you know about the
Switching Spell? It is a special charm that allows two mortals to trade bodies, based on a matter of trust and agreement. Creations have their own version… via a trading of existences between a mortal and Creation, the imaginary can become real. That was a theorem discovered by Weiss Guertena, a legendary artist. And one that can help me spectacularly, because if I could trade existences with another mortal, I would have power in this world! I could manipulate the dreams of mortals from outside, and rule the Dream Realm from this position.”

“Can’t help ya there, buddy.” Plankton declined simply. “I love you Thaddeus, but not enough to trade my existence.”

“Regardless… it is a theorem I want to research. That is why… I must get my hands on that girl named Mary.” He looked at Plankton with maniacal eyes. “Because she is Guertena’s daughter.”

**Skypia; Rubberband Land**

It was 10 in the morning before Sector W woke up. Sleeping on solid cloud was a wonderful experience, they never felt more relaxed. So much better than camping on soil. “Yaaawn-d’ow!” Anthony yawned awake, and splatted cream against his face with his hand.

“HAH! And you all wondered why I packed whipped cream!” Aranea shouted.

Anthony angrily wiped it off with his arm, then onto the cloud ground. “Arise and burn like the sun, mine comrades.” Fybi sang from the air. “Yon time to fly to Birka hast dawned. Clothe in yon suits of rubber and let us make haste.” She dropped a skinny blue rubber suit beside each of them.

The kids each went behind a rock-cloud, as they had to take off most of their clothes to fit the rubber suits on. They all appeared skinnier than their bodies, but once the feet were in first, they could see how they stretched to a more worthy size. They were still very hard to squeeze into, then they had to fit the rubber hoods over their hair, making them all appear totally round and hairless. “Hnnn-nn-nn, stupid-!” The girls and Harvey giggled at Anthony, who rolled out from behind his rock in his underwear, unable to squeeze his big foot into the suit.

“He he he he!” Phosphora giggled through her teeth. She blushed at her action, frowned, and turned away. She looked at the suit Fybi had dropped beside her.

“Thou art powerless, but a bender of lightning nonetheless.” Fybi said. “Thine choice to wear is optional.”

“…” Phosphora slung it over her shoulder. “No, I don’t think I will. I grew up in that atmosphere, I want to feel it. …Hang on… where’s your suit?”

“Prithee, am I ungeared?” Fybi sparked with mock-realization. “Nay, I canst not fly without wind on my skin. I will not be able to maneuver thee through storm. I fly metaphorically naked.”

“HUUUUURRRRR!” Aranea struggled to help Anthony squeeze his suit on. She stretched the hood a great length, then- “Ow!” released, letting it snap onto his head. “Ugh… thanks, Nea. Fybi, are you sure you’ll be okay without a suit?”

“The suit wouldst feel uncomfortable on my wings, call it a hunch. I am certain I canst navigate thee through the storm. Phosphora, where is Birka’s direction?”

“Around this time of year, Birka usually flies near Europe. That doesn’t make it easy to track; their clouds shift location pretty quickly.”

“The inside of my vessel possesses yon weather radar. I am certain it canst find Birka’s ominous
clouds shouldst I flutter ‘cross the continent. Into the ship, and we shalt lift off.”

Everyone boarded the Angel Wing as Fybi stood the seven feet in front of it, letting it read her motion-sensor straps. The weather map appeared on the front deck in the cockpit, reading them over the Atlantic Ocean. “Yes, Europe is just northeast. And…” Phosphora swiped her finger across the monitor to Europe, and zoomed in, “there is a storm; a big one. About to pass over Greece.”

“Then yon skies of Greece, ’tis where we head.” Fybi smirked with enthusiasm. “I pray that its gods allow us safe passage. Art thine seatbelts buckled? Wilt no one go flying in midflight? Willest—”

“JUST hurry up and take us, Fybi, before we run out of air-fuel!” Anthony shouted.

Fybi stared. “On-thy-mark-get-set-GO!”

“WHOOOA!” Fybi shot forth without warning, and the open skies awaited. (Play “Cloudtop Cruise” from Mario Kart 8!)

Stage 37: Birka

Mission: Find the lightning island, Birka!

Act 1: Cloud Cruise

This was the very kind of flying Fybi was looking forward to, high, unmatched speed going a hundred miles per hour, thousands of feet over the sea, wind pounding powerfully against her features. Her friends really wished she wouldn’t go too fast, but as long as they had a straightforward path… well, until they get to the storm. “Avast, yon creatures of the sky wisheth to thwart our path! Well, guess once more!” Fybi drew her B.O.W. and blasted arrows at the strings of Spiked Parabuzzies who tried to impale her with their spikes, or the Lakitu who tried to chuck Spinies. Her energy arrows came out at whipping fast pace, although the creatures weren’t defeated instantly because of their shells, Fybi’s arrows got through before long.

An airplane was flying by, unseen at first because of the large cloud in their way. “Whoops! My apologies!” Fybi swooped down, her friends screamed when the ship mimicked the action. She flew smoothly again as she shifted altitude upward, but as if out of nowhere, a plane shot up to them from behind another cloud, but Fybi quickly shifted up higher and soared over its roof. A higher plane soared by from the right, she dodged down, dodged up to avoid a low plane from the left, then when a longer plane was coming up from behind, Fybi dodged left and flew along its side. She slowed her flight to let it pass, smiling at the passengers inside, and shifting heights to dodge the plane’s many wings (for both herself and her ship, requiring Fybi to use good judgment so neither would hit a wing). “The plane schedules are too clustered for my comfort!” Aranea cried.

After this final plane was cleared, Fybi could fly safely through open skies. The clouds were far away, and shadows of landscapes could be seen across the horizon. Once they crossed the sparkling sea, it was a shorter distance away to Birka. “Huh? Fybi, look at all those Nimbis up there.” Sally pointed directly ahead.

Fybi almost thought they were clouds, but drawing closer, she realized they were a fleet of adult Nimbi. “Prithee, art we on path of Skypian militia’s patrol route? Mayhap I shalt alter course this
direct—She swerved and dodged by the beat of her heart; the Nimbi had begun shooting arrows. Before long, Fybi was flying through the scrambled fleet, rapidly blasting the Nimbi with her B.O.W.

“A no-fly zone in Skypia?” Aranea exclaimed, baffled.

“Wherefore ist thine reason?” Fybi shouted.

“By order of the Government, these children art not permitted access within Birka’s boundaries. Heed our warnings and return to whence thou cometh.”

“These guys work for the Government?” Harvey asked.

“Wait, I remember Viridi telling me a story.” Phosphora mentioned. “Earth’s World Government convince Nimbi to believe they’re angels of the true Heaven, forced into the mortal world because of everyone’s disbelief. They work with the Government to help realize their ideals.”

“But how do these Government Nimbi know what we’re up to?” Nea asked. “Even we don’t know why Fybi wants to go there.”

“I shalt shoot first and ponder these queries later.” Fybi nimbly dodged and air-rolled every direction, charged a powerful arrow to shoot through a team of Nimbi, then Tornado Spun to create a wind drill, bursting through several more. She shot upward and out of the swarm, flying forth with breakneck speed to get away. “I shouldst not engage them much, lest my sensors rip. We must get away.” She swerved and maneuvered around groups of clouds to lose the Nimbi, but she stopped behind one, whipped around, and whirled a tornado with her arms to blow some Nimbi away, then kept flying. Armored Nimbi began chasing them, wielding Flaming Swords of Vengeance that launched flaming beams.

The Angel Wing took a few blows, much to the passengers’ horror, so Fybi evasively tried to maneuver away, throw air blasts back to disperse the flames, then decided to dive-bomb toward the sea. She about-faced upward while still descending, her ship going behind as a result so she could blast charged arrows at the Flame-sword Nimbi. Most evaded her shots and narrowed closer; then forming an idea, Fybi smirked and spun during her descent, and since the ship always stayed behind her, it whirled around Fybi and knocked some Nimbi away. She faced down again and dove faster, her friends shut their eyes in fear she would hit the sea. Then—Fybi stopped, the ship stopped, the Nimbi sped by and splashed into the sea, which bubbled from their flame swords. Before they could dry their wings, Fybi took off toward the nearby landscape. “We’re about to pass over Spain.” Phosphora reported. “Then over the Mediterranean, past Italy’s southern shore, then Birka is over the Ionian Sea.”

“The wind under my wings grows as great as our destination. I canst feel the air guiding me thither, closer.” Fybi pressed her arms to her body, legs together, and flew faster with as little resistance as possible. Spain’s landscape was passing under so quickly, they needed each moment to marvel it. Especially when Fybi had to start maneuvering through a herd of giant f**king Sky Whales. Seriously, how do Earth people not notice all these things in the sky? Fybi turned sideways so her ship could squeeze between some whales. She shifted up to fly over a whale, then dodged left around a line of whales. A large whale glided below her, just for fun she flew down and dashed along the whale’s back, thankfully the ship followed her since she wasn’t stationary. “If some o’ these whales fart, it probly ain’t pleasant for the other ones.” Anthony remarked.

“Anthony, why can’t you keep your freaking mouth shut during these parts?!” Nea shouted. After they were clear of the whales, more Flame-sword Nimbi were after them, riding the backs of Loftwing. Fybi dodged down and flew past them, but the Loftwing about-faced and coughed giant
nuts at the Angel Wing. Fybi performed a somersault and got behind the colored birds, shooting the Nimbis in the back with charged arrows. “I do not wish to harm fair birds. Pity they must be tamed for such evils.” A gentle pattering hit her ears, the tiny wooden propellers of Fly Guys. The masked sock creatures fluttered over Fybi, dropping bombs or spikeballs, though the Shy Guys were easy to shoot down with rounds of small arrows.

“Phosphora, at how further a distance must I fly?” Fybi yelled.

Phosphora wasn’t looking at the monitor. “It’s… right over there.”

Fybi smirked at the great mass of dark clouds directly ahead. “I know. I doth be checking thine attention span.”

“How do we know that’s even Birka?” Anthony asked worriedly. “Aren’t there like a zillion storms happening per day?”

“It’s Birka.” Phosphora knew. “We had pictures of its pattern.”

“We enter yon storm noweth.” (Play “Cloudtop Cruise Thundercloud” from *Mario Kart*) The inside of the clouds was like a tunnel, in brightest day, the sun couldn’t get inside. The air was still very hot, which was to be expected since there was no rain. Tornados spiraled from the clouds on their upper-left, direct right, and from below, Fybi barely dodged them and got herself and her ship away from their current. Armored Nimbi were still riding into the storm, but their swords were electrified and unleashed such beams. Fybi briefly turned around, blasted one with a charged arrow, dodged two others’ beams, then turned back to resume flight. She swerved around numerous bulky clouds to lose sight of them, if it wasn’t for all the flashing lightning, she couldn’t tell which way was open and which way was solid cloud.

Parts of the clouds swirled and rose to become Dark Puffs, small clouds with smiling faces and sub-sentience, but they were anything but kindhearted smiles as they charged lightning bursts and blasted. Fybi evaded and dispersed the clouds into fragments with her arrows, but parallel rows of Dark Puffs flew along the floor and ceiling, or both walls, connecting with their parallels via electrical bars. Fybi had to shoot a few of the Puffs on either side, creating openings for her ship to fit through. The Angel Wing briefly took a shock, not damaging the kids because of their suits, but it wasn’t healthy for the ship all the same. The great cloud tunnel shifted leftward, where clouds became more pitch-black, but still enough light from the lightning.

The clouds above had many bright flickers, so to be safe from lightning, Fybi landed on the flat cloud path below and ran. Bolts did strike down on various parts of the path, it was a matter of dodging left or right, lest she be forced to stop. The path curved sideways along the right wall, steadily looping to upside-down, the left wall, then back to normal, her quick pace allowing her to shift in these directions. The tunnel ended as Fybi took flight, across an open expanse of the storm where tornados spun in place. Fybi kept a safe distance, but Skytails flew out from the darkness, she repeated her evasive skills and shot their weak tails. “We just need to fly around a few more trenches before we make it.” Phosphora informed.

“Yeah, but one problem.” Anthony pointed. “Those Angels of Vengeance are everywhere!” In either of the two routes on their left and right, squadrons of Lightning-sword Nimbi were appearing, and there would be risky chance at avoiding their strikes at close range.

“Prithee, ist Birka just beyond hither?” Fybi yelled, drawing closer to the cloud wall.

“Y-Yes, but I don’t see-” said Phosphora.
Fybi forcefully spun her arms and sent a cyclone beam, drilling a hole within the cloud, then spiraled into a wind drill herself and burrowed through the cloud like ground. Her friends spun and spun in the ship, there were moans of disgust when Anthony puked. Fybi felt the sparks of lightning tingling her skin, her wind drill glowed brighter as it drew in the lightning. She withstood the tingles and kept spinning, if she lost momentum now, she would never get through. She came bursting out of the other side as a spinning bolt, but the lightning dispersed as she flew straight.

“Art thou okay?”

Fybi really didn’t need a response for that. They wished they’d stayed in Hawaii. “On the bright side, though, we’re nearing the center.” Sally observed on the monitor. “I really can’t wait—”

After a blinding blue flash of lightning, a titanic, godlike figure of bright blue skin, with white hair and beard, glowing blank eyes, and a darker blue toga, rose from the clouds and yelled at them with a mighty voice that rang in their ears. “EISVOLEÍS. EXAFANÍSOU APÓ AFTÓ TO MÉROS. PLÉNONTAI, EPISTREPSETE STON ÁDJ.”

“YAAAAAAAAHHHH!” Sally and Harvey screamed and hugged each other. “What IS that thing?! What is it saying?”

“Incidentally, our native tongue is Greek.” Phosphora replied calmly, though was just as panicked. “It’s telling us intruders to be gone and be purged. It’s our energy-made Thunder Lord, Birka’s guardian; we won’t be able to get through unless we beat it.”

The Thunder Lord roared another sentence in Greek, raising a massive bolt of blue lightning in its right hand before striking down with supreme power. The range and the force resulted was larger than expected, Fybi barely avoided. She stretched and shot charged arrows one after another at Thunder Lord’s face, then proceeded bombarding him with smaller faster arrows. Thunder Lord swiped his arm at Fybi, she dodged up as that strip of air lit with lightning for a brief second. The guardian roared and coughed energy balls at Fybi, easy to dodge as she ceaselessly bombarded arrows. The guardian raised another lightning spear, Fybi blasted two charged arrows at his wrist, the deity roaring when his attack ceased. He unleashed a deafening cry, blasting endless beams from his eyes, Fybi had to maneuver far away so neither her or the ship would be struck.

“Pray tell, how doth a being of such power stand for so long?”

“All of it is lightning created from complex arrangement of clouds with positive and negative charges.” Phosphora replied. “It’s Lightning 101, pretty basic stuff for Birkans.”

“I view the weather channel every day, I know what creates it. And how it disappears.” Fybi whirled her arms and blasted a constant air gust at the Thunder Lord’s base. She spun it like a tornado, poured a lot of strength into expanding, trying to push the clouds away. The Thunder Lord threw another spear, Fybi zipped to the left, dodged, then flew far up into the sky. “Thou wilt not enjoy the sensation, so thou wouldst understand.” Fybi smacked the sensor strap on her waist, and the ship deactivated. The kids were horrified, but the parachute equipped and slowed their descent. Fybi spun into a wind drill, dove beneath the clouds, and spun and spun and spun.

The guardian cried thunderous curses in Greek, staring at his hands which steadily began to fade. The Thunder Lord roared to the heavens before he was nothing, his clouds separated. Fybi flew up, back faced toward the Angel Wing’s tip, and let it read her sensors. The parachute retracted as Fybi resumed flight. After the last few clouds moved away, the expansive island was in view. “There it is… Birka!” Phosphora beamed.

“Sweet!” said Harvey. (End song.)
The Lightning Nimbi on Birka were both confused and a little excited to have a visitor. Down from the clouds he came, on his homemade spaceship. But Killer Bee, the dark-skinned ninja rap star with yellow hair and sunglasses, was not just touring. No, he was a little lost. “Hmmm.” Bee looked at a map of space. “I was almost certain that wormhole to Termina was three light-years left of the third quasar. Unless it was counting that one way off my path. Ah hope it wasn’t a temporary wormhole. Hmmm…” He folded the map and looked around. “One thing’s for certain, Ah don’t got a clue what this planet is. It’s not bad, though. The staticky air feels good on my nerves. Ah feel a nice tune comin’. Gonna find me a club or somethin’, introduce some beats to these flashy angels. Fools, ya fools…” He jigged his way up the path.

Under a flash of lightning, the island denizens saw another ship approaching, guided by a redhead angel. Despite the powerful winds, Fybi was able to slow to a halt over the shore, landing softly as her ship did the same. Her friends climbed out of the cockpit to welcome themselves to the atmosphere. Well, the other four were wearing rubber suits, so they weren’t too welcoming, but Phosphora felt a feeling of nostalgia tingle her nerves.

Birka was a fiercely windy place, and though no sun could penetrate its dark, endless-spiraling clouds, the electricity kept everything bright as day. The Nimbi had shades of gray with their white skin to match the clouds, and they wore mostly loose robing. With their sparkling blue wings of energy, they zipped everywhere all the time, one part of the island to the other in the blink of an eye. There were many metal devices, small platforms that uplifted to floating houses via lightning beams, platforms that traveled along electric-powered rails all across the island.

A Birkan man zipped up above them, “Heeey welcometoBirka, islandoflightningstormsandenergy, wehopeyouenjoyyourselayhere, pleasevisitourgiftshopstouristsstayatourhotelsforfree, havefun!” He zipped away before they could ask him to slow down.

A group of Birkan kids appeared around the Sector W members (except Fybi, who was airborne). “Hey’re these guys humans?”

“They got funny outfits!”

“Come play shockball with us!”

“Betcha they can’t.”

“So lame.”

“Watch me fly to Dashi’s Peak—watch me do it again!”

They all zipped away before I could briefly describe their appearance. “Well, the people are awful friendly.” Sally smiled.

“How short is a Birkan’s lifespan, anyhow?” Anthony asked.

“Pray, doth not ask such things.” Fybi told him from the air. “Each and every split second, the Birkan lives their life vigorously.”

“Kmm, he he!” the friends giggled.

“…Prithee?”

“Fybi, your…!” Anthony choked snickers.
Fybi’s frizzy hair was puffy like an afro, standing right upward. She glanced at it and laughed softly. “Thou hast gotten me thither.” She tried to pull it down, but it stayed standing. “Birka’s air be very static, unpredictable. Shalt we begin knowing the structure of this land?”

“There’s a playground I always used to hang around up this path.” Phosphora said. “Let’s see if it’s still up.”

They followed a road that was carved into a small gorge. The more they were in Skypia, they more they wondered if platforms, stairs, or pathways were even necessary if everyone flies all the time. Of course, there was always the chance of visiting humans, not to mention flightlessness was a disability. There was a park at the end of this path, where Birkan kids were playing. The swingset’s swings could loop constantly around the bar they hung from, and took the form of electric circles when kids used them. The roundabout flew high into the air when kids powered them with electric charges. Hoops sat at the top of thin poles, each at varying altitudes, and tested kids’ precision as they zigzag-zipped through them. The five Birkan kids from before were in the air above the playground, one of them holding a metal ball, which was really a grouping of stick-like bars with wires, wrapped into a sphere with many gaps. While I have a moment, the three boys were named Dio, Brendix, and Laxy, while the two girls were named Amper and Ela.

Dio lit the ball with his power, causing a blue electrical sphere to shine in the center. He looked down and saw the humans. “Look, it’s those humans again.”

“Do they wanna play?” Amper asked.

“Betcha they can’t.” said Brendix.

“Hey humans, lookathis.” Dio zipped above, kicked the ball at Ela, she zipped to its side, kicked it at Brendix, he kicked yards away, Laxy zipped that distance and kicked at Amper, she zip-flipped and kicked the ball towards Anthony. Thinking fast, Anthony kicked the ball with his rubber-covered foot, and considering the speed at which it came, it was amazing his kick sent it across the park.

Impressed, the five Birkans zipped down to Anthony, fluttering in a circle above him. “That was strong.” said Dio. “What’s that about?”

“Are you herculean?” asked Amper.

“Who are you, anyway.” said Brendix.

“Wait, I’ve seen those teeth somewhere. He’s an Earth-beaver.” Ela said.

“How’d you get up here, Beaver?” Laxy asked.

“I’m not a beaver!” Anthony shouted. “And we flew here on a ship, we’re on… vacation.” That’s the only available reason of their coming there.


“We wear things so we don’t get struck by lightning.”

“Why’re you worried?” Brendix asked. “Gonna die? Sure, we can shock you to death. But we’ll just shock you back to life. Want me to kill somebody and show you?”

“No, please!” Sally panicked. “We’d rather not test it!”
“You guys need an official tour.” Laxy told them. “We can do that, here I’ll give a tour right now. Try to keep up.” He zipped away—he came back, “Thus concludes our tour. Any questions?”

“Thou mayest not notice, but yon woman of the still yellow hair wast one of thou, at one point.” Fybi mentioned. “We hath come hither based on her knowledge.”

The Birkans flew around Phosphora. “So you used to live here? Where’s your wings, why’d you move?” Ela asked.

“If you’re from here, tell us stuff.” Brendix told her.

“Okay, okay, sheesh.” Phosphora waved them off. “Birka was created a long time ago by ordinary airbending Nimbi who bended hundreds of thunderclouds together into an eternal fortress, and have mended Island Clouds from the same type clouds. Buildings were constructed, society formed, they learned how to bend lightning through airbending, and in time, they developed lightningbending in general. Of course, lightning is unstable and needs to be controlled, so the five Thunder Towers were constructed around the island. They absorb the energy from the everlasting clouds outside and provide power for the entire town.”

“. . .” The five Birkans looked at each other weirdly. “We don’t pay attention in history, we don’t know this stuff.” Laxy said.

“Except the Thunder Towers.” Amper said. “Everyone knows them. My mom says they’re better than ever, because of God Thor.”

“Phosphora mentioned Thor to us.” Aranea replied. “Last night, she told me…”

“The people of Birka believed the Thunder God, Thor would appear one day, and bless pure energy unto us.” Phosphora explained herself. “22 years ago, he came from the sky above Dashi’s Peak.”

“You were there when he came?” Brendix asked, the kids zipping around her. “What was he like? Did all the girls go crazy? Did YOU go crazy?”

“Like you wouldn’t.” Ela remarked.

“Don’t you guys got other people to bug?” Anthony asked.

“Fine, screw you.” Dio said. “Let’s go prank that fat human that showed up here.” They zipped away.

The sectormates approached the central statue in the park, constructed from solid Island Cloud that was black as onyx. He wore ancient garb and a cape, held a staff with an electric spark inside a cube, and a helmet which kept his still, sharp face exposed. For the moment, they had no developed opinion on the god, statues were common in places. Phosphora led them down a nearby village street, where several houses or buildings were at varying levels on either side. They’d like to say the citizens strolled or skipped merrily up the street, but no, most of them were zipping place to place. At times, they were afraid of people bumping into them. They tried to avert their eyes away from the people to avoid getting dizzy.

“Hey visitors hey visitors!” a fat Birkan man said quickly, waving behind his Snack Stand (written in Greek). “You like it here in Birka you never really know it until you try our fabled Electro Cookies!” He held up a whitish-brown cookie with blue icing and a yellow icing lightning bolt in the center. A small electric spark flowed around the whole thing, only presented itself every few seconds.
The kids exchanged wondering glances before Sally said with a smile, “Well, it’s no vacation if we don’t embrace their culture. Who knows, it might be tasty.” She took a cookie and bit a piece, the light electric charge sparking in the empty chunk. She swallowed, “A little tingly, but very tasty, too.”

Her friends shrugged and took a cookie themselves, then Phosphora, smiling as she savored the taste. She really forgot how good these were. “Hmhmhmhm!” Fybi laughed. “Mine tongue feels most jiggly! Pray that it dost not jump from my mouth and run.”

“Yeah, these are kinda fun.” Anthony smiled. “You use to have these, Phosphora?”

“Oh, yeah.” She smiled. “Here comes the best part.”

“What’s that?” Harvey asked after swallowing.

Phosphora mentally counted down. …Anthony jumped back from a spark in his mouth, then Harvey, Sally, Fybi, Nea. “W-What’s th-” Nea said, her head shook as she uplifted off the ground several feet due to a shock, then landed. Sally flew several yards back, Harvey slammed against a pole, Anthony spun vertically like a wheel, Aranea stumbled and twitched along the ground, Sally zigzag-zipped sideways around the air (within a set area), Harvey uplifted a few feet as his ear hairs stuck out, while Fybi just inched farther and farther to the sky.

“Hm hm hm h-! Zzzzzz” Phosphora giggled, then felt the twitches herself, “Hahahahaha-zzzzt.”

After that silly sensation was done, the group proceeded to the end of the village path, standing atop a steep hill that overlooked a gray cloud river. “You might guess it, but our main source of hydration is rainwater.” The lighting woman commented. “Sky people are more adapted to it, but you humans might think differently.”

“We play outside in the rain sometimes.” Sally said. “We taste it. It’s so-so.”

Several yards away from them, in reality high above the river, five familiar Birkans were zipping.

“Guess who.” Anthony said.

The shockball kids zipped above them. “Hey it’s the humans again.” said Dio.

“They’re just now getting here?” Amper asked.

“They’re so slow.” said Brendix.

“Excuse us if we aren’t lightningbenders.” Anthony stated.

“We’re just saying, Birkans make a hundred rounds around the island in minutes.” Dio zipped away, came back. “We aren’t used to visitors.”

“Especially humans.” Ela said. “God Thor doesn’t like outsiders. If he knows you’re here, he could smite you.”

“Everyone else seems nice.” Sally replied with a frown. “Not to suggest anything, but wouldn’t they be smite, too?”

“It’s because you’re kids, so they’re nice.” Brendix zipped away, returned. “They know you can’t stay here, so they feel self-satisfaction in showing their homeland to visitors, in their few moments.”
“Not that we’d tattle on you.” Amper said. “That’s what grown-ups do. Besides, you shouldn’t have to worry about anything since you’re kids. Still, don’t get too close to Dashi’s Peak. See you in a few minutes!” And they were gone again.

“Where’s Dashi’s Peak?” Anthony asked.

“That’s it over there.” Phosphora pointed at a great, dark-gray tower a few miles away. It was roughly 80 feet wide, but stretched hundreds into the sky. Its top appeared to be at the center of the spiraling clouds above. “God Thor lives all the way at the top.”

“They can never just live on the second floor, huh.” Anthony gulped, his fear of heights kicking in. Well, at least they might not have to go up there.

Three blue strips of straight, flat lightning zipped across the air, the force creating a strong breeze that almost moved them. They watched as the source of those strips swerved leftward around the island in the distance. “What were those?!?” Harvey beamed.

“Oh-ho, those.” Phosphora chuckled. “Those would be Lightning Chariots. Birkans can only go at lightspeed a few meters every interval, but those things can fly to other planets if they wanted to. The Thundercorns (lightning unicorns) that pull them are among the fastest creatures in the universe. It takes a strong stomach and sense of will to control them.”

“Sweet!”

“I get the feeling our skulls would fly out of our noggins if we attempt to ride one.” Nea commented. “Well, as a small estimate.”

“Pray, dost thou ever wish to ride one as a youth?” asked Fybi.

Phosphora blushed and looked away. “Maybe my former dream was… to become the fastest Chariot Master around.”

“Ha ha HA! Thou were a true child!”

“It does look pretty cool.” Anthony sat on the ground and tried to scratch his arm through his suit. “But I still don’t get why we came here.”

“Phosphora, thou sayest yon people of Birka hath long awaited Thor’s arrival.” Fybi recounted. “So wherefore were thee to speak of him in a negative light? Thou speakest as though he were not a god, but a mere king which calls himself such. You spoke of him as a stranger, whom appeared atop the peak, as though thou hast not expected. Am I on track?”

The kids stared at Phosphora curiously. The woman shifted her feet and looked down with a downtrodden expression. “Your few minutes are up!”

“DAAAH!” A shockball flew by and bashed Anthony in the face. The boy bumped all the way down the hill and splashed in the Rainwater River. The Birkan kids flew above his friends, staring down. “Maybe that was too hard.” Dio said.

“Toldja he couldn’t.” Brendix remarked.

“We should help him.” Laxy suggested.

“No, we might shock him to death.” Amper noted.
“Oh well.” Ela said, and they were gone.

“Ay. We shalt help him.” Fybi flew down, followed by Sally and Harvey who slid down the slope.

Phosphora sat down with her legs hanging over the hill’s edge, and Aranea joined her to watch the show. “I don’t want to offend any of your people, but I only believe in one God.” The girl said. “Even with all my parents’ stories, I was raised a Christian, so He’s the only God I believe in. Stories of God and Jesus make me feel… warm inside. …Hehe, I’m not boring you, am I?”

“I see why you would think that.” Phosphora said, still turned away.

“Fybi has a point, you said that your people have been waiting for Thor to arrive, but on the S.C.A.M.P.E.R., you talked about him differently. …Did you not… believe in Thor?”

Phosphora smiled sardonically. “I believed in Thor greater than anyone. I believed… for a very long time, he would come.”

“So what happened?”

A thin, dark veil fell over the sky that shadowed Phosphora’s eyes. Her smile alone looked comical and mocking. “I learned that religion is for fools.”

**Sector W7 Treehouse**

After the team had dropped Sector V at their treehouse, Sector W7 returned to their own. They were delighted to breathe the salty air of Water 7 again, and wanted to return to the living room so they could pass out. “’ey, you girls flip on the TV and look for something good, I gotta make a phone call right quick.” Chimney told them before leaving to the hallways.

“You girls as hungry as I am?” Apis asked, going to the kitchen. “I’ll cook us something to eat.”

Aisa perked at the thought of her friend’s terrible cooking. “I-I could, run down to the market really quick.” She hurried to stop her.

April and Mary carried their canvases to the former’s room, storing them with the collection. “There’s another of a hundred adventures I won’t soon forget. Hmhm, and Mary, I see you have some yourself.” April giggled at her cousin’s crayon drawings.

“Yes, but… April… do you ever consider coming back to Germany?”

April looked a little quizzical at the question. “I guess I could, if I asked Cheren to transfer sectors… but I’m happy here. Why, do you miss me that much?”

“Not just transferring sectors, I mean… stop doing this KND stuff altogether.”

“Why would I do that?”

“Because, it’s dangerous!” Mary said with a worried, downtrodden look. “We almost got killed by those people, and some of them are really scary. That cloaked guy, he said…he said something creepy.” Mary replayed the words in her head.

“You can drop the act around me. We both know what you really are. I have an acquaintance in the Dream World, you see. You’re… hur hur hur. A very interesting specimen.”

“Oh, right… you got hurt by that guy, I saw. We’ll get you treated if it still hurts, Mary.” April smiled. “Don’t let anything he said get to you, bad guys are always pulling this stuff.”
“Um…” Mary looked away, sadly. Truthfully, she didn’t know what that man was talking about, yet it gave her a foreboding feeling. She didn’t know how to address this to April, however. “I guess so.”

“You’ll feel better after a snack.” April put an arm around Mary. “Let’s go with Aisa and get your favorites.”

Mary gasped. “Macaroons, macaroons, yaaaaay!” She skipped as April led her along.

In Chimney’s room, the Sector Leader switched on her personal transmission monitor. “Sector W7 Leader Numbuh W473R, requesting Sector JP’s Numbuh Chinese New Year. Kodama, pick up!!”

The static screen projected a jovial girl with a light-red, knotted headband under her short, shiny black hair. She wore a blue robe with yellow, spiked explosion designs on the shoulders, orange sleeves on her undershirt, and had purplish-red eyeliner under her vibrant black eyes. She grinned and greeted Chimney with a salute. “What’s-up, Chimney!”

“First I wanted to say, that your fireworks blew this shitty giganto train’s mind away like the day yo’ numbuhed for!!”

“Wow, really? Well, I’m glad to help out!”

“Yes, and I woulda wasted them beautifully, if I ain’t got ***king shrunk!!”

“Oh….” Kodama’s face sunk, but she still smiled sheepishly. “You got small again, huh?”

“Yes, and Giganto totally humiliated my baby! Now I gotta work extra hard to make her as beautiful as ever!”

“I’m sure you can handle that easy, Chimney!”

“NOT DONE! If I’m gonna give those deki sokonai a show, I’m gonna need bigger more beautiful fireworks. That’s where you come in, Ko-chan!” She pointed vigorously.

“What do you want me to do, exactly?”

“Do whatchu always been doin’! Make me the biggest, most powerful fireworks you gooot!!”

“Even more powerful than before?!!”

“Yes! I need fireworks big enough to dazzle a whole galaxy, and you’re the greatest explosive expert I know! So what say you, Ko-chan? Are you NOT the biggest firework fanatic around?!”

“Whaddyou mean, of course I am!” she yelled defensively.

“Then can YOU make fireworks good enough ta be on the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.?!”

“You better bet I can!” She balled a fist and smirked.

“Then will YOU work your ARSE off to CREATE such explosives?!”

“I WILL, Chimney!”

“I AIN’T HEAR YOU LOUD ENOUGH! Yell that to me in a full sentence!”

“I’LL CREATE THE BIGGEST, BRIGHTEST FIREWORKS YOU’VE EVER SEEN! SO YOU
“BETTER MAKE EXTRA SPACE IN YOUR TRAIN, ‘CAUSE THEY’LL BLOW YOU AWAY!”

“GOOOOOD! I expect them before month’s end!!”

“YEEEEAAH!”

“Yaaaaaaaah!”

“YEEEEEEEEAAAAAAH!” They both screamed, before the screen switched off.

Mocha stomped in with a confused look. “What’s with all the Japanese screaming?”

“Ahhhh, it’s madgirl-style business, Mochan, you wouldn’t know.” Chimney casually walked by the giantess, who shook her head in disbelief.

Flora Galaxy; Galactic News Studio

“-so Planet Rovere is sure to see good times with their latest discovery of molten Alumitanium.” The green-skinned anchorman reported.

“In other news,” continued the anchorwoman of the same species, “tomorrow, Earthican billionaire Ted Wassanasong will begin construction of his project, Golfing in the Stars, which will be established over the would-be former Violet Dwarf System.”

“Planetary citizens all over the galaxy are excited and have shown their support for the Earthican benefactor, whom is supported by Galaxia’s very own Mom of Mom’s Friendly Robot Company. Speaking of which, if I may, I bought the greatest robot from them a few weeks ago, hasn’t shorted out once. Robot 1-X, my antennae, please.”

A short, floating white robot with a round-square head, a blue monitor face, and no legs glided over, extracted Q-tips from its fingers, and twisted gunk out of the anchorman’s green antennas. “Your ears are void of all unnecessary wax and I shall begin refining them into a bottle cake as you requested.”

“Not what I wanted to hear before dinner…” said the anchorwoman with disgust.

“Hey, you can’t go in there!” The doors swung open when Arianna burst in, escaping the large-bodied guards.

The child ran behind the stand between the anchorpeople. “People of Florae, you must NOT support Ted Watchacallit!”

“Did our translators spell his name wrong?” the anchorman said into his headset.

“Young lady, this isn’t a playground, do you have-?” The anchorwoman was cut off as Arianna spoke.

“The people of this galaxy can’t allow this man to destroy an entire system just for some pastime entertainment. I have flown by the Violet Dwarf System many an occasion, and I’m certain many of you have, too. The Violet System is a wonderful place, endlessly frolicking with creatures too majestic for our eyes. Those creatures do not exist in many quadrants, they struggle to survive today, so who are we to let them die tomorrow?”

“Miss, we can see you’re very sensitive about the topic,” the anchorman intervened, “but the money was already donated, the people of Florae support Ted. The star system isn’t located too
“YES IT WILL. Do you not think these animals are people, too? Don’t think their habitats are settlements? Very well, as part of nature, stronger or more intelligent species hunt and kill the weaker for food. But that act is terrible on its own, even if necessary, so to kill them just for temporary entertainment is soulless! How would you all feel if the same thing happened to you, WHAT IF we were to die tomorrow, every one of us?!”

“No, don’t go into commercial, this girl’s bringing our ratings starward!” the anchorwoman whisper-yelled into her mike.

“All I’m saying is, try to imagine yourselves in the animals’ place. Grazing in your homes, your markets, carefree and innocent, when all of a sudden, a force beyond your control rains down and destroys everything you care about. A being that deems itself far greater than us has no qualms, it laughs at our planets reduced to rubble and lives its existence happy and uncaring. Never once had it considered what we felt. All the children we love, the parents and friends. Our existence meant nothing to this ‘person’. How would you know the animals don’t think and act in their own special way? Living lives as average as ours, for the sake of living. Do we think ourselves as gods? …I guess we must.”

The news aliens were silent for a while. Everybody in Florae was silent before their TV screens. For an 11-year-old girl, she sounded very passionate and sure of herself. They never really looked at this whole operation from a different point of view. True, a lot of parents took their kids to see the star system, it was a pretty place. They wondered if a golf course would be any better. Sure, it might be wicked fun, but establishments are sure to be torn down after a while, the Violet System has been there for eons, roughly.

“Yeah, but then again, she’s just a little kid.” Arianna gasped when someone else barged in the room and shoved her away. It was Ted’s son, Chane Wassanasong, a handsome black-haired Laotian of 15, with a white shirt and gray jacket that made him resemble his father. “But the Chanester thinks differently. Hey ladies, how’s it hangin’?” He winked.

“AAAAAAAHHH!” Teenage alien girls were instantly swooned by his appearance, screaming gleefully.

“I’m just saying, who cares if a few animals in the universe go ‘bye’? I mean, it’s not like we see ‘em all the time on our home planets, right?”

There were mutters between a club of teenage boys at a party. “Well, yeah, maybe…”

“Before long, they’ll grow old and die within a fraction of our own lifespans. And since all they have are those little strips of asteroid, there won’t be too many mates to have more kids with. The last of those generations will just get old and die alone, and no one wants that, right?”

“NOOOOO!” screamed more girls.

“It’d be better to die together than alone, that’s what I’m saying! But you guys, all you male and female species out there can have fun for years to come at my dad’s new golf course. Cotton candy made of all fruity flavors for the little ones.” He showed a picture of the rainbow-colored candy.

“Mommy, I want that!” an alien girl pointed.

“For the adults, a million different flavors of wine, including static, skin cream, and garbage sludge.”
“Mmmmm I want that.” A blobbish garbage alien smiled hungrily.

“So if you wanna see animals, pick up a pet or something. We can lose an asteroid field-full. Continue supporting Ted’s Golfing Galaxy, and please, tune in or join us tomorrow, and witness the unveiling of Golfing in the Stars.” He knelt down and put an arm around Arianna. “What say you, little lady? Will you come golf with us?”

Arianna stared enticingly at his gorgeous face. Her purple skin flushed, she spoke excitedly, “I would love to, Chane!”

“You heard it here, folks, on Channel One Quadrillion!” the anchorwoman grinned. “Tune in tomorrow as we film the bombing of the Violet Dwarf System!” The cameras panned away and the anchors left. Arianna was still blushing as Chane walked away. …The color immediately drained from her face, and no longer did she want to live anymore.

Birka

“Cough, cough, keh. Huff… huff…” Anthony was soaking wet by the time Sally and Harvey were able to fish him out of the water with their yo-yos. He had the soaked appearance as though he were out during a rainstorm. Aranea and Phosphora eventually chased after them, and Anthony flowed quite a distance up the river. “Uuugh… now I’ll never get this dumb suit off.”

To Aranea, the comical ordeals that happen to Anthony get old after too much. Instead, she let her mind wander to the area they were now. They were at the edge of a small, cluttered, decrepit village that looked like a power plant, thin wires connecting house-to-house with small, weak sparks traveling along them at random intervals. At the other side of the village stood a Thunder Tower. “What’s this place?” Nea asked.

“It’s Joel.” Phosphora answered solemnly. “My… home.”

Meanwhile, Fybi had flown over the island’s edge and beneath the whole mass, to get beneath the river’s base as she used her airbending to keep Anthony within. Since cloud water was weaker than land water, Anthony sunk faster, so this was a necessary precaution, of course Fybi didn’t wanna submerge through herself, lest her wings get too droopy. The bottom of Birka was unsurprisingly barren—except for the gigantic upside-down antenna not too far away. The grayish-black device shone with energy, before sending a powerful beam directly through the clouds below. Phosphora wondered if this was some strange means of creating lightning for the earth-dwellers, but she would ask Phosphora. She quickly flew toward the edge to return to her friends.

Very near the large antenna, an armored Birkan saw her. He flapped up through an opening in the cloud and up Dashi’s Peak that the antenna was connected to. He landed at the very top and kneeled before the man on the throne. “O Great and Powerful Thor. A little Nimbi child has seen your machine. Her wings were feathered, so she must be from outside.”

Thor tapped his fingers on the armrest. “Outside, is she?” He spoke with a light, calm voice.

“Yes, and according to earlier reports, she is accompanied by four human children, and one adult.”

“Would this adult be the singing human that was reported previous?”

“No, it was a woman. With yellow hair and little clothing. We do not know how the singing human landed here, but our Thunder Lord was destroyed half an hour ago, after he appeared. The only explanation is these kids. Shall we make ready to banish them from the island?”

“…Not yet.” Thor picked up his staff and stood. His greasy black hair was shiny and smooth, his
sharp face stretched a smile. “I want to meet them first.”

I’m somewhat at an impasse for this arc. I wanted for a fair bit of time in Birka, but I also don’t think I can stretch the conflict for 4 more chapters. Symphonia was regrettably rushed since I wanted to make the 10-chapter mark, that’s why. Not to mention, the Presidents Saga coming up has a lot of stuff about it, so I could dedicate more chapters to it. So yeah, this saga may end soon. Next time, we will finish Arianna’s arc, and if there’s time, learn Phosphora’s backstory. See ya.
Chapter Summary

Nerehc Onu goes to meet Ragaj Gnik.

This chapter is short and is mostly a setup. But next time is when the real action begins.

Chapter B-16: Whereabouts of the Few

Reykjavík, Iceland

Egroeg and AlyakAm waited for a chance to steal the spare S.C.A.M.P.E.R. in the Uno House. When Sector V went on a mission to Dressrosa, the siblings seized the chance. It took them a while to find Iceland’s location in the Posiverse; it was in the opposite direction it usually would’ve been. They saw a treehouse growing from a house they recognized as their own.

“I wonder if our parallels are home.” Egroeg asked tonelessly as they stepped off the ship, which they parked in the front yard.

“We can determine that by our Positive mother’s reaction if we knock.” AlyakAm replied.

With that, the younger sister knocked on the house’s front door. A woman who looked like their Positive mother, Misty King, answered. “George, MaKayla! Welcome back from space!” She grinned.

“I guess they aren’t home.” Egroeg said.

“Who’s not home, George?”

“Greetings, Mother.” AlyakAm spoke with a higher tone, in attempt to sound like how she perceived her Positive to sound. “Is Father—I mean, Mr. King—I mean… yes, Father, is he home?”

“N…No, he’s still at the Great Clock.” Misty replied, confused by her daughter’s behavior. “He should be back by tomorrow…”

“That is well.” Egroeg said. “We will go up to our rooms, and change clothes, and brush our teeth, and look over Kids Next Door files. You do not need to come check on us, because we will be down for dinner.”

The two kids with their blank expressions entered the house as Misty watched them. She couldn’t shake the feeling that they sounded too much like robots today.

Egroeg and AlyakAm passed their Positives’ rooms and entered their parents’ room. AlyakAm searched the closet, moving the couple’s clothes aside to find nothing unordinary. She picked up a book leaned against the closet’s corner. It was a copy of the Avalaran fairytale, Fairy Sisters… there was a white tape under the title, but AlyakAm couldn’t pick it off. “Meh.” She put the book back in the closet, not thinking it was relevant.
Egroeg searched the nightstand drawers. There was a crayon drawing of Jagar and Yuki, smiling and holding hands. There was a drawing of a six-fingered hand. There was a drawing of a smiling green skull with green eyes. Egroeg decided to search under the bed. He pulled out a heavy book and read its title. “AlyakAm, look at this.” His sister walked over and looked at the book on the floor. Its cover depicted a body of green mist, with a hooded head on its top and bottom. *Ghosts of my Family*, by Alexander Pines. (Illustrations by Trevor Wickens.)

They turned the book over and read the description on the back. *For as long as I can remember, I was haunted by green ghosts. My father claimed that he too was haunted, and that his father was haunted… So I sought to learn the truth behind these spirits which I have called Shimmers. My colleague, Trevor Wickens, and I travel to find a way to delve into the hidden confines of the human mind and discover the meaning of dreams.*

“We should look up the online reviews and see if it’s any good.” AlyakAm said.

Egroeg opened the book—there was a paper taped inside the back cover. *See also: Diary of Stanford Pines. …*No, I am not an egotist.*

They searched the room, but found no trace of any supposed diary. “AlyakAm… do you suppose our Positive father keeps things in the basement, too?”

The siblings quietly crept down the stairs, seeing Misty was cooking in the kitchen. They snuck into the door they recognized as the basement entrance. Instead of finding a meeting room where their father gathered a bunch of intergalactic supervillains, there was dusty junk piled in the basement. There was an upside-down poster of a tree hanging on the wall… no, apparently the tree itself was upside-down, and a room underneath the tree was circled.

Egroeg found a dusty book laying on its front. *Diary of Stanford Pines.* “Why are these people so fascinated with these… Pine Trees?” AlyakAm asked.

“AlyakAm, you remember the stories our father has told us, right?” Egroeg asked, flipping pages of the diary. “The connections I’m drawing from these books is much too similar. Which means that, perhaps somewhere in here, is a clue as to how…” He glimpsed at a peculiar page with bolded writing.

*Dear Diary: ASTONISHING! Today, I learned the equation that baffled scientists for eons: the equation that can cancel the seal of any chi-block anywhere! I wrote it in my journal—but don’t tell anyone!*

“UUUUGH, another book we have to find!” AlyakAm groaned.

“Now I understand how Mr. King stole from Father.” Egroeg said, looking at the poster of the upside-down tree.

“You are right, Brother. But the question remains, where did he hide the-”

*Knock knock knock*, the sound rang from upstairs. “Oh, maybe it’s Jagar!” Misty’s voice cheered, making no sound with her bare feet as she fast-walked to answer it.

Adrenaline filling them, Egroeg and AlyakAm went up the basement stairs and peeked through the door, watching Misty about to answer the front door. “What if it’s our Positives? Or worse, Mr. King?” Egroeg asked.

“If it’s our Positives, we can make the claim we were just doing a playful prank.” Alyak said. “If it’s their father, I vote to sacrifice you.”
“Why? It’s not like their powers can effect us.”

“But if he knows that equation, he can.”

Misty answered the door. “Oh, Miyuki, hello! And I see you brought friends over. Lemme see, you kids were… Dillon York and Melody Jackson, right?”

“Haha, I guess they are!” Ikuyim’s cheery voice said. “Hi, Positive Egroeg and AlyakAm’s Mother! We’re looking for our friends, Egroeg and-”

“GUYS!” Egroeg shouted (still sounding a bit toneless) as he and Alyak ran up to them.

“THERE you two are.” Nollid stated. “We need to talk to you about a few things.”

“Kids, what’s going-” Misty tried to ask.

“They’re here for a study project,” Egroeg and Alyak rushedly pulled Ikuyim and Nollid upstairs, “we’ll just be up in our room again, no check!”

Misty looked down at Ydolem’s solemn smile and creepy white eyes. “I enjoy your choice of décor.” Ydolem said before calmly following the others upstairs.

The five kids gathered in George and MaKayla’s room, and slammed the door. “All right,” Nollid began, “I don’t know if you heard, but Nerehc was possessed by the goddess, Medusa, who apparently wiped all our memories of his existence until a while ago. The last thing he and Sipa remember was leading you two to the Posiverse to meet your matches. Is that just a coincidence? If not, why did you end up finding your way here by yourselves? You didn’t notice that they didn’t follow along?”

“That’s why we volunteered to come here and look for you.” Ydolem said.

“Actually, she kinda just wanted to come outta nowhere.” Ikuyim mentioned.

“I have a reason. AlyakAm…” Ydol stared at the female Gnik. “You were the one who came to me that night, weren’t you? On the night before my brother became a traitor… you were the one who made me keep that secret.”

AlyakAm was silent. “Wait…” Nollid said, remembering that night, “you mean the secret you wanted me to transfer out of your mind?”

“…Your vow is to keep secrets, isn’t it?” AlyakAm asked. “So whatever this secret is… you should hold by your word.”

“But is what you’re doing here have to do with that secret?” Ydolem asked. “Because… why else would you come here alone?”

“Questioning her on a supposed secret?” Egroeg asked. “You’re a hypocrite, Ydol.”

Ydolem looked saddened, folding her hands behind her and leaning forward. “I…”

Someone knocked on the door. Egroeg answered, finding Misty standing there. “Mother…”

“…You kids… are Negatives, aren’t you?”

“If you know what our Positives look like,” Nollid began, “then we thought you would catch on to us earlier. We didn’t mean to intrude, we just wanted to bring these two home.”
Misty looked at her Negative children. “…If you two are my kids’ Negatives, then your father must be…”

The two made a break for the room’s dresser mirror—Misty used her timebending to freeze the room in time. Nollid, Ikuyim, and Ydolem stood like statues, frozen with shocked expressions. Egroeg and AlyakAm observed their frozen forms. “Whuh…” Misty was confused as to why they didn’t freeze. “Why are you still…”

Egroeg and AlyakAm pulled up their shirts. Japanese symbols were inscribed on their bellies. “Our father cut these chi-blocks into our bodies to make us immune to all forms of bending.” Egroeg explained. “Except, of course, to the bending of the Lord of Time, according to Father. You must know his name. It’s ___.”

Misty stared at him confusedly. AlyakAm glanced at Ydolem. “Oh. It seems the Secret-Keeping Spell is still in effect.” She said. “Our father forbade us from speaking his name, so I told it to Ydolem, and it seems Nollid ensured that no one but her or me would be able to utter it.”

“I wonder if we told her the equation to disable chi-blocks, no one would be able to use it.” Egroeg said.

“You kids-!” Misty lunged to grab them, but Egroeg and AlyakAm dodged and jumped the woman, bringing her to the floor.

“You know, if I killed Egroeg, then your son George would die.” Alyak mentioned. “And you couldn’t stop me from doing so. So you have to tell us where it is. The item your husband stole from our father.”

“I’m afraid it’s not here!” Misty grunted, trying to shake the kids off. “And I wouldn’t allow you to take it back for him!”

“It doesn’t matter.” Egroeg said. “We figured we’d kidnap you, anyway. According to our father, your husband is afraid to face him. So he won’t try to save you if we-”

“Stupefy!” Nollid casted stunning spells to make Egroeg and AlyakAm stiff. He, Ikuyim, and Ydolem were mobile again. “I guess your chi-blocks don’t make you immune to magic. When you jumped this lady, your chi-blocks wore her Freeze off.”

“It’s all right, Miss Posi-Mom!” Ikuyim said happily. “We’ll bring these two back home and make sure they don’t do this again.”

“Heh heh… Thank you.” Misty smiled nervously. She watched as they carried the stunned Negative kids out of the house, then she shut the door. “Sigh…” She put a hand to her forehead. “Jagar, why did you have to go and take that thing? Sigh… I really hope George is safe.”

Fizzuras House

The Marzipan Pirates completed their submarine, titled the Ace Swimmer. It was relatively small, but big enough to fit the five pirates. “So how are we going to carry this thing? Shrink ray?” Augustus asked.

“Better!” Stewie pulled out a ray gun with a capsule of a light-blue liquid. He shot the submarine, and it compressed into a tiny blue cube. He approached the cube, picked it up, and stashed it in the Infi-Cube in his back pocket. “I had Big Mom purchase alien technology from Nightmare Enterprises, too. I kept a few parts in my Infi-Cube in case I would need to build something.”
Augustus whistled. “Convenient. How does that work?”

“Do you want me to explain the science?” Stewie asked with disbelief. “Is anyone gonna listen? Gonna remember? You all scientists now?”

“Why would we be sinuses now?” Nel asked, sucking a drop of snot back in her nose.

“All you need to know is if the cube is drenched in water, it’ll change back to normal.” Stewie said. “So when we drop it in the ocean, it will be ready to sail.”

“Alright, then what we need to do now is go to Gumdrop Cove.” Augustus climbed in the Ace Flyer. The Baby Trio got in the backseat, and Nel climbed in the trunk. “Let’s hope we can reason with the pirates.”

“You’re going already?” They looked to the garage entrance as Ace walked in. “You haven’t even been back for one morning. Isn’t there a limit on this adventure thing?”

“It isn’t just about adventure, anymore.” Augustus replied, starting a new lollipop. “I don’t know why, but… I really think I need to try and find the Lost Candies. I need to know why the World Government hates them, and why the fairies want me to find them. At this point, we’re probably the only people who can.”

“…Well, there’s no trying to stop you, anyway. Just come back before your mom gets too upset.” Ace smiled.

“Hm. We’ll see.” Augustus smirked. The captain started the plane and took off for the sky. Ace walked out of the garage and watched them fly into the sun.

“AUGUSTUUUUUUS!” Fuming in rage, Henrietta charged outside, hopelessly chasing the plane. “YOU STUPID SHIIIIIIIT!” She bounced on one foot as she pulled the boot off the other. She spun around rapidly and chucked the boot skyward. It hit the plane, but did no damage. “Vhen you get back home, I am putting ein MUZZLE on your ARMS! …Und YOU!” she shouted at Ace. “You just let zem LEAVE?!”

“Uhh… yeah. But on the bright side, make-up kissing?” Ace grinned sheepishly.

Henrietta knocked him out cold with an Armament punch.

On the flight to Gumdrop, the Marzipans saw a redheaded Nimbi girl guiding a ship across the sky. Augustus missed the feel of the breeze on his face. Every few minutes, Nel peeped open the trunk, and one could see her big hazel eyes looking around.

Eventually, they landed on the shore of the light-brown island that was shaped like a wad of gum. Augustus and the babies climbed off the plane as the former opened the trunk. “You alright in there, Nel?”

“Mmmmmm-mmnmnmnm…” The cavechild was trying to put her mouth around the Rock Nut, baring a loving expression as she savored its succulent taste. Her drool was dripping all over it. “Uhhhh…” Augustus stared weirdly. “‘kay, you just stay in here and guard it.” He shut the trunk.

“AUGUSTAAAAAAHHHHHH (Gustaaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrr)!” Gumdrop’s bands of Candy Pirates stormed over to the infamous teen.

“FRIEEEEEENDS!” Augustus happily walked over with open arms. “Glad to SEE ya again!” They all drew swords and aimed them at him. “Ooo, did you sharpen your swords?”
“Gustah!” The pirate with the brown beard and eyepatch – Harold the Helium Voice – shouted in his hoarse, high voice. “I look forward to one thing and one thing a year: the *Davy Back Fight!*” He gasped. “Yoo ruin it! Yoo take the Fairy Princess for yourseeelf.”

“Yes, I betrayed the rules of a Davy Back Fight.” Augustus admitted. “But Captain Hook captured that fairy by force, he had no right to give her away as a prize. Besides, those rules are ridiculous, a member of the loser crew has to join over to the winner crew? Isn’t the key to being a pirate supposed to be freedom? Freedom to make one’s own choices and decisions?”

“YER a wreshed liar, ye wreshed flesh wretch!” Gelatin Gerald shouted. “If yush had the fairy in yer grasp, why would ya NOT want ta keep her luscious powers for ya?”

“Why don’t we move this to the Soda Can? I’ll thrill you guys with a story…”

**Soda Can**

“Thank you, thank you everybody!” said the leader of the owl mariachi band. “Thank you for welcoming us to Gumdrop Cove, we will take any low-paying gig we can get! We are Los Búhos Musicales, here to tell you the story of Augustus the Stone Fist!”

**Ohhhhhhh**

_There once was a boy_  
_Who deeply loved candy_  
_He sought it and found it_  
_In places most dandy_  
_His abuela was BIG and_  
_So round and fat!_  
_She gobbled so much_  
_And made mountains of scat!_  
_One day, she found him and said,_  
_“COME WITH ME!”_  
_So Augustus sailed with her_  
_Across the great sea_  
_To find the world where_  
_They would find their dreams_  
_To great Candied Planet, ’tis where_  
_The Sugary Wonders lead!_  
_But LO, it was a trick, so_  
_Au-gus-tus leaves_
He and his crew sail  
To find new things  
Other pirates, so rageful  
So drunken and pissed  
But when they cross Augustus  
They’ll meet his fiiiiist!  
Hard as iron, unmoving as stone  
The sound of his name brings chills to the boone!  
His FIIIIST… of STOOOONE  
His FIIIIST… of STOOOONE

While they were livening the bar with their music, Augustus explained the adventures he has been on since he last met the Gumdrop pirates. “Before Princess Aisling left, she told me to go to Oceana and see a friend of hers. Since these babies can’t swim, I wanted to buy some Oxybursts in this town, help them breathe.”

“Aye, that do be a tale of thrills and chills.” said Bubbly Brandon. “The Sugar Fairy Princess? The one only known in legends?”

“He must be fibbin’.” Harold gasped.

“Heheh, it’s not a fib! Everything I told you is real. The fight with Azula, the trip to the past, the Rock Nut and the cavegirl I have in my trunk.”

“Even if we wanted to believe you, you’re wanted among pirates for what you did at the Back Fight.” Brandon said. “Helping you would be a crime.”

“But isn’t that what makes us pirates?? Breaking all manner of rules to follow one’s dreams?”

“Didja not take history in school, Lad?” Gerald questioned. “Pirates always had rules. That’s why there’s good and evil pirates. ’Tis the Code, set by the Brethren Court, the Pirate Lords of the olden times. Freedom has a price.”

“Politics in piracy is total crap.” Augustus threw the finished lollipop away. “Even in normal society, rules are meant to be broken. I saved an innocent person, I saved the Fairy Kingdom, and the only reason those pirates are hunting me is because they wanted Princess Aisling for their own selfish plans.”

“You got two Pirate Lords and a Pirate Empress on your tail.” The skinny Black pirate mentioned. “Good deed or not, you’re a cursed man.”

“So what, you’re not gonna sell me ANY Oxybursts, OR a new sword?”

“It would be bad karma.” Harold replied. “Course, if you wanted to steal such supplies, we could not be held liable.”

“Since ya like freedom so much, mangy cur.” Gerald followed.
“Captains!” A skinny pirate with a red bandana and striped shirt ran in. “The Silver Bullet from the Slag Pirates is outside!”

“Silver Bullet?!” Augustus exclaimed.

Near the town’s shore, the silver robot with the single red eye spotted the Ace Flyer after landing. “That looks like something Augustus would fly. A real shabby piece of work.” The robot approached the biplane. “I hear something in the trunk. What could be…”

She opened the trunk and found Nel happily sucking on the Rock Nut. The cavegirl looked up at the robot curiously. “Some kind of unevolved human? Hmm… Perhaps I’ll take you as a pet.”

A Gobstopper flew and struck Bullet in the back of the head. “She isn’t for you, la hojalata.” Augustus stated.

“You know, a remark in your ethnic language isn’t always necessary.” Stewie commented. “Just call him a tinplate and move on already.”

“Will consider.” Augustus began a new lollipop. “But I’m afraid you’re mistaken, Stewie: she’s a girl.”

“You see her robo LADY PARTS?!” Rallo gaped.

“Heh heh… no, but her build appears ladylike. And before you tell me robots are genderless husks, I doubt this person is a real robot.”

“*You’re very intuitive, Captain.*” Silver Bullet approached him with a gun raised. “*Maybe if you hand me the Forest Fairy, I’ll give you my number.*”

“I think the question should be, do you want MY number.” Augustus smirked. “Plus, you’re out of luck. The Fairy Princess already fled. I have a tight schedule anyway, so if you’ll excuse me!” The teen ran at Bullet with an Armament fist, dodging the disguised robot’s self-named bullets. He knocked the gun out of her hand, but Bullet dodged his punches, rolled behind him, and pulled Augustus’s arms back. She pinned the captain on his front, still bending the arms in a cross.

“I may be a lady, Captain, but you won’t believe how many people doubted my abilities. True, I’m not very strong, but this suit changes that. If I capture you with brute strength alone, perhaps the pirates may respect me a bit more.”

“*Heeeeeey!*” The Bullet turned to find Nel dashing to her on all fours. “Get off of Aughsuuuuucks!” The cavegirl leapt, swung a foot, and kicked Silver Bullet with enough force to send her flying.

“Ow!” The Bullet recovered and glared at the Neanderthal. “That brat is stronger than she looks!”

“Nel knows Rugle Frugle!” Nel made karate poses. “Nel defend her mate!”

“You’re too young, Nel, so please get off.” Augustus was still laying down with Nel standing on him.

“Hold on, doesn’t that Rock Nut make things stronger?” Rallo asked. “She been suckin’ it all this time, so maybe she got a power boost.”

“Did she now? In that case,” Augustus grabbed Nel and got to his feet, “back away or she’s going old school on your arse!” he yelled as he held Nel toward the robot.
Silver Bullet aimed her left arm, shot the hand over like a grappling hook, and took Nel away from Augustus. She quickly tied the cavegirl up and propped her over the shoulder. “You’ll have to make better threats than that, Augustus.”

“Haaaaa-MMP!” Nel sunk her teeth into a spot below the back of the robot’s neck.

“Don’t hurt your teeth, girl. I doubt you know any good dentists.”

“NYUH!” Nel ripped a piece of armor off the metal suit.

“GYAH! How in the world did you—”

Augustus ran up, socked the fake robot in the chest with Armament, and sent her flying while Nel dropped back in his arms. “That yuckiest rock Nel ever taste!”

“Augustus!” Stewie shouted as he, Rallo, and Maggie ran for the Ace Flyer. “Maggie stole everything we need from the candy store! Let’s hurry before they catch us!”

Augustus saw a swarm of angry Candy Pirates storming over from the town, swords and guns raised. “W-What?” When Silver Bullet looked up and saw them, she was immediately trampled by the scallywags.

“Hm. Good plan.” Augustus smirked, carrying Nel as she ran for the Flyer, stuffed the cavegirl in the trunk, then hopped in the cockpit. “Hasta la vista!” The biplane took off, and the pirates hopelessly chucked swords that dropped after partway, and shot guns in the wrong directions.

“Uuuuuh…” After Silver Bullet recovered, she was unable to clear a way around the rowdy pirates. “Damn it—you guys—move aside—I can’t see…”

Little did she know was that the pirates were doing what they were doing on purpose. From atop some stairs, Gelatin Gerald and Bubbly Brandon watched their crewmen act. “Well, we shouldn’t be in trouble with the other pirates now.” Brandon said. “It ain’t like we told them to steal… did we?”

“That’s shnotty shwabbie better not be yankin’ our licorice!” Gerald yelled. “He better show us that them Lost Candies are worth all this nonsense!”

“Nice thieving, Mags!” Augustus praised, viewing the small sack of yellow starbursts the child had stolen. “This should be more than enough to go to Oceana.”

“Mw-mw!” Maggie smiled, reached into the bag, and drew out a Candycane Cutlass with gold stripes. “WHOA-HO-hooo!” Augustus took the blade and lightly rubbed it. “Nice!”

“You actually stole a lemon-flavored cutlass?!” Stewie exclaimed. “How much was it worth?”

“Mw-mw.”

“DANG, that’s a lot!” Rallo shouted. “I don’t actually understand her, but it is, right?”

“Mw.” Maggie winked.

“Okay, Oceana,” Augustus clutched the steering wheel firmly, “here we come!”

“You remember the coordinates, don’t you?” Stewie asked.

“Pull out my phone and double-check for me!”
Negaverse; DNK Moonbase

Egroeg and AlyakAm were handcuffed to a table in the interrogation room. Nerehc paced before them, looking less than pleasant as he tried to formulate a question. “After everything I’ve just been through these past few days… I dunno where to begin. Just… WHY did you sneak into your Positives’ house and try to kidnap their mother?”

“It was a simple matter of ‘eye for an eye.’” AlyakAm replied. “Mr. King took something that belonged to our father. We were unable to find it, so we tried to take something that belonged to Mr. King.”

“And what was this item that was so important? Gardening sheers?”

“Our father forbids us from telling you… so we won’t.” Egroeg said simply. “We know you won’t torture us at the risk of harming Cheren’s friends, our Positives. You don’t need to know. Medusa is helping you find the Darknesses now, is she not?”

Nerehc looked at him with a raised brow. “How would you know about that? You weren’t around when she…”

The two Gnik siblings glanced at each other. Nerehc gritted his teeth and slammed his hands on the table. “So you DID set me up! You knocked me and Sipa out, giving Ragus the chance to kidnap me…”

“Fine, you caught us.” Egroeg admitted. “It was part of our father’s plan, too.”

“Silence, Brother.” AlyakAm kicked him.

“In other words, your father is the one I should interrogate.” Nerehc summed.

“It’s an unwise decision to pick a fight with him.” Egroeg said.

“I’ll decide that.” Nerehc walked out of the room. Nollid, Ydolem, and Ikuyim were sitting on the bench outside, with Sicnarf beside them. “Anyway, thanks for bringing them back, you three. I’m going down to their house so I can question their father. Apparently, he’s the one who staged a lot of this.”

“Before you do,” Ikuyim got up and spoke loudly, “Ydolem’s been keeping a secret for AlyakAm! They were talking about it back there, and it sounds like it’s important!”

“Well, Ydolem?” Nerehc looked at the shadowbender inquiringly.

Ydolem turned away. “I can’t… I can never betray anyone’s secret. I made a vow… to be the most trustworthy operative in the team.”

“Ydolem, if you have information that is VITAL,” Sicnarf stood over the girl imposingly, “then you HAVE to tell us! As a fellow operative, we trust you to help us, and we trust you not to be gullible and let traitors like those two misuse your trust. So can’t you break your lousy vow and tell us—”

“HEY.” Nollid held his wand to Sicnarf’s cheek. “Her brother did the same thing when he turned traitor. If she doesn’t wanna tell us, she doesn’t have to.”

“You can’t be serious. If she was told to keep how to save the world a secret, would you let her be silent??”
“Nollid’s right.” Nerehc stated. “Before the DNK changed its name… Ydolem was the one person that everybody could trust. She was the symbol that we could be better than what we were.”

“So you want her to keep the secret?”

“Well… at least let her make the choice to tell us if she wants to. But AlyakAm is the owner of the secret, so we can choke it out of her later. For now, I’m going to their house.” Nerehc began to walk away. “The rest of you can head home.”

Nollid smiled as he got up and pulled Ydol to her feet. “I’ll take you home.” Ydolem stayed silent and let Nollid lead her along.

**Gnik Household**

Nerehc landed before the house where Nega-Sector IC’s treehouse was growing from. As he approached the front door, Ghirahim came out of the Devil’s Sword. “Master, perhaps I should do the interrogations this time. I’m a master of torture.”

“No, Ghirahim, if we hurt the Negative, we hurt the Positive, like they said. Still, if he’s in league with Medusa, there might be more to him than we expect. I hope we don’t end up in a fight.”

Nerehc turned the doorknob and opened it. “Dude just leaves his house unlocked?” The interior was dark, so Nerehc lit a violet flame to see the way. He and Ghirahim walked upstairs, searching the vacant rooms. Before long, they came upon the parents’ room. A woman, Ytsim Eneerg, was injecting syringes into a bedridden man’s stomach.

“I keep the door unlocked for my guests.” said the man in bed; Nerehc flinched when he seemed to acknowledge their presence. “There is nothing in this home of impertinent value.”

“. . .” Nerehc shook his head, “But then why did you send your kids to take back something that was stolen from you?”

“Because the item that was stolen did not belong in this house.” Ragaj Gnik replied. “Granted, it did not belong where it originally was, either. I planned to find a way to retrieve it, but my Positive got ahead of me.”

“...Mr. Gnik, are you allied with Medusa? Did you plan for her to infiltrate the DNK?”

“The answer is yes, and no. I am the one who verbally instructed Medusa... but I speak for someone much higher. I act for him. I am his voice and his ears... but sadly, I am unable to do more for him.”

“What are you talking about?”

“. . .” Ytsim moved away as Ragaj sat up. “I long to be able to taste... to look at the world around me. But my only sustenance is nutrition compressed into liquid which my dear wife injects me with, day after day. It is the only way this mortal body can survive. Just until... the Final Day.” He turned to Nerehc.

The boy stumbled back, struck with horror and disgust at the sight. He turned off his flame so the man’s features could not be seen in the dark. “Nerehc...” Ragaj slowly swerved around to put his feet on the floor, and approach him. “For many years, the Gnik Family and the King Family have been doomed families... because we are the only ones who can possibly know.”

“Kn-Know what?” Nerehe backed up.
Ragaj stopped at the doorway and put his fingers on his round head. “You seek the whereabouts of the Darknesses, don’t you? Some are close, but others are far. Since before the beginning, their destinies were set in motion. And throughout time, their journeys have been. And others work to bring them to their fates. Even if they do not realize. I will give you some examples.” A line of green mist floated from his head to his fingers, making them glow. “With memorybending.” Ragaj bent down and placed the glowing mist against Nerehc’s head.

Dozens of images flashed in Nerehc’s eyes, too many to keep track of—his vision zoomed up to a prison cell, where a vicious woman with frizzy black hair and a broken skull mask, clothed in black, smirked at her captors. She was tied by spirit chains.

“For some reason, my spiritbending isn’t affecting this one.” Rukia Kuchiki said. “She has a stronger soul. Will you be able to restrain her?”

“I will.” Aggie Prendergast replied, aiming her glowing hands at the restrained witch. “Once Ellen arrives, she can search this woman’s mind and see what’s keeping her.”

“RUKIA!” Norman cried. “We have intruders!”

Arrancar stormed the base, attacking the Spirit KND operatives. One of the Arrancar cast a spell to break Bellatrix’s chains. The black-haired woman fell on her front and gaped at her savior. “Dolohov…”

“You know where he is, don’t you?” Dolohov questioned. “Go. He trusted you to save him.”

Bellatrix almost felt like crying. “. . . AAAAAAAAAAH HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!” Her madness and desire became her fuel, for she flew out of the base faster than the wind.

“Who are you people?!” Rukia demanded, her sword drawn.

“We are DEATH EATERS! We serve the Dark Lord.”

**Mysterious train station…**

This station was so bright, nobody could see, and so white, no one could make out anything. No soul had been here for decades… except one, who continues to linger here.

This soul was writhing with pain. A bloody, shriveled, hairless imp. It had destroyed its soul after creating seven Horcruxes. It tried to find strength… It tried to crawl forward… but its pain was endless… as much as this barren station. And yet, it wanted to keep crawling… because it saw him, just in his grasp, but still so far away… “Harry Potter…”

Then it heard something: shoes clanking across the posh floor. A dark figure emerged from the hallucination. It stood over him, shielding him from the blinding light at long last.

“My Lord…” Bellatrix knelt down and picked him up like a child. “My Lord…” She cried, hugging him close. “It’s been so long… I wanted to come here sooner… Oh, why didn’t I…”

“Bell. . . atri. . .” He spoke hoarsely. “I need. . . a vessel. . .”

“I will, My Lord… I know someone… who can serve as your vessel. A friend of mine… showed me to him…”

**Unknown world**
The chamber was composed of glistening white diamonds, smooth and unbreakable. A towering woman of yellow skin and clothing approached the throne. She had a yellow diamond on her chest, and a tiny, slender yellow woman with a pearl on her chest skittered close to the giant’s feet.

“My Diamond, we have driven the angels away from the Quartz Training Grounds. They failed to take any of our Power Crystals.”

“Very good, Yellow Diamond…” White Diamond spoke softly. She was twice Yellow Diamond’s size, and wore a beautiful white gown that complimented her flawless skin. “We cannot afford to lose any of our resources…”

“My Diamond, I suspect that the angels have formed an alliance with the trolls. We must attack their world before they can do anymore-”

“No, Yellow Diamond. The project which the trolls are constructing makes them too dangerous to confront. You remember what has happened to the Black Queen of Derse. Protecting Homeworld must be your only concern. Tell the other Diamonds.”

“My Diamond, if we let those organics be, they will keep marching onto our surface and taking our crystals. The troll called ‘Sanula’ stole five of them last cycle. Our precious Ether!”

“Patience, Young Diamond. The amount of Ether in their possession is no concern. But we Diamonds are responsible for maintaining the Ether. Without us, it will go everywhere, and all order is lost. Yellow Diamond… do not try to engage the trolls. Is that clear?”

“. . .” Yellow Diamond restrained her rage and answered, “I understand. Excuse me… My Diamond.” She turned around and left the throne, with her Pearl skittering after her.

Unknown wasteland

Thousands have died in this barren landscape, their weapons discarded on the ground. Two men of Japanese ethnicity stood face-to-face… One of them was clothed in black, with long spiky hair, and very strange eyes with an unusual design. “Madara…”

On the sea

The next vision Nerehec saw was of a ship, the Queen Anne’s Revenge. “Ehhh?” Blackbeard looked utterly confused. “I ended up on a different world? How is that possible?!?”

“I wish I could say.” Medusa replied. “But do you really need to know?”

“Heh… As long as I can still sail, I’ll be just fine! Ze ha ha ha!”

Underworld Prison

“For ten years, I longed to sail upon the shore where you had gone…” Davy Jones spoke, sulking in the back of his dark cell. “For ten years, I waited to be with you… And all I was to you… my emotions were just toys-ah. They were nothing more than fickle little things you could mold to your whim.”

“Davy Jones… please come with me.” Medusa held an arm inside the cell. “I need the Thirteen Darknesses… to make the New World. When I do… I will give you a thousand oceans. I will give you as many as you need to finally conquer your despair.”

Jones shot up and grabbed the woman’s neck in her crab claw. “I will be rid of my despair myself.
I will not be a toy to this cruel entity called ‘destiny.’ I will not fulfill the duties you had planned for me. I will never give you… my heart.”

“…I wonder, before I up and dumped you, were you planning to literally put your heart on an engagement ring?” Medusa inquired.

“GUAAAAARDS-AH!” Jones cried.

Blackbeard ran by, holding a cherry pie in one hand while he grabbed Medusa’s in the other. “Forget him, he’s a baby, LET’S GO!” The chubby pirate dragged her off.

**Gnik House**

Nerehc fell over as the memories overcame him. “Master!” Ghirahim gasped. He growled at Ragaj, drew a sword, and readied to stab him…

Ragaj slowed Ghira to a Stop. Winding his finger counterclockwise, Nerehc and Ghirahim began to Rewind, from talking to Ragaj to coming up the stairs, and entering the house.

The Rewind wore off when they were outside by the ship. Nerehc fell to his knees, feeling the weirdest sense of déjà vu. “I don’t understand… are those people the Darknesses?”

“What people?” Ghirahim asked.

“But how are we supposed to find them? We still don’t know how to get to the Original Worlds… even if we could, how do we know where to look?”

“You need the keeeey.”

“Huh?” Nerehc looked up. Four small, black aliens with big blue eyes floated down to him. “Wait, I remember you things.”

“The KEY is what you need.”

“What key?”

“THIS KEY!” The four Zoni shocked Nerehc at once.

*Another image flashed in his mind: an ocarina, colored sapphire. “The Ocarina of Time is the key. Take him to Termina, and find it.”*

When the vision ended, the Zoni vanished. “The Ocarina of Time? …Take who?”

**Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium**

“Really?…” Facilier asked curiously, holding a phone to his ear. “Ohhh, reallyyy…?” He nodded, becoming more fascinated. “Well, if that ain’t worth checkin’ out… Got it, I know, I’ll send someone over. ’kay, see ya later, Stanny.” He hung up. “Heyyy, Wendy! It’s time for another job!”

“Really, another job?” Wendy ceased organizing a chest and raced to sit in the chair.

“And what masochistic objective do you have in mind today?” Carla asked.

“Oh, don’t be like that, Charlie, think of it as an adventure! Wendy, I want you to run to a town called Gravity Falls, Oregon, and find a house called the Mystery Shack. I just got done talking with a friend of mine – his name is Stan Pines – he found himself a couple of shrunken merman
heads. I’ll lend you some money so you can buy them – and get a few other souvenirs if you want. Use the Point Me spell to find the place.”

“I know, Point Me.” Wendy repeated quickly. “Okay, it sounds fun! Is there anything else?”

“Yes, actually.” Facilier winked. “According to Stan, Gravity Falls has been having weird gravity anomalies these past few months. The town crawls with all sorts of supernatural voodoo, but even this was unusual, Stan says. I want you to poke around and see what’s causing them. Then come back and write a report about it!”

“More homework?” Wendy moaned.

“I’ll bring your notebook, Child.” Carla said.

“Oh well, it still sounds fun.” Wendy stood up eagerly. “I’ll go to Gravity Falls and be back in a jiffy!” She and Carla raced out of the shop.

**Somewhere hidden…**

The machine hadn’t been turned on in 30 years. It was shaped like an upside-down triangle with an empty center. Little sparks lit up within the center, too weak to do anything. But that was going to change very soon…

And that would be next time. ;P The next Side Stories chapter will, in fact, be conjoined with Chapter 30 of the Main Story… well, mostly on deviantART. I’ll explain later. Kids, don’t sneak into peoples’ houses.
Your God Spits On You

Chapter Summary

Team Vweeb go to stop Ted's evil scheme! Meanwhile, Sector W learns Phosphora's backstory.

To make up for the excessive wait, I give you an extra-long chapter.

Chapter 27: Your God Spits On You

Dunfree Household

Arianna lay dead in her room. Well, not actually dead, but she really wished that she was. She’s been this way through the whole night, and even as morning arose, she lay still. No telling how many people from Florae or Galaxia saw that news broadcast. She couldn’t show her face to anyone, anymore. She would shut herself in her room and never live the humility.

‘Course, when she felt a tiny force land on her upturned shoulder, she learned that wouldn’t be the case. “Well, that news was… ehh, that was somethin’.” Vweeb said with a loss for the right words.

“Will you just go AWAY, Vweeb?!” she shouted angrily.

“Arianna, I really don’t get you, anymore. That speech you made there, that was the greatest speech I’ve ever heard. You sounded more sure of yourself than ever, but then you toss it all away to agree with that Chane kid?! What’s wrong with you?”

“I…I don’t know, either.” Arianna sunk her face into her pillow. “I really was sure of myself, but that boy; Chane was… when I looked at him, and heard his words, he was just so… confident. He didn’t stutter, and he was so charming, and I thought he made his case so… well. Maybe deep down, I… I really didn’t care about the animals. Deep down, I knew that someone was going to hunt or kill them, and there was nothing I can do. Maybe all my words really are just a bore.’” Her whisper grew fainter as she turned to hide her face further.

With a disbelieved stare, Vweeb jumped down before her face, stuck his tiny hands underneath, and turned her head upward so it was perfectly on its side. “Arianna, take it from someone who’s been getting stepped on his whole life before this: you’re an idiot. What you said on that TV was really inspiring, and it made me look at you differently. It made me think, whether you were spineless or gutsy Arianna, you actually opened my eyes with your speech, and you were the bravest person in the galaxy for breaking in there to say it. But then Chane comes out of nowhere, AND IT’S all gone! I wasn’t actually looking, but what about that guy’s ‘charm’ made you DROP the whole thing?”

“You… weren’t looking?”

“I was, uh, inside my mom’s ear, helping her clean out stuff. Hehe.” Vweeb blushed. “Come to think of it, Makava was trying to finish a chapter of this book, so she wasn’t looking. But both of us were still listening, and we dunno why you found Chane so likable.”
Arianna sat up with a thoughtful look. “Vweeb… do you think Chane might have… brainwashed me?”

“Whaddyou mean?”

“I-I can’t really say for sure, but… I also can’t think of any other explanation. I mean… were you and Makava really not watching, just listening?”

“Well… yeah. But Arianna, even if you’re right about that, it’s a little too late. Ted’s gonna blow up the star system in a few hours, and everyone’s gonna be watching him.”

“Then… Then it’s now or never!” Arianna spoke passionately. “We’ve gotta get to the Violet System and stop Ted from blowing it up!”

“Again, Arianna, really confused about you.” Vweeb smirked. “You go from wimpy to gutsy to emo to gutsy again in the span of a day. Just pick an Arianna and stick with it, which are you?”

Arianna blushed slightly at this realization. “I’m… um, I’m gutsy!” she proclaimed confidently.

“That’s what I was hopin’ for.” Vweeb leaped up, smacked her shoulder, and dropped. “Then let’s hit the stars, Kava and Tronta are waiting for us outside.”

“Wait, you’re going to help me?”

“Someone has ta keep ya from looking more like an idiot than you already are.” Vweeb smiled casually. “So come on, let’s go!”

“Arianna!” Nova suddenly barged in. “Celebi’s missing! I found this beside her Spirit Ball.”

She held out a small paper, which Arianna hurriedly got up to look at, Vweeb on her shoulder. *Be the first to visit Golfing in the Stars. Don’t be late. ;)*

**Violet Dwarf System**

Nearly 24 asteroids and planetoids orbited this system, with the most majestic flora and fauna under the stars. Antelope, whose dozens of horns shine like rainbows, drank from the pure, gentle pond. Pitch-black fish swam within, whom when their anglers lit up, it revealed neon eyes and skeletons inside. Phoenixes soared across the asteroids, but instead of flames making up their wings, they were composed purple juice, which dripped onto the Zippy Toads, whom stopped to guzzle the drink before resuming moving at bullet pace. All of these planetoids drifted close to a tremendous, though relatively small violet sun, the very sun this quadrant was named for. Its magical glow lit all of the habitats purple.

Many miles away, the Orbital Auditorium hovered, where hi-def cameras zoomed close to give everyone a spectacle on the big screen, which displayed in front of a great glass wall. Ted Wassanasong stood behind the podium onstage. “Today is the day, folks, we are live outside the Violet Dwarf System, where in the next half hour, Earthican President Ted Washington will commence the blowing up of the Violet Dwarf System.” the anchorwoman spoke with a grin. “Hundreds of galactic residents have gathered to watch the event up close, inside this Orbital Auditorium specially provided by MomCorp. Mom, is there anything you would like to say to commemorate this event?” She held her microphone to the elderly tycoon, who bore a grouchy wrinkled face.

“Yes, I’ve had to address this problem to ten people: NO FREE REFILLS ON THE DRINKS!” Then she walked away.
“Hu hu hu hu!” The anchor laughed. “Let’s have a word with the man of the hour, President Washaphone himself, Ted?”

“Thank you, um… News Alien.” Ted replied politely, with no idea how to pronounce her name. “As it would so happen, construction of the golf course has finished early, and we have the entire attraction on standby. My son, Chane will assist in moving the entire course to this region, once the asteroid field is rid of.”

“Your son, Chane was a very nice young man, and we were happy to have him on our set. I feel I should ask you, though, what was your opinion on the Harnitan child’s speech last night? She put up a very compelling argument if I do say so myself.”

“She made quite the case, but what she does not understand is that this is a matter of business. You’ll find my son, Chane agrees as well, and the two of us are quite… persuasive.” He cocked a brow.

“You most certainly are. So, when the golf park is officially opened, how much will you be charging first admissions?”

“My lawyers are currently determining specific numeral values of alien currency. However, the first ten admissions will be free.”

“YAAAAAAAAAY!” the audience cheered.

“We’re STILL charging you for parking, you dumb clods!” Mom shouted.

50 space-miles away from the Violet System was the long-awaited golf park. Each colossal structure was tied together, all ready to be pulled by a single tiny spacecraft. Team Vweeb was currently approaching the course in Makava’s Heart Star. “I can’t believe Ted would just kidnap Celebi.” she said. “When she wasn’t even in her Spirit Ball, how can you DO that?”

“It doesn’t matter, because Ted has officially gone too far.” Arianna stated. “Tronta, after we land, you and I will search this place to find Celebi. Makava, Vweeb, I’m trusting you to fly to the auditorium and stop Ted, can you do that?”

“YOU BET!” both siblings perked.

“Yeah… I’m gonna have ta say ‘no’.”

The Heart Star was suddenly trapped in a blue attraction beam. “What?! It’s pulling us to the course!” Makava exclaimed, for their ship was steadily sinking toward a base of the course. They were forcibly parked on a blue pad in the middle of a grassy ground, with the only way up being a narrow hill, which was designed like a playground slide. “AAAAH!” The kids screamed when a giant golfball was about to roll down and flatten them.

Vweeb jumped out of the ship and used his super-Kateenian strength to stop the ball’s course, barely under the bottom of it. “Grrrrrr help me out, guys, I’m about to go squish!”

Tronta threw two Light Discs that connected with rope, which they used to pull the giant ball back onto the flat ground above. “Huuuuuff.” Vweeb fell on his back. “That’s exercise for the week.” He spoke with little breath. “Makava, pick me up, please.”

Makava fiddled with the Heart Star controls. “The attraction beam is gluing our ship to this pad. We’ll have to turn it off!”
“Awww, why would you wanna do that?” Chane Wassanasong’s image appeared on a screen above—Arianna shut her eyes. “Stay here, kids, be the first to try the golf course. We got plenty of mega-size holes to go around. First to land three holes-in-one scores a ride on the Chane Train. Ladies only.”

Makava was swooned, “Well, since you offered—”

Arianna smacked her, “SNAP out of it! He’s brainwashing somehow, we can’t look at him!”

“You won’t be able to resist my charm for long. But if you twerps want something to entertain yourselves, my dad sent Pokémon to guard the golf course. Play with them if I’m too sexy for ya. Catch ya later, nerds.” The screen shut off.

“The switch is probably up in his control station.” Makava figured. “Maybe Celebi, too.”

“We don’t have time for this!” Arianna yelled. “Let’s all work together and get up there as soon as possible! We have roughly 27 minutes before Ted blows up the system. Hurry!” (Play “Specter TV Fortress” from Ape Escape 3.)

Stage 36: Golfing in the Stars

Mission: Stop Ted from blowing up the Violet System!

The four operatives hurried up the slope to the small field of fake grass, where the giant golfball still sat. Porygon zipped out of thin space and blasted Psybeams, the four dodging before Makava grabbed Vweeb and threw him at one, using his superhuman strength to push it into another. Arianna had several potted plants strapped to her belt, thrusting her arms up to extend brambles from two of them, smacking away the other Porygon. Tronta twirled and tossed his Light Discs across their heads to knock them unconscious. A door in the center of the blue wall was sealed, with a hole in front of it the size of the giant golfball. Tronta commanded his roped discs to move the ball, however his friends indicated a small, steep hill on the right of the garden. A tiny ledge was far above this hill, and a Gold Bolt rested on top. Figuring they could use the extra money, Makava hopped atop the ball while Tronta struggled to get it up the slope, then the Glomourian could jump up and retrieve the bolt.

Afterwards, they moved the ball into the hole, causing the door to open. They entered a large, dark room with space’s chasm below, and giant golfballs traveling along narrow paths. Their first path was ‘U’ shaped, where the giant ball rolled back-and-forth, so when it was coming up their end, the kids jumped over and quickly ran up the opposite end before it came back. They turned down a left slope, where giant balls dropped one after the other on the top, proceeding to roll down with little space in-between. The operatives kept between two balls as the slope navigated two different turns, before the balls rolled off to a lower path. When the ball in front did so, the kids jumped and balanced on top. While the balls rolled into a hole their size, Arianna extended vines from her plants to quickly wrap around a row of nails across the wall, allowing the kids to grab hold and climb across.

They landed on a thin walkway with a ladder leading up to the platform on the opposite side from the starting point. The door was sealed, but all they had to do was hit a small golfball across a little path, past the lasers moving along the floor, then into a hole. Makava took the club, waited for the lasers to move, then hit the ball into the hole, so the door opened. They were allowed into a wider field of fake grass, where little red pegs with bouncy rubber sides sat around. “Only a hole in one passes here, kiddies.” Chane’s handsome features appeared onscreen; the girls closed their eyes
while Vweeb and Tronta looked. “But do me a favor, please don’t touch the switch that turns the springs. It really doesn’t make a fair game, ya know?”

“Well, he has a point.” Vweeb spoke, then Arianna smacked him with a vine.

“No, he’s brainwashing you!” she yelled.

“Really? I thought he looked a bit attractive.”

“Just keep from looking up too much.” Makava cautioned.

“Good luck with that. Oh, and don’t mind the Gulpin, it’s their midmorning lunch.” Indeed, there were Gulpin stationed around the field, wobbling towards the golfball at the start in their lust to eat it. Tronta ran around and defeated the little monsters with his discs, but when more slid out of their hiding spots, he kept the pace. Makava flipped a switch on a center pillar several times, which made the spring pegs face a different direction, until she could determine the perfect order of springs to hit the ball to. Apparently, it would end up rolling up a narrow, gravity-altered wall, then a ceiling, where the path would just end, directly above this very pillar. Makava decided to rush up this blue path herself, and when she could look directly up (down) at the pillar’s top, she saw the hole.

Unfortunately, Makava couldn’t keep the springs lined up how she wanted, because they kept switching back on their own. Arianna used vines to climb nails up onto a ledge behind the start, finding an Aipom flipping his own switch. She knocked the creature out, so Makava could turn the springs herself to the right order. Meanwhile, Vweeb discovered a tiny tunnel, leading into a room with the Grav-Switch on. With everything prepared, Makava hit the golfball to her desired first spring, watching it bounce around the others, up the Grav-Path, and then Vweeb flipped the switch to disable the gravity when the ball was in perfect position to fall into the pillar’s hole.

Having met the desired hole-in-one, a door on the right side opened. They felt their selves lift off the floor in this room that displayed a holographic projection of outer space, stars glittering everywhere. A red, green, and blue golfball were inside stationary barrier spheres, and nine energy hoops, three for each color, were scattered. There was also a sealed hole for each color around the room, so they figured out the puzzle. Arianna first used her vines to line all the green hoops between the ball and the hole. They were about to float apart again, so Makava quickly hit the ball through (the barrier automatically disabled when her club came), and the hole immediately opened when all hoops were passed, landing hole-in-one.

The blue loops were aligned with their hole in disorderly fashion, but when Tronta stuck his disc into a nearby circular spot, spinning it caused each hoop to zip left-and-right back-and-forth. He had to stop his disc when the hoops were perfectly lined, then Makava hit the ball through. The red hoops performed their own left-and-right movement, but the red ball was in a diagonal alignment with the hole. She waited ’til the hoops were in such a staircase alignment, quickly hit the ball through, and the hole was hit. A hatch opened on the ceiling, so the aliens floated up and onto an outside path, where the gravity was normal.

Porygon2 zipped out of space, and zipped haphazardly around the field in their aim to knock the kids down. Tronta and Makava quickly dodged them and countered with their weapons, but the Pokémon would only stay dizzy for a second, so Vweeb had to Stun them with his gun in that time. A boulder-size golfball was perched, and they would need it in going down a winding road of thin rails. Vweeb shrunk Ari and Tronta, and Makava set them on her hair while she climbed and balanced on the ball. It rolled like a roller-coaster down the rails, Makava had to move her feet quickly to stay on. Porygon2 zipped non-warningly out of space, but they were fast enough to avoid them before the ball hit a spring, which flung them to another area of the park.
Makava balanced the ball carefully across platforms that threatened to tilt. Little Chain Chomps rolled around in attempt to push them off, so Makava stayed clear of the creatures. She rolled onto a spatula-shaped platform that was attached to and rotating around a central axis, keeping the ball stable on the wobbling device before rolling onto a series of scattered, zigzag paths, and many holes. Voltorbs popped out of holes and rolled toward the golfball, intending to self-destruct, so Makava stayed clear, keeping absolute focus on these narrow paths. She finally made it to the flat ground on the other side, but didn’t cease momentum so she could dodge the Porygon2, then successfully landed the ball in the giant hole.

Vweeb restored his friends to normal as they entered the newly-open door. “I gotta ask, if people actually pay to come here, do you think they gotta go through all these trials?” he asked. They shrugged. The next room was incredibly long and tall, and contained a gigantic blue slide whose bottom end they stood by. The sound of a light force rolling down its wood echoed across the room.

“Just let it hit the bottom.” Chane’s image appeared, the kids kept their eyes down. The source of this rolling was a tiny golfball coming down the slide, so heeding against Chane’s advice, Makava raised her club high, ran up the steep slope, and—“NNNN!” hit the ball with all the force she could muster. It rolled up partway, but the momentum directed it down again, so Makava kept hitting it further. She couldn’t stay balanced on the slippery, flat slope, so Tronta aided her using his roped discs. Eventually, Makava got it up to the top of the slide and into a hole. Meanwhile, Arianna helped Vweeb and Tronta get up by vine-swinging the nails that led up the side of the slide.

The kids entered the doorway to a room where the lower floor was a giant pinball machine. A row of holes was along the bottom, golf clubs were stationed around the field, and balls were rolling down. The kids had to use the switches to flip the clubs and direct the balls into each hole. “Behold, Ted’s Golfing Galaxy’s Remote-Controlled Golfing!” Ted’s automatic P.A. announced. “It is not based off of any game you know!” It didn’t take long for Kava to land each hole, and the door on the other side opened. They crossed the walkway on the side of the room and found another giant golfball in an outside area. Vweeb minimized the others so Makava could guide them across.

The Glomourian moved her legs rapid-fast when she was forced to roll the ball down a steep hill, directing it left and right to avoid holes. The ball rolled up a ramp at the very bottom, flying high and taking land on a giant pool table. Conveniently, Makava’s golfball was white, so she proceeded to bonk each ball into a hole. Oddly, the 8-ball was more frantic and bouncing around, so Makava struggled a bit in pushing it where she wanted to, but it got there eventually. The north-most hole emerged a spring, so Makava rolled on as her ball was flung onto a spiraling path.

She kept herself stable and let the hill guide the ball, and the momentum would help them proceed across a wider, flat road, whose green floor possessed the fabric of a pool table. Electrodes popped out of holes, Porygon2’s zipped out of space, she even had to maneuver around hungry Gulpin. A great big statue of a gorilla, whose mouth opened and closed, hovered in the distance. Makava made sure to maneuver her ball to the center of the path, so when it rolled off the end, the low gravity and momentum allowed it to float directly to the mouth. Just when the mouth was in the midst of closing, Makava ducked, and the ball barely made it through. The ball shortly landed inside a hole, opening the door.

Vweeb returned the others to normal as they progressed through a short hallway. They looked out a window to find the starting area where their ship was parked, so once the attraction beam was off, they could drop down and take off. They saw another ship suspended in midair, whose rope was tied to this building, which was tied to the other structures, so this ship would eventually pull everything into place of the Violet System. Not that they would let that happen. They barged into a
room at the hallway’s end, the control room where Chane Wassanasong worked. The teen turned
to smirk at them, and Celebi floated close by. (End song.)

“Well, whaddya know. You dweebs actually made it. We’re honestly surprised you could bear to
look away from me. Aren’t we, Celebi?”

“Biii-i-i-i. . .” Hearts were around the Forest Spirit. She floated near Chane with loving, googly
eyes.

“Celebi! What did you do to her?!” Arianna demanded.

“I snuck into your house last night and, eh… talked her into hanging with Chanester. I didn’t want
you disrupting Dad, so I took her to trap you here. She cooperated after I explained my dilemma.
She’s enjoyed every minute, haven’t you?” He scratched Celebi’s chin.

“Bi biiiii!”

“No, you BRAINWASHED her!” Tronta yelled, drawing his discs. “Just like you did Arianna! How’re you doing it?!”

“You got me.” Chane shrugged. “That creepy Clown guy with the puffy coat gave me and Dad
Persuade-Persuade Fruits. We can talk anyone into doing anything, like getting all these loser
aliens into supporting Golfing in the Stars.”

“So TED’S been brainwashing people, TOO?!” Vweeb shouted.

“Yeah. ‘Course, you won’t tell anyone… will you?”

“. . .” Vweeb, Makava, and Arianna were swooned by his charm.

“Stop tryin’ ta put a stop to this whole thing. You’re in the greatest golf park in the universe, you
should be happy! Quit acting like a bunch of hopeless idiots.”

“Feh.” Tronta walked forward, his look smug.

“What? You wanna see the Chanester up close? Sorry, man, this body’s reserved for ladies onl-”

Tronta socked him across the jaw, knocking Chane down. The others and Celebi shook free of his
control. “Beauty’s in the eye of the beholder, isn’t it?” Chane wiped his mouth and glared at Tron.
“Your mind-control only works if people look at you, too.”

“Yeah? So move those bangs aside and get a load of me, Hippie!” Chane snapped.

“It won’t matter if I do.” Tronta smiled coolly, brushing up the bangs blocking his faded green
eyes. “Because… I’m blind.”

“You… WHAT?! Then how are you SEEING me?!”

“My antenna is extremely sound-sensitive, so I know the position and movement of everything
around me. Vweeb just farted. (“Trooon!”) You might be able to hit on every other boy, but I can
only judge by character. And you are very unattractive.”

“The hell I-!” Chane lunged at Tron, but the boy nimbly spin-jumped and kicked him away.

“Everything moves, you know, everything vibrates, and my antenna feels their movement. Like
that switch on the wall, what is that?”
The big blue switch was labeled *Attraction Beam*. “Worth finding out!” Makava quickly pressed and turned it off.

“Quick, let’s get back to the ship!” Arianna yelled.

“Don’t even THINK about-!” Chane ran to press the switch, but Tronta grabbed and pinned him down.

“I’ll take care of this guy. Just go!”

“Come on, Celebi.” Arianna said. (“Bi-biiii!”) The Firstborn fluttered after the trio. Makava, Vweeb, Ari, and Celebi hopped in the Heart Star as Kava hurriedly started up the engines, and they took off straight to the Orbital Auditorium.

“Chane?” Ted Wassanasong spoke into his phone. “Chane, it’s your father. Are you prepared to fire the Star Bomb? Chane, please respond.”

“Ted, look out!” Cindy gasped, and the audience screamed when the Heart Star burst through the glass window, Ted and Cindy ducking from the shards as the ship landed.

Arianna was quick to hop from the spacecraft and whip Ted away with brambles. “EVERYONE! You can’t allow Ted to carry out this plan! You are ALL being tricked, he and Chane have brainwashed you!”

“Honey!” Cindy tried to run to her husband’s aid, but Makava blocked her and drew swords.

“You wanna tango?”

“…” Cindy frightfully backed away.

“Citizens of Florae, look at the screen!” Arianna directed up at the projection of the fauna-filled planetoids. “Watch how these animals innocently graze. The marvel of the Violet Star. Will you really let Ted destroy them?”

“That is enough from you, young lady.” Ted recovered, throwing open two Pokéballs which contained a Scyther and Scizor. Both Pokémon raised their blades and claws respectively. “This is an important, World Government-approved operation, and if you do not desist, I can have you jailed for life.”

*The second this brat is alone, I’ll have her skewered!*

Arianna gritted her teeth. “VWEEB, under his shirt, NOW!”

“You got it!”


AAAAH! A little, brownish-black bug was flung into the air by Vweeb, who then punched it to the floor. Ted fell on his back, rasping with pain.

“Ted!” Cindy cried.

“What is that?” Makava asked.

“This creature is what poisoned Ted, not my brambles!” Arianna shouted. “I heard him with my
telepathy; I think it was possessing him!”

Vweeb wrapped arms around and pinned the worm-like creature to the floor. “Just what are you?”

I am the Dark LEECH! Only Arianna could hear him. The very LAST Dark Leech in Mars’s great toxic puddle! Six months ago, Ted conducted an expedition to Mars, and filled my puddle with cement, destroying my clan! I only survived when Ted chose to keep me as a pet. My entire species, gone, because this man wanted to build a golf course! Anger consumed me, he destroyed my people because they were an infestation to his would-be park, so I vowed to have revenge on ALL impudent species! I possessed Ted using my poisonous suction, learned of the Violet Star System in Florae, and through Ted’s resources, I organized this entire operation! Making him eat that ‘Devil Fruit’ proved very helpful. I never could have collected enough money to buy a Star Bomb from some Nightmare company.

“Mr. Leech, I’m terribly sorry for what Ted did to you, but to misplace your anger on all of these innocent creatures?!” Arianna stated.

Mwah ha hah! You think their lives matter to me? My species craves poison and destruction! As the last of my kind, I vow to make up what they lost. I will destroy ALL endangered species! And until his body decays, Ted will be my SLAVE! The leech coughed acid at Vweeb, forcing him to get off so the creature could slither back under Ted’s shirt. Cindy stared with horror when her sickened husband stood up like a puppet.

“Scizor, Scyther. Attack, please.” He ordered calmly. The Pokémon lunged at Arianna, only to be blocked by Makava. Vweeb jumped and punched Scizor away while his sister clashed with Scyther’s blades. Ted balled his fists and glared at Arianna, who returned the look and readied her brambles.

Tronta hopped off of Chane to let the teenager stand up. “You shoulda let your friends stay.” Chane smirked. “Cause Dad doesn’t give the call to launch the Star Bomb, I do! With the push of a button, you can kiss your precious Violet Star good-bye. You don’t think YOU can stop me, do ya?”

“Boy, you really are dry.” Tron said.

“What?”

“Have to rely on superpowers to seem like a hottie to everyone, blowin’ up star systems to feel like a bigshot, just how many girls could stomach to look at you before this?”

“Quit stalling, Greeny, don’t be sour just ‘cause you can’t even SEE girls to look at.”

“Tsk tsk tsk.” Tronta shook his head. “You have no idea. I may not have the looks, but I got the right brains and brawn to know you will NOT be looking well after this. You want people to look at you, well get a look at THESE!” Tronta ripped off his shirt and his lower pants legs. Chane shut his eyes, but then opened them confusedly: Light Discs were strapped to Tron’s chest, back, arms, and legs. He held his two signature discs in his hands.

“Dude, you are really obsessed with Frisbees.”

“Obsessed, you say?” Tronta cocked a brow; the Frisbees began playing a jazzy music tune. Tron began speaking in a sing-song voice. “There’s more than obsession under these Frisbees, baby, there’s love and there’s passion, even some romance, maybe, and I’ll tell you just what I’m gonna do, prove once and for all that I’m better, I’m sexier than you.”
Chane glared and balled his fists. The two of them slowly circled around a center as Tronta sang.

This is Tronta: Ah’m back in action

I’m not getting myself beat by the likes of you

‘Cause I’m so much prettier. Much pithier.

I take one look at you and say, “I pity her.”

Chane growled in anger and ran at Tronta, throwing punches that the alien blocked with his Wrist Discs, his cool smile not changing.

The four of us ain’t gonna follow your rules

Come at me with your so-called “fancy” tools

Let’s go, just us two.

And you’ll see, I’m se-xi-er than you.

He pushed Chane back with a thrust of his Chest Disc, but the boy recovered with a twirl, kicked off the wall, and flew at Tron like a rocket. Tron air-flipped and kicked Chane down with his Leg Discs, picked the teen up, and threw him across the room.

In the auditorium, Arianna dodged Ted’s puppet-like punches and kicks, binding his wrists and ankles using vines, but the Dark Leech stuck out of his shirt collar and spat the vines with quick acid bullets, retreating back into his shirt as Ted plopped on the floor. He got up quickly and flew at Ari with a midair cartwheel, which she blocked with brambles, but Ted flipped underneath the thorns, grabbed Ari, flipped up, and threw her headfirst into a distant wall. Arianna dodged Ted’s whip-like kick and thrusted brambles against his chest, causing Dark Leech to fly out. Arianna twirled her brambles and tried to whip the sprightly insect.

The Dark Leech latched onto Scyther, the Bug-type going mad with rage as it lashed its blades more rapidly. Makava defended with equally-quick precision, but Scizor grabbed her by the waist from behind and threw her into the audience, with those members scattering backwards. Arianna lashed her brambles up Scyther’s chin, making the leech fly off before it hopped across the floor and back onto Ted.

Go ahead and try to hit me, if you’re able

I see and hear you comin’ though my eyes are disabled

You should see how me and ladies intermingle. Tronta touched his fingertips together.

I think you’re upset because you’re still single.

You’re not gonna stop what we’re trying to do. Tronta leaped overhead, grabbed either side of Chane’s head, midair spun vertically, and hurled him against a wall.

I’m gonna come outta this good as new

See these discs on my knuc-kles here? Tron’s Wrist Discs broke into tinier discs for his knuckles.

Listen close, because it really ain’t something to fear
Because these discs are full

O-o-O-o-ooof

Lo-o-O-o-ove

Tronta repeated these lines several times. His knuckles flew across Chane’s features at each “O”, and he imagined funny screenshots of how his face looked after each punch. His uppercut sent Chane skyward, then using Leg Discs, Tronta flew up, spun, and kicked Chane, sending him flying to his ship. Chane burst through its roof and looked up as Tronta was rolling forward like a midair ball. Chane grabbed a nearby pitching machine and fired an onslaught of golfballs.

Arianna saw the purple bulging veins on Ted’s flesh, the man moving with quicker speed as he threw punches. A successful punch sent Arianna hurling against the microphone stand, then she rolled out of the way before Ted’s fist impacted and broke through the floor. The man ran on all fours like a beast, snarling as well as he tried to snap Arianna with bubbling fangs, she raised a vine that his teeth sank into, then she wrapped the vine around his head before flailing him around the air. She tossed Ted away, but he recovered, snarled, and ran at her again, only for Ari to jab a bramble directly at his chest.

Makava grabbed Scizor’s right claw and stuck it into Scyther’s left blade, leaping behind the former to kick the back of his head and push him into Scyther. She saw the Dark Leech land by her foot, but in her attempt to stomp it, it latched onto her neck. “Makava!” Arianna lashed vines at her friend, but against her will, Makava cut them with her swords.

“Ari, hold her still!” Vweeb yelled, trying to aim his Tri-gun. Arianna threw four vines to bind her arms and legs, and as Makava tried to shake away, Vweeb blasted his Shrink ray, the Dark Leech dodging just in time while Makava shrunk. Arianna whipped her vines across the floor and swatted the leech against the window, then ran forward to swing her foot against it. The leech stayed strong and hopped back to Ted, who was otherwise growing weak from the bug’s poison.

You think you can stop me, well think again

I think you’re forgetting just who I am

Still rolling in midair, Tronta easily dodged the golfballs, before throwing two discs, one to slice the pitcher and one to knock Chane down.

If you try to hurt my sister, I’ll give you a blister

Buck up, ‘cause things just got downright, Mister.

Tron landed in the ship, Chane fearfully tried to back away, but Tron tossed two discs to bind his legs and make him trip. He leaped and stamped his foot against Chane’s back.

I know you think you’ve seen all of me (hot dude)

So you wonder what makes all the ladies love me (not you)

Well, I have something that you don’t, see

I balled it up in here, Fist “A” and Fist “B”

These fists are made
And it’s sexier than you!” Tronta threw his fists across Chane’s head, picked him up, and threw him against the controls. Chane growled and ran at Tron, but his antennas sensed the movement, so Tron fell, spin-kicked, toppled Chane toward him, then he kicked the teen up into the ceiling. Tronta hopped back up and kicked Chane away when he fell.

“I’m sexier than you!”

Makava ran at Scyther and performed a mighty leap, but when the Pokémon lunged forward, Vweeb shrunk her sister so she could land on its face and slash the eyes. She kicked off and flew to Scizor, and Vweeb biggified her as she slashed down his face with both swords. Makava grabbed the Pokémon’s legs, swung him around, and into Scyther, then Kava leapt and spun midair before slamming her blades against them both, and the creatures were down.

Arianna caught Ted’s arms with brambles, squeezing them, but when blood lightly seeped, she held back, knowing this man was against his own will. She slashed a bramble across his chest – his shirt was more than shredded by this time, and the Dark Leech flew off. Vweeb stood before it, smirking as he punched the leech with superhuman strength. While it was downed, Arianna slammed her brambles onto and kept it down.

I’m tired of kicking you into walls

So I’ll just kick you in the-

Tronta’s boot flew into Chane’s crotch. The teen’s eyes almost popped out, but they were too far out for his eyelids to close. His cheeks puffed as though concealing the scream that couldn’t burst. Tronta calmly pulled away and let Chane fall on the floor, writhing in pain. “…balls.”

The Dark Leech was down and defeated. Vweeb’s fists were balled, expecting him to get back up, but no such luck. Arianna gasped for breath and retracted her vines. “I think… huff… it’s done. …” The three of them looked at the audience. They were flabbergasted, to put it simply, with blank, frozen stares.

 “…Worth the money ya paid for, right??” Makava perked. “Cheap, fine-quality entertainment!”

Tronta cut the rope binding the ship and the golf park with a Light Disc, then sat himself at the controls to take them back. Still holding his crotch with one hand, Chane reached in his pocket with the other to grab a remote. He pushed it, and to Tronta’s utter surprise, the Star Bomb shot from the ship’s bottom, soaring like a comet to the Violet System. “NO!”

From the auditorium, murmurs echoed throughout as the audience pointed outside. The three operatives saw the comet coming. Arianna gasped. “The star system, no!!”

Hearing this, the Dark Leech recovered, hopped Ted’s fallen body, and fished the remote out of his pocket. It plucked open the hatch with its teeth, and Arianna was too late to react before it pressed. “STOOOOP!”

The bomb exploded in the distance—and froze. Everybody stared speechless. A bright body of
light replaced the bomb in that split second; the first phase of the explosion, but it was frozen in
time. When the cameras skinned around, they found a tiny figure a few meters from the
explosion. George King wore a space helmet and held the flame in a Time Stop, floating while a
cord kept him connected to a ship. “Uhhhhh, anytime is good, Jerome.” he said. A vortex
appeared below the Stopped explosion and sucked it in.

Supreme Leader Nebula splorped in the auditorium above the stage. She looked down at her
subordinates. “Either of you wanna explain why George’s Future Sight picked up my four best
operatives ruining an important business project?”

“Oh Numbuh Eternal, thank you so much!!” Arianna spoke with pure delight.

No! NOOOOOO! the Dark Leech cried. My perfect plan, RUINED! All thanks to you meddlying
kids! Currerrrse yooooou…. CURSE YOOOOO-!

Vweeb Stunned him senseless. “Way to bring back the classics, dude. (I didn’t understand him, I’m
just assuming…)”

“HEY, look at the screen!” an audience member pointed.

The kids whipped their attention to it immediately. The dozens of fauna-filled asteroids lined
together, and flew directly toward the Violet Star. They sunk inside within an instant, much to
everyone’s horror. But before their eyes, the star turned white, bulgy, and egg-like. It divided into
two bulges, then four and eight, then 32, it was a big round body of bulges. “It’s like… an egg and
a sperm.” Arianna gazed with wonder.

“Ew.” said Vweeb.

Then, the star became a bluish-purple, with an oval-shaped glass dome at its top, depicting a vast
grass plain with a lake and mountains. The body stretched to life, became flat, nothing could
describe the absolute marvel: it was a gigantic sting ray. The majestic creature of indescribable
wonder soared to the auditorium. It glided miles beyond the window, and gave everyone a
marvelous view of the landscape on its back.

“LOOK!” Arianna pointed. “They’re… Ancient Flowers!”

“Machinians!” Vweeb pointed, for the camera zoomed closer to reveal tiny, flea-like beings with
human heads and green jelly bodies. They were among other tiny creatures Vweeb recognized.
“Shrimpkins! And Smurfs!”

“I think that’s a Vestian!” an audience man pointed at an alien wearing a vest.

“And Vegims!” beamed Ari. “Are all of these… extinct plants and animals?”

The tremendous manta flipped, and stopped with its back facing the audience directly. His tiny
eyes at the top fixed on them. “LIFE.” The audience was startled by his great thundering voice.
“DENIZENS of Florae: I am the Encyclopod. The Keeper of Life and all DNA across universes.
Arianna Dunfree…” The child gasped quietly. “You have my eternal thanks. Because of your
selfless deed, I can now travel the universe, collecting all remaining DNA of plant and animal
species. Once my duty is complete, the new universe can be born with many a species, and
existence can begin anew.”
Murmurs sounded across the galaxy, from this little chamber to everyone at their TVs. “E-Excuse me!” Arianna shouted. “What do you mean the new universe? Do you mean…”

“The Apocalypse is coming soon, children. I have seen it twice before, before God Arceus created the gods beneath him. My job, since the beginning, was to collect the DNA of all endangered species. I took many forms, a frog, a snake… Until the time of awakening, my body grows as a Violet Star, but from my slumber, I can see anything and everything. My presence senses all species in danger of declining, and summons their energy to me. 14 billion species I have collected… 5 billion I have yet.”

“Dat is meeeessed uuuuuup.” Vweeb drawled.

“And now, I shall collect my next: the Dark Leeches will yet be revived.”

NOOOOO! screamed the leech. I cannot go now! I still have so much to do! So many planets to-DAAAAAAAHHHH! The leech was absorbed by the manta’s laser eyes. His entire, tiny being became one with the Encyclopod, among billions of others.

“Um… Mr. Encyclopod.” Arianna spoke. “Does this mean that-”

“Yes, the Apocalypse is real. It will come by the end of the month. There is so much left to do, before the gate can be opened. I believe you children can succeed, however. Until that time comes, I will fulfill my duty.”

“Well, if you’re saving all species, then… I dunno, maybe human?” Vweeb queried, indicating the rasping man on the stage.

Cindy Wassanasong buried her face into her husband’s bloodied, poisoned chest. The kids felt pity for the man, now… the way he looked, he wouldn’t last another minute. “Do not worry. A friend of mine should be arriving soon.”

“Ooooooooooo…” The great whale, Mobius Dick flew out of a portal. The whale broke the glass window down and stopped, opening his mouth to stick out his tongue. A familiar girl with a midnight dress, and purple rose in her pigtailed hair hurried out.

“H…Haruka?” Nebula queried.

“Move aside!” Haruka pushed Cindy away, bent down, and stuck her fingers into Ted’s chest. The purple within his skin absorbed up Haruka’s arms, but that purple slowly dispersed through Haru’s antibodies. “Is there a med team, hurry up and bandage him!”

Doctors rushed out and covered Ted’s cuts with the white wrapping. Ted’s rasping calmed, he barely looked as sick as he did before. Cindy sighed with pure relief. “Phew. Made it just in time.” Haruka sighed.

“Haruka, what are you-” Makava said.

“I’ll tell you guys later, I can’t stay long!” Haruka ran back onto Mobius’s tongue. “See you in a week, I think!”

Mobius shut her inside and flew away. “Many thanks, once again.” The Encyclopod said. “Goodbye, children. See you in the New World.”

The manta flew away, gliding past Jerome and George’s tiny ship. His eyes especially narrowed on the helmeted timebender. The purple headband around his forehead. Strange… I sense an unusual
power from that boy. I haven’t sensed power like this… since that Lord English fellow, a few universes back. I was almost certain he was destroyed. …It is a very worrisome feeling. The kids watched until the terrific creature was gone from sight.

“Hoooooo…” Ted Wassanasong held his chest, his wife holding his sides worriedly. “I’ve been trying to tell people about that Dark Leech for 6 months. That thing was quite a bother. You children have my thanks.” He bowed. “In spite of the aggressive means of handling it, you saved my life. If there was anything I could do to repay you…”

The kids looked out in the distance, where Golfing in the Stars still floated. They looked at the vast, barren space before them: the Violet Dwarf System they had struggled to save transformed into a giant space-manta and flew away. There was now absolutely nothing. They looked between the golf park, the nothing, the golf park, the nothing, then they looked at Arianna. Arianna looked at Celebi, who only shrugged. “…Um… free, lifetime memberships to Golfing in the Stars, for all our friends?”

“…Fair enough.” Ted shrugged.

“YAAAAAAAY!” the operatives cheered.

“Arianna!” The operatives looked as Nova hurried onto the stage, embracing her daughter in a hug. “We’re so proud of you!”

“Oh, Mother.” Arianna blushed. “Anyone could have.”

“Yes. But you did. That’s why somebody…” Nova pulled out a green ball the size of her hand, “deserves something special. Celebi is officially yours.”

Arianna’s face lit up like the sun. She looked at Celebi, who smiled and nodded approvingly. Arianna tossed the Spirit Ball at the Firstborn, and she was sucked inside. The ball landed on the floor, shook and made little beeps… bong. The Spirit Ball hovered in the air. It shone with a green light Nova saw once before. The top half was light-green, the lower half dark-green, but a bright golden ‘II’ was now lit above its central lock. Arianna caught the ball and held it proudly: she was now Celebi’s Guardian.

**Arianna captured a FIRSTBORN! Only 7 more to go!**

Tronta walked into the room, shirtless as he scratched his head awkwardly. “Um… Chane has a girl’s voice now. Just thought you all should know.”

“HAAAH!” Vweeb laughed.

**Birka; Joel**

The five kids and Phosphora casually walked a street in the run-down village. It was just like the power plants the kids see on a regular basis, gray dull buildings with bars, cylinder tanks, and wires. “I’m guessing you weren’t rich?” Anthony inquired.

“Nope.” confirmed Phos. “Unless you count rich in energy. The primary purpose of this place is to regulate the energy taken in by the Thunder Towers. You could say we’re kind of a big deal to the island, but nobody gets paid. Before God Thor came along, the priests were the only government; but the idea of money was something the townspeople adapted on their own.”

They were close to the Thunder Tower at the island’s edge, very tall and foreboding up close, though not nearly as much as Dashi’s Peak. They jumped when lightning struck the tower, filling it
with energy. “The good part is, no one has to pay bills on this island, so it’s easy living. Especially when you’re orphaned.”

“Orphaned?” Sally queried.

“I lost my mom when I was five, and I never knew my father. Don’t get me wrong, it was loads of fun.” She smiled casually. “I had plenty of friends, we played games, got into loads of trouble, the rest of the time, I was in….”

“Iiiiiin what?” Harvey asked.

“This way.” Phosphora walked forward quickly. “I wanna see if she’s still around.”

She brought them to a church a few blocks from the Thunder Tower. The windows had no panes, allowed the wind from outside to freely pass through. A statue of God Thor stood over the altar, and an elderly Birkan with graying white hair and a decaying robe stood before it. The woman turned to face them, a smile on her wrinkled face. “Hello, children. Session is over for the day, but if you have a prayer, we’d be happy to…”

Phosphora approached her. The old woman was hunched, so Phosphora appeared taller than her. “Lady Sulfa… it’s me. It’s… Phosphora.”

The woman’s old eyes seemed to light. “Phosphora…”

Sector W exchanged wondering glances. The elder lightly hugged Phosphora, who returned the gesture. They pulled apart. “It’s been so long. Where’ve you been all these years, Child?”

“Oh, you know… embracing nature.” She smiled jokily.

Lady Sulfa looked around her. “And who are these children? They don’t have wings.”

“They’re, um… kids I met. On the surface. They helped me come back here.”

“They certainly look the peculiar bunch.”

“’Tis a natural response we art given.” Fybi said.

“Oh, how the years have changed you… I still remember you. That little girl who was so excited and happy all the time… so devoted to her beliefs… Tell me, is your house still intact?”

“I… haven’t seen, yet.”

“Would you like us to see together?”

“Um… okay.”

The old woman moved slowly, so the sectormates grew a little impatient in waiting. They walked ahead while Phosphora stayed by Sulfa, and behind one of the fences, they saw something curious: a chubby, dark-skinned human with yellow hair and sunglasses, and a white ninjas’ uniform. The five approached him calmly. “M…Mister?” spoke Sally.

“Oh?” Killer Bee looked at them. “Well, hello, kids. I don’t suppose you want my autograph?”

“Uhh… no?” Anthony replied.

“Of course, everyone in this dimension’s a critic. Sorry, kids, Ah’m tryin’ to lay low here. I got
lost while looking for a wormhole to my homeworld, and when I was tryin’ to start up a show here, these guards started tailin’ mah tail. Lemme ask you, kids, how does one ‘steal lightning’?

“We don’t know.” Nea replied.

“Ah well. I gotta get movin’, there’s too many eyes here. If you kids wanna talk to me about concert tickets, find me blended in with the wall behind Quiznos. Catch ya later.” The rapper squatted like a crab and scuttled away sideways.

The group reached Phosphora’s house, which was in less-than-exceptional shape. The ceiling and roof were long since crumbled, and only three or four tiny rooms made up the place, leaving no place to hang around. The seven gathered in the bedroom, where Phos and Sulfa sat on a gray cloud bed. Sally, Harvey, and Nea sat on an old metal bench, Anthony took the floor, while Fybi hovered. “‘Twas a shame… what happened.” Sulfa spoke.

“What happened?” Sally asked.

“Nothing happened.” Phosphora spoke almost defensively.

“It was 22 years ago… when God Thor arrived. Little Phosphora was so happy… don’t you remember, dear?”

“What gave you the idea that I was happy?” she asked snarkily.

“You were happy… For a time. Siigh, but accidents do happen.” The woman looked down depressedly. “Unforeseen events beyond our control. Still, what can you do about it. If it was God Thor’s will, then it must be-”

“God Thor is a phony.” Phosphora stated outright.

The elder looked up with as much surprise as her weary old face could display. Her subtle reaction drew attention from the kids. “My dear… I know you were forced to leave because of God Thor’s, erm, unexpected policy, but that’s no reason to stop believing in him. He only wanted your protection. A Birkan who cannot lightningbend will have difficulty living here.”

“You literally have no idea what happened, do you? You people still don’t know a thing, like a bunch of idiots. Did Sola ever find out, Node, or even Lingning??”

“The situation was explained to them, Child. They were very sorry to lose their friend… They deeply wanted to come and visit you, but they worried that you would be angry at them. Still able to fly and all.”

The kids flinched when Phosphora punched the wall behind her out of anger, breaking a hole. She held her head down with regret. “Well… I guess it wouldn’t matter, anyway. Nothing mattered anymore…”

“If I may speak, thou seemeth to have quite a tale to tell.” Fybi said.

“Yeah, so tell us already, quit bein’ a baby.” Anthony demanded.

“Only one of us hasn’t caught up with the others on the evolution scale.” Nea remarked, earning a glare from her leader.

“Miss Phosphora, why don’t you tell us what’s wrong?” Sally spoke kindly. “It might make you feel better.”
“Yeah.” Harvey agreed, swinging his yo-yo.

Phosphora gripped her lap with her hands, internally forcing herself to keep silent. Lady Sulfa gently placed her hand over Phosphora’s right. “If there’s something you know that we don’t, Child, I encourage you to speak.”

“…” Phosphora’s gloomy purple eyes remained downward, but the kids were listening closely. Phosphora spoke with a low, depressed voice.

**Birka; 22 years ago**

It was an unusually stormy day in Birka. The clouds were dark, spiraled quickly, and the lightning was furious. This was never a problem for the citizens of Birka. Storms were lovelier the more furious they were, it was a sign for great energy harvest. The mighty god, Thor was watching over them, blessing his children with power even now. Of course, some children desired more rations than others. A few miles from the island, within the dark of the Storm Canyon, a band of Nimbi kids stared with both awe and horror at the gutsy angel above them.

“Watch out, guys, this looks like a big one!” the 12-year-old Birkan girl exclaimed, eying a steadily-growing area of light within a cloud.

“No girl, you’ll hurt yourself!” another girl, Sola told her.

“Don’t listen to her, go for it Phosphora, go go go!” a boy, Node sparked.

Phosphora was an ordinary Birkan with purple eyes, and long, pretty blonde hair, though the ending strands curved up as a result of static friction. She wore a white top that exposed her belly, white shorts, and brown Greek sandals, as well as green laurels over her ears. Her lightning wings, long and graceful, shone brightly. “Come on, guys, it doesn’t even look big, quick being Remlits!”

“Some of us aren’t even religious like you, Phos!” another boy, Bzzbert yelled. “And just because you’re the only one that prays to him, doesn’t mean God Thor is gonna go easy on you!”

“Maybe. But as Thor as my witness, I will SURVIVE!”

Without warning, the powerful bolt of lightning struck—Phosphora caught the charge in both her open hands, and this caused dozens more lightning bolts to strike the same spot. Her friends shielded their eyes, afraid to witness Phosphora’s end. The girl’s body was shining with lightning, she felt the incredible power building within her veins. She struggled to pull her left arm away, pointing a finger at the canyon wall and directing the plasma forth. The energy was scattered amongst the clouds, and once the crackling finally stopped, the kids worriedly opened their eyes.

Phosphora passed them an innocent grin, her body sparking slightly as her hair stood up like a wall. “So who’s buying me drinks?”

**In town**

Rizbi guzzled five Electro Cookies before his zappy sensation kicked in, Lingning could only eat half of one, being 5 years old, Sola managed to eat 10 before lightning popped out of her ears, Bzzbert ate two, puffed, and shot lightning from his nose, and Node swallowed three in one gulp, before so much lightning shot out, he went from fat to skinny. With that, they all focused on Phosphora, whom had happily finished devouring her 23rd cookie. While scraping between her teeth with her nails, she felt an incredible surge of energy, so strong that she felt like she was vibrating, so fast that they couldn’t see. “BUUUURP.” A great beam of lightning flew from her
mouth, and there was no telling how far it would go.

Later, they were all down by Rainwater River. “Girl, are you really gonna drink from it like that?” Sola asked.

“I gotta find somethin’ to do with this straw.” Phosphora winked, holding a bent metal antenna like a bendy-straw.

“Put it in a smoothie!” Lingning cheered.

“Doesn’t anyone wanna share?” the daredevil remarked.

“No thanks, I just dropped 20.” Node replied.

“Suit yourself!” Phosphora stuck one end of the antenna in the water, kissed her mouth over the other end, then when a great bolt of lightning struck the river a few meters away, the energy flowed across the current, up the antenna, and sizzled Phosphora furiously when it conducted to her mouth. She flew back several meters after it stopped, and when the friends worriedly flew over to check her, Phosphora happily sat up and spat spark streams at each of their faces, then to all the passerby. “Too much salt, needs more sugar!”

Next, they were several meters in midair, just under a team of Lightning Chariots that swooped by, leaving their perfectly flat trail. “NOW!” Phosphora flew up first, grabbed two chunks of a strip to use as extended arms, and her friends did so as well before they began lashing them at each other. They laughed joyfully, each swing flying at lightspeed, having a blast through trying to send the other flying. “Hahaha! Say, where’s Lingning, I don’t really want her to get-”

A tremendous pair of lightning arms rose over them. Lingning was much smaller compared to her friends, but her arms were superior. She wore a devilish grin as she swatted all of her friends. She then grabbed Phosphora in both hands, whirled and whirled and whirled her around, then sent her flying away. “WAAAAAAHHH…!"

Joel

A skinny Birkan with an electric mustache was hunched over while an Amp (a living electric sphere with a face) was scratching his back with its energy. Phosphora burst through the ceiling and crashed upside-down against the wall. The man looked at her. “Nnnnn, this is hereditary.”

Phosphora held her head dizzily as she walked out of the house. “Phosphora, there you are!” A slender Birkan woman with a white gown, long white hair, and blue eyes floated over. “What were you doing?”

Phosphora stood up straight with a sheepish grin. “Nothing, Lady Sulfa! I was heading back and I overshot my landing, that’s all!”

“Yo, Phos!” Her five friends zipped above them, wielding smaller lightning arms now. “We gonna finish this thing or do somethin’ else?” Sola asked.

Phosphora spoke and waved her arms panickingly, “Something just came up, maybe later, guys!”

“Okay! Catch up later.” Bzzbert said, and they zipped off.

Phosphora returned her sheepish grin to Lady Sulfa, but after feeling her scolding glare for a few seconds, the girl slumped, baring a pouty face. “Phosphora, why are you always getting yourself into trouble.”
“It’s just hanging out with friends.” Phosphora smiled casually, sticking hands in her pockets. “Besides, Sola’s your daughter, aren’t you glad the two of us are bonding?”

“I wish you would set a better example for Sola. She doesn’t follow our religion, but I don’t want you giving her the idea these games are safe. One of these days, you’re going to hurt yourself.”

“You worry too much, Sulfy.” Phosphora lightly kicked the ground. “I’m a survivor, I’m like Bowser, I can withstand anything that’s thrown at me, LIKE THIS!” She flew up to the air, caught a sudden bolt of lightning, and blasted the nearby Thunder Tower. “See?”

“Don’t DO that! Sigh, come on, we’re supposed to be praying at Dashi’s Peak. God Thor won’t get here any faster if we neglect prayer during a storm like this.”

“I know, I know.” Phosphora sighed as the woman headed first toward the tower. She was about to join her, but first zipped up, got in the way of a bolt, and let it tickle. “PHOSPHORA!!” She snapped back to attention and zipped toward the peak.

**Dash’s Peak**

According to Birkan law, it was sacrilege to set foot on Dashi’s Peak before Almighty Thor. For that reason, most Birkans took care not to fly too close. The only ones to be so close were the priests and priestesses, forming a circle around the structure as they bowed in prayer. Their respective groups of students were aligned behind them in similar fashion. Those who knew what Phosphora was like outside of class would get confused in thinking they’re the same person. The very same daredevil who always challenged the powers of nature was politely bowed, a peaceful smile on her face. Every time the Head Priest spoke, she replayed the words in her head.

“Mighty God Thor,” the ancient Birkan spoke before the stairs, “we are but your humble servants, who hath dwelled on this island for many a century. In this eternal storm, we know that from the heavens higher than ours, you bless us with everlasting energy, and this storm is a form of your praise and kindness, not your anger. Our children, and our children’s children happily accept your gift, knowing it will allow us to thrive for more generations to come. So if it is your will, please let greater thunder roar across the heavens and earth…”

*So that all beings may know the power and prosperity that Birka brings, power which said beings, humans and Nimbi alike, use to prosper today.* Phosphora concluded in her mind.

A distant zipping sound caught her ears. Phosphora sat up and looked back, seeing a trio of kids several hundred feet in the air, zipping place-to-place as they kicked a shockball around. They were steadily, though unknowingly getting closer toward the tower. With a powerful kick that used lots of momentum, the shockball was on a collision course with the tower. The kids were too nervous to go after it, fearing they wouldn’t make it and be branded as the culprits, though the ball would make impact either way. The priests and students looked up, gasping as the ball was a second from crashing.

Even without blinking, they couldn’t comprehend Phosphora’s speed when she practically warped up to the ball and sent it beyond the clouds with a mighty swing. The kids looked at each other sheepishly before flying away. Phosphora looked down at her classmates, who all gazed up with praiseful stares, and Sulfia was especially proud. “…. Oooooow.” She had to grip her toes for the next several minutes, for kicking that hard with a sandaled foot couldn’t come without price.

After session was over a few hours later, the students were all parting ways, while Sulfia was speaking with Phosphora. “In spite of all your regular activities, at least you’re still a model student during session. Why are you so different every other time?”
“I like to think I’m embracing what Thor gave me. The wings to do whatever and fly anywhere I want!”

“Thor wants \textbf{all} children of Birka to live their lives happy and healthy, not maim themselves in a storm.” Sulfa said with a sweatdrop. “Besides, you remember what happened to your mom, r-”

“My mom died doing what she loves!” Phosphora exclaimed, almost defensively. “And Thor as my witness, I’ll go down the same way!” She faced up at the sky with confidence. “I’ll become the greatest Chariot Master ever!”

“Well, I can’t stop you from doing what you love. But I’d at least consider Priestess as a fallback. Have a nice evening, Phosphora.” The priestess waved good-bye before flying away.

Phosphora lived by herself in the old power plant village, Joel. Her father left them before she was born, so only her mother raised her. Of course, her mom was a carefree woman too, her passion was Lightning Chariot racing, and Phosphora always loved seeing her in action as a little girl. But one day, when Phosphora was five, the Thundercorns broke free of their reigns when her mom was flying at a thousand miles per hour. She crashed against the island in a blinding blaze, and the rest was history. Phosphora was orphaned and upset, but feeling sympathetic toward her, the local priestess Lady Sulfa comforted her. She introduced Phosphora to their religion Raikism, taught her to honor and worship Thor, the mighty Thunder God who would ensure safety and prosperity to all Birkans. Phosphora believed her mom was up in the Spirit World now, with Thor, with all the everlasting energy to survive a thousand chariot crashes. Despite what’s happened, Phosphora still wanted to be a Chariot Master, and prayed for Thor’s blessing every day so that her dream could be realized.

Maybe that was the reason behind her ‘daredevil’ side, to always test the powers of lightning and see if Thor, or maybe her mother, was looking after her best interest. She didn’t know, either way it was fun, so she and her friends got into regular amounts of mischief on a daily basis. For now, however, Phosphora was tired after burning so much energy, so she returned to her little crumbled house in Joel, slipping out of her sandals to collapse onto her mini raincloud bed. She wasn’t even sure what time it was, no one did in Birka, the sky is always blocked by clouds, which always produce lightning. Even though the clouds today, as she could still see through the hole in her ceiling, were very dark.

She barely slept, just closed her eyes and let her mind wander for a couple hours. She pictured herself riding across the planet in minutes on her Lightning Chariot, saw herself jump out of her chariot in attempt to race the Thundercorns, because how epic would that be. She also pictured God Thor, finally descended onto Birka, and asked Phosphora to be his vassal. She would get to spend every waking moment with the sexy, muscular, powerful deity. And maybe when she became old enough, he would fall for her and wish for Phosphora to carry his half-mortal child. Hey, don’t judge her, she’s turning 13 next year, she has to start having fantasies like this.

A knock at her front door shocked Phosphora out of her thoughts. She got up and answered to find Sola and her friends. “Girl, what’re you still doing in, I thought you’d be out ‘n’ about by now! You gotta take a look at this storm, it’s like it’s a portal or somethin’, over Dashi’s Peak!”

Curious, Phosphora joined her friends as they flew closer to Dashi’s Peak. The very center of the spiraling clouds brimmed like a vortex, and a tornado-like shaft seemed to stretch miles upward within this center. The light within the shaft grew brighter as lightning cracked every few seconds, growing steadily louder, everyone was anxious as to how loud or powerful the strikes would become. Then a terrific, tremendous, godlike bolt struck the top of Dashi’s Peak, the entire structure shone. The light stretched across Birka for several minutes until the storm finally calmed.
An armored, caped figure stood upon the very top of the peak. The Birkans’ gazes fell on nothing else, especially Phosphora, whose purple eyes trembled with extreme wonder and delight. The being raised a staff in his right arm and roared with a high and mighty voice, “DENIZENS OF BIRKA. I AM YOUR RULER. My name is Thor, God of Thunder. From my place up in Higher Heaven, for thousands of years, I have heard your prayers. Now was my time to descend unto you. I will bring Birka, and this whole world, into a GOLDEN AGE! From this day forward… you shall be forever pure!”

Roars and cheers rang across the island, rivaled only by the lightning. Phosphora still couldn’t believe her eyes or ears. The god she has always waited for, dreamed of meeting, suddenly to appear before their very eyes. “…Sii-i-i-i-i-igh!” She couldn’t contain her breath, she was too excited. How she wanted to be atop that tower as soon as possible.

A few seconds later

“Hiii, Lady Sulfa!” Phosphora didn’t need long to find her. “So um, not to sound too abrupt, but when’s the field trip to go up and meet Thor??”

“Hmhm, I’m excited too, but even the teachers aren’t allowed up on Dashi’s Peak, yet!” Sulfa replied with a chuckle. “Only the Head Priest and his group can have the honor. You can wait a little longer, can’t you, Phosphora?”

“Wait a little longer?! Haven’t we been waiting for this day, like, forever?? Do you not know how huge a deal this is??”

“Of course I know what a huge deal this is, but no huge deal should be approached precipitously. We have to behave respectfully in the presence of Lord Thor. But-just-in-case, can I have your opinion on hairspray, standing or stationary?” She excitedly held up two bottles of electric hairspray. Phosphora stared with disbelief and said nothing before zipping away.

She seated herself on a rooftop overlooking Lightstreet, where Bzzbert, Node, and Sola were quick to join her. “If I could take a chance to use an adult phrase correctly, I’d say you’re horny.” Node said—Phosphora flipped, kicked down against his head so hard, it sank into his body, puffing him fat again. His head popped back out, dizzy.

“Girl, we know you been waitin’ for this since before you were born, but Mom’s right, you shouldn’t go all crazy.” Sola told her.

“Hey, if you guys could understand an ounce of what I’m feeling, you wouldn’t be saying that, but you never even believed Thor would show up.” Phosphora retorted.

“You’re right, I didn’t, and I sure as heck don’t believe it now.”

“What’s that supposed to mean.”

“I mean, for Thor to suddenly SHOW UP in the middle of a storm just doesn’t seem real, I mean why now, why today? I feel like just anyone coulda ‘descended’ onto Dashi’s Peak and say he’s our god.”

“Please, that is the most ridiculous thing I-”

Rizbi and Lingning showed up, “He’s fake.”

“What?”
“I flew by and snapped this photo after he appeared.” Rizbi showed them his camera. “Took a couple of times to get it precise.” The picture depicted the figure in brownish-gold armor, with a horned helmet and sharp face. “And here’s a book depicting an ancient drawing of Thor. There’s a… slight difference.”

He showed them a dusty-looking tome, with a worn-out image of a mighty, muscular man raising his hammer. “…Well, there is somewhat of a… difference… But that drawing was ages ago, and; maybe no one ever saw him, it was just their interpretation of Thor.” Phosphora reasoned.

“Does he still match your fantasy?” Bzzbert asked.

“Maybe not exactly, but… you know, never judge a god by his facial features!” Phosphora beamed. “Besides, if it isn’t Thor, who else could it be?”

“Look, just for fun, we’re gonna say that it is.” Sola said. “We don’t want ‘im to completely drive you away from us. You might be spending an extra ten-hundred hours praying to him, but before you go and do that, at least play shockball with us.”

Phosphora sighed lightly. “Yeah, you’re probly right. …I call first serve!” She zipped skyward.

“I know who gets last!” Rizbi remarked before the others (minus Node) followed.

“Haww, darnit.” The overweight Nimbi joined them.

**Dashi’s Peak**

“My Lord, do forgive us if this place of residence is not to your liking.” The Head Priest bowed, as did his apprentices. “Birkan law states that we were never to set food on this tower. For 5,000 years, it’s stood. We promise to renovate this place to your liking if it is your will.”

Thor rubbed his fingers on the armrest of his throne, feeling for dust. “It will do for now.” He sat down. “I should hope your people have made excellent use of my lighting over the years. What is this island’s technological status, exactly?”

“Icredible, My Lord! We are the most advanced in technology because of your energy, and now we pray to be even greater with the limitless power you will bestow! …If it is your will.”

Thor smiled. “Your Lord will be more than delighted to bestow the energy you so helplessly desire. There is… only one problem. My powers are drastically diminished.”

“M-My Lord… what do you mean?”

Thor kept his wry smile, but it went unnoticed by his subjects. “There is a reason I decided to show myself now. It seems that, after 5,000-plus years of providing this world energy, my powers are a bit faulty. You don’t need to worry… because I have every intention of granting you the promised energy. I expect you to heed my every order if you want it, since I am your god.”

“Yes, My Lord! Your wish is our command.”

“Good.” Thor twisted his staff in his fingers. “First… there will be new laws established on Birka. Outsiders are forbidden to enter, and those too-” His attention was directed to the sky behind the priests. A team of five Birkan kids were happily zipping about and kicking a shockball around.

Phosphora sent it to Rizbi, who spun at 10,000 degrees and flung it skyward, Sola performed a Screw Kick, diagonally down to Node, who bounced it with his bulbous belly as he turned skinny,
then Bzzbert sent it to Sola with a headbutt, and they just kept passing it around, all around the island. After Bzzbert headbutted it for the 10th time, his eyes widened at something. “Uhhhh, guys?”

Five-year-old Lingning wasn’t gonna pass out on the fun. She had flown to another Lightning Chariot strip, and grown another pair of energy arms. On an instinct, Rizbi sent the shockball toward her whipping fast, and Lingning balled both fists and struck the ball with greater force. The only problem was, it was flying directly toward Dashi’s Peak, the very top where Thor now sat. None of the kids bothered to try and stop it, but Phosphora was especially horrified, the speed it was going. With rageful eyes, Thor rose, swung his staff, and shot an energy ball so swift and powerful, it zapped the shockball through space and time.

The priests stepped aside in fear when Thor marched to the edge of the stairs. His green eyes fixed on the distant little dot that was Lingning, whose energy arms shrunk into nothing. Thor whipped his staff, and a lightning bolt struck inches in front of the child, barely scraping her as she fell to the ground. “LINGNING!” Phosphora cried.

Thor warped to the area where she fell, standing atop a short cliff that overlooked the child. “THIS IS how you treat your god?! Sheer disrespect with childish antics?!”

The Head Priest zipped down to him, “Please, forgive her, My Lord. Children don’t know any better-”

“I was to understand that ALL Birkans were raised to honor and worship me.”

“N-Not all of them, My Lord, roughly 10 percent of the population-”

“Then YOU should have tried harder.” Thor thundered at the elder, before focusing his anger on the 5-year-old. “ALL mortals must know my power, including hopeless little runts like her. I will TEACH her the price of insubordination,” incredible power built up in his scepter, “ONE way or another!”

Seeing the light on his weapon grow, Phosphora zipped down in the way of Lingning, just when the powerful beam fired. Phosphora caught the energy in her hands, she felt her feet glued against the ground. She absorbed every ounce that she could, Thor’s power was truly godlike, her nerves were tingling like she couldn’t believe. “AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHH!” Her body glowed totally white, her flesh was furiously burning.

Lingning fearfully backed away, staring with silent horror when Phosphora fell. Her body was burnt brown, her clothes were nearly disintegrated. Little sparks lit up her body. “PHOSPHORA!” Lady Sulfa flew over, and Phosphora’s friends surrounded overhead with worried expressions.

“Uuuuu…” Phosphora looked barely alive. The Head Priest flew down, bent over, and softly felt around her singed form.

“Her chi-paths are distorted. She’s suffered Chi Overload.”

“Oh, my!” Sula gasped.

“Girl…” Sola was at a loss for words. The friends bowed their heads in guilt and sympathy. After how risky, cheerful, and carefree Phosphora was… the sad part of it all, she was only trying to protect her friend.

“Nnnn-n-n…” Phosphora weakly got back on her feet, much to everyone’s surprise. She held her left arm and forced a grin, still sparking as she looked up at Thor. “My…My Lord…” She said
hoarsely. “Forgive my… insolence…”

Thor only stared at the child. How pathetic she looked… it was humorous. Staring at him like an idol, the god he was… right after she was so brutally injured. Thor released a chuckle and smiled. “The rest of you leave us. I would like a moment alone with the child. …Her bravery must be commended…”

Lady Sulfa and the Head Priest looked at each other with worry and confusion. Phosphora’s friends bared the same features, but obeyed the god and zipped away. Thor softly dropped onto the ground where Phosphora limped. The child was still so happy… gazing at the deity. “My Lord… mighty god, Thor.” She fell to her knees and bowed. “I am… your humble servant. I may be just a child, but… my faith that you would come was very strong.”

A gentle rumble of thunder took place. Thor remained silent. “You know this already, but we’ve all waited… for a very long time, God Thor.” Phosphora fought the pain in her nerves. “Your power was mixed with your kindness, giving all Birkans a place to call home. Yet, you must show discipline, when it is needed… do forgive Lingning, My Lord. She is an innocent child, in the end. It was an honor to take your punishment in her place. Mighty God Thor, if I am deserving of your kindness… please, replenish my wings, and my chi. In return, I shall devote my life to serving you. Mighty God Thor, savior of Birka… please, shower unto us your divine energy.”

Thor’s soft smile didn’t change. This child’s loyalty and devotion was beautiful. He could see through her humbleness like water: deep down, she truly believed he would grant her request.

Thor raised his staff and smashed Phosphora’s head against the ground. Blood and teeth fell from her face. “Mighty God Thor, do this. Mighty God Thor, thank thee for that.” He swung his staff like a bat and hit Phosphora against a mound. “It’s the same with all of your pitiable kind. You act so humbly towards your god, because deep inside, you think you deserve it. You think your god acquiesces. But let me tell you something.” He jabbed the base of his staff against Phosphora’s face, forcing the back of her head against the mound. “A true god feels no pity.” Bashed her across the jaw. “A true god seeks to punish for insubordinance, not forgive.” Across the other end of the jaw. “And your God Thor does not care for you. He would never set foot on such a meager planet.”

As blood continued seeping from Phosphora’s swollen features, Thor grabbed her by the neck and zipped to a nearby edge of the island. “Remember this, Child.” He whispered softly in her ear, even though she was less than conscious. “My name is Loki. Second son of Odin. Your religion has always been a sham. Of course, the people of this island don’t need to know that. Not until my use for them is through. An age of pure power is dawning over Birka. Those too weak to embrace it do not deserve to live here. Good-bye… Phosphora. May you be with your gods soon.” He dropped Phosphora’s limp body on the ground, then kicked her over the edge.

She was too nearly dead to understand that she was falling. Her brain was as active as her limbs. Her body twirled and twirled and twirled as she descended. She wouldn’t and couldn’t attempt to stop herself. When it seemed her vision was clear of endless gray, the blue sea stretched below her. She splashed in the salty surface, and everything went black.

When vision returned to her, she was staring at blue sky and sunlight. Two things she’s never seen. She was in a very filthy coastside dump of an unnamed town. As she sat up to observe her surroundings, her mind was still lost. Was it the lightning, was it the sea salt in her lungs, the loss of blood, either way she didn’t understand anything, anymore. She tried to stand up, but her knees faltered. She remained hunched as she limped across the trash. The sea had washed some of the blood and soot, but now it appeared dried on her flesh. Tiny shreds now served as her shorts and shirt, barely covering her private areas, but could crumble away at the slightest tear. Her sandals
were long lost, and the bottoms of her feet took cuts from the shards lying about.

Her legs carried her to town, but could walk no further. She was on all fours, crawling helplessly. She made her way to an alley and crawled into the gungy path. She let her body lie dead on its front, staring mindlessly at the roaches crawling around, slurping the little puddle of substance. The sun was directly overhead and shining through the buildings’ gap. She felt her skin growing warmer. She didn’t know what to do or where to go. Only await death.

She weakly looked up at the sound of some thumping. A large creature in lime-green armor stared at her. Or maybe she was hallucinating, that was the likely explanation. The creature turned and walked around the alley’s corner. Phosphora regained a fraction of strength in her arms and crawled. She was led to an open area, where a green spaceship of sorts sat. The armored soldier looked at Phosphora before marching into the open hatch. While still weak and slow in the mind, Phosphora crawled in after it.

Within the next several hours, Phosphora was carried to a distant, alien planet, inside a tremendous fortress made entirely of bark. The strange creatures here bathed Phosphora in invigorating spring water, gave her a shirt and shorts stitched from leaves, and patched her wounds using vine. She was brought to a dining room, where a slim, handsome butler with bluish-purple skin and brown hair fixed her dozens of plates of steaming vegetables and fruit. Phosphora guzzled almost every bit, she had never felt so replenished. “Do you like it?” a peppier, feminine voice asked. “Arlon’s cooking was never one to disappoint.”

Phosphora swallowed a carrot. “Yeah. It’s great. But… who are you?”

“Call me Viridi.” The 8-year-old girl replied from behind a cluttering of vines, which blocked her out. She had bright blonde hair and green eyes. “Goddess of Nature and all living things.”

“Goddess of… Nature?”

“Your mind is still processing slowly, it seems.” Arlon observed. “A natural phenomena, after such a traumatic experience.”

“I… I don’t understand…”

“I saw the whole thing through my crystal ball.” Viridi informed. “It disgusted me to no end… how an ordinary human could claim to be god. This ‘Thor’ was the furthest thing from.”

“Ordinary… human?”

“Well, he isn’t EXACTLY human, but he’s still a despicable mortal. Of course, I suppose I don’t really look in the best shape, either. The truth is, I’m a hundred percent god, but because of certain ‘crimes’ I committed, I’m locked up here.”

“What… crimes?”

“Crimes for trying to teach humans and ALL nature-haters a lesson! The other gods branded me for trying to destroy the world, I’m trying to SAVE it! You’ve seen it yourself, Phosphora, how great mortals deem themselves. An ordinary human like Loki impersonating a god, treating your people like vermin. And look what he’s done to you… poor, innocent child. Phosphora… I really want to help you, but I can’t do anything ‘long as I’m trapped here. That’s why… I would like you to work for me. I want you to help me destroy ALL disgusting humans like Loki. Make the worlds a better place for all creatures of nature. I have a device that can give you lightningbending, and I will train you to command my soldiers. But if you don’t want to, I’ll happily let you stay here.
Well… Phosphora?"

Even though it didn’t seem like it, Phosphora understood every word. She replied solemnly, “I will.”

“Excellent. Welcome to the Forces of Nature… Lieutenant Phosphora.”

“Ahhh, I’m glad we have that business out of the way.” Arlon sat across from the girl. “You must be wondering how I came to be in Viridi’s ranks. It all started when I was a little boy living on Lunaria—”

“We’re running out of chapter-time, Arlon.”

“Very well. I’ll wait for the Side Stories.”

**Phosphora’s house; current time**

“So I worked for Viridi for the next 22 years.” Phosphora continued. “She gave me a Lightning Scarf that restored my bending, but I couldn’t use it too much without recharging. Since then, my loyalty was only to Viridi.”

“No offense, but why would Viridi care about you?” Anthony asked.

“You wouldn’t believe it, but Viridi was a very kind spirit. She feels compassion for all creatures who are unjustly treated, like merpeople, Minish, or those little aliens.” Anthony frowned grumpily and looked away. “Humans and other mortals think themselves powerful over these creatures, like they were gods who could decide their fate. That’s why Viridi wished to punish them. I know her ultimate goal was the wrong way, but for a long time… I didn’t really care.” Phosphora looked down and glared. “There was no proof that my religion was correct, but it was something I came to love. Then on that day, when Thor—when Loki appeared, I was overcome with joy… on that day, everything that I believed in came flying to me in the blink of an eye. And as fast as it all came… it crashed. That so-called ‘god’ destroyed me inside, so I… believed Viridi. I wanted to destroy all of those people who think they’re god, destroy everything they believed in.”

“But why is this ‘Loki’ still hanging around?” Aranea asked. “Wasn’t Viridi going to help you destroy him?”

“She wasn’t in much condition to help me destroy anyone; not until she could use Celebi to return to full power. It didn’t matter in the end, though, because Viridi was defeated. The person who gave me a home after my banishment… then I spent the next few months in prison. Until that stranger with the red eye broke us out. Took Arlon with him, but he gave me a ship he stole. During that time, though… I had time to think. I thought about why I joined Viridi to begin with, I saw myself falling from my island, then I remembered Fybi… after her wings were destroyed by my lightning. For a long time, I couldn’t stop thinking about how distraught she might’ve been, so after I escaped from prison… I wanted to meet her again.”

The kids sat in silent agreement. Fybi was distraught by the incident, this was true. “But I never expected Fybi to want to come here.” She continued. “To tell the truth, I never wanted to come back. The island where I was made to look like an idiot. I never wanted you kids to know about it, the shame of it all. But after Fybi asked, I thought about… what you kids could do. I heard the stories, you Kids Next Door are more than what you seem. I heard what Cheren and Nebula did, and I fought you five directly… As weird as it sounds, I thought you kids could help me, too. I still didn’t want you to know about me, so I tried to keep it subtle, that ‘Thor’ was just a phony god whose secret I discovered. But… sigh, I can’t run away from my past if I’m returning to it. After
what I did to Fybi, you kids must be really humored to know this.”

“But Miss Phosphora, that’s terrible what happened to you.” Sally stated.

“Yeah, I mean, you may’ve gone completely nuts with us, but I probly would’ve gone the same.” Aranea noted.

“Not sweet at all.” Harvey said with strong disapprove.

“In spite of our past conflict, thou must know that thou hast our full support.” Fybi promised. “Ist this not so, Anthony? …Anthony?”

The boy was gone. They heard the front door shut. The six of them quickly hurried outside, seeing the Sector Leader go up on a small hill. He held Fybi’s B.O.W. and took aim at Dashi’s Peak—Fybi felt her skirt and realized her weapon was missing. Anthony stretched the string and formed an energy arrow, locked absolutely tight on the caped figure atop the peak. He let the charged arrow fly, and… it pierced Loki’s chest. They watched as his armored body fell over and plummeted down the tower.

“EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAA!” The sectormates and Phosphora panicked, taking cover behind a fence so as to imply, ‘He’s not with us.’ But more than halfway down the tower, Loki’s body dispersed into dust, and they all stared confused.

“Huh?” Anthony was just as surprised.

“A pleasure to meet you, too.” Lady Sulfa flew up behind him, and transformed into Loki. He thwacked Anthony across the head with the head of his scepter.

“ANTHONY!” His friends ran out, but stopped when Loki turned at them.

“Did you children really believe you could waltz onto this island under God’s supervision? Never forget that I am anywhere and everywhere. I may sit atop Dashi’s Peak some of the time, but I mostly prefer to go for a little walk. That figure you just shot was a mirage I created to deceive people, while I disguise myself as the commonfolk. It’s the best way to snuff out the town of disloyalty and have those people imprisoned. But I was particularly interested in you young visitors. I must admit, I had forgotten about that child until she told us her story. To think you were still alive all this time, Phosphora.”

“You…” Phosphora’s eyes trembled, “Where is Lady Sulfa?!”

“Imprisoned in the tower with a few others who stood against me. They’ve been excellent help in providing the tower energy, but it’s just not enough. I must say, I’m rather interested…” Loki bent over and picked up the B.O.W. from Anthony’s hand, “with this.”

“PRAY, what interest hast thou in my weapon?!” Fybi shouted.

“Your weapon? Well, I suggest that you explain to me how a bow of this design can magically conjure arrows, if you don’t want your half-beaver friend to become dust.”

“Grrrr!” Fybi displayed the anger on her face, but kept herself from acting rashly. “I hath purchased material from alien beings to create such a weapon, which canst produce endless amount of energy, which I hath programmed to take form into solid arrows to smite evil beings like thyself.”

“Limitless arrows and energy…” Loki studied the small weapon with interest. “I think this trinket
can complete my ultimate plan. I’ll just take it with me, if you don’t mind.” He smiled wryly at the angel. “Many thanks to you, Feebi. You all can witness my crowning moment from the dungeons of Dashi’s Peak.” In a second, he zipped away.

A swarm of armored Birkans appeared around them. “This is where it came from!” the captain yelled. “By the will of God Thor, you are all under arrest. Surrender now, or be-” Furious storms of lightning rained down on all of them.

“‘Smited’ is what you were going to say, right?” A shockball whipped around and bashed each Birkan in the head, knocking them senseless. Amper appeared, and after inhaling, she puffed herself and sent tiny, but furious sparks around to singe all of the guards. Ela, Laxy, Brendix, and Dio appeared above the group. “I guess you kids finally know what’s goin’ on.” Dio proclaimed.

“Uhhnn… wh-what?” Anthony regained his senses and looked up. “You guys again? What’s the deal, who ARE you?”

“We’re the Birkan Kids Next Door. I’m the leader, Numbuh Kilo.” Dio zipped away, Amper took his place.

“You guys better come with us to our base so we can fill you in.” she said. “Birka is about to pass over Mount Olympus. If this happens, Loki will try to unleash the Titans.”

Talk about trying to squeeze so much into one chapter. That song was a parody of “Stronger Than You” from Steven Universe, the Encyclopod is from Futurama, reality is an illusion, the universe is a hologram, Fairy Tail uses mind-control waves, eat lots of pancakes, I’ll see you later! Oh, and Loki is from Thor!

...

Grazing in your homes, your markets, carefree and innocent, when all of a sudden, a force beyond your control rains down and destroys everything you care about. A being that deems itself far greater than us has no qualms, it laughs at our planets reduced to rubble and lives its existence happy and uncaring. —Arianna Dunfree
Rulers of this World

Chapter Summary

Sector W takes the fight to Loki!

Well, we’re finally here, the final stage of Lightning Saga, and the boss.

Chapter 28: Rulers of this World

Sector STORM Treehouse

Far away from Birka, near the entrance to Storm Canyon, was Birkan Kids Next Door, Sector STORM’s treehouse. Much like the rest of Birka, it is composed of storm clouds hardened into metal, with thousands of wires, and constantly takes in lightning from the clouds. Sector W returned to their Angel Wing, which they used to follow the Birkan kids to this hideout. “Welcome to our place!” Dio zipped away, came back, “Make yourselves at home!”

He was gone, Laxy replaced him, “We’ll give you the tour, show ya around.” He zipped off—came back, “That’s the end of our tour. No asking questions about the secret room.”

“Quit buggin’ us and just tell us what’s goin’ on!” Anthony yelled. “Is this the only Birka sector?”

“Duh, there’s only one Birka.” Amper said, zipped away, Ela replaced her.

“We’re part of Skypian KND, though. They call us for fast-pace missions.” She zipped away, Brendix replaced.

“We knew who you were, Phosphora. Our parents told us about you. Betcha can guess who they are.”

“Wait…” Phosphora figured it out quickly. “You mean you’re-”

Dio and Amper zipped. “Sola is our mom, Sulfia is our Grandma.”

Brendix zipped, “Node is my dad, didja know that?”

Then Laxy. “Rizbi’s my dad, I’ll tell ‘im ‘hi.’” Zipped away, came back, “Just kidding, he’s in jail.”

“And mine is Bzzbert. That’s all.” Ela concluded.

“Lingning didn’t get married?”

“Course not, she’s only 27.” Dio replied. “Who has kids when they’re younger than 27?”

Around the world

“ACHOO!!” All of the Nextgen parents sneezed.
“Funny thing about Lingning, though.” Dio said. “It was her idea that Birkan KND should be formed. She was the original operative. This was her treehouse. And some friends of hers. Not yours, they were too old.” Zipped away, Amper filled in.

“But they all knew what Loki did to you, they were just afraid to do anything. Lingning took action by starting this KND, her team worked to try and find a way to expose and defeat Loki, but never managed, now we’re continuing their work.” Zipped away, Brendix filled.

“Loki kinda caught on, too, Lingning and our parents are locked in Dashi’s Peak right now. But now we know just what Loki’s doing here.” Zipped away, Ela began to explain.

“Loki built a giant ray gun on the island’s underside, it’s connected to Dashi’s Peak, wasn’t there before.” She spoke quickly (much like her friends). “It shoots below the clouds every now and then, it’s absorbing energy from the surface.”

She zipped away, Laxy filled in. “And we know why, we found a book in Loki’s room on Dashi’s Peak. How’d we sneak in, shrink ray of course, everywhere else has one, why not a lightning sector? Anyway, he had a page bookmarked, about Mount Olympus down on Greece, he’s gonna-”

“Guys, can you at least explain this part slowly, I can’t follow along when you talk so fast.” Aranea interrupted.

Dio filled in and talked normally. “It tells a story how Greece used to have their own band of gods, before the main gods told them to leave. The reason is those gods created a group of gigantic monsters called Titans. There was a Rock Titan, Ice Titan, a Magma Titan, bunch of them. I think there was also a Cyclops.”

“But before the gods left, Zeus sealed the Titans in the grounds around Mount Olympus.” Brendix continued. “Zeus was a lightning god, so only tremendous amounts of lightning energy could break the seal. That’s why Loki’s been absorbing lightning from everywhere with Dashi’s Peak. We aren’t sure when they actually finished building it, but after 22 years, we think he might have enough energy. We started flying over Greece not too long ago.”

“But wouldst Loki not need terrific amounts of energy?” Fybi inquired. “He hast been absorbing power from the surface, verily, but we art talking of a seal created by a god. Canst average Earth lands produce so much energy?”

“But Fybi, he took your B.O.W., didn’t he?” Aranea asked. “You said it produces limitless energy arrows.”

“V…Verily.” Fybi felt a growing tinge of worry inside. “But Birka wast already crossing Greece before he hath taken. Didst he not already possess enough?”

“The book didn’t actually look clear from what we read, so we don’t know if Loki is sure, either.” Dio replied. “But what about this B.O.W. of yours? How can it produce unlimited energy?”

“Hmmm…” Fybi thought for a moment. “I believeth… yon GKND who hath lent me such material… claim it is from Vaporia, planet of electric.”

“Home of Volcor, Vaporian God of Thunder.” Laxy knew. “We were in the Viridi War, you know. Betcha can guess why you didn’t see us.”

“Thou means to say that ‘Volcor’ is whose energy my B.O.W. possesses?” Fybi inquired.
“It’s a thought. Either way, Loki could definitely get a handy amount of energy from Vaporian technology. If Loki sets those Titans free, he could ruin the whole planet.”

“Well, what’re we up here for? Let’s fly to Dashy’s Peak and clobber him!” Anthony fist-palmed.

“Surprised you still have the ability to say that after being *clobbered* in the head by him.” Aranea remarked.

“You can if you want to.” Laxy replied. “But it won’t be easy. A barrier made of Loki’s energy protects the cannon until it needs to fire, and that same shield protects the upper parts of the tower. It forces electrical bodies like Birkans to go all crazy, like some radioactive business. Only soldiers get to the top by flying through the inside, except for those brief moments when the shield’s down.”

“So we wait for the cannon to shoot, then go up?” Harvey asked, swinging his yo-yo.

“That’s not a good move, either.” Ela replied. “Let’s assume that his next destination is Mount Olympus, if we wait for it to fire, the Titans’ll come up. The best plan is to go into Dashi’s Peak through the bottom entrance and make your way up. Since you guys have those rubber suits, you should be safe from most of the electricity.”

“Go inside Dashi’s Peak and find a way to turn off the barrier.” Dio told them. “While you’re in there, you can save all the prisoners being forced to contribute their energy to the cannon. In the likely event it fires on Mount Olympus, the less energy, the better.”

“’Tis a rational course of action.” Fybi agreed. “I wish to reclaim my B.O.W.. I shal not let it be used for such evils.”

“Come to our armory and we’ll let you pick out some of our weapons.” Laxy zipped away, he came back, “Well, what’s taking you guys so long?”

“Stop doing that, Laxy.” Amper said with disbelief, before the Birkans calmly led the humans away.

Anthony was going to join them, but noticed Fybi float away from the group, apparently lost in thought. He approached his angel friend. “Fybi, don’t you want any weapons? Without your B.O.W., you…”

“Pray tell, Anthony, fair Tom hast told thee the way of lavabending, yea?”

“Pfft. It took me forever to Seismic Sense, you think I can lavabend?”

“Nay, but wouldst thou hath the stomach for it? Is not what Tom said to know what *heat* is? Thou dirty thine feet with the dirt of the world sun after sun, ast thou embraces fair earth, thou canst control it. Tom continues to know heat every day, and hast tapped into Earth’s raging form. Wherefore canst I not do the same? I hath flown hot summer air and cold winter chills. Shouldst I not be able to make my air hot or cold, whenever I desire?”

“IIIiiii wouldn’t think so?” Anthony had trouble understanding her sometimes.

“Nay.” Fybi smirked. “I shouldst.” Fybi clamped her hands together, focused her chi, and spun the air around her. Anthony’s jumpsuit became increasingly sticky with sweat, the air was so hot, he thought he might suffocate. “Prithee, is it hot?” Fybi smiled brightly and let the air chill. Anthony begun to shudder now, he wished he was wearing something thicker, because it was co-o-o-o-o-old.
Their teammates later returned with gray, cloud-made, electrical-based weapons in hand. Aranea held the empty handle of a whip, Harvey wore shoulder pads that he could press with his head and shoot lasers, Sally had an average electric ray gun, and Phosphora possessed a small, thick thunder rod. “Well, here’s some for you guys.” Aranea said, passing Anthony a set of electric knuckles, and Fybi her own shock ray. “Bur-r-r, who turned the air down?”

“My apologies.” Fybi grinned. “I shalt not be needing a weapon for present. I shalt only use my B.O.W. to battle Loki.”

Outside Dashi’s Peak

The tower was tremendous up close, and its front gates were shut. If one gazed at Dashi’s terrific size, they could hardly believe it doesn’t stretch above the clouds. Guards were stationed at every exterior corner. Since no one could fly to the top through the barrier, only the bottom parts required guarding. One soldier looked in the distance, seeing five Birkan kids innocently kicking a shockball around. Amper kicked it skyward to Dio, who spun around and sent it rocketing to the base of Dashi’s Peak. It smashed against a guard’s face, and said guard flew backfirst against the tower. The guards stared up at the kids. “GOD THOR SUCKS LOFTWING MILK!” Brendix announced for all to hear. “Betcha didn’t know that!!”

A trio of guards zipped up to chase him, but Brendix’s friends flew down, zapped the other guards, and earned their full attention. The citizens of Birka got to enjoy an afternoon spectacle of guards chasing kids, in the forms of strips of light. Sector W and Phosphora peeped out from behind a bush. “Now’s our chance!” Anthony whispered, and the group bolted to the stairs to the gate. The gray, wooden doors were sealed, but posed no threat to Fybi. She whirled her arms, spun the wind around her to a single point, and thrust the gust forward to blow the doors down. (Play “In the Aurum Hive” from Kid Icarus: Uprising!)

Stage 37: Birka

Mission: Defeat Loki and save Birka from his rule!

Act 2: Dashi’s Peak

The first room was large and wide-open, with columns of lightning surging from the floor to the ceiling. Birkan Spearmen zipped around the room, zapping small electric spheres from their rods. Sally and Harvey tossed their yo-yos, which had blades extracted on their sides that contributed to the damage, injuring their exposed areas. Aranea extracted her Electro Whip that she lashed through the guards’ armor, and Anthony fought with the mud he got from Rubberband Land, performing Mud Slices across the armor. During their weakened states, Fybi used gusts to blast them into the electric columns. The five heroes climbed a ladder onto an upper walkway (Fybi flew) and found a huge door sealed with four giant locks. “It needs four mega-charges to open.” Phosphora explained. “It must be the point of these columns.”

“Hope one of these lightningbenders is willing to help.” Aranea said.

“That’s why I took this.” Phosphora held up her metal lightning rod. “Very attractive. I might just keep it afterward!” She winked.

“I shalt take it now.” Fybi took the metal rod and flew to the closest column, keeping a firm grip when the electric attracted to the rod’s tip. Her arm trembled from the force, but she held tight and pulled the lightning to the first lock. She stuck her rod in, turned it off and pulled away, and the
lightning stayed directed in the lock. She repeated the process with the other three columns, and once all four charges were set, the door shone brightly before opening. This room was more narrow, but wide, with many electric columns that kept platforms aloft. The friends found a stairway of platforms to their left, but jumped up them carefully, as they were close between the other columns.

They reached a large gap between their current platform, and another platform that floated left and right. An unlit rod was hanging horizontal above them, so only Sally and Harvey swung across with their yo-yos. They rode the moving platform to the very left, finding another unlit sideways platform against the wall. Sally and Harvey tossed their yo-yos around the rod and pulled it with them when their platform floated back. When it was close to touching the other sideways rod, Aranea lashed her whip up and between both rods, connecting them with an electric charge. They floated across the gap between the kids and the parallel cluster of columns, passing under an unlit rod and lighting it.

This rod connected with a Charge Pad on the floor, which allowed the platform to float over, in which Fybi flew above to push the platform down beside her friends. (Sally and Harvey had to drop to the floor and come back up the platform stairs to reunite with their friends.) The group rode it to the upper floor on the other side, and were able to freely jump around the platforms of equal height. There was a ledge on one side (directly above the room’s entrance) with a sealed door, requiring two charges on the antennas. There were higher platforms connected to antennas via charges, and Phosphora used her thunder rod to catch the lightning from two of them, jumping the platforms and pulling them to the antennas. When she had the charges connected with these antennas, the door opened.

They were in a vast, cylindrical room that seemed to stretch many floors. The four electric columns from the lower room stretched up this far. A line of holes spiraled up around the wall, but no stairs. “I shalt see if I canst find a way.” Fybi floated all the way up the room, avoiding the Amps and Ruff Puffs around. The line of holes ended at a ledge with two round slots on the floor. After examining their insides, she flew back down to inform her friends. “Seemeth a device which turns is required above.”

“Oh, right, energy cogs.” Phosphora face-palmed. “Where can we get one of those?”

“Oh, right, energy cogs.” Phosphora face-palmed. “Where can we get one of those?”

“Actually, can we use tops?” Sally asked.

“Why would tops-?” Before she could finish her thought, the twins pulled out tops from their pockets, which puffed to their size on the push of a button.

“We learn a few things from our Negatives.” Sally smiled. “Let’s go, Harvey!” (“Sweet!”) The kids hopped on their tops, which extracted blades from the sides that stuck into the barren stairholes, allowing them to grind up the spiraling wall in this fashion. The twins ducked the Amps that flew by in attempt to hit them, and they tossed their yo-yos to dizzy the Ruff Puffs. The tops rolled off on the floor, and the kids each claimed a slot and kept spinning. They felt cogs underneath turn, and a stairway shortly came into being from the holes. Their friends seized the moment to run up, with Aranea and Fybi using their whip and wind to take out the Ruff Puffs.

Fybi blew the gates at the top open, bringing the group to an outside stairway. Beamos were stationed along the stairs, sensing the kids’ presence as they blasted their signature beams. Harvey bumped his shoulder pads and shot the eyes with lasers while Sally took aim with her own shock gun. “My neck’s gonna hurt after this.” Harvey said. A chunk of the stairs was missing, with a rod stationed on the upper side, so Aranea roped it with her Electro Whip and pulled, unveiling the concealed stairs. The friends rushed up the stairs before Aranea switched her whip off, then
jumped on before the stairs retracted fully. A door with a diamond center was sealed, but all they had to use was a single Beamos. Fybi smirked and got the sentry’s attention, tricking it into blasting its laser at the diamond, which shone brightly before the door opened.

There were Birkans with chains around their ankles, forced to clutch wires within the walls and contribute energy. Guards were watching them, and had Jolteons on leashes. “Those must be the prisoners.” Phosphora deduced. “Let’s help them out!” Fybi whirled hot air around her arms and blew it at two guards, causing them to suffocate. Phosphora rushed forward and punched them in the face while the Harper twins struck with bladed yo-yos. The Jolteons were released as one of them sent a thunderbolt at Anthony, who withstood the shock with his suit before slicing the creature across the face with his mud.

The Harper twins rode their tops and rammed the guards with the bladed edges, and when the Jolteons ran at them, Aranea roped them with her whip and threw them into the electric columns, defeating the Pokémon with thousands of more jolts than they could stand. Aranea sliced the chains of two of the prisoners, and Anthony did the same with his Mud Slice. “Are all of you okay?” Phosphora asked.

“Yeah, but my hands aren’t gonna feel the same for… Phosphora?” One of the men spoke to her. Phosphora needed a moment to recognize him. “Rizbi?”

“Holy friz, where’ve you BEEN all this time?! We thought you were dead!”

“I’ve been out of this world, if that still qualifies. Where are the others?”

“On other floors. Probably getting their juice sucked out like me.” Rizbi sat on the floor.

“Just rest until your power comes back. We’ll save them.”

“Here, I stole this from one of the guards.” He handed Phosphora a key with electricity flowing. “Course, you can probably steal one from their unconscious bodies. Heheh.” Phosphora stuck the key into a nearby door, sending electricity through before it opened. This room had hovering platforms like the lower floor, except a pool of energy made up this room. Dark gray clouds were floating in the ‘water’, while others floated like stairs to higher platforms, but they looked too small and fragile to jump. Fybi made the air cold and channeled it into the clouds, increasing their density and size, so her friends were able to jump across.

They jumped a cloud-stairway to a solid foothold in a corner, close to a set of lightning columns whose three platforms shifted up and down. When the nearest platform was at their level, they jumped on, were lifted to the second, then jumped from there to the third. A Dark Puff was innocently hovering around, so Fybi made good use and puffed it with cold air. The Puff felt stick to its core, but the friends passed this off and boarded its inflated body. The air was forced out of its mouth with their weight, blowing toward another foothold in the corner. The team jumped off before the Puff deflated. Leading to the next walkway was a group of energy geysers, rising up from the pool below. Fybi flew to the area on the other side and found a crate of emergency rubber rafts – inside a box with Rubberband Land’s logo. Fybi took and dropped a raft over the tip of each geyser, allowing her friends to cross once more.

They entered a door and turned to pass down a hall—Loki grinned at them from the other side, and the friends braced for impact when the king fired a sphere. Fybi attempted to blow it away, but the sphere phased through her and didn’t harm the kids at all. “It’s an illusion!” Phosphora yelled. The fake Loki chuckled solemnly before vanishing. The heroes found a room where a Birkan prisoner was running ceaselessly on a large hamster wheel, barked at by Sky-Blue Spinies, whom were
commanded by Dark Lakitu. Phosphora recognized that candy-green hair to be Bzzbert.

Fybi blasted the Lakitu with airbending, then the Spinies curled into balls to zoom at the kids, dealing painful damage with their high speed. Sally and Harvey rode their tops to ram the Spinies, bouncing between them and the wall as they steadily pushed the creatures toward the wheel’s generators. Their spiky bodies took a deadly zap while also destroying the two generators, forcing the wheel’s energy flow to stop. “WAAAAAAH!” Bzzbert was caught off-guard, slipping and zipping around the wheel before he was thrown to the wall.


“Owww.” Bzzbert landed on the floor and sat up. “Who are you, Thor’s hooker?”

“Hmph, I could’ve been. I’m Phosphora, Dumbo.”

“I was almost gonna guess that. …Sorry, I’m really happy to see you, I just… huff… been running for a long time…”

“Wouldst thine breath return quicker, knowing we were going to rescue thy friends?” Fybi asked.

“Huuuuff… almost!” Bzzbert fainted.

By stopping the wheel, an electric barrier blocking a stairway was gone. The friends rushed up, avoiding the Amps coming down, and entered a small, straightforward room with Voltorbs. The ball Pokémon rolled at the kids, who immediately dashed down the stairs when the explosions happened. Fybi blew away the smoke that followed them, and when the kids returned, the Electric-types were defeated like that. The friends crossed the room to another outside stairway, where the thunder roared furiously overhead. “WHOA!” The kids jumped to avoid a sudden bolt, and a strike began to occur every 2 seconds.

“The energy in the tower must be getting stronger!” Phosphora yelled. “It’s making the clouds unstable! I’ll run ahead first.” She raised the thunder rod and rushed up the stairs, catching each sudden bolt and feeling a tremor in her own body. The sectormates kept behind her, safe from the bolts themselves. They noticed the energy in the rod was building after each strike, and this would become convenient when they reached the sealed door, with a keyhole as wide as the rod. “Need a charge, do ya? Well, here it is, fresh from nature.” Phosphora stuck the rod inside, filling the door with enough energy to open.

The moment they entered this room, they were horrified: the severed heads of Birkans, their bodies as well, lay dead and bloody. The sign above read Dýspistous Prosochí! “It says ‘Disbelievers Beware’…” Phosphora spoke with gloom.

“Beware of what?” Fybi blasted air everywhere, dispersing the illusion. “Our own mind, mayhap.” The guards that were hidden tried to attack them, Aranea roped one’s wrists with her whip and flipped him upside-down, leaving Anthony to punch them in the face with his Watt Knuckles. Phosphora kicked another in the shin, then Fybi blew him into a nearby lightning column, and the Harpers stood on either side of a column as they threw their yo-yos around the arms of a soldier, pulling him back and into the electric. The next door was above a high ledge, with no way to climb up. Fybi flew above and observed the walkway, seeing two holes beside one area. She felt above those holes—discovering an invisible ladder. “Loki’s mirages be most deceptive.”

The friends climbed the revealed ladder to the next room, which was reddish-pink colored, massive, and a stairway of rows of giant blocks led up to the door. Phosphora was going to climb the first one, but it vanished, and Fybi pulled her back before the hidden Amp zapped her. “Most
deceptive indeed.” The woman replied.

Anthony observed the blocks carefully, walking just inches from them to avoid touching the fakes. He felt an odd force beside one of them and touched it, confirming it solid. “This one’s safe.” Phosphora helped the kids climb before getting on herself. So for the rest of the room, Anthony determined the solidity of each block, and the kids progressed based on his judgment. “Not bad, Anthony.” Aranea said.

“Earthbenders gotta know what’s hard.” He winked. Behind this next door, the hall was incredibly narrow and cramped. The way they progressed through might’ve been similar to a 2-D side-scroller. There was a small pool of electric, where they had to wait for a platform to come over, jump on, and ride across. A pair of platforms were moving along a square-shaped line in midair, so the kids hopped on and rode the nearest one, jumping an incoming electric sphere. Pink electric sparks lit up the following passage, each one at certain intervals, so the six were patient in getting through.

The group entered what seemed like a pumping room, with four pipes channeling energy from a center. Phosphora didn’t need long to recognize Node, who shifted from fat to skinny on a regular basis, and was now using this trait to pump electricity through the pipes. He was trapped inside a glass dome, so Anthony decided to use his Watt Knuckles to begin punching it. Birkan Archers zipped into view and attempted to shoot him, Fybi blew off the electric arrows and Screw Kicked the first guard in the face. Harvey caught Aranea with his yo-yo and hurled her to the second guard, and she caught his legs with her whip to pull him down, letting Phosphora run up and kick him across the face. Sally threw her top above the third one, whipped her yo-yo up to press its switch, and the top expanded to crush and bring the guard down, then she grabbed the enlarged toy to bash him senseless.

The minute Anthony’s fist broke the glass, Node puffed to the ceiling. He slowly drifted down, as flat as a paper. Phosphora grabbed and stretched him to normal. “Ouch. Is that you, Phosphora?”

“I only stay one width, Node.”

“Yup. …I don’t suppose you… brought extra underpants?”

The friends showed disgust, so they quickly left him to recharge. A door was opened with the pipes no longer operable, bringing them outside. A platform was connected with an energy tube spiraling up around the tower, so they boarded on and began to ride. Sky-Blue Spinies dropped down from above, and the kids dodged when the turtles tried to roll at them. Some Birkan Archers landed, Phosphora fell and spin-kicked one off its feet, letting Fybi blow him down, and Anthony caught another’s arrow to stick it in the guard’s mouth, before Sally hit his face with her yo-yo and knocked him over. The platform came to a stop on a new ledge as they entered the door. “I actually wonder how much of this technology was built when Loki arrived. Because otherwise, this tower’s been here for thousands of years.” Phosphora thought aloud.

This room was the prettiest inside the tower: dozens of giant, colorful plasma lamps were stationed around, giving this place an alien, otherworldly feel. This appeared to be the lounge room, for guards were laying on couches, smoking electrical cigarettes. “So I was down at Shizzles’ the other day, I saw this guy’s daughter, and she was HOT. Like, SO hot.”

“Dude, I was with you. She was twelve.”

“I know. This was back when we were kids.”

“Oh, yeah…”
No one was attacking them, and it looked like there was nothing worthwhile, except they could rejuvenate their selves in the hot spring. They decided to do so, and once their strength returned, they entered the next door. It was a huge disco room of sorts, where hundreds of hovering, vertical pads circled around the central ball. The pads lit beams every few intervals, so the six kept an eye out for lit ones and dodged them. The kids performed this gesture as they hurried to a flight of stairs to their right, leading onto the upper floor. Inside an electric barrier surrounded by colorful tiles was Phosphora’s friend, Sola, dancing gracefully to the music that played and powering the disco with her energy.

Birkan Spearmen were there to slow their progress, so the others had them dealt with while Phosphora studied the flashing tiles. Red, green, yellow, blue, purple tiles, but how to free Sola. She discovered a nearby terminal, with a design of a red circle with an empty center, likely resembling this floor. There were purple numbers at different spots, 1, 2, 3, 4, and Phosphora deduced they were the purple tiles, which flashed in fewer areas than others. On the bottom-right of the screen, each tile color was lined up, with arrows between them, implying those colors would change to those. The yellow tile had a Check mark, letting Phosphora know they were safe to stand on.

Phosphora considered the purples’ location on the map with the actual ones, and thankfully the ‘1st’ one was nearest the edge. She jumped to, stepped on it, and jumped back. The second tile was further in, requiring Phosphora to jump around yellow tiles, hit the purple when it came, and make her way back to start. The third tile forced her to maneuver a complex pattern of appearing yellows, and from there, she skipped to the fourth tile, just touching the barrier. The entire room blacked out, the disco, tiles, and the barrier. Sola gasped for breath, thankful she no longer had to dance.

“My legs are gonna hurt for hours.”

“Awww, but you were always so good, Sol.” Phos grinned.

“Phosphora?” Sola said during a breath. “When did you…”

“Clearly, I’m Birka’s most-recognized. Sola, is your mom here? Where is she?”

“I think she’s in that room up there.” Sola pointed to a stairwell across a bridge. “That’s the room where the barrier machine is.”

“Thanks.” Phosphora faced the stairs unwaveringly. “Come on, guys, let’s take it down.” She ran first while Sector W followed, and bright blue flashes were seen up above. They glanced at an alternate passage on their left, to a hangar room where Lightning Chariots faced the open sky, waiting to be ridden. The heroes made it to the barrier chamber, where two giant rods focused toward a center, where powerful electric energy was channeled between them via a small force.

(End song.)

“That must be what’s powering the barrier!” Sally exclaimed.

“But what is it?” Harvey asked.

“It’s…” Phosphora looked closely. She only knew one Birkan who could channel that much lightning through her arms. She ran forward and yelled, “LINGNING! LINGNING, IS THAT YOU?”

“Nnnnmuuuu, naaaaah. . Don’t hurt. . Phosphora. .” She spoke with a raspy, trance-like voice.

“What’s wrong with her?!” Aranea shouted.
“Mayhap Loki hath done something.” Fybi said.

“LINGNING, SNAP OUT OF IT! It’s me, Phosphora! I’m all right!”

“Phosphora’s dead. Phosphora’s gone. I should be dead. I should be gone.”

“Lingning, please! I was glad to take that lightning for you! I didn’t know what was gonna happen afterward, no one could have! But despite everything that happened, I’m glad it was me and not you! I still remember how you looked, Lingning. A little girl who saw us playing around and wanted to get in on it. You were better at lightningbending than all the other kids, so no one else your age played with you. You felt like one of the big kids, even though you were only five! Looking back, you probably could’ve survived that blast, but I wasn’t gonna chance it! So don’t blame yourself, Lingning! Snap out of it and come down!”

Groups of lightning bolts suddenly struck either rod of the machine and destroyed them. The surge shot back to Lingning and shocked her, and Phosphora caught the 27-year woman before she hit the floor. Even after all these years, she still could only look at her like that same little child. Lingning opened her tired yellow eyes. “Phos…phora?”

“Talk about overworking.” Sola remarked, joined by the others of Phosphora’s friends. “Did you find…!”

They looked to the other side of the room. An elderly Birkan with a robe was just powering some wires, before the machine suddenly exploded. Phosphora passed Lingning to Rizbi and hurried to her side. “Lady Sulfa?”

The woman looked the very same as when Loki impersonated her. She looked up wearily.

“Phosphora… Is that you, Child?…”

“I don’t know, is that really you? Not Thor?”

“Thor?… My dear… that’s not Thor looking over Birka… it’s Loki.”

“But you’re you.” Phosphora smiled. “Lady Sulfa… I’m sorry this all had to happen. All of you are in here because of me.”

“No, Child… Loki’s actions against you, exposed him for what he really is. I was much the same as you. This ‘Thor’… is not the same one I grew up with, either. I didn’t want to honor a god so evil… and yet, I couldn’t bear to tell the others the truth. I wanted them to still be able to hope… Oh, what a fool I was.”

“Loki’s not going to fool anyone, anymore. It’s time for us to stop him.”

“Oh, will you?” The friends jumped aside when a bolt struck down. Loki stood grinning at them from a high perch. “Isn’t this pleasant… The first humans to grace the presence of their new ruler. Millions of children are envious of you, now.”

“That’s funny, because we’re envious of all the children who AREN’T looking at you.” Aranea retorted.

“You’d be wise to watch your words, little girl.”

“Where did you even find a book about our world, anyway?”

“So you know about that, too? Interestingly, the book was delivered to my jail cell on Asgard,
along with dimensional coordinates. I’m not sure from whom, but it was clearly trustworthy information. The note told me something that was not in the book’s pages: the true Pure Energy under Mount Olympus.”

“True Pure Energy?” Phosphora questioned.

“Of course. Those Titans will merely be my aids in reshaping this world. But when the Greek gods were forced to abandon this planet, an embodiment of Zeus’s energy was contained and sealed deep within the mountain. Using all of the power I harnessed in this tower, I will be able to take it! I, Loki of Asgard will become a TRUE God of Thunder, and reign over your people like insects! There will only be one religion across the planet, and it will be the greatest of all! To honor the one, true god that rules this domain! To realize their selves as DIRT in the eyes of their Lord!”

“Even if we do let you get away with that, no one will ever worship you.” Aranea stated. “Because you aren’t the god that people want to honor.”

“Hm hm hm, can I assume you’re one of them?” Loki grinned humorously. “A sniveling human that clings to a religion for the sake of appearing important before whatever imaginary god you idolize?”

“There’s more to a religion than just worshipping a god or feeling self-satisfaction. I follow my religion because it gives me hope and happiness. Because I believe that God does care about His followers. He gives everyone a bright future that they can strive for. No matter who you are or what power you have, you’ll NEVER be our god!”

“The words of a child… hmph. The lot of you are nothing but a nuisance. The only worth you’ve proved is handing me this bow.” He pulled out Fybi’s treasured weapon. “Its energy contributed massively to my Energy Cannon. A worthy weapon for a king of this world. Perhaps I’ll give you children the honor, of being the first smited by it.” Loki pulled the string back and charged an arrow. “Good-bye, children.”

A lightning bolt struck the ledge below him, making Loki stumble and drop the B.O.W., while Fybi caught it. “That’s no-way, to treat the kid-dies!” a sing-song voice sang. A rap tune played, for standing at the entrance was Killer Bee.

“It’s that rapper!” Harvey pointed.

“He’s a lightningbender?” Phosphora noticed.

Killer Bee swayed as he rapped, “Ah saw them kids, goin’ up the tower, and thought they would need my power, and now that I see you, Ah say, Ah’m not lettin’ you get your way, fool, ya fool!”

“Peh. Keep your toy.” Loki scoffed. “I’ve absorbed more than enough power from it. Say your final prayers, children, and we’ll see how well your God protects you. Say your same words after you come outside!” He zipped away.

“Let’s get him!” Anthony and friends rushed up the stairs and to the door that was behind Loki.

“You guys go, and I’ll protect the co.. Go give him a show. Fools, ya fools!” Bee rapped.

“I’ll catch up with you!” Phosphora told the kids, running back down the stairs.

**Dashi’s Peak**

The door led them outside, to a small flight of stairs to the top of Dashi’s Peak. Loki’s throne was
empty, so Fybi blasted it with her B.O.W., expecting an illusion. The throne crumbled to pieces, the kids looked around frantically. “Up here!” Loki was hovered above them on a Lightning Chariot, swinging his staff to strike a bolt from the sky.

“WHOOAAA!” The kids were blown over the stairs and over the edge, losing their electric weapons as the hundreds-feet fall began. Sector STORM swooped by and caught them inside their ship, flying alongside Fybi outside.

“Came as soon as the barrier went kerploot.” Laxy said. “Wanna see us come again?”

“Just fly after him!” Phosphora yelled, having appeared beside the ship on her own Lightning Chariot. She boosted after Loki’s chariot in the distance, and the sector followed.

Loki had soared far beneath Birka’s edge, and was in view of the island’s underside. “YOU’RE TOO LATE!” he cried to his pursuers. “The era starts NOW!” (Play “Dragon King” from Fairy Tail!)

The tremendous cannon on the bottom of the island shone with energy. A laser of incredible power fired down, and blew away the sea of clouds below. The peak of Mount Olympus was revealed, with many ancient temples and structures that belonged to the Greek gods. The laser struck, and began burrowing down the mountain’s center. It felt like the entire world was trembling. Even from the heavens, they could feel it.

A few miles in the distance, the ground was crumbling. A tremendous brown arm made of thick, solid stone reached up, clutching its fingers. The rest of the earth crumbled, and within seconds, the Rock Titan was towering over the land. A round, rugged bulky body with two heads on top, red eyes and mouths. Lythos roared to the heavens and began his march to crush Greece into canyons.

A skinny, skeletal arm, made of the coldest ice, with long, sharp fingers, reached from the earth, the land around it freezing. The Ice Titan, Hydros broke free, and the terrifying skeleton would begin his march to turn the ocean into a great field of ice. “FWAAAAAH-” A very fat Titan with reddish-pink skin, no clothing except for a red loincloth, and a single yellow eye on his bald head, came bursting from the mountainside, rolling midair before landing on the ground with a terrific quake. The Cyclops looked around confusedly, before eying fleeing herds of sheep and horses. “ME go eat FOOOOD.” The ground shook at each quick step as he chased.

“THE WORLD IS ENTERING A NEW ERA.” Loki cried for all of Birka to hear. “I, Loki of Asgard, shall reign supreme as the God of Thunder and Destruction! From the ashes of this world, I will create an ideal law! Humans, angels, and ALL creatures will forever live in fear of the gods! And with the energy I shall harness from this mountain, I will spread my power across the cosmos! There will be no mortal alive that can challenge me!”

The operatives watched with horror as the Titans made slow, but great progress across the landscape. “If that laser keeps drilling the mountain, the other Titans will be waken up, too!” Laxy exclaimed. “The Magma and Wind Titans are the worst. We have to destroy that machine!”

“But we can’t just let the Titans wreck everything!” Aranea yelled. “We need to stop them somehow!”

“Easier said than done with Choki botherin’ us!” Anthony reminded. “What’re we supposed to do about him?!”

The many kids and Phosphora gripped their heads in aggravation. What should come first, the laser, the Titans, or Loki? They were hopelessly outnumbered. “PRAY, wherefore dost thou hold
thine heads in such mannerism?!” Fybi shouted them out of their thoughts. “We shalt approach this quick and now! Sector STORM, thou shalt attack the cannon with everything thou hast! Anthony, Sally, Harvey, and Aranea, slow the progress of the Titans if nothing else! Phosphora…” The Birkan looked at her. “We shalt battle Loki posthaste. Realize thine dream of driving a Lightning Chariot and duel him with me!”

Fybi didn’t seem phased by the situation at all. She was the smartest of all of them, her sectormates had to admit, and her spirit was strong. They all put aside their feelings of worry and became determined. Within minutes, Sector STORM was flying them all to the mountainous Titans. “But first,” Anthony announced, ripping off his rubber suit and switching for his real clothes. “I fight much better like this.” The others followed his example and changed.

STORM’s ship glided over the Rock Titan, so Anthony dropped down first. “HAAAAAAA!” He balled his fist and smashed the center between their heads. The Titan cried and shook, hopelessly flailing its arms, unable to reach Anthony, who had fallen down the front and landed on the ground. He shook slightly from the impact, but stood firm on his feet and faced the Titan.

The sector flew over the Ice Titan next as Sally and Harvey leaped out. They swung their yo-yos to wrap around the beast’s neck, swinging around as Hydros roared and tried to swat them away. The twins landed on its shoulders. “Sis, you’re sure these strings are unbreakable, right?” Harvey asked.

“If what our Negatives said was true.”

Aranea stared with worry as the ship hovered over Cyclops. “I dunno, that guy looks pretty big.”

“Your brain is probably larger than his, so GO for it.” Brendix pushed her out.

“WAAAAH-!” Aranea landed atop Cyclops’ s head. She lost her footing when the monster shook his head confusedly, falling down the front as she grabbed the top of its eyelid. “Uhhhh, hey, big guy, I’m gonna have ta ask you not to destroy everything. You probably don’t have anything better to do, but we’d appreciate it-“

“Fl-leeeea…” Cyclops held his fingers by the tiny child, and flicked her away.

“OOOWW!” Aranea felt like she flew miles, landing against the leaves of a tree before she fell to the ground. She regained her senses and watched the Cyclops continue to chase sheep. “Sure, send the smallest operative to fight who is, without a doubt, Anthony’s ancestor. This is gonna go well.”

Fybi was high within the clouds, glaring at Loki on his Lightning Chariot. The man kept his wry smile as Phosphora caught up on her own chariot. He began to chuckle, seeing that look in her purple eyes. Eyes that were once so joyous to meet her lord, now sought revenge on him. “‘Tis true, those of the youth serve as its only protectors. I hath seen it too many times, and heard so many stories. And children like us… shouldst not hath to undergo so many trials. Our childhoods ruined by what battles yon gods hast ordered us to endure. As an airbender, I must be against such battles. Mine wish is to follow the ways of peace, to know serenity and freedom. I wish this life for all kids. The
wind is lovely under my wings…” She gently flapped. “But thither be angry winds, too. When the direction changes, so must I. Under calm skies, I let the wind carry me.” She held both hands open, spiraling wind around them. “But when yon raging storms blow forth… I must allow my anger to burn… like FAIR LIGHTNING!”

Her hands shone with electricity, and during Loki’s utter surprise, she blasted two bolts at his chest. “FYBI!” Phosphora screamed. “You’re a LIGHTNINGBENDER?!”

“Oh oh oh!” Fybi smiled innocently. “Pray, what is lightningbending? What is Birka, the Lightning Island? Dost it magically spawn from our very being? Nay… lightning be the conflict between positive and negative charges. A bender doth be the master of their element. I canst make the air hot, or cold, and both between.” She spiraled the two different airs around her hands. “Water molecules forever float among the winds, they canst be molded to make clouds, and yon clouds become my charge. Birka is incredibly rich with this power. Conflicting temperatures art all around. For long as I’ve flown, I hath soared hot summer airs and cold winter mountains. Temperature, climate, altitude, thou may call me its queen!” Lightning shone on her hands again.

“Hn hn ha ha ha.” Loki calmly stood up, brushing his armored chest. “Simple little angel… you should know better than to play with lightning.” The head of his staff shone brightly. “No matter who you are, however… you’re still only a mortal. And you will face judgment before the eyes of a god.”

Fybi smirked. “Speaketh such words to a certain goddess, whom hast received a most horrifying fate.” (Play “The Encounter” from *Kingdom Hearts II*)

*Boss fight: Loki*

Fybi spiraled more lightning around her arms and blasted at Loki, but the mirage dispersed as the real Loki zipped between both girls on the Lightning Chariot, Phosphora nearly falling off of hers. She hopped back on and whipped her reins, forcing the Thundercorns to dash after the other chariot, while Fybi flew alongside her. Loki threw rounds of energy spheres from his staff, the girls having to think fast to avoid them, and when the phony god swerved left and upward, Fybi attempted to halt, then boost to cut him off, but in a flash of lightning, three Lokis whipped out of space, Fybi braced for impact when they came, but the mirages dispersed upon colliding, then the real Loki zipped out of nowhere and grabbed Fybi by the ankle. He merely pulled her along for a few seconds, but Phosphora flew up from the side and rammed her chariot into his, Loki stumbling back as he released Fybi. The younger angel clamped her electrified hands over his face, resulting a shock, then Phosphora punched him in the nose, before the god recovered and batted her off with his staff, flying away on his chariot.

He vanished beyond the clouds, so the girls chased—and ended up flying over a valley of active volcanoes. They evasively dodged the giant meteors, the sudden lava geysers that sprout up from the surface, then Fybi was caught unprepared when Loki zipped out of the distance and bashed her with his staff. She recovered and evaded the array of lightning bolts that struck out of the heavens, dodged Loki’s electric shockwave when he flew back down, then attempted to chase him, but a great wall of magma exploded from the ground. “Fybi, he can make mirages, remember?!” Phosphora shouted. “None of this stuff is real!” The woman tested her own claim and flew through the magma, and rather than burn and melt, the spot she flew through became a blue, mystic light, hinting its falseness. Fybi flew through as easily as a ghost.

Phosphora was chasing Loki as they swerved about in the air, and Fybi stopped in place to lock on
with her B.O.W.. When Loki turned at an angle that faced Fybi, she fired and struck one of his Thundercorns, causing the chariot to turn sideways. Loki fell out, and Fybi performed a Screw Kick as she flew at him whipping-fast and kicked him in the face. Loki recovered and activated his anti-gravity boots, launching spheres and energy columns at Fybi, who spun clouds around her arms, passed them to her legs, and lit them electric. She dodged Loki’s attacks with greater speed, flew up to him, and dealt quick electric stomps at his face, then flew behind to charge and arrow and strike his backside, leaving a crack in his armor. Loki zipped back onto his chariot and rode it away.

The Rock Titan’s foot was bigger than five houses, and Anthony dodged it by inches when it came down. The colossal creature seemed to take no interest in him and continued stomping.

“HUUUUURRRRR!” Anthony stomped the ground, propelled himself forward with a rock-jab, and slammed his fist against the monster’s foot. Lythos cried and stumbled slightly, so Anthony ran to the center between his legs, stomped, threw his arms up forcefully, and forced a pointed rock to stab up and through. Lythos fell completely on his front and shook the world, so Anthony took the time to climb onto his back. He furiously stomped the stone creature in an attempt to get inside.

“If you’re anything like the OTHER rock titan I fought, you have a weak spot inside!”

The monster began shaking, reaching a hand back to smash Anthony like a bug, but the boy stood firm and pressed his hands against the great stone palm, keeping it up. Anthony kept stomping until he could sink partway into the monster’s back. Lythos stood up and furiously shook, letting himself fall backwards and smash the earth. He got up and turned to glare at the tiny, fallen Anthony. The two-headed Titan raised his right fist and prepared to bring it down. Still on his back, Anthony raised both hands and countered with all his strength.

“WHOOoosa, WHOOoaaa...” Sally and Harvey swung about frantically from the Ice Titan’s neck, holding tight to their yo-yo strings while the monster shook. “OOF.” Both siblings collided with each other, and their strings unraveled before they fell. The Ice Titan felt a burn in his neck where the strings were, forcing ice onto that crack to freeze it up. The twins panicked when the Titan prepared to blow ice against them, grabbing tops and throwing them under their feet as they expanded to the size of platforms, letting them slide away. They continued sliding desperately when the storm of ice chased. “If we get frozen by that, we’re goners!” Sally exclaimed.

“Too cool, man! Too cool!” Harvey yelled with worry. The ice finally stopped, and they looked back to see that area of ground frozen completely. The Ice Titan lashed icicle missiles, the twins dodging on their tops and riding them over the ice, the slippery surface allowing greater momentum. “Its legs, Harvey!” Sally yelled, and both siblings skied to a separate leg to toss their yo-yos around it. They tugged, emerging the yo-yos’ blades as they spun back around and cracked the Titan’s legs, making the creature fall forward with its long-fingered hands against the ground.

“Let’s take him apart!” Harvey exclaimed as the duo each climbed onto a leg, hopped on their tops, and rode up and across the Titan’s back while the tips of their tops released a small laser, cutting perfectly through. The twins formed parallel lines up to his shoulder blades, and Hydros roared as he was split into three. Each part still had half a leg or two, and the arms helped their respective sides up, leaving only the middle down. Each arm side chased one of the siblings, forming giant ice boulders in their hands that they chucked.

“Huhu hwah hwah hwaaaaah!” The Cyclops had several sheep squirming in his hand, picking one up at a time and tossing them in his mouth. “Mmmm, woolly goodness!”

“HEY, DUNG MOUNTAIN, YOUR JUNK IS SHOWING!” His ears picked up a tiny voice. The Cyclops looked around confusedly. “Oh I’m sorry, you’re ALL junk!” He looked at the nearby ground, seeing the teeny blue flea that was Aranea.
The colossal fatso squatted down and squinted closely at the girl, scratching his cranium with his long, black fingernail. “Talking fw-weeeea?”

“YES, and as much as I hate to say it, my Uncle Herbie doesn’t stuff himself as much as you! Are you really this hungry?”

“I’ve been asleep for nearly…” Cyclops took a moment to count his fingers, “7,520 years. So my last meal was,” he took a moment to count again, “7,520 years ago. Yes, I’m pretty hungry.”

“Well, there’s such a thing called moderation. You ever consider going on a diet?”

“I’ll EAT what I WANT to, FWEEEEAAA. If YOU ate more, you wouldn’t be so POOOOO-ny.”

Aranea was getting a headache from this lug. “If I’m so poo-ny, how do I know what a Higgs boson is, or how to multiply a fraction by a decimal, or how to determine the exact circumference of your navel?”

“Duuuuh-” Cyclops scratched his head.

“Because by eating right each and every day, my brain is decades ahead of yours in terms of development, and it’s got more juice in its veins than every ounce of lard on your whole being. Yup, it’s a real shame that you don’t have a brain as improbably large and juicy as mine.” She smiled proudly.

“Hoo HWAH HWAAAAH hwah hwah!” Cyclops laughed and pointed giddily at the child, his sound ringing in her ears. “How can such a POOOO-ny flea have anything but the POOOO-niest of wittle-fwea bwains?”

“Well, this puny brain knows how to ripen a wider range of vocabulary, and possesses the uncanny ability to enunciate words correctly and without drawling.”

“Hoo HAH ha… uuuhhh…” Cyclops couldn’t think of a comeback. His head hurting, the monster raised his hand out of anger and SMASHED Aranea flat. However, the girl easily evaded and climbed onto his finger. “Guess again!” She slipped under his nail and lay hidden, and when the Cyclops was unable to shake her out, he gripped that nail and pulled. “UWAAAAH!” He cried, for it was a painful sensation.

“Thanks! I needed one of these!” Aranea held onto the severed nail, pulling it free from Cyclops’s fingers, and dropping to stab it in his eye.

Phosphora lashed her Thundercorns to boost toward Loki, but the mirage vanished, the real Loki zipped beside and shocked her with his staff, then zipped away, appearing a few feet from Fybi, who spun and slammed a kick into his face. Loki zipped away and landed in his chariot, throwing his staff skyward to make streams of lightning rain down, but Fybi spun a Wind Sphere into being and caught the lightning on. In this energy form, she boosted to Loki and blasted the energy at him, while he countered with his staff. Fybi flew away, charged an arrow, and shot an energy sphere of his, then Loki zipped underneath and made Fybi spiral vertically.

The pseudo-god soared to the underside of Birka to view the progress of his Energy Cannon, but to his horror, saw the laser was blocked, with only a tiny sliver making it to Olympus. The five kids of Sector STORM were pulling the rest of the energy to them, then channeling it to blow away from their bodies. “You WON’T interfere with God’s plan!” Loki swung his staff, striking lightning bolts from Birka’s clouds to zap the kids away. The laser continued drilling Mount Olympus at full power.
“NNNNNAAH!” Phosphora rammed Loki’s head with her chariot, forcing him out of his own. He hovered using his boots, twirling his staff when Fybi blasted an onslaught of arrows. Loki flew away, charging a powerful beam and shooting it into Birka’s cloud. Much of the underside lit blue, and giant spheres began to rain down everywhere. Fybi nimbly dodged them, but- “AAAAH!” Phosphora’s Thundercorns were struck, and she plummeted. Fybi glared at the god, who chuckled and sported a taunting grin. The angel soared around and around, likely attempting to make a tornado from Loki’s view, and he merely let her do so for humor. But this tornado was becoming inexplicably hot, Loki was sweating under his armor. The god rasped, in desperate need of breath, and during this moment of weakness, Fybi charged her B.O.W. and struck him in the chest.

“OWW!!” Phosphora remained in her chariot when it collided with the ground, feeling sore in her lower back. The Thundercorns looked a little weary, so she didn’t expect them to recover soon. Phosphora felt a shadow over her, and gasped when the Rock Titan was about to stomp. “HNNN!” Several rock-spears popped up from the earth and kept the foot up. Phosphora saw Anthony struggling to keep them standing. “HURRY AND MOVE!” he yelled at Phosphora. The woman lashed her reins, and the Thundercorns weakly, but quickly walked away.

Anthony jumped aside himself to let the Titan stomp, catching his own breath. He couldn’t rest long, for he had to chase the Titan before it got far, then quickly stomped the ground to send rock chunks at its legs. The Rock Titan growled and turned to glare at the leader, raising its arms and falling forward. Anthony smirked, dashing forth before its bulky body could crush him, and got between his legs. Anthony swished his mud around the air a little, made it flat as a blade, and began cutting the bases of the Titan’s legs. In minutes, they were severed from its body, and the Titan was unable to stand. The monster was forced to crawl around to be able to face Anthony, and realized the boy was holding its feet with his earthbending.

Sally and Harvey wished they could say it was funny how the severed halves were hopping on one leg, but it was a different story when the colossal stubs were chasing them, and freezing the ground around them. Sally’s half formed another ice boulder and threw it at her, so she used both yo-yos to catch, pour a lot of strength into whirling it, then threw it at the knee. It cracked slightly as the monster slumped, and Sally glided forward on her top and threw a yo-yo around the knee, pulling and chopping it in two. Meanwhile, Harvey boosted toward the other leg on his top, blades extracted from all sides around the device as he rammed against the foot. He dodged the icicles and came around for another ram, and the monster-half came tumbling down, but held itself up with its arm.

The central body blasted ice breath at the ground to propel himself upright on both leg-halves. The Titan trembled and began to regrow his end sides, and the arms were in their first, stub phase. The left side attempted to grow its own head, and both halves of the right side’s severed leg began to grow its respective missing part; in other words, Sally and Harvey were up against four Ice Titans now.

Cyclops furiously stomped his feet, but Aranea was much too fast, and his one eye was still tearing from the fingernail stuck in it. Aranea blew a raspberry and ran away from the monster, laughing happily, but when the Cyclops decided to fall forward, she panicked. His bulbous blubber body shook the world, and Cyclops stood to view his flattened foe. “Huh?” Aranea was nowhere on the ground, so he gripped his belly and pulled it upward to search for remains. “HEY!”

“Dude, I hope you aren’t planning to rent this place, because IT needs SERIOUS cleaning!” Aranea yelled from the confines of his bellybutton.

“GET OUT!” Cyclops furiously punched his belly. “COME out of there and FACE me, FLEEEAAA!” He shook his belly and punched it some more, but couldn’t hold back from
coughing afterwards. He held his fist by his navel during a fit, giving Aranea the chance to jump and grab his knuckles. The Cyclops confusedly raised his hand to look at her, but when close enough, Aranea jumped and grabbed the fingernail still lodged in his eye. “Hoo-HWAAAAAH!” She merely stabbed the nail in his iris again, and when Cyclops felt the instinct to punch, Aranea slid down his right arm, letting his left arm sock himself in the face. The Titan stumbled backward and fell, his right arm flinging Aranea upward before she landed between his upturned toes. Before she could recover, the toes squeezed her between, and her face smashed against the ground when the Cyclops stood.

The Sector STORM members recovered and used their powers to try and pull the laser’s energy to their direction. “I don’t think we can keep this up much longer!” Ela yelled, the five struggling to fully direct the energy their way.

“Keep trying!” Dio yelled. “We can’t let anymore Titans escape!”

But to their horror, another region of the earth was crumbling. A pitch-black wind burst from the crust, and took the form of a gigantic tornado, with demonic red eyes in its blackness. “OH NO!” Amper screamed. “It’s the Wind Titan!”

“Canst thou not destroy it?!” Fybi yelled.

“No we canst! It’s completely made of wind, I don’t think there’s any physical entity!”

The wind immediately began to pick up. The clouds spiraled in the sky above the Titan, and sucked into its form. “It’s going to suck up all of Skypia if we don’t do something!” Phosphora shouted. “Somebody has to stop it!”

Laxy and Brendix were about to fly after- “NO!” Dio stopped them. “We have to keep holding back this laser! If the Magma Titan escapes, we’ll never be able to stop it! COME ON!” The five operatives focused their power on the laser.

“Hm hm ha ha.” Loki laughed wryly, his armor ruptured thanks to Fybi’s arrow. “It’s not even funny anymore, you children. To think this world has survived so long with you as its protectors. I seem to be horribly misunderstanding.”

“Verily… thou art.” Fybi said. “I take it upon myself to educate thee.” Fybi spun like a wheel as a circle of lightning formed around her, flying at Loki who rose his staff in defense. She continued spinning and pushing on his weapon, then flew below and kicked him upward. Loki recomposed, dodged Fybi’s arrow, but Birka’s underside was hit, resulting in a lightning bolt striking Loki. Fybi flew up, punched him, then dealt a round of kicks against his face, before Loki zipped behind and batted her away. Loki summoned his Lightning Chariot and boarded on before flying away.

Fybi flapped her wings forcefully and chased with wind-breaking speed, B.O.W. aimed forward as she blasted endless arrows at his back. He struck three bolts, Fybi dodged, then dodged the three Loki clones that sped at her. The real Loki zipped by, grabbed her, and slammed her against the floor of his cart. He stomped her chest, then Fybi blew forcefully at his face, which she kicked upward as she recovered. She blasted rounds of charged arrows that he blocked with his staff, but was unprepared when Phosphora’s Lightning Chariot shot up before his, making Loki stumble. Phosphora flew in place and passed a smirk and wink to Fybi, who returned the gesture.

Loki jumped up, struck a beam upward, and shot two bolts down on either Nimbi. He blasted Fybi away, but Phosphora ducked when the staff swung over her, whipping her Thundercorns to speed away while Loki chased. He struck the right wheel of her chariot, but she kept her grip on the reins. Loki thrust his staff backward, and Phosphora dodged the lightning that struck from ahead, which
then hit Loki’s staff before he shot skyward, lit the clouds blue, and rained lightning down to injure her. Loki was about to shoot her again, but felt a chill in the air and turned back. A sphere of cold wind spun around Fybi, who flew at Loki with a determined look and frosty skin. She flapped her wings toward him and swallowed Loki in the freezing wind. She flapped away and surrounded herself with hot wind next.

Loki furiously blew the cold wind away and blasted Fybi, who dispersed into mist. “What?”

“Thou art not the only one that canst create mirages!” Loki turned and gritted his teeth at the swarm of wavy, intangible Fybi clones. “High temperatures canst make one delirious, see what thou wisheth. Doctor Pepper machine, anyone?” A misty vending machine appeared in midair.

Loki chuckled at the antic and sent illusions around to disperse the Fybi fakes. “OOOF!” Phosphora zipped her chariot by to ram his, the pseudo-god falling over again.

“Pay attention to all your opponents.” she remarked.

Anthony controlled the feet of the Rock Titan and stamped them against its heads. Lythos furiously swatted the chunks away with his arms and lunged forward with mouths wide, so Anthony seized the moment and dove into the right head. The head swallowed, but then they both exchanged worried glances. “Uh-oh.” They felt furious thrashing inside them, until the right head was blown clean off. Anthony’s tiny head replaced it.

“Ha-hall RIGHT! This is awesome!” The child exclaimed, raising the monster’s arms. “Who knew you could control a rock monster like a robot! Let’s see what THIS does!”

“Wait, nooo!” Anthony slammed the left fist onto the left head, then pushed the arms against the ground to propel them upright. Anthony stomped toward the Ice Titan on Lythos’s stubby legs.

“Hoo HWAH hwah hwah!” Cyclops joyfully kicked Aranea up and down and up and down. “Bouncy fwea, bouncy FWEA!”

“UUH!” The child landed on the ground backfirst, then gasped horrendously when the Titan’s underside loomed over her.

“POO-ny flea go POOT.” Cyclops smashed Aranea under his butt, then happily stood up to see her practically flattened. Cyclops giggled as he picked the tiny operative up in his fingernails. “Wittle FWEA go in my MOUTH. Hoo HWAH hwah hwah!”

Cyclops flicked Nea off so she would take the fall on his tongue, but she quickly regained herself, grabbed one of his teeth, and flipped atop his upturned face. His pupil focused on her confusedly, but didn’t reach before Aranea climbed into his ear. “I was right, alright. The only thing that occupies this space is the retina. Well, not for long.” Aranea drew out her S.P.I.C.E.R. and proceeded burning the fragile cord.

“WAAAAAAH! WAAAAAH!” Within minutes, the eyeball rolled right out of his head. “What have you DONE to me! I’m BLIIIIIND!”

Sally and Harvey used their tops’ lasers to burn through the severed leg Titans, then tossed their bladed yo-yos to slice the legs of the bodies with heads. Sally and Harvey swung to the top of either head, throwing their yo-yos around their necks in attempt to burn through. “INCOMING, GUUUUYS!” Anthony cried, trudging over on Rock Titan’s body and grabbing the Ice Titan’s severed arms/legs. He swung them around and smashed the giant ice chunks into pieces.

“AAAAAGYGHOOO!” The Cyclops flailed his arms helplessly and collided with the Rock Titan,
furiously beating and shattering the stone as Anthony was flown out. The trembling caused both bodies of the Ice Titan to fall forward, just when Sally and Harvey had the heads chopped off, the Cyclops turned around, one head landed in his mouth, the other down his loincloth, and both of those areas froze solid. The Cyclops fell forward, and the ice smashed.

Sector STORM was almost totally burnt out. They focused every ounce of strength into redirecting the laser, but its resulted tiny laser was growing larger, for the amount of energy they could channel back was steadily decreasing. But in what seemed like a miracle, the energy was blocked by another force. Lingning was keeping it back with her bending. “Don’t stop now! It’s time for Sector STORM to complete their mission!”

The younger operatives looked as their parents zipped by. “Keep holding it back, kids!” Sola yelled. “We’ll take care of the tornado!” They zipped off in the Wind Titan’s direction.

Fybi swiftly avoided each Loki that flew at her, blasted arrows at some, then ducked the real Loki’s staff before shooting at his head, but Loki batted the arrow away, Phosphora rammed his chariot from the bottom, and Fybi Screw Kicked him in the face during his weakness. Loki lashed the reins of his Thundercorns and boosted skyward, making the loop around to charge back. Loki attracted the lightning trail onto his staff and formed a massive energy whip, each swing coming as fast as lightning as the Nimbi narrowly avoided. “You totally stole this idea from Lingning!” Phosphora retorted.

A successful whip shocked them both, suspending them in midair for a few seconds. “To think that your powers were given by gods.” Loki chuckled. “‘Lightningbending’, ‘airbending’… you’re unworthy of such powers. All of you are.”

“HYAH!” Phosphora lashed her Thundercorns after regaining her senses, and was gone above the clouds in seconds. Loki and Fybi faced each other alone, floating in place.

“TELL ME, CHILD, like that woolgathering Birkan who just fled me, what kind of creature do you perceive yourself in your gods’ eyes?” Fybi glanced up, seeing the trail of Phosphora’s chariot forming a glowing circle in the clouds. “An angel of justice? A pure soul? Is that why your gods give you such powers?! I’ll tell you the real reason! Your gods are MOCKING YOU!”

The circle of energy in the clouds was growing brighter. “They bless mere mortals with their powers because they’re unworthy to wield it! They watch how you pathetically struggle and fight each other with the powers given to you! They watch as you mortals DESTROY each other! Before long, this entire planet will fall into decay because you mortals didn’t know the power you possessed! But you, you Kids Next Door think you’re the saviors. Why, in your most droll of opinions, do you think the gods give you these powers?”

Fybi laughed softly to herself and closed her eyes. Listen to Loki ask such a question, like a curious child. She knew because she asked the very same question.

“Prithee, Auntie Rachel?” Five-year-old Fybi asked the woman. “’Tis not a lie that thou hast met God Rayquaza?”

“’Tis not a lie at all, Fybi.” Rachel shook her head.

“To meet a god must be a wonderful honor! Pray, didst thou ask him this query for me?”

“What query would that be?”

“Why yon Anthony possesses Earth, thine children create Fire, and my mother and I control the
wind… wherefore ist their reason?"

“Hmmmm…” Rachel smiled and nodded her head in thought. “We did kind of talk about this. And what Rayquaza told me… was that we mortals are stronger than gods!” She grinned brightly.

The lightning reflected off Fybi’s determined emerald eyes. “’Tis because the gods doth not think we mortals should rely on them.” Fybi shot to the sky, spinning rapidly toward the circle of lightning. “’Tis because the gods wish for us mortals to have power! To decide our fates, to give us the ability to hope!” She flew to the center of the circle, spinning the wind furiously, hot and cold and hot, channeling the lightning inside. “For we art the most powerful! Our souls are the most pure! Because ‘tis brewed with the most impure of impurities!” The energy was coming below the clouds. Fybi was a blinding ball of electric. “Our anger. Our love! The storm that always spirals! ‘Tis what makes mortals powerful!”

Loki crunched his teeth and jumped from the chariot, headfirst toward Fybi. “So thou shalt see!” Loki held his scepter forward, charging power in the head. “The true gods of this world art… yonder KIDS NEXT DOOR!”

The two powers collided and lit up the whole landscape. Loki used all his strength to stab through Fybi’s shield, but the power was too strong, her lightning was directed to his body, the energy from his staff followed suit. Loki was blown away, the momentum from Fybi’s attack sent him directly toward the Energy Cannon. His scepter, now overfilled with concealed energy, was aimed toward the cannon, and the moment it stabbed through, the unbearable power channeled through Loki. “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHAAAAHHHHHHH!

With a sudden flash, the cannon exploded, and the beam pierced directly up through the island, with Loki with it. Phosphora flew by on her Lightning Chariot and rammed the king once more, sending Loki falling to Dashi’s Peak. He collided with a painful thud, his helmet flown off. (End song.)

Phosphora’s friends caught up to the Wind Titan, whose wind was stronger than ever up close. “Shoot lightning from all angles until you find a weak spot!” Sola declared, trying to stand her air.

But the black tornado heard them and turned, glaring with its fearsome red eyes. The four readied to battle the demon, and the Titan was ready to make its move. “…!” Its eyes widened. The tornado spiraled and swirled like a thing being flushed down the toilet, and in seconds, it shrank into the distant ground, like it was never there. The four adults exchanged the most baffled of glances.

The Wind Titan roared and ragefully hit the tiny jar it was trapped in. The Man With the Red Eye held the captured creature to his face. “This is an interesting specimen… I know someone you could be very useful to.” He hid the jar under his coat and Disapparated. The four Birkans zipped down and searched the area. With no detected trace of the Titan, they decided to fly back home.

Phosphora and Fybi reunited on Dashi’s Peak, taking the moment to catch their breath. They exchanged grateful smiles, still sparking with electric. Sector STORM was there to join them as they faced Loki. The defeated god helped himself stand. “I will not be defeated… by lesser mortals like yourselves.” He rasped. “I am Loki… of Asgard! I am a GOD among you people! I will not be beaten like some pathetic-!”

A blinding flash of lightning struck Dashi’s Peak, blowing Loki against a pillar before he fell on all fours. Phosphora and Fybi shut their eyes and kept away from the great white bolt. The lightning vanished, and someone stood in its place: an armored figure with a red cape and yellow hair, wielding a powerful stone hammer. The mighty being turned, glaring at Loki with clear blue eyes.
Loki shuddered at his appearance; but Phosphora’s purple eyes have never shown so much delight.

“*Brother…*” Loki spoke lowly. He lunged to punch the figure, but he batted the blast away with his hammer, then smashed him with the tool. Loki moaned from the force, which following his battle against the two Nimbi, rendered him unable to fight further.

“You’ve hidden from me long enough, Loki.” the man said. “But no more. I am taking you home, where you will face judgment.”

“No…” Phosphora limped forward, slumping to her knees. “Are…Are you…”

He turned to look at her. “Do not be alarmed, fair maiden. I am Thor. First son of Odin. I am not permitted to explain the details, but my brother, Loki traveled to this dimension with unorthodox means. I cannot stay for long,” Thor sat Loki against the pillar and planted large, stone cuffs over his wrists, “so I must take Loki quickly. Farewell-”

“Wait!” Phosphora jumped up and gripped the man’s arm. Her purple eyes were full of wonder and excitement. “You’re Thor… THE Thor!… The God of Thunder! We’ve been waiting for you for so long!”

“I was… expected here sooner?”

“Thine raised brow dost tell thou dost not know.” Fybi figured. “So I shalt clarify: thou art honored as god among fair Birkans.”

“You blessed the very first lightningbenders with your energy, your power is what brought life to Birka!” Phosphora spoke quickly. “And we waited for you for thousands of years so you would give us pure energy!”

“…Oh… Well, this is awkward.” Thor said. “Your people may have misunderstood. Although Asgardians live many years, we are not immortal. Even if I were, I cannot grant what you call ‘pure energy.’”

“You…You can’t?”

“I do not know the customs of your people, nor do I wish to go against them. But I can assure you that my power is not what gave life to you. Perhaps it is a force you have not yet acknowledged. Whatever that force may be, it would seem your people have thrived well on their own. I don’t know what ‘pure energy’ is, nor how great it would be… but know that perfection is not always needed. One’s own strength may be enough.”

“I see.” Phosphora looked down with disappointment. “I guess you couldn’t restore my lightningbending, huh?”

She looked up when Thor put a hand on her shoulder, smiling handsomely. “You seem like a kind young woman… I wish I could provide you the answer you want. If such power is what you desire, I could allow you to come to Asgard.”

Phosphora turned red in the cheeks. She turned to look at Fybi and Sector STORM, whose expressions were eager. She turned back and smiled politely. “No thanks. I only just got home, I want to stay.”

Thor nodded, and his cool smile kept Phosphora blushing. “Very well.” The Asgardian backed away, took Loki by the arm, and raised his hammer before they zipped to the sky in a flash of lightning.
The Head Priest and his guards floated a few meters from the peak, having witnessed the spectacle. “So that was Thor…” he spoke hoarsely. “The god that had been reigning over us… was a fake. Oh, I am such a disgrace.”

“Don’t be so glum, Baskerville.” Lady Sulfa’s weary voice spoke brightly. The priestess had appeared beside him. “I think we all learned a valuable lesson. And that lesson was… make sure our god has a hammer before we brand him as ‘Thor.'”

Fybi and Phosphora heard panting from below the stairs, and watched as Killer Bee and Sector W made it up. “Not to worry!” Bee gasped. “I brought the tykes back safe and sound!”

“Thank thee, fair rapstar.” Fybi smiled.

“Hey Fybs, what happened to Joki?” Anthony asked.

“Phosphora and I hath showed him the exit. Or mayhap Thor, wouldst be an accurate answer. Without regards, yon island is saved from phony god.”

“Wait. So you ladies took down that crazy lightning guy?” Bee asked. “Even if I was far away, he looked like pretty powerful stuff.”

“Hmhmhm. Thou shouldst not look at me, and say I am not powerful.” Fybi twirled.

“Well, Ah gotta say, y’all are pretty hot stuff. Ah dunno if you’re being rewarded, but take this from me.” Bee reached under his robe and pulled out a blue headband, with a shiny silver buckle depicting a swirly leaf design. “It belonged to an old friend of mine. Think of it as, uh, special ticket for mah next three concerts.”

Fybi took the headband and let it dangle from her hand. “I shalt bring it to mine heart.”

A beautiful ray of sunlight poked from the cloud tunnel above. No one on Birka remembers the sun ever shining on their land. “Prithee… from where doth yonder light shine?” Mesmerized by its golden glow, Fybi softly floated upward. (Play “The First Mask” from Rayman 2.)

The clouds stretched miles and miles up the sky. The texture around the clouds was blended with many colors, alit only by the golden sun above. Fybi drifted higher, and higher, she thought all of this sun would blind her vision, but it became more warm and wonderful the higher she went. Just when she was about to touch its very source, she found herself above Birka. The top of the eternal storm fortress was calm and very beautiful, with a sky of blue, gold, and pink tones. She was enclosed within a great cloud mountain range, but floated even higher to land on a vast, long road of solid marble, leading to a temple in the distance. But just on the start of this road, between the parallel stairs, was a stone cube with ancient writing.

Phosphora and Sector W flew up on a Lightning Chariot, landing to watch as Fybi slowly approached the monument. Her eyes gazed at nothing else, as if this stone was calling to her. She stopped a few feet from the stone as her rewarded headband glowed, floated up, and sunk into the cube. The ruin shone with blue light, which flew into Fybi’s body, then faded. Her friends didn’t know what it was, Fybi knew just as much, but an odd sensation flowed within her.

Fybi awakened herself as the **THIRD LIGHT!** Only 4 more to go!

The odd writing on the monument glowed. Fybi read its contents clear as daylight. “‘If you’re reading this, congratulations, you must’ve come a long way. You can rest for now, but don’t get too comfortable, because the real battle has yet to begin. We look forward to the day we can meet you, and we know you can make it. Believe it! –Naruto Uzumaki’.”
“I didn’t know Fybi spoke Greek.” Aranea said.

“That’s not Greek, I can’t read it either.” Phosphora corrected.

“Then what is it?” Anthony asked.

“Ha-halright! You guys finally made it!” They looked up when an angel with glowing wings flew in a circle overhead. He stopped and flapped in place, grinning at the heroes. “Took ya a while!”

“Huuuu!” Fybi gasped, her emerald eyes displaying pure delight. “Thou art… Pit Icarus!!”

“Long time, no see, Fybi!” The brown-haired angel winked. “Lady Palutena knew you would find the Poneglyph.”

“Lady… Palutena?” Phosphora asked.

“Yeah! This is where she lives. Come on, I’ll introduce you! She prepared a banquet and everything.” Pit flew across the road. “I’ll race ya.”

“Hahahaha!” Fybi happily flew up, and said to her friends, “Thou must hurry, or the sun will set! First course is for meeeeee!” She joyfully flew after Pit.

The five other friends exchanged excited glances. “I wanna meal after all that!” Anthony yelled, so they all bolted up the stairs and across the miles-long road. The spirit of a boy with blonde, spiky hair, blue eyes, and whiskers on his face appeared, grinning at the kids as he fixed on his headband. (End song.)

Down below, things had never been more calm on Birka, and though they wished their lightning would return soon, the sunlight was something to marvel at. The Energy Cannon had drilled deep beneath Mount Olympus’s surface. Deep within that hole, a blue flame appeared. From the flame, a two-dimensional spirit, a golden triangle with black, stubby arms and legs, as thin as lines, a black skinny top-hat, and a single eye.

The very bottom of this hole is where Loki’s staff fell. The spirit grabbed the blue, glowing cube on its head and ripped it off. “So, this is the Tesseract, huh?” he spoke with a perky, monotone voice. “It doesn’t feel as powerful as I imagined. Maybe its energy is limited in this world or something. Still, this is just the kind of material I needed. It looks like Loki was able to prove his use after all.” He tossed the cube into his chest, vanishing into his being. “I should be able to have the machine running, soon. Matter of fact, they should be stopping by in a little bit.” He squinted his eye giddily, his body displaying images of Cheren, MaKayla, and Wendy Marvell. “I guess I better get back to Gideon. Bill Cipher is back in action, baby!” The spirit dispersed into flame.

Great Clock

Jagar King sat in meditation before the Time Gate. The twenty chairs around the room were empty, and had yet to welcome their guests. In this Chamber of the Twenty Keys, Jagar always felt melancholy. Especially now, more than ever, knowing what was to come. “Calliope… if what you say is true… then I can’t let it happen.” Jagar stood, clutching the Chrono Staff tight. He looked at the room’s doorway with solemnity. “I can’t let the Twenty Keys come together.”

So those were the Titans from Hercules. Sorry if you were expecting different Titans. ;P Get ready, people, because we’re about to enter the Presidents Saga. This one is gonna be very
long, and very eventful, and that goes for the Side Stories, too. Like, I consider Presidents Saga the halfway mark if anything, it is gonna be loooooong as far as I can tell. So next time, we will begin it. And as you can tell by that ending scene, it will feature Gravity Falls. ;D
Django’s Crew

Chapter Summary

Kimaya and The Gang go to rescue Midna!

Okay, everybody, it’s time to start the Presidents Saga! Quick note, though, since Gravity Falls will be featured in this arc, I’ve decided to start using cryptograms! I will put a code at the end of each chapter, and my readers can try to decode it! Most likely, the code will foreshadow something. Today’s code uses the Caesar Cipher.

Chapter 29: Django’s Crew

Palutena’s Temple

“Again today we go a-soaring through the skyyyyy!” Pit and Fybi sang together, holding each other and flying joyfully. “Our enemies, we’ll dish ’em UP enough to fryyyyy!” Sector W and Phosphora rolled their eyes humorously. “Gracious Goddess of the Light: watches from up above. At dinnertime, we always show the cook some LOVE!”

The interior was colored a whitish-gold, the windows white with sunlight. The dining hall had a great variety of meat, fruits, vegetables, any food group to satisfy the kids, all being carried in by Centurions, angel warriors in golden armor. “All this food looks so yummy!” Sally beamed. “It’s nice to get rewarded for our hard work!”

“Yeah, but this is kinda unexpected.” Aranea smiled, sitting in front of some steamed broccoli (beside molten cheese, thank God!). “I know we were popular, but to have a goddess as our fan?”

“Don’t question it. Just enjoy.” Harvey smiled, sitting by a bowl of chocolate ice cream and stuffing himself. “Sweet.”

“Lady Palutena’s a fan of all of you.” Pit replied, seated beside some hamburgers. “She’s been watching you Kids Next Door for a long time! Heh heh, her favorites are the shrink stories.”

“Can you tell Palutena to quit watching us like cartoon characters?” Anthony asked.

“I’m not sure if I want to. It’s fun getting in debates with her. Or you can just ask her yourself! Lady Palutena, you’re finally here!”

The friends looked at the doorway atop the narrow stairs. Lady Palutena, the Goddess of Light, was the most beautiful woman they ever laid eyes on. Her shiny green hair dangled to her knees, its many strands flowing everywhere. Her emerald eyes were gorgeous, complimented by her gold sun necklace, gold laurel crown, and many gold bands around her arms, and gold accessories hanging from her belts. A Mirror Shield was tied to her left arm, she held a blue staff with a golden head, and blue sphere on top that hovered disconnected from it. Her flowing white dress ended before her brown, high-heel sandals.

They felt a lovely warmth from her presence when she stepped down the stairs, and joined them in the largest seat at the table. She took an orange and had a bite. “A good breakfast is the start of a
great day!” She grinned brightly.

“Um, Lady Palutena, this is lunch.” Pit corrected confusedly.

“All meals should be treated with equal respect.”

“Thou art Goddess Palutena?” Fybi said with awe. “Art we so deserving to be in thine presence?”

“I think it’s high time you and me met, Fybi!” The goddess smiled at her. “Excluding that brief moment I repaired your wings.”

“That power wast… thou?”

“Yes. I can heal almost any injury with my power, as long as it was received recently. Otherwise, I can only give power to an inoperable body part for 5 minutes. Just ask Pit. Neither his body, nor his Gigai had working wings for thousands of years.”

“Thousands of years?” Sally asked.

“I died when I was this age.” Pit blushed. “I’ve been inhabiting a Gigai all this time. Those are artificial mortal bodies.”

“Lots of Nimbi are born flightless, so sometimes I like to give their wings some function, just so they can know what it’s like.” Palutena noted. “You might be familiar with a Nimbi called Aisa. Her friends get in tons of dangerous situations, so I give her Flight powers when it’s necessary. If I let them use the power for five minutes, their wings burns up, and my healing powers wouldn’t work.”

“That still doesn’t explain why you’re such a big fan of us.” Aranea reminded.

“Hmhm, well you already know part of the reason. You kids know the Apocalypse is coming, and to save everyone, you need to find the Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses. This was a prophecy established a long time ago. My job, according to Arceus, was to find the Seven Lights when the time came. And the Thirteen Darknesses… were to be sought by Medusa.”

“Medusa?” Sally repeated.

“Medusa is the Goddess of Darkness, and my twin sister. You can already guess, but we were always at each other’s throats. She wanted Darkness to consume the universe, but I wanted it to be bathed in Light. Our conflict was the law that established every conflict in history: Good vs. Evil, Light vs. Darkness. But the reality was, neither of us could have our own way. The universe needs Light and Dark to everything. And this very same law is what establishes the Twenty Keys.”

“Right.” Aranea recapped. “The Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses come together to open the ‘New World.’ Then you two goddesses go mano a mano to decide if Light or Darkness rules the New World. Um, that’s what Cheren told us.”

“Yes…” Palutena lightly shook a glass of orange juice. Her look was solemn. “Me and Medusa never fought so hard until 20 years ago. We worked together to help your parents defeat Arceus, because we knew that 20 years from then, the real Apocalypse would come. But that was when our ultimate struggle would begin. Already, she’s working to find the Thirteen Darknesses, recruiting any available mortal children to help. But the ultimate law of us gods is, we aren’t allowed to interfere with mortal affairs, unless other gods were involved. She’s breaking several laws so she can get her hands on the Darknesses. But the thing about that is, if she hadn’t broken these laws, she couldn’t get the Darknesses.”
“But you’re searching for the Lights.” Nea reminded. “You helped Fybi, and now we’re here…”

Palutena sighed. “At this point in time… the idea of laws and destinies are entirely different; since the very beginning, the Apocalypse was beyond our control.”

“Whaddyou mean?” Anthony asked.

“Arceus and Dialga sensed the Apocalypse happening around this time, but they never could determine the actual cause. Arceus’s disruption of the universe damaged the Time Gate, releasing powerful unstable energy, we realized that 20 years ago. Yet, this all… None of this makes any sense.” Palutena plopped her forehead in her hand. “If the gods never had control over the Apocalypse’s happening, why is it that we, the Goddesses of Light and Darkness, are the ones to have the battle. The ultimate law of Light vs. Darkness… to me, it just feels too… simplistic.”

The Sector W members exchanged weirded, though worried glances. “But… that’s how almost everything is, isn’t it?” Sally asked. “An evil force threatens our universe, so the good force has to do something.”

“Hm, I know.” Palutena looked up and smiled softly. “But every day, I keep having… nightmares. That there’s more to this prophecy than what Arceus knows. And all of the gods are… afraid. Sigh, I tried to explain my worries to Medusa, but she’s just so stubborn. Her only interest is finding the Darknesses and establishing her ideal world. I mean, I know that’s what we’re supposed to do, but I just can’t stand all of this… conflict.”

“But thou dost know whom the Lights art, dost thou not?” Fybi asked.

“Only recently. Thirteen years after Arceus’s defeat, the dark energies inside the Pyrameglyphs were supposed to begin brewing, awaiting the Darknesses who would read them. Then seven years after that, the light energy inside the Poneglyphs. That was that rock you read outside.”

“So I am a Light.”

“Yes, you are. Fybi, Sheila Frantic, and Suki Crystal, those are Lights that have been awakened. And according to the prophecy, each Key possesses a special power. Not an elemental power or anything of that sort… it’s something else.”

“I don’t understand, though.” Aranea said. “You said the gods have no control over the Apocalypse, yet they established this ‘Twenty Key’ thing. How is it that the Keys have the power to make a difference, but the gods don’t?”

Palutena looked down with gloom. “This is the funniest part… Arceus and Dialga were confused when they saw these happenings in the future… they never had any idea what was going on. The Poneglyphs and Pyrameglyphs were nothing of their design. They never established this prophecy, they were told about it.”

“Told about by WHO??” Anthony shouted, tired of all this complex stuff.

“A mysterious spirit, who, around 10,000 years ago, was named one of the Six Demon Saints. He told us who the Lights and Darknesses would be, but forbidded us from actually revealing their names to you, because it would jeopardize the destiny. We didn’t understand why he knew so much, but he was terrifying. His name… was Bill Cipher.”

“Yeah, um, hi, excuse me, Phosphora here.” The lightningbender rose a hand. “Just a quick question, um… WHEN WAS ANYONE GONNA TELL ME ABOUT THIS ‘APOCALYPSE’?!”
“Oh, right.” Palutena chuckled. “You still don’t know. I don’t actually understand everything myself, but let me tell you what I know about the First Dimension…”

KND Moonbase

Panini blasted endless rounds of fireballs at Cheren, she didn’t hold back at all, they might need a new gym room after this. Cheren held no weapons, he evasively dodged Panini’s flames, maneuvering to her to throw punches. Her fists were larger than his and easily blocked, she countered with kicks to his chest, but the boy withstood and slipped behind, wrapping his arms around her neck. She tried to pull him off, but he flipped upside-down and slammed her head on the floor. He backed away, letting Panini hop up, Cheren kicked her in the nose and sent her flying against the wall. He smirked victoriously. “Panini, I would almost suggest MaKayla a better opponent.”

Immediately, he froze in time. MaKayla King casually walked in and kicked his hip. He unfroze—“OUCH!” and flew away.

“If you can fight a timebender, I guess it is better training.” She shrugged.

“Yo, Supreme Leader 3621.” Francis Drilovsky walked in. “Sector V’s finally back from space.”

“Really?” Cheren got up. “Haven’t heard from ‘em since Fi’s message. I wonder if they rescued Maddy.”

The four of them hurried to the bridge and found the team of 10 waiting. “Hey, Bro, looks like you’re getting your butt kicked by girls as usual!” Chris greeted.

“Who says we can’t kick you in areas?” Aurora asked quizzically.

“Hey, it’s funny when it happens to him.”

“When we were at Solana, we met a group of bad guys who were looking for the Seven Lights, too.” Dillon informed.

“By any chance, did these bad guys work for someone named Ragaj Gnik?” Cheren asked.

“A-Ah…” Aurora was at a loss for words, wondering how Cheren knew. “Well, they were called Team Gnik, so I guess… How would you know?”

“I told ‘em!” Sunni Chariton popped behind the team, startling them, grabbing Harry’s shoulders.

“S-Sunni?!”

“Hehe, I’ve been working on my psychicbending, Harry!” she grinned brightly. “How d’you like the new me?”

“Uhhhh. . . speechless.”

“Sunni encountered a group recently that captured her mom.” Cheren informed. “She fought back and interrogated them. What they said was…”

Team Rocket was still suspended in the air by Sunni’s power. The child was still innocently lain on a midair psychic platform, her head rested on her hand as she stared at Team Rocket with childish eyes. “Giovanni is our boss, and he wanted us to capture you and your mum because you were Mew’s Guardians!” Meowth explained quickly. “But Team Rocket isn’t alone, we’re workin’ with
“a bunch of bad guys, and the BIG boss in all this is a man named Ragaj!”

“Ragaj?” Sunni asked.

“Ragaj Gnik, to be exact, but we haven’t actually seen him.” James followed. “Only the boss and the other armies’ bosses have.”

“And as for who the Twenty Keys are, our boss never really told us.” Jessie replied. “He’s only interested in capturing the Firstborn. However, according to Giovanni, he isn’t even sure how Ragaj knows who the Keys are. Unless you’re a Time God or something, there are hardly any clues about this ‘Apocalypse.’”

“Hmmmm…” Sunni tapped her chin thoughtfully. “This all gets curiouser and curiouser.”

“There, is that all your questions, can we go?”

Sunni thought for a second. “All right, you can go.” So she pulled back, and blew them to the sky with terrific force.

“Now we’re REALLY blasting off agaaaain!” (“Wobbuffet!”) Twinkle.

“But what’s your end?” Cheren asked the team afterward. “Tell me about this ‘group.’”

Sector V began to explain their attack on the Star Train, fighting Team Gnik. “So what I’m working from this is… some Negatar Gnaa wannabe is trying to find the Lights first.” Francis concluded. “So that he and his buddies can rule the universe with ultimate power.”

“We’ve had reports from KND treehouses being ransacked by apes.” Cheren noted. “And atomic bombs going off in the ocean. Not to mention Maddy getting kidnapped. So it looks like, not just the World Government we have to worry about, but these Gnik guys, too. But it sounds like the Firstborn are tied into all this as well.”

“Hold on, if these were the guys who kidnapped Maddy, didn’t you save her?” Francis asked.

“And now to explain Act 2:” Haruka began informatively. So the second part of the story commenced, Dillon’s information from Vanellope, meeting Professor Büe, and why Maddy had to stay behind.

“If we’re talking about the Firstborn, I guessed it had something to do with Midna.” Dillon mentioned. “I was supposed to come back to rescue her. Maybe I shouldn’t have trusted Django to do it.”

“Back this up a little bit.” Cheren spoke up. “So this professor person… learned about these ‘Gibberish Rocks’ from Gravity Falls? The same kind of rock you found on Candied Island?”

“Righty-o, Mate.” Sheila nodded. “So these blokes are thinkin’ that stuff is there. Sounds like an adventure.”

“We have a sector in Gravity Falls!” Cheren rose his voice suddenly. “I remember after I announced the Apocalypse… the leader of Sector GF, Numbuh 2012 called and said he would do research on it. I wonder if he actually found anything…” Cheren rushed over to the Global Tactical Station and activated. “This is Global Command calling Sector GF. Numbuh 2012, this is Numbuh 3621, do you read me?”

The screen was very staticky, but they made out the image of a boy wearing a hat. “This is
"Numbuh 2012, Dipper Pines." He spoke with a deep voice, likely in the shift from child to teenagehood. "What is your transmission?"

“I’m calling to ask if you have any info regarding the Apocalypse, like you said?”

“Well, um, not exactly, but,” the silhouette scratched his head, “my sister and I found a secret bunker in the woods the other day. We didn’t look too far yet, but we found a broken laptop. I—I’ll send you a detailed report if you want.”

“That won’t be necessary. Sector V confirmed a possible clue to this entire mystery, in your town. I’ll be coming to your sector to research it with you.”

“W-Wait, a clue?! What kind?”

Haruka came over and explained, “There’s a picture of a Gibberish Rock inside a book somewhere. An old man had it, inside a ‘shop of weird things’. Know anything like that?”

“A shop of—YOU MEAN MY UNCLE’S JOURNAL?!” Dipper sounded very excited. “H-Hold on, I’ll go get it!”

“I’m coming down there shortly, have it ready for me.” Cheren told him. “End transmission.” The screen vanished.

“Do you want us to go with you?” Aurora asked.

“We have to go save Midna.” Dillon reminded. “Let’s get back to Miracle City and find their hideout.”

“I’ll go with Cheren.” MaKayla walked beside the boy. “There’s still things I need to learn about this whole quest, too. But maybe Clockwork’s Future Sight can help me recognize something.”

“Want us to come, too?” Francis asked.

“You two need to stay here and keep everything together. Send operatives or look for available sectors to help the ones we can’t get in contact with. And Sunni, since you’ve been training, maybe you can help the Psychic Sensors look for villain activity. It’d be nice if we could find Team Gnik’s bases this way.”

“Weren’t we supposed to have our epic rivalry battle first?” Sunni grinned.

“Heheheh. We’ll worry about that stuff later. Anyway, we have our missions. So Kids Next Door, let’s move out.”

As Sector V got back onto the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S., Dillon was calling home with his cellphone. “Hey Mom, it’s Dillon. We’re back from space.”

“Sigh, Dillon, thank goodness, I’ve been worried sick. I still haven’t seen your father since Dressrosa.”

“Really? Sigh, that doesn’t sound good… Listen, did you hear anything from Django? He said he was going to rescue Midna, but I’m not sure if—”

“Yes, I’ve been trying to call you about that. Django came home with Midna yesterday, safe and sound. He’s right here, wanna talk?”

“Wassup, Dills!” a familiar voice greeted.
“Django? You actually saved Midna?”

“Told ya, didn’t I. I gathered my crew, drove down to Texas, then boom, wrecked those Brotherhood bastards. That reminds me, I had no idea Kaleo was your cousin.”

“Wait… KALEO?!?”

Canyon of Miracles; yesterday morning

We’re gonna jump back in time again. Don’t get confused. After Hannibal Bean elected himself as Brotherhood’s leader, they established their base in the Canyon of Miracles. Which, just previously, was the battle site between the KND and Nerehc Onu. The villains have grown accustomed to this H.Q. during these 8 months, especially after carving the base out. And it was here where Django’s mission took place. He stood at the edge of the canyon, dust blowing in the desert wind. He took a whiff, and imagined the scent in his deceased nostrils. “Well, this is where I heard my grandma say their base was.”

“So why couldn’t we DRIVE the whole way? Why we gotta cut through that Texas canyon?” a girl asked.

“The element of surprise. Besides, it takes a lot of energy to control that train, especially when a 50-ton passenger is riding the roof. How did you say he got giant, again?”

“I TOLD my mom butterscotch was gross! !” Kaleo, the 2-story giant shouted. “I was allergic, but she didn’t believe me! Oops, sorry Stewie.” He stepped off of his Imaginary Friend.

“I might just try it myself later.” Django replied. “You ready for this, Gang?”

“If we ain’t, we wasted a trip.” Kimaya said.

“Let’s BASH their skulls open! No offense, Django.” Beat fist-pumped.

“It’s gonna be fun!” Rhyme beamed.

The five members of The Gang stood ready. And this is probably the part where the readers are confused. I won’t show you the flashback now, but the short version is, Django met The Gang two years ago, when his grandma took him to Virginia while she was visiting the local witch-doctor. Django stumbled into The Gang’s hideout, and after they got used to the fact he was a magic skeleton, he became one of the crowd. Unfortunately, Django had to go back home to Miracle City, but they promised to keep in touch. He visits them every now and then. And The Gang, of course, was loyal to each other, enough to help Django break into a base of supervillains. “Let’s roll.” (Play “Ruins of the Temple” from Kid Icarus: Uprising!)

Stage 38: Canyon of Miracles

Mission: Rescue Midna from the Brotherhood!

Django ran first toward the canyon, seeing a band of Ice Cream Men coming his way, so he strummed his Mystic Guitar and sent a sonic wave to knock them down. A wall of Ice Cream Trucks blocked the way, so Kaleo sent a Mega Gas Bomb to blow them apart. Kimaya extracted twin Poison Whips and twirled as she knocked several men down, and the Gang members proceeded to the canyon. The Brotherhood’s living quarters were primarily wooden mining houses, of course more advanced technology existed within as well. Hungry Men flipped out to attempt
shooting the ruffians with plunger arrows. One of the plungers caught Beat’s face, but he pulled it off, yanked the string, and pulled that Hungry Man forward before kicking him in the face.

Django was performing a fast-pace Spanish tune on his guitar, so Rhyme danced as she mended the soundwaves into notes, which she aligned into notesheets that she flew around and defeated other Hungry Men. Of course, Kaleo took credit for most of the damage, as his giant size squished some of the mining houses, whose interiors were metal, making it a little challenging for the task. When nearly all of the men were down and out, Django grabbed Little Juan by the neck. “Hey.” He grinned with skeleton teeth and brimming red eyes. “Where’s Midna?”

“J-Just up that passage, man! P-Please, take off your costume, it’s so real!” He shuddered. “Take off yours.” He threw Little Juan against a wall. The four other members jumped up the rocky, natural stairs, while Kaleo climbed with a few steps. Jackbots flew over the gorge ahead and destroyed the stone pillars, leaving nothing to cross the distant bottomless chasm. “Keep up that tune, good buddy!” Beat cheered, so as Django continued strumming the guitar, he and Rhyme created a Song Road. The Gang members shifted lines to hit the notes and keep the rhythm flowing. The note path swerved between snaky walls of a close trench, and when Jackbots flew along the path to disrupt them, they shifted the respective lines to avoid them.

Of course, since Kaleo was too large, he merely needed to clutch a wall and climb across after them. The teammates made it to a large, barren field, but when they took a few steps forward, turrets popped out of the ground and fired. Django strummed his guitar, Skeleton Soldiers sprouted up and took the bullets, then when the turrets had to reload, Beat and Rhyme blasted soundwaves to destroy the turrets. They progressed, diagonal rows of turrets appeared from the side, Django sprouted skeletons in that position to take the hits, then Leo burped Mega Gas Bombs to destroy them. They progressed even further, one turret popped up at a time, Django timed the placement of each skeleton. A circle of turrets appeared around them, Django was still able to protect his friends before Kimaya, Beat, and Rhyme used their powers to destroy them.

The Gang followed a small passage before reaching a hill of mining houses built within. Gramma Stuffum’s Food Patrol charged out, Kaleo was excited to grab the little foodlings in his hands and stuff them into his mouth. None of his friends would want to see him again afterward until he brushed his teeth. (Oh, and yet Django is so tolerable.) Kaleo lifted and carried his friends up the hill – the houses were like stairs to him, but they found an energy barrier blocked the next passage. Kaleo punched the barrier furiously, but made nary a dent. The barrier even stretched too high for the giant to climb over.

“Look for generators inside the houses.” Django said. Leo set the group down as they checked each house on each level of the hill. A different kind of enemy patrolled their house; Beat and Rhyme had to fight Flu Bugs, Hands of Justice, then find a generator protected by Lunch Ladies. Kimaya fought through Hungry Men, Stickybeard Pirates, then gassed a room full of Cheese Ninjas before intoxicating a barrier. Django, however, mostly walked by each house, strummed a Skeleton Soldier into being, and had it break inside. He didn’t know which house it was, but one of them destroyed the last generator.

Kaleo helped his friends up again, and they progressed down the path. A minecart track stretched across, so Django, Kimaya, Beat, and Rhyme hopped in to roll off. “See ya down the road, Leo!” Django waved at the giant. The cart sped down a hill, then the track became more curvy as it drove over a river, going around stalagmites. A piece of track was broken ahead, so Django strummed his guitar and summoned a skeleton from the nearby stalagmite, its bones forming a bridge so they could cross. Jackbots swooped by and destroyed parts of the track with lasers, Django made use of the nearby stalagmites and sprouted skelo-tracks from them. The tracks became rugged and were
going to run off, so Django kept strumming while Beat and Rhyme created a Song Road.

The four jumped off, grinded the road up a garden of mountain needles, and landed safely on a cliff beside an old ruin. The Rhymer’s Rappers appeared to stop their progress, Beat and Rhyme had the honors of performing an in-sync dance, mending the songwaves together to wrap the Rappers up. They spun the songwaves around the henchmen and got them dizzy, then Kimaya mixed this with her gas to put them to sleep. Kaleo caught up with them by climbing across the mountain needles, following his friends to a dried, ruined fountain. This area appeared to be a central location of the canyon. Our Gang members didn’t know this, but this was the site of Cheren and Nerehe’s battle, nearly 8 months ago. Boy, does time fly.

The direction that caught their attention was a temple atop the hill. More turrets popped out to shoot them, so Django repeated the process of timing his skeletons, blocking the bullets before his friends destroyed them. The temple had no actual walls or doorway; at least not anymore, and all that was inside was a black and white, shadowy imp with an orange ponytail, binded by orange energy hoops. Django recognized her as Midna, but before they could act, a swarm of Elite Jackbots flew in their way. “MWAH HAH ha ha!” A white-skinned boy with red hair and a black suit hovered above with a helipack. Beside him, a small purple ghost with a white mask and yellow eyes. “End of the line, um, random intruder people! Jack Spicer, evil boy genius, will have the honor of destroying you with his army of Jackbots!”

“Does this kid look familiar to you?” Kimaya asked.

“Nope.” Beat shook.

“WHAT?! I’m one of the Brotherhood’s elite!” Jack whined. “I led the operation to infiltrate Moonbase and disable its defenses! Go ask Cree; wherever the heck that snotty deserter is!”

“FOCUS, Jack!” the purple ghost, Wuya shouted. “Hannibal Bean entrusted us with guarding Midna… until Pottymouth got back from his kid’s party. Don’t let your guard down!”

“Relax, Wu’s, they look like a couple of street punks.” Jack folded his arms with a confident fashion.

“You’re the one who wet his pants, I see.” Django smirked.

“WHAT?!” Jack reddened. “W-Well… at least I have the fluids to WET my pants!”

“Do not let him get inside your head, boy!” Wuya shouted.

“Who are you, his grandma?” Django asked. “Hey to break it to ya, but mine is 1500 years prettier.”

Wuya flew up to him, “Say that again, boy…”

“Ew, man, I smell that stank breath from HE-YUH!” Kimaya waved a hand by her nose.

“What, is this ghost made of pee and crack stench, yo?!?” Beat remarked.

“It smells like an air freshener they would hang in the sewer’s dung creeks!” Rhyme grinned.

“OOOOOO! You children are the BANE of my existence.” Wuya furrowed. “Hurry up and destroy them, Jack.”

“What’re these again, JACKbots?” Django asked. “Creative name. They don’t have anything over
“my Skeleton Soldiers, though.”

“Oh, please. My Jackbots are made of the sturdiest metal, your skeletons are made of… bones. Robots CRUSH bones!”

A Jackbot designed with a doctor’s uniform made sad eyes. “Um, Master,”

“Except you, Docbot. You fix bones. But the rest of them will crush your skeletons into dust!”

Django strummed his Mystic Guitar and summoned a swarm of undead soldiers. “Shall we wager?” He grinned.

“JACKBOTS: ATTACK!” Within seconds, the temple floor was swallowed in the dust of battle.

Midna’s expression was bored and uninteresting. She just wanted to get rescued already, Jack’s voice was painful to her. Thankfully, her wish would come true, when Rhyme snuck through the conflict and picked the Firstborn up in her arms, smiling comfortingly. “It’s all right. We’re taking you home!”

“Can we stop at the Ear Doctor, first?” Midna replied.

A Jackbot drilled a skeleton’s empty sockets, a skeleton ate a Jackbot’s innards (it's just wiring, geez), two skeletons choked each other because they couldn’t see in the dust, a skeleton rode a robot like an amusement park ride, and one skeleton and robot were secret lovers. Wuya flew above this chaos, knowing for certain it was going nowhere. She looked at the empty pedestal where their captive was—her eyes widened. “STOOOP!”

Both sides froze in place. Jack Spicer looked confused. “YOU FOOL!” Wuya yelled at him. “Midna’s gone, and it’s ALL because of your incompetence!”

“I should’ve known: you can never trust a dead kid to abide by the rules of warfare.”

Wuya face-palmed, “Put these robots to use and FIND them!” The ghost rubbed her intangible hands, “I was planning to use Midna for something…” (End song.)

After the Gang members made it away from the canyon, Django strummed his guitar to summon the Ghost Train. Kimaya used the spikes on her cuffs to pick the mechanical locks on Midna’s hoops, setting her free. She stretched her weary limbs. “Well, not the most useless people on the planet.”

“Hee hee HYEAH-yuh!” Beat high-fived Kimaya and Django. “We made fools of those Brotherhood fools!”

“Glad I could count on you guys to help.” Django said.

“Hey, we street kids always look out for each other.” Kimaya punched his shoulder. “Even dead ones or… giants.”

“Guys, I think one of those spinach guys is stuck in my teeth.” Kaleo scraped his teeth with his pinky nail. “Help me get it out?”

“Which reminds me,” Django said, “we have to do something about Leo’s condition.”

“I can help.” Midna zapped the giant with her power. In seconds, Kaleo was dispersed into Shadow Matter. “I did something similar with his father. I’ll bring him back when we get home.”
“PLEASE teach us how to do that!” Beat pleaded.

“Alright, guys, get on, I’m running a tight schedule here.” Django said rushes, gesturing the group to get on. Django was about to board the train himself, but stopped to look in the desert horizon. Very far away, it would seem like a grouping of rocks, or even mountains. But no, Django recognized that village. Long forgotten by everyone else. He could walk there right now if he wanted to.

“Yo, Deadbones, ya comin’?” Kimaya asked.

Django flinched, “Y-Yes.” He boarded the train, and had it speeding across the landscape before long. The Gang members and Midna sat patiently on the benches. Django looked out the window, watching the village grow smaller out of sight.

“The Gang looks out for each other, man.” Kimaya told him. “You need anything, just come to us.”

“…Hmph.” Django smiled solemnly. “Anything, huh? Right… because you’re all my ‘buds.’”

**York Household: present time**

Sector V took land outside Dillon’s house, as the boy was first to hurry inside. “Mom, I’m home! Is Midna really safe, where is she?”

“She’s in the kitchen with Django, sweetie.” Danika smiled softly, sitting on the couch. The sectormates looked to the kitchen and saw Django and Midna at the table, playing poker.

“You know, this game was invented in the Underworld.” Midna informed him. “Except the cards were emotions back then. Malladus played against Mesprit. She whooped his butt with Love.”

“You don’t say…” Django halfheartedly stared at his cards, slurping a dead fish in one gulp.

“Midna, are you okay?” Dillon asked, entering the kitchen.

“Of course I am, Dillon, it was just the Brotherhood. I was trapped on Vaporia, too, remember?”

“But they had to’ve made you do something, right?” Haruka asked. “You don’t just capture a Firstborn and put her on your collection shelf.”

“Yeah, but they just weren’t interested in me.” Midna laid a card down. “It was Jirachi they wanted, they were just going to use me to find him. I don’t know where Jirachi is, but apparently we Firstborn can telepathically ‘sense’ each other, according to whatever phony history book they wrote.”

“Can you?” Artie asked.

“Not across a billion light-years, no.”

“But why do they want Jirachi?” Dillon asked.

“The Apocalypse is coming, so they want to wish it won’t come. And I told them that, even IF Jirachi still had all his powers, it would’ve been beyond him.”

“That’s true.” Aurora remembered. “He wouldn’t even be able to make Dimentia’s ideal world. We all know what really would’ve happened.”
“So tell me about space or wherever you went, how did that go?”

“Well, we learned that there was a ninth Firstborn.” Dillon responded. “In fact, we’re starting to think that we need to capture the Firstborn all over again. I don’t suppose you still have your Spirit Ball?”

“Heads up.” Danika walked in, and tossed her son the black-and-white ball.

Dillon caught it, almost unprepared. “…Well?” Midna cocked a brow. “Aren’t you gonna catch me?”

Dillon shrugged. “Good to get this part of the quest over with.” So he threw the ball. Midna became a beam of energy and was sucked inside.

The ball wiggled and beeped on the floor. Everyone watched eagerly. Will Dillon have caught his very first Pokémon? He’s still got over 700 to go before he becomes a master. Unfortunately, that wouldn’t be happening soon, because Midna burst free. “Not even close, man.”

“What?”

“This reminds me of a similar scenario.” Midna tapped her chin. “Django, do the act I taught you. Pretend you’re Nolan York, and I’ll be Celebi.” She gave him the Spirit Ball.

Django turned his chair to face them, then sat hunched like an old man. “Duuuuuh I’m a human child in a wheelchair who’s working for a disembodied brain in a jar. Master Genious, I got the Firstborn Celebi! I’m not her Guardian, but I’mma catch her, anyway!” He threw the ball.

“Bi-biiiii.” Midna cried sarcastically, and she was sucked inside. The ball beeped on the floor again. Midna broke free. “Now pretend I’m Darth Genious: You’re a fool, Nolan York. I’mma strangle you now.” She clutched Django’s neck with her ponytail hand.

“Aaaaauuuuck- No! Please! I didn’t read the story very well!” Django rasped. “I thought the Firstborn were human benders, not Pokémon! I only based my knowledge off of the Fan Forums review! Oh, what a fool I waaas!”

“And… scene.” Midna concluded, crushing Django’s neck. She released, and the skeleton fell dead.

Dillon felt his head throb with anger when his friends giggled. “Well, if I’M not your Guardian, WHO IS??”

“No, you actually ARE my Guardian. But you haven’t awakened yourself, yet. And you’ll only awaken yourself, by fully understanding your spiritual self. So, ask yourself… what makes Dillon York?”

Dillon looked down in thought for a moment. His spiritual self, eh… What did make Dillon York. What was the most unique thing about Dillon’s personality. “I’ll tell you one thing,” Mason spoke up, as if reading his mind, “he idolizes his dad a lot. Ironically, most of our friends are closer to their mom.”

“Even you, Maseyfairy?” Haruka cooed.

Mason blushed and furrowed. “Yes.”

“I look up to him,” Dillon replied, “and we had our share of moments, but my dad says he doesn’t
want me tryin’ to be like him, and I should focus more on my shadowbending, since it’s what I was born with. And I’m trying to be good at it, it’s just a pain when you have to.. rely on someone for it.”

“What do you mean?” Midna asked, raising her brow.

“I mean, you know how other element benders can just bend their element, and that’s all there is, but shadowbenders have to rely on their sub-sentient shadows for most of the work?”

“Shadow is the Element of Hiding. It has to do with loneliness. It’s a feeling of being forced to hide, feeling cast off.” As Midna explained, Django frowned and looked away. “But they’re never alone, because the shadows are hiding with them. The shadows teach the benders, and the benders teach the shadows. That’s the beautiful thing about shadowbending.”

“Well, it’s not very beautiful for me.” Dillon stated. “Mario’s been totally useless lately, I’ve been slumping in every fight thanks to him. I know it’s supposed to be a thing about friendship, but I wish shadowbenders could be able to fight by their selves, you know? Get by with their own strength and not have to rely on; someone or something else.”

Oh, is THAT how you feel about me, is it? Mario said, his anger growing.

“What?” Dillon looked at his shadow.

You know, Master, I haven’t been feeling fond of YOUR attitude lately, either. You forgot I can read your thoughts, I hear you saying ‘Stupid shadow’ or ‘Every ***king time’, but I never say anything because I have to agree with everything you say. Well, you know what, fuck the laws, if you wanna fight by yourself, be my guest. I don’t have to put up with a snotty, ungrateful master. Good-bye, Dillon.

“M-Mario—HEY!!” To everyone’s surprise, the shadow flew off of Dillon’s body, out the front door, and across the houses. “COME BACK, MARIO!” Dillon fought through his friends to outside, but lost any sign of his shadow under the sunny sky.

“Whoa… Dillon’s shadow ditched him.” Mason spoke with awe.

“I don’t believe it…” Danika spoke quietly.

Artie fell on the floor and tearfully hugged his shadow, “I’m sorry for everything bad I might’ve done, Shadow, please don’t leave me!”

Haylee and Harry stared with disbelief. They heard a crackling sound and looked at Dillon, eyes widened. “Dillon, you’re on fire!!” Haylee shouted.

“Wh-What—AAAAAAAHHH!!” Dillon’s hand was swallowed by a whitish-gold flame, then his hair, and slowly his entire body was burning.

“DILLON!” Danika stretched Cheshire forth, grabbed her son in her shadow’s fingers, and pulled him back in the house, slamming the door.

The friends stood around as Dillon was thrown on the floor. His eyes were struck with fear as he studied himself, but no trace of the flames remained. “W-W-What just happened?!”

“It’s called Loneliness’s Toll.” Midna responded gravely. “A person who, for any reason, lost their shadow, has lost the connection between their Light and Dark Sides. Dillon has to keep himself in shadow at all times, because if he steps into the sunlight, with no shadow to balance out half of the
Light Energy of the sun, his body will disintegrate.”

“You mean I…I can’t stand in sunlight until I get Mario back?!”

“The only reason the sun never disintegrates anything is because everything has a shadow to moderate half of the Light Chi. Too much Light Chi or Dark Chi destroys a person, that’s the simple part of it. That’s why every person needs a shadow… The question is, where did Mario run off to?”

“’ey, so if Dillon can’t get in sunlight,” Sheila spoke inquiringly, “does that mean I can’t do this?” She lit her entire arm gold.

“AAAAAHHH!” Dillon’s face caught fire at the sight of the Light Chi.

“STOP IT, SHEILA!” Mason, Harry, and Chris dove on her.

Palutena’s Temple

Sector W was stuffed. They had no desire to do anything until that food settled down. They never felt more deserving of a meal. They patiently waited for Phosphora to finish bathing, then they would each take turns. Their young bones really needed the repair of energy. “We’ve gotta save countries more often.” Aranea commented.

“We art most gracious, Lady Palutena.” Fybi spoke politely. “But pray, is it true? Thou canst not tell us the identity of yonder Lights?”

Palutena was turned away from them. “I really want to, but this ‘Bill’ said that we couldn’t. I don’t know if I should believe him or not. With something the gods have no control over… I feel like everything me and Medusa are doing is a waste of time. If these Lights and Darknesses are destined to awaken themselves… what if the two of us are being played for fools?”

“Don’t say that about yourself, Lady Palutena!” Pit perked up. “This Apocalypse effects ALL creatures, including the gods! And no one cares about all life more than you, Palutena. That’s why you wanna do your best to protect everyone! It’s why you constantly watch the Kids Next Door and help them when they need it!”

“Hmm, I already knew all that, Pit.” The goddess smiled. “But even gods have worries that we can’t ignore. Still…” She turned to the five kids, “It looks like the prophecy is coming true on its own. Three Lights were already awakened. I bet, before long, the fourth will appear, then the others. Now I just need to hope Medusa is holding up her end of the quest. Despite her means of doing it.”

“Yeah! And when all the other bad guys hear how we beat Loki, they’ll go runnin’ and cryin’!” Anthony fist-palmed.

“Verily, ’twas Phosphora and I that were the victors in that fight.” Fybi reminded. “However, I hardly call Loki fair game. Ha ha HA!”

“Still, if we’re on the topic, what’s the deal with those World Government people?” Aranea asked. “I only heard about them from Cheren’s announcement. Is it true that one group rules the whole world?”

“Yes. And I’m ashamed to say I helped one of the World Leaders.” Palutena replied. “Her name is Jennifer Bush. Over 4,000 years ago, Jennifer was a child who died and became a spirit. I felt pity and granted her lightbending in the afterlife. She trained with it for years until she challenged me to
a battle. Our contract was, if she won, I would grant her part of my Personal Chi, revive her with eternal life, and give her my home on Sun Pillar. ...And she did.”

“Why would you agree to all that?!” Nea shouted.

“It was a law established near the beginning, where mortals can challenge gods for their powers. I had the choice not to accept, but I did. She still had the heart and soul of a child, so I was deceived. I had no idea she would befriend the original World Leaders and form what would become the World Government. And I had no idea how great a threat they would be. That they would fulfill the role of ... gods.”

“Whaddyou mean ‘gods’?” Anthony asked.

“The World Government possesses an incredible power, unlike anything we’ve seen. Even Dialga shudders at the thought of it. There have been many World Leaders throughout history, and all have been mortal, but many of them felt so... distinguished from everyone else. They act as though they aren’t human or mortal, they’re greater than anyone on the planet, they’re the sole importance. It’s sickening, really. And yet, they’ve only recently become more active. I think it’s because, like the real gods, they’re afraid of the Apocalypse.”

“Yeah, but they’re NOT gods.” Anthony stated firmly. “They’re humans just like we are. But I don’t see THEM tryin’ to stop the Apocalypse. They have a problem with us, well I’m not very fond of them, either. I wanna get strong enough to KILL one of those Leaders!”

“Anthony, murder is not the right way.” Aranea replied scoldingly, wagging a finger.

“Fine, then I’ll just beat them really bad.”

They heard fast-pace steps echoing from the hallway beyond the door. Palutena, Pit, and the sectormates readied their selves for what was coming. “YA FOOOOLS-!!” Killer Bee burst in—

He skidded to a halt when Palutena and Pit zipped up to him, weapons aimed. “Who are you?! State your name and business!” the goddess demanded.

“Hey! It’s Dr. T!” Harvey shouted.

“Really? I thought Dr. T had black hair.” Palutena said.

“Maybe this guy works for the B-Team.” Pit assumed.

“No, no, no! Fools, ya got it all wrong, the name’s Killer Bee, but I work for no team, so it would seem, fools, ya fools!” Bee sang.

“He’s some guy that’s been hanging around Birka.” Aranea informed.

“What are you doing up here?” Palutena asked.

“Er, um, uh, Ah saw the kiddies goin’ up the clouds, and since Dashi’s Peak was unoccupied, I thought I’d please the crowds, singin’ a song ‘bout the fake god behind the shrouds. Apparently, such a topic was a little too early, but that ain’t why I came, because some angels came and, through all shame, said they looking for the kiddies, playing some game where apparently it’s illegal for ‘em to come here.”

Confused by what he meant, Palutena looked at the crystal orb on her staff. It displayed squadrons of Nimbi soldiers searching around Birka. “The God’s Angels Air Force.” She knew. “The Nimbi
that work for the World Government.”

“We fought some of those guys when we were flying here.” Sally remembered. “We have no idea why they were after us.”

“The Government is afraid of the Apocalypse to the point that they’re trying to ignore it.” Palutena stated. “And they’re ignoring it to the point that they don’t want anyone to act upon it. They don’t want the Twenty Keys to come together.”

“But they can’t just ignore it, because it’s going to happen, anyway!” Aranea shouted.

“They distinguish their selves from mankind by acting as gods. And nothing like the Apocalypse should be beyond a god’s control. That’s why they’re ignoring it, I’m guessing.” There was subtle anger in Palutena’s voice. “I’m going to seal this temple inside a barrier, so they shouldn’t be able to get inside.” Palutena hit the floor with the handle of her staff. The blue orb flashed, and outside, a spherical barrier appeared over the temple. “My guess is they’ll really be after Fybi. You kids should stay in here until they’re gone.”

Phosphora came out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel. She noticed the worried looks on everyone’s faces. “Um… What’s going on?”

“God is mad at Nea for skipping her weekly church visits, so His angels are coming to smite her.” Anthony explained.

“They would get you first, Anthony.” The girl said.

“Thou art certain they canst not penetrate, correct?” Fybi asked.

“Relax, Fybi! Lady Palutena’s shields are the strongest in the universe!” Pit beamed. “It’d take an awful lot of power to break it.”

Palutena gasped. “You might’ve spoken too soon, Pit. I’m sensing... very powerful Light Chi. It’s... It’s mine!”

A team of angels were pulling a golden-pink chariot under the rainbow sky, drawing nearer to the great dome around Palutena’s Temple. An army of God’s Angels rose up from the distance, and some crossed the cloud canyon when the chariot landed. A pair of pink high-heels touched the marble path. World Leader, Jennifer Bush looked beautiful under the sunlight, and her smiling face could warm anyone’s hearts. She dashed joyfully to the barrier’s edge. “Lady Paluteeeenaaaaa! Palutena-senpaaaaaiiii! Yoohooooo! Could you tell me why King Andrew felt one of the Seven Lights become awakeeeened? He does not want thaaaaat.” She swayed her body like a worm.

“It’s Jennifer Bush!” Palutena exclaimed. “She must’ve known I live here!”

“Ooooooohh, a barrier of solidified Light Energy.” Jennifer looked close at the shining glass with childlike eyes. “Good thing I have God Chiiii!” Jennifer pressed her fingers on her right hand together, pulled back, and thrust the hand nails-first against the shield. It broke through like glass, and the rest of that area of the structure cracked, before breaking entirely.

Pit Icarus dashed out with his bow ready, “You aren’t taking anymore of Palutena’s ENERGY!” He loosed an arrow of energy, and it flew through Jennifer’s heart perfectly.

“AAAAAHHH!” The woman fell on her back, dead. A beautiful ray of light shone from the heavens, a chorus of angels sang. Jennifer was back on her feet. “I am God’s Daughter, I’ll keep coming back! I’m- im- mor- tal.” She paused at each syllable. “AH HAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Now
excuse me, I must capture the little babies inside! Since nothing else works, we’ll just wipe their memory of this whole Apocalypse business. Come ooooon, Palutena, I beat you once, I can beat you again.”

“It’s not safe for you kids here.” Palutena told Sector W. “I’m sorry you didn’t have time to rest more, but we can’t let them capture you. Come with me to the Reflecting Pool and I can make it transfer you all to the Negaverse.”

“What’s the Negaverse?” Phosphora asked.

“We shall inform thee in time.” Fybi told her. “But mayhap thou shouldst not accompany. Thou hast little knowledge on this matter, so the Government may not hunt thee if thou dost not affiliate with us.”

“Yes, Miss Phosphora, we wouldn’t want you to get in trouble because of us.” Sally followed. “And I’m sure if you act like one of the maids here, those angels might not care for you. We promise to meet up with you again as soon as we can, okay?”

“…” Phosphora bit her lip, as though contemplating an ultimate decision. She nodded, “Okay. Um, and Fybi? …Thanks for everything.”

The Fulbright girl smiled.

“But methinks you kids, need an ounce of parental supervision.” Bee rapped. “I shall accompany thee, too, until I’m no longer needed by you, baka, you bakas.”

“Fair enough, Bee.” Palutena smiled. The goddess led them to the chamber of her Reflecting Pool, which she stirred with her staff to display who appeared to be a cheerful Anthony. “Would Anthony’s Negative be okay?”

“Yes! He’s pretty nice.” Sally beamed.

“Come on, I’d rather go to yours.” Anthony replied.

“Same difference, either way.” Palutena shrugged. “Jump in, kids.”

Each kid made a “Hup” sound and dove into the mystic pool, and Killer Bee’s bulky exterior was last to make the gesture.

With that, the Goddess of Light marched out through the front gates, joining Pit against the thousands of God’s Angels. “Miss Palutena, there you aaaaaare!” Jennifer cartwheeled. “Were you trying to keep me oooouut?”

“I don’t really appreciate uninvited guests.” The goddess stated. “Now what do you want, Jennifer?”

“I know you’re hiding the kids from meeeeee. My angels saw them coming to this island.”

“I’m afraid there aren’t any kids here. You can search the temple top to bottom, but you’ll find nothing. Not that I intend to let your troops barge in.”

“Is that a THREAT, Lady Palutena?!” Jennifer became enraged.

“I’m just stating obvious fact. Thou shalt not pass.”

“If THAT’S the case, I challenge you for MORE of your God Chi! GOOD LUCK BEATING
Palutena clutched her staff tight, “Hm-hi don’t accept. This isn’t a matter of taking one’s chi, this is home invasion. And even gods need self-defense.”

“You’re no god to ME, Lady Palutena! I’ll show you how far my chi has COME since I took it from you! JESUS, GIVE ME STRENGTH!” Jennifer leapt and stomped her heel against Palutena, who blocked with her staff.

**Washington; White House**

*Let me tell you a story about a certain boy. A boy who became a man, and changed the world.*

The hallway was pitch-black. A bright light shone at the end.

*This boy’s father was a U.S. Senator. His parents taught him all about politics and American history.*

The man fixed on his coat and straightened his tie.

*He loved reading about American presidents. All of their noble deeds and faults.*

He slowly walked toward the light. Thousands of people were cheering outside.

*When he turned 18, this boy joined the U.S. Army. He went from Cadet to Lieutenant to General, then Admiral in a few short years.*

The man smiled, the light reflecting off his glasses.

*He performed many noble deeds for his country. His strength was greater than anyone’s.*

He felt the summer air from outside growing warmer, the closer he got.

*His only real crime was a detention he received in Fourth Grade. But all children have such a fault.*

The man briefly kissed his wife on the cheek, before she joined him outside.

*America was consumed in war with Iraq, China, Canada, many countries. This man led the front lines, and now these countries are aligned with America.*

*There was a rumor that he got his strength from a demon. If this was true, nobody cared, anymore.*

The people of America cheered for the man atop the flight of marble stairs.

*People say he is the most powerful man in the world, under the World Leaders. They say he once shared a soda with King Andrew.*

*If this man wanted to, he could become a World Leader. He was just that great, and noble.*

*This man is now the 46th President of the United States.*

*And his name was…*

*James Nixon McGarfield.*

Clothed in the shiniest white tux, a red emblem on his necktie, the sturdiest white cowboy hat. He
appeared fat at first glance, but the loyal citizens knew it was muscle. His hair was brown, his eyes were a beautiful blue behind his glasses. He was the most handsome, most charming man in the world. The people of America were so delighted to elect him as leader.

*Today, President McGarfield has an announcement.*

*He’s going to announce his new Education System.*

*They just captured a rowdy bunch from Gallagher, Virginia.*

*Children like them desperately need it.*

Jimmy lived in the White House—more like the White Palace, as it was the largest house in America. American flags hung everywhere. The courtyard was large enough for these thousands of citizens. Directly above Jimmy’s podium, above the front door, was a banner depicting a golden triangle with an eye. The Eye of Providence which gave the people of America hope.

So we introduce the main antagonist of this saga. Well, ONE of the main antagonists, you’ll see the others later. Well-p, Chapter 30 next, you know what I think we should dedicate it to? Going to Gravity Falls! Next time, we’ll meet the Pines Twins! See you then! ;)

...
Gravity Falls

Chapter Summary

Cheren and Wendy Marvell met the Pines Twins and explore a secret underground bunker. (Warning: VERY plot-heavy chapter!)

Hmm, Chapter 30? Strange, the story isn’t even close to being finished. Hehe, my other stories would be completed by now! XDD Extremely complex plot development, people!! Today’s codes use the A1Z26 Cipher, but they’re found within the story.

NOTE: This is also Chapter 17 of Seven Lights: The Side Stories.

Chapter 30: Gravity Falls

York Household

“Midna, explain to me, very slowly, what the hell HAPPENED?!” Dillon yelled ragefully.

“Like your slow-witted father, you are excessively thick.” Midna replied, frowning with disappointment. “Let me put it to you simply:” She poked Dillon’s nasal bridge with each word, “Your shadow. Is. PISSED. Do you remember every time YOU were angry with your father, so you walked away? Well, this is the same thing.”

“My fucking SHADOW! How do you get in a fight with your fucking SHADOW, and it flies AWAY?”

“All people’s shadows have a conscious, it’s just shadowbenders are able to interact with them better. In reality, Shadow is a material all on its own, like poison or earth, the living shadows are composed of that material, and they can touch it. The shadowbenders can control other shadows, but until they’re at that level, their own shadow acts for them. But now you have no shadow, so you can’t shadowbend.”

“So give me a new shadow and give my bending back!”

“Pfft, a god can’t just CREATE a life-form out of thin air, they have to be born! We exhausted our energy creating the original life-forms, we don’t intend to make anymore. Dillon, you’re just going to have to find Mario and kiss up to him.”

“In that case, better hope Mario is on a clean metal pole, and not a trashcan, crumbling wooden house, or somebody’s butt.” Aurora said.

“Either way, I’m snapping a picture when he does.” Mason said, holding his phone, and the friends couldn’t contain their laughter.

“Midna, do you have ANY idea where Mario could’ve run off to?” Dillon asked.

“Even you could guess that one.” Midna replied. “But for the sake of saving a few lines of dialogue, it’s Twilight Town.”
“That shadowy forest in Pennsylvania where Mom and my aunts took me to train?”

“That shadowy forest in Pennsylvania where Mom and my aunts took me to train?”

“Mm-hm. The forest bathed in eternal sunset.” Danika replied. “It’s sort of the Anderson Family’s heritage, and a retreat for shadows who had a… falling out.”

“You mean benders get in fights with their shadows regularly?” Haylee asked.

“Yes, but it’s also the home of the Twili.” Midna replied. “A shadow sub-species who are descended from humans that moved to the Shadow Realm. They’re like the Fishmen in Oceana, their appearance changed after adapting to the environment.”

“Interspecies relations are weird.” Artie said. His siblings stared at him, knowing his crush on Makava.

“Look, let’s just go to Twilight Town and get Mario back.” Dillon stated impatiently.

“Won’t the fact that you can’t go into sunlight be a little problematic?” Haruka asked.

“Being a shadow myself, I can serve as your temporary shadow.” Midna informed. “You will be able to bend a little bit, but you won’t be much without your birth-shadow.”

“Whatever, I can live with it. As long as I don’t combust like a vampire.” Dillon said with silent aggression.

“Technically, vampires would shine like diamonds in sunlight.” Aurora corrected.

“Your vampires were not portrayed accurately. Midna, just get in my shadow- or, whatever.”

“No wonder Mario left.” Midna complied and blended with the floor under Dillon’s feet, becoming his shadow.

“I’ll call Victoria to tell her you’re coming.” Danika said. “She works at the local inn, so she could fix some rooms for you kids if you end up staying a while.”

“I guess I’ll be staying here by myself, then.” Django sighed with fake depression. “Just a dead kid and Dillon’s sexually-depressed mother. Aaaall by myself, with no one to play with.” He slumped lazily on the kitchen chair he was sitting in.

You can come, too, Mr. Django. Kirie signed politely.

“I’m going to assume that was an invitation to come, YES!” The skeleton fist-pumped.

They heard a sudden cellphone ring, coming from Mason’s pocket. He took it out and looked at the Caller I.D.. “It’s Carol.”

“Is she Number One- Ow!” Haruka rubbed her leg after Mason kicked it.

Mason answered, “Hello, Carol?”

“Maseyfairy, THERE you are, I’ve been trying to call you since yesterday! Your mom said you were in space or something, why would you go without calling me??”

“Because you’re not my mom, OR my girlfriend, Carol!”

“My, what a mouth on you. Hey, I’ve got something to tell Dillon: His dad got arrested by the Government!”
“What?!” Dillon took the phone.

“Arrested?…” Danika gasped.

“I’m waiting inside your treehouse, come over and I’ll explain.”

“We’re on our way.” Dillon gave the phone back to Mason, who hung up. “’Guess Twilight Town will have to wait.”

“Who was she?” Django asked as they piled outside.

“Operative in training.” Aurora replied. “She wants to be in our sector.”

“Hold on, why is she allowed in your treehouse and not me??”

“She isn’t, we aren’t even sure how she would get in.” Mason said.

“Because Maseyfairy lets her in when no one else is around, wink-wink.” Haruka pressed her cheeks.

“Why is my ‘relationship’ with Carol the only one that’s mocked?”

“Because you remind us of Dad and Lizzie.” Chris answered.

Gravity Falls, Oregon

Cheren and MaKayla flew their S.C.A.M.P.E.R. over a thick, vast forest of towering pine trees, and landed in a random location. They both stepped off as MaKayla looked around. “Why did we land here? Is their treehouse nearby?”

“Sector GF is sort of a ‘secret sector.’” Cheren explained. “They’re given mystery-based missions and research secrets that the KND can use. They requested the Supreme Leader before me to become their own sector, but he turned it down and insisted they be part of Sector O. After I became leader, I gave ‘em the green light. As part of the terms, they don’t use an actual treehouse. We’re landing this far to avoid giving away their location.”

“So where is the location?”

“Some kind of tourist hut in the middle of the woods. I visited here a few times; there really is some weird stuff here. I wouldn’t be surprised if some of Roguetown’s creatures wandered over here. Be careful, MaKayla.”

“You’re telling that to a timebender. Watch your own back, Cherry.” (Play “Hidden Mountain & Forest” from Smash Bros. Brawl.)

Stage 39: Gravity Falls

Mission: Meet up with Sector GF!

Act 1: Gravity Forest

Cheren and MaKayla marched forward as an eerie wind rustled the pine trees, and the sun could barely poke through the branches. Wooden, tree-bark monsters called Groots broke free from the trees, lashing their thick vine arms at the duo. Cheren sliced the vines with his sword while
MaKayla chucking Time Bombs to slow them, giving her leader an easier time to shoot the Groots with Fire Arrows. A short, but high cliff blocked their way ahead, but Cheren noticed the barren areas on the trees, where it looked like branches would grow, but didn’t. MaKayla held on while Cheren launched to the first spot with his Hookshot. With his pair of Hookshots, they flew to one target, then the next, and if they fell, they would end up going down a slippery slide carved into the earth, leading off the short cliff, therefore dropping them at the start of this segment.

The two had to time their Hookshot swings when rows of Zingers buzzed back-and-forth between targets, and also when Gnomes launched up to them like arrows, getting their pointed hats stuck in the bark. The final Hookshot target let them off on a safe ground, just before a Gnome stuck into it. It was then Cheren realized, from there, he could’ve hooked to another target, on a branch that would give him a Heart Piece. Now he couldn’t hook the previous target because the Gnome was in the way. ‘Guess he’d have to play the level again. The duo wandered into a small field of bushes, where Gnomes popped out and attacked them directly.

The tiny creatures jumped in the air and dove at them like arrows, and with their great speed, MaKayla had to slow them, giving Cheren the chance to shoot them with real arrows. With the creatures knocked out, the kids proceeded to a grouping of trees—a tree that was oddly-shaped stepped away like a gigantic leg, quaking the ground, and a flock of crows flapped away when the branches forcefully rustled. The two exchanged frightened glances and followed a right path, away from that monster. A river flowed gently into the forest, so the friends stayed along its side as they progressed. The earth suddenly trembled, and they felt their selves floating into the air. “W-What’s happening?!” Cheren exclaimed.

“Gravity anomalies are common in this forest. My father senses them regularly, he told us. I’d like to know what’s causing them.” Unfortunately, the two were about to be lifted to some Zingers, who managed to float in place, so the kids swam along the low-G to keep from hitting them. They floated above a large tree branch when the gravity dropped them, crossing a group of rope bridges across other branches. Skulltulas ambushed them from above, but Cheren was quick to act by batting them, turning them around, then stabbing their weak undersides. The last branch overlooked a far cliff, so Cheren told MaKayla to grab on before he glided them over using the Pirates’ Sail.

They followed the path through a shady area of forest, where a ray of sun shone against a giant crystal, causing a purple light to shine through the other side. Cheren drew his blade when a Skulltula crept toward them, but when the spider walked through the light, it shrunk to the size of a regular tiny spider. The two stared curiously before Cheren stomped the Skulltula, then Fi came out. “Master Cheren, I have determined this is a Size Crystal. When light shines upon it, depending on which side, the other side will cause targets to either shrink or grow. I surmise an 88% chance the woodland creatures will have varying heights. Master, your Mirror Shield may be able to deflect the light.”

“Magic is lovely.” Cheren said. A tall, pointed boulder was blocking their path, so Cheren bounced the purple light with his shield to decrease the rock’s size. The next path had Size Crystals lodged in the sides, touching the ground with blue beams, and when innocent local Goomba wandered into those beams, they grew to giant size. MaKayla ran, jumped, and climbed on top of one to begin bashing the creature’s head, since Goombas still had weak bodies regardless. Cheren blasted another Goomba with Fire Arrows until it was down, but now Buzzy Beetles were wandering onto the Grow Lights and changing size. They curled in their massive shells and spun at the operatives, so Cheren and Kayla evasively dodged them. The world shook when the giant beetles bounced around the walls. Another giant boulder was blocking the way, so the kids tricked the beetles into ramming into it until it smashed open.
A giant Skulltula was seated on a web, blocking the path out of there. There was a blue light, but that would only make the Skulltula bigger. “Wait a second, can’t we just make OURSELVES bigger with these??” Cheren realized.

“It’ll be hard to fit yourself in a purple light, don’t risk it.” MaKayla said.

“Fine. …Kayla, grab that pebble.” MaKayla picked up a nearby pebble, while Cheren bounced the blue light above the spider. Kayla tossed the pebble above and into the light, it grew to boulder size and crushed the Skulltula. Thankfully, the stone was still flat enough for the duo to climb over; Cheren noticed a tiny Size Crystal growing from a mound. “I think I’ll take one… you know, just in case.” So he did.

Over this pebble-boulder, the two could slide down a snaky slope, laughing with excitement before they were set onto a mostly barren ground. Undead hands reached up from the earth; the Redeads made their otherworldly moans as they limped toward the duo. Cheren ran between some and performed a spin attack, MaKayla leapt around with strong, swift kicks to send their heads flying, but their horrifying screams caused the kids to shudder in place. A tremendous, tree-root foot stomped a grouping of zombies, then kept walking, and the friends saw it was the same monster from earlier. They paid it no mind still, doing away with the rest of the Redeads before proceeding down the next path.

The world shook, and the two were uplifted by Gravity Fails. There were a lot of spider webs in the branches above, so they maneuvered around the air to avoid them. They flew forward, feeling the gravity return when they were above a path of webs, so they let their selves land on a branch in-between. While wondering where to go next, the gravity failed again, they were able to keep going. Above a garden of very sharp pine cones, they let the gravity drop them over a solid patch. They repeated these intervals until they landed on the next path between some trees. Groots emerged from the bark, and Gnomes leapt out from behind the creatures and flew at the kids, Cheren and Kayla dodged as the latter slowed the Groots, and Cheren shot the Gnomes with arrows. He hit the Groots with Fire Arrows before hurrying forward with his friend.

“Creee-ee.” A weird sound was heard, the two whipped around to see nothing there. A sign nearby read, Beware the Hide Behind. Cheren and Kayla exchanged worried glances and kept forward. They heard footsteps behind, they turned around, nothing there. MaKayla stood back-to-back with Cheren and kept walking, they heard the steps up in the branches, aiming to gnash down on them. They exchanged frantic glances and ran for it, and hearing the quick footsteps, MaKayla threw a Time Bomb back, and the two whipped around to catch the Hide Behind in the act, a tall, lanky shadow creature. Cheren leapt and slayed the monster with a jump attack, so the two could continue without worry.

The earth quaked again when they made it to a barren area under a cliff. The gigantic, tree-bark monster stomped out of the woods to their right, hunching forward and planting his hands against the cliff’s edge. Curious, the two hurried behind the monster, and were able to climb the vines around its left leg. Walltulas were creeping along, Cheren shot them down with arrows before climbing. They then had to sidle up a thin ledge, sloping up to the creature’s back, Cheren sliced a Snapdragon that got in the way. They reached the sloped part of the back, hurried up, then ran across the giant’s arm to get onto the cliff. They turned back to its gruff, wrinkled face as MaKayla waved happily, “Thank you, Mr. Tree Giant!”

“I, AM, KING, GROOT!”

“We’ll tell your story!” The duo continued through the woods, encountering a wall of Gnomes that blocked the path. A huge, muscular Gnome – made up of many normal Gnomes – dropped onto
the ground, the operatives readying their selves. The Gnome aimed its fists and blasted its smaller comrades like pointed bullets, Cheren bounced them against the body with his Mirror Shield. MaKayla ran, punched, and kicked several of their little Gnome faces, climbing to the head (a Gnome with a brown beard) for a quick punch before flipping down. Cheren got behind the giant and shot a M.A.R.B.L.E. at the left leg, blowing those Gnomes off. It hopped around on the other leg, then with perfect agility, MaKayla leapt toward, spun sideways and horizontally in the air, and kicked the head Gnome off, letting the whole thing crumble down.

“Ow!” The brown-bearded Gnome fell on his back as Cheren and Kayla stood over him. “Hey, you’re not bad, toots. How would you like to be my queen?”

“I’m a King, sorry.” Kayla remarked.

“Really?” The Gnome stared at her lower area. “I thought male humans had—” MaKayla forcefully kicked him toward the wall of Gnomes and let them topple. She exchanged a friendly nod with Cheren before they progressed, making it to an open road. The sign indicated the ‘Mystery Shack’ to their right, and there it was. A large gift shop in the middle of the forest, displaying its name on the roof, though the ‘S’ was fallen and upside-down, so it looked like ‘Mystery Hack’. No refunds.

(End song.)

At the same time...

The Point Me spell continued to lead Wendy and Carla as they raced all the way across the country. When they were at the edge of a stone bridge within a forest of pine trees, the wand started to get jittery. “What’s it doing?”

“Perhaps it’s reacting to a magnetic field.” Carla assumed. “This must be Gravity Falls.”

“No use for the spell, then.” Wendy dispelled the Point Me. “Finding the Mystery Shack shouldn’t be too hard, right?”

“No, but gravity anomalies are a different story. There’s something awfully suspicious about this place, Child. Please be careful.”

“How can I not be with you eying over me, right?” Wendy chuckled.

“Hm-hm.” Carla smirked. “Fair point, Child. Alright, then, let’s go.”

“You got it!” (Play “Made Me Realize” by Brad Breeck!)

Stage B-13: Gravity Falls

Mission: Investigate the gravity anomalies.

Act B-1: Gravity Road

Wendy started across the bridge, building up her speed, and zooming around the trees on the snaky forest path that followed. Wendy made it to a straight path, which led her up a hill and off a ledge, landing Wendy on a small field where Gnomes were riding Big Goombas. Carla used Torpedo Spins to knock the spike-topped Gnomes off the Goombas, then Wendy could bounce on the Goombas’ exposed heads to knock them out. Wendy kept racing through the forest, crossing a path of ruins where Piranha Plants hid behind stones and tried to snap Wendy as she ran by, so she sidestepped away from the stones’ sides. When two stones were coming up, Wendy jumped to
dodge the twin plants.

Wendy ran along a swerving road, where trees created a pattern of shadowed parts and sunny parts on the ground, so the top of Wendy’s vision blinked on-and-off in these light and dark spots. The path brought Wendy to Lake Gravity Falls, and her keen speed allowed her to run across the surface. “Wendy, watch out!” Carla yelled when a massive, robotic lake monster emerged from the lake. Wendy drifted leftward to avoid the monster, and when this route brought her to a group of jagged rocks, Wendy drifted right to avoid crashing. She avoided the jumping fish as she raced toward a group of yachts fishing in the lake. She flew up a skier’s ramp, bounced off a yacht’s sail, and landed back on the lake as she kept boosting.

The robotic lake monster — the Gobblewonker — swam alongside Wendy’s right, so she drifted left to avoid crashing, then dodged the other boats as she came to the shore. The Gobblewonker submerged below the water, then reemerged ahead of Wendy as she ran up the robot’s back, across its rising neck, then the head flung her into the air as she flew toward the pine trees. Wendy bounced across the tree tops before landing on the forest ground and running toward a cliff. A blue light suddenly flashed over the land, and Wendy was lifted off her feet and floating. “Whooooaaa! Is this what Mr. Facilier was talking about? ?”

“Aaaah!…” Carla felt no air under her wings and floated without flying. They floated above the first cliff, but GUN Beetles were waiting above, electrifying their selves in the hope Wendy would touch. The mage avoided, and the gravity lifted her higher as she floated above the next ledge. GUN Hunters appeared rooted to the ground, shooting Wendy from their positions, but she evaded and was lifted above the next ledge. Spike traps covered this ground, but if Wendy maneuvered around their path quick enough, she could get a Fire Soul at the end. Sadly, she failed, and the gravity brought her to the next foothold.

The gravity returned, allowing Wendy to run up a steep hill. She ran off a ledge at the top, and she landed on an abandoned train track bridge that hovered miles over the town. She had an amazing view of the valley, and the track was between two cliffs facing each other. As she raced across the great bridge, a gray pterodactyl swooped over in attempt to grab her, but Wendy slid to avoid its talons. The pterodactyl came back, swooping its whole body across the bridge’s surface, so Wendy jumped to avoid. The pterodactyl came from behind, and the bridge was about to go into a tunnel sealed by wooden boards. “Reducto!” Wendy destroyed the boards with the explosive spell, escaping inside the tunnel before the dactyl caught her.

Wendy grinded some rails that felt too close to each other and made jumping rails uneasy, especially since they led her over a narrow river of lava where fireballs bounced up. “I can see why they closed the tracks.” Carla said. Wendy landed on stable ground as the cave curved and sloped down left, but soon had to run across the left wall over another lava river. A fireball jumped in her way, so Wendy jumped to the right wall, she felt the gravity steadily weighing her toward the lava, but her heart could relax when she made it to the safe ground just in time.

As the tunnel sloped lower, Wendy and Carla arrived at a great, vast cave glowing with orange. They were gigantic chunks of frozen tree sap… and dinosaurs of all types were sealed inside. “Wow! Carla, look! Dinosaurs!”

“Are they frozen in tree sap?” Carla observed. “I read a theory that said tree sap had ice-like properties, but I dismissed them as hogwash.”

“Welcome to Jurassic Sap Hole!” A gruff voice spoke from a tower with a speaker. “For just 10 dollars, join a tour to see real live dinosaurs! For an extra 20, you’re allowed to taste the sap! The-Mystery-Shack-is-not-responsible-for-any-paying-customers-devoured-or-dismembered-
“It seems we’re getting close.” Carla said. The girls admired the sights as they trotted (and flew) through the cave. When they passed a tunnel to another cave, a gravity anomaly appeared and forced them to float. Huge drops of tree sap fell from above, and Wendy was unfortunately pushed down and stuck to the ground by one. She used Incendio to melt the sap off and floated up again. She made it onto a ledge by the time the gravity returned. There was a cave drawing of a caveman with a Stone Fist, punching a green caveman while a pterodactyl family cheered.

Wendy ran right along the path before entering another tunnel. This cave had a chasm on her left, with minecart tracks leading to a nest with a baby pterodactyl. The baby was guarding a Fire Soul, and seemed to change position to face a certain track rail. Wendy grinded on the rail he wasn’t in front of, but the baby reacted by flying at and knocking Wendy off. Thankfully, she bounced on a large mushroom on the ground below, and used a stairway of these mushrooms to get back up to the ledge. Wendy decided to grind the rail the dactyl was facing – because its eyes were far apart, the avian couldn’t see her coming, then Wendy could jump the baby, get the Fire Soul, and grind back.

Wendy raced into the next room, which featured a T-rex inside a weak chunk of sap. She went up a slope onto the left ledge, and from there could cross a path passing the front of the rex’s face. Wendy boosted across—the dino’s head broke free and snapped its teeth on the path, missing Wendy by an inch. In the next room, Wendy jumped in a stronger steaming geyser that propelled her out of the cave and into fresh air. She raced a new path, coming to a ray of purple light just before a stone. When she zipped past the light, she shrank in an instant, and went through a hole under the rock.

This path was filled with flat stones, and tiny Wendy ran up a slope onto the first rock, then could either jump across the others or run on the low path. These rocks brought her to a mini spring that bounced her to a mini path on the left ledge. She climbed some stone pillars before a blue light stretched her to normal size, allowing her to grab a Fire Soul. From here, Wendy passed the flat stone path, climbed onto a short ledge, and touched a purple light to shrink again. She raced up a spiraling path going around a tree, and squirrels came out of holes to chase the little prey. Wendy jumped off the end of that path, landing safely on Carla’s head.

“Better let me handle this.” The cat said as she carried Wendy. Giant spiders hung down on webs, hungry to feast on the winged prey. Carla evaded their webs, making several turns around trees as she tried to find another blue light for her friend. Carla eventually hovered above a wider spider web, seeing a blue light shine on the ground below. Wendy jumped off, fell through the web’s gaps, and hit the light to poof back to normal.

Skulltulas hung down everywhere in this field, while some dropped on the ground to approach the blue-haired delicacy. Wendy casted quick blasting spells to defeat the hideous creatures, and once she beat the ones hanging from the web above, the web dispersed and Carla was able to come down. She lifted her owner above a ledge, escaping the field and running a new path.

Finally, Wendy made it to the actual town, passing glances at all the happy-go-lucky citizens. She decided to make turns around all the city’s streets. She sped past Lazy Susan and spun the woman around as she cried, “Woooooowwwwwhhhhh!!” She jumped on the roof of Bud Gleeful’s car store, jumped on the Discount Prices dollar sign, and rode it partway across town before jumping in the miniature golf course. She ran to the windmill, grabbed one of its blades, and spun it faster with her airbending before it broke off and flew away – exposing the little golfball people inside the tower. Wendy raced past more forest, touched a purple light that shrunk her, and used her small size to skid across the surface of Gravity Falls Pool. She dodged the water balloons thrown at her before a
kid’s splash knocked her back onto land, and she touched another blue light outside the pool’s fence.

Wendy got back to town and raced down a street leading into the forest. The sign read Mystery Shack, and before long they saw the secluded house. Wendy slowed before the front door and entered. (End song.)

The girl and kitten caught their breath after that invigorating run. Carla set foot on the floor to rest her wings. “Yo, what up!” a redheaded teen girl called from the register. She wore a green patterned shirt and a lumberjack hat. “Welcome to the Mystery Shack. Say, are you new in town? ’Cause I would definitely recognize hair like that.”

“Yes, I am.” Wendy smiled. “My name’s Wendy.”

“No way, my name’s Wendy, too!”

“It is?”

“Shyeah! That must mean we’re, like, brethren or something. Aw, and you even like green, dude we should totally hang out sometime.”

“Not when you’re working!” A gruff old man stated as he walked in. He wore a black tux, had a big round nose, and wore a maroon fez with a yellow Pac-Man-like shape. “Say, are you the person Dr. Facilier said would come over?”

“Yes, I am! Are you Stan Pines?”

“The one and only.”

“Hello, Mr. Pines. Do you still have those shrunken merman heads?”

“Right here!” He held up the three shrunken heads, whose pale skins had a tannish tone about them.

“How do we know they’re not ordinary shrunken heads?” Carla asked.

“Why would they be? I found them in the lake, what would they be if not merpeople?”

Wendy felt a little creeped out. “I, um… Maybe we should buy something else… I hope Dr. Facilier doesn’t mind.”

“Sigh, suddenly everybody’s a paranormal critic. Fine, feel free to shop around.” Stan walked away. “Corduroy, make sure she doesn’t shoplift.”

Wendy Corduroy’s cellphone went off. When the teen checked it, the called ID read HIII. “Oooo, I gotta go do something. Catch ya later, Little Wendy.” She hopped over the desk. “And if Stan asks, tell him my hormones are acting up.” Wendy waved as Wendy ran off.

“She seems nice.” Wendy smiled.

“Come on, Child, let’s look into these anomalies. We can question Mr. Pines’ credibility later.”

“You’re right.” Wendy jumped around and was about to race out the door.

“So that’s Sector GF?” MaKayla asked as they approached the entrance to the Mystery Shack.
“Yup. Perfectly disguised, no one would ever suspect. Their great-uncle owns this tourist trap, their room is up in the roof. Let’s go say ‘Hello’.” Cheren walked onto the porch and opened the door.

“WHOOA-!” The minute he did so, a blue-haired girl collided into him, both falling on the ground. They stared into each other’s brown eyes for a minute, blushing. Cheren grinned. “Hehe. Why must we keep running into each other like this?”

“Hehe. Sorry.” The girl climbed off and helped Cheren up. He and MaKayla saw the white, winged kitten behind her.

“Your name was Wendy, right? And the cat was…”

“Carla.” Wendy replied. “And you… were…”

“Cheren. This is MaKayla, one of my operatives. What brings you here?”

“I’m doing work for Mister Facilier. You wouldn’t happen to know about the gravity anomalies that happen around here?”

“We may’ve encountered some.” MaKayla said.

“We call them ‘Gravity Fails’.” Cheren followed.


“It’s kind of a long story. We’re here to meet up with some friends.”

“Well, we won’t keep you.” Carla replied, walking around the group. “Let’s look elsewhere, Wendy.”

“Hold on!” MaKayla stopped them. “Maybe you two should join us.”

“Why ever should we?”

“Yeah, Kayla, how come?” Cheren asked.

“They’re here to check out the gravity anomalies, and we’re here for information about the Apocalypse. I wonder if both of us can find what we’re looking for.”

“Wait… you know about the Apocalypse as well?” Wendy asked.

“Y-Yeah, we’re trying to stop it.” Cheren said, scratching his head confusedly. “How do you-”

“Please, Carla, can’t we join them?” she pleaded to her cat. “I told Mr. Facilier I would help them stop it, I think we should.”

“Wendy, we have our own priorities to take care of, we’ll just be in the way.”

“But Carla, maybe they can help us look for the source of these anomalies.”

“We’d be happy to help.” MaKayla smiled. “I can easily track the source with my power.”

“It’s official:” Cheren patted Wendy’s shoulder. “You’re a temporary KND ally.”

“Really? Great! I promise not to be in the way too much.”
“Siiiigh.” Carla sighed. “Very well. As long as we don’t get too far off track.”

The group headed upstairs and approached a room down the hall, guarded by two girls. One was shorter, with long black hair, glasses, and a green striped shirt, while the other was large and bulkier, with brown hair in a ponytail, a pink shirt with ‘COOL’ written, and purple shorts. “HALT!” the large girl spoke with a gruff, man-like voice, holding a hand to them. “This room is restricted. Only those who know the password may enter! Unless you’re here to give me your number, Cutie.” She smiled flirtingly at Cheren.


“Numbuh 3621, welcome!” the shorter girl, Candy spoke with a French accent. “Dipper and Mabel were expecting you.”

“I’m STILL waiting for your call!” the large one, Grenda scowled with hands on her hips.

“Numbuh Pounds, I told you I didn’t want your number. May we enter now?”

“Fine, whatever.” The girls entered first, followed by the four guests. “Hey guys, the Supreme Leader’s here!”

“All right, you made it!” Dipper looked up from his journal. He was a brown-haired boy in a light-red T-shirt, navy-blue vest, and a blue and white hat with a pine tree.

“I baked cookies!” Mabel grinned, showing the braces on her teeth, holding a tray of cookies. She had long brown hair, a light-blue sweater with a white bird, and a purple skirt.

“WOOOOOOOO!” a distant, otherworldly applause roared throughout the room.

The Pines Twins looked confused. “What was that?” Dipper asked.

“Our readers are really excited to see you.” Cheren blushed.

“I know I’d be excited to see me.” Mabel replied. “HEYOOOO!” she waved at the readers.

“WOOOOOOOO!”

“I love those guys.”

“Numbuh 2012, you said something about your uncle’s journal.” Cheren reminded. “Did you get it?”

“Yes! It’s right here.” Dipper held up the brown book, with a golden six-fingered hand, and a large “3” written on it. Cheren, Wendy, and MaKayla peeked over Dipper’s shoulder as he opened it. “I found this a long time ago while I was exploring the woods. It tells about all the weird things in Gravity Falls.” The pages depicted the Gnomes, Redeads, and Size Crystals. “Our Grunkle Stan took it from us to think up props for his shop. What is it you said you were looking for?”

“That!” MaKayla pointed at a picture of a block with strange writing. “That’s the very same rock we found on Planet Glacia! Only Suki was able to read it back then…”

“Well, what did it say?”

“Um, it was written by someone called ‘Ichigo Kurosaki’. It just congratulated Suki for being the ‘Chosen One’, and that there’re six more. Also, her power would be important. But let me look back, just in case. Thankfully, I have a very keen memory.” MaKayla touched her forehead and
closed her eyes. She rewinded her own memory back to when they and Sector SOUL found the Gibberish Rock. She reopened, “No, that one was written differently.”

“Wait a second, if this book is about Gravity Falls, wouldn’t that mean that rock is HERE?” Cheren asked.

“Hey, you’re right!” Dipper perked. “That secret bunker I told you about! What if it’s somewhere in there?”

“Excuse me, but I would like to take a look.” Carla spoke up.

The twins looked at her—“AAH!!” and screamed. “Did that cat just talk?!”

“And it has wings!” Mabel exclaimed. “It’s a bird-cat!”

“I wonder if that’s somewhere in here??” Dipper flipped the pages.

“JUST give me that book!” Carla shouted. Dipper complied and handed it to her. The kitten skimmed through pages with ghosts, some kind of black triangle with an eye (and red ink written), and what looked like part of some blueprints. “There are an awful lot of blank areas.”

“Yeah, I’ve been wondering about that myself.” Dipper said. “It’s like the author got lost in thought while writing it.”

“…” Wendy glanced at the pink wand in her hand. “W-Wait! Let me see it.” She knelt beside Carla and touched her wand to the book. “Aparecium.” A light glow emitted, then faded. Everyone stared as faint white writing appeared on the current page.

Dipper gasped. “How did you do that?”

“It’s a Revealing Charm. Mister Facilier taught me how to do it when he talked about invisible ink.”

“Invisible ink…” Dipper took the book and excitedly flipped the pages. “I don’t believe it! It’s a whole bunch of mysteries I didn’t even know about! So many more things to-”

“Yes, yes, Season 2 was a hoot, flip back to the Gibberish Rock!” MaKayla demanded.

“R-Right, right.” Dipper hurriedly flipped to said page. “Yes, there’s writing! ‘I discovered this rock when I was in Germany, doing research for a company. I visited a local art gallery and found this rock in its basement. I tried to translate the language to the best of my abilities, but no luck.’ There’s also a code—Mabel, write this down: 9-6 / 25-15-21 / 23-1-14-20 / 8-5-12-16 / 1-19-11 / 13-1-18-25. We’ll decode that later.”

“So the rock isn’t here.” MaKayla said with disappointment. “It was just research.”

“No, come on, there has to be something!” Dipper flipped more pages and skimmed the invisible ink. “AHA!!” He startled them with his sudden outburst. “Lookathis!” He showed them a drawing of a pyramid, with similar writing as the Gibberish Rock. It was made with invisible ink. “‘I discovered this in one of the dimensions. Its stone and symbols are very similar to the cube from my world. There is definitely a connection. I want to continue researching, but using the machine too much is very risky. I wonder if he would know anything’… Who?”

“What machine is he talking about?” Cheren asked.
“I think it’s this.” Dipper flipped to the blueprint page. “I never found out what this was, but I assumed it’s part of a design for some… alien machine.” There was invisible ink. “At last, I found the Original Worlds!”

“I’ve seen just about enough.” Cheren stated. “Dipper, take us to this secret bunker you told me about.”

“I wonder if this has to do with the gravity fails!” Wendy said excitedly. “Carla, we have to check it out!”

“What if Dr. Facilier is expecting us, we can’t spend too long.”

“You know, she kinda showed us the invisible ink.” MaKayla noted. “Who says a little magic can’t be helpful?”

“Yeah, Carla, it’ll be fun! I’m sure Mister Facilier wouldn’t mind.”

“Perfect.” Cheren smirked confidently. “We’re cracking the mystery behind these rocks today!”

“Who are these girls again?” Dipper asked.

“MaKayla, from Sector IC.” The timebender responded.

“My name’s Wendy.” The mage bowed. “This is my cat, Carla.”

“Um, no offense, but we kind of already know a Wendy.” Dipper said. “So I’m gonna call you… Uhhhh…”

“BLUE GIRL!” Mabel shouted.

“Yeah, that’s it! Blue Girl!” Dipper agreed. “Is that okay?”

“Um… I guess so.” Wendy looked down and shifted her feet.

Cheren touched her shoulder and passed a smile. “I’ll call you Wendy.”

The girl flushed. “Heh heh heh.”

“You can call ME Grenda!” Grenda popped up between Cheren and Wendy, grinning at him. “Cutiiiieee.”

Cheren sweatdropped, looking fearfully. “O-Okay, sure.”

“Boy, you’re so SWEATY!” Grenda grabbed Cheren in a bone-crushing hug. “I like sweaty guys with glasses. We should call each other and talk about our sweatglands!”

“EW, NO!”

“Congratulations, Cheren, you got your eleventeenth girlfriend!” MaKayla smiled.

“Wow! That’s more crushes than Mabel.” Dipper remarked.

“I demand to see Cheren’s Romance Book!” Mabel shouted.

Cheren shook his head and pushed away from Grenda. “Look, just take us to this bunker!”

“Candy, Grenda, hold the fort.” Dipper ordered as they piled out. “We’ll call you in case we run
“Oh-ho, *that’s* his excuse.” Grenda eye-rolled.

“Want to look at Dipper’s Internet history?” Candy smiled.

“Hot dog!” Grenda perked.

The band of kids headed downstairs and to the exit, passing an old man with a muscular body, black tux, and square glasses, who was stacking items on shelves. “Bye Grunkle Stan, we’re going to investigate a secret bunker for clues about the Apocalypse!” Dipper told him quickly.

“Oh, okay, kids, be back by dinner!” He didn’t look at them, and the kids shut the door on the way out. “Wait… What?”

The Pines Twins led the group not too far away from the shack, to a seemingly ordinary pine tree. “Me and Mabel were playing Sit-on-the-Pinecones, and when she grabbed that branch up there, this secret stairway opened.”

“For the record, I won the contest.” Mabel grinned. “Now stand aside, kids. I’ll flip that switch with my-” She whipped out her signature device, “GRAPPLING HOOK!”

“Won’t it be easier for me to fly up and-” Carla said.

“Too late, my Mabel urges are acting!” The Pines sister shot the grappler up, bounced off the lever-branch, and “OW!” hit Dipper’s head.

The ground shook slightly as the space around the tree sunk down. Wooden plank stairs popped out of the side in spiral fashion, leading into a passage. Dipper switched on his flashlight and led the way down. (Play “Dungeon 5” from *Ib*.)

**Act 2: The Author’s Bunker**

The group wandered into an abandoned laboratory, with dust-covered knick-knacks, opened food cans, and waste drums. “This is the desk I found that laptop.” Dipper indicated. “And we found a tunnel through there.” He pointed at a sealed hatch with a turnable wheel.

“I wonder what all these things do?” Wendy asked, taking a ray gun-like device and studying it.

“It may not be worth finding out, don’t touch those.” Carla told her.

“Imagine how much Grunkle Stan could make for this.” Mabel thought aloud, tapping a spider in a corner. She gasped with an idea, “Maybe HE’S the author!”

“Heheh, sure, Mabel. …?” While examining the desk, Dipper discovered a small slip of paper behind the back-right leg, against the wall. He picked it up and read the little writing. “I knew this was a bad idea. I trusted him, but he lied to me. I need to escape someplace where he can’t find me, but I won’t be able to come back. I must hide the journals someplace safe and sever connections with my family. To my son, Ruford, if you find this, know that I love you. I know your power will be a great gift to everyone.’ …Well-p, I am officially scared out of my wits.” Dipper balled the paper and flicked it under the table.

“Look, we won’t find anything unless we keep going.” Cheren said impatiently, standing by the tunnel.
“Yeah.” Dipper held the flashlight against his shoulder while skimming the journal, following Cheren, who crawled into the tunnel first. “Cheren, wait!” Dipper stopped him. “This is a pipe maze. We have to follow a specific path or we’ll keep going in circles.” The specific path was highlighted with white ink.

“How would that be possible?” Carla questioned.

“Maybe the Author’s a wizard.” Wendy said.

“There are a lot of spells in here, I’m expecting that.” Dipper said. On his instruction, they crawled left, right, left, straight, right right, straight, left, left, straight, left, we’re out of there. However, Mabel noticed a group of numbers on the tunnel’s side and quickly wrote them down: 1 / 7-15-4 / 23-8-15 / 23-9-12-12 / 3-8-1-14-7-5 / 20-8-5 / 23-15-18-12-4.

They were in a small room in which the floor, walls, and ceiling were made up of tiles, all with strange symbols. “I get the feeling we’ll need to touch certain ones.” MaKayla said. “We shouldn’t move until we’re sure-”

“W-Whoa!” Wendy stumbled after climbing out of the tunnel, stepping on a panel that pressed down. The tunnel sealed, and one at a time, the panels began to rise from the structure, threatening to crush them.

Dipper hurriedly flipped the pages, finding one with these same symbols, though some were highlighted by white ink. “Quick, press these buttons!” Carla saw one on the ceiling, she flew up, nimbly dodged the rising panels, and pressed. Cheren saw one across the room, he shot his Hookshot to press it. MaKayla saw a symbol on the floor to her right, nearly blocked by rising panels, she crawled underneath with her skinny form, pressed it, and escaped. Mabel frantically hopped around the panels and saw it in a corner, “Got it!” She pressed, returned to her friends, and they barely escaped through an opened passage.

The operatives gasped for breath, seeing the panels completely clutter the room. Worried, Dipper phoned his wristwatch, “Candy, Grenda. Can you guys hear me?”

Candy’s image was staticky. “Yah, Dipper, is something wrong?”

“Sigh, good, we still have reception. … Barely. W-We’re fine, but if we don’t call in an hour, come with back-up. Hopefully there’s another way out.” Transmission ended. Dipper got his flashlight and journal, “Hokay, let’s keep going.”

They walked down a stairway into a vast, underground cavern, where a still river lay. The stairs let off on a small islet with spider webs and stalagmites. Mabel discovered a code engraved on a stalagmite: 1-14 / 1-18-20-8-19-20 / 13-21-19-20 / 3-18-4-1-20-5. An arrow sign read Switch and pointed down a left cavern. However, there was no way to cross the river. “I’ll go look for it.” Wendy offered. “Step aside, you guys.” She blasted twin air blasts behind her and raced across the river at super speed, sidestepping to dodge falling stalactites and finding a tall island at the end. She grinded up and around the rails leading up it, suddenly stopping herself before she went off the edge. She stepped on a switch and raced back to her friends, finding that a pathway of barrels floated up from the water.

“Nice job.” Cheren smiled at her, and Wendy blushed before joining her friends over the barrels. They reached another tall island pillar and climbed its rugged side. Once on top, they overlooked a trio of floating platforms, which had bladed wings spiraling around and around. MaKayla tossed Time Bombs to slow their speed, making it safer to jump, but good timing still helped them. There was nothing between this current platform and the other, except for the big swinging axes. Mabel
aimed her grappling hook, waited for each axe to be away, then fired, grabbing a stalagmite on that ledge to pull herself over. She pulled a lever, forcing the axes to stop, and the kids were able to hop across them.

They then had to sidle across a thin ledge between close walls, still very high above the river. Dipper poked Cheren and showed him the journal. An ordinary line had highlighted white marks, possibly indicating the parts of this ledge that are safe to stand on. Dipper memorized the pattern, so he jumped the first chunk of the ledge and confirmed its solidity; he almost fell, so Carla flew in front and kept him on. He jumped or sidled his way across the ledge, and the others mimicked the action; though since Wendy was a bit more clumsy, Carla held her hands and floated to keep the blue-haired steady.

“Anyone starting to wonder how the Author got through all this?” Dipper asked as they wandered into a dark hallway, using his flashlight. They were in a decaying library of sorts, the shelves were filled with many old books. Whether they were for the Author’s research or for collection, they couldn’t say. Cheren decided to take a dark-pink book off a shelf and read its contents.

The … of Making Pa…ies To a …Sick Child’s … Parents … Dependence

The ink was much too smeared, so he put the book back. Mabel pulled out a red book, then noticed a 14 on the wall behind it. She pulled the rest down to unveil the new code. 6-15-18 / 14-15-23 / 8-5 / 19-12-5-5-16-19. “I wonder if he had any books on the Apocalypse.” MaKayla said, skimming the faded titles.

“This practically is the Apocalypse.” Dipper remarked somberly.

The earth began shaking, they felt their bodies lift off the ground for a few seconds. “I really felt it that time!” MaKayla rose her voice. “I feel a powerful source of energy down this cave. This way.” She eagerly ran forward first, Dipper aimed the flashlight her direction as they all hurried after. The further they went into its depths, the more they hoped they would find a way out soon.

In the center of this dungeon, a short boy with a blue tuxedo and huge white pompadour carefully set the blue energy cube, known as the Tesseract, into a slot. He closed the hatch, flipped a few mini switches on the panel, and two tubes of energy sparked to life. A triangular machine with a hole in its center glowed to life, ready to channel its power into the center. Li’l Gideon pulled off his goggles to look. “Is it workin’?”

Bill Cipher, the golden, one-eyed intangible triangle, rubbed his nonexistent chin. “Yep, I think it is.”

“There! I helped you fixed your machine, Demon!” Gideon yelled demandingly. “Now you have to help me!”

“Relax, kid, a deal’s a deal. But there’s something I wanna do with this, first. Our guests should be arriving right about… NOW!” He threw his attention to the entrance, when the operatives rushed in.

“There’s people already here!” Wendy exclaimed.

“It’s Little Gideon!” Dipper pointed. “And… BILL?!”

“Well well well, if it isn’t my favorite saps, Dipper and Mabel Pines!” The twins glared at Bill’s comment. “And who are these, some friends of yours? Ahh, yes: Cheren Uno, MaKayla King, Wendy Marvell, and of course, Charle!”
“It’s Carla!” the cat shouted.

“How do you know our names?” Cheren glared.

“Please, anybody can figure out THOSE names. I happen to know lots of things! LOTS OF THINGS.” His voice turned deep and malicious, his body displaying images of Malladus, the World Leaders, and a black dragon. Bill resumed to normal and spoke, “Very nice of you twerps to join us this evening. I was a bit afraid when Dipper started snooping around this bunker. Thankfully, he couldn’t get far in without you bunch.”

Cheren drew his sword, “What kind of creature are you?!”

“I am BILL CIPHER!” The triangle projected a wheel behind him, with many symbols. “One of the Six Demon Saints! Master and creator of dreams, keeper of secrets, and knower of knowledge! And this is my little sidekick, Li’l Gideon.”

“I AM NOT your sidekick!” Gideon screamed. “I specifically called you back to help with Master President’s plan!”

“Master President?” Cheren questioned.

“What’re you up to, Gideon? How did you get out of prison?” Dipper demanded.

“You’d love to know that, wouldn’t you?” Gideon smirked. “Well, for your information, my bail was paid by a special ‘friend’, you might say. In return, he wanted me to steal Journal 2 back and get in contact with this one-eyed demon.”

“In return, Gideon’s been helping me handsomely.” Bill followed. “Thanks to his resources, he was able to find the right material to fix the machine you see behind me. The only thing missing was the perfect power core to function such a device. Luckily, a recently-departed god has provided me just what I needed!!”

“And what does this machine-of-the-hour do?” MaKayla asked.

“I’m glad you asked, Miss Thinks-She-Knows-Everything. My friends, you are looking at the greatest, and only worthwhile achievement the Author of those journals has created. Behold, the Multiverse Portal!”

“Dun-dun-duuuuuun!” Mabel sang.

“A Multiverse Portal?” Carla questioned.


“And why would you want something like this?”

“Yes, Bill. Wah DID Ah have to fix this for you?” Gideon asked.

“Haven’t you ever wished to travel the multiverses? To see what other worlds are like compared to our own? I know the Author sure did!” Bill’s eye half-closed in a giddy fashion. “That’s why he asked me to help him build this machine to begin with! He wrote all about me in his journals. Yup, there’s no person you can trust greater than Bill Cipher! And if you still doubt this wonder, how about we just SHOW YOU. Turn it on, Gideon!”
The white-haired child approached a large lever in the corner. “Hold on a second!” Carla spoke up. “A machine that transports to multiple dimensions can’t just do so willy-nilly. A device of this magnitude has to burn and consume terrific amounts of energy! This town is already facing gravity distortions, that’s just a small issue. We’re talking about tearing through our very dimension, maybe even beyond! A machine like this could cause very hazardous effects for the Space-Time Continuum.”

“Hmmmmm, you make a good point.” Bill tapped his ‘chin’. “You’re forgetting something though:” The spirit turned red and fiery. “I DON’T CARE.”

Cheren and Wendy ran to attack Gideon, but the boy stretched a hand forward, caught them in a psychic grip, and blew them back. “Oh yes, Gideon’s a psychicbender. Did you know that?” Bill remarked.

MaKayla froze Gideon in time and attempted to run and kick him, but Bill flew in her path and stared with his wide single eye.

A woman was stabbed in the heart, and her blood soaked the floor of the classroom. Four-year-old MaKayla stared with horror.

MaKayla fell to her knees, and Gideon blasted her to the others with psychic. The white-haired child shook and channeled his power, causing the ground beneath the operatives to crumble. "WAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!" They fell in. With that, Gideon used psychic to pull the large lever. The triangular machine sparked as a vortex formed within the center.

The kids hit the ground in the bottom of a huge underground chamber. A chasm was on the sides around this floor. “Ouch. Is everyone okay?” Cheren asked.

“I’ve survived worse.” Dipper said, wiping blood from his nose. “We’ve gotta get back up there and stop that machine! Who knows what Bill’s planning to do with it?”

“Wwendy, use a Shrinking Spell on everyone and I can carry you up.” Carla said.

“Great idea, Carla!” Wendy held up her wand. “Hold still, everyone.”

“Hahahahahahaha!” Li’l Gideon hovered above them using his power. “Y’all aren’t getting out of here that easy! My other friend will see to that!” Gideon pulled out a dog whistle and blew.

“AAAAAHHH!” Carla clamped her ears shut and fell, but none of the others were effected.

They all heard a distant cry that sounded like it belonged to an overgrown bug. Their suspicions were true, for a huge, alien-like creature with slimy white skin and a round mouth crawled through the hole above, and hopped to the floor. Its left arm was bulkier than its right, and it stood upright on four legs. “What kind of creature is that?” Dipper asked.

“Friends, I’d like you to meet the Shape Shifter.” Bill Cipher announced, floating beside Gideon. “I named him Glen. He used to go with the Author on his adventures, and he’s seen many a monster. How about I show him a few more?” He flew in front of the creature, and Bill’s body displayed brief images of several familiar monsters. Glen demonstrated his power by changing into Mukak, Dodongo Dragon, Xitsflicks, and then Grenda.

“WAAAAAAH!” Mabel cowered behind Dipper. “It’s hideous!!”

“Um, Mabel? …” Dipper wanted to question her judgment.
“Go ahead, Glen!” Gideon cheered. “Show these mouth-breathers who’s boss!”

“What ever you say, Ice Cream Topping!” Glen said with Grenda’s voice. (Play “Desire for All That Is Lost” from Kingdom Hearts II!)

**Boss fight: Glen**

“Reducio!” Wendy cast the Shrink Spell, but Glen morphed into Army Dillo and bounced it upward with his armored shell.

“Whoa!” Gideon dodged the blast. Glen came out of his shell and laughed at the operatives. Still in armadillo form, Glen curled into the metal shell and rolled at the kids, who all jumped aside except for MaKayla. The timebender slowed the giant wheel in time, nearly stopping it in place, though it threatened to push her off the edge. Wendy blew a cyclone from her mouth and successfully knocked it down, but Glen transformed into a glob of water and slithered away, emerging to be Chaos 6. The overgrown water insect lashed its axe tail at the lot while they dodged, until Mabel grabbed ahold and let it lift her above. She took out some Ice Candy and threw it into the liquid body, freezing it solid. Cheren blasted M.A.R.B.L.E.s and blew the creature to smithereens.

“Pull yerself together!” Gideon demanded, and the melted ice droplets slithered to a center and reformed the beast, who transformed into Crackjack, the giant psychotic clown jack-in-the-box. The kids scattered again as the monster hopped toward Dipper, grinning madly and trying to stab the boy with its knife. Cheren ran in front of the creature and shot his Hookshots into its mouth. Glen chomped his teeth on the chains, keeping them inside, but Cheren passed the items to Wendy, who boosted away and caused the jack-in-the-box to topple over. She readied to cast a spell at Glen’s head, but was caught in a psychic grip and thrown backward.

“Fine! ‘Guess I need to help, too.” Gideon decided, taking land on Glen’s back when the creature turned into Icipede. The Child Psychic held the operatives in place while Glen crawled around to snap them in his claws, Cheren used his Hookshots to rescue Dipper and MaKayla. He then drew his bow and launched Fire Arrows to melt its various ice chunks, so the creature transformed into Dogadon and flew high in the air. The dragon rammed into the cave’s walls and caused boulders to fall, which Gideon grabbed with his psychic to chuck at the heroes. MaKayla stopped the boulders with her timebending and quickly Rewinded them back, but the Dogadon form changed its front into Army Dillo’s shield, protecting himself while the dragonfly wings remained in flight.

“He can merge multiple forms at once?” Cheren observed.

“I have an idea!” Dipper said. “MaKayla, get ready to slow them, Carla, fly up from behind.” He ran away from the others and yelled, “HEY, GIDEON! How many of those things can you throw?!”

“Enough to finally squash YOU!” Gideon grabbed multiple boulders with psychic and chucked them consecutively.

“NOW!” Dipper yelled, MaKayla slowed the boulders in time, allowing Dipper to jump his way up. Gideon clutched the boy in psychic, but Carla flew up behind and rammed Gideon in the back, knocking him on his front. Dipper was released, so he jumped to the Dogadon’s face, the dragonfly shaking furiously, but the action caused Gideon to lose his balance and plummet toward the abyss. He saved himself by floating and landed on the ground, but Dipper dropped from Glen and landed on the Child Psychic, wrestling with him. Gideon threw him off, then blew his whistle to sick Glen on Cheren, in the form of a Moldorm.
“Corpus levitas Diablo Daminium Mondo Vicium!” Gideon read aloud from Journal 2, summoning a group of Redeads from the earth. MaKayla kicked Glen off of Cheren, then helped freeze the zombies in time while the swordsman sliced them up. He flinched and dodged aside when Glen leapt back up in the form of Goht, the giant robotic goat whom Cheren recalled was destroyed by Kyurem, back in Termina. The shape-shifter charged an energy beam in its horns and blistered at them, missing and striking a wall over the chasm, unveiling a secret tunnel. The Goht leaped into the tunnel while Mabel shot her grappling hook onto its horn. “WHOOOA!” It didn’t serve her much, for she was flapping behind Goht while holding the device.

“Mabel!” Dipper cried.

“I’ll save her!” Wendy leapt over the pit and chased the creature.

“The fewer, the better!” Gideon stated, grabbing a zombie’s remains and chucking at Dipper and Kayla.

The tunnel had several bumps and curved a lot, and the Goht kicked boulders toward Wendy, forcing her to sidestep and dodge. The shape-shifter eventually ran off a ledge, into a small lake. “MABEL!” Wendy yelled when the girl was pulled in as well.

A patch of bubbles brewed on the lake’s surface, and Wendy’s heart raced with anticipation, hoping Mabel was okay. “RAAAAAAAHHHHH!” Glen transformed into the Kraken, its tentacles swinging everywhere. Mabel hung by the grappling hook, swaying to and fro from the demon’s head. The Kraken smashed tentacles down, but Wendy ran left and raced along the wall. The Kraken kept trying to stab tentacles in the wall, Wendy sidestepped and swiftly avoided, and as her speed increased, she moved higher up the wall. When she was high enough above the Kraken’s head, the minute Mabel was swung above it, Wendy squatted, kicked off the wall with great force, and grabbed Mabel before the demon could snap its teeth.

Glen turned into Crazy Dillo and chased the girls through the tunnel. Wendy ran faster and held tight to Mabel, pulling her by the sleeve, staying inches ahead of the spike-shelled monster.

Gideon hovered in the air and encased himself in a bubble, bouncing around forcefully to crush Dipper, MaKayla, and Cheren. When he attempts to smash the latter again, Cheren holds up his Mirror Shield, causing Gideon to bounce suddenly to the curved ceiling, then against the wall before he flies toward Dipper, his bubble deactivated. The male Pines readies his fist and socks Gideon in the cheek, knocking on his back.

“Ooooo, left hook!” Bill perked up. “Nice punching, Pine Tree!”

“You either help me or stay outta this, Triangle!” Gideon shouted. He shone blue and flew at Dipper, pushing him away, then when Cheren swung his sword down, Gideon blocked it with psychic and pushed the leader back. MaKayla rolled forward and dealt several quick jabs against his stomach before kicking Gideon away. They looked when Wendy leapt back in from the tunnel, holding Mabel by the sleeve, and Glen in the form of Crazy Dillo spiraled after them, creating an explosion of dust after hitting the ground.

Wendy blew the smoke away as they all searched frantically for the shape-shifter. “Huh?” two voices said simultaneously. Two Dippers stared at each other. “Aw, man! Not this bit again!”

“Which one is the REAL Dipper?” Mabel exclaimed.

“I am!” Dipper said.
“No, I am!” Dipper contradicted.

“Why you-!” Naturally, both started to fight.

“I’m not through, yet!” Gideon lit with bright blue, raising Cheren, Wendy, and MaKayla in the air. Mabel looked between the Dippers and Gideon, panicking, but noticed that Carla had snuck behind the psychic.

“Carla! Gideon’s ticklish!”

“What?” Gideon looked at her, confused. Seizing the chance, Carla stuck her paws under Gideon’s arms and began tickling. “Hahahaha! HAH HA ha ha ha! HAAAAAAA HAHAHAHAHAHAHA! HAHAHAHAHAHA—AAAAAH HAH HAH HAH HAH HAH HAH!” His mouth was foaming.

His hostages were released, and Mabel took the chance to take Gideon’s whistle, throwing it in the chasm, as well as Journal 2. She flipped through its pages hurriedly. “Look! It says its main form is weak against fire!”

“But which one is it?!” Cheren yelled, holding his sword ready as he watched the Dippers.

“It’s him! I mean, me! I mean—GAH, dang it!” The twins rolled on the ground, punching each other.

“Ooh, I know! Show us your birthmark!” Mabel beamed.

“Birthmark, what birthmark?” a Dipper asked.

“She means this one!” Dipper held up the hair blocking his forehead, revealing the Big Dipper mark.

“HEEE-YAH!” Cheren spun and stabbed his sword into the other Dipper. Glen made its horrendous bug-like cry, transforming into Ripto, Dracula, a blue-skinned girl, screaming with their voices for that time, then reverted to his slimy white form, oozing green blood. Cheren grabbed his bow, aimed a Fire Arrow, and loosed.

“Engorgio!” Wendy hit the arrow with a spell, increasing its size, and swallowing the creature in bright flames. The monster cried in the most agonizing pain, stumbling backwards and falling into the abyss. Li’l Gideon was still cracking up under Carla’s tickle torture, so MaKayla made the final blow and stomped him in the stomach, knocking the laugh-sick boy unconscious. (End song.)

“All RIGHT!” Dipper exclaimed, hugging Mabel tight. “We have Journal #2!”

“We can’t celebrate now, we have to stop that machine!” Carla reminded.

“Right!” Wendy nodded seriously. “Everyone, stand together.” They all stood in a bunch as Wendy held her wand above. “Reducio!” They were all zapped to a small size, leaving Carla to pick them up and fly them to the hole they fell in through.

Once on solid ground, Wendy re-expanded them all, and MaKayla used her timebending to repair the hole into solid ground again. “It’s too late, brats!” Bill Cipher declared. The cave was quaking furiously as the Multiverse Portal was spiraling its rainbowy colors. “The portal is almost at 100% capacity! A gateway to endless universes will be mine to use as I please!”

“Not if we shut it down, first!” Wendy ran forward.
“Wendy, wait, it might ex-” MaKayla tried to chase her.

A quick, but sudden energy pulse bursted from the machine, knocking them all down. When Wendy and MaKayla recovered, the girls found their selves floating off the ground, towards the spiraling vortex. “MAKAYLA!” Cheren screamed.

“WENDY!” Carla yelled.

MaKayla was about to fly in first, Wendy reached and grabbed her hand, Cheren jumped and grabbed Wendy’s other hand. The Supreme Leader held tight and struggled to pull back. Dipper grabbed and pulled Cheren, followed by Mabel, and Carla in the very back. “NNNN!” Gideon teleported back into the room and blasted them with psychic. The line of friends was forced to release.

“WAAAAAH!” MaKayla and Wendy vanished into the portal.

“MAKAYLA!” “WENDY!” their friends cried again.

The Transportifier began sparking again, the earth quaking at the force of its power. The vortex quickly shrank into nothingness, all of the lights disabled, and the machine was shut down completely. “Yuh-oh… this is problematic.” Bill said.

“Whaddyou MEAN ‘problematic’?!?” Gideon shouted.

“I thought I memorized the blueprint, but the Author must’ve done something. It didn’t stay on as long as it used to.”

“I’m TIRED of working on this thing!! We’ve gotta get back to Washington NOW!”

“Don’t worry, Gideon, we’ve done enough for today.” Bill told him calmly. “I think our friends got a worthy demonstration.”

“What did you DO to them?!” Carla demanded. “Where’s Wendy?!”

“If my calculations are correct, your friends have been zapped to another dimension! What dimension specifically, I can’t say. But I’m afraid you won’t be SEEING THEM anytime soon. Not until this machine is fixed.”

Cheren whipped his sword out, “BRING THEM BACK RIGHT NOW!”

“Sorry, kid, but that’s beyond my power at the moment!” Bill said perkily. “But don’t worry, I’m sure your friends will survive… as long as they make it through the Dimensional Byway, ha ha haAAA! I’d love to stay and mess with you more, but fighting would be pointless. You can’t destroy me, and I don’t want to destroy you. YET. See you down the road.” A wall of sapphire flames sprouted behind the spirit. “Oh, and remember: Reality is an illusion, we’re all figments of a fanfiction writer’s mind, watch lots of football, bye!” And in a blinding flash, Bill was gone. Gideon had vanished as well.

Carla solemnly approached the machine, staring at the barren portal. “Wendy…” She fell to her knees, her shiny brown eyes watering. “I knew we shouldn’t have come… Why don’t you listen to me, Child…”

Mabel came beside her and put a comforting hand on the kitten’s back. “I’m sorry, Carla. You know, whenever I’m upset, I talk to my pet, Waddles and pretend like he understands me. But since you’re an animal, maybe he could understand you for real.”
“Um… thank you, Mabel.” Both of them looked at the portal. Carla sighed and calmed herself. “To tell you the truth, I don’t know why I’m so attached to her. We only met a few months ago, but all that time, I’ve felt… indebted to Wendy. I feel like I’d sooner die for her than… than let anything happen.”

Cheren bore the same solemn look as he stared at the portal. He wasn’t personally close to MaKayla, but why shouldn’t he be concerned for all of his operatives the same way. “I’m sorry, Cheren.” Dipper told him sympathetically. “I wish there was something we could do.”

Cheren remembered something. “Your journal had blueprints to this machine, didn’t it?”

“Yes, but only part of it. We still need Journal 1. I’m not sure where it is.”

Carla stomped her paw and looked at them with pure austerity in her eyes. “Find the other journal as quickly as possible. If it tells us how to fix this machine, make it your Number One priority!”

“We’ll try our best, Carla, but I’m not even sure if the other journal is IN Gravity Falls.” Dipper replied. “The Author travelled to Germany, so the journal could be hidden in any.”

“Mister Cheren, you’re the commander of an army of children with access to a variety of technologies, according to Dr. Facilier.” Carla spoke matter-of-factly. “You should expend every available resource at your disposal to finding this other journal. Can you do that?”

Cheren didn’t want to admit that half of their treehouses were being taken over by apes. And nearly every other sector was unavailable, everyone was stressing and scrambling over the Apocalypse. …Cheren smiled promisingly and gave a thumbs-up. “You have my word. We’ll save both MaKayla AND Wendy. Promise.”

“Hold on, Dipper!” Mabel spoke up. “What about this laptop?” She pulled out the broken device.

“Mabel, of course!” Dipper spoke elatedly. “Maybe the Author left back-up blueprints on it, or something about the dimension they went to.”

“Huh? Actually, I was gonna say we beat the machine with this laptop and see if it comes on. But yeah, your stuff works!”

“It doesn’t actually look that broken.” Carla observed, walking closer. “If you had tools in the Mystery Shack, I could easily fix it myself.”

Dipper and Mabel’s wristwatches beeped. They answered and heard Candy’s French accent. “Dipper, Mabel, Teen Ninjas have appeared in the forest! They could be looking for you!”

“What? What could they want?” Dipper panicked.

“You don’t think Gideon called them, do you?” Mabel asked.

“If he did, they might be able to find this bunker.”

“Isn’t there a shortcut outta this place?” Cheren asked, feeling around the wall. He noticed a small compartment, and opened to find a terminal. “What’s this?”

Dipper quickly searched Journal 3, finding a picture of the tree that hid the secret bunker. The bunker’s secret entrance was depicted with invisible ink, and Dipper noticed a tiny code in the top-left corner, with the same ink. “Cheren, see if this can work: 1017118.”
Cheren inputted the numbers, then pushed Enter. A secret door with a ladder unveiled beside the terminal. “It worked! You guys stay down here, I can take care of the ninjas.”

He climbed the ladder out of a secret hatch in the woods that was concealed under some bushes. He closed it and quickly hurried through the forest, finding a small band of Teen Ninjas flying around the trees on jetshoes. “Dude, we looked everywhere. I don’t see any operatives.” A teen with long orange hair and a lumberjack hat said. “I think Gideon was just trying to punk us. You know how brats are.”

Cheren did know a few Wendys as operatives, but none personally, so he sort of forgot at first: Wendy Corduroy was a TND operative from Sector O, who was entrusted with protecting Sector GF’s secret. But it looks like she had to keep her cover when the ninjas were called to Gravity Falls. Still, for the sake of differentiating, he would call her Corduroy. “Guess again, Wendell.” A nearby, red-haired teen said (hey, that name works, too). “I’m sensing a powerful body of chi nearby! It’s, sniff sniff, kind of hot! It’s over… there!” Karin pointed giddily in Cheren’s direction.

The white-haired half-Fishman, Suigetsu Hozuki hovered above. “Well, isn’t this a find, the Supreme Leader out for a little stroll.”

“Can I ask what you’re doing here?” Cheren clutched his sword.

“Doing stuff that’s none of your business!!” Karin retorted hotly.

“Our boss sent us here to help one of his benefactors.” Suigetsu said, holding his own large sword. “I guess it was true. The same kid who attacked the Corporate Presidents hasn’t gotten his fill. I guess we better do somethin’.” He shot down at Cheren and swung his sword, Cheren clashed back and attempted to slice Suigetsu, but he flew up.

“HAAAAAH!” Karin shot down for some fast-pace punches and kicks, Cheren took blows before jumping away and throwing his Bananarang, but the girl flew up and dodged, then avoided Cheren’s arrows with her Observation Haki. Before he knew it, Cheren was encased inside a bubble of water that originated from Suigetsu’s water-made arms.

“Whoa, dude, I thought we were gonna capture ‘em, not drown!” Corduroy said with concern.

“That was before we found out this kid was Supreme Leader! This kid’s the worst troublemaker of all of them. And the minute we silence him in a water grave,” Cheren was furiously struggling to escape the water, “we’ll be in for the promotion of a lifetime.”

Suigetsu’s water suddenly boiled, so he quickly released to avoid evaporating. Cheren was lit on fire, having gone into Demon State. Suigetsu growled and lashed arms-made-into-Water Whips at him, but Cheren grabbed them both and made them bubble, “Aaah!” forcing Suigetsu to pull away. He whipped his attention to Karin, zipped up, and slashed her armor to pieces, letting her hit the ground.

“Tagging out, man!” Corduroy cried, retreating. A swarm of Teen Ninjas revealed their selves from behind the pine trees, narrowing their sights on the flaming child of anger. They flew at him, Cheren raised his sword as it shone with vicious flames—and everything stopped.

Cheren’s fire vanished, his anger replaced with confusion. Everything had stopped, from the flapping butterflies to the jetshoes’ engines. Everything fell dead quiet. Was this another one of Gravity Falls’ mysteries?

Cheren heard crunching in the grass—another sound, and turned around. A familiar man in a
purple cape, pale skin under brown hair, and a blue shirt with a clock on it, held a scepter with a clock for a head. “Mr. King?” Cheren spoke.

Jagar held a finger by his mouth, gesturing a ‘shush’. He held his cape open and reached to his back pocket. He pulled out a brown book, with a golden, six-fingered hand icon with a “1” on it.

“Journal #1…” Cheren gazed with shock. “Why would you have-"

“I’ll explain why later.” Jagar said calmly. “Let’s entrust this to your friends so they can repair that machine and bring my daughter back.” He calmly approached Cheren and gave him the journal. “I’ll erase all these teens’ memories so they’ll forget why they came.” He turned around and walked away. “Afterward, I’d like you to come back to my house. I want to discuss something with you.”

“Wh…What?”

“I need to explain to you… why we can’t let the Twenty Keys come together.”

**Washington; White House**

“Wah, Little Gideon, it’s a pleasure to see you again.” U.S. President McGarfield swerved his chair around, smiling charmingly at his miniscule partner, who was almost totally hidden behind his office desk. “I hope you didn’t run into any ‘problems’ in that there Gravity Falls.”

“Would wittle old me wun into any problems?” Gideon spoke with an adorable face. “Whatever would you mean, Master President?”

“Nothin’ of the sort.” James brushed the air. “So I trust that our special ‘friend’ is cooperating?”

“Behavin’ like a girl in ballet class. Ah must say I had mixed feelings about working with Bill again, but he’s been mighty fine help. This Author was tellin’ the truth about him. There ain’t no one you can trust better than Bill Cipher!”

Close to the White House was President James’ Elementary School for the Seriously Uneducated. It was the quietest, most peaceful school you would ever find in the world, because all of the children were asleep. They were, however, paying close attention in class, which took place entirely in the Subconscious. Everyone looked half-awake, the dimension was entirely black-and-white, and wobbly. There was only one teacher in the entire school.

“Great job so far, class.” Bill Cipher spoke, holding his golden cane in both hands. “But let’s try it ONE more time. Repeat after me: Ahem. ‘The World Government is our friend.’”

“*The World Government is our friend.*” They droned.

“‘We can live in bliss under the Government’s watchful eye.’”

“We can live in bliss under the Government’s watchful eye.”

“‘America is the Government’s example. We must stand to be the greatest country.’”

“Amer*ica is the Government’s example. We must stand to be the greatest country.*”

“‘The New World Order should not be feared. All hail the New World Order.’” Bill’s eye was peering through their souls.

“The New World Order should not be feared. All hail the New World Order.”
Inside the portal… (Play “Sea Bottom Segue” from Sonic Lost World.)

Act B-3: The Dimensional Byway

“WHOOOOAAAA!” Wendy found herself whirling through a bright, blue dimension; it looked like a tunnel of water, displaying all sorts of surreal images.

“I GOT YA!” MaKayla grabbed Wendy’s arm as she grinded on an energy rail, flipping around it as she threw Wendy to another rail.

“Aaaah!” Wendy naturally grinded along, keeping stable as she viewed around the dimensional tunnel. “Wh-Wh-Where are we?!”

“The Dimensional Byway! Just stay on the path and hopefully we’ll be safe. Otherwise, we could end up anywhere. Let’s try and stick together!”

Their rails were ending, leading to a region where scattered rail parts looped around the tunnel’s surface, so the girls made careful leaps across these rails before landing on a single, longer one. The rail divided in a fork, the girls each taking their own path as either rail mirrored the other on their opposite surface. Wendy and Kayla were upside-down to each other—when the rails reached their end, the girls jumped, kicked off each other, landed on a rail segment, and repeated the process before the two rails intertwined.

Wendy and Kayla spiraled down a narrow, snaky tunnel, then their rails turned straight and unwind as MaKayla grinded several feet lower than Wendy’s rail. Kayla shot a Chrono Beam to hit a switch on her right, which turned a curve in Wendy’s rail to face straight and keep her going. Wendy was coming to a group of propellers that were lifting rail parts, and she had to jump and bounce each one so they lowered down to Kayla’s rail, preventing her from riding off. Both rails became level with one-another as the two girls rode side-by-side.

They had been riding through a vast region of the Dimensional Byway, and bubbles depicting a variety of symbols floated everywhere. “Whoa… I think we’re in the Sea of Worlds.” Kayla said with awe.

“What’s that?” Wendy asked.

“This portal must cut deep within the Dimensional Plain. I wonder how far we’ll travel?”

The byway was growing brighter the deeper they went, forcing Wendy and Kayla to shield their eyes. “Uh-oh!” Kayla spoke up. “The byway’s becoming unstable! I feel a force pulling me the other way… WENDY!”

“KAYLA!” Both girls reached for and grabbed the other’s hands tight. Both felt a magnetic-like pull drawing them the opposite way, the light was shining brighter, they felt each other’s fingers slip from their grasp… “WAAAH!” Inevitably, both were torn away.

Wendy was sent zipping down an alternate tunnel, hurriedly jumping scattered rails in order to stay on track. The tunnel’s direction curved upward, as did the rail, which twisted a few times before leading Wendy over a loop-di-loop. Wendy viewed the bubbles floating around: they depicted smiling and vibrant-looking people, like a girl with blonde hair, a girl with scarlet hair, a dark-haired boy with a cool smirk, a scowling guy with spiky black hair…

Wendy came to another region of scattered rails, in which some of them were more blue and see-through. When Wendy jumped on them, they immediately fell into the spatial abyss, so Wendy had to jump the next rail quickly. The last rail was reaching its end, so Wendy jumped and descended
down the abyss, where the next rail was in sight. She felt the momentum increase as she fell, and it was gone so suddenly when she set foot on the rail. There was nothing else obstructing her path as the rail led her beyond the dimension. The realm ahead morphed into lovely, abstract flower designs, dizzying Wendy’s vision. Then, as she felt her very being stretch, the realm turned white. (End song.)

Unknown city…

“Nnnn…” MaKayla opened her eyes to a blue sky, with few clouds and a sun shining over her. When she sat up, she realized she was on the top of a skyscraper, overlooking a city with a river flowing through the center. “This place feels… familiar…”

Kayla heard a faint whoosh sound and looked to her left. A girl with raven-black hair, wearing a black robe, and strict purple eyes flew by. “Wait, I know her… She’s from the Spirit Kids Next Door…” Kayla remembered the adventure on Arendelle. “She’s… RUKIA!”

The spirit operative slowed to a halt at the sound of her name, turning to MaKayla with surprise. “Who’s…”

Unknown forest

Wendy woke up to leaves swaying above her softly. Sunlight poked through gaps in the trees and shone on her eyes. “Mmmm…” She groggily helped herself stand, exhausted after that journey. She felt around her eyes. “I lost my contacts again… Sigh, Mr. Facilier is going to be upset.”

She heard footsteps quickly trotting across the grass and whipped around. A familiar magenta-haired girl with blue eyes and pretty blue shirt and skirt came from around some trees and stopped at seeing her. “W…Wendy?”

Wendy gaped. “CHELIA!!” Without thinking, she ran at and threw her arms around the teen dancer.

“Waaah!” Chelia yelped, taken aback by the younger girl’s sudden actions. “W-Wendy, it’s nice to see you, too!” She smiled, blushing. “Geez…”

“Chelia, how did you escape??” Wendy looked up and showed the elder her tearing red eyes.

“Escape? From where?”

“From that World Leader!”

“World…?” Chelia looked more closely at her friend. “Wendy… why are your eyes red?”

“What?” Wendy let go of her, slightly offended. “They’ve… always been red.”

“Last I saw, they were brown.”

“That’s just my contacts; come on, Chelia, you know they’re actually red.”

“They… are?”

Silence fell between them. There was clear confusion on both of their faces. Why did they seem to know each other, but it felt like their first meeting all the same? “…Wendy, are you feeling well? Maybe you need someone to take you home.” Chelia took Wendy’s hand and began to lead her along.
“Home? Where’s that?”

“Come on, Wendy, don’t be silly!” Chelia said with a bright smile. “It’s Fairy Tail, of course!”

So yeah, almost all our favorite Gravity Falls hoo-ha. X) Here’s where this crossover takes a real Kingdom Hearts-ish turn. Next time, Wendy and Kayla explore these new and strange worlds.
Original Realms

Chapter Summary

In this strange world, Wendy Marvell goes to Fairy Tail, where the people seem to know her.

This is one of the chapters I’ve been most looking forward to. X) Atbash cryptogram at the end.

Chapter B-18: Original Realms

Portal Chamber

Carla flew around and studied every inch of the portal. There were a few sparking areas, but most of the machine looked properly taken care of. This shiny blue cube in one slot appeared to be a key power source, but Carla had no idea what it was. “So, uh… do you have a master’s in engineering or something?” Dipper asked, questioning the kitten’s technical knowledge.

Carla whipped around and outburst, “Well, at least I’m doing SOMETHING! Are you just going to stand around, because the more time we waste, the longer Wendy could be lost in some multi-dimensional subspace!”

“Okay, calm down! Look, the only way we’ll have any hope of understanding this portal is if we have the journals.” Dipper held up Journal 2 and flipped its pages. “But without the first one, it’s hopeless.”

“Dipper, look!” Mabel called after getting up from searching behind some barrels. “I found it!” She ran over.

“It…It can’t be.” Dipper gaped at the book in her hands. It had a six-fingered hand with a ‘1’.

“JOURNAL NUMBER ONE?!” He excitedly took the book and flipped through its pages. “I don’t believe it! W-Was it just lying around?!”

“I guess so.” Mabel shrugged.

“Th-Th-This is great!” Dipper opened to the pages depicting blueprints. He laid all three journals on the floor, aligning them to make the full blueprint. “Now we might be able to get it working again! Not only that, we can also figure out why the Author made it!”

“Let me see!” Carla flew over, landed in Dipper’s way, and stood over the blueprints. The corresponding pages depicted other parts of the machine. She took the books, flew over to these parts (such as the temperature dials, toxic waste chambers), and compared them to how the books read… “This isn’t right. A few things match up, but other parts are…” She found a page with an empty machine where it looked like something would go. “What is this?”

Dipper came over and looked at this design. “Another part to the portal? Maybe it’s around here some-”
“WAAAAAH!” They heard Mabel screaming, followed by loud banging sounds. The two rushed back in to see Mabel fallen on her back, grappling hook extracted and attached to a metal rectangle. There was now an opening in the wall. “Uhh… I meant to do that?” Mabel said, unsure of herself.

The three entered the hidden chamber revealed by her. The empty machine that the journal depicted was standing before them. “This is it.” Dipper said as he and Carla approached it. “It looks like something goes here. But the journal doesn’t say.” He looked at the page.

Mabel picked up a bar light from a box and turned it on as it emitted a purple light. “Ha ha! Dipper, look!” Mabel shone it on herself. “Do I look _spooooky_?”

“Co-ho-mon, Mabel!” Dipper chuckled, approaching his sister. “We need to focus here.”

Mabel glanced down at the open journal. “Dipper, what’re those white lines?”

He and Carla looked at the journal. The purple light not only exposed the invisible ink, but the machine had a huge, gem-like thing in its chamber. “Is this what the Author used to see his own ink?” Carla thought aloud. “But what is that thing?”

“Wait… I recognize it.” Dipper said. “I saw it once when I visited the KND Museum. It’s the Master Emerald!”

“So can we use that emerald to power the portal?” Mabel asked.

“It appears to be the case.” Carla observed. “If you children know where it is, then I encourage you to get it!”

“You’re right!” Dipper nodded seriously. “We’ll get the others and bring that emerald ASAP! Don’t worry, Carla, we’ll save them before you know it!” He and Mabel ran off in a hurry.

Carla returned to the portal chamber and stared at the disabled device. Her little heart filled with worry. “Wendy… please be safe. …Oh…” Carla touched a paw to her forehead. “My head hurts for some reason… sigh, it’s probably nothing.”

**Dimension “Fiore”**

Chelia brought Wendy to the edge of the forest, standing atop a hill that overlooked a small town. “What’s this place?” Wendy asked.

“It’s Clover Town.” Chelia answered. “It’s in Southeast Fiore.”

“What’s Fiore?”

“The country we live in, of course!” Chelia giggled.

“I’ve never heard of…”

Chelia looked at Wendy with a questionable frown. She touched her friend’s forehead. “You must really feel sick… Hopefully, Fairy Tail will be able to help you.”

“You never told me what that is.”

“Ugh, it’s the guild you work at! Wendy, don’t you remember anything?”

“I remember you!”
“Yeah, but you have a weird story on how we met! Look, we’ll talk about this later, let’s just hop a train and get to Magnolia.”

“Do we need a train? ’Cause we can just run there.”

“Hmhm, hyou’d have to have pretty strong legs to run that far.”

“Yeah, but I’m pretty used to that.” With that, Wendy dashed down the hill, across the town, and Chelia only saw her as a strip of wind.

“WENDY, WAAAAAIIT!!” Chelia cried. Just as fast, Wendy came back in seconds. “When did you GET so fast??”

“I’ve always been fast!” Wendy chuckled. “I kind of thought you were, too.”

“Well, I’m not! I trip a lot, anyway! I admit it seems more efficient, but I can’t keep up with you.”

“It’s okay. I can just carry you like this.” Wendy aimed her wand and yelled, “Reducio!” She shrunk Chelia down to doll size.

“WAAAAAHHH!” The tiny screamed with high pitch. “Where did you learn to do this??”

“I think something’s wrong with your head, too!” Wendy chuckled, picking Chelia up and placing her partway under her dress collar. “Just tell me where to go and I’ll get there in a jiffy!”

“Sure, Wendy.” Chelia smiled confusedly. Boy, she seems really different. I wonder… is this the same Wendy? (Play “Camelot Castle” from Sonic and the Black Knight.)

Stage B-14: Homecoming Kingdom

Mission: Get to Fairy Tail!

Wendy raced down the hill, whooshing across the first village street and evasively dodging the townspeople, who as usual were whipping to face Wendy in surprise. She turned a left street, dodging the trees and jumping the small rivers that flowed in-between parts of the ground. “Wendy, be careful not to hit anything! I don’t wanna go squish!” Chelia yelled.

“I’m sorry, Chelia! I’ll be careful!” Wendy was reaching the edge of town, going up a road that was paved into a hill.

“Wendy, you’re going the wrong way! The train tracks are the other way!”

“Darn it!” Wendy made a loop around a forest path, coming back to town and hitting some Spring Pads that bounced her onto the roofs. Bird-Knights appeared, avians made of dark energy and wearing knight helmets. Wendy cast spells to knock some away, but she also used them to bounce over large gaps between buildings. After making it across the town, Wendy landed at the base of a forest hill, and dashed up as she sidestepped the Spear-Knights (knights wielding long jousting lances and made of the same dark matter).

Wendy found the train tracks, and on Chelia’s instruction, she hopped on and grinded leftward, blowing air behind her to move faster as usual. Shield-Knights sprouted up to thwart her progress, so Wendy had to jump between the twin rails to get around them. The tracks seemed to be steadily curving right, so the forest trees made it impossible to see ahead of them. “We’re about to reach Clover...
“WAAAAAAHH!” Caught completely off guard by the huge train, Wendy instinctively jumped off on her left. They were over Clover Canyon, but she thankfully landed on a cliff path, running down, jumping off the end, and using airbending to kick off a ledge. She flew across the chasm toward a pillar holding the train bridge, kicked off to another ledge, and kicked again before landing on a ground. The canyon was very deep and vast, and the chasm was nothing but fog. “You know, Wendy, some people don’t think this canyon even has a bottom.” Chelia smirked.

“Gulp. I better not fall.” Eye-Knights surrounded Wendy, but she shot them down with quick blasts from her wand. Wendy began to run across a set road atop the canyon, jumping a few small stalagmites and avoiding the Crossbow-Knights. “Chelia, what are these creatures, anyway?”

“They’re knights from a guild called Tartaros. They’ve been appearing a lot lately, it’s kind of worrisome. Still, what I’d like to know is why all these springs are just lying around.”

“That sounds like something worth questioning, too.”

“Look, Wendy! Flying Fish!” When they were reaching a ledge over the canyon, they saw a flock of huge fish with blue scales, yellow faces, big open mouths, and yellow bird wings. Wendy smiled in amazement at the creatures, using them as platforms to get across the chasm. Afterwards, she jumped off on a road within the canyon, following it as it sloped down, turned right, slightly left, then turned flat and straight across a ground that was crumbling. A Crossbow-Knight was launching arrows from the other side, and Wendy avoided them while also sidestepping the weak parts of ground. She cast an Attack Spell on the knight, running past as the road curved right.

She hit a spring at the edge of the cliff, sending the girls flying up to a passing train. She landed on one of the platforms between cars, entered the train, and dashed down the center, scaring all the passengers with the force of her wind. “Sorry, everyone! I’m just in a hurry, usually careful, sorry!” Wendy jumped off the back car and grinded across the tracks before they brought her to a huge train station. Wendy entered the station, swiftly evading the townspeople as she raced up some stairs, and exited onto one of the station’s roof levels.

Wendy used airbending to knock down the Crawl-Knights that were climbing up the sides of the building. She hit a spring in the corner of the roof to bounce to the next level, blew down more Crawl-Knights before reaching another spring, and at the top of the station, she grabbed a zipline and flew down to the rooftops of the city. “You know, Wendy, I don’t recall you being this coordinated in your running, much less jumping across roofs!”

“Actually, it does seem like I’ve been getting more balanced- AAH!” Wendy tripped on the edge of a roof, fell to a lower building as she stumbled on her feet, and when she jumped to the next roof, she collapsed onto her back. “Ow… You okay, Chel?”

“Just dandy…” Chelia was dizzy. Wendy got back up, jumped off this last roof, and began to race across a mountainous region. “This valley cuts straight to Magnolia. With your speed, we’ll get there in no time!” Wendy made a great leap over a huge gap, landing safely on the opposite cliff as it brought her to a steep slope. Wendy was unable to slow down, she sidestepped to avoid the Spear-Knights, but feared jumping would result in a bumpy landing.

She was glad when the ground became flat at the bottom, but when she was about to run across a seemingly flat plain, a series of stone prisms popped up and created a maze. Wendy attacked all the Underworld Knights she encountered, but the maze really impeded her quick progress. Eventually,
she found the exit, and didn’t hesitate to boost up the next hill, down the other side, and then skidded across a river. “Wendy, I still can’t believe how fast you’ve gotten!”

“Chelia, why are you acting like this is the first time we met?”

“It isn’t the first time! But you’re the one who’s acting weird between us, Wendy. …Look! That’s Magnolia! Just a little bit until we reach Fairy Tail!”

They arrived at a very populous town, and Wendy’s first act was to skid across a canal, dodging the people on rowboats, whom were naturally looking at Wendy in surprise. She jumped onto a bridge and zipped right into the town. “Turn right at this next street!” Wendy nodded and turned again, coming toward a great cathedral. “Oops, this is Kardia. My mistake. Um, just go around and go left.”

“Er, okay.” Confused, Wendy ran around the right of the church, curved left and raced down an alleyway. She skidded to halt before some Shield-Knights, but her Lamia Scale was easily able to knock the creatures out. Wendy crossed the bridge of another canal, then raced over a straight road as she attracted the attention of townspeople. She thought she heard one of them say, “Wait, is that Wendy Marvell?”

Wendy bypassed the South Gate Park, where friends and acquaintances were casually hanging about. She swerved left, crossing another town street and making it to a central street. “Wait, there it is! On the right!” Chelia pointed. “The guild hall and Kardia are directly across from each other! Silly me.”

“That’s it, huh?” Wendy saw the building in the distance. “Okay.” With a determined look, Wendy boosted across town, dodged all the citizens, and made it to the building. (End song.)

It was about three stories tall, had red roofs, and looked like a church itself, given the belfry with the big gold bell up top. An orange banner showed a symbol Wendy couldn’t make out, and the sign above the gates read Fairy Tail. “Wendy, can I get big now?”

“Oh, right!” Wendy put her friend on the ground, aimed her wand, and called, “Engorgio.” Chelia stretched back to normal.

“Phew. Now if I could ask you to never tell my guildmates about that. Well… here it is!”

“‘Fairy Tail’?” Wendy read the sign. “I thought it was spelled the other way?”

“No, it’s spelled that way on purpose. It’s based on the idea that fairies have tails, which is what that symbol’s supposed to be. …Wendy, I asked you the same thing and that was your answer.” Chelia stared at her weirdly. “Are you trying to quiz me?”

“N-No! I… So, is this where you live, too?”

“Hmhm, no, I work for Lamia Scale. …Look, Wendy, since you have amnesia, I’ll introduce you, anyway. Come on, it’ll be alright.”

Chelia held a hand out, giving a kind and trustful smile. Wendy stared at it, then slowly reached over and took her hand.

The pink-haired mage guided her past the gates and to the front door. Chelia knocked on the door. The person to answer was a tall, teen girl with long white hair and wearing a red dress. “Oh? Well, hello, Chelia!” The girl greeted with a smile. “If you’re looking for Wendy, she…” However, she reopened her eyes and noticed the blue-haired child. “Wendy?”
“I found her in the forest.” Chelia replied. “She looked a little lost and… dizzy. And, for some reason, her eyes are red.”

“Red?” The girl – Mirajane – looked at Wendy’s eyes and noticed this. Wendy remained silent, confused as to how this woman seemed to know her. “Well, come on inside, you two. We’ll straighten this out.” The two airbenders followed her into the building.

“Hey, everyone!” Mirajane called to all the inhabitants sitting at the tables. “Chelia’s here, and she brought Wendy!”

“Hi, Wendy!” Levy greeted, a teen girl with short light-blue hair and an orange top.

“Back already?” a tan-skinned girl in a bikini – Cana – asked. “You didn’t scrape your knee and cry, did you?” She proceeded to drink a barrel of beer.

“Yeah, Wendy, weren’t you on a mission with Team Natsu?” a boy with spiky dark-purple hair, and a red vest that exposed his abs, asked.

Wendy gasped at seeing him. “Romeo! What’re you doing here?”

“Huh?” Romeo looked confused. “I… kinda live here, sorta. I’m a Fairy Tail wizard like you.”

“Like… me?”

The people all faced Wendy and noticed the look on her face. She really didn’t look like herself. For one, she had red eyes and pointy ears, and the guild mark on her right shoulder was missing. “Wendy, what exactly were you doing before I found you?” Chelia asked.

“…” Wendy looked down shyly, not sure how to respond. “I… I was going through a portal with a friend of mine… but we got separated. Before that, I was traveling with other friends in Gravity Falls, then we…”

“Gravity Falls?” Mirajane repeated.

“I’ve never heard of a place like that.” Elfman said suspiciously. He was a muscular man with spiky white hair.

“Me neither.” Gajeel replied. He had long, spiky black hair, and metal nails in several parts of his body. “Do you think she could be from Edolas?”

“The Edolas Wendy was taller, and…” Pantherlily (a small black panther) stared at Wendy’s chest. “Well, yes, taller. However, perhaps she could be from another world, like Edolas.”

“Do you think you could tell us more about… where you came from?” asked Levy.

Wendy felt a little awkward with everybody staring at her, eagerly expecting a story. She never felt this popular in a crowd before. Wendy decided to tell them about herself, how she was an orphan with an airbending curse, forced to run around the world. She told them how she met Dr. Facilier, who became her teacher, and she found a weird winged cat named Carla. She mentioned meeting Chelia before, and then how she was sucked into a machine called the Multiverse Portal, along with MaKayla.

“Hey, slow down, I can’t keep up that fast!” Gajeel spoke up.

“Good thing you’ve got me, right?” Levy giggled.
“So you’re a different Wendy,” Romeo recapped, “but you know a Chelia, a Carla, and a ‘me’ from your world. What about the rest of us?”

“No, I…I don’t know any of the rest of you.” Wendy replied. “Wait, there’s a Carla in this world, too? W-What’s she like, what kind of creature is she?”

“She’s from a sentient cat race known as Exceed, like myself.” Pantherlily replied.

“Exceed?…”

“Boy, she seems really confused.” Levy said to the others. “I’m not sure what to do…”

“You don’t have to worry about it.” Wendy said, turning around to leave. “Maybe I’ll find a way back if I go back to the forest. I don’t want to trouble you guys.”

“Wait a minute, don’t go!” Mirajane grabbed her arm. “We wanna help you.”

“Why? I’m not the Wendy you know…”

“Who cares!” Levy said perkily. “Any Wendy is still Wendy. And even if you weren’t, we can’t just ignore someone who needs help.”

“Let’s go down to the library and see if we can find any books about this.” Mirajane suggested.

“Can I come, too?” Chelia asked.

“Sure, if you want to!”

“Wendy, feel free to make yourself at home.” Levy told her as they headed to a different room. “I figure traveling between dimensions can make one exhausted.”

“W-…” Wendy wanted to say something along the lines of, ‘don’t really know you very well because we only met twice. Ha ha ha…”

“Oh…” Romeo frowned. “That’s fair, ’cause I don’t exactly talk to Wendy much. Well, maybe we can get to know each other now. I’ll tell you about our world, and you tell me about… yours.”

“Um… Sure, that sounds fun!”

“Oooooooo,” Cana moaned from her table, wobbling drunkily, “Romey’s got a daaa-aaaate…” Romeo flushed. He began to lead Wendy outside. “So, what kind of person… is your Wendy like?” she asked.

“Oh… She’s awesome.”

MaKayla’s world

“Rukia!” MaKayla called to the black-robed spirit girl. “Remember me? We met back on
“Arendelle?” Rukia asked. “I’ve never seen you before. How do you know my name?”

“What are you talking about? You helped my friend, Miyuki out? The white-haired girl? Then we helped you guys beat those Arrancar.”

“If this is some trick to manipulate my mind, I won’t fall for it!” Rukia clutched her sword hilt and threatened to draw it.

“No no no no!” Kayla waved her hands frantically. “Please, I…I’m just a little lost and confused! Can you… tell me where this is?”

“Why don’t you explain yourself first, stranger? I’m sensing some kind of spiritual pressure from you, so I can tell you’re not an ordinary human.”

Still confused over Rukia’s lack of memory, MaKayla explained her position in Sector IC, she was a timebender, and she could separate her soul from her body. “I don’t understand any of that other stuff,” Rukia said, “…but if you can separate your soul, does that mean you’re a Soul Reaper?”

“You mean a Grim Reaper?”

Both of them were silent for a moment. “Hold on…” MaKayla thought aloud, remembering the portal she just fell through. “Is it possible… I’m in another dimension?”

“Another dimension?” Rukia repeated.

“Um… Can you get me off this building first?” Kayla asked with a blush, almost forgetting that she was on a hundred-foot skyscraper. “Then you can tell me about this place.”

**On a city street minutes later**

“So this universe is composed of three dimensions,” Kayla recapped as she and Rukia walked downtown, “the Living World, Soul Society, and Hueco Mundo. Sounds kinda like our Spirit and Underworlds. Except we also have a Negaverse, a Netherverse, and a Dream World…”

“The point is that you’re definitely not from around here.” Rukia stated. “Whatever this portal is you mentioned, I’m afraid it could create an upset on our dimensional plain. How do we send you back?”

“I don’t know. We just found the portal machine recently, and it was constructed by our enemies. It sucked in me and…!” Kayla’s eyes widened. “I got separated from Wendy! She has blue hair and a green dress; I don’t know if she landed around here or if she landed in a different universe!”

“Calm down. Look, I promise to help you in any way I can. I’ll get the other Soul Reapers to help, too, but I can’t promise you they’ll be very trusting. However, there’s one person in particular I think would have knowledge on the subject. We’ll visit him first.”

“He’s not crazy, is he?” Kayla asked with a sheepish smile. “I’m just wondering if I should brace.”

Rukia chuckled. “Well, he’s… pretty sane. But there is that unpredictable side to him, though.”

**Urahara Shop**

Rukia brought Kayla to a small, wooden shop in a downtown alley. There were two kids sweeping
the ground outside: a boy with red hair and blue shorts, and a thin girl with black hair in pigtails, sandals, and a pink skirt with white polka dots. Both of them wore a white shirt with red Japanese letters that read *Urahara Shop*.

“Hm?” The redhead boy looked up when the two girls approached. “Check it out, Ururu. Rukia’s back with some other chick.”

“Hello, Jinta and Ururu.” Rukia greeted them. “This is MaKayla. She’s… lost, and we thought Kisuke could help her find her way home.”

Kayla gasped at seeing them. Her most clear memory was of a Girls’ Boxing Tournament on Moonbase. “Jinta? Ururu? From Sector JP?!”

“Who’s from what now?” Jinta asked.

“Jinta, don’t play dumb. I remember you fighting in that boxing tournament for girls!”

Jinta flinched and blushed. Ururu asked, “Jinta-kun, when did you do that? Are you a pervert?”

“NO!” Jinta pointed panickingly at Kayla. “That girl’s a liar!! She’s an evil spirit of deception out to get us! Ururu, brace yourself!” He grabbed his broom. “Get ready to fight for your dignity!”

“But I’m too young for fanservice!” Ururu covered her chest.

“Please, just relax!” Rukia yelled. “We think MaKayla comes from a different dimension. She claimed to have met me in the past, but her story was unfamiliar. Let us speak to Urahara.”

“Fine, the old man is inside.” Jinta said with a scowl. “Go and confront him about his sexual desires, not mine!”

“I wouldn’t even have known you had some, were it not for you telling me.” Kayla remarked as she and Rukia entered the shop.

“I DO NOT!!” Jinta screamed. Ururu blushed and backed away from the boy.

Rukia led Kayla to the back of the shop, finding a man in a black jacket and a white- and green-striped bucket hat. “Thought I sensed your spiritual pressure, Rukia. But who’s the one beside you?”

“Kisuke, this is MaKayla. She’s from another dimension. Kayla, this is Kisuke Urahara. He owns this shop.”

“You can call me Mr. Hat-and-Clogs.” Kisuke stood up and turned around. He wore a green shirt and pants under his jacket, hid his face with a fan, and was barefoot. He had pale yellow hair.

“Ha ha, okay!” Kayla beamed. “You can call me Ms. Hat-and-Slippers.”

“Well, the ‘MK’ on your shirt’s gonna make me call you that.” Kisuke closed his fan, showing his cool smile. His hat shadowed his eyes. “So, what’s the situation, again?”

“I was sucked into a portal and landed in this town.” Kayla recapped. “I know who Rukia and Jinta are because they work for my organization, the Kids Next Door. I think I’m in some kind of parallel universe.”

“Kisuke,” Rukia spoke, “I know this is sudden, and I don’t really understand it either, but if nothing is done—”
“Now, hold on.” Kisuke interrupted. “I seem to remember something like this happening. It was a few years ago, when I was walking around the forest, I met a strange man in a brown coat who claimed to be from another universe. He called himself Ford.”

“Ford?” Kayla asked.

“Yes. He told me he constructed a portal whose purpose was to pierce far into the Dimensional Byway, cross the Sea of Worlds, and find the Original Worlds.”

“The Original Worlds?”

“Of course,” Kisuke laughed, “naturally, I just HAD to ask him what the hell he was talking about! And before we knew it, we became close friends, and we would be pen pals if we knew how to send letters across universes. He told me about his world, showed me his journal…”

“Then this Ford must have been the Author of Dipper’s journal!” Kayla realized. “Mr. Hat-and-Clogs, what happened to Ford? He must have gotten back home!”

“Well, of course. Out of nowhere, a powerful beam of light fell down from the sky, and Ford bid me farewell before jumping in. He claimed it was the call-back system of his portal. He said it was dangerous for the portal to stay on for too long, so he sets it to switch off after being used, but it is programmed to self-activate at a later time and track down his location.”

“So if I just wait around, then the portal will reactivate and I can go back?”

“I don’t know. But here’s something else a little interesting: Ford showed me a drawing in his journal: a cube with strange writing on it. Back when I worked for the 13 Court Guard Squads, I came upon a stone pyramid deep in the dungeon cells. Its writing was similar to the writing on Ford’s drawing. In fact, I think I still have the picture.” Kisuke went beside his counter in the store and pulled out an old, wrinkled paper. “See? Drew the pyramid myself.”

MaKayla studied the picture. The pyramid had an eye on its tip, like Bill Cipher. The writing was indeed similar. “The Original Worlds… the Gibberish Rocks… so they are connected. Mr. Hat-and-Clogs… do you have any idea of the purpose of this pyramid? Do you know anyone else who’s… interacted with it in some way?”

“Hmm…” Kisuke stroked his chin. “Now that I think about it… when we were kids, I recall Aizen sneaking into the dungeons just for fun. …When he came back, that’s when he started acting weird.”

“Aizen?” The name sparked a reaction in Rukia. “Well, did you ask him what he saw in there?”

“Not really. To be honest, I just thought he saw two prisoners doing adult things.”

“Who’s Aizen?” MaKayla asked.

“It’s a long story.” Rukia replied.

“Anyway, I don’t know if your portal is gonna call you back at some point.” Kisuke said again. “But I doubt anyone in Soul Society will have any clue as what to do, so I guess you’re stuck here. Why not go for a walk, get some fresh air.” He said in a laid back fashion. “You know, since you’re new in town, I’ll offer you some free samples of my candy.”

“That’d be nice.” Kayla chuckled. “My money’s probably no good here.”
“Maybe I should stay with you until you can go home.” Rukia offered. “You mentioned that there are Hollows in your world, well that’s no different here. I should protect you.”

“Hey, I can protect myself, just so ya know.” Kayla folded hands behind her head. “But I appreciate it.”

After she took some candy from Urahara’s shop, she and Rukia began their casual stroll downtown. *He said it was only a few years ago when he met Ford.* Kayla thought. *Just how recently did the Author vanish, exactly? Or maybe… the Multiverse Portal can travel through Space AND Time!*

**Negaverse; Dnalhsa Park**

“Everyone, I hereby call this meeting of Sector Leaders to order!” Ynohtna announced to the operatives gathered around the park fountain, which the bucktoothed boy was standing on. The participants included Aroru, Ydolem, and Asia. “Because of Egrog and AlyakAm’s recent treachery, Cousin Nerehc has decreed that Sector -IC needs a new leader. And we have all decided that Numbuh -6:00m.a., Ikuyim Latsyrc, is most appropriate for the job!” There was little applause as Ikuyim came to stand by Ynohtna.

“Oh, Ynohtna!” Ikuyim proclaimed happily. “I promise to do my absolute best to help my sector recover. Honestly, even Yrret is having a hard time being good again, but Egrog and Alyak, too?? It really tears at my heartstrings!”

“Why are we having this meeting outside?!” Sector -JP leader, Nirak whined, flailing her arms. “My shoes are getting all dirty, and there’s so many bugs!”

“I think a gathering of friends in fresh air livens our spirits and boosts our creativity!” Ynohtna cheered.

“The air might be more breathable than it used to,” Asia replied, “but it’s still smelly enough to derive us from focus.” She sprayed some freshener.

“Maybe, but we’re steadily getting there. Look at this fountain, for instance!” The Nega-Sector W leader turned to look in the water. “It’s so clean now, we can see our reflections! And look how shiny it is. …” The fountain began to glow. “Eh?”

“WAAAAAH!” Five figures came flying out of the fountain, plopping on the ground before the leaders. Ikuyim approached and studied the group of 7-year-olds.

“Huh? Ynohtna, it’s your Positive!” Ikuyim pointed at the barefoot boy who looked like him.

“YOOOO!” Another person flew out of the fountain and landed on his face in the grass. His lower half was propped up before falling down, then he jumped to his feet. “Yo, yo!” Killer Bee, the ninja rapstar, rapped. “I was travelin’ on a stormy island when I saw these kids, they beat the snot out of some god with this, supah-dupah thundered-up angel, then the Goddess o’ Light sent us to this world with a opposite angle, fools, ya fools!”

“Owww… where are we…” Anthony moaned as they helped their selves up.

“’Tis the Negaverse, fair enough.” Fybi observed. “The air is noxious.”

“You said it, Cous.” Asia remarked.

“Anthony!” Ynohtna jumped down to hug him from behind. “Nice to see you again! I missed you so.”
“I didn’t miss you, Shoe Boy.” Anthony broke away from him. “The only reason we’re here is ’cause Palutena sent us.”

“We were under attack by one of the World Leaders from our world.” Aranea explained. “Palutena thought we would be safe in Ynohtna’s care.”


“Yeah, but we don’t like it.” Anthony stated. “On the bright side, it feels nice to be on solid ground again.” He brushed his foot along the pavement.

“Hey, are you an earthbender?” Ikuyim asked.

“Yeah, so what?”

“That’s funny! I’m an earthbender, too!” She pointed at her bare feet.

“Oh. Well, you’re already cooler than your Positive.”

“Anthony, maybe Ikuyim can teach you some new things.” Sally smiled intuitively. “You were in the middle of training before we had to help Fybi.”

“Shyeah, but Tom was a lavabender.” Anthony folded his arms in a haughty fashion. “I bet Ikuyim doesn’t do anything close to that.”

“Well, my sister is a lavabender,” Ikuyim laughed, “but I doubt she would be a good teacher. But Anthony, have you ever heard of Nature Crystals?”

“No?”

“They’re supernatural crystals that grow from the Heart of the World and have unique properties. They’re very fluent with a planet’s very life force. I first learned of my earthbending when I trained to sense these crystals!”

“Okay, so you can sense magic crystals. But I wanna learn earthbending to fight, how does that help me?”

“Fools, ya fools!” Killer Bee rapped. “If nature and elements were used to battle, every bender would be an offender! Then their brothers go tattle, and that’s immature, but we wanna be mature, that’s why it rhymes with nature, ya dig?”

“Ha ha ha ha!” Ikuyim laughed with a sunny expression. “I think what this man means is, you’ll only get stronger by bonding with your element! Don’t just focus on the parts that would help you battle better, you have to know why your element is so wonderful to begin with!”

“I already know all that nature crud.” Anthony stated. “Chiri taught it to me, how the earth is a living organism that ‘cares for its children like a mother’ or somethin’. I’m already pretty good at Seismic Sense.”

“This much is true, Anthony, but there’s a lot more you need to learn.” a woman’s voice said.

“Well, I wanna get ta learning the important stuff before I… Wait, whut?” The boy looked around in confusion.

“Look!” Ynohtna pointed at the fountain. A bright projection of Goddess Palutena rose from the water as the Negatives gazed in awe.
“Goddess Palutena…” Asia stared.

“I had time to whip up this self-aware hologram to tell you a few things.” Palutena said. “Anthony, you are aware that you are a member of the Granite Family, who are said to be the leaders of the Four Earthbender Families. But did you know that, on many occasions throughout history, the Granites have always been taught by the other families?”

“Um… no. Wait, so did my mom learn from the other families?”

“Well, she never had the chance to. But don’t be fooled just because she made Logia. If you really want to become stronger, you will have to train under the other families. Your mom and your sister taught you what the Granites should know, and Tom of the Sovites was kind enough to be your teacher… You’ll be happy to know that the other families have kids who are still learning their abilities as well. I think they’re the ones you should train with.” She gave a smile.

“So, shouldn’t my sister train with them, too?” Anthony cocked a brow.

“Oh, let your sister mature a little more. She’s still so young and developing.”

“My butt.”

“That’s Anthony, Ikuyim here is the daughter of the Latsyrc Family. They are part of the Negaverse’s own Noble Earthbenders, for their ability to bend crystals and gems. They may not be infamous in their own history, but you can be the very first Granite to learn from them.”

“Hmm… Doesn’t sound bad.” Anthony figured. “So do I have to learn from the other Nega-Families?”

“Not unless you wanna perform dark arts.” Palutena said sheepishly. “Ikuyim should serve as a good teacher for now. But when you return to the Posiverse, search for Shelly Johnson, the daughter of the Quartzite Family. Her specialty is sandbending.”

“But what about the fourth family?” Sally asked.

“The Hornfels daughter still hasn’t awakened herself, yet. But when she does, I’ll tell you.” The goddess winked. “I’m about to fade off, so I wish you the best of luck. Be strong, Anthony, Fybi, and Harvey. Your future struggles are not far.” And she was gone.

“…So the Hornfels is a girl. Fantastic.” Anthony rolled his eyes.

“Why did she mention you, Harvey?” Aranea asked. “I know Fybi’s a Light, and Anthony’s the leader, but why you?”

“I dunno.” Harvey swung his yo-yo. “Maybe she thinks I’m sweet!”

“Whatever.” Anthony faced Ikuyim. “Okay, Crystal Girl, teach me how to crystalbend.”

“Haha, I’m not a super-smart teacher, either!” Ikuyim blushed, scratching her head. “In fact, I really don’t know any good training grounds for my style. Maybe we’ll just do some warm-up exercises over there.”

“Better than nothing.” Anthony said as they adjourned a few yards away. “I just wanna shake off the skysickness.”

Medusa watched them from afar, under the shade of a tree. “Thankfully, I happen to know the
perfect training ground.” She smirked.

**Magnolia, Fiore**

Three hours passed since Wendy came to this world. She had been exploring Magnolia with Romeo, who offered to buy Wendy ice cream (since her money was worthless in this world). Now they were at the South Gate Park, sitting under a lone tree. Romeo told her how Fairy Tail recently competed in the Grand Magic Games, where their Wendy met Chelia, he mentioned how the founder of their guild was a spirit girl called Mavis… And Wendy told him about element bending, which was kind of like their own elemental magic, but it wasn’t… Romeo could detect Wendy’s confusion by her own explanation.

“The truth is, I’m still a student.” Wendy said with a blush. “Not even my teachers know the difference between magic and bending.”

“Some teachers!” Romeo chuckled.

He felt a tinge of delight when Wendy shared in the laugh. “I guess so! …” They both sat silent for a moment, gazing up at the pretty blue sky. “Hm… It’s so weird, talking about different worlds and universes like this.” Wendy mentioned. “We’re acting like I just came from another country.”

“I know, I almost forget.” Romeo blushed. “You look and act just like our Wendy… If it weren’t for your eyes, I wouldn’t tell you apart.”

“So, is your Wendy… really popular? Everyone else seems to like her.”

“Well, I think everyone in Fairy Tail likes each other the same. It’s kind of our policy. But our Wendy wasn’t sure of that at first, she had a lot of trouble fitting in… But in a way, I guess she is popular.”

“Hmm…” Wendy looked down, smiling at the humorous thought that she had so many friends in another universe. “I guess your Wendy… wouldn’t want someone like me stealing her friends.”

“Are you kidding?? Two Wendys would be the greatest thing ever!”

“Huh?”

“Uh, n-nothing.” Romeo flushed. “What I meant was… I’m sure our Wendy would be happy to welcome you. I don’t know what it’s like in your homeworld, but it’s hard to find a better place than Fairy Tail.”

“There you two are!” The two turned right to see Mirajane. “I had a feeling you lovebirds would be here.”

“Ghhhh!” Romeo flushed, Wendy giggling at his reaction. “We’re not lovebirds. …So, did you find anything, Mira-nee?”

“I’m sorry…” Mira frowned with regret. “We can’t find any books that talk about ‘Gravity Falls,’ ‘element bending,’ ‘Bill Cipher,’ or any of that stuff Wendy described. You might have to stay with us for a while. Is that all right?”

Romeo turned to Wendy. The girl thought for a second, before giving a big smile. “Of course it’s fine! As long as it isn’t a huge burden for you.”

“Not at all! Come on back to the guild and we’ll give you something to eat if you’re hungry.”
At the guild hall, Wendy was given some slices of strawberry cake, orange gelatin with little blueberries inside, and juice to wash it down. Romeo’s father, Macao and his friend, Wakaba thrilled Wendy with stories of their exciting adventures, and when they brought up what a catch they were with ladies, Mirajane smacked them out of anger, and Romeo shrank in embarrassment. Cana, who was still drunk, found delight in picking Wendy up and feeling how light she was. She questioned if Wendy’s breasts were smaller than their Wendy’s, making Wendy blush.

Before they knew it, it was nighttime. Team Natsu still hadn’t come back, yet, but since Wendy’s room in the Fairy Hills would be left unoccupied, they found no harm in letting Wendy sleep there. But first, Levy and Mirajane invited her to a mini-sleepover to get to know her better. During her stories, they painted each other’s nails and brushed their hair. They were sad how Wendy spent most of her life alone and homeless, but her ability to run fast was so cool, they wanted to hear details about her adventures. So Wendy told them every little jump, skid across water, and train-track-grinding that she remembered, making body motions to emphasize the excitement.

When she went to sleep in their Wendy’s bed, with the wrinkles and texture left by its owner, it really felt like something she had lain on. It made her feel more like this was her original home.

*This world really isn’t so bad. Maybe... I could get used to it here. I guess I should help them look for a way to go back. Oh well... I’m not in a hurry.*

> **If people really have parallels from Original Worlds,**
> **What if those people went to those worlds?**
> **Would they be treated the same as their Originals? Be welcomed by friends and family alike?**
> **I wonder, if a person were to travel to their Original World,**
> **Would they feel as though they always belonged in that world?**
> **Depending on how great their life is there, they might forget it isn’t their real home.**
> **Or perhaps it always has been their real home. What if our people and Originals are one in the same?**
> **That’s what I told him I wanted to find out.**
> **-Diary of Stanford Pines**

Pretty important chapter. Not only are we seeing some Original Worlds, but we got foreshadowing! So behold the worlds of *Bleach* and *Fairy Tail*. Next time, an Augustus level. Farewell, kids. Here’s your code.

*HEV’OO NZGFIV ZG GSV ILLGH*
Undersea Headquarters Sanitization Committee

Chapter Summary

Team Emily infiltrates Plankton’s Undersea Mansion. Cheren Uno has a talk with Jagar King.

Warning: Spoilers for those who aren’t caught up with *Gravity Falls*. Today’s codes use the Atbash Cipher.

Chapter 31: Undersea Headquarters Sanitization Committee

King Household

Cheren’s never been to the Kings’ house before; add that to the hundreds of other operatives he doesn’t associate with much. The interior was fancy with elegant-looking chairs and carpet, as well as old paintings. Rely on timebenders to be more into the classics. Jagar King walked in with two cups of tea, one for Cheren. “Hope you like Koopa Tea.”

“Why not.” Cheren mumbled sarcastically, having a sip while Jagar sat on the couch beside him.

“Mr. King, I didn’t really feel comfortable leaving my operatives behind. I assume what you want to tell me is important.”

“Well, first, the journals…” Jagar had little spirit in his somber voice. “The person who wrote those journals was my father. Stanford Pines.”

Cheren swallowed a large glob of tea. “R…Really?”

“My original birth name was Ruford Pines. My father was always very obsessed with uncovering paranormal secrets, even while his wife, Judy King was pregnant with me. He created the Multiverse Portal with Bill Cipher’s help, but then something terrible happened, so my father had to leave where Bill couldn’t find him. He entrusted his first journal to my mom to hide, then demanded that we drop the name ‘Pines’ and call ourselves by Mom’s maiden name. He even went as far as to rename me. I believe his exact words were…”

“Listen to me: his name is NO longer Ruford. Ch-Change it to something else, like Jagar; Jagar King! E-Except pronounce it like Hagar, who names their kid that?!”

“I was a little over a year old, and I had already displayed timebending. My mom never actually told me any of this; I was able to see into my own past after becoming the Ghost of Time.”

“But if your last name is Pines, wouldn’t that mean Dipper and Mabel-”

“-Are my uncle, Sherm’s grandkids, and George and Kayla’s cousins.”

“Sigh, now *Gravity Falls* is ruined for me.” Cheren sighed sadly. He shook back to attention, “S-So what happened with your father and Bill?”

“My father achieved the impossible: he created a Dimension Transportifier that actually linked with the Original Worlds. You may know that our universe is one that was born from mixing
hundreds of other universes, through something called Dimensional Fusion. The ‘Original Worlds’ are the universes where parts of our dimension was taken from. People, places, events, those were taken from the Original Worlds to create this one. But those worlds are very far away along the Dimensional Byway. Creating a machine that could actually take you to them would consume tremendous amounts of power. That kind of power is dangerous for the universe. That’s why my father wanted to stop Bill from using it for his own gain.”

“And what ‘gain’ did Bill want from it?”

“. . .” Jagar clutched his Chrono Staff and looked down. “This is what I wanted to talk to you about…” He looked up at Cheren with as much emotion – in the form of seriousness – his blue eyes would display. “You all have to stop your quest for the Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses!”

“What?! But wouldn’t we be able to save everybody from the Apocalypse?!”

“The Apocalypse is going to happen either way, but the results are actually different. There are two gates that maintain the unstable energy in our universe, the Time Gate and Space Gate. When Arceus unleashed his wrath 20 years ago, both of those gates suffered incredible damage. The Great Clock was given the greatest attention when fixing, but the Space Gate – the Nexus – was still weak. In truth, Cheren, the person who instigated the Apocalypse… was Dimentia’s brother, Dimentio.”

Cheren’s pupils shrunk with anger and horror. “Dimentio? . . . The one that almost destroyed everything two months ago?!”

“Yes. Dimentio tried to destroy all matter in the universe by controlling and destroying the Nexus, which controls all of the unstable Space Chi in the cosmos. Nebula and my daughter defeated him and restored the Nexus to a safer condition, but it wasn’t enough. By the end of this month, the Nexus will truly start to falter. Unstable Space Energy will begin to burst free from the moons – which are normally the primary entries to the Netherverse. When that happens, all planets will be destroyed by their power. Arceus will only rescue a choice few, so that they may help construct the New World.”

“But what about the Twenty KEYS?! We’re trying to find the Keys to open the Time Gate, so that EVERYONE can escape to the New World safely!”

“How do you plan to fit a whole UNIVERSE of people into the Time Gate?!”

Cheren clenched his teeth and looked down. He hadn’t thought about that. “It won’t work.” Jagar stated. “Arceus may have approved the hunt for the Twenty Keys, but it’s far too dangerous. The Time Gate is what’s maintaining all the unstable Time Chi. Letting all of that energy loose into this universe will create worse cataclysm than the Nexus.”

“But if we DON’T find the Keys, jillions more people might die! You just said Arceus approved the hunt, why wouldn’t HE know all of this?!”

“Because he DOESN’T! The only reason I was able to determine this is because of-!”

Jagar stopped himself. Cheren stared up at him curiously. “Because of. . . ?”

Jagar sighed, sitting on the couch as he spoke more calmly. “There’s a demon.”

“I fight demons.”
“No, it’s nothing like Demise, Malladus, or Majora! This demon is more powerful than anything you can possibly imagine, and his name is ____! …! His name is ____! …” Jagar held his throat with shock.

Cheren cocked a brow. “Couldn’t think of a good name for your crappy story?”

“I…I can’t say his name!”

“Oh, lemme guess: VOLDEMORT.”

“No, I literally can’t say his name! I-I don’t under… His name is spelled _ _ _ _ _ _ ! Hold on!” Jagar ran off to get a paper and pencil. He drew the first line- “Sspk!” the pencil sparked, the line faded away.

Cheren glared. “…Mr. King, you’re full of crap. I bet the reason you don’t want us to find the Keys is because… ‘cause you’re The King.”

“What?”

“You’re The King of the World Government!” Cheren got up and walked around the opposite side of the table, pointing accusingly at Jagar. “The same one who used that Octagon or whatever to kill my dad, and for SOME wild and crazy reason, you don’t want us to stop the Apocalypse!”

“I am NOT The King!” Jagar shouted, standing upright.

“Then who IS The King? You must know that, Ghost of Time.”

“I don’t know who he is-”

“WHAT A LOAD OF BULL!” Cheren stomped the short table.

“Cheren, you’re just going to have to trust me on this, trust me when I say not to find the Twenty Keys-”

“Then tell me what’s gonna happen if we do. The minute we bring all of the Keys to the Time Gate, after EVERYTHING we’ve freaking been through, what’s gonna happen?”

Jagar clutched his staff and looked down again. How he desperately tried to find a good answer. “I don’t know. . . I can’t see. . anything…”

Cheren calmed down and looked closely at the man’s features. Jagar trembled, stuttered in a fashion that meant… he was telling the truth. He really couldn’t see… so he was afraid. The Ghost of Time, unable to see what’s going to happen. “Mr. King… I don’t know what’s going to happen, either. I even get the feeling I might… die. But you can’t just sit around and cry away your fear. You have to take a chance. That’s why… we’re going to find the Twenty Keys. We’re going to save as many people as we can.” Cheren passed him an assuring smile before walking to the exit—

He froze in time, mid-step. Jagar walked over and picked him up like a statue. “I’m afraid… I can’t trust your word over mine.” Jagar said. “Your friends can’t be allowed to find the Keys. I don’t want to harm them, though. Without their Supreme Leader, they may be discouraged either way. It might by some time.” Jagar carried Cheren into the basement, setting him in a corner. He left the room and shut the door. Cheren’s frozen, assuring smile went unchanged in the darkness.

Under the sea; Dr. Cooper’s submarine
Emily’s square-spectacled eyes focused on the tiny tray under the microscope with pure attention. Her blue eyes narrowed on them for several minutes, her brain pulsed trying to determine an answer. “…Seven-million-and-four?”

“NOOOOO!” Sheldon Cooper cried. “There are FIVE million and forty-THREE! Honestly, this is the one good use Amy had for these germs, and you’re treating this like a joke!”

Emily stomped around to face him, “Well, I’m sorry if I haven’t been able to perfect a sight-based martial art in less than two days!”

“Holeh SEACOW, Emily’s not PERFECT at something!” Sarah exclaimed. She and her brother were on the second-floor couch, watching the sea pass by in the window.

“Call the fraud police!” Gary yelled.

“For your information, I never said I was perfect… with physical body skills!” Emily retorted. “I never planned to learn ANY martial art, let alone Haki!”

“And yet, you deliberately guessed the number of nails that make up my lab!” Sheldon argued. “Miss Garley, you were allowed in the company of Sheldon Cooper for over 36 hours since our meeting, not being able to learn Observation Haki is your fault, not mine.”

Emily tiredly slumped away from the microscope. “Well, I’m officially too weary to embrace the beauty of microorganisms. I’m gonna lie down.” She was about to settle down on a large bed in the corner.

“Ne-Wai—HAAAANG on…” Sheldon stopped her before she did so. “That’s MY bed, yours is right there.” He pointed at a lanky metal bed against the wall, about Emily’s own width. For a minute, she thought that was a stretch bed.

“Why can’t YOU sleep on that one?”

“Khh! Now you’re only acting silly; unless you intend to recite a passage from E.M. Snickering’s beloved children’s book, ‘The Tall Man From Cornwall’.”

“Who?”

Sheldon raised a finger, gesturing to wait, and walked over to the skinny bed. He turned on a radio and played a jaunty sailor tune (Mrs. Puff’s Theme from Spongebob) before sitting on the bed with his legs across it; his entire lower body stretched the length of the bed. He recited the poem in rhythm with the music.

“There ONCE was a tall man from Cornwall: Whose length had exceeded his bed. My body fits on it, but barely upon it, There’s no ROOM for my big Cornish head!” He lied down completely flat—his upper-body couldn’t fit on the bed, so he was lain diagonally, uplifted by the head side’s fence.

Emily cleared her throat and recited her own poem: “There once was a man from Oregon, Who had an extra finger on each hand. He couldn’t wear gloves, so Winter was unloved, but he was the lead drummer in a bestselling band.”

The sailor tune resetted again as Sheldon got up from the bed. “There was a rotund woman from Kentucky, Whose width was too round for the door. She was incredibly heavy, more so than a Chevy, However she wrote one hell of a score.”
Emily blushed and touched a finger to her chin in a cute fashion. “There was a little girl from Germany, Who was born with Size 10 feet.” She looked at her shoes. “She trips, she stumbles, in the water she fumbles, But them booties were easy to beat.”

The volume of the tune increased as they stood back-to-back and sang together. “There were a couple of musicians from England, Who were chemically glued to the back.” They swung their legs forward as they circled in place. “They knew how to pose and smelled like a rose.”

They held their heads close to each other and spoke impossibly fast, “It-took-a-while-to-find-a-manager-who-was-comfortable-with-the-idea-but-you-can-imagine-the-public-wasn’t-so-into-it-at-first-they-would’ve-had-the-accident-reversed-but-they-ran-into-financial-issues-so-they-had-to-compromise-their-albums-didn’t-sell-well-for-a-time-but-when-a-rival-attempted-to-rip-off-their-work-they-sued-him-for-millions-now-they’re-living-it-up-in-a-mansion-with-two-women-who-like-them-now-because-they’re-rich”

“-but their bedroom skills are sufficiently lack!” The song reached its final notes. Emily and Sheldon made a stunning pose.

“. . . . .” Sarah and Garry wanted to erase that from their minds. “Aren’t you glad we don’t have as many scenes as other characters?” the former asked.

“Ahhhh, you’re a delightful company, Lady Emily.” Sheldon sighed.

“And you are very tolerable, Sir Sheldon.”

“Eh, fun fact, in the Japanese dub of this series, I would be known as ‘Sheldon-sama’.”

“Noooo, I would refer to you as Sheldon-kun. Because you’re so cute.” Emily flushed goofily.

The monitor on the control deck started beeping. Sheldon hurried over. “Oh, dear… seems we’re not alone.” He observed. “There’s some kind of… structure, traveling along down here.”

“You know, part of me had a feeling that wasn’t a fish…” Gary replied. Beyond their window was a dark, tremendous force in the distance.

A red light at the radio station started beeping. “Uh-oh. Seems they’re trying to signal us.” Sheldon said.

“We can’t just ignore ‘em.” Emily spoke with mixed thoughts. “But are they friend or foe?”

“Only one way to find out…” Sheldon worriedly went over to the station and put on headphones. “Remember, kids, the key to avoiding any terrible situation is a well-developed lie.” He said to the group. Sheldon pressed the microphone button and responded, “Ahem, hello?”

“Pardon me, fine sailors, but this is restricted land owned by Chum Bucket Labs. All unauthorized personnel will be annihilated on the spot.” A deep and maniacal voice spoke.

Sheldon quickly concocted his lie. “Sir, we are part of the Undersea Headquarters Sanitization Committee, and we received a report about a, um, newly identified mobile fortress, 200 nautical miles southeast of the Gulf of Mexico. Would that be your fortress by any chance?”

“Well, actually, yes. Can we help you?”

“Wonderful.” Sheldon smiled. “As you can surmise, our Number One priority is the purest cleanliness of all undersea fortresses, and it would be a shame if a headquarters as remarkably
tremendous as yours was drenched top to bottom in repulsive, disgusting seaweed for another minute. Should you have questions or concerns about our credibility, I would be glad to provide you a list of clients who are familiar with our work.” Sheldon held up a clipboard. “Feel free to call them to your hearts’ content, and you will see, the UHSC is the finest under the sea!”

“Hmm… Come to think of it, we do have too much seaweed clogging up the ventilation shafts. Alright, come on in! But DON’T get any soap on the sofas! I got those with a bargain.”

A garage door on the bottom of the fortress opened. Sheldon steered their submarine inside, parking it in a surface pool. The interior walls were brownish-orange, and a red carpet led down the tunnel. There was a camera in a ceiling corner. “I bet if I can hack into the camera, I can get footage from all the others in this place.” Emily said. “Then we can see what’s in this fortress.”

“And how d’ya plan to do that?” Sarah questioned.

“With THESE!” Emily held up her glasses proudly.

Kids Next Door: S.P.E.C.S.
Spectacles Propellerized Equipped Camera Spygear

Emily took out a mini remote/monitor, which displayed the image from her square glasses as they flew around with twin propellers. Gary opened a hatch on the ceiling so they could fly out, letting Emily land them on the camera. She pressed a button on her remote, extracting a cord to plug into a slot. The glasses’ lens displayed a staticky image that appeared on her monitor. She could search through dozens of screens displayed from different cameras.

“Holy mole, check it out! There’s a bunch of monkeys in here, too! Maybe Specter owns this place! And… hold on.” Sarah, Gary, and Sheldon looked over her shoulder. The monitor displayed a prison cell, containing a frightened child with dark-red hair, clutching the bars and looking around worriedly. “They’re holding somebody captive. The fiends! Come on, guys, this is officially a Kids Next Door mission!”

“Yes, but before we do that, I need a list of your friends’ phone numbers, whom we can pretend to be clients that the, quote-on-quote, ‘UHSC’ has worked with.” Sheldon showed them his pen and clipboard. “Be mindful that these must be friends who are willing to stay faithful to the lie for an undetermined amount of time.”

“Buff that lie, Sheldon!” Emily shouted, putting her glasses back on after they flew back. “They’re going to catch us catching their monkeys and breaking that girl out. Stay here and guard the ship; it’ll be the only way we can escape.”

Sheldon shook, stumbling on what to say, “We can’t just call the lie off right NOW! These people are expecting a fine-quality sanitization of their entire fortress within the next 5 minutes. The best spy missions keep the aforementioned lie up in the best and longest way possible.”

“Then Y’ALL can spend yer time scrubbin’ seaweed outta their vents,” Sarah tossed him a mop and bucket, “while we conduct our rescue mission.” She and Gary marched out with no regrets, joined by Emily, who waved cheerfully at the older man.

“Good luck, Sheldon-senpaaaaaii!”

“. . . . .” Sheldon stood with a blank expression, holding the mop and bucket. “I want a refund.” (Play “Frozen Frenzy” from Donkey Kong: Tropical Freeze.)
Stage 40: Undersea Mansion

Mission: Capture 15 monkeys and rescue the prisoner!

The three operatives jumped out of the submarine and proceeded down the tunnel lit by flickering lamp posts. They saw the first Pipo Monkey up on the ceiling, holding the seaweed while he swung innocently, with a stairway of thin ledges leading up to him along the wall. Gary chose to grapple and hop up these ledges himself, then kicked off toward the monkey to net him, then landed beside his friends. They wandered into a large room with giant gears, being churned by the ocean down below. On their left, the three could float onto a high ledge with their Sky Flyer, then jump their way across a constant turning bar to another platform—any missed jump would send them sliding into the sea.

From here, they had to cross a flat, turning gear, but several security lasers were crossed and turning along it. The trio was careful to hop in the open gaps, then they had to ride one of the bars up a vertical gear, steering clear of the lasers that were in-between bars. They jumped off on a safe platform—however, Sarah saw a platform below it and rode the gear further until she could jump off on it. A ladder led down the wall and close to the sea, where a Pipo Monkey was innocently surfing on a board. Sarah had to time it precisely: she jumped down, net outstretched, caught the monkey, then Sky Flew upward to grab the ladder, and climb back on the platform. Then she could Sky Fly off and up to the higher platform, where her friends helped her up.

They Sky Flew up to a thin ledge along the next wall, having to hold tight with their fingers as they climbed across, and wait for the security lasers to skim away from it. They made it to a platform with a door leading into a corridor of fishtanks. Exotic fish of many varieties, and unknown origin, swam freely inside. Some of them were, in fact, Pipo Monkeys, but there was no discernible way inside of the tanks. The hallway turned right and sloped up, leading into a very dark passage with security lasers. Two sets of lasers were diagonal, moving back-and-forth, and crossing each other, with the only gap available at the top, after they slid away. When the lasers were in the process of moving away, they quickly spun their Sky Flyers and got through.

The next portion was a maze of lasers, with platforms of varying height blocking some. They first jumped onto a platform on the right, used Sky Flyer to fly over some and around other lasers to land on the second, then they crouched to crawl under a row of platforms blocking more lasers. Then they could crawl onto safe ground, and the rest of the hall had dozens of lasers sweeping back-and-forth in diagonal fashion. This task required their Super Hoops, speeding across as the lasers were opening up, and getting past before they closed. The three scientists jumped into a small pool and swam underneath with their Water Nets.

There were floating balls with searchlights moving about—Search Spheres. They swam behind a group of rocks in the down-right corner to avoid the first light. The next Search Sphere circled around a water mine, so they had to stay on the exact opposite side of the mine to be out of its sight; without touching the mine. Once past it, they swam down to inhale some air bubbles to rejuvenate their selves, then they netted a Pipo Monkey hiding inside a clam. The next Search Sphere shone along the floor and ceiling, but couldn’t hit the walls because of the rock blockades. However, Torpedo Teds came out of holes at the end of those passages, chasing the kids with devious grinning faces. They had to hurriedly swim behind a strip of rock that spiraled across the passage, hiding them from sight of many Search Spheres, and outrun the pursuing Torpedo Teds.

At the end of the passage, the trio climbed out of a surface pool, bringing them to a lounge area with potted plants, red couches with gold edges, and chandeliers. Two Pipo Monkeys were
lounging on a couch, chucking nut shells at the Fodder robots who were mopping. The robots clearly had pent-up rage, so the kids put them out of their misery by shooting them with their slingshots. The twins monkeys panicked as one hopped across the lasers over the floor, and another leaped to grab the chandelier above. A dresser was standing against the wall, and Emily could jump onto it, and from there Sky Fly onto the chandelier to—the monkey greeted her with a storm of rapid punches, then- “Ow!” pushed her off. When the monkey ran to the opposite side of the chandelier afterward, Emily had Sarah shoot the ape repeatedly with slingshot pellets, distracting him so she could float onto the chandelier again to catch him.

The lasers scrolled around slowly, but Chucks were throwing torpedoes from afar in attempt to push the kids around. The kids avoided and shot the robots with slingshots, but a hidden Duplicatotron was spawning more. Gary simply shot the robots himself while his friends got across, then Emily destroyed the Duplicator hidden behind a wall. The second Pipo Monkey was still hopping around between the lasers, but Sarah kept him in place with slingshot while Gary netted him. The next passage was blocked by lasers, so the trio hopped up some stairs to an upper area composed of chandeliers. The chandeliers were far apart, requiring Sky Flyer usage, and lasers skimmed in-between. From the starting point, Sarah and Gary had to shoot Chucks while Emily crossed the platforms herself. She was able to get into a hidden room and destroy a Duplicatotron, afterwards flipping a switch to disable the lasers blocking the path.

“Plankton, I’m starting to doubt these people are from the Undersea Headquarters Sanitization Committee.” Karen’s voice sounded throughout the base.

“Quit worrying, Karen, this guy is totally credible, listen to him!”

“One year ago, we signed a contract with the Kremling Krew of Oceanic Base, which as you can see, has interior floors and walls with a newly-painted seaweed-green hue, complimenting their scales!” They heard Sheldon’s voice through the intercom. “Course, that’s nothing compared to the Marine Research Facility, although it is difficult to go five seconds without slipping, thanks to their polished marble floors.”

She returned to her friends, and they entered the new hallway where giant blue jellyfish floated in a river. A Search Sphere was moving about below, shining its light above the surface. The jellyfish served as barriers, but if they stood on them too long, they would electrify. They had to wait until the searchlight went away, then hop to the next jelly, and repeat the pattern until they were across. However, a Pipo Monkey was clutching a chain on the ceiling above one of the jellies. Emily shot it down with the slingshot, and Gary made his way across again to net. The trio entered a very tall, upward shaft, where a Search Sphere floated up-and-down through the center.

The kids put on their M.A.G.N.E.B.O.O.T.S. and walked up a metal path that went up the shaft. There were barriers in place in certain areas, to protect the group from the searchlight when it came by. Partway up, an alternate, snaky path led to a Pipo Monkey, who was taped to the wall. Sarah quickly stomped up to net it, then return under the shelter before the light caught her. At the top of the shaft, they switched for their real shoes and entered a wide, empty room, where steam pipes circled around. To open the next door, they had to catch three monkeys. They saw two peep out of hatches on pipes, so Emily rushed to one with her Super Hoop and bashed it open. “AAAH!” She was met with piping hot steam to the face, no monkey.

Clearly the three apes were switching between pipes, so they had to use the R.A.D.A.R. to find them. Emily ran to one pipe, Gary another, and Sarah the other, hitting those pipes open so they could catch the shifty monkeys. The door was open, but this entire following river passage had vertical and horizontal security lasers. Emily chose to use her S.P.E.C.S., flying them carefully around every wide-enough gap within the lasers. There was a wiring hatch in a far upper corner of
the room, so Emily let her glasses float beside it, insert the cord, and begin hacking. All of the vertical lasers were disabled, so the crew could swim under and through the river. Two Pipo Monkeys rode Enguarde swordfishes, the kids barely avoided their jabs before catching the monkeys with Water Nets.

The kids had to swim through a rightward tunnel at the end, navigating a cavern of sea anemones and jellyfish. They encountered two Pipo Monkeys piloting mini-submarines and launching torpedoes. They couldn’t net the monkeys through the subs, so they lured them into the sea anemones. They were grabbed in their tentacles, the subs were squeezed and ruined, and when the monkeys swam out, they were netted. The trio swam to a more narrow tunnel, having to avoid electric eels as it snaked, and they resurfaced in a room. It was incredibly huge and wide, and a searchlight took up nearly the entirety of the space, its source coming from a glass dome on the ceiling. There were Sleepytime robots lurking around, and some naughty Pipo Monkeys who threatened to wake them. The robots couldn’t be shot with slingshots because they had protective lasers.

However, a trashcan was nearby, and using the handles of her S.P.E.C.S., Emily could cross them under the can’s lid’s handle and lift it. She turned the lid to face the searchlight as she made it float up to the source. A large area of floor was made a blind spot, and Emily controlled her glasses to keep protecting them as they trekked through the danger zone. The monkeys threatened to awaken the Sleepytimes, so Sarah shot and stunned them, Emily maneuvered the blind spot as they got closer, and Gary netted the apes. The friends had to press three switches around the room, each guarded by a Sleepytime. To destroy the robots, the kids crawled close within their range, and quickly shot an explosive pellet, so their laser couldn’t react in time.

With all three switches hit, a staircase extracted on one side, leading into a passage. The trio hurried over, and Emily kept protecting them with a blind spot as they jumped up. By this point, her eyes were getting tired, and walking while focusing on the monitor was no picnic either. Thankfully, after they made it into the passage, Emily could call her glasses back and put them on. At the end of this passageway of pipelines, they found the jail cell. (End song.)

Sandy Sidney had almost lost any hope. They were trapped in this dingy old place for days, and had nothing to eat but Chum Patties. But her spirits lifted when she heard the fast-paced footsteps rushing up the hall. A blonde girl with big square spectacles, and her two odd-looking friends hurried in. “Hu! Are you here to rescue us?”

“Never fear, little lady, the Kids Next Door is here!” Gary cheered dizzily. “And we may be here a while, because I need to take a rest.” So he plopped on his back and snored away.

Emily approached the girl’s cell. “Are there any other prisoners here?”

“Just me and my brother, I think. I’m Sandy, by the way, this is Jessie.” She indicated the unconscious, tan-skinned boy behind her.

“Mah brother, I get, but what’s his problem?” Sarah asked.

“I don’t know.” Sandy spoke sadly. “He forced himself to stay awake before we got here—then we get captured out of nowhere, and he won’t wake up! I’m really worried…”

“Don’t worry.” Emily drew her slingshot. “We’ll get you both out of here and get your brother help. Step back.” Sandy did as told, and Emily destroyed the cell’s lock with an explosive pellet.

Sandy grunted as she struggled to lift her brother up in both arms. “Could you help me carry him?”
“Not a problem. You two can get inside this.” Emily placed her Infi-Cube on the floor.

Sandy looked at it with confusion. “Th-That?”

“Yeah, just put your brother on it!”

Sandy carefully set Jessie onto the little box—“Wh-Whoa!” He was slurped inside like a vacuum. She frightfully stepped on it herself, and in she went. Emily closed the box and hid it under her coat. After Gary’s short-lived nap, the trio hurried back into the huge searchlight room. “Not so fast, kiddies!”

The searchlight vanished, and the doors on either end sealed. A figure emerged from the small stage in the center of the room: he wore a light-red jumpsuit, with blue rubber gloves, boots, and underpants, and a blue helmet-mask with a smirking red mouth and eyes. There was a blue belt with a gold buckle around his waist. “If you plan to escape this place with your lives, you’ll have to get past Man Ray! BWAH hah hah ha!”

“Holy cow! A muscular guy in speedos!” Emily exclaimed. “My one weakness! Must… avert… eyes… can’t… from… HOTNESS!…”

Sarah and Gary stared in disbelief. “We both know that’s yer overly-sarcastic mock.” Sarah said.

“Usually, you itch when you’re turned on.” Gary remarked.

“Huhu!” Emily blushed. “Forgive me for trying!”

“MOCK my speedos all you want, kiddies, but I am sporting the LATEST in supervillain swimwear!” Man Ray proceeded to make fashionable poses. “My muscle-tight body suit! Undergarments of the silkiest rubber! Topped with a Tickle Belt of solid gold buckle!”

“Tickle Belt?” Sarah questioned.

“Umm- that’s not important.” Man Ray furrowed. “You phonies from the UHSC have taken a very important prisoner from us! Hand us that weird voodoo box or else!”

Emily glanced at the Infi-Cube under her coat. She clutched her Stun Club and looked at him sternly. “You want these kids back, you’ll have to do it around the corner of my multi-directional glasses!”

“We both know they can’t do that.” The friends chorused.

“Why can’t I dream!!”

“Quit bickering!” Man Ray demanded. “Just try to get past my array of ‘multi-directional’ searchlights!” The supervillain pressed a remote, lowering a giant disco ball from the ceiling. Dozens of searchlights appeared and started circling the floor of the chamber. “By the end of this day, you’ll regret having never learned how to dance as well as… MAN RAY! Huu! Oh yes!” The speedo-wearing gentleman flashed his sexy poses on the stage. “That’s the stuff! Ho!”

“Well, he’s not as bad as Yellow Monkey…” Emily sighed. (Play the Mini-boss Theme from Battle for Bikini Bottom!)

**Boss fight: Man Ray**
The searchlights were turning rapidly, so getting close to the villain would be difficult. The trio used their slingshots to blast exploding pellets, but Man Ray was quick to react by punching and kicking, and being able to withstand the explosions, he was tougher than he looked. Man Ray whipped out a ray gun and started trying to blast the trio, giving them a trickier time with trying to strategize. Emily remembered his note about the Tickle Belt, so her curiosity reached the peak of her improbably large mind. She told Sarah and Gary to distract him with slingshot pellets, so without his ray gun to distract them, Emily flew her S.P.E.C.S. through the searchlights (the defense turrets didn’t register to them) and narrowed in on Man Ray. The villain was still distracted punching her friends’ pellets, so Emily was able to stick the S.P.E.C.S.’ cord into his belt lock.

“He he he he, he HWAH ha ha, HOO HOO HOO hahahahahaha!” The Tickle Belt lived up to its name, for the villain started laughing uncontrollably. The array of spotlights started skimming forward-and-back, left-to-right, whichever direction they chose at respective intervals. Sarah wanted the honor of landing the first blow, so she maneuvered around the quick-moving searchlights, leapt onto the villain’s stage, then jumped to bash Man Ray’s head with her Stub Club. “OUCH!” The force of the attack made him bump Emily’s glasses away from him, so free from his tickling, he grabbed Sarah and furiously threw her across the room. Man Ray pushed his remote again to raise his platform higher, nearly halfway up the room. They noticed grabbable ledges around the sides.

Not only were searchlights spinning around again, Man Ray skimmed security lasers across the room every few seconds, with wide-enough gaps for them to dodge, they just had to be attentive. It seemed the lasers could only sweep across certain areas, so the kids remained in the safe spots as they shot at Man Ray again. While he blocked the pellets, Emily sent her S.P.E.C.S. across the room, having to evasively dodge the security lasers that appeared out of nowhere, stretching across the room. They were a minor hazard, and once her glasses made it to Man Ray, they connected with the Tickle Belt and induced Tickle Torture. While Man Ray entered a laughing fit, the searchlights were still spiraling around the center, with only one empty spiral path going around to Man Ray.

Gary readied his Super Hoop, waited until the path’s entrance circled by him, then rushed on, keeping absolute focus to stay within the path’s boundaries, inching leftward the whole time as the road led into the center, and then he was at the risen stage. As he grabbed and hopped up each ledge, security lasers shone onto the pillar, requiring Gary to either jump or wait in order to avoid them. Once he made it onto Man Ray’s platform, he managed to land two hits against his head, before the villain shook free of the S.P.E.C.S. and kicked Gary away. Man Ray pushed his remote again and rose his platform to the near top of the dome-shaped room, a little under the disco ball.

No ledges led up around the side of the pillar, but after studying the room, they noticed a metal path going up and around the wall, ending near the ceiling. One of them could jump from there and Sky Fly onto the villain’s platform. But this time, Man Ray sent respawning Chucks to even the score. Emily flew her S.P.E.C.S. all the way up the tower, Sarah shot Man Ray with pellets, while Gary shot the Chucks, which proved tricky since they were high up in the air. Emily linked her glasses with the villain’s belt, then Sarah took the task of stomping all the way up the metal path with her M.A.G.N.E.B.O.O.T.S.. The Chucks still chucked torpedoes at her, so Gary defended her from the ground, so all Sarah had to do was watch out for the searchlights that skimmed by.

After nearly exhausting her legs, Sarah was at the top of the room, with Man Ray in close view. She jumped out of her metal boots, hovered across with Sky Flyer, avoided the disco ball’s searchlights (God, she would hate to get hit and have to do all that again), and thwacked the cackling supervillain with her Stub Club. “UAAAAAAAH!” Man Ray’s head flew clean off his body, landing close to Emily and Gary.
“AAAAAHH!” Emily screamed, calling her glasses back. “You beheaded him!!”

“No no, it’s alright!” Man Ray’s platform sunk back to the floor, as his body was gesturing with his hands. “My head naturally comes off, I’m still fine.”

“Aaaaaaand the explanation behind that is?” Sarah inquired.

“….I’m not really sure.”

“Well, I guess it’s alright if I do this, then.” So Emily whipped out her net, and “GOTCHA (GOTCHA)!” had the severed head teleported. Man Ray’s body panicked and ran around aimlessly, before slamming into the wall, falling, and shaking crazily.

“That doesn’t look too pleasant.” Gary commented.

“That’s because his head was warped to a cage full of monkeys.” Emily reminded. “I don’t think it’ll be in too fine a shape by the time he finds it.”

“Great. Now one of you get my boots back so we can get outta here.” Sarah stated.

“Yeah, sure. In a minute.” Emily put on her own M.A.G.N.E.B.O.O.T.S. and stomped up the path to recover Sarah’s. (End song.)

“No! STOP THEM, Dirty Bubble!” Sheldon J. Plankton yelled from his control room (don’t be confused with Sheldon Cooper). “We can’t let those clowns from the Undersea Headquarters Sanitization Committee get away with the Light! Catch them NOW!” (Play “Hell’s Gate” from Rayman Legends!)

Emily, Sarah, and Gary bolted down the halls of the mansion to find the docking room where Dr. Cooper waited. “Hnn HNN hnhnhnhnhnh!” A giant, brown bubble with an evil face was chasing them with swarms of robots. “Come back here, little morsels! I need a new helping of dung to refill my DIRTY Blasters!”

“SUPER HOOP IT, GUYS!” Emily screamed, so the trio spun their hoops to run faster. Chucks tossed torpedoes, the trio sidestepped left-and-right to avoid them, giant piranhas popped out of the floor ahead, they had to maneuver around those as well. A huge chunk of floor was broken, the trio leapt, spun their Sky Flyers to go across, landed on a stable foothold, then Sky Flew again. The entire fortress shook, for the mobile structure was shifting upwards, making the hallway slope incredibly, their feet were moving faster against all control. Parts of the floor popped open and shot water spouts, the kids made sure to avoid them, and then they took land in the water.

They quickly got their Water Nets and kicked hurriedly to swim, but Dirty Bubble had dove underwater and was on their tail still. Emily looked back, eyes widened when the bubble’s giant, demonic mouth loomed over, and she swam down to dodge when he chomped. Dirty Bubble shifted lower, readied to snack on her again, Emily hurriedly kicked up and dodged his teeth. He slowed down, but swarms of Torpedo Teds were coming out of holes, it took quick-thinking maneuvering to go around them. The kids swim into a dark tunnel, lit only by jellyfish and Search Spheres.

Aside from avoiding the jellies, the trio had to keep an eye out for the blockades and swim behind them to get past the searchlights. Water mines fell down from below, they had to maneuver down to avoid the high ones, then kick up to dodge the low ones, but they made it out of the water, and the ship shifted normal-ways again as they Super Hooped through a hall. A series of floor lasers was coming, they carefully jumped the gaps, they dodged fast-moving diagonal lasers, then
evasively got through a row of left-and-right searchlights. They turned a left corridor, the fortress suddenly tilted left-ways, they kept their Super Hoops going and ran along the sideways floor, lest they fall in the jellyfish water below.

Waterfalls popped out of the floor, the kids expertly avoided them, they had to kick to and run along the opposite wall (ceiling), dodging the waterfalls and leaping Magikarp. The fortress shifted normal again, the kids landed on the floor and turned down another hall. They dove under another river, swimming past the incoming electric eels and continuing to outrun the smirking Dirty Bubble. Suddenly, a shark was coming their way, Emily blasted a Water Net at its face, causing the shark to haphazardly swim against the glass and pour all the water out. The kids were dumped out as well, they recognized this particular hall, they kept running along, then they were at the room of giant gears. They jumped their way down, then ran through what they recognized as the starting hall. They avoided the Sleepytime robots’ searchlights, and saw Sheldon’s submarine in sight.

Sheldon Cooper was brilliantly keeping his lie, “For just 200 doubloons, we’ll have the underside of your headquarters scrubbed of all soil, seaweed, and waste, but throw in an extra treasure chest, we can coat it with Sleek ‘n’ Slippery Soap, guaranteed to make filth fly off and keep your bottom clean for five-to-eight months!”

“Quit your bellyaching, I know what you’re really doing!” Plankton shouted.

“Oh, dear.” Sheldon frowned. Team Emily made it back just in time, slamming the door to their sub. “Okay, new plan!” Sheldon spoke quickly. “You’re all mentally ill children from the Make-A-Wish Foundation, your wish was to see the best aquarium possible, and the only one we could land was this one, you like to capture animals and break stuff for fun, so your reasons justify-”

“START THE RUDDER AND LET’S GO!” Emily ordered impatiently.

Quickly as he was startled, Sheldon started the ship, backed it away and under the surface, and out of the garage hatch just before it closed. He spun the wheel, turned the ship around, and sped them away from the mobile mansion as quickly as possible.

“They’re gaining on us, can’t this sub go any faster?!” Gary yelled when Torpedo Teds started to chase them.

“Hu- it can’t!” Sheldon panicked. “In the event we were chased by an enemy structure, we were meant to surrender while I offer my friends as sustenance!”

“No one is becoming sustenance today!” Emily declared as she turned a dial on her T.E.L.A.-N.E.T.. “Thankfully, I snapped other destinations with my net several months ago, in case we would have to make a getaway. Everyone stand still and we’ll make the leap to Sector L!”

“Are you sure this’ll work?” Sarah asked worriedly.

“This is why we test it with monkeys. Get ready, NOW!” Emily whipped her net over Sarah, then Gary, both were transported. “CURL UP, Tall Man from Cornwall!” Sheldon frightfully curled in a ball, enabling Emily to net him. She took out her Infi-Cube and netted that by itself, just in case. As the submarine was being bombarded by torpedoes, Emily forced the net over herself, and a-splopping she went. With no one controlling it, the submarine rammed into several small mountains, and along with the torpedoes, was torn to pieces.

“CURSES!!” Plankton furiously banged his control panel. “And my plan to capture the Light was so brilliant! Lesser Lord Ragaj told me who he was, and Mr. Dark said he was a Bubble Dreamer, so cornering him at Sabaody Park was perfect!” He grabbed the microphone and yelled
demandingly, “All troops, MOVE OUT and find where those brats escaped! No matter who you have to destroy, find and recapture Jessie Sidney at all costs!” (End song.)

**Sector V Treehouse**

The KND’s largest field sector finally made their return to their favorite place. “Hooooome SWEET hooooome!” Haylee cried, happy to bask in the scent of their hangar. “I have MISSED this place!” She twirled as they headed for the door.

“I’m actually allowed in here now?” Django asked.

“You’ve proven your trust, congratulations.” Dillon said with slight sarcasm. The group entered the living room. “You and Carol will make excellent—!” They all gaped.

The wooden walls were decorated bright green, gorgeously intricate rugs were lain around, and the tables, cabinets, and chairs were replaced by those of the fanciest quality. Django looked weirdly at all of their struck-open mouths and eyes. “What?”

“WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR TREEHOUSE?!” Haylee screamed.

“Impressive, isn’t it?” a familiar voice perked up.

Their second surprise of the day. “Carol? . . .” Mason stuttered. “Is that you?”

Carol Masterson wore a green business suit with a white shirt and blue tie underneath. She had a dark-green skirt and very high white socks that went into black Mary-Janes. She held a laptop in her right arm, her light-blonde hair was in two puffy buns, and her blue eyes were as clear and pretty as ever. “Meet Carol Masterson: Computer Nerd!” She winked and stuck a tongue out at them.

They couldn’t take their eyes off of her. “Carol, what the heck did you do?! Mason asked. “How did you get in our treehouse?”

“As I learned in Arctic Training, with additional help from my butler, Jenkins, I am a master Computer Expert! I let myself in using pro hacking, then I called a couple hundred helpers to redecorate this place while you were away. I think this place looks a HUNDRED times prettier! Well, Maseyfairy? I know you think I look cute.” She swayed her hip.

Mason blushed, shaking his head. “It’s certainly a wild change of style!”

“Well, I had a wild change myself: I went from richest girl in Cleveland to smartest computer wiz in KND… while still having millions of dollars at my disposal! Actually, when I was running laps during training, my ginormous hair got stuck on a broken oil can, so Numbuh 6,000 suggested I get a haircut. He recommended a girl named Aeincha from Sector W7, so I hitched a ride to her sector a couple days ago. I don’t know if you know her, but she was… not what I expected.”

“Wait… YOU’RE Aeincha?” Carol asked with the clearest confusion.

“You were expecting somebody bigger?” Aeincha blushed, scratching her head.

“Kind of. I was told you’re the best stylist in the organization. And for the record, I have a whole team of barbers style my hair, so I know how to judge.”

“Oh, yeah? Come to my room and I’ll show you what real quality work is!” Aeincha smirked confidently.
Carol was later seated by a sink in Aeincha’s room, back facing it while her huge puffy hair was lain atop it. Aeincha certainly had a lot to work with; she never imagined a person carrying this much hair. It would be a real test of her abilities, but Aeincha wasn’t afraid. She spent several minutes combing and brushing, noting every single pattern of the strands. When she was ready, she picked up the pair of scissors in both hands, cutting with absolute precision in all the right areas. Her little arms were used to handling such large items, she trained herself to work with them quickly; she wouldn’t let tiredness get the best of her, this operative-in-training needed an example of KND’s greatness.

Aeincha had a pile of severed strands on the floor and sink. Carol had lost a terrific portion of her hair, but once it was short enough, Aeincha retrieved two blue braids from the drawer. It took just as much strength and effort to pull the still-thick hair into two puffy buns, and tie them in place. “Huff… huff… huff…” Aeincha sat on the edge of the sink to catch her breath. “Do you like it?”

Carol stood and viewed her new appearance in the mirror. Her eyes went wide. “It’s so pretty!! I didn’t think someone so tiny could MAKE something like this!”

“Heh… really?” Aeincha smirked, her heart still not caught up. “That was nothing.”

“I feel so light and pretty and SMART!” Carol twirled joyfully. “And Maseyfairy will SO go google-eyes for me! …Here. For your troubles.” She placed a bundle of dollars beside the little barber.

“Aaaaahhh-!” Aeincha went google-eyes over all those ‘100’s. That bundle of bucks became her temporary bed. “I never wanna spend this.”

“I’ve been able to move MUCH faster,” Carol twirled, “and I feel a jillion times smarter, too!”

“So you’re a Computer Expert now…” Dillon replied solemnly. “Just like… Vanellope.”

“Oh…” Carol frowned. “I almost forgot… I’m not trying to replace-”

“No-no, it’s fine, it’s fine. C-Carol, you called us because you said my dad got arrested.”

“Oh, right!” Carol sat down and placed her laptop on the floor, “Well, when I went to the party on Mariejoa, I logged into the mountain’s Wi-Fi. I wanted to hack into the World Government’s database, but I wasn’t sure how to go about it. Thankfully, Cheren lent me his 4DS before he got toyified; I didn’t remember who it belonged to at the time, but it was extremely helpful. I Copied and Pasted his Miis to my computer, and with some quick modifying, they were able to steal their passcodes! Of course, they did need a little leadership. Guess what new friend I made!”

“Beep! Beep! Bip-bip-bip BEEP!” a familiar, two-dimensional black creature floated down on a 2-D parachute.

“Mr. Game-and-Watch!” Aurora beamed.

“I met him a while ago, when I practiced hacking into your treehouse.” Carol winked. “He was pretty upset over Vanellope going missing, so I gave him a little patting on the back. WHO helped me hack into a top-secret Government website, YOU did, THAT’S who!” Carol lovingly petted Game-and-Watch’s head. If he could make other colors, he would be smiling and blushing. “But more importantly, they had a list of wanted posters, and which of those criminals they had incarcerated. Nolan York is being held in the CIA Headquarters, Langley Falls! Pending interrogation!”

“Sigh, it was only a matter of time, huh Dad?” Dillon sighed.
“CIA, shme-I-A, let’s bust in there and save his half-dead ass!” Django fist-palmed.

“If I get close enough to the building, I should be able to hack Game-and-Watch into their—” Carol froze. She stared weirdly at Django. “…Who’s the skeleton?”

“The hottest guy you’ll ever meet.”

“Dillon, I dunno if we should help your dad, yet.” Chris said. “We need to get your shadow back.”

“His… shadow?” Carol questioned.

Midna came out from under Dillon. “Allow me to explain:”

So Carol got to hear their exciting and dramatic tale. “Ohhhhh! So THAT’S what happened in Peter Pan!” she realized.

“With this mystery solved, it is now a beautiful piece of cinema!” Artie smiled.

“Carol, do you think you could save Dad?” Dillon asked. “I mean, if you’re really that good at what you do…”

“I could…” Carol frowned sadly. “But I really wanted to go on a mission with you. I wanna show you how much smarter I’ve gotten, Maseyfairy. And a place like Twilight Town sounds soooooo romantic!”

“Carol, an operative must plan based on what’s best, not what one wants.” Aurora spoke wisely.

“Then again, my dad’s a pro hacker himself, he can probably bust himself out.” Dillon noted.

“No, Dillon… I have to do this for you.” Carol decided. “I’ll go to Langley Falls and rescue your dad! Meanwhile, you should just worry about getting your shadow back and not dying like a vampire. However, as soon as Mr. York is safe, I’m coming to Twilight Town for an endless evening of romance!!”

“It’s officially a race to get Dillon’s shadow back.” Mason blushed with embarrassment. “Um… just out of curiosity, Carol, did you decorate me and Haruka’s room?”

“Oh ho ho hoooo.” She winked.

Then Mason was staring humiliatingly at his room. Paintings of Carol, sculptures of Carol, cookie jars of Carol, Carol pillow, Carol blanket, Carol absolutely ensured Mason could be with her all night. “…Kirie, may I move into your room? I think Carol’s gonna take my spot.” Haruka asked.

Cyberspace

“That stupid Ragaj doesn’t make my job easy.” XANA mumbled as he was hard at work fixing a robot. “So I hope you will change that. I’m reviving you from Digital Nothingness specifically for your excellent construction skills. This entire world is a mess, so you better be worth the money.” He closed the hatch on its chest and walked away. “I was to understand your field of combat is range and deception, rather than direct. Well, that’s acceptable, but expect to be submitted through some experiments.”

XANA pulled a lever. The metal bed the robot rested on began to shift vertically. “Based on Lesser Lord Gnik’s orders, you are to help repair every pixel in this realm, leave no spot unchecked. And if you see a little girl with candy in her hair, give her the same treatment. I actually have a more
important task for you, but I’ll test your ability on the field, first. Do you understand… Peridot?”

She was a Program composed of green skin of various hues in different parts of her body. Her legs became bulky past the knee and ended in boots, and her fingers were little green bars floating separate from her stubby hands. Her hair was a pale yellow, shaped like a tetrahedron, she had a visor over her eyes, and a triangle-shaped green gem on her forehead. Her green eyes opened—“AAAAAAHH!” She began shaking and looking around frantically, her arms and legs still binded to the bed. “Where are they?! Where am I?! No no no this is bad, I can’t be captured, I have to report back to-!”

XANA socked her across the jaw, knocking Peridot dizzy. “Nnnnn bvoold wrznImw… hzev nv…” She was unconscious.

XANA angrily pulled out a notepad and wrote, “Note to self: Before giving an instructional speech, make sure the Program actually pays attention, and/or has no past trauma.”

So I wonder what Olive’s true name is, then. :O Ehh, not important. So um, yes, Carol Masterson is now a computer nerd, and is based off of Rebecca Hawkins from Yu-Gi-Oh, whom actually shares Carol’s voice actor, Kerry Williams. She is officially Vanellope’s replacement in Sector V. Next time, we will go to Twilight Town, so Dillon may begin his path to reclaiming his shadow. Later.

…

BWLOVN PMLDH SRH HVXIVG
Chapter Summary

Sector V heads to Twilight Town.

Today’s code uses both the Caesar and A1Z26 Cipher, with the latter being reversed. Can’t make these codes too easy!

Chapter 32: Mother of Shadows

Pennsylvania; Twilight Forest

Sector V landed the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. deep within the dark forest and stepped off. The sun was halfway over the horizon, giving the sky deep shades of orange and magenta. The trees were very shadowed under the branches, and an eerie chill fell down their spines as the wind rustled the leaves. “Why couldn’t we land close to Twilight Town?” Dillon questioned.

“Because it’s a secluded setting.” Midna stated. “You think any aircraft can just fly there willy-nilly? Well, yes, but show a little more respect, why don’t you.”

“I wouldn’t mind a quiet stroll.” Django stretched his old bones. “Cold breeze, darkness. Think we can see some predator action?”

“I came here with my mom to train, so I kind of memorize the way.” Dillon mentioned. “There’s just a few creatures we have to watch out for.”

“I’ll provide your shadowbending on the way, but don’t get steam-headed.” Midna told him. “Or I may just up and leave like Mario.” (Play “Forest Interlude” from Donkey Kong Country 2.)

“Wait, wasn’t that the same music for Forest of Darkness? Why couldn’t we just make them one in the same?” Dillon questioned.

“Looks like I need to go over the fundamentals of shadowbending again so you understand why it’s HARDER to bend at nighttime.” Midna stated.

“Alright, never mind.”

Stage 41: Twilight Town

Mission: Make it to Twilight Town.

Not many areas of ground were touched by the orange sunlight, but as they followed Dillon through the trees, they spotted shadows in those sun patches, who perked and sunk away when the humans looked at them. The team encountered a group of jagged rocks blocking their way, however one of the stones was movable, Dillon remembered, as he extracted Midna’s big ponytail hand to push it forward. The group entered a clearer part of the forest, where Hyper Clefts – green, spiked stone creatures – charged out of bushes to ram the kids. “Just so you know, I can make new
inventions, too.” Harry announced as he placed his boombox on the ground. He turned it on, and its loud tunes shook the ground forcefully, flipping the Clefts upside-down so that Chris and Sheila could punch them senseless with their fists.

Shadows appeared on the sides of trees and rocks, grinning Cheshire-style at the kids before swooping away. The group stepped up a few short mounds before getting to a narrow pathway within the grass. Crazee Dayzees leapt out from the sides and charged at them, Kirie thought fast and tossed flower shurikens to knock them out. The path led to a barren tree, where Murkrow swooped down at them from its branches, Mason and Haru shot gas puffs to put them asleep. The path turned rightward, ending at a vast trench chasm. They questioned what to do, until Dillon punched the tree, and a swarm of shadows flew out of its shadow and down the cliff. They gasped with horror when Dillon jumped down, but the child stopped partway down in midair.

Sheila was obviously next to jump down, then the others followed suit—they realized those shadows were forming a midair pathway. However, they were against the cliff, so the kids’ shadows stood on them, making it seem like they were standing on invisible ground. Dillon assured it was fine and kept leading them forward. They had to jump square-shaped lumps in the shadows, over a slight hole, then carefully jump a series of separate platform shadows, before Wall Jumping parallel columns of shadows, landing on a dead-end shadow-platform. “Then my mom would Shadow Glide us to that path.” Dillon pointed across the trench.

“Screw that.” Django strummed his guitar, summoning a bridge of skeletons to cross over. “These guys start to fall after you step on them, ME FIRST!” Django ran across the skeletons, the kids quickly followed as one-at-a-time, the dead bones collapsed. They safely made it to a grassy path void of most trees, and the view of the orange-magenta sky was brilliant. Deinos were hidden within the grass, and when the kids drew close, the Pokémon coughed blue fire at them. Aurora and Chris caught the flames in their palms, though it was heavy and pushed them back, being of its origins. They chucked the flames at the Deinos as Aurora followed them with ice blasts, defeating the young dragons in seconds.

Dillon led them to another cliff overlooking a chasm, but no shadows led the way down. He mentioned his aunts having to find them hidden across the grass plain, so the group split up. Dillon uncovered the first shadow underneath a boulder, which he used Midna to push off. Kirie happily hopped up a pine tree, finding a shadow at the top and tagging him. Sheila wandered to a large boulder with a cave-like dent in its side, pitch-black inside, but when she punched a Light Sphere, the shadow panicked and flew out. Haylee found a very skinny, dead tree – looked more like a branch growing from the ground, and hit it with her wrench to scare the shadow out. Harry came to a garden of tall grass, but it was easy to scare the shadow out by blasting his boombox.

Django twirled his guitar and blasted a laser at each in a grouping of boulders. He discovered the shadow in the third one, but destroyed the rest just for fun. Mason and Haruka sent gas up twin trees, scaring the shadow out with no place else to go. Aurora froze a pond, seeing the shadow trapped inside, then pelted him free. Finally, Artie had a gut feeling a shadow was under that small rock—he flipped it over and found an Amazy Dayzee. Artie bolted away, not wishing to duel the golden, overpowered flower. It didn’t matter, ‘cause they found all the hiding shadows. Dillon jumped off the cliff first, a shadow grabbed him, threw him to the first one within the narrow trench, got thrown to the next, following the zigzagging path within the trench, until the shadows threw him safely on a new forest floor.

His friends were able to enjoy the wild ride as well, then they explored this open, soil ground with several trees scattered about, with varying height. Sheila spun and punched a Light Sphere; there were shadows on the trees, hidden in this area where sun didn’t shine, but Sheila’s light could reveal them. They could stand on a shadow around a tree that was almost touching the ground. The
next tree had a shadow halfway up, but was too far to jump to, but when Dilllon made the leap, he grabbed onto a force halfway. Clearly the shadows weren’t positioned directly beside the trees. They saw an open shadow hand on a faraway tree, Dilllon made the jump, he didn’t go far before the invisible spirit grabbed, whirled him, and chucked him onto a shadow to a further tree. The friends caught up with Sheila in company, and the next alignment of trees had shadows with arms positioned like bounce pads.

Dilllon led the way, landing on invisible platforms that made them go bouncy, repeating this act carefully across the trees. There was a hidden area to their right, so Kirie decided to glide over and follow it. She found a wrinkled, blue-skinned old Twili, sitting still as a ghost beside the bushes. “Iluvw H… wkhq I… qrz J. Zkdwv qhaw, K?”

Silly old man! Kirie smiled, before returning to her friends. They continued across the bounce pad shadows, lest they fall into the bushes below and have to fight Hyper Clefts, but they successfully made it to a new path. It was straightforward, though Chris was ready to set fire to bushes if anything came out—then he felt something tap his shoulder. He whipped around to Harry with a start. “What?”

Harry raised a brow. “Um… nothin’?”

“Don’t do that.” They kept walking. Something tapped Chris’s shoulder again- “Stop that, Harry!”

“I ain’t doin’ nothin’!”

“AAAH!” Haruka freaked, grabbing her dress. “Something just lifted my skirt!”

“Mason, didn’t we talk about brushing your teeth?” Haylee asked, waving an awful stench away from her nose.

“How d’you know that isn’t Django?”

“It isn’t, guys.” Dilllon said with disbelief. “It’s the Ghost Pokémon.”

A Gastly, a Haunter, and a Gengar materialized, cackling humorously at the children. “Very funny, guys.” Haruka put hands on her hips. “Are you gonna help or not?”

The Pokémon exchanged glances… and nodded. They flew down the path, so the kids followed quickly. “It’s a maze over here, you have to follow the path they hint out.” Dilllon said. They came to a circular path with four different roads, with bushes, trees, and rocks within the center. Chris set fire to the assaulting Green Fuzzies as the friends searched for the ghosts’ hints. Aurora studied a jagged rock close to one path, and it formed lips, leaned in, and smooched her. Aurora frantically shook the germs off, then indicated this path. Another circular area, Django shot down some Inkay Pokémon using his guitar laser. While Artie followed behind Haylee, the brother panicked when a leafless tree revealed big eyes and sharp fangs, ready to snack on Haylee unsuspectingly. Artie yelled for her, but the tree stood back to normal when she looked. His heart racing, Artie pointed this as the correct path.

On this next circle road, some Weavile zipped out of the bushes, Sheila was swift to dodge their quick attacks and defeat them with Light Fists. The friends kept an eye out for the “subtle” clue—when a boot popped out of a bush and kicked Harry down a path. Must be the right way. Flower Fuzzies attacked in this area – pink Fuzzies which suck their chi – Haylee bashed them with her wrench while Artie gooped them with a M.U.S.K.E.T.. When Kirie innocently walked by a path, Haunter popped out, clamped a hand over her face, and forced a fart out of her (however that worked). Haunter laughed, and the kids followed that path. They were at the final circle road,
nothing to attack them. It took a while to find the subtle hint, but then Dillon indicated the secret 5th path, within the hologram of some woods. The illusion dispersed—“BAAAAAAAIIEEE!” Gengar screamed in Dillon’s ear, totally surprising him, but at least the kids were through with that area.

The Pokémon laughed at Gengar’s action. “Thank you for helping us.” Haruka spoke with half-politeness. The ghosts nodded and faded away. Sector V began the trek up a steep, rocky mountain, having to take high steps or climb up tall mounds, really putting their legs to work. But they heard forceful flapping of wings: a Hydreigon flew down, the three-headed final form of Deino. The dragon prepared to blast them with its breath, but Django sighed impatiently and strummed his guitar, summoning three large skeletons to jump onto and pin it to the ground. The skeletons choked the dragon’s heads, until Midna flew out and destroyed them with Shadow Balls. “Don’t do that!” she yelled at him. “It’s just protecting Twilight Town!”

“Well, I’m protecting you guys!” Django argued. “And using this guitar a lot takes my energy, so you should thank me.”

“It all worked out, so don’t worry.” Dillon said as they bypassed the weakened Pokémon. “Let’s just get there.” They had to climb a rugged wall up the rest of the mountain, but once they made it, they were there. (Play “Twilight Town” from Paper Mario: TTYD.)

Twilight Town was a small and peaceful village, composed of mostly wooden houses. The trees had very few leaves, and pitch-black crows with eerie white eyes sat on the branches. The eternal sunset still peered at them from the horizon, but atop this mountain, over all the trees, it was even prettier to look at. The rest of the sky was a shade of magenta, and the yellow Full Moon was in marvelous view. Then there was the townspeople: they wore average, old-timey clothing, they had hair colors of brown, orange, yellow, black – like any normal human – but their skin was surreal green, blue, or purple respectively, and their glowing eyes peered from the shadowy dark top areas of their face. They were the Twili, and seeing them interact with the actual shadows, the whole presence of the town made their skin tingle.

“They kind of look like Midna.” Haylee noted.

“That’s not surprising.” Midna came out of Dillon. “I was the original shadow and Twili. Remember the Twili are descended from ordinary humans who moved to the Shadow Realm, and grew closely accustomed with the shadows and shadowbending. Not that I’m saying I’m human-designed, we Firstborn are more-or-less… fairies.”

“But the Twili are basically human just like us.” Aurora understood. “They just prefer more shade.”

“Like nerds.” Haruka remarked.

Kirie gasped brightly and silently: there were certain animals roaming the streets of Twilight Town. PIGGIIIIEEEEES! She joyfully skipped to one of the chubby oinkers.

“DON’T, Kirie!” Artie jumped in the way. He wore a skeptical scowl that you’d see on a conspiracy theorist. “I saw this in a movie once: every time the steeple bell tolls, a villager gets turned to a pig!” He whipped around and clamped the pig’s face. “Who did you use to be?! Wait, let me call someone on my Galactic Transmission Radio!” He pulled out a small, high-tech radio and tapped some buttons.

A girl answered, “Hey, Artie, what’s up?”

“Makava, get Arianna! I need her to ask this pig something!”
“Um… okay? Ari, it’s for you.”

“Hello?”

“Arianna, translate this pig for me!” He held the microphone by the pig’s mouth. “Now, did you use to be human…oid?”

“Oink oink oink.”

“It’s asking when is its turn for a mudbath.” Arianna translated.

“Void of all human sense.” Artie sighed with regret. “The horror…”

“How long did you have that, ’cause we coulda called for help in Solana.” Haruka stared at him.

“Hello, visitors!” They looked to their right. An ordinary Twili with green skin and brown hair under a hat approached them. “Welcome to Twilight Town! I’m Freddy, the tour guide. This must be your first time, since we don’t have many humans. …Are all you kids by yourself?”

“I’m 46 years old, so technically I’m the responsible adult!” Django shouted.

“I’ve actually been here before.” Dillon informed. “With my mom and aunts. But that was only to train, I never actually explored.”

“Wait, are you part of the class that warps here often?” Freddy asked.

“What class?”

“HEY, DUDES!!” a woman’s voice shouted from afar. They saw her running their way, black hair in two pigtails, pale skin, a black shirt and shorts that showed her belly, and holding a cigarette between her fingers.

“Mrs. Stork!” Dillon exclaimed.

“’t’s okay, Freddy, I’ll take it from here.” Virginia assured him, blowing a smoke.

“Cough!” the Twili choked. “Be my guest.” He quickly walked away.

“Dudes, how’s it hangin’?” The 34-year-old woman asked perkily. “I stepped away from my class for a quick smoke, then here you guys are!”

“Oh yeh, I forgot.” Harry spoke. “Sunni told me Twilight Town was one of the places for her dad’s school.”

“Yeah, we warp here with a team of psychicbenders.” Virginia said. “Speaking of warping, Lola and Terry are here, too. Now, what’s this about you guys sending them into space?”

“Looking back, we’re starting to think it was a pointless gesture.” Harry said.

“They said they saved a mountain from some ghosts. I dunno if that has any relevance, but it sounded pretty cool!” Virginia blew a smoke. “So what’re you dudes doing here?”

Dillon’s friends looked at him, and he especially felt Midna’s one-eyed glare. “I got in a fight with my shadow and we think he ran away here.”

“Wow, dude, really? Well, this might be kinda awkward.”
“Isn’t that the same with a lot of shadows here?” Aurora asked.

“Yeah, but… lemme show you somethin’.” Virginia led the team across the road, around some village houses. She indicated the tall, dark statue in a town square, depicting a long-haired woman in a dress. An old, blue-skinned Twili, with white fluffy brows and mustache, standing with a cane, was beside the statue. Virginia approached him. “Kids, this is Mayor Dour (pronounced ‘dow-er’). Hello, Mr. Mayor.”

“Oh, visitors.” The old Twili turned to face them. “Are they on a field trip?”

“Yep. Mayor, wanna tell us who this statue is?”

“Oh, of course… This fine woman is the ruler of this land. Daphne Anderson, also known as one of the World Leaders. We at Twilight Town were always poor, little food and resources, until this woman rose to power. She was born here, you see, adorable little girl. Who would’ve thought someone from a country as poor as ours would rise to such greatness?”

“Daphne… Anderson?” Dillon gazed at the statue.

“Is she one of your relatives??” Haylee asked with surprise.

“She’s my… great-aunt. My mom mentioned her.”

“Did she mention she was one of the World Leaders?” Chris asked with spite.

“…No.”

“You kids seem like you’re familiar with her.” Dour noted. “She is quite famous, true.”

“The World Leaders are monsters!” Chris yelled. “They killed our dad!”

“I’ve heard…” Virginia spoke regretfully.

“Now, that’s quite a stretch.” Dour replied. “Mother Anderson is a kind woman. We’ve never felt safer under her rule. And the shadows, especially…”

**BONG. . . . BONG. . . .**

“AAAAAAHHH!” Artie stuck his head under Kirie’s sweater. “It’s happening!! Someone’s gonna get piggied!!” Kirie smiled and patted his back.

However, they all looked with wonder and confusion when all of the disembodied shadows, as well as those belonging to Twili, wistfully flew away. They were going to a distant part of the forest, like a swarm of black, see-through clouds. “It’s the stroke of Pure Twilight.” Dour informed. “7:00p.m.. When every conscious shadow is called to Minerva’s Cathedral for one hour. Naturally, we shadowless benders have to stay in the shade, which isn’t hard since most of town is shaded.”

“Everyone has to go shadowless for one hour, why?” Midna questioned.

“Because they are having a session with Mother Daphne herself. She resides in the cathedral, whenever she isn’t on Mariejoa. There, she soothes them. Gives them bliss, and peace of mind. Then they return and spread their bliss to us. Then we Twili feel we never have to worry. This is mostly for the shadows who were deserted by their benders. Mother Daphne will send those shadows back to them, with the hopes tensions between them will be cured.”
“So Mario must be at that cathedral.” Dillon deduced, looking in the distance. “Come on, team, let’s get him back.” He started to walk forward.

“Wait, Dillon!” Haruka grabbed him. “One of the World Leaders is in that building! If Mr. Uno couldn’t beat them, maybe we should stay out of it.”

“Except Dad was by himself.” Chris fist-palmed. “If this lady’s by herself, we can easily jump her and take her out. Heck, I’ll blow that building up with my Combustion Beam.”

“Don’t act like an idiot, Chris!” Aurora stated. “I hate them for what they did to Dad, too, but we shouldn’t just go bursting in!”

“Why not, Aurora, she’s outnumbered, we can totally whoop her butt!”

“I second the motion.” Django raised his hand. “If she sends those shadows at us, I got an army of skeletons at my disposal.”

“Plus we have Midna, a Firstborn, we can get Mario back AND take out one of our major enemies!” Dillon reasoned.

“You realize you kids are talking about destroying the savior of this village in the middle of town, and in front of the mayor.” Virginia said with disbelief.

Now that they realized, a lot of townspeople were looking at them weirdly. “It’s okay, guys, they’re just kidding around!” Midna assured them. “You know how immature children are.” She pinched Dillon’s cheek playfully.

“Ms. Stork, can you take us someplace more private?” Aurora requested.

“Sure, dudes.”

The smoking woman brought them to a dark alley, leaning against the side of a house and smoking while the kids talked. “Okay, so let’s get some facts straightened out:” Aurora began. “One of the World Leaders, right now, is out in the forest. Assuming she’s by herself, it’s all of us against her. We can safely assume she is a crazy-powerful shadowbender. However, we have the Shadow Firstborn. Also, Sheila is a lightbender, me and Chris are firebenders, and if she sent all those shadows to attack us, maybe Django could fight them with his skeletons. Then again, all of the townspeople love her, and attacking her may kinda get the other World Leaders riled up. So in conclusion: We should not fight Daphne Anderson.”

“Why the heck not?!” Chris shouted.

“Look, we may SEEM like we’ve got the advantage, but we don’t know how strong this woman really is! We only came here to get Mario back, so that’s what we’re gonna do. We’ll wait for that… ‘session’ to end, then Dillon will have a man-to-shadow talk with Mario when he gets back. And to be honest, Chris… we never really asked Grim which of the World Leaders killed Dad. If anything, The King did it; or maybe they all did it together, we aren’t sure.”

“Sigh… all right.” Her brother folded his arms.

“So why don’t we find the inn Dillon’s aunt works in and settle in.” Harry suggested.

Artie hoarsely cracked up. “_That was the best sentence you ever said!!_”

“Aw, please.”
“I’m all for that, dudes.” Virginia said. “Ah’ll take ya to her place.”

The Shady Inn was 5 stories tall, though it seemed kind of small in width. “Hey, I’ll tell Lola and Terry you’re here, so you can hang out later.” Virginia told them before leaving them to enter.

The kids met a very tall woman of 38 years old with black hair at the reception desk. She smiled brightly at them. “Dillon! Hi, little guy!”

“Hi, Aunt Victoria.” Dillon blushed. “These are the guys. And girls. And dead guy.”

“Hm hm, it’s nice to finally meet all of you! Danika told me you were coming—did you really get in a fight with your-”

“YES.” Dillon was tired of repeating this.

“Heh heh…” Victoria blushed. “Well, don’t worry, I’m sure you’ll straighten it out. We have two rooms prepared for you—we assumed you wanted Boys’ Side and Girls’ Side, so—”

“We’ll take it from here, Miss!” a woman said. Three Twili showed up with bright expressions. A woman with dark red hair and glowing blue eyes, a man with bright blue hair and green eyes, and a Twili that was half their size and looked like a two-legged black-and-white cat.

“Let us show you to your room, kids!” the man followed.

“We got a ton of plates of dunch set up for ya!” the cat replied with an accent. “That’s dinner-plus-lunch.”

The boys took a room on the second floor while the girls had the room next to it. Artie took out his Infi-Cube and popped out all the sleepover essentials, pajamas, sleeping bags, and some handheld games for all of them. “When is bedtime, exactly?” Harry questioned.

“Please, try Shady Inn’s Peachy Peaches and Golden Tea!” the red-haired woman offered the foods with a bright grin.

“And for the Firstborn of Shadow herself, fresh Inky Soup!” The cat handed Midna a bowl of shadowy soup.

“Thank you.” Midna smiled, holding the spoon in her ponytail hand while she slurped.

“We’ll be up with your meals shortly!” the woman beamed as they backed weirdly out of the room. “If you need anything else, please don’t hesitate to ask!”

The three Twili calmly walked away from the twin rooms. They held their heads close to each other as the man whispered, “Was that really her, Meowth?”

“Yeah, the Foistborn of Shadow, Midna!” Meowth perked up.

“Hm hm, this is too easy!” Jessie grinned. “We’ll wait until their guard is down, and that Firstborn is ours for the taking! The boss will be so pleased!”

“Just play it cool until then, capiche?” Meowth said as they resumed walking.

“Blunkers, do me soles need some airin’!” Sheila sighed in relaxation, plopping front-first onto the bed.

The boys and girls stared weirdly at her. “Don’t you wanna be in the girls’ room, Sheila?” Mason
“Who the heck says we should?” she questioned. “We all shared a room on Sunny Day. Like that night that was really cold, and we were shivering.”

“Please don’t mention it.” Mason sunk.

“So we all cuddled up together like rodents in a cave.” Sheila hugged the bed lovingly.

“And Carol held Mason like a body pillow.” Haylee said.

“They’re mentioning it.” Mason flushed.

“Don’t you wanna come and explore the town, Sheila?” Haruka asked. “Cause that’s what we’re doing, maybe hang out with Terry and Lola. We can keep an eye out for Mario, too.”

“I think I’ll rest for now.” Dillon lied on the floor with his arms wrapped behind his head. “Think about what I’m gonna say to Mario.”

“Oi, somebody climb in with me and we’ll think together.” Sheila spoke lazily—she already looked fast asleep, and drool leaked from her mouth. Mason raised a brow, suspecting she was off on a Dream Land adventure.

“I need some alone time, too.” Chris said before leaving down the hall.

The male Uno child held his head down, one hand over his forehead. One of the World Leaders was in the forest… one of the people that killed his dad. Made Cheren upset. He really wanted to go out there and attack her, but he feared Aurora was right. Her strength might be too much for them. But what if she decided to come to town herself and see them? Would they have a choice? “Your turn.” A gruff old voice said from a closed door.

“Oh-ho, excellent play, Your Majesty!” exclaimed a higher old voice.

They sounded familiar to Chris. He held an ear by that door.

“I wager 200 years of damnation.”

“You will suffer for all your sins, Sire!”

Now they creeped him out. Chris walked away- “Where are you going, Boy?” He stopped. He looked at the door, clenching his teeth in fright. “I can feel your rage. Please, come inside.”

Chris lightly creaked open the door to the small room. “Have a seat.” The taller man said.

Chris gasped. “What’re you two doing here?” (End song.)

**Sector L Treehouse**

Danny gathered the papers and stacked them neatly together, ready to do another news segment. He glanced over at his sister, who was playing dead on the couch. “Melody, are you sure you don’t wanna anchor with me?”

“I told you, Danny, I’m done.” She rolled over.

“Come on. Remember when Mom used to recap the events of Firstborn? I feel like this story is due for some recaps, since it’s longer.”

“Alright, fine.” Melody groggily walked up and took the papers. Her eyes were baggy in the
camera, her long hair was a mess, and she spoke quickly. “Good evening, everyone, this is Melody Jackson, here to recap the events of Seven Lights. First, Sector IC went to Glacia and murdered Elsa ‘cause Frozen is getting old, Cheren got turned into a monkey by Aunt Morgan, Corporate President Doflamingo got hung by a birdcage, there’s a Ninth Firstborn named Sugar, and Hatsune Miku was her Guardian, Phosphora escaped from prison, we learned she was a religious nut that got bitch-slapped by her god, now Fybi and Suki are Lights, also Chimney got shrunk and Jar Jar is traveling with Maddy, and I think Arianna hatched a giant sting ray, also Tronta’s gay—THIS has been Melody Jackson, see you in 30 chapters when this plot advances.” So with that concluded, she returned to the couch.

“I, uhhh. . . . think you left out a few details.” Danny replied.

“Danny, I just can’t take it, anymore.” Melody folded her arms and rolled away. “I didn’t know what I was expecting when I took over this KNN stuff, maybe report some major victories, juicy secrets, the most dramatic thing I was expecting was daily decommissions. Hearing about the ‘Apocalypse’ out of nowhere, then Cheren killing a corporate billionaire, it’s… sigh, it’s just that these’re too big of things for me to think about.” She spoke more sadly. “I’m training with Mom to become better at waterbending so I can help, too, but I can’t just sit in front of the cameras and talk about these things comfortably. Especially Mr. Uno…”

“But Melody, they’re relying on us to keep everyone up to date. And ever since this ‘Apocalypse’ thing started, crazy things’ve been happening left-and-right. One minute, we’re having this emotional moment, all of a sudden four intrepid explorers fall out of the sky.”

“Danny, what makes you think four people would-”

Five flashes of light appeared above the room, Sarah fell out, Gary, Sheldon Cooper, an Infi-Cube, then Emily Garley. “OOOF.” All on top of each other.

“…We have our next news segment.” Melody remarked.

The next 10 minutes were spent getting all of them straightened up, Emily releasing Jessie and Sandy from the Infi-Cube, and the crazy events that led to them splorping inside their treehouse. “Then these three came to rescue us and, put us in their box.” Sandy concluded, with confusion at that last part.

“Excuse me, but we have been inside your home for 10 minutes and 35 seconds, and no one has offered us any hot beverages!” Sheldon argued.

“Coming right up.” Danny walked away.

“To be honest, I’m surprised Specter didn’t take this place over.” Emily mentioned. “A KND news studio would’ve been perfect for his plan.”

“Well, don’t give them the idea now.” Melody remarked.

“Um, if we’re done with the explanations, can anyone please fix my brother?” Sandy asked with worry.

As Jessie lay asleep on the couch, Melody extracted the water from her two bottles using her bending, placing her watery hands over Jessie’s head and chest. They glowed with a mystical light, and Sandy held her hands over her chest in prayer for Jessie’s health. “His body is fine… but there’s something off about his mind. It’s unusually lightheaded. You said he’s been sleeping for over 2 days?”
“Uh-huh.” Sandy nodded. “You don’t think he’s... brain-damaged, do you?”

“Maybe I’ll bring him to our mom, she’d know this stuff better than me.”

“Whenever I have trouble waking up, my mother used to turn on the Geology Channel!” Sheldon informed, followed by giddy laughter. “They think that geology is a real science!”

“Um... okay?” Sandy responded questionably. “Um, Jessie laughs at *Spongebob*. Maybe we could turn *Spongebob* on.”

“Nooo, that’ll only make his brain worse.” Sheldon said worriedly.

“I’m in the mood for some cartoons, so flip it on.” Gary swiped the remote from the table and turned on the TV. He changed it to Nickelodeon, where conveniently *Spongebob* was playing.

“I barely remember this show.” Melody commented. “Like, there’s a starfish, a cowboy squirrel; I hardly remember the actual main character.”

“I had a similar dilemma, but I’m given to understand that the main character is a talking sponge with square-shaped pants.” Sheldon explained. “At first glance, you can already point out the inaccuracy that he is not designed like a real sea-sponge.”

“I dunno why it’s so popular, either, but it might be a good break from catching monkeys all week.” Emily seated beside Gary. “No sugar in my cocoa, Danny!”

**Hall of Doors**

Sheila leapt out of a pool of Waking Water marked *Twilight Town* and met up with Murfy, Globox, and Rayman, the latter of which was tied to a leash held by Globox. “Okay, so I flew back to Toons in Trouble, but Magician wasn’t there anymore.” Murfy explained. “It looked like Hoodlums ransacked the place, tryin’ to steal all the Lums we collected.”

“I thought we were collecting Electoons?” Sheila questioned.

“We’re saving both, it’s just the Lums are everywhere, and Gamewizard ain’t gonna write out every single one. Anyway, the Magician fled to a more private setting, some dreamscape of a 12-year-old girl from Japan. It’s kinda far away, but I think we can take this shortcut through the Sponge Dream. It’s real convenient, because it’s where we can awaken-”

“RUFF!” Rayman got free of his leash and snapped Murfy’s manual in his teeth, leaping into the Sponge Dream portal on all fours.

“HEY! Give that back!” Murfy chased him inside.

“I guess leashes work better if it has a neck to go around.” Globox figured, studying the rope’s empty loop. Sheila ran and dove into the portal, then the blue toad followed suit. (Play “Spongebob’s Dream” from *Battle for Bikini Bottom.*)

**Stage 42: Sponge Dream**

**Mission: Cross the dimension to find Magician’s residence.**

Sheila came out on a floating, sandy island, very high up in the sky, which seemed to have no earth below at all. The entire sky was yellowish-orange, with millions of intricate designs of tikis, palm
trees, any oceanic-related stuff. The entirety of standable areas were floating islands or platforms. The first trial, for instance, required Sheila to jump some quick back-and-forth floating green blocks, which constantly flipped and had spikes on all sides except for one. However, the final block was lower than the following island, though no spikes were on it. “Let me go first!” Globox insisted, expertly hopping across the platforms and landing on the final. He lied on his back, clutching the sides with his hands and feet, and held on as the block flipped. “Jump on me!”

Sheila used the best of her precision (the music gave her an upbeat aura, too) to jump across the fast blocks, keeping an eye for the safe sides, and had to do something similar when Globox’s side on the last one came. She bounced on the toad’s belly and flew onto the soft, sandy island. There, she found a bed with a tan-skinned 7-year-old, brown hair, purple shirt, and black shorts. Sheila shook the familiar youngster awake. “Nnmmm… what ***king time is it?”

“’ey, help me get across this place, ya sailor-mouth dingo.” Sheila ordered.

“Who the *** are you?”

“Someone who’s gonna wet your pants if you don’t get up.”

“***… fine.”

Jessie kicked the covers off and approached a large, cube-shaped yellow sponge, jumping on and performing a Ground Pound with bubble feet. Many Block Bubbles flew out of the sponge, forming a path to the next island, which had a giant squirrel in a white spacesuit and air helmet floating over it. “Maybe you should wait in here.” Jessie encased Sheila inside of a bubble, the girl balling up while Jessie pulled her. The boy bounced across the back-and-forth Bubble Blocks himself, and each one popped upon impact. Jessie used his double-jumps and maneuvering wisely, and he successfully took land on the island. There was a thin tree inside a large glass air dome with a grass garden inside. Murfy was floating by it.

“Sheila, I saw Rayman go in this room! Help me follow him!” Murfy flew into the dome’s door. Sheila sighed with annoyance and went in with Jessie.

Sandy Cheeks’ dream took place in the skies above Texas’s plains. The moment the kids dropped in, they were going down the longest slide they’ve ever seen, very narrow, colored red on the sides with a center white line, blue stars, and thousands of meters in the air. Sheila and Jessie drifted along a left turn, quickly drifted rightwards, then took a terrific leap off a ramp, flying the great gap, landing on the lower slide. Before continuing, Sheila saw some Hoodlums making mischief on a giant sandcastle to their right, so she took Jessie’s arm and jumped over.

Sheila pelted Light Spheres at the Hoodmongers, Jessie aided, but Stumblebooms stood atop the castle’s towers tossing grenades. While Sheila took out the minor troops, Jessie spotted a Chuck in the distant sky, so he sent a Bubble Torpedo to wipe the robot out. A green Power Can was dropped at their island, Sheila grabbed it to obtain the Tornado Fist. She leapt up the stairs within the short castle to get where the Stumblebooms were, spinning them off their stilts. She proceeded to kick them senseless, and in doing so, an Electoon Cage was revealed. Sheila rescued the critters, and the sliding continued. They slid down a sudden steep slope, but the road became flat again as they had to side-dodge a series of powder kegs.

Chucks tossed torpedoes at them from the sides, they paid them no mind and kept sliding. They were about to go off an edge, Sheila caught a blue Power Can, grabbed Jessie, and swung the Purple Lums that staired upwards. They made it on top of another part of the slide, letting the downward momentum carry them, they constantly drifted left, right, left, right, left, then constantly go right—Sheila barely saw that Purple Lum whip by the corner, still with her Swing Suit, she
grabbed Jessie and swung on, up onto a floating water tower reading ‘ARLEN’, and breaking an Electoon Cage atop it. The duo floated back to the slide, which eventually dropped them on a small island with a faucet that released little bubbles.

Jessie rolled a Bubble Bowl against the faucet, letting it puff to a size so he and Sheila could get in. They rolled down another brief slide into a portal. They were suddenly warped to the ocean, using the momentum from that slide to roll up and around a great, looping wave. They rolled onto a stable water-made path (they were confused if it was solid or liquid), off a ramp, and landed on an uplifted surfboard, which bounced them to another, then another, until they landed on a path within a looped wave, rolling down. The path curved leftward until it sent them down a steep slope, up a ramp—the water below was definitely liquid, but there were solid, ramped platforms in the form of waves, they landed on carefully to swing upward again and land on the next.

They made it onto a larger shore and rolled their Bubble Ball across a bridge of surfboards that floated by, ending at a water spout that sent them onto the beach. Before rolling into the Tree Dome door, they followed a right route, where a rising bubble column lifted them up, and they could roll onto an Electoon Cage to break it open. They then left the dreamscape through the Tree Dome door, returning to the Sponge Dream hub. They could roll their bubble on another bubble jetstream, lifting up before they rolled over a series of floating bubble vents.

They landed on a new island and popped the Bubble Bowl on a spike. “Darn it. While you were takin’ your time sliding, Rayman escaped into this dream!” Murfy was close to the Krusty Krab, represented by Mr. Krabs’ gigantic form. “This one’s a real doozy. The mind of a miser is not a safe place, let me tell you. Best of luck to ya, tykes.” The duo entered the treasure chest restaurant —Sheila and Jessie landed on a patty of a giant grill, and giant spatulas were flipping certain patties every interval.

They jumped to the next patty before theirs flipped; whenever a patty was flipped, the top was scorching red, so they had to wait for it to cool before jumping. Just as well, they couldn’t land on the grill, or risk being melted. Sheila punched Light Spheres to Chucks who were trying to thwart their progress, but thankfully the duo made it onto a safe treasure chest. Well, safe until it suddenly POPPED open, sending them flying to another distant stove. This entire road was covered in oil, thanks to the Planktonbot Slicks, who were surrounded in oily shields. Sheila and Jessie were forced to ski around this ground, dodging the Slicks’ oil balls. A giant block of ice sat at the start of the road, but Sheila wasn’t able to move it. There were many burners around the stove, lighting aflame every few seconds, so the duo took care not to slide into them—for all this oil would result in massive damage.

There were two burners that had switches within them, and both had to be pressed simultaneously. Sheila and Jessie waited beside one, waited for the flame to go off, and quickly Ground Pound the buttons before jumping off. An Electooon Cage was called up, free for Sheila to burst. At the end of the oily road, they encountered a Tubelet, which was three robots floating on top of each other. The lowest one spun around and released a stream of fire, forcing Jessie and Sheila to keep away as that area was set aflame. Sheila punched a Light Sphere, Jessie a torpedo to destroy two of the robots at once, then Sheila sent another sphere to destroy the top one before it revived its friends.

Sheila gained a Strong Suit, and saw the rest of this scape was a river of boiling grease. Sheila returned to the start of this oil road, to the giant ice block. Jessie distracted the Slicks with torpedoes, letting Sheila slide the block across the oil using her enhanced strength. Depending on the strength of her punches, the block slid further. She had to make sure it didn’t slide off the edge, or onto a lit burner. Once the block was aligned with the grease river, Sheila slid it down, freezing the substance solid. She and Jessie slide down with terrific momentum, stopping at the dream’s exit. The ice block also landed in the rays of two giant desk lamps, melting to give them a barrel of
Sheila carried the juice in through the exit, and they met Globox in the dreamscape’s hub-world. “Sheila, you won’t believe how I got across—PLUM JUICE!” The toad grabbed and guzzled the barrel. His allergic reaction kicked in, puffing to bloated size as he burped a stairway of purple bubbles. These bubbles were steady, thankfully, allowing the pair to hop up them and reach the final island: a huge pineapple with a door and windows; which overlooked the island where Sheila started from. A familiar—yet unfamiliar yellow sponge was floating above the fruit, so Jessie was eager to go inside.

The dimension’s sky was endless rows of pixelated Spongebob images, flashing yellow and blue. Bubbles floated everywhere, all the way up this winding tower. Sheila clutched Jessie’s wrist and used her superior speed to rush up the path carved within the tower, making all the necessary right turns, left turns, avoiding blockades, the larger bubbles that floated in her way. At the top of the aqua-blue tower, they were nearly blinded by the presence of three giant desk lamps. All pointed at the center above the tower, where a floating cage contained a near-shriveled, yellow-brown sponge. Arfs, Tubelets, and Slicks appeared everywhere, respawned every time Sheila destroyed one. Rayman was also at the top of the tower, thankfully distracting some of the robots as he snarled like a dog.

Jessie trusted Sheila as his defense and sent a Bubble Torpedo behind the base of each giant lamp. By hitting the switches, the lamps shut off, and once all three were destroyed, the sponge could no longer shrivel. The robots stopped respawning, then Jessie used his Headbash attack (in the form of a bubble Viking helmet) to break the cage open. (End song.)

The brown-yellow sponge gasped heavily on the ground (he was on top of the Exit Portal). With a stern expression, Jessie opened his bubble bottle over him and poured the soap on. The vibrant little sponge puffed to his natural yellow color. “Bai-yai-yai-ai-ai! Sudsy!”

“Psst! Here, boy!” Murfy clapped his hands, signaling Rayman to look at him. “Who wants a Rayman Snack?” He held a cookie shaped like Rayman’s face.

Rayman stuck his tongue out and panted, dropping the Manual. On all fours, the Ray-dog pounced toward the fairy—Murfy swung and bashed him unconscious with a frying pan. “Hnn. Like I would give you my treat.” Murfy munched the cookie in his own big teeth.

With that, Globox had Rayman locked in another cage. “Rayman, you gotta learn how to behave. I won’t have to take you to the vet, will I?”

“A dog-walk a day keeps the vet away!” Spongebob spoke wisely. “Now I believe you three were looking for-” He twirled his arms, then aimed at the portal, “the exit.”

Sheila and Spongebob stood beside the pedestal. They did the silly dance with hands on their hips, kicked their legs, spun in place, then the portal open. Sheila slurped inside, Murfy flew after, Globox cannonballed in with Rayman’s cage. “Now… just where the ***k have you been?” Jessie asked Spongebob disapprovingly. “You don’t show up in my dreams for months, then I have to work with those weirdoes to save your ass?”

“Gee, I’m sorry, Jessie.” Spongebob touched his shoulder comfortably. “I really wanted to meet you again, too. But maybe dreaming isn’t the best way of doing it. I want to meet you for real. You can come and meet me-” He leaped into the air, diving backward over the tower, “under the SEEEEEEEEAAAA!”

“…” Jessie watched until Spongebob was gone in the abyss. “Sigh… how the *** am I supposed
to go there?"

Sector DR Treehouse

Dressrosa was still in ruin after that crazy, out-of-nowhere battle that occurred three days previously, and GUN soldiers were struggling to organize and calm down all the citizens. Sector DR’s treehouse was left completely abandoned, because three of the members were arrested, while another member is on a vacation to a music planet. However, one member was left behind. A strange nutcracker toy was still in place. Finally, Sugar’s curse was wearing off on him. The toy shone with white light as he transformed back to normal.

He was a yellow square-shaped sponge with big blue eyes, a long nose, buckteeth, and green holes. He had stick-like arms and legs, with little white sleeves on the base of his arms, black shoes and white socks, and wore brown square pants with a white shirt and red tie. “I think it’s safe to say THIS twist was a little… nut-cracker! Bah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!” After giving his trademark laugh, the semi-sentient sponge leapt into the air, headfirst in the bathroom’s toilet. As it flushed, Spongebob took the form of a small, live-action sponge, going down the drain. “Bai-yai-yai-yai-ai-ai-ai-ai-ai!”

Twilight Town

And THIS one’s a piggy! Kirie stared wide-eyed at a little oinker, who scurried away. And THIS one is a piggy! She approached another, it retreated. And THIS one is a piggy, TOO—. . . She frowned when she approached a fat, blue-skinned Twili in a purple hood from behind. The woman turned around.

“Yes, can I help you?” she asked.


“Kirie!” Aurora, Haylee, and Harry hurried over to the girl, panting. “You haven’t seen Dillon, have you? He’s not in his room and we can’t find him in town.”

They heard a gentle guitar strumming up above. They knew only one person that carried a guitar. The group hurried away from the inn and looked at its roof, seeing Django. The sunlight made him appear half dark, and half orange. His eyes were closed as he played the guitar peacefully. “We… are the Kids Next Door. We’ll always kick your ass. And if you think we won’t, tell that to the guy on the floor—”

“Django!” He opened his eyes when Aurora yelled up at him. “Do you know where Dillon is?!”

“YEAH, I saw him go into the forest. To that cathedral place.”

“YOU SAW HIM GO WHERE?!!”

“He must be going to get his shadow back!” Haylee exclaimed. “Django, why didn’t you stop him?!”

“Puh.” Django spat a nonexistent glob of spit, smiling coolly. “Midna’s going with him, too. He makes a good argument. The fact is…” He narrowed his glowing red eyes. “It’s his shadow. It’s his battle. And he won’t become Midna’s Guardian unless he fights it.”

Dillon made it to Minerva’s Cathedral, and Midna came out of his shadow for a better view. There was nothing bright about this place. The sun didn’t touch this area. It looked like a large, grey, cold stone, carved hollow to become a cathedral. Dillon glanced at his Firstborn companion, sucking a
breath before marching into its front gates. (Play “Requiem for the Lost Ones” from Bleach.)

He felt the color fade from his body. It was grayer than a retro movie in here. Along the walls, on the floor, the ceiling, the seats, were shadows. Different hairstyles, different shapes… same color. They were partially black, but that black was in the process of becoming gray like the building. Like… her.

She was at the altar. The woman who the statue represented. Daphne Anderson. Dillon’s great-aunt was more pale and looked more dead than a ghost. Her lips were blacker than Death’s cloak, her eyes were darker than the Reaper’s sockets. Dillon couldn’t imagine her ghostly-white hair feeling any better than the coldest, rustiest wilted flower. All of the shadows were looking at her. Dillon and Midna felt a grave, depressing feeling from all of their souls. They saw a particular shadow was skinny and football-headed; Nigel Uno’s shadow.

But they especially recognized the young shadow who was with Daphne at the altar. “It’s a cold world… after all.” She spoke with a voice that would dampen even the most brightest of spirits. It had no interest in love or life at all, and mixed with those soulless eyes, how could any person want to feel hope around her. “You look at the moon… you look at the sun… you look at the stars… and still you feel nothing. Because they are far… and you are here. They look at you… taunt you… and lay endlessly out of your reach.”

She softly petted Mario’s hair, gently rubbed his cheek, like a mother comforting her child. Dillon could feel the solemn tranquility from his shadow. All of the spirit and soul draining from his form. Feeling only solace before the woman who sapped this force from him. “You poor dear…” She spoke softly to the shadow. “You knew the feeling… of anger… tears… joy… confusion… your mind is in an unsteady place… all you are feeling… is false.”

Daphne pulled out a black rose with a white stem. She began to pluck its petals. Dillon flinched at each pluck.

Dillon laughed as he recorded Mason and Sheila’s kiss.

Dillon playfully took strings from Mason’s sweater.

“These feelings of yours… joy, pain, and sadness… they are what destroys a heart.” Daphne plucked three more petals.

Dillon was so happy when Vanellope joined their sector.

Dillon was so upset when Vanellope was taken away.

Dillon was so angry when Carol was going to replace her.

Dillon was glad to help Carol when she needed it most.

“This is why shadowbenders do such things… because you shadows are the reflection… of what they are.”

Midna looked concerned as Dillon hunched over from unseen pain. The boy limped forward down the aisle, eyes fixed determinedly on his shadow. “To be thrown aside… To be treated as trash… because deep down, you know… you don’t belong in this world. You’re cold, like dead air… a ghost of something that wants to exist. In truth, you have no voice… your desire goes unheard. So just sit alone… take solace in darkness… let your heart be still.”

And Mario embraced every word. This beautiful woman… opened his eyes. He drifted closer,
leaning his head on Daphne’s chest. The woman put an arm around him softly. Mario wanted to be close to her… he felt so warm around her… so understood. Daphne let him embrace in her. She was about to pluck the last five petals of the rose. “Aunt Daphne?”

The woman stopped. She looked at him. The boy with passionate brown eyes. The only color, the only life, the only soul in this place. Dillon reached under his sweater, took out a S.C.A.M.P.P., and aimed it at her. “Give me my shadow back.”

If anyone remembers that nutcracker toy from *Viridi’s Last Stand*, working for Sector DR, you now know the truth. And you’ll know the story behind that truth later. Twilight Town comes from *Paper Mario*, but the Twili are from both that game and *Twilight Princess*. Next time… well, hopefully you’ve been following along, and not relying on Melody’s recap. Because then you’ll know the inaccuracies. :P
33. The Ocean’s Bane

Chapter Summary

Sector V battles World Leader Daphne Anderson! Team Emily goes to Oceana, which is being terrorized by an unwanted person.

Today’s code uses the Atbash Cipher. Resume “Requiem for the Lost Ones” from Bleach.

Chapter 33: The Ocean’s Bane

Minerva’s Cathedral

Dillon stood firm and locked his S.C.A.M.P.P. on the woman. While all the shadows felt solemn and cold around her, Dillon showed emotion in his brown eyes. Determination to get Mario back. Daphne looked at him with her cold dark eyes, which, if one looked closely enough, could see a shred of humor. “I was wondering who had walked in during my monologue.” Daphne said with the same depressed tone. “What else did I expect… another wayward soul.”

“Mario, get away from that woman!” Dillon demanded. “Come back to me!”

“Why should he.” Daphne softly hugged Mario to her chest. “After all, you are his… reality. Shadows suffer so much… living in the light of their masters. Their emotions become the shadows. The shadows despair and decay in what the masters feel. No… a shadow… knows peace.” She rested her head on Mario’s, closing her eyes. “A shadow suffers in peace. All they should need… is quiet… blindness… bliss… but their masters ruin such tranquility.” She reached for a black petal on the white stem. She plucked.

Dillon hated the Zoni for wanting to take away Vanellope’s glitch, that which made her great.

“A true shadowbender… knows bliss like the shadows. They must become still… silent… soft…” She plucked another petal.

Dillon woke up with embarrassment on the Sunny Day, cuddling with Mason on that cold winter night.

“But the only way a person can know such tranquility… is through death. There’s no more wonderful embrace. A Gray Shadow is a shadow whose master has faced death, in the most gentle way.” She plucked another.

Five-year-old Dillon hugged his dad lovingly after he got home.

“Void of all emotion… all feeling… that is the beauty in my power.” Daphne slowly reached for the last petal. “Enter that void… and sleep.”

Dillon clutched Daphne’s arm before it reached. She looked down at him. “A real shadowbender… knows how to let their shadow feel these things. A real shadowbender… takes their shadow away from that boring tranquility and shows them what it really means to have emotions. Instead of being just a shadow under their master… they get to be a friend to their master. They’re able to
stop being shy and interact… like a real human. If a Gray Shadow comes from a dead master… why are you so gray? Why am I feeling your flesh…”

Daphne closed her eyes. The memory brought no feeling to her heart.

Daphne was five years old, Isabelle Anderson was seven. They were two sisters living in Twilight Town. Although they were human born, their skin was pale, in the process of becoming Twili. Daphne loved to hide in the shade, Isabelle was a ray of sunshine. She always grabbed her little sister’s arm and ran around the village, around the forest, playing games with their shadows. Isabelle ran too far, Daphne worriedly chased after her. Although young and full of energy, Daphne never expressed much emotion, only subtle hints.

Then the demons captured them. The demons that served Malladus and Hell’s Royal Family. Malladus’s son was married to Queen of Shadows, Malevolous. Shadows and shadowbenders alike were subject through experiments. Shadows were transformed into ravenous monsters, so why not do the same to shadowbenders? Give them a feeling of being demon. Isabelle and Daphne were in prison for years, before the demons decided to experiment on them.

Daphne’s shadow, Shaydes was extremely agro, she bit and scratched the monsters, desperate to protect her master and sister. The demons injected the shadow with their dark magic, Daphne cried for her shadow, the girl had finally shown emotion in the form of tears. She hugged Shaydes closely. Let the tears soak her. It was unbearable, but the young shadow withstood, fought the pain. …But at a price. Shaydes had faded into a soulless gray color. Her previous pitch-black form possessed the vibrance and joy Daphne lacked, but that color was sapped from her form now. The dyed shadow crept back behind her master, and in the weakest, most hopeless voice possible, Shaydes promised that she would always be with her.

And then the Kids Next Door appeared, tearing the factories to pieces, Malladus and Grandfather were destroyed, the demons were cowering back to the Underworld, light had returned to the planet. Isabelle met a handsome boy in raggedy clothing called Daniel. His parents died of illness when he was a baby, he lived in his own secret sewer hideout with nary a home or a surname. But Isabelle loved him, he became her best friend and soon-to-be-lover. Daphne was not left alone, however… That handsome, chubby boy with sunglasses, Numbuh Zero, grinned at Daphne and reached a hand down.

Monty Uno, the traitor to the Uno Family, comforted Daphne for what happened to her shadow. Daphne, whose soul was dried like Shaydes’ color, found light and warmth next to this boy. She thought Monty could help repair the color that was lost. Then… he disappeared. No one knew where he went. No one on the planet.

In the years that came, Daphne became a teenager. She met a handsome, older boy called Reggie Johnson. He took Daphne to where he lived. A beautiful mountain in eternal sunlight. Daphne met other people, some close, some far from her age. They became friends… then, they became rulers. They had the power to decide, to run this world. They had the power to bring and restore the peace they desired. Daphne knew… the very peace everyone deserved.

Daphne reopened her eyes. “If, for even the tiniest bit, I am allowed to desire… it is to serve the people who saved me, and destroy all the evils in this world. But all evils… stem from feeling. With no feeling… there would be no evils. My shadow… all shadows… I will be the mother they have longed for. I will show them what my shadow has shown me…. Solace.” She reached for the petal again. (End song.)

“EEEH!” Midna smacked the flower away from Daphne’s hand with her huge ponytail hand. She clutched the woman’s arm tight and tried to pull her away. “SHADOWS, stop LISTENING to this
woman!” she yelled to them. “You all need to be with your masters. Alive or dead, both of you need each other. This woman is poisoning you. Only your masters should be able to give you any kind of solace!”

“Hmmm…” Daphne rubbed Midna’s cheek with her other hand. “Even the Firstborn… after spending so long in the mortal world… has let the masters ruin her mind.”

“Uuuuu…” Midna’s grip on her arm faltered. The Firstborn’s areas were fading to gray. She was growing sleepy…

“DILLON!” The cathedral doors flew open. The Sector V members burst in, holding weapons or powers ready. “Are you Daphne Anderson?!” Haylee questioned.

“She looks more dead than I am.” Django remarked.

“How much did she hurt you?!” Chris yelled.

“Now I’m being judged again.” Daphne closed her eyes, smiling somewhat. “‘Hurt’, he says. ‘Dead.’ Kids really know nothing. I am a mother to every shadow you see here. A mother’s job… is to give their children warmth and comfort. A home. Every Gray Shadow you see here… belonged to a master who I had introduced to Death. Death is a terrifying thing to wait for… so I take them in safe, easy steps. I pluck one petal at a time. Then… on the last pluck, the heart stops. They never feel more peaceful. Just ask the latest one to my collection.”

She gestured to a tall, thin shadow with a football-shaped head. Chris and Aurora’s eyes widened. “Dad…” The former glared at Daphne, “So it was YOU who killed him!!”

“Why are you angry? It was your father that attacked us. We felt horrible for what we did. But we couldn’t let him wreck everything. So I killed him with my Gray Shade. You should have seen him when he died… he was beautiful.”

“AAAAHH!” Chris punched a flame at the woman, Shaydes jumped in the way and defended her master, then reformed from the flame. Chris kicked on his rockets and flew, but all of the shadows piled on and held the boy back. He desperately tried to fly at Daphne, but the shadows were surprisingly strong. They redirected him at the ceiling, causing the firebender to fly and break through. “WAAAaaah!!”

“Django, the skeletons!” Aurora whispered at him. “We need to get Daphne outside for our plan!”

“That’s mah jam.” Django strummed his guitar, forcing skeletons to pop out from each seat in the church.

Daphne made a chuckle that sounded like a simple, toneless breath. She waved an arm, and all of the shadows flew under those of the skeletons. The corpses began shaking of their own accord, directing at the operatives. “What?!” Django furrowed.

“Thank you for helping us test our experiment.” Daphne smiled. “Shadows can be added to the bodies of corpses, bringing them to life. Those corpses will have the physical abilities and personalities of their shadow’s master.”

“Does this sombrero make my head look fat?” a fat skeleton asked with a woman’s voice.

“’Ey, yo, what’s the dillio??” an Italian skeleton questioned.
“Kah…kids?” a skeleton coughed.

Aurora gaped. “Dad?…”

“Kids… Thah… The King… his name is…”

Daphne clutched her hand. The skeletons stood upright and silenced, ready to attack her enemies. “Well-p, we tried, it failed.” Django turned a dial on his guitar to force the skeletons back into the earth. The shadows floated back in the air.

“Mario, just snap out of it!” Dillon yelled. “I know I act like a jerk, but is that really worse than having the life sapped out of you??”

“You’re only so indifferent, because you do not know the everlasting serenity.” Daphne reached down to pick up the one-petal rose. “I will happily… give it to you.”

Mario touched her arm. Daphne looked at him curiously. He spoke to her telepathically. Dillon could tell, though he couldn’t hear. Daphne’s eyelids and brows inched up in a way that she agreed. “Oh… yes. Perhaps we should. After all… they are making this last far too long. If you would… Mario… you may.”

Mario nodded. He flew around to all of Sector V’s shadows, and to their utter astonishment, they flew out from their positions. Mario flew to the center of the room, and spoke to all of the shadows. They flew together in a swarm, and soared directly into Daphne’s body. “Uuu-uuuh!” The woman choked, her skinny ghostly body began pumping. Black and gray aura surrounded her body, her eyes glowed white. The kids stared with the greatest terror as she grew larger.

“Uhhhhh maybe we should go.” They agreed with Aurora and bolted out of the church, through the trees, as fast as they could. Since they didn’t have shadows, they had to keep within the shade of trees. After they ran a safe distance, and hearing the crumbling of a building, they turned around —gaping at the colossus.

Daphne was a hundred times fatter, and a hundred times bigger. She towered like a short mountain over the shadowy forest. One half of her ghost-white body was dark, but the other half facing the sunset mixed with orange. The colossus turned and looked down at the kids with blank white eyes. “Was her growing into a giant part of your plan, Kirie?” Haylee questioned. The mute shook her head frightfully.

“It’s the Shadow Absorption…” Midna spoke, still ill from Daphne’s touch earlier. “The strength of every person those shadows belonged to… is hers. Including you guys.”

“Any chance you could do what you did to Big Mom, Sheila?” Aurora asked.

“Lightbending ain’t as easy with no shadow, Mate.”

Daphne took a few minutes to let the shadows settle. Let the incredible power flow within her. The power of a single World Leader. She would now show them, what the World Government possesses.

Then Daphne hunched over slightly. The kids looked extremely curious… the woman was bulging… like she were about to throw up. “Mm-mm… mm-mm…” Her mouth threatened to burst. Her blank white eyes would be wide and bulging if they had any life to them. But the sensation was all the same. “UUUUUUUUUPTTTTTTTHHHHHEEEH!!!” A stream of black and gray came spewing from her mouth like vomit.
The stream struck Dillon, showering him. He felt the shadows endlessly pounding upon him, he
couldn’t move away or stand straight. It wasn’t just the immense weight. Dillon felt an unbearable
sensation. Incredible pressure was building inside him. Growing greater by the minute.

Daphne shrunk back to her regular human size, collapsing on the ground. The ghostly woman felt a
shadow over her. …A spark of emotion was hinted on her gaping face.

His friends never expected this turn of events: Dillon York had grown over 50 feet high, brimming
with black aura, his eyes blank white and furrowed. Parts of his clothing were ripped, the muscles
underneath were pumping. The colossus raised his right hand and stared at it. “Wha-a-a-a-at’s thi-
i-i-i-i-i-is?” His voice was vibrating from the power.

*Your body isn’t strong enough to withstand this power for long, Master.* Mario spoke. *Attack her
while you have the chance!*

Snapping to attention, Dillon looked down at the little ghost woman, and slammed his fist down. A
crater was created, but Daphne had flown several meters in a Shadow Veil. Daphne was caught in a
Shadow Possess suddenly, by Midna from behind. Dillon expanded a tremendous Shockwave Zone, sending the storm of shadows to fly out and gnash furiously around Daphne’s form. After the shadows returned to the giant, Daphne flew away, hovering at height with the giant’s chest using a
cyclone of Gray Shadow. All of the shadows from the trees spiraled into her center, and she made
them take the form of a spear that stabbed the giant in the chest.

Dillon cried like the Hulk-like monster he was, stumbling backward and feeling the need to
explode. The shadows scattered away from the beast, across the distant sky, back to their normal
masters, and Dillon shrunk down to normal. Sector V hurried around the trees, jumped over the
fallen ones, to find their friend panting on the ground, his clothes torn. Dillon couldn’t feel any
sense or muscle in his body, he couldn’t stand. The friends looked ahead, glaring as Daphne
Anderson walked softly through the trees.

“So, his shadow led me into a trap.” She spoke with the same depressed tone. “How sad. His
master would’ve been much happier, if I had plucked the last petal. His death would be painless.
Peaceful. He never would’ve known greater warmth… than such an embrace. Look at him as he
suffers. Begging for peace. I will grant his—”

Aurora grabbed Dillon, flew backwards with Rocket Boost, and when a cloud of green and purple
gas flowed into the area, it was immediately set aflame. Daphne slid away with her shadow—the
forest in front of her exploded. Chris hovered in the sky on jetshoes, sucking in forceful whiffs
through his nose and puffing Combustion Beams at every area around Daphne, destroying every
last tree. Daphne was totally surrounded by fire—Sheila Frantic bolted through a spot Aurora had
cooled open, the wereraccoon forming a Light Sphere in both hands that was bulging in many
areas. Quickly, she ran around Daphne, chucked the distorted Light Sphere above, and it popped
into a storm of droplet-sized beams that rained around Daphne, sizzling her and her shadow.

Aurora froze and dispersed a huge chunk of the flame wall, forcing the remaining half to stretch
Shaydes the other way. Chris dashed forward, flipped, and waved his arm like a karate-chop to
send a Flame Slice, severing the stem between shadow and master. Before it could reform, Sheila
lit her foot solid gold, zipped up by Daphne’s head, and kicked her with enough force to send her
flying like a kickball, against a distant tree. Shaydes tried to return—Chris and Aurora ignited a
wall of flames in its wake. “IN YOU GO!” Artie whipped out a mechanical thermos, blasted a blue
laser, and struck the shadow. Shaydes unleashed an echoing cry of despair as it was sucked into the
thermos, and Artie clamped the lid. “Wow! It actually DOES work on shadows!”

Daphne hid in the shadow of the tree from the sunlight. “Way to go, Kirie!” Aurora praised. “Your
plan worked like a charm!”

“Keh… plan?” Dillon spoke hoarsely.

Kirie held up a finger gesturing ‘Wait’, then showed them her sketchbook. Many colorful, crayon drawings, of Chris going ‘pop pop’ with the trees, making fire go *burrerrrr* around Daphne, Sheila going ‘crackle crackle’ with her Light Sphere, Chris going ‘hot slice’ on Daphne’s shadow, then Artie going *shuuuuurrrrrp* with his Phantom Thermos. Well, that’s what Dillon made from it, since it just happened. Kirie put the book away, and bowed.

“You think you’ve won.” Daphne said with humor in her tonelessness. “You forget… I’m a mother to all shadows. Every tree has–”

Sheila kicked her off her feet, she and Chris got on either side. The others shut their eyes—a ballad of cartoon punching and beating sound-effects rang across the air. When it made it to the ‘rrrrRINK, DONK, PSH-SH-SH-sh-sh-sh!’ sounds, it stopped. The kids opened their eyes.

Daphne Anderson had blood and bruises all over. Parts of her face were swollen. Teeth were knocked out. She was totally unconscious. Kirie pulled out a pair of chi-cuffs—the ones Haruka found in Dressrosa—and locked them over Daphne’s wrists. Aurora didn’t blink. Her wide blue eyes tried to process what happened. She didn’t tear away as she held her wristwatch to her face. “Hi, Francis. Uhhh, send a couple S.P.R.A.Y.S.H.I.P.s to our coordinates? Long story, but I’ll try to make it short.”

Minutes later, Aaron and Rhilliane Doblemitz arrived to take Daphne onto their S.P.R.A.Y.S.H.I.P.. Francis was there on his own ship, to take the Phantom Thermos from Artie. “Excellent work, Sector V.” Francis said with a slight hint of confusion. “I’ll have this locked in a secure place, then we’ll attempt to interrogate this woman.” He boarded back on, and both ships took off.

“. . . .” Aurora’s stunned expression went unchanged. “We… We beat her.” She stretched a psychotic grin. “We beat her! WE DEFEATED ONE OF THE WORLD LEADERS!!!”

“Uh-huh! There’s just one problem.” Harry pointed that direction. “The whole town saw.”

The people of Twilight Town stared blankly. Mayor Dour, Virginia who was smoking, Victoria, Lola and Terry. “Mother Daphne was our hero…” Freddy spoke with concealed emotions. “She made us feel so happy. Why… would you do this?”

“Because Mother Daphne did THIS!” Haruka showed them Midna, still pale with sickness.

The town gasped. “Midna, the Twilight Princess?!” a purple Twili exclaimed.

Midna coughed. “Yes. Mother Daphne tried to drain my power. She tried to drain all of your energy through your shadows, but these kids saved me. They’re your heroes, not your enemies. Daphne Anderson may have provided funding for your town, but she wasn’t a good person.”

“It’s all… so hard to believe…” Mayor Dour spoke hoarsely. “She was making our shadows feel so… happy.”

“That happiness was all her shade, it wasn’t true. A shadowbender shouldn’t be separated from their shadow at all. Since she won’t be taking them anymore, you have to make your shadows happy yourselves. In the event that Mother Daphne comes back, you shouldn’t let her take them.”

“Hmmm…” Dour’s head sunk down. “Mother Daphne… we could never repay you for saving our
town… I don’t want to accept what these children say… Still… if you really did save us, you children should be rewarded. Please, rest in our town as long as you need to.”

“That’s great, because the Twilight Princess really needs some potion.” Midna spoke up. “Oh, and someone oughta fix Dillon, too.”

**Shady Inn**

Dillon was lain on bed as Aunt Victoria brought him a bowl of black potion, the Drink of Shadows. “Guff, huff…” Dillon drank the substance, and felt the pain in his veins going down. Midna also had a drink, and her color returned. “Shadow Absorption.” Victoria repeated, shaking her head. “Wow, Dillon. You have one heck of a shadow.”

“Man, I wish I coulda seen that up close.” Lola said. “That giant Dillon monster looked wicked!”

“Yeah, Tael, were you really in Dillon’s body?” Terry asked his shadow. Tael nodded.

“I’ll just explain it.” Dillon said. “Mario apparently convinced Daphne to let him persuade all the shadows to enter her body to give her power. But while she was embracing them, he persuaded all the shadows to abandon her and enter my body. I don’t actually… understand how or why.”

*Your desire to get me back was stronger than Aunt Daphne’s ‘love.’* Mario explained. *That internal strength spread to me, Master. And I let Sector V’s shadows in on my plan, and together we were able to lead the other shadows away from Daphne’s teachings. Mr. Uno’s shadow still cared for his kids, especially… I think a lot of them wanted to be away from her, they just couldn’t find the strength.*

“Wait… so was all this ‘abandoning me’ stuff part of your plan to sneak-attack a World Leader?” Dillon questioned.

Actually… it wasn’t. I really was angry at you, Dillon, so I wanted to socialize with my own kind. I learned about Aunt Daphne, and against all odds, I attempted this sneak attack… It was pretty gutsy, to be sure, and I had to rely on you for part of it. I risked giving you Chi Overload so we could have a shot, but I guess the others had it handled.

Dillon smiled. “Thanks, Mario. You are my buddy, after all.”

Don’t feel too flattered. I’ll stay under your body so you don’t combust, but I’m still mad at you. I wouldn’t say our issue’s resolved.

“Oh, come on! After all of that, you’re still mad??”

Well, right now, I’m tired. Let’s go to sleep, Master. We can discuss this in the… evening.

“Sigh, you’re right. …Good evening, Mario.”

*Good evening, Dillon.*

Dillon was under the covers and fast asleep. “I second that.” Harry agreed, going to get his pajamas.

“Isn’t anyone else a little weirded out that this was our EASIEST mission ever??” Aurora said.

“I’m not keeping my spirits up.” Mason replied, going to change clothes. “I’m holding out that a giant mutant turkey will attack us because someone stole its Nintendo DS.”
The boys and girls in separate rooms (excluding Sheila), the teammates got in sleeping bags and went to sleep. Victoria shut the curtains to make the rooms totally dark, sporting a bright smile at how cute Dillon’s friends looked. She shut the doors to their rooms quietly. After the first hour of their twilight vacation, they were exhausted. They let slumber consume them, and would wake up under an orange sky.

**Sector L Treehouse**

“Bai-yai-yai-ai-ai-ai-ai-ai-ai!” Spongebob laughed. Team Emily and Sector L watched blankly.

“DUH-HUH-HUH-HUH-HUH-HUH!” Patrick laughed.

“Bai-yai-yai-ai-ai-ai-ai-ai-ai!”

“DUH-HUH-HUH-HUH-HUH-HUH!”

“This is ridiculous.” Sheldon stated simply. “I hardly believe this child’s brain is worth saving at the expense of ours.”

“No one’s telling you to watch, go someplace else.” Danny retorted, sitting on the floor. “So I can sit on the couch.”

“No you can’t, this is my spot.”

“You must be crazy.” Melody said.

“I’m not crazy. My mother had me tested. And I can promise you, the second this boy awakens to this garbage, he will say something insane.”

“Nnnnnuu…” Jessie moaned awake.

“Jessie!” Sandy beamed excitedly.

“Holy cow, it actually worked!” Emily perked.

“Thank you so much for healing him!” Sandy told Melody with tears in her eyes.

“It’s what I do.” Mel smiled and shrugged.

“Jessie, are you okay?” Sandy asked. “Are you sore anywhere?”

“Sandy… we…!” Jessie’s eyes widened. He pointed forward, “We have to go to the bottom of the ocean!!”

They formed sweatdrops. “Yep, I knew this would happen.” Sheldon put on a doctor’s mask. “Say the word and I’ll begin the brain extraction.”

“Um, Jessie, we were just in the bottom of the ocean.” Sandy spoke with worry.

“Then we have to go back!! Spongebob is waiting for me down there!”

“Okay, Uncle Sheldon, you’re right.” Gary flipped the TV off.

“Wait!” Emily perked. “I suddenly remember… the series. HOLY COW, his recent seasons are terrible!!”
“Oh my GOD, yes!” Melody smacked her forehead. “Why are they still AIRING this series, can’t we play the old ones?! …Why are we suddenly remembering Spongebob?”

“Doesn’t this kinda feel like what happened with Cheren?” Danny questioned.

“You mean Spongebob was turned into a toy?”

“Spongebob was turned into a nutcracker by some girl, yes.” Jessie confirmed.

“What?!” They screamed.

“Yes, he told me so in a dream. He got added to a group called ‘Sector DR’. He didn’t mind, but he felt awfully stiff.”

“So that girl who turned Cheren into a toy got to Spongebob.” Melody summarized. “That’s why we barely remembered his show. But… that means… Spongebob is real? And he’s in Oceana?”

“Ocean-whona?” Jessie asked.

“The Sea Kingdom.” Danny answered. “If you really wanted to go, I think our mom could take us. It wouldn’t hurt to visit Grandpa, would it?”

“Grandpa?” Sandy questioned.

“Yep! We’re the Prince and Princess of the Sea!” Danny and Melody posed. “Our grandpa is Ocean King, Kyogre!”

“I’m leaving.” Sheldon walked away from this nonsense.

“Get back here, young man.” Emily grabbed his pants. “Assuming Spongebob IS real, how the heck were you talking to him through dreams? Are you a psychicbender or something?”

“How the fuck should I know?” Jessie stated angrily.

“SAY WHAT?!?” they panicked.

“He has a point.” Sandy had adorable eyes.

“TRUE THAT.”

“Going to Oceana wouldn’t hurt.” Melody figured. “We could even meet Uncle Manaphy while we’re down there!”

“Sounds fun.” Emily shrugged. “You guys up for it?”

Sheldon stumbled on his words, “Now- before I go sailing on an undersea voyage, I would like to address some concerns: 1) being eaten by Krakens, 2) the level of stability of our vessel, and 3) how do you expect me to breathe in a fantasy kingdom of fish-people?”

“I know someone who can answer all of those.” Melody smirked.

**Samiyan Sea; Mother & Child Isles**

The group sailed here on a 4x4 ship. Eva Roberts-Jackson stood on the front in her red top and blue dress of ocean designs, feeling the ocean air on her skin. The stars were pretty in the sky. “It’s a beautiful night for sailing, isn’t it?”
“HMMMMMUUUUUEEE!” Sheldon barfed over the edge. He stood up and faced them, “See this is why I require indigestion pills everywhere I—HUUUEEEEEE!!”

“Melody, can you… remind me why you wanted this trip, again?” Eva requested.

“That kid wants to meet Spongebob. I didn’t get it either, but I thought a trip to meet Grandpa would be nice.”

“Melody, I keep telling you not to call him Grandpa.” Eva stated hotly. “Eric is your grandfather. Kyogre is Blood-Grandpa.”

“That just sounds gross. Why can’t I call him Grandpa, Manaphy is our uncle.”

“It’s for moral reasons!”

The ship sailed into the island surrounded by a stone wall. Little fairies inhabited this beautiful garden. Eva drew and raised the Phantom Sword, pointing at the full moon above. The sword brimmed blue, and a light emerged from the central fountain. A child spirit of glossy, shiny, cyan skin, blank eyes, and a dress appeared. “Hehehehehe! Why, if it isn’t Princess Eva! My goodness, how much you’ve grown! Are these your children?”

“Queen of Ocean Fairies, Danny and Melody.” Eva introduced. Her kids bowed. “Danny and Melody, Queen Cerulea, of the Ocean Fairies.”

“Pleasure to grace your presence.” Cerulea bowed. “You’ve arrived with wonderful timing. Oceana is-”

“HUUUUUUEEEEEE.” Sheldon barfed. Cerulea flew in front of the man, flicked his stomach, and sparked blue glitters. Sheldon stared at his stomach. “Astonishing… What genius could invent a hologram with electrons that shock an upset stomach into submission?”

Cerulea flew above her fountain, frowning sadly. “I’m really glad you’re here. Oceana is in danger. A terrible maniac that had long been missing has returned. The citizens are in an uproar. Some are even calling him worse than Davy Jones.”

“Worse than Davy Jones?!” Eva exclaimed.

“Well, maybe he isn’t THAT bad! But still… you guys better go quickly. I’ll send you through the tunnel.” A whirlpool spun the ship around and submerged them underneath. They sailed through a speeding current thousands of meters under the sea, where they could gaze at the wonder of millions of fishies. Of course, since Team Emily was already under the sea moments ago, they weren’t too awestruck. Besides, this same scene was in Firstborn, they can see it there.

Still, it was safe to say Oceana was one of Earth’s wonders. A towering city of corals, shells, and seafloor rock, all encased within an enormous, everlasting air bubble. In the distance was Samiya, the Sea Temple, built with the shiniest and reflective marble. And everywhere were merpeople, Fishmen, or general fish floating about with bubble floaties.

They already heard screaming and shouting coming from downtown. “Cerulea was right, it sounds like.” Eva noticed, holding her Phantom Sword ready. “Don’t let your guard down.”

They rushed to a deep part of town where merpeople were fleeing from. “He’s turning down Wailord Road! STOP HIM!” Rows of streetlights and seahorse carriages were ruined ahead. A team of merman guards in golden armor were chasing a familiar yellow sponge with an eager expression.
“Sheesh, fellas, hold the welcome party for later, some of us are overdue on JELLYFISHING!” Spongebob excitedly raised his net.

“CATCH THAT NET AND HAVE IT THROWN IN A VOLCANO!” a guard cried.

“Okay, I’m not big on Spongebob either, but THIS is overreacting.” Danny commented.

The guards chased Spongebob into a dead-end alley, cornering him. “I’ve got bubbles.” Spongebob said nervously, pulling out his bottle and wand. “Fun at parties!” He dipped the wand in and blew some.

They hit a guard’s eyes. “MY EYES!!” He furiously swung his trident around, knocking the other guards into nearby Fishmen.

“My leg!”

The remaining mermen growled with anger and lit their tridents, slowly approaching to disintegrate the sponge. “Now HANG ON!” Sheldon Cooper jumped in the way. The guards lowered their weapons, seeing this man intended to defend him. “Before you commence with this… I need to see a dry-cleaner ASAP, where is it?”

“…?” The guards pointed to his left. There was a laundry mat with a tailfin logo. “Thank you!” Sheldon smiled gratefully and jogged in there. That’s when Eva, Melody, Danny, and Jessie ran in the way.

“But this is as far as you’re going!” Eva declared, her arms morphed into water. “What would Kyogre say if his guards were wasting energy over an innocent sponge?”

“THERE he is!” The God of the Sea, the great blue and white whale, Kyogre Neptune, hovered over the area with desperate eyes, and a fleet of swordfish. “ARREST that monster, NOW!”

“HOLD on, Sire!” Sebastian the Crab spoke up. He dropped to the floor, skittered under the guards, and approached the tall, slim, redhead woman. “Could it be… Princess Eva??”

“Princess??” The guards began murmuring amongst their selves. Eva smiled with pride.

“Yep! Princess of the Sea, Eva Jackson at your service!” She bowed. “And my children, Melody and Danny.”

“Holy sea cow!” Sebastian beamed. “Look how much you’ve grown, Princess! You aren’t, um… are you still with that fat human?”

“Ahem.” Danny glared.

“Ay guess so.”

“Blood-Dad, what is the meaning of this? Why are you calling a Code Red attack on Spongebob?”

“Eva, you’ve been away for a while, so of course you wouldn’t know, but this sponge is an incredible nuisance. So please stand aside so we may have him taken far away.”

“ Heck no!” Eva absorbed the moist air around her and grew into a colossal water body; though only half as tall as the buildings. “This kid came a long way to meet this sponge, and I can’t imagine it’s done anything to warrant this much treatment. You better explain what’s going on or I’m grilling fish for dinner.” Even the kids were terrified at her appearance.
“Very well, Eva.” Kyogre spoke. “At least allow us to apprehend and secure him in the palace dungeon. Then I shall explain.”

Eva shrunk down to normal. “Fair enough.” And she splashed water over to freeze Spongebob in ice.

**Sea Palace, Samiya**

Eva stayed close to the guards as they carried the unfrozen, handcuffed sponge up the shiny, slippery palace stairs. “Dang, Melody, your mom’s a Logia?” Sarah said with amazement.

“She sure is. No matter how she morally words it, she’s Queen of the Sea.”

“I’m not surprised.” Emily said. “. . . . I JUST REALIZED SOMETHING!!” She freaked out. “Sarah, Gary, are you related to Davy Jones?!”


Sarah approached a team of mermen with an honest, yet sarcastic smile. “We are terribly sorry for everything he did to you.”

“We forgive you.” They smiled.

“Well-p, that conflict is taken care of.” Emily blushed. “What were we doing? Oh yeah, something to do with Spongebob.”

After Eva helped lock Spongebob in the palace dungeon, everyone gathered in the throne room where Kyogre floated. “Ahem… excusing that… chaos a moment ago… welcome to Oceana, children. I would like to believe none of you secretly signaled a fleet of warships this time.”

“Humorous as that may be-” Team Emily snickered at Dr. Cooper’s garb: golden straps over his top area (mainly covering his breasts), and a metal armored skirt over his underwear. He still wore his shoes and socks, “but I have quite a few complaints about the lack of variety of emergency clothing in your laundry mat. Putting THAT aside, however, I tried to question the manager if the machines were made to clean salt from my garments, but as I don’t understand Mermish, I suppose a higher, English-speaking authority will suffice. Also, while I do not understand Oceanic customs, we are guests in your home, and in America, we provide our guests with hot beverages.”

“Hurrrrr.” Kyogre face-palmed using his right fin of oversized fingers. “Sebastian, bring our guests some drinks.”

The little crab scuttled away, mumbling something about ‘Humans being allowed in their palace every decade.’ “While I wait for that, I believe I’ll ask the residents for any, um, less-revealing clothing. At the very least an Aquaman suit…” Sheldon walked away.

“Now, the matter regarding Spongebob.” Kyogre changed the subject. “First, I feel I should ask: Why did you come all this way to see him?”

“Because we’re fans of his show.” Sandy answered. “My brother especially, he-”

“I talk to Spongebob through my dreams and he wanted me to come and meet him.” Jessie stated firmly. “So why the *** are you locking him in prison?”

“You talk to him through dreams?”
“Yes, and we go jellyfishing, we bother Shelly and Squidward, we eat Krabby Patties, and don’t get me started on my Sabaody Bubbles.” Jessie held up his bubble bottle and wand.

“Jessie is really great at blowing bubbles.” Sandy spoke brightly. “It’s like his superpower or something! …Mr. Kyogre, I was wondering, is there a thing called… bubblebending?”

“Bubblebending, you say? Well, waterbenders have an attack called Bubble Beam, and can rapidly shoot bullet-like bubbles from their mouths. And controlling average bubbles in the air is a child’s task. Yet… I do sense an unusual power from this child.” He looked at Jessie. “He and Spongebob both possess it. I believe that the two of them are… Bubble Dreamers. Which, in a way, is sort of ‘dreambending’.”

“How?” Eva questioned. “Like fearbending can create nightmares?”

“Um; sort of. I am not an expert in the area… but based on Chronicler’s knowledge, Bubble Dreamers are incarnations of the Dream Spirit, Polokus. A very powerful non-god entity who could put Bad Dreams to sleep with his power. I am not talking about Darkrai’s everyday Nightmares. I am speaking of Dream Spirits who step beyond their boundaries and terrorize the peaceful dreams of mortals. Bubble Dreamers can seal away those spirits. I know of one certain spirit who even the gods feared, that Polokus put to sleep. His name was Bill Cipher. Tell me, Jessie, are your own dreams… peculiar in any way?”

The others looked at him curiously. “Well, I talk to Spongebob a lot, and… he takes me to his friends’ dreams. Sometimes I go to my sister’s dream, and Joey’s. Timmy and Hikari. Oh- hah ha, and Shelly!”

“Very interesting. I heard that Bubble Dreamers were able to enter other peoples’ dreams. Without the aid of Dream Spirits as outside assistance. This way, they could find the Bad Dreams and put them to sleep. The people of Oceana can tell you of Spongebob’s constant messing with our dreams. Ugh…”

“It sounds like a really interesting power.” Eva mentioned. “If Spongebob can do it… maybe it would be worth the while to let him teach Jessie.”

“Absolutely not!” Kyogre shouted. “Spongebob is royally a nuisance! HE is the reason that Manaphy is no longer here!”

“What?” The Ocean King sighed. “A terrible story, really… You must have met the Queen of Ocean Fairies, Cerulea coming in. She is not the only fairy our people renown. There is also a Fairy Princess—a very beautiful spirit that Cerulea allowed to be one of her own. Majestic and graceful… Princess Lapis. We loved watching her dance at regular parties or gatherings. Then one day—ugh—it feels stupid to talk about it. Spongebob purchased a ‘jumbo-sized’ jellyfish net and chased a large jellyfish into an outdoor party. He caught Lapis by accident, but he didn’t notice, so he mindlessly swung his net around to catch the darn creature. Lapis kept getting hit against the ground. You see, a fairy’s ultimate weakness is any kind of net, they’re powerless under the things, I don’t know why. Eventually, Spongebob broke the core of Lapis’s power, her Lazuli Gem. Lapis’s mind and energy were distorted, and she fell into an incredible rage. She would have destroyed Oceana, if… Manaphy had not intervened. He used his wonderful voice to soothe Lapis’s soul, then led her far away from Oceana. None of our healers could fix Lapis’s gem, so he sought to find one that could. Sigh… no one knows where he is now. The least we could do was banish that ungodly sponge.”

“Why couldn’t YOU do something about Lapis, O Mighty King?” Jessie questioned sarcastically.
“I am not the Mighty King I used to be. Gods sacrifice terrific amounts of power when they bear children—especially Firstborn. I cannot protect my people from powerful invaders… Not too long ago, we entrusted our safety to a band of Candy Pirates, but even they are long gone now. Manaphy and Princess Lapis used to be our primary means of defense, but now… Regardless, I cannot let that sponge roam the streets. He won’t find many people in Oceana willing to show him kindness.”

“But how else can Jessie learn about this ‘Bubble Dreaming’?” Sandy questioned.

“What if we found Manaphy and Lapis and brought them back?” Melody inquired. “If we fixed Lapis somehow?”

“I would be eternally grateful, but it would not change my mind about Spongebob. Still… Jessie’s Bubble Dreaming ability is a very important gift. If I recall… there is a forest called the Boggly Woods in Kochi, Japan. The tribe there studies rare and unique abilities such as Bubble Dreaming, and they could teach Jessie what they know. I will allow you to visit Spongebob’s dungeon, but he cannot—”

“Your Majesty, Your Majesty!” Sebastian skittered into the room. “The four prisoners we captured earlier escaped, and they’ve taken Spongebob with them!”

“What?!”

Everyone rushed outside, seeing a blonde-haired teenager in a brown vest throwing exploding pellets at the merman soldiers, carrying Spongebob in his other arm. Augustus Fizzuras flashed the group a grin and wink behind his sunglasses, making his arm Armament to punch through some guards. A football-headed baby flew overhead with jetpacks and blasted missiles to clear the path, and a spike-haired baby blasted bullets at floating swordfish. “Hold on!!” Sandy shouted. “Those babies worked for the pirates who kidnapped us!”

“Those are members of the Big Mom Pirates!” Kyogre exclaimed. “We caught them breaking into the Candy Factory earlier.”

“They’re escaping on a submarine!” Eva pointed, noticing the vehicle rise up beyond the bubble barrier. “I’ll stop them!” The woman spun into a watery cyclone and flew to the barrier, her Logia body dispersed into bubbles.

The Marzipan Pirates suddenly felt their submarine stop, wrapped around a tentacle-current while Eva’s water-made face glared into their front window. Augustus dove out of the bottom hatch, swimming to Eva’s head and swinging Armament punches against her. “A-a-a-ah!” Eva shrunk back into human form, her chi blocked as she was forced to hold breath. Two mermen grabbed and carried her back in the bubble, while Augustus returned to the submarine and flew to the surface.

“We can still catch them, let’s go!” Melody spoke quickly, leading the others back to their boat.

They sailed through the undersea current again and popped out at Mother & Child Isles. They hurriedly sailed in the direction of Oceana, finding a team of mermen surfing along the sea, chasing an airplane high above. “That must be them!” Emily narrowed her eyes, grabbing her slingshot. “Lock on and we can take ‘em down!”

Suddenly, a tiny blue cube landed in Eva’s cleavage. “What the-?!” Almost instantly, it grew into the lovable yellow sponge they were trying to rescue.

“Wow, this feels softer than my pillow! Bai-yai-yai-ai-ai!”
“AAAAAAHH!” Eva punched the sponge away from her, grabbing her ripped red top and covering herself. “THE FUCK DID HE COME FROM?!”

“Hey, there’s a note on his forehead.” Emily took the little paper off. You twerps owe me one. Signed with the Marzipan Jolly Roger. “Um… should we thank them?”

“JESSIIIEEE!” Spongebob’s eyes glittered.

“SPONGEBOOOOOOB!” Jessie never looked so happy.

The two hugged lovingly. It was so heartwarming, to finally meet each other in the flesh. ...Just how long did these two f**king know each other in Dream Land? That was the question weighing on everyone’s minds. They pulled away. “Bai-ai-ai-ai! I’m sorry I haven’t seen you in awhile, Jessie. But this scary guy in a dark cloak captured and locked me on that tower! And Neptune knows my real body wasn’t anymore mobile than a nutcracker.”

“Mister Spongebob, it’s a real honor to meet you!” Sandy spoke happily. “We’re big fans of your show! So, um, where’s Sandy?”

“YOU’RE Sandy! Bai-ai-ai-ai! Ahem, actually, I haven’t seen her since I was kidnapped, so um, heheh.”

“Well, since we have a moment’s peace, maybe you could… tell us about that.” Melody requested.

“Hmmm…” Spongebob sat down and scratched his head, “It happened eight years ago, so it’s kinda hard to remember… I was kidnapped by some Water Pokémon, and they brought me to a guy with a pink feathery coat. He said a woman named Morgan put him up to it, ‘in exchange she doesn’t reveal his secret’. Next thing I know, a little girl turns me into a nutcracker. Not like I wasn’t doin’ that enough already, bai-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!”

“So Kyogre told us you were a Bubble Dreamer like Jessie.” Sandy spoke. “Do you, um, think you could, teach him anything?”

“Well, I dream a lot, and blow bubbles! But that’s about it.” Spongebob shrugged. “Except for jellyfishing, and fry-cooking! And karatay.”

“Either way, we should bring you back to Oceana and have you arrested.” Eva came out of the cabin with a black top wrapped around her chest. “But I guess that wouldn’t be ethical, would it?”

“KND Arctic Prison

The 45 Twins brought Daphne Anderson to the darkest available corridor, keeping her in chi-cuffs as they pushed her into a cell with a metal door. “Why does Marcus want even more extra security...”
now?” Aaron whispered as they walked away.

“Duh, because this lady’s a big deal. She’s with the Illuminati or somethin’.”

“Those guys are real?”

“I don’t know. Either way, they said she had wicked shadowbending, so let’s bring a few more blocks.”

Daphne sat on the floor, cuffed arms over her legs. Even the dark and cold of this room didn’t compare to her. In her mind, however, there was someone she thought about. The thought gave her warmth. “I will save him. Then… you’ll save us, won’t you. I know you’ll always come back for us…” The great, armored figure on the throne. “My King.”

No one is probably gonna get it at first, so I’ll just say it: It is Dimentia’s fault that Nigel Uno is now dead. Reread Daphne’s backstory, and let everything sink in. Well, it partly is. So uh, quick question, how many people here like the new Spongebob episodes, because this guy doesn’t, and you know what, the people of Oceana don’t, either. XP That’s why this makes a funny conflict. So yeah, Boggly Woods, we actually mentioned that place in an earlier chapter, another group is heading there if you recall. In fact, next time we’ll check that group. See you then.

…

DV ZIV GSV UZRIB HRHGVIH

NZERH OZKRH ZRHORMT
B-19. The Cupcake Core

Chapter Summary

The Marzipan Pirates go to Oceana in search of the Cupcake Core.

The Original Worlds Arc may only be a few more chapters. But don’t worry, we’ll see more of them. This comes after Chapter 33.

Chapter B-19: The Cupcake Core

Oceana; Sweets Factory

The Sweets Factory was the main candy distributor in all the ocean. The merman workers kept the salt out of their sweets, but when it came to applying sugar, they had Sugar Fairies for that. One of their products was fruit-flavored candy, made using real fruit collected from islands. The adorable little creatures had their own secluded break room, a tiny room with a tiny door. Knock knock knock. One of the fairies answered the door to a red-eyed fairy with blue hair and a blue tuxedo. “Hi, everybody!”

“HI, Sally the Salesman Fairy!” the fairies all chorused. “Did you enjoy Glitzville?”

“I sure as sugar did. And look! I brought back the Cupcake Core!” She pulled out a her-size cupcake colored sky-blue, with gold icing and a star-tipped wand, from her little pocket.

“Ooo, goody!” A fairy with a purple mermaid tail said. “Did anybody see?”

“Just a girl with blue hair and her kitty! Some bad men came, but I gave them the slip, and a boom! Tee hee! I’ll take this back to its hiding place. But no telling when the bad men will come again.”

“It’s okay. We’ll make them go slippy again!”

“That will look sweetielicious! Well, off to hide it. Be right backsy!” She picked up the big cupcake, waddling as she carried it off.

The mer-fairy’s cellphone rang. “It’s for me!” She took it out and answered. “Hello? Oh? … Princess Zeiry?”

Above the surface

The sun was setting over the Atlantic. The Ace Flyer flew over the part of the ocean where Augustus’s digital map was marked. Stewie Griffin threw the blue cube that compressed the Ace Swimmer’s matter onto the surface. The submarine miraculously puffed back into being, still in perfect condition. The captain parked the biplane next to the sub, taking Nel out of the trunk as the crewmen crossed to the sub. Stewie compressed the plane into a cube, which he stored in his Infi-Cube.

“Why is big rock floating?” Nel asked as they climbed into the submarine.

“Future caveman magic, Nelly.” Augustus started a new lollipop.
“You know, we may not be taking the front entrance, but how are we going to enter Oceana without being discovered?” Stewie asked as he started up the controls.

“We’re going to park a few miles away from the actual town. Then we’re going to eat these Oxybursts and walk there. We’ll sneak around and look for anyone who looks like a fairy.”

“As foolproof as plans get.” Stewie remarked. “Okay, all systems are go. Get ready to submerge.”

The submarine sunk below the surface, headlights pointing the way forward. They saw the great bubble containing the oceanic city many fathoms below. The pirates parked a few miles away, within a small coral gorge. “Here you go, Nel.” Augustus fed the cavechild the yellow oxygenated starburst, which she began to chew.

“Rock ish really squishy.” Nel said through chews. “Ish rock become mud?”

“Sure it is, Little Gal.” Augustus smiled, adored by her primitive behavior. “Everybody eat their Oxybursts? Then let’s go.”

They climbed out the submarine’s bottom hatch, their lungs light thanks to the magic candy (Nel wouldn’t get the complex science). Stewie, Rallo, and Maggie felt very heavy thanks to the Devil Fruits in their veins. Augustus had to lift the four kids as he jumped large crevices or skipped over mounts. Jumping around underwater was as easy as jumping around space. At the very edge of Oceana’s barrier, the crew could hide under a short wall. Augustus peeped up, and Nel curiously did the same, clutching the top of the wall. “It looks like a back alley section. Let’s go in.”

Augustus hoisted the babies up, and they all entered the bubble.

The crew snuck between two warehouse-like buildings, keeping eyes out for anyone. There were seahorse-drawn carts that octopus Fishmen were hauling boxes into. Stewie took out his binoculars and zoomed on the building across the yard. “Wait a second, this is the Sweets Factory!” he realized. “It’s where Oceana produces all of its candy! The place that Big Mom ordered from.”

“You know, Big Mom offers me a few crumbs from the candy she orders here… they’re pretty good.” Augustus said. “W- Hold on… do you think Aisling’s friend works here?”

“Why would you think that?” Rallo asked.

“Well, if she and Zeira wanna find the Lost Candies, maybe the friend does, too. Maybe there’s a Lost Candy in here or something.”

“Aughbucks, look!” Nel pointed at the side of the warehouse they were beside. “It’s cave drawing of you, but on square leafs and weird paint.”

The Marzipans saw the wanted posters she indicated. Stewie Griffin - $80,000, Maggie Simpson - $66,000, Rallo Tubbs - $33,000, and Augustus – 700,000 Chocolate Dollars. “First, Nel, it’s called paper, and it isn’t paint, it’s called gradient, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe InDesign. But holy cow, they upped my bounty by 200,000!”

“We can’t go into that factory, they’ll catch us red-handed!” Stewie stated.

“That’s why it’s called bein’ stealthy! What, did you wanna send Nel inside and ask around? Not like she’s wanted.”

“It could work.” Rallo said with sarcasm. “Mah mom catches cave kids scavenging around the trash all the time, they won’t notice a thing.”
“Nel good at stealing from Rocknut cave.” Nel smiled silly. “Nel move like jaguar. Dumb cavemen no notice.”

“Mw-mw, mw-mw, mw-mw.” Maggie pointed.

“Those vents do look small enough for Nel.” Stewie said. “Perhaps if we climb into the Infi-Cube, Nel could carry us inside.”

“You fit into tiny rock?” Nel looked at the dimensional cube in Stewie’s hand.

“Just push this button to pull us out once you get inside.”

“Can you do it, Nel?” Augustus asked the cavechild.

Nel smiled adorably. “Nel is glad to help Aughsucks. Nel is happy for Aughsucks for bringing her to Futur.”

“Aughsucks—I mean, Augustus is happy to have you in Futur. ’kay, Stew, let’s-”

“NO.” Stewie shouted. “I told you to NOT call me that!”

“Just get in!” Augustus took the Infi-Cube, set it on the ground, and forced Stewie inside. He, Rallo, and Maggie joined after. Nel got on all fours and picked the cube up in her teeth like a dog. (Play “Wriggle Sweet Room” from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory!)

Stage B-15: Sweets Factory

Mission: Find info about Aisling’s friend.

Nel scampered into the open factory yard, coming to twin rows of sacks of flour lying on the ground. The parallel sacks were used to prop another sack up from the ground. When a hammerhead Fishman was approaching, carrying two sacks in his arms, Nel crouched and hid under one of the propped-up sacks, otherwise he was sure to notice the cavegirl with his stretched-apart eyes. “Ehhh, where was I supposed to lay these?” the Fishman asked himself, mindlessly walking back-and-forth beside the rows. Nel had to keep crawling under the flour sacks, and when the Fishman walked away from the end of the row, Nel crawled out and kept running.

The cavegirl came to a row of crates, which were each spread apart by one crate-length. A barracuda Fishman was looking into a different crate, his back facing them—he whipped around at the sound of Nel’s faint footsteps. The girl hid behind the first crate just in time, but with every footstep she made, he would whip back around. When the barracuda wasn’t looking, Nel had to position herself and perform a sideways midair flip between each crate, so when she landed behind the next one, the Fishman wouldn’t see her. After the last crate, Nel could make a dash for the fence gate around the factory’s boundaries. Too bad there was a searchlight.

An angler Fishman stood on a watchtower and lit the area around the gate with his light. The fence itself had barbed wire on top of it (was that really safe for an underwater city?). However, there was a small, open box nearby that contained light-rainbow-colored, wriggling critters that were as big as footballs, and had several skinny stems that served as their limp legs. Nel couldn’t read, but the box said Wriggle Sweets. Nel picked out one of the wiggling critters, throwing it into the searchlight. Nel gestured right, and the Wriggle Sweet followed her direction, luring the curious searchlight away. Nel rushed for the gate, using her short size to crawl under a gap at the bottom.
Once Nel was under the targeted air vent, she pushed the button on the Infi-Cube to shoot Maggie out. The non-speaking baby shot her grappling hook above the vent and pulled Nel up with her. Maggie used a screwdriver to unlatch the top of the vent, the two climbed inside, then Maggie pulled the vent back up, assuming it wouldn’t fall off the rest of its bolts. The girls crawled through the duct, dropped down a vertical shaft, and smashed through a vent at the bottom, creating a loud noise that made Maggie wince. Thankfully, the room they were in was stacked with big crates and no immediate guards.

Maggie took the cube and squirted out the rest of their crew. “Nice job, Nel!” Augustus praised. “But we’re going to have to keep it up. So let’s be careful when breaking vents open, okay?”

“Mw-mw.” Maggie rolled her eyes.

The pirates jumped up some short stacks of crates, but afterwards they had to sidle along a thin ledge left open by a taller stack. They could climb into an open spot between two stacks, leading inside the crate fort. They looked over a narrow path below, where a lazy Fishman was asleep on a pile of fallen candy. Above their perch, the top ends of some boxes were slightly open. The crew used their Licoropes to swing these boxes, and doing so caused them to open and spill more candy down below. The kids thankfully made it across before the snoozing Fishman would notice.

They jumped down on a floor below, and from here they could pass a doorway with a fruity-flavored waterfall. They coughed after passing the fall, while also savoring its taste. A conch-shell speaker rang as an announcement spoke: “The Sweets Factory’s new anti-Oxyburst magic fruitfalls are guaranteed to give any non-merman intruder a hard time! A big thanks to all staff for supporting this proposal.”

“Wait, so our Oxybursts won’t work now?!” Augustus shouted. “NOT CONVENIENT!”

They were in a room where a huge gap separated their ledge with the opposite ledge. A 3-feet deep pool of water was down below, along with some floaties. There were gears on the other side, and they had view of the side of a turnable cog lodged within the wall. Augustus threw his Gobstopper at the gear, turned it, the ball bounced back, and the water rose slightly higher, but sunk back down quickly. Augustus kept throwing and hitting the gear until the water was at their level. The babies jumped across the floaties and made it without drowning. The four kids stacked atop each other so Rallo could keep spinning the cog, letting Augustus swim across the level water.

The next room was puffing colorful bubbles of water, made of fruity flavors and magically floating. Augustus jumped into a yellow, lemon-flavored one close by, swimming in it as though it were normal water. He stuck his head out and said, “Tastes yucky, but it’s safe.”

“Even if we could breathe in those things, we can’t swim.” Stewie stated. “Can you carry all of us across them?”

“It won’t be easy to jump them… Fine, hang on.” To reach the bubbles that were higher, Augustus had to swim toward the top of his bubble, perform a Torpedo Spin, and launch out of the bubble with the momentum, reaching the higher one. Augustus got to a cherry-flavored bubble, propelled to a smaller grape bubble, and then he could Torpedo Jump to a ledge with four bottles of Fizzy Lift. However, he noticed a much smaller cherry bubble with a Gold Wonka Bar above it. He couldn’t build enough momentum to reach it from the grape bubble, so he had to start from the lemon bubble and perform consecutive, nonstop Torpedo Spins, to the large cherry, to the grape, and then his jump was strong enough to reach the small cherry and grab the candybar.

Augustus grabbed the four soda bottles on the ledge, dropped back to the Baby Trio plus Nel, and allowed them to drink. “Wuuuuuh…” Nel felt extremely light, turning upside-down once she was
off her feet. “Nel feels like bubble…”

“Help her float, you three.” Augustus ordered the trio. “And move quickly.”

The captain made his way back up to the ledge, the babies floating after him as they entered a corridor with a watery chasm. Fruity bubbles floated in here, too, so Augustus used them to cross the room while the babies had to maneuver around them. There were cannons stationed on either wall (they looked like F.L.U.D.D. from *Mario Sunshine*), shooting huge globs of water through the fruit bubbles, so the pirates made sure to avoid them.

A waterfall blocked part of the passage, but Augustus noticed a bubble on his upper left against the wall, holding a switch. Augustus shot up to it, hit the switch, and dropped back down to the bigger bubble. The waterfall stopped, but the crew encountered another one. There was a gear in the right wall, which the airborne babies turned to make the waterfall open. Augustus could jump to a ledge, which had another gear to keep the waterfall open and let the babies join him.

The Fizzy Lift wore off just in time. They passed another doorway and were standing on a ledge overlooking a room with a long treadmill. Sugar Fairies dressed like fruit were dipping sugar onto sweets passing along the treadmill. “Hey, Sugar Fairies do work here!” Augustus exclaimed. “We’ll ask one of them!”

“Are you daft, they’ll alert the guards!” Stewie reminded. “There’s two of them at that door!” He indicated the puffer Fishmen beside the door on the left wall. One was blue, one was dark-pink.

“Sigh, good point. Let’s see if there’s a way around them.”

“Wait! I got an idea.” Rallo extracted the boombox in his afro, cleared his throat, and spoke with a magnified voice: “Attention all Sugar Fairies: Free coconut cookies and chocolate milk in the break room.”

“EEEEEEEEEEEE!” The adorable little fairies scampered happily in circles before piling into tiny doorways.

“Way to manipulate the predictable.” Augustus pulled out his dry lollipop and dropped it.

“Maggie says there’s Pop Gum over there.” Stewie pointed across the room. “Perhaps I can control the ceiling cranes with this panel and lift Nel across.”

“Now things are convenient.”

Stewie approached the control panel on their right, with Augustus lifting the baby so he could reach. The cranes began to move under Stewie’s control, so he lowered the closest one for Nel to grab onto. He moved the crane to the next one so Nel could swing to it, and repeated the process until the cavegirl landed on the opposite ledge. She grabbed a container of orange Pop Gum and started chewing. She then jumped down to the lower floor, behind the treadmill so the guards wouldn’t see, and the others did the same as they crawled over to her.

Augustus grabbed Nel, peeped up over the treadmill, and when both puff-fish yawned at the same time, Augustus shot a gum into each of them so they would PUFF. With that, the pirates could pass the incapacitated guards and enter a room with a pool. There was a ledge on the other side with a bushel of Rock Candy. It was too high for Augustus to Torpedo Jump to, but he could push the dark-pink inflated puff-fish in and balance on her round body (his boots protected him from her spikes). He allowed the babies to cling onto him, throwing them up onto the foothold before jumping on himself.
They ate the Rock Candies and encased their selves in spheres, with Augustus sharing his with Nel. They rolled into the water and each held down four switches. This opened a gate, leading them into an underwater passage. The four had to maneuver around mines and force their rock spheres against four different, long buttons on the walls. They had to press these buttons simultaneously, as they would begin to stretch back out, giving them a limited time to get into the gate. This led them to a tunnel with pitfalls on either side, and pipes shooting currents that threatened to push them in. They pushed through the currents quickly, stayed on the path, and rolled above a surface.

They smashed their crystal spheres against a ledge, which the kids peeked over to see into a room with a giant apple rotating on a stand. There was a path carved into and around the apple (that part of skin was cut off), and Sugar Fairies were digging into it. The crew could casually walk around the apple with the fairies busy, and another box of Wriggle Sweets was found in a corner. Augustus picked one out, hid under the entrance ledge, and tossed the sweet several feet to the right in the room. The captain Armament punched the wall, making the Sugar Fairies whip to attention and notice the Wriggle Sweet.

They immediately climbed off the giant apple and swarmed in, making little “AWWWWWE”s and saying “Silly Wriggle Sweet!” With the cute fairies all nuzzling the critter, the pirates put on their Corn-Clamber Boots and marched up the giant fruit (August carried Nel). At the top of the apple, they could see a giant banana swinging up and down, so when it was down, the pirates jumped to and latched their boots to it. They trekked to the top of the banana, and when it swung up, they could jump to a ledge.

At the end of this ledge was a large orange spinning aimlessly in place. They could only briefly spot the cut part, so Augustus went first in jumping and sticking to it. The orange would rotate by a floating, stable cut lemon platform, which the captain jumped to, and from there, he faced a giant floating bushel of purple grapes. A specific row of grapes were taking turns turning and exposing their green undersides before turning back. Augustus jumped to the first one when it came, stepped across the following ones quickly, but before jumping to the platform above his vision, he kept following the green grapes higher up the bushel to get a floating Wonka Bar.

He jumped to the foothold afterwards and set Nel down as they awaited the others—the Baby Trio merely launched their grappling hook to the ledge and hauled their selves over. “Platforming isn’t normally our thing.” Stewie remarked, earning an eye-roll from Augustus. The crew entered the next hallway, which had several high ledges with water pools before them. The first one was short and squirted water spouts, so when one was about to shoot, they jumped in and were pushed up to the next ledge.

The next pool was longer, but twin rows of spouts led to the ledge. Each set of spouts took turns, starting from their end and moving to the other end, but they were only up for half a second. They quickly jumped on one of the starting spouts and raced across the following ones as they came. The third pool’s spouts were more spread-out and had water cannons shooting big bubbles. They kept their eyes out for spouts about to pop up, avoided the water cannons, and successfully reached the final ledge.

They were in a large, dim-lit room with several security devices protecting a capsule with a blue cupcake with golden icing. “Damn, and Ah thought mah mom liked to hide cupcakes from me.” Rallo said. “They didn’t have any good ceiling cabinets?”

“A cupcake? Maggie, gimme those.” Augustus took the girl’s binoculars for a better view of the sweet. “…Is that the Cupcake Core?”

“One of the Lost Candies?” Stewie asked.
“Yep. I may not know what it looks like, but the crazy security makes it a pretty likely guess. Alright, kiddies, it’s time for some *Mission: Impossible.*”

There were two rows of searchlights rotating endlessly in the same direction. There was an empty spot in each row, but they weren’t next to each other. Thankfully, there was a Wriggle Sweet box close by. Augustus waited for the empty spot to show, then quickly threw the sweet into the light next to the spot. The entire row ceased rotating so that one light could shine on the sweet. When the second row’s empty spot came by, the kids jumped through.

A glass wall blocked their way, but fruity water bubbles were coming out of cannons below, floating up quick and popping on the ceiling. Augustus went by himself, Torpedo Jumping his way across the bubbles, going a half circle around the center where the Cupcake Core was, then he was able to swim into an opening in the glass. He pressed a switch to open the glass, so the four kids could jump over the gap where the bubbles came from.

Another glass wall protected the Cupcake Core, and there was a short water spout risen up on one area. Two Amps (floating electric balls with faces) flew circles around the glass wall, electrifying the water spout when it went through. Augustus jumped onto the spout, and a stairway of them rose up and around the glass. Augustus hurriedly ran over the spouts, jumping the ones that would be electrified by the Amps, until he could get inside an opening in the glass. He pressed a switch to open the glass and let the babies inside. The only thing protecting the cupcake was an electric barrier with four generators.

“Time for Stone Fist to mark his name.” Augustus turned his hands Armament and punched his palms. He punched and destroyed each generator as the electricity stopped. The captain marched up and took the cupcake with the star wand. (End song.)

“Mmmm… That rock look yummy.” Nel asked with big sparkling eyes and a drooling mouth.

“Sorry, Nel, but I don’t know if these regenerate like the Sugary Wonders.” Augustus turned the cupcake and studied every inch. “But man, I bet this tastes like Heaven. Or greater.”

Suddenly, the room turned red as alarms rang, and Sugar Fairies dressed as fruit hung onto ropes and surrounded them, aiming tiny bows and arrows. “Hands where we can see ‘em!” one yelled in their squeaky tone. “You may think you’re a bunch of sneaky rats, but rats don’t sneak by us. Because we’re teenier than them!”

“Man, those voices are starting to hurt my ears.” Augustus remarked.

“When we shoot you with our cupid bows, you’ll go gaga over each other. You’ll be kissing and kissing, and we’ll take pictures and post them on the Internet.”

“And since that boy is a teen, ALL his friends will think he’s a creepy perv who stalks little kids.”

“Ruin someone’s future is funilicious! Get ready to fire, fairies!” They all readied their arrows. “Wait! Don’t hurt them!” The Sugar Fairy with the purple mermaid tail flew in. “They’re the people Princess Zeira called about!”

“You mean he’s the pirate Augustus?” The fairies lowered their weapons and looked more closely.

“Yes! He’s on all the pictures.”

“Wait, Zeira told you about me?” Augustus asked.
“She did. She said you were searching for the Lost Candies. Our friend, Sally just brought the Cupcake Core back from Glitzville. Princess Zeira called us and said to keep it safe, because a smelly man called Augustus was searching for the Lost Candies!”

“Only smelly ’cause I change baby diapers all the time.” Augustus subconsciously passed the cupcake to Nel while he fished around for a new lollipop. “But since we’re here anyway, do you fairies know if the Lost Candies regenerate if they’re eaten?”

“A berry good question.” The mer-fairy said as Nel studied the delicious cake in her hand. “It’s hard to say, really.” Nel sniffed the cake, entranced by its scent. “Because the Lost Candies…” Nel opened her mouth for a big bite, “are indestructible!”

CHOMP! They whipped their attention at Nel. She had golden icing around her lips. She licked it off. The pirates and fairies merely stared at the innocent-looking cavechild. “. . . . Nel’s tummy heavy…”

“Did you just swallow the Cupcake Core whole??” Augustus questioned.

“It big, but squishy rock. But now Nel feel sick. Nel like taste, though.” She smiled.

“Boy, that’s going to be a really big poop.” The mer-fairy said.

“EEEEEEWWW!” the other fairies squealed.

“Oh yeah, almost forgot!” Augustus spoke up. “We came here to begin with because the Forest Princess, Aisling mentioned a friend of hers in this town. Would you know anything about that?”

“You must mean the Ocean Fairy Princess, Lapis.” A fairy dressed like a banana said. “But she hasn’t been seen in eight years. And it was all because of…”

“Hu-hu-hu-hu-hu-hu…” The fairies shivered, afraid to speak of the culprit’s name.

“The alarms went off in here!” They faced the entrance to the room as Fishmen began to storm in.

“Crap, it’s the buzz!” Augustus exclaimed.

“THAT’S them!” the puffer Fishwoman yelled. “They used me as a platforming prop!”

“I don’t think we’ll be able to speak for you with these guys!” the mer-fairy yelled.

Augustus kicked Nel several feet backwards. “Nel’s not on the wanted posters. After they take us, can you fairies guide her outside? Bring her behind the factory and tell her to get to the sub. Oh, and give her this after you’re outside.” He tossed them an Oxyburst.

“IT’S OVER, pirates!” The Fishmen grabbed the four humans and handcuffed them. “We’re taking you to Samiya! You’ll be lucky if the Ocean King treats you well. Nice work catching them, fairies. We’ll throw you some extra gummy koalas.” The guards began to escort the pirates outside, not noticing the cavegirl in the faint light.

Washington; KND Museum of Artifacts

The museum had been closed for several days, due to Emily Garley’s absence. Sector GF landed their S.C.A.M.P.E.R. (piloted by Candy Chiu) outside the treehouse entrance. As they stepped off the craft, Carla was quick to fly out of the pig, Waddles’ range, for the pig had been trying to nuzzle her the whole journey. “Ha ha! See, Carla, I told you Waddles would open up to you.”
Mabel laughed.

“Well, could you please tell him I am closed to him?” Carla stated. “I do not associate with runts of the litter!”

“Speaking of closed, the museum still isn’t open.” Dipper observed. “How do we get in?”

“Closed, shmosed!” Grenda stomped forward, looking agro. “The ticket booth was closed at Sev’ral Timez’ concert, but that didn’t stop me from breaking in and catching the ticket guy making out with his magazine. Heeeey-YAH!” With a mighty punch, Grenda broke the sealed door open.

The museum was still lit by a little daylight. Dipper led them to the back room that he remembered the first time he was brought there. “I first read about the Master Emerald in a KND book and asked the curator if it was actually here. She brought me back here and… Voila!” After opening a secret trapdoor, they climbed down into a dark room, lit green by the enormous emerald.

The mystical light reflected in their awestruck eyes. Carla set foot on the floor and approached the beautiful gem. “Astounding… Where would one find a jewel like this?”

“I heard the Mobian KND wanted to thank the Firstborn Guardians for their help, so they allowed them to keep the Master Emerald.” Dipper explained. The male Pines helped himself up and straightened his back. “What I don’t understand is why the Author planned it for his portal. I mean, if Bill helped him make the portal before, then he should’ve known about it, which means he would’ve brought the emerald there before trying to activate. Did the Author make the decision without Bill’s knowing? But if Bill said that it worked before, then this feels like a really huge change in programming.”

“You’re thinking too much, Dipper.” Mabel said as she carefreely climbed on the emerald. “The Author probably wanted his portal to look prettier. If this thing wasn’t so big, it would make a PERFECT wedding ring!”

“Which brings up the question, how do we carry it back to Gravity Falls?” Carla asked.

“Grenda has no problem carrying it.” Mabel replied as her muscular friend lifting the giant emerald with one hand. “But it probably won’t fit on the ship…”

“Wait! Mabel, didn’t you bring the Crystal Flashlight?” Dipper asked.

“Oh, yeah!” Mabel jumped off the emerald and whipped out the flashlight. “We’ll shrink it down and put it in our pocket.” Grenda put the emerald down, and Mabel flashed the purple light on the shining green gem, shrinking it to the size of her hand. Mabel picked it up and placed it in her backpack. “Or a backpack.”

“Hokay, let’s get back to Gravity Falls and stick this in the machine.” Dipper climbed first up the trapdoor’s ladder. “But we’ll still need to fix the rest of the portal. Maybe we can ask one of the KND scientists.”

“I should be able to fix the machine with the right tools.” Carla said as she hurriedly flew ahead. “Just hurry, I want to bring Wendy back as soon as possible!”

“Okay, just take it easy!” Dipper tried to jog after her.

“She talks, she flies, and she’s a technical wizard!” Candy said with admiration. “Where did Wendy shop for you, Carla?”
“The discount store of mutant pets for magic children…”

**Oceana; Simaya’s dungeon**

The Marzipan Pirates were locked in the palace dungeon after they were shown to the guards. It was dark, empty of other prisoners, and, not surprisingly, damp. “At least they air-bubbled our cell.” Augustus said with a casual smile.

“Ugh, what the hell are we going to do now?” Stewie asked angrily. “They took all of our weapons, AND the other Oxybursts.”

“Do you think they’ll let us call our moms?” Rallo asked with worry. “But I don’t remember my house’s phone number! OH GOD, we’re gonna get eat by fish-people!” He gripped his afro and shook.

“Chill out, you twerps. At least it can’t get any worse than this.” Augustus said.

That’s when a merman appeared and opened their cell door. “You’ve got a new cellmate. Enjoy him.” He tossed what seemed like a big yellow sponge with limbs into the cell before closing.

The sponge pushed his hands against the floor and propped himself up on his feet. “Not the most comfy place for a slumber party, is it?”

“Wait a sec…” Augustus gaped at the sponge, his lollipop falling out. “You’re-”

“AAAAAHH OHMYGOD OHMYGOD!” Stewie shook ecstatically. “You’re Spongebob Squarepants, oh I’m such a HUUUUUGE fan!”

“Hold on, Stewie, is that yo’ dad??” Rallo questioned.

“No he’s not, but I WISH he was!!”

“I just assumed he was because BOTH of you need your asses cancelled.”

“Oh, HA HA, become an old comedian, why don’t you.”

“What the hell is he doing in here?” Augustus asked.

“I don’t know.” Spongebob shrugged with honest confusion. “I was just on a downtown jellyfishing run (excuse all the wrecked carriages outside) when these mermen started trying to arrest me for hurting their princess, or something…”

“Princess? Was she a Fairy Princess?”

“I dunno. Ooo, but if I was a woman, I would be the Princess of Krabby Patties…” He imagined himself in a flowing gown designed like his favorite sandwich, and had a castle made of ketchup and mustard bottles.

“… PWAH HAH HA, pwah hah ha!” Stewie started cracking up. “Hah hah ha! HAH ha! OH, that is quality comedy you don’t get on Cartoon Network!” He wiped a tear. “Please, Augustus, let him join our crew!”

“You have a pirate crew?” Spongebob asked. “Oh, I’d love to, but I can’t. There’s someone I’m supposed to meet. He’s upstairs in the palace with his friends, but I won’t be able to leave with him if I’m a criminal.”
Augustus turned his hands Armament and tried to tug the cell bars. “Man, these’re tough. But I think I have a plan. Spongebob, do you remember that episode where you and Patrick were making faces or something?”

“Are you talking about the Season 8 episode ‘Face Freeze’, the Season 12 episode ‘Face Flash’ where we tried to get the silliest picture for Photo Day at Mrs. Puff’s Boating School, or the Season 18 episode ‘Face Frenzy’ where everyone in Bikini Bottom tried to make funny faces and ended up-”

“JUST make a face! Any of them will do!”

“Okay! Just give me a sec to prep up.” He turned around and started rearranging his face.

“GUUUAAARD!” Augustus called. “We have a medical emergency!”

The merman jailer swam over, looking suspicious. “What seems to be the ailment?”

“POOR DESIGN QUALITY!” Augustus grabbed Spongebob and faced him at the guard: Spongebob’s eyes, nose, and mouth were inside-out, exposing the hideous and snot-oozing undersides.

“AAAAAHHH!” The merman screamed before passing out and floating up like a dead fish. His keys sunk down, allowing Augustus to grab them and open the cell. “I’ll swim out and grab our things, you kids wait here with Sponge.” He dropped the sponge on the floor and swam out of the air bubble.

Stewie, Rallo, and Maggie tried to hold their stomachs in, their faces green. “I don’t remember any of those episodes! BLUEEEEH!” Stewie puked.

Augustus swam out to the lobby and found a giant clam holding their Infi-Cube and Maggie’s weapons. Augustus tugged the clam open with Armament hands and grabbed the items before quickly swimming back. He grabbed some Oxybursts from the Infi-Cube and gave one to each baby and himself. Stewie grabbed a remote control from the cube and pressed some buttons. “I’ve set the Ace Swimmer to come to our location. We’ve got to get to the barrier!”

“No time to lose!” Augustus grabbed the babies and Spongebob in his arms. “Let’s go, Sponge!”

As he struggled to swim through the lobby, Spongebob noticed the clam Augustus tore open minutes ago. “That reminds me of the time I fell in love with a Krabby Patty and killed a bunch of baby clams to protect it!”

“Your show teaches kids to kill birds for food??” Rallo questioned.

“Mw-mw-mw.” Maggie noted.

“I think he was trying to avoid saying that.” Stewie replied.

“Prisoner escape!” More bands of mermen were swimming out once the pirates made it to the palace foyer. “They’re taking the Yellow Devil!”

“Oh, like the episode where I dressed up as a monster and fell into a church while I was jellyfishing!” Spongebob remembered as Augustus kept carrying him.

“Not even gonna question that!” the captain remarked.
Stewie grabbed a jetpack and a missile launcher to fly overhead and blast at incoming guards, and Maggie shot bullets at floating swordfish. As they were escaping the palace, Augustus looked back and saw the group of human kids, and one redhead adult, rushing out to observe the situation, along with the Ocean King himself. “Uh-oh. 'Guess we played around too long!”

“WAIT! That boy is the kid I was talking about!” Spongebob pointed.

“If you’re still wanted, it won’t work to just throw you to him!”

“There’s the submarine!” Stewie pointed.

“Right on time!”

Rallo spun around to shoot soundwaves at the pursuing guards. Once they were at the barrier, Augustus grabbed onto the babies, jumped out, and quickly swam to the submarine, climbing in the still-open bottom hatch. Nel had thankfully made it back beforehand, picking her nose at the time of their arrival. Stewie jumped at the controls and turned off the autopilot. “As soon as we’re back in the sky, they shouldn’t be able to—” The submarine quaked just then.

“What was that?!” Rallo yelped.

A face made of water and bubbles appeared at the ship’s front window, glaring venomously at the escapees. “Just where are you going, little worms?” Eva Jackson hissed.

“SEA MONSTEERRR!” Rallo flailed his arms.

“No, Logia waterbender.” Augustus spat his lolli-stick out and punched his palms. “Not a problem for me, anymore!” He dove out of the submarine and swam to the woman’s projected water-body. With his fists hardened, he dealt quick jabs at the liquid body, blocking Eva’s chi as she shrunk back into her human form. “A-a-a-ah!” She was forced to hold her breath underwater.

“Kids, don’t drink and swim!” Augustus winked at the woman before going back in his sub.

The mermen were still giving chase, but as soon as the pirates reached the surface, Stewie threw the dehydrated Ace Flyer into the sea so its cube would grow back into the biplane. They jumped in the plane, Stewie compressed the Swimmer into a cube and caught it, and Augustus quickly set the plane for liftoff. “Love to stay, Oceana, but we have places to be!” Augustus cheered.

“Ooo, going on pirate adventures is gonna be so much fun!” Spongebob said excitedly. “I’ve been ready for this longer than I can remember! Check out this pirate tattoo I have on my right buttock!” He dropped his pants-

“UUUGH!” The crewmates shut their eyes (except Nel, who looked curious as always).

“PLEASE get rid of him!” Stewie clutched his captain’s pants and cried pleadingly. “He’s not as funny as he used to be, now he’s just annoying and I want him gone, I don’t want him in our crew anymore, pleeeaaase!”

“Alright, alright! …Hey, there’s those people again!” Augustus pointed at a yacht in the sea ahead. “They catch up fast. Lemme just write a note.” Augustus grabbed a small paper and pencil from a compartment at his seat, wrote You twerps owe me one, drew the Marzipan Jolly Roger, and posted it on Spongebob’s forehead. “Stewie, now!”

Stewie shot the annoying sponge with his dehydrator, then Augustus threw the compressed cube down to the yacht. The mermen were hopelessly pursuing their plane from afar, not aware that
Spongebob was safe on his friends’ yacht.

“Sigh… That was exhausting.” Augustus sighed as they flew under the night. “Nel, do you still have the cupcake?”

“Mm-hm…” Nel rubbed her sore belly.

“You know, why is it called the Cupcake Core, anyway?” Stewie asked.

“The same reason for the Sugar Fuel?” Augustus cocked a brow. “Heck, even the Rock Nut looks like the fastener type of ‘nut.’ …Wow, I can’t believe I didn’t notice these things.”

“The Lost Candies are named after terms that would apply to… a machine of some sort.” Stewie thought aloud.

“Well, except the Sun Cream. Speaking of which, if the Lost Candies are indestructible, how did Veruca’s Devil Fruit powers still affect the Sun Cream?”

“Indestructible doesn’t mean they can’t be supernaturally transformed in some way.” Stewie argued.

“I dunno… something doesn’t add up about that whole thing. Well, at least now we have two Lost Candies. Unless we count Zeira’s Sugar Fuel, that means we have half of them. And I remember where Luviro said we could find another one: the Gear Heart.”

“That’s named after a machine part, too!” Stewie noticed.

“Exactly. The names can’t just be a coincidence. And by the time we find them all, we may as well know. And as for the Gear Heart, get ready to go to the place where the gays are all up in your face: Kamabaka Kingdom.”

“Oh, Stewie, your hometown!” Rallo joked.

“Oh, shut up.”

**Fiore Dimension; bathhouse**

The next morning, Levy, Mirajane, and a purple-haired girl named Laki brought Wendy to a bathhouse. The girls were naked, sitting in a tub that was carved in the ground as the steaming water eased their souls and melted away their woes. “Um… Excuse my rudeness, but does this world have bathing suits?” Wendy asked, feeling a little awkward about being naked in a tub with three teenagers.

“Yeah, but they’re not used for bathing.” Levy replied. “Lighten up, Wendy!”

“I don’t think I’m old enough for this!” Wendy flushed, covering her chest.

“Wendy, it’s fine.” Mirajane said with a friendly smile. “We do this with our Wendy all the time. There’s nothing shameful about it because we’re all members of the same guild.”

“Even so, this feels a little too… personal.”

“Maybe, but it’s what we do.” Laki lied back and folded her hands behind her head. “You might as well get used to it.”

Wendy sighed, relaxing herself and pushing aside the awkward feeling. These girls allowed her to
bathe with them like it was a common thing. She embraced in the tub’s heavenly feel.

*Should I be concerned? Should I be desperate to go back to my world? ...Because it’s hard to feel that way. I like it here.*

According to the guildmates, Chelia stayed at a local inn, so that she could return to the guild and keep looking for ways to send Wendy back home. None of them appeared too concerned. It was like they enjoyed Wendy’s company.

*They’re so nice to me. What did I have in the other world, anyway? Sure, I had a few friends... but all I did was cause trouble. The Government keeps trying to arrest me. My friends would be happy I found a better home.*

“Hey, Wendy, what’re those papers on your waist, again?” Mirajane asked.

“Oh, you mean my Chi Stabilizers? They keep my Air Chi from going crazy. Without them, the wind would blow around too much outside. ’Course, I’ve been learning to control it, but just in case…”

*Maybe I’m getting my hopes up. I could make trouble for these people, too. Then they wouldn’t want me…*

“Maybe we could research a way to get rid of that curse.” Levy said. “It must be a pain to have to deal with.”

Wendy looked down in shame. “It is… You guys wouldn’t wanna be around me for 10 seconds.”

“Oh, I’m sure we could manage.” Mira replied. “A little wind is nothing compared to what we deal with.”

“And we would help you with it, too.” Levy promised. “Just don’t hesitate to ask!”

“Mmm…” Wendy smiled at the gesture. “You’re just saying that.”

“Boy, you’re more modest than our Wendy.” Laki remarked. “Quit whining and just accept our help, already. That’s what I always tell her.”

“You never told her that!” Levy argued.

“Well, I should.”

“Hm hm hm!” Wendy laughed.

*Still... I wonder if I asked them... would they mind having two Wendys? I bet I would make great friends with the other one.*

**Fairy Tail**

After their bath, the girls returned to the guild, where Mirajane cooked some ramen for Wendy and brought a glass of juice. Chelia greeted them, but was sad to report she had no luck in finding a way back for Wendy. Wendy thanked her for her effort and decided to share her ramen with Chelia. Then for the next hour, they forgot about the subject of Wendy’s return home altogether, as Gajeel entertained them with stories of his own adventures. This led to Chelia sharing some stories, and Levy and Mira began bragging about how fast this Wendy claimed to be.

This resulted in Wendy and Chelia having a footrace around Magnolia. Wendy only used a fraction
of her whole speed to give her friend a chance, but by the end of the race, Chelia was clearly more exhausted. The pink-haired airbender (or should we say Wind Mage) decided to challenge Wendy to arm-wrestling, to prove she was still stronger, and she beat Wendy in three quick matches. Wendy cast the Arms spell on her dominant hand, so Chelia had a harder time besting her. Their arms locked in place for three minutes before Wendy’s was able to pin Chelia’s.

To reward her for this lucky break, Chelia agreed to tie Wendy’s hair in two long pigtails, in the same fashion that their Wendy sometimes had her hair. The tails were fixed with red bows, then Chelia brushed them until they were perfectly smooth and straight. “There!” Chelia said after finishing. “You look as pretty as our Wendy!”

“You know what would look super cute?” Laki asked. “Putting tiny stars on the tips of her ears so they look like Christmas trees!”

“She does look like an elf, so why not?” Cana followed.

“How about it, Wendy, can we??” Laki excitedly requested.

“Stop it, you two are embarrassing her.” Levy said.

Wendy blushed at the idea of her pointed ears being decorated for Christmas. …She remembered last Christmas, when she had a dream of meeting her older self, living with a family and having friends. The more time she spent with these people, the more she felt like she was dreaming. She was afraid that, when she woke up, she would be back in her own world… but she wasn’t. She was still here, with the happy, carefree people that loved her. They thought Wendy was a delight. If she asked them, they would let her stay here. And no one would miss her in the other world.

…Well, Dr. Facilier would wonder what’s keeping her. The first man to give Wendy a bed to sleep on, taught her magic, made her feel like life was worth living. And Carla, her talking winged cat whose very existence was a mystery, she would never know what type of creature she is, never know that there were others of her kind in this dimension, an “Exceed.” The Chelia in her homeworld was probably captured by the Government, hoping Wendy was at least safe, and Lee Andrew might be hoping to hear from her again, and…

Wendy clasped the lap of her dress. Her lips quivered, and tears quickly built up in her eyes. “Sniff, sniff!” She got up and ran outside.

“Wendy!” Mira yelled as everyone looked in surprise.

Wendy fell to her knees and cried. No matter how much she wiped the tears, they wouldn’t stop. Wendy’s hands and arms became soaked. The Fairy Tail members came out to see her. “Sheesh, it was just an idea!” Laki shouted. “We weren’t gonna make ya get the little stars!”

Wendy sniffled. “I’m sorry! All of you are really nice, and I’m really thankful for your hospitality. Nobody’s treated me so nice before, it’s like the home I never had. I really want to stay, but…but I can’t! This isn’t my real home! If I don’t get back to my own world, Carla and Dr. Facilier will be worried about me, and I’ll just feel so bad if I…” She choked out more sobs.

“Wendy, calm down!” Mirajane knelt down in front of her and tilted Wendy’s head up. “There’s nothing wrong about missing your home. We promise we’ll keep trying to find a way back. Just stay positive.”

She sniffled, and the tears started to subside. “The truth is, I… I really like this world. I actually liked it better than my home, I didn’t wanna leave. What if Carla and the others are going crazy
trying to bring me back? I’m a terrible person.”

“I’m sure they’ll be thankful you aren’t hurt, at least. For now, we’ll just work even harder to find a way back.”

“But if it makes you feel better…” Levy began with a playful smile, “We’re sorry for being too likable!”

“Sniff… Ha ha ha ha ha ha!” Wendy couldn’t help but find that hilarious.

“The second you get home, make sure your friends throw you a party.” Mirajane stated. “But if they don’t, we might just come to your world and throw one ourselves.”

**Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium**

Dr. Facilier was boredly looking at his crystal ball. Wendy and Carla certainly have been gone a long time, and he was unable to find them. Perhaps it was a result of Gravity Falls’ obscure magnetic field. He wished he could tell if they were in danger.

A ringing sound came from his fireplace. Somebody was trying to teleport to him from the Floo Network. However, the doctor had a spell in place, requiring him to approve the person’s entry, otherwise the warp would fail. He approached the fireplace, and was delighted to see the magical projection showed Wendy’s vibrant face. She must have kept Floo Powder with her just in case. “Come on in, Girl!” He clicked the icon.

Emerald flames emerged from the fireplace. …Gideon Gleeful was the one who came out, wearing a Wendy mask. He took it off and smiled wryly at the man. “Expecting somebody else?”

He threw Facilier over the table with his psychicbending. The doctor scrambled to his feet as the Child Psychic approached. “My, look at this beautiful shop full of illegal magic stuff. The Ministry of Magic would love to see this. BOYS, come awn in!”

Four magic Aurors marched out of the Floo Network and stood beside Gideon. Facilier’s heart was racing, the doctor unable to configure how any of this happened, what would happen now, or even more-so, what happened to Wendy. “Dr. Harvey Facilier,” the Head Auror spoke, “for possession and use of a Devil’s Wand, and harboring a wanted criminal, you are hereby under arrest. You will await trial in Azkaban.”

**Negaverse; Latsyrc Household**

“Friends, I’m happy to welcome you to my home!” Ikuyim danced into her room and allowed Positive Sector W inside. Ikuyim had several plants, shelves aligned with pretty gems of various colors and shapes, and a sleeping mat on the floor.

Fybi sniffed the pleasant air of the room. “‘Tis the most fragrant scent in this malodorous world. Thine choice in décor is praiseworthy.”

“It isn’t bad, I guess.” Anthony said, enjoying the natural air. “So like, what’s up with those people at the volcano, again?”

“Oh, that’s just my sister and her friend, Yllehs.” The group went over by the window to view the volcanic field beyond Ikuyim’s back yard. “Ikus gets a lot of temper tantrums and turns everything into lava, so we need Yllehs to fight her and cool her down.

Lavabender Ikus Latsyrc and icebender Yllehs Nosnhoj were in another climactic battle. Yllehs
surfaced on an Ice Road, creating a wide curve around her opponent while Ikus sent streams of lava to break parts of the ice. Yllehs suddenly lunged at Ikus, hands lit with ice as she attempted to slam them against her, but Ikus raised a lava wall, which Yllehs turned to stone when her ice hands touched. Yllehs was knocked back when Ikus kicked a piece of the wall at her, then the lavabender surfaced forth on a lava wave. Yllehs skied away, raising a trail of tall icicles, but Ikus surfaced between each one and melted them in her pursuit.

“Wow, and I thought Michelle was annoying.” Anthony remarked. “How do you get any sleep?”

“Knowing that tomorrow is another adventure!” Ikuyim happily danced over to her shelf of purple gems. “I loved to collect treasure as a hobby, but when I discovered my earthbending, I began to practice with them.” She waved her hands and made an oval gem and triangle gem float. “I had a natural talent for it. You try!” She passed the oval gem to Anthony.

The boy set the gem on the ground and held his hand above it. He channeled his power and struggled to lift it. …The gem shook and lifted slightly, but it plopped back down when Anthony’s grip broke. “Sigh, it’s really heavy.”

“Didn’t that Minish say no earthbender ever lifted a diamond?” Aranea asked.

“That’s not a diamond, it’s an amethyst, silly!” Ikuyim laughed. “But you’re right, diamonds are impossible to bend. They’re like, super strong!”

“More than you know.” A woman’s voice said from the doorway.

Ikuyim gasped, recognizing her immediately. Medusa walked in and said, “Thannypoo, knock the extras out.”

The green snake on her shoulder flashed his eyes at each of the Sector W members. They passed out on the floor, with Fybi dropping like a bird from the air. Ikuyim clenched her teeth in anger. “Whaddid you DO to them?!”

“Easy, I only put them to sleep!” Thanatos yelled defensively. “Not the everlasting sleep.”

“I’m sorry to interrupt your lesson, but the Darknesses won’t find themselves.” Medusa said. “I’ll need you for this one, Ikuyim.”

“Need her for what?” Anthony asked groggily. The three looked in surprise as the boy was pushing himself up from the floor.

“He withstood my Sleep Stare?” Thanatos asked. “How is that possible?”

“When you train as long as I have… heh… you decide when to sleep.” The boy smirked.

“Hmmm…” Medusa scratched her chin. “Impressive feat of will, but… you’re not really relevant to my plan.”

“Ikky-yim, who is this lady?”

“She’s Medusa. And--; hn-hn, that’s not my name, silly!” Ikuyim switched from a serious glare to a sunny smile.

“Wait… Medusa?” Anthony cocked a brow. “Palutena’s sister?”

“HISSSS!” Medusa bared her fangs, scaring the boy. “Don’t you mention her name in my
“She told us you were searching for the Darknesses. So, are ya?”

“I am.” Medusa still glared. “That’s what I was about to ask Ikuyim to do. You’re going to awaken one of the most important Darknesses.”

Ikuyim glanced at Anthony. “I want him to come with me.” She stated firmly.

“What? Why?”

“So that I can give him some on-the-field training. I don’t think you would’ve asked me unless this had something to do with my power. Now, who is this Darkness?”

“How very clever.” Medusa smiled lightly. “All right. Your little beaver can come with you and die before one of the mightiest women the universe has ever known. She is a real beauty of a gem… A conqueress by the name of Yellow Diamond.”

These Side Stories chapters are actually getting to be pretty long. It’ll be annoying when I have to divide them on deviantART. Well, Chapter 20’s next, so let’s dedicate it to our well-known Lady Darkness.
Chapter Summary

Anthony and Ikuyim travel back in time to meet Yellow Diamond.

Wanted to write a little more of the stage, but screw it, I had a hard day at work and need to do some homework.

Chapter B-20: Diamond and Pearl

Island south of Indian Ocean

Medusa brought Ikuyim and Anthony to the Posiverse, where she then warped the two to the designated island via Dark Portal. “I still wanna know what’s going on!” Anthony demanded.

“Just hold your horses.” Ikuyim told him. “Medusa promised to help us find the Thirteen Darknesses. Hopefully, she’s taking us to a clue.”

Medusa led them to the underground chamber where Stewie’s time machine lay. “I set the coordinates to take you to a planetoid called Crystallia. Exactly 6,557 years ago. There, you should find the one called Yellow Diamond.”

“And she’s one of the Darknesses?” Anthony cocked a brow.

“Yes, and a very special one at that.” Medusa smirked. “She comes from the First Dimension. The very place that, when the Twenty Keys are united, will be open, and the New World can be constructed. You two must serve as her guides, and be on your best behavior. Return with the Return Pad when you’re finished. And remember, you are not to tell her of your mission.”

“You don’t tell me what to do!” Anthony shouted.

“I can turn you to stone right now!” Medusa shot her face into his, her reptilian eyes narrowed. “Now get in the machine!”

With a gulp, Anthony stepped into the machine with Ikuyim, the door shutting behind them. They pressed the activate, and the blinding blue light zapped them across the timeline. “But I thought Anthony wasn’t included in Yellow Diamond’s original story.” Thanatos said. “Only Ikuyim matched the description. Won’t this affect things?”

“We’ll watch from here and see what happens. Perhaps there was a mistake…”

First Dimension; White Diamond’s Throne

“White Diamond…” Yellow Diamond marched into the massive, white, glittering chamber.

“Yes, Yellow Diamond?” the towering, beautiful empress asked softly.

“I wanted to apologize for my earlier insubordinance.” Yellow bowed her head. “I was only… concerned for our wellbeing.”
“It is understandable. All is forgiven…”

“I’ve just been… so angry.” Yellow hugged herself lightly, speaking with congested anger. “Our Ether falling into their hands… They’re abusing our people! They act as though we’re merely objects, even though WE’RE the ones who wish to SAVE this crumbling dimension!”

“Yellow Diamond… please be calm.”

“My Diamond, please fuse with me!” She looked up at her empress with pleading eyes.

“Excuse me?”

“I need… solace.” The smaller diamond closed her eyes. “We haven’t fused in so long… I would like to feel your warm embrace again. I just want a reminder… we will always have each other…”

“Topaz…” White Diamond slowly reached down.

“My Diamond…”

White Diamond gently picked her up. The empress remembered the last time they fused. Although she didn’t express it, she enjoyed it very much. Her subordinate was so tiny… so adorable… yet, her love and passion for her empire was vast… and White Diamond loved her fierce and strict aura.

White Diamond held Topaz to her chest, stood up from her throne, and twirled. Yellow Diamond shone and sunk into her empress’s chest. White Diamond glowed, and their body transformed into a beautiful entity comprised of both their souls.

Yellow Diamond… this is wonderful. I had forgotten… how it felt to be with you.

It is wonderful, My Diamond. And I will always keep you with me. I’m sorry… to have to…

Topaz… what are you doing?

I will not let the trolls reap our land any longer. I want to destroy them, but I can only do so with your power. I knew you would not agree to this… so I must…

Topaz… Stop!

My Diamond… forgive me…

Crystallia

Amethysts, jaspers, and pearls lay scattered around the landscape. The planet’s surface composed of crystals and gems of diverse colors, and their beauty was complimented by the stars of space. A single pearl of yellow tint shone as it rose into the air. It formed a body of a yellow, slender humanoid, whose yellow hair was up in a point, she wore a one-piece, had long leggings, and yellow slippers, and the pearl was on her chest.


But then she heard a faint shimmering sound. She turned and saw the yellow diamond float into the
Yellow Diamond had reformed. “My Diamond!” Pearl happily skittered over to the woman who was slouched on her knees.

“Augh… Pearl…” Yellow Diamond stretched to full height. “What… happened…”

“Those dirty trolls attacked us with their machine! All of a sudden, I was poofed, and all of the other Gems—…” Pearl paused and looked at her empress with shock.

“What? Pearl, what is the matter?!” Diamond asked sternly.

Pearl skimmed her up and down, standing stiff and her eyes wide. “M-My Diamond… you’re so… small.”

Diamond’s eyes widened. She looked down and only then realized that Pearl was a few inches shorter than her. “WHAT HAPPENED?!?”

“I-I-It must’ve been the after-effects of the machine. Heheh, traveling dimensions certainly absorbs a lot of energy from a Gem, hahahahaha.”

“This is UNACCEPTABLE!!”

Her thundering voice scared Pearl into slouching like a crab and scuttling backwards. “You’re still taller than me! M-My Diamond, I’m certain this doesn’t change how powerful you are.”

“Sigh, it doesn’t even matter! Did we really end up in the dimension the trolls were constructing?” Yellow Diamond looked around.

“Apparently…” Pearl looked left-and-right quickly.

“Ugh… We need to find a way back home. Without all the Diamonds, the Ether will be impossible to control. Pearl, start collecting all these gems and store them in your pearl.”

“Yes, My Diamond.” Pearl started picking up each and every fallen gem, stuffing them inside her chest gem, which glowed and let them into a subspace. “Sigh, the idea of all these Gems confined in my chest… it’s like a breeding ground. Hu-hu-hu-hu.”

Yellow Diamond heard a buzzing sound and turned. A blue light flashed into existence and dropped two characters on the ground: a girl with white hair, a dark-gray shirt, and orange skirt, and a boy with buckteeth and large feet.

As Ikuyim and Anthony helped their selves off the solid, shiny ground, the pair of high-heel boots approached them. They stared up at the imposing yellow woman with the diamond on her chest. “Who are you?” she demanded.

“Uh… I’m Ikuyim Latsyrc, and this boy is Anthony.” The Negative girl answered.

“You’ll show your respect, Antling!” Pearl stated, skittering up from behind her empress. “You lay before Co-Empress of the Gem Empire, Yellow Diamond!”

Ikuyim stared at her with admiration. “You’re Yellow Diamond!” She stood up, smiling brightly. “You’re so beautiful! And that gem is so pretty!”

“She looks like a bottle of pee.” Anthony stated, getting up.
Yellow Diamond bent down, grabbed him by the ankle, and picked him up upside-down. “H-H-Hey-!” The empress grabbed two of his toes and shook them, turning the hanging boy and studying every angle.

“Wait… you’re an organic being.” Diamond said. “Like the trolls or the angels.”

“What, you mean the Nimbi?”

“What exactly is your purpose here? Do you hail from our home dimension?”

“We’re just explorers!” Ikuyim shouted assuredly. “We came here to explore this crystalline planetoid! I am also trying to teach that boy earthbending.”

“Earthbending?”

“The ability to control stones and soil, of course!” Ikuyim smiled. “My specialty is crystal and gembending!” She stomped the gem ground and forced a chunk into the air, flying it around before setting it back. With a spin and jump, Ikuyim forced red crystals out of the ground around her.

“She can control GEMS?!” Pearl fearfully clutched her master’s arms. “My Diamond, she can’t be trusted!”

“Hold on…” Still holding Anthony, Yellow Diamond bent down and felt the ground. “I…I’m not feeling any Ether in this ground. But then…” She looked at Ikuyim, “How do you use such power?”

“I connect with the chi in the ground using my feet!” Ikuyim pointed at her bare feet.

“Chi? Is that the same as Ether?”

“I’ve never heard of Ether, so I’m sorry, I don’t know.”

Diamond stood up fully and said, “But if you have control over this land, you could be of use to us. You will escort me to the source of this chi you speak of so that we can harness its power!”

“Hah hah, you must be misunderstanding! Chi is-”

“YES, we’ll escort you, please lemme down!” Anthony yelled with blood rushing to his head.

“I promise we’ll help you the best we can!” Ikuyim bowed.

“Very well. You are hereby my temporary escort.” Diamond acknowledged. “And as for you…” She looked at Anthony. “You can be Pearl’s pet.” She dropped the boy in Pearl’s arms.

The slender servant’s eyes stared with the seven-year-old’s brown eyes as she held him like a pet. “Uhh… You someone’s mom?” he asked.

“SILENCE!” Pearl dropped him and pinned a foot on the boy. “You are my pet, Fleshy! Sit before Master!”

“I’m not doing this-”

Yellow Diamond drew an electric sword from her chest, flashing it threateningly. Anthony sat before Pearl like an obedient, frightened doggy. Pearl smirked with pride and malice. “Ha ha, hokay, but I still reserve some time to teach him bending.” Ikuyim laughed. “Let’s begin exploring!” (Play the “Underground” Theme from Yoshi’s Island!)
Ikuyim led them along a path out of the field. The path was enclosed between some steep mounds and snaked around some large, dark-green emerald crystals. There were green Bald Clefts hiding behind the emeralds, rock monsters camouflaged with the environment. They charged at Ikuyim when she walked by, but Anthony was quick to stomp them. The path ahead was blocked by huge bright emeralds. “Anthony, try to move this aside.” Ikuyim instructed.

“HUUUUUUU!” Anthony poured all his strength into pushing the unbendable crystals.

“I’m guessing this one is defective.” Yellow Diamond said.

“No wonder it’s so small! N-No offense, My Diamond.” Pearl stuttered.

“Anthony, gembending is about seeing the inner beauty of the earth.” Ikuyim told him. “When you look at that emerald, does it make you think of anything you’re fond of?”

Anthony took a breath and placed a hand on the crystal, staring at it. In its beauty, he saw Fybi. Her emerald eyes matched the crystal. Fybi smiled at him, and Anthony smiled back. He used a gentler touch in moving the rock aside. His hand pushed through and cracked it. Ikuyim decided to break the rest of them. “Good on your first lesson!”

“So instead of knowing how to function since birth, he must be taught verbally.” Diamond observed.

“He really is a pet.” Pearl said.

They came to a vast canyon with a deep, spiky crystal bottom. The group stepped onto a flat-topped, blue gem pillar leaning against the cliff. Ikuyim felt the entire pillar through Seismic Sense, seeing its loose base. She willed the pillar into tilting across the chasm, doing so gently so her passengers could stay balanced. Orange space jellyfish (Jelliens) were floating around the air where the platform tilted, so Pearl drew a two-sided electric spear, swinging it at the jellies in a graceful fashion. When they were close to a green gem pillar, they jumped over to it, then Ikuyim used her bending to shift it toward a pinkish-red pillar. Pearl cut away more Jelliens, but when they landed on the pink pillar, it wouldn’t tilt in either direction. However, Ikuyim used her bending to make it sink into the ground, then gave a thrust up, making the gem shoot up and spring them across the chasm. They landed bumpily on a convenient soil ground.

The four entered a cave that was very dark, except for the sparkling light-red crystals. It made the explorers appear as red figures in the darkness. The earthbenders could see around the cave with Seismic Sense, but Ikuyim confirmed there were Eyeballus Rocks lurking about, eyeball creatures made of rock. Ikuyim lifted a ruby crystal to light the way, and when its glow shone on the Eyeballuses, the creatures shirked. However, other ones were spitting small rocks at them from the darkness, and when any of them came for Yellow Diamond, Pearl sliced them away.

Ikuyim stopped at a dark, bottomless chasm, her steps causing a few pebbles to crumble and plummet. There was a big, ruby door of some sort across the chasm and on a cliff. The chasm was also on their right, but there was a path leading to the door on the wall across the pit. “If only we could get over there.” Ikuyim said. “This ground is pretty loose, so I can’t make my own bridge from here.”
“I might be able to reach there by going up this wall.” Pearl indicated the opposite wall they were close to.

“Could you take Anthony with you? Then he could make a bridge from up there.”

“Just hurry up, Pearl.” Yellow Diamond stated impatiently.

“Yes, My Diamond. Now, hold still, my pet.” Pearl lifted Anthony in her right arm and twirled her spear in her left. She spun it fast as a helicopter, sticking it in the wall as she sawed up it. She then sawed across the ceiling, body hanging over the chasm, the Eyeballus still shooting at them, until they could set their feet on the path above the parallel wall. They walked around to the ruby door, and Anthony stomped the cliff to stretch a stone bridge down to Ikuyim and Diamond.

After the two regrouped with them, Ikuyim led Anthony to the ruby door. “When I think of rubies, I think of anger.” Ikuyim told him with her positive smile. “Course, I can’t think of anything that makes me angry! What about you, Anthony?”

Anthony put his hand on the ruby. The only red thing he could think of was Michelle’s hair. And boy, did his sister make him angry. Laughing at him so cockily, because she was so much better at earthbending. Anthony did to this ruby what he could never legally do to his sister: he punched it and shattered it to pieces. “Forget punching-bag dolls, therapists should get THESE in their office!”

The door led outside, where rows of Crystal Clefts charged at them. Anthony couldn’t stomp on the spiked Clefts, so Ikuyim stomped crystals up from the blue ground to knock them away. They followed a snaky path within a narrow trench before it led them to a chasm with lava. A long, blue crystal hung over the lava from the right wall. Anthony punched the wall and made the crystal fall into the lava. It floated as the current turned it to face the other side. Ikuyim jumped down first, ran across the buoyant crystal, and jumped to grab a thin crystal dangling from the cliff.

Since Anthony wasn’t nimble like she was, Pearl picked him up, ran across the crystal, and wrapped her legs around the hanging crystal to climb it. Yellow Diamond simply made a high jump onto the left wall, went across, and dropped down to the others. The group proceeded on the path, and they stopped at a dead end, but the wall stretched over another chasm of lava. “This way, Pearl.” Yellow Diamond simply leapt high above the wall and walked across. Pearl followed her with her buzzsaw spear.

“That’s okay. We can just do like this!” Ikuyim slammed the wall, sticking some green crystals out of the wall over the chasm.

“Why can’t you just spring us up there?”

“Because this is more fun, silly!”

The crystals threatened to fall under their weight, so they had to quickly and carefully jump down to the next one. The crystals sloped down like stairs, but when they landed on the lowest crystal, Ikuyim used her bending to make it shake up and down, building enough momentum to fling them onto the next high crystal. No other crystals were available, so Ikuyim smacked the wall to make some more. The next one was too far away, so Ikuyim wiggled their current crystal left and right until they could launch forward. The following crystal required the same mechanics, but since it was at a lower level, Ikuyim softened the shake so they could make it. The next one was further and higher, so Ikuyim wiggled this one diagonally to fling in that direction.

Ikuyim smacked the wall again and emerged more crystals that formed a “W”. The kids ran down
the first slope, up the next, each of the crystals immediately fell out the wall after stepping, down the third slope, up the fourth, then they made it to where Pearl and Diamond waited. The group approached a sapphire door this time. “Whenever I look at sapphires, I always find myself cooling down.” Ikuyim said.

“Well, most Sapphires possess cyrokinetic abilities.” Pearl informed. “Though very rare ones possess telekines—”

Anthony punched the door open. “I just pretend its Vweeb and I’m stompin’ him. Man, gembending is easy.”

“Heheh… Lucky for you, these are easy gems to move.”

The door led to an enclosed area with a left road and right road. The right had an impassable river of lava, while the left road was above a short cliff. Ikuyim propelled herself and Anthony up there. They followed a jagged, narrow path that sloped upward, knocking out some Crystal Clefs on the way. They saw a large, round boulder with little crystals sticking out, perched on a tall cliff. “That can get us across!” Anthony said hopefully, climbing the last bit of steps before the cliff.

“Anthony, don’t-” Ikuyim tried to say.

The boy punched the wall, making the boulder loosen from its perch and threaten to crush them. “Yuh-oh.” The earthbenders hurried back down the path as the spiked stone chased them. They leaped off the ledge they started from and watched the boulder roll into the lava river. The kids shrugged at each other, figuring this could work—they realized that Pearl and Yellow Diamond were missing. “We’re over here!” Pearl called from across the river.

“You’re taking much too long. Hurry up!” Diamond shouted.

“Heeeeeeere, Anty Anty!” Pearl patted her knees, calling Anthony like a dog.

“I’m getting tired of that lady.” Anthony said as he and Ikuyim got on the boulder and used it to roll across the lava, withstanding the pain on their scorching feet. They were quick to jump off on the opposite side and cool their feet down. The narrow trench path led them out into an open crystal canyon, with the humans walking several paces ahead of the Gems. (End song.)

Ikuyim saw a piece of amethyst on the ground and made it bounce to her hand with a stomp. “Try to crush this, Anthony.”

She gave the gem to Anthony, who began squeezing it in attempt to shatter. “Ow… How’s this one work?”

“They’re just a stronger variety. Most normal earthbenders have a hard time with it. Some people believe that gems grow from the Heart of the World, too, the same as Nature Crystals. Their pure properties reflect the beauty of the Heart. And because the Heart is the embodiment of Mother Earth’s heart, it’s very strong and unbendable.”

The amethyst cracked in Anthony’s hand. “Hn… Not to me!” He smirked. “…Ow!” He dropped the gem and shook his hand from the pain for how hard he squeezed.

“How much longer until we reach the source of ‘chi’?” Yellow Diamond asked.

“Oh yeah…” Anthony remembered that was the reason they were escorting them. “Where are we supposed to lead them?” he whispered to Ikuyim.
“Uh, I dunno… I’m gonna run ahead!” Ikuyim skipped forward eagerly.

“I need a rest.” Anthony sat down to rub his aching soles.

“Organic wastes of space.” Yellow Diamond scoffed. “Pearl, do a scan of the area. These fleshies probably wouldn’t know Ether if they were sniffing it.”

Pearl skipped her way up a nearby crystal mount, perching her feet perfectly on its tip. Her pearl lit up and scanned the vast crystalline landscape. “Sigh, I’m not detecting one trace of Ether.”

“This can’t be possible.” Yellow Diamond picked up the cracked amethyst Anthony dropped. “How can there be so many lifeless gems in one setting?”

“What is Ether, anyway?” Anthony asked.

Pearl slid down and responded, “Well, Pet, Ether is the energy that dwells in the Gem Homeworld. It is a powerful force that can give life to anything and manipulate reality. For a long time, races from other planets have been stealing our Ether to achieve their own ends.” She made a scowl. “As if our dimension wasn’t distorted enough.”

“The four Diamonds of our world had the power to stabilize the Ether.” Yellow Diamond said. “But without me or White Diamond there, it will run rampant. The Gem Empire’s ultimate goal was to save our universe from its chaos… but thanks to those trolls, all of them will be doomed!” Her fist trembled.

“My Diamond, please calm down!” Pearl said with her hands held up. “I promise we will find a way back home.”

“Guuuuuuuys!” Ikuyim’s voice echoed from the distance.

The three walked a few feet down the path and saw the girl waving her arms from the top of a hill over a trench. Many shiny blue, giant crystals stood up from the hill’s surface. “I found this weird pyramid! There’s some writing on it!”

Ikuyim went up and rubbed the pyramid. “I don’t really recognize this type of stone. It’s like… otherworldly.”

“Well, we are on another world.”

The ground trembled, startling the four to attention. Ikuyim bent down and touched the ground. “Uh-oh. I thought I felt something weird about this hill. It’s not a regular hill… it’s alive!”

“Alive?!” Anthony shouted.

“WHOOOOOOOOOOOOOA!” The hill turned sideways and caused the four to fall to the ground below. From here, they watched as the colossus stomped away on stubby feet. The beast that was 20 stories high ran several miles away and turned, showing its ugly, big-chinned mug.

“GREEEEEEHHHHH!”

“It’s a Cleft!” Ikuyim exclaimed. “I’ve never seen one that big before!”
“It’s like one of our Gem Monsters!” Pearl exclaimed. “Except... I’m still not detecting any Ether from it.”

“It must be mad at us for climbing on it. We should go-”

“Wait!” Anthony yelled. “We have to get up to that pyramid again!”

“That pyramid is of no interest to me!” Yellow Diamond stated.

“Yes it is!” the boy argued with her. “Don’t ask me how I know, but I think you’re able to read what’s on it.”

“That text was unfamiliar. I would not-”

“JUST trust me!”

“Steel your teeth, Pet!” Pearl smacked him. “Show your respect to Her Highness-”

“WATCH OUT!” Ikuyim slid the two away with earthbending when the Cleft sent a storm of sharp crystals at them. Yellow Diamond turned her body into solid diamond, the crystals unable to shatter her while they broke their selves. Ikuyim hurried beside Anthony as they both got in fighting poses. “Anthony, if you’re right about what you say, then we need to take this monster down. This’ll be your first true test as a gembender.”

“It’s not the only time I fought an oversized rock. This’ll be a walk in the park!” (Play Blizzeta’s Theme from Zelda: Twilight Princess!)

**Boss fight: King Cleft**

The colossus unleashed an earsplitting roar and charged at the two earthbenders, but Ikuyim stomped the ground and sank herself and Anthony into a hole. The planetoid trembled ferociously under the beast’s contact with the cliff, and Ikuyim hurriedly burrowed a tunnel underneath the Cleft. They resurfaced behind the mountain as Ikuyim hurled some large gem shards at the crystals on the Cleft’s rear. Roaring with anger and slight pain, the Cleft stomped its feet as it about-faced. The mountain performed a tremendous leap, its big-chinned mouth hanging open as he faced directly down, wishing to devour the morsels. Anthony and Ikuyim bolted forward, out of the monster’s range, and the earthbenders flew into the air when his body crashed against the ground.

His big stubby feet wiggled as he seemed to be stuck in this position. There was a bright reddish-pink, circular crystal patch in the center of his underside. “Gross.” Anthony said. “Why do all these rock monsters have to have a weak spot on their-”

“Anthony, if I shoot you up there, can you break through it?” Ikuyim asked. Yellow Diamond and Pearl came up to them from behind.

“Why can’t we make Pearl do it?”

“I wasn’t bred for this type of task!!” Pearl flinched in disgust. “It’s on you, Pet!”

“Now or never, Anthony!” Ikuyim stomped and sent Anthony flying at the weak spot with a rock-jab. The boy charged his fist and punched through the gem patch with great timing. Inside the Cleft’s turned-over inside, the boy clutched a wall and started punching it, creating dents and cracks with his bending. He smashed every fragile crystal he could on the inside, and the interior
suddenly rolled as Anthony felt himself land on the right-side-up floor. Overwhelmed by the beast’s thundering roar, the King Cleft spat him out of its mouth.

The colossus ran miles away, running in circles around the distant plain as crystal missiles flew at its opponents. Ikuyim quickly knocked away the crystals coming at them, but the Cleft was too far away to attempt to chase on foot. “Do you guys have any idea to catch him?” Ikuyim asked.

“Pearl, help them.” Yellow Diamond ordered. “I just want to get this over with.”

“Yes, My Diamond.” Pearl drew out her two-sided energy spear, ripping the polearm in half as both sides contracted to just the spears. She flipped gracefully and stuck them on the bottom of her shoes. Pearl picked Anthony up and began to skate across the gem ground with great haste using the energy blades on her feet. She swiftly dodged the crystals and was quickly closing in on the beast. King Cleft roared, charged at his pursuers, but then flipped to sit and slide on his bottom. Pearl rapidly spun around and moved towards the left, evading the monster by inches.

Anthony was dizzy and sickened by the spin. Pearl didn’t understand his moans, but told him to cease as she skated toward the now-standing monster and got beside its foot. She reformed her spear, twirled it like a baton, and used it to saw up the foot and across the Cleft’s underside. She threw Anthony up into the hole, where he resumed stomping and destroying the weak crystals. He was blown out by the beast’s great bellow, hitting the ground haphazardly as Ikuyim and Yellow Diamond made it to where he was.

Ikuyim grabbed Anthony’s arm and ran around the King Cleft. The beast narrowed his agro eyes on Yellow Diamond, and desired nothing more than to crush her into gravel. Yellow Diamond tried to summon the power taken from White Diamond, tried to conjure floating diamonds to shield her from the creature’s foot. However, her full powers had yet to recover in this miniaturized form. “MY DIAMOND!” Pearl jumped in the way, spinning her spear so fast, it projected an energy barrier to keep the Cleft’s foot aloft. “Please get away! I won’t let this monster crush you!”

“Nothing can crush a Diamond! And with the strength of two Diamonds, are you really questioning my-”

“I, said, MOVE!!” Pearl jabbed her foot so fast, she kicked her empress away, but her pose faltered and resulted in her being smashed by the Cleft.

“UUUUUUUUUUOOOOOOOOHHHHH!” The Cleft howled with anger over these hard-to-kill enemies. Ikuyim and Anthony ran underneath as the former sprung up a pillar to lift them into the opening. “You know, it would be really funny if this guy’s chin fell off from all his yelling!” Ikuyim said with a smirk.

“I’m ready when you are!” Anthony returned the look.

Both earthbenders hurried to the beast’s mouth, standing their ground against his deafening roar. Anthony and Ikuyim locked hands. “Let’s channel both of our chi into one amazing stomp!” Ikuyim yelled.

“On three!”

“ONE.” Ikuyim channeled her power to her right foot, and Anthony his left. “TWO.” They raised their feet, which felt heavy and longed to be taken by the gravity. “THREE!” With a powerful, concurrent stomp, the King Cleft’s chin snapped off the monster’s body. The monster let out a weak, defeated roar, wobbling around before collapsing and sliding on the ground. (End song.)
The kids jumped out of the open mouth and high-fived. They hurried around the monster’s fallen body and saw Yellow Diamond standing by a crater. They rushed over to her side. The Diamond’s expression was one of horror and anger. Pearl was lain in the crater, her limbs bent and smashed, and the pearl on her chest cracked. …The cracks were growing.

“Pearl… Why…” Yellow Diamond tried to restrain her anger. “I told you it couldn’t have crushed me… Why didn’t you LISTEN?!”

Pearl’s body fizzed like static. She had a big smile as she spoke weakly. “Because you know… as much about this world as I do. And that’s… not very much.” Fizzed. “My Diamond… we were so lost and confused… all of the other Gems have lost their power. I wouldn’t have lasted… if it wasn’t for you… My Diamond…”

“I did not order you to sacrifice!” Diamond shouted. “I still needed you… to carry the Gems and find a way back to Homeworld! Without Peridot here, you were the only capable one I had!”

“Heh heh… A capable Pearl… not many of us get to hear that.” Her gem cracked more, and her body fizzed harder. “It was truly an honor… to serve you, Yellow Diamond. I know a Gem as flawless as you… will find a way back home… and save our universe.” Another fizz. “Good-bye… My Diamond.” The gem shattered, and Pearl’s body disappeared.

When Yellow Diamond was going for a walk outside her palace, something caught her eye: a Pearl was stylishly swinging a two-sided spear behind a large, jagged gem. Curious, the empress approached her. “What are you doing?”

“YAH!” Pearl flinched, facing the empress with one leg bent and up in the air, while the other foot was on its tippy-toes. “My Diamond! I-I was just…"

“Playing with your spear.”

“Hee hee…” Pearl grinned nervously. “I heard that… the soldiers were preparing for another battle. I thought, if I were able to fight… I could dwindle the enemy’s progress?" "

Yellow Diamond raised a brow. “If that’s what you thought… then I’ll put you on the front lines.”

Even though the Pearl was so skinny and flimsy next to the Quartzes, she was fast and made quick work of the angels. After that battle was done, she came to bow before her Diamond. “That was impressive… Hmm… very well: from this point, you will be my personal Pearl. That means I expect more from you than the other Pearls. You must move faster, be more obedient, and be overall better than the other Pearls. Am I clear?”

“Yes-My-Diamond!” She saluted quickly.

Almost instantly, every gem that Pearl had stored into her Infi-Storage materialized around the field. It was a disheveled mess of lesser pearls, jaspers, and amethysts. “…Well, that sucks.” Anthony remarked.

Yellow Diamond picked up the broken remains of her Pearl. She crushed the shards in her hands, still angry. “Disobedient… And I thought she was the perfect Pearl. She followed me everywhere… she did everything I told her without question… I know it’s not uncommon for a Pearl to fail… but WHY do I feel so aggravated?!?”

“Because she meant a lot to you.” Anthony said. “You loved her… for always being loyal to you.”

“Hmph… What would a mere rodent know?” She glared at him.
Anthony remembered himself as a tiny, riding on Fybi, the person he trusted the most. “A rodent that knows a lot…” he replied, seeing no point in explaining to her.

“Now’s our chance to get back up to that stone.” Ikuyim pointed. “If Anthony’s right, you can read it, Yellow Diamond.”

The angered empress decided to comply, allowing Ikuyim to lift them to the top of the King Cleft via a rising pillar. Yellow Diamond approached the pyramid with foreign writing. It was true… Yellow Diamond was able to read it now.

One who seeks perfection and order will find their selves crumbling. Submit to the chaos, and understand there is nothing you can do.

A dark aura appeared around the pyramid. It flew into Yellow Diamond’s self-named gem. She winced a little, but as it absorbed completely inside, she felt odd.

Yellow Diamond awakened as a DARKNESS. Only 10 more to go.

“…” Yellow Diamond stared at her hands. “Was this… the source of your ‘chi’?”

“N-No, no!” Ikuyim stuttered. “I didn’t get a chance to explain! Chi is a force that exists everywhere and inside all beings. But the gods give people called benders the power to control certain parts, like earth. L-Like, for instance…”

“I don’t think now is the time for a lecture.” Anthony noted.

“Sigh… well, now I need a new servant.” Diamond said. “Are you two going to help pick up these gems or not?”

The kids looked at the hundreds of gems scattered down below. They exchanged quick glances. “Return-Pad!” Anthony yelped. Ikuyim put the device down as they stood on it and warped back to the present.

“WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!” Diamond yelled hopelessly. “GET BACK HERE! HEEEEEEEY…”

Yellow Diamond was stranded on Crystallia for two Earth years. She was all alone on this planetoid with no way to harness power for her gems. The longer she waited, the more she knew that Homeworld must be crumbling. She despaired in not being there, to retain order. And yet, the message on that pyramid still haunts her…

After ages of waiting, she heard a sound above her. Yellow Diamond looked up and saw a tremendous ship of dark-magenta color and unknown origin. It was accompanied by a fleet of Irkens, who sought to make a settlement on this rock. The Tallest Dirk saw the tall, yellow woman from afar… that was one long neck.

With the Irkens’ aid, Yellow Diamond finally found a great source of Ether called Planet Avalar. However, the natives of this universe seem to call it “magic.” Regardless, Yellow Diamond was able to revive her Gem soldiers, and in exchange, they would serve the Irken Empire, a race that sought rule and order across the universe. To this day, she didn’t understand why that white-haired girl and her pet rodent appeared on that lonely rock…

Present time

“Oh, now I remember.” Medusa spoke after watching the monitor. “When Yellow Diamond told
us her story, she mentioned a white-haired girl that controlled the lifeless gems... and her pet rodent! Hmm, so much for firsthand sources.”

Anthony and Ikuyim materialized out of the time machine. “So, when she read that pyramid... she awakened herself?” Ikuyim asked.

“The same thing happened to Fybi after she read from a Gibberish Cube.” Anthony replied. “But I still don’t get what those things do.”

“The Poneglyphs awaken the True Light within the chosen ones.” Medusa responded. “While the Pyrameglyphs awaken the True Darkness. Then when all twenty have come together, the final battle between me and Palutena will commence.”

“So the Lights are going to fight the Darknesses, too?”

“Yes... Too bad we have the advantage.” Medusa smirked. “Anyway, congratulations to you brats. I’ll take you back to Ikuyim’s house.” The goddess opened a dark portal, leading the children inside.

“Medusa, no one said anything about ‘True Light’ or ‘Darkness.’” Thanatos whispered. “You’re just making that up!”

“Be quiet! I still need to act like I know what I’m doing, if just a little bit!”

Latsyrc Household

After Medusa dropped them in front of Ikuyim’s house, the two went back upstairs to her bedroom. “Anthony, Ikuyim!” Sally exclaimed. “Where have you two been?!?”

“Judging by their description of a purple woman with a snake, I assume it was Medusa?” Ynohtna inquired.

“Ugh, you? What’re you doing here?” Anthony asked rudely.

“My sister and I were in the bathroom when somebody fell through the mirror!” Ynohtna blushed. “Wanna guess who?”

“ANTHONY, THERE you are!” Michelle McKenzie stomped around Harvey and Aranea. “I’ve been worried sick about you, and so has Mom! But Dad’s just bein’ lazy like usual. You better tell me where you went!”

“Michelle, how the HECK did you get in the Negaverse?”

“I climbed on the sink to catch a bug, but then the mirror turned all gooey, and I fell in.”

“Then we had a little mishap,” Ynohtna followed, “where she thought I was her brother, and Ellehcim was her long-lost twin.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Michelle!” Ikuyim waved. “My name is Ikuyim. I’ve been teaching Anthony gembending!”

“Gembending?”

“Yeah, it’s a really tough form of earthbending.” Anthony poked his sister’s nose. “Too tough for you, even. Since gems are more pure and clean than regular rocks, it’ll take ya forever to-”
Michelle casually made two amethysts from Ikuyim’s shelf float around the air using her fingers. “Tee hee hee! It’s easy!”

Anthony’s mouth drooped open, and he looked less than intelligent. “Uuuuuh…”

“Wow, if you can do that,” Aranea said, “maybe you can bend those diamonds-”

“FORGETIT! Let’s gohome!” Anthony grabbed Michelle and dragged her out of the house, not wishing to discover if she can bend the unbendable gem.

**Gravity Falls; Portal Chamber**

Mabel set the Master Emerald on the ground and resized it with the Crystal Flashlight’s blue ray. Grenda then used her super strength to set the massive emerald into the machine like the journal had drawn. Carla looked over the blueprints and began to alter the other settings on the portal. It took a little under an hour before she finished double-checking. “Sigh… It appears to be done.”

“If this works…” Dipper approached the activation lever, “we may be able to bring MaKayla and Wendy home. Still, I’m a little worried… What exactly did Bill and Gideon wanna do with this? Carla, even you said it was harmful to the Time-Space-”

“We’ll shut the machine down afterwards.” Carla shouted. “Just bring Wendy back!”

“Okay! Well… here goes.” Dipper jumped up and pulled the lever.

The portal spiraled to life, and the symbols around it lit up. A small arrow rotated on the circle, aiming at a symbol of a flame, then at one of a fairy with a tail. v“Detecting coordinates of previous users. Initiating callback system.”

“Callback system?” Carla repeated.

“Maybe it’s trying to bring Wendy and Kayla back!” Dipper said hopefully.

“Is it?! Oh, Child, please be safe…”

**Dimension “Karakura”**

Night had fallen over Karakura Town, but the street and building lights kept the city vibrant. Rukia showed MaKayla to an outdoor ice rink, where the human girl was carefreey sliding around on some rented shoes. “You should join me, Rukia!” Kayla told her with a hand held out. The spirit swordswoman was sitting on the fence, watching her skate in circles.

“I can’t.” Rukia blushed. “I’d have to run back and get my Gigai, anyway…”

“You’re a spirit, stop making excuses.”

“Sigh… All right.”

Rukia hopped off the fence and took Kayla’s hand as the latter guided her across the ice. “Nnnh!” Rukia stumbled a little. “These sandals aren’t really good for this!”

“You’re an icebender and you don’t know how to skate.” Kayla looked in disbelief. “Honestly, Rukia.”

“I told you it isn’t icebending!”
“Yeah, but you’re not so much of a spirit, either. Way too heavy. Just lighten up and do what I do.” MaKayla took both of Rukia’s hands, let her head hang back, and her hair breeze as the two girls spun in place. The other skaters who were unable to see Rukia looked confused by MaKayla’s pose. Still, she managed pretty well, not falling in that position.

MaKayla pulled her in skating around the rink some more. “To be honest, I thought you would be a little more worried.” Rukia said. “We don’t know if the portal will call you back to your world. As a matter of fact, what if it appears in the same place it dropped you?”

“I haven’t sensed its presence. But then again, it could be because of the huge amount of spiritual energy I feel in this city’s air. But I know I’ll get back home.” Kayla winked back at her. “I have good intuition.”

“…Hm.” Rukia gave a light smile. “It’s weird… You act like the two of us are already familiar with each other, so you expect me to take your word for it.”

“Well, it was only a brief meeting. But your team saved Miyuki, so I have to be thankful about that!” She grinned.

Rukia stayed silent, figuring asking more questions would lead to more confusion. The girls skated peacefully until MaKayla spoke again. “Still… the pyramid that Urahara had drawn… There’s definitely a reason Bill Cipher wanted to build that portal. That pyramid must be the reason… I wonder if the other Original Worlds have them.”

“MaKayla?” Rukia said with concern.

“Oh, sorry.” Kayla blushed. “Just thinking out loud.”

“Come on, Karin, it’ll be fun!” They looked at the rink’s entrance. A girl with short light-brown hair was happily tugging her black-haired sister’s arm.

“Yuzu, I told you I only like my feet on ground that won’t slip me!”

“Hey, it’s Karin from Sector JP!” Kayla beamed.

“You know her, too?”

“Y… Oh, they’re different ones.” Her expression sunk.

“They’re actually friends of mine, too.” Rukia smiled. “Their brother is the Soul Society’s hero. Ichigo Kurosaki.”

“Ichigo?”

“Is he also from your world?”

“…” Kayla thought for a second. Where had she heard that name before? “Wait… his name was on the-”

“Mommy, look at that!” A little girl pointed at the sky.

Everyone looked up as a result. There was a growing white light in the sky. “AAAAAAH!” The light became a white beam that struck the ground outside the rink.

“KARIN, WHAT’S HAPPENING?!” Yuzu cried.
“I don’t know, but we’re leaving!” Karin grabbed her sister and bolted from the rink. *Thank God, an excuse not to skate!*

“What’s this energy I feel?!” Rukia shouted.

“I… I recognize it.” Kayla said, holding her forehead. “This is it! The Multiverse Portal! It must be calling me back!”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah! Well, I guess this is good-bye for now.” Kayla jogged up to the powerful beam. “It was great meeting you again, Rukia!”

“W-Wait! Maybe I should go with you and make sure you get there safe.”

“I appreciate the gesture, but it might just create problems if we couldn’t send you back. But hey, I’ll tell the other you you said ‘hi’!” Kayla shot her one last smile. “Farewell, Rukia!” With that, she ran and jumped into the beam. Her body became light, and she was slurped up into the sky. The beam faded away after a few minutes, leaving a huge burned mark on the ground. The witnesses were murmuring in confusion.

“Hmm… I have a feeling there *is* more to this conundrum than we believe.” Rukia said with suspicion.

**Fiore**

“Guys, look at that!” Levy shouted, pointing at the sky.

A white beam struck the ground before the guild hall, quaking the earth. The members of Fairy Tail piled out to see it. “Is it an Etherion?!” Chelia shouted.

“No, it’s something else!” Mirajane yelled.

Wendy gazed at the vortex-like beam. She recognized its appearance. “Guys… I think this is the portal.”

“The portal?” Romeo asked. “You mean… it’ll take you home?”

“…I don’t know.” Wendy slowly stepped forward. “I wonder… is it safe?”

“I-If you don’t think so, then maybe you shouldn’t!”

“But this could be her only chance!” Panther Lily shouted. “And if this portal stays active, it could harm the Space-Time Continuum.”

“But-”

“He’s right.” Wendy stated firmly. “I have to try… If Carla is on the other side, I need to go in now. But first…” She turned around to face the Fairies. “I’m really grateful to you guys for letting me stay with you. I don’t know how, but… it feels like I’ve known you guys forever. This world is the happiest place I’ve ever seen, and I would love to stay here, but…”

“We understand, Wendy.” Levy giggled, since they’ve been through this already. “That world is your home, and you have friends to get back to.”

“It’s not just that.” Wendy smirked with determination. “I’m gonna tell my friends all about you. I
want my world to be as happy as this one, I want people to be as loving and caring as you guys! I wanna try to set the example… and maybe when it’s good enough, I’ll welcome you guys to visit me!”

“I know you can do it, Wendy!” Chelia raised a fist. “Just do your very best! And always remember: Love is the most powerful magic!”

“Please be safe going home, Wendy!” Mirajane cheered. “And send us a letter sometime!”

“Hey, Wendy…” Romeo scratched his arm, blushing. “If you see the other me again… Tell him about me?” He made a nervous grin.

“Hmhm, sure! And you should talk to your Wendy.”

“Hehe… I will.”

“Good-bye, everyone!” Wendy gave one final wave. “I’ll never forget Fairy Tail!” She turned around and jumped into the vortex. Her body turned into light, and within minutes, the beam vanished.

**Gravity Falls**

The portal was furiously spiraling, the earth trembled under its power, then suddenly, two people spat out and hit the wall on the opposite side. “UUH!” Wendy and MaKayla fell on the ground.

“There they are!” Dipper exclaimed.

“WENDY!” Carla flew over and landed beside her owner.

“Ow… Carla!” She looked up at her kitten, holding her sore head.

“I was really worried about you, Child! What was it like in there?”

“It was… Oh, I’ll tell you about it later. Let’s go back to Dr. Facilier!”

“I agree. I’m sure he can survive without his false merman heads. That man has sent you on your last masochistic endeavor!”

“Oh, he didn’t know this would happen. But when we get back, let’s have a party!”

“Why ever would we?”

“Just because. Let’s go!”

Carla showed Wendy the secret exit, and once they were back in the forest, the air mage and kitten began their exciting run home.

**Cleveland, Virginia**

The two made it back by late afternoon, Wendy excitedly turning city blocks en route to… They came to a halt and stared confusedly at the crowds of people gathered around and facing the voodoo emporium’s direction. “Carla, what’s going on?”

The kitten flew over the crowd to search for a plausible answer. She gasped: a team of wizards in brown coats were ganging up on Dr. Facilier, casting spells that the witch-doctor countered, while his shadow was flying around and biting them in the necks. “AAAH!” The man was grabbed by
the neck in Gideon’s psychic. The shadow tried to attack the child, but the Aurors cast Lumos Solem to weaken the shadow, and Facilier was hit with stun spells.

“What’s happening?!” Wendy shoved through the crowds, struck with horror when the Aurors were trying to shove her mentor into a black carriage.

“Er- Wendy!” Facilier grunted, unable to repress the stun effects. “Run away, they’ll get you… AAH!” They threw him inside.

“My, my, if it isn’t Wendy Marvell.” Gideon approached the taller girl with his wry smile. “The famous Sky Dragon. Escaped from the portal, did you? You caused quite the stir up in Glitzville. But this doctor ain’t the ONLY one with Friends on the Other Side! Bill Cipher showed us what you were doing! Ever since your encounter with Master Churchill, he’s been watching you from a piece of paper that latched onto your clothes. Your little harborer is going to Azkaban and YOU’RE coming with!”

“A-Azkaban?” Wendy stuttered.

“Them dementors are gonna find your widdle souls soooooo delicious!” Gideon sang with an adorable expression.

“Child, let’s get out of here!” Carla tugged Wendy’s arm and tried to pull her as she flew. “We can’t let you get captured! Wendy! …?”

Wendy stared at the carriage where her mentor was trapped. Shadow Facilier was trying to creep out, but the Aurors shocked him with spells and forced him back. The others were glaring at Wendy. “…Grrrrr!” She gritted her teeth in anger.

“CHILD!” Carla cried when she charged forward, whipping her wand out.

“I WON’T LET YOU TAKE MY TEACHER! Sky Dragon ROOOOOOAAR!” She unleashed a cyclone that blew Gideon and the Aurors down. “Too many of my friends got HURT because of me!” she yelled as she cast attack spells at the men. “I WON’T let that happen again! I WON’T lose the man who gave me a HOME!”

“ENOUGH!” Gideon squeezed her by the arms in his psychic grip, raising her off her feet. “The only home you’re gettin’ is a dark, cold prison cell!”

“PUT HER DOWN!” Carla lunged at the Child Psychic from behind.

“Oho, tryin’ to tickle me again??” Gideon telekinetically grabbed the cat by the neck. “Sorry, Kitty, but you’ll have to bite harder than that. Shoot her, Killbone!”

Gideon’s henchman, an African-American with huge muscles and vicious scowl, took out a gun and shot, scratching Carla’s waist with the bullet. “CARLA!!” Tears spilled down Wendy’s eyes. “AH-!” One of the Aurors bashed Wendy in the head and knocked her out cold. Gideon used his psychic to make her float into the carriage where Dr. Facilier lay stunned.

The Head Auror took Facilier’s cane, popped it open, and let the Devil’s Wand slide out. “Yep… it’s a Devil’s Wand, all right. Prime condition.” He set it in his pocket and took Wendy’s wand. “Lamia Scale… these are rare. That pink-haired girl had the same kind.”

“And now we’ve got them BOTH!” Gideon beamed. “Can you imagine the odds of that? TAKE ’em away! I want the report of my success in this capture mailed to President Jimmy by the morning!” He went around to sit on the front of the carriage. “Killbone, my baby seat! NOW!”
Carla coughed, trying to lift off the ground, but the bullet scratched her right wing as well. She helplessly crawled forward, eyes set strictly on the carriage where her master was trapped. “No… Give her… back to me…” The carriage magically lifted off the ground by an unseen force. Carla watched it shrink into the sky, despairing in her helpless state. “Wendy… please…” Her world turned dark. She was on the ground, asleep.

...My child… don’t take… my child...

I predict the Side Stories will have at least 40 chapters, so we’re at the halfway mark. (This is the Presidents Saga, after all.) Next time, we’ll do the last chapter of the Original Worlds Arc, then we’ll work on the Main Story again.
The King’s Request

Chapter Summary

Shelly and Gonshiri finally make it to Boggly Woods. There, they learn a shocking truth about themselves.

Welcome back, folks! Sorry this took a long time, I had some struggles with this chapter, but I think you’ll like the ending parts. Today’s code uses Caesar Cipher.

Chapter 34: The King’s Request

Flight Sanley

It took days for Shelly to find an airport that allowed 9-year-old girls in swimsuits, but it paid off. Her and Gonshiri’s clothing were worn and tattered, and the few passengers on the plane avoided them. “Boggly Forest better be worth this.” Shelly said angrily.

“I’m starting to wonder the same thing.” Gonshiri replied. “Traveling with you is joyless.”

“You didn’t have to buy a ticket, you don’t get to complain. Sigh…” Shelly rested her head on her hand. “Even if we do make it to the forest, what’ll I do afterwards? I’m sure a bunch of Minish live there that’ll support you.”

“True, but you can always shrink down to our level, and be my servant.” The princess smiled wryly. Shelly said nothing for a few seconds, and from her perch on the human’s shoulder, Gonshiri could sense her downtrodden (though scowling) expression. “You only have five seconds to make a comeback, otherwise I win.”

“Blah, blah.” Shelly replied uninterested. “Not to get too personal with this, but… how many of your people actually care about you?”

“That’s a matter of opinion.” Shiri said, with a raise of a brow at this question. “My mother tries to raise me to be an excellent princess, I have perhaps a thousand teachers, servants are obviously under my orders… Of course, many of them are being paid, I assume. I don’t… have any normal friends, if that’s what you’re implying.”

“How do you feel about that?”

“I never minded. But what is it to you? How many human friends do you have, or ‘care’ about you?”

“I’m the Fourth Grade President at Gallagher, you can only make that position by having a ton of friends, so yeah.”

“I thought presidents were chosen because of their ability, not their popularity?”

“We’re kids, Shiri, we don’t care about people’s skills or responsibility, we elect based on if they’re cool or not. And a lot of people think I’m cool, I’m the princess of a desert. Granted, I’ve misled them into thinking I’m rich, when really my dad just created a giant sandcastle and declared...
himself king of that backsand country, even though we have no authority whatsoever. …Sigh.” She leaned her head against her knuckles.

“I surmise the cliché occurrence where you’re a large-headed bully who boasts about being better than all your peers, when really you’ve nary a penny.”

“My cousins have a lot of stuff.” Shelly informed. “Course, I never get to touch or show it to anyone. Sigh, to be honest, Shiri, this sack of dough is the only decent money I ever got. Otherwise, I rely on the allowance of less-graders to buy me lunch. Not enough for a new set of clothes.” She tugged her sticky swimsuit. “Don’t get the idea I’m jealous of you, Shrunken Violet, but you’re lucky to have a whole tribe to give you stuff.”

“Only because I’m the rightful princess. I don’t mean to console you, either, but consider it an honor that your human peers respect you enough to make you president. You may have claimed to have money, but that promised nothing on their end. I would like to think the students of Gallagher wanted—albeit a bad choice in my opinion—a strong leader with gusto like yourself.”

“Well…” Shelly smiled slightly, “these feet of mine won many a soccer game. My team would’ve lifted me in the air if my knights weren’t bodyguarding. …Do you think… they’re wondering where I am right now? If they’re worried?”

“That’ll be up to you to figure out. …Well, it looks like our flight is ending. Don’t unbuckle yourself at the last minute, Shelly.”

After arriving at Kochi City, Shelly quickly blended in with the hundreds of tourists and townspeople. “This brings up an interesting question, Termite, can you speak Japanese?”

“The only reason I speak English is because of an English Jabber Nut. Minish produce Jabber Nuts of all kinds of languages, unfortunately it’s only safe for Minish to have one. We also have a type that speaks our language, Picori, for humans.”

“So no Japanese. Well, whatever, I’m sure I can speak their language one way or another.”

Although she couldn’t read the sign, Shelly entered a store with a design of a Japanese robe. This was the clothing store. “Ā, kon’nichiwa, shōjo. Sore wa hijō ni kyōmibukai ishôdesu. Anata wa manga no pôzu shite imasu ka?” the clerk asked her. (“Ah, hello, little girl. That is a very interesting outfit. Are you posing for a manga?”)

“And you plan to translate him how?” Gonshiri asked.

Shelly smirked slyly and pulled out a red ruby and gold coins from her treasure sack. “OOOOOOOOOOOOOHIIIIIIIIII!” The Asian man’s eyes went wide, his mouth an “O”.

“That’s right.” Shelly nodded. “Show me all your garbs and I’ll make a decision.”

Of course, despite her status as a princess, Shelly didn’t want anything fancy. She walked out of the store, very comfortable in her purple T-shirt and shorts that matched her swimsuit, which still lied underneath. “No shoes?” Gonshiri asked.

“Hey, it’s weird to go around in a swimsuit.” Shelly admitted, wiggling her toes. “But being barefoot is healthy. Okay, enough sightseeing, let’s look for these Boggling Woods.”

“My teachers told me they exist along the northern side of Kochi. You could see if a bus will take you.”
Shelly glanced at her still-loaded sack of gold. “If they don’t, something tells me they’re gonna start today.”

**Alaska; Minish CND Training Course**

Timothy and Hikari regretted agreeing to do this with Rupert, and Rupert himself owed Timmy a debt of 40 dollars. The snow was cold on their tiny bodies, even clothed in the Minish coats they were offered, the snowflakes were as large as boulders. Rupert never liked winter, he hated the frigid cold (and on an unrelated level, no looking at older girls in swimsuits at the pool).

Regardless, they endured every bit of this cold. Their skill with Pikmin had improved terrifically: they now had 41 Reds, 60 Yellows, 52 Blues, 40 Wings, 53 Whites, 41 Purples, 41 Rocks, 32 Musics, and 20 Ghosts (10 of which were still alive). The sun was blocked by thick snow clouds as Team Rupert marched out for their third day of training.

“Well-p, after two days and multiple tries, you passed each Battle and Treasure Course with near perfect marks.” spoke Jetta Tarka, the Drill Sergeant of the CND Training Base, a large and buff Minish girl with a gray coat. Rupert embarrassedly mistook her for a boy at first, and made his friends promise not to tell. “I must say, I’ve never known a couple of human runts to be as talented with Pikmin as you. Your next test combines all of the regular obstacles – but based on your prior experience, it should be no problem. Simply utilize your Pikmin skills and reach the goal. This test will also observe your ability to breed a new Pikmin type, as you will soon see. If you’ve successfully passed, I will highly recommend you to the Supreme Leader as honorary operatives.”

“THEN we’ll finally get to go home, right?” Timmy whined.

“You could’ve gone home whenever you wanted.”

“I was talking to Rupert.”

“Yeah, yeah, we’ll go home.” Rupert eye-rolled. The truth is, he insisted on staying at the training base until he made an efficient amount of progress. Then he could proudly tell his parents the good news, to make up for how long he’s been missing. And of course, Timmy and Hikari had to stay with him in case he got eaten. “Bring it on, Coach! This is the one gym class I’m used to!”

“You’ve got 20 minutes to reach the goal with as high a score you can get.” Jetta smirked. “Good luck, soldiers.” (Play “Valley of Repose” from *Pikmin 2*.)

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**Stage 43: Plain of Crystals**

**Mission: Pass the MCND Training Course!**

Team Rupert took 15 Reds, 11 Yellows, 14 Blues, 10 Whites, 5 Purples, 10 Ghosts (5 alive), 15 Musics, 80 total. They approached some grazing Snow Bulborb, which were Dwarf Bulborbs with white backs and blue spots. Easy enemies to take out with Purple Pikmin, but they held off on collecting for now. The team journeyed up a mound of snow before descending down the other side. A short way to their left, there was a large (to them) light-blue Chaos Emerald perched on a platform, with a light waterfall pouring on it from the side of a cliff. Because of the water, none of the other Pikmin could touch it, and the platform was too small for Blues to be thrown on. The Ghosts also couldn’t touch it because the Emerald was glowing.

The trio proceeded to what seemed like a campsite, with snoozing sled hounds, a tent, some discarded bags, and while they expected a fireplace, a bar heater was rested in a dry area of snow,
its bars glowing a fiery orange as the tinies could feel its heat. It started to make their coats feel useless, they wanted to dispose of it soon. In fact, close by in this dry area was a light-blue Onion. First, Team Rupert used their Yellow Pikmin to break the electric bars protecting the heat bars. There were three heat bars that sloped like large stairs. With the electric bars gone, their Reds were sent to begin work against the heat bars. The heater was disabled, so they expected the new Onion to come to life. ...It didn’t.

When they observed the stair-like fashion of the bars more closely, they realized they could set their Music Pikmin on them. The maestro stood at the front, the kids made sure their unbloomed Pikmin were around. The friends vigorously danced to the “Freezeey Peak” soundtrack from *Banjo-Kazooie*, remixed with the squeaky vocals of Magenta Pikmin. The song filled the light-blue Onion with Christmas spirit, and they watched with joy as the Onion sprouted from the ground. Landing on all three legs, the Onion released a single seed. The ice-blue Pikmin felt cold on Rupert’s hands when he plucked it.

**Team Rupert discovered Ice Pikmin! These chilly buddies can freeze and walk across water, and anybody is allowed to follow their paths! However, any water spaces will unfreeze after a minute, unless they’re walked over again, so be careful. In large groups, Ice Pikmin can briefly freeze enemies! Just keep them away from fire and they’ll serve you well!**

They called their Music Pikmin down, then the kids began the work of harvesting the Frosty Pellet Posies. 20 Ice Pikmin were collected, making 100 total. Their first objective was to go back to the Onions and switch out their Yellow Pikmin for 11 Wings. Returning to the tall snow mound, they stayed above it and followed along the left, getting above the ledge where the waterfall poured from. An Armored Cannon Larva emerged from the snow, so the crew tested their Ice Pikmin to attack it. The beetle froze at brief intervals during their beatings, giving their Ghost Pikmin a chance to attack and defeat the creature. They let the Music Pikmin carry it back for sustenance, then Team Rupert threw their Ices onto the base of the waterfall, freezing it with enough hits. The ice shook and threatened to burst free, so the Wings were sent to pick up the Chaos Emerald (Common Rarity) and take it back.

With that, the friends continued on the path beyond the campsite. A large pool of water prevented any other Pikmin from crossing, but each Ice Pikmin froze a path as they walked across, and the other ground Pikmin could cross as well. The team wandered into a field of Eeno, snow-made creatures that took the form of moving mounds, but would reveal their eyes and mouths if the kids got close. They chuck large snowballs, meant to bury their Pikmin, and while the act wouldn’t kill them, the Pikmin had a chance to let their flowers bloom. Regardless, the snow monsters were annoying, so the kids plucked their Red Pikmin to do away with them quicker. Defeating the Eenos would break the monsters into irreparable pieces, but Pellets or nectar eggs would be dropped.

The friends used their Pikmin Radio to summon the Music Pikmin back from the Onions—they now noticed the annoyance with having to keep Ice Pikmin here to freeze the water pool. However, in the wall on the pool’s left, their Pikmin could walk up a snow mound and dig a tunnel through a weak spot of the snowy wall. The tunnel came out on the other side of the pool, and the snow they dug through fell out and now served as a slope to this hole: a shortcut was made. The Music Pikmin could come through, and they continued their journey to a larger area of water.

They used the Ice Pikmin to create an ice-path to one of many small islands, where the other Pikmin crossed to. There were Pellet Posies stationed on tall jagged rocks that the Wing Pikmin could grab, but they didn’t bother. Timmy decided to take 10 Ice Pikmin and freeze a path along a snaky part of river between some walls, while Rupert and Hikari used the other 10 Ices to freeze a path to the next island, steadily making their way across the lake. One of the islands had a Frosty Blowhogn that they tossed their Red Pikmin to battle, but they were thrown off and some ended up
frozen by its Ice Breath. (It should be noted Ice Pikmin can’t affect ice enemies). After they managed to defeat the creature, Timmy returned and told them he needed Red Pikmin, so he took 8 of them.

Timmy had discovered a Goron’s Ruby (Seal of Brotherhood) on a ledge at the end of the snaky river, and needed to bring the Red Pikmin along the frozen path, because the ruby was fiery hot. Just as well, the Ices had to keep the river frozen while avoiding touching the ruby as the Reds were carrying it. Rupert and Hikari crossed to the next island, but by this time, Skeeterskates were skiing around and shooting water globs at their Pikmin. The Pikmin panicked and ran into the water, forcing the duo to call them back, and as expected, Ice Pikmin were the best with dealing with the water spiders, for they could never sink and the monsters froze instantly. However, another flaw arose: if a monster was defeated while frozen, it would shatter and couldn’t be carried back. Oh well.

Rupert saw a treasure underwater: a Water Element coin from *Luigi’s Mansion*. It was emitting bubbles magically, so they knew only the Blues could touch it. 10 Blue Pikmin were thrown underwater to carry it up a slope to a piece of land above the surface—from here, they needed the Ice Pikmin to create a path back to the shore. While Rupert took care of this, Hikari sent the Wing and Ghost Pikmin to battle a Puffy Blowhog hovering by the next island. By the time the Water Element coin (Life’s Treasure) was returned, all three kids regrouped with all their Pikmin. They crossed the rest of the lake to an enclosing between huge snow mounds. They overlooked a flowing river with many large ice chunks, and they had to keep their Pikmin close together as they jumped their way up the flowing ice. The team jumped off on a left enclosing partway up, but further up was a large cage. Hikari took the five Ghost Pikmin up the river and sent them through the cage’s bars, but 10 were needed to carry this red top-hat (Note of Distinction) – which looked like Chopper’s hat from *One Piece*. Rupert and Timmy decided to throw their 5 Green Pikmin in the river, so when they became Ghosts, they could carry the hat up and out of the hole above the cell, and fly all the way to the Onions.

The group entered a large field where Frosty Blowhogs, Hairy Bulborbs, and Swooping Snitchbugs roamed. They used the Purples to wipe out two Bulborbs, defeated three Blowhogs with Blues and Reds, and took out two Snitchbugs with Wings, letting those respective types have the remains. On the right of this field was a long, wide road swarming with Bulborbs, Blowhogs, Dweevils; so many enemies, it would take forever to defeat them all in such a close range. Thankfully, a Music Pikmin stage was nearby, so their 15 were gathered on it. They chanted the “Homecoming Hijinx” song from *Donkey Kong: Tropical Freeze*, and their thundering, high-pitched notes caused an avalanche that buried every monster under mounds of snow. The Pikmin army could walk up atop this heightened ground, bypassing every dead enemy and reaching a beautiful blue rose (Selfless Guard) half-buried in the snow. The White Pikmin dug it out and carried it back with great haste.

“Rupert, I know you’re probably having fun, but our 20 minutes might be almost up.” Timmy pointed out.

“Crud. Well, we can at least finish with more Ices.” In the previous field, there was a Pellet Posy worth 20 Ice Pikmin, so 20 Ices were needed to carry it. Hikari also chose to run back and check on the ground Pikmin crossing the lake—turns out, an alternate path led over and around the lake, from the end point, back to the starting point, but Ice Pikmin were needed to cross the lake again. Hikari later returned with all of their Pikmin after the Ices got their fill, then the kids followed an enclosed pathway from the field. Jetta Tarka was waiting for them inside a cave, so they thought this to be the finish line. (End song.)
The Minish Drill Sergeant was scribbling a message on a leaf. The three adventurers eagerly awaited her response. “So do we pass?” Rupert asked her.

“I dunno, Runt.” Jetta answered. “You’ll have to ask him.” A Minish in a blue coat and black pointed hat marched out from behind her. “Fellas, this is Supreme Leader Numbuh Hundred Acres.”

“SUPREME LEADER?!” The team was caught off guard.

“I told you I would recommend you. Didn’t say if I already did.” Jetta smirked.

“So you’re the humans that were involved in the Dressrosa Operation?” Lenari questioned. “The one who helped destroy that factory?”

“If knocking out a little girl counts for doing that, I guess…” Timmy was still confused about that whole scenario.

“I don’t know the story behind that myself, but these kids know their Pikmin.” Jetta informed. “They’ve got a surplus, and they found a bunch of colors just by wanderin’ around their neighborhood. For humans, these kids are pretty good.”

“And the three of you… aren’t affiliated at all with the Human Kids Next Door?” Lenari asked them.

“Nope.” Rupert shook his head. “We just kinda wandered into your, eh, tiny world, and we picked up quickly.” Though he could feel Timmy and Hikari’s stares, wanting to explain their end of that story.

“But according to their report, they were trained by Sappo and Gibli from Virginia.” Jetta reminded. “They said those two were captured by someone named Shelly, ‘for stealing their princess.’”

Lenari gasped. “You mean Shelly the… Sand Castle Princess?! You mean you three encountered her?”

“She’s kind of our school bully, so we encounter her on a regular basis.” Timmy informed.

“Wait, did she really capture you guys’ princess?” Rupert asked.

“Yes. …Sigh…” Lenari turned away. “The truth is I’m supposed to be her bodyguard. Ever since she was kidnapped on Christmas, I’ve exhausted everything trying to track her kidnappers. Then a few weeks ago, our spies reported finding her at Sand Castle. But she was always hidden or guarded, and we could never get around to making a plan because of Pikmin shortage and…”

Team Rupert could tell Lenari was stressed by the sound of his voice, worried for his princess. “Um, Mr. Lenari? Since we’re good at Pikmin, maybe we could get your princess back.” Rupert said.

“Or we can try to break in normally.” Timmy reasoned. “You know, normal size. Since we’re humans.”

Lenari chuckled, smiling at the trio. “I have to be honest, though… I was pretty sour about humans after our princess was kidnapped. But after seeing what you guys do… I think I made my
“What decision, Mr. Leonard?” Hikari asked.

“Heheh. Nothing that concerns you.” Lenari closed his eyes, thinking back on the two human leaders who requested an alliance. “Anyway… after I fill out the paperwork, some Minish will come to take you to the Tree of Beginning. You’ll officially be honorary Minish.” Rupert, Timmy, and Hikari exchanged proud smiles. “But just in case, take these as a gift from me.” He handed them all whistles made of a golden wood.

“Extra Pikmin Whistles?” Rupert said.

“These Gold Whistles are given to expert Pikmin users in our group. You’ll be able to bring 200 Pikmin with you. …Just be careful not to lose any, okay? You guys have a heck of a surplus.” With that, Lenari left.

“Well, with that outta the way, I understand you runts want to go back to your homes now.” Jetta recapped. “Just say the word and we’ll ship you off on our Bigonions.”

Timmy and Hikari looked expectantly at Rupert. Their leader smiled and nodded. “Take us home.”

**Boggly Woods**

A gentle breeze softly rustled the white leaves, which grew from trees of grayish-black bark. The moment Shelly stepped into the forest, her feet had never known greater ease. She enjoyed the feel of the soft, white flowers under her soles, between her toes. The chilly feel of the wind blew away all her woes. Looking up at the milky yellow sky beyond the swaying leaves, Shelly felt very drowsy. “You want to watch where you step, Minish live here, too.” Gonshiri said.

Shelly shook out of her trance and looked down. There were tiny beady eyes looking up from below the grass. “What the heck is with this forest?” Shelly ruined the moment by asking. “Why’s it so weird-looking?”

“My knowledge is only based from my forced studies, but I believe the Boggly Woods are closely connected with the Dream Realm. The Puni tribe studies the art of dreaming, how denizens in the Dream World are born wholly from mortal thoughts or from pieces. I still don’t understand why the elders would want me to come here, but maybe I’ll find out.”

“Where do these Puni guys live? Not the Minish, I mean.”

“I’ll ask.” Gonshiri leaped off Shelly’s shoulder and vanished below the white flowers from the latter’s vision. In this forest of black stems, Gonshiri approached a group of Minish. “I am Gonshiri, Princess of the Minish Tribe. I seek the race known as Puni and wish to know the direction of their residence.”

The Minish, who wore black and gray robing, were silent, staring blankly while glancing at each other. They then pointed upward at Shelly, so Gonshiri deduced the Minish were terrified of the monster. “It’s all right, she’s under my control. She won’t bite or step on anyone on purpose.”

The Minish made quiet gestures for one of their group to go forward. That Minish looked worriedly, but he complied. On Shiri’s instruction, Shelly bent down and held her pinky beside the Minish. When the tiny creature climbed on her nail, Shelly lifted it to her face. The creature stared very closely into Shelly’s narrowed left eye. Shelly’s eye was black and shiny. It reflected the Minish’s image like a mirror. He gestured the human to lower him down on the ground. He spoke in gestures to his people, and they nodded. The Minish plucked flowers from the ground and
soared across the breeze through the forest.

“They approve of you.” Gonshiri said, getting back on Shelly’s shoulder. “Try to keep up.” (Play “Boggly Woods” from *Paper Mario: TTYD.*

**Stage 44: Boggly Woods**

**Mission:** Find the Punies.

**Act 1**

Shelly jogged around the forest paths to keep up with the tiny, flying flowers that breezed around tree after tree. After walking miles of desert, the feel of such soft ground under each step was a delight for Shelly. Unfortunately, since most of this was flora, her sandbending wouldn’t be put to much use. Which means Gonshiri had the upper hand with her superb bending. Pale Piranha Plants popped out of the ground in attempt to munch the human, so using her wooden sword (which still had a sakura petal), Shelly sliced the black-and-white plant monsters. Shelly overlooked a cliffside, but Gonshiri began jumping up the ladder-like steps of a large tree. Shelly climbed the tree herself to get above its branches.

The Minish Princess nimbly leaped across each large branch, but it was harder for Shelly’s large and unbalanced feet. The human flinched when a Pider – a large black-and-white spider with a round body – dropped and dangled over the gap, so Shelly cut his web to let him fall. After chopping down a series of Piders, she made it to a huge Pider Web where the Minish were trapped. Piders were crawling toward them, so Shelly sliced the stems of the web that were latched to the branches, climbed the trees on either side to slice those stems, while Gonshiri detached the stems on higher, smaller branches. The Piders collapsed to the ground while the Minish were free and kept flying. To cross this chasm, Gonshiri extended a gray-and-white vine from a tree with her plantbending. Shelly grinded across the zigzagging vine, having to shift her head left or right when Piders dropped.

Shelly landed in a field of white bushes, but the path forward was blocked by a large gray beehive. “This is a Jabbi Hive, actually.” Gonshiri informed.

“You don’t know I was thinking otherwise!” Shelly yelled defensively.

“Yes you were. Jabbies are types of insects that live here, and according to my studies, they’re very wild in groups. I wouldn’t go near that nest without an offering.”

“I have one right here.” Shelly smirked at Gonshiri.

“Don’t even think about it. I believe they enjoy mushrooms, however.”

There were plenty of trees growing around the area. Shelly kicked one, shaking it as an egg dropped out, splatting on the ground. “Whoops.” She kicked another tree, a coconut bonked her head. “Ow! Should that even grow here?!” She kicked one more tree, a red mushroom came down.

“Well, look for someone to give it to.” Gonshiri told her. Shelly looked around the bushes until she saw a pair of staring little eyes. She shook the bush, and a Jabbi baby came out; it had tiny wings, a little pointy mouth, and was gray-bodied like everything else. The Jabbi took the mushroom and flew back to its hive. An alarm light, which Shelly just noticed was attached to the nest, lit green, and the entire fortress shifted sideways. Shelly marched into an open area of the forest, void of many trees with a great view of the white plain.
Clefts posed as gray rocks, then charged at Shelly when she got close. She could easily pick up and throw the creatures away with her earthbending. Within the grass, Shelly discovered a sealed black trapdoor with an “X” crossing. She lifted a Cleft in her bending and bashed the hatch open with the creature’s spikes. She discovered a sock inside, though still had no idea what these were for. Shelly continued across the field and arrived at an area with tall, thin, black trees. The only passage through this area was over a long and narrow chasm, but a tree was perched on the ledge across. Shelly saw a thin, weak spot in the lower part of the tree, so she grabbed one of the Clefts to throw it spikes-first against the spot. The tree tumbled toward Shelly and served as her bridge.

Unfortunately, she couldn’t follow this route as a Jabbi Hive was securing the area. There was a staircase on its right side, but if Shelly stepped beyond the security line (in the form of a line of white flowers), a swarm of Jabbi would fly out and sting her ‘til she’s bulgy. The entrance to the hive was on the bottom, like a cave on the ground. Shelly looked up and saw a boulder suspended directly above it on two branches. Shelly grabbed another Cleft with her bending and threw it at the boulder, making it fall over toward the ground and block the hive’s entrance. As for the Jabbies wandering around the area, Gonshiri swatted them away with extended vines from the ground, and Shelly could safely march up the stairway. Rather than follow the path that turned a left corner, she noticed a narrow walkway between the tall black trees, which led over the side of the path to the Jabbi Nest. The bark was oddly textured in this enclosing; they looked like letters, and each tree had a few. PLQ LVKV LV WH UVE HIR UHKX PDQ PLV WHUHV

Shelly climbed a ladder to a dangling branch with some white leaves, in which Gonshiri used her bending to stretch another vine-rail, which led over the current path she was supposed to follow. Shelly grinded across, grabbed a sock that was suspended in midair via a bubble, and jumped off to a tree stump that was over a short chasm. (If they followed the route normally, Shiri could’ve stretched a vine over the gap). Another Jabbi Nest sat at the other end of this passage, and with all the Jabbies snoozing on the ground, Shelly sensed that touching the ground would wake them all.

Starting from this tree stump, Shelly jumped a series of bushes that Gonshiri reshaped and fortified with her bending – though the prickly plants tickled Shelly’s feet, so she had to jump quickly before she stumbled off. From the second bush, Shelly had to jump and grab a dangling branch, then she waited for Gonshiri to grow a large flower platform, swinging to it before the branch snapped. Shelly jumped a stairway of three flowers, then Gonshiri extended a vine-rail to a small rock. Shelly briefly grinded, then stopped perfectly on the rock before overshooting. Shelly used her earthbending to lift the small rock with herself on it, setting it on a tall stump that was too far to jump to. From there, she grabbed a thin ledge along the right wall of trees, climbing across before setting her tippy-toes on a long, thin rock. Said rock made small, snaky turns before it led to a corner path from the right of the Jabbi Hive. Shelly could safely step off and keep going.

This next passage featured a creek of neon, soapy substance, which produced bubbles that floated in the air. Shelly walked through the shallow creek, feeling her feet become soapy and slippery. A dead end lay at the end of the creek, so Shelly would have to jump her way up the large bubbles. The flying Minish flew around the bubbles that were deemed sturdy enough, so Shelly memorized them and bounced up. She bounced a secret route of sturdy bubbles to grab a sock inside one, then bounced her way to the ledge. This path was very long, leading to a tremendous tree of the same dark-gray bark and white leaves. But on the way, Jabbies were perched on stumps, looking every which way for intruders. Gonshiri would have to grow bushes to a large enough size so Shelly-

“Screw all this stealth crud, I’m goin’ head on!” Shelly bolted to the first Jabbi and punched it in the face, knocking it out. The alarm on the distant nest blared red, making the sound of a police siren, and the princesses saw a thousand Jabbies scramble out.

“Uuuugh! You blundering fool!” Gonshiri and Shelly ran forward as Gonshiri punched and kicked
every Jabbi sentry she could using her bug-like speed, while Shelly kicked and sliced the creatures with her sakura petal sword. Jabbies swarmed all around the human princess, they were furiously nipping Shelly’s head, she withstood all the shots and frantically flailed her sword. Gonshiri extended some bush vines to swat the bugs away from her friend, desperate to swat others away as well, and when Shelly had her vision back, she resumed striking Jabbies.

The under-a-thousands were still coming, so Shelly whipped out her Sand Wand to whack Jabbies along with her sword. Shelly ran away from the swarm to recompose herself, then looking at her Sand Wand, she had a crazy idea and aimed it at the ground. A mound of soil rose up on her command, so she threw it around and knocked away incoming Jabbies. She made good use of the soil and took down Jabbies as she ran toward the base, with Gonshiri protecting her with extended bush vines. As the routine drew on, the number of Jabbies in the air were falling, all of them lay dizzy on the ground with their wings twitching. However, the gate on the side of the nest was still blocking the path, so they realized a single Jabbi was still fluttering around. Shelly ran to deal the blow with her Sand Wand. The alarms stopped and the gate opened.

On this final route to the Boggly Tree, another Pider Web was connected via two trees, and their Minish guides were stuck. “Perhaps it’s a good thing we rushed it after all.” Gonshiri said. Before the Piders could dine on the Minish, Shelly used her Sand Wand to slam the soil against them, tearing the web down. The Minish flew and landed in the grass close to the tree, so the princesses quickly joined. (End song.)

The silent Minish looked up at Shelly with disbelieved stares. They shook their heads disapprovingly at her reckless action. “Don’t make those looks at me, I saved your butts, didn’t I?”

The Minish knew this, of course. They smiled and bowed their heads in gratitude. “I agree.” Gonshiri understood them, jumping down to their level. “While Shelly isn’t very bright, she is strong, and you can rely on her to help you if she desires it. And, if I must say…” Gonshiri turned to the giant human with a smile, “Picily ki, picani, picidili micori ki!” The Minish made silent laughs at this.

“Whaddyou MEAN the doctors transmitted my fat into what existed of my brain?!” Shelly shouted with anger.

Gonshiri giggled for a moment—then was struck with shock. “You…You understand Picori?”

“Of course I—” Shelly froze. She was stunned by herself. “I…I do?”

The Boggly Minish exchanged glances and confirming nods. They took flight with their flowers and vanished up the Boggly Tree. Shelly and Gonshiri looked weirdly at each other. “Well, um…let’s get going.” Shelly said, following the smaller princess to the huge tree.

“Excuse me? Hellooooo?” Gonshiri yelled, gazing up the towering bark. “We are looking for the Puni Tribe. Is anybody home?”

A pair of little eyes peeped out of a bush. “Wh-Wh-Wh-What is that?” it asked with a squeaky voice. “Is that a bully?”

“As a matter of fact, I am.” Shelly spoke proudly. “So gimme your lunch money, because these feet aren’t for show.” She stomped the ground.

“Shelly, don’t say that!” Gonshiri yelled. She turned back to the creature, “Ahem, it’s all right, this monster isn’t going to hurt anybody. Now if any more of you are hiding, I implore you to come out.”
Shelly watched as more little eyes peeped out from the bushes, before they all came out. They looked bigger than Minish, but still rather small. They were roundish, mouse-like creatures with tiny legs, no visible mouths, gray bodies of various textures, and antennas with round colored balls at the ends of them. The balls were mostly yellow, but Shelly saw green, pink, and others in the mix. They all stared up at Shelly with wide round eyes, full of either wonder or terror. Gonshiri spoke, “It’s quite all right, ladies and gentle Punies. I am Princess Gonshiri of the Minish Tribe, and this is my escort. She rescued me from imprisonment and she is very well-trained.”

“Yes, Princess Gonshiri, we always knew you would be coming one day.” The Punies scrambled out of the way when an older, hunched one of their group appeared. The Puni Elder’s body was drooped like a gray robe, and he had a purple antenna dangling in front of him. “It was prophesized that the Minish Princess would ride here on a terrifying steed. However, before transactions conspire, we do not want such a behemoth stomping every which direction. There is a stump with Minish Dust over there.” Shelly looked at said gray-colored stump on her right.

“Screw that!” Shelly stated. “Look, man, I had a long and exhausting journey with this whole thing, I rescued the princess, so at the very least, I’m not turning tiny in front of a bunch of mice.”

“I AM A WOMAN!!” the Puni Elder screamed, growing to Shelly’s size and scaring the girl. He- I mean, she shrunk back to normal right after. “And both of you snarky little lasses need to learn some respect. To start off, little brats should not be bigger than their elders, otherwise it detracts from the affect of calling you a little brat. Now get in the stump, you overgrown brat!”

Shelly huffed with anger, stomping over to the stump with Gonshiri following. She planted both feet on top of it, let Shiri bend the Minish Dust, and shrink Shelly into their world. The Punies all gathered to look at her—the scary monster was a lot less imposing. Shelly, on the other hand, was now creeped out at all the rats’ large staring eyes. “There, I’m the size of an insect now!” she yelled at them. “Are you happy?”

“OF COURSE I’M NOT HAPPY!” The Puni Elder puffed to giant size and scared both princesses. “Because you’re still an ungrateful brat! Both of you are. But I guess that’s to be expected. I would hope you two learned a thing or two about yourselves on this journey.”

“All I learned was that Princess Chipmunk is worse than a whistle in your ear.” Shelly stated.

“And Her Royal Sandybutt possesses the worst form of company.” Shirited countered. “But this is completely off subject. I am only to understand your people are friends with the Minish Royal Family. For that reason, I entreat you to-”

“YOU’RE A MONGREL!” Elder turned giant. “I WILL TALK AND YOU WILL LISTEN! Do not forget, we are in Japan, and Japanese kids obey their elders!” She shrunk to normal. The Elder turned to her Punies, “Well, what are you all standing around for? Staring is rude! Go inside and clean up the tree!” The hundred-plus rats scampered inside, their feet making little squeaky sounds at each step. A few of them stayed behind to listen.

“May we come in, too?” Shelly asked with fake politeness.

“Don’t be impatient, Missy, you’ll have your chance for a drink.” The Elder walked past the girls with a calmer aura. “I must say, the two of you are impossibly stupid for not noticing. Your attitudes are so unbearably similar.”

“What the crud are you talking about?”

The Elder was silent for a minute, her back facing them. “Princess Lánshelly Johnson the Second
and Princess Gonshiri… the two of you are sisters!”

Silence followed. They all stood still. The two needed time to process this info; their miniscule brains weren’t prepared. Then: “AAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!” Their eyes turned a ghostly white.

“You mean I’M RELATED TO THIS BLOATED BUFFOON??” screamed Shiri.

“I’M RELATED TO THIS TINY TERMITE?!”

“THIS IS AN OUTRAGE, I TELL YOU, AN OUTRAGE!!”

“How COULD THIS POSSIBLY HAPPEEEEEEEN?”

“It’s a tale many of us know.” Puni Elder began. “It was about 18 years ago when Sandy’s mother, a descendant of the Quartzite Family, took him on a small vacation…”

Europe; 18 years ago

Empty plains surrounded the western side of Europe. A towering mountain range surrounded an even greater tree. A slim mother in a purple dress, yellow shorts purple eyes, brown hair, and no shoes led her son across the country to this great tree. “But Moooooom, why couldn’t we just go to the BEEEEEACH?”

“We go to the beach all the time, Sandy, try something new!” his mother, Roxy said brightly. “We’re learning about our family heritage!”

“But why doesn’t ANDREW get to come?”

“Because since you and I are the only earthbenders, it’d make the trip a real chore for them!”

“I can’t make a sandcastle in THIS dump. Where are these Minish, anyway?”

“They’re around—watch where you step. My friend set her house up for us a few miles over, we’ll rest there and go to meet the Minish tomorrow.”

“Whatever. Mind if I pee?”

“Hehe, okay. Catch up soon!”

Sandy walked a few steps to the left for a good spot to do his business. A certain spot caught his attention: a band of tiny, green bugs, as tall as ants, were dancing merrily around a small green fire. A female among these creatures yelled for everyone’s attention, indicating the giant human child gazing over them with wondering eyes. They assumed he was a child that wandered out of town, so the Minish excitedly waved ‘Hi’s and ‘Hello’s to him.

Seconds later, a stream of yellow liquid rained all over the party, dissolving the fire and giving the bugs an awful smell. Sandy smiled smugly and began the walk back. “I’m coming, Mooooom!”

The female Minish looked the most enraged of all of them.

That night, Sandy was fast asleep. He felt rather odd as the night drew on; the ground he lay on was uncomfortable, he felt a dizzy sensation. He woke up. “Wh…”

“Rise and shine.” said one of many angry Minish surrounding him with spears. Sandy barely had time to view his somehow-ginormified room before the guards dragged him out.
He was brought to the very top of the Tree of Beginning and pushed onto the ground before a stairway, where the Minish Princess in the purple leaf dress and pink flower crown glared at him with resentment. “Well, if it ISN’T the overgrown monkey that likes treating my people like a urinal nut.” She spoke with a high voice.

Sandy got to his feet, “And who might YOU be, R-R-R-Royal Chipmunk?” he asked in his regal tone.

“I am Princess Lánshelly, heir to the Minish Throne, and YOU had the GALL to URINATE on me and RUIN my birthday party! LET ALONE my new DRESS!”

“Well excuse me if I have no resent on drowning a couple of annoying TERMITES.”

“You SHOULD have resent, because NOW you’re AMONG these termites, who plan to give you the full course of royal punishment. UNLESS you bow where you stand and offer your sincerest apology.”

“KING SANDY apologizes to NO ONE.” He closed his eyes and turned his head.

“If you DON’T apologize, I’ll see that you spend the REST of your days here. You will never speak with your silly-minded human friends again, and shall be walked over and crushed upon like we who you’ve chosen to torment, every day.”

“Your brain is naturally smaller than mine is, so I’ll try to make this simple.” Sandy marched up the stairway with absolute sureness. “I’m a human, you’re an undersized chipmunk. I’m the king of a beach, which means my kingdom is automatically bigger than ALL of your people combined. And the moment my mom realizes I’m missing, she, my brother, AND my cousins will charge in here and stomp all of you to dust.” Lánshelly fixed her glare harder when Sandy stopped right in front of her. “So I, possessing the more SUPERIOR of power, hereby order you chipmunks to bow to me, and MAYBE I’ll reconsider stomping all of you the moment I’m bigger.”

“…” The princess snapped her fingers. “Leave us, guards. I’ll carry out the punishment myself.” With very frightful looks, the guards backed away. “Alright, you…” Sandy took light steps backward, seeing the ocean of rage in Lánshelly’s eyes. “Let me show you what happens to those who deem themselves higher than me…”

Minutes later-

“AAAAAAAAUUUUUGH!” The Minish citizens jumped aside when a strange ball began rolling down the forest of giant flowers. When it stopped, it appeared that Princess Lánshelly and King Sandy were going mano a mano. Gripping each other’s arms tight, trying to pin the other down. Shelly got on his back and tried to bend his arms behind him, but Sandy grabbed her between his legs and tried to slice her like scissors. They became pretty tangled after a while, until both just couldn’t move. The anger on their faces faded into happy, joyous smiles. “HA HA ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!”

Current time

“And from that moment on, the two became lifelong, childhood friends.” continued the Elder. “Lánshelly allowed him to revert to normal size and back—but needless to say he made use of his normal size in getting back at Shelly.”

“Uuuuuuuukhh…” Shelly and Shiri were wobbling like ghosts. They couldn’t process the fact they were related.
“Elder, I think they wanted a longer flashback.” a Puni named Punio said.

“I’M AN OLD LADY!” Elder puffed giant. “YOU THINK I REMEMBER EVERY SINGLE DETAIL?!” She shrunk down and continued. “So anyway, the two became very close over the years, both still ordering the other to give in and bow to them. Then, when both were 18, Sandy was the one to do so. He was normal size when he got down on both knees, and showed Shelly a, erm, giant ring with a green butterfly emerald. One week later, Sandy and Her Highness were at the altar, and became the first recorded Human/Minish couple in history. They were together for 2 years ’til they were 20, ready to conceive their first child. I remember that day very well…”

Sandy and Lánshelely were the same tiny size when it happened. They got under the leaf blanket of Shelly’s bed, kissing each other—

“WE DON’T NEED TO HEAR THAT PART!!” the princesses screamed.

“Oh, fine! Bunch of whiny… Well, you know how it ended. It was almost fate that they would bear two daughters: one human, and one Minish.”

“YOU MEAN WE’RE TWINS?!”

“Well, of course. Didn’t you ever ask each other’s birthdays?”

Nine years ago

Baby Shelly and Gonshiri Johnson were furiously tugging on a tiny rattle, both wanting to shake it more than the other. “You have to take her away, Sandy.” Lánshelely told him.

“But why? Why can’t our daughters grow up together?”

“A human growing up in the Minish World is just too unreal. They need to get adjusted to their own kind; if Shelly II is smaller than every human, or Shiri is bigger than every Minish, they just wouldn’t feel comfortable. It doesn’t mean they’ll never see each other.” The Minish Queen smiled. “We’ll wait a few birthdays, then we’ll finally bring our girls to meet.”

Sandy returned the smile before both looked at their daughters. Shelly II succeeded in claiming the rattle, bashing Gonshiri’s head with it.

Now

“So Gonshiri stayed with her mother in Europe, while Sandy took Shelly to South America. ‘Course, he let her attend Gallagher in Virginia, where she stayed at her uncles’ house, and that really…”

“GRRRRRR, EERRRRAAAAAAAH!” Both girls were on the ground trying to strangle the other.

“I REFUSE to acknowledge your genetically mutant blood IN MY VEINS!!” Shiri exclaimed.

“YOU THINK I DO?! I MIGHT SUFFER A DRAMATIC SHRINK-SPURT BECAUSE OF YOUR CHIPMUNKISM!”

“AAAAAAAHHHH—GYYYYAAAAAAAAHHHH!” They rolled all around the tree, and wouldn’t give up with trying to choke the other. They would never accept that the two of them were sisters. Never in a million years.

Three minutes later
“Hahahahaha ha ha ha ha!…” After getting their bruises bandaged, both girls relaxed on the foot of a giant tree root.

“Now that I had some time to think about it,” Shelly smiled, “having a little sibling follow my footsteps sounds pretty neat.”

“Excuse me, but how do I know you aren’t the little one following MY footsteps?”

“Uhhhh, because in reality, you’re only a centimeter big, therefore my footsteps will be the ones being followed. I can already picture it:” Shelly held her hands forward. “I’m just an average human girl, walking ‘cross the hall, down the sidewalk, unaware that my pipsqueak sister is doing her very best to follow, wanting more than anything else to be like the powerful, strong girl she looks up to. I mean, looking at it the other way around just looks sad.”

“Well I’m afraid that’s JUST how it is, because I will NEVER look up to you, bigger than me or not, you are a hopeless mammal that should give everything you got just to be like me. You should do everything I ask, carry me places, fix my baths, bring me food, only then will I teach you the secret of baring my intelligence.”

“Have my brain shrunk and be genetically mutated into a chipmunk?”

“Yes, but you’ve already done the same, but mutated into an ape, so you’re already on the wrong path.”

“Well it’s NOT gonna happen, Pintbrain.” Shelly lied back with a proud smirk. “Because I will ALWAYS be bigger than you.”

“My brain is the largest, most fearsome piece of intelligence on the entire-”

“ARE YOU TWO DONE?!” The Puni Elder shot to ginormous size, scaring the girls, then she minimized.

The twins shook back to their senses as Shelly asked, “So wait, if my dad and her mom planned for us to meet, why did Dad kidnap her?”

“Ahhh, yes… Why? That must be the thing you are wondering.” Elder said. “You see, the two of you belong to a number of important families. The Minish Royal Family… the Quartzite Family… and…”

**Two years ago…**

Seven-year-old Gonshiri was currently in one of her many regal classes, so she never noticed the troupe of Pikmin carrying an envelope. A giant letter was carried to Lánshelly’s throne, so the queen read it eagerly. **Dear Lánshelly,** Sandy’s handwriting began, **this desert feels so barren without your charm to warm me. Your daughter has fastly asserted herself as Queen of Cleveland Beach and Gallagher Elementary. She takes after the both of us quite well. I’m sad to say she has not demonstrated any earthbending, but as she insists on getting sores on her feet, perhaps I am speaking too early. Either way, if I could handle Your Highness, this little monster is no trouble for Yours Truly. Hope to hear from you soon. –King Sandy**

A couple weeks later, a single Wing Pikmin brought Sandy a tiny leaf. He used a magnifying glass to read it. **Dear Sandy,** I’m sorry if this got to you a little late. We Minish don’t have the most effective mail-to-humans system. Regardless, it is nice to hear that Shelly is quickly finding her way in life. Gonshiri, albeit possesses the natural spoiledness of a princess, has a long way to go, and continuously slacks off with her studies. However, I am proud to say our daughter is a terrific
plantbender. I would say she is like her mother, but according to the elders, her chi is very special: she has the ability to revive dead plant matter. It’s a power that few of us Minish Royals are born with. I will be excited to see Gonshiri develop such a power. I am also contemplating a date when our children should meet. Let me know what you think when you write back. –Lânshtelly

Sandy smiled, hearing from his beloved wife. He put the leaf under his shirt and waved the Wing Pikmin good-bye. “King Sandy!” His knight, Sir Shovelot walked in with a salute. “You have a visitor! ‘Tis your elder brother, from the Holy Land!”

“Big Brother Andrew, eh?” Sandy smiled wryly. “Oh, mercy me, to be in his presence. …Fix some mangoes for us and bring it to the guestroom.”

“Yes, Sir!”

Sir Shovelot had two mango smoothies prepared and brought to the two men. Sandy looked out the glassless window of his sandcastle and smiled peacefully at the clear desert sky. Meanwhile, his older, stronger brother sat on the sandcouch, head tilted directly down over his smoothie. “Couldn’t bother with coffee, could you?”

“Juice feels more… beach-friendly.” Sandy shrugged. “So, um, Andrew, great to see you and all, I know it was a long journey, but I have a small question.” He held his thumb and index an inch from each other for emphasis. “Why are you wearing a frying pan over your head?” (Play “Eclipse Gate” from Fairy Tail.)

“…” Indeed, the muscular man with the white sleeveless shirt and tan skin wore an old frying pan over his head. “…Our father, Reggie is dead, Sandy. I’ve just been made King of the World.”

Sandy spit out his juice. “The King-?”

“The Octogan’s powers became too much for our father, so the worst happened. I’m under a lot of pressure right now, Sandy. The Octogan reads that the Apocalypse will happen in two years. Within that time, I have to get my armies organized, but there are so many problems. The White Lotus Revolutionaries, this ‘Ragaj Gnik’, not to mention this Twenty Key Prophecy. I must continue what my ancestors started: bringing this world’s denizens into my own Spirit World, where they will live in peace long after this world’s fall. To end the Dimensional Fusion that caused all of this chaos.”

Sandy looked down with a foreboding chill. He knew this for a while… that their father was the King of the World, they were descended from a long line of World Leaders. Their father never saw a strong leader in Sandy, his brother Andrew was bigger and stronger. So only Andrew joined his father to Mt. Mariejoa, where he learned the ways of The King, including all three forms of Haki. Sandy was angry and jealous of his brother, so he established dominion over his neighborhood’s beach, and insisted it was not pretend. Now Sandy created this giant Sand Castle in Sand Kingdom, declaring himself the king of this country. But Sandy knew at least the World Government’s history: 4,000 years ago, they sensed the end of the universe through a device called the Octogan, an extremely powerful item once discovered and hidden by a man named Acnologia. As a child back then, the very idea frightened Sandy, but he had believed it was a myth as he grew into his teenage years. But Andrew’s presence here… now…

“So what are you doing?” Andrew asked, his helmeted head looking up. “Are you and that insect continuing this horrid bestiality of yours?”

“Just a second!” Sandy proclaimed angrily, stomping his foot. Andrew made it clear before that he didn’t like Lânshtelly for what she was, especially now that she and Sandy were married. He didn’t
come to their wedding, nor did their father. “Just because you’ve become an overly-devoted Man of God, and THINK you’re God Himself, don’t say a word about my wife! Lánshelly is a wonderful woman, and I miss her every second! And even more so, she is the mother of your nieces, so if you disrespect her, you disrespect your fam—”

Andrew smashed the table with his mighty fist, shaking the castle. He stood and stomped angrily to Sandy, “YOU disrespect your family! Marrying that FILTH… Those Minish are evidence of the Dimensional Fusion! The force that threatens our universe to the very core. All denizens of that Fusion are unholy beings!”

“This ‘Dimensional Fusion’ stuff is a load of NONSENSE!” Sandy proclaimed. “A bunch of universes combining together and creating a universe-wide catastrophe? I admit, these made scary kids’ stories, but you can’t possibly believe they’re true!”

“The Octogan has never LIED to us! It is the most powerful gem that sees beyond the timeline’s boundaries! It knows the force which combined our universes, why that force will end up destroying us, and it is the only way we can survive! The gods have been deceived into thinking a ‘Twenty Keys Prophecy’ will be the key to everyone’s safety, but they are wrong! Because we have seen beyond the Time Gate! A force more powerful than anything this universe knows! That force will bring a worse cataclysm than the Apocalypse! This is why the Twenty Keys cannot come together, why we must go against the gods and declare ourselves our own God. But many of this world’s fools fail to listen! Siiiigh…” Andrew looked down and plopped the ‘face’ of his pan into his hand. “Sandy… you must understand. Understand why our family is what it is. The Apocalypse is real, and with the Octogan, I have seen it. I’ve never been more afraid, Sandy, but I cannot show my fear in front of the World Leaders. I…I need my brother.”

Even through that helmet, Sandy could tell when his big strong brother was upset. He could feel his inner turmoil. Sandy smiled comfortingly and hugged his brother. “It’s all right, Andrew. I…I really would like to help you. But what have I got, besides a bunch of sand?”

Andrew stood up straight and began to walk away. “I should return to Mariejoa. I am sorry for troubling you.”

“HEY!” Sandy yelled impatiently. “When I said that, you were supposed to tell me a way I can help!!”

Andrew stopped. “…I sense an incredible war coming. The White Lotus will attempt to thwart our plans. We need an unstoppable army. My fellow Leaders have a solution. …The Grand Inferius. It is an ancient dark spell that can revive the dead to perfect, healthy, invincible, and controllable form. Imagine a zombie movie where all the zombies are crazy powerful.”

“You want me to help build an army of zombies?” Sandy asked with a very questionable look.

“No. But the spell requires a number of steps to create such an army. There is a key component I need: a legendary Fruit of God, whose juice can be harnessed to create the Elixir of Life. Along with several other components, they can create the most powerful army of undead. That kind of army is the only one that could fight the White Lotus, and give us enough time to enact our Spirit World Project. Unfortunately, that fruit has been extinct for centuries. …Perhaps… if you knew a way…” And so, Andrew walked away slowly. It was times like these, Sandy always thought his brother could read his mind. Andrew stopped, “Oh, and should you ever wish to contact me, you will address me as King, not my name. …I would not like some people to know who I am.”

As he turned the hallway, a kickball lightly hit his helmet. It bounced back to seven-year-old Shelly, in a swimsuit and bucket crown. “Oh? Hi, Uncle Andrew!” She kicked her ball the other
Dear Lánshelly: I think it would be best for our daughters to meet as soon as possible. Something very crucial has come up, I cannot explain, but I’m sure our daughters will be delighted. –Yours Truly, Sandy

Dear Sandy: I’m not sure if now is a good time. Gonshiri is very deep in her studies, so pulling her away now wouldn’t be helpful. But don’t worry, I’m sure they’ll get to meet soon. Maybe until they’re both a little more mature. –Yours Especially, Lánshelly

Dear Lánshelly: I understand that Gonshiri’s studies are important, but it never hurts to take a break once in a while. Just as well, as the princess, it should be important to know the history of both sides of her family. Knowing the pridefulness that exists in both our blood, I’m sure she will enjoy her studies a lot more if she knows. I await your reply. –Sandy

Dear Sandy: I know you’re very excited, but I really think we should hold off a little longer. We’re facing a shortage of Pikmin at the moment, so my first priorities as Queen are to help reproduce. I hope you understand. –Lánshelly

Dear Sandy, I know what you’re trying to do. One of my Puni agents was at your castle, he told me about your meeting with King Andrew. You want to use my daughter’s power to revive the God Fruit, you’re going to use her to help the World Government. Sandy, I knew for a while that you were related to those people, but I still wanted to trust you, and you proved that trust until now. When you write back to me, I want you to tell the truth. –Queen Lánshelly

Dear Lánshelly: You’re right, it’s true. When my brother mentioned the extinct plant, I thought for sure Gonshiri’s power could work, and I wanted to help him. But I feel I must ask, what did you mean when you made that point about trusting me? Is there a problem with my family being part of the World Government? –Sandy

Dear Sandy, I didn’t mean to imply anything, but the World Government is cruel to us Minish. Because of their lunatic theories about the Dimensional Fusion and Apocalypse, they like to kill us or enslave us when they can. I love you, Sandy, but I don’t want Gonshiri to associate with them. –Lánshelly

Dear Lánshelly, I admit that my brother is very aggressive, and I strongly disapprove of how he talks about your people, especially in regards to our children. But deep down, Andrew just wants what’s best for everybody, he wants to protect us. I admit, I was jealous that he surpassed in this business when I didn’t, and I’ve grown away from that over time, but he is still my brother. I can tell when someone like him is scared or upset; I thought this Apocalypse was a joke as well, but he seems more knowledgeable in the matter. Lánshelly, I promise to protect Gonshiri before he does anything rash, but maybe we should consider his plan. For the greater good. –Sandy

Sandy, I won’t let my daughter become a tool of mass destruction. In fact, we are starting to become afraid that the Government is overseeing our letters. I’m sorry to say this, Sandy, but I think we should stop communicating, and I don’t think our daughters should meet for a long time. But if you decide to rethink your priorities, when you decide that your daughters are more important than helping your brother’s insane plans, then I encourage you to write to me. Until then, good-bye, Sandy. –Your wife, Lánshelly
Present time

Shelly and Gonshiri were speechless. The Punies noted their horrified looks. The sisters slowly turned to look at each other. Gonshiri faced forward and spoke with a frightful stutter, “So, King Andrew—my uncle…” She corrected herself. “He wants to use my power to create an Inferi Army?”

“You know what that is?” Shelly asked.

“My history teachers taught me about it.” Shiri spoke with noticeable fear in her eyes. “Roughly 6,000 years ago, a powerful army of undead was awakened, and nearly destroyed the plains of Planet Avalar. The zombies were commented as being perfectly healthy, but flesh that felt unreal, and with their indestructible bodies, their martial arts, magic, and element bending was for their controllers to use as they please. I believe the dark wizard who commanded such an army… was named Zeref the Black Cloud. It was the very first recording of dead being brought to life on such a terrific scale. In time, the spell called ‘Inferio’ was created to command lesser ‘Inferi’, but that catastrophe came to be known in history as ‘Grand Inferius.’”

“And Uncle Andrew… is trying to recreate that catastrophe?”

“I’m afraid it is so.” The Elder answered hoarsely. “Not only does he want as much power as possible, but, I assume, it is his means of forcing the people to accept this Spirit World Project of his. A Zombie Apocalypse, a Spatial Apocalypse, no matter what catastrophe, the citizens will want to survive. Of course, the only other way to survive is to find the Twenty Keys, and guide all denizens through the Time Gate. However, we have feared what King Andrew said may be true. We do not know of the force he speaks of behind the Gate, nor can we confirm the Octogan’s credibility. We have only grown up on what Polokus has told us. A powerful Dream Spirit who, along with another of dark intentions, knew of the Twenty Keys Prophecy. He has taught our ancestors his teachings. To this day, we believe that fulfilling the prophecy is the key to saving this universe. Of course… I cannot prove such a prophecy to you girls, now. What is your belief?”

Shelly and Gonshiri couldn’t believe any of this. The fact they were sisters was crazy enough, but… this ‘Apocalypse’, this Inferius, what King Andrew wanted to do… Shelly shook her head, “Who was this Dream Spirit of ‘dark intentions’?”

“His name is Bill Cipher, and many times has he appeared throughout history, albeit subtly. Polokus told us of his powers… he possesses vast knowledge, knowledge which stems from his ability to see from any image of himself. Such as an American one-dollar bill.” That comment made Shelly’s heart skip a beat; all of the one-dollar bills she stole from less-graders. “It was Bill who told the gods this Twenty Key Prophecy, but as they have learned across time, Bill Cipher is a demon. And no demon would do something kind, such as passing knowledge, without desiring a price. That’s why the Twenty Keys Prophecy is feared by many, including the gods. However, Polokus has told our ancestors, and many denizens of the Dream Realm, that the Twenty Keys must be found, and the Time Gate opened. Nobody, not even the gods, know what will happen once it’s open. So the decision to find, or not to find the Twenty Keys is up to you.”

“Just what are these Twenty Keys?” Gonshiri asked.

“Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses. This very moment, the Twenty Chosen Ones are on their journeys. One of them will be coming here shortly, as our prophecy reads. It is your decision, whether or not you wish to aid him.”

Shelly and Gonshiri exchanged serious glares. “Shelly… I think we should help him. I may not be kind, nor am I a great princess… but I will not be used for Uncle Andrew’s evils. If the Punies
believe it is in our best interest to find the Twenty Keys, we should.”

“Yeah.” Shelly nodded. “I don’t know why my uncle’s putting his hope in some octagon, but he sold me away with this crazy zombie idea.” She faced the Elder. “So who is coming here? Which of these Seven or Thirteen Darklights or whatever?”

They felt a footstep quake the earth. “He is here now.” The Elder spoke. (End song.)

The light, though thundering footsteps, which belonged to a normal-size human, came from around the tree. Shelly and Gonshiri slowly approached, their mouths in ‘o’s. Their minds knew only wonder and excitement. Who was this mysterious hero? Who, along with nineteen other people, would supposedly save the world? The answer would soon be apparent, when the girls stepped around the tree root.

“Yaaaaaaaawwwwn.” The seven-year-old with brown skin yawned, very tired from the journey. His yawn echoed in the ears of the tinies. Shelly immediately panicked. This was the one surprise that she definitely couldn’t take.

“JESSIE?!!?”

Dickson Household

Rupert eagerly rushed into the tree stump in the yard across the street. He looked at his Pikmin briefly, and nodded in thanks. He entered the stump, and puffed back to normal size with the help of Minish operatives. After all this time, it felt so weird. Rupert was so used to his tiny size, it was the greatest adventure of his life. Being back to normal size would take some getting used to. Regardless, he was excited to run to his house and tell his parents everything. His father would be proud of him, his mother would be so happy, and boy did he have lots to tell them.

“MOM, DAD, I’M HOME!”

His father was sitting on the couch, his face buried in his hand. “You’re finally back, huh?” he said after a moment of silence.

“Uh… yeah.” His father didn’t seem happy to see Rupert at all. Definitely not the reaction he expected. “Weren’t you wondering where I was?”

Chad chuckled softly. He sat up, smiling at his son. “It’s almost ironic… your mom says I don’t have faith in you. Yet, I’m the one who kept saying you would come back okay. …She didn’t believe me.”

“Whaddyou mean? Dad, where’s Mom?”

As a response, Chad flipped on the news. “It isn’t your fault, Kiddo, but… just watch.”

“Breaking news, all the way from Washington D.C., a sudden massacre inside President James’ School for the Seriously Uneducated! Students everywhere are running away in fright, as the school seems to be under attack by a ghost!”

Presidents James’ School


“Ooo-hoo-hoo!” Li’l Gideon laughed gleefully. “Bill Cipher is an excellent teacher! Hm-hm, but
only thanks to your marvelous mentoring skills, Mr. President.” He made his cute and bubbly face.

“I wouldn’t sell dear Bill short.” James McFarland replied. “Even though he is on the one-dollar bill! HA HA hahahahaha!” He and Gideon laughed.

“You know, I’ve always had a fondness for teaching.” Bill Cipher replied, leaning on his cane casually. “I even considered teaching a class, but I just didn’t have the credentials. Granted, I was a substitute at Harvard Law School for a time, one of my favorite students was-”

The walls suddenly burst open, and blue fire shone through the smoke. Emily Phantom looked less like a human, and more like a demon. “Where is my baby?…” she panted hard.

“Ho ho! Looks like we got a specter problem here!” Bill perked.

“I know you took him away!” Emily spoke venomously. “He was playing with his Gallagher buddies and you kidnapped them! Give him BAAAAAACK!” A powerful Ecto Ray flew from her lungs.

“AAAAAAAAHHHHH!” Bill Cipher was struck in the eye, the tip of his body dispersing.

“RUUUUUPEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEERT!” The children screamed from Emily’s fury, all of the mesmerized students were awakened and fleeing.

“NO! COME BACK, YOU LITTLE TERMITES!” Gideon screamed. “OBEY ME, NOW!”

“You’re a hot piece of work, you know that?” James grunted, helping himself up from the force.

“GRAAAAAAH!” Emily lunged at the president, clutched his neck, but James grabbed her arm in his Armament Haki hand.

“I may have been afraid of hags like you when I was in diapers,” James began, struggling to push her away, “but that was before Ah hit the Big Four-Six! This country’s ruled by a NEW man now, and his name is JAMES!” He socked her in the face with an Armament punch, sending her against the desks.

Emily watched as Bill Cipher reformed above her. “Oh, right, you’re a ghost! You can touch me. But that also means that I CAN TOUCH YOU, TOO.”

His eye glowing blood-red, Bill lowered down, looking closer into Emily’s monstrous eyes. The woman felt herself whirling in an ocean of despair. Spiders latched her from all sides, tore her limbs, her organs were harvested by skeleton scientists, her heart and brain were minced through a juicer, and her soul was lost in the bowels of Hades.

The ghost woman was on the floor, more pale than before, her face frozen. Bill licked his fingers in his nonexistent mouth. “A little spicy, but definitely been sitting out a while. I’m not cleaning that up.”

“No problem.” Gideon said. “VIOLET! SCARLET! CLEAN-UP!”

The cat women walked on all fours with blank, glowing blue eyes. They picked Emily up in their teeth and carried her away.

As you can tell so far, the Presidents Saga focuses a lot on the World Leaders’ backgrounds.
We may not show them all quite yet. The Punies and Boggly Woods come from *Paper Mario: Thousand-Year Door*. Next time, we'll do Maddy and Vanellope’s next stages, and I’m excited to write the fight that happens. ;3 See you later.
**Catch Her!**

**Chapter Summary**

Dr. Nefarious pursues Maddy, while Vanellope pursues Peridot!

This chapter is also titled “Fanservice.” ;3 Today’s code uses the Atbash Cipher, but the phrase is backwards.

**Chapter 35: Catch Her!**

**Star Train; The Head**

Dr. Nefarious paced back and forth in the control deck, the anger clear on his eternal-scowling face. “Pardon me, Sir,” Lawrence approached him with his emotionless frown, “but you’ve been pacing around the same spot for two days. You’ve imbedded footprints in the metal.” If one looked down, one could see this was true. “Might I ask what is wrong?”

“Just when I think I’ve got Maddy back in my clutches, she escapes again!” Nefarious spoke with anger. “And not one of my robots has tracked her whereabouts! How hard can it be to chase after a giant space-whale?!?”

“With all due respect, Sir, perhaps you are exhausting too much in trying to track this girl. She is one of the Seven Lights, true, but you are becoming obsessed with her.”

“Well, of COURSE I’m obsessed with her, Lawrence!” Nefarious faced him, making an arm gesture that emphasized his logic. “Lesser Lord Gnik TOLD us she was the most powerful of the Lights! That’s why we’ve been spying on her all this time, because even GNIK doesn’t know what this power is!” He turned away and rubbed his fingers deviously. “Ever since they were eight years old, I’ve been watching her. I staged that little twerp buying her dumb dog on her birthday so that one day, I could discover what this power is, and TAKE IT for myself!” He punched his palm.

“Yet, I’ve come up with nothing! That’s why we must capture that child and FORCE IT OUT OF HER!”

“Dr. Nefarious, Sir-”

“What?!” Nefarious screamed at the robot hologram that just appeared.

“Our scoters have detected Ratchet’s Aphelion near the region of Planet Oltana. Subject ‘Maddy Murphy’ was detected with them. Shall we engage in pursuit?”

“No! I’m tired of relying on you clowns to capture Maddy. I’m joining in the chase myself! BUCKLE IN, Lawrence, we’re detaching the head!”

Meanwhile, in the halls of the train, Lord Vorselon was whistling a merry tune while sweeping the floors of rubble from the earlier battle. The train began shaking all of a sudden, and Vorselon nearly lost his balance when the wall of the door he was about to enter broke away from the hall. Vorselon stood on the edge of the train, watching as the Nefarious-shaped head of the vessel drifted farther away. “I’m stepping out for a while, Lord Vorselon!” Nefarious said through the PA
speaker. “Use the back-up controls to pilot the train. Also, I’m cooking some French fries with triple-packed oil, make sure to turn the stove off in 10 minutes!”

**Space; some time ago**

*HELLO, READERS! Welcome, come one, come all, to this exciting tale of goes and bows. Welcome to Jar Jar Blinks’ story arc of Seven Lights: The Side Stories: Jar Jar Blinks’ Shifty Shenanigans! WEE HEE HEE HEE!*

*It all starts on Nightmare Land, when I was-a helping Da’ky helpin’ Anna get settled in. (A picture was shown of Jar Jar peeping on Anna of Arendelle in the shower, with said girl creeped out.) She was-a pretty upset over her kingdom going ploopy, with her sister deady-weddy, so I-sa say, “It’s okaaaaay.” (A picture of Jar Jar smooching Anna.) “Jah-Jy’s here, and he’s-a gonna make it betty,” and then Anna says, “OOOOOOO Jah-Jyyyyyyyy!” (Anna lovingly kissed Jar Jar back.) “Ohsh, but I’s am so sadness over my sissy-poo,” and then I says, “What cans I do about Anny-do?” Then Da’ky comes to me. He was-a REAL bright and shiny. He says-si:*

> “Jaaaaar Jaaaaaar.” (Darkrai was depicted with a white beard and robe, the sun shining behind him over a hill.) “Thou must fly to the galaxy of Solana, and find Ministry Queenmoo, then seek from her the Holy Milk. Only then will Anna feel happy about sissy.”

*But I knows I cans not do it alone. I-sa needs me old friend, ones I have known for yearsies: Zachary Murphy. He’s and I’s know each other from 4th birthday of his and Mads, when his Sissypoo broke her booboo-receiver, so I’s feeds her milk from baby bull. (The next picture describes itself.) I’s flies everywhere in Solly Gally, but noes Zachy-Wacky. Thens I sees alie-walies drivin’ dat dem Apheli-Wheeli, so I says silly: “GIVEE THAT BACK!” I’s battles them, and I’s takes Aphelion back, but oshi-NOOO! I-sa losin’ control, and going for gangbusters’ planet! Nows I am here, with Maddy, Zaddy, Raddy, and Draddy, and ours exciting Side Story continues. I wills not give up ‘tills I finds the Holy Milky, so thats all sad sissy-poos everywhere shall always-

> “JAR JAR, two things,” Maddy yelled with anger, “1) This isn’t the Side Stories, and 2), even if it was, YOU ARE NOT GETTING A STORY ARC!”

> “But my plots is so enticiiiiiing.” Jar Jar said depressedly. “When you looks at all the subtle clues and foreshadows, none would even suspect my’s great-grandsister is Luvita Blinkingsling, street-renowned juice thief. Ha!” Jar Jar gasped. “I-sa spoiled it! I-SA SPOILED MY SECRET FAMILY RELATION! NYEEEEEE-!” He flailed his arms like an idiot.

> “SHUT IT!” Maddy punched his bomback mouth. “Sigh…” She sighed depressedly. “I can tolerate Zach, but why did YOU have to come?”

> “Maddy, did you really drink milk from a bull?” Drake asked.

> “NO! ! And he and Zach were never childhood friends, this story’s all at the top of his head! That is to say his head isn’t a black hole.”

> “Please, Maddy, your head’s rounder than any hole.” Zach remarked, using a glider to fly alongside their ship. The airless void chilled his face. “And for the record, I think that situation with the bull stems from the intimacy you never got with your mom as a kid.”

Maddy wasn’t gonna draw on from that. “Zach, you’re in space, your head’s gonna pop.”

> “Hn-hno it won’t, Maddy, my head is specially trained to-” The airless void caught on to him, and his head exploded into blood. His lifeless body float there.
“OH MY GOD!” Ratchet panicked.

“And 3,” Maddy began with disbelief, “2… 1…”

“BAP.” Jar Jar’s head came off, revealing to be Zach in disguise. “Ta-daaaa! We dropped Jar Jar off on some curtain planet.”

“I hope he enjoys himself.” Maddy eye-rolled. “Zach, can’t you be a *little* bit serious about this? I’m still angry that we didn’t go home with them ‘cause we have to find some ‘Disbanded’ person, based on what Dillon told us *Vanellope* said out of nowhere. And frankly, I’m not even sure why I believed him, I’m sick of this dump.”

“This ‘dump’ is kind of my home galaxy, Maddy.” Ratchet replied, piloting Aphelion with a solemn look.

“I’m just saying that I wanna go home, too. But I’m also worried about this ‘Apocalypse’ thing, so—I dunno—maybe I’m going along with whatever happens for the sake of something good happening.”

“Remind me, again, where this Apocalypse thing came from?” Ratchet requested.

“We honestly have no idea.” Drake shook his head. “And we’re really sick of the whole thing, already. Totally ruining our summer.”

“Aphelion, are you any closer to tracking Clank’s radio waves?” the Lombax asked his ship.

“I am sorry, Ratchet, but I cannot detect Clank’s antenna waves anywhere within a 10,000 light-year radius. There is a chance that Clank’s antenna was severed, his waves are being obstructed by a force, or he is very very far away.”

“And how far is 10,000 light-years?” Drake asked.

“Not so much, but pretty far.” Ratchet sighed. “But assuming he was captured by Nefarious, he could have taken his antenna off, maybe even reprogrammed him!” He spoke with frustration, “I wanna go back to that train and make Nefarious tell me where he is!”

“Mad-dy? Mad-dy?” Zach was now a 5-year-old, tugging on his big sister’s sleeve.

“Not now, Zachary. Ratchet, I’d like to ask Nefarious a few questions too, but we barely escaped that train last time. We’ll just have to survive without Clank.”

“Mad-dy? Mad-dy?”

“Sigh, I know all that, Maddy. It’s just… well, you weren’t with us for very long, so you didn’t get a chance to see, but Clank’s been kind of… sick, lately. Like, every now and again, he kind of shorts out and speaks gibberish, so if he’s trapped or by himself somewhere, he’s got no way to protect himself. That’s why I’m worried.”

“Mad-dy?”

“Well, I can’t argue with that.” Maddy said. “You should see the kind of messes Zach gets into—What the heck is it?!?”

“Dat.” Zach pointed behind them.

“MAAAAAADDYYYYY!” The three panicked: Dr. Nefarious’s gigantic space station-size head
was chasing them imposingly. “I foooooound yooooouuuu!”

“Sir, if we’re doing this, can you please not talk suggestively?” Lawrence asked.

“AAAAAAAAHHH!” Maddy screamed. “Ratchet, get us away from here!”

“Ratchet, I am detecting Planet Oltana approximately 5 light-years away. Shall we hide there?” Aphelion asked.

“Yes, go for it!” On Ratchet’s command, the ship escaped through hyperspace, though the Star Head was still in pursuit. …A small black ship watched and went unseen by them, but it vanished into hyperspace, too.

**Planet Oltana**

*Stage 45: Oltana Valley*

*Mission: Get away from Dr. Nefarious!*

*Act 1*

Aphelion entered Oltana’s atmosphere and landed in an enclosing of a canyon. The planet looked dead and desert-like at first glance, and the surrounding horizon was a sunset orange, while the rest of the sky within was dark. Regardless, the landscape was bright as if it were daytime. Team Ratchet trekked down a slope along the right side of a chasm, the Lombax using his OmniWrench to whack away Tumfoids. They arrived at a dead-end cliff, and Maddy held onto Drake as he used his grappler to swing a Swingshot target. She expected Zach to hold onto Ratchet, but-

“Roo-REE-roo!" Zach took the form of a squat, rectangle, spring creature with a shocked face, bouncing across in one swoop. “Look, Zach, this is gonna get old after a while.”

“You would know, Mads. Hey’d you want that Gold Bolt over there?” He pointed to the ledge they just swung from: it had a cave below it, with a Gold Bolt inside.

“Whoops. Too late now.” Ratchet said.

“No it isn’t. Roo-REE-roo!” He Roo-Bounced over to the cave, got the bolt, and returned. With that, the four would begin their venture across a rickety wooden path alongside a canyon wall.

“Maaaaaddyyyyy, where aaaaaare yooooouuu?” The four gasped and looked up: Dr. Nefarious’s head gradually emerged from the dark sky. “Ahhhhhh! THERE you are! You must be careful! You wouldn’t want to lose your footing and FALL! Ex-TERMINATE them!” (Play “The Precipice” from *Rayman 2.*)

The ship blasted a laser that destroyed the rocky foothold they were just on, the team was forced to bolt forward. Parts of the wooden walkway were shaking and threatened to fall under the cannonfire. They jumped a gap to a lower walkway, and a red Walking Shell (a missile with legs) was dropped ahead of the path, running toward the group as they had to jump it. When a bombshell exploded under their current bridge, the entire foothold flew off to the right, but the four jumped off and landed on a flat rock balanced atop a stone needle. They jumped a series of balanced rocks, which tilted back-and-forth at their weight, but were in the process of falling due to Nefarious’s cannons.

They jumped to a narrow path on the side of a small mountain, crossing a short cave before landing inside a minecart. The cart rolled down a track, up a ramp they had to jump, and a cannon blew off part of this next track as they made the cart jump again. Two Walking Shells ran at them from
either side, so they jumped again, quickly jumped a gap that was blown open, then the next chunk of track collapsed as they fell off and rolled down a steep slope. Their cart crashed against a rock, but the four jumped out and ran along another cliffside. Bombshells hit the wall above them, dropping rubble down and forcing the group to stop, so when the rubble finished falling, Ratchet used a grenade to blow it up. They ran further, a large chunk of path was blown off, but a huge flat boulder fell vertically past that gap, so the team quickly Wall Jumped it to get across.

They turned leftward between a trench, then continued their run across another rickety bridge, suspended over a chasm by weak supports. Under the bombshells’ explosions, the parts of the bridge were toppling over, the four heroes ran as fast as they could with disrupted balance. They swung a Swingshot target part of the way, the path took them between close trench walls. The cannons were blasting the walls and sending rubble everywhere, the friends had to keep an eye out for boulders falling to their path. Among the rubble was an old man with a white beard and scarecrow hat, crying “VNRG HRS TMRGHZD HVS!” The team turned left across a series of platforms they had to jump, and they made it to a longer path that stretched along a cliffside.

“Psst! This way!” They looked left, briefly spotting a shadowed person that zipped around a corner turn.

“Wha- Who’s that?” Ratchet stuttered.

“I’m going deaf anyway, so I’ll risk it.” Drake ran that person’s direction, the others followed, it was a tight narrow passage within a trench. The shadowed person drew further away, the four stayed on their tail. “Maddyyyyy, where’d you gooooooo?” (End song.)

They watched the person jump into a hole, so the four heroes followed. The sound of explosions and gunfire was stopped, but they heard the engines of Nefarious’s ship in the sky. Regardless, they were glad to rest their ears and legs. “We dunno who you are, but thanks for helping us.” Ratchet said.

“My pleasure.” The figure with black shiny armor turned to them with her glowing violet eyes.

“WAIT A SECOND!” Maddy screamed, pointing accusingly. “You’re that… Shade girl! One of the Teen Ninjas!”

“Maddy, you know her?” Ratchet asked.

“Yes, and she’s a bad guy!”

“No I’m not!” Shade stated. “Sigh… time for me to explain.” She pushed the left breast of her armor, and her B.R.A. retracted, revealing the black jumpsuit underneath. She had light-purple eyes and light-red hair, curved backward in several large spikes. She had a little black, animal-like nose.

Maddy stared for a moment. “You’re a… hedgehog?”

“I’m an echidna.” Shade said with disbelief. “Well, a Mobian echidna, actually. And I’m not really your enemy, I’ve been posing as a Teen Ninja for the past few years so that I could spy on you.”

“I have had it up to here with people ‘spying’ on me.” Maddy held her hand above her head. “If you’re not my enemy, why did you kidnap me to have me shrunken down?”

“If you recall, I also knocked Nya out for you so you could get back to normal.” Shade argued. “Besides, I helped them with that whole thing because I wanted to see if it was true. …You have Conqueror’s-“
“Maaaaaaaddyyyyyy. Come oooooouuu-uuuuut.”

“If we stay here, they’re going to find us. Come with me.” Shade pulled a ninja mask over her mouth and hurried forward. Maddy contemplated following her, but when they looked at Nefarious’s vessel above the hole, they decided to. (Play “Volcano Force Point Temple” from Star Fox Adventures.)

Act 2

They hurried after the echidna as she ran through a series of maze-like caves. “How exactly do you know the way again?” Maddy asked.

“I don’t in particular, but he’s starting to send robots inside, I can see where they are with my Observation Haki.”

“Haki? Why does that sound familiar…”

“Duh, Maddy, Mr. York had it!” Zach said brightly. “He was playing Hockey with Caesar! I even kept the trophy.” He held up a golden trophy of Sandman sliding a puck with a hockey stick.

“Um… no.” Shade replied. “It’s a kind of martial art that heightens the senses. Armament Haki-”

“Yeah yeah yeah, maybe you wanna tell me why you’re suddenly a good guy?” Maddy requested.

“Oh, right. Would you believe me if I said I was 4,000 years old?”

“NO.” They all chorused.

“I’m not.” Shade said humorously. “I’m actually 23. But that is how old our prophecy is. I’m not just an average Mobian, I’m from the Netherverse. Our tribe of Mobians have very wise prophets, and they saw the end of the world happening near this date. According to history, a man called Acnologia came to our universe to hide a gem called the Octogan. From it, the ancient prophets harnessed power, and saw the future. Because of what they saw, they feared the Octogan, so they sent it back to this universe. They kept the power that they took from it, because the prophecy was real regardless.

“According to that prophecy, when a man who claimed to be the ‘King of Space’ came to our universe, it was a sign that the Apocalypse was coming. That man, Dimentio, appeared in our world 20 years ago, so the time to fulfill their part of the prophecy was then. 18 years ago, when I was five, the prophets used the harnessed power of the Octogan to give me the knowledge of this prophecy, then they banished me to this universe, so that I could help Maddy.”

“There’s still a couple of holes in that story.” Ratchet noted. “Like, why are you helping Maddy, and why didn’t they send an adult?”

“The Mobians used Space Magic, which came in short supply, to send myself and two other children, Vendra and Neftin, to this universe when Dimentio was taking over. It was convenient on their end because of my exceptional combat skills, that’s why I was chosen. And I was ordered to help Maddy because they knew she was one of the Seven Lights.”

“My brain officially hurts.” Zach remarked.

“So what’s why Nefarious is after me? And you, are you… the Disbanded?” Maddy asked.

“That’s probably why Nefarious is after you, and no. The ‘Disbanded,’ actually, is someone who
ended up in this universe 20 years ago, following Arceus’s explosion. He’s actually a denizen of one of the Original Worlds. I don’t know how you know about him, but you need to find him so he can train you.”

They arrived at a tall cliff that Shade climbed up effortlessly. She saw a stalactite on the ceiling, jumped to pull it down, then stuck it in the cliff partway down. She did the same with two more, making a stairway of sorts for the others to follow her. “They’re watching from outside. Don’t stand in the holes.” This tunnel had large holes in the sides, where Chuck Planktonbots viewed inside with searchlight eyes. The group stepped up some natural stairs to a narrow ledge above a hole, sidling across. Rather than drop down on the other side, they used their grapplers to latch above the next hole, while Shade climbed across the wall.

They dropped down after the second hole, but kept out of the diagonal sunrays of corner holes. They came to an area filled with gaps in the ground, with the only crossable paths blocked by searchlights. “Maaaaaddyyyyyy. I can detect your body temperatuuuuuure!”

“If that were true, this place would be crumbling under cannonfire.” Shade assured. She crawled up the wall of this cave to the ceiling, punching stalactites as they fell to stick on small platforms below. They could use the taller footholds to bounce across the chasm and under the searchlights. They jumped to a space on a path between two searchlights, then had to drop down the opposite ledge to climb across a grabable area. They went under the searchlight and climbed onto the foothold again. Two searchlights skimmed up-and-down between this foothold and the next, so the group waited for an opening and flew across with their grapplers.

“Hold on, Shade, does the Disbanded live here?” Drake asked as they journeyed another straightforward cave.

“No, he’s on Planet Pokitaru. But you guys retreated here, so I had to follow you. And before you ask how I even got here, I flew on my ship; I’ve been wandering around this galaxy ever since your leader announced the Apocalypse.”

“If you knew about the Apocalypse all along, how come you never told anyone?” Maddy asked.

“The World Government knew about it, and they let the Kids Next Door be because they didn’t know. I didn’t exactly know when you would find out either, but it took the Government by surprise. They’re a little disorganized trying to schedule legal attacks on your organization. All they can do is try to stop the Twenty Keys from doing what they do. At least, that’s based from my job as a Teen Ninja—I wasn’t given ALL of the prophecy. …Maddy, lemme ask you something: do you remember, I dunno, anything weird you might’ve done that you couldn’t explain? I mean—besides that whole screaming fiasco during the shrink ray incident?”

Maddy raised a brow, both at the question and at the example. “I remember when we were escaping Nefarious’s ship,” Ratchet explained, “she said she saw Qwark’s aura outside. Not that Qwark is easy to miss, but through the wall and all…”

“Hm… interesting.” Shade said. “Let’s talk about that after we escape. We’ll have to get outside someplace where Nefarious won’t spot us, then I can summon my ship.”

“We’re getting my ship back too, right?” Ratchet asked.

“I won’t make promises, we may have to come back later.”

They entered a wider tunnel of Sleepytime robots, and (much to their disgust) bones laying about the ground. “Can you do this?” Shade asked, nimbly leaping the short stalagmites that made a path
between the Sleepytimes.

“If KND teaches them Ninjutsu, probably.” Ratchet remarked.

“I’m glad you asked!” Zach made swift hand signals. “Substitution Jutsu: Swap bones with:” He planted his hand against the floor, “GRAHAM CRACKERS!” In a puff of smoke, all of the bones turned into graham crackers.

“THIS DOESN’T HELP US!!” Maddy screamed. But just then, the Sleepytime robots startled awake. “Oopsie.”

The Sleepytimes looked at the graham cracker floor around them. The robots became very frantic, their tongues popping out excitedly as they began digging into the treats. “Well, that works.” Drake shrugged as they stepped around the robots, crunching the crackers beneath their shoes. They met with Shade at a long, wide chasm, in which the ninja Wall Jumped between either wall, across the pit—and they noted how far the walls were apart. “…Any ideas?” asked Drake.

“Well, you and me can hold onto these two and take turns with our-” As Ratchet explained, he absentmindedly moved his arms, hitting Zach in the face when he walked by eating a cracker. The boy flew up in the air, landed on his back, and farted out a Golden Gate Bridge. “…Or that.” They crossed the bridge with many questions waiting to be asked.

“Maddy, will you JUST get your ass back into my room so that I can harvest your body for POWER already!”

“Sir, please stop talking.” Lawrence pleaded.

There was a large opening in the ceiling ahead, and they saw Nefarious’s head-ship slowly looming over. Shade jumped in the water. “It’s deep enough to swim under. We can hide this way.”

Maddy clutched Drake’s arm nervously. “Sheee, eh, has a phobia.”

“Oh, right.” Shade remembered. “Does Zachary have any ideas?”

Zach searched his pockets. “Candy that inflates into a submarine when dipped in water: go!” He threw the little yellow candy into the water. Bloop. Tiny splash.

 “…Sigh, just hold onto me.” Ratchet said impatiently, taking Maddy’s arm as they dove under the surface. Shade guided them through an underwater tunnel, and Maddy had her eyes and mouth shut the whole way. She normally wasn’t one to trust an alien with her life, especially underwater, but here they were trusting Shade to bring them to safety, and Ratchet’s been helping them the whole time. Things sure change quickly, Maddy realized. Maybe someday, she could put this water phobia aside completely.

They resurfaced and stepped onto solid ground. They followed a narrow, quiet tunnel, hearing the wind blowing from outside. They saw orange sky in the distance, peeking out of the tunnel exit. Nefarious’s ship was several miles back, steadily flying right from their perspective. “Sigh. Okay, now’s our chance.” Shade tapped buttons on her wristwatch. “As soon as my ship’s here, we’re jumping on and getting off this planet. It’ll be a miracle if we can lose him before-” (End song.)

“So sorry, dears.” The group jumped when Lawrence suddenly appeared from thin air. “But my master has been yelling my hearing sensors off ever since Maddy escaped, so it would be easier for everyone if you agree to let him experiment on you.”

“Easier, my forehead. Where did you come from, anyway?” Maddy retorted.
“Dr. Nefarious programmed me with teleportation, and it comes in handy so very much.”
Lawrence thought back on Nefarious’s many tantrums. “Unfortunately, I need 5 minutes for a recharge every time, so… RAAAOO RAAOO-!” His head became an alarm, he began blaring—Zach glomped around his head in the form of a Minion from Despicable Me.

“EEEEEEEEAA. Bippity-boop-dah! Dippity-doo!” He shouted in a Minion’s voice. “91 minutes of my life wasted! GAAAAAAAH!”

“Run for it!” Ratchet bashed Lawrence away with his wrench, pulling Zach back into their group as they bolted.

“THERE you are! You’re not escaping me THIS TIME!” Nefarious’s ship about-faced and chased them again, firing round after round of bombshells. The group raced across a valley of stalagmites, the cannons blew up their bases, the ‘mites flew up in the air and threatened to stab the group, forcing them to watch out and dodge. Shade was the first to Wall Jump the strips of parallel walls ahead, and the walls were close enough for them to do the same. The cannons blew up chunks of the walls, so they were careful to kick off the right areas lest they fall in the pit.

They landed on a snaky path within a very close trench, boulders toppling down because of the ship’s cannons, and they watched as Shade leaped up and punched every one coming for her comrades. “We have to get somewhere safe where I can call my ship again!”

“Dude, what’s with the herculean strength?” Drake asked as they ran.

“Echidnas are super strong, don’t worry about it.” After they passed the trench, they ended up tumbling down a steep rocky hill, in which Maddy, Ratchet, and Drake balanced on Zach, who rolled downhill like a barrel. They evasively maneuvered around the boulders that rolled down at them, and Zach was back on his feet after they arrived at the bottom. They raced across a somewhat-flat field, avoiding oncoming cannonfire, until a storm of robots appeared before them.

“I have had it up to HERE with this game of Cat and Mouse, Maddy! …Since you can’t see me, my arm is stretched to the ceiling. ‘Cause, it extends and all. Ahem, anyway, if you don’t surrender now, I’ll see that your silly friends NEVER see the light of-” Lasers rained down all over the robots, destroying every one. “WHAT?!”

“I’m afraid we can’t authorize that.” Jerome Winkiebottom’s Jamaican accent echoed. A fleet of armored Wisps and GKND ships appeared from the sky.

“THE GALACTIC KIDS NEXT DOOR!” Maddy cheered, for the first time in her life.

“Are you KIDDING ME?! WHERE DID they all come from?!”


“Who—… George?” Maddy barely remembered the boy. “When did all of you get here?”

“George sensed you coming here with his Future Sight.” Jerome replied. “It has proven to be a very helpful power. The Earth KND is very lucky to have someone like you.” He smiled.

“Heheh. To tell the truth, my Future Sight’s been getting really active lately. It couldn’t even tell me when pop quizzes were coming before.”

“NOOOOO YOU DON’T!” Nefarious thundered from his giant head. “I am NOT losing Maddy again! She’s coming with me, and ALL of you will BE MY SLAVES!” The mouth of the head
opened, unveiling a huge cannon. The cannon locked on the swarm of Wisps, charging a fiery yellow-red beam. The cannon fired, and the Wisps unleashed their squeaky screams before their colorful bodies turned metal and robotic.

“WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?!” Maddy screamed.

“It’s Nefarious’s Biobliterator!” Ratchet exclaimed. “It turns any flesh being into robots! I coulda sworn me and Clank destroyed it a few years back…”

“Correct, Ratchet!” Nefarious spoke deviously. “Unfortunately, this Biobliterator is on a lower scale. The energy is limited and wears off after a while. But I’ll keep YOU Roboticized long enough to FINALLY do you in!”

The cannon was beginning to charge again. Its sights locked on all of the operatives. “We may not be able to get away in time!” Shade yelled.

“Zach, if there was a time to do something crazy, NOW would be it!” Maddy stated.

“PERFECT!” Zach expressed his readiness in an animated fashion. “I brought my EMERGENCY RAFT!!” He raised the inflatable yellow boat in the air.

He threw it on the ground, hopped in, and- “Huff huff huff huff huff huff huff huff huff!” Began to row hurriedly. …He was going nowhere fast.

“You’re a nutcase, Zach.”

“Sigh, alright.” George jumped off the ship and shoved Maddy and Ratchet aside. “I’ve got an idea that might work, but it’s gonna be a little intense. All of you should step back a few meters.”

With mixed looks of worry and curiosity, Maddy’s group ran far away (except Zach, trying to get away on his raft). George looked up at Nefarious’s ship with a grave stare.

“Ahhhh. A volunteer, I see.” Nefarious smirked. “Want to take the full blast, do you? Perhaps the effect will last longer on you! I’ll be happy to make you my servant!”

George gripped his purple headband tight. Nefarious’s cannon locked closely on him, the robots staring with interest. George yanked his headband off.

“OOOOOOWWWYYYY!” 3-year-old George was in so much pain. His head throbbed, even with the headband wrapped around him. “D-Dad! It…It huuuuurrrrrts!”

“Jagar, this whole thing is insane! We can’t risk our own son’s life for this…this thing!” Misty stated.

“Misty, neither me, Clockwork, Dialga, or any timebender can see the Octogan in any point in history. But if we had one of them, we’d be able to work around that rule. But the Octogan needs to adapt to a young timebender, and once George gets older, he’ll have more control.”

“And you expect that headband to stay on with no one noticing?!”

“It has chi-blocks all around the inside. It’ll hold back a lot of the unstable power while still having enough for himself. But George, you have to promise you won’t show it to anyone, and don’t use it for anything unless I say otherwise. Okay?”

“Aaaaaaaahhhhhhh!” The child was in no position to answer.
“AAAAHHH!” The screen in Nefarious’s ship blacked out, his own vision sensors hurt.

The operatives stared agape at George when the canyon began trembling. An “8” was inscribed on George’s head, and incredible power burned from it. “Wh-Wh-What’s going on?!” Maddy trembled.

“I-Is that the… Octogan?!” Shade stared wide.

George’s eyes glowed, he felt unbelievable power surging through him. He inhaled a terrific breath of air, filling his lungs with Time’s very particles. When it was all ready to let loose: BONG. . . .

His Roar of Time was so loud, it sounded like the toll of a church bell. A white laser that blinded everything else struck through Nefarious’s ship. “EEEEAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!”

Long after the gigantic head exploded, the energy was still burning uncontrollably. All of the Wisps were being blown away, along with Jerome’s rescue ship. “Guys! We have to get away!” Ratchet cried.

“ZACH! Get your butt over here!” Maddy screamed.

George desperately tried to get his headband off the ground, but the pain in his head was forceful, it wouldn’t let him. “Aaaaaahhhhhh…” A bright white circle expanded from him and encased Maddy’s group. They felt their selves uplift into the air… Then they were all gone. The GKND operatives searched the canyon, but found neither hide nor hair of the humans, echidna, or Lombax.

Let’s look at the term “Octogan” for a second.

“Octo” means “eight”, “gan” means “eye”. It is an “8 Eye”.

Many average creatures in the universe have two eyes. There are two Octogan.

One of them had many owners. One of them had few. Such is the law of opposites.

Few creatures know where they originate from. Those who do fear to speak his name.

So I will not speak his name, either.

King Household

Jagar gasped, falling to his knees and gripping his head. He panted heavily, sweating. “No… George! Where’s George!” He clutched the Chrono Staff and saw his son in the past, tracing his chrono signature forward. “No… George, no!” 8888888888 The flashing “8” was all that he saw. “Damn it, George… Why did you take it off?! Who saw?” He walked over beside the window, planting his hand against it with his head down. “Why… I thought if it was with him, I could observe it easier, I could control it easier. But I’m not any close.” A blue flash blinked in the sky. “And now… augh, what if somebody—”

A Psycho Sphere blew through the front door of his house like a comet: the entire two-story building burst into flames. As Jagar choked, fighting his way through the smoke, he began to panic inside. He had never been the victim of a sneak attack, but since he just viewed the Octogan in his mind, his Sight was disrupted. To think in just so short a time… he gasped, “Cheren!” Jagar fought through the flames with his bending and got into the basement. The boy’s time-frozen statue had fallen over. “Cheren!” He picked him up.
BOING! “Ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha!” A Cheshire Cat head popped out where Cheren’s head should be, swaying left and right with that creepy laugh. As Jagar stared baffled, the Cheren dummy bent his leg back, and- “OOOF!” kicked Jagar in the crotch. “Ow!”

Sunni Chariton flew miles away from the home, setting the frozen Cheren on the ground. She took a chi-blocker out of a box, sticking it over his forehead before pulling off. “Waaah!” Cheren was just walking, so suddenly finding himself on the ground put him in a shock. “S-Sunni! Where the crap am I?”

“Since I’ve been, er, ‘touching’ you a lot lately, I’ve picked up your aura signature, and you’ve been at Mr. King’s house an awfully long time. He froze you in time and locked you in his basement.”

“What?!” Cheren said with anger in his voice.

“What did you go there for, anyway?”

Cheren recounted their talk to the best of his memory (even though it was only a few minutes ago to him). “All I can make of it is Jagar is afraid of what will happen when we find the Twenty Keys, so he’s trying to stop me from finding ‘em. Just like… the World Government would.”

“But do you think he’s really The King?”

“I don’t know. Sigh, but now I need to go up to Moonbase to warn everyone about him; at the risk of making Sector IC look bad. Speaking of Sector IC, I have to go back to Gravity Falls to check on that portal situation, too.”

“What portal situation? Maybe I can go there after taking you to Moonbase.”

“It might be easier just for us to go together. Sigh…” Cheren put his hand on his forehead in exhaustion. “This is starting to become like the old days all over again. We can’t trust any adults and people who seem like allies are bad guys. I was almost sure we grew past all this.”

“Awwwww, don’t be so frowny.” Sunni poked his cheek. “You still trust me, don’t you?”

“Hehe. You’re one of my closest operatives, Sunni, I trust you guys more than anything.”

“Hehe, me too!” Sunni grinned. “So’re you ready to go back to Moonbase?”

“Yup. Warp us up, Sun.” With that, Sunni teleported the two of them.

Cyberspace; Land of Quartz and Melody

Vanellope was splorped to another strange land under a black sky with violet rainbowy strips. The whole surface was made of quartz crystals, blue and purple, that towered like mountains. “Ugh. These snow levels are getting way too common.” Vanellope said.

“’Tis not snow. It is quartz. This land is rich with mystic energy. Like all others, it is broken. XANA has sent his helper to fix it.”

At the note of his ‘helper’, Vanellope looked a short distance ahead. Light-green spherical robots, with four crab-like legs, walked around, shooting cracked areas of the quartz using cannons. Those cracks repaired their selves in the robots’ sparkling goo, good as new. Vanellope saw a tall, slim being with green skin, and the back of their yellow head was shaped like… from Vanellope’s view, a Dorito.
Four fingers on Peridot’s right hand floated away and formed a square, displaying a midair holographic computer screen. She tapped the screen using her thumb. “Sector 34 of Area ‘LOQAM’ is 95% repaired. Reparation of entire planet is currently 55%. Patience with nagging computer-headed guy: 2%.” She narrowed her eyes. “Personal confusion about this entire mission: 80%. But it’ll all be worth it once I-” She turned around, and spotted Vanellope a few inches away.

The candy-haired girl and the green-skinned robot stared confusedly. They were both peculiar creatures from the other’s eyes. “What the heck are you.” Vanellope said, folding her arms. “I think that question is reserved for me to use.” Peridot remarked.

“Are you some kind of Dorito person?”

“A what?” Peridot cocked a brow. “A Dorito?”

“Yeah, but you’re on top of a Mountain Dew bottle, that’s why you look weird.”

“I am not a Dorito, NOR a ‘Mountain Dew’ bottle!” she said hotly. “I am a Type 10 Maintenance Program specifically designed to repair broken Cybersites, sent here by ‘Master X.A.N.A.’ to fix the broken domains of this quartz planet, using my Flask Robonoids.”

“Be whatever you want, you still look like a Dorito.”

“I AM NOT A DORITO!! Besides, look at yourself, you look like some child’s doll.” Peridot began scanning her with her holographic computer. “Just what are…!” She gasped at the image that appeared. “Wait! You’re the ‘Vanellope’! The one XANA wanted me to—AAAH!”

Vanellope pounced on and began munching Peridot’s head. “Bleck, this is the worst Dorito ever!”

“GET OFF ME!” Peridot threw her off, and her right fingers connected like a windmill around her thumb, which aimed and blasted a laser at Vanel.

“WHOA!” Vanellope jumped back. Peridot pointed her finger forward, sending the Robonoids to chase and shoot their glittery goo at Vanel.

“Do not let it touch, or you will be fixed!” The Zoni chorused, so Vanellope glitched about and dodged their shots. With her lightspeed, she zipped to and kicked the robots away, breaking them. “UWAAAHH!” Vanellope gasped when Peridot shot the Zoni, binding them in green energy rings.

“Not cool, man!” Vanellope spin-glitched and shot at Peridot, kicking her in the chest as she flipped back. Peridot landed on her fingers and scuttled away like an insect, grinning crazily.

“Hnn!” Peridot flipped right-side-up and used her right fingers to fly like a helicopter. Her left fingers separated and surrounded her body, encasing her in a green bubble shield. “Try to get me in here, you candy-haired clod!”

“I can’t imagine why XANA would wanna hire someone so annoying.” Vanellope shook her head. (Play “Sinister Shadows” from Kingdom Hearts II.)

Boss fight: Peridot

More Flask Robonoids were sent after Vanellope, she dodged their shots and kicked them senseless, chasing Peridot as the Program floated away in her protective bubble. Vanellope
glitched after her, trying to get around the bubble, and when Peridot floated around a quartz mount, Vanellope zipped around the other way and dealt lightspeed kicks against her bubble. “Tough break, Candy Clod! No one breaks through MY shield!” Vanellope continued chasing while observing the bubble, and realizing the five fingers surrounding it, Vanellope glitched to and kicked one of them to the ground. “AAAH!” Peridot panicked when her barrier shattered. The robot flew higher, and the other four fingers aligned in various forms to shoot lasers or energy balls at Vanel.

Vanellope dodge-glitched and kicked another finger into submission, then the other three spun in a triangle alignment and tried to slice the girl in the form of a Frisbee. She glitched midair, downward, the Frisbee-triangle stayed on her tail as Peridot cackled. Vanellope smirked, glitching underneath, glitching just below, then glitching in front of the Program, sparing a sarcastic wave before zooming away. “AAAH- HEY!” Her own Light Disc sawed through and chopped her arm and legs apart. She used her right arm to crawl around and recollect her limbs, but Vanellope kicked the side of her head, upside the chin, then sent her backward with a chest kick.

Peridot growled and shot green energy ropes from her fingers, pulling her limbs back to her and reattaching them. As Vanellope ran at her, Peridot connected the fingers of each hand with energy, spinning them around her body at rapid speed, in the form of whirring green lights. Vanellope glitched around and tried to find an opening, the height of the fingers changed to match Vanel’s altitude. Vanellope zipped up-and-down repeatedly, noting the slightest delay in the fingers, so she glitched up really high, then quickly glitched down to zip underneath and kick Peridot in the face. Peridot bounced on her arm-stubs and back to her feet. When Vanellope ran at her, Peridot jumped, shifted horizontal with her legs clamped together, and her boots aimed at Vanellope before shooting off her legs and stamping the girl’s face.

The rocket boots sent Vanellope several meters backward, but after coming to, she watched the boots fly around a quartz mount. Vanellope zipped to that direction to ambush Peridot, but- “HNN HNN HNN!” a bunch of grinning, flying Peridots surrounded her, but each were a brighter tone and staticky like holograms. They closed in on Vanel, she examined each one closely. “NYAAA!” Vanel immediately zipped leftward when the real Peridot furiously blasted laser-bullets, and the girl was scratched in her back by one. She glared at Peridot, who laughed snarkily and landed back on her feet. She spun both propeller-fingers and cut a circle in the quartz ground around her, using those fingers to lift that chunk of ground and chuck it at Vanellope, who dodged.

Peridot flinched when her earpiece rang loudly. “I SAW THAT, you stupid lime! I repaired you to FIX this world, NOT TEAR IT UP!”

“OKAY, okay! It was just a-”

“YAAAH!” Vanellope zipped up and KICKED Peridot in the face, breaking her visor. Her back hit against the quartz mount, then Vanellope zipped up to stomp a storm of kicks against her body. Vanellope glitched to the side, then shot up for a more forceful kick across her head, knocking Peridot away. “Heh! Who’s a clod now, you Dorito Clod?”

“ENOUGH of this!” Peridot got back up. “You think you’re hot stuff, ‘Vanellope’, but this is just the beginning!” She locked her windmill-fingers at her, charging a laser. Vanellope readied herself to dodge, staying focused. “…Of my ESCAPE!” Her laser died down, she raised her arm upward and flew away like a helicopter.

“HEY!” Vanellope tried to chase, but Peridot was already too high. The Program dropped more seedlings that hatched into Robonoids, which Vanellope proceeded to destroy. She watched with aggravation as Peridot escaped. “You’re really just a coward, aren’t you?”
“You must chase her!” The Zoni had recovered.

“What? Why?”

“You must fix, before she does. Chase her, and stop her.”

“Fine. But I really can’t stand her voice. So whiny and nasally and… blech.” (Play “Dance of Swords” from Steven Universe.)

Stage 46: Land of Quartz and Melody

Mission: Chase Peridot!

Peridot dropped Flask Robonoids in her wake as Vanellope chased her, with the girl either dodging around or kicking them senseless. Peridot turned left around a quartz mount, and Vanellope stopped before nearly running off a cliff over lava. There were midair lava blocks, and Blarggs jumped out of each one, forcing Vanellope to spin-jump across them as they came. Some Blarggs were high and required forceful jumps, some were low or close and required weak jumps, lest she miss the chance to bounce the Blagg. Peridot turned rightward as this route took them between a trench area. When Vanel landed on a safe platform, she immediately had to jump when three Robonoids tried to shoot her together, kicking the robots into the lava afterward. However, seeing the next lava river route, she kept a Robonoid, jumped over the next ledge, and kicked the Robonoid up to hit a switch, which redirected a line path for a platform to come down and catch Vanel.

She kept holding the Robonoid as the platform carried her over the river via its line path. Fuzzies came at her along the line, requiring Vanellope to jump, but when she saw parts of the line were broken, she squeezed the Robonoid to squirt its healing spit, fixing those parts. The line was about to lead into the lava, Vanellope kicked the Robonoid to hit a switch within the wall, redirecting the path straight so the platform could keep moving. Chainsaws started to buzz along the line from ahead and behind, and Vanellope had to spin-jump to become immune to their sharpness, while avoiding floating Munchers and staying over the platform. She landed on the platform just when the line sloped down just over the lava, and Vanel jumped a Blagg with great timing before the platform sloped up. But during so, she kicked the Robonoid to hit a floating switch, allowing the platform to direct up to a safe ground.

Vanellope chased Peridot across a vast quartz field where blue-shoed Koopas kicked shells off from platforms, the shells sliding and bouncing everywhere as Vanellope zipped around and dodged, also having to watch out for platforms with Robonoids. Peridot was flying above a midair obstacle course, but to chase her, Vanellope would need one more Zoni. She braved the onslaught of shells and found a “Zoni.” on a platform, and with it, Vanellope performed four glitchwarps up to the course’s start. She had to glitch her way up a vertical shaft of Munchers, and more Koopas kicked blue shells out from their enclosings. Vanellope had to maneuver her warps to bounce on the shells, bouncing each following one with great precision, until she could glitch through a zigzag route onto a tiny safe block within the Munchers.

A Baseball Chuck was chucking, well, baseballs at Vanellope from his safe spot. Vanellope had to wait for an opening between the balls, then she glitched through the tight zigzag Muncher path to grab a Power Star. She sparkled with invincibility, quickly jumped up the Muncher stairs, then ran across a long Muncher path while jumping Muncher pillars. “Seriously, where does XANA find so many of these things?” Her star was about to wear off, so she used four glitchwarps across the rest of the Munchers to land on the solid quartz ground. She chased Peridot into a maze of stacks of
music blocks. “Give up, Candy Clod, you can’t chase me forever!” Peridot hovered in place above, since Vanellope could bounce on the music blocks, she attempted to fly up and grab the Program’s legs, but the hologram dispersed.

Vanellope glitched up into a tunnel of music blocks, and by this time was getting annoyed by their sounds every time she bounced. Flask Robonoids were also bouncing around, constantly flipping as they shot their healing goo. Vanellope had to stay clear of the goop spots, needing to glitchwarp to bare areas with good precision on her way through the tunnel. She made it to an outside area, miles over the ground, with a great view of the violet rainbow sky. The music blocks were very far apart, it took more precise glitching to land on the tiny bounce pads, while XANA Hornets tried to shoot her from the sides. Vanellope glitchwarped across a larger gap, but didn’t make it to the cliff—thankfully, a Bullet Bill popped out of nowhere, bounced her upward, and she made it. She chased the Mountain Dew-colored Program across another quartz valley. (End song.)

Peridot landed on the ground and retreated behind a mount, leaning against it to catch her breath. “I expected the ‘Vanellope’ to be some kind of virus, but this brat’s beyond annoying. And those little things that float with her… What kind of Cybersite-?” Vanellope glomped her left leg. “WHAT?!” Get the heck off me, you stupid-!” She shook her leg and punched the child’s head.

“No!” Vanel withstood the punches. “I wanna know why you’re working for XANA. You don’t look like one of his robots, so…”

“That’s none of your business, you pesky glitch! Now get your snotty doll-hands off me!” Peridot aimed her finger laser and blasted, but Vanellope dodged back in time. She spun her helicopter and balled up, taking flight into the violet sky. “Next time you mess with my job, I’ll tear up your pixels worse than numerous resizes on Photoshop. Good-bye, Candy Clod!”

Vanellope watched as the green dot shrunk into the violet sky. “First I’m going after green spirits, now green Teenage Robots. What am I even doing again?”

“You must follow!” the Zoni stated. “Her fixing must be yours!”

Okay, but for the record, I don’t get many chapters in this story, and I don’t wanna spend them chasing some weirdo. I mean, how can XANA even stand a girl like her? She sounds like her nose is congested, and all her gloating gives me a headache, using cheap tricks to fight me, and making fun of my hair, XANA has the worst taste in…” The Zoni stared at Vanellope in disbelief as she drew on. …She later caught up to her words, reflecting on herself. “Wow, I just hurt my own feelings. …So, uh, where’s she going?”

After Peridot left that Cybersite’s atmosphere, she flew into a dark ship. She caught her breath once more, bending over as she planted her hands against her yellow kneecaps. “Well, that was slapdash, C+ work if anything.” XANA told her reprovingly. “I didn’t expect you to beat Vanellope, but was that the best you had to offer?”

“For your information, I almost had her before you decided to go RINGING in my ear!” Peridot argued.

“And I went ringing in your ear because you broke part of the SITE!”

“WHAT THE HECK’S WRONG with this place, anyway?! The cracks in the ground are one thing, but there’s junk all over the place! What’d you do to this world?”

“Lesser Lord Ragaj ordered me to fix this dump of a Cyberspace, but my means of doing so are quote-on-quote ‘sloppy’, and he needs this place fixed. You see, Peridot, this isn’t any average
Cyberspace: this entire dimension exists within the mainframe of the Great Clock’s computer, the source of all time in the universe. Everything in this world is recorded memory of what exists of the First Dimension. But based on Lord Gnik’s information, this space is also connected with that First Dimension, that’s why he wants it fixed! And I hereby order you to fulfill your duty!”

“I WILL fulfill it, you square-headed dork! As long as you keep YOUR end of the deal! I fix this space for you, and YOU take me to see Yellow Diamond! You said you knew where she was!”

“Patience, girl. You’ll get to see your Diamond again. As long as you cooperate, you have Master X.A.N.A.’s word.”

“Sigh… Okay.” Peridot sighed calmly, internally believing he would keep true to his word.

“Now then… despite your performance with Vanellope, your repair skills are exceptional thus far. It’s time for your next test.” XANA opened a compartment in the wall, rifling through junk. “One of my cohorts brought this to me. It happens to be the leader of those Zoni creatures you saw fluttering around Vanellope. He’s suffered some damages, so I need you to mend him to our control. Now… get to work!” He threw Clank’s unmoving body on the floor.

**Peri the Dotypus comes from **Steven Universe** if you don’t know. ;P And Shade the Echidna is from **Sonic Chronicles**, after all this time, you finally know who she is. ;P Sorry about the short stages, though. Next time, Emily’s next stage, and Carol’s first stage! Kids, don’t watch the movie **Minions**!
Team Emily goes to Karakura Town to help Sector JP with the monkey infestation. Carol Masterson goes to rescue Team Sandman.

I couldn't think of a good chapter title. X/ Lots of foreshadowing in this chapter. I’m not just talking about the direct foreshadows. Today’s code uses A1Z26 Cipher.

Chapter 36: Assimilation and Infiltration

Sector L’s boat; en route to Japan

If there’s one thing you had to love about KND ships, it’s that they were efficiently fast, especially when powered by waterbenders. Team Emily, Sector L, and the Sidneys made it to Japan by 11:00 in the morning. …The sail was hell.

“B-O-A-T R-I-D-E S-O-N-G Song!” Spongebob was hurriedly playing a small guitar while Jessie and Sandy sang along. They repeated this verse over and over, faster and faster. …Everyone else had their ears clamped shut. “But it would help iiiiif you just siiiing aloooong!”

“That statement is contradictory because our lungs would hurt along with our ears!” Emily yelled.

“Actually, it’s statistically impossible to hurt one’s ears with one’s own voice, not to mention our soundwaves regulate the soundwaves coming toward us, I’m just not a singer!” Sheldon explained quickly.

“You forgot to mention how sound travels faster through liquid, and by liquid, I mean Logia waterbenders,” Eva said quickly, “so with that in mind, SHUT THEM UP!!”

Gary and Sarah shoved their Stun Clubs into Spongebob’s mouth. “Ther’ we go.” Sarah said. “As soon as we get to Japan, y’all are hopping train to this ‘Boggly Grove’ and gettin’ out of our hair.”

“While we have a moment of peace, why the heck hasn’t Spongebob suffocated by now?” Gary questioned.

“Bai-ai-ai! You silly!” Spongebob beamed. “Moisture floats in the air around us, so I don’t need to be in water to breathe!”

“Dude, these H2O particles are too small for even a normal sponge to absorb on its own.” Emily pointed out.

“Emily, since we’re going to Japan, I thought it would be wise for us to brush up on the language,” Sheldon spoke thoughtfully, reading a Japanese Language book. “There’s only so much manga and anime could teach us, so let’s practice. Ahem: Aisatsu, faro. Anita wa sago no your atarshi episoto kotaga walkinmart taka?”

“We just waged war against Japan, didn’t we?” Danny asked.
“I hope not, ‘cause we’re almost to the island.” Melody replied as they spotted the incoming shore. She and her mother were waving their arms, using waterbending to make the waves push the boat. “Where is Sector JP, again?”

“Shikoku Island, Karakura Town, located at least 537 miles after the shoreline.” Emily informed.

“Sigh, ‘guess we’re gonna have to walk.” Danny sighed miserably.

“No we won’t!” Spongebob spoke brightly. “I can drive us there easy!” The young sponge went for the vessel’s steering wheel.

Melody perked in fright, just realizing. “Wait, Spongebob, DON’T-!”

“FLOOR IT!!” Spongebob stomped the gas pedal (apparently boats have that), and the ship made a screeching sound like tire wheels as it boosted across the water, toward the shore. The passengers screamed and held on for their lives as the boat flew up the coast like a ramp, scraping along the ground as it raced across the landscape.

“TURN LEFT!” Eva screamed, unable to keep her watery skin on. “NO, YOUR OTHER LEFT! WATCH OUT FOR THAT BABY! THROUGH THE RING OF FIRE! DO A U-TURN! WAAAAAAAHH!”

Several houses and several townspeople were blown away, they were looking to millions of dollars (or yen) in property damage. “Dr. Cooper,” Emily cried, “I know that tiring long walks are the illogical fallacy when crossing a country, in this case I think we should make an exception!”

“I AGREE!” Sheldon screamed.

So with that, the four members of Team Emily let go and flew off, bumping against a dirt road. As Emily recomposed herself, fixing her glasses, she noticed the sign by the road. She used her glasses to scan the Japanese letters, translating them. *Karakura Town: 1 minute away by train.* “Holy eggroll! We made it!”

“Dern right we did.” Sarah said as she took out her R.A.D.A.R., which was beeping crazily. “There’s monkeys all over the place.”

“Considering this is Japan, I expect we’ll be seeing a share of anime parodies.” Gary assumed.

“In that case, we should count on the monkeys to be super slow. Huhu!” Emily laughed. “You think Melody and the others are okay?”

“Assuming they haven’t puffed up and exploded.” Sarah remarked. “Besides, we can look for ‘em after we go to Sector JP. I don’t wanna imagine the cruddy dubs these apes try to make.” (Play “Wabi Sabi Wall” from *Ape Escape*)

*Stage 47: Animonkey Tour*

*Mission: Catch 20 monkeys and get to Sector JP!*

At a nearby train station, two monkeys were playing cards on a table. One was dressed like Yugi Muto, the other like Jaden Yuki (from their respective *Yu-Gi-Oh* series). Sarah shot Yugi with her slingshot, then Jaden reacted by chucking his cards like shurikens, scratching the Jones siblings in the sides as they winced, while Sheldon nimbly dodged with Observation Haki. Yugi recovered as
they both threw card shurikens, with neither the Jones’ or Emily able to get close. “Okay, Mr. Haki, make yourself useful!” Emily tossed Sheldon her T.E.L.A.-N.E.T.. The lanky scientist complied and dodged his way to the Pipo Yugi, swinging the net to catch the ape. During Jaden’s distraction, Sarah and Gary pelted him with pellets, allowing Sheldon to catch.

“You know, if Nintendo had licensed Ape Escape on their consoles, this would make an astounding Wii-motion game!” Sheldon commented as he returned Emily’s net.

“No kiddin’!” Emily agreed as the four entered the vacant train station. They saw the track to their left was tilted open like a drawbridge, but there wasn’t a switch in the immediate area. The group used their R.A.D.A.R. and detected a monkey hiding behind one of many posters, in which this one advertised Pocari Sweat. Emily shot the poster open with her slingshot, revealing a monkey dressed like Naoto from Rail Wars. The Pipo panicked and ran around the station, but Gary chased him himself to catch while Emily hit the switch in the ape’s hiding spot. The drawbridge came down and connected, and in an instant, a white train sped up from the right. Before boarding on, Sarah used the Sky Flyer to float onto the train’s roof, then the station’s roof, grabbing a 4x4 piece.

“Let’s get to town!” Emily said before they boarded the vessel and whipped across the grasslands.

In less than a minute, the train dropped them off at a station in town. The four (or at least the main three, Sheldon stayed behind) hurried to a city street where a monkey dressed like Ash was having a Pokémon battle with a monkey dressed like Brock. They were using real Pokémon; Ash a Piplup and Brock Geodude. After they saw Team Emily, however, Geodude defended the apes by punching the kids back if they got close, and Piplup assisted him using Water Beam. Their exploding pellets couldn’t harm the Geodude, so they let the Pipos be for now. Gary picked up a 4x4 piece in an alley on their right, then they ventured down a slope leading onto the pier of a canal. Water spouts squirted up all around the area, and surfing along them was a monkey dressed like Sun Seto from My Bride Is a Mermaid. When Emily dove in the nearest spout, using the Water Net to swim, the ring of spouts either rose high or sunk low going counterclockwise, and Emily had to swim along them as the Pipo tried to outrun her. She had to maneuver up as a spout rose, or down when it sunk, so she would keep her speed and allow her to catch the mermaid monkey.

She swam back to her friends as they returned to the street, following it to the front yard of a high school. They entered the white building and encountered Nefarious Drones (not that they knew who Nefarious was), who extracted their buzzsaws and lashed them at the four. “AAAH!” Sheldon panicked, narrowly dodging their extended arms. He cowered behind Emily, “I should’ve warned you, while my moral support is absolute, in a physical confrontation, I will be less than useless.”

“Choke it up, Shelly.” Emily and co. blasted the drones using exploding pellets, then ran against them with Super Hoops. They saw a team of Protomantises marching up from down the hall, so with little desire to fight the robots, the team retreated into the girls’ bathroom. “Wait, we shouldn’t go in here!” Emily realized. “The spirit of Hanako might be haunting one of the toilets!”

“Please,” Sheldon remarked smartly, “that legend’s as believable as Moaning Myrtle having lunch at Arby’s.”

“Hehehe!” came a little girl’s giggle.

“What was that?” Sheldon whipped around. Curious, Gary approached the farthest bathroom stall and knocked three times. The stall nearest the entrance swung open on its own, so all four stepped in, both nervous and cautious. Emily flushed the toilet, then the stall on the far end exploded open. “Hehehe!” A little girl ghost with black hair and a red dress flew out. She wore a bright smile and slowly drifted toward the group. “Good Lord, someone left their hologram projector in here.” Sheldon said.
“You think there’s something in the stall?” Gary questioned.

“I ain’t tangoin’ with that ghost!” Sarah yelled.

Emily sidestepped left-and-right, but Hanako stayed aligned with her. “Sheldon, let’s play Don’t Touch the Hologram.” Emily said, pushing him forward. “You first.”

Rolling his eyes, Sheldon played along, stepping left-and-right as he waited for an opening. “Huu-uu!” He gasped when Hanako zipped forward suddenly, dodging around the spirit, he ran to her stall, dodged again when she zipped to him, then Sheldon rushed into the stall. “There’s a bus pass in the toilet—honestly, why do Japanese high schoolers care for their belongings so poorly?”

“Get the pass, Sheldon!” Emily yelled, seeing Hanako float into the stall. With repulse, Sheldon reached into the toilet to pick it up. When Hanako reached him, she whiffed and put on a disgusted look.

“You smell awful!” With that, the ghost faded away. When the group left the bathroom, the Protomantises were still guarding the hallway, so they ran into a classroom opposite. Each desk had a cardboard Pipo Monkey with a real blaring helmet. ‘Course, anyone who knew their anime knew the only real monkey was sitting in the back, gazing reflectively out a window. Sarah got down and crawled in-between the desks to sneak up and net the monkey dressed like Kiyo from Zatch Bell. With that, the team left the school and continued further across the road, arriving at a restaurant called Ichiraku Ramen. They peeped inside and saw two monkeys, sitting across from each other at a table and staring intently. They were dressed like Monkey D. Luffy and Naruto Uzumaki.

Before attempting to net the apes, Emily crawled around the tables to a camera that was aimed at them. She pressed the switch to record the staring monkeys. Five episodes later. The caption read. With that, Sarah rushed up to net the Luffy monkey, while Naruto leaped away with ninja agility and threw shurikens. Gary tossed Sheldon his net as the adult dodged the stars, attempting to swing at Naruto while the monkey was perched on the wall, but the Shadow Clone puffed into smoke. Sheldon evasively dodged the Naruto that appeared behind him, swung the net, but that Shadow Clone poofed. When a Naruto dropped down from the ceiling, Sheldon swung upward and successfully netted the ape.

The heroes left the restaurant and turned another corner of the street to find a bus stop. Sheldon held up the toilet water-covered pass to the sign, and as if it were programmed, a bus swooped by, its destination set for Bath Springs. The speedy vehicle drove them out of town in seconds, to a mountainous area where the sloping path led to a bathhouse. They walked up a slope and arrived at a tall ledge where they could Sky Fly. But before doing so, the R.A.D.A.R. detected a monkey around the right side: the ape was clutching the cliff with fear in her eyes, and was dressed like Aoi from Encouragement of Climb. “I ain’t even heard of some of these anime.” Sarah mentioned as she leapt to net the monkey, then Sky Fly back onto their foothold. With that, they flew up onto the ledge (throwing one of their Sky Flyers down for Sheldon to come up), and trekked up a hill with lots of bushes on the sides.

A tiny spidermonkey dressed like Doraemon was running back-and-forth between bushes, but like the spidermonkeys back in Nashville, the ape could dodge between the strings of their nets if they tried to catch it. They let the tiny cat be and headed to an old wooden shack atop this hill. The tavern was empty, except for two apes, one dressed like Spike from Cowboy Bebop, and the other like Dandy from Space Dandy. The two were running around the bar blasting guns at each other, but when they noticed the kids, the gunfire was directed at them. Both teams took cover behind the tables, and Sarah passed Sheldon her T.E.L.A.-N.E.T.. The lanky scientist dodged the guns and
maneuvered toward the Spike ape, while Emily used the Super Hoop to dash around the tables and capture Dandy.

They found a 4x4 piece from the shelf behind the counter, then left the bar to follow the next route up the hill. A tank was stationed at the end of this hill, shooting cannonballs to random areas of the path every half-second. When Sarah rushed on the path with her Super Hoop, the cannon was desperately trying to shoot her, Sarah kept an eye on the bombshells’ positions and dodged them going forward. She made it to the tank and climbed up to its cockpit to break the monkey’s protective glass. The ape was dressed like Lutgalnikov from *Miritari*, but that didn’t stop Sarah from catching her. When her friends caught up, the four finally entered the bathhouse. The wooden wall was sealed, blocking any means of peeping, except for the tiny opening on the bottom. The sign read ‘Fanservice Hour.’ “Didn’t we just do a ‘Fanservice’ chapter?” Gary asked.

“I believe that particular Fanservice was a play on words based around the name and primary desires of a certain person,” Sheldon explained, “while actual fanservice is a means of a fictional series ‘serving’ its fans by some deluded means, i.e. half-naked animated females.”

Inside a pot in the corner, Emily discovered another small 4x4 piece. “I know just what to make with this!” She combined the four tiny pieces and created a red toy car with remote control.

**Kids Next Door: C.A.M.-C.A.R.**

Camera Active Machinery Can Accomplish Reconnaissance

“I also built a tiny net inside for catching spidermonkeys!” Emily spoke brightly. “For you, Dr. Cooper. Because you’re old enough.”

“Oh, please.” Sheldon took the remote. “I enjoy the occasional anime now and again, but not for such pointless filler.” He drove the car through the opening, and the remote’s monitor depicted the scene inside the hot spring. A monkey dressed like Lucy from *Fairy Tail* was washing a monkey dressed like Orihime from *Bleach*. There were lilipads floating in the water, so Sheldon carefully drove the car across. He made it to a central platform with a button, which the car could press and open the wooden fence for the team to get in.

But at the same time, a door that was atop a group of short mounts came open, and another monkey stepped out. She was dressed like Sailor Moon, posing her sexy body, and the Orihime and Lucy monkeys gaped. They felt ashamed of their selves. Sarah and Emily rolled their eyes before netting the two monkeys, and when Gary tried shooting Sailor Moon with the slingshot, the ape was nimble as she jumped down the mounts and around the spring. The three kids ran to separate areas with their Super Hoops in attempt to corner the monkey, until Gary was able to catch her at her jumping spot. Before moving on, the group returned to the hill area with the bushes, with Sheldon controlling the C.A.M.-C.A.R. to chase the Doraemon monkey. He pushed a button to catch the tiny ape in the car’s net, warping him.

They also decided to board the bus back to town, to the spot where the Ash and Brock monkeys were still battling. The kids hid as Sheldon sent the C.A.M.-C.A.R. to draw Geodude’s attention, the Rock-type chasing the tiny car. Sarah and Gary shot pellets at Piplup (that’s mean) so Emily could run out and net Ash. Brock tried to run away, but the toy car came back to ram and knock him down, scoring another catch for Emily. With that, they returned to the bathhouse and climbed the mounts to exit the door Sailor Moon came out of. They viewed a hill that led all the way up to a treehouse growing from a tower. “I thought Sector JP was supposed to be a stealth-based sector.” Sarah pointed out.

“The old Sector JP was.” Emily replied. “This Sector JP didn’t take after them.”
Partway up the hill, they came to a flat field where a red curtain was hanging over a stage, likely built there by the apes. Spotlights came on, and the curtains opened to reveal the three *Steven Universe* monkeys. A Pipo dressed like Pearl made a graceful pose, and an unseen audience applauded her. A taller monkey dressed like Garnet flexed his/her fists, and there was more applause. A monkey dressed like Amethyst swayed her hip… a cricket was chirping somewhere. Angered, the monkey fingered all *SU* fans. The Pearl monkey majestically skipped around the field as Sarah chased, but the Amethyst monkey kept a safe distance and whipped the kids off their feet. The Garnet monkey leapt forth and tried to crush Emily with its fists, but she rolled away just in time.

Emily began beating Garnet with her Stun Club, but was punched in the face and knocked several feet. While Sarah was dodging Amethyst’s whips, Sheldon controlled the C.A.M.-C.A.R. to get behind the monkey and ram her feet, knocking her over as Sarah ran over to capture. Gary was able to chase Pearl with no disruptions, and after ramming her with the Super Hoop a few times, he caught her. Emily dealt a few hits against Garnet at a time, dodging her fists afterward, until finally the robotic body was ready to explode. She broke into Ruby and Sapphire monkeys (spoiler alert), and before they fused again, Emily caught Sapphire. Ruby burned with rage and punched Emily in the back, then dodged Gary’s Stun Club. Sarah ambushed and whacked the monkey, and before he could retaliate, Emily netted Ruby. (End song.)

With nothing else to disrupt them, the kids and adult hurried up to Sector JP’s treehouse. A swarm of Nefarious Drones was steadily approaching the tower, but Team Emily gaped when a storm of colorful fireworks rained down upon and exploded on the robots, covering them with sticky confetti. “*Now’s your chance, Ururu!*” a girl’s voice called from the treehouse.

“O-Okay, Kodama.” A girl wearing a red jumpsuit with a “K” on it, along with bat wings and a devil’s tail, flew overhead and rapidly blasted the robots with guns. She was Numbuh Centipounds, Ururu Tsumugiya, who had black pigtails sticking out of her red helmet, and bluish-purple eyes behind her green visor.

“HEY! Are you with Sector JP?” Emily yelled up at her.

“Oh?” Ururu looked their direction from midair. “Who are you guys?”

“AN ADULT!” cried another voice. Sheldon looked left with surprise, seeing a red-haired boy in a white T-shirt and blue pants that were rolled up at the end, fly at Sheldon with a giant baseball bat ready. “No one gets past Sector JP!”

Sheldon ducked the swing with his Haki, and the boy flew over and crashed against a tree. “Jinta-kun, wait!” Ururu yelled with her soft voice. “I-I think they came to help us.”

“Yes!” Emily replied with a sure and serious look. “We’re on a mission to recover all the monkeys that escaped from my grandpa’s lab! As well as, various other places in the world. Are one of you guys the leader?”

“No, Karin’s fighting some monkeys in the soccer field out back.” Jinta pointed. “We still gotta take care of some monkeys in the treehouse, so can you guys help her?”

“Excuse me, but I believe you meant to say she’s in the football field—honestly, you’re Japanese, you should know this.” Sheldon said reprovingly.

“Sure, we’ll help your leader.” Emily nodded. “Come on, guys!”

A girl with short, raven-black hair and dark-gray eyes was hunched over and panting on the soccer
field. She wore a white shirt under a black sleeveless shirt with a yellow kitten face, blackish-blue shorts, and white gym shoes. She glared at a tall, blue monkey with a white T-shirt and a blaring-red Pipo Helmet, who stood with several lesser Pipos behind him. “The art of soccer isn’t your everyday ‘Kick the can down the sidewalk.’” Blue Monkey stated, holding the metal soccerball under his arm. “It needs precision and durability! But you’re a thousand years too early to be taking me!”

The girl, Numbuh Twelve Points To Zero (12-0), Karin Kurosaki, huffed and stood up straight. “The art of soccer also needs LEGWORK, dumbass. And when I say ‘legwork,’ ROBO legs don’t cut it!”

“The art of soccer requires a keen mind!” Blue Monkey was wearing sturdy mechanical legs, as were his teammates. “And a keen mind uses the best strategy! Against our speed and strength, you twerps fall short!”

Karin readied herself with a firm stance, “I’ll show YOU who falls short!”

“Numbuh 12-0, wait!” Karin looked right when Emily ran over—the nerd tripped and fell on her front.

“Who’re you?” Karin questioned.

Emily jumped up and saluted, “Numbuh 303 from the KND Museum of Artifacts, best scientist in the organization! You can take a breather now, ‘cause our team can handle this.”

“No thanks.” Karin stated simply, walking forward with an unphased stare at the monkey. “I’m in the middle of teaching this guy a lesson.”

“Hehehe.” Emily blushed. “Be that as it may, their technology has advantage over your natural strength alone. I strongly advise you allow us to assist you.” She held up her Stun Club and Slingshot.

“This game just started, so I’m not throwing in the towel, yet.” Karin replied firmly. She held her right leg up and rubbed under the knee, “You probably didn’t notice ‘cause you stayed away from that area, but I won 200 soccer matches during Arctic Training. I developed something called ‘Inhumanly Strongism.’ So if I could beat that many twerps, I think I’ll be alright here.”

“It may be safe to say you are incredibly talented, but judging by the solidity of that steel ball, plus the relative speed it would accumulate due to the momentum of robotic leg kicks, the chances of you winning this match without aid are-“

Karin grabbed Emily by the hair, threw her up in the air, and—“AAAAAAHHHHH!” sent her flying to the treehouse with a kick. “Twelve to Zero.” Karin concluded.

“OW!” Jinta screamed from the treehouse—Emily had crashed into him when she flew. “YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE, Karin!”

“BUZZ OFF, Jinta!” Karin yelled. She narrowed her eyes on Blue Monkey again.

“Twelve To Zero, eh?” Blue Monkey raised a brow. “I think it’s a game then.” One of his Pipos pressed a remote, encasing the soccer field inside an electric barrier. “The shield only goes down when 12 gets the crown. The team that loses gets buried 6 feet underground. After the barrier’s energy transmits to and shocks them to death. Already we outnumber you 9 monkeys to one. You’ve signed a death contract when you took that codename, Numbuh 12-0. And I’ll be your Reaper.” (Play “Monkey Soccer” from Ape Escape 2!)
Blue Monkey served first and kicked the metal ball at Karin, who swung her leg powerfully and rocketed the ball toward the enemies’ net. It flew past Blue Monkey, but a Pipo kicked it to one on Karin’s right, he kicked it to another close to her left, he sent the ball at Karin’s face, she flipped, kicked the ball away, but another Pipo kicked it into Karin’s net. When the Score 1 was marked on their board, energy from the barrier came down and dealt a shock to the Sector Leader. “Nnnnnn!”

“HA ha ha!” Blue Monkey laughed. “Each scorer gives a free shock to the enemy! That should slow you down.”

Karin gritted her teeth in anger, standing straight up as that same Pipo Monkey kicked first. Another Pipo kicked it from Karin’s right just when she was about to, she watched a Pipo kick it to a far right one, then a left one, to Blue, who kicked to Karin’s net, the girl jumping in the way to block, but it collided with her chest and shoved her into the net as well. She screamed as she endured the shock. “Nobody blocks this ball!” The next round started, Blue Monkey kicked the ball to a Pipo, he kicked at Karin, who flew her leg upward and sent the ball to the air (the metal sphere went through the barrier). It came down, Karin jumped, spun, and sent the ball rocketing over the monkeys to their net. Energy from the shield came down to zap them all. “Good thing I know how to kick them.” Karin remarked.

After the ball was handed back to her, Karin threw it in the air, then jumped and flipped upside-down as she kicked it forcefully, bouncing off Blue Monkey’s face, about to fly over their goal, then a Pipo leaped up and kicked it to her, but Karin smirked as she kicked it toward a Pipo near the left, bounced it off his face, and into their goal. The score was even 2-to-2, and Karin was ready for more after taking the ball and kicking it to a Pipo on the right. The ape kicked it to one in the air, who sent it to Karin’s goal, while said girl kicked it skyward before sending it to Blue Monkey. He kicked it back to her, she kicked it back, he kicked it back, she kicked it, a Pipo kicked it to Karin’s right, then she sent it into their goal. Blue Monkey angrily bonked that Pipo’s head, but as he wasn’t paying attention, he panicked and ducked when Karin kicked the soccerball right over him, into the goal. “You apes would have better luck kicking a barrel of bananas.”

“Or perhaps we’ll have better luck kicking YOU. Rudy, Ginger, Max, Ophelia, get her!” Four of the Pipo Monkeys screeched and leapt to Karin, the girl reacting quick as she dodged their robo-leg kicks and knocked them away. The ball was still on the ground at her side, so another Pipo Monkey rushed to send it in her goal. Karin was dealt a shock, then the Pipos kicked her upside the face, bumping her against the goal’s pole while Blue Monkey had the honor of getting another score. After enduring another shock, Karin furiously tried to kick the monkeys away, but when the ball flew to her goal, she jumped in attempt to bonk it with her head, but the metal object knocked her into the goal again, giving her a bloody nose and a black eye. “The score is 5-to-4 now.” Blue Monkey smirked, tossing the ball up and down in his hand.

She took a few seconds to recompose herself, listening to the excited screeches and “UKKIIIS!” of the monkeys. “GrrrrRRRRR!” Anger fueled the girl’s form, she channeled it all into her foot as she kicked the ball, rocketing into Blue Monkey’s face and sending him flying back into his goal. Still enraged, Karin wiped the blood off her face and sloshed it into a Pipo’s eyes. The four enemy monkeys ran at her to attack, but Karin nimbly turned and jabbed her right foot to each one, sending them against the barrier. Another Pipo came to kick the ball, Karin planted her hands on the ground, bent her legs toward the monkey, caught him between, then pushed herself to the air as she spun and hurled him to Blue Monkey. With her momentum still going, she kicked the ball
during her descent to the ground, and it flew into the enemy’s goal. “6-to-5, buddy! You gonna cry yet, or have I not BEAT you enough?”

“I think it’s time we start gettin’ DIRTY!” Blue Monkey served the ball himself, Karin kicked it straight in the air, kicked it a few feet forward and higher when it came down, then she jumped, planted her feet against the goal’s top pole, then kicked off it to swing a momentous kick into the enemy goal. The monkeys grew angry after the shock, Karin kept sharp eyes on them as they subtly kicked it around the ground. A Pipo leaped at her from behind, she kicked her foot up behind her to knock him away, then the metal ball flew at her, she ducked in panic as it hit her goal, making the score 7-6. They got first serve, Karin kicked the ball to the far left corner, a Pipo kicked it to the far right, Karin ran and dodged the pursuing angry Pipos, then the ball flew into her goal. Karin kicked the angry Pipos away, and when the ball flew to her goal again, she jumped to kick it leftward, bouncing against one of the enemy Pipos, back to her before she sent it at Blue Monkey, bouncing off him to the left, then a Pipo panickingly kicked it into their own goal. 8-7.

“Frap this!” Blue Monkey cursed. At his command, several outside monkeys threw more metal balls into the barrier, making a total of five.

“WHAT?! You can’t be serious!” Karin exclaimed. “Only one ball can be on the field!”

“So there’s only gonna BE one ball!” When Blue Monkey brought each metal ball together, Karin gaped with horror: they all formed into a giant metal soccerball, big enough to squish the girl flat. “Since it’s still five balls, the scorer gets five points. In other words, winner takes all!” Blue Monkey smirked. “I’m afraid your fancy footwork won’t cut it. All together, boys!”

The 9 monkeys kicked the giant ball together, and Karin’s eyes grew wide as it rolled closer. She had to get out of the way, but if it passed her goal, it was over anyway. If she was gonna go down today, she wouldn’t go down a coward. Karin jumped to her goal, grabbed the top bar, and kicked both legs outward when the ball came as they made contact. “Hnnnnnnuuuuuu!” Her legs were bent as the ball began to squish her. The monkeys were still pushing the ball from their side, Karin felt her internal pressure decreasing. It was amazing she was keeping it back for so long with her own strength. …It was because she couldn’t let this ball pass, for many reasons: she was leader of Sector JP, she had to protect her treehouse, she had to protect her title as KND’s greatest soccer star, and she had to become the soccer champion of the world. Never in all her years would she let a pack of apes, and their oversized metal ball, crush her mighty legs like sticks.

With every last ounce of strength, Karin stretched her legs straight and pushed the ball. “UKKIII!” The apes panicked as she heard several of them crushed, their robot legs breaking to pieces. “WAAAAAH!” Blue Monkey shared this fate, his goal was crushed, and Karin watched with utmost satisfaction as the barrier’s being was channeled to each of their bodies. “AAAAAAAAAHBBBBBBBBB!”

Blue Monkey and his Pipos were covered with soot. Since each of them took a share of electricity, none of them were dead; that’s not to say they weren’t in a lot of pain. Karin stared at them with her smug glare, casually kicking the normal metal ball up and down. Sarah and Gary approached her with nets ready. “Mind if we clean up?” Gary asked.

“Be my guest.” So with that, the Jones siblings ran around and netted each monkey. Sarah saved Blue Monkey for last, and the commander vanished into light within her net. (End song.)

“Ahhhh.” Sarah sighed with relief, stuffing her net in her Infi-Cube. “It feels nice when Emily doesn’t get the glory in a boss fight. Say, you wanna join our monkey-fightin’ squad?” she asked Karin.
“Hmm. I’ll think about it.” she shrugged. After all, she did get all the high scores in the *Ape Escape* games.

They all returned to Sector JP’s treehouse, having successfully captured the monkeys running rampant. They had time to get acquainted with the JP members, including Numbuh Chinese New Year, Kodama. Her attire greatly stood out among her teammates, a blue robe with yellow spiked explosion designs, purplish-red eyeliner, a light-red knotted headband, and wooden sandals.

Karin was sat with her legs spread across the couch while her twin sister, Yuzu placed a warm towel over her legs. Yuzu (Numbuh 5 Degrees) had yellowish-brown hair, brown eyes, and wore a yellow shirt with a white apron. “Karin, you should’ve let them handle it.” Yuzu spoke scoldingly. “You know better than to sprain your legs kicking a metal ball. Let alone one that’s five times your size.”

“I didn’t sprain them, they just got a little stiff. Besides, I still kicked his butt.” Karin smirked proudly and flexed an arm, “I’m the soccer champion of the world.”

“Before this escalates, I can’t let this illogicality go on any longer,” Sheldon spoke up, “just because you speak English, why are you classifying the sport as ‘soccer’ and not ‘football’?”

“I don’t know, it USED to be called ‘football,’ but they changed it to soccer five years ago.” Karin stated. “My dad says it’s ‘cause America took over.”

“Oh dear, of course.” Sheldon smacked his forehead. “How could I not remember? For the past 12 years, America’s been assimilating other countries one after another. Part of some ‘New World Order’ type of malarkey.”

“Yeah, and it totally STINKS, too.” Jinta replied hotly. “All of our anime are crappy dubs, our riceballs have jelly and custard in them, AND WHAT THE HECK ARE THESE FORKS?!” He angrily held up the silver utensil. “I grew up on chopsticks, dang it!”

“It isn’t so bad.” Ururu smiled. Without her Tiny Devil jumpsuit, she wore a white shirt with a pink flower skirt and sandals. She had blush marks on her cute face. “You could look at it as a way of being multi-cultural. I think these Fritos are really delicious!”

“SAVE HER, SHE’S BEING BRAINWASHED!” Jinta grabbed her around the neck and twisted his knuckles against her head.

“Ow! St-Stop it, Jinta- ow!”

“Personally, I don’t care what they call it. I just wanna kick SOME kind of ball around and be good at it.” Karin replied, kicking her soccerball upward a few times.

“On the bright side, I get to experiment with America-brand fireworks.” Kodama mentioned with a smile. “It’s been helping my arsenal a ton!”

“Who wants some American chocolate chip cookiiieees?” Yuzu sang as she brought a tray of the steaming pastries.

“NOOOOO! STOP THE ASSIMILATION!” Jinta raised his giant baseball bat and smashed the tray to the floor, much to Yuzu’s horror.

“They kinda teach us all this in Social Studies.” Emily replied. “And all of this assimilation was thanks to James McGarfield. Currently the 46th President of the U.S., and by extension, all of its assimilated nations.”
“Course, before that, the 45th president, Kevin James ran them.” Gary followed. “Still can’t believe it though, comedian to president in a few short years. ‘Guess that’s the American dream.”

“You guys know why they’re assimilating everyone, right?” Jinta asked with a scowl. “The World Government wants ‘em to it. Because, in reality, they’re THE ILLUMINATI!” With gusto, the red-haired boy whipped out an American dollar, pointing out the pyramid with an eye on it. “They won’t stop until everyone is bowing to the New World Order! And do you know what they’ll do after that?! They’ll trap all our souls inside a Magic 8 Ball while a giant skeleton demon plays with us like dolls, turning us into poorly-drawn characters using MS Paint, as we live the rest of Time’s existence completely unaware-!!”

Karin punched the boy in the head, frowning angrily. “You and your crazy conspiracy theories. Sigh, this entire thing is getting completely off track. You were supposed to tell us about these monkeys, not a basic recent-history lesson.”

“My, but who says the two subjects can’t be one in the same?” a nasally voice echoed from outside.

They all gasped and rushed to a rooftop balcony. A fleet of Pipo Monkey ships (designed like giant robot monkey heads) surrounded the treehouse, led by a white ape on a floating chair. “Specter!” Emily recognized him.

“Ahh, Dr. Cooper.” Specter smiled handsomely at the aforementioned, his voice still nasally due to his missing modifier. “That was quite a nifty move you pulled back in Texas. I wasn’t happy to hear the news. Perhaps you don’t want your dear Amy safe after all.”

“You might be able to use threats in attempt to coax me to comply with your desires, but that only accentuates how much you need my intellect in order to proceed.” Sheldon folded his arms in a sure fashion. “Should any fate befall Amy, you will have no means of convincing me, and taking her feeble skin and physical strength into account, any means of torture are risky in that sense, ergo it seems you’re at a loss.”

“Hm hm hm, dear boy.” Specter chuckled snootily. “Your technology would be convenient for us, but we could manage without you. It should suffice you to know we had our own reasons for kidnapping Amy. I wouldn’t mind doing away with you right now, but I do not wish to harm this treehouse. I’m looking to turn this base into my own anime broadcast station. I expected Blue Monkey to get defeated, which is why I was waiting in the wings. Once we get to broadcasting our anime, we’ll be able to brainwash millions! I’m sure your minds must be tired from all that thinking.”

“I would hope that statement isn’t directed at Jinta.” Karin smirked.

“Oh, you just WAIT for the right moment and-” Jinta retorted.

“Why are you wasting time with this brainwashing crud?” Emily questioned. “You know the Apocalypse is coming, right?”

“All the more to make the best of things.” Specter shrugged. “So with that in mind, I really don’t want to get in a fight. Perhaps this should lighten the mood. LUXURY BEEEEAM!” He pushed a button.

“DON’T LOOK!” Karin and Sheldon exclaimed—everybody whipped the opposite direction and shut their eyes. The monkey ships opened to reveal green-and-orange hypno wheels. Yuzu didn’t react in time, so the yellow-haired Kurosaki twin was brainwashed. “Ugh, dammit, Yuzu.” Still
keeping her back toward the wheel, Karin grabbed her sister in her arms and carried her, running with the others. “Everybody get into our C.O.O.L.-B.U.S., we’ll find someplace to hang out.”

The operatives and Sheldon boarded a Japanese-style C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. and took off from the underground hangar, fastly escaping under the fleet of Pipos.

“Oh darn, they’ve escaped. No matter. My new anime shows will have dub and sub-lovers alike under our control! Chimp Tail, Banaruto, Want Peace, Yellow, Uk-Ki-Oh, Space Nanner, we’ll brainwash the whole world before long! We’ll be able to turn everyone against the World Government as Lesser Lord Gnok ordered. Then they’ll have little to stop us from taking their Octogan! The only other problem is,” he turned on a small screen and shouted, “I still wish that SOMEONE would talk less and get to fixing my freaking MODIFIER!”

Mojo Jojo replied, “I am trying to fix your modifier, but it is not easy, as your voice is so loud, it is hurting my eardrums, which is distracting me from completing the task you have entrusted me, which is fixing your modifier, so your criticisms are thereby decreasing the productivity of my…” Specter face-palmed in annoyance.

Langley Falls; CIA Headquarters

It was 11:00 at night when the limousine pulled up to the CIA’s front gates. “Thank you for driving me, Jenkins.” Carol Masterson smiled to her butler before stepping out of the vehicle. “I’ll take it from here.” She approached a guard at the gate booth, who was playing a Nintendo DS. “Excuse me.” He lowered his device to look at Carol, who wore a serious look. She held up a badge, with a picture of herself with a smile, wink, and tongue sticking out. “I am Special Agent Carol Masterson from Cleveland’s CIA branch, sent here to help redesign this building’s security network. It’s close to midnight, and as a little girl, I need my sleep, so if you don’t mind, I’d like to get this job over with as soon as possible.”

The guard in sunglasses shrugged and opened the gate. Carol smiled proudly and walked in, while the guard returned to his DS. Carol casually entered the building, showing her self-printed badge to every agent that glanced at her, before she entered the main computer room. “You’re all relieved, guys, I’m fixing your security network, so nobody can be using them at the moment.” She told the agents inside.

“But I’m looking up something important!” Dick Reynolds, a bald-headed agent, yelled urgently.

Carol glanced at the website he was on. “Euu-hu!” she shuddered at it. “I think that can wait.”

Carol waited until all of the agents cleared out. With that, she hooked her own computer into one of theirs. “Mr. Game-and-Watch, are you ready?”

“Bip-BOP-boop!” the 2-D Program saluted.

Stage 48: CIA Langley

Mission: Rescue Sandman’s team from the base!

Mr. Game-and-Watch was in a dark-blue cyberspace, completely 2-D like him. He jumped a pool of electric, then saw a key floating above a square line, in which two platforms traveled along it. Game-and-Watch hopped on one of the platforms, avoiding the electric spheres moving on the line as well, and grabbed the key, opening a locked door ahead. When he entered, floating, black, 2-D drones hovered over and shot turrets at Game-and-Watch. The Program used his frying pan to flip
hams up to the drones and destroy them. Game-and-Watch began to jump a series of platform columns, where certain ones only scrolled up or down. More turret drones flew at him, so Game-and-Watch avoided their bullets as he maneuvered on lower platforms to flip hams up at them.

Game-and-Watch encountered a group of four stationary turrets, protecting a key from all sides. Each one took several hits from Game-and-Watch’s ham before it was destroyed, the Program took a few hits from their bullets, but he survived with what HP he had left and destroyed them. The door opened after he grabbed the key, so Game-and-Watch continued to a field full of electric gaps in the floor. Columns of electric appeared between them at certain intervals, requiring Game-and-Watch to use caution while jumping. The end of this route was blocked by a larger stationary turret, so Game-and-Watch maneuvered to avoid both the electric and the bullets. The battle was tedious with G&W’s hams, but the sentry blew up eventually.

With that, Game-and-Watch made it to a door labeled ‘Interrogation Room.’ Game-and-Watch entered, and through his eyes, Carol saw that the room was holding ‘Sandman.’ “Perfect, Mr. Game-and-Watch. Let’s set our little Sandy free.” The duo cracked the code ‘Mindwash.’

Nolan York sat bored inside the interrogation room, head rested in his hand while his elbow propped against the table. He heard the speaker by the ceiling ring and expected an agent to come and question him. “Good news, Mr. York! Your savior has arrived!” said an energetic girl’s voice.

“Huh?” Nolan sat up in surprise. “Who is this?”

“It’s Carol Masterson. Remember? I’m that adorable rich girl who tried to use your grappling hook?”

“Oh yeah… Wait, what’re you doing here?”

“I found out you were in jail and came to rescue you myself. It turns out, I have a superb talent with computers and hacking!”

“And suddenly you’re breaking into government facilities? Seems like a wild jump for you.”

“You’re just jealous ‘cause I learn faster. Listen, I’m about to unlock your cell, then once I do, you’ll have at least 30 seconds to grab your gear out of that hall over there and back out. I want to focus time on turning off enough security for you to escape.”

“Hang on, I still have to help Wiccan and Coldman. Are they in here, too?”

“Sigh, fine. But I’m taking a big risk here, I’ll help you as much as I can, but you’ll have to do the hard parts. Mr. Game-and-Watch says your wristwatch has Vanellope’s signature in it. I’ll be able to talk to you directly if you have it.”

“Got it.” Once the cell was open, Sandman quickly rolled out. He crossed to the open door on the other side, finding a hallway of security lasers. The lasers shut off, so Sandman used the 30 seconds to race across the passage, maneuvering around the metal blockades they had in the way just in case. He grabbed his suit and equipment, dressing himself up quickly before making his escape through the hall. He got out just in time before the security lasers reactivated. Carol then appeared on his wristwatch.

“Nice rollin’!” she nodded brightly. “While we’re on the subject, how come Vanellope’s signature is in your wristwatch?”

“She helped me reprogram my watch to be good at hacking. Not that I wasn’t a master before.” Nolan smirked lightly.
“Egomaniac.” Carol puffed her cheeks. “Okay, I found something else. Prisoner ‘Wiccan’ is in the Northwest Wing, just past that door.” Sandman looked at said door’s label, the Northwest Prison Wing. “While Prisoner ‘Coldman’ is in the Weapons Storage, being used for research. Two agents in the offices have a Card Key for the prison wing and Weapons Storage. You’ll have to try and swap them without being spotted. Their names are Duper and Eric.” She sent him pictures. “The agents aren’t looking at your room right now, so this is your chance.”

Sandman crept out into the offices, using Detective Vision to spy the agents as he hid behind the nearest cubicle. “So do you think that girl is one of those girls who looks like a kid, but she’s really 18, or-or 21?” Agent Dick stuttered.

“Don’t be silly, Dick.” Agent Jackson told him. “Even if she is, she’s way too young.” Agents Duper and Eric’s auras were marked green in Sandman’s Vision. Since several agents were close around them, Sandman sent out the Grapple-Cam to latch its way across the room. “I see up them shorts.” Sandman whispered into his controller’s microphone. His voice emitted from the Grapple-Cam, catching their attention.

“G-G-Guys?” Dick shuddered. “Ah-I think there’s a ghost!”

“Dare you to check it out, Dick.” Duper snickered.

“Mmmm.” Angry, Dick went over to the source of the voice. The Grapple-Cam was on the ceiling corner, so when Dick was below- “Ow ow ah!” Nolan pelted his face three times with the grappler before flying the Grapple-Cam to another corner of the room. “Okay, which one of you guys did that!”

“What’re you talking about, Dick?” Duper chuckled as the agents went over to check it out.

During their squabble and distraction, Sandman rolled behind another cubicle with a computer desk. The computer screen displayed a code in green numbers: 15-14 1 14-15-2-12-5 13-9-19-19-9-15-14 20-15 10-1-16-1-14, 20-8-5 D-G-20-8 16-18-5-19-9-4-5-14-20. Sandman quietly snuck up behind Eric in the back of the crowd, swiping the Card Key off his belt. Sandman rolled back and hid before any agents looked over. Duper was still surrounded by agents, so Sandman positioned the Grapple-Cam to a far corner and said, “Duper is a pooper! Pooper Duper!”

“What?!” Duper whipped around as the agents snickered. “Alright, I swear I’m gonna…” Thankfully, Duper went to investigate the sound by himself, so when he was far enough away from the other agents, Sandman tailed him to swipe his Card Key. With that, he hurriedly rolled back to the interrogation room, sliding Eric’s key into the slot beside the prison wing door. Sandman rolled inside and drew attention from the criminals behind barrier cells.

“If you get beside your friend’s cell, I can have Game-and-Watch jump in from your watch.” Nolan searched each cell before… “There she is! Crystal!” He spoke hushedly.

The witch looked up from her bench. “Nolan!” She eagerly came over. “How did you get out?”

“The same way you’re about to.” Nolan held his watch beside the cell terminal.

“There’s your window, Game-and-Watch! Jump in!” On Carol’s command, the excited little Program jumped into the terminal’s mainframe. Floating sentries swarmed in and blasted at G&W, who withstood some shots as he flipped ham up to destroy them. Mr. Game-and-Watch had to jump up a series of platforms where twin security lasers scrolled up and down (each going opposite of the other). There were protective bars on either wall, so G&W got on the platforms beside them,
waiting for the lasers to pass by before jumping further. Game-and-Watch made it to a high field
where red balls bounced all around between the floors and nonexistent ceiling. He evasively
dodged the balls as best as his 2-D controls would, took a few hits, but he managed to grab a key to
open the door.

There were floor turrets in this room, trying to scroll below Game-and-Watch and shoot upward.
Game-and-Watch got onto some platforms above, and from there flipped hams up at stalactites to
make them come down and stick through the floor. They destroyed the turrets with successful
strikes, allowing Game to pass to the code room. He cracked the code ‘Bowling Day’ and opened
Wiccan’s cell.

“Hoo. Thanks, Nolan.” The witch smiled as she stepped out.

“Don’t thank me. Thank this little girl.” He showed her his wristwatch.

“Wow, your hair is so purple!” Carol beamed. “You look like a witch in this story I read!”

“Fascinating. Nolan, I’m afraid they took my staff.”

“It could be in the Weapons Storage. We’re going there for Yuki.” The two hurried through the
prison wing—Sandman stopped them before they entered the interrogation room, sensing agents
inside with Detective Vision.

“Maybe the ghost was just one of the criminals.” Dick’s voice was heard.

“Maybe. Hey, didn’t we have a guy in there?” Duper asked, pointing at Nolan’s former cell.

“Someone else musta locked him in there.” Eric replied. “Hey, you think Director Bullock will let
us play with his gadgets?”

“I wonder if Sandman has Anti-Aging Cream?” Dick asked hopefully. “Oh-ho-ho, what I wouldn’t
give to look 32 again…” Sandman watched them pile out. He sighed with relief before entering
the room with Crystal. The agents were sitting at computer desks in the office room.

“Crud. We can’t sneak into Weapons Storage this way.” Sandman said.

“I have a plan.” Carol reported. Sandman saw the girl’s aura walk out into the offices. “Hey,
everybody! My CIA office is sending donuts to us, outside!”

“YAAAAAY!” The auras excitedly piled out. Sandman and Wiccan seized the chance by rolling
out there. “The short story is, Dunkin’ Donuts owes me a few favors.” Carol informed. “With that
in mind, you have about 20 minutes ‘til they get done with ‘em. I’ll go back to watching cameras,
you handle the rest.” Carol rushed back into the computer room.

Sandman used the Card Key to open the door to a short hallway where an agent was backed against
the wall, holding a chair to an angry mammoth in defense. “All I wanna do is ride you to
McDonald’s! Why do you gotta be like this?” The two heroes paid this no mind, as Sandman used
his grappler to fly up onto a walkway near the ceiling, pulling Crystal with him. They avoided
sight of the agent, then dropped to the floor on the other side.

They entered the massive room that was Weapons Storage, where missiles, guns, and gadgets alike
were lain about, and agents patrolled everywhere. He detected a stiff frozen aura far away, and
when they looked from behind some missiles, they saw it was Yuki Crystal. He was frozen in a
capsule of liquid nitrogen, which had chi-blocks set around it. “Since he can’t icebend, he can’t
unfreeze himself.” Nolan observed. “If we could at least burn those off…”
“Let’s look for my staff.” Wiccan said. They grappled to a higher walkway, seeing the guard was several feet ahead, then grappled up to the large metal ceiling pipes. Sandman detected an orange, stick-shaped aura on the right side of the room. Crystal’s staff was encased inside a safe, protected by two armed guards. “Carol, could you hack into that if we got close?”

“Yes, but make sure no one’s looking.” They waited for the walkway guard to climb down the ladder, then Sandman glided onto it—weighed down a little carrying Crystal. Nolan sat at the very edge of the walkway, holding his watch up. “You aren’t close enough.” Carol told him. The safe was just a few feet around this turn.

Crystal noticed the metal pipe that traveled along the wall, from them to above the safe. “Give it to me.” she said. Nolan unhooked his watch and gave it to Crystal, who put it around her head like a necklace. She climbed up and sidled atop the pipe, then very carefully stepped onto the safe. She made sure not to breathe as Game-and-Watch did his thing.

A giant green wall chased G&W inside the blue space, so he hurriedly beeped and ran. He ran through a field of orange spikes both on the floor and air, jumping precisely in-between them. He quickly jumped up a set of tall stairs, and at the top, flying drones began shooting at him. He flipped hams up to destroy a few, then kept running. He climbed a ladder, giving the green wall some time to catch up, but G&W got away in time, running across a long field. He encountered a wall of pixels and flipped his hams to destroy each little one, doing so hurriedly as the wall was catching up. When the pixels were all gone, Game-and-Watch rushed inside to crack the code ‘Forbidden.’

The safe beeped open, but the guards didn’t seem to hear. Crystal quietly climbed off the safe, cracked it open, and got her staff. She subtly shut the door and flew away on the stick. “Way to go, Crystal.” Nolan said, taking his watch back. “Um, and Carol. I’ll distract the other guards, you shoot those chi-blocks.” Sandman grappled above the pipes and sent his Grapple-Cam to a wall away from the frozen capsule. “You wield that gun like a girl!”

“Of course I do, my mom taught me.” One of the guards replied simply.

“The safe guards are still there, but I’ll risk it.” Crystal aimed her staff and shot small fireballs to burn the paper seals. The safe guards didn’t seem to notice or react, and the other guards were still looking for the Grapple-Cam. Nolan and Crystal watched the frozen capsule intently after the chi-blocks disintegrated. …The frosted glass was beginning to crack. The agents whipped around when it shattered completely.

Yuki Crystal stood on the platform that once rested his liquid nitrogen capsule. “Brrr-r-r-r… I feel a little… stiff.” Yuki spoke calmly, but inside he was flowing with power. “I should… stretch my legs a little!” He smirked vigorously.

“Yuki, freeze all of the guards, quick!” Sandman yelled—again startling the agents.

“Oh! Okay!” Each guard ran for an alarm button, Yuki blasted ice beams at each one, one at a time. The safe guards shot their guns at him, Yuki flipped off the platform, dodged, and froze them from afar.

“That’s anything but stealthy…” Carol said with disbelief.

“At least we still have time. Sort of.” Sandman replied. “Is the coast mostly clear out there?”
“Not really, they’re coming back already.” Carol replied, looking at the offices camera on her computer. “And… uh-oh.”

“I just wanna check something on my email real quick, maybe that girl will let me.” Dick said as he was about to enter the computer room.

Carol hurriedly closed her laptop, unplugged it from the CIA computer, and looked worriedly for a place to hide. She saw an air vent on the floor and said, “Good thing I brought this.” as she pulled out her screwdriver. She unscrewed the bolts in the vent, cracked it open, and crawled in, closing the vent.

“Oh, she’s gone.” Dick said as Carol saw him sit down. “Maybe she was outside and I didn’t notice. Oh well!”

Carol sighed in relief before deciding to crawl further in the vent. She heard the fast strumming of a banjo and some singing echoing from the room around the corner. When she peeped through this vent, it appeared to be an office. Carol clutched the vent bars and pushed it open with all her force, but held the vent tight so it didn’t bang on the floor. Carol crawled inside and saw who was singing.

The CIA Deputy Director, Avery Bullock, was at his desk. He was kicked back as he merrily strummed a banjo, singing “The Window Cleaner” song. “All day up this ladder, I’m as happy as can be. Any thing thing thing, anything, the things I shouldn’t see! Oh, the blushing bride looks divine…”

Bullock’s telephone suddenly rang, so he placed the caller on speaker. “Hello? Deputy Director Bullock?” a gruff voice spoke on the other end. “I’m not... interrupting anything, am I?”

“Oh, Corporate President Carter Pewterschmidt!” Avery spoke brightly in his British accent. “No, of course not, please, chat with me for a pint.”

“Um, okay. Also, why the hell is your speaker phone on?”

“It makes the atmosphere feel more open, of course. Besides it hurts my arm to have to hold that dreadful device to my ear for too long.”

“Well, considering all that coke I send you, God forbid your arm gets tired. So what’s the deal with these White Lotus Revolutionaries stealing our Mega Footbombs?”

“Oh, it’s nothing to worry about, Carter,” Avery spoke casually, tuning his banjo, “they only stole prototype bombs from the stadiums. I have the secret locations of three bombs marked on blueprints in my office, they’re all still safe.”

“Good. We’re thinking of sending the Teen Ninjas to blow up KND Moonbase, Arctic Base, and their Undersea Base. Three bases, three Footbombs, keep ‘em safe, Avery.” Carol internally gasped at this. “Then the Leaders can quit worryin’ about them. Anyway, something else, Director, my security cameras saw a group of kids crossing the border to Mexico a few days ago. One of them was some sort of giant, and they had a skeleton child with them. Did you see anything like that on your cameras?”

“I thought I caught a glimpse of something of the sort. I was on cocaine at the time, however, so my memory’s a little fuzzy.”

“Well, send extra security to the border ASAP! We saw them go back over the border, but that skeleton was the same that escaped from Pueblo de Niebla, and I don’t want him finding his way
back there! Not only that, but one of those kids was one of the Seven Lights our Leaders told us about! Since Pueblo de Niebla has one of those ‘Gibberish Rock’ things, I know they’ll be going back there eventually. I don’t want those brats to ruin my Lazarus Operation!”

“For God’s sake, Carter, you’ve already harnessed more than enough of that Lazarus to last yourself another 30 years. Why do you insist on staying in that back desert country?”

“Because the World Government caught on to what I’m doing, and they want in.” Carter said with what seemed like a whisper. “I’m gonna have to mine this whole desert to give ’em the amount they want. Just send me your agents so I don’t have to worry about those twerps!”

“Relax, Old Boy, my Agent Smith is the best there is. He’ll show a few brats a thing or two. Plus you’ve still got those hillbillies you’ve persuaded to work for you.”

“Sigh, alright. So um, anyway, that whole thing with Doflamingo was pretty messed up. You know, they’re actually considering letting his son fill in as president. As soon as they find him.”

“A CHILD for a president, if that isn’t the highlight of my evening!” Bullock exclaimed with humor.

“What’s he gonna do with the company,” Carter continued with a noticeable humorous stutter, “turn it—turn it into an action figure, comic book-type business—aaah, you know that crap kids do!” He and Mr. Bullock shared in laughter. “Ahhh, well uh, I have a meeting to go to, so I’ll let you get back to… whatever it is you’re doing. Send those agents over soon.” He hung up.

“Sure, sure, I’ll get right on that.” With that, Mr. Bullock continued playing his banjo, resuming his “Window Cleaner” song. “The bride groom, he’s doing fine, I’d rather have his job than mine…”

Now that the dialogue was over, Carol kept on the floor as she searched for the Footbomb locations. On the wall beside the door was a collection of wanted posters. They depicted Wendy Marvell, Augustus Fizzuras, King K. Rool, Sandman, Red Eye, and Ragaj Gnik (who was worth two billion dollars, however a reason was not given for his criminality). Carol found a blueprint taped to that wall, so since Bullock’s head was tilted back during a verse, she quickly stood and snapped the blueprint with her cellphone camera. She then crawled to one of the vents in the opposite wall, opening its bars to see a blueprint lodged within. While Bullock was singing, she quickly reached in to pull it out, uncrumple it, and snap the picture before stuffing it back in.

The only place Carol guessed where the other one was was Bullock’s desk. She crawled around his right side, seeing the man’s head totally upward as his chair tilted back and his feet were on the desk, lost in song. His singing hurt her ears up close, but she used the distraction to stand up, rifle through a drawer, and found a Riddler Trophy. Annoyed, she crawled around to search the drawer on his left side, finding the blueprint. She snapped the picture, put the paper back, then crawled to the opposite side of the desk from Bullock.

“I’ll send these to Maseyfairy to send to Cheren.” Carol thought aloud quietly, texting Mason the photos while warning him about the Footbombs and the planned attack. The blueprints read the Footbombs were in New Jersey, Arlen Texas, and Colorado’s NFL Stadiums. “That’ll give them some time to make a plan.”

With that done, Carol was about to crawl back into the vent- “Who the devil are you?” She flinched. She turned her head to show her panicked face to Bullock.

“Uhhh… I’m the vent cleaner.”
“Ah, I was wondering when you’d come.” The Deputy Director smiled. “Well, carry on, then. Ahem, all day up this ladder, I’m happy as…”

Carol sighed, crawling back in as she stuck the vent’s hatch on. Dick was gone from the computer room, so it was safe for Carol to crawl out. She peeped into the offices and saw… all of the agents frozen solid. “Great, you made it.” Nolan greeted her.

“You certainly take care of things quickly.” The girl remarked.

“I’ll unfreeze ‘em if we’re ready to go.” Yuki promised. “Are we?”

“Yes, I think we should.” Nolan nodded. Yuki summoned all of the ice back into his hands before the team rushed out of the building.

“You guys! My life just flashed before my eyes!” Jackson exclaimed, panting after being unfrozen. “And I use… way too much… syrup on my waffles…”

Team Sandman hurried past the gate as Carol showed her badge to the guard, “All taken care of, have a nice night!” The guard nodded uninterestingly, focused on his DS. The team ran a far-enough distance away, where Jenkins’ limousine was parked. The heroes caught their breath.

“Well, Carol, you have our thanks.” Sandman told the child. “But I have to ask, since you even look like her now, why couldn’t Rebecca Hawkins from *Yu-Gi-Oh* fill your role?”

“It’s called character development, Mr. York, it’d do YOU a few favors.” Carol spoke with a smug frown, her eyes closed. “I’m not letting you off the hook easily, you each owe me 150 dollars.” She held a hand open and wiggled her fingers.

“Why the devil should we?!” Wiccan shouted.

“’Cause I’m a little girl who’s up past her bedtime rescuing three adults from jail. I want a bigger allowance.” Her hand was still open.

“We’re superheroes, we don alter-egos to avoid paying compensation.” Coldman argued.

“Fine, I’ll put it on your tab. That only means your debt will increase as time goes on.” She winked cutely and stuck her tongue out.

“We’ll keep that in mind. Can you get home okay, Carol?” Sandman asked.

“Sure.” Carol casually walked to her limousine and got in. “Worry about yourselves. Oh, and consider it a gift from me,” she smiled at them, “I Copied Game-and-Watch and Pasted his clone in your wristwatch. Hopefully, he’ll make hacking a lot easier. I’ll say ‘hi’ to Dillon for you!” The heroes watched as the limo drove away down the street.

Sandman checked his wristwatch, seeing Mr. Game-and-Watch’s happy image. He made some beeps and bops before ringing a 2-D bell. “Hooray, we have a new friend!” Crystal grinned.

“Where should we take him next? What’s our next mission?”

“Hmm…” Sandman sighed. “I think it’s been a long day for all of us. They’re going to know we’re gone before long, so let’s go home and catch up on rest. …Then afterwards, we gotta look for this Hugo Strange. If he’s one of the World Leaders’ apprentices…” Sandman looked at Game-and-Watch on his watch. “He must be pretty important to them.”

**Boggly Woods, Japan**
Some believe it was fate that caused Spongebob to crash the boat all the way in Kochi, conveniently near the place that they were going. But some people just want this little yellow nuisance to go away already, because he causes more trouble than he’s worth. That’s why Melody, Danny, and Eva chose to stay behind in town and trust Spongebob to protect Jessie and Sandy. “Oh, and there was the time I crashed the car so many times, Mrs. Puff puffed really big and floated out of the planet’s atmosphere. Then she exploded like a firework in the sky!” Spongebob recounted a story with a bubbly expression. “Bai-yai-ai-ai-ai! ‘Course, that wasn’t nearly as fun as the time Squidward broke his voice box while yelling at me, so I taught him sign language and translated everything he was trying to say. Bai-ai-ai!”

“You probably don’t know this, but you got all of his translations wrong.” Jessie noted, having seen that episode. “Like, horribly wrong.”

“These are all really sad episodes.” Sandy spoke downtrodden. “Can’t we talk about the good ones? Like when Mr. Krabs and Plankton worked together to find out the Kelp Shake formula?”

“You missed the ending of that one, didn’t you?” Jessie asked.

“Oh, yeah. What happened?” Jessie whispered the ending in Sandy’s ear. “Oh… well, never mind.”

“Fellas, I admit I’m not a bestselling author,” Spongebob replied simply, “but come on, you kids grew up on my show, didn’t ya?”

“Doesn’t mean we liked all of them.” Sandy replied shamefully.

“Some of them were pretty ***ed up, you have to admit.” Jessie followed.

“Okay, I made a few, dare I say, ‘flops,’ bai-ai-ai…” Spongebob walked forward with his eyes closed casually, “but I think I have a good routine goin’ on, and my fans are as loyal as-” His shoes were untied, he stepped on a lace, “AAAAHH- d’oh- dah- DOI- dack!” He ended up tumbling and bouncing down a rugged hill, landing beside a giant tree of dark-gray bark.

“Hmhmhm, that episode was one of my favorites.” Sandy smiled, recalling the untied shoes episode. “Flying Dutchman taught me how to tie knots.”

“Yaaaaaawn.” Jessie stretched his arms. “This forest is making me sleepy.” He rubbed his eyes as they stepped down a natural stairway in the hill. “Let’s take a nap under this tree or something.”

Jessie still felt drowsy as they walked around the tree, in search for a good spot to rest. “Jessie, wait!” Sandy stopped her brother before he walked around a tree root. She noticed a couple of purple, ant-like bugs on the ground. One of them panicked at the sight of them. “Is that… Shelly?”

As we know by the last chapter, it is Shelly. :P “The Window Cleaner” was written by George Formby, but it was in American Dad, which is where Bullock and those agents come from. Next time, Jessie’s Bubble Dreamer training, then maybe Sector V will wake up in Twilight Town. Later.
Bubble Dreamer

Chapter Summary

Jessie and Spongebob go through Bubble Dreamer training. At Twilight Town, Wuya takes Jack Spicer to meet her sister.

I’m slating the Presidents Saga to end at Chapter 41. It definitely shouldn’t end on Chapter 40, there’s quite a bit to do. Today’s cryptogram is Caesar.

Chapter 37: Bubble Dreamer

Boggly Tree

The humans and Spongebob were allowed into the Boggly Tree. In-between the bark walls were glass-like barriers in which water flowed through, little bubbles inside of it. There were black columns and statues with white, intricate designs, and the floors were of colorful grass. It was a beautiful type of scenery, but Jessie and Sandy’s attention had been drawn to something else for a while.

Shelly stood on a tree stump with anger on her face, impatiently awaiting a reaction from the giant-to-her first-graders. Jessie and Sandy had been staring at the tiny bully for at least three minutes.

“It certainly looks like Shelly.” Sandy said.

“What’s that?”

“The fact I am very happy to see her.” Jessie smiled wryly.

“For your information, Shorts, I just learned I’m the princess of an entire race of chipmunks, which is more than anything you accomplished!” Shelly squeaked.

Jessie bent closer and replied, “That won’t change the fact that you are small enough to replace Fluffleupagus as our classroom pet.”

“Ugh! Hey Elder person, these brats have to shrink too, right?” Shelly yelled at the Puni Elder behind the stump.

“Actually, Jessie is more important than you, ergo we shall not alter him.”

“WHAT?!! You biased son of a-”

“DON’T TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME!” Elder puffed giant. “Also, I would not be a ‘son,’ I would be a ‘daughter’!” She shrunk down.

“Perhaps we should tell Jessie why exactly we were expecting him.” Gonshiri informed.

“I ain’t recapping that entire story.” Elder stated. “Besides, he doesn’t need to know it all, yet. All
he needs to know is that he and that sponge are Bubble Dreamers.”

“We were told.” Sandy replied. “Could you, um, remind us what a Bubble Dreamer is?”

“As you might have learned, Bubble Dreamers are a rare type of people, reincarnations of the spirit Polokus. Their job is to enter people’s dreams and put a stop to rogue Dream Spirits. Such spirits are a different type from general Nightmares, just so you know. As for the term ‘Bubble,’ a Bubble Dreamer’s primary power is control over Dream Bubbles. Dream Bubbles are bodies which are born from sleepers’ minds and form dreams and Dream Spirits. A Bubble Dreamer can bend those bubbles to their will. The embodiment of people’s dreams makes the ‘dreambender’ (in this context) stronger.”

“So Spongebob and Jessie can control dreams and use them to fight?” Gonshiri tried to summarize.

“You know, I did something like that once!” Spongebob beamed. “I once fell out of my own dream and explored my friends’ dreams.”

“Spongebob and Jessie have explored their power already.” the Elder said. “But there is more they can do. A Bubble Dreamer can ease or subdue Bad Dreams by encasing them inside Sleep Bubbles. Those bubbles will then take their place in thousands of stars in the Dream Realm sky. Now, are you three aware of Bill Cipher?”

“Mr. Kyogre mentioned someone by that name.” Sandy replied.

“Bill was once in slumber thanks to Polokus’s power, but he escaped 4,000 years ago. Bill Cipher had since found a hobby with aiding the World Government behind the scenes, doing so by helping American presidents with their position. You should know that the World Government controls America greater than any other country. If a president, such as Abraham Lincoln or John Kennedy, do not comply by their rules, the World Government has them executed. However, thanks to Polokus’s power, Bill is trapped in the Dream Realm, and can only communicate to the World Government, or anyone, using images of himself. For that reason, the Government has images of Bill everywhere, and all of their workers bare his likeness as a tattoo. They call it the Eye of Providence.

“It was only 30 years ago when a man named Stanford Pines found a way of summoning Bill into our world. Bill helped Stanford create a machine that the former could use for his own goals, which is finding the Thirteen Darknesses. Thankfully, Stanford realized Bill’s treachery and had the demon banished again, until last year, when Gideon Gleeful summoned him back. During the 30-year gap, Bill Cipher began to communicate with Jimmy McGarfield, using a simple one-dollar bill that displayed Bill’s likeness. Under Bill’s guidance, Jimmy trained to become stronger. While serving in the army, Jimmy learned the best strategies of conquering countries, it is thanks to Bill Cipher that Jimmy has become a renowned president. When Jimmy learned that Gideon had a means of summoning Bill, he made Gideon his adviser. Now under their command, Bill Cipher is brainwashing the children of America to obey the World Government.”

Jessie shook his head, “You’re ***king losing me, Lady! Just get to the point of this story!”

“THE POINT IS,” Elder puffed giant, then shrunk down, “you are a Bubble Dreamer, reincarnation of Polokus, so it is your job to defeat Bill Cipher! Otherwise, you will not be able to save your friends.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that the children of Gallagher accused the middle school of kidnapping you kids and
Shelly. They went to war, and many of them were captured. They are slaves in President Jimmy’s school now, and Bill Cipher, your fated enemy, is their teacher. Jessie Sidney, there is no choice in the matter, you must learn Bubble Dreaming!

“Yeah, Jessie, let’s do it!” Spongebob perked up. “It sounds like fun!”

“…” Jessie thought for a second, his eyes furrowed. “So this ‘Bill’ person is controlling our classmates. Hmmm… if this is the only way I can help them…”

“So be it. Your training shall begin now.”

“Shouldn’t we wait a little bit first?” Sandy asked worriedly. “Jessie’s been through a lot lately, and we’re really tired from the walk.”

“Then it’s a good thing the little brat will have to be asleep. Come upstairs, we have some nice patches of flowers for you.”

Jessie, Sandy, and Spongebob followed the Elder and a group of Punies a few floors up the tree, to a small room with white patches of flowers. Jessie and Spongebob rested their selves on two of them. The flowers were very soft and comfortable, and Jessie already felt his body easing. His unconscious body hadn’t had any decent bed to sleep on this whole time. “Your main weakness is that your real body is vulnerable while in slumber, so someone has to protect you. You can count on these whippersnappers for that. Now into slumber…” The Elder dipped her purple antenna into a bottle of pink soap. She waved the antenna and blew bubbles over Jessie and Spongebob’s eyes. Their lids grew heavy as they sank into slumber.

**Dream World**

*Stage 43: Boggly Woods, Act 1.5*

*Mission: Become a Bubble Dreamer.*

The sky over Boggly Woods was black, while the outer horizon became yellow, with a milky gradient in-between. The grassland was a mix between yellow and red, while the black Boggly Tree towered in the distance. Bubbles of neon color floated everywhere. “Welcome to my dreamscape.” The Puni Elder sat a few feet before them. “This is where most of your training will take place. Keep in mind a few things: your power only exists in the Dream World, ergo cannot be used in the Waking World. Now then, since Bubble Dreaming is essentially ‘dreambending,’ you must expect it to be on psychicbending’s level of power. However, dreambending is like a mix between psychic and energybending, as you are bending the energy that makes up Dream World, which in itself requires imagination.”

“Teehee! Bubbles!” Spongebob giddily popped a few bubbles. “Tehehe!”

“I don’t even know what psychic or energybending is, how the *** would I-” Jessie cursed.

“BY SHUTTING UP AND LISTENING!” Elder puffed giant, then shrunk. “Perhaps you impatient brats want some direct practice. Well, no harm. Grab the bubbles in the air and make whatever your hearts desire.”

Jessie and Spongebob both took bubbles from the air. Spongebob molded his like clay, into pickles, ketchup, onions, lettuce, molded into the finest Krabby Patty he’d ever seen. Meanwhile, Jessie molded a bubble into himself, another one into Shelly, then placed a smaller bubble beside his bubble-self like a kickball. He made his bubble-self kick the ball at Shelly, smiling proudly.

“Good, good NOW AWAY WITH THOSE THINGS!” Elder puffed giant and blew those bubbles
away. “The Dream World is made of such bubbles. They exist in the air and ground. So quit being blind old bats and grab them.”

Jessie and Spongebob exchanged glances and shrugged. They waved their arms like waterbenders would, and Jessie soon found bubbles form around his arms. Spongebob created a bubble jellyfish net, which he used to catch a bubble jellyfish he made. “Alright, enough of that.” Elder told them simply. “Make use of your fancy bubbleworks. Get to the top of that tree.” She turned to face the Boggly Tree in the distance.

Jessie and Spongebob waved their bubble wands in the air to catch and mold bubbles, afterwards blowing them into a stairway of platforms. They raced across the air on an ever-rising bubble stairway, but ended up going much higher than the treetop. With excited smiles on their faces, Jessie and Spongebob jumped down and raised their wands, forming bubble parachutes. They plummeted into a shaft down the tree, landing in a dark underground area. They stood on the ledge over a black chasm as the Puni Elder appeared from a puff of bubbles. “You already know your bubbles can take any form. Do what you just did to cross this chasm.”

Jessie and Spongebob waved their wands overhead as they ran off the edge, creating bubble hang-gliders to soar over the darkness. They maneuvered left and right when Pale Piranhas popped out of the sides, before they were able to take land on safe ground. There was a Bubble Bowl wheel, in which Spongebob spun said bubble into being and hit the wheel, opening a hatch at the top of a towering shaft above them. “It’ll close in a matter of seconds.” Elder informed them. “It’ll take faster work than just flying to get there.”

“No problem! Hit me, Jessie!” Spongebob opened his mouth wide as Jessie released a storm of bubbles into his throat. The sponge grew larger and larger, and when his roundness was ripe, Jessie jumped into his mouth. Spongebob aimed directly above and POPPED, sent Jessie flying like a bubbly cannon, sliding him through the hatch before it closed. Spongebob hit the wheel and opened the hatch again, creating his own assortment of bubble springs as he bounced higher into the air, soon to join Jessie above the hatch. This next passage was a grayish-white, and completely blocked by thick bubble substance. Some of the bubble was clear, but other parts were a shiny, solid white-neon.

“You’ll have to force your way through this maze of Waking Water.” Elder said. “If you touch that stuff, you’ll have to start from the beginning.” Jessie went first and forced his hands into the substance, tearing it open. Spongebob kept close behind, helping keep the back of their makeshift tunnel open while Jessie tore a way for the front. They were like moles digging through dirt, they had to maneuver left, then rightward around the Waking Water. A wall of Waking Water blocked them, they had to dig back a few feet, then dig a stairway that barely inched above the Waking Water. Jessie noticed a tight-looking tunnel through the water, so he dug through carefully until he managed to find a sock. In their attempt to maneuver out of the tunnel, Spongebob touched the Waking Water and suddenly vanished in Jessie’s vision. “Gash, blast it!” Elder cursed. “Looks like you’re on your own, boy.”

“I don’t think so.” Jessie burrowed into the Waking Water himself. The next minute, he woke up tiredly in the real Boggly Tree.

“What the devil was that for?!?” the Elder shouted.

“If I don’t get to take Sandy with me, Spongebob and I are still a team.” Jessie stated.

“Ugh, the youth of today… Fine, if that’s the way you want it. We’ll do this all day if you insist!” So the Elder put them to sleep again.
The duo made their way to the Waking Water maze and, with no more need to use the tunnel, they continued higher. Columns of Waking Water stood, Jessie and Spongebob made careful use of their steps as they maneuvered around, until they could exit the maze at the top. They came to a locked door sealed with a keyhole. “We’re in the Dream World, remember?” Elder asked. “Make anything that suits your needs from the bubbles.”

The situation here required a key, by the looks of it. So Spongebob blew a large bubble, and from that bubble was born… a cannon. After the fuse was burned all the way, it blasted the door clean open. Jessie and Spongebob entered a clear, narrow passage, where a Deathtoon (a red Doomtoon) appeared out of midair and approached them with a beefy pose. “Now the real test: trapping Dream Spirits inside Sleep Bubbles. You must let your mind be calm, and imagine your very serenity as you mold a bubble from your mind. Trap the Dream Spirits inside such a bubble, and they will know slumber.”

“How the *** do we make it from our mind?” Jessie asked.

“JUST move your hands closer to each other in front of your forehead and imagine pulling a bubble out!” Elder shouted. “Now hurry! Deathtoons can destroy your mind by the touch!”

Jessie shut his eyes tight and enclosed his hands beside his forehead. He literally pulled a bubble from his mind and threw it at the small red creature. The Deathtoon was trapped, but his anger fumed as the bubble steamed, and the Toon broke free. “No no, your mind was too angry, you have to make a CALM bubble!”

“You keep ***king yelling at me-!”

“Watch out, Jessie!” Spongebob pulled a bubble from his own mind and threw it at the Deathtoon. The creature furiously tried to break free, but it soon became drowsy. The Deathtoon fell asleep, and Jessie and Spongebob watched as the bubble floated into the sky, taking its place among stars. Jessie huffed with aggravation and touched his forehead.

“You’ll never defeat Bill Cipher with a torrential mind!” Elder shouted. “You can be angry while you’re fighting him, but at the calling moment, you’ll have to put that anger aside! Now buck up, there’s more coming.”

A green, man-size bug called a Cricket came, whose yellow shoes and light-green head were separate from its dark-green body. It wore a taunting scowl as it kept in the two’s way, and when Jessie tried to approach, the Cricket flew into the air and kicked him away. Jessie sighed, relieving himself of anger, and calmly pulled a bubble from his forehead. He let it float to the Cricket, but the creature kicked it into nothing. “Is that puny bubble gonna catch a creature that big?!” the Elder yelled.

“No, but this one should!” Spongebob positioned his hands to pull out a bubble, moved them further from his head, and extracted a bigger bubble. The bubble was able to encase the large Cricket, put him to sleep, then it floated into the stars. “Like that, you little snot.” Elder scolded.

Jessie huffed. “How the *** do you expect me to pull this off? Hell, why can’t Spongebob fight Bill himself?”

“You just said you two were a team, you hypocritical dope! Besides, you’re the one who needs to take his place in destiny, this lousy sponge is just along for the ride. Either way, I’m afraid at some point, you’ll have to continue this training on your own. A Bubble Dreamer’s other power is entering peoples’ dreams, but it’s hard to practice that when not many are willing to go to sleep. Well, I suppose there’s millions asleep right now, but it won’t matter. You at least need to master
your Bubbling before we conclude. The next room should suffice.” Elder led them along. “I borrowed these guys from a friend of mine.”

The Puni led them to an enormous room of Stone Demons—those seen in the Chronicler’s Realm. Jessie and Spongebob exchanged smirks—Spongebob molded karate gloves out of the bubbles while Jessie made a soccerball. Spongebob leapt around and karate-sliced all of the stone monsters, Jessie kicked the soccerball and bounced it around their heads. After dizzying them, Jessie blew Bubble Torpedoes to explode the statues into pieces, but their remains lived and crawled toward the Bubble Dreamers.

Spongebob smiled with solace and pulled bubble after bubble from his mind to encase each piece of broken stone. Jessie was surrounded by Stone Demons both together and broken, hurriedly molding Sleep Bubbles from his mind, large and small, to catch them. He threw the wrong-sized bubbles at some statues, while the others easily broke free. “Just think of something happy, Jessie!” Spongebob told him. “I think of Krabby Patties!”

“I have had the worst few days, so telling me to be ***king happy is a stretch!” Jessie whacked a demon away with his wand.

“That’s a real shame, boy!” Puni Elder called. “I guess I left Shelly at that miniscule size for you for nothing!”

Jessie only just remembered. He didn’t have enough time to appreciate the sight, before he was forced into training. He pictured himself in the Waking World, happily poking the little Shelly, flicking her around, calling her “Shrimp.” Jessie closed his eyes and stretched a large bubble from his mind. He threw it at a single whole Stone Demon and trapped it. In the creature’s attempt to break free, the demon felt incredibly giddy, dancing a tap-dance, before the bubble broke open. “You almost had it, but you have to be serene!” the Elder scolded. “As though you were dreaming.”

“When I’m making Krabby Patties, I feel like I drank 10 cups of cocoa and fell asleep under 20 blankets. Haaaaaah.” Spongebob sighed with the purest relaxation as he Bubbled another monster.

Jessie imagined himself tucked cozily under his blanket… with a mini Shelly screaming angrily from a jar on his nightstand. He pulled another large bubble from his mind and trapped two Stone Demons. Jessie watched as those demons fell asleep and floated to the stars.

By the time it was all over, however, Spongebob had Bubbled many more demons. The sky was filled with stars, which in reality were Bubbled monsters. The Puni Elder approached the two Dreamers. “You have a long way to go, Jessie. Perhaps it is good Spongebob is with you. This yellow devil’s mind is so unbearably happy, it’s a haven.”

“I never asked to be a ***king ‘chosen one of destiny.’” Jessie folded his arms and looked away. “Before all this started, I just wanted to eat ice cream.”

“Be that as it may, it’s time for you brats to wake up.” The Elder turned away from them; Jessie walked away in a half-awake fashion. “There are a couple things I should warn you about Bill Cipher. First, you should never look directly in his eye, that’s how he…” She turned around. Jessie was gone. “Eh? Where did that boy go?”

Jessie walked up a stairway that neither Elder nor Spongebob could see. The Boggly Tree slowly faded into black, and was replaced by endless stars. The stairs led Jessie onto a floating, flat asteroid with a golden circular pool. Jessie stared into the surface, the golden light making his eyes heavier. …He fell in with a splash.
Jessie appeared on the shore of a starlit sky. The massive full moon was halfway over the horizon of the indigo sea. The atmosphere of this space was making him sleepy. The waves brushed across the shore and touched his feet, sending a chill through his body that would ensure his sleep faster. Jessie looked at the tall pedestal not far away. On it rested a very short creature with a tall top-hat. His hat was violet with faint yellow stars, his skin was a pale yellow, and he bore very long arms. His body was very short and round, his mouth stretched across the whole of the top front. He had bare feet under blue pants that covered his bottom body.

“Welcome, Jessie…” He spoke with a calm and patient voice as Jessie walked closer.

The boy stopped a few feet away, staring with half-awake eyes. He believed this creature was only a figment of his imagination. “Who the *** are you?”

“I am the Bubble Dreamer the Elder speaks of… I am the spirit who resides in all Bubble Dreamers like yourself… I am Polokus. For a very long time, I knew that one of my incarnations would be one of the Seven Lights… as it was planned by my Creator.”

“Cre…ator?” Jessie spoke tiredly.

“Let me tell you about Creations, Jessie. In all of existence, there have always been two types of Creations.” Polokus outreached his long, right arm, sticking up the index finger. “There are Dream Spirits, Creations born in the Dream World from the subconscious mind of sleeping mortals. And there are Imaginary Friends,” he stuck up the middle finger, emphasizing ‘II,’ “Creations directly created by conscious mortals. Bill Cipher and I are the latter. We are Imaginary Friends, dreamt up by two Creators. My Creator… was the one who originally thought of the Twenty Keys Prophecy. She is the reason the prophecy exists. And the reason the prophecy exists, its primary purpose… was to defeat Bill Cipher’s Creator. An extremely powerful, and terrifying monster, whose abilities defied Time and Space. The destiny of you, and the other Nineteen Keys, will ultimately be to defeat this monster.”

Jessie shook his head, speaking tiredly, “Hold up, hold up… I thought I was learning this to beat Bill Cipher… not some ***king monster. What the *** do ‘Twenty Keys’ have to do with anything?”

“Ohhhh, yes… You were not yet told the prophecy. All in good time, Jessie… There is only one thing you need to be certain of. Bill Cipher is our fated enemy. He has in his captivity the ones you hold dear. That is why, I will bless you with my greatest of powers, Jessie. I will bless you… with the knowledge of my Creator’s name, and Bill Cipher’s Creator’s name. By knowing my Creator’s name, as I am a part of her, I can bless you with her power. By knowing his Creator’s name, you will have power over Bill Cipher. But this power will only come into play, after you have said his name in front of Bill Cipher himself. That is why I want you to take extra care in remembering them. Will you?”

Jessie’s look stated that he was still hallucinating, thinking it was all a dream. …He nodded.

“Very good. My Creator’s name… is Calliope. And Bill Cipher’s Creator, whom she has invented this Twenty Keys Prophecy to stop… his name is…”

**Boggly Tree; Waking World**

Shelly and Gonshiri were outside as the former was sitting on the ground and mindlessly waving her Sand Wand. “I still don’t like this whole thing.” Shelly admitted. “When did a twerp like Jessie get to be a big deal? I kick way more butt than he does. And he can’t even use his superpowers in the real world!”
“Regardless, we agreed to help Jessie fulfill his supposed ‘destiny,’ didn’t we?” Gonshiri reminded.

“I still can’t even believe this whole ‘Apocalypse’ thing. I just don’t want Uncle Andrew to raise a zombie army, and I also wanna save my less-graders from that Bill Cipher weirdo.”

“But according to the Elder, Jessie and Spongebob are the only types of people who can defeat a Dream Demon. As strong as you are, simple earthbending wouldn’t work.”

“This Sand Wand is totally useless, too. I mean, in the desert I’m a badass, but talkin’ about concrete or marble, what can this piece of junk do, besides pick up little grains?”

“The Sand Wand is meant to help the user concentrate their own chi.”

“Which is utterly useless if my chi is limited to DUST!” Shelly shouted.

“And my studies of the Quartzite Family prove otherwise.” Gonshiri narrowed her eyes in annoyance. “A sandbender who develops their skills becomes a formidable force in almost any landscape. This is because sandbenders can destroy entire landscapes into deserts. What was once a marble temple becomes a pile of sand under their power. What I understand from reading about the Quartzites is that their power is destruction.”

“Pssh, I thought lavabenders had that honor.” Shelly snickered.

“That’s true, too.” Shiri smiled lightly. “But lavabenders can solidify their rock, and by extension make sand into one body again.” Shiri looked up reflectively, “Then there were the metalbenders, Hornfels. I read that they were very smart people who specialized in archaeology. Through mastering their abilities, they could return any solidified rock to its pure form, such as gold or platinum, and they could locate all of the pure quantities inside rocks. As you might surmise, the Hornfels were hugely responsible for technology and industrial development. Then as for the Granites, well, they were considered the leaders because they saw the beauty in Earth and earthbending. To harness nature from a very core element.” Gonshiri softly rubbed the soil. “Where plants grow, water flows, where shadows rest upon, what makes space so diverse, that is Earth.”

“I’m complaining about my crappy sandbending, I didn’t ask for a history lesson.”

“For your information,” Gonshiri spoke fast and angrily, “I only know all that stuff from my forced studies, which YOU didn’t have to endure because you’ve been living the simple life with human peasants, you never had to worry about a thing because you’re so unintelligent!!”

“So I can break anything into sand, is that what you’re saying? Okay, so how do I do that?”

“Develop your Seismic Sense so that your chi can burrow into the very confines of the ground. Then you force your chi to destroy the ground it connects with.”

“Perfect. I’ll just go ahead and do that.” Shelly remarked sarcastically.

“Uh, excuse me, princesses?” They turned right as Punio approached them. He had dark-gray stripes and a green ball antenna. “The Elder says that Spongebob and Jessie are wrapping up their training. With that in mind, we’re setting up to take you all to the Tree of Beginning. I’m sure your mom must be worried.”

“Since when do a bunch of tree mice have a ship?” Shelly questioned.
“Since these tree mice became the Puni Kids Next Door, a division of the Minish Kids Next Door.” Gonshiri replied.

“And HOW long have you known that??”

“I’m the princess, I have to know all of my operatives. The Punis are a stealth sector, so that’s why I didn’t say anything.”

They entered the tree and traveled to a high balcony, where Sandy was trying to keep a half-awake Spongebob and Jessie standing. “Nnnnn, don’ worry, Mrs. Puff, one-thousand, two-hundred and sixty-seven’s a charm…” Spongebob mumbled.

“May I stomp on Shelly now…” Jessie wobbled.

“No, Jessie, that’s mean.” Sandy replied politely.

“The first thing I’ma do is stomp you when I’m bigger, Shorts.” Shelly declared.

“Before you kids leave, take this with you.” The Puni Elder came with a bubble bottle of pink soap. Sandy picked it up and studied it. “Those are Sleepytime Suds, the very same bubbles I used to draw those two into slumber. Tell Jessie to use them whenever he needs to put somebody to sleep. Bubble Dreamers of old used them to help rid the demons inside peoples’ heads.”

“Thank you, Mr. Elder. But, how would Jessie be able to tell when-”

“THAT’S MISS ELDER TO YOU!” Elder scared the girl with her giant size, then shrunk. “The reason I’m giving it to you is because of Bill Cipher and James McGarfield. Jessie will only be able to fight Bill inside the Dream World, leaving his mortal body vulnerable to James. The only safe option is for Jessie and Spongebob to fight them both in the Dream World. And that’s not to mention all of McGarfield’s subordinates. Seeing as McGarfield’s the United States President, you kids will need one hell of an army.”

“An…An army?” Sandy spoke with worry.

“The Apocalypse is coming, so everyone is being put to the test. Including you kids. The battle that is about to happen may shake the whole world, and the outcome may surprise everyone. You young whippersnappers better be prepared.”

“Here come the ships!” Punio announced. “Get ready to board!!”

Shelly and Gonshiri gasped at the magnified sounds of flapping wings. A swarm of Jabbies were coming, their eyes spinning and their mouths as spiky as ever. “IT’S THE JABBIES!” Shelly screamed.

“Turn me to normal so I can swat their asses!!”

“No no, it’s okay!” Punio exclaimed. “The Jabbies are on our side, they just thought you were intruders before! We can ride them to Europe, they’ll get the big people, too.”

Shelly and Gonshiri seated their selves on individual Jabbi, whom were laid down and big as one-man planes to their sizes. Groups of Jabbi roped the arms of Sandy, Jessie, and Spongebob, and had the means of lifting them in the air. “Are you sure this is safe?” Sandy asked.

“This isn’t the first time they lifted humans.” Punio replied, seated on the Captain Jabbi. “In fact, you guys are kinda lightweight. Let’s go!” He kicked his Jabbi. “To Minish Kingdom, Europe!”

The Elder watched all of her children and the others fly away. Sandy’s look of worry didn’t change
as she watched the Boggly Tree shrink in the distance, while the horizon grew closer. Even if it was destiny, she feared for the fate that was in store for her brother. Jessie was still half-awake; no matter how much Elder talked about ‘Bubble Dreaming,’ he still looked completely helpless in that state. She prayed that everything would turn okay. A single dollar bill was flapping halfway out of Jessie’s pocket, and the Eye of Providence stared from the paper.

Bill Cipher watched them from this very dollar. His eye narrowed with interest. “Well, well, well. The Bubble Dreamers are coming for me again. Then I guess that means… IT’S TIME TO GO TO WAR.” His eyes viewed the scene over Washington, flashing images of the Teen Ninjas, Li’l Gideon, King Sandy, then President Jimmy.

**Twilight Town**

The friends of Sector V yawned and stretched awake. It was a crisp and clear… sunset in this time-frozen land of Twilight Town. The kids felt refreshed after their sudden battle last ‘night,’ and they weren’t in a hurry to leave Twilight Town right away. Besides, it seemed Dillon had some rekindling to do with his shadow, thankfully they didn’t need to worry about him combusting in the sunlight anymore.

Dillon was currently lain on the ground within a garden of bushes, staring at the full moon in the magenta sky. “Any idea what the science is behind this place?” he asked Mario. “Like, how could the sun be in one place forever, for this particular town? Even assuming it’s an illusion, it’s still being projected millions of light-years away, isn’t it?”

*I’m as clueless as you, Master.* Mario replied.

“I’m just not gonna think about it.” Dillon laid still and closed his eyes to clear his head of that thought. He reopened to stare at the yellow moon. “So what exactly are you mad about, again?”

*I don’t know… For the past few days, I feel like I’ve been getting pushed too hard. And I couldn’t force myself to fight like you want me to because inside I sensed your true feelings. I always wanted to think that I was a part of you that you cared about, not just some means of power.*

“That’s why shadowbenders talk to their shadows, isn’t it? Because it’s their power?”

*That’s what I mean. You were truthful with what you said to Daphne. Because of shadowbenders, we shadows don’t have to act as still and silent as we do, we feel like we have a conscience. But I also know that you wanted me back because you wanted to feel powerful again. I sensed your unspoken fear with having no means except Midna to protect yourself.*

“Why the heck wouldn’t I feel afraid, I was going to burn up in sunlight.” Dillon spoke with a logical and angered tone. “Why accuse me for wanting to protect myself, it’s no different from the other guys. Aurora didn’t even think we could beat that woman before you turned me all giant.”

*I admit that part of the reason I did that was to make up for all the times I failed you for something. You could call it a means of ‘tough’ or ‘ironic’ love, but at least I didn’t let you explode.*

“That comforts me.” Dillon rolled his eyes. “All I mean to say is if Chris’s firebending could talk, or Mason’s poisonbending, they’d tell it to work harder. And why shouldn’t they, after what happened to Mr. Uno, why shouldn’t they want to get as powerful as they can?”

*I’m your shadow, Dillon, you think I don’t have a clue with what’s been going on here at all? I know why you want to get more powerful, I would’ve been glad to help you, but Shadow is the only element that has a conscious, and it can feel when its master is spiteful toward whatever. All I’m*
saying is I didn’t want to be thought of as just a way for you to have power. Even against the Apocalypse, I want to feel like I’m your friend, too.

“You are my friend, Mario.” Dillon stroked his shadow’s hair (really stroking the ground). “I didn’t mean to say- or, think all those things… I guess I just got a little frustrated. I mean, this Apocalypse thing came outta nowhere, I guess I feel a little… behind. You remember Sheila’s little show, don’t you?”

Sigh… I guess that isn’t your fault, either. When Cheren made that announcement, I felt your worry strongly. None of us could have seen it coming. Both of us wanted time to grow with each other, but this forces us to push ourselves against our own will. I guess I shouldn’t hate you for getting a little frustrated. My anger is yours, after all, and it isn’t just because I’m your shadow.

“Well… even if I do get a little mad at you, I don’t want you to leave me, Mario. I want to have someone – besides Mason and the guys – I can be worried with and vent my anger to. You’ve been with me for so long, Mario; you really are a part of me, so I guess I never thought about our… friendship much.”

You humans have that weakness often, but it’s alright. I’ll tolerate your anger and stay with you until the end, Master.

Dillon smiled and patted his shadow’s head. “I love you, Mario.”

Now you’re just being narcissistic.

“***k you, Mario.” He punched the shadow lightly.

Meanwhile, Haruka had decided to visit the clothing store, and dragged Mason along with her. “Which do you think would look cuter?” Haruka asked him, holding two Twili dresses. “Blue-to-white gradient or violet-to-orange?”

“I’m not a fashion expert, Gothic Lolita.” Mason replied with a grumpy frown.

“You go shopping with Mom all the time, Pocket Mason.” Haruka smirked wryly. “You expect me to think all her cute clothes aren’t ‘cause you picked ‘em?”

“Fine, I’ll help you as long as you don’t use that nickname again. Speakin’ of which…” Mason decided to look at his phone, and saw a text message from Carol. “Maybe she rescued Mr. York.” He clicked the message labeled To Cheren, though he was confused by the title. “…Huh?”

“What is it?” Haruka asked.

Before she got an answer, Mason rushed out of the store and saw Aurora observing a pig pen. “Aurora!” She looked over to see him come. “Check it out!” Mason showed her his phone.

The message featured flashlight-lit blueprint images of NFL Stadiums, and “X” marks on each of them. “‘Teen Ninjas gonna attack Moonbase, Arctic, and Undersea with Footbombs. Let Cheren know ASAP. :Heart: Carol.”

“You think she found that out while helping Dillon’s dad?” Mason asked.

“I’m sending this to Cheren right away.” Aurora stated, quickly tapping buttons on Mason’s phone. “I wonder if this is because we caught one of their Leaders?”

“We only caught Daphne last night, they couldn’t have planned this so quickly. I wonder if they
“Sigh, well I just sent Cheren the message. I’m sending it to Francis too, get as many people in on this.”

They ran around to all their teammates to tell them of Carol’s message, so they sent messages to different friends of theirs, like Harry to Sunni, Artie to Danny, Dillon to Leanne, while said boy also texted Carol to ask if Dad was saved. (Dillon wouldn’t expect his father to wanna come home afterwards, ergo his mother couldn’t call to confirm this.) “That reminds me, has anyone seen Midna?” Dillon asked. “I didn’t see her in our room, so I thought she already got up.”

“Why don’t we go ask Aunt Victoria?” Harry asked.

However, when they entered the Shady Inn, the woman in question was absent from the reception desk. “Hellooo? Aunt Victoria?” Dillon called.

**THUMP. THUMP.** They started at the sound of the forceful bang against the closet door behind the desk. Kirie climbed over and opened it—Victoria Anderson tumbled out, tied up and gagged. The kids gasped as Kirie pulled off the gag. “Finally, I was waiting for someone to get up.” Victoria gasped. “Kids, I saw Midna get kidnapped by three Twili!”

“What?! Who?” Dillon exclaimed.

“It was those three employees who showed you to your room!”

“How far did they get?” Aurora asked. “Maybe we can find a trace!”

“I think I found one.” Django called, standing outside as he looked up to the building’s roof. “Guys, out here!”

They all ran out to join him, and gaped at the sight of the Meowth hot-air balloon floating over the inn. **“Prepare for trouble, we are not what we seem!”** a woman’s voice declared.

**“Make it double, under twilight’s gleam!”** Two figures appeared on the roof of Shady Inn. The male and female employees that Victoria mentioned had a still-sick Midna tied up.

“To protect the world from devastation!” the woman began.

“To unite all people within our nation.”

“To denounce the evils of twerps on adventure!”

“To extend our reach is our conjecture!”

“Jessie!” She threw off her disguise.

“James!” He threw off his.

“Team Rocket, blasting off across the horizon!” Jessie continued as they boarded their balloon.

“Surrender now, ‘cause we’re on the rise, son!”

“Meeeeowth: that’s right, Hun!” Meowth concluded.

“Woooobuffet!”
“Chiiiiime.” Chimecho sang.

“Yaaaay, they brought Chimecho back!” Aurora applauded softly.

“Are you guys from the same group as Butch and Cassidy—who’m I kidding, I watch Pokémon.” Chris stopped himself.

“Oh, so you met Butch and Cassidy, did you?” Jessie smirked. “Unfortunately for you, those two are small-time compared to us three.”

“Yeah, but it’ll only take one of us to take you down!” Django strummed his guitar and blasted an energy beam.

“Wobuffet, use Counter!” Jessie ordered.

“Wooobuffet!” The blue blob glowed red and bounced the laser back to the ground, blowing the kids apart with an explosion.

Chris tossed twin beams of fire, but- “Pumpkaboo, use Shadow Ball!” Jessie summoned the floating Ghost Pokémon.

“Pumpkaboo!” It formed a black-and-purple sphere that struck Chris’s flames and exploded into smoke.

“Chimecho, catch them with psychic!” James declared.

“Chiiiiime.” The wind chime Pokémon lifted the 11 kids high into the air, steadily squeezing them tighter. Django felt his bones about to crack while the humans felt like their blood would squirt out like jelly.

“I think we made our point quite clear!” Meowth said proudly.

“Clearer than the cleanest glass.” Jessie agreed.

“Oh, don’t make me laugh.” A gruff voice stated.

“HM?” Team Rocket turned the opposite direction. A yellow bolt of lightning flew up from above and struck the balloon, swallowing it in smoke. “AAAAAAAH!” In the next second, the three agents and their Pokémon were seen flying across the orange sky. “Team Rocket’s blasting off already?!” (“Wobuffet!”) Twinkle.

The Sector V operatives landed on the ground and rubbed the sore spots. Dillon noticed Midna landed a few feet away, so he scrambled to get over and untie her. “Midna. Are you okay?”

“Uuuugh… I knew there was something funny about that soup they gave me.”

“That was awfully convenient.” Aurora said. “Who do we have to thank for that?”

“Me.” Stated the same gruff voice.

The kids except for Django gaped at their appearance. A tall, black shadow with a long beard, and bright yellow eyes, floated beside a short leprechaun with orange hair and two horns, one big and one small. “GRANDFATHER?!” Aurora exclaimed.

“Chancellor Cole?!” Haruka followed.
“I assume by the looks on your faces that my great-grandson hasn’t mentioned us, yet?” Grandfather smirked.

“Chris…?” Everyone looked at the Uno boy curiously.

“I found them in one of the rooms at the inn yesterday.” Chris admitted. “I was gonna tell you guys, but…”

“Please, do not be alarmed, kids.” Grandfather smiled openly, sinking to the ground beside Cole. “I’m not here to harm anyone. In fact, I happen to have special rights in this town. I am the King of Shadows, after all.”

“Since when?” Artie asked unbelievingly.

“Since he married the Shadow Queen, Malevolous Djinn.” Midna remembered.

“Correct.” Grandfather winked. “Which is why I come here every now and again for vacation. After all, it is the setting where my beloved wife is buried.” He frowned sadly. “For 50 years, ever since she was murdered by Ganondorf.”

“You know, I always wondered about that.” Mason said. “If you guys’ great-grandmother was the Shadow Queen, aren’t you part-shadow?” he asked the Unos.

“Quite the contrary.” Grandfather raised a finger. “My descendants are part-Twili! Malevolous was born an ordinary mortal, who achieved a very long life force through the aid of her shadow. That is, after she became a Logia shadowbender. But alas, even the most powerful of creatures is nothing to a sick devil like Ganon.” His features furrowed. “Enough about me, however. Chris told me what’s been taking place during my absence. Is it true that my grandson is dead?”

The friends exchanged solemn looks. They looked at him and nodded.

“That’s a shame.” Grandfather bowed his head, as did Cole. “And a trifle curious.” They looked up quizzically. “Is it not true that Malladus’s genes passed on to you afterwards?”

“Whaddyou mean?” Aurora raised a brow.

“Hmmm… I guess it hasn’t.” Grandfather stared up at the sky, stroking his beard in thought. “Interesting…”

“Wait a minute, this guy is your grandfather?” Django spoke up. “You guys are related to the Demon King?!”

“Did we forget to mention?” Aurora asked.

“I say, Sire, I don’t believe we’ve seen that one before.” Chancellor Cole said, floating down to observe Django up close. The leprechaun was a few inches shorter than the skeleton.

“No, Cole, I believe we haven’t.” Grandfather smirked. “But there is an interesting presence radiating from him. Tell me, boy… are you familiar with Lucifer?”

“Doesn’t sound familiar.” Django folded his arms coolly and turned away.

“Don’t play coy with us!” Cole shouted. “Every decent mortal’s at least heard of Lucifer! Especially if they’ve come back from the dead!”

“Guess I shoulda paid more attention in history.” Django flicked Cole’s forehead with his boney
finger before walking away. “I’m goin’ to the forest to look for dead animals. Don’t wait up.”

“Wonder what his deal is.” Chris thought aloud quietly. “So, who was Lucifer, exactly?” he asked Grandfather.

“The short story is, he’s the reason we Unos exist.” Grandfather replied.

**Twilight Forest**

A gassy purple ghost with a white mask, pointed red nose, and yellow eyes led her terrified, white-skinned human sidekick through the dark forest. “W-W-Wuya?” Jack Spicer, evil boy genius, stuttered. “These shadows give me the creeps. W-What’d you say we came here for again?”

“Someone very important to me, of course.” Wuya hissed. “You still have the Shen Gong Wu, right?”

“Uh-huh.” Jack pulled out an octagon-shaped mirror with a fancy design, and a wooden trinket that curled on one end, but had a red eye inside a black space on the other end. “The Reversing Mirror and Zing Zom-Bone. Right?”

“Yes, boy. We are almost at the place… ah-ha!” Wuya’s mouth (which didn’t move while she talked) became a wide smile. Jack saw they had arrived at a graveyard of deceased Twili. There were all sorts of names Jack didn’t recognize, while one of the graves was written in jumbled letters: \( WKH \text{KHURHV RI WKH XQLYHUVH DUH ZLFRNHQV! KRRUDR IRU HOOHQ! } \)

Wuya floated to the largest grave in the center, a stone tomb that was atop some stairs, perfectly exposed to the twilight. Jack joined her up there. “Jackie, boy… would you be interested in a little story?”

“Okay?”

“This world is closely connected with our own on the Dimensional Plane, as you may know. One thousand years ago, the Xiaolin Warriors banished my spirit into this world, using a Shen Gong Wu imbued with Space Chi. Lost and lonely,” Wuya frowned for a second, then grinned evilly, “I was taken in by a marvelous lady, the Queen of Shadows. As time passed, I came to call her my ‘sister.’ Then, around 80 years ago, the two of us met two fetching young demons. I forget the one she fell for, but I was in love with another: Cole Fulbright! The old man took pity on my disembodied soul, so he conducted a ritual, to allow my ghost to inhabit the body of a simple Irish woman. My body was mortal, but my soul was not, so we bypassed those anti-mortal laws and had a son!”

“Wait, you had a son in this world?!” Jack exclaimed. “When were you gonna tell me that??”

“I was going to tell you after the Brotherhood conquered the world, but clearly I had my hopes too high.” Wuya rolled her eyes. “It doesn’t matter now. It was then, approximately 50 years ago, when a man called Ganondorf attacked our family. He killed the body I was inhabiting, was court-martialed in the Underworld, then he killed my older sister.” Wuya looked sad again. “Cole was very sympathetic, and protective towards me. He helped me find a wormhole in space that went back to my home universe, where Ganondorf could never find me if he attacked again. Then a couple decades later, I met you.” She looked disbelieved. “I never lived that down.”

“Hey!”

“Which BRINGS us to the reason why we’re here!” Wuya shot to Jack’s face, grinning with malice. “Jack Spicer… use the Zing Zom-Bone on this grave! Then, combine it with the Reversing Mirror, and the corpse inside will be free and, partially alive!”
Jack gulped, looking at the tomb. He knew exactly who this was now, but the idea of a reanimated corpse freaked him out either way. “Zing Zom-Bone!” He zapped the tomb with the artifact. “Reversing Mirror!” Then shone the mirror’s light.

The tomb quaked, and the lid slid open as Jack tumbled backwards down the steps. Wuya smirked with pure evil and madness in her eyes. The shadows of the trees and graves became more black. Gray, wrinkly, decaying hands clutched the sides of the tomb as the body climbed out. “Yeeees… YEEEEES!” Wuya’s hissed voice screamed. “Behold, Jack Spicer… my adoptive sister! The Queen of the Shadow Realm!” The corpse sat completely upright, her mouth and right eye drooped open. The grayish gold, jeweled crown sat on her head of long, grey hair. “Malevolous Djinn!”

I’ve been going through a lot of stress lately, and it’s having an effect on my stories. You probably don’t wanna hear it, but it is what it is. X/ You could say the ‘Bubbling’ was inspired from Steven Universe, but I didn’t really notice it until I was writing. The Twilight Town Arc may conclude next chapter, then the rest of Presidents Saga will be focusing on defeating Bill and Jimmy. Stay tuned. P.S., the fact that Jessie will have to fight James is a total coincidence. XOXO
**The Black Queen**

Chapter Summary

Sheila explores the dreamscape of a girl named Madotsuki. Sector V battles the Shadow Queen.

I forgot to mention that Malevolous is basically the Shadow Queen from *Paper Mario*, so she’s sort of half-OC. I remember way back then, I always thought Grandfather was like a Shadow King, and I imagined them being a pairing, so there’s that origin. Same idea with Shadow Queen and Wuya being sisters. Anyhoo, let’s stuff. Cryptogram is A1Z26, but it’ll be tricky to figure out.

**Chapter 38: The Black Queen**

**Twilight Forest Graveyard**

“Behold, Jack Spicer: my adoptive older sister, the Queen of Shadows, Malevolous Djinn!” Wuya announced once again (in case people missed the recap). The boy genius crawled backward in fright as the grey, towering zombie rose taller. “Malevolous, it’s me! It’s Wuya, your favorite witch!” The ghost looked ecstatic. “I came back to revive you, just like I said I would! I hoped to be in better shape than what you see now, but it all worked out! We’ll get my body back soon enough.”

“Уууунунун… ннннуууухх…” The droopy-faced zombie moaned and wobbled mindlessly. Jack wondered when it was going to lunge for him and eat his brain. …Malevolous’s corpse fell backward and plopped into her coffin.

“PAH HAHAHAHAHAHA!” Jack laughed hysterically and kicked his feet in the air. “Guess being dead for 50 years makes you a little uncoordinated! Ha ha ha ha ha!”

Wuya glared at him with anger. She flew over Malevolous with a worried expression. “Oh, Malevolous, this isn’t how I wanted you to look, either. I was going to force the Firstborn, Midna to become your shadow and revive you. These Shen Gong Wu could reanimate your corpse, but you are anything but sensible at the moment. It’s all right, dear, I’ll get you the help you need. JACK, get off your buttocks and help my sister this INSTANT!”

Jack sighed and snapped his fingers, summoning two Jackbots to pick Malevolous up by the arms. Once she was on her feet, other Jackbots came to help her get down from the gravestone. “Malevolous, it’s alright. Everything’s going to be okay.” Wuya spoke comfortably. “We’ll restore you to full power, and then you’ll conquer the world!” She smirked devilishly. “I still remember the spell that Cole used for me! Once I get my body back, I will use it for you—I will find you a vessel and—”

“NUUH!” Malevolous swung an arm, Jack yelped and ducked, inching backward as the zombie panted. “Taaah… taaaay… tah-me-bah… TAY MAY bah…”

“Maybe we should wake her up in the morning?” Jack wondered with fear.
“Malevolous dear, what’s wrong?” Wuya asked.

“Tay may bah… teh may back… Derrrrrse!”

**Tree of Beginning, Europe**

A swarm of Jabbi glided over the mountains as the enormous tree came into view. They were set to land within a narrow tunnel several meters up the tree, which in reality was a hangar. Jessie, Sandy, and Spongebob had to crouch slightly, seeing the Minish guards stand aside so a path was clear for them. “Before we actually let you pass, whose orders was it to bring full-size humans in here?” a Minish operative questioned. “As well as some oversized sponge creature?”

“My orders.” Gonshiri climbed off of her Jabbi and approached the guard in a regal fashion.

“Princess Gonshiri!” The Minish bowed. “You finally got saved? You have to tell Numbuh Hundred Acres ASAP, he’s been worried sick!”

“I have every intention. Now move aside, you can’t trust these half-awake lugs not to crush anyone.” The princess waved her hand to gesture them aside as she walked.

From his 50 Minish-feet high throne, Supreme Leader Lenari saw two big humans and a sponge approaching, escorted by a troupe of Punies. If nothing else drew his curiosity, it was this. He leapt off the throne with the intention of greeting Punio, but saw that two other tinies were leading ahead of him. “Princess?!?” the leader exclaimed with shock. “You’re back! And…And Shelly?”

“That’s **Princess** Shelly to you.” She informed thusly. “**Twin** Princess Shelly?”

“Excuse me?”

“Lenari, meet my long-lost half-human sister.” Gonshiri smiled regally.

“. . .” Lenari processed everything for a minute. The humans and sponge were weird enough. “Well, maybe Punio would like to fill me in. You should go tell your mother you’re okay, she’s in her room. …I’m sure she would know if she had a human daughter.” With that, Gonshiri nodded and led Shelly away.

Punio walked forward and saluted with one stubby leg. “Numbuh Hundred Acres, Sir, the Minish KND have a mission. Petunia, the report.” Punio’s sister, a smaller Puni with a pink antenna, gave Lenari a leaf scroll.

Gonshiri led Shelly to the royal quarters of the tree, made of pretty glittering stone and pure green leaves. Shiri’s mom’s room had furniture made of wood and miscellaneous decorations found only in their world. Shiri knocked on the closed bedroom door. A Minish woman with long eyelashes, a gold flower crown, and posh green dress answered. She gasped, “Gonshiri?”

“Hello, Mother.” Shiri smiled politely. Shelly made a smile that was half-warm and half-smirk as the taller Minish bent down and hugged her daughter, who returned the gesture.

The queen looked up at the human. “Who is this?”

“Well-p, my feelings are hurt.” Shelly folded her arms and turned away. “Some mother you are.”

“**Shelly**?”

“What’s up.” She turned back around.
“It…It’s really you?” Lánshelly stood up, making a hopeful smile.

“The one and only.” She smiled proudly. The human princess shortly earned a hug from her mother. Shelly shrugged and put one arm around her. “So I guess it’s all true, then.” She figured. “I’m really the Minish Princess. Same for that story about you and Dad.”

“You know what happened?” Lánshelly asked, pulling away.

“The Puni Elder told us.” Gonshiri confirmed. “However, I distinctly recall Shelly saying her mother left Father because he was an incompetent king.” She smirked.

“Well, I never met her, so that’s what I assumed!” Shelly shouted.

“Hmhmhm, Sandy did boast a lot.” The queen giggled. She then frowned, “I can’t believe that man kidnapped you, though. You aren’t hurt anywhere, are you?”

“Not much. However, my nose still feels bent from when Shelly stepped on me.”

“Shelly, don’t you know better than to crush your little sister?!” Lánshelly yelled at her daughter.

“Sister, shmister, ants get squished!” Shelly retorted.

“Well, you’re an ant now, so I hereby ground you until you’re 13.”

“Screw you, Mom, you’re not the boss of me and you’re not so big!” Shelly smirked (she was a fan of Malcolm).

“I’ll have you know I can be very ‘big’ when I need to.” The queen smirked back. “But seeing as you brought your sister back from captivity, perhaps I’ll go easy on you. How did you two escape, anyway?”

Shelly and Gonshiri recapped their long and arduous journey, from crossing Sand Kingdom, finding the Sand Wand, then flying to Kochi. “There’s something that concerns me, however.” Gonshiri said afterward. “If Father was really set on capturing me, I’m certain he would have searched by now. More specifically, searched our birthplace.”

“We haven’t had any signs of Sandy or the Government.” Lánshelly replied. “However, travel here takes a while by plane; although you all still made it.”

“I suppose it doesn’t matter for now.” Shiri resumed. “Mother, we may not be staying long. There’s something we have to do, but you’re not going to be okay with it.”

**Lenari’s Throne**

“YOU WANT US TO WAGE WAR ON THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT?!” Lenari screamed after reading the scroll.

“We have no other choice!” Punio reasoned. “It wasn’t even our idea, it’s the Elder. If she says that Bill Cipher is a monster, and only the big people can stop him, we have to do what she says.”

“The Minish Kids Next Door was never meant to go to war with adult human governments!” Lenari argued. “Even if the princess were to agree with this plan, how exactly would an all-out attack on Washington benefit us?”

“Our classmates are trapped in Washington, along with many others.” Jessie told them seriously. “I’m the First Grade President at Gallagher Elementary, so it is my job to help them.”
“And Shelly is the Fourth Grade President, so she’ll be helping, too.” Sandy followed.

“That still doesn’t change the fact that we’re going against humans.” Petuni replied. “You’re all so much bigger than us. You three could crush hundreds of us in minutes.”

“Petuni, we keep telling you to not give them ideas!” a fat Puni named Puniper yelled.

“Sorry!”

“We understand that, but you’re the only army we know.” Sandy spoke pleadingly. “Well, except the Kids Next Door.”

“NO.” Jessie and Lenari said together. …Both leaders stared at each other.

“I never agreed to an official alliance, yet, so we can’t work with them.” Lenari explained.

“And if any big kids are helping us, it’s ones from our school.” Jessie stated.

“CHOKE IT UP, Whippersnapper!” Punio yelled, scaring them. “That’s what Elder would say. Numbuh Hundred Acres, we’re not even trying to destroy the American government, we just need to get Jessie and Spongebob to Bill and President Jimmy so they can fight them. But they’ll need to fight them in the Dream World, so one of the bad guys’ helpers could hurt them if they’re asleep. That’s why we need a lot of people supporting them. It may be against Minish Code, but even all of our Pikmin would have a hard time against those big people. The Kids Next Door could help us…”

“The World Government hates the Minish, they’re generous enough by not attacking us directly.” Lenari argued. “If we just up and attack America, what’ll that mean for us?! Mass and legal extermination!”

“But if we were aligned with the Human Kids Next Door, they could protect us from the WG. Besides, didn’t you hear any news about this ‘Apocalypse’? The Government’s going crazy about it, they’re blaming the Minish for some reason, so sooner or later, they’re gonna get us, anyway! I personally don’t know what could result from this battle, even if we win, but it would be nice if we weaken the Government any way we can. If the WG’s using a monster like Bill to do their work, we gotta help these humans beat him.”

Lenari huffed and smacked his hand onto his forehead. “I never even heard of ‘Bill Cipher’ until today, I never cared about what America was doing to other countries, why is this suddenly our responsibility?!”

“Because the princess orders it.” Everyone whipped around to look at Gonshiri and Shelly, whose mother was behind them. Gonshiri spoke, “The World Government kidnapped me for their insane purposes. If we allow Bill Cipher to run even part of the scene, they’ll have more than enough manpower to capture me again, and burn down our entire kingdom just to do that. I can’t verify anything about the ‘Apocalypse’ or ‘Twenty Locks’ (“Keys.” Punio said), but as Princess and vice-leader of this Kids Next Door, I have to agree with the best possible means of protecting everyone.”

Lenari let out a long, hard sigh. “Do you actually agree with this, Your Highness?”

“Of course I don’t, the children of my kingdom are going to war.” Lánshelly stated. “But my daughter and that young Puni are right. I would like to hope there’s still good in my husband, but we can’t trust any of the World Government not to attack us. I may be an adult, but I’m not oblivious to anything the Kids Next Door are up to. You are strong, to be sure, but if those two
human leaders from before would like an alliance, it would do no harm to trust them. Their strength can help you.”

“Are you really sure, Your Highness?” Lenari asked.

Lánsheully smiled. “I’ve read stories of many strong and noble humans—or big people in general. The Fairy Sisters of Ancient Avalar, the Earthbender Families, and I was proud to bare witness to the Human Kids Next Door’s heroic acts 20-plus years ago. Forgive this adult for telling you how to do things. It’s only a considerate mother’s suggestion.”

Lenari looked at Gonshiri, then to Punio, then to Jessie, who put on a half-interested, accepting look and gave a shrug. “All right.” Lenari decided. “I’ll go to the nearest Human KND sector and get them in contact with Moonbase. I’ll explain our dilemma to their leader, then no matter their decision, our fate is set: we will attack Washington at High Noon tomorrow!”

“YEEEEAAAAAH!” As Minish, Punies, and Pikmin alike were cheering, the room ringing with squeaks in the big peoples’ ears, a short Minish scampered up to the Supreme Leader.

“Numbuh Hundred Acres, Sir!” the Minish saluted with an Australian-ish accent. “We just received word from our sector in Virginia! Our Pikmin Instructors, Sappo and Gibli, were spotted in the possession of King Sandy. They’re currently at the human school, Gallagher Elementary.”

“What?!” Shelly stepped forward. “What’s he doing there?”

“Well, uh, our reports say that the school ground was turned into sand. The kids inside are trapped.”

Shelly’s eyes widened with realization. Gonshiri knew it was obvious, even to her. Sandy was using Shelly’s subjects to lure them into a trap. “…’Guess I’ll give him what he wants.’ She smirked and punched her palm.

“For the record, people will get confused between my sister and Shelly’s dad.” Jessie informed. “How ‘bout we just remember to call him ‘King’ Sandy?”

“And I’ll be Vice-President Sandy!” the girl beamed.

“Too long, you’ll just be Sandy.”

“Okay.” She frowned.

Hall of Doors

Sheila, Globox, and the still-caged Rayman followed Murfy to a portal labeled Mado no Nikki. It was represented by two ghosts with swirly tails, with black bodies (one had purple outline and one had pink), and both leaked drool. “So what’s in this place again?” Sheila asked.

“This is where the Magician is hanging out.” Murfy recapped. “It’s a dreamscape that belongs to a 12-year-old girl called ‘Madotsuki.’” His info was based from the Manual. “He chose this place because it’s really weird and maze; the Hoodlums would never think to look here. Haha, if you think about it, her name is a mix of Maddy and Suki’s names! The kid kinda looks like ‘em too, maybe these two Fuse like in Steven Universe? I’m gonna flip ahead and see if that happens.” Murfy quickly flipped pages forward.

“Put that spoilbook away so we can get going!” Sheila yelled, jumping in the portal before Globox and Rayman.
“Okay okay! Just let me bookmark.” Murfy put a bookmark in his chosen page—the Manual had bookmarks in every section. He flew in after them. (Play “Forest World” from Yume Nikki.)

Stage 49: Mado no Nikki

Mission: Find the Magician’s residence.

Sheila appeared within a vast forest of coniferous trees, where the sky and invisible ground were pitch-black. A tremendous image floated in the sky: to the best of Sheila’s analyzation, it was a red Egyptian monkey god, staring at her with hexagonal yellow eyes, and had a tail that curled in a square, with a black hand with a face reaching out from its bottom-right—it was just weird. There were a couple of ways to go in the forest, so Sheila chose a random path. “So apparently this level’s from some horror game.” Murfy read from the Manual. “In fact, after the Presidents Saga, we’re gonna have a lot of horror crossovers. Mary’s even a central character in the next saga, if you don’t know about her, she…”

Murfy’s voice droned out. Sheila was lost in the forest, long separated from the group. She encountered one of the purple-outline ghosts that were outside the portal. She reached to touch it, then the ghost latched itself to Sheila’s head via its green drool. Sheila shook her head, grabbing the drool in attempt to yank the ghost off, but had no luck. With annoyance and disgust, Sheila walked forward. She wandered aimlessly for a few minutes, encountering similar ghosts with pink outline, and as she grew more lost, seven of the two different ghosts latched onto her head with drool. The ooze was covering her eyes, so Sheila walked forward with her hands outstretched, feeling around the trees. She was close to finding her way even less, and had no means of ditching these ghosts.

“AAAAAH!” She heard the familiar scream that belonged to Globox. “Sh-Sheila? Don’t look now, but there’s a bunch of ghosts on your head!”

“Okay, I won’t look.” she said sarcastically. “But someone’s gonna need to be my eyes if I ain’t.” Globox took Sheila’s hand and led her through the forest, however the toad had as much idea where to go as Sheila.

“Oooo, Sheila, look at these weird rectangles!” Globox spoke ecstatically after minutes of wandering. “Oh wait, I guess you can’t. Maybe Murfy can tell us what they’re for—MURFYYYYY! You aren’t chatting up that frog, are you? Oh well, let’s keep goin’.” Globox led Sheila between the parallel, green zigzag rectangles—they were suddenly taken out of the forest and into a field of large face carpets. A group of seven, skinny bird-like people—with brown hair in pigtails, normal clothing, and crazy purple eyes—quickly walked toward Sheila’s direction.

“Sheila, watch out!” Murfy yelled. “Those are Toriningen, if they catch you, you won’t be able to escape unless you wake up!”

Said Toriningen were attacked by the ghosts drooling over Sheila, allowing her to wipe her eyes clean. She seized the moment and ran around the Toriningen with Globox. This Face Carpet Plaza had odd and creepy face carpets that were cyan and purple, with smaller variations that had spikes sticking out. The plaza was surrounded by a spike wall, so Sheila searched around for a place to go. The purple face in the down-right corner had a squinted left eye, so when Sheila stomped this eye, a yellow Power Can came out. Sheila touched it and became imbued with Shock Gloves.

“Sweet, a new power, and totally erases the Flight Suit from the story.” Murfy spoke (the yellow can was the Flight Suit in Rayman 3). “Use that to power things up. You know, pointy objects are conductive too, right?”
Sheila wouldn’t know that, but as far as Dream World went, the raccoon began punching electric at each of the face carpets’ spikes. “No no, don’t punch the cyan ones, those will only power them up!” Sheila rolled her eyes and instead punched the spikes on the purple faces. By this time, the Toriningen were chasing her again, and Sheila’s own Light Spheres couldn’t hurt them. After she lit all the purple spikes, the floor within their center shone with energy. Sheila lured the Toriningen across, but ran off this floor herself, watching as lightning struck down and destroyed all the Toriningen. Globox, who was cowering in the corner, looked back up and sighed in relief. Sheila saw that the gateway out of the plaza was sealed, so she used her Shock Fists to ignite the spikes on the cyan faces. Globox wandered mindlessly onto the energy ground that formed, and when the lightning struck him, he was imbued with enough adrenaline to run around, crashing and bouncing many parts of the wall of spikes (Sheila having to dodge him at some points), until Globox finally burst through the gate.

From here, Sheila ventured into another forest area, with a prettier night sky of stars, and lampposts one would find in parks. Globox was already conked out from that energy boost, so Sheila was glad she didn’t do the same. This path was more straightforward, though a few routes led her into dead ends. She found an open area of lampposts, in which one of them was turned off. Sheila realized her Shock Fist ran out of juice, so she rushed back, grabbed the Power Can, and returned to the lamppost to shoot and activate it. When Sheila touched the post afterward, she warped to an alternate dimension with a pink and purple wavy sky, in which she was secluded on a platform of same-color tiles. Sheila opened a wardrobe to find an Electoon cage. She punched it open, then touched the lamppost to warp back to the forest.

The route led her into a mall of some sort. The interior walls had bluish-purple, block-like tiles, while the floor and ceilings were black. The shoppers had various colors of skin and clothing—some bright and some darker, but none of them had faces. Sheila couldn’t talk with any of them, so she bypassed them all and walked up an escalator. There was a shoe store close by, and along the shelves were various shoes that came in single pairs. “Easter Egg alert, these shoes belong to horror game characters.” Murfy commented, startling Sheila with his appearance. “There’s even a footnote section that tells you specifically. Want me to read it, or you wanna get on with the stage? Just break that box there if you do.”

Sheila released an annoyed “Ugh” and punched the box open, releasing a Crazy Sandal. When Sheila touched it, as what happened in Fly High Tower, she shrunk into one of her own sandals, while the other one drove away. Sheila drove her current sandal and chased the crazy one across the mall’s walkway, maneuvering around the standing or walking shoppers. On the other side of the mall, Sheila chased the Crazy Sandal into an open air vent, driving up its slope and slowing down to avoid giant fan blades. The vent came out over the building’s roof, where the crisp morning sun poked over the horizon, under a misty cloudy sky. Sheila chased the Crazy Sandal around the rooftop and rammed it several times with her own sandal like bumper cars. After dealing the required number of hits, Sheila stretched back to normal.

Sheila had a terrific view of a city from up here—miles above the planet’s surface. Over one edge of the building, she felt a light gust of wind blowing upward. Sheila jumped off and spun her tail, kept aloft in the air by the gust. She slowly floated through misty clouds, maneuvering around the witches on broomsticks that went unseen except for their shadows. To her left, Sheila noticed the small, faint shadow of an Electoon cage, so she punched a sphere to break it open. As Sheila neared the end of the mist, the cloudy sky became indigo again. It was nighttime, but there were no stars in the sky.

Sheila set foot on the edge of a dock, within a vast, endless ocean that reflected the sky’s blue. Lampposts stood up from the water and served as the only lights. The docks turned many corners and together formed a maze. There were mysterious faceless creatures swimming in the water; at
least, Sheila hoped they were swimming, and not either dead or drowning. After wandering the maze for some time, Sheila came across a hooded spirit in a brown cloak. When she touched the spirit, Sheila was warped to a rocky plain where Lizardmen roamed about. Well, that’s what Sheila decided to call them – she couldn’t make out their characteristics well as everything was pixelated, including herself.

Sheila talked to one Lizardman, but all he said was 201819. She talked to him again, he said 201518. She approached another one, he said 191225. Then he said 131415. Since they had nothing interesting to say, Sheila kept along the pixelated path. She had to navigate a maze of gray blocks – they were short enough for her to jump, but the RPG world limited her actions. In getting a little lost, Sheila discovered a pixel Electoon cage, which she could punch open (her Light Spheres only traveled a few feet in the pixel world). Sheila later found a secret path above the screen’s boundaries, which led her into an enclosing of the maze. She trekked down a stairway that led deep underground, then as she expected, she found herself within a maze of stairs.

The interior was like somebody’s house, with small dressers, lamps, and many doors on the many floors. Some of them led to new areas, whose doors led to dead ends, then back to previous areas, allowing Sheila to check other doors, then other stairs, which brought her back to previous rooms. The lowest room that Sheila could find was filled with Goblins – small, blue-skinned creatures with red clothes and green swords. Sheila’s Light Spheres defeated the Goblins in one hit, but had no effect against the Big Goblin.

Sheila retreated from the room and back up the stairs, then up another flight of stairs. The door on this secluded floor was locked. Sheila returned down the stairs and explored more routes until she found a room with a demon with light-red skin. Sheila defeated the demon with a simple Light Sphere, watching him drop a red Power Can. Sheila got the Strong Fists and quickly found her way to the Goblins’ room again. She defeated the respawned small Goblins, then bested the big one with her Strong Fist. She collected the key from him and used it to open the door on the upper floor.

Sheila exited to a pretty grassland and followed the path away from the house. She touched another gateway of purple-and-black, zigzaggy rectangles that warped her to another dark area, and was thankful to be back to a normal, non-pixelated form. As she approached a big purple house, represented by a tall top-hat with a star, Sheila saw Murfy come from the right, grunting as he carried Rayman’s cage. “This is what I meant when I said not to turn on the cyan spikes first.” He said. “Globox is pooped, he had to rest in the lounge back at that mall. Good thing I knew a shortcut to this place.”

“Shortcut woulda been nice.” Sheila admitted, looking around the dark sky. “I dunno what it is about this world… but it don’t sit right with me. I don’t like it.”

“Tell me about it.” Murfy agreed. “Little girls need to dream about ponies or boys. None of this is natural for a Dream World. Oh well.” Murfy lifted Rayman’s cage again. “Come on, let’s go tell Magician the good news. In case you’re interested, his real name’s Ales Mansay.” (End song.)

The Magician’s house featured posters of Dream Land’s scenic locations, bottles of potions, and many typical artifacts one would find in a wizard’s home. Sheila saw an animated clock, with gloves and shoes separate from its body, and when his hour hand struck ’11,’ the clock’s eyes whirled as his bells rang. The Magician was in a medical room, where a Red Lum was pinned to his desk as he gently poked it with a needle. Sheila assumed he was in the middle of an experiment. To recap, Magician wore a tall top-hat and a sleek black jacket. He was shorter than Sheila, and had a big, light-blue nose like all Teensie. He turned his head and gave a bright grin at his guests. “Hey, you guys made it!” Magician said perkily. “For a minute, I was afraid you’d get lost.
Madotsuki! Fetch our guests something to drink."

The girl in question walked in from behind purple curtains on the left. Her eyes were closed as she walked listlessly. She had brown hair in two pigtails, a pink hoody sweater with a window design on the chest, and a purple skirt. Her red shoes made little squeaks as she walked. “Oi, is this girl sleepwalkin’? Ya can’t sleepwalk in your dream, ya dumb drongo!” Sheila shouted at her.

“Don’t worry, she’s totally conscious!” Magician grinned, patting the girl’s head as she walked by. “She’s only resting her eyes, but she knows every nook and cranny in this place, so it’s alright. Her dream, after all.” Madotsuki walked into the kitchen. “Anyway, great that you’re here, how’s the quest been going Sheels, have you been collecting me them Lums?” His eyes turned big and bright at the word.

“Got ‘em right here, Sir!” Murfy pulled several giant jars of Yellow Lums out of nowhere. “Sheila’s been doin’ great, she got like two S-ranks, mostly A’s, but that’s after replayin’ a few levels. Heh, these levels are just too fun not to replay!”

“Ahhhhh, Lums, so many Lums!” Magician hugged one of the jars and stroked it with his arms and legs. “Leems, Looms, Lems, Lims, Lums… I love Lums, I hope you know that.”

“I hope you’re planning to use these ‘Looms’ to help out Raydum.” Sheila said.

“All in good time.” Magician stretched his arm and shoved all the jars away into the curtained room. “First, lay our guest of the hour on my table over here.”

Murfy carried Rayman to said table and opened his cage. He forcefully shook it until Rayman tumbled on all fours onto the table. Magician quickly cast some spells to bind Rayman’s hands and feet. Magician jumped onto Rayman’s body on the table, pulling his mouth open to peer inside. “Mmmm-hm…” He grabbed a Purple Lum out of nowhere and shoved it in Rayman’s mouth. Nothing happened. He shoved another one in. Nothing happened. Then another, another, another, and another. “That’s somethin’.”

“I’ll say. Rayman has no neck, arms, or legs!” Murfy joked.

“It’s not only that. His eardrums absorbed so much Rabbid screaming that his brain up and left his body. It might be wandering the Dream World this very minute; assuming nobody stepped on it.”

“Do ya mean we have ta go on a big quest to find Rayman’s BRAIN?” Sheila asked exasperated.

“No we don’t!” Murfy spoke eagerly, skimming the Manual. “If we go to Picture City, ‘Where art becomes real,’ we can paint him a new brain! And that’s not even the best part, the next Light is in Picture City, her name is-”

Sheila grabbed the Manual, tore its pages off, threw them on the floor, and furiously stomped and grinded them under her sandals. “NOOOOOO!” Murfy grabbed a few tiny pieces. “My Manual! My limited edition Guide to Legend of the Seven Lights, made by the one and only Catswell Patterson, same guy who made guides for all the other Gameverse stories! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, Sheila?! That thing had all the answers, every big secret was in that book! What are we gonna do now?! I don’t know what’s gonna happen, NONE of us know! How can we possibly survive without knowing the end of the story?!”

“You spent this whole adventure buried in that piece of garbage.” Sheila scolded. “Well, I’m the captain of this voyage, so we’re going by my rules. And Cap’n Sheila says… we do this adventure the way we’re supposed to.” She winked at the camera. “Keep everyone guessing.”
“Sniff.” Murfy was sobbing, hugging the ripped bits to his chest.

“Either way, he had the right idea.” Magician said. “If you go to Picture City, you could make a new brain for Rayman. I’ll still need to conduct the surgery to get it in there; that’s gonna take a few thousand Bubble Bucks. Thankfully, we’ve been making a ton of money from Super Legends Heroes. Make sure to read that when you have time.”

“Yeah, when we’re done saving the universe.” Sheila stretched her arms. “Well-p, it’s right time for me to wake up, or me mates will miss me. Where’s the way out o’ this place?”

“Right in the kitchen.” Magician pointed. Sheila smiled in thanks and walked in, finding Madotsuki standing by the portal pedestal. She and Mado performed a silly dance to make the portal open. Sheila swirled inside.


The Magician waited until he was gone. He looked as Madotsuki returned with a cup of coffee. The Teensie drank it calmly. “Thank you, Mado. Now, if you would with this Lum?” He noted the red, winged energy ball on the table.

The Red Lum shook frantically to escape its binds, but it was hopeless. Madotsuki put her hands beside her forehead, and pulled a Sleep Bubble into being. She caught the Red Lum inside. Ales watched as the creature fell asleep, shuddering from the nightmares it was now having. “Good job, Mado. Now, why don’t you go out and play, it’s a nice day out. I’ll have more work for you later.” Without opening her eyes, Madotsuki walked to the exit and left.

The Magician entered the purple curtains, which led down a flight of stairs. He used a key to open the door to a secret passage. Ales put the Bubbled Red Lum inside a closet with many others. All those Lums were mutated, however, some growing blank white eyes, arms, legs, yet all were asleep and shuddering in their bubbles. Ales closed the door, then peeked into another closet, where all of the jarred Yellow Lums Sheila collected were placed. Ales smirked evilly, intending to conduct experiments on them later.

With that, Ales entered the main room of the passage, grinning ecstatically: Mr. Dark posters, Mr. Dark carpet, banners that read I :heart: Mr. D, fan letters to Mr. Dark, Mr. Dark T-shirts—the Teensie was totally obsessed with this one person. Ales Mansay rubbed his hands with a malicious smirk. “Just gimme a week… only one week so I can work on these Lums. I’ll create the most powerful army of mutant Lums you’ve ever seen! Then once Madotsuki lives up her worth… she’ll be the perfect sacrifice! The Waking World will be yours, Mr. Dark! Oh, but don’t worry… I’ll be sure to keep away any incursions.” His eyes narrowed to a bubble across the room: it contained a short being with a silver body, pink head, and two long tails, fast asleep. “You’ll be good and stay in here, won’t you? Thanks.” The Magician left and shut the sleeping creature in the dark.

Twilight Town

Sector V was still lingering around Twilight Town, and Grandfather and Cole were sitting at an outdoor table and slurping tapioca. The operatives still couldn’t believe how mellow these two were, knowing the terrors and atrocities they caused in the old days. Cheren called them to confirm he got their message, and he’s summoning a group of available operatives to plan an attack. “We should go to help them, too.” Aurora said. “We mostly came here to get Mario back to begin with, and he and Dillon look pretty patched up. He can claim Midna as his Firstborn later.”

“Are you still sick?” Dillon asked Midna.
“I’m feeling better.” Midna replied. “But I also feel… something else. A familiar presence… Huh?”

“EVERYBODY RUN!” a Twili screamed as many citizens were running from one side of town. “The robots are invading!!”

“Yo, what’s going on?” Virginia asked, hurrying to the center of town with Lola and Terry beside her.

“Is this another tradition they have?” Lola asked.

“I’m glad we don’t come here often.” Terry remarked.

“Wait! Look at those robots!” Django pointed.

A swarm of short robots with red eyes, no legs, metal claws, and black and dark-yellow designs flew up from the cliff around town, surrounding them. “BWAH HA hah ha!” came the cackle of the red-haired boy with a helipack. “Kids Next Door, your ultimate match has returned once again! Jack Spicer, evil boy genius, is from this point forward, the CONQUEROR of this town!”

Grandfather shot up and grabbed him by the chest. “Under WHOSE authority?!”


“Listen, you overgrown coat hanger,” Wuya flew up to Grandfather’s face and glared, “if you were wise, you would make like the other shadows and- HUUU!” The ghost gasped. “Wait! I know you! You’re…” Wuya’s eyes narrowed to the left, seeing the little man floating in midair. “COLE?!”

“WUYA?” Cole exclaimed.

“COLE!” Wuya happily flew to the leprechaun as they locked hands (sort of) and twirled in place. “Where have the years BEEN? I have been having the most exhausting time with this nose-picking pest.”

Jack was in the middle of picking his nose as Grandfather clutched him. At Wuya’s remark, he wrapped the hand behind his back. “But this is wonderful timing, Cole!” Wuya beamed. “I need your help- no, my SISTER needs your help! We need you to use that spell again to give her a vessel!”

“Your… sister?”

“Uuuuuueeeeee.” The group looked down the left street and gaped at the source of this moaning. The grey zombie in the large blue-and-brown dress was nearly Grandfather’s height, and was only kept standing with the help of Jackbots.

Grandfather gasped and dropped Jack, “Is that…?”

The Jackbots stopped to let Malevolous droop and catch her breath. The zombie lifted her head to stare at the team of frightened children. Her hazy vision looked at Midna, then focused on Virginia, who was holding a lit cigarette. “HUUUU!” The zombie thrusted her chest forward, and her shadow stretched out and latched Virginia’s.

“UUU-Uck!” The woman choked, feeling her very nerves bind. Virginia dropped her cigarette. The shadow between her and Malevolous grew black, and the half-human’s body became black, too.
Malevolent’s zombie collapsed, and the shadow flowed over to encase Ginny’s body completely. In a flash, Virginia was wearing purple-and-black clothing, and her eyes were a milky dark. “Siiiiigh... huff...”

“M...Mom?” Terry choked.

“Dude, is she possessed?” Lola asked.

“Malevolent?” Grandfather bore a teary smile and eyes, lowering to take Virginia’s hands. “Is that really you, Dear?”

“Yes!” Wuya hissed. “YEEES! At long last, the Queen of Shadows is reborn! Come, Malevolent.” She flew beside the possessed woman. “Let us finish what we started! Let’s take over the world together!”

“NO!” Malevolent swung an arm through Wuya’s hazy body, wobbling away from Benedict as she bent and cupped her hands onto her knees. “I...I am Malevolent Djinn... a Logia shadowbender. My chi remained inside my corpse after death... I am controlling this woman with an advanced Shadow Possession. So tell me...” She looked at Midna, “Is this woman—this shadowbender; is she the Firstborn Guardian?!”

“I believe you want that fellow there.” Cole smiled wryly at Dillon.

Malevolent faced him, and Dillon glared back. “Oh... my mistake. Very well...” She walked forward. “Come here, boy...”

“The HECK you will!” Aurora and Chris jumped in the way, lighting with flames.

“You...You ignorant children. Why are you defying me?”

“Don’t play dumb with us,” Harry said, “you wanna possess Dillon so you can control Midna. Viridi pulled the same crud, it ain’t gonna happen.”

“You useless imbeciles, you don’t understand! Let me possess him!”

“Or what?” Django tuned his guitar, smirking.

“Oh, come on, YOU again?” Jack exclaimed with annoyance. “Look, I can only deal with one dead thing at a time, so let’s make some adjustments. JACKBOTS: ATTACK!”

“Skeletons, attack!” Django strummed the skeletons into being and had them fight the robots. Terry and Lola jumped Malevolent in their mom’s body, trying to weigh her down, and when Kirie leapt for a kick, Grandfather blasted heat vision to knock her away.

“HEY, what’s your deal?!” Haylee shouted.

“Please, this is my wife here.” Grandfather smirked. “You kids need to mind your elders.”

Aurora blasted ice at the demon, and Cole sent ghostly mice to latch the Uno girl to his energy strings. He forced Aurora to battle Chris, but Harry tossed CDs to slice his strings, then Haru and Mason bounced Haylee up to whack Cole with her wrench. “Nnn-nnn!” Artie tried to whack Wuya with his hat, but the ghost was intangible. “What’s the deal with you, anyway?”

“I created a Horcrux back in my world.” Wuya smirked. “Not telling you what it is, though. But let’s see what secrets you’re hiding.” The ghost shrunk and flew into Artie’s ear, and her image
could be seen behind his green eyes. She flew out the other ear and stretched to normal. “I didn’t think a boy your age could keep so many nude posters!”

“THOSE WEREN’T MINE, THEY’RE HOAGIE’S!” Artie flushed.

“ENOUGH OF THIS!” Malevolous blew Lola and Terry off of her, stomping toward Dillon. “Just let me-” A Light Sphere punched her in the side of the head, forcing the Shadow Queen out of Ginny’s body.

“Sheila!” Mason exclaimed.

“‘ey, did you numbskulls forget to wake me up again?” Sheila remarked, her fist shining.

The disembodied shadow flew in circles on the ground before going into Dillon. “AAAAH!”

“DILLON!” Midna screamed.

“Aaaaaaa-aaaaahhh!” Dillon twitched everywhere as black shadow was encasing his body. “Let… gooooo!”

Subconscious

Dillon panted heavily, landing within a shadowy black plain with a blue sky. He looked up when a glob of the shadow ground rose. It formed into Malevolous Djinn, glittering pink hair in strip-like strands, golden crown with jewels, and her blue-and-brown patterned dress was in great shape. She had no eyes, but a mouth that grinned at Dillon. “Queen Malevolous…”

“It’s useless to resist me, boy. Now, stop this insolence.” She loomed forward. “Allow me to-” But for the second time, she was thwarted. Mario flew up from the ground and punched the Shadow Queen away.

“You’ll stay AWAY from my master!” the shadow declared. In this realm, Mario sounded like he was actually talking, rather than a voice in Dillon’s head. “A fat ugly shadow like you doesn’t belong here.”

“How DARE you attack me!” Malevolous floated back up. “You lesser impudent shadow, I command you to obey me!”

“Mario, let’s take her on!” Dillon said readily. “If we can fight Aunt Daphne’s control, this old hag will be easy! You with me?”

“Yes, Master.” Mario got beside him. “There’s only room for one shadow. And Midna.”

“Heeeeh… I don’t want it to be this difficult.” Malevolous sighed. “But if I must… I will. Before there can be reason, there must be punishment. I will teach you that lesson the hard way!” (Play “Shadow Peach Battle” from Paper Mario: TTYD!)

Boss fight: Malevolous Djinn

The Shadow Queen dug her arms into the ground, making a line of hands sprout up along a path to Dillon. The boy dodged aside, then ran as the hands kept chasing him, sending Mario to punch them away. “The ground is shadow, Master, use it!” Dillon squeezed the air in his hands, psychically grabbing the shadow ground and whipping it in front of him as a shield, blocking
Malevolous’s chomping teeth when she lunged. Dillon waved and thrust his arms toward the queen, making streams of shadow pelt her in the face, but Malevolous countered with a swarm of shadow columns. Dillon raised his hands in defense to block the shadow, but Malevolous Veiled in the ground and came behind him, grabbing Dillon in her hands. Mario popped out and punched her away, then pulled Dillon into his own Veil.

The Shadow Queen looked around before a huge hand reached up and pulled her down, allowing Dillon to deal some punches against the witch. Malevolous easily escaped, then Dillon rocketed out for a headbutt against her face. “Ow.” He grunted after landing, dodging Malevolous’s stretched, roundabout hand. Dillon evaded other such attacks before stretching Mario to bind the queen. She was too strong to hold in his Shadow Possession, and Mario couldn’t get close to wrapping around for a Strangle. Malevolous’s head stretched and shot over to bite him, but Dillon dodged, punched a fist up, and had a shadow gush pop up from the ground and hit her neck.

Dillon punched a barrage of gushes against her neck until the queen’s body toppled over. Dillon slithered over to her body and popped up with a large shadow fist, punching her in the gut. The queen sunk into a Veil, and Dillon ran as a string of her clapping hands chased him. Dillon became exhausted and stopped, stretching his hands to either side to push the queen’s hands back, then he gasped when the queen’s mouth appeared below and caught him inside. Dillon furiously punched the inside, and with Mario’s help, he broke free. He recovered and stretched a Shadow Shockwave, sending Mario to bite and gnash the queen from all ends, tearing a few pieces of her dress and hair.

The Shadow Queen fumed with anger and molded much of the shadow ground up onto her form, encasing herself within a bulging ball. “What’s that about?” Dillon asked.

“It’s going to explode, Master, watch out!” Mario quickly pulled his master below, letting the powerful Shadow Bomb erupt without harming them. When they came up, Malevolous karate-sliced and knocked them away, and when Dillon recovered, the queen dealt stretched punches across his features. She flew up and grabbed his arms, ready to sink her teeth into him, but Mario punched her in the teeth and saved his master. Shadow Queen flew and chomped her teeth, but Dillon sunk into a Veil. He came up a few feet to her left, she chomped him, the Shadow Clone faded. Another one, then another came, she attacked both, Dillon clones were popping everywhere like Whack-A-Mole.

“You aren’t the only one who can clone herself! Er, himself. Er, forget it!” Malevolous spawned a wall of Shadow Clones and had them all fly at the Dillon clones, dispersing every one. The real Dillon emerged behind her as a tall shadow, wrapping around her like a snake. Dillon flew off onto the ground while Mario remained wrapped, close to strangling the woman, but Malevolous sunk into the ground just as fast, coming up below Dillon to make him fall. He jumped to his feet and punched a shadow gush at Malevolous from the ground, but the clone dispersed, and the queen punched him from behind.

The Shadow Queen expanded a Shockwave and attacked Dillon with an onslaught of shadows, then pulled him into a Veil with a single hand to lay beatings. “Gnnn!” Dillon grunted after being thrown back onto the floor, and the moment he stood, he was trapped in Malevolous’s Shadow Possession.

“Quit trying to resist. You will submit to me! You will listen!”

“No, Master!” Mario yelled. “You must fight her! You can!”

“Easier said than done… Mario!” Dillon choked, watching the shadow steadily rise up past his waist. “I’m not… the Logia shadowbender here.”
“It doesn’t matter who’s a Logia, what matters is I’m your shadow! The same way you took me back from Daphne, Master… If I’m really important to you, you can fight her with your own strength of will. If you want me to give you power, you’ll have to give me power, too! Come on, Master! I don’t want to get eaten by this bitch!”

“Dude, if Mom heard you cussing…”

“It’s your own fault, just save me, Master!”

Malevolent’s essence was about to pass Dillon’s neck. He struggled harder and stopped her there, desperate to break his arm free of the blackness. “Come on, Dillon, you can do it!” Haruka’s voice cried out.

“Huh?” Dillon looked up. The shadows of his friends appeared in the blue sky.

“Don’t let Mario die on us!” Chris’s shadow yelled. “We need someone to hang out with!”

“If he’s gone, we’ll have no way of talking to our masters!” Shadow Mason followed. “Being a shadow is lonely when you can’t feel like part of the group. Come on, Dillon, do something!”

“Artie is still trying to hit Wuya, and he looks really stupid right now, so please hurry!” Shadow Artie cried.

Dillon couldn’t believe it. The shadows of his friends came to support him… like they were their own persons. No, what is he saying… all shadows have a conscience, it’s just that most of them can’t express it. All of Sector V’s shadows were alive, they were Mario’s only friends besides Dillon. But through each other, Dillon was friends with the shadows, and Mario was friends with the humans. …Dillon chuckled. “If you guys love Mario so much, help me out here. Are you just gonna let your teammate get eaten? Quit being a bunch of lifeless husks and HELP US!”

“Blimey, Dillon is a sourmouth.” Shadow Sheila put hands on her hips. “No wonder we never talk to him.”

“Come on, let’s just help him.” Shadow Harry said.

“OKAY!” Shadow Kirie cheered. With that, the team of shadows flew into Dillon and imbued him with power. Dillon successfully broke free of Malevolent’s grasp. His sweater was white, his hair was white, and he brimmed with a white aura as he turned to face the queen.

“It can’t be!” Malevolent hissed. “White Shadow?!”

“The Power of Dawn, baby.” Dillon said simply. “And you are looking a little pale.” He blew a White Shadow Breath that blinded the queen, sent Mario over to land a few bright punches, then stretched a Shadow Shockwave for some blinding gnashes from His Truly.

“AAAAH!” Malevolent hissed when a white strip of shadow connected her and Dillon. A White Shadow Possession. “This isn’t possible, you’re just a boy! In all my years, the only shadowbenders I’ve seen master White Shadow were the Andersons!”

“Oh… yo.” Dillon pointed at himself.

“What… you mean you…”

“Choke it up, you worn-out piece of paper.” With that, Dillon wrapped Mario around the queen, and Strangled.
“AAAAAAaaaahhhhh. . . .” The Shadow Queen broke into little particles of light. Mario returned to his master, and the shadows of his friends flew out. (End song.)

“Huff… huff…” Dillon bent over to catch his breath. Mario kept him standing. “We sure showed her, didn’t we?”

“Yeah. But it was probably Sheila’s shadow that helped us use White Shadow.”

“Better keep her with us then, right? Heh heh.”

A shadow crept up behind the unsuspecting boy. “GYAAAAH!” Malevolous captured him again, putting her eyeless face beside his as she whispered softly.

“I guess it’s true, then. You are Midna’s Guardian, there’s no other option. It’s great to know I didn’t waste my time with you. Now…” She slowly moved her open mouth to bite him.

“No! No! No! No!” Dillon shook frantically, he felt Malevolous’s essence enter him, he was becoming overpowered. “NAAAAAAHH-!”

Many images flashed before him. A purple city on a small planetoid, citizens were black shadow-like creatures, a baldheaded man in a black robe was locked in prison, vast space with many odd planets, flashing “8”, gray-skinned creatures with orange horns, salamanders, a giant red warship, then Majora’s Mask shrinking beyond the fires.

Dillon gasped for breath, finding himself floating in darkness. All those images were burned into his mind. “What the…What the heck is this?!”

“The future.” Malevolous hissed. “I am not only the Shadow Queen, boy… I am the Black Queen. The Black Queen of Derse, the Kingdom of Darkness. I was born in what you people call the ‘First Dimension.’ I was the original shadowbender of that world. After the creation of this universe, the inhabitants of that world banished me here, in order to watch a powerful demon called Majora. Majora had been banished to this universe a few years before then. Through my Logia shadowbending, I was able to meld with my own shadow. As a half-spirit, I became immortal. Then the gods, how pitiable they were. They made me the Queen of Shadows, in exchange that I tell no one of the First Dimension. I was made Midna’s guardian spirit…

“I will not confess to being a saint, that’s why the First World decided to banish me. I used Majora’s Mask for evil purposes, I ruled with darkness in my heart. I wedded to Benedict Uno and bore two children. In their veins exists the blood of demons, of humans, and the blood of my species, Carapacians. Then my body, which had lasted for millenniums, was killed by Ganondorf. But my memories… remain in this body.”

“You’re…You’re from the First Dimension?” Dillon asked, struggling to process all of this. “The one that’s… behind the Time Gate? The one we’ll go to—”

“When the Twenty Keys have been collected, yes. There’s something you should know about that world, boy. There is no law. There is no balance. I may have died in this world, but I am still alive in an earlier time of that world. That’s why I wanted to get in contact with Midna’s Guardian. The moment Wuya revived my corpse, returning my soul to here, I had to speak with you. I can only assume that Negatar Gnaa has already been banished from this universe.”

“What does Gnaa have to do with anything?”

“Before I was sent here, Negatar Gnaa arrived in the First Dimension, having been sent from here. Time is horribly unbalanced in that world. It does not correlate with this world’s time at all. If
Gnaa was sent there, it meant that very soon, the gateway leading to your world would open. Now that I am here, no longer controlled by the gods at this moment, I can tell you something. You must find the Firstborn. You must find them, and bring them to the First Dimension. And you must do it, before the gate is opened.” Dillon felt a throbbing pain. “I cannot hold onto you for long. My deceased soul exhausted too much energy. Listen, Dillon… you must do what I said, find the Firstborn, and come to our dimension. Our world is in terrible danger. It will affect your world, too, and any world that should come. Please… Dillon…”

“Okay, I will. But why couldn’t you tell me all this before?”

“I wasn’t sure if you were awakened as Midna’s Guardian, so I had to test you. You passed. You are a true shadowbender, but you must become stronger. Dillon… I will leave you a fraction of my chi. Use it… to strengthen your own. Dillon… I know that you and your friends… can save our world. Tell my descendants… they possess the blood of rulers.” They were swallowed in light.

Twilight Town

Dillon collapsed onto the ground, rasping. “Dillon, are you okay?!” Aurora asked worriedly.

“I don’t sense Malevolous’s presence.” Midna said. “He must have fought her back.”

“No! NOOOO!” Wuya cried. “Malevolous! This can’t be! Quick, Jack, revive her body again!”

The boy jumped to attention and rushed to Malevolous’s corpse. “Zing Zom-Bone! Reversi-AAAAH!” A laser blasted the dead body and destroyed it.

“Oops. Did I do that?” Django smiled innocently. Smoke emitted from the head of his guitar.

“NOOOOOOOOO!” Wuya cried once more. “My precious sister! How could you do this to her?!”


“Actually, she was around 8,000.” Grandfather informed.

“How were we born again?” Chris asked.

“I think it’s about time we conclude this chapter.” Dillon got back on his feet, taking out his Spirit Ball. “Do you agree, Midna?”

“A thousand times.” The Firstborn nodded.

Right out of nowhere, a glass cage came down and caught Midna and Dillon inside. “WHAT THE CRAP?!” Mason shouted.

“Prepare for trouble, we are back for more!” A jet with a red “R” hovered overhead.

“Make it double, won’t you feel sore?” Midna and Dillon’s cage dangled on the bottom.

“Bringing chaos at a breakneck pace!” Jessie continued.

“Dashing hope, putting fear in its place!” James followed.

“A rose by any other name’s just as sweet!”

“When everything’s worse, our work is-”
“JUST get to the point!” Haruka shouted. “We never liked the Diamond/Pearl motto, anyway.”

“Midna is ours, that’s the point!” Meowth smirked. “We’re blasting off to Giovanni, and won’t he be happy to see us?”

“So let’s put the pedal to the metal, James!” Jessie said brightly.

“Austa la vista, twerps.” So with that, the aircraft flew away. (Play “Double Trouble” from Pokémon!)

“Get after them, Jack!” Wuya shouted. “We can still harness the Firstborn’s power!”

“Right!” Jack slipped on a pair of jetshoes. “Jetbootsu!” He shot after Team Rocket at great speed.

“Not if I can help it!” Chris blasted after them with his own jetshoes.

“Pumpkaboo, use Shadow Ball!” Jessie threw her Pokéball open.

“Victreebel, Razor Leaf!” James threw his—“DAAAAH dammit, Victreebel!” His loving Pokémon began munching him.

Chris narrowly dodged Pumpkaboo’s spheres while Jack Spicer used the Ruby of Ramses to catch the Razor Leafs and toss them back. Wobbuffet stood on the roof of the ship and used Counter to bounce the leaves back again, scratching the sides of Jack’s cloak. Chris kicked more fire to his shoes and flew faster after Team Rocket, only for James’ Chimecho to catch him in psychic and throw him back. Jack used the Reversing Mirror to bounce Pumpkaboo’s Shadow Balls to knock the creature down. He then shot the Zing Zom-Bone at Chimecho to make her zombified, easily letting Jack pass.

“Come on, Victreebel, he’s gaining on us!” James shouted, so the Plant-type lashed Vine Whips that Jack evasively dodged, using his helipack to slice the vines. “Wobbuffet!” The blue blob jumped in the way and brimmed red as Jack neared.

“Reversing Mirror!” Jack’s mirror glowed, so now it was a matter of which Counter power was stronger. Wobbuffet was knocked clean out, flying into Victreebel as they broke through the roof. “Eeeeeek!” The Rocket Trio panicked when Jack dropped in after.

“What’s that?” Jack smiled wryly. “Did I hear screams of panic at my presence? I suppose that reaction is to be expected. Hands in the air, because you’re now under MY care! –Jack Spicer, evil boy genius.”

Dillon and Midna were trying to punch the glass, but no avail. “You won’t get out of that!” Jessie yelled to them. “That cage is chi-blocked.”

“But is your ship?” Dillon smirked.

“What?” Team Rocket and Jack looked at the controls, watching as Mario pushed the ‘Detach’ button. The villains panicked again when the glass cage dropped to the earth, shattering to pieces.

“Awesome job, Dillon!” Chris announced, landing on a mount in the forest. Mario returned to his master.

“Chris, use Combustion Beam!” Aurora jabbed a finger at the jet.

“Are we roleplaying or somethin’?” he stared.
“Yep, so play your part, Bro!”

“All right.” Chris threw off his headband, sucked in a breath, and puffed his head. Spark spark spark...

“AAAAAHHH!” Team Rocket and Jack’s features grew wide, and the ship vanished in flames. (End song.)

It was on this moment, Team Rocket had the greatest view of the sunset. “Ahhhh… it really is beautiful from up here, isn’t it?” Jessie sighed with delight.

“You really appreciate life’s wonders when you’re looking down on them from way up above.” James agreed.

“The breeze feels good on my whiskers, too!” Meowth perked.

“Wooooobuffet!”

“Hey, um, are we actually safe up here?” Jack Spicer asked, flying along with them.

“Except for the occasional bruises, we usually come out okay.” Jessie replied.

“Sometimes we land somewhere inconvenient.” James said.

“But ya really get used to it after a while.” Meowth followed.

“Hm… it is kinda fun.” Jack smiled. “How long does this last, anyway?”

“Two minutes, at least.”

“We don’t have long, then!” Jessie beamed. “Let’s do it!”

“Team Rocket is setting off with the suuuuuun!” (“Wobbuffet!”) The agents and Jack flew into the yellow orb over the horizon. Twinkle.

The other Sector V members regrouped with their friends in the forest. “Always end a story arc with a bang.” Artie said.

“With that outta the way,” Dillon held up the Spirit Ball, “after you, Midna.”

The Firstborn nodded. Dillon threw the ball, transforming Midna into light as she flew in. The ball shook and beeped on the ground, the light on the lock was red. …It stopped. The Pokéball hovered into the air and shone with its black top and white bottom, with glowing cyan lines. A golden ‘II’ was inscribed above the lock. Dillon held the ball proudly.

**Dillon captured a FIRSTBORN! Only 6 more to go!**

Wuya floated with a defeated, downtrodden stare as Grandfather and Cole joined her near the kids. “You snot-nosed urchins never change, do you?” Pappy asked.

“Old habits die hard.” Haruka shrugged.

“I would’ve loved for Malevolous to stay a little longer.” Ben frowned. “We could’ve had the whole family. After all…” He looked up with his devilish smirk, “my grandson’s funeral is coming.”
Sector V exchanged surprised looks. They hadn’t heard news of a funeral date, yet. “May the 10th, that’s a good date.” Cole agreed. “I hope you children don’t have plans.”

This turned out better than I thought. Well, with Twilight Town done, the rest of this saga will be aaaaall fighting. Like, a lot of fighting in the next few chapters. Get lots of rest, kids!
Azkaban

Chapter Summary

Carla and her allies work to rescue Wendy and Facilier from Azkaban.

Last chapter of the Original Worlds Arc.

Chapter B-21: Azkaban

Cleveland, Virginia

A baby was crying, wrapped comfily in a blue blanket. She had beautiful brown eyes and hair as deep blue as the ocean. A man in a dark cloak took her away. She reached for her baby, but despaired as she drew farther away from her grasp.

Carla moaned as she woke up in the alley. A pair of black high-heeled boots stood before her. Carla’s hazy vision moved up to see the glaring, boney face of Madame Rouge, smoking a cigarette. “Ma…Madame Rouge.” The kitten spoke weakly. “Where’s… Wendy…”

“She and Dr. Facilier have been taken by Magic Aurors.” The French woman replied. “I saw it from ze crowd.”

“You… You saw?” Carla got to her feet and angrily yelled, “Why didn’t you DO anything?! You let Wendy and your own husband be captured!”

“It vould not do to blow my own cover. I am on ze vanted lists, too. My husband is in enough trouble for harboring Vendy.”

“He’s still the man you married! Why would you dare to marry him if you would not fight to protect him? He might not be an honest man, but you’re a terrible-”

“I vill not be lectured by you, Cat!” Rouge stretched her neck down and glared at the animal. “I do love Dr. Facilier, and ze reason I do not show myself around here often is to avoid getting him in trouble.” She pulled her neck back upright and turned away. “Wendy was not the only person running away from people who tried to arrest her. Vhen Hannibal Bean unfroze me six years ago, I could not go anywhere without hiding my true face. That bratty Nolan York told the G.U.N. about us and marked me in their criminal banks. Vhen my escape was noted, wanted posters have gone up. Vone day, vhen I was on a stroll through this town on a rainy night… I went into Harvey’s emporium. He saw through my disguise, but had no intention of capturing me. Instead… he read my fortune.”

Carla said nothing for a moment. Rouge was speaking reflectively, thinking of warm memories, the kitten could tell. “…Madame Rouge, if Dr. Facilier means to you as much as Wendy means to me… we must save them.”

The slender woman turned to her. “You mean as much as a pet loves her master? Zat is not how I feel.”
“You know very well what I mean.”

“Regardless, zey are going to Azkaban. It is the most secure prison in the vizard community. Ve could not hope to infiltrate it.”

Carla rubbed her chin with the “knuckle” of her paw-finger, thinking. “…That Mr. Floop person said that the World Government uses Azkaban as their main prison. He suspected that Chelia would have been taken there.”

“Your point?”

“Well, seeing as Floop served a World Leader, he may have information we can use. Honestly, it’s the only hope we have. Where did those twin hooligans take him, anyhow?”

“I know where they’re hiding. Come with me.” Rouge transformed into Rachel Uno and began to walk off.

Carla stretched her wings to fly- “Aaaah!” She sank to the ground.

“What now?” Rouge asked.

“My wing still hurts. I’m afraid… I’ll have to walk.”

“A kitty has to walk, how dreadful.” Rouge kept walking.

“Not like you ever went a mile in your own shoes.” Carla retorted as she hurried after.

Azkaban

The rusty doors slowly creaked open, letting light into the dull little room. World Leader Henry Churchill entered the cell, escorted by a black-haired woman with red eyes, a boney upper-body of cold blue skin, a red dress, while the rest of her body was that of a spider’s. This spider woman, La Contessa, crawled up the wall and on the ceiling as Master Churchill approached Wendy Marvell, who was glued to the wall by a spider web.

Wendy’s eyes were a dull red, and her face showed no expression or soul. Master Churchill gave his wry, quirky smile, reaching a hand up to softly rub Wendy’s cheek. “Chapter 21 of Defeating Your Enemies: seeing them… at their weakest.” Henry spoke softly. “Tell me, Miss Marvell… how long did you plan to run? Knowing that the entire world feared you, by merely putting your face on a piece of paper… It’s amusing how people react.

“Did you think this old witch-doctor could hide you? Did you think your lovely pink-haired friend could protect you from me? You’re sorely mistaken… because the simple fact is that you aren’t a child worth saving. Wendy… do you often wonder why you were born? Why you were given a name, and a world in which to run around? It’s easy… the creatures which you call the ‘gods’ have played you like a fool. There is no meaning behind your birth… All you are is a hindrance and a troublemaker. And here you are, sulking in the cold air the dementors have wrought. Soon, they will suck out your soul, and you will be nothing…”

“Uuu… Uuu-uuuuuuuhhh…” Wendy could barely move her arms or bare feet. She tried to lift her head up and speak. “Che…Chelia… Where is… Chelia…”

“Chelia? On the brink of disappearing from existence, she is the one you are concerned for? Hmm.” Henry began to pace around the room. “Well, while I intended her to be carted to Azkaban, that was before we learned she possessed God Chi. And no ordinary mortal is allowed to have the
power of a god. That power belongs to us.” He turned to show his witty smile. “So we are keeping her elsewhere until we can sap the God Chi from her veins. Sorry, Dear… but you will not get to say a final farewell to each other. Floop could have made the ‘Sky Sisters’ a royal hit, but not all dreams can come true. And when I turn around and walk away, I will never see you again. And… now.”

So Henry turned and walked out of the cell. La Contessa crawled down the web holding Wendy, tilting her face up to look in her eyes. “After the dementors are finished eating your soul, I will have the remains. I hope you taste good.” The warden crawled out of the room and shut the door.

Cleveland; Floop’s hideaway


“DO NOT pet the lion while he’s sleeping (do not).” Floop faced the camera and sang as Sonny was about to pet a giant lion.

“Or he will (WILL) tear you into pieces!” Several Floops popped up at different distances from the camera as the lion tore up a Floop doll. “He can!” sang a Floop whose face appeared directly at the camera.

“(Can?) Can you crush a bird with your hammer?” Floop made a shrug as Donna threatened to smash a bird in her nest.

“You can! (YES!) But no, you should NOT! (Oh, no!)” Floop wagged his finger.

Unless you are a hobo that needs a quick snack!” A table floated up with plates of small turkey and scrambled eggs. Sonny and Donna licked their lips, holding knives and forks.

A trio of Floops were then sitting in a Viking boat, rowing concurrently. “Use positives, and negatives, to accomplish, your, objectives! Conjunctions! Adjunctions! Know: how they function!”

“Know your verbs! (‘Mr. Floop?’) Know your words! (‘Mr. Floop?’) Use this stone to kill TWO-”

“I BEG YOUR PARDON, MR. FLOOP!” The show host snapped back to reality—the holographic background snapped off, revealing the true form of Goofy Goober’s basement.

“Oh, Charles!” Floop acknowledged them from his chain-linked platform. “Madame Rouge! Lovely to see you! Take five, twins.” He clapped his hands to lower his platform.

The birds that Sonny was about to crush with a rock immediately flew out of there. “He made us kill several of them while we were rehearsing.” The male Climber said with a casual smile.

“I love modern children’s programming.” Donna followed.

“Whaddya think?” Floop asked with a bright smile, approaching the two women. “These twins got me a part-time job making shows for this restaurant’s customers! There was mostly scrap down here, but I was able to make what I needed. Eh, don’t ask where I got the lion.”

“Mr. Floop, Wendy and Dr. Facilier were arrested!” Carla shouted.

“Arrested?” Floop’s bright expression sunk.
“Ze Aurors caught zem. Zey are being taken to Azkaban.” Rouge recapped.

“Azkaban? That’s awful…” Floop looked away in remorse.

“You said that Azkaban was being used by the Government, did you not?” Carla asked. “As a former World Leader’s apprentice, would you have clearance to enter the facility?”

“Heh, ‘former’ is the key word.” Floop chuckled, pacing around the room. “Given what happened at my castle, they’ll likely suspect I’ll try to rescue Wendy.”

“They will!” said one of Floop’s clones.

“You’re on break, Floop 4.” At this, a hole opened on Floop 4, causing him to blow around the room as his air deflated.

“Well, do you at least know where the prison is located?” Carla asked. “I can simply fly there and rescue them myself.”

“That’s too dangerous. The prison’s island is surrounded by a 50-foot wall, with dementors patrolling the sky. The only way in is through the gate and on a boat, but you would either need clearance or have a wanted criminal tied up at your-…” The man paused midsentence and looked at Rouge. “Wait a second… Madame Rouge… you’re on the wanted list!”

“What are you thinking?” She glared.

“I’m thinking…” Floop rubbed his chin and resumed pacing, “if I sailed to the island with you handcuffed, and they would let us in to bring you to a cell… and we somehow found a way to sneak Carla and the kids in, and they go to rescue Wendy, Facilier, and you as well… Ugh, but how would that work.”

“Perhaps we could hide under her coat?” Carla inquired.

“No, they would check that.”

“My body is made of liquid rubber.” Rouge informed. “I could store zem inside my body.”

“DIRTY IMPLICATIONS!” the twins sang.

“You would be willing to do this?” asked Carla.

“A meager prison cannot hold me. But I trust you to do your part.”

“We can also use Facilier’s yacht to sail to the island. He even has a magic teleporter installed in it.”

“Halright.” Floop clapped hands. “It’s going to be a long shot… but I think we can pull this off. Here’s what we’ll do…”

Close to Azkaban Island… (Play “Prison Grounds” from Sly 2.)

After unhooking Facilier’s Old Orleáns from the city pier, they sailed it to where Floop memorized the prison to be located: a lone island in Britain’s North Sea. The sky was bleak with dark clouds, but there was an opening in the sky to allow the eerie blue moon to highlight the prison. Ghostly black beings floated in the sky over the walled island—the dementors.

“Attention small and shabby yacht,” said a voice from the speaker, “access beyond this point is
Floop activated the boat’s speaker and yelled, “My name is Fegan Floop! Apprentice to World Leader, Henry Churchill!”

“According to the database, you were stripped of your title.”

“I know! But I captured a wanted criminal and wanted to bring her into custody. Laura De Facilier nee Mille, aka Madame Rouge.”

A swarm of flying eyes came down from the wall and peeped into the yacht’s windshield. They skimmed the rather chubby woman in the red jumpsuit, long black hair, and ruby lips, her gloved hands cuffed. “She’s a bit… pudgier than what our records read.”

“She’s uh, been… putting on some pounds, true.” Floop chuckled. “You know how these washed-up criminals are.”

“Grrrr!” Rouge growled.

“Hmmm… Miss Contessa, what are your orders?”

“Open the gate and let them inside. We will contact Master Churchill and ask what he wants us to do with Mr. Floop.”

The gates to the wall opened, exposing the island with the steel building with three, triangle-shaped towers. Dementors floated over the sea, and the boat was steadily freezing from their presence. Madame Rouge felt her skin harden.

They docked the boat next to the island as Floop and Rouge stepped off. Two Aurors escorted them inside the facility. They retained calm auras as they were guided into the first hallway of despairing and psychotic criminals. Rouge suddenly sat down and jumped back up, dropping a large glob of rubber goop on the floor. “Euh, what’d you do that for?!” an Auror shouted in disgust.

“If I am going to jail, I’m leaving you a treat!”

“Ugh, KEEP walking!” The Auror pushed her along. “Somebody call the janitor!”

After they were gone, Carla climbed out of the goop. “I share his disgust… Sigh, alright, let’s find Wendy and the doctor and escape as soon as possible. Oh, I pray to God they haven’t hurt her, yet…”

Stage B-17: Azkaban

Mission: Rescue Wendy and Dr. Facilier.

Carla hurriedly jogged down the corridor, already creeped by the prisoners eying her with craving looks. She peeked around a left turn and saw Floop and Rouge being led up some stairs. Carla jogged over to said stairs, but skidded to a halt when an old, man-size bird, who had the dark feathers of a crow and the neck of a vulture, and wearing a guard’s uniform, limped around the corner behind the stairwell, holding a lantern. Carla ducked into a different passage on her right. “Caw?” The vulture-crow (Shadow Guard) heard Carla’s movement, and when she saw that lantern light about to come around, she tried to lift off the ground and fly. “Nnn!” Her wing still
injured, she could not go far.

Carla kept running, making little sound with her tiny paws. She turned a left corner and found a door to a janitor’s closet, and a hole high up on the wall. She couldn’t fly up there, so she opened the closet and found a broom to lean on the wall, under a shelf of pictures with cobwebs. Carla quickly climbed the broom’s stick, hopped on the shelf, hopped to another higher shelf, and from there could jump into the hole. The Shadow Guard arrived at the passage, but did not see what creature was making the disturbance.

Carla landed on top of a gargoyle statue outside, feeling the eerie cold air on her fur. The presence of the dementors lurking around made her feel despair… she felt her very happiness slipping away. But she tried not to let these feelings get to her, picturing Wendy’s image firmly in her mind. If she did not hurry, she would never see Wendy again. The gargoyle was hanging over the raging sea, but on her left, Carla saw a dented path going up the wall. Carla glided over, despite the pain in her wing, and managed to set foot on the base of the dent. She clasped the rugged wall and began to climb.

It was hard to keep a firm grip in her little paws, and her left foot slipped for a brief moment, but she passed off the jump in her heart and kept climbing. She faltered when the cold seemed to grow, and her fear increased dramatically when she viewed ahead: dementors loomed over the wall she was climbing, and the black phantoms drifted down to feast on the kitten’s soul. But then, a giant spider made of silvery-white light crawled down the wall and scared the dementors away. Carla felt a warmth radiating from the spider, and when she viewed ahead again, another large spider, but with a skinny woman’s upper body, black hair and red eyes, crawled over the side. Based on Floop’s info, she must’ve been the Contessa.

“The dementors have been acting very frisky lately.” The Contessa said to herself. “Perhaps I should feed them Facilier’s soul now. A wizard who has ties with a Devil must be a 5-Star meal. And perhaps Madame Rouge can be the appetizer… while Wendy will serve as dessert. Hmm, this is really working out for everyone.” The spider woman crawled away, not seeing Carla.

The winged kitten made it up onto the wall and viewed a small prison yard where the Shadow Guards were roaming. Carla was able to sneak between two vultures who were faced away from each other, then around another one as it was in mid-turn. She was standing under a small tower with a sign above the door that read **Prisoner Belongings. Perhaps they are keeping their wands inside.** Carla thought to herself.

A series of gargoyle statues went up and around the tower. She climbed up on a convenient trashcan, mustered strength in her wings, and flapped up to the nearest gargoyle. She repeated the maneuver for the other gargoyles—a dementor came around the bend. Carla climbed down and clutched the side of the gargoyle to hide from its hooded gaze. The phantom loomed close, almost certain there was a frightened little snack to feast on, but it resumed flying and ignored this feeling. Carla climbed back on the gargoyle and flapped up the rest of them.

She took a minute to catch her breath and ease her sore wings after getting onto the top of this building. She peered into the glass-made roof, seeing the items confiscated from prisoners. The shiniest one in there was Wendy Marvell’s Lamia Scale. Carla was able to flip open one of the window panels and drop into the room. Facilier’s Devil Wand was thankfully placed next to Wendy’s on the table, but it was tied by metal cuffs. Carla looked around the room and saw a sword leaned against the wall. She used the sword to pick the locks on the cuffs—she only had to pick the first one before the Devil Wand JUMPED out and hit against the wall.

Carla jumped to grab the wand, but it struggled like a living entity. “Please, calm down!” Carla
whispered. “I could understand wands choosing a wizard, but having their own free will is a different story. Are you trying to find Dr. Facilier? We’ll find him, please settle down!”

She shoved the Devil Wand and Lamia Scale into her satchel, which stuck up in a certain direction as the former was still moving. To escape this sealed room, Carla decided to ram herself against the double doors. She then hid behind some junk as she saw a crow-vulture’s silhouette appear on the paneled door windows. The guard unlocked the door and crept in in search of the source of the sound. Carla used her small size to sneak behind the bird, avoiding detection from the two outside as she ran to the other side of the yard.

She entered a door to another hallway of jail cells. A Shadow Guard was marching up from ahead, so Carla hid behind a trashcan. The guard about-faced and patrolled forward before passing the can. Carla saw another gargoyle several feet up, but the only available boost to jump to it was the Shadow Guard. So when the crow was close to it, Carla hurried up, jumped up on its back, and quickly flapped up above the gargoyle. “CAAAW! CAW!” the Shadow Guard panicked, flapping its wings and looking around for its assaulter. It didn’t spot the winged cat, so it resumed patrolling, though with a fearful expression.

Carla stepped on a thin ledge over some cells and sidled across, then grabbed hold of a chain dangling from a few feet up. “Aaaaaaaahhhhh!” a scream echoed from the prison depths.

“We can do this all day, you know. Legilimens!”

“Aaaaah! You won’t… get a shred of thought out of me!”

“That sounds like Dr. Facilier.” Carla whispered. “I must be close.” And right she was, for after climbing to the top of the chain, she viewed a wide open floor leading to a door where the screams and buzzing sounds seemed to echo from. She glided over to the edge of this floor, but took note of the Beamos standing around. The one-eyed mechs were immobile, but Carla thought they would shoot their lasers if she got close. In fact, she had to quickly jump back after walking closer; the Beamos shot its laser, but it ceased when she was far away again. Carla looked at the brick floor and saw how some of the bricks were broken and disorderly. When she stepped on these bricks, the Beamos didn’t attack her. She stayed on this trail and made it across.

When the door was about to open, Carla gasped and backed herself against the wall beside it. Three Aurors stepped out. “I don’t know if it’s some kind of voodoo, but his mind is too strong. But if this guy is involved in black market deals, we have to crack him. And if he was harboring that Wendy, he could be connected to the Man With the Red Eye.”

“Why don’t we call a specialist from Bulgaria?”

“We shouldn’t have to. A few minutes with the dementors will scare him straight.” Carla snuck behind the Aurors and into the room before they shut the door and walked away.

“Mr. Facilier!” Carla exclaimed after finding him strapped to a metal bed. “I’ve brought. . .” The cold and dreary air became apparent as she looked up and gaped at the cloud of dementors.

“Nnn!” Facilier twisted his left hand to face up and open. “Carla, my wand! Gimme my wand!”

“Oh-!” Carla snapped back to reality, fishing through her shaking satchel to get the frisky Devil’s Wand. The dementors floated down, she was frozen with fear, for they were going to suck out her soul.

“CARLA!”
The cat flinched and dropped the satchel as the wand flew out and up to his hand. “Expecto Patronum!” A silvery-white raven flew out of the wand and forced the dementors into backing away. “Alohomora!” He used the unlocking charm to open his cuffs and set his feet on the floor.

“Mister Facilier, where did they take Wendy?”

“Ah dunno, they separated us. But we should be able to find her. Point Me Wendy!” The Devil’s Wand whipped to point up diagonally. “A couple of floors up. Let’s get moving.” They exited the room, and Facilier cast spells to stun the Beamos when they tried to shoot lasers. “We’ll go this way.” Facilier grabbed Carla and used his green Flubber to rope across some gargoyles high on their left over the lower hallway. They swung to a high ledge with a door that led outside.

They were on a balcony overlooking the ocean (before the outer wall, at least), and looked up at the row of gargoyles leading to the top of this tower. “Say, can you fly?”

“No, my wing was shot. I can’t go very high.”

“Sigh, too bad Devil Wands don’t heal well. Wait, how did you get here, anyway?”

“I’ll explain as soon as we find Wendy, can we just hurry?”

“Alright, alright. We’ll get a better view from up here.” He used his Flubber to rope the first gargoyle, yanked the green blob, and loosened his grip to launch them up. He quickly roped the next gargoyle, launched up, and repeated until they were at the top. He cast the Point Me spell, and his wand aimed at the tower across the central prison yard. “Looks like it’s that window. Gonna be a hard trip.”

“Could you use a spell to make me float there? Then I could give Wendy her wand.”

“Well, I guess that would simplify things…”

“I suppose I’ll just tell you, Mr. Floop, Madame Rouge, and the twins are here, too. Rouge was posing as a prisoner that Floop was turning in, and the twins were inside her.”

“’kay, I’ll send you over to help Wendy, and I’ll look for them. Careful, Charles.”

“Will do, Harvard.” With that, Carla was uplifted with Wingardium Leviosa, gently floated over to the opposite tower. Dementors saw her coming and came to get their snack, only to be averted by Facilier’s Patronus. As soon as the kitten set her feet on the barred windowsill, the doctor released the spell.

Carla peered into the dark room and saw Wendy glued to a spider web. “Wendy!” she called in hushed tone. “Child! It’s me!”

“Уииииооо…” A faint moan leaked from her mouth.

“Wendy, I’ve got your wand. Don’t worry, we’re going to get you-”

The door to that room opened. The Contessa crawled in, her red eyes the only highlighted feature on her eight-legged body. “Guess what, Wendyyyy? It’s time for dinner. Hm?” She caught a glimpse of a cat’s shadow in the window light, but it was gone. The Contessa walked in front of the window and saw nothing. In reality, Carla was now clutching the edge of the sill as tight as her paws could.

The kitten pulled up to peep into the cell, watching as Contessa took Wendy off the web, wrapped
her up, and set her on her bulbous behind. “Master Churchill wants a recording of the dementors sucking your soul. We’ll record it along with Dr. Facilier and Madame Rouge. And as for Floop… well, that’ll depend on Master Churchill’s decision.” The spider woman crawled out of the room and slammed the door. The echo of the door seemed to sound from outside. Carla looked down and noticed the stairs leading up and around the tower. Contessa was coming down them with Shadow Guards at her behest.

They were then walking across a wall on the side of the central yard. Carla jumped off the windowsill and flapped her wings to soften her fall. She chased after the guards and warden, tailing close behind without making too much noise. When one guard turned around, Carla gasped and hid behind a broken part of the stone fence. The guard returned beside his friend, but this gave Carla an idea: she grabbed a lone rock off the ground and threw it down to the island surface over the fence. The guard came back to investigate the noise, while Carla climbed across a thin ledge under the fence, leading to another broken part. She could then sneak behind the guard, run up, and do a brief Torpedo Spin that knocked him over the edge. It seemed vulture-crow hybrids didn’t fly well.

They turned a corner on the wall, and Contessa was about to crawl down some stairs leading to the center yard (but if she’s a spider, taking the intended path seems unnecessary). Carla saw a cat-size hole in the ground, and a similar hole further head. She tossed another rock back and dove into the hole. When the Shadow Guard came to look around, Carla quickly crawled through the small tunnel and out the other side, viewing the backside of the guard as he peered into the hole. With catlike reflexes, Carla ran up his back, grabbed his vulture head, and pulled it into the tiny hole. Carla crawled out the other side again, and the large bird frantically flapped its wings, unable to get his big beak out of the little hole.

*I’ll never be able to do that again.* Carla thought, quickly catching up to the Contessa. The spider woman crossed the central yard, approaching a sealed door. Carla grabbed the Lamia Scale and held it up as she quick-walked closer to Wendy. The child showed no signs of motion, and her dull red eyes stared at Carla. Carla hated seeing her master in such a state, and hoped above hope that returning Wendy her wand will refuel her with power and confidence. The second Contessa stopped to begin unlocking that door, Carla reached up to give Wendy her wand, expecting a reaction.

“Caw!” An ordinary crow flew down—Contessa launched a web from her butt, pulled it down, and snatched the bird before sinking her teeth into its flesh. Carla ran behind one of the lamp posts as fast as her heart beat. The Contessa looked around and raised a brow. “Hmph… useless guards.” The Contessa pulled out a red wand with a spider web design and opened the spider-shaped lock. She crawled in the building with Wendy bouncing on her behind, not hearing Carla crawl into the door before it closed.

The Contessa crawled down a wide flight of stairs, leading into the prison’s basement. Carla noted the webs on the diagonal ceiling, spiders crawling around them. She wondered if they were Contessa’s children. These spiders hung down in attempt to bite Carla, so she maneuvered around them. At the bottom of the stairs, the Contessa entered a very large room with more webs on the ceiling, dementors, and two of those silvery-white spider Patronuses were on the webs. There were web mummies hanging on them, too, likely the Contessa’s victims. Madame Rouge and Floop had been brought here. (End song.)

“Contessa!” one of the Aurors yelled. “Dr. Facilier escaped from his cell! His and Wendy’s wands are missing!”

“What?! Weren’t you interrogating him?!”
“I-It was right after we went for break!” he stuttered. “Er, but don’t worry, Miss!” As he talked, Madame Rouge saw Carla in the darkness on their right. “When we called Master Churchill, his answering machine said he was on a tea and golf break. We have plenty of time to catch—”

Rouge stretched her legs and kicked the Aurors away. She puffed her arms and broke off her cuffs, but when she tried to stretch and grab Wendy, the spider woman shot a web up to the webbed ceiling and pulled herself up, along with Wendy. Contessa stuck the wrapped-up child to the webs. “No one steals MY dinner! Dementors, attack!” She snapped her fingers and made her Patronuses vanish.

When the phantoms flew down to dine on the rubber woman, Sonny and Donna burst out of Rouge’s fat area. “The Comical Twins are here to SAVE THE DAY!”

“Lovely, you brought some more morsels.” Contessa smirked. “But no child can bear their will against the dementors.”

“Expecto Patronum!” The raven Patronus flew in and scared the dementors away. Dr. Facilier jumped between Contessa and his friends. “Laura, take the twins and Carla outta here! I’ll save Wendy. My Patronus will protect you from any more of them.”

“You really think you can win?” Rouge asked.

“I mighta got my ass whupped before, but that’s because my cane reduces the full power of my Devil’s Wand. Now that it’s out in the open, it’s ready for action!”

“Now, hold on!” Carla shouted. “I’m staying here and helping Wendy! And don’t try to tell me otherwise.”

“I know I am not staying.” Rouge remarked, grabbing the twins. “Do not die on me, Harvey!” She raced out of the room with the raven Patronus following them.

“Aren’t you going to stop them, Floop?” Contessa glared.

“Actually, I’m feeling a little gassy!” Floop’s body puffed. “Oh, Floop.” The balloon popped.

“Fine, you can help.” Facilier said to Carla. “But stay back and let me wear her down first.”

“What kind of creature is the Contessa, anyway?”

“I am an Arachnimorph.” Contessa replied, keeping her hand on Wendy as she stood on her web. “We are spiders who can take the shape of humans.”

“They’re a despicable race.” Facilier said with a scowl. “They pose as humans and go out on dates with real humans. They lure ’em back to their cave for ‘dinner’, and guess what happens next.”

“Sadly, there have been advances in anti-disguise charms. My people keep getting discovered, and we cannot land any decent meal. However, I was lucky enough to find a friend in one of the World Leaders. Now I have a full-time job where I can have all the food I desire, and for a good cause.”

“A good cause, my tail!” Carla retorted. “This prison is a nightmare house! Using these horrid phantoms to eat the souls of your inmates?! Let alone an innocent child like Wendy! Do you really find pride in this?”

“Why not? You humans are as despicable as us spiders. Stealing and slaughtering others for petty gain. There is a reason prisons were created. And scum like this little troublemaker…” Contessa
bent her head over Wendy’s gloomy face and rubbed her cheek, “will atone for their sins in mine and the dementors’ bowels. –AAAHH!” Facilier shot her with a fire spell that made Contessa drop to the ground.

“The only scum in this room is YOU!” Facilier yelled. “Wendy never had any reason for being on them posters, and if the Government didn’t have mindless idiots like GUN at their disposal, she wouldn’t be here! We’re getting out of here as soon as I kick yo’ ass!”

“Don’t think I’ll go down with a simple giant newspaper!” Contessa got back on her feet. “I may be a spider, but I am an excellent witch. You know how most wizards can only cast one spell at a time? Well, my Spider’s Leg allows me to cast eight spells at a time!”

“So that’s how you had two Patronuses active. But we’ll see how your eight spells compare to my voodoo!” Facilier moved the skull and crossbones on his hat over his face. “I hope you’re ready, Contessa!”

“You think you’re the only voodoo master in here? All you’re doing is burning carbs. And I like my food spicy!” (Play Sally’s Song from Nightmare Before Christmas: Oogie’s Revenge!)

**Boss fight: La Contessa**

Facilier shot attack spells at the spider woman, but Contessa jumped to his left and shot three web balls. The doctor flipped right and shot a Leg-Locker Curse at her, tying the Contessa’s eight legs as she fell forward. She shot up to her ceiling web, pulled up, then aimed her bottom at the ground to shoot out eggs. Baby Arachnimorphs crawled at Facilier and jumped on him, but his shadow ripped them off quickly while the doctor stomped them. “Facilier, Wendy!” Carla shouted, pointing up frantically when Contessa was going to eat the child.

“SHADOW, GO!” The doctor sent his shadow up to grab the woman by the neck and tug. Contessa clutched Wendy and tried to bite her, but the shadow gave a forceful tug and made her fall to the ground. Facilier ran at the spider to kick her, but Contessa recovered and gnashed his leg in her teeth. Facilier kicked her, but the spider’s grip remained firm as the pain in his leg grew. “Sectumsempra!” The second he cast the spell, Contessa broke away, and Facilier ended up cutting his own leg.

“AHH!” He slouched. “Augh… that’s gonna need stitches.”

“Seeing that blood only makes me HUNGERIEST!” Contessa hissed, crouching down like a predator. “I WANT YOU!” She lunged again, but Facilier blew her back with a Reductor Curse.

“Facilier, we need to cut Wendy down!” Carla shouted.

“Not when I’m around!” Contessa blew the smoke away with a wind spell. “I’m giving this place a makeover!” Her wand flashed, and thick spider webs as wide as logs popped out around the walls. Facilier was pushed against a wall by one of them, dropping his Devil’s Wand. He flinched when Contessa dropped onto his web, close to his face. “The only people who could use a Devil’s Wand is one who’s sold their soul to a Devil. And you accuse me of being evil?”

The wand flew back into its master’s hand as he aimed it at her head. “I put my past behind me.” He said before shooting her off, then burning the web with fire. “But I still keep in contact with old friends!” Facilier grabbed a vial of pink liquid from his jacket and smashed it on the ground, creating a pink explosion. Colorful designs moved along the walls as voodoo dolls and tiki masks
emerged from them. Contessa scoffed and shot Sectumsempra to slice the dolls, Reductos to destroy the masks, and Protego to shield herself.

She saw Facilier casting fire spells to burn the thick webs, then Contessa launched a web over to catch him and throw him against the wall. Contessa leapt over, grabbed him, and tried to bite his neck, but the witch-doctor dodged his head left and right before Shadow tackled her from the side. The spider used Lumos Solem to scare the shadow off, and Facilier whipped an assortment of attack spells that Contessa was quick to defend. The spider-woman shot a web to the ceiling, swung across, and knocked him down.

Contessa jumped off and shot a swarm of large spiders out of her wand onto Facilier, who grabbed his Flubber and spun around with it to catch and throw them off. The Contessa shot a web at the end of the Flubber, but Facilier whipped it back, pulling the spider’s web and making Contessa fly over as well. Facilier punched her across the jaw, and Contessa returned this by scratching his face with her arm-legs.

One of the spiders she conjured landed next to Carla, who also noticed the web column leading up to Wendy. Carla hopped on the large spider and rode it like a bull. “I don’t know the Spanish word for ‘spider’, but you better do what I say! Now, take me up to Wendy!” The spider did as told and crawled up the web. Carla took the Lamia Scale out of her satchel and held it up to her. “Child, here! Your wand, please take it! Please!” She poked her face with it. “Wendy, why aren’t you moving?! Did they already take your soul?!”

“No, they haven’t, yet.” Contessa hissed as Facilier had his arms around her neck from behind. “But I told you a child’s will can’t last long in the dementors’ presence.”

“That doesn’t mean we can’t bring it back!” Facilier yelled, punching her head against the ground and hopping off. “I didn’t want to in case the others still needed it, but I’ll chance it. Expecto Patronum!” He shot his raven Patronus up to float by Wendy’s face. Its light reflected off her eyes.

“You think that’ll help?” Contessa whacked Facilier with her butt to knock him down, and when he tried to get up, she flashed a hypnotic beam from her eyes and made him dizzy. She blasted a spell that made him flip up into the air and get stuck on the ceiling web. The Contessa crawled up the wall, excited to dine on his flesh. “…Oopsie!” Facilier perked when a bottle of green liquid fell to the ground and shattered, causing a larger current of the green ooze to float up and encase his body. It burned the Contessa’s arms when she tried to touch him, and burned the webbing so he could drop free.

“What is that?” Contessa questioned.

“Voodoo magic condensed into liquid!” Facilier spoke as his eyes and the inside of his mouth appeared flashy and colorful, complimented by the magical skull mask over his face. “You never know when you might need some!” The entire room glowed an eerie green as he controlled a wave of stitches and sewing needles. Some wrapped around Contessa’s legs while others began to cut up the web binding Wendy. More tiki masks appeared and floated up to attack Contessa.

“Expecto Patronum!” The warden cast four spider Patronuses to keep the tikis at bay. “You know Patronuses work on voodoo creatures too, right?” The Contessa shot the Jelly-Legs Curse at Facilier, followed by a magic web that tied him up. “Forget about sucking her soul, I’ll just eat her now!”

The raven Patronus was still flapping around Wendy’s face, but it was chased away by two of the spider Patronuses. The Contessa grabbed her own head and pulled it back like a hood, revealing her true, hideous face with pinchers oozing venom and eight red eyes. Wendy’s conscience was
coming back thanks to the Patronus, and she saw a blurry mass looming over her. “I’ll send the dementors after your soul in Hell.”

“GET AWAY FROM HER!” Wendy’s blurry vision saw a smaller figure jump onto the Contessa’s head as the spider shook. “If you lay a single leg on her, I SWEAR I’ll kill you!” The small figure bit Contessa in the neck.

“C…Carla…” Wendy’s vision became clear to see the little kitten on the hideous spider.

The Contessa grabbed Carla in both her arms and hissed at her. Carla was helplessly struggling. “I suppose you’ll serve as an appetizer.” She opened her mouth to swallow Carla whole.

All of Wendy’s other senses returned that very moment. “CARLA!” She was able to get her arm free of the cut web-wrap, grab the Lamia Scale that was dropped on the ground, and cast Expelliarmus to knock Carla away just before Contessa’s teeth snapped. The spider hissed and crawled over to pick her up by the arm. “You wanna die first?!”

“Not today!” Facilier whipped his Flubber to pull Wendy over. “Sectumsempra!” He blasted the white slice to chop off Contessa’s right arm.

“AAAAHH!”

“You think you’re a bringer of justice with this job, Contessa?!” The Shadow Man yelled as a tornado of liquid voodoo spun around him. “Sapping the love and joy out of people until there’s nothing left?! I don’t know what sick thoughts you’re thinking to make those Patronuses, but you don’t deserve them! I may have done bad things and have a fondness for Dark Arts…but if I do any worthwhile thing, it’s givin’ this girl a reason to be happy! And if YOU got a problem with that… you can take it up with my Friends on the OTHER SIDE!”

With a wave of his wand, the voodoo spirits swarmed Contessa, attacking her from all sides and trapping her in a whirlwind. Dr. Facilier performed a dance to keep the spirits coming, preventing Contessa from recovering. When the doctor did a splits, the voodoo exploded into colorful fireworks. The dark room turned back to normal. Contessa lay defeated on the ground, her wand rolling away from her spidery claw. (End song.)

“Hoo…huff…” Facilier gasped for breath, his skull mask dispersing. “Been a while since I did that… Lemme getchu outta there, Wendy.” He ripped off the rest of the web covering her and helped Wendy to her feet. “You okay?”

“I am…”

“Child!” Carla rushed up and jumped to her master’s chest.

“Carla!” Wendy hugged her back.

“Hate to cut the reunion short, but we need to go! Can you walk?”

Wendy took a step forward- “Mmm!” her leg faltered. “My legs feel numb…”

“Harvey!” Madame Rouge broke into the room, and some Aurors’ unconscious bodies flew in with her. “Your Patronus disappeared!”

“I had to use it to save Wendy. Sorry if I worried you. Laura, I need you to carry Wendy and Carla!”
“Alright.” The woman stretched her arms to grab both girls.

“What are the twins at?” Harvey asked as they hurried up the stairs.

“They’re in the center yard. We better hurry, the dementors—” When they got outside, they saw a cloud of dementors surrounding a center. Sonny and Donna were in this center, and the dementors caused the ground to freeze with their presence. The Ice Climbers looked as dull as Wendy did moments ago, their bodies steadily covering in ice. “Secure the island!” Aurors were swooping in on broomsticks, landing on every wall and tower. “The prisoners must not escape!”

“Expecto Patronum!” Facilier tried to cast one from his wand, but the light came out in an impure mist. “Darn it! I used up too much power just then.”

“Dr. Facilier, the twins!” Wendy yelled with worry.

“Hold on! What are they doing?” Carla asked.

As the dementors were slowly moving closer to them, Sonny and Donna weakly looked up and smiled at each other. “Hey, Donna…?”

“Yes, Sonny…?”

“…It’s really… cold here, isn’t it?”

“…Super cold…”

Both siblings slowly reached and locked their mittened hands. The ice encased their bodies, their brown hair turned white, and their hands glowed with their Ice Chi. They raised their hands up, slammed them on the ground, and the entire prison island froze solid. It began to snow, and the Aurors shivered. The ocean around the island was also frozen. “…Well, that was something.” Facilier remarked, having protected them with an anti-freeze spell.

Madame Rouge stretched over to grab the twins and pull them through the dementors. They went up the stairs to one of the walls and found the side of the island their yacht was parked, jumping off and racing to the boat. Floop was waiting for them. “Well, we were all set to go, but then the ocean froze! What happened?”

“These kids did it.” Facilier indicated the twins, whom Rouge dropped on the floor, still making dull smiles. “My guess is they got a power boost from the dementors. Never seen an icebender do that.”

“Well, can they unfreeze??”

“Don’t worry, I’ve got another idea.” Facilier ran down into the storage hull and opened a crate filled with potions. He found a blue one and drank, restoring his energy. Afterwards, the doctor ran back onto the deck and shot fire down into the frozen water, opening a hole for him to dive into.

“Mr. Facilier!” Wendy yelled.

“I swear, zat man is more insane than Brain sometimes.” Rouge said.

“What’s happening to the boat?!” Floop yelled when the vessel began rumbling.

The Old Orleans was lifted by the tentacles of a giant squid. The squid’s head rose above the surface, and Dr. Facilier was standing on it, clutching his wand in his teeth, folding hands above
his head, and swaying his head to a mystical, banjo-like tune. “He’s controlling the squid!” Wendy remembered when he did this to the Racatan at Orchid Bay.

The giant squid smashed through the frozen ocean and out of the gates to Azkaban. More Aurors were hovering on brooms and casting spells that made water spires sprout up, so Facilier had the squid maneuver around them. The dementors were catching up, taking the form of a dark cloud, but since Facilier couldn’t shoot a Patronus like this, he kept the squid moving. The squid had to dodge around reefs, whose presence was only indicated by waves crashing into them. Once the reefs were passed, a small fleet of GUN navy ships started to fire at them.

When two more GUN ships were coming up ahead, Facilier had the squid set the yacht down on their right, then he jumped onto the deck, letting the squid crash into the ships in its last seconds of hypnotism. “Just about every wizard-owned facility has a giant squid in its waters. Is the Apparator functional?”

“It is!” Floop responded.

“Good, then I’m getting us out of here!” Facilier jumped at the controls and set coordinates for the Apparator. “We’re going to Iceland!” He pressed the activate and opened a spiraling green portal in the sea ahead. The yacht sailed inside and was gone, leaving the pursuing dementors in confusion.

Ocean close to Iceland

The boat popped out of the other end of the portal, on a peaceful sea and clear night sky. “Sigh…” Wendy sat on the deck and rubbed her legs. “My legs are sore…”

“Perhaps they’re just cold. I’ll warm them up.” Carla hugged her master’s legs.

“Hm hm…” Wendy smiled at the gesture. “…Carla, your wing!” She noticed the hole in her right wing.

“Oh, right.” Carla looked at the wing and flapped it. “Well, I guess I won’t be much help to you now. I’ll just be a hindrance.”

Wendy grabbed the kitten and hugged her to her chest. Tears dripped onto Carla’s head. “No you won’t. You saved my life… I’ll always want your help.”

Facilier, Floop, and the Ice Climbers smiled at their moment. Madame Rouge kept her usual scowl, but she watched them nonetheless. Wendy looked up at each of them. Dr. Facilier, Mr. Floop, Madame Rouge, Sonny and Donna (whom were still partly frozen with white hair). “…I’m sorry… for causing so much trouble for you all.”

“It ain’t yo’ fault.” Harvey said. “Besides, someone had to teach that hag a lesson.”

Carla gasped. “Oh, no! I completely forgot about Chelia! W-What if she’s still-!”

“She isn’t.” Wendy said. “That World Leader came to my cell… he told me Chelia wasn’t there. They took her somewhere else to suck out her God Chi.”

“Well, we’ll find her, Wendy.” Floop said with promise in his voice. “We’ll find where they’re keeping her and rescue her, too. She’ll be added to our group… and I’m going to make us one hell of a sitcom!”

“Is that the only thing on your mind??” Carla giggled.
“What? I have creator’s urges, what do you expect?” he asked with a shrug. The group exchanged in slight laughter, except for Madame Rouge, who sighed at the simple attempt at humor.

*It really is just like Fairy Tail. A family I didn’t know I had. I hate to ask this of them… but I hope they never leave my side. I’d like to meet more people like them, too.* … It was then Wendy remembered Cheren.

**Symphonia: Bald Mountain**

Medusa, Thanatos, and Pandora approached the dark mountain where dementors roamed. The mountain whose odd shape was in actuality the folded wings of the Song Demon, Chernabog. Pandora was in her god form, a black and blue flame with a face and halo. The Goddess of Chaos unleashed a beam from her mouth that exploded the mountain.

“Chernabog wakes up once a year on La Melody Extravaganza.” Medusa recapped. “But until then, he must rest to recover his energy, robbed from him by the Three Goddess Bells. If he were to awaken before the one-year mark…”

A shadow appeared in the smoke. It was shaped like a baby with horns and small wings. Chernabog crawled out… the terrifying demon had the appearance of a baby. An adorable face with chubby cheeks, and his innocent glowing eyes made him look cuter. He crawled up to Medusa, who was the size of a doll compared to the big winged baby. Medusa smirked as she proceeded to finish her sentence: “He’s going to be very cranky.”

Medusa decided to flick his young nose. Cherny felt the slight tinge of pain. “*Buu buu bu...*” Tears welled up in his shiny yellow eyes. The cranky demon cried out his feelings. “*WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!*” The earth around Bald Mountain cracked, and any mortal within ten miles went deaf.

The Contessa comes from *Sly 2*, but the Arachnimorph concept is from *Gravity Falls* (I made them one in the same ’cause they are :P). Next time in the Side Stories, we will begin the Tenth Firstborn Arc. But don’t worry, the Original Worlds don’t really end here. Sadly, it will be on hiatus until I write more of the Main Story. Still, we made a fair amount of progress in a short time. Here, have an Atbash Cipher.

…

*WLM'G GLFXS SVI YZYB*
Sectors W7, JP, and KB go to stop the rogue football stadiums from destroying their treehouses!

Many crossovers are OOC in this chapter. ;)

Chapter 39: Japan vs. America

KND Moonbase

“Numbuh 3621.” Panini reported hurriedly to the Supreme Leader. “The ships of Sectors W7, JP, and KB are about to board the hangar. Carol is with them, too.”

“Good.” Cheren nodded. “Tell them to meet me up here.”

The Sector Leaders of the aforementioned sectors gathered on the bridge and greeted Cheren with a salute. Numbuh 2=1, Bon Clay Jr., of Sector KB, Numbuh 12-0, Karin Kurosaki, of JP, and Numbuh W473R, Chimney, of W7. “At ease,” Cheren told them. “A—Melody, Danny, Emily?” He noticed the five extra operatives. “Why were you with Sector JP?”

“It’s a very long and exhausting story.” Emily’s arms drooped.

“And we kinda got picked up on the way.” Melody followed.

Cheren shook his head, “Tell me later. Now, my sister sent me these photos earlier,” Cheren held up his phone, displaying the stadium maps, “and said they originated from Carol here. Could you tell us where you got these?”

“Gladly.” Carol walked up to the front and spoke with a serious and confident aura, “Last night, don’t ask why, I broke into a CIA office in Virginia. I overheard the director and one of the Corporate Presidents talk about sending Mega Footbombs to the three main KND bases. Their secret locations were marked inside NFL Stadiums, so I snapped those photos.”

“There are Mega Footbombs in New Jersey; Arlen, Texas; and Colorado’s NFL Stadiums.” Cheren looked at his phone. “I’ll mail each of you these photos, then I want you to break into these stadiums and steal the Footbombs. The best course of action would be to dispose of them, but considering their range and magnitude, it may not be the best option. I think I’ll summon Nebula from GKNB over to warp them into a black hole or somethin’. The Footbombs will likely have a lot of guard, which is why I want you to go as sectors.”

“No worrehs, Cherry Boy!” Numbuh 2=1 smiled brightly. “We’ll swipe them balls and have ‘em trashed like yesterday’s muffin top. Won’t we, fellas?”

“YEA!” The okama operatives posed in the background.

“I have some queries first.” Karin raised a finger.
“What is it, Numbuh 12-0?”

“First, our treehouse just got taken over by apes, so the longer we do this, the more they might be touching my stuff, so send backup. Second, we carried two adults with us, one of them’s a water freak, the other is annoying. We need to drop them somewhere first.”

“It’s my mom.” Melody informed.

“And our Uncle Sheldon.” Sarah followed.

“We’ll set up a guestroom for them here.” Cheren replied. “Emily’s group can stay and tell me about their adventure.”

“I also have an annoying guest I’d like to leave here.” Chimney raised her hand.

“Chimney, if it’s that new Mary friend of yours, I don’t wanna hear it.” Cheren said with disbelief. “Besides, April called and told me she was helpful. Wanted to recommend her for training.”

“Curse that traitorous April.” Chimney fumed with anger.

“When you’re ready to leave, suit up.” Cheren instructed. “Sector JP, you’ll go after the Footbomb in New Jersey. Sector KB, you get Colorado. Sector W7, you’ll do Texas. I’ll send the maps to your phones. Sector L, will you be helping JP?” Cheren asked.

Melody was looking at Danny’s phone, nodding with her brother. “We think we’ll stay here, too. There’s something else we wanna talk about.”

“So be it. Kids Next Door, battle stations!”

Cheren sent them all the bomb locations as the operatives returned to their ships. Melody walked up to Cheren and showed him Danny’s phone. “Look in the top-right.”

This photo depicted New Jersey’s stadium. In the top-right of the flashlit camera, there was a tiny portion of a different paper on the wall. The words Mermaid Swamp were legible. “Mermaid Swamp?”

“Yes, that. Any idea what that is?”

“No, but what does it have to do with anything?”

“We’re trying to find Manaphy, but Grandpa Kyogre says he’s been missing for years. Carol, look that place up.”

“Got it.” Carol typed the swamp into her laptop. “A legendary swamp said to be hidden within Louisiana’s bayous. Home to toxic mermaids who prey on visitors.’ Quite a story there.”

“Louisiana, huh.” Melody thought aloud. “Danny, you and I should go there.”

“You shouldn’t go now.” Cheren told them. “We’re gonna have Dad’s funeral in a couple days. Can you wait ‘til then?”

“Okay. We think we’ll borrow a S.C.A.M.P.E.R. to take Mom home.”

“Alright. See you later.” Cheren’s two cousins left the bridge.

“I’ll head to communications.” Carol said as she walked away. “I wouldn’t mind trying a few
“Er- Carol, you don’t have clearance!” Cheren called.

“I will in a moment!” Carol winked. Cheren sighed with disbelief.

“Yer workin’ awfully hard lately,” Panini mentioned. “Knowin’ yer dad’s funeral is comin’, it’s surprising you can manage all this.”

“Someone has to run the organization. Zero knows you can’t.” He smirked lightly.

“What if something big comes up on the day?”

“Then we’ll have to take care of it. That’s why I wanna get these Footbombs dealt with ASAP, so—”

“Incoming transmission from Sector E.” Panini rushed to the Global Station to answer this call.

“This is Numbuh 860, what is your transmission?”

Numbuh Great, Sector E’s leader, appeared onscreen. He spoke with a British accent. “Ah, Numbuh 3621, good that you’re here as well. I have someone that wants to speak with you.” He held up his pinky finger. “He claims to be the leader of the Minish.”

“The Minish Leader?” The camera zoomed in on the little Minish on the finger. It was close enough to make out Lenari’s blurry form. The Minish was saying something that Cheren and Panini couldn’t make out.

“He claims that he wants your help in destroying America.” Numbuh Great said. Lenari panicked and shouted frantically. “My apologies, he wants your help in attacking America.” They saw Lenari face-palm and yell in Great’s ear again. “He says to let him explain slowly, he wants to get this over with. He’s grunting with annoyance. He wishes to stop repeating everything he says— goodness, is this some sort of mental issue?” he asked the Minish.

“Um, tell him to wait there, Numbuh Great, I’ll just come down.” Cheren said, tired of this banter. “Watch the treehouse, Panini.” The leader ran off.

**Gallagher Elementary**

It was no joke when it was said that Gallagher Elementary was surrounded by a swirling sand pool. Teen Ninjas surrounded the building, some were inside and tying up the hostage students. King Sandy tapped his foot impatiently outside the sand pit. “We’re done implanting all the hooks.” Nya LaMar flew overhead and reported. “The carrier crafts are gonna be here in a few minutes.”

“That’s all well and good.” Sandy sighed. “I’m just a tad disappointed my daughter didn’t show up.”

“Yeah, ‘cause when my school turns into a giant sandpit, I wanna rush over there ASAP.” Nya remarked sarcastically.

“She’s bound to show up sooner or later. Right now, at least I can make up for my mistake by bringing President Jimmy another helping of students. …Ah, here they are.”

A team of Teen Ninja Carriers hovered overhead and lowered long, hooked wires down. They latched onto the hooks that the Teen Ninjas hammered into the school, and the whole of Gallagher
was uplifted from the unsteady sand ground, into the sky. “This is Hoagie to Command Carrier.” Hoagie Gilligan III spoke into his communicator. “Gallagher is off the ground.”

“Excellent.” Gideon Gleeful replied from the Command Carrier. “Father, set a course back for Washington!”

Gideon’s father, a fat man in a sun hat and red button-up shirt with flower designs, was driving the craft. “Now, I’m happy to do this for you, son, but this seems like an awfully complicated construction project.”

“All perfect masterpieces are complicated!” Gideon rubbed his hands evilly. “And the more pieces, the better! After Bill absorbs enough mind power from these kids, he’ll become unstoppable. We will RULE America and all of its colonies! The Kids Next Door will be powerless to stop us! And once we give them a taste of our Mega Footbombs, it’ll be all sugar.” He blinked his eyes in a pretty fashion. “I mean, what can they possibly do at this point?”

Timothy and Hikari Gilligan were among the students tied up at Gallagher. The siblings exchanged nods before easily slipping out of their ropes. You can always count on Hoagie not to betray his family. Hikari opened her backpack to let the nine Pikmin Onions flutter out, and inside them were Rupert and his Pikmin. “Are you guys sure there aren’t any bad guys?” Rupert squeaked.

“They’re all watching from the outside.” Timmy whispered. The building was swaying on its midair hinges. “I can see why.” Timmy held his stomach, feeling ill. “You don’t have to untie everyone, just go help the Kindergarteners. They can take care of the rest.”

“Will do. Come on, fellas.” They watched the colorful Pikmin army scamper out of the classroom.

“But even if we get untied, what’re we gonna do afterwards?” Timmy asked his sister. “How are we supposed to save Rupert’s mom and all the kids in Washington?”

Hikari sighed, laying her head down on her desk. Timmy brought up a good point. How would they be able to escape with all of their friends? How… “Tell me how, Jessie.”

Sector JP C.O.O.L.-B.U.S.

“Um, Karin?” Ururu spoke softly, after fixing on her Tiny Devil suit.

“Yes, Ururu?”

The former directed Karin’s attention to Yuzu, whose eyes had been spinning the whole trip. “I think there’s something wrong with Yuzu. She’s been… like that since she got hypnotized.”

“She’s just being silly.” Karin approached her sister and waved a hand by her. “Yo, Yuzu, snap out of it. We got a job to do, I know you aren’t very strong, but focus!”

Yuzu’s eyes spun for a few seconds. Then they stopped, as the girl yelled, “DEATH TO THE WORLD GOVERNMENT!”

“YEAH! That’s more like it!” Jinta grabbed the girl around the neck. “Fight the power!”

“Wow, you two actually have something in common.” Kodama grinned sheepishly, making a sweatdrop.

“Ah, crap, she’s still hypnotized.” Karin sighed.
“Oppose the Government!” Yuzu raised her spoon with pride.

“Oppose the New World Order!” Jinta cheered.

“Join the Freedom Fighters on your own time!” Karin yelled. “Kodama, how close are we to the stadium?”

“10 miles and closing.” The Fireworks Expert responded, piloting the bus. “We’ll land a few miles away so they don’t suspect anything.”

“You know what we should do?” Jinta asked with a grin. “Make it a game with the other sectors to see who gets their ball first. Last place has to buy everyone snacks!”

“That does sound kinda fun.” Ururu replied softly. “It would inspire us more.”

“It’s no fair if the other teams don’t know they’re playing.” Karin said disagreeingly. “Besides, there’s more than just money for snacks weighing on this game…”

Sector KB’s S.C.A.M.P.E.R.

“HOMOSEXUAL.” Bon Clay shouted out of nowhere. He was sitting on the captain’s seat of their pink S.C.A.M.P.E.R.. “Thou must be: HOMOSEXUAL. Are you guys with me? Because I don’t think you seem to understand what I’m saying. I’ll clarify it: ah-he-hem: gaaaaaaay-”

“UUUUGH!” One of the female members slammed her fists on her control deck. “Will you JUST SHUT UP already!?” She had short, brownish-red hair and a red sleeveless shirt, black shorts, and dark-red boots. She also has red skin. “We KNOW we’re gay, everyone here is gay, but YOU hurt my EARS!”

_Numbuh One Half, GKND transfer operative from Solar Mines_  
**RUBY**

“Ruby, vous êtes en train de brûler à nouveau votre-” A girl with blonde hair and a light-blue shirt was speaking in French.

_Numbuh Perfect Pair, swordsgirl of Sector KB_  
**LIBBY BELLE**

“And YOU!” Ruby pointed at her. “SPEAK ENGLISH!”

“She was saying that you’re setting your seat on fire.” Sapphire replied. She was a blue-skinned girl in a blue-and-white dress, and light-blue hair that covered her eyes. Ruby saw that the pillow of her seat was engulfed in flame.

_Numbuh Other Half, GKND transfer from Glacia, telepath of Sector KB_  
**SAPPHIRE**

“I’m sorry for being such a loudy-mouth.” Bon Clay smiled wide, but sadly. “I’m still upset over Lexi. Why did he have to leave us?! Oh ho ho ho!” He began crying.

“Who cares about Lexi, just let ‘im hang out with his Teen Ninjas.” Ruby folded her arms in anger. “What’re we gonna do about these Mega Footbombs?”

“Sapphire will find it, of course.” Libby replied, her French accent noticeable. “Her psyceek is excellent. Are ve close to ze stadium?”
“Sure, sure.” The ship’s pilot replied with a nonchalant smile, powdering his face with sparkly makeup. He had brownish-blonde hair and pretty blue eyes, and was wearing a pink shirt under a black sleeveless, and slim black pants. He was driving the wheel with his knees.

**Numbuh Binary, 4x4 officer of Sector KB**

**HIBIKI LATES**

“Hibiki?” Sapphire spoke in a low tone. “There are two things wrong with your statement.”

“What is that, Sapphy?” he asked with handsome narrowed eyes.

“One… we have changed course about 80 degrees from our destination five minutes ago. Two… we are about to crash into a satellite.”

“WAAAAAAAAAAAH!” They all screamed (except Sapphire) at the incoming satellite in outer space. Hibiki whipped the ship around and flew them back to Earth.

**Sector W7’s R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.**

“Oh, wow, we’re going to a football stadium?” Mary asked with a bright and cheerful face. “I’ve always wanted to see an American football game! I heard that they don’t actually use their feet. April, how can you play football without-”

“Mary, if ONE more word comes outta your mouth, I’m gonna rip your tongue out!” Chimney shouted.

“Besides, Mary, football is boring.” April replied, painting a picture of Mocha withstanding the tackles of several football-players. She won the game singlehandedly. “It’s all just giant guys pushing each other while angry cowboys scream all day and paint their faces.”

“But that all sounds fun!” Mary grinned. “Who doesn’t like to paint their face?”

“Did anyone else notice Sector KB’s adorable outfits?” Aeincha asked with a dreamy smile. “I wanna get in on that.”

“YOU GAY?” (“Gyom?”) her teammates chorused.

“I dunno.” Aeincha sunk.

“There’s Texas, girls.” Chimney reported. “The map says the Footbomb is under the field, so we’re gonna split in pairs and find a way down. Got it? Let’s go!”

After the train took land outside Arlen’s football stadium, the team split into pairs: Chimney with Mocha, Apis with Aisa, April with Mary, and Aeincha with Gonbe. The others followed routes through different floors and corridors, while Apis and Aisa headed to the vast, empty field directly.

“I wish Water 7 had more grass.” Aisa smiled with delight as her bare feet trekked the field ground.

“I thought you might like it.” Apis giggled. “Without all the raging fans, football fields are pretty nice. Hey, do you think you can sense the Footbomb with your Mantra?”

“I’ll try.” Aisa closed her eyes as they kept walking. “There are a few guards and stuff here… yeah, I see it. The Footbomb is 10 meters below this field.”

“It sure would be nice if there was a shortcut around here. …Oh, look!” Apis pointed. “There’s someone there!”
A man with a white T-shirt, blue jeans, brown shoes, and dark-brown hair with a flat top was mowing the grass some yards away. He bore a warm smile, and his eyes behind his square glasses showed he was in daydream. He saw the girls coming and stopped his mower. “Oh, hello, girls. Couldn’t wait until the Cowboys got here?” Hank Hill joked, speaking with a moderate voice.

“Nope.” Apis blushed. “Did you mow this entire field? It’s really pretty!”

“Oh sure did. Fresh Matrix RealGrass.” Hank took a pleasant whiff. “You can’t even tell they used pesticides.”

“You did a great job.” Aisa smiled, wiggling her toes on the grass.

“Say, would you girls like a free sample from Strickland Propane’s new Deluxe Propane-Powered Grill?”

“No thanks.” Apis smiled politely. “We’re just looking for something we lost in the stadium. We’d like to try it later, though!” They were about to walk away.

“Oh, I can’t let you leave.” Hank said, still smiling. “You see, the Teen Ninjas sent us pictures of you girls, so you must be Kids Next Door operatives.” The two whipped around at him with slight surprise. “I’m afraid you’re gonna have to stay a while. But to pass the time,” Hank climbed off his mower, “let me show you how I cut this grass.” He bent down and put his finger on a grass blade. “You want to trim the blades of your mower to 60% smoothness. That way, the tops of the grass-”

“Whoa whoa whoa whoa,” Aisa interrupted, “you’re not gonna keep us here with boring stories, we’re finding our stuff and going.”

Hank sighed sadly and stood up, “Halright, I guess we’ll do this the hard way. This grass is great though, isn’t it?” He smiled. “It really, gets in your nostrils.”

A powerful scent flowed into their noses. The girls felt dizzy and sank to all fours. “Yeah, sometimes it’s recommended you wear plugs in your nose.” Hank pointed at his nostrils. “The scent is too powerful sometimes. Oh well. I’ll go grab the cages.” Hank walked off casually, leaving Apis and Aisa to grow drowsy in the scent.

April and Mary found their way to the employee break room—they stared weirdly at the sight. A man with yellow hair, tan skin, and orange speedos with black tiger stripes was laying on a bed while several ladies cuddled up to him. “Ho ho, take-it-easy-man, dang-ol’-got-enough-room-for-every-one-o’-you, jus’-one-at-a-time, or, maybe-dang-ol’-two, man.” Boomhauer was speaking very fast.

“April? What is that man doing?” Mary asked.

“I think he’s a pervert, Mary.”

“Uh?” Boomhauer looked up and noticed them. “Oh, hey-there, li’l-ladies, you-girls-get-lost-from-your-parents, I-tell-you-what, this-one-time-some-dang-ol’-fat-guy-left-his-li’l-baby-in-the-car, hohohoho.” He shook his head. “Ain’t-go-too-well, man, ain’t-go-well-at-all, I-tell-ya-dang-ol’-parents-gotta-watch-their-kids-more, then-we-wouldn’t-have-these-dang-ol’-Kids-Next-Door-ruining-everything, man, now I gotta dang ol’…” He stood up and put on some blue jeans and a dark-gray T-shirt. “’Scuse me, ladies, this’ll only be a minute.” He smiled coolly at his women, who giggled and left the room. “Oh- and your money’s on the counter.”

After the women left, Boomhauer faced the Goldenweek cousins with a serious glare. “Tell-y"
Boomhauer punched a switch in the wall, and the Goldenweeks felt the floor shake and rise like an elevator.

They were lifted up to the stadium’s roof, where it was so windy that April had to hold her hat down. Boomhauer went flying to the air, surfing the winds on his own air-light board. “Ah-don’t-even-need-water-to-surf, man, I’m-a-teach-you-how-it’s-done, dang old, enguarde, man!” Boomhauer swooped at the cousins, who dodged aside and fell, watching as Boomhauer swerved around to attack again. April dabbed some red paint on the roof and ran away to let Boomhauer crash there, but a forceful gust of wind blew the red paint away. “Real-windy-up-here, man, good-luck-tryin’-ta-dang-ol’-paint.”

Aeincha rode Gonbe like a horse to a storage area inside the stadium, where cockroaches and insects crittered all around the floor and walls. “Gross! They really oughta call an exterminator or something!” Aeincha said.

“Gyom, gyom!”

Gonbe kicked open a door, stopping at the sight of a lanky man in an orange jumpsuit, orange hat, and shiny sunglasses, with a can of gas strapped to his back. “They did call an exterminator.” Dale Gribble blew a cigarette. “Somethin’ about a rabbit hit with spray can and some genetically animated doll.”

“Are’n’t they more concerned about the man-size preying mantis?” Aeincha remarked.

“Not as surprisin’ as the display before me. I bet no one’s entered you in the Stuffolympics.” His glasses twinkled. “Get ready to win First Prize.”

“Eeeeek!” Aein and Gonbe panicked.

**Colorado Stadium**

“Hey, Sapphire?” Hibiki asked as the five operatives were in the midst of battle.

“You’re going to ask what these things are.” Sapphire predicted, nimbly dodging the monsters’ attacks.

“Pretty much.”

“They are monsters from Nightmare Enterprises.” The creatures attacking were very short men with heads, arms, and legs, no central body, and each represented the mascots of football teams. “They’re called Rushers.”

“How do you know that?” Ruby asked, punching each Rusher using a pair of red mech gloves.

“Well, look at this, Karin.” Two Teen Ninjas flew over to them. One had white hair and a big sword, the other had red hair and red eyes behind glasses. “Our Rushers found a bunch of snot-nosed kids. In case you brats are curious, we ordered those things from Nightmare Enterprises.”

“That’s how.” Sapphire answered.

“SAY WAT?” Bon Clay looked up with a panicked smile. “Oh! For a second, I thought Karin from Sector JP turned traitor!”

“There’s a million Karins in Japan!” Karin shouted hotly. “But fine, you can call me Red Eye.”
“There’s already a Red Eye.” Suigetsu reminded.

“Then I’ll be Karin U.!!” The girl steamed. “Because my last name is Uzumaki!”

“Doesn’t matter WHO you are, ‘cause I’ll kick your ass!” Ruby balled her fists.

“Right then!” Bon Clay twirled. “Ruby and Sapphire will whoop those two! Let’s go find the Football!”

“Secret elevator underneath the PA box, you’ll have to cross the stadium.” Sapphire informed.

“Uh, Sapphire? They’re already gone.” Ruby noted.

“I know. I was talking to Hibiki telepathically.”

“I’m on it, Sapphire!” Hibiki yelled across the hall.

“Darn it, I was hoping to take on all of you.” Suigetsu smirked. “I need a plate of fries to fill my appetite, not two small ones.”

“I’ll show YOU a small fry!” Ruby jumped up and socked Suigetsu in the jaw with her fist, sending him across the room.

“Ouch!” Suigetsu recovered angrily. “What the crap?! I’m a Logia, how did you punch me?”

“The knuckles of my gloves have chi-blocks!” Ruby smirked proudly. “But I can still get HOT!” She sprouted rockets from her feet and flew at the Logia, forcing her fists on him as they were gone down the hall.

“I’m SICK of that guy leaving me behind!!” Karin U. shouted. “Fine, then I’ll just get you.” She swung a kick at Sapphire, but said girl floated up to the ceiling.

“I’m a psychicbender who mastered Prediction.” Sapphire said tonelessly. “I can predict something an hour away by weighing any and all possibilities and facts around me. Tonight, you’re gonna be in bed for a long time before you go to sleep.”

Karin’s skin became as red as her hair. “SCREW YOU!” She flew up using jetshoes and threw a punch, Sapphire dodged down before throwing a Psycho Sphere, which Karin dodged, kicked at Sapphire, who flew left, then lunged at Karin, who flew up, kicked down, then Sapphire dodged. “But I have Observation Haki, so I already knew your elements as you were coming in!” She grinned wryly. “I don’t need to predict anything, you just let me know and I’ll dodge it!”

“Then I guess..” The camera zoomed on Sapphire’s face, “it’s a battle..” Even closer, “of dodges.”

Bon Clay was dancing like a ballerina, taking terrific and graceful skips down the hallway, while Libby Belle ran ahead of him to cut Rushers with her sword. “Numbuh 2=1, I would appreciate eet if you could ’elp me fight.”

“A human’s body, must be reserved!” Bon spoke brightly. “Like a ‘frigerator, it must be kept in perfect form, ready to serve, not wasted on little freaks! Un, deux!”

“If you aim to fight soon, garçon paresseux, do it when you find ze bomb. I’ll go this way, you go up there.” Libby ran past a stairway while Bon skipped up said stairs.

“Ah-haaaaa!” He was happy as a swan. “I feel no gravity because I am a bird! To be gay is to be freeeee! Come be gaaaay with meeeeee! Un, deuuuu-x!” Clay kicked open a door, finding himself in the
“Oh, so the Supreme Leader sent you.” A Russian voice said. “I guess it was expected.”

“HUUU!” Bon Clay’s features stretched wide. “Lexi…”

**New Jersey Stadium**

Karin Kurosaki kicked her soccerball and bounced it around a team of Rushers, Jinta smashed another group with his giant bat, Ururu sliced them with the claws of her Tiny Devil suit, and Kodama had swiftly tied other Rushers to her firecrackers, passing a salute before watching them fly away. “Like we said, team, split up.” Karin ordered. “Kodama, take Yuzu with you, she shouldn’t be left alone like this.”

“Why can’t I take her?” Jinta asked angrily.

“Because I’m afraid you’ll start a war with her. Alright, team, move!” They split different directions, with Kodama pulling Yuzu along, and Jinta sighing with anger.

Karin rushed into a gym room decorated with a cyan-blue tone—the door sealed behind her. Jinta found his way to a track field on an upper floor—the door sealed. Kodama tripped on her sandals as she tumbled into a target practice room, letting go of Yuzu’s hand in the process. “Yuzu!” She reached to her friend hopelessly before the door sealed. Meanwhile, Ururu wandered onto the football field, gazing up when an electrified net spawned in place of a roof above the stands.

“Bad idea to come here.” Karin whipped her attention forward. An African-American boy approached her, wearing a white mechanical suit with a football helmet of the same material. “We thought the Kids Next Door would find out about our plan, so we were prepared. Where are you guys from?”

“Sector JP from Japan.” Karin replied sternly. “And telling you that before hearing who you guys are is the MOST generosity you’ll have from me.”

“We’re the Canton Rushers. I’m the leader, Ish Taylor. We’re Teen Ninjas who specialize in forms of football. Our Battle Ready Jerseys make us unstoppable.”

“You mean you can’t play well in football without crummy suits?” Karin smirked sardonically. “That’s pathetic. I can easily kick through that crotch plate.”

“I see you have a soccerball. Still haven’t moved up from the kiddie field, I see.”

“What’d you say?” Karin narrowed her eyes.

“I mean, it’s a decent workout for your legs, but football requires real muscle. I don’t think your teammates are gonna cut it.”

“Really?” Her eyebrow twitched, Karin was struggling to repress her anger. “Maybe you just haven’t seen what we’re made of.”

Ish drew out a glowing blue energy football. “Do you care to show us?”

Karin held her soccer ready to drop. “I’ll just tell you: We’re made of FIRE!”

Ish hurled the football at Karin, who nimbly dodged aside and kicked her soccerball to his face. Ish dodged forward, but wasn’t prepared when Karin charged at him for a mighty kick, sending him
across the room. Ish kicked off the wall and tackled Karin, the two rolling on the floor before Karin flipped up and kicked away. Ish ran at her to throw a punch, but Karin countered with a kick as both attacks hit with equal force. Ish swung a punch at her head, Karin ducked and kicked Ish off his feet, but the boy grabbed Karin’s legs and kicked on rocket boots, flying around and pulling Karin along. Ish spun around and threw Karin against the wall before flying and dealing a punch.

In the target practice room, Troy Kang, a Korean-American in a Battle Ready Jersey, faced Kodama from across the long room. “It never matters how far it is, I always go for the goal.” He assured.

“I can relate to that.” Kodama smiled proudly. “I can blast a balloon a thousand miles away!”

“I wouldn’t wear sandals on a football field.” Troy extracted a cannon on either wrist, charging energy footballs. “You tripped walking in, you won’t make it to me.”

“I won’t need to!” Kodama twirled her dress and unveiled a trio of firecrackers from underneath. “Because my eyes are on the prize!”

“Better keep your eyes on the ball.” Troy blasted the footballs, Kodama sent smaller fireworks to destroy them, then sent a giant one to Troy, who took a great leap forward while the area behind him exploded into colorful smoke.

“I wonder who will reach whom first?” Kodama remarked. She blasted another round of fireworks that Troy countered with footballs, afterwards dashing through the smoke to get closer, then Kodama blasted another huge firework to the floor in front of him, making Troy jump back.

“Hope that it isn’t me.” Troy said.

On the football field, Ururu stuttered with fright at the imposing giant. Tua Tupola, a Samoan-American in his own B.R.J., was obese and roughly 30 feet tall, staring down at Ururu as he stomped toward her. “Look, why don’t you just surrender?” Tua asked sincerely. “I don’t like fighting little girls. Especially the really little ones.”

“O-Oh, that’s okay.” Ururu blushed, swaying her hip in a sheepish fashion. “I may be small, but I’m really strong, a-and I can fight.”

“Heh, tell you what.” Tua smiled. “I’ll give you the first hit for free. How’s that sound?”

“O-Okay. Thank you.” Ururu bowed. She pressed a button on her Tiny Devil, and vanished into thin air.

“What?!” Tua searched around. “Where did she go?! OW, AHH!” His head punched left, then right, then upside the chin as he fell on his back. When the giant narrowed his eyes to the center, he spotted a teeny-tiny Ururu on his nasal bridge.

“My Tiny Devil suit converts my size into strength.” Ururu squeaked. “I based it off of Ant-Man. I may be tiny, but my targets are only bigger.” Ururu smiled.

“Why you- ow!” Tua attempted to grab her, but Ururu flew away, causing him to smack his own face. Tua got to his feet and saw Ururu back to normal, throwing a punch at the girl, but Ururu jumped and shrunk down to run up his face for another punch.

A similar scenario was happening to Jinta, who was getting punched left, right, diagonal, frontways, sideways, backways. “URURU is that you!?”
“Nope!” A blonde-haired boy zipped by, punched him- “It’s me!” Zipped around, punched him again, “Marty Stevens, nice to meet you!” Zipped around to punch the ear, “How ya doin’?”

Left, right, in the air, back to the ground, then Jinta felt the speedster zooming around him like a whirlwind. “GHHHH!” Jinta bit his teeth in anger and swung his giant bat, bashing Marty in the face. “You need to control yourself!” He smashed his bat down, but Marty sped away again.

Yuzu wobbled left to right as she limped slowly. Her nose picked up a scent from the nearby room, and her instincts told her to follow. It was a kitchen area, and it looked in pretty fair shape. “Stop right there!” a girl’s voice yelled. Yuzu lazily turned around, seeing an orange-haired girl with bright green eyes. It was Ash Reynolds. “I know you’re with those Kids Next Door. You won’t find the Footbomb in there, if that’s what you’re thinking.”

“What are you saying?” Ash asked.

Yuzu’s spiraling eyes flashed. “REVOLUTIONOOOON!” Acting on instinct, she dashed into the kitchen, turned on the oven, put a pot on, and began stirring ingredients.

Ash couldn’t make sense of this. “Is this some sort of baker’s symbolism?”

Yuzu faced her with passion, “A fight to destroy oppression! The World Government must fall! I will bake a meal so powerful, it will make them fall! My Ramen Kempo will reign supreme!” She grabbed a spatula and ladle, twirling them like weapons. She professionally stirred the pot, flipped ingredients out, and shot them at Ash, who jabbed fists at each one before spaghetti hit her in the face. After Ash wiped it off, she evasively dodged when Yuzu flicked a storm of patties like shurikens, followed by buns, lettuce, tomatoes, Ash stared with confusion when a wall of hamburgers grew behind her. With a twirl of her spatula, Yuzu chucked it at the burgers and caused them to all topple down over the female footballer.

**Colorado Stadium**

“Oh, Lexi!” Bon Clay cried, falling to his knees as his emotions poured. “Why do we have to fight?! Why did you have to leave us, why couldn’t you tell us what was wro-o-o-o-ong!”

“STOP crying!” Alexei Abramovici hit his former leader with his hammer staff. “It’s that kind of idiocy that ensured my decision!”

“But it was YOUR idiocy, too!” Bon cried, outstretching his hands. “You were gay, I was gay, ALL OF US were gay! Come back and be gay with me, Lexi! Come back and be gay with me aga-a-a-a-ain!”

“No!” Lexi hit him with the hook staff. “The only person I serve is Master Lucas. The World Government will save the world, and you ignorant Kids Next Door will regret not siding with them.”

“You know, Lexi,” Bon Clay stood up assuredly, hands on his hips, “I might have sided with you, I might have agreed with you, but those Government guys did one thing I disagreed with: THEY KILLED CHERRY BOY’S FATHER.” His features became dark, and his smile was terrifying. “I will always be loyal to Cherry Boy. He let Sector KB be a THING, he let us be GAY!” He posed brightly. “So if he don’t like the Government, I ain’t helpin’ ‘em one bit!”

“You’re a fool.” Lexi glared. “Can Cherry Boy stop the Apocalypse? In what little time we have, can he match the powers of the Government? It is not too late to quit being stupid.”
“I BELIEVE in Cherry Boy!” Bon’s eyes were sparkly. “He never failed us before! And I will not fail you!” He kicked his swan slippers at Lexi, who rolled aside and swung his hammer. Clay leaped off the polearm and jumped to kick Lexi against the microphone desk.

Hibiki Lates searched intently in the area beneath the PA box. He sported his cool smile and touched his forehead, closing his eyes. He could sense it: the very faint photon particles in the air. He followed them to an ordinary wall, which in reality was wallpaper. He found a secret elevator behind it, as the photon particles hovered around its buttons. He rode the elevator to a secret passage under the stadium. Hibiki approached a door sealed by a terminal, sporting a soft chuckle at this defense. He formed his own holographic computer in the air and hacked into the terminal. The door opened.

Hibiki solved a few more such codes before finding the central room. The Footbomb inside the glass capsule was orange, baring the symbol of the Denver Broncos. “You got here quickly,” Gage Davidson said. The former Arctic Prison inmate still wore his black jacket, pants, and sunglasses. His yellow mustache and beard were longer. “What kind of computer is that? How the hell did you hack in?”

Hibiki brushed his hair back. “I’m a lightbender who can manipulate photons in the air. All computers project a sort of wireless signal I can bend to my will. Though to be fair, this defense was lacking.”

“So like, you can control any sort of computer? Even mine?” Gage asked aggressively.

“Hm hm. I’m not that type of sport.” Hibiki patted his shiny hair. “A person needs to be their self, and fight how they choose. So how will you fight me?”

Gage quickly tapped his keyboard and summoned a Flash-made ninja and cowboy gunman. Hibiki nimbly dodged the gun shots and ducked when the ninja slashed him, sending a kick at the ninja’s crotch to distort his code. Gage sidestepped a few feet away and summoned small UFOs to shoot lasers at Hibiki, the latter used his bending to grab the lasers and shoot them back, then punched the cowboy. On Gage’s code, a team of machineguns came up from the floor and blasted bullets, Hibiki created a shield of security blocks from the wireless air, shielding from bullets, then using the holo-screens to slice the guns. Hibiki thrusted the screens forward and sent Gage flying, but the Teen summoned some Flash hawks to grab him by his coat.

Karin U. tossed kunai knives at Sapphire, who dodged. Sapphire blew some psychic at Karin, she dodged, Karin ran to throw some punches, Sapphire dodged every one, Karin flew away when Sapphire tried to grab her in psychic. The Teen Ninja shot lasers at Sapphire, she still dodged, the latter threw a string of Psycho Spheres, Karin dodged left-and-right, the ninja kicked on rocket shoes and blasted at Sapphire, she projected a psychic bubble, Karin directed up before hitting it, then flew back when Sapphire flew up and missed her. “This dodging match is boring!” Karin shouted.

“I agree.” Sapphire showed no emotion.

“How ’bout we just fly and throw a punch at each other?”

“Nnn… alright.”

Both girls flew at the other, threw a punch—they stylishly dodged and faced each other in midair again. “I knew you would dodge.” Sapphire said.

“I’m not letting myself get hit! Sigh, fine, let’s do it again.”
“You’re going to dodge me again.”

“Oh, ***k this!” Karin extracted wrist lasers and shot at Sapphire, the dodging continued.

Suigetsu swung his giant sword at Ruby, who punched with her right fist and blocked, then the Solaran jumped a low swing to kick Suigetsu’s face. Her foot sunk into his water-made face, and when it reformed, Suigetsu was biting Ruby’s arm in his sharp teeth. Ruby grunted with pain before Suigetsu threw her against the wall, afterwards grabbing her right arm in the form of water. Ruby boiled with anger, heating up Suigetsu’s arm, his water arm bubbled as Suigetsu winced and pulled away. “Munch THIS in your jaw!” Ruby aimed her mech fists at his face, and using her firebending, she rocketed the fists forward, forcing Suigetsu against the wall with great force.

Suigetsu smacked the fists away, and when Ruby tried to run and get them, the Fishkid slammed his sword in her way. “You aren’t so strong without them!” He swung at her, Ruby rolled aside, she ran for her fists, then Suigetsu kicked and sent her across the room. She got up in time to dodge his sword, punching fire at the Logia and creating steam with each hit. Ruby sparked with an idea, smirking as she punched rounds of flames at Suigetsu. “Ow- Hey- Stop that, stop that!” Suigetsu grunted as the hall began to fill with steam. “I can’t see anything!”

“That’s more like it!” Ruby punched twin flames.

**Texas Stadium**

Hank Hill was hauling two glass cages, each fit for one, out to the football field. After stopping to drink an Alamo Beer, he nearly choked at the sight. “What the hell?!?” The grass of the field had grown to terrific size, tall as trees.

“Surpriiiiiise!” Apis sat on the edge of the blades above Hank, grinning. “I used my Cell Telepathy to accelerate their growth! Looks like you have more mowing to do before next game!”

“Gah!—Turn my grass back right now!” Hank fumed. “And how the hell did you escape that scent?!”


“Come get us, Dummy!” Apis taunted as they vanished into the grass.

“GAHHH!” Hank furiously trudged through the thick grass. Apis and Aisa giggled tauntingly during this time, but he managed to find his lawnmower. “You kids need to learn some respect. You don’t go magically altering a football field’s lawn!” He pushed a button that extracted buzzsaws on either side of the mower, chopping the grass forest down as he followed the girls jumping across the grass tops.

“WATCH OUT, RAINING PUMPKINS!” Aisa threw her Conache Pumpkin down against the mower’s front. Its iron-like hardness ruptured and weakened the mower.

“Better sharpen those blades, they’re growing again!” Apis telepathically spoke with the cells of the grass under Hank’s mower. He was uplifted into the air.

“Get ready, Mary.” April said as Boomhauer swooped down again on his surfboard. The girls dodged aside, with Mary sticking two white crayons against the board as she was pulled along.

“Hey-man, git-git-git-offa-this, man!” Boomhauer yelled when Mary flew onto the board and was
bent over the side.

“Waaaaah!” Boomhauer spun the board around as Mary fell off for April to catch her. “Gah, dang old…” However, the man suddenly felt his surfboard weighing to the roof. “What-What-the-hell-did-you-do, man?”

“I used Gray Crayons to make your surfboard heavy like metal!” Mary smiled, holding two crayons of said color. “Heavy stuff doesn’t float well on water, does it, April?” Her cousin shook her head.

“You-know-what, I’m-dang-old-glad-my-board-is-heavy, ‘cause-dang-wind-is-gonna-get-chilly-chilly, man.” Boomhauer landed on the stadium roof and pressed a remote. A giant fan emerged from the roof a few meters away and began blowing powerful wind. April and Mary grabbed hold of one of the poles for stadium lights while Boomhauer weighed himself down with his heavy-as-metal surfboard.

Aeincha rode Gonbe as the swarm of moths and cockroaches chased them, directed by the gas that Dale Gribble was spraying at them. “Gonbe, jump onto those boxes and kick me to him from there!”

“Gyom, yom!” Gonbe nimbly pounced up the stairway of large crates before facing down at the exterminator. Gonbe pounced off, let Aeincha fly off of him, then kicked the Lilliputian toward Dale to land against his face. “GYAAAAH! Help!” Dale cried. “I’m being attacked by a Cabbage Patch Kid! I told you I’m not crazy!”

Aeincha threw her grappling hook around to latch the top of his container, swinging around to fly on top of it. She tried to turn the dial with all her Lilliputian strength, but failed. “Not so fast!” She was instantly grabbed in the exterminator’s gloved hand. “You may have won the battle at Farmer Brown’s Cabbage Patch, but I’m stronger than I was back then! I can predict every move you make, from the blink of your eyes to jumping off your-”

“Gyom!” Gonbe pounced up from behind, bit his teeth into the gas container, and poked it open. Dale dropped Aeincha in surprise, and Gonbe caught her on his back before hopping away. Dale stood there mindlessly as gas flowed out and surrounded him. “Dang…”

Mocha and Chimney fought their way through a basement area, stomping swarms of Rushers that tried to get in their way. Er, needless to say Mocha did all the stomping, and the punching down doors, Chimney rode her hair. “That’s showin’ them, Mochan!” Chimney fist-palmed. “We’re gonna find our ball first and WIN this contest!”

“This is a contest?” Mocha asked.

“Why not? I betcha Kodama’s sector’s doin’ it.”

Mocha broke down another doorway to a room with a scaled-down football field. Across the room was a fat man that was cradling the Footbomb like a baby. He had brown hair around a bald scalp, a white sleeveless shirt, and blue jeans with brown shoes. (He looked almost like Hank.) Bill Dauterive was feeding the Footbomb (which was midnight-blue with the Dallas Cowboys logo) a baby milk bottle when he looked up and noticed the girls. “Oh, hello! Sorry I didn’t see you, I was busy feeding my baby. It’s a bouncin’ baby boy!”

“…” If that wasn’t the weirdest thing the sectormates hadn’t seen all day. “Oi, isn’t that thing some sorta superweapon?” Chimney asked.
“Well, it does go ‘boom’ a lot, if that’s what you’re thinkin’.” Bill chuckled, cradling the ball. “I’m actually raising this for Lenore, for when she gets back. She’s been at work for the past 15 years,” There was a choke in his voice, but his smile was still happy, “but I’m sure she’ll come back eventually.”

“Well, you’ll have to take my ball OVER MY DEAD BODY!” Anger consumed Bill as he sealed the Footbomb in a glass container. He stomped a switch to block his section of the room with a wall of metal squares, all linked together. Using his terrific strength, Bill charged and shoved the metal toward Mocha, who threw her hands forward to push back with equal strength. Chimney jumped off of Mocha to begin throwing speedy kicks and punches around the squares, trying to find a weak spot.

Karin swung a kick at Ish’s head, the boy ducked and punched up at her face, Karin flew back and kicked off the wall to rocket at Ish, who ran across the room, then dashed back. He tackled and shoved Karin against the wall, she threw a punch at his head, Ish ducked back and ran to force Karin against the wall again. Ish jumped back and tossed two energy footballs, which Karin rolled forward to evade, then ran to swing a storm of kicks that Ish countered with punches. Ish then managed to grab Karin’s leg in both hands, swing her overhead, and slam Karin against the floor, headfirst. “It’s too bad soccer doesn’t teach you to wear a helmet.”

“It’s too bad your helmet’s a piece of crap!” Karin flipped upside-down, pushed herself into the air, and stomped her foot against the face of Ish’s helmet. The glass cracked slightly, but the boy paid this no mind and charged against Karin, struggling to shove her across the room while she stood firm with both legs.

In the kitchen, Yuzu was swiftly tossing hotdogs and condiments into buns, tossing them across the floor so Ash slipped on them. When Ash recovered, she watched as Yuzu cut open two sacks of flour, which she tossed over to cover the female footballer in white. “This is getting ridiculous!” Ash yelled. “This isn’t real fighting, you’re just throwing food at me!”

“I am making a recipe!” Yuzu announced. “A recipe for the World Government’s DEFEAT!” She whipped out a pair of chopsticks and yanked several long strands of spaghetti from the pot. Ash watched with utter confusion as the girl wrapped herself in spaghetti like a mummy. “Ramen Kempo ARMOOOR!” There was an opening for her head, and Ash dodged as Yuzu swung stretched spaghetti punches at her. Ash flew for a kick into Yuzu’s chest, but the leg got stuck in the ramen, then Yuzu whipped her arms around, wrapped Ash in the spaghetti, then whirled her out of the room.

Jinta kept his ears open for the speeding Marty, and when he heard the Rusher come up from behind, Jinta swung his bat into his legs, watching Marty fly forward with his body shifted. However, the speedster began spinning in a ball like Sonic, going up the wall, across the ceiling, then Jinta jumped back to dodge his Homing Attack. Marty still spun and shot at Jinta again, so the latter blocked with his baseball bat as the spinning pinball grinded it. Jinta jumped high, letting Marty pass underneath, and had already turned around to attack again.
“In your dreams!” Still in midair, Jinta swung down and sideways, sending the spinning ball flying across the room. Marty crashed and fell onto the floor, weakly getting on all fours.

“Alright, enough playing games.” Marty smirked at his opponent across the 50-yard track. “I’m coming at you with lightspeed! Just need a minute to charge up.” Jinta watched as the footballer began vibrating furiously. With no time to lose, the baseballer raced across the track, not letting the weight of his bat slow him down.

In the target room, Kodama unveiled some colorful cannons (where does she hide all these?) and blasted confetti at Troy, which would then combust into sparks. Troy had to keep backward, but he hurled an energy football over Kodama, who watched it sprout a forcefield that took up the length of the room. Troy pushed a button on his wrist, and Kodama had to run when the barrier began moving toward her. “Yeah, that’s it, come closer.” Troy smirked.

Kodama returned the expression, “You’re gonna regret that.” She tied a large red firework to her back and lit it up. She rocketed across the room, Troy ducked, then Kodama detached herself to let the firework explode against the wall. She whipped out twin sparklers and aimed them at Troy, squirting twin streams of sparks that the boy was quick to evade. He rushed at Kodama and kicked her in the chest, sending her across the room.

On the football field, Tua was stomping his feet in attempt to crush the tiny fly, while Ururu was zipping around the grass beneath him in half-second intervals. His foot then stopped partway to the ground, Ururu was keeping it up with her own strength, then the Tiny Devil flew out and up to his head, landing a series of punches. Angered, Tua instinctively threw a punch backward, and he felt his titanic fist come into contact with Ururu, seeing the dot-size opponent fling away. He saw Ururu grow back to normal size, weakened and on the ground.

The giant hopped over and stomped his boot onto the Tiny Devil. “Not only are you still not a match, you’re just as annoying as a fly. I still don’t wanna hurt you, so I’ll ask you again: surrender, and I’ll turn off the barrier over this field. You can fly away and pretend this never happened.”

Ururu was struggling to push the giant off of her. “Th-That barrier… w-what’s it made of?”

“Electric energy, 100,000 volts.”

Ururu smiled softly. “Th... Thank you. That’s all I wanted to know.” She pushed the button and shrunk again, dealing more speeding punches across Tua’s head, the giant flailed his arms in attempt to swat her away.

“UUUA!” He felt the fly-size devil crash against his crotch, Ururu then flew behind his right leg and forced it upward, the giant fell back. Ururu flew underneath and used her tiny super strength to push his back, carrying him directly upward. Tua gasped as the barrier’s ceiling drew nearer, he flailed his limbs to try to shake away. Just before he touched, Ururu let go, flew far below, then shot up like a bullet to send him flying up to the barrier. The area flashed as Tua absorbed the 100,000 volts through his suit, and Ururu flew away to watch the giant plummet to the field. The impact was quaking, and his armor fell off into pieces. Ururu watched as the barrier sparked and disabled itself; the controls for it were likely in Tua’s suit.

“Now where was that bomb again?” Ururu asked herself. “Oh, right!” She flew for the large TV.

Tua

“I don’t know about the others, but this guy was totally lame.” Apis said casually as she and Aisa
walked across the field.

“I know. Usually, bad guys put up a better fight than—”

“DWAAAAAH!” Hank Hill tore through the extended grass, his body pink with rage. “YOU DONE CROSSED THE LINE, I paid 6,000 dollars for that mower and Ah’m takin’ it from your allowance until you’re 30!”

“AAAAAAHHH!” The girls frantically swung their arms and ran away from the Texan, who had the rage and speed of a bull. “COME BACK here, I’ll kick your ass one way up this field ‘n’ down the other way, you little brats think you c’n do whatever you want, I’ll show you a thing or two, quit runnin’ around so I can grab you little—”

Aisa whipped around and swung a kick at his crotch. “Dwaaaah!” Hank’s redness vanished, and pain flowed through him. “My narrow urethra! Dwuuuuhh.” He collapsed onto his back.

“…” Aisa and Apis only stared. They couldn’t feel excited about this victory. “Like I said, totally lame.” Apis restated.

April held onto Mary as the latter was using white Glue Crayons to stick into the roof and climb across, aiming to make it behind the giant fan. However, Boomhauer was steadily approaching them, using the weight of his Gray Crayon-colored board to withstand the wind. “Ee, yo-yo, man, talk-about-a-big-bowl-of-irony, man.” He positioned the heavy surfboard to stab down at the girls. “Nn, sorry-I-have-to-do-this, man.”

“NOW, April!” Mary cheered. April held up a bottle of her red paint, squirted it out, and let a stream of the substance fly past Boomhauer, the fan winds blowing it off of the roof.

“HEY! E-e-e-e-e-!” Boomhauer panicked when he was forced to chase the paint, for his simple attack was forcibly directed toward it. “GAH, dangoldcheaptrick, man, Itellyouwhat, I’magonna…” He spoke incomprehensively fast as he ran off the roof and hit the ground below. April let Mary crawl to the nearest fan by herself, watching her cousin stab the fan’s base with a yellow crayon. The fan became electrified, and Mary let herself blow away from it before it exploded.

The Goldenweek cousins helped their selves to stand. “Excellent job, Mary.” April smiled.

“You’re the one who got rid of the creepy guy, April!” She grinned.

“Yeah, but we fought way harder battles. Let’s go find the others.”

The cousins rode the elevator back down to Boomhauer’s room, already eager to leave as it bore a strong scent of cologne. Before leaving, Mary noticed a remote control on Boomhauer’s dresser. … She smiled with curiosity and picked it up.

Mocha and Bill Dauterive were still at it, pushing the wall of metal boards with 110% strength. What Bill failed to realize was during their ongoing struggle, Chimney found an air vent that led directly to his side. She punched open the glass jar containing the Footbomb and yelled, “I got it!” before jumping back into the vent, taking it with her.

“Great!” With nothing to worry about, Mocha used full strength for real this time, pushing the metal boards effortlessly across the room and smashing Bill against the wall.

“NOOOOO!” Bill cried helplessly as the girls ran off with his baby ball. “Lenooore! Don’t leave meeeeee.” He started sobbing.
After Chimney called and told the others the news, the team finally regrouped at the stadium’s entrance. “We got the ball!” Mocha cheered.

“Great!” Apis beamed. “Let’s get back to the train before any more show up!”

Down in the storage area, Dale Gribble merely stood and let the fumes from his can fade away. All of his bugs were gone. He was all by himself. “…Hm hm hm.” He chuckled darkly and walked over to an ordinary crate. “Those stupid Kids Next Door. Even if they do find the Footbomb, they won’t realize it’s a fake!” He opened the crate. “The real one is right here!” The Footbomb in question was dark-purple with a red core, and had silver tips.  “This one’s made of dark energy. The same type that was found on Mt. Gnaa! Our Teen Ninjas will throw this at Moonbase. Then, on the push of a button, their headquarters will be lost in oblivion!”

**R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.**

“Look at what I found in the creepy man’s room!” Mary happily presented the tiny, one-button remote.

“Mary, why did you take that?” April asked. “You don’t even know what it does.”

“I wanted a souvenir to remember going to my first American football game!”

“And a football wouldn’t have sufficed?” Aisa sweatdropped.

“Gyoooom-gyom!” Gonbe happily leapt up to push the remote. Curiosity got the best of him, too.

**Dale’s room**

The exterminator watched as the Dark Footbomb beeped. “Oh, mah…”

Arlen Stadium was swallowed in an expanding sphere of darkness.

**Colorado**

Bon Clay dodged Alexei’s hook and hammer with little effort, his big smile wry. “The World Leaders forbid you from learning Hakeh!” Bon Clay swung a kick up at the teenager’s face. “They forbid you from doing Okama Kempo.” A kick in the chest that pushed Alexei back. “Just look at you, Alexei, they’re starving you totally skinneh!” Lexi angrily swung more blows, Bon Clay danced ballet and dodged, skipping around his old friend before kicking his butt.

“I’ll have you know they prepare me meals from the finest chefs!” Lexi argued.

“Yet, I can still see the bones through your bodeh! Lexi, just what have you to gain from them? What can they give you over your friends?”

“What can you gain from the Kids Next Door?” Alexei asked. “What do you have over the Government?”

“Hmmmmmm…” Bon Clay’s grin was thoughtful. “Sector KB’s got passion.”

After Ruby created steam from Suigetsu’s body, she attempted to locate her mech gloves in the mist. “GNNNN!” All of the steam retracted to a single point, and the Logia waterbender stood over Ruby as a body of water with a growling face. “Make all the steam you want, it doesn’t stop me! Water extinguishes fire, and your time’s up!” He lunged with his mouth open.
“That’s what YOU think!” Ruby dove into his watery body. Her voice gurgled, “*I am an eternal flame, baby!*” She heated to incredible temperature, boiling Suigetsu’s body as he spat her out. He needed some time to reform, but gasped when Ruby leapt at him with her recovered mech fists. “And I’ll evaporate you!” She punched the chi-block knuckles on either side of his head, then with a rocket burst from her hands, Suigetsu’s head was squished from both ends. Ruby watched as the Fishkid morphed into wobbly, unstable water, collapsing on the floor.

“We’ve got smarts.” Bon Clay continued.

Red-Eyed Karin and Sapphire jabbed punch after punch at each other, both of them were continuously dodging. Karin kicked, Sapphire dodged right, blasted psychic, Karin dodged, both of them faced the other and panted. “Give it up, brat.” Karin gasped. “I know all your tricks by now. I’m ready for anything you might throw.”

“Really.” Sapphire put her hand under the bangs over her face. “Is that so?” She raised them to reveal her large, single blue eye.

“GYYYYAAAAAAHHH!” Karin screamed in fright- “That’s no big deal.” She calmed down. “That’s not all. When I look into your eyes, I can read your mind.”

The room felt very cold. Karin shuddered and hugged her arms. “Wh-Wh-Who turned down the thermosta-a-a-at?”

“I can see that you’ve been in Arctic Base a long time. You don’t like cold weather. I am using mind-tricks to make you believe it is cold.”


“It’s alright, though. You needed to chill.” Sapphire encased herself in a bubble and smashed Karin against the wall. The teenager was out cold, her glasses broken.

“We’ve got charm.” Bon Clay resumed.

Gage Davidson was flying with his Flash-hawks as he programmed a Flash-cannon to appear from his laptop and blast Hibiki. The lighthbender dodged the slow blasts and quickly typed on his own holo-computer. The glass capsule protecting the Footbomb opened, so the handsome operative jumped up the staircase to retrieve the weapon. “Sorry to cut this short, but I got what I needed.” Hibiki told his opponent.

“Not even gonna try to beat me, are you?” Gage asked.

“It’s not even a matter of trying, anymore. I’m afraid you’re breaking the rules.”

Gage panicked when his Flash-cannon glitched up, and his computer screen turned into pixels. “What the ***k?! What the hell did you-” His Flash-hawks glitched out, so the teen fell to the floor and smashed his laptop.

“I felt the wireless signal between the Footbomb and your laptop. You were gonna wait until this was taken to Moonbase or something, then set it off like that. Hm, but don’t worry. We’ll drop this bomb in a safe location before you have a chance.”

“You think you’re real smart, don’t you.” Gage nodded sarcastically, and Hibiki could feel the look behind his sunglasses. “You must be the favorite of your sector.”
Hibiki threw a Light Frisbee that hit the side of Gage’s head, knocking him out. “Hm… I wish.” Hibiki smiled to himself, turning away. “The only problem is, I’m not really gay. I just like to dance silly. Plus, they’re a really nice team. But I can’t help that I find girls pretty. Sigh…” He opened his eyes and faced the corridor out of here. “I’ll tell them someday.”

“Aaaaand we got talent!” Bon Clay concluded.

“Hee-SHYAH!” Libby Belle snuck up from behind and sliced the heads of Alexei’s staffs. Bon Clay laid the final blow and kicked the side of his head, knocking his former teammate out. “It’s a shame I could not find any worthy opponents.” Libby said, sheathing her sword.

“The battle doesn’t matter, Libby. It’s preserving the peace! Let’s go find the others and make peace again!” Libby ran first out of the room with Clay about to follow. He spared one look at Alexei and sighed sadly, leaving the fallen teen.

New Jersey

Troy approached Kodama after the Asian girl was kicked into the smoke. “Watch out, crazy madman throwing grenades!” Kodama jumped out and threw mini firecrackers that made forceful explosions on the floor, Troy jumping hastily as they were aimed at his feet. Kodama threw a string of firecrackers to his left, a larger one to his right, then blasted a missile to push him back a small distance. “Keep an eye on your ball!” Kodama pointed.

Troy turned around—the barrier that had formed from his football was still moving, closing in on him. Kodama blasted one more firework to push the teen into the barrier, swallowing him in soot as the football was destroyed in the explosion. Troy fell on his front in defeat. “If you want an encore,” Kodama gave a proud thumbs-up, “make sure to catch Chimney-chan’s R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. in action.”

Marty was vibrating faster, he was a few seconds away from speeding at Jinta faster than a bullet. His eyes narrowed on the red-haired boy, but Jinta was still coming with his bat raised. The second Marty kicked off to boost was the same time Jinta jumped and swung his bat down. He barely smashed Marty’s accelerator in time, causing it to malfunction as his speed went beyond his control. “Wh-Wh-Whoa-WHOOOOOAAA!” Marty burst through the wall, across the city, across the sea, he ran to the ends of the Earth.

Jinta held his bat over his shoulder and smirked victoriously. “Do you wanna see me do it again?”

Ash shot lasers at Yuzu’s ramen body, but the spaghetti strings never seemed to fall apart, and Yuzu kept swinging her flexible string arms against the footballer. “Alright, that’s it!” Ash allowed one of the arms to wrap around her body, then she spun around to unravel Yuzu’s suit completely. “EYAH!” With a burst of force, Ash blew the spaghetti off of her. It all lay scattered across the hall. “I’m ending this once and for-” Ash’s suit began to spark. “What? Oh no! Sauce got in my suit! No, no, no!”

“This is a message to the Leaders of the World Government!” Yuzu raised her spatula with pride, pretending that Ash was a camera. “If our food burns, your food will burn with it-” An electric bolt from Ash’s suit struck Yuzu in the head, the same time the suit blew up.

Yuzu held her dizzy head as she stood up. “What happened…” Her normal brown eyes looked at Ash with confusion. She viewed around the area. “YAAAAAAAHH!” What was all that food doing on the floor? “This place is a MESS! THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE! Uuuugh, please let there be a mop in this- YAAAHH!” She ran into the kitchen and slipped on a hotdog. “Ooowww…” A spoon fell on her from the counter.
Karin Kurosaki countered Ish’s punch with a kick, his headbutt with one of her own, but the Japanese girl became dizzy from the impact. Ish punched Karin in the chest and knocked her to the floor, but this position allowed her to see her soccerball stuck between a stack of mats. “This armor isn’t so bad, is it?” Ish remarked.

“Yeah.” Karin smirked. “But in Japan,” Karin grabbed her ball, jumped to her feet, “we’re really well-known,” she kicked the ball, Ish dodged right, “for our ability,” the ball bounced off the wall behind him and hit his legs, knocking Ish on his back, “to BASH SOME SKULLS IN!”

Karin raised her foot over Ish’s face and stomped with full force. She shattered the glass and poured more pressure against his face. Karin stepped off and grinned wryly at the distorted way Ish’s face looked now. “Tell your friends that Japan KICKED your face!”

Karin and Jinta regrouped at the football field, where Ururu flew down from the large TV with the Footbomb in hand. It had the logo of the New York Giants. “I’ve got it!”

“Sweet job, Ururu!” Jinta fist-pumped. “But where’re the others?”

“Kodama, where are you and Yuzu?” Karin asked in her wristwatch.

“I found her in the kitchen.” Kodama responded. “She’s, um… cleaning up the mess.”

“Who in their right mind leaves perfectly good food lying all over the floor?! Do these Americans have no respect for quality ingredients?!” Yuzu was shouting.

“At least she isn’t a rebel, anymore.” Karin said. Jinta slumped in disappointment. “Yuzu, get your butts out of there and back to the ship. We got the Footbomb, so we can go back.”

The team of five made it back to their C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. and took off for Moonbase. “So this is a Footbomb, huh?” Jinta asked, holding the weapon with interest. “How do Americans play with these things, anyway?”

“Put that down, Jinta, you could set it off!” Karin shouted with worry.

“You know what, I’m tired of you doubting me!” Jinta scolded. “Just because I can’t hold a cup of cocoa,” he absentmindedly threw his arm back, “I’m smart enough to be more careful with a dangerous-” The ball was gone. Their eyes widened with fright.

The teammates peeked out the window to watch the Footbomb plummet to the stadium. BOOOOOOOOOOOOM… The entire structure was engulfed with flame. “WE’RE OKAY.” The Canton Rushers yelled.


“Why do I have the urge to dethrone the World Government?” Yuzu asked.

**Sector E Treehouse**

Cheren was on his knees on the floor before the living room couch. Lenari was standing on it, having just explained the mission to Cheren. “And that’s the most I can recollect.” Lenari concluded. “I know we don’t actually have an alliance yet, but… we could really use your help.”

“Bill Cipher, hm?” Cheren remembered the demon from Gravity Falls. It was because of him Wendy and MaKayla were missing. Regretfully, he hadn’t gotten around to asking the Pines Twins about an update on the situation. “He’s a worse threat than I thought… sigh, but my dad’s funeral
is coming up.”

“Oh.” Lenari scratched the back of his head, feeling both surprised and embarrassed. “Well, you
don’t really have to agree to this battle. We’ll mostly want your protection when the Government,
em, gets mad at us.”

“I want to help you, and… I should. It’s just out of nowhere.” Cheren reasoned. “We’re already
facing the threat of megabombs destroying our bases. And starting a war with America right before
my dad’s funeral… it’d just look weird.”

“I can see how you would think that. Oh well. Regardless, after the conflict, I am considering
signing a treaty with your leader, anyway. I’m just afraid how we’ll…”

Cheren gave a weak smile. “I’ll still help you, but it depends on how many of my operatives are
available. Everyone’s been dealing with a lot of crap, we think everything’s okay for one second,
then all of a sudden…” Cheren’s wristwatch rang. Lenari looked up and immediately saw the mopey
look on the human’s face. Cheren answered, “Hello?”

“Chereeeeeeeennnn!” Panini sang joyfully. “You are gonna wanna get on your knees and kiss the
floor I walk on after hearing my good news!”

“Heh, Paniniii, Paniniiii…” His instinct was to say ‘Not in front of the Minish Leader.’ “What
good news?”

“We did it, we fixed the portal!” The familiar voice of Dipper Pines said excitedly. “MaKayla and
the Blue Girl are okay!”

“Y-You did?!” Cheren’s heart jumped. “Okay?”

“A-OK!” MaKayla’s voice said.

“And that’s not all! The sectors you sent off to retrieve the Footbombs completed their mission!”
Panini cheered. “Sort of.”

“Sort of?”

“Um, Sectors KB and JP already got rid of theirs. We called Nebula to get rid of W7’s. So what’s
up, Cheren, what are you and the Minish Leader talking about?”

Cheren looked at Lenari, whose smile indicated he could read Cheren’s mind. “…Panini, make
sure those three sectors still have some fight in them, call any other available sectors. Dipper,
you’ve fought Bill Cipher before, right?”

“Yes?”

“I want you to tell us everything you know about his weaknesses. …Tomorrow, we’re gonna
humiliate America.”

The next day; White House

“What?! WHAT?” President McGarfield yelled at his phone. “Whaddyou mean the stadiums in
Arlen and New Jersey blew up?! The Kids Next DOOR?” He hung up forcefully, “BILL?
BIIIIIILL! Get out here, you one-eyed Dorito!”

Bill Cipher poofed out of a spark of blue flames. “Sorry, I got confused because there’s another
Bill in this chapter. What’s up, Jimbo?”

“The Footbombs we were gonna use on the Kids Next Door were used against us! We’ve gotta act NOW, Bill! Wasn’t the Minish army supposed to attack us today?!”

“Yes, but you got nothin’ to worry about.” Bill brushed the air. “I called in some special assistance to take care of those buggers.”

The president’s phone rang again. He answered roughly, “What is it this time?!”

“Sir, it’s Gideon! There’s a swarm of little gray bugs comin’ from the south; and there’s little mice riding them!”

“Speak English, Gleeful, you’re not making any sense!”

“I think the exact translation is, AAAAAHHHH!” Bill screamed.

The rapid flapping of Jabbies rang in the ears of all the citizens. A gray cloud of the pointy-nose bugs were swarming over the city, stinging any and every Teen Ninja that was sent to attack them. “We need to order an evacuation!” Hoagie III yelled at Nya.

“Hoagie, Wendy, you get all the citizens outta town!” Nya ordered. “Ashei, call the G.U.N.! Rodrigo, go help security around the President’s School!”

“SANDY, set up a barrier around Gallagher!” Gideon ordered. “We can use those brats as hostages!”

King Sandy clamped his hand against the ground and turned the area around Gallagher—which had been successfully brought to Washington this morning, into sand again. He encased the entire school inside of a huge, round sandshield. “AAAAHH!” The front of the shield blew open, blowing Sandy away with a gush of sand.

“Were you looking for me, Father?”

King Sandy looked up, gasping. His daughter was standing in Gallagher’s doorway. Jessie Sidney, Sandy Sidney, the Kindergarten Chief, the Second and Fifth Grade Presidents, Spongebob Squarepants(?), the students of Gallagher were freed and ready for battle “SHELLY?! H-How did you get in the school?!”

“I have friends in a looooot of places. TWERPS OF GALLAGHER, GIVE THEM HECK!” The army of grade-schoolers screamed and ran daringly into the capital. Jessie’s gang was at the front of the crowds, and they had many miles to go until the White Palace in the distance. Inside, he could feel them coming. Bill Cipher saw the Bubble Dreamers coming.

“Well, well, Polokus.” Bill said to no one. “Long time, no see.”

You know, I might’ve misspoken in the earlier chapter, I had a fight scene planned at Gallagher Elementary, but I wasn’t sure how much I could stretch it out, so... well, here we are! The saga’s conclusion will commence in Chapter 40, then it may or may not end at Chapter 41. I don’t think I’ll be able to squeeze the boss fight in. Next time, the Gallagher Kids vs. Jimmy’s Army. Sleep well, kids!

...
QVHHRV ULI KIVHRWVMG, QVHHRV ULI KIVHRWVMG!
The students of Gallagher, along with their KND allies, attack the capital of Washington!

Maybe we did get here a little quicker than I expected, but like I said, I didn’t have any way to draw this saga out. :P Took care of the action stages I wanted to, anyway.

Chapter 40: Kids of America

Gallagher Elementary; en route to Washington (the night before the battle)

The Teen Ninja Carriers were hauling the uplifted school through the night. Naturally, the Teens got sleepy and went up to bunks in their carriers. They didn’t expect the school of children to have the energy to try and escape, rather than sleep. They were still unaware that the students had been untied hours ago, with the help of the Kindergarten Tribe, who had been untied previously by Rupert’s Pikmin. While their comrades were asleep, the Second, Fifth, and Kindergarten Leaders met in the teacher’s lounge, along with Timothy, Hikari, Joey, and tiny Rupert on the desk. “Little person with ant people took me by surprise.” Chief Fingerpaint, the dark-skinned Kindergarten Chief, said. He wielded a wooden stick staff with a purple orb dangling from one end. “I thought him to be messenger from Crayon Gods.”

“I did use to be higher up.” Rupert joked.

“We have to come up with an escape plan.” David Keith, Fifth Grade Leader, reminded. “If you said Third Grade Leader and the others got locked up in that school, how do you expect us to rescue them?”

“There’s a good chance Jessie and Shelly are in there, too.” Richard Teague, Second Grade, deduced in his nasally voice. “Knowing they used to be the Top 2, I don’t see this workin’ out.”

“Jessie’s not in there!” Hikari beamed. “He told me so in my dream!”

“Say what?” Timmy asked.

“When I took a nap on my desk, Jessie came to me in a dream.” She spoke with dreamy eyes. “He said he and Sandy are okay, and Shelly’s with them, and they’re gonna save everyone with their army of ant people.”

“Impossible.” Richard scoffed. His peers shared his look of disbelief at the 5-year-old. “Unless you were born with some sort of psychokinetic ability, or were struck by a radioactive energy wave, the idea of communication through dreams is the most confounded—”

“Oh, I’ve been longing to sock you in the nose, Soprano Voice.” A familiar girl’s voice remarked. Jessie Sidney, Sandy Sidney, and Shelly Johnson were in the doorway. “JESSIE!” Hikari screamed.
“Sandy!” Timmy lighted.

“SHELLY!” the presidents beamed.

“And me!” Gonshiri cheered from Shelly’s shoulder. “Princess Gonshiri of the Minish Tribe, here to grace your humble presence.”

“Holy Toledo, it’s a talking mutant chipmunk!” Richard perked. Gonshiri glared.

“Where did you guys come from?” Timothy asked.

Jessie, Sandy, and Spongebob were minimized to be carried inside the Pikmin Onions. Jessie had chosen to sleep and practice his Bubble Dreamer powers, and with Spongebob joining him, the two discovered that Hikari was asleep, and her dreamscape was open. …Jessie had seen it a couple times, but he was still creeped out: his likeness made up most of the entire scape, from balloons to carpets.

And it was in this ‘scape where Hikari and Jessie told each other what was happening. By interacting with her, Jessie could see where Hikari was sleeping, and from how far a distance. After informing his friends, the Pikmin Onions managed to track the airborne school and fly inside under the Teen Ninjas’ vision. They were grown back to normal size after landing.

“That’s the short version of it.” Jessie finished.

“That still leaves a lot of questions, dude.” Richard said. “Like, Spongebob was with you? Seriously?”

Punio and Petuni walked in and stood beside the humans in the doorway. “We got Spongebob to sleep.” Punio said. “Hopefully, he can get into all the sleeping kids’ dreams and tell them the mission.”

“What’s with the talking mouse?” David asked.

“Alright, before we actually recap all the random crap we endured during our absence,” Shelly began, “I’m gonna make this straight: we’re going to attack Washington. More specifically, the White House.”

“What?!” Richard freaked.

“Is this to save all our friends?” Rupert asked.

“Of course it is.” Jessie spoke seriously. “But there’s something else, too. We need to destroy a monster called Bill Cipher. He’s in the White House, and he’s the one turning all our friends into mindless zombies. Me and Spongebob are the only ones that can fight him, but we need everyone in Gallagher to help us.”

“It isn’t just us.” Sandy assured. “The Minish Kids Next Door are gonna help, and they said they would ask the real Kids Next Door, too.”

“We’re actually a little ahead of schedule.” Gonshiri noted. “We planned to rescue you all, then set off to Washington, but it seems they’re already taking you. This is the perfect chance for a sneak-attack.”

“If Hikari hadn’t told me what was happening when she was asleep, we would’ve wasted our time.” Jessie smiled. The girl in question gave a blush.
“Hold on, this is going WAY too fast.” David spoke up. “We’re gonna attack the White House so
you and ‘Spongebob’ can fight some sort of monster?”

“And the Minish KND are helping?” Rupert asked.

“It happened very fast for us, too.” Gonshiri replied. “But at least we have time to rest before we arrive. I was told that you have an assortment of modified toys and bikes in your arsenal; I doubt their effectiveness in this situation, but anything will suffice.”

“I’m sure they can handle it.” Rupert said readily. “We took on the middle school! I mean, that’s what started this whole thing, and we sorta lost, but, what I’m trying to say is…”

“It’s time for all you Grade Presidents to represent, not just your school, but all elementary schools everywhere.” Gonshiri announced. “It’s time to prove to all the bigger kids what you’re really made of. Does that inspire you?”

“Not to the point we wanna get ourselves killed.” Richard replied.

“That’s why the Kids Next Door is helping us.” Sandy reminded. “But listen, if you guys agree to help, we can promise you free autographs from Spongebob himself!”

“Do we die, or get made into mindless zombie?” Chief Fingerpaint asked himself. “Mmm. Either way’s the same. But I would rather fight big bullies first!”

“Okay, we’ll do it.” David decided. “To protect our classmates.”

“Those big losers are going down—OW!” Richard was punched in the nose by Shelly. “What was THAT for?!”

“Ugh, your voice is so horribly high-pitched!” Shelly complained.

“Let’s go get the bikes ready.” Jessie suggested. “Hopefully, those dumbass big kids are too lazy to check on us.”

“You really need to work on your cussing, dude.” Richard said as they headed for the gym.

“It gets him fired up.” Sandy reasoned with a pretty face.

“Oh, fine.”

**Washington; day of the battle**

The Jabbies, Punies, and Minish were already attacking. The grade-schoolers could hear the conflict outside. Shelly’s father, King Sandy, was forming a great big sand bubble around their school. The army of Kindergarten-through-5th graders were ready on their bikes, their weapons, and waited at the front door. “I’m gonna blow this bubble down, then everybody heads straight to the White House.” Shelly announced, clutching her Sand Wand tight. “Our main priority is to get Shorts and Sponge over to the White House, and protect them from any jerks that come for ‘em. Got that?”

“This is the very same as attacking a middle school.” Jessie assured. “Except these kids are bigger, meaner, and have the United States Army to back them up. But we’re gonna rescue our friends and give them HELL!”

“YEEAAAH!” The kids cheered vigorously.
“Twerps of Gallagher:” Shelly waved her Sand Wand and blasted the bubble clear open, “GIVE THEM HECK!”

The grade-schoolers burst out of the school raced through the capital, either on foot or on bikes. Teen Ninjas swooped in to subdue them, but Jabbies were flying around their heads and stinging every corner, and Timmy and Hikari noticed the Pikmin slip into the big kids’ ears. “You brats ain’t goin’ anywhere!” Gideon cried. “Violet, Scarlet, SICK THEM!”

The two werecat women raced onto the field on all fours, their eyes glowing blue under mind-control. They split up and went for two squads of students, the grade-schoolers screaming and running. “HEEEEEEEE!” Richard Teague let out a high-pitch scream, hurting the werecats’ sensitive ears. His comrades shut their ears and seized the chance to run past.

“’Guess it’s good for somethin’.“ Shelly remarked.

Punio and his army of Punies dropped down from the cloud of Jabbies to run ahead of the kids. “You guys focus on getting to Bill!” Punio yelled. “We’ll rescue your friends!”

“Hey, watch out!” Timmy pointed ahead. “It’s that lady from before!”

Susanne Suave skied toward the crowd of kids, clothed in only a red bikini as she left a trail of her slippery suntan lotion. Some of the Gallaghers didn’t heed the warning and kept speeding on their bikes, which caused them to drive out of control and crash into buildings. “AAAHH!” Jessie’s group was lifted into the air by psychic.

“That’s as far as you go!” Gideon smirked. “Sandy, wrap them up!”

King Sandy had caught up as well, morphing this entire area of ground into sand so that other Gallaghers would have a harder time crossing. He grabbed a stream of sand in his aim to seal Jessie’s group inside a bubble. Lenari and Gonshiri snuck up behind Gideon, ordering their Wing Pikmin to carry Music Pikmin inside his ears. “Wa-wa-wa-WAAAAH!” Gideon screeched from their loud vocals.

The minute his psychic grip released, Shelly waved her Sand Wand to catch the sand surrounding them, and throw it at her father during their descent to the ground. “Just run ahead, Shorts.” The princess ordered. “I wanna get some payback at Daddy.”

Jessie nodded and ran ahead with his friends. Gideon angrily shook the Pikmin out of his head and flew after the kids.

King Sandy got to his feet on the sandy ground and faced his daughter. “Hm… It’s nice to see my two girls getting along.”

Gonshiri hopped up to Shelly’s shoulder, baring the same glare. “How come you never told us we were sisters?” Shelly asked.

“I can guess why.” Gonshiri followed. “It’s so that you would have no qualms about me being taken away by the Government. All along, he was going to hand me to his brother so that I can bring to life his God Fruit.”

“So, you know the truth, do you? Yes.” Sandy admitted, baring a remorseful look. “Disregarding my obsession with ruling a beach, the only thing I ever cared about was my family. I was indebted to Big Brother Andrew, and for a long time, I wanted to see my other daughter. I wanted Gonshiri to get to know Shelly. But your mother found out about my chat with Andrew. I felt terrible for losing her trust… but I’m not sorry for wanting to help my brother. My daughters didn’t even know
they were related, but they were already bound to each other. You know the feeling.”

“But your brother is terrible!” Gonshiri shouted. “He hated my mother, your wife.”

“And I hate him for that! But it doesn’t matter.” Sandy reasoned. “All he wants is to save the world. My brother always knows what’s best. So I’m going to help him in any way I can. If he needs Gonshiri’s power for his plan—whether that’s raising a zombie army or selling cookies for boy scouts—I have to help him. But I promise, the moment I think he’s going to do something dangerous, I’ll protect my daughter.”

“Bullcrap, you can’t be relied on for jack, and Uncle Andrew doesn’t know anything.” Shelly argued.

“And I will not be used to breed any zombie army whatsoever!” Gonshiri yelled. “So you can piss off, Father!”

“The two of you already messed up by attacking Washington.” King Sandy replied. “Your friends are going to be captured, and you can either join them in that school, or come with me to Mariejoa.”

“I’ll take the third option.” Shelly smirked. The princess waved her Sand Wand and grabbed a bundle of sand to surround her and Shiri. “Beating the snot out of any weirdo that tries to control us!”

Gideon flew over Jessie’s group and encased himself in a psychic bubble, forcefully bouncing around the field in attempt to crush the kids, who stopped and ducked in fear. “Ah’ll squish every one of you rats!”

Before he could crush Jessie, Spongebob kicked him out of the way and stretched in width, bouncing the bubble away as it disabled, and the Kindergarteners launched a storm of crayons from small bows to stick and pin Gideon to a building’s side. He fumed with anger when Jessie’s team ran ahead, using psychic to pull the crayons off and float back to the ground. Chief Fingerpaint approached the white-haired boy. “You really weird girl.” Chief said. “Is that some kind of lotion?”

“I AM NOT A GIRL!” Gideon shouted. “I dunno if you’re a kid or some kind of jungle person, but no one gets mercy from me!” The psychic blew his dog whistle, summoning the brainwashed werecats to his side.

“You use curious powers, to your disposable.” Fingerpaint said. “But you are not only one with power over mind.” He held up a small, convenient bag of catnip, calling Violet to pounce over. Fingerpaint leapt onto her back like a horse, bit his wooden stick staff in his teeth, and performed a jig as hypnotic music played. Colorful swirls appeared in Violet’s eyes; she was under the Kindergartener’s control. Gideon climbed onto Scarlet’s back as both controllers forced the werecats to claw at each other.

Jessie’s team made it to the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, so the next course of action would be to go around it. “Guys, look at that!” Joey pointed when the pool began bubbling.

“HAAAAAIIIIIIIEEEEEE!” A gigantic, green sea serpent emerged from the water, and riding on its head was Ashei Winters, the pale-skinned Eskimo with a white coat and sleek black hair. She took attention to the stampede of Punies running around the pool, so she directed the monster to Punio in the lead. The Puni Leader looked up and screamed at the incoming monster’s mouth, but a giant blue letter “B” block flew in the way and clogged its mouth. The Punies and Ashei looked over at
Joey Beatles, who held his giant Lego Bazooka.

“Better you fight that monster than me.” Richard remarked as the other children and Punies kept going. The sea serpent angrily flailed his head as it tried to bite the block, but decided to toss it away and lunge at Joey again. The boy dodged aside, and Ashei watched with interest as he began to run around the field, dropping letter blocks in his wake, until a great wall of blocks surrounded the pool’s perimeter and towered over the beast. The sea serpent shared Ashei’s baffled expression.

“You can’t be serious.” Ashei said as her monster rammed his head against and toppled the blocks down, but by making it unbalanced, the longer wall behind him toppled down and over the monster, crushing him into the pool. Ashei blew her horn and jumped off to let the giant snowbird to swoop down and take her in its talons. The winged beast had snow-white fur, blue talons and wings as sharp as icicles, and a blue beak under piercing yellow eyes.

“Looks like it’s bird season!” Joey whipped out his bazooka and began blasting giant blocks that didn’t go high enough to reach the bird. The snowbird slashed its wings to shoot icicles that Joey ran to avoid.

Susanne Suave skied across the sides of the buildings near the Reflecting Pool to go over the fallen blocks, afterwards kicking off to ski on the ground to Jessie’s group. “YAAAAAH!” She leapt high into the air for a kick at them, Sandy immediately noticed and threw her lasso to rope her, but Susanne easily slipped through and stamped her foot against the girl’s face, flying her away.

“SANDY!” Jessie exclaimed, running to his sister’s side. “Are you hurt?!”

“Ow… m-my nose…” Sandy held her bent, bleeding nose.

Jessie gritted his teeth and looked at the teenager with anger. “You slippery WHORE!”

“WHADDID YOU CALL ME?!” Susanne turned red, despite her lotion. “I’ll break your SKULL in, you little turd!”

“Could you pleath wash that sunscreen off?” Richard whined, his nose congested. “I’m allergic to, a-gi-gi, a-gi-gi- ACHOO!” He blasted a glob of greenish-white snot at Susanne’s face. The girl panicked and shook to shake it off, but the kids seized the chance to escape and make a mad dash to the distant White House. Jessie was helping his sister along.

“We’re almost there!” Timmy exclaimed.

“Don’t celebrate, yet!” Richard cautioned. “Here come the GUNs!”

A troupe of GUN soldiers marched forth from the White House in perfect rows, ready to subdue the kids. “Are we really gonna arrest a bunch of grade-schoolers for attacking the White House?” one of them asked.

“We’ll phone their parents later.” The leader said. “Just hit them with light chi-blocks and we’ll carry ‘em back-”

“I’M NOT THROUGH YET, BRATS!” Susanne screamed, skiing after the children after getting the snot off. His allergies were still active, so Richard sneezed a rope of snot to stick onto the teen, then Richard turned his head to swing the attached girl to the GUN troops, bowling them over like pins. To further complete this simile, Spongebob created Bubble Bowls to send the soldiers toppling, literally in the shape of pins.

“Are you kidding me?!” Nya shouted, floating beside Wendy Corduroy. “They have to be the weakest soldiers in the world!”
“Well, it’s not like beating up kids will look good on the news.” Wendy argued.

“Raaah!” Nya growled when some Jabbies swooped by, attempting to shoot the bugs with her laser. “Robbie, do something about those twerps!”

“You got it!” Robbie Valentino, a black-haired boy with black armor and a few zits, flew out onto the field and landed a short distance from the kids. He outstretched his arms and extracted huge, twin metal wheels with sharp blades. They spun rapidly as he smirked devilishly at the kids, rolling for them.

“You called my ex-boyfriend?!” Corduroy exclaimed. “He’ll tear those kids to shreds!”

“Not our fault.” Nya replied uncaringly.

The children braced for impact when the bladed wheels were seconds from slicing them, but David Keith bounced his bike off of the teen’s head, having rode off from a nearby roof at high speed. Robbie lost control and swerved to the left, missing Jessie’s group and hitting a building. David landed on the ground and stopped his bike near the kids. “I’ll take care of him. Focus on saving the others!”

Robbie roared with anger and recovered, speeding toward the biker as David hurriedly spun the pedals, attempting to outrun the Teen. Robbie was steadily inching up, David and the others shut their eyes from the former’s inevitable demise. A wave of water swooped by and hit Robbie in the face, causing him to shift and crash against a building. Team Gallagher looked up at their savior:

Melody Jackson jumped down from her KNN C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. and hurried over to Sandy Sidney. “Big kid!” The child said with surprise. Melody giggled and bent down, molding water over her hand to put it over Sandy’s broken nose. The water glowed blue as the blood stopped, reshaping her nose. Sandy smiled with gratitude and touched her nose, and Melody passed a brief salute before running off to join the fray.

A small fleet of KND ships were landing around the city as its operatives burst out to battle Teen Ninjas and GUN troops alike. Chimney quickly leapt around to kick ninjas senseless, Mocha had delight in crushing her enemies, Mary colored some soldiers’ armor green – causing them to stink horribly, and April painted a red dot on a building to make all ground turrets blast it. Karin Kurosaki knocked a ninja down, wrapped his limbs up like a ball, and kicked him to Jinta, who swung his bat and flung the teen to take down his airborne comrades. Ruby was flying thanks to Sapphire’s psychic, so she could help punch ninjas out of the sky with her fists. Sector W was also back from their Negaverse vacation, and were flying overhead to find a good place to start fighting.

A helicopter was hovering far above this conflict, and Eva Jackson stood in the door. “This is Eva Jackson live at Washington, D.C., where the city is under siege by, what appear to be grade-schoolers and a swarm of gray bugs. And now Kids Next Door operatives have gotten involved. People of America, I think we can safely assume we’re watching history. As a parent, I have to route for my daughter’s side.”

James McGarfield saw this on the news. The street to his palace was in shambles, teens and kids were fighting, and that particular group, led by the Indian boy in the purple shirt, was coming for him. “Grrrrrr!” Jimmy pushed the PA button, “You kids, WHADDYOU think yer doin’?!?”

“The American Government is one of the founding footholds to the World Government itself?” His voice was heard everywhere in the city. “By attacking this city, you are declaring WAR against the World Government! Is that what you snot-nosed kids want?!! To become enemies of the world?!!”
“Screw the government!” a voice yelled from outside. A baseball was hit through Jimmy’s window, and the president read it was autographed Jinta.

The president growled again. “BILL! Get out here!”

Bill Cipher appeared again. “Didju find my contact lens?”

“The Kids Next Door are here, Bill! When is that special help supposed to arrive?! Where is he?!”

“No need to worry, Jim Belushi, he’ll be here momentarily! Meanwhile, I’m gonna go out and see my competition.”

Jessie’s team was almost at the White House, they just had to cross the courtyard and they would make it. Bill Cipher poofed above the front gates, and everyone stopped to gasp. “WELL, well, well!” His perky voice echoed. “What have we here? I spy with my All-Seeing Eye, a couple of Bubble Dreamers!”


“Correct, Jesselina! Or should I call you Polokus?” He narrowed his eye and folded his line-arms, lowering down to the group. “Are you going to try and Bubble me? Well, I’m right here, so take your best shot. Oh, wait a second, YOU CAN’T!” His eye widened giddily. “You can only Bubble me in the Dream World! You can try to if you want, but it won’t work!”

“Grrrrr!” Jessie forcefully dipped his wand in a bubble bottle and blew Bullet Bubbles at Bill.

“Haaaaa hahahahaha, ah hahahahahaha!” The demon cracked up when they all phased through his form. “Anyway, I’ll catch up with ya later! Until then, you can play with this guy. Look out above!” He poofed away.

“Hey! Look up in the sky!” Timothy pointed. There was a tiny, black dot that was fastly descending from the clouds. “It’s a bird!”

“It’s a plane!” Hikari beamed.

The object collided with the earth in front of the palace gates. After the smoke cleared, it was revealed to be a brown-haired man in a black sweater, blue jeans, and brown shoes. His hands were folded in front of his mouth. “Who’s that?” Wendy Corduroy asked.

“Oh no! That’s one of the World Leaders!” Hoagie said with worry. “Lucas Stonebuddy!”

“What?! The president called a World Leader to fight grade-schoolers?”

“I do not want to exhaust much energy.” Lucas said to himself, observing the school of children that were standing with their guards raised. Lucas whirled his left arm in a square-like form, before slapping his hand against the ground. A great, stone wall rose from the ground, blocking the entire front of the White House’s garden. Three more walls appeared from either side of the building’s grounds. The White House was sealed behind rectangular prisms with great height and perfect angles. Lucas stood on the top.

“I’ll take care of it!” Anthony declared as Sector W flew over the White House. “That guy is goin’ down!”

“Anthony, don’t!” Sally panicked. “He’s a World Leader, you can’t beat him!”
“I don’t see any other earthbenders. I have to. Wish me luck!” He jumped off of the S.C.A.M.P.E.R., despite his friends’ protests.

Anthony landed atop the stone wall a short distance from Stonebuddy, immediately stomping the ground to propel a rock out, then kick it at him. Lucas blocked it with a single hand, so Anthony kicked another rock that Lucas blocked. The World Leader stretched and waved his hands to grab chunks out of the wall, in the form of giant stone hands. Anthony ran back before the hands clapped, dodged another clap, and when they came at him again, Anthony outstretched his own hands to push them back. The hands clapped, but Anthony was safe in the holes he pushed open.

Sandy tried to throw her ropes up the wall, but to no avail. “There aren’t any places to grab onto!”

“I can float us up there!” Jessie declared.

“Forget about it, that guy up there will get you, anyway.” Rupert said, standing on Timmy’s hat with his Pikmin. “Let’s go save everyone in the school, we’ll wait for Anthony to beat ‘im.”

Jessie watched the earthbender boy battle the World Leader, and he could already sense the fight would take a while. He decided to lead his team to the school, following the band of Punies.

King Sandy sent five streams of sand at Shelly, who raised her Sand Wand to create an invisible shield, taking the sand to throw it at her father’s feet. The man flipped away and punched the ground, sending a row of sand geysers at his daughter to propel her to the air. Sandy rushed over to a building and planted his hand against it, channeling his chi through the entire structure to break it into sand. As he waved it away to throw at Shelly, only a few scaffolds remained: Cleveland Brown was about to slide off in his bathtub. “No no no NO NO!” Crash. “I made it halfway through this story, and I tried to go for the goal.”

Shelly quickly raised her Sand Wand to block the oncoming sand, leaving a narrow space for herself as the rest of the wave flew past. Some sand got in her ears, where Shiri was currently in refuge to be safe from the attack. Shelly used one hand to hold the wand, and the other hand to pull out her sakura petal sword. She forced herself through the storm and burst out into open air, “HYAH!!” slicing her father across the left waist with the sharp petal.

“OW!” King Sandy gripped his waist and sank to his knees. He turned to look at the strange weapon that had cut him. “A sakura petal?” He drew interest at the simple pink petal growing from the wooden sword. “Hold on… you can’t mean to tell me…” Sandy noticed Gonshiri peek out of Shelly’s ear. “Did you do that?”

“Believe me, it wasn’t easy.” Gonshiri informed. “I doubt I’m strong enough to help your brother’s crazy plan.”

“No matter. It’s a start!” Sandy threw an arm up to shoot a gush of sand at Shelly’s face, pushing her on her back as Gonshiri fell off. Sandy threw an arm back, pulling a gush of sand from under Shiri toward him, and allowing him to catch his Minish daughter between his hands. “I don’t mean to act this forceful, but I promise we’ll make this an easy journey.”

“Like hell you will!” Shelly punched the ground to sink a sand trail leading to her father, but King Sandy stomped up a sand wall to save himself before running away.

“Princess!” Lenari flew overhead with his Wing Pikmin, having some of them carry Brown Pikmin into Sandy’s ears. The man felt his ears clog, so he cupped Gonshiri in his left hand and stuck his right pinky finger into his right ear. The Brown Pikmin remained stuck, then Lenari’s Wing Pikmin dropped Purples down to Sandy’s feet, making him ache as he tried to shake them off, then Shelly
hurled a sand stream at his butt to push her father down. Gonshiri was released and bounced across the ground before Wing Pikmin swooped down to save her. “Are you okay, Princess?” Lenari asked, flying level with her.

“I’m fine. It’s difficult to battle when there aren’t many plants around. Especially when this lunatic is turning everything into sand.”

“I think I saw a rooftop garden on another building. If it’s still intact, I’ll go bring you some. Until then, you can use my Pikmin.” Lenari flew away with his Wing Pikmin, leaving the ground Pikmin for his princess.

Chief Fingerpaint and Li’l Gideon were still riding Violet and Scarlet. They made the werecats run up and stand on their hind legs as they clawed at each other. Fingerpaint seized the chance to poke Gideon in the eyes, pushing him off his cat, then Fingerpaint jumped over to land on Gideon’s belly. Gideon hacked spit and pushed Fingerpaint off with psychic, then ran away from the werecats to let them continue their fight. A second-grader ran by, snapped a picture of the fighting catwomen, then ran away.

“Corpus levitas Diablo Daminium Mondo Vicium!” Gideon chanted the spell from memory, and Chief Fingerpaint backed up in fear when Redeads emerged from the earth. “You ain’t the only kid who knows a bit of magic!” The psychic declared.

“Yes. But you are not the only one who can raise the dead.” Chief Fingerpaint dropped his staff, folded his hands, and closed his eyes. “Haish bishah, comayea, hishiminshihah, nortah, netamye…”

“Is that some kinda Javanese?” Gideon raised a brow.

“It means, ‘Crayon Spirits, come help me beat this chick.'” Fingerpaint translated. Almost on cue, a team of colorful child spirits, each wearing clothes reading ‘Crayola,’ emerged from the ground. Gideon exchanged a glare with the 5-year-old, blowing his whistle to sick his zombies, while Fingerpaint made hand gestures to send the spirits. The zombies weakly swung their hands at the ghosts, and as the spirits blew around the corpses, their shriveled bodies became colorful. When there came to be a yellow zombie, green one, pink, blue, and red, some fast violin music began to play. The zombies put hands behind their backs and performed a tap-dance, made synchronized hand-waves, then breakdanced on the floor.

“…I did not expect that.” Fingerpaint said.

“Should we just go back to fighting normally?” Gideon asked.

“Yes.” So with that, the two screamed and ran at each other.

The snowbird was too high for Joey Beatles’ Block Cannon to reach, but when the monster swooped down to grab him in its talons, Joey dodged aside. “This isn’t goin’ anywhere. I’m gonna have to break out the Big Blocks.”

When Ashei had the snowbird turn back, she watched with interest when Joey was building another wall of letter blocks, which he proceeded to cower behind. Ashei chuckled, ordering her winged beast to swoop down to ram the wall down—he collided facefirst with the massive stone block behind the letter blocks. His ice-cold beak cracked, and the snowbird fell on the ground. “Where the heck did you hide this? !” Ashei exclaimed after falling as well.

“No place you would ever look!” Joey taunted.
“Really? I’ll have to call my friends to come look at it.” Ashei blew into her horn again. The ground began shaking as a stampede of yeti charged from around the buildings. Joey panicked and began blasting the monsters with his Block Bazooka, but soon thought it fruitless and bolted away. Joey dropped more and more blocks that ended up becoming a stairway. The yetis charged up the stairway and… ran off the top edge. They stayed in midair for a few seconds, exchanging looks with each other before they screamed and fell.

Jessie and Spongebob blew Bubble Torpedoes at the Shy Guys protecting President James’ Elementary School, and Sandy roped their little bodies to pull them over, then throw them into other Shy Guys. As they hurried into the school, they saw the Punies scamper out of the classrooms. “All of the students are asleep.” Punio reported. “Their dream selves are probably locked in a trance.”

“So we have to go in and wake them up?” Jessie asked.

“You and Spongebob need to save your energy to fight Bill and Jimmy. We’ll think of a different way to wake them up.”

“I can help with that!” Rupert squeaked. “My Music Pikmin can sing a song to wake them! Right, guys?”

“Ree-roo!” The Music Pikmin perked. “Reer?” Their antennas picked up a distant, beautiful tone: the strumming of Spanish guitar strings. “Hey, where’re you going??” Rupert yelled when the Music Pikmin jumped off of Timmy’s hat and ran away.

“Hey!” Sandy perked up. “Now I wanna follow it, too.” So against all their wills, the grade-schoolers and Punies followed the music.

Rodrigo Añorga was rapidly strumming his guitar as a team of students were groggily dancing behind him. He looked at the tiny Magenta Pikmin that had gathered on the ground, staring at them with cool brown eyes. His glittering eyes made the Pikmin swoon, so the handsome Spanish boy kept playing.

Jessie’s team gathered in the music studio, beginning to dance in unison like the hostages. “This is like what happened at the middle school!” Timothy exclaimed.

“He must’ve been the one behind it!” Richard cried. “I conjecture it’s a form of hypnosis in which the soundwaves alter our brainwaves in a manner where our body actions-”

“He’s a musicbender, case closed!” Punio yelled. “We’ll never rescue anyone unless we fight it!”

“It’s no use.” A 9-year-old in black clothing and glasses replied in a miserable tone. “We’re totally under his control.”

“Hey, that’s the Third Grade President!” Timmy realized. “Leon.”

“I’ve been here for who knows how long.” Leon Anderson Sobs whined. “And he’s keeping us here until we feel like staying asleep. I’m so exhausted. My own shadow abandoned me. That doesn’t surprise me, though, I would abandon me, too.”

“Brown Pikmin make good earplugs.” Punio said. “Too bad we don’t have some of them.”

Anthony stomped up and kicked more rocks at the World Leader, but Lucas Stonebuddy blocked
each one with his hands. Furthermore, he used quick stonebending to repair the chunks that were missing from his wall, keeping it perfectly steady. “We have to help Anthony!” Sally exclaimed from their ship.

“How? We’ll be as good a match for that guy as he is.” Aranea reasoned.

“I shalt assist.” Fybi decided. “Aranea shalt command yon ship.” She put the S.C.A.M.P.E.R. on autopilot and flew out, spinning the air around her hands. She created lightning and struck down at Lucas, but the Leader jumped back and emerged stone donuts from his wall. He flew them around the air to attack Fybi, but the angel was quick to dodge them, trying to fly far away to outrun. When she looked back to see them fall behind, Fybi gasped when the Lincoln Memorial flew up to smack her between its hands, afterwards descending to the ground. Fybi shook and managed to get away before the crash, but Lincoln remained under Lucas’s control as he tried to swat Fybi like a fly. The World Leader faced Anthony with one hand over his mouth.

“Why do you keep covering your mouth?” Anthony asked.

“My job in the World Leaders is to calculate the best possible and most probable strategy for every battle, and it wouldn’t do if my enemies could see me move my mouth and calculate them.”

“But your friends can’t see you calculate ‘em, either!”

“Of course not, I speak them to myself, I’m the only one who needs to and it helps my brain to process.”

“Come on, man, you’re an earthbender, you’re supposed to quit thinkin’ and fight!” Anthony stomped and kicked another rock, an easy block for Lucas.

“Yes, you are really prevailing in this fight.” Lucas said. “I cannot anticipate what you’ll do next.”

Anthony glared at the World Leader, closing his eyes and putting one hand on the gray stone they fought on. Using Seismic Sense, Anthony focused and raised one hand to punch through the wall and burrow underneath. Lucas was ready for him to come back up, feeling the boy underneath him, so Lucas stomped to send a quake down. He felt Anthony stop. “Hmph. Not worth my-“

Lucas’s eyes shot open when a jagged stone popped up and struck his crotch. Anthony smirked as he came out behind him, thrusting another rock-jab at Lucas’s back, but the World Leader defended with his own. “That doesn’t affect me like most people.” Lucas informed calmly, stepping away from the rock between his legs.

“Are you a Logia or something?”

“Please, I would never do something so barbaric.” Lucas threw a hand up, flipping the ground Anthony was standing on over to crush the boy, but Anthony managed to push the stone up with his feet. Lucas clapped his hands and brought up two square chunks of stone from the wall’s sides to seal Anthony from either end, then one more square to seal him from the other side.

Before long, every news studio in the country sent reporters to film this event. The Battle of Washington became the most-watched news in America’s history. Word soon spread about the American Capital under attack by grade-schoolers. America was laughed at by every other country in the world.

Gideon grabbed debris from the battle in his psychic to throw at Chief Fingerpaint, who dodged them as he spun his staff to pick up and throw debris using magic. However, Gideon’s attacks came faster, so Fingerpaint was forced to retreat behind an alley. “Hey, are you alright?” a voice
asked behind him. Chief Fingerpaint turned around to see an older boy with a pine tree hat, and a
girl with a gray sweater that depicted a missile with a burning engine.

“Who are you, Big Kid?”

“My name’s Dipper, and this is Mabel.” The girl grinned and waved, showing her braces. “We saw
you fighting Gideon and wanted to help.”

“You know white-haired man-girl?”

“Yes- hha ha ha ha!” Dipper laughed at that comment. “Listen, do you know where Jessie Sidney
is, we brought him a list of Bill Cipher’s weaknesses.”

“He should be near White House, or inside prison school. Big kids, I may need your help for this
battle.”

“I’ll help you.” Dipper decided, giving Mabel a piece of paper. “Mabel, you bring this to Jessie—
Cheren said he’s an Indian boy. Um, he’s probably not wearing make-up or clothing like these
guys.”

“On it, Dipper. DELIVERY MABEL AWAAAAYYY!” She ran out of the alleyway, holding the
small paper above her as she ran past Gideon.

“Oh, why Dear Mabel’s here!” Gideon beamed. “I was hoping my queen would witness my
victory.”

“You’re gonna have to keep dreaming, Gideon.” Dipper told him. Gideon turned and scowled with
anger at the Pines. Chief Fingerpaint was riding on his shoulders. “You’re not becoming King OR
Queen. Chief, whaddyou want me to do?”

“Keep avoiding his attacks, so that I may focus.” The Kindergarten Chief started waving his staff
and swinging the purple orb it was attached to. Dipper watched as debris floated in the air, covered
in purple aura as it flew at Gideon, who countered with psychic-thrown debris. Dipper jumped
around and dodged the psychic’s attacks, keeping Fingerpaint steady so he could attack as well.

“Listen, Gideon isn’t a real psychic.” Dipper told him. “The last time he did this, he was using a
magic necklace. Try and attack his chest!”

“You need to learn to keep your mouth shut, Pines!” Gideon blasted psychic and blew Dipper and
Fingerpaint backwards. When Dipper saw a large boulder fly his way, he grabbed the chief and
pulled him away.

Lucas Stonebuddy was trying to smash Anthony within his rectangular stones, but the Sector
Leader used every ounce of strength to push away. “The World Government has no real quarrel
with you, and you have nothing to gain from this battle, so why are you fighting?” Lucas asked.
“You’re humiliatingly exhausting yourself for nothing.”

Anthony concentrated chi to his head, lifted it up, then hit the back of his head against the stone to
break a hole, sink in, and slip out of the stones. Anthony punched up forcefully to blow the
rectangles off, climbing out and slumping as his head ached. “I said that I would… beat up one of
the World Leaders for Cheren… f-for his dad.”

“Oh, that business again.” Lucas sighed. “Well, I guess I’m going to have to give you brain
damage. OOOH!!” A foot swung up from behind and kicked his crotch.
“No one hurts my brother’s brain more than he does!” Michelle McKenzie declared, followed by a kick to Lucas’s shin before she ran beside her brother.

“Michelle?! When the crud did you get here?!”

“When I snuck on your ship, of course. Tee hee hee! I was waiting for you to mess up, Big Brother. Why is this guy so hard? Even I can tell he’s just a big rock.”

“So he is a Logia?”

“No, he’s really a big rock. See?” Michelle suddenly stomped her foot, forcing a sharp stone up under Lucas’s arm to chop it off. The stone-made arm fell over the wall and hit the ground below.

Lucas kept his mouth covered with his other hand, while the edge of the amputated arm was gray and dropping specks of gravel. “So, you saw through my ruse? Impressive. Yes, my real body is still in Mariejoa. I send my copies out to battle when I am called, and it is through them I can earthbend from afar.”

“So you’re earthbending from a thousand miles away?” Anthony asked. “Huh. You’re just a big coward. I can beat up a statue easy.”

“Anthony, let me beat him!” Michelle stomped her foot demandingly.

“Nuh-uh. I’m the big brother, so I beat up bullies. You’re the little sister, so you ruin things. Make yourself useful and tear this wall down!”

“HMPH!” Michelle huffed with anger and ran to one corner of the wall’s top, forcefully punching the stone in her attempts to break it. Lucas flipped up perfect rectangles into the air to crush the child, then Anthony hurriedly knocked them away with his own stones, then chucked one at Lucas, which he blocked, then Anthony grabbed the rubble from the stones to throw all at once, making Lucas stumble back.

Mabel made it to President James’ Elementary School and burst through the front door, still clutching the note in her hand. “Okay, we’re looking for an Indian boy with no makeup. …” A distant Spanish tune caught her ears. Mabel looked curious as her arms and legs began to jig on their own. “Hey, this is pretty catchy! Ra-dat-dat-dah-dat, da la la la, rada dat-dat-da-da, I gonna download this to iTunes! Okay, time to focus, Mabel, let’s look for that Indian boy.” Still dancing, Mabel peeked into a classroom. “Indian boy?” She looked at an African-American. “No.” Next classroom, “Indian boy?” Chinese girl. “No.” Next one, “Indian boy?” It was a closet. Mabel gasped with delight: “Kittens!”

Lilac Farley and Berry Bean were bound inside small cat cages, trying to clamp their cat-ears shut from the music. “Aww, they’re wearing people clothes! And people hair. And skin.”

“We’re humans, Dumbo!” Berry insulted her. “They locked us in here when we tried to help our moms. Grrr, I can’t stand that music anymore!”

“What’s so bad about it?” Mabel jigged. “I think it gets my heart pumpin’!”

“Hey! Hey, Human!” a voice squeaked from above. Mabel looked up and saw Sappo and Gibli inside a small jar on a shelf.

“Wooooow!” Mabel took the jar down and stared close at the Minish with wondrous eyes. “You’re like chipmunks and ants! Chipants!”
“We heard it before!” Sappo yelled, he and his sister dancing to the music. “Listen, why isn’t that music controlling you as bad as the others?”

“I dunno.” Mabel smiled bubbly. “I guess because I’m a fan of all types of music.”

“Listen, the guy making this music is up ahead. You have to destroy his guitar so we can all be free!”

“Hurry up! We saw the Punies run by earlier!” Gibli bounced.

“Don’t worry, Mutant Chipmunks, you can count on me!” Mabel carried their jar and ran down the hall, breaking into the music room. The girl gasped, seeing the brown-skinned boy with a purple shirt dancing with his friends. “Indian Boy!” She danced over to Jessie and touched his cheeks. “It really is you! No makeup or anything.”

“Quit ***king touching me and save our asses!”

“Okay.” Mabel turned to face the handsome Spanish boy with determination—until she actually got to look at him. Rodrigo Añorga looked so handsome. He played that guitar with perfection. “My true love.” Mabel breathed.

“Oh, boy.” Richard sighed.

Shelly whirled two bundles of sand around her arms and hurled them at her father, who propelled himself to the air using a sand geyser and flew back. King Sandy threw his arms up and rose a team of sand columns, which he spun into a tornado to pull in the air around. Shelly ran as the cyclone chased her, but the princess was sucked inside and whirled around the air. After the cyclone stopped, Shelly was panting on the ground. She grabbed her sakura sword and tried to run at her father, but Sandy threw a blast of sand to knock the single petal off.

“Hey! I worked really hard on that petal!” King Sandy was suddenly flung away by a flower pot. Gonshiri was controlling a large body of leaves and flowers, all stemming from pots. “And I don’t appreciate my work being tarnished!” the princess exclaimed.

“Pikmin, SWARM him!” Lenari called from a lower part of the plant mass. Tiny screams rang in the air as Pikmin stormed out to attack the giant human. King Sandy floated a mound of sand above to crush them, but Shelly whipped her Sand Wand to yank it back, smother it over her father’s face, and let the Pikmin climb his legs to whack various areas. Sandy scratched to shake the Pikmin off, then got punched in the face by one of Gonshiri’s flower pots. Sandy recovered and saw the monster come again, he blocked both pot-fists with his hands and channeled his chi to morph them into sand.

King Sandy ran away and clutched another building to scatter its matter and throw the resulted sand at Gonshiri. The plant creature barely dodged aside, but lost its lower half as Sandy hurled another wave. Shelly jumped in the way and blocked this wave with her Sand Wand, then whooshed it along the ground to knock Sandy down, then she buried his head with it. “Termite, I’m getting a little exhausted.” Shelly panted. “You know a lot, tell me a way we can wrap this up.”

“Seeing him disintegrate these buildings reminds me of something.” Gonshiri began. “While structures are torn into sand, they retain their previous hardness or material. If you can break something of a hard-enough material, you can use the sand to fight him.”

“I can’t even break REAL material, I’m only using the sand that HE makes!”
“I remember reading that if you stomped on your Sand Wand, it would force you into Fury Mode, which strengthens your power. But the Sand Wand will be broken as a result, so you’ll only have one chance. Shelly, why don’t you search for a good material and I’ll fight him?”

“YAAAH!” King Sandy blew the sand off of him.

“I’ll protect her, you go!” Lenari assured. Shelly nodded and ran off to find something, while Shiri and Lenari commanded a swarm of Pikmin to attack the Sand King.

“You know, I play guitar, too.” Mabel spoke sheepishly to the Spanish teen, dancing close to him. “My brother says I could be in a band. He thinks I could be lead singer, too, but, he’s my brother, so whaddoes he know, right? Heh heh.” She chuckled.

“There’s a good time and an inconvenient time for flirting with the enemy.” Richard whined. “This is the latter!”

“Ooo, I know!” Mabel beamed. “Let me play your guitar and I’ll show you!”

“No, mi chica.” Rodrigo denied.

Mabel snorted, “I’m not a chicken, silly! Come on, just let me play it!” Against Rodrigo’s wishes, Mabel took the guitar. “ESO NUEBLA, hola olaaayy!” Mabel strummed the strings loudly and sang what she thought was Spanish. “No esque ooocho, espanol no leeee!”

Jessie rushed over, took the guitar, and smashed it against the ground the minute he was free from control. Timothy took the jar containing Sappo and Gibli to drop them on the floor. “So this is where he took you!” Rupert realized.

“Now’s your chance to wake up everyone else!” Punio declared. “Use your Music Pikmin!”

“Let’s get on it, Gibli!” Sappo said.

“Right!”

“Leon, we have to get going!” Richard yelled at Third Grade’s leader.

“But I can’t go anywhere without my shadow.”

“We’ll look for it.” Rupert assured, flying with Wing Pikmin. “We have to find my mom, too.”

“Hey, are you Jessie?” Mabel ran up to the Indian. “I brought this for you.”

Jessie took the note and read the list of Bill Cipher’s weaknesses. He nodded. “This makes it even easier.”

“You really think they’ll work?” Sandy asked.

“If they don’t, I know another weakness of his. I don’t really know how it works, but if I say his Creator’s name, he’ll weaken.”

“What’s his Creator’s name?”

“I’ll tell you later, in case it’s a one-time thing. Quick, let’s go to the White House!”

David Keith sped his bike from around a building, immediately chased by Robbie, whose bladed wheels cut those sides of building. “Those kiddie wheels ain’t gonna last ya, dude!” The goth teen
taunted. “They’re about to become chopped rubber!”

David sped faster to another building, bent backward to make the front part of his bike shift up, then David hurriedly pedaled up the building’s side. He saw Robbie easily chase up the building using his bladed wheels, but David quickly pressed the brake, stopped, and plummeted down, landing against Robbie (the bike’s wheel against his face) and smashing him to the ground. David pedaled away before Robbie got up to glare at him. “You might have fancy Big Kid bikes,” David remarked, “but my uncle is Lance Strongarm! And he once outran an airplane traveling a kajillion miles an hour!”

Robbie glared and extracted his wheels again, chasing the 12-year-old. David evasively pedaled away, going between the buildings as Robbie sawed through the sides. David expertly bounced his bike up a convenient stairway of Teen Ninjas, getting atop the roofs as Robbie sawed up and continued pursuit. David drove off a high roof to a lower roof, then swiftly U-turned to go down an alleyway, watching Robbie continue ahead. The goth teen stopped on the following roof to look around. “Where did that twerp go?”

“Right here, Bignose!” David sped up the building’s side to ram Robbie from the front, shoving him off the building.

“UGOH UGOH UGOH UGOH!” The yeti were running frantic and distorted around Joey’s letter block maze, they turned one way, came back the other way, found a different way-

“STOP RUNNING!” Ashei screamed. All of the yeti stopped to look at her. “Alright, if we’re gonna get outta this maze, you all need to stop acting like idiots!”

“Ugoh-ugoh?” a yeti asked.

“We took that way eight times, there’s nothing there.”

“Ugoh?” a yeti pointed at a certain wall.

“I know those blocks look like Queen Latifah, just focus!”

“Ugoooohhh!” A yeti threw his arms up.

“We tried throwing each other up in the air, Billy’s arms got tired, and Cedric never came down.”

“Ugo hugohugohugohugohugohugohugohugoh!” All of the yeti were engaging in mindless bickering.

Ashei huffed with anger and stepped away from the crowd. …She stepped on a loose part of street. She looked down, and pulled the handle of the trapdoor open. The Eskimo smirked evilly. “Found your secret passage.” She climbed in to search for Joey.

Dipper Pines kept running around with Chief Fingerpaint on his shoulders. The older boy was dodging Gideon’s psychic throws while Fingerpaint was molding mantra, as far as Dipper could tell. “What’re you trying to do again?”

“I am trying to summon the ghost of Big Taking Bully, who take things from little kids.” The chief responded. “I will tell him to take the necklace of which you speak. I must also keep throwing things at him.”

The chief used his magic to pick up trashcans in an alley and chuck them at Gideon, but the psychic pushed them away with his own power and continued pursuit. “Wah!” Dipper stopped with a jump when he saw the brainwashed Violet and Scarlet look around the alley corner, snarling at
“Jump on dumpster!” Fingerpaint yelled. Dipper jumped off a can to get onto the nearby dumpster, and the kindergartener used his magic to levitate them to the roof. Gideon lifted Violet and Scarlet up with himself, ordering the werecats to pounce after them across the roofs. Dipper came to a dead-end roof, nearly stumbling over the edge, and turned to look at the werecats with fear. “Uhnnnn, n-nice kitties.”

“Scratch under chin, cats like that.” Fingerpaint said. Dipper worriedly approached the catwomen and scratched under their necks. Violet and Scar bore relaxed looks in their blank blue eyes, purring with satisfaction.

“Violet, Scarlet, QUIT wasting time and tear that Pine Tree to shreds!” Gideon clutched his hand, and the werecats fell back under control and gnashed at the Pines, who dodged back onto his rear and backed away. The werecats were slowly inching up, and Dipper internally pressured the chief into hurrying.

Gonshiri controlled the Purple Pikmin and made them fly around the air, smacking King Sandy’s head from left and right using their strength. Sandy stomped a sand wall to surround himself, then blew it apart to push the Pikmin away. He clutched the ground to morph it to sand, then made a gush fly his daughter to his hand. “That’s enough, Gonshiri.”

“PRINCESS!” Lenari screamed. “You let her go!” The Minish Leader ran up to bite Sandy’s toe, but he easily flicked him away.

Shelly hurriedly searched the town, feeling every fancy building she came by to see if the stone would be suitable. She couldn’t make a decision, and she may only have a short time to use the stone against her father. Then, Shelly’s eyes widened: the Washington Monument, of solid white stone, towered above her. …Shelly looked left, and her eyes shot open wider: the Obama Monument was even bigger, and a sturdy black stone. …For some reason, that sounded weird in Shelly’s head.

“I’ll use this against Dad.” She decided. “But I hope I can pull it off.” Shelly put the Sand Wand on the ground and raised a foot. “Fury Mode, GO!” She stomped the wand into pieces, and felt power flow through her veins as a sandy yellow aura surrounded her. Shelly clasped her hands to the Obama Monument, sensing the entire structure with her Seismic Sense. She channeled her terrific power, all throughout the monument, pouring all her strength as it rumbled. The Obama Monument was gone, broken into millions of pieces of black sand.

King Sandy flailed his hand to swat the Pikmin away, Gonshiri almost jumped out of his fingers, but Sandy clamped her between both hands. “Enough!” Sandy stomped up a sand bubble to protect himself. “This game is dragging on too long.”

“May I say, for your own I.Q., that you are the worst father a Minish could ever have!” Gonshiri insulted.

“Don’t you think I’m worried about Andrew’s plans, too, Gonshiri?” Sandy stated. “If I don’t do this, he’ll just come after you himself and destroy your people, the only way I can protect them is to hand you over myself. Besides, at this point, you and Shelly have no choice. If you can’t even beat me, what makes you think you’ll get out of here unscathed? !”

A wave of black sand broke through his shield and knocked Sandy onto the ground. Gonshiri seized the chance to hop over to her sister, who was glowing sandy yellow and controlling a body of black sand behind her. “Gut instinct.” Shelly replied. King Sandy angrily threw sand, Shelly
blocked it with her black sand and furiously slapped her father across the face. The princess waved her arms and lifted her father to the air using the sand, wrapping it around him like a spherical present.

“SHELLY, DON’T!” King Sandy cried as only a little of his face was visible. “What’ll you do if Uncle Andrew comes?! If he’s set on making the Grand Inferius, how will you protect Gonshiri from him?!”

“I’ll kick a ball at his nuts instead of his head. He doesn’t really look that tough. Sorry about this, Dad.” Shelly smashed the palms of her hands together.

“ANDREWWWW!” The name forced out of Sandy’s mouth when the sphere of sand contracted on him. Shelly waved the black sand away to let her father land on the scattered ground. He was left with several bloody openings and crushed bones.

Lenari and Gonshiri came over to the part of his waist that Shelly cut. “Wait a second…” Lenari noticed the dangling part of a white bandage. “Shelly, lift his shirt up.”

Shelly walked over to her defeated father and did so. White bandages were wrapped around Sandy’s waist. “When did he get those?”

“The agents that came to the castle must have done that.” Gonshiri assumed. “I don’t know if Uncle Andrew approved of it or if it was their own choice.”

Shelly shook her head in disappointment. “He’s a bad brother either way. …Hey, what’s that big wall over there?” Shelly pointed to the distant stone wall where Anthony and Lucas were fighting.

“That’s where the White House is supposed to be!” Lenari realized. “Someone musta raised it. Shelly, you still have Fury Mode, run over there and tear it down!”

“I’m on it!”

Lucas Stonebuddy emerged pyramids from his stone and threw them at Anthony, he thought quick and punched them away, then saw one going for his sister. “Michelle, watch out!”

The girl gasped, looking up from trying to tear a part of wall, and raised a stone shield. “Waaah!” The child was blown off of the wall, but Fybi swooped down to rescue her, dodging a punch from the Lincoln Memorial.

Lucas used his bending to stomp into place new pieces of stone to fill the gaps. “They say that my ancestors created the Great Wall of China. I never looked into it, but I wouldn’t be surprised. You’ll never get through this wall.”

“I don’t know the ‘Timber’ variation for walls, but here goes nothin’!” Shelly Johnson dashed up to the stone wall and punched her hands into it. Lucas felt his precious wall tremble before the low front portion morphed into sand. The structure lost balance and began to lean toward the White House’s garden. The wall crashed as Lucas fell on the ground, and a band of Gallagher students cried as they charged over the fallen defense. Lucas looked up, and his eyes focused solely on Jessie Sidney, passing the Leader a smirk as he leaped across with Spongebob.

“No!” Lucas rolled to his front and outstretched his only arm. “The Light!” Then Anthony leapt and landed on his back, pinning the stone man down.

“You’re the light of my life too, Buddy.” The earthbender stomped and smashed Stonebuddy’s head into pieces. Around the perimeter, Michelle and Shelly were destroying the rest of his wall.
“Better stay safe, ‘cause I’m comin’ after the real you.” Anthony threatened.

“HEY, stop those kids!” a GUN commander roared as his soldiers formed a line before the White House, holding their shields perfectly straight. “They’re not allowed to enter the White House!”

“I’ll take ‘em down!” Spongebob rolled a Bubble Bowl to the soldiers, but it simply bounced off their shields and rolled back against the sponge’s legs. “Uw-WAAA-AA-AAAAH!” Spongebob tripped and rolled rapidly, knocking a group of soldiers down on his own, and when the other troops about-faced, they were pounced and bitten by Gallagher kids.

“WHOA-ho!” Wendy Corduroy perked. “That kid just knocked that guy’s teeth out!”

“Ugh. Man, we should’ve called CP10.” Nya sighed in exhaust, swatting away some Jabbies. “World Leader sure was useless. Hoagie, Wendy, go back up Rodrigo at the school. Susanne, stop those kids!”

“Roger!” The TND operatives nodded and flew off to the school. Susanne Suave glided across the courtyard, swiftly kicking every Gallagher she skied by. Richard Teague turned around and sneezed a glob of snot that Susanne ducked, coming at him faster to throw a punch, but Richard dodged. “Keep going, Jessie!” the nasal-voice yelled, shooting another snot-robe at Susanne. The girl shifted left and smirked tauntingly as Richard’s snot was stuck to a tree. But the Second Grade President returned the look as he lunged himself forward with the snot to kick Susanne in the face, the girl slipping off her feet and falling.

Jessie’s team made it to the White House stairs, but quickly came to a halt and gasped: “It’s the President!” Sandy exclaimed.

“ALRIGHT, you little brats, get back in that school or I’ll have all your families deported!” James McGarfield threatened, standing atop the stairs.

“GO AHEAD!” Jinta taunted—the members of Sector JP, KB, and Grenda and Candy of GF charged into the courtyard as well. “You were planning to do that from the beginning!”

“Come on, Sapphire, let’s break his glasses!” Ruby fixed her mech fists and rushed up.

“No, Ruby!”

An invisible force overcame everyone, and many of the children and operatives fainted. Jessie was struggling to stand, but his sister had fallen. “Sandy!”

When Ruby fainted and bumped down the stairs, Sapphire grabbed and flew them away with psychic. “The president uses Conqueror’s Haki. So that’s how he was able to assimilate all those nations.”

“You big jerk!” Jessie attempted to blow bubbles at the president, but Jimmy lit his fist with Armament Haki and dealt an upper-cut, flinging Jessie far across the courtyard.

“JESSIE!” Richard cried, seeing the First Leader fly overhead.

“Nah-nah-nah DOO-DOO!” Susanne mocked, seizing the chance to slide over to swing her foot into the nerd’s face.

“Nobody treats my friends that way!” Spongebob announced before leaping at James. “KARATE CHOP!”
The sponge’s tiny yellow hand dealt no damage against the burly president. “AAAAHH!” James used Armament to throw a punch at the sponge, but squeak, made nary a dent. James was surprised, so he threw an onslaught of Armament punches, though not one injured Spongebob’s squishy body. Spongebob leapt over and wrapped arms around Jimmy’s head, the president shaking in attempt to get rid of him. “Anna, do something!”

“I’m on it!” Jimmy’s wife, Anna Worthington-McGarfield, controlled a huge Bus Walker and grabbed Spongebob off of the president using one of many claws. She tossed Spongebob into the Walker’s hold, then proceeded to collect all of the operatives taken out by the Haki. Sandy Sidney was among them.

In James’ Elementary School, Rupert and the Minish twins rescued Lilac and Berry from their cages. They rode the werekittens as they searched the school for Leon’s shadow and Rupert’s mom, with Mabel and the Punies accompanying. Lilac sniffed around. “I smell something stinky over there!”

“Maybe it’s Mom!” Rupert said hopefully. The kids turned a few more corners and found an auditorium. Emily Phantom and Leon’s shadow were locked in coffins with see-through glass, hanging on the wall above the stage. “Mom!”

“Baskerville!” Leon exclaimed without changing his expression.

“WHO NAMES THEIR SHADOW THAT?” the others chorused.

“Those must be some kinds of spectral containers.” Punio assumed. “If we can break the glass, they could escape.”

“I’ll do it!” Mabel announced. “With my GRAPPLING HOOK!” She blasted the hook up to Baskerville’s coffin, it bounced off the side and hit Emily’s cage. Both coffins fell as the glass broke open. The werecats pounced up onstage as Rupert sent his Magenta Pikmin beside his mother’s ears.

“Baskerville!” Leon cheered with sad delight, embracing his shadow in a hug. “I missed you so much. I had no one to be miserable with.”

“Hang on, Mom, we’ll make you better!” Rupert reassured his grey, shuddering mother. The Music Pikmin were beginning to sing.

“Rupert, didn’t you say you saw our moms?” Berry asked.

“They’re outside, being controlled by some fat kid. You can go out and find them, I need to stay with Mom.”

“We’ll stay to watch him.” Punio promised. The werecats and Mabel hurried out of the auditorium.

You little niños done it now!” Rodrigo Añorga shouted, entering from the stage’s left. “I had a perfectly good flow of Music Chi goin’, then that girl ruined it! At least I still can blow your heads up with Bad Notes!” He used maracas to control the soundwaves in the air, shaking them fiercely as purple Bad Notes with munching mouths spawned.

“Hey, stop thaaaaat!” Leon whined when the Bad Notes began swarming him. “It’s burning my earlobes.” He sunk into a Shadow Veil.

“Oh no you don’t!” Rodrigo searched around. “Where did that kid go?”
Leon came up in the doorway behind him. “Hi.” He said with his gloomy face. “I can use my Shadow Veil to go wherever there’s a shadow. I use it to get away from bullies. So don’t find me.” He Veiled again before Rodrigo could throw soundwaves.

Hoagie III and Wendy Corduroy flew into the auditorium. “Yo ‘Rigo, what’s up?” Wendy asked.

“Help me find that shadow mocoso! He’s one of the students here!”

“We’re on it, man.” The TNDs flew off.

Ashei Winters climbed up the ladder eagerly. Wherever this led, Joey Beatles was hiding, and she would finally take the brat down. “Ah-HA!” She came up out of the hatch- “WHAT THE-?!” She was now standing at the base of a tremendous Jenga tower. “When did he have time to make THIS?!”

“Oh, hello!” Joey waved at her from an upper floor. “You’re just in time to help with my construction project!”

Ashei glared and blew her horn, summoning a team of owls to lift and carry her up to his floor. Joey hurriedly made block staircases to get to higher floors. Ashei sent her owls to peck him while she ran up the block stairs, during which Joey swung Lego swords at the owls and dropped scattered Legos on the stairs to slow Ashei’s progress. “Stop running around!” she demanded after chasing Joey onto the top floor. “There isn’t anywhere to go from here!”

“Actually, I think we can work from up here.” Joey decided. “But I might need a little help. It’s time to caaaaall…!”

“LEGONYX!” A colossal figure fell from the sky: it looked like Sardonyx from Steven Universe, made entirely out of Legos and wielding a giant block hammer.

“WHERE DID SHE COME FROM?!” Ashei freaked.

“Good MORNING, everyone!” she announced like a talk-show host. “This is the LOVELY Legonyx coming to you live from Jenga Tower, Washington, D.C.! I’m visiting from Planet Legola to see a very special friend of mine… oh, there he is! JOEY, baby, how’s my little man?” She happily reached up and took the boy off the tower.

“I’m doing great! And you’re looking beautiful today, Legonyx.”

“Ohhhh, you are so sweet, I wanna eatchu like candy!” She pinched Joey’s cheek with one of her four hands. “But for now, just sit back and relax, Joey, as I show you artistic talent!”

“So you lured me up here just to let your giant monster smash this tower?!” Ashei shouted.

“Hmm… ‘Smash’ is the word one would use to describe what other people might do.” Legonyx replied. “The proper words to describe Yours Truly are:” She performed a graceful leap into the air, “Specific!” and knocked a Jenga block out of the structure to fly across the city, crushing no one. “Intelligent!” Another block. “Accurate!” She kept it up, the tower still didn’t fall. “Faultless! Elegant! Controlled! Surgical! Graceful! And POWERFUL!” To conclude, Legonyx flew high above the tower, spun, and smashed her hammer, taking the entire fortress down. Ashei Winters was among the fallen blocks, dizzy and unconscious.

“But for this occasion, I will settle with smashing.” Legonyx shrugged.

“Bo-bobo Kempo?” Joey Beatles asked the dark-haired boy he met at the park. “What’s that?”
“It’s where you do a bunch of crazy stuff to beat your enemies.”

“How does it work?”

“I dunno. I just think of stuff to happen and it happens.”

“What kind of stuff?”

“Whatever you can think up, I guess.”

“Could I carry a bunch of blocks that way?”

“If you want to…”

Lilac, Berry, and Mabel looked around the battleground from afar. Teen Ninjas, kids, and Jabbies were everywhere, Washington had no sense of order anymore. “Look, there’s my brother!” Mabel pointed to the top of a building, where Dipper was backed up on the edge, approached by two snarling catwomen.

“And there’s our moms!” Berry noticed. “We gotta get up there!”

“Grab onto me, kittens, I’ll grapple hook us up there!” The werecats did so and clasped onto Mabel- “Ow! Not so hard with the claws.”

Dipper Pines looked over the edge with worry, then faced back at the approaching werecats. Chief Fingerpaint was still chanting, and the Pines feared he wouldn’t get done in time. A grappling hook latched onto the edge beside him, and Mabel and the kittens flew up. “WHOOGAA!” She overshot and flew right over the cats and Gideon, landing on the next roof.

“Mom, don’t!” Berry and Lilac pounced off and tackled their parents, trying to bite and tug their ears.

“Don’t eat those boys!” Lilac pleaded.

“GET OFF, you filthy street cats!” Gideon picked the girls up with psychic and began to choke them.

“Aaa-ah!” Lilac choked. “M-M-o-ommy-y-y!”

“Mom! . . .” Berry choked.

Violet and Scarlet felt a spark in their minds. They looked up at their daughters. “Li-lac?…” Violet breathed.

“Berry?…” Scarlet spoke.

“FOCUS, you fools! Get back to killin’ that Pines kid!” Gideon ordered. The werecats shook under Gideon’s enforced grip.

“I am ready!” Chief Fingerpaint announced. “I summon from the Grade School Down Below: Big Taking Bully!”

The spirit of a fat, tan-skinned boy with black hair, a yellow shirt, and black pants appeared. He fixed his glare at Gideon, who looked with fright. “Hey! What’s dat under your shirt?”

“What? What’re you talking about?” said Gideon.
“Dat!” The bully flew down and lifted Gideon by the leg, shaking him.

“Hey! Stop it! Let go o’ me!” Several coins and items fell out of his pockets, along with a psychic-blue necklace from under his shirt.

“Hey, dis looks fun!” Taking Bully smirked. “I dink I’ll give it to him!” He tossed the amulet to Chief Fingerpaint.

“Thank you, Taking Bully. I will dispose of it posthaste.”

“The HELL you will!” Gideon dove at the kindergartener, they both ended up falling over the building, but Fingerpaint used the necklace to make himself float, watching Gideon fall. “WAAAAAH!”

The white-haired boy fell into a trashcan, getting his entire lower half stuck as it fell over. He tried to squirm free, looking up when Dipper and Fingerpaint floated down. “Sorry, Gideon, but your sham is over!” Dipper threw the necklace to the ground and stepped on it. “It’s back to the dumps for you!”

“Noooooooo!” Dipper kicked the can and watched it roll away with Gideon.

In the elementary school, Añorga’s Bad Notes were flying everywhere, desperate to find Leon and snack on him. “’Ey, did you chicos find him, yet?!” Rodrigo yelled at his communicator.

“We’re looking as hard as we can, dude, it’s not easy to find a shadowbender.” Wendy replied. After she hung up, she looked at Leon Sobs under a desk. “Okay, so what do you want us to do?”

“Just tell me where he is and I’ll try to catch him.” Leon said glumly.

“Got it. Hoags, where’s ‘Rigo?” she said to her phone.

“He’s looking in the art studio.” Hoagie responded. “Second floor, 243.”

“Okay.” Leon said before sinking in a Veil. He traveled along the shadows and found the art room, where Rodrigo was looking over the shadows of shelves in the corner. “Hey, I’m over here.” Rodrigo whipped around to find Leon peeping out from the shadow of a stool. He ordered his Bad Notes to attack it, but Leon sank as they mindlessly chewed up the stool. Leon peeped out of shadows of canvases, which had paintings of Mariejoa, the Eye of Providence, and an American Flag with the Earth in place of stars; the Bad Notes chewed up every single one in their failed attempts to catch him.

“’Rigo, I saw him in the science lab!” Hoagie III yelled from down the hall. The Spanish teen rushed out and saw Hoagie beside the science room.

Rodrigo carefully searched under the tables for suspicious shadows. The teen perked when he spotted the upper half of Leon’s head peeping up from a shadow, like a sad frog in water. “Hey!” Rodrigo dove in after when Leon sank, he ended up going in the shadow as well and flying out from underneath some cabinets, smashing the empty glass containers on the table. “Aaahh! Dammit!” He saw Leon under another table, Rodrigo dove in, popped out from under the teacher’s desk and bashed his head, causing the table top to become tilted and drop the teacher’s items on his head. Rodrigo saw him in the shadow of a stool, Rodrigo dove—then got stuck halfway, as he was way too big to fit.

“Gaaah! Ayúdame a cabo, pedazo de mierda!” Rodrigo demanded, his upper half poking out of the shadow of a classroom globe.
“It wasn’t my fault, you were too big for that.” Leon said mopingly. “Oh well, we’ll find some grease or something.”

“Not until my Bad Notes squish you into grease!” Rodrigo shook his maracas, which were still by his lower half with his hands. The Bad Notes flew into the science room, where a body’s lower half was sticking out of the floor. The Bad Notes smiled madly, swarming in to begin chewing Rodrigo’s lower half. “Gaaaah! ¡Fuera de mi culo, estúpido…!”

“Now you’re scaring me.” Leon said. “I’m gonna leave now.” He sank into a desk shadow and was gone, leaving the musicbender stuck.

David Keith raced all the way to an active highway, pedaling expertly around the cars in the opposite direction traffic was coming. Robbie Valentino was behind him, unhesitatingly slicing cars as he chased the Fifth Leader with madness in his eyes. After David changed course onto an exit, the road was clear, and Robbie spun his wheels faster to quickly catch up. David looked back, Robbie was inching closer, the camera view switched between David, then Robbie, David, Robbie, David was panicking, the camera zoomed on Robbie’s psychotic eyes. …David passed a salute and smirk before driving out of the way. HOOOOONK. A gigantic truck was coming.

“AAAAAAAHHH!” Robbie crashed into it face-on, flashing stars populated his vision, his armor and wheels crumbled to pieces as he flew from the impact. He bounced around the highway, getting hit by many cars, before finally flying into a colorful tour bus.

Inside this bus, Robbie looked up at a bunch of preschool children smiling at him. “Well, hi there!” the teacher greeted brightly. “You’re just in time to join our Friendship Tour! Class, let’s greet him with the Friendship Pledge.”

The kids all locked hands and sang, with Robbie in the mix. “If you stub your toe and it hurts you know, Friends are there to heeeelp you! When you trip on your face and your teeth-”

“NOOOOOOoooooo…!” Robbie plopped his hands and face to the back window, crying with despair as the bus toured across the country.

Richard Teague sneezed his snot onto another tree in attempt to swing around and kick Susanne, but the agile teen ducked and kicked upward, sending Richard high. His snot still attached to the tree, Richard was forcibly yanked to it and collided. The nasally boy detached himself and recovered dizzily. He looked over and watched an unconscious Jessie get captured by Anna’s Bus Walker, thrown into the hold. “Pay ATTENTION to me!” Susanne demanded before skiing over to throw a punch, but Richard ducked and ran away from her.

“Sorry, but I can still see the wrinkles in your skin.” Richard mocked. “That sunscreen doesn’t help.”

“Doesn’t HELP, does it? Then maybe if I use THIS!” Susanne whipped out a bottle of Super Screen, dousing herself entirely. The teen was completely soaking in white, so she zoomed after Richard at greater, air-light speed.

Richard smirked, sneezing a larger line of snot ahead of him to latch onto the Bus Walker’s legs, pulling himself to it to make more ground between himself and Susanne. He landed ahead, watching the teen ski at him, but Richard sneezed on the Walker again and propelled himself back overhead, tempting Susanne to slide around the Walker’s legs and chase. The minute the Bus Walker stepped on the trail of slippery lotion, “WAAAAAH!” the structure flew up and crashed on its back. The roof hatch was open, exposing the captured kids who were waking up from their Haki knock-out.
Sapphire flew over and shouted, “Now’s your chance, everyone get out of there!” The kids shook fully awake and hurried out of this strange hold.

Spongebob carried Jessie and Sandy Sidney out as the latter woke up to find her brother with a bloody nose. “What happened to Jessie?!?”

“He’s just knocked out. I’ll have to wake him up!” Spongebob took out the Sleepytime Suds and doused some on his eyes, putting himself to sleep.

Inside the Dream World, Spongebob found the door to Jessie’s dream close by, rushing inside to find the boy dizzy. “Jessie, what’re you doing SLEEPING at a time like this?! We’re in the middle of attacking WASHINGTON!”

“Polokus…” Jessie moaned drearily. “Sandy… Bill…”

“Whaddo ya WANT, Jessie, an inspirational speech?! There’s no time for that, WAKE UP!” He punched his friend in the face.

“SONOFA***!” Jessie shot awake. “Ow! My nose…”

“Jessie!” Sandy hugged her brother. “Thank goodness. Come on, we’ll look for a CleanEx inside the White House.” She held Jessie’s hand as they ran to the building.

Susanne Suave slid far away from her opponent before making a wide turn and coming straight back. Richard Teague sneezed a long string of snot, missing Susanne as he latched to a tree and propelled himself to it. Susanna watched as he flew around the tree, his snot stretched longer as he got in range of her, and successfully caught the teen in his snot. “What?!” Richard then detached himself, the momentum forced Susanne to spin around and around and pull the snot around her like a white sticky mummy. She continuously spun on her exposed, slippery feet, crashing through a pile of sacks of garbage to cover herself, followed by some pots of cacti, then across a family of chickens to cover herself in feathers. To conclude, Susanne bumped against and flew into a drum of lemonade. “EYAAAAAHHH!” Her beautiful gloss skin wouldn’t look the same afterwards.

“If that doesn’t clear up my summer allergies, I dunno what will.” Richard remarked.

Jessie and Sandy made it inside of the White Palace, where Timothy and Hikari were vigorously outsmarting and besting GUN troops. “The president’s office is on the 4th floor!” Timmy pointed. “You can’t miss it, it has a fancy entrance and everything!”

The twins nodded and raced up the many stairs to get there. “Not so fast!” Anna McGarfield burst in through a window on jetpacks. “You kids aren’t going anywhere NEAR my husband!”

“We don’t even want to hurt him, we’re only going to stop Bill!” Jessie reasoned.

“I don’t care! Jimmy’s been a major success ever since Bill started helping and I’m not going to let you ruin that!”

“How the hell can you ***king trust Bill? How do you know he won’t eat Jimmy’s soul after all this?”

“I’ll protect my husband if he tries anything. For now, if Jimmy trusts Bill to help him become World Leader, then I’ll support him all the way.”

“Well then, you’re a waste. Sandy, now!”

“Right!” Sandy jumped back, roped her brother with a lasso, yanked it to make him fly behind, then she hurled Jessie forward and over the woman. Jessie slipped out of the lasso, and when Anna attempted to chase, Sandy roped her with another one. “I’ll join you later, Jessie! This won’t be long.”

Jessie ran across a long hallway that led to brown double doors with an American Eagle crest on the carpet before it. Jessie blew a Bubble Torpedo and burst the doors open to get inside. “Well, look who’s here, Jimmy!” Bill Cipher perked. “It’s Jessie Sidney!”

“Aren’t you supposed to be in the nurse’s office, brat?!” James shouted.

“Please. You don’t punch anywhere hard as Shelly.” Jessie retorted.

“Then maybe this will keep you senseless!” James used Conqueror’s Haki again. Jessie felt the odd force in the air, but withstood it.

“What, you want to play a staring contest?”

“Alright, that’s it!” James climbed over his desk and came at Jessie with Armament, the boy dodging as his fist broke a hole in the floor. James slipped over, grabbed Jessie, and threw him against his shelves. The boy weakly looked up and tried to blow Bubble Bullets, but James grabbed and threw him against a painting of George Washington, which fell off the wall and revealed a safe behind it.

Anna McGarfield took out a ruler and began trying to hit Sandy with it, the girl fastly dodging. “We had a hard-enough time with your parents in elementary school!” Anna panted. “I won’t have the same trouble from you!”

Sandy dodged behind, threw her rope up to catch a chandelier, and pulled it down to smash Anna. The vice-president was unconscious. “We’re not the same as them.”

She heard squeaky footsteps come up the hall as Spongebob finally caught up. “Sorry I’m late! Where’s Jessie?”

“In the president’s office, let’s go there!”

After James was done beating Jessie, he dropped the Bubble Dreamer on the floor and stood over him imposingly. “It’s too late for you, Boy! No matter what you do, Ah’m gonna run this country ’til my term is up! Then I’ll move up to Mariejoa, and become a REAL World Leader!”

“Sorry to rain on your parade!” Spongebob announced, standing in the doorway with a bubble wand ready. “But it’s time for your afternoon nap!” Spongebob blew the pink bubbles against Jimmy’s face.

“Hey! Wh-What the…” The big strong president wobbled front and back, growing sleepy. James fell backward and shook the floor. He was snoring like a hibernating grizzly bear.

“I have to say, kids, I am impressed.” Bill Cipher folded his arms, narrowing his eye in interest. “You made it all this way, I bet you expect to go further. All right, Jessie, let’s finish this once and for all. If it’s a Dream Fight you want, it’s a Dream Fight you’ll get. I’LL BE WAITING FOR YOU. AHH hahahahahaha, AAAH HAHAHA HAHA!” The triangular demon sunk into Jimmy’s head. The president started mumbling and squirming from a nightmare.

Sandy grabbed some tissues from the president’s desk to wipe the blood off of Jessie. “Are you sure you’ll be okay, Jessie? I know only you and Spongebob can beat him, but what if you mess
“Then we’re all ***kin’ dead.” Jessie stated simply. “But I’m not worried at all.” He smiled confidently. “Me and Spongebob can take the both of them. And once I say his Creator’s name, we should have it in the bubble. If not, then at least we have these weaknesses.” He looked at the paper once more.

“Okay then. I’ll protect you from out here until you’re done.”

“I know. Thanks, Sandy.” Jessie nodded. “We’re gonna throw everyone a party after we get back home, and we’ll bake your favorite cake.”

Sandy smiled at the tasty sweet in her mind. “Good luck, Jessie. Good luck, Spongebob.”

“‘Luck’ is my middle name.” The sponge assured. So with one final breath, the two touched Sleepy Suds to their eyes and fell asleep. In a moment, a climactic battle would take place within Jimmy’s very mind.

Told you I couldn’t fit the boss fight. :P I bet the intensity of the battle spread to you guys, too, you must be exhausted. :P Sadly, it isn’t over: next time, the Battle of Jimmy’s Head: Jessie and Spongebob vs. President James and Bill Cipher. The conclusion will impact everyone. Atbash Cipher today.

...
Forty Seven

Chapter Summary

Jessie Sidney and Spongebob battle Bill Cipher and James McGarfield in the dreamscape!

It’s hard not to confuse these two between the Team Rocket agents. X) I mean, I literally didn’t intend to make that coincidence, it just happened!

Chapter 41: Forty Seven

Dream World

The sky of President Jimmy’s dreamscape was entirely an American Flag. Its blue square of white stars were as pretty as the night. The entire ground was a gigantic American Eagle crest. Jessie Sidney and Spongebob Squarepants glared at James McGarfield and Bill Cipher. “Well, well, well.” Bill said his signature catchphrase. “After all of these years, Polokus has returned to get me. You know, back then, old Long Arms was a total bore, but he put up one hell of a fight. Now I have to worry about a pee-pants kid and some overrated sponge?”

“We’re taking this from some nard who looks like Mr. Peanut, but with Doritos?” Jessie retorted.

“Humorous, Jessie, humorous.” Bill’s eye narrowed. “I gotta write that down. I wanna start a comedy club after this. Any final words before we duke it out old school?”

“You’re very confident about yourself, Mr. Cipher.” Jessie folded his arms. “We’ll see how you feel after I say a certain word: your Creator’s name!”

“What?!” Bill’s eye widened. “How can you possibly know that?!”

“What’s he talkin’ about, Bill?” James questioned.

“Uhh, did I say that, hehe, what I meant to say was…” Bill tapped his fingers.

“You know very well what I’m talking about, so I’ll say it.” Jessie stated. “Your Creator’s name is _____. …!” Spongebob looked at him weirdly.

“What? My Creator’s name is WHO now?” Bill inquired.

Jessie shook, “His name is _____. …!”

“Um, Jessie, are you okay?” Spongebob asked.

Jessie fell to his knees and clutched his head. What’s going on?! The name’s on the tip of my tongue. It’s in my mind, but I can’t say it! Why can’t I…

“You’ll have to speak a little louder, Jessie!” Bill exclaimed. “I can’t seem to HEAR YOU.”

Jessie and Sponge flinched at the sight of Bill’s fiery eye, shielding their vision. “Well I guess
you’re all outta options, Jessie!” The demon hovered beside them, circling around. “But because I’m a good sport, I’ll give ya a chance. Go ahead, Bubble me!” He flew to different spots rapidly. “Go ahead! G’mon! Bubble! Bubble! Bubble! BUBBLLLLLE!”

Jessie hurriedly pulled a bubble from his head and threw it at Bill. “Aaaahh!” The triangle was caught. “Oh, no! I’ve been Bubbled! How can this happen?! It makes me so MAD!”

He burst free, and the force blew the Bubble Dreamers away. “AAAAHHH hahahahahahaaaaaa! That came a little too overcooked, Jessebelle! I’m afraid I take my meat medium rare.”

“Enough with these games, Bill!” President Jimmy marched forward. “I’m punching these twerps back to reality and ending this battle!”

“Jessie, watch out!” Spongebob grabbed his friend and jumped away to avoid Jimmy’s punch. “If we get hit too hard, we might wake up!”

“You’re right. It’s now or never to take him down!”

“Bill, would you take a second to explain to me what the deal IS with all this?” James requested.

“This is your dreamscape, Jim-Jars! You can do whatever you set your mind to. And I’m gonna help you out! By overshadowing your body, I can dramatically increase your strength. You and me had quite a while to get used to each other, so it shouldn’t be too painful.”

“Fine, I’ll take it. As long as I can mangle these twerps faster.”

“I like your enthusiasm, buddy. You’re gonna make a great Leader! But for now, merging bodies. Alright, Bubble Dreamers, get ready to see a party trick!” Bill Cipher flew into Jimmy’s body, and the president shook. (Play “The Encounter” from Kingdom Hearts II!)

James McGarfield shone with a golden aura. His shirt and jacket burned off his body, revealing the muscles underneath. The glasses on Jimmy’s face fell and broke, and the president opened his sharp yellow eyes wide – made that way thanks to Bill’s possession. He formed a grin that could terrify a demon. Jessie and Spongebob readied their bubble wands.

**Boss fight: Bill Cipher and James McGarfield**

“Spongebob, you first!” Jessie declared, whipping a long bubble shield in front of himself as Spongebob jumped to and bounced against it. He flew toward Jimmy and spun like a torpedo, only for the president to punch him to the sky with Armament. James lunged at Jessie and swung a punch, Jessie leaped away and blew quick Bubble Bullets that didn’t penetrate James’ defense at all. The president whipped out twin pistols and fired ceaselessly at Jessie, who was quick to raise Bubble Shields in defense, but they were easily punctured as Jessie took scratches to the side. “Come on, brat, can those wimpy little bubbles defeat me?!” James taunted, in unison with Bill’s voice. “This is my dream, so I have the upper hand!”

Still spinning, Spongebob was descending down at Jimmy, this time wearing a pointy metal helmet like that of a missile. The sponge collided with Jimmy’s head and knocked the possessed president dizzy. “Jessie, we’re in the Dream World, remember? We can make anything we want!” Jessie sparked with remembrance, smirking as he molded bubbles together. A katana appeared from the bubbles as Jessie rushed at the president, and McGarfield lit his hands Armament and grabbed the sword. Spongebob created a torpedo gun and blasted Jimmy from the side, knocking him to the
ground, then Jessie leapt in attempt to stab the president, but James leaped backward and dodged.

“We don’t even need to worry about Fatso,” Jessie said, “we just have to get Bill out of his body.”

“No problem!” Spongebob whipped out a jellyfish net with enthusiasm. “Everyone knows that anything that flies is helpless under a jellyfish net.”

“That only works on fairies, stupid!” Bill Cipher’s conscience replied.

“Not in THIS dream! Nnnn-NUU!” Spongebob leapt at the president and swung his net, but Jimmy dodged to the side to fling Spongebob away with an Armament punch. Jessie leapt to slice his sword against Jimmy, but the president grabbed his blade, pushed Jessie off, then tore the sword into two as it dispersed into bubbles. He approached Jessie, who recovered and threw Bubble Bowls, easy for James to jump as he then blasted heat vision at Jessie (thanks to Bill’s influence). Jessie hastily dodged it, then quickly blew a series of slow-coming bubbles around Jimmy’s head. James smirked cockily, but the bubbles instantly popped and smothered him with goop. By the time the president could yank it off, Spongebob surprised him by catching his net over his head.

“And now I activate the Brain Scrubulator!” Spongebob pushed a button, making spinning waxing machines come out of the net’s side and rapidly scrub Jimmy’s head.

“AAAAAAHH!” Bill Cipher spiraled out. Jessie calmed his mind and pulled a Sleep Bubble from his head, throwing it at Bill. “NNN!” The triangle blasted it with an eye laser. “Don’t go thinkin’ you’re hot stuff just because I’m separated from Jimmy. The whole time I was ‘teaching’ your classmates, I was actually stealing their mentality! All of their dreams, fears, and thoughts are mine to use as I please! And I must say that some of them have quite the BIG HEAD!” He grew to five times his size.

“You won’t have such a big head in a moment.” Jessie retorted. “I’ve got a list of your weaknesses ready for use. Weakness Number 1:” He waved his wand, and the bubbles formed cartoon characters inside them: a male gopher with a blue shirt, female with a yellow dress, a penguin with a microphone, and a crocodile. “Cartoons in reality!”

“AAAAH!” Bill panicked. “The cartoons from Out of Jimmy’s Head?!”

“I got the idea when Spongebob got you out of Jimmy’s head.”

“ZING!” Tux the Penguin exclaimed. “That was Jessie Sidney with our opening joke! ‘Course, anything that opens has to close right away, otherwise it spoils. ZING!”

“NOOO!” Bill gripped his wide-eyed head. “His jokes have no body behind them! Please, someone toss me a tomato!”

James McGarfield punched the penguin away with Armament. “Get a grip on yourself, Bill, they’re just crappy characters from a cancelled show! During Cartoon Network’s dark ages, but still!”

“DAAAAARK!” Crocco the Alligator grabbed around Jimmy’s head. “I don’t like the dark! I need my blanky!”

“Golly, Dolly, I need you guys to attack Bill!” Jessie commanded.

“Hmmmm,” Golly stared up at the triangle with his quizzical cartoon face, “Well, it’s like we sing at the Crocco’s Indigestion Experience ride: the only way to beat a giant Dorito is to EAT IT!” He
and Dolly opened their mouths wide and leaped up to begin munching the demon.

“NO! That ride was an atrocity!” Bill cried as parts of his body were chomped off like a chip. “It gave children the impression that alligators have chips in their diet!”

James punched Crocco off of him and growled with anger, unprepared as Jessie and Spongebob leaped over with bubble-made spike boots and stomped him in the face. James flew back and bounced onto his feet, using Armament to punch the spiked soles when Jessie was thrown at him by Spongebob. Said sponge stretched himself forward via his legs and swung a kick with one foot. James ducked the kick, but Jessie rolled inside a bubble ball as he came from behind the president, knocking James forward against Spongebob. When Spongebob fell, the still-outstretched leg flew up into the air, came down, and STOMPED Jimmy with the spiky shoe.

Bill Cipher exploded into blue flames, which all scattered into a team of Bill clones. “AHHHH HAHAHAHAAAA!” The Bills flew around quickly. “What’s wrong, Polokus, more Bills than you could chew? Go on, bite me first, bite me! Ahhh hahahahahaha!” They zipped about faster and blasted energy balls at the Dreamers every second.

“If there’s one thing I learned from Shelly, it’s taking a bunch of shrimps down in one kick!” Jessie created a soccerball from the bubbles and kicked it at one Bill, it bounced around all the others as they all got dizzy. However, the Bill clones continued spinning, so fast they were like helicopter propellers, turning horizontally and spinning close to or above the ground. Jessie hastily ducked or jumped the Bills, spinning in place to surround himself in bubbles. “AAAAHH!” The Bills easily chopped through the bubbles and sliced Jessie’s sides.

“I-say, I-think-this-is-how-you-cut-a-log, but-whaddo-I-know, I’m-just-a-triangle-with-an-eye!”

“PIZZAAAAA!” Crocco the Alligator leapt up to grab one of the Bills in his teeth, swallowing the demon whole. The gator’s indigestion kicked in, his belly increased in size and exploded, hitting each Bill with a glob of digestive acid.

Almost instantly, Golly, Dolly, and Tux were taken out by Jimmy’s Conqueror’s Haki. The Bill clones shook the acid off of them and reformed into a single body. “Ugh, that was revolting! Time to put these cartoons to good use.” His eye glowed and sucked the fallen cartoons inside of him, then the demon flew back into McGarfield. James blew Spongebob off him with a burst of his power, and having absorbed the cartoons, the president could transform his arms into stretchable hammers. The hammers turned Armament as James attempted to smash Jessie between them, but the boy jumped back, and when the hammers collided again, Jessie quickly blew a Bubble Bomb to explode against them.

During Jimmy’s weakened moment, Jessie blew a Bubble Torpedo at the president’s chest, but James leaped over and lit his legs Armament as he flew at Jessie. The first-grader dodged, but Jimmy had sunk partway into the ground as he lit with Bill’s light-blue fire. Blue columns of flame sprouted everywhere around the field. “OUCH-OUCH-OUCH!” Spongebob was burned in the butt, rocketing toward the air. Jessie was evasively dodging the fires as he blew an array of bubbles to the sky. They all exploded, sprinkling around the field and weakening most of the flames. James stomped his foot through the ground before him, sending a crack toward Jessie that the boy dodged. A terrific wall of blue fire erupted and blocked the other side of the field.

“How do ya like the new Presidential Firewall?!” The combination of ‘Bimmy’ exclaimed, stepping through the fire to Jessie’s side. “When I’m through with this, I’m putting these all over the Internet! You aren’t posting on deviantART without MY permission!”

“Don’t worry, Jessie!” Spongebob called from the other side. “There’s gotta be some water
somewhere!” He raced across the dreamscape, shoes squeaking with each fast step.

“He’ll have to beat my Swimming Obamas first!” Bimmy announced. The president grabbed part of the firewall in either hand and lashed flaming whips at Jessie. As the boy dodged, he stuck his wand into his bubble bottle, then stabbed the wand into the ground to make bubbly jetstreams. He created a wall of jetstreams, which dispersed Bimmy’s flame-whips when he tried to slice them. Through the bubbles, Jessie fired a Bubble Torpedo to hit Bimmy’s face and back him against the firewall, but when his back caught fire, the president rolled like Sonic and shot through the bubbles as a flame ball, Jessie barely avoiding.

Spongebob found the President’s Swimming Pool a short distance across the field, where Barack Obama clones were swimming back-and-forth. When Spongebob attempted to suck up the pool using a straw, the Obamas jumped out and threw kicks at him. Spongebob whipped out his karate gloves and sliced a few Obamas into bubbles, but several more surfed out and grabbed Spongebob from all corners. The sponge contracted into his Sponge Ball and slipped away, rolling a few feet before turning back to normal and creating a bubble-made Shock Bowl. He threw the electric bowling ball at the Obamas and destroyed them. With that, Spongebob proceeded to suck up the pool of water.

Jessie spun several bubbly hoops into being and chucked them at Bimmy to further disperse his body flame, only for the president to jump over and collect more from the firewall. Bimmy spun like a rocket and blasted at Jessie, who got scorched while dodging to the side. James smirked devilishly, but then realized his firewall was being destroyed by Spongebob’s outpour of water. During his distraction, Jessie put a Bubble Viking Helmet on his head and rammed Jimmy’s rear, pushing him toward Spongebob as the sea critter caught his head in his jellyfish net. Jimmy’s head was waxed clean again, forcing Bill out. Jessie leapt forward, pulling a Sleep Bubble from his head, and dunked it on Bill like a basketball. The demon felt very excited, so he was able to burst free.

“Boy, am I in a good mood all of a sudden!” Bill said perkily. “I think I wanna call some friends over!” Bill shot lasers that summoned a spider on tap-dance shoes, a clown mailman, and Governor Ratcliffe from Pocahontas. The spider danced its way over to Jessie, who pulled a Sleep Bubble to throw over its head, but the spider shuddered with fright before popping it off. The clown mailman threw packages around Jessie, and jack-in-the-boxes popped out of them and laughed hysterically before exploding. As Jessie tried to shake off the confetti, Ratcliffe seized the chance to leap over and stab him, only for Spongebob to block his sword with a spatula.

“I’m not scared of the mailman, tap-dancing, OR guys with swords!” Sponge declared bravely. “These guys are on me!” He caught Ratcliffe’s sword in one of the spatula’s holes, leapt overhead while pulling the sword up, and forced Ratcliffe to stab himself. The governor faded into bubbles, then Spongebob dodged when the mail-clown blew Bombballoons down to him. Spongebob pulled a Sleep Bubble partway out of his head, then ran around with his arms still stretched, pulling the bubble longer. It was at a perfect length and size to capture the mail-clown, watching the monster fall asleep and float up into the American Flag star sky.

Jimmy’s Armament punches now sent energy balls across the air, aiming to hit Jessie from afar. Jessie created a small cannon that attached to his wrist, which would blast an ice cream ball with each jab of his arm. James countered the ice cream with energy balls, but a chunk of strawberry latched onto his face, followed by vanilla and chocolate over either fist. Jessie looked as Spongebob was shooting Bubble Torpedoes at the tap-dance spider, so the Indian calmly pulled bubble after bubble from his head to throw at the spider’s feet. Each of his legs became sleepy, then Spongebob Bubbled the head as the monster fell asleep and floated up into the stars, albeit partly Bubbled.
The Dreamers screamed and jumped when a giant Bill Cipher blasted a powerful laser through the ground, burning a path around them. “AHHHH hahahahahaha!” The ground inside that area collapsed, and the heroes took the fall through a vortex. Bill’s image expanded before them, and the kids shut their eyes to avoid looking at his gaze. But that brief look forced their eyelids to grow sharp fangs, biting their eyes as they screamed in agony.

“MY EYELIDS!” Spongebob cried. “How can I trust you to protect me from sunlight now?!”

Jessie punched his own eyes to stop the biting, then he dumped some of his bubble bottle over his face. “Huff…” He had limited eyesight back, but it was slowly healing. “Time for Bill Cipher’s next weakness: ironically, it’s jimmies!” He created another turret over his left wrist. He blasted ice cream from the right one at Bill, then shot it with sprinkles from the left one while the cream was still flying.

“AHH!” Bill frantically dodged the cream balls. “Sprinkles ruin everything! They’re so colorful, they make things seem full of love and life!”

“Bill, why does it seem like all of your greatest fears have to do with my name?” Jimmy questioned.

“It’s called being tolerant, Jimbo.” Bill glared at him. “Not that you would know. Because I’ve been teaching you otherwise.” He shot lasers from his hands to hit a few sprinkle-filled balls, but Spongebob flew above Bill Cipher with a bubbly bike and created the Goofy Goober from his bubbles. The peanut chuckled and dumped a bucket full of sprinkles onto the giant Dorito. “Noooo! They’re sticking all over me! They’re ruining my perfect taste!” He frantically tried to scratch them off.

“Weakness Number 3, blueberry!” Jessie switched the dial on his ice cream gun to Blueberry, blasting the fruity blue cream all over the demon.

“STOP! DOOON’T! All of this is too unnatural! It’s such an unpleasant taste!”

Jessie and Spongebob then leaped into the air, stylishly forming propeller-powered bubble surfboards under their feet. They rocketed below Bill, shot upward, and began shoving the demon back up the vortex against his back. Jimmy stepped back to watch the giant triangle fly out into the sky, then Jessie and Spongebob flew above to about-face and ram Bill again, blowing him against the ground to crash onto Jimmy. They watched the flattened triangle help himself up, seeing the president smashed in a big triangle crater. Bill turned to glare angrily at the duo.

“I’ve been going easy on you worms, but I’ve about had it up to HERE! I’ll make you kids never want to sleep AGAIN!” The demon flew into Jimmy’s body again as the president surged with greater power. A fiery blue aura lit around him, and Jimmy’s upper body grew bigger. They couldn’t count how many muscles were on his body, and his arms looked too long to be fair.

“Spongebob, doesn’t this look like a good time to become You-Know-Who?” Jessie inquired.

“My mind must be open, ’cause you read it like a book!”

“What are you two clowns gawkin’ about now?!” the Buffbod Bimmy shouted.

Spongebob stuck his bubble wand into the top of his head, then began a long and large inhale as bubbles flowed from Dream Land’s atmosphere, into his lungs. When he was puffed to a large height, the sponge clamped his mouth shut and trembled, as if he was blowing on the inside. Only his head remained square, as the rest of his body, along with his white shirt, stretched and grew
into muscles. He also put a blue mask over his bubble wand and eyes.

“Have no fear: The Invincibubble is here!” The superhero sponge proclaimed.

“Not THIS cheap excuse for a second movie!” Bimmy growled.

“How’s THIS for cheap?” Spongebob channeled more bubbles in through his wand, sending them into his right arm as he ran at the behemoth for a powerful punch to the chest. Bimmy slid across the ground, but remained standing as Spongebob leapt and channeled the muscle into his legs. James lit his entire upper body with Armament, easily withstanding the twin kicks as he grabbed Spongebob’s legs and whirled him around. He chucked the muscled sponge at Jessie, who managed to bubble up a giant spatula during this conflict. He caught Spongebob just in time, flipping him to the air before whacking him toward Bimmy.

Spongebob collided with and shoved the president slightly, then landed his feet on the ground to continue pushing. James withstood and pushed with his own strength, his auras growing brighter as his muscles grew stronger. The Invincibubble was shoved away, shaking the landscape after falling. “That’s COMPLETELY ridiculous!” Bimmy exclaimed. “This is MY dreamscape, and I control every inch and corner! So with that in mind, let’s bring out the tanks!” Under Jimmy’s will, a squad of tanks poofed out of nowhere and launched bombshells at the sponge.

Spongebob narrowly avoided the explosions while creating Bubble Shields to bounce the bombs back and destroy the tanks. However, warplanes started flying overhead, releasing Mega Footbombs that Spongebob hurriedly captured through Bubbling. “Jessie, grab my net! Try to get Bill out of him!” The Indian nodded and swung a bubble rope to catch Spongebob’s net from his pocket. Jessie molded Bubble Jetpacks on his back and flew across the air, avoiding bombs and explosions as he readied to catch Jimmy’s head. Bill Cipher’s eye opened on Jimmy’s chest, but Jessie was too late to shut his eyes as he appeared in a white dimension, where Bill was floating over his Cipher Wheel.

“I’m Bill Cipher, Jesserella! Master of dreams, keeper of secrets, knower of knowledge! And my knowledge is eons ahead of yours! Every Cipher, from Caesar to Vigenère, I invented all of them and hid my messages all over the universe! It’s unfathomable how much I know over you!”

“Yes, yes, smarty-pants, if you’re older than me, obviously you’re going to ***king know more.” He blew Bubble Torpedoes at the demon, Bill dispersed and reappeared a few feet away, Jessie shot him, he reappeared again, and then a circle of Bills appeared around him.

“It’s not about all the knowledge I have, it’s my ability to accumulate so much of it. My likeness is depicted everywhere, every one-dollar bill feeds me knowledge! Everything people say and do, I don’t miss a beat! I know everything you’re thinking, how you’re so desperate to beat me, you wanna tour the world with Spongebob, or how you think Shelly is the hottest piece of-”

“NNNNNRRRRR!” Jessie forcefully grabbed Sleep Bubbles out of his mind and chucked them at each Bill.

“WOW, am I mad right now! I can’t remember EVER being this mad! In fact, it’s a little too maddening, how mad I am right now.” Jessie was ceaselessly throwing bubbles to catch the Ciphers in multiple. “I’m so mad that, I can’t help it! AAAAAHHH, it burns! Stop it, stop the madness, STOP IT NOOOOW!”

“ERRRRRAAAAAAAHH!” Jessie woke up on the ground, watching the Bimmy colossus grip his head with purest aggravation. “BILL, WHAT’RE YOU DOING?! You’re giving me a headache, Bill! GET, OUT, OF, MEEE!” James punched his own head with Armament, and the spirit flew
out. James shrunk and contrasted to his normal form. “That’s it, NO more possession, Cipher! I don’t need a crummy demon to whoop a kid in MY dream!”

Jessie quickly jumped away when James came for a punch, then Jimmy whipped out an imagined whip to grab Jessie by the legs and swing him back and forth against the ground. He released and flew Jessie into the air, imagined a bazooka, and blasted a net up to the airborne Indian. Spongebob leaped up to be caught in the net instead, and the muscular sponge struggled before ripping the net apart. He crossed arms in defense when the smaller Jimmy came up to throw punches, and the powerful president was able to send Spongebob away. Jimmy raised a needle and performed a terrific leap to the sponge, piercing one of his abs as bubbles leaked out, and Spongebob began to shrink to a normal square.

Jessie blew a storm of Bubble Torpedoes that Bill avoided, but when many were surrounding him, Jessie clapped his hands to make them all pop and stun the demon. Jessie calmed down, pulled a Sleep Bubble from his mind, and threw it at Bill. The demon was successfully captured, but Bill surged with power and burst free, growing bigger. “I don’t just know a lot of things, I am a BODY of mind energy! Every piece of information I collected, for thousands of years, from every single mortal, all of the knowledge I absorbed directly through peoples’ minds, has contributed to my power!”

Bill Cipher absorbed all of the tanks and planes that were around the field. He grew to colossal stature as his eye burned red. “This is how my Creator imagined me! To be the smartest being in the entire cosmos! And no creature in any universe is more imaginative than he is! This is the END of you, Polokus! The end of ALL that you hold dear!”

Jessie blasted torpedoes up to his gigantic eye, but Bill destroyed them all with small lasers. He blasted a massive laser from his eye that exploded the ground before Jessie, flying the boy back and unconscious.

“Jessie, boy… Jessie…”

The child awakened in Polokus’s dreamscape. He turned around as the spirit sat on his pedestal. “Do not let Bill deter you, Jessie. His knowledge is vast… but my Creator created me with wisdom. Her mind and heart cared for all things. She loved all creatures in this universe… so she wanted me to protect them. I will protect them through the Bubble Dreamers. Through you, Jessie.”

“Well, you’re not doing a good ***kin’ job of it, are you?!”

“You must never forget, Jessie. Never forget my Creator’s name. You possess my essence. I was created from Calliope’s mind. You possess Calliope’s power. Jessie… although you cannot speak of the monster who created Bill… Calliope’s existence is all you need to know. Let me fill your mind… with all the love and knowledge that she knew.” He spiraled energy around his hands and let it all flow to Jessie.

“Oh, I forgot.” Bill stared with disbelief at the fallen boy. “You’re just a kid, aren’t you. You’re nothing like the real Polokus. You’re just a hopeless boy dreaming hopeless dreams.”

“You take that BACK!” Bill whipped over to Spongebob. The sponge was weakly limping forward after being stabbed by Jimmy, glaring up at Bill. “Sure, Jessie likes to dream a lot, and he picks up too many bad words from his parents; and from the Krusty Krab dumpster that I show him. But Jessie isn’t Class President for nothin’! That’s because Jessie’s brave, and heroic, and he cares about ALL of his friends!” The world turned dark as a spotlight shone upon him.

“What the heck is goin’ on?!” James exclaimed.
“But the most important thing you need to know about Jessie…” Smoke began to flow in.
(“What’re you doing?” Bill asked.) “Is that he’s…” Spongebob bent over, “He’s…” Even further, “HE’S…” (“What the scallop?!"

“HE’S A GOOFY GOOBER (ROCK)!” (Play “Goofy Goober Rock” from the Spongebob Movie!)

“AAAAHHH!” President McGarfield was blown away by the force. Spongebob whipped out an electric guitar and microphone, singing with all his passion.

“NOOOOO!” Bill Cipher gripped his head in agony. “Rock and roll! ! My greatest weakness of all! How could you possibly…” He looked down at Jessie. Bubbles flowed all around the Indian child, encasing his unconscious body. Jessie floated up into the air, clothed in midnight-blue pajamas with glittering star designs. Polokus’s hat was firm on his head. “It can’t be! Polokus awakens at the power of music?!”

“Didn’t know that?” Jessie smirked. As Spongebob strummed his guitar, a Song Road came and caught Jessie, allowing the boy to surf into the sky and chase Bill Cipher. The demon blasted rounds of energy balls at the Dreamer, Jessie swiftly evaded them and threw bubbles to counter. Jessie whooshed his wand in front of him to mold four torpedoes at once, sending them all to strike Bill’s eye. After Bill’s short blink, Jessie caught up to him, surfing across his giant eye and sending bubble spikes to deal some damage. Jessie created bubbles in the air that formed patties inside them, then surfed by to use a spatula to flip the burning meats at Bill’s eye.

“STOP THAT!” Bill screamed, his eye now red from pain instead of power. “His chops are too righteous!! I could never stand this level of rock and roll! DO SOMETHING, Jimmy!”

James sent his Conqueror’s Haki across the dreamscape, steadily approaching Spongebob in hopes of knocking him out. The president was hit with a sonic wave that blew him back, James ran at Spongebob in attempt to grab him, but Sponge leaped, kicked off Jimmy’s head, then blasted another soundwave at the president. James punched energy spheres from his Armament that Spongebob countered with notes, then he strummed his guitar faster to have a swarm of notes surround Jimmy and flip him on his back.

Jessie sent clones of Golly, Dolly, and Crocco to feast on Bill’s body, which tasted extra pleasant with the inclusion of sprinkles on blueberry ice cream. “Is this really the power of Polokus?!” Bill exclaimed. “The power that exists in all Bubble Dreamers?! But the reason Jessie is… it’s because he’s a Light, isn’t it? The only reason Polokus is lending Jessie his power, is because he’s one of Calliope’s Lights!”

Jessie flew far above Bill and channeled his energy. With a soft and graceful breath, Jessie blew into his wand. A titanic bubble grew forth, grew larger than Bill, and overshadowed the entire field. Bill felt this shadow and turned, gasping with fright. The bubble swallowed him entirely. President Jimmy felt darkness surrounding him as he woke up from his fall. The gigantic bubble was expanding, ready to crush his little body. “AAAAAHHHHH!” (End song.)

The bubble exploded and forced Jimmy into the Waking World. The colossus Bill Cipher made himself into was destroyed. All of the mind power he stole these past few weeks was scattered, returning to their owners. “Ohhhh…” The demon felt groggy as he awakened. He was back to his normal size. “What?” A bubble surrounded him again. He tried to bang its interior, but to no avail. “The Sleep Bubble! I-I can’t get out! This can’t be happening! Getting… sleepy… Want to drink cocoa… and read from textbooks… NOOOOO!”

The monster looked down at Jessie and Spongebob with a promising glare. “You may have won this time, Jessie Sidney, but mark my words, you have NO idea what you’re up against!” Jessie and
Spongebob’s heads tilted more back as they watched the bubble ascend into the sky. “My Creator will return to this world, and he’s more powerful than anyone can possibly imagine! I’m eagerly awaiting his return. And when he does, I’ll be back.” Bill Cipher’s cry echoed beyond the stars. His bubble had long floated away from the dreamscape, to the endless ocean of stars, which in reality were millions of sleeping, Bubbled monsters. “I’LL BE BAAAAAAAAAAACK…!” Bill Cipher then became drowsy. He yawned, folded his arms under his head, and fell asleep.

White House

The president’s office was in shambles. Jessie and President James were tattered on the floor, with Sandy watching over them and Spongebob. “Uuuuuoooh…” The large-bodied president awakened first, wobbling as he stood. He stared at his flabby arms and body, and panicked. “What… Bill? BILL?” The president looked around frantically. “It can’t be! Bill! You little…”

“Ahh!” Jessie had still not recovered as James grabbed him by the neck, lifting him.

“Jessie!” Sandy cried.

“You may be powerful in the Dream World, you little trash-mouth, but in the real world, you’re a piece of filth! I’ll crush you one way or another, and have your family deported! This country is—”

A sudden gust of wind burst in the office, blowing James against his desk while Jessie dropped. The Indian boy was more awake, rolling to his arms and looking up at the assaulter: it was a very tall man in a dark cloak, the right half of his white face covered by a mask. His exposed red eye glared at Jimmy, before looking down at Jessie. “Out of the way, child.”

Still woozy, Jessie got to his feet, and Sandy and Spongebob helped him walk to the door. They didn’t exit, only looked at the back of the stranger’s silver hair as he approached James. “Y… You.” The president panted, getting up. “You’re that Red Eye! The leader of them White Lotus! You picked the wrong house to blow into. I am the 46th President!” He threw his Armament fist at Red Eye, striking the side of his head. Red Eye retaliated by flicking a spell from his wand, knocking James onto the severed desk.

“The story of America’s history always intrigued me.” Red Eye spoke with a deep voice. “A Land of the Free, they say. This country became independent from Great Britain as a means of being free from the king’s tyranny. Sure, America has had its hypocritical faults in the past, but there is one that still stands: such a country cannot become a free land, when its leaders continue to follow the law of the World Government. You are, by far, one of the worst America’s had. But I will restore this country, to what it’s supposed to be.”

“Hu-u-uck-uck…” Red Eye began to whirl his arms. Jessie, Sandy, and Spongebob watched as President Jimmy’s eyes bulged while he choked. A stream of breath flowed out of the man’s lungs, he reached desperately to take it back. Red Eye began to spiral the breath around Jimmy’s head in the form of a sphere, the man flailing helplessly.

“What the fuck are you doing?!” Jessie asked in shock.

“To live is to breathe. To breathe is to have Air. Air is Freedom. To live is to be free. Without freedom, there is no air. There is no… breath. It is time you presidents learned that. It is time for this country to…” Red Eye dispersed the breath with the atmosphere. The kids watched horrified as James fell on his back. The president was dead. With that, Red Eye whipped his magic wand and broke open the safe on the wall—the one that was formerly behind Washington’s painting. He took a rolled-up piece of paper from inside and became wind, breaking out the window behind the desk.
Red Eye flew above the front entrance of the White House, watching the fighting continue. “PEOPLE OF AMERICA!!” Red Eye’s voice echoed. Everybody looked at him. His presence was recorded on the news. Everybody in America was watching. “This is the United States Constitution!” He unrolled the paper. “The Supreme Law of your country, that has long been tampered with by your rulers! Your current ruler, President James McGarfield, is DEAD! Vice-President Anna has met her fate as well! My followers have massacred and destroyed everyone in the Congress! I am Red Eye, Leader of the Revolution, and I hereby introduce a New Order to America. A FREE order! As of this moment… America, and all countries it has conquered, are FREE!!” He used his wand to set fire to the Constitution.

Citizens all over the country went ballistic. Nerds were breaking into game and comic book stores and taking everything they wanted. Criminals were breaking out of prison, policemen and firemen were at war, churches were playing poker with bars, farmers converted their barns into factories, and vice-versa for factory workers, and toilets were no longer flushing. Citizens were breaking into army bases and taking tanks, the airplanes were driving on the ground, trains across the sea, and boats took flight. It was a national catastrophe, the country was in a worse state than it’s ever been, and soon their chaos would spread to the whole world.

Joey, Shelly, Timmy, and Hikari ran into the president’s office; with Gonshiri riding Shelly’s shoulders. “Jessie, what the CRAP happened in here?!” Shelly screamed.

“Some psycho broke in and killed the president!” Jessie yelled. “Right after we took care of Bill Cipher.”

“What are we going to do?!” Sandy exclaimed. “The country’s gonna tear itself apart if we don’t have a president!”

“But all of the Congress members are dead, who’s gonna wanna be president NOW?!” Timmy panicked.

“ Especially in a country where everybody is completely and utterly- . . .” Gonshiri spoke.

Jessie listened to the cries and chaos outside. Everyone in America was crazy. Like a school full of immature children. With this in mind, he looked at President James’ fallen body, his cowboy hat dropped on the floor. …He put on a serious look.

“SIIIILEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEENCE!”

An earsplitting scream stopped everything. The people of America looked at the podium before the White House. A little girl of about 7, with dark-red hair, panted heavily after such a loud scream. With everybody looking at her, Sandy Sidney turned nervous. “U-um… citizens of America, give a round of applause for, um, President of First Grade, Jessie Sidney!” She stepped away when an Indian boy in a white cowboy hat stepped up on the podium. He bore a strict expression as he cleared his throat.

“I want to start off by saying that everyone in this country is completely FUCKING STUPID!” The child’s accented voice was on every news channel on every TV, and every radio. “Just because your president DIED, you’re all acting like you can do whatever the fuck EVER! You’re acting like just because you have no leader, you have no fucking sense of humanity, WHERE THE FUCK IS YOUR SENSE IN THAT?!” Red Eye still hovered in the sky, watching this display with interest. “I am a seven-year-old boy in First Grade, after summer I’m moving on to Second Grade, so the fact that I, a child, am smart enough to point this out to you is the most retarded thing ever! If you all really need a president to tell you how to act like common-sense people, clearly an adult would be the wrong type to have! Maybe you should let CHILDREN run your country. Would that make
“First, I want every policeman in this country to get the fuck AWAY from your donuts and start catching those criminals! If there’s a fire somewhere, firemen need to put it out, none of this silly rivalry with the police! Also, no fucking factories near rural areas, those are annoying, and quit polluting rivers and oceans. And while you’re at it, give every ‘conquered’ country its rights to be their own country back, and make sure every child gets an education in a friendly school—because you adults have everything BUT an education. There, these are easy, SIMPLE laws that even a five-year-old can abide by! If you need a Constitution so bad, I’ll have the Kindergarteners draw one up in crayon, they’ll do a hell of a better job! My fellow Americans, I have made my point: STOP ACTING LIKE IT’S THE END OF THE WORLD!”

Everyone in America was speechless. The whole country was told off... by a first-grader. “...Coughjessieforpresident.” Chief Fingerpaint coughed.

“Coughjessieforpresident.” Another kindergartener coughed.

“Keh, Jessieforpresident.” Richard Teague coughed.

“Oh, great, there’s a flu bug going around.” Leon Sobs moaned.

After witnessing this entire scene, Eva Jackson spoke into the camera, “You heard it live, folks, from the 47th President of the United States: Jessie Sidney!”

Everybody in America cheered to the sky. The Gallagher students were flabbergasted. Red white and blue confetti was thrown up to Jessie’s podium, as well as a variety of gifts, some teddybears, videogames, and a white square-patterned scarf around his neck. The booths were piling with people, adults and kids alike, everyone was throwing Jessie’s name into the boxes. Everyone wore Jessie Badges, artists were making posters of Jessie, and one artist got sued for manipulating a Jessie poster, calling it his own art. People were putting Jessie bumper stickers on their cars, authors were writing novels about Jessie’s life, and the Sidney Monument – a very small, brown tower with a pointy tip – was created.

Shelly, Sandy, and the others stared awestruck. Hikari elbowed them all, and saluted happily. Shelly put on a serious look and saluted, they and all of Jessie’s friends stood beside their president proudly. The 47th President, the first president to be an Indian, and the first president to be a child.

“...You were right, Gonshiri.” Shelly said. “The people of this country are nitwits.”

Mariejoa; God’s Castle

King Andrew and Lucas Stonebuddy watched everything on their TV. “Lord Stonebuddy?”

“Yes, Your Majesty?”

“What the fuck did we just watch?”

“In all my years and expertise of calculating probable outcomes, I’m afraid I cannot provide you a justifiable answer.”

Washington

“One more thing!” Jessie announced, pointing at the banner of Bill Cipher above him. “This country is no longer aligned with the World Government! We are going to be our own country, and that’s final! So everybody in America is hereby ordered to burn EVERY image of a pyramid with an eye! We’ll replace your dollar bills with a different symbol, like...like diamonds! Nothing
Every banner of Bill Cipher was burned, every window pane that looked like him, every one-dollar bill. Diamonds were instead marked on the bill, and everyone felt rich just by holding one. In time, however, crazy conspiracy theorists came up with some whackjob theory about how their world is ruled by the “Diamond Authority,” but everyone passed them off as nutcases and ignored them.

Red Eye chuckled to himself. “Well, this was an unexpected turn of events.” He smiled solemnly at Jessie. “Oh well… I can let this leader slide. No doubt the Government will want him, however. I should protect him.” He flew away.

“Excuse me, Mr. President!” A brown-haired man in a black suit approached Jessie with a perky smile, and a bunch of keys. “I am Carl Keysley, the country’s Key Keeper, and as President, you are entitled to every key to every door in the country!” Jessie was handed the huge ring of keys. He looked confusedly; why would he want so many keys? “They can open anything, money vaults,” Carl held up each respective key, “bedrooms, bakeries, and this one opens the secret passage in your fireplace.”

Jessie’s friends all stared wondrously at that key. They exchanged excited smiles. (Play “The First Mask” from Rayman 2!)

There was a keyhole in President Jimmy’s fireplace. His friends watched with wonder as Jessie stuck the key inside, and a secret hatch opened. They all climbed down a ladder to an underground chamber. They passed a long, wide hallway with ancient brick walls and torches. There was a round table with six chairs, each marked for President Jimmy and a World Leader. One more chair sat atop a short staircase, meant for ‘King Andrew.’ Behind that throne was another secret passage, leading to a tall room with a raised platform.

The path curved up and turned vertical along the pillar’s side. Jessie whirled his wand and tossed a Bubble Bowl up the path, hitting the switch. Different parts on the vertical path flipped and became a winding stairway. Jessie and his friends hurried up. The top of the pillar bore something Jessie and Sandy had seen before: a stone cube with foreign writing. “Hey! That looks like that thing we saw on Candied Island!” Sandy pointed.

“What’s it say?” Shelly asked.

“Doesn’t look like any language I’ve seen.” Gonshiri said.

Jessie slowly approached the cube, staring wide. The monument called to him. He stood inches from the ruin, but could read no part of its text. …The white scarf, which a citizen threw around his neck moments ago, glowed blue. It floated up and into the strange cube. The entire thing glowed, and its light shot into Jessie’s body. The child felt the oddest sensation.

**Jessie awakened himself as the FOURTH LIGHT! Only 3 more to go!**

The foreign text glowed. Jessie read its words out loud to his friends. “‘If you are reading this rock, way to go!! Now you’re all a little bit closer to saving the world! There’s still a couple more, but don’t stop now! Keep fightin’, and stay fired up!! –Natsu Dragneel.’”

“The fuck?!” Sandy exclaimed. (Jessie said the same thing when Sheila read her rock.)

“What in the world is going on here?” Gonshiri questioned.

“Maybe it’s a scavenger hunt!” Spongebob perked up. “Whoever finds the golden coin is the winner! Pssst: last time I played it, I slipped coins in everyone’s pockets.” He whispered slyly.
“Everyone’s a winner!”

“I… have no idea.” Jessie rubbed his forehead. “All I can say is I have a headache.”

“Well, if this is all there is, maybe we should get back upstairs.” Sandy suggested. “We’ve got a whole country to run, after all.”

“Yes… I suppose we should get to that.” So they all left the chamber and returned upstairs. A holographic image of a teenage boy, with strawberry spiky hair, a black vest, and a white scarf, grinned and gave a thumbs-up at the kids. (End song.)

**James’ Elementary School**

All of the students that were under Bill Cipher’s trance were awakened. Their minds were in almost perfect order. “Look, Punio! They’re waking up!” Petuni exclaimed, seeing their eyes open as they moaned like zombies. “Sort of…”

“Then I guess Jessie and Spongebob finally defeated Bill.” The Puni Leader deduced. “Finally. I was getting sick of the Elder talking about him.”

“Ohhhh…” Emily Dickson regained her senses. Rupert beamed, watching his titaness-to-him mother sit up. “What… happened?”

“MOOOOoowoom!” Rupert cheered to the sky, though his tiny voice didn’t travel far. Emily heard his high-pitch squeak and looked down. Her tiny son was waving his arms, alongside an army of colorful ants. …Emily collapsed, needing to catch up on sleep. “Oh, Mom.”

**White House**

“Mr. President!” An aid rushed into the office after Jessie’s friends climbed out of the fireplace. “You have some visitors. They say they’re your parents.”

“Our parents?” Sandy gasped in surprise. “Are they outside?”

“Actually, they’re… right here.” He stepped aside to reveal Samuel and Jessica Sidney. The mother was infuriated.

“JESSIE, what the FUCK do you think you’re DOING?!” Jessica screamed. “We haven’t seen you in DAYS, th-then you’re in Washington, o-on the news, a-a-and *this,*” she gestured at James’ dead body, “a-a-a-and the-, en-d-d-d, mitu-widu??”

“What your mother’s trying to say is,” Sammy said, “this seems to be a huge misunderstanding. You don’t really think you can be U.S. President, do you?”

“But he did just save the country’s children from an evil triangle demon.” Sandy reasoned.

“And calmed everyone down when they started acting like idiots.” Gonshiri followed.

“My mom always talks about how she hates the whole ‘assimilation’ thing.” Timmy mentioned.

“President Jessie, I have finished drawing U.S. Constitution in crayon!” Chief Fingerpaint reported.

“I’m making a bill that states that all allergy medications have to be given to prescribed patients for free!” Richard exclaimed.
“I guess I’ll go help reorganize the military.” Leon moaned.

“You see, Mom and Dad, running a country is easy.” Jessie sat at the broken office desk and propped his feet upon it, tipping his cowboy hat back. “You just have to be nice to everyone and say a bunch of words that’ll get people to like you.”

Sammy and Jessica exchanged very concerned looks. “Well, since no one else is stepping in to be president,” Jessica scratched her head, “and everybody else is okay with it…”

“As long as you keep us around to give you advice.” Sammy stated.

“And you keep up with your schoolwork.” Jessica smiled. “Since Gallagher was transported here anyway, I guess it all works out.”

“We will have to call someone to bring our stuff. As well as, everyone else’s parents’ stuff. … They’re going to send me the bill, aren’t they?” Samuel sighed.

“Eh, we’ll put everyone’s taxes to decent use then.” Shelly said simply. “But how did you two drive here all the way from Virginia so fast?”

“Your mother is very reckless when she gets this way.” Sammy blushed.

“We might need to use those taxes to pay for all the cars I hit.” Jessica said.

**The next day; KND Memorial Cemetery**

Cheren wore a black suit and tie, which he found very itchy. The sky above was gray and cloudy. Hundreds of people were here. “Hey, Cuz.” Anthony greeted, walking past his older cousin/hero. It was the first time Cheren saw him wearing shoes, Michelle too. Even though he’s never been to one, Cheren didn’t like funerals. Everybody looked so bleak.

As he walked around, glimpsing at party guests, a familiar blue-haired girl with red eyes walked up to him, with her white winged kitten beside her. “Hello, Cheren.”

“Wendy?” Cheren said with surprise. “They said you made it back. Where did you end up, anyway?”

“Someplace… weird. But also amazing.” Wendy smiled. “I’ll tell you about it later. Mister Facilier told me what happened, so I felt I should come. I never knew my parents, so I can’t say what losing one is like, but…but I’ve always imagined. So… if you wanted someone to talk to, I don’t know if I could help, but…”

“Hm.” Cheren gave a smile. “I’ll keep that in mind, Wendy. And thanks for your help in Gravity Falls.”

“Heheh.” She blushed. “Um… see you later?”

“Count on it.” He winked, making Wendy blush. Cheren resumed looking at guests. Dipper and Mabel had come with Grunkle Stan, the twins smiling and waving at their leader. Cheren looked to the right, seeing an aquamarine-haired girl through a crowd of people. He eagerly shuffled his way through. “Sugar!”


Cheren stared up at her with shock—for one thing, he had to look up. “W-Wow, you’ve… grown.”
“Hm hm hm! Get used to it.” She smiled cutely, swaying her hip. She seemed to take delight in being many inches taller than him now, with hair in a ponytail. “My growing’s only just begun.”

“Heh heh. Someone will need a pardon from decommissioning. …” Cheren only just remembered. “Oh, right… your father, too.”

Sugar frowned. “Oh… to tell the truth, I can’t feel too upset about it.” She spoke honestly. “I never felt more happy in 12 years. My heart feels…” She smiled and touched her chest, “free. Symphonia is an amazing planet. I’m still glad I decided to come back by the time of your dad’s funeral.”

“I’m glad you’re here too, Sugar. It’s great to see how much you’ve… grown.” The idea was still weird to him. “How long until you’re at normal age?”

“About three years. Apocalypse pending.” She chuckled.

“Hah ha. Yeah.”

Cheren then saw April Goldenweek a short distance to the left, painting a canvas. He approached her. “Hey, April. Can I see?”

“Oh? …Sure. You’re April’s friend.” She spoke without looking at him. “April’s friends are my friends.”

“Well… all my friends are your friends, then.” He grinned. “Which means you now have hundreds of friends. Also, if you wanna join the KND, I’m all ears.” He was about to walk away.

“Cheren?” Mary spoke. Cheren turned to her. “Did you… really love your father?”

“…” He was confused by her question. Regardless, he looked down regretfully. “I didn’t spend as much time with him as I should have. I guess it’s… too late now, right?”

“…” Mary looked down. Cheren expected her to say something back, but she turned away without a word. It made Cheren wonder what her story was. He passed it off for now and kept walking.

All of Sector V and their parents were here, including Mr. York. Sector W7 was sitting on Mocha’s big head. Sector RZ and their parents—Lee Andrew had just encountered Wendy, and they looked happy to see each other for some reason. (Hope Haruka doesn’t get jealous.) Sector L, except Eric, was here, Emily Garley was with Sarah and Gary, Sector IC except for George. He saw Chris and Aurora with their mom, and Chris seemed upset that Maddy wasn’t here. Cheren had to wonder what all these people were doing.

He was approached by a short girl with messy orange hair. “Ci…Cindy?” He recognized his cousin.

“Hello, Cousin Cheren.” Her right eye twitched. “Mom said I should come and cry over Mom’s cousin’s husband. She says that I can’t scare anybody here. Can you tell me how to cry, Cheren?”
Cheren blushed. “I… can’t tell you what to cry about. You have to want to yourself.”

“That’s good. ‘Cause I don’t want to.” Cheren watched her go back to her parents. Aunt Mandy, the Pirate Emperor, was chugging down rum, standing beside her husband, Billy Cortix.

Cheren saw Nebula and Jerome at a table, where a Minish was sitting. When he got closer, he realized it was Minish KND Leader, Lenari. “Nebula? Why are you with Lenari?”

“Numbuh Hundred Acres has officially decided to sign the treaty.” Nebula confirmed. “We plan to do so after the funeral. He thought of attending the funeral as a symbol of our new friendship, or something like that.”

“What made you decide to sign, anyway?”

“The realization that the Minish KND’s been helping humans in secret for too long.” Lenari’s tiny voice stated. “Maybe it’s time we started helping each other for real. If humans can grab and throw Pikmin, maybe Minish can punch and bite like humans. To an extent. Anyway, consider the Minish KND your allies.”

Cheren smiled, albeit not understanding what he means. “Shouldn’t you be with your family?” Jerome questioned.

“Y-Yeah.” On his way to his family, Cheren glanced at Dimentia, who looked solemn as well. Cheren’s father did forgive Dimentia after everything she did, but now that he remembers, Dimentia’s brother had met a fate not long ago. Granted, Dimentio tried to destroy the universe, but no matter the reason, losing a relative wasn’t easy.

He then passed by Jagar King, whose head was down. When he looked up to glance at Cheren, the boy only scowled at him. “I’m sorry.” Jagar said. “After rethinking my actions, I… regret what I did.”

“Then I don’t expect you to do it again. We will find the Twenty Keys, Mr. Pines.” He walked forward-

Jagar grabbed his shoulder. “Cheren, I…I can’t stop any of you from completing this quest. But there’s something else you should know. I can’t actually confirm it, but I think my daughter, MaKayla’s the Gatekeeper. The person who’s meant to open the Time Gate after the Twenty Keys are found.”

“How much of this prophecy do you know?”

“Not much, actually. I know the Twenty Keys have to unlock the door, a Gatekeeper opens it—and a Groundskeeper cleans the passage to the New World. But with this in mind, Cheren, I…I want you to protect MaKayla. And… whatever you do, I really want you all to be careful.”

“…We will.” Cheren nodded. “But, Mr. King… what were you trying to say before? Who’s the demon that’s more powerful than I can imagine?”

“…” Jagar turned away. “I still can’t say it. I don’t know why, but…”

Cheren stared at him weirdly. He bypassed him and walked over to stand by his mother and siblings. Panini and the Drilovskys were close by. Grandfather was hovering beside Cole and Wuaya, who looked less than interested. Mandy, Billy, and Cindy joined close by. The Grim Reaper appeared with his son, Death the Kid, who Cheren knew was the Spirit KND leader. The Reaper put on reading glasses and opened a book. “In loving memory of Nigel Uno. A Kids Next Door
legend, husband, father, and Demon King for three minutes. He saved de world from alien invaders, demons, and helped save de world from mutant fispeople and lunatic gods. Yah. He was a big deal. And because he’s a big deal is why we’ll always remember him. For every mortal, in reality, is immortal in spirit. So Nigel Uno will always be watching his family from de Spirit World above. His next biggest achievement: being the first demon-blood allowed in de Spirit World. Ha ha ha ha!”

Everyone stared blankly at Grim. …The Reaper closed his book and stared back. “We now condemn Nigel Uno to eternity. May Kids Next Door and mortals in general follow his example.”

The coffin slowly lowered into the grave. Once it was in, the hole would be filled with dirt. They watched every grain of gravel. The former KND’s legacy. The Demon Prince, Earth’s Best Operative. His story had come to an end. A new generation was here to fill the shoes. Chris, Aurora, and Cheren Uno would continue the legacy. They would do what Nigel Uno has done before: save the universe, no matter what evils.

King Andrew, his World Leaders, and Morgan Uno watched the funeral from a distant mountain. Andrew’s helmetless head looked down with remorse. One of the greatest operatives Chad ever trained. Andrew would never forget.

**Tree of Beginning, later that day**

Every Minish in the entire KND came to watch this, as well as Team Gallagher. Numbuh Eternal, Nebula, and Numbuh 3621, Cheren had lain the piece of paper on the ground, waiting for Lenari to finish inscribing his, erm, very large signature. Once he was finished, he stepped off, smirking proudly at the larger human leaders. Nebula picked the treaty up, then lifted Lenari on her finger to sit him on his tall throne. “As Supreme Leader of the Galactic Kids Next Door, I, Numbuh Eternal, am happy to welcome the Minish Kids Next Door to the Galactic Kid Council!”

“YAAAAAAAAAAYYYY!” The million screams were very high-pitched at their tiny sizes. Cheren felt his eardrums tingle.

“And to further commemorate this day,” Lenari announced, “we are honored to welcome the return of our ‘fair’ Princess Gonshiri, and long-lost princess, Lánshelly the Second!” He gestured to the bucket-crowned human princess, who bowed, while Gonshiri bowed from her shorter platform next to Lenari’s. “We will celebrate this occasion by welcoming new operatives to our ranks! Please, step up to the throne: Rupert Dickson, Timothy Gilligan, and Hikari Gilligan!”

The humans saw that a tiny strip was clear through the Minish crowds. Three miniature figures were leading an army of Pikmin, and the Gallagher kids knew who these tiny humans were. (I mean, he just announced them.) Princess Shelly picked up and placed Lenari on the ground this time, while Gonshiri jumped down herself. They both approached the humans, with Lenari holding a golden leaf paper, and Gonshiri some cups of green and purple ooze. “Just put your fingers in the green ink and mark your fingerprints on the leaf.” Lenari showed them the gold leaf’s writing, a seal of approval for new Minish operatives. “Then Princess Gonshiri will mark it with the purple ink. You’ll officially be Minish KND operatives.”

“All right!” Rupert happily dipped his index in the ink and stamped his fingerprint. “Come on, guys, don’t leave it hangin’!”

Timmy and Hikari exchanged contemplative glances, as though unsure if they wanted to do this. “Oh sure, why not.” Timmy shrugged. “I mean, we came this far.”

“Yeah! And Jessie looks super cute from down here.” Hikari looked dreamily at the President. She
and Timothy marked their fingerprints.

“Well, Princess?” Lenari cocked a brow.

“Hmmmm.” The princess studied the humans, or rather Rupert, with mock suspicion. “I’m not sure if I want to. As good as their skills with Pikmin are, I feel they’re… lacking something of a true Minish.”

“The worst part of being tiny is looking at Shelly from down here,” Rupert explained simply, “we never realized how ugly she was until now, and every second makes us want to barf.”

“You are hereby approved.” Gonshiri smiled proudly, taking the purple ink and stamping the leaf.

“Numbuh Ounce, Numbuh TG, and Numbuh Kindergarten, WELCOME TO THE MINISH KIDS NEXT DOOR!” Lenari declared. “Whenever us Minish require the aid of humans, let us be assured we can always rely on our new operatives and allies!”

“YAAAAAAAAAAYY!”

“So, uh, Princess…” Rupert spoke sheepishly to Gonshiri. “Since I’m in your KND now, did you have any… plans comin’, or…”

“Oh, don’t even try with me, Loose Tooth.” Gonshiri retorted. “Besides, I do have plans. Don’t I, Lenny?”

“We have catchin’ up to do.” Lenari smiled and took Gonshiri’s hand.

The kids gaped. “Y-You mean you and the princess?…”

“Meetchu at the treetop later?” Lenari told Gonshiri smoothly.

“Don’t be late.” The princess smooched her bodyguard.

“I don’t want no humans kissing my sister, anyway.” Shelly folded her arms.

“No humans’ll wanna kiss you either, ***thead.” Jessie remarked.

“HE CUSSED!!” The Minish squeaked.

“He’s President, he can do that.” Sandy looked adorable.

“HAIL TO THE CHIEF!”

“We have, like, the biggest army right now.” Cheren said with a humored smile.

“I have the biggest army right now.” Nebula smirked, raising a brow.

“Good thing, too. After that crazy business… I doubt the World Government is going to rest.”

“We need to find the Twenty Keys soon.”

“You’re right. We got a few Lights, but I never heard a thing about the Darknesses. …I wonder if Nerehc knows anything.” Cheren said thoughtfully. “I haven’t seen him since we started this quest. I think we’ll schedule a meeting.”

Arctic Base Medical Wing
Everyone that was involved with President Jimmy was captured and arrested, including Gideon and the defeated Teen Ninjas. King Sandy, with his bones still broken, was being cared for in the medical wing. “Mr. Johnson, you have a visitor.” A nurse walked in and said. Sandy glanced over: a Minish woman was standing on the girl’s finger.

Sandy smiled weakly. “Thank you. You can set her on the table.”

The girl allowed the Minish to walk onto the bedside table, then left them alone. “Things didn’t work out, did it?” Lánshelly asked.

“It’s that moment when your two twin daughters beat the crap out of you that makes you realize.” King Sandy said. “I’m not getting younger, and they’re getting older.”

“You’re still 30, liven up.” The queen remarked. “You aren’t still planning to follow Andrew even after this, are you?”

Sandy sighed. “Chances are, Andrew isn’t gonna be happy with any of them, now that Jessie rules America. Since I was dumb enough to let them get away with it…”

Lánshelly leapt over onto Sandy’s bed, approaching his head. “Then this is your chance to be a real good father. Since King Andrew will only get more upset over this, you have to do the responsible thing and protect your daughters. Besides, this is what we always wanted, Sandy.” She smiled. “For our daughters to meet each other. Now they finally have, and they’re so close. We can all be a family again. Just you, me, and Shelly and Gonshiri.”

Sandy smiled down at the tiny woman. “You really missed having someone to scare all your bullies away.” The queen giggled at this. “I’d really love to, Dear, but I’m kind of… tied up at the moment.”

Queen Lánshelly snapped her fingers, summoning a team of Onions into the room. They went unnoticed by the guards. “I’ll sneak you out right under their noses.” The Pikmin landed and carried out several Minish-size jars of Minish Dust. “We’ll continue your treatment inside and take you straight back to Europe. But keep in mind that Shelly will be larger than you.” She smirked. “So she’ll keep you in line if you try anything.”

Sandy gave a defeated, humorous sigh. “At least Gonshiri can protect me. Hmmh… alright, Shelly. Let’s go home.” The Minish Queen grinned, using her bending to wave the green dust over her husband. He was zapped to size and carried inside the Onions by Pikmin.

Mariejoa

The World Leaders’ throne was currently empty. The Octogan was still resting in its golden pyramid. The 8-ball was flashing crazier than ever. The eye was going mad, as if excited. It saw the Fourth Light awaken. Just three more to go, and only 20 days of putting up with these retarded World Leaders! Then he would finally be free, finally! His eye flashed images of all the expectant faces, of Bill Cipher, Dimentio, Xehanort, Zeref, Yellow Diamond, the ‘8’ became a series of letters **O R Q J O L Y H H Q J O L V K**, before displaying a longer image of the shadow of a skull demon, surrounded by emerald flames. The image flashed the shadow of Ragaj Gnik before becoming a normal ‘8.’

Jinta’s theory about the Illuminati had some truth to it. Like, totally true. Well, my friends, we are officially halfway through the Seven Lights Saga. With four Lights collected, we can
move on to the Art Saga, starring the Goldenweek cousins. Don’t get too comfortable, yet. We still have a long way to go!
That Dream Again

Chapter Summary

Mary wakes up from a nightmare of an art gallery. Sheila and April meet a strange girl in Picture City.

Hokay, guys, here begins the first chapter of the second half of Seven Lights, opening with the Art Saga! We’re gonna cool down from all the crazy action that happened last time; there’s plenty of time for crazier action later. A1Z26 Cipher. (Yes, Bill’s still trolling us. ;3)

Chapter 42: That Dream Again

Dark hallway

“Hello?” Mary Goldenweek called to no one. She was all alone in a dark, violet hallway, lined with many odd paintings. “Is anyone here? April?”

She walked forward, echoing the halls with the sound of her shoes against the solid floor. The corridor seemed to go on for infinity. She wondered where the exit was. It just seemed to grow darker and darker. Then, she reached the end. There was a painting hanging on the wall. It depicted a sleeping man, with lavender hair, a dark blue jacket, surrounded by blue roses, and holding one to his chest. “Who…Who’s that?”

“I have no idea.” Mary flinched. She turned around to see Mr. Dark. “I was hoping you did.”

Mary stepped backward, looking at him with fear. “You’re that… weird guy.”

“It took me a while to find your dreamscape.” Mr. Dark looked thoughtfully. “In fact, I couldn’t seem to find any trace of it. I had to persuade Darkrai to let me in during tonight’s round. I wanted to meet you again, Mary, because I want to know… how did you do it? How did your father figure it out?”

“You mean Alvin? My dad?”

Mr. Dark chuckled. “That’s not the one.”

“I don’t know who you’re talking about, then.”

“I’m sure your memory will kick in. Perhaps that gentleman behind you would know.” Mr. Dark pointed at the painting.

Mary stared at the lavender-haired portrait. No matter how long she looked, she couldn’t recognize him. She stared closer. The blue roses were pretty. …She felt a terrible pain in her head. She grabbed her head and shook, feeling agony.

She gasped and started awake in her bed. The guestroom bed she was given in April’s house at Water 7. “Good morning, Mary.” Her cousin greeted her with a smile in the doorway.

“April…”
“Dad made us breakfast. You always liked to sleep in a lot.” She made a light chuckle.

“April… I had that nightmare again.”

“Oh…” April frowned. “The one where you’re in the gallery?”

“Uh-huh. But this time, that weird guy was in it. He’s saying weird stuff.”

April noticed her solemn look. Her cousin had been having this dream a lot. Even before April moved, she had this dream, and it was always on her mind the next morning. “You know, I’ve been having that dream lately, too.” April admitted.

“You have?”

“Well, not as much. Most of the time, I dream I’m in an art city. Hmhm, it’s really fun.” She sported a smile. “Let’s go eat breakfast and go up to the treehouse. No one gets your mind off a bad dream better than W7.”

“Hehe… okay, April.” Mary grinned.

**Hawaií; Tom’s Training Camp**

Anthony and Shelly knelt over the ground and planted their hands to the hardened soil. With their Seismic Sense, they sensed and felt the earth around them. “Got a good grip?” Tom Taylor asked them. “Give me a sand pool, shrimplings.”

“Don’t call me a shrimpling, Redhead.” Shelly retorted.

“I’ve been told you were half-Minish, ‘shrimpling’ is a compliment.”

Shelly grabbed and twisted the ground, molding the black soft earth like a whirlpool that partly morphed into sand. Anthony struggled to twist his ground, then when he made a more forceful twist, he sent a sudden quake to hit Shelly. “Whoa!” She fell over.

“No fighting each other.” Tom stated.

“Her chi keeps gettin’ in the way o’ mine!” Anthony accused.

“That’s not even possible, is it?” Shelly argued.

Gonshiri was sitting a few feet away, reading a book. “According to this, if two same-type benders are bending in the same area, their chi will tend to mix one way or another. Mostly if you’re in a battle.”

“I don’t get why I need to learn sandbending if the Quartzites can do it.” Anthony responded.

“It’s not about whether you actually master it or not, it’s the experience.” Gedra replied, sitting on his own Minish-size pillar, which was three-fourths of Tom’s height. “The Four Families learn from each other to improve their own strengths. The Granites are masters in Seismic Sense, and the Quartzites are masters at breaking big areas of ground at once. (Which requires Seismic Sense.) And the Sovites, not that this guy is a good example, teach you all how to take heat.”

“I don’t get why I need to learn sandbending if the Quartzites can do it.” Anthony responded.

“What about the other family, where’re they in all the fun?” Shelly asked, lying on the ground for rest.

“The Hornfels tell you how to be smart. Unfortunately, we don’t have any clue who the current
family is. But don’t worry, ‘soon as they turn up, we’re puttin’ their kid through this training, too. Now come on, back to work!’ Gedra stomped his pillar into the ground, shaking the earth as all three earthbenders fell on their fronts.

“Hey Gonshiri, you wouldn’t happen to know whatever’s at the bottom of the Beginning Tree, would you?” Shelly inquired.

“They never actually let me down in that area, so I can’t be certain.” The princess replied. “But if the Hornfels ever turn up, perhaps we’ll have our answer.”

Dickson Household

“You told me not to treat him like an ant.” Chad spoke mockingly, folding his hands behind his head as he sat on the couch with an arrogant air. “You told me not to drop him in the woods. And what happened after all of that ‘bad’ treatment? He joined the Kids Next Door.”

“The Minish Kids Next Door.” Emily Dickson corrected, dusting off the ceiling in her ghost form. “Chad, how can you be okay with our ant-size son going on dangerous expeditions? You heard him, he almost got eaten twice.”

“And he told us that excitedly. Emily, this is exactly the kind of training Rupert needs, to fight monsters that are bigger than him, not shirk away in the face of dangers or hardships. If turning small doesn’t force a person to learn all those things, I’m not sure what will.”

“But Chad, didn’t you tell me the whole point of him becoming stronger was to catch up with the other kids? Especially with this Apocalypse thing coming up? Even if he’s the greatest Pikmin Master ever, he’s still sacrificing 36 inches of strength just to do this. He’s more vulnerable than ever.”

“Yeah, but it’s sounding to me like it works. It’s not just about being as strong as the other kids, it’s having a way to protect himself or help other kids out. Besides, he’s learning survivor skills in dangerous environments, physical endurance, he spent a couple days in an arctic tundra, and he’s learnin’ how to fight kids that’re 50 times his size. We might be able to sweep him up in one stroke, but every minute he spends with those Minish is making him stronger, Emily. I know it.”

Distant Spring

“Rupert, Timothy, Hikari,” Sappo began, his arms folded behind his head in relaxation, “it is of the greatest honor to have taught the first three human Minish operatives. You now have full permission to use our secret swimming pools.”

“This one is our absolute favoritest!” Gibli said.

The Minish twins, Timmy, and Hikari enjoyed the soul-soothing warmth of this spring. Minish were roaming everywhere in this region of pools and springs, playing games with Pikmin or simply relaxing. “Hey, where is Rupert?” Timothy asked.

“Up here, guys.” Rupert called from above a cliff. His friends looked up.

The Dickson boy was wearing orange swimtrunks as he lay on his front on the ground. He was near the cliff edge and staring dreamily. “You know what the best part about Small World is?”

Beyond this cliff was a regular-size human hot spring. Slim, tall, and beautiful Japanese girls were giggling and splashing each other, wearing the cutest bikinis Rupert’s ever seen. “Ho, boy.” Sappo rolled his eyes.
“Rupert, you know those girls are twice your age, right?” Timmy asked. “Some of them could even be Teen Ninjas.”

“That doesn’t mean I can’t admire how shiny they are.”

Sappo climbed up onto the cliff and approached Rupert, putting a hand on his shoulder. “Listen, Rupert, I just want you to know, you aren’t alone in this. Hundreds of Minish become curious about humans of the opposite gender, I myself once pondered the texture of their bodies. But the more Minish think about human girls, they draw away from Minish girls. And do ya know what happens then? The girls step on ‘em when the Minish try to go up and talk.”

“But I’m a human.” Rupert reminded. “And didn’t Queen Lánshelly marry a human? That’s why the princess is half-human?”

“She’s the queen, she can get whoever she wants! I’m just sayin’, it’s not a crime to stare at girls, but if there’s a size difference, it can become a bad habit, then you’ll get killed.”

“I guess you’re right. Although I kinda wanna bounce on those—”

“Get down.” Sappo grabbed the boy and pushed him back into the spring with Timmy and Hikari.

“Good thing I don’t like girls, yet.” Timmy mentioned. “And I’m even Japanese.”

“All Rupert really wants to be is someone who gets to see a giant—OW!” Hikari was kicked in the shin by Timmy before she could say more.

“Speaking of the princess, why did Shelly’s dad try to kidnap her, again?” Rupert asked.

“Because she’s a plantbender who can control living and dead plants!” Gibli splashed.

“And that’s a rare thing?”

“Yep.” Sappo replied casually, sipping a green juice from a martini glass. “Apparently, he wanted to use her to find some ‘God Fruit.’ ‘Course, even if the princess could bring it to life, they have no idea where the original fruit was grown. In fact, nobody does!” Sappo smiled proudly. “No one except Lenari and his closest friends.”

“That would be us!” Gibli beamed.

“SSSH!” Sappo clamped her mouth shut.

“Wait, you mean you guys know where it is?” Timothy asked.

Sappo stared with annoyance and removed his hand from Gibli’s mouth. “Fine, we know where it is. But no one else can ever know, especially the princess, otherwise she’ll be more of a target.”

“It’s okay, Sappo!” Gibli spoke positively. “The place it’s hidden is totally chi-blocked for non-Pikmin, and it has a bunch of monsters and traps protecting it!”

“Yeah, but any explorer that was gutsy enough would brave it.” Sappo smirked. “Not just for a lousy dead fruit. You humans probly don’t know the story of Malarko, but the short version is, he’s a Minish who built up an Army of a Thousand Pikmin. And all of their Onions are in the same hiding place.”

“Wait, for real?!!” Rupert spoke excitedly. “The Malarko that started the Minish KND?”
“Wait, you know about him? Man, you really HAVE been training.” Sappo chuckled. “Look, Ruppy, don’t get your hopes up, only members or friends of Malarko’s family can wake up those Pikmin. You’d be exhausting yourself for nothing.”

“I know that, but…” Rupert smiled in deepest thought, “but what if we ended up making a BIGGER army? We already have close to 500 Pikmin, don’t we?”

“Rupert, are we really gonna try and get one thousand Pikmin?” Timmy asked.

“Come on, it isn’t really THAT hard. On average, we make more Pikmin than we lose. I don’t know math, so I don’t know, but, come on, don’t you guys wanna try it?”

“I wonder if Jessie would think my colorful Pikmin army is pretty?” Hikari spoke dreamily. “Do you think he would make me a general?”

“Y’know, I’ve been seeing a lot of you guys with those Brown Pikmin.” Rupert mentioned. “Where can we find those?”

“Usually in marshlands.” Sappo sipped his juice. “Especially in the Zingers’ Hive. ‘Fact, Lenari said we’re running short on Premium Honey, if you guys were desperate enough…”

“Zingers’ Hive? Is that like a beehive or something?”

“You called it.”

Rupert looked down contemplatively. He really didn’t like bees, always stinging him when he went camping, getting his arms and face swollen all over. A sting at this size would make him explode. “Maybe we shouldn’t…”

“There’s the Rupert I know and love.” Timmy sighed in relief.

“It isn’t that bad.” Sappo said. “I mean, bees usually don’t sting anyone that’s smaller than them.”

“If you guys did it, we would tell you where the Pikmin Army is-!”

“GIBLI!” Sappo shut his sister’s mouth again. “Ehhh… all right. If you got outta that place with enough honey, we’ll let you in on the secret.”

Rupert bore a new thoughtful look on his face. Timmy and Hikari noticed it, silently pleading him not to take it. “Okay, we’ll do it!” His friends sank in the steaming tub. (“I-I-I wa-a-ant sixty-y bu-u-u-ucks.” Timmy gurgled.)

“On’nanoko, rukkusu, kōzan ga fuyū shite imasu!”

Rupert’s ears perked at the Japanese girls’ voices. “Right after I try to decipher what that one girl said!” He climbed up the cliff to once again overview the humans’ spring.

**Uno Household**

Cheren and MaKayla gazed longingly at the former’s dresser mirror. “This is really your only way of talking to him?” Kayla asked.

“It’s the most obvious way. But I think we can also get Mr. Facilier to open a portal.” Cheren held his left hand out to lightly tap the glass with his fingernail. It made quiet, brief *ding* sounds with each tap. …The kids gasped: the mirror spun into a vortex. “Oh, I guess he’s home! Let’s go in, Kayla!” They locked hands and jumped up onto the desk, through the portal.
After exiting the sub-dimension, the two carefully stepped off the dresser onto the floor. “Nerehc!” Cheren beamed. His Negative was passed out on his front on the bed, head rolled away from them. His red jacket was off, exposing his black T-shirt.

Nerehc turned his head to look at them with one eye. “I, have had, the worst, week.”

“I had a bad week, too, so one of ours must be better.” Cheren replied as they grinned blushingly. “What’ve you been through?”

“Well, it started when I just wanted to walk over to your world to meet you. So now that we’re finally meeting, please tell me you’ve been making progress with this whole thing.”

“Well, taking Kayla, Sheila, Fybi, and Jessie’s stories into account, we now have four Lights.” Cheren counted up fingers. “What about you guys, Nerehc? Any word on the Thirteen Darknesses?”

“Actually, yes. We found two Darknesses.” The two kids exchanged smiles. “But we had some ‘help.’” Nerehc kicked himself out of bed. “Some bitch possessed my body and got us to work with her. She’s also looking for the Demon Saints.”

“The Demon Saints?” Cheren questioned.

“A title given to powerful and threatening demons.” Kayla confirmed. “I came across the term a few times. Although I don’t think the Demon Kings ever had it.”

“So, what else is going on with you?” asked Nerehc.

“Aside from getting my butt kicked by Aunt Morgan and turning into a Rainbow Monkey, nothing much’s happened.” Cheren informed.

“Speaking of the Demon Kings,” MaKayla mentioned, “I wanted to talk with you about your Demon State, Cheren.”

“That’s out of nowhere.”

“I wanted to bring it up for a while. I know you lose control because of it.”

“How much does your timebending tell you?”

“A hell of a lot.” She smiled proudly. “I clearly have to know a lot of things about you. Having 20 girlfriends gives you a lot to think about, clearly.”

Cheren turned a hot pink. “You better fuckin’-”

“I’m kidding, but it’s written all over your face. Cheren, let me ask you something: how often do you go into Demon State?”

Cheren returned to normal peach color and looked down. “It happens when I’m really angry, or when I’m in danger. Of course, I get really angry when I’m in danger, so that’s… And when I go in Demon State, I can never remember what I did during that, and I still feel really angry after it’s done…”

“Can you name a few times?”

“Well, you probably know that thing with Doflamingo, but I remember back in Termina—why are we even talking about this?!” Cheren shouted all of a sudden. “We completely changed the subject!
Nerehc was saying some person is looking for the Demon Saints!"

“And by extension, the Demon Kings, then by extension, you two.” Kayla reminded. “Cheren, the truth is, I saw an event like this coming back when Clockwork was inside me. I didn’t know when it would happen, but this sounds like it. Cheren, you’re upset and ashamed about your Demon State because you can’t control it. But you need to learn how to control it if you wanna protect it from being stolen.”

“And how am I supposed to learn to control it?”

“Termina.” Nerehc said out of nowhere. “A while ago, these little black alien things told me to take you to Termina. Find something called the ‘Ocarina of Time’?”

Fi leapt out of Cheren’s sword in an excited fashion. “Master Cheren, I could not help but overhear, but I have important information regarding this topic.”

“I’ll scold you for eavesdropping, but let it loose.”

“The Ocarina of Time is a very sacred and important relic that Link possessed in one of his eras. It granted the hero the ability to control time. Its mystic songs could perform miracles, ranging from manipulating times of days or turning back time itself.”

“Holy cow, Link had that??”

“Affirmative. But after the passing of that incarnation, the ocarina was taken by the gods into the Spirit World. I am unsure of the location, but Master, be mindful that this form of Link passed away in Termina Earth.”

“And I have an idea where.” MaKayla said. “Clockwork pointed it out to me when I had this vision about you. It’s an ancient temple that existed in the DunBroch Ruins—”

“DUNBROCH?!” Cheren jumped with joy. “Halright, we can visit Merida while we’re there!”

“Who’s Merida?” Nerehc asked.

“Another girl he thinks about in his sleep-” Cheren stomped MaKayla’s foot, blushing hotly.

“Uh, hehe…” Cheren chuckled. “Not even just her, actually, I can visit Termina Sector V and everything. I wonder if the Apocalypse would affect them, too…” His look turned solemn.

“I’ll go with you guys.” Nerehc stated. “There’s something we need the ocarina for.”

“You can tell us the details on the way.” Cheren appointed. “Let’s see if the Dimension Transportifier in Father’s mansion still works.” With that, the three of them jumped through the mirror back to the Posiverse.

**Sector W7 Treehouse**

“You use the Stylus to move him around.” Apis explained, moving the tip of said Stylus around the bottom DS screen. Link was following its movements.

“Is that a magic wand?” Mary asked, sitting on the couch and watching her. Aeincha was standing on Mary’s blonde hair and combing it.

“Not really.” Apis laughed. “It’s just a technology that they have. I don’t know how it works, I just love going around killing demons.”
“Does that little guy know you’re controlling him?”

“If *Wreck-It Ralph* is true to its word, then maybe. Don’t your parents let you play videogames?”

“Not really. My parents are rich!” Mary grinned. “They buy me classy stuff and make me do ‘fine arts’ stuff. They let me have lots of fun, though! Maybe they would buy me a game if I asked…”

“You’re rich, Mary?” Aeincha asked. “April, doesn’t that make you rich?”

“If our grandpa didn’t favor Uncle Alvin more over my dad, I would be.” April replied, painting a canvas of Mary and Toon Link. The two were staring curiously at each other, noting their strikingly similar appearance. April then got the idea to make Mary Cheren’s long-lost cousin.

Aeincha saw Chimney walk in from the hallways, carrying a bulletin board. “Hey, Chimney, Mary’s parents are rich! If you asked her, she could buy you stuff for your train!”

“Yeah-yeah, I don’t believe it and neither should you.” Chimney set the board on its legs and unrolled it. “ALL EYES UP HERE, on’nanokos!” The six girls and rabbit faced her. “We got an important update regarding our ultimate quest!” Using a stick, she pointed at the pictures on the board. “According to Cheren-san’s info’mation, we now got FOUR of the Seven Lights. Their names are,” she pointed at Sheila’s image at the top, “Sheila-chan from Sector V, Suki-chan from Sector IC, Fybi-chan from Sector W, and Jessie-kun from Gallagher School. The rest of them, we still dunno.” She pointed at three shadows. “But judging by the information, it’s obvious: the Seven Lights are IN THE KND!”

*“Suki and Jessie are not operatives.”* (“Yom-yom.”) The friends except Mary chorused.

“That’s not important! There’s a jillion sectors in the KND, so I got this to narrow it down:” Chimney flipped the page, “Behold, the current Top 10 sectors.”

1. Sector V
2. Sector DR (defected)
3. Sector W
4. Sector IC
5. Sector Q
6. KND Bike Hub
7. Sector L
8. Sector JP
9. Sector KB
10. Sector RZ

“Thus far, some of these sectors has had either a Light or a Firstborn Guardian. Maybe both. We can assume that the other sectors will have one or the other. Even Sector DR had Sugar, Melody-chan will probly be Manaphy’s Guardian, that Garley chick will have Uxie, so let’s pretend she works for Bike Hub. AND WE’RE NUMBER 2 ON THE LIST!” she cheered. “WE TOTALLY HAVE A FIRSTBORN GUARDIAN IN OUR SECTOR!”

“You got a little off track.” Aisa sweatdropped. “None of our parents are Firstborn, so one of us must be a Light.”

“You do make a lot of sense though, Chimney.” Mocha complimented. “I didn’t think you were that smart!”
“Now:” Chimney spoke authoritatively, “which one of you girls is hiding a crazy superpower?!” She ran up to Mary and glared at Aeincha atop her head, “I’m lookin’ at you, Aeinchan.”

The Lilliputian blushed. “It would be pretty cool if I was. But then I would have a big responsibility, so…”

“Mary, I don’t remember,” Aisa spoke up, “did you come to Water 7 by yourself or are your parents in town?”

“I came myself.” Mary smiled. “They wanted to come, but I promised I was a big girl now and I could do it! Besides, Uncle Galdino was waiting at the airport for me.”

“Sounds like an awful long way to travel.” Apis said. (“Oi, what about my thing??” Chimney shouted.) “What do your parents look like, anyway?”

“I have a picture of them!” Mary excitedly reached into her briefcase. “Here you go!”

Mary showed them a photo: it depicted herself, facing the camera and smiling with her parents. Her mother and father both had brown hair; the mother’s was short and in a ponytail. Father had black eyes and Mother had red eyes, and both wore fancy attire. “That’s them, huh?” Aisa said.

“Yes!” Mary beamed. “Father is April’s father’s brother! We’re cousins, but we’re like sisters!”

Apis made a frown. “That’s weird.”

“What?”

“Your parents don’t look a thing like you. I mean, most kids you see have something that resembles their parents, but you don’t look like them at all except for skin color.”

“April doesn’t look like her dad, either.” Aeincha spoke with a bubbly face. “Maybe it’s a family thing!” (“Gyom-gyom!”)

“If you ask me, she was adopted.” Chimney commented. “All annoying kids were adopted.”

“Like you, Chimney?” Mocha asked.

“NO WAY! Kokoro’s mermaid veins run within me!”

“I read an article online that said 57% of orphans have blonde hair.” Apis mentioned. “It also said that 80% of blondes are rich. Coincidence, maybe?”

“Really?” Chimney rubbed her chin. “Well, I need to ask Granny Kokoro if we have a few hundred —YOU’RE MISSING THE POINT!” She shook back to focus. “We just established that one o’ you girls is a Seven Lights. Now which one o’ you is it?!”

“How could we even tell?” April asked, painting a new picture of Chimney with a big brain. “Do we have to wait for a spirit guide to come into our… yaaaaaawn, mind?”

“Maybe I’m a Light.” Apis spoke with a smile. “I am a girl of God, after all.”

“If anyone, it’s Chimney.” Mocha said. “She’s got the most personality of all of us. And she really loves us.”

“Yaaaaaawn, that was my vote, too.” April’s eyes were getting heavy.
“Nnnn? What if I am?” Chimney spoke thoughtfully. “I already got a big responsibility raisin’ YOU girls. And I got the best train in the universe!” Her eyes were sparkly.

“That’s gotta be it, Chimney’s the Light!” Aeincha agreed.

“I guess you can rule me out, since there’s already a Nimbi.” Aisa sighed, upside-down on the couch with her legs against the backrest.

“Yaaaaaawn-”


April rested her paint on a stool and rubbed her eyes. “Sorry, Chimney. I guess I didn’t get much sleep last night. I’m gonna lay down, maybe then I’ll feel more awake.”

“Bleh, you teenagers.” Chimney mocked. “Always wantin’ ta sleep.”

Mary sat up and watched her cousin trek down the hallway slowly. She got up off the couch and fast-walked after her. “April?” The girl in question entered her art gallery-style room, took off her shoes, hat, and cloud-pattern jacket, and climbed into bed. “April, you aren’t sick, are you?”

“No, Mary, I’m just a little drowsy today.” she replied with a smile, feeling both humored and grateful at her cousin’s concern. “I’ll take a short nap, then we’ll play some games.”

April rolled onto her side with one arm beside her. Mary stared at her cousin with worry. She wondered if she would have the same nightmare about the art gallery again, or if that weird guy would be in her dream. “Wake up soon…” she told April before walking back to the living room.

**Hall of Doors**

“I am sleeping way too much for my own health.” Sheila stated as she progressed alongside the river. “Me poor legs are growin’ stiff as a newborn. Man, why’d I get stuck with all this Dream World hoo-ha? Why can’t I go on pirate adventures with me mates like we were already doing? Darn blokes know they need me.”

Sheila stared at the next portal, labeled *Picture City*. It was represented by a bright wall of splattered colors. “Sigh… goin’ without Murfy or Globo’s gonna be boring. I still like havin’ mates to travel with, even if some of them ruin the surprises. Well, I guess I’ve got me a brain to paint up for ol’ Rayman. Blimey, I’m not good at art.” With that, she dove into the portal. (Play “Picture City” from *Rayman*.)

**Stage 50: Picture City**

*Mission: Create a brain for Rayman.*

Sheila was dropped on a giant pink eraser that seemed to be suspended hundreds of meters in the air. A giant pen stuck out from the bottom, and the eraser felt slippery with ink. The sky was wavy with rainbow colors of a tint hue, and the buildings that towered in the distance were designed like pencils, pens, paintbrushes, whatever particular form of art they were made for. To get across this chasm, Sheila had to bounce across a series of blue, sparkly erasers, which were as bouncy as trampolines. Pan Pirates – alien pirates that were riding flying frying pans – appeared out of thin air and chased Sheila from behind. More appeared as she progressed, but she saw a lower eraser and dropped to it, letting the aliens fly over. With that, she could bounce back up and punch Light
Spheres at them from behind.

Sheila bounced in place on the last blue eraser as she faced a garden of giant pencils, whose tips were sharp and deadly. Sheila fired rounds of Light Spheres to wittle the pencils down, so she could safely jump across their round tips. Sheila made it to and took land on a field of canvases, surrounded by puddles of colorful paint. The canvases had a variety of miscellaneous paintings, but Sheila paid them no mind as she maneuvered around the maze of canvases. After she made it out on the other side, Sheila discovered the artist responsible:

April Goldenweek was standing before a canvas and painting a swirly ink road. “Hmmm… I don’t remember painting those cages of pink things.” April observed. “A great addition, however. It implies sadness in fun.”

“Blimey, April!” Sheila perked in surprise. “This is YOUR dream?”

“Chimney?” April turned around. “Oh, Sheila, it’s you. This is a surprise.”

“Yeh, ‘cause you and I are such close pals. April, Ah need you to make me a brain.”

“I already had an order for Chimney, but I’ll make time for you.”

“Not me, some bloke with rabbit ears!”

“Panini?”

“Not HER, some bloke with- sigh…” Sheila face-palmed. “I dunno, just make a brain.”

“I’ll need some special material to make a quality brain. Come with me to the city and I’ll show you.” April resumed painting her swirly ink road. Sheila gaped when the empty chasm before them spawned a real, life-size fortress made of dark ink. “After you?” April inquired.

“YAAAAHHOOOO!” Sheila surfed across the slippery ink, down a steep hill, up a ramp, and she flew high into the air, across the chasm, and onto a straight path leading into the fortress. Sheila drifted leftward and flew up a ramp along the wall, letting some Pan Pirates fly underneath her before landing back on, sliding right, and up another ramp, seeing April Goldenweek slide along a higher road. After Sheila landed, she followed a wildly snaky road, which would then bring her to an outside road with the bottomless chasm on either side. Sheila jumped each Pan Pirate that poofed out of nowhere, swung a Purple Lum over a ledge, then landed on an ink slide that slid down rightward, then curved up with a sudden turn back left.

The world spun above Sheila as she slid around a sidewards spiral of the slide, the same time April was sliding on a parallel segment in the opposite direction. During her dizziness, Sheila was able to spot and punch an Electoon cage, then the two roads met up as she and April locked hands and leaped off of the edge while spinning like a wheel. “Hit the targets, Sheila!” April passed her some yellow paint, she herself used blue paint, hitting the respective same-color targets suspended along their midair path. They set foot on the edge to Picture City, able to claim another Electoon cage that was free from a Colors Trap (a forcefield of color).

The buildings of Picture City looked even taller up close. The sirens of police rang throughout the air, and cars that were shaped like 3-D protractors drove everywhere. Sheila and April stood on a ledge and overlooked a street of speeding cars, so they knew it’d be dangerous to fall down. April indicated the blank white path along the right side of a building, then she showed Sheila a roll of blue painter’s tape on a building that was across the street from the previous. April and Sheila ventured rightward along their current ledge, which had yellow and orange splotches of paint along
the ground. A Hoodstormer (a small Hoodlum with a cannon and propeller) was flying over the end of the path, shooting these splotches onto the ground.

Splatoon Squids surfed along these splotches and tried to knock Sheila and April off their feet. Sheila punched Light Spheres at the squids while April hurriedly dipped white-out over the puddles, until the girls made it to the Hoodstormer. There was a canvas stationed on a platform to the left, which April jumped to to paint a barrier blocking the Hoodstormer. It could no longer shoot at them, but Sheila could send Light Spheres around to attack it. The Hoodlum was destroyed, and it dropped a Swing Suit Power Can. The girls rushed back to the painter’s tape as Sheila punched a grappable fist, allowing her to pull and unravel the tape into a bridge.

April could cross the tape and enter a small room where a window could view the white path along the next building. April painted a platform course on the window, and a real course appeared alongside the building. April held onto Sheila as she swung a Purple Lum with the still-active Swing Suit, landing on the path. Doomtoons dropped down from above and lunged at the girls with big teeth, which Sheila gladly punched. April took interest in how their bodies flew away, leaving only their eyes bouncing around. The girls Wall Jumped between two vertical platforms to reach a higher point. The girls bounced the buttons of some giant pens to cross the street, then they touched a Shrink Fairy over the last pen as Sheila floated herself and April to land on a standable ledge of a windowsill.

The building they were on was black and white in a lot of misc. areas, namely the windows, which had inverted colors. The miniaturized girls crossed the top sills of two windows, then dropped to the bottom sill of the third one as the top sill was flat. Sheila had to punch Light Spheres to determine if the sides of windows were solid, or if the floors were standable. For some windows, they could climb onto the middle strip to the top strip, or jump to the middle of the next window—it became a baffling 2-D maze. The route ended at a window that was sealed on all other ends, but the girls could enter the blank white space inside.

There was a (giant to them) paintbrush dipped into a can of black paint, which April jumped up to grab the end of. The girls were navigating another maze, but with everything completely white, April had to paint the ground and walls with black paint as they progressed. April walked ahead and revealed holes they had to jump and a Wall Jump area in one part. There was an Electoon cage in the up-left direction from a ledge, and April revealed a secret staircase that Sheila could climb to break the cage. The Blank Route was steadily leading downward, and they could see an exit below. April dropped the paintbrush as they entered the tiny hole, and a Shrink Fairy poofed them to normal on the other side.

They were in a sewer area in which the walls and ceiling were wooden with ink splotches, and the river below was pitch-black ink. The flat tops of colorful pencils were rising up and down, and since Sheila had no intention of getting her feet inky, she jumped the pencils when they were risen. They rested on a small, steady eraser platform, where a one-eyed ball was suspended above it, with colors of a Yin-yang symbol. Sheila hit the Yin-yang and caught it when it fell. She noticed a walkway along the wall above the entrance they just came from, so Sheila carried the ball across the bobbing pencils, and once under the path, she released the ball to bounce in place.

Sheila used the Yin-yang as a foothold to jump up onto the walkway, then cross it to a set of parallel walls with an Electoon cage on top. Since they were too far to Wall Jump, Sheila sent a Light Sphere to bounce up between and hit the cage. She turned back—Deathtoons appeared along the path, Sheila jumped the insta-kill creatures hastily. She made it back to April, seeing the Yin-yang respawned above the safe platform, so the two carried it across the next set of pencils. April used it to jump up to a floating platform with a canvas, which she used to paint more pencils across the barren area of ink between them and an eraser course. The duo crossed to the erasers, and saw
the next route crossed over giant pencils that bobbed up-and-down under a short ceiling with giant pushpins.

The girls had to crouch to avoid the pins, but their awkward position made it difficult to jump. April’s hat got stuck to a pin, so she quickly pulled it off before the pencil sank. The girls made it to a floating pencil-sharpener, which carried them up a shaft. They had to dodge left and right to avoid pushpins in either wall, then they could step off at the top. Deathtoons were helicopter-flying over a field of blue Bouncerasers, so the girls took care to maneuver around or under the monsters. They stopped on a safe eraser, which had no other route to follow, only two cups of red and blue paint. “These should help your tail out.” April said as she dipped two brushes in and colored Sheila’s tail with both paints. “Now you’ll be able to fly.”

Sheila rapidly spun her tail propeller and hovered in the air, not feeling the need to come down at all. “Strewth! Ay’ve been really mad since me tail got hurt during that Minish Door jumbo, I can’t actually do much besides glide anymore!”

“Was that the excuse the writers put?”

“Yep.” Sheila grabbed April by the hands and flew them over the sea of ink. “That spinning’s gonna shake the paint off, though, grab some Paintballs on the way.” April cautioned. Sheila flew a little off course when she saw an Electoon cage in the distance. She whirled and punched a large Light Sphere to break it from afar, then grabbed April’s other hand again and quickly redirected toward the sewer tunnel.

She grabbed a Paintball just before her flight wore off. April kept her legs bent as they flew in the tunnel, close to the inky river that threatened to discolor her shoes. Walls of floating trays with needles blocked their path, but Sheila could punch through the spiked Yin-yangs within the gaps to fly through. Sheila kept hitting the Paintballs, narrowly avoiding the falling giant pencils as the tunnel shifted right. They exited into sunlight as the artistic buildings towered over them again. The flight was about to wear off, so Sheila quickly floated them onto a sidewalk on the left.

The roads around here were closed, as there were big splotches of colorful paint around the streets and buildings. “Splatoons.” April informed. “They like to engage in Color Wars and mess up the town.”

“Why, what’re they trying to do?”

“Nothing. They have no real objective at all. Just pointless gang wars.”

The two explored the streets as Splat Squids jumped in and out of their respective colors, either in place or along paths of puddles. Sheila punched and destroyed the squids on their way to a cliffside, which had a white background and made of very intricate black textures. The girls were able to climb textures that looked like combs, while the textures that were big splotches were flat and would cause them to slip and fall. There were hidden numbers blended in with the textures, like 9, 14, 19, 5, and 3. Sheila and April stepped off on a safe foothold and viewed a blank white area of the cliff. Colorful flowers grew on this ledge, and there was a table with black paint and a canvas. April picked up one of the flowers, dipped it in the paint, and began stamping the texture of the petals around the canvas.

Those petal textures appeared along the blankness, and the girls could keep climbing along. There were other numbers and some letters; in order, Sheila saw they were 20, 15, 18, 23, G, 15, 14, 12, 25, B, 1, 18, 5, 16, 21, 18, 5, 12, 25, 8, 21, 13, 1, 14. A Hoodboom was chucking paint bombs at them from his vantage point, and with those areas of texture unusable, the girls had to either maneuver around or climb fast. The duo finally made it onto the Hoodboom’s cliff, and Sheila
seized the chance to punch and destroy the creature. This area had green and yellow paint Splatoon splatters lain around, and appeared to be the rooftop of a building with drums and a short water tower. The Hoodboom dropped a Crazy Shoe, so Sheila and April touched it to shrink down and drive one of their shoes like bumper cars.

When the girls drove over the different paint puddles, the color absorbed into their shoes, and they could push a button to sink into the puddles and maneuver within their dimension. Sheila absorbed enough yellow paint to surf her way up a stairway of tall drums, in which the top parts were yellow, then got inside a water tower to break an Electoon cage inside. Sheila and April then absorbed green paint as they slid down a slope of the color, having to submerge every so often when Hoodmongers stood in their way. At the bottom of the slope, they had to submerge and go up the painted wall, then the girls began their drive over the rooftops.

They absorbed some magenta paint and submerged in the color to drive over the edge and down the building’s side, and from there jump to an eraser platform with same-color paint, then to the next building. They absorbed blue paint next and drove over some midair erasers with pushpins sticking out. Since the pins were covered with paint, they could submerge and swim within the spikes, having to surface and absorb more before the power wore off. They then drove and bounced across Bouncerasers, which bounced them to blue paint on the ceiling, so they could submerge inside and go over the spikes.

They dropped off on a street and drove their Crazy Shoes to a backstreet area. The place was totally drenched in paint: Splatoons were running amuck, children wearing average clothes and glasses. They were mindlessly blasting paint guns, throwing paint bombs, and swinging giant paintbrushes to paint up the place. “Blimey, you weren’t jokin’ about these drunks. How d’ya propose we beat them, April?” Sheila asked.

The girl in question noticed hers and Sheila’s other shoes driving around, covered in neon paint as they changed colors every few seconds. April boosted her shoe and sped up to her crazy one when it was close to a magenta Splatoon. She rammed the shoe and exploded some yellow paint over the Splatoon, causing the kid to tremble and explode. “Like that.”

Sheila drove into an alleyway to find a Splatoon wielding two brushes of blue paint to whip his color across the walls. Sheila bypassed the kid and found her Crazy Sandal was taking cover in the alley corner, and the sandal drove back the opposite way when she appeared. She chased it to the kid, and when her shoe lit magenta, she rammed and exploded the paint on him. April was still in the main square, aiming to take down a green Splatoon with a big paintbrush. She rammed her Crazy Shoe to explode blue paint and destroy her. The last two kids were up on the roofs, so Sheila absorbed some blue paint, while April absorbed yellow paint to surf up those colored walls. A yellow Splatoon was throwing grenades below from his roof, and Sheila needed some expert maneuvering to trick her Crazy Sandal into jumping to his platform. Once it finally did, she surfed over to join it and exploded orange paint on the Splatoon.

April chased her Crazy Shoe across a long orange path, where Splat Squids surfed over from the opposite end. The last, orange Splatoon was there, but now it was time for him to disappear, because after April was there and done, she and Sheila—“Ugh, I can’t get that trailer out of my head!” April huffed with anger. “Just die, you stupid excuse for a multiplayer!”

April hit her shoe, which exploded into blue paint and killed the Splatoon. With the enemies defeated, both girls grew back to normal size. Sheila made sure to hit the Electoon cage while on the roofs, then the girls dropped down and followed the road past this wharf. They were approaching some kind of theater, which was advertising Space Mama’s Fanfare: Starring Ib as the Caged Stage Objective. (End song.)
“Is this where we’re gonna make Rayman’s brain?” Sheila asked as they wandered the dark theater. “Or watch some crummy interpretation of One Piece on Ice?”

“This theater wasn’t supposed to be here. There’s something strange going on and I want to see what’s up.” April replied.

“You’re very in control of your dream, aren’t you?” Sheila said with disbelief. “Aren’t dreams supposed to be more free, not so ‘organized’?”

“If it’s too free, then we have Splatoons. I’ll be free where it matters.”

They stopped before a pair of huge red curtains. “‘Twas THREE eras und 74 weeks ago,” a high opera voice sang throughout the room, the curtains lifting as spotlights appeared, “a most loveliest of woman wanted naught more than to be among the STARS, but alas, was shrouded by the streetlights of the meager.” The scrolling background depicted the moon’s landscape and outer space.

“But soft, what light through yonder alley br-r-r-r-REAKS?” Space Mama floated down from the barracks above, wielding her bazooka. A cage dropped and dangled beside her; it contained a young girl with brown hair, red eyes, a white shirt, red skirt, and black socks with red shoes. “‘Tis no ordinary light: Meester Dark hath holden the Protoon, and dost giveth me new beauty!”

“Wait a sec!” April exclaimed. “You’re that woman we fought on the train!”

“Und yo-o-o-o-ou are that annoyeeng girl, whom doth defend the yellow-haired maiden Mr. Dark so fancies.”

“You mean Chimney, ‘cause she’s one of the Lights?”

“NnnnnOOOOOO! The one that doth wear green!”

“Oh, Mary. Wait,” April shook, “why is your boss after Mary? And; who’s that girl? HEY, are you okay?”

“I’m fine!” The girl in the cage yelled.

“Do not speak!” Space Mama hit the cage and had it reel back up. “I will have my revenge! I will get the secret Meester Dark desires from you, and he will reward me soooo! Eet’s time for your final act!” (Play Space Mama’s Theme from Rayman.)

Boss fight: Space Mama

Sheila and April felt the gravity falter in the theater, and could make slow, terrific leaps into the air. Space Mama gracefully leapt around the room, blasting slow lasers from her bazooka that bounced around the floor and walls. Sheila maneuvered toward the woman, spinning her fist slowly to ready a punch. Space Mama glared and swung her bazooka at the raccoon, which Sheila countered with a kick, then punched Mama in her helmeted head. Space Mama spun around and flew away, gliding above the girls to drop missiles down on them. Thinking fast, April jumped up to the stage and painted blue barriers on the scrolling landscape, protecting herself and Sheila from the descending missiles (even though no 3-D barrier appeared over the field).

Space Mama kept floating so high, they couldn’t reach her, and Sheila’s Light Spheres were too slow to hit her. On April’s cue, the two of them jumped, the former painted a standable line on the
scrolling background, the girls could land on it, and they kept jumping as April painted more. Space Mama tried to move away, but April hurriedly painted a stairway toward her so Sheila could run up and punch her in the helmet. All of them descended to the ground as Space Mama leapt and Ground Pounded, propelling the duo up with her force. She spun below them and sent up more missiles, and still midair, April painted a barrier to block the missiles. Sheila landed and jumped at Mama, who smirked and leaped backward away. The woman flipped with her cannon outstretched, Sheila simply grabbed onto its roof when she came back around, socking Mama in the face again.

Mama kicked away from Sheila and blasted lasers down at April, who was forced to dive away from the stage. Mama spun at a low point around the air to release missiles, and before they could fire, April hurriedly dashed up onstage. She and Sheila ducked, for she could barely draw a low shield in time before the missiles dropped. Space Mama flew up beside the left wall, and when April tried to paint a path up for Sheila, Space Mama flew to the right. April had an idea, so she had Sheila make her way to Mama again, dodging her attacks before the woman leapt back to the left. Then, April painted spikes at Space Mama’s level in the background, so when they scrolled over to her, the woman took several hits.

Angered, Space Mama plummeted down and Ground Pounded, propelling Sheila and April into the air again. She made missiles appear along the left wall, they were easy to block as April’s barrier scrolled their direction. However, some missiles still made it past, they did a U-turn to come at the girls again, so April quickly blocked. In the air, the remaining missiles directed down, April blocked with haste. Space Mama landed on the ground and skipped toward Sheila, leaping above for a Ground Pound, but the raccoon dodged and was propelled into the air. Sheila thought fast and Ground Pounded onto Space Mama, striking her helmet.

“I will not let you ruin my show!” the actress declared. “I will wash away the two of you!” She leaped above the stage, and April ran away before a washing machine could fall and crush her. Mama used the machine as a shield and blasted her bazooka from her point on the stage. Sheila nimbly dodged her blasts and shot a Light Sphere at the washer’s dial, turning it up one notch. They noticed the washer shake faster, so Sheila smirked and dodged closer to her opponent, punching another sphere to turn another notch. Mama began to shoot bouncing lasers across the ground, Sheila quickly hit Light Spheres at them as she rolled closer. “The only thing we’re washing away is your act!” Sheila made it up to the washer and turned it up full blast.

“Nooooo!” Space Mama clutched her washing machine tight as it propelled into the air. “I will not lose! Not so long as Meester Dark is depending on meeeeee!”

“If I were him, I would be thankful not to hear that voice again.” April remarked as she painted some platforms up to the woman. “So annoying.” As Space Mama was swaying in midair on her washer, April jumped to the device and painted an extra notch on it, turning it up higher. The washing machine shook beyond control and propelled to the ceiling. “NOOOOOOOOHAAAAA!”

The washer exploded, the upper barracks came down and brought the background down along with it. The girls felt their bodies heavy with gravity again, and watched as Space Mama fell down helmet-first. The glass smashed against the floor, and Mama was knocked out. The cage containing the imprisoned girl dangled close to them. (End song.)

Sheila punched the cage and let the girl drop on her knees. She went over to help the child stand. “You okay?”

“Yeah.” The red-eyed child looked up and smiled. “Thanks for saving me.”

“Neither is raccoon ears.”

“Ari, I don’t really wanna stay here long.” Sheila told the artist as she approached them. “Can you just promise to make me a brain by the time I get back?”

“I’ll try to make time for it.” April said. “Depends on how long I feel like dreaming. …It was fun hanging out with you, Sheila.”

“You too, mate.” Sheila stretched her arms in a bored fashion. “See ya later.” She and the red-eyed girl approached the portal pedestal behind the fallen background. The two of them performed the silly kick-your-legs dance before Sheila was sucked into the portal.

With that, the girl turned around to face April. “Is that really you, April?”

“Um… yes? Who are you?” April asked with confusion.

“My name is Ib.” The girl smiled. “You sure look a lot different than before.”

“Before?… I don’t understand. Where do I know you from, and why’re you in my dream?”

“I don’t remember how I got here…” Ib frowned and touched her head. “That weird guy with the blue coat appeared and captured me… I heard him talk about April, and then I… I remembered Mary, so I asked him, and he… uuuuoh…” She fell to her knees.

“Ib? What’s wrong?” April asked with concern.

Ib looked up at her with groggy red eyes. “April… do you still remember… the gallery?”

April gave a light gasp. “Gallery? What gallery?”

“The… The one with Guertena…” She was becoming more sick. “April, please… I don’t wanna stay here anymore… Please come… back… Mary… please…”

April stepped back in fear when the dreamscape began to turn dark. Ib’s begging body morphed into reddish-pink, before the dimension inside swallowed April. The pink hallway of paintings zoomed past April as she stood agape, drawing further into the darkness. An empty portrait of yellow roses was coming closer before the world flashed.

April’s Room

April jumped awake. She was back in her art studio room. She sat up and touched her head. “What a weird dream… It’s too weird to even paint a picture of it. Suddenly I’m friends with Sheila… then we’re… hmmm… Guertena… Gallery…” April gasped, her mind sparking with remembrance. “The Guertena Gallery!” She formed a big smile.

In the living room, Apis was looking over Mary’s shoulder as the yellow-haired girl was playing Zelda: Spirit Tracks on the DS. She was controlling the Spirit Train and blasting enemies with the cannons. “Apis, if I’m the little guy in the train, aren’t those monsters people, too?”

“Relax, Mary, they’re just mindless programs, they’re going to respawn no matter how much you kill them.”

Mary frowned with concern. “If you really say so…”

“April-chan, there you are!” Chimney proclaimed after the older girl came back. “We’re tryin’ to figure out what my secret power is. If you ain’t tired anymore, get to helpin’ me tap into my hidden
“Please, Chimney, my eyes hurt.” Mocha moaned, having just endured a series of brutal kicks to her eyes in her battle with Chimney.

“Mochan, if YOU can’t force me to use my hidden superpower, who will??”

“Hey, Mary, guess what!” April began brightly. “I think I finally figured out the answer to our gallery nightmare.”

“You…You did?” Mary asked.

“You’ve been having nightmares, April?” Aisa followed.

“Um, I didn’t mention it to you guys, but… Mary, do you remember the Guertena Art Gallery? The one our parents took us to before I joined KND?”

Mary gasped. “Oh! Yeah, I do remember!” She smiled happily. “That was the last thing we ever did together.”

“So why don’t we revisit memory lane?” April suggested. “In fact, all of you guys can come with us! You can meet Mary’s parents and we can see the gallery that inspired us!”

“Don’t be silly, April!” Chimney shouted. “We don’t got time for crummy art, we’re tryin’ to discover my ultimate and emotionally-tolling destiny!”

“I wouldn’t mind going to a gallery!” Aisa grinned, now lain on the floor with her feet up against the couch. “It’s better than just lying around here and doing nothing.”

“Yeah, um…” April spoke embarrassedly, “about that, Aisa, the Guertena Gallery’s a pretty classy place, and if not that, Mary’s parents certainly are, so you may need to… dress up?”

“WUUUUUUHT?” Aisa totally freaked out.

“And you, too, Mocha.” April was still embarrassed. “They wouldn’t let a giant in and shake up the place.”

“Well, that’s okay.” Mocha complied. “I’ll just eat one of Aisa’s apples, no harm done.”

“For what it’s worth, I like ALL of you guys the same!” Mary beamed.

“April, this is turnin’ into total bull.” Chimney huffed. “Does this mean I gotta shut my mouth the whole time we’re with Mary’s parents?”

“You know, Chimney, your secret power might arise for having your mouth shut for a day.” Aeincha kidded.

“April,” Mary spoke with a concerned look, “I still don’t think we should go. Maybe the reason we keep having nightmares is ‘cause… it’s scary. Some artists like to make scary stuff, don’t they?”

“I don’t remember it being scary, and you weren’t scared, either.” April reasoned. “Also, have you ever heard of the Nightmare Spirit, Darkrai? I read somewhere that his nightmares can foretell someone’s future. …” April was silent for a minute, thinking back on her dream just now. “Whatever- or whoever’s at the Guertena Gallery… it might be something important. Come on, Mary, it’ll be fun!”
“Sigh… okay.” She sighed solemnly.

“Chimney, get the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. prepped.” April commanded, walking away. “I’ll see if Dad wants to come, too.”

“WAT?! I gotta let a stinking adult on my baby, too?”

“Guess I’ll go break in the sandals.” Aisa figured, leaving with April. “I can probably wash them in the ocean.”

“Haa… I don’t get a say in this, do I?” Chimney slumped.

“That’s the emotionally-tolling price, Chimney.” Aeincha shrugged.

North Carolina; 1123 Wilson Way

Sunni Chariton calmly walked up the street under the partly-cloudy sky. She was about to pass the tall, black fence protecting the giant, orange and brown-roofed building behind it. A black flag with the signature blue “F” flapped on top. Sunni looked at the note that read the address her father gave her.

“Hey, uuuummm… Dad?” Sunni spoke, balancing on her heels like a sheepish little girl. “I know I’m not tryin’ to be like Mom and all, but I just wanna know, how does she make Imaginary Friends like she does? ‘Cause like, if I could do that too, it would like, help I guess? But like, isn’t making Imaginary Friends super hard?”

“Heh heh, unless you’re Morgan.” Rainier chuckled. “To tell the truth, your mom wasn’t good at making anything that didn’t come from dreams.”

“So I just gotta dream a lot?”

“I wouldn’t, that’s bad for your legs. But listen, I’ll tell you about the house your mom liked to come to.” He wrote something down on a piece of paper and gave it to Sunni. “If you want a few Imaginary Friends, this is the place for you.”

If this house didn’t stand out, Sunni didn’t know what did. She passed through the front gates and approached the purplish-red double-doors. However, it seemed that two Anti Guys (dark-gray Shy Guys) were guarding the entrance, yelling at Sunni with sing-song voices, “No no, dear! No one’s allowed! :heart: You don’t wanna mess with us!”

Sunni stared disbeliefed. “Get out of my way.”

“No no! You can’t go in! :heart: Our Lady’s in, and she-”

“It’s okay, guys, she can come in.” A British voice yelled from inside.

The Anti Guys perked with surprise, then shrugged. They pushed open the doors together to let Sunni inside. “You know, except for the blue aura, your psychic really is similar to Mika’s.” The woman in the white labcoat commented.

Sunni gasped. The woman turned around as her emerald eyes stared at Sunni from behind her blue glasses. “Aunt Morgan?”
To be honest, I really wanted Picture City to be the 50th stage. XD Anyway, plenty of stuff I want to happen this saga, I’m not actually sure when we’ll get to the Guertena Gallery. Next time, we’ll have some Sunni progression, we haven’t really gotten much of-

“Reality’s still an illusion,” Bill Cipher shouted, “none of you are real, all humans and all creatures are just tiny fragments-”

Bill, go back to sleep. Funny thing about Rupert’s story, I originally had planned that he kept the Pikmin business a secret from his parents, then Chad finds out and-

“Remember to watch Spongebob, that’s always been one of my hits!”

Okay, I gotta settle this guy down. See you next time, peoples.

“Later, jackasses!”
Chapter B-22: The Gear Heart

Iceland; Climbers Household

After escaping Azkaban, Team Facilier took refuge in Sonny and Donna’s house on Oil Ice Mountain. It was a pretty log cabin with hunting gear and meat that their parents collect from their travels. The living room had a stuffed polar bear with purple shorts and sunglasses. It creeped Wendy out.

The blue-haired mage-in-training awoke on her small, but cozy guestroom bed. Carla was asleep at the foot of the bed, and looked more peaceful and cozy than Wendy did. Carla’s wing had a bandage wrapped around the hole. Wendy smiled, remembering how everyone saved her. She was so grateful, and felt bad that Carla was injured.

“Carla.” She reached over and shook the kitten. “It’s morning. Wakey wakey.”

“Mmmmm…” Carla’s slanted brown eyes peeped open. The blurry image before her morphed into the clear form of her young master. “Is it time for food?…”

“Are you hungry, Carla?” Wendy grinned.

“Well, cats usually ask for food in the morning… and I feel more like an average cat.” She flexed her wing lightly.

“Don’t be silly. You’re smarter than the average cat!”

“Hm hm hm! Then I should make use of my intelligence and steal a family’s picnic basket.”

“Or make a bunch of equations that could catch an ostrich!”

“Hm hm, perhaps!” Carla hopped off the bed as Wendy got up. The kitten brushed against her legs and purred. “Good morning, Master.”

“Since when do you call me ‘Master’?”

“Oh, you’d be surprised how a pet’s behavior changes when her master is gone for so long.”

Wendy picked Carla up and faced her. “I don’t wanna be your master. I wanna be your friend!”

“…” Carla returned the gesture with a soft smile. “Thank goodness, because it’s a real shame when the brains is not the master.”
“Exactly! …W-WAIT!” Wendy flushed.

“Hyou walked right into that one!” Carla laughed.

When the two entered the living room—“Wendy Carla, Cendy Warla!” Sonny and Donna bounced out to greet them. They wore a green and yellow sweater, black pants, and socks.

“Hello, you two.” Carla smiled.

“Look! We don’t have white hair anymore!” Sonny beamed.

“We’re not becoming sad old people!” Donna followed.

“And we’re not dying to save a fish’s life!”

“We had to put them by the fireplace until they warmed up.” Their father, Popo said. He was a handsome, robust man with similar clothes to the twins, but a blue sweater. “They were in some kind of Ice Fury. I’ve never seen it before.”

“If we didn’t warm them, they would’ve turned into kidsicles!” Nana cheered. The mother had long brown hair and wore a pink sweater.

“THEY TASTE LIKE YOUTH!” The four Climbers jumped.

“…The parents look like they’re twins.” Wendy whispered, staring awkwardly.

“Indeed.” said Carla.

“OH, FLOOP!” An explosion came from the kitchen. The six people looked in to see Fegan Floop covered in soot. “Eh… I tried making a cooking robot out of some firewood I found outside. In retrospect, it might’ve… misunderstood its programming.”

“Having strangers in our house is fun!” Popo and Nana sang.

“That reminds me, Mr. Facilier is waiting for you downstairs.” Nana said. “Don’t keep him waiting!”

Wendy, Carla, and the twins walked down to the basement. It was pitch-black, but a faint light revealed the doctor’s silhouette on the other side. “Young mages and magic enthusiasts: Dr. Facilier presents the relocation of the Voodoo Emporium: VOILA!” Lights flashed on, revealing the boxes and assortments of magical items on shelves.

“Wooooow!” Wendy gaped in awe. “It looks just like the old one!”

“It is! After we escaped Azkaban, I got in contact with my Friends on the Other Side. They slurped up every last artifact and moved it all here before them Aurors ever had a chance to notice! From now on, business will take place here. You see that door?” Facilier pointed on their right. “It’s connected to the door to the old shop in Cleveland! When people knock on it, namely my old customers, I’ll be able to see and let ’em on in!”

“That’s amazing! I’m glad your customers can still come to see you.”

“But the Government can just as easily find us again.” Carla said. “Won’t it be safer to close down shop?”

“Girl, we can’t close this down!” Facilier flapped his arms, emphasizing his logic. “Magic ain’t
just some product, it’s a living thing, it needs life and love! People need to explore the wonder of magic, especially them everyday folk who doubt it exists!”

“He’s right, Carla.” Wendy smiled, doing a twirl. “Magic is all so wonderful! You can do anything you want and possibilities are endless!”

“And what’s more, due to that chaos up in Washington, the Government’s all sorts of disorganized!” Facilier grinned.

“Oh, yeah. I’m glad we got to go to Mr. Uno’s funeral. I enjoyed it. …!” Wendy flushed when she retraced her words. “I MEAN, I didn’t enjoy it, I hated it! -! I MEAN, I’m upset that Cheren’s father is dead, but I’m glad that… um…” She looked away, cheeks still red, “It feels like we’re friends now.”

“When people share emotions, it brings them closer together. You’d be surprised how strong sadness is in that regard.”

Wendy perked up. “I just remembered! When I was sucked into that portal, I landed in a different universe. There was a place called Fairy Tail—it had Chelia, and Romeo, a-and Carla; there was a cat person like you, and there was-”

“Wait wait wait, one at a time, Child!” Carla shouted.

“Mr. Facilier, where’d the stretchy lady go??” Donna interrupted.

“Who, Madame Rouge? You can’t expect her to stay in one place too long. She needs to stretch her limbs and fly – or trot, depending what animal she changes into.”

“Excuse me, I think Wendy was going to tell us a story.” Carla reminded.

“I know that,” argued Donna, “that’s why I’m sad that Stretchy Lady has to miss it!”

“And I want popcorn!” Sonny pouted.

“Actually, before I do,” Wendy began, “…I was wondering if I could use the Floo thing to go to Lee’s house. I talked to him at the funeral and promised we would meet up…”

“Wendy, I really think you should just lay low here.” said Carla. “In spite of what the doctor says, the Government may be trying even harder to find you. I don’t mind getting in trouble, but anybody else could be endangered-…” Her words were making Wendy upset, Carla noticed. “Um… On second thought… perhaps you shouldn’t keep him waiting. You deserve as many friends as you want.”

“Aye.” Harvey nodded. “Plus, if she’s going to a KND sector, the Gov’ will have to deal with the KND. I don’t think they want that right now. So of course y’all can go to Lee’s house!”

“Thank you.” Wendy bowed her head. “Ahem… So, my story… I got separated from Kayla and landed in a forest…”

The sky somewhere

On a chilly, starry night, the Marzipan Pirates decided to rest on a small Island Cloud. They slept next to their parked plane and listened to the peaceful music of the Mariachi Owls, whom were drifting on a different cloud. “Welcome, faithful viewers, to another chapter of Augustus’s Candied Adventure.” The band leader said. “Here, our intrepid explorers are weary from traveling through
time, clashing with enemy pirates, and having nothing to eat but candy. They have come here to rest for the unbearable trials ahead.”

*Ohhhhh the Stone Fist Augustus*

*And his four young crewmen*

*They got in a fuss with*

*Some demonic women…*

“How long are they gonna follow us…” Rallo moaned in aggravation.

“They’re just sad because someone they know died.” Augustus said. “Even though they foreshadowed his death, like, 20 years ago.”

*And we know how Augustus*

*Does with the ladies*

*He certainly likes them*

*With skirts and braidies*

His eyes widened. “Um… What is this song about, exactly?”

*When he’s not hunting candy*

*They’re always on his mind*

*From nearly the PM*

*To the AM of nine*

Stewie, Rallo, and Maggie crawled away from the captain, looking creeped out.

*These notes are believable*

*Just take it from meeee*

*We-put-cameras-in-his-room-on-Whole-Cake*

*Just so we can see*

“GYAAAH!” Augustus snatched one of Stewie’s weapons, shot the cloud the owls were on, and watched them plummet to the sea. “Sigh…” The captain lay back down.

Nel crawled up on Augustus’s chest and stretched her arms in a hugging position as she slept. “Pterodactyl song make Aughsucks attractive.”

“Ugh…”

“Why haven’t we gone to Kamabaka, yet?” Stewie asked. “It was right there.”

“Because Mandy’s ship was sailing around it, Dummy. Like they waiting for us. But it’s gone now, so maybe they gave up. First thing in the morning, we’ll fly there and look for the Gear Heart.”
Captain Mandy returned to her cabin with a half-drunk bottle of rum in one hand. “Did we enjoy ourselves?” said Lord Licorice with a wry smile, sitting on Mandy’s throne.

“Didn’t I tell you you can’t be in here without my permission?”

“Somebody had to.” The Candy Lord stood up. “Still think His Majesty rules with bias intent? He was quite fond of Mr. Uno, too. Imagine the pain he felt in executing him. I wish we hadn’t have left Kamabaka just so you could attend his funeral.”

“I had to.” Mandy sat herself on the throne. “I owe Rachel that much, at least.”

“Balderdash! You helped her slay a powerful Demon King when you were children, what more can she want from you? I, on the other hand, have a job to complete. I can easily persuade His Majesty to have the Fairy Princess captured, no matter where she may be… but I can use the same powers of authority to have you assassinated by the Cipher Pols. So, Captain Mandy, we had better get back to hunting those Lost Candies ASAP! Since the job involves taking revenge on Captain Augustus, you can’t possibly want to refuse.”

Mandy glared at the lord. “Why are you so fixated on these lame candies, anyway? What do you, the King of the World’s dog, have to gain from expending all your time and energy trying to find them?”

“The King’s orders are absolute! That is all I will tell you. I will send word to the other pirate crews to secure the locations of the other Lost Candies. We are to make sail to Kamabaka again soon. On your command, ‘Captain.’” Licorice exited the cabin.

“Hmm… Understood.” Mandy stood up and moved her throne aside. She opened a secret hatch on the wall and pulled out a dusty book with cobwebs dangling from it. *Fairy Sisters: Sugar Fairies.*

“After all… it’s not like the Lost Candies peak my interests as well.”

**Kamabaka Kingdom, the next day**

Like Augustus promised, he flew his crew to Kamabaka when morning hit. The island’s most notable features were towering cliffs that were shaped like hearts at the top, composed of red and pink trees. There was a treehouse on top of the biggest mountain, the base of Sector KB.

The *Ace Flyer* landed at the base of a path going up through a forest, and would lead up the mountains. “Sorry the wait was so long, but here we are: the island with the weird name.” Augustus announced with little enthusiasm. “The bushes in this forest are lush with natural-growing heart candy, and at the top of this mountain lies the Gear Heart. We may just be able to find it without setting into town whatsoever.”

“I smell a homophobe.” Rallo remarked.

“Yeah, right.” Augustus opened a new lollipop. “I don’t care if we do or not. It’s just hard to find any ladies that’ll smooch me.” He smirked before starting the lolli.

“Aughsucks want female to mate with?” Nel smiled.

“Still too young, Nel. And at the same time way too old. O-kay, pre-stage banter done, on-stage banter starts now.” (Play “Deep Woods” from *Sonic and the Black Knight!* )
Stage B-18: Lovely Hill

Mission: Find the Gear Heart!

Boko Babas grew out of the ground, likely planted there by the Boogey Pirates. Augustus sliced them with little struggle using his new Lemon Candycane Cutlass. They came to a gorge where they would have to swing vines to the opposite ledge, and said vines had small red hearts on their ends. They were too far apart, and when Augustus threw his Gobstopper at the closest one, it wouldn’t even budge. “Hmm… I remember reading about this place in a book. Everything in this forest only reacts to love.”

“Wellp, I guess it was now or never.” Stewie said. “Come here, Rallo.”

“NOT LIKE THAT!” August shouted. “We have to use certain Heart Candies to make things react!”

“Oh! Well, of course I was only just kidding… of course.” Stewie blushed.

“I wanna file a restraining order when we get back.” Rallo said.

They jumped down into the gorge and saw two monkeys with strange helmets eating Heart Candies by a bush, with the candies popping in their mouths. The helmets had red lights on them. When the monkeys spotted the pirates, they chucked the Pop Hearts at them, but Augustus punched the monkeys unconscious before Stewie shot his net gun to capture them. Augustus fed some of the Pop Hearts to Nel and used her to shoot the heart vines. The hearts inflated as the vines began swinging back and forth, allowing the pirates to swing across the gorge.

A gentle rain began to pour, but the morning sun was still shining bright through the clouds. The Marzipans needed to use their Corn-Clamber Boots to climb a cliff to the next area, but the wall would not allow the spikes to penetrate it. There was a puddle of reddish water that looked like Kool-Aid down in a corner of some trees. Augustus cut away the Kool Chus guarding it and stepped their Clamber Boots in the puddle, imbuing them with love apparently and enabling the team to step up the cliffside.

They stood on the shore of a Kool-Aid river, with lilipad-hearts floating in it. The hearts were too light for Augustus to stand on, and naturally, he was the only one who could swim in the river. The captain dove under and struggled to see through the bright redness. At the bottom of the deep river, four Dexihands were surrounding a Gold Wonka Bar, so Augustus chopped the ghoulish cyan hands before claiming the candy. He resurfaced and swam further down, seeing all the taller Heart Flowers that they would eventually have to jump. He saw a platform with some Shrink Sweets and took some.

Augustus hurriedly swam back to the four children and climbed back on shore. “Sigh, sorry that took so long. We’ll eat these and Nel will carry us.” He handed the other three a Shrink Sweet.

“Why can’t we just hide in the Infi-Cube like last time?” Rallo questioned.

“’Cause that was when no Shrink Sweets were around.” Augustus threw his lolli stick in the river. “Otherwise, we breathe the air the world gives us. Now get shrimpy, Shrimpy.”

After the four minimized, Nel picked them up and put them in the holes of her skull mask. The cavechild was light enough to jump on the lili-hearts. Some of the hearts had Bio Boko Babas latched underneath, so when Nel stepped on their lilipad, the plant monsters would flip it over, forcing Nel to jump quickly. The river turned right and more narrow as Nel jumped up a stairway...
of Heart Flowers, landing on a safe platform. She jumped two more Heart Flowers, dodging the Skulltula that dropped down and tried to bite her. Nel landed on a thin ledge on the right wall, with only enough room for her small feet as she sidled across. She got parallel with a path on the opposite side, and the cavegirl made a nimble pounce across.

When Nel was about to venture through a thin path of the rainforest, a swarm of bees began swarming around her head. “Aaaaahh! They like Rex Bees, but small! Nel sorry for taking honey!” she yelled as she tried to swat them away.

“How the hell, Nel! Maggie will shoot them!” Augustus yelled. Nel pranced through the path on all fours as Maggie blasted missiles full of bug-repellant at the (giant to her) bees. Nel jumped a fallen tree and dodged right to avoid a Boko Baba. Nel turned left and pounced up a stairway of Heart Flowers, with Maggie continuously shooting upcoming bee swarms so the cavegirl could get through a curtain of heart vines. They stood upon a cliff overlooking the town, the morning sun shining beautifully through the rain clouds.

Nel set her friends on a rock with some Growth Gum, watching as they stretched big again. “You were a big help, Nel.” Augustus said, noticing her swollen features due to the bee stings. “It doesn’t hurt too badly, does it?”

“Mm-mm.” Nel shook. “Nel use love to run!”

“Heh heh…” The captain blushed. He lifted Nel over his shoulders to ride. They had to cross another cliffside with Corn-Clammers, but their boots needed a love source. A couple Kool-Aid Chuchus appeared close by, so Augustus sliced them into puddles. The four pirates stepped their clamber boots in the liquid to walk on the cliff. They could drop on an upcoming ledge, but Stewie saw three Pipo Monkeys below, catching Kool-Aid droplets from the cliff in their mouth. He proceeded to catch the apes in nets.

After landing on the ledge, the Marzipans viewed a rainbow road that stretched over the town, had many curves, and would go higher up the mountain. There was a bushel of Rock Candy, but when Augustus waved his hand through the rainbow, it waved and felt like mist. Further down the ledge was a rainbow waterfall, so he and the Baby Trio encased their selves in a Rock Candy sphere to roll to it. Heart-shaped panels stuck in and out of the ledge and threatened to push them off. The crew waited for each heart to retract as they reached the waterfall, rolled under, and drenched the rock spheres in its neon colors.

The crew returned to the rainbow road, and the rainbow-powered spheres were able to touch and ZOOM over the rainbow. They would’ve liked to admire the scenery as they were soaring over the town, but they had to focus on the road. There were holographic, rotating flowers on the rainbow, and when Augustus hit them rolling by, a slope tilted down from above and let them onto a higher path, where they rammed a Pipo Monkey that was forced up onto the ball.

The rainbow road began to zoom up and around the main mountain, during which they had to jump huge globs of water that rolled down from ahead. There were more flower cogs that the captain had to strike before jumping the water balls, and hitting all three would open an alternate route that curved along the right of the main road. They caught another Pipo Monkey, and the rainbow road reached its end over a cliff. The monkeys fell off Augustus’s shattered rock sphere and became dizzy as Stewie caught them.

It turns out that a large eyeball lodged in a ledge was crying the water balls. The explorers climbed a few steps before looking over a barren, gray ravine. They jumped into it, suspecting some type of blockage to be behind this. “Mw-mw.” Maggie turned around and indicated the blockage to her teammates: two giant stone eyes (with eyelashes) were twitching due to the small rocks lodged in
their lids. “This is a weird level.” Stewie said.

“Help them out, Ralls.” August ordered, starting a new lollipop.

“Don’t use nicknames.” Rallo activated his afro stereos and stuck his head into the cracked wall under the eyes. By shaking the earth, the rocks fell out of the eyes and they started crying waterfalls. Augustus grabbed Rallo out and ran as the ravine started flooding. The crew climbed a short ladder up to a dry canal and kept running from the pursuing flow. More Cry Eyes were dropping water bombs from above, but they were a minor nuisance. At the end of the canal, they arrived at a small lake that was only partly filled, but thanks to the restored flow, it rose to full height.

Augustus grabbed the four kids and held them in the brief seconds it took to swim to the left shore, an arduous task with all four weighing him down. They had to catch their breath before studying their next puzzle: there were four platforms with heart switches, connected to pipes that ended at a stairway of deactivated water spouts. There was a Bounce Gum on the shore, and Augustus decided to attempt this puzzle himself first. He bounced over to the closest platform with a heart switch – he squished a Kool Chu that materialized, drenched his gum in its substance, and released the Kool-Aid when his gum pressed the switch.

August bounced three normal platforms to reach the next switch – it didn’t activate and the gum popped. The third platform had another one next to it with a Kool Chu. Augustus swam back to shore to repeat the puzzle, this time hitting the Chu and pressing the second switch. He then had to bounce on the shells of two large turtles, before the third turtle would serve as a boost to the switch. However, August continuously bounced on the turtle as it swam beside a platform with the Kool Chu, smashed it, then pressed the switch. From there, Augustus bounced some lilipads that sunk after one bounce. The Kool Chu spawned on a small lilipad which surprisingly withstood Augustus’s weight, then he pushed the fourth switch.

The Baby Trio used Bounce Gums to cross a row of platforms that served as a shortcut to the right shore. They all smashed some available Kool Chus so their gum would be permitted onto the stairway of now-active water spouts, setting foot on the ledge above. They were almost at the top of the mountain, but their path was blocked by a series of brick walls, and wooden towers with Bulblin archers perched on top. “Stewie, you’re the only one who hasn’t had a role in this stage, yet.” Augustus remarked. “Any ideas to get through here nice and easy?”

“Well, since this level revolves a lot around Kool-Aid, why not now? HEY, Kool-Aid!”

An unexcited Kool-Aid Guy appeared from their left. “You know the deal, kid. It’s five bucks to drink it, ten bucks to ride it.”

“Twenty Chocolate Dollars to burst all the way through here.” Augustus gave him the candy money.

“You got it. Alright, everyone hop into my liquid.” The pirates climbed into the giant pitcher. The Kool-Aid charged, broke through each brick wall, and tore the Bulblin towers down as well. “I’m gonna need a refill!” When Kool-Aid ran around a snakelike path in the jungle, Augustus directed him left and right to hit the Kool Chus and refuel him. They came to an open field, where Kool-Aid smashed open some cages with Pipo Monkeys hiding in them. He had to run around and get aligned with a series of stairway platforms, starting with the lowest one and jumping up each as they brought him to a high path with another wall to break through.

They were on a thin ledge on the side of the mountain, with a great view of the island below. Kool-Aid ran up a curve, going up a vertical path before Augustus yanked him and signaled to jump.
Kool-Aid jumped a spike trap and ran up another wall, then jumped to the next path. He ran up a vertical path that took place behind a waterfall, having to jump between this one and a parallel path. His liquid poured out faster, so while there were no obstacles, he had to jump to where the Kool Chus appeared.

The Kool-Aid Man made it to the top of Lovely Mountain, where a rainbow arched over the summit. They bid the Kool-Aid Guy farewell and progressed, with rain continuing to pour through the sunlight. They found the source of the mountain’s waterfall, a lake where two figures were dancing and skiing as though the water was frozen. (End song.)

“LAAAA!” One of them was a black-haired boy dressed like a swan. “Mwaaaaa!” The other was a fat, yellow monkey with banana-shaped lips, green hair, wearing a Pipo Helmet and underwear that… was not quite big enough.

“Can you dance better than meeeeee?” Bon Clay Jr. sang.

“We’ll just have to seeeee!” Yellow Monkey sang.

“WHEEEEEE!” They skied close to and began twirling in the center, making graceful poses.

“What the HELL is this?” Augustus snapped.

“Yes, if they’re going to figure skate, where are all the snowballs?” Stewie asked. “Figure-skating’s always better when you throw a few-”

“STEWIE!” August stopped him. “Your sentences man, I…I don’t like some of your sentences!”

“Nel from past.” Nel said, still holding on the teen’s shoulders. “Nel don’t get references.”

“Yaaaaah yaaaaah yaaaaah!” The two figures kept dancing in place. Then, Clay and Yellow, with smirks on their faces, both swung a kick at each other. “OOOOOWW!” Bon Clay took the blow and splashed in the non-solid water.

“Uh-uh-uuuuuhhh!” Yellow twirled to a halt and wagged his finger. “You have to do better than that to touch me, Sweetheart! Honestly, have you looked at yourself in a mirror lately? How grodyyyyyyyyyy!”

“Pleh, pleh!” Clay resurfaced. “At least my style comes from natural talent! I have my OWN heart to give me power! My own LOOOOOOVE!” He spun and emerged from the water, making a pose as he stood on the liquid again.

“It doesn’t matter to me where love comes from.” The Freaky Monkey took out a pinkish-red heart, with bars that one would find on a gear, and hugged it. “As long as it tastes sensulicious!” He licked it.

“It’s the Gear Heart!” Augustus exclaimed, drawing his sword. “Hey, Chunky Ko-!” He splashed in the lake when he tried to run over.

“Un! Deux! Yaaaaaaa!” Bon Clay skied by when Augustus resurfaced. “You’re just gonna drop on in without showing so much as a pint of feeling? Get on outta here before you filthify this lake!”

“But I wanna help you beat him!”

“I am delighted by the offer, but you shan’t need to fear!” Clay twirled. “This dirty monkey invaded mah treehouse and assaulted my pals! It’s high time for his just desserts.”
“When are you gonna get it through your cute little head?” Yellow Monkey swayed his hip. “You can kick me and smack me as much as you want, but I’m so much more beautiful!”

“Sector KB does not belong to you, Flashy Hat Monkeys! Even if I die, I shall continue to dance against you until you fall flat on your bubbly belly!”

“Hoo hooooo! If you were looking for a way to stir my hair follicles, you might have just found it, Sweetie Feathers.” Yellow winked.

“Then our battle for the fate of Kamabaka begins right now!” Clay made a fighting pose.

“I’ll look forward to keeping your beaten body as my priiiize!”

“Then let’s go! UN!”

“DEUX!”

“HEEEEEY!” Both stretched an arm, crossing each other’s like an ‘X’, and their epic battle commenced. (Play “Hippos on Ice” from Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time!)

Boss fight: Yellow Monkey

Both fighters put hands on their hips and skated circles around the center. They spun around and stretched one leg out, blinking flirtingly at the Pipo Cameras recording them. Clay and Yellow reunited at the center, holding each other’s arms as they swung kicks behind them. Yellow hugged Clay to his belly and jumped, then they held each other by one arm and rotated in place. Yellow spun faster and hurled Clay away, but the Sector Leader recomposed quickly and skated along the very edge of the lake. Yellow Monkey glided after him like a graceful ugly duckling. When Yellow was getting close, Clay swung a kick up, Yellow ducked and tried to grab him, but Clay dodged back, leapt over, and stamped Yellow in the head.

The monkey wobbled around dizzily, giving Clay the chance to kick him from behind and slide Yellow across the surface on his belly. (Again, we’re assuming both of them are male.) Yellow’s head slammed against the side, but the ape recovered as his vocals vibrated in anger. “Ooo-hoo-hoo-ho-o-o-o!” With that, both opponents returned to the center, facing each other as they did a Russian squat dance. They skied around for a second—then quickly threw punches at each other before Clay was slid away again.

Yellow Monkey drew the Gear Heart and slurped all over it before placing it back on his back. The ape glowed red and spun faster, exploding with hearts that flew everywhere. Bon Clay dodged the hearts and tried to kick Yellow Monkey, but the ape leaped over like a grasshopper and kicked the boy in the back. Clay spun about-face and kicked back against the wall to propel forward, but Yellow had already skied up to punch him in the gut. Yellow followed with a combo of punches before throwing one at Clay’s back and sliding him forward.

Yellow Monkey smooched the Gear Heart like a man making out with his pillow. His lips seemed to stretch when he pulled his face away, but it was actually a light-red sticky goop-like energy rope linking his mouth to the heart. He stretched it longer before the rope snapped off the Gear Heart, and Yellow spun before whipping it at Bon Clay. The Okama caught the whip on his mouth, around his puckered lips, and it seemed like his and Yellow’s lips were linked. Both dancers stared at each other with wide, sparkling eyes. They rotated around a center and were steadily pulling close. The sun seemed to shine on their moment. They grabbed each other, leapt in the air, and
their faces moved closer…

Clay smirked, forced his momentum down and pulled Yellow with him as the ape smashed his helmet against the water-ground. Clay sliced the energy-rope with his bladed swan slipper, kicked Yellow in the belly, and rolled him against the side of the lake. Yellow got up and huffed, showing his rear to Clay as he skied away. Clay was making the same movements, except he was skiing backwards and following Yellow. When he caught up, both figures bent forward, reached behind to link hands, and their rears… okay, don’t need to know that part.

The Marzipan Pirates didn’t know what they were watching, and they didn’t know why they were still watching. This was supposedly a boss battle, but the momentum sort of shifted a lot. “Does everyone in Futur do this?” Nel asked.

“No sentient person does this, Nel.” Augustus said.

“Do they actually hate each other?” Stewie asked. “I feel like they’re either friends or rivals.”

Clay and Monkey kicked away from each other, circled the center in opposite ways, and when they reunited, Yellow grabbed Clay, who allowed the monkey to lead. Both of them had bright, dreamy smiles, and never felt closer with one-another. Yellow Monkey raised Clay high, making him feel like the graceful swan he is. Yellow then put Clay on his back and stretched his arms like he were an airplane. With a big smile, Clay stood and faced the opposite direction, posing like a lookout.

Bon Clay jumped off as they skied away from each other. “Heeeey!” Clay called as Yellow faced him. The Sector Leader held the Gear Heart up.

“Ooooooh!” Monkey’s mouth shaped like an ‘o’, and was likely meant to say ‘For me?’

“There’s really not any conflict here, is there?” Augustus threw his dry lollipop away.

The Kool-Aid Guy sat a few feet away, smoking a cigar. “You kids ever see Paul Blart?”

Yellow smiled with graciousness, his hands open as he welcomed the boy back. Bon Clay flew over and set the Gear Heart in his hands, the two of them spinning in place. But then Clay yanked the heart and pulled Monkey over, kicking him in the stomach, and when Yellow hunched over, Bon Clay STOMPED his Pipo Helmet and broke it. The chubby monkey splashed in the water, leaving Clay to keep the Gear Heart. “The thing about love is it always HURTS in the end!” He smirked. (End song.)

“WHOOOOPEE! And the battle is won by ME!”

“That will never, in a million years, be classified as a battle!” Augustus retorted. “Dude, how are you standing on the water?”

“Because I got love in me, of course! From the soles of mah slippers to the ends of my hair.” Clay tugged one of his hair strands. “I’m guessing you had to solve those silly little puzzles on your way up here.”

“Yes, and I will be glad when it’s time to leave. Give us that Gear Heart you got there.”

“No ho ho ho way.” Clay wagged a finger. “I know who you are, Augustus Fizzy Pants. Cherry Boy told me how you kidnapped his lady. He told me what you done with Big Gorilla. I don’t think I want you havin’ this handy-dandy heart.”

“What does the Gear Heart do, anyway?” Rallo asked.
“Gives ya energy!” Clay beamed. “Gives ya loooove! ’Long as you had it, you could just keep going and going and going and going and going and GOIIIIIING!” He spun repeatedly before coming to a stop. “But you’ll go POOP the moment you put it down. So don’t think I’m going to give it to you. My family has been protecting the Gear Heart for five thousand YEARS!”

“REALLY??” The crew gaped.

“Nah. I’m just an average citizen.”

“D’OOH.” They drooped.

“But this tasty piece of candy has been here a long time. It’s our sacred treasure! Legends say it was given to us by fairies. A band of dirty pirates like you could never comprehend the value of a treasure like this. Why, you’d sooner toss it in your gut and-”

“ULP.” Nel’s stomach tightened. “Oh… Nel feel… PLEAAH!” She coughed the Cupcake Core onto the ground.

“Heh?” Clay raised a brow.

Augustus picked the cupcake up and wiped it clean. “For your information, we’ve been searching for these candies all month. They’re called the Lost Candies, and there’s six of them. According to the Sugar Fairy Princess, they were created by Termina Giants.”

“Termina Giants?…” Bon Clay remembered that part from Cheren’s story. “But what are these candies for?”

“The truth is, we don’t know. But the Fairy Princess said the Illuminati – whom I assume is the World Government – is trying to destroy them. I’m trying to find them and protect them from Lord Licorice. He’s the apprentice to the King of the World.”

Bon Clay frowned – a rare sight even to this crew. Augustus’s words seemed to stir memories in him.

“I really admired you, Clay. I would have followed you forever.” Alexei said. “That was a mistake of my own. I found a real man to follow.”

“…” Clay stared at the Gear Heart before looking up at Augustus. “I still don’t think I should give this to you. You hurt Cherry Boy’s friend.”

“Who the heck is Cherry Boy, your boyfriend?”

“NO… though he is pretty… Perhaps ‘Panini’ is the key word here.”

“Oh, right.” Augustus looked away. “Fine, I’ll admit that I was a bad guy in the past. I worked with Big Mom for my own selfish goals. The only thing I loved was adventure, and…and I still do. But now I’m actually trying to do something good for somebody – for a lot of people, by finding the Lost Candies.”

“And tell me something, if you don’t know what these Lost Candies are gonna do, how do you know you’re doing something good for anyone, huh? ?”

“BECAUSE I AM, alright?! Ugh, it’s pointless to try and convince you, can I just have the stinkin’ heart?”
“Alright then: show me how much you love the person you’re doing this for. If you can walk across the water and get to me, I’ll let you have it.”

“Um… er…” Augustus looked at the water, unsure if he could do this.

“You don’t even know Luviro that well, do ya?” Rallo asked.

“There’s gotta be some trick to it. Like-” Augustus stepped in the water and splashed in.

“That ain’t it.” Clay shook.

Augustus climbed out and huffed in annoyance. He calmed himself and pictured Luviro in his mind. Pale white skin, wrapped almost fully in blankets… Augustus stepped in and splashed in the water again. He climbed out and proclaimed, “This is stupid! I can’t just magically walk on water like Jesus or Sonic! The only reason you and that monkey can do it is ’cause you were raised on this island of magic Kool-Aid, so it’s totally-…” Nel hummed a little tune as she walked on the surface, looking down to make sure her feet were on the water. “Wh… Nel?”

She turned and faced him, making a balancing posture as though she might fall. “Nel think of Aughsucks. Maybe Aughsucks think of Nel?”

“…” Augustus closed his eyes to think. He first started this adventure to find the Lost Candies for Luviro. He met Luviro seven months ago and promised to find them. But he neglected his promise to help Big Mom find Candied Planet. Because he would’ve loved to find Candy Planet, the world of endless adventure for all candy hunters. He would’ve loved to explore that world for the rest of his life. But Big Mom’s true intention was to make Earth into a Candy Planet.

Augustus detested the plan… Not only would it not be the adventure of a lifetime, but it would’ve poisoned everyone. At first, Augustus didn’t mind harming a few innocents to find the lost planet, but after learning it was Big Mom’s only intention… he felt disgusted inside. He wished he spent this time finding the Lost Candies than being Big Mom’s dog. He felt like granting Luviro’s wish would make up for it all. He really wanted to help him.

Augustus stepped over the water—splashed in once again. “COME ON, I really gave that one some thought!”

“I guess your passion ain’t strong enough.” Clay taunted.

“JUST GIMME THE FREAKIN’ HEART!” Augustus hurriedly swam after Clay, who skied across the watery surface. “You damn flamingo-swan-whatever, I’m gonna cook you into turkey and eat you for-!”

“Just give him the heart, Clay.” A girl’s soft voice said.

“Oh?” Clay looked over and smiled. “Hiya, Sapphy! You really think it’s okay?”

“Yes.” Sapphire nodded. “Trust me. It will be a major help to us.”

“Well, Sapphy doesn’t lie. It’s all yours.” He dropped the Gear Heart on Augustus in the water.

The captain resurfaced. “Um… thanks. See you later, Sector Weird.” He and his crew began their long journey down the mountain.

“You know, fellas, Sapphy’s a real good telepath.” Clay told them. “She could predict what those candies are gonna do.”
“That’s okay.” Augustus waved. “It’s no adventure if we know what’ll happen!”

“I knew he would say that.” Sapphire said tonelessly. “And I didn’t need psychic.”

Augustus stuffed the Gear Heart and Cupcake Core in the Ace Flyer’s trunk. “ Couldn’t you-a thought of your mom or dad to walk on that water?” Rallo asked as they climbed in the plane.

“Yeah, but I ain’t doing it for them. Anyway, now that we have the Gear Heart, and still including Zeira’s Sugar Fuel, we have four Lost Candies and two left to find. And one of them happens to be the Sun Cream.”

“Perhaps I can use my Metahuman Neutralizer to purify the intoxicated Sun Cream pool.” Stewie thought aloud.

“Maybe, but I still can’t believe a metahuman power could affect a Lost Candy. We might’ve missed something back on Buttermilk. So let’s fly there ASAP!” Augustus started the plane. “Now that my Haki’s back, I ain’t afraid of those Willy Wonka Wannabes!”

The pirates flew away from the island. Moments later, a S.C.A.M.P.E.R. landed on the same spot, and Team Emily stepped out. “Alright guys, time for our next monkey-hunting exploration!” Emily Garley declared. “We are going to catch every monkey on this island and save Sector KB! …?”

A bunch of monkeys trapped in nets were bundled at the start. They were ripe for the taking. “WHOOP, stage complete.” Sarah proclaimed. “Guess someone did it for us.”

“I object to that!” Sheldon argued. “We can’t just bypass a stage because of some ‘shortcut.’ If we don’t play all the levels the way they were meant to be, we don’t get the full experience, and we may even miss some crucial parts of the storyline, therefore—” Yellow Monkey dropped from the sky and smashed Sheldon. The helmetless monkey of average intelligence lifted Sheldon over his shoulder and ran off into the jungle. “AAAAH! He’s putting a dress on me! Somebody call the zookeeper!”

**Palace of Winds**

Somewhere in the sky, lost among the dark clouds was an ancient palace. Some say it was home to the Sky King, and had thousands of Shandoran Nimbi enslaved here. It was a story that he took interest in. Now he made this old temple his home.

The Man With the Red Eye soared through the dark clouds and entered the palace. It was pitch-black inside, so the mage had to see the way with a light on the tip of his wand. Red Eye got to a room lit by some dim torches, and a faint light coming from a magic mirror. Somebody was seated and watching the projection. “Red Eye burned the American Constitution and fled the scene, and chaos and mayhem ensued everywhere throughout the country. The situation was resolved by a young boy named Jessie Sidney, who shortly after, became…”

“You certainly are a violent sort.” The man watching the MV said. “I’m not sure if I want you visiting my planet.”

“That man would have slain an innocent child had I not flown in.” Red Eye said, his body shadowed except for the left eye. “I use violence to deliver justice to those corrupt beings. I hoped America would stay a free country, but we will see how this child president fairs. But I do not wish to bring harm to your world. I simply wish to study its magic potential. And I think it is the perfect place for my daughter to meet me.”

“I see…” The man—Arlon—stood and faced Red Eye, with his own monocle eye glowing red.
“Then I shall comply to your request. I want to see my daughter again, too. I still have mixed feelings about.”

“DARN IT!” A bowl of berries was thrown at Arlon’s head. “These are blueberries! And they’re ROUND! WE’RE OFF SCHEDULE!” An infant-size creature flew between the two men, facing Arlon. It had an indigo body, a crescent moon head, and a crescent symbol on the chest. “Tonight is a crescent moon! I need a banana! Or a cookie with one bite taken out of it! Half moons, I drink half a cup of grape juice, or a taco. And during eclipse, I eat donuts. Blueberries are for FULL MOONS!! I’ll also accept a plum or a moon pie.” He smiled. “Always up for a moon pie. BUT WHAT’M I SUPPOSED TO EAT RIGHT NOOOOW?”

“Master Crest, I am positive that the food you choose to eat is irrelevant to the current phase of the moon!” Arlon argued.

“Irrelevant?! Dude, it’s ALWAYS relevant!” Crest threw his arms up. “It’s…It’s LOGICAL! It’s…IT’S…”

“Crest.” Red Eye spoke. “You will still lead me to Lunaria like you promised, correct?”

“Oh yeah sure man, whatever floats your boat.” Crest said quickly. “We can do it on May 15, that’s a full moon. Provided you get me more of-” He rubbed his fingers and glanced at the berries on the floor, “those things.”

“May 15 was the date I had in mind, too. That shall be it then.”

“Coolness! So uh, you know uh, those uh…?” He continued rubbing his fingers.

“Bananas, yes.”

“Neat, well, buh-bye.” Crest flew off.

“And on the same day… I want you to bring Wendy and her friends to Lunaria.” Red Eye told Arlon.

“To that end, I fear for Master Crest’s safety. It is true that my people have long awaited the Young Lord… but there are many prying eyes who would JUMP at the chance to seize him! He is, after all, the Tenth Firstborn.”

“Yes…” Red Eye turned away. “The Firstborn are bodies of limitless power. They are only children, but cruel adults seek to capture them, abuse them for their own ends. I detest such adults. If anyone tries to take Crest, I assure you… they will fall by my hands.”

Kamabaka is from One Piece, but I made up all the magic Love Kool-Aid random… stuff. So these first few chapters take place within the Art Saga, so there shouldn’t be very many, because when we get to the main arc of the Art Saga, I don’t wanna pull much attention away from that. But this next chapter is actually connected to the main story’s chapters – I won’t pull another Gravity Falls gimmick, but Ch. 44 in particular will lead into the next SS chapter. So see you for that. Later!
Real Friends

Chapter Summary

Sunni Chariton and Morgan Uno have contrasting views regarding Imaginary Friends.

Caesar Cipher!

Chapter 43: Real Friends

Foster’s Home For Imaginary Friends

“I really wish Mikaela didn’t get you in the habit of calling me ‘Aunt.’” Morgan said.

“Good point.” Sunni glared at her. “You don’t deserve it after what you did to your nephew.”

“I was in the middle of an important operation.” Morgan argued without changing her moderate voice. “If his parents won’t make an effort to control their son, then I have to.”

“You tried to kill him!” Sunni shouted. “Is that how your side of the family disciplines children?”

Oh, wait, I’m talking to Father’s biological daughter.

“You don’t have any qualms of trying to kill your mother.”

“That’s totally different!!” Sunni steamed red. “That’s a matter of personal growth, symbolism, thing… Look, what are you doing here, anyway?”

“She’s here to pay our mortgage.” An old woman’s voice said. Morgan stepped aside as Madame Foster came down the stairs. She was shorter than Sunni, with white hair in a large bun, a green overshirt, yellow shirt, glasses, purple skirt, and a cane. “Hello, Morgan Dear. Will you be taking an Extremeasaur today?” She smiled politely, but Sunni noticed the look of resent.

“Hmm… maybe. I’d like to look around, though. We need some extra help around the base.”

“Certainly, Dear. Take all the time you need.” Madame Foster moved aside as Morgan went up the foyer stairs. Another gang of Anti Guys stared at Sunni before following their master.

After she was gone, Sunni approached Madame Foster and sat before the short woman, “She pays your mortgage?”

“She’s the only benefactor that was willing to offer.” Foster frowned regretfully. “After Mr. Herriman was killed by a Werehog 10 years ago. Lady Morgan has been a regular visitor before then, ever since she left her Imaginary siblings here. Those four are a delightful bunch, I tell you what.” She made a smile. “And we are so grateful to her. It’s nice to be friends with the Head of the Corporate Presidents.”

“I dunno, I seen that look on your face, you got a problem with her.” Sunni’s eyes narrowed.

Madame Foster sighed. “In return, Lady Morgan wishes to make contracts with Imaginary Friends. Preferably the Extremeasaurus. Those are the very monstrous kind. But as a request, Lady Morgan
wants those Friends to have more freedom. So naturally, the other Friends get terrorized.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. But what is this ‘contract’ thing, anyway?”

She turned to Sunni, “Well, I don’t know if you know about psychicbenders, but certain kinds of people with powers come in here to make ‘contracts’ with the Friends. They can use their powers to summon the Imaginary Friends to their side for whatever chore they had in mind. Lady Morgan and some psychics use their Friends to fight for them.”

“That’s pretty cruel. And you let her get away with that?”

“Oh, it’s not cruel at all, Dear!” Madame Foster proclaimed bubbly. “You’d be surprised how well some of our Friends fight! Besides, it’s good for their health. Since their Creators have long abandoned them, they need the psychic energy to stay alive. And by warping Friends to their locations, the benders are giving them their energy. Plus, when that happens, they aren’t as hungry for dinner, and Lord knows we need extra hands in cooking.”

“I’m trying the best I can, ya know!” Handy walked by and yelled. He was a large, brown glove with a face.

“I wasn’t talking about you, Handy! Anyway,” Foster faced Sunni again, “forgive me. You must be here to adopt a Friend. What’s your name, Dearie?”

“Sunni, Sunni Chariton. My mom’s name is Mikaela, do you know her?”

“You’re Mika’s daughter? Ho ho ho, I thought you looked familiar! Yes, your mother is a regular visitor, too. Used to come all the time with Lady Morgan, but now I only see them apart. Mika said you might be coming here in the near future.”

“Hehe, well here I am.” Sunni grinned and blushed. “I don’t understand how it works, but I wanna try this contract thing. But, I kind of planned to use them for battle, too.” She scratched her head nervously. “If that’s okay…”

“Oh, it is, don’t worry about it. I’d love to help you look around, but I need to help my granddaughter with papers. I’m sure the Friends will like you just as much as they like Mika!” She gave her positive smile before walking to the office on their right.

“Hold on! I don’t even know how to make a contract.”

“Oh, the Friends can tell you how to. Really, it’s not as hard as you think.” Madame Foster assured the girl before continuing to the office.

Sunni made a shrug before going upstairs. It might’ve been her imagination, but this house looked far bigger inside than it did outside. I mean, it was unnaturally huge. The length of these hallways and all their rooms looked longer than the house’s width, and all these intricate stairways made it so mazelike. “Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!”

And now there was an odd, faint sound in her ears. She stopped and looked around for a source. “Down here!” She looked down. There was a very tiny, green pea with a face, arms, and legs beside her right shoe. It had a thimble for a hat. “Hello, Miss! Can I help you find something?” It spoke energetically.

Sunni raised a brow. First interesting sight of the visit. “Yes, I dropped my silver grain of sand here earlier and I was looking for it.”
“Ahhhh, you’re a kidder!” The pea playfully punched her shoe. “My name is Peas! If you’re looking for an Imaginary Friend, I’d be happy to give you a tour.”

“Actually, I’m a psychicbender. The name’s Sunni. I’m looking for some Friends to make contracts with.”

“Oh, well I’d be glad to make a contract with you! Just bend down so I can reach your finger.”

“What I meant is I’m looking for some Friends that can, y’know, fight?”

“Well, I can fight. I mean, I can’t duke it out,” he jabbed his tiny fists, “but I can run fast and I’m great at distractions. I’ve been studying Tiny Style.”

“That’s great, but I prefer to save room for ones that’re more… direct? Maybe. Just how many contracts can I make?”

“Oh, please give me a chance.” The little guy pleaded. “I don’t get noticed very much, so it would be great if someone picked me for a summon. The only limit on contracts is your imagination. If I’m really not good, you could still pick plenty more.”

“Hmmm…” Sunni thought for a second. “I never actually made one before, so… can you teach me how?”

“Oh, certainly! It’s easy! Just let me touch your finger and mark me with your aura.”

“Hehe-hyeah, ‘cause, I dunno how to do that.” She forced a sheepish grin.

“Come on, I’ll teach ya how. Let’s do it!”

Suni sighed and sat on her knees, holding her pinky beside the Friend. Peas touched both hands on its tip. Sunni closed her eyes and tried to sense both their auras. Seeing the inch-tall Friend touching her finger, Sunni tried to channel energy to her pinky’s tip. “GAAAH!” Peas blew across the hall like a bullet. Sunni gasped and chased after him, finding the tiny green pea knocked out against the wall. “Ohhh…” Peas held his head as he sat up. “Well, I see whatcha mean when you wanted a bigger friend. Your psychic’s a little too… strong for me.”

“At least I know what to do now.”

“Wait!” Peas perked up before she could leave. “I still wanna be friends with you! Just… try again, but don’t do it so hard.”

“Whaddyou mean ‘don’t do it so hard’? If it’s too much for you, then we aren’t gonna work out!”

“I’m just saying, you’re gonna have the same problem with other Friends if you’re too hard. Even some big guys get repelled by too much psychic. Come on, just try again.”

“Uuuugh.” It was embarrassing to be taking psychic lessons from a pea. Sunni bent down and touched her finger to him again. She kind of did it on accident the first time, but this time, she tried to focus her power with a weaker sense of effort. “WHOW!” Peas smashed against the wall again. “That wasn’t as bad, but… ow.”

“Huuuff.” Sunni sat and lied back on the stairs. “This exercise is giving me a headache already.”

“You wouldn’t be having a headache if you just work on your focus.” Peas said as he climbed up to Sunni’s shoulder.
“If you’re implying my psychic’s too strong, then maybe I should focus on stronger Friends.” Sunni argued logically. “Then again, I’m not even sure if I need any Friends. I finally got adapted to my real psychic, so I can kick enemies’ butts by myself.”

“Do ya mind if I ask which enemies’ butts you’re trying to kick?”

“Well, in all honesty…” Sunni sat up and spoke lower so only Peas would hear, “that Morgan lady is one of the ones I want to beat. She attacked a friend of mine. I didn’t even expect her to be here, but…but if she’s picking Imaginary Friends, wouldn’t that mean she’s not very strong by herself?”

“Not really. She picks a lot of Extremeasaurs, and only really tough psychics can do that. Sunni, having Imaginary Friends isn’t about having someone else do stuff for you, it’s about having someone to do stuff with. Your chances of winning are better when you fight with them. Even if you’re the greatest psychic ever, sometimes a Friend is great to have. Especially against other psychics.”

Sunni released a solemn sigh. “I used to have Darcy to do stuff with. But she’s been on her own adventure for weeks and I haven’t heard from her. Still, you’re probably right about having friends, even Imaginary ones. But I don’t think you and I are right for each other. I’m going to try to make contracts with stronger Friends.”

“Fine.” Peas folded his arms. “But just because a Friend doesn’t suit up to your style, it doesn’t mean they wouldn’t be a good friend.”

“I still kind of like you, if that’s what you’re saying. But in the midst of war, preferences have to be made.”

“I guess.”

They heard glass shatter upstairs. Peas rode Sunni’s shoulder as the girl rushed upstairs. Shy Guys were running amuck in a living room area. Some were trying to eat an Imaginary Friend made of gelatin, others ran off with a giant baby’s rattle, while some Pyro Guys were chasing a snowman Friend. “Uhhhh what da hell is this?” Sunni questioned.

“These are all Lady Morgan’s Shy Guys.” Peas responded with a sigh. “She always brings them so they have a place to play around.”

“I’m starting to think Lady Morgan’s getting more than what she’s paying for outta this place.” Sunni said with a glare.

“She’s still the one paying our mortgage. Look, it’ll be fine, I mean some Friends get a few bruises, but we can’t just-”

Sunni grabbed a couple Shy Guys in psychic and chucked them at the ones eating the jelly Friend. The other Shy Guys whipped in her direction. “A’right, you all better settle down or I’ll TEACH you what rowdy means.”

“Sunni, no!” Peas exclaimed. “Lady Morgan’ll get mad at us if we attack her soldiers!”

“If she’s gonna criticize someone’s parenting and attack their kid, I’m gonna do the same. I’m sure there’d be a few grateful Friends out there.” She cracked her knuckles. “It would make a great start to a contract.”

“Ho boy. I would be afraid to be your friend.” Peas sighed. “Just try not to do more damage than they do.” (Play “Shy Guy’s Toy Box” from Paper Mario!)
Stage 51: Foster’s Home For Imaginary Friends

Mission: Clear out the Shy Guys and make contracts with Friends!

Rather than heed her warning, the remaining Shy Guys in the room went rampant. Two Guys were jumping up-and-down on the couch and whacking each other with pillows. Sunni quickly swiped the pillows, and when the creatures began running around the floor, Sunni threw quick kicks and knocked them out with the heel of her Mary-Janes. Sunni saw a Shy Guy peep out from behind a small garbage can in the corner, but he ducked when she looked over. Sunni only saw from the corner of her eye, watching him emerge before pulling him over with psychic to knock him unconscious. Another Shy Guy was holding a lamp horizontally to block Sunni from entering the passage. Sunni stepped to either side, but the Shy Guy wouldn’t let her, and he jabbed the lamp if she approached. Sunni decided to rush to the left, quickly zip past the hall’s edge with psychic, then got around the Shy Guy to knock him out and take the lamp, standing it up.

Sunni headed up the following staircase to a roundish room where a chubby Imaginary Friend with green fur was being forced against the wall by three Headbutt Guys, using the attack they were named for. “That’s Belly Bob Norton.” Peas explained. “He’s fun to bounce on. Unfortunately, the Shy Guys know that.”

“Not a problem.” Sunni jumped directly in front of the Friend and created a shield, blocking the Headbutt Guys, but her shield was cracking under their attacks. Sunni grunted and thrusted her shield against them, raising the Shy Guys in the air with psychic. She felt them quickly shaking free of her grip, so Sunni dropped them on the floor to face each other, resulting in them aimlessly ramming and knocking each other out.

“Thanks for saving me.” Belly Bob told her. “It never actually hurts, but boy do I feel woozy.”

“About that,” Sunni began, “would you agree to a psychicbender contract where I summon you to be a back-up shield?”

“Well… okay, but nothing too scary.”

“And it’s called a Creative Summons Contract.” Peas informed. Sunni grabbed Norton’s hand and channeled her aura, pouring extra focus since he was a bigger friend (only slightly taller than her).

“Oh!” Norton’s hand burned as he pulled away and shook it. “You don’t have to do it THAT hard!”

“That’s what I kept telling her!” Peas shouted.

“Fine, I’ll do it where you’re less sensitive!” Sunni placed both hands on Norton’s belly, but this time channeled her chi at a weaker rate.

“Uhhh… not feeling anything.” Norton said.

“Y’know what, screw you, I’ll find someone else.” Sunni stated before proceeding to the hallway. When she looked up, a Shy Guy was hanging on the bottom of a chandelier and swinging back-and-forth. Not surprisingly, the chandelier detached and plummeted, so Sunni threw a hand up to grab it in psychic. “Don’t let anything fall!” Peas yelled. A few jewels on the chandelier dropped, Sunni held her other hand forward to grab each jewel one at a time, but she lost her grip on the chandelier and let it smash to the floor, knocking the Shy Guy out as a result. “That’s coming out of my allowance.” Sunni figured.
She used her Aura Sense to see into other rooms, and found a Shy Guy in two of them. Those Shy Guys scamppered out of the rooms and through a taller door, and when Sunni entered, she discovered this room was a basketball court. There was an Imaginary Friend designed like a scoreboard, with the two scores being labeled for Shy Guys and Sunni. He seemed to be forcibly strapped to the wall above the basket, and two Spark Guys shocked him to make a point go up whenever one of the Sports Guys scored a basket. “I heard of kids who were forced to be a basket, but since when do you force a scoreboard to be, well, a scoreboard??”

“Hang in there, Stats, Sunni will save you!” Peas yelled.

“These guys think they’re so great, but let’s see ‘em play without hands!” Sunni swiped the basketball from the Sports Guys and bounced it around with psychic, much to their astonishment. Sunni chucked the ball to the basket, but a Sports Guy leaped up to whack it away. His friend caught it, bounced toward, and tried to send it to the basket, but Sunni pulled it away with psychic, bounced it to the floor, the opposite wall, then against the ceiling before flying it to knock out one of the Spark Guys. She rapidly bounced it around the room, and when the Sports Guys attempted to tackle her, she jabbed her foot against each of them to knock them out. She tossed the rubber ball at the remaining Spark Guy to defeat him.

“Sigh… glad that’s over.” Stats sighed. “Hey, wanna hear a secret? If you score 10 points, you’ll find a secret passa-”

Sunni grabbed the basketball in psychic and tossed it through the hoop 10 times. A secret door opened on the left wall, leading to stairs. “Thank you!” Sunni hurriedly jogged up the stairs. Stats was left alone, hanging on the wall. “I assumed you would help me, too!” he yelled.

The stairs brought Sunni to a fancy room with a curtained roof over the bed, a writing desk, and a small table in the center. A very fat Shy Guy with a knife and fork was sitting on the little chair, facing a plate of what seemed like melted apples. Sunni wasn’t sure what that food was, it smelled good, but looked gross. “D’oh… I thought I smelled something good, but I couldn’t possibly eat this.” The Gourmet Guy said. “Little girl, would you go down to the kitchen and bake me a cake with flour, white icing, strawberry-“

Sunni stunned the overweight Shy Guy before punching him across the head and knocking him out. “Most boring mini-game ever.”

“Hey, lookathis!” Peas bounced onto the table and pressed a small button. A trapdoor opened before the room’s main entrance. Sunni grabbed the little Friend and jumped down the chute, taking land within the laundry room. Sunni’s shoes sank partway into some shallow water that covered the floor. Shy Guys were climbing up the wall of washing machines and pulling them open, letting water spill constantly. Sunni approached and tried to open the door—something was blocking it on the other side. Sunni banged the door. “You guys better not be out there!”

“What? Who’s in there?” someone’s voice yelled.

“Hey, that’s Wally!” Peas realized. “HEY, WALLY! Why are you blocking the door?”

“I’m trying to keep the water inside! Listen, if you can do something about the Shy Guys and stop the flooding, I’ll open.”

“Don’t mind letting us drown, do you!” Sunni shouted. She quickly used her psychic to close each washer, but the Shy Guys were readily climbing around to reopen. Sunni tried to grab them in psychic, but the Shy Guys held surprisingly tight to the washer doors. Sunni decided to close a
pathway of washers as she climbed up herself, and once close to the Shy Guys, she punched them to make them fall to the flooding floor, unconscious. Once all four Shy Guys were down, Sunni closed all the washers with psychic to stop the flooding. “Okay, we’re done!”

Wally stepped away from the door, letting all of the water flow down the hall when Sunni opened. He was a red brick wall with a pair of eyes inside a black space. “Sigh, Frankie’s gonna love cleaning that up.” Peas said.

“Hey, Wall Guy, wanna make a psychicbender contract with me?” Sunni asked Wally.

“Umm… sure?” Wally shrugged. Sunni walked over and placed both hands against him, channeling a stronger amount of energy considering Wally’s apparent sturdiness. “Ummm… I’m ready when you are?”

“Ugh, I’m trying!” Sunni shouted. “You’re a lot bulkier than I thought, you know? How ‘bout I…” Sunni trembled and channeled greater chi—Wally went blasting across the hall.

“IIIII… think you came on too strong.” Peas said.

“Let’s just kill more Shy Guys.” Sunni progressed down the opposite hallway and entered the house’s arcade. The many game consoles’ screens lit up the otherwise dark room, but no one seemed to be occupying it. Sunni spotted the brief images of Shy Guys on the consoles’ screens, zipping around within every console as they blasted coins at her like speeding bullets. After getting scratched by coins from a nearby console, Sunni drew out her lightsaber in anger and lunged at the nearest one with a Shy Guy.

“DOOON’T!” Peas cried with his high voice, Sunni immediately stopping. “You already broke a chandelier, but we’ll never be able to afford to replace these!”

“How could you buy these to begin with?!”

“I don’t know, just find another way to get them out. Can you do Force Lightning?”

Sunni was about to respond- “Ow! Ah!” More coins scratched her from either side, “I haven’t gotten around- ow! It’s a dark move anyway, isn’t- oof! And I don’t think I can bend well-” She got scratched by three more rounds of coins, “RRRRRRR!” She threw her fingers up and zapped lightning at the consoles, causing the screens to turn staticky. When she hit the ones with the Spark Guys inside, the creatures were forced out. They were still zipping frantically around the room, Sunni shot more lightning at the Guys and overfilled them with energy, up to the point where they explode. With the arcade cleared out, Sunni headed outside to the hallway, seeing a staircase going up on her left.

A banging sound rang in their ears, seeing a Shy Guy using a cookie pan as a sled as he rode down the stairs. He passed Sunni and slid across the hall, and Peas noticed the monitor in the ceiling corner. It depicted the Foster’s foyer, with vases lined up like bowling pins. “Oh no!” Peas pointed. “Sunni, you have to stop those guys!” Sunni rushed over to the sliding Shy Guy and used psychic to slam him against the wall. He tried to run for it, but she grabbed the cookie pan and bashed him unconscious.

Sunni headed back and began to run up the stairs, grabbing any Shy Guy she passed in psychic to throw him over the edge. The stairs stretched up a tremendous, vacant shaft in the house, and the sounds of the sliding pans echoed all around. Sunni didn’t question again how all of this fit inside the house, she was set on throwing Shy Guys. One of the staircases was broken with only a few standing chunks, so she had to float to each one. Pogo Guys were hopping down the chunks on
pogo sticks, aiming to smash the vases on the ledge where these stairs began. Sunni made a psychic bubble to bounce each Guy off and down the chasm.

“Remind me how many floors are in this house, again?” Sunni requested.

“I lose track between 42 and 2,017.” Peas replied. After getting to the top of the stairs, the duo followed another passage that led to the house’s roof. A Shy Guy had forced the Imaginary Friend, Scissors to detach a group of balloon Friends from the railing. Sunni kicked that Guy over the roof’s edge, then quickly used her psychicbending to grab the balloons and pull them down. Considering their durability, Sunni grabbed the balloons gently and could only pull them slowly. All the while, Sky Guys were trying to shoot the balloon Friends with slingshots, so Sunni briefly released the balloons to grab their pellets with psychic, chuck them at the Sky Guys’ balloons, then grab the Friends again before they drifted too high. She maneuvered the Friends in the air as she got them low enough for her to safely release. She repeated this pattern until all the Sky Guys were taken down, then the balloon Friends could be lowered back to the roof. Peas leapt off and grabbed the ends of their strings, using Tiny Style acrobatics to wrap them around the railing.

“Safe and secure!” Peas proclaimed proudly. “High five, Sunni?”

“More like a low one in my case.” Sunni smirked, holding her pinky beside him.

“It’ll do!” Peas smacked her fingertip ecstatically.

“RAAAAAAHHHHH!” A monster’s roar screeched across the air, followed by the forceful sounds of banging metal. Peas hopped on Sunni’s shoulder as she ran to the opposite railing, seeing a huge metal cage shaking under some force.

“That’s our Extremeasaur cage.” Peas informed. “Lady Morgan must be in a fight with one of them again.”

“She’s fighting them?!”

“Well, yeah. They are Extremeasurs. If you’re goin’ near those things, you better know how to fight.”

“I wanna see what’s up with this.” Sunni leapt over the roof’s edge and used psychic to make herself float down steadily; scaring Peas at first. She landed lightly on the grass and was about to approach the large, distant cage. (End song.)

“NOT SO FAST!” Sunni stopped. She and Peas looked around for the source of this militant voice.

“Sunni, look out!” Peas pointed upward, and Sunni dodge-rolled away before the large force could crush her. It was… a giant rubber ducky. Sunni and Peas exchanged weirded looks.

Steam emitted from the duck as the head opened up. A Shy Guy leapt out, wearing a white general’s cap with a gold emblem. He wore a white robe with some medals and spoke with a strict general’s voice. “I’m the General Guy, the commander of the World Government’s Shy Guy battalion! I am Head President Morgan’s personal escort, and I do not appreciate you attacking my troops!”

“Well, WE don’t appreciate your troops making a mess of our house!” Peas retorted. “Forgive me for disrespect, but I think your battalion needs new management.”

“NEW MANAGEMENT?! Am I to take criticism from some half-pint, morbidly obese bean?!”
“WHAT? I’m not obese—I’m not even a BEAN! I’m a pea, and the name’s Peas!”

“Well, Ah got news for you, Peas, I don’t take lip from ANY sentient delicacy, not no way nor no how! In fact, just because I’m impressed with your physical ability in besting my best troops, I’ll invite you on the secret of my true identity!” The General Guy grabbed his hat and mask. “There’s only one reason I’m always in my prime, and why I always have the best taste in both troops and Drake Bell CDs. I’m not just the General Guy.” He spun around. “My alternate identity… is GENERAL RICE!” Underneath his sock suit, the General Guy actually had a head shaped like a yellowish-white block of tofu.

“YOU’RE A TOFU HEAD?!” Sunni screamed.


“Aaaaahh!” Sunni flew a few feet back and hit the ground. “Grrrrr!” She helped herself up angrily. “Alright, you wanna go Filipino o Genero, I’ll turn your rice into sushi!”

“Not so fast! You still need to eat dessert!” The General Guy turned around, preparing a dish. “And for dessert, nothing follows rice up better than… WATERMELONS AND DORITOS!” He held the former in one hand, and a bag of Doritos in the other.

“Does Japan even HAVE Doritos?” Sunni questioned.

“I had this stuff imported from Turkey, don’t patronize me! Just eat your dessert.” He tossed her the food.

Sunni sighed and sat down, using her lightsaber to cut open the melon. “Sunni, you’re really gonna eat that?” Peas asked.

“Why, you think it’s a trap?”

“It wouldn’t hurt to make sure.” Peas jumped into the opening that Sunni cut. The tiny Friend searched within the juicy red insides carefully. Everything seemed in order… until Peas got to a candlelit room.

A penguin was laying in bed with an antelope as romantic music played. The penguin looked up at Peas with shock, baring an angry look. “Out- Get out—GET OUT NOW!”

Sunni saw the distraught look on Peas’ face after he climbed out. “You don’t wanna eat that.”

“I’ll say, THEY FORGOT THEIR BILLY JOEL CD!” General Guy threw a boombox at the melon, shattering it, and injuring Sunni, the antelope, and the penguin in the process.

“That’s it, I’m done playing around.” Sunni charged a Psycho Sphere. “See ya later, Squarebob.” She let the sphere fly and strike the general directly. He was engulfed in an explosion, Sunni brushing her hands off with a victorious air about her.

The smoke cleared, revealing General Guy’s bacon body underneath his robe. “Well-p, you done blewed off my garb. I hope you’re happy.”

Sunni sighed, “You’re gonna make me ask, do all Shy Guys look like this?”
“Not really. Martin is made up of a pill and a bellybutton lint, while Louie Gibbson is naught more than two drivers’ licenses and a hacky sack.”

“Well, I’m glad I cleared that up.” Sunni made a sweatdrop.

“But now that you know my REAL secret identity, I have no choice but to exterminate you!” The General Guy leaped high up into the sky. “Prepare to face the deadliest move of Shy Guy Style! Medium Rare Grill-heat-to-right-temperature Attack!” He spun around and lunged at Sunni bacon-first. The Filipino raised a psychic barrier to protect herself, struggling to withstand as the bacon was about to pierce through.

“Sunní, maybe fighting this guy isn’t such a good idea!” Peas proclaimed. “We should take this chance and get away!”

“Come on, this guy’s just a bunch of talk. I can make a whole harbor out of psychic, you expect me to be afraid of…”

General Rice broke through, entering the bubble shield in the form of dozens of Toothberries from Donkey Kong Returns. “THE HECK ARE THESE THINGS?!”

“Frybits, frybits, frybits, frybits!” The tiny, blue, and sharp-toothed creatures chanted as they bounced endlessly around Sunni with their limbless bodies.

“Why are people so obsessed with those things lately?” Peas questioned, rolling his eyes. “Frybits, frybits, frybits…” They all stopped and faced up at Sunni. “Fryyyyy-BIIIIIIITS!” They all fired Solar Beams at Sunni and sent her flying into the sky.

“OW, D’OW, daaaaah!” Sunni landed on one of Foster’s’ many layers of roof, dropping down other ones before hitting the ground. Sunni held her aching arm as she got to her feet, glaring at the general with anger. “Okay, this fight is losing its appeal. I’m serving chopped tofu for dinner, with a side of bacon!” She drew out her lightsaber and ran at the Shy Guy. “Haaaaaaa-!”

Sunní stepped on a wire that dropped a gigantic empty rice bowl and caught her underneath. She tried to force the bowl off of her with psychic, but it was stuck tight. “What kind of bowl is this?!” She was unable to cut the bowl with her saber. “Some kind of chi-blocked diamonddantium?"

“This bowl is greater than a peasy chi-block!” General Guy declared. “This is a limited edition diet-block that I bought from the hardware store. It feels that your body is lacking in healthy rice and intends to keep you under until you get yo’ belly full! So if you will pardon my absence, I am going to the kitchen to prepare the grand course! I hope you’re hungry, ‘cause I’m gonna stuff ya with so much rice, you’ll be more square than a Christmas present!”

“Your analogies make no sense!” Sunni shouted, her voice muffled by the bowl.

“THEY ONLY MAKE SENSE EVERY OTHER HALF-MOON! But first I’ll sing you a gentle Mexican lullaby. Ahem:” He took out two maracas and began singing quickly, “La CucaRAAAACHA, La CucaRAAAAACHA, eehhhh di adi-adi-aaaa! La Cucaraaaacha, La Cucaraaaaacha, EEEEEHHH-di adi-adi—DON’T YOU COOK-A MY RACHA!” He smashed the maracas against the bowl, ringing it like a giant church bell.

“Nnnnnnn!” Sunni gripped her head from the unbearable noise, feeling her mind spinning.

“Let her go, General.”
“HUHN?!” The General Guy slowly turned his tofu head. President Morgan was standing behind him. “But…But she-”

“She’s not worth your time. Just release her.”

The general huffed with anger. He took out a tiny nail and stuck the very tip under the bowl’s edge. He raised a little pebble above the opposite end. He brought it down lightly—the giant bowl went flying away. The General Guy put his robe, mask, and hat back on before leaving.

Morgan walked over to Sunni as the Filipino sat up on the ground, still holding her aching head. “Since you’re probably wondering, the General Guy uses Bo-bobo Kempo. I don’t know what it is, either. Some kind of martial art that incorporates the Imagination element, that’s the best I can come up with. Don’t peg him wrong, he’s the strongest general in our military. Even I’m afraid of getting in a fight with him. His style works.”

Sunni helped herself up, glaring at Morgan while Peas stood on her shoulder. “So did you pick your new Friend?”

Morgan raised a hand and gestured with her fingers. A tiny pink bunny-rabbit hopped its way over, baring an adorable smile. The rabbit formed wide eyes and metal jaws as an enormous and deadly laser cannon emerged from its mouth. Sunni and Peas stared with colorless expressions that said “Oh sh**,.” Morgan waved away, and the cannon retracted as the bunny hopped away. “You want to see my other ones?”

Morgan led them to the Extremeasaurs’ holding cage, opening the small human-size entrance. Sunni immediately ducked at the cry of Chompjaws, the monster forcefully trying to smash through its giant cage. Morgan bore an emotionless look as she led Sunni through casually, while said girl and Peas were absolutely frightened. Like the foster home, this holding place was bigger inside than it was outside. They all entered a door at the end of this passage, going down a dark flight of stairs. At the bottom, Morgan used her psychic to light the room blue.

Sunni forced herself not to scream. Slifer the Sky Dragon, the tremendous snakelike armored colossus, was asleep inside a cage. He was breathing through both mouths of sharp teeth. “This is the monster that I summoned to attack Cheren. He’s the most powerful and indestructible Friend that lives here, who was created to destroy any and all enemies the summoner sets them against, and any other enemies that should appear. The sad part is that he isn’t actually imaginary. Some kid ripped him off from a card game.”

Sunni and Peas gaped at the monster. They didn’t want to imagine this thing when it was awake. They can’t even imagine how they got him down here. “…You were gonna kill your nephew with THIS?!”

“I was going to stop Slifer before he actually completed his attack, I only meant to scare Cheren. I really didn’t expect that business with Sugar. I mean, I knew about her powers, of course, that’s why I had her transform Spongebob. Too bad she’s gone rogue now.”

“And I suppose you brought me down here to scare me, too?”

“Well… yes, in a way. I can see your progress in making Imaginary Friends is… faulty. Let me tell you something about the Creative Summons. It’s not just about how strong your chi is. It also matters how well you connect with the Friend. Many of these Imaginary Friends’ creators have died, so their essence is being kept alive by the Psychic Chi that flows within here. If they left this house, they would fade, unless they were ‘adopted’ by someone else. That much could only happen if the adopters felt a strong bond with the Friend, and that bond would keep the Friend
solid. Creative Summoning requires such a bond. The Extremeasaurs, for example, like to fight, so their choice friends are ones who can fight. Believe me, even with my power at the time, it was hard, let alone Slifer. But I did it, anyway.”

“I still don’t get this whole thing.” Sunni said, turning away. “Even if these guys are monsters, they’re still called up only to fight. Were most of the Friends here even made to fight? I figure most of them were made to just goof around with their creators.”

“Do not forget these are Imaginary Friends. Even if they take physical form, they’re still imaginary at heart. No matter who they’re adopted by, an Imaginary Friend’s purpose is to make their owner happy, serve them even. And the fact is, real friendships can’t develop between them. They can’t even attempt to act like real friends. Because real friendships have all kinds of feelings, sadness, anger, support, comfort… Imaginary Friends are merely a catalyst for children who have no real friends. But Imaginary Friends will not help them in reality, and in time, those people realize that and abandon them. The Imaginary Friends that live here only stay with their adopters for so long before they are abandoned again. Relying on ordinary children to keep their essence solid will not work for very long. That’s why their only hope is to rely on psychicbenders. Not just for a sake of friendship, but to fight for them, work for them, anything so long as the Friend can survive on their Psychic Chi. What depends, then, is if the Friend can follow the orders they were given. In my case, I need good Friends who can fight.

“What I’m trying to tell you, Sunni, is sometimes people should have their pick in Friends. You can become friends with any real person out there, but Imaginary Friends are a different story. The only Imaginary Friends you should make are any that would suit your serviceable needs. Because, although they would keep you happy, you can never find a real friend in an Imaginary one. Of course, you yourself, Sunni, are looking for Friends who can fight for you. Unfortunately, no Friends match up like the Extremeasaurs, especially that little pea. You can find all the other strong types in the house, but my Friends are superior in power. Sunni, the simple fact is, no matter how much you or your friends try, real or not real, the World Government is—”

Morgan turned and realized Sunni was on her knees, turned away from her. Sunni had lowered her pinky finger to the floor as Peas touched it. Morgan sensed the psychic flow between the girl and the pea. It was a very small flow that fit his size. …Peas shone with a light-blue energy, then he smiled confidently. “I might’ve come here to look for Friends who can fight for me,” Sunni proclaimed, standing up and holding the tiny pea to her cheek, “but I still like a few that I can talk with once in a while!” They both wore vibrant smiles as Peas hugged her cheek.

**Düssenheim, Germany; Goldenweek Residence**

The Goldenweek Mansion was stationed 20 miles from the city of Düssenheim, in a beautiful grassland with few trees and a bright sky. The mansion itself was made of solid reddish-brown brick, two stories tall and 32 rooms. The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. came for a quaking landing in the open courtyard, scraping on the ground and halting just before hitting a hedge. The Sector W7 members stepped out with only minor dizziness, being used to Chimney’s driving. “Well, Dad, I hope you enjoyed the Flying Train Experience.” April said sheepishly to her father.

Galdino Goldenweek stumbled out of the train, hunched over as he felt his stomach twisted. He was a black-haired man that wore slanted glasses, a shirt with blue and white vertical stripes, and yellow khaki pants. He had a droopy face. “If you were going to insist I come to see my brother again, where was the harm in riding a Sea Train?”

“Cause a Sky Train is free and gets the job done faster.” April laughed.

“YAAAAAY!” Mary danced off the train, knocking her hunched uncle aside. “We’re home, we’re
home! I mean, my home, you guys are away from your home, but welcome to my hooouuuse!"

"Whooa!" Apis gaped at the mansion. "This is where you live, Mary? You really are rich!"

"No kidding." Chimney narrowed her eyes at April. "April, how come you never dropped me a few mulas when I needed 'em?"

"Because Euros aren't accepted in Water 7?" April asked with a sweatdrop.

"Then exchange 'em for OUR money!"

Aisa was gazing longingly at the grass. She wore a golden dress, white sandals with green straps, and her cap was absent. A white satchel was slouched over her shoulder, and Aeincha and Mocha peeped out of it when they felt their friend jittering. "What’s wrong, Aisa?" the miniaturized giant asked.

"I wanna take my shoes off and walk in the grass, but April says I have to look classy, or else I can’t go to the gallery." Aisa looked close to weeping. "Do you think they’ll be mad if I’m barefoot just a little bit?"

"I’d be more mad at Chimney for landing a train in their garden." Aeincha said.

"Mother, Father!" Mary skipped up to the front doors and knocked excitedly. "I’m back, and April’s back, and Uncle Galdino is back, and I wanna show you all my new frieeeends!"

Mary’s mother, the woman with brown hair, red eyes, and a red robe answered the door and smiled at her daughter. "Mary, you’re finally back!" She bent down to hug her. "How was your visit to Water 7?"

"It was so much fun! Me and April went to space on our flying train, we visited a music planet where me and a raccoon girl sang karaoke, then a giant monster tried to kill us, then we fought space-pirates on an even bigger train, THEN we flew to America and beat up a man with funny underpants!"

"That sounds like quite the adventure!" Rosa replied jubilantly at her daughter’s imagination. "And… April, hello!" She looked up and saw her niece approach, going over to hug her. "I haven’t seen you in years! You’re such a big girl now…"

"Hello, Aunt Rosa." April blushed, hugging the woman with one arm. "I just thought about showing my friends the place I grew up. Er, partly grew up."

"Look, Mom, these are all the friends I made!" Mary danced around and pointed them out. "This is Chimney, and Aisa, and Apis, that’s Gonbe, and look!" She reached into Aisa’s bag and pulled out the two tinies. "These are their dolls, Aeincha and Mocha! Of course, Mocha’s normally bigger, but now she’s tiny, and they’re so cute!" She pressed them to her cheek lovingly.

"We still have lungs!" they choked.

"It’s wonderful to meet all of you." Rosa smiled politely. They looked in the doorway when Mary’s father appeared, the man with short brown hair, black eyes, wearing a midnight-blue tux. "Alvin, Mary’s back! And she brought April and her friends."

"I thought I heard commotion outside." The man chuckled, smiling at the group. "It’s a pleasure, really. …" He frowned when he looked at the slim adult with the drooped face. Galdino was staring resentfully at him. "Hello, Galdino."
“Alvin.”

“…” The girls felt the awkward silence between them. “Shall we… adjourn inside?”

The friends and adults were at the dining room table after lunch was prepared for them. Gonbe was on the floor and chewing up carrots that were cut up and dropped in a bowl. Chimney, who was wearing a red bowtie on her chest to make her look fancy, was forcefully tugging on her piece of steak in her big teeth. She stopped when she glanced up at Mary’s parents, who stared with curious expressions. Chimney sighed, putting the steak down so she could cut it and eat it like a proper lady.

“We actually expected Mary home much sooner.” Rosa said. “She was only supposed to be in Water 7 for three days, at most.”

“I was, but I was having so much fun with April’s friends, I got sidetracked!” Mary spoke brightly. “Whoopsie!”

“You lose time quickly when you’re traveling in space or demoralizing a country.” Apis commented, eating a pea. “So, uh, COUGHHUAHIsmaryadopted?”

“Apis!” April hissed.

“Oh! Excuse me, Mr. and Mrs. Goldenweek.” Apis smiled with mock politeness.

“Why would you ask a thing like that?” Alvin asked.

“Oh, I dunno. It’s just, neither of you have blonde hair or blue eyes, so I thought it was interesting.”

“Mary isn’t adopted.” Rosa chuckled. “Though we have considered adoption at one point, if I do recall. But April started coming over a lot, so Mary had her for a big sister.”

“Mrs. Goldenweek, did anyone tell you you have really pretty eyes?” Aeincha complimented.

“Well, thank you! You’re a very kind little doll, Aeincha.”

“Heheh, actually I’m a Lilliputian.” She blushed. “If you want, I know lots of good eyeliner that goes with red.”

“Uncle Alvin, Aunt Rosa, we actually wanted to ask you something.” April spoke. “Do you remember the Guertena Gallery you took us to when we were kids?”

“Oh, yes, that place was lovely.” Rosa replied. “I remember those pretty red jewels they were selling at the gift shop. I still have them!”

“I found that museum rather odd.” Alvin spoke awkwardly. “Mr. Guertena had a peculiar mind for… designs.”

“Alvin’s not as appreciative for art.”

“I would say so.” Galdino remarked smugly, sipping a teacup.

“Well, as far as our father was concerned, our work at Adams Tech was more profitable than Galdino’s sculptures.” Alvin informed. “You couldn’t have been surprised when the family fortune was passed to me. Of course, it’s not as odd as Bertrand’s style. …He liked to make sculptures out of his unusually lavish earwax.”
“Yeah, his son makes sculptures at the KND Museum.” April said. “But anyway, me and Mary were wondering if you’d like to take all of us.” Mary’s smile faltered at the inclusion of her name, and she slowed down in eating.

“To the Guertena Gallery?” Alvin asked. “I suppose we could… What’s the occasion?”

“Lately, me and Mary have been having nightmares about it. We don’t know why, but we wanna go there and ease our thoughts about it.”

“It’s not a scary place, is it?” Mary asked, forcing a smile. “It has lots of silly paintings. And there’s a pretty big rose sculpture! Mom, that’s your name, Rosa!”

“It would be nice for a visit.” Rosa agreed. “Alright, then. After we’re finished eating, we can all drive downtown when you’re ready.”

“I hope we won’t encounter any monkeys while we’re there.” Alvin said, standing up as he left the room. “I’m going to call the lab to see if everything’s okay.”

“Who was this Guertena, anyway?” Aisa asked. “Was he a famous artist?”

“Not incredibly famous.” April answered. “He lived in the late 1800s. But I think he died of a heart attack after the century.” She ate a piece of steak. “I wanna paint a picture of it sometimes.”

“Um, Honey?” Alvin called from the foyer. “When did we get a train in our front yard?”

“I’m charging for rides.” Chimney stated. (“Gyom-gyom.”)

**Louisiana Bayou**

Melody and Danny Jackson were calmly rowing their canoe down a murky swamp river. The air was filled with seaweed-green mist that blocked the sky, making the swamp appear dark, even though it was broad daylight. “There’s nothing I enjoy about this.” Danny said, afraid of the lack of sunlight and various sounds of miscellaneous, unseen animals. “Why couldn’t we just search from our C.O.O.L.-B.U.S.? It’s not like a magic tornado would’ve sucked us in.”

“Did you forget how foggy it was from the sky? And I wasn’t gonna fly too low and get gunk all over my ship. It’s safer in Sector X’s treehouse.”

“But why couldn’t they come with us?”

“Because there’s apparently some crazy rumor about monkeys with guns going around and taking over treehouses, and they wanna be around in case they come. Blame Emily for that.”

“Assuming this Mermaid Swamp does exist, what makes you think we’re going to find Manaphy? As far as Oceana’s terms go, this would be the ‘Outlands,’ and an Ocean Prince in a lawless area of his country is asking for trouble. Besides, how does an injured Fairy Princess expect to get healed here?”

“But if the Ocean Prince and a Fairy Princess turned up anywhere else, you’d think there’d be news about it, from anywhere, and at least one or two KND sectors would’ve learned about it. Our best guess is a mysterious swamp that not many people know about. Either that, or some bad guys captured them.”

“So why didn’t we place our bets on GUN first.” Danny asked rhetorically.
Melody and Danny stopped by a large boat that was suspended in a tree. The siblings jumped over to the tree’s ladder and climbed into the boat’s opening. Ancient furniture and fancy decorations made up the interior. An odd smell emitted from the cauldron in the center, where the short, wrinkly woman in the white robe and shades to indicate blindness was stirring a brew. “Can you believe that scruffy old Cranky got away with stealing mah song, Juju?” Mama Odie asked her snake companion. “Twenty years since that failed lawsuit, and I still can’t get over it.”

“Excuse me?” Danny spoke up, knocking the side of the wooden entrance. “I hope we aren’t interrupting something.”

“JUJU!” Odie spun and swung her ladle, the snake ducking. “Why ain’tchu tell me we have guests? I hope you got those magazines off the floor.”

Juju nodded, using his tail to sweep a pile of adult animal magazines under the chair. Melody and Danny were unsure, but they assumed it was okay to walk further in. “Is your name Mama Odie?” Melody asked. “The kids in the treehouse down the river told us about you…”

“Yes yes, you have the right 1100-year-old blind woman.” Odie replied, walking to the other side of the boat to shuffle through supplies in cabinets.

“Good, ’cause we were afraid of confusing you with the other old woman in that mud cave.” Danny joked, earning a giggle from Melody.

“Save your jokes for the news, Danny!” Odie threw her ladle at his head. “Them’s the only kids that’ll like ‘em.”

“Do you know us?” Melody asked.

“Of course I do, Melody!” She turned around, bringing armfuls of colored jars to the cauldron. “You’d be surprised how long a fortune-telling cauldron stays runnin’ in the magic world.” She dropped the items on the floor beside the cauldron. “Even with all the Chocolate Plum Stew I be cookin’ in it! Eh HEH heh he…” Odie opened a pink glass jar and dipped a single eyeball in the soup. She peeped into the jar with confusion. “JUJU!” She screamed at her snake. “Where are my warthog eyes? Did you invite some boys over when I was out walkin’?”

Juju frightfully shook ‘no.’ …He began to lightly nod yes, then more quickly, then he made a sheepish smile and shrugged. (Since he’s a snake, he stuck his back end up to imply a shrug.)

“Then GIT OUT to the swamp and git some MORE! And I don’t want no complaining about them mermaids.”

“Wait, did you say mermaids?” Melody asked.

“Yes, the ones in the Mermaid Swamp. You were gonna ask about that, weren’tchu?”

“Does that mean you know if Manaphy’s there or not?” Danny asked.

“Oh, I can’t see what goes on in the swamp. In fact, not too many humans can. Only animals can find their way through the swamp. They can bring humans along with ‘em, but that’s only if they get through all the predators.”

“Okay.” Danny spoke with mock interest, still not liking the sound of this place. “What’s the science behind that?”

“The mermaids there emit a sound and smell that only most animals can smell or hear, especially fish. That’s how they lure ‘em in. Then legend has it they COOK ‘EM like pork beans!” She
banged her cauldron with the ladle.

“O-kay, we’re gonna go.” Danny tried to walk away.

“Danny,” Melody grabbed his shirt, “that’s the perfect reason Manaphy would be lured there. We have to check it out. Mama Odie, can you lead us?”

“Who, me? I can’t even tell the color of these circles over mah eyes,” she touched her sunglasses, “you think I can git through a foggy swamp? Naw, Juju here can take you. Won’tchu, boy?” The snake nodded. “And they’ll make sure you get them warthog eyes, won’t they?”

“Can we at least have magic charms to ward off evil spirits or whatever?” Danny asked.

“Chill out, whippersnapper, evil spirits only show up every other Monday. Just get your rumpuses over to that swamp—and quickly now! Y’all don’t wanna try traveling this fog when it’s nighttime!”

Melody forced an anxious sigh. “Alright, let’s go.” She allowed Juju to slither up her arm.

“Come on, Melody, you can’t be serious about going in there.” Danny said as his sister climbed back down to the canoe.

“Danny, there’s nothing to worry about, we brought a lantern, and we can protect ourselves with waterbending. Though it might be best not to tell the mermaids we’re royalty.”

Danny released a worried sigh and climbed down to join her. “You’re just not afraid ‘cause you know they’re gonna eat me first.”

Juju pointed his head in the right direction, so the Jacksons rowed the boat into the green mist. Their presence was indicated only by the lit lantern. A crocodile’s eyes were peeping out of the surface of the swamp, watching them.

Deep within the swamp’s green mist was what appeared to be a mountain. The mountain had an odd shape about it, a crocodile head with a crown on top, and two clawed arms reaching forward. If one could see closer through the thick fog protecting it, they would see it wasn’t actually a mountain. It was a fortress. A fortress that had run aground here from the sea.

An eerie breathing was echoing through the halls of this fortress. The master was sitting in his throne, gazing at a glass prison cell where a slim, blue-skinned figure was down on her knees, faced away from him. The teardrop-shaped gem on her back was cracked. A single Kritter – a man-size crocodile on two legs, wearing an open shirt with his crew’s crocodile Jolly Roger – jogged down the fortress halls and arrived at the throne room. The Kritter told his King the news. “Ahhh… I see.” The large crocodile’s deep voice echoed. “Well then… make sure they’re kept safe.” The Kritter nodded and jogged back down the hall.

“Uhhhh Master Kroctus, Sir?” A Klump spoke through the PA. “The guys you were expecting are waiting for you.”

“Good… It’s time for a meeting.”

King Kroctus helped his overweight self off of the throne and trudged down the halls. He lightly shook the halls with his weight, and his red cape blew behind him. The spiky golden crown sat firm on his head. Finally, King K. Rool made it to the meeting room. He sat at one end of the rectangle table. “New and old members of Team Gnaa… I’m glad you all could make it.”
The other people around the table were King Bowser Koopa, Dr. Ivo Robotnik, and Gruntilda Winkybunion. “So… what did you call this meeting for… Miss EiznekCm?” Kroctus looked up at the blonde-haired woman on the opposite end of the table.

The Foster’s stage dragged on a little longer than I planned, mostly ‘cause of the end scenes. You probably don’t need to hear the Foster’s Friends come from the show with the really long name. :P The General Guy is from Paper Mario, with a little bit of General Fishcake from Bo-bobo. And remember Mama Odie from Princess and Frog, she was in Firstborn. Next time, we will maybe go to Termina. L’ars.

…

ORUG JQDD LV ORQJ JRQH

KLV OHJDFB FRQWLQXHV RQ
Chapter Summary

MaKayla and Nerehc take Cheren to Termina to help him master his Demon State.

Anyone up for strawberry milk? Today’s code uses Atbash Cipher, however the letters are scattered.

Chapter 44: Demon State

Foster’s; Extremeasaur Cage

“So you’ve made your first Friend.” Morgan said nonchalantly as Sunni was still hugging Peas to her cheek. “I suppose if you were desperately hungry and had nothing else to eat, he would make a decent snack.”

“Ewww, I don’t like food that screams.” Sunni said. “But Aunt Morgan, haven’t you ever stopped to think, I dunno, maybe Imaginary Friends are more than just a way of entertainment? I mean, these little guys still have hearts, don’t they?”

“Imaginary hearts aren’t the same as real hearts. The only feelings the Friends have are those that the creator feels. They’re made only to suit the creator’s desires. My own siblings, for instance, were the ideal family I’ve always wanted, a brother to fight with, sisters to joke around with, all of them to support me. But in time, I learned to embrace the fact they weren’t real. It may seem like these Friends have natural feelings, but that’s only their illusion. Imaginary Friends.”

“The same woman that attempted to kill, and humiliated her nephew in front of a bunch of rich people, is lecturing me about Imaginary Friends.” Sunni stared reprovingly, as did Peas. “I think I’ll believe what I want about this matter. Aunt Morgan, even if you’re right about Imaginary Friends, they still make kids happy, and they leave a lot of good memories by the time they’re adults. Besides…” Sunni frowned regrettably and looked away, “sometimes you kinda feel sorry for them. They have to rely on their creators or psychicbenders if they wanna survive. They’re forced to be dependent on people. If they had as much freedom as humans did, I’m sure they would want to be more than… ‘entertainment.’”

“Perhaps you’re right.” Morgan replied. “It’s merely the law of nature that was set in place for them. But we can’t change nature. Imaginary is what it is.”

“That’s still no reason to show favoritism for the monsters.” Sunni glared. “If you’re noble enough to pay this place’s mortgage, you’d give your power to all the other Friends, too. Make friends with them, give them a sense that they won’t be forgotten and fade away.”

“I’m not going to waste my time with useless Friends who aren’t even-”

“Then I will.” Sunni declared. “I’ll make contracts with every Friend in this house. I have more Psychic Chi than I know what to do with, I guess I’ll share it.”

“Hm.” Morgan made a wry smile. “Now you’re obviously just making false devotions to imply
that you know better than me. Sunni, I think you do have potential as a psychicbender, so don’t waste it all on these living child’s toys.”

“Or is someone afraid that my army of Imaginaries will kick the crap out of your Extremeasaurus?”

“If you want to exhaust yourself, you can try. But even on their terms, you couldn’t possibly make friends with all of them. I’d love to stay and watch you attempt, but I have business to attend to. Do me a favor and tell Cheren not to break into my parties.”

“Pfft, tell Mom not to sneak him into your parties.” Sunni eye-rolled.

As Morgan was about to walk away, she stopped at this statement. “…Mikaela snuck him into my party?”

“What? No, not my mom, I meant Mom the… person. Th-The Corporate President.”

 “…I see.” Morgan resumed walking. “My mistake.”

They waited in the cell until Morgan’s footsteps faded. “So um, you’re really gonna make contracts with everyone?” Peas asked.

“Sigh, I guess I have to now.” Sunni sighed. “Know a good place to start?”

“SNOOOOORE… shhhhhh…” Slifer the Sky Dragon made a breeze with his snoring. Sunni and Peas looked at the monster, then exchanged a glance with each other.

“Sunni, please don’t.”

“I’m not, I’m not. …”

**Delightful Mansion**

“How many retired supervillains just have a Dimension Transportifier sitting in their house, gathering dust?” MaKayla asked as Cheren was turning on the machine.

“Don’t question it.” Cheren smiled coolly. “Just enjoy the fact that Father’s still in Arctic Prison, which means we have this baby to ourselves.” The machine took a few minutes to power up, but the pink swirling vortex made its presence known.

“Let’s try not to get separated like me and Wendy did.” Kayla cautioned. “The byway is really messed up.”

“Hang on, I just realized something.” Cheren said. “If you and Wendy went to another dimension, doesn’t that mean your Negatives did, too?”

“Oh yeah, I guess so.” Kayla realized. “Nerehc, do you know if anything happened to…” she tried to say her name backwards, “Al-yak-kam and… Ednew?”

“Not really.” Nerehc shook. “Come on, let’s go in.” Without waiting another moment, the three jumped into the portal and surfed through the Dimensional Byway.

**Termina**

They came out of the Transportifier in Father’s mansion in Termina, exiting the house to breathe the similar atmosphere of this parallel dimension. Termina Virginia looked the very same as Hyrule Virginia, same neighborhood, same school, same treehouse over the same Uno House.
“Wanna go say ‘hi’ for me, Nerehc?” Cheren asked.

The Negative shrugged and flew up to the treehouse’s balcony. He cupped his hands on either side of his mouth and bellowed, “RAINBOW MONKEYS TASTE LIKE UNICORN BARF.”

“What?!” a girl’s voice cried from inside. Cheren recognized her. “I’ll have you know unicorn barf is used as ice cream toppings after it’s been cleaned by…” When Kellie Beatles stepped out onto the balcony, she gaped at who was flying over the edge. “Cheren?…”

“That’s Nerehc, Kellie!” Cheren exclaimed, waving his arms for her attention.

Kellie beamed with joy. “Cheren!! Harry, Lissa, Celeste,” she dashed inside, “Cheren’s here, Cheren’s here! Lower the stairs!”

In time, a set of wooden stairs was lowered for Cheren and Kayla to walk up. The three entered the living room where the sandy-blond Stork girl rushed up to greet them. “Yo, dude! It’s been forever since we saw you!”

“Cheren, what’s up!” Harry Uno grinned happily, joined by Melissa Gilligan, Thomas Drilovsky, and Truman Kirman.

“Finally decided to pay us a visit, huh?” Melissa asked.

“Although I guess our location’s pretty inconvenient.” Truman blushed. “Another dimension and all.”

“Good thing we know a shortcut.” MaKayla smiled. “My name’s MaKayla, by the way. Thank you guys for helping Cheren save Miyuki.”

“Well, she was trying to destroy the planet anyway, so… it was our pleasure.” Melissa said. “What’s new with you? Stop anymore moon crashes?”

“Funny story, actually.” Cheren scratched his head.

Nerehc rose up before the camera. “Half an hour later:”

The six Sector V members were wearing derpy faces. “Well, those aren’t things that happen every day.”

“So when Majora turned the moon into a monster and tried to destroy us, that was actually what was going to happen?” Harry asked.

“That’s what Zanifr told me.” Cheren confirmed. “He used Miyuki’s timebending to speed up the moon’s years and power it with dark energy. I don’t actually understand most of what he did…”

“My prediction is that the moons are destined to rupture, one way or another.” MaKayla said. “Majora was only trying to instigate it faster. But the darknessbending was probably his own touch.”

“So are you here to try and stop it or what?” Harry asked.

“Um… kind of.” Cheren answered. “We need you guys to take us to DunBroch Ruins. There’s something there we’re trying to find.”

“You mean that place you went to without us because you were mad?” Thomas remarked.
“Yes, that place.” Cheren stared. “If you aren’t busy, can a few of you take us?”

“I’ll take you.” Melissa complied. “But I don’t want to stay too long. We’ve been a little busy with our own things.”

“Cheren tells us part of the adventure involves time-travel, so that might help.” Kayla replied. “Kind of a coincidence, because I wanted to ask, Cheren, didn’t you have special relations-”

“How DO YOU HAVE TO SEE EVERYTHING IN MY TIMELINE?!” Cheren flushed hotly.

“Heeheehee, okay, okay! …When we’re alone, then.” Kayla smirked.

**KND Arctic Prison**

“He’s in here.” The guard told Dillon, leading him into a private cell. “You have 5 minutes.” He shut the door.

Dillon approached the dark cell slowly. The prisoner inside had thick, mechanical cuffs over his hands, which were chained to the wall. “Doflamingo?”

The leader of Sector DR let his head hang back, an uncaring frown on his features. The blue round sunglasses covered his eyes. “It’s me. Dillon. I know you and I were enemies when we last met… but I wanted to apologize for… for what my dad did to your dad. We can’t deny that what your dad was doing was bad, but… we really wish it could’ve gone differently than it did. So, with that in mind, we’d like it if your team joined the KND again. We’ll make up for what my dad did as long as you help us with our mission. We already forgave your sister.”

“…Is that the best you have to offer me?” Doffy Jr. raised his head. “You seem to have forgotten something. I’m still the Prince of Dressrosa. Even if my father committed a crime, I won’t forgive your father for murdering him. You think simply promising a friendship is going to erase your past sins. But let me tell you something.” Doflamingo got up and walked as close to Dillon as he could before the chains pulled him back. “Even if the World Government is evil… your KND is just as evil. ‘Friendships’ cannot solve everything. You can remember that… Dillon.”

“…” Dillon turned around to walk out of the room. “You can’t blame a guy for trying.” He said before shutting the door.

**Termina; DunBroch Ruins**

Melissa parked the S.C.A.M.P.E.R. on an area of grassland a few miles away from the ruined town (since Cheren insisted the walk was nice and Kayla agreed). On the way, Cheren, MaKayla, and Nerehc told her a few stories about their recent adventures, and Melissa didn’t know whether to feel jealous, or relieved that her team didn’t get involved in so much action. Melissa told them about how Truman’s been feeling very feverish, ever since his Delightfulization during Majora’s attack. “That’s why I don’t wanna stay here too long.” she told them. “Truman is… really important to me, and I wanna be there to help if he needs it. So if you’re time-traveling, I dunno how you actually work that, but…”

“We might need a few more favors after this.” Nerehc noted. “But we’ll fly back to your place first.”

“Alright, let’s go.” Cheren declared. “Hopefully the Warp Gate is still in the town ruins. We’ll go back in time to see Merida with that.”
Stage 52: Ancient Ruin

Mission: Find the Ocarina of Time.

Act 1: The Road

Cheren led the group across the field. It looked the same as when he’d first visited seven months ago. A gray cloudy sky, peaceful grasslands, forests in the distance, but no signs of human life. He walked by a small hole—“Cough!” some gas emitted from it, making him choke. He looked behind to see Kayla and Nerehc trying to catch up, though the two were viewing around at the sights.

“Chereeeeeeen!”

Cheren heard the Scottish girl’s cry in the distance. His heart filled with delight. “Guys, did you hear that!”

“What?” Kayla asked.

“It’s Merida! Merida’s calling me! MERIDAAAAA!” He ran forward excitedly.

“Cheren, wait!” His friends chased him.

“Chereeeeeeen!” Her voice was still faint, but he knew he was getting closer. The ruins of the ancient town were in sight. “Chereeeeeeen!”

He saw her among the ruins, waving her arms, her frizzy orange hair swaying. “MERIDA!”

He jumped a few broken walls, crossed some hills, and stepped over the broken buildings to…Merida’s expression was eerie and cold. She had no legs… the bottom of her green dress was ragged, dangling from her blue ghostly body. “Cheren…” Cheren was deafened to every other sound except a howling wind, but he couldn’t feel anything. He was unable to move, and his vision was centered on Merida, everything else spinning and blurring.

Merida’s eyes became black holes, her face more ghoulish, as she glided toward Cheren and swallowed him in darkness. In a blink, Cheren was in a field of skulls under a red sky. MaKayla’s skin unraveled off of her body before her skeleton collapsed, Aurora and Chris caught on fire and became bones, April Goldenweek’s body melted, Anthony’s limbs were scattered, and Panini’s skin hung on a post like wallpaper. Cheren clasped his head and ran. Chunks of the earth were flying into the heavens, going into rips in space that sucked in galaxies.

“AHHHHH HAHAAHAHAHA, AAAAH HAHAAHAHAHAHA!” Bill Cipher laughed hysterically above all the destruction at a giant size. “WHERE YA GOIN’, Cherry Cakes? The party’s just getting started!”

“BILL!” Cheren glared with malice. “I thought Jessie got rid of you! Why are you back?!”

“You think I’m gonna sleep through the end of the universe (universe universe…)? My master is going to come back to this world, Cherry. I’m just taking a little catnap, but rest assured, I have every intention of GREETING him when he does. But try your best to find those other Keys, it makes great entertainment. Wake me up for hotdogs! Ahhhh hahahahahaha, ah hahahaha…” Bill shrunk into the distant sky as the most terrifying colossus rose from the earth. The demon was a shadow in emerald flames, with a skull for a head. Flashing 8-balls stared at Cheren from his eye sockets. 8888888888888888

Cheren trembled in anger. All of his friends were dead, the universe was coming apart, and there
was nothing he could do. "RRRRRRRRRR!" His body caught on fire, letting his Demon State take over. He flew at the demon like a rocket, and the moment he made impact, the world was swallowed in a great explosion.

Cheren was knocked unconscious for who knows how long. When he awoke, he was still in his Demon State, consumed in anger. He was miles up in the sky, in the center of a massive fiery tornado. Pieces of the DunBroch Ruins flew everywhere, and he was on one, close to a wall. Cheren gasped and ducked under a tree when the colossal figure of Legion peeped over, looking for his prey. "I know you're here..." He went away.

Definitely the Termina Legion. Cheren thought. Oh well. He isn't that tough. I'll get 'im when he doesn't suspect. Cheren progressed across the path—lightning struck, and the ground collapsed, leaving him only able to sidle across the thin ledge. He made it across and ducked under a wall when Legion looked over, and waited until the giant began to turn away before he faced a set of Hookshot targets on floating ruins. Some of the targets were turning in place or shifting left-and-right, making it confusing for Cheren as he latched across. Cheren remained on a turning target when Legion made the loop, not spotting Cheren when the target was turned away from him.

Cheren ducked behind a wall when Legion whipped his direction, after he landed on a foothold. Legion directed his vision left-to-right every few seconds, on either side of this windy shaft. Cheren had to jump in the shaft, whip out his Pirate Sail, and float up. When Legion looked over, Cheren let go of his sail to fall softly in the draft, staying behind a piece of wall, then floated up higher when Legion looked away. Cheren made it inside a building, where Stalfos appeared. The skeletons swung swords at him—fast as light, Cheren zipped behind one and sliced it in half with his flaming sword, then he chopped another one up in multiple directions as its bones disintegrated.

Cheren lit on fire, clutched two more Stalfos’ skulls, and had them turn orange before they popped. The last Stalfos leapt at him from behind, but Cheren shot a fire beam and destroyed him. Cheren burst through the wall and rushed across a straight path while Legion was looking the other way. There were stone pendulums kept suspended by pillars, so Cheren had to blow up the pillars using M.A.R.B.L.E.s so the pendulums could swing and hit Legion’s head. He had to duck under a wall when Legion looked over afterward, but when three pendulums struck him, Legion became dizzy. Cheren was able to run to the pile of boulders on the end of the path, light up the powder keg, and blow the boulders away without Legion catching on.

The giant was about to recover, but Cheren was already running up a stairway leading to his head. “AAAAHHH!” Cheren leapt forth and stabbed the giant in the forehead, then the eyes, then the nasal bridge, he stabbed Legion everywhere with his flaming sword. “You died in the other world, now you’ll DIE in this one! RAAAAAAAAH!”

Cheren sliced his head clean off, watching it fall into the burning abyss. He panted, standing on the edge of Legion’s neck. The burning sky was turning dark, his flames died away. Cheren watched his shadow stretch away from his body, becoming a shaded mirror copy of himself. "I guess a hallucination is better than nothing."

“It’s you again?” Cheren asked.

“Nice to see you, too.” Shadow Cheren retorted. “Y’know, it’s not easy being a shadow, when I finally wanna talk to my master, I expect a friendlier greeting.”

“Pardon me if I don’t feel comfortable with you. You’re the Demon State. The one that never listens to me.”

“I’ve BEEN listening to you, remember? You wanted Doflamingo dead, you wanted Viridi dead,
you want all those operatives to leave you alone. I do what you’re not strong enough to do.”

“But I don’t WANT you to do those things! I’m not TELLING you to, I wouldn’t want you to, not unless I straight-out say so.”

“It’s not my fault that you aren’t clear about it! All I want is what you want, I wanna survive the same way you do, I wanna stop the Apocalypse, I’m just SICK of all those jackasses getting in the way!”

“I KNOW that I want those things, I’m sick of all those people, too! But if we’re gonna beat them, if we’re gonna stop all this, you and I have to cooperate better.”

“That’s the problem, we CAN’T stop it! You’re lying to yourself! You’re trying to chase a dream, I’m trying to help you accept reality, you can’t stop the Apocalypse. That’s why we can’t cooperate, because you’re an idiot!”

“We CAN stop it! If you would just do what I say, you would see!”

“I’ve BEEN doing what you say!”

“No you WEREN’T! You never do what I say when I let you out!”

“You never TELL ME what to do after that, you just tell me to kill somebody and I DO IT!”

“NO I DON’T! Ugh!” Cheren smacked his forehead. “This is ridiculous! We shouldn’t be having this conversation, you’re my shadow—my firebending—or something. You’re supposed to go along with what I say or do, no argument needed! And I’m not talking about what I think, if a person just does whatever they think about, how can they… Sigh…”

“Cheren? Cheren, wake up.”

“What?” The darkness went away. Cheren was sitting on a scorched ground, MaKayla touching his shoulder.

“Finally.” She said. “That hole we ran by had some Nightmare Toxin leaking out of it. Me and Nerehc breathed it, too…”

Cheren looked around. The grassland was black with soot, as were some of the trees in the forest. The ruins of the town were more destroyed, some of it still had small fires. “What happened?”

“She said you jumped into your Demon State while you were hallucinating about Merida.” Nerehc replied. “Tore up everything. Too bad I missed it.”

“Lucky for both of you, I fought out of my nightmare early.” Kayla stated. “Even if I still think about it… Come on, Cheren. The Warp Gate was in town, right?”

“Right…” Cheren rubbed his head, remembering Merida was in the past. He should’ve saw through that hallucination.

The Warp Gate Cheren had used to travel back 800 years was still intact. Just like last time, he struck the Timeshift Orbs with his Time Chi-imbued Master Sword, and the portal spiraled open. The three jumped inside.

The next second, DunBroch Town was restored and bustling with people. The sky was full of gray clouds, but there were large gaps in-between that showed the blue sky and sunlight. It filled their
hearts with delight to see so much people in a land that was once dead. Er, a land that will be dead.

Cheren led them all to the north gates of town, running across the plain between them and the distant castle, which had an unmistakable KND treehouse growing from it. Cheren remembered the first time he was here, helping the soldiers fight through an army of demons and skeletons. DunBroch looked much prettier since then.

There were two guards protecting the front gates of the castle, who were at first quick to deny the strange-clothed kids entry. However, once they examined Cheren, and checked their own posters of ‘approved’ people (Cheren was drawn with a much more proud and manly face than he really was), they shrugged and allowed them all entry.

“So I told Lord Macintosh,” King Fergus proclaimed to his men in the throne room, “Ay don’t mind that yer hair is longer than mine. Ay just wanna know if you’re at least charging the fleas RENT!”

The Scottish men erupted into laughter, which the three operatives were just in time to listen to, smiling in disbelief. “WHAT’D WE MISS?” Cheren exclaimed to all of them.

“Hey, WHO let in a pack of gypsies?” a soldier asked.

“What? Gypsies, you say?” Fergus inquired, looking toward the shuffling soldiers. “Ay hope they aren’t plannin’ to juggle torches in my…” His expression lit up when the kids made it through the crowd. “Hold the phone, boys.” (“What is a phone?”) “It’s… CHEREN! Elinor, look who decided to visit! It’s wee Cheren! And ‘e’s brought a fancy young maid along!”

“Oh, you really are too kind.” MaKayla smiled and blushed, swaying on the spot.

“And who is that boy?” Elinor inquired at Nerehc. “Your twin brother?”

“Yep. We’re two peas and a pod.” Cheren remarked.

“So ‘ave ya decided to marry my daughter?” asked Fergus. “Unless this lass stole yer heart.”

“Fergus, Ay told you they’re too young!” Elinor whispered.

“Ay, me grandfather MaDungus met HIS true love when he was a wee toddler, ‘o says love has an age?”

“Ah ha ha.” Cheren blushed. “Well uh, I’m still reaching a conclusion. I came to see her actually, where is she?”

“She be upstairs in ‘er room. Do ya want me to call ‘er down for ya?”

“No, I… think I’ll surprise her.” Cheren smirked, already going upstairs. “Come on, MaKayla.”

“A’right then. You know, Ay think I can set yer friend up with one o’ the Lords’ sons!”

“I will… see to them myself.” Kayla replied detestably.

In the room Cheren recognized as Merida’s, the Scottish Princess was not there. Cheren only spared a knowing smirk to his comrades and walked onto the bed. Very gently, he creaked the wall passage open, leading MaKayla and Nerehc up a ladder inside a dusty shaft.

They coughed as they emerged above a dusty fireplace, covered in gray as they peeked into the treehouse’s living room. “Willie, did you steal my last Berry Cake again??” questioned the tall boy,
Stephen Macintosh.

“Uhhhhhh...” moaned Willie Dingwall.

“You are much too attached to those things.” Arbur MacGuffin replied, walking by while witling a wood crossbow. “You oughta go on a diet, try some steamed carrot stew.”

“Oh, really?” Macintosh turned to him, “And what’s that blue stuff on yer lip?”

“Ay said you ‘ad to. Ay’m not the one in shape.” He smiled witfully.

“Ya dirty little sneak!” Stephen whipped out a sword. “I oughta gut ya and-”

“You boys are HOPELESS.” proclaimed Merida DunBroch as she marched in. “Ay can’t go ONE day without you burglarizing all the food, and when it’s not you, it’s apparently those Dust Sniffers that go crawlin’ around the fireshaft, just like those three over—” The moment she looked and pointed to the fireplace, three gray dust beings were standing there with wide, querying eyes. “AAAAHH!” she panicked. “They’re real!”

“Geh!” Cheren frantically shook, the dust scattering. “Oh drat, we’ve been cornered.”

Merida perked. “Ch...Cheren!”

“Did I arrive announced?” he winked, and soon found himself caught in Merida’s hug.

“What a surprise! It’s been months, Ay thought ya might have forgotten about me!”

“Oh, I could NEVER... hold on, you didn’t happen to forget me, did you?” he asked curiously.

“Fer...Forgotten you?” She let go.

“Yeah, when... um, tell you later.”

“Ay, who is this?” Macintosh questioned, approaching the other dust people. “Found yerself some weird pets?”

MaKayla shook the dust off, “I’m MaKayla; a friend of Cheren’s, and this boy is Nerehc, his... brother. I think you’re acquainted with my friend, Miyuki.”

“The masked girl?” Merida asked.

“Yeah.” Cheren nodded. “MaKayla’s a timebender, too.”

“You guys are all over the place now, aren’t you? What brings ya here, Cheren?”

“Well, um... it’s a crazy story... but we’re looking for the Ocarina of Time.”

“Ocarina of Time?”

“It’s a powerful timebending relic once used by Cheren’s family.” MaKayla explained. “It was left here by Link during his Terminan adventure, and the Giants left it in the Spirit World. And Cheren... well, he also has a second side of him whenever he grows really angry.” Cheren glanced away in regret. “We planned to help him control it. Are there any areas of this kingdom that are... well, really sacred and spiritual?”

“You mean like the Heavenly Ruin?”
“Hey, hang on.” MacGuffin spoke up. “Durin’ one of me and me dad’s excursions, we found this… really strange temple in the cliffside over Madara’s Chasm. It was the strangest temple we’ve ever seen… doesn’t look at all like one of ours. We didn’t go inside ‘cause we thought it mighta been haunted, and I—er, my dad, was scared.”

“And you never brought this up when I visited?” Cheren asked.

“’ey, this was after you left. Ay dunno what it is, but there was somethin’… ghostly about it.”

“Hmmm…” MaKayla closed her eyes. “Yes… I do feel something. Strange spiritual energy… over a giant chasm. I wonder if the Giants hid the ocarina there.”

“Alright, let’s get goin’.” Nerehc fist-palmed. “Anyone’d like to show us the way?”

“Ay know Ay’m goin’.” Merida declared. “Cause I know Cheren can never survive without meh. Anyone else?”

“No way!” Macintosh said. “You know the stories about Madara’s Chasm: legend tells of a fearsome warrior from a far-off land, took on thousands of warriors and destroyed ‘em in a single blow: by destroying the very earth and sending all o’ them to the Underworld. That’s where the chasm leads, and that’s whom it’s named after: Madara.”

“Yeah, well some dead Scottish warrior’s not gonna scare me.” Cheren spoke confidently. “I’ll cross his chasm like a boss.”

“We’ll have you know Madara wasn’t Scottish.” Arbur informed. “’e was from the east. Japan, Ay think.”

“Big deal, he’s still dead. Let’s get going.”

“Hold the fort, boys.” Merida told her teammates before descending down the fireplace.

After the operatives snuck the princess out of the castle, they headed further north, far behind the castle before they reached a tremendous, foggy chasm. The opposite land seemed miles on the other side. “…So one Japanese guy made this, huh?” Cheren asked.

“Yes.” Merida said. “We’re lucky not to be around back then, right?”

“I’m feeling spiritual energy.” MaKayla said, pointing a little to the left. “Over there.”

Nerehc lit his rocket shoes and soared to the direction Kayla pointed, becoming harder to see as he shrank into the mist. He turned around a corner of the opposite canyon wall, completely unseen. … Nerehc flew back as fast as he could afterward. “It’s there.”

Nerehc carried Kayla and Merida across while Cheren glided using the Pirate Sail, falling far behind as a result. Again, Cheren was never a fan of heights, he hated being suspended above where no ground was visible. He hoped Nerehc would come back and carry him the rest of the way, too. … … … Nerehc was a jerk.

Thankfully, there was enough wind to keep Cheren uplifted, and as he swerved around the canyon, the ledge within the enclosing came into view. He set foot on the grassy ground, gazing at the brownish-orange temple of curious design and structure. It looked like aliens had created it, and didn’t look ruined at all in this era. There were lines of light-blue energy, as well as totem poles with same-color spheres. “There was a reason I felt it so well.” Kayla said. “This place is rich with Time Chi. This must be how Majora made that Warp Gate, and why the Giants hid the ocarina
“But who made this place?” Cheren asked.

“I wish we brought Miyuki. She could see its history.”

“Let’s see what this place has.” Nerehc said. “Catch up later.” With that, he flew over the temple and left his friends.

“CHEATER!” Cheren shouted.

“Come on, we’ll explore this place without ‘im.” Kayla said. “Hopefully their hieroglyphics are easy to read.” (Play “Colorful Mist” from *Naruto: Shippuden*.)

*Act 2: The Temple*

The ground outside the temple was all lush grass, and the structure’s magnificence was complimented by the sunlight poking through the gray clouds. The door was sealed, but the walls on either side had round slots. MaKayla stood between them and shot Chrono Beams from her hands, and the other two gazed as the lines within the entrance glowed blue. The temple door, which bore the design of a Termina Giant, opened. They were led to a small pond area, enclosed within canyon and temple walls, and cubes floated around in midair. Cheren and Kayla stepped into the opening of the first cube. There were Eye Switches on the opposite wall, which Merida could shoot with arrows to make the cubes flip certain directions. If she turned the cubes to drop her friends in the water, they would have to climb some stairs back to the starting ledge and try again.

The puzzle was too complicated for words, but eventually, they solved it and got to the ledge on the right side. Cheren then pulled Merida over with the Hookshot. The grassy path turned a right corner, but Cheren noticed a short stone in the corner with writing.

*If what the man with the strange face says is true, this temple holds the gem of incomparable wisdom and power. With it in my hand, I may finally harness all the inner secrets of our cosmos. To any who should read this stone, if you know my name, I was victorious, and the gem is no longer here. If you do not know me, the gem is truly too powerful for mortal understanding. Heed my words, and turn away.*

-Acnologia

“Sorry, I don’t know you.” Cheren remarked. He hurried after his friends to another water area enclosed within walls. Cheren attempted to shoot part of the water with an Ice Arrow, but the frozen platform melted away in seconds. MaKayla climbed down to the step before the surface and stuck her finger in the water, pulling it out and shaking the heat off. “This water’s piping hot. But it doesn’t look…” She put her finger in another part. “This part’s cold. Mixed temperatures?…”

Cheren shot his Ice Arrow at another random area, and the frozen platform stayed. “Crazy science for the win.” Around the pool were three odd tiki statues with Timeshift Orbs in the mouths. Cheren froze multiple ice platforms for Kayla to jump around, having trouble finding the cool spots. Kayla collected the orbs one at a time and brought them to the small temple room on the far left corner. They were each set in a slot, and Cheren and Merida glided over to join her. The three orbs caused a giant clock to emerge from the floor. It was like the turntables in Cheren and Merida’s adventure, they could stick their swords into individual slots and turn it. The clock hands turned before stopping at 7:30. Lightning flashed before it started to rain.
The sky became darker, and the hot areas of the pool emitted steam. The team was able to swim through the cool route and climb back onto the previous starting ledge. They returned to the pool with the cubes, seeing no other way to go. They decided to dive into this pool, and a tunnel led within the wall underneath. They swam through as Merida used her sword to cut up the Lockjaws coming at them. The tunnel directed upward to a surface within the cave, where a waterwheel was turning thanks to the rain. They grabbed one of the wheel’s pegs and were lifted up to the opening, climbing onto the grassy ground above.

The air was a misty dark-blue under the rain, but they could make out a large area of temple stretching partway over the next field. They walked down a stairway, through a path between the temple walls. They didn’t see it coming through the mist, but a large blue eye opened up on an archway, blasting a blue beam along the ground toward the group. They flipped back and took cover within an enclosing on the right wall. Cheren jumped out, tried to shoot the eye, but did no effect, quickly jumping back before it shot. Merida noticed the sequence of far-apart platforms in this enclosing, jumping up them to get across the wall. She got behind the archway, seeing the opposite side of the eye, and she and Cheren shot both eyes simultaneously to destroy them.

“You know, you never told me why yer lookin’ for this ocarina.” Merida mentioned. “What’s been goin’ on?”

Cheren sighed, “I am really tired of telling people this story. Look, it’s a future thing, you don’t need to worry about it.”

The path led to an open area with a short totem that sat a miniature sun, and a tall totem that had a mini moon. The gate had a glowing emblem designed like the Earth over it. Both totems were stationed in carved paths, so they could only be pushed within those paths. They pushed the totems at a perfect position where the Earth aligned with the moon, aligned with the sun. This solar eclipse caused the rain to turn into snow. “The machinery of this temple is manipulating the weather.” MaKayla observed. “I never thought about using timebending like that.”

The gate opened, allowing them up a stairway. This area was a wide open field with temple walls in every other direction. There were Crystal Switches stationed on pillars, and when struck with arrows, random tiles rose at different heights around the field. The group had to figure out another maze regarding which switches raised what tiles, and some of the switches were concealed inside hollow pillars, in which Cheren had to drop M.A.R.B.L.E.s in from the top. Several pillars had letters on them: in no specific order, they were L I Z M N W V F G H M N.

They had to get MaKayla onto two platforms to grab Timeshift Orbs, then they eventually found the right set of platforms to make a path to a ledge to the next area. This garden was enclosed within canyon walls, and a circle of brown-orange tikis surrounded a circular patch of snow. MaKayla set the Timeshift Orbs into two slots that caused a clock to emerge from a wall. Merida climbed the hour hand that was aiming at the 6, up to the minute hand as she stuck her sword in the gap. She let herself fall, pulling the minute hand with her so it whirled around rapidly and turned the hours. At 12:00, the snow was gone, letting sunlight shine.

“What the heck are you guys doing?” Nerehc asked, sitting atop a cliff before floating down to them.

“Changing nature, what’re you doing?” Cheren retorted.

“Waiting for you guys.”

“We could’ve gotten through there faster if you’d helped.”
“Yeah, but how do you develop?”

“That’s a good question,” MaKayla sighed. “I think… this is the place.” They faced the light-brown metallic circle in the center of the tikis. MaKayla breathed through her nose and closed her eyes. “Yeah…” She stepped out of her shoes and approached the circle. “Alright, Cheren. We’re going to enter the Spirit World from here.” She sat cross-legged, and Cheren sat directly in front of her as they locked hands. “Now, focus. Clear your mind and soul of any obstructions, and our path will be set.”

“Have you ever done this before?”

“Yes. I’ve made regular visits to the Spirit World since I was 5.”

“Wow, really? How come?”

“Oh, something happened, just… It’s nothing.”

“Come oooon. Tell me.” He smirked.

“Sigh, well… Back when we were in kindergarten, we had a teacher named Mrs. Sheryl. That was a time when I wasn’t too into anything, just playing and coloring like a normal kid. She was a really sweet woman, showed me how to draw a bird, she played blocks with me when no one else would… we just had that connection. But then—it happened outta nowhere: a mugger broke into the school; I dunno what for, and found his way to our classroom. The rest of the class made a run for it while Ms. Sheryl held him off, but I stayed behind and watched. He… stabbed her in the chest three times before he ran.”

“Whoa… I’m sorry.” Cheren felt bad about asking her now.

“Well naturally, I was pretty traumatized for awhile, but; that’s when Mom told me about it: the Spirit World. She told me about the place where all people go to when they die, and if I wanted to, I could visit there. Eventually I calmed down after a few months, when I started meditating with her. Then when I was good and ready, we… Ascended.”

“Ascended?”

“It’s when a mortal’s soul is uplifted into the Spirit World before their death. A person that becomes spiritually connected is able to Ascend into the Spirit World as a means of searching into their selves. When I went there, it was the most beautiful thing in the whole world. And my mom took me to find my teacher. …She was teaching a class of 5-year-olds who’d also died.”

“Mmmm.” Cheren noticed the teary smile form on her face.

“Since then, I’ve never been as afraid of dying, knowing we were bound for a happy place. But still… the sight of blood makes me panic. And I couldn’t bear it if someone I was close to died. Seeing that death enabled me to see spirits, and the Hollows as a result. But my bond with Clockwork came naturally. And when I first saw the Apocalypse coming… I knew I had to stop it.”

“And we are going to stop it.” Cheren looked at her with passionate eyes. “We’ll find the Twenty Keys and open the Gate before the Government or Team Gnik have a chance to stop us.”

“Yes… there always was a special fire about you. A fire that can burn through anything. And I know, what lies beyond the Gate will be more fierce and powerful than anything we can imagine. That fire is what will burn it down. I want to help you ignite.”
“Let’s do it!” Cheren gripped Kayla’s hands and shut his eyes tight.

“Don’t get too eager. Only a weightless soul may Ascend to the spirits. Your heart is still filled with anguish.”

“Well, how do I get rid of it???”

“Just relax, and focus… Face your inner demon, and take his soul with yours.”

They sat in silence for several minutes. Things steadily grew silent, things steadily grew dark. MaKayla disappeared. All Cheren could see now were the tan metal circle, the bright green grass surrounding it, alit as though sun were shining, even though everywhere else was pitch-black. Cheren opened his eyes and stood, walking forward with a sure expression. He stopped and looked down when his shadow stretched before him, detaching and standing at his height. His black body alit a tiny amount, to a very dark tone of Cheren’s colors. It glared and spoke in a fashion like Nerehc.

“Back again, huh?” Cheren’s shadow asked.

“Yeah. I’m a bit more calmed down.”

“Yeah, not for LONG. You know you’re just gonna DIE, why not kill yourself?”

“That seems a tad excessive.”

“Look at how much TIME you wasted! You spent 4 months KEEPIN’ this a secret, you got less than 30 days ‘til it happens, and everybody just FORGOT you for a day! You’ve done absolutely NOTHING all this time. Just letting all your buddies run happy and clueless, only to break all their spirits with the fact they’re going to die. You expect any of them to be any stronger before it comes; heck, YOU’RE probably the most powerful kid in your army, and what’ve YOU got to show? How do YOU know what’s going to turn out, if you’re gonna find the Keys, how can you be so sure you’ll save everyone from what you already know is unavoidable? And why are you wasting what’s left of your life trying to?!”

“Because…” Cheren presented the Book of KND from his pocket, “I have hope. The kind of hope only snot-nosed kids are stupid enough to believe in. Fine. I don’t expect to be at God’s level by the end of this month, and I don’t expect everyone else to. All I can do is keep everyone hopeful, and promise them that I CAN stop it. That I can give them a future. That we will all have the power to do our part.”

“That’s IT?! Hope? What do you expect HOPE to do for you?! This isn’t a fairytale where you can just WISH for a miracle, and if your GODS cared a damn bit, they woudla done somethin’ about this. How can you be so sure of yourself?”

“Because…” Cheren stretched a smile as joyous and tearful as MaKayla’s, “because I’m a silly little kid whose parents have rotted his mind with that ideology. And I’ve got such a big ego, I’m the King of the World. And AS King of the World, you oughta do what I say.”

“Like I’ll ever! I don’t serve any king who cries like a pansy!”

“Yes you do.” Smiling mischievously, Cheren wobbled forward and put an arm around his shadow’s neck. “Because we are one silly kid.”

“No we are not!”
“You are Cheren Uno.” He spoke very quietly in his ear.

“I am NOT!”

“We… are Cheren Uno.”

There was something about Cheren like a magnetic pull. That silly little smile that looked so annoying. Thinking he was the King of the World. What people followed him? Those silly little twerps of his that followed his every order. He ordered them to help stop the Apocalypse. Like they could follow such a request. He almost wanted to play along with him. Just try to stop the Apocalypse. Satisfy his twerpy little mind. Heh… if only..

The shadow embraced Cheren in his own hug. He had fallen into his trap. “You are one slick little monkey.” were his final words before his essence dispersed into Cheren. Cheren stared at his arms as they brimmed, feeling his body alight with sun-orange flames. The light returned to the world, as did MaKayla, Merida, and Nerehec, and he raised his fiery arms in victory. (End song.)

Cheren gained control of his Demon State! He has finally awakened himself as a firebender! After accumulating enough energy, he can enter this Fury Mode whenever he likes, but he’ll be exhausted when it ends.

Whirling his arms, he threw them sunward and unleashed a straight ray of flames. “AAAALL RIGHT!! I’m finally a bender like my siblings!!”

“I know, that’s so great!” MaKayla beamed, Merida clapping excitedly in the background. “Too bad you can’t use it now.”

His flames vanished. ”WHAT?”

“Well, now we have to go in the Spirit World. Can’t use bending there. Or your weapons.”

“Aaaaawwwww. But how will I defend myself? Is Fi at least going?”

The spirit emerged, “Master, although I will be able to see your progress from here, I will not be able to assist you directly. I may still provide info for you telepathically.”

“Well… good enough. Let’s do it.”

Both he and MaKayla sat down again cross-legged. “Now… just close your eyes and look inside yourself… find your spiritual center.”

“Siiigh…” He closed his eyes. “Fiiind my center… bееее a spirit… I, am, a spirit… I eat nothing but onions and banana juice… my skin is so shriveled, I’m skeletal… I am an airbender… I am air… I am… wind… I’m bald… I am-“

“Okay none of those things apply to you.” Kayla said quickly.

“Well how the hell am I SUPPOSED to go in the Spirit World?! I don’t have time for all that CRAP!”

“Cheren, every person has their own spiritual center, and it’s never easy to find. Think about what applies to you. Think about what makes your soul, and let that uplift you to the higher realm. What makes… Cheren.”

“What makes… me…” Cheren thought long… but not hard ‘cause he felt like that never works.
What did make his soul… his responsibility as Supreme Leader… his duties to his organization and… to the universe. His mission was to stop the Apocalypse and bring peace of mind to kids and people everywhere. All he desired was a universe where kids can run around and act like idiots, save the world from impending doom in pretend games, not for real. But to achieve such a world… he needed to set the example. In a pretend world where he was crazy overpowered, he can do anything, never giving his enemies the advantage… because he was the big hero who would save everything. He was the hero that was above all the rest… so above, he was the King. Yes… he was the King. The King of… the Whole World. He ruled on high… so very high… as the World’s King… so… above it all… above… high…

His body was gone, for he no longer felt the ground beneath his rear. He was soaring high, high into the sky, past the clouds, past the stars, in a single blur. He had… Ascended.

He had only been to the Spirit World once, er, six times before, when each Giant had been awakened. In those places, he was on a pillar, miles above the ground. Bubbles floated everywhere, columns of water rose from the ground into the sky, and the landscape itself represented whatever world Cheren was in at the time, be it a jungle, ice land, or amusement park. This was… almost like that.

He was on a pillar, miles above the sea of clouds, and columns of water rose miles from where he stood. The sky was very misty and reddish-pink, the sunset, or was it sunrise, in the distance. He had no idea what way there was onto this tower, but several more stood in the distance beyond, all baring gold round tops, and their walls painted in Arabian styles. Since he was just in Scotland, he really questioned how the Spirit World did things. He guessed that no particular mortal area had a set Spirit World, none of it was existent, all depended on the mind, it seemed.

“A report, Master:” Fi’s voice sounded from directly in his mind. “Judging by your soul exiting your body seconds ago, I conjecture an 80% chance your soul has Ascended from its mortal form. You are now in the Spirit World.”

“Yeah, I… see that.”

“MaKayla has requested me to inform you she may not be able to follow you where you have gone. However, somewhere in this space lies that which belonged to Link: the Ocarina of Time. There is a 70% chance this information is accurate. While I cannot assist you directly in this world, I shall be happy to provide status updates when need be. Oh… and Merida would like me to inform you a beetle has crawled up your pants and you may feel a paining sensation upon your return. Master… I wish you luck.”

“DOESN’T MEAN YOU CAN’T HELP IN THE MORTAL WORLD, FIIIII!” (Play “Flip Panel Footpath” from Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker.)

Act 3: Spirit Skies

Cheren was on a platform with a wall too high to climb. There were twin switches that mirrored each other, but Cheren couldn’t press both at the same time. There was a tile within the gap in the wall, which Cheren assumed would rise if both switches were hit. He heard a faint sound, nervously moving away when a cloud of bluish-gray smoke chased him. The smoke PUFFED, and a glowing ghostly mummy appeared. The gaps under his white wrapping were dark-blue, and a little opening showed his beady light-blue eyes. He was shaped like Cheren. “Uh… Fi?”

“Target locked: Mummy-Me. A type of mummified Duplighost who, like others of its kind, can take the shape of whomever it comes in contact with. While their mummified appearance makes them unlikely to deceive anyone, they memorize every movement the mimickee makes and follows with
haste. If a Mummy-Me catches up with you, Master, you will suffer damage. Should you be over a dangerous chasm, you will take the fall. I’d advise you keep track of your own movements and be ready to dodge them, Master.”

Cheren ran in circles, looking backward, and the Mummy-Me mimicked his actions precisely. He quickly ran back-and-forth between the twin switches, so when Mummy-Me mimicked, both switches were pressed, and Cheren quickly jumped onto the rising platform, then climbed to the ledge. He faced a chasm of floating spinning tops, running around his foothold when the Mummy-Me climbed up. When the first top spun over, Cheren jumped on, trying to maintain balance as he waited for it to float back over, while also avoiding the mummy. He jumped to the next top, and from there, he had to swing between two floating ropes of energy balls.

He had to alternate heights on the ropes when the Mummy-Me was swinging with him. When the top spun over, Cheren let go, and waited for this top to carry him to a path within the walls of a tower. He hurried through with the Mummy-Me hot on his tail. He followed a narrow, snaky path and pressed a switch, but with the mummy behind, Cheren had to Wall Kick up and over him to escape that dead end. Cheren ran down another road, climbing a ladder that appeared on the wall, due to the hit switch. Parts of the zigzag ladder sunk in and out, Cheren waited impatiently for them to appear, having to stop every half-second so the Mummy-Me would move slower.

At the top of the ladder, Cheren sidled across a thin ledge along the wall, stopping to let the Snapdragons snap, but moving quickly afterward to outrun the Mummy-Me. He could safely run when the path became wider, pressing a switch at the edge of the chasm. A platform activated down below, so Cheren jumped down to let it slowly carry him across. It stopped every few seconds to let the Mummy-Me catch up; Cheren grunted at this troll move. He shifted to different positions of the platform to avoid the mummy.

Eventually, the platform brought him to a very tall, thin tower, where Cheren jumped his way up a series of rotating platforms. The pattern was set where if a platform was horizontal, the next was vertical, so Cheren had to stand on the edge of each one before it turned vertical, then jump onto the next one, without letting Mummy-Me catch him. The next part of tower had in-and-out platforms, which followed an odd sequence that required Cheren to step back to previous platforms before the next ones would stick out. Cheren then quickly, but carefully sidled up another thin ledge to reach the top of the tower. A Snapdragon surprised him, but he missed it by an inch, kept sidling, and got onto the tower before Mummy-Me caught him. The minute Cheren grabbed the shiny blue ocarina on the pedestal, Mummy-Me poofed into nothing. (End song.)

Cheren got the Ocarina of Time! This was a treasured artifact that belonged to Link in his era! Its notes can create many a mystic effect.

The ocarina felt warm in his hands. He sensed a strange energy coming from it. He held it close to its heart, embracing in its warmth. The Spirit World around him blurred, he felt his soul flying quickly across the misty sky. The next second, Cheren was on Earth, in his body, with his friends.

“…YOOOOOOOWW!” Cheren felt the stinging pain in his leg.

“Oh, come on, ya big baby, Ay wasn’t THAT hard!” Merida said.

“Do you have the ocarina?” Nerech asked. Cheren stood up and reached into his pocket. He pulled out the shiny blue instrument.

Fi came out. “Master, I can safely tell you with 100% assurance, this is the Ocarina of Time Link possessed. Link’s spiritual signature is still very clear upon its shell. Master… if you would, I would like to hear you play it.”
“Haha… okay.” The three kids and spirit smiled eagerly (except Nerehe), excited to hear the ocarina’s mystic notes. Cheren took a calm breath, put his mouth over the reed, and blew.

_HREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!_ It was the worst sound they ever heard.

“Sorry!” Cheren grunted. “Let me cover a different hole. Huuuu—” _REEEEEEEEE-

Nerehc swiped the instrument away, “YOU CAN’T PLAY!”

“I could play the Spirit Flute, how is this any different?!”

“You just need a little practice,” MaKayla blushed, chuckling. “Or maybe let someone else. Anyone can use it, right?”

“Affirmative.” Fi said.

“I guess we should go back to the future now.” Cheren figured. “Melissa’s probably getting tired. So, Nerehc… what did you say you needed this for, again?”

“Merida…” The boy in question faced the Scottish princess. “Didn’t your friend say that Madara lived in Japan?”

“Um… yes?”

“Where, exactly?”

This chapter was a lot shorter than I expected. Convenient! XD If I squeeze in enough stages, I could make Guertena Gallery the 57th stage. But it wouldn’t matter. ;3 Next time, we’ll adventure Mermaid Swamp. G’day.
Old Legends

Chapter Summary

Nerehc Onu travels back in time to meet Madara Uchiha. Meanwhile, AlyakAm takes Truman Kirman to an ancient tomb.

Like I said before, this chapter comes after Chapter 44 of the Main Story, and actually continues from it. So if you don’t remember, skim through it if you want. XP But I’ll throw in a quick recap just in case.

Chapter B-23: Old Legends

DunBroch Kingdom

After retrieving the Ocarina of Time from the Ancient Ruin, the team of Cheren, Kayla, Nerehc, and Merida returned to DunBroch. Using the ocarina, Nerehc played the Song of Soaring, which Cheren memorized, as it would warp them to the owl statue that he activated in DunBroch long ago. The four kids were encased in a pair of giant wings, which spun around, and within seconds they were whisked to the statue in the middle of the town.

“Wow, it actually worked!” Cheren beamed. MaKayla and Merida were dizzy from the experience.

“What other manner of witchcraft haven’t you showed us?” the princess asked.

“So Nerehc, why are you suddenly interested in this Madara person?” Cheren asked, regarding Nerehc’s question before they warped.

“You mentioned having confronted Ragaj Gnik.” MaKayla noted. “Did he have something to do with it?”

“Yes.” Nerehc nodded. “Ragaj showed me visions of some people—I think they were the Thirteen Darknesses. And in one of them, two Japanese guys were having a face-off… and I heard the name ‘Madara.’ So Merida, how much do you know about him?”

“Only as much as my dad and Macintosh told me.” Merida replied as they headed to an alleyway, away from the noisy townspeople. “He was a Japanese warrior that came here from the Land of Fire 200 years ago. Like Macintosh said, thousands of warriors fought him, but he destroyed them all.”

“Two hundred years?” Cheren raised a brow. “That’s awfully recent. A bit too recent to be a ‘legend.’”

“Well, the thing is, everyone was destroyed. No other witnesses lived to tell the tale. But Madara survived and that giant canyon just appeared. Everyone who came to see it believed Madara was responsible.”

“So then what happened to him?” Nerehc asked.
“Another Japanese man appeared and chased him away… so the legends say. I can’t tell ya any more than that because I don’t know.”

“Another man…” Nerehc rubbed his chin. “The two men from my vision…”

“What did they even look like?” asked Cheren.

“Well, one of them was wearing a silver headband… It had a symbol like a swirl… with a little point.”

“Your descriptive powers are sensational.” Kayla remarked.

“Hey, I only had a second to look at it!”

“Wait!” Cheren reached in his pocket. “Did the symbol look like this?” He pulled out his Hidden Leaf Headband.

“IT IS!” Nerehc recognized the symbol.

“Oh, yah.” Merida remembered. “You use that to turn into a ninja. Fuh-reakyyyy.”

“I got this headband from the Land of Fire in Japan.”

“Then that’s where we should go.” Nerehc decided. “If Madara is a Darkness…” He looked at the Ocarina of Time in his hand, “then I need to meet him.”

Fi jumped out of the Master Sword. “Master Cheren, based on these words, I conjecture an 80% chance Nerehc intends to use the Ocarina of Time to travel back to a time when Madara was alive. The ocarina does possess the potential to travel through many periods in time. However, in order to set a specific time and date, certain requirements must be fulfilled.”

“What kind of requirements?”

“It may suffice you to know that the Master Sword and the Ocarina of Time were created from the same Timeshift Stone. If I could examine an object that has existed since a certain time period, I could trace the object’s history and transfer the recorded data to the ocarina. Afterwards, by performing the Song of Time, one would be able to travel to a previous point in time in which that object existed.”

“Like if we found something of Madara’s… We would be able to travel back one thousand years in our time.” Cheren figured. “Let’s return to the present and go back to Sector V. We can rest up and then fly to Japan. If Madara was famous in his own country, there would have to be one or two historical artifacts lying around.”

“Well, this adventure was fun while it lasted.” Merida sighed. “It was great seein’ ya again, Cheren.” She smiled and waved. “I’d like to join you, but Ay have NO idea what you’re doing, and it’s probably too much to explain.”

“You have nooooooo idea.”

**Present time; Termina Sector V**

“This is the Ocarina of Time?” Harry Uno held and examined the shiny blue instrument.

“Oooo, so prettyyyy!” Kellie Beatles took it, her eyes sparkly. “Can I give this to my Uncannily Sky Blue Rainbow Monkey?”
“You know, whatever happened to that magic flute thingy you used to have?” Celeste asked.

“I gave it back to the Mask Man after we returned home.” Cheren replied. “Nerehc wants to go back in time and find somebody called Madara.”

“You’re trying to find Madea?!?” Thomas exclaimed.

“No, silly, he said ‘Madara!’” Kellie giggled. “He was a Japanese warrior from the Land of Fire!”

“You know about him, too?” Nerehc asked.

“Of course! He was my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather!”

“?!?” Cheren and Nerehc shared the same aghast expression.

“Aaaaaaaaand I’m just kidding.” Kellie said after a minute and a half. They were able to unfreeze their faces. “But he is related to my pen-pal from Sector LF, Sarada.”

“Really? Then maybe she can help us.” Nerehc said. “Fy said we needed certain requirements to go back in time.”

“It’s pronounced ‘Fee.’” Cheren corrected.

“She’s a spirit girl who speaks gibberish and whose name is only written. I’ll pronounce it however I want.”

“So you won’t mind if I start pronouncing you ‘Neerehc’?”

“Cher-REN??”

“I don’t…” Harry Uno and the others stared confusedly. “I don’t know what they’re talking about.”

“Never mind.” Cheren sighed. “I’m guessing Sector LF is in Land of Fire? How come we didn’t meet them during the Majora thing?”

“Well, they are a ninja sector.” Melissa said. “Not like we can just show any interdimensional traveler their location. But you’re cool now, so don’t worry, Cherry.”

“Uh he…” Cheren flushed, remembering his awkward moment with her in the Tortuga journey. “Well, as soon as MaKayla’s done in the bathroom, we can head on over.”

**Bathroom**

“I thought part of being spiritual was not needing to use the bathroom as much.” Kayla said to herself as she washed her hands. “Heh, as if. I need my girl time.” She splashed water over her face and washed it. “Gotta stay awake, too. We’re starting to find real leads in this quest. I wonder if the Ocarina of Time can-” She opened her eyes and looked up at the mirror.

“Hello.” Truman Kirman was behind her.

“HEEEEYY-YAH!” Kayla instinctively kicked back and stomped him in the stomach.

“OOOOOF!” Saliva flew out his mouth.

“What the heck?! I thought this was the girls’ room!”
“It is… ack!” He coughed. MaKayla pulled her foot back. “My name’s Truman… Nice to meet you.”

“Hello, Truman… Why the heck are you creeping on me?”

“I saw you come in here and you… I thought you smelled nice.”

“…” MaKayla inched toward the door. “So, I will just… let you finish in here… and we will never talk about this… ever.” And she left.

Truman approached the mirror and stared at his reflection with half-closed eyes. He was completely motionless, like his reflection was just a picture. Then the mirror wobbled like liquid—Truman gasped and backed away. MaKayla climbed out of the mirror… but she held no emotion on her face, and the letters on her shirt were ‘AM.’ “I will assume I smell bad by that logic. But that’s okay.”

**Sector LF; Land of Fire, Japan**

Melissa flew Cheren, Nerehc, Kayla, along with Kellie to Japan. They landed in the forest a few miles away from the Hidden Leaf Village before stepping off the S.C.A.M.P.E.R.. “Thanks for driving us, Melissa.” Cheren waved.

“My pleasure.” She said with a mocking smile. “It’s always fun to be the chauffeur to the heroes saving the world.”

“Uh…” Cheren felt a tad guilty by that remark. “Well, you could come with us.”

“Nah, I’ll just guard the ship.”

“…Seriously, I’d feel bad if we treated you like a minor-”

“Just come on!” Nerehc grabbed his Positive and pulled him with.

“So where’s Sector LF?” Kayla asked as they followed Kellie up a hill. “I don’t see any treehouses.”

“You don’t expect them to have their base out in the open, do you?” Kellie questioned. “They’re ninjas! They gotta be seereeet.”

“Like Sector GF.” Cheren recalled. “Or even Sector JP. Before they… stopped being a spy sector.”

Kellie stopped at a tree that was slightly bigger. She knocked the trunk with a special sequence before a hatch opened. They followed her in climbing down a ladder into the dark hideout. They set foot on a floor that they couldn’t see, so Cheren used the light of his Master Sword to see.

“What is this?” he whispered.

“Hi Sarada, it’s me, Kelliiieee!” The girl grinned and waved. “Don’t worry, they’re my friends!”

They all heard loud **WHISH** sounds—MaKayla used timebending to freeze the incoming kunai in time, then Cheren slashed them out of the air.

The lights switched on. There was a pale boy with yellow hair and pale green eyes crouched behind a cardboard bush. There was a shadow on the ceiling, and a boy with spiked black hair was peeping out of it with narrowed dark-green eyes – a shadowbender by the look of it. “Shikadai, Inojin, come on out.” A black-haired girl with black eyes, red glasses, and a red sleeveless shirt
uncovered her cloak that camouflaged her with the floor.

“You knew it was Kellie, why do we always have to set this up?” Shikadai said, dropping from the ceiling. “What a drag…”

“Kon’nichiwa, Sarada-san!” Kellie greeted happily.

“Kon’nichiwa, Kellie-chan.” Sarada returned in a more casual tone.

“We don’t understand them.” The other three chorused.

“Wait, but I have this!” Cheren put on the Hidden Leaf Headband and magically turned into an adult ninja. “Kon’nichiwa!” He spoke with a deep, cool voice.

“Kellie, who are these people? You know we don’t invite strangers to our treehouse.”

“I know, but they’re kind of on an important mission. See, that’s Cheren, who can transform using magical masks, that’s his parallel-universe twin Nerehc, and that girl is MaKayla, she can control time. Oh, they’re also from a different universe.” Kellie explained with a casual grin.

“Can you translate for us, Cheren?” Nerehc asked.

“Yeah, they probably think Kellie’s crazy now. Look, I hate to cut to the chase, but Kellie said you could tell us about someone named Madara.”

“Madara?” Sarada repeated in surprise. “Why do you want to know about Madara?”

“It’s just important to us, alright?”

“You can trust him, Sarada.” Kellie promised. “I know he looks like a creepy ninja who can turn into a boy, but he helped us save the world a few months ago!”

“Oh right, when the moon was falling.” Inojin said tonelessly, drawing an ink picture on his scroll. “Here’s what I thought it would look like.” The picture depicted the moon, with its giant face, munching the Earth like a cookie.

“Well, Madara was my ancestor.” Sarada explained. “He was a patriarch of the Uchiha Clan that lived a thousand years ago.”

“Before he came back to life 20 years ago and tried to kill everyone.” Shikadai said in a laid back fashion.

“Twenty years ago?” Cheren was familiar with that time era. “That’s… something worth discussing.”

“I don’t really understand it.” Sarada continued. “I mean, according to our recent history, Madara came back to life, and he fought the hero of our village, Naruto. Madara was destroyed, but then, all of a sudden, Naruto just… disappeared. No one knows how it happened or why. But Naruto earned the title of ‘Hokage’ in honor of his memory. Pretty stupid if you ask me.”

“If he’s your ancestor, then you must have something that belonged to him.” Nerehc imputed. Cheren translated this to Japanese.

“Well, she has a ton of swords in her room.” Shikadai smirked, gesturing back with his thumb. “And there’s a rusty-looking one hanging on the wall.”
“I TOLD YOU NOT TO SNEAK IN MY ROOM!” Sarada flustered.

“Wasn’t me.” The boy sunk into his shadow.

“I think he does this.” Inojin drew a picture of Sarada changing clothes and Shikadai peeping from a shadow.

“Ugh! Yes, I do have an old sword, and I think it did belong to Madara. If you wanna see it, then by all means, come along.”

Sarada led them all to her room, where the walls were lined with all types of swords. She showed them to one hung on a plaque on the wall, a rusty-looking ninjatō. Fi leapt out of Ninja Cheren’s shuriken – scaring the Sector LF members. “Master Cheren, after a thorough three-second analysis, I have determined that this sword is approximately 1300 years old. By transmitting the data to the Ocarina of Time, you will be able to travel back to any date within those 1300 years. Also, by playing the Song of Time backwards, you can return to the present.”

Cheren took off the Ninja Headband and turned back into a kid. “And we have to play the Song of Time, right? I think it went like-” He took the ocarina back from Nerehc and played —HEEEEEEEE! Everyone clamped their ears shut.

Nerehc swiped it back. “Just hum the tune and I’LL play it!”

“Wait a second, just what are you doing exactly?” Sarada asked.

“They wanna go back in time and meet Madara!” Kellie answered

“You can seriously do that?!” Shikadai exclaimed.

“How do I pinpoint exactly where I want to go in time?” Nerehc asked. “I mean, WHEN I want to go…”

“If you have a specific date in mind, Master Cheren’s Negative, I may telepathically affirm the date to the ocarina.” Fi said.

“You can? Hmm… Then I want to go back 1,050 years. Just to see what happens.”

“You’re going by yourself?” MaKayla asked.

“Well, you’re a timebender, so in case I don’t come back soon, you can probably help do something. For now, I wanna try and meet Madara myself. So, how does the song go?”

Cheren sighed, still not sure about this plan. “Like this:”


Ooooo-ooooo-aaa-ooooa-oooo… Fi hummed the song with her majestic voice as Nerehc played it consistently. A column of blue light encased Nerehc and made a mystic whirring sound, growing brighter as the others covered their eyes. Nerehc found himself falling into a white abyss of clocks, going faster as the years passed.

In a forest…

The blue spire of light released Nerehc in a forest. It was sunny, and a gentle breeze rustled the leaves. Nerehc heard a noise coming from up a hill, so he walked up to investigate. Nerehc peeked
over the top of the hill, viewing the bloodstained battlefield where two armies of ninjas killed each other left and right.

Somebody snuck up from behind Nerehc with a sword drawn. His sandaled feet scurried across the grass, footsteps drowned out by the screaming armies. When he was going to stab Nerehc in the back, Ghirahim popped out of the Devil’s Sword and countered with his own blade. “HUAH!” Ghira slashed, and the assaulter jumped back. He was a boy about Nerehc’s height, black spiked hair and dark eyes, wearing a dark blue robe with a white sash. “You drop your guard way too much lately.” Ghirahim smirked.

Nerehc grabbed his sword and raised it against the kid. The boy ran up to swing his sword, but Nerehc fought back, and his superior sword knocked the kid’s away. The boy narrowed his eyes at the strange kid and his diamond-skin accomplice. “…Anatahadare?”

Nerehc felt like he got shot in the brain. “DAAAAAH I DON’T KNOW JAPANEEEEEEESE!” He gripped his head and flailed frantically. “Cheren’s been translating all this time, now it all sounds like Gobbledegook to me, I’m gonna look like such a stupid head in this damn feudal Japan period!”

“Master Nerehc, I speak Japanese.” Ghirahim said.

“Ya do?” Nerehc stopped instantly.

Ghirahim turned to the boy and spoke in Japanese: “Greetings, I am Demon Lord Ghirahim. This is my master, the Demon Prince Nerehc. We possess dark powers and the ability to create an age of torment and everlasting doom.”

“… . . . AAAAAAHHHHH!” The boy dashed away with his arms raised. Ghirahim splorped over and grabbed him by the shirt, raising him. “Not a good opening line?”

“Hey, calm down!” Nerehc shouted, standing in front of the kid. “Listen, we’re looking for someone named Madara. Know anyone like that?”

After Ghirahim translated, the boy looked at him curiously. “Madara?”

“Yes, Madara. Familiar?”

He pointed at himself. “I’m Madara.”

“You?”

Ghirahim set the kid down. “Uchiha Madara.”

“…” Nerehc stared at him for a minute. “You can’t really be one of the Thirteen Darknesses. You’re just a kid.”

“So are you.” Ghirahim remarked. “Everyone is born a child, Master. It doesn’t mean they can’t grow into demons.”

“The only thing demonic about him is his hairdo. You swing your sword like an old lady.” He snapped at Madara.

“I’ll have you know my grandma killed hundreds with that blade alone!” Madara retorted. “Now what’s your business here! Are you really demons?”
“Yeah, kind of. Humanity is really messed up in the future.” Nerehc replied casually.

Madara blinked. “The future?”

“Yep. We’re time-travelers.”

“…How did you say you knew my name exactly?”

“Well, you’re kind of famous in the future. You… Why is he famous again?”

“You blow up a canyon.” Ghirahim said. “Heh, pretty famous if you ask me.”

“Why did you come here to meet me?” asked Madara.

“Well, we—er…” Nerehc wondered if it was safe to tell him about the prophecy. “Er, we wanted… to learn more about you.”

“What do you want to learn about me? You just said I was famous.”

“Yes, but I don’t know very much about you.”

“Then HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT ME?!”

“YOU BLEW UP A CANYON!!”

“ENOUGH!” Ghirahim shouted. “It’s bad enough being your two-way translator, but I won’t be the consolidate for your ARGUMENT!”

“Sorry, sorry! Ugh…” Nerehc pinched his temples. “I can’t focus with all this yelling going on. Do you know someplace else we can talk?”

Madara glared in the direction of the battle, then faced further in the forest. “This way.” He went to get his sword before leading them.

“Those two armies are the Senju Clan and Uchiha Clan.” Madara explained as they arrived at a river. “My dad is the head of the Uchiha Clan. I don’t even remember why we’re fighting.” He picked up a rock and chucked it at the river, resulting in a splash. Nerehc thought he intended to skip the stone. “If you’re from the future, you must know how this battle ends.”

“Ehh… Not really.” Nerehc said sheepishly.

Madara looked at him suspiciously. “You’re a weird time-traveler. Where in the future did you say you were from?”

“The correct terminology would be ‘WHEN am I from.’”

“HAH HA HA HA, HAH HA HA HA!” Madara clasped his chest. “That is the funniest thing I EVER heard!”

“I know, right?” Nerehc chuckled. “Ahh, in the past, everything is original.”

“Ha ha ha!” Madara calmed down and spoke more seriously, “So, what is the future like? You said humanity was messed up.”

“Oh yeah, oh ye…” Nerehc waved a hand in the air, collecting his thoughts as though his mind fogged for a second. “Like, humans started getting with demons and having human kids with dark
powers, and I think this angel hooks up with this half-demon kid – even though he looks nothing like a demon, it’s pre-tty fun-ny!” He started chuckling.

“??” Madara was baffled. “Humans, demons, and angels… live together?”

“Um… sort of? There’re also mermaids, aliens, and these little chipmunk guys that live in the grass.” Madara looked at the ground, possibly intending to spot these ‘chipmunk’ things.

He looked back up at Nerehc. “Would you show me this future?”

“Huh? Um… I’m not sure if I’m allowed to do that.”

“Yet, you’re allowed to come back to the past and talk to me?”

“Good point.”

“Master, may I have a word with you?” Ghirahim requested.

“Sure… Excuse us, Madara?” Nerehc said awkwardly. The Japanese boy simply watched as the two strangers walked a few feet away. He couldn’t eavesdrop on their English conversation, anyway.

“Ghirahim, if you’re gonna complain about being our translator, I don’t wanna hear it.”

“I’m bored out of my mind, Master! You’re not getting anywhere with this brat! I hoped for at least an action stage by now. If you’re not going to mention the prophecy to him, how do you plan to find out if he is one of the Thirteen Darknesses?”

“He might not even know what I’m talking about if I mentioned that! Based on Ydnic and Ikuyim’s stories, Davy Jones and Yellow Diamond didn’t seem like they knew anything about the prophecy. They just read some Gibberish Pyramid and… ‘awakened’, I’m assuming?”

“So, ask him if he’s seen any such pyramid.”

“I will, but we can’t just leave it like that. We need to try to learn more about this. You remember how Medusa acted back on Moonbase. She really doesn’t seem to know what’s going to happen, she might not even understand why the Darknesses were chosen.”

“Davy Jones and Yellow Diamond were evil beings who did evil things in the past. The Darknesses may bear similar fates. This Madara boy is no different.”

Nerehc faced the boy in question. “…But what’s the source of his darkness? I wonder…” He approached Madara again.

“Stop playing games with me, Stranger.” Madara stated. “I’m starting to have doubts about you. Why did you really come here? Where are you really from? Tell me the truth.”

“…” Nerehc was silent for a second. “The truth is I’m from a really hectic future. It’s so hectic that I wonder how it got the way it was. It makes me wonder what the past was like. …I may not know what you do in the future, but the fact is, you become a legend, Madara. So I want to ask you… is there something that you want more than anything else in the world?”

“…You said you were a demon.” Madara turned away. “A demon wouldn’t understand.” He ran off with wind-like speed.

“HEY!” Nerehc kicked on his Rocket Skies and raced after him, Ghirahim keeping up on his own
swift feet. They ran into a deeper, thicker part of the forest where the sun could only poke through in little rays. Nerehc kept his eye on the spike-haired boy—he halted immediately when Madara whipped around and held his sword up.

“The battle hasn’t come this far, yet.” Madara said with a glare. “This forest is where the spirits live… Any demon who enters here will drown in their light. Let’s see if you can get through.” He ran forth once again.

“Man, you’re annoying.” Nerehc held his sword up, summoning Ghirahim back inside. (Play “Sacred Grove” from Zelda: Twilight Princess.)

Stage B-19: Lost Woods

Mission: Follow Madara.

Nerehc chased Madara through a straight and narrow path—Madara turned a sudden left path, but Nerehc kept after. He jumped up a set of tree branches, which would allow him to grab a zipline vine that stretched leftward and set him on an upper path. This route was narrow, and would turn into an abyss with a path on either wall to go across. Nerehc jumped on the left path as did Madara, and he would hit a mushroom that sprung him down right. Nerehc landed on a rail and grinded over the abyss, but when it was about to slope down, Madara jumped on an upper rail that just appeared, so Nerehc followed.

The rail sloped up right and set them on a snaky path between close walls, in which Nerehc lost sight of Madara, but this was no problem on the linear path. The forest became foggy, and Nerehc inevitably lost his lead at a fork in the road. Both routes had bushes, and since one path’s bush was waving, he assumed Madara took that way and followed it. He came to a three-way fork, where one of the paths had a stick snapped in two, so he took that way. Another three-way: the middle road had a torn bush—but the road on its right had a cloud of fog that seemed to be reforming. Madara likely tried to trick Nerehc into taking the middle route, but Nerehc took the right.

The fog cleared as Nerehc came to a cliff with two vines. He saw Madara swimming in the pond below, so Nerehc grabbed the right vine and swung after him. He landed on a shore, chased Madara through a narrow path, and then had to Wall Jump across a chasm. He avoided the steam that erupted out of holes in the sides, maneuvered up, and followed Madara through a hole on the right. The forest became more wide and open as Nerehc skied around trees and jumped logs and holes. Madara listed leftward, then right, grabbed a vine to swing across a pit, while Nerehc had to glide across with jetshoes. Madara jumped up some platforms that led up to a cliff, and Nerehc almost missed seeing him jump to a lower, hidden platform on the right, leading to a secret path within the wall. Nerehc bypassed a garden that had a large blue cube with a depiction of the sun shining rays down below. He headed through another clearing of trees. (End song.)

Madara had finally decided to stop, glaring at Nerehc as the latter caught his breath. “Well, look at that.” Nerehc panted as Ghirahim came out to translate him. “I didn’t drown in any holy spirit light… huff… at all! Now, I asked you a question! What do you want more than anything else?!”

“…” Madara turned around. Nerehc realized they were standing on top of a cliff, hundreds of feet above a great forest valley. “All my father wants to do is destroy the Senju Clan.” He stated. “And the Senju Clan merely wants to destroy us. Both of us have grown to hate each other… it’s how we were raised. What I want to do is put an end to hatred.” Madara reached forward and pretended to clasp the valley. “I want a new world without conflict, without destruction or spite… I want a world of peace and kindness.”
“…” Nerehc stood beside him. He held up his right hand to view the Triforce of Power mark. “I want that kind of world, too.”

“You do?” Madara faced him. “I thought you were a demon.”

Nerehc’s right hand lit with a purple flame that surprised Madara. “I never asked to be born as a demon… I never wanted darkness inside of me. But the world I live in is filled with darkness. I hate it. I wanted to make a world where we all loved each other. I didn’t want people to view me as a demon, I didn’t want to follow a demon’s instincts and thrive on darkness. I wanted to… be different.”

“And… where did that lead?” asked Madara.

“…” Nerehc faced him and smiled. “It led me on the right path. Me and all of my friends.”

“Your friends?”

“Yes. Madara, I’m not saying it’s possible to destroy hatred. But it isn’t the only path you can follow. If you want a more peaceful world, then work to achieve it. Then after you’re gone, people can follow your example.”

“Cough, you’re completely influencing the past.” Ghirahim commented.

“Ah, nothing’s gonna happen that hasn’t already will happen.”

Madara was silent. “…I was always afraid there would be no one who shared my feelings.”

“Well, you’re not alone anymore.” Nerehc smirked.

“…Would you stay here and help me?”

“I… kinda need to get back home.” He blushed. “But don’t worry. I’m sure other people will share your vision. You just have to look around. Hopefully, they will speak the same language.”

“He he…” Madara grinned.

The three entered the forest again and stopped to look at the blue cube with the sun ray depiction. “I’ve been through this wood several times and always wondered what this stone was. It looks nothing like the surrounding ruins.”

Nerehc picked up the Ocarina of Time. He looked between it and the cube. “Master, play the Song of Time.” Ghirahim whispered. “I recognize this stone…”

Nerehc glanced at his servant before putting the ocarina to his mouth. He played the Song of Time as he memorized. The cube vanished in a spire of blue light. In its place stood a stone pyramid with foreign writing and an eye on its tip. Nerehc gasped, recognizing such a pyramid from Ydnic and Ikuyim’s stories. And already, Madara felt a strange attraction to it, gazing at the ruin as he approached.

*Darkness is hatred. To hate the darkness is to feed it. Allow it to feed you in return.*

A dark aura appeared around the pyramid. The eye glowed and cast a beam at Madara’s forehead. The darkness was transferred to his body, his eyes glowing. After seconds, it stopped.

**Madara Uchiha awakened as a DARKNESS. Only 9 more to go.**
Nerehc approached him cautiously. …Madara turned: his black eyes were read circles that had three pointed swirls surrounding the pupil. “Gyah!” Nerehc flinched. “Did you… break a blood vessel?”

“No, stupid. This is the Uchiha Clan’s Sharingan. I guess it’s finally awakened.”

“Oh? I guess I do now. It must have been watching your mouth movements all this time. The Sharingan allows me to copy and mimic other peoples’ abilities. So, English is this language, huh?”

“Yes!” Nerehc grinned. “It’s the dominant language in the future, for the most part!”

Madara looked away. “I will make note of that…”

“Alright, if you know the way back, then I guess it’s okay for me to return to my time. Good luck on your dream, Madara.”

“Yes.” He nodded. “Good-bye, Nerehc… and thanks.”

“Heh.” Nerehc grinned. With that, he played the Song of Time backwards. A spire of light appeared to return him and Ghirahim to the present.

“…I blow up a canyon?” Madara repeated to himself. “Sounds pretty awesome.”

Madara returned to the river. He picked up three stones and failed to skip any of them across. Then it seemed like one of the stones came back. Madara looked up in shock. There was a boy with short black hair on the other side. He grinned at being able to make it across, while Madara glared at him.

Present; Sector LF

The others watched as Nerehc rematerialized. Thanks to his sunglasses, the light didn’t affect him too much. “How long was I gone?”

“About five minutes.” Sarada replied.

Nerehc whipped at her. “So you know English, too!”

“Heheh, she kinda revealed it after you left.” Cheren blushed. “Wait, what do you mean ‘too’?”

“I met Madara.”

“You did?!” Sarada exclaimed.

“What was he like?” asked MaKayla.

“I met his child self, actually. And I think he is one of the Thirteen Darknesses. But there was nothing about him that seemed… evil. Sarada, what did Madara do that was so bad?”

Sarada looked away, trying to remember and piece together the story. “His goal was to end world conflict. That’s what my mom told me. But… he got a little carried away.”

They listened to her story for the next hour.
The S.C.A.M.P.E.R.

The operatives left Sector LF, watching the Hidden Leaf grow smaller as they took off in Melissa’s S.C.A.M.P.E.R.. “So you saw the pyramid with your own eyes.” MaKayla said. “The same one that was in Ford’s journal. The one Kisuke had drawn in the other dimension.”

“What are you talking about?” Nerehc asked.

“Nerehc, I think we have an idea for how to find the remaining Darknesses. And the Ocarina of Time may be the key.”

“But I still don’t understand. I thought the Darknesses were supposed to be evil. Dark-hearted or something.”

“Ehh, I dunno.” Kellie replied. “Madara did go a little cuckoo.”

“But he wasn’t like that when I met him. He had a good intention, he had a good vision for a future. That pyramid must have influenced him or something! If I didn’t go back and help him find it-!” Nerehc clenched his teeth in anger.

“It doesn’t matter!” MaKayla insisted. “It was his fate to find the pyramid one way or another, and it was probably your fate to lead him to it. Madara is a Darkness, and now we’re one step closer to finding all the answers.”

“But it isn’t fair! Madara never had an evil heart. Why did the prophecy choose him? Why are any of these people chosen, what sets them apart from others?!”

“Nerehc, take it easy!” Cheren yelled. “I’m sure there’s a reason behind everything. And sooner or later, we’ll know what it is.”

“I know that! It’s just… if Madara can turn that way while following his dream… what if it happens to me?” He looked down at the floor. “What if I give in to my darkness…”

He looked up when Cheren touched his shoulder. “I’ll bring you back to the light. I promise.”

“…” Nerehc smirked. “Don’t get all touchy-feely, I don’t wanna become one of your girlfriends.”

“Shut up.” Cheren chuckled, smacking Nerehc in the chest before going to sit down.

“Get a room, you boys.” Melissa joked, earning laughs from the other girls.

Nerehc spared a chuckle before thinking to himself: *I never told Madara my name… How did he know it at the end? Did his Eye Powers do that, too?*

Egypt

At the same time as their adventure to Japan, AlyakAm had stolen a small R.O.A.D.S.T.A.R. from Sector V and used it to take Truman to Egypt. She parked the flying racecar outside a pyramid, which had a pathway of torches leading up to the entrance, giving the ground a red glow under the night sky. AlyakAm and Truman climbed out of the car. The former examined the stone statue of a spike-headed figure above the entrance. “This must be the tomb Medusa described. …” She looked at Truman. “You are surprisingly cooperative.”

“I seem to… remember this place…” Truman said, his blue eyes blank. “But from where exactly? …”
“Medusa said that you might. There is something in this temple that belongs to you. I’m here to take you to find it.”

“But what is this temple?”

AlyakAm stared at the spike-headed statue for a minute. “Medusa called it the Tomb of the Nameless Pharaoh.” She led Truman inside. (Play “Dry Dry Ruins” from Paper Mario.)

Stage B-20: Tomb of the Nameless Pharaoh

Mission: Find the tomb’s treasure.

The two walked down a small staircase into the first room of the pyramid. The wall was cracked, and there was a Bomb Flower that could be used to destroy it. However, given the fragile appearance of the room, the flower could make the ceiling cave in. There was an empty coffin lain in a corner, so Alyak and Truman carried it over beside the cracked wall and set it on its front. AlyakAm plucked the Bomb Flower and tossed it under the coffin, which contained the full force of the explosion, but still caused the wall to collapse.

They went down a couple more stairs into a wider room. AlyakAm stepped on a switch in the center—two dozen giant beetles fell from the ceiling upside-down. Three of them had glowing bellies. “Find the correct ones, or be PURGED.” A dark voice hissed. The beetles flipped right-side-up and started skittering everywhere. Alyak noticed one of the shiny-bellied ones and ran to kick it. Truman kicked another beetle—the spiked ceiling lowered partway. AlyakAm found another shiny-belly, then kicked one which she thought was shiny, but this wrong move lowered the spike ceiling. The ceiling lowered slowly, so the two panicked. Truman managed to kick the third shiny-belly. AlyakAm grabbed him and dashed to the open door before the ceiling squished them.

The next room was a mazelike path over a dark pit. There were statues with swords placed around the maze. “Only those who show respect may enter. All others will be eaten by the darkness.”

“If this were the Japanese version, it would be bloody spike pit.” AlyakAm said. “This riddle is unfamiliar to me.”

“It is to me.” Truman said. “Look at the statues. Their left foot is placed forward. We move like this.” He put his left foot forward and kept it like so as he moved forward. AlyakAm tried to walk normally—one of the statues sliced at her, she jumped back with a start.

“This pains my pride to great extent.” Alyak said as she moved with the left foot forward. One of the paths curved backward, but would curve again back in the right direction. However, Truman hit a switch on the curve-back: the spiked ceiling slowly began to lower down. “Egyptians need to come up with some original traps.” The two moved faster in this left foot posture. While Truman managed to escape through the door, AlyakAm was falling behind. She made a mad dash, dodged the statues’ swords, and made it out.

They stood atop a ledge and viewed down a dark shaft with a ladder leading down. AlyakAm picked up the lone torch and climbed down first. They set foot on a ledge, then had to climb down another ladder. Once under the ledge, a swarm of bats awakened and tried to nip at the torch-holding girl. AlyakAm swung her torch to scare them away, but she accidentally dropped it on the ledge below. “Well, we were going that way, anyway.” She said as the bats left her alone.

“We might want to get there fast!” Truman exclaimed. Small, poisonous beetles were crawling
down the ladder. Truman just decided to drop down, pushing Alyak under his butt as they hit the floor.

“Uck!” She pushed him off. “I would sooner have let you be the snack. …?” The torch landed on a trail of powder, which burned like a fuse and exploded against a pile, blowing the wall open. The next room consisted of red, green, and blue tiles, with no real organization, and two normal floors were on the left and right. *Doo-doot-doot-doooot!* Four tiles blinked and made a song. AlyakAm skipped across these tiles to the left floor, and pulled a lever on it.

Five tiles made a rhythmic path to the right foothold, where AlyakAm could pull another lever. Seven tiles made a much quicker rhythm, giving Alyak little time to memorize. She slipped on the fourth tile, and all the tiles immediately gave way. “I GOT YOU!” Truman grabbed Alyak and leaped to the left foothold. “Are you okay?”

AlyakAm panted, feeling her heart race. “I didn’t think… I could still feel emotions…”

“It’ll be all right. Just stay focused.”

“At least it’s a change from the spike ceiling.” The tiles floated back up in their places. The puzzle started over, so AlyakAm had to do it again. She did the third pattern accurately and caused the door to open. The next room was wide and box-like. A chasm took up most of the floor and many rows of swingable handles took up the left wall. “*The Pharaoh loves to watch performers... eh, perform. If he is pleased, he will allow you further into his domain.*”

There was an image on the right wall that looked like a Connect the Dots. AlyakAm knew these represented the correct order of handles. She jumped to grab the first one, swung to the one above it, jumped forward, forward once more, dropped to a low handle, back to one behind, swung over the forward one to grab the one after it, then had to diagonal-swing up-right to grab the last handle. The part in the middle of the intersecting wall opened like a drawbridge. AlyakAm grabbed the ledge on this wall to climb over to it, and Truman had to swing the handles to get to her. (He didn’t have to repeat the puzzle.)

They entered a long, wide passage where a dark abyss loomed down below, with a suspended bridge leading across. Coffins were standing up along the railing, and their lids would topple over if the kids stepped in front. Alyak and Truman dashed down the path, hearing coffin lids fall one after the other, but halted at a dead end of the bridge. When they turned around, mummies, snakes, and Dark Chuchus came out of the coffins. There was a switch at the start of this path, and a ray of light shining beside it.

Truman picked up one of the torches and set fire to the mummies while AlyakAm lured the Dark Chus over to the light ray. The light turned the Dark Chus into stone, making them heavy enough to hold down the switch. A bridge stretched from the dead end to the next part of the path. Alyak and Truman quickly hurried across before the Chuchu could get off the switch. The bridge brought them to a more open floor with four square tables, and rectangular tables lined up on the walls that had several items.

“In order to reach the Pharaoh’s Tomb, you must feed his vassals. For their first meal, they order five crawlies and a thirst-quencher the color of tears.”

There was a bowl of water and some cups on the table, and Truman noticed spiders crawling around the floor. He caught five spiders and set them on a table, along with a cup of water. Some mummies came up and started eating their meal. “Very good. Now they desire two samples of fresh meat, with five punctured squares and four preborn lives.” The kids grabbed two fish from bowls, four plant seeds, and five small cheese crackers (which had holes in their centers). They set them
on the second table so mummies could eat.

“For dinner, they wish for a destructive force, mixed with tiny strings grown from meat.” The dark voice said. They got a bomb, then AlyakAm used a pair of scissors to cut off some of Truman’s hair, serving both items to the third table. “And finally, for dessert, they wish for liquid the color of soil, with five throat-piercing blades and four sources of beauty.” The items required were a glass of soda, five darts, and four lipsticks.

“The vassals are satisfied with their meals, and their bellies full for another five thousand years. You may enter the Pharaoh’s Tomb. But make sure to wipe your shoes on the mat. We only just polished.” The final door opened, a stairway leading them down a corridor. They were in the Pharaoh’s Tomb. (End song.)

The golden tomb atop the stairs had what looked like purple spiked hair on its head. The face of the tomb had narrowed eyes. There was a small plate above the tomb with Egyptian symbols neither of them knew. On the platform before the tomb sat a stone pyramid with writing that wasn’t Egyptian. On top of that pyramid was a golden triangle with an eye, encased in a ring that had five points dangling from it.

Truman stepped up the stairs and gazed at the treasure. It glowed, and the eye appeared to stare at him. Truman climbed the pyramid and took the ringed treasure off, exposing the eye that was engraved on the stone’s tip. Truman climbed down and held the ring to face the writing. The treasure’s mystical glow gave him the ability to read it.

_We have awaited your return, O Dark One. The vessel you now possess need only be temporary. Let your conscience awaken, and let your destiny be realized._

A dark aura appeared around the stone, and as we have seen previously, it flew into Truman’s body. His expression was still blank.

Um… huh? I don’t understand what’s going on, but it looks like Truman Kirman awakened as a Darkness. Only 8 to go, I guess.

“Do you… feel any different?” AlyakAm asked.

“…” He turned to face her. “I feel like I have the worst insomnia you can ever imagine.”

**Sector V Treehouse**

Night had fallen by the time AlyakAm and Truman returned. “Your team is probably concerned for your absence.” Alyak figured. “It’s no concern to let myself be noticed now. So let us deliver the good news.”

In the living room, Sector V and Cheren’s trio were gathered like she expected. They were conversing over Truman’s absence, with Melissa looking the most concerned. The girl in question looked back and saw them. “THERE’S Truman! He’s with MaKayla- eh, wait a sec…” She turned back around, as MaKayla was clearly with Cheren and Nerehc.

“ALYAKAM!” An enraged Nerehc rushed over and held his sword up to her. “I thought you were in Moonbase, how did you escape?!”

“Nerehc, what’s wrong?” MaKayla asked, surprised at his outburst. “Is she my Negative?”

“Medusa ordered them to free me.” AlyakAm stated. “She used the Dimensional Traveler designed by the Nainozama to send me here. My work is done, so you may take me back in your custody.”
“What work?! What did Medusa tell you to do?”

“She is doing as she promised in your deal. The prophecy is progressing ever so smoothly. I just needed this child’s assistance to accomplish the mission.”

Nerehc swerved behind and grabbed her arms. “It’s time to go back home. Clearly, I’ve been away too long.”

“Truman, are you okay?” Melissa put an arm around her friend, noting his unbalanced posture. “What did she make you do?”

“I think a beetle crawled up my pants… Would either of you mind checking for-”

“NOT IT!” Melissa pushed him to Kellie.

“I hate to cut this reunion short, but you know home drama.” Cheren said to Sector V. “Thanks for helping us, Sector Termina.”

“Any day of the week, Sector Hyrule!” Harry grinned. “Good luck with your ‘Twenty Keys’ and fighting demons and… whatnot.”

“Sure, man.” Cheren blushed. “Call me if any more moons fall, you know where the portal is.”

“We’ll miss you most of all, Melissa!” Kayla waved ‘bye’ as they left the treehouse. “You were the biggest help!”

“Yeah, yeah…” Lissa waved halfheartedly and rolled her eyes.

Madara and Sector LF are from Naruto, and if you remember Down in the Negaverse, we actually met Sector LF’s Negatives. So yeah, compared to the Lights, the Darknesses are easy to rack up. Well, until next time, enjoy an Atbash Cipher.

... 

DSZG’H DRGS YIFXV ZODZBH SZERMT NLMHGVI XSROWIVM?
The Swamp Prince

Chapter Summary

Melody and Danny make it to Mermaid Swamp and find Manaphy.

This has to be the shortest chapter in a while. I guess I could’ve squeezed in another stage, but I didn’t want to. :P Caesar crypt.

Chapter 45: The Swamp Prince

Louisiana Bayou

Dark green mist blocked their view entirely. Melody and Danny had docked their boat beside land minutes ago, and walked forward into the swamp with Juju as their guide. “You don’t think they’ll be into a human who stuffed himself with chips before coming here?” Danny asked, holding the lantern.

“If they’re poisonbenders, I’d assume they’d welcome that.”

“Darn.”

“Don’t worry, Danny, it’s just a legend. The mermaids might be vicious, but ‘cannibals’ seems like a stretch. A little reasoning can do wonders. And if it doesn’t, don’t forget I’m tougher than I look.”

Stage 53: Mermaid Swamp

Mission: Locate Manaphy in the swamp.

Juju slithered across the grass ahead of them, and Melody and Danny followed with haste, lest they would lose their guide. Juju made several turns around trees and bushes, and the Jacksons expected a monster to ambush them any second. Rustle-rustle.

“Whuhwazzat?” Danny whipped around, holding the lantern toward the path they just came. Nothing but flora leading to pitch-darkness.

“Come on, Danny!” Melody grabbed her brother in a water tentacle and pulled him along as they resumed chasing Juju. The snake jumped and swung a vine over a murky pond, so the siblings thought it best to follow his example.

They came to a wide area enclosed within thick vines, in which Juju slithered his way up a diagonal vine that was his width and got onto the ledge on the other side. The Jacksons couldn’t follow him up the vine, but there were three thick stalks growing around this area. Melody lashed her water tentacles to grab the top of the shortest one, pulling it before loosening her grip, and flinging to the air. She grabbed the medium stalk, flung to the tall one, then onto the ledge where Juju waited. Danny hooked the lantern to his pants and repeated the actions, though his heavier body made it more difficult. In his fails, Danny saw a secret high ledge to the left of the medium
stalk, and when he decided to redirect his momentum and fling over there, he collected a trophy of Neptune! “…Yaaaay, game completion.”

Danny caught up to his sister and watched Juju jump and roll down a thick vine slide, up the ramp on the bottom end to land on ground across a pond. “Danny, I’m gonna need your help here.”

“I know.” Danny sighed. He gave Melody his lantern before bending water from his bottles into his mouth. He turned more round, and Melody climbed onto him as he rolled down the slide. His momentum allowed him to go up the ramp and land on the next ground, and Melody jumped off to let Danny deflate. “If I ask for drinking water, say ‘no.’” Melody remarked as Danny put the water back in his bottles.

Mermaid ghouls flew at them from gravestones nearby. Their bodies were gassy purple, with glowing yellow eyes and sharp fangs. Mel and Danny frightfully sliced them with water, but the smoke reformed into the ghosts behind them and tried to choke their necks. Melody got her arms free and sliced water at the graves, severing them, and the ghosts faded away, giving them the chance to breathe. In the next field, they saw a gravestone on a tall pillar, Merghosts coming at them. Mel and Danny sliced water and dispersed them, then Melody ran to get behind the pillar, climbing on a small platform to grab a beanstalk with water tentacles. She propelled herself up to the pillar and sliced the gravestone.

Melody latched her water-arms on some thick vines above her, climbing toward a cliff they were growing from, but Merghosts flew down from up there, too. As she was swatting them with water, Danny stuffed himself with his own water and lay on his back like a big round pillow. “Melody, drop that rock on me!” He pointed at the stone lodged in the vines on her right. Melody grabbed said rock in her water-arm and dropped it on Danny’s belly, causing him to blast a tall gush of water, and Melody (regretfully) jumped in and was propelled to the cliff. She destroyed the gravestone and waited for Danny and Juju to catch up to her.

The duo then followed Juju through another foggy maze. The only sounds were grass and twigs crunching under their shoes, the rustling of bushes they moved aside. Rustle. Melody and Danny whipped around. They still saw nothing but darkness the way they came. “You think anything is stalking us?” Danny asked.

“Yep.” They turned back around… “Where’s Juju?” The siblings quickly ran forward, holding their lamp/glowing water in every direction. “Juju?” Melody called with a not-so-loud tone.

“Juuuuuuuuuu?” Danny howled. The snake had gone missing entirely. They looked around for a few minutes, before Danny concluded, “We’re gonna die.”

“No we’re not. We’ll just keep heading straight, eventually we’re bound to end up somewhere.” Melody insisted as she led them both forward.

“Yeah, in a Neptunian Humantrap.” Danny scoffed.

“Please, where’d you come up with that?”

“They’re mermaids!” he hissed. The two walked straight for several minutes, making sure they stayed close to each other. The swamp continued to drag on. Trees, vines, and grass were all they encountered. “Do you think Mama Odie will be mad that we left her snake for death?” Danny asked.

“She sent him in here to begin with.”
“’kay.”

The two made it to a muggy cliffside. Melody stretched a tentacle up to grab a part, but it broke off on her grip. She proclaimed it was too slippery, so using her bending, she grabbed much of the muddied liquid off the cliff, shaking the dirt off and holding only the clear water. “Get ready to use your circus acts again.”

“I’m gonna drink mud water?!” Danny exclaimed.

“We need enough to get a good booster. It’s clean now, relax.” Melody bent the water into Danny’s mouth, inflating him again. Danny fell onto his belly, mouth facing the ground, as Melody climbed onto his back, raised twin Water Fists in the air, and PUNCHED down on her brother to make him squirt an endless stream. He propelled into the air like a balloon, but they made it to the cliff before he deflated. The next path led over a murky river far below, between close vine walls. Thick vines were hanging outstretched, and Melody went first to grab the vines in her tentacles, whirl around them, and fling to following vines. Danny followed her example, again at a slower rate.

After getting across, they then faced a murky river with far-apart platforms that each stepped higher. Danny sighed in exhaust, again stuffing himself with cleaned water from the mud, letting Melody climb onto his bloated body before he began bouncing, going higher with momentum so he could get up the platforms. They reached a dead end, but Danny could smash through a weak patch to a lower path. The boy deflated as they proceeded to what seemed like another maze. Again, Melody intended to go straight.

“Huff…huff… I need to rest…” Danny slowed down before finally falling on his back.

_Rustle._ Melody briefly saw a large shadow rush behind some trees. She ran to where it went with her water raised in defense. She saw nothing at first, but saw the shadow go behind a further tree, so Melody chased. She saw nothing. “Sigh… I’m seeing things.” Melody returned the other way to rejoin… “Danny?” She looked around. Her brother didn’t respond. “Danny?”

She began to walk in circles around a set area. Still no sign of him. No sign of his lantern light. “Danny, you BETTER not be pranking me.” She walked quickly forward, then she turned right, went left, went slightly right… Somehow, she was back at the muggy cliffside. “Oh, come on.” She decided to head the way she came, retracing her steps… which she didn’t really remember. “Hello?” she called to no one. There was no one. No Danny… no Juju… no Eric… just Melody. She sighed to herself and merely walked forward. “I have to get out of here. Get a search party or something. Wait! I’ll just radio Moonbase.” Melody tapped her wristwatch, which depicted static. …The image didn’t change. “Oh. Well, I’ll call Mom.” She took out her phone and dialed the number. “…No signal.”

Everywhere she looked was trees, shrubs, and darkness. No matter how far she walked, she found no sign of exit. “My legs are tired…” She decided to sit down and rest beside a tree. “…I’m lost. I wanna go home. I don’t…” She lied down, “I don’t want to do this, anymore. I wish I just… stayed home.”

Melody had never been so lost and hopeless. It made her question everything. She wanted to become a reporter… but news had just been so dramatic for her. She thought they could make it through Mermaid Swamp… the fog was too thick for her. And what of the… Apocalypse? Why were they doing anything, knowing what was to come. Why, and how could they stop it. …What did Cheren have planned. A week ago, he was despairing over his father, he believed nothing else. Two days ago, they conquered America. What a wild story that would’ve made. Would look great on KNN News.
“…” Melody jumped to her feet, “Cheren’s not giving up, and I can’t, either. I have to get us out of this place, for his sake. …And find Manaphy.” She kept walking.

Meanwhile, Danny was almost completely drained. “Meeloodyyyyy.” He held the lantern still, but his chubby legs were like jelly. He prayed for a miracle… a guardian angel to guide his wayward spirit.

_Upon one summer’s morning, I carelessly did stray_

_Down by the Walls of Wapping, where I met a sailor gay_

Was his prayer answered? A beautiful voice sang to him, soft and enticing.

_Conversing with a bouncing lass, who seemed to be in pain,_

_Saying, William, when you go, I fear you will ne’er return again._

Danny saw her through the trees ahead. A lovely mermaid with a purple tail, and purple long hair covering her green body.

_My sailor is as smiling as the pleasant month of May,_
_And oft we have wandered through Ratcliffe Highway,_
_Where many a pretty blooming girl, we happy did behold,_
_Reclining on the bosom of her jolly sailor bold._

Danny slowly walked closer. The mermaid turned and looked at him. She was about 16 years old… but Danny was attracted to her. Water dripped down her gorgeous flawless face, down her cleavage. Her yellow eyes peered into his soul. He wanted to kiss her purple lips.

_Come all you pretty fair maids, whoever you may be_
_Who love a jolly sailor bold that ploughs the raging sea,_
_While up aloft, in storm or gale, from me his absence mourn,_
_And firmly pray, arrive the day, he home will safe return._

A smile stretched onto Danny’s face. He was going to hug this mermaid… he was going to kiss her.

_My name it is Maria, a merchant’s daughter fair,_
_And I have left my parents and three thousand pounds a year,_

Others of her kind waited beneath the surface. They felt the tasty, rotund boy coming.

My heart is pierced by Cupid, I disdain all glittering gold,

Danny reached the edge of the river. The gorgeous mermaid leaned down to him. He felt her breath as she spoke the last words of the song.

_There is nothing… can console me…_

Danny inched his face closer… he joyfully awaited that kiss.

...but my jolly... sailor... bold.

“…HAAAAAH!” She exposed her sharp teeth, grabbed Danny, and pulled him under the water.
Melody gasped, whipping her head left at the sound of the splash. “Danny?!” She ran that direction, and found a patch of bubbles in murky water, beside a dropped lantern. She took a breath and dove inside, lighting her hands blue in attempt to see. It was far too dark underneath, but she felt the light bubbles patting her from below, so she swam toward them. “HAAAAAH!” Another ravenous mermaid came up to snack on her, Melody punched her off and whirled her arms to send streams of bubbles toward her. A mermaid was thrown at Melody from below, dizzy from punches, and the girl held her glowing hand down to see Danny. Three more mermaids were swimming at her, she slashed her arm and sent a bubble-slice at them.

Danny and Melody swam back to the surface and climbed onto land, the former grabbing his dropped lantern. Melody stepped in a puddle—“AAH!” A mermaid’s purple-nailed fingers grabbed her, she slashed water to knock it off, then a group of mermaids lunged out of water nearby and tackled them both. One of them stuck her hand in her mouth, covering it with gooey saliva which she used to handcuff Mel and Danny.

“It’s been a while since we had fresh human.” a mermaid hissed. “And we were just now getting ready to cook the one that came earlier. This fat one smells extra special.”

“Oh, God!!” Danny panicked.

“Hurry up. We must get the pot ready.” One of the mermaids farted gas at them, making the Jackson kids dizzy and drowsy…

When their vision came back, the Jacksons felt their selves floating on their backs in murky water. They quickly held their heads up, seeing the mermaids pulling them were heading to a steaming yellow-green cauldron, in a circular pond where other mermaids were waiting. They were chanting with excitement, waiting to feast on fresh humans. Melody looked right, seeing Juju stuck to a stick as mermaids were frying the terrified snake over fire. The humans were tossed onto a wooden platform on the water.

“Melody! Danny! Is that you?”

The siblings looked over. A nerdy boy with drenched, ragged clothing was on another platform. “Eric?!!” Melody exclaimed.

“Ho, thank goodness! I was afraid you got blown up by the atomic bomb. Hah ha, funny story, after the explosion, my boat crashed on a reef, so I had to paddle and ended up lost at sea. I made it to this swamp and, well, I heard some really beautiful singing and followed it. Wouldn’t ya know it, it was a trap set by sirens.”

“I thought only animals could hear them.”

“My mom had a lot of animal habits, so I guess I inherited ‘em. Melody, PLEASE tell these guys you’re the Ocean Princess! I tried to, but they don’t believe me!”

“HAAAAH!” A mermaid shot up onto Melody’s platform, hissing at her. “This girl is the mermaid princess?” She examined her legs. “Then what are these extra limbs?” She sniffed Melody’s foot. “Spice compliments?”

Melody kicked the mermaid in the face, pushing her off. She quickly spun her cuffed hands and called some water up over them, freezing the sticky goo, then pulling her hands until the ice broke. “Listen,” she jumped to her feet and spoke confidently, “my name is Melody Jackson, granddaughter of Kyogre, and niece of Manaphy Neptune. I hereby order all of you to stop this crazy ritual.”
The mermaids all hissed loudly in shock. “Lies!” one declared. “Any waterbender can wander into our midst and claim they’re royalty!”

“Alright, you asked for it. Water Gate, Open!” Melody thrusted her arms to either side, and her body lit with an aqua-blue aura. She jumped into the water, and the mermaids swam away when all of the water started flowing into a single, focused gush. A liquid colossus of Melody that was almost as tall as the trees towered over them, reflecting the light-blue glow of her body. She raised her fist as it grew bigger with more channeled water. “I am the Princess of the Sea, and all bodies of water it connects to. Release my friends or face the consequences.”

“I would do what she says.” They all looked up the river. A large, rotund mermaid with a green upper body, and purple lower body (like many others of her kind), with golden bands on her wrists, sloshed across the surface, making the gesture of marching. The lesser mermaids looked again at Melody’s form, choosing to free Danny, Eric, and Juju before some of them swam away in disappointment.

Melody’s liquid body dispersed as she set foot on Danny’s platform. Eric paddled his over to join them, and the merwoman approached the kids. “No other human so small can use waterbending at such a large level.”

“You must be a friend of our mom’s!” Danny beamed.

“DON’T count your guppies!” She folded her arms and leaned over them imposingly. “My name’s Ineptune. I work for the Kremling Krew.”

“Ineptune?” Melody recognized that name. “You fought Vweeb’s parents, didn’t you?”

“Yes, girl, ‘I fought VWEEB’S parents.’” She spoke in an aggravated tone. “I don’t know who Vweeb is, but as long as I’m in the history books, CHALK one up! Name me ‘Ursula’ for all I care.” She folded her arms and turned away.

“Well, why did you help us?” Danny asked. “You were a bad guy, weren’t you?”

“Bad’ is a matter of perspective.” She turned back around. “But yes, I did desire Oceana’s destruction. I, unlike my poisonous sisters, desired to live in the big city, but my poisonbending made me a little… unbearable. Then after a long and heartaching story, I met King K. Rool and joined his Kremlings.”

“What was the story?” Eric asked hopefully.

“NONE of your business! Anyway, the reason I helped you is because we know one of you will be Manaphy’s Guardian. Probably Goddess here. It is our desire that you should be ‘awakened.’” She sloshed away.

“Why do you care if I’m awakened?” Melody asked.

“Ineptune looked at them again, “King K. Rool and his allies are trying to find the Firstborn. Again. It’s all part of Project: Find Gnaa.”

“They’re trying to find Negatar Gnaa?”

“Yes. Finding the Firstborn and summoning Arceus is what caused Gnaa to go missing. They believe that bringing the Firstborn together again will help them bring Gnaa back.”

“I assumed they would be worried about the Apocalypse.” Danny said.
“The what?” Ineptune questioned.

“Yeah, I mean, if they called Arceus, they could ask him to do something about it. …It makes me wonder if he could.”

“That seems like an interesting topic to bring up with the captain. But in due time. I supposed you want to see… His Majesty?”

The three operatives and Juju exchanged glances. Melody shrugged, “Sure.”

The group walked on the side of the river as they followed Ineptune through the village. Many of the mermaids were snarkily talking amongst their selves, while others feasted on the remains of unknown creatures or passed dirty looks at them. “Were they really going to eat us?” Melody asked.

“Well, of course. Humans are quite delicious, especially benders. I’ve never tasted one, though I tried to with that human and her alien friends back then.”

“That’s just horrible.”

“Who’s going to do anything about it? Oceana’s law does not reach here. They would not even welcome us if we came, we eat what we ensnare to survive. Of course, that was before the Kremlings made this land their base. They’ve provided loads of lush fruit and bananas. There’s our base.” She pointed to the oddly-shaped mountain a few miles away.

“That’s K. Rool’s base?”

“Yes. After the Firstborn Quest, the World Government started becoming rather ‘antsy’ about catching him. He needed a place to lay low, so I brought him to my homeland. It wasn’t easy. Hundreds of warships went after him. Kroctus sunk every last one. The Kremling Krew is fiercer than the average animals!”

“Is Yogi Bear a division commander?” Danny asked. His friends laughed cheerily.


“Does this mean K. Rool has Manaphy trapped in his base?” Melody asked. “With the Fairy Princess?”

“The Fairy Princess we have, yes. But Manaphy is the Sea Prince, he deserved to be with his kind. …We might have judged wrongly on that.”

“Whaddyyou mean?”

They arrived at a river that turned left, and Ineptune looked down and said perkily, “Oh! There he is!” The kids caught up and curiously looked where she pointed.

A gang of mermaids were roaring and cheering for a fight taking place: a little slime-green creature with two antennas was biting and tugging a Kasplat Kremling. “Mana-Mana! Mana!” The small creature hissed, and the Kasplat cried when its sharp teeth sunk into his shoulder. The mermaids continued hollering for the creature, throwing fish, and it caught one before swallowing whole.

“Hey, leave that guy alone!” Melody yelled, throwing water at the creature to knock it off the Kremling. She stepped through the ankle-deep water and shoved the mermaids aside. “Just what are you-” The creature looked up and glared at her. “…Manaphy?”
The Firstborn of Water was venomous, with sharp fangs, triangles on his eyelashes instead of circles, sharp antennas, a jagged red gem on its heart, and heartless yellow eyes. “MAAAAN.” The creature leapt and chewed on Melody’s leg.

“Hey- Stop it! STOP IT!” She shook her leg, then grabbed and pulled Manaphy off. “Manaphy, I’m Eva’s daughter! I’m Melody!”

The Firstborn stopped shaking and stared at her eyes. A part of him almost seemed to recognize her. “…Maaaan!” He tried to bite her face, Melody punched him to the water and kicked him to the shore. Manaphy hissed and flopped to the main river, swimming up the route they came.

The group followed him partway before Manaphy began to try to catch fish, chewing them heartlessly. “What… happened to him?” Melody asked.

“Water is the Element of Change.” Ineptune spoke. “Manaphy is the Firstborn of Water. One of his special powers is adapting to the environment he’s in. Manaphy was lured here by the mermaids’ wail, and he brought that blue girl with him. It was horrible, what they did to the Fairy Princess. ‘UCK, she’s blue, she must be sick!’ they said. ‘Don’t eat her, she’ll give us food poisoning.’ ‘Wait, maybe she’s an ice person, LET’S beat her around to see if she breaks!’ Cruel, cruel treatment to Miss Lapis Lazuli. Her gem was already broken, so we assumed Manaphy wanted to get it fixed. He tried to tell them to stop, but needless to say, they took delight in the little prince. Cursed as he is, he’s still a baby. An impressionable baby, at that. …The mermaids made him into one of their own.

“Manaphy put aside his concern for Princess Lapis, and started trying to eat her. What a jerk, right? Lapis became consumed with despair; she would have destroyed this land in her rampage… until Dr. Robotnik caught her with a net. Now she is locked in Hideout Helm. We’ve been trying to keep Manaphy within the swamp’s boundaries until someone came to get him. It should suffice you to know, deadly poisons are harder to get rid of than healthy poisons. That is K. Rool’s theory, which is why he doesn’t want Manaphy to leave. The people of Oceana would hate what the Sea Prince has become.”

Melody couldn’t believe this was the same Manaphy her mother described. The happy, joyful Sea Prince, whose voice was magical and won the love of all animals of the sea. She was watching this same prince wrestle with and chew the flesh off of fish. He jumped at and bit every mermaid that jeered at him, and they punched him in turn. “If only we brought our mom. Manaphy loved her… she could help him get back to normal.”

“Melody, I think you need to do that.” Danny reasoned. “Assuming you’re gonna be his Guardian and not me.”

“Yeah, you’re probably right.” She sighed. “Manaphy needs an older sister… or in this case, an older niece to help straighten him out. …” Melody turned to look at Hideout Helm. “But first I should make up for his mistake. I’m gonna help the Fairy Princess.”

Cyberspace

The Zoni teleported Vanellope to another expansive and beautiful landscape. This entire world was made of glittering gems, with small crystals sprouting from the ground. The sparkling stars in the bright, grayish-pink sky complimented this posh world. Vanellope was gazing at a towering structure of these gems. “What is this place…”

“This Land of Crystals and Gems is a Core World.” the Zoni said. “Precious energy dwells beneath the rock. XANA has brought Peridot here. She will use this planet’s resources to fix our
leader. You must rescue him, and fix before her."

“Don’t I get a ‘Pretty please with sugar and sprinkles’?”

“Later! Please go!”

“Close enough.” (Play “Atop the Sea Spire” from Steven Universe.)

Stage 54: Land of Crystals and Gems

Mission: Rescue the Zoni’s leader.

Vanellope marched up a clear, diamond stairway to a round area with small, crystal bugs with pink mouths, that looked like larva. “The Crystal Shrimps feast on energy. You must avoid.” Or better yet, Vanellope thought, she could spin-jump and bounce around all of them. One of the columns around this garden had a sapphire gem, so Vanellope grabbed it during her jumping, then bounced over to chuck it into a slot in a pillar over the edge. The pillar sunk low enough for Vanello to glitchwarp over on top of it, then she glitched her way across a series of more distant pillars, each farther than the last. The last pillar was too far for three glitches to make it; a Chargin’ Chuck fell from above, Vanellope barely seized the chance to jump and kick off of him before making it across with three glitches.

Vanellope faced a shiny gem stairway littered with Crystal Shrimps, and as she spin-jumped up, Volcano Lotuses spat fiery pollen over the stairs, forcing Vanellope to be cautious while jumping. At the top of the stairs, a King Bill blasted over from the opposite way. Vanellope hurriedly glitchwarped above the massive missile, landing on its top before jumping off the other side. She landed on a broken edge, just now realizing the next path had many broken parts. She glitchwarped to the next foothold, glitched up when a Banzai Bill came from the right, glitched once more when another came from left, and when a King Bill blasted directly from above, she let herself descend, glitched across the next gap, and dodged it. “Ya know, how come my levels are never as peaceful as they should be?”

“Peace gets old.” The Zoni said. At the end of this road, Vanellope turned down a path on the left, which led between twin walls of waterfalls. Rip Van Fish were snoozing inside of them, but at the whistle of a Chuck that was hidden within the falls, they all woke up and swam at Vanellope in midair. Parts of the path began collapsing into the falls, Vanellope glitchwarped across gaps, evasively maneuvering around the flying fish. Eventually she arrived at a more open region of the water canyon, viewing a group of large, gem-made platforms.

Buzzy Beetles were crawling up the steep slope leading down to these platforms, so Vanellope “Wheeeeee!” slid down the slope and kicked the beetles off. At the bottom, Vanellope glitchwarped to the first platform near her left. A sphere of Boos was surrounding a blue P-switch, which rested on a single small block. Timing carefully, Vanellope ran and jumped between an opening, glitched just onto the block’s edge to grab the switch and not press it—she slipped and fell to the floor, thankfully missing the Boos, and she threw the switch away and glitched out of there.

She threw the switch to and glitched onto a taller, right platform. She dodged the Crystal Shrimps’ gnash with a start, beginning to spin-jump across the spiky creatures. Hidden amongst them was a gray P-switch, which Vanellope decided to smash. The Crystal Shrimps morphed into coins—and so did the R.S. Buzzies that were crawling around the midair blocks leading between a waterfall trench. Vanellope carried the blue switch here and pressed it, and when she followed this block
path, she saw that the rest of the path, which was previously coins, turned into blocks, too. She hastily ran across these blocks, over a watery chasm and to a lovely gem temple, before glitchwarping across the gap to said temple, zipping left-and-right to avoid falling boulders.

Vanellope stepped up a short stairway before entering the temple, starting with a narrow hallway with giant, winged Piranha Plants. The large plants jumped, shot a fireball while in midair, then landed, each at different times. Vanellope expertly glitched and dodged them, getting into the next corridor to a wider room that had a waterfall chasm below. Vanellope picked up a pink key at the edge of this path, threw it over, then glitched across the chasm to the tiled floor. On this floor, the tiles were flashing many different colors, each its own color, until a respective one stopped. When red stopped, fires bounced everywhere. On blue, Buzzy shells bounced. On purple, Chargin’ Chucks came at Vanellope. On white, buzzsaws. Amongst them, Vanellope noticed a single pink tile in the corner, and when she dropped the key on it when it lit, the door opened.

Vanellope went up another staircase—avoiding a buzzsaw from the ceiling, and appeared in another chasm room with ropes moving along paths in the ceiling. They moved quickly, making it hard to jump to each one, and Torpedo Teds were released from the ceiling to fly at her. There was a block switch on the right wall of the room, so she grabbed a rope that moved her close, jumped off to bump the switch, then glitched to grab the rope again. The door on the other side of the room opened—it also caused some ropes to fall off, so she glitchwarped over into the door.

Vanellope walked up stairs into a taller, wider passage with waterfalls in-between columns on either side. She spin-jumped to get across the floor full of Crystal Shrimps, but the stairway on the other side was lined with Munchers. She assumed that a Power Star was in the ? Block on the floor, but she couldn’t hit it in that position. She bounced near the waterfalls and found a hidden enclosing with another key. She spin-jumped and carried the key across the shrimps, and landed on the small open space on the floor beside the block. Before the shrimps could bite her, she kicked the key at the block to open it, grabbing the star.

She used her invincibility and charged through the shrimps, up the stairway of Munchers. She ran across a small ground that had four statues, two on either side, which were white, yellow, blue, and pink. The pink statue’s head was cut off, and the blue statue had a crack in its head. As her Star Power wore off, she ran up another staircase, to an open field at the top of the temple. (End song.)

Peridot was hunched over Clank’s fallen body, burning the green laser from her fingers into his open chest. “For what looks like a hatchling’s toy, this ‘XJ-0461’ has curious circuitry. Perhaps if I located a Rose Quartz, chop it and combine with a Jasper, I can remake him to XANA’s—”

“Hey! Dorito!” Peridot looked up and saw Vanellope heading her way.

“Ugh! Not the ‘Vanellope’ again!”

Vanellope stopped and looked at the smaller robot curiously. “Hey, cool new toy! Can I play?”

“NO PLAY! He is Leader!” the Zoni moaned. “You must saaave!”

“You won’t have the chance.” They all looked up when XANA appeared over the temple on a floating platform.

“Guy-I-don’t-remember!” Vanellope pointed.

“Oh, shut up! I’ve about had it with you meddling with my affairs, Vanellope. Lesser Lord Gnik expects me to have this space cleaned, and I can’t have you ruining it!”
“I don’t know much of what’s going on, but these buggy guys here keep telling me to ‘fix’ stuff, so don’t we have the same goal?”

“Also, I’m the one fixing what you clearly messed up.” Peridot said to XANA smugly.

“So like, why are we fighting?” Vanel asked.

XANA grumbled and screeched in his high-pitched voice. “All Ragaj keeps telling me is to do something about the Zoni, so by extension, I have to kill Vanel! Peridot, if you don’t want your precious hide munched, you would pick Clank up and move. Goooo GET her! My Centipeetle!” XANA flew away.

The ground started shaking, so Peridot grabbed Clank in one hand and made the other into a propeller to fly away. The Centipeetle emerged from over the edge, a centipede with an emerald-green back and darker-green bottom. It had a large, cream-colored mane, a long mouth of sharp teeth, and when it roared, Vanellope noticed the round, green gem that bore the Eye of XANA (and looked like a Pokéball) in its mouth.

“For a second, I thought that thing was Serpentine.” Peridot said to herself.

“Yeuchk.” Vanellope looked disgusted. “I don’t wanna know how your parents met.” (Play the Mini-boss theme from Zelda: Twilight Princess.)

**Boss fight: Centipeetle**

The Centipeetle blasted globs of acid around the field, then it attempted to crawl at Vanellope, who dodged left. The Centipeetle turned and spat more acid at her, further covering the floor as a result. The creature’s mouth-eye glowed as it attempted to gnash at Vanel, who glitched backward, nearly falling in an acid. When it caught up, Vanellope glitched past and along its side, then onto the end of the Centipeetle’s tail. She held on as it wagged its tail, looking back to hiss at her. Vanellope chose to let it fly her to the air, so when the Centipeetle spat acid, she glitched down to its tail, then glitched away to trick it into hitting its own tail.

The monster cried, facing up at the sky, then Vanellope climbed on its back, ran to its mouth, and performed three glitch-kicks against the eye. The tail shook, and five of its segments broke off into individual, Baby Centipeetles. When they crawled at her and opened their mouths wide to gnash, Vanellope seized the chance for a glitch-kick to each one of their eyes. The babies were destroyed, but the Mother Centipeetle became more angry. Without all those extra parts to hold it back, the Centipeetle charged faster, running circles around the field as Vanellope dodged. Finally, the monster crawled over the edge, climbing back up on one of the surrounding pillars.

The Centipeetle’s eye glowed as it charged energy, then blasted a bright-green ball into the sky. It exploded and rained small globs of acid, Vanellope quickly dodging each one. “Hey, watch where you’re spitting!” Peridot shouted. The Centipeetle wrapped itself around another pillar and shook it, causing four Koopas to fly out from the top and onto the field. Vanellope took one of their shells, leaped off toward a pillar, threw and bounced the shell against it, then jumped on it for a boost. She did three glitchwarps to get atop the pillar, watching the Centipeetle try to get away. Vanellope chased it across the pillars, but it kept evading as it shook each one and made enemies spawn out of it.

When one of these pillars emitted a torch at the top, Vanellope smirked, beginning to jump the opposite way so the Centipeetle would be forced to about-face. The creature’s tail was burned on
the torch when it landed on that pillar, then Vanellope hurried over to glitch-kick its eye. Five more chunks of its body broke off, each baring wings while the mother fell to the field. Vanellope locked sights on the closest one that approached her, but in her attempt to glitch-kick, it dodged up. Vanellope fell to the field and waited for the winged bugs to come down. Another one prepared to snap her, she glitched up to it, it dodged, she glitched again, it went higher, but she managed to kick and destroy it on the third glitch. She repeated the same moves for the other four.

With only three more parts besides its own, the Centipeetle began leaping around the field, rapidly munching its mouth and aiming down at Vanellope for each descent. She kept a sharp eye, when its mouth was open, she glitch-kicked the eye, forcing the creature back as another part flew off. Vanellope destroyed the youngling, then kicked the mother’s open mouth again. A winged baby came off, she performed the three-kick combo to destroy it. With only one part behind the mane left, the Centipeetle leapt high into the air, coming directly down at Vanellope. The girl squatted, charged the pixelated force into her legs, and shot up.

Vanellope dealt a string of rapid glitch-kicks against the creature’s eye, watching the XANA-infected gem blink with static. Vanellope zipped lower, charged again, and zapped up for a mighty kick that flew Centipeetle to Peridot above. “Waaah!” The Program was hit, dropping Clank as Vanellope glitched up to catch him. The Centipeetle crashed on the ground and puffed into pixels, leaving only its round gem eye. (End song.)

“HA haaa!” Vanellope cheered with victory, smirking at Peridot. “Your robot toy is MINE, you sour soda!”

“No! Give him back!” Peridot flew down. The Zoni got in her way and blasted energy spheres to send her flying. “AAAAH!”

The Zoni came back down and stared at the sleeping robot, whom Vanellope rested on the ground. “*He is our leader.*”

“This toy robot?”

“*He inherits soul of Orvus, first Zoni. You must fix him. Then, his knowledge is yours.*”

“You guys, I still don’t know how to fix anything, I’m not a mechanic like Dewey you just blew away.”

“In this land, there is a way to fix. We will bring you to Fountain of Quartz. That is where... she will heal him.”

Mermaid Swamp is kind of based off the horror game of the same name, but at the same time totally different. Ineptune was from *Spyro: A Hero’s Tail*, the Centipeetle’s from *Steven Universe*, “Jolly Sailor Bold” is from *Pirates: On Stranger Tides*, and now I’m tired. XP Next time, we’ll do two stages, then we’ll be at Stage 57, Guertena Gallery. Later.

...
When They Are Young

Chapter Summary

Karin Kurosaki travels back in time with the Multiverse Portal to meet Sōsuke Aizen. In a flashback, Negatar Gnaa meets a young Tom Riddle.

This may be the last Side Stories chapter within the Art Saga. Soon, we'll get into the main plot of Tenth Firstborn. (P.S., if you haven’t read Sector JP, beware of spoilers in this chapter.)

Chapter B-24: When They Are Young

DNK Moonbase

AlyakAm was locked back in her cell alongside Egroeg after she and Nerehc returned to Moonbase. “We don’t have any idea how she escaped, Master Nerehc.” Ininap said in her nervous tone. “We looked everywhere, we really did, b-but-”

“Yeah yeah yeah, take it easy, Stutters. It sounds like Medusa had something to do with it.”

“A dark portal, to be precise.” AlyakAm confirmed. “This petty fortress of scrap is nothing to even the simplest of a god’s abilities.”

“And what were you doing with that boy? Were you looking for one of the Thirteen Darknesses?”

“Yes, and I can safely assure you, you now have less of the quest to worry about.”

“Then who was the Darkness in question?”

“Medusa says you don’t need to know that, yet.”

“Of course we don’t. Ininap, I’m going back to the Posiverse. Cheren and Kayla said they might know where to look next. Let everyone know to watch out for Medusa.” He began to walk away. “I should’ve expected her to look for loopholes in this deal…”

“Hm hm hm.” AlyakAm chuckled.

Ininap turned to her curiously. “Eh he… What’s so funny?”

“Nerehc is concerned for what conniving tricks Medusa has up her sleeve regarding this grand plan. He, like Medusa herself, is deceived into believing the latter is the mastermind. Her position is no greater than that of any of our father’s ‘associates.’”

“She is to our father what I am to AlyakAm.” Egroeg commented. “Even I am smart enough to know this.”

Ininap approached them. “You two know more about this prophecy than any of us, don’t ya? Yer father knows… somehow, someway…”
“You are inferring what exactly?” AlyakAm asked.

“You know important answers.” Ininap spoke seriously. “You can be a real big help to us. You can help us be prepared. You can help us save everyone.”

“You are mistaken. There is no amount of preparing you could do and no way to save everyone. You can never comprehend what is to come.”

“And you can? Are you two all right with what’s going to happen? It won’t affect you in any way?”

“…” Alyak took a minute to respond. “It doesn’t matter if we are or not. And a weak person like you would only cower in a closet. If I decided to tell you, you would utterly give up and give in.”

“I wouldn’t. Not on my own… anyway…” Ininap turned away. “Not unless Nerehc does. I would follow where he thinks we should go. If he thought it was a losing battle… I would agree. If he thought we could win… I would let him use me as a shield if it would help him get there.”

“You haven’t a single speck of pride in your veins.” Egroeg said. “What a pity. …” Alyak was staring at him. “What? I have more than she does.”

“I’m not very smart or strong,” Ininap stated. “Until I learn how to be… I’ll trust Nerehc to guide me. Maybe you two should, too. Because it sounds like… you aren’t sure what to do, either.” She left the room.

Grayson Household

During a boring afternoon on a sunny day, Lee Andrew lay figuratively dead on the living room couch, lazily swaying his foot as his eyes leaned in the direction of the fireplace. His sister, Leanne came in and saw that his position did not change. “Wouldn’t you rather be trying to build an upgraded 4x4 weapon?”

“Wouldn’t you rather be acting like a snob at Guitar Hero?” the boy retorted.

“Lee, just because Wendy promised to magically spawn out of the fireplace to meet you, do you have to spend every waking moment waiting for her?”

“It’s not like we got any fun missions. I thought we would be fighting swarms of bad guys from the Government or these Gnık people, but we’re still just getting crappy Brotherhooders. I wish I could’ve gone to Magic World with Wendy.”

“Just get up once in a while so you don’t turn into a potato sack. Plus, you aren’t doing her any favors. Once Haruka hears how much you’re fixated on Wendy, she’ll turn her into blueberry soup.” On that note, Leanne left.

Lee passed off the conversation and continued waiting. After 10 more minutes, an emerald fire lit in the place. Lee got to his feet and gazed with eager blue eyes. “Uh!” Wendy popped out on her front. “So that’s what happens if the other side is smaller than the first.” Carla came beside her as Wendy looked up. Her face beamed. “Lee!”

“Wendy!” Lee exclaimed.

“Child, your feet are still in the fire.” Carla said.

“NOIDON’Twannamoseyfeet!” Wendy immediately scrambled out and hit the couch, toppling it over with her legs propped up. “I’m okay.”
Lee and Wendy lay on the breezy hill and watched the clouds drift by. It was the same hill where they met before, when Lee tried to help Wendy with her powers. That day was only three months ago, but it felt like years to both of them. The peaceful atmosphere put Carla into slumber on Wendy’s chest, leaving her and Lee to talk in private. “I still can’t believe how far I’ve come,” Wendy said. “Mr. Facilier taught me so much in just three months. I know magic, and Dragon Style, and I haven’t even started my first year at Hogwarts.”

“I sure feel jealous.” Lee replied casually. “You’re going on way cooler adventures than my team is.”

“Mr. Facilier told me you guys were on a quest, too. The Seven Lights?”

“No, everyone else is on that quest. It usually matters if we have a Chosen One in our sector, which we don’t. At least not at the moment. It feels like, until we actually know, the whole thing is random.”

“So the Chosen Ones are the only ones who matter?”

“That’s what it feels like. Take a look at Cheren, for instance, his family has a long record of always being Chosen. I guess if you’re lucky enough to be friends with a Chosen One, you have a shot at making the books. But I can never see a reason to try and help out with this quest unless we were actually part of it.”

“I can see how you would feel that way. But when you think about it, it doesn’t make you much different from everyone else. There are billions of people in the world, and only seven Seven Lights. Imagine all the people who aren’t concerned with this quest. They’re probably worried about accomplishing something else. Like me.” Wendy held up her Lamia Scale and softly rubbed it. “All I want to do is meet my family, make a lot of friends, and learn who I really am. And I guess somewhere else in the world, there are other people just like that. The world is a much bigger place than most people think.”

“I guess you’re right there.” Lee rolled on his side. “But when the Seven Lights and Eight Firstborn Guardians happen to be people you know pretty well, it makes the world feel smaller. Even in the Kids Next Door, we have thousands of sectors, but there’s only a few worth mentioning. That’s why we have the Top 10 list. And MY sector wouldn’t have gotten 10th Place back if Sector DR didn’t turn evil. It makes me wonder if Cheren even remembers to check up on every little sector.”

“He’s the Supreme Leader, isn’t he? Dr. Facilier once told me that Cheren is like… everyone’s friend.”

“Yeah, I guess he’s pretty nice, to a fault. But you should’ve seen him when he first became leader, he was getting torn up. Like, back then he was trying to grant everybody’s wishes like Jirachi. He got a lot of people to like him, but I can’t believe that he could manage the entire KND the same way. If you want my advice, Wendy, don’t make too many friends, because all those friends are gonna want things from you. Especially if you run a worldwide organization.”

“I don’t think I need to worry about that…” Wendy said sorrowfully.

“Hey, do you wanna join my family for dinner tonight?” Lee asked, sitting up. “We can introduce them to your weird cat.”
“Don’t call her weird.” Wendy sat up, too.

“Alright, sorry. So, you wanna come?”

“Sure.” She smiled. “I mean, if Mr. Facilier thinks it’s okay.”

“Cool, can’t wait! Heh, if you’re lucky, you’ll get to see Diwata turn into a werewolf with us.” Lee snickered.

“What do you mean?”

“Almost every night that wasn’t cloudy, she lays outside and stares at the moon. I’m not sure if she’s a werewolf or a Nine-Tailed Fox, but it creeps us out. You’ll see what I mean if the sky’s nice.”

“Well, now I’m scared to come!” Wendy panicked.

“Well, ya better watch out,” Lee got on all fours, “‘cause I might be one, TOO! !”

“AAAAH!” Wendy fell on her front when Lee pounced on her. “Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!” They laughed happily.

“Child, you’re crushing me!”

“Oops, sorry, Carla.” Wendy climbed off of her flattened cat.

**EiznekCm House**

Nerehc took a quick bath after returning home, and the wetness was still present in his hair by the time he was dressed. He went to his room and would enter the Posiverse through his dresser mirror to meet with Cheren again. He had laid his sword halfway in the mirror to keep the portal open for that reason. But Nerehc saw a different sword on his bed: it had a green hilt and was encased in a black sheath.

Nerehc picked up a note by the sword. It read, *500 years Karakura*. Signed with a green crayon picture of a head with snake hair. Nerehc glared at her signature and focused on the sword, then took the Ocarina of Time out of his pocket. Medusa must know what they’re going to do next.

**En route to Sector JP**

“So you think it’s another clue?” Cheren asked. He, Nerehc, and MaKayla were flying to Japan in a S.C.A.M.P.E.R., which the former was piloting.

“Yep, Medusa must be on to us. I guess it’s a good coincidence we were heading to Karakura, anyway.”

“I don’t think Medusa was talking about *this* Karakura Town.” MaKayla replied. “When I was sucked into the Multiverse Portal, I landed in a different Karakura. The members of Sector JP were there, except they weren’t Sector JP. It was an Original World.”

“An Original World?” Nerehc repeated.

“Do you know about them?”

“The Moon Spirit Cresselia appeared and told us about them. And Lucifer mentioned that that’s where the Darknesses come from.”
“Then we really are on the right track.”

“But why did you want to come to JP again?” Cheren asked MaKayla.

“Because if they have counterparts in Original Worlds, we could possibly use them to trace that universe again.”

“Don’t we have this sword to do that?” Nerehc asked. “Assuming you’re right, of course.”

“Yes, but I think Karin in particular would be suitable for the task at hand, given her position.”

“What position?” asked Cheren.

“Oh, riiiiight, she never told you!” Kayla cooed, pinching Cheren’s cheek. “Well, you’re in for a surprise.”

At the moment, Sector JP’s treehouse was taken over by monkeys, so the sector was forced to take refuge in a secret bunker in their local forest. A hatch on the ground opened to let the S.C.A.M.P.E.R. land in the underground hangar. The hangar turned dark when the hatch closed, so the trio entered a lit-up doorway to the hideout’s living room. “Cherry Pie, welcome to the Secret Pad.” Karin Kurosaki greeted with mock enthusiasm. Jinta and Ururu were seen playing games on a couch. “I don’t suppose you’re here to help us get those monkeys off our backs?”

“You’re still having trouble with those apes?” Cheren chuckled. “I thought you would’ve called animal control by now.”

“We tried to, but they have hypno beams at every entrance. Yuzu keeps getting hit and going Karate Mode.”

“Unfortunately, we’re here for a different matter.” MaKayla said seriously. “I think it’s time you revealed your secret, Karin.”

“Secret?” Karin’s brows twitched. Jinta and Ururu heard this and looked over.

“You have an affiliation with the Spirit Kids Next Door. Believe me, I have my sources, and I sensed the energy radiating from you during sector meetings.”

Cheren and Nerehca raised a brow at Karin. She sighed. “Fine, but promise you two won’t gasp and jump back in shock. Cheren, you remember that report I sent when we fought the Brotherhood leader a few months back?”

“Yeah?”

“Well, I left out a little detail.” Before their eyes, Karin FLASHED, and transformed into a ghost. She had a black robe, light-blue flames around her ankles, and a white aura around her body.

“YAAAAH!” Cheren and Nerehc jumped back in shock.

“Ugh.” Karin face-palmed. “S’yeah, the truth is I’m a Halfa – you know, like Danny Phantom. I do part-time work for the Spirit Kids Next Door, but I’m not allowed to use my powers against mortals. That’s sorta why I never told you.”

“I encounter the Spirit KND during my regular trips to the Spirit World.” Kayla said. “I got the tip from them.”

“What, is she in trouble or something?” Jinta questioned.
“No, but we need Karin for a project. As a matter of fact, her uniform will work perfectly for this mission.”

“What’re we doing, exactly?” Karin asked. She hadn’t really expected any sort of mission today, let alone one regarding her powers.

“We’re going to find one of the Thirteen Darkesses.” Nerehc confirmed, holding up the unnamed sword.

“We’ll explain on the way.” Cheren said. “Our next stop is Gravity Falls.”

**Gravity Falls; Portal Chamber**

The triangle machine was still active and spiraling its neon colors, the only light in this dark, ancient basement. Mabel, Grenda, and Candy were sitting on the floor, holding fishing rods that were cast into the portal. “I bet if I eat a Dimension Bass, it’ll create a wormhole in my stomach, and I’ll be able to eat 10,000 cheeseburgers without exploding!” Grenda exclaimed.

“I just wanna put it on my wall and hear it sing.” Mabel said with an innocent smile. “But it might sing in some garbly, other-dimensionly language.”

“Mabeeeel!” Dipper cried, entering the chamber with Cheren’s group. “I told you not to go dimension-fishing in the Multiverse Portal!”

“Relax, Dipper! It’s not like we’re going to catch the Time-Space drain plug with our fishing poles. Oh, I caught something!” Mabel quickly reeled hers in. An ant the size of a dog flew out of the portal, nibbling the lure. “WOAH! That is one ugly dog!” The ant spat out the lure and crawled back up into the portal.

“Sigh. Anyway, we’ve been studying this portal ever since Wendy and MaKayla made it out.” Dipper explained as he led them into the secret room. The Master Emerald was still sitting in its power station. “Look at this.” He showed them a scanner machine with a computer attached to it. “According to the journals, this device was meant to scan people or objects and detect duplicates of them in the Original Worlds!”

“Really? Try to scan Karin.” Cheren ordered.

“Sure. Stand in front of it.” Karin stood a few feet from the tiny eye-size hole, which shone a red holographic scan that swept down and up her body.

“Parallel detected in Original World ‘Karakura.’ Directing to targeted destination.”

They went to look at the portal. The arrow in the circle of symbols pointed at one of a flame. “So it can.” MaKayla observed. “But I think the portal has another purpose: it can travel through time.”

“IT CAN!” exclaimed Dipper, flipping open Journal 2. He lit the purple light and showed invisible ink. “While the portal can target specific universes, it seems that it drops me off at certain points in Time in those universes. Bill and I have built a device for an object called the ‘Ocarina of Time,’ which he says can be used to target specific times. But the ocarina in question has been lost for—”

He looked up when Nerehc held up the instrument.

“Not anymore.”

There was a machine on the left of the main panel with a small, square-shaped glass cabinet. It was perfectly fit for the ocarina’s size. Fi leapt out and said, “Master Cheren, I can use my telepathy
and command the ocarina to transport the user 500 years in the past. Based on the structure of this device, there is a 70% chance that the vast chronokinetic energy contained in the ocarina will be transferred to the Multiverse Portal. This will, in turn, enable the portal to warp people and objects to the respective time date within the specified dimension.”

“Sounds like a 70% worth chancing.” With that, Nerehc performed the Song of Time, joined by Fi’s marvelous vocals. When the ocarina began to glow, they set it inside the cabinet and shut it. It shone a bright blue light, and the energy transferred along the cords to the portal. The machine shone blue, as did the spiraling portal. Mabel, Grenda, and Candy shut their eyes from the blinding light and ceased their fishing.

“This must be it!” MaKayla exclaimed. “Karin, now’s your chance, go in! Eventually, the portal should call you back.”

“But I don’t even know what I’m looking for!”

“You’re finding one of the Thirteen Darknesses. His name is Aizen. You need to take him to the dungeons and find a stone pyramid.”

“How do you know these things?”

“Because I was here before! This is based on the information I picked up.”

“First we’ll make sure the Darkness’s location is on the dot!” Nerehc ran up to the scanner and presented the sheathed sword to it. The machine detected the sword’s original location, and the destination of Dimension Karakura didn’t change.

Karin faced the portal with nervousness in her heart. She took a breath to relieve this feeling, then transformed into a ghost. She flew headfirst into the portal and whisked across the Sea of Worlds. There were bubbles with images of a white-haired man, a strong man with a cocky grin, and a creature Karin recognized as a Hollow. She was nearly dizzied by the images in the Dimensional Byway before a great white light engulfed her.

Soul Society; 500 years ago

Karin woke up under a blue sky with clouds, having landed in an alleyway between old wood houses. She got up on her feet and observed her surroundings. She floated upward for a better view of the area. She was in a village of some sort, with a huge white castle-like structure in the distance. The village looked like something from feudal Japan.

“Hu!” Blue mist escaped from Karin’s mouth; her Ghost Sense. It leaked out like a cracked bottle —Karin cupped her mouth shut. She landed on the ground and began to look for the cause that alerted the sense.

“What’s wrong, Nerd?! Why’re you so afraid, huh?” Karin heard a voice from around a left building corner. She peeked and saw a gang of large boys, surrounding a smaller boy with brown hair. They all wore ragged clothing and the small boy was the only one with shoes – brown sandals.

“Come on, guys.” The boy’s head was bowed, and he looked timid. “Can’t we just forget about it?”

“Nuh-uh!” The largest bully, a fat boy with blue robes and budding hair, smirked. “We know what you did to those Shinigami chasin’ after Kisuke! You got in their way and blew ’em back with your Super Reiatsu! Sōsuke, the mega freak who can’t go nowhere wifout his Spirit Pressure over-
“Guys, stop! Really, I mean it- hey!”

“What’re those kids’ problem?” Karin asked herself with spite. “Hm, they’re about to have another one-” She stomped up to them—the bullies were all blown apart by a sudden explosion, a small but forceful one. The boy was standing in the center where it came from, panting with anger.

“AHHH!” The bully screamed. “He really is a monster! RUUUN! Let the Shinigami get rid of him!” His friends followed his example and cowered away from the area, screaming.

Confused, Karin decided to approach the boy. He gazed up at her with nervous brown eyes, and moaned a faint “Uhhhhh…”

“Hey, I’m not gonna bully you.” Karin said. “So close your mouth before a bug enters in.”

He waited a moment before speaking. “…Are you… a Shinigami?”

“Shinigami?”

“Yeah… you’re wearing the robe…”

“I am?” Karin looked at her black robe. “I guess I am… So, why were those guys picking on you?”

“Um…” He looked down. “Because of my Reiatsu.”

“Reiatsu? …Hu!” Karin’s Ghost Sense leaked out in a ceaseless fashion again.

“Yeah, I have really big Reiatsu. And it makes me…?” He looked up and saw Karin trying to hold her mouth shut.

The girl turned around and let the mist float out. *Wait a minute... this is a Spirit World. Everything here... but this boy, he...*

“Are you okay, Miss?”

Karin turned back to him once the Ghost Sense settled. “I’m fine. My name’s Karin – Karin Kurosaki.” She smiled and sat down. “What’s your name?”

“It’s Aizen. Sōsuke… Aizen.”

“Aizen?” The name immediately rang a bell.

“Do you want something from me, Shinigami-sama?”

*Is this kid really a Darkness? He’s so small. But then again... “I was just looking around.”* Karin answered. “But tell me about this Reiatsu of yours, Aizen. You said it was really big?”

“Uh-huh.” Aizen said in his timid voice. “I don’t know why it is, I was just born this way. I was told my mom died giving birth to me, and my dad just... dropped me. And I can’t control it most of the time. I can’t...!” Aizen’s hair started waving, and Karin felt an invisible force. “Aaaaah... It’s happening again!” He started panicking.

The blue mist leaked out of Karin’s mouth again. “Hang on!” She shot ectoplasmic energy from both hands and encased Aizen in a green barrier. She found it difficult to contain the force, and the
barrier was cracking from it. Karin managed to keep it steady long enough for the power to die down. After three minutes, she released the barrier.

“I’m sorry… It acts up on its own a lot.” He said shamefully. “I… Wait… What was that spiritual pressure, Miss?”

“What? You mean that barrier I just did?” Karin replied.

“Yes… I’ve never seen Reiatsu like that. It doesn’t feel like any…”

Karin wondered if it was okay to say where she was from. She decided not to and chose to alter her backstory. “I was also born with a strange Reiatsu. It’s green-colored and behaves differently from normal Reiatsu. But it gave me an unfair advantage over everyone else; and I felt kind of bad for it.” She was referring to her skill on the soccer field. “Not only that… my mother died because of my power.” Karin said remorsefully.

“What did you do about it?”

The story was actually sensitive to Karin, and she felt awkward about editing it. “Well… I just learned to accept my powers. They didn’t change who I was inside, and best of all, I could use them to help people. I’m not sure how to help you control your powers, but maybe you can think of them as a gift. In the future, they could help you do something phenomenal.”

“Hmm…” Aizen bowed his head. “I never thought about it that way… The only thing I worry about is… how strong my power could get… I worry about what could happen because of them…”

Karin tilted his head back up, giving him an assuring grin. “If you’re worried about it, then make sure it doesn’t happen. Try to learn how to control them, try to get in touch with these powers. One day, you’ll be able to do great things, and you’ll be very thankful that you have them.”

“You really think… that I can?”

“Sure ya can, Slugger!” Karin playfully punched him in the shoulder. “Just keep your chin up and believe in yourself a bit more!”

“Ah!” Aizen flinched, holding his shoulder. “Why did you hit me, Shinigami-sama?”

“What? No-no-no, that wasn’t a hit!” she said quickly. “It was a shoulder bump! It’s just my way of saying ‘I have faith in you’!” Man, I really hope I’m not screwing up the timeline.

“Eh heh. That’s a very odd way of saying that, Shinigami-sama.”

“Please, just call me Karin. …Actually, call me Karin-san. I like being called that.”


“Ah!” Karin jumped at the question that could easily blow her cover. “Well, I, uh… work in Squad 1 and I…” She beamed at the opportunity at hand, “I work down in the dungeons! Checking on prisoners and… stuff! If you want, I can give you a tour of the place!”

“A tour? Are you allowed to do that?”

“Sure I am, it’s no big deal!” Karin grinned, ruffling his hair. “But just in case, let’s not tell anyone.
But FIRST, I’m gonna quiz ya!” She winked and stuck her index finger up. “Where is the dungeon located?”

“U-Under Squad 1…” Aizen stuttered.

“Correct! Which is where, exactly?”

“Er… it’s that big place right there.” He spoke as if the answer was an obvious fact and pointed at the castle-like structure.

“Yes, that would be pretty obvious to anyone that that… is where it is.” Karin felt stupid inside.

“O-kay, quiz completed, hop aboard and let’s go!” Karin picked the child up and turned invisible as she soared across the village.

They went unseen by the Shinigami guards, but they appeared to sense the Reiatsu emitted from Aizen. Karin phased them through the ground outside the castle and down several floors of what was clearly an underground dungeon. Karin and Aizen set foot on the 8th floor, the former lighting her hand green in order to see in the darkness. “I’m looking for a stone pyramid, is that it?” she mumbled. “Something like that shouldn’t be too hard to…”

“Did you say something, Karin-san?”

“Um, I was talking about the… super rare treasure that is lost within the dungeon depths.”

“Treasure?”

“Yes, it’s a pyramid! It’s an old legend that’s told among us Shinigami, but no one’s ever found it. I wonder if we’ll be lucky enough to?”

“Heh, is this some sort of game, Miss?” Aizen smiled.

“Maybe it is! You should play along.”

“Wait… I feel something.” The boy looked left.

“What?”

Aizen entered an open cell that had nothing inside but dust and chains. He approached a dark hole in the corner of the room. Karin held her glowing hand over the hole, but could not see its bottom.

“What do you feel, Aizen?”

“I don’t know… but I wanna go down there and see what it is. Is it safe?”

“I’m… not sure. …But I wanna see what it is, too. Let’s go down together.” Karin picked him up and began to float down. “Don’t worry, I’ll protect you.”

“Karin-san… do you think the pyramid is down here?”

“There’s a 70% chance that it is.” (Play “Earth Temple” from Zelda: Wind Waker.)

Stage B-21: Dungeon Depths

Mission: Find the Pyrameglyph.
Karin and Aizen set foot on the bottom of the hole. The cave was full of dust and bones, and it was surprising to have faint light giving them vision in this dungeon. The first room was small and had a locked door—and it seemed Karin was unable to go intangible through it. She began to overturn the many small stones that were lain in the room. A dark scorpion with a skull mask jumped out of one of them and latched onto her face, but Karin was quick to yank it off and destroy the Hollow. “Look, Karin-san!” Aizen said, pointing to the key that was uncovered from the rock.

The two used it to unlock the door and go to the next room. They were on a platform over a wide room with many tall pillars that had mirrors on them. There was a Sun Switch on the other side, and it had a sleeping face due to no light. There was a light shining on a higher mirror, but it was faced away from the others, and all those mirrors faced random directions.

Karin kicked her soccerball at a mirror—the ball ignited like a comet from the force of the kick, and the mirror spun around before stopping to face another. Sadly, the mirror changed back after a few seconds. Karin saw a higher platform on her right and decided to fly up. With good precision, she kicked the ball around a sequence of mirrors, turning them one after the other, then she quickly hit the top mirror to direct the light all around them, eventually hitting the Sun Switch and opening the door.

The following room was even more wide, but the floor was covered in a blue fog. “Karin-san, that’s Curse Fog.” Aizen cautioned. “You won’t be able to use your Reiatsu in it.”

Karin examined the rest of the room, her eyes falling on the locked door on the other side. “But what choice do I have? Hop on my shoulders and I’ll walk us across.” Aizen complied, and was safe above the Curse Fog’s reach as Karin stepped in. She felt powerless with the blue fog touching her, and hidden under its mist were black holes on the floor. Dark hands called Holemasters lunged out of these holes and seemed intent on grabbing Aizen, so Karin leapt away before they had the chance. She was forced to keep her eyes down in search of the key, dodging Holemasters every which way. She felt her foot step on something long, discovering the key.

Karin made her way to the ledge with the locked door and got inside. She and Aizen viewed a corridor over a chasm, in which the door was partway down on the opposite end. Blue Bubbles, skulls with the Curse Fog, were floating over the pit. Karin was unable to fly up high, for an unseen force was preventing her. She would have to glide across. She carried Aizen and maneuvered around the Blue Bubbles, having to wait for an opening between two of them and having to sink lower to get under three stationary Bubbles. She managed to land the platform before going too low and they entered the next room.

It was another straight hallway where the door was free for the opening. Karin smirked at the simple puzzle and walked forward proudly. Steps before touching the door, a ghost possessed her and forced Karin to go back. “Hey, get off of me! Stupid ghost, let me go!” No matter how much she tried to force herself around, the Poe wouldn’t comply. Eventually, the ghost left her body on its own accord.

“Are you all right, Karin-san?” Aizen asked.

“Yeah. Boy, was that ever unpleasant.” The two entered the door to a bigger room over a pit of Curse Fog. A bridge crossed over to a central platform, then a set of smaller platforms would lead to a door. Karin’s Ghost Sense picked up more hidden Poes, waiting to possess her. She shot Ecto Blasts at the empty air, but they seemed to do nothing. “Ugh. I know more of those ghosts are waiting for me.”

“Karin-san, I have an idea.” Aizen said. “That ghost was making you go the opposite of where you wanted to, right? Maybe you can use that against them.”
“Hmm… Good idea, Kid.” Karin walked forth and allowed the first Poe to possess her. She tried to walk the opposite direction, but the Poe’s will commanded her to keep forward. She moved carefully over the thin bridge with no railing, making sure she didn’t shift left or right too much. By the time she was at the platform, the Poe abandoned her. Karin and Aizen then had to cross a series of platforms that would tilt under their weight. As Karin expected, a Poe possessed her, and commanding it to will her in the opposite direction required better timing and precision on these unbalanced footholds. Karin managed to reach the last platform, but in her attempt to step on the ledge, she stumbled and fell over. “AAAH-!”

“Karin-san!” Aizen grabbed and pulled Karin over to the ledge. The Poe left her body.

“Phew, thanks! Hey, how come those ghosts don’t come after you?”

“Maybe my Reiatsu’s too much for them.” He blushed.

They entered the door and gazed up a flight of stairs. “I got this.” Karin picked Aizen up and flew up the stairwell at high speed. It was nice to know this room didn’t weigh her down, for she kept flying and flying, the stairs and wall texture whipping past her. And she kept going and going and going… there were so many stairs. Why hasn’t she made it outside at this point?


“What’re you talking about, we’re going straight.”

“No we aren’t, we’re just flying in a loop. It’s getting dizzy.”

“What…” Karin stopped. The stairs and walls turned wavy.

“The door is down there. Just fly down.”

The stairwell faded away, revealing the true, downward stairs that led to a door. “What… was that about…” Her mind still swimming, Karin floated down and entered the door. (End song.)

A dreary mist filled the room and dozens of skulls lay around the floor. Through the fog, they could see a triangular shadow. As Karin stepped closer, she could make out hieroglyphics on the pyramid and the eye on its tip. “Aizen… it’s the pyramid!”

“It is?”

The dozens of skulls floated up. Karin readied her guard, expecting them to attack. One at a time, the skulls lit with a colored flame, starting from orange, green, blue, purple, then it repeats. Soon, all the skulls were lit, flying around the pyramid in a colorful circle. They stopped: all the skulls had goofy faces and began to sing loudly.

**OOO, INTRUDERS WANDER TO OUR MIDST**

*To beat us with their groady fists*

*They really baked a nasty cake*

*Of one great big mistake!*

A giant skull mask appeared above the pyramid and sang in a dark voice-
We’ll turn their ORGANS upside-down!

We’ll stew their brains and crunch their bones

And see they never pay back their loans

Their SOULS- ARE- NOW- OUR- OOOWWWNN!

All the flame skulls flew into the mask, which puffed a fat black body with a hole in its chest. The hole filled with a neon light composed of all the souls in this Hollow’s body. The ghost cackled demonically and the battle began. (Play Jalhalla’s Theme from Wind Waker!)

Boss fight: Jahollow

“If that isn’t Most Creative Boss Name of the Year!” Karin retorted. The giant Hollow blasted colorful fireballs as Karin flew up and around him. She shot Ecto Blasts at his belly, but they merely bounced off and shot herself. Jahollow flew over to smash Karin under his belly, but she had flipped over to push against his weight with both feet. She kept him high enough to quickly fly out, letting him plop onto nothing. When Jahollow recovered, Karin blasted twin Ecto Rays at his chest, the Hollow shaking from the unbearable pain. The light of the neon chest grew brighter until he exploded. The colorful skulls scattered and flew around rampantly.

We’re SEPARATED all around

Master Jahollow has fell down

Run away, up high, up low

Before she deals her fatal blow!

“Unfortunately for you, I see a bunch of moving balls!” Karin flew around and, with power and gusto, kicked as many of the skulls as she could. Each one ricocheted around the room before shattering, and Karin took delight when their flames made many a colorful flame-line during their bounce-around. After striking six skulls, Jahollow’s face returned, and the remaining skulls reunited at his core, reforming his body.

Karin blasted at his chest, but the Hollow pulled his belly up to shield his chest. Jahollow began to inhale, creating a vacuum that Karin tried to outrun. When the Hollow ceased, it released the condensed air at the ground, blowing several tornadoes of dust. Karin was swept up in one of the whirlwinds, spinning around and around before she was forced against the ground. Jahollow seized the chance to smash her.

Karin forced twin Ecto Rays up to push the fat ghost off. As she gasped for breath, she took note of how she pushed him off. She flew level with Jahollow and shot twin rays, pushing him once more. She pushed him above the pyramid, flew above, then pushed down so the pyramid’s tip pierced his belly. The Hollow exploded, freeing the rainbow skulls as they flew rampantly again. Karin tried to beat her record, kicking each skull that crossed her vision. She was able to beat nine skulls, leaving four more. Those four flew into the Hollow mask once it returned.

Jahollow turned invisible and reappeared behind Karin, possessing and forcing her to fly in opposite directions. She smirked, having already encountered this trick, so she faced Jahollow’s direction and fired- “AAAH!” She shot herself with the Ecto Rays and flew back. The curse must redirect her aim, too. When she recovered, Jahollow immediately possessed her again. She
managed to face up at him and would shoot herself in order to forcibly shoot him. However, Jahollow saw this trick and broke his control, letting Karin shoot herself again.

“Karin-san!” Aizen ran up to her.

“Aizen?”

“Karin-san, let him possess me!”

“What? I’m not gonna risk you like that!”

“Please just let me!” The child looked fearlessly as Jahollow approached. This new prey was brimming with Reiatsu, and it looked so delicious to the Hollow’s dead eyes. Jahollow cast its possession spell on Aizen—immediately the monster was overwhelmed, and exploded from the radiating power.

Karin seized the chance to kick and destroy the last four skulls. Only Jahollow’s skull remained, and Karin smirked at his helpless state. “Don’t worry, this is only an accident.” Karin tossed her ball up and kicked it at Jahollow’s face with full force. Like many kids from the soccer field she can’t remember, his skull broke. “Nothing a trip to the nurse’s office won’t fix.” (End song.)

“Hey, Karin-san!” Aizen yelled excitedly. “I did it, didn’t I?”

Karin bashed him in the head. “OW! Is that your way of saying ‘yes’?”

“NO. That was my way of saying that was a VERY risky move!”

“B-But I—”

“And I’m proud of you for it.” She smirked and tilted his head up.

“Ah… hehe.” He blushed.

“Honestly, you reminded me of one of my teammates.”

“Hehe…” Aizen turned and faced the stone pyramid. Karin frowned as he approached it, looking as though he was in a trance.

“Aizen… you feeling okay?”

He stopped before the pyramid. “I’m fine.” A dark aura appeared around the ruin. With the gray mist out of the way, he could see the text. And Karin could tell that he could read it.

Do not deny the powers in your veins. Let them be yours, and know that the only force in this world is absolute power.

The eye on the pyramid tip glowed and the dark aura entered his body. Karin suspects the mission is now complete.

Sōsuke Aizen awakened as a DARKNESS. Only 7 more to go.

“…Karin-san.”

She was silent, almost fearing what he would say after that. “Er… yes?”

“…Do you think… I can join Gotei 13?” He turned to her with a smile, holding a green-hilted
spear in his hand.

Karin was shocked. “Where did you get that?”

“It just appeared… heheh. Maybe it’s a Zanpakutō. I wonder what it does?” He drew it.

The Ghost Sense leaked from her mouth again—a dizzying sensation fell over Karin. “Karin-san?” The world turned blurry, her feet felt cold, she was smelling delicious cakes and pastries. “Karin-san, what’s wrong?” She could taste that cake, too. Mmm, it was so good. She wanted to keep eating it. She wanted to keep-

“Karin-san!” The feeling was gone. She was on her hands and knees, facing Aizen directly. He had sheathed the sword.

“Nn… sorry.” Karin got up. “Let’s get you out of here.” She carried Aizen and flew up through the ceiling, phasing through all the many layers of spirit-rock until they made it above the surface. “Sigh, THAT time it works. Aizen, it was great meeting you, but I’m afraid I can’t stick around. If you want to join the Gotei, you should talk to one of the higher-ups.”

“Karin-san… why did you lie to me?”

Her heart skipped a beat. “Uh… What?”

“A minute ago… you said you were from a different universe. Here to find me.”

She bit her teeth. “I didn’t say that!”

“But… you did. Or was it… your mind?…” Aizen looked at the sheathed sword he was holding. He faced Karin again and yelled, “Karin-san, who are you really?!”

“…Sigh.” She calmed down. “Aizen, I’m sorry. You’re right, I’m from a different world. I was on an assignment to help you… ’awaken’ yourself.”

“What does that mean?”

“I… don’t really know myself. I couldn’t explain it to you, and… I don’t think I should. Aizen, I think you should forget that you met me. Just remember what I taught you.”

“Karin-san…”

A ray of light pierced through the sky and shook the ground. “Uh-oh! I guess that’s my way back!” Karin exclaimed. “Good-bye, Aizen! Who knows, maybe we’ll meet up again! Until then, see ya!” She flew into the portal, which then vanished after a few seconds, the tremors ceasing.

“Good-bye… Karin Kurosaki.” And from then on, Aizen never mentioned her to anyone. But he remembered her name to this day… Kurosaki.

**Portal Chamber**

“Heads up, girls! Mabel’s got herself a ringer!” Mabel exclaimed, standing firm as she reeled her fishing rod with gusto. “We are gonna EAT tonight!”

None other than Karin flew out of the portal. “PLEH!” She spat the lure out of her mouth. “Dammit, I’m not a fish!”

“We caught a ghost with a fishing pole!” Candy beamed. “Take THAT, Jack Fenton!”
“Karin, you made it back!” Cheren exclaimed. “What was it like? Did you meet the Darkness—did you find the pyramid?”

“Good, I think, and yes. I found Aizen like you said. He read the Gibberish Pyramid and then darkness flew inside him.”

“That about sums it up.” Nerehc said. “You guys were right, then. The Darknesses really are through this portal.”

MaKayla approached it, staring at the swirly vortex. “But why? The Original Worlds were said to be secluded from our dimensional plane. According to legend, the gods designed this universe from what existed in those universes. So why are the Darknesses in those worlds? Who would’ve decided this?”

“The only thing we can do now is find them.” affirmed Nerehc. “Cheren, you and your pals focus on getting the Lights. Me and my operatives will keep using this portal to find the Darknesses. I may have to rely on Medusa to send me more artifacts.”

“But what about the ocarina? You won’t be able to target the dates without Fi.”

“So leave Fi here.”

“Ghh!” Cheren flinched. He took out his sword and held it aloft. “Can I do that?”

Fi jumped out. “Master Cheren, in the same manner that I was commanded to guide Sector V to Solana, I can remain in this chamber if you so need me to. If my advice is not needed, you may take the Master Sword whilst I remain and obey the requests of Not-Master Nerehc. If it is your desire, let it be so.”

Cheren hesitated to answer. Fi’s advice was helpful, whether or not it’s needed most of the time… Without her spirit in the sword, he would feel a tad lonely. But for the sake of finding all the Keys… “Okay, Fi. Stay here and do whatever Nerehc tells you.”

“Understood, Master. I hope that we may reunite soon.”

Cheren faced his Negative. “Bring her back as soon as you’re done, got it?”

“Relax, man, I will.” Nerehc smiled. “My sword’s cooler, anyway.”

“Ha ha… Well, good luck, you two.” He, MaKayla, and Karin left the cave.

Fi turned to Nerehc and said, “Master’s Wannabe Nerehc, I am at your command.”

“Well, this is gonna be fun.” He sighed in exhaust.

Somewhere in Europe; 96 years ago

The waves smashed against the cliffside on this gloomy, stormy day. A person’s voice could roughly be heard down here. If someone were to fall into the raging sea, nobody would hear them scream. It was a sea that Davy Jones loved to sail.

It wasn’t often that Davy Jones sailed this close to land, but he agreed to at the request of his new master. Negatar Gnaa stared at the cliffside as the Flying Dutchman drew close to it. “I cannot go any farther without alarming the town.” Jones said. “Why did you wish to sail this way, Lord Gnaa?”
“I feel a voice calling to me.” Gnaa said solemnly. “A voice… in the darkness.”

“I, too, feel it, Master.” Phantom Gnaa hissed, holding his master’s shoulders. “Let us go.”

The phantom carried Lord Gnaa across the waves and the rocks, and set him on a thin path along the cliffside. Lord Gnaa entered a cave where he felt the darkness emanate. It was very dark, and the only areas that had a hint of light were a dull gray. Tiny drips of water echoed across the dank cave. Gnaa’s only guide was the darkness that called for him.

He found the source between a group of crystals that gave off a gray glow. It was a small boy of nine years old, with dark hair and dull clothes. He looked up at the figure with an arrow on his head. Negatar Gnaa stared at him blankly and spoke in a whisper, “Why are you down here?”

“I’m hiding.” The boy said lowly.

“From who?”

“I’m hiding from the world. I don’t belong in the world. The world… hates me.”

“How does the world hate you?”

“I can do things that others can’t. I can make things move without touching them. I can make animals do what I want without training them. I can make bad things happen to people who are mean to me. I can make them hurt.”

“…I can do things that others can’t as well.” Gnaa said. “I can feel the darkness in people’s hearts.”

“Is that why you’re down here?”

“I came down here because I felt the darkness in your heart. I can feel the darkness clouding you. I can feel it… becoming you. The world has given you pain. It has made you want the darkness.”

“Then… what am I to do?”

“…Embrace the darkness. Welcome it. And it will always be with you. It will always help you…”

“Would the darkness… be my friend?” The boy stood. “Would it… talk to me?”

Phantom Gnaa rose from the ground before him, a body of black mist with glowing eyes. “Yes… it would…”

The boy looked down at his feet. His own shadow appeared to stretch away from him, acting on its own. When the boy looked up, the stranger was gone. He walked forward slowly, the sound of his footsteps mixed with the echoing droplets. The child looked right when another part of the cave glowed. Down the passage of crystals was a stone pyramid.

The boy approached the strange ruin. It must have sat in this cave for thousands of years. And yet, it looked so… clean. The cavern droplets did not wither away its text or its form. But some droplets seeped into the engraved letters and the eye on top. The crystals brimmed greater, giving everything in the cave a bright gray. They highlighted the pyramid’s perfect form, and the letters clear enough for him to read.

The light shall fade… only darkness can live forever. Do not let yourself fade. Reject the light… Rejoice the darkness…

The dark aura from the pyramid flew into the boy’s body. He understood the text’s meaning… he
let it sink into his mind.

**Tom Riddle awakened as a Darkness. Just 6 more to go.**

The *Flying Dutchman* sailed away from the land, soon to be gone with the storm. “There should be a number of worthy shadowbending teachers in Britain. Many of the wizards and witches are-ah.” Davy Jones said.

“I have already found a worthy teacher.” Gnaa smirked. “Now it is a matter of…” he looked back and faced the cliff, “waiting.”

**Same cliff; present time** (Play “Organization XIII” from *Kingdom Hearts II*.)

Ninety-six years later, waves were still mercilessly smashing against the cliffs. Some of the rocks had eroded away. Medusa stood on the edge and felt the forceful wind. Behind her, Baby Chernabog was asleep, kept warm by Pandora’s flame. Medusa looked back at them for a moment, then faced the horizon. “Let me ask you something, Thanatos… When is a person most susceptible to the darkness?”

“The answer is obvious, Medusa!” said the snake on her shoulder. “It’s when they are young!”

“Correct. A child is always most vulnerable to darkness. An undeveloped mind is an open mind. Even Firstborn like Jirachi can be easily fooled. That’s why many of these Darknesses realize their destinies when they’re young. And it is why, even as they have become adults, the light has never reached them. True, the Seven Lights can try to avoid the darkness all the same… but all that matters is destiny is truly set in stone. Then it’s survival of the fittest.”

**Outside Sector JP’s hideout**

It was a cloudy and chilly night in the forest. Karin’s teammates have gone to sleep, but she was outside, waiting. Her Spirit KND mentor, Yachiru, flew down from the trees and set foot, making a salute. “You called me, Karin-chan?”

“Ha ha, hi, Yachiru.” Karin smiled. “Sorry if you were busy… but I wanted to ask you something.”

“Sure, anything!” The pink-haired girl smiled brightly.

“Do you know anything about anyone named… Sōsuke Aizen?”

“Aizen… hmmm…” Yachiru stroked her chin. “The name sounds familiar…” She paced left and right. “I think I read it in a book… OH!” She perked up. “Right! It’s a story about a man who challenged the gods, nearly 10,000 years ago! His name was Sōsuke Aizen!”

“Do you know… what it was about?”

**10,000 years ago…**

He woke up in a desolate field, lost and confused. He didn’t know how he landed here… there was a great flash in the sky and that was it. Dust blew in the wind, and swords were impaled in the ground, marking the places of fallen warriors.

Aizen heard a pair of footsteps behind him, but did not turn to see their owner. “It was a bloodthirsty battle.” Medusa said. “But I’m sure it was nothing… compared to your power.”

“…That’s a shame.” Aizen turned around. He was a handsome man with smooth brown hair, sharp
brown eyes, and a sleek white robe. “For a second, I was… upset.”

“I feel it in your heart. The irrepressible urge to unleash your unending power. But striking at mortals would be like… striking at empty air. You want beings that you can call equals.”

“Equals… So there is more than one?” Aizen was humored at the idea.

“Of course… And I would be happy to take you to them.” She smirked maliciously. “But first… I want to test your power.”

“I can’t believe it took all the gods together just to beat him!” Yachiru said.

I didn’t feel like Tom Riddle needed a stage. Maybe because we just did a cave stage. So Aizen is from *Bleach* and Riddle is from *Harry Potter*—which you all should know. :P I might throw in an Augustus stage next, but soon we should get to the nitty-gritty of Tenth Firstborn Arc. This arc continues in Lazarus Saga, so see you then. ;P
Team Sandman steal some cargo from trucks in Raiders' Valley. Team Rupert infiltrates the Zingers' Hive. Sector W7 sleep one last night before their trip to the Guertena Gallery.

**Sandman and Rupert get action today! And a number cipher!**

_Chapter 46: The Night Before_

**Kentucky; Raiders’ Valley**

The sun had gone down over this region, and the cloudy sky was totally black. Sandman, Coldman, and Wiccan marched across a grass road between the short walls of a trench. The wind was filthy with the dirt of the country, so the heroes kept their masks and hoods on. “I received an email telling me to come to this location, on the night of Nigel’s funeral.” Sandman said. “Now I’m waiting for this guy to reply to me.”

“You just trust whatever some Internet stranger emails you?” Wiccan asked.

“Well, I did backtrack to a couple areas to pick up Riddler Trophies, soooo… Ah, here he is.” Someone was calling Sandman’s wristwatch.

“Hi-diddly ho, a-riddling we go!” the perky voice exclaimed on the other end.

“It’s Bill Cipher!” Coldman gasped.

“Very funny, *Gladius*. No, this is the Riddler, reporting to you live from an undisclosed location! I’m so glad Sandman found the time to go back and find my trophies while he was busy breaking into government facilities. I see you were also able to discover which people among those enemy guards were actually my henchmen.”

“They weren’t hard to figure out after sending a Game-and-Watch copy to your email.” Sandman informed.

“See, this is why videogame walkthroughers shouldn’t offscreen, because now I’m totally lost.” Crystal smacked her forehead.

“Yes, your little game character was an interesting trick. Too bad I blocked him. I sensed you were getting tired of backtracking, however, so I thought I’d give you a pointer to your next mission. This is a rather secluded valley in Kentucky, called the Raiders’ Valley, after the outlaws who used to run around here in the 1980s. Milkmen used this passage to cart milk to various stores and such, and the Raiders had a gimmick with breaking their cargo. Don’t understand the story behind that, all you need to know is Hugo Strange found an interest for it.”

“What are you saying?” Nolan asked.

“I’m saying that I have a couple of boys among these people as well, so they know that Dr.
Strange is planning to ship what seem like ordinary milk bottles, which are actually filled with a peculiar substance, to the stores. Search me for whatever that is, my boys didn’t seem to know.”

“So Dr. Strange is trying to put this stuff on the shelves in place of milk? Where’s the actual milk?”

“The actual milk is mixed in with it, it looks like. I don’t know if the farmers were persuaded to turn a blind eye, but it might’ve been behind their backs.”

“If this is true, then I can’t let them make it to the stores. We have to steal these bottles from the trucks.”

“How are we supposed to do that? Our own personal truck?” Wiccan asked rhetorically. “They couldn’t all fit in the Sandmobile, could they?”

“Ahem.” Riddler coughed. “It so happens I have a special carrier craft hovering over the area. It’s watching your movements down there; just hold the bottles outside and it’ll reach down to take them off your hands.”

“You expect me to trust you with this unknown substance? What’s in this for you, anyway?”

“What I want is not important. But you can certainly trust I wouldn’t want any minds dirtied because of this stuff, and I’m sure you don’t, either.”

“Hmph… I’ll play along, but don’t think I won’t take some for my own research.”

“I was counting on that, Sandy. Just don’t take more than you can drink.” (Play “Infiltration of Hyrule Castle” from Zelda: Four Swords Adventures.)

Stage 55: Raiders’ Valley

Mission: Steal the cargo from the milk carts.

Team Sandman trekked up the road, unable to see far forward through the dust and darkness. Sandman mostly used his Detective Vision- “Up here!” He grappled to a ledge in the wall on the right, his friends joining him as they were nearing a horse-drawn cart, carrying bottles of milk. The cart seemed to be dropping landmines as it went, so Sandman ordered Wiccan to fly down to it on her staff. The witch softly landed on the safe spot between the bottles, picking up each one, holding it over the back edge, and a mechanical claw reached down from an unseen source in the darkness to claim them. Crystal kept a single bottle under her cloak before flying back to her friends.

“Whoever’s controlling it, there’s definitely a ship up there.” Sandman observed. “This whole thing is really unnerving.”

“Rest easier knowing it’s for a good cause. Now are you gonna sit there, or are you gonna get the rest of those carts?”

“I’ll do one or both.” Sandman remarked. They waited for the cart to drive around a left turn, vanishing down a road, while the heroes followed a path above some natural stairs. Partway up the dark road, they saw the red lasers of snipers aiming from afar. They backed up to a point they wouldn’t be seen, then Sandman sent the Grapple-Cam to latch its way between the trench walls. He found the snipers standing in small enclosings on either wall. “Enjoying your low-playing night job?” his voice sounded from the mike.
The snipers turned around to search for the voice. The heroes quickly moved forward, Sandman latched the left cliff and knocked the sniper out, and Yuki froze the one on the right. Sandman used Detective Vision to see ahead; they stopped to let a cart drive by from a left road, which turned straight from their direction. They wanted to pursue, but duos of guards were standing on either side of the road. One looked at the back of the cart when it passed, the other looked the opposite way in each group. Yuki swiftly froze each one before any of them could notice, and the heroes bolted across the path before Crystal flew to the cart and landed on a clear spot. She handed each bottle to the extended arm, except one she kept under her cloak.

They watched the cart drive casually down the rest of the road, and the heroes took flight over a chasm on their right, landing on a cliff. They followed the road to a small field where guards roamed. This zone was chi-blocked, so Yuki's OP ice attacks wouldn't work. Thankfully, there were several tall rocks in this area, so the heroes snuck around and knocked out the three roaming guards. The two gate guards weren't armed, but the minute they spotted the heroes, they rolled forward for swift punches and kicks.

Crystal blocked with her staff, which the guard kicked away, but Crystal managed to roll behind him and punch him in the head. The guard withstood and grabbed her arm, throwing the witch forward, but Yuki leapt and kicked him in the side of the head, knocking him out against the wall. Nolan grabbed the other guard's fists in his Armament hands, but the guard flipped his legs in the air, overhead to kick Sandman in the face and push him on his back. The guard leapt at Sandman, who turned his stomach area Armament to withstand the impact, afterwards swinging a punch at the guard's legs to knock him down, then climb on top to punch his head senseless.

Nolan's friends helped him back onto his chair. “Ever since the Doflamingo fight, using my Haki hasn't been easy. I'm not good at Coloring other parts of my body besides the fists.”

“At least you have us along in case things get rough.” Yuki said. They swipe gate keys from both martial artists, using one of them to open the way out of this field. Sandman saw a cart coming from the right road, aiming to enter a gate on their left, he used the other key to seal that gate shut. The cart was forced to change course down their path, but the heroes took cover in a hiding place in the wall. When it passed, Crystal flew on to rob the cart of its bottles. The heroes progressed down the road the cart previously came from, coming to an area with a medium cliff and high cliff, and guards patrolling on each of the three levels.

Sandman threw a boomerang at the guard on their level, then quickly knocked him out. He waited for the guards on the second level to pass each other, afterwards he and Yuki grappled up to knock both out simultaneously. Two guards were protecting the path on the very left side of the third level, so Crystal floated to the very right, sidling along the wall to slip behind the nearest guard, then she stood between both before performing a Ground Quake with her staff. In their dizzy state, the trio knocked them out.

After crossing this small dirt road, they arrived at a wider road where two carts drove side-by-side. They noticed that the right cart had more bottles and no standable areas, so Wiccan was tasked with boarding the left one for its bottles, while Yuki pushed Sandman’s chair after the right one, allowing the hero to grab them off the cart. It took longer to pass each bottle (except two) to the ship, but they managed okay.

On the right, they viewed another chasm with a low cliff on the other end, but two snipers stood guard. When they were turned away from the center, Sandman quickly rolled off the edge, shot his grapper to the opposite one, but remained under so the snipers didn’t see. He climbed below the left sniper and pulled him off to dangle by a rope. He repeated this for the right sniper so his friends could cross. The road turned leftward, bringing them to an enclosed area with several
They had to knock out these guards before the cart escaped. Sandman first rolled down a slope on his left, getting behind a sniper to knock him out. He grappled to the vacant cliff on the center platform, then climbed over a short rock wall to take out the guard standing there. On another segment of the center platform, the guard was facing a guard on a wall ledge, so Sandman sent his Grapple-Cam behind the latter guard and whispered, “There’s a creeper gonna creep when yo’ sleepiiiiing.” That guard turned, Sandman knocked out the one on the platform segment, then grappled to the ledge guard to take him out quickly. Meanwhile, Crystal floated over to knock out the remaining ledge guard.

Afterwards, the witch floated down to the slow-moving cart, and since there were no standable areas, she followed and took each bottle out to hand to Riddler’s ship. The heroes continued on the next path north of this mini canyon. They hurried across this wide road and chased, not a horse cart, but a large truck of black steel. The back doors were sealed, but there was a terminal on the side. Yuki pushed Nolan after the truck while the latter called Mr. Game-and-Watch on his wristwatch, holding it toward the terminal to see if G&W could connect.

In his cyberspace, Game-and-Watch chased a two-dimensional train-like vehicle with multiple segments. He jumped on the back segment, over some boxes, then he Ground Pounded onto the link and severed the back part. The train moved slightly faster, and while G&W chased, midair turrets fired at him, the Program tried to avoid the bullets to catch up. He jumped on the train car and flipped patties from his frying pan to defeat turrets perched on it, then he could chop the link off. He chased more, jumping pits of electricity, then got onto the next car, patiently waited for the laser barriers to disable, and severed the link. There were no obstacles on his way to the faster-moving front car, and there, he had to flip patties at a wall of turrets. Afterwards, he entered the train and inputted the code ‘Ginger.’

Team Hero watched as the truck’s backdoor opened. Wiccan and Coldman flew onto the standable spot on the edge, working together to hand the bottles to Riddler’s ship. Finally, the truck was clear, and the two jumped off, chased after, and shut the doors like they were never there. They stood in place and left the truck to drive away. (End song.)

“Well done, Sandman. I should’ve expected no less from you. I’ll make sure these hazardous bottles are put away safe and sound. For now, it’s been a long night. I think we all deserve some beauty sleep… by which I mean you. Keep looking for my trophies!” Transmission ended.

Seeing the ship about to fly away, Sandman forcefully threw a tracking device skyward, latching it to the bottom hull. “I’m sure he expected me to do that.”

“Nolan, now that you have these, erm, samples, how do you plan to examine them?” Crystal inquired.

“Humans have senses for a reason.” Nolan twisted the cap on one of the bottles and opened.

“Don’t do that!” Yuki cautioned. “What if it’s Nightmare Toxin, or worse?”

Nolan took off his mask and smelled the liquid. “…Definitely more than sour milk… but I don’t recognize the smell. A taste test would be out of the question.”

“I should hope.”

“Not to worry, guys.” Nolan twisted the cap back on. “There’s one expert on poisons I know well
enough to make a guess. ...Of course, it might be past her bedtime.”

**DK Isles; Zingers’ Hive**

Sappo and Gibli led Team Rupert’s Onions to the jungle island with the Donkey Kong-shaped mountain. Among the trees was a massive beehive fortress, where the mammoth-size bugs they were named for, the Zingers, fluttered in and out. The Onions were careful not to touch any of the oozing honey before they landed in a dry spot within the hive. The constant and furious rumbles of buzzing filled their ears once they stepped out. “You’re lucky you don’t have Zelda ears.” Sappo remarked, poking their fingers in their big ears. “Alright, you kids remember the deal, right? Get the Premium Honey, along with whatever treasures these bugs collected, and we’ll tell you where Malarko’s Pikmin Army is hidden.”

“You can count on us!” Rupert proclaimed confidently.

“Aaaaah!” Timothy screamed, having gotten his shoe stuck in a patch of honey. “I might need a little help here.”

“Don’t worry, Timmy! Just play dead and the bees won’t think you’re food!” Hikari said bubbly.

“Bees don’t eat humans, anyway.” Sappo said. “They will want the honey on his shoe, though.”

“You guys better find some Brown Pikmin fast!” Gibli jumped. “Only they can carry Premium Honey, or eat regular honey. In case you don’t know, Premium Honey is more shiny and gold. Like those weird cards that humans use for money!”

“That narrows it down.” Rupert shrugged. “Alright, gang, let’s nab today’s breakfast!”

Timmy tried to pull his foot out of the honey, but remained stuck. “Just help me out before I become a bee’s breakfast!” (Play “Hornet Hole” from *Donkey Kong Country 2!*)

**Stage 56: Zingers’ Hive**

**Mission: Collect Premium Honey!**

Rupert and Hikari pulled out 20 Ice Pikmin, 15 Reds, 15 Musics, and 10 Purples for now. They viewed a lake of oozing honey, and Rupert decided to toss Ice Pikmin onto it. The honey froze. The two smiled at each other, beginning to freeze a path for them all to cross. “Guys!” Timmy panicked when some Fuzzybees (furry bees that were their size) were buzzing toward him slowly. Hikari quickly threw some Reds up to take the bees down, then she called 10 Yellows to give to Timmy, letting him defend himself. With that, the other two proceeded across the ice path the Pikmin froze.

They could step onto a dry shore, where an incomplete bridge began. The tiles of the bridge were over on a small island, so the two would have to use their Ice Pikmin to- “Or we could use Wing Pikmin!” Hikari smiled. “They can carry over anything.”

“Yeah!” Rupert agreed.

“No, you can’t!” Sappo yelled at them. “We forgot to mention that Zingers hate Wing Pikmin! They’ll attack ‘em the moment they’re out!”

“That’s inconvenient!” Timothy shouted.
Regardless, they could use the Ice Pikmin to carry across the bridge tiles. It didn’t reach all the way, and they saw another isle of tiles on the opposite side of the big room. Unfortunately, those tiles were drenched in honey, so the Pikmin couldn’t get them without being stuck (even the Ice ones).

They returned to the previous shore, going further across as Hermit Crawmads peeped out of holes. Rupert threw an Ice forward, quickly called it back when the Crawmad came out, then they sent Pikmin on the creature. They repeated this pattern for the next two Crawmads, then continued to the wall at the shore’s end. A honey waterfall was dripping out of a hole, and while the Ice Pikmin could freeze it, they couldn’t climb up. On the opposite edge of this wall-side shore, there was a standing plank half-buried in the ground. Their Pikmin dug it up, then the Ices carried it over to lean it against the edge of the hole, causing the honey to flow down the slope. The Ices could freeze the river so the others could walk up it and into the tunnel.

The tunnel dropped off over a high point, but the Ice Pikmin froze the honey below so the kids could safely drop, then get onto the shore. They viewed this new honey pond, seeing three downpour currents focused on a single point: over a Brown Onion. They saw a path near the ceiling leading above those currents, and a honeycomb ladder on the wall of their shore. Hikari agreed to take some Ice Pikmin up there, having the creatures attack some Zinger Larvae on the walkway. The Ice Pikmin couldn’t freeze the currents because the constant flowing made the ice break, but Hikari saw a cavern of Bomb Rocks across the center. She led her Pikmin over to them, had them place bombs beside the honey slides’ bases, and destroy them so the falls would flow down the wall.

The honey over the center isle flowed away, leaving it dry, and the Brown Onion sprouted to life and dropped a seed. Rupert and Hikari regrouped to freeze a path to the platform, and the former plucked his first Brown Pikmin.

**Rupert discovered Brown Pikmin!** Their sticky bodies make them hard to shake off! They can cross and climb sticky terrain, and also eat sticky sweets off of items! Just don’t grab them too hard, or they’ll stick to you, too.

“I have a feeling we’re gonna need a lot of them to help the others around.” Rupert said.

“Me, too.”

They dedicated the surrounding Pellets and fallen enemies to the Brown Pikmin, ending up with 35. After that tedious journey, they brought that many Browns to the start and freed Timothy from his trap. Afterwards, they got out 20 of each Pikmin, except for Ghosts and Wings, making 195 total.

The Brown Pikmin ate the honey off the bridge tiles before bringing them to repair said bridge. They explored the rest of this lake with their Browns, and one of the honeycomb shapes in the wall was golden. Looking closer, it was made of glass. They threw their Rock Pikmin to break the glass, and inside the short tunnel was a pool of golden honey. “That must be the Premium Honey!” Rupert pointed.

“Alright, Brownies, go and get some!” Hikari threw the Brown Pikmin inside, and they made trips back-and-forth from the Onions until all the fragments of Premium Honey were collected. On one of the sides of the lake, a path of honey led up into a higher hole, so the Brown Pikmin performed the arduous task of carrying all their friends up (if the twins were trolling them about the ‘no Wing Pikmin,’ those two were gettin’ honey up their dresses). The tunnel was wider inside, and they saw the Silk Spitter from **Xiaolin Showdown** stuck to the left wall by honey. They threw the Brown
Pikmin onto the honey spots to eat it off, afterwards sending 10 Ice Pikmin to carry the Silk Spitter (Captured Rival) back, with Timmy accompanying them with 10 Browns.

Rupert and Hikari encountered two Honey Bulborbs, and only the Brown Pikmin could be tossed onto and defeat the creatures. Afterwards, the duo made it to an open area of the hive, where Zingers were fluttering about. Their hearts raced nervously when one of the giant bees hovered above them, and when it suddenly swooped down for a stab, the kids commanded their Pikmin to roll aside. They tossed Yellows up to weigh the bee down, but they were doing no damage. Hikari decided to throw Rock Pikmin at its stinger, and the bee winced with pain under each blow before falling.

They took care of three more Zingers in the field, and when Timothy returned to them, they fed their Pikmin some nectar from a garden of eggs in the center. They led their Pikmin to a side of the room where they had to go up some stairs, following a walkway that led to two large gaps between footholds. Timmy threw his friends to the first, then Rupert threw Hikari to the next, and she continued. She entered a cave that was barren, but the soil felt soft, so she returned to her friends and told them to throw White Pikmin over. As expected, they found diggable patches within the ground, and like oil, Premium Honey spurted out of them when they dug deep enough. Hikari told her friends to throw Brown Pikmin over to begin carrying.

To avoid having to throw the Browns over the gaps every single time they came back, the White Pikmin could thankfully dig up a weak patch of the ledge, causing it to slump into a slope. However, Fuzzybees were flying down to recover the stolen honey, so the trio had to throw Pikmin up to take them down. While waiting for the Browns to finish, they allowed their Music, Ice, and Rock Pikmin to take the fallen enemies (the Ice went first to make a path). Afterwards, the kids viewed another honeycomb ladder in one side of the wall, and since some holes had Zinger Larvae slumbering inside, they had to punch the bees and slay them (how cruel). They led their Pikmin to an area at the top of the room, viewing a complex, twisty path that led to the other side.

Big balls of honey rolled across this road, being spat by Honey Cannon Beetles from different turn points in the path. Timothy ran up, staying to the side to avoid their boulders, and distracted the beetles after reaching them, allowing his friends to come up and attack with Pikmin. As soon as they were all dealt with, the kids reached the other side, seeing a Bob-omb (Kids’ Kamikaze) from the Mario series sat on a platform. They tossed Purple Pikmin to pick it up—the bomb’s fuse lit, it turned red as it threatened to explode, burning the Purples with its heat. Only the Reds could carry it back, and going across the complex path took up time. Furthermore, they had to use Ice Pikmin to freeze over the honey lake, but just when the bomb was seconds from exploding, they reached the Onions.

The trio climbed the honeycomb ladder again, for there was also another tunnel up top to follow. A dry path snaked between sticky honey on the ground, so they kept their Pikmin within it. There were holes in the wall that were likely sheltering large creatures (such as bees), and would snack on anyone who steps on the honey. They made it through with no trouble and were standing in a tall, wide, and vacant room. There was a Music Pikmin stage facing a bright, towering wall of frozen honey. The Musics sang a remix of the “Rolling Boulder” song from Zelda: Skyward Sword, and their notes caused the hive to tremble and the frozen honey to loosen.

The kids bolted downhill when the honey began flowing toward them. They constantly whistled so their Pikmin would keep up, maneuvering them around Dwarf Bulborbs and honey patches in the way. They saw a walkway to the left and aligned their Pikmin to run up it, watching as the honey flowed down the rest of the hill. It stopped at the dead-end ahead, rising higher until it was level with their walkway. The Ice Pikmin froze a path leading to a narrow tunnel.
Honey dripped from the ceiling, and the Brown Pikmin had to eat every pile since there was no room around the honey. They kept an eye on the ceiling for forming globs, moving their Pikmin away before the honey fell on them. Just when they were reaching the end of the tunnel, Hikari spotted a shiny drop of honey form on the ceiling and hit the ground. Two Brown Pikmin carried the Premium Honey drop back, and Hikari brought two Ice Pikmin to follow them.

The other two entered a taller passage where faint streams of honey flowed down like slow, web-like waterfalls. They used Yellow and Rock Pikmin to defeat two Zingers in the area, then the Rocks broke down a couple of yellow glass walls through a passage. Speaking of webs, the room through this passage was a spider-web wall with Arachnodes crawling on them. Instead of questioning what the hell spiders were doing in here, the duo threw Pikmin onto the web to lure the spiders down. They called their Pikmin off before the spiders ate them, and when each spider was defeated, the Brown Pikmin began the tedious task of carrying each of them up the webs. Rupert and Timothy led their army into a very dark cave, where sprouts of fire popped up from holes. While Red Pikmin could destroy the holes, they were the only means of light, so they kept the other Pikmin away.

The group walked along a ledge over a pool of honey, which was nearly hidden in the darkness. However, Rupert noticed a weird object with what faint light was over the honey, but their Browns couldn’t get underneath the gooey liquid. After trekking up a hill, the duo saw a water faucet up on the wall. They tossed Yellow Pikmin up onto the faucet, and they turned it as a stream of water flowed out into the honey pool. The substance was washed away, and their Blue Pikmin could go into the weaker liquid to retrieve the treasure: a laser-light for cats (Ceaseless Mockery). After it was out of the water, they had 10 Brown Pikmin carry it back.

Hikari regrouped with them as they ventured further through the cave, still dark, keeping along a narrow path over honey pools. One of the pools on their right had what seemed like a closed hatch on the wall over it, and a handle on top. They threw a Yellow on, and the (magically appearing) Pikmin counter required 20 to pull it open. They counted spaces under the current one, and the Pikmin would touch the honey before the quota could be met. So instead, they tossed two Purple Pikmin, causing the hatch to fall open, the handle part landing over the edge so the Pikmin could land safely. Inside the hatch was a mount of Premium Honey, so the Brown Pikmin were on the case.

After that was done, their journey led them out of the cave. They were in an expansive room where faint streams of honey dripped down the walls. Some of the honey patterns shaped like numbers; they were 2 5 3 1 18 5 6 21 12 23 8 1 20 25 15 21 19 20 5 1 12 19 15 13 5 23 15 21 14 4 19 1 18 5 8 1 18 4 20 15 8 5 1 12. A stairway led up a tall, wide altar that had a huge pot of honey at the top, like that seen on Winnie the Pooh. Rupert and Timothy helped Hikari climb and stand on the pot’s edge. The honey was as shiny and yellow as solid gold. “Ooooooh! This honey looks super-duper yummy!”

“And I guess it’s free for the taking!” Rupert beamed.

Their Minish communicators rang, and Sappo’s voice spoke on the other end. “Say, did you guys find King Zing’s King’s Brew?”

“More like Winnie’s Big Score, if he were here. But yeah, we found it!”

“Listen, guys, don’t worry about taking that. King Zing will get really mad, and he’ll tail you guys like you were made of pollen. Just look for other Premium Honey.”

“We wouldn’t want the whole kingdom mad at us.” Timothy figured. “Okay, let’s leave it. I see another tunnel over there.”
“No way!” Rupert proclaimed confidently. “We can take on a giant bee!”

“What?! No we can’t, Rupert, a giant bee is scarier than a giant girl!”

“You’re completely right in that statement.” Rupert said with a blushed, dreaming face. “But with a score like this, we’ll go down in Pikmin History!”

“History means we DIE!”

“Come on, at the very least, we’ll get extremely swollen. Alright, Whites, get it on!”

It took 30 Pikmin to lift the King’s Brew, so their 20 Whites plus 10 Ices were used. They marched and carried the honey pot down the stairs, ready to enter the dark cave. “Rupert, I really don’t think this is a good idea!” Timmy hissed.

“Timmy, you worry too much. We can have this big pot outta here before King Zing even notices. Where is the fatty, anyway? (I just assume he’s fat.)”

“Maybe that big bee there will know!” Hikari pointed at the ceiling. “Heeeey, Mr. Big Beeeee!”

Rupert and Timothy freaked: they had just now realized the ceiling was spiky with yellow and black stripes. The giant bee puffed as he snored, curled up, and rolled upward as his tired eyes peeped open. “Bzzz…bmmm?” The room and altar was a big circle with smaller circles from his view. He thought a more yellow circle would be in the very center… instead, he saw three humans, and no pot of honey. “Bzzz? Bmmmmmm-zzzzzz!” King Zing shook with anger, buzzing his wings to life and detaching from the ceiling. He fluttered above the kids and rapidly blasted stingers, and they tumbled down the stairs to avoid.

“He’s gonna go after the Pikmin!” Rupert exclaimed. “I’ll go with ‘em and attack from the front, you guys stay behind and get ‘is stinger!”

“Deal!” Timmy nodded frantically. (Play “King Zing Chase” from Donkey Kong Country 2!)

Rupert took a team of Pikmin and rushed after the Pikmin taking the pot, and when King Zing forced himself through the tight dark tunnel, his narrowed eyes were clearly seen. Zing was faster than the Pikmin, so Rupert quickly tossed Rocks and Purples to damage his eyes and slow the bee. From behind, Timmy and Hikari threw Rocks at his stinger, and the bee stopped totally for a few seconds to recompose himself and shake the enemies away. Rupert was at the wide area of the dark cave, and King Zing had more room to fly. His wings beat the ceiling rapidly, causing boulders to drop around in the darkness.

Rupert only had a few seconds to see the shadows of boulders in the fire spouts’ lights, and had to call the carrying Pikmin over if they were in danger, or move his own Pikmin aside if it was them, then they quickly had to resume carrying the pot. They escaped the cave and traveled down the drooping honey path, and under King Zing’s shaking, globs of honey dropped in the way, forcing the carriers to stop while Brown Pikmin ate it. To keep King Zing from catching up, Timmy and Hikari threw Yellows at his stinger (since it was currently electrified). When the way was clear, they progressed the narrow tunnel, and since Zing couldn’t fit, he stuck his stinger in and blasted stinger bullets. Rupert threw Rock Pikmin at each one to stop them.

Rupert escorted his Pikmin up the slope where the large honey river downpoured, and when King Zing slammed the ground, honey boulders rolled down from ahead. He ordered the carrier Pikmin to maneuver around them, and once up the slope, they traveled the snaky path between the honey ground. Like the dark cave, King Zing forcibly squeezed his way through, Rupert hit him in the
eyes while his friends hit the stinger. They were back in the large room with the Cannon Beetles’ path, they dropped to the floor below as Fuzzybees chased them, aiming to reclaim the honey.

When King Zing floated below the ledge in his pursuit, Timmy and Hikari threw Red and Purple Pikmin onto his wings, slowing the king greatly. The carriers had one more trip through a tunnel, Rupert froze a path in the lake below with Ice Pikmin. Sappo and Gibli jumped excitedly when they saw the large pot coming, and after the Pikmin crossed the ice, the King’s Brew was inside the Onions.

King Zing burst out of the tunnel, desperately trying to recover his honey despite the Pikmin wailing on his wings. When he sank closer, Rupert threw Brown Pikmin on his eyes, Yellows on his stinger, Pikmin were beating him down all over. Eventually, King Zing was worn out, he collapsed into the honey lake, and the victors summoned their Pikmin back before they sank as well. “HOORAY, we did it!” Rupert cheered.

“Wow, guys, I can’t believe you made it!” Sappo exclaimed. “Wait until Lenari sees the hefty load you got us!”

“But not now! Let’s get outta here before the king wakes up!” Gibli said rushedly.

With that, all of them boarded the Onions and took flight away from the hives. “I almost wish we went with you.” Sappo said. “You guys have guts to steal from King Zing.”

“He’s just a giant bee, what’s to worry about.” Rupert said casually.

“You don’t know how dangerous that was. According to stories, King Zing’s stings are fatal and slow-killing. Your body just keeps swelling, and before you actually die, the pain is horrible. I’ve seen pictures of it, and trust me, I had mixed feelings about coming here. The worst part is, there’s absolutely no way to heal it.”

“Yeesh. I’m glad we escaped when we did. But now that it’s over, you gotta tell us where Malarko’s army is!”

“Yeah, about that…”

“You lied to us, didn’t you?” Timothy inquired.

“No, we were truthful. But we wanna ask Lenari’s permission to reveal such classified information. He’ll probably be mad at us for dropping the hint, anyway.”

“But I’m sure he’ll confide in you!” Gibli spoke surely. “You guys are awesome!”

“Even if we don’t find out, that was still pretty fun.” Rupert smiled. “Next time I see a bee when I’m bigger, I’m gonna say, ‘I’m supposed to be scared of that?’”

“My answer will always be ‘The crud I’m not.’” Timothy remarked.

Within the honey lake’s ooze, King Zing slowly and weakly resurfaced. The bee fumed with rage, knowing his precious treasure had been taken. He would have his revenge on them all. (End song.)


Goldenweek Residence
Since it became fairly late in the day, the Goldenweeks decided to schedule a trip to the art gallery tomorrow. The Sector W7 friends spent the night in Mary’s mansion, engaging in late-night antics such as coloring (which April proved best at), pillow fighting (Chimney showed no mercy toward Mary), Hide-and-Seek (Aeincha and Mocha took a while to find), but then Apis made them bored (except Mary) reading her Bible stories, so the girls were finally ready for bed. The other friends were sharing a guestroom, with Chimney on the bed, cuddling Aeincha and Mocha close to her, and Gonbe, Apis, and Aisa on the floor.

“Isn’t it great, Big Sister April?” Mary happily bounced on her bed, wearing a dark-green nightgown, while her cousin was brushing her teeth in Mary’s personal bathroom. “We get to sleep and cuddle each other just like when we were kids! I mean, we’re still kids, well mostly me ‘cause you’re a teen, the point is we were littler!”

“Would I even fit in the same bed with you, anymore?” April asked with a smile. “We’re way too old for that, Mary.”

“No we’re nooooot.” Mary made a fake mopey frown as she sprawled out on her bed. “Come on, April, I’m tired of cuddling with dolls. I wanna cuddle with my big sister before she leaves tomorrow!”

“Well, I kind of missed it too, I guess. Scoot over, Mary.” She chuckled.

Mary excitedly whirled so her head was on the pillow end, getting under the covers and scooting left so April could climb in. The older girl moved some of Mary’s dolls aside to fit her head on the pillow. She felt her little cousin’s arms grab around and hug her tight, like an overgrown doll. “You have such wonderful friends, April. It’s no wonder you don’t care about me, anymore.”

“Don’t be silly, Mary. You’ll always be my little sis.” She patted Mary’s hair. “I might not act like it, but I really miss you a lot.”

“I’ll miss you guys, toooo.” She moped. “I wish you would stay here with me, forever. I wanna play with you all every single day.”

“You saw our flying train, we can easily come visit you. But Mary, you really should join the Kids Next Door. You’ve already been on missions with us, so you’re a step ahead. You might not get put in our sector, but we would still see each other more, and you’d make lots of friends. I mean, even if they were scary, didn’t you have fun on our missions?”

“Of course I did, April!” Mary hugged her tighter. “I had loads and loads of fun! In fact, I wanna go on more missions with you. That’s why I’ll be sad when you leave after we visit the… gallery.”

“Well, we’ll come visit you either way, Mary. You can count on that. Tomorrow’s gonna be fun, though, even if it’s just walking through a boring gallery.” April pulled the lamp switch and made the room dark. “And Mary? Don’t worry about those nightmares. As soon as we see that gallery, they won’t bother us, anymore. Good night.” April rested her head on the pillow and closed her eyes.

Mary frowned, loosening her grip on her cousin during slumber, but still lying close to her. She didn’t understand her nightmares, or why she had such worrisome thoughts about the art gallery… For some reason, she felt like after tomorrow, she would never see April again. She really hoped this didn’t happen, though. She was already sad when April moved to Gobi’s Desert, she didn’t want her to leave again. She hoped she could stay with April forever…
On Chapter 47, we’ll go to Stage 57, the Guertena Gallery, at last starting the Art Saga’s main plot. The Zingers come from *DKC2*, but take note that it wasn’t just a filler stage, Sappo’s words have wisdom. Next time, the gallery. Don’t stay up past bedtime.
The World of Guertena

Chapter Summary

Sector W7 go to the Guertena Art Gallery. It is a much more frightening place than expected.

Did I mention Mary comes from *Ib*? ‘Cause that’s kind of important. Also, an Atbash.

*Chapter 47: The World of Guertena*

**Goldenweek Residence**

The sun rose over the lush grassland where the Goldenweek mansion stood. Few white clouds were in the sky, so the day would be bright and clear today. Mary was still asleep in her soft, warm bed, her yellow hair a mess after rolling around all night. When she stretched her arms to either side, she hugged only dolls. It took her an hour to realize that none of them were body-size. She lazily sat up, looking around. She looked at her doorway when April walked in, fully dressed except her shoes and hat. “Good morning, Mary! Did you have any nightmares?”

“Mmmm… mm-mm.” Mary shook ‘no.’

“That’s good. Do you wanna sleep in or eat breakfast first?”

“No, I’m hungry.” She smiled. “I wanna eat cereal! It tastes like tiny tasty sand dancing in my mouth!” She smacked her lips and tongue up and down like she were chewing.

“Ha ha ha! Be down, soon! The gallery opens at 11, so your mom and dad wanna go at 12:30. Plenty of time to play around!”

“Okay. I can’t wait!” After April left the room, Mary kicked off her bed and entered her bathroom. She doused her hands with hot water under the sink and splashed it on her face. She looked up at the mirror, her tired eyes squinted as water dripped from her face. For some reason, her face seemed darker in the reflection. She stared at herself close, like an image in a canvas. Today, they might learn the secret behind her nightmares. But Mary felt like she already knew.

**Outside**

“TAG!” Aisa exclaimed, pushing Chimney. “You’re it!” The Nimbi laughed as she ran away, the feel of the grass under her bare feet giving her energy. After they had breakfast, the friends went outside to engage in an energetic game of Tag.

Chimney chased Aisa, her teeth gritted furiously, until the leader stopped and noticed Mary to her left. Chimney smirked, dashing over to push Mary forcefully. “TAG!! You're it, Mary-chan!” She ran away.

“Yaaaaay! I’m it, I’m it!” Mary jumped.

“Mary, you don’t *want* to be ‘it’.” April chuckled, painting a canvas.
“Why not?”

“Because the one who’s ‘it’ dies! That’s how I always interpreted it.”

“Oh. I don’t want to die.” Mary frowned.

“Actually, since Chimney tagged you, that makes you our new Sector Leader!” Apis grinned.

“WHAT?!” Chimney freaked. “NO I DIDN’T! YOU TAG ME BACK RIGHT NOW, YOU SNEAKY…” She tackled Mary, angrily slapping her face as the others laughed.

Aeincha and Mini Mocha climbed up April’s long legs, eventually resting on her shoulders to view her painting. “Whatcha doin’?” Aeincha asked.

“Oh! It’s Sector V!” Mocha pointed. The painting depicted Sector V standing on Candied Island’s shore, with Sheila grinning, winking, and raising a ‘peace’ sign.

“I know. I’m making pictures of all the places the Lights went to.” April explained. “There’s the others.” Aeincha and Mocha dropped to the ground and walked around a tree, viewing the four paintings leaned against it. Sector IC with Arendelle Castle at the top, Sector W flying through Birka’s storm, Team Gallagher fighting in the Battle of Washington… then Sector W7, happily exploring an art gallery.

“Our isn’t very exciting, huh.” Aeincha sweatdropped. “But does this mean you think one of us will be awakened there?”

“Kind of. I met Sheila in a dream last night, and she told me about the other people she visited. A few chapters later, a new Light.”

“Guess Chimney is finally going to learn her secret power.” Mocha said. “You’re amazing though, April. You’ll put this Guertena guy to shame.”

“I wouldn’t say that. His art was pretty deep, from what I remember.”

“Yeah, but he lived a long time ago.” Aeincha said. “They’ll need to make way for the Goldenweek Gallery pretty soon!”

“Hm hm hm hm! That would be awesome.”

“YEAAAAAAH!” Chimney stood victoriously over Mary. “I’m the Leader of Sector W7 agaaaaain!”

“Oh- my mistake.” Apis said. “Since Mary isn’t an operative, we’re playing normal Tag, so you’re going to die.”

“NOOOOO!” She fell over. (“Gyom-gyoooom!”)

“Hehehehehehe!” Mary giggled, still lain on the ground. “Do you guys have this much fun every day?”

“In some way or another way.” Aisa shrugged. “You aren’t bored of us, are you?”

“No way! You guys are so much fun! Hey, if there was a way we could play like this forever and ever, would you?”

“HECK no!” Chimney shouted, sitting up. “I might DIE if I was stuck with these on’nanokos
forever! I need my alone space.” She folded her arms and turned away.

“Oh. Well, I surely would!”

“You guys, it’s 12:00!” Rosa Goldenweek yelled to the children. “If we leave now, we can make it downtown by 12:30!”

“Adams Tech tells me the monkey situation is under control, so that sounds like a green light.” Alvin called.

“Oh!” April beamed, quickly grabbing her paintings. “Let’s go, Mary!” (“Gyom!”)

Mary stood and watched her new friends run to the two separate cars, driven by her mother and father respectively. She sighed and hurried to her mother’s dark-red car, where April was sitting.

**Downtown Düssenheim**

“My, I can’t believe a pack of monkeys could cause this much damage.” Rosa said, studying the smashed windows of many cars and buildings. Their trip took numerous detours because of holes in the road.

“I kept telling them the Pipo Helmets would come back to haunt them.” Alvin said, speaking to the other car via their radios. “It’s awful, almost every building in town was attacked. Thankfully the bridge was fixed, otherwise we couldn’t get over there.”

April gasped. “You don’t think they ruined the gallery, do you?!” If that were the case, she wouldn’t rest until every monkey on Earth were strangled.

“As a matter of fact, I asked about that.” Alvin replied. “My co-workers had a funny story. Apparently, several of the monkeys and their robots were seen guarding the Guertena Art Gallery. They didn’t let any visitors in at all, and after they were finally captured, nothing in the gallery was reported damaged or stolen. They were entirely baffled, it’s almost as if… they were expecting somebody.”

“The monkeys… they work for that Team Gnık group.” Apis remembered from the Star Train. “Team Gnık is after the Seven Lights. Do you guys think that… a Gibberish Rock is inside the gallery?”

“A Gibberish Rock?” Rosa smiled humorously. “That would be something Master Guertena would create. I can’t wait until we get there.”

Galdino Goldenweek huffed exhaustedly. “The only exhibit I’m looking forward to is the lounge. I didn’t enjoy coming the first time, I won’t enjoy it this time.”

“You’re just upset because Guertena had a better mind for sculptures.” Alvin said simply.

“I could outwax him in my sleep…”

The Guertena Gallery was a large, white building that was two floors tall, and a posh tiled floor was spread out before the stairs leading up to it. The sign read, in German, *Welcome to the World of Weiss Guertena! The place of homage to the late artist since 1923!* “It’s been around that long?” Aisa asked.

“Some say it was Guertena’s own living quarters.” April answered. “It has to be, because one of them is a floor painting. It’s pretty cool, wait’ll you see it.”
“Yeah, yeah.” Chimney sighed, uninterested. “I’m just gonna be thinking about *One Piece* the whole time.” (Play the Gallery Theme from *Ib.*)

Stage 57: Guertena Gallery

Mission: Explore the gallery.

*Act 1*

The lobby of the gallery was a bright white, and the floor was shiny and marble. The visitors wore mostly fancy clothing, but teenagers wore average clothes. “It’s already bringing back memories.” Rosa smiled. “I wonder if they still have the pretty rubies?”

“I still remember needing to visit the reception desk before touring.” Alvin said. “Shall we?” The band of kids followed the parents to the brown desk, where a white-haired man in a black tux stood.

“Uncle Alvin, Aunt Rosa?” April spoke. “Is it alright if we all go ahead?”

“Hm hm, eager for an adventure, aren’t you?” Rosa chuckled. “Alright. Just don’t cause trouble for the other visitors. April, you’re the oldest, so we’re counting on you to keep your friends under control.”

“Will do.” April blushed. “Come on, fellas.” The kids all walked ahead (Gonbe peeped out of Aisa’s satchel).

“So do you really think a Gibberish Rock is here?” Aisa asked Apis.

“It’s possible.” Apis smiled thoughtfully. “If one of us is a Light, that person would be able to read what’s on it.”

“Right you are, Apis-chan.” Chimney agreed. “Let’s split up in groups. Search every nook and cranny ’til we find that rock.”

“First I wanna show you the floor painting.” April said eagerly. “It’s over here! See?” Several visitors were standing around a square-shaped rope fence. The W7 members looked over, gazing at the huge floor painting: it depicted a gray angler fish coming in from the right, against a dark-blue background that was under the sea. The angler had a gaping mouth of sharp teeth, and black holes for eyes. “Whoa… for the first time, I feel super tiny.” Aeincha said.

“I wanna be bigger in case that thing comes out.” Mocha said worriedly.

“Hmhm, that’s a typical reaction.” April laughed. “It’s called ‘Abyss of the Deep.’”

“Hey girls, check it out!” Chimney waved her friends to come over beside the nameplate. “I found gibberish! Maybe this is connected to the rock!”

“Chimney, that’s German.” Apis said. “It says, ‘Abyss of the Deep: A world where man will never stand. To realize that world, I decided that I would engrave it within the canvas.’”

“Hah?? You understand German? I don’t know any of these words!”

“Mary taught us all while you were fixing your train.” Aisa informed. “She showed us a bunch of
super-easy tips. Even Gonbe learned a few words!” (“Gyom!” the rabbit confirmed.)

“You mean I’m the only one in this gallery who can’t read?!” Chimney shouted quietly. “I feel so…so… stupid!”

“Aw, chill out, Chimney.” Mocha smiled. “Just be thankful that you know the storylines of anime better than anyone, because dubs and subs can never get it right!”

“It’s not the same, guys.” Chimney was down on all fours, facing the floor in a depressed fashion. They could imagine the blue wavy anime lines over her form. “I need some time to monologue internally.”

“Well, okay.” Apis said. “Let’s split up and look for that rock.” She went with Aisa, Aeincha explored with Mocha, and April with Mary.

Apis and Aisa went south of the floor painting and found a tall sculpture of a red rose. The stem was spiky, and red petals lay on the floor. “‘Embodiment of Spirit: Beautiful at a glance, but if you get too close, it will induce pain. It can only bloom in wholesome bodies.’” Apis read.

“What do you think that means?” Aisa asked.

“Who knows. It’s art.”

April and Mary carried Aeincha and Mocha up to the second floor. They glanced at a painting of a green Yoshi, dangling upside-down via a rope around his legs. The Yoshi’s face was miserable. “I read that Mr. Guertena based this creature off of those from an exotic island.” A man observing the painting said.

“He does not use real creatures for models often, does he?” his female companion asked.

While April walked ahead, Mary stopped before a familiar painting. She gasped to herself: it was the painting from her dream. A slumbering man with lavender hair, wearing a dark blue, ragged jacket, with a green shirt underneath. He held a blue rose, and was surrounded by such roses against a black background. It was called *Forgotten Portrait*. “Mary?” April called.

“Oh. Coming!” She chased her cousin.

“April, what did Guertena look like?” Mocha asked.

“I don’t know. There really aren’t many pictures of him. There’s plenty of books, but no pictures. He didn’t do self-portraits, either. Though to be honest,” April smiled, “I picture him wearing white clothing. The ‘Weiss’ in his name is German for ‘white.’”

They looked at paintings labeled *Misshapen Diamond, Couplet Towers, Bitter Fruit, and The Lady in Red*, a brown-haired woman with red eyes and a red dress, smiling. Mary smiled back at the painting, delighted by her appearance. Aeincha and Mocha especially took interest in a trio of headless statues, colored red, yellow, and light-blue. They were titled *Death of the Individual*. “How come those guys don’t have heads?” Aeincha asked.

“I guess it’s because ‘the individual’ lies in one’s expression. That’s why they’re ‘dead.’” April responded.

“I just thought it was because you need your head to stay connected to your body.” Mocha said. “But your idea’s good, too.”
Downstairs, Apis and Aisa viewed a set of four glass cases; this exhibit was labeled the *Twinkling of Crystals and Stars*. The sight inside the glass was too spectacular for human words. “…Apis, look!” Aisa pointed, running to a door in the corner. “It’s the Basement! They probably have a ton more things down here.”

Apis tugged on the doorknob. “It’s locked. Do you have any shrink apples?”

“I had to make room for Gonbe. But Aeincha’s arms could probably reach in.”

“Good idea. It would be great if the Gibberish Rock was hidden in here.”

After passing the headless statues, April received a call on her wristwatch. “*April, are Aein and Mocha with you?*” Apis asked. April confirmed ‘Yes.’ “*We found a door to the basement, but we need them to reach into the lock.*”

“Alright. Mary, can you carry them down?” She handed her cousin the tinies.

“Of course! I love holding my dollies!” Mary pressed them to her cheeks.

“We enjoy your company too, Mary.” Aeincha remarked.

While Mary jogged back to the stairs, April proceeded on this floor. A white couch sat inside a rope fence, titled *Reserved Seat*. A little boy with a yellow shirt tried to sneak under the fence, but his mother grabbed and pulled him away. “I told you you can’t touch anything, Norbert.”

“Eh.” When the boy thrust his arm toward the couch, a card fell out of his sleeve. “Mom, my *Yu-Gi-Oh* card!”

April shook her head humorously and kept going. “Wariness” was a pink sphere with three swords stabbed into it. The “Taste-Cleansing Tree” was a thin black tree with colored strips hanging from the branches. “Fusion” was a sculpture of a blue, blob-like humanoid with a bald, drooped head. She then walked by a painting of a black cat’s head, and a little girl excitedly pointing at it. “A kitty! Mommy, look, it’s a kitty-cat!”

“Yes, I see it, now be quiet! I told you not to shout.”

April remembered why she loved this place. So many unique paintings and sculptures, so many people talking about them. Art can have so many interpretations, they create so many discussions. April wondered if, a hundred years from now, people would talk about her art. How amazing it would be if she lived on in history as Germany’s second greatest artist. People would call her a reincarnation of Guertena… no, no, April was thinking too much.

“Hmm?” April saw another painting… well, it was almost like a mural. It was very wide, taking up a large space of wall. There were many black, shadowy blotches. The left side was blue and had a red rose in the upper-left. After that, green, then yellow, a pink splotch with a crescent moon next to it, then gray. The right side was dark-red, with the Lady in Red’s canvas at the very end. April read the title. “S…Something… World? I can’t read that word. …I don’t even remember this painting. Hmm.” (End song.)

The lights flickered. April looked up with a start. The light remained normal afterwards. “That’s strange…” Then again, this gallery was a century old, so lighting problems would happen. April continued ahead; this route made the loop back to the headless statues. The gallery had gotten quiet. April saw no other visitors. “Where did… everyone go?”

She went downstairs. The receptionist was gone, his desk abandoned. April walked to the room
with the floor painting: she never pictured a time where no one surrounded the marvel. “HELLO? Chimney?… Apis?… Mary? Anyone?…”

She returned to the lobby and looked at the entrance. “Did they all… go outside?” April approached the brown double-doors and grabbed both handles. She gasped when the doors wouldn’t open, jiggling and tugging them. “It’s locked.”

The lights flickered again—then they faded to a very dark dimness. April heard faint, rhythmic footsteps in the distance. “Hello? Who’s there?”

No one responded, and April wasn’t sure how far the footsteps were. Her heart racing, April rushed to one of the windows, trying to pull open. It was sealed tight. April peeked outside, viewing the pitch-black world. “But… it was broad daylight.”

Blood leaked from the top of the window—April jumped back. Her heart raced faster, the footsteps kept pounding in her ears, so April ran upstairs. She passed a window—a silhouette walked by the window. Curious, April approached and looked out. When she saw nothing, April resumed walking. BANG BANG BANG! She whipped around, and the window was cracked. She ignored this and fast-walked past the headless statues, to the big mural painting. A blue ooze leaked from the bottom left of the canvas. April slowly approached. “What… is this?” She softly touched it—BIP BIP BIP BIP! She turned—blood-red letters splattered on the floor, reading WELCOME BACK. The blue ooze had turned into writing. It said, come down below april you know the way.

April didn’t understand, but she chose to return down the stairs. The footsteps wouldn’t stop, but there was no sign of another presence. She wondered what the writing meant… then, she saw it: a piece of the fence around the floor painting was open. Blue, painted footprints led into the Abyss of the Deep. April didn’t appreciate defilement around such a great painting, but it didn’t appear damaged.

She looked around the gallery further. She viewed the Embodiment of Spirit sculpture, which—Cough!” April whipped behind. The Coughing Man painting hung on the wall, a black-haired person in an orange shirt. April approached and looked at him closely. Did he just… cough? April shook this idea off and kept looking. She returned to the second floor, passing the mural to the next row of paintings, such as the black cat—

“Mroooowww.” She definitely heard it that time. That cat moaned. Yet the painting lay motionless. She went up to view the other paintings. The Lady in Red, Misshapen Diamond, and Bitter Fruit remained—the apple in Bitter Fruit fell out and splat on the floor, leaving only the pear. Well-p, that pretty much clarified it: something was wrong with this gallery.

April was getting more annoyed with those footsteps, but seeing no one they belonged to. She wandered downstairs and looked at the footprints beside the Abyss of the Deep. Could it be that… April stepped on that spot. As she viewed the giant, open-mouthed angler fish, she thought without a doubt, this would be the craziest thing to ever happen. She stepped one foot over the floor painting. She stepped down… then, she splashed in as if it were water.

April held her breath. She was underwater, inside the painting. Bubbles floated from her mouth. Fish swam about. It was brighter blue than it had been in the painting, but the angler fish wasn’t here. It was… amazing. Already, she felt like she were in a whole different world. A world where man would never stand. April felt her body turning, slowly within the liquid. Her soul felt uplifted, her mind was wide open. This entire space… was inside a painting. She fell into a painting… everything under this water was paint. And yet, it felt so real. One minute ago, she was afraid. Now, she was in awe beyond compare. Her imagination was touched at its core. (Play “Dungeon
She felt herself go through a surface, and her feet touched down on a flat, blue floor. She looked around the short, blue-colored hallway, then at the ceiling, where she noticed the faint waves of the “water” stop rippling. That was where she came from, but it looked like a blank ceiling now. Wherever she was, she wouldn’t be getting back.

There were two paintings on the wall: both depicted cliffs looking out over a sea, one blue, the other red. April followed the hall past the blue sea, coming to a door beside a painting of an abstract, gray pattern. *The Geometrical Fish*, it was called. It didn’t look much like a fish; perhaps Guertena can stump April after all. There was an empty, square hole under the picture. The door was locked, so April went down the other hall. Light-blue letters were scattered around the wall; April tried to list them in the order she passed, *T F V I G V M Z O R E V H*.

There was a small brown desk blocking a door, and a base with a bright pink rose sat on the desk. April was enticed by the rose. It smelled lovely, and looked beautiful. The vase’s water was shallow, so she found it amazing that a rose could have so much life in a building’s dim-lit basement. April reached over and took the rose... for some reason, she felt an odd connection with it. A part of her told her not to put it back. April gently put the rose in her jacket pocket. She moved the desk aside to enter the door, leading to a small room with a painting of a woman with dark-cyan hair. She was smiling, eyes closed in arches, and wore a white shirt. It seemed her hair’s paint was leaking out of the canvas.

There was a box-shaped device with mini square tiles on the floor. April picked it up—the painting’s eyes opened to an angry slant, and her mouth grinned with sharp teeth. April gulped, wanting to walk out of there, but she noticed a paper under the painting. It said, *When the rose wilts, so too shall you rot away*. April walked out of the room. There was also a poster beside the rose’s former desk, which said, *You and the rose are unified. Know the weight of your life*.

The light-blue letters in the hall were gone, replaced with red letters. April couldn’t put them in a specific order, but each of the five different letters splatted on the floor before her, reading *THIEF*. April quick-walked down the hall, back to the Geometric Fish painting. She put the tile box inside the open square. When she moved the tiles in the box, the tiles on the painting moved as well. April reorganized the tiles, each with various shades of gray, and created a realistic fish. A blue key dropped from behind the portrait, and April used it to open the door.

She was in a green hallway with numerous, simple paintings of bugs. A ladybug, a bee, a Bulb–

“hey, watch where you’re going.” April gasped and looked down. An ant was close to her large shoe. Curious, April bent down and scooped the ant on her finger.

“Did you just… talk?”

“of course. i’m an ant. ants talk.”

“So do humans, but we know how to use capital letters.”

“do you love paintings? i love paintings. my painting is especially cool. i’d like to see it again, but it’s kind of far away.”

“Where is it?”

“over there.” His stubby leg pointed to an alternate corridor.

“Well, I’ll take you.” April smiled.
“no, i don’t go that way. you can bring it to me, though.”

“Um, okay.” April set the ant down and walked toward that passage. A sign read, Beware the edges. April progressed, not sure what that— “HAH!” A black claw reached from the wall, April jumped back with a start. “HAH!” Another one nearly grabbed her—April bolted down the long passage, “HAH HAH HAH!” arms shot out to grab from every direction, she dodged left and right and moved her legs faster. When the hall turned right, she dodged that way, and no more claws reached for her. Beside a locked door, April found the ant painting. She took it off the wall and swallowed nervously. The arms were still outstretched, but could only go so far. She kept in the very center of the passage and walked quickly.

“oh. that’s my painting. it’s just as cool as i remember it.” The ant was staring longingly at the picture when April showed it to him.

“Um… that’s nice… Hey, do you know a way out of here?”

“Oh, no. maybe the person in there will.” He pointed further down the hall. April sighed, still carrying the painting as she followed. A picture labeled Prologue depicted a yellow-green dot against blank white background. Chapter 1 showed a worm, Chapter 2 had a cocoon, and the Last Chapter depicted a beautiful yellow butterfly. April opened a door to a small room with a rectangular hole in the floor. Oddly, the ant painting would be good to lay down and cover it… but April wouldn’t treat art that way, not to mention her long legs could easily step over the short hole. So she did.

She was led to a dead-end room with a red headless statue on the other side. A painting on the wall depicted the yellow butterfly being eaten by a black spider. Epilogue. A green key lay on the floor, so April picked it up—“HAH!” The headless statue reached forward and chased her like a zombie. April immediately bolted through the door, the statue pursued quick and prevented her from shutting it, so April—“WAAAAAH!” Her foot stepped into the hole in the floor; losing balance and scraping her head against the side, April plummeted through.

She landed in a red hallway, feeling a searing pain in her legs and on her face. “O-ow-w-w-w-w…” Her knees jittered when she tried to stand. She saw that the ant in the painting was literally squished by her weight, its body parts severed with blood leaking out as if it were flesh. She looked up, seeing the headless statue standing over the hole in the ceiling. April tried to walk forward quickly, but the pain wouldn’t leave her body. Her legs felt like sticks. April remembered the rose in her jacket and pulled it out. It had one petal left.

April eventually made it to a door, bringing her to a corridor with a bright blue vase on a desk. There was a painting of such a vase, and it was called Eternal Blessing. April decided to put her one-petal stem in the vase. Like magic, the rose’s petals reappeared, making it good as new. The pain in her legs and head disappeared, allowing her to stand upright. She sighed with relief.

“Hm…” April picked the rose up and stared at it. “So, does this rose… represent me?” She turned it over from a few angles. “But just what is this water?” She looked at the apparently magic vase. April sighed and sat on the floor, staring at the pink rose thoughtfully. “Talking ants… living statues… everyone disappearing… nothing here makes any sense.”

April’s eyes inched left, stopping at the communicator on her wrist. Realizing this, she tapped it to try and call her friends. …It was completely dead. Worry flowed inside her heart. Where had her friends and everyone in the gallery disappeared to. She took a breath and cried out, “MARY, CHIMNEY, APIS, AISAI CAN ANYONE HEAR ME?”

As she expected, no one responded. Her voice traveled as far as the limited space in this hall. She
sighed again and got up. “I wonder if they’re in the same situation as me. …I wonder if they’re not and they even know I’m gone. …” She looked up at another door ahead. “I guess I have to try and find a way out of here.” April walked forward, putting the rose in her jacket.

**Gray Area**

Aeincha and Mocha were climbing a ladder down a small shaft. After Mary set them on the floor and ran back to find April for some reason, the tiny girls attempted to follow her. The lights flickered when they looked at a giant painting, and everyone else disappeared. They found a loose tile in the floor and decided to climb down the secret tunnel. “Why would an art gallery have this?” Mocha asked. “Do Lilliputians work here?”

“It is kind of strange.” Aeincha agreed. “Hopefully, this leads down to the basement. If only I brought a flashlight.”

“The one thing I don’t understand is, weren’t we on the second floor?”

“That’s what makes me lost.”

They finally set foot on ground and crawled out of a mouse hole, into a small (to a regular human) gray room. There was a white canvas with a line-drawn, unsymmetrical box called *Unbalanced Box*, and a picture of two hands clutching a heart, called *Heart in Custody*. The girls took solace in the fact they were clearly in the gallery’s basement, and there was enough light to see. They approached a gray door that towered over them. “I still can’t believe how small I am now.” Mocha said. “I’ve been giant for so long, it’s such a dramatic change. How are we supposed to open that?”

“I’m glad you asked, Mocha,” Aeincha smiled and winked, “because Mistress Aeincha will happily teach you the Art of Tiny Lifestyle to make your tiny experience as easy as eating pie. Starting with my grappling hook!” Aeincha pulled out and threw her hook up to the doorknob. She climbed up quickly and grabbed the knob, shifting her body weight to make it turn. At the sound of the click, Mocha used her strength to push the door open.

Aeincha dropped to the floor as they entered the new room. They gasped—the wall was aligned with ghostly-white mannequin heads that all faced the center path. Paintings of said heads hung on the wall; the first one had an average face, as did the second one, and the third one had no pupils. The hallway was very long at their size. “This is creepy…” Aeincha shuddered.


“Yeah, but if they wanted to, we’re the perfect size. …Mocha, look at those!” Aeincha’s eyes lit up as she pointed up the desk in the corner. Two roses, a green and a gray one, sat in a vase.

“How do those roses survive down here?”

“I don’t know, but they’re so pretty! Let’s climb up there!” Aeincha grabbed the table leg and climbed.

“Aeincha, hold on!” Mocha climbed after her. “We don’t wanna knock anything down!”

After getting onto the desk, Aeincha attempted to climb the vase. “It’s too slippery. Mocha, give me a boost.”

“Aeincha, I really don’t think we should—”
Aeincha accidentally pushed the base, spilling the water as the roses fell to the floor. “Er!” the girls yelped, feeling an aching wince. “Boy, that was weird.” Aein said.

“Yeah…” Mocha looked down at the roses. “Well, someone’s gonna be mad.”

“Let’s just take them and find another vase!” Aeincha happily dropped down to pick up the green rose. Mocha followed her and grabbed the gray rose. “Hahaha! We’re Rose Warriors!” Both girls giggled as they swung their larger-than-them roses.

“We sure are! But let’s be careful with them. Hopefully, we can find someone—” Mocha turned toward the mannequins’ path—the sculpted heads were staring at them creepily. “Uhhh… they weren’t looking at us before.”

Aeincha noticed this. Her heart filled with worry. “Uhh… I think I saw another door this way.” The girls returned to the room with the two paintings, where another door stood. Aeincha repeated her grappling trick to open the door, then Mocha pushed it. They had to jump down a step into this new passage.

“AHAAHAHAHAHA!” Their tiny hearts almost stopped at this crazy laughter. They whipped around—the other side of the door was a black canvas with blue, droopy eyes and a mouth, both twitching up-and-down. “Your flowers look nice! Give me those flowers and I’ll let you back through! Ahahahahaha!”

“AAAAHHH!” The girls scampered away, afraid of becoming dinner for a talking door-painting. Once around the corner, they stopped to catch breath. “THAT was unexpected!” Mocha said.

“What’s up with this gallery? It’s like Night at the Museum!”

“I thought the point of coming during daylight was so that WOULDN’T happen!”

“Maybe this is the reason the basement was locked. Maybe we should find a way out of here.”

“Good idea. Wait, I hear footsteps!” The girls looked down the hall. Two red headless statues came from around a corner, marching their way.

“Are those the same statues that were upstairs?” Aeincha asked.

“Can they see where they’re going?”

One of the statues turned to their direction, stopping. It took notice of the roses being held by the doll-size girls. “HAH!” They walked quicker, and the girls sensed that they were the targets.

“I think they can!” Aein exclaimed.

“Run for it!” The two hurried down another passage, but the larger statues caught up before long.

“Never mind, I wish you were bigger now!” Aeincha panted. “I don’t think Tiny Style will be good against those things!”

“Maybe, but to me, size is irrelevant!” Mocha set her rose down and turned to face the statues determinedly. “I’m still an Honorary Amazon!” Mocha ran forth, and when a statue tried to step on her, she threw her Armament hands up and kept its foot lifted. She poured more strength when the statue pushed harder, and the shrunken giant forced up and caused the statue to fall back, knocking its ally down. Mocha got her rose and ran back to Aeincha. “But on the bright side, we know why they’re called ‘Death of the Individual.’” Mocha panted, giving a humorous smirk.
They saw the statues recovering, so Mocha and Aeincha kept running. They managed to get around a few more corners before the statues lost sight of them. The tiny girls caught their breath and sat along a wall underneath a small painting of coffee and cake. “April thought this was gonna be boring.” Aeincha breathed. “But honestly, I would welcome- OOOOWWW!” A piping hot drop of brown liquid fell on her head, the Lilliputian shaking her head frantically. “What is this, COFFEE?!”

Mocha looked up at the aforementioned painting. “I… think so? …Aeincha, your rose!” The girls looked to see a couple petals fall off the green flower.

“Oh. I guess we should find a vase. I don’t know why, but… I feel something weird from these roses.”

“Me, too.”

They silenced when they heard more footsteps, looking to a leftward passage a few feet away. A man of about 18 years appeared. He wore a dark-blue jacket that was very ragged on the edges, a light-green shirt underneath, and light-brown pants. His lavender hair was messy, hanging over his wondering dark eyes. “Aeincha, it’s another person!” Mocha pointed.

“HEY!” Aeincha ran to him first. “Excuse me! DOWN HERE!”

The man stopped walking when squeaky voices reached his ears. He looked down, seeing the tiny girls waving their roses. “Oh-… Oh my.” He walked closer and knelt down, speaking softly. “This is a surprise… how did you ladies get so small?”

“That’s a long story.” Aeincha blushed. “My name is Aeincha, this is Mocha. Mister, your hair is so cool!” Her eyes sparkled. “You have to let me cut it! (You can use it, honestly.)”

“Sir, can you please help us?” Mocha asked. “We climbed down from upstairs and we wanna get back up to our friends. Can you carry us?”

“Why, of course.” The man smiled, gently picking the girls up. “I couldn’t leave two young ladies of such a stature by their selves. My name is… er…” He frowned. “Hm… I dunno…”

“You don’t?” Aeincha asked.

“No… Well, no matter, anyhow.” He smiled warmly. “I’ve got to get you girls to safety.” He began to carry them around the halls.

“There’s a lot of scary statues walking around.” Aeincha said as she relaxed in his right hand. “I’m glad we have a handsome giant to protect us!”

“I guess somebody has to be.” Mocha chuckled, making an embarrassed blush.

The man’s hair hung over his eyes, casting a shadow. The girls didn’t see his devilish look.

Yellow Area

Aisa and Apis were wondering what was taking the others so long, so they went upstairs to look. After wandering the second floor—and everyone else seemed to disappear, the door into the basement was open. After going down stairs, the two found their selves in a storage room with white mannequin statues, large heads, and tables. “Something isn’t right here, Aisa. Everyone else in the gallery disappears, our communicators don’t work…”
“Well, if there’s no staff, I guess no one’ll mind if I do this.” Aisa took her sandals off and smiled innocently.

Apis noticed a vase nearby, holding a dark-yellow rose that matched her dress, as well as a brown rose. She reached to take both out, studying them. “Here.” She handed the brown rose to Aisa.

The Nimbi sniffed it. “It’s nice, but…”

The lights in the room flickered; one of the head statues began to move toward Aisa. It moved a little closer every time the light flickered, but Aisa didn’t notice as she explored the room casually with Apis. They stared at a painting of a red rose. “The budget on this place is terrible.” Apis said.

Aisa felt her foot step in goo, looking down to see it was yellow paint. The substance was dripping from the ceiling. “Eww! Tell me about it.” She left footprints as she walked further. “These leaks won’t be good for the artworks—”

A shattering sound rang in their ears. Both girls whipped behind, seeing a head statue fallen over and broken. It seemed to have tripped on the yellow puddle. “…Their skin was still tingling. “Let’s go someplace else.” Apis said.

There was a yellow key inside the head’s remains, so they used it to open the door out of this room. They passed a small room with cat-like eyes on the wall, to one with several block-shaped pillars, and curtained portraits with yellow painted buttons under each one. She had doubts these paint spots would actually react like buttons, but she pushed one anyway, and the curtain opened to reveal an eraser. “AAAAHH!” Apis screamed when the upper-right half of her vision turned blank. “What happened?!”

“Apis, your eyes got erased!” Aisa exclaimed.

“Erased?! Well, find a pencil and draw them back!”

Panicking, Aisa ran to push another button, exposing a painting of a naked woman. “Aaaah!”

“OW!” Aisa was slapped. “Sorry!” She pushed another button, exposing a gun. “OUCH!” She was shot in the foot; two petals were now missing from her rose. The Nimbi began to limp as her foot bled. She pushed a button that unveiled a painting of a pot of roasting fish. They could smell it as though it were actually there. “MEOOOOWWWW.”

“APIS, WATCH OUT!” Aisa grabbed her friend and dodged between the pillars when a giant, yellow cat stormed in to gaze at the painting. They helped each other out of the room. A chunk of the wall, where the cat eyes formerly were, was gone, exposing a passage.

“Thanks a lot, Aisa…” Apis sighed with relief. “…Hey, my vision’s back!”

“Thank goodness. Can you help me walk?” Apis nodded and helped her injured friend. The girls entered a new hall and saw a black canvas, with red eyes and a wiggling tongue, on the wall. The face spit on the floor- “Ow!” Aisa felt a burning pain in her foot when she stepped on the spit. “I’m starting to think the ‘No shoes’ policy was a warning! I need a first aid kit, fast!”

They entered a door that led to a small library. They skimmed the titles for anything that might be interesting. Apis found a book titled Worldbuilding, which she opened to a bookmarked page. When an artist develops a world inside their head, consciously or subconsciously, it becomes more real than they realize. When that world forms into being, the only laws are that which the creator establishes. Even as they die, the world they created lives. Of course, without their creator, the denizens of that world cannot survive beyond the boundaries.
Aisa found a book titled *Secrets of Immortality*. Inside were images depicting a magic fountain, a person’s spirit being split in two, and one of a black demon. Aisa found this too scary and put it back. Apis skimmed a book about *Conspiracy Theories*, seeing pictures of Bill Cipher, a gray face with two orange horns, and a diamond whose page was labeled ‘Polymorphic Rocks.’ “Sigh, we need to find a way out.” Apis sighed.

“Yeah.” The two left the room and went down an alternate passage, which had a painting series lined up. An axe rose from a log it was chopping, inched higher, higher, the last painting had the axe at its highest—“AAAAH!” it chopped down and nearly cut them. They stayed silent for a few minutes to let their hearts race. “Apis, please tell God not to let me lose my feet today!”

“I already asked Him to help us get outta here alive!” Apis helped her friend back the opposite way, eventually squeezing through a door called the Liars’ Room (however, they didn’t read the label). Paintings of shadowed people hung on the wall, wearing green, brown, yellow, blue, white, and red respectively.

*Try the door on the left!* the writing under the green one said. *Try the door up north.* Brown said. *Blue’s got the right idea.* Yellow said. *I just went with white.* Blue said. *The right door, it’s the right one!* said White. *There’s a trapdoor behind the statue.* Red said.

The girls were confused, but there seemed to be more votes for white. They shrugged, heading into the next room to walk to the right door. Apis creaked it open and peeked into the darkness. A cloud of purple gas blasted both girls. They grew sleepy, lost composure, and tumbled into the abyss within.

**Gray Area**

It felt like half an hour since the strange man began carrying the tiny girls, but Aeincha and Mocha didn’t mind the rest. The gray halls seemed to drag on forever. They both looked up when the man was approaching two paintings, depicting a bride and a groom. *Grieving Bride* and *Grieving Groom*, they were labeled. “Awww. What’s wrong with them?” Aeincha frowned.

“The bride lost her wedding ring.” The man replied. “Now they can’t be betrothed.”

“That’s so sad.” Mocha frowned. “Assuming these paintings are alive, too, it’s good to know they have feelings… sort of. …What are those hands?” There was a black hand in front of each painting, flexing its fingers.

“Those are the bride’s hands. They’re desperate to find her ring. Hm…” He smiled. “You shouldn’t feel too bad for them, though. They like to play. In fact…” He formed a smirk, “you girls look pleasantly fun.”

“Hey, what’re you—” Aeincha gasped when the man set her in the left hand, while Mocha was placed in the right hand. He swiped their two roses, and the black hands began to squeeze the helpless girls.

“Ahh! Mister, help us, please!” Mocha pleaded.

“Hm hm hm hm hm.” The man twirled the roses in his hands. “You girls will make excellent toys for the Ladies here. There’s nothing for you to worry about, however. As soon as you’re dead, you won’t feel a thing.”

“D-DEAD?!” Aeincha panicked, trying harder to squirm out of the bride’s hand. “No! We don’t wanna die! Please don’t kill us!”
“Have you girls ever played ‘Loves Me, Loves Me Not’?” The man giggled maliciously. “There’s a trick to it: just pluck the stem petals, too. You can always win. Over he-e-e-e-ere, lad-i-i-ie-es!” He wagged the roses in the air. “Come and geeeeet ‘eeeeeem!”

Hissing sounds were heard. Creatures were crawling from down the dark passage. The tiny girls shuddered at them.

**Red Area**

April passed a painting of a Smoking Gentleman, in which she could smell the smoke. A Heartbeat picture depicted a simple green line, but it made a *thump thump* as the line waved like a heart monitor. A blue statue called “Uh” towered in the room; it was a blob-like woman holding a baby in a bundle. A red statue called “Ah” depicted a similar woman, but her mouth was open as she cried.

April looked ahead and saw a more pleasant painting at a dead-end passage: The Lady in Red. The upper half of a brown-haired woman in a red dress, pretty red eyes, and smiling courteously. April returned this smile and stopped before her. If this painting was alive as well, April couldn’t imagine her being monstrous. It was like Mona Lisa: April got a warm feeling from her. Her smile gave her comfort.

“RAAAAAH!” The Lady in Red exposed sharp fangs, smashing through the glass of her canvas as she grabbed April. The girl was hurt by the glass, she punched the Lady off and ran away—the Red Lady crawled after her, having no legs, only the canvas to serve as her “lower half.”

April swung a door open and slammed it before the Red Lady caught up. The Canvas Lady furiously banged on the door, desperate to claim her prey. Thankfully, she couldn’t seem to reach the knob. April sighed with relief, walking calmly down this new path. April noticed a hole camouflaged within the dark-colored wall. She viewed the inside, ducking as she entered it. She hit a wall and had to turn right, seeing an exit.

On the other side, she gazed at a large painting of a blackish-blue tree, leaves scattering under a shaded pink sky. Black creatures with red eyes stared at the tree, and misty energy flowed from their bodies to it. The painting was *Soul-Sapping Throng*.

If the Abyss of the Deep sucked her into this world, April wondered if this led to another world. Did she even want to know… or maybe there was no other way. April approached cautiously… she reached her left arm… and touched the painting.

“AHHHH!” Black claws emerged from the painting and grabbed her tightly. She struggled to shake away, but it proved hopeless as she was pulled inside. She completely vanished into the portrait.

**Violet Area**

“Uuuuuuh… where am I…?” Chimney mumbled groggily, hunched forward as she limped weakly. The hallway was dim with a strong shade of purple. “I thought I saw a head in a picture hide behind the wall… and when I tried to climb after it, I’m here. Why doesn’t my wristwatch work… and why does my arm hurt?” She flexed her right arm. “Ugh… comin’ here was a bad idea. I ain’t gonna be the chosen one if I don’t even know German gibberish… I just wanna go outside and sit down somewhere.”

Chimney stopped when she noticed someone a few meters ahead. A girl with blonde hair and a green dress was happily twirling a yellow rose in her hand. “Nnn? Mary?”
The Goldenweek girl looked over. “Oh, Chimney! Hi there!” Mary waved. “For a second, I thought everyone else left me.”

“I wouldn’t blame them.” Chimney remarked as she approached her. “What’s that rose you got?”

“I found this in a vase. Isn’t it pretty? I mean, I was never a fan of yellow, to be honest, but I still like it. I mostly like red, and pink, but especially blue! What’s your favorite color, Chimney?”

“Nnn… never thought about it.”

“Oh. I was hoping it’s orange. I found this rose, too!” Mary pulled out an orange rose. “For some reason, it reminded me of you. I was touching the petals and I pulled one off by accident.” Mary frowned regretfully, handing Chimney the rose. “Sorry, Chimney.”

Chimney stared half-interestedly at the 8-petal rose. “Eh… I don’t mind. Mary, did you get here the same way I did?”

“Um… I found a staircase, so if that’s what you mean…”

“Well, can you show me those stairs? I wanna leave.”

“I wanna leave, too…” Mary’s head faced down as she bore a sad, worried look. “But I can’t find the stairs. I don’t think they’re…”

“Sigh, I’ll look for them myself.” Chimney walked past her. “Or at least an elevator or something.”

Chimney’s left wrist was grabbed in Mary’s hands. Chimney turned to see her pleading blue eyes. “Don’t leave me, Chimney. I’m scared of this place.”

“Okay, Mary, sheesh. Just let go of my hand.” Chimney pulled her arm free and kept walking.

Mary’s footsteps stayed in rhythm with hers, so it only sounded like two feet were moving. Chimney stopped and turned, seeing Mary just inches behind her. “Personal space, please?”

Chimney walked again, but Mary kept in close quarters.

“I wanna stay with you, Chimney. You’re a nice person. You protect your friends if they’re in danger. I’m your friend, too, right?”

“To an extent, I guess.”

“Chimney… what if there was no way out of here? What if you, me, and all the others were trapped here? That wouldn’t be bad, right?” Mary smiled lightly. “Because we would have each other. Forever.”

“Forever with you is long enough. I’d just as soon leave you here if I wanted to.”

“Oh…” Mary frowned and kept following Chimney. She smiled again, “Well, I was just saying ‘what if.’ We’ll get out of here, right, Chimney? Then we can all play some more. You, me, and our friends.”

All they did was walk through the dark, violet corridors. They passed a painting of a shadowed, crying man, a painting of a grey toad on a lilypad, and a painting of a fly on a branch—the toad’s tongue shot into the fly’s canvas and caught it. “Chimney, since I know German, do you want me to read any of these paintings for you?”

“Nah, the point of knowing their names is to figure out the symbolism, and I’m not into that stuff. I
like April’s stuff better ‘cause I know what’s going on.”

“Yeah, Sister April makes fun pictures. Guertena’s pictures are fun too, though. Are my crayon pictures fun, Chimney? Look!” Mary held up a crayon picture of herself holding a little Chimney. “It’s you when you’re tiny! I like Tiny Chimney, she’s fun to play with.”

“I’ll be glad when we find the Gibberish Rock and never have to see you again. Why can’t I call the on’nanokos?” She looked at her blank wristwatch. “This is starting to feel like some Halloween gag.”

“Halloween is fun.” Mary beamed. “You get to dress as something you aren’t to get candy. I like being a mummy.”

The girls walked down a long, vacant hallway in silence, only their footsteps making sound. The hall turned left, and they glanced at a blue, zombie doll with yellow eyes, black frizzy hair, and a pink dress lain against the wall. There was purple writing on the wall that said, Hello, Mary. Mary stayed beside Chimney so that she wouldn’t notice the writing, and she gestured Chimney to walk faster. Mary looked back; the doll was gone from its spot—Mary gasped to herself when the doll was leaned against the wall up ahead. The writing said, We missed you.

“You lookin’ to race or something?” Chimney asked as Mary took her hand and walked faster.

“I just wanna find April.” Mary replied sadly. “Or a way out. I wanna get out soon.”

They passed the doll again, with writing that said, We like your new friends. The wall turned right, then right again, and when they passed the doll with writing that said, Will they join us for tea?, Mary began to jog, pulling Chimney with her. They turned several more corridors before they saw a door up ahead. “Maybe we can get out over there.”

“Sheesh, Mary-chan, get ahold of yourself, nothing in a haunted house is real, and all these paintings are a load of-” When Mary pushed open the door, a red, blue, and yellow headless statue were on the other side, along with a Lady in Red and Lady in Blue.

“HAAAHH!” The monsters hissed. Mary screeched and tried to pull the door shut, but a headless statue stuck its foot in while the Canvas Ladies pulled it back open. Chimney and Mary backed away in fear as the monsters inched closer.

“Chimney…” Mary held the girl’s shoulders and crouched behind her.

The Red and Blue Ladies crawled toward them with ravenous expressions, eyes locked on the orange rose in Chimney’s hand. But they stopped, noticing the blue-eyed girl behind her; Mary ducked her head behind Chimney’s when she saw them looking at her. The Canvas Ladies smiled with glee, exposing their sharp teeth and terrifying the humans with their mad looks. “MA’Y!” The humans backed away faster as the grinning ladies came. “MA’Y!”

“It’s okay, Mary, we can get past ‘em.” Chimney clutched her rose confidently. “Use that Ice Crayon to color the floor, then we’ll kick across the wall over them, a-; Mary!” She turned around, seeing the Goldenweek bolting back the other way. The Red Lady reached for her rose, Chimney kicked her in the face, then swung her foot to the side of Blue Lady’s face, afterwards leaping to kick between the headless statues. When Chimney landed- “Ah!” the Red Lady scratched her leg, causing a petal to fall off her orange rose. “MARY, COME BACK HERE!”

“No!” Mary cried, running ceaselessly around the many corridors. “I don’t want to! I don’t wanna come back, I never wanted to come back!”
She arrived at a fork, she tried to run one direction, but three headless statues were waiting for her. She tried to run the other way, a Lady in Yellow and Green peeked around the corner, grinning at her. Mary’s only other option was to enter a door, but at the feel of the cold doorknob, she stopped herself. She looked both ways frantically, backing against the door as her heart raced. The headless statues and Canvas Ladies came closer. She looked at the passage she just came from, seeing the blue doll walk toward her like a zombie. There was nowhere to run. The monsters were about to seize her. She could feel death approaching.

“No… No, please!” Mary turned and leaned her head against the door, crying. “Please… don’t take me… please!” I… Mary clenched her teeth as tears fell. I’m not one of you… I’m not… Please leave me alone… Please…

The Lady in Yellow reached up and softly touched Mary’s shoulder. She hissed through her devilish, sharp-toothed grin, “Welcome back, Mary…”

Visiting the Guertena Art Gallery was like visiting an amusement park.

I had so much fun, the day was over before I knew it!

You’d be surprised what delightful friends you could make of the paintings!

It was from that day that I began to get my muses from dreaming.

-Diary of Stanford Pines

This is going to be a fairly long level. We’ll continue it next chapter, then we’ll go back to Mermaid Swamp. Next time, we’ll learn Mary’s backstory. Kids, always wear shoes and shirts in an art gallery. (Also, don’t bring your dolls ‘cause the artwork might play with ‘em.)
A Creation’s Creation

Chapter Summary

Mary's past is fully revealed.

This chapter is also titled “Ib in a Nutshell.” (So spoilers.)

Chapter 48: A Creation’s Creation

Guertena Gallery; Violet Area

“EVERYONE!” the Lady in Yellow hissed as the headless statues guided Mary into a room.

“Ma’y’s back! MA’Y’S BACK!”

“MA’Y! MA’Y!” The statues raised their arms in excitement, the mannequin heads were bouncing, and the Canvas Ladies were plucking petals off of blue roses.

A blue doll painted purple writing on the wall. It said, We missed you so much, Mary! We thought you would never come back.

Another one wrote. We made your favorite flavor.

Mary was seated beside a small table on the floor. The blue dolls poured imaginary tea into a cup and passed it to her. Mary picked up and stared at the empty plastic cup. “Um… what is all this about?”

“Ma’y, yor so si’y!” the Blue Lady hissed. “You lef’ a lon’ time ago. You came back!”

“You must be mistaken.” Mary smiled brightly. “I’m not one of you guys. I’m just a little girl from Germany!”

“She lost her memory when she left.” A painting of lips called Tattletale said. “Her time in here was forgotten.”

Mary, don’t you remember us? A doll wrote. You knitted every doll here. And we played with you every day. Mary looked around at all the blue, zombified dolls with black hair and yellow or red eyes.

“I love playing with dolls.” She grinned. “But I never played with any of you. You must be mistaking me for a different Mary.”

“No. You are our Mary.” Tattletale informed. “The one who wanted to leave. The one our father loved more than any other. The last painting Guertena ever created. Mary-”

“No I AM NOT!” Mary punched the table and smashed it, much to their horror. Mary snarled, her expression vicious. “I am NOT the same Mary! I wasn’t made here, I’m not one of you! I am a human GIRL!” She stomped. “Do I look anything like any of you?! I do NOT!” She punched the wall. “I am MARY, I am MARY!” She punched the wall each time she repeated. “I am MARY, I am MARY, I am MARY, I am MARY, I am Mary, I am Mary, I am Mar…” Her
knuckles were becoming bruised and darkened. She fell to her knees and began sobbing.

The Lady in Red bore her warm smile as she crawled closer. “Ma’y… you were always in your room... plucking roses like we do. Father made you differently... but you are the same. You are our Ma’y.”

“Oh, yeah?” Mary turned and looked at her angrily. “Well, prove it. What makes you think I’m the same as you?”

"’Cause you understand us."

Mary gasped and clamped her mouth. Was she not speaking English? No… they weren’t speaking English. They only spoke in hisses and pants. Mary understood almost every word. “Only we know what we say.” Tattletale mouthed. “Only you speak perfect English.”

More tears leaked from her eyes. She looked at the floor. You know it’s true, too. A doll wrote. The truth of your existence was always in your memory.

“…You’re wrong.” Mary stood up. “I couldn’t have come from this place. I’m not one of you guys. I’m… I’m Mary.” She faced them. “I live in Germany with my mom and dad. I have a cousin named April, and we have a bunch of friends that came to this gallery.”

“Bu’ you didn’t befoooore.” Yellow Lady hissed. “You stole their places. The boy and girl that were stuck in here. Both of you stole their places.”

“Bo…Both of us?” Mary questioned. “Who do you… mean?”

“NYAAAAAH!” Chimney kicked open the door and rapidly began punching every Canvas Lady and kicking every doll. “Mary, you just gonna stand there or you wanna get out?!”

“Chimney!” Mary seized this chance to run out of the room. She stopped when her friend didn’t follow. “Aren’t you coming?”

“Just run ahead, I’m gonna beat these guys in case they follow!”

“…” Mary wanted to protest for a second, but she really didn’t want to stay there. She nodded and ran off.

“MA’Y!” The Lady in Yellow tried to crawl after, but Chimney kicked her in the face.

“The only thing I know about art is that it’s easy to break! So COME AT ME, furiku kaiga!” She punched more Canvas Ladies and kicked off the walls to knock the headless statues down. “I’ll send all o’ you back to the drawing board!” She kicked dolls across the room, watching red fluid spill out. “TASTE MY SANDALS, skulls!” Chimney kicked one of the mannequin heads, and it shattered into pieces.

Black Area

Stage 57: Guertena Gallery, Act 2

April woke up in an area that was pitch-dark. She held her head and walked forward with a slight aching feeling. When she checked her rose, it seemed only a couple petals were missing. April held her hands forward to feel her way. She heard a male’s voice echo from a distant speaker, “Attention, all staff, attention: One of our visitors is damaging the displays. If found, please report them promptly. Those who damage the gallery exhibits will b… comp. . . sat . . n…” The speaker
was glitching up.

April gasped. “Is it talking about me because I crushed the ant painting? Hmm… I need to find an exit soon.” April made it into a wide room, atop a long staircase. She was gazing at a black, diamond-shaped bed, with a curious black diamond design over it. She wondered if this was one of Guertena’s pieces… then, her gaze focused on the person sleeping under the covers.

It was the girl from her dream. Her eyes were closed in slumber, but the brown hair was familiar. Her name was Ib, April remembered. (It’s not easy to forget a name so odd.) She looked very ill. April put a hand on her forehead. She felt average. “Ib? Hello?” April shook her gently. Ib moaned weakly, as though wanting to wake up, but couldn’t.

April stared for a minute. “I wonder if this bed’s doing something?” She pulled off the covers and stuck her hands under Ib’s arms to pull her up to her feet. She was about to fall, so April kept her standing. She saw a green stalk drop from Ib’s hand. April bent down to pick it up, noticing the single red petal. “This is her rose.” While observing it, she lost her grip on Ib, so she caught her quickly. “When I get hurt, petals fall off my rose. If this petal falls, will you die?” She stared worriedly at the moaning girl. Ib made no response. “Sigh… we have to get it healed in that magic vase or something.” She put the stalk in her pocket with her own rose and helped Ib to walk.

They entered a dark passage, in which April outreached an arm to feel ahead. Her hand touched a door, then she felt down for the knob. She entered a room that was almost as dark, and there were a lot of paintings of humans with white clothes and bare feet, and black scribbles on miscellaneous parts of their body. April looked at the sign hanging from the ceiling. “Hall of Mistakes? Interesting that they have this. But I guess every artist has faults. Am I right?” She looked at the camera.

April carried Ib through a passage with smeared-out Canvas Ladies and other paintings on the wall. In fact, it kind of looked like parts of those paintings were cut off and pasted on other paintings. When April turned a left corner in the passage, she found a big canvas with a door painted, in which the chunk where the knob would be was cut off. Still carrying Ib, April searched the hallway for a painting piece with a doorknob. April found such a piece over the head of a rabbit painting, and when she pulled it off, she viewed the smeared result of the head. She brought the doorknob to paste over the empty chunk, then she was able to turn the knob and open the painting.

There was a vase of water in this small room, so April placed the one-petal stalk inside it. The red rose bloomed with petals, looking beautiful. “Mmmm…” Ib’s weight on April’s shoulders was subsiding. She could safely release and let Ib stand on her own feet. She opened her red eyes and viewed around. “My rose…” She picked the flower out of the vase. She looked up at the taller girl, her savior. “April?…”

“You’re Ib, aren’t you?” April asked. “You spoke to me in my dream?”

“April! It’s really you.” Ib hugged the older girl. “I was afraid you and Mary would never come back.”

“Me and Mary?” April pulled away. “What do you mean? Have we been here before?”

“Yeah! I mean… I don’t know.” Ib stared at her for a minute. Her expression was confused. “You kind of look like… um, w-where are you from?”

“Germany… Me and Mary are from the Goldenweek Family.”

“Goldenweek?” Ib looked a little surprised.
“Yeah, it’s a rich family.”

“…But…” Ib frowned. “My last name is Goldenweek.”

Shattering sounds ruptured the air, making them jump. “Oh, no. Those paintings must be coming to life.” April assumed.

“What do we do?”

“Stay behind me, I’ll get us through.” The girls ran out of the room and hurried through the passage. The smeary paintings made eerie moaning sounds and either reached forward or fell to crawl on the floor, looking like ghoulish zombies. They reached the room of scribbled-out Mistakes, which all broke out of their portraits and began to scramble about the room. The ones with scribbled faces were moving aimlessly, but those with faces came after the girls.

“Time to decrease your quality.” April dipped her brush in pink paint and slashed it across the Mistakes. The paintings stood confusedly at first, then resumed trying to attack the girls.

“Whaddid that do?” Ib asked, evading their swipes.

“Pink paint is supposed to decrease your confidence, but I guess these guys don’t feel much of anything. Ib, can you fight well?”

“Not really.”

“Well, get ready to learn.” April painted blue paint on Ib’s back, and the 9-year-old felt empowered. She began moving at quicker speed and punching the Mistakes, and April drew a red mark on another one so that others would attack it. She and Ib made it to the door and escaped, slamming it forcefully afterwards. “Sigh… that was-” The door opened, and the Mistakes were trying to pile out. The girls gasped and bolted down the passage, back to the room with the diamond-shaped bed. They ran through an opening in a rope fence, up a flight of stairs where they took cover in another room.

April put a stool against the door in case the Mistakes tried to follow. “Sigh…” The girls sighed with relief, and April wiped the blue paint off Ib’s clothes. “Now that we have a moment… how did you get here, again? How do you know me and Mary?”

“Ib, I don’t remember much of anything… I know that I came here a long time ago… and I got lost. I found that weird bed and took a nap… then I started having dreams about my family. They made me feel so happy, I didn’t wanna wake up. But sleeping on the bed made me feel real sick… I kept trying and trying to find a way out, but I couldn’t. I could only feel happy by having those dreams. So I kept looking for vases to heal my rose… so I could sleep more. Then all of a sudden, I got captured by a weird clothes monster in my dream. When he locked me in a cage, I heard him talking about someone named April. Then… I remembered Mary.”

“I don’t understand.”

Ib stared at her. “April… do you really not remember anything? Does Mary ever talk about this place?”

“Mary and I have been having nightmares about this place. We came here years ago, but we don’t remember any of this…”

“Aaaaaaaaaahhh! Heeeeeellllp!”
They gasped, looking at a ladder in a corner of the room. “That sounds like Aeincha and Mocha!” April exclaimed.

“Who are they?”

“They’re friends I came with. Ib, come on!” The artist climbed up the ladder first, followed by Ib.

The ladder ended at a square hatch, which April lightly pushed up. She saw Aeincha and Mocha being squeezed by black hands, and a man with lavender hair handed a green and gray rose to two Canvas Ladies. “Those must be their roses.” April whispered.

“A, what’s going on?” Ib asked, stopped on the ladder while the taller girl was blocking it.

“One at a time, ladies.” The man cackled giddily as the Canvas Ladies touched the first petal of either rose. “He loves you…”

“OW!” The tiny girls yelped when a petal was plucked.

“He loves you not.”

“OH.” Another pluck.

“HEY, leave them alone!” April climbed into the room and swung a punch across the tall man’s head. The Canvas Ladies hissed and chased her down the hall, dropping the roses in the process.

The man growled with anger as he sat up and rubbed his jaw. He saw Ib climb out of the floor and attempt to grab the roses, but she gasped when she noticed the man herself. “Garry!”

“Heheheheheheheheeee!” The man known as ‘Garry’ grinned psychotically. “Don’t be afraid, little precious. Come play with us! You’ll be fine with all of this company.”

“Please, help us!” Aeincha struggled. “Get us out of here!”

Ib noticed the two doll-size girls in the hands. “GIVE ME THOSE ROSES!” She gasped when Garry lunged at her, dodging and running the direction April went.

April turned a corner—then halted just before she ran across a hall with spider-web designs painted on the floors, walls, and ceiling. Seeing the Canvas Ladies coming, April quickly painted a red spot in a web’s hole, and she dodged as the painting women lunged at it, ending up stuck on the sticky floor. April met back with Ib in the hallway, turning back as Garry caught up. “It’s all right. You can keep those roses if you want.” The man was still giggling madly as he squeezed Aein and Mocha in his hands. “All I gotta do is squeeze the little air out of them, then they’ll make the deadest little dolls!” He tightened his grip, and as their heads seemed to swell, April and Ib saw a petal drop off their roses.

Ib passed the roses to April and ran up to the man. “Garry, stop! Why are you acting like this?! Come on, don’t you remember who I am?!”

“Nnn?” Garry frowned, still showing his gritted teeth, and stared at Ib with his only exposed eye (the left one was covered by his hair). He loosened his grip on the tinies. Ib’s pretty red eyes were pleading. She almost looked… familiar. “… Garry shook his head, grinning madly again as he kicked Ib in the face, making a petal fall off her rose. “You know, these dolls do look adorable. I wonder if they taste like candy? Munch, munch, muuuunch…” He opened his mouth and moved Aeincha closer, headfirst.
“AAAAHHH! NOOOO! PLEEEASE!” the Lilliputian cried.

“OOF!” April kicked Garry in the crotch, dropping Aein and Mocha on the floor as they got behind April’s shoes. April picked up and passed them to Ib before painting blue paint on herself. She threw furious punches across Garry’s face before he fell on his back, then April stomped his head to knock him out.

She gasped for breath and wiped the paint off. “Thank goodness you came, April.” Aeincha said. “But… who are you?” They looked up at the one holding them.

“My name is Ib.” She smiled. “Why do you dolls talk?”

“Aeincha, Mocha, wasn’t Mary carrying you?” April asked.

“She was, but she let us go to look for you.” Mocha answered. “Then we tried to go after her, and we found this secret ladder; then these big statues started chasing us!”

“We met this man down here and asked him to help us.” Aeincha explained. “But he took us to these scary hands and… Hey, did you say his name was Garry?”

Ib approached the defeated man with a sympathetic look. “We were trapped in this gallery together, and he tried to protect me… but that was before Mary…”

“I think we should get away from him.” Mocha said worriedly. “Before he wakes up. We should also try and find the others.”

“We probably should.” April agreed. “Ib, come on.” She took a few steps ahead, but Ib was still looking at the man. “Ib?”

“I… I want to find out what’s wrong with him.” Ib said. “I wanna help him.”

“He tried to hurt us, Ib!” Aeincha shook. “Let’s just go somewhere safe!”

“Err… Okay, you’re right.” Ib carried the tinies and followed after April.

**Brown Area**

Apis awoke in a dark, brown-colored room. In this room’s weak light, she saw Aisa laying feebly on the floor. Only one petal was on her brown rose. “Apis… are you okay?” She shook her friend lightly.

Aisa moaned, opening her eyes to a squint. “Apis… where are we?”

“Somewhere else in the gallery, I guess. Let me help you.” She lifted Aisa to her feet and put her friend’s arm around her head as she helped her walk down the passage. When they were approaching a left turn, they heard other footsteps, so Apis stopped and backed against the wall. “I wonder who that is.” Apis whispered, inching closer to peek around the corner. The footsteps grew louder until Apis saw someone walk by the left route ahead. “Mary!”

The girl gasped and looked right. “Apis?”

“Thank God.” Apis walked over to her with Aisa. “We thought we were splorped to an alternate dimension for a while. It’s good to know at least you’re here. Where did you come from?”

“Um… a door over there.” Mary pointed behind her. “Chimney saved me from a bunch of evil monsters.”
“Chimney’s here? Let’s go down and find her!”

“W-Wait!” Mary perked up nervously. “W-What’s wrong… with Aisa?”

“She got shot in the foot by a gun. Er, a painting of a gun. I wasn’t sure because my eyes were erased at the time. …The bottom line is, this gallery isn’t natural.”

Mary looked at a vase on a table in the middle of the room. “Aisa, let’s put your rose in that vase.” She took the one-petal stalk and hurried to do so. As the brown petals magically reappeared, the wound in Aisa’s foot disappeared. The Nimbi stepped away from Apis and looked at it in awe.

“It’s healed! How did you do that, Mary?”

“These vases can fix your roses!” Mary smiled. “I, um… I saw one earlier.”

“So we’re connected to these roses?” Apis questioned. “I guess we should hold onto them. Okay, let’s go help Chimney.”

“Hold on!” Mary stopped. “It could be dangerous. Besides, Chimney’s tough, and fast, she’ll catch up.”

“She knows the layout of this place as much as we do.” Aisa noted. “We have to go get her so we can find a way out together.”

“Yeah… you’re right…” Worry still displayed on her face as Mary led them to the aforementioned door. She turned the knob and tried to pull, but it wouldn’t budge. “Huh? It’s locked.”

“Locked?” Aisa and Apis walked over. “But didn’t you come through here?”

“It’s probably… locked on this side.”

“Darn it. Well, maybe there’s a key somewhere.” Apis said. “Let’s split up and look around.”

**Violet Area**

“Muuuu… I’m hungry.” Chimney moaned as she wandered into a library. “I’m so hungry, I could eat Apis’s crappy cooking. Maybe one of these books has a map to the building’s lunchroom.”

Chimney picked out a book. “‘Art Styles of the 17th Century’? Nope.” She threw it behind her. “‘Legend of the Planet of Yarn’? Lame.” Threw that one back. “‘Mary’s Diary’—whah?” She found a book that was written in crayon. A smiling, peach-colored face with yellow hair and blue eyes was drawn. She opened the book—“AAAAHH, it’s written in German!” Chimney wept. “Blaaaah, if only there was a way-…”

She noticed a book titled *English-German Dictionary*. “…That’s very helpful.” Chimney took the book and began the slow, tedious process of deciphering.

**Gray Area**

“This looks like a good room to rest.” April said as they entered a room with a white ancient couch and some stools. “We’ll probably be doing a lot more running, so we should give our legs a break.” She sat on the couch, Aein and Mocha on her lap, while Ib took a stool.

“This is a lot more excitement than I bargained for.” Aein said, lying down. “April, did you try calling the others?”
“My wristwatch doesn’t work. I’m not even sure if the others are down here.”

“Let’s hope they can take care of their selves.” Mocha replied.

“Ib, now that we have a moment, maybe now you can finally tell us.” April stated. “How do you know Mary; or me, for that matter?”

Ib stared at her red rose and twirled it in her hand. “You look just like the doll that Mary had.”

“Doll?”

“Me and Garry met Mary here after we got stuck in the gallery. She was swinging a little doll around, saying it was her sister. Then we found out Mary was…”

**Violet Area**

“Hold on, wait a minute!” Chimney proclaimed after deciphering and writing down the first few pages of words. “Did I line these up right? This better not be some funky language thing! Or crappy crayon writing. Let’s see… ‘Dear Diary, today I created a new doll. Her name is April, and she’s my big sister! I’m Mary, she’s April, and we’re sisters, and we love each other very much. We love each other so much, that we…” Chimney looked at the small, sloppy crayon drawings at the bottom. “Mary-chan and… APRIL-chan!!”

**Guertena Gallery; unknown date** (Play Mary’s Theme from *Ib*.)

Mary had been in her room for the past hour with a smile on her face. She had been working diligently on this doll… her absolute favoritest one of all. It had taken ages to find the right material… but now she was done. “Ha ha!”

Mary picked the doll up and ran all across the halls. She arrived at her destined room within the maze and kicked it open. “Look, everybody! Meet the newest friend in our group! Her name is April, and she’s my BIIIG sister!”

She held the tiny doll by its hands in either thumb and index finger, letting April dangle beside her skirt. All of the dolls faced her; they were stationed in that position before this. April had peach-colored, sewn skin, wore a cloud-pattern dress cut from some fabric, and part of a maroon-colored cup, cut off and taped on her like a skirt. Her thin, stick legs ended at big cottonball feet, blush marks were painted on her face, and dark-red string was intricately sewn around her head, tied in two pigtails.

Mary carried April in to join the other dolls. Some small, some medium, but all bore dark-blue skin, frizzy black hair, yellow or red eyes, and single dresses of varying color. Mary sat cross-legged with April on her lap. “April would like to join us for tea! Jen, would you bring us some?”

One of the small dolls in a pink dress stood. Jen waddled as she walked to a corner and brought a teacup and pot. There was no tea, but the doll made the gesture of pouring, anyway. She brought another cup, and Mary lightly sipped one. “Mmmmm! Delicious! April, you should try it!” She put the other cup in April’s lap; it was large enough for April’s arms to reach to its sides. The doll was unmoving. “…Okay! I’ll help you!” She tipped the cup to April’s mouth. “Delicious, I know! Now…” Mary stood, “who wants to play a game? April?”

She looked at the doll in her hands. April faced up. The black googly eyes were toneless. “…Hide-and-Seek sounds like fun! Don’t run away from me, now!”

She threw April to a random corner, then closed her eyes. She counted to a hundred. “Ready or not,
here I come!” She searched every corner of the room, behind every sitting doll. She frowned, for she couldn’t find April. “Hmmm… where did she go. Oh?” She saw a very tiny arm-stub between two dolls against a wall. She crawled over and reached for it, grabbing April. “THERE you are, Sister! You’re really good at this!”

The little doll stared at her blankly. …Mary’s features shrunk to a quizzical look. “You wanna play Tag?” She frowned sadly, “But you’re so much faster than me, Big Sister. My legs get too tired.” The doll said nothing. Mary stared at her for a few seconds. “…Give me a headstart? Well, okay.” She smiled.

“Huff, huff, huff, huff!” Mary ran all around the gallery halls, excitement and desperation on her features. She ran as fast as possible, for her big sister would catch up before she knew it. “Ha ha ha!” She made a big smile, overfilling with confidence, she had gotten so far ahead, she might actually win this! “Good luck, Sister April!”

She waited. For hours… and hours… her big sister never found her. Mary was all alone in the dark halls. She began to feel sadness… regret… had she run so far that her sister gave up looking? Mary tried to retrace her steps, running all around the halls until she could get back to the Doll Room. “APRIL!” She filled with joy after finding her sister lain on the floor inside the room. She rushed over, picked her up, and hugged April to her chest. “April, I’m so sorry for running too far! I don’t care if you’re faster than me, I don’t want anymore headstarts! I just don’t wanna be away from you, Big Sister! Don’t ever leave me alone!” Mary sunk to her knees, letting her tears of joy flow. Her happiness was powerful, being reunited with her sister.

…”Mary looked at all of the dolls, tears streaming from her wide blue eyes, past the corners of her smile. All of them stared blank… their eyes, their smiles… all as she had sewn them to be. Mary trembled, still grinning madly. More tears fell. They were full of despair, not happiness. She hugged April tighter to her chest. Her head faced the floor, shadowing her eyes in darkness. Only the tears gave any reference to her eyes. She sniffled, clenching her teeth. “Don’t leave me alone… Daddy… Please don’t leave me alone…”

Mary cried. Her sobs echoed across the vacant halls of paintings. No soul was there to hear her. No soul was there to hold her… (End song.)

Dear Diary: The owners of the gallery moved my painting to the basement. They want to make room for more stuff. They said I wasn’t interesting, anymore.

Dear Diary: A man named Stanford visited my basement. I helped him find a secret room. He thanked me and wrote about me in his journal. …I wish I got to talk to him.

Dear Diary: I like the visitors coming in today, but I wanna leave this place and go outside. But the only way I can leave is to switch places with someone from outside. Won’t somebody come soon? Won’t somebody come soon…

Mary was in her room. Yellow rose petals littered her floor, along with stems. She was sitting on her knees and picking one. “He loves me… he loves me not… He loves me… he loves me not… He loves me…” There was one petal left. …She picked it. “He loves me not.”

Her eyes had been open for hours. They twitched. She was going mad with desire. She picked her palette knife off the floor and stood over a mannequin head. She held the knife up, wanting desperately to stab it through. Her arm trembled… she held herself back… but she wanted to… no, she couldn’t. She had to try again. Mary grabbed another yellow rose from her canvas, sitting on her knees to pluck it.
“He loves me… he loves me NOT… He LOVES me… he loves me NOT… He LOVES me… he loves me NOOOT!” The last petal was torn. She panted for breath, growing more angry. …She looked at the stem, noticing a little leaf hanging from it. …She plucked it off. “He LOVES ME!! I KNEW IT! HA HA HA HA HAAAA!” She hugged the stem and joyfully rolled around the petal-covered floor. “Now I can—!” She stared at the barren stem. A green stick made of fabric. The same fabric as the yellow petals around her. There was no real life to them. No life…

An elderly man in a shiny white tux and white pants was sitting on a stool, painting a canvas in the middle of a vast meadow. The sun was bright overhead. It highlighted his lavender-colored hair. “Oh, Mary… my Mary.” The image he was painting was of a smiling blonde girl with pretty blue eyes, and a developing green dress. “Soon, you will be complete. You will be… born. Mary… I poured my heart and soul into so many creations… but you are the only one; cough!” He grabbed his chest and paused painting. “Hm…” The artist resumed. “I may not be long for this world… but I will not slow down. You will be my greatest creation. You will have a heart, a soul. I want you to live for a very long time.

“If the Creator of an Imaginary Friend dies, the Friend fades away. This is because they have no mind or heart to be connected to any longer. I will not let that happen, Mary. I will see to it that the world knows you. I will let everyone come to look at you. Your smile and soul alone will make everybody love you, even if you’re a painting. They will want to believe you are real… then, it will happen. You will live for a very long time, as long as people remember and love you. Because you are more than just imaginary, Mary. You are… my precious daughter. I love you.”

Mary heard him. In the deep subconscious of his mind, Mary floated. Peacefully. Very slowly, she watched her own body assemble. She was missing a left arm, her lower body swayed like a legless ghost. But little by little, her body was forming. She wept and smiled at the distant man’s face. Mary reached her arm forward. “Father… I love you, too. Please make me soon. I want to stand by you. I want to feel what you feel. Father… Father…”

Mary stared at the stem still. Her eyes were dropping tears again. She was still alone… in this Fabricated World. She was fabricated… her mind… her heart… her soul… She wasn’t real… she would never be real…

Mary approached the giant mural that hung on the main gallery’s wall. The portal that connected this world with the real world. Mary reached up and put a hand on the protective glass. The real world… plainly within her sight. If she stepped beyond these boundaries… she would perish. An Imaginary being belonged in no world that saw her as nothing else. All she was was a painting. A forgotten painting. No one should know her or care.

Mary wandered the gallery’s dark halls. Every day of her life, she looked at other paintings of her dad’s creation. The Beach Isolation, which depicted a tan-colored, dusty shore next to water. This was called a “beach,” as she read in a book. It was really warm there and smelled nice. The “sun” always shone there, a giant ball of fire in the sky. She’s seen pictures of it, and it looked pretty. She drew the sun in her room using orange crayon.

Her father painted a picture of something called a “moon.” Or a crescent moon, to be precise. It was like the night’s sun, it made everything dark, but there were tiny dots in the sky. Mary thought these looked like candy, and she wanted to taste them. She drew the moon in her room. Her father made a small painting of “large ice.” Ice was apparently a really cold rock that turns into water when it’s warm. Must be magic!

Mary really wanted to get out there and see it all. She wanted to leave and live in the real world, where all these magical things happened. Food that grows on trees, “animals” that interact with
people, they’re both large and small, like the talking ants in the gallery. Mary filled her room with colorful crayon drawings of all these things, all these things that she wanted to see. Every once in a while, a misguided human wanders into this world, lost, scared, lonely. Mary had a chance to take their place and escape. But they had always found a way out before she could find them. The possessions they left behind, however, she kept to herself. Souvenirs from the real world. In that world, there was probably millions of these.

Mary had only her fellow paintings to socialize with. But there was one problem: her dad was never as passionate about them. Their “souls” were undeveloped. The headless statues that patrol the corridors could only go “HAH!” The Canvas Ladies were inspired from the gold-digging women who tried to court him for his inheritance, so their personalities were limited. They were the most Mary interacted with, though, besides her hand-made dolls. They were her older sisters, whom she lent her roses to to play “Loves Me, Loves Me Not.” The more Mary remained here, with them, the more she felt like she didn’t belong. She had a fully developed, human body, she could think and talk. So why wasn’t she allowed to leave? She may have been Imaginary, but she’s different, she wasn’t a monster like the others. Was she? …No, of course not. All Mary wants is to have friends, a family, be loved. She wanted to be where she truly belonged. She wanted to be real.

In the upper floors

She didn’t know how she ended up here. She didn’t know where she was. Ib’s parents brought her to an art gallery to see a collection of works by an artist named Guertena. Her biggest mistake was asking her parents to let her explore alone. For one thing, she didn’t know most of the words. She was only 9 years old. The pictures looked nice, that’s all she could say, but the grown-ups were talking about them in ways Ib didn’t understand. Is it so much trouble to say a picture looks pretty and move on?

But that much was before everyone in the gallery disappeared. The front door was locked, the lights dimmed. She thought she heard the Coughing Man cough, the cat painting meow, the apple fall out of its frame. Then, Ib walked into a floor painting of a big fish. As she descended through the water, gazing at the fish that swam by, she had no understanding of anything else. She had fallen into a world unlike her own. And she didn’t like it.

“Hello?” she called through the vacant hallways. “Mommy? Daddy? Anybody?”

No one answered. She wandered the halls endlessly. She picked up a red rose from a vase. It was very pretty and matched her eyes. Yet, she also felt an odd connection with it. Before long, she understood. “AAAAH!” Black claws reached at her from the edges in one passage, and when they scratched her, petals fell off her rose. She bolted through, taking rest in a room with headless statues. “AAAAH!” The statues chased her, Ib kept running. She hid in a room with a lot of curtains with buttons beneath them. When she curiously pressed one, she saw a sinister painting: it depicted herself, being grabbed and strangled by the claws.

Ib ran further, her pants sounding down the halls. “MOMMY! DADDY! Anybody! WHERE ARE YOU?”

Her young legs were wearing thin, so she stopped, gasping for breath. She wanted to sit down, but in fear of more monsters coming for her, she stayed on her feet. She had been wandering the gallery for an hour. She had never gone so long without sitting. And she was very scared. But she never showed it too much. Her parents taught her never to show fear; it wasn’t proper for a lady. To keep herself from being afraid, she thought about bunnies. She had dozens of them in her room at home. She pictured herself going back home to be with her stuffed bunnies.

When Ib wandered into a red hallway, she found someone passed out on the floor. A man with
lavender hair and a dark-blue, ragged jacket. He looked sick, moaning, and made little response when Ib shook him. He was clutching a key, so the girl decided to take it. She used this key to open a locked door into a small room. The Lady in Blue, a living Canvas Lady in a blue dress, connected to a frame, was plucking petals off a blue rose, playing “Loves Me, Loves Me Not.” The lady saw Ib, and “HAH!” began chasing her. Ib gasped, evasively dodging the painting, grabbing the one-petal rose off the floor, and escaped.

There was a bright blue vase with water inside. When Ib put the blue rose inside, it healed like magic. She decided to do this on her own rose. She no longer felt tired, had the strength to run another hour. But first, Ib brought this blue rose to the tired man. “Mmmm…nnnn…” He helped himself to stand. After regaining his senses, he looked at Ib. “GYAAAH!” He fell on his rear, backing away in fright. “Whaddyou want now, there’s nothing left from me to take!”

Ib gasped. “Uh-I…”

Garry noticed the blue rose in her hand. “My… Wait a moment. Could you be… someone else from the gallery?”

“Um… I came with my parents.” Ib said shyly.

“…” The man smiled. “Thank goodness. Someone here besides me.”

The man introduced himself as Garry. A 20-year-old, he came to the gallery by himself, on a casual walk through town. Then all of a sudden, he ended up in this cursed place. Much like Ib, he had no idea how things came to this point. “Even these roses.” he said. “Wounds appear on me when the petals drop. At any rate… it’s great to know I’m not alone.” He smiled at the girl. “You came pretty far for someone your age. Are you in a club called ‘KND’?”

“No… What’s that?”

“I’m not sure.” Garry looked away. “I have a little cousin that says he’s in it, and he says a lot of other kids are, too. Either way… I can’t leave a young girl to wander this place by herself. Let’s find a way out of here.” Garry took Ib’s hand and led her along. “I’ll protect you from any-”

A face painting with a wiggling tongue spat on the floor. “GYAAAAH!” Garry fell backwards. Ib stared at him blankly. Garry blushed, getting up again. “I, um… was a bit startled, that’s all. Let’s keep going; and watch out for such bizarre things as that.”

With Garry in her company, Ib didn’t feel afraid anymore. The older man helped her solve many of the gallery’s puzzles, and could read the words Ib didn’t understand. She found it funny how Garry got freaked out all the time by the startling sights, such as a blue face that wanted to eat their roses, or Canvas Ladies that burst out every now and then. Ib was afraid too, of course, but she proved better at staying levelheaded than the grown man.

“I wish the lighting in here wasn’t so cheap.” Garry said when the lights flickered; a mannequin head appeared a few yards behind them. “It’s starting to hurt my eyes.” They flickered again; the mannequin appeared closer. “Ib, if you want, you can close your eyes and I’ll hold your-EYAAAAAH!” The head appeared right in front of them. “Son of a-!” He swung his foot and smashed the delicate head against the wall, breaking it in pieces. “…Phew. Just a mannequin.” Ib rolled her eyes. The two kept progressing down the passage. Where the mannequin smashed, gray writing appeared. Hanged Garry.

Ib and Garry entered a new room with a white, ancient couch; they recognized it as the Reserved Seat from the main gallery. On the opposite wall, Ib saw a painting that nearly made her faint.
“What’s wrong, Ib?” Garry asked.

The painting labeled *Couple* depicted a familiar man, with brown hair and dark-blue fancy clothing, and a red-eyed woman with red clothing. “Th-They’re… my mom and dad.”

“What?” Garry looked more closely at them. “They do look like you, Ib… But why would such a painting be…”

He felt Ib’s little hands clutch his arm. “Garry… do you think they’re down here?”

Garry smiled assuringly. “I’m sure they’re fine, Ib. We’ll look for them and get out of here.”

“Do you think so?”

Garry knelt down to her eye level. “I promise that one way or another, I’ll get us out of here. … You look a little tired, Ib. Do you want to lie down for a nap?”

“But…But what if something comes get us?”

“Then I’ll pick you up and carry you someplace else. You just lie down and rest, Ib. I’ll protect you.”

“Um… okay… Can I lay on that couch?” She pointed at the ancient sofa.

“Er, that probably isn’t a good idea; I don’t trust anything in this place. Just… lie on the floor. You can use my coat as a blanket.”

Ib went over beside a corner and lay on the floor like Garry said. The man took off his ragged-edged coat and put it over her. “Garry?…”

“Yes, Ib?”

“Why do you talk like a lady?” She smiled with half-closed eyes.

Garry blushed. “My… Do I? Why, I guess I… haven’t noticed…” He scratched his head sheepishly.

“I think it’s silly.”

“W-Well…” His face remained red. “Thank you, I guess…”

“Good night, Garry…”

“Good night, Ib.” He watched the adorable child close her red eyes and go to sleep. After everything she’s been through today, her soul was so innocent. He questioned why a child like her deserved to be in this type of mess. She deserved to live her childhood more freely, more imaginatively, but this gallery was frightening. He wanted to find a way out soon, for her sake. On his word as a TND operative.

**Violet Area**

“Hmmm hm hm hm hmmmmmmm.” Mary hummed merrily, swinging April by her little arm as she strolled about the purple passage. “April, what do you think we should do today?”

The doll’s expressionless face lay still as Mary swung her. “Guess the painting without reading the title? Okay, that sounds fun! It would be great for our brains!”
They came to a painting depicting a man and a woman arguing—Mary shut her eyes after briefly looking at it. “I believe this was called… Fighting Friends. Am I close, April?” No response. …

Mary opened her eyes and read the nameplate. The Force of Quarrel. “Darn.” Mary frowned. “But isn’t it two friends fighting? Why don’t they make it an easy title and not a hard one? My name is Mary. That’s easy to remember, isn’t it, April?”

A fast patting rang in Mary’s ears. She looked to a door on her left. The footsteps were growing closer. But who besides her could be making footsteps? The headless statues? When Mary curiously approached the door, it swung open, and a red-eyed girl flew through. “AAAH!”

Ib rammed Mary and knocked her down. The brown-haired gasped at what she did. “Ib!” Garry came in behind her.

“Owww…” Mary held her head.

“Oh, my… I’m terribly sorry.” Garry held a hand down to the strange girl. “We didn’t look where we were going.”

Mary looked up at him curiously. Where had this weird man and this girl come from? Were they… like her? “It’s okay.” Mary took his hand and got up.

“But could you perhaps be someone from the gallery, too? Are you in the same predicament as we are?”

Mary was silent for a minute. They were from the real world, of course. …But they thought she was from their world, too. They thought Mary was real. …Perhaps she had a chance. “I… I was looking to see if there was anyone else, too. …I wanted to get out, so I…”

“Ahh, perfect! Well, I’m Garry, and this young lady is Ib. We’re trapped in the gallery as well. Why don’t you join us and we’ll find a way out?”

“Sure! I’d love to!” Mary smiled happily. She turned to Ib, “It’s nice to meet you, Ib!”

“Nice to meet you, too.” She returned the smile. Ib looked down and noticed the doll behind Mary. “What’s that doll?”

“Oh!” Mary bent down and picked it up. “This is my big sister, April! April, say ‘hi’ to Ib and Garry!” The doll said nothing.

Ib and Garry stared at the doll. “…Hello, April!” Ib said happily.

“Charmed.” Garry greeted, playing along. “So, Mary, seeing as Ib and I both have roses, do you have one as well?”

“Oh!” Mary searched her dress pocket frantically. “Yeah, a yellow rose!” Thankfully, she still had one.

“Ah, I see. Ib and I have them, too. Hold onto those, okay? And don’t give them to anyone. And-”

“Woooow! Ib’s rose is reeeed!” Mary sang. “My rose is yelloooow. I like yellow, but I also like pink, and blue! April likes pink, too!”

“Learn to listen, would you?” Garry stated with a sweatdrop. “I’m serious, we need to be attentive in this-”
“Ib, do you like dolls?” Mary asked perkily.

“Yeah, a little bit. I mostly like rabbits.”

“I like rabbits, too!” Mary jumped. “When we get out, do you wanna go pet rabbits?”

“Sounds great, Mary! Maybe I can ask my parents to let you come over. …Would your parents let me come to your house?”

Mary frowned, glancing down. She smiled and looked up, “Sure they would!”

“Okay, girls, let’s keep pressing onward.” Garry told them.

The group of three wandered the violet corridors in silence for several minutes. Ib and Mary were a few feet behind Garry as the latter whispered to her friend of the same age, “Psst.” Ib moved closer to her at the gesture. “Ib, I was wondering… is Garry your dad?”

“No.”

“Okay, so you’re Dad is somebody else. …Is your mom nice, Ib?”

“Not when she’s mad.” Ib giggled.

“Your mom gets mad at you, Ib? But you’re so nice!” Mary beamed.

“Well, she does.” Ib blushed. “Are your parents nice, Mary?”

“Y-…Yes, my parents are… nice. …Hey, Ib, if only two of us could get out of here, who would you take with you?”

“Why would you ask that, Mary?”

“It’s just a ‘what if.’ I mean, who do you like better, me or Garry?”

“Mary, I like both of you. I could never choose between you. In fact, I…” Ib turned away thoughtfully, “I might stay here if you two could…”

Mary frowned. “But, Ib… then we couldn’t play together. …Well, we’ll get out of here, you’ll see!”

*Rustle. Rustle. Rustle.* The three stopped and looked around at this noise. “What is that?” Garry asked.

“Ib, look!” Mary pointed at a blank brown canvas. “Something’s coming from that painting!”

“Watch out!” A spiky rose appeared on the painting, and the trio jumped away when green spiky thorns popped out of the ground, connecting from one wall to the other. Ib and Mary were on the opposite side from Garry.

“GARRY!” Ib yelled, running to the thorns. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Ib, don’t get too close to those!” the man cautioned.

“What are these things?”

“I don’t know, but I’m going to burn them with my lighter.” Garry pulled said device out and held
the lit candle to the thorns—Mary gasped at the fire. “Wait a minute… these vines are made of stone.”

Mary glanced at a door nearby. “Ib, why don’t we go this way, and Garry can keep going that way? Maybe we can find a place to meet up.”

“You think so? I’d rather not split up…”

“I don’t want to split up either, but…” Garry examined the vines. “These thorns are too sharp to climb and too hard to break. Sigh… alright, we’ll go with Mary’s idea. Just promise you girls will stay safe.”

“We will! Let’s go, Ib!” Mary grabbed her friend’s hand and skipped into the door.

Ib and Mary found a brown-colored storage room with piles of boxes. The door was locked, so they searched the boxes for a key. “Look, Ib! I found a palette knife!” Mary perked, pulling said item from a box. “Maybe this can cut those vines?”

“Could it?”

“Not really. Palette knives don’t cut! I was only joking, Ib.” Ib blushed at this. “But I think I’ll hold onto this. You know, just in case.”

“Right… Hey, I found the key!” Ib beamed. The girls used it to open the door, continuing through the next hall. The lights were flickering in this passage, and they heard a bouncing sound. When they arrived at a staircase, they stopped and stared as a red ball was bouncing down. It splat against the wall. The girls saw that a Clown painting was up the staircase, missing its nose.

“Ib, where did you say you met Garry, again?” Mary asked.

“Here at the gallery. He’s trapped here just like us.”

“Ib…” Mary had a worried expression. “Do you think Garry could be… a painting?”

“A painting?” Ib looked at her in surprise.

“Yeah. What if Garry’s a painting that’s trying to lead us in a trap? Maybe he meant for those thorns to get us.”

“But Garry’s been so nice to me. And he’s really afraid of everything here. I know you haven’t known him as long, but you must’ve seen the other things here, Mary. All these paintings are monsters. Those Canvas Ladies are the worst, always trying to get our roses. I just wanna leave and never come back ag-”

“A-HEM.” Mary coughed loudly, so Ib silenced. The blonde girl looked a tad aggravated at something, but Ib didn’t question it. “I’m just saying that Garry’s way too suspicious. He’s too different from us, Ib. You know you can’t always trust what grown-ups say. Maybe we should just find a way out ourselves. Forget about Garry.”

Ib frowned and looked away. She really didn’t want to think this was true. Mary was probably just nervous. Ib felt the same when she fell in here. “We need to find Garry.” Ib stated. “I think he’s a person just like we are. If you really aren’t sure, we’ll just ask him.”

Mary’s eyes narrowed. She looked away. “Fine.”
April was still swinging from Mary’s clutched hand around her own. She could feel the frustration in her sister’s voice. Garry had to be stopped, for Mary’s sake. She mentally sent the note to all her fellow dolls.

Garry began walking through an empty hallway with lots of turns. The more he wandered throughout this dungeon, the more he wondered how any of this was built down here, how far it extends. Of course, his chance to ask that was probably long irrelevant. He hoped that this path would take him back to Ib and Mary at some point. He passed numerous blue dolls on his way down… actually, it felt like that same blue doll was teleporting ahead of him. Garry simply speed-walked, wanting to bypass this area already.

Eventually, he found a library that he decided to rest in. The sign read, *No checking out books.* Garry decided to skim a few of the titles; maybe one of them had a hint to get out of this place. He opened a book called *Theories on this World.* “‘Via a trading of existences, the imaginary can be made reality.’ What does that mean?”

There were books such as *Conquer the Unknown* and *Know No Fear, The God of Creation,* and *Terror.* The latter book read, *Being alone is fearful. A group of two can have relief. A group of three…* The rest of it was torn off. “Ugh!” He shook his head. “I’ve gotta quit wasting time with these! I need to find Ib and Mary before…” Garry glanced at another book, which was located close to a painting of an ear. *Collected Works of Guertena.* “Hmm… It would be nice if I had more information on the paintings. Weaknesses or something…”

Garry decided to skim the book’s pages. “‘Worry: A painting depicting half of a white head with an eye. The head hides partway behind the canvas as it seems to stare at the viewers, giving them a sense of fear that they are being watched.’” He flipped several pages back. “‘Process of Severing: A series of paintings that depict an axe rising to chop a log. As the point of view is taken from the perspective of the cut, most people feel the need to jump away before it chops.’ Sigh, don’t you make anything that *doesn’t* instill fear in the most literal way possible?” Garry aimlessly flipped page after page.

He stopped at one with no known date. “‘Mary: The last work of Guertena’s life. While the girl appears almost lifelike, naturally, she is not based on a real person.’ Wait a second.” There was a picture of a smiling blonde girl with blue eyes, a green dress, surrounded by yellow roses. “Is that… our Mary?” The ear painting was jiggling. “If she’s not real… could that mean…”

Ib and Mary were wandering the Brown Area in search for a way down to Garry. They passed a painting of lips against a blue background; Mary saw the Tattletale was whispering. Only she could hear its voice. “I know Mary’s seecreeet…”

Mary gasped. She looked down at April in her hands. Ib turned back and noticed she had stopped walking. “Mary?” She approached her. “Are you okay?”

“Okay? Yeah, I’m Mary.” She smiled innocently. “I’m Maaaaary, I’m Maaaaary, oh HO hohohohoho!” She grinned menacingly. “*I don’t like him. I don’t like him ONE bit!* Eeeheeheeheeheeheehee!” She excitedly ran down the hall ahead of Ib, letting April blow behind her.

Ib hurried after her friend. Mary swung open a door to another room, and when Ib ran after… Mary was stabbing a mannequin head with her palette knife. “In my WAY, in my WAY, in my WAY, in my WAY…”

“Mary… what are you doing?”
“This THING is in the way, if it weren’t, we could go ON, we could get OUT of here, but this thing’s in the WAY, if it weren’t, if it WEREN’T!…”

“Uhhh…” Ib nervously backed out of the room. She walked away- “Ib.”

She flinched. Mary caught up behind her. “…Please don’t leave me, Ib.”

“…” Ib turned to face her. “What were you doing, Mary?”

“Oh… just relieving some stress.” She smiled. “Hey, Ib, do you know what ‘snow’ is? I heard it’s this sugary stuff that falls from the sky. And some people make it into cream and eat it!”

“Y-Yeah, I like to make snowmen sometimes.”

“Oooo, you can make men out of snow?!”

“Yeah, haven’t you ever made one?”

“…Sure I have!”

“…” Ib was really confused. “Mary, we have to find Garry. He’s probably worried.” She walked ahead, and Mary followed her with a scowling face.

After Garry walked out of the library, he saw a blue doll tiptoe around a right corner. It looked back, and when it noticed him, it made a squeaking sound before dashing in a room. Garry walked around the corner and found the door that closed. He peeped inside—the room was filled with zombie-like dolls, staring at him with wide yellow and red eyes. “Uh… wrong room.” He closed the door—a blue doll jumped in the gap and kept it open. “AAAHH!” The dolls came out and all ganged up on him, Garry forcefully threw them off or stomped on them, squishing red liquid out every time. Garry bolted around the turns and found a flight of stairs—Canvas Ladies and headless statues on the sides came to life, and he barely avoided their grabs.

Ib and Mary found a staircase and were walking down. They heard screaming echo from below, along with fast footsteps. “Ib, maybe we shouldn’t go this way.”

“IB! MARY!” The girls gasped. Garry was scrambling to get up the stairs, but Canvas Women and statues were grabbing him from all over, and dolls jumping on him. “IIIIB!”

“Ib, no!” Mary cried when her friend ran down the stairs.

“Get your hands off of Garry, you creeps!” Ib swung kicks at the Canvas Ladies’ faces and pushed the dolls off.

“Augh!” Garry’s arms were binded by the headless statues. “Ib, the lighter! Get the lighter out of my pocket!”

Ib fished around his right jacket pocket and grabbed said device. She raised it and flicked it on. “AAAAAAHHH!” The Canvas Women bore horrified expressions, and they, the statues, and dolls were moving away. Now free, Garry took the lighter back and held it to them. “Get away or I’ll burn every single one of you!” The monsters complied and scrambled down the stairs.

“Sigh… That was scary, Garry.” Ib sighed.

“At least we know their weakness.” Garry looked at his lighter. “I’ll have to save the oil on this thing, in case we… My rose!”
Garry had dropped his rose, and April was on the floor and trying to pluck it. “MARY!” Garry swiped the flower back and kicked April forcefully, sending her up the stairs. He growled furiously at Mary. “You lying little monster!”

“Garry, what are you talking about?” Ib asked.

“Ib, stay away from her!” Garry pulled Ib behind him. “Mary’s not human, I saw her in a book! She’s one of Guertena’s paintings!”

“Huh? Mary, is this true?”

“No it’s not!” Mary spoke angrily. “Ib, HE’S the painting person! Don’t listen to him!”

“Don’t try to trick her, Mary! Your doll was just trying to pick my rose!”

“I dropped her and you kicked her like a meanie! Ib, you don’t really believe him, do you?”

“Mary, let me see your rose.”

“What?”

“Show me your rose!”

“Why, so you can TAKE IT?”

“Mary, GIVE IT to me!” Garry ran up and locked arms with the girl, trying to reach in her pockets.

“NO! IT’S MY ROSE, MY ROSE!”

“AAAH!” Garry pushed the girl on her back and grabbed the yellow rose. He studied and felt its petals. “…It’s paper. Look, Ib, Mary’s rose is a fake.” Ib bore a terrified look from the fight that just transpired. “We have to get away-”

“GARRY, WATCH OUT!”

“AHHH!” Mary tried to stab him with the palette knife, but Ib jumped in the way and grabbed her arm.

“IB, LET GO! If he’d’ve just been good and stayed down there, we could’ve…”

Garry socked Mary in the eye and knocked her out. Ib hugged the taller man worriedly. “Sigh… It’s alright, Ib.” He patted her back comfortingly. “At least you weren’t hurt. Come on, let’s get away before she comes to.” He held Ib’s hand as they ran up the stairs.

April recovered and approached her fallen creator. Mary looked up at her “big sister.” Her left eye was darkened. “…April?” She was silent for a second. “Do you wanna see the outside world, too?” April nodded. “I do, too. Do you think… we could belong out there?” Mary smiled. “Do you think we can make lots and lots of friends?” April nodded. “Me, too. …” Mary helped herself up, keeping her head down. “Then I guess… I’ll have to play a little dirty…” She shook her arms and caused the entire gallery to tremble.

Garry and Ib were climbing down a new flight of pink stairs, leading to darkness. “You know, Ib, as far as we’ve managed to come, aren’t we heading down? I mean, most of these stairs head down. So…” Garry glanced down at the girl clutching his arm. She looked worried. Garry smiled. “Well, nothing in this gallery makes sense. Maybe there is an exit.”
They stopped when the building began shaking. “What? Is this an earthquake?”

The walls fell away, and the two found their selves surrounded by stars in outer space. “….! Ib, the stairs!” Garry grabbed her hand and rushed up the stairs when they began to shift vertically.

“Garry, we aren’t gonna make it!”

“İb, hold on!” Garry wrapped arms around her tight as they plummeted down the abyss. Their eyes remain shut during the descent, blinding their selves from inevitable demise.

Blue dolls, mannequin heads, and headless statues were perched everywhere in this strange room. Large crayon drawings covered the floors and walls. Ib and Garry exchanged glances as they recovered, wondering where they were. “Hello, Ib. Hello, Garry.” Mary was standing a few feet away, smiling. Her palette knife was clutched in her hand. “Welcome to my Toy Box. All my friends love to play here. Would you like to play? I know lots of fun games.”

Garry stood in front of Ib. “Mary, just let us out. We already figured out what you are, so we’re not gonna fall for your tricks.”

“I’m sorry, Garry.” Mary looked down sadly. “I just wanted someone else to play with. I won’t be mean to you, anymore. Won’t you please play with m-”

“No, Mary. You can’t be trusted and you can’t come with us. You’re a painting, and a monster like the rest of them! You can’t-”

“NO!!” Mary shook the room. Tears fell from her madness-filled eyes. “I HATE IT HERE! I’m sick of living here! You don’t know what it’s LIKE for me here! You don’t know how it feels to be all alone, with NO ONE!”

“What are you talking about, Mary?” Ib asked. “There are a bunch of paintings here.”

“The other paintings are MONSTERS! No matter how much I try to make friends with them, I’m just too different! I’m not like them… I don’t belong here…” Mary began sniffing. She fell to her knees. “Fine… I tried to hurt you… No matter what I say, I’m still a painting… but let me ask you something.” Mary looked up at them. “If I’m not real… are my tears not real? Is my voice not real? Is nothing I’m saying to you real? Tell me the truth… IS MY HEART NOT REAL?!”

“But Mary, if you really wanna leave, why don’t you?” Ib asked. “Isn’t there an exit in this place?”

“I’m not allowed to leave! I’m imaginary, and Guertena died ages ago! The only way I can live in the real world is if someone from the real world stays here. I need to trade places with someone, and I was gonna do it with Garry so I can be with Ib!”

“Too bad, Mary. I’m not going to be your sacrifice.” Garry stated. “I’m sorry it has to be this way, I really am, but me and Ib have lives in the real world, we’re not going to give them up so…”

“So what?” Mary sniffled. “So I don’t get to live? I don’t get to know what it’s like to live? To be loved and grow up like…like a real person?”

“Mary, please.” Ib stepped around Garry and approached her slowly. “You may not get to come with us, but you’re still our friend, and we love you. You’re as real to us as anyone.”

Mary let a few more tears fall. “Am I really… Ib?”

Ib smiled and walked closer. She knelt beside the painting girl and hugged her. “Of course you are,
Mary. And after we leave, we’ll tell everyone about you. We can bring all our friends here to visit you, and we’ll find a way for you to come outside with us. You’ll never have to feel alone again, Mary. Right, Garry?"

The 20-year-old had mixed feelings, clearly displayed upon his features. He was worried that Mary would stab Ib during this chance… but she made no moves. Mary was simply crying over her shoulder. Garry sighed and walked over to hug Mary as well. “I guess so.”

Mary sparkled at the chance. She grabbed the rose from Garry’s pocket and jumped away.

“MARY!”

“Sorry, Ib, I’m not gonna stay here, so sacrificing one of you is the only way! I don’t want it to be you, so Garry’s it.” She plucked the first two petals and ran toward some stairs.

“Ah!” Garry winced. “MARY, COME BACK!” He and Ib dashed after her, evading the dolls and mannequins that tried to catch them.

Garry’s speed was faltering as Mary continued plucking petals, but he tried to stay strong and chase her. Mary ran up another set of stairs- “Waaah!” she tripped and threw the rose forward. When she crawled to try and grab it, Garry jumped on and began wrestling with her. “Augh, let me go, Garry!” She grabbed her palette knife.

“No!” Garry grabbed her arms and tried to push them away. Ib made it up the stairs to watch the conflict. When she looked ahead, she noticed an empty portrait on the other side of the room, except for yellow roses. “Mary, is that your picture?”

“GET AWAY FROM THAT!” Mary shouted, still wrestling Garry.

“IB, HERE!” Garry tossed the lighter for her to catch. “BURN IT, NOW!”

“No!” Mary squirmed more forcefully as Ib ran to the canvas. “IB, STOP! DON’T!”

“Ib, I can’t hold onto her! Do it!”

“Okay!” Ib lit the lighter and was inches from touching it to Mary’s canvas.

“NOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

April jumped and hit Ib’s hand away, causing her to throw the lighter, which flipped off, into a pile of junk Mary collected. The doll kept its arms firm around Ib’s, staring at her red eyes. Somehow, Ib detected a pleading look in the doll’s googly eyes. Garry and Mary stopped struggling, both surprised at the sight. Realizing this—Mary pushed Garry off, raised her knife, and severed the head of his rose. “GARRY!!” Ib cried.

The man gave one final breath, and fell dead. Crying, Ib ran over to him. “Garry, speak to me!” She shook the sleeping man, but his body was still and peaceful. Mary ran over to grab April, then she bolted past Ib and out of the room. Ib looked up with a gasp. “Mary, come back!”

She chased Mary down more stairs, through a few more corridors, until finally, Ib found they were in the main gallery. The rooms were black instead of white, but it was the very same gallery. Jumping back to attention, Ib ran up to the second floor, to the large mural painting that started this entire journey. Mary was there, about to climb into it like a portal. “Mary, wait!” The girl stopped and looked at Ib, who was tired from running. “We can’t just leave here without Garry!”

“Ib, it’s too late. I already sacrificed him, so after I leave, he’ll take my place as a painting. I waited
for this day forever, Ib, I’m not going to miss this chance! Ib, now’s your chance to get out of here, too, because if you wait too long, the portal will close.”

“I won’t, Mary. I won’t leave Garry.”

“Why not?!” Mary swung her arm in anger, throwing April into the mural portal. “You don’t even know him, Ib, why do you care about him? Why would you stay here for someone you don’t know?”

“Because he doesn’t deserve this any more than you do! Mary, I understand how you feel! This place is scary for any boy or girl, I was completely scared when I came here! Even if you’re one of these paintings… I can tell how you feel. Being alone here would be terrible. That’s why I can’t leave Garry alone.”

“But… Ib…” Mary looked upset. “I wanted to play with you more… I wanted to explore the real world with you. Won’t you come with me?”

“I’m sorry, Mary. But I’m staying with Garry.” Ib turned around. “And I’m not leaving until I find a way out for both of us.”

“…Fine.” Mary stepped into the portal. “Good-bye, Ib.”

With a flash, glass appeared over the painting, blocking any further access. Ib walked the spooky corridors. All alone. No mother… No father… Garry was dead… Mary was gone… She didn’t see anymore paintings come to life. Ib was completely alone.

She was completely lost. She couldn’t find where Garry was. She had no sense of direction. She had no idea how long she had been wandering. But her mind and heart was drowning. She didn’t remember what her parents looked like… what her house looked like… anything. She was so depressed and afraid, trapped in endless darkness. She would love to lie down… and dream forever.

She found a black, diamond-shaped bed, in the middle of a large room. She wondered… if the person who owned this bed wouldn’t mind her sleeping there. Ib took off her shoes, climbed in the bed… and fell asleep. (Play “Memory – Ib All Alone” from Ib.)

“Happy birthday, Ib!” her mother and father chorused. “Nine already, huh?” Father said. “You sure are growing fast.”

“I hope you had a good night’s sleep, Ib!” Mother beamed. “We’ve invited all your friends for the party.”

She had her ninth birthday days ago. The last wonderful memory of her life.

“Ib, this is a handkerchief.” Mother showed her. “I had your name knitted on it.”

“Honey, isn’t she too young for this?” Father asked.

“Oh, nonsense! Ib’s always careful with stuff, so I know she won’t lose it.”

Ib still had it with her.

“Oh? Looks like she found our secret present.” Father blushed. “Well, alright, Ib, open it.”

It was a large stuffed bunny.
“Do you like it?”

“Honestly, Dear, another rabbit?” Mother spoke reprovingly. “Her room is filled with them!”

“Oh, does she?” Father blushed. “But Ib sure seems to like it.”

“Sigh... all right.”

It was soft and warm.

“Oh? Ib, you look sleepy.” Mother noticed.

“She’s been partying an awful lot.”

“Why don’t you lie down for a nap? We’ll keep partying after you wake up.”

“Good... night... Ib...”

Real world...

April Goldenweek couldn’t remember what she was doing. Her head was very foggy. She tried to organize her memories. She was seven years old. She loved to paint. She was thinking about joining the Kids Next Door. Her father was Galdino Goldenweek. Her mother died when she was young. ...And her cousin was...

“Audit, there you are!” She looked over. Her 4-year-old cousin, Mary Goldenweek, skipped happily while her parents held her hand. “We looked for you everywhere!”

“Did Galdino let you wander off by yourself?” Her father, Alvin chuckled. “Honestly, that man...”

“Come on, April, let’s go find him.” Rosa held a hand out to April. “We have to leave soon.”

“...Okay!” April smiled and took her aunt’s hand.

When a real person dies in an imaginary world

An imaginary person can become real.

But when realities change, so must reality itself.

Garry died, and Ib chose to remain in that world.

April and Mary filled their places.

However, their parents do not remember them. Nobody does.

Galdino Goldenweek has always wanted a daughter, but he never married.

April and Mary still want to be sisters.

When the imaginary becomes real, reality is modified in a way to make as many people happy as possible.

So if some people have to be forgotten, then so be it.

But no one knows what force is behind how reality gets re-structured. As you can see, Mary is much younger than she was before.
Sometimes, reality is altered in a way that works for everyone…

Current time

Aeincha, Mocha, and April were speechless. The former two looked up at April, who was staring at her hands. “That… doll… really was me?…”

“You look just like it.” Ib replied. “Mary said she had to kill Garry to be real. If I stayed here, too… maybe you turned real.”

“I can’t believe it…” April stood up. “I… I’m an… Imaginary Friend. Me and Mary both are.”

“April, I’m so sorry.” Aeincha spoke regretfully. “Mary must’ve forced you to go along with that plan. If you were anything like you are now… you wouldn’t have done that, would you?”

“I don’t know.” April looked at the floor. “I really can’t remember any of that. I mean… this gallery feels so familiar to me now… I wonder if I even had a brain. This is just… so much to take in.”

“What are you going to do?” Mocha asked.

“…Me and Mary have to stay here.”

The tinies gasped. “April, why?” Aeincha asked.

“We stole the lives that belonged to Ib and Garry. Ib’s been suffering here; and just look at Garry. They need to go back. Me and Mary have to stay here.”

“Aleincha, you can’t!” Aeincha jumped off the couch and ran up to April’s shoe, looking up with weeping eyes. “You’re one of our best friends! We’ll miss you so much if you stay!”

“I know… sniff…” April was beginning to cry. “I… I would’ve much preferred decommissioning… I would love to keep going on missions with you… but… I just couldn’t, knowing these two would be forced to stay here… We stole the lives they had in the real world… we don’t deserve them!…”

“Aleincha, it wasn’t your fault!” Mocha shouted. “You were just doing what Mary told you, she threw you in!”

“It doesn’t matter, Mocha. We don’t belong in your world. We have to stay… It’s the right thing.”

The girls held their heads down. Aeincha and Mocha didn’t want to accept this… but April was right. Ib and Garry were the prisoners here. It wasn’t fair for them. …It wasn’t fair for any of them...

“This gallery’s a terrible place.” Aeincha stated. “I thought museums were supposed to be fun, but this is only making us sad.”

“You’re only happy when you’re outside.” Mocha said. “Nobody outside knows this gallery’s dark secret. …After we leave, we won’t remember, either.”

“I wish there was a way… that everyone can be happy.”

“…Not this time.” April said solemnly. “Not this time…” (End song.)

Violet Area
Chimney walked out of the library. She had a terrible headache. She had a feeling Mary was some kind of monster… but April, too? Chimney must have translated that diary wrong at some point. It did have a lot of illegible crayon writing. She needed to find those two and straighten this out.

Chimney, not paying attention where she was going, entered a random door. “Nnnn?” Blue dolls were staring at her from every direction. Some small, some large. They were extremely creepy. A blank white canvas was on the opposite side. “Uhhhh… I’m gonna go.” She turned to walk out—the door shut. She jiggled the knob, but couldn’t open it. “What?” Writing appeared on the door. *Let’s have a treasure hunt. Who? Who? Who has the key?*

“So? The room turned a shade of blue. *BONG*… “Oh, crap! Where’s the key?!” Chimney grabbed each and every doll, tore it open, and shook stuffing out. *BONG*… “Where is it?” She searched in one’s head, tore one in half. *BONG*… A figure was slowly reaching up from below the blank canvas. *BONG*… It had frizzy black hair, zombie blue skin, and piercing red eyes like the dolls. *BONG*… It was far bigger than the dolls. It was slowly climbing out of its canvas. *BONG*… Its mouth was open very wide. Chimney looked delicious. *BONG.* . . .

“YES, I FOUND THE KEY!” Chimney proclaimed with delight. “Now I can…” The room was a very dark dimness. Chimney felt it behind her. She slowly turned… The giant demon was out of its canvas, inches beside her… Chimney’s world went black in its mouth.

**Caesar Cipher!**

**GLG QR RQH HOVH WHOO KHU**

**WKH VHFWUHW LQ WKH FHOODU?**
Chapter Summary

Melody tries to cure Manaphy of his sickness. Sector W7 regroups inside the gallery.

_Zelda: Tri-Force Heroes_ is the worst excuse for a _Zelda_ game. The fact I would ever say that is astonishing. Atbash Cipher (which I just added).

Chapter 49: Ruin of the Heart

Mermaid Swamp

Ineptune led Melody, Danny, and Eric (as well as Juju) to the shore of a large lake, where Hideout Helm sat in the center. “We’re going to enter from the underwater entrance.” The mermaid said. “You two kids are waterbenders, so I’ll hope you keep up.” She dove underneath. Eric and Juju held onto Mel and Danny as both waterbenders dove underneath, making air bubbles for them. Melody glowed with her hands to serve as a light for them all, trying to see Ineptune’s bulky form through the fog.

Ineptune swam into an underwater gate that the kids followed her in. After they resurfaced, the kids climbed onto a metal floor. “Klubba, these children are guests of King K. Rool.” Ineptune told the green, buff Kremling wielding a spiky club.

“I still need a toll.” The Kremling stated gruffly, patting his club in the palm of his other hand.

“We have a snake!” Danny perked, raising Juju. Said snake panicked. “You can use him for, like, floss or something.”

“No, I have 10 pythons. …Hmmm…” Klubba reached over and picked up Eric. “But this boy could be fun to practice my balloon animal art.”

“There’s a couple things I don’t like about that sentence!” Eric panicked.

“Deal with it or don’t pass.”


“That won’t fix the emotional trauma!” the nerd cried.

“I’ll take you to King Kroctus.” Klubba slapped Eric over his shoulder and let his club drag along the floor as he led the two kids through the base.

Meeting Room

“Hmmm… So it is true, then.” King K. Rool said after Lehcar told her story. “The Apocalypse really is upon us. Then I guess we have waited too long. We must unite the Eight Firstborn and their Guardians. With Arceus’s great power on our side, we cannot be harmed.”

“King Kroctus, I think you’re overlooking a few details.” Eggman spoke informatively. His brown
mustache was graying, and he had wrinkles. “First, remember the first time Arceus was called back? He went completely berserk, and Gnaa lost the conscience to control him. Also, even if Arceus would cooperate with us, what good is a universe that’s destroyed? True, Arceus could just make a new one, but I’ve grown too fond of this dimension.”

“It isn’t only about surviving or having power.” Kroctus said. “It’s the powers behind all of it. Lehcar speaks of the Twenty Keys that must be gathered, and a Dark Goddess searching for them. Furthermore, this group called ‘Team Gnik,’ and the unreal energy Dr. Eggman has detected in the World Government’s possession… I have to wonder, if Arceus, the God of Everything, would have known anything about these.”

“Those same Gnik guys keep talking about Ten Firstborn, ‘stead of Eight.” Bowser mentioned. “I got some Koopas over in their gang, spying for them. You think it’s something to be worried about?”

“Eight or Ten, I’m so confused.” Gruntilda nagged. “These Firstborn were ALL over the news! You found them once, why find them again? They’d just protect everyone from the end.”

“We’ve been keeping tabs on the Firstborn for years,” Eggman said, “ever since the Guardians set them free. The fact that they would know about the Apocalypse, and aren’t doing anything about it, is stifling.”

“Just what are the Twenty Keys.” Kroctus scratched his chin. “What have they to do with the Apocalypse and ‘Team Gnik.’ Mmm…”

“Kroctus.” Klubba banged the side of the entrance with his club. “Ineptune brought some twerps for you.”


“Holy wow, Bowser!!” Danny ran up to the Koopa King excitedly. “I’m your biggest fan!”

“Guess again, Roundo.” Bowser remarked. “I’m not the Bowser you’re thinking of, I’m Bowser Jr.. Bowser Sr. is still running the Koopa Clan, and trust me, he’s still bigger than I am.”

“Mrs. Uno?” Melody noticed the woman across the table. “No, wait… you’re Lehcar, aren’t you?”

“Glad you noticed, Ydolem.” Lehcar propped her feet on the table and folded hands behind her head. “Which reminds me, your Negative is acting real suspicious about something. Give her a talking to sometime.”

“If you’ve come through the swamp, you must have seen the sorry state Manaphy is in.” Kroctus stood up from his chair, his strong, bulky appearance towering high. “We thought his Guardian could restore him.”

“I…I’m going to.” Melody assured. “But first, I know you have the Fairy Princess here. Where is she?”

“This way.” They stepped aside to let Kroctus march down the hall.

The Kremling King brought them to his throne room, showing them a glass cage that peeked into a chamber that looked like a giant barrel. “This is her.” Inside was a girl of dark-blue skin, hair, and dress of various hues, sitting on her knees as she faced the opposite wall, so they could only see the soles of her feet, and the cracked teardrop gem on her back. “Gruntilda told us her identity as Lapis
Lazuli, one of three renowned Fairy Princesses from an ancient fairytale on her home planet, Avalar. Lapis ruled the Ocean Fairies on this planet beside Queen Cerulea, and she is known by the merpeople as a beautiful and graceful dancer. Until…"

“Until Spongebob caught her in a net and broke her gem.” Danny recapped the crazy story.

“Yes. Then you must also know about her rampage, and that Manaphy consoled her using his song. Unable to find someone to heal her, they wandered into Mermaid Swamp. We have contained her powers in this specialized cell, but we are unable to aid or even speak with her. If we enter, she may attack us or try to escape. We were Gnaa’s closest allies, so we know when darkness and anger is rising inside a heart.”

“Let me go in there.” Melody stated. “I can try to help her. I have healing powers, I can fix her gem.”

“Hold on, Melody.” Eric spoke, still slouched over Klubba’s shoulder. “Em, big guy, can you turn around?” Klubba turned so that Eric could view the situation. “Melody, do your powers even work on magical rocks, or spirit people for that matter? Besides, even if you could, Lapis might still try and destroy this swamp.”

“That’s why I’ll try to reason with her, too. Just let me in.”

“Very well.” Kroctus complied. “This window is also one-way, so do not tell her of it. This way.”

He led Melody around a back room, opening a door into a short, white hallway. He sealed the door behind her, then opened the next one into Lapis’s chamber. Melody calmly approached the kneeled princess, whose head was drooped. “Princess Lapis?”

“Who is it, now.” She responded lowly.

“Melody Jackson. …I’m the Ocean Princess. Kyogre’s granddaughter.”

“Oh… I see.” Her head straightened up. “Sorry if I didn’t recognize you.” She turned and looked at Melody with oval-shaped, mirror-like eyes, with no pupils or irises.

“Eee!” Melody’s heart jumped a bit. “…Um… pretty eyes?”

“Don’t patronize me.” Lapis flipped to sit on her rear. “It’s the least of what happened to me after my gem was broken. I can’t fly, anymore. If I could, I would’ve left this miserable planet. Never even wanted to stay here. Sigh…” She buried her face in the lap of her dress.

“What are you talking about? Someone was making you stay?”

“Oh, so I guess your ‘grandfather’ hasn’t told you.” Lapis looked up, her mirror eyes slanted in anger. “He demanded me to stay on this planet, for 5,000 years. After I heard about Malladus attacking this world, I flew here to heal the injured merpeople and some humans. A lot of them were upset about the whole war, so I started doing Fairy Dances with them, I made them feel happy again. Even after Malladus was gone, Kyogre wanted me to stay. I had to dance at all of their parties, help protect the ocean, and I granted my healing powers to newly-born waterbenders.”

“Your healing powers?” Melody stared at her hand. “Does that mean my healing powers came from you?”

“I was the first waterbender born with healing, because of my Lunar Magic. I was born on a planet called Lunaria, but I was forced to move to Avalar when a war was happening. I wanted to go back
there ever since I became a fairy, I wanted to leave this dump, but I felt like protecting these
merpeople was my responsibility. But I don’t care, anymore.” She rested her face on her dress
again. “I just wanna see Mavis and Aisling again. Avalar or Lunaria, I just wanna go back home.
Where I’m happy.”

Melody sat beside the princess and put a hand on her shoulder. “So that’s why you were so upset.
Getting your gem broken was the last straw for you, wasn’t it? My grandpa pestered you into
staying, even though you didn’t want to. He kind of almost did the same with my mom. My mom
was used to living on the surface, so she didn’t want to move to Oceana, even though it would’ve
been her dream. She got with my dad, and-

“I don’t wanna hear your sob story.” Lapis smacked her hand off. “That’s the problem with your
family, you only think about yourselves.”

“We do not! I was just saying that I get where you’re coming from, and I know how you feel!”

“No you don’t! You and your mom have a great life and friends you like to be around. I know that
Kyogre wanted your mom to come back, but never did, why did Kyogre accept HER decision, but I
still couldn’t go back to MY home?!”

“Okay, okay, so we’re not the same. I still wanna help you. If I have your chi, I can heal you. But
when I do, you have to promise you won’t hurt anybody else. Agreed?”

“…Sigh. Alright. I just want my wings back so I can leave.” Lapis got on all fours to show her gem
to Melody.

Melody got on her knees and bent water onto her hands, putting them over Lapis’s gem as they
glowed. “So wait, how come I can bend in here, but you can’t?”

“Butterfly net strings are tied around the walls outside. They render all fairies helpless. Don’t ask
me why.”

“Wouldn’t it be easier to chi-block this cell?”

“That wouldn’t hold my magic back.”

Melody closed her eyes to focus. She had to sense where Lapis’s wounds were, make her own
water into new flesh. …Except she was not human. “You have an… interesting body.”

“I know. Solid photons.”

“That’s problematic. I-I can’t seem to… heal your gem.”

“I THOUGHT you said you could DO something!” Lapis shouted.

“I-I thought I could, I wasn’t sure! I’m used to healing people, not cracked objects! Why couldn’t
you fix it yourself before?”

“Because my powers don’t WORK as well when my gem is busted!”

“Okay, okay! Sigh…” Melody stopped trying. “Maybe waterbending’s not gonna help. Our KND
has a few timebenders, I could bring one of them to fix this.”

“Don’t even try to get my hopes up.” Lapis sat back on her rear and folded her arms. “You
merpeople are all the same. From Kyogre keeping me on this planet, Spongebob for breaking my
“gem, and Manaphy for leading me to this godforsaken swamp just to betray me.”

“Manaphy didn’t betray you, he was poisoned by the swamp’s influence.”

“Please, how can you go from being ‘sweet and lovable’ to a monster in just a few hours?”

“I don’t know—it’s a Firstborn/Water/spiritual thing! Lapis, I know you’re upset about everything that’s happened, but at least take solace in the fact I’m trying to help you. If me or Mom knew that Kyogre was pestering you to stay here, we would’ve done something about it.”

“If you really want to help me, tell them to let me out of this cell.”

“I want to, but you’re still kind of… sour. I mean, we don’t want you to take revenge on Oceana if you’re trapped on this planet.”

“Hmph.” Lapis looked away. “You don’t even care if I get better, as long as I can still be ‘friends’ with you merpeople.”

“I do want you to get better! And I won’t care if you hate the other merpeople forever, I still don’t want you to destroy ‘em. Sigh…” Melody sat beside the wingless fairy. “Look, Lapis, I’m sorry I can’t heal you, and for what my grandpa did, but can’t we just be friends? I already feel responsible for what Manaphy did to you.”

Lapis was silent for a minute in thought. “…If anything, you could tell those people to stop watching us.”

“What people?”

“Come on, you think I don’t know about the invisible window that peeps in this cell? How else would they watch me. I bet there’s a bunch of people watching us like a movie.”

“Come on, I’m sure there isn’t THAT many.”

The throne room was filled with Kremling soldiers, gazing enticingly at the window into the cell. One of them was eating popcorn. Klubba was scratching his chin in thought, looking at Eric, whose limbs were currently bent into a triangle-ish shape. …Klubba stuck one arm up and bent the hand at 90 degrees, then he nodded approvingly.

Melody walked up to where she thought the window was and knocked. “Look, boys, show’s over, just go eat shark meat or something.” The Kremlings murmured comments as they piled out of the room.

Melody sighed in exhaust, unsure if there was even anyone out there, and went back to sit by Lapis. “Lapis, I’m sorry about everything my grandpa put you through, and I really wish I could heal you. Is there anything else I can do to… I dunno, be friends?”

“…Well…” Lapis had her head propped on her hand, tapping her chin with her pinky, “We could trade bodies.”

“Excuse me?”

“I want to believe you’re telling the truth and you’re nicer than all the other merpeople, but the only way I can be sure is if you understand how I feel. If we traded bodies, we could see into each other’s minds. I would know you’re honest, and you would know how upset I am.”
“That’s an… awfully weird solution. How would we even do that?”

“Can’t Manaphy switch peoples’ bodies?”

“Well- Yeah, but he’s not in the right state to do that.”

“You’re his big sister. You can fix him, can’t you?”

“I’m his niece, technically. …Although if my mom hatched his egg, she could be considered the mom, making Manaphy my brother.” She spoke logically. “But that still makes him older than me.” She shook her head and stood up, “Alright, I’ll try to help Manaphy so he can do this for us. Just… don’t mess up my body when you’re in it, okay?”

“Sure, of course.” Lapis nodded, her blank expression unchanged.

Melody left the cell and met Danny down the hall, and they followed Klubba, who was using Eric as an around-the-neck towel. “She wants me to use Manaphy to switch our bodies.”

“Switch bodies with a fairy and have all her powerful fairy magic?” Danny questioned. “Lucky you!”

“I’ll say- ow! My rib!” Eric yelped as Klubba kept wiping with him. “I’ve always dreamed of being a fairy princess with cool magic powers! And I had the prettiest dress…”

_The opening of Star vs. the Forces of Evil began to play, but in place of Star, it was Eric Horvitz. “It’s gonna get a little weird! Gonna get a little WILD! I’m not from around here! I’m from another DIMENSION!”_

“…We’re not doing anymore cutaways.” Melody decided, disgusted at the thought.

“Oh, tarter sauce.” Eric moped.

**Land of Crystals and Gems**

The Fountain of Quartz was as expansive as a small lake, with shining pink liquid that could make one’s eyes mesmerized. The shallow water almost reached Vanellope’s skirt as she followed the Zoni and carried Clank to the fountain’s center. The fountain’s source was a statue of a bulky woman with large hair, closed eyes, and a star on her belly. “It is her…” The Zoni moaned.

Vanellope’s wide, awestruck eyes were drawn to the person on top of the statue. Their hair matched that of the woman’s, pink in very large curls. Vanellope held onto Clank as she climbed on the flower-shaped edge around the fountain, gazing longingly at this mysterious person. …They turned around. “Good mornin’!” It was a weird-looking man with an orange mustache.

“…Who’re you?” Vanellope asked.

“I’m your Uncle Grandpa!”

“My who now?”

“Uncle Grandpa! Everybody’s uncle and grandpa!”

“…Is that even legally possible?”

“Of course it is! Wanna come into my van and see my giant realistic flying tiger?”
“...What’s that?”

“OUUUUCH!” The Zoni zapped Uncle Grandpa and sent him flying. “That was not her!” they chorused. “We have been trying to get rid of that guy for years. No more wasting time! Throw Master into the fountain!”

Vanellope looked at Clank once more, then she threw him in. Being a robot, Vanel expected him to short-circuit instantly. ...Clank’s green eyes beeped to life, the robot started twitching and sparking, Vanellope braced herself for the explosion. Clank’s head spun around—his green eyes turned a midnight-blue and starry. The robot hovered in the air as his antenna shone the same color. The Zoni’s bulbous eyes became staticky: afterwards, one’s turned gray, another’s turned cyan-colored, and the third one’s turned a dark-green. “OH, LOOK WHAT FINALLY F**KING HAPPENED.” The gray-eyed Zoni said annoyedly. “THE CANDY GIRL FINALLY BROUGHT ORVUS BACK.”

“K4RK4T, I C4N SM3LL YOUR SP1C3 FROM W4Y OV3R H3R3.” The cyan-eyed hissed.

“Terezi? Karkitty? I’m so glad we get to c’at again.” :3 The green-eyed said.

“Huh? You guys can talk now?” Vanellope asked.

“AND LO, WE HAVE THE HERO OF THE HOUR.” Karkat said sarcastically. “GIVE HER A ROUND OF APPLAUSE, LADY TROLLS AND MAN-TROLLS, SHE ACTUALLY DID SOMETHING REMOTELY USEFUL.”

“HEY, SARCASM, I THINK YOU LEFT YOUR CAPS-LOCK ON!” Vanellope shouted. “WHY ARE YOU TALKING LIKE THIS?”

“BECAUSE THIS IS HOW I TALK! IF IT BUGS YOU, SHOVE THAT CANDY INTO YOUR HOLLOW EARS!”

“JUST tell ME who YOU are SO we CAN get ON with THIS!”

“1 4M T3R3Z1 PYROP3. H3 1S K4RK4T, SH3 1S N3P3T4. W3 4R3 TH3 TROLLS FROM TH1S D1M3NS1ON.”

“NOT *THIS* PLACE, SPECIFICALLY.” Karkat followed. “ALL THIS CYBERJUNK IS THE RECORDED DATA OF OUR REAL DIMENSION. NONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED THERE ARE ACTUALLY IN THERE. NOT EVEN ROSE QUARTZ.”

“Except for Puridot.” Nepeta smiled. “But that’s ‘claws Yellow Diamond sent her to s33 what we were doing. So we put her in Cyberspace.” :33

“It might be the weird language, but you guys are losing me.” Vanel said. “What dimension are you talking about, what’s a Rose Quartz and Yellow Diamond? And for the love of God, dude, whisper or something!”

“(Fine. I’m whispering. You happy?)” Karkat whispered. “(You still didn’t put it together? We’re the people who created the universe you came from. The universe Arceus asked us to make, before he shut us in here.)”

“K4RK4T, I DON’T THINK V4N3LL0P3 3V3N KNOWS 4BOUT TH3 4POC4LYPS3.”

“I didn’t. You guys told me about it.”
“(Our Zoni must have done that. Listen, Shiitake Candy, the Zoni are poly-dimensional robots that *we* designed. Um, okay, it was sort of us, but we did have help from-)

“Karkittyyyyy! I don’t think she knows, y33333t!” >:3 Nepeta whined.

“THEY’RE GOING TO FIND OUT EVENTUALLY, NEPETA. HECK, ONE OF THEM’S SNIFFING THROUGH MY DRAWER RIGHT-”

“TH3 P4ST MUST NOT B3 T4MP3R3D W1TH, K4RK4T.” >:3 “TH4T 1S WH4T SH3 S41D.”

“Yes, Karkat, you can’t tampur with the past.” :33

“TELL THAT TO THE *** WHO HAS A MILLION DEAD PARADOX CLONES IN HIS ROOM!”

“You know, if this is a bad time,” Vanellope was about to climb off the fountain, “I’m gonna-

“DON’T MOVE A MUSCLE, CANDY! YOUR JOB ISN’T EVEN OVER, YOU STILL HAVE TO OPEN THE EGG CHAMBERS.”

Vanellope sighed, thinking this was another task she had to do. “What’re those.”

“HA! WE KNEW YOU COULDN’T HAVE OPENED THEM YET, IF YOU WERE JUST NOW HEALING ORVUS. WHO, BY THE WAY, DOESN’T LOOK A ***KING THING LIKE THE REAL ORVUS. IS THAT THE FORM HE DECIDED TO TAKE? HE LOOKS LIKE A HUMAN PUPA’S TOY.”

“TH3 3GG CH4MB3RS W1LL B3 US3L3SS UNL3SS TH3 F1RSTB0RN W3R3 F0UND BY TH31R GU4RD14NS. DO YOU KNOW IF TH3 Y46 V3?” Terezi asked Vanellope.

“Well, it’s not like I was allowed to go back to them and ASK.” Vanellope emphasized.

“A FEW OF THEM SHOULD HAVE BY NOW. LET’S JUST GET STARTED.”

“Orvus better come back befur we’re fi’shed. Or the chambers won’t work.” 3:>

“DID YOU REALLY JUST MAKE A CRAPPY FISH PUN? YOU AREN’T FEFERI!”

“Kitties like fish, Karkitty.” :33

“Are you guys gonna say something that actually makes SENSE?!!” Vanel exclaimed.

“TOUGH BREAK, CHOCOLATE CREAM. THIS STORY’S ABOUT TO GET A LOT MORE CONFUSING ON YOUR END.”

Mermaid Swamp

“All I’m saying is that if we’re taking Manaphy back there, DANNY’S gonna be the subject of his water balloon experiments!” Eric complained as Melody used waterbending to heal his aching parts.

“You deal with bullies on a daily basis, at least your body was ready for it!” Melody argued.

“So how are you planning to change Manaphy back to normal?” Danny asked.

“I’ll try healing him.” She finished with Eric and stood up straight. “If that doesn’t work, I guess I’ll try talking to him. He loved my mom a lot, I’m sure he could feel the same with me. Why
don’t you guys go with Juju and get those warthog eyes or whatever that lady wanted.”

“Is that so we don’t get to watch you get beat up by your baby Uncle Brother?”

“Duh.” She eye-rolled. “I’m way too cool for that.”

“Suit yourself. C’mon, Juju.” The snake hopped on Danny’s shoulders as the boys left.

A few feet down the river, Melody saw a Klump standing on the shore’s edge, belly bumping Manaphy whenever the Sea Prince jumped out to him. The action repeatedly happened like a rewinding tape. Melody approached him casually. “Hey. Your shift’s up.” She gestured behind her with her thumb.

“Okay.” Klump took out a crocodile cigarette, blew smoke, and walked away.

“MANAAA!” When Manaphy leaped out to bump him again, Melody grabbed him in her arms.

“Manaphyyyy!” She lovingly hugged her Uncle Brother, nuzzling him with her cheek. “How’s my baby bwoyyyyyy-ni-ni-ni-niiiiii…”

Manaphy’s mouth opened wide, his fangs sharpened, and he CHOMPED Melody’s arm. “Yeowch! Hey-Hey-Hey-Hey!” Melody frantically shook the arm, then pressed her foot against the baby prince until he finally came off. When blood dripped from her wounds, Manaphy was underneath, trying to catch in his mouth. “Stop that!” Melody bent the blood up in the air, away from him- She just realized what she was doing. “…Wow, I’m a bloodbender. ‘Guess I’m a bad person, now.” She tried to force the blood back into her cuts, then grabbed more water from the swamp, shook the mud out, and began healing herself. When Manaphy started hopping around to catch flying, overgrown bugs, Melody had to stop partway finished and run in front of him.

Melody squatted before her uncle, who looked up at her with his scowl. “Manaphy, you and I both know this isn’t who you are. I think you’re only stressed because years and years of trying to find help for Lapis have led to zero results! The last thing you wanted was to end up in a swamp of snotty, heartless, cannibalistic mermaids, believe me, I would feel the same. But what you were trying to do was a good thing, and now that I’m here, we can find a cure for Lapis together! Come on, Bro-Bro.” She smiled confidently and held a hand to him. “Whaddya say?”

“…” The little monster looked between Melody’s hand and her face. Contemplating on her words. …Manaphy took her hand in both of his… and swung her back, forth, back, forth, hitting her against the ground, before throwing her to a tree. Melody weakly looked up to see the prince climb up a tree to a beehive, tear it down, and started munching on it like a cracker. He chomped any bees flying around him. “Yeah, I pretty much walked into that one.” Melody figured.

The news anchor sat cross-legged, leaning her head on her fist as she watched Manaphy bounce and chase three Klaptraps. The green one stopped, turned, and growled at him. Normally, after a Klaptrap gets K.O.’ed, its tongue and jaws come out to chase their opponent. Manaphy did the reverse: he jumped into the Klaptrap’s mouth, ate its tongue and teeth, then jumped out before knocking the body out. “Hmm… I didn’t actually try healing, yet.” She noticed. “If nothing else works…”

As Manaphy finished chewing, he turned to see Melody come back to him, water ready on her hands. He tried to jump away, but Melody grabbed and struggled to pin him on his front. He snarled like an angry dog, and just as well, he didn’t put up much resistance as Melody’s hands glowed, softly rubbing his back. Blue waves were moving along Manaphy’s green skin, and she saw hints of his normal color. “This is all he needs.” She made a slight pant, still needing to keep
him pinned. “Just a magic touch from his favorite family. There, there, Manaphy. Most kids your age get shots, so you’re lucky enough to have me. The pain’ll be gone in a second.” He kept struggling. “Just… a little…”

“MAAAAA!” Manaphy growled, shook, flipped upright, and bit Melody’s right ring finger clean off her hand.

“YOOOOOOOOOOOWWWWWW!” Her pupils shrunk and her hair stood on end. Manaphy spit the finger on the ground. “OH MY GOD! SON OF A BITCH, WHAT THE FUCK?! YOU SHITTY LITTLE.” Melody swung her foot and kicked him in the face, knocking him several feet. Manaphy got up, wiping mud off his nose and growling with more anger. “You wanna go mermano o mermano?! Wanna throw down?! ‘Cause I will! I’ll beat some sense into you ONE way or another, you fuckin’ turd-booger!”

“Oooooohhhhh!” Surrounding mermaids were gathering to watch the spectacle. “Human chick’s gettin’ it on with little Gremlin!”

Manaphy leapt to gnash Melody, who punched him away, ran up, and kicked him against a tree. Manaphy kicked off and grabbed Melody’s shoulder in his teeth, the girl crying in pain as she grabbed and tried to pull him off with both hands. She succeeded, leaving a deep gash in her shoulder, and she began smacking Manaphy across the face left-and-right. Manaphy chomped a fang into the back of her hand, so Melody ran and smashed him against a tree. The dizzy prince fell off, then Melody forcefully tugged his antennas away from each other, clutching them as she swung and hit him against the ground some more.

More mermaids were being attracted by the commotion, and Danny, Eric, and Juju followed the noise as well. “MELODY?!” they screamed at the sight of their mangled friend and what she was doing.

“Feel like behaving now?!” Melody stated as she pressed Manaphy face-first against the mud, the prince growling like a protesting dog again. “Huh? ‘Cause I got all day. I got all day to knock those teeth out. Just say the word, Swamp Scum, and we’ll do it.”

“Melody, stop!” Eric and Danny ran over to pull her away. “What the heck is going-”

Melody held up her missing ring finger. “AAAAAAAAAHRRRRHHH!” the boys screamed.

“MANAAAA!” Manaphy lunged at Melody, who grabbed him by the cheeks with her thumbs in his mouth, backed him against a tree, and stomped his face to knock some teeth out. She threw Manaphy down and backed away, both of them panting. “You know what, Manaphy, maybe it’s GOOD that you ended up in Mermaid Swamp, because if you can change THAT easily, Oceana doesn’t need you! You’re nothing like the Manaphy from Mom’s stories. You’re just a sour, heartless little mutant!”

“Maaaaaan!” He hissed at her once more and hopped away.

“Ugh.” Melody went to pick up her severed finger. “Come on, let’s see if the hideout has any bandages.” She marched back to Hideout Helm in anger. “And if Klubba’ll let me borrow his club.” Danny and Eric stayed 20 feet behind her.

**Guertena Gallery** (Play “Dining Room” from **Ib.**)

“Apis, Aisa!” Mary called to the two girls exploring the Brown Area. “I found the key!”

She led them into a room that was black and white. Even they had no color about them. “What
“What kind of room is this?” Aisa questioned.

“There’s no color at all.” Apis said.

“There’s the key! Over there!” Mary pointed across a dark chasm. The key was sitting on a small table.

“That’s too far to reach.” Aisa said. “Isn’t there a way across?”

“I don’t know…” Mary spoke sadly.

“I can’t even sense anything down there. Let’s keep looking around.”

The three girls later discovered a very narrow hallway with small lamps hanging on the wall near the ceiling. “I wonder if there’s a way down through here?” Apis thought aloud before stepping forward-

Aisa grabbed her, “Don’t! There’s spike traps all over.”

“There are? Then… how do we get past them?”

In the Violet Area below, Ib was leading April, who was carrying Aein and Mocha, through a long, vacant passage. This corridor was vaguely familiar to Ib, who had a hard time remembering much of the gallery already. There were strange, line diagrams near the ceiling on each long wall, and light switches under some of them. “What do these do?” Aeincha asked.

April flipped a few of them in the down position. “Not sure.”

In the Brown Area, the lamps above the passage were switching off, making it darker. But Aisa noticed something else with her Mantra: “The spikes switched off. Well, most of them.”

“But I can’t see.” Mary frowned.

“I can. Stay close to me.” Aisa guided them both down the hall, sensing where some of the spikes were still active and instructing Apis and Mary to step over them. They made it into a room at the end of the passage, in which a hole separated two sides of the floor. “Nothing we can’t step over.” Aisa said, about to do so-

“HAH!” Claws reached up, preventing this feat. They looked around the room, but all that was here were five cords lined up on the ceiling, with a green painting with blinking eyes under the fourth one.

Downstairs, April’s group made it to the main room of the Violet Area, where various paintings hung, such as Worry (its eye blinked), Juggling (an animated juggler), and Fleeting Thoughts on a Moonlit Night, which depicted a cherry blossom tree with animated falling petals. Five cords, like those seen on lamps, hung around the room. When Ib pulled one close to a wall, she was scratched by a claw. When April pulled one near a toad painting, the toad caught Aeincha on its tongue, chewed on her, and spat her out. Ib then pulled the cord beside Worry, flinching as she expected to be hurt again.

In the Brown Area, the portrait of blinking eyes slid down the wall and became a bridge across the hole. Shrugging at each other, the three girls crossed it, and the eyes made a boink sound. “Hehehe!” Mary giggled. They found a room of flickering lights, standing atop a wide staircase as they watched a red ball bounce down. At the bottom, the ball fell into a dark chasm. Another ball came out of the missing nose of a Clown painting and began another descent.
April’s group entered a room with seven pedestals, and a palette hanging on the wall. The sign below it said, *The seven balls of paint will show you the way.* “Balls of paint?” Mocha said after April read it. “Where are those at?”

With Mary’s group, they noticed that a narrow path led over the chasm down below, to a platform with a smaller hole. There were pegs around the stairs that altered the red ball’s path. A peg was set before this path as well. The girls could move the Clown’s position on the wall, setting it on a good route where the ball could bounce off that peg and onto the path. They watched the ball fall down the hole, wondering what that accomplished.

April’s group split up to explore this area, and Ib saw a red ball fall out of a painting of stairs. When she picked it up, the ball mysteriously vanished. April looked at the Fleeting Thoughts painting again. There was a small message below that said, *Offer your condolences.* The cherry blossoms were pink like her rose. …April pulled three petals off her rose and dropped them before the painting, wincing from the pain. A pink ball of paint fell out, and it vanished upon April’s touch.

Aeincha and Mocha entered the library, where they discovered an open English-German Dictionary on the floor. “You know, that’s kind of what Chimney would read.” Aeincha noted.

“You think she was in here?”

“She coulda been. Oh well. You think there are any paintballs hidden here?”

Mocha saw an *Essentials of Color* book a few shelves up. She climbed and used her super strength to pull the book out, letting it plop open on the floor. The two tinies flipped the pages, seeing color wheels, saturation wheels, and pages of color dots with numerous hues – one of the dots stuck out like a lump. Aeincha pulled the green ball of paint out, and it vanished.

Ib entered a room that was kind of like a waterway. There was a painting aptly labeled *Barren Pipeline.* A blue ball of paint sat on a platform that was too high to climb to. But in one corner, Ib found what seemed like a valve wheel. There wasn’t any good place to latch it in here. Ib returned outside—there was a fishing hook dangling out of a blue painting labeled *Fishing Hook.* Just for fun, Ib decided to hook the valve onto it. She gasped when the valve was reeled up into the painting.

Apis, Aisa, and Mary returned to the main room of the Brown Area to look around. Mary noticed a Fisherman painting, holding a valve. When she approached, the man held it out for Mary to take. The golden-haired girl searched around, and found a small room that had a painting of a small hole, titled *Water Valve.* Mary was able to hook the wheel onto the painting and turn it, smiling happily as she pretended she was driving.

Below, April’s group heard a sudden rushing of water. They entered the waterway room to find it filled. Since neither of them could swim, Aeincha rode a small lilypad over to the platform with the blue ball. It vanished when she touched it.

Upstairs, Apis found a painting called *Heavenly Thread,* which was a string hanging within a blank white space. Taking the rest of this gallery’s shenanigans into account, she decided to reach in and touch it. Indeed, she was able to, and the Christian decided to climb into the portrait and climb the thin string. It stretched into utter whiteness for miles, making Apis wonder if it was okay to keep going. She eventually reached a small, gray platform, hidden at first within the blankness, and found a white paintball seated. When she reached to touch it, it vanished.

Aisa found a painting called *Skin and Scales,* which depicted orange and purple tiles in diamond-
like patterns. There was a yellow ball through the scales, and she felt the need to grab it. Her hand got pricked by the scales, and it seemed the various squares were in different positions. Using her Mantra, she determined the depth of the painting and maneuvered her arm within it. After carefully touching the yellow ball, it vanished.

April’s group searched nearly the whole of the Violet Area, but couldn’t seem to find the other Balls of Paint. They decided to roam the long corridor they previously came through, wondering if they missed it. In one of the corners, Ib spotted the purple ball camouflaged with the room’s color. She picked it up and let it vanish.

Mary and Apis found a library inside a small room. Skimming titles, Apis picked out one labeled *Ruin of the Heart*. *If your spirit suffers too much, you will soon start to hallucinate. And in the end, you will be destroyed.* More worrying yet, is that you will not even be conscious of that fact.

Mary found a book titled *A Girl’s Last Days*. *Once upon a time, there was a little girl. The girl went with her parents to an art gallery. But all of a sudden, the girl realized that she was lost. She searched through the dim gallery, but found neither her parents nor the exit. Scared, helpless, lonely, hungry, and thirsty, she fell and hurt herself, putting her body past the limit…* The last page had an illustration of a collapsed girl.

“Guys, there you are!” Aisa barged in. “I just checked that colorless room again, and a rainbow bridge appeared! I crossed it and got the key!” She held said key up.

“Great!” Apis beamed, putting her book back. “Mary, let’s hurry downstairs!”

“Um… I’ll catch up with you.” Mary was staring solemnly at the picture of the collapsed girl. “I need to… rest…”

Aisa and Apis exchanged questioning looks. “Okay, Mary, just don’t go too far.”

They used the key to open the door to the stairwell. The area went from brown to violet as they rushed down. The door at the bottom was locked, however they could turn the dial to unlock it. When they entered, they were surprised at who they ran in to. “April!” Aisa beamed. “Aeincha, Mocha, …Who’s this?”

“I’m Ib.” She greeted. “Is that a Halloween costume?”

“No… April, did you see Chimney down here? Mary said that they were down here.”

“No, not really.”

“Wait, you guys ran into Mary?” Ib asked.

“Yeah. Do you know her?”

April looked down; Mary hasn’t told them, yet. Aein and Mocha looked at her expectantly. “…There’s something we have to tell you guys. Let’s find Chimney and Mary first.”

“Oh, is that so? Nnn hee hee hee…”

The girls gasped softly. “Did you hear that?” Apis whispered.

“Really? Boy, that’s somethin’…” They heard the voice come from around a corner, down a passage. The teammates decided to follow it. “Well, you know, things happen.” There was a door that was cracked open. “Hee hee, you’re so funny!”
“That sounds a lot like… Chimney.” Mocha said.

“Is she talking to someone?” Apis asked.

“This door was locked before.” Ib mentioned. “I wonder who opened it?”

Aisa sensed the presences on the other side of the door. There were many of them… they freaked her out. She gulped. “Let’s see.” She put her hand on the door and pushed it open. (End song.)

Bunnies of white and pink fur frolicked freely in this small, peaceful room. They had adorable, beady red eyes, their noses twitching as they sniffed about. A large painting of a pink rabbit, sitting on a grassy meadow, hung on the wall. Chimney was sitting in front of a green rabbit, smiling and exchanging pleasant conversation. “Are you kidding?! Who would do that to a girl?” she questioned. “Well, if I saw someone doing that, I’d tell ’em off for sure.”

The teammates didn’t know what to say. The sight was… adorable and confusing all at the same time. “She’s… talking to it?” Aisa asked.

“What’s wrong with her?” Aeincha followed.

Apis looked at a nearby bunny that was sniffing the floor. She smiled. “Well, at least they’re cute.” She was about to pet it.

“Whoa whoa!” Aisa held her back. “What about them is cute?!”

“Huh? Well, they kind of are… It’s not like we don’t have an oddly-colored bunny.”

“Bunny? Whaddyou mean?”

“The… These bunnies.”

“These aren’t… bunnies.” Aisa said confusedly.

“She’s right… they aren’t.” April said.

“Then… what are they?” Aein asked.

What some of them saw as bunnies, in actuality, they were dolls. Blue, zombified dolls with wide staring eyes. The pink rabbit painting actually depicted the Red Eyes, a bigger, more terrifying version of these dolls. Chimney, while she seemed to be smiling sprightly, was actually very gray and wrinkled. The blue dolls were climbing on her, licking her skin. Her orange rose was slowly decaying. “Yeah… I know the feeling.” Chimney said. “You feel so helpless sometimes… you want to do something, but you know you can’t. It’s nice to not have to think. Just forget all your problems… you know?”

“Chimney!” Aeincha jumped out of Ib’s hand and ran onto the lap of Chimney’s skirt, looking up at her face. “Chimney, it’s me, Aeincha! Is something wrong with you?”

Chimney glanced down at her. “Oh, hello. Are you lost? Well, we have plenty of room here. Make yourself comfortable.”

“…Mmmmmmph!” Aeincha fumed with anger. “Chimney, get ahold of yourself!” She jumped and smacked her giant head. “Snap out of it!”

Chimney didn’t feel a thing. “That’s what I mostly do is sleep. I just feel more happy in bed, you know? Not havin’ to do anything…”
Apis sat beside Chimney and read from the *Bible*, “‘And God said to Abraham, ‘You will kill your son, Isaac.’ And Abraham said, ‘I’m sorry, I can’t hear you. Can you speak a little-?’’ Wait, wrong one…”

“Did you know I can sleep a whole day?” Chimney asked. “I know, weekends are the greatest…”

Aisa walked over and pinched Chimney’s nose between her toes. “Yes, Chimney, I ditched my sandals.” She grinned teasingly.

“School’s boring, though… I just don’t pay attention. I doubt it really helps…”

“Well-p, I’m out of ideas.” Aisa pulled her foot away.

Aeincha was close to crying. Her best friend was completely senseless. She wasn’t hearing them at all. “…Mmmmmmmmmmmmm CHIMNEY, I LOVE YOU!”

The others looked at Aeincha in surprise. The Lilliputian gasped and clamped her hands over her mouth. “…Nah?” Chimney looked down at her. She shook her head, frowning and raising a brow. “Aeinchan?”

“Chimney?” she spoke, blushing.

“You’re back to normal!” Apis beamed. “Nice job, Aeincha!”

“Hehe, remember that for next time!” Aisa laughed.

“Uhhh… What on Earth happened to me?” Chimney stood up, scratching her head.

“Let’s get out of this room.” Aeincha suggested. “These bunnies are giving me the creeps.”

The group left the room of dolls and shut the door. They heard footsteps coming from around the corner, and saw Mary appear. The blonde Goldenweek gasped when she saw her cousin. “APRIL!” She ran up and embraced her in a hug. “I didn’t know where you were, I was so lost, and I lost you, and I thought you were lost, but now we-!” She looked up at her taller cousin’s face. April was frowning, while Mary’s smile was shining. “What’s wrong?”

“Mary, I…I have some bad news. I don’t know if you remember, but…”

“Mary?” Ib walked around from her left. “Is that really you?”

Mary was a little shocked by her appearance… but wasn’t sure why. “Who are you?”

“Mary, this is Ib. Ib Goldenweek.” April replied. “She’s Alvin and Rosa’s real daughter. Mary… you used to be a painting. A Guertena painting. And I was a doll you created, just like the ones in that room. We trapped her and Garry in this gallery and stole their realities. We became real humans, and they became paintings… or something like that.”

Apis and Aisa exchanged baffled glances. Chimney’s head was foggy from her experience just now, but she had the strangest notion she knew about this from somewhere. Mary stared at her blankly. No doubt, she would have the hardest time understanding if she didn’t remember. …She smiled. “April, don’t be silly. We’re people, and we’re from Germany! My mom and dad are Rosa and Alvin, you’re dad is Galdino, and you used to live in Germany, but you moved to-”

“Mary, it’s true. We’re Imaginary Beings, and we erased two real people from existence. I know it’s hard to understand, but we have to stay here.”
“But… But why?”

“Because Ib and Garry are suffering here. They don’t belong here. But we do, and as long as we have each other, it won’t be so bad.”

“Mary, please try to remember.” Ib pleaded. “I still remember how upset you were back then. I really wanted to help you… but you tried to hurt Garry, and I…I-”

“I know.” Mary pulled away from April and turned away. Her expression was solemn. “I…I think I’ve always known. Ever since I started having those nightmares. I don’t think April knew it as well because she was a doll… but I tried to ignore it. I didn’t want to give up my freedom…”

“If you remember, then you know what we have to do, Mary.” April said, reaching to put a hand on her shoulder. “We have to stay here so they can be free. It isn’t right to keep them here, you know that.”

“But what about your friends, April? Won’t you miss them?”

“Of course I will, I really don’t wanna do this either. But we have to do the right thing, Mary. They belong in the real world. Not us.”

“…” Tears were welling up in Mary’s eyes. She ran around the halls, tears flying behind her, and they heard her sobs echo.

“Mary…” Ib reached in her direction.

“I don’t understand any of this.” Apis said, baring the same look as Aisa. “Both of you came from this place? And you need to stay?”

“That’s what Ib told us.” Aeincha replied. “But Mary, though… I know what she did was wrong, but I can’t help but feel sorry for her. I wouldn’t wanna come back, either.”

“Come on, let’s go find her.” April said. “The least we can do is promise we’ll always remember her, and promise we’ll always be her friend. Even if she- er, we have to stay here, at least this way she won’t feel completely alone.”

“But what if we forget like you did after we leave?” Aeincha asked.

“We’ll have to make some kind of note. One we’ll always hold on to.” The seven kids marched forward to find their friend.

Mary was sitting on her knees, facing a corner at the top of the stairs to the Brown Area. She had a minute to think to herself. She was able to reach a decision. “Alright, then… I know what I need to do now.” Her expression dark, she reached into her pocket to grab the palette knife. “I need to finish the job.” She got to her feet and shot a deadly glare down the hall. “I’ll kill Garry once and for all… so I never have to come back.”

**Mermaid Swamp; Hideout Helm**

Lapis heard the entrance to her cell open, and Melody walked in again, her hair and clothes a mess. “You’re back?”

“Yep.” She still looked exhausted. “And don’t worry, I asked them to close the window. They’re watching football, now.”
“GO! GO! GO! GO! GO! GO!” The Kremlings were hooting and hollering at the screen: Charlie Brown went several yards back, he dashed forward with high hopes, and just when the cartoon boy was about to kick the football… Lucy pulled it away, causing Charlie to fling himself into the air. “NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!” The Kremlings went in a temper tantrum at this.

“Did you bring Manaphy?” Lapis asked.

“No, I did not. But I did get these.” Melody pointed at her cuts, and the bandage wrapped around her severed finger.

“Oh, my!” Lapis gasped.

“Yes. And you know, Lapis, I don’t really care if we’re friends or not, but if the day should come that I finally save Manaphy from himself, using him to trade bodies with you will be the least of my interests.”

“No no, I get it, I get it.” Lapis gestured with her hands to ‘calm down,’ standing up and approaching Mel to look at her finger. “Will it stay on?”

“Yes, thankfully I managed to heal it in time. No offense.”

“Right…” Lapis looked down regretfully, scratching her head. “I’m… I’m sorry for my attitude before. I’ve just been trapped in here for so long, I can’t really distinguish between friend and enemy…”

“At least now you have someone to sympathize with.”

“Yeah…” Lapis looked away, contemplating. Her mirror eyes faced Melody again, “I still wanna trade bodies with you.”

“Well, it’s NOT gonna happen anytime soon!”

“No, I mean, we don’t actually need Manaphy to do it!”

“What’re you talking about?”

“Because I…” Lapis looked both ways. She whispered in Melody’s ear, “I can still use magic in here.”

“Huh?”

“I think there are a few cuts in the net strings. I’ve been able to use faint forms of magic, even though none of them are strong enough to get me out of here. And I… There’s a spell we can use to switch bodies.”

“What’s it called?” Melody raised a brow.

“We have to hold each other, look in each other’s eyes, and say, ‘I trust you with my life.’ ‘Course, we have to actually mean it, otherwise it won’t work. I used to do it with my friend, Mavis a lot.”

“What makes you think we could do it?”

“Well, despite what’s happened… I think you really are honest about wanting to help me. And this way, I think we can sympathize with each other. So…” Lapis softly took Melody’s hands in hers, “I trust you with my life. Do you trust me?”
Melody wasn’t sure. She had only just met Lapis… but she would still like to be friends with her. Melody was horribly stressed out over trying to pacify Manaphy, and even Lapis wasn’t covered in wounds, however the fairy was suffering in a different way. It would be a fun experience to try, feeling each other’s pain this way. Melody looked into her mirror eyes. “I trust you with my life.”

Lapis closed her eyes and channeled her faint magic energy. A light appeared in both their hearts, traveling along the arms to the other’s body. “Whoooa…” Melody wobbled backward. She felt so… weird. Her vision was smeary and… she felt extremely lightweight. She looked at her hands and her bare feet past her dress, all of a blue tone. She was in Lapis’s body.

Lapis felt very heavy; her skin was peach-colored, was made of flesh, and she felt pain in several areas. “It…It worked.” Lapis said with Melody’s voice. “I’m in your body.”

“Whoooa!…” Melody wobbled, unbalanced in her light-made body. “And I’m clearly in yours. … Lapis, this feels weeeiiiiird…”

“Hm hm, don’t worry.” Lapis chuckled. “You get used to it over time. I’ll even help you with it.” Swiftly, she grabbed water from Melody’s bottles, sliced it across the waist of her former body, and watched it poof into smoke. She picked up the cracked Lazuli Gem that remained, staring at it. “Sorry, Melody. I really did think we could be friends. If only you weren’t Kyogre’s granddaughter.”

Using her bending, Lapis broke out of the cell, surprising the Kremlings in K. Rool’s throne as she slashed water and knocked out all of them. She bolted down the hall, throwing Water Fists at each Kremling. Currently, Klubba was bouncing Danny up-and-down with his club, having inflated the male Jackson with 10 gallons of water. “Melody!” Danny spat the water in the opposite direction to fly after his sister, afterwards running on the ground beside Eric. “Where’re you going?!?”

“I’m done being everyone’s PRISONER!” Lapis slashed water and froze the boys in ice. Eventually, the possessed human made it outside, viewing Mermaid Swamp from the base’s balcony. “If I can’t leave this planet… I’ll make ALL of you my PRISONERS!” She kicked on Melody’s Water Fury and dove into the swamp.

Sounds like a familiar story, doesn’t it? Next time, we will conclude the Mermaid Swamp Arc, and see the next part of Guertena Gallery. Kids, don’t wrestle swamp piranhas.

…

TZIIB DZH YLIM RM Z SLHKRGZO

SRH ZFMG IRPVW GL SLOW SRN
Chapter Summary

Melody tries to get her body back from Lapis. Sector W7 catch up to Mary in the gallery.

It probably wasn’t right to squeeze in both these story arc parts, but I wanted to make up for holding this off for so long, and also save time. :P Caesar Cipher.

Chapter 50: Plot Hole

Mermaid Swamp

Bowser used his fire breath to melt the ice off of Danny and Eric, with the rest of Team Gnaa behind them. “What the heck is wrong with your friend?!” the Koopa King questioned.

“We don’t know!” Danny yelled. “It caught us by surprise!”

“Empty, the Princess Lapis cell is!” Grunty informed. “The child must have done the biz.”

“I conjecture that Lapis’s body retreated into her gem.” Eggman spoke. “I’ve been studying her, and she has a most peculiar anatomy. The only true physical part of her body is her gem.”

“So you think Melody’s keeping her in her pocket?” Eric asked.

“That doesn’t explain why she up and attacked us!” Danny said, exasperated.

“If Lapis has done something, we must apprehend her.” Kroctus said. “If Lapis still holds on to her hatred, Oceana may-” They nearly lost balance when the base wobbled.

“Your Excellency!” A Kritter and a Kop hurried up to them from down the passage. “A pillar of water just rised up from around the fortress! It’s being frozen in ice!”

“Summon Dogadon to melt the ice!” Kroctus commanded. “You all, follow me to the hangar. We are taking the Flying Krock!” The king charged back the way they came.

They followed the Kremling King all the way to the top of the base where the Flying Krock was parked. Kroctus hurriedly activated the ship after they all boarded, flying through the encasing water before the top froze. The wind from the plane’s propellers blew some of the swamp’s fog away, and through it, they could see a light-blue glowing force. When the plane hovered closer, they could make out the figure in the center of the glow. “It’s Melody!” Danny pointed.

Said girl was whirling her arms and spinning the swamp’s murky water around her. The ship hovered higher as the body of water continued growing, forming a sickly green colossus, with a hint of blue from its controller, that shaped Melody’s body. “What?! THIS again?” Eggman asked, remembering back when Eva became a water giantess.

However, the form of Melody morphed into a watery body of Lapis Lazuli, whose green form, pupil-less eyes, and angry scowl made her a terrifying sight. “NO ONE has power over ME,
“anymore!” the giantess declared with Melody’s voice. “I’ll destroy everyone that TORMENTED me on this planet!” The giant slashed sudden beams of water at the ship, and K. Rool evasively dodged them as he fired missiles, but the engines cooled after entering the water body before ‘Melody’ tossed them back. The Krock was bounced around by the explosions, then the giantess sent a massive Water Fist to send the ship spiraling toward the sky.

Mermaids were getting pulled up into the water body via the current, so Lapis relentlessly spat them out onto the land. “Mana Mana!” When she realized Manaphy was being pulled up against his will, the possessed child decided to encase him inside ice. In her water colossus, Lapis surfed through the murky fog and away from the swamp, soon to find shore under an open atmosphere, but cloudy sky.

Lapis turned off Melody’s Fury and settled on shore, laying the frozen Manaphy beside her. Lapis tried to catch Melody’s breath. “If this girl has Kyogre’s God Chi, it should be greater than mine. The problem is, she’s mortal, not to mention these wounds still hurt. Using too much power too quickly will exhaust her body. Not like my own…” Lapis reached into Melody’s pocket and pulled out her cracked gem. “I’m guessing she doesn’t know how to rematerialize my body. I won’t be able to switch back if she can’t figure it out. So it’s a good thing I brought him along.”

Lapis unfroze Manaphy, who shook his head and snarled viciously at her, still missing teeth. When he lunged, Lapis dodged aside and swiftly trapped Manaphy inside a spinning water bubble, raising him in midair. “If this girl is your Guardian, then she should be able to control you. That is, if she has your Spirit Ball. I wonder where…” Lapis felt around Melody’s clothes – her hand felt a tiny dangling ball from the earring on her right ear. Curious, Lapis picked it off—she pushed it, and the blue Pokéball grew to hand size. “Of course. I wonder if she even knew what this was. Ahem:

Lapis chucked the ball into the air and called, “Manaphy, RETURN!” She threw it at the Firstborn, watched Manaphy turn into light, and go inside. The ball shook and beeped on the ground for a few seconds. It popped open—“AAAAH!” Manaphy lunged at Lapis and bit her waist, the fairy retaliating by yanking Manaphy off and stomping him on the ground. “Fine! Then my only other plan is to spiritbend you. I doubt Melody learned how to do that, but since she has my healing, I should be able to pull it off. However…” Lapis stared out into the open sea. “Not before I use the Ocean King’s own power to destroy his precious kingdom!” The human froze Manaphy in ice and dove into the sea, using Melody’s superb bending to swim across the miles in no time.

The Subconscious...

Everywhere around Melody’s vision was millions of glittery dots, flying across miles of wavy blue light. All of this light should be hurting her eyes, but she felt no need to blink. Melody couldn’t feel her wounds… or any other part of her body. She held what she was certain were her hands in front of her… but they didn’t look normal. She had no weight or form about her. “Where in the world… am I…” Melody looked around. There were giant bubbles across this scape, each depicting images. Melody was apparently standing on a glowing watery path suspended in the air.

“Am I… inside Lapis’s mind?…” She moved her hands to feel her body, but only mystical mist was present. “She did say that was why she wanted to switch bodies, but… this is really weird.” Melody viewed around the odd realm. The images seen inside the millions of bubbles. “I guess I better get to work, then. She left a lot of memories for me to look at.” (Play “Mural World” from Yume Nikki.)
Mission: Collect Lapis’s memories.

Melody jogged across the liquid path, looking left and right at the memory bubbles floating over the abyss. One depicted Lapis with a blonde girl and a ghostly-white girl, one showed her sitting on a hill and staring at two moons, and one showed a blue-skinned man with a blue mustache. Melody reached the end of the midair road, where three short water columns of different height were sat. The next road was a few feet above and over the abyss. Using her bending, Melody could push the columns to float over, but their water began to pour into the chasm bottoms-first. Melody barely had enough time to jump across their tops and successfully make it onto the foothold.

Melody viewed an endless water road where two blue legs stood at the beginning. They moved in very graceful and elegant poses, dancing for a few feet, but then returning to start. Melody watched their movements closely, then started to dance down the road in the same fashion. The legs kept going, apparently trying to evade her grasp. On the sides, there were bubbles depicting Lapis doing these dances and mermen staring at her. Melody continued dancing until she finally caught up with Lapis’s legs, whose holographic appearance latched onto her own particle legs.

The road showed an end, with a Memory Bubble floating over it. Melody decided to jump inside.

*Lapis was performing a dance on an outside stage in Oceana. Her gem glowed as beautiful and intricate water patterns formed above, thanks to her bending. Melody felt a little jealous at her skill. There was no sound, and the memory showed in clips, until Lapis was standing before Kyogre. “Princess Lapis… may I be the first to say it was an honor to have you in our home. Our spirits were uplifted by your charm…”*  

“Oh, it was nothing…” Lapis grinned blushingly, scratching her head.

“It was much more than that. Which is why, Lapis, I would like to make a request: I would love for you to remain in Oceana. To highlight the glooming spirits of our people, and to defend our world with your power.”

“I… I can’t, really.” Lapis spoke regretfully. “It’s just, I’m more used to Avalar’s ocean, ya know? And I don’t wanna get…”

“Oh, but you must!” Kyogre’s deep, calm, echoing voice sounded insistent. “I fear the demons will not stay below for very long. We need your majestic aura to keep our oceans at peace, and to heal our wounded. Please… Lapis…”

Lapis frowned, looking at the floor before gazing at the sky. It was nighttime, and the stars were blurry beyond the surface. “I guess I could stay… a little while.”

Bubbles floated up from the abyss between Melody and the next path, but the water of those bubbles poured down in droplets as they shrunk and disappeared, then reappeared. The cycle repeated, so Melody had to quickly dive and swim through them, dolphin-jumping to each bubble before landing on the foothold. Melody viewed a small ocean of floating water blocks, none of which were positioned straight, some at random diagonal positions. Melody jumped around the maze of blocks, growing quickly lost and unable to remember the paths she came. She saw a platform high overhead, so she kept maneuvering around the blocks, finding ones that led her higher, until she successfully landed on the platform.

Lapis’s arms were floating around midair and making a pattern of waterbending movements. In the space around the foothold, small water droplets floated. When Melody mimicked the arms’ movements, she was bending the droplets and molding them together. She had to move her hands in a spherical fashion, the gesture of molding something into a ball, and those droplets became a
“Look, Your Majesty,” Lapis said to Kyogre, “I think I’ve overstayed my welcome. By, like… a lot. I wanna go back to Avalar and see my friends, again; I missed, like, 520 of Mavis’s annual Fairy Tea Parties.”

“But you cannot leave, now! The Festival of the Moon is approaching. Our citizens will be eager to see you dance at your greatest.”

Lapis sighed with aggravation. “Fine… If I must.”

But that’s when Malladus made his return, Melody remembered, so Lapis had to stay longer. … Wait, how did Melody remember that? Either way, it pissed her off. A straightforward path appeared before her, but random areas lost balance and sank into holes; likely a result of Lapis’s cracked gem. Melody watched out for these holes, then she viewed a more wide water-made field of square tiles. Half were a lighter blue, others a darker, but Melody took note of the more wavy ones next to stiller ones. Melody walked and jumped around the still tiles, as the wavy ones would collapse, then made it to the other side.

Melody arrived at a large, cube fortress whose interior was made up of similar tiles. Melody expected some kind of maze where the right paths were hidden inside the fake walls; actually, the wall tile directly across from her had Lapis’s mirror eyes. Melody peered through them like binoculars; they showed a reflection of this room, and a left wall panel was glowing. Melody approached and was able to climb through it into the next room. She found the mirror eyes on the floor, and they showed a glowing ceiling panel, in which Melody could use her bending to make the water rise and lift her into it. This room had several risen tiles, in which Melody had to solve a maze of them before finding the eyes in a high wall tile near the tallest risen panel. Melody could barely detect the glowing panel behind a short risen panel, but she did nonetheless.

The next room had more of those wavy tiles that would collapse. Melody maneuvered around them and found the eyes on the left wall. It showed the glowing panel on the floor on the other side of the room, so Melody had to make tricky jumps over loose panels to get there. That very glowing panel was wavy, and when she jumped through, she felt herself land on a narrow path just under the fortress, over the abyss. She walked forward and walked through the midair mirror eyes, latching them over her own. Melody entered another Memory Bubble.

“Lapis: I would like you to meet my new friend. Davy Jones.” Kyogre showed her to a gray-haired sailor in mostly brown leather clothing, and a large captain’s hat. “I have appointed him as the Ferrier of Souls whom were lost within the sea.”

“Cool! Nice to meet you.” Lapis smiled casually. “Is he going to be taking over my job, or… something?”

“No. Do not worry, Lapis.” Kyogre made a small humorous smile. “I would like you to show him the realm, and teach him of our customs. Perhaps you may be able to aid him in his job.”

“Oh! Well, that sounds great.” Lapis’s eyes narrowed, and her smile appeared forced.

“I will leave you to it. Farewell, for now.” The Ocean King swam away.

“So, you are a fairy…” Davy Jones said with interest, his Scottish accent thick. “You are beings of magic, are you not?”

“Yep. Ain’t I just a big ball of Fairy Dust?” Lapis remarked; her masked anger was the reason
behind her sarcastic tone.

“What sort of magic do you know?”

“Well, one time I read how a human can cut out their heart without dying. Interested?”

Melody proceeded to a garden of Memory Bubbles. One showed Lapis and a younger version of that blonde girl sleeping on the same mat. Another showed those two dancing. There was a memory of Lapis touching her fingers to Baby Melody’s forehead, the child asleep in a bundle. Another memory had Lapis performing some kind of waterbending, in which the water glowed as it spiraled around some black monsters with skull faces. Melody decided to go around and collect all these memories—it was crazy how one could see a person’s entire history through this… crazy means. Melody collected a memory of Lapis swimming, which was coincidentally above a river that Melody had to swim through. She saw memories of Lapis bathing with her two friends, of them dancing in the rain, and of Lapis laying in slumber on the ocean’s surface.

When Melody resurfaced, she climbed onto a foothold where Lapis’s cracked gem floated. A Memory Bubble was behind it, depicting Lapis trapped in Spongebob’s net. As the gem connected with Melody’s back, she viewed into the memory.

Lapis was dancing at an outdoor diner, and all eyes were on her. Lapis’s smile was calm as always, but Melody could feel the bottled-up aggravation. Then suddenly, the merpeople panicked and swam away: Spongebob’s annoying laughter rang throughout the air; he was trying to catch a large jellyfish inside an equally large net. Lapis stopped to stare at him with confusion. The fairy screamed when Spongebob captured her in a missed swing. “Oh, yeah?” Spongebob narrowed his eyes at the jelly. “Well, how about THIS!”

“WAAAAH!” Lapis was swung with the net, smashing a table.

“Then THIS!” Spongebob swung again and smashed another table with Lapis. “Fine! Then I’ll just do THIS!!” Spongebob leaped, swung harder, and SLAMMED Lapis gem-first against the ground. The net ripped in the process, and Spongebob realized what he did. “Oops.”

“AAAAAAAAUUUUUGH!” Lapis’s pupil-less eyes were furious. “THAT’S IT!! I’ve HAD IT with this planet! When I get through with this place, you’re all gonna WISH it was Malladus or Jones instead of MEEEE!!”

Parts of the bubble over the kingdom ruptured, buildings were collapsing when water pierced through them, the people of Oceana had never seen a greater storm of Waterbending Fury. “Huuum… hum huuum… HUUUM… hum HUUUM…” Then the storm subsided. Manaphy’s soft, beautiful voice eased Lapis’s soul. And only as Manaphy kept singing did Lapis stay calm. For three years, as they searched for a healer, Manaphy didn’t stop singing. (End song.)

Oceana

“Sire! Your Majesty!” Sebastian scuttled into Kyogre’s throne in a frantic fashion. “There is a cyclone! A very large cyclone heading toward Oceana!”

“A cyclone? That cannot be…”

“I know. De Kids Next Door are being sent to investigate and subdue the cause. But our soldiers have seen de top of it, and it is…”

The cyclone drew in millions of fish in its wake, and above the surface it connected to was Lapis Lazuli’s water colossus. Lapis, still in Melody’s body, stopped when swarms of merkids emerged
above the surface. “This is the Oceanic Kids Next Door!” Numbuh 10,000 Leagues, Kaima shouted through a conch-shell megaphone. “You are conjuring a cyclone below the surface that is about to pass over Oceana!”

“Tell her what she already knows!” a male merkid remarked.

Kaima glared at him. “You are hereby ordered to stop what you’re doing and turn yourself in!”

Lapis slashed her giant arm across the surface and wiped a chunk of merkids away with a mighty wave. “I am ALREADY ‘turned in’ if I can’t leave this useless planet! I’ll make every one of you REGRET making me stay here! I’ll turn this ocean into your own PRISON!” With a surge of power, dozens of water columns sprouted into the air around her.

After the Flying Krock escaped the swamp, they flew across the sea in search for Melody. “Uhhh… Is that her?” Eric pointed at the water giantess a few miles ahead.

“She’s even less discreet than I am.” Eggman remarked.

“But why the heck is she making that Lapis statue?!” Bowser shouted.

“Melody told us that Lapis wanted to switch bodies with her.” Danny mentioned. “But if she didn’t have Manaphy, how could they’ve done that?”

“I told you once, I told you so!” Gruntilda scolded Eggman. “To check the status of the net’s sew! A hint of magic, Lapis still possessed. She fooled Melody, that little pest!”

“Then we’ll have to catch Lapis and force her to switch them back!”

“Are you kidding me??” Eric proclaimed. “Danny, you’re Kyogre’s grandson, too, but you ain’t as tough as Mel!”

“Perhaps.” Kroctus said. “But do not forget, we are the commanders of Team Gnaa.” He set the ship on autopilot. “We will subdue her!”

Bowser flew out in his Koopa Clown Car, Eggman on his Egg Mobile, Grunty on her broomstick, and Lehcar used Rocket Boost to fly out of the aircraft, while K. Rool dove into the sea. The Kremling King swam underneath the water pillars; which took the form of cyclones underneath. Inflated Pufftups spiraled around the cyclones and flew at Kroctus, who used his great strength to punch them away, despite their spikes. Kroctus found the largest cyclone and let himself be sucked inside so he could swim up the colossus’s body.

Lapis looked down and gasped when she saw the Kremling King swim up, and Kroctus took notice of the Sea Prince trapped in ice. Lapis spun around and caused her colossus to do the same, whirling the muscular crocodile inside the twister to prevent him from catching up. Kroctus maintained composure, swam up, and swiped his claw at Melody’s body, but the possessed girl dodged and punched him upside the chin, with a burst of water blowing the Kremling out of the water body. “OOOOWWW!” Lapis cried, having punched the Kremling with Melody’s injured hand. She felt her control faltering, so she recomposed herself quickly.

Kroctus blew through several water columns, and Lehcar barely dodged him before he crashed in the sea. The king resurfaced and told her, “She has Manaphy trapped inside. But considering Melody’s injuries, this act must be consuming a lot of power.”

“In that case, we can defeat her easy.” Lehcar said, pressing two fingers together. “Especially if I lightning her.”
“No! We do not want to fatally wound the Firstborn Guardian. We can weaken her just by forcing her to fight.”

Gruntilda waved her wand around the air and froze a number of water columns with magic, then Bowser Jr. rammed his Koopa Clown Car against them and made them topple toward Lapis. The water giantess slashed her arms and destroyed the columns, but Dr. Eggman seized the chance to fly through and blast fire from his Egg Pod, alongside Bowser Jr.. A huge cloud of steam appeared when the fire made contact, and as Lapis was trying to blow it away, her other water columns disabled. She looked down and realized a swarm of poison mermaids, directed by Ineptune, were swimming around her cyclone below and leaving gas in their wake. “That’s right, ladies!” the large merwoman proclaimed. “Remind this hag why we weren’t allowed to leave our swamp!”

“Hey!” Lapis shouted when her water body began to turn green, absorbing their poisons. “Stop that! Get out of me, get out!” She spun around to shake the greenness out—as the mermaids caught and threw the poison globs back with their bending, Bowser Jr. blew fire at the water body and ignited the poison with flames. “AAAAHH!” Lapis was blown away by the explosion, splashing in a distant part of the sea. Manaphy’s ice prison was destroyed as the monstrous Sea Prince landed in the water.

The Oceana Kids Next Door swam to and surrounded the area where the princess splashed. They held their tridents ready to apprehend Lapis, but what they saw was… “Wait… she isn’t Lapis.” Kaima observed. “She’s…”

“Melody!” Sebastian exclaimed with horror, having come to observe this battle up close.

Indeed, the dark-haired human princess, her bandages and clothing ripped, was unconscious as she softly descended under the sea. The cracked teardrop gem had slipped out of her pocket and was sinking farther into the black abyss. …Lapis gasped awake, choking with so much water inside her lungs, and hurriedly swam back to the surface. “Huuu-cough, cough!” Lapis desperately tried to cough the water out of Melody’s throat. She never knew how it felt to drown. She looked around when the merkids surfaced around her.

“Aren’t you the Ocean Princess?” Kaima questioned. “Kyogre’s granddaughter? Why are you attacking us? And why did you shape that statue like…”

“SHE IS NOT THE OCEAN PRINCESS.” Some merkids swam away when a figure emerged out of the water, perched on a water column of her conjuring. “I am!”

“It’s the Fairy Princess!” a chubby merboy pointed. “She’s back for revenge!”

“GET HER!” Kaima roared, and all of their waterbending and trident attacks were directed at the fairy.

Melody, in Lapis’s body, spun around and created a cyclone to protect herself, but when the cyclone dispersed, the fairy was no longer there. “AAAHH!” Lapis screamed when her former body emerged behind her and grabbed Melody’s neck in her arms. Melody used Lapis’s bending to make a water spire lift them high into the cloudy sky. The merkids swam up in attempt to catch them, but Melody forced the spire to freeze, trapping all of their pursuers.

Melody let Lapis break away and fall forward, gasping for breath with her human lungs. “You…” Lapis glared up at her former body. “You figured out how to materialize? But how?”

“I was inside your mind. I was able to see your memories. Isn’t that what you wanted?”
Lapis breathed for a few seconds. She was too busy trying to attack Oceana, she never tapped into Melody’s memories. The Flying Krock hovered close by. “Lapis? Melody? What are you two doing?” Danny’s voice was heard.

“Danny, it’s me!” Lapis’s body yelled. “I’M Melody! Me and Lapis switched bodies!”

“But how? Did Manaphy do it?”

“I’ll explain later. But first…” Melody turned down to Lapis.

“I guess you want me to switch us back?” Lapis asked rhetorically. “I can’t really do that in this body, only you can. But the ‘Trust’ agreement still has to be done. And I doubt you wanna trust me after this.”

“Well, you can’t expect me to not be mad about you tricking me.” Melody stated. “And I know that if we switch back, you’re still gonna wanna get revenge. But you know, Lapis? I’m gonna let you.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You were right, Lapis. I saw your memories, I felt your feelings. Kyogre didn’t even bother to ask how you felt. Did he even care about you at all?”

“That…That’s exactly what I’m wondering.” Lapis replied reflectively. “Did he even admire and respect me, or was I just some cheap entertainment and magical healthcare? Why didn’t he beg his own daughter to stay in Oceana, why was she allowed to stay on Earth and I couldn’t even go visit my friends? Heck, I can just teleport with my fairy powers and be back in a flash, was it really so important that I stay?! Of course, my gem is broken now, so I can’t even DO that…”

“I’m still mad at you for tricking me this way, but if we hadn’t switched bodies, I guess I wouldn’t know how you were feeling, so that was the only way you could escape. But I think we both know my body’s in a rough shape right now. Lapis, switch back with me. You can get revenge to your heart’s content.”

“Are you sure? You’d want me to get revenge on your own grandfather?”

“Well, my mom didn’t want me to call him ‘Grandpa’ for a reason. Come on, Lapis.” She held a hand down to her. “Let’s do it.”

Lapis stared at her own blue hand, looking up at her own serious mirror eyes. The human stood and took the alien’s hand.

“Mana Mana. Mana.” Manaphy was swimming in circles around an area, trying to catch an innocent yellow guppy with blue stripes. The guppy looked elsewhere, cowered, and swam away.

“Mana?” Manaphy looked to where it did, seeing the large force speeding up.

“AAAAAH!” The two princesses screamed when their ice pillar shook suddenly and collapsed. As Lapis and Melody resurfaced, a Gyarados shot out of the water, soared overhead, and captured the fairy inside its mouth as it splashed back in. “MELODY/LAPIS!” Danny and Eric screamed.

“Wait/Which one is it/are they again?” they both said at the same time.

“Hnnn?! What is that Gyarados’s problem?” Eggman asked, surprised.

“Wait! It is no Gyarados!” Kroctus proclaimed, closely observing the robotic animal under the water.
“Prepare for trouble, I’m afraid you’ve misjudged.” The woman’s voice echoed.

“And make it double, we pack the ***.”

“I told you not to use that line!”

“You set me up for it, I thought it was time!”

“Oh, never mind! To protect the world from devastation.”

“To unite all peoples within our nation.”

“To denounce the evils of free-roaming fairies.”

“To extract from them their magical dairies!”

“Okay, that line is also weird. Ahem, JESSIE!” The woman made a pretty pose in a swimsuit.

“James.” So did he.

The camera flashed pictures of them against an ocean wave background. “Team Rocket, surfing away across the sea!”

“Surrender now, you can take it from me!”

“Meeewwwwth: It’s us three!”

“Woooobuffet!”

“Chiiiiime…”

“What’s going on down there?!” Danny exclaimed.

“Hm hm hm, it’s our first catch of the day,” Jessie giggled, “and it’s a pretty good one, I say.”

“We were able to snag both Manaphy and the Fairy Princess da boss talked about, in one go!” Meowth said.

“But are you certain all it takes is a net to hold them?” James asked with concern, looking at the two struggling inside the fish net.

“Relax, I read that fairies are powerless under nets, and with that one chi-blocked, Manaphy can’t do much neither.”

“Then I guess it’s time to hit the hay.” Jessie decided, pulling a lever. “Bon voyage, twerps!” Their Gyarados submarine sailed away. (Play “Double Trouble” from *Pokémon*)

“I’m going down there!” Danny yelled, diving out of the aircraft.

“Wait!” Eric cried. “Don’t leave me with…” He felt a shadow loom over him, looking terrified at Klubba’s imposing form. “Oh boy.”

Danny submerged and immediately began swimming after the submarine with ‘Melody’ by his side. “Melody.” he said with an air bubble over his mouth. “Is that you?”

“No, I’m Lapis! They took my body before we could switch!”
“What would they want with you, anyway?”

“At this point, I don’t care anymore. I’m sick of being IMPRISONED!” She spun like a torpedo and sped after them.

“No, you’re still injured!” Danny shouted. “Oh, forget it!” Danny inhaled a large breath of water, puffing himself round, and farted a stream of bubbles to move as fast as a speedboat. Seeing them pursuing, James threw a Pokéball outside and summoned a real Gyarados, who zipped by and knocked Lapis out of the water with his tail. Danny kept going, tailing directly behind Danny, who was quickly deflating with constant farting. The male Jackson had to resurface and catch breath, and Gyarados towered over him, ready to gnash down. Danny quickly dove, dodging its mouth, and inhaled more water before blasting after the sub again.

When Gyarados tried to pursue again, the bubbles from Danny’s rear hit his face. The scent was awful, so Gyarados was forced to stop. Danny evasively dodged the torpedoes from Team Rocket’s sub, but when he had to catch breath and puff up again, the sub appeared too far out of reach.

“James, your Gyarados is falling behind.” Jessie pointed out.

“Don’t worry. He’ll catch up by the time that boy runs out of oxygen.”

“Let me out of here!” Melody squirmed, kicking the net’s strings with Lapis’s feet. “What’s your guys’ deal?!?”

Meowth jumped before her and pointed a claw up, “Listen, Toots, you’re gonna show us how ta get to Lunaria, or youse gonna be very sorry!”

“Lunaria? I don’t know how to get there!”

“What? But aren’t you a Lunarian? So you should know the way around the Lunar Field like da Boss said!”

“Manaaa! Manaaa!” Meowth looked around and saw the struggling green creature behind ‘Lapis.’ The cat walked around and said, “And just what’re you doing- YAH?!”

The sharp-toothed Firstborn had enough remaining teeth to bite through the string. “AAAAAH! I don’t remember Manaphy havin’ such big teeth! Or lookin’ that way, for that matter!”

“That doesn’t make sense!” Jessie yelled. “Our energy readings for that creature match Midna’s and Mew’s, and the physical shape matches, so it has to be Manaphy!”

“MAAAAN!” Manaphy successfully snapped through, much to their horror. The Rocket Agents froze fearfully as the creature jumped out and snarled at them. Melody squeezed Lapis’s skinny self through the hole and bent water out of her gem. “This party’s over- AAHH!” Manaphy chose to bite the alien’s leg instead. “Get off, you crappy little-!” Manaphy was flung off against a window, cracking it as water began to leak in.

“GYAAAAH! I knew I forgot to do maintenance!” Meowth panicked.

“I knew we meant to get you a brainscan!” Jessie retorted.

“Scan each other later, we’ve gotta get!” James panicked.

The three agents hurried to the emergency escape sub, sighing with relief after they escaped. “Phew… HUH?!”
A giant, round mass with a face was glaring at their little sub. Danny Jackson had inflated to a radius of 40 feet. The boy slowly rotated 180 degrees, so now his bottom was facing the terrified Rocket Agents. With one last puff, Danny farted a powerful beam of bubbles that propelled Team Rocket to the surface and beyond. “Looks like Team Rocket is blasting away under the moon!” (“Wobbuffet!”) Their forms twinkled in the moonlit sky. (End song.)

The clouds had gone away, and while the edge of the horizon remained orange, a crescent moon and stars lit up the indigo sky. Melody resurfaced in Lapis’s body, later to be joined by Lapis in her own body. “What was that all about?” Lapis asked.

“Don’t ask me.” Melody replied. “Anyway… Where were we?”

The two girls stayed afloat as they locked hands. “I trust you with my life.” Lapis stated calmly.

“I trust you with my life.” Melody repeated, closing her eyes. She tried to channel Lapis’s magic energy, tried to switch their souls. …Their hearts glowed, they- “OOOW!” Melody was bit in the leg by Manaphy, and she angrily kicked him underwater to shake him off. Manaphy jumped out of the water and tried to gnash the fairy. “AUGH!” Melody grabbed the prince tightly. “When I get through with you, you stupid…”

“Mana Mana! Mana…PHEEEE!” His green antennas glowed red and connected both princesses. When it died down, Melody felt exhausted and heavy in her injured body, while Lapis’s lightweight self returned to her. Manaphy swam away.

“Oh! We’re back.” Lapis observed.

“Yeah. ‘Guess we are.” Melody followed, staring at her hands.

Lapis was silent for a second in thought. She then said, “So, is our deal still in effect? I still want revenge on Oceana.”

“…Yep. It still is.” Melody nodded. “Have at it.”

“Hm… You’re too kind.” Lapis smiled, her eyes narrowed quizzically. She turned around-

“Wait.” She stopped when Melody spoke. “I believe I also made you promise not to mess up my body. Now I have soot marks and my bandages are ripped. And if my memories that I don’t remember serve me correctly, you attacked my friends after you escaped. I don’t appreciate being used that way.”

“Y-Yes, but-…” Lapis stopped. Through her blurry vision, she saw Melody’s accusing look. She could read her mind still. “Oh… I see.”

“Loopholes are fun, aren’t they?”

“…All right, then. If that’s how you wanna play it.” Lapis’s gem glowed as the chunk of the ocean they were in sank into a large liquid crater. The fairy encased herself inside a rising water pillar that projected her angered visage. (Play “Mirror Match” from *Steven Universe.*)

**Boss fight: Lapis Lazuli**

Globs of water rose out of the solid liquid ground and turned into Melody clones. They swung their arms and slashed water at her in the same fashion that she would, so Melody expertly dodged and
slashed water back at them. Melody still felt weak in her hand, and the clones seized the chance to
gang up on her. Melody pushed them away with her bending, then stretched her arms to go into
Water Fury. She pulled five streams of water from the wall behind her and washed them over the
clones, then she surfed across an ice road to Lapis’s pillar. The face spat a powerful Water Beam,
and Melody leaped to surf across it as well. She froze the beam with her bending, and once she
made it to Lapis, she jumped and broke the ice off, swinging it forcefully into the pillar.

She hit Lapis like a baseball and knocked her out as the pillar collapsed. Melody turned off her
Fury to conserve power, running up to Lapis to throw Water Fists at her. She socked Lapis across
the jaw twice before sending her flying back, but the fairy recovered and splashed a sudden wave
that Melody dodged. Lapis called more Water Clones of Melody, who ran away as they bundled
together into a bigger clone. Melody launched icicles at its head, only distorting it a short while
before the clone clamped Melody in its hands. The clone whirled her balled hands around and
slammed Melody under the water. She weakly recovered and saw where Lapis was standing.

Melody Torpedo Spun up and headbutted Lapis, knocking her on her back. Still in the air, Melody
formed twin Water Fists and smashed down on Lapis, but the fairy recovered fast and splashed
water at her. Melody called two tentacles up on either side of Lapis, having them bend down to
catch the fairy, but Lapis bended their water into a bubble shield and ran Melody over with it.
Melody got up and extracted a water pillar to raise her up, then jumped behind as she froze it. She
punched individual ice chunks at Lapis, who rolled around and evaded in her bubble shield.

Melody dashed forward, slashed tentacles at the shield, and ripped it open.

Melody jumped inside the bubble and wrestled with Lapis, clawing at each other’s faces. Lapis
pushed her out and created another rising pillar, and Melody sunk into the water as she was sucked
inside. Unable to escape from it, Melody evaded the fist-shaped currents hidden within the liquid,
but took a few hits across the face as air flew out of her lungs. Melody tried to regain her senses,
but another fist punched her and knocked Melody out of the pillar. She splashed in the water below,
rather than its steady form, and tried to swim away from the pillar to catch her breath.

Melody turned toward the spire and determinedly swam back. She avoided the Water Fists that
flew out like meteors, taking a deep breath and going inside. She made her own current shield and
defended from the attacks within, withstanding and keeping her breath as she zeroed in on Lapis at
the top. The fairy ordered her spire to sink, trying to push Melody down with the current, so
Melody pushed harder and made it to her. She grabbed Lapis as she shot out of the spire, punching
the alien’s eyes before they splashed in the sea. Melody resurfaced, and she looked around for
where Lapis went.

She whipped around at hearing a massive splash, and a Lapis water colossus emerged. Melody
uplifted herself with a cyclone, flying headfirst at the colossus while Lapis, inside its head, did the
same. Both of them bore agro faces, gritting teeth, and triangle-shaped noses. The impact these two
would make would shake the sea.

And when they were inches from touching, a red beam connected both girls, and they switched
bodies in an instant. Melody, in Lapis’s body, lost control of her bending, and the ocean crater rose
up and became completely flat again. (End song.)

“HUUUU!” Lapis needed to catch Melody’s breath, swimming to the surface quickly, and Melody
joined her up there. Both girls stared at each other weirdly. How did this happen. “Oh… I just
remembered.” Melody spoke. “Manaphy’s power only lasts a short time. The bodies switch back
automatically.”

“Oh…” Lapis blushed. “Then I guess… it wouldn’t have mattered if you had Manaphy do it
“…” An awkward silence fell between them. Both girls burst into joyous laughter. “Well, I guess we better switch back for real!” Melody shrugged.

“Yeah, I guess we should.” Lapis took her hands and said, “I trust you with my life.”

“I trust you with my life.” Melody repeated. For the second time, she channeled Lapis’s magic energy. The light appeared in their hearts, going across their arms, and into the other’s chest. The girls were back in their original bodies for good.

“And it is still really painful.” Melody grunted, still exhausted. “Halright, Lapis, ready to pick up where we left off?”

“…You know…” Lapis looked away in thought. “I don’t think I want to, anymore.”

“Don’t want to what? Get revenge?”

“No… I don’t know why, but I’m kind of over it, now. I’m still mad at them, but… maybe this was all I needed.” The fairy smiled. “Just letting off steam. …” She faced her new friend, “Thanks for helping me, Melody. Sorry about… Manaphy.”

“Oh, it’s no big deal. Now that he’s out of the swamp, he can- OW!” Manaphy bit Melody’s leg underwater. She punched and forced the prince to get off. “God, I HATE that little…”

“You know, I was thinking of a way to heal him.” Lapis mentioned. “Ever heard of spiritbending?”

“I think I saw you doing that in one of your memories.”

“Ah! Then you must know what it does. It scatters spirits into fragments so they can be reborn anew in the Spirit World. I don’t know how it would work on a god, though…”

“I’m going to try it out. Let’s see if I can remember…”

Manaphy was swimming in circles, his antennas sticking out of the water like a shark’s fin. Melody softly waved her arms and spiraled two streams of water around and above the prince. Manaphy stopped and looked confusedly as the streams began glowing. Melody focused her energy steadily, and the mystic glow reflected off Lapis’s mirror eyes. Manaphy’s sickly green body turned gold. His eyelashes became circles instead of triangles, his antennas became perfectly smooth, his red gem was fixed. Manaphy was the happy blue Sea Prince he was five years ago.

“Mana?…”

Melody opened her eyes, gazing in surprise. “Manaphy?”

“Man…Mana…” Manaphy stared longingly at Melody. She looked a lot different, and yet, so similar. …She was Eva’s daughter. “Eva Eva! Eva!”

“No, Manaphy, I’m Melody! Eva’s daughter!”

“Evaaaa!” Melody giggled as Manaphy leapt into her arms.

“Manaphyyyyyyyy! I still need to go to the hospital, but I’m so GLAD you aren’t a jerk, anymooore!”

“Mana?” Manaphy looked up and noticed Lapis. The fairy smiled and waved lightly at him. “Hey there. Nice to see you, sort of.”
“Lapyyyy!” Manaphy jumped into Lapis’s arms and began nuzzling her. Lapis giggled and hugged Manaphy softly, and the Firstborn put his stubby arms around her neck. Tears dripped from Manaphy’s eyes, down Lapis’s back, and into the cracks of her gem.

Lapis gasped, feeling a sudden chill on her back. The gem glowed, and the cracks vanished completely. As she looked up, Lapis could clearly see the moon and stars above. Melody stared agape when Lapis’s blue tones turned lighter, and pupils appeared in her eyes. The Fairy Princess stared at her hands. “I’m… I’m healed. How did he…”

“Looks like someone just discovered a new power!” Melody cooed Manaphy. “Do you have magic healing tears, you little angel, yooouuuu?”

“Man-Mana!”

“I don’t believe it!” Lapis chuckled. “Manaphy was my healer all this time! We just had to make him cry.” She shook her head in disbelief.

“So, what are you going to do now?”

“Whaddyou think?! Gettin’ the hell OFF this planet, that’s what!” She sprouted Water Wings from her back and took off for the stars. “See you later, Melody! Tell Kyogre I said, ‘FUCK YOU’!”

“I will!” Melody waved. “Tell your friends I said, ‘Hi’!”

“Will do! Take caaaaaare!…”

Melody and Manaphy watched until she was gone. Danny, completely out of breath, swam to them. “I think I developed that disease you get from too much swimming, pant… huff… What happened to Lapis?”

“She’s gone. But Manaphy’s back!”

“Mana Mana!”

Melody took the Spirit Ball out of her pocket. “I honestly had no idea what this was until Lapis found it. But I guess I finally get to use it. Ready, Manaphy!”

“MANAAAAAAAA!” The Firstborn leapt toward the Pokéball when Melody tossed it, and was sucked in. It floated in the water and beeped. Boop… The catch sealed, the ball floated and brimmed in the air, and a golden “II” appeared over its lock.

Melody captured a FIRSTBORN! Only 5 more to go!

Melody and Danny lay flat on the floor of Flying Krock, having no more breath. The Team Gnaa members returned and were about to take off. “So, those people desired Lapis to take them to Lunaria.” Kroctus recollected. “This fits well with the reports from our spies. And, the mystery of the ‘Ten’ Firstborn.”

“I swam more than every Olympic in history today.” Melody gasped.

“This is my exercise for the year.” Danny breathed.

“You’re telling me.” Eggman agreed, eating a Footlong Sandwich. “Don’t you kids want to explain this story to Kyogre?”

“Something tells me I should let my mom do it…” Melody replied.
A couple days have passed since Lapis’s surprise attack. Even though she was long gone, Kyogre was still angry. To think their beloved Fairy Princess would show treachery, even after the merpeople’s hospitality. Even if it was Spongebob’s fault to begin with, Lapis had no reason to-

The doors to his throne room opened, and none other than Eva Jackson marched inside, clutching the Phantom Sword. “Ah, Eva… My dearest daughter. I am certain your daughter has informed you what transpired just days ago. I cannot believe how…”

With her Logia bending, Eva leaped toward Kyogre with extended water legs, flying at him with sudden speed. “AAAAAAHHHH!” The Phantom Sword pierced through the whale god’s head perfectly. “AAAAHHH! IT HURTS! OH MY GOD, DOES THAT HURT? AAAAHHHH!”

“I warned you.” Eva glared at him. “Didn’t I?”

“You don’t tell me what to do. You aren’t my father and you never will be! You have no right to decide my fate!” Eva kicked Oshus to the ground and aimed her sword at his neck. “So, let me tell you something: If you even think about deciding my future for me, I’ll ram this sword so hard through your head, you’ll be begging for Jones to come and end you after I get done. I’m Eva Roberts! Numbuh 10 of the Kids Next Door! Nothing more, nothing less. Understand?”

“Except this was for Lapis.” Eva stated. “I guess I just expected you to follow the same rules.”

Eva withdrew the sword from the king’s head and left him writhing in pain. “Oh, God! Medic! I need a medic! Lapis, where are you! Where the hell are you when I NEED you! Ahhhhhgg!”

_Guertena Gallery_

“Maaaryyyyyyy?” Ib called as they trekked down a seemingly endless stairway. “MARY, are you DOWN THERE?”

“I coulda sworn I sensed her run this way.” Aisa replied. “Where does this even lead?”

“When me and Garry came down here, the stairs turned sideways and dropped us into a room.” Ib remembered. “Mary’s picture was in there. I guess this is where this leads.”

The pink stairs led them into what seemed like outer space. They stared in awe when a white, crayon comet soared overhead. A blue comet soared over next, and the stairs finally ended at a pink path that looked like… crayon?

Colorful constellations appeared in the stars. A purple rose, yellow moon, orange sun, a brown six-fingered hand… This sudden change of atmosphere confused them terrifically. They merely pressed on, wondering how odd this hand-drawn world would get. They dodged a meteor that fell from the sky, then a large axe. The word _Sketchbook_ was labeled in blue crayon. (Play “No One in Sight” from _Ib_.)

They viewed a village of crayon houses, crayon flowers, crayon trees, that were all completely flat and looked like they were drawn by a Kindergartener. Aisa brushed her foot along the ground. “Is everything in this place crayon?”

“That’s impossible.” Apis approached one of the flat, poorly-drawn houses and was able to turn the yellow knob. She peeked inside (apparently, it did have an interior): there was a clock, a bookshelf, and a painting of some…thing. “Is this part of the gallery, too?”
“Maybe Guertena drew all this in his childhood.” Aeincha assumed.

The friends separated and explored this mysterious landscape. There was a Butterfly Park, and the butterflies were the most realistic creatures here. There was a blue crayon pond with darker blue fish, and when Aisa chose to dip her rose in the water, it wilted slightly. April entered a house with Aeincha and Mocha, and they noticed the end of a fishing pole sticking out from above a shelf. April threw the two tinnies up there to push it down to her. When Aisa mentioned the pond to them, they went over to dip the hook into it. They successfully fished out… a crayon bottle of toothpaste. That explained the sign nearby, which said, *Don’t litter.*

In one of the other houses, Ib found a crayon toothbrush. They looked around for a place to use these… and Chimney pointed out the giant lips with teeth several feet over the dark abyss. They did a ‘Not it’ game, and Chimney was the last to touch her nose. Begrudgingly, she squirted toothpaste on the brush, and crossed an invisible path to the giant teeth. She scrubbed a single dirty tooth to cleanliness. The teeth spat a blue crayon key at her head.

The only locked doors in this world were a house with flowers around it, a central pink building, and a larger building labeled ‘Gallery.’ The key opened the Gallery; there was a large, crayon drawing of Ib holding Garry’s hand on the right side of the room. On the left side, a drawing of Mary appeared to be waving her arms and calling for them, while a zombie doll held her yellow rose. There was a box in the center of the floor labeled ‘Pandora’s Box.’ “Let’s see what’s inside.” Chimney approached it.

“Chimney, do you know what Pandora’s Box is?” Apis asked.

“We’ll find Pandora and give it back to her.” Chimney unhesitantly opened the box—eight symbols flashed out of the box and flew away.

“What were those?” Mocha exclaimed.

“Sheesh, Pandora has a weird diet.” Chimney said, rubbing her eye. “…Hey, there’s a mirror in here!” She pulled out a hand-size mirror. When her friends looked over her shoulder, they saw that their reflections were crayon forms of their selves. The girls went back outside to look for a place to use—*SHINGSHINGSHINGSHINGSHING!* A buzzsaw flew across the path from out of nowhere, their hearts jumping as they avoided it.

In the northwest quadrant, they realized that an orange crayon sun appeared in the dark sky. They stood and embraced in its warmth; it felt surprisingly like a real sun. Chimney was staring curiously at a light-blue door that looked like it was frozen; she was unknowingly aiming the mirror at it, which bounced the sun’s crayon rays to melt the door. “Wow! Good thinking, Chimney.” April complimented as they all entered this crayon building. Chimney shrugged.

They heard a distant ticking sound in this room, even though there was no clock. There were eight pedestals seated around the room in a square alignment, and eight symbols drawn on the wall: Heart, Star, Moon, Sun, Question Mark, the six-fingered hand, Snake, and a Ghost. “Those look like the symbols that flew out of Pandora’s Box just now.” Aisa noticed.

“So do we need to find them?” Ib asked.

“Let’s go get the box, maybe we need to catch them.” April figured. They returned to the Gallery and took Pandora’s Box, then searched the Sketchbook for these symbols. They already knew the Sun was in the northwest quadrant, so they used the mirror to direct its ray inside the box. Eventually, the light was completely sucked in. When Aeincha looked in the sky above the Butterfly Park, she gazed beautifully at the yellow star twinkling above it. They carried her there
and set her on one of the butterflies. The creature lifted her and fluttered up, then Aeincha jumped to grab the star, dropping back for her friends to catch her. They put the star in the box.

One of the flowers around the house in the north quadrant was pink and heart-shaped. They put it in the box. When April came back to the pond, she noticed that the crescent moon’s beautiful image was reflected. She launched her fishing rod, and was able to catch and reel the reflection in. She put it in the box. In the east quadrant, Apis discovered that a great number of trees with fruit blossomed within the area. One of those trees had a white stick man hanging by the neck. The red noose, in question, looked like a question mark, so Apis cut it down and took it to put in the box. In the south quadrant, Aisa noticed a purple snake was peeped out from behind the green grass. She caught and put it in the box.

Ib entered the first house they encountered in the southeast. She examined the poorly-drawn crayon books. A brown book had a six-fingered hand marked on it. She peeled it off and put it in the box. Finally, Chimney spotted the ghost fluttering above the southwest quadrant. Chimney jumped up and down and up and down, but the ghost eluded her height. When Apis walked by, she suggested Chimney jump in the large mouth so it could spit her up to the ghost. Chimney shook her head frantically, but Apis pushed her toward the mouth, commenting it isn’t as big as hers, so she’ll be fine. Chimney huffed and climbed into the large mouth whose teeth she brushed beforehand. The mouth spat her up toward the ghost, which she caught.

With all eight things in the box, they returned to the room and released them onto the pedestals. A yellow key magically appeared in the center. They took it to the house in the north quadrant and entered it. (End song.)

They found their selves inside a pitch-black room with dark-pink corners and floor-to-wall borders, and blue crayon roses growing on green thorns around a staircase. “Down there is where Mary’s ‘Toy Box’ was.” Ib pointed at a left staircase leading down. “And up there was where her painting was.” She pointed at the stairs ahead.

“I sense her with someone else.” Aisa said. “Let’s go!”

As soon as they were up the short staircase, they gasped at the horrifying sight. “AAAAUGH! AAAAAH!” Mary was mercilessly slashing her palette knife across Garry’s chest. Blood didn’t fly out, but rather the gooey paint that made up his colors. “Hehehehehehehehehehe…” The dark-clothed man merely cackled, embracing the pain.

“DIE! DIE ALREADY!” The look in her eyes was demonic. “I would’ve finished this a long time ago if I could have!”

“MARY, STOP!” April yelled.

“April!” Mary turned to her in surprise.

“How would YOU know, you used to be a DOLL! It was thanks to you I was able to kill him the first time! So help me kill him ag-”

Garry swung a kick that sent Mary flying into a pile of junk against the wall. He kept cackling maniacally as Mary tried to stand up, shoving the random items aside. It was then she discovered the lighter: the lighter Ib was going to use to burn her painting, until April knocked it out of her hand. Mary looked at Garry’s empty portrait on the wall, a few fabric blue roses hanging from it. She looked at Garry, who was grinning like a devil and swaying in place. She looked at the lighter,
and knew how to finish this permanently. “There’s no other option.” She flicked it on. “Good-bye, Garry.”

“MARY, DON’T!!” Ib cried. She could only watch hopelessly, too far away to stop her, as Mary dashed up to the canvas with the lit flame ready…

Somebody socked Mary in the nose and slammed her against the wall, dropping the lighter. Mary grabbed her bloody nose and looked at the one responsible: Chimney was glaring at her furiously, with drops of Mary’s blood on her knuckles. “April-chan told you not to.”

“Get out of my way, Chimney. None of this is your problem.”

“I been havin’ this problem with you for a long time! I knew there was something about you I didn’t like!”

“Out of my way! I need to kill Garry so he’ll finally stop bothering me!” Mary stood and stomped her foot firmly.

“KND operatives don’t kill adults, Mary! We just beat them until they’re covered with bruises. And you don’t meet the requirements!”

“Out of my WAY, out of MY WAY!!” The room shook under her rage.

“Mary…” Chimney remained stern.

“NOOOOOOWWWW!!” (Play “Sinister Shadows” from Kingdom Hearts II.)

**Boss fight: Mary**

Mary dashed up and stabbed her knife at Chimney, who dodged and performed a spin-kick to knock Mary off her feet. Mary swiftly got up and flipped away, grabbing her blue crayons to slash lines along the floor, so when Chimney ran at her, she slipped on the ice and fell. Mary scribbled yellow crayon on Chimney’s back, so the Sector Leader jittered from the electricity. Mary ran to grab the lighter, then up to Garry’s painting to burn it, but Chimney suddenly zipped in her path and knocked her away, moving with whipping speed now that the electricity was added.

Mary thought fast and avoided her attacks, grabbing her gray crayon to mark on Chimney’s arms. Chimney slumped, feeling her arms weighed down by the heavy color. Mary threw punches across Chimney’s face, but the Sector Leader managed to raise her arms up above Mary’s head, letting them weigh down and cause Mary to fall forward. Chimney threw punches at the back of Mary’s head with her weighed arms, and Mary withstood as she drew white crayon on either side between Chimney’s legs. Mary rolled out and poked her knife in Chimney’s right leg, and when the girl fell down, the two white lines touched together, getting Chimney’s legs glued.

Mary ran to grab the lighter again, but Chimney flipped up to her hands, pushed off the floor, and flew to stamp Mary in the head with both feet. Chimney hopped with her legs still glued, and when Mary recovered, Chimney grabbed her by the collar, threw her up in the air, then leaped to kick off the wall and stamp Mary in the chest. Still in midair, Chimney ripped her legs apart from each other, landed on both, then ran over to swing a spin-kick at Mary’s head. The Goldenweek was knocked away again, but she recovered and ran to slash green crayon under Chimney’s nose. Chimney was used to such stench (thanks to a certain Nimbi), so she punched Mary away again.

Garry kept laughing like a hyena, no doubt enjoying this conflict. Mary growled hatefully at him.
from her position on the floor. The lighter was still in her hand, but the canvas was several feet away. “GRRRRR!” Mary dashed up to the man himself, who gasped perkily when her knife was drawn. The W7 members gasped: Chimney grabbed firmly onto the knife before Mary could make it, the former’s hand bleeding. Chimney smacked the knife to the ground, and when Garry cheered ecstatically, Chimney flipped a kick up to his face to knock him out clean. Still holding Mary’s hand, Chimney flipped over her, pulled her around, then punched Mary forcefully to the floor. (End song.)

Mary calmly gasped for breath, but they could sense the bottled rage within her pants. She stood up as she felt the blood drip from her nose. She never had blood as a painting. When she became real, she was able to bleed. At least, when she bled… she was reminded that she was still real. She turned around and faced Chimney with malice in her eyes. Chimney faced her unflinchingly. She was ready for Mary to attack again. The Goldenweek raised her knife toward her. She glanced right at the other girls. All of them bore either worried or strict looks that wanted her to stop. Mary saw this clearly in Ib’s pleading red eyes.

Mary dropped her knife, her eyes going from anger to sadness as she looked at her hands. With a forceful sniffle, she spun around and fell to her knees. “I don’t wanna stay, I don’t wanna stay, I DON’T WANNA STAY!” She repeatedly pounded the floor in a tantrum. Jagged red crayon lines appeared there in the form of cracks, and the room seemed to vibrate. “I hate this place, I don’t wanna stay here!”

“Mary…” Ib calmly approached the girl from behind.

Mary started forcing out sobs, tears hitting the black floor. “I wanna be free… I wanna keep living in the real world. I wanna keep seeing the blue ocean in the sky, and the one on the ground… I wanna see the night sun, and the day moon… I wanna go back to space and look at all the stars… I wanna dance on the music planet again…”

“Mary…” Ib sat down and put her hands on Mary’s shoulders.

“There’s so many things I wanted to do…” Mary sniffled. “Walk on the ocean floor… sleep on a bed on the moon… perform in the circus… and make way more friends… I don’t wanna stay… I don’t-”

Ib hugged Mary, leaning her head on her shoulder. “I’m sorry, Mary.” Tears dripped from Ib’s pretty red eyes. “I want you to do all those things, too. I really wish there was a way we could all leave. I really wish…”

“Ib…” Mary’s tears softened as she glanced at her. Someone else got down and hugged Mary from the front. “April…”

“At least you won’t be alone now, Mary.” Her cousin smiled. “You gave me a soul. Even when I turn back into a doll again, I’ll still be more than just… your Imaginary Friend.”

Aeincha and Mocha climbed up Ib’s shirt to get to Mary’s shoulders, hugging her neck. “I know how it feels to be trapped in one place for too long.” Mocha said. “Even if you did have people with you.”

“We’ll always remember you, Mary.” Aeincha promised. “And when we’re able to, we’ll come visit you and April. We’ll bring souvenirs from the real world and tell you all about them!”

“And don’t forget, it doesn’t matter if you’re real or Imaginary.” Apis said, hugging her from one side. “As long as you have a heart, God will be inside it.”
“We’ll tell all the Kids Next Door about you, too.” Aisa hugged from the other side. “We’ll make it our mission to find you a way out. But Mary, try taking off your shoes once in a while. That usually makes me happy!”

Mary’s tears faded away. She felt so strange, in the center of all their hugs. She was being hugged… by friends. Six friends were hugging her. Even during her time as a real person… Mary never felt more whole until now. For the first time, her heart felt like the farthest thing from fabricated. If she were to go back to what she once was… she really hoped this feeling would last. …Father… is this what you wanted for me? I hope that I… made you happy…

Ib reached into her pocket and pulled out her red rose. She held it above Mary. April pulled out hers, Aeincha’s and Mocha’s, and Aisa and Apis held theirs up as well. A harmony of colors.

Realizing something, Aeincha looked over at Chimney. Her arms were folded, turned away from them. “Chimney, stop acting like that. Come over here and comfort Mary.”

“Oh, screw that, Mary belongs here!” Chimney claimed, turning to them. “She’s as freaky as any of these monster paintings! But April-chan, I’ll be DAMNED TO HECK if I let one of my pallies stay in this ghost house! You comin’ back to W7, like it or not!”

“Chimney, the only way I would be able to is as a lifeless doll.” April reminded. “Even if you hate this worse than the rest of us, it doesn’t change the fact that Ib and Garry have to be set free. That’s the Kids Next Door’s job, isn’t it?”

“Garry’s a freaking adult, let him stay here so you and Ib be free!”

“I couldn’t leave Garry with Mary when he’s like this.” Ib stated. “I don’t see how he got so crazy to begin with. Is it because his rose got plucked? We should look for it and heal it.”

“You can’t.” Mary said. “If a rose dies, and a painting takes that person’s place, it disappears. Then the person becomes…” She felt her heart skip a beat. She looked up. Her friends were holding their roses above her. Including Ib. “Ib… You still have your rose.”

“Oh?” Ib brought her red rose back down. “Yeah. April healed it for me.”

“But… that’s impossible. Your rose should’ve disappeared after me and April stole your place. Unless… you never actually died.”

“Um… I guess I didn’t.” Ib stared at her rose with confusion.

“I thought she stole your place when you chose to stay here.” Aisa mentioned.

“No, a painting can only become real if a real person dies in this world.” Mary explained. “And a person only dies when their rose completely wilts. …S-So then…” Mary looked at her yellow rose. Her pupils shrunk, feeling horrified and confused. “How did me and April BOTH become real?!”

“Siiiigh. Okay, now I’m really confused.” Chimney sighed. “But normally, this is where somebody provides a totally random, complicated, though somewhat logical explanation that solves all of our problems. Aaaaaaand NOW.” There was silence. “And NOW. …NOW. …NOW.”

“Mary, did you forget to tell us anything?” Ib asked.

“Um… I don’t know.” Mary looked down, sad and confused.
“GARRY!” Aisa said suddenly, pointing when the man jumped to his feet. The group broke apart the hug and readied their selves for him.

“HEHEHEHEHEHehehehehehehehehe!” Garry’s grinning expression was still hysterical and terrifying. “I’m Gaaarryyyy, I’m Gaaaaarryyyyy, HEHEHEHEHEHEEEE! Come down below, let’s play, let’s PLAY!” He bolted out of the room.

“Garry, come back!” Ib chased him.

“Ib, wait!” The others followed suit.

Garry rushed into a pink, crayon-drawn house, and Ib dashed inside first. The pink room inside was of the gallery’s normal decorating, and as they hurried down a flight of stairs, the interior was turning black. Ib and Mary remembered this as the way back to the main gallery, or rather a duplicate of the main gallery that existed at the very bottom of this cursed building. When they burst through the double-doors at the bottom, there they were in the lobby with the abandoned reception desk.

“Which way did Garry go?!?” April yelled, looking around.

“Maybe he’s going for the exit!” Ib exclaimed.

“No! He went down those stairs!” Aisa sensed with her Mantra, pointing at the thin stairwell near the reception desk.

The eight girls gathered in front and stared down the passage. The stairs led into darkness not far down. “I…I don’t even remember this being here.” Mary mentioned. “I thought *this* was the bottom of the gallery.”

“A whole new area of the Guertena Gallery that Mary didn’t know about…” Aeincha stared with awe and wonder.

“What kind of surprises can we expect from this?” Apis asked.

Ib looked again at her red rose, then Mary’s and April’s. “If Garry’s down there, we have to find out.”

“You’re right.” April nodded. “Come on, guys. We’re all together now, so we can get through this place. Let’s go.” She marched down first, followed by Ib, Mary, and the rest of W7. Chimney stood behind for a few seconds, sighing with annoyance. But she complied and followed her team downstairs. Blue writing poofed on the wall beside the stairs. It said, *Drown in the abyss.*

**MXMX DQG JBDUDGRV QHYHU FDPH EDFN WR WKHLU PDVWHUV**

**WKHB OLYH KDSSLOB RQ WKHLU UDW IDUP LQ XWDK**
Forgotten and Remembered

Chapter Summary

Sector W7, Ib, and Mary explore the gallery's secret dungeon.

The final level of Ib is the finale of the Art Saga. Let’s dive into the Abyss.

Chapter 51: Forgotten and Remembered

Guertena Gallery

They reached the bottom of the dark stairs, even though it seemed to go down for ages. They found a small room with an empty vase; it reminded Ib of the room where the Blue Lady was plucking Garry’s rose. When they entered the door, this very passage looked the very same as the Red Area, near where she met him. The Lady in Blue was hanging on the wall, immobile. This area was quiet; and as Aisa sensed no danger, it was peaceful. Chimney and Mary healed their roses inside an Eternal Blessing; the wounds from their previous battle were healed. The other kids healed their roses. With that, they entered the door to the Orange Area. (Play “Noise” from Ib.)

Act 3: The Dungeon

There was a painting of someone taking a red rose titled Déjà Vu, and a painting of a hand reaching from behind an orange curtain, Concealed Secret. The next door brought them to the main hall of the Orange Area. The left route was blocked by a giant, green sleeping snake, and the left route further ahead had a gap within the floor. They could step over this gap- “HAH!” if not for the claws down below. Ib noticed a small white dot roaming around the floor. “Look, guys! There’s an ant!”

“Oh, an ant?” Apis asked, crouching down to look at it. “I bet I can talk to it.” She held her finger down for the ant to crawl on.

“hello. i’m a white ant. i miss my home. can you take me home?”

“It’s like the talking ant from before.” April remembered.

“Wait… You can understand it, April?” Apis asked.

“I can, too.” Ib mentioned. The others nodded.

“Oh… So much for Animal Telepathy. Mr. Ant, did you see a man run by here?”

“i saw him. maybe he was looking for his home. i’m looking for my home…”

“We’ll take you to look for it.”

“no, i’ll keep looking here. maybe it’ll turn up…”

She set the ant down as they entered a different door. There were many paintings around this dead-end hall, small and medium-size. None of them were labeled; there was a painting of red balls, a
painting of a shark, a painting of a chair, a nail pinned into a red wall and stretching a shadow… There was a painting of a book that said, *Everything changes at night.* There was a painting of a teacup, in which they could smell the steam. “Mmmm… smells yummy.” Mary smiled happily. “Wish it was real, though…” She frowned.

“Aha!” Aisa perked. She pulled an anthill painting off the wall. They brought it back as she placed the painting over the gap like a bridge (remembering a similar case from the Brown Area).

“oh. It’s my home. thank you.” The white ant crawled inside the painting. The picture felt like natural dirt under their feet when they crossed it.

They found two giant, dancing tulips, a blue one and dark-pink one called *Stubborn Twins*, guarding a door. Aisa cautioned her friends not to go near them. A painting called *Hard-to-Wake Man* showed a man sleeping under a blanket at daytime. *A Place Out of Reach* depicted a white object with black hearts under it. *Light Within the Canvas* was a candle—except without the flame. Mary and Ib entered a door on their right—there was a living sculpture of a newspaper delivery boy rapidly pedaling his bike. He was giant, but he didn’t appear to go anywhere as he was suspended on a treadmill. “I wonder if Mocha could ride a bike that big!” Mary grinned.

“You mean the doll girl?” Ib asked.

“Oh, right… You don’t know, yet.” Mary winked.

The giant delivery boy was titled ??? *Young Man* (they couldn’t read the word ‘Dogged’). In the corner behind him was a glass case containing unique, colorful bugs; it was labeled *Spirits of Nature*. The bugs were made of a certain element: a water spider, lightning beetle, a gas fly… the ‘Fire Butterfly’ was missing. “Mary, did Guertena like to catch bugs?” Ib asked.

“Ohm… I dunno. But I know he liked to paint ’em a lot!” she beamed.

April and the tinies walked by a—“YAAA!” the tinies screamed. There was a painting of a dark-red silhouette with a smeary pink heart, raising a knife. It was titled *Stirred Up*. Aisa confirmed that it wasn’t planning to attack, so they bypassed it with this in mind. They made the full loop around the hallway, once again finding the giant snake block their path. There were two doors on the wall, so Aisa and Apis entered the left one: it was a completely pitch-black room. “Aisa, can you lead us through?” the latter requested.

“I… can’t. My Mantra’s not working in this room, for some reason.”

“It isn’t? Well, then let’s come back later.” Both girls backed out of the room.

The others focused their gaze on the large, painted clock that hung on the wall, labeled *Truant Seconds Hand*. The “clock” in question actually had a big hole where it should be. April, Aein, and Mocha walked into the right door, finding crates lain around the narrow paths of this room, another of those Mistake paintings, and the tail of the sleeping snake. One of the corners was protected by box walls on all ends. April set Aeincha onto a gap in this wall, allowing the tiny to peep in. The white ant was in there, viewing a painting of himself. There was a small, her-size tunnel under it and between some bookshelves. “I wonder what’s in there?”

“Can you go see?” April asked.

“No… There’s spikes down there.” Indeed, there was a spike patch below her gap. “Whoever made this fort thought ahead.”
April picked her back up as they explored the passage further. Needles were blasting at them from the ceiling, so April ducked, protected the tinies, and hurried quickly, though she was stabbed by a few of them. At the end of the passage, she stepped on a black rose—and the needles stopped. This hall had a dead end, but there was a painting of sky and clouds titled *Beyond Halcyon Skies*, and what seemed like an orange butterfly nailed to the wall. *Imprisoned Flame*, it was labeled. “Poor butterfly.” Aeincha frowned.

“Pick the nails free!” Mocha yelled. April did so and picked them out. The butterfly’s majestic wings literally brimmed like fire as it fluttered away. The girls exchanged wondrous smiles as April chased it. She reached to gently touch the butterfly—“Ow!” it burned her hand, she shook the pain off. Figuring they couldn’t yet touch it, April went to leave the room—the Mistake broke out of its frame, so they exited fast. The girls gasped when the Mistake chased them… but it simply began to wander about the hallway.

“I think it can’t see.” Aisa mentioned.

“We encountered those earlier.” April remembered. “Just stay away from it.”

“Nnn? April-chan, you’re bleeding!” Chimney pointed. Indeed, blood was leaking fast out of the parts where the needles stabbed her.

“There’s a vase over there, use that!” Aeincha pointed at a vase across the sleeping snake. April nodded, quickly going to step over the snake (why hadn’t they thought of that) and put her rose in the vase. The bleeding stopped. April then returned to the others.

“Sigh. ‘Ju find anything in that one room?” Chimney asked.

“There was a butterfly made of fire!” Aeincha smiled. “Super pretty! But we couldn’t catch it.”

“I think I saw a net in that one room.” Apis recalled. “I’ll go check.” She jumped over the sleeping snake and returned to the dead-end hall with the unnamed paintings. Indeed, there was a light-purple canvas with a net. She could reach in and take it. She went into the room April mentioned and found the fiery butterfly. She caught it with the net, which wasn’t affected by the flames at all.

When Ib and Mary told them about the bug case, Apis was going to bring the butterfly there—the butterfly escaped from the net before she could and flew into the candle painting. It seemed the butterfly actually served as the lit candle. Forming an idea, Aisa took the painting off the wall and brought it to the dark room: the candle painting served as their light. She and Chimney explored the room together, having to navigate a maze of boxes. When Chimney was looking elsewhere—*CRASH!* “YAAAAAAAAAAAH!!”

“What?” Aisa jumped at Chimney’s sudden shout. It appears she had bumped into a cat vase and knocked it on the floor, broken. “Oh… Don’t scare me like that, Chimney.”

There was a painting of grapes, and Aisa knew the translated title as *Prelude to Wine*. “I don’t get it.” Chimney said.

“They use grapes to make wine.” Aisa said.

“I’ll just use grapes for grapes, since I’m hungry.” Chimney reached to pick one-

“Don’t!” Aisa smacked her hand. “Just… stay with me.” They found a lever on the wall, labeled *Alarm for the Clock*. Aisa flipped it. Nothing seemed to happen. With a shrug, they explored the maze further, and found a label *Malice’s True Form*. “I wonder what…” Aisa held her candle up to see the painting: it appeared to be a mutant, bloody human head, sticking partway out of its canvas.
“…Mir-RI-ROO-ROO-roo-roo…!”

The girls shuddered at the terrifying sound the painting made, which also moved. They walked away to examine the rest of the maze. They noticed a bunch of canvases - Plop. “Mir-RI-ROO-ROO-roo-roo…!” …Although it was too dark to see, it sounded like the Malice’s Form painting fell off its canvas... and was wandering around the room. ...They decided to ignore it, hoping it wouldn’t come at them. The canvases around the maze had various colored numbers: a red 7, blue 2, yellow 3, purple 9, and a green 1. They memorized these numbers and headed outside.

“This clock has hands now.” April noted at the Truant Seconds Hand. “But we need a five-digit code.”

“We found some numbers in that room.” Aisa mentioned. “But we don’t know the order.”

The girls split up to explore the area again. When Ib viewed around the room of unnamed paintings, she noticed they each had a certain color and varying heights. She deduced that the order was from shortest to highest: the ball painting was red (7), book painting was blue (2), shark was yellow (3), tea was purple (9)… but there wasn’t a green painting to serve as the next in height. That’s when Apis remembered the anthill painting they took down before; it was green, making the fifth number “1”.

They inputted this code in the giant fancy clock. The hands, which were pointing at a sun design, spun around and pointed at a moon. The hallway’s lights dimmed: it was nighttime. The butterfly flew out of the candle painting and started fluttering around the hall. The kids looked over at the Mistake painting wandering around: glowing red eyes appeared over its scribbled face. “EEEEEEE!” The girls shuddered. “It can see now!” Aeincha panicked.

“Not for long!” Chimney jumped over and threw heavy punches at the Mistake before it knocked out. “Yaaawn…” Hearing a yawning sound, they whipped around to see the giant snake was finally waking up.

“Quick, in here!” Aisa said as they ran into the room where the Mistake originally hung. They saw the snake’s tail flapping about on this side.

“Oi, let’s attack it from here!” Chimney ran to the tail. “CHIMNEY, NO!” her friends screamed, not that it mattered.

Chimney stomped the tail forcefully, and they heard the snake hiss as it turned around to enter this room via the painting. The snake spotted them and threatened to feast—the girls bolted out of the room and slammed the door. Aisa pressed her ear against it. “It’s looking around for us. As long as it doesn’t come out here, we can be safe. I’ll stay here and warn you guys if he comes.”

In the room with the unnamed paintings, the steaming tea had cooled, the nail no longer cast a shadow (since it was night), and the chair had a purple-haired girl in a red dress and red hair ribbon sitting in it. The book was closed, but they remembered its text: Everything changes at night. And it seemed things did. The “Hard-to-Wake Man” became the “Night-Owl Man.” The Stubborn Twins had stopped dancing—but they couldn’t enter their door because it was locked. When Mary checked the giant biker’s room, she discovered snow was covering the floor, and the delivery boy was off his bike, shivering on the floor.

The others noticed the white ant wandering around his anthill. Apis asked it, “Excuse me, do you know where we can find a key to that door?”

“i have a key. it’s in my house.”
“Could we have it?”

“i’m hungry. give me food and you can.”

“Anything in particular?” April asked.

“i like stars. they’re sweet and sugary things from the sky.”

“Candy stars?” Ib asked.

“I knew it!” Mary cheered. “I knew stars were candy!”

“Well… we’ll bring you some, then.” Apis shrugged.

For the moment, the kids didn’t know where to look for candy stars; they couldn’t shake out the ones the Night-Owl Man had in his painting. They couldn’t enter the snake’s room with it slithering around—“AAAH!” Ib jumped and dodged when the Stirred Up painting tried to stab her.

That must’ve been his night change. When April went back to the first room of this place, she and the tinies realized the Concealed Secret had changed into Revealed Secret: the hand was holding a frog by its leg. April took the large frog and went near the snake’s room. Aisa confirmed the creature was still in there. April opened the door quick, threw the frog toward the left, and slammed shut. Aisa confirmed the giant snake was eating.

April entered the room and walked quickly before the snake caught on. She hurried to the end of the hall where Beyond Halecyon Skies hung—instead of clouds, it was stars, and titled Overfilled Night Sky. She was able to shake the frame and let a piece of Stardust fall out. She scooped it in her hand and returned to the white ant, setting the star on the floor. “yay. food. thank you. you can go in my house now.” The tiny creature began to eat the delectable.

The kids exchanged shrugs. “I guess I’ll go in there.” Aeincha offered. April set her on the floor, and Aeincha was able to squeeze herself into the anthill.

She popped out of a hole in the ant’s box fort; safely past the spikes above the gap. She glanced at the white ant painting briefly before crawling into the mini tunnel. Due to the nighttime, it was very hard to see. In the faint light, this appeared to be a maze of tunnels, but it didn’t drag on too long as she felt herself touch a giant key. “Perfect!” Aeincha grabbed it around both arms and started to crawl back. “Mir-RI-ROO-ROO-ROO-ROO-ROO—!” Her tiny heart almost stopped. Aeincha frightfully turned back. A glowing white eye against a blood-red mass was staring at her. It must’ve been the Malice’s True Form that Aisa mentioned. Aeincha crawled faster.

“Mir-RI-ROO-ROO-ROO— Mir-RI-ROO-ROO-ROO—” The creature kept repeating this scary sound. Aeincha kept crawling; she had trouble remembering the route she came, plus carrying the key made crawling difficult. She wouldn’t look back, knowing that monster was probably right behind her. Finally, she saw what she recognized as the entrance, so Aeincha crawled faster to make it out. She dropped the key in the little hole and jumped in afterward.

She reunited with her friends as April grabbed the key and went to open the door. They found a painting titled Queen of High Society, depicting a fancy woman in a blue dress, surrounded by townspeople. The halls on either side of the painting simply made a loop around the central wall, which had numerous vacant sidewalk paintings, except for one paperboy painting. Ib and Mary remembered the shivering giant paperboy in his room.

Since the crew still had their net, they caught the butterfly floating around the hall. They brought the fiery creature to the glass cage and set it inside. Its light shone from the glass, and the
paperboy felt warm. He climbed onto his bike and rode vigorously across the treadmill-sidewalk. He threw a newspaper onto the floor, so April picked it up. She brought it to the Queen of High Society and tossed it into the painting. The queen caught it—unseen applause sounded as stairways rose up in either hallway. The kids could walk to the top of this tall room, finding another stairwell that led into this central wall. They journeyed down as the orange interior became cyan. (Play “Dungeon 5” from *Ib.*)

Act 4: The Abyss

At the bottom of the stairs, they found a purple sculpture of a woman bent up like a rainbow bridge, titled Annulated Woman. There was a message on the wall in cyan paint. As you walk into the abyss, do not forget the works you hold dear.

They entered the main room of this floor; the girls gazed with awe and wonder: the ceiling depicted an illusion of stars. There was a giant sculpture of a skeleton king and a Lady in Red hugging each other, in which both stuck out of a giant frame. Tryst After Death, it was titled. There was a sculpture of a giant, slanted wine glass with an indigo cloud of stars and planets, which was attached to said glass via a pole, making it seem like the night cloud was flowing out of it. Drinking in the Night. On the left, there was a giant yellowish stone called Flexible Stone.

April walked over to pick up a square panel with a strange design. The second she touched it, it poofed, reappearing on a blank canvas on the wall. Considering the amount of space left, April deduced that 12 pieces should go there. “It’s just like those Balls of Paint. I wonder what that picture’s going to make.”

“Guess we should split up and look around.” Aeincha shrugged. So that’s just what they did. Aisa entered a room to the very west side: she nearly became blinded by the walls of red, blue, and yellow abstract colors. The poster read, Cycloptic Smile: Focus your eyes and find where she hides. A true test of her sight abilities. Aisa examined every inch of the abstract walls closely. None of it displayed any specific pattern. She actually spent quite a while searching for… whatever she was searching for. Then: she noticed part of a curved red line move. She observed the area around it, realizing that the abstract designs created a body, somewhat, with a single large eye over the smile. The eye looked at Aisa, and another painting piece fell out of it. Aisa touched and watched the square vanish.

Aisa entered another door in the room. It was completely empty. She walked around and examined the floor tiles, but nothing seemed out of place… then when she leaned on the opposite wall—“Whoooa!” she stumbled through like it was never there. In this next room, there were painting pieces lain everywhere, but every one was holographic to Aisa’s touch. She wondered how she could find the real one… and when she returned through the fake wall, there it was, lain in the center of the floor. Aisa touched the piece as it vanished.

Chimney entered a southeast room. The poster read, Swimming Pool: An experiment in water color. Beware the anemones. The floor was completely covered with blue-painted paper—and Chimney was able to submerge in it like real water. Walls of sea anemones formed a path, so Chimney made sure to maneuver around them. She followed a zigzaggy path—she also didn’t realize that a cloud of splotched paint colors were floating after her from over the surface. Chimney followed a left route that led to a dead end. She resurfaced for air, and luckily discovered the painting piece floating in that spot. She touched it and made it vanish.

Still not noticing the pursuing color splotches, she dove underneath and continued through the anemone path. The floor was sloping downward, so Chimney shifted herself down. On the very lowest point, Chimney touched another painting piece, which vanished. There was also a black
rose. Chimney reached to pick it off its perch: the black petals scattered and floated up, and the color splatters poofed into nothing. Chimney resurfaced for breath, then dove back under to swim back to the start. She then noticed a blank white canvas… it was titled Mayhem of Color, but Chimney couldn’t read the German at all. “Ahh, I should’ve brought that dictionary with me. Meh… doesn’t look very interesting.”

When Chimney returned to the main room, the same time as Aisa, both of them noticed the indigo-blue liquid dried onto the floor. It looked like it was flowing from the Drinking in the Night.

April took the tiniest with her into a southwest room, where little black stick figures perked at the sight of them. They zipped away from their sight, hiding around the room. There were black lines scribbled everywhere. The sign on the wall said, Avoid red, chase black. There were red stick men walking around, trying to harm them, but they were small enough for April to step over. They noticed the black stick men blending in with the scribbles on the floor, walls, and ceiling, so April picked them off one at a time and stuffed them in her pockets.

There was a painting of pale flowers called Flowers Without Color. At Mocha’s request, April set the mini giant inside the painting. Mocha walked around the flower vase and caught a stick man. There was a painting of a blue coffin with a white Cross, called Insomnia Coffin. They couldn’t interact with it, at the moment. There was a painting of a boy in a white shirt, but his head and feet were unseen over the frame’s edges… except for the head and feet of the black stick man filling his place. In the space where a nameplate should be, Complete Youth was written. On the other side of the room, April picked up the fallen nameplate that saidIncomplete Youth and went to stick it back on. The stick man jumped out, leaving April to catch him.

There was a table of teapots that one of the sticks were hiding in. There was a row of cat statues, and April pulled the head off a loose one to catch another stick man. There was a glass, neon-colored bird squirming on the floor when a stick man was trying to ride it, so April pulled it off while Aeincha comforted the bird. There was a black and white painting titled Texture Maze, where April saw a stick man make a subtle movement, exposing himself. After the last few sticks were found among the scribbles, April shoved them all into a Croquis Book in the room’s corner. She heard something hit the floor on the other side of the room, discovering that a painting piece fell out of the Insomnia Coffin.

“Look, April!” Aeincha called. The Lilliputian was happily riding the glass neon bird. “He’s friendly, now. Isn’t he cute?”

April giggled. “He is, isn’t he? …Now that I think about it, where’s Gonbe?”

“That’s a good question.” Mocha realized. “He should’ve been with Aisa, but… she doesn’t even have her bag.”

“Well, let’s go ask her.” Aeincha rode her bird outside the room while April carried Mocha.

After finding Aisa in the central room, April asked her, “Aisa, weren’t you carrying Gonbe in your bag?”

“I set the bag beside the basement door before we came to look for you guys. It wasn’t there when we came back…”

“How COULD YOU LEAVE MY PRECIOUS KITTY ALONE?” Chimney screamed.

“I didn’t know this would happen! Besides, maybe it’s good that Gonbe didn’t get mixed up in this. We’ll meet him as soon as we’re out of here.”
“Tweet tweet.” The bird said.

“What’s that, Birdie?” Aeincha asked. “Do you want something?”

“He said he wants to go home.” Apis said. “…HEY, I understood him! Even though he’s not a real bird…”

“I keep getting more confused.” Aisa said.

“Come on, Birdie, you can take me.” Aeincha smiled. She rode the bird to a room on the very east side, which seemed to be a very long hallway. The bird gestured Aeincha off, looked at her, and began to walk down the hall in a specific pattern: Forward, Forward, Right, Fore, Fore, Left, Left, Fore, Right, Fore, Fore, Left, Fore, Fore, Right, then straight Forward. The writing on the wall said, The way will be shown to those pure of heart. Aeincha shrugged and proceeded to follow the specific path… She got a little mixed up, so she decided to walk directly forward… the hallway stretched on and on and on and on…

“This is making my brain hurt. Maybe he’ll show me again.” Aeincha walked out of the room and came back. The bird awaited her and showed… a different path. Just great.

So after about 10 tries, Aeincha finally followed the correct path. The glass bird jumped into a painting at the end of the hallway. He was with his mate in a bird nest. They dropped a painting piece for Aeincha to collect. “Hmhmhm! I’m glad you’re happy!” she told the bird.

Ib and Mary had gone up a very long stairwell, their young legs tired after doing so. They passed a narrow hallway and gaped at the terrific sculpture: it was a planetarium of celestial bodies that neither of them knew what planets they were. It was titled Birth of the Copernicus Revolution. “Wooooow! It’s outer space!” Mary beamed. “Did Dad- I mean, Guertena go to outer space, too?”

“I don’t know… but Mary, look!” Ib pointed at part of the device. “There’s a piece!”

“But how do we get up there?” Mary frowned. The girls searched around the room for a possible switch to turn it on. Ib found a cyan key beside a Mistake painting. The minute she picked it up, the painting came to life, so she and Mary hurried out of the room. They returned down the stairs and opened a locked door at the bottom. There was a glass jewel box labeled Jewel Box of Temptation. Mary’s eyes sparkled at all the lovely gems it contained. She was about to reach and try to open it…

“Want me treasure?” the box asked. The girls flinched. Ib and Mary exchanged curious and worried glances. “Solve me riddle, then we talk. Mess up, me bite. Which of me treasures weren’t there?” He displayed sharp teeth.

The girls gulped frightfully. They studied his treasures of various colors and textures, however they didn’t understand the riddle. Which treasures weren’t there? …They ran all the way back up to—the Mistake painting came tumbling down the stairs, so they avoided him first. When said painting started to wander the main room, the girls headed up to look at the planetarium. Indeed, the planets matched the colors and designs of the jewels. They rushed downstairs and observed the jewels again. After a few more checks (boy, their legs were tired), they pointed out the orange sun jewel and emerald jewel. “…You smart. Okay. Me treasure yours.” The jewel box munch-munch-munched before spitting out a painting piece. It vanished on their touch. “Me so bored… play game with me sometime.”

Ib and Mary went back up to the planetarium, but it still wasn’t moving. It was then Mary
discovered the switch inside the Mistake’s canvas, now visible with the painting absent. She flipped
the switch, and the spectacular spherical device began moving. When the painting piece rotated at
its lowest point, Ib grabbed it. They returned downstairs to see the floor grew more covered with
Drinking in the Night’s substance.

In the northwest corner of the main room, there was a round canvas beside a door. A single pink
flower was drawn against white space in this Beauty of Blanc. “Hm… an experiment in white
space, I’m guessing?” April said.

“Feels kind of lazy.” Mocha said. “But that glass looks breakable. Hold me closer.” April did so,
and Mocha used her strength to punch the glass open and grab the flower.

“What can we use it for?”

Mocha looked around for an answer, then her eyes directed up the giant skeleton in the “Tryst
After Death” sculpture. “Let me climb up that skeleton!” April carried the mini giant to the
skeleton so she could climb up its red king’s robe. Mocha clutched the flower tight in her teeth,
using every ounce of strength to climb ceaselessly. I sure miss being giant. Finally, she slipped the
flower in the skeleton’s teeth. A painting piece came out that April grabbed.

“Sigh, I need to rest now.” Mocha panted after climbing down.

“You can rest here.” April placed Mocha on the Flexible Stone, which was actually softer than it
looked. “Hmm… I wouldn’t mind resting someplace, too.” She thought aloud as she entered
the northwest room.

In this room, Apis was skimming the books of a library. “Did you find anything in here?” April
asked Apis, who turned to her.

“Not yet, but I’m trying.”

“I’m going to take a short nap.” April said as she sat against a wall beside a blue curtain. “My
feet hurt. Wake me up if something happens.”

Apis found a book titled Nobodies, which had a bookmarked page. If a real person trades realities
with someone Imaginary, an empty shell will be all that exists of that person. These “Nobodies”
are one without true feelings. They have forgotten everything that they once loved. However, that
does not mean that what was forgotten is no longer there.

“I wonder if that means… Garry?” Apis thought aloud. She found some old newspaper clippings
that said, Eccentric Artists Ahead of Their Time: Who Was Weiss Guertena? “Huh?” Apis gasped
when the room’s lights started flickering green, pink, and blue. Her heart racing, she ran up to
April and shook her. “April, wake up! April!” The 13-year-old was fast asleep. Apis jumped back
with a start when the blue curtain fell off the wall, revealing a painting of a guy with an axe.

Apis observed the painting closely. There was a German word in the lower-right that she didn’t
know. There was also a 3-minute counter above the painting… and its sights were set on April.
Rather than try to wake April up again, Apis hurriedly checked the books. A book that was sticking
out was titled Entering the Secret Room. She immediately pulled it open. First, look under the
stool. She ran to the stool near the door, finding a note stuck to its bottom. Look in the Cubism
book. Apis remembered seeing that in the left bookshelves, so she opened it. On the painting’s axe.
Gulping, Apis went to look at the man’s axe. Canvas, it had written. Apis checked the blank canvas
in the room’s corner—it had something written now. Close your eyes and count to 3.
Apis knew this would be trouble. She sighed and mentally counted, seeing only darkness in her eyelids. One... two... three...

A cord dangled from the ceiling, surprising her. Apis quickly pulled it—she poofed to a new room in the blink of an eye. There was a painting that was constantly scrolling leftward. It depicted a swamp setting, including frogs, fireflies, crows, fish... it was titled Four XXX and XXX Lights, in which the X’s were green and yellow respectively. The only green things in the painting were frogs, so Apis typed that code in the panel under the green ball. The “lights” must have been the fireflies, so Apis counted seven different ones before the painting looped. She inputted ‘7’, and she got a painting piece.

But how to exit this room? There were four switches in the corner walls. Tempting fate, Apis pushed a random one... and she was back in the library. “Apis!” April exclaimed, finally awake. The painting’s counter had stopped. “Where did you come from?”

“A... secret room?” Apis wasn’t sure of herself.

“Really? Must’ve been really secret....” She looked at the axeman painting and went to read the word in the corner. ‘Peep.’ Hmm...” The two left the room to meet the others. “I wonder how—AAAAAAH!” They fell into a dark abyss the minute they walked out the door. “OW!” They landed on an asteroid of some kind. They found that they were surrounded by endless space, with stars and planets.

“Apriiiiiil!” Mary called from the distance. The team members had landed on individual asteroids.

“What happened in here?!” April yelled.

“The Drinking Night thing filled the whole room!” Ib called. “How do we get up?!”

A stairway of stars floated up to a central platform from each of their asteroids. “I guess this is it.” The girls all hurried up their stars and reunited in the center, where the “Tryst After Death” also stood. “Wait, where’s Mocha?!”

“She’s still on that rock!” Aeincha pointed to the Flexible Stone on a lower platform. It seemed the center of that stone had sunk into a hole, and Mocha was in there.

“I’ll save you, Mochan!” Chimney unhesitantly jumped down and smashed on the soft stone. “WHOOOA!” Immediately, the stone puffed and propelled her and Mocha back up with the others. The final painting piece came up with them, so April touched it.

“That was the last one!” Aisa pointed excitedly. “Look!”

A stairway led up to the painting on the center of the wall. The twelve pieces formed the left side of a white-coated figure holding a paintbrush with green paint. The girls jogged up, and April read the nameplate. “Guertena’?”

“Really?” Apis gaped. “THAT’S Guertena?”

“But I heard he didn’t make self-portraits.” April said. “When did he make this?”

“Father...” Mary spoke lowly.

The room shook, and a staircase led directly up into the painting itself. Their undying curiosity only grew. They stepped up into the painting.
A wide, black stairwell led up into a large, quiet room of the same dark color. It brought them to a diamond bed that April and Ib recognized. “This is where I found Ib…” April said. On the other side of the fence, they could read the nameplate: Final Stage.

The room trembled just then. The black bed moved to the right, unveiling another staircase. Blue shoeprints were facing it. The girls exchanged wondrous expressions and marched down. The passage was very dark, but it was short before they reached a door. April turned the knob and entered first. This room had canvases, stools, mannequin statues, and slanted paintings hanging around the walls. “Hehehehehehe…” They turned left. Garry was giggling giddily, scratching a rabbit’s tummy with his finger. “Who’s a happy kitty, who’s a happy kittyyyyy…”

“Gyyyyyyyyoooooom…” Gonbe felt like he was in Heaven.

“GONBE-CHAN!” Chimney dashed over and punched the man away, grabbing her rabbit. “WHO SAID YOU COULD TOUCH MY PRECIOUS NEKO?!?”

“Is that Japanese for ‘bunny’?” Mary asked.

“No, Mary, she…” April was too lost in thought to explain to her. “Aisa, look! Your bag!” She pointed at a satchel a few feet away. A cyan rose was sticking out of it, likely Gonbe’s.

“Ahh… So nice to have guests in my humble home.”

They whipped their attention to the center. They were facing the back of a man with lavender hair (lighter and smoother than Garry’s), and a white coat, painting a canvas with his left hand. “Nnn? Who are you?” Chimney asked quizzically.

“It… can’t be…” April stared in awe and wonder. The painting they had just entered…

“April… Mary… It’s me.” The man turned around on his stool. He had narrowed golden eyes on his sharp face. “It’s…”

“Father…” Mary’s blue eyes welled with tears.

“Mary…” He held his arms open. “Hello, Dear.”

She immediately ran up and grabbed her father in a hug. Her tears soaked his leather white coat. He softly patted her back with his left hand. The W7 members found it both heartwarming and amazing… The artist they had never heard of, the one who made everything here… was in the flesh. And he looked so young…

Mary pulled her face away and looked up at him with a smile. “Father… I thought you were gone. And… I wondered… where you were… I thought you forgot about me…”

“Mary… I never forgot about you. Those lasts years of my life were dedicated to you… and your creation. I wanted nothing more… than to set you free… Allow you to live and breathe… like a real person… So I did.”

“You did?”

“I was ill, Mary. I was old and feeble. My greatest regret was that I could not watch you live the life that I wanted for you. I feared the life I wanted for you could not come into place. Just after I had finished painting you… I had a heart-attack. The doctors were able to heal me, but I knew I
was not long. I told them that I wanted to live my last days inside my treasured gallery, where they had already framed and placed your portrait. I entered my Fabricated World and plucked the petals off of my own rose. I sacrificed my reality... for you, Mary.

“Do you mean... I could’ve left whenever I wanted...” The idea was unbelievably shocking to Mary.

“Mary...” Ib spoke softly, thinking back on all the drama Mary had been through, and what she put them through. To think that none of it mattered... Mary must’ve felt so guilty...

“I’m sorry, Mary.” Guertena bowed, still smiling. “I had assumed the other creations would have told you. I guess they could not bear to let their Mary go.”

“So when Mary killed Garry... that meant two people were sacrificed.” April looked at her hand. “I stole Garry’s reality... and Mary took-”

“Wait a second!” Aisa spoke up. “April was thrown outside the painting first, so SHE took Guertena’s reality, and Mary took Garry’s!”

“That doesn’t make sense, either.” Apis said, “because how come Ib’s life was replaced by Mary —in fact, why wasn’t Guertena forgotten?!?”

The artist in question chuckled. “I have created a very complex world, haven’t I? My children, I am a Worldbuilder. While average people can only create a single Imaginary Friend, those with once-in-a-million talent and vision can create an entire fictional realm. Such a realm is bound by the rules the artist creates. Anyone who is trapped here is forgotten by the outside, except myself. This way... I could know immortality. Imaginary or deceased, Weiss Guertena would live forever.”

“But, Father... wouldn’t that mean I would’ve been forgotten, too?” Mary asked with hurt in her voice.

“I know, Mary... An artist always has his flaws. But you escaped. You and April knew freedom. It was only six years ago when this Nobody of mine materialized. The creations lay my body to sleep on my deathbed, awaiting the day it would arise as one of their own. Hm, how unfortunate that Miss Ib chose to sleep on it, just after I arose from slumber.”

Ib clenched her fists and bit her lip. The memories of her pain on that dark bed haunted her.

“I have enjoyed Garry’s company very much. He’s very delightful. And what a riveting bunch you girls have been, ever since arriving here. What marvelous paintings you will make.”

“Excuse me?” Aeincha perked up.

“Father, what are you saying?” Mary asked.

“True, I originally wanted Mary to have freedom... but as I sit here, continuing my art, for hours without end... I have never known greater solace. Surrounded by all things that I love, forever. My own personal Spirit World, with nothing to concern me. Deeply have I missed Mary’s company. But that no longer matters... because I knew she would return to me, with more new subjects like Master Garry and Miss Ib.”

“You mean you’re planning to trap us here?!” Mocha shouted.

‘Trap’? My dears, you’ll feel like home here. Look at yourselves, you’re walking pieces of art already! A large-mouthed human, two talking dolls, a life-size animated doll, a winged human, and...
an oddly-dressed priestess…” The girls each narrowed their eyes at their remark. “Visitors will be lining up all over to see you.”

“If you want, you can use the nicknames I gave ‘em all.” Chimney noted.

“But I thought we couldn’t become paintings unless other paintings took our place.” Aisa stated.

“Precisely. Which is why these ladies are lining up to seize the chance.”

The girls realized they were surrounded by Canvas Ladies and headless statues. Their venomous looks were the same. “They will enter the real world and bring more visitors to my gallery. Children will wander in my world, and the ones that are distinguishably ‘special’ in appearance will be trapped here. Reality will become art, and my art will become reality! The legend of Guertena will be one that never vanishes!”

“But… Father…” Mary’s eyes trembled. “Those people don’t belong here… they belong in the real world. They have friends… and family… and they…” She turned around. Ib was staring at her with the same look in her red eyes. “…They don’t deserve to live here… This place is… dark and… scary… And we shouldn’t let what happened to Garry happen to anyone else.”

“Is that so… Mary?” Guertena smirked. “You had no qualms about that before… Will you really sacrifice what you have in that world… to return here?”

“…” Mary clutched her heart. Her real heart, that contained a real soul. A soul that was not fabricated. “Yes… I would. Garry… deserves to be free.”

“Mary…” Ib spoke.

“Hm… I see.” The artist’s eyes narrowed. “Then I must become rash.” The room suddenly shook as he stood. “I must make you realize the power of art… to its full potential.” (Play “The Encounter” from Kingdom Hearts II!)

They felt the floor sink downwards and the walls and ceiling move away. They gazed up in the crayon-drawn, starry sky, with the sun, the moon, all the crayon designs from Pandora’s Box. Weiss Guertena’s self-portrait hung in the sky, just above the artist’s floating platform. The artist happily drew on a canvas, and more headless statues, Canvas Ladies, and mannequin heads appeared. A swarm of zombie dolls came down, and a familiar blank canvas floated above them: the Red Eyes climbed out as the giant, hideous doll snarled at its prey.

April clutched her paintbrush and palette, showing no fear. “You’re a century out of date, Guertena. You’re dealing with a new generation of artists. Right, Mary?”

Mary narrowed her eyes, grabbing her crayons. “Yeah…”

**Boss fight: Weiss Guertena**

When Guertena drew a black line on his canvas, a black line stretched across the battlefield, and claws reached out of them as they attempted to grab the girls. They jumped back as Chimney used her rapid kicking to fight them, but the claws clasped her legs and tried to scratch. April saw a canvas nearby, so she dipped her brush in pink paint and swiped a line across the paper, making a pink paint strip cut through part of the claws. “Hey, it works!”

“Good!” Chimney escaped and began to punch away the Canvas Ladies. “Draw fire over all these
freaks and burn them!"

“It won’t work if he’s doing it, too. I’ll go up there to stop him, you guys focus on these monsters. Mary, can you draw on these, too?”

“Uh-huh!” Mary danced over to a canvas and swiped yellow crayons across, making yellow strips appear over the field to shock the statues and Canvas Ladies that were on them. April rushed across the field, nimbly evading the red stick figures and slashing red paint on the floor for them to attack. “Hhehehehehehehehe!” She found Garry in her path, raising a palette knife. “Don’t go over there, stay here! I wanna play with you… AAAAAH!” Ib jumped from the side and grabbed her arms and legs around him.

“Go on, April! I’ll hold back Garry!”

April nodded and ran around them. Still cackling, Garry grabbed and threw Ib on the floor. “Garry, snap out of it! Don’t you remember anything?”

“HHEEHEEHEEHEE!” Garry stabbed down, but Ib rolled out of the way and got to her feet.

“Garry, I know you’re in there somewhere! I know you’re not REALLY trying to hurt me!”

“Garry, who’s Garry?, you’re Garry, I’M Garry!” he cheered perkily. “Would you like some dairy?” :3 He held a glass of milk up.

“Uh… sure?”

Garry was smiling kindly—then he made that angry anime face where his teeth turn sharp. “WELL THAT’S GOOD, ‘CAUSE MY DAIRY WOULD LIKE SOME O’ YOU!” He smashed the milk on the floor, letting a puddle of white spread out. Ib fell in the white and grabbed hold of the ledge that still remained. Garry was grinning devilishly as he began to stomp and grind his shoes on Ib’s fingers.

Chimney kicked away Canvas Ladies while Mocha was punching the zombie dolls, thankful to be the right size to beat them. “Hey, Gonbe, is all our stuff still in that bag?” Aisa asked.

“Gyooom-gyom!” He saluted.

“Great! We can give Mocha a red apple and make her giant again!”

“Sounds like a plan,” Mocha panted, punching the dolls one at a time, “because I’m tired of Tiny Style!”

“At least you’re nicer to the ears.” Aeincha stared at her.

Apis ran to try and grab the satchel- “HAH!” A Canvas Lady popped up from the abyss and took it. She was taller than the others, with a pink dress, pretty blue eyes, and orange hair. “It’s my Big Big Sis!” Mary gasped. “Elizabeth!”

“WHOA!” Apis dodged when Elizabeth slashed a lizard tongue at her. “Mary, you have a weird family!” She kept dodging, and Elizabeth held the satchel beyond her reach.

April used the nearby canvases to draw red spots so that Guertena was forced to connect his black lines to them. April stopped at a central canvas close to Guertena’s platform. She combined black paint and white paint to make gray, drawing a spring on the canvas. “Here goes!” April jumped—a spring propelled her high into the sky, and she landed behind Guertena on his platform.
“April… so nice of you to join me.” He smiled at her. “Isn’t art simply grand? Why don’t you join me here? You can draw with me forever.”

“The atmosphere isn’t right for me. Afraid I’ll have to decline.”

“But now that you know the truth behind your existence, do you plan to leave Mary here? Because it’s plainly obvious I don’t intend to go.”

“I do plan to leave with my friends… but I won’t abandon Mary. We WILL find a way for her to leave, too! For now, we can only make sure she doesn’t have to deal with you!” She ran to throw a punch, but Guertena whipped his paintbrush in front of her and blocked with a blue paint shield.

“I am the artist here. What I create becomes reality in this world. No matter if I am real or Imaginary.” He drew a downpour of small rocks, and April dodged when said downpour appeared over her.

“My art still kicks more butt than yours.” April dipped blue paint on her right fist, using her enhanced strength to punch Guertena’s shield. She was able to break through, grab the artist by the neck collar, and hurl him overhead to slam him on the floor. Guertena jumped away, swiftly painted a punching glove into being, and sent her flying off the platform and over the chasm.

“AAAAHH!”

“APRIL!” Mary danced over to a canvas and swiped some diagonal blue crayon, making an ice slide appear to bring April back to the battlefield. “Thanks, Mary! …Oh no, Ib!”

“AAAAH!” Ib poured all her willpower into holding the ledge, despite the weight of Garry’s shoes on her fingers.

“When do the bones break, tell me that, I wanna hear them crack, hehehehehe!” Garry giggled.

“IB!” Mary slashed her gray crayons and knocked Garry away with their force. She and April helped Ib back up onto the ground.

“That just hurt, it was from a squirt!” Garry sang. “Squirt just hurt! Hurt and squirt.”

Ib ran up to him again. “Come on, Garry, come to your senses! Stop acting stupid! What’s wrong with you?”

“I…I’m sorry.” Garry spoke and looked guiltily. “…No’mnot! HEEHHEEHEEHEEEE! TAKE THIS!” He chucked a mannequin head that grabbed Ib’s hair in its teeth. Mary came to punch it off, but Garry threw more heads that bit them all around.

“NNNYY!” Chimney flew over and powerfully punched and kicked the heads, letting them all shatter. “I’m used to smashing these things. Give me all ya got!”

Garry snapped his fingers, and a swarm of mannequins floated from under the edge. “Oh no.” They were all sent at Chimney, who used her rapid speed to break every single one.

Mocha was still punching zombie dolls with single punches, their red paint flying everywhere. The giant was growing more tired, so Aisa picked her up to kick dolls away herself. “YAAAAAH!” Aeincha was riding Gonbe as the headless statues chased her, and once they were far enough away, Gonbe ran back to jump, kick Aeincha in the air, and the Lilliputian threw her grappling hook into a red one’s head hole. She swung around and kicked off the chest of a green one, flying
around the red one’s back and flying up in the air.

She landed in the red statue’s head hole, ducking inside to dodge its hands. “You know, how is it that you have better sight than the Mistake guys?” She ducked another grab. “Doesn’t matter, you’re still clueless, I guess.” The other statues were “glaring” at her, so Aeincha jumped to the yellow one, and when the blue tried to grab, he stumbled and knocked both of them down, then Aeincha jumped off Blue’s head to land on Green. Red whirled its fist, ready to punch, Green gestured ‘No!’ , but Red punched and knocked her out, and Aeincha jumped over to Red.

April was going to make another spring on the middle canvas, but Guertena drew claws under it as they pulled the board into their darkness. Weiss drew more claws at her, but April dodged to another canvas to cancel them with pink paint. She dipped her brush in blue paint and painted a stairway that winded right, creating some stairs that led up to Guertena. The artist created a giant axe to chop the end of the stairs—April thought fast and jumped the gap to land on his platform. She painted blue on her fist again and ran to punch him, but- “Huh?” the man broke into papers.

“Paper Art.” Guertena was perched on a higher platform, folding paper into birds and painting brown feathers and yellow beaks on them. April slashed white paint on them to disable the papers, and using the canvas on this platform, she drew a spring pad. It propelled her skyward, and she landed on Guertena’s platform, stomping the paper dolls with knives that he created. She threw her blue-painted fist at him, but Guertena dodged so she would punch his canvas.

“AAAAH!” Her friends below screamed when a crater exploded in the ground.

Before April could recompose, Guertena painted a black hole under her feet. “WHOA!” She fell in and grabbed the edges.

“Don’t bother.” Guertena created a weight that smashed on April’s face, forcing her down the hole and on the lower battlefield.

“APRIL!” (“Gyom-gyom!”) Her friends screamed.

“OOOOOW… agh!” Blood was drastically spilling out of April’s nose and other cuts on her face. “It hurts… OW… aaah!…” The petals of her rose were quickly falling.

“April has hemophilia!” Mary yelled. “We gotta do something!”

“Hemo-whaty-what? What’s that mean?” Chimney asked.

“It means that she bleeds easy.” Apis answered. “We gotta find a vase somewhere!”

Chimney saw a gray vase not far from her position. “I’ll save her!” Chimney kicked the mannequin heads and dodged over to April to grab her pink rose. She stylishly jumped over to the vase to put it in. The petals reappeared and April’s bleeding stopped.

“Phew… Thanks, Chimney.” April helped herself up. “…Chimney, behind you!”

“Mmm? AAH!” The Red Eyes was standing over Chimney, hissing at her with glowing eyes and mouth of the same color.

Apis dodged Elizabeth’s right hand while she held the satchel up with her left. “Apis!” She looked over, gasping when a red headless statue charged over to the large Canvas Lady like a football player. However, the red statue had Aeincha’s tiny head on its top, the Lilliputian controlling it. The statue leaped and grabbed the large lady’s face, Elizabeth shaking and flailing her arms. Apis seized the chance to jump and grab the satchel. She dug around in it and grabbed a red apple.
“MOCHA, CATCH!” She threw it.

Aisa caught the apple, put Mocha on the floor, and gave her the fruit. The black-haired girl happily munched it: she grew slightly bigger, allowing her to take more bites, and before long she was her powerful giant size. The Red Eyes was trying to drain the soul out of Chimney, but the demonic doll was no threat from the giant’s perspective. “Hey, Ugly!” Red Eyes turned with a hiss, gasping in surprise. Mocha balled her right fist and turned it Armament. “Pick on someone your own size!” She swung her fist, and blood flew out of Red Eyes’ nostrils as the giant zombie fell into the abyss.

“AAAAH!” Elizabeth grabbed Mocha from behind and began to choke the giant. “Let me go! Stop it! AAAAH!”

“Hang on, Mocha!” Apis hurried over and jumped to grab Elizabeth’s hair. The monstrous lady shook her head and swung her long hair, but the Christian kept a firm grip.

“Keep that up, Apis!” Aisa ran over and pulled a Dial out of her satchel. “She’s about to get a bad hair day!” She aimed the conch-shell and blasted fire from it in the same fashion as a S.P.I.C.E.R.. When Apis swung back to her, the fire burned off Elizabeth’s hair as Apis landed safely on the field. “UUUUAABBBBBBBBBBBBBBB!” Elizabeth released Mocha and crawled around helplessly, making an earsplitting screech. When she began rolling on the floor, Aisa hurried up, aimed an Impact Dial, and BLASTED the canvas in the face. Elizabeth’s fabricated face was dented like a crater, and the Canvas Lady fell dead.

“HAHA!” Apis and Aisa high-fived.

Guertena chuckled softly. “Water Color.” He dipped his brush in water and painted from the bottom of his canvas. The girls screamed when the battlefield suddenly flooded, in which the girls except for Chimney were unable to swim. Said girl quickly swam up to Guertena’s platform to do a Torpedo Spin, but Guertena created a shield to protect himself from her rage. He then painted two sharks to chase the part-mermaid.

Still holding her breath, April grabbed a paintbrush and tried to draw on a floating canvas, but her paint was floating everywhere like mist. “It is forbidden to damage the displays in my gallery.” Guertena stated. “And I do not appreciate my art being tarnished. You ladies are going to learn the hard way, the power of the one and only Guertena.”

A thought sparked in April’s head. Wait! If I stole Guertena’s reality... then that means I took his place in the real world. Er, doesn’t it? I mean, I ended up being Galdino’s daughter, but...but I wonder if I can... She grabbed her brush and whirled it in a circle over her, creating an air bubble. “I CAN!”

“What?!” Guertena gasped. April mixed gray paint together and drew a drain on the floor. The water flowed away, allowing her friends to breathe.

April raised her brush proudly. “I am the reincarnation of Weiss Guertena!” She painted jetpacks on her back and joyfully flew skyward to land on the artist’s platform. Guertena drew a black archway on his canvas, making a dark portal appear overhead as claws reached out to grab April. April painted firecrackers and lit them with painted fire, making them fly and explore on the hands. Guertena swung a painted wrecking ball from his hand, hitting April in the chest and knocking her back over the edge. Mocha caught her friend before she hit the ground, but they looked and realized painted spikes were appearing around them. Mocha winced from the pain in her feet, but April painted wings on herself to fly. She swooped across the field to paint a midair extra floor for all of them to jump on.
“HEEEEEE!” Garry jumped onto this extra floor, as did Ib and Mary. The latter drew orange crayon on Garry’s coat, but the man embraced the heat and began to swing his flaming coat around the air. Ib dodged when Garry swung it at her, going behind the man to kick his legs and knock him down. Mary painted ice-blue crayon on his T-shirt, so to soothe the coldness, Garry put his flaming coat back on. He spun like a top with his knife outstretched, attempting to slice the girls. Mary raised her own knife in defense, but it was flung out of her hand, falling to the abyss. Garry stopped, grinning hysterically before punching Mary to the floor.

He raised his knife to stab the girl, but Ib jumped and grabbed his arm from behind. “Garry, please stop! Please! I’m trying to help you! I want you to come home with me!”

“HA HAAAAA!” Garry whirled and threw her off. “Garry’s gone, Garry’s GOOOOONE!” He stabbed down, but Ib dodged back and stood up.

“No he’s not! I know he’s still in there! You tried to protect me, Garry, you wouldn’t let me get hurt.”

“Nope!” He spoke perkily. “No Garry! Never ever! Garry died, you cried, no one cares if you survive! Speaking of which, I prefer if you DON’T!”

Ib gritted her teeth in anger. She looked at the edge of the starry abyss, then faced him seriously, “Yes you do. You DO care if I survive. And I’ll prove it!”

“IB, NO!” Mary cried when the brown-haired Goldenweek girl ran and jumped into the abyss.

“IB!” Garry cried frowning—wait a minute. Garry’s head was burning with thoughts… That can’t be right, Garry hadn’t thought in six years. As a matter of fact, he wasn’t Garry! Who was Garry? There was no Garry. No… he… Garry… Ib… Mary… Garry… Mary… Ib… Garry… Garry… … Yes… he remembered… he was Garry Lincoln… (Pause song.)

His father was an African-French man named Avery, and his mom was a German woman named Gabriele. They had him when they were 18 years old. His 11-year-old aunt, Abby got him to join the Kids Next Door when he was six. Numbuh 362 approved his admission, but after her resignation, he served under Numbuh 363. On his 13th birthday, he became a TND spy. When Abby had her first son, Hoagie III, Garry heard that he joined the Kids Next Door. Then when Garry was on a break from spying, he visited the Guertena Gallery in his hometown. He got trapped in the cursed gallery, and that’s where he met…

“IIIIIIB!” Garry jumped over the edge, trying to force himself to fall faster and catch the child. Seeing him falling after her, like the Garry she knew and loved, tears flew out of Ib’s eyes, reaching up for him.

“Mind if I lend a hand?” April swooped down with her painted wings and grabbed Ib, shooting straight up and grabbing Garry on the way. She set both of them on the floor, where Mary ran up to them.

“Ib…” Garry got up on his knees and faced down at the red-eyed girl.

“Ib…” Garry was still tearing.

“Ib… What on Earth were you doing? And… where am I…” He looked around.

“GARRYYYY!” She grabbed him in the tightest hug she ever gave somebody.

“M-My… Ib… Did something happen? What have I… been doing all this time…”
Ib was crying, pressing her face to his shirt. “You... weren’t doing anything, Garry! You were just... having a nightmare...”

“...Ib...” Garry smiled and softly touched Ib’s back. What had this child been through during his absence... He was so glad to see her again.

“...Garry, you’re hurt!” She noticed the cut across his shirt that Mary cut earlier.

“Oh... hehe, it doesn’t feel painful.” Garry blushed. “I’m not even... bleeding... Huh?”

Ib smiled and held her lace handkerchief up. “Use this.”

“Ib, I told you, I’m not-...” He couldn’t resist a favor with that adorable smile. “But... I’ll hold onto it.” Garry took the handkerchief.

April smiled at their beautiful moment, floating with her wings. “AAAH!” (Resume song.) A bladed whip lashed down and sliced her wings.

“So what if you snapped him back to normal!” Guertena proclaimed, flying with dark demonic wings. “You’ll become just as mad as he did when I’m through!” He flew at them like a rocket, but April painted a hole in their new ground and caused him to smash headfirst against the spikes below. She painted blue paint over her arms, increasing her strength tenfold as she threw furious punches at him. She grabbed his wings and yanked them off, but Guertena was still on his feet, spinning around and painting dark circles on the floor. Whirlpools spawned in those areas to suck them all inside.

April mixed orange paint on her soles to make rocket shoes, flying up and drawing a giant vacuum to suck all her friends into safety. She flew up, set the vacuum on the high platform, then painted a crossbow to shoot at Guertena. The artist drew two mirrors to bounce her arrows back and knock the bow out of her hand, then he leaped, grabbed April’s leg, and spun midair to throw her to the field. He painted himself a slide to slide back onto the field and shove April toward the edge. She regained her balance and slashed red paint around the floor to distract him. She ran away to catch her breath, exhausted from the blue paint she used.

“Ib, Mary, just what is going on here, anyway?” Garry asked as they watched the fight transpire.

“It turns out, Guertena made himself a painting, too.” Aisa explained. “And after Mary killed you, she and her doll, April took both of your places... Er, technically Mary took Ib’s place—I really don’t understand how this works...”

“Wait... so that girl is the doll that Mary had?”

“She is...” Mary replied. “I think that’s why she bleeds easily, ‘cause I stuffed my dolls with red paint that falls out a lot.”

“That explains why April don’t wanna fight me.” Chimney realized.

“But don’t you think we should help her?” Mocha asked.

“Nah. They’re both artists. It’s fate or something.”

Guertena began to paint bombs around the field, blowing off individual parts. April painted wings on her back again to fly, but Guertena did the same with his black painted wings. He slashed gray paint droplets from his brush, which morphed into axes that April frightfully dodged. Guertena rammed her with a headbutt, but April recomposed and painted blue on her legs and wings. She
flew faster, zipping above Guertena to land a powerful kick, and the artist hurled painted spears that slashed the top edges of her wings. April winced and panted as she looked up... Guertena’s painting was floating in the sky.

“Just what are you thinking about?” Guertena asked, flying at her again, but April dodged and flew to her friends.

“Mary, did you bring the lighter?!”

“Oh!” She shuffled around her pocket and got it out. “Here!” She tossed it to April.

“What are you doing?!” Guertena panicked.

April faced him with a cold stare, flicking the candle on. “Your art’s about to light up the night sky.”

“NOOOOOO!”

April soared to the painting with increasing speed, set on nothing more than to burn it where it floats. With pure gusto, she swung the lighter at the painting... it phased through. “Huh?!”

“HA HA HA HA HAAAAAA!” Guertena laughed. “Did you forget?! I created this world! It runs by my rules! And according to my rules, MY PAINTING can’t be burned!”

“That’s unfair!” Chimney shouted. (“Gyom-gyom!”)

“But I can’t say the same for your friends!” Guertena created orange paint meteors that were falling to the girls’ platform.

April sparked with an idea. “But I know a painting that can be...” She soared down, shoving Guertena away, and created a barrier to block all the meteors. “Everybody, in the vacuum!” She used the giant paint vacuum to suck them all in again. With that, she carried them all up and flew into Guertena’s painting.

“Where are you going now?!?” Guertena chased her.

They were back in the Black Area, and April released her friends before they all dashed up the stairs. Guertena chased them all the way up, and seeing him coming, Mary drew blue crayon on the floor to make him slip. Guertena gasped when Garry ran and tackled him all the way back down. With a force of power, Guertena blew him off and rushed up even faster. “RUN, IB!” Garry called.

“Let’s go!” Mary grabbed her friend and ran after the others.

The stairs finally brought them back to the main gallery—or rather, the replica of the main gallery. Guertena chased the kids up to the second floor, past “Death of the Individual” and “Reserved Seat,” before finally catching them beside the Fabricated World mural. “Think you girls are going to escape- HUH?!”

April was holding the lit lighter to the giant mural. “One more step and I’ll destroy this entire world. The legacy of Guertena will be gone forever.”

“You’d destroy yourselves!”

April smirked, not taking her hand away. “At least no one’ll be sad about us.”
“AAAUGH!” With cheetah-like speed, Guertena dashed at April, tackling her as the lighter was flown away, off.

April grinned deviously. “Caught ya.”

The artist realized her arms were painted blue, and with her enhanced strength, she forced him to the floor and threw punches at his face. Guertena smacked her off. April backed toward the mural, then grabbed the man’s wrists when he lunged at her.

Ib and Mary watched as the canvas around the mural vanished: the portal to the real world was open. The two exchanged serious nods. April looked around Guertena at them, giving a wink. Ib and Mary ran and grabbed his legs, April fell and kicked her foot up at his stomach, and once the man was propelled, the two shoved him inside the mural. Guertena recovered with surprise, but April jumped in the mural and punched him in the face, sending him all the way back into the portal. (End song.)

April climbed down to her friends to catch her breath. “I shouldn’t be using so much blue paint…”

“He’s gonna come back, isn’t he?!” Mocha balled her fists. “Move, we gotta be ready!”

“No…” Mary spoke grimly, staring at the mural. “I think it’s over…”

Real world

Guertena tumbled out of the painting. He got back up on his feet, rubbing his head. “Where... am I...” He hadn’t seen the other side in so long. It was completely foreign to him. And yet, it felt so... familiar. It felt so... marvelous. “Hn hn hn... I’m back.” He spoke softly. “The real world... after so many years. I wonder how things have changed.”

Guertena looked around. Almost all his paintings, sculptures, at display in this gallery. The gallery dedicated to him... the legendary artist. “Imagine when they see... the true Guertena. I’ll bring so many customers... more will fall into the Fabricated World. They’ll be part of my... genius.” He excitedly explored the gallery. But something wasn’t right. “Where is everyone? It can’t be closed now, can it? Hm, no matter.” He chuckled softly. “Outside, there’s sure to be...”

He headed for the front door. For the first time in over a century, fresh air, city streets, sky and clouds. People... He giddily walked over to the front door, grabbed its handles, turned... It wouldn’t open. “What?” He twisted and pushed, but the doors wouldn’t budge. “That’s strange.” He walked over to the twin windows. The moment he tried to view out into darkness, red paint leaked out from the top. “What?”

Writing appeared on the wall. Father, come back. In the distance of the vacant halls, footsteps sounded. Must be his imagination. However, he grew slightly nervous and decided to roam the halls for another way. The lights dimmed so the white halls became a dark-gray. You don’t belong here. “Hello?” He looked every direction as he roamed. The paintings and sculptures hung where they always have. He returned to the room with the Fabricated World mural. Blue paint leaked from it. It’s too late.

Its glass frame kept it sealed, so Guertena searched and searched. The lights were growing darker by the minute, it got harder to see. “Whoever you are, come out!” He stated, whipping out a palette knife.

Your heart is fabricated. You are one of us. Guertena’s heart was racing. Blue paint filled the floor, dropping from who-knows-where. He ran back downstairs, finding the “Abyss of the Deep”
smeared. The painting “A Well-Meaning Hell” had turned into “Tones of the Dark Gallery.” He ran into the room where stood the Embodiment of Spirit: the huge red rose was black, the petals dropping. Panting frightfully, the distant footsteps growing louder, he returned to the lobby. A poster of his body hung above the desk. He looked in the pamphlet, it read Bad man, bad man. You know what you are.

He was afraid, the lights were nearly black, he wanted to escape. He rushed to the door, seeing with whatever vision remained, desperately trying to pry it open. No escape. Jiggle jiggle jiggle, that’s all he did to the doorknob, and he bash bash bashed the door. It wouldn’t open, it was glued. Come back to us. He started crying, pouring his emotion to his strength, trying to open the door, it paid no contribution. Stay forever. With your children. The gallery was pitch-black, the footsteps grew closer, faster, fiercer. He sank to his knees, and his wails and the footsteps were the only sound. The only existence. There was no color, there was no light, there was no life. He was alone…alone in eternal darkness, infinity. “Sniff… no… no!… huff, huff… no…” No one would ever hear his pleas or pat his shoulders. He was nothing.

ENDING: The End of a Legend

Fabricated World

Sector W7, Ib, Mary, and Garry stared at the Fabricated World painting. “So is he… in the real world now?” Apis asked.

“No… at least, not for long.” Mary replied. “When my dad made himself a painting, he became bound by the rules of his own world. If nobody from the real world was sacrificed in here, then he couldn’t exist in their world. He was bound to fade away minutes after stepping out.”

“So he’s gone, huh…” Ib said solemnly.

“But… I still can’t believe Father was like that.” Mary said sadly. “I thought he was… so nice… Why was he…”

“I read a book about ‘Nobodies’ back there.” Apis mentioned. “It’s what happens to a person after they lose their reality. They forget what they really loved. …Of course, Guertena loved art, so… who’s to really say that wasn’t how he was like. …Not like Garry.”

Mary looked at the man in question, who had caught up to them. She frowned regretfully, her head hanging down. “Ib, Garry… I’m sorry. All I wanted was to know what it felt like to be real. I wanted to escape into the real world, see the beautiful sky, the sea, make real friends… but I was wrong to.” Tears dripped from her eyes. “Your existence gets replaced entirely when we take your place. All the friends you had forget you, they get replaced with a phony person and phony memories. But it isn’t right. I don’t deserve to steal someone else’s life. Ib and Garry… you’re the real humans. You belong in that world. I hope that, sniff… I hope that you can forgive me!” She sank to her knees and wiped her sleeve over her eyes.

Ib smiled warmly and touched Mary’s shoulder. “It’s alright, Mary… I understand. I felt so miserable the whole time I was here. I got lost, I didn’t have Garry or my parents… Despite everything that’s happened, I’m glad you got the chance to leave. You and April deserved to be free.”

“No…” Mary stood up, “I don’t. April deserves to be free. She has tons of friends who love her. She’s a million times more happy with them than she is with me. Since she already took Dad’s reality, she needs to go back. But Ib… you and Garry were our first friends from the outside. You were the best I ever had. I don’t think I could live with myself, knowing you were still trapped here.
Since Ib still has her rose, she can leave. And Garry…” Mary held up her yellow rose, “you can escape, too. I’ll sacrifice my life so you can become real again. Your friends, family… Everyone that cared about you will remember you again.”

“Mary… you would really do that for me?” Garry asked.

“Of course I would.” Mary forced a grin. “You’re my friend, Garry. All of you are. You deserve to have loads of friends who love you. I don’t deserve it. I’ve always been the bad sister… the crazy one… I never really paid attention to those books about friendship… but now I realize you should always think about their well-being… know what they really need. Ib… Garry… you need to go back. Take back the lives that…that’s yours.”

“I won’t do that, Mary.” Ib stated determinedly. “I’ll stay here with you. I’ll find another way for us to leave together.”

“Hm hm… you were always so nice to me. I wish I could’ve developed a real soul like April did… but I guess we can’t always have everything. Ib… Garry… April…” she turned to the others, “Chimney… Thanks for being friends with someone like me. I’ll always miss you.” As tears fell past the curves of her smile, Mary grabbed the petals of her rose.

“MARY, NO!” Ib tried to stop her, but Mary jumped away and decapitated the rose. Mary gave a final breath and fell. Ib kneeled beside her, tears leaking. Garry and Sector W7 held their tears. Chimney couldn’t believe it. After all her jokes about wanting Mary to die… she was dead before her. And Chimney didn’t want it. As annoying as Mary was… she never deserved a fate like this. A part of her wished they could’ve played with her more.

Ib’s tears soaked the green of Mary’s dress. “Good-bye, Mary… sniff…”

April sniffled and cried, looking at Mary’s body. Mary, the one who literally gave her life. The one who brought April to the real world, where she met all her friends. “Mary… I’ll never forget you.”

After Apis made a prayer to God for Mary’s soul, she turned to face the Fabricated World. “Well… I guess it’s time to go back.”

“Do you need a hand, Ib?” Garry asked the child politely.

Ib smiled. “Okay, Garry.” The 20-year-old lifted her and jumped into the mural, finally free to breathe the real world.

“Well… let’s go, too.” Mocha said, stepping in simply.

“You got it.” Chimney carried Aeincha in, then she helped up Apis, who helped Aisa, who helped Gonbe. “April, come on! Whatchu waiting for??”

April stared at Mary’s fallen body. Her face bore its usual tonelessness. “April, what’re you doing?” Apis yelled.

April reached into Mary’s pocket and took out her crayons and sketchbook. She quickly scribbled Mary’s image onto a page, and labeled Mary’s name in yellow. “Just making a note. Okay, I’m coming.”

She grabbed Chimney’s hand and was helped into the mural. She turned to stare at Mary’s body for the last few seconds. She passed her cousin and sister a smile before the mural warped them.

Real world
April couldn’t remember what she was doing. They had just entered the Guertena Gallery… and Apis thinks there might be a Gibberish Rock in the basement. She looked at her wristwatch. 12:42pm. Not even an hour had passed since they entered. She turned and walked toward the Reserved Seat sculpture. The Yu-Gi-Oh card the boy had dropped earlier was still there. April reached down to pick it up. It was the Dark Magician.

April decided to put it in her pocket—she felt something else. She pulled out a small sketchbook. It had a crayon drawing of a yellow-haired girl with blue eyes and a green dress, labeled MARY. “Mary?…” she spoke confusedly.

April’s wristwatch rang, and Apis spoke. “April, where are you? Aeincha got the door open, so we’re all gonna look inside. Wanna join us?”

“Oh. Okay.” April headed downstairs and found her friends beside a hallway corner. Aeincha and the shrunken Mocha were held in Ib Goldenweek’s hands, April’s cousin whom they came with. The lot of them looked down the dark stairwell. April went down first.

The basement had many paintings and sculptures down below, most of which were likely gathering dust. April’s vision fell on one painting on the wall: it depicted the very same girl April had a drawing of: MARY. She gasped—images of dark hallways, living paintings, mannequin heads, all flashed in her mind. “MARY!” April shouted, about to reach up and touch… She stopped herself. She looked back at her friends, wondering if they remembered. …They were gazing longingly at it as well. “Do you guys… remember?”

“…We do.” Ib said, her expression solemn. The other girls nodded.

April faced the painting again. Mary was depicted with tears, passing the curves of her smile. April softly touched the frame. The image forced her to cry as well. “Mary… I’m sorry.” April wiped her tears away. “We will find a way… We will…” (Play “The First Mask” from Rayman 2!)

However, touching the painting loosened it from its perch—April quickly grabbed it before it fell, then leaned it against the wall. …They looked up at where it was hung: a secret door was there. April turned the nob and climbed inside, her friends following.

They discovered a secret chamber filled with dust. It was relatively small, but tall enough to fit an altar with a short stairway. Atop this altar sat a Gibberish Rock. April stared transfixed at the stone. She walked up slowly and stood before it. The Dark Magician card in her hand glowed before floating into April. The feeling inside her was so mysterious, she wondered if she could capture it in a painting.

**April awakened herself as the FIFTH LIGHT! Only 2 more to go!**

The garbled writing on the monument glowed. To April’s eyes, it was no longer gibberish. “‘The end of your journey is growing closer with each day that passes. Make sure you are using your time well. No matter what happens, always stay true to your heart, for yourself and for your friends. –Yugi Muto’.”

“You just made that up.” Chimney said. (“Gyom-yom.” Gonbe agreed.)

“Is that what it says?” Ib asked. “I don’t know any of those words.”

“Hm… I guess I’ll have to ask Sheila.” April smiled. “Let’s go back upstairs. Our parents won’t be happy about us sneaking down here.” So the seven kids and rabbit left the basement, reorganizing things to make it seem like they were never there. The spirit of a boy with narrowed
purple eyes, and blonde and purple spiky hair, smirked at the group from the Gibberish Rock’s chamber. (End song.)

The teammates went back up to the gallery, closing the basement door. They wandered around in search of Ib’s parents. …They were seen next to the Embodiment of Spirit sculpture, talking to Garry. They looked over as the kids approached them. “Oh, there she is! Ib!” Rosa called.

“Mom? Dad?” Ib spoke curiously. “Who is this man…”

“This man’s name is Garry.” Rosa said. “He seems to have found something… you misplaced.”

Garry blushed. “I seem to have… had this in my possession.” Garry pulled out a lace handkerchief. “It had the word ‘Ib’ on it… so I searched around to see if anybody lost it. Honestly, I have no idea how it turned up in my pocket, but…”

“Normally, Ib is very careful with items. I can’t imagine how this happened, either.” Rosa chuckled. “At least this man was kind enough to return it. …Although, it’s… a little dirty.”

“Forgive me.” Garry blushed further. “I wish I had noticed it sooner. Of course, it can easily be washed.”

“It’s no harm at all, really.” Alvin smiled.

“That’s good. Well…” Garry approached the red-eyed girl and gave her the handkerchief. “It was nice to meet you. …Ib.” His exposed right eye winked. Ib gasped softly and smiled. She winked.

“But, my… I certainly am late for a report.” Garry said. “I wonder who the Supreme Leader is now. I probably missed my share of Christmas dinners. I wonder if Hoagie joined the TND, too… Hm hm, excuse my rambling.” He blushed at the kids. “Ignore me. …Farewell, you all.” And with that, Garry walked away. He went to leave this gallery, once and for all.

“I guess we should leave, too.” Aisa said. “We pretty much combed the whole gallery. There’s nothing left to see.”

“…” April smirked. “No. We’re not done, yet.”

Two days later…

“BREAKING NEWS: The Guertena Art Gallery has witnessed its first break-in in the history since it was founded in 1923! According to reports, a group of five kids, and one rabbit, broke into the gallery’s basement and made off with one of the paintings! One of these kids was described to be a ‘giant girl,’ leaving police baffled. Higher authorities are being reported about the break-in, and some are suspecting the Kids Next Door of treachery. As Düssenheim citizens are in an uproar over these events, we can only ask: what painting did they take, and WHY??”

Foster’s Home For Imaginary Friends

Mary climbed out of her painting and fell on the polished floor. Her senses slowly returned to her… She was confused as to where she was. She looked up, feeling presences over her: a tall, skinny, red creature with a broken eye, a huge purple furry monster, and some kind of chicken that looked like a palm-tree and airplane. “Hi, there!” Wilt greeted. “My name’s Wilt, this is Eduardo and Coco. This is Foster’s Home For Imaginary Friends!”

“Foster’s Home… whuh…”
“Maybe she doesn’t know English.” Eduardo mentioned.

“Well, she is from Germany. Can you understand us?” Wilt asked. “No offense, if you’re just confused, we just…”

“Cococococococococo!”

Mary perked. “A home where abandoned Imaginary Friends can come and live and play with other Imaginary Friends?”

“Wow, Coco, she understands you!” Wilt beamed.

“COCOCOCOCOCO!”

“MARY!”

The painting gasped: April, Ib, and Sector W7 were standing not far away. Mary’s memory was foggy… she processed their appearance… “A…Ape…! ! APRIL!” Mary whipped over and grabbed her in a twirling hug. Ib, Aisa, and Apis hugged her, and Mocha picked them up in her giant arms and squeezed them all.

The giant set them all down as Mary viewed around the house’s foyer. Friends of all kinds of whacky design were flying and running everywhere. “Now you can play with tons of new friends.” April said happily. “You can talk to them, and they can talk to you!”

“And we’ll always come over to visit you!” Ib said brightly.

“The downside is you have to rely on Psychic Chi, so you’re still trapped here.” Apis shrugged. “But it’s much more colorful than the gallery.”

Mary felt a beautiful warmth in her heart. She was an Imaginary person… but here she was, standing in the real world. Real friends… “Thank you, April.”

“Great, so can we go now??” Chimney insisted.

“I’m so glad I get to talk to you again!” Mary cheered. “And don’t worry, April. One day, I’m gonna join the Kids Next Door and go on more adventures with you! I’ll be the first Imaginary Friend to ever do it!”

“Technically, second.” April blushed. “Although you would be the first normal Imaginary Friend.”

“And I’ll join the Kids Next Door, too!” Ib declared. “I’ll be expecting to see you there, Mary!”

“I will, Ib!” Mary nodded. “You can count on it!”

“We’ll see you later, Mary!” April waved as they began to leave. “We’ll make sure Cheren lets all the Kids Next Door know you’re coming!”

“He’s gonna be really mad about that burglary, though.” Mocha blushed.

“Bye-byyyyye, Sister Aaaaapriiiiiil!” Mary called to her friends. “Bye-bye, Iiiiiiiib!”

“Bye, Maryyyyyyy!” (“Gyom, gyoooooom!”)

“I still don’t get why Mary was able to come outta there.” Chimney said to her friends. “I mean,
yeah, she’s in Foster’s now, but she was still stuck in the gallery, right?”

“Yes,” April smiled intuitively, “but Mary still lives by the rules of any Imaginary Friend. As long as she lives where there’s Psychic Chi, she’ll survive. But once enough people get to know her, she won’t have to worry about that, anymore.”

“I don’t understand why Guertena would fade away, in that sense.” Aisa mentioned. “Everybody still knew who he was…”

“Maybe… but he’s from the past.” April reminded. “Sure, a lot of people still admire him, but nobody in this time knows or really loves him. Especially since he tried to kill us.”

“Mary tried to kill us, too.” Ib said with a laugh. “But she’s different…”

“I hope Mary will be happy there.” Aeincha said. “It makes me wonder how the other paintings feel about this.”

“It won’t really matter in the end.” April said. “This is for the best for Mary: a place where she’s truly happy. And one way or another, she belongs…”

Guertena Gallery

Astonishingly, on the same day that Mary was stolen, another painting was discovered. One that no one had even known existed before this. The Lady in Red in the middle, blue dolls at the bottom, headless statues standing over in the background, and mannequin heads to the side, were all smiling and waving at the viewers. No one understood the title… but then again, Guertena was mysterious like that. It was so unusual, it was hung in the gallery immediately. Dozens of viewers came to observe it with interest. Good-bye, Mary.

And that’s the end of the Art Saga. So yeah, longest stage in the entire story. A lot of it was the same from Ib, but fans will notice I threw in my own puzzles, and I must say, it was a very fun level to type. X) Next time, we will continue to the Lazarus Saga. Of course… that may not be for a while. I’m planning to continue Fairy Sisters, but the next few months will likely be dedicated to the Side Stories. Shyeah, we are falling behind on that! So when that time comes, I will see you when the longest story ever continues!

…”

1-12-12 20-8-9-14-7-19 1-18-5 2-15-18-14 6-18-15-13 1 19-9-14-7-12-5 20-8-15-21-7-8-20
A Mary Time in Foster’s

Chapter Summary

Mary gets adjusted to her new home at Foster’s.

Here is a one-shot that takes place after the Art Saga in Legend of the Seven Lights. So before reading this, read that story, or there will be spoilers and confusion. :P But if you have, enjoy!

Chapter 51.5: A Mary Time in Foster’s

KND Moonbase

After Cheren returned from one of his adventures, he was back in Moonbase to relieve the exhaust with paperwork. He heard a bling! on his computer, and saw that he had email. “Ah, it’s from April!” Cheren clicked the message and began to read to himself.

“. . . Wow… That’s quite a story. But I’d be happy to get Mary and Ib into CND Training. . . .” That name sounded weird in his head. “Who names their kid ‘Ib’? Also…” The other name sounded weird, too. “Mary… I feel like I should know someone named Mary… but this is the first time I’m hearing about her. Or… is it? . . .” He looked over April’s story again. “Hm… Knowing me though, she’s probably a friend.”

Foster’s Home For Imaginary Friends

Mary slept beside the window in her room. When the sun came up every morning, it would shine through and light up her head of golden hair. When she felt the warmth touch her face, she got up on her knees to open the window and breathe the fresh morning air. She would then reach a hand up toward the sun and try to clasp it in her fingers, even though it was up in the sky. She was just glad to see it came up.

She had been brought to Foster’s yesterday, welcomed by the friendly Friends who lived here. When Mary went to sleep that night, she was afraid it would all be a dream and she’d wake up in that gallery. She was afraid of waking up all alone in darkness. The sun came up and reminded her that she was in a new home.

Her empty portrait hung on the wall in her bedroom. Mary approached the portrait and placed a hand against it. The hand became flat and part of the portrait. She pulled it off, and her hand regained 3-D shape. She looked at both hands and flexed her fingers. She looked at her feet and wiggled her toes. She felt the smooth green nightgown she was given to wear. She looked like a human girl… but she was not really human. It felt so weird… being real and not real at the same time.

Mary dressed up in her dark green dress with a blue neckerchief, black socks, and green shoes. The same clothes she was drawn with, and the ones she kept during her years at Goldenweek Manor. Mary wondered if she should still call herself a Goldenweek, now that she was no longer tied to them. Well, maybe she would, because she would always be April’s sister.
When Mary exited her room, she heard the squeaky sound of gym shoes hitting the floor. She looked left and saw Wilt approaching. He was a red-skinned Friend with tall legs, one left arm, and a broken eye. “Oh, hello, Mary!” Wilt greeted happily. “I hope you slept well! That room hasn’t been occupied in a while, but I clean it up every other day, since we could get a Friend any time, you know? I know it’s not a great room, but if there’s something wrong with it, just let me know, alright? I wanna help you feel welcome here.”

“Oh, it’s fine.” Mary smiled. “It’s a fine room. My room! It’s fine. And mine. Hey, so, Mr. Tall Guy? Why is your arm so tiny?”

“You mean this arm?” He waved his right stub. “Heheh, it’s a long story. My arm got crushed and, well, the doctors weren’t sure how to fix it since I didn’t have bones. They decided it was easier to cut it off. It’s okay, because Imaginary Friends don’t have blood. …I’m sorry if that’s disturbing.”

“Blood…” Mary lightly pinched the back of her left hand. She felt the tingle, but she didn’t think she had blood, anymore.

“MAKE WAY, MAKE WAY! Best Imaginary Friend ever COMING through!” Wilt stepped aside when a short blob of a pure blue color wobbled over. Mary’s mouth became a small ‘o’ when the blob narrowed his eyes and looked at her closely. “So, you’re the new Friend, hm?” He poked her belly. “Well, you’ll fit in at Foster’s after some touching up. The name’s Blooregard Q. Kazoo, but you can call me Bloo. I don’t usually reserve that honor for many people.”

“Um, I’m sorry Bloo, but, doesn’t everyone call you Bloo?” Wilt asked.

“Shhh, I’m trying to introduce myself here!” Bloo whisper-shouted.

“Wooooow!” Mary gazed with delight at the short blob. “You’re bluuuuue! Blue is my favorite color ever! I like it better than pink and yellow!” She knelt down and softly rubbed Bloo’s round top.

“Hey, hey, hey!” Bloo flailed his stubby arms to shake hers off. “Don’t do that, I just combed my hair.”

“Uh… Hair?”

“Listen, little lady, I know you’re new here, so I’ll just be direct: I’m the best Imaginary Friend this house has, and probably the whole world. Blue is the best color, as you know, that’s why God made the sky and ocean blue. There isn’t one place in the house where the Friends don’t know my name,” he put his arm around Mary, “so if you’re friends with me, you’re friends with everyone. And you want that, don’t you?” He nudged her with his elbow.

“Oh, yes! I wanna make lots of friends!”

“Great! Just do exactly as I do and you’ll make friends in no time! TO THE DINING ROOM!” Bloo grabbed Mary’s arm and zipped off. He came back and said to Wilt, “Oh, and Wilt, here: for your troubles.” He tossed a quarter up to him and ran off again. Wilt looked at the simple coin with confusion.

**Dining Room**

“The first thing you need to know is I start my days with a well-balanced breakfast.” Bloo explained as he walked Mary down the extremely long table. The girl’s mouth was drooling at the variety of delicious foods. “Of course, I won’t be able to eat the amount I need if I share with you, but that’s the type of generous Friend I am.” The two made it to and sat at an area with all sweets,
like cakes and ice cream. “But you can look forward to the daily breakfast-dessert every morning! Let’s DIG IN!” Bloo began to guzzle up a whole bowl of vanilla ice cream with chocolate syrup and bananas.

“Ugh, Bloo, you’re supposed to start with the cereal and eggs, THEN come and grab dessert.” Frankie Foster, the 42-year-old caretaker of Foster’s, stated. “Mary, if you want, I can get you some-”

The Goldenweek girl began gobbling large slices of cake, and squirting syrup into her mouth.

**Frankie’s Office**

“Whenooohhh, whooohhh, whoooaaa…” Bloo and Mary, with their bellies round and full, wobbled into the main office. Bloo sat at the desk while Mary stood beside him. “So, that lady was Frankie, the maid. She took over management after Mr. Herriman died, but she’s still lame. Anyway, now that the food is settling, it’s time for our next part of the day: what I like to call the Burping Hour! First, drink this soda.” He handed Mary a soda can, and he drank his own can while Mary drank hers. “Now do this!” He grabbed the microphone and pushed the PA button. “…BUUURP.”

“BUUURP.” Mary repeated.

“BUUURP.”

“BUUUURP.”

“**BUUURP.** “**BUUURP.** “**BUUURP.** “**BUUURP.**” The belches were heard in every room of the house. The Friends still in bed were putting their heads under their pillows. Friends roaming the halls were twitching their eyes. Eduardo was taking cover in the cardboard box fortress he had built for this purpose, wearing a cooking pot helmet and wielding a broom.

“Ahhhh…” Bloo and Mary sighed after letting the gas loose.

“BLOOOO!” Frankie swung the door open and stomped in.

“MARY, GRAB ON!” He clutched Mary’s hand. “EYUH!” With his other hand, he threw a ball of powder on the floor, which exploded into a thick white cloud. The cloud cleared as the entire office was covered in powder. Frankie glared at Bloo and Mary, who were also covered.

“Awww.” Bloo moaned. “I thought these things teleport you. They do in the movies.” He took Mary and jumped out the window. He came back and, “For your troubles.” tossed Frankie a quarter, then jumped back.

**Arcade**

“This is the house’s arcade, which has every videogame ever imagined.” Bloo explained, showing Mary around the room that was lit only by the game screens. “Now, I don’t mean to discourage you, but I have the highest score of every game in here, and they’re pretty tough to beat. I could teach you what I know, but you’d be lucky if you get the 2nd highest score.”

“Nnn! Nnn! Nnn! Nnn!” They heard a faint grunting sound when they got close to a Jetpac console. They looked down to see Peas, the tiny Friend who was a pea, trying to climb the console’s corner.

“Hey, fellas! Mind lending me a hand?”

“Oh, wow!” Mary beamed, lightly picking up the little pea. “You look like the food that my old parents used to make me! I didn’t know you things talk! Why don’t you ever say anything when I...
“DON’T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!!” Peas shook. “I’m trying to get up to that game so I can play it. I’m going for the high score!”

“HA HA HA HA haaaaa!” Bloo cackled. “The high score, YOU? You couldn’t even get ONE point!”

“For your information, I’ve been watching OTHER people play and I wanna try out some tricks! I just… need someone to help me. Like you!” He pointed at Mary. “How would YOU like to help me, little girl?”

“Little girl?” Mary looked around the floor. “Where?”

“Oh, very funny. Just put me in your ear and I’ll tell you how the game works.”

“Pfft, this is gonna be funnier than watching Eduardo play.” Bloo said, pulling a quarter out of his “pocket.” “Fine, Peas. Do your best.” He put the coin in the game.

Mary placed Peas in her right ear as he spoke, “Okay, grab the stick. That makes the little man move. The red button shoots his gun, and the blue button makes him float.”

“But how does he know I’m pushing those buttons?”

“He-… I dunno, it’s just how videogames work. Just do what I say, I’ll tell you what to push.”

“This will take two seconds.” Bloo rolled his eyes.

22 minutes later

“WWWWWWWHHHHHAT?!” Bloo gaped when the blinking score was posted above the one beside his name.

“Ooo, look! Those numbers are blinking! What does that mean?” Mary asked.

“It means you got the high score! Come on, Mary, enter my name!” Peas said eagerly.

“WAIT A SECOND! You didn’t get that score, MARY did!” Bloo shouted. “SHE should type her name, NOT YOURS!”

“But, Bloo… I thought you had all the high scores?” Mary asked, confused.

“BUT I- YOU- HE- IT-; EYAAAAAGGGH!” Bloo swung a kick at the console and ran away. He came back, threw a quarter at the machine, and left again.

Upstairs; Coco’s room

The floor of Coco’s room was covered with many colorful eggs she had lain herself. The bird-palmtree-airplane creature’s happy mindless expression didn’t change as she trotted about and laid more eggs. “Oooooo!” Mary gazed at all the eggs when Bloo cracked the door open.

“This is Coco. She has her own room now. She wanted more space to lay her eggs.”

“What’s in these eggs?” Mary picked a blue one up. “Baby birdies? Or maybe bunnies! I heard there was a bunny that laid eggs on Christmas.”
“Actually,” Bloo took the plastic egg and pulled it open, “they contain prizes.” A lottery ticket came out.

“Prizes? Where does she get them?”

“Who knows. But somewhere among these dozens of eggs lie the keys to someone’s racecar.” He smirked eagerly. “And we’re going to find it! So Mary, I’ll get Coco to lay more eggs, and you just keep poppin’ these bad boys open, got it?” Mary nodded. “Good. Ahem…

“AAAAAHHH!” Bloo made a terrific leap and latched onto Coco’s airplane back. “RIDE ‘EM, COWGIRL! Mary, now’s your chance!”

“COCOCOCOCOCOCOCOCOCOCOCOCO!” Coco ran around rampantly, dropping more eggs. Mary hurriedly began pulling each and every egg open. She found a pencil, some whipped cream, a fork, some cigarettes, ChapStick, an accordion, Abu from *Aladdin*, the Holy Grail, but nothing that looked like car keys. As Bloo kept riding Coco, the room became more and more flooded with eggs.

“BLOOOO? MARYYYYY?” Frankie roamed about the halls in search of the two. “I swear, if one of these halls has gelatin stuck to the ceiling, I’m gonna…?” She found the door to Coco’s room was trembling. When Frankie pulled it open- “WAAAAAAAHHH!” She was buried under a mountain of eggs.

Coco popped up above the eggs, looking dizzy. “VICTORY!” Bloo cheered, popping up with a set of keys in his hand. Mary climbed out and shook her messy hair. “Come on, Mary! TO THE AUTO STOOOOORE!” He grabbed the girl’s hand and ran off. He came back, tossed a quarter at Coco’s palmtree, and resumed.

**Mark’s Auto Shop**

“Whaddyou mean they don’t go to a racecaaaaarrrrr?” Bloo whined at the man named Mark.

“Look, kid, we don’t even sell racecars. I dunno where they come from, but they ain’t from here. Besides, we don’t really sell to Imaginary Friends. ’less they got a driver’s license, y’know?”

“That’s discriminatory! Ripoff artist!”

“OW!” Bloo kicked the man in the shin.

“Come on, Mary, there’s gotta be some place that sells a good racecar.” Bloo said angrily as he walked away from the man. “…Mary?” He looked around the parking lot. The girl was nowhere to be seen. “Hmm.” Bloo shrugged and continued walking. He came back to Mark, who was still holding his shin, and chucked a quarter at him.

**Foster’s**

Mary stood in the open double-doorway of the large house with a blank expression. She looked down, seeing the toe-ends of her shoes were inches from passing the door’s boundary.

“GOTCHA!” Mary flinched when Frankie grabbed her right arm from behind. The woman had parts of Coco’s eggs stuck to her body. “Didn’t think you and your little blue mastermind were gonna evade me for long, did ya? …Hey… where is Bloo?” Frankie looked around.

“I think he was taking me to a car store.” Mary replied.

“Why didn’t you go with him?”
“…” She looked outside with a sad expression. “If I leave the house, won’t I disappear?”

“Oh, that’s only for Friends with dead creators. But didn’t your creator drop you off here yesterday? Or, who were those kids?”

“Um…”

Mary tried to explain her story as best as she could.

“Wow… That’s pretty amazing. And kind of confusing. But if I understood that last part… then you should be able to leave if April’s still around, right?”

“Um… I guess so. April loves me lots.” Mary smiled.

“But Mary, you shouldn’t get yourself involved with Bloo. No matter what he might’ve told you, he gets himself in more trouble than Benedict Arnold and Darth Vader having a street race. I mean, you didn’t actually like doing those things, did you?”

“Well… Bloo told me that if I did what he did, I would make lots of friends. I wanna have more friends.”

“Well, it’ll be hard to make some doing what Bloo does, trust me. If you want more friends, just go around and talk to people. Foster’s is full of Friends, that’s what we’re all about!”

“I know that… it’s just…” Mary looked around to see a few Imaginaries pass by: a giant monster of pale blue fur, a huge gummy bear, and a pair of scissors with legs and eyes. “All of them look like… monsters. It’s just like at the gallery. I feel… different… here…”

“Mary,” Frankie knelt beside her, “these guys are different from those guys at the gallery. They’re all really kind and sweet. …Most of them. No one will care if you look like a human, as long as you’re a Friend at heart. …Of course, every now and then, some humans show up disguised as Friends to get free food… in fact, we even get a few Nimbi and Minish doing the same, that’s why we had to get the X-ray and… ugh, I’m just rambling.” She shook her head. “Look, Mary, if you’re too nervous to talk to these people, I’ll hang out with you. I was going to go out shopping anyway, so if you wanted to come to the mall or something…”

“Oooooo, I love malls! They’re really big and have a lot of floors and stairs that move!”

“Well, hop in the Foster’s Bus and I’ll let you ride them when we get there!”

“YAAAAAY!” Mary ran outside with her arms in the air. “Does your bus have rockets and fly in space?? I once rode a train that did that!”

“Heh heh heh, well if you could imagine…”

The Mall

“WHEEEEEE!” Mary cheered at the top of her lungs when the escalator lifted her to the second floor. The other riders shut their ears in annoyance. “I don’t have to move my feet and the stairs take me up! But when I go down,” Mary skipped down some steps, “I’m still kind of going up! Frankie, these stairs are so weird!”

“Ha ha ha!” Frankie laughed, delighted by her carefree antics. “Well, we’re almost at the top, Mary, so get ready to step off.”
“I’ll walk down backwards!” Mary was stepping back, “But when I look forward, it still feels like I’m going up. I wonder if I walk up backwards,” she about-faced, “will that-” She tripped on the slot where the stairs vanished into, falling on her back.

“That’s why you gotta pay attention.” Frankie blushed, helping Mary to her feet. “Come on, Mary, there’s a clothing store over there! Since you’ll be wearing them, you probably want a few pairs to change into.”

Mary grabbed a bunch of clothes that looked pretty… which was nearly all of them. In the dressing rooms, she tried on a green two-piece swimsuit, a very fat blue coat, pants, and hat that only showed her eyes, a pink sparkly prom gown with high-heel sandals, and a brown jacket over a black T-shirt, with baggy pants and untied sneakers. “Next!” she yelled, holding a hand out to Frankie.

“Mary, I’m not buying ALL of these clothes.” Frankie chuckled. “I’ll get the ones that look nicest on you. …Hey, try these on!”

Mary was later walking out of the mall with a new green shirt that showed her belly, a green and white skirt, and white running shoes. “Frankie, Frankie!” She jumped. “I feel like a new Mary! But I’m the same Mary, aren’t I? Is this what they call a ‘same difference’?”

“You know, it kind of is! Hmm, but your hair kinda clashes with the outfit. It looks messy. But I know just the place!”

Salon De Sisse

“Frankie? Why is our hair getting sucked up into a vacuum?” Mary asked as they both lay back on chairs.

“They’re not vacuums, Mary, they’re hair-dryers!” Frankie laughed. “They just washed our hair, now it needs drying."

“Just like laundry? Are laundry rooms salons for clothes?”

“I never thought of them that way, but, I guess they are! You know, you’re pretty insightful, Mary.”

“Insightful… yeah.” Mary never heard that word before. “Hey, Frankie, mud is dirty, right?”

“Yeeaaah… “

“So why do people bathe in it?”

“Hmm… I’m not sure. I tried it a few times, and it works, though. I don’t think we should, since we’re just getting our hair clean.”

“Okay. …Hey, Frankie, if people put pickles over their eyes, would the pickles taste like eyes?”

“Ha ha ha ha ha!” Frankie laughed more. Even though she lived in the real world, these questions never arose to Frankie.

Park

Mary’s hair was wrapped in a pretty ponytail. Her yellow hair was no longer messy, but smooth, and went perfectly with her new outfit. She ran around the park, full of life and energy. “You
know, Mary, I think I was right about before. We’ve been out for hours and… you’re still here.”

“Oh?” Mary stopped running, looking at each side of her hands. “I…I’m still here.”

“You sure are.”

“…Is this why I feel so happy?”

“Why else would you feel happy?”

“I don’t know… I thought it was because of the new clothes!”

“That must be why, too! You have a lot of reasons to feel happy, Mary. You have new clothes, a new house, tons of new friends… and since Imaginary Friends don’t age, you’ll always be this way!”

That statement tugged one of her heartstrings. Mary looked downtrodden. “What’s wrong, Mary?”

“Nothing… Just… When I became real, I was a little girl… and then I grew up. I wanted to be an adult and be tall and smart. Now I won’t ever grow big. April and all my friends will grow old and die… and I won’t ever see them again.”

“…” Frankie frowned at this realization. Being young forever did have its downsides. “Well… even if that’s true, Mary… you’re a wonderful person. You can make more friends. You’ll make lots of people happy just being who you are. And you’ll be able to see lots of new things. Like… Like that rock!” Frankie pointed at a tall rock in the center of the park. “They say whoever climbs that rock becomes King or Queen of the Park.”

“How do they decide which is which?”

“I dunno! Find out.”

“Okay!” Mary excitedly ran over and climbed the tall stone. Once up top, she sat on and kicked her feet in the air. “HOORAAAAAY! I’m the King or Queen of the Park! Now everyone will bring me lots of presents!”

“Don’t get ahead of yourself, Mary!” Frankie called. “That’s the kind of thing that starts a revolution!”

“What’s a revolution? Is that like a party?”

“No, it’s a-” Her phone started ringing. “Hold on, Mary.” She answered, “Hello? Uh… I’m sorry, what? BLOO? You’re WHERE?? Ugh! I’ll be there in a minute.” She hung up. “Mary, come on, we have to go to the police station.” She walked away in anger. “Bloob tried to break into the police station to see if they keep stolen racecars. Honestly, I don’t know where he gets these ideas!” Mary kicked off the rock and raced after her.

Police Station

“When we get home, I’m cooking ‘IT’ for you tonight.” Frankie told the frustrated blob as he wobbled outside. “Now get in the bus!”

“Mmm-myow, racecar, mmm-mmnn.” Bloob mumbled.

“Thanks for calling, Officer.” Frankie said to the cop. “I hope he didn’t cause too much trouble.”
“No, not too much. All he did was kick me in the shin and throw a quarter at my face, for some reason.”

“I’ll make sure he doesn’t do… MARY!” She spotted the girl pick up and study a gun from the cop’s desk. “PUT THAT DOWN! It’s dangerous!”

“Dangerous? Why?”

“Because it KILLS people!”

“Kills people?” Mary looked at the weapon again. “It looks like… the thing those bad guys were using.”

“What bad guys- Never mind, just put it down!”

Foster’s

After they returned to Foster’s, Frankie sent Bloo up to his room. She turned around and noticed Mary slowly following with her head down. “Mary, what’s wrong this time?”

“You said… that thing kills people.”

“Oh… Mary, I didn’t mean to worry you. It’s not going to get you.”

“Do bad people use those things? Do they use those things to… kill people?”

“I…I’m afraid they do.”

Mary walked over to a window and looked up at the sun. The big light in the sky that made everything look pretty. “Mary, just don’t think about stuff like that. The world’s a wonderful place, and somebody with a bright spirit like yours only makes it-”

“But it isn’t.” Mary said. “The world has lots of bad things. Like the gallery. April and her friends are fighting lots of bad people. The bad people… killed Cheren’s dad. Cheren was April’s friend. That means… he’s my friend. They’re in the Kids Next Door. The Kids Next Door stops bad people.”

Frankie stared at her, wondering what she was talking to herself about.

Mary turned around and showed Frankie her bright smile. “That’s why I wanna join the Kids Next Door! I wanna stop the bad people, too! So then the world can look even prettier!”

“Hm hm!” Frankie smiled. “See, Mary? You’re already a grown-up. And a smart one, too. You’ll fit in perfectly at Foster’s.”

Almost immediately, they heard what sounded like an explosion outside. Mary, Frankie, and some other Friends rushed out to see smoke coming from the Extremeasaur cage. The small door into the cage opened, and Sunni Chariton stumbled out, battered and covered in soot. She leaned on the door as she gasped for breath. She looked up at them with a dizzy expression. “Guess what, huff… I just made a new friend.” She fell and fainted.

Following the Art Saga’s events, nobody else remembers Mary right away, that’s why Cheren’s mind is foggy. And no better way to end a one-shot than with a foreshadow. Guess
who Sunni’s new friend is! Hint, he appeared earlier in *Seven Lights*! Well, I’ll see you when we continue this saga. XP
Chapter Summary

The Marzipan Pirates return to Buttermilk Building to get the Sun Key.

This chapter comes after Chapter 51 (so I guess it’s first in the Lazarus Saga). We’re gonna jump right to an Augustus stage, then go to some good stuff. Also, in-chapter Number Cipher.

Chapter B-25: Parley

Top of Buttermilk Building

The Marzipan Pirates ventured up Buttermilk for the second time. This time, with Augustus’s crewmen able to join him, they approached the pool of rotten Sun Cream. Nel climbed off Augustus and approached the dry brown pool. “Mud usually look good… This mud don’t.”

“Hopefully, it won’t stay that way. Stewie, go for it.” Augustus ordered.

The boy genius pulled out his Metahuman Neutralizer and blasted at the cream. To their astonishment, it was slowly morphing back into its whitish-gold color, and the pleasant smell Augustus was familiar with began to reach their noses. “I can’t believe it, it’s working!” Stewie beamed.

“Impressive. But who knows how long it will stay that way?” a robotic voice spoke.

The five gasped and looked up. A Cinnamon Ship was descending, and the red-eyed robot known as the Silver Bullet was manning it. The silver mecha parked the ship and stepped off, the children readying their guard. Nel jumped in front and yelled, “Don’t touch Aughsucks or Nel eat you, Rock Man!”

“That’s okay, Nel.” Augustus stepped around the cave child. He pulled out his lolli stick and flicked it off the mountain, eyes narrowed on the mech. “I already know you’re a chica under that suit. Take it off and let me see your pretty face.” He smirked.

“You’re straight to the point, Captain. I never have enough time to get there. But since you’re cute, I’ll let it go.” She gripped her helmet. “My name is Penelope.” She pulled it off, revealing her light lavender mouse head and big round ears, shaking her long orange hair free, which had a red bandanna over it. “Penelope Mousse.” she said with a nasally voice.

Augustus’s jaw dropped and he felt his heart shatter. For some reason, he was picturing a beautiful sexy girl who liked to dress like a robot. Instead, he got… “Una chica de ratón?!"

“Oh, what were you expecting, Terminator?!” Penelope retorted. “I’m a Mobian, GET OVER IT! Of course, you wouldn’t expect me to be, given my species. Mobian mice are born small and they lead small lives. But I wasn’t gonna live off little SCRAPs that the big animals throw away. I swiped an Everlasting Growth Potion from a Minish shop and went on to bigger and better things.”
“What an engaging story. Does Captain Slag know about it?” The captain cocked a brow.

“Yes, he knows. The Slag Pirates may be an ‘all-robot crew’, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t open-minded. I’ve actually come here on behalf of my crew, Captain Aughsucks.”

“Grrrr!” Augustus flushed at the nickname.

Penelope’s suit opened as she stepped forward, wearing an orange top and blue shorts, and held her right hand to Augustus. “I’m here to call a parley.”

“…Well, at least you’re not a kid.” He decided to shake her hand. “Very well. You have the floor.”

“So, here’s how it’s goin’ down, you know all those crews you pissed off at the Davy Back Fight? Well, Lord Licorice got all of them to not only help hunt you down, but to hunt the Lost Candies, too. Except the Kremling Krew, we dunno what those guys are doin’. We know you’ve been gettin’ all the candies, and Captain Slag is starting to become curious about them. So here’s what he was thinkin’: we help you find the Lost Candies and split the difference with whatever they’ll do in the end. Maybe sell them to the highest bidder, we’ll be set for life, know what I’m sayin’?”

“No deal. I’m collecting the Lost Candies for somebody else, not for any reward.”

“Who? And for what?”

“Somebody’s dying wish! I couldn’t turn THAT down!”

“Well, after this person gets their ‘dying wish’, then what? You have six magical candies just sitting around in…” she looked around, “where are you keeping them exactly?”

“Nonya Business.”

“Oh, I’ve been to that island before.” Penelope smirked. “But listen, Captain Augustus, Lord Licorice may be making himself out as the pirates’ friend, I know that he sees us as a means to an end. It’s Piracy 101. How do you know this special someone isn’t using you for the same reason?”

“How do I know that you aren’t?”

“Touché, Captain. But the fact that Captain Slag sent me here to begin with is ‘cause he’s impressed with your skill. I call it luck, but hey, no arguin’ with the grog factory. What he was really thinkin’ is we become allies—so you can still be your own ragtag crew. You might object to it, but I don’t think you’ll be collecting the Lost Candies without my help.”

“I got most of ’em already, and the Sun Cream is right here.”

“So it may seem.” Penelope approached the pool of cream and bent over to scoop some in her hand. “But this splendid serving of sun is in actuality-” She drank it- “GLUCH, PLOO, PLEEEEH!” She desperately hacked the taste off her tongue, gripping her neck. “Oh God, that is terrible! I think I preferred the trash, gluk, gleeeh!”

Stewie grabbed a soda from his Infi-Cube and tossed it to her. Penelope guzzled it up and sighed with great relief. “My point is, it’s not the real one.”

“Then where is the real one?”

“The real one happens to be underneath. Quite a ways, in fact. We picked up this little tidbit from Licorice’s henchgirl, Veruca. Said she wasn’t sure if her Devil Fruit could affect the real Sun
Cream, of course she couldn’t go down there, given she can’t swim.”

“So how do we go down there?”

“Thankfully, I designed special Cinnamon Swimsuits for such an occasion. You can dive deep beneath the stickilicious cream and come back with your gravely old skin still intact. (But you’ll reek of cinnamon, at least.)” Penelope went to her ship and pulled out a large diving suit with a cinnamon roll design, and a small one. “I brought one your size and three for the tykes. But I forgot about the rodent.” Nel glared at her.

“That’s alright. Rallo can stay up here and watch you. Provided you two are able to communicate with us.”

“They have communication gear, though I wonder if they’ll work through the gluck. Only one way to find out. So, do we have a deal or not?” She held a hand out.

Augustus stared at it, contemplating for a minute. It would help him get the Sun Cream, and with Stewie coming with, the Lost Candies in the Infi-Cube would be safe from her grasp. He did feel treachery afoot, but he supposed one way or another, he would have to deal with Slag’s crew. So he shook her hand. “Deal.”

With that, Penelope helped fix the Cinnamon Swimsuits on Augustus, Stewie (his helmet was football-shaped), Maggie, and Nel, who fussed a little as she disapproved of her help. Penelope couldn’t help but giggle at their silly brown armor with black swirly stripes. “I’m sorry, but I can never get used to this whole candy thing! So ridiculous!”

“Just hope I won’t have to Gobstop your pretty face later.” Augustus winked. He and his choice three crewmen jumped into the cream pool and slowly descended beneath its gooey substance.

“This is Silver Bullet to Candy Hunter. Do ya read me?”

“Yeah, I can hear you.” Augustus responded. “But it’s ‘Stone Fist’ now.”

“Stone Fist? That’s a crappy name.”

“Like yours is any better. Are bullets even your thing?”

“It’s just a persona. For a time, I was Black Baron and Black Knight.”

“If you say so, darling. But I’ve never been a fan of aliases. Either you let the world know your name or don’t become a pirate.”

“Alright, alright, keep your glasses on. You’re almost 50 feet down, I’m picking up a tunnel. It seems the cream is more clear down here, you’ll be able to see.”

The four set foot on the bottom. Indeed, the way forward was clearer, but still blurry with white cream. “It’s definitely not as shiny as it was on top. I wonder how bright the real cream is.”

“Do you think it’ll blind us like the Crystal Marshmallow?” Stewie asked.

“I hope not. Good thing I’m wearing sunglasses. But if I had to make a wild guess, the Sun Cream will look like something that goes to a machine.”

“What kind of wild guess is that?” asked Penelope.

“Tell ya when we’re finished.” (Play “Funky Waters” from Donkey Kong: Tropical Freeze!)
Stage B-4: Buttermilk Building, Act 2: The Deep Cream

Mission: Find the real Sun Cream.

The pirates avoided Gum Cheeps as they swam through the tunnel – they were big gumballs with lips, eyes, and fins. The tunnel turned left, and a current was pushing the group back. Thankfully, the suits were built with small propellers that allowed them to boost, not too fast, but strong enough to push through the current. They had to avoid puffer fish that blew in the current (naturally the fish had gum bodies), but their boost had a limit before it needed to recharge. When this happened, they could hide behind jagged rocks on the floor. Augustus caught glimpse of a Gold Wonka Bar in the upper left corner, and proceeded to catch it before they made it to the end.

There was an area they could resurface and a floor they could climb on and take off their helmets. “Bleck, cinnamon right up your nose is the worst. These suits are really helpful, though.”

“And even though Maggie and I have Devil Fruit powers,” Stewie said, “it seems the water doesn’t affect us when it doesn’t touch our skin.”

“Mw-mw.” Maggie replied.

“Cream has milk, which has water, it’s the same difference.”

The light from the cream lit up the cavern. There were temple-like images on the walls. One of them depicted six giant figures standing over a small horned being. Augustus carried Nel as he, Stewie, and Maggie used their Corn-Clamber Boots to go across a path over a cream pool. Large creamy globs dropped from the ceiling and threatened to push them down. They also slid down the wall slowly and forced the crew to wait.

At the end of this path, they could set foot on stable ground and enter a greater, wider room with two towers connecting the floor and ceiling. There were creamy White Chuchus lurking around with Chocolate Coins in their blobby bellies. “I heard that people who come up here liked to toss coins into the Sun Cream and make wishes.” Penelope said.

“A few extra bucks for me.” Augustus cut the Chus up and took the coins. There was a path that spiraled up and around one of the towers, but it was too creamy and slippery to walk on even with Corn-Clamber Boots. Farther across the room was a Rock Candy bushel, but it was trapped inside a huge Cream Chu. Cutting with the Lemon Cutlass didn’t cut it, but when Augustus punched the blob with Armament fists, it took damage like a solid being and eventually shrunk into a flat puddle. They each took a piece of crystal and encased their selves in a Rock Candy sphere. But it still wasn’t enough to go up the slippery path.

In another corner of the huge room was a garden of candy corn. The candy corn stuck through their spheres and their spikier undersides were outside. With greater sturdiness in their Rock Candy, they could roll up the path without sliding off. Cream Chus wearing candy corn helmets sprouted up, and Augustus had to give his sphere an extra push to crush the Chus’ defenses. At the top of the path, a large spring in the tower pushed them across a bridge to the next tower, where they quickly rolled down another spiraled path that ended at a ramp, which flew them to a new tunnel.

The tunnel sloped down before they instantly crashed against a wall and their spheres broke. They had to put on their suits again and dive into a new cream pool. “Better hold hands. I can’t see a thing down here.” Augustus suggested. It was incredibly murky, and he led the kids carefully as they linked like a chain. The captain stopped just before touching a yellow light, which he realized
was a jellyfish.

“Mw-mw-mw!” Maggie called for their attention.

“You can use your Zoom-In to see the jellyfish’s light through all this?” Stewie asked through his suit.

“Glad we brought ya, Mags.” Augustus smirked. “Fine, you lead the way.” They reorganized their chain as Maggie began to lead them through the darkness. The jellyfish light was faint in her Zoom-In vision, but it helped them greatly in finding their way out. Eventually, they encountered a gummy anglerfish and had to keep up as it guided them in the murk. They were finally in more clear water (er, cream) as they swam through a tunnel, which had temple depictions of an ark sailing under a storm. They thought it was Noah’s Ark.

When they tried to swim over a pit, ceiling propellers activated and pushed them down into it. Their suits’ boost function couldn’t even push up against the current, but there were Pop Gums lain around the ground. “We need Nel to eat these and shoot them. But how can we with this cream in the way?”

“Relax, those suits were designed to flush out cream, too. Just have her quickly open her helmet to eat and shoot them.” Penelope responded. When Nel finished eating all the Pop Gums, Augustus used her as a gun to shoot and destroy the propellers. They could swim out of the pit, and Augustus used Nel to shoot three more propellers that kept them from advancing. They could swim to a surface and climb onto a floor in a vast room with a chasm.

There were more fans stationed around parts of the room, with one of them on their ledge. There was a huge image on the cave wall depicting who they knew was Princess Zeira, surrounded by six stars. When Stewie held down a floor switch, all the fans activated at once, but when he stepped off, they stopped. There was also a Fudgepuffsicle bushel, so Augustus knew what this puzzle entailed. “I think I’ll go it alone here.” he said, taking the ice cream. “It’d be less complicated. You kids will guide me across, right?”

“Any time, Captain.” Stewie smiled.

“Heh he. That’s my seaman.” Without fear, Augustus bit the popsicle and inflated. Stewie pressed the switch so the floor fan would blow him up diagonal toward a ceiling fan. Stewie got off the switch before Augustus hit the fan, and he was able to float under the ceiling fan, allowing it to blow him downward. A fan that was on a pillar blew him across the darkness, toward a sharp stalagmite, but under a stalactite. Stewie stopped the fans when the captain passed the stalactite, so Augustus would float up in front of a fan on said stalactite, which would blow him further and over the stalagmite.

The next fan blew Augustus alongside the wall with the image of Zeira. This close, he could see a line of symbols, and Penelope caught these symbols through the camera on August’s suit. A fan threatened to blow him into spikes, so Stewie stepped off the switch to prevent this. Augustus floated slightly up and got in front of a new fan that pushed him toward a foothold. He deflated and finally made land.

“Interesting.” Penelope said. “I think those symbols you just passed represent numbers from, like, a really long time ago. If I were to guess, the numbers have to be… 14, 15, 1, 8, 19, 1, 18, 11, 8, 1, 4, 12, 15, 20, 19, 15, 6, 19, 16, 1, 3, 5. I wonder what it means?”

“It means that Mouse People must have built this place if you could decipher that.” Augustus remarked.
“Very funny. Just keep going. This cave has to end sooner or later.”

Augustus crossed a short bridge to a ledge with a tunnel. He spared a look at the designs in the creamy cave before he made it to the final room. Using his Corn-Clambers, he stomped up the creamy stairs of an altar. At the top, he gazed at the shining, sunny treasure he had sought in this dungeon. (End song.)

He gaped at the luscious candy, its sunny light glinting off his shades. “…There was… never a Sun Cream.”

“What do you mean?” Penelope asked.

“It’s… a Sun KEY!”

The Lost Candy was a huge, white key with an orange sun design for a head. Augustus reached up and pulled it from the pedestal it was lodged into. “The Rock Nut… Cupcake Core… the Gear Heart… Sugar Fuel… and now this. The Lost Candies… clearly, they are parts to a machine.”

“Are you serious?”

“I am.” Augustus clutched the key tight. “The only question is… what kind of machine does it make?”

The temple trembled suddenly. The abandoned pedestal shook and POPPED out of its station, a geyser of cream gushing out. Augustus held an arm up to defend from droplets and jumped down. The place began flooding. “Yeah, I kind of expected that.” (Play “Sawmill Thrill” from Tropical Freeze!)

Augustus bolted through the tunnel he just passed through, which erupted cream spouts in random areas, forcing him to run around or use his Corn-Clambers to go up a wall and get around them. When he was back in the fan room, he ate a Puffsicle and signaled Stewie to switch on the fans, as one would blow him back to the babies’ platform. He ordered the trio to put their suits back on as they jumped into the cream and quickly swam through the waterway. Fans appeared on either wall and blew them left or right, but it didn’t hold up their progress in escaping the huge glob of thick cream behind them.

They got to the dark passage, and as a result of the avalanche, the area was spinning in whirlpools as the anglerfish and jellyfish were blowing around. The kids were caught in these whirlpools, so they had to maneuver their selves to the corresponding ones, avoiding the jellyfish, but using them as guides to the exit. They resurfaced and had to head up the steep tunnel, but as expected, it was too slippery for their Corn-Clamber Boots. “Nel, I’m tossing you up there! Find something that can help!” Augustus grabbed the cave child and chucked her up the tunnel.

Nel was about to slide, but she thought fast and leapt to a safe floor with a Rock Candy bushel. She grabbed three pieces and slid back down, giving each one to her friends and sharing a crystal sphere with Augustus. However, they quickly rolled their spheres into the nearby candy corn spikes, enabling them to go up the slope just before the flood filled in. The twin pillars room was in the process of flooding, but Augustus saw several Big Cream Chus floating below. “Nel, I’m tossing you up there! Find something that can help!” Augustus grabbed the cave child and chucked her up the tunnel.

Their rock spheres broke against the entrance to the hall where they had to cross a cream pit with Corn-Clambers. The cream pool was mixing with thick cream, so they needed to cross the wall again. They did so one at a time, for the cream droplets fell down faster. Finally, they put on their Cinnamon Suits and swam through the first, final passage. The current helped push them along, but
they had to avoid boulders that fell from the ceiling. They could turn right in the passage with all the Gum Cheeps, but thick cream spewed out of the walls and threatened to flood them in.

The crew managed to maneuver around the cream, and from there it was straight up through the shaft that was under the original pool of Sun Cream. “Mmmmm!” Nel lost her grip on Augustus due to his forceful swimming. He looked down in shock, seeing her fall into the rising thick cream. Almost instinctively, he swam down to grab the cavegirl, but the cream caught them as Augustus tried to shake free. “Just go, you two! Leave this to me!”

Almost hesitantly, Stewie and Maggie used their boost functions to escape from the pool and climb on shore. “There you are! Where’s Augustus?!” Penelope shouted.

They looked as the pool began to bubble, and before their eyes, Augustus and Nel came flying out when it erupted into a fountain. The clouds cleared away and allowed the sun to highlight the delectable wonder. Teams of Shy Guy came climbing up the mountain, yelling joyfully as they jumped into the sunny fountain, relishing in its everlasting cream. The others stared amazed for a second before Augustus and Nel crashed on the ground.

“WOOHOOOO!” The captain cheered, raising the Sun Key skyward. “That was DEEEEELICIOUS!”

“The key was plugging the fountain all this time!” Stewie beamed. “Astonishing!”

“I gotta hand it to ya, Captain.” Penelope said, licking some cream off her nose. “You know how to go out with a bang. Now, um, about our deal…”

“I think we should take this parley up with Captain Slag, don’t you agree?”

“Just what I was thinkin’. The captain’s a few miles off on their flagship. If you wanna go and get your plane, I’ll meet ya there.”

“He doesn’t happen to have any showers, does he?”

“Oh, you probably don’t want their shower. Robots keep it kinda hot.” (End song.)

**Grayson Household, May 13; night time**

“So there’s a hell of a lot of dust under the refrigerator,” Ashley said as the family and their guests were having dinner, “I mean HELL of a lot, and I think there was a banana peel.”

Wendy glanced at Lee beside her, who was sunk below the table in embarrassment. Ashley continued, “So then Lee, the little sweetie, tried to make a self-cleaning service robot from some old 4x4 tech… It went crazy and tried to lead an uprising at his school!!”

Wendy and the family (minus Lee of course) laughed at the hilarious story. “It killed the pet hamster Nibbles and he got a war funeral!” Leanne exclaimed.

“Oh, Mom? Dad?” Lee spoke weakly. “Can we please not tell embarrassing stories about me to Wendy?”

“You’re right, Lee.” Leanne said kindly. “It’s up to your girlfriend to discover these things on her own.”

“I DO NOT like her!” Lee shouted, cheeks red. He glanced at Wendy, who looked taken aback. “I mean, not romantically.”
“I don’t mean to sound rude, but if Lee doesn’t want to talk about these stories, I don’t think you should.” Wendy spoke politely.

“Okay, we’ll stop.” Leanne ate a piece of her steak. “So Carla, any funny stories you wanna share about Wendy?”

“Well, while she has been improving in recent days, it is stark contrast compared to how she was.” Carla was sitting in a high chair and given a roasted fish. (At first, she considered it offensive.) “Dr. Facilier once tasked her with turning a pencil into a foot-long sandwich by utilizing four different potions in a combination.”

“Please don’t tell that one!” Wendy clasped her forehead in embarrassment.

“Details aside, she ended up creating a sentient sandwich that was shaped like a skunk, spoke French, and wanted to marry her.”

“You’re telling it.” Wendy pulled her shirt up over her head.

“Oh, don’t be so hard on yourself, Child. Every mistake you make means you learned something new.”

“SEE, Leanne??” Lee retorted.

“That’s just what people say to make their selves feel better.” Leanne replied. “It doesn’t change the fact that Lord Vacuumus left emotional scars on all of our classmates.”

“Not as much as Lee when he found out Pretty Princess Sparklecrown wasn’t real.” David said.

“I know her!” Wendy beamed – Lee’s face was planted against the table. “We used to watch that cartoon in my orphanage.”

“Yeah, Lee and Leanne used to watch it, too. Lee was in love with the princess and wanted to buy all her merchandise.” David smiled humorously at the memory. “He ended up having way more girl toys than Leanne-”

“You-know-what, I’m-not-hungry.” Lee stood up and stomped out of the room. “I’ll be outside, hoping I get eaten by a werewolf.”

“Fine, but tell Diwata to get off the roof if she’s out there.” Leanne told him.

“Um… I would also like to be excused if that’s okay.” Wendy said.

“Sure it is.” Ashley smiled. “You probably won’t be up for our boring grown-up stories. Okay, so I was playing Hero’s Duty online, one of my jackass ‘teammates’ made a bargain with the enemy and TOTALLY LED ME TO A BOMB TRAP! I ripped my headset in half and-…”

While Ashley continued her “boring” story, Wendy went outside and found Lee lying on the grass, gazing at the stars. “Lee… I’m sorry if I’m ruining your dinner. This probably wasn’t how you were hoping it would go.”

“Sigh, it isn’t your fault, Wendy. They tell stories about me all the time. When we have guests, when they’re on the phone, or when they’re chatting online. I should’ve told them to lay off me tonight, but… I guess I hoped they wouldn’t. What about you? Do Carla and Facilier make fun of you a lot?”
“Of course not.” Wendy lay beside him. “They’re really nice and they love me a lot. I’m sure your family loves you, too, Lee. That’s why they love to talk about you.”

“Yeah, they love to talk about my screw-ups.” Lee rolled on his side. “I bet Cheren’s family never makes fun of him. Or Sheila’s, or Nebula’s. They did things that make WAY more exciting stories. I bet it’s all their parents talk about with other people.”

“I wouldn’t know anything about them… but I doubt they’re perfect. They’re human just like we are.”

“Actually, they’re half-human.”

“Oh.” Well, she did say she didn’t know much about them. Cheren looked human, last she checked.

“But I get what you’re saying, Wendy.” Lee returned on his back. “It’s just, I’d like the chance to do something memorable. Something that people can be grateful for.”

“You already did do something like that, Lee. You rescued me from Professor Bob; you became my friend.”

“Oh… I guess I did.”

“Were you hoping for someone else’s approval?”

“N-No, that’s not what I meant!” he yelled panickingly. “I’m glad I rescued you, Wendy. But compared to what those other people do, it just feels… small.”

“That doesn’t matter. Small, nice gestures are still nice. I’m really grateful that you saved me… oh.” Wendy retraced her words.

“What?” Lee cocked a brow.

“For some reason, I feel like I said that before somewhere.” Wendy smiled and blushed. “The small gesture thing.”

“Where?”

“…I have no idea.” She laughed sheepishly.

“You’re weird, Wendy.” Lee poked her nose.

“Heh heh heh heh!”

“He he he!” He was delighted by her laugh. They layed back down for a minute. Lee lifted his head up and looked right. “Oh, yep, there she is.”

“Who?” Wendy sat up.

“Diwata.” He indicated the blonde girl laying on the roof of the next-door house. Her eyes were fixed on the half moon. “Hey, Diwata! Are you gonna turn into a half-wolf??”

“SHHHHH!” Dee-Dee hissed. “Be quiet, Leeee! I’m trying to hear the voices of the mooooon.”

“Dee, you sound like a song from a Disney movie. Leanne says get off the roof.”
“But it’s sooooooo hiiiiigh. Lee, can we go up to the moon?”

“Lee, I thought the Kids Next Door had a Moonbase?” Wendy inquired.

“Yes, Wendy, we do. Diwata, we go to the moon all the time, why don’t we visit it in the morning?”

“BOOOOOO! Dee-Dee wanna go up NOW!”

“Then ask Lulu or somebody to take you because Lee-Lee is tired. Sigh, honestly, I’m not sure what her problem is.” Lee said to Wendy.

“And she does this every night?”

“Just about. Well, you wanna go back inside? If we’re lucky, we’ll be in time for the story of how I was Baby New Year.”

“Heh heh, you were?” Wendy laughed as they got up to go in.

“I probably was, for all we know.”

Diwata huffed at them in annoyance and continued staring at the moon. “Huh?” A tiny star twinkled across the sky. It glittered blue and was unlike any other star. But Dee could see it for what it was.

It was a girl with blue skin and a beautiful pair of glowing wings. They shaped like a butterfly’s and were made of water, drawing power from the moon.

The ‘star’ whisked under the moon and soared beyond the sky. “Will you take me to the moon… Pretty Star?”

Negaverse

The Man With the Red Eye sat with legs crossed, meditating in the gentle night breeze. He was floating 10,000 feet in the sky, but any fear of falling was meaningless to him. … The rapid pounding of a chopper’s propeller broke the silence, and Red Eye opened his eye to see his Negaverse counterpart using a helicopter to fly level with him. The wind from the propeller nearly blew Red Eye away. “YOU REALLY DON’T LIKE KEEPING IT SUBTLE.” he yelled.

“YOU’RE THE ONE WHO WANTED TO MEET UP HERE!” Blue Eye shouted. “YOU KNOW I CAN’T FLY!”

“NO MATTER. OUR MEETING WILL COMMENCE AS SCHEDULED. SILENCIO.” Red Eye cast a spell to mute the helicopter entirely. He remained afloat outside as he spoke to his Negative. “Sigh… now then: The date in which I had planned to meet my daughter is merely days away. And the dreadful Apocalypse we have long been preparing for is scheduled in half a month. It is almost terrifying how quickly time has passed.”

“My sentiments exactly.” Blue Eye agreed. His voice was a higher pitch of Red Eye’s deep voice. “And your plan is to stage this meeting on a planet called Lunaria, correct?”

“That is true. After we have at long last become acquainted, I will teach Wendy everything I know, and she will join our cause. I plan for her to meet your daughter once again as well.”

“I am sure Ydnew will be delighted to hear this… yet, I am concerned that it won’t be the reunion
you anticipate. Would your daughter accept your violent tendencies? What if she doesn’t share your perspective? If she were to fear you?”

“I am positive she will understand my plight. I would not put it past her to feel resent for me, given my method in ‘raising’ her. But she will not hate me for long.”

“So you say. I just advise you to be careful what you wish for. Since we are on the topic… when did you plan to attack the World Government?”

“I do not wish to create more panic while the Quest for Seven Lights is still taking place. And yet, I cannot expect the Leaders will sit idly by for much longer. Set a date for May 25. Or -25 Yam in your case.”

“I will do just that. But next time… could we please meet on the ground?”

“Hm hm, very well.” Red Eye smiled. The deafening chopper pounding returned when he dispelled the Silencio, watching as his Negative flew back to the earth. “Perhaps now would be a good time to speak to Dr. Facilier. I should get Arlon to prepare.”

**Slag’s Fleet**

The Marzipan Pirates met back with Penelope in the sky, a few miles from Buttermilk Building. With her permission, the biplane was allowed to make land on the captain’s flagship. She led the five through a bar of loud, drunken robot pirates, who spoke in the typical pirate turn-of-phrase and engaged in mindless brawls. “It be MOI turn to play with the Princess Barbie Rainbow Set!”

“Don’t gawk at me in such a tone, ye rapticious rapscallion! Er Ay will haul this cutlass up yer artificial spine and see ye capsize!”

“They certainly embrace the piratey tradition.” Augustus said.

“More along the lines that they’re men.” Penelope replied. “So where did you say that cavegirl was from?”

“The Land Before Time, where do you think?”

“You mean to tell me you actually traveled through time?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know.” He smirked, starting a new lollipop.

“Just make sure you watch out for her. I hear that people who travel through time and stay in a different time era too long get killed.”

“Killed?”

“Yeah, because the universe demands it or something. It upsets the balance of things, ruins the Space-Time Continuum, you know all that fun stuff.”

“But when you think about it, aren’t we all traveling through a river of time?”

“Nice poetry, Captain. But taking shortcuts through that river is another thing.”

They arrived at Captain Slag’s cabin, where the Rusty Pete twins were playing Tug-o-War over Termina Slag’s Mask. “Oi’m pretty sure that I’M the Termina Pete!”

“My backup hard-drive you’re Termina Pete! You just want the mask ALL to yourself!”
“Your backup hard-drive is nothing but cheap adult films on the Internet! Gimme back me captain’s mask!”

“It’s MY captain’s mask!”

“STOW IT!” Captain Slag bonked them both on the head. “Why fight over that dumb old mask when the REAL Slag be right before yer eyes? You love and respect the same grog-chugging captain… SO LEARN TA SHARE!”

“WE WILL, CAPTAIN!”

“Ahhh, Penelope!” Slag marched up to the visitors. “Ay see you’ve returned with Lolly-Licking Augustus.”

“It’s… Stone Fist… Augustus.” He bit his lollipop.

“Iron beats stone.” Slag raised his own fist. “It make no difference to me. Seeing that you are here, ye must have agreed to the terms of my parley.”

“‘Agreed’ is a strong word, Slaggy. Let’s talk business. First off, how do I know you aren’t working for Lord Licorice?”

“An understandable concern. Boys?”

Some pirates stepped out from behind a curtain, holding four Blackberry Troops bound and gagged. “Took a little effort, shakin’ down laddies with the most info. And if that ain’t proof enough, maybe this will convince ya. Kill that one.” One of the pirates raised his sword to cut a guard’s neck-

“NO NO NO!” Augustus stopped him. “It’s fine, I believe you!”

“Beautiful.” Slag signaled the pirates to take the guards to the brig. Another crewmate brought him a gallon of grog, which the captain chugged down. “So, ye want to talk business then? First matter regarding, what of the Lost Candies? How many you have?”

“On hand… four. One of them is being looked after by someone else.”

“May I see them?”

“Will you steal them?”

“’ey now, Ay called a parley. I may be made of iron, but Ay’m a man of my word. You’ve nothing to fear.”

“Sigh… Let him see them, Stewie.”

The baby took out his Infi-Cube and shot the four Lost Candies onto Slag’s desk. He observed the legendary sweets with interest. “Most fascinating. And what did ye say the candies were used for, again?”

“He thinks that they’re parts to a machine.” Penelope answered.

“A machine, ye say?” Slag picked the Cupcake Core up. “These wee little candies construct a device most foul?”

“What makes you think it’s most foul?” Augustus raised a brow.
“Har har har.” Slag put the cupcake down. “I have a proposal for ya, Captain August. It’s plainly obvious that the World Government fears the existence of these delicacies. Or Lord Licorice would not have been sent to secure them, perhaps destroy them. If it truly be a machine that these sweets conceive, then such a device may be devastating beyond compare. Even more than the horrors of the Eight Sugary Wonders. To seek the Lost Candies would be to seek to create this machine. So here is my plan, Augustus: we construct this machine together, and destroy the World Government.”

“Destroy… the Government?”

“You see, Lad, the quota for a space pirate to become Emperor isn’t just a handful of islands: ’tis a handful of planets. And fer thousands of years, no space pirate could conquer this lonely world because of the Government’s power. Some pirates had the bolts to challenge them, such as Golden Fist Marine or Big Mom herself. But the Lost Candies may provide us with the key. If Captain Slag would be the man to destroy Earth’s mighty Government, Ay will be recognized as Space Pirate Emperor!”

“Time out, Captain!” Penelope spoke up. “I thought we were just gonna sell the candies and give Augustus part of the profit! Taking down the World Government… isn’t that kind of much?”

“If having your name known across galaxies be too much for ye, then by all means, walk the plank and lose the opportunity. And you, Augustus, will forever be known as the man who helped make it all possible. If lubbers were to mess with ye, they will tremble, knowing they will have to tango with Emperor Slag. I acknowledge yer skill, boy. It is rare that I say such a thing. And Ay’m sure that the feeling’s mutual.”

“Hm hm hm, you wish!” Augustus held the dry lolli stick between his fingers. “The pirate I respect most of all is Sunny Fist Sheila Frantic.” He flicked the stick into Slag’s cup.

The captain remembered the half-raccoon lass that kicked him beyond Galaxia like a football. “Grrrrrrrr!” He boiled so hotly that his grog caught fire. Rusty Pete put it out with an extinguisher. “Well, we all be entitled to our opinion… wretch. What is your response to my proposal?”

“I was never planning to destroy anyone. I’m collecting the Lost Candies for a friend. But to tell the truth… even I’m wondering what he intends to use them for.” Or what the fairies planned to do with them.

“Then why don’t we call this decision a stalemate? How ’bout, instead, we aid you in locating the sixth and final candy? I’m sure ye already know where it lie?”

The four kids and Penelope looked at Augustus. They were eager to hear the location of the last Lost Candy. “Actually… Luviro never told me where the last candy was found. I only knew the five of them.”

“Then you need to ask Luviro where it is.” Penelope affirmed.

“I will, but I don’t want you guys following me. And when I find out, I can’t promise I won’t try to get it myself.”

“A fair trade, but when Lord Licorice comes a hollerin’ and shootin’ his pistol, ye’ll beg for Captain Slag. But whether you hunt it first or not, ye’d best return to me soon. Do we have an accord?” He reached his hand out.

“Hmm… Accord.” Augustus shook it.
“Excellent. Now, Penelope will escort you back to your vessel.”

“No thanks, we can find our way.” The teen winked, recollecting the four Lost Candies before he led his crew away.

“Augustus, you can’t really mean you trust them.” Stewie said.

“I’m not stupid, Stewie. I’m not even up for destroying the Government. But either way, we’ll have to fight with Slag or Licorice over the candies. We’ll accept his bargain for now and cross it when the time comes. I just hope Luviro is still alive…”

**Climbers House; night of May 14**

Carla showed Wendy a card of a seaweed-like plant with roots that looked like rat tails. “Gillyweed! Found in the Mediterranean.” Wendy answered. Carla nodded and picked another card from the deck. This one showed a golden leaf. “A Twileaf, found in Twilight Town, Pennsylvania.” Carla nodded and got a card with a yellow plant that curved like a worm, and grew from twin leaves. “That’s a Heart Plant!”

Carla shook her head. She pointed at the tip of one of its leaves. It looped and crossed over itself. “Ohhhh. A Hurt Plant.”

“Very good, Child.” Carla smiled approvingly. “You know your Herbology well.”

“I do my best.” She shrugged.

“WENDY, WENDY!” Sonny and Donna bounced into her room. “Dr. Facilier has a visitor, come down and see!” Donna yelled.

“He’s all blue, like you!” Sonny said excitedly. “We think he’s your dad!”

“REALLY?!” Wendy immediately jumped off the bed and raced to the basement.

“Wendy’s father is here? Is this true?” Carla asked, feeling this was too sudden.

Wendy tripped in going down to the basement and broke through the door, but she quickly got to her feet. “DAD, is it really… you?”

The man standing above her had blue skin, a long white mustache, and a black suit. “You must be Miss Wendy, I presume?” He held a gloved hand down. “We are well met. My name is Arlon, and I hail from the Moon Planet, Lunaria.”

“BLUE MAN GROUP!” The Ice Climbers slid down the stairs and jumped on Wendy’s back, shaking his hand.

“Are you gonna dance for us?” Sonny asked quickly.

“Are you an alien??” followed Donna.

“Is Wendy an alien disguised as a human?”

“Are you gonna turn US blue?”

“Answer before we submit you to torture!”

“PLEASE get off of her.” Carla ordered. The twins complied as Wendy got up. “Sir, are you really
“Wendy’s father?”

“Heh heh heh, no.” Facilier laughed. “They got the wrong idea. This gentleman is Arlon, and he was sent here by Wendy’s father.”

“My father sent you?” Wendy asked. “But why?”

Arlon cleared his throat and spoke professionally, “It is at the humble request of Master ‘Man With the Red Eye’ that I assume the role of escort to Miss Marvell, Dr. Facilier, and these two delinquents, and ensure a safe and pleasant travel to my humble homeworld, wherein you shall—”

“He’s going to take us to meet yo’ dad!” Facilier exclaimed.

“REALLY?!?” Wendy’s face never looked brighter.

“THE KING OF BLUE MEN!” the twins cheered.

“YEP, this kind old servant is taking us to Lunaria!” The doctor patted Arlon’s shoulder. “According to him, your dad’s already up there, and he ain’t leavin’ until you come!”

“I DON’T BELIEVE THIS!” Wendy grabbed both men in a hug. “THANK YOU, this is the happiest day of my life, I’ve always wanted to meet my parents, you have no idea how grateful I feel right now!”

“Yes, well, be that as it may, I must lay down a few ground rules!” Arlon stated. Wendy pulled away from them. “First and foremost, Lunaria is a very peaceful and sacred place. I want no roughhousing up there of any sort, understand? Secondly—”

DING DONG. The doorbell rang. Thinking it was a customer, Facilier approached the portal-door and peeped through the eye hole. “Some kids… Wait a minute. Ain’t that Sector RZ?”

“Lemme see.” Wendy came over and stood on her tippy-toes. Indeed, Lee Andrew and his friends were out there. “It is!” She opened the door quickly.

“Wendy, hey!” Lee and his three friends stepped in right away.

“Wow, Doc, you really changed up the shop.” Lulu said, studying the change in décor and size.

“We are a little busy at the moment.” Carla said strictly. “Can we help you?”

“We haven’t seen Diwata since last night!” Lee shouted.

“I TOLD you to tell her to get off the roof.” Leanne scolded.

“SHUT UP. Sigh, we looked in town and on Moonbase, but we couldn’t find her. We were wondering if the doctor could see her with his crystal ball.”

“We have some hair from Dee’s brush!” Leanne held up three blonde hair strands.

“I’ll see what I can do.” Facilier went to his table and took out a small bottle of liquid, placing the hair inside it. Some yellow smoke floated out as the doctor waved it around the crystal ball. Clouds swirled around inside the ball before they cleared to reveal a full moon. “Are you sure she ain’t on Moonbase? ’Cause that’s all I can guess.”

“Well, she wasn’t.” Denny Whitby argued. “We checked the rest of the moon in case you ask.”
Arlon stared at the image more closely. “Wait a moment… that is not Earth’s moon. It is… Lunaria.”

“Lunaria?” Lee asked.

“He said it was his home planet.” Wendy replied.

“Yes, but the planet is untraceable to anyone who does not know where it is.” Arlon said. “She would need the guidance of someone from Lunaria to go there.”

“You don’t think she was kidnapped, do you?” Leanne asked.

“Why would anyone kidnap Dee and take her to some moon planet?” Lee replied.

“It does seem ludicrous.” Arlon agreed. “Or… is it?”

“Why wouldn’t it be?”

“Hmmm… I did not plan to take so many children to Lunaria… but I suspect you will join us to Lunaria with the intention of finding your friend. Let it be known that once you arrive… you will be sworn to secrecy.”

Penelope is from Sly Cooper – good old master of disguises. :P Sorry to cut this short, but I must go. Next time, we head to Lunaria. Kids, don’t swim in cream.

“PEOPLE OF EARTH, YOUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED.” A tiny robot with vacuum hands stared at the readers with evil red eyes. “Lord Vacuumus will return! The Dust Bunny Empire will rise and filthify everything! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! Ha ha-”

“Is zat a lovely dear I hear?” A sandwich shaped like a skunk appeared and spoke in a French accent. “Oh hohn, c’mere, my delectable fillie.” He felt attracted to Vacuumus.

“Aaaah! Desist! Desist!” The robot fled.

“I will hug you, und kiss you, and we will be wed in ze spiciest of sauces.”

“Nooooooooo!”
Okay, everyone, it’s time to begin the sixth saga of the story, the Lazarus Saga! There’s only three sagas to go in this story, so the plot progresses ever so suddenly! I’d also like to give a shout-out to my new reader(s), IDA Official. Glad you like Zach, ’cause boy do I have plans for him. ;)

Chapter 52: Why Wait Later

Washington; White House

“As President of the United States,” Jessie announced from his desk, wearing his white cowboy hat proudly, “I hereby call this first meeting of the Seven Lights to order!” Sheila Frantic, Fybi Fulbright, Suki Crystal, and April Goldenweek were in the room. Suki and Sheila were sitting on chairs, the former swinging her feet happily, Fybi was floating, and April was painting a picture of their meeting.

“Only five, but still a good number.” April said.

“So, will you kind ladies please explain this f**kin’ quest to me one more time?” the president asked.

“I don’t even know it, either.” Sheila replied, leaning her head on her fist. “But every time I go to sleep, I end up walkin’ through a dream world and helpin’ some bloke get to some place… and by the looks of it, you blokes are Seven Lights.”

“And so, my mind doth wonder, wherefore do we stand?” Fybi did a twirl in the air. “Wherefore hath we been chosen? Hast the grand writers saw fortune in our souls or our abilities? Art we meant to stand together as one?”

“I am Groot!” Suki joked bubbly, having no idea why she was brought here.

“According to Polokus,” Jessie explained, “the person who wrote the Twenty Keys Prophecy is Calliope, and it was intended to stop Bill Cipher’s master, ___. And I still can’t say his ***king NAME!”

“Still, that’s the closest we are to figuring out the mystery behind this whole quest.” April said. “But why did Calliope choose us? Especially me, considering…”

“Mayhap once all Lights are hither, the answers will be known.” Fybi replied.

“Oi, April, when were you gonna make that brain for Rayman?” Sheila inquired.

“Oh. I kind of got sidetracked with the gallery adventure. But I’ll whip it up as soon as I go to sleep again.”
“HEEEEELP!” The man in the green jacket, Exposition Guy, ran into the office. “There’s an army of robots outside of the police station!”

“No they’re not!” Richard Teague ran in after him. “The robots are outside of the WHITE HOUSE!”

“The White House? You mean this isn’t the police station?”

“ Probably isn’t.” Jessie remarked.

“Oh. Well, hi, Mr. President!” He smiled and waved. “YAAAAH!” Then he ran flailing his arms.

The five Lights headed outside to find the White House’s courtyard swarming with Plankton robots. A massive, robotic crab stomped toward the palace as a huge screen projected the green, one-eyed microorganism. “Attention, chosen ones of the Seven Lights Prophecy: this is Sheldon J. Plankton, founder and CEO of Chum Bucket Industries, here to congratulate you on your past endeavors. We at Team Gnik were happy to play a role in your awakening.”

“Hardly!” April shouted. “You guys attacked Mocha and shrunk Chimney!”

“And you captured me and my sister!” Jessie followed.

“Oh, water under the bridge, it worked out for everyone, didn’t it? But I’m sure by now, you kids understand this quest perfectly! ...Do you?”

“Just spill it, ya dumb jellybean!” Sheila yelled. “What do you want from us?”

“I want you to come over to our side. The side of Lesser Lord Ragaj Gnik! We plan to unite the Twenty Keys, anyway. And this way, you’ll be safe from the World Government!”

“And why should we trust you?” Jessie asked suspiciously.

“Well, you want to see your little yellow friend again, right?” Plankton turned the camera to face Spongebob Squarepants, snoozing on a table. “Caught him napping in a crate of buns at the local Burger King.”

“Spongebob!”

“And it isn’t just him. I captured the angel’s little friends, too!” The screen showed Sector W locked in a cage.

“I have doubts that one as small as thee could capture Anthony!” Fybi argued.

“That’s why I had Dennis teach them a lesson.” The five looked down at the Fishman bounty hunter with sunglasses and a cowboy uniform. He cracked his knuckles. “Don’t worry, I won’t hurt them too badly. I just want you five to come in so we can have a little chat! I’m sure you want to know more about this little quest…” Plankton smirked connivingly.

The five Lights suspected if they didn’t play along, Plankton would make their friends pay the price. Still, if he could get this far, why not try to kidnap them, too? Was it because the Lights were too strong? Certainly, Sheila, Fybi, and Suki were. “Very well. We’ll play along.” President Jessie decided.

“Wot? We can take them!” Sheila fist-palmed.

“Later, Sheila. We don’t want our friends hurt.”
“Excellent. Lead them in, Dennis.”

The Fishman escorted the kids up into a hatch under the crab ship. When they were safely onboard, the hatch closed, and the ship took off.

Midway Peak

“Head President Morgan,” Benjamin yelled in anger and fright, “when I accepted the position as your butler, there was NOTHING in the job description about-”

The tiny butler fell backward when Morgan stomped her foot next to him. “The job description said you would care to my needs.” Morgan said, sitting on the couch in the dark room while the TV provided the only light. “Including if I needed a little bit of entertainment. Now, get to work.”

“Ohhhhh!” The butler picked up the (giant) brush, dipped it in the jar of indigo paint, and began coloring the Head President’s toenails. Morgan used her psychic to grab a jug of butterbeer from the lamp desk, then began to drink. “If I knew I was up for this, I would have signed up to work for Lady Daphne’s apprentice.”

“Sadly, Amy Fowler was captured by our adversaries, Team Gnik.” Morgan paused in her drinking. There was a fizzy mustache over her lips. “At least I’m paying you a hefty wage. Would you like some butterbeer?”

“No thank you, Mizz. I predict you will put me in the glass if I say ‘yes.’”

Suddenly, the door to the room burst open, and General Shy Guy ran in. “HOLY COWBOYS astronaut pirates and old people stalkin’ the Jew shop! We got BIG TROUBLE, President Morgan!”

“Can it with the expositions. We already have a ponytail guy in a green jacket doing that. What is it?”

“We’ve been keepin’ tabs on the American White House ever since that snot-nosed PUNK got elected as president! Team Gnik’s robots showed up out of nowhere and knocked out our troops! Then those five Seven Lights stepped onto their ship like a bunch of surrendering pansies!”

“Team Gnik captured five of the Lights?!” Morgan shouted, subconsciously sliding her feet forward and knocking Benjamin down.

“Miss Head President, you made me get some on your toe!”

“I betcha ALL the money in your bank that they’ll snatch the other Lights ’soon as they wake up!”

“Only two left that need to find their Gibberish Rocks… we’re running out of time.” Morgan bit her lower lip as she tried to think.

“The last two Gibberish Rocks are still in the possession of our cohorts!” General Guy shouted, his militant tone unchanging. “They won’t let them Lights get them!”

“That’s what we were told regarding President Jimmy’s rock under the White House. Yet, look what happened. If Team Gnik has five of them in their custody, then we need to snatch the other two.”

“But we don’t got no clue where those two at!”
“On the contrary, I happen to know one of them. She is the daughter of one of my childhood friends. President Carter is already alerted to her.”

“Sounds like a right winged plan. But President, what did you wanna do about Mom?”

“…Mom… hm…” While her tiny butler was still painting her nails, Morgan decided to grab him between her toes. “I really haven’t been fond of Carol as of late…” She wiggled Benjamin lightly, despite his squeaky protests. “Ever since her actions in Galaxia. I think it’s time to say good-bye to her.” She squeezed her toes gently as the man choked. “General Guy, send an assassin to do it.”

“WILL DO, Miss Pres.!” The Shy Guy dashed out of the room.

“Although at this point… I really question the Government’s budget.” Morgan said to herself. “Even Azkaban couldn’t hold its prisoners. Sigh… Oh, sorry, Benjamin.”

She released the butler from her toe-grip, and he fell on the floor, looking much slimmer. “Honestly, you psychicbenders leave no reason for exercise.”

**Cleveland Park**

“YO, YO!” Beat sang, making a rockstar sign with his fingers. “We are The Gang and we got the goods!”

“We’re rough and we’re tough and we got neat hoods!” Rhyme followed.

“The Knights of Virginia, we ah the winnuh!” Kimaya sang.

“AND THERE AIN’T NO ONE BIGGUH!” Kaleo Anderson screamed, shaking the ground when the giant jumped behind them.

“WORD!” The four chorused.

Don Quixote Sugar sat on a picnic table as she watched them sing. “Um, that was…” She said with a repulsed and nervous grin.

“BEAUTIFUL!” Meloetta cheered. “Ten out of ten!”

“So, we got the goods?” Kimaya asked, crossing her arms and making rockstar signs. “We can raise the roof of yo’ music planet?”

“To be honest, it was only four sentences and one word… which was literally ‘word.’” Sugar answered. “I may not be a fan of rap, but real songs have more flesh and soul to it. Besides, it… just doesn’t sound pleasant to the ears.” She sweated a little, having never criticized anyone else’s music before.

“Yo, we takin’ this from an alien girl with her pet fairy??” Beat questioned.

“You hang out with a giant and a skeleton boy, and you question Sugar’s advice?” Cheren Uno remarked as he approached from behind his friend.

“Screw her!” Beat retorted. “We just jazzin’ over he-yuh and she comes to us all curious and whatnot!”

“It’s not like she got to explore her own element for very long.”
“I’m a little thirsty, anyway.” Sugar said as she got up. “Excuse me a moment.”

The 14-year-old-and-growing girl walked over to the park drinking fountains. She used to be short enough to drink from the little kids’ fountain, but was tall enough to drink from the big kids’ fountain. After refreshing her throat, she sang with a beautiful tone, “Ooo-OOO-ooaa-OOAAA.”

“Glad to see you’re settling back okay.” Cheren said to her.

“Yeah, but I still wanna get better at musicbending.” Sugar replied. “I think the more I sing, the faster this Age Stasis will wear off. Then I’ll be at my peak. But since my feet keep growing, I don’t bother wearing shoes.”

“I think people sing better when they’re barefoot!” Meloetta twirled. “An open voice needs to come from an open body!”

“I still get sores.” Sugar blushed. “So, Cheren, how’s the quest been coming? With the Twenty Keys and all?”

“Hmm…” Cheren switched to a serious aura. “Well, counting April from Sector W7, that makes five. And Nereh tells me that his friends have been finding the Darknesses. In fact, we’re letting them use the Multiverse Portal we found in Gravity Falls. Apparently, this is what Bill Cipher had in mind for it. But another concern is the Eight- er, Nine Firstborn. They seem to play a part in this quest. Meloetta, do you know anything?”

“About the Twenty Keys Prophecy? Not a clue.” The Music Goddess shook her head.

“That brings up another question, do you know where Arceus is?”

“I don’t know that, either. Even though I was in a distant galaxy, I did feel Arceus’s energy after his return. Then one day, it seemed to just… vanish. Over a year ago, in fact.”

“You felt Arceus vanish over a year ago?” Cheren cocked a brow. “That seems awfully recent. I’m definitely sure someone in the universe would’ve noticed him.”

“But still, even if we don’t know all the answers yet, we’re making tons of progress in this quest.” Sugar smiled, eating a grape from her basket. “Five Lights, four Firstborn, and it sounds like you all are getting stronger with your bending.”

“We have.” Cheren stared at his left hand with a proud smile. “I still can’t believe Sector V defeated one of the World Leaders. It would be real nice if we could pick them off one at a time. Still… we can’t underestimate them. Between the World Leaders, Corporate Presidents, and that Team Gnik… our work’s more than cut out for us.”

“Chereeeeeeen!” They looked over and saw Carol Masterson jog over with her laptop. Her puffy blonde hair was still in buns and she wore her new schoolgirl uniform.

“And it looks like you got more.” Sugar remarked.

“What’s up, Carol?” Cheren asked after she made it over, catching her breath.

“Well, yesterday, I flew to New York and met with a man called Oliver Warbucks. He attended the party at Midway Peak to discover any secrets the Corporate Presidents are keeping. Apparently, he’s against them, too. After I convinced him we were on the same page, he told me something pretty interesting: the Corporate Presidents located and captured the Firstborn Spirits, Azelf, Mesprit, and Uxie!”
“What?!” Cheren jumped at the surprising news. Meloetta shared his look of shock. “The last time I saw Azelf was before I went to Arctic Training 3 years ago!”

“That’s what he told me. He doesn’t know how, but he heard from his friend, Richard, who’s friends with one of Midway’s caterers, whose child goes to Edgar’s School For Servants, and is a teacher’s pet to Mrs. Glassclean, who regularly web-chats with her sister, who is a guard on Mariejoa… when Giovanni worked for the Corporate Presidents, he was able to track down the three Firstborn and contain them. He kept Mesprit for himself, but when Giovanni defected and joined Team Gnik, he took the Firstborn with him. Azelf was given to Doflamingo, and Uxie was entrusted to Head President Morgan.”

“So, Aunt Morgan has Uxie. But, wait… Doflamingo was keeping Azelf in custody? Sugar, did you know about this?”

“Not really. Dad never let us in on his black market deals.”

“Why don’t we go back to Dressrosa and look around?” Carol suggested.

“I’m sure she could’ve escaped on her own by now. In fact, I’m surprised Doflamingo could even hold the Goddess of Willpower. Something’s weird about this. But you’re right, let’s go check it out.”

“Hopefully Dressrosa isn’t too much in shambles after all that.” Sugar said.

During their talk, Kimaya Heartly walked over to Django de los Muertos sitting in the shade of a park tree. He was playing a gentle tune on his guitar, the only pleasant sound in the park besides The Gang’s rapping. “For the record, I thought it sounded alright.” He said charmingly.

“-…” Django felt the urge to answer that truthfully. “Well, I’ve just been buds with Sector V lately. They’ve been a fun bunch. Never woulda guessed Kaleo’s cousin was Dillon.”

“I hope you ain’t gonna switch ta them! You a Gang man! A street rat!”

“I considered joining the Kids Next Door, but they’re more lawful than I expected ’em to be. Still pretty badass, though.” He made a dramatic strum of his guitar.

“I hope you don’t.” Kimaya rested her hands behind her head. “We don’t see you much and you fun to have. Freakin’ DEAD GUY, walkin’ the street like no one’s biz! You’re too great.”

“Hmph.” He chuckled. “How many kids could come across a walking corpse and want him in their club? You’re really weird, Kim. You don’t even know how I died or where I came from…”

“Not like you ever told us. ’sides, I don’t need to know. ’Cause you a kid that got a bad past, and you ain’t treated right. I mean, ’cause you a dead kid, I’m assuming.”

“Heh heh heh! Yeah, it’s kinda obvious. Hey, wanna hear my new song?”

“Mm-kay. Probably better than anything Fairy Girl right there can sing.”

“Heh heh, okay. Ahem…” Django tuned his guitar, closed his eyes, and began to play softly. “Iiii have long… forsaken… my feelings. I’ve never… beeeeen afraaaaiiiid. The desert that burns…”

His hypnotic notes drew Kimaya into sleep. “The mountains are chiilily. I feel… no…”
“Then somewhere inside... I don’t un-der-stand. This hollow... shell... of miine.” Kimaya felt her body grow numb. “I heard a strange thump... I felt my chest bump... And my eyes began... to shine...?” Django stopped. Kimaya fell asleep, leaning on his shoulder.

Django put his guitar down and stared at her. The three spiked strands of yellow hair sticking out of the hole in her backwards cap. Her round nose, the sleeveless shirt that exposed her little naval. Even in sleep, her face still bore a scowl. Django softly put his left hand over her right, clasping his boney claws over the flesh. Kimaya’s hand was so tiny. He rubbed the back of it with his thumb. *I can’t feel anything... I wonder if humans are really warm.*

His red eyes stared wistfully at Kimaya’s face. She looked more beautiful. *I love her... I loved her for a while. That’s why... I don’t want to ask her. It’s none of their business. And besides... I’m already dead...*

Django fell asleep and leaned on Kimaya. Their hands remained intertwined.

**Plankton’s Crab Craft**

Plankton invited the five Lights to sit at a round table, lined with Krabby Patties, French fries, and Kelp Shakes, which Karen was pouring into cups with straws using her mobile body. “Chum Bucket Industries proudly introduces new fat-free Kelp Shakes!” Plankton said happily, standing on the table. “Now without the toxic waste.”

Sheila slurped from her drink. “Blech. Tastes worse than diet Flurp.”

“I only want the ice!” Suki took the ice out of her shake and ate it.

“Snoooore, mimimimimi.” Spongebob slept peacefully on the metal table behind them. “Snoooore, mimimimimi.”

“Did you drug him or something?” Jessie asked.

“He’s been like that since he brought us here,” Aranea said from Sector W’s cell.

“He’s probably lolling about the Dream Realm.” Plankton said. “Mr. Dark sees him every now and then. Perhaps looking for other Bubble Dreamers.”

“We don’t plan to loll around here too long, either.” April stated, biting a fry. “If you have information to share with us, speak.”

“Oh, fine. Karen?”

They directed their eyes at his Computer W.I.F.E. when she rolled to the side of the table where no one was sitting (there were two empty seats, making seven total). Her screen buzzed as she projected Sheila’s image.

“*Sheila Frantic: The Awakener.*” Sheila’s image shrunk into the top-left corner with her title written beside it. Suki’s image appeared. “*Suki Crystal: The Believer.*” The image shrunk under Sheila’s, and the process repeated for these next ones. “*Fybi Fulbright: The Seeker. Jessie Sidney: The Dreamer. April Goldenweek: The Creator. These are the titles that were given to you, the Seven Lights. Of the two Lights who have yet to awaken, one of them is ‘The Keeper.’*” A silhouette image appeared and shrunk under April’s. “*And finally, the Seventh Light, whom Dr. Nefarious has been trying to capture, Maddy Murphy: The Conqueror.*” The decommissioner’s image...
appeared last.

“The Creator?” April repeated herself. “But who gave us these titles, and why?”

“From what Plankton’s boys were saying, they have something to do with you.” Dennis commented.

“It’s true.” Plankton affirmed. “Sheila is The Awakener because she’s been visiting the Lights in your dreamscapes. Jessie is obviously a Bubble Dreamer, and April’s an artist.”

“Not only that,” April weighed in, “but I switched realities with Guertena, who created the world me and Mary lived in. Judging by my battle with him, maybe I inherited a little more than existence.”

“I, AM, GROOT!” Suki yelled angrily, having been the least informed on this whole prophecy.

“Didst fair Suki hath strong belief in Jack Frost?” Fybi inquired. “And mine given title… mayhap it is my desire to always fly and ‘seek’ yon horizon. But whom wouldst give us such titles?”

“Calliope.” Jessie said simply.

“Right you are, my boy,” Plankton jumped on the edge of his Kelp Shake. “These are the things that Lesser Lord Gnik told us. He didn’t tell me what these titles had to do with the prophecy. The only one I understand is Sheila’s.”

“Do not forget Jessie.” Karen reminded.

“True, there are other Bubble Dreamers, but he was the only one given the knowledge of the prophecy’s writers.”

“Do you people know who Calliope is?” Jessie asked.

“Lord Gnik told us about her.” Plankton answered. “He explained the story after Jessie awakened himself. She is the one whom the prophecy was created to destroy.”

“No it is not!” Jessie jumped to his feet and argued. “Polokus told me she made the prophecy to stop ___! DAMMIT!”

“Lord Gnik said that two people created the prophecy: Calliope, and her friend that Gnik referred to as the Lord of Time.” Karen’s screen depicted an image of two green, hooded figures made of shimmering, mist bodies. “These same two people were the ultimate entities that designed the universe before even Arceus appeared. They are who made the Dimensional Fusion.”

“Are you serious?” April asked, awestruck.

“Gnik’s story doesn’t end there. Those two beings created the Octogan, which produced and stored the energy that would become the pre-universe.” Karen’s screen showed two balls of green light that floated into the two Shimmers’ hands. “The rest of the work was left to Arceus. But then Calliope went rogue. Consumed with the power they possessed, she let it run rampant, distorting the plane of the First Dimension. She tried to do the same to the new universe the gods were making, this one, but the Lord of Time sacrificed himself to destroy her.”

“You’ve got it f**king backwards!” Jessie argued. “Calliope created Polokus while Bill Cipher was likely made by this ‘Lord of Time.’ So explain why Bill Cipher tried to KILL US!”

“BECAUSE YOU WERE ON THE WRONG SIDE!” Plankton cried. “When those two gods were destroyed, the Lord of Time’s will was reborn into twenty vessels. Seven of them embodied his
thoughts, while thirteen embodied his power. When they come together, they can revive the Lord of Time and stop the rogue Calliope. However, Calliope’s putting up a fight: the Octogan that she created continues to do her work for her, using the World Government. The reason Bill Cipher pretended to work for the Government was to keep an eye on her. And Polokus—"

Sheila jumped over and SMASHED Plankton and the shake he was on between her hands. The green liquid leaked everywhere as Sheila released, viewing the flattened Plankton. “First off, you’re giving me a headache. And second, YOU’RE A freaking liar! If you blokes are supposed to be the good guys, WHY IS IT you’re so bad?!”

Plankton stretched back to 3-D. “We are bad guys! Doesn’t mean we want the universe to be destroyed. And Lord Gnik said once all this was over, the Lord of Time would grant our deepest desires!”

“Well, I don’t believe a BIT of it! If Lord Gnik thought he was so great, then he shouldn’t try ta HIDE it!”

“He knew the World Government would try to get to you and persuade you—”

“BLADDY BLADDY BLAAAAAH! All I know is you drongos are bad guys, and maybe the Government’s bad guys, too, I DON’T KNOW! But I don’t wanna help either ONE of you out!”

“YOU KIDS KNOW LESS THAN US!” Plankton roared. “You don’t know who’s good and who’s BAD, so your only option is to trust us!”

“No it isn’t!” Jessie pounded the table. “Because there’s somebody else we can trust: Calliope.”

“Calliope is DOOMING the universe!”

“You guys and Bill Cipher have done WAY more doom in half a month than Calliope did in a ***king billion YEARS!”

“He’s right, you guys hurt our friends, so you’re not our friends!” April joined, standing up. “We’ll unite the Twenty Keys and discover the answers on our own! But we don’t mind crushing you on the way!”

“Oh yeah?! Well, what’ll you do if ‘finding your own way’ ends up destroying the universe?!”

“Then stupid us.” Sheila shrugged passively. “I sure as hell rather go down a free sheila than workin’ for blokes I hate.”

“I AM GROOT!” Suki cheered in agreement.

“So if you don’t mind,” Sheila marched over to Sector W’s cage, cracking her knuckles, “I’m gonna bust these wusses out and probably tear this ship a new one.” Karen zipped in front of her, sprayed Sheila with pink gas, and put her to sleep.

“You kids aren’t going ANYWHERE!” Plankton puffed to his muscular adult-size body. “One way or another, you’re my prisoners, and I WILL get you over to our side! Be good kids and cooperate OR ELSE!” On his cue, Karen remotely electrified Sector W’s cage as they screamed in pain.

“Thou art very hospitable.” Fybi glared at him. “I am believing thy story more and more.”

“You can keep us here as long as you want.” Jessie crossed his arms. “We’ll keep believing in
Calliope.”

“Oh, yeah? Well, I don’t see Calliope rebutting Lord Gnik’s story!”

“If your trump card is to threaten us, HI don’t really think she needs to rebut!” April choked a chuckle, spreading laughter to her friends.

**Hall of Doors**

“Bluh!” Sheila startled awake on the side of the river that reflected the night stars. “Crikey… that computer got the jump on me!” She helped herself up. “Grrr… I should wake up and help the mates. …Or maybe…” She looked at the river and saw she was still beside Picture City. She looked further down on her left. The next portal was labeled *Olden West*.

“Plankton may be a liar… but I think I am an Awakener. So I guess I should do my job then.” She jogged over to the portal and dove inside. (Play “Go West, Young Raccoon” from *Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time*)

**Stage 58: Olden West**

*Mission: Meet the Sixth Light.*

Sheila spun out of a portal set on a large rock. She was standing atop a stone pillar towering over a deep canyon. Her skin quickly adapted to the hot, desert air, the morning sun shining from beyond the canyon walls. There was a skeleton laying dead next to a wooden sign that had the level’s name written in black letters. In the distance behind the sign was a Western village set on a cliff.

Sheila first walked across a broken minecart track hanging over the edge of her pillar. From here, she faced a series of rock pillars, and could jump to grab the rugged side of the closest one. She climbed around the pillar to get in position to jump to the next one, doing so quickly before this pillar tumbled into the canyon. Sheila clutched a thin ledge to climb around the next pillar, dodging the Snapdragon that popped out of the roof above her, then she jumped to the next pillar before that one fell. This pillar was divided in two with a narrow gap between both halves, so while in midjump, Sheila planted her hands and feet against either half and wall-walked across.

Before the pillar fell, Sheila jumped out the other end and landed on a flat rock perched on a stone needle. She hopped across a series of these rocks as they were quickly sliding off into the chasm—an Electoon cage was revealed under one of the rocks, so Sheila shattered it with a Light Sphere. After the last unbalanced rock, Sheila landed on a stable ground and saw somebody asleep on a robotic bull, like one would see in bars.

The person was laying on their front, letting their limbs dangle off the bull. They were about Sheila’s height, but shorter, wearing a black cowboy hat, pants and boots, and a sleeveless shirt loaded with ammo. “Yaaaawn…” Kimaya Heartly yawned and stretched awake. After scratching her sore butt, she hopped off the bull. “Dang, I was ridin’ that thing so fast, it flew outta the bar and straight to here. …Who are you?” She noticed Sheila.

“Is this your dream?” the raccoon asked.

“It better be. Raccoon people ain’t real, are they?”

“I’m as real as they come!” she yelled offended. “Mah name’s Sheila.”
“Name’s Kimaya. Ah’m wanted around these parts, so I wouldn’t associate with me.”

“Well, I’m a scurvy pirate that sails the seas.”

“Oh, you and I are from totally different climates.”

“Don’t matter what climate I’m in, because I’ll explore it all!” Sheila smirked.

“Ahright, thin. Let Kid Kimaya show ya the ropes.” Kimaya grabbed two pistols from her belt.

The two hopped into a minecart and rode it on a track hanging dangerously over the chasm. The track zipped down and back up suddenly before becoming straight. It steadily curved leftward as wooden targets began popping up, and Kimaya used her cowgirl guns to shoot them expertly. Hitting the targets earned points, but when the track threatened to drive them off, she had to quickly shoot a green switch to turn it on the right path. The track zoomed down again, Kimaya hurriedly shooting the targets on the right, then they suddenly traveled a left curve as the targets passed by faster, but Kimaya had each one blasted.

The track went up a ramp and flew them across a huge gap, landing bumpyly on the next track. Kimaya shot the targets that were more far away on either side. Eventually, the track led upward and came to stop on the cliff before the village. A wooden cage opened and allowed them to break open an Electoon cage for shooting all targets. “Dang varmints put ’em in a cage in a cage? That ain’t straight.” Kimaya said.

When they passed the gate to what the sign read as ‘Yold Town’, Hoodlums stood on the houses’ balconies and burst out of the doors, shooting wildly like the cowboys they were dressed as. Kimaya pulled Sheila behind a rock, standing up and dealing quick shots to her enemies before ducking back. “These guys-a been showin’ their selves a lot. You good with a gun? Y’all c’n help.”

“Ah only need my fists!” Sheila fist-palmed. She ran out and swiftly dodged the gun-slinging Hoodlums, sending Light Spheres to knock them out cold. The girls covered the whole town and shot down each Hoodlum. That’s when a Heckler, a large armored Hoodlum with a shoulder cannon, came out of the saloon. Not only was Sheila unable to punch him, but when she tried, a Hoodoo protected him with a barrier. The Hoodoo was seen on the building roofs, so while Sheila was throwing punches and forcing him to make barriers, Kimaya shot her twin pistols and destroyed the exposed Hoodoo.

Afterwards, Sheila charged her Super Light Sphere and destroyed the Heckler in one punch. “Hoooo-WEE!” Kimaya cheered, walking up as she blew her guns free of smoke. “That packed more punch than a gorilla in a boxing ring!”

“Man, I can punch WAY harder than that! …Plus some!”

Sheila grabbed a blue Swing Can that was left by the Heckler. They hurried to the north side of town, jumping up some barrels onto a house’s roof, and from there, Sheila swung a series of Purple Lums leading up to a cliff, bringing Kimaya with her. From the cliff, the girls viewed out into the open desert, and had naught but a brown horse to be their steed. “This pardner’s Exodus.” Kimaya said. “Don’t ask why. Hop awwn on!” Kimaya perched herself on the horse while Sheila chose to stand on it.

Kimaya kicked the horse’s sides as Exodus raced across the desert winds, grains of sand blowing everywhere. Hoodlum Horsemen rode their own ugly stallions; Sheila and Kimaya shot their choice projectiles to send them hitting the sand. The desert was extremely vast with no specific
direction to go. The horse galloped and galloped, and more Hoodlums rode in to attack them. “Sigh, these things are more repetitive than recycled clichés.” Kim said. Eventually, they discovered a Hoodmonger hiding among some boulders on the east side. Sheila KO’ed him, earning herself a red Power Can.

They rode the horse around the desert some more, desperate to find where the Strong Fists can be used. Around the middle of the desert, they found a long boulder with a sealed wooden door camouflaged in it. Sheila punched it open with her stronger fists and rescued the Electoons inside. They kept exploring the desert and found a gorge on the west side, with a high cliff on the other side and two rock needles that had wooden platforms. Sheila jumped down into the gorge and found a green Power Can. She then jumped up some platforms leading back to the starting ledge and used the Spin Fists to make the wood platform (which had a propeller on it) float up.

However, they couldn’t jump on it when it was aloft, so they waited for the platform to come back down before jumping to it. Then Sheila made it float up, allowing them to jump to the next platform, and making it float up to the high cliff. “Hoo, finally.” Kimaya said afterwards. “That section was more annoying than-”

“-Western similes.” Sheila interrupted.

The duo viewed a train track that sloped down on their right. “Don’t worry, there ain’t been a train in ages.” Kimaya said. “I just have it to do this.” Kimaya hopped on and began to grind the right rail, so Sheila did the left. Targets sprouted up on either side, tempting the girls to make use of their sharpshooting. The track ended, so they jumped to a set of two unbalanced rocks placed on needles that fell over quickly. They resumed grinding on the next track, shooting more targets as the track curved left and passed over another Western village, in which targets were hidden in the alleys and on rooftops. The tracks ended at a massive rock fissure. It seems they shot all the targets, for they were given an Electoon cage.

Within the huge rock fissure, the girls began going down a steep, wide slide. Wood targets hung on the cliffsides and floated above via propellers, so they once again shot them down as they slid. Sheila took a secret narrow path on the left, quick-punching a row of three targets overhead. She got back on the main path as she and Kimaya drifted around corners of a snaky part of the slide, shooting targets that surprised them from behind the corners. They were brought out of the fissures, and the girls had to slow down to avoid falling over the long drop on either side.

They jumped a huge gap, shooting three targets set on ledges on their left and right, and landed on the next slide as it swerved left. The slide turned steep, the change of speed was sudden, and they rapidly shot targets on their whipping ride down. They were given another Electoon cage for their excellent shooting. They now faced a short, straight path between old board fences, leading to a small shack. Chuck Norris appeared to be awaiting them. “Awe, this guy’s fun. You’ll never guess where he keeps his gun.”

Smirking, Kimaya Heartly slowly stepped forward. She softly stroked the handle of her gun, ready to whip it out when the time came. The metal on her boots clanked with each soft step. Her eyes were narrowed on Chuck Norris, who was fearless and unmoving. There was no visible gun on his belt, so would he be ready? Then, when the tip of Kimaya’s boot crossed the halfway mark—an arm popped out of Norris’s beard and shot a gun, Kimaya dodged her head right, flicked her gun at, and shot him in the head. She blew the smoke from her gun in victory. “That’s how ya do it.”

She and Sheila stepped over Chuck’s body and went through the shack that actually had nothing more than its front. They were in a garden with some boulders. A white key the size of a large sword was stuck in the ground. (End song.)
Kimaya clutched the key’s handle in her right hand and pulled it out. The border around the handle had angel wings, there was a keychain with a pink five-point star, and the teeth were designed like a blue star with yellow and white tips. “Say, this looks like the big key my mom has.”

“Strewth, that’s a Keyblade, ain’t it?” Sheila asked.

“I reckon it is. Always thought it looked cool.” Kimaya swung it around.

Wait... Does this mean this girl’s a Light? Sheila thought. Which would make her The Keeper! The Keeper of what, though? “Why do ya think it’s here?”

“Ah dunno. Always wanted one, maybe?”

“Hmm.” The raccoon shrugged. Maybe I’m wrong. …Sheila turned around and saw the portal pedestal perched on a short rock. “Well-p, there’s the exit portal!” she pointed. “I’ll just do a little jig and be out of this place.” She confidently marched toward the portal, absolutely certain that much would happen.

But then a pink energy ball shot down and destroyed the pedestal. Sheila blocked her eyes from the dust of the explosion before staring at it in shock, as did Kimaya. “Going somewhere?” They looked up when Mr. Dark floated down.

“YOU!” Sheila grit her teeth.

“I hope Plankton has you all trapped well, because your dream self isn’t leaving this world anytime soon. Without the exit portal or a Bubble Dreamer, you are trapped here. Oh, and I took the liberty of destroying the portal at the start of this level, too.”

“Are you bloody stupid?” Sheila folded her arms. “Jessie’s trapped with me, too. I’ll wake up and tell him to save me!”

“I will not make it easy for him. The Hoodlums are patrolling the Hall of Doors this very moment. But don’t worry, we still need you to find the Seventh Light. We just need… a bit of time.” Mr. Dark spun his cloak like a vortex and vanished.

“Bloody drongo.” Sheila cursed. “I’ll see ya later, Kimaya.” She yanked her own tail, and her body turned to mist when she startled herself awake.

“Hm... That was weird.” Kimaya said passively, studying her Keyblade. “This thing ain’t half bad... I wonder where I could find this...!”

An image flashed in her mind of a mountain of rubble where dozens of coal trucks roamed. She saw a poor, dying town and a factory. Then she saw a white stone cube with foreign writing.

**Cleveland Park**

Kimaya woke with a slight start. She noticed Django was leaning on her with his hand over hers. “Hey, Django! Ever heard o’ personal space??” Kimaya shook the skeleton into waking up.


“You looked so adorable!” Rhyme laughed as she, Beat, and Kaleo approached.

“That Fairy Girl just left with those two nerds!” Beat jigged. “Now we got no one to listen to our beats.”
“Ugh, now my back’s sore.” Kimaya stood up and stretched. “What you guys wanna do? We can’t go to our houses without makin’ room for Leo.”

“Hey, I am very sensitive about my weight!” Leo shouted, not knowing that a girl in a ninja suit was dashing up to him. “My mom keeps feeding me veggies, and I’ve been starving like-”

The ninja girl leaped and kicked the giant in the head, toppling him down. The Gang gaped at the ninja, who landed on her feet in a fighting pose. Without bothering to speak, the black-haired ninja flew to and fro, knocked Beat out, knocked Rhyme out, and stomped Django so hard in the face, it was surprising his skull didn’t break. Kimaya tried to fart gas at her, but the ninja seemed unphased as she dodged behind, grabbed Kimaya’s arms, and pinned her to the ground.

Struggling to look up in this position, Kimaya saw G.U.N. helicopters swarming into the area. Soldiers dropped down with ropes and surrounded them. Stan Smith, a man with a blue tuxedo, black hair, and big chin, marched toward Kimaya. “Why wait to do later what we can just do right now? That’s what I always say.” He smiled proudly.

Dream Realm; Mado no Nikki

“La, la la, la la…” Spongebob hummed a merry tune as he was exploring a forest of pine trees, with a gigantic Mayan-like image floating in the sky. “Exploring the Dream Realm is so much fun! I don’t know what this place is, but there are so many cool creatures here! Some of them would actually make great faces! Ahem… BLUUUURRGH.” He transformed into a sperm-like creature spewing ooze. He changed back and, “WEEEAAACK!” turned into an elephant with a humanoid skull and huge jaw. “And also… irk…” He scrunched his face with his hands. “GLUUAACK-!” He morphed into a multi-armed creature oozing blood.

Magician’s House; same dreamscape

“Sniff… sniff…” Murfy fluttered out of the guestroom in The Magician’s house, crying. “My Manual… oh, what’ll I do without my Manual…” He floated into the kitchen and saw the Magician was not here. “Sigh, maybe I’m just hungry… I need a snack. Hey, Mado, got anything to eat?” he asked the dreamscape’s owner, Madotsuki when she walked by.

The brown-haired girl looked at him with tired, closed eyes. Saying nothing, she pinched her cheek, and her body dispersed into bubbles, returning to its Start Bed. “Okay, screw you.” Murfy remarked. “Sigh, where is that Magician?” He floated to the purple curtains, which hid a stairwell leading down. Curious, Murfy slowly flew down and into the open door.

In this new corridor, Murfy peeked into a room where Bubbled monsters lay adrift around the ceiling. The monsters in these bubbles looked like… Lums. Red and yellow ones. Some were sprouting arms or legs in disproportionate areas, some were oozing slop of various colors. The Magician, Ales Mansay, appeared to be stretching one of the bubbles, along with the leg of the Lum inside it. “What is he doing…” Murfy narrowed his eyes at him. He gasped- “Wait a minute!” and hid behind the doorway.

“I remember reading something in the Manual…” he thought aloud quietly. “Something’s supposed to happen around this part… and it’s because of-!” He gasped again. “That kid is in danger! I need to go find Sheila and-!” He hurriedly flew back up to the kitchen—a team of Hoodlums blocked his path to the exit portal and the house’s exit.

“Where do ya think you’re goin’, Smiles?!” André the Black Lum asked snarkily, flying close to
Murfy in his fly-like body.

“Yes, ‘Smiles.’” Murfy whipped around and found Ales Mansay smirking at him. “Stick around. The party’s just beginning!”

Normally, we do the Firstborn Arc at the same time as the Light Arc, but this time, we’re just going to jump into one, then do the other. Next time, we will start the Madotsuki Arc, the Firstborn Arc of this saga! Here’s a Caesar Cryptogram.

...
The Morning

Chapter Summary

Harvey Harper enters the dreamscape of Madotsuki in pursuit of Mr. Dark! But what does the shady figure want with this little girl?

Here, we will start the Madotsuki Arc, which is a crossover with the game, *Yume Nikki*.

Chapter 53: The Morning

Apartment in Karakura, Japan

The morning sun peered over the horizon at 6:00a.m.. In an apartment on the 45th floor, the room’s occupant awoke. She was a 12-year-old girl with brown hair in pigtails. She wore a dark pink sweater with a window design on the chest, a purple skirt, and warm red socks. The girl sat herself up, but she didn’t open her eyes.

Madotsuki weakly pulled off her blanket and stepped out of bed. She crossed the red carpet that bore a pattern of tiki faces, and opened the glass door that led out onto her balcony. Madotsuki rested her elbows on the railing, listening to the echoes of honking cars throughout the city as the morning sun lightly shone through her eyelids. She looked right. There was a small set of movable stairs next to the balcony’s edge. Madotsuki could walk up them, and walk off. If she wanted to.

Madotsuki reentered her apartment. All she had was the tiki carpet, her bed, a desk with her diary and a chair with wheels, a bookshelf, and a TV with an old Famicom hooked up. Madotsuki walked up and turned the TV on. …It displayed a test card, but this was the only channel she had. Madotsuki sat down and decided to play her Famicom. The only game she had was *NASU*, where she played as a little red creature that caught eggplants falling from the sky. The background was black, and the ground was a green bar that displayed her score.

The game started. A 3-note 8-bit music played. Madotsuki moved the character right to jump and catch an eggplant. …She missed by an inch, and when the eggplant hit the ground, the Game Over screen displayed for seven seconds. She started again. She caught the first eggplant close by. She hurried left to catch the second. She missed… Game Over for seven seconds. She started another round. She caught the first eggplant… then the second… the third… fourth… She missed the fifth. Game Over.

Madotsuki turned the game off and stood up. She faced the door to her room. She approached and reached for the handle… she shook her head ‘no.’ She had not in a long time… and she will not. Not now, not ever.

Madotsuki went to sit at her desk. She opened her diary, where her records were written in Japanese letters. She wrote another passage.

*Dear Diary… Tomorrow is my 13th birthday. I wonder if that means a new door will appear.*
new one always seems to appear on my birthday. But I still haven’t finished exploring the other ones. There’s so many rooms. I get so lost. But I have been making some friends. Maybe I’ll find more. Until later, Diary.

She closed the book. Then, with nothing else to do, she swerved her chair around to face her bed. She got up, walked over, and climbed under the covers. 3… 2… 1…

She woke up, opening her red eyes. The Famicom was gone. When she went to turn on her TV, an eyeball displayed. Madotsuki went out onto her balcony. Karakura’s bustling streets were gone, replaced by an empty sunrise void. Madotsuki went back inside, and faced the door to her room. She approached, and slipped her feet into a pair of red boots. She turned the knob on the door and opened.

She was in the Nexus, the room in which 12 different doors would lead her to regions of the dreamscape. The ground and sky were black with Aztec floor designs. “Where should I go today…” Madotsuki thought to herself. “Maybe I’ll go in that one.” She approached a purple door with a block-shaped hourglass design.

She entered a world where the floor was covered with colorful graffiti designs that looked like amoebas and cells. There was a gigantic image of a cell floating in the sky that looked like a mitochondria. Not that Madotsuki knew which cells were which; however, two areas on the cell looked like eyes that were glaring at her. Madotsuki walked around the graffiti tiles. Each one made its own sound under her steps. Madotsuki decided to hop and skip around the tiles and make herself a little song. But there was no certain rhythm, and she would probably never remember it.

A path of graffiti markings led Madotsuki to a lone bicycle. “Oh, here’s where I left it.” She said as she touched the bike. Her hand glowed upon touch, and when she moved it away, a bike icon floated in a small hand-size bubble. Madotsuki made a real bike materialize from that bubble. She climbed on and began to pedal across the Graffiti World, making more fast-paced notes on the tiles. Madotsuki wasn’t a fast walker, so the bike was very helpful.

“Where to go next…” Madotsuki pedaled out of the world, back to the Nexus. “How about that one?” She entered a door with dark-red blocks and green lines in-between. She was in the Forest World, a maze of pine trees and a red Aztec monkey floating in the sky. The only sound was the hypnotic dong of a clock. There were pink ghosts that oozed magenta drool, and purple ghosts that oozed green drool. “Hey, get off me.” Madotsuki said when these ghosts latched their drool onto her head.

“Ribbit. Ribbit.” A little frog hopped over to her.

“Oh. Hey, Froggy.” Madotsuki touched the creature. Another bubble appeared with the frog’s icon. She popped it on her head, transforming into a frog with a human body. “Ribbit. Ribbit.” She started to hop about happily.

Magician’s House

Ales Mansay and André watched Madotsuki on a small computer screen, from an overhead perspective like it were an RPG. The girl hopped around the forest with her frog head. “…This… is… so… BORING!” the Black Lum shouted. “Why are we watching some crummy little girl goof around?! Don’t we have a job to do?”

“We can’t rush these things.” Mansay replied. “First, we must remind her why she longs for the Dream Realm. And that… will not take much longer.” He smirked.
“Well, whaddo we do about that sponge kid snoopin’ around?”

“Hmm, good point. We can’t risk him ruining this. Take your Hoodlums and take care of him. But make sure Madotsuki doesn’t see any of you.”

**Plankton’s Crab Craft**

Aranea had picked off a strand of her hair and was using it to pick the lock of Sector W’s cell. “Sigh, how long is this gonna be, Aranea?” Anthony asked, pacing back and forth.

“Hey, I’m doing my best. You think using hair as a key is easy?”

“I thought you girls would at least carry around one of those knife thingies for your nails.”

“You mean a file? And I did, but it’s on that desk with the rest of our weapons. Gah!” Dennis suddenly grabbed Nea’s hand.

“Nice hair.” The hunter said as he took the light-blonde strand and held it by his sunglasses. “Feels a shame to waste it.” He snapped the strand in half with little strength. He then pulled up a chair and sat in front of them. “But I’ll be keeping an eye on you kids ’case you try anything.”

“Uuuuugh.” Anthony leaned his hands against the cell bars and let his head droop. “Maybe if I focus really hard, my metalbending will awaken like Toph.”

“Anthony, you can barely gembend, how do you expect to bend metal?” Sally questioned.

“Hey, you never know, it could happen.” Harvey shrugged. “That’d be sweeeet.”

“Bluh!” Sheila Frantic jumped awake. She turned to the other Lights and yelled, “Oi, Jessie, help me out! Mr. Dark got me dreamself stuck in some Western dream, and I need me a Bubble Dreamer!”

“You’re trapped in a dream? Well, alright, I’ll-” Jessie pulled out his Sleepytime Suds.

“You’ll stay put!” Plankton grabbed Jessie by the arm in his muscular form, lifting the boy and throwing the pink soap bubble aside. “We need to keep you here for our plan!”

“What plan?” April asked with a scowl.

“Ah, there he is now!” Plankton perked up when Mr. Dark materialized from a self-made vortex.

“Ah, April Goldenweek. I was hoping you’d be here.” Mr. Dark zapped purple lightning at April, blowing her against the wall.

“THOU BODILESS BEAST!” Fybi yelled, drawing her B.O.W. to aim at the Dream Spirit.

“DON’T EVEN!” Dennis grabbed Anthony through the cell bars and pulled him against them, holding a knife up. Fybi was forced to lower her guard.

“So, April…” Mr. Dark approached the singed girl. “Do you remember what you are now? Do you remember that you and Mary are Imaginary Friends? Even I would not have known if I hadn’t come across that Ib child. I must say, the illusion was convincing.”

“Why were you so interested in us?” April asked.

“Because, April, I want to know how. I am certain that Weiss Guertena knew the secret to making
the imaginary reality. And I am certain you know now, too. So… how did you and Mary become real?”

“Like I would tell you!”

Mr. Dark snapped his fingers. Dennis raised Anthony higher and held the knife to his ankle. “A foot as large as this would look nice on my mantle.”

“Okay, gross.” Aranea said.

“TELL ME the secret!” Dark demanded.

April clenched her teeth. “Grr… In the Guertena Gallery, we fell into a sub-dimension created by Guertena. We became real by killing Ib and Garry and switching realities with them.” She wouldn’t bother to explain the real story behind that.

Mr. Dark’s yellow eyes widened with sudden realization. “Of course!” He smacked the forehead of his hat. “Why didn’t I think of it before?!” He began to pace. “To steal the existence of a real person… that person must die in the Dream World! Which can only happen if their real body is in the Dream World itself!”

“What?”

“Listen, April, it wasn’t just a sub-dimension that was in that gallery… but Guertena, that brilliant man, actually created a portal into his own dreamscape, from the real world! But because Guertena was a Worldbuilder, one who can create their own fictional world and establish laws, his dreamscape could not be entered from anywhere else! It is no different than the Wonderland created by Alice… It is like a dreamscape that exists in the real world, and yet, it is still bound to dreams…” He pressed the Protoon to the chest of his cloak in a loving fashion.

“And now, April,” Dark turned to her with evil eyes, “I know how to become real. I simply must bring a human into the Dream World and slay them. But first, I must-”

“EUH!” Sheila ran at Dennis and kicked him in the crotch. He threw his knife up in the air, and Sheila punched him away before he could grab it. Sheila spun both fists and bashed Sector W’s cell open. “I praise thee, Sheila!” Fybi cheered.

“Ugh! I’ve no time!” Mr. Dark spun his vortex and began to warp.

“HEY!” Harvey grabbed his and Sally’s yo-yos from the desk and threw them at the cloaked man. The yo-yos ended up sucked into the vortex, and Harvey spiraled in with them “Whooooaa!”

“HARVEY!” His friends cried when the portal shrunk and vanished.

**Hall of Doors**

“AAAHH!” Harvey hit the grass ground when they rematerialized, and Mr. Dark shook the yo-yo strings off. “What are you doing?” He glared at the boy.

Harvey scrambled to his feet and looked around the strange jungle. “Where are we?!”

“This is the Hall of Doors of the Dream Realm. When you grabbed hold of me, you warped with me into the Subconscious Plane.”

“The…The Dream Realm?!” Harvey filled with fear, remembering what Mr. Dark just confirmed.
“Yes…” The Dream Spirit hovered over the boy threateningly. Harvey backed up, afraid of becoming his sacrifice. “And the only way back is through my Protoon. How easy it would be to destroy you… and take your reality.”

“W-Wait! I don’t wanna be a dream person!” Harvey waved his hands in defense. “What if I dream I’m naked in school, but I’ll never wake up?!”

“You’ll find, boy, that even in reality, there are nightmares you can never wake up from.” Mr. Dark raised a hand lit with purple lightning. “And your nightmare is JUST-”

“AAAAAAAAAH!” Harvey screamed at the top of his lungs when Mr. Dark blasted a powerful bolt of lightning through his chest. The smoke cleared and… Harvey was still in one piece.

“What?!?” Mr. Dark yelped, looking at his hand. “Am I not able to hurt humans that come into the Dream World?”

“Heh! I guess your plan’s a bust!” Harvey retorted. “But I wonder if I can hurt YOU! HEEEE-YAH!” He leapt to kick him in the eyes.

Mr. Dark popped a pink shield into being with his Protoon and bounced Harvey back. “No, I am able to touch you.” He observed. “However… perhaps I cannot wound you. This could complicate things…” He stroked his scarf (his imaginary “chin”). “Urgh, I can’t waste time with you. It doesn’t matter to me if you die, but you’re not the one I want to kill.” With that, Mr. Dark flew a short way down and splashed into a portal on the starry river. Harvey hurried in that direction and saw the portal was labeled *Mado no Nikki*.

“If he’s the only way back… then I have to follow him. Here goes!” With a determined look, Harvey dove into the portal.

**Dimalanta Household**

Nolan York, Yuki Crystal, and Crystal Wickens dressed in their casual attire since it was broad daylight, though their Sandmobile wasn’t parked far down. Nolan rolled up to the front door of the house and knocked.

“MY TURN THIS TIME!” Inside the house, Mason and his mother, Yin, bolted up to the door and rammed each other, falling down dizzily. Yin reached an arm up, twisted the knob, and let it slide open.

“Are we… interrupting something?” Crystal asked regarding their position.

“Nah, it’s just their routine.” Nolan said. “Usually, Haru and Matt do it. Hello, Yin, Mason.”

“Hey, Mr. York!” Mason got up first. “If you’re looking for Dillon, he’s at the treehouse.”

“Good to hear. But we’re actually here to see Haruka.”

“Haru’s down in the basement.” Yin replied, standing up. “We set it up to be her own personal laboratory. She spends a lot of time down there when she’s home lately.”

“It may work in our favor.” Nolan rolled in first; he had a few milk bottles on his lap. “We should only be a minute.”

“So, how’s the quest going?” Yuki asked as they followed.
“It’s going well so far.” Mason answered.

“After working so hard, he needs to stop by home once in a while!” Yin happily pinched her son’s cheek. “Saving the world like the strong little man he is!”

“Moomoom! You said not when we have people over!”

“Oh, relax, son, we’re adults, we see this thing all the time!” Crystal giggled, twiddling her fingers at him.

The basement had tables and shelves lined with glasses one would see in science labs, filled with various liquids. Haruka wore a pair of goggles and rubber gloves as she lifted a tiny vial of blue, fizzing liquid by her face. “Hmmm…” She observed it closely.

“Set up your own secret meth lab?” She flinched at a semi-familiar voice, hearing thumping down the stairs when three people (and a wheelchair) were stomping down.

“Ho, Mr. York.” Haruka pulled up her goggles. “No, I’m not making anything like that. Since I’ve become more adapt with my parasite powers, I figured it was safe for me to experiment with real chemicals. I’m getting a real jump start ahead of all the other college students!” She winked.

“Very impressive.” Crystal said, viewing the bottles of potions. “But don’t you also need a labcoat to work with this stuff?”

“No, if my antibodies can eat Fear Toxin or Candy Virus, they can survive… most of this.”

“Haruka, I have something I need you to look at.” Nolan set the milk bottles on an empty table and gave one to Haruka.

“To see if your milk expired?”

“It’s not milk. We robbed those from some trucks and they contained a substance I don’t recognize.”

Haruka set a small rectangular glass on the table, opened the bottle, and used her bending to make a small drop of the milk float out. It had a greenish shade to the white. “Well, it definitely isn’t real milk. …” Haruka put the drop on her tongue and pulled it back.

“Don’t do that!!” Yuki shouted. “Even Nolan said a taste test was a bad idea!”

Haruka held up a finger, implying ‘wait.’ She let the drop dissolve on her tongue, the taste spread. “It tastes… not bad. I’ll make my antibodies eat it in case there are damaging effects.”

“These bottles were being shipped to local stores before we stole them.” Nolan explained. “Clearly, they were meant to be drunk by people. But if it were to poison or kill them right away, I’m sure news would get out and prevent anymore customers.”

“And yet, it’s definitely toxic enough for me to poisonbend.” Haruka bent another drop out and put it on the small glass. “The question is, what’s inside it?” Haruka slid the glass under a microscope and began to observe its cellular structure. “Hmmm…”

“Could you tell us what’s in it?” Crystal asked.

“I dunno, you might not understand me. Are you a doctor or an engineer?”

“Er… They can be one in the same!” The witch flushed.
“No they cannot.” Haruka remarked, still focused tight on the substance. “But it does contain milk’s properties like casein… but I’m seeing other molecules that… I don’t recognize.” Haruka went to grab a book on compounds. “It’s in here somewhere, I’m sure of it.” She began to skim pages.

“Well, if you don’t mind, we need to go out and patrol.” Nolan said. “Call us if you find out.”

As they were coming out of the basement, they saw Matthew Dimalanta in the midst of a phone call. “What?! You’re kidding!” He whipped around in panic and noticed Team Sandman. “Nolan, good, you’re here! Jeremiah’s daughter’s been kidnapped by GUN!”

“Kidnapped?!?”

“Not just her, but her friends, too. Kami saw it all happen at the park.”

“Tell them we’re on our way over!” The heroes rushed out of the house.

“Jeremiah, Nolan said they’re going to the park to help.” Matt said into the phone. “No, he didn’t say if he knew anything—I don’t know what this is about either.”

“MATTHEW!” Yin raced in from the kitchen. “Marine just called from Washington—Sheila and her friends were kidnapped by a giant crab!”

“SHEILA?!” Mason exclaimed.

“What’s all the yelling about up there?!” Haruka called.

“WE’RE BEING INVADED BY ALIEN CRABS!” Mason screamed. “We gotta go to the treehouse!”

“I can’t right now, I’m doing something! Just get the others and go!”

“A-Alright! Later, Mom and Dad!” Mason raced out of the house.

“Ugh… This is stressing me out.” Haruka sighed, placing a hand on her forehead. “How do I know what I’m looking for in this book… Who would know… ugh…”

Mado no Nikki

Harvey came out the other side of the portal, finding himself in a pine tree forest. “Where did he go…” Harvey asked himself as he began to wander around. There was a red Aztec monkey in the sky and a distant donging of a bell. Harvey explored the forest for several minutes, seeing many pink and purple drooling ghosts. He had never been in the Dream World before, but from what he could make of it, it was really weird and creepy.

“Hehn hehn hehn…” came a weak laugh from a familiar high voice. Harvey looked left and gasped at seeing Spongebob, with two of those drooling ghosts attached to his head. “You guys feel like balloons made of squishy tarter sauce…”

“Spongebob!” Harvey raced up to him. He used his bladed yo-yos to chop the drool of the ghosts, scaring them into fleeing. Spongebob shook the drool off himself.

“Now, that wasn’t very nice!” Spongebob said.

“Spongebob, we’ve all been captured by Plankton! Your real body is aboard his ship, and he’s got Jessie and the Lights, too.”
“Oh, no! Wait, who are you again?”

“My name’s Harvey, from Sector W. I tried to grab onto Mr. Dark, but I got sucked into the Dream World with him. I need to find Mr. Dark and make him take me back.”

“Well, then I’ll help you!” the sponge proclaimed happily.

“No, you should wake up and help the others.”

“But who will be here to help you? If you’re stuck in the Dream World, then you’re more trapped than they are.”

“M-Maybe, but…but I’m worried about them.”

“Spongebob NEVER leaves a friend alone! I’m not going back without you! I’m sure your friends will be fine, as long as they have each other.”

“I guess if they have Sheila…” Harvey looked away for a moment. “Augh, alright, you can help me. You are a Bubble Dreamer… whatever that is. W—WAIT A SEC! Spongebob, Sheila’s trapped in a Western dreamscape! She needs a Bubble Dreamer to escape, but they’re keeping Jessie from saving her!”

“One of Jessie’s friends is trapped? Then I’ll go save her first!” Spongebob raised his bubble wand proudly. “I’ll be back for you soon!”

“YOU’RE NOT going anywhere, Squarebob!” André flew down as a band of Hoodlums surrounded the two, guns aimed.

“Who’s the talking fly?” Harvey asked.

“The name’s André Black! I’m the boss of these Hoodlums, see? And by the order of Mr. Dark, you twerps are under arrest!”

“You know Mr. Dark? Where is he? I need him for something.”

“You won’t get the chance! Shoot him, Marvin!”

One of the Hoodmongers from behind Harvey shot him in the back. The bullet phased through and left no wound. “What the-?!?” André yelped.

“I’m from the real world!” Harvey retorted, stomping up to the fly. “You can’t hurt me!” He smacked André.

The Black Lum rubbed the sore spot… then, out of curiosity, he lightly poked Harvey in the nose. “No, but we can touch you normally.” He smirked. “Hoodlums, GRAB THEM!”

Spongebob blew some Bubble Torpedoes to knock out some Hoodlums. “Let’s get outta here!” He grabbed Harvey’s arm and stormed through the other Hoodlums, getting away from the crowd. They saw two green polygonal rectangles standing next to each other and ran between them, warping to a room where purple and cyan carpets were lain around the floor, designed like African masks. The field was also within a ring of spikes.

“Hurry up, we have to lock them up someplace!” The Hoodlums were appearing from the gate they just passed through.

“Crud, where do we go?” Harvey asked panickingly.
“Let’s ask that red block for advice!” Spongebob pointed at a spinning red block with a hole in its center. He pulled Harvey with him as they ran to the block, and warped upon touching it.

“WHOAI!” Harvey flinched at the event. They ended up in a bright red maze with walls that had wobbling black dot designs, under a red sky. Harvey’s eyes were already burning from the sight. “Where are we now?”

“I dunno, but we can lose ‘em in here!” The two kept running, turning several maze corners and getting their selves lost among the redness. They heard the Hoodlums shouting in the distance, likely getting lost in their search for them.

“Darn it, we’ll never find Mr. Dark at this rate.” Harvey said, still squinting his eyes. “Spongebob, don’t you know if there’s another way for me to leave the Dream World?”

“Mmm, I don’t know, Harvey. I didn’t even think it was possible for someone to physically enter the Dream World. But don’t worry, I’ll find a way for you, yet! Ooo, maybe that bird lady knows!” He saw a humanoid woman with a bird’s face, brown hair in pigtails, casual clothes, and crazy purple eyes.

“Spongebob, don’t!” Harvey tried to stop him, but Spongebob raced up to the Toriningen excitedly.

“AAAAH!” The bird lady sprouted wings and talons, grabbed Spongebob in said salons, and soared away. “HAAARVEEEEY!”

“SPONGEBOB!” Harvey threw both his yo-yos to wrap around Spongebob and be carried up with him. He tugged the strings and tried to yank Spongebob free, but the latter ended up dropping his wand and bubble bottle. “AAAAAHH-!” The yo-yos loosened and caused Harvey to plummet without his friend. Within the maze, there was a large red, one-eyed monster that looked like a toilet (it had a big mouth on its ‘seat’). He fell toward this monster, who opened its mouth and swallowed Harvey inside.

“OW!” Harvey landed on a footprint path within a black space. More of these toilet, seat-mouth monsters were sitting around, and they had different colors. They looked dimwitted and stood still. Harvey brushed his shorts off and ran across the footprints. “Darn it… now I’m all sorts of lost. Who the heck would dream a world like this, anyway?”

**Snow World**

Madotsuki entered a purple door in the Nexus. It led to a beautiful snowy plain, populated with coniferous trees and igloos. It was Madotsuki’s favorite of the 12 worlds she dreamed about. She was only a little cold, but it was pleasant. Her boots left prints in the snow, but they would always get filled up by the endless falling flakes. And yet, the snow never grew deeper than it normally was.

Most of the igloos were empty, and were only small enough for her to crawl into. She wandered the tundra in the hopes of finding company. Then, she encountered a Toriningen. But unlike the lunatic Toriningen that carried her away to an inescapable, isolated island, this one was friendly. The smiling, kind-looking bird woman led Madotsuki another direction across the snowfield, past some trees to another igloo.

Madotsuki crawled in this igloo. There was a girl with short brown hair, a gray shirt, black pants, and blue shoes. She was sitting and fast asleep. Madotsuki didn’t recognize her, so she called her Kamakurako (Igloo Child). All she did was sleep in this igloo. Although, there was something
about her Madotsuki thought was… familiar.

Madotsuki wandered the snows some more. She came across a rather short woman of white skin, dark blue hair, and a pale blue kimono. With her sleeved hand over her mouth and nose, and her frigid appearance, there wasn’t an ounce of heat about her. She was the Yuki-onna, a snow woman from Japanese folklore, which Madotsuki took an interest in. And when Madotsuki touched her, she donned this frigid appearance. She was very cold, and the snow fell like a blizzard. She wandered the wilderness, desperate to find a means of warming herself. Then, as if by good fortune, she found a bed in the middle of some trees. She climbed under the covers to warm up.

Madotsuki woke up on a stairway leading deep into the abyss, surrounded by a forest of ghostly hands that rose up from nowhere. Madotsuki walked down this stairwell, not knowing where it would go. The stairs seemed to descend into infinity… but they eventually brought Madotsuki into a furnace. A huge burning flame was bursting from the door ahead. Using the power of her Yuki-onna, Madotsuki unleashed a blizzard that dispersed the flame. Madotsuki took off the Yuki-onna and entered a sewer library. There was a blob monster made of poop, and had a large mouth. When she touched the monster, her very hair transformed into poo.

“DAAAH!” A sewer hatch on the ceiling suddenly burst open. A boy with green eyes and wearing a black ushanka fell in and looked up at her. He looked about 7 years old. As Harvey Harper helped himself up, he whiffed the awful smell. “EEEWWWW! Is your hair made of POOP?! That is so GROSS!”

“…” Madotsuki opened the window on her shirt, pulled out a bubble with a cat icon, and slapped it over herself to become a neko. The poop icon was stored in her window. “Meow meow.” She waved her paw at Harvey before turning to leave.

“Huh? W-Wait, come back.” When Harvey tried to follow, Madotsuki equipped her bike and pedaled away faster. He chased her through a seemingly endless sewer corridor. His legs were still tired from running around that maze. “Huff… I wonder if she… knows her way around here…”

Madotsuki climbed a ladder out of the sewer, to an island in the center of a vast, Pink Ocean. There were colorful balloons adrift about the sea. To cross this ocean, Madotsuki transformed into a frog. She dove in and began to swim. Harvey witnessed this when he made it out of the sewer. This girl appeared more odd by the minute. However, there was a strange energy he felt about her… he had to follow her. Harvey jumped in the Pink Sea and swam after, but he proved to be less proficient in the act.

Madotsuki resurfaced on an island of colorful tipis, which looked like giant party hats. After taking off her Frog Effect, she approached a house designed like three tipis. She turned the doorknob and entered. Inside was a very pretty, pink room with a green carpet, a desk, a bookshelf, and a bed. The house’s resident was a girl with blonde hair in a ponytail, a green shirt, brown skirt, and red shoes. She was half turned away from Mado, with narrowed blue eyes. The girl didn’t speak and Mado didn’t know her name. So she called her Poniko, or “Ponytail Girl.”

When Madotsuki approached, Poniko walked the opposite way. Mado got on her right, but Poniko turned the other way. She always acted like this when Madotsuki visited. But Mado thought she looked pretty, and an ideal friend she could have. She wanted to get the girl to acknowledge her. Madotsuki donned a Long Hair Effect. She got in front of Poniko and brushed her new long hair with her hand, smiling. Poniko turned away. Madotsuki changed into blonde hair and tried to show it off. Poniko turned again.

Madotsuki became a cat. “Meow meow.” She said. Poniko still ignored. The ponytail girl heard Mado transform again. Then, three Mini Mados climbed up her body, resting on her shoulders and
head. Two of them sat on Poniko’s feet, another swung on her ponytail… but she still didn’t acknowledge them. The Mini Mados jumped off and reformed as she changed into a frog. “Ribbit…ribbit…” She began to hop circles around Poniko.

Magician’s House

Ales Mansay propped his head on his hand in boredom. Madotsuki hopped around Poniko as a frog, turned her body boneless and jellied as she wobbled, then made herself faceless. “Yaaaawn… Come on, we don’t have all day. We still need more Lums…”

Poniko’s House

Madotsuki put on a blindfold while standing in front of Poniko. And when she took it off, she was once again facing the ponytailed’s backside. Harvey watched all of this through the house’s window. “Boy, she must really want her attention…”

Madotsuki frowned and stopped using Effects. She approached the room’s lightswitch and turned it off. The room turned black with neon lines appearing on the edges of all the objects. Mado turned the light back on, restoring the normal pink colors. Turned it off, switched to night mode. Turned it on, back to day. Turned off, turned on. Madotsuki gave up trying to get her attention. She pinched her cheek and dispersed into bubbles, waking up.

Harvey decided to enter the house. “Excuse me, are you a real girl? Like, someone who’s dreaming? Because I need help getting back to the real world; I’m actually a real person who… got trapped here.”

From an outside perspective, that made no sense, Harvey thought. Poniko looked at him from sideways vision and turned away. “Hey, I’m talking to you. Is something wrong? And what was with that other girl just now? Hey.” Harvey turned the lights off, turned on, lights off, lights on, lights—

A FLASH, Poniko transformed into a black blob with a white, ghostly oozing face. Eyes appeared on the pictures, the wardrobe, the window, and the carpet, and the room was trembling. Harvey gazed at the monster with fear in his emerald eyes. Uboa’s face swirled like a portal and sucked Harvey inside.

The child felt his feet sink into a white, marsh-like liquid. He was stranded in an ocean of white ooze, the sky pitch-black. And in the distance, the size of a mountain, a creature more hideous than anything Harvey had ever seen. It was black like the sky, but the only indication of a body were its eyes, tongue, and hair, all the color of blood. It had multiple arms that were each gripping a hill.

Harvey couldn’t bring himself to move or to think. He didn’t understand anything about this, but it was all so hideous, he didn’t want to. A portal materialized above him, and Mr. Dark appeared. “YOU! How DARE you try to interfere—and wander in HERE of all places!” The cloaked mage grabbed Harvey, pulled him in another vortex, and reappeared over a lone barren space within a forest. He dropped Harvey there. “BOTH of you will stay put!” He warped again.

“Harvey!” The boy jumped at the familiar voice and turned around.

“Spongebob?”

“Thank goodness you’re okay. What happened to you? You look like you’ve seen a million ghosts.”
“N-No, it’s… It was something really disturbing.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. But Harvey, I don’t think we’re going anywhere. I lost my bubbles, and these trees are too thick to squeeze through or climb over. But if I wake up, maybe I’ll appear in my own Dream World if I fall back—”

“No, don’t! Plankton’s not letting Jessie go to sleep, and if he knows what you’re up to, he won’t let you, either. He’s probably only letting you sleep now ‘cause he doesn’t know.”

“But what if Mr. Dark tells him?”

“Yeah, he might. …Hang on, when Mr. Dark brought me here, he tried to kill me so he could steal my reality. But when he couldn’t do that, he said something about wanting to kill someone else. Then he flew into this world.”

“That could only mean he’s targeting the owner of this dreamscape. But who could that be?”

Harvey thought for a second. “A few minutes ago, I was following this girl around to ask if she could help. But she pinched her cheek and vanished. I guess she woke up.”

“But if she’s the dreamer of this world, we need to save her!”

“I know. But first we need to get out of here…”

**Dressrosa**

Cheren, Carol Masterson, and Sugar flew a S.C.A.M.P.E.R. to the island and parked on the royal palace’s courtyard. “The town looks like it’s calmed down.” Cheren noted. “This place seems pretty empty, too.”

“No it isn’t.” Carol informed, indicating another ship a few yards away. Three men who were guarding the ship decided to approach them. They wore dark gray uniforms.

“Wait, I know them! They’re Mom’s sons!”

“Your older brothers?” Sugar asked.

“No, I mean—Carol’s sons.”

“Do I look old enough to be their mom?” Carol remarked.

“No I mean—AUGH!”

“Hm hm, chill, Cheren, we know who you mean!” Sugar said as Carol giggled.

“Look, Walt! It’s Cheren!” Larry pointed. “We shared a bed with him! Ow!” Walt smacked him.

“Pleasure to meet you again, Mr. Uno.” The eldest son spoke in a sinister tone. “Can we inquire as to why you chose to revisit this castle?”

“We found out Doflamingo had something that belongs to us, and I’m here to reclaim it.” Cheren said with a glare. “Is your mom here, by any chance?”

“Yes.” Igner smiled dimwittedly. “Miss Morgan asked Mommy to get something from Flamingo’s office.”
“What if it’s Azelf… or better yet, her Spirit Ball?”

“I’ll take you to his office!” Sugar yelled, running ahead while the two followed.

Doflamingo’s office was large and hollow, except for the desk placed before a great window where the sun shone in. Above the entrance, a massive painting of the flamingo-feathered president hung, his grin big and bright like the original. The doors creaked open as Mom walked in. She got to her knees and searched the drawers of the desk, which faced the window.

“You would think something like a ‘Spirit Ball’ would stand out.” She thought aloud. Mom was unaware that another being snuck into the office before the doors closed on their own. “Come on, where did the feathery bastard keep the damn thing?” The shadowed being was getting closer. “Unless he hid it someplace else… or if Morgan decided to send me on a wild goose—AAAAH!”

Mom was stabbed in the hip by an Anti Guy. The black Shy Guy had an adorable, blank expression common among his kinfolk. He extracted the knife as Mom gripped the wound, forced to keep her body propped with the other hand. The Shy Guy also stabbed through the cast she was given on account of her snapped back. “Something is ‘wild’ all right, but it isn’t a goose.” The familiar voice spoke. Mom looked at the ceiling, glaring at President Morgan’s staticky image. “I’m afraid it was you all along, Carol.”

“Morgan! What the devil are you—cough!” She winced from pain.

“You shouldn’t have thought you could keep the secret from me. Bringing Cheren to do your dirty work. Your faith was in the wrong person, anyway. But now… I’m returning the favor.”

The Anti Guy raised his knife for the final blow on the 142-year-old president.

**Mado no Nikki; Dense Woods**

Harvey whirled both bladed yo-yos around while Spongebob stayed ducked, but they made no progress in chopping the trees that encased them. “Grrrr! If these stupid yo-yos could chop up an Ice Titan, then why can’t they do it to a bunch of TREEEEEEEEEES!” He mindlessly flailed the yo-yos about… Spongebob’s limbs were cut off. “Er… oops.”

“It’s okay, Harvey. I regenerate!” The sponge sprouted new arms and legs. “Still, I don’t think there’s any way to get out of here.”

Harvey sighed, calming his anger. “I might have… one more idea. Can you keep a secret?”

“Ooooo!” Spongebob made a creepy curious expression. “A seeeeeeecreeeeeet?”

“So, you’re keeping it secret, but I figured my friends would find out eventually, so… Just stand behind me.” Harvey stood silent for a while and remembered the horrible monster he saw moments ago. He never felt more afraid of anything, the mere memory haunted him. However, Harvey’s fear of the horror was stronger than that anyone else would feel. He concealed the emotions… but now he would let them burst. He would unleash them in the form of… a mega laser.

“AAAAAAHHH!” A powerful beam burst from his lungs, and he swept it across the trees to burn them down. Harvey stopped himself, already burnt out after using his powers for the first time in ages. “Huff…huff… I’m an emotionbender.”

Spongebob stared awestruck at him. “Wow… that’s a nice secret.”
“Yah, we’re pretty rare. Now’s our chance, let’s run!” They raced over the steaming tree stumps and found their way to a street road that seemed to cut through the forest. There were lamp posts giving indication to the road. The duo took the left route of the street, hoping it could lead to a town where they could ask for help. It was beginning to rain. The kids came to a stop before a road block. There was a bloodied corpse lain before the block. It had green skin, black hair, a brown shirt, and blue pants.

Harvey and Spongebob needed a moment to mourn the stranger. Harvey took off his hat and bowed his head. He may not know this man, but there was still reason to be sad. “You really enjoy poking your nose into other peoples’ dreams, don’t you.” They flinched and whipped around. Mr. Dark glared at them, his form made more terrifying by the night and rainfall.

“Spongebob, it’s him!” Harvey yelled.

“Mister Dark,” Spongebob made a karate pose, “prepare to feel the power of the Sponginator.” Mr. Dark zapped the sponge with purple lightning, scorching him with soot. “Ow.” He gasped hoarsely.

“Impudent child. If you want me to take you out of the Dream Realm, I will gladly do it.”

“Not so fast!” Harvey declared. “I know what you’re up to, Dark! You’re trying to hurt that girl! The one who made this dream world! And I bet you’re the one crudding it up, too!”

“What are you implying?” His yellow eyes narrowed.

“That ugly monster, the blonde girl turning into a blob, and what about this guy?! You killed him, didn’t you!”

Mr. Dark flashed lightning, scaring Harvey. “How DARE you… For your information, I have no intention of ruining this place more than it already is. That unsightly monster, this person lying dead… these things have been around the moment Madotsuki dreamt them.”

“Madotsuki? Is that her name?”

“Yes. And sad as it is, her dreams are her only escape. It is her means of escaping her fears… but it has failed. Let me ask you, have you ever read those stories where the author inserts their self into the story, as an actual character?”

“What about ’em?”

“You see, a story is like the author’s sort of dreamscape, and their means to ‘insert’ their selves in the story is their way of envisioning their selves as… someone better. They imagine their selves in a better world and portray their selves in a positive light, regardless of a few minor flaws they may give their selves. But it is the major flaws they choose to ignore, the parts about themselves that they wish to forget. Madotsuki uses her dreams for similar purposes. However, no matter how much she dreams, her fears continue to torment her. She wanders endlessly, only to find no escape. Even though she is a Bubble Dreamer, the Exit Portals will not welcome her. She is trapped.”

“Well, even if she is, what’s the point of trying to hurt her? You’re only making her dreams scarier.”

“There is no harm I can do to her that is worse than anything that has been done to her already. As a matter of fact, I am trying to SAVE that girl!”

“BULL crud! It looks to me like you and your bugs are here causing trouble! What do you know
about this girl, anyway?! How is any of this YOUR business?!”

“DON’T TAKE that tone with me!” The dark man thundered. “I have known Madotsuki since she was little. I bore firsthand to her suffering. She created me when she was three years old! I am her Imaginary Friend!”

Okay, regarding that analogy just now, that is sort of my opinion on self-insert OCs. :P Except Mr. Dark was a bit more negative about it. I know that I have a few self-inserts from other authors, but there’s a reason they don’t have major roles compared to the Nextgen kids. :P And I myself do not count as one because I insert myself for comedy purposes, not as an actual character. ;P Anyway, yeah, most of this arc is derived from Yume Nikki, except with an actual story. And next time, we will learn the backstory of Mr. Dark and Madotsuki. It’s Number Cipher time.

…

23-5 / 23-9-12-12 / 13-5-5-20 / 1-7-1-9-14…

(continued in next chapter)
Chapter Summary

Mr. Dark reminisces about Madotsuki’s past. Harvey Harper learns a terrible secret about the girl.

As hinted in the last chapter, the cryptogram is meant to be conjoined with the one in this, and the next chapter. (I’ll just tell you it’s a neat little reference, given what happens. ;P) Now, this chapter is supposed to be… a bit disturbing. So just be warned.

Chapter 54: After Noon

Madotsuki’s Room; 10 years ago

The night before Madotsuki’s 3rd birthday. She was a very small child who slept on a small bed, and had small toys in her room. Her parents left the window open that night. It was rather windy out, the trees rustled in an eerie fashion. Madotsuki hid deep under the covers. Clamp…clamp…

The breeze was making her closet door bang against the arch, open, close, open, close… In the brief moments she could look through the gap, she could see a dark, indigo cloak breezing. She didn’t know what was inside that dark, spooky closet, but she was afraid to go over and shut the door, for a monster might ambush her.

When the door was about to clamp again, it stopped. It stopped as though something grabbed it from the other side. Madotsuki climbed out of the blanket and set her little socked feet on the floor. Walking past all her toys, she approached the door and opened it.

A cloak as dark blue as the night hung in the closet, probably put their by her parents because they didn’t have room in their closet. There were blue pointed shoes that were too big for young Mado, and a hat with a purplish-red stripe hung above the robe, two jingle bells on its side. There were two yellow lights seen between the robe and the hat. When Madotsuki looked closer, they looked like… eyes. There were also gloves hanging by the cloak, but they were attached to nothing.

“That was getting on my nerves.” A British voice said. The clothes did seem to make an invisible body. And it was staring at her. And speaking. “You should return to bed.”

Madotsuki turned around. She felt a force—the floating glove—gently nudge her back to her bed. Madotsuki climbed in. The gloves pulled the blanket over her. “I do not like the wind.” The clothes reached over and shut the window. The wind outside became faint and less eerie. The clothes returned to the closet and shut their selves inside.

The next morning, Madotsuki opened her closet. Those same clothes were still hanging there, but they had no eyes and showed no conscience. Madotsuki went off to enjoy her birthday. Last night was probably only a dream. But she wished to have that dream again.

That night, Madotsuki opened her closet again. The clothes still hung… and the yellow eyes were present. “Do you need somebody to tuck you in?”

“Why ah you in dere?…” The child spoke adorably.
“Mmm… no idea. I guess you thought I was in here… so I am.”

“Am I dreaming?”

“Hmm… no idea.”

“What’s your name?”

…I guess I don’t have one.”

“You’re dark…”

“Is that the name you give me?”

Mado shook her head shyly. “What do you wanna name?”

“It isn’t customary for someone other than the creator to name her creation.”

Mado stood confusedly. She didn’t know many words, being so young. “…Though the name ‘Thaddeus’ does have a ring to it.”

“Daddy-us?”

“Y-…Yes.” He would blush if he had cheeks. “I’ll be… Thaddeus Dark. You can call me ‘Dark-san.’”

“Dark…san.”

“Madot-suki.” He replied. He guided the child back to her bed and put the covers over her. “…Madotsuki… that’s Japanese for ‘Window.’”

“Win…dow?”

“Why would your parents give you an odd name like that?”

…I dun’ no.”

Mr. Dark saw the window design on Madotsuki’s sweater. He reached down and felt it. “…It’s very pretty. Do you mind if I… open it?”

…”’kay.”

Mr. Dark opened the window on her shirt, shrunk down, and jumped inside.

An Imaginary Friend is created by a human as an ideal Friend of their design. A Dream Spirit is created by subconscious thinking. I am a being of both types. I can enter and exit the Dream World through Madotsuki’s window. So she always wore a shirt with a window.

One night, it rained. But the next morning, it was partly cloudy. Puddles still filled the streets. Madotsuki stood over one and viewed her reflection. Then a frog jumped in the puddle and rippled it. It happily hopped along. Madotsuki crouched like a frog and hopped in the puddle. “What are you doing, Child?” Mr. Dark asked behind her.

“I’m a frog.”

“Hmm…” Mr. Dark zapped a magic spell from his finger. Madotsuki turned into a frog. “If you
wish to be.”

“Ribbit. Ribbit.” Madotsuki hopped around the park. She jumped in all the puddles. She seemed to jump further each time. “Ribbit…” She saw a blonde-haired girl with a ponytail sitting behind a tree. “Ribbit.” She looked rather lonely, so Madotsuki hopped over to her. She hopped on the lap of the girl’s skirt. She merely stared at the frog with narrowed blue eyes. Mado hopped off. The girl stood up and walked away without a word.

One day, Madotsuki was at home, playing with her toys. She stacked blocks like buildings beside her doll house. She noticed how small the toys were compared to normal things. She wondered what it was like. “I wanna be small.”

“As you wish.” Mr. Dark cast a spell and shrunk Madotsuki. She entered her dollhouse and explored it, interacting with each plastic item. She climbed her blocks and viewed the expanse of her room from the top. She always wanted to climb Karakura’s big buildings, but this seemed just as fun.

“I wanna be a cat.” Mado said after seeing a cat pass by her house. Mr. Dark turned her into a pink little kitten. “Meow meow.” She began to repeat as she wandered around on all fours. The ponytailed girl, who Mado nicknamed Poniko, was walking on the sidewalk. The kitten trotted beside her, going “Meow meow.” Poniko ignored her.

One day, she saw a birthday party taking place in a backyard. Some kids that were in her class were there. She wasn’t given an invitation. “I wanna be invisible.” she requested. Mr. Dark turned her invisible, except to his eyes. Madotsuki approached the fence and watched the party from here. They had balloons and cake. It looked very tasty, and fun.

“Dark-san, will you read me a story?” a five-year-old Madotsuki asked while in bed.

Thaddeus pulled up a chair beside her bed, sat down, and opened a book. “‘Once upon a time, there was a little girl who lived alone in the woods. She was a witch, born with magical powers.’

“‘People feared her for her magic.’” Madotsuki dreamed she was flying on a broom, dressed in a witch’s cloak and hat. “‘So she was all alone. Then, a girl came to her house.’” Mado stopped flying and saw Poniko walking by down below. “‘A cute girl with golden braids.’” Poniko seemed to glance up at the witch, but turned around and ignored her.

“‘Once upon a time, there was a demon that ruled the world.’” Mr. Dark read the next night. “‘He enslaved all humans, and darkness shrouded everything.’” Madotsuki dreamed she was a demon, like one she saw in a videogame once.

“‘Once upon a time, there was an entire planet, where all the mountains, buildings, and fields were made of musical instruments. Music played every day.’ Ooo, this story has a demon, too.”

“Will you play me a song?” Madotsuki asked.

“You wish me to play you something?”

“Yes, please.”

“…Very well.”

**Current time; Dense Woods**

“Awwww… That story was adorable.” Spongebob said.
“Okay, well, what about all this ‘suffering’ you were talking about?” Harvey asked. “When does that start?”

“I am only telling you that much!” Mr. Dark stated. “You have no business in this child’s dreams and therefore it is not your concern!”

“Yes it is! You’re planning to hurt this girl, and as a Kids Next Door operative, it’s my job to stop you!”

“None of your pitiful Kids Next Door could HOPE to understand Madotsuki’s suffering!”

“You’re wrong! Bad things happen to us all the time! Like when Anthony got that shrinking curse, or Fybi lost her wings, or when Dillon lost Vanellope… You wouldn’t believe it, but I felt that sadness and distraught stronger than anyone else.”

“That’s right!” Spongebob exclaimed, remembering what he learned minutes ago. “Harvey’s an emotionbender! But don’t tell anyone.”

Harvey shot a look at him, then back on Mr. Dark. “Bad things happen to people all the time. But they all got past it, and I know Madotsuki can, too. We could even help her if you just tell us what’s wrong.”

“I will do no such thing! Emotionbender or not, you are stepping into territory you have no place getting yourself involved in. You will leave this realm at once!”

“Listen, buddy,” Harvey pointed a finger, “it’s your own fault for bringing me here in the first place, so YOU better…?” Harvey turned around to see the green-skinned corpse. “Hey… does this body have something to do with it?”

“I said DON’T interfere!” Thaddeus roared.

Harvey ignored the warning and approached the body. Although it was disgusting, he bent down and touched it.

*On a rainy night, a car shot down the road and ran over a man crossing the street.*

Tears appeared in Harvey’s eyes, his face struck with horror. “Harvey, what’s the matter??” Spongebob exclaimed.

“H-Huh?” Harvey backed away from the body. He wiped the tears off and tried to let his nerves calm. “I-I musta… saw one of Madotsuki’s memories. Sh-She felt… really upset a-and…”

Mr. Dark narrowed his eyes, angered at their nosiness. Harvey stared at the hand that touched the corpse. “Wait a minute… this is Madotsuki’s dream world. That means everything here is made from her thoughts and… her feelings. If I go around and touch everything I can, I wonder if I’ll be able to understand what she’s feeling?”

“You will NOT!” Mr. Dark ignited a flame in his hand and threw it, but Spongebob grabbed Harvey and ran down a forest path.

“I think you’re on to something though, Harv!” Spongebob told him. “Squidward never wants me involved in his life. But when I do, boy do things work out!”

“The first thing we should do is find Madotsuki herself.” Harvey panted. “I need to warn her what Mr. Dark is up to.”
“You know, Harvey, I need to ask, why were you keeping your powers a secret? Don’t they look like they woulda helped you guys a few times?”

“My mom said it was a rare and dangerous power, and she didn’t want me using them until I was older. She told me to always keep my emotions under control and not express them too much. But that’s STUPID, ’cause she started using HER powers when she was seven! Why is she so afraid of ME-!”

A few of the surrounding trees blew down from an unseen force. Harvey stopped and stared in shock. “I don’t know.” Spongebob replied honestly.

“There they are, I SEE ’em!” André declared as Hoodlums were giving pursuit.

“Uh-oh! Let’s go this way, Harvey!”

**Dressrosa; Doflamingo’s office**

The Anti Guy raised the knife to end the 142-year-old president’s life. Mom shut her eyes from her fate. Then an Ice Arrow flew into the room and froze the assassin solid. A Song Beam fired and struck the frozen Shy Guy, blasting him against the wall.

Before Mom or Morgan could understand what happened, Cheren, Sugar, and Carol ran into the room. “That’s an AWFUL dirty trick, Aunt Morgan!”

“Cheren, is it? I see Carol has you at her beck and call. And who might you be? Don Quixote Sugar? I was counting on your toy curse to rid the world of Spongebob Squarepants... but it seems it has failed.”

“I never wanted to use my powers to begin with!” Sugar yelled. “And I won’t use them anymore, especially not for you!”

“Aunt Morgan, why did you try to kill one of your associates?!” Cheren aimed his sword at the screen.

“Sunni Chariton tipped me off that it was Carol who snuck you into Mariejoa, is this not true?”

“Not me, it was her!” Carol pointed at Mom frantically.

“You know, Aunt Morgan, I may get mad at operatives for disobeying my orders, but I sure as hell don’t have them EXECUTED! Heck, the worst I did was throw Kodama in prison, but she kind of…”

“This woman intended for you to slay me. Would you not retaliate in the same manner?”

“ Heck, no. I woulda asked what their problem is with me, and KICK their ass if I wanted to! And FYI, Morgan, I never planned to kill you. But it’s great timing that you’re here: where are you keeping the Firstborn Uxie?”

“So, you learned that secret? Unfortunately, I have given Uxie to someone else. We planned to use her for something important, so don’t think we’ll let you come up and take her.”

“Guess again, Lady!” Cheren slashed his sword at the air. “Because I’m coming up there! And I’m gonna mop the FLOOR with you!” Sugar and Carol gaped at his declaration.

“I already ’mopped the floor’ with you 13 days ago. And I did not even use my full strength. What
“I’ve gotten stronger, Aunt Morgan. And I didn’t even have a chance to go full throttle. I’ll beat the snot out of you and make you come back to our side.”

“Even if you get lucky and beat me, it will not change a thing. But very well, I’ll accept your challenge. I expect to see you by May 20. Five days from now. I haven’t got all month, you know. But I have one little condition, just to make it fun: you must climb up Mariejoa through Enies Lobby. CP10 should be a pretty decent warm-up for you.” The TV switched off.

“You wish.” Cheren remarked in spite. He turned to face Mom as the old woman was gasping, clutching her wound. “Mom, are you okay?”

“I’m just fine, you nosey snot. Why… did you bother saving me, anyway?”

“I have an unhealthy fondness for ladies.” He said with a cocked brow. “Come on, let’s get you back to your sons.”

Sugar and Meloetta helped the woman to walk as they navigated out of the castle. “So, you came here searching for Azelf, too?” Mom inquired. “I thought that was a trick.”

“Well, based on my info, Doflamingo was keeping Azelf hostage.” Carol Masterson replied. “But given how much time passed, she’s probably gone by now. Either escaped or taken by the other presidents.”

“Or I could be just hanging around here, waiting for something fun to happen!”

“Yeah, I guess so.” Meloetta replied. “Azelf is the kinda person to- Oh?”

They all turned and faced up. There was a silver-bodied creature wearing a silver helmet, holding swords in its two tails. “Wait!” Sugar exclaimed. “That’s Azure! The greatest fighter we have in our colosseum!”

“That’s right!” Azure nodded. “The people of Dressrosa know me as Azure, when in actuality, I am…!” He pulled off her helmet, exposing her blue head with golden eyes and red gem on her forehead.

“A-Azelf! It’s really you!” Cheren beamed with delight.

“What’ve you been doing here?” Carol asked. “Did Doflamingo actually have you trapped?”

“Well, Doflamingo told me he would persuade the other Corporate Presidents not to hurt my sisters if I fought in the Corrida Colosseum. Even if I didn’t believe him, it sure got me some work! I don’t know where he got all those warriors, but they were the best workouts ever! I couldn’t be too worried for my sisters, ‘cause we’re Firstborn, we know how to pull through. So, what’ve you been up to?”

“Story time!” Carol exclaimed.

Half an hour of recaps later: “Yikes… I missed a lot.” Azelf said. “But wow, Cheren, taking on the Demon Saint Majora and Goddess of Nature Viridi? You kick SERIOUS ass! Hehe, I remember when you were five and playing with that toy sword! When I analyzed his Power Level, it was just a itty-bitty teeny-tiny 3!” She held her small hands very close to each other.

“Heh heh, hey, I was young.” Cheren blushed.
“What do you mean by his Power Level?” Sugar asked.

“Well, Azelf here is able to scan a person’s overall strength.” Cheren explained. “But only if that person attacks her. She didn’t actually discover this power until Arceus removed her curse.”

“That’s why I liked to go around and make ALL the strong guys attack me!” Azelf proclaimed, doing a flip and pointing her tails at her head.

“When she scanned my mom, it was 3,127.”

“Hm. I expect nothing less from the famous Rachel.” Mom noted.

“Aright, s’let’s see how strong YOU got!” Azelf said perkily. “Come on, Cheren, hit me! Hit me with your strongest shot!”

“We- I-”

“I didn’t ask for a stutter, take out that sword and slice me down the middle!” She inched closer each time she insisted, “Go on! Do it! Hit me! Cut me! Do it, Cheren! Cut me into little pieces!”

“UGH!” Cheren burned into his Demon State, raised the Master Sword, and SLICED Azelf perfectly down the middle. Sugar and Carol were speechless at the fact he would slice a Firstborn with no hesitation. Azelf flew back and hit against the wall. The Goddess of Willpower only had a minor scratch on her.

Azelf touched her tails to her head as her red emblems glowed. “Analyzation complete. The speed of your attack, the strength of your cut, plus the current level of chi… You have a Power Level of 4,104.”

“WHOA!” Sugar and Carol jumped.

“Don’t ‘Whoa’ yet, let’s see the rest of you, hit me!”

Sugar sucked in a breath and blasted a Song Beam against Azelf with her highest note. Azelf recovered and analyzed. “Don Quixote Sugar, your Power Level is: 1,210.”

“Not bad!”

“My turn! Heeeyyy-YAH!” Carol rushed up, her fist balled tight, and punched Azelf in the face. She budged a little bit, but the Firstborn analyzed quickly.

“Carol Masterson, your Power Level is: 10.”

“D’OH.” The rich girl collapsed.

“Hah hah ha!” Cheren laughed. “Still, 4,104. I really didn’t expect that!” He stared at his hand proudly. “I may be able to defeat Aunt Morgan after all!”

“Don’t get too hasty.” Azelf stated. “Morgan visited Dressrosa five months ago just so I can scan her. After a somewhat painful Psycho Beam to the face, I determined her Power Level is 5,892.”

“Ache-!” Cheren winced. “That’s… pretty high.”

“I also know The King’s Power Level.”

The three kids and adult stared at her with amazement and terror in their eyes. They wondered if it
was safe to ask. “W…When did you scan him?” Cheren asked.

“Back in March. He visited Dressrosa in some silly disguise called ‘Sir Knightly.’ He didn’t look at all intimidating when I faced him. And then…”

Azelf lashed her swords at every corner of the pots-and-pans knight. She had never seen armor this indestructible, and yet knocking him around was so simple. But just when it seemed the knight was lying dead, he screamed, jumped to his feet, ran at Azelf like an escaped lunatic, and punched her so hard, her helmet broke and she went flying out of the colosseum.

“His Power Level, at the time, was over nine thousand.”

“Nine… thousand…” Cheren felt his spirits decrease.

Dun dun duuuun! The screen cut to Goku, who had a shock-ridden, gaping expression.

“Wait a second, what about Firstborn Guardians?” Sugar asked. “Don’t our Firstborn make us stronger?”

“Of course they do! Firstborn can triple your powers!”

Cheren’s spirits fired up again, and he said excitedly, “Then I need to claim you as my Firstborn! Does Mom still have your Spirit Ball?”

“I never found it, dumbass!” Mom shouted.

“I MEANT MY MOM!”

“Yes, she does.” Azelf answered. “But you’re not ready to claim me, yet.”

“Whaddyou mean I’m not ready?! I saved the world TWICE! I took on Majora and Viridi singlehandedly! Even my mom needed Lehcar and Mandy’s help to beat Ganon! Do I need to unite the Triforce myself now?”

“Oh, screw the Triforce, that thing’s nothin’ but trouble. Look, I’ll tell ya when you’re ready to capture me, just trust me on this.”

“Sigh, fine. It’s at least good to have you back, Azelf.”

“Um, excuse me, but,” Meloetta interrupted, “don’t we have a woman bleeding to death here?”

They now remembered the wound in Mom’s hip. “Right.” Cheren said. “We’ll bring you up to Moonbase and have Melody heal you.”

“You’re bringing a Corporate President up to Moonbase?” Carol questioned.

“Keep your diapers on, brat, it won’t do me any favors to try a sneak attack.” Mom said. “Now that President Priss has stopped trusting me.”

“We’ll keep guards trained on her just in case. Let’s go.”

Madotsuki’s Room

Madotsuki climbed out of bed after waking. She walked out onto her balcony. The sun hovered in the partly cloudy sky. It was about 2:10pm. The town looked pretty and lively. But this was as much Madotsuki would see of it. Madotsuki went back in to write in her Yume Nikki (her Dream
Diary.

Dear Diary… Poniko ignored me again. I wonder why she won’t talk to me? I also saw a boy with a winter hat. He made fun of my hair, then he chased me. What was really weird is that he talked. I didn’t understand him, but… I wonder what he wanted? Will I see him again? Probably a 1/78 chance, though.

Madotsuki had nothing else to do. She would not go outside her room… she made no progress in NASU… so she climbed under the covers and went to sleep.

Neon World

The Neon World was the brightest and most colorful place in Madotsuki’s dreamscape. She came here after going to sleep. There were living pinball machines, jiggling worms, one-eyed things with pinchers, all flashing neon colors and dancing about the neon halls while techno music played.

Madotsuki could not blend with the colorful, carefree creatures. She was just too single-colored. But then she came upon a neon parrot. When she touched the parrot, her body turned neon. She happily danced alongside the creatures. She was neon like them, and she made the party even flashier.

Madotsuki found an empty doorway whose black interior contrasted with the neon colors. Madotsuki turned off her neon form and entered. She was in a black dimension with a path composed of purple and red, flashing tiles, which made sounds under her steps. The area was quieter than the Neon World, and no one was around. However, Madotsuki saw two red Lums, little energy balls with wings. The Lums appeared lost, and afraid. They heard the tiles make sounds behind them—Madotsuki was coming.

The Lums tried to flee, but Mado opened her shirt window, took out a bubble with a stoplight design, and changed into a Stop & Go light. She flashed the red light, forcing the Lums to freeze in place. Mado approached the Lums and pulled bubbles out of her head, trapping them inside. The Lums shivered from the horrific thoughts contained in these bubbles, but they could not escape. They were about to float up into the Sea of Bubbles, but two Black Lums flew by and carried the bubbles away.

“Nice catch there, Mad!” Ales Mansay’s voice rang from an unseen speaker. “Listen, I managed to catch some myself, they’re at the house. Hurry up, I made some food for ya, too! You know grub’s always best in Dream Land! Also, somebody’s here waiting for ya, too. An old friend of yours.”

Still feeling half awake, Madotsuki made her way to the house.

Somewhere outside Dense Woods

Harvey and Spongebob rested under some trees to catch their breath. “The Hoodlums couldn’t-a followed us this far.” Harvey said. “How big can one person’s dream world be?”

“I think Mr. Dark said Maddy was a Bubble Dreamer, too.”

“Call her Mado, I’ll get her confused with someone else.”

“Okay. Anyway, my own Dream World has all my friends’ dreams connected to one-another. I think Jessie’s are, too.”

“So Madotsuki’s is made of other peoples’… like that ponytail girl. Sigh, let’s keep looking. She
has to be around here somewhere.”

“Wait, do you hear a bike?”

The two peeked out from some bushes. The 12-year-old girl in question, Madotsuki was pedaling up from down the road, bypassing them on her way to a house with a big magician’s hat. Harvey and Spongebob pursued her, keeping hidden within the trees. They gasped when Mr. Dark materialized before the house. Madotsuki Bubbled her bike and put it in her window.

“Madotsuki… it’s good to see you again.” The cloaked nightmare knelt down and put his hands to her back (if he had arms, it would be hugging). “Do you remember? It’s me, Madotsuki. Dark-san…”

“Dark-san…” Her eyes were half closed.

“Yes… Dark-san…” The man gently stroked her hair. “Sigh… Madotsuki… I feel terrible for letting that happen to you… For six years, you never had someone to comfort you… Those wretched Kids Next Door were so obsessed with stopping parents from feeding their kids broccoli or from giving kids triple homework… ignorant to your plight… But I will be rid of them soon… and I will save you…” Mr. Dark stood up and took Mado’s hand. “Let’s go inside.” He led her into the Magician’s House.

“What’s he planning to do to her?!?” Harvey whispered angrily. “He shouldn’t be able to kill her, right?”

“I have an idea! I’ll send in one of my Minibobs!” Spongebob ripped off a square piece of his body. It morphed into a mini Spongebob, said “I’m ready!” and ran to the house.

“Spongebob, you got a weird body, but it’s handy.”

“In more ways than one.” Spongebob smirked, extracting more arms from his body.

Inside the house

“KYAAAAAAH!” Ales Mansay screamed like a little girl meeting her favorite boy band. “MR. DARK-SAAAAAAN! Mr. Dark-senpai! Senpai Dark! DAAAARK-senpai! It’s so good to see you again! And of course, the girl who dreamified this magnificent man!” Mansay got beside Mado and rubbed her cheek. “Madotsuki! The honor belongs to you, hah ha!” He glanced up at Mr. Dark, who was giving a spiteful glare. “…Uh, hehe.” Nervous, Mansay slipped away. “Food’s in the kitchen. Please, help yourself, Mado.”

The 12-year-old walked away, her red boots making their usual squeak sound. The Minibob squeezed under the door and saw her. He went to hide when André buzzed in between Dark and Mansay. “Well, we got about 1,056 Mutant Lums ready to bust some heads. So, what’s the plan, how’re we gonna kill that girl?”

“We cannot kill her.” Dark replied. “When I attempted to kill that boy, my attacks phased through him. We cannot kill real humans in the Dream World.”

“Well, that’s no big deal!” Mansay shrugged. “We’ll convince Mado to kill herself! It shouldn’t be very hard at all! I mean, every kid her age feels like killin’ their self. Especially if she was freaking ra-”

Mr. Dark squeezed The Magician by the neck and raised him to his eyes. Mansay’s head puffed and was turning darker blue. “Listen, you prepubescent fanboy.” He spoke with pure malice. His
yellow eyes bore into the Teensie’s soul. “I did not appreciate you sniffing around my background. The only reason I do not twist your neck is because you have technology that is useful to me. But you are NEVER to speak of that. You have no place to. Do you understand me?”

“Ack! . . Crystal. . clear. .” Mr. Dark dropped him. Mansay gasped and puffed his neck back to normal. “Uff… But, it should be pretty easy, right?”

“Sure, I’m a pro at instigating suicide!” André said proudly. “But what about that other thing? You know, with that thing we got in the basement?”

The Minibob perked at this hint. “We should have enough power to fire the cannon.” Mansay replied as Minibob ran for the purple curtains. “We’ll collect a bit more chi in case…”

The Minibob dropped down a flight of stairs behind the curtains. He squeezed under another door, to a room full of Mr. Dark T-shirts, fan letters, and merchandise. There was also a bubble that contained a silver being with a pink head and two tails. “Spongebob! Is that you?”

Minibob looked at the right wall: Murfy was glued to a large piece of bug tape.

“I’m Minibob!”

“Eh, close enough. Spongebob, see that thing in the bubble? That’s Mesprit, the Goddess of Emotion. Mansay’s usin’ her for something evil! And what’s more, that Madotsuki girl is in danger!”

“TIME TO REPORT BACK TO BIGBOB!” Minibob pinched himself and popped.

Spongebob’s missing piece reformed. “Hu! Harvey, somebody named Mesprit is trapped in there!”

“Mesprit?! She’s here??”

“Do you know her?”

“She’s the one who gave me emotionbending. Spongebob, listen, I’ll run in there and drag Madotsuki out. If those guys chase me, that’s your chance to run in and get Mesprit. You saw where she was, so you’ll have a better chance.”

“Ooo-hoo, I love distractions!”

“Okay, on three: One… two… three! AAAAH!” Harvey ran for the house.

“Wait- I wasn’t ready! I thought you would say ‘go’!”

“HANDS UP IN THE AIR!” Harvey burst into the house and raised his yo-yos. The three villains flinched and did so.

“Like we just don’t care??” André joked.

“WAIT A SECOND!” Mr. Dark blasted fire, but dealt no harm to Harvey as the boy threw his yo-yos at Madotsuki, caught her, and pulled her back. “AFTER HIM!” The three villains began to chase Harvey as expected. He unwrapped his yo-yos and held Madotsuki’s hand as the taller girl ran with him.

“Come on, we have to get away from them! I’ll explain later!”

After Harvey led them far enough from the house, Spongebob quickly ran inside. He went down
the basement, to the room where Murfy and Mesprit were trapped. “Spongebob, get me down from here! I’ll help you save Mesprit—we need to get Rayman outta here, too!”

“You got it!” Spongebob faced Mesprit’s bubble determinedly. “No bubble lasts forever!” He whipped out a camera and snapped a blinding picture.

**FC World**

Mr. Dark, Mansay, and André chased Harvey and Mado through a warp gate that brought them to the pixelated FC World. *They must’ve gone in that house!* Mansay’s textbox read. They burst into the ordinary house that had dozens of floors inside.

However, Harvey and Madotsuki were hiding behind the house. “Sigh… let’s hope that keeps them busy. My name’s Harvey. We kinda met a little while ago. I’m… sorry I made fun of your hair.”

Madotsuki stared at him and said nothing. “Your name’s Madotsuki, right? I… Ugh, this videogame world’s hurting my eyes. Do you know someplace else we can talk?”

Madotsuki reached into her window and took out a bubble that had a hand with an eye. When she donned the Medamaude Effect, Harvey felt his vision zoom into the eye. They warped back to the Nexus. Madotsuki took the Effect off as Harvey shook back to his senses. “Um… ’guess you do.”

“…” Madotsuki turned to leave.

“Wait!” Harvey ran in front of her. “I’m here to help you. Those people are planning to kill you—Mr. Dark. Is he your Imaginary Friend?”

“…” Mado looked away, frowning like always. “There are lots of people here. Dark-san is one of them.”

“So you… did make him?”

“…Dark-san is the only one who talks. No one else talks. …But you.”

“Heh.” Harvey blushed. “I’m not really from this world. I’m a real person. Like you.”

“…Real…”

“Yeah, real. I’m a human.”

“…I don’t know what’s real.” She turned to walk to a door with a blocky design.

“Hey!” Harvey followed her again. “Look, I don’t know anything about you, but… I can tell you’re upset. And I really want to help you.”

Madotsuki spared a glance at him. She said nothing and entered the block door. Harvey followed her into a realm composed of gigantic blocks with varying shapes. They only came in purple, pink, and white colors. Harvey brushed his hand along some blocks as he followed Mado around them. “Do you like to play with blocks?” he asked with a smile. Harvey felt a happy energy radiating from these blocks. He remembered the part in Mr. Dark’s story, when Madotsuki turned small and climbed on her blocks. “I play with blocks, too. It’s like building your own little city, isn’t it?”

After minutes of wandering around the blocks, they found a hat and scarf that were floating in midair. They moved as though an invisible person were wearing them. “Mafurako.” Madotsuki introduced.
“Er, I don’t see anyone.” Harvey said.

Madotsuki put on a triangle kerchief. She turned invisible. The hat-and-scarf girl became visible; she wore a blue shirt and purple pants, and her brown hair hid her eyes. Harvey approached and touched the girl. There was a soulless, empty feeling about her. As though she were isolated in her own dimension.

Suddenly, he and Madotsuki were teleported atop one of the block structures. Mafurako was far away in the distance. Harvey felt a desire for the girl to be far away from them. Madotsuki turned visible and entered a black, polygonal door that was on this block. Harvey went with her, going up a stairwell behind the door.

“Is that how you feel most of the time? Invisible and lonely? I could get if it’s because of some trauma, but even if it is, you don’t have to feel that way. The Kids Next Door can help you. The KND helps everyone, and the best part is, you never feel lonely. We can help you forget your past, and you’ll never have to think about it. . . .”

At the end of the stairs, they appeared in a vast, white marshland. The memories of that horrible monster returned to Harvey. There it was, the mountain-sized beast gripping the hills in its many hands, its tongue oozing with red. There were walls that had large cow utters hanging limp. There was a monochrome girl with pigtails and bare feet. Harvey approached the girl to possibly ask who she was. Then she turned around: multiple arms sprouted out of her body like bones, the pupil of her left eye drooped out. She looked like a disfigured zombie.

Madotsuki was crossing the street with a man, a woman, and another girl, who Madotsuki considered a friend. It was nighttime and it was raining. A renegade car ignored the stoplight and ran them over, only missing Mado since she skipped ahead. Their bodies lay dead on the street. Bones were squished out of the girl’s body. Her mother, at the time, was pregnant-

Harvey whipped around, shutting his eyes, squeezing his head. He didn’t want to picture such an awful thing. The horror he was feeling. The horror Madotsuki felt. Harvey stomped away, but the image wouldn’t leave his mind. It gave him the vision of a girl sleeping in an igloo. Harvey tripped, falling into the white marsh. This unnamed liquid filled him with even more dread.

Madotsuki was forced to walk home by herself. She was lost downtown. She didn’t know where to go. She thought she would never see home again. . . .She felt someone staring at her from the alley. Mado kept wandering, ignoring this feeling. She heard footsteps behind her. She ignored them and ran. She was in a filthy backstreet where no soul roamed. She was lost in the dark and in the rain. She sulked, having lost all hope in finding home. And in her moment of weakness, that’s when he grabbed her.

He muffled Madotsuki’s mouth. Nobody heard her scream, nobody saw her squirm. He carried her all the way to his 45th floor apartment without a hitch. He shoved the helpless 7-year-old on the bed and-

“NO MORE!” Harvey yelped. He was on the floor, crying and hugging his legs. He felt her emotions on that night. He felt them like it actually happened to him. “No… more… sniff…”

Harvey was not in the marsh, he was on a floor now. Mr. Dark stood over him, more angry at the boy than ever. “Are you happy now…?”

Unable to get up from his fetal position, Harvey twisted his head to look at him. “How. . . h-how could anyone do that to a child? . . .”
“Imagine how I felt… watching her from her window… helpless to do anything…”

“W-Why didn’t you do anything?! You were her friend, right?”

“Only in her dreams! I could not step out into the real world unless she were thinking of me. But she was in so much pain that she could not. And from that night forward, all she had were nightmares. And I felt nothing but anger and rage.”

Mr. Dark turned away, remembering what happened next. “The horrid transformation of Madotsuki’s dreamscape did not go unnoticed by the Council of Teensies. But did they do something? No… they were ignorant! They took me away from this nightmarish world and dropped me in the Candy Chateau! Where everything is sweet and delicious! WELL, IT IS NOT!” He burst flames for a second. “They only enjoy a Dream Realm where everything is happy! That’s why I stole the Protoon, to harness its power and turn it into darkness! But then Rayman, the realm’s acclaimed hero, defeated me and took it back! Even HE would not hear my plight! Well, NO MORE! I stole the Protoon again and destroyed Rayman’s brain! I will ensure that ALL beings know the pain and darkness that Madotsuki lived through!

“Let me ask you something, Harvey!” He turned to the crying boy. “Where were your Kids Next Door when Madotsuki was being raped?! Where was Sector JP? Sector V? WHERE WAS ANYONE?!”

“W-W-We didn’t know! . .” Harvey sniffled.

“Oh, that’s right! You were saving some boys from the Mega Detention Center! Or you needed to cure a chickenpox epidemic, or defeat the tyrannical Homework Lord. But such a thing is TOO MUCH for your puny child organization! When REAL evil adults are oppressing kids in the most REAL way possible, you shirk away! It wasn’t what you signed up for, was it?!”

“I WOULD’VE SAVED HER!!”

“BULL!” Mr. Dark slapped him. “Even if you manage to whisk her away from that apartment, you will never be able to make her forget. Her dreams will forever haunt her. Can you honestly say you would not rather DIE than go on living with this pain?!”

“Sniff…” Harvey managed to put himself on his feet and stand up. “Bad things… happen to everyone…” He choked through his sobs. “But things always… get better… We can help Madotsuki forget… We’ll be the friends she never had!”

Thaddeus closed his eyes. He turned to a huge, silver piano that was gaining dust. The vacant room echoed with his footsteps. He slowly approached the piano and took his seat. “The burden is mine to bear… I am the one at fault. I read Madotsuki to sleep every night, with stories that all ended happily. Ugh… when I look back… on all those wretched novels… I remember…”

**Years ago…**

“Will you play me a song?” Madotsuki asked while in bed.

“You wish me to play you something?"

“Yes, please.”

“…Very well.” Mr. Dark stood up, and walked over to a piano. He sat down and began to play. (Play “14th Song” from *D.Gray-Man.*)
He played a soft and gentle melody. The notes rang in her head like a lullaby… it was beautiful. Madotsuki felt herself grow lighter… she felt like floating… sleeping forever… in dreams…

On the windy night of her 3rd birthday, Madotsuki opened her closet and found a set of dark clothes with scary yellow eyes. She named it Dark-san.

Mr. Dark held Mado’s hand as she skipped across the wet ground, splashing in every puddle. She saw the ponytail girl sitting by a tree. Mado turned into a frog… but the girl ignored her. She turned into a cat… but she ignored her. Madotsuki turned invisible and watched a party she wasn’t invited to.

Her father, pregnant mother, and “friend” were run over by a car. She was kidnapped and taken to an apartment she would never leave. Then, when the kidnapper wasn’t looking… she took a knife and stabbed him.

“Sniff…sniff…” The song was so wonderful in Harvey’s ears… he couldn’t stop crying…

“Once upon a time… there was a witch who lived in the woods.”

Ellen gouged out her eyes… then she cut off her legs…

“Once upon a time, there was a little girl who was trapped in an art gallery…”

Weiss Guertena finished painting Mary before he died. Mary waited in the gallery for decades, but her father never returned. She was alone in the darkness.

“Once upon a time, there was a princess who could control snow. She lived on a world completely covered with snow.”

Queen Elsa froze her sister, Anna. And in her despair, she froze the entire kingdom. Everyone on Arendelle died, and her spirit was left to suffer.

“Once upon a time, there was a child who could grant wishes…”

Jirachi was suffering. There were so many planets who wished for their loved ones back. Dimentia told him not to… they were not ready to know of the GKND.

“There was a boy who could control the elements…”

Negatar Gnaa was feared and shunned for his power. His shadow came to life and spoke to him…

“Once upon a time, there was an island of lightning…”

Phosphora bowed before God Thor. But Thor, who was actually the deceitful Loki, bashed the child in the head with his staff, and dropped her from the sky.

“But no matter how much they suffered. ” Mr. Dark spoke, pure anger and malice in his eyes as he stared at the open book.

Ellen dragged her bleeding, dying body across the ground, reaching for Viola, wishing for her aid. Elsa sung “Let It Go” for 300 years to erase her grief. Mary tore the petals of several fake roses.

“No matter what sins they may have committed. ” Mr. Dark could not bear to hold the book any longer. He felt more hatred the more he stared at it.

Young Mavis Vermillion screamed and unleashed a black cloud that killed her parents. Phosphora
battled Fybi Fulbright in the sky and struck a bolt of lightning that burned her wings. Mary decapitated Garry’s rose and let the man die. Sugar turned Cheren into a toy, and everyone forgot him.

The next sentence made Mr. Dark so angry, he would die trying to utter it. “They all lived. . .”

April, Ib, and Sector W7 all hugged Mary. Dr. Facilier, Carla, and the Ice Climbers hugged Wendy. Elsa cried as she hugged Anna’s frozen body... She began to unfreeze from her sister’s love.

“. . . happily. . .”

Avatar Aang and Negatar Gnaa joined together to save the universe. Nigel Uno reunited with his friends on Earth. Phosphora was happily living with Palutena.

“...EVER...”

Mavis, Lapis, and Aisling became the Fairy Princesses. Nerehc Onu made a better Negaverse for his people. King Sandy returned to live with his half-Minish family. Viola lifted Ellen over her shoulders and carried her to be healed. Everyone, everywhere, in this wonderful universe... their bad times had all passed.

“. . .AFTER!!”

The book exploded as Mr. Dark combusted into flames. The flames were his hatred, which grew ceaselessly. Tears leaked from his eyes, wetting the ground, wetting his cloak, and the flames would not dry them. He could feel nothing from those stories. Because Madotsuki was still suffering. She was still in her room, haunted by memories that would never be gone, haunted by dreams she could not escape from. And no matter what they did, no matter how much she pretended to be something else – a witch, a cat, a videogame character – she could never escape. So why, then, should Mr. Dark enjoy such stories... when Madotsuki could never achieve a happy ending.

“SHE CAN!” Harvey screamed through his unending tears. “SHE CAN have a happy ending! We’ll give it to her! We’ll save her from her nightmares and be her friends!”

“IMPUDENT CHILD!” Dark roared. “You would never say such things if you were in her shoes! If you knew an OUNCE of what she felt!”

“I AM FEELING IT! RIGHT NOW! And it’s... sniff... it’s awful... I never wanna feel this way ever again. But maybe that’s good. Maybe it’s good that I can feel Madotsuki’s emotions. Because now I can reach out and hug her... and tell her it’s all right...” He wiped the tears away. “I couldn’t stand to hold in my emotions all this time... If my mom’s afraid of my chi going crazy, then screw her! Everybody needs somebody else to cry with... so I’m going to cry with Madotsuki. You’ll see...” He marched out of the room, feeling strong belief in his own words. Mr. Dark continued playing his piano.

Magician’s House

“Dammit! I can’t believe that snotty brat tricked me and made off with Mesprit!” Ales Mansay grumbled while typing on a massive keyboard. “Well, the joke’s on them! By using Mesprit as a power source, we managed to absorb 50,000 joules of Emotion Chi from Madotsuki! Mixed with the fear from the bubble we had her trap Mesprit in, this baby is READY for fireworks!”
The hat on the top of the house opened to reveal a cannon. It aimed directly at the starry sky. The stars above Dream Land were in truth the Sea of Bubbles. Hundreds of thousands of nightmares that were Bubbled by every Bubble Dreamer throughout history. All were in eternal slumber. “Chi Cannon firing sequence initiate!” Mansay announced as the cannon shone with a bright pink energy. “Lock all targets within firing range! Number of targets estimated at: 988,000! You may fire when ready! Aaaaaand… FIRE!!”

The dreamscape trembled under the cannon’s power. A blinding beam shot up into the sky and pierced the stars. The explosion was as bright as a close sun. The thousands of stars were popping. Every monster that they contained, every being that terrorized the peaceful dreams, were free. A maniacal laugh echoed beyond the flash.

It was kind of hard to write this without going in too much detail. I was originally going to include the Emotions from Inside Out… but I totally forgot when I began writing this arc. XP Which irrefutably means the idea has been scrapped, and I got something better planned. ;P Next time, the Madotsuki Arc will conclude. This Atbash Cipher continues last one’s cryptogram.

... 

WLM’G PMLD DSVIV, WLM’G PMLD DSVM...
Midnight

Chapter Summary

Harvey tries to thwart Mr. Dark's plan to sacrifice Madotsuki!

This chapter is also called “Happy Ending.”

Chapter 55: Midnight

Plankton’s Crab Craft

“Uck, these Kelp Shakes are the worst.” Anthony stated, throwing another cup of the substance away. “How long are you gonna keep us on this dumb thing?”

“Until you’re convinced to get on our side and stay there.” Plankton replied, filling a cup with chocolate substance from a machine. “But if you’re tired of kelp, you can try a chocolate chumshake for only a dollar and ten cents.”

The ship rumbled, causing Plankton to drop the shake. “Plankton, we’ve got company.” Karen reported.

“AAAH!” The group yelped when two sets of metal blades gripped the edge of the hatch and yanked it open. Artie and Haylee were seen flying in their C.O.O.L.-B.O.T.

“Someone call for a rescue party?” Artie remarked. “No? Must’ve been a wrong number. All aboard the Freedom Train!” They flew away as the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. appeared.

“JUMP IN, April-chan!” Chimney shouted.

“OUCH!” Plankton was struck by Fybi’s B.O.W.. The kids jumped into the open doors on the sideways train, with Fybi carrying Spongebob’s snoozing body.

As they were fleeing the Crab Craft, Jessie found a bottle of Sleepytime Suds in Spongebob’s pocket. “Good thing Spongebob has a spare. Sheila, I’ll go into the Dream World and find a way to rescue you.”

“Okay!” Sheila fist-palmed. “I think the place Ah’m in is Olden West.”

“Put me to sleep, too.” April said. “I should finish painting that brain for Rayman.”

“Sigh, this will be one hell of a slumber party.” Jessie blew pink bubbles at Sheila and April, then rubbed the Sleepytime on his own eyes. They fainted on the spot.

Madotsuki’s Room

Madotsuki woke up for the third time today. She stepped onto the balcony to check the time of day. It was night. About 9:50pm. Madotsuki looked at the stairs leading over the railing. They looked really good about now. She was actually thinking about it. Mado returned inside and sat at her desk. She wrote in the Yume Nikki.
Dear Diary... I saw that boy again. He talked to me. He seemed nice at first... but then he started going crazy. It's like how I felt before my family died. I think it means happiness doesn’t last. … Diary… I might just do it tonight. I wanna kill myself. I’m just too afraid to leave this house. I’m afraid of the world now. I’m afraid people will hate me for killing someone. …I’m going to sleep one more time. If I don’t find a different answer… I will do it. I will kill myself. Good-bye… Diary.

Madotsuki put the pen down and climbed in her bed. She let her mind drift like bubbles. 3... 2...

Mado no Nikki

Harvey ended up in a sewer after leaving the piano room. The only sewer hatch he could find led him into a world with Aztec murals painted on large, blue and red blocks. “There he is!” Spongebob’s voice yelled. “Hey, Harvey!”

“Spongebob!” The boy looked and saw Spongebob run over, carrying Mesprit’s body in his arms. He was joined by a green, bug-like creature with a big grin, whom was walking a doglike thing with separate body parts. “Who’re you?”

“Name’s Murfy, wise guy. This is Rayman. And I’m guessing you’re the kid that’s tryin’ to save Mado.”

“Yes, but I got separated from her. Hopefully, Mesprit will be able to help us. What’s wrong with her?”

“I dunno.” Spongebob said. “She’s been moving like this ever since we rescued her.”

Harvey took Mesprit in his arms. The Firstborn was squirming and moaning lightly, as though from a nightmare. Harvey put a hand over her forehead gem. He saw visions of flying heads, the spinning four-armed girl, a flashing FACE, and the mountain-size behemoth gripping white hills. “Nnn!” Harvey pulled his hand back. “She’s seeing all this weird stuff, too!”

“She was sleeping in a bubble all this time.” Murfy said. “I’m guessing it was a bubble Madotsuki created. Sleep Bubbles are made of the feelings Bubble Dreamers have at the time. And Mesprit wasn’t the only one she Bubbled.”

“How MANY times you gonna say the word ‘Bubble’, Smiley?” André remarked from above. “’Cause I ain’t the only one getting sick of it! Friends and acquaintances, say hello to… THE NIGHTMARES!” He threw his arms up, directing at the sky when legions of horrible abominations rained onto Dream Land’s surface.

A swarm of Darktoons landed in the Land of Toads and began munching the behinds of the amphibians. An icicle monster with a face and giant mustache landed in the Olden West and started making a trail of ice over the desert. A sun monster with sunglasses flew around the Christmas Dream and blew fire everywhere. A monster with a stick body, consisting of an enormous mouth and eyes, started making a “GACK GACK GACK GACK GACK GACK!” sound, ruining the serenity of Fly High Tower.

“I knew it!” Murfy panicked. “Mansay’s been using Mesprit to absorb the emotional energy from Madotsuki’s dreamscape! He condensed the energy into a mega cannon so he could use it to destroy the Sea of Bubbles!”

“CORRECT you are!” André declared. “Bubble Dreamer bubbles ain’t easy to pop, at least without hurting the monsters inside. Emotion Chi does the job beautifully! And best of all, all these
monsters are infected with Madotsuki’s fears, so good luck Bubbling them again! And they ain’t the only ones you need ta deal with. MUTANT LUMS!” From the distance, a cloud of bugs was swarming in, red and yellow Lums that had white legs, arms, and faces growing from their bodies in awkward places. “I’d love to stick around, but the night’s getting old. In a few hours, the real world will be welcoming a NEW ruler! HEH HEH HEH haaaaa!” The Black Lum flew away.

Spongebob made bubbles from his head and Bubbled the head of a spider with tap-dance shoes, a flying nose with eyes in its nostrils, and a math textbook with teeth. The monsters grew sleepy and floated to the sky. “It’ll take forever to catch all these things!” Murfy exclaimed. “We have no choice. We have to get Rayman a new brain!”

“Whaddyou mean a new brain?” Harvey questioned as Rayman was scratching his ear with his shoe like a dog.

“He’s got issues, okay? Look, I’m going to Picture City to find him one, you kids stay here and try to handle the mess. Augh, come on, boy!” Murfy impatiently tugged Rayman’s leash to lead him along. “Come on, I’ll give ya a Ray Snack! No, TWO Ray Snacks! A HUNDRED Ray Snacks, just PLEASE hurry up!!”

Sky Altar

“MONSTERS OF DREAM WORLD!” Mr. Dark’s voice echoed from the top of a towering altar in the desert. He held the Protoon high as it shone a purple beacon and flickered lightning. “I AM THADDEUS DARK! I hold the Great Protoon! I am the most powerful of ALL Dream Spirits! GO FORTH! Destroy ALL dreams, and terrorize the mortals who are so ignorant to the plights of others! No one will EVER want to sleep again! Let them ALL know the pain my creator has felt, and let them TREMBLLLLE!”

“Hee hee hee heeeeee!” Ales Mansay waved two glow sticks to direct the Mutant Lums. “FLY, my prettiiieees! BRING ME the ruby slippperrrs!” A Lum with a long white tongue licked him as it flew by. “WOHA! Huhuhu, that…that kinda made me uncomfortable.”

Globox exited the mall in Mado no Nikki, watching a team of Evil Instruments charge by. “Ooo, a parade! I want in!” He excitedly followed them, beating his belly like a drum.

Nexus

Harvey and Spongebob located the Nexus, which was currently empty of any monsters and a good chance for them to rest. “I won’t be able to fight these monsters without my bubble wand.” The sponge said. “Although I can still grab them from the air…” He waved his arms around and formed a bubble spatula.

Harvey was knelt on the ground with a hand over Mesprit’s head. “I don’t know enough emotionbending to fix her… Sigh, what’m I gonna do, Spongebob? Anthony and Fybi got so much better at their powers, why didn’t I practice?! He spoke with a mix of anger and sadness.

“This reminds me of the episode where my alarm clock didn’t go off until 10 minutes later and I started doing everything 10 minutes after I should.”

“WORST 10 minutes of my life.” Harvey stated. He heard a door open and saw Madotsuki enter the Nexus. “Madotsuki!” He ran up to her. “Madotsuki, look!” He held Mesprit up. “This is Mesprit, the Emotion Goddess! She’s the funnest person you could ever meet! I remember when I was four years old, Mesprit made us laugh all day. She can make you laugh too, Mado!”
Mesprit was still moaning and shaking. Madotsuki stared with a blank expression. “Okay, maybe not at the moment. But she was trapped in your bubble, she was seeing all your fears. She knows how you’re feeling, Madotsuki, and so do I! But I promise we can help you get through it. The Kids Next Door will help you!”

They heard another door BURST open; a Nightmare broke out of it. It was a skull-headed monster wearing a red shirt with a star, had two orange horns, a purple ponytail, and a bear nose. “…That is literally the funniest thing I’ve seen in a while.” Spongebob said.

“Madotsuki, get behind me!” Harvey whipped out his bladed yo-yos and tossed them at the Nightmare. They phased straight through. “What?! You mean I can’t hurt Dream People, either?”

The monster screeched and charged at its assaulter. Madotsuki reached in her window and grabbed a knife. When the monster was at her, Mado stabbed it in the chest, and it screamed before dispersing into bubbles. Madotsuki held the knife down as Harvey looked impressed. He touched the knife.

_Madotsuki repeatedly stabbed the man who kidnapped her, pure fear burning in her eyes._

Harvey let go, staring at his empty hand as though he were the one that did it. His fear subsided as Mado headed to a door. “Madotsuki, don’t listen to Mr. Dark! He’s going to convince you to kill yourself.”

Mado turned to him. “Dark-san wants me to kill myself?”

“Yes, but you can’t. It won’t solve anything, it’ll just make a lot of people upset.”

“…Who?”

“Well… I’ll be upset. Mesprit will be upset when she hears what happened.”

“I don’t know you.”

“No, but I know you. I really do. I know what happened to you, and I wanna help. And there’s a lot of other people who’ll help, too. Madotsuki?”

The girl was staring at empty space. Dark-san wants her to die… this boy wants her to live… but they were figments of her dream. They were embodiments of her conflicting thoughts. She should… she shouldn’t…

“I want to see Dark-san.” Madotsuki de-Bubbled her bike and pedaled off.

“MADOTSUKI!” Harvey carried Mesprit and chased her across the dreamscape. Madotsuki used her knife to kill more large Nightmares on the way. Harvey had to commend her, she was good at using it.

_Hall of Doors_

“There’s Picture City!” Murfy said quickly, getting ready to push Rayman into the portal. “I really hope Sheila got a brain started…” He looked further down. “Wait! You’re Jessie!” He dropped Rayman’s leash and flew over to the Indian boy.

“What the f**k are you?” Jessie asked.

“Stick a soap bar in it! Jessie, you’re a Bubble Dreamer, aren’t ya? We need your help, what the
“This raccoon girl wants me to save her from that Olden West.” Jessie pointed at the label floating over the empty spot of river. “But how the hell do I go there if there isn’t a portal?!"

“Oh, I think that’s one of your powers! Just stir your wand in the water and it’ll make one!”

“Thanks for the tip, bug with giant denchers.” Jessie bent over the river and stirred it with his wand. That area of water morphed blue and yellow, and began to glow as a portal appeared.

“YEEEEHH!” Sheila immediately flew out, scaring Jessie. “BLIMEY, I get tired of the same dream for too long.”

“Sheila, did you get a brain ready for Rayman?” Murfy asked hurriedly.

“Yeh, I told April to get on it.”

“Great, but you two gotta get over to Mado no Nikki. Spongebob and Harvey are there, they’ll tell you what’s up. Hurry, or Mr. Dark will be able to enter the real world!”

“Over my numb fists!” Sheila fist-palmed before running to jump in the portal to Mado’s world, followed by Jessie.

Rayman was licking the underside of his belly at the time. “Uck, do that in your house!” Murfy scolded before shoving Rayman in the Picture City portal, then going in himself.

**Mado Nikki**

Minutes after arriving, Sheila and Jessie were ambushed by Nightmares left and right, but the expert dreamscapers fought back with no trouble. “Where the hell are we supposed to find them?” Jessie asked.

Sheila saw a purple beacon in the distant sky. “That beauty’s worth checking out.”

“Then get on.” Jessie created a bubble boat, which the two leapt onto. “We can sightsee from the air.”

Harvey and Spongebob chased Madotsuki to a desert region with swirly vine plants. The girl killed more Nightmares in her wake, and Spongebob Bubbled as many as he could, but the Nightmares kept breaking free of his bubbles. Harvey was still immune to their attacks, but he still dodged them in case Mesprit could be injured. “Mesprit, please wake up!” He waved his hand over her face, switching focuses between her and Madotsuki. “I could really use a brief emotionbending lesson. I mean, if Anthony got better after one lavabending and gembending class, it shouldn’t be that hard. A Firstborn power boost wouldn’t hurt either- AAH!” He tripped on a small vine.

Harvey looked up at the sky while recovering. There was an extremely tall, Mayan stone altar with an equally tall stairway. A purple beacon shone from the top of it, created by Mr. Dark. Madotsuki was pedaling toward the stairway in her mission to confront him. “Well, it should take her a while to get up those stairs.” Harvey said. “I have time to catch up.”

But instead of get off her bike like Harvey expected, Madotsuki pedaled up the sky-high stairway, as though it were flat ground and no gravity weighed on her. “WOW, I wish I had a bike like that!” Harvey held Mesprit tight and sprinted toward the stairway. Madotsuki got very far ahead, but when Harvey tried to run up the stairs, his young legs were already exhausted. “Huff… Madotsuki… come back… huff… I feel like Kung-Fu Panda…”
Madotsuki made it to the top of the stairs in a minute. From below, one would expect the altar to look as Mayan on top as the rest of it did. However, the top of the altar was designed like a city park, with grass, benches, and lamp posts. Madotsuki approached the opposite side of the park. A group of green-skinned humans were overlooking a city, and a star was flying around the night sky (now clear of other stars).

“You saw a shooting star and thought it was a UFO.” Mr. Dark said, floating down onto the ground behind her. “Perhaps it was a UFO. A child’s imagination is beautiful like that.”

Madotsuki turned to him. “Dark-san… do you want me to die?”

Mr. Dark knelt to her eye level and put a hand on her shoulder. “Madotsuki… it is the only way. The only way to be free of your pain, free of your nightmares. It is the most peaceful slumber.”

“But what if I don’t like death? If I never wake up… I’ll have nightmares forever.”

“You do not have to worry… because I will stand by you as you sleep. I will play your lullaby all day… I will put all your favorite things beside you… I will remorse, but as long as you do not have to live in the darkness of reality… I will be at ease. Madotsuki… you must set yourself free-”

“Waaaaiiiit!…” a weak cry was heard. They looked to the entrance of the park. Harvey Harper made it up… He was panting, hunched over, and his tongue dangled out. He struggled to hold Mesprit in his arms, which felt like sticks. “HUFF… Stairs… So many stairs…” He limped over to a bench. “I’m just gonna… lay Mesprit here.” He lay Mesprit on one side. “And maybe lay down myself.” He climbed on the other side. His knees bent up and with his hands folded like a pillow, he closed his eyes. “Wake me up in five.” And with that, Harvey began to snore.

Mr. Dark, Madotsuki, and André stared with confusion. “Snooooore…” Harvey slept like a baby.

“He can’t fall asleep in the Dream World.” André said. “Won’t that, like, destroy the Space-Time Continuum or something?”

“It would certainly be inconvenient if his dreamself were here.” With that, Mr. Dark shot lightning at Harvey.

“YAAAH!” He startled awake and fell off the bench. “Madotsuki, they’re using you! If you die in the Dream World, Mr. Dark will enter the real world and destroy everyone! You can’t let that happen!”

“This boy is nothing more than another cursed nightmare!” Mr. Dark argued.

“What, you mean all the Nightmares you just woke up?! Mr. Dark, you’re as bad as any other bad guy out there! Just because bad things happened to Madotsuki, you don’t have to ruin everyone ELSE’S lives!”

“The fools of this universe need to understand that happiness doesn’t last! They are so ignorant to the misfortunes of others! You Kids Next Door, and the Council of Teensies, ignored Madotsuki’s plight, ignore the idea of adults who would do things that young children would not imagine! I will erase that cold fact by flooding both worlds with misery!”

“You’re right, the Kids Next Door didn’t help Mado when they should have. Maybe they were busy stopping an alien overlord from destroying the cosmos! The Kids Next Door CAN’T save every kid who screams, because there’s so many! But it’s NOT too late to help Madotsuki NOW. Mado, we helped tons of people with their troubles, we made them all feel better. We’ll help you, too!”
“And WHO’S going to help YOU?!” Mr. Dark announced, spinning his cloak into a vortex. “I’ll suck you back to the real world and drop you over a volcano!”

“AAAAHH!” Harvey clutched the bench when the vacuum began sucking.

“HUUUAAAH!” Sheila Frantic flew up and PUNCHED Thaddeus with a golden fist, sending him flying against a lamp post. The raccoon set foot on the ground and flexed her fingers. “That ain’t a fair way to fight! …” She glanced at Madotsuki. “Who’re you, Window Sheila?”

“Sheila, that’s Madotsuki!” Spongebob shouted, standing with Jessie at the stairs. “The one I told you about!”

“André, stop them!” Dark ordered.

“On it!” The Black Lum buzzed over and used both hands to rapidly poke Jessie and Spongebob’s faces. “Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!” they yelped. André enlarged his hands and SMACKED the two over the stairs, watching them continue their yelps as they bounced a great distance down.

“HOODLUMS, ASSEMBLE!” André called a swarm of his kind to chase them.

“Strewth, what the hell is that thing??” Sheila pointed at Mesprit. “Blimey, hanging out with Jessie gets ya in some bad habits.”

“It’s Mesprit.” Harvey responded. “She’s stuck in some nightmare with Madotsuki’s fears.”

“’ey, my mom helped me with that once! Like this!” Sheila punched a Light Sphere at Mesprit’s head.

“YAAAAAAAAH!” Mesprit jumped awake and began zipping around the air. “DON’T TAKE MY HEAD, My Queen! I’m sorry I missed the tea party! I saw this cat standing on its head, so I tried to do it myself—DAH, that’s defeating the purpose of my words!!”

“WOW, you actually did it!” Harvey beamed.

“Of course, Mate! Lighbending kills nightmares.” Sheila smiled proudly.

“Hey… Sheila, use your lighbending on Madotsuki!”

“NO!” Mr. Dark flew over and kicked Mado away. He created a cup shape with his hands and aimed them at Sheila, sucking her in like a vacuum.

“Whoooooaaa!” The half-Mobian shrunk and was slurped into the suction. Sheila found herself trapped inside a crystal ball, tapping the glass confusedly.

“Hah hah hah hah!” Thaddeus laughed, holding her like a mini hamster in its ball. “That glass is impenetrable, Rodent!”

“TELL THAT TO THE BLOKES IN ZORDOOM! AAAAAAAAAH!” Sheila ran up and around the ball, loop after loop, but it was perfectly sealed.

“Now I shall-” However, Mr. Dark was hit by some Bubble Bowls. “WHAT?!” He whipped to face Spongebob.

“Jessie can handle those bugs! He learned by watching the episode where I become a nematode exterminator and gas the Krusty Krab! Speaking of which, order UP!” Spongebob used his bubble wand (a new one Jessie created for him) to create a cannon that blasted buns, lettuce, patties, and
other burger segments at the cloaked nightmare. Mr. Dark stumbled and nearly dropped Sheila’s ball, but recomposed and projected a barrier around himself.

“Wait a sec… HARVEY?!” Mesprit beamed. “HARVEEEEY!” She gripped the boy in a hug and spun them around as she flew up. “It’s been such a long time! Look how much you’ve GROWN, you strong little man!” She dropped Harvey from six feet above the ground. “So whatcha been doin’, going on adventures, fighting baddies, huh huh huh??”

“Mesprit, don’t you remember what you’ve been doing?”

“Uh, I think so! I’ve been real hazy ever since…” She examined her surroundings, noticed the fight between Spongebob and Thaddeus, then Madotsuki. “THAT GIRL!”

“That girl is in danger!” Harvey stated. “Mesprit, I need to stop Mr. Dark! I need to learn more emotionbending so I can fight better!”

“Well, how much have you trained since we last met?”

“NOT VERY MUCH!”

“Wееееell, that’s gonna be a problem. It’ll take me at least a month to teach you even the basics of combat-based emotionbending!”

“IS THERE A CHEAT SHEET?!” Harvey screamed while Mr. Dark struck Spongebob with lightning.

“Well, if we were in the Dream World, I could probably maybe do something.” Mesprit said with her silly smile. “Me and Uxie are two of the creators of the Dream World. Our chi make up its bubbles. Hehe, I dunno what we were thinking, we just wanted to make the Dream World outta bubbles! So fun.”

“But THIS is the Dream World!”

“It is? Oh, I thought it felt familiar. You don’t notice these things right away after such a good sleep! But Harvey, it seems like you’re still awake. I’ll only be able to give you a good power boost to your dreamself.”

“Fair enough. I can’t hurt him like this, anyway.”

“All right! Sweet dreams, Harvey!” Mesprit flashed the gems on her tails and put him to sleep.

Mr. Dark whipped twin fire-whips at Spongebob, which he defended from by blowing quick huge bubbles. He had to catch his breath after Thaddeus stopped. “Mr. Dark!” Ales Mansay flew above on a winged carriage-bike. “Dark-senpai! How may I be of service to you?”

“Take this brat far away!” Thaddeus threw Sheila’s crystal ball up to him.

Mansay caught it. “Will do, Future Lord of Dream Land!” He stuffed Sheila’s ball under his hat before pedaling away.

“SHEILA!” Spongebob tried to chase.

Mr. Dark sent magic ropes to bind Sponge’s limbs. “The less nuisances, the better!”

“TOO BAD! You just got one more!” An energy blast struck Mr. Dark from behind. It came from Harvey Harper, who was shining a faint pink. Mesprit was behind him, making a heart shape with
her tails. Harvey’s true body was asleep on the ground.

“I linked my chi with yours, Harvey.” Mesprit told him quietly. “You work on dodging and making moves, and I’ll send the bending attacks from your body. This wouldn’t be a safe move for your waking body, and you won’t wanna sleep for a while. Try to defeat him quick.”

Harvey nodded, eyes locked on his enemy. “Mister Dark… you’re done messing with Madotsuki’s mind. I’ll destroy you so you’ll never be able to take over the real world! And once you’re out of the way, I’ll take out the rest of her nightmares!”

“Very well! Then before I liberate your world, I will show you the full power of the Great Protoon!” He had the Protoon levitate above him. The electrical sphere shined with power, fueling its master. Mr. Dark made a bar-shaped flash, spawning an instrument in his hands. It was a blue guitar with an electric piano, some light drums on the underside, and it was also a saxophone: the reed on top, and the horn at the bottom. (Play Mr. Dark’s Theme from *Rayman*)

**Boss fight: Thaddeus Dark**

He started the battle by pounding the drums. They seemed to do nothing, so Harvey ran to lay the first blow, but with a sudden strum of the guitar, Thaddeus blew Harvey back with a fire spire that exploded from the ground. The boy recovered and shot smiley faces from his hands, only for Thaddeus to block with another fire, then he wiggled his fingers to send tiny energy balls to pelt Harvey from all sides. Harvey lashed a yo-yo at Thaddeus, but he dodged, then he blew in his saxophone with a slow but sudden rhythm, which sent a spotlight to Harvey that would electrify him should he not avoid. He sent a wave of energy fists with some faster horns, then Thaddeus danced up to Harvey while doing a guitar solo.

The guitar solo made flames sprout behind Thaddeus, and the final note exploded a wall of fire that Harvey jumped back to avoid. Thaddeus tried to slam Harvey with the guitar, but he dodged, tried again, still dodged, then Mr. Dark slashed the instrument like a sword before slamming the ground and knocking Harvey back with a shockwave. The Dream Spirit did another solo, rocketing skyward with the final note as a ring of fire sprouted around Harvey.

Mr. Dark tapped the piano keys as the ring slowly closed in on his enemy. Harvey looked around frantically, but there was no escape from the inferno. “Harvey!” Mesprit called. “Your emotions! Hate is fire! But what is water?”

Harvey felt very bad for Madotsuki. He let this feeling climb to the top of his emotions and cried. His body turned blue, and the fire turned into steam when it touched him. Mr. Dark grunted when the steam clouded his vision. Harvey spat upward, sending giant tear-shaped droplets that sent Mr. Dark away. He landed several feet, looking up to see Harvey run at him with large tear-whips. He dodged the whips and sprouted fire to destroy them, then sent the fire walls along the ground while Harvey dodged.

“S-So I can bend any ele-ment th-that matches my emotion?” Harvey stuttered, still saddened.

“No, your chi is just taking forms. But they still conflict with each other the same way!”

“What a ridiculous way to fight!” Mr. Dark blew his horn and surrounded Harvey with spotlights. The Protoon glowed as purple lightning appeared in the lights, which circled around Harvey as some of them crossed the circle in attempt to shock him. Harvey nimbly dodged, but took zaps from a few of the lights. They blinked away—Thaddeus shot over with a sudden strum with a fire
trail burned, but Harvey dodged in that split second and threw a bladed yo-yo to cut Dark’s cloak.

“Graaah!” Mr. Dark flew away and played his piano, making the Protoon shine brighter and electrify. He then strummed his guitar to send sudden shockwaves through the air, blowing Harvey several yards back.

“Harvey, use your anger to gain power.” Mesprit instructed. “Or else he’ll take you to a dark place. After all, his name IS Mister Dark.”

The anger sparked in Harvey’s mind. “I DON’T LIKE THE DARK!” He turned red, his teeth sharp, and his eyes demonic. Harvey moved so fast, he dodged the shockwaves, zipped behind Thaddeus, and kicked him into a park tree. Before he could recover, Harvey zipped up and laid a storm of punches on his eyes, but Thaddeus popped a bubble shield and bounced Harvey back. The hate-filled boy threw his yo-yos the moment the shield dropped, catching and swinging Mr. Dark around before slamming him on the ground.

“Don’t stay angry too long, you’ll get tired more quickly! Wait, can we even get tired in the Dream Realm?” Mesprit queried. “My own rules stump me, silly Mesprit.”

“Then I’ll act CHEERY!” Harvey turned yellow and put on a bubbly expression. He hummed a little “La la la!” as he danced up to swing his glowing fists on Thaddeus, but the nightmare strummed up a fire wall that knocked him away. Harvey landed on a long, wavy piano path, Thaddeus playing the instrument to wave the path up and down.

“You cannot possibly have reason to be happy!” Dark retorted. “You did not beat me and Madotsuki will still kill herself! The Nightmares will ransack her dreamscape and our violent battle will be a final spectacle.” He tapped the piano keys faster, Harvey screaming as the path furiously waved up and down with him stuck on it. The piano path rolled up and caught Harvey in its loop, spinning around and ’round so the boy would get dizzy.

“BLAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!” Harvey broke free by screaming and blasting an Emotion Beam, striking Mr. Dark in the chest. Madotsuki looked up when he flew overhead and off the edge of the Sky Garden.

“Harvey, that was a really dangerous move!” Mesprit yelled in worry. “You could already do that on your own!”

“Yeah, and your Firstborn power boost kinda hurts my throat- ack.” Harvey gagged. “That shoulda knocked him out clean.”

“Guess again.” They looked as Mr. Dark rose up in the distance beyond the ledge.

Dark flipped his instrument over and enlarged the drums on the bottom. “The Protoon’s power will not be crushed so easily! But it will pound you into rubble!” He spawned two drumsticks and began a wild drum solo. The beat of the drums caused giant round boulders to fall from the sky and bowl over the garden from every direction. Harvey had to keep eyes out for all of them and think fast while dodging. Every boulder missed by an inch, they were so fast, and they just kept coming. Harvey felt a jump in his heart each time, he grew more and more nervous, and this nervousness transformed into fear.

With each successful dodge, the jolt in his heart spat out a Fear Sphere, which would home in and strike Mr. Dark. The fifth sphere hit him from the bottom and bounced him up, losing the rhythm as the boulders stopped coming. “Try to beat this beat!” Mr. Dark sliced an electric blade across the Protoon, and all the lamp posts grew into electric towers. Thaddeus meteored down at Harvey
Harvey began bouncing around the towers. Upon each impact, the respective tower flashed and made its own booming note. Harvey bounced between them like a pinball machine. Whenever he went astray, Mr. Dark would block and bat him back. He made a catchy rhythm from the towers. And of course, Harvey took a zap when he hit them. He made faster notes for a few seconds, and Mr. Dark ended the song by flying above and bashing Harvey against the ground with his guitar. (End song.)

“Oooooh…” Harvey lay on his back, dizzy after the endeavor.

“You would not even be standing right now if you did not have a Firstborn giving you power.” Thaddeus landed on the ground near Harvey. “I could end this battle easily by attacking Mesprit. However, I was curious. How does a child think he can fight me as though he were a master bender? You’re still in first grade, how do you expect to fight well?”

“Hey, Anthony and Fybi kick butt!”

“True, but they are different. Anthony, Sheila, Cheren, that Maddy child based on Nefarious’s videos; they are admittedly strong children. But you, Harvard, I never saw that type of spark in you. Even though you have unveiled your emotionbending and have a Firstborn’s aid, I am stronger than you. Why do you try to fight me?”

He rolled onto his front. “Because I’m on a MISSION!” he yelled with tears pouring down. “I’m not gonna let you do this! I can’t believe you would want to! Madotsuki gave you life, she’s like your mom! Why would you kill the person that made you?”

“What if your mother had an incurable cancer, and she were suffering for days gone into weeks? Seeing her in such a horrid, unsightly state, would you not wish the sweet release of death?”

“NO! I mean… I DON’T KNOW! That’s different! That’s an illness, but what Madotsuki has is emotional. She can get over it.”

“THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE! Whether the condition is physical or mental, no life is worth living through such pain! The only way Madotsuki will be rid of her pain is DEATH!”

“NO IT ISN’T!” Harvey jumped to his feet. “I would never want my mom to die, NO PERSON SHOULD! You call yourself Madotsuki’s friend?! You should be trying to help her! You should be hugging her and telling her it’s okay! Even if you hate everyone else in the world, you should always stick by her side!”

“I refuse to let Madotsuki live in a world of cruel beings! I will admit to myself being an evil person, so my decent act will be to liberate her! Do you understand, Madotsuki?!” He turned to his creator. “This world is cruel, and happy times will not last! You have no choice but to free yourself. Let death’s sweet embrace TAKE YOU!” He struck Madotsuki with lightning. She gasped, and her body dispersed into bubbles, for she started awake.

“But if she kills herself in the real world, your plan won’t even work!” Harvey shouted.

“Correct! Which is why I transported her real body HERE!” Mr. Dark directed up to his left. Harvey gasped: over the edge of the Sky Garden was a building he hadn’t noticed before. It was an apartment building.

Madotsuki gasped awake in her bed. That was the most frightening nightmare, yet. She saw herself stabbing those monsters, and again remembered the dead man in the house’s kitchen. She got out
of bed. She looked at the balcony. She heard their two voices yelling inside her head. Her emotions were greatly conflicting. She didn’t know how to make it stop or what to do. …Only one way to find out.

“I’m going up there!” Mesprit declared, flying to the nearest balcony of the building. “AAAAAAAH!” An invisible barrier electrocuted her and bounced her forcefully to the Sky Garden.

“MESPRIT!” Harvey yelped, his power boost vanishing.

“I created that barrier to block out all beings.” Mr. Dark explained. “The inside of the barrier projects an illusion of Madotsuki’s city, and blocks us from her view. Now no one will interfere-” An energy ball hit him in the back of the head. “Ugh, I am about SICK OF THAT… hu!” He gasped when he turned and saw his assaulter. “It can’t be…”

The hero of the Dream Realm, Rayman smirked as his fists shone gold. “Long time, no see, Thaddeus.”

“RAYMAN?!!”

“Looks like I finished his brain just in time.” April Goldenweek said, standing by Murfy. “Murfy told us what’s been going on.”

“And we’re here to put a stop to it.” Rayman fist-palmed. “I beat you before, Mr. Dark, and I’ll beat you again.”

“You idiotic excuse for a HERO!” Dark shouted. “You and all those Teensie scum ignored this dream! You ignored my creator’s pain!”

“I didn’t know why they didn’t want me coming here!” Rayman argued. “But you’re terrorizing the Dream Realm, that’s why I need to stop you. And we won’t let you hurt this girl!”

“You’re too late! There she is now!” They looked up at the balcony. Madotsuki looked over the railing, but all she saw was Karakura under the dead of midnight. She looked at the small, movable stairs. She would finally do it. She walked to stand on the first step.

“WE GOTTA SAVE HER!” Murfy was about to fly up.

“NO, there’s a barrier, remember?!” April shouted.

“Wait!” Harvey perked. “If people can’t be hurt in the Dream Realm…” Harvey bit his finger, and the shock turned his body into bubbles as his real body awoke. Harvey ran for the edge, twirled his yo-yos, and tossed them through the barrier to wrap around the railing on the balcony. Harvey swung off and planted his feet against the building’s side. “It worked!”

“Hurry Harvey, you’re the only chance we got!” Murfy yelled.

“Let’s settle this, Mr. Dark!” Rayman balled his fists. “Once and for all!”

“I will GLADLY!” Thaddeus dodged Rayman’s Gold Fists and lit his cloak aflame, spinning like a fiery tornado in attempt to burn his adversary.

**Down below**

“What’s wrong, Spongebreath?!” Mansay taunted as he continued to evade Spongebob’s grasp.
“Your show hit a bump in the road? A really BIG bump? ’Cause you aren’t catching me with the speed you’re going! HEH HEH HEH HEEEEH! Boy, this is too much fun! And hey, this raccoon sheila’s kinda cute!” He reached up his hat, fishing around for the crystal ball. “I wouldn’t mind keeping her as a pet- What the-?” The ball he retrieved was bright gold and shining. “I don’t remember having this. …Ow-ow-ow, it’s a little hot.” He bounced it around in his hands. “Really hot, REALLY hot, ouch-ouch-ouch, I—WHOOOOAA!”

Mansay crashed his bike into a red monkey statue and dropped the crystal ball. It shattered on the ground as Sheila grew back to normal. “HOO-WEE!” Sheila flexed her legs. “Who says you can’t lightspeed-run a jillion miles in a hamster ball? Me legs feel strong enough to kick ten Gorons at once! Would ya like ta see?” She smirked devilishly at Mansay, spinning her left leg rapidly.

“N-No no, th-that’s okay.” Mansay stuttered in fear. “I was just kidding about the whole pet thing, and did I mention I’m a real big fan of yours?, if you want, I can be your-”

“YUH!!!” Sheila hit Mansay with a kick that could crack a mountain. The Teensie Magician flew high, high, high into the sky. Sheila watched to see how high he would go. “…Oi, I think he landed on Mars.”

**Sky Garden**

Madotsuki put both feet on one step at a time. Every step led her closer to her demise. The very thought that she was going to commit suicide gave her chills. If she wanted to live… she would be too afraid and back out. And if she wanted to die… she would walk off and take the fall. Now she was on the final step. Her toes hung over the edge of the hundred-foot drop. The only way was down. Falling down to her death. Her dreams and nightmares would be over. At 13 years old, her miserable life, over. No one would miss her. She had no friends, no family, nowhere else to go. All she had to do was fall-

“MADOTSUKI!” She turned around with a start. Harvey had climbed up the building’s side using the little string of his yo-yos. He made it to the balcony and was tired. He limped up to the stairs and sank to his knees. Mr. Dark and Rayman ceased their fight to watch. April, Murfy, Mesprit, and even Jessie and André arrived just in time to view the climax.

“I’m sorry!” Harvey cried once again. “I’m sorry for what happened to you! I’m sorry the Kids Next Door didn’t help you, I’m sorry for not being born back then so I could help you! But this isn’t the only way! Me and all my friends can help you, we really can! This isn’t just a dream anymore, Madotsuki. You’re real… and I’m real… and no matter what happens, everyone deserves to live. Everyone deserves to be happy. But I won’t be happy if you’re gone. And when I tell the Kids Next Door about you, they’ll be upset, too. Madotsuki…”

She said nothing. She remained on the final step for several minutes. She had waken up… but the boy from her dreams was here. Was any of it a dream? Was she still dreaming? …Or was it real. Maybe she was having second thoughts. Maybe… he was right. Madotsuki lifted her foot over the second-to-last step.

Seeing this, Mr. Dark snapped his fingers. The final step slanted back. Madotsuki lost her balance and flailed her arms.

All of the viewers gaped in horror. Harvey jumped up to grab her hand… Missed by inches. Madotsuki fell. Harvey saw the despair and regret in her eyes. He left his yo-yos tied to the fence. She fell… and fell… quickly shrinking in his vision.

Madotsuki felt the wind brush her, falling faster and faster. She turned to look down. Before long,
she would hit the ground. Death was here. It would claim her. It was the end. “…I guess we’ll see what happens.” She closed her eyes one final time. She would accept her fate. Perhaps it was meant to be. It was nice, at least… to think there was someone that cared about her.

Her body broke like a glass of milk on the kitchen floor. Blood splattered in a puddle. Her limbs lay scattered. Madotsuki was dead.

Mr. Dark turned off the barrier. Everyone made it down to see her remains. They couldn’t find the words. Madotsuki was dead before their eyes. A girl they didn’t know existed until yesterday. A girl who no one bothered to help, a girl left forgotten. Now she would only exist in their memory.

Mr. Dark approached his creator’s remains. Tears flowed down his cloak, thinking of how much she suffered… Now, she would suffer no more. The dead remains glowed a faint blue. A small spire of light rose up from it. It was a portal into the real world. “Finally…” The light glinted in his eyes. “I… will enter reality… and take my revenge.”

A laser pierced Mr. Dark from the side, taking everyone by surprise. A searing pain coursed through his clothing. A little sapphire fire brimmed in the holes. Mr. Dark fell and dropped the Protoon. The pain was too great for him to move.

“Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha…” A laugh echoed from the sky. A giddy and maniacal laugh that sent chills down their spines. “HAH HA HA HA ha ha ha ha ha ha!…” He appeared before the column of light. Everybody gaped, horrified in his presence. The madness and excitement burned in Bill Cipher’s eye, and there was so much joy in his laughter. “HAH HAH HAH HA ha ha hahahahaha!” He turned around and faced the spire.

“At LAST! At LONG, LONG LAST! After ONE TRILLION years, SWEET FREEDOM IS FINALLY MINE!!” He flew into the spire, and the Dream World trembled from the power. A kind of power that would only result from transcending dimensions. “Physical form?! HELL YEAH!!”

“What’S HAPPENING?!” Harvey screamed.

“It. . can’t be. .” Murfy gazed at the rising light. “It’s… the end…”

Madotsuki’s Room

A ball of light filled the space where Madotsuki was pulled into the Dream World. It morphed into various blob-like shapes. “Hahahahahaha, HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!” Madotsuki’s form was seen within the light. Bill’s maniacal laughter rang from it. Mado’s body was swallowed by a golden glob, which grew bigger. “HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!”

Two young arms in gold sleeves burst from the light. Two legs in black pants and curl-toed shoes. The body wore a black bowtie, a thin top-hat with a triangle eye. Finally, Bill’s head popped into being: he had smooth blonde hair, demonic yellow eyes surrounded by black sclera, and sharp teeth that shone brightly as he grinned. “HAH HAH HAH HAH HA HA HA HA!”

The Human Bill, whose body looked seven years old, flew around the room. “I don’t believe it! FINALLY, I have a real body! And what a SIGHT! Two EYES??” He put a hand over each individual eye. “How deluxe! MAN, Ah’m lovin’ this! I feel like KILLING someone!” He burst out of the balcony door and faced the apartment that gave Madotsuki grief. “MAYBE I’ll just blow this up!” He pointed his little finger and pierced a little laser through the building. The skyscraper exploded on the spot.
“AAAAAAH HA HA HA HA HA!” Bill flew all around Karakura Town, shooting lasers and destroying many buildings. “HEY, SUPERMAN, wanna go for a race?!” Bill flew circles around the planet, about a hundred times in one minute. “YOU CAN’T MATCH THIS!”

Bill flew down to Washington and stared at the Sidney Monument. “WOW, Jessie, that’s pretty big! HOW ABOUT THIS?!” He blasted heat vision at the tip of the brown tower, melting it to the base. He flew to the Lincoln Memorial. “Say, I could use a new throne!” He blew up Lincoln and sat himself on the huge stone chair. “Ahhhh… roomy!” He POOFED, leaving a scorch mark with a triangle eye.

**Mado no Nikki**

“W-What’s happening now?!” Harvey and everyone wobbled in place under a powerful earthquake. The sky above Madotsuki’s dreamscape turned a brownish orange, storm clouds creating lightning. A black pyramid with an eye, four arms with flames, and two of its segments spinning opposite ways, spoke with a voice that all of Dream Land heard.

“Oh, I’m sorry. Did I forget to mention that I needed to switch places with a Bubble Dreamer to attain supreme power in the Dream World and Waking World? Must’ve slipped my mind. HA HA ha haaa! I will NO LONGER be bound by the laws of your worlds! As of this day, Bill Cipher is the SUPREME being!

“Mister Dark!” Said man glared at the demon. “I could not have done this without you. You have fulfilled your duty as a member of Team Gnik! And thus, I shall grant your reward: LIBERATION!!” Bill snapped one of his fingers, and his eye shot a golden beam that burned Mr. Dark where he lay. “AHH HAHAAHAHAHA HA HA!”

**Moonbase**

Bill reappeared before Moonbase just when Cheren and Mom’s ships were flying back. “Hey, who’s that??” Carol asked in shock.

“SO, Kids Next Door! An all-kid organization bent on saving the world? MAYBE I CAN JOIN!” Bill threw both hands open, blasting a devastating beam that destroyed many areas of Moonbase, shaking and slanting it as all the operatives screamed. His grinning face whipped toward Cheren’s ship—Bill zipped behind and KICKED the shabby camper into the Moonbase. Cheren, Sugar, and Carol felt dizzy from the impact. When Azelf flew out, Bill came up, slapped the Firstborn, and cackled as he flew away.

“And if you think I’m fun to be around, WAIT’LL you see my master!! As soon as he gets back, we’ll throw the ultimate party, the likes of which the universe has never seen! THE APOCALYPSE IS FIFTEEN DAYS AWAY! SAY YOUR FINAL FAREWELLS! AH HAHAAHAHAHA, HAHAAHAHAHA!” Bill flew beyond the stars, faster than light, his cackle heard for light-years.

Azelf touched her tails to her head and analyzed. “His Power Level is… one million.”

*Dun dun duuuun!* The screen cap of gaping Goku displayed again.

“Stop that, Carol!” Cheren scolded.

“Sorry.”

In Moonbase’s destruction, the Gray Shadow, Shaydes escaped from her T.H.E.R.M.O.S. prison.
She flew down to Earth.

**KND Arctic Base**

Shaydes flew through Arctic Base fast as the wind. She sensed her master’s location, found her cell, and reunited with Daphne Anderson. “Oh. Hello, Shaydes.” She spoke in her downtrodden tone. “I almost forgot about you. Sigh… well, time to escape, I guess.” She uttered some words under her breath. The chi-cuffs that were locking her arms lost their keen touch. She Veiled out of the cuffs and escaped the cell.

With her superior bending, she controlled all the shadows in the prison. She broke the cells containing Li’l Gideon and the Teen Ninjas, and they hurried off to free Sector DR as she ordered. Meanwhile, the ghost-skinned World Leader headed to the farthest cell in the darkest wing of the prison. “It’s time to come back home, Abram.”

“NO! I’ll never come back! I’ll never let him use me!” The teenager squirmed on his seat.

“Your faith is misplaced, Child. You must understand that there is nothing you can do, and nothing they can do. I am taking you home to your father now.” She stretched her shadows to grab him.

“No! NOOOOO!”

**Dream Realm**

Mr. Dark was black with soot, his yellow eyes twitching. He lay next to Madotsuki’s remains. The dark sky filled them with dread. “What’s gonna happen now?” asked Harvey.

“…I don’t know.” Murfy replied glumly.

Mesprit was sad. Mansay was sad. Everyone was sad. They gained nothing from this venture. Madotsuki was dead. Her happy ending was lost. Stolen by Bill Cipher. And Nightmares ran about the Dream Realm, free to rampage. Their problems would only increase from here.

“Ah, well.” Sheila shrugged casually. She smirked and cracked her knuckles. “We’ll just beat the snot out of Billy in the real world.”

“…Hm.” Mesprit smiled. “You’ve always been one of the people I admired most, Sheila. I just feel so bad for… Madotsuki.”

“But she couldn’t be dead.” April mentioned. “She should be revived as a Dream Spirit now. Just like Mary was.”

“But she’s in one hell of a mess.” Murfy noted. “Gonna take a lot of duct tape.”

“So we can still save her?!” Harvey exclaimed.

“Well yeah, we can put ’er back together, but she’ll be stuck in the Dream World! Unless she switches realities with someone else. …Any volunteers?”

They were silent for a moment before April spoke. “Bill’s the one who took her existence, so we need to make him give it back.”

“How are we going to do that?” Rayman asked.

“Like Sheila said.” Jessie replied. “We’ll kick Bill’s ass.”
“But now Madotsuki doesn’t have to be alone.” April said. “We’ll help her recover.”

Harvey looked at the girl’s dead body. Her remains glowed as the bubbles were slowly reattaching her. “Yeah… we will.”

Two red jellyfish from Mado’s dreamscape floated beside her. They made gentle ringing sounds and played a familiar tune. (Play “14th Song” from *D.Gray-Man*.)

**Great Clock; Chamber of 20 Keys**

The chamber was empty. The chamber was dark. The twenty thrones had yet to welcome the chosen ones. The Time Gate was still sealed. Below the chamber, there was a golden piano. Bill Cipher was playing a song that echoed throughout the station. It was a very big piano, so Bill had magic hands reaching the distant keys. The notes were calming his mind. He felt at ease playing them.

“No wonder why she liked to hear this song.” Bill spoke. “It’s the same one I used to play for you. Hm hm hm… And this was the only music you would listen to. Sigh… What else is this chapter missing? Ah, of course: and Bill Cipher lived happily ever after…”

Bill played the piano for hours without end. He passed the time with the song. He awaited the day they would open the door… and he would get to see his face again.

So I… hope you weren’t expecting the same basic arc conclusion. :P This Caesar Cipher will conclude the 3-chapter cryptogram.

…

*L NQRZ ZH’OO PHHW DJDLQ*

*VRPH VXQQB GDB*
Hybrid Theory

Chapter Summary

Darcy Chariton infiltrates Giovanni’s palace! The Teensie Council talk about what to do about Bill Cipher.

Today, we will meet a couple characters we haven’t seen in ages.

Chapter 56: Hybrid Theory

Dream Realm; Hall of Doors

Jessie and Spongebob used Bubble Balloons, attached to their wands, to carry Mr. Dark’s and Madotsuki’s bodies. Murfy led them to a portal that was in a dead-end part of the river in the Hall of Doors. The portal was huge and in a circular enclosing, surrounded by blue pillars that had a faint night light. Blue butterflies also fluttered around it, and there were glass walls with intricate designs of magical creatures. The portal’s label was Fairy Glade.

“Who needs a portal this big?” Jessie questioned.

“It belongs to a beautiful Fairy Princess called Mavis.” Mesprit replied with an admiring smile. “It’s full of so many fairies and magic and… cookies!”

“And she let the Teensies rent out a building to serve as their headquarters,” Murfy followed. “They’re the main law enforcers around Dream Land. I’m sure by now, they caught on to Bill’s message and the monsters running around. We’ll need their help if we’re going to fix this mess. Follow me, fellas.” He flew in first, and the others jumped in after.

Fairy Glade

The Fairy Glade’s sky contrasted between orange sunset and indigo night with stars. It was likely in the midst of transition, but this type of contrast was still unrealistic. They crossed a great, long bridge to a humongous castle-like building – all of which was suspended above a bottomless waterfall chasm. Shiny blue fairies fluttered around. In the distance, there was a forest where green fairies (in the form of lights) roamed, and some of the stars were moving yellow lights, possibly fairies also.

“I’ve been to the council once before.” Rayman mentioned. “It was after I beat Mr. Dark the first time. One of my friends, Ly the Fairy works here.”

“I’m surprised you remember that, given your brain is all mush.” Sheila remarked.

“I made it the best I could, given my limited time and instructions.” April replied. “But it looks like it’s suiting you well.”

“Yeah, but my head feels a bit gooey.” Rayman shook his head lightly.

“Here we are, folks.” Murfy announced as they arrived at a dark yellow gate that was 20 stories high. “The gates to Teensonius: the Council of Teensies.” The big-mouthed bug flew a few meters
up and knocked the door with a little tap. There is no way anyone inside would’ve heard that, the kids thought.

A slot opened, revealing eyes against darkness. “You got an appointment or some ID?”

“We have a dead girl and a pair of burnt clothes?” Murfy responded in more of a questioning tone than a direct one.

“Mesprit here.” The Firstborn shot up in front of Murfy and put her narrowed eyes at the slot. “Goddess of Emotion. We want in. You can tell because the seriousness in my voice is stronger than any mortal’s.”

“Ooo. Well, do excuse me, Your Godness.” The slot closed. The area rumbled when the great gates slid open outward, forcing the group to back up. Murfy and Mesprit came back beside them as a troupe of waffle guards marched out of the gate, led by a human-like woman with big green lips, purple hair, a purple dress, and purple tattoos on her tan skin. Her legs were cross-legged as she was floating.

“Rayman...” She spoke with a soft, echoing voice.

“Ly!” Rayman beamed. “It’s been months! Maybe even longer since I had my brain stolen…”

“Terrible things have befallen our world, Rayman... The Nightmares once imprisoned by the Bubble Dreamers have escaped, and the demon Bill Cipher has…”

“We already know that, Creepy Voice!” Sheila retorted. “But look! We have the Protoon back!” She grinned and presented the electrical sphere. “AND we caught that bloody Mr. Dark!”

“That is most fortunate... We must bring the Protoon inside. Come into the Council Chamber and we will discuss these matters.”

Council Chamber

The Protoon was placed in a protection chamber where some Electoons levitated around it, as was Madotsuki’s body. The scorched Mr. Dark was bound by energy balls linked into chains, seated on the defendant’s chair while the others sat with the jury. The members of the Council of Teensies – whom were actually an assortment of creatures from different lands of the Dream World – were at their stands. The center, highest stand, awaited its occupant. And there he was, the King of Teensies himself: he was child-size like all Teensies and wore a green and purple robe. The tall, thin crown rested on his big-nosed blue head.

“As the King of the Teensies, I hereby call this meeting of the Council of Teensies to order!” As he spoke, another Teensie snuck up behind him, wearing the same garb. “We will begin by-”

The Teensie swiped the crown and put it on himself. “Don’t listen to him! I’M the King of the Teensies!”

“Oh boy, not again.” Murfy face-palmed.

Another Teensie took the crown. “Not true! I’m the King of the Teensies!”

Another took it. “No, me!”

“Me.”
“No, me!”

“Me.”

“Give it back-!”

“PICK A KING ALREADY!!” the kids shouted.

“Hahahahahahahaha!” Mesprit laughed, sitting in a VIP chair.

“Look, let’s just take turns like last time.” The current “king” suggested. His cohorts complied and sunk below the stand. “Alright, before we get started, let’s do role call and make sure everyone’s present.”

“Gumsi, King of the Knaaren Tribe, present!” a short, purple-skinned creature with a stone crown and scepter spoke.

“You sound like an old lady!” Sheila snapped.

“SIIIIIIIIILEEEEEEEN-”

Gumsi’s voice actor broke his microphone while recording this line. Sorry about that.


“Sharkboy, King of the Ocean, present.” A teenage boy in a shark suit followed.

“King of his ocean, in case you’re confused.” Murfy whispered to his friends.

“What’s up, Brozacks?” a tan-skinned, muscular teenage boy with blonde hair greeted cheerily. “My name’s Xyler! This is my bro, Craz.”

“Yo, council dudes!” Xyler, a blue-haired teen with peach skin and a red and white jacket, joined in. “I just want everyone here to have a radical time while we’re up here delivering justice.”

“The law is AWESOME, dude!” Craz exclaimed. They high-fived.

“We’re still missing one more person.” King Teensie indicated the empty seat. “It’s… Ah, he’s over there!”

The council members all faced the jury. Their eyes seemed to direct at Murfy. The humans looked at Murfy. Everyone was now facing Murfy. The big-teethed bug looked confused. “…OH, that’s right!” He grinned. “I’m in the Council of Teensies!”

“That’s new!” the kids yelped.

“Hey, when I’m not helpin’ Sheila, I pretty much get hammered.” Murfy said as he flew up to his chair. “Can’t expect me to keep track of everything.”

“Now that everyone’s present, I will call this meeting to order.” King Teensie banged the gavel, then stepped down as the next Teensie took the crown.

“Thaddeus Dark, for the second time, has stolen the Great Protoon and has wrought terror over the Dream Realm, with the assistance of notorious Black Lum, André.”

“It wasn’t just them.” Murfy said. “The Magician, Ales Mansay was in league with them all along.
He’s been using a Bubble Dreamer’s powers to mutate Lums.”

“But wasn’t Mansay one of Rayman’s friends?” Sharkboy inquired. “He helped Rayman beat Mr. Dark the first time. Why is he suddenly Dark’s accomplice?”

“I’m not sure why, all I know is he had a ton of Mr. Dark merchandise in his room. You don’t believe me, ask Mesprit.”

“NO, don’t ask me, I don’t remember anything! !” Mesprit panicked like a girl who didn’t do her homework.

“They used Mesprit’s power to fuel an energy cannon, which Mansay used to destroy the Sea of Bubbles.” Murfy explained. “He freed Bill Cipher in the process. Then, Mr. Dark tricked the Bubble Dreamer, Madotsuki into killing herself in the Dream World. Bill Cipher stole her reality and is now running rampant in the real world.”

“That is some cold ice, Bromeo.” Xyler said.

“Whooooaa!” Craz gaped. “Ice IS cold, man!”

“That’s how I emphasize the severity of these events.”

“So, is Bill the one that burned Dark into a crisp right here?” Sharkboy asked.

“That is also an ironic play on words!” Craz beamed.

“I hate the idea of Bill doing our work for us.” King Teensie said. “How else could we punish him?”

“BURN HIM ON A STAKE!” Gumsi roared.

“HEY!!” Harvey shot a hand up and stood. “Do you guys even know why Mr. Dark did all this?!”

“You’re going to defend him?” the king asked before another Teensie succeeded him.

“No. I agree that everything he did was bad, but it was only because nobody helped his creator, Madotsuki.”

“We are aware of this.” Ly spoke. “The majority vote was to ignore the dark and distorted dreamscape. I disagreed.”

“We only became members a few months ago, so someone needs to fill us in.” said Xyler.

“I mean, we definitely woulda helped a little girl if she was in danger.” Craz reasoned. “You hear me, ladies??”

“We love you, Craaaaaz!” The girls in the audience screamed.

“That’s right! You’re ALL my Dream Girls!”

“...” The girls fell silent. They all put on vicious expressions and cried, “There can only be OOOONE!” Then they began to tear each other apart.

“This is a fun council!” Spongebob smiled.

“ENOOOOUGH!” King Teensie banged his gavel furiously. “We have more pressing concerns
than Mr. Dark’s punishment! How we’re going to round up all the monsters, and what we’re going to do about Bill Cipher.”

“Excuse me.” April Goldenweek stood and raised her hand. “Regarding the Bill Cipher problem, we need to bring him back to the Dream World so we can get Madotsuki’s reality back.”

“That’s right!” Sheila stood and fist-palmed. “We’ll beat the snot outta him and drag him on back here!”

“Bill Cipher is too dangerous to be kept alive.” King Teensie argued. “If the opportunity to kill him were to present itself, I would take it. One human’s existence is worth sacrificing.”

“DON’T SAY THAT!” Harvey shouted. “Madotsuki doesn’t deserve ANY of this! People’ve been using her in the worst ways you can imagine and nobody helped her! We need to get back the life that Bill TOOK from her!”

“What life?!” Gumsi snapped. “According to our real-world records, that child had a CRAPPY life! She had nothing to live for, and getting back her reality in exchange for Bill returning HERE, she will STILL have nothing to live for!”

“Did you not hear Bill’s message?” Ly asked. “By switching realities with a Bubble Dreamer, he can have power in both worlds. At least if Bill were to regain his Imaginary existence, he would have limits.”

“But we can’t KILL Bill in this world!” Sharkboy argued. “Maybe in the real world, they can actually get rid of him!”

“I never noticed those words rhyme!” Craz said. “Brony, remind me to never give my kid a name that rhymes with a negative word.”

“Well said, Broniack.”

“I love making up synonyms for ‘brother’!”

“REALLY? I do, too! Are we even brothers?”

“Our parents mighta switched us at birth!”

“AWESOOOOME!”

“SHUT YOUR MOUTHS or I’ll make up a bunch of synonyms for JAWBREAKER!” Sharkboy balled his fist and bared his jaws.

“We cannot give the mortals the burden of slaying Bill.” King Teensie said before his crown was seized.

“Don’t underestimate us.” Sheila said. “We’re pretty bloody strong.”

“But we can’t kill him in the real world.” Harvey followed. “We need to bring him back here so we can get Madotsuki’s reality back.”

“No.” Mesprit stated. The Firstborn floated down to the center of the room. “What we should do first… is ask Madotsuki what she wants. We must ask her if she prefers the life of a Dream Spirit, or if she would like a new life in the real world with new potential friends. We could associate with her either way. Then, depending on her answer, we will decide the method in which to defeat Bill.”
They hadn’t thought of that. Everyone was murmuring conversations. “Yes. That is a good idea.” April said, remembering a similar situation. “We will ask Madotsuki’s opinion.”

“…Yeah.” Harvey smiled.

“Very well. All in favor for leaving the decision regarding which means we shall deal with Bill—as well as the ultimate fate of Thaddeus Dark—to Madotsuki?” King Teensie asked. He, Murfy, Ly, Craz, and Xyler raised their hands. “All opposed?” Sharkboy and Gumsi raised theirs. “Motion carried.” He banged the gavel.

“OH, phooey.” Gumsi cursed.

“Before we continue, is there anything Mr. Dark would like to say and is able to say?”

“Cough…” Mr. Dark’s glaring yellow eyes were the only highlighted feature on his blackened body. “You fools are still… ignorant.”

“Noted.” King Teensie the Fifth nodded. “Have him ironically taken to the cage for now.”

Two Electoons flew in with helicopter hair, smirking as they began to carry Mr. Dark to the Cage of Irony. “Now, what of André and Ales Mansay? Where are they now?”

“André got away after the Bill Cipher bit.” Murfy answered.

“And I just kicked Mansay up to the stars.” Sheila said casually.

“I won’t mind helping track them down.” Rayman offered. “I still need to find Globox, too.”

“I’ll send my Knaaren out to fight the Nightmares!” Gumsi announced. “But we won’t make very much progress without any Bubble Dreamers.”

“That sponge kid and that Indian boy over there are Bubble Dreamers.” Murfy pointed.

“We know. They’re the ones who caught Bill Cipher days ago.” King Teensie affirmed. “No doubt, they are powerful. But they alone cannot capture them all.”

“My Creator’s a Bubble Dreamer, too.” Sharkboy said. “But he doesn’t need a cheesy bubble wand to make stuff.”

“Given the likelihood we would unite them together, I have called for another Bubble Dreamer.” Ly echoed. “And I sense his arrival now.”

The doors opened at the entrance of the center aisle. The audience looked in his direction. A pair of small, green flipper feet flopped across the floor. It was an old frog with a white beard and yellow eyes with bushy brows. He was walking with a cane and had a pipe in his mouth. “Excuse my late arrival.” He blew bubbles from the pipe.

“‘ey, I know him!” Sheila pointed. “He’s the old frog from the Toad World!”

“Yes, I am Don Gero.” He blew bubbles. “I remember you as well, Miss Frantic. I am a subject to Toad Sage Gamamaru. And yes, I am a Bubble Dreamer.”

“Madotsuki’s Bubble Dreamer powers may still be usable to her, despite being a Dream Spirit.” King Teensie predicted. “We must repair her body soon. Ly, you will explain to Don Gero our dilemma, and Sharkboy, you will call for your Creator. Council, dismissed.” He banged the gavel once more.
“Eh… I don’t know about those guys.” Harvey said as the council and audience began to clear out. “What if Madotsuki wants her reality back, but they won’t let her?”

“Yes, says we ’ave to do what they say?” Sheila smirked. “We’re still gonna beat Bill and make him give it back, anyway.”

“But how do we fight Bill in the real world, anyway?” April asked. “Do Bubble Dreamer powers work there?”

“No.” said Jessie.

“Did you forget who we are, April?” asked Sheila. “Me mates are the toughest blokes you could ever see. We’ll all gang up on Bill!”

“Did you forget what we’ve been doing all month, Sheila? We’ve been fighting enough enemies already. This Seven Lights Quest gives us too much on our plate. Sure, until now, we’ve been coming through okay, but there are too many enemies for all of us to just focus on one. We don’t know how powerful Bill is, and by the time we beat him, we’ll be so exhausted, the other enemies can attack us. Heck, Bill might even be attacking our friends right-”

“’ey.” Sheila put a finger over April’s lips. “Take a few examples from Chimney why don’tcha. She’s the only one of your sector I respect. She kicks more arse than all of ya, and wouldn’t say things like that. …Mocha’s pretty strewth, too, but not as much as me.”

“…You’re right.” April smiled. “I guess we should stay positive. Plus, we can’t forget about the GKNDS either. We have loads of planet KNDs as our allies. So in the event we all get reduced to bones and ashes, they’ll jump in next.”

“That’s… better?”

“Oh, but now we have to get Harvey to the real world, right?” Spongebob remembered. “How do we do that?”

“Oh, I can do that!” Mesprit smiled. “As a creator of the Dream Realm, I have the ability to warp between worlds. I can take people with me.”

“So is this your real body?” Harvey asked.

“It is. I’ll take ya back if you like.” She winked.

“Um… I’m worried about Madotsuki.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll take care of her.” Murfy assured with his big grin. “I got plenty of duct tape upstairs just for this occasion.”

“But even if I come back, I won’t be able to make you my Firstborn, Mesprit. I didn’t save Mado and I’m not even good at emotionbending.”

“Oh, blah blah. Your mom didn’t know any more than shooting a laser, but she caught me easy. I thought your performance was top notch!” Mesprit grinned. “I say you’re ready for me.”

“Heh… really?” He smiled sheepishly.

“Yeah, just be thankful I’m not Azelf. She is like, SUPER critical! Making her Guardian slay a powerful demon before catching her?? Sheesh! Then there’s Uxie with the whole brainiac quiz
“But I’m gonna need to learn more emotionbending before I can be any help. Will you teach me?”

“Aww, I’d be happy to, Harvey. But Emotion’s a tricky element to master. You can’t be great at it in just a few weeks.”

“Maybe… but I don’t feel like I deserve to be your Guardian until…”

“Until you can kick a bit more butt, am I right?” Sheila asked with a grin. “Gettin’ stronger is always better when ya have something to work toward! I gotta admit, I admire ya for doin’.”

“On second thought, screw it, I chased a girl around her disturbing dream world, which is more than my mom ever did, so I’m gonna capture you the second we get home!” Harvey decided.

“Fair enough!” Mesprit beamed.

“Oh, lame!” Sheila scoffed.

“You know what else I was thinking we’d do?” April asked. “Bring our friends here to meet Madotsuki. We’ll find their dream worlds.”

“Actually, maybe we should bring people that Madotsuki can… relate to.” Harvey suggested. “People that’ve had bad pasts. Like Phosphora.”

“Or Mary. Yeah, I think that would be best.”

“Oi, should we go back to the real world and tell our mates about what’s happened?” Sheila asked.

“Yeah, we should.” Harvey agreed. “I wonder if Bill Cipher made himself popular, yet.”

**KND Moonbase**

**DOIIINNNG!** Sector V, W7, and many others gaped at the horrible state Moonbase was now in. “I’m guessing Bill Cipher said ‘hi.’” Jessie remarked.

“Yes, he did.” Cheren sighed.

“AZZIIIIEEEE!” Mesprit flew up and hugged her sister, twirling in the air.

“MESSIIIIEEEE!” Azelf hugged back.

“I missed you so much!”

“I missed you, too!! Let me examine your Power Level!”

“No, we’ll overwhelm the kids!”

“Who cares, we’re Firstborn, they expect us to be powerful!”

“Cheren!” Panini and Francis ran up to the Supreme Leader, holding an empty T.H.E.R.M.O.S.. “The Weapons Storage was broken open, and the shadow we were holding in this T.H.E.R.M.O.S. escaped!”

“Marcus called from the Arctic Base,” Francis began, “and the World Leader escaped! She freed the Teen Ninjas, Gideon, Sector DR, AND the old Supreme Leader!”
“ABRAM JOHNSON ESCAPED?!” Cheren screamed.

“NO FREAKING WAY!” Sheila panicked.

“This is terrible!” April followed.

 “…Um… Can someone tell me who that is?” Mocha asked.

Cheren bit his teeth, remembering his former commander very well.

3 years ago

When 6-year-old Cheren was admitted to the KND, he was given the honor of Supreme Leader’s assistant. He was so proud, and operatives like Karin and Sunni were jealous.

“I do solemnly swear to do everything you say!” Cheren saluted in a way that was adorable for a child. A single loose tooth hung from his mouth. “No ifs, ands, butts, or any negative or unexciting remarks!”

He mostly organized the office, carried papers and food, and got a status report on his operatives. But every once and a while, an operative came to Abram to request him something. One day, Dipper Pines, who was 3 years older than Cheren, came to the office.

“So like, my great-uncle owns this Mystery Shack in Gravity Falls, Oregon, which is kinda close to Sector O, and well, to get to the point, I was thinking of starting my own independent sector where we like, solve mysteries that could be beneficiary to the KND.”

“No, it’s a waste of space. We don’t need a sector like that.”

“But I wrote a five-page proposal on how a mystery-based sector could be helpful-”

“You’ll go back to your treehouse and go on missions like any other sector. Any more talk on your ‘proposal’ will fall on deaf ears.”

“Um… alright.” Dipper left, feeling disappointed.

“Howdeh, Supreme LEADUH!” Numbuh 2=1 from Sector E greeted with enthusiasm. “S’listen, the fellas at my treehouse… don’t have a good opinion on my… preferences. So, I was wondering if I could change sectors.”

“If you don’t like how they treat you, don’t be gay. I don’t believe that ‘it’s not a choice’ crud.”

“Heh, well I can’t just CHANGE how I am. I mean, boys are handsome, don’tcha agree?”

“Even if I do give you a different sector, they’ll just mock you, too, it’s not a common thing.”

“Well, maybe we can build a treehouse in my homeland and invite OTHER gay operatives to join! We’ll have fun and no one can judge us! It’s perfect!”

“I’m not wasting resources on that, so scram. Either deal with your sector or just quit.”

“But I… sigh.” Bon Clay’s bright smile faltered. As he left, dressed in his swan suit, Cheren looked at Abram with spite.

“Greetings, Earthling Child Commander!” Nebula D. Winkiebottom, at 8 years old, greeted with a happy, though nervous smile. She spoke in a way that Cheren thought she wasn’t sure what she
was doing. “Do not be alarmed, but I am an alien from a distant galaxy. I have recently established an all-kid organization known as the New Galactic Kids Next Door. Unlike the GKND you might have heard in stories, our goal is to establish peace in the universe for kids and adults everywhere. I am currently looking for KNDs to form alliances with, so that all kids may aid and support each other if the need should arise. My organization is founded on friendship. I would very much like you to be a part of it.”

“It sounds cool!” Cheren perked. “Do it, Sir, do it!”

“No.” Abram said firmly.

“I implore you to read the treaty I specially designed for this.” Nebula said, pulling a paper out of her tux. “If we become allies, we will provide your organization with new technology, protect your planet from foreign invaders, and-”

“You alien scum tried to destroy the universe, get lost.”

“Oh…” Nebula frowned. “If that is your wish. I will return in the future to see if you changed your mind.” She warped on the spot.

“OI!” Chimney shouted at the Supreme Leader during a graduation ceremony. “What you mean Aeincha can’t join?! She KILLED in the Spy Course!”

“A child that small will never survive. If she is meant to serve as a treehouse hamster or a pet, she doesn’t need to enter her DNA.”

“Chimney, it’s okay.” Young and tiny Aeincha said. “As long as I can still be with you guys-”

“NO!” Chimney leapt and gripped her hands and feet onto Abram’s shirt. “Aeincha can walk and talk like any person, and I want her to be treated like ANY operative!”

“The Code Module won’t even be able to recognize-”

“DNA accepted.” The supercomputer spoke. Abram gasped, seeing Aisa holding Aeincha, and her finger in the Code Module. She shot a taunting grin at Abram. “Please, choose your codename and sector.”

“I choose Numbuh 76.2 and Sector W7!” Aeincha proclaimed.

“TAKE YOUR BOOGER OUT OF THAT!” Abram stomped over and snatched the Lilliputian, squeezing her tightly.

“Ow! Okay, I will, please stop it! AAAAHH!”

“HEY, what’s the big idea?!” Paula Doublefinger of Sector GD shouted. “She’s only a little girl! Er, no pun intended.”

“YEAH, Mr. Macho!” Jinta Hanakari stomped up, looking furious. “If you’re gonna ban someone for being little, why not Ururu?!”

“P-Please don’t reference me, Jinta-kun.” Ururu blushed.

“I thought the KND was about protecting kids, NOT hurting ’em!” Dillon yelled.

“Maybe we should get a new leader!” Chris shouted.
Nearly the entire audience began shouting protests as some operatives climbed on stage, approaching Abram with fists raised. “GIVE AEINCHA BACK!” Chimney leapt from behind, grabbed Aeincha, and ran away.

“You PATHETIC-!” Abram whipped around, swinging his fist to punch Chimney—he socked Cheren in the eye and broke his glasses, knocking the younger child back.

“BRO!” Chris and Aurora yelped.

“You FUCKING PRICK!” Panini pounced on the tall, muscular leader, furiously pounding his head, but Abram grabbed her shirt and held her away.

“A PRICK, huh?! How about I throw all you twerps in Arctic Prison with nothing but your underwear?!” As the leader spoke, Cheren was on the ground, holding a hand over his left eye. There were small bits of glass punched inside of it. “That oughta straighten up you whiny-…” Cheren’s sadness, hate, and anger molded into one, burning in his right eye. He glared at his Supreme Leader, for whom these feelings burned for.

“AAAAHH!” Cheren flew up and PUNCHED the boy across the chamber, smashing some audience chairs. Everyone gaped at Cheren. He was on fire, and his body was darker. The left eye that had been injured was a fiery yellow. The adorable boy who was loyal to his leader looked like a demon.

Abram recovered and growled at his traitorous assistant. He stormed up to deal punishment—Cheren zipped behind, grabbed Abram’s neck, and started dragging Abram all around the auditorium, scraping his face on the floor and carving a trail. Cheren moved faster than anyone ever saw him. When Cheren was finished, he leapt up to the ceiling, faced Abram at the Code Module’s pedestal as they rocketed down, and SMASHED his head through it.

Abraham didn’t show motion and didn’t speak. Having let his anger out, Cheren’s flames poofed, his color returned, and he fell over exhausted. …His loose tooth fell out.

Hospital

“Are you okay, Cheren?” Aurora asked her brother as he lay in a bed.

“Yeah… I don’t remember anything. …W-What happened to Abram?”

“You went Dark Super Sonic on him. He’s okay, but… we’re thinking of putting him in Arctic Prison. We’d kinda like a new leader.”

“Maybe you’re right… Who were you thinking?”

“Find out yourself.” Aurora threw open the room’s curtain—they were actually on the stage in the center of the Sooper Convention Center. When Cheren peeked out, everybody was cheering him, raising banners that read CHEREN, flags with his face, and flags with an “X” over Abram’s face. “While you were out, we had an election. It lasted for… an hour. There were other votes for like Doflamingo and Mabel, but the majority is, well… you.”

“But why do they want me?? I dunno how to be leader!”

“Yes, you do! Cheren, you think we don’t hear you talking to yourself every day after you come home? ‘I think a friendship with GKNF would be cool’ and ‘What’s wrong with an all-gay sector or a mystery sector?’ Cheren, you might not have experience, but you sound to me like you’d make a way better leader than Abram! Just try it out. I’ll help you get started if you want.”
The operatives were cheering outside, eagerly expecting their new leader to walk out and acknowledge them. “Well, I did have a few ideas… Fine, I’ll give it a shot.”

**Current time**

“…Wow… They made you leader just because you went Demon Mode on a bully?” Anthony said, astonished. “Rock on, Cuz!”

“Why would you say that, YOU’RE a bully!” Aranea remarked.

“Well, Vweeb didn’t stand up to me, he just got all you guys to gang up on me!”

“And then Abram joined the Teen Ninjas.” Cheren continued. “He broke out of prison and attacked us a few times before we caught him again. Sigh… but I guess he’s free again.”

“His last name was Johnson?” Jessie asked. “Is he related to Shelly?”

“I just noticed that, actually. Is Abram Shelly’s cousin, do you know?”

“I could ask her.”

“Sigh, I’m not sure it would matter much, though. Man, Moonbase is a mess…”

“I would be willing to repair it for you.” Everyone turned to face Mom, whose three sons were standing in a line like soldiers.

“What’s the catch?” Cheren cocked a brow.

“The catch is that I need a place to lay low. And I still want you to kill Morgan.”

“I’m not going to kill Aunt Morgan. Just maybe, really hurt her… real bad. We’ll accept your help, Mom, but you’ll be monitored. We’ll also lock you in a cell after we finish repairing.”

“You’re not very trusting, are you?” Mom remarked.

“Is that a deal-breaker?”

“No, I’ll still help. But it won’t be long until you’ll desire my assistance again.” The woman smirked.

“And why would we? Dare I ask?” Carol retorted.

Mom’s face wrinkled and showed her teeth in her smirk. “Let’s just say you’ll want a ride to the Great Clock.”

**Planet Poké; Giovanni’s Mansion**

Giovanni’s mansion was built in the middle of a forest. It was a massive whitish-yellow building with a red roof, four castle-like towers, and had the security one would expect from a military fortress. Team Rocket Agents patrolled inside and outside the electric fences and around the ground turrets. Darcy Chariton and Lucario slightly lowered their camouflage cloaks as they were backed against a tree, studying the mansion.

“So is this the place they got my mom trapped?” Darcy asked.

“I do not feel your mother’s aura.” Lucario spoke telepathically. “However, I am sensing two
different, very powerful auras. And one of them… belongs to Mew.”

“Mew is in here? Really?”

“Yes. Now is your chance to put your new skills to the test, Darcy.” Lucario showed faith and strictness in his narrowed left eye, the only one visible to Darcy from this sideways perspective. “I have toured you around Poké’s regions to teach you the ways of Elemental Martial Arts so you will have the strength to save Mew from this prison. Once we have succeeded, we may return to Earth. You and Sunni will be able to show each other your newfound strength with proud faces.”

“But what about saving my mom?”

“We will rescue Mikaela in time. I am sure she will love to see her two daughters again, and how far they progressed.”

“All right, then…” Darcy narrowed her eyes at the base. “Time to show them what I’m made of.”

(Play “Baron’s Palace” from Daxter!)

Stage 59: Pokémon Palace

Mission: Rescue Mew.

A group of agents outside the fence marched left, while a group inside marched right. When both groups passed, Darcy squatted down, channeled strength inside her legs, and performed an Air Jump. She landed over the fence, but quickly hid in her Camouflage Cloak before the agents turned and came back. Two Magnemites were floating over the next fence, but when neither they or the agents were looking, she Air Jumped over the fence and camouflaged again.

From here, Darcy was in view of the stairs to the front entrance. Darcy wouldn’t be able to creep up the stairs under camouflage, so she snuck to the left side of the stairs to do a weaker Air Jump. She landed on the spot before the entrance and quickly cloaked to hide from the agent coming up the stairs. He slipped a card key through the slot, and when the door allowed him entry, Darcy crept in without his knowing.

The Rocket Agent headed to a door on their right. Darcy was inside the palace foyer, which was brightly lit by sunlight through the windows. “Intruder in the palace foyer. Activate security defenses.” The alarms started blaring, and Darcy saw holes open up on the floor. Spikes rose—Darcy had already Air Jumped and landed on a small platform on the side of the wall. Three Magnemites came out and blasted electric balls, which Darcy blocked with a psychic shield before psychically grabbing the Pokémon and throwing them against each other.

The spikes wouldn’t allow Darcy to access any ground floors, so she would have to take the route above the foyer stairs. Darcy Air Jumped, used psychic to float atop the ceiling chandelier, and from there jump to the top of the stairs. (Since she wasn’t a master of psychic, she couldn’t float for too long.) The door was sealed to keep her out, so Darcy would use what is probably her least favorite Element Style: she channeled strength to her head, making it hard as rock as she bashed it against the door. She did it three times until it was dented enough for her to pull open with psychic. She would always need a moment to let the dizzy feeling settle.

The next hallway was gold-colored, lined with vases with Pokémon designs, a red carpet, and security lasers skimming in any direction. There was a Bronzong hovering near the ceiling, shooting Psycho Spheres that Darcy threw back. The Bronzong fell to the ground in defeat. A short
A wall of lasers blocked her path, but when Darcy tried to jump over, they changed position to keep her blocked. Darcy grabbed the Bronzong in psychic and discovered that his steel body was immune to the lasers. She used him as a shield to get past them, then held the steel bell above her to protect from ceiling lasers. A single laser locked on Darcy and followed her, so she kept the Bronzong in an appropriate position to block it.

Darcy turned left at the end and came to a large room set over a pool of water. Darcy dropped the Bronzong, having served its purpose, and jumped a set of platforms with Goldeen jumping in between, to poke intruders with their spikes. Darcy landed on a walkway where a trio of Totodile all blasted Water Guns at her. Darcy swung her arms and legs nimbly, catching their water with her Fishman Karate and knocking the Pokémon off the edge by sending it back. She would have to cross a large gap with three fire columns blocking her way. Thankfully, Tentacools were spitting water up at her, so Darcy redirected it with quick hand thrusts and put out the fire.

She Air Jumped across the gap to land on the platform, then had to use Fishman Karate on another fire spire a few feet to her right. She Air Jumped across, but instead of a flat foothold, she had to kick off a rectangular sideways platform, using Air Jump to go higher, and Wall Jump her way up several sideways platforms before she landed on a new floor at the top. There was a fountain in the center, and several Rocket Agents flying with jetpacks.

The agents summoned Gardevoirs to create shields that would bounce away projectile attacks, so the Quilavas inside the shields could shoot fire at Darcy without hassle. Darcy dodged the flames and jumped through each Gardevoir’s shield to knock the psychics unconscious. She then used Fishman Karate to grab water from the fountain and knock the Quilavas out. The Rocket Agents sent Geodudes next, but Darcy could defeat the Rock-types with water as well, then tossed Psycho Spheres to blow the agents out of the air. Darcy headed for an elevator and rode it one floor down. She exited into a room with many plants and flowers, providing a lovely fragrance.

Some of these plants were actually camouflaged Victreebels, who seized the chance to snatch Darcy in their mouths when she came close. She was caught by one of the hungry bell-plants, squirming furiously until it spat her out. Angered, Darcy balled her fists and channeled enough power to them until they were red with flames. She punched the Plant-types out of submission, then tried to get a handle on her whereabouts. Half of the room was blocked off by a pool of poison sludge. She could climb up a vine wall on the opposite side from the sludge, avoiding the Spinaraks crawling on it.

She climbed to a platform with two small handles on the wall. Darcy faced the room, grabbed the handles, jumped, and pulled the handles while planting her feet against the wall. The handles allowed her to keep a firm stance on the wall, building momentum in her squat legs. When ready, Darcy Air Jumped and flew across the room, over the poison river and to the other side. There was a walkway that sloped up along the wall, leading to a door, but thick brambles were grown over parts of the walkway from the ground. There were weak stems that Darcy could break with Fire Kung-Fu—but she chose to destroy the one closest to the door and simply Air Jump above the path.

A Donphan rolled out of the doorway and pushed her back to the lower ground. She couldn’t get close enough or have good view of the elephant Pokémon without it rolling out and pushing her. Darcy decided to Flame Punch and destroy the other brambles, but when she set foot on the path, the Donphan rolled out and knocked her away again, and it was too strong for her to grab in psychic. When Darcy looked around, she found a Rattata wandering in the grass of the flora-filled floor. She caught the rat and took it with her up the path. The Donphan rolled out—it freaked at the sight of the rat and jumped off the path. Darcy giggled, throwing the Rattata to chase the elephant while she proceeded.
She entered a library corridor with lights on the orange ceiling, and some books were dropped on the green-tiled floor. “This place looks kinda nice.” Darcy smiled, walking forward as she viewed the books. “Would Giovanni mind if I-”

When she stepped on a dropped book, a laser shot it—she jumped back with a start, heart racing rapidly. “Okay, I guess not! Gee, how much security does this guy need? Talk about freaking paranoid.” A wall of lasers blocked a wide archway, but there was a big gap at the top, so Darcy could Air Jump and float through it. More lasers blocked access further down, but the right hall was open, except for floor lasers. Darcy Air Jumped and swung the ceiling lights across the floor, setting foot on the other side where it was safe.

She could then turn down a left passage—a Rocket Agent commanded a Pidgeotto to use Gust and keep Darcy from crossing the hall. Darcy put her Earth Style to use and stomped through the strong wind with sheer force. When she was close enough, she blew the bird away with psychic and knocked the agent out. Darcy turned left and was now behind the laser wall that blocked her previously. The next hall had books lain everywhere around the floor, and bookless areas on the wall shelves. Given what happened before, lasers would shoot Darcy if she touched the books. She leapt to the first bookless area, kicked to the next one with Air Jump, and repeated until she landed before the elevator.

Darcy rode further down and came to a basement level. “I’m actually feeling Mew’s presence, too. He can’t be too far away.” Darcy cloaked herself when the elevator opened in case anyone was waiting for her. Indeed, a Noctowl was peering at the elevator with glowing red eyes, looking very eerie in the dark hallway. The owl was confused as to why no one was in there, so it looked right. Darcy crawled out during this time, hiding under its perch. Several Noctowl were skimming the hall with searchlight eyes, so Darcy kept under her cloak and crawled through. She had to stop when their eyes directed at her, for they would notice the ripple of her cloak.

At the end of the passage, she could stand up and walk down a dimly lit stairwell of grated steps. At the bottom, she passed through a hallway with cages of rare and unique Pokémon, like pink Rhyhorn, Butterfree with faces on their wings, a four-headed Dodrio, a tiny Golem, and many others. There was a doorway at the end of the hall. She hid behind it and peeked into the room.

A thin bridge with no railing led to a machine with a three-computer keyboard. There was a glass capsule above it. The man inside the capsule had tan skin and long, spiky white hair. He had blue dragon tattoos, wore a necklace of dragon fangs, black pants, and his muscular body was shirtless. There were also several huge areas of burned flesh, and he was missing his right arm. There was a smaller glass case stationed above him: it contained none other than the Firstborn, Mew. Cords were transferring Mew’s pink energy into the sleeping man’s capsule.

The person operating the controls appeared to be a man-size robot, which had a wooden board for a head, inside a glass helmet. “The project is nearing completion, Master Giovanni.” The scientist spoke in a British accent. “This is a most fascinating body you found… Where did you say you discovered him, again?”

“I found him from the remains of the Lunar Sanctum. Lesser Lord Gnik told me he was there.” Giovanni’s silhouette spoke on a screen. “He ordered me to use Mew’s power to revitalize his energy. Apparently, even though his body is a corpse, this man kept his soul bound to it and kept his flesh from decaying too quickly. Lord Gnik wants him to destroy the Moon Planet, Lunaria. It works in our favor, since we have a need to find Lunaria as well. Make sure you finish soon, Dr. 20x40.” The screen went off.
“Will do, Sir. I am most interested in what this man’s power can do for us. …You can come out of hiding now, girl. My assistant has ears like a squirrel.”

“Yeep!” Darcy flinched. She sighed and walked out of the doorway, crossing the bridge that led to the machine. She stopped halfway and asked, “Why didn’t you tell Giovanni someone was spying on you?”

“He did not need anymore concerns. Besides, you do not look like someone worth having concern for. Don’t you agree, Johnny?” The cyborg turned around. Johnny 20x40 had a psychotic and maniacal grin on his face, which was the only human part of his robotic body. His friend of superior intelligence, Plank 20x40, was set on top, though his wood was slightly withered and his left eye was smeared red.

“Oooooh!” Darcy gaped and pointed. “I know you! You’re that Plank guy that was in the first part of the Firstborn Story, but you were like, so lame!”

“Yes… I had assumed conquering the world with an army of living mutant planks would be easy.” Plank recollected, staring at his left cyborg hand. “Apparently, not. Poor little Johnny here became a victim of a horrible car crash. Team Rocket found us and created this convenient new body for us. Now we work for them.”

“Well, if that doesn’t put you two closer. So, what is this machine? What’re you using Mew for?”

“This device is the R System, created for the purpose of reviving the fallen through means of a super powerful life support. Have you ever read the book on Hybrid Theory? Well, part of it reads that Mew is the original hybrid, as he possesses the DNA of all creatures and can become anything. By using his power, a hybrid is able to unlock the full potential of one or all of his genes, and become a formidable force.”

“So that guy is a hybrid? Of what?”

“You do not need to know that. In any case, we have big plans for this subject, and we will not let you disrupt them. It is time to demolish you.” Plank pressed a switch on the terminal, and the bridge dropped Darcy down to a wide floor below. Darcy looked up as the cyborg hovered with jetshoes.

“HWAH hwah hwah!” Johnny laughed. “HWOW, Pwank! Do we make awesome traps or HWWHAT?!”

“Yes yes, settle down, dear John. Ah, it is ever so nice to be in control of both the brains and the brawn. I wonder how efficient this psychokinetic is in either world? We shall soon find out.” (Play Megahammer’s Theme from Mario Galaxy 2!)

**Boss fight: John-Plank 20x40**

John-Plank aimed their right arm at Darcy, which became a cannon that shot bombshells at the floor, creating electrical shockwaves that Darcy jumped with careful timing. The cyborg flew circles around her, shooting more bombshells as Darcy rapidly jumped them. John-Plank flew down to start swinging punches, but Darcy was swift to avoid, ducking and kicking them off their left leg, then punching Johnny in the face. “Ow!” She shook her hand from the pain.

“I would not do that.” Plank smirked. “He is more bulk than blood nowadays.” He activated the jetshoes, flipped up in the air, and slammed his feet down at Darcy, but she dodged once more,
focusing power to her fists, lighting them with fire, and dealing a storm of fast heated punches. “Just pray you don’t overheat!”

The cyborg felt its temperature rise and Plank’s marker face drip a little. When his defense was down, Darcy leapt and kicked Plank’s capsule off the body. Johnny seemed to wobble dizzily and hunch forward mindlessly, so Darcy seized the chance to attack Plank. However, Johnny’s eyes suddenly burned red, crying a “YODELY YODELY YOO!” as he charged at Darcy, flailing his arms, and punched her with enough force to fling her several yards. She got up and saw the cyborg charge at her again, so she squatted her legs and jumped high into the air, then she spun like a drill and dove at him headfirst with her body on fire.

She smashed the cyborg against the floor, jumped to her feet, then tossed a Psycho Sphere to knock Johnny a short distance. She saw Plank’s castle floating with mini rockets, so she Air Jumped up and kicked him, cracking his glass. Johnny caught Plank and reattached him to his body, his red eyes returning to their normal craziness. “Johnny can’t bear to be separated from me. He goes a tad wild, you see. Now we need a recharge, do excuse us.” The robot grabbed some Pokéballs from slots in their body and threw them open.

A Blastoise and a Venusaur shot Water Gun and Vine Whip, to which Darcy used Fishman Karate to redirect the water and cut the vines. She saw two Magnemites channeling a gentle electric charge into John-Plank’s body, so Darcy kicked a water strip up and caused the cyborg to electrocute. “NOWEEEE!” Johnny screeched. “NANIIII!” His jetboots malfunctioned and began to fly him around the room. “Neenonee-NY-NOOOOO!” He crashed into Mew’s cage on the R System, cracking the glass.

Darcy grabbed the Venusaur with psychic and slammed him against the Blastoise, then readied herself when the cyborg flew down again. John-Plank shot two bombs from his hands to land on Darcy’s left and right—they POPPED a blinding flash that made Darcy dizzy, giving the cyborg the chance to punch her several meters away. “HWAH HWAH! We got that psycho freak GOOD, huh Pwank?!!”

“Okay, psychicbenders are a normal thing now, so that slur lost its touch.” Darcy said as she rubbed her head. “And you don’t even deserve to use it, you Cyfreak!” She threw a Psycho Sphere, but John-Plank dodged and rocketed at her. She dodged right, and when the cyborg turned around, Darcy was gone.

“HEHN?! Where she GWO, Pwank?!!”

“Keep your ears open, Johnny. She cannot hide from you for long.” The cyborg began pacing around the room, listening intently for the sneaky psychic. Darcy was crouched on the ground with the Camouflage Cloak over herself. She quietly sidestepped left when John-Plank was about to pass close by. When Darcy had a good view of his back, she Air Kicked at and grabbed hold. “DAH! Johnny, on our back!”

“I’m more annoying than a monkey, aren’t I?” Darcy used Psycho Stun on his back and caused him to short-circuit again. John-Plank flew around with rocket shoes in attempt to blow her off, but Darcy held on and maneuvered his flight path. She flew them up and around the R System, and crashed the cyborg into Mew’s capsule again. Darcy fell back to the floor while John-Plank hovered above her.

“Perhaps THIS chap will give you a shock!” John-Plank released an Electabuzz from a Pokéball. Darcy made a psychic shield to block its Thunder Shock, then threw a Psycho Sphere at the Electric-type. John-Plank grabbed her from behind by the shirt, rocketing upward, spinning around, and hurling Darcy headfirst at the ground. She was quick to raise her arms up, plant her hands on
the floor upon landing, and bounce herself to the ceiling with an Air Jump. During which, her legs bent against the ceiling, giving strength for another Air Jump toward John-Plank, spinning in a Flame Drill and ramming Johnny in the face.

The cyborg crashed on the floor as Plank fell off of him. Johnny’s eyes turned red, but he turned around to retrieve his master. However, Darcy used psychic to pull Plank over to her. “Come catch me if you want ’im!” Darcy squat her legs and Air Jumped up to the second floor bridge, facing the R System. Johnny rocketed up, then dove at Darcy, but she fell flat on her back and avoided him by inches.

“You missed, you fool!” Plank shouted. Johnny shot a bombshell that popped an electric shockwave, which Darcy Air Jumped, but while she was in midair, Johnny flew at her for a punch. Darcy smirked, having lit a Fire Fist to punch him in the humanoid face. Johnny got dizzy and crashed in the wall beside the machine. “Get ahold of yourself, Johnny!” The cyborg recovered and blasted lasers that Darcy dodged. He dove at the psychic, who Air Jumped again, kicked backward, and grabbed hold of Mew’s case. Johnny locked on and readied to shoot a missile. “NO, JOHNNY!”

The mindless mecha shot the missile, and Darcy jumped away so it would crash and shatter Mew’s glass case. “Darcy shoots, SHE SCORES!” Still in midair, Darcy used psychic to slam Plank’s capsule against Johnny, breaking it. The martial artist spun vertically with her feet lit aflame, going faster like a flaming wheel, until she SMASHED Johnny’s head and popped several nuts and bolts out of his body. The cyborg short-circuited and fell on his back, his eyes turning off, but his mad smile was still stretched. (End song.)

“Mew…” The catlike Firstborn softly landed on the floor, his blue eyes weary.

“Mew!” Darcy ran up and lifted him in her arms. “Are you alright? It’s me, Darcy. I dressed up as you for Halloween and got turned into you. And then Sunni almost got killed by Lucario. Hehe, remember?” She grinned.

Alarms started blaring as the base flashed red. Team Rocket Agents swarmed in, commanding Magnemuses, Mismagius, and Inkays. “HRAH!” Lucario landed before Darcy and cast an Aura Beam at the agents blocking the entrance. “Let’s go, Darcy, HURRY!” He dashed through the base’s halls, throwing Aura Spheres at all incoming agents while Darcy kept behind with Mew in her arms.

“LUCARIO EX-MACHINA!” Darcy cheered.

Plank got up off the floor and saw the unnamed man’s capsule sinking into the wall, due to the security program. The living piece of wood quickly hopped inside before that wall closed.

Outside

Agents scattered about the woods in search of the escaped intruders. When a group of five passed by, Darcy and Lucario took off their Camouflage Cloak. They were knelt on the ground as Mew lay in Darcy’s arms. “It seems they drained much of his energy already.” Lucario observed. “But it should recover with the proper treatment.”

“Just what were they doing with him? Who was that man in the R System?”

“I am unsure… and yet… I seem to recognize him from somewhere.” Lucario closed his eyes. “Although his body was dead, I felt a strong aura within him. Was he a zombie, perhaps? Or was he…”
Darcy stared at him, anticipating another theory. “…Oh, well.” Lucario said. “The point is that we saved Mew. I will teleport us back to Earth.”

“Finally. Only Arceus knows how much we missed…”

Inside

“That girl was more clever than I anticipated.” Plank said as he typed on a keyboard with his little branch hands. “No matter… They may have rescued Mew, but we transferred enough of his energy to proceed with our plan. I’m sure some Moon’s Tears shall quench what remains of your thirst.”

The man was lain on a bed connected to two machines with shining blue, tear-shaped stones. Their light was transferred through cords into the man. Plank approached him with a malicious smirk.

“Isn’t that right, my dear Logia?”

Soooo yeah. The first time Darcy actually does something worth mentioning. I kinda wanted to include a scene in Chapter 12 where she begins her training… but I never got the motivation to make it. But maybe I will after I finish more of the story. Ly and Gumsi are from Rayman, Sharkboy’s from Sharkboy and Lavagirl, and Craz and Xyler are Mabel’s Imaginary Friends from Gravity Falls. And we all remember Johnny and Plank, right? No?

Makes sense. Next time, we’ll do an Emily stage. Here’s an Atbash Cipher to keep you intrigued.

...  

WLM’G QFWTV Z YLHH YB RGH NFHRX
Father

Chapter Summary

Team Wendy and Sector RZ go to Lunaria, the Moon Planet! There, Wendy meets someone special.

This chapter comes after Chapter 56, and this Lunaria Mini-Arc will all be before Chapter 57. Some events in Chapter 56 will connect to these Side Stories, so refresh your memory if you need to. If not, then let us take flight.

Chapter B-26: Father

Lunaria

After thousands of years, she has returned home. She remembered the way, and was delighted to set her feet on the planet’s soft blue soil. Lapis Lazuli breathed Lunaria’s rich scent. After so many years, she feared the smell of salt water would never leave her nose. There were people and children around, and they looked at her. They had blue skin like her own, some had blue hair, some purple, but the elders had white. Lapis stood out with her pair of glowing, watery butterfly wings. She was just the same as the ice-blue, glittering statue of herself in the town park, posing with one leg bent back as fountain water poured from her gem.

“I should’ve told them how weird that looked.” Lapis blushed.

“Look!” A round-headed boy with white hair pointed. “It’s the Fairy Princess! It’s Princess Lapis!”

“Princess Lapiiiiis!” A girl with a yellow dress, long blue hair, and no shoes leapt over gently, the planet’s low gravity making her light.

“Ha ha ha! Hello, everyone!” Lapis grinned brightly. “It’s great to be back!”

“Where did you go, Princess Lapis?” asked a smaller girl with purple hair curved up in points.

“I was on an… extended vacation to Oceana, Earth. So here is some advice regarding that: DO NOT GO TO EARTH.”

“Is Earth bad?” the round boy asked.

“YES, and it’s UNBEARABLE! Full of annoying sentient sponges, nagging whale gods, and adorable babies that only LOOK sweet and innocent, but turn out to be MONSTERS! Ugh, I NEVER wanna see another Earthling for as long as I-” A ship crashed behind them. Lapis whipped around in fright, as did the other park-goers.

It was a KND S.C.A.M.P.E.R., damaged only slightly from crashing in low-G, and a blonde girl with chocolate-brown eyes stumbled out. “I made iiiiiit, moooon…” She collapsed.

Cleveland Rooftops

Sector RZ and Wendy’s group left the basement emporium through the portal door and exited to
the alley where the original emporium was located. Arlon’s ship which he had stolen from Zordoom and Sector RZ’s C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. were parked on the city roofs. “I have been under your father’s service for roughly two months.” Arlon said to Wendy. “He freed me from my cell in Zordoom for the purpose that I would bring you to Lunaria.”

“Oh, that’s right, you were one of Viridi’s thugs.” Lee Andrew remembered. “How do we know you aren’t out for revenge?”

“Mistress Viridi has already been foiled. Honestly, even if I lusted for vengeance, I do not have the resources to seek it. I suppose it is rare for you children to encounter such a competent villain of my stature.”

“More like a fraidy villain.” Leanne retorted.

“Yeah, why did you even agree to help us?” Lee asked.

“For the same reason you will be sworn to secrecy should we arrive there. But I was only requested to serve as escort to Miss Wendy’s party. It is your duty to attempt to keep up on that shabby camper.”

“It’s a school bus.”

“A shabby mode of transportation all the same. Now, if we are all prepared, we must make flight for Lunaria.”

“Dr. Facilier?” Wendy spoke politely. “Would it be alright if I rode with Lee’s friends?”

“I cannot agree to this, Child.” Carla said. “It just… looks like a school bus with rockets attached to it. How would it even get beyond the atmosphere?”

“Hey, don’t underestimate our 4x4 technology!” Lulu exclaimed. “They’re even better than they used to be thanks to GKNF’s tech. We even have a Warpdrive Key to zip us through hyperspace!”

“Yeah, Carla. And besides, it wouldn’t be the first time I rode in one of their ships.” Wendy blushed. “At least this time, I won’t be piloting it.”

“It’s alright by me!” Facilier grinned. “More room in there than this smelly old prison ship.”


“Why must children insist on making matters complicated?” Arlon sighed. “Very well. But I should hope your piloting skills are of the highest quality.”

After both ships took off from the atmosphere, Arlon set his to warp through hyperspace. Sector RZ entered the warp gate after him.

Florae Galaxy

They reappeared in a region of space that was unrealistically blue. Everywhere looked like a night sky—the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. dodged right and barely hit a small moon. “The moon shrunk, the moon shrunk!” Donna shouted.

“Or maybe… we’re gigantic??” Sonny questioned.

“We’re going to step on everybody.” They both said with devious smiles.
“On the contrary, children, we are at the edge of the Lunar Field.” Arlon said to them through the transmit. “It is a vast field of moons that surround and protect Lunaria.”

“How does Galaxia have room for all these planets?” Lee asked.

“This is not Galaxia.” Arlon said in aggravation. “The Florae Galaxy is close to Galaxia’s borders, however, and it is here where Lunaria floats. Stay close to me or you shall be lost among the Maze of Moons.”

“A Maze of Moons?” Denny repeated. “This would be the most amazing thing in the universe if I wasn’t so darned confused! Why in the world would Diwata think to come here? And how would she even know how to solve this maze?”

“It’s just a bunch of moons.” Lee said doubtingly. “We’re basically looking for the most gihugic one out here, right?”

“Unless Lunaria is super-duper tiny.” Leanne replied.

“Squash it.” The Climbers hit their hammers together.

“Yes, it may seem like a simple maze to navigate,” Arlon said contrarily, “but there is a spell in effect, wherein you must navigate a specific path, lest you be lost forever. We Lunarians instinctively know the correct path, and the illusion of being lost does not work for us.”

“Wendy, are you sure you wouldn’t rather ride in the other ship?” Carla asked.

“Carla, there’s nothing to worry about. Mr. Arlon will guide us across.” Wendy smiled with faith. “We’ll find Diwata… and we’ll find my dad, too.” (Play “Rainbow Road” from Mario Kart 7!)

Stage B-22: Lunaria

Mission: Get to Lunaria (even though it’s the stage name :P).

Act 1: The Lunar Field

The ships flew over a large moon and under two smaller moons before Arlon listed slightly to the left, then right, passing two more big moons. They entered a field where moons moved around and bumped into each other like pool balls. Arlon turned his ship sideways and slipped between two moons on a collision course, and Sector RZ quickly boosted their ship to squeeze between them. “Apologies, children, some moons are rather impatient!” Arlon yelled.

“You’re leading us through here to try and kill us!” Lee shouted.

Arlon was flying close to the bottom of a large moon, and the kids watched as he performed a somersault all the way around the moon before flying straight up. The operatives mimicked the action and entered a greater sea of moons, where they had to quickly turn left, diagonal right, do an overhead loop around a small moon, and then boost through five pairs of moons that would bounce against each other. The next region had three columns of moons, the other two drifting up while the center one’s moons moved down. Following Arlon’s example, the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. slowed down through the first column, boosted through the second, and swerved left around the third.

They entered a cluster of moons, where they had to turn their ships sideways to go through a canyon, upside-down when the canyon became horizontal, turned further clockwise through
another vertical canyon, and when they could revert to rightside-up, they flew upward. “Even if space did have directions, it certainly doesn’t in this mess.” Leanne said.

“What if each of these moons had its own gravity?” Denny asked. “I’m gonna be sick.”

“Uuuuuuh… awwwwww…” Wendy’s face was unnaturally blue.

“WENDY!” Lee exclaimed. “YOU’RE a Lunarian?!”

“I don’t believe that is the case…” Carla said.

Arlon’s ship was flying toward a bigger moon that was raining little comets at them. He performed numerous barrel-rolls to bounce the comets away, so when the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. was forced to mimic, Wendy’s sickness only increased. “Child, this spacecraft has a stationary gravity.” Carla told her. “If it’s the sights that are dizzying you, please close your eyes.”

“No, Carla… it’s pretty.”

“Just remember who’s gonna have to clean up.” Lee stated.

They flew through a ring of small moons before reaching the big moon, and they had to speed around it three times, still avoiding its comets before they rocketed further skyward. They were soaring over the Sea of Moons, an endless field of glimmering blue. The stars sparkled in the indigo sky, creating many a constellation – a five-point star, a flower, a fish, a waving hand, the Triforce. “Oh, no, those aren’t stars creating the constellations. They are moons.” Arlon said. “We must fly into that one there.”

The constellation in question was a smiling crescent moon. Arlon turned his ship diagonal to fly through the group of small moons, and when the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. flew through, a gigantic blue moon seemed to materialize several miles away. “Well, children, I am almost surprised you were able to follow my directions. You have technically won the right to land upon my home planet: Lunaria.”

They were minutes from entering the atmosphere of the great blue orb, and it was getting close surprisingly fast, given its size and distance… wait a minute. “Just kidding.” Arlon flew around the ordinary moon, so the kids followed. “THAT is my home planet, Lunaria.” The real planet was, unmistakably, a greater distance away, and had various tones of blue that represented land, sea, and mountains. “You wouldn’t believe how many hapless visitors crashed on that other one.”

“It’s one way to single them out…” Lee commented. They closed in on the planet with very transfixed expressions, and could only imagine what beauty lay on the actual surface. Their ships did not even burn upon entering the atmosphere, nor did the sky change any different from how it looked in space. It was like they were simply landing on a huge rock in space. (End song.)

Both ships landed in an open space within some hills. “BLEEEEEEHHH!” Wendy finally puked after stepping off the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S..

“AHHH!” Arlon freaked. “We’ve been here for merely two seconds and you’ve already defiled my planet’s soil!”

“Oh, get a grip on yourself!” Lee shouted. “Don’t act like no one on Lunaria gets sick!”

“THEY DON’T!”

Facilier helped wipe Wendy’s mouth. “I’m sorry…” she said humbly.
“At least you didn’t soil my ship.” Leanne patted her back. “I’m proud of you, Wendy.”

“Sigh, let’s just move on, shall we?” Arlon sighed. “The village where Master Red Eye promised to meet us is up ahead.”

Lee was first to follow him- “Whooooaaa!” he felt his feet lift off the ground, floating for a second before plopping on his front.

“Yes, the gravity is a little… lacking, compared to how you are familiar with it on Earth. You may need some time to adjust.”

“Wheeeeee!” Lulu leapt several feet high. “I jump higher than Weegeeeee!”

“Weegee?” The Luigi mutant peeped from behind a rock.

“No, Weegee, back in your hole.”

“Weegee?” He came out more.

“No, Weegee.”

“Weegee!”

“I SAID NO!”

“Weeeeegeeeeee.” Weegee sunk down in depression.

“He was in Firstborn, by the way.” Donna told the readers.

Lulu, Denny, and the Climbers embraced in the low gravity by jumping carelessly, while the others tried to keep their selves steady while following Arlon. The butler guided them to a cliff over a great river of blue, still water. Across the river were a series of tall islands that all formed a village. There were houses with gardens of blue, pretty grass, lamp posts shaped like moon phases, and some people were laying on lawn chairs and getting “moontans.”

Arlon waved his hands and seemed to catch the mystic blue light, forming stairwell platforms. “Watch your step, if you please.” He leapt up the stairs gracefully. His guests followed, but kept their eyes down to see the floating see-through steps. “On Lunaria, we practice the art of moonbending. To outsiders, it may sound like our powers are merely limited to the surface of the moon, but in actuality, a moon is more than just a spherical rock above a planet’s atmosphere. An ethereal energy flows from the moon, touches all that it shines upon. The moonbenders are able to harness and control that energy.”

“An ethereal energy that shines on all…” Wendy spoke lowly. “Mr. Arlon… are you talking about magic?”

“A most educated presumption. You see, the moons are the primary gateways to a realm called the Netherverse, which is concentrated with powerful Space Chi. The moons regulate that chi, keep it from leaking too destructively. And the output that has resulted is what we call Moon Chi. From Moon Chi, we are able to construct shapes, manipulate gravity… We have thought as moonbending as a sub-form of spacebending, a supernatural sub-form at that. And over centuries, other cultures have developed the form called ‘magic.’ The moons were a primary source of magic energy, the stars even. However, Moon Chi and magic… are used in very different ways.”

“Ohhhhh I’m confuuuuused.” Wendy held her head.
Their pathway took them over the village and provided a lovely view of it. Lunarian children were pointing and looking up at the strangers. Like Arlon, they were blue-skinned humanoids, but with various colors of hair, like purple and blue. Wendy stroked a few strands of her hair. Perhaps… she was Lunarian? “Mr. Arlon… how did you say my father got here?”

“He had his methods… As a reminder, you children must be sworn to secrecy.”

“Secrecy to what?!” Lee exclaimed. “How to get here? Because I won’t remember that specific path!”

“Patience, young man. You will learn momentarily.”

They set foot on an island with no houses, and a pointed hill that was more like a small mountain. A figure was floating above the point, turned away in a position they assumed was cross-legged. The being had silver hair and a flowing black cape. A breeze that they hadn’t felt before began to blow gently.

The kids slowly stepped up the hill, with Wendy and Carla going first. The breeze seemed to pick up. The others stayed behind and watched Wendy go on her own. She stopped a few steps from the tip of the peak. The man sensed her presence behind him. His white hand reached into a pocket and came out with a purple locket.

“This planet is a wonderful place… isn’t it.” He spoke with a deep voice. “It’s so wonderful that you wonder why it must be secluded from the outside. It was a decision of this planet’s founders, so many ages ago. To protect it from the evils of outside. The people and children play and live happily… and yet, their freedom cannot be shared with the outside. But that does not matter… The air of this planet is too fragrant for words. Why not embrace in its beauty? I knew it was the place for us to meet.”

The floating man turned around. The right half of his white face was concealed by a mask, only showing his left red eye. He set his sandaled feet on the ground. He clicked open the locket. Inside was a picture of a sleeping, adorable baby with blue hair. “I missed you… my child.”

A storm of emotions flowed through Wendy’s mind. She just couldn’t comprehend, couldn’t understand this being true. His face and hair bared no resemblance to Wendy, but his red eye and pointed ears looked strikingly similar, and his smile was warm and inviting. Carla looked between him and her master—the silence was tense for all of them.

“…Dad…” Tears flowing from her eyes, Wendy ran up and grabbed him in a hug, which he returned. Red Eye held the child close, filled with joy over his daughter’s happiness. They had both been awaiting this for a long time. Dr. Facilier, Sector RZ, and the Ice Climbers felt a warmth in their hearts. Wendy has finally met the father she never knew and always wanted to know.

Lee examined the dark-cloaked man. There was something familiar about him. “WAIT A SECOND, I know you, you’re that… GUY! That GUY that… worked for Ganondorf! Wh-What’s his name—VAATI!!”

Wendy pulled away and stared at him. “Vaati? I’ve heard of you. Mr. Ezlo talked about you.”

“So, you met my old master? Then… you must know a great deal about me already.”

“I think lots of people do.” Carla stepped forward and told him. “Your alias appears frequently on the wanted posters. And the Government has drawn connections between you and Wendy.”

Vaati was a tad startled by her voice—he looked around and saw that it belonged to a winged cat.
“Oh-ho, excuse me.” He blushed. “I did not see you there. You…?”

“Carla. And according to Wendy, I’m an ‘Exceed’ or something.”

“That would be the first time I’ve heard of that. But you are correct. I made myself an enemy of the world for following my philosophy. It is a fate I chose. But never one that I desired for you, Wendy.” He put a hand on her shoulder. “I left you at that orphanage so that your fate would not be bound by your parents’. You would know freedom. But it seems those fools at the World Government sought to detain you, anyway. I have endangered you, Child.”

“I don’t care about that!” Wendy embraced him again. “All I wanted was a family! Somewhere to call home, where I would be accepted.”

“And now you do.” Vaati hugged her. “Now that you are here, I want to teach you everything I know.”

“Everything?”

“Yes. Airbending, magic, how to battle, and my dreams. I entrusted Dr. Facilier with teaching you only a small portion, so that you would be prepared. I would love you… to be my student. Will you?”

“Yes, of course!” Wendy said excitedly. “I want to learn EVERYTHING from you! I waited for you for so long, I don’t wanna disappoint you!”

“Excuse me.” Both turned to Carla. She bore a very inquiring glare. “But if you’re Wendy’s father… perhaps you may tell us who her mother is?”

“Yeah, yeah! Who IS Wendy’s mom?” Lee exclaimed. “Someone we know too, I bet!”

“Well, Mr. Vaati?” repeated Carla.

“Hmph…” Vaati smirked, his eye closed. “Your mother’s name… is Annie Wilconson.”

“CALLED IT!!!” Denny screamed.

“Wonderful woman. Delightful. Heheh, she really had that fangirl about her back in the day.” Vaati chuckled at the memory. “They made a show about the Kids Next Door’s exploits, and boy was your mother obsessed with it. Even wrote fanfictions.”

“Master Vaati.” Arlon spoke seriously. “As heartwarming as this reunion is, we had another matter to discuss. Where is Master Crest?”

“Oh!” Vaati’s white cheeks reddened. “Yes, well, it seems Crest grew a little antsy when we arrived. So I… took him to a diner.”

New Moon Dining

“NOM NOM GOBBLE GLOP, GLOOP!” There were tall stacks of bowls and plates standing on one table, where a blue fat impish creature with a crescent-shaped head gobbled up a bowl of large blueberries. “OHH, they only grow ’em right here! HEY LADY, WHERE’S MY MOON PIE?!”

“Almost ready, Master Crest!” a chubby yellow-haired waitress said frantically.
“NOOO, what have you done?!" Arlon shouted, running to lift the moonberries out of Crest’s grasp. “The Young Lord’s appetite is RUINED! If he weren’t able to change his own body shape, this would be a DISASTER! Master, just how much have you eaten?”

“Bleventy…hundred… and one.” Crest moaned sickly. He perked when he realized: “Wait a minute… that doesn’t end in zero. It’s not perfectly round! NOOOOOOO!” The creature cried and rolled around the restaurant floor on his chubby belly. “Why why why whyyyyy…”

“So… what is this again?” Lee Andrew asked.

Arlon caught the Young Lord and lifted him for the tourists to see. “Ahem, may I introduce you to Lord Crest. The Firstborn of Moon.”

“Whoa-whoa-whoa-whoa! FIRSTBORN??”

“The Tenth Firstborn, as a matter of fact.”

“TENTH FIRSTBORN?!” the operatives screamed.

“All right, this is COMPLETELY messed up!” Leanne shouted. “We grew up knowing there were Eight Firstborn. EIGHT… FREAKING… FIRSTBORN! Then Sector V tells us about a random MUSIC Firstborn, NOW WE HAVE THIS RANDOM MOON THING?! I mean… WHERE did he come from?!”

“It happened two years ago.” Vaati explained. “One of my subordinates, Mikaela Chariton, had to take her daughter to the hospital on Mother’s Day. Her daughter had attempted to show her proficiency in psychicbending by creating an Imaginary Friend. When Mika returned to the hospital room… she found Crest and brought him to me, thinking he spawned from Sunni’s Imagination. It was a while before I realized… his powers and anatomy matched that of a Firstborn. And I was astonished to think that an undeveloped psychicbender’s powers could create such a creature.”

“After Sir Vaati freed me from my prison, I declined his request to take his daughter to Lunaria.” Arlon followed. “But then he showed me to Master Crest… so I was forced to obey.”

“I had no intention of harming Crest, and I followed Arlon’s wishes to protect him. A Firstborn is not born in the universe every other week. If word got out that a new one just appeared, the universe would descend into chaos, people will jump at the chance to seize him, research him, harness his power! Just like Dimentia once did to Jirachi. The Firstborn are the most powerful beings in the universe.”

“And you let him just casually come to a diner and casually eat food like… a fat rich person.” Lee commented.

“BUUUUURRRP.” Crest deflated like a balloon, returning to a slimmer stature.

“If only I could do that.” Lulu frowned at her chubby body.

“Oh, I can help you!” Crest floated over and touched Lulu with a blue twinkle on his finger, and she went from round to slender in seconds.

“AAAAAAAHH! I’m so tiny!!”

“You’re just skinny, silly!” Lee laughed.
“YOU’RE A SAINT, Lord Crest!!” Lulu grabbed and hugged the Firstborn. “No more exercising or gym for me!”

“As impressive as that is, that can’t be all he can do.” Leanne said. “I mean… he’s a Firstborn! He must have phenomenal cosmic… moonbending or something!”

“Indeed, Master Crest is brimming with potential.” Arlon replied. “But a Firstborn must not use its power rashly. We must wait for Crest’s Guardian, whoever he or she may be.”

“A bender must not conceal itself.” Vaati said. “A bender must be free to exert its power, express itself. I kept Crest a secret for this long, but you must allow him freedom on his own planet.”

“I will decide when he is ready for that.” Arlon picked Crest back up. “He is not my child, but he is certainly not yours. Why don’t you attend to your own daughter?”

“Yes… perhaps I shall.” Vaati said with slight resentment for him. He turned to Wendy with a welcoming smile, “Shall we go someplace to talk in private?”

“I would love to! But, Dad, one of Lee’s friends went missing and we think she came to this planet. So, I wanted to help them-”

Facilier touched her shoulder. “You leave finding Diwata to me, sweetie. Y’all just spend time with yo’ dad. I know you’ve both been looking forward to this.”

“Yeah, Wendy, don’t worry about us.” Lee grinned. “Go bond with daddy!”

“Hehe… Well, if you say so.” Wendy grinned.

They went outside the restaurant as Vaati helped Wendy onto his shoulders. “Hold on tight.” Fast as the wind, Vaati dashed across the indigo fields, dodging rock after rock, cliff after cliff, over the mountains, and was gone. The joy and energy Wendy felt was unparalleled.

Dr. Facilier held up his cane and called, “Point Me Diwata Uno!” The stick whipped in a certain direction. “This way, kids!” He led the way for Sector RZ.

Before Arlon had a chance to follow them, the restaurant waitress cornered him, smiling bubbly. “And will you be paying for Master Crest’s meal?”

“Uh-…” Arlon looked behind the waitress. DUN DUN DUUUUUN! A huge Lunarian with giant arms punched his palm, glaring murderously at Arlon. His shirt read Lunarian Resources. “Y… Yes. Let me fetch my checkbook.”

**On a moonlit hill**

From here, one could see the ocean as it stretched for miles, reflecting the light of the planet’s hundreds of moons. Vaati marched up the hill with Wendy still clinging to his back. “I know I sound too excited, Dad, but I just have so many questions to ask you!”

“Ask me anything, Dear.” Vaati chuckled.

“Okay well first, what about my hair, why is my hair blue, I know I have your red eyes, but your hair isn’t blue, is my mom’s hair blue, or did your hair turn white from old age, not that being old is bad, but-?”

“Calm yourself, Child! Neither me or Annie have blue hair. Before we found out she was pregnant,
I treated her to a wine called Ocean’s Marvel. It was very intoxicating.” He chuckled. “We think it resulted in your hair turning blue. It’s a beautiful color, isn’t it? It goes great with this landscape.”

“It does, I agree.” Wendy stroked her hair. “So, Mr. Vaat- I mean… Dad.” Wendy would have to get used to that word. “There’s so much I want to ask. Like… where do you come from; who were your parents?”

“A very good question. My parents abandoned me too, Wendy. Left me in the care of my master, Ezlo.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I do not know their reason; Ezlo claimed to have found me on his doorstep, but because they left me, I had taken the first step to knowing freedom. True, Ezlo became a father figure of sorts. Taught me much of what I know about magic. As to where I come from, like many Minish, I was born and raised in the Tree of Beginning. In time, I would convert to a human size to better pursue my goals, and even Ezlo came to do so.”

“A Minish? That means… I’m half-Minish.” Wendy figured. “And I’m also half-”

“Nimbi—I mean, human, yes. Keh, sorry.” He flushed red. “My mind races around so much, my tongue begins to jump, it’s really an odd habit.”

“Ha ha ha! I get that way, too! We really have a lot in common, Dad.”

“I know, and I’m very proud of how you’ve grown, Wendy. I have clearly missed my chance to give you a piggyback ride…”

Wendy just remembered she had been riding him all this time. “Dad, if I’m too heavy for you, I can walk on my own.”

“I wish I could disagree, but…” Vaati was shaking, “you weigh a lot more than I anticipated.” Wendy blushed. “I feel like I might fall apart! Heh-!” He fell over and broke into dust.

“DAD!!” Wendy panicked.

But then the dust swirled into a center, recreating Vaati’s body in the form of wind. “Logia airbending.” He leaped over his daughter, reforming his physical body. “It’s very handy.”

Vaati shot to the sky as fast as wind, and Wendy gaped as his body dispersed into such. As a long gust of wind, he soared around and around, far across the field and coming back to breeze past Wendy. She whipped around as he soared miles over the cliff, that gust splitting into three, forming cool shapes, before coming back together. Wendy smiled admiringly as Vaati’s upper half reformed above her, his lower half remaining a whirlwind. “When you’re a Logia, Wendy, you know all the greatest power your element brings. For us airbenders, it truly means knowing breath.” He reformed his feet and landed before her. “I bet you’re a great airbender. I hope you will join me on the wind in a few years.”

That brought up another question in Wendy’s mind. “Mr. V-Dad, who was the first Logia? I mean, I read his name’s Acnologia, and he was a mage, but I still don’t…”

“Hm hm. So full of questions, as expected of you. Acnologia was a moonbender.”

“A moonbender? So he was Lunarian?”
“No, according to ancient scripts, Acnologia was human. In fact, he was not even a bender. He was a wizard who loved magic, desired to learn all he could on magic, and moonbending became a very favored subject of his. He found Lunaria and, using ancient magic only known in his time, he detached his soul from his body, absorbed the spiritual energies of this world, and in time his very soul would be one with Moon Chi. He strengthened his own soul, transferred it to his physical body, and applied it to his magic. With this much power in his veins, he was not only the first mortal to gain bending of his own accord, but the first to actually take the form of his element. One with the essence of nature and the universe, he was a legend to the gods.”

“Woooow!” Wendy’s red eyes were shining. “That sounds so amazing! So did other Logia benders learn from him?”

“Hm hm, he sure inspired me. It would sound like Acnologia became a role-model for all benders… but he was dangerous.”

“Dangerous?”

“He was absorbed in Dark Arts and absorbed in power. He destroyed many, many landscapes with his unmatched power. In the end, he was still mortal, so the gods had to destroy him, sever his ultimate energy. Eventually, mortals discovered ways of achieving this level, having been deemed as ‘Mortal Gods’, but later to be called Logias when compared to the first one. The gods grew concerned having given the mortals more power than they imagined, but passed this off. It showed how generations could pass and things develop.

“As destructive as he was, Acnologia was one of my idols. I think he loved magic as much as I do, and all he desired was the freedom to grow with his power. Tell me, Wendy, when you first laid your hands on your wand and began summoning spells to your whim, how did you feel?”

Wendy pulled out her Lamia Scale. “It felt amazing! It felt like my heart was closed, but it finally opened up to a whole new world! I was beginning to learn who I was!”

“That’s how I always feel as I practice and research magic. It is a wonderful power, and I would like others to view it the way I do. But much of Earth’s society fears magic, and magic communities are forced to hide. If those rules did not exist and mages could express their selves freely, there would be no fear. Don’t you agree, Wendy?”

“Of course I do.” Wendy smiled. “I mean, it’s one thing if wizards use their magic to bully people, but they shouldn’t be persecuted just for being wizards.”

“Exactly! Throughout history, it was shown that rules create limitations and create havoc because of these limitations.” Vaati paced back and forth as he stressed his argument. “Atrocities like slavery, events like World War II, have all happened because of power-hungry world leaders who were ignorant to the ideals of freedom. Growing up, I read more than my share of stories, detailing the exploits of these leaders. They disgusted me to no end.” Vaati gritted his teeth. A darkness loomed in his red eye. “It makes me wonder what the world would be like… if we just didn’t have them.”

“Father?”

“…” Vaati turned to her, smiling. “Sorry, I kind of just started rambling. But the truth is, Wendy, that I wanted you to know freedom, too. I did not just abandon you to protect you… I wanted you to grow up without the binds of parentage, without you feeling burdened or indebted to your parents. I know that life has been hard for you… but I only desired the best for you, Dear.”
“But, Dad… all I wanted was to know you. I didn’t care about having freedom or feeling burdened… and for a long time, I thought that you didn’t want to bother with me. I don’t think I ever felt free… I just felt like a waste. I felt like nothing I did mattered and no one would ever care about me.”

“Wendy… you were more important to me than anything else. I never felt more happy… than the day you were born. You were never a waste… and I’m sorry that I made you feel that way.”

“I don’t care about that, anymore.” Tears welled up in her eyes again. “I’m just glad you’re here now… I love you, Dad.”

“I love you too, Wendy.”

They hugged warmly. The father and daughter that have been apart for so long… Wendy felt like nothing could go wrong and she would be happy from this moment forward. Why wouldn’t she feel this way… At long last, she had her father.

“…Wait a minute!” Wendy spoke up. “How did I weigh you down in this low gravity?”

“You must be heavier than you think!” Vaati laughed.

“Daaaaaad!” Wendy turned red and wiggled embarrassingly. But then the two engaged in laughter.

Twinkle Park

Dr. Facilier’s Point Me spell led the kids to a town park. In its center was an ice-blue fountain statue of a girl with butterfly wings, pouring water from its back. “Master Crest, as the Firstborn of Moon, you must learn to take responsibility!” Arlon told him scoldingly. “In the future, you cannot rely on your caretakers to pay your food bills, and you certainly cannot eat like a farm animal for the rest of your life.”

“Man, and I thought being a baby god would be more fun and games.” Lee said.

“It’s fun for me!” Lulu did a twirl. “I feel so skinny, I can stand still and hide in plain sight, just like a paper!” And just then, she inflated to her chubby self. “WHAT THE HECK?!?”

“Ohhhhhh yeah, forgot to mention, that wears off.” Crest noted. “So uh, no hiding for you!”

“AWWWWW!”

“It should go without saying you must not abuse your power for senseless purposes.” Arlon said.

As they trekked up a hill, a Lunarian with watery butterfly wings emerged from the other side. She gasped at seeing Arlon. “DAD!”

“Lapis!” Arlon exclaimed.

The fairy girl swooped down and grabbed her father in a hug, twirling him. “I missed you so much! I would’ve come back sooner, but Kyogre made me stay in Oceana, and this stupid sponge thing came and… Wait…” She noticed the creature in Arlon’s arm. “Is that…’
“The Firstborn, Crest.”

“You mean he’s finally come?!”

“Hey, who’re you?” Lee asked rudely. “You look like that statue over there.”

Lapis turned to them. “Oh… some more humans.” She said with resent. “By any chance, you wouldn’t be acquainted with the one who arrived earlier?”

“What do you mean?” Leanne asked.

“After I finally made it home, this ship crash-landed in the park and a human girl came out of it. She had blonde hair and a green shirt.”

“DIWATA!”

“KIDS, OVER HERE!” Facilier called from atop the hill. “I think I just found her!”

The operatives ran up beside him and saw the backside of a familiar blonde girl sitting in a shimmering, moon-shaped pool. “It’s really her!” Lee beamed. “Diwata!”

The four kids rushed down to greet her. She turned around, “HEY, guys!” showing her deep blue face with round, white eyes.

“AAAAAAAH!” They screamed with the biggest shock they have ever experienced, so big their hearts almost jumped out. “D-D-Diwata?” Denny stuttered. “Are you stuck in mid-throw-up?”

“No, silly!” She shook her head. “I’m a Lunarian!”

“You…You are?!” Leanne couldn’t process this quick enough.

“Um, I wanna say half-Lunarian, but my mom is half-Lunarian, which I guess makes me half of half-Lunarian! What? Didn’t you guys know? Like, I turn blue every time we go swim at the pool! Well, I turn partly blue, but only because we never go night-swimmin’, hee hee hee! Hey… are you guys okay? You look like Time just halted to a standstill. …Hello?”

The amount of plot twists they experienced tonight froze them speechless. Lulu fell and rolled into the water.

**Gravity Falls; Portal Chamber**

Mabel, Grenda, and Candy had fallen asleep after hours of Dimension Fishing. Dipper, being the night owl he was, had to be drugged with a dose of harmless Death Chi. With the four operatives out, Medusa and Thanatos could make their selves known. “You like to get in, get out without a trace, don’t you?” Nerehc queried.

“It’s not like I wanted to be scarce, it’s just this dimension is more heavily watched.” The goddess shrugged. “Except this room, for some reason. I brought the next two candidates for our mission.”

Atnort and Annaira Eerfnud came behind her. Medusa approached one of the connecting devices, which contained the blue glowing cube known as the Tesseract. “So, this is the device Bill Cipher used to help power the portal. But it isn’t from this world, either.” She took the Tesseract out of its station and held it before the scanner.

“Original counterpart detected. Changing destination to: Dimension Marvel-199999.” The arrow pointed at a symbol of a slanted “A” with a circle around it.
Under Medusa’s instruction, Nerehe played the Ocarina of Time, and Fi set it to transport seven years in the past. Atnort and Annaira stood before the spiraling portal as it shone blue. “In this universe, you will be searching for one of the most powerful Darknesses. A born conqueror, a true challenger of the gods… the Mad Titan, Thanos.”

**Outside Lunaria’s atmosphere**

A fleet of ships had cleared the Lunar Field and were closing in on the Moon Planet. These ships were marked with a huge red “R”. “We will arrive on Lunaria’s surface in twenty minutes, Master Giovanni.” Butch reported.

“It is even more marvelous up close.” Giovanni smirked. “A planet rich with supernatural chi. A terrific source of power, and hiding place of the Tenth Firstborn.”

“Those Lunarian dweebs have no idea that WE knew about the Tenth Firstborn all along!” Meowth announced. “And now Team Rocket’s gonna be da first bunch o’ baddies to capture him!”

“It is a shame that Mew was taken by that wretched girl.” Plank 20x40 spoke. The face of his cyborg body, Johnny, made his most frightening grin. “But the amount of power this Newborn Firstborn will grant us will make us unstoppable! Especially with *you* on our side…” the cyborg turned around, “Acnologia.”

The shirtless man with long, spiky white hair, and tan, torn-up skin with blue tattoos, was knelt on a platform. He tried to rush forward- “OOOOOAAAAARRRGGH!” He was bound to the platform and encased inside a force field. Furthermore, John-Plank had a remote control to zap him into submission.

“You’d best behave yourself in my presence, Mr. Logia.” said Giovanni. “I did not rescue you from that burning sanctum so you would run rampant like the beast you were. I will seize the Ten Firstborn and rule the universe. I brought you back from the dead so you would guide me to Lunaria… but if you mind your manners, I will be happy to grant you a place in my army.”

“OOOAAAAARRRGGH!” He was shocked again in his attempt to resist.

Jessie and James were holding each other and shuddering. “You know, maybe you should be a little nicer to him.” Jessie said.

“After all, a Logia moonbender is practically an endangered species.” James followed.

“The microbots I had planted inside him will keep him under control.” Plank assured. “He will be a valuable asset to us.”

“And his power will be nothing to that which Crest can give us.” Giovanni said, facing the approaching planet. “The first target I will set my eyes on is Gozaburo Kaiba. His precious Duel Monsters will be wiped out in one fell swoop!”

Acnologia fell to his hand and knees. He looked up, snarling like a beast as he bared his fangs. The glow of Lunaria glinted off his blue eyes, his pupils shrinking.

I got this chapter done in two days… at least. SUPER FAST! I guess it’s easy when I already had some dialogue pre-written. So yeah, Crest actually first appeared in my “Mother’s Day” one-shot if anyone remembers that. We all know Vaati, he’s from *Zelda* and he was an an-
again off-again villain in *Firstborn*. Next time, another Darkness hunt. Here’s a short and simple Caesar Cipher.

...

*GUDPWLFLURQB*
Sibling Rivalry

Chapter Summary

Atnort and Annaira are sent to awaken Thanos as a Darkness!

Gonna do a quick Darkness stage, then back to the Loony Planet. Also, if you wanna go on a feels trip, play the Donkey Kong music I'll cue up. ;P

Chapter B-27: Sibling Rivalry

Marvel-199999; Sanctuary (Play “Hau’oli Hau’oli” from Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep!)

“The Chitauri grow restless.”

“Let them gird themselves. I will lead them into glorious battle.”

“Battle? Against the meager might of Earth?”

“Glorious, not lengthy. If your force is as formidable as you claim.”

He was donned with golden armor, entrusted with a scepter with a powerful blue gem as its core. We know this black-haired gentleman as Loki. Of course, these events were a little before the chaos on Birka. “You will have your war, Asgardian.” An ancient, hooded being who sounded like Emperor Palpatine stated. “If you fail… if the Tesseract is kept from us, there will be no realm, no barren moon, no crevice where he can’t find you. You think you know pain? He will make you long for something as sweet as death.”

“I shall not fail.” Loki assured. “With the power of this scepter, even the most vile, hulking figure cannot crush me.”

Earth

“Achoo!” Bruce Banner sneezed.

“Bless you, Dr. Banner.” Nick Fury said.

“Thank you.”

Sanctuary

“See that you don’t.” The Other said as a bright light flashed in the starry sky. “Once the Tesseract is in your possession, you are to-”

“AAAAAHH- UH!” Two beings crashed on the ground between The Other and Loki. A girl with purple skin and green hair, and a boy with green skin and magenta hair.

“They couldn’t have programmed the Multiverse Portal to drop us closer to the ground?!” Atnort complained.
“YOU’RE the one who wanted to jump in without a second’s thought!” Annaira argued.

“IMPUDENT VERMIN!” The Other’s elderly voice thundered.

“It’s your problem, not mine.” Loki remarked before leaving.

“How DARE you little heathens intrude upon Lord Thanos’ sacred ground with naught a hint of repentance!”

“What are you talking about?” Atnort asked, looking around. “I don’t see anybody but some old ghoul with bad breath!”

“Enough.” A deep, commanding voice echoed. They faced the giant throne that was hovered above their asteroid. It turned, revealing the giant with purple skin, golden armor, and a muscular build. He had bright blue eyes. “When children come idly shrieking into my domain… they must bow before he whom they have intruded upon… or be given severe discipline.”

“Talk like a normal person, why don’t ya.”

“Shall I cut off your tongue?!” Other shouted.

“Wait!” Anna yelped. “Are you… Thanos?”

“You have nerve to question my name, without providing your own. State your names and where you hail from.” Thanos ordered.

The siblings exchanged glances. “I’m Annaira Eerfnud. This is my brother, Atnort Eerfnud. We’re from the Negaverse—the Earolf Galaxy.”

“Negaverse… Earolf… These places are unfamiliar to me. And your species… Is it Zehoberei?”

“We’re Zehoberei if you want us to be.” Atnort joked.

Thanos smirked, showing his large teeth. “Congratulations, Atnort and Annaira. You are now children of Thanos!”

“Since when?!”

“Since you were born. You will serve me from this moment forward. Within the next few years, I will train you to become world-conquering machines, matched only by your fellow assassins. Gamora… Nebula… come to Papa.”

The kids heard footsteps and turned. A woman with black hair, green skin, and black attire, along with a blue-skinned woman with a bald head and cybernetic features approached them. “These two are Atnort and Annaira. They are your little siblings. So, as their big sisters, you two must set the example.”

“Might we inquire as to how they were bred?” Gamora asked acerbically.

“The same as you, I would be certain.” Thanos smirked maliciously. “Well… Now that the family is all here, why don’t we play a game? There is an ancient Asgardian temple five parsecs from here. Inside is an item that I want. A special gauntlet, if you will. Heavily fortified… with monsters so ferocious, the Asgardians dare not venture into its depths. My girls, you will lead your new siblings into the temple. Brave the traps and return to me with the gauntlet. Gamora… you will take Atnort. And Nebula, you will take Annaira. Your squads will compete against each other, and
the one to retrieve the gauntlet... will earn Daddy’s praise.”

“And the one who does not?” Nebula asked with a voice that sounded like Medusa (Cree Summer).

“It would seem I have been too lenient with them. Do I make myself clear? Then take your brethren and prepare yourselves.”

“We didn’t come here to play some game!” Atnort yelled. “We came here to find you! You’re one of the Thirteen Darknesses, so you have to—”

“SILENCE! I will not tolerate insolence. Forget who you were and where you came from... because from this moment forward, you are children of Thanos. Do as I say and bring me the gauntlet! Or you will know true pain...”

Gamora grabbed Atnort’s arm. “Come.” She led the younger green-skinned alien away.

As Nebula guided Annaira in the opposite direction, the latter reflected on her name... literally. “Nebula... Aluben...”

“Do not mumble, speak up!” Nebula ordered.

“Oh, of course!” Anna gasped to attention. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you...”

Watching his children leave, Thanos sighed and relaxed on his throne. “Do you really believe these offspring will bring the Infinity Gauntlet without strife?” The Other questioned.

“No... Of course there will be strife. But that’s why... I love them...” Thanos smiled.

His phone rang. Frowning, Thanos grabbed it from his pocket. He clicked the holo-projection to show Ronan the Accuser’s face. “THANOS! This verminous Xandarian couple is talking over the movie! SEND your minions to DESTROY Nova Cinema 199999 at once!” He hung up.

“Ugh... Speaking of pouty children.” Thanos sighed.

Gamora’s ship, moments later

“The Asgardian temple has two entrances that we know of.” Gamora explained as she piloted the craft. There were robotic aliens called Chitauri operating the controls. “I planned to take the bottom entrance. I also have Chitauri spies planted on Nebula’s ship to slow them down. Of course, I didn’t plan on a little brat slowing me down.”

“Hang on a minute!” Atnort spoke up. “I may be a lightningbender, but this is going too fast even for me! First off, I didn’t agree to sign up for this treasure hunt, and second, if we’re both after the same thing for the same guy, then why are we fighting the other guys?!”

“Because Thanos enjoys it when his children fight for his affection. I’d advise you to get used to it.”

“Pfft, yeah right. As soon as that portal calls us back, I’m jumping in faster than a Lightning Comet.”

“You have quite the mouth for an offspring.” Gamora remarked. “What do you have to contribute?”

“I’m a lightningbender.” He pointed at his electrified antenna. “My chi paths got a little messy a few months ago, so I’ve been forced to take baby steps... If you wanna let the jokes fly in.”
“Do you mean to say you possess the power of lightning? Perhaps you will be useful.”

Nebula’s ship

“You’re able to control lifeforms via the blood in their veins?” Nebula replied to Annaira’s description on her powers. “With power like that, we can easily crush Gamora and your brother.”

“If it were that easy, I would’ve crushed him already.” Anna said. “So… Nebula… what kind of man is Thanos?”

“What kind of man is Thanos? I thought you would’ve at least known he isn’t a human before you appeared in Sanctuary. Honestly, what creature in the universe doesn’t know who Thanos is?”

“A creature not from the universe!” Anna chortled.

“Save your humor for after we’ve won. There’s the temple.” They were approaching a massive, dark structure in the middle of space. Giant asteroids surrounded the region and made it impossible for stars to be seen. Nebula glanced down and noticed the ship floating under the asteroids to the bottom of the temple. “Right on cue. It’s time to give my sister a little surprise.”

“What do you mean?”

“I had my Chitauri plant a bomb in their ship. With a push of the button,” Nebula held her finger above a red button on the control deck, “it’ll stop them before she even has a chance!”

“RAAAH!” Two Chitauri jumped over and lashed blades at Nebula, but she was quick to flip over them and shoot them through the heads with a ray gun. Other Chitauri were clashing with each other, and when one of them shot its gun at Nebula, she ducked, causing the laser to destroy the detonator. “So, my sister hired a bunch of double-crossers to get the jump on me first?! Well, the joke’s on her, because now the bomb is set to explode in 30 seconds!”

Gamora’s ship

Beep…beep…

Atnort’s antenna picked up a sound. “Do you hear that?”

“What?” Gamora asked.

Atnort bent over a hatch on the floor and zapped lightning around the edges to detach it. There was a bomb with a timer. “It’s a bomb!”

“A bomb?!” Gamora whipped around. She set the ship to autopilot and tried to pick the device off its place. “It’s attached to the ship, we need to get off!”

“No we don’t—it’s gonna blow when it hits zero, right? So we just need to stop the timer!” Atnort zapped a gentle ray of lightning from his antenna, sending a charge through the explosive until its timer blacked out. “I dealt with these all the time back in DNKG.”

“I should’ve known Nebula would try something so shifty. Hmph… we must be on our guard. Put on your helmet. It’s time to enter the temple. Chitauri Squadron A, stay here and try to get that bomb off. Squadron B, sabotage Nebula’s ship.”

“How do they tell each other apart?” Atnort asked.
“How should I know, they’re just robot lizards.”

**Stage B-23: Dark Space**

**Mission: Get the Infinity Gauntlet!**

Atnort leapt up a series of asteroid platforms, following Gamora’s example as they made their way to the temple’s bottom entrance. On one asteroid, they planned to jump and kick off a vertical asteroid to reach a higher one, but Asteroks (or Space Octoroks) coughed rocks at them to prevent this feat. Atnort could shoot lightning at the space squids, allowing them to accomplish their low-G Wall Jump. “I may need your powers here, too.” Gamora cautioned as they faced a swarm of slow, small incoming asteroids. They made a great leap to a distant asteroid, during which Atnort shot lightning bolts at the small ones that threatened to bash their skulls. After making land, the two Wall Jumped up a series of far-apart asteroids that led straight into the temple entrance.

They had to keep Wall Jumping up a shaft before they could reach the floor of the temple hallway, the gravity still low. They faced a pit where meteors were constantly raining downward, so Atnort did the honors and performed a Zip Dash around them and crossed the pit. He pressed a switch that stopped the asteroids and allowed Gamora to leap across.

“So, do you and Annaira try to kill each other a lot?” Gamora asked while they proceeded.

“Is it that obvious?”

“Call it a hunch.”

“Well yeah, we use each other to ‘vent’ a lot. If you came from a planet that had twice the population that it should have, it would make you pretty stressed out, too.”

“I should be so lucky…”

They reached a ledge with a pad with a hammer icon, and the rest of this passage was set over a pit. Atnort used lightning to ignite the pad, and Gamora quickly hopped on a platform that rose up on their left. Other such platforms poked out of the walls and ceiling. Two of them blocked her path, so she told Atnort to stop powering. The pillars retracted, including hers, but she made the low-G leap off the platform, past the barricading pillars, then told Atnort to reactivate them so she could land on a new extracted pillar. The hall turned left, and the ledge she had to reach was blocked by ceiling pillars. When Atnort deactivated, Gamora made the jump—wall pillars from either side would’ve come out and crushed her had she delayed, but she made it. She pressed a switch that lowered a stairway of electric spheres within mechanical devices, and Atnort could Zip Dash up these spheres to get to her.

In fact, the next room was huge and full of Zip Dash Spheres. Many of them only pointed in certain directions, creating a complex maze for the lightningbender. So complex that I’m sure you wouldn’t remember the path even if I wrote it down. It took Atnort 20 minutes to solve the maze, and during this time Gamora was playing *Angry Space Birds* on her holo-phone. Eventually, Atnort made it across and stepped on a switch that would extend a bridge for Gamora. “Why am I doing all the work here?” Atnort commented.

“It’s not my fault this temple has puzzles that conveniently befit your powers.”

**With Nebula and Annaira**
A Fatblin guarded the entrance to the temple, but when the overweight monster stabbed its spear, Nebula leapt above and kicked the spearhead off, afterwards kicking its weapon and shield away. Annaira used bloodbending to roll it into a Fatblin-size hole, which triggered the massive gate to open. They entered a room with several fountains spewing from the floor. There was a stone tablet with text in front of the next sealed door. Nebula’s scanner translated the Asgardian text and read aloud, “The chamber shall open to a dry floor.”

“I guess we’re allowed to keep the air wet.” Anna used her waterbending to lift all the water off the floor and project a psychic barrier that would keep all the other water in the air. Holding so much water was a strain on herself, but she withstood it until the door opened. Nebula quickly ran in, and Anna let the water splash down before diving in the doorway herself.

“Annaira, look at this.” Nebula was viewing a magic-projected screen on the wall. It showed Atnort and Gamora in a different passage.

“So I guess this is a security camera.” Anna figured.

“Yes…” Nebula smirked at the square switch below the screen. “And this must be SECURITY!” She pressed it. (Play “Deep Space Battle” from Birth By Sleep!)

The door behind Atnort and Gamora sealed, and their hallway rumbled. “I think we tripped the wire!” The hall began to turn red with heat, and the aliens sweated. The two green-skins rushed down the hall, dodging the parts of floor that burst into flame. Gamora Wall Jumped across a lava river while Atnort used Zip Dash Spheres, falling tired after he did so. Gamora picked him up and jumped up a set of platforms over a lava pit, making it through a new door that sealed off the burning corridor.

“Phew… I guess you can’t expect these traps to be as dumb as Anaidni Senoj.” Atnort gasped for breath.

Gamora found a holo-screen that showed Nebula and Annaira viewing a similar screen. “And you can’t expect your sister to play fairly!” She pressed the switch under that screen.

Anna and Nebula’s hallway began to flood. Anna tried to bend it, but the water was unusually thick. “I’m not cleaning this floor.” The two raced up the hall, dodging the waterfalls that poured in. A Bokoblin tried to attack them, but Anna grabbed it in bloodbending and brought it with her, then snatched a second Bokoblin. She stuck the two monsters into holes on either wall, twisting them like keys to open the gate. They had to cross a balance beam over rising thick water. Nebula ran across it with grace, but when she saw Annaira doing it in a slow, careful fashion, the assassin was forced to run back, pick up, and carry Anna to the exit.

They pressed another switch, dropping the floor in their rivals’ next hallway. A storm of Zip Dash Spheres were flying at Atnort and Gamora. The latter dodged them expertly while Atnort used them to zip to the opposite side and press a switch, shutting them off and repairing the floor. Unfortunately, the ceiling began to close down, so Gamora was forced to dash, sliding under the last few inches of space and escaping through the door.

Gamora pressed a switch, turning her sister’s hallway into a mirage zone. The hall consisted of numerous forks, where one of them appeared normal, but would lead them into a pit of lava. Annaira was about to run into a pit—“GET BACK!” Nebula grabbed her before she did. “My scanner can see through the mirage! Follow me!” The right directions were left, right, right, and left.

Nebula found another monitor—Gamora found another monitor. Gamora was seen getting ready to
trigger another trap—Nebula was going to set another trap. They both raised fingers to press the buttons—

Annaira sliced theirs with a Water Slice and Atnort destroyed theirs with lightning. “ARE YOU INSANE?!” Nebula bellowed. “Do you WANT them to get the upper hand?!”

“I thought we were here to get a gauntlet, not try to kill each other! We’re not making any progress.”

“They were about to trap us!”

Anna and Nebula looked around and waited a moment. “…Or perhaps not.” (End song.)

**With Atnort**

“Hm… I guess she feels the same.” Atnort observed.

“Fine, I’ll stop.” Gamora complied. “But for the record, we made faster progress running from their traps.”

The two proceeded up a flight of stairs, with tiny lines in the wall providing light. “I’ve been in this galaxy for almost an hour, and it’s just as crazy as my homeworld! How do you live with a father that MAKES his kids fight each other?!” Atnort questioned.

“Thanos is NOT our father.” Gamora affirmed. “To him, ‘children’ is another word for weapons. He is a murderer and a monster. He killed every last member of my species, he killed my parents in front of me. Whether it’s women, elders, children, infants… Thanos will slaughter anyone he desires in order to achieve dominion.”

Atnort needed a moment to process that shocking response. “…Yeah, I didn’t think any woman would be brave enough to get in bed with him. Did the same thing happen to Nebula?”

“I think her family was killed, but I don’t know more than that. It doesn’t matter. Thanos doesn’t love us, nor do we love each other. We’re weapons now. It won’t be long before you and Annaira will be hating each other.”

“We’re not staying. We’re jumping ship the second we have a chance to.”

“And how do you plan to do that? Because Thanos will find you. He’ll kill millions to ensure you are captured and punished.”

“Trust me, we’re going to escape.” *I really hope that portal calls us back now.*

“Hm. If your words held meaning, I would like to come with you.”

Atnort bit his lip. “I… don’t think you can do that.”

“Why not?”

“Because we-” Atnort tripped on a slanted force and fell on it before pushing off and standing straight. “Huh?” A huge stone pyramid towered over them, and a golden gauntlet was floating above it.

Annaira and Nebula gazed at the massive ruin from across the great vacant chamber. The pyramid only seemed to grow as they stepped forward. Based on the stories from Nerehc’s friends, this Pyrameglyph was a lot bigger than the other ones. Annaira saw Nebula using her scanner on the
alien writing. “It won’t translate.” Anna knew.

“My scanner is programmed with eight billion different languages, even a simple ruin like this… is unknown.” The scanner failed. “Hm… Well, what does it matter. That must be the gauntlet Father desires. Let’s get it down before Gamora arrives.”

“Too late, Sister.” Gamora and Atnor walked out from behind the pyramid.

“Yeah, we found the gauntlet first!” Atnor asserted.

“You two took a lousy shortcut!” Anna argued.

“Shortcut my ass! I was stuck in that shock sphere room for 20 minutes! WE get the giant gauntlet!”

“Will both of you shut up and think for a second?” Gamora cut in. “How are we expected to carry such a large item to Father? We will never be able to bring it to either of our ships if we are at war with each other.”

“Don’t play the Moral Game with me, Sister.” Nebula hissed. “You have always been Father’s favorite child, and you crave his praise! But I will not let you have it, you parentless whore!”

“SOULLESS WITCH!” Gamora punched Nebula in the jaw—the sister flipped behind and grabbed Gamora by the neck, choking her until Gamora grabbed a knife from her pocket and cut Nebula’s waist. They swung swift kicks at the other before Gamora rolled behind, grabbed Nebula, and kicked her against the Pyrameglyph. She was dizzied by the impact, but she extracted long metal claws and swiped them at Gamora, who dodged and grabbed both Nebula’s wrists, only for the latter to kick up at her face.

Atnor and Annaira exchanged looks. “So if this is an Original World, is this where the Negaverse gets it?” the former asked.

The ceiling of the temple blew open, interrupting the fight. A squad of Chitauri flew in, accompanied by Thanos on his throne. “It’s so wonderful to see my children playing.” Thanos smiled with malice. “Oh, don’t let me intervene. I merely wanted to observe my girls bonding. After all… the game is not over.” He looked up at the gauntlet. “The Infinity Gauntlet is right there. Which child will be the first to bring it to me? Nebula? …Gamora? …Or, how about you two?” He faced down at Atnor and Anna. “New children of Thanos… FIGHT, and prove which one is superior!”

Atnor looked at his sister, then to Gamora, before facing up at Thanos. He grit his teeth. “I’d rather fight the lazy fat guy in the floating CHAIR!” He shot a beam of lightning from his antenna. It was small and merely tickled the nose of Thanos. When it stopped, the lord’s nose twitched. Atnor shot lightning from his hands, but it came in weak doses. He kept trying until- “Ow!” He fell to his knees. “My chi paths hurt… I had to use the Zip Dash too much.”

Thanos dropped out of his throne, shaking the floor. He was three times taller than a human adult and very intimidating. He approached Atnor, but Annaira jumped in front, aimed her open hands, bent the fingers, and twisted the wrists different ways. She seemed to be clutching hard at an invisible force. Thanos cocked a brow. “What are you doing?”

“…Um…” A sweatdrop rolled down Anna’s face. “Do you have blood?”

approached the pyramid. “I’ll do it myself.”

The Mad Titan climbed the pyramid and claimed the golden gauntlet. It fit perfectly over his left hand. He balled his fist and viewed the knuckles, noting its empty spaces. “It feels… empty. But not for long… Soon, the Infinity Stones will be mine, and I will control reality!” He raised his fist above the tip of the pyramid and **SMASHED!!**

The impact of the Infinity Gauntlet to the unbreakable stone created a powerful shockwave that shook the entire temple. The others could barely keep on their feet and the temple started to crumble. Anna helped Atnort dodge the falling rock chunks, and when Thanos’ daughters tried to do the same, a huge chunk crushed Nebula’s left arm.

“ACK!” Nebula struggled to push the boulder off. “Father! I am trapped!”

“Nebula!” Gamora rushed to her.

“NO, Gamora!” Thanos roared. “Do not pity the weak!”

Gamora faced Nebula, trapped in a moral dilemma. However, the blue-skinned sister raised her knife and chopped the pinned arm off. “AAAAAAAA!”

A bright light flashed in the sky, and a ray struck the floor of the already-crumbling temple. Annaira hesitated, for Thanos had not read the Pyrameglyph, yet. But she looked at her weakened brother once more, and when the floor was seeing its last moments, Anna lifted Atnort up and jumped into the portal, returning to their universe’s Posiverse.

After the temple was gone and the sisters escaped, Thanos stood on the one remaining platform before the Pyrameglyph.

*O Supreme Being of the Universe… Seek the power that you long for… Become invincible… Become a god.*

Thanos smirked at the very inspiring message. A dark aura flew from the pyramid into his mighty body. He was ready to seek the Infinity Stones.

**Thanos awakened as a DARKNESS. Only 5 more to go.**

The Mad Titan looked up at the sky, pondering over the beam of light that took his new children away. “Hmm… Even the boundaries of dimensions… are nothing to the power of Thanos. I will find you again, my children… and destroy all that you cherish.”

**Somewhere sometime in Danny Phantom’s world**

The Infinity Gauntlet, reduced to a lesser size, lay abandoned on the ground. A wandering ringleader happened to come by it. Baldhead, white skin, and red eyes were his features. He fixed the gauntlet perfectly over his hand. “Saaaaay! That’s not a bad fit!”

The Infinity Gauntlet was known as the Reality Gauntlet, having been found and used by numerous people in this dimension’s history. It was last seen at Final Brain, during the battle with the Brotherhood.

Sam and Tucker ran about, happily sucking ghost villains into their Thermoses, such as Kitty, Hotep-Ra, and Lydia, then suddenly noticed Freakshow. The ghost-wannabe looked angrily at them before using his Reality Gauntlet to turn giant, and the kids gasped and ran before he could stomp on them. Danny and Emily saw this and nodded to each other. Both Halfas flew up toward
Freakshow’s face and combined their Ecto Rays, firing directly at the clown’s face and knocking him over. Freakshow growled in anger and used the Reality Gauntlet to transform himself into a hideously, terrifying ghost. However, Danny only looked with disbelief before simply sucking him inside the Fenton Thermos. He then picked up the dropped Reality Gauntlet and tossed it in the air, and Emily fired an Ecto Ray to destroy it.

The Infinity Stones were at a sufficient loss of power because they did not belong in this world. The gauntlet never looked more feeble.

Twenty years later, with the frozen villains free and long gone, the broken pieces of the gauntlet began to move to each other like magnets.

But they knew their original master would return. They would have power again.

Portal Chamber

“You know, there was something about Thanos’ name that struck me as familiar.” Thanatos said. “Do you know what that could be, Medusa?”

“Oh, Thannypoo.” Medusa scratched the snake’s chin. “Do you ever get tired of being a jokester?”

Nerehc, Fi, and the gods looked as Annaira fell out of the portal with Atnort’s arm around her head. “Did you do it?” Nerehc asked.

“We… kinda left before we saw him read it.” Atnort replied.

“Rest assured, he did read it.” Medusa assured. “You did a fine job, you two.”

“How? We didn’t even guide him to it, and his daughters would’ve found the pyramid, anyway.” Annaira reasoned.

“I just wanted to give you a preview.” Medusa smirked. “Thanos is, without a doubt, the most powerful being in that universe. And when the Infinity Stones fall into his grasp… well, by God, even I am afraid!”

“She won’t even get in bed with him!” Thanatos remarked.

Medusa glared and gripped his neck. “Anyway, I’ll come back later with your next mission. Rest up, kiddies. You know what you’re up against.” She vanished in a Dark Portal.

“Hm… Was Thanos really as powerful as she says?” Nerehc asked.

“He really just sat on a chair most of the time.” Atnort said. “But he’s got a hell of a way raising kids. Speaking of which… why did you save me, Anna?”

“Stupid Atnort. You’re my brother, aren’t you? Someone needs to make sure you don’t lightningbend irrepressibly.”

“Yeah, well… you have weird-looking boogers.”

“At least all I have to do is one swift motion of the hand and waterbend them out. Yours just sticks with static electricity.”

“You just be careful what you touch when we get home.” The two giggled.

“Awww.” Nerehc smiled. “They really do love each other.”
Ghirahim smiled at the readers and winked.

“Still… do you think we should’ve brought those two with us?” Atnort asked.

“Why the hell would we? Those two were insane!”

“So are we, Anna! Don’t you think they would’ve behaved a bit differently if we… got them away from Thanos?”

“I doubt it.” Annaira looked away with a frown. “After all… I still want Aluben back.”

“…I do, too… but compared to Thanos, Aluben is alright to be around.”

**Lunaria; Twinkle Park**

“Oooooooo!” Diwata waved her hands and moaned in a ghostly fashion. “I’m bluuuuuuuuue! So bluuuuuuuuue!”

Her Sector RZ friends stared at her with disbelief. “We see that. You aren’t dead.” Lee said.

“WE WANT A BLUE MAN GROUP!” Donna shouted angrily.

“Either we see dancing blue people or we’re bashing heads!” Sonny threatened.

“I can’t believe I didn’t see that girl following me.” Lapis sighed. “She should’ve definitely gotten lost in the Lunar Field.”

“But the fact is she is Lunarian.” Arlon reminded, still holding Crest. “Not that anyone else has noticed. When a Lunarian mates with a different species, their descendants inherit the skin color of that species. But when exposed to water, the element with the greatest connection to Moon Chi, their blueness shows. Age rates can vary among hybrids.”

“Well, we knew Dee-Dee since we were little.” Lulu replied. “Age isn’t a factor.”

“If I may ask, who are Miss Diwata’s relatives?”

“Her mom’s name is Flordeluna.” Leanne answered. “A name that is… a dead giveaway when you think about it. But this part’s weird, her dad’s name is Bruce Uno—and he looks exactly like this other man called Bruce Farley! Even Uncle Nigel wasn’t sure if he was related to him.”

“Our theory is that Bruce Uno is from a parallel universe, transported to ours due to Arceus’s temporal distortion 20 years ago.” Denny explained.

“The temporal distortion?” Lapis asked, stupefied. “A man from a parallel universe?”

“Indeed, Lapis.” Arlon agreed. “As outlandish as their story sounds… there may yet be truth to it.”

“Oh derp, did we accidentally confirm a prophecy?” Leanne asked.

“Our Lunarians have always anticipated the birth and arrival of the Tenth Firstborn, Crest of the Moon. But a Firstborn is not whole without its Mortal Guardian. And it was told that Crest’s Firstborn Guardian would be one born of Lunarian blood, shared with the blood of one who hails beyond space’s boundaries. I believe this translates to dimensional boundaries.”

“So you’re saying Diwata is the Firstborn Guardian?!” Lee exclaimed.
“The timing behind this could not be more random.” Denny commented.

“Random or not, her duty is imperative.” Arlon continued. “Moon Chi is a very powerful energy, and the amount Crest possesses is so great, it’s devastating. His Guardian must teach him to use it wisely, and make wise use of her powers.”

“But Diwata has firebending, not moonbending!” Lee argued.

“Actuallyyyyy not really.” Diwata lit her hands with sapphire flames. “Moon Fire is kinda different from fire fire. It’s only red as a disguise. It represents the anger or ‘hotheadedness’ of my Moon Chi.”

“Just how good are you at moonbending?” Leanne asked.

“Uhhh, almost decent… could be better.” she said quietly with a white blush.

“If she is the Guardian, she needs to claim Crest soon.” Lapis stated. “The Apocalypse is coming, and Lunaria will be the first to go.”

“What do you mean?” asked Denny.

“The Apocalypse will happen when the moons fail to contain the Netherverse’s energy and explode, destroying all in their range. But with Crest’s power, maybe we have a chance. He can keep the moons from exploding.”

“You mean there might be a way to stop the Apocalypse?!” Leanne exclaimed. “What about the Twenty Keys?”

“It is only a presumption, children!” Arlon stressed. “Regardless, I am certain Master Crest’s role in the universe is a great one. And to think our meeting transpires during such a time… it must be fate.”

“Then I’ll do it!” Diwata proclaimed. “I’ll become Crest’s Guardian, and together, we’ll save the universe from-!”

“DAAAAAH I can’t stand this grown-up stuff anymore! !” Crest leapt out of Arlon’s grasp and flew away.

“Master Crest! Please come back!” Arlon cried.

“I’ll catch him!” Lapis flew after.

“What got into him?” Lee asked.

“Sigh… Master Crest is still a newborn of the Firstborn. His mind has yet to process and mature.”

“At least he knows more than Manaphy.” Leanne mentioned. “And he had 20 years.”

Crest didn’t go far, only hiding behind the short mount where a park tree was planted. Lapis stood on the edge of the mount and looked down at him. He was blending with the crescent moon rocks.

“You didn’t go far.”

“Go away, I’m sulking!”

Lapis sat in front of him. “Is it the Apocalypse that has you so worried?”
“NO! I mean, YES! It’s just, I didn’t ask to be a Firstborn! I just wanted to fly around and eat food! But NOOOO! Red Eye Guy’s holding me captive because guys will KIDNAP me, Big Mustache Guy says I need to mind my MANNERS, because I’m a MOON PRINCE, and I’m two freaking Earth years old!”

“Believe me, I understand! I know what it’s like to be forced doing something you don’t wanna do. And I think what some people seem to forget is… you may be a god, but you have a soul, too. You’re only a child. Like, when people think of the Firstborn, they think of the most powerful beings in the universe, a source of unlimited power, they think of you as just… objects. But…” Lapis felt the urge to reach back and touch her gem, “you’re not objects, and you’re not just gods, either. You’re people who have feelings and… know how to learn.”

“I always wondered what the other Firstborn were like. You ever met them?”

“I only met one. And he, heh heh heh!” Lapis grinned, but then looked sheepishly, “he was somethin’.”

“I’LL tell ya what Crest needs!” Diwata jumped up on the mount. “To just JUMP AROUND the moon and have FUUUUUN!” She leaped very high and slowly came down. “Come on, Crest, let’s play! Put aside that boring god stuff for a day and be a kid!”

“AWESOME!”

“YEEEEAAAHH!” Dee-Dee grabbed Crest and leapt away.

A seaside cliff (Play “Twilight Terror Intro” from Donkey Kong: Tropical Freeze! (Don’t let the name fool you, it’s gorgeous.))

“Tell me, Wendy.” Vaati spoke as he and his daughter stared at the moonlit ocean’s horizon. “When you are running across endless fields under endless skies… do you not long to see if that horizon has an end? To keep running as the air always flows through your lungs?”

“I never really thought about it before… but I guess I would like to find out.”

“Don’t you think everyone should be allowed to view this marvel? But when oceans block our way, people are forced to rent boats. And this beautiful planet is hidden from the universe. If more people could be free to breathe this planet’s air, set foot on this soil…! That reminds me!” Vaati faced her. “When I arrived, I got this outfit for you to wear.” He waved his wand, casting magic glitter over Wendy. Her yellow- and blue-striped dress morphed into an indigo dress with stars, a yellow crescent moon on the chest, and a half-moon pattern around the bottom edge. Her shoes were gone, leaving only the winged bracelets around her ankles.

Wendy twirled gracefully, smiling at her pretty new dress. She jumped very high, and as the low gravity slowed her descent, she spun around in the air like a fairy ballerina. She landed twirling on the toes of one foot. She came to a stop and said with a great smile, “I love it! I feel so happy right now, Dad!”

“I knew you would be. The feeling in your heart you are experiencing right now… it is freedom. It is the most wonderful feeling in the universe. When you feel like you are able to do anything… and with magic, you can. That’s why I fell in love with, not just magic, but the universe, sought to learn everything I could. I know that you feel the same. Dr. Facilier writes to me about how excited you get when you learn something new.”

“I really do!” Wendy grinned. “And I do want to learn a lot! I wonder if I’ll ever know as much as
“It will take some time… but trying to teach you all I know on magic is only a small part. There is more. There are many things I believe in, Wendy. Freedom is one, but I also have strong faith in reincarnation. Do you know what that is?”

“Y-Yes, it’s… being reborn as somebody else?”

“Correct. The idea that you and I were completely different people in a past life. But I’m not talking about who we were a thousand years ago… I am talking about who we were in another dimension.”

“Another dimension?”

“Very old texts depict the idea that our very universe is the center of a Dimensional Fusion, the molding of many alternate universes and their people. Just about every person in this realm could have existed in another universe, with entirely different lives, including you and me.”

“Does that mean… you and I aren’t related?”

“In this universe and its timeline, we are father and daughter, but I’m saying there are versions of us who existed in other universes, and the gods of old have taken those people, and made them denizens of this one. No one knows what our original selves were like—perhaps I could have still been a wind mage, but you and I have no connection at all; I may not exist in your universe, I might have had a completely different personality. But I believe that our lives in those other worlds play a key effect with our lives here. I may not have been a revolutionary in that other world…” Vaati stared at his hand, “but perhaps I had revolutionary qualities. It leaves so much to wonder.”

“How do you know all of this?”

“In the Spirit World, there is a deity called the Chronicler. He lives on an island where, to speak with him, one of each main bender type, plus Time and Space, must work together. His trials were primarily set for the Avatar & Negatar; apparently either one gets Time and Space every few generations. Anyway, I and some friends of mine braved those trials and spoke with him. He possessed a very ancient text describing this Fusion, and knowledge beyond. Would you like to hear something amazing, Wendy?” He spoke this last part with concealed enthusiasm.

“S-Sure!”

Vaati walked forward, knelt to her eye-level, and placed hands on her shoulders. There was great excitement and desire in his voice. “There is a legend that tells of Twenty Keys: Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses. These keys can open a door to a dimension that existed before our own. It was from that dimension, the foundation of this one was formed, by ordinary mortals.”

“I think I know about that! Dr. Facilier and Lee talk about the quest.”

“Then you must also know about the Apocalypse destined to destroy this universe.”

“Y…Yes?…” Wendy was saddened.

“I understand your remorse. This universe is doomed, Wendy, but if this door were opened, we can go to that world, and design a brand new universe! Do you know what that means?”

“We can save everyone?!” she exclaimed with bright eyes.
“Better! It means we can design a brand new world to our liking! Create a balance even the gods never knew! We’re the gods, Wendy! That power, greater than Logia, is in our hand! Creating a world… a world of wind.”

“Wind?…” That sounded like a very odd desire.

“I mean, yes, all elements are equally important, but I always believed that wind… succeeded. What I want, what I always desired, for you, Wendy… is freedom. I want to create a world without the annoyance of governments, rules, borders; gods even. Every soul, every being in the universe will possess absolute freedom, like a Spirit World on Earth. I want this, not just for you, but for your friends, ALL the future generations! I abandoned you at that orphanage to give you freedom from parentage, let you see what it means to roam free, but now that you’re with me, I want you to help me realize that dream! Won’t you?”

His eye was trembling with excitement. Wendy was frightened a little. “But… true freedom… how will that work? I like running around and all, but… If we didn’t have rules, bad people would be free to do bad things, no one would stop anyone from fighting. U-Unless you mean to establish a morality system with creating it.”

“No, that’s the thing! We’ll create the universe, place the people inside, but from there it’s on them. I want every person to live with absolute freedom, feeling no pressuring ties with gods who might be watching. Any life that they decide should be their decision, not a king’s, not even parents. I will create a world where everyone knows the freedom that I—that YOU knew. You will never be hunted anymore, Wendy, the World Government will have no say. Join me in destroying them, so we may accomplish that dream.”

“D-Destroy them? But what do THEY have to do with this?”

“They are trying to interfere with us, they only want a world of law and rule. THEIR law. To find true freedom, we must sacrifice, and since they try to rob us of freedom, we must destroy them. Then, in death, they will understand. Wendy, why wouldn’t you want this? They, who’ve been trying to take your freedom, capture you.”

“I know, and I’m angry at them for it! But I never wanted to have freedom… at least, not exactly. I wanted a family—I wouldn’t have cared if they set up some rules as long as they loved me. Running around everywhere, seeing the world… It really is a lot of fun, but seeing all those children with friends and families… made me feel empty. I really don’t like fighting or hurting people, but I don’t agree with you OR the Government. I…I think there needs to be a balance.”

“Indeed, it was the gods that designed the original Balance of Light vs. Darkness. But if we were the gods, we could establish our own Balance. A wise airbender named Guru Laghima once said ‘New growth cannot commence without the destruction of the old.’ I believe the Apocalypse represents this belief. The Apocalypse will destroy the universe, giving us the chance to recreate it anew. Recreate it… better.”

“But the Apocalypse will kill everyone we love. I don’t want that to happen.”

“It will not kill everyone… If nothing else, we will rescue the young generations, and I will teach them what true freedom means. They will help me in creating this free universe, and they will have you to guide them also.”

“I just don’t know, Dad. There’s going to be bad people that will abuse their freedom, abuse it by hurting people.”
“And with nothing to hold them down, those people will fight back!”

“So everyone’s fighting each other! I don’t want a world like that!”

“You need not fear, Wendy, because in a world of true freedom, there will be no need for conflict. Everybody will be happy, and it will be thanks to us.”

“You sound very ascertained.” They turned around as Carla walked out from behind her stalagmite. “But for someone who boasts about freedom and detaching children from their parentage, you have an awful lot of expectations for your daughter.”

“Carla!” Wendy said in slight surprise. “How did you find us?”

“I ran after you… Not easy for someone without wings.”

“Well, regrettably, I have my own limitations in my teachings.” Vaati blushed. “I want my daughter to act freely and not feel burdened by me… but I want to avow my philosophy to everyone. Once I do, everybody will desire to pursue their dreams, feeling no fear in doing so. I truly believe it is the right way, and Wendy can understand as well.”

“Well, that is a brighter way of looking at it…” Wendy smiled. “I guess everyone deserves to be who they wanna be… It’s just…”

“It’s just there has to be some limitations.” Carla said with paws on her hip. “Parents, for instance, have a responsibility to raise and protect their children.”

“A house pet wouldn’t know anything about freedom, I suppose.” Vaati shrugged. “But perhaps you can learn a few things, too.”

“Maybe we should just not talk about it.” Wendy suggested. “I was having a good time… I wanna just enjoy the planet.”

“You’re right, Dear.” Vaati smiled. “I’m sorry for jumping into this so quickly. Perhaps we should look for Dr. Facilier and your friends. Would you like to race?”

“Heh heh, sure!” Wendy beamed. “Hold on tight, Carla!” She picked her kitten up and joined her father on the imaginary start line. …A shadow fell over them. They looked up, seeing a fleet of ships with red “R”s painted on their hulls. “What’re those?”

“Not of this world.” Vaati glared. “In fact… I feel a disturbing power.”

Twinkle Park

Arlon treated the kids to Blue Moon Ice Cream, which packed a taste like blueberries that were plucked from the sky… according to Diwata’s first reaction. Lulu and Leanne were sitting on a park bench and watching the others play. Lee Andrew and Denny were playing Dodge Moon with the local Lunarian kids, and Diwata, Crest, and Lapis were playing with the Ice Climbers in the snow, which was conjured by the latter. “Well, Crest came out of that fast.” Leanne noticed.

“Well, he’s like the moon.” Lulu figured. “He changes a lot! Mood swings and all.”

“I guess so.” Leanne laughed. “You know… I think I understand why Arceus made the Firstborn kids.”

“Why?”
“To show us that the gods aren’t much different from us.” The Ice Climbers dressed Crest up like a snowman, and Diwata tried to eat him like a snowcone. They laughed. “I mean, when you take away the part about them being supremely powerful beings who created the universe, the gods are… basically human…ish.”

“Not very.” Lulu said. The girls laughed. “But still, do you really think Crest could stop the Apocalypse?”

“Not really… If he could, then there would be no point to this Twenty Keys thing. But it will be nice to have another Firstborn on our side.”

“You know, our parents say Jirachi was the original Kids Next Door operative. If he is, then maybe the Firstborn were the… original KND sector. Sector First!”

“You might be right! And after all these years, they’re still part of the team!”

“And now Crest can join that team!”

Dr. Facilier lay under a nearby tree, growing drowsy and smiling from the noise of the carefree children. He looked at the stars and could only see Wendy’s vibrant smile. I’m sure you’re happy right now, too. Finally found yo’ dad. …I guess you won’t want me for a teacher, anymore. Oh well… Have to learn to let go, I guess.

Sonny and Donna gave Crest their Blue Moons, and the Firstborn stuffed both ice cream chunks in his mouth, earning laughs from his friends. He might have been a Firstborn… but he was a person all the same. He wondered if his Firstborn brethren felt the same, if they casually interacted with mortal children because they were the same. They were carefree children in a carefree world, and even if they were mortal, he was glad to be among them. (End song. :() 

It wasn’t long before the peace was ruined by the roaring engines of ships surrounding the park. “Prepare for trouble, you know peace doesn’t last!”

“Make it double, it goes away fast!”

“All the way across the galaxy!”

“It’s time we realize our destiny!”

The roof of the flagship opened, and out came Jessie, James, Cassidy, and Butch in gorgeous indigo dresswear that made them blend in with the night. “Oh, but what is it that I see?” sang Jessie. “Little twerps, and I think they might pee!”

“I smell a fragrant scent in the air.” James whiffed his rose. “Perhaps the new parfume in my hair.”

“Maybe we’ll give them a pretty song.” Cassidy smirked. “I don’t see what could go wrong.”

“I think that you’re right.” Butch followed. “We’ll sing with all our love and might!”

Meowth jumped in front. “But we’ll save it for next chapter! Gooooood NIGHT!”

“WOOOOB-buffet!”

“Chiitiitiiime!”
So yeah, shout out to my anonymous wiki commenter who wanted to see some Atnort/Annaira bonding. ’Course, they thought it would be during Yellow Diamond, but that ended up not happening, but then I remembered Thanos! XD Two Darknesses are alien invaders, two Darknesses are pirates… you connecting the dots? XD Specifically, this Thanos comes from the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Also, lazy author uses Zelda monsters in a Marvel universe. XP And may I just say, Tropical Freeze music tears at my heartstrings. 3X Next time, Team Rocket rocks the moon with the Logia of Logias! ;D Later!
Change

Chapter Summary

In order to use the Lunar Magic, Diwata Uno must make a sacrifice.

Last time, Team Rocket showed up. And I think they were gonna sing for us. Let’s watch!

Chapter B-28: Change

Lunaria; Twinkle Park

We hail from Team Rocket

We have come to join the fight!

The universe is darkness

But we will make it light!

“JESSIE!”

“James!”

“Cassidy!”

“Butch!”

“This is random.” Lee said.

Meowth made a pose alongside Sonny and Donna, who crossed their hammers. “Meooowwth, that’s riitiitght—WHO THE HECK ARE YOU TWO?!”

“We want in, too!” they sang.

“IT’S OUR SONG!” James kicked them to the sky. “Off with you!”

“We’re screeeewwwwed!”

Both twins crashed at different times, contributing to the rhythm. Jessie sang the next line.

Love is justice, which is evil

A common trick, a con!

We’re the stars, don’t you see?

Today’s our day of Pokémon!

James sang with a charming voice:
If you think your dreams are real
Then reality will be nightmare
Soon, we will have command

Here! Watch me open a flower!

James waved his fingers over a closed red flower and made it bloom.

Spotlights hit the hatch behind them. A muscular cyborg was the one to rise, John-Plank 20x40. The cyborg turned as Plank sang in his magnificent British accent.

Does my voice… not make you swooooon? (Ooooo!)

A chorus of female Planks sang to him.

Do you wish to seek solace from foreseeable dooooom? (Ooooooo!)

Well, we are here to put an end to your gloom!

Take shelter, under my fragrant parfuuuuuume!

Plank made sexy poses and sprayed himself with Marker Perfume, which made him smell like different-colored markers. He bent Johnny’s robot arms behind him and shook his hip to further boaster his sexy appeal. With that, all the Rocket Agents sang together.

TEAM ROCKET’S ROCKIN’

Talkin’ trouble, walkin’ trouble

BIG trouble’s gonna foooollow you!

TEAM ROCKET’S (‘Rockin’!’ sang Jessie.)

Prepare for trouble, make it double

’Cause BIG trouble’s gonna fooooolow you!

Without warning, John-Plank shot his extendo arms, snatched Crest, and pulled him away from the kids’ grasp. Lapis Lazuli flew up to take him back, but John-Plank made a terrific leap into the low-gravity air.

“We’re gonna catch the Firrrrstborn, toooooooo.” The cyborg flipped in midair during descent, and surprised Lapis with an electric net when he came back around. The Fairy Princess lay powerless and trapped in the painful net as John-Plank made land on their flagship.

“IT’S TEAM ROCKET!” Leanne exclaimed. “They’re bad guys who try to steal other peoples’ Pokémon! HA! Now I got to say it, too. Beat THAT, Aurora!”

“Who ARE YOU unruly rapscallions?!” Arlon demanded.

“Your new rulers!” Giovanni’s throne lowered from a bottom hatch, his loyal Persian by his side. “I was the first person to see Crest after Sunni Chariton created him. I had been watching the girl for some time, curious on the extent of her psychic power. The fact she was even able to conjure a Firstborn… it seemed unreal to me. But his anatomy was so much like one… so I thought, if
anyone knew, it would be the Lunarians.”

“What traitorous Lunarian would tell you anything about Master Crest?”

“YOU, Mr. Arlon.” Giovanni smirked. “Did you think your Lunar Sanctum crashing to the earth would go unnoticed? It was clearly Lunarian technology, so I scoured its ruins. Not only did I find old tomes that told of the arrival of Crest… I was able to come by the person who guided me here today!”

Arlon gasped, horrified. “You can’t mean…”

Jessie and James performed a drumroll, while Cassidy and Butch waved Pompoms. “Making his FIRST public appearance in over 8,000 years,” Meowth announced, “we are PROUD to introduce the living legend! The one… the only… ACNOLOGIA!”

Another hatch opened on the bottom of the ship, dropping a figure to the indigo ground. It was a man with long, spiky white hair and black pants. Dr. Facilier gazed at him with great curiosity. Lee and Leanne exchanged glances and were about to approach- “Keep away, children!” Arlon cautioned. “This man is beyond your years. …But then again, so is he…”

John-Plank stuffed Crest inside a glass capsule before extracting a controller. Under his control, Acnologia pushed himself up with his single left arm. The kids braced their guard when he was up on his feet. His muscular tan skin was burned in several places and he had blue dragon tattoos. His sharp blue eyes shot to Arlon, who flinched. “Let them rip.” Giovanni commanded.

“RAAAAAH!” Acnologia tackled Arlon, snapping one of his arms off with his teeth and yanking the other arm off with his hand.

“DAD!!” Lapis cried.

Logia kicked Arlon away, and Dr. Facilier cast quick spells from his Devil’s Wand. The shots didn’t phase Logia’s Logia body. The moonbender leapt and kicked Facilier 50 yards away. Lee Andrew blasted him with his G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A., accompanied by his shadow’s… even Sonny and Donna weren’’t amused by the simple gumballs. Acnologia snarled and stomped toward the boy. Lee gulped, fearing he would disintegrate by the simple touch.

Vaati appeared faster than the wind and threw Lee away, then dodged Logia’s attack with the same speed. “Lee, I got you!” Wendy jumped and caught her friend.

“Thanks, Wendy! And love the new outfit!”

“Ha ha!”

“I wish her father would give her shoes back.” Carla stated.

“CAAAARLAAAAA!” Smitten with love at the female kitten, Meowth jumped off the ship and sprinted toward her. “Fate has brought us together ag-!”

Carla KICKED him in the face. “Brought my foot to your face, more like!”

“So hard-boiled!” He fell over, flushing madly.

“I can’t believe it!” Vaati stared wide at the man before him. “The living legend… Is it really you, Acnologia?”
Sonny and Donna froze Lapis’s electric net and broke her free. “Back when my friends and I formed the Fairy Sisters, Acnologia was revived as a zombie by Zeref.” Lapis explained. “But I thought he was destroyed with the other ones?”

“I was astonished when I conducted my autopsy on him.” Plank explained. “His body still contained life force, and it was not as decayed as it should have been, given the ages. And so we sought to revive him… and control him at that. Like a Frankenweenie, hm hm hm.” Acnologia growled at the cyborg. “The way he pounces and snarls, you wouldn’t think he was ever-”

Acnologia threatened to blast him with a Lunar Beam—“OOOAAAARRRGGH!” Plank shocked him with the microbots.

“To keep your soul bound to your body for thousands of years… you were a wizard like no other, Mr. Logia.” Giovanni said. “But while you may have been the ruler of your era, THIS era belongs to Team Rocket!”

“It belongs to NO ONE!” Vaati roared. “How DARE you steal the freedom of this passed soul! You vile scum!”

“Ack! It’s da Man Wit’ the Red Eye!” Meowth panicked.

“The Revolutionary!” Giovanni realized. “I haven’t seen him in person since he killed President Osborn. Acnologia, destroy him!”

John-Plank controlled the Logia and made him slash his claw at Vaati, but the wind mage took to the air and faced Team Rocket. The agents yelped and braced each other when Vaati lunged at them, but John-Plank shot a ball that projected an electric barrier with a chi-block, zapping Vaati and blowing him back. “I never like to use my Chi Shield in a fair fight, but against a powerful opponent like yourself, I will make exceptions.”

Acnologia jumped, grabbed Vaati’s leg, and slammed him to the ground. Logia raised his arm and charged energy, but Vaati turned into a tornado and spun him around. “ROOAAAR!” The tornado dispersed due to Logia’s bellow. Seeing all the children surrounding him, Acnologia clutched the ground and increased the gravity, forcing everyone to lay flat. The pressure only grew, and they thought they would pop like grapes in seconds. “AAAAAHH!” Logia was shocked by Plank.

“You will have your fun in time, Acnologia.” Giovanni promised. “But we have other items on our agenda. Take us to the Night Palace where the Lunar Magic rests. Then, you may destroy Lunaria as you see fit.”

Acnologia sprouted a pair of massive, black dragon wings. He shot a murderous glare to Team Rocket before taking off in the desired direction. “We’ll drop our Pokémon off in case those kids follow us!” Butch suggested as the ships followed Logia’s direction.

“Teddiursa, keep them busy for a while!” Cassidy tossed her teddybear-size Pokémon out of its ball.

“Urrrrse?” The adorable creature touched a finger to its chin.

“Awww, aren’t you a cutie!” Denny approached Teddiursa. “I dunno if they planned to distract us with adorableness, but it almost-”

“URSA!” It grabbed Denny and slammed him back and forth. “URS! (“Ow!”) Urs! (“Ah!”) URS! (“YOW!”) URSAAAA!” The bear spun around and hurled Denny yards away. “Ursa?” It faced the others curiously.
“Dad!” Lapis grabbed her father’s arms and stuck them to their appropriate places. She used waterbending to heal the cracks. “Dad, are you okay?”

“I will be fine, Lapis… cough! Leave me be! You must rescue Master Crest!”

“But how will I fight Acnologia?”

“I will help you.” Vaati avowed. “I am a Logia and I use Haki. It will be my speed against his strength. Would you join me, Wendy?”

“Against that monster?!” Carla exclaimed. “Absolutely not!”

“I did not ask you, Cat!”

“But Dad, I can’t fight a wizard as powerful as Acnologia!” Wendy said doubtfully. “Isn’t there something we can do?”

“Dad, how was Acnologia defeated the first time?” Lapis asked.

“In exchange for my loyalty to Viridi, she persuaded Celebi to fight the monster. I fear we may need the aid of a Firstborn in this fight. But Crest is the only one available. If Miss Diwata truly is the Firstborn Guardian, then she must retrieve the Spirit Ball in Crescent Canyon.”

“(For a planet as big as this, they can only have so many locations with moon names.)” Lee commented.

“But doesn’t Dee have to learn some kind of important moral to awaken as a Guardian?” Lulu questioned. “Or at least complete a trial?”

“We don’t have TIME for TRIAAAALS!” Diwata whined, shaking her arms. “We gotta get the ball and beat up Acneloogy!”

“Cough!” Arlon hacked. “I do not know if certain requirements must be met… For now, you must venture across Crescent Canyon and collect the Spirit Ball. Perhaps then you will be recognized as the Guardian.”

“But I don’t know where that is!”

“Use this!” Vaati handed her a golden compass with a round glass case over the needle. “You must focus your desire to find the Spirit Ball into this Grand Compass. It will point you in the right direction.”

“Okay. Mmmmm…!” Diwata narrowed her eyes at the compass and repeated the phrase in her mind, I want to find the Spirit Ball, gimme the Spirit Ball! Eventually, the needle was set in a specific direction.

“Do you need me to run and carry you there?” Wendy asked.

“It’s okay, Wendy, we’ll take her to the ball!” Sonny declared.

“Meanwhile, you have a date with Daddy!” Donna winked.

“Incest is a sin!” both chorused. “And we go!” They grabbed Dee-Dee and surfed across the landscape on an ice path.

“Are you sure you don’t need my help, Dad?” Lapis asked with worry.
“Yes, Lapis, I assure you my injuries are the least of my concerns! Just go save Crest! Hurry!”

Lapis growled; she hated to have to leave her father again, after being away for thousands of years. But for the sake of saving her world from a terrible fate, she stretched her wings and flew to the Night Palace.

“Wendy, will you come?” Vaati held a hand to her. “Will you save this world with me?”

“Do you really think I’m… ready to fight by you, Dad?”

Vaati smiled. “I do.”

“…Then I will!” Wendy grabbed her father’s hand. Vaati tossed her up on his back and flew across the moonlit valleys.

“CHILD, YOU FORGOT ME AGAIN!” Carla shouted furiously. “Just because you found someone NEW to carry you, I think I deserve a ride on YOUR back!”

“I was left behind too, Carla!” Meowth put his arm around her. “Let’s be abandoned together!” Carla glared at him.

Next second, Meowth’s arms were pulled behind him as Carla pressed him against the ground. “Just what are your criminal friends after?!”

“Aaaaack, they’re after the Lunar Magic! It’s this planet’s power source, da boss was gonna use it to catch all the other Firstborn!”

“Well, we can’t just stand here, we need to help Wendy, too!” Lee shouted.

“After Diwata gets the Spirit Ball, she’ll need a lift to where they are!” Leanne reasoned. “Let’s go to the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. and be ready to get her.”

“Good idea. I really hope Crest can beat him…”

As soon as the kids had left, Dr. Facilier cast magic strings to link Arlon’s arms back to his body. “That should hold you for a while.” The doctor said as he lifted him to his feet.

“I have dreaded the possibility Acnologia could return…” Arlon reflected. “I confined his slow-decaying body in my Lunar Sanctum for 8,000 years. I hoped his body was lost in the sanctum’s destruction… What a fool I was.”

“It’s gonna be alright. You seen what the Kids Next Door can do, they can beat that guy.”

“Have these operatives faced a monster like Acnologia? I would be hopeful if the chap who defeated Viridi were here, but he is not. What does this entourage have to its name? What of your student?”

“You just have to have faith. We’re going to save Lunaria and those kids are gonna help. Don’t forget who it was that defeated you last time.”

“I was beaten by a clown.”

**Crescent Canyon** (Play “Twilight Terror Intro” from *Donkey Kong: Tropical Freeze!*)

*Stage B-22: Lunaria*
**Mission: Find Crest’s Spirit Ball!**

**Act 2: Crescent Canyon**

Diwata and the Ice Climbers made a moon leap to a tall pillar over the canyon abyss, leapt to another one that was under a cliff, then leapt to that cliff. However, there was a Moon Medal floating in the trench between the two footholds, so Diwata dropped down to grab it, Wall Jumped out of the trench, then moon leaped to the cliff. Hooligans – green worms made of separate, outline block segments – bounced around the small field. Sonny and Donna had fun and knocked their individual segments off. The path continued above a taller cliff, so the twins each held one end of a rope as Sonny jumped, pulled it, and allowed Donna to fly higher. The female Climber pushed an average-size boulder down for both Dee and Sonny to leap and use the slow-falling rock as a boost to make it up.

The trio had to go up a narrow path where small rocks lit with Moon Fire were bouncing down in perfect rows. They came in stacks of three that bounced on each other at various heights, and when Sonny and Donna attempted to freeze the rocks, their ice proved ineffective. “You silly, icebending doesn’t work on Moon Fire!” Diwata grinned. “You’re just gonna have ta jump!” The three had to study the heights of the moon rocks and make accurate judgments on how high to moon-jump. They didn’t get through without a few bumps to the head, but Diwata was quick to bend the Moon Fire off herself or the twins.

At the end of the path, they had to go between a trench with Longators standing on small ledges – white rectangular creatures who could stretch their necks. The three jumped together, and each of their long necks provided a boost for all three. Naturally, the Longators were far apart and required careful moon jumps. They landed on a path that led down to a field occupied by Lunatones. The crescent-shaped Pokémon used psychic and chucked rocks at the intruders. The kids couldn’t progress due to a large barrier composed of Moon Chi, and there were boulders with crescent-shaped holes.

Sonny and Donna cast ice beams to freeze two Lunatones and have them drop, then they smashed them out of the ice. Dee-Dee shot fireballs at the third Lunatone, and during its stunned moment, she leapt and kicked it to the ground... though when the low-G force didn’t weaken it, the Ice Climbers bashed it with their hammers. The kids stuck the Lunatones into their slots and dropped the barrier. There wasn’t anywhere to jump over the abyss, but a string of Warpids began to materialize. The kids quickly jumped the living energy particles before they would disappear, and with their assistance, the explorers set foot on a cliffside. “Master Floop has taught us well in the ways of animal abuse.” Sonny bowed.

“And since it’s a videogame, it’s both fun AND non-endangering!” Donna beamed. The cliffside path sloped down at a steep angle and would curve up at a ramp, meant to fly them across a long jump to a path. The Ice Climbers froze the path, but since the low gravity wouldn’t allow for enough momentum, Diwata sat down, and Sonny hit her like a hockey puck, sliding her down with enough force for her to fly up to the path. The Climbers blasted ice behind them to boost down and fly up, too. They had to fight past some Lunatones before coming to a row of water spouts leading across the chasm.

Sonny and Donna froze the tops of the spouts into a path, but mini flame comets were raining down and steadily melting the ice. The group hurriedly jumped across, taking some hits from the comets, and Dee was able to grab a Moon Medal and make it to the end before the ice completely melted. The next challenge involved several small platforms that were frozen in red ice. Diwata’s personal Moon Fire couldn’t melt them, but the flames from the nearby torches could suffice.
After jumping the small platforms, they arrived at a field frozen in spiky red ice, with some Moon Torches placed. Diwata bent the fire to burn a path through the ice, but she was forced to go in the directions of other Moon Torches. There were creatures called Brr Bits – small floating red ice volcanoes – that kept refreezing the path, so Diwata had to shoot Moon Fire to melt them. They eventually made it to a safe foothold, overlooking another red ice field, but this time larger flame comets were raining down and burning spaces for them to jump. They did so before Brr Bits could freeze the spots, and the road would bring them to a towering wall of red ice.

Diwata used her bending to catch the meteorites and chuck them at the barrier, the ice steaming as chunks of it began to collapse. After fifteen strikes, the red ice wall crumbled completely, exposing the altar within the mountain. The trio moon leaped over the chasm and set foot on the base before stylishly leaping up the thin stairs. The top of the altar was surrounded by pillars with busts depicting phases of the moon. Under the bust of the full moon, which was glowing, sat a Pokéball that was whitish-blue and had crater markings. (End song.)

“Dat dada daaaahhh!” Diwata raised the Pokéball in victory. “I got a Pokébaaaaall!”

“Your journey as an eternal 10-year-old starts now!” The twins cheered.

A white glow appeared in the sky. Diwata, Sonny, and Donna gazed at the majestic light as the Moon Goddess, Cresselia appeared in all her beauty. “Firstborn Guardian of the Moon… you are mere moments from learning your destiny. To claim the Firstborn and mark yourself as the Guardian… you must master the Lunar Magic that powers this world. But as the moon is a body of change… only one who knows great change can possess the Power of Moon.” She ascended to the sky and the light was gone.

There was a roaring of an engine, and a C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. now occupied the space above. “There you are, Dee-Dee! We tracked your communicator!” Leanne yelled. “Did you find the Spirit Ball?”

“I DIIIIIID!” Dee-Dee cheered and waved the ball. “Right heere, right heeeere!”

“Cool, then let’s get going to the Night Palace!” Lee declared. “Acnologia’s not destroying ANY planets tonight!”

“ALL RIIIIIGHT! LET’S GO!”

Night Palace

The Night Palace was a huge Arabian-style palace of shiny blue color, suspended above a deep crater. The Team Rocket fleet had arrived, flying over the top tower. “HAAA!” Lapis Lazuli slashed large blades of water and destroyed a few ships, but when Giovanni’s crew saw her sights locked on them, John-Plank commanded Acnologia to fly over and kick her out of the sky. She landed on a palace walkway, quickly recovering and shooting up as a water drill, but Logia easily batted her away with his wings. Rocket Agents sent Nidoqueen and Nidoking to grab the Fairy Princess.

Wendy and Vaati made it to the edge of the crater and saw the conflict from below. “Wendy, I’m going to challenge Acnologia! Find the Lunar Magic and protect it, and attack any Rocket Agent you see!”

“I WILL, Father!” Wendy declared with pure confidence. “I’ll do everything I can to STOP them!”

“You’ve come so far, Wendy. I can’t wait to join you even further!” The wind mage shot up to Acnologia and laid a storm of fast Haki kicks. Wendy leapt down to the bridge to Night Palace and
raced forth. (Play “Unawakening Float” from Sonic and the Secret Rings!)

Act 3: Night Palace

Wendy sidestepped the Thunder Shocks cast by Rocket Agents’ Magnemites, and at the end of the bridge, the mage had to jump across a series of Magnemites to a platform. Wendy ran across a glass walkway whose various segments were being shattered by Skarmory shooting up from below, but after dodging their holes, Wendy ran up a stairway that winded left. On this new path, giant spears flew out of portals from afar in attempt to pierce Wendy, but she jumped on them, ran up, and jumped to the next until she could make the moon leap into a palace entrance.

Absols stood on pillars and lashed crescent beams at Wendy, who dodged and cast the Leg-Locker Spell to bring them off their feet. She cast stun spells at the two Rocket Agents on jetpacks before going up some stairs to a new hall. The floor vanished, but Wendy quickly jumped on an energy rail to grind across, setting foot on the opposite floor as she ran through a doorway. This room provided an illusion of a dimension of moons, and when the path ended, Wendy jumped to a moon and ran loops over it, able to do so using the mini moon’s gravity. She had to jump to a higher moon, then a moon on the right, then Wendy could jump to a stable platform.

Quilavas shot fire at her from the stairs, but Wendy cast Aguamenti to defeat the Fire-types. The stairs curved left and led Wendy to a path of floating, vertically-turning pillars. The pillars had rails on each side for Wendy to grind on, and had to jump pillars before she either rolled off or the pillars turned too high for her to land on them. After clearing this section, a doorway brought her outside the normal palace, where Wendy ran up some stairs before hitting a spring, which bounced her to two other springs that would land her on a round palace roof.

Wendy ran three laps around the roof before a magic blue path appeared to take her higher up the palace. Wendy was set on a platform, and using moon leaps, she jumped to other such platforms that were all distant. A group of Gulpins tried to gulp her on one of them, but she kept their hunger satisfied by casting Avis, sending birds in their mouths. The next platform was further, but two Magnemites were available for her to bounce on. Wendy stunned two Rocket Agents, then she had to leap and Air Boost to a new foothold and go up stairs into the palace.

A narrow stairway winded up the massive vacant tower, and Wendy jumped the Donphans rolling down. The tower’s space seemed to stretch before her eyes, and the stairs shifted in angle when Wendy was suddenly running up the tower’s wall. Rocket Agents were screaming and falling due to a change in their own perspective, and Wendy decided to stun each one she passed by. The space stretched up as Wendy ran on the ceiling, but only for a few seconds before she ran into a warp. She was outside and running across a bridge to the highest tower of the palace, and inside was another winding stairwell. A column of blue energy was in the center of the tower, and as Wendy neared to the top, she believed she would see its core. (End song.)

Vaati kicked Acnologia three times across the face with Armament Haki, flew away when he slashed his claw, then returned with a Screw Kick that sent Logia into a palace tower. A Lunar Beam shot out of the wreckage, Vaati swiftly dodged, then Logia shot up to slash him in the chest three times before punching Vaati to the sky. Vaati rocketed back down, so Logia lit his fist aflame and swung a punch, but Vaati dodged underneath, then to Logia’s side, before blowing a sudden gust of wind that slammed Logia against the top of the largest tower.

Vaati flew up and stood on the roof of that tower as Logia got up to face him. Their desire to abolish the other was strong. Acnologia inhaled a great portion of Moon Chi in the atmosphere, while Vaati inhaled the air. The wind mage spun into a tornado that darkened from Armament Haki, but Acnologia morphed into a body of Moon Fire and flew at Vaati like a comet. The two
forces collided, Vaati’s tornado setting aflame and Logia withstanding the shredding force of the Armament tornado.

Giovanni, Jessie, James, Cassidy, and Butch had entered the tower’s chamber. A giant yellow crescent moon with a smiling face sat atop a platform, which seemed to channel a great flow of energy up from the planet’s core, for the flow stretched far down into the crater. “So, this is the Lunar Magic… How marvelous.” Giovanni grinned evilly.

“Boss, what is the Lunar Magic, anyway?” Jessie queried.

“One trillion years ago, God Arceus created the moons to seal the Netherverse’s powerful Space Chi. But the Netherverse can be accessed from any point in the universe’s matter, given the appropriate Space-Time Rifts. The truth is, it is not Space Chi alone that is contained in that dimension… but a great outpour of the force we call magic. This magic leaks into the universe at substantial rates, but to keep it from disrupting Time-Space, Arceus created the moons. And Lunaria, the greatest moon of all, contains the very core of that power. This Lunar Magic that the ancient Lunarians, with the help of Cresselia, designed this temple to regulate.

“This magic energy was closely intertwined with the Netherverse’s Space Chi, resulting in the force called Moon Chi. It is from Moon Chi that other beings used to create magic. It started with simple rituals that utilized harnessed magic, but in time, the magic infected their bodies, became part of their bodies, in a manner that was unlike Element Chi. Thus, wizarding societies were established, and with the gods’ help, people created laws regarding these magics. But Moon Chi combines nature and supernatural, and those who use it can be stronger than any wizard or bender. At least… this is what Ragaj Gnik told me.”

“But if Moon Chi has the power of nature and magic…” Cassidy looked at the capsule encasing Crest they were carrying. “How did a psychic twerp create a Firstborn that could control it?”

“Even I have my doubts that Sunni’s powerful psychicbending alone could create a god of this magnitude. Maybe His Lesser Lordship will tell me the rest. For now, Young Master Crest will harness this Lunar Magic. And Crest will be under the control of this Dark Ball!” He raised a black Pokéball. “Created from the Dark Chi on Mt. Gnaa, it corrupts any Pokémon and increases their abilities tenfold!”

“But would that even work on a Firstborn?!” James exclaimed.

“Let’s find out! Release him!”

The agents opened the capsule. “NOOO!” Crest immediately tried to fly away, but James’ Victreebel stretched vines up to grab him. Giovanni tossed the Dark Ball.

“HYAH!” Wendy Marvell jumped and kicked it away with perfect timing, flipping in midair before softly landing on the floor.

“HEY, we didn’t invite any twerps to this party!” James yelled. “Weezing, use Sludge Attack!”

“Lickitung, use Lick!” Jessie freed her Pokémon as well.

“Weez!” The Siamese gas balls spewed a stream of sludge that Wendy blocked with a wind shield. Lickitung jumped behind her and stretched its long tongue. “AAAAHH!” Wendy shuddered crazily. “My new dress is drenched in slob, now I need to take a bath and wash it, oh but what if it gets ruined?!?"

“That’s it, Lickitung!” Jessie encouraged. “Keep licking!”
“Licki-Licki-Licki-Licki…” Wendy was squirming on the floor as the giant tongue wiggled and tickled her.

“Stop it, stop it, stop it, you’re getting me all sticky- oh please don’t get my feet- why didn’t I spray myself with—…” She continued squirming and whining.

“Do you think 4Kids would cut this scene?” James asked.

“Jessie, I thought you traded Lickitung for Wobbuffet?” Cassidy inquired.

“We’re Team Rocket, Cass, obviously I stole it back. But thanks for acknowledging our show’s continuity.”

“Woooobbuffet!” The blob popped out.

A few miles away, the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. was en route to the palace. “That must be it!” Lulu exclaimed. “And I see Team Rocket’s ships, too!”

“You twoips are clawin’ up the wrong tree!” Meowth declared, still being stood on by Carla. “With Acnologia on our side, there’s no WAY you can-!” Lee aimed his G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A. at him.

“You know all it takes is a single Powuh Shot to send you blasting off again! We watch the anime!”

“Acnologia’s fighting with Wendy’s dad!” Lulu reported. “What should we do?”

“Like the football-players and Numbuh One do!” Denny smirked confidently. “Ram him!”

“That sounds like something I would do!” Lee argued.

“But it sounds crazy enough to work.” Leanne said. “Turn on the shield and smash him through the roof?”

“You got it!” Denny switched on the shield, boosted, and spun the ship as they rocketed to Acnologia. The dragon bender saw them coming. “The field is open! And iiiiIIIIIT’S…!”

Acnologia stopped the ship with his one hand and pushed back with great strength. “…Touchdown?”

Logia shot a Lunar Beam to blow the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. away. Vaati kicked the back of his head, but Logia leaped up, charged power to his fist, and smashed down, missing Vaati and breaking through the roof. Vaati jumped in after, and Sector RZ landed their ship on the roof before jumping in. “Wendy!” Lee aimed his G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A. at Lickitung. “Lick on this, you slobbery weirdo.”

“Lick-Lick-Lick-Lick-Lick-Lick-Lick-Lick-…” Lickitung caught several rounds of gumballs down his throat, and Wendy was able to get away. She saw John-Plank at the top of some stairs to a window, controlling Acnologia to attack her father. Wendy raced up the stairs and spun a whirlwind around her fist. “Sky Dragon CLAW!”

John-Plank faced her—Wendy’s fist collided at Johnny’s face. “Yodel-yodel yo-LAY-hoo!” The dimwit’s head spun like a screw.

Plank grabbed her fist with their cyborg hand and threw Wendy off the stairs. He jumped down after and punched Wendy to the floor.
“Crest, I’ll help you!” Diwata shot fire.

“Beeeel!” Victreebel screamed when its vines burned.

“Now’s my chance!” Diwata tossed the Spirit Ball. “GO, Spirit Ball!”

“It can’t be!” Giovanni exclaimed.

The Pokéball struck Crest and caught him inside. It softly rotated and descended in the air as it beeped. The ball popped open and released him. “It didn’t work!” Lee yelled.

“Didn’t that moon bird say you needed the Lunar Magic?” Donna asked.

“But I don’t know what that is!” Dee yelled back. “Unless… it’s that big moon thing?” She noticed the crescent moon with a face on the central platform.

“Wendy!” Carla rushed over to her fallen master. “Did he hurt you too badly!!”

“I’m fine, Carla.” Wendy got back up. “It doesn’t hurt so much in low gravity.”

Johnny, Plan Beta!” Plank ordered.

“You got it, buddy!” The cyborg leapt to Acnologia, took Plank’s capsule off, and stuck it to the half-dragon’s back. Acnologia bellowed when Plank’s vines bore into his flesh.

“I am now one with your flesh and bone, Dear Logia! It’s time for me to have the upper hand on this planet! No pun intended.” With Plank controlling him, Acnologia charged at Wendy with the intention of tearing her with his flaming (single) left hand, but Vaati flew in front and dealt an Armament air slash.

“Acnologia! Don’t let these fools control you! You have always been my Number 3 role model! Just behind Nolan York and Laghima, but still! You are a powerful wizard, I know you can fight this!”

“No creature commands ME!” Acnologia slashed his wings and scratched Vaati’s chest, then punched the airbender to the wall. “I am Acnologia… the most powerful wizard! And I will become stronger…” His eyes were drawn to the Lunar Magic as Diwata carried Crest up the stairs to it.

“Crest, you have to help me control the Lunar Magic!” Dee yelled.

“I don’t even know how to control it!”

“The Lunar Magic doesn’t belong to children like you!” Logia flew up onto the walkway. “Out of my way or I will BURN you- AAAAAHH!” Plank’s vines tugged on his insides.

“Unfortunately, we do not want you to possess the Lunar Magic, either.” The British board said. “Team Rocket will command it as soon as-”

Vaati blew Logia off the walkway, then zipped above and kicked him to the ground. “Well, Crest, should we just draw it in with our moonbending or something?” Diwata questioned.

“Beats any of my ideas.” Crest shrugged. They both held their hands to it and tried to channel the Moon Chi. The Firstborn was easily able to absorb it, but Diwata was having a harder time. “Let me lend you some.” Crest channeled the Lunar Magic to her body.
“AAAAAH!” Dee winced in pain from the power. “Okay, this is gonna take some work!”

Vaati shot at Acnologia with swift kicks, flying ten feet away after each kick and back to him in seconds flat, and after Vaati dealt a combo of three kicks, he attempted to swing his fist. Acnologia caught the fist, and when Vaati applied the other arm, his strength was roughly equal to Logia’s single arm. The ancient wizard flipped and stomped Vaati to the ground, then Acnologia forced Vaati’s head down with his hand and began squeezing it.

“Oh, isn’t this a surprising state of affairs?” Plank smiles wryly. Vaati was unable to pull Acnologia’s hand away. “It must be an honor to be destroyed by your hero. Aren’t you thankful that I restored his fallen body? Who would have thought that the great Plank would be the one who defeats the Man With the Red Eye.”

“Dad!” Wendy dashed up to Logia, but he kicked back and hit her stomach, sending Wendy against the wall. The half-dragon faced up at Diwata trying to control the Lunar Magic. He threw Vaati away, but before he could fly up, an unseen force caught him. It was a shadow originating from Lee Andrew.

“Shadow Possession, you undead abomination!”

“Now it’s OUR turn!” Sonny and Donna blasted ice beams at Logia, but he countered with Moon Fire breath and shot beams to blow the twins away.

“Hey, you’re supposed to listen to me!” Lee yelled, trying to maintain the hold. Acnologia blue fire at his shadow, Damien screaming as it dispersed. Acnologia snarled at Lee and lunged at him.

“LEE!” Leanne sent her shadow to grab her brother and lift him out of harm’s way. Acnologia snarled having lost his prey, and set his sights on the one responsible: Leanne Grayson. He rushed at Leanne, whose eyes saw the image of death in his form.

MASTER! Ash dropped Lee and flew back to her—Lee grabbed his G.U.M.Z.O.O.K.A. to shoot Acnologia, but the pellets flew through his intangible body. “LEANNE!!”

“AAAAAAH! . . .” Acnologia’s sharp, murderous eyes were the last she saw.

He blasted a gaping hole in her chest. The universe seemed to mute and it all was slow motion. The three operatives couldn’t bring their selves to move. Sonny and Donna didn’t feel like smiling or laughing. Vaati choked on his breath. Even Team Rocket was stunned by the act. Wendy wanted to break down and cry.

The scene reflected off Diwata’s eyes. Her eyes that were round and white as the moon… The girl that was so energetic and carefree felt that side of her slipping away.

“Only one who knows great change can possess the Power of Moon.”

A wave of dark fell over Dee’s eyes, starting from the right, like the moon going from full to half to crescent to… nothing. Acnologia felt a rise in power and faced Diwata. He was unsatisfied with the meager kill just now, but the yellow-haired Lunarian felt oddly intimidating. His reflection was clear in her dark eyes…

The next second, Acnologia was blown out of the palace, crashing into the ground around the crater. “Ack!” Plank grunted. “Impossible! Get up, you daft fool! Are you going to let her humiliate you like some…?”

A blue fire burned on Acnologia’s chest. Growling, the Logia stood, and the flame blossomed from
his rage. “AAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUUHHHHHH!” His body set aflame.

“AH HA HA HA, OUCH OUCH OUCH!” Plank squirmed frantically—his face was melting from the fire. “STAH STAH STAH STAH, IT-SA SAH SAH SAH, SAAAAAOOOOOOW!”

Plank fell off, and before his melted eye, Acnologia transformed into a great black dragon with brimming blue markings. The dragon glared at the parasite that had been controlling him, his mouth open and fangs exposed. “Vile cretin, how DARE you burn your handler!” Plank scolded. “You will place me on your back and OBEY me! Or…” A blue light was rising from Logia’s lungs, “Or…!” Plank could only feel fear in this moment. “Gulp! Oh, poppy seeds!” his voice squeaked.

Acnologia’s fire breath reduced Plank to a lesser existence than ash. The dragon returned his attention to the palace. Diwata Uno flew out of the tower like a blue comet, encased in a bright aura. She hovered over the chasm, eyes black with white lines around them, like a Solar Eclipse. Acnologia hissed. “For 8,000 years, I slept in my own decaying body… awaiting the day I could rise again. I knew it was my destiny to become the most powerful man in the universe… ever since I lay my hands on that gem: the Octogan. It told me I was bound to reign supreme… but the Octogan haunted me. The Shimmers would not leave my dreams. And they continued to haunt my descendants for thousands of years…

“And here I am… looking at a child who controls the Lunar Magic. Is this the universe’s way of deceiving me? To make children who possess the power of the gods? Just… what type of era is this?”

Diwata narrowed her eyes. “The era… of the Kids Next Door.” (Play “Gaul 2” from Spyro: The Eternal Night!)

Boss fight: Acnologia

Acnologia charged a Lunar Beam and unleashed it at Diwata as she flew around the dragon. Dee-Dee grasped the ground in her hands, sprouting crystals up under Logia’s feet. The dragon stormed forward and gnashed its fangs at Diwata, who pushed a hand and foot to Logia’s mouth and kept it open. She flew away, then rammed into Logia’s chest to shove him over the cliff, but he recovered with his dragon wings and spat giant fireballs at his opponent. Diwata sprouted blocks made of Moon Chi, serving as a perfect shield. She then conjured a warp pipe, jumped inside, and came out behind Acnologia as she spewed a beam at the dragon’s wings.

Acnologia whipped around and smacked Diwata and her warp pipe out of the air. Diwata recovered and centered the gravity around Acnologia, bringing a storm of moon meteors to strike him. Logia easily whacked the moons away with his wings and tail, but wasn’t prepared when Diwata stabbed a large moonlight-made scythe into his chest. Logia grabbed Diwata and slammed her against the ground several times before leaving her in a crater. He charged a Lunar Beam and fired, but Diwata countered with her own power and withstood his terrific power. She was left exhausted afterward.

Arlon and Dr. Facilier were examining the battle from the former’s ship. “Is Miss Diwata… clashing with Acnologia?” Arlon fixed his monocle.

“Told ya not to underestimate these kids.”

Two water arms wrapped around Acnologia’s neck and froze. Lapis Lazuli struggled to pull the dragon back. “Hurry, get up! I got him distracted!” The dragon broke free and snapped his teeth at
the fairy, but Lapis dodged and threw a storm of droplets that became icicles – which merely phased through his body. Logia screamed when a pair of moon-made teeth bit his tail, conjured by Diwata. The Lunarian flew upward and spawned more comets, but Logia blocked with his wing. The tattoos on his wings came to life and flew at Dee in the form of snake-dragons, but she was quick to dodge their teeth. Acnologia flew up and batted her away with his tail.

Acnologia opened a portal above Diwata and dropped a Lunar Onix on her – a Pokémon Onix made of blue moon rocks. Diwata threw him off, but Acnologia seized the chance to smash Dee under his hand. A giant water sphere encased him, controlled by Lapis, who attempted to freeze the dragon. Logia’s eyes flashed, and the area was shrouded in blackness. Lapis saw the dragon’s ravenous blue eyes in the darkness, and when she felt his mouth shoot up to eat her, she performed a spinning water wheel and went through his intangible mouth.

Light returned to the area, but it was a horribly bright saturation that made everything almost white. Diwata commanded the chi that created this brightness to fly at Logia’s head, and the dragon tried to break the bright blasts with his Lunar Beam. He just missed Lapis, who flew to throw a water slice, but the dragon swatted her away like a fly. The fairy bounced on the ground a few miles away before stopping on her front, looking up. “Sigh… I can’t hurt him, anyway. Just have to leave it to her.”

Acnologia spawned dark crystals in the air around Diwata, and when she flew away, he spawned another crystal patch to stick her. Diwata fell to the ground, then Acnologia increased the surface’s gravity to steadily crush his opponent. With one more sudden thrust of gravity, Diwata was too weak to move. Acnologia landed and picked her up.

“Oh, no! She’s too tired, she’s going to be eaten!” Lulu yelled.

“No…” Wendy struggled to restrain her tears. Lee was still crying over Leanne, and his friends’ words only festered the wound.

Without waiting, Acnologia threw Diwata into his mouth and swallowed her whole. “Finally… after 8,000 years, the Lunar Magic is mine to control. I am the most powerful wizard in all of existence… and for the rest of eternity, I shall.” There was a rumbling in his stomach. “What…?” He fell to his knees. The dragon felt a powerful buildup in his bowels. “No… How is this happening?! I am the King of Dragons! Moon Chi is my nourishment… I will not be sickened by a simple crumb-!”

Acnologia exploded, his parts blowing everywhere. Some fell into the abyss, and a gooey puddle was left where he stood. The dragon’s head hit the ground and shrunk to Acnologia’s gaping human form. Diwata was left standing in the puddle, brimming with the Lunar Magic’s energy. (End song.)

“Ohhhh…” Diwata dropped to her knees. The energy flew back to the Night Palace to reunite with the Lunar Magic. Lapis returned to her aid, as did Arlon and Facilier after they landed.

“She really used up a lot of energy.” Lapis said, moving her Healing Touch around Dee’s body.

“Did that girl truly command the Lunar Magic?” Arlon asked. “Even us Moon Sages cannot accomplish such a feat. How could she…?”

Giovanni saw the battle from a palace bridge. With Acnologia gone, he had lost his advantage, so he sought to find the nearest Team Rocket ship. He turned—Vaati was floating over him. “Red Eye!”
Vaati kicked the man upside the chin, and he stumbled forward. “Giovanni… The leader of Team Rocket. Former Corporate President and a Pokémon hunter. What a horrid man you are.”

Giovanni grabbed a gun and shot Vaati, but the bullets passed through his Logia wind body as Vaati blew the gun out of his hand. He shot a gust at Giovanni and knocked him on his back. “Dad, there you are!” Wendy was running across the bridge with Carla.

Giovanni held his aching head. “Uuu-u-uck!” His eyes swelled red when his very breath rose out of his mouth.

“DAD, what’re you doing?!” Wendy exclaimed in horror.

“A man like you has no right to rob the freedom of any creature. Freedom is as vital as air. To steal it… would be to steal the air they breathe.” Giovanni was rasping.

“Dad, please stop!”

“And one who disrespects the value of freedom does not respect breath. You will be rid of your breath. You will be set free.”

“DAD, STOP IT, STOP!!” Wendy jumped and grabbed her father’s arms.

“HUUUU!” The breath slurped back into Giovanni’s lungs and he was saved.

“Wendy, what’s wrong with you?! Because of this man, your friend has been killed, robbed of her freedom to live!”

“THAT DOESN’T MEAN I WANT HIM TO DIE!” Tears spilled down her face.

“Men like him will only continue to rob others of their freedom! We must grant him freedom as a spirit, it’s the only way!”

“I DON’T WANNA SEE ANYONE ELSE DIE!” Wendy fell to her knees and cried. “Dad, I’m really angry at this man for what he did, I really am… but I don’t want to kill him. Please don’t, Dad…”

It hurt Vaati to see his daughter upset… He didn’t know what to do next.

A metal hand reached down and grabbed Giovanni, pulling him to a Meowth ship piloted by the Meowth Trio, plus Cassidy and Butch. “Let’s blow this joint and get OUTTA here!” Meowth shouted.

“Sorry to jet, Lunaria, but we’re in a hurry!” Cassidy yelled.

“We’ll send you a postcard!” James followed.

“Team Rocket’s cowering away agaaaaaiiin!” They took off like a twinkle in the sky. Twinkle.

Vaati pulled his daughter to her feet as she cried still. “I’m sorry you had to see that… but you must understand, Wendy. The path to true freedom is not easy. When there are evil people who will kill innocent people… sometimes, we must kill the evil ones. You may not believe in true freedom now… but if you do not learn to kill, the greater battles will become arduous.”

Wendy sobbed a little. “…Let us return to your friends.” her father said. He calmly led Wendy back to the central chamber. Carla followed, glaring at Vaati with utmost suspicion.
Lapis was unable to heal the gaping wound in Leanne’s chest. Their Sector Leader was gone before the mission could see completion. “So that is why…” Arlon observed. “As the moon is a body that changes… only one who could experience great change can control the Lunar Magic. But the change was so sudden to Diwata’s eyes.” The girl in question was hanging over Denny’s shoulders, panting. “She abruptly took control of the magic and fought Acnologia. And when Acnologia swallowed her, the Lunar Magic was too much for even his body to digest. He destroyed himself in the end…”

“And for what?” Lee sniffled. “Leanne’s dead! She’s dead and it’s all my fault!”

“But it isn’t your fault, Lee.” Wendy said.

“No, it is! I wanted to have an adventure that people could remember… Whether I was the Chosen One or Dee, I wanted to do something that our parents and friends would talk about with everyone. And now… sniff!”

“But it wasn’t for nothing.” Vaati said. “As tragic as it was… Diwata was able to command the Lunar Magic. Perhaps now…”

He didn’t need to finish, as Diwata had enough strength to stand on her own. Crest floated down to her. “Dee… Are you alright?” he asked.

“…No. I’m upset. I’ve… never felt this upset. I thought we were going to save the day like always – and I would make a joke that we saved the night, because it’s always night here. I thought we would go home… and nothing would change except for learning some new powers. …Not this.”

“…” Crest turned to Arlon. “When I was born… I didn’t know where I was or who I was. I just wanted to eat and have fun. I didn’t want to be thought of as a ‘Firstborn.’ But I am… and I have a duty to the universe, don’t I?”

“Fun and games are not a crime, Master Crest.” Arlon spoke. “But you must remember… we all have duties we must abide by. We must never forget our duties. Or bad things will happen…”

“Bad things will happen…” Crest turned to Leanne. “…I don’t know how to be a Firstborn. But… you said there were nine others. If I talked to them… maybe they could help me.” Then to Diwata. “Will you help me, too, Dee-Dee?”

She raised the Spirit Ball and smiled. “Sure I will.” She tossed the ball and caught Crest again. It beeped as it slowly rotated during its descent. The moment it touched the floor was when it booped. The moon-like ball shone with a brighter color, and it felt warm in Diwata’s hand.

Diwata captured a FIRSTBORN! NOW there should be 5 left! …Right?

“Children…” Arlon spoke. “In light of the circumstances… on behalf of Lunaria, I would like to thank you. Our planet was saved from a terrible fate. I would be pleased to reward you.”

“Thanks, but… I don’t know if I want anything.” Wendy replied.

“Yeah, I’m not even up for a victory party.” Denny said. “Sigh… Cheren is gonna fall apart.”

“We might as well get back to Earth ASAP.” Lulu said. “Give them the bad news.”

“Do take good care of Crest.” Arlon said. “You know how precious a Firstborn is… But perhaps it
would be best if he interact with his own kind.”

“We will.” Dee smiled. “Hopefully, things aren’t TOO bad on Earth right now.”

Wendy and Vaati returned outside and gazed at the sky. “In truth… another reason I came to Lunaria was to dispel the protection around it.” Vaati said. “I wanted it to be free for the universe to see.”

“Dad… I really don’t think this ‘freedom’ route is... the right way.”

“…” His eye glanced at her. “I will return to Earth and meet with you again. Only half a month is left until the Apocalypse. I suspect the chaos will only grow and the battles more arduous. Make sure you’re ready, Wendy.” And he flew away.

I got the Night Palace from Sonic and the Secret Rings, and Acnologia is from Fairy Tail. Enjoy a Caesar Cipher.

...

KLV ZHDNQHVV LV LQVLGH
The Disbanded

Chapter Summary

Maddy Murphy finally meets "The Disbanded."

This upcoming stage takes place on May 15, during the Madotsuki Arc, but the other scenes are after. Yeah, I’m gettin’ the times all confused for ya! ;D This chapter is also pretty short.

Chapter 57: The Disbanded

Road to KND Central Bike Hub

Emily Garley pedaled ceaselessly en route to the Central Bike Hub, zipping past all the trees in Virginian Forest and snatching all the wandering monkeys. Easy when she had a self-pedaling bike. Meanwhile, Sarah and Gary were following on natural bikes, but Sarah had a harder time seeing with the adult passenger sitting in her basket. “AAAAAAAH!” Sheldon Cooper cried – he couldn’t drive a car, and he was certainly not a bike person. “WATCH OUT FOR THAT ROCK!” Sarah bumped over a rock, but kept going. “AAAAAAAHHH!”

“Told you we shoulda bought the crate.” Sarah remarked.

“I see it, guys!” Emily pointed. “Let’s stop here and rest!”

They parked their bikes when the Bike Hub treehouse was in view, along with the dozens of colorful, swervy roads connecting to it. “I haven’t seen Mike since I left for Germany.” Emily said. “And when he finally calls me, his treehouse is getting ransacked by a ‘Red Monkey.’”

“One of Specter’s Freaky Monkey Five, I’m guessing.” Gary deduced.

“But think about it!” Emily counted fingers. “We stopped White Monkey at Sector N, Sector V said they beat Pink Monkey up in space, we caught Blue Monkey at Sector JP, visited Sector KB and caught Yellow Monkey… That makes Red Monkey the last of Specter’s officers!”

“Eh- hang on, now, ‘defeated’ does not mean the same as ‘captured.’” Sheldon noted. “Did Sector V capture Pink Monkey?”

“Er, no… but I’m sure it was still an amazing battle!”

“Furthermore, you are forgetting Mojo Jojo.”

“Always on top of things.” Emily shot him a look. “Still, this is the last of Specter’s field officers! If we catch him, it’ll strike a major blow against the Pipo Army! Soon, we’ll be able to take the fight to Specter!”

“Now you got me rarin’ to go!” Sarah smirked, readying her net. “Let’s go for it, Em Girl!”

“Before we actually capture him, we should interrogate Red Monkey as to the whereabouts of Specter’s location.” Sheldon suggested.
“Excellent idea as always, Dr. Cooper. Maybe we’ll even find your girlfriend, too.” Emily smirked, feeling Sheldon’s nasty look at the fact she used ‘girlfriend.’ (Play “Excitebike Arena” from *Mario Kart 8*)

*Stage 60: Central Bike Hub*

*Mission: Collect 20 monkeys and capture Red Monkey!*

The three kids rode their bikes down a hill, then made quick turns around a snaky path through a forest. They came to a straight path with some large rumps, with two monkeys riding over them with bikes from the other side—Emily snatched the left one as she passed it, and Gary caught the right one. They made a wide right turn when the path curved that direction, then had to shift left for just as much—Sarah snatched a monkey behind the corner turn, visible for just a brief second.

They stopped their bikes at a large step and stuffed them inside the Infi-Cube. They climbed the step to a playground setting, seeing two Phanpy Pokémon inside a spherical cage that was hanging by a chain. The Phanpy looked like sky-blue wheels as they were rolling around the cage. There was also a tall pole with a U-shaped ramp at the top, and two Biker Pipos riding up and down it. Sarah climbed the pole, then used the Sky Flyer to get level with the ramp’s base, snatching the apes in her net when they swooped down.

Meanwhile, Emily flew her S.P.E.C.S. up the Phanpy cage and unhooked the door with the glasses’ handle. The Phanpys rolled out, rolled rampantly around the park, and one of them hit a tall tree at the edge of a long pit. When the tree was in diagonal position mid-fall, the other Phanpy rolled up, off, and grabbed the branch of a tree on the other side. The tree fell over with its weight, connecting the tips of both trees as they formed a bridge.

The four crossed the chasm to a road that sloped and curved up left, and sloped down right. They went right, but saw it led to a ramp over another pit. They would have to use their bikes, so they went up the left hill and got to the highest part. They released their bikes from the Infi-Cube, rode them down the slope, and used the acquired momentum to go up the ramp and over the pit. Two Pipos rode in from the sides and began to race them across the track.

The track brought them to an open field with mounds and Dash Panels. They had to avoid the mounds and use the panels to catch up to the monkeys. Emily maneuvered leftward, following a zigzaggy path between rows of rocks. She was rewarded with a Dash Panel that shot her up to catch one of the monkeys. Once past the field, they rode up a path constructed by 4x4, going over a loop-di-loop—Sheldon fell out of Sarah’s basket at the loop’s top, but landed back in when she rolled down.

The Pipo Monkey jumped bumps in the road, so the kids mimicked the action – and every jump choked a “Hee-hee!”, a “HWOO!” or a “Hwuh-oh!” out of Sheldon. They made tight and careful drifts when the narrow, no-railing road turned, but then the treehouse was in their view as they were driving straight to it. The road would zigzag right and back left, but Emily chose to jump her bike across scattered platforms on the left, landing on a road of Dash Panels that shot her back on the main road, catching the monkey just before he could escape inside a small garage.

The bike path ended as the team hopped up some platforms on the side of the treehouse. There was a large gap that required a Heli-Glider to get across – the same device from Cooper Works. Before using it, Gary detected a hidden monkey on a platform behind them. He floated onto it with Sky Flyer and discovered the monkey behind a square patch on the tree. After catching it, the group used the Sky Flyers to make the Heli-Gliders float them across the gap (Sheldon was forced to get
in the Infi-Cube since he didn’t have a Flyer). “Okay, why ain’t we do that durin’ the biking??” Sarah questioned.

“Because he’s like an adorable baby brother!” Emily said with a flush. The trio put on their M.A.G.N.E.B.O.O.T.S. to walk up a metal strip leading into a house on the tree, via a trapdoor. The inside of the house had some controls, computers, and half-eaten pizza. Emily sniffed the pizza. “Pepperoni and liver. This is definitely Mike’s.”

“Won’t even ask how you know that.” Sarah remarked.

The three walked up some stairs through the treehouse hallway. There was a door to a room that consisted of a large, glass-protected table. Under the glass was a design based off the *Excitebike* game, an oval-shaped racetrack with bumps and boosts, and three spidermonkeys riding motorbikes. “Good Lord.” Sheldon swore. “Excitebike. The bane of my NES days.”

“How did you escape the Infi-Cube?” Emily asked.

“Please, that thing has as much security and complexity as a Rubik’s Cube. Sigh, but I suppose the task of seizing these monkeys is up to me. Excuse me.” Sheldon took out the C.A.M.-C.A.R. and drove it into a hole at the table’s bottom. From up here, it looked like playing a 2-D NES, driving the toy car around the miniature track. Once again, Sheldon had to avoid bumps and hit boosts to go faster, then shoot the car’s net to catch each individual spidermonkey.

After catching the three monkeys, they continued up the stairs to a massive room of the treehouse with many bike-related devices. Emily stuck her bike into a device on the floor, hurriedly pedaling as the wheels activated it. A huge bike tire rose up from the chasm, spinning quickly. Sarah and Gary had to use their Super Hoops to run across the tire, since it was spinning the opposite direction from the next path. They jumped to the foothold on the other side and used Gary’s bike to power another device, spinning the tire the other way so Emily and Sheldon could get across.

“Hey, check it out, guys!” Emily ran up to some tables with spare bike parts. She picked up some wheels that had a snake-shaped dent around the center of the tires. “These are special tires designed to remain steady on poles or rails! I’ll bet we can use ’em to get new places.”

“Alright, but I reject any backtracking until we have all the known abilities.” Sheldon noted.

Already, they saw a yellow curvy rail go across part of the chasm. The kids used their upgraded bikes to ride and balance on the rail perfectly. They jumped parts of the rail that were electrified and were about to land on a new floor. However, Emily jumped to an alternate rail on the left, which would swirl down like a whirlpool with a suction tube at the bottom. Two monkey saucers were flying around the whirlpool, so Emily had to keep jumping parts of the rail to chase them, jumping to hit with her Stun Club, and when the saucers were destroyed, the monkeys would fall into the suction tube. Emily jumped in the tube and was sucked up to the floor where her friends were. They already captured the Pipo Monkeys.

The kids rode their bikes again through a narrow hallway, leaving the big room. The hall turned left, bringing the bikers outside as the track was on the treehouse’s side. They jumped a low branch and ducked a higher branch. Another low branch came, Em and Sarah jumped over – Gary bounced his bike on the branch, to another one, and caught a Pipo Monkey climbing the tree. The track dropped them on a rail that went straight up vertical. “Don’t stop, guys!” Emily shouted as they were moving slowly and weakly. “Just pedaaaaall!”

“Screw yooooouuu!” Sarah shouted at the fact Emily’s was self-pedaling. They got parallel with another vertical rail. When an Amp traveled down their rail, they jumped their bikes, whipped
around, and landed them on the other rail, fighting their exhaust to keep slowly pedaling. An Amp came down this rail, they jumped to the other—an Amp instantly came down, they jumped again. Finally, this rail became flat and stable, allowing them to catch their breath. They took it slow for a few seconds, and immediately sped down a sloped part, which would curve up and fling them to the air with momentum.

They turned their bikes about-face and landed on a new rail that stretched away from and sloped down around the treehouse. They passed one final look at the annoying vertical rails before riding into an opening. They jumped and ducked two Amps and landed on a huge bike wheel. It wasn’t actually a bike wheel, rather a rotatable platform with the 2-D design of one. The kids used the Super Hoops and ran in one direction to make the platform turn and float upwards.

When it stopped floating, they entered an exercise room that only consisted of bikes (and not the moving kind, obviously). Three monkeys were using the bikes, and there was a video camera on a platform by the ceiling. Emily jumped up some stacked mats to the platform and recorded the monkeys with the camera. From this view, the apes appeared very devout in their exercise and were building up quite a sweat.

_All we think of is crack! Like, all the time!_ The caption read. The kids proceeded to net the monkeys simultaneously before they could start jumping around the room.

In the next room, there was a Pipo Monkey balancing on a unicycle on a mini circus set behind a glass case. Sheldon had to drive the C.A.M.-C.A.R. into the tiny entrance and make its way to a switch at the top of the set. The car drove over some small balls floating in the pool at the bottom, and they each shifted left and right, requiring careful timing when crossing them. The car drove up mini stairs and got level with some platform swings. It got on the first one, swung over, crossed to the next, and repeated until it was at the other side. It went up more mini-stairs, then had to bounce over some mini trampolines. They would lead to the switch that would cut the monkey’s rope, causing him to fall and break out of the glass. Emily caught him in her net.

“Two more monkeys, guys!” the scientist cheered. “I am in fuuuuuull Excitement Mode now!” They went outside to a massive rooftop swimming pool, but to fit with the bike theme, they had to ride waterbikes. A Pipo Monkey was driving his own bike in circles, splashing waves that would knock the others off their bikes. When this happened to Emily, she tried to swim under in attempt to resurface in the center of the circle, but water mines prevented this act. However, Gary shot the ape with the slingshot to knock him off his bike, then Emily netted him with Water Net.

They rode their waterbikes around a snaky river, jumping waves surfing from the opposite way. They had to jump the bikes onto individual pipes of water, grind across, and jump to higher pipes. Emily saw a cog switch, quickly jumping to bat it with her Stun Club, turning the device and forcing a spout of water to shoot up from ahead. The spout bounced them up to a higher part of river. They had to jump and hit other cogs to activate more water spouts to propel them over barricades. Just after the second barricade, Emily hit another cog, activating a spout that shot her up to a monkey on the wall, and catching this 20th monkey. The river ended in a docking room, so the kids climbed off the waterbikes and proceeded through a corridor. (End song.)

“MIIIKE?” Emily’s voice echoed as the treehouse began to grow darker. “HELLOOOOO?”

“May I insinuate that Mike is Emily’s quote ‘boyfriend’ unquote?” Sheldon asked.

“It ain’t even something to laugh at.” Sarah said. “One time, she shrunk him and kept him in a jar.”

“And we will treasure those 28 hours for the rest of our lives.” Emily replied, on the verge of crying at the memory. “OH, MIKEY, please be safe!!”
Green and red spotlights came on and moved around the room as a voice echoed. “LADIEEEEES and GENTLEMEN! The act you’ve all been waiting for, the exciting conclusion of our show! Starring the fantabulous, the extraordinary, the exemplary, the incomparably talented, the-”

“THE REDUNDANT!” Sheldon shouted.

“I dunno what that means, but I’ll take it! For I am RED MONKEY!” A purple spotlight shone on a muscular ape wearing a red ringleader’s uniform, goggles, and a Pipo Helmet. “Now you might be asking, who is the guest of honor? WHO, besides Red Monkey, could be so heavily emphasized so as to deserve a mention?! Well, folks, you will have your answer. I give you… MIKINLEY!” Pink spotlights aimed at the top of a ramp.

“AAAAH!” Emily and co. gaped with utmost horror.

Mike Strongarm was wearing a pink dress, a fruit bowl hat, red lipstick, and blue eyeliner while balancing on a unicycle. “Well: this is all manner of humiliating.”

“LOOK AT THIS GUY!” Red Monkey yelled in his microphone. “Is it a guy… OR A GIRL? ! I can’t tell! Yellow Monkey confuses me enough with his/her gender, but now my head just freaking aches! So I’m just going to beat the snot out of this guy, and squash his head like the fruit he’s carrying!”

“MIKE, DON’T WORRY!” Emily yelled, setting her T.E.L.A.-N.E.T. to warp to a hamster cage. “I’ll use this net to transport you out of here!”

“DON’T LISTEN TO HER!” Sarah and Gary tackled her.

“No no, please, guys, I-hi really need to do this!” Emily chuckled, trying to shake them off.

“That’s okay, Em! His one mistake was putting me on a unicycle. It may be half of a whole bike, but half is all I need!” Mike smirked with confidence.

“You’ll need a bigger wheel than that to crush MY wheels!” Red Monkey jumped onto a four-wheel bike—with monster truck tires. “Come down from your tower, Princess! Let’s dance!” He rammed the side of the ramp and caused Mike to roll off. (Play Mr. Patch’s Theme from Banjo-Toodie!)

**Boss fight: Red Monkey**

Mike hurriedly pedaled around the circus grounds to escape from Red Monkey’s Big Wheel. Even though he only had a unicycle, Mike was skilled enough to keep a safe distance from the oversized bike. Mike dodged the Orange Grenades Red was throwing, but this gave the boy an idea: he grabbed a banana off his hat and threw it behind him, causing Red’s four-wheel to swerve out of control. Mike seized the chance to roll up to a towering “U” ramp, rolling up one side, down, up the other, and got higher each time until he was ready to fly off and soar to the approaching Red Monkey. He landed the unicycle on Red’s head and knocked him dizzy.

“You won’t mind if I tinker around a bit?” Mike took out a wrench and proceeded to detach the huge tires from the four-wheeler. He jumped off as Red Monkey crashed to the floor, but the Freaky Monkey recovered and leapt to a large tricycle that automatically came over. The trike’s wheels rotated around the center, but still gave Mike a good pursuit. When Mike threw another banana, the wheels avoided slipping on it.
A laser shot from the bottom of Red Monkey’s tricycle and propelled him up like a rocket. Mike pedaled faster as the ape intended to burn him with the laser, but he was steadily catching up. Mike saw a gong high up on the wall, at level with Red Monkey, so he pedaled toward it and tricked the ape into smashing against it. The tricycle plummeted to the ground, its legs stretching for a brief moment so Mike could jump on. He bashed Red with the wrench before unhooking the trike’s legs.

Red Monkey smacked Mike off and called over a bicycle with big wheels (big bike wheels, not monster truck wheels). The ringleader pedaled up a tightrope going up a pole, so Mike chased him. Red Monkey threw his own banana peels back on the rope, but Mike jumped them and made it to the top. Red Monkey pedaled across another tightrope, weighing it down and causing Mike to speed down faster with the shift in angle. He bumped into Red’s back wheel and nearly lost balance, but was able to recompose and keep chasing the monkey.

“HE’S GOING TO ESCAPE!” Emily cried, for the final tightrope would lead out of a window and onto a ship.

“NOT TODAY!” Mike smirked. When Red’s weight weighed that rope down, Mike could jump over and bonk his head. Red lost balance and fell down to a “U” ramp. His back wheel hit the back fence of the top part, snapping the wheel off while he continued pedaling his front one.

Red saw the other end of the ramp coming and pedaled faster, aiming to fly up and land on the tightrope again. Mike landed on the ramp and chased him, having gained a boost by landing on the curve appropriately. “I’m going to make it! I’m going to make it!” Red was having trouble balancing on the broken bike, but his acquired speed launched him sufficiently high off the ramp. He saw himself landing on the tightrope. “I’m GOING to… huh?”

“Whatever, Carny.” Mike had already launched off ahead of him, so fast that none of them saw. Having gone higher than Red Monkey, he jumped off and KICKED the ape off his bike.

“AAAAHH!” Red’s boots hit the top of the ramp, getting stuck and causing his face to smash against the side. His body scraped down the ramp and made a squeaking sound before stopping at the bottom. Emily came up and kicked him to his back, seeing his cracked goggles. Emily set her net to the Adams Tech containment and caught Red Monkey. (End song.)

“ALL RIIIGHT!” Emily jumped and swung her net around. “WE CAUGHT ALL THE FREAKY MONKEY FIVE!”

“Emily!” Mike hurried up to his friend, throwing off his outfit and wiping the makeup off.

“Mikeey!” Emily jumped over and hugged her crush. “I have had oooone heck of a trip! I expected to find a career in science when I arrived at Adams Tech, not a career in animal control!!”

“Believe me, you aren’t the only one, Em. These apes show up outta nowhere and start making a circus out of my treehouse! And it looked like they were freaking recording it.”

“Yeah, they’ve been turning all our treehouses into TV studios, ruining all the wonderful educational programming. But now that his officers are in our custody, Specter’s brain-rotting days are numbered!” Emily smirked and raised a fist.

“Yes.” Sheldon spoke with sarcasm. “And now we will never know where Specter is hiding.”

“D’AAH!” Emily flinched and began crying. “I forgot we were supposed to interrogate Ree-eeeed!”

“Wasn’t Red trying to escape on that ship?” Gary pointed.
At this, they all used their bikes to grind up the tightropes, jumping into the ship through the window their selves. Sheldon came out of the Infi-Cube and approached the control panel. “It’s on autopilot. Set for G.U.N. Area Delta.”

“GUN Area Delta?” Mike repeated.

“Is Specter hiding in a GUN facility?” Emily asked herself.

“I say it’s worth checking out.” Sarah nodded.

“Agreed! You up for a trip, Mike?”

“Hey, these guys messed up my treehouse. If you know where their boss is hiding, I wanna administer some payback!” Mike fist-palmed.

“I’ve been waiting all month for a moment like that, I would be glad to share it with you.” So with that, Emily pressed the Activate. The small GUN ship roared its engines and set off for the destination.

**Solana Galaxy; Pokitaru**

The last thing they remember was a flashing 8, then an explosion. The rest was all a haze.

Maddy woke up to sun hitting her face. Her eyes were blurry – she lost her contact lenses – but the ground was sand, and she could make out a straw roof on the side of a cliff and clothes hanging from a clothesline. Ratchet, Zach, Drake, and Shade were asleep under that roof. Maddy felt a shadow come over her. She looked up and saw a man looking down, darkened by the sun behind him and his round glasses shining white. “Thirsty?”

Maddy tiredly sat up as he held a coconut cup of juice to her. She took it, looking as the man approached the others. He had greying hair to his neck, wore a white coat, sandals, and sunburnt tan skin. “Um… Where are we?”

“You’re on Pokitaru; it’s a beach planet.” He said as he lightly kicked Ratchet’s body. “Don’t ask me how you got here. One minute, the sky was glowing, and the next you all fall on my beach.” He kicked Shade’s body. “It was all one hour ago. But the Zoni said you had time-traveled. Er-?” Zach was still snoozing, but he gripped the man’s leg and crawled up like a worm. He climbed to the man’s head and smooched his cheek. The man pushed him off.

“CELESTABELLEBETHABELLE!” Zach yelped, startling everyone awake. “W-Whuh?”

“What happened?” Ratchet asked, rubbing his eyes. “Wait… This is Pokitaru!”

“Pokitaru?” Shade repeated with familiarity.

“Don’t be alarmed, I’m not your enemy.” The man said. “I was just telling Maddy here. My name… is Silvers Rayleigh.” He turned to show his face to Maddy (not that she could see it well). He had a small grey beard.

Shade gaped. “YOU’RE the Disbanded, aren’t you?!?”

“Heh heh, that’s what the Zoni keep calling me!” He chuckled.

“So you’re the one I was supposed to find?” Maddy asked.
“And you’re the girl I was told to wait for, it seems. So I guess you’re right.” Rayleigh paced around the beach as he spoke. “I’ve been on this island for 20 years. I was really surprised to learn that I was on another planet—in an entirely different dimension! Apparently something happened in this world that caused me to be sucked from my world. I wouldn’t have had any idea if it wasn’t for the Zoni.”

“Who are the Zoni?”

“They’re small black aliens that’ve been keeping me company. They seemed like very wise creatures. They told me to stay here and wait for ‘The Conqueror.’ I didn’t know who that was, but I figured I had nothing else to do. So I waited. Heh, doesn’t feel any different from my home!” He chugged a bottle of rum.

“‘The Conqueror’? Maddy questioned. “Who’s that?”

“It’s the name you were given in the prophecy.” Shade said, approaching her. “I tried to tell you before. You have Conqueror’s Haki. You used it on Nya’s Teen Ninjas way back when.”

“That Haki stuff again?”

“You have Conqueror’s Haki?” Rayleigh raised a brow. “So it’s true… the power does exist in this world.”

“It’s in your world, too?” asked Shade.

“Hold on, tell me what Haki is again?” Drake Puncture cut in.

“Armament Haki, which hardens the body.” Shade raised a fist. “Observation Haki, to predict attacks and determine numbers. Those are two powers that all beings can use, but there’s a third form called Conqueror’s Haki. For eons, people have called it the ‘Color of The King.’ It is a symbol of true strength and authority, and very few beings are born with it.”

“Right you are.” Rayleigh said, sensing a huge creature burrow from under the sand. “But the meaning of ‘King’ is different in your world. It was given to-”

He jumped away when the hideous sandworm emerged from the ground. It hissed at Rayleigh and lunged at him—there was a tingling sensation in the air, and the sandworm went down like that.

“This will be your lunch. I’ll start the fire in a moment.”

Ratchet blinked, wondering what just happened. He shook back to reality and said, “Wait a minute, we were being attacked by Dr. Nefarious! There was an explosion caused by… caused by…?” He touched his head, trying to remember.

Rayleigh frowned. “Maddy… would you like to see something? It’s a little grotesque, but…”

“M-Maybe I shouldn’t.”

“No, I think you should. This way…”

Rayleigh calmly led Maddy and her group inside a cave within a mountainside. They heard a sound of energy surging, and saw faint blinking lights around corners in the dark tunnel. The group gasped horrifically. “AAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!” Eight Zoni were floating and surrounding a pale-skinned boy, whose veins were showing and eyes were bulging. They channeled their energy to holding him in a sphere. He looked like he was in pain more horrendous than they could imagine.
“Is that… GEORGE?!” Maddy exclaimed.

“Yes.” Rayleigh nodded. “Apparently, this young man had an Octogan implanted inside him.”

“An Octogan?” Maddy remembered Shade talk about it.

“It’s an extremely powerful relic that gives the user control over time and reality. These creatures here, the Zoni, are trying to subdue its uncontrollable power. Maddy, do you know about the World Government that rules Planet Earth?”

“My friend, Chris mentioned them to me…”

“Every King that the World Government has had could use Conqueror’s Haki. They used that Haki to withstand and control the Octogan. That’s why Conqueror’s Haki is known as the ‘Color of The King.’ But if what they say is true, you possess it, Miss Murphy.”

“But does that mean me and Zach are related to The King?”

“Oh, no. Numerous people, albeit few, possess the power, including myself, but I’m not from this world. And my knowledge is only based on what the Zoni have told me. I don’t really understand much about this world, but I’m sure there’s a reason I was brought here. And it is to teach you Haki.”

“So if I mastered Haki, that means I could overpower the Octogan? And maybe help George?”

“That’s a stretch. In my homeworld, it took me 2 years to teach a student Haki. An inexperienced child like you would take much longer to be able to hold an Octogan without gravely injuring yourself.”

“But I’m a fast learner!” Maddy yelled impatiently. “I was able to master Tiny Style in a few hours, I bet I can do this, too!”

“I don’t doubt that you could,” Rayleigh smiled at her willingness, “but as far as the matter of George here, we have only the Zoni to rely on. However, I promise to protect him myself, in case they fail. For now, my child, I will teach you the ways of-”

“The Force!” Zach shouted. The five people shot disbelieved glares at him. “…Well, he set me up for it.”

“Whatever, let’s get started right now.” Maddy stated. “The Apocalypse can happen at any time, so I won’t go back to Earth until I’m a master at Haki.”

“Very well. First, I’ll teach you the most offensive form, the Color of Arms. Let’s go outside.”

As Rayleigh led them out of the cave, Maddy turned back to George. He really did look grotesque; she could feel the power surging through his veins, the unbearable energy coming from the ‘8’ on his forehead.

“All the doctors know, Melody found out, George—I mean…” Chris stopped himself.

“Who’s George?”

“George King, from Sector IC. He, uh… kinda found out during Arctic Training.”

“Did Chris actually know about that?” Maddy asked herself. “And he kept it secret? …Just what are these people?”
“I’m a freak among firebenders.” Chris concluded.

“Then I guess he’s a freak among timebenders…” Maddy mumbled in worry. She couldn’t imagine what sort of ‘advanced powers’ a timebender could have.

“Even more than that.” Shade replied; Maddy flinched when she realized she was beside her. “Maddy, I’m beginning to understand why Nefarious was hunting you. The Octogan are the most powerful objects in the universe. If those with The King’s Haki can control them, their strength can be phenomenal. Nefarious must want that kind of power.”

“I wouldn’t put it past him.” Ratchet noted. “But, Nefarious was destroyed in that explosion, wasn’t he?”

“If we survived, there’s a chance he could have survived, too. It feels unreal for a child to become a Full Haki Master in less than a month. But if mastering Haki is Maddy’s job in the prophecy, then maybe she can. But it won’t be easy.”

“I lost my wristwatch communicator.” Ratchet said. “Drake, will you help me look for it? I need it to call Aphelion if we’re gonna have any hope of getting off this planet.”

“Aren’t you still worried about Clank?”

“Yeah, but I can’t do anything about it now, can I? But if Dr. Nefarious shows his face again, I’ll make him tell me where he took Clank.”

**On a different island**

“AHH, MY FACE!” Dr. Nefarious shouted. “I can’t tell where my face is!” His head was dropped on the ground and covered by a blanket. “LAWRENCE! Where are you?!”

His butler was collecting other parts of his master’s body and putting them back together. “I thought the blanket was supposed to project the illusion of nighttime and put one to sleep. Hmm, perhaps I misread that article on birds.” When he attached the left arm, it smacked the butler before the body marched over to pick up the head.

Nefarious screwed his head back on. “Finally. Now, what planet is this?”

“Pokitaru, Sir. The vacation resort. We somehow winded up here after yet another failed attempt to detain Madeline Murphy.”

“Ugh, I am officially SICK of chasing that girl around all the time. Lawrence, signal Lord Vorselon to come get us off this watery wasteland.” The robot mastermind marched around some trees to a cliff overlooking some islands. “We don’t have much time to discover Maddy’s ability before the Apocalypse arrives. I want to harness that power in case…?” From the cliff, Nefarious had view of a beach campsite on a close island. He zoomed in his vision to see the people coming from around the hill. “Ahhhh… She’s HERE!”

“Ooo, how lucky.” Lawrence said in his emotionless voice. “If we time it correctly, perhaps we can seize Madeline while no one else is looking and teleport to ship when Vorselon arrives.”

“Wait, Lawrence… Let us sit and observe.” Nefarious tuned his eye-binoculars. “Perhaps the child believes she is a safe distance from us. Maybe now she will be willing to show us her ‘secret power.’ And once I know what it is… I will see what I can do with it before I feel like telling Ragaj.”
Since Mom was too weak to work herself, and was still being treated in the infirmary, she called some workbots to help the operatives repair their treehouse. Mom was currently sipping tea while laying on a hospital bed, having been healed by Melody beforehand. Dillon York approached her with a serious expression. “Mom, I need to ask you something.”

She opened one eye to view her visitor while in mid-sip. She put her cup down and said in her smug tone, “Why, if it isn’t the little snot who liked to skip around with that candy chick. Where is your little robo-doll, anyway?”

“Vanellope’s missing, and last I heard, she was at the Great Clock. You said we would have to go to the Great Clock. Why?”

“My, aren’t we persistent.” Mom said in her soft, sweet tone. “Little boys need to be patient while Mom is busy. As soon as your Moonbase is fixed, I’ll take you to the Clock, dearie.”

“Tell me what’s happening at Great Clock!!” he yelled in anger.

“Augh, fine. I’m sure by now, you must know that the World Leaders don’t look too highly at the Twenty Keys Prophecy. They want to do everything they can to stop it from happening. Well, they know that the Great Clock is a key item in the prophecy. And at this very moment, one of our Corporate Presidents has been sent to handle the situation.”

“Who?”

“He is known as the ‘Full-time Gamer.’ President of KaibaCorp., Gozaburo Kaiba.”

Meanwhile, three workbots were fixing the entrance to the Weapons Storage safe. Several Moonbase guards were stationed to watch them, while Cheren, Panini, and Francis had a checklist for all the safe’s items. “It doesn’t seem like anything was destroyed in the attack.” Cheren said with relief, checking off Father’s piano. “But when I think about it, if Kodama hadn’t stolen the Shell 297… it could’ve actually blown up in here. …Holy fuck.” The very idea was mind-blowing to Cheren: Kodama saved the Moonbase by disobeying him. …He was actually stunned for a few minutes.

“Wait a minute, the Yin Yo-yo that Sector JP brought us seven months ago!” Francis realized. “Is that on our checklist? Where is it?” He looked around frantically.

“Er- I’m sure it’s here somewhere. Look around, it might be under something.”

While the three were hopelessly crawling in search of the small yo-yo, an even smaller thief was already tiptoeing away behind the guards’ boots. “Ha ha hee heeeeee!” Jack Spicer laughed, having minimized the Yin Yo-yo with the Changing Chopsticks. “Twenty years later, these kids are still morons!” He made his escape before anyone would see.

Great Clock’s Cyberspace

This chamber was nearly pitch-black, except for the lights of a control panel, which faced an enormous stream of light that was ceaselessly flowing right, its waves and texture whirling around as it did so. XANA and Peridot’s footsteps echoed in the dark, quiet chamber. “Well, Peridot, in spite of a few bumps in the road, your work has been… satisfactory. Our job will not be complete until we have flushed out those verminous Zoni. But for now, there is one other thing you must repair. Lesser Lord Gnik says that it is the most important of all.”
Peridot approached the controls, gazing at the stream of light. From a close perspective, the light was both blinding and hypnotic. She stared transfixed at it for a few minutes. “I… I recognize this wavelength.” Peridot used her computer-fingers to activate the controls. Holographic screens appeared, showing gray-skinned humanoids with orange horns, beautiful angels, green mist, a distorted space, and a tall yellow empress whose scowling face was turned away. Peridot gasped.

“Peridot… I want you to infiltrate the trolls’ fortress. Learn what you can about the machine. Any threats or weakness it might possess. But do not let them see you.”

“I hope you die! Hee hee hee!” Pearl laughed.

“According to Ragaj, this wavelength dwells in the bodies of the Zoni.” XANA said. “They use it to warp between the First Dimension and the New Universe in mere milliseconds. This stream is none other than the First Byway. It is the Dimensional Byway that links the universe with the First Dimension. Sealed behind the Gate of Time. Peridot… if you hope to see your Diamond again, then it must be fixed.”

“Yellow… Diamond…”

The area rumbled suddenly. “What was that?” Peridot gasped.

Outside

The Zoni had splorped Vanellope to an outside area of the same Cybersite. She was still carrying an unconscious Clank in her arms. “THIS IS THE PLACE. WHEN WE BRING ORVUS TO OUR SUPER COMPUTER, HE CAN TELL YOU PART OF WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.” The gray-eyed Zoni (Karkat) said.

“Mewww! I can’t wait until we get to m33t you all!” Nepeta’s Zoni said.

“1 SM3LL TR34CH3RY! SN1FF SN1FF!” Terezi hissed. “W3 4R3 NOT 4LON3.”

The site rumbled. “Is it XANA?” Vanellope asked.

Great Clock

The Human Bill Cipher walked by a window. He peered outside at the incoming fleet of ships. “Ooooo! Looks like this place is in for a party!”

The flagship was commanded by Gozaburo Kaiba. “Even if the Twenty Keys come together, we will not allow them to do anything here. We will condemn this place for the Government and keep the Gate of Time sealed.”

Rayleigh is from One Piece, Kaiba is from Yu-Gi-Oh. Although some stages may appear minor, they are all still important. This one had a subtle foreshadow! ;P I wanted to include a Vanellope stage here, but I think we can do it later. Anyway, while we are still a long way from the end of the story, the individual character arcs are nearing their conclusion. We only have a few Emily, Maddy, Rupert, and other character levels to go. Decipher this Number Cipher (which also has a letter for a number).
Project Daycare

Chapter Summary

Team Sandman and Kami go to rescue Kimaya from GUN H.Q.. A terrible secret is revealed.

These next few chapters will be focusing on the Sixth Light. This also takes place on May 15.

Chapter 58: Project Daycare

Cleveland Park

Team Sandman hurried to the park after leaving the Dimalanta House. The normally peaceful park had trashcans and picnic tables fallen over. Kami Heartly was the only person in the park, pacing back-and-forth in a frantic fashion. She saw the three approaching. “Nolan, thank God!” She jogged up to them. “Did you hear what happened?”

“Yeah, Jeremiah called Matt. Your daughter got kidnapped by GUN agents?!” Nolan was still baffled by the idea.

“Yes, they just showed up out of nowhere! First, this ninja girl appears and knocks out her friends, then a bunch of helicopters… Sigh, I tried to ask what they were doing, but they said they were under strict orders. God, it’s just like 20 years ago.”

“Haha, you got kidnapped a lot back then!” Yuki laughed.

“I don’t understand what’s going on, but they’re probably being taken to GUN H.Q..” Nolan figured. “I know where the base is, so we’ll fly there and rescue them.”

“I’m coming, too, you know!” Kami insisted. “If my daughter’s being thrown in detention, I have a right to know why so I can scold her later!”

“Eh, can’t argue with that. I’m friends with the GUN Commander, so maybe I can ask him what this is about and make sure the kids get off easy.”

“Maybe. But just in case you can’t,” Kami raised her right hand as the Jungle King Keyblade materialized, “I may have to get aggressive.”

“Holy mackerel!” Crystal gaped. “What kind of weapon is that?”

“It’s a Keyblade.” Nolan said. “I used one in my battle with Revan. I’m not sure what they are.”

“I just think it’s a really weird sword.” Kami replied.

G.U.N. H.Q.

Kimaya, Beat, and Rhyme were thrown into a cell protected by a blue force field, handcuffed by chi-cuffs. Kaleo was herded somewhere else, being forced to crawl due to his size, wearing a shock collar around his giant neck. “Aroooo! Aroooo!” the giant roared like a moose, having taken way
too many jolts to still be thinking right. They shocked him with the collar again. “Aroooo…”

“MAN, you can’t lock us in here!” Beat shouted, banging on the force field. “This validates our constitutional rights! Our rights to not be beat up by a ninja and taken to a military facility without a permit!”

“Oh, but we do.” Agent Stan Smith replied. Two agents beside him had Django inside a glass case, and his Mystic Guitar in the other. “This skeleton has been on our wanted posters for quite some time. You were seen associating with him, and therefore harboring him. Under the orders of Carter Pewterschmidt, we are to study this guitar for its supernatural properties and determine if it can be any use to us.”

Hearing this sparked a reaction from Django. He gritted his teeth. “Your giant friend looks worth studying, too. Don’t worry, we’ll set you kids free as soon as you answer our interrogations.” The agents left, taking Django and Leo with them.

Stan Smith told the agents to take them to the designated rooms. As he was joined by his ninja daughter, Hayley, he looked at a TV in the ceiling corner. It showed Team Sandman and Kami entering the facility from the front. “Hmmm…” Stan rubbed his chin and looked at Hayley. “I was going to deactivate you… but I may need you for just a little bit. As a matter of fact…” He looked at the TV again. Stan seemed to recognize the blonde woman with the large key. (Er, except the large key.)

Entrance

“Commander Gunkan.” Nolan acknowledged as they approached the GUN Commander in the lobby. “Right on time.”

“Mr. York.” Brett’s hands were folded behind him. “Yes, we were expecting to have visitors regarding, eh… some new prisoners. Thanks again for your help exposing the secret in Dressrosa.”

“You jerks kidnapped my daughter!!” Kami shouted. “What the crap?!”

“It wasn’t our decision, and I tried to speak against it.” Gunkan said. “But we were ordered by the Corporate President, Carter Pewterschmidt.”

“And under President Pewterschmidt’s orders, you’ll keep silent on the matter.” They looked as Stan Smith marched into the lobby. “After all, you can’t betray the one who funded your little organization to begin with. A shame you don’t hunt metahumans anymore like you were originally paid for.”

“YOU arrested my daughter!” Kami stomped up with her fist balled near Stan’s chin. “Where is she?!”

“Heh, please, please.” Stan smiled and gestured her to calm down. “I’ll let you see your daughter momentarily. Come with me and we’ll talk.” He casually turned to walk down a hall, and Kami followed, keeping a firm grip on her Keyblade.

“Should one of us go with her?” Wiccan asked.

“Kami can handle herself.” Nolan assured. “We don’t need to make a scene here, yet. Brett, maybe you can help us with a different matter. Ever heard of Hugo Strange?”

“Sigh… yes, I have.” Brett looked away as he collected his thoughts. “He used to be a scientist here at GUN… He was a paranormal specialist who tried to find ways to harness the forces we did
not understand. By which I mean the spiritual forces of life and death. He wanted to find ways to revive the dead and control them."

"Why on Earth would he?" asked Crystal with repulse.

"I assume because of some past trauma. This was 14 years ago, and as you would expect, it was too freaky for our tastes. We were going to send him away, but that’s when a group of High Agents from Mariejoa came down. Apparently, the World Leaders have spies working under our ranks, making sure we’re being good. Those spies told the Leaders about Strange, so they sent some people down to take him away. Now he’s the apprentice to Felius Umbridge."

“What does he do for her?” Yuki asked.

“I don’t know. But…” Gunkan stepped closer and spoke in a whisper, “I heard he has a secret lab in Saudi Arabia. When he came to our base one day on a helicopter, I overheard the pilots talk about it. It’s stationed in a town called Magnostadt."

“Magnostadt?” Crystal cocked a brow.

“I’ve never seen it, and it’s not on any maps. It’s a secluded city of wizards and mages.”

“Yes, I’ve read about it. Apparently, there’s a magic school there. I never believed it existed.”

“But you know Hogwarts exists.” Yuki contradicted.

“I’m sure there’s a science behind it all."

“If it’s not on any maps, how do we find it?” Nolan asked.

“I don’t know. …Anyway, Nolan, it’s probably not best to stay here. ‘Sandman’ is wanted. I’ll make sure nothing bad happens to Kami.” Brett assured.

“Very well. We’ll just wait outside for her.” The three heroes exited the base.

“Well, I’m usually up for visiting a magic city.” Crystal began with enthusiasm. “But if we’re going to Arabia, I guess I’ll have to hide my face and stick with you men.” She said with repulse.

“Eh, they’re gonna be hunting all of us, so it won’t matter. We’ll still have to be stealthy. Our only concern now is how to-” Nolan’s wristwatch beeped. It depicted a green “?” on its screen. He answered the call.

“Was it a bat I saw? Oh ho, just kidding. I’ve been spending too much time with my cousin, Palindrome. IT’S ME, your long-time friend, The Riddler! And I would be SOOO happy to give my Sandy a helping hand in finding Magnostadt! But first, I require an itsy bitsy request. What kind of trophy asks questions?”

“Riddler Trophies.” The three chorused, rolling their eyes.

“That’s right! Go out and collect some more. After all, intelligence is more important in a hero than strength. And I just don’t think you got what it takes. As soon as you complete more of my challenges, I’ll tell you how to find Magnostadt.” He hung up.

“Fine. As soon as Kami’s all done in there. But knowing her, there’s going to be drama.”

Inside
“Tell me why you arrested my daughter.” Kami demanded after leaving Nolan’s group. Stan Smith approached the coffee maker in a robot laboratory and poured a cup.

“Can I ask you something, Mrs. Heartly?” he asked.

“W-… How do you know my last name?”

“Your daughter is named Kimaya Heartly, so that made it obvious.”

“Oh… But-” She was about to question him on that.

“I also know your first name, Kami.” She felt her heart jump at that statement. “I recognize you.” When he turned back to face her, there were a few tiny holographic screens by his eyes. “Want some coffee?” Stan smiled and handed her the cup.

“…Um… thank you?” She took a sip of the coffee, looking confused.

“We know you were the one who defeated the Pirate Emperor, King K. Rool. Very impressive.”

“Really? I didn’t think that would make me famous.”

“Oh, the Government notices these things. But while battling a notorious crime lord comes easy, raising a child isn’t, it seems.”

Kami choked when she took another sip. “Whaddyou… mean?”

Stan snapped his fingers. Hayley Smith flipped over in a stylish ninja fashion before standing firm, her expression serious. “Kami, this is my daughter, Hayley. Pretty, ain’t she? She’s strong, she’s fast, and more importantly, she’s under my control.”

“What?”

“Come this way, please.”

Stan led Kami to a nearby room that was designed like a kindergarten classroom. There were young children sitting at desks and coloring pictures. It was a diverse class with Caucasians, Asians, African-Americans, and even some Lilliputians. They all wore neck collars. “This is a secret program we started 18 years ago, called Project Daycare. We raise children to become Sleeper Agents for the World Government. Heh, when the CIA submitted this proposal, you wouldn’t believe how many countries protested it. Even Japan. Boy, won’t they be pissed. But that’s why we have America, the freest country in the world.”

One of the girls colored outside the line on her picture. Her collar started beeping, and some agents rushed in to grab her and take her to a back room. Kami could only gape in horror. “If that new child president knew about this, we would be ruined. The other countries would go crazy and everything would fall to chaos. Much like your relationship with your daughter, if she found out.”

Kami bit her lip. From Stan’s view, she appeared to be restraining some feelings. “Yes, Kami, we know you considered this. When your daughter was two, you among several other parents brought your kids here after you received our ‘secret’ invitation. Before you completely agreed to it, we made you believe it was a simple government-organized daycare meant to teach your children obedience. You actually let Kimaya take a few classes. A few months of classes, in fact. Her collar went off a lot. But by that time, we were ready to trust you with the activation code.”

“I pulled Kimaya out of this place for a reason!” Kami stated. “I couldn’t believe you were trying
to control kids, it’s wrong!”

“Then why did you let her stay here this long? Why have you never told anyone?”

“…Because… I was ashamed. When she was growing up, I even considered taking her back. Then that Arlon person showed up and gave me the same offer. I finally gave in and took it, and I… She just wasn’t the same. I still feel terrible.”

“Your daughter is a disobedient little rebel. And if she found out, she would just ignore the word ‘law’ altogether. Her own mother tried to destroy her free will. Isn’t that the worst thing you would ever wanna hear?”

Kami sighed, bowing her head in shame. “Now, we promise not to hurt your daughter while she’s here. You just walk away and forget what you saw… and we promise not to tell her this cold truth.”

“I let her take those classes because I wanted Kimaya to be good. I wanted her to be a girl everyone could love.”

“See, we all have our poisons.”

“…But if you’re just going to arrest her for no reason, the word ‘law’ lost its meaning already. HYAH!” She swung the Keyblade and scratched Stan’s cheek, knocking him back. “My daughter might not trust me again, but I won’t let you get away with this! It’s time I do what I should’ve done years ago!” She started slicing the collars off the kids, and attacking the agents that tried to subdue her. Stan grabbed Kami by the neck and threw her back up the stairs to the laboratory.

Kami got up and gasped when Stan flew in with jetshoes. His left eye was red, and his right arm was a cannon. “You see, Kami, at the same time I signed Hayley up for Project Daycare, the CIA made me a deal I couldn’t refuse: they turned my real body into a CYBORG!” He ripped off his suit, exposing the blue robotic body, which had a yellow belt with an American Flag buckle. “It even comes with a language library!” He turned a dial a few times. “Español! Nihongo. Français! British, old chap! And some dead language.” He turned once more. “Latinae.”

“Figures. Only a heartless robot would turn his daughter into a weapon.”

“Before I remark your hypocrisy, let me show you what these Sleepers can do. Hayley, I command you to-” The alarms blared. They looked at the ceiling TV, which displayed The Gang escaping their cell. “They’re escaping?! Hayley, go stop them! Don’t let them free the subjects! But do it quick!”

“Understood.” The ninja flipped away.

**Prison wing; a few minutes ago**

“Dammit, I wish they let us keep our iPhone!” Beat shouted, kicking the barrier. “I never gone this long without music! I need mah DJ Gappa, I need mah Poop Dog!”

“I wish Vweeb was here.” Rhyme said. “He’s so small, he could go right under this wall. Hee hee, so fun, so fun! Hey, whatchu doing, Kim?”

Kimaya was sitting against the wall, her legs arched up and her eyes closed. *Keeper… Awaken… Keeper… Awaken…*

“Who the hell are you?” Kimaya asked.
In Pueblo de Niebla lies the key.

“Puebla de Whuuuh?”

“Kimayaaaa… You startin’ to creep me out by talkin’ to yourself!” Beat exclaimed. Rhyme curiously crawled up to her.

You hold the key… In Pueblo de Niebla lies your destiny.

“Ooo, what’s this?” Rhyme saw a keychain sticking out of Kimaya’s pocket and pulled it out.

“Huh?” Kimaya looked up and saw the small, white key hanging from the chain in Rhyme’s hand.

“Hey, this is pretty!” Rhyme grinned. “Where’d you get it?”

“I… I ain’t remember havin’ this.” Kimaya took it in her right hand, looking at it strangely.

“Wait… I remember it, though. It was in a dream I had.” She let the key rest on her palm. “It was a—” The keychain FLASHED, and suddenly grew the size of a sword. The Keyblade was white, had a blue star with yellow points, and angel wings around the hilt.

“HOLY SHIZ!” Beat literally jumped out of his loose pants, and Rhyme flew back in shock.

Oathkeeper…

“Son of a frick!!” Kimaya stood up and waved the weapon around. “H-How the hell this even…?!?”

“What kinda lock NEEDS a key that big?!” Beat asked.

“…Ah dunno… But lemme see what it does.” She smirked and lashed the blade at Beat.

“YAAAAH!” He shut his eyes. “…Huh?” Kimaya chopped off his chi-cuffs.

Kimaya then cut Rhyme’s cuffs, and Rhyme took the Keyblade and cut Kim’s. “That’s mah jam.” Kimaya took the key back. “Gang, this is our exit card.” With that, she aimed the key at the cell’s lock and fired a small beam. The barrier vanished.

“GIRL, HOW LONG YOU FUCKIN’ HAVE THAT?!” Beat yelled.

“HEY, THIS just appeared in mah pocket, I dunno WHO put it there or when!”

“Then why you ackin’ like you know how to use it?!”

“I DUNNO! There’s this freaky-ass voice in mah head, tellin’ me to do this shit, and I’m like, whatevuh.”

The alarms started blaring as the hall flashed red. “Fine, whatevuh, let’s ditch!” Beat yelled.

“First we gotta get Leo and Django! They took ’em this way!”

“’kay, but the second Leo turns green and ’is shirt rips, he’s on his own!” The group rushed down the hall.

Testing Room

“MMMMM!” Kaleo was given a giant plate with four dozen bacon sandwiches, which he gobbled up like small pieces of candy. “This is tasty! And Mom always tells me not to end up in prison!”
He then proceeded to lick milk out of a giant bowl like a dog. The scientist watching him wrote notes down about the ‘Mammoth Toddler.’

“KALEO, DON’T!” Django yelled from his glass cage. “They put Tatababasco in those sandwiches, it’s an illegal spice!”

The Mystic Guitar was placed inside a large machine, which made a thorough scan. The guitar was depicted on a screen, with blocks of writing that indicated certain parts of it. “No doubt, these wavelengths aren’t normal.” One scientist said. “I don’t recognize it.”

“You don’t suppose it’s… magic, do you?” another asked.

They all chuckled for a second. “Still, this must definitely be an item of the supernatural. Perhaps we should inform President Pewterschmidt.”

“DON’T EVEN THINK IT!” Django yelled. “That jackass took enough from me already! I’ll tear all the skin off your bones if you-”

Beat and Rhyme blew the door down with a synchronized Song Beam. “AH RIGHT, G-Dogs!” Beat sang. ‘Here’s how it’s goin’ down! We gonna take back our buds, and Y’ALL are gonna sit down at your little desks and whine about it, ya dig? OOMP!’ He and Rhyme were kicked forward by Hayley. The Sleeper ninja drew out a knife and twirled it around.

“NOT COOL, man!” Kimaya came behind Hayley and knocked her away with the Keyblade. “Yo, I’ll beat this ninja chick, y’all take out these nerds!”

“WORD!” The Bitos sang.

Kimaya blocked Hayley’s knife and bat the weapon away, then leapt over the ninja while bashing her in the head with the Keyblade. Kimaya swung her blade at Hayley’s sides, but she blocked with her arms and kicked Kimaya away. She fell on her back, raising her Keyblade to block Hayley’s kick, then she kicked the ninja’s ankle to knock her down. Hayley grabbed Kimaya and tossed her skyward as she jumped back to her feet. When Kimaya came back down, Hayley jumped and kicked her toward Kaleo, but Kimaya planted her feet against the giant’s leg and kicked off, flying back to Hayley and sending her flying back with a Keyblade swing.

Upstairs

Stan flew at Kami and soared around the room, continuously shoving her before aiming to crash into a wall. Kami knocked Stan’s arm away with the Keyblade and fell, causing him to crash himself. Stan recovered and shot a round of lasers, Kami twirling the Keyblade to block them. Stan aimed his left fist and blasted it, knocking Kami across the room and through a few tables. Stan flew above and attempted to stomp his boot down, but Kami rolled aside and got back on her feet. She swung her blade at Stan, but he grabbed it and shoved against her with equal force.

During this stalemate, Stan looked at a timer on his left arm. 1:50 was left. “Damn. I guess I lost track of time.” His rockets kicked on as he shoved Kami to the wall. He flew away and spoke in his wristwatch, a satellite extracting on his head. “Hayley, it’s Stan. I’m Getting Fed Up With-”

Kami chopped the satellite off his head and bashed him in the chin. “Wait! I need to deactivate!” Stan tried to speak, but Kami dealt another blow and bounced him back. She jumped over and slashed an ‘X’ on his chest, then bat him away again.

“Nice try, but I won’t let you use your daughter like this!”
“UGH!” Stan shot his fist again, but Kami leaped over and ran at Stan. The cyborg tried to fly away, but Kami tossed the Keyblade and struck the right jet, causing Stan to fly out of control and crash into a large robot with an empty cockpit.

**Downstairs**

Hayley lifted Kimaya by the shirt and started punching the girl in the face. Hayley tossed Kim into Leo’s large milk bowl, the boy perking in surprise. Hayley jumped in the milk bowl after her, and the girls fought and splashed around like they were in a pool. “This is like when my hamster, Chitters jumped in my cereal!” Kaleo grinned. “Then he took a nap and floated there while I ate.”

Beat and Rhyme finished knocking out the scientists before the former punched Django’s case and broke the glass. “Hurry and get my guitar back!”

The Bito siblings fired a twin Song Beam at the scanner machine, but it did nothing. “Darn it, it’s some kinda ‘reinforced’ metal! Yo, Kimaya, save Leo and have him bust this open!” he called.

“DO NOT LET PRISONERS ESCAPE!” Hayley jumped out of the bowl and flipped over to kick Beat and Rhyme down, then kicked one of Django’s legs off before attempting to stomp him in his skull head. Kimaya jumped and grabbed Hayley from behind, but the ninja pinned Django down and grabbed Kim by the neck, choking her. She grabbed Kim’s Keyblade and tossed it away.

“KIMAYA!” the Bitos cried. Rhyme ran to grab the fallen Keyblade and aimed it at Hayley. “… Grrr, how do you shoot the laser?!” She shook it.

“RRR!” Beat leapt to punch Hayley, but she punched him back.

“What?” The Keyblade vanished in Rhyme’s hand and reappeared in Kimaya’s. She slashed Hayley down the chest and got free.

**Upstairs**

Kami grabbed onto Stan from behind, and while he was able to balance in the air with a single jetshoe, he struggled to shake her off. After he finally dropped Kami on the floor, he aimed his cannon at her. “I can’t waste time with you. Good-bye-…” Stan glanced at his watch, which read 00:00. “No!…” He gasped.

Downstairs, Hayley was surrounded by the three Gang members, readying herself. Suddenly, she stretched upright, eyes wide for a second. With a calm aura and narrowed eyes, Hayley walked over to pick up her knife. She left the room, leaving The Gang confused.

“Maybe there’s still time to-” Stan tried to fly away, but Kami tossed her blade at his other jet and made him drop down. She caught her Keyblade and leapt to stab it through his cannon.

“Wow, this key’s stronger than it looks.” Kami smirked.

“You don’t understand! If I don’t deactivate my daughter, she’s going to-” A door broke down, and Hayley was standing in the entrance.

“Hello… Father.” The ninja glared at her father.

“I’m Getting Fed Up With This Orgasm!” Stan yelled.

Hayley gripped the knife. “So am I.” Kami jumped away when Hayley charged at them, stabbing the knife at Stan’s face, but he smacked it away as the two swung punches at each other.
“So, is your control broken?” Kami asked.

“No, worse! If a Sleeper Agent remains active for seven straight days, she kills her handler!”

“What?!”

“It’s a glitch in the program we never got around to fixing!” Stan locked hands with his daughter as they pushed each other. “Don’t just stand there, do something!”

“And why should I? You’re the one that had her brainwashed in the first place!”

“PLEASE, just do it! If you help me, I’ll get rid of the Sleeper in your daughter!”

“What do you mean, I pulled Kimaya out of this!”

“Yes, but we were able to implant the Sleeper inside of her! She may not’ve been heavily trained, but someone could still use her. For example, Carter Pewterschmidt.”

“ENOUGH OF THIS!” Hayley’s hands turned Armament Haki, allowing her to squeeze and crush Stan’s robot hands.

“AAAAH!” the cyborg screamed. Hayley flipped behind, wrapped her Haki arms around his neck, and squeezed until the head snapped off his body. Stan’s expression was left agape as his red eye turned off.

“Uh…” Hayley fainted alongside her robot father. Kami panted, watching in case either of them would get up again. She then looked at the ceiling screens, seeing Kimaya’s group coming back.

**Downstairs**

“RRRUH! NNNN!” After Kaleo was freed, the giant furiously banged his head on the containment chamber, steadily creating a dent. “Don’t worry, Django, I’ll have that guitar outta there in a jiffy! AAAAAH!” He continued head-bashing.

“Just break the glass, you idiot!” Django yelled.

Kaleo noticed the window on the machine. “That’s probly easier.” He kicked the window and broke it easily.

“Well, nothin’ lost, at least.” Kimaya shrugged.

Django retrieved his guitar from the scanner. “‘Guess not. So Kimaya, where’d you get the giant key?”

“I dunno, it was just in mah pocket. Don’t ask me how Ah got so badass with it—some reason, it feels like I always had it.” She viewed the Keyblade from all sides. “There was this weird voice in my head about ‘Pueblo de Niebla.’”

Django gasped. “Pueblo de Niebla?”

“Can we get outta here first??” Beat insisted.

“Right! All aboard the Leo!”

Kaleo crouched down like a dog as his friends climbed on his back. GUN agents swarmed in, but the giant smacked them away like dominoes as he trotted down the prison wing and up the stairs.
Kaleo smashed down the archway of the door Hayley broke open earlier. “Kimaya!” Kami yelled.

“MOM! Man, I swear if you put that chip in mah hat again!” Kimaya took off her hat and brushed her hair.

“Kimaya, let’s go, my friends are waiting outside.”

Commander Gunkan didn’t bother to try and stop the escaping kids – the fact that one of them was giant would probably result in futile efforts. Kaleo stopped beside Nolan’s Sandmobile outside as the kids climbed off. “You don’t expect me to fit HIM on this, do you?” Nolan questioned.

“No worries.” Django tuned the dials on his guitar before aiming it at Leo and strumming a sonic wave. The giant boy shrunk down to normal size. “Problem solved.”

“YOU COULDA DID THAT ALL ALONG?!” The Gang and Kami screamed.

“Hwhat, hyou didn’t ask!” Django chortled.

“There still isn’t enough room for all of you.” Crystal noted.

“So we’ll make some.” With that, Django strummed the guitar and shrunk Wiccan, Yuki, and Kami.

“Problem solved agin!” Kimaya grinned, picking up her mini mother.

“Solution to everything, I suppose.” Kami sighed.

“Well, if it ain’t broke.” Nolan shrugged. “Pick them up and climb in.”

With Beat and Rhyme holding Yuki and Wiccan, the kids climbed into the Sandmobile and took off from the base. Commander Gunkan watched them with a proud smile. “Hm hm… What is it about kids that make them so hard to contain?”

“Sir!” A GUN agent hurried out. “We’re unable to contact Area Delta! For some reason, our satellite image picked up some cartoon about monkeys.”

“Monkeys?”

**Cleveland; Gallagher Neighborhood**

When they returned to Sector V’s neighborhood, Django restored the adults to normal size. Nolan received a call from Haruka and headed for her house with his friends. Kimaya showed her mom the Oathkeeper and explained how it mysteriously appeared in her possession. “So your Keyblade appeared outta nowhere too, Mom?” Kimaya asked after Kami told her own story.

“Yes, it did. But then K. Rool brought it back to me several months ago in the form of a keychain. I never understood these 20 years ago, I don’t understand them now. Kimaya, there’s something I need to tell y-”

“Kimaya, you said something about Pueblo de Niebla.” Django brought up. “Something about a voice?”

“I ’unno, i’ was jus’ some voice. Why you so hooked on it?”

“…” Django looked away and answered, “Pueblo de Niebla’s my hometown.”
“Wait, I thought’chu were from Miracle City?” Beat asked.

“No, that’s where I moved. I was born in Pueblo de Niebla.”

“Is that Spanish for something?” Rhyme asked.

“Yes, it means Village of Fog. It’s called that because of its toxic air. Not a good place to live unless you’re dead. …Heheh.”

“If it’s where you’re from, you think… You think we can visit it?” Kimaya asked.

“Kimaya, he just said the place STANKS!” Beat retorted.

“Ah know, but…” She looked at her Keyblade. “‘Some reason, I feel like I’m supposed to go there. Like my instinct or something. So Django, maybe you wanna take us?”

Django looked hesitant. “Um, I…”

“ROAD TRIP!” Beat and Rhyme double high-fived. “C’mon, Rhyme, let’s go home and git our skateboards.”

“I wanna skate, too!” Kaleo yelled, running after them.

“MAN, you fall on your face each time!”

“Ah’m runnin’ home, too!” Kimaya announced. “Later, Mom!”


“Your daughter’s growin’ up fast.” Django smirked.

“Not fast enough. When’re you gonna take off that skeleton costume?”

“Screw you. I’m gonna see what Dillon’s dad’s doing.” Django headed for the Dimalanta House.

**Dimalanta House**

“Haruka!” Nolan, Yuki, and Wiccan came down the stairs to the basement lab. “Did you find out what that chemical is?”

“Yes, but I had to call in some help.” Haruka replied, holding up her cellphone. “After I bent a sample of the chemical away from the milk, I took a picture and sent it…"

“TO ME!” A maniacal voice spoke from the phone. "Her FAVORITE uncle!"

“Wait a second… Is that Caesar Clown?!“ Nolan exclaimed.

“Right you are! And that dull old voice must belong to Sandman! Pleasure to see you again, old chum.”

“When Caesar escaped Dressrosa, he left his phone number behind.” Haru explained.

“I knew sweet little Haruka wouldn’t resist the urge to call me, to seek my expertise! And my, look at the work she has been doing. The minute I learned she was my niece, I knew she had the potential I had always desired in an apprentice.”

“Not interested! I just wanted to ask if you knew what this was!”
“Of course I do! It is a very rare and powerful chemical I had only heard in legends. It’s called Lazarus.”

“Lazarus?” repeated Nolan.

“Based on stories, Lazarus has the ability to preserve life and heal wounds. Any sickness a person may have, physical disability, can be GONE! by just taking a dip in Lazarus.”

“Isn’t that kinda like the Fountain of Youth or the Fountain of Dreams?” Haruka asked.

“Yes, but Lazarus is far superior! Those measly fountains only have temporary effects, but Lazarus can last for very long periods! Oh, how I longed to get my hands on the substance; just imagine all the experiments I can do with it.”

“But why would Hugo Strange want people to drink Lazarus in their milk?” Nolan said.

“What did you just say?!” Django asked loudly. He was standing at the basement stairs.

“Django, what’re you doing here?” asked Haruka.

“Never mind that, whaddid you say about Lazarus?”

“Um, it’s this chemical Mr. York found in these milk bottles. They said that they were being shipped to stores.”

Django was shaking with anger, as though his skull would explode. He bolted up the stairs and out of the house. “Was that boy a skeleton? Holy CRAP, I need to do an autopsy on him!” Caesar beamed.

Outside

“Huh- Django?” Kami looked confused when the skeleton ran past her.

Django met up with Beat, Rhyme, and Leo on the street, whom all had skateboards. “Well, since you guys asked, I would be happy to take you to my hometown.”

“YEAH, MAN!” Beat gestured shooting guns in the air. “Gonna get all Mexican, in Mexico Land! Yo, where’s Kimaya, she be trippin’!”

“Raht here, pardner.” The four turned around and gaped. Kimaya wore a black cowboy hat, black boots that clanked with each step, and a belt with a skull buckle. Her boombox was playing a Western whistle. She made the gesture of cocking her Keyblade like a gun. She tipped up her hat to show her eyes. “Y’all fellers ready to get Southern?”

Django strummed his guitar and summoned the Ghost Train, blazing onto the road. “More ready than I have in 40 years.”

Pokitaru

“Maddy, let me ask you something.” Rayleigh said as he led her and Shade into a part of the jungle. “Do you know what chi is?”

“Yeah, it’s what benders use to control elements with.”

“Yes, and no.” Rayleigh stopped walking and turned to them. “Chi is a force that exists in all beings. We have Personal Chi, or Willpower Chi. Benders are able to manipulate elements by
using the particular Willpower Chi given to them by their god. But ordinary humans are able to utilize Willpower Chi in their own way.”

“Hold on.” Shade spoke. “How would you know this, exactly? I was told you hail from an Original World. Are element benders and chi discussed in your world as well?”

“The Zoni gave me the knowledge of benders and chi when I arrived here. They must have thought it would be easier to train you under your terms. However, the matters of Haki and ‘element bending’ work under similar circumstances in my world. Perhaps in time, I will tell you. But do you understand what I’m saying?”

“Yeah, I think. So how do we use this Willpower Chi?” Maddy asked.

“Well, starting with Armament Haki.” Rayleigh stretched his left arm as it turned black and iron. “This comes from the Willpower Chi found in our strength. In reality, the level of strength our body seems to automatically possess is an illusion. The body contains tremendous amounts of strength stored in our chi. It’s true that normal exercises heighten our strength, but by harnessing our very will, our strength can exceed to greater levels. When a great quantity of chi is applied to our strength, it will take form on the outside of our body. The power of Will is the strongest ability any person could have. It is strong enough to break the defenses used by Logias.”

“This is starting to sound like some sort of bending.”

“All advanced martial arts apply concepts used in bending.” Shade said. “Because they all revolve around harnessing our inner chi.”

“Observation Haki is a bit harder.” Rayleigh continued. “You harness the Willpower Chi that lies in your senses. By enhancing your very eyes, ears, touch, even taste or smell, you can see and hear everything around you. You can detect a person’s thoughts by the sparkling of their brainwaves and predict their next move. You can determine where every living thing within your radius is, even the tiniest flea. Sometimes, your very instinct will take over, and 90% of the time, it is right.”

Maddy remembered when they escaped from Vorselon’s ship. She sensed Captain Qwark’s aura and convinced her friends to jump out the airlock. Was that Haki?

“The final form is Conqueror’s Haki. This isn’t a power that can be mastered through simple training. A person has to be born with it. It is when the Willpower Chi exists in your very heart. It is bred by sheer resolve, courage, and authority. The chi heightens the courage to the point that every small-willed person around you will feel intimidated, and pass out as they are unable to comprehend it. It can make people acknowledge you as their leader. Their ruler.”

“Maddy, do you know how some kings and queens possess a ‘divine right to rule’?” Shade asked. “How their right to rule was given by God? These words hold truth. The Goddess of Emotion, Mesprit is the one who grants Conqueror’s Haki. By studying a person’s character, even at birth, she can tell what people possess the authority that a king would have.”

“And she actually picked me? I’m not even leader of the Decommissioning Squad.”

“Yet, the power is yours nonetheless. The gods cannot be mistaken.”

“Now it’s time for you to try it yourself.” said Rayleigh. “Harness the strength in your body until your arm can be as hard as iron.”

Maddy balled her right fist and held it out. “Hmmmmmmrrrr!” She channeled pressure into her arm, but felt no enhance in strength. “Hnnnnnn!”
“I don’t think you’re doing it right—” said Shade.

“Probly not!” Maddy cut in. “It doesn’t make sense, how do you just… magically force your body to get stronger.”

“Benders master their abilities by training in their natural environment. Perhaps combat is what you need to enable the Haki to emerge.”

“Then we shall.” Rayleigh smirked. “Keep attacking me until you’re able to hurt me, even a little.”

“Okay. …Boy, I never thought I’d ever have to learn how to fight the way a bender does.”

“It’s like Chris tried to tell you.” Shade said. “We are one.”

‘’Guess so. …WAIT A SEC, how often do you watch me?!”

“Eh heh heh…” Shade grinned sheepishly.

A different island

“Augh, how long have we been watching her, Lawrence?” Nefarious said, viewing the training via binoculars. He was lain on his front with his feet propped up. “I wanted to see some juicy secrets, not a training montage! Get to the goods, girl!”

“Sir, you must understand that there are so many things wrong with what you’re doing.” The butler sighed. “So many implications.”

“If you’re not gonna watch this girl exercise with me, then be quiet.”

“…You’re doing it on purpose. You have to be. I see no other alternative. …Sir, it seems that he is simply teaching her Haki. Even Conqueror’s Haki is not an uncommon art.”

“That’s just it, Lawrence. Ragaj told me to watch this girl because she possessed a secret power that even he couldn’t determine what it was. And he’s usually on top of things. He knew Jessie was a Bubble Dreamer, knew April was a doll, he knew the one gives them all keys, so he definitely should’ve known Maddy possessed a simple power like Haki. There must be something missing here. And I’m going to find out what it is.”

Dimalanta House

Kami stared at her cellphone with worry. Kimaya texted her in saying they were going to Django’s hometown, “Peblo de Nebla.” She saw Team Sandman and Haruka exit the Dimalanta House.


“Sigh, apparently they’re going to Mexico. Honestly, that girl…”

“Hey, what a coincidence!” Haruka beamed. “We’re going to Mexico, too!”

“Why?”

“We were researching a chemical called Lazarus. Based on Haruka’s, um, ‘source’, this Lazarus comes from a place called Pueblo de Niebla.” Kami made a slight reaction, looking at the text again. “The person who mines it is…”

Kami gasped after hearing his name.
Carter Pewterschmidt saw the group of kids coming through his security cameras. They crossed the border to Mexico on their magic train and were headed to the village. Carter turned. Behind the desk in his dark, smelly office, was a solid white stone cube with unknown writing. Near the base of this cube was a keyhole. And Carter knew the person that would come here in search of this cube. She was coming. He reached into a desk and pulled out a file on Kimaya Heartly. Agent 6767 was her codename. Somehow, Carter found that funny.

“We can’t let them get here.” Carter stated, facing forward again. “We’ll stop them from seeing this thing at any cost. Understand?”

“Darn right, Sir.” Hank Hill responded. He and his three friends had dark purple, mutated bodies, with black heart designs on their chests. “We’ll kick their asses ’til their hearts can’t take it no more, I tell you what.”

“I wonder if their hearts taste sweet and sugary.” Bill Dauterive said, hugging himself. “Like a little child’s dreams.”

“Ah’ll smoke ’em into oblivion.” Dale Gribble blew black smoke from a cigarette.

“Sure you will, sure. Just take these monsters and go.” Carter ordered.

Heartless Shadows, Soldiers, and Song Bells appeared out of darkness. They headed out to hunt the one that held the key.

“When I was working for Doflamingo, he picked up a juicy little tip!” Caesar spoke giddily. “One of the Corporate Presidents, Carter Pewterschmidt, found a whole butt load of Lazarus, in a Mexican village called Pueblo de Niebla.”

I never wanted the GUN H.Q. escape scene to be very long, since we have enough jailbreak scenes. Stan and Hayley are from American Dad, as was the Project Daycare concept. Next time, we go to Django’s homeland. Byuh.
The Land the Gods Forgot

Chapter Summary

The Gang makes it to Pueblo de Niebla, where Django reveals his past.

I predict this saga should end on Chapter 61.

Chapter 59: The Land the Gods Forgot

Sandmobile

“Whoa whoa whoa, say that again.” Nolan responded as he piloted the airborne Sandmobile. “Your daughter’s a Sleeper Agent?”

“Yes.” Kami answered with frustration. She sat next to Wiccan in the backseat. “And that cyborg guy said Carter Pewterschmidt knew her activation code. I don’t know what possessed Kimaya to go to Mexico, but if Carter’s in the same place, I’m afraid he’ll try to use her.”

“I feel like I heard of ‘Sleeper Agents’ before.” Yuki said. “Do you have to say some kind of funny sentence to activate her? Like a sentence you wouldn’t say in normal conversation?”

“That’s right.”

“What’s Kimaya’s, Hi’m just curious!” Yuki chortled.

“I’m not telling you! Sigh, I was always afraid of Kimaya finding out and never trusting me again. What if she runs away from home, or starts acting paranoid because I know the code?”

“At least you’re doing the honest thing now.” Haruka reasoned, having to sit on the floor while the adults occupied the seats. “As soon as we see what this Carter guy is up to, we’ll tell the Kids Next Door about Project Daycare and put a stop to it.”

“Why is she here again?” asked Yuki.

“Poison- and chemical-based villains are her specialty.” Nolan remarked.

“Darn straight!” Haru cheered.

“Nolan, look out there!” Crystal pointed left outside the ship. “There’s some boy with four children in an airplane!”

They all looked left to see this. Indeed, there was a boy with sunglasses piloting a biplane. In the backseat was a football-headed baby, a spike-haired baby, a boy with an afro, and a girl with a skull mask. The pilot gave a grin and wink at the Sandmobile before flying down. “Was that Ace?” Kami asked. “What’s his deal?”

Miners’ Mountain

Django’s Ghost Train screeched to a halt in the desert. The sun was nearly set beyond the horizon,
but they could not see it because of the towering mountain. The Gang members stepped off the train as Django gaped in horror. “I don’t remember this being here!”

“This dern mountain?” Kimaya asked, her boots clanking as she stepped beside him.

“Take a closer look! It’s a freaking coal mountain!”

Leo, Beat, and Rhyme came to observe. It was a mountain of rubble that smelled like burning sulfur, or some chemical they didn’t know, with coal trucks driving along it. Django approached a pile of rocks that were glowing green and picked one up. He scratched some gravel off. “So, he’s been mining for more all this time.”

“Who you talkin’ about?” Kimaya asked.

“No one…” Django crushed the rock in his hand. “Pueblo de Niebla’s somewhere on the other side. I can’t imagine how it looks now… Must be horrible.”

“Yo man, I thinkin’ about backin’ outta this trip!” Beat said, pinching his nose. “This smells WORSE than skunks makin’ a poop mountain! It smells like… DEATH makin’ one!”

“Yeah, Kimaya!” Kaleo pinched his nose shut. “Even I think it smells bad. Let’s just go home.”

Kimaya held the Keyblade and aimed it up at the mountain. She felt an odd magnet-like force pulling it. “I gotta see what this is. This magic key’s puttin’ off some weird mojo.”

“I say just shove that magic key up a wizard’s magic nose and forget it!” Beat shouted. “This is the kind of stuff you see in a nature documentary. And when those things don’t bore me to death, they freakin’ scare me!”

“Then stay behind, you scared-ass pussy. Ah wanna see where Django’s from. Is it a city of dead people, too?”

“It probably is by now. Sigh… Let’s get moving.” Django approached the slope.

Kimaya followed him, and then Leo. Beat and Rhyme exchanged worried glances as the former said, “Stay close to me, Rhyme. That ain’t the only weird smell Ah smell here.” (Play “Canadian Wilderness” from Sly 2!)

Stage 61: Pueblo de Niebla

Mission: Get to the Fogged Village.

Act 1: Miners’ Mountain

The slope was too slippery to step up normally, so The Gang jumped up some flat parts until they reached the top of the gravel hill. They had view of part of the mountain range, looking down into a gorge where a machine appeared to be mining from a glowing green pit. The Gang tried to travel along a right path, but a coal truck was coming and would run them over carelessly. They saw a truck drive by on a low path on their left, so they decided to jump down and ride it a short way. It was coming to a tunnel, so the kids jumped to the ledge above it, back on the previous path, which was past the point where the coal trucks came out on this path.

They followed a snaky road between some large coal mounds, then came to a small field where
some filthy-looking miners were grilling burgers and drinking beer, engaged in laughter. Beat and Rhyme withheld from barfing when their soot-covered gloves picked up the burgers to begin eating. “I wouldn’t mind a bite.” said Django. “Let’s kick their asses!” He ran out to strum a sonic wave at one of the miners. They grabbed guns and tried to shoot the kids, so The Gang scattered, with the Bitos riding their skateboards. The siblings circled around the miners while Kimaya bent a stream of gas through the grill, using the resulted flame to scorch the miners’ butts. In their effort to put the fire out, Beat and Rhyme blast Song Beams to knock them out.

Django proceeded to eat the remaining burgers before pushing the propane-powered grill toward a large stone wall. “Mmm, not bad. Leo, see if you can blow this up.” Kaleo nodded and farted a Gas Bomb at the grill, exploding in the fire, which in turn blew up the propane tank and blasted an opening in the wall. They peeked inside the cave, seeing bits of gravel dripping from the ceiling. “A cave through a rubble mountain?” Beat questioned.

“I know, it isn’t stable.” Django said, strumming a black skateboard with a skull design into existence. “We better be quick if we wanna get through!” With that, The Gang members hopped on their skateboards and rode through the cave, Django using his eyes as red flashlights. They dodged boulders and dripping gravel that would follow with boulders, then reached a left curve where they skated up the wall before shifting direction. They jumped a gap and grinded across minecart tracks, having to jump between tracks before they collapsed. They jumped back on a road, jumping all the small bumps as the ceiling began to cave in behind them. They made a tight turn to the rock before coming out of the cave.

Their momentum increased as they skated down a hill, and had a nice view of the sunset in the distance. They skated down to a field and got off their boards. There was a Sombrero Shy Guy in the middle of the field, playing the level’s music. His notes summoned Red Nocturne, Blue Rhapsody, Green Requiem, and Yellow Opera Heartless. The floating bells cast their respective elements, but when The Gang tried to hit them, the Heartless dodged swiftly, being powered by the Sombrero Guy’s song. Kaleo was able to fart a Gas Bomb to explode against several Heartless, but the Green Requiems healed their comrades.

The Sombrero Guy danced away from the action, keeping the Heartless empowered. “Hey, buddy! I know a song you can play!” Django summoned four skeletons around the Shy Guy and had them gang up. “It’s called ‘Your Funeral!’” With the music spell gone, the Heartless were weakened. Kimaya flipped around and stylishly cut them with her Keyblade, and when some flew too high, she blasted laser bullets. For each Heartless defeated, a captive heart flew out of it.

“You got some weird-ass animals in your hometown, Django.” Kimaya said.

“No we don’t. I dunno what those things were. But I got a bad feeling.”

The Gang progressed down the path, coming to a wide area with a chasm and minecart tracks over it. The carts were simply rolling back and forth, and had piles of coal in them. The kids jumped on the first when it came over, then to a cart on a track that went right, one more that went forward, and jumped to the next ledge. They followed another path to a very expansive field with lots of short hills, which all made a wavy formation. A sudden gust of wind brushed across the field, The Gang shielding their eyes as gravel blew. “This isn’t normal, either!” Django yelled. “What…”

They saw someone soar in from the sky. He was a thin man in a purple jumpsuit, a black heart symbol with red outline on his chest, and a tan face. He rode a flying surfboard with the same symbol. “‘ey, yo-yo, why-don’t-you; yo, why-don’t-you-kiddies-get-on-outta-here, man?” Boomhauer requested.

“Is he speaking Spanish, because I can’t understand him.” Rhyme said.
“No, it’s not Spanish. And he’s probably one of Carter’s dogs.” Django glared at him.

Boomhauer scanned the kids before setting his sights on Kimaya. “‘ey, yo… You there. Uh, dang-ol’ admin, he-he’s-pretty-reasonable, man.”

“?? ??” The Gang exchanged baffled looks.

“Uh, dang-dang-old-admin. D-Dang-old-admin, he-; admin is reasonable, man!” Boomhauer insisted.

“I’ll just say he’s sayin’ it’s Surfer Season!” Kimaya shot laser bullets from her Keyblade like a gun.

“Ahh!” Boomhauer barely dodged, soaring behind them as he used dark airbending to blow the gravel. The Gang got on their skateboards to flee when a sandstorm of gravel washed after them. Smaller waves brushed at them from the parent wave, forcing them to dodge to the sides. A pit was coming, the skaters went up a curve along the right wall, back on the path once across, then up a left curve to avoid another pit. They were skating to tall rocks blocking the path, but when larger sub-waves began to surf up from the parent, they would lift the Gang members up, giving them the chance to jump the top of the rocks.

“Guuuuuys!” Kaleo cried, pointing at the steep hill ahead. “We’re gonna crash!”

“This is what we trained for, Raimu! Are you ready?” Beat fist-palmed.

“Yeah, Bito! Let’s rock their world! Hehe, get it, rocks!”

The rapstar siblings projected a Song Road, which they all used to glide up the hill, bouncing between lines and hitting the notes to keep the song flowing. “Brothers in the hood and-” “sisters in the jeans!” Beat and Rhyme took turns. “Boys doin’ good and-” “girls being mean!” “And when they meet up right downtown, they’ll-” “TEAR EACH OTHER all year rooo-ound!”

They got to the top of the hill, safe from the sandstorm. “You Americans have weird music.” Django remarked. He frowned as he looked down at the sandstorm. “Hmm… looks like we lost that guy. I wonder what else he has in store.” The Gang continued along a path that steadily sloped down. Air Soldier Heartless appeared, bat-like Heartless with pilot hats. Kimaya shot them with laser bullets while Django and the Bitos knocked them down with Song Beams.

“Django, you keep talking about this Carter dude.” Kimaya said. “What’s your beef with him, he done you wrong or something?”

“I’ll explain as soon as we get there. I want the entire town to hear it. Assuming there’s anybody actually left…”

At the edge of the hill was a canyon of gravel, where they had to sidle along a thin ledge on the left wall. Since it was a weak gravel ground, the ledge was crumbling under their weight, so they sidled quick to outrun the crumbling part. They were coming to the end of the ledge, but a coal truck was driving by, so they jumped down onto its load. Some of the rocks were colored with the bright green substance. The truck drove between a trench, where The Gang had to duck or jump metal scaffolds that were sticking out of the sides. When the truck drove into a tunnel, the kids jumped to a path above it.

The Gang crossed another road between large mounds of coal. Fat Bandit Heartless were stationed atop the mounds, breathing fire to ignite propane tanks, which they chucked down to explode. The Gang bolted to avoid the line of explosions, and the escape would lead them to a field of propane
tanks. A single Fat Bandit coughed a fireball at one of the tanks, turning them all into a mine field. The Gang saw the exit, having to run around large holes in the ground to outrun the explosions, but they were able to get to another path within a trench.

“Hold up, pards.” Kimaya stopped them, facing forward. “Big black bulgin’ blob at 10:00.”

“But my watch says it’s seven!” Kaleo whined.

“It is, and it’s not a blob.” Django pointed. “Take a look!”

The black mass at the end of the path was a huge cloud of black smoke. The source of the smoke was a bug sprayer, which Dale Gribble was using to fly. He had the Heartless Emblem on his chest and hat, and his suit was a preying mantis skin. He blew smoke from his cigarette. “Ah could use the activation code on her… But I have a strong feeling I am also a Sleeper Agent. I probably have some weird code like… ‘Quit raping that cow’ or ‘No, I wouldn’t mind a budget cut.’ I lie awake every night in fear. I can’t turn on a fellow Sleeper. Best to just put you outta your misery.”

He sent the black cloud to sweep over the path, and with the previous field still burning from explosions, The Gang was ensnared. Kimaya and Leo stepped in front and threw their hands up, using poisonbending to create an invisible shield. The black gas was strong, and they felt their selves getting overwhelmed. There was something unnatural about it.

The Sandmobile was gliding over the artificial mountains, seeing the black cloud and the person creating it. “What is that thing?” Haruka questioned.

“Let’s fly down and ask it.” Nolan said assertively. However, Boomhauer flew in front and used dark wind to blow their aircraft away. When the Sandmobile recomposed, the surfer flew up and bashed the ship with his board, sending it crashing on the ground.

“COUGH, kuoh!” Beat coughed. “Man, I don’t wanna die like no bug! Can’t you DO somethin’, Django?”

“I can’t see through this smoke!” Django yelled, blasting rays from his guitar. “I’d like to hit him, but…”

The Keyblade flashed in Kimaya’s hand. The odd magnetic pull was aiming it upward. She aimed the blade that direction as a laser shot, striking Dale perfectly in the chest as his black cloud dispersed. “Oof!” The exterminator gripped his chest. “Some kind of newfangled laser-key-gun technology… The future’s coming for us all.” He retreated.

The ground was spray-painted black as a result. They turned left at the end of the path, coming to a field of pumpjacks. The ground was covered in oil, and if they stepped too close to the holes where the jacks were mining, they would slip and slide in. They used some flat rock platforms on their left to cross the first oil slope. Kimaya and Leo held onto their friends and used Poison Whip to rope the back end of the pumpjack, swing to another, rope it, and swing to a platform. The Gang jumped to a coal-filled minecart, which started to move along its rails that would lead it into the pit. Before it did, they jumped to another cart, and when this one rolled toward a pit, they jumped another—then immediately jumped once more as that one slid in a pit instantly.

“They clearly set ’em up like that just to troll us.” Django figured. They were almost at the end of the field, but the slope before it was angled like a triangle. They used their skateboards to shred across this angle, keeping perfect balance, or else they would zip into the oily pit on either side. They made it to the edge of the slick field, setting their feet on dry ground. They passed through a short trench and discovered a lone coal truck, its headlights on, but its driver absent.
“Alright, we can use this to drive to the village!” Django hopped in the driver’s seat with an eager grin.

“You got a driver’s license?” Beat asked suspiciously.

“Hey, if I can drive a train, a truck will be no problem.”

“That logic’s more convincing than Gingerbread running from a fox.” Kimaya said as she rode shotgun. “Let’s hit town with this gas horse, fellers!”

“Seriously, Kim, the cowgirl talk isn’t for you.” Beat said as the other three climbed onto the coal pile.

The area was growing darker by the minute, and soon night would be completely upon them. They used the truck’s headlights to see the path, avoiding usual hazards like pitfalls and rocks. The small propane tanks were more difficult to see, and when Django hit one of them, the truck took damage from the explosion. “YO, watch it, DJ!” Beat shouted. Heartless Bandits, who wore white turbans and blue suits, climbed up to attack the rooftop riders with their swords, forcing Beat, Rhyme, and Leo to fight back and push them off.

Django hit the boost to drive the truck up a slope and over a chasm, resulting in an uncomfortable bumpy landing. Afterwards, a large metal wall was opening and closing sideways. Django hit the brake to avoid crashing, then sped forward when the wall opened. He had to repeat the actions for more opening walls, during which Red Nocturnes shot fireballs at the truck. The Bito kids blasted Song Beams to defeat them. They came to a row of five walls that opened and closed sequentially. Django waited for the first to open, hit the gas, and sped through the doors as they were opening, then drove up and over a chasm, followed by a forceful land.

“Django, some idgit’s standing in the road!” Kimaya pointed up ahead. There was a bloated purple fat man wearing only briefs, stretching his arms in a blocking position. He had a Heartless Emblem.

“Then I guess tonight’s the night fatheads die.” Django kept driving, showing no concern for the man.

The minute the truck made contact, it was slowing to a halt. “Hnnnnrrrrrr!” Bill Dauterive kept as firm as he could, pouring every ounce of strength into pushing the truck. “You think you getting past me? Ah once kept a 200 pound leg press … hmmm, for two days straight!”

“MOVE ASIDE, gramps!” Django stomped the gas and applied more pressure.

“HOOOO-WEEEE!” Bill felt his legs slipping. With an extra thrust from the truck, it bumped his legs—he fell back as his legs were bent up. “SOOO! I think my rectum just… went through my spine.” The truck forced itself over and squished his bones. “SQUEEEOoooo…” The kids heard a SPLAT as the truck kept driving.

“That must be the entrance to the village!” Django pointed at the huge, upcoming gate. “I’ll ram this baby through it!”

“YOU CRAZY, D?!?” Kimaya shouted. “You ain’t worried about squishing little kids on the street?!”

“Not one bit!” Django narrowed his eyes.

“Well FRAP this! ABORT, FELLERS!” She jumped out the door.
“COWBOYS DON’T SAY ABORT!” Beat jumped off.

“No, they say GIT OFF!” Rhyme jumped off, then Kaleo.

They watched from a safe distance as Django smashed through the gate. They didn’t want to imagine how many people were smashed on the other side, and they were even thinking of turning around and heading back. But they guessed they had to see if Django wasn’t more dead. (End song.)

After the smoke cleared, they saw the truck crashed against a fountain in the center of town. The fountain wasn’t leaking anything, and it looked like it had been dry for ages. Django fell out of the truck, then got up as he limped toward The Gang. “Well... Welcome to my home.” He said with no enthusiasm.

Pueblo de Niebla was a withered village of wooden houses, filthy streets, and putrid air. The only thing to compliment it were the streetlights that came on when night fell. “This place is...” Kimaya began.

“Really depressing...” Rhyme finished.

They saw people peeking out of windows. Kids stepped out of the houses. They all had pale brown skin and were coughing. Their clothing was ragged and only a few of them wore shoes. “Es que un esqueleto?” a boy asked. (“Is that a skeleton?”)

“Es Parca? (Is it Grim Reaper?)” a girl asked.

Django climbed on top of the coal truck. “People of Pueblo de Niebla!” he announced in Spanish. “I am Django de los Muertos. Yes, I just drove a truck through your door, but I had no reason not to. For you see, I was a citizen of your town! But now, I am dead! I am dead because of the man who calls himself your protector! 30 years ago, you called me an unholy demon. You ran me out of town. By this time, I am certain that everyone I knew back then is dead. You’re a new generation of suffering victims. Well, I’m back. Now I will tell you all the story. The citizens and my new friends.” He gestured at The Gang.

Django muttered, “And since my friends won’t understand jack shit of what I’m saying, here’s a language converter.” He tuned his guitar and shot a calm sonic wave at The Gang. The soundwaves of Spanish words would reform into English words. “Perfect. Ahem, now then...”

33 years ago...

It was a time when the village was slightly more peaceful than it is now. A time when the fountain was running, but it was unwise to drink from it. Django sat on the edge of the fountain and played a gentle tune on his guitar. His music was the life of the village, made them forget their sorrows. Kids were always seen around him, sitting politely with smiles on their faces. Django himself looked like the most healthy person in town, with no pale features on his brown skin, black hair with a curve at the front, and wore a black jacket, red bandana, brown pants and brown shoes.

“Thank you, thank you.” Django said with a cool smile. “I’m Django Diaz! Here all day, every day, 24/7!” Yes, that is my last name.

“I don’t think ‘Django’ is your first name.” Kimaya said.

“Shut up!”

A little girl was about to throw a coin into his cowboy hat. “Oh, there’s no need for that.” Django
picked up and put his hat on. “Today’s free of charge. Now this next song is about my grandma. She lives in Miracle City, and she’s now... among her ancestors.”

“Awwww.” The kids frowned.

“This song is an ode to her memory! Ahem... Here’s the story... of Sartana. Sartana D-”

“Look, everyone!” A woman pointed to the town entrance. “The government is here!”

Django’s audience excitedly got up to gather by the entrance. “Darn it! Better remember to copyright that song.” he mumbled.

I didn’t know how long our people had been sick. But apparently, government agents were sent here to study this land, and they discovered a dangerous chemical underground. It polluted the water and even the soil, causing an epidemic. But instead of moving, the government ordered us to remain secluded, fearing that our diseases would spread. They brought fresh water, food, and medicine every week, but they didn’t stay long. However, there was something odd about their arrival...

Instead of food or medicine trucks, flatbed trucks carrying machines were parking outside the town. A black helicopter with the label Pewterschmidt Industries landed at the gates. A man in a black tuxedo, brown hair and small mustache, and a large triangle-shaped nose stepped out and greeted the town (with an agent to translate his words).

“People of Pueblo de Spanish Word: by the authority and permission of the World Government, this property is under the control of Pewterschmidt Industries. I’m Carter Pewterschmidt, and from this day forward, you can call me your second mayor.”

“We don’t have a mayor!” a woman yelled.

“Ah, perfect, I don’t have to share my pool with anyone. Anyway, the government has granted me permission to mine the land around this village for the source of the poison. My company is going to study this chemical, and from it develop a cure for your gross-looking town. Your salvation is UNDERWAY or some crap from the Bible or... something. Ahem, but my generosity doesn’t come cheap. There’s going to be a tax increase. Thankfully, we have plenty of new openings in our new mining operations. Sign-up sheets are over there.”

“None of us know how to write!” a girl shouted.

“Man, this town is boring! Fine, everyone just raise your hand if you wanna volunteer.”

The announcement caught everyone off guard, and everyone engaged in frantic, muddled discussion. Django picked up his guitar and cut through the crowds as he made his way to the east side of town. There was a rugged hill that led up to a lone house. It looked like it had been here for centuries, more decayed than any other house in town. The slightest tap against the siding may topple the whole structure.

Django creaked open the crooked front door. He tiptoed into the house, moving the cobwebs aside and stepping over the broken floorboards. There was a bed near the empty fireplace. The blanket was in a lump—someone was laying in it. The occupant was coughing as Django approached him. “You still hanging in there, Luviro?”

“Cough!” The boy gave Django a weak smile. His head was wrapped up in a blanket, and his skin was a pale white. He definitely was the most sick person in town, for he never got out of his bed. His eyes were green with yellow sclera. “I’m just fine... Amigo Django.”
He was my best friend. I visit him almost every day to bring him medicine or tell him what’s going down. It was a year beforehand when I first discovered his house.

“The town’s coming under new management, it seems.” Django told him. “Some bigwig American guy. He’s going to start mining our town for the chemical. The townspeople don’t know how to feel about this, and neither do I. I mean… won’t it just harm our town more if it were more exposed?”

“But why does he… want to… Cough!”

“He says that he wants to make a cure. Sigh…” Django smiled with humor. “I would never think the word ‘cure’ held meaning here. I thought sickness was our very existence. What do you think?”

“Cough. Cure… it’s funny. I only dreamed about days when I… wasn’t coughing. When I can walk and… breathe normally. I think the only reason I’m still alive… is ’cause I can imagine a day like that coming.”

“Hmm… The idea of a cure does sound like a dream. I’d like to imagine it, too…” He closed his eyes.

“Django… sing me a song.”

He looked at Luviro. “Do you wanna hear the2 song about that legend you told me about?”

“Yes… I like that song.”

“Okay.” Django sat on an old chair and played his guitar, singing softly.

*Six magic gems… from a faraway land*

*Six you must find… Find them if you can*

*End-less fire… eeeendless poooower*

*The key that which lies… at the top of the tooower*

*Just follow your heart… to a suuuunny toomooorrow*

*You will find the core… of your love and your sorrow*

*With unmatched strength… harder… than stone*

*With friendship… you’ll never be… alone…*

_I was the only person in town born with magic. Maybe that’s why I’m not as ill. The other townspeople wouldn’t look at that too well. They would think I’m a demon. And I guess they’re right. Luviro was the only one who knew. My music eased his soul; namely when I played this song his grandma used to sing him. His grandma passed away, too. It makes me wonder…_

**Three years later**

Pewterschmidt Industries dug several mines and brought more mining equipment. Taxes increased, forcing more people to volunteer as miners, even children. Dozens perished. A factory was being constructed on the north edge of town, and what that had of it became the primary mine site. For Django, life went on like normal. His music kept the hearts of the children at ease, kept their faces smiling, hoping there would be a brighter tomorrow.
Special volunteers wanted, the posters read in Spanish. Speak to President Pewterschmidt. Django pulled one of these papers down, looking at it with a raised brow. He headed to the factory.

Mining operations were in progress under the factory’s basement. They had found a flowing river of the chemical, which was a pinkish-red color. A crane was lowered down into the river. Carter Pewterschmidt watched as a boulder was raised from its depths. The crane dropped the stone beside Carter.

“President Pewterschmidt.” Carter turned to face an agent, who was standing by a Mexican boy with a guitar. “This child wanted to speak to you regarding the ‘special volunteers’ posting.”

“Really?” Carter smoked a cigarette. “And what’s our young volunteer’s name? …Cough.”

“Django Diaz.” The boy replied. He played a musical spell that would allow him to understand and speak English.

“Ooo, badass!” Carter perked. He spoke more formally, “Ahem, well, Django, when I say ‘special volunteers,’ I don’t mean just anyone.” Carter said as he walked slowly around him, hands folded at his back. “Little boys your age believe in magic and wizards, don’t you?”

Django raised a brow. “Yes?”

“Well, those little stories aren’t just fantasies. There are forces in this universe that are hard for people to understand. And we believe that if we were to understand them, extraordinary things could happen… Cough.”

“But what does that have to do with saving my hometown?”

“Because, boy, the chemical we are researching is one that we only heard in legends. And this river you see here,” Carter waved an arm at the river as Django looked down at it, “is just how it was drawn in the books. It’s called Lazarus. And the legends read that Lazarus is a powerful substance that can cure any illness. Unfortunately, if the source of the Lazarus was tainted in any way, it would create the opposite effect. Cough!”

“So the reason everybody in Niebla is sick is because this ‘Lazarus’ is tainted?”

“Yes. If we were to purify it, we could develop a cure to heal not just your village, but all the sick people in the world.”

“What’s the answer to purifying it? The reason for your ‘special volunteer’?”

“The answer is over here. This way…”

Carter led Django up the river’s trench, through a small tunnel. They got to a room with a pit that glowed a faint red. They looked into the pit. A huge cube was sitting in the river, with only the top sticking out. It cast a square shadow on the ceiling above, while the area around it reflected dim red light. “We believe this is the source of the Lazarus. It’s being clogged by that stone. We built that giant crane to lift it.” Carter pointed at the crane on the ceiling, “but it wouldn’t budge. Then we brought in some agents who knew earthing. Even they couldn’t lift it. Clearly, this stone is not natural. The special volunteers I’m looking for are anyone who know how to get that stone out of this hole. Hm, but maybe asking this town was the wrong idea. Cough, cuah!”

Django looked at the guitar in his hands. He faced up at Carter, “Why do you care about our town, anyway? If you had someone who could lift it, why should they?”
“Django… I have a secret to tell you.” He faced the boy more closely. “I may look like a man in
the prime of my youth… but I am not. I have cancer. Cough! I feel so awful every day I wake up.
And it makes me think about the plight of others… It makes me think of all the poor, innocent
people who are suffering. Django… I really do want to help you. But as long as that rock is
clogging up the source, we may never find a cure.”

“…Don’t give up just yet.” Django turned the tuners on his guitar. “You may have just found your
special guy.” He closed his eyes and remembered the levitation song his grandma taught him. He
played it softly. “Rise… to the sky… Rise… to the sky… Riiiiise, oooohhh riiiiise… very hiiiiigh…”

Carter was confused as to what he was doing. But when he looked at the cube again, it began to
twitch. “Riiiiise… oooohhh riiiiise… Riiiiise… uuuup hiiiiigh… But the ceiling… works, tooooo… Will
you dooooo it… Won’t youooouu…”

The cube began to rise. It rose slowly out of the pit, dripping with the red Lazarus. Carter moved
back when Django floated the cube over the ledge. He set it down and stopped his song. Carter
didn’t recognize the symbols on the stone, and Django said it wasn’t Spanish. There was a keyhole
below the writing.

Regardless, they both viewed down into the unclogged pit. The Lazarus bubbled and began to rise.
The river flowed faster. “It worked, Django!” Carter exclaimed. “How the hell did you do that?!”

“I may have been born with… magic powers.” He smiled proudly.

“Magic? You mean like… a wizard?”

“I guess so. Except instead of using a wand, I play this guitar.” He strummed a few notes.

“Well, that just… works in my favor entirely.” Carter grabbed the boy and threw him into the pit.

“AAAAAAAAHHH!” A searing pain burned Django’s body. His clothes dissolved, his hat dissolved,
he flailed his arms and legs desperately as his skin turned red. “WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! GET
ME OUT OF HERE, AAAAAHHH!”

“There was one more page of the book I forgot to mention. The Lazarus’s healing properties will
only be revealed with a live sacrifice. My agents always wondered why you were the only healthy
brat in this God-forsaken town. Now you come to me with the straight-up truth that you have
magic. Just what the Lazarus needed: a healthy body of magic energy. You served me well,
Django. Now you’ll be able to curse your gods in person.”

“AAAAAAAAHHH! AAAAAAAAAHH… AAAAAAA…”

His flesh burned off… his eyes melted… and soon, he knew, his skeleton would be lost, too. But it
wasn’t.

Django thought he would feel relief when the pain was gone. But he found himself in a realm of
darkness. His bones gazed up at the black mass with red eyes, which spoke with a deep voice that
sent a chill down his bare spine. “Your death has come sooner than I expected… Oh well. I still
have a debt, I suppose. Django Diaz… I am Lucifer. A close friend of your grandmother, Sartana.
Sartana of the Dead, as you already know her.

“It was her request that I grant you magic abilities. And it was her request… that I let you share
her fate. Now, I shall revive you, Django… You will be of the Dead… but you shall walk among the
earth and seek your revenge…”
A dark mist shrouded Django’s body. He was given a black shirt, black leather pants with boots, and a brownish-black cowboy hat that had a curve like his hair, and a skull and crossbones. His boney claws stuck out of his dark-brown gloves, swirly lines appeared on his skull, and his eyes glowed red. He raised his hand. A black guitar burned into being from blue flames. He brushed the other hand across the strings and made a strum.

The Lazarus turned a bright green thanks to Django’s “sacrifice.” Carter slowly climbed down, dipping only his legs into the Lazarus. He sniffed the toxic air and breathed a sigh of relief. He never felt so purified… his throat so clear… He climbed out of the pool. “But how long does it last… that’s the question. We’ll keep mining the land around this village for more bodies of Lazarus. Make sure the townspeople don’t find out about this.” Carter told his men before walking away from the pit.

He whipped around at the sound of a BURST, seeing a bright blue flame rise from the pit. A person flew out of it, landing firmly on the ground. It was a skeleton with large claws, wearing a bandana like Django’s and holding a guitar at his back. He looked up at Carter with brimming red eyes. “Well? Aren’t you gonna help the town?”

“Well? What?”

“You said you wanted to cure the town… You gonna keep your word?”

“You’re a… You’re a demon!”

“I’m not the only demon… Are you gonna help the town?”

“SEND IN THE RANCOR!”

At Carter’s command, a large cage was opened. A hideous brown monster with a rock-like body and misshapen mouth stomped out, roaring ravenously. The monster saw the skeleton child and felt a lust to crunch him to pieces. The Rancor charged over and swiped an arm at Django, who dodged and ran. The Rancor blasted a sound wave that Django countered with his guitar. Django ran and slid under the monster’s legs, then climbed up its back, to the head.

Django gouged his claws into the Rancor’s eyes, the monster screeching with agony. The Rancor stormed through the mine, knocking down all machines and people in its wake. Django kept his fingers in its eyes, wanting it to suffer until it felt like dropping dead.

The Rancor ended up bursting out of the factory, furiously shaking its head until Django flew off. The skeleton landed in the center of town. He looked around at the surrounding citizens. They were terrified of the living corpse, backing away and muttering prayers. The children who enjoyed Django’s songs didn’t recognize him. They only saw a cursed being.

“EVERYBODY IN YOUR HOUSES!” Carter shouted through a megaphone. “This demon appeared in my factory and summoned this monster! Get inside, we’ll take care of it!”

Everybody scrambled to their houses like a swarm of bats fluttering out of a cave. Agents surrounded Django and aimed shotguns. Django glared murderously at Carter when he marched up between the soldiers. “I helped you!” Django growled. “Why are you betraying me? Why are you betraying these people?”

“You may be a demon, but you’re still a child.” Carter said. “So I wouldn’t expect you to understand. This is a world of business and profit. The people who rule this world are people who know how to make money. Those are the only people worth saving. And if everybody had access
to a medicine that can cure all, then we would be out of business. I need to keep people hoping for cures and miracles. And these people won’t be hopeful with some unholy bone child walking their streets. You don’t belong here. Now, leave.”

Django stared at the men with their guns trained. He stared at the people peeking from the windows. He felt their fear. He felt Carter’s desire. These dark feelings… He could feel them like the toxic air. “Fine.” Django turned to the town entrance. His new boots clanking their metal at each step, he marched out.

He marched out to the dry, dry desert. He couldn’t feel the sand in the breeze, nor the warmth of the sun as it set behind his home. His legs never felt weary from the long walk.

*From that day on… I hated the world. People are cruel… adults especially. I began to ignore law and meaning.*

**Present time**

“I went to Miracle City to live with my grandma.” The people were still listening to his story. “I almost forgot the plight of my people. I gave up on them. Then one day, Grandma took me to Cleveland to meet the witch-doctor. I wandered off on my own… and met the first group of people I could call my friends.”

Django jumped off the truck, beside The Gang. “What was it you told me, Kimaya? It was understood that we have rough backgrounds. It couldn’t get any worse than being dead like me. You let me into your crew without question. And I paid regular visits, hung out with you guys… because deep down, a part of me sought coldblooded revenge. You said The Gang looks out for each other… If there was something I wanted from you, I shouldn’t hesitate to ask. Well… can you understand what I’m asking you, and why?” He spun and indicated the pale, dire townspeople.

“Oh, I understand *perfectly.*” They whipped in the direction of the factory. Carter Pewterschmidt marched up, the citizens limping aside to let him and the Heartless Hank Hill through. His hair and mustache were grey from old age, and he wore blue business attire. “Well, the translator did, but I understood… the translation. After all this time, you finally came back. I figured a demon like you would leave his people to die.”

“Don’t you people see?!” Django yelled. “This man is a fraud, he’s been using you all along! He doesn’t care about your health!”

“Go ahead and tell them. They’re too sick and weak to do anything. Why do you think this place is the Land Forsaken By God? Because these people have always been hopeless, not even worth saving. They may sell everything they own just to buy medicine from me, but they’re better off waiting for death.”

“Wow, man…” Kimaya said with disgust. “You have got to be the sickest son of a bitch I know.”

“Oh, I’m far from it.” Carter smirked at the girl in the Western hat. “That Male Administrator Is The Most Reasonable Man I Know.”

A spark flashed in Kimaya’s brain—she stood upright and saluted. “Agent 6767 activated. What are your orders?”

“What the fuck?!” Beat gaped.

“So, you really were a Sleeper.” Carter said. “This couldn’t be any easier. Agent Double-67: destroy that skeleton!”
“Understood.” She lashed her Keyblade at Django.

“HEY!” Django swung his guitar to counter her attacks, then jumped away to strum a sonic wave, which Kim avoided. The townspeople retreated back indoors.

“Kimaya, what are you doing?!” Rhyme cried.

“It must be some kind of mind control!” Django dodged Kimaya’s swift swings and slashed his claws at her face. “Rhyme, Beat, you two are musicbenders, see if you can cure it!”

“Man, the mood ain’t right!” Beat shouted. “There’s way too much pressure in the air, why don’t you use your magic notes?”

“I’m not getting a good vibe myself!” Django said as he countered more of her slashes.

“Alright, alright. Lemme find a good beat,” the rapper put his boombox down and tapped the song select, “okay! Rhyme, on three! One, two, ahem: Doooon’t start unbelieeeeving. Never don’t not know- AAH!” Beat was shot in the stomach by Hank Hill.

“BEAT!” Rhyme and Leo cried. The sister knelt beside her brother.

“Ahh… Rhyme!…” he choked.

“Yer outta time, Mister.” Hank said before shooting him once more. Beat fell on his back, dead.

“BITOOOOO!” Rhyme ran up and knelt over his face. Her big brother showed no signs of life or motion. Rhyme’s pretty blue eyes were overflowing with tears. “Beat… Beat… BEEEAT…”

“Rhyme?” Leo spoke, traumatized by the sight himself. He never saw the younger girl look so upset. In fact, he couldn’t remember a time when Beat and Rhyme were ever apart. He approached carefully.

“BEEEAT. BEEEAT. BEEEAT.” Leo hesitated as Rhyme’s voice grew. “BEEEEAAAAT!” Her body fell dead atop her brother’s as a dark mass came out of her. The black-purple creature had the same shape and size as Rhyme, but it had a hole in its chest, and when it turned around, Leo saw its frightening skull mask. “AAAAHH!”

“BUAAH, GET OFF ME!” Rhyme lunged at Hank, biting and tearing his arm. “Got damn little devil, I swear-!”

A gust of wind created by Boomhauer blew the dark creature off. As Rhyme snarled at him, Heartless Soldiers appeared. Rhyme blasted dark music notes to attack them. “Rhyme…” Leo looked between Rhyme’s body and the creature, growing more confused.

“LEO, BEHIND YOU!” Django screamed.

The earth shook as Bill Dauterive stomped into town. His body was not splat, his bones were not misplaced, and he towered over the village at 40 feet. “I’m a BIIIIG man! And I need a BIIIIIG bowl of cereal!”

“AAAAAAHHH!” Kaleo bolted to the east side of town.

“WHERE YA GOIN’, Puny?!” Bill charged after him, knocking over streetlights and squishing many of the lesser Heartless. “Don’tchu wanna goooo in my mooouuuth?”

“Well, I have nothing to worry about.” Carter said assuringly. “I don’t know how you boys turned
into mutants, but as long as these brats get squashed, I don’t really care.”

“We aim to please ya, Mr. Pewterschmidt.” Hank nodded. “But what’re you gonna do about that there Kimaya girl? Ain’t she the one you’re s’posed to stop?”

“She’s a Sleeper Agent, don’t you see? As soon as she gets rid of that walking corpse, I’ll tell her to kill herself. Then no more Twenty Keys!”

**In the sky above**

This group of kids had a hawk’s-eye view of the coal mountain, and all the verminous Heartless. The conflict taking place at the village caught their attention. “The situation’s worse than we thought.” said a girl wielding a large scythe. She had sandy-blond hair in two long bangs, green eyes, wore a black tux that flowed like a cape, and a red patterned skirt underneath.

*Spirit KND Sector SCYTHE Leader*

**MAKA ALBARN**

“I’m not afraid!” A boy with spiky blue hair smirked, whirling his kusarigama. He wore a black sleeveless shirt, large white pants, and a star marked on his right shoulder, gloves, and shoes. “I’ll chop every last one of them to pieces!”

*Spy of Sector SCYTHE*

**BLACK ☆STAR**

“These aren’t Hollows we’re dealing with.” A girl with purple hair, golden eyes, and a red dress said. She had a skull mask on her head. “They’re Heartless. In fact, I read that they and Hollows were enemies.”

*Mage of Sector SCYTHE*

**ELLEN WICKENS**

“It doesn’t matter.” Maka said. “It’s time we put an end to them. Sector SCYTHE, Battle Stations!”

Yeah, this is kind of plot twist palooza coming up. :P I didn’t think I would write Django’s backstory this early, but I did. Lol I think turning the Hill Gang into Heartless is one of my funniest ideas, yet. XD Ahh, the Hill Gang’s from *King of the Hill*, Heartless are from *Kingdom Hearts*, Carter is from *Family Guy*, and Sector SCYTHE is from *Soul Eater*—except for Ellen Wickens from *Witch’s House*. I got the Lazarus from *Batman*. 
Chapter Summary

The Gang tries to form a plan to get into the Lazarus Factory.

Made it to the sixties!

Chapter 60: The Keeper of the Keys

Pueblo de Niebla

“COME BACK, LITTLE MAN!” Bill Dauterive was hot on Kaleo’s tail, reaching both arms and drooling like a child. “I just wanna plaaaay!”

“THIS REMINDS ME OF THAT SCARY ANIME WITH THE GIANT PERVERTS!” Kaleo screamed, growing more sweaty by the minute.

A chain-sickle swooped in and SLASHED off Bill’s left leg. “OOOOOOOG!” He fell over with unbalanced weight.

Kaleo turned in shock at the sight, taking the moment to catch his breath. “HEEEEE-YAH!” The chain-sickle sliced off Bill’s right arm, and Leo gaped when its wielder flipped over the giant. “You call yourself a Titan?! You’re a BUG compared to the godly might of Black Star!” the boy with spiky blue hair taunted.

“WOW! THAT WAS SO AWESOME!” Leo cheered.

“Thank you!” Black Star spoke with pride. “The great god acknowledges your-!” He perked when he realized: “WAIT A SEC, how do you see me?!” He pointed at Leo frantically. “I’m in spirit form, mortals can’t see me, which means you aren’t normal!”

“YAAAAAH!” Leo gripped his head and rolled around. “I’M A FREEAAK!”

“Black Star, wait!” A woman’s voice came from the chain-sickle. “I’m not sensing anything unusual, he’s a normal human!”

“Are you sure, Tsubaki?” Black Star looked at the crying Leo weirdly. “Looks pretty weird to me.”

“He certainly seems… odd. But he is a normal human.”

“But he’s still seeing me. I’m gonna see what’s up.”

“Ahh-ha-ha-haaaa!” Leo still cried as Black Star approached him. “WAAAH-ha-haaaa! WAH ha-”

“HEY, BIGMOUTH!” Black Star kicked him in the face. “CEASE your wailing and bow before Black Star!”

“YES, MY LORD!” Leo bowed down quickly. But then he looked up in confusion. “Wait, who are you?”
“Who am I?! I am the Supreme God of the Universe! My power outranks that of Arceus, of Dialga, of ALL gods combined!” He made many epic poses as he spoke. “The very stuttering of my name will cause mortals to faint! Brace yourself, lesser being, for I am Black Star!”

“Snoooore…” Leo fell asleep.

“PAY ATTENTION TO ME!” Black Star kicked him.

“DAAAAH!” He fell back. He got up with an excited grin, “Hey, my name’s Kaleo! I get Dandy grades in school and take a bath every month, give or take!”

“Oooooaaaaaa…” They both turned to Bill Dauterive, whose amputated arm and leg turned into dark mist, and reformed on his body. When Bill got back up, he grew a few more feet tall.

“IMPOSSIBLE!” Black Star shouted. “No one recovers from Black Star’s reign of terror! I’ll cut you as many times as it takes! AAAHHH!” He lashed his sickles and chopped all four limbs off. They reformed on Bill again, and he grew some more.

“Black Star, I feel his energy level increasing!” Tsubaki yelled. “Just take this human to a safe place!”

“How are we supposed to hide from him?!”

“I know how we can lose him!” Kaleo announced, grabbing a can of Green Flurp. He guzzled it up, got in a sitting position, and Fart Rocketed up to Bill’s face. “SMELL YA LATER!” He turned around and Gas Bombed him up close, the blast blowing Leo forward as Black Star ran after.

“AAAAAA! It smells worse than I did on all my first dates!” Bill waved his hand by his nose in a desperate attempt to be rid of the smell. He opened his eyes and saw his prey had gone. “And they ran… just like all my first dates.” Bill drooped his head in sadness. “Siiigh… Look how fat I am. I’m never gonna meet a woman like this. Well, I guess I still have a shot at Brittney Spears.” He stomped away to search for the kids.

He bypassed a rocky enclosing, where Leo and Black Star were hiding. “That was an impressive maneuver.” The spirit said.

“Thanks, it’s Flurp!” Leo held up the green can. “Wanna taste?”

“Sure! It should quench my godly thirst!” Black Star took the can, put one hand to his hip, and poured it down his godly throat. “Eh?” The Flurp came through his pelvis like green pee. The can fell out of his ghostly hand and spilled on the ground.

“Kee hee hee heeeeee!” Leo’s grin stretched wide like The Joker.

“Deceitful little urchin.” Star folded his arms and scowled. “Are you a member of the Human Kids Next Door?”

“Uh-uh.” Leo shook ‘no.’ “I’m with The Gang. The Cleveland City Street Gang. Well, we’re just ‘The Gang,’ but some people get confused by…”

“Then what’s your deal?”

“Er, I came here with my friends because Kimaya’s magic key told her to. But then Kimaya turned evil and attacked our singing skeleton, and Beat…” Leo gasped. “BEAT’S DEAD! BEEEEAAAAT!”
“Kaleo, stop.”

“Oh, Beeeaat!” Kaleo pounded his fist on the ground. “I forgive you for all the times you wedged me! I know that’s your spirit trying to apologize!”

“I ain’t apologizing, you dumbass! I’m tellin’ you to look up!”

“Ahh?” He looked up. Beat was floating there with an intangible body. “HE’S A GHOOOOST! YAAAAAAAH!” Leo bolted across the field again.

“Beat?” Black Star looked up at him with a cocked brow. “Wait, you mean this is the kid you’ve been hanging around?”

“Yeah, yeah. Look, Ah never told ’em I was already dead until now, a’ight? I was afraid Django would find out, but he never said anything. Just go catch him, I need to help my sister.” Beat flew back to town.

“Ugh. And you think I’m a troublemaker, Tsubaki.” Black Star remarked before chasing Leo.

**Lazarus Plant**

“HA ha ha ha!” Carter chuckled as he entered his private quarters, where his wife was sitting on a chair and drinking tea. “Babs, you will not believe my luck! Ever since the Leaders told me one of the Seven Lights would come for that Gibberish Rock, I’ve been worried as hell! And it TURNS out that the person that was going to look for it is a SLEEPER Agent! And to think that little boney demon brought her! I mean, look at this!”

He turned on the TV, displaying Kimaya and Django locked in battle, Keyblade against Mystic Guitar. “Not only can I finally get rid of Django, but once Kimaya is finished, I’ll order her to kill herself. The Twenty Keys that the Leaders kept whining about GONE,” snapped fingers, “just like that!”

“You’re very diabolical, Carter.” Babs said nonchalantly when a cute little Shadow Heartless brushed by her legs. “When are you going to call someone to get rid of these rodents?”

“Those things just showed up outta nowhere. I duno what they are, but they just started doing what I say, and I say ‘Why not?’ YOU, Fatty, bring me a coffee in my Star Wars Collectors’ Glass!” he ordered a Large Body. The Heartless saluted and marched off. “At least I’m getting service from somebody.”

“Oh, buck off, Carter. You’re so fat.”

“And you’re an old bat. HAH! Don’t set me up for rhyme if you can’t do the time!” Carter’s phone rang. He answered, “Hello? ’EY, Director Bullock, mah man! Hey, I have a funny story!”

“*President Pewterschmidt, we’ve received a notice that the Sleeper Agent 6767, aka Kimaya Heartly, has been activated! She was heading to your location, was she not?”*

“Yeah, I activated her! Like, super convenient! You guys said she wasn’t ready, but she’s kicking ass!”

“*Carter, you have to deactivate her right now!*”

“W-What? I don’t understand.”
“She was programmed as Agent 6767, but we never had the chance to perfect her! Instead of turning on you in seven days, she’ll turn on you in one hour!”

“AN HOUR?!”

“Deactivate her now! If she really is the Light, you can’t risk it!”

“Grrr!” The fight was still continuing on the TV. He looked at his watch, which read 8:05. “It’s only been 10 minutes since I activated her. If she doesn’t kill that skeleton in time, I’ll tell her to kill herself through the PA. Babs, I’ll be in my office.” He marched away. “If things go south, I may have to phone in CP10.”

“Yes, you enjoy your Star Wars, dear.”

**Miners’ Mountain**

With its flight engines busted, Nolan drove the Sandmobile recklessly across the coal mountain. He was now speeding through the road with the opening/closing walls. “Nolan, when did you say you got your license?!” Kami exclaimed.

“I just assumed ex-KND ops and vigilantes were exempt from needing a license.”

“You drive your son to school in this thing!” Crystal shouted. “For God’s sake, no wonder you have parent/child drama!”

“That must be the village! Let’s park here!” Nolan stomped the brake and stopped the car, the passengers lunging forward.

“I’m glad I don’t read comic books.” Kami sighed as the five got out of the car and ran to the village.

“Holy crap!” Yuki gaped at the sight of the rampaging Heartless. On the rooftops, there was a sandy-blonde girl slashing at Heartless with a scythe, her swings precise and her heart furious.

“I’d like to say that girl has it covered.” Nolan said. “Cause I wouldn’t wanna be in her way.”

“What girl?” asked Kami.

“Yes, I don’t see anyone.” Crystal agreed.

“Are you kidding, she’s right there.” Haru pointed.

“Wait a minute.” Nolan scanned the girl with his goggles. “She’s doesn’t have any bio readings. In fact, I… can’t seem to scan her at all.”

“DAAAHH!” They looked right and saw Django be blown out of an alley, raising his guitar to block Kimaya’s jump-slice. The Mystic Guitar was shining red due to a defense spell.

“That’s Django!” Haru exclaimed.

“And Kimaya!” Kami followed.

While the two headed over, Nolan used Detective Vision on Kimaya. Now viewing her skeleton, a red circle was marked around part of her brain. “There’s some kind of micro chip inside her. That must be the Sleeper!”
“WATCH YOUR BACK!” Yuki grabbed Nolan and ducked aside, dodging the black lawnmower with buzzsaw teeth and fiery demon eyes. Hank Hill turned the mower about-face.

“Ah might look like a regular Old Joe, but I’m pretty dang handy with machinery, I tell you what.” Hank rolled at Nolan again, but Sandman launched his grappler to the top of the gate, pulling him up and out of Hank’s way. Hank grabbed a hammer, and the ordinary tool morphed into a larger, dark-purple shape thanks to the Heartless’s chi. He bashed the town gate and caused it to vibrate. Unable to stay balanced on it, Nolan glided off and across town. Hank chased on his dark-powered lawnmower and chucked a burning propane tank, which flew surprisingly high and exploded near Sandman, forcing him to redirect leftward and crash somewhere in the village.

Kimaya had Django pinned as the latter pushed his guitar up against her Keyblade. He looked left and saw the two girls come over. “Oh hey, it’s you guys! Nice of you to join us!”

“Kimaya, what are you doing?” Kami yelled.

“Carter said some weird phrase and brainwashed her!”

Kami gasped. “He activated her?!”

“Whaddyou mean ‘activate’?”

“Kimaya’s a Sleeper Agent.” Haruka answered. “Kami told us about it. Django, what did Carter say?”

“I think it was… That Male Administrator Is The Most Reasonable Man I Know.”

“RRRR!” Kimaya slashed sideways and cut Django’s waist. Kami grabbed her daughter from behind and tried to pull back.

“It didn’t work.” Kami grunted. “You two hide someplace, I’ll try to knock some sense into her.”

Haruka helped Django up and ran away. Kimaya broke free of her mother and tried to chase, but Kami leapt in front and slashed her Keyblade. “Kimaya, I am your mother! If you don’t stop what you’re doing, no more music!”

Kim flipped and slashed down, her mom stumbling back. “As your parental figure, I ORDER you-” Kim right-slashed and up-slashed, knocking Kami on the ground. “Or maybe we’ll just sit down and-” She blocked some quick strikes from Kimaya, before the Sleeper flipped behind and knocked her forward. Kami flipped and blocked another swing, jumping to her feet as she clashed with her daughter.

Haruka and Django hid in an alley a few blocks off. “Django, what’s going on here?” Haru panted.

“This is my hometown. I brought my friends here to… Ugh, I just got done telling them!”

“I missed the backstory?”

“Yes. Look, all you need to know is the town’s being run by Carter Pewterschmidt. He’s keeping this chemical called Lazarus all to himself—it’s supposed to cure any disease, and he’s not letting the town have it! They’re suffering because of him!”

“I would say he’s doing them a favor.”

“That doesn’t mean-… Wait, who said that?”
“Clown here!” Haruka held up her cellphone. “I already briefed her on the properties of Lazarus. I don’t know how much reading Mr. Pewterschmidt did, but my knowledge is far superior. It’s true that Lazarus can keep one alive to the point of being immortal. However, it is terribly addicting. You just feel so ENERGIZED every time you step in it! It really is like the Fountain of Youth in some ways: go too long without it, you’ll start to look really, really ugly. You’ll even go downright mad if you have no access to it. I must say, Carter keeps a very convincing demeanor.”

“Are you saying that he’s trying to get people addicted to it?” Django asked. “Why he’s shipping it to stores?”

“Don’t ask me. I’m not the vigilante.”

“Mr. York said that Hugo Strange had them taken to stores.” Haru corrected. “But that still leaves a lot of questions.”

“I smell a rat hiding in my floor.” They looked up when Dale Gribble hovered over, spreading a black cloud of gas. “What they failed to have realized was that I traded my day vision for night vision. …And my lungs for gills.”

“Run!” Haru grabbed Django and ran down the street as the cloud was chasing. “YOU run, I’m already dead!” Django retorted.

“Hey-Dale, ten-ten-ten-o’clock, ten-o’clock, man!” Dale looked up when Boomhauer spun in for a crash-landing, his wind blowing the gas away. Rhyme was grabbing Boomhauer in her dark form, the surfer punching her until she came off. Boomhauer flew up and did a vertical air-slice, missing Rhyme and chopping a house in half.

“HEY, take the fight somewhere else!” Django strummed a sonic wave to blast Boomhauer back. Dale shot a black gas stream at the kids, but Haruka aimed both hands forward and made an invisible shield. She tried to withstand it, but the poison was overwhelming her. Thankfully, purple energy ropes appeared to bind Dale’s arms from behind. They were cast by Ellen, who was flying above Dale.

“I’m not sure who those people are.” Django said. Haruka ran into the broken house. “Hey, where you goin’?”

“To see if these people are all right, of course! Why, where do you wanna go?”

“Fine, you do that. I’ll check the rest of town.” Django ran further down the street.

Inside the house, Haru found two sick boys lain on either side of a bed. They looked at her with despairing, pale sick faces. “It’s okay.” she told them with a kind smile. “I’m gonna get you guys treated.”

“Good plan! I’ll mail you the recipe for NHC10.”

“We are not making them into giants!” she argued.

“Come on!” Caesar was sitting in a McDonald’s, awaiting his food. He wore a top-hat, a scarf, sunglasses, and a mustache disguise. “A village of giants would be way cooler than those sick little bastards.”

“Sir, please don’t cuss near my son.” said a mother from the next table, sitting by a 6-year-old boy.

“YOUR SON’S a little bastard! Hey kid, ever heard of gigantism?” The disgusted mother took her
son elsewhere. Caesar spoke back to his phone, “Haru, just use your parasite powers to bend the poison out of their systems. Then bend it out of yourself so we can study it.”

“Okay. Hopefully, my lab equipment didn’t get damaged by Mr. York’s careless driving.” Haruka stuck her fingers into the boys and sapped out their poison.

**Elsewhere**

Maka sliced Gargoyle Heartless that took turns swooping at her, and when they were gone, Search Ghosts and Trick Ghosts appeared around her. Icicles were launched from below, striking the ghosts as Yuki Crystal came up beside Maka. “Hey there. Should I ask who you are, or you wanna beat these things first?” the icebender asked.

“**Maka, this guy’s a normal human!**” her scythe said with a male voice. “**He can see us!**”

“I’m on official duty.” Maka answered. “What’s your business, Human?”

“Harsh.” When a Trick Ghost spat fire, Yuki blocked with ice and froze the Heartless.

“Jump.” Maka ordered. Yuki jumped as she slashed a spin attack, killing the rest of the surrounding Heartless. But that’s when a Grand Ghost appeared, a larger Search Ghost with white and yellow skin and a red shirt. Maka and Yuki used their scythe and bending, but no damage was being done.

Crystal Wickens saw Boomhauer spinning a dark tornado against the ground at one spot. Rhyme was pinned against the ground by it, screaming from pain, but Wiccan couldn’t see her. But the wind was getting on her nerves. “My, you’re a blowhard.” Crystal used her staff to float up to the surfer, spinning and whacking Boomhauer in the face. Before he could recompose and view his attacker, Crystal flew above, turned the staff dial to Ground Quake, and SMASHED Boomhauer to the ground with strong force. She hopped off and examined the defeated Heartless, showing disgust at his purple jumpsuit. “And people say I dress weird.”

Rhyme recovered behind her. The skull-faced being snarled at Crystal, unable to distinguish between friend or foe. Before Rhyme could attack, Beat dropped in and grabbed his sister in a headlock. “I’ll hold her down. You get outta here, Lady.”


**“BITO-NII!”** Rhyme cried, clamping her ears shut at the sound of the gunfire. **“Bito-nii, it’s so loud!”**

**“C’mon, Rhyme, I’mma getchu outta here!”** Beat hugged his sister and stayed down as he tried to maneuver through the fire. **“AAAH!”** A stray bullet got him from behind.

**“BITOOOO!”**

“**Bito...**” The dark creature calmed down. Her aura began to fade, and through the black-purple skin, Rhyme’s normal body was seen. **“Beat...**” The skull mask disappeared, revealing her tired visage. The hole in her chest was sewing itself back.

“**Raimu...**” Beat smiled warmly.
“RAAAAH!” Beat looked back and saw Maka and Yuki dodging Grand Ghost’s attacks, unable to damage the Heartless. “I’ll just be a second, Rhyme!” Beat turned fully and sucked in breath, roaring a Song Beam that blasted the large ghost away. “You just like to nose around, don’tchu, Maka?”

“Beat, what are you doing here?” Maka asked hotly. “You better be here with your sector!”

“’Fraid not. We’ll talk later, I need to help my buds.” He took Rhyme and flew off.

“What buds?! BEAT, YOU GET BACK HERE!” Maka swung her scythe in a childish fashion.

“Did I show up in time for an awkward reunion?” Yuki asked. Before receiving an answer, Maka chased after him.

Kimaya shot laser bullets that Kami deflected with her Keyblade, then jumped back when Kim performed a jump strike. Kimaya threw more forceful swings, Kami keeping her blade horizontal to block them, only for her weapon to be flown out of her hand by an upward strike. Kimaya aimed the Keyblade at her mother, who raised her hands.

“Look, Kimaya, I didn’t know what they were going to do to you, I didn’t mean for it to happen. I guess I thought that school would… discipline you better and you wouldn’t grow up like a troublemaker. Which you… sort of did.” Kimaya swung at her legs, Kami jumped back. “But maybe that was my fault for not trying to understand you better. I mean, I would have, but I can’t stand that rap, I don’t see how you would—”

Kimaya rolled to Kami’s left and kicked her off her feet, aiming the Keyblade close to her face.

“Okay, okay! The truth is, deep down… I would’ve liked to have a daughter that was more like me. I wanted a daughter that I could really bond with, talking about the same shoes, the same shows, and about… boys that we may have crushed on. Let’s be honest, you’ve made some pretty bad mistakes yourself, but… Sigh, I guess I’m no different. I should’ve told you about the daycare, but I just didn’t wanna worry you.”

Kami’s Keyblade poofed back to her hand. She blocked when Kimaya struck down, pushing with equal force. “Dammit, what the hell are you doing, Double-67?!” Carter shouted from the PA. “I ordered you to kill the skeleton, forget about that woman!”

“Kimaya, if there’s one thing you took from me – besides some magic key with no explanation,” Kami continued, “it’s your stubbornness. Don’t let that man control you with some magic words. You disobeysed me for all these years, why don’t you put that to good use!”

“Eh…eh…” Kimaya’s strength faltered, and her eyes looked tired. She hunched over and started panting.

Kami heard a bursting sound, looking right to see Nolan roll out of an alleyway, avoiding a wall of purple fire. Hank Hill used a flamethrower to rocket at Nolan. The Sandman turned his fist Armament, pulled it, and dealt an uppercut to Hank’s stomach with perfect timing. “BWAAAH!” Hank hacked as he was propelled up into the air. “Now I have a narrow colon!” He crashed a few houses over.

“What a pain. Kami, you doing okay over there?” Nolan turned and asked her.

“I think so.” Kami smiled, getting back on her feet. “I guess all Kim needed to fight the control was a heartfelt speech.”

Nolan scanned Kimaya with Detective Vision. “Or maybe her faulty microchip needed to
malfunction because it hasn’t been perfected.”

“I still say the heartfelt speech played a role.”

“Ugh, I don’t have time for this! Agent 6767, stab yourself with that key and just DIE!”

Kimaya flinched, jumped away, and aimed the Keyblade at her chest. “KIMAYA, DON’T-!!” Kami ran to stop her—but Kimaya stabbed the key through herself.

A light poked out of her chest. Kami and Nolan stared with both horror and wonder. Kimaya fell back, gasping as she held the key in place. Kami pulled the weapon out, but the light still leaked as Kimaya held her chest. She kept gasping, feeling like her heart would burst. Her chest flashed, the light vanished, and Kimaya woke up agape. “Ahh… Man! It feels like I jus’… gave myself surgery!”

“Kim…aya?…” Kami said lowly.

“The chip just wore out.” Nolan observed.

“Mah?” Kim sat up. “What you doing here? And why am I on the ground?”

“Don’t you remember anything, Kimaya?”

“I feel like some old bat was naggin’ at me. …Was it you?” Kami glared.

“Kimaya!” Django yelled from behind them. “We gotta go to the east field, Leo’s in trouble!”

“Dang Leo! Well, later, Mom!” She jumped up and ran with Django.

“KIMAYA-!” Kami called after, but to no avail. “…Grrrrr, I GIVE A HEARTFELT SPEECH AND YOU STILL DON’T LISTEN!!”

**East field**

“YAAAAAAA!” Kaleo’s mouth stretched open as he screamed and ran from Bill Dauterive. “HEEEELP! GIANT PERVERT!” He stopped when he encountered a chicken. “AAAAAH! MUTANT BIRD!” He ran the other way. He stopped at an old wood sign with Spanish words. “AAAAH! ALIENES!” Ran the other way. Stopped at an animal’s skull with horns. “AAAAH! NICOLAS CAGE!”

A large shuriken flew around and chopped off Bill’s arms, legs, neck, and some parts around his body. The shuriken returned to Black Star’s hand, but Bill’s body merely reformed and grew larger. “My godly patience is wearing thin by this giant’s unwillingness to die! How can we make this fool fall before me?”

“Try to make him fall off that cliff!” Tsubaki said. “The ground is so loose and slippery that he might not be able to climb up. It’ll be nice to knock him out of the way for a while.”

“I suppose you’re right.” Black Star glanced at the cliff behind him. “Now to lure him over here. HEY, FATASS! I can’t tell where your head begins on that gross excuse for a body!”

“Do you mean meeeee?” Bill looked over with a downtrodden expression. “I’m not FAT, I’m HUSKY!” He started sobbing. “I’m just husky, Lenore… Just husky… sniff…”

“Are you kidding me?! You look like your real belly exploded, so they had to replace it with a whale!”
“YER GETTIN’ ON MAH NERVES, you little snot mouth!”

“Better than what YOUR mouth is probly full of! NYEEEAH, NYEEEAH!” Star stuck his tongue out and spanked his bottom.

“ROOOAAAAAH!” Bill charged and shook the earth harder under his stomps. Black Star threw his chain-sickle around Bill’s ankles and ran between them, causing Bill to lose balance. The giant Heartless flailed his arms and fell over the cliff, shaking the world so great that it was surprising the mountain didn’t crumble. Black Star looked down and saw him miles below. The giant failed to climb the soft soil cliff without slipping and falling.

“MWAH HA HA! In the end, you are FAR beneath my powers and talents! It’s like this cool catchphrase I just invented: the more humongous they are, the more humiliatingly they plummet!”

“I think you got that from somewhere.” Tsubaki said sheepishly.

“Black Star, here you are.” Ellen said from behind. Black Star turned to find her and Maka, along with The Gang members.

Kimaya, Leo, and Django looked up at Beat and Rhyme—awestruck at the fact they were ghosts. The Bitos looked between them and the KND, who looked between both groups, as did the former three. “Alright, we clearly have a lot of questions,” Ellen said, “so why don’t we find a place to sit down and discuss?”

With that, Django led them to a tall hill of rugged rocks, where a very withered house was stationed. It was the house that belonged to Django’s old friend, Luviro. They hid behind the side of this hill and sat in a circle.

“We’re operatives of the Spirit Kids Next Door, Sector SCYTHE.” Maka explained. “I’m Numbuh Pair, Maka Albarn, and this is my scythe, Soul. He’s Black Star, Numbuh Star, and she’s Ellen, Numbuh Aged.”

“Which sounds like ‘Nevuh Aged.’” Ellen chuckled. “Which is funny if… you know.”

“Beat and Rhyme are KND operatives, too.” Soul said. “They’re part of Sector REAP. Care to explain?”

The Gang looked at the Bito siblings with suspicion. With a darkened Rhyme sitting and hugging her legs, sadness on her features, Beat spoke. “Look, the thing is, me and Rhyme has been dead for like, five years.”

“That don’t sit right!” Kimaya stood up. “Me and Leo ha’ known you for three years!”

“We been using Gigai!”

“Giga?”

“No, it’s Sigh…” Beat calmed himself. “Lemme start from the beginning. Me and Rhyme are from Shibuya, Japan. Our big dumbass brother had ta babysit us, and he took us with him downtown to hang with this bad crowd. His gang got in a shooting with this other gang. Rhyme started crying, and when I tried to get her out, I got shot. And then Rhyme started crying over me, but there were Reapers already there to take the dead people. They already took me to the Underworld before Rhyme got shot.

“When she became a ghost, she flew around looking for my ghost. And when she couldn’t find me,
she started to cry again, and she turned into a Hollow. I told the Reapers to take me back there after they made me a spirit. They told me what happened, and they wanted to do an exorcism or something. But I told ’em ‘no.’ I tried to talk to Rhyme, I sang her favorite hip-hop song, and she started to calm down. And then…”

“Then they hugged each other.” Maka said with a warm tone. “It was a real touching sight, looking back…”

“We let them join the Spirit Kids Next Door.” Ellen followed. “We were able to call the Music Spirit, Meloetta to give them their bending back. It was a rare sight for someone to be able to change a spirit back from a Hollow. Rhyme was only happy when she was around Beat, but if they were apart…”

“When they didn’t go on missions, their sector said that they took Gigai to hang out in the Mortal World.” Black Star said with a smug look. “I guess they’ve been hanging out with you.”

“Normally, humans can’t see us unless they witness someone die.” Maka mentioned. “Kaleo saw Beat die, but even though it was a Gigai, it was still the same as watching a real body die.”

“But Kimaya was brainwashed at the time, how is she seeing you?” Django asked.

“We don’t know.”

“So wait,” Kimaya said, “the reason we never see you at school or come to your house is ’cause y’all were ghost people?”

“Yeah, we didn’t think we was gonna hang out with you very much.” Beat said. “We just walkin’ ’round town and we fall into your hideout, and you say ‘Join the Gang.’ We didn’t think we was gonna go that long without you askin’ who we were. But ya never did, and we just sorta… started hanging out with you when we had time. Jus’ like with Django.”

Kimaya bit her lip and looked down. Yeah… she just let Beat and Rhyme hang with them, and they did… even though they weren’t around as much as Leo. One year later, Django fell into their hideout. Freakin’ dead kid.

“Look, man, Ah don’t care if you’re a spooky skeleton dude.” Kim told him. “See, the reason we’re a Gang is ’cause our home lives ain’t too good. We got too much drama goin’ on, that’s why we need a place to hang out and socialize. I don’t know WHY you a dead kid, but you prob’ have WAY more drama than any of us do. Why don’tchu hang with us?”

She never asked Django about his background… She never inquired Beat and Rhyme about their ‘troubled background.’ …She really didn’t know much about her Gang at all.

“…Ha ha ha ha ha.” Django started laughing. “HA HA ha ha ha! HA HA HA HA HA ha ha ha! All—Ah-hall this time—I-hi thought I… was the one with the traumatic past! AND LOOK! You two were dead, too! AH HA HA HA HA HA HA! And all this time, I wanted you guys to help me get revenge on Carter! But I was afraid you would say no, and you wouldn’t want me around anymore, HA HA HA HA ha ha ha! And I was only afraid because…” Even though his grin was permanent as a skeleton, it seemed wider than ever, “I really like hanging out with you guy-uy-uy-uy-uyys! Sigh, but now I feel like a drama queen!”

“…” Kimaya stood and spoke strongly, “This Gang needs a real makeover. We dunno jack shit about each other. Like, why are the Kids Next Door so tight? Why do all them sectors like hangin’ with each other?”
“Well, I don’t know about you humans,” Maka said, “…but we Spirit Kids Next Door are connected by our souls and our hearts. We resonate with each other, because we have the same goals. We…”

“We understand each other because we love each other.” Ellen smiled. “Even though our quirks are different.” She winked at Star.

“HEY, whaddoes that mean?!” the spike-haired panicked.

“Then maybe we should do the same.” Kim said. “We gotta be a Gang that loves chillin’ with each other. Not just for chillin’, but ’cause we feel… chill around them. Know what I’m saying?”

“Be that as it may,” Maka said, “there are other issues to attend to.”

“Yeah, like teachin’ Carter a lesson!” Beat fist-palmed.

“NO! The Spirit Kids Next Door is not allowed to harm mortals, no matter how evil they are. We can only hunt evil spirits, which includes Heartless. However, it is also forbidden for us to interact with humans unless they’re in danger or if they see us. Not only that, but if other humans find out they can come back to the Mortal World using a Gigai, it’ll discourage people from living their life to the fullest. Beat, Rhyme, I’m sorry to say this, but you can’t hang out with these people now that they know who you are.”

“Hold up!” Beat refuted. “You just said the KND resonates with each other. Yeah, I resonate with my sector, but I also do it with these buds! We ain’t have any friends when we was alive, hangin’ out with this Gang is like a second chance for lost opportunities! We don’t get ‘em involved with our biz.”

“Beat, it’s a’ight.” Kimaya said. “You never had to tell us, and we won’t tell anyone else. And if you really gotta, you can leave. But before you do, we gonna do what we came to do.” She turned and stepped toward the factory. “If y’all can’t hurt Carter, then I will. I’m calling him out.”

“Kimaya, wait!” Django grabbed her arm. She turned to him with a surprised look. He was silent for a minute.

Django remembered lifting the stone cube out of the Lazarus pool. It had strange writing. Django remembered Sector V talk about the Gibberish Rocks. The Seven Lights were meant to find them. “…Don’t ask me why, but I think Carter wants to keep you out of that factory. I think, the voice in your head that told you to come here… I think it wants you to find it. It wants you to find the cube that I lifted out of the Lazarus.”

“How would you know that?”

“Because that cube had a keyhole. You have a giant key. That’s a connection if I saw one. Kim, you have to get in the factory and find it.”

“Okay, but… what about Carter?”

“We’ll lure Carter out here and distract him. If we’re lucky, we can beat him ourselves. The important thing is that you find that cube.”

“But if he’s trying to keep out Kimaya, he’ll stay in and make sure she stays out!” Black Star argued.

“I’ve got a plan! You spirits just fight the Heartless, and we’ll lure Carter out like this:” Django
strummed his guitar and spawned a kid-size skeleton. With a few more notes, strings flew out of his instrument and wrapped around the corpse, forming Kimaya’s skin and clothes.

“…That looks… so wrong.” Kim said.

“This doppelganger will distract Carter, while the real Kim,” Django played and sent magic notes around Kimaya that turned her invisible, “will walk in undetected! The spell only lasts a short time, so make it count.”

“This feels weird, but… Let’s go for it!”

“Sweet!” Django smirked. “…Hey, now that I think about it, if Beat and Rhyme are dead, what about their Negatives?”

Negaverse

The powder-faced kids of The Club sat at their table, drinking tea. “Flow and I are in actuality ghosts.” Pat said tonelessly.

“We were aware, but it made little inference.” Ayamik said with the same disinterest.

“Accurately.” Flow affirmed.

Lazarus Plant

Carter paced around his office, feeling more anxious about the chaos taking place outside. He spared one look at the Gibberish Rock behind his desk. The PA rang. “President Pewterschmidt! The guards outside have been knocked out, and the Hill Gang is preoccupied! That Kimaya child is about to enter the factory!”

“It can’t be!” One of the monitors depicted Django, Kim, and Kaleo standing outside the front gate. Carter stormed over to the window and pushed it open to view the three kids from his ten-story office.

“This can go one of two ways, Pooperschmidt!” Django shouted. “Either you come down, or we’ll come up! Either way, we’re kicking your ass!”

“I came up with that insult myself!” Kaleo cheered.

“I had a different one, but they said it was too gross!” Django rejoined.

Carter glanced once more at the cube. “Well, if that’s how you wanna play, I’m coming down!”

With that, the president jumped out the window.

“I didn’t think you would that way!”

“UURAAAAHH!” Carter spun like a torpedo and built momentum before crashing on the ground and blowing the three kids back. Django recovered and gasped: an invisible energy blew around Carter. His sleeves were ripped, as well as the middle of his shirt, exposing the muscular arms and abs, and he was taller. “I… didn’t think you would do that either.” Django said.

The spirit operatives saw this from above. “Yow! Carter’s been takin’ steroids!” Beat exclaimed.

“It looks like Old Man Fist!” Maka observed. “It’s a martial art where the user conserves their Personal Chi at a young age, and makes it available to them at an old age.”
“What does that even mean?” Black Star asked.

“I think it requires them to harness their chi as they’re growing up, but not to use it too much.”

“The Lazarus could’ve helped Carter with it, too.” Ellen figured. “Come, we need to focus on the Heartless. Let’s just hope they know what they’re doing.” Sector SCYTHE flew back to the village. Beat and Rhyme stayed to watch their friends before joining the spirits.

Carter lunged to attack Kimaya, but Django sprung up three skeletons to grab him. Carter spun and threw them off, but wasn’t prepared to block the Gas Bomb Leo shot at his face.

The real Kimaya used her Keyblade to unlock the factory entrance and slip in while Carter was dizzied by the gas. Kim’s invisibility wore off. “Ah’m just lookin’ for a cube with Gobbledegook on it? If you say so, Django.” (Play “Modern Chemical Plant” from Sonic Generations!)

*Stage 61: Pueblo de Niebla*

*Mission: Find the Poneglyph!*

*Act 2: Lazarus Plant*

Kimaya hopped on her skateboard and rolled to grind on a minecart track, jumping carts of Lazarus that sped up at quick speeds. The track angled up and right, and the decreased momentum kept her from jumping high enough over the carts. She had to switch to a small rail on her right to avoid a cart, jump back when it passed, jump to a left rail to avoid a cart as well as a gap behind it, then back on. The rail ended at a walkway, where Kimaya had view of all the machines and Lazarus tanks in this vast factory room.

Three Black Fungus Heartless (kid-size humanoids with blue robes and purple shroom caps) impeded her progress by puffing purple gas clouds into being. Kimaya channeled her poisonbending through her Keyblade (apparently she can do that) and moved it aside, then quickly struck the shroom-capped Heartless. She simply batted them over the edge before turning to face a dead end of the walkway. Kimaya could jump and grab a pole sticking from the wall, then waited for a Lazarus waterfall to disappear before swinging to the next pole. The third pole retracted and extracted, so Kim had to wait for the poisonfall to stop, jump to the extracted pole, and quickly jump again before it retracted.

Kimaya kicked off a vertical platform, and began to Wall Jump between that and another one. At the top, she could jump over the left wall and grab another horizontal pole that stretched over the previous area. She climbed across quickly when Amps chased her along the pole. She stopped to wait for a couple poisonfalls to pass, bending the toxic off the pole to crawl further, and she eventually made it to a platform.

Kimaya entered a new room of the factory, which had towering tanks of Lazarus, with hatches on the sides that would open and release gas. Since these hatches lined up like stairs, with the lids facing up, Kimaya could jump up them when they opened. Kimaya struck the thermometer on the first tank to make all the hatches along the right spurt open. She ran up them and could jump to hit the thermometer on the second tank. One of the hatches shot out gas above the main line-up, so Kim used her bending to stuff it back inside and progress. For the third tank, Kimaya shot laser bullets to hit the thermometer that was too high, then she jumped hatches that were further apart.

Kimaya set foot on the ledge at the other side, entering a door into a hollow, tall cylindrical
chamber. It was the inside of a factory chimney. There was a Rare Truffle, a kid-size Heartless with a blue robe and yellow shroom cap. It was raising its arms and jumping, so Kimaya batted him up and flew him several feet high. Kimaya smiled at its carefree spirit, and felt like taking it with her. She hit the Heartless up some high grated platforms, which she could access by jumping herself. However, a cloud of gas burst up from below, so Kim quickly hit the Heartless into a dent in the wall, jumping in herself to avoid the huge geyser.

Kimaya pushed the Heartless out when the gas stopped, then knocked him up to a platform that was scrolling up and down. She couldn’t jump high enough to grab the platform, but a ladder was available to her. She could jump to the platform from it, and the foothold protected them from the gas geyser. Kimaya then had to hit the Truffle up a slope with barrels rolling down. She could jump on the barrels to get a boost and hit the Truffle to an enclosing, grabbing a ladder to climb up with it and hide from the geyser. After the barrels, Kimaya hit the Truffle across two platforms that turned vertical and horizontal. On the final foothold, she let the Heartless hold down a switch to open a door to the next room.

There were Lazarus waterfalls spilling everywhere, giving the room a bright green glow. Kimaya picked up a propane tank that was sitting by itself, figuring she’d need it. She carried the container through a maze of poisonfalls, and when Red Nocturnes ambushed her, she quickly put the propane down to attack the fire Heartless. A Fat Bandit coughed fireballs at her from afar; Kimaya hit the fire away as she ran at the Heartless and sliced it in the head. Eventually, she brought the tank to a barred gate, standing back and shooting it with laser bullets to blow the gate open.

In this room, Kimaya jumped up some round grated platforms where Lazarus spouts shot up from. Kim got to a platform with an Ice Cannon Heartless, dodging its blast, which in turn froze one of the spouts. She decided to grab the cannon and shoot the other spouts. Her foothold was high enough for her to jump atop the first one, then she jumped the other ice pillars to reach a ladder. She climbed up to a platform with another Ice Cannon, using it to freeze a stairway of poisonfalls lined up on a wall.

She made it to a walkway with three gas geysers sprouting out of pipes. The middle one was pointing up at a ceiling pipe that was pouring a poisonfall over a door on the opposite side. Kimaya bent the gas of the left and right pipes back in and sealed the lids, creating a stronger output from the middle pipe. There was an Icy Cube Heartless lollygagging around, and Kimaya threw it into the geyser to blow up and smash against the ceiling pipe. The pipe froze, creating blockage that stopped the poisonfall and let her enter the door.

Kimaya entered a room with disorganized Lazarus rivers, seeing a pool of Lazarus covering the way to the next door. “Okay, why is every room in this factory some sorta puzzle?” Kimaya questioned. She could jump over the thin rivers, which were spread around like abstract strokes of paint. There was an Icy Cube in the center of some rivers, and knowing she had to use the Heartless to cross the pool, Kimaya started kicking it around the rivers. If it touched the rivers, the ice cube would freeze a path and shrink slightly, giving Kim less to work with for the pool.

Kimaya defended the Icy Cube from Fat Bandits’ fireballs, then jumped over to slay them – these enemies didn’t make the puzzles challenging, but more tedious, thought Kimaya. When Kim made it to the pool, she whacked the Heartless across to the doorway, freezing a path. It was too thin for Kimaya to step on, but she could skateboard across and make the jump to the entrance. Kimaya faced up a long stairway in a narrow hall. It seemed like a simple journey up, but that was before a stream of Lazarus washed down.

Kimaya Wall Jumped her way up the hall to avoid the stream. Partway up, the walls started pouring poisonfalls, so Kimaya switched to a skateboard to grind up a center rail. Two-thirds of the
Kimaya swung more poles on the walls, each of which had an Amp that would slither up to shock her, but she quickly timed her jumps and successfully landed on the platform where the door was. She entered Carter’s private quarters, where Babs was still drinking tea. “Don’t mind me, Dear.” The triangle-nosed woman said. “Carter makes me go through all those puzzles, too.”

Kimaya offered her condolences before heading to the office. There were Star Wars figurines on shelves. The window Carter jumped out of was still open, and she saw him locked in battle with Django and Leo. Behind Carter’s desk was the rock that Django described. (End song.)

Kimaya chopped the desk in half and moved both halves aside. She could see the front of the cube in its entirety, from the foreign writing to the keyhole below. It certainly looked like her key could be used for this. But why did Django think she needed to find it, what use did she have for this rock? She was a cowgirl/gangster, not an archaeologist. She would rather be down there helping her friends. Oh well, might as well check this out.

Kimaya aimed the key at the lock. It shone with a light, shot a laser, and an aura appeared around the stone. The letters and the keyhole glowed. Kimaya could read them perfectly. “If you’re reading this, you are the Keeper of the Keys in this dimension. So, congratulations! You’re gonna be real important! Deliver these keys to the others, but keep one to yourself.” –Sora.

The entire cube shined white, leaving only the letters dark. The stone turned into light and vanished. The letters turned into floating black things with single eyes, all shaped like the letters. “Unown, Unown, Unown, Unown!” The letters circled around Kimaya before flying out the window. She didn’t know what they were, but she saw something floating where the cube was previously standing.

It was a key ring with seven keys on it. Kimaya held and stared at each key. One was light-brown with a sun for teeth, and a keychain of a Jolly Roger with a straw hat. One was light-blue with icicle teeth and a whitish-blue flame keychain. One was dark-gray with a tornado tooth, and a keychain of a swirly leaf. One was dark-pink with bubble teeth, its handle looked like a bubble wand, and the keychain was a purple top-hat. Another was striped and colorful with a paintbrush tooth, a hilt ring shaped like a palette, and a frame keychain. Another was silver, had a king’s crown for teeth, and a throne keychain.

But Kimaya was more into the black key with the black star keychain. In fact, she felt a bond with it. She smirked.

Outside

Nolan tossed boomerangs to chop the Air Soldiers’ wings off, and when two Large Bodies charged at him from behind, Maka sliced them. They heard the whir of an engine and looked up, seeing Hank Hill piloting a darkened Sandmobile. “I’m not much into this newfangled technology, but as long as it kicks your ass. Heh heh.”

Haruka set up her lab equipment on the ground to analyze a sample of the poison she collected from the sick kids. She snapped photos with the microscope, transferred them to her phone, and mailed Caesar. “Well, does it look familiar?”

“DAMMIT, woman, I told you not to give me the peanut butter sauce! I’m allergic to this stuff, do you want a lawsuit?!”

“Caesar?”

“Sorry, I had a problem with this dumb waitress.” Caesar munched his burger on the other end.
“Hmm, those are interesting samples. I’ll need a quick peek at my handbook.”

Haruka found herself surrounded by a whirlwind of black gas. “Ah know you.” Dale said. “Yer one of them science people that like to experiment with my brain. Well, you wouldn’t like it if I injected your brain with DEATH stuff.”

Black Star finished killing the Defender Heartless in the east field. The ground shook when two massive purple hands grabbed the cliff behind him. Black Star looked in disgust when Bill Dauterive hauled himself up, bigger and uglier than ever. “I gave those comments of yours some thought, and they only hurt more. Now I wanna hurt you. A lot…”

Django summoned a row of skeletons to attack Carter, but the businessman swung a kick that sent an air wave to cut them and knock Django and Leo over. The fake Kimaya attempted to sneak in the factory, but Carter lunged over and punched her away, knocking her clean out. Django tried to get up, but the skeleton was pinned down by Carter’s foot.

“Pathetic demon. Did you really think a gang of street rats were going to help you? Thirty years and that was the best help you can find? You belong with those urchins; you belong with them and ALL these hopeless people. Living off the scraps that the kings are generous enough to throw you. We are the gods of you demons.”

A comet shot out of the factory window and swatted Carter away when it crashed down. Carter landed against a coal pile, recomposing to see his assaulter. Django gaped at his savior, and Leo’s mouth was in an ‘o’. (Play “Number One” from Bleach!)

Kimaya Heartly crossed her keys over her shoulders, her hat tipped over her eyes. She slashed both keys at the air before looking up to smirk at Carter. “Kimaya…” Django said in awe.

“I dunno either.” She told him. “All I know is I got two keys now. Oathkeeper,” she noted the white one, “and Oblivion.” Then the black one. She spun both keys like propellers before holding them forth. “And as far as I care, these’re my pistols. Now I’m really gettin’ Western.”

“Does this mean you found the cube?”

“Yep… Ah reckon.”

“…” Django smiled and faced the sky. “You owe me one, guys.”

Kimaya awakened herself as-

“HOLD ON, little fanfare!” Kimaya stopped. “We ain’t done, yet! I still need to whoop this guy’s ass!”

Carter recovered and growled at the dual-keyed child. “This town ain’t big enough fer a bigwig like you, Carter.” Kimaya crossed both keys in an ‘X’. “I’m calling you out. You done this town wrong, and it’s time you were busted. Django wanted me to git back at you… and mah response is ‘hell yeah.’”

Django felt a sense of relief and excitement. Kim glanced back at him and Leo. “Y’all git back in town and round up them bulls. It only takes two to tango.” The boys grinned and headed back for the village.

Bill Dauterive towered over Black Star, who showed no fear at the titan. Boomhauer soared over Beat and Rhyme. The sister was still downtrodden, but when Beat patted her shoulder and sported a smile, Rhyme smiled back. Wiccan was confused by what Boomhauer was looking at, just empty
space. Haruka readied herself against Dale, and when Ellen appeared beside her, she passed the spirit a friendly smile. Kami saw her daughter with that extra key, and she was soooo confused.

“Huff, huff, huff!” Black Star looked left when Kaleo ran up. “Huff… huff…” The boy sweated like he just ran a marathon. He probably used the last of his energy just getting there. “I need a minute.” He fell on his back. “Let’s just do it next chapter.”

“A’ight.” Kimaya winked at the readers. “Next chapter then.”

Augustus and his crew were flying over the village in their biplane. “Whoo.” The captain whistled. “I think we’re just in time for a show.”

Deviating from tradition a little bit. ;) Next time, we’ll conclude the Lazarus Saga. For now, Mr. Caesarian has a word.

...

**LI WKHUH LV D OLJKW**

**WKHUH LV D GDUNQHV**
Kimaya Heartly battles Carter Pewterschmidt! Afterwards, a secret is learned about the Heartless!

Let’s conclude this saga for now!

Chapter 61: The Other One

Pueblo de- crap, it’s already starting! (Play “The Encounter” from Kingdom Hearts II!)

Boss fight: Carter Pewterschmidt

Kimaya rushed up to swing both Keyblades at the Corporate President, but Carter grabbed them in his hands and kicked Kimaya away. He leapt overhead, spun like a drill, and stomped down at her, only for Kimaya to dodge behind and strike him in the back. Carter about-faced and threw punches that Kim countered with her keys, until both opponents jumped away from each other. Carter bashed his knuckles together and sent an aerial shockwave that Kimaya blocked with the Keyblades, but didn’t recover in time when Carter kicked over, threw a combo of punches, and flung Kimaya to his left.

Kimaya bounced back on her feet and shot double laser bullets from her blades, which Carter avoided by Air Jumping to her left, then flying at her. Kimaya jumped and ran to attack Carter with another combo, then leapt to knock him against the ground. Carter kicked Kimaya’s chest and pushed her back, then when he charged to grab the child, Kimaya crossed her keys in an ‘X’ to block and push back. She slashed the keys and made him stumble back, then leapt, spun, and bashed both keys against his head to bat him away.

“Come on, Carter, I don’t feel right beatin’ an old man.” Kimaya said coolly. “Why don’t you just give up and git yo’ ass outta this town?”

“Huuh…huuh…huuh…” Carter was rasping on the ground, his skin turning dry and pale. Kimaya was appalled, but Carter gave her a murderous look. A Wyvern Heartless swooped down to carry Carter across the valley. Kimaya hopped on her skateboard and engaged pursuit, going down a hill into a gorge within mounds of rubble. She grinded on a track and jumped a few minecarts, then skated on a ledge along the left side of a pit.

At the bottom of the slope, Kimaya jumped and grabbed an overhead rail in her crossed keys, swinging left or right to avoid dangling hooks as she ziplined across. She landed and resumed skateboarding on a new path, which took her across three parallel minecart tracks. Carter blasted parts of the track with a shotgun, forcing Kim to jump between them, but they eventually made it to a wide, circular area with round Lazarus rivers.

Carter dropped into a Lazarus pit in the center, and Kimaya stopped skating as she watched. The Corporate President emerged from the pit, showing light-green veins in his body and shining green eyes. Heartless appeared around the crater, and Kimaya sliced them while dodging Carter’s energy blasts. “I guess not.” She sighed.
With the others

Black Star roped Bill Dauterive’s arm with his chain-sickle and propelled himself above the giant’s body. “Tsubaki, Katana Form!” he commanded, transforming his weapon into a sword before stabbing the top of Bill’s head. He descended and carved a long strip down the middle of Bill’s back before landing on the ground. When Black Star faced up, the cut sewed itself back together as Bill grew larger. “I don’t understand! How are you fixing yourself?!”

“You think a little pain is gonna make me whine and cry?” Bill looked down and asked him. “Well, I’m done letting pain get in my way. My power comes from pain. I make it part of me. I share it with others. And after I squash you, I wanna share it with Lenore.” He raised his foot, and Black Star jumped back when he stomped down, denting a crater.

“I did an analysis of him.” Tsubaki said. “The pain he feels from your attacks is an unstable chi that he bends to his will. He uses the Pain Chi to reform his body and increase in size and strength.”

“So, pain is his ally, huh? But a man can only take so much from the godly Black Star.” He noticed Kaleo still laying on the ground. “Hey, if you’re not gonna help, then get outta the way!”

Kaleo sat up, nearly done catching his breath. “I’m so glad I didn’t do a stage with Kimaya. …” He felt a shadow over him. “AAAAAH!” Bill’s fist was coming down, but Leo dodged just in time. Kaleo ran behind the giant Heartless and faced up fearlessly. “I’m not gonna run away from you! Kimaya’s busy fighting that jerk man, so I’m gonna do my part, too! I want her to finish her battle without any fear of—”

Bill snatched Kaleo in his hand and began to squeeze him. “GAAAAH I CHANGE MY MIND!” Kaleo cried from unbearable pain. “I DON’T WANNA HAVE CHARACTER GROWTH, I wanna be the funny guy that makes quirky remarks!”

Black Star sliced off Bill’s arm with the katana, saving Leo. The arm grew back and Bill grew slightly taller. “If he grows any more, he can crush the whole village.” Black Star said. “Kaleo, I think we’re gonna have to use our brains on this one.”

Kaleo stuttered at the very idea. “M-m-m-my b-b-b-b-brain?”

“I know. It hurts me, too. Thankfully, we have Tsubaki!” He grinned. “Always glad to help, Master.” The sword blushed.

Sandman and Maka bolted out of the village from the west end as Hank Hill shot twin lasers from the Sandmobile. “Better to fight him outside of town so no one gets hurt.” Nolan panted.

“I agree.” Maka whipped around and deflected the laser with her scythe, striking the bottom of the aircraft. “But you shouldn’t get involved either, Human. We can handle this.”

“I’ll have you know that’s my ride! I’m already involved!”

“Yeah, Maka, didn’t Sector SOUL get help from those human operatives?” Soul asked.

“How about some clean-burning?” Hank opened the cockpit and threw two burning propane tanks down, only to be shot with ice and frozen.

“I like clean-freezing!” Yuki surfed in front and blasted an ice beam to freeze the Sandmobile. It fell to the ground, but Hank shook it until the ice broke. Yuki grabbed Nolan and sped away on an
ice path as the vehicle chased them. “Isn’t this just like that *Teen Titans* episode where Cyborg fell in love with his car?”

“Kind of.” Nolan pulled out a remote. “I’m in love with the Eject feature.” He pressed it.

“BWUUUH!” Hank was sprung into the air, and the darkened Sandmobile changed back to normal. Maka shot up to the airborne Hank and kicked him in the crotch, rocketing him against the ground. “Bwuh… Dang… A narrow bladder!”

Dale Gribble’s Black Tornado was enclosing on Haruka and Ellen. The witch lit her hands purple and sprouted a magic cylinder to protect them. “Are you a poisonbender?” Ellen asked. Haruka nodded. “This Heartless is using Dark Poison. Elements infected with Dark Chi are hard for normal benders to control.”

“Do you know how we can beat him?”

“I should be able to do it myself. But I-”

A sonic wave hit Dale and knocked him up, his gas cloud fading. “No thanks are necessary, ladies!” Django said proudly. “But a kiss will do.”

“Let me check on the townspeople first.” Haruka stated. “Are you sure you don’t need my help with him?”

“We’ll be just fine.” Ellen smiled politely.

When Haruka was about to enter a house, she looked to the east field, where Bill was trying to stomp Star and Kaleo. “They look like they could use some help.”

“Who?” Caesar asked from the phone.

“They.” She aimed the phone to face the battle. “Feels like one of your giant kids would come in handy. In fact, how did Kaleo get small again?”

“He ate the Giant-Giant Fruit, of course.”

“The what?”

“It’s a Devil Fruit that allows one to grow giant, or return to normal size. He ate it when you all came to Punk Hazard.”

“But I thought he got giant with the NHC10!”

“I thought that at first, but when I returned to Punk Hazard’s ruins, the Giant Fruit was missing, too. I should’ve known, because why else would his clothes grow with him? I don’t understand why he isn’t using that power to kick that monster’s ass.”

“Maybe he doesn’t know… I think we should tell him. Sigh, as soon as I check on these people.” She entered the house.

Beat held onto Rhyme as Boomhauer blew an endless gust of wind. The siblings couldn’t blow a Song Beam without inhaling the dark wind in the process. “What is with you and attacking empty space?!” Wiccan announced as she flew behind and bashed Boomhauer in the head with her staff. Boomhauer about-faced and shot a cyclone at Crystal, which pushed her skyward, looped, and smashed her to the ground. Beat and Rhyme’s combined Song Beam struck him from behind.
“He may be wind, but we be sound!” Beat rapped. “We travel fast as wind, maybe faster!”

“At the end, we’ll be the masters!” Rhyme sang.

“‘ey yo yo yo!” Boomhauer recomposed and performed several graceful aerial movements. They felt the wind blowing forward, until a tidal wave of condensed, dusty air appeared and washed toward them. “RAIMU, LET’S MOVE!” Beat grabbed his sister and tried to outfly the wave, but he saw the standing Crystal Wickens get swept up. “Dammit, that lady! I wish she could hear us!”

“Beat, watch out!”

“GAAAAH!” A whirlwind sprouted up and blew the siblings apart.

**With Kimaya**

After destroying the Heartless, Kimaya continued to dodge Carter’s green energy blasts. Kimaya saw Lazarus being poured out of a pipe and into the river. “Is he concentrating it all to one place so he c’n use its power?” Kimaya thought aloud. “Or I don’t understand this stuff. Maybe I’ll just clog up these pipes.” Kimaya channeled her poisonbending through her Keyblades and was able to shove the flow back into the pipe. The pipe puffed, Lazarus leaked, and also began to spurt out of the ground via an underground pipe.

Kimaya hopped on her board and skated along the path, grinding a rail to a platform with another pipe, which she proceeded to block up. Carter boiled with rage, and this seemed to cause a storm of toxic droplets to fly up and hit the path. Kimaya spun her Keyblades to block the droplets and direct them away from herself. While skating, she spun around and used her bending to swirl the Lazarus away from her path. She made it to the final pipe and clogged it up.

Carter shot up without warning—Kimaya swiftly swung her Keyblades, blocked his attacks, then dodged behind to strike him in the back. Carter reached behind, clutched Kimaya’s hair through her hat, and hurled her across the Lazarus rivers. She landed on a relatively soft mount of dark sand, quickly getting up and dodging when Carter flew over. “Man, you look ugly!” Kimaya squinted her eyes when she viewed his glowing veins up close. “I don’t think this stuff’s doin’ you any favors.”

“And what do you know?!” Carter punched the ground, Kimaya dodged, and evaded the next ones as he talked. “You’re a street rat! You were born a street rat, you’ll die a street rat! And only your fleas—”

“Fleas will mourn me, dude, you startin’ to sound really weird. Maybe we should stop fighting and find you a medic?”

“I DON’T NEED ONE! I’m Carter Pewterschmidt! I’m immortal! I’m powerful! YOU PEOPLE ARE VERMIN TO ME!” His body flashed green, thrusting his arms forward to blow Kimaya several yards away. Kimaya got up and saw Carter dash at her again, so she shot bullets from both Keyblades. Carter withstood the shots and jumped to do a spin-kick, but Kimaya ducked left and farted a Gas Bomb. Carter was stunned by the blow, allowing Kimaya to deal a triple combo with both Keyblades.

**The others**

After Beat landed between some houses, he flew up to search for his sister. “OW- AH!” Boomhauer pelted him with air puffs before surfing around the rapper and encasing him in a spiraling air bubble.
“Yo-man, I’mma-suffocate-you, gonna-gonna-be-all uek, uek, ueeehhk.” Boomhauer made the gesture of choking.

“Dude, I’m a spirit. I don’t suffocate!”

“Yeah-well-we’ll-see, givin’-that-dang-old-darkness-man.”

“Cough, cough…” The wind sphere was turning purple, and Beat found himself unable to breathe when the darkness began to swallow him.

“AHHH!” Crystal flew up behind the Heartless yet again and choked him with her staff. “I’m getting tired of you ignoring me! You think empty space is a better opponent than I am?”

“Whatchu-talkin’-about-I’m-tryin’-to-fight-these-dang-old-kids-with-the-hip-hop-and-snoopy-poopy, get-the-***-off!” Boomhauer talked quickly as he tried to shake her off.

The witch let go and flew in front of Boomhauer, landing on his board. “Well, I bet you didn’t expect this!” She switched the dial on her staff, aimed the open end at Boomhauer, and shot a sudden burst of air that blew him a few miles over. “I sucked in the air from your tidal wave attack! Still don’t think I’m a good match?”

The air sphere wore off on Beat, but he sunk to the ground. The Dark Chi was overwhelming him. “Nnn… Rhyme…”

When Sandman, Yuki, and Maka surrounded Hank Hill against a wall, the Heartless grabbed a shovel lodged in the rubble and imbued it with darkness. When he stabbed the shovel through the cliff, the huge chunks that he hurled at them were dark-imbued as well. Hank tore away at the cliff until he uncovered a pumpjack. Yuki was quick to shoot a powerful beam of ice that froze the pumpjack inside an iceberg, but Hank had thought ahead, appearing behind Yuki to swipe his ice pack. He used the upgraded pack to freeze the ground with dark ice, which was a bright purple and too slippery for even Nolan’s wheelchair to stay balanced.

Maka flew skyward and lunged down at Hank, who dodged her swings and shot a Dark Ice blast to freeze her feet and her scythe against the ground. Nolan shot his grappling hook to catch the ice pack, but Hank reacted by grabbing the hook. He yanked Nolan over, successfully swiping his utility belt before kicking the hero away. Hank put the belt on himself, igniting it with darkness as a swarm of dark boomerangs appeared in the air. “Heh heh heh. Wow, there’s more on this belt than Mega-Lo Mart’s entire store.”

Black Star used his chain-sickles to rope his way up Bill’s body, but the giant unleashed a “BUUUURP” that pushed the spirit back to the ground. He and Kaleo were mostly running around the dimwitted Heartless in search of a weak point. They didn’t want to risk enlarging him any more. “KALEO!” They saw Haruka run over with her phone raised. “Kaleo, weren’t you still a giant before? How did you get small again?”

“Django’s magic guitar did it.” Leo panted for breath. Black Star cut Bill’s leg and distracted him so they could talk.

“Leo, when we went to Punk Hazard and you got separated from us, did you eat a strange fruit? Namely one that tastes bad?”

“I eat bad things all the time, I’mma need more detail.” Kaleo stuck his pinky in his ear.

“If I’m correct, you should be able to shift to your giant size at will!” Caesar yelled. “Just stretch your arms and say ‘I’m a big boy now!’”
“Is that really how it works?” Haru asked.

“Beats me. I just wanna see it in action!”

“Then I will!” Kaleo faced up at Bill and stretched his arms, determination on his features. “I’m a BIG boy now! I’m a big boy now!” He shut his eyes and tried to force himself to grow. “I’m a big boy… NOOOOW!” Haruka was knocked back when Kaleo blew up like a balloon. He was half of Bill’s height.

“Ouch… At least it worked.” Haru grunted.

“AW, MAN!” Black Star whined. “Why is everyone turning big but ME?! I’m a god! I deserve a more godly size!”

“Great job, Leo! Are you feeling okay?”

“Nuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhh.” Drool dripped out of Kaleo’s hanging mouth. He wobbled in an unbalanced fashion, like his brain forgot to grow, too.

“Whoopsie!” said Caesar giddily. “The Devil Fruit has a couple flaws: while stretching one’s own dimensions makes you stronger and heavier, it has a nasty effect on the brain. The bigger you are, the stupider you are! You also move incredibly slow. After all, a nimble and intelligent giant is a ticking time bomb.”

Bill swung his foot and kicked Leo in the jaw, sending him crashing against a cliff. The giant charged to crush Leo’s skull, but Black Star flew up and sliced Bill’s eyes with the katana. With the giant stunned, Star changed his sword to a shuriken and chopped a circle around Bill’s Heartless Emblem. There was a blue beating heart inside it. “That must be the weak spot!” He tossed the shuriken at the heart, but a purple force field blocked it. The chest hole repaired itself as Bill grew.

“Sorry, buddy! But ‘long as one meter of mah belly is intact, this heart is staying nice and’ cozy.” Bill slapped his hand at Black Star, only to have it sliced off.

The spirit looked down when the giant Kaleo shrunk back to normal size, as a result of his lightheadedness. “I didn’t think I would ever say this…” Kaleo said to himself with a dizzy grin, “but I think I got an idea…”

Dale Gribble shrouded the village area in black gas, making it impossible for Django and Ellen to see. The witch decided to fly out of the gas and project a barrier around herself, and when she saw red lasers from Django’s guitar shoot out of an area, she sent a magic chain down to retrieve him. They were safely out of the gas for a second before Dale had it fly up into their undead throats. The two mages choked on the gas before dropping on the ground. “Doe’n’t matter to me if you’re alive or dead.” Dale said, blowing a smoke. “The Black Gas snuffs out everything.”

“KUEH, kueh!” Django hacked. “Any plans?”

“Just this.” Ellen grabbed the skull mask on her head and pulled it over her face. Her eyes shone red, her bare legs became skeletal, as did her left hand and part of her head. Ellen flashed green and blew the surrounding gas away, then aimed her hands up to shoot a magic beam at Dale.

“YIKES!” Django gaped. “You’re a skeleton, too?!”

“It’s Hollowfication. I’ll tell you about it later.” Ellen stretched her arms up as they morphed into magic and pulled Dale down. He coughed smoke from his cigarette to burn the hands off, but
Django ran up and slashed him in the face with his claws. Ellen shot dark magic at Dale’s right leg, but the exterminator withstood it and rocketed upward, swallowing the area in a gas tornado.

“Uh-oh.” Haruka said as she viewed the tornado from outside. Several village houses were caught in the fog. “Sigh… Here goes.” Determined to help them, she dove inside, and already began coughing.

**Kimaya**

Two Wyvern swooped in to carry Carter away again, so Kimaya pursued on her skateboard. She swerved left and right to avoid Lazarus puddles on her path, then slid up ramped walls to avoid pits. Carter blasted green energy balls at the ground ahead of Kim, resulting in sandy shockwaves that she could use to propel over the pits. Kimaya stopped before a tall machine with a Lazarus tanker that Carter was dropped into. From below, it seemed like the tank was boiling and giving him more power, while also sending large droplets out to hit her. Kimaya decided to climb up and stop him.

She crossed a walkway on the left of the machine, using bending to stuff gas leaks back in their pipes. The path turned right, leading to a small fenced area where a Lazarus spout was risen at level with a higher path. Kimaya saw an Ice Cannon Heartless and used it to freeze the spout, then she pushed a box over to use as a boost to get on the frozen pillar, and reach the walkway. Kimaya swung bars on the side of the structure to cross a gap in the walkway, and they would bring her to two close Wall Jump walls. She raced across another walkway where Lazarus burst out of the sides, then made it atop the tank where Carter was bathing.

Kimaya used her skateboard to grind across the edge of the tank, circling it in a counterclockwise fashion while she held her Keyblades over the tank. She used her poisonbending to make the Lazarus swirl around, jumping and ducking Carter’s energy attacks. Eventually, Kimaya was able to make the structure wobble from all the stirring. When her psychic grip was strong enough, Kimaya jumped off the machine, swung her blades left, and caused the machine to topple over entirely.

Unsurprisingly, Carter popped out of the spilled Lazarus and zipped at Kimaya for swift punches and kicks. He moved faster, giving Kimaya less time to react and take a few hits. Carter’s skin shone a faint red, contrasted by his lime-green veins. “Dude, just look at yo’ self in a mirror. Do you really wanna look this way?”

“And what the hell would you do if you had cancer?! Just lay there and DIE?!”

“Hey, nobody wants to die, but if I had to look like that, I might have second thoughts.” she replied as she quickly dodged his attacks, trying to find an opening.

“Well I’m NOT gonna die! I’m the one and only heir to Pewterschmidt Industries! I’ll rule the company forever! I’ll have everything and you’ll have NOTHING!”

“At least before you sounded like a smart villain. Now you sound like some loon in a crazy house.”

“Sponges get them Jews from my undergarments and I’ll BLOW YOUR PENCIL UP!”

“And now you ain’t talking in real sentences. ’Guess we won’t be exchanging witty banter. Halright, let’s hurry this up.” Kimaya ducked another punch and stabbed her blades up at Carter, seizing the chance to deal a fast combo before jumping, doing a vertical spin, and batting him upward. Carter recovered in the air and stomped down at Kimaya before kicking her away. He flexed his muscles as Kimaya felt an invisible force around him. Carter did a vertical spin-kick and...
sliced a dent across the ground with his green energy. Kimaya dodged further attacks like this as she made her way to Carter—he zipped up with both hands raised before he hammered them at the ground, bursting a shockwave around his area. Kimaya was able to dodge behind and shoot twin lasers from her Keyblades to hurt him.

And the others

Ellen charged a dark magic spell and shot it at Dale, who dodged before throwing a spire of black gas up to hit her. “Cough!” Ellen choked. “I don’t wanna stay in this form too long… I might get infected with darkness, too.”

“Haruka!” Django used sonic waves to blow the gas away and find Haruka kneeling on the ground. “Haru, you alright?” He ran up to her.

“I think so…” Haruka showed her arms, which had faint black lines. “I’m trying to adapt to the gas with my antibodies, but it… cough!”

“I can help!” Ellen flew down, her Hollow powers turned off as she projected a barrier from Dale’s gas. “Django, distract him!” The skeleton nodded and shot a soundwave at Dale, then summoned a skeleton totem pole to lift him up so he could claw at the Heartless.

Ellen pulled out a syringe of reddish-pink potion and injected it in Haruka. “HUUUU!” She almost felt like exploding from the sensation it gave her.

“Don’t panic! It’s a potion I made to vaccinate mortals from dark infections. I never tried it on a Heartless before, so I don’t know if it would work on him…”

“Wait… I think this can work.” Haruka smiled weakly, still commanding her antibodies. “Can you lure him down here while I get ready?”

“Er… Okay.” Confused, Ellen flew up and punched an energy fist at Dale, then Django sprouted another skeleton totem to grab and pull him down. Ellen lunged at and kicked Dale across the jaw, but he shot her away with gas. Django jumped, ripped down his mantis coat, and threw the man backward. “HYUH!” Haruka jumped behind and stuck her fingers into Dale’s neck.

“UAAAAAH!” Dale swung her off and clasped his neck when his skin began to turn a reddish-pink. “Oh God, what’s happening?! Is this the government’s Anti-rebellion Serum?!”

“No, it’s MY serum!” Haruka declared with pride. “I used my antibodies to mix Ellen’s medicine with the particles from your gas to create an antidote!”

“No, this can’t be!” Dale fell to his knees and gasped. “My precious fumes, used against me! I can’t die without having… one last smoke!” He fished around in his pocket, got a lighter, and lit his cigarette for one final smoke. “HUUUU, oh God, it tastes like burning cherry! You were right, Octavio! You were RIIIIIGHT!” Dale’s body faded into dark mist, his blue heart floating up and disappearing.

“Cough!” Haruka fell over. “But making an antidote with my body… Not my safest move! I need a minute… keh. Kids, don’t do this at home.”

“Beat!” Rhyme was able to find her brother in an alley. “Phew, I thought I lost you! Beat, what’s wrong?”

“Cough, he kind of got me!” Beat choked as his body turned more dark. “I think I sucked in his Dark Wind with mah… ghost lungs or somethin’.”
“AH! OW!” They looked up and saw Wiccan be pelted with air puffs from Boomhauer, then the surfer flew up and bashed her to the ground with one more puff. He spotted Beat and Rhyme and spun a cyclone to blow the siblings apart again. “Man-three—three-on-one-isn’t-fair-man, gonna-get-it-done; take-take-him-out-first.” He blew a ceaseless gust of wind at Beat, preventing him from standing.

“BITO!” Rhyme jumped in the gust and was pressed against her brother.


“Rhyme, get the fuck outta here!” Beat grabbed his sister and struggled to throw her off. “Just ’cause I gotta choke on his breath don’t mean you do!”

“But if you die, I might become a Hollow again, and I don’t want to!” Rhyme cried. “You died trying to protect me, Big Brother… I’ll die for you, too.”

“Nnn… Raimu…”

“Is there something wrong with your head?” Crystal remarked as she sucked the gust into her staff. “Instead of wasting your strength on imaginary ghosts, you should focus on me!” The witch rocketed up and started whacking his head like a golfball stuck on a tee. “A woman does not like it when you IGNORE her! ESPECIALLY during a fight!” She flew above and shot him to the ground with a bit of the condensed air. Crystal landed on him and stuck her staff in his mouth. “Perhaps I need to inflate your brain a tad!”

“MMMM!” She shot the full force of the gust inside Boomhauer, puffed him like a balloon, and POPPED him, his heart flying out. “But that’ll just inflate your ego. WHOO!” Wiccan twirled her staff and made a pose. “I beat him ALL by myself!”

Beat and Rhyme floated behind her with irritated stares. They picked boogers out of their noses and wiped them on her robe. “Hee hee hee hee!” The spirits giggled before flying up.

Black Star stabbed his sword in Bill’s foot, resulting in a grunt from the giant. The spirit kid jumped up Bill’s body and continuously pierced him in places, so Bill wouldn’t have the readiness to retaliate when Star stabbed the top of his head and pulled it back. Kaleo climbed out from under Bill’s armpit and jumped down his gaping throat. Black Star released and watched as Bill grew bigger. “I really hope this works.” Star said quietly.

“You know, in spite of all this pain I’m feeling, it’s probly nothin’ compared to those poor villagers.” Bill turned to face Niebla. “They’re so sick, I bet they wouldn’t even feel me crushing them to the ground. Well, I guess I’ll put them outta their misery.” The giant began to stomp to the village. At his size, he would get there in 30 seconds.

“Come on, Leo! Hurry up!”

Before Bill could reach the first house, he felt something press against the inside of his chest. “Urk! Oh, man! I’m having a heart attack! D’oh, why can’t I find that blasted heart under all this fat? Why am I so fat?! Hick—D’OOOH!” Kaleo expanded to a size even larger than Bill. His massive heart was forced out, and the giant was unable to reform with Leo occupying his original space.

“Tsubaki: SHADOW STAR!” Black Star’s weapon transformed into a small black sword. “God’s Divine Judgment Will Bring You Justice!” He flew at the heart and stabbed it through the center. The shell around the heart was destroyed as it disappeared.
“NOOOOO!” Bill’s head was still falling from the air. His body parts dispersed into darkness. “Lenore…” He whimpered as his head faded, too.

Maka was hurriedly swinging her scythe to fight off the swarm of dark boomerangs. The dark Grapple-Cam had a pair of teeth and was swinging itself around Yuki as it kept trying to bite him in various areas. “Eh HEH HEH heh heh!” Hank electrified the ground around him with the Shock Gun; he never had a wider smile. “Hwow, these gizmos are really fun! I feel like putting on a cape and beating up burglars! Heh, a cape! Wait’ll Bobby sees this! Eh HEH heh! LOOK OUT, streets of Arlen! Propane Man’s fighting crime with clean-burning—”

Nolan pressed his remote and caused the utility belt to electrify, shocking Hank until he fell on his back. The dark gadgets fainted. Nolan rolled over and picked Hank up by the shirt. “You need to ask before you play with someone’s toys.” He jabbed Hank in the eyes.


“Okay, this stopped being funny.” Maka said as she casually stabbed Hank in the back. “I just wanna go home and take a spirit-bath.”

“Make sure to use spirit-soap and a spirit-sponge, and wash your spirit-hair.” Nolan said, earning a laugh from Yuki.

“NOT FUNNY!” Hank’s body faded and the heart vanished.

Now Kimaya

Carter hopped in a car Heartless called a Hot Rod, driving across another dirt road while Kimaya chased on her skateboard. The Hot Rod simply dropped bombs that Kimaya had to evade, and she saw they were returning to the Lazarus Plant. They rolled down into a dark tunnel going under the factory, and the only light within the depths was a humongous pool of Lazarus. Kimaya didn’t see where Carter went (though it was obvious), so she skated down the path and stopped on the only safe foothold by the edge of the pool.

“AAAHH!!” Carter shot out of the pool like a bullet and slammed Kim against the wall. The elder’s skin had the reddish-pink tone of a painful sunburn, and his green veins were bulging. “So, you like that Django boy? Then you can JOIN him!” He punched a beam that broke a gaping crack in the wall, Kimaya dodging by a beat. “You can die in the same place that he died! I’m getting SICK of the Leaders nagging me about the Seven Lights!”

Kimaya stumbled over when she dodged on Carter’s left. As she grabbed her dropped Oathkeeper, she glanced down at her stomach and had a wild impulse. She ran back up the winding skateboard path, dodging all of Carter’s blasts that made the path crumble. “Why would you give a damn about anybody else when you can have everything? I’m the president of a multi-million corporation! I’m the only person worth saving! And the second this godforsaken town finally dies, no one will ever remember or CARE about—”

“I am getting SICK of yo’ FACE!” Kimaya pierced both Keyblades into her stomach, unlocking her Poison Fury. She dove headfirst into the Lazarus, much to Carter’s utter shock. Faster than a bullet, Kimaya shot out and banged him against the wall. Her body shone with the Lazarus’s bright green light, using her Keyblades to bend a stream of Lazarus and press him on the wall. “You like Lazarus?! Well, have a GALLON! Or a DRUM! OR A FERRY!!”
“Gluck gluck gluck, cough, gouk!” Kimaya continuously shoved Lazarus down his throat. When she stopped, Carter fell dizzy. Kimaya spun at whipping speed and pulled a spire of Lazarus up to surround herself. She was still energized with the Lazarus mixed with Fury Mode, and before she would let it go to waste, she flew all around the factory and destroyed every last machine that had a thing to do with Lazarus. Her Keyblades allowed her to control the powerful toxic, shooting beams that destroyed every container and pipe.

Finally, Kimaya drilled back down to the basement, bent all of the Lazarus around her Keyblades, and sent a devastating beam down to the center of the pool. But Carter Pewterschmidt blocked it with a beam of his own, and now it was a matter of which force was stronger. Carter fought through Kimaya’s beam and grabbed her crossed Keyblades, pushing with the full power of the Lazarus he absorbed for 30 years.

“I am Carter Pewterschmidt… a Corporate President! If you destroy me, you will regret it! Cipher Pol 10 will come… Cipher Pol 10 will kill every last one of you brats! The Seven Lights will regret the day they EVER stood against the-”

“BUUURP!” Kimaya’s Gas Bomb faltered Carter, and one final burst of power was enough to blow him into the Lazarus Pit. “Like Ah give a shit.” The energy beam burrowed through the ground, and for the next few minutes, Kimaya watched as- “WAIT, are we forgetting something?”

Harper House

“Here’s the Spirit Ball, Harvey!” Sonya gave her son the ball.

“Thanks, Mom!” Harvey through the Pokéball and caught Mesprit. The ball wiggled and beeped on the floor before confirming capture. The Spirit Ball flashed its pink and silver colors, and a ‘II’ appeared on the forehead. Harvey picked it up. “Yaaaaay!”

It doesn’t feel climactic, but Harvey caught a Firstborn! Just 4 left!

“Phew, okay.” sighed Kimaya. She watched every last ounce of Lazarus swirl into the depths like a toilet. She set foot on the ground to let her Fury wear off. (End song.)

Kimaya panted and felt no energy left to even walk. The cave was so much darker; only a few droplets of Lazarus gave light, and echoed upon dropping. A small blue light floated out of the pit. Kimaya stared at the blue heart before it disappeared into darkness. “So, he was one of them, too… or something.” She gasped.

Outside

Everyone else gathered outside the factory entrance as Kimaya limped out, using her Keyblades as walking sticks. “Kimaya!” Kami and The Gang yelled as she and Django helped her stand.

“Cough!” She spat some droplets out. “Damn… Lazarus tastes like old man spit.”

“You fell in the Lazarus Pit?!” Django yelled.

“Not so much that, more like… Tried to control it with Fury Mode and got carried away.”

“Where did you learn to do Fury Mode?” Kami asked.

“Dad taught me about it. He said I needed to get better at bending, but since Keyblades can open anything, I thought I’d… KUEH!”
“We need to get her to a hospital!” Haruka yelled. “I’m calling Moonbase!”

“Kimaya, just… hang in there!” Django was the last one to speak before Kimaya fainted.

**Moonbase**

She awoke to a soft, peaceful tune. A hospital light hung right above her. Kimaya was wrapped like a mummy, but her signature three front strands of hair stuck out of the bandages. Django was on her right, playing the tune in question. He opened his eyes a tad to stare at her coolly. Kimaya returned the smile. “I’ll take the fanfare now.”

“…Okay.” He smiled.

Now? Okay. **NOW Kimaya awakened as the Sixth Light! Just ONE more! No, Mom, I’m writing stories. I know, I’ll do that in a minute. No, I haven’t seen—CRAP, wrong place!!**

“You sure know how to make a show, young lady.” Kami entered the room with The Gang and the (invisible to her) Sector SCYTHE.

“After you beat Carter, the rest of the Heartless just disappeared.” Maka said with a grateful smile.

“I think they were intimidated by my godly godliness.” Black Star smirked.

“If only.” Ellen giggled, earning a glare from him.

“Hey, Kimaya!” Kaleo grinned. “I grew so big that I forgot how to speak! But a talking football shot me with a ray gun and made me little again!”


“Uuaaaah.” Django lay beside her. “Me, too.”

“No you ain’t, you a dead kid. You ain’t evuh get tired.”

“Oh, shut up. My bones feel rickety.”

“I wanna be Beat, too!” Kaleo lay with them.

“Well, you can’t!” Beat rapped. “’Cause I’M Beat!”

The Gang and Sector SCYTHE laughed for a second. Kami gave a small chuckle and sat on a chair. When they calmed down, Kimaya frowned and brought up the question: “So Ah guess Beat and Rhyme have ta leave now?”

The two siblings frowned and looked away. “I thought we would have to eventually.” Rhyme said. “But I’m still gonna miss you guys.”

“Well… we could bring it up with the Supreme Leader.” Ellen smiled. “If he was okay with it, and if they didn’t tell anyone else, he might let you visit them…”

“Uuuuugh.” Django rolled on his side. “Why are Beat and Rhyme getting the sympathy treatment? I’m the one with the sad backstory, my town is sick and dying!”

“No offense,” Rhyme smiled, “but for Spirit KND, sad backstories are as everyday as messy clothes.”
Kimaya put a hand on his shoulder. “Cheer up, Django. At least your town won’t go cuckoo like Carter.”

“Good point… All I wanted was payback at Carter. Whether he gave them the Lazarus or not, in the end it wouldn’t have mattered. I’m starting to think it’s Niebla’s fate to be sick. I guess I’m just the lucky one. But what can you do about it?”

“I can understand the pain your town must be in.” Ellen said. “It would be a shame to leave things as they are, without trying to help them.”

“I think Haru was trying to do something.” Django said. “Maybe we’ll go back after Kimaya’s better.”

“What I can’t quite understand is why the Heartless suddenly decided to show up here.” Maka noted. “In the past, the only times the Heartless decide to show up… are when the Negatar was around.”

“Where do the Heartless come from, anyway?” Black Star asked.

“I’m not sure… but maybe we can find a clue in the Lazarus Plant. We’ll check it out after Kimaya’s better. Let’s give her some space for now.” The spirits left.

The Gang kids were silent, lain on Kim’s bed. “Kids, get off of that. You might catch her disease.” Kami told them.

“Relax, it was only a little Lazarus.” Kimaya said.

“Sigh…”

“So Mom, how come you ain’t seeing those spirit kids? Didn’t you kill K. Rool?”

“I didn’t really care about that. Maybe that’s why.”

Django whistled. “You’re cold, Mrs. Heartly.”

“He came back to life, anyway.”

“Sure he did. …Hey, Kim. Wanna hear about the Twenty Keys Quest?”

“Is that important?”

“I think so…”

**Pueblo de Niebla; two days later**

It was sunnier in the afternoon, and the sky clear with the factory shut down. Townspeople were out of their homes for fresh air, but they were still too ill to do anything. Kimaya was healthy enough to walk around, but she still had bandages. She stared at the key ring with the six strange keys dangling in her hand. “Twenty Keys, huh.” she said to herself, sitting on a rock. “Seven Lights, Thirteen Darks. You know anything about this, Mom?”

“Not a clue,” Kami said, lain on her front on the ground. Her head was propped on her hands and her legs rocking to and fro in the air.

“…I’m still mad at you for not telling I’m a Sleeper.”
“I said I was sorryyyyy.” Kami droned.

“I need a better heartfelt speech.”

“Sigh. Humility hurts.”

“How long are we going to stay in this place?” Wiccan asked. “Eventually, the Government will be aware of our actions here.”

“Until Haruka feels like leaving.” Sandman shrugged.

“Thank God the Sandmobile has Sand-Sleeping Bags.” Yuki noted.

“May I have EVERYBODY’S attention!” Haruka announced from the top of the coal truck (still crashed on the fountain). “After a careful analysis of the samples extracted from my patients, my uncle has come up with a conclusion.” She held up her cellphone, turning the volume up so all could hear—and Django cast a translation spell.

“GOOD AFTERNOON, Sick People Country!” Caesar’s maniacal voice spoke. “After I finished studying the bacteria sample, I now know the reason behind your illness. It is something I read about, but had never seen for myself. It even took some looking up on Mexico’s history to finally learn the truth. Pueblo de Niebla is a village of poisonbenders!”

“Poisonbenders?” The others were murmuring confusion, but the citizens were too tired to do the same.

“Two hundred years ago, numerous Mexican families were banished from their hometowns for having one or more smelly poisonbenders. It was a cold era where we could not be the free bees we are now. Those people pleaded to the gods for a place they can call home. So the God of Poisons, Hexxus appeared and brought them to a land rich with Poison Chi! Houses were built, a whole village where the benders could be their delightful smelly selves!”

“So how did they all get sick?” Django yelled.

“Well, as you now know, the reason for this abundant chi was the Lazarus. The impure, tainted Lazarus created fumes that were too much for the benders to handle – it messed with their minds, you know. A couple generations later, the people forgot their poisonbending. They developed a disease known as Chi Disuse. It happens when a bender goes far too long without using their chi, while living in an area heavy with that chi. For poisonbenders, it is most likely to happen. The samples I studied were, in actuality, a tainted Poison Chi as a result of Disuse.”

“Then the reason I was the only healthy child…” Django spoke, “is because I’m not a poisonbender?”

“Did your family come from this town originally?” Nolan asked.

“No. My grandma was a dark witch, and she brought my dad here from Miracle City to protect him from persecution. They thought he might have magic, too. He married a woman from this village and had me. But when I turned three, Mom got really sick and she died. When Dad went out to the desert to hunt, he never came back. That night, when I was in bed… Grandma appeared as a skeleton. She told me what she was and said that I inherited her magic.”

“But if your mother hailed from this village, then you should have inherited a little of her familial traits. The fact you were perfectly healthy is outstanding, even for a mage.”
“So what do these people have to do to get better?” Yuki asked. “Use their repressed poisonbending?”

“That would be the first step.” Haru figured. “But I think we also need to get them out of this dump. Pueblo de Niebla’s too toxic for any person to live on. We need to get everyone treated and find them new homes. Just like we did for all of Caesar’s victims!”

“Exactly! HEY, wait a sec!”

“I already told Cheren and everyone else everything that’s happened here. We’ll also be able to get Project Daycare out of the way, too.”


“I… I want to be. But it’s too hard to believe. I gave up hope this town could be saved… I wanted to use you to achieve my selfish desire to destroy Carter. I kept my feelings and ambitions a secret… How could it all be resolved so easily?”

Kimaya knuckled his skull. “Quit actin’ so dead and ask for things more.”

“…Hn hn hn.” Django grinned and chuckled.

“If all of you are finished,” Maka’s voice called, “someone else is here to speak!”

The heroes made their way north of the town square. Sector SCYTHE was standing with three other figures. Team Sandman instantly recognized the Nightmare King, Darkrai II, and Jack Skellington. They were accompanied by their new employee, Anna of Arendelle.

“Cough! Blech!” Anna choked. “Earth’s air is worse than Glacia’s blizzard!”

“I kind of like it.” Jack smiled, his bone lungs immune to the fumes.

Darkrai floated up to Kimaya Heartly. He reached down by her belt and took the key ring, studying the six attached keys. “Kimaya… What did the stone cube call you?”

Kimaya questioned how he knew about that, but maybe Sector SCYTHE told him. “Um… ‘The Keeper of the Keys’?”

“Darkrai, what’s going on?” asked Nolan.

The king gave the keys back to Kim. “These spirits came to Nightmare Land through the NME Transporter inside Carter’s factory. Mr. Pewterschmidt is a customer of my products, but I was surprised to hear what creatures showed up in his control. I have a story to tell you all. The Heartless come from Nightmare Land.”

“You mean they’re Nightmares?” Haruka asked.

“Not quite. I believe the date was 1500 years ago.”

**That long ago**

*It was a time when my father was having creator’s block in Nightmare production. They pictured the Holy Nightmare, towering and terrifying, clutching his head as he panicked from lack of ideas. It was really funny. Definitely.*
Then one night, a man was reported strolling through the city. A human man. And he came to the factory. He wore a brown robe with a hood. He approached my father with his head bowed. He introduced himself as…

The man pulled off his hood. He was brown-skinned, baldheaded, had a grey goatee, and scary yellow eyes. “I am Xehanort.”

He raised his hand and materialized what we now know as a Keyblade. It was the same Keyblade Negatar Gnaa would one day use: the blade that unlocks hearts and minds. Xehanort used it on my father, and his creativity lit like a dark sun.

Darkrai I scratched his chin as he scribbled formulas on a holographic screen. Xehanort shook ‘no’ and wrote his own formulas with the Keyblade. Darkrai smiled deviously. He was an ingenious man, like he had been doing this his whole life. He brought with him a potion called ‘Heart.’ Xehanort held up a vial of pink, brimming liquid with tiny hearts. According to him, it was emotions in condensed form. My father beamed at his intellect.

When Darkrai II flew by, he noticed the key ring attached to Xehanort’s coat. It had twelve keys on it.

Across the factory treadmills came Soldier Heartless, Icy Cubes, Nocturnes, Search Ghosts, and Large Bodies which hilariously smashed the pile of Heartless at the end. A whole new line of Nightmares called “Heartless” were made. They were made using the Heart and Evil Crystals we collected. Father honored Xehanort and gave him the Nobel Fear Prize. We had never seen a one like him… but then one day:

The Heartless revolted! Xehanort commanded them to attack the Nightmares! It was a disaster! During the invasion, a ship landed in the Town Square. Xehanort went up to greet its driver. It was none other than the Negatar Navi!

“Navi from Ocarina of Time is a NEGATAR?!” Kaleo screamed.

It’s just “Ivan” spelled backwards! …But that is funny. Anyway, it turned out Xehanort was in league with Lord Navi. And Navi’s Dark Chi was used to create more Heartless; before we knew it, Heartless appeared in nearly every populace setting. The Reapers and spirits were sent to control the situation. We didn’t produce that many Heartless in Nightmare Land, so we assumed they were making more elsewhere.

Eventually, the Grim Reaper, Jorgen von Strangle, and Fairy Princess Mavis were called to fight him. I still remember how he fought. He was very powerful! He also kept using Healing spells, and THAT’S always fun. The fight lasted for AGES…


We won.

“Awwwww.”

But it wasn’t easy. And even as Xehanort lay defeated, he spoke his last words proudly.

“I am Xehanort. I am the Keeper of the Keys! You can never imprison me. No lock can hold me!”

So we used all manner of Lock Spells, magic locks, and injected him with a toxin that makes his body still. Then we placed him in the lowest floor of Underworld Prison.
Currently

“There were still so many things we didn’t know about Xehanort.” Darkrai continued. “But over the next generations, more Heartless appeared under control of the Negatars. Mortals also began to gain Keyblades and used them to fight the Heartless. I was so confused that I decided to seek the knowledge of the Chronicler. Grim accompanied me. The Chronicler coined the Dimensional Fusion as the cause.”

Darkrai faced down at Kimaya. “Disregarding all those details, I think I understand. It seems that you, Kimaya, are a chosen one of the Seven Lights. You are the Keeper of the Keys. I believe Xehanort has the same duty as you do. He is the Keeper for the Thirteen Darknesses.”

“Really?!” Haruka exclaimed.

“Yes. And it seems the two of you will give those other keys to the respective chosen ones. I do not understand the entire prophecy myself, so it may not do to ask me. But I think we can be sure that Xehanort will return. Just be on your guard…”

Kimaya looked away, not sure what to think. Anna also looked a bit downtrodden; the mention of the prophecy and the Poneglyphs was a sensitive topic, given what happened. “Anyway, we will happily take the people of this town to Nightmare Land and have them treated.” Darkrai said. “Do not misjudge. Our medical care is very excellent, and Anna has shown to have great doctoring skills.”

“Jar Jar gets a looooot of booboos.” Anna grinned sheepishly.

“I could help treat them.” Haruka said.

“That’s very kind of you, but you children must have more important things on your plate.” Darkrai said. “You can trust them in our care.”

“Heh…” Django grinned. “One skeleton to another?”

“You bet!” Jack perked. “We’ll go back home and bring a few ships to take them back with us!”

The three returned to the factory. “We need to go, too.” Maka said, standing with her spirit operatives. “Thanks for all your help.”

“Catch ya later, Kim and Lo!” Beat rapped.

“Catch ya on the flipsiiiide!” Rhyme sang.

“It was great seeing you, Haruka!” Ellen waved. “Tell Cheren I said ‘hi’!"

“Haha, okay! Wait, how do you know Cheren?”

“I don’t personally, but he’s my sister’s descendant!”

“Your sister’s-?”

“Time to go!” Maka yelped when a ray of light shone on them from Heaven. “Byyyyye!” The spirits warped.

Django returned to the east field and climbed the hill to Luviro’s house. It was as old as he had last seen it, and its only inhabitant was long dead. “Sigh… I promised that I would be with you when you died. I guess… I forgot that, too. Sigh…”
A pair of boots stomped up the rugged path. Django felt their owner stand beside him without looking up. “Well, you aren’t something I see every day.”

Django looked up. He was a teen boy with sunglasses, a brown vest, and a lollipop in his mouth. “Neither are you. What’re you doing here?”

“Here to see Luviro.” Augustus walked toward the house with his crew of four babies.

Django was confused. “How do you know Luviro?”

“I met him a few months ago.” The captain entered the old house.

Django gaped, pondering the teen’s words. “Luviro’s… alive? …” Feeling too curious, he joined the crew in the house.

Mariejoa; God’s Castle

“YOUR MAJESTIES!” An agent in a black tux dashed through the shiny marble halls. “Honorable World Leaders!” He entered the open throne room and bowed before the six Leaders. “CP10 returned from Mexico! President Carter Pewterschmidt was killed, and the Sixth Light found the Poneglyph he was protecting!”


“Poor Carrrrrrrr, poor Carrrrrrrrrr.” Jennifer Bush swayed to and fro. “Rrrrr, rrrrr, rrrrrrr.”

“Time is running out!” King Andrew thundered. “Is the Poneglyph in Enies Lobby still in place?”

“Y-Yes! Eldwin reported that it was still secure!”

“See to it that it stays secure! For hundreds of years, the World Government has searched for the Poneglyphs, to hide them from the chosen ones! The Poneglyph in Enies Lobby will no doubt go to the Seventh Light. The Octogan showed us her identity. CP10 is ordered to protect it from her at all costs. The one named Madeline Murphy must not come to Enies Lobby!”

“Yes, My Lord!” The agent ran.

“Our time is running short.” Lucas Stonebuddy spoke with hands over his mouth. “Hugo Strange is nearly complete with his end. There is still one crucial key to create the Inferius: the God Fruit.”

“There is no worry.” His Majesty said. “It will be delivered to our hands soon enough.” The Octogan showed a furious King Zing and his swarm of Zingers, and Team Rupert bringing a giant pot of honey to Lenari.

Lazarus Plant

Babs Pewterschmidt stared at the ruins of her husband’s factory. She shook her head in a reproving fashion. “Little children can be such demons. I hope you people are worth the money we’re paying.” She turned to face them. “Do whatever you can to avenge Carter.”

The seven masked figures in black coats said nothing. The gentle breeze blew their coats.

I was a tad pressed for time, but… it all worked out. A few scenes I wanted to have happen,
but couldn’t work in. Well, with Lazarus Saga concluded, we will now move to the seventh, long-awaited, semi-final CP10 Saga… RIGHT AFTER I write the Tenth Firstborn Arc of the Side Stories! XD Yeah, I debated it, and I wanna get this Side Stories arc out of the way! So I will see you for that!
Freedom

Chapter Summary

Wendy Marvell spends time with her father! Meanwhile, Alieha Sicnarf is sent to awaken Marshall D. Teach as a Darkness.

Ladies and germs, we are beginning the final arc of the Side Stories: Noah’s Arc. It will be fairly long as the Side Stories will end around Chapter B-40, during which we will cover up the three character stories. This also comes after Chapter 61, right after that one ends.

Chapter B-29: Freedom

Pueblo de Niebla

Let’s recap for a second: following their parley with Captain Slag, the Marzipan Pirates flew to Pueblo de Niebla to ask Luviro about the sixth Lost Candy. They flew by Team Sandman’s aircraft, and before confronting the sick child, the crew decided to bare witness to the exciting conflict that took place in the village. A group of kids whom the pirates were pretty sure were Kids Next Door operatives fought a band of dark creatures. One of these kids grew exponentially gigantic and seemed to have no clue on his surroundings. Before he could cause too much damage, Stewie blasted this boy with his Metahuman Neutralizer. This seemed to work as the boy shrank back to a normal size.

When Augustus was finally ready to see Luviro again, he led his crew up the path to his house. He cocked a brow: there was a skeleton boy in black clothes and a Western hat. “Well, you aren’t something I see every day.” Augustus said to the undead boy.

The skeleton looked up. He had glowing red eyes in his sockets. “Neither are you. What’re you doing here?”

“Here to see Luviro.” Augustus walked toward the house with his crew following.

Django was confused. “How do you know Luviro?”

“I met him a few months ago.” The captain entered the old house.

Django gaped, pondering the teen’s words. “Luviro’s… alive? …” Feeling too curious, he joined the crew in the house.

The home was as fallen apart and poorly managed as either Django or Augustus had last seen. They all approached the bed by the dead fireplace. The lump that belonged to its occupant was still there. Django only watched as Augustus put his hand on the lump. “Luviro… are you awake?”

Django gasped upon hearing the faint, agonizing moan. “Au…gus…tus…”

“LUVIRO!” Django was quick to climb on the bed. The pale, dying face of his old friend opened his yellowish eyes. “Luviro… is that really you?”

“…Hm.” Django smirked. “Compared to you, I’m a sight. But… this isn’t possible. You shouldn’t even be alive… let alone look the same as you did 30 years ago!”

“Thirty years ago?!” Stewie asked baffled.

“Mw-mw?!” Maggie shared his confusion.

“You three are one to talk.” Augustus noted. “Luviro, look! We have four of the Lost Candies!” He took the Infi-Cube and released the Rock Nut, Cupcake Core, Gear Heart, and Sun Key on his bed.

Luviro gazed at the treasures and made a faint hiss that sounded like a long gasp. “Los Caramelos Perdidos… You really found them for me?”

“I did!” Augustus said happily. “Just like I said I would! And I’m about to find the other ones, too! But I need to know where the sixth one is. Can you tell me?”

He coughed. “Augustus… I’ve never been more happy… I’m so thankful that you… are finding them. …I have a secret to tell you. Uncover my head, Augustus… Please.”

Augustus viewed the blanket that covered his head. It seemed awfully thick for what he assumed was little space underneath. But he felt something hard underneath when he grabbed the blanket. Augustus pulled it off… He, Django, and the babies gaped.

Luviro had graying black hair and pale orange horns. The twin horns curved into swirls like a lizard’s tail. “My name is… Luviro Lizaro. I am from a world called Alternia. Augustus… do you know about the Apocalypse that will happen at the end of this month?”

“The Apocalypse…” Augustus was still trying to process this strange appearance, so this new knowledge didn’t reach him right away. “No…”

“The Apocalypse will destroy everything… He will destroy everything… But there is a way to save everyone. When the Lost Candies are brought together… they will create the ship to the New World… and it will sail for three years… I was sent to this universe thousands of years ago… to help the Sugar Fairies hide the Lost Candies…”

“Thousands of years…” Augustus whispered to himself, trying to process it all. “So… the Lost Candies create a ship?”

“Sí… It is the most powerful ship in the entire multiverse… created by Termina’s Giants. If it isn’t complete… nobody will survive… The universe is doomed… Augustus, please… You need to complete the ship. Save… everybody…”

“But none of this makes sense! An Apocalypse is gonna destroy the universe, who else knew about this?!?”

“The Kids Next Door.” Django answered. “What? You seriously weren’t aware of this Seven Lights Quest that’s been happening all month?! Hwow, you need to catch up!”

“Luviro, if all this is true, why couldn’t you have told me earlier? I would’ve spent more time looking for them!”

“I had to be sure I could trust you… If you were really willing to find the Lost Candies… then I could. Augustus… I have Universe Cancer… My body absorbed too much of the energy from my
peoples’ Transportifier… and after I landed in this universe, my lifespan became bound to it… I can feel it… It’s going to happen soon… cough. Augustus… please find the last candies… please… cough!”

“But where is it? Where’s the sixth candy?”

“The final candy… we hid under an island… that looks like a squished gumdrop.”

“Gumdrop Cove!” Stewie said with realization.

“Augustus… I’m sorry I lied to you before…” Luviro spoke hoarsely. “I’m sorry that I… gave you this difficult mission… But I loved this universe… I loved every moment I spent here… It’s so much nicer than Alternia… I just wish… it didn’t have to go… cough. Augustus… go find the last candy, quickly… I may not get to see you again… so I want you to know… I’m really grateful… you came to see me…” He fell asleep.

“Luviro…” Augustus put a hand on his head. Django felt for Luviro’s heart, but his boney hand had no feeling.

“Luviro… why…” Django would be crying tears if he could. “Why didn’t you tell me… I would’ve done it for you! I was DEAD for 30 years, I had nothing else to do! LUVIRO!”

“Calm down, he’s still breathing!” Augustus yelled. “He isn’t dead, yet. Still… is his lifespan really bound to this universe? And the Apocalypse… could that be what the fairies were talking about?”

“Augustus, do you know what’s going to happen at the end of this month?” Zeira asked.

“This month? At the end of this month, Luviro’s gonna die. He’s terminally ill, and he wants to see the Lost Candies before it happens.”

“…I see…” Zeira was clearly suspicious of his reason, though Augustus couldn’t imagine why.

“She did know…” Augustus thought back to that conversation. “She knew all along… Kids, we have to go. We need to search Gumdrop Cove for the Lost Candy.” He recollected the four candies and began to walk out. “What are you gonna do, Skeleton?”

Django glanced at them, still kneeled on Luviro’s bed. “I’m gonna stay here… I promised Luviro I would be with him when he died… I thought I missed my chance, but now… I can keep my promise.”

“…” Augustus took out a lollipop and tossed it to Django. “If he wakes up, give that to him.”

Django stared at the green candy, hearing the footsteps of the crew fade out of the house. “I doubt either of us could taste it now…” Django chuckled.

“Augustus, are we going to tell Captain Slag about Gumdrop?” Stewie asked on their way to the Ace Flyer.

“Not yet. I wanna get my hands on it before Slag or Licorice have a chance to find out. If Licorice knew where it was, his boys would’ve been swarming Gumdrop already. We have a shot.”

“But he didn’t even tell us what the candy looked like!” Rallo shouted.

“Yes he did, Rallo. The Lost Candies are parts to a ship. We have four of the parts, the fairies have
the fuel… so all that leaves is the ship itself.”

**KND Moonbase**

Sector RZ parted ways with Wendy and her group once they left Lunaria’s atmosphere. The team of four returned to a shabby-looking Moonbase, parking their C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. in the hangar. Lulu, Denny, and Diwata headed for the Supreme Leader’s office while Lee remained with his sister, who was lain on one of the bus’s seats.

When Dillon saw the team come onto the bridge, he gestured Carol to follow as he jogged up to them. “Sector RZ! Where’ve you… Is that Diwata?” he questioned the blue-skinned girl with round white eyes.

“Yes, it’s me.” Dee confirmed. “Before we start explaining, let’s get Cheren.”

They knocked on the leader’s door before entering the office. Cheren looked up with a quizzical expression. “Lulu, Denny? And…”

“Diwata.” She rolled her eyes. “Cheren, we gotta show you something.”

They led Cheren, Dillon, and Carol back down to the hangar and entered the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S.. Lee stepped aside to give them a look at his sister… The three gasped at the sight of the hole in Leanne’s chest. They nearly died of shock. “Wh…What the hell happened?!” Cheren choked out.

“Leanne’s dead.” Lee said solemnly. “It happened on a mission to Lunaria.”

“Lunaria?! I didn’t give you any mission!”

“We sorta got it on our own.” Lulu replied. “To sum it up…”

The next few minutes were spent recapping the adventure. Dillon couldn’t bring himself to ask questions… Leanne was a close friend. He comforted her when her prank against Francis backfired, they played videogames together… Dillon wasn’t particularly in love with her, but a recent conversation suggested differently about her.

“So Dillon, I notice you’ve been spending an awful lot of time with Carol.”

“Well, she is tryin’ out to be a new member of the team. I’m just helping her out.”

“Ah. It’s only fair, I guess, with Vanellope gone… no offense.”

“What does that mean?”

“Come on, Dillon, you’re totally hitting it up with that rich girl. And she knows computers now just like Vanellope!”

“That doesn’t mean I LIKE her!” Dillon flushed. “And I wasn’t in love with Vanellope either, she was my sister!”

“Adopted sister.”

“It’s still gross!”

“Fine, but I’m still gonna tell you that money doesn’t buy happiness.”

“I KNOW that! Besides, Carol’s in love with Mason. I don’t wanna steal her because I couldn’t
tease Mason then.”

“Well, Mason still has Sheila, so you and her still have a shot, I guess.” Leanne shrugged.

“Yeah, you’re probably right… I MEAN, NO YOU’RE NOT!”

“Dillon, are you okay?” Carol asked comfortingly, putting a hand on his shoulder.
Dillon glanced at her and sported a light smile. “For a while, I sort of had the feeling… Leanne had
a crush on me. I don’t know if she did or… she was just poking fun. …I guess I’ll never find out
now.”

“Sigh… We better go tell Mom and Dad so we can start preparing the funeral.” Lee said.

“We don’t have time for another funeral.” Cheren replied.

“What?!” Lee whipped at him, and Damien bared fangs and hissed, sharing his master’s anger.
“We had a funeral for your dad, but you don’t wanna have one for my SISTER?! I thought you
were a nice guy that tried to be too nice, but you’re really a selfish PRICK, aren’t you?!”

“The Apocalypse is 15 days away!” Cheren yelled. “I’m as upset as you are and I wanna have a
funeral, but we don’t have time! We need to focus our energy on finding the Lights and saving the
universe! If all of us are dead, there’ll be no one to mourn her! But if we’re successful… then we’ll
give her a funeral.”

“…Hmph. I wonder if you would say that if Anthony died, or Aurora, or just about anyone from a
higher-up sector.”

“Calm down, Lee.” Lulu appeased.

“Uh-uh. I don’t get why Cheren is allowed to have a bedridden ‘my life is over’ moment and I
shouldn’t.”

“I’m not berating you for being upset,” Cheren argued, “I just want you to be sure you don’t lose
sight of the mission at hand.”

“Oh, well sorry for not trying to find the Seven Lights that we don’t know who they are. Sorry that
no one in my sector fell asleep and received a destiny dream, EXCEPT maybe Diwata, because
she’s a flippin’ Firstborn Guardian now! And NO ONE stopped Dillon or Melody from going to
get THEIR Firstborn! In fact, if you didn’t make that deal with Grim, she could just come back to
life right now!”

“But if she did come back, it would kind of ruin the meaning behind Diwata’s awakening.” Denny
reasoned. He was met with Lee’s angry stare, plus silent stares from the others. “…Or something.”

“Sigh… Lee, I’m really sorry about Leanne, and I’ll even bump you guys higher than Sector L if
you want.” Cheren consoled. “But I just don’t think another funeral is necessary. Anyway, since
Leanne died on a mission, we’ll put her in an official KND casket and keep her in the infirmary,
but first you can take her down to show your parents. …We should also probably cover up her
wound… it’s hard to look at.”

“Do whatever you want.” Lee sat in the seat opposite of Leanne’s. “I don’t care anymore.”

“…Okay, I’ll leave you be.” Cheren left.
Midna rose out of Dillon’s shadow. “As saddened as I am about losing a fellow shadowbender, is no one going to ask about this accredited TENTH Firstborn?”

“Oh, sorry.” Diwata pulled out her Spirit Ball. “Midna, meet Crest.” She popped it open and released the indigo crescent-head. “Crest, meet Midna, your fellow Firstborn.”

“HOLY FLAP, YOU’RE PRETTY!” Crest shouted at Midna with wide eyes. His chest moon shaped like a heart.

“GYUH!” Midna flinched, and red filled up her dark cheeks.

“You’re so beautiful!” Crest got up in her face. “I don’t wanna be that guy with cheap pickup lines, but I think I found the missing piece of my moon.”

“Uhhh… byebye!” Midna zipped into Dillon’s shadow.

**Climbers Household**

“Thank you for preparing this dinner, Mrs. Climber.” Wendy said with a kind smile as she and the twins ate steamed carrots with mashed potatoes and melted cheese. “Um, that is your surname, right?”

“Ah, you don’t have to worry about that.” Nana smiled. “Just enjoy the meal! Traveling to the moon and back has to make a kid hungry.”

“I wonder when my dad plans to meet me again.” Wendy said to herself. “Or where.”

“Wendy, I don’t believe you should interact with that man, anymore.” Carla stated.

“What? But Carla, he’s my dad. You know how long I waited to meet him.”

“I know that, Child, but there is something… off about him. Something that makes my fur tingle. Even you were detested when he attempted to-”

“I know.” Wendy didn’t want to hear the end of that sentence. “I agree… there’s a few things that are… wrong with him. But he’s still my father. I want to spend more time with him…”

_Knock knock knock_, came a sound from the wooden door. Popo went up to answer it, only to find nothing but snow under the night. The Eskimo peeked outside, wondering what fool would journey all the way up this mountain just for a ding-dong ditch. There was a sudden gust of wind that blew snow around, forcing Popo to slam the door.

Wendy and Carla exchanged a knowing look. “Well, um… I’m going to go for a walk. May I be excused?” Wendy asked.

“I call dibs!” Donna swiped her food.

“At least put on a coat, Child.” Carla said.

Wendy donned a purple coat with thick black pants, purple boots, a white scarf, and purple mittens. She stepped out into the night cold, covering her mouth and nose to protect them from the chilly breeze. She looked up a hill and saw a floating shadow against the indigo sky. Wendy trudged up the snow and would soon discover the shadow was her father. Vaati was floating cross-legged a few inches above a floating carpet.

“Father…”
“Wendy.” The Man With the Red Eye smiled, finding her outfit and posture adorable. “It’s very chilly tonight.”

“It sure is.” Wendy uncovered her mouth to speak. “My nose always gets drippy.”

“…I… hope you’re not still angry at me for my actions.”

“Um… I don’t want to be… It just concerns me. I don’t like fighting or violence… but when there is, I don’t wanna see… death. Father… how often do you kill people?”

Vaati closed his eye. “More often than I’d like to admit.” He reopened it. “I cringe at the sight of death, too, Wendy. I believe all beings deserve a freedom to live. And yet… there is a freedom in death as well. Beings become spirits, their souls no longer tethered by the weight of the world. When there are evil people who enjoy taking freedom, do not see the beauty in freedom, the only solace is death.”

“Dad… I don’t know if I like this freedom philosophy. I know that everyone deserves free will, and bad people have to be stopped… but I… I just don’t know.”

“The fault is mine on that. As you said, while my goal was to teach you freedom by abandoning you, let you be free to run around the world, I made you feel as though you were nothing. You were not able to look at the world as I have, Wendy. So I invite you to come see it with me.”

“R… Really?” She stared at the carpet.

“This is a magic carpet I purchased from a town called Magnostadt. I never had a need to use it, since I can already fly.” He blushed. “In fact, I used to have a black sky bison, but… he was a little too violent even for me. So, will you come?”

“Uh… Of course.” Wendy smiled and climbed on the carpet. “Is this gonna be like Aladdin?”

“The very same.” Vaati chuckled.

“Whole new world, same old song.” Wendy beamed.

“Ha ha ha! However, I would like it if you take off your coat. It’s so hard to embrace the air with such heavy clothing. Toss them in here.” He held his hat out.

“Um… Okay, Father.” After removing her coat, pants, and boots, Wendy was left with her emerald dress.

“You should take off those nasty chi-blocks, too.”

“You mean my Stabilizers?”

“Yes. Do not fear your wind curse. We shall be constantly flying.”

“If you say so…” Wendy reached under her dress to pull off the stickers on her waist. The wind began to build up as snow blew.

“There… Now just enjoy the breeze.” (Play “Whole New World” (instrumental) from Aladdin!)

Vaati took off into the sky and the magic carpet followed. Wendy lay on her front and gripped the edge of the fabric, peering over to see the mountains shrink away from her vision. Soon, they were soaring over the clouds and over the endless sea. The view was already so majestic, and Wendy enjoyed the feeling of freedom in her soul. Her father flew around the carpet, performing barrel-
rolls and gliding upside-down, smiling as he embraced the breeze. His one eye opened to stare at his daughter. Wendy smiled. “Are you going to sing, Dad?”

Vaati blushed. “Well, uh, I always considered ‘Whole New World’ more of a romantic song.”

Wendy flushed. “Oh – right – how silly of me, that would just be weird!”

“Oh, no harm done.” Vaati patted her cheek. “I remember when I brought your mother on a similar adventure.”

“Will you take me to meet Mom?”

“Soon, Wendy.”

Miles away from Iceland, they soared over the Mountain of Flavors, snowing with vanilla ice cream. They floated calmly between the mountains, mouths open as they caught snow on their tongues. “I can’t believe ice cream actually falls from the sky. And this is natural?”

“You use magic and have been to many amazing lands, yet you question the existence of an ice cream mountain?”

“I just can’t believe it’s so delicious!”

“Save your appetite, Dear.”

They flew through the Amazon rainforest during a gentle shower, and Wendy let her soaking blue hair hang over the carpet, creating a small waterfall. She smiled when a string of fireflies flew around her, glinting in her red eyes. She rolled on her front to watch them fly off. She then realized:

“Dad, won’t this rain hurt the carpet?”

“I cast a dryness spell on it just in case.” Vaati assured.

“Oh! Hm hm, way to think ahead, Dad!”

Their adventure brought them to a sea of fluffy clouds. Wendy felt herself growing weary, her head lain on her crossed arms. The carpet began to feel like a bed, flying through an imaginary world. The clouds looked like sheep that Wendy counted. One, two, three, four…

“Are you getting bored, Child?” Vaati asked.

“Hm?” Her eyes cracked open. “Sorry… Clouds make me sleepy. And I keep forgetting I’m awake… Whenever I’m running around on my own, I’m always trying to focus on the path and avoid obstacles… I could never look around very much.”

“It must feel good to rest your legs. It’s a wonder you’re so trim with all the exercise you’ve been garnering. Don’t fall asleep yet, though. Or you will miss my most favorite of worlds.”

Past the fluffy clouds, Wendy gazed in awe as they soared through a city placed atop the clouds. The people were angels, and there were giant colorful birds. “Dr. Facilier told me about this place… This is Skypia.”

“The home of the Nimbi and the home of airbending. Embrace in it, Wendy. Relish. Because aside from the Minish culture, this is our heritage. The Land of Air.”

“Father… can I lay down on a cloud?”
“Of course you can, Wendy. Of course…”

They found a lone, small cloud that was solid enough for Wendy to lay on. She found herself unable to find a comfortable position, because the cloud was just too fluffy, she wanted to hug it and cuddle it, rub her feet around it, let every part of her feel the wonder. This was greater than any dream. She was so glad to be with her father, have so many friends, and get to live in a marvelous world… She wanted to be grateful about everything.

“Dad… I never thought I could be this happy… I’ve been upset and afraid all my life… I can’t believe this is real…”

“It is like the Air Nomads used to preach… If you look for the light, you will find it. But if you look for the dark, that is all you will ever see. You must allow yourself to know happiness… If you can believe it is real, then it will become real. That’s what being an airbender, and even having magic is truly about.”

Wendy opened her eyes and sat upright, facing her father. “Dad… Is everything really going to be destroyed at the end of this month? If we can do anything we believe… then could we stop it if we wanted to?”

“The only way is to find the Twenty Keys and venture to the New World, as I have said. I will miss this world deeply… but the next world will be one of our design. We will make it our ideal world… No boundaries, no conflict, no evil… Just freedom. But the World Government does not desire such a world. That is why we must fight them first. Will you join my team and fight the Government with me, Wendy? Join the White Lotus Revolutionaries?”

“The Revolutionaries… Will I be able to visit Dr. Facilier and Lee?”

“Of course, Dear. You will be able to visit whomever.”

“…Will there be a lot of fighting?”

Vaati frowned, feeling her concern. “Whether you choose to join me or not… you will have to face battles greater than you can imagine. Those battles are not far off. I can ensure that you are ready. You just have to trust me.” He held his right hand out.

Wendy stared at it for a moment. Vaati’s hand was more pale than his white face, with long fingernails. Her father wasn’t much for personal hygiene, it seemed. But if he was right… Wendy wanted to be ready. She didn’t want to lose any more friends like Juniper, Chelia, or Leanne. She wanted to have the strength to protect them. She stood and took her father’s hand. “I will, Father. I’ll do whatever you think is best.” (End song.)

**Gravity Falls; Portal Chamber**

The Multiverse Portal was firing up, ready to transport its user to a set time and place. The arrow aimed at a symbol of a skull-and-crossbones with a straw hat. The one chosen to carry out the mission allowed the portal to suck her inside. “And so, another Negative is off to fulfill her duty.” Medusa said lazily, focused on her card game with her acquaintance. “Are you sure that was the right one, Teach? She really didn’t seem… all that up to it. Her Positive better fits the description.”

“Oh, she was the one all right.” Teach smirked, munching his cherry pie. “She might not have the lovable personality I do, but there’s one thing me and her have in common: our devilish streak!”

**Baltigo, Grand Line; 30 years ago**
On her way through the Sea of Worlds, there were bubbles depicting a man with a crescent white mustache, a guy with a long nose, a curly-brow blonde man, and a blue-haired woman with a ponytail. In a final explosion of light, the portal released her in the Original World labeled “Grand Line.”

And when the ray vanished, she was revealed to be Aliehs Citnarf. As Sheila Frantic’s Negative, her brown skin was grayish, and went with her gray shirt, black shorts, and gray sandals. Her raccoon ears and tail were dull, as was her expression. She detested the sunny landscape, lighting up the desert of whitish-brown soil, which blew in the wind. There were tall and rugged peaks several miles behind her. Aliehs also saw the shadow of a village through the sandy wind.

Aliehs approached the village to find it was composed of old houses, with doors opening and shutting against their hinges due to the wind. “This place is boring,” Aliehs said.

Her ears perked when she heard a sound come from a house. She entered the house and saw a rotund creature digging through a pantry. The creature had white pants and a black jacket that showed his belly area. It must’ve been a human. “Aha!” The boy plucked himself out of the pantry, holding a cherry up in victory. “Look what I found!” He ate it. The boy had black hair and a tooth missing.

“Are you a werepig?” Aliehs asked.

“WAAAAH!” The fat boy fell on his back and tilted to and fro on his blubbery body before getting back on his feet. He turned to Aliehs. “Hey, who’re you?! I thought there was no one left in this dump!”

“I’m Aliehs. You live here or something? I suddenly see more in my own life.”

“I don’t live here! This is an old village, I’m from the one down in the canyon. You know, Georgetown. Just looking for a bite is all. The name’s Teach.”

“If a centuries-old cherry doesn’t give you diarrhea, I don’t believe you’re human.”

“You’re one to talk. What’s up with those ears, are you a Mink?”

“Sure. If you want me to be.”

“Whatever. So where’d you come from?” Teach asked as he began to leave the house.

“Far away.” Aliehs answered, following him.

“How far? Across the desert, across the sea?”

“I crossed a sea to get here. Sounds logical.”

“Well, if you are a Mink, you’re a gutsy one. It’s the Grand Line, unless you’re on a Marine ship, you ain’t gonna last.”

“What about an Eniram ship?”

“The hell is an Eniram?”

“Never mind. You have anything fun to do around here?”

“Nothing but hunt for treasures and steal food. What do you do for fun?”
“Tie this firecracker to my back and light it up.” Aliehs was suddenly holding a blue firework with a red tip, nearly as long as her body.

“WHERE ON YOUR PERSON DID YOU HIDE THAT?!” Teach screamed.

“Infi-Cube.” Aliehs took the small cube out of her pocket. “Infinite space for infinite things. I think you’re too big for it, though.”

“What the hell do you know?!” he yelled offended.

“Hey, what’s up in those mountains?” Aliehs pointed to the towering rugged peaks. “Think there’s a pyramid up there?”

“Why in the world would you think THAT??”

“I dunno, I came here looking for a pyramid.”

“Then you should’ve gone to Alabasta! Besides, that mountain is way too dangerous to climb. Even if I wanted to see what’s up there, my body, eh…” He looked down at his belly. “It’s not in shape.”

“I can probably fly us up there.” Aliehs strapped the firework to her back and drew a match. “I’ll push you from behind and you tell me where to steer.”

“WHO SAID I AGREED TO THIS?!”

“Don’t knock it ’til you try it.” Aliehs lit the fuse on the firework and rocketed to the sky. She did a U-turn and dove back at the ground, quickly curving 90 degrees and shooting straight at Teach. The rotund boy bolted the opposite direction, but at such an inferior speed, he was inevitably bound to the front of the missile and used as a flabby windshield. “Where’s the mountain?”

“TURN RIGHT!” Teach panicked. “Nonono slightly left! Er- one inch right, we’re gonna hit a— FALLING BOULDERS!” They were whipping through the mountain range, and with Teach’s instruction, Aliehs quickly ducked “LEFT RIGHT DOWN UP DOWN DOWN RIGHT LEFT RIGHT DIAGONAL!”

With Aliehs’ vision aimed down the whole time, the half-raccoon spotted a flat ground at the top of a thin mount. “We should land before we explode.” Aliehs whipped up, performed a loop, and blasted toward the foothold Teach-first. She spun quickly in order to shake him off, dropping him safely and dodging left just in time. She flew up, detached herself from the rocket, and landed with him, watching the firework explode in the sky.

“THAT WAS INSANE!!” Teach bellowed after recomposing himself. “Are you TRYING to kill yourself?!”

“I used to be suicidal. Until I found a thrill with dodging death.”

“I take that to mean you SWAM to this island boatless?”

“No, I surfed. I don’t swim.”

“Great, we have something in common! Go kill yourself by yourself, I’m climbing down— AAAAAAH!” When Teach looked over the edge of their very steep mount, he shortly realized how impeccably and precariously high they were.
“I was going to suggest this way.” Aliehs indicated a rickety bridge that crossed to a path up the side of a mountain. “But don’t let me discourage your need for danger.”

“I don’t have a need for danger! But I have a craving for cherries like you wouldn’t believe.”

“Then maybe you should stick with me. Trust me, I know what I’m doing.” Aliehs walked across the rickety bridge with no speck of fear. Teach sighed, cursing the devil that sent this monster to his island. (Play “Rockface Rumble” from *Donkey Kong Country 3*!)

*Stage B-24: Baliigo Peak*

*Mission: Find the Pyrameglyph.*

Teach couldn’t bring himself to cross the bridge, as it could easily snap under his weight. Aliehs decided to return and kick him across like an exercise ball. Teach pushed himself back up as he joined Aliehs up the mountain path—giant boulders bounced down the path, quaking the ground powerfully, so Teach clutched Aliehs’ back in the hopes she knew where to step. Aliehs kicked the boy back and jumped forward before a boulder bounced in the spot where they were formerly standing. Teach scrambled to catch up to her, and the path ended at a tall flat rock perched on the ledge.

“Let me see…” Aliehs looked around the rock and studied the area behind it. “Yeah, this could work. Hold still.” She got behind Teach, shoved him against the rock, and caused them to topple over the edge. The rock landed on a U-shaped slope, and Aliehs hopped to the end of it as they rode it like a sled. Teach’s cries echoed across the mountains when the sled flew off the ramp and bounced across some jagged mountain tips. It landed on a path that winded down around a mountain before launching them up a ramp.

The sled was stabbed and perched atop the tip of a needle, rocking to and fro by their weight. There was a series of tilting platforms ahead, so Aliehs used her strong feet to kick Teach to each one. She had to quickly jump and use her propeller tail to float to the platforms and kick Teach to the next before he would roll off the current one. After the last tilting platform, Teach was kicked into an opening within a mountain. The only path to follow was a shaft ascending directly upward. A rope seemed to stretch up along the wall of the shaft and would set off dynamites latched to the ceiling.

“I take it you plan to kick me up here.” Teach deduced. “At least whoever set those dynamites never set ’em off.”

“I’ll fix that.” Aliehs lit the fuse with her match.

“I DIDN’T SUGGEST YOU SHOULD DO IT!”

“Too bad.” Aliehs kicked Teach in the rear to propel him up the shaft. She used the close walls to Wall Jump up, kick him again, and repeat as they steadily progressed. At the top of the shaft, Teach was kicked onto a ledge outside. Aliehs kicked him down a stairway of aligned flat-top needles, running after the organic stage device before the dynamites exploded behind her.

“Huff…huff…” Teach groggily pushed himself up again, feeling the need to hurl. “Why did you even come to this island, anyway? Why are you dragging me on this adventure?”

“I’m trying to find a pyramid. The sooner we find it, the sooner I’ll leave you alone.”
“Who even told you there’s a pyramid up here?”

“You did.”

“Come again?”

“It’s getting warmer… I think there’s lava up ahead.”

“Don’t ignore me!”

The two cut through a narrow path within a mountain and arrived at a lava pit. Two rows of stalagmites led to a ground across the lava, so without changing the routine, Aliehs kicked Teach and bounced him between the stalagmites for him to make it across. Aliehs Wall Jumped the stalagmites to cross herself, helping the roly boy up as they followed a path between a small trench. They came to a straight path that was scorching hot, with lava leaking up from its cracks. The other side was too far to kick Teach across.

“’Guess we’ll have to use this.” Aliehs shot a giant ice cube out of her Infi-Cube, setting it on the scorched path and kicking Teach on it belly-first. The ice began to melt, so Aliehs kicked and slid it partway across. She had to Wall Jump the close canyon walls and kick the ice further, using her tail to stay afloat long enough to do so. When the ice bumped against the end of the scorched path, Teach was flung onto the safe foothold. He and Aliehs followed a narrow path out of the enclosed canyon and back to open mountains. They were at the top of a thin, steep hill miles above ground.

“Hey, will you do me a favor and eat this?” Aliehs asked, holding a red mushroom with white spots to Teach.

“A mushroom? Well, I am pretty…” Teach took the fungus and was about to eat. “…What’ll it do to me?”

“It’s a way of showing that I commend you for your conveniently durable body.”

“When has it been convenient? You could’ve climbed up here a lot easier if you didn’t have me to kick around.”

“Kicking you was the best part about climbing up here. It’s a ‘thank you’ snack.”

“Hmmm… Well, who am I to turn down free food?” Teach ate the large mushroom in two bites. “HUUUULP!” He inflated to the roundness of a perfect sphere, save for his hands and feet.

“This is why plumber food is disgusting. Okay, time to serve your worth.” Aliehs hopped on the Teach Ball and began rolling. (Play “Star Ball 2” from Mario Galaxy!)

The steep slope curved right and would lead them onto a wider slope with large boulders. Aliehs avoided the boulders and maneuvered left to roll into a large steam geyser. The geyser blew them up to a tunnel that cut through a mountain, and Aliehs dodged the flame spouts that would burn Teach’s blubber. The tunnel dropped them on a flat tilting rock, and as gravity tried to weigh against them, Aliehs hurriedly rolled Teach up the opposite end of the rock. They rolled onto a corresponding tilt-rock and repeated the process for two more rocks until they could roll down a mountain path.

They arrived at a lava river with large flat rocks floating to the right. Teach rolled onto one of the rocks and remained steady under Aliehs’ command. She rolled Teach onto a lone platform that was pushed up by a flame geyser every few seconds. They sat on the platform for a minute, wondering where to go from here. Then Aliehs noticed a crater that appeared to be corked by a trembling
stone. When their platform was aloft, Aliehs rolled Teach off to smash the cork in. The lava buildup increased and they were blasted into the air, flying over several needle mounts before landing on a new hill.

Aliehs kept her balance as they rolled down with little control, maneuvering to cross the platforms over lava pits. They had a chance to rest at the bottom of the slope, but Aliehs wanted to keep the momentum flowing. She guided Teach over a very thin path above a lava pit, and the feeble stone supports were steadily cracking from the weight. Aliehs was able to get them across, rolling into a tunnel that sloped down and dropped them in a cave. Behind them was a cork in the wall, clogging some lava that urged to burst free. Aliehs rolled a good distance, came back with building momentum, and rammed Teach against the cork. She performed the act three times before the cork BURST, blowing them out of the cave and over the mountains, miles over the earth. (End song.)

When Teach’s spherical exterior smashed against the ground, a strong BUUURP was forced from his lungs and he deflated back to his regular rotund form. As Aliehs was casually fixing her sandals, her expression dull as when they started, Teach stomped up to her in a rage. “I don’t know who you are or where you came from, but YOU are OFFICIALLY, the CRAZIEST humanoid girl that has EVER set foot on this desert! My life flashed before my eyes, I came close to crapping myself, and YOU act like it was another day in the life!”

“It was.”

“Well, you know what I have to say?!” His eyes widened with vigor, and he flexed his hands to express: “Best. Day. EVER! ZEEE HA HA HA!” He raised a fist and posed proudly. “I felt like I was rolling down from Heaven, to be reborn anew on Planet Earth! I still feel my blood churning! I want some more, I wanna do it again! Aliehs, let’s race up the mountain and run down so fast, we become wind!”

“You have come so far, my student.” Aliehs said with approval.

“ZE ha ha!” Teach waddled as he ran around the path. “I wonder if pirates do this? Always out on that dangerous sea, they gotta be…?”

His eyes fell on a stone pyramid with an eye on its tip. Just like Aliehs said… but what kind of pyramid was it? Teach approached the stone, and at first, the only letter he could read was the huge D on the bottom. And yet, when the letters glowed, the writing became clear.

*The world is full of freedom and full of adventure. It lies stretched out before your eyes. If the endless dream guides your restless spirit, seize it! Let nothing stand in your way!*

The “D” on the stone filled with a dark aura that floated before Teach’s eyes. The “D” flew into Teach’s chest, and he felt his heart THUMP.

**Marshall D. Teach awakened as a DARKNESS. Only 4 more to go.**

“Hmmm…” Teach wasn’t sure what had happened, but his need for excitement grew stronger. He turned to Aliehs and asked, “So, what made you into such a crazy psycho? Somebody use you for a balance ball?”

“Not that in particular, but it was this girl.” Aliehs took out a small photo of her Positive, Sheila. She was smiling and holding two fingers up.

“She looks a lot like you… She your sister?”
“Well, we were born on the same day.”

There was a FLASH in the sky, and the earth trembled when a ray of light burned the ground behind Aliehs. “What the… Aliehs, behind you!!” Teach panicked.

“This is my ride home.” Aliehs turned to walk into it. “See ya later, Teach. Oh, and when they offer you a part in *Pan*, say no.” The light sucked Aliehs to the sky, leaving a scorched spot where it shone.

Seconds after, Teach felt his stomach rumble. But to his good fortune, he noticed three large berries growing from a dead tree. The berries were black with red swirls. His face beaming, Teach punched the tree and caught the dropped berries. He took the first bite of the first berry. “Blech! How awful! …” He continued eating.

**Portal Chamber**

“Boy, I was fat back then.” Teach frowned. “But who would’ve thought I was talking to an interdimensional traveler. Destiny is a funny thing.”

“It really is, Teach.” Medusa played a card. “Still, I feel bad for the Negatives. None of them are Lights, none of them are Darknesses, none of them are Firstborn Guardians. They’re just pawns doing my dirty work. What a pitiful bunch.”

“I can hear you loud and clear.” Nerehc said from the darkness. “And I don’t like you talking about my operatives that way.”

“Loosen up, boy. Even you have to see that you’re the only Negative worth anything. The new Demon King Nerehc.”

“Then why don’t you send *me* to find the Darknesses?”

“Because these Negatives possess a certain charm that… relates to them better. Thanos likes bickering siblings, Yellow Diamond’s a fan of rocks… and Teach, deep down, is a danger seeker.”

“But if Teach is here right now, where are the other Darknesses?”

“They’re on the lowest floor of Underworld Prison. I broke in there last year and tried to rescue them, but Teach was all I could recover. Rest assured, I have a plan.”

The Multiverse Portal spat Aliehs out before returning to its normal neon colors. “Well, look who’s back.” Blackbeard approached the half-raccoon and patted her head. “To think just seconds ago, I was a fatty little brat. Amazing how much a man grows, huh? Ze ha ha ha!”

“You look less grown up than before.” Aliehs said.

“Ahh, say whatever you want. I’m just glad I was picked to be the Darkness instead of Kaido.”

“Based on your stories, Teach, I say any one from that world could’ve been a Darkness.” Medusa said. “Anyhoo, I believe we’re done here, time to pack up. You might want to let those kids go.” Medusa formed a Dark Portal and entered. Blackbeard used his Logia darknessbending to spit Sector GF out of his body, afterwards sucking the card table in. He followed Medusa as the portal vanished.

“Oh my gosh, what just happened?!?” Dipper panicked. The color was sapped from the four operatives’ faces. “W-W-We were trapped in a black hole that smelled like rotting cherries!”
“I guess it’s true.” Mabel rocked back and forth, hugging her legs. “Anime characters really do have endless bowels.”

“Never-To-Be-As-Good-As-Master Nerehc, regarding your accord with Goddess Medusa, I suspect a 91% chance of treachery on her end.” Fi said.

“REALLY, Fi?” Nerehc’s eyes widened into a fake look of realization. “That DIDN’T occur to me!”

“Please take heed that any misfortune that should befall you may have drastic consequences for Master Cheren.”

“I might be your master’s Negative, but I won’t let her get the best of me. I’ll fight to protect my operatives no matter what. And as long as Cheren does the same, I have nothing to worry about.”

**Pokémon Palace**

Giovanni returned to his private quarters, feeling anger and humiliation. He sat at his desk and linked the security camera feed with his computer. He viewed a cell in the dungeons… completely empty with a pair of cuffs on the floor, and a note. Giovanni zoomed the camera in on the note.

*Got bored. Felt like leaving. Better luck catching me next time! –M.C.*

Giovanni was too exhausted to feel more irritated. His Persian meowed and gestured at the ovular mirror, which wobbled like liquid. Giovanni viewed the unchanging scowl of his reflection as he and Persian entered the mirror.

Now he was in the dark basement where Team Gnik held their meetings. There was a table with a Krabby Patty, Fourth Flavor ice cream, and a hot bowl of Gold Ink Soup. Giovanni sat in the available chair and ate the Krabby Patty first. “Plankton has outstanding culinary skill.” The dull, mysterious voice spoke. Team Gnik’s leader was in the darkness across the room.

Giovanni swallowed. “Lesser Lord Gnik. Are you going to punish me for my failure?”

“Trying to control a monster like Acnologia was bound for failure. There is a reason he was the first vessel my master chose. The ancestor of the Pines Family… Acnologia.” He stepped forward into the light.

Giovanni nearly choked on his patty. “Is that really your face? How…How do you live that way?”

“I am not to leave this home until the appointed day…” Ragaj said as the camera faced his chest to troll the readers. “It is why I had to gather minions to serve my master’s cause. I promised to take them to the New World… yet, I did not sense that many of them would make it. Mr. Dark has already served his purpose… and XANA and Nefarious are about to serve theirs. However, you, Giovanni… I may require your services just a bit longer.”

He put a glass on the table and held up a bottle, pouring a blue liquid into it. He pushed the glass up to Giovanni. “You will not be on par with the Thirteen Darknesses… but you will be a formidable force. You will get everything you wanted.”

 “…” Giovanni reached for the glass.

“*Oh, it’s not for you. It is meant for the Persian.*”

Giovanni quirked a brow. He picked up the glass and held it to his Pokémon. The Persian licked it
up. “MROOOW!” A shocking sensation coursed through it.

“PERSIAN!”

“Wait.” Ragaj raised a hand.

Persian rolled on the floor, his fur spiking and his forehead gem glowing. A red light burst from the gem and swallowed the feline. It shrunk back and revealed Mega Persian, with its shining large ruby gem, sharper fangs, long claws, and tiger stripes across its back. “It’s a… Mega Evolution.”

“A permanent Mega Evolution. Thanks to my specially ordered Perma-Mega Potion. I have vast quantities of it… I would grant them to you and more. With the power of your Dark Balls, I can give you an army of Mega Pokémon to use at your disposal. And if you remain by his side… the Firstborn will be yours.”

Giovanni smirked. “Well, I guess it’s worth a try.”

The funny thing is Pokémon doesn’t have a Mega Persian. XD Blackbeard comes from One Piece, and I think we have the least information on his background compared to the other Darknesses, regarding his respective series. Him living in Baltigo is just a wild swing on my part, but I expect to be wrong. :P Also, lately I’ve been having this Aladdin obsession, don’t know why. A’ight, enjoy a Caesar Cipher.

...
In a Thousand Nights

Chapter Summary

Shade is worried about Maddy's progress in her training.

This chapter marks the beginning of the CP10 Saga, the semifinal saga in the… saga.

Chapter 62: In a Thousand Nights

KND Moonbase

Two days after Bill Cipher’s sudden attack, reconstruction of Moonbase was running smoothly. Cheren had stacks of paperwork to fill, but the only reason he was bothering with it was to clear his mind. He had far more important things to do, so he would be done with this stuff early, finished or not.

He heard a vwoom and looked up. A green-eyed girl with a long black tux and sandy-blonde hair, holding a huge scythe, appeared in her office. “…Can I help you?” Cheren asked weirdly.

“Apologies, Human KND Leader. My name is Maka Albarn, Numbuh Pair of the Spirit Kids Next Door. My teammates have been recently sent on a mission in Puebla de Niebla, Mexico, and it seems a few of your operatives were involved in the conflict that took place. On behalf of the Spirit Kids Next Door, I would like to apologize for any harm that might’ve befallen your operatives.”

“It’s cool.” Cheren smiled modestly. “Haruka said everyone came out okay. Just like that other spirit operative – what was her name—Rukia?”

“I’m glad to hear it.” Maka smiled. “Our Supreme Leader sends his regards. He also says your operatives have been very big help in our missions.”

“Don’t underestimate the living.” He winked.

“Hm-hm, of course not. Until next time, Numbuh 3621.” Maka twirled her scythe and vanished on the spot.

“Hmm… Those guys look pretty cool, actually.” Cheren said to himself. “I wonder if Nebula would wanna make an alliance with them.”

“Hey, Cheren.” Dillon York barged in and said with an assertive tone.

“Hey, Dillon.” Cheren retorted in sarcasm. “You need me to get the cereal off the shelf?”

“No, I need Mom to take me to the Great Clock.”

“Since when?”

“Since she told me that one of the Corporate Presidents was sent there to do something. I know Vanellope is on the Great Clock, and she could be in danger. I know we’re in the middle of fixing Moonbase, but I need her to take me there so I can help Vanellope.”
“Hmm… Dillon, I’m not sure if it’s a good idea. If one of the presidents is a trillion light-years away, then he’s not here on Earth to bother us. Kimaya’s gang just offed another president, and they’re not even operatives – but it’s only a matter of time until they retaliate.”

“But the Great Clock is important—it’s where all the Twenty Keys are gonna meet! We HAVE to go there to stop what they’re doing, anyway!”

“Sigh, you’re right. But it sounds more like a problem the GKNĐ can handle. We can just call Nebula.”

“The Global Tactical Station is still busted. Cheren, just let me go up there, please!”

“I CAN’T just let you go alone!”

“He’s NOT going alone.” Carol Masterson marched in, her computer in hand. “I’m coming, too.” She said confidently. “And so are these guys.”

“Yo!” Kodama of Sector JP appeared behind her. “I owe Vanellope for helping me get the Shell 297, so I’ll be happy to join!”

“And we’re taking the NEW IMPROVED Rocket-san!” Chimney shouted. (“Gyom-gyom!” said Gonbe.)

“Wow… you put this team together quick.” Cheren said in quiet astonishment.

“I’m also going.” A girl’s voice said.

“Who said that?”

“I did.” The group stepped aside to reveal Miyuki behind them. “If the Great Clock is the core of the prophecy… I want to see if I can learn anything there.”

“Your whole teams aren’t going, are they? I don’t wanna send all our best operatives away from the planet.”

“Well, Sector Q is coming along, but only because they hope they’ll find Drake.” Dillon answered.

“Besides, April’s takin’ Mary to the Dream World to see that Window-suki girl.” Chimney mentioned. “So they’re gonna be sleeping all day. Boring.”

Cheren sighed. “I guess I can approve this mission… but we need Mom to finish fixing Moonbase.”

“No worries!” Carol said perkily. “We already asked her and worked it out.”

**Ten minutes ago**

“Mom, we need you to take us to the Great Clock now.” Dillon told the woman on the hospital bed.

“Why, of course, Deary.” Mom replied with a kind smile. “Walt, Larry, Igner, would you come here?”

“Yes, Mother?” The three sons lined up in a straight row beside Mom’s bed.

Mom smacked them all. “TAKE THIS BRAT AND HIS BRATTY FRIENDS to the Great Clock!”
Mommy’s too sick. And DON’T screw up!"

**Dream Realm; Teensie Council Medical Wing**

Madotsuki opened her eyes to a ceiling lit by yellowish-white light. This “hospital room” had pretty, temple-like designs on the ceiling and walls. Madotsuki sat up and studied herself. There were multiple cracks around her body that seemed to be linked with small bubbles. This was so strange… a minute ago, she was sure she killed herself. Maybe that was a dream… This was probably a dream, too… And like any dream, she might as well explore it. She turned right-

“HI, Friend!” A blonde girl’s face was up in hers.

“YAAH!” Mado fell back.

“My name’s Mary!” The girl said brightly. “I’m an Imaginary girl! I look like a real girl, but I’m not real! But I can talk to real people.”

“I think you’re being a little too sudden.” Another blonde woman in a white gown and sandals walked in. Phosphora was almost unrecognizable with longer, smooth hair, but it was curved up at the end.

“Yeah, but that’s Mary for ya.” April Goldenweek said with a smile.

“W…What’s going on…” Madotsuki said with weakness.

“I can tell ya that!” Murfy said quickly. “See, Mr. Dark staged it so you would kill yourself, then he planned to steal your reality, but when he did, Bill Cipher came and-”

“I don’t think-!” April silenced him. “…we need your help here.” She approached Madotsuki calmly. “Madotsuki, you’re in the Dream World. I don’t mean that you’re asleep. You’re literally part of the Dream World.”

“…I am…”

“Yes. Also… we know what happened to you. When you were younger.”

“…” Madotsuki didn’t show any reaction.

“We know it’s haunted you your whole life. That’s why my friends and I wanted to help you recover from it. The people we brought are people who’ve had something bad happen to them. We think they’ll be able to connect with you better. That is… if you would like to speak with them.”

“…” Mado stared at her fractured parts attached by bubbles. “Am I… dead?…”

“Um… More like reincarnated.” April blushed, feeling it’d be best not to confuse her with an explanation. “But it’s a second chance for you. We want to help put your past behind you. We want to give you back the childhood you lost.”

Madotsuki faced away, contemplating. “But if you need time to think, we’ll come back later.” April, Mary, and Phosphora left the room and shut the door.

They joined Jack Frost and Django in the waiting room. “This is ridiculous.” Django said impatiently. “If she isn’t even ready yet, why did you all waste time collecting us from our dream worlds?”

“I couldn’t have said all that and NO ONE was waiting for us!” April laughed.
“I don’t see what the big fuss is about.” Jack Frost said, floating upside-down with his legs propped up on the wall. “My entire kingdom was wiped out and I got back up on my feet just fine.”

“Well, not everyone gets up the same way.” April told him. “Be a little more considerate.”

“We’ll try, but I’m sympathizing with Snow Hair there.” Django replied. “And Lightning Chick for getting dissed by her town’s savior, wasn’t it?”

“Technically, Thor was our god, but it wasn’t actually… him.” Phosphora said awkwardly.

“You religious nuts.” He chuckled. “See, I told you that stuff don’t get you nowhere. So, what’s Cheerleader’s story, again?”

“I was stuck a really long time in a scary art gallery!” Mary said cheerily. “But now I’m freeeee!”

“Eh, Elsa thought she was free, too.” Jack noted. “Boy, did she go nuts.”

“But I’m Mary!”

“I think we can agree that we all had traumatic backgrounds.” April consolidated. “But we all moved on from them, so-”

“Whaddyou know, your past wasn’t traumatic.” Django remarked.

“I came from the art gallery same as Mary!”

“But she didn’t really know until she found out, but it all worked out okay!” said Mary.

“You know, I object to that!” Django argued once more. “Like, NONE of the KND operatives have tragic backgrounds, yet they’re always the heroes!”

“Yeah, you’re right.” Phosphora agreed. “I mean, sure a few of them learn important lessons, like Anthony learned not to be a bully and Miyuki learned to enjoy life… I destroyed Fybi’s wings once, but then they got healed by God Magic, so no tragedy there.”

“Y’know, we shoulda brought that Nolan guy.” Jack suggested, flipping right-side-up and sitting on his staff. “He’s got a ton of dead people. Some of them are actually in Spirit KND.”

“I just remembered those three spirit kids that came back to life 20 years ago.” Django mentioned. “Y’know, those are totally dick moves, just because they’re friends with the Grim Reaper, they can come back to life. Why can’t this be like anime where EVERY important person has a dead relative?”

“Why are you complaining, you’re a living skeleton.” Jack remarked.

“I’m a cursed child. The powers of darkness are within my bones. *I should never make friends.*” He spoke mysteriously. “*I can not.*”

“And ya mysteriously.”

“Wait, am I the only person here that hasn’t died once?” Phosphora asked. “Man, I don’t even feel like I deserve to be here.”

“What happened to the philosophy where ‘being immortal is bad’?” Jack asked.

“Can I live forever, April?” Mary asked.
“Guys, just settle down!” April shouted. “Sigh… The point is, all of you experienced something traumatic and you all made bad decisions. The fact you’re able to talk about this stuff so casually… If you guys could put your pasts behind you, then so can Madotsuki. She just needs a little help… like you guys did.”

“I’ll help her!” Mary grinned. “I love to make new friends! And she looks like Ib!”

“She looks like Mabel Pines.” Jack chuckled.

“How do you know Mabel?” asked April.

“I hang with Craz and Xyler.”

“What’s up, Jackerie?” Craz poked his head in the room.

“HE is, Crazikai!” Xyler pointed.

“That’s MIND-BLOWING, Manaji!”

“Nicknaaaames!”

Thaddeus Dark was in a secluded room of the hospital, steadily receiving treatment for his burned body. He had time to think. Lord Gnik… you said that you would help me spread terror to the Waking World… Are we merely tools to you? Just… what are you really?

Great Clock

The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. zipped out of hyperspace, having followed the coordinates provided by Mom. The ragtag team of operatives were closing in on the tremendous structure that was the Great Clock. There was a fleet of ships surrounding the station. “Kaiba’s fleet has already arrived.” Walt said in his dark tone. “Kaiba is a master of strategy and deceit. Be prepared for anything.”

“We’re already prepared!” Chimney cheered. “The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. 2.0 is the most fearsome of all aircraft! You loaded the baby with the hot new ammo, didn’t ya, Kodama??”

“You bet I did, Chimney!” Kodama smirked. “My new fireworks will rip those government guys a new one! COME AT US, AMATEURS!”

The train slowly moved closer. The ships made no motion or sign of defense. “Uhh… Any time now?”

“They’re not doing anything.” Dillon said suspiciously. “Just what are they planning?”

Midna came out of his shadow. “They might be preparing to ambush us inside. Don’t lose your cool.”

“Attention, Flying Train!” a high, nervous voice sounded from the Clock’s PA. “You are t-trespassing on p-private property! P-Please state your name and purpose, o-or go away! Ugh, as if these computer viruses weren’t trouble enough—ACK, you didn’t hear that!!”

Midna pushed the train’s PA. “My name is Midna, Firstborn of Shadow. I’m sure we gods have clearance, correct?”

“Midna? Lessee lessee lessee lessee- here we are. Um, Twilight Princess Midna? Just scanning your ship to be sure… Oh, Princess Midna! A pleasure to have you here in our humble Clock. Um, you aren’t being held against your will, are you?”
“No, we’re on official business. Just let us in, whoever you are.”

“Yes, yes. Enter the hangar on your left.”

A huge doorway opened and the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. was able to squeeze through. They landed as all the passengers began to step off. “Man, that was lame.” Chimney complained. “No ambush, no defense, I was hoping for a dogfight!”

The interior of the station was mostly dark except for the blue light of some energy flowing through pipes. “That’s Chrono Energy.” Miyuki said as they went up some stairs. “This place is filled to the brim with it. I can feel it everywhere.”

“Midna, have you ever been here?” Dillon asked.

“Oh-uh.” She shook ‘no.’ “But it was designed by the gods. It’s the most powerful and indestructible fortress in the universe. Maybe even the multiverse. It keeps time in this dimension and all other dimensions linked to ours.”

“MaKayla’s dad works here in Great Clock.” Miyuki said. “If he were here, he could do something about Kaiba. He could stop him.”

They entered what looked like a living room with a gold piano, a table, refrigerator, and a couch with a TV. “I sure wouldn’t mind making a pad here.” Dillon commented. “But where in the world is Kaiba?”

“I dunno, maybe he stayed up so late playing games that he died!” They whipped their heads up at the sound of the perky voice. He was a blonde boy with a thin hat and a cane. “That’s all ya need to kill a dork. Remember that when they rise up in 300 years!”

“IT’S BILL!” Dill and Carol screamed.

Bill landed in front of them. “Welcome to my crib!” He stood on one foot and spread his arms. “It’s the deluxe suite, am I right?”

“Why are you here, Bill?” Dillon asked, all the operatives glaring at the demon. “Shouldn’t you be destroying the universe?”

“Normally, I would be, but I don’t have time for that right now. See, I’m in the middle of planning the new universe.” He projected a giant image of blueprints, which had marks like ‘Galaxy A here’ and ‘Model of Bill here.’ “I had a lot of fun in this universe, but the new Bill needs new pizzazz. I wanna give this New World a multidimensional makeover.” The blueprints morphed 3-D and changed into many shapes and sizes.

“Tough luck, because this universe isn’t gonna go anywhere!” Dillon assured. “We’re going to save everyone, you’ll see!”

“Ohhhhhhh Dillon.” Bill shook his head and approached the boy. “Always idealistic, just like your father. How is old Nolan doing, anyway?” He was smirking in Dillon’s face. “Lose anymore friends? Did his wife die, yet?”

An angered Dillon punched Bill in the face. “Oh ho ho, real strong fist!” Bill taunted. “Did you train all year just to punch that good? Face it, Kid, I have a Power Level of one million. What’s YOUR Power Level, a lousy hundred?”

“I bet you never fought a Firstborn.” Midna smirked.
“Oooo, Firstborn Midna, how ferocious.” Bill swayed and wiggled his fingers at her. “What’re you gonna do, take control of my shadow?” His shadow stretched on the wall behind. “I’ll just make another,” the shadow doubled, “and maybe more!” They divided in ten shadows.

“I’m more powerful than I look, you know!”

“Alright, I believe you.” Bill’s shadows retracted. He frowned as he recollected, “But you know, I wasn’t always this powerful. Imagine life as an Imaginary Friend. You’re nothing more than a projection of one’s thoughts, forced to drift along an ocean of abandoned dreams. I sought to escape my miserable existence.”

Bill whirled his hands and held them together, projecting a tiny city on the open palms. “And look what happened!” His giant devilish smile would look frightening from the city’s perspective. “Now I can hold planets and galaxies in the palm of my hands!” The holographic citizens went about happily, unaware of the looming terror. “People will look up at the sky and see their salvation!” Bill blew on the city, turning it all into dust that hit Dillon’s face.

Bill appeared behind Kodama, touching her shoulder. “Miss Fireworks knows what I mean, don’t ya?”

“Not the way YOU have in mind!” she yelled.

“Bill, are you one of the Thirteen Darknesses?” Dillon asked. “Is that why you’re hanging around here?”

“No, not me. I was created before we came up with the whole Twenty Keys thing. But I was there to watch the magic happen. I know all the answers and I would be happy to tell them to you. Maybe if you sign over to my side, y’know join the winning team. I might even throw in your own galaxy, design however you want!”

“We’ll look for the answers ourselves, thank you. Now where’s Kaiba, where’s Vanellope? There’s a whole fleet of ships out there, where’s all the pilots?”

“Those clowns have already virtualized their selves into the Great Clock’s cyberspace. They’ve been here a while, trying to take control of it. But it seems like XANA’s been putting up hell of a fight. But don’t worry, I’m sure your Vanellope’s somewhere in the mix.”

“How do we enter the cyberspace?!” Dillon demanded.

“Sheesh, a yelly type, ain’tcha? Ever think about calling Tech Support? Here, I’ll do it for ya. SIGGY, GET DOWN HERE!”

“GaaaaaaaAAAAAAHHH!” A robot came storming into the room. He was a red, levitating robot, shabby-looking and inside a ring with a computer. “Apologies, Master Cipher, but I’m very busy with- who are these guys?”

“Who are you?” Carol asked.

“Sigma 0426A, Junior Caretaker of the Great Clock, if you are here to see Master Jagar, I’m afraid he is busy, and quite frankly, so am I, all these computers just started glitching and…” He rapidly tapped his keyboard.

“Sigmund,” Bill began, “these guys need help with something, could you take them away so they stop bothering me?”
“Yes Sir, Master Bill. This way, all of you, don’t dilly-dally.” The robot floated through the next door. The operatives all decided to follow, shooting dirty looks at Bill.

“Oh, you wanna look at me? I’ll give ya something to look at!” Bill lifted his shirt over his head and shook his belly. “Mmph, yeah yeah! Sexy boy is sexy! You pervy readers would like some of this. Too bad all you see is words, it ain’t nothin’ like the real thing. Mmph, oh yeah.”

“Master Bill?” Dillon questioned Sigmund for using that title.

“Yes, Bill Cipher is a VIP.” Sig said quickly. “His name is in the one-trillion-year-old files, not an easy spot to take.”

“Why is Bill so important, he’s dangerous!”

“It’s not my place to question it, it’s to follow orders! Now, what is it that you wanted?”

“We want to go into the cyberspace and drive out Kaiba!” Carol answered. “Didn’t you see a bunch of men storm in here?”

“No, I didn’t see any men at all! Just a bunch of ships that all decided to park outside. All of a sudden, viruses everywhere, I can’t log into the network! We have Virtualization Chambers that allow one to access the network directly, but those aren’t working either. Besides, I couldn’t allow you to use them without Mr. King’s approval.”

“Maybe I can fix them!” Carol exclaimed.

“Don’t fool yourself, this technology is beyond your understanding. I worked here for 10,000 years, and even I can’t-”

“I just logged into this place’s Wi-Fi!” she beamed, staring at her laptop.

“What?!” Sigmund whipped around. “But-But the Great Clock’s Wi-Fi has the most complex password in the known universe!”

“It’s just ‘PopDancerSigma’ 15 times. Ha ha ha, check out this video!” She showed them all a video of Sigmund singing on a stage of colorful lights.

“That was on my personal computer!” The robot was flustered. “How in the WORLD did you-”

“Mr. Game-and-Watch did it!” The 2-D program was dancing on the stage beside Sigmund.

“Still don’t think Carol has the moves?” Dill smirked.

“Fine.” Sig glared. “You wanna try and fix the virtualizers, by all means go for it!”

Without delay, the caretaker took them to the Virtualization Chamber. There were five gold capsules and computers beside them. “We won’t be able to take everyone with us.” Dillon observed. “At least not all of Sector Q.”

“I VOLUNTEER!” Quill Ramsey quickly threw his hand up.

“I’m certainly coming!” Kodama declared.

“Not me, I don’t do in this stuff.” Chimney declined. “My legs going all stiff.”
“I’m staying behind, too.” Miyuki said. “I want to look around.”

“Could me and Midna share a chamber?” Dillon asked.

“I don’t recommend it.” Sigmund shook. “Jagar and Misty once shared a chamber. Their bodies got switched.”

“Then I guess me, Dill, and Midna will take the other three chambers.” Carol decided, hooking her computer up in the wall. “Okay, Mr. Game-and-Watch, look for the bug and kill it!”

She was given a screen of Game-and-Watch in a blank blue background. A huge Blue Eyes White Dragon appeared and started coughing fireballs. Carol commanded G&W to shoot his flamethrower. “That’s a big bug.”

“Oi, I played games like this before. Move over.” Chimney pushed Carol aside. She tapped the buttons excellently, jumping Blue Eyes’ attacks and countering with Game-and-Watch’s. The operatives excitedly watched her gameplay at work. The dragon was destroyed.

“WOOHOO!” They cheered. “Go, Chimney!” Quill slapped her back.

“Unbelievable!” Sigmund yelled. “The chambers are up and running again!”

“Now’s our chance, gang!” Dill announced. “Pick one and let’s go virtual!”

He, Carol, Midna, Quill, and Kodama picked a chamber. Sigmund hurriedly programmed each of them, sealing the kids inside. Each chamber made a growing whiiirrrRRR sound, and they shut their eyes as a blinding light swallowed them.

**Cyberspace**

The five kids were dropped onto a crystalline landscape. For a cyberspace, the clear blue crystal was beautiful, as were the stars above. Midna turned around, immediately focused on the sight. “Might wanna turn around.” So they did.

An army of robots vs. an army of monsters, it was the kind of videogame setting one would expect from Cyberspace. An Abaki smashed a XANA Krab with its spiked club, a Neon Night sliced a Megatank in half, and Dark Magician annihilated a Scyphozoa. “Wow, it’s like… Nerdvana.” Kodama said.

“It’s not just that… These are Duel Monsters!” Dillon exclaimed. “Now I remember! Gozaburo Kaiba is the President of KaibaCorp! They made this game! I play it with Mason all the time.”

“Isn’t this the dorky game where you make up your own rules and strategy,” Midna asked, “so you can ALWAYS turn the game in your favor?”

“Yes, and… no.” The kids ducked laser fire from some robots.

“DUEL MONSTERS, DESTROY ALL ENEMIES!” A giant hologram of a teal-haired boy hovered over the landscape. “We will TAKE the Great Clock in the name of my father!”

A platform with a railing hovered above the kids, and a robot with a computer head and blue cape was on it. “These cursed Card Monsters are ruining my plan! I hope Peridot is keeping her ground up there.”

“XANA!” Dillon yelled in surprise.
XANA looked down. “Eeeeaah!” He cowered on his platform. “DARN IT! You clods are the LAST thing I need right now! Make yourselves fodder and stay out of my way!” He steered the platform to float skyward.

“I forgot how much I hated that guy’s voice.”

“Incoming!” Kodama yelled when a Megatank steered over to them. When it opened its core, Kodama bent down and launched a firework on her back, exploding the spherical robot. She glanced at her back when the firework respawned. “My stuff RESPAWNS in this world?! INFINITE AMMO, BABY!”

“Each of your weapons and powers were scanned upon virtualization.” Sigmund’s voice echoed from the sky. “And I inputted the infinite ammo cheat code. Just hurry up and find a way to fix this mess.”

They flinched when a bomb exploded close to them. “Run for it!” The five charged across the battlefield—Kodama shot missiles at any XANAbot and Duel Monster in her range and Quill blasted behind him using his Elbow Cannons.

“There’s Mr. Game-and-Watch!” Carol pointed at a black 2-D rocketship a few yards ahead. The little Program waved at his friends and lowered an anchor. The four humans grabbed the 2-D chain while Midna flew up into the ship. They were reeled inside before the craft took off.

The ship was thankfully bigger on the inside. “Where do we begin looking for Vanellope in all this mess?” Quill asked.

“Game-and-Watch still remembers her code.” Carol said. “We might be able to trace her with his help.”

“As much as I’d like to,” Dillon followed, “I think our first priority is to clean this mess up. Let’s look for Kaiba and take care of him. We should definitely see Vanellope on the way.”

**Pokitaru, Solana Galaxy**

Shade faced Maddy from 10 yards away, shurikens in hand. She tossed one at the blindfolded girl, Maddy dodged her head right, another one came, she dodged left. Two shurikens came, a high and low one, so she dove in the space between, dodged a third one with the beat of her heart—the shuriken came back and she kicked it away.

“Well, it seems you do pick up quickly.” Silvers Rayleigh sat on a rock and drank a bottle of rum. “Even alternating between the forms doesn’t confuse you too much. But you’re a ways from becoming a full Haki master.”

“I could’ve sworn three days of training would pay off by now.” Maddy said with sarcasm, lifting her blindfold and catching breath.

“Indeed, but you are only human.” Shade said as she approached her. “You should expect weakness.”

“Did you have to throw real shurikens at me, though?”

“In the battlefield, you must expect the danger to be real. Training can help you get accustomed to it. As the Chosen One, you must not show weakness.”

“And besides, I set those throwing stars to ‘stun’, not ‘kill.’” Ratchet commented from the
“I get that.” Maddy said. “It’s just, when I was tiny, they just shot darts at me, and they still helped me learn.”

“Yes, Tiny Style is both a silly and effective form,” Shade stated, “but that alone will not help you for the real challenge to come.”

“That’s what they tell Link every Zelda game, but he always beats Ganon just by pressing ‘B’.”

“Unfortunately, THIS ISN’T a videogame! …For the most part! And shouldn’t YOU two be looking for Ratchet’s communicator?” she yelled at Ratchet and Drake.

“Take it easy, we found that yesterday.” Ratchet said, laughing slightly at her outburst. “I’m in the middle of fixing it, but once we do, we can set a direct course for Maddy’s planet.”

“Sigh, I can’t wait to go back home,” Maddy fell on her back in exhaust, “and breathe the fresh air of my human brethren again.”

“CoughshemeansChris’sair.” Zach coughed.

“But your training is not yet complete.” Shade stated. “You have grasped the basics of Armament and Observation, but you must become better. Otherwise, the prophecy may not be fulfilled.”

“All you keep talking about is this ‘prophecy’ garbage, lighten up.”

“How can I lighten up when you’re lying on your back as though dead?!”

“Heh, ladiiiees, please… settle down.” Rayleigh chuckled. “I think she’s doing exemplary.”

“I’ve seen better. You’re being too lenient.” Shade told him.

“If you think you know better, why don’t you be the teacher?” He smirked.

“You were supposed to be the only capable teacher. You don’t seem to be understanding the importance of Maddy learning Haki.”

“And what IS the importance?” Rayleigh laughed. “To become the ‘Seventh Light’, to control the Octogan? I already told you, even if she could become a master in a few days, that would be beyond her skill. A person is not the same as a shed, I can’t force it to be complete as soon as possible. I may not understand the full severity of the Seven Lights Prophecy… but perhaps you do?”

“Nn…no!” Shade flushed. “I just know… it’s important! It’s what’s supposed to happen, so…”

“You know, sometimes destiny is something that we decide for ourselves.” Rayleigh drank from his bottle. “In my world, no one ever said I had to become a pirate, a Haki master, or a Haki teacher. Of course, that was before I was involuntarily sucked into this world and those aliens told me to wait here and be your Haki teacher. True, there is an illusion of what can be called fate, but our lives aren’t decided by any ‘destiny’ that someone ‘plans’ for us.”

“Perhaps… but if I had not followed the orders given to me, Maddy would not know to come here.”

“You didn’t even bring her here, did you? You all just warped here.”
“Grrr!” Shade growled, like a nerve was touched at that point.

“Perhaps we should have our first test. The training course that I designed is over there.” Rayleigh pointed at a path through the jungle. “Why don’t the two of you do it together and test your current skills?”

“I’m years ahead of her. It wouldn’t be a fair game.”

“Then you should be kind enough to help her if the need requires. Clear the course, kids. You must get a ‘B’ Rank or higher.”

“Very well. Come, Maddy.” Shade sighed and walked ahead.

Maddy got back up and chased after. “You sound different all of a sudden.”

“Nonsense, I sound the same as I always have.”

“I mean you sound… more pushy than usual.”

“I have to be. It won’t be long until the Apocalypse arrives, and if the Twenty Keys aren’t united, something terrible could happen. If you’re the Seventh Light, the responsibility falls unto you, too.”

“But why do I need to know Haki, exactly?”

“I assume it has to do with the Octogan, but the exact reason doesn’t matter at the moment. Mastering Haki is your duty and I must see that you do.”

“Didn’t you say it was the Octogan that gave your people the prophecy? How do you know it isn’t lying?”

“It is the most powerful and most knowledgeable of Seeing devices. With it, my elders saw that you must master Haki, so you will.”

“But you don’t know if something bad will happen.”

Shade stopped and turned to face her. “It is the only thing we know to do. So we will do it. No matter what happens. We don’t know if something bad will happen if we do… but if we don’t, we can be assured that something bad will happen regardless. So what path do you choose?”

“…Sigh, follow the destiny path, I guess.”

“Good.” Shade faced the obstacle course. “Our destinies may be something we decide… but that doesn’t mean the choice won’t have consequence. And what I choose to do… is complete the mission I was assigned.” (Play “Dragonfly Falls” from *Spyro: A Hero’s Tail*.)

*Stage 62: Pokitaru Falls*

*Mission: Clear the course by using Haki.*

*Act 1: Haki Training Course*

Maddy and Shade were in a small gorge with two wooden towers on either side. They climbed a rugged wall to get onto the middle of the right tower, which had a line of small catapults that would
fling apples to the opposite platform. On said platform, there were targets that would set off their respective catapult. “Observation test.” Shade said. “One of these targets will help you, the others will hurt you. Use your Haki to determine the harmful ones.”

None of the opposite catapults looked different from one-another. She cut the rope of the first catapult, flung the apple to hit the target, which in turn caused the parallel catapult to fling a barrel of bananas to hit her. Maddy dodged the trap and took time to examine them. It wasn’t like a living thing whose movements you could determine from thought patterns. But after a few minutes, she noticed one of the catapults wasn’t trembling as much from too much weight. She flung an apple at that one, and in turn, a rope ladder-bridge unraveled as it flew over. Shade tied the rope ends to their platform. “Good work.” The echidna merely glided across while Maddy had to climb across the bridge.

On this platform, there was a line of springs that would shoot them up through hatches on the top platform. Maddy didn’t need Shade to tell her that only one was correct (and Shade was already climbing the cliff out of there, so she wouldn’t tell). One of the hatches had tiny sun rays poking through, so she bounced up through that one. The other hatches had boxes over them. She could then jump to the cliff where Shade waited by a huge boulder. “Use Armament Haki to move this rock.”

“Oh, boy.” Maddy pushed her hands against the rock and mustered the Haki by exerting strength. “Huuuurr…!” She felt the arms growing in strength, but the rock budged just a little. “Wanna help, Shade?”

“Very well.” Shade pushed the boulder, and although it looked like she struggled, she moved it with ease compared to how Maddy did. “You need to learn to summon the Arms without already exerting strength. Otherwise, it lessens the full effect.”

They entered a relatively open area of jungle, though shrubs and trees still covered the ground. “Another Observation lesson: get through here and be wary of the enemies.” Maddy could already sense the Piranha Plants lurking in the shrubs. They lunged at her one after another when she stepped forward, but she was quick to grab and yank off their stems. The only feasible path was forward, so she decapitated every living plant on the way there. After clearing that field, they had to cross a trench with waterfalls on either side, roaring loudly as they poured into a pool below.

“Spouts of water will spew up in certain areas.” Shade explained. “Determine where they’ll be and use them to get across.”

“Shade, did you already do this course?”

“Yes, a few times. I wanted to be sure it was befitting for Haki. I could’ve asked for better, but for amateurs, I suppose it’s decent.”

“Do you think you can carry me for this one? I’m not good in water.”

“You wouldn’t have to swim if you mess up!”

“Come on, just let me sit on your shoulder!” Without waiting for a reply, Maddy went behind and climbed to sit on the echidna’s shoulders.

“OH, for the love of… Fine, but you need to tell me where to jump. This is humiliating beyond belief.”

“Then you should’ve been a giant puppy or a giant girl. Now juuuum…” she needed a moment to
study the water, “there!” Shade leapt to the pointed spot, and a spout came up to catch her. She made accurate guesses for the other hidden spouts, and Shade withstood the pressure around her neck while jumping. Their Observation was able to sense the bubbling parts in the water through the roaring falls, so it seemed to Shade that Maddy was getting better at the art.

Shade set her on the ground when they were successfully across, and they turned left on the path before encountering a big watery blob with beady eyes. “This Water Chu is composed of water similar to a Logia. You know what you have to do here.”

Maddy sighed. She stretched her left fist and felt the Haki surge into it. She then ran up to the blob and started punching it as though it were a solid creature. She laid a good combo of punches, until the Haki involuntarily wore off and her hand went through. She frantically shook to pull it out, but the blob kept a thick grip. Maddy was able to make her hand Armament and yank it out, ripping the blob in the process as it deflated into a flat puddle of water. The girls crossed and arrived at a coast side, with a great view of the sparkly ocean.

There was a short cliff far to their right, and they could climb the rugged side. A wooden gateway blocked the path up the mountain, and three locks kept it shut. “The three keys are hidden around this coast. Since you aren’t a swimmer, you can tell me where they are and I’ll see if you’re right.”

“Okay, ummm…” Maddy studied the tall pillar-islands and ledges around the sea. “I think there’s one on that tallest island, one all the way over on that cliff, aaaaand… one probably underwater somewhere.”

“Well, they wouldn’t be just out in the open.” Shade sighed. “Alright, I’ll be right back.” She leapt off the ledge and glided a great distance over the ocean. Her first destination was the shortest island platform. From there, she glided to a soft soil path going up the medium platform. Piranha Plants ambushed her on top, but she tore them up easy. She then glided to the tallest platform, grabbing its soil path that went up and around. She punched the Snapdragons that she knew would jump out and made it to the top, claiming the gate key.

Shade glided across the sea to the cliff on the coast’s left. She climbed another soil path and dodged the bundles of dirt that monkeys threw at her from above. At the top, Shade would have to make her way around a zigzaggy soil path, with monkeys still throwing dirt at her from the sides. Shade could set foot on the intended ledge, which had several boxes she could feel free to smash. Neither of them had a key, but one of them had an arrow underneath that pointed across the coast. Shade glided in that direction, and she claimed the key that was kept afloat by a propeller.

With that, she dove into the ocean and swam in search of the last key, putting her ninja mask over her mouth. She swam beneath a hill and into a tunnel. At the end of this tunnel was a clam, who opened its shell and let her take the key. There were other underwater clams that had other treasures, but Shade wasn’t concerned. She returned to Maddy and opened the triple-locked gate. There were tall jagged rocks that blocked parts of the hill path. Maddy punched the stones and left cracks with her Armament Haki, but Shade was easily punching and breaking rocks. “Don’t sprain yourself.” Shade said.

They got to a big enclosing within the jungle where a wood board swing was facing a tall cliff. Maddy sat on the swing, kicked back, forward, back, forward, back; she kept gaining momentum and swinging higher. Finally, she was able to leap up to the ledge, which Shade had already climbed to. They faced a chasm with three more swings to go across. Maddy jumped to the first one, built momentum, leapt to the next, more momentum, swung to the third, and swung to the next path. They headed up some wooden stairs to a platform.

“AAAACK!” A colorful bird the size of a horse was tied down by its legs. It was mostly magenta,
but its tail and the ends of its feathers were yellow, green, and blue. It flapped its wings and
screched, desperate to get free.

“Rayleigh told me he found that bird earlier.” Shade said. “It’s a Loftwing named Fluzzard. I think
he intended this to be your Conqueror’s Haki test. Conqueror’s Haki is able to tame animals to your
will.”

“Kind of mean to just tie it up like that.”

“They don’t tend to listen to people easily. Most Loftwing just answer to one person, any person
they deem worthy. This is the end of the training course, so let’s go back.”

“I don’t think so.” Maddy ran and jumped on Fluzzard’s back.

“Maddy, what’re you doing?!”

“AAAAA! AAAAAA!” The Loftwing frantically tried to shake her off, but Maddy held tight, and
it seemed the struggle only made it stronger. Before they knew it, the ropes snapped, and the
Loftwing WHOOSHED into the sky. Shade gaped at how high they were going, not taking her eye
off as Fluzzard soared around. “AAAAAaaa!” Fluzzard stopped in place and flapped its wings,
but Maddy stayed on like it were a horse. Its wings spread, the Fluzzard swooped down to the
platform and had Shade in its sights.

“Hey, don’t even think it, Bird Brain!” Shade yelled flustered. “I’m a Mobian, you aren’t taking
me like some common—AAAAHH!” Her arms were caught in Fluzzard’s talons.

“Shade, you aren’t scared of birds, are you?” Maddy chuckled.

“OF COURSE I’M NOT, PUT ME DOWN,” she kicked her feet, “tell this thing to let
GOOOOO!” They sped up.

“Hold on, we’re going for a ride!” (Play “Fleet Glide Galaxy” from Mario Galaxy 2!)

Act 2: Fluzzard’s Flight

Fluzzard made wild turns around the needle-like mountains, and after the third turn, a group of
Skytails ambushed them, but Maddy had the Loftwing dive down and dodge. “WATCH OUT!”
Shade cried—the Loftwing flapped up before hitting the sharp rocks. They soared through a
canyon with waterfalls on either side, and Nefarious Drones were launching buzzsaw shurikens
from platforms. Water geysers sprouted up from below, so Maddy swerved Fluzzard right and left
to avoid. There was a wall at the end of the canyon, but Maddy sensed a narrow path directly
down, and commanded Fluzzard to dive, then shift up to fly into a cave. Shade kept her legs bent
up to not bump the cliff.

Taking Shade’s well-being into account, Maddy avoided the stalagmites on the cave ground, as
well as the dropping stalactites. They entered a wider region of cave, where Nefarious Drones blew
up the base of pillars that would topple down and crush the colored bird. Fluzzard swiftly avoided,
and seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, Maddy pulled Fluzzard’s feathers and made it fly up
and out. They splashed through a waterfall upon exit, and had a wonderful view of Pokitaru’s
mountains and sea.

They glided left and through a narrow jungle pass, and Shade was quick to dodge her legs away
from the Piranha Plants that popped out every which way. They flew into an open part of the
jungle shaded by leaves, and monkeys were swinging on swings and chucking bananas at them.
They then went through a narrow canyon with boulders swinging to and fro on ropes, and the
space between the boulders was wide as Fluzzard’s wings. The Loftwing glided up a hill, towards the light at the end of the jungle. They were outside once again, swooping past a rainbow under a waterfall, and flying up and around a mountain with the wind blowing through their hair.

“Okay, I think we can land now.” Maddy had the Loftwing fly down into a low area of jungle. Fluzzard dropped Shade on the ground, then made land before Maddy jumped off. (End song.)

“Aaaa!” The bird folded its wings.

“Good boy, Fluzzy!” Maddy patted its beak. “Way to hang ten! Or however you birds phrase it.” She went over to Shade as she was helping herself up. “Look at that, Shade, I used Conqueror’s Haki!”

“No you didn’t! You just jumped on his back and got lucky. Surprised it didn’t take us to his nest.” Shade walked the other way and turned around a wall.

Fluzzard came beside Maddy and seemed to share her confusion. “What’s her problem?” she asked him.

“Eeeaaaah!” Fluzzard flapped his wings.

Shade sat beside a river, pulling off her boots to rest her feet. She splashed water on her face as Maddy came to sit by her. “If you were afraid of birds, you coulda just told me.”

“I am NOT afraid of birds! I was simply concerned for your… avian-taming ability, is all.”

Maddy rolled her eyes, feeling the lie in her voice. “So… you’re like a master of Haki, too, aren’t you? How come you couldn’t teach me yourself? Even Rayleigh said you couldn’t just ‘master’ Conqueror’s Haki, so it didn’t matter if…”

“Actually, I’m only proficient in Observation Haki. I could never master Armament.”

“Really? But he said it’s easier than Observation—and back there, you were breaking boulders!”

“Mobian Echidnas are naturally strong, alright?” Shade stated rashly. “I never found a need to master Armament. But I was naturally great at Observation.”

“Well, you don’t have to get all angry! I was just confused.”

Shade sighed and faced forward again. “I know. But Maddy… you don’t know what life has been like for me. When you’re a child prodigy… everyone expects more from you than anyone else. We Mobians are natural-born fighters, we know combat from sheer instinct… but I really stood out. I knocked out all my teachers when I was four years old, I could grasp Observation when I was five. They had already decided that I was the most capable one to…” Shade bent her head between her knees and clasped it, “carry out this ‘destiny.’”

“Shade…” Maddy sat beside her and touched the echidna’s shoulder. She wanted to ask about her stress, but Shade had already sensed this and looked up.

“Maddy, I can see you’re working very hard at your training, and you’re beginning to grasp the basics of Haki. But I can’t stop worrying. I can’t stop wondering if… you really are the Chosen One.”

“What do you mean?”
“My job – my mission, when I was sent to this universe, was to wait for you. To find you. To watch you. To guide you when the ‘time’ would come, because you are the Seventh Light. You have no idea how long I waited for you. My entire life’s purpose was thrust upon me at five years old: to wait for Maddy Murphy and guide her to her destiny. I knew when and where you would be born and I watched you. I saw when you fell into the ocean and started fearing water, I know that you wear contacts, I know you sing to yourself in the bathroom, and that you still carry your Simba doll to school.”

“I feel really violated right now!”

“I KNOW!” Shade outburst. “I know it was creepy, but it was my job! And after all that, here we are, where you’re finally learning Haki from the man that I was supposed to bring you to. You’re merely days away from when you have to realize your destiny, and I’m still worried if the prophecy was right!”

“Why would you think it wasn’t?”

“Sigh…” Shade faced down. “I don’t know… Maybe because, after watching you grow up… you never looked like ‘Chosen One’ material. I guess what I was expecting was… someone like me. A child prodigy who had no time for fun and games and always had to train. You may be strong, but I know you struggle and you cry sometimes… That’s why I was afraid you weren’t the one.”

“Everyone struggles with things. Everyone gets upset…”

“But I never did. Whether I pride myself about it or not… I had talent. I know that people work hard to achieve their goals. People exert blood, sweat, and tears to become great at martial arts, to become strong. But I never believed in hard work, I always believed you had to be born with the talent, the sheer instinct that you could do something. If it was what you were meant to do, you could just do it, even if a little training was required. That’s why I think Observation Haki came so easy to me. That’s why I wonder… if you really have the spirit that Conqueror’s Haki requires.”

“I used it before… didn’t I?”

“By accident. It was undeveloped, so you affected your teammates, too. Simply having the power doesn’t matter.”

“Well, it isn’t very easy for me either, Shade. I didn’t want to be a Chosen One, I didn’t ask to have to go through all this training, and the only reason I’m doing it now is because… I feel like I have to. I don’t know anything about Seven Lights or this Apocalypse Cheren brought up out of nowhere, so I feel like if I don’t do this… a lot of people are going to be hurt.”

“…I guess… it was a duty that was forced upon you…”

“Yeah, and now the ONLY person who seems to know what’s going on, besides Dr. Nuts-and-Bolts, even after she’s stalked me all these years, doesn’t even BELIEVE in me! And I’m supposed to think this isn’t all a waste?!”

“…I’m sorry!” The echidna fell on her front and started to cry.

“Shade!” Maddy didn’t expect to offend her.

“My whole life has been about the mission I was given! I waited so long… I was afraid if I was gonna mess up or do a bad job. All you had to do was join the Seven Lights and my life would be complete. I had nothing else to look forward to and nowhere to go.”
“Shade, you didn’t have to dedicate your whole life to me.” Maddy pulled her upright. Shade had already cried a stream of tears that soaked her jumpsuit.

“The only reward I could’ve waited for… was you telling me I did a good job. If I really was a big help to you, I wanted to know it. But now I just let my stress get to me. I failed as a guide…”

“No, Shade, you didn’t. I’m stressed too, but I wasn’t gonna give up. I’m still gonna become the Seventh Light.”

Shade sniffled as the last batch of tears spilled. Maybe it was because of how sudden it was. All the years of waiting for the Chosen One were suddenly behind her.

18 years ago…

_Go to Quahog… Wait for Maddy Murphy… She is the Conqueror… The Seventh Light… When the Quest for Twenty Keys begins, take her to The Disbanded._

Those were the instructions. And so, she was here, on Planet Earth. A five-year-old echidna on her own. The prophecy would not take place for 18 years. So she waited… and waited…

It was nighttime when she appeared on Earth. She found a lone rock in a grass meadow outside of a forest. She sat on it and gazed at the stars. There were millions of them. They all sparkled around the full moon.

_Well, here I am. Far away from home_

_Growing up all alone, I’m on my own_

Shade lay upside-down on the grass with her legs propped up on the rock.

_I’m on a mission. I need to wait_

_No going back… I’m bound to fate_

... _Just a thousand nights to go_

The sun rose, then set, then rose, then set. The moon was different each time.

_Just ten thousand nights to go_

Shade went into the forest to eat fruit. At night, she returned to watch the stars. Some nights, it rained. Some nights, there were shooting stars. Shade got bored of this area. She began to walk the great field.

_No matter where I go… the sky stays above me_

_I feel so small… like I’m in a cage_

_My fate is watching… It is all that I can see._

_And yet, after all… it’s like I don’t even age_

... _Just a thousand nights to go…_

Shade found a beautiful, clear river, and skipped across it with grace. It gave her the illusion of being free.
And then a thousand more, too…

Humming this song was the only thing that kept her sane.

I don’t know where to go. I don’t know where I am.

I just know when, I just know why

Shade came to a pond and jumped out. She stared at her rippling reflection and sang out loud.

And when she comes… would we even be friends?

When we’re done… where do I go then?

Am I just her escort? Am I just a guide?

...What if I fail? Should I hide? Or should I-...

Before she finished that line, a star whizzed across the sky’s reflection. She looked up and gazed at the crescent moon.

Am I just a piece… of something that’s greater?

I want to love her… but what if I hate her?

What if she herself… is only a fragment?

In the grand scheme… is she as small as I am?

...Can this piece be more… than what it was designed for?

Or is my life… bound for nothing more?

...In a thousand more nights, we’ll know.

Now

“Shade…” Maddy spoke calmly. “I wouldn’t have asked you to wait that long for me. But if you did… I wish you would’ve told me… so we could be friends.”

“Given your spite for non-humans at the time, we probably couldn’t. The only way I was able to study you up close was through the Teen Ninjas.”

“Maybe… but that’s all in the past now. After this is over… you can do whatever you want. I’ll even help you find something you like to do.”

“…Maddy…” She looked up again.

“Yeah, Shade?”

“…Promise me… you’ll become the Chosen One I waited for. Promise me you will… so I can be happy, knowing I did a good job.”

“…I will. If I don’t do it for anyone else… I’ll do it for you, Shade. You already did a good job.”

She closed her eyes and smiled. “Hmm… I don’t remember the last time I cried to anything… how foolish of me.”
“Zach still has first place.”

“Heh… How fortunate. Maddy… promise me nothing bad will happen… Promise me I made the right choice to help you…”

“You worry way too much. Nothing bad is gonna happen, Shade.” She smiled. “The Kids Next Door will make sure of that.”

Great Clock

Sigmund brought Miyuki Crystal to the entrance of the center of Great Clock. A great door sealed the entrance, and the lock was a tiny hole down by Miyuki’s feet. “Only the Chrono Staff is able to unlock this door.” Sigmund said. “Mr. King must still be inside.”

“Can we call him out?”

“I don’t think he’d listen. He’s usually in here to meditate.”

Miyuki approached the door and put a hand on it. She focused her energy to see the Great Clock’s history.

For a trillion years, it has existed. She saw MaKayla using it to travel through time—it shook from the energy of Arceus’s rage—twenty thrones around a center before a gate—a blood-hurdling roar—hands clasping the gate—

**8888888888888888**

“HUUUU!” Miyuki gasped for breath and fell on the floor, trying to clear the bright light from her vision. She helped herself up, but still felt unbalanced. “The…The Gate of Time…”

“Miss Miyuki?” Sigmund asked with concern.

“If… the Gate of Time… opens… is something going to… come out…?”

Sigmund twiddled his fingers. “I-It’s… hard to say… Mr. King spends hours in there… trying to see what may exist beyond the Time Gate. He wants to know, if the solution to stopping the Apocalypse really is behind that gate. But the more he meditates… he comes out, looking more afraid.” The robot turned away and left the area. “On the Day of Apocalypse… the Space Gate will fall, and the powerful Space Chi of the Netherverse will destroy everything. Sometimes, Mr. King says… that would be the safest way to go.”

Jagar King was knelt before the Time Gate. He exiled himself from the world around him to seek the unheard voices. Where are you… Please respond… Tell me more… Tell me what will happen… Please, tell me where you are…

...Calliope.

Remember Sigmund? He was in Operation: NECSUS, though he came from Ratchet & Clank. Fluzzard is from Mario Galaxy 2. Seven Lights is steadily approaching its final stages. But don’t fear, because there is plenty more to go. The Caesar should keep your fancies tickled.

...
“Mmph, yeah yeah!” Bill danced across the screen. “Shake that thang! Uh! Oh, yeah! Illuminuti!”
Chapter Summary

Hcaz Yhprum is sent to awaken Czar Baldy Bald III in the World Without Law. This world proves to be a nightmare for the poor guy.

This is one of my favorite chapters in the Side Stories. I laughed while writing it. XD Well, not this first part, the first part’s kinda depressing. (Also, if you aren’t caught up with *Fairy Tail*, beware of spoilers.)

*Chapter B-30: The World Without Law*

**Alakitasia, Fiore Dimension; 410 years ago**

Nollid Kroy was sent through the Multiverse Portal and landed on a grass ground. “Yeesh… that was crazier than Apparating.” he said. Nollid was in a forest, and the sky had a hint of yellow, implying that the sun was setting. He walked forward. “I wonder where the Darkness-” He stepped on a cliff and stopped before losing balance. A few grains of dirt fell off from his step, falling below the clouds. Nollid gasped, taking in the view before him. “Wow…” (Play “Floating Islands” from *Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon.*)

A light breeze whisked across the country of floating islands. At first, Nollid thought it was Skypia, but the islands were made of dirt and soil. Masses of land ripped from the earth and left to drift in the clouds. Nollid looked up toward the right, where the cliff sloped up and led to a thin strip of ground hanging over the abyss. A boy of seven years old stood on that strip, staring down at the passing clouds. He had smooth black hair and black clothes.

Nollid stepped up the hill and approached the kid from behind. “You should be careful. You might fall off.”

The kid looked up and turned, staring with surprised black eyes, though his expression was dull. The stranger wore a black hoodie with black pants and shoes. Nollid had a purple strip through his black hair. The kid noticed the wand in Nollid’s right hand. “Are you a wizard?”

“Hm? Oh, yeah. I am.” Nollid answered, now confirmed that wizards do exist in this world.

“I’ve never seen you. Do you go to my school?”

“Er, no, I don’t. I’m not from around here. My name’s Nollid.”

“Hi, Nollid. I’m Zeref.”

*Yep, this is the one I’m looking for.* “Nice to meet you, Zeref.” Nollid smiled. “Can you tell me about this place? I didn’t exactly read a travel guide, so…”

“This is Alakitasia. The Floating Land. I don’t know very much about it… but I think a long time ago, some wizards made the land float to be closer to the gods.”
“A country-wide Levitation Spell? That’s pretty amazing!”

“Yah… but it’s dangerous. Dragons fly up here. They kill people. They killed my parents and my little brother. …If you’re magic, can you do something for me?” Zeref asked with hopeful eyes.

“What do you need?”

“Can you bring people back to life?”

Nollid hesitated to answer. “Um… not particularly. But I recently learned to use Inferio.”

“What’s Inferio?”

“It’s a spell that can wake up corpses. The corpses are called Inferius.”

“Inferius? Well… can you bring my brother back?”

“Why your brother? Why not him and your parents?”

“My parents were eaten by the dragons. We don’t have their bodies. My brother is buried at the cemetery. Could you wake him up?”

“Wake up his corpse? Well, sure. But you know this is dark magic, right? I only practiced it because my mom made me. It feels creepy when I actually… do it.”

“I just wanna see my brother again. Is that bad?”

“If it’s that important to you, I guess I could… for a few minutes. Will you take me to him?”

“We have to go up there.” Zeref pointed at an island a few feet off the edge, whose ground was higher than theirs. “Can you fly?”

“No, but we can make it. Watch a wizard at work.” Nollid winked.

**Stage B-25: Floating Lands**

**Mission: Awaken Zeref’s brother.**

There was a tree with vines standing on the edge of the island. “Accio Vine.” Nollid aimed his wand and called the end of a vine over. He put away the wand and told Zeref to hang on his shoulders. Nollid grabbed the vine and held tight as they swung under the bottom edge of the island. When the vine swung back and became straight, the wizard climbed it. Nollid and Zeref set foot on the island, which was composed of yellow brick ruins. Stone gargoyles were perched on pedestals and ruins, but these statues revealed to be alive as they swooped in to claw at the two. Nollid was quick to cast Reducto and explode the gargoyles, protecting himself and Zeref.

According to Zeref, the next destined island was several meters above. Nollid’s Ascendio wouldn’t get them that high, so he decided to use Wingardium Leviosa to uplift Zeref. The child felt odd floating like a feather, and feared falling from such an already unsettling altitude. Thankfully, Nollid kept his focus and set Zeref on the small island. “Is there anything up there?!” Nollid called up.

“There’s a knocked-over pedestal!” Zeref yelled back.
“Push it down here, I can use it!” Nollid stepped back when the pedestal fell, using magic to slow its descent. Afterwards, Nollid stood on the stone and used magic to levitate himself up. He rejoined Zeref and used another Levitation Spell to float him to a longer island ten feet off. Zeref stepped on a stone switch that stretched a bridge for Nollid. The duo crossed the long island and were attacked by Clefts that were disguised as rocks. Nollid used Flipperoo to flip the Clefts upside-down and stomp their weak bottoms.

“No offense, Zeref, but your homeland is kinda dull.” Nollid said honestly.

“This isn’t my home. I’m from a town past the forest. I come out here to look at clouds.”

“It sure seems like the cemetery is pretty out of the way.”

“These are sacred grounds. No one comes out here because they’re afraid of being cursed.”

“Cursed? Doesn’t that make you afraid?”

“No.”

They jumped some small gaps in-between islands before climbing stairs to an ancient town. They cut through the center street and found a sealed gate that depicted four symbols in compass directions. The north depicted a swirl, east pointed at a snowflake, south aimed at a raindrop, and west at a flame. Nollid looked above the gate and noticed the dark orb. He cast Ventus up at the orb and watched it glow white. “We probably have to activate all the orbs to open this gate. I bet they’re located in the compass directions.”

He and Zeref followed a small road to the east side, but since the path was blocked by rubble, they entered a building. They couldn’t go far due to the stone clutter, but Zeref was small enough to crawl through a tight space between the rubble. The boy jumped stacks of stone bricks that led to a window. Vines were growing on the outside of the window, allowing Zeref to climb to the ruin’s roof. Zeref found a stone block slightly taller than himself and could push it over the edge of the roof, landing it on the center road. He called Nollid to come back outside, and using the block as a boost, Nollid could use Ascendio and make it onto the roof. The next-door building had an orb, and since this was east, Nollid cast Glacius as according to the gate’s compass. The orb turned blue.

To the left of the sealed gate was a path leading to a broken part in the wall around the ruins. When Nollid peeked through it, he saw an orb hanging on the side of the wall. This was probably west, so Nollid cast Incendio to light it red like fire. Lastly, they needed to find the south orb. They returned to the beginning of town, searching the area around the entrance stairs. Zeref found a vine wall under the island’s edge, so Nollid climbed down and found himself clinging across vines along the island’s underside. They brought him to the fourth orb, which required the water spell, Aguamenti.

Nollid heard a rumbling and suspected the gate has opened. He regrouped with Zeref as they proceeded past the town, arriving at an ancient church. “This must be the old Church of Ankhseram.” Zeref said.

“What’s Ankhseram?”

“He’s the God of Death. The people in my town worship him.”

“Where I’m from, our God of Death is Thanatos.”

“Your people have a different god? We probably shouldn’t talk about it here.”

“Heh heh, yeah.” Nollid blushed. “I think I see a way over there.” He and Zeref went to the right of
the church, where Nollid used magic to stack three large rocks against the back wall. He levitated Zeref up to an opening high up in the wall, then Nollid stood on the stack to be high enough to Ascendio up to the opening. The next island had a tree with bees swarming around a hive. Nollid cast Avis to send a flock of birds to devour the bees, making it safe to cross over. But how to go about doing that? Nollid saw a plank connecting that island to the next, so he called “Accio Plank” to slide the plank over to connect it with their ledge.

“Nollid, where did you say you were from?” Zeref asked as they carefully crossed the long board.

“I’m from a town called Gohauq. It’s pretty far away.”

“Why did you come to Alakitasia?”

“ Mostly to travel. So, are we almost at the graveyard?”

“Yeah, we just gotta get across. I wish they wouldn’t put it so far away.”

They made it to the island with the hive, and Nollid moved the plank again to cross to the following island. The next island required a short jump to cross, but it was upside-down as they viewed its rugged underside. Nollid cast Flipperoo to flip it up correctly. However, the land they had to reach was too far. “How do we get there now?” Zeref asked.

“I have an idea. But just so you’ll be safe.” Nollid used Leviosa to float Zeref over to the base of the cemetery. With a courageous breath, Nollid used Flipperoo on the small platform again, spinning it with himself on it and flinging himself across the gap with the momentum. Zeref gasped, fearing he wouldn’t make it, but his worry for those two seconds were subsided when Nollid landed beside him. “Heh heh. Worry not, Zeref, I’m a pro at this.”

“Great! Let’s look for my brother’s grave.” Nollid followed Zeref as the latter read the names on the tombstones, which were written in foreign letters Nollid couldn’t read. Speaking of foreign letters, Nollid looked across the cemetery and spotted a grave in front of a stone pyramid.

“Zeref, do you think it might be that one?” he pointed. Zeref looked to the strange pyramid near the edge of the island. He jogged up and read the name on the stone.

“You’re right! This is his grave! Natsu…” (End song.)

Nollid came beside Zeref and held his wand ready. “Alright, here it goes. Inferio.” Nollid cast the spell into the soil.

Zeref gasped when two small, boney arms sprouted from the ground. A child’s zombie emerged, moaning. “Whoa… you did it.” Zeref gaped. “Natsu… is it really you?”

“He can’t talk.” Nollid said. “He doesn’t have a will or his own state of mind. Inferio reanimates a corpse, but it doesn’t do anything besides act as a puppet.”

Zeref waved a hand by Natsu’s lifeless face. “Do you know a spell that… can bring people back to life?”

“No, I don’t. But my friend, Sipa told me about a stronger version of Inferio. It’s called Grand Inferius. It’s able to revive people to perfect fighting condition. I don’t know how to use it, though.”

Zeref caught Natsu when the corpse fell over. “If you can wake up a corpse… maybe I can bring back the dead.” Zeref spoke lowly. “If I learned magic… I wonder if I could…”
"It looks like I just dug this kid’s grave. Nollid thought. No pun intended. I guess it couldn’t be avoided. Still… “Zeref, I already told you these were dark arts. I don’t know what you’re thinking, but… don’t get in over your head.”

“I know. …Hey, Nollid? How long does this spell last? Do you think Natsu could… stay awake forever?”

“I’m not sure. There’s a chance the spell will wear off if I leave. But I guess… I’ll leave it active just to see. I wouldn’t let the town see him, though.”

“I’ll keep him secret.” Zeref smiled at the older boy. His attention then fell to the pyramid behind the grave. Zeref approached the ancient stone, and Nollid knew what was to happen next. Zeref read the glowing text.

New growth cannot commence without destroying the old. If you wish to make change, only chaos is the answer.

A dark aura appeared around the pyramid, and the eye on the tip channeled it into Zeref’s body. Zeref awakened as a DARKNESS. Only 3 more to go.

“…What was that, Nollid?”

“I honestly have no idea.” Nollid answered. “Let’s get you back to where I found you. It’ll be dangerous crossing that path on your own.”

Nollid led Zeref and Natsu across the floating islands and returned to the forest area where the former first landed. “If you don’t have parents, do you have a home to go back to?”


Nollid felt repulsed at the thought of this little boy living with a corpse. Whether Natsu died again or remained animated after he left, it was a creepy thought. He didn’t have long to think about it when the ray of light burst from the higher heavens, burning the ground. “Good-bye, Zeref!” Nollid yelled, giving Zeref no time to comment on this. “And good luck to you.” He jumped into the vacuum and was sucked back to his home dimension.

Zeref looked at Natsu when he moaned. Despite Nollid’s sudden vanishing, his brother remained active. “Inferius…” Zeref would remember that term.

Portal Chamber

“Zeref was a complicated fellow to work with back in those days.” Medusa commented. “It will be good to have him back, though.”

“Don’t we have to do something about Zeref’s little… predicament?” Thanatos asked.

“Don’t worry, Thanny. In time, we shall enlist the help of the Firstborn.”

“How many more times will we have to use this portal?” Nerehc asked.

“Only two more times.” Medusa answered. “Say, Nerehc, when we send your friends to the Original Worlds, have you noticed that nothing actually happens to the Positives?”

“I… didn’t think of it.”
“The reason is simple. The Original Worlds do not abide by the same laws as this universe. Some of them may not have a Negaverse. It only proves how distant they are, and raises more questions on why these people were chosen to be Darknesses.”

“Another thing that you don’t understand?”

“Don’t flatter yourself. But speaking of different laws, I fear for our next victim. The world he’s diving into is called the World Without Law. It will be a miracle if he finds the Darkness and keeps his sanity…”

The arrow was marked on a symbol of a wig. Along the Dimensional Byway to this world, the bubbles displayed a man of blue jelly, an orange sun-like creature, a girl with pink hair, and a guy in a white sheet flashing up his skirt. It was probably the most dangerous of the Original Worlds.

Chrome Dome Empire; 150 years and 1,064,271 milliseconds ago

In the year 150x, war waged between the Hair Kingdom and the Chrome Dome Empire. Chrome Dome was once a peaceful nation, content with their shiny domes. The country never had to buy combs, so they could save extra money to buy gas and fast food. Unfortunately, hats and sunscreen were scarce in this age, so thousands of the Chrome Dome residents acquired unbearable sunburns. Their domes were so scorching, their neighboring country Hair Kingdom crossed their borders and began to cook pancakes and bacon on their heads. The sad part was that they cooked faster than ordinary stoves.

“And that was why they went to war, right?” our lucky victim asked.

No, of course not. What really ticked them off was that they didn’t use butter.

“Okay – that’s it, time out, time out!” Hcaz Yhprum spoke up. “Why the hell did I have to get picked to do this dumb world?! The stupidest person we got is Ylime, don’t you think this place would make her feel smart?”

Oh, pardon me, Hcaz, but this isn’t the Negaverse where you can just sing a pretty song and your dreams magically come true. In this world, you need 200 points of store credit, so ya better hop to it if you wanna finish the mission.

“I don’t understand how anybody from this world could qualify as a Darkness! The last two towns I went to were all made up of tofu that judged each other based on the way they hold their pencils!”

PAH HAH HAH HAAAA! I can so relate to that! Don’t worry, Hcaz, you’re almost close to where you need to be. Luckily, fourth wall rules don’t matter in this world, so I get to help you out. Anyway, back to the story. Our hero, Hcaz was strolling through a peaceful neighborhood with average cartoony houses and little kids with dotty eyes swinging swings on trees. He traveled this dark, nightmarish landscape in search of one of the Thirteen Darknesses: Tsuru Tsurulina III, or as he is known in America, Czar Baldy Bald III. (In 3-D!)

“So I’m guessing I’ll stumble upon an innocent-looking child who couldn’t possibly grow up to be a monster.” Hcaz figured as he marched up a narrow zigzaggy hill above a perilous chasm. An eerie-looking house sat at the top. “That’s how it was for everyone else.”

And right Hcaz was. For when he stepped into the house, there sat a pedestal with… a tiny baby inside an embryo. “ARE YOU SERIOUS?!” Hcaz shouted. “He was never even properly BORN!”

Indeed he wasn’t. That’s why it falls to you, Hcaz, to carry Tsuru on his journey of personal growth. You must undergo trials of unspeakable tribulation, and it will be trifling. But don’t worry,
just pat yourself on the back and have fun with it.

“Sigh...” Hcaz picked the unborn czar up in his hand. “So far, Thanos was the only Darkness that looked terrifying.” (Play “Aban” from *Bobobo-bo Bo-bobo*)

*Stage B-26: World Without Law*

*Mission: Go get ’em, tiger!*

Hcaz carried the embryo across a series of floating square platforms over a chasm. He jumped a platform that flipped slowly, a platform that rotated around a center, and one that went to and fro. One last stable platform would bring Hcaz to a cliff—the platform rapidly flipped when he set foot, throwing Hcaz to the ledge and speaking furiously, “NO! You know, I am TIRED of you Mario wannabes jumpin’ around on us like we’re a bunch of floating lifeless mounts for you to stand on! It’s time for us platforms to speak our minds and YOU’RE gonna help us!”

Armies of platforms and non-platform supporters began to protest all videogame companies and characters for unfair treatment. Gamers grew angry at the fact they could no longer get past Level 1, and many were forced to hack their games to make an anti-gravity code. Protestors were arrested and forced to resume their platform duties in chains, but this didn’t stop them from super-gluing their tops and getting Mario and Rayman stuck. Eventually, the designers gave in to the protests. Hcaz reasoned that the platforms would return to their duties, provided they get double pay, be allowed to attend after-parties, and could be chosen as playable characters.

So with that, Hcaz made it past the first obstacle of this stage. He came to a chasm with a target floating several meters over. With nothing else to chuck at the target, he was forced to throw Tsuru’s embryo, hit it, and catch the unborn baby when it bounced back. “In Aliehs’ level, you abused a fat kid to progress.” Hcaz mentioned as he crossed the bridge that appeared. “Are we that low on level ideas?”

The bridge led Hcaz to a great red door built within a brick castle wall. There were three keys lain down, but only one keyhole. Take your pick, Hcaz. “Whatever.” Hcaz got a key that looked like Jelly Jiggler. He stuck it in and tried to turn the lock, but failed, and when he pulled the key out, it shaped like a paperclip. He tried the Don Patch key next, but it was fruitless, except when Hcaz pulled it out and saw it became a banana. He then used the Bo-bobo key, but would pull it out to realize it was a lace handkerchief. “GRRRR! Nothing in this world makes SENSE!”

With that, Hcaz set off on a three-month long journey to the Himalayas to find the correct key. After buying hot cookies from a snow monster so he could hit the lottery, Hcaz located the key inside a cave: it was a doll of Abraham Lincoln. “Brilliant.” Hcaz said with sarcasm. He stuck the hat side of Lincoln in the lock and opened the gates to the first important destination of the level. A prestigious institution that resembled a castle, he arrived at Beacon Academy. “WHAT?!” Hcaz screamed. “I thought this was *Bobobo*, not *RWBY*!”

“Indeed it is, Mr. Yhprum.” A portly man with a burgundy suit and big grey mustache marched up. “I am Professor Peter Port, and I’m here to encourage the growth of Young Czar Tsuru. And nothing helps a child grow than a ravishing story of his teacher’s days of youth.”

“I don’t have time to hear a story!”

“YOU WILL LISTEN TO MY STORY AND YOU WILL LIKE IT!” Professor Port beat the snot out of Hcaz. “Very well, let’s begin.” He ceased and cleared his throat. “I was born with the
biggest mustache in the hospital. My infant mustache was so enormous, I was put on the cover of *Children’s Magazine* five weeks in a row…”

**64 hours later…**

“So in the end, we decided to throw the Hershey bar away.” Port concluded. Hcaz was beyond bored at this time. “Well, that concludes my ravishing tales. Let’s take a look at Tsuru’s growth.”

The embryo shone and turned white, floating in the air. Like a Pokémon during Evolution, it grew to a toddler’s size. The light vanished, revealing five-year-old Tsuru with a bald head, blue T-shirt, and black pants. “For the next leg of your journey, you may ride Zwei.” Professor Port showed them a little black and white puppy. “You are one step closer to becoming the third czar, Tsuru.”

“I don’t wanna be Czar!” Tsuru whined. “I wanna be a physician!”

“YOU’LL BE CZAR AND YOU WILL LIKE IT!” Port set the two on the puppy’s back before taking out his blunderbuss and whacking it. The puppy shot across the sky like a comet, Hcaz and Tsuru holding for dear life. They crashed through a few UFOs and Cats in Hats, but eventually they crash-landed along a beach setting. Zwei scampered off to join the circus, leaving Hcaz and five-year-old Baldy to cross the beach of sexy teen girls.

“This place is so gross!” Tsuru whined, repulsed at the fine-looking ladies in bikinis as he ducked for cover. “All these girls are naked! I can’t go another step!”

In order to rectify the situation, Hcaz had to platform across the ocean using giant beach balls, where he could land on an island laboratory and borrow the local weather machine. With some quick finagling, the weather machine cast a blizzard over the land. The girls could no longer embrace the sun and the heat, forced to don coats. “Aaaaahh!…” Tsuru’s head shot up, taking in the sight of the babes in their lovely thick coats. “I think I’m undergoing character growth!”

“Not under this rating.” Hcaz led Tsuru across the beach-turned-blizzard, and they would soon come upon a beautiful summer forest. Monkeys were happily hopping around the trees and throwing carrots down, due to some trade agreement with the bunnies. It was in this forest where Tsuru would complete his next step toward adulthood: picking up a musket and shooting the shifty apes down. The five-year-old felt powerful with the gun in hand, smirking up at the monkeys and letting fire. *BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!*

When he’s finished killing monkeys-

*BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!*

When he’s finished killing monkeys-

*BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!*

When he’s finished-

*BANG! BANG!*

STOP IT! So with that, Tsuru’s body lit up and grew a few feet taller. When the light vanished, Tsuru had become a Charmeleon. Or as we’ll call him, Czarmeleon. “YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING!” Hcaz shouted.

Thankfully, since the monkeys were all dead, there was nothing to stop the construction crew from tearing down the forest and building a Pokémon stadium. Hcaz would have to rely on his trusty
Charmeleon to defeat his rival trainer, Turquoise, whom was an ordinary human boy in a turquoise hat and shirt. “I choose you, Stone Crocodile Head!” Turquoise tossed his Pokéball, and as was expected, the creature to pop out was a Koopa Troopa.

“It’s not worth my energy to scream at these things anymore.” Hcaz sighed. “Charmeleon, use Flamethrower!”

“Chaaarrr!” Tsuru blew fire at the two-legged tortoise and swallowed him in embers. The attack was useless, because Koopa Troopa was a rock guitarist with spiky pink hair and tattoos on every part of his tissue. “You’re just throwing up whatever crap you think of!” Hcaz argued.

It was then that Hcaz realized that his normal routine wouldn’t cut it in this world. He would have to step up his game and be a little more creative. (On you, Hcazzy.) “Oh, I’ll show you creative! Charmeleon, use The Finger!”

Czarmeleon flashed his finger at the Koopa. The turtle stared at it silently. He then cut off Czarmeleon’s nail and rode away with it on a caravan, wedding bells ringing from afar. “…I will hate myself forever.” Hcaz remarked.

“I summon my next Pokémon!” Turquoise threw a ball that popped open. “A Team of Sushi Chefs!” Ten sushi chefs came out of it.

“WE ARE SUSHI!” they chorused.

“Sushi Team, attack them with Ziploc Bags on a Stick!” Turquoise ordered.

“WE SHA’!” The sushi chefs charged at Tsuru wielding Ziploc bags on pencils.

“Charmeleon, drop Canada on their heads!” Hcaz commanded.

“Repeated naaame!” Czarmeleon raised the country high and smashed the chefs underneath.

“WE SHARPEN OUR PENCILS!” The sushi chefs used Canada’s Silver Sharpener to make their pencils sharpen their swords.

“Unfortunately for you, the sharpener spins so fast, you were sucked inside and grinded into bedsprings!” Hcaz counterattacked.

“THAT, HAS GUT, TO HU’T!” the chefs cried, having been grinded into such.

“DANG IT, Turquoise!” Turquoise’s mother began scolding the shameful boy. “I told you to eat more brussel sprouts and wash your underwear! Now, go sit with the rest of your brothers!”

“Yes, Mom.” The defeated trainer sadly went to sit in a room with his dozens of colored clones, like Magenta, Beige, or Light-Caramel, all of whom had their heads drooped in shame.

“The winner of the tournament is Hcaz Yhprum and his Czarmeleon!” the announcer announced. “Do you know what he wins?! A most-expenses paid trip to New Jersey!”

“I hope it’s better than Old Yesrej.” Hcaz replied. But wrong he was, for while he expected clear skies and mansions with luxurious pools, here he was in a town of smoggy skies, factories, and police sirens. “Any person or place that is in this level, you are basically just effing them.”

Be that as it may, Tsuru’s next step to manhood was in this town. Somewhere in the magical land of New Jersey was a bar called “Old Meter Maids.” Oh, there it is! Inside this dark dank bar were
tough-looking thugs smoking and playing pool or poker. If our young Czarmeleon was going to evolve, he would have to play the part. “By playing both pool AND poker?” Hcaz asked.

No! By catching the fish swimming in the electrical circuits. Why else do you think this place is so dark? “Makes as much sense as anything else.”

Tsuru Czarmeleon held the fishing pole firmly while the hook was up in the wiring. He wore a morbid expression and smoked a cigar. The thugs were staring at him, awestruck by his cool demeanor. Czarmeleon blew a smoke, then tapped his cigar to drop a few specs of soot on the floor. He felt a tug and began reeling the rod. “The bait I used must really be working!”

The ceiling collapsed when the fish was completely reeled, for the bait used was none other than Big the Fat Purple Cat. “WHY WOULD A FISH BE LURED TO THAT?!” Hcaz screamed.

The Evolution process resumed once again, turning Tsuru Tsurulina from an adolescent Czarmeleon into a teenage Japanese knight on a black stallion. “Whoa, that’s quite the change!”

“HARK, it is TIME TO RIDE!” Tsuru kicked his steed, and Hcaz hopped on as they rode under the night. “The Summer Solstice is almost upon us! We have nary a second to waste!”

“Why?! Where are we going?” Hcaz asked impatiently.

“We must journey to the beach!” Before long, they arrived at a sunny beach that was completely different from the one they froze earlier. “It is time to enjoy summer… in bathing suits!” Tsuru threw off his armor and exposed his two-piece American Flag swimsuit, the sun glinting off his chrome dome.

“You were repulsed by all those girls at the other beach, but I don’t think you looked in the mirror!”

“If you keep staring at me, you have to pay riyals.” Tsuru stated. “Now let’s round up the boys and play FOOTBALL!” The future Czar started playing soccer with a team of churros.

“JUST PICK A COUNTRY!”

The football match between Samurai Tsuru and the Churro Burros lasted for three fortnights. That was before Marco kicked the ball into the window of a British piano musician, who won the rights to the team in a lawsuit. Five years later, they became Ubisoft. “Sweet, so let’s play Rayman and get on with our day.” Hcaz stated.

The next phase of Tsuru’s development was working in a boring business burrow. In one of many dark offices lit only by a candle, he was typing on a tiny calculator and signing papers, growing envious of all those colorful Rayman characters and their platforming adventures. “Wait, wasn’t Rayman suffering as a result of the Platform Revolution?!” Hcaz realized. “How could he already exist if we just invented Ubisoft?!”

So Tsuru decided to stage a coup, rounding up his old churro buddies and luring the top officials into box traps using Reese’s Pieces. Tsuru became the new President of Ubisoft. The Rayman franchise was taken over by Rabbids, which would torment the Dream World for centuries. “Nothing in this stage can be canon.”

Hcaz, everything I write is canon. Everything I unwrite is uncanon. Even if I write out a cannon. (R.I.P. Gilbert)

“Who’s Gilbert?”
My pet cannon. But with that, Tsuru’s next phase of Evolution commenced. He grew as his light silhouette shaped like a proud adult—which shrunk down into a tiny white dot with a wiggly tail. “HE REVERTED BACK INTO A SPERM!!” Hcaz’s eyes popped out of his glasses.

The Underground music from *Super Mario Bros.* played. In his sperm form, Tsuru would have to navigate a maze of mall-goers, in order to buy a pair of Size Ones. This would evolve him back into a baby, and then the Evolution process could begin again. “Time for Part 2 of my story!” Professor Port said.

“NO WAY, ABSOLUTELY NOT!” Hcaz decided to seize the sperm and declared, “If anything goes in this world, I’m ending this stage early! Say hello to my Time Machine Microwave!”

He tossed Tsuru into the microwave and set it for fifty years. “MWAH HAAAA!” The future czar popped out as a full-grown adult with a blue jacket with red shoulder pads, a phoenix symbol on his forehead, and a shining bald head. Hcaz may have taken the easy way through this level, but real life ain’t so easy. “Like anything in this level translates to real life!” Hcaz shouted.

In order for Tsurulina to complete his journey, he would have to face his greatest challenge, yet. “That would be me, of course.”

Hcaz and Tsuru gasped, whipping around in the direction of the voice. A powerful and formidable titan towered above them, his body shadowed except for the smirk on his face. “It’s him!” Tsuru exclaimed. “The current ruler of the Chrome Dome Empire! Czar Baldy Bald II!”

“That’s right, Baldy Bald III. If you plan to claim the Sacred Wig of the Czar, you must battle with me. But be forewarned… I am a Master in—” The lights switched on—the towering shadow was actually an average-size cup of frappé with fruits and vegetables. “The Maracas Jamba Music, Mon!” He shook two maracas around.

“I CAN’T TELL WHAT KIND OF DRINK YOU ARE!” Hcaz shouted with a wide rectangular mouth.

“Be careful, Hcaz!” Tsuru III cautioned. “If he touches you with his maracas, you’ll develop an interest in the first telephone!”

“Don’t be so sad, old phones are da bombshell, Mon!” Tsuru II exclaimed. “Here I cooooome!” (Play “Love In My Tummy” by Arthur Resnick and Joey Levine!)

**Boss fight: Baldy Bald II**

Hcaz and Tsuru III made a run down a castle hall, the two deciding to split different ways. Tsuru II spilled part of his liquid out and had it chase Hcaz. Tsuru III panicked when he saw the czar chasing him, and would have to take cover in an upcoming door to hide. The future czar dove in, but the current czar followed suit. The room in question had a long curtained table with tea and cakes. Tsuru II checked each little teapot to see if his opponent was hiding, and saw that one of the pots had *Not Fake* written on it. Tsuru II smirked and opened the pot—a mousetrap flipped out and snapped him in the head.

Hcaz was caught in a dead end by the Fruitling Tsuru sent after him. The Fruitling raised a maraca and ran to strike him. Hcaz took a breath and mentally cursed himself before using the Lochness Monster Attack, wherein the lake monster popped out of the floor and ate the Fruitling. Hcaz ran around it to search for the others. He found Tsuru III clutching a chandelier in fear while Tsuru II
was jumping and trying to hit him with maracas. Hcaz tossed the future Darkness a banana and told him it could become a rapier. Tsuru III caught the fruit and dropped to strike the frappé czar.

Suddenly, the Bunny Police arrived to arrest Hcaz, and a lawsuit was filed for making creative use of the trademarked fruit they had traded with the apes. “Oh, NOW there’s continuity?!” Hcaz expressed.

The courtroom was instantly torn down when Tsuru III swung a wrecking ball through in his attempt to hit Tsuru II. The frappé czar continued dodging as Tsuru III tore down an arcade, Gruntilda’s Lair, and Bowser’s Castle. He gaped when the wrecking ball swung in his direction and smashed him out of the truck’s cockpit, slamming Tsuru back-and-forth between a boulder and A Soft Place, which was a store that sold soft items like wool beds and paper doors. “Shouldn’t the wrecking ball destroy that place?” Hcaz questioned.

Having pointed out the anomaly present, a space-time rift was created, tearing the universe asunder. “I DIDN’T MEAN TO DO THAT!”

“Oh ho ho!” Tsuru II made use of the chaos by throwing UFOs at his enemies. “Even the destruction of a universe does not cease my jazzing, Mon!”

“That may be so!” Tsuru III countered. “But you’ve yet to see the new universe that will create!”

They swirled into a cosmic cyclone and landed in the new world. Hcaz, Tsuru II, and Tsuru III were working on a Dorito farm. “It’s 100% unnatural like everything ELSE in this dump!” the former shouted.

“Look, Pa!” Tsuru III picked out a Dorito with a green stain. “This one still has a bit of green! I say we keep it.”

“Oh ho ho, you’re so silly, Son!” Tsuru II laughed. “NO ONE WANTS A STAINED DORITO!” He furiously threw it to the sky.

“NOOOO!” Tsuru III cried.

“You big JERK!” Hcaz yelled passionately. “He just wanted a pet Dorito! All he has in his life is a messed-up development system! After everything he’s been through, you won’t let him have a Dorito with a green stain?! WELL, NO SIR!” He swung his foot and blasted Chuck Norris out of his shoe, dealing a painful blow to the frappé.

“Listen to me, Czar Milkshake!” Hcaz grabbed Doritos from the farm and tossed them like shurikens. “I don’t know who you are or how you came to be alive, but you’re messing with the wrong kid with anger issues!” Hcaz reached into the soil and grabbed Augustus and Wendy by the ankles. He dug his head in the ground and grabbed Nerehc in his teeth. “I don’t know what you may’ve heard, but I’m more important than I look!” He attacked Tsuru II with Three-Character Style, swinging the three characters like swords.

“No!” Tsuru II struggled to withstand the strikes. “I am the juiciest cup of frappé there’s even been, Mon! I am too much for a character as minor as yourself!”

“Well, NEWSFLASH, buddy!” Hcaz threw the three protagonists away and surged with power. “I am better than ANY of those three nerds!” He exploded the ground with his powerful energy. “I AM THE STAR… OF THIS STORY!!!” The entire country was ravaged, and Tsuru II was blasting off with Augustus, Wendy, and Nerehc.

“AAAAH!” From the stars of space, Tsuru II could gaze at the marvel he created. “He…He
changed the Earth into… ICE CREAM SUNDAE!” The sight was so bright and magnificent, the czar melted into nothing. “I feel like a bird, Mon…”

“No.” stated a man in a tuxedo and bird mask. “I… am Birdman.” (End song.)

Hcaz gasped after realizing what he did. He stared at his hand. Having discovered his Bo-bobo Kempo, Hcaz was ready to follow his destiny: to bring peace to the Land of Paper Planes by sending love letters between nations. “Wait, that wasn’t in the script!!” Medusa shouted. “You can’t just drop a random destiny on some minor character! We don’t have time to prepare, it won’t look good when we get it out!”

Hey, I worked in Bill Cipher. Now that Czar Baldy Bald II has been defeated, Czar Baldy Bald III was ready to take his place among anime characters with funny English names. He stepped into the throne to Chrome Dome Empire, but behind that throne was a certain stone. Hcaz joined him in approaching it, knowing it was the stone they were looking for: a trapezoid with a nose at the top, and gibberish letters that all looked like B, L, A, or H. “IT’S A TRAPEGLYPH?!” Hcaz gaped.

Baldy Bald read the writing to unlock his destiny (to play as in **Smash Bros. Brawl**):
*Congratulations, Baldy, you won the contest! You can choose one of two prizes: A) A membership in the Thirteen Darknesses, or B) your own story in the One Thousand and One Nights.*

“I’ll take Thousand and One Nights!” Tsuru beamed.

“What?!”? Hcaz yelled infuriated.

**Tsuru Tsurulina III awakened as the First Night! Only One Thousand to go! And it was up to Hcaz to-**

“I’M NOT SPENDING ANOTHER SECOND IN THIS WORLD!!” Hcaz held a peanut up to Tsuru. “Become a Darkness or I’ll test your immune system.”

“Gyaaah! Okay!” The czar panicked. “I’ll become a Darkness! (Provided I get a free pen.)”

The Trapeglyph sneezed a cloud of dust on Tsuru. Red hair grew on his bald head, the Royal Wig.

**Okay, Tsuru III became a Darkness. Only 2 more to go. (Lame.)**

**Portal Chamber**

The Multiverse Portal called Hcaz back eventually. However, the ray of light got stuck in traffic on the 405 Freeway, so Hcaz’s stay in Bo-bobo Land was prolonged. He landed before Nerehc with torn clothes and a manic face. “Hey, Hcaz. How was the mission?” Nerehc asked.

Hcaz pointed at him threateningly. “Never. Again.” And he stomped away.

Medusa shuddered, feeling a sudden chill down her spine. “What’s wrong, Medusa?” asked Thanatos.

“I’m just remembering… our first meeting with Tsurulina. His powers were unlike any other’s… I think he is the only Darkness I dread meeting again.”

**The 1700s**

It was a dark era in history where much of the population had gone without hair. Baldness was an epidemic. There were no beauty pageants and barbers were out of business. Japan was especially
targeted for its rather peculiar hairstyles. (“Did we even have those things back then?” Medusa asked.)

Czar Baldy Bald III absorbed all the power from their shaven heads, absorbing the luscious Hair Chi into his veins. “Yes! YES! BWAH HA HA!” The czar brimmed with power as his red hair grew like vines. “Supreme power is at my behest! There is nothing you can do to stop me, Mew!”

“Mewww!” The Ancestral Firstborn spawned eight pink Psycho Spheres and cast them at Tsuru, exploding against him. When the smoke cleared, the czar was protected inside a giant bottle of sunscreen. “It’s hopeless! My Hair Hunt powers have reached the maximum level!”

“How does THIS translate to Hair Hunt power?!” Medusa exclaimed.

“Now I will use Special Attack Number 53! The Age of Children and Pie!” The world flashed, creating a sunny landscape where children gobbled up blueberry pie.

“What is THAT supposed to do?!”

“Mister? Would you like some pie?” an adorable little boy asked Tsuru.

“Don’t mind if I do!” Tsuru took the pie and ate it. He paused: “WAIT! This pie! It’s… BLACKBERRY!” He was blown into the sky.

“Does that cancel out your attack?” asked Medusa.

“No! But a blackberry stole my wallet once and I was in the middle of looking for him! Sorry, Mew, maybe some other time!” The czar zipped off, leaving a trail of dust. Medusa sighed in disbelief.

_The gods decided that Mew was the only spirit capable of defeating the mad czar. But even Tsuru’s antics tested the Firstborn’s imagination. The battle lasted for five days. It ended when Mew caught Tsuru in the School Trap, forcing him to undergo 300 years of remedial English._

“I just wanted to be a physiciaaaaan!” Tsuru cried.

And before you ask... no. Hcaz is not. :P I think before I do more Side Stories, I’ll cover some ground in the Main Story, because the Side Stories won’t have much to go after this. We have nearly all the Darknesses, and Wendy and Augustus’s stories are near to finishing. Atbash Cipher today, short but with a subtle meaning. :P

... 

_OZDMVHHMVHH XZM'G YV NVZHFIVW_

_BANG! BANG! BANG!_ Tsuru killed three more monkeys.
Chapter Summary

Dillon’s team goes to retrieve Vanellope!

I really did not feel like looking up the names of Duel Monsters. XO Evidence of that is clear in this chapter. There’s like so many, and the lists are confusing. XP I already have to do that with Pokémon.

Chapter 63: Orvus

Cyberspace; Byway Core

XANA landed his hoverpad on the floor of the vast, dark chamber and approached the great spire of energy that flowed upward. He saw his assistant hard at work in fixing the machine where the spire came from. “PERIDOT!”

“YIPE!” The lime-green Program bumped her head and came out of the compartment she was fixing. “I told you that any sort of surprise or disruption halts my work progress by 5%! You said you wanted this junk heap fixed as soon as possible, so unless you took your own regular interruptions into the equation, it is statistically impossible-”

“SILENCE! That cursed Corporate President is ruining all of our work, so as long as he’s still around, we’ll NEVER get done! I want you to finish the upgrade you’ve been installing into me. I will use it to destroy Gozaburo once and for all!”

“Very well.” Peridot stood up. “I was hoping to avoid having to tinker in your chest for a while longer, but I’m being paid either way.”

XANA went to lay down on a bed as Peridot opened his chest and began working. “I’ve never seen this type of code before. However, it seems like a type of virus. Where did you say you collected this code?”

“It was part of Vanellope’s code, when I studied her. I was able to duplicate it, but installing it within myself has proven difficult. But if it works, I may very well unlock the secret of virtual immortality! And Gozaburo will be sacrificed in order to do so. SO HURRY UP!”

“GAH! Why don’t I fix your voice chip in the process… What the heck is this?!” Peridot picked a cookie out of his chest.

“Oh, I was wondering where that was! Gimme!” XANA took and ate the cookie. Peridot glared and picked it out of his chest again.

Elsewhere in the base (Play “Bullet Bill Express” from Super Mario 3-D World!)

Stage 63: First Byway

Mission: Restore the Final Byway.
Act 1

Vanellope ventured across a wasteland under a green sky that was lit by the spire of energy from the building miles away. Clank was tied to her like a backpack, and the Karkat, Terezi, and Nepeta Zoni were guiding her. Vanellope was forced to jump over a cliff, and when she was about to land in a pit of green lava, a row of slanted block platforms rose out to save her. The series of footholds began to appear and move in the fashion of a giant wheel. Vanellope jumped through a gap in a bar of Munchers, bounced off a Koopa before landing on its platform, and she had to hold the discarded shell while standing on the platform, waiting for the next wall to rotate. Once it was vertical enough, Vanellope kicked the shell through a tunnel of Piranha Plants.

Vanel glitchwarped into the cleared tunnel and raced through as a wheel of fire bars rotated after her. At the end, she could jump out and grab a gray P-switch on a new platform. Spinies occupied the following set of platforms, so Vanel tossed the switch up, spin-jumped, and grabbed it again as she could bounce on the spiked creatures. A ceiling of Munchers rotated overhead, and the fireballs that jumped out of the lava threatened to catch Vanellope mid-spin-jump and knock her up to the Munchers. Vanel avoided them and landed on a platform before a stack of Thwimps, and she hit the P-switch to turn the stack into coins.

A string of flames whooshed up along the rotating course, so Vanellope spin-jumped across them, and the Thwimp wall no longer impeded her progress. She landed on another platform, facing three upcoming Muncher walls with gaps, requiring her to make three successful glitchwarps to pass them and land on a safe foothold. A tower of cannons rotated up and fired a line of Bullet Bills, so Vanel had to hurriedly bounce up them to get over the cannon tower. Afterwards, she had to rely on a team of Missile Bills that blasted out of nowhere, keeping her aloft above the pit. She had to avoid the ball-n-chains that flew up as well, but once this trial was passed, Vanellope could set foot on a cliff.

It was then an invisible force began to push her from behind—from a certain point of view, it would be like an auto-scroll in a 2-D game. The auto-scroll increased in speed, forcing Vanellope into a sprint. She was running to a river of green lava—she spin-jumped over a series of fireballs, landed on a long walkway where she had to slide under small gaps, then spin-jumped up a stairway of Bullet Bills. She landed on solid ground, getting closer to the spire thanks to this forced sprint. Volcano Lotuses spat mini fire puffs that rained around the ground, forcing Vanellope to jump and dodge them.

Vanellope was forced over a cliff—she glitchwarped up to get into a tunnel within the opposite cliff. She dodged the XANA Hornets that flew out, glitchwarped through the gaps of incoming barriers, and raced along a path in the center of a lava river where fireballs jumped out alongside her, resulting in an epic entrance. A Warp Pipe was coming and would crush Vanellope against the screen-scroll, unless she performed the pipe-entering mechanic—and she did!

Vanellope came out on a ledge over a green lava pit, facing up at a higher ledge. With the power of the Zoni, pillars began to sprout for Vanel to jump on. The first two were normal, then she had to spin-jump off a Volcano Lotus, followed by a Spiny platform where two Baseball Chucks chucked balls at her from the left and right. Vanel then landed on a platform where a Jumping Chuck jumped up between two pillars, and had to slide under it and the pillars when the Chuck jumped. She Wall Jumped up to a higher platform, then bounced up some Bullet Bills that were fired from cannons aiming diagonal from her view. Vanellope made it onto the ledge and approached a small machine. (End song.)

There was a glass compartment in the machine that was fit for Clank’s size. “TH1S 1S WH3R3 H3 MUST GO.” Terezi hissed. “PL4C3 ORVUS 1NTO TH3 M4CH1N3.”
Vanellope put Clank inside, and a surge of power began to flow through the machine. A large holographic projection appeared, depicting a Zoni with a dark pink face and bulbous turquoise-colored eyes. “Oh my goodness, I didn’t expect to be asleep for this long! Ahh, and look! My dear sweet children, I’m so happy to see you again.”

“CUT THE CRAP, ORVUS.” KARKAT SHOUTED- whoops, sorry. “WE BUILT YOU, AND YOU TOLD US NOT TO WAKE YOU UP UNTIL IT WAS TIME TO OPEN THE GATE. WELL, GUESS WHAT? WAKEY WAKEY!”

“Hm hm hm, your calculations are a bit off, my dear Cancer. We are roughly 14 days early. And it seems the Cyberspace is still in quite a rough shape.”

“Hey, bigheaded guy!” Vanellope yelled. “Are you the boss of these annoying little robots?”

Orvus looked down at her. “Ah... So, this is the one you’ve chosen, is she?”

“Chosen for what?”

“I apologize for the ordeals my children may have put you through... I’m sure by now, you know this Cyberspace exists within the Great Clock, and it contains the collected data of the First Dimension’s worlds. But this space is more than a collection of data... They are, in fact, the very remains of the First Dimension, after its horrible destruction by the power of Arceus. They have been left in a state of ruin for some time now, and our mission is to restore these worlds to their original, peaceful stature. If this is not accomplished before the Gate of Time opens, the Chosen Ones will be destroyed, and all will be lost. But fixing the sites using simple means is impossible. It is a task that can only be completed by a god. That is where you come in.”

“Me?” Vanellope questioned.

“Yes, my child. For you have in your possession The Source of Cyberspace.”

Vanellope gasped. She reached into her sweater pocket and picked out the teeny tiny pixel XANA had once sought. The pixel XANA tricked Dillon into finding, and the one that gave Vanellope’s memories back. “The Zoni knew you were the most ideal host for The Source, that which brought to life the Great Clock’s Cyberspace and all that came after it. For eons, it was hidden in the depths of low-quality virtual reality, protected by the Game-and-Watch Tribe. With it, you can become the God of Cyberspace.”

“The God of Cyberspace...” Vanellope stared at the very small source of power between her fingers. “But... why me?”

“Because you are friends with the Chosen Ones.” Karkat responded. “The God of Cyberspace needs to be a reliable being who will guide the Chosen Ones safely. Obviously, you don’t wanna see them die, so of course you’ll do it. And look! I’m speaking in low caps! You happy?”

“But what’ll that be like?” Vanellope glitched.

“Naturally, that atrocious glitch will be removed.” Orvus answered. “And you must remain here and protect the Cyberspace until the Chosen Ones have arrived. Eventually, the data in this space will become reality, and this realm will all become darkness. Unfortunately, on the Day of Apocalypse... you will be lost with it.”

“...Yeah, I’m not gonna do it.”

“WEREN’T YOU LISTENING?!?!” Karkat screamed. “YOU’RE THE ONLY ONE WE CAN TRUST...”
TO FIX OUR UNIVERSE, SO IF YOU DON’T, THEN YOUR FRIENDS WILL—"

“Yah, I HEARD all that, Banshee Breath! But I wanna see if it’s alright with him first.”

“Alright with whom?” Orvus asked.

“Dillon, of course! He is my brother—I think he would want a say in me becoming a god or not. So maybe we should find him and ask him real quick.”

“ABSOLUTELY NOT! WE ARE NOT GOING OUT OF OUR WAY TO FIND YOUR CRAPPY FRIEND AND—”

“Karkitty! Vriska’s clawing, she says a group of humans are coming!” =33 Nepeta yelled.

“Let’s see who it is.” Orvus projected a large screen, showing a two-dimensional black rocketship. Vanellope instantly recognized that type of design—and the black-haired boy in its window. “IT’S DILLON!”

Outside First Byway (Play “Blizzard on the Star Express” from Captain Toad!)

The Gamen Rocket was approaching a greenish planet in the depths of Cyberspace. Quill Ramsey was blasting XANA Mantas with the ice setting of his Elementor Guns, and Kodama used Flashworks to blind the Duel Monsters whose names she couldn’t remember. “Is Vanellope really on that planet, Mr. Game-and-Watch?” Carol asked.

Beep. BOP! Boop!

“Can you establish a connection with Vanellope?” Dillon asked, catching some XANA Hornets in a spherical Shadow Shockwave before sending Mario to tear them to shreds.

“There’s too much interference. We’ll just have to get closer.”

Midna grabbed a gargoyle Duel Monster in her Hair Hand and chucked it at a Megarocket (a Megatank with rockets). “It doesn’t look like they want us in there. There’s too many.”

“Then use your Firstborn magic to blow them all away!” Dillon yelled, raising his Spirit Ball. “As your Guardian, I command you!”

“What am I, a genie?! And legally, I’m not allowed to go all out, I’m only as strong as my Guardian.”

“Oh, screw that, we’re in Cyberspace using Infinite Ammo cheats, what’s holding you back??”

“If you were a genie, I wish for a quick and efficient way to get through this mess!” Quill shouted.

“OI, NAKAMA! It’s Chimney-chan! Can you hear me?? I just found out this baby has a Cyber Train! I’m bringing it to ya, hop aboard!”

Fast as a shooting star, a black train with bright yellow outlines zipped up from behind. “Fast and deadly, that’s my ride!” Kodama joyfully jumped on.

“I’m calling shotgun!” Quill jumped on.

“The bill for food is on me!” Carol jumped on. “Cover us in your ship, Game-and-Watch!”
Dillon jumped on and called Midna over. “Let’s make our way to the FRONT!” He cheered.

**Act 2: Cyber Train**

Megatanks rolled up along the first car, and when they opened their shells, Kodama was quick to shoot missiles at their cores. The next car was blocked by a barrier, and XANA Ninjas were tossing shurikens from behind it. There was a terminal atop a platform on this car, so Carol had to sidle across a thin ledge on the side of it, get to a ladder, and climb onto the platform. She could hack the terminal and disable the barrier. The next car had totem poles that the ninjas were jumping around, but Dillon caught them in a spherical Shadow Shockwave and sent Mario on all three of them.

The route to the next car consisted of these totem poles. Quill flipped and shot a grappling hook from his heel to latch to a pole, but that’s when ninjas poofed out of smoke. He swiftly dodged their shurikens and kicked his Grapple Heels at them, resulting in the ninjas jumping platforms. Quill could kick his grappling to the free totems and fly further across. XANA Mantas swooped across, forcing Quill to jump, but then he could grapple to the next car and press a switch. The totem poles sunk, along with the ninjas, pulling the previous car over for his friends to join.

Some stairs led up to a platform with a cannon, and they saw a swarm of XANA Missiles launching from the further cars. “Leave this to me!” Kodama stuck her fireworks into the cannon and shot them at the missiles with keen aiming.

“Midna, use your extendo hand thingy to pull the car over!” Dillon ordered.

“As you wish, Master.” Midna stretched her Hair Hand across and grabbed the hook on the edge of the next car. She struggled to pull it over while Kodama protected them from the missiles. It took about a minute until Midna successfully latched the car with their own. The missiles ceased, so Kodama jumped down to join the team across. They climbed a ladder onto the roof of the car and had to navigate a maze of floating searchlight robots. Their lights would catch them in a magnetic pull and chuck them over the side, so Dillon ventured the maze alone.

He used Shadow Veil to hide from the searchlights, and after he was through the maze, he jumped off the roof and entered the car. Amps moved left and right between the seats, so Dillon avoided the shock balls until he got to the back and unlocked the door. His team climbed down the ladder and entered, avoiding the Amps as they returned to the front entrance and headed for the edge. There was no way to cross to the next car, but the Gamen Rocket swooped by from the right and left several times, leaving a suspended series of 2-D monkey bars.

The kids climbed across the bars, and Quill kicked his Grapple Heels at the Bullet Bills that were sent to shoot them down. They made land on the very front car and had to go across a walkway on the right side. The door into the car was sealed, so Dillon had Midna fly over to the other side. “There’s another computer over here!”

Scyphozoa climbed up onto the walkway, but Kodama was quick to shoot their domes with fireworks. “I’m going for it!” Carol ducked under the squids and offered to sidle on the thin ledge around the front of the car.

“Wouldn’t you rather let Midna carry you over?!” Dillon called.

“You only learn with experience!” she yelled back. Carol hugged the car and kept her feet perfectly sideways, feeling wind push against her when she sidled around the front. She was able to set foot on safer ground, then she jumped some platforms before reaching the terminal. After one quick hacking session, the door into the car opened. “Uh-oh!” A security mechanism activated—
the platforms supporting her dropped. She whipped open her parasol—“AAAAAHH!” and blew away with the sheer force—Midna shot her Hair Hand up to pull her back to safety.

“And my experience stems from saving Dillon’s father from several death pits.” Midna remarked. The kids entered the train and took out the XANA Creepers at the control station.

“Now it’s just a straight shot to the planet!” Kodama smirked.

“Vanellope, here we come.” Dillon said eagerly. (End song.)

The Cyber Train came to a slow and steady halt inside a docking bay. The kids stepped off and viewed around the dark chamber. “Wow, I never knew you for the easy landings, Chimney.” Kodama said.

“That’s because she didn’t land you, I did.” Sigmund responded. “That large-mouthed nutbrain was about to crash you.”

“Nuh-uh, I was gonna land them in that lava pit!”

Beep BOP boop! Mr. Game-and-Watch pointed and stepped in that direction.

“He’s feeling Vanellope’s signature even stronger!” Carol beamed.

They followed the little Program down a quiet passage. Midna stopped before a door labeled God Production. As the others kept walking, Dillon turned back and saw her. “What’s the matter, Midna?” The others stopped to notice this.

“God Production… I have to see what this is.” The Firstborn entered the room. The others exchanged glances and went in after her.

There was some kind of pipe machine and shelves lined with colorful, large, baby-size eggs. The kids examined the eggs curiously… Midna was especially engaged in the room. There was a screen that read Eggs Hatched. There were eleven eggs on the screen: a light-green/dark-green one; a blue one; a white one with a yellow star; a pinkish-white one; a black-and-white with cyan lines; three silver ones with red emblems in a blue, pink, and yellow space respectively; a green one with notes; an egg designed like a moon; and a brown egg with pink diamond parts.

Midna stared at the egg with cyan lines… It was designed just like her. All those eggs’ designs were familiar… She looked around the eggs in the room. She put her hand to a black egg with red lines… A powerful energy was growing inside it. She felt it from all the eggs. She looked again at the ‘Eggs Hatched’, and her mind started racing, for it was too much to process—

“Huff!” A little gasp escaped her throat. This was too strange to believe… impossible, even…

“These are… Firstborn.”

“What?” The word escaped Dillon like a gasp. What could she mean? All these eggs…

Midna stared around the room, her eye struck wide. “Why…Why does this place… feel so familiar…”

“I don’t get it.” Quill said, looking at a yellow and orange egg. “Are you saying this place is… producing Firstborn?”

“Producing gods…” Dillon remembered the sign outside. “But… that’s impossible. Midna… I thought the gods were created by Arceus. Even the Firstborn…”
Kodama picked up a dark-purple/dark-red egg in both arms, putting her ear to it. “Whoa- wah-wah!” She stumbled on her own feet, and her sandals curved, causing her to fall back. She tossed the egg up in the air, but caught it in her hands. “Phew.”

The egg cracked slightly. The kids gasped, horrified that something resembling a Firstborn could come out of that. They heard a faint sound: “Hoopa?”

“HATCH ALERT! HATCH ALERT!” A Zoni flew into the room. It quickly snatched the egg in a psychic grasp and worked to repair it. “Premature hatching averted!” It placed the egg back on the shelf and flew out.

“That was one of the things that took Vanellope!” Dillon exclaimed. “After it!” The kids abandoned the room and chased the robot. Midna spared one more look, feeling a strong urge to study this room further… but she chose to go with her Guardian for now.

**Repair Room**

Peridot finished inputting the code in XANA’s computer and closed his chest. “The virus has been implanted.”

“Excellent.” XANA sat up. “Now then… continue to repair this fortress. I will go to face Gozaburo Kaiba myself.” There was an alarm. “Hmm… Seems we have some visitors. Is it Kaiba… or those children? I will have them all derezzed either way.” XANA began to leave the room. “Attack anyone you encounter, Peridot. We must be rid of any setbacks if we are to finish in time.”

**Downstairs**

The four operatives and Midna entered a vast, dark chamber. They saw a single ray of light several yards away and ran to it. Dillon slowed to a stop, gazing when he saw who was in the light. “Is that…” Kodama whispered.

Dillon stepped forward calmly. Vanellope looked like she was in a trance, arms hanging out and eyes frozen wide, staring at the source of light. Worry coursed through Dillon. Had she been experimented on, stripped of her memory? Was this some sort of weird upgrade? She seemed to have no idea of her surroundings… Dillon wished he’d come sooner.

“…BLAGABLAHG!” Vanellope wagged her tongue.

“BAAAAH!” Dillon fell back and his heart almost jumped out.

“HA HA HA HAAAA!” Vanellope hugged her chest and cracked up. “OH MAN, I’ve been saving that trick all month, you-hoo-hoo totally PEED yourself!” She wiped a tear and kept laughing. “Ha ha ha, you’re a puss, Dillon!”

“. . .” Dillon smiled and felt tears rolling down his face. “Vanellope!”

He got up and shared a hug with his sister. Their friends smiled at the warmhearted moment. Vanellope glitched once, but that didn’t disrupt the hug. They let go. “I missed you so much.” Dillon said.

“I missed you too, Dill! So, who are these weirdoes? I recognize the little Gremlin.” She remarked at Midna, who glared. “And… hey, Kodama!”

“What’s up, Vanellope?” Kodama gave a thumbs-up and wink. “Thanks again for the assist!”
“Hey, don’t forget to introduce me!” Carol walked up in peppy spirits.

“Oh, Vanellope, this is Carol!” Dillon said. “She’s… uhhh…” He didn’t know how to phrase it.


“She isn’t as great as you were!” Dillon defended.

“That’s YOUR opinion.” Carol retorted.

“AHEM.” Karkat and his Zoni floated up. “IF WE’RE DONE REUNITING, HURRY UP AND TELL HIM!”

“Tell me what?”

“Oh, well,” Vanellope began, “see, these guys sort of want me to become a god and restore the virtual world, because if I don’t, you’re all gonna die, so-”

“UGH, I GUESS I’LL HAVE TO EXPLAIN IT AGAIN.”

Karkat recapped the story in two minutes. “So wait, if you do this, you’re gonna disappear?” Dillon asked.

“That’s why I wanted to ask you if I should do this, Dill.”

“No, of course I don’t want you to do it!” Dillon yelled.

“Whoa, time out, man!” Quill intervened. “What about that stuff about us being destroyed? I mean, I don’t get this prophecy stuff, but it sounds important.”

“I’m not gonna let Vanellope sacrifice herself! Why can’t you Zoni things do it?”

“W3 N33D TH3 ZON1 4L1V3 UNT1L YOU ARR1V3.” \[::< Terezi stated.

“Dill, I know Vanellope’s important to you, but think about-” Carol tried to reason.

“Forget it! I waited too long to find Vanellope! I wanted to take her back home with us, so she could live in the Human World like she always wanted!”

“To be fair, she had plenty of time in the Human World.” Kodama said. “And it’s not like she could… grow up with us.”

“What are you guys saying?! That we should let her kill herself, one of our friends?!”

“Well, maybe ask what SHE wants to do!” Carol yelled.

“Fine! What do you want to do, Vanellope?”

Vanellope was silent for a moment, shifting her feet and twiddling her hands. “I dunno… Whatever you want, I guess.”

“When we met, you said you wanted to live in the Human World, like a real girl. That’s why we downloaded you, a solid hologram. You had to jump back in a computer every now and then, but we made it work.”
“I know, and I’m really glad that you did. I had a lot of fun on our missions. …But…”

“What?”

“. . .I know you care about me, Dillon, but. . .I’m a Program. I’m artificial.” She glitched. “Part of me felt like… I didn’t belong with you. She’s right, I couldn’t grow up with you… I couldn’t mature or develop, and most of the time, I did feel kinda… broken.”

“Vanellope, don’t say things like that! You were one of our teammates, you were as important to us as Mason or Sheila or anybody! We wouldn’t have cared if you couldn’t grow up… And besides, you aren’t the only one! Wait’ll you hear about this Mary girl-”

“IF SHE DOESN’T BECOME THE GOD OF CYBERSPACE, ALL OF YOU WILL DIE.” Karkat stated. “YOUR WHINING IS MEANINGLESS!”

“Vanellope, I never thought of you as a Program or artificial. I thought of you like… any kid who wants to have fun and have friends. In the Kids Next Door, it doesn’t matter who you are or where you’re from… because we accept all kids. . . Even god kids.” He looked at Midna, who quirked a brow. “Heck, the Firstborn are supposed to be mega powerful, but they hang with us like any kid does. You don’t have to feel different, Vanellope, and I’m sorry if we did make you feel that way. I really want you to come back with us. But… if you really have to stay here so… so you can help us… I don’t know. Just give us your honest answer. What do you want to do?”

“…” Vanellope smiled. “I wanna come back to Earth and go on missions with you.”

“OH, WELL THAT’S FAN-FUCKING-TASTIC!” Karkat exclaimed. “THEN COULD YOU PLEASE TELL ME WHERE WE’LL FIND ANOTHER AVAILABLE CANDIDATE TO BE ‘GOD’ BEFORE THE APOCALYPSE?”

“Aaaaaa AAAAAAAH- UUH!” Something green crashed on the floor a few feet away, along with green robot parts. The head of the creature looked like a chip they couldn’t name right away. It shook its head and got up. “Oh, I KNEW I should’ve repaired that bolt!” Peridot shook her fist and glared up. “When I get back up there, it will RUE the day it…” She looked at her bare fist. She noticed Vanellope and the people with her. Peridot looked around at her fallen parts. “My limb-enhancers!”

“AWWWW!” Vanellope came over and squeezed the pipsqueak in a hug. “You’re so CUUUUUTE! You’re like a tiny little cuddly alieeenn!”

“RELEASE ME! Your feeble death squeeze will not destroy the great Peridot!”

“Ooo, what are these?” Midna used her powers to make the limb-enhancers levitate.

“GIVE THOSE BACK!” Peridot reached a hand up. “Those are mine!”

“Come and get them!” Midna giggled, keeping them out of arm’s reach.

“What is this thing, anyway?” Kodama picked Peridot up by the arm. She was the size of a toddler to them. “Some kind of puppy?”

“LET ME GO! RUFF RUFF RUFF RUFF!” She kicked her feet.

“She’s some kind of repairbot XANA hired to clean up his mess.” Vanellope answered.

“Why not let her be the Cyber God?” Dillon asked.
“SHE CANNOT BE TRUSTED! SHE IS A SERVANT OF YELLOW DIAMOND!” Karkat shouted.

Peridot’s eyes widened. “Wait… I RECOGNIZE that voice!” She pointed at the Zoni. “You’re the trolls! You were the ones stealing our Ether, the ones building that machine! Yellow Diamond ordered me to spy on you, and you threw me in your machine like…like some common Pearl! WHERE IS YELLOW DIAMOND?! I know you clods know, so TELL ME!”

“YELLOW DIAMOND WAS BANNISHED TO THAT WORLD. SHE IS ONE OF THE THIRTEEN DARKNESSES.” Terezi hissed.

“What do you mean the Thirteen Darkneses? Why is My Diamond associating with them?”

“YOUR DIAMOND HAS BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE GREAT PROPHET. IT WAS THAT THAT BANNED HER.”

“But back to the point, she can’t become Cyber God. She isn’t even a real Program.”

“Actually, she is.” Orvus projected himself. “When Peridot was transferred to this dimension, her gem was destroyed, but her data was recorded in this Cyberspace. She was reborn as a Program, along with her instincts as a repairwoman.”

“WHO THE CRAP CARES, SHE’S STILL OUR ENEMY!” Karkat yelled.

“In the past, perhaps. But I believe we can persuade her to work in our favor. If she is truly loyal to Yellow Diamond.”

“What are you saying?!” Peridot screamed. “If you have information concerning My Diamond, I request that you SHARE IT!!”

“Yellow Diamond, along with the other Thirteen Darkneses, will be returning to the dimension you came from. The dimension you stand in now. But in the horrible state of array it’s in, we can only expect tragedy to befall them. Perhaps you do not care for these humans… but I am certain you will restore this world for your Diamond’s sake.”

“I see through your trick!” She smirked and pointed. “The Diamonds are unbreakable! Thousands of Gems can be destroyed in one blow, but Yellow Diamond will stand strong!”

“YEAH?! WELL, TAKE A LOOK AT THIS!” Karkat projected a recording dated thousands of years ago: a golden-haired fairy unleashed a powerful beam of magic at a diamond-bodied beauty. Yellow Diamond absorbed every ounce of the power directed at her. Her body flashed brighter and faster. She expected a few beams to redirect and hit the fairy. But such didn’t appear to be happening. The spell lasted for minutes without end. Then… the light faded.

...... CRACK!

Peridot frowned. The entity poofed and left only the cracked diamond. “…But… nothing can crack a diamond…”

“WELL, THIS ONE DID! AND IF THIS PLACE ISN’T FIXED, SHE’S GOING TO BE MORE THAN CRACKED. SHE AND ALL YOUR PRECIOUS GEMS ARE GONNA DIE!”

“But My Diamond… Where is she?”

“Yellow Diamond will return, that you can be sure.” Orvus said. “You may not be able to see her
again afterward... but this duty will be the last great deed you do for her.”

“HELL NO! VANELLOPE’S THE ONLY ONE WE CAN TRUST. WE WASTED ALL THIS TIME PREPARING HER!”

“All beings, physical or cybernetic, have a choice. Vanellope can choose to be with her friends, and she can if Peridot is willing to take her place. But someone must... this much is true.”

“Pleeeeaaase, Peridot?” Vanellope said adorably.

“I am not doing what YOU say!” Peridot argued. “It’s irksome enough to listen to that nasally voiced XANA, but I won’t take orders from YOU gigantic clods!”

“Then would you rather let XANA become the Cyber God?” Dillon questioned. “He might download Yellow Diamond to this world and make her a plaything.”

Her face shrunk at the idea. “Well-if-it-is-for-My-Diamond-perhaps-I-shall.”

“Nice one, Bud.” Quill patted Dillon’s back.

“Hands where I can see them, all of you!” A teal-haired boy in a white suit hovered above them on a platform, Duel Monsters by his side. “This building is now under the jurisdiction of KaibaCorp! As heir to the Kaiba fortune, I – Noah Kaiba – am placing you under arrest!”

“Arrest THIS!” Kodama blasted a magenta firework up that exploded and covered Noah with same-colored powder.

“AAH! MY EYES! I virtual-peed myself! WAIT, why did I say that?!”

“You’ve just been hit by my Truthwork! You have to answer any question I ask you! Now, where is your father hiding?”

“He’s on the roof, trying to shut down that energy spire! And I think XANA was up there, too!”

“We can take them both down!” Dillon fist-palmed. “Are you ready, Vanellope?”

“You BET I am! But first;” Vanellope held the tiny pixel up to Peridot’s face. “Peridot: Are you willing to betray XANA and team up with us for the sake of aiding Yellow Diamond in her super important destiny?”

“You want me to betray my annoying and unreasonable employer and help a team of somewhat-threatening strangers whom I’ve only known for five minutes?”

“That’s the gist, yeah.”

“Meh, sounds logical enough.” Peridot shrugged.

“Great, then I present to you the Pixel of Destiny!” She dropped The Source in Peri’s small green hand. “You’re the God of Cyberspace now, enjoy!” She glitched ahead of her friends. “TO THE ROOF!” And she continued glitching as the team hurried after her.

“WHAT ABOUT MY LIMB-ENHANCERS?!” Peridot screamed. Midna abruptly dropped them on the ground. “Uh… Thank you.” She then stared at The Source. “What am I supposed to do, eat it?”

“It’s a suppository.” Orvus said.
“What does that mean?”

“It’s… eh… Never mind, I was only kidding.”

**Roof**

The roof of the tower was round and ring-like, and the energy current spouted out of the center to flow forever to the sky. Gozaburo Kaiba held up a small computer pad that projected the current’s wavelength. “So, is this what you’ve been working on all the way out here?”

“Why, whatever do you mean?” XANA asked mockingly, approaching Kaiba from behind.

“Don’t play the fool with me.” Kaiba turned around. “I know you’re an accomplice of Ragaj Gnik, the being who seeks the Twenty Keys. Any project you are working on is considered threatening by the World Leaders.”

“Well, I don’t particularly enjoy this line of work… No pay and I can’t even tell who my boss is because he stays in the dark.” XANA approached him calmly, a devious smirk displayed on his screen. “I’ve been dying to meet one of you Government dogs… Now that you’re here, I want to tell you something.”

“And what would that be?”

“…” XANA fell to his knees and bowed to him. “PLEASE put me out of my misery! I can’t take it, anymore! I’ve been trapped in this space for so long, fixing all these wretched sites that only seem to get more broken, working with incompetent minions and trying to catch some pipsqueak candy child!” He looked up, showing the mini waterfalls pouring from his digital eyes. “I don’t care about Lord Gnik, the prophecy, or ANY of this stupid crud! *I just wish someone would derez me.* But if I go out by any petty means, it will tarnish my memory. That’s why I want a Corporate President to destroy me, so it will seem like I died in great battle against a worthy opponent!”

“You’re bluffing. Even you cannot be so pathetic!”

“But I’m kneeling before you and I’m powerless. You have my word, I will not try to destroy you.”

“Hm hm hm.” Kaiba drew a sword and held it at XANA’s neck. “You are a failure as a man, XANA. But it is not like you ever were one.” He raised the sword. “Enjoy Digital Nothingness!”

Dillon’s group stepped off the elevator, just in time to watch XANA get beheaded and his body disperse into pixels. “XANA!”

“Well, if it isn’t more annoying guests.” Kaiba turned to face them. “Are you viruses or mere children playing on controllers?”

“Wait, if we’re using the only five virtualizers, then how are you in here?” Carol questioned.

“Probably some other virtualizers Sigmund didn’t tell us about.” Quill figured.

“Afraid not. The body you are looking at is my own.” Kaiba stated. “My son, Noah and I were diagnosed with a fatal illness three years ago. But while our bodies lay their final rest, my company’s technology transferred our minds to our supercomputer. We have continued to live as Programs, and walk about the real world as solid holograms.”

“Just like Vanellope…” Dillon said.
“But do not drop your guard. You may be using uncreative avatars in this virtual world, but I can still destroy your real bodies from here. This blade I am wielding is equipped with a virus that can infect the source of any Program, so by impaling it through you, I can send a shock to your virtualizers and-” Kaiba’s body began glitching in red pixels. “ACK! What in the… Why is my body-?!"

“You’re not the only one implanted with a virus!” XANA’s cackly voice said. “You’ve fallen for my trap, Gozaburo! Now your pixels will become mine!”

“NO! This can’t be! AAAAAAHHH…!” Kaiba’s body fully became pixels as they morphed into XANA’s shape. Computer head, pointy fingers, and blue cape with 0’s and 1’s, XANA was back.

“Well, Vanellope, this virus of yours proved to be more useful than I could’ve hoped! Now, I shall never be destroyed, by the Kids Next Door or—!” XANA’s body started glitching. “What?! What’s happening now?! GYAAAAH!” His body morphed into that of Gozaburo.

“That IS a helpful virus, XANA! Did you really not think I had the same one?! Now then, back to business.”

“NO YOU DON’T!” Kaiba’s right arm morphed into XANA’s and started punching him in the face.

“Stop that!” Kaiba kicked his left foot up at his own rear, grabbed the right arm in his left to bend it behind him, and snapped his head at a right angle. “AAAAAAHHH!” Kaiba transformed into a pixelly blob that showed parts of both Programs.

“Our Take Over Viruses are conflicting with one-another! Our bodies are molding!” XANA’s high voice spoke in an eerie echo.

“CURSES! I can’t tell which pixels are mine!”

“ULP! Everything’s looking… shpoingy broingy.”

“NEE-RHWIRE! LEVISHTAN!”

“Artificial intelligence failing… Artificial sapience… Licknar.”

“NOOOoooo!”

XANA and Gozaburo Kaiba transformed into a giant monster with green bug wings and a dragon’s tail. Their body was mostly red except for XANA’s closed keyboard chest, and Kaiba’s head was on top. It glitched and morphed into XANA’s head. “I feel as though this scenario was in my memory files somewhere.” Kaiba’s head. “Does your memory files tell how to undo this??” XANA’s head. “They tell that I liked it!” Kaiba’s head. “Well, I do not!” The heads glitched back and forth and argued.

Vanellope gasped: at some moments when XANA’s head glitched, his screen depicted the faces of King Candy and Turbo. “I DO remember something like this happening! It was before I was transferred to the KND’s computer… The virus that tried to destroy my game. XANA has Cy-Bug code!”

“Oh, but how does that help us?” Dillon asked.

Vanellope looked at the light spire. “I wanna see if there’s a way to make this thing brighter. If I
hack into the machine and increase this light’s wavelength, we might be able to beat ’em.”

“If it’s a hack job, I want in, too!” Carol cheered.

“Yeah, sorry sweetie, but this is a job for the professionals.” Vanellope smirked.

“I have just as much experience as YOU do, smarty pants!”

“Care to put it to a wager?” Vanel flicked her nose.

“Look, you girls are BOTH qualified computer experts,” Dillon said with annoyance, “so just work together on this! Vanellope, take Carol with you.”

“Fine, but if she gets in my way, I’m giving her a time out. Let’s go, Puffy Hair!” Vanellope ran to the elevator.

“At least I WASH my hair!” Carol ran after. Mr. Game-and-Watch beeped and booped and joined them.

“Let’s see if we can tear these two apart before they get done!” Dillon smirked.

“Uh-oh! They’re going to attack us, Gozaburo!” XANA said.

“Then quit standing there and fight back!” Kaiba argued.

“Fine! Then I take over for both of us!”

“Like hell you will!” Both heads switched back and forth before they shouted-

“ENOUGH!” (Play “Gigabyte Mantis” from Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance!)

**Boss fight: XANAIBA**

Quill shot fire from his Elementors at Kaiba’s head, but the amalgamation retaliated by whipping the three away with his tail. XANA’s head took over as the beast took flight, launching energy blades from its wings. Kodama sent fireworks up to damage the creature, then XANAIBA circled over the field to spew pixelated vomit. From that vomit came monsters that were hybrids of XANAbots and Duel Monsters. Quill shot ice from his Elementors and froze the pixelated ground along with some monsters, which Kodama then destroyed with fireworks. Dillon drew other monsters into a Shadow Shockwave and had Mario tear them up.

With that, Midna stretched her Hair Hand and grabbed XANAIBA by the leg, slamming him against the roof of the tower. Dillon hopped on the monster’s back and did a Shadow Shockwave on the beast’s wings, followed by Kodama’s Tongue Twister firework into Kaiba’s mouth. “AAAA! Thlat’s a accuralately named filawork!” he said with a twisted tongue.

**Computer Room**

Vanellope and Carol located the main computer terminal, set directly in front of the spire of light. “The Zoni told me this thing was called the ‘First Byway’ or something.” Vanellope said. “It’s made of the same wavelength used to create them.”

“So can we ask them to help light it up?”
“Don’t need to. I’m gonna try and turn up the frequency from inside. You stay and help me from out here.”

“Whatever you’re trying, I won’t let you!” Noah Kaiba floated up on his platform. “I’m going to derez you both- HEY!” He was trapped inside a green diamond, whose points were connected by green finger-like bars.

“I won’t let you hurt the people who are trying to help My Diamond!” Peridot yelled from below. “As of this day, they are allies of the Gem Empire!” She pulled Noah back down to her.

“It doesn’t take much to convince her.” Carol said. “Alright, my laptop’s set up. Get in!”

Vanellope glitched into it.

Immediately, the Program was put through a bullet hell screen, rapidly dodging the sea of deadly dots. “CAROL, I’m getting Undertaled here!” Vanel shouted.

“Hold your horses, Candy Hair.” Carol controlled the cursor and clicked as many bullets as she could. The way was clear for Vanellope to swiftly glitch around them, but the bullets kept flying.

**Roof**

Quill Ramsey kicked his Grapple Heel at XANAIBA’s leg, pulling him up to the airborne creature and launching above his head. Quill landed, stuck his Elementors in Kaiba’s nose, and shot gas. “AAAHHH-!” He glitched into XANA’s head, so Quill jumped over the front, grappled up to his keyboard chest, and opened it as he began typing. “Okay, you abomination, let’s see how you like ‘Two Girls and a-’”

“DON’T EVEN THINK ABOUT PLAYING THAT!” The kids shouted.

“Okay, okay! Then we’ll watch the Spongebob episode where Spongebob helps his grandma use the toilet.” He typed in the video and played it.

“BYAAAAAAAAAHRRRRR!” XANA shook frantically, his face completely replaced by the atrocious episode. “GET THIS GLECH OUT OF MY FAAAAACE!” He flew rampant, swooped down across the roof, and crashed into the energy spire. The mutant was shocked and blown back, his body glitching as XANA’s face appeared sideways, upside-down, and oversized. “Ho, what a nightmare. You’re gonna pay for that, little twit!”

**Computer Room**

After Vanellope was past the bullet hell, she ended up in a stream of powerful waves. “Carol, I think I found the wavelength!”

“You did! Vanellope, be careful in there or you’ll drown!” Carol clicked her teammate and lifted her above the waves.

“I am being careful, let me go, Carol!” Vanel shook.

“I’m just trying to keep you safe! How do you plan to brighten this thing, anyway?”

“I’ll use my Lightspeed Kick attack! Move me around so I can build up speed! That is, if your finger’s as fast as you’re worth as a replacement.”

“Oh, I’ll show YOU fast finger-swiping!” Her finger pressed firmly on the Track Pad, Carol whooshed Vanellope all around the wavy screen, her body made of pixelly light that seemed to
move the waves around.

“Stop that!” Noah Kaiba tried to smack Peridot’s floating fingers away.

“Nyea!” The Gem Program flew a few feet in front with helicopter fingers as she poked him in the eyes.

“I said quit it!”

“This is what you get when you’re dubbed by 4Kids, you clod! Nyeaaaa ha ha ha ha!” Peridot evaded him.

“Real epic battle you’re having over there.” Carol remarked.

Roof

XANAIBA flew miles away and returned in attempt to ram the tower, but Midna blocked him with her giant hand, pushing against his face. Kodama launched Cheeseworks to stick his wings in place, but before the monster would take the fall, it grabbed the side of the tower and climbed up. XANAIBA raised its Virus Sword and slashed it across the ground – Quill dodged by flying up with the Elementors’ fire, Kodama used Jetpack Works, and Dillon hid in Shadow Veil.

“WOOOOOOOOO!” Kodama flew around and around and around. “INFINITE FUEL ROOOOOOCKS!”

“HELL YEEEEEAAAAH!” Quill cheered.

“YOU GUYS, we’re in the middle of a boss fight!” Dillon shouted.

XANAIBA flew level with the carefree operatives. “Oh, I completely forgot!” Kodama grinned at Quill.

“I guess we just made this a dogfight!” Quill beamed. The two rocketed at XANAIBA as Kodama about-faced and burned his human face with her rockets. “You’re looking a little gassy, Kaiba!” Quill switched the Elementors to gas and shot them at his burning head, creating an explosion. “OR MAYBE THAT WAS ME!” Quill screamed as he fell, quickly switching back to fire so he could rocket up.

“Come on, Dillon, sprout some wings and join us!” Kodama exclaimed.

“Ugh! Midna, lift me!” Dillon ordered.

“Say the magic words!”

“PLEASE!”

“My, so rude.” Midna grabbed Dillon in her giant hand and flew up to the mutant Program. Dillon kicked XANA’s face and cracked it as it glitched between King Candy, Turbo, or his own face.

“Useless outdated computer with a fat back!” Kaiba’s still-scorched head took over. “You’re hopeless!”

“And you’re blind!” Dillon blew Shadow Breath over his face. Kodama shot fireworks at his wings and Quill flew by his keyboard and looked up some cat entertainment.

“I AM THROUGH PLAYING GAMES!” XANAIBA spun around and whipped all the kids back
to the tower. “As soon as I destroy you worms, I am splitting up from this piece of junk!”

**Computer Room**

“As you sure this isn’t hurting you?!” Carol yelled, continuously swiping her finger around the Track Pad as Vanellope’s light increased.

“This is nothing! Keep going, we’re almost there!” The wavelengths onscreen were growing more frantic with Vanellope’s speed.

Several pairs of Peridot’s fingers connected via energy links, which she used to chop Noah’s hoverpad to pieces. The boy landed on the computer’s floor and ran to stop Carol, but Peridot’s fingers tied him up. Both of them watched as her computer screen glowed brighter—“Aah!” Carol was forced to release her Track Pad when it got too hot. Vanellope continued glitchwarping, and she felt completely filled with power. “Super Duper Uber Mega Ultra Lickety Split KICK!!”

And before their eyes, the energy column shone blindingly and shook the world as it blasted to the sky. “Agh!” Vanellope zipped out of the computer, and her body was distorted, zigzaggy, and sparking.

“Vanellope, are you okay?!” Carol yelled.

“Yeah, don’t wor—ry—bout it! PERIDOT, SH—T ME!” She ran at Peridot.

“GYAH!” Peridot shot a laser and destroyed the freaky Program.

“VANELLOPE!” Carol screamed.

Noah started shaking as his pixels turned blue and morphed. “What’s happening?! AAAH! DAAAAAAAAD…” His body compressed and his pixels formed Vanellope’s shape, along with her color.

“Ahh, much better!” Vanellope smiled at her well-designed, non-ugly body, making a smirk. “Don’tcha think?”

Carol giggled and Game-and-Watch waved ‘1’ flags. (End song.)

**Roof**

The energy burst from the tower at full power, lighting up the sky. The kids shut their eyes from being this close to it, but the light was especially beautiful to XANA’s eyes. “The light! It’s so… so…” His screen flashed King Candy- Turbo- Cy-Bug- Kaiba- “OOOOO HOO HOO HOOOO!” His own face turned red with hearts, for the powerful beam was a fountain of candy in his dysfunctional vision. He happily skipped toward the candy as happy music played.

*La la la la la la!*

*La la la candy time!*

“What ARE YOU DOING?!” Kaiba’s head took over—exposing the deadly beam for what it was. He tried to fly away, but XANA took over and was still entranced.

*La la la la la! “OOO hoo hoo hoo, CANDYYYY!” La la la, candy-

“GET AWAY FROM THAT!” Kaiba fought to get away-
La la la-

“Are you INSANE?!”

La LA LA la la la! XANA was seconds away from having a taste. “Caaaandyyyyy-”

“NOOOOO!”

The monster exploded into thousands of tiny pixels. They rained everywhere and the kids were awed at how beautiful they were. The XANAbots fell dead on the spot, the Duel Monsters derezzed, for both of their masters have been destroyed.

Inside

The Zoni hacked the computer and immediately decreased the force of the wavelengths. The spire returned to its original form. Karkat was outraged. “THAT WAS COMPLETELY RECKLESS! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH DAMAGE THAT COULD’VE CAUSED? YOU KNOW WHAT, I’M GLAD YOU AREN’T BECOMING CYBER GOD! I DON’T KNOW WHAT WE WERE THINKING IN GIVING A STUPID CANDY GIRL SUPREME POWER! I WOULD SOONER MAKE SIRI THE CYBER GOD, BECAUSE AT LEAST SHE KNOWS WHAT RESTAURANTS WE LIKE. I SWEAR IF I-”

“Karkat, would you do me a favor and SH8T 8P!!” A new Zoni with seven pupils in its left eye yelled. “Honestly, there is no way to please you sometimes! And I H8 when I’m this close to you on one of your tantrums. Keyword H88888888!!” >::: (

“YOU’R3 LUCKY W3 3V3N L3T YOU SP34K, VR1SK4, 4FT3R TH4T M3SS YOU PULL3D 1N T3RM1N4.” Terezi stated.

Dark room, unknown location

“What, 8ecause I decided to lend Majora a hand?” Vriska asked, propping her head on her hand in boredom. She had long black hair, orange horns, and a gray jacket. Her left eye had seven pupils. “Well, it would 8e a little sour if I didn’t, like we did sort of seal him in a mask for hundreds of sweeps.”

“AND NOW MAJORA IS ROTTING IN A DEMON PRISON. MUST BE A DREAM COME TRUE FOR THE LITTLE SH**. DON’T PULL ANYMORE CRAP LIKE THAT, SPIDER, OR YOU’LL BE NEXT.”

“Ooo, I’m so fr8ghtened. I’m gonna go sulk in my room.” Vriska broke her Zoni connection. “Siiiigh. Well, sulking done. 8ut speaking of Majy.” Vriska smirked and brought up an image of Cheren on her computer. “He planned on killing that 8oy soon… I 8etter get ready.” :::; )

First Byway

Peridot stared at the pixel in her hand, confused. “I still don’t understand how something so small… could give me so much power.”

“Big things come in small packages.” Orvus chuckled. “You shall soon see… if you are truly willing to do this.”

“A Peridot becoming a god is quite laughable.” Peri laughed. “Still… it will be an honor to die for My Diamond. I just wish… I could see her before I do.”
“You will have the chance. For now, we must begin the process of fusing you with The Source.”

“Man, I am glaaaaaaad I’m coming home with you.” Vanellope said to Dillon. “I liked those things better when they were a hive mind, now they’re just… annoying.”

“Tell me about it.” Dillon rubbed his ears. “Who would ever wanna become a god, anyway? …” He and Midna exchanged glances. “Speaking of which.” They approached the Zoni.

“I want to know the purpose of that God Production chamber.” Midna demanded. “Are you breeding gods? How is that possible? And why was my egg—a-and the other Firstborns’—…”

“I understand you are confused, Midna.” Orvus consoled. “But you must be patient. The answers will come in time. However, I will tell you this: when all of the Firstborn Guardians have awakened, they must bring them back to this planet. It is crucial that you do.”

“Just like what Malevolous told me…” Dillon remembered.

“Now then… With those two nuisances out of the way, it’s time to move on to other matters.” Orvus smiled. “It is time to awaken the Seventh Light.”

Uno Household

Cheren Uno entered his house and haphazardly chucked his Three Sacred Treasures on the floor. “Hey, Cherry.” His mother greeted him from the couch. “Long day at work?” she commented on the aforementioned action.

“Too long, in fact.” Cheren went into the kitchen and got a soda from the fridge. “I’m not staying too long, I just need to rest my mind a little.” He drank the soda.

“I heard what happened with Leanne. That’s horrible.”

“You have no idea.” Cheren said with slight aggression. “You and your friends always had Grim bringing you back to life.”

“Well, you had Grim, too. Why not just break the vow you made him take?”

“I couldn’t do that. I want us to feel like we’re strong enough to survive without help. I want it to seem like the universe actually wants us to win.”

“But maybe Grim kept protecting all of you because the universe does want you to win. The universe wants to give you as many chances to live full, natural lives.”

“Well, we can’t.” Cheren reentered the living room. “Our lives have never been natural. Not just because we have superhuman powers… but because it’s our job to save everyone from the evil and supernatural alike. And this Apocalypse… I don’t know if there’s anything natural about it… But I don’t want Grim’s help. If I want a shred of realism in our lives… then I want us all to have one chance at all our battles. If the universe really wants us to win… then we won’t die. Not all of us, at least. …Then, by the time we do die… everyone else can live happily.”

“Cheren…” Rachel felt bad for her child. Even she doesn’t remember it being this hard… If only she could look at herself back then, remember what burden she had… if it would be any different.

Cheren’s phone rang. He read the Caller ID and answered it. “Aurora?”

“Cheren, I’m at Hendry Middle School! Get down here, quickly! There’s something you need to
Hendry Middle School

Police cars and teenagers surrounded part of the building, and as Cheren fought his way through the crowds, he caught loud remarks like “WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS-” and “BRUH, DUDE, MAN!” as well as “FREAKIN’ SHIT!” Cheren made it to the front where the Gilligan Triplets and Aurora were standing. He gasped horrified at the sight everyone was yelling about.

Wendy Corduroy, Hoagie Gilligan III, and Garry Lincoln were chained to the wall, bruised and bloody. Underneath them, in black and red graffiti, was the word TREACHERY. And underneath that were seven symbols: a lion’s paw, a hammer, a pen, a whoopee cushion, a jug, a chicken, and a kangaroo. They were marked around the name of the group responsible:

**CP10**

Another name for this chapter is Killing Two Villains in One Boss Fight. :P Soon, we'll get into the main action of the CP10 Saga. P.S. Check out :iconDepthcharge2030:'s story Zen and Intent when you have time – it’s a Crystal Wickens story set after the Firstborn Saga!

Here is a Caesar Cryptogram that kind of throws back to the old KND show!

...  

**VHHPV QLJHO ZDV ULJKW**  

**EDELHV FRPH IURP HJJV**

Also quick question, Quill Ramsey/Kōdama… What do you think of that pairing, just thought of it when I made that flying scene.
Chapter Summary

Cipher Pol 10 makes their selves known to the KND.

When you work for a company that depends on computers for its schedules, you can expect it not to go well. :P

Chapter 64: CP10

KND Moonbase

Wendy Corduroy, Hoagie, and Garry were at rest in the Moonbase Hospital as Melody used waterbending to treat their wounds. Haruka carefully wrapped them in bandages and had hospital gowns fitted over them. “I can’t believe this happened…” Cheren said with remorse.

“At least they aren’t dead.” Haylee replied. “Still… I wonder if other TND operatives were discovered.”

“WENDY!” Dipper Pines ran up to the copper-haired teen and stood over her bruised face. “I came as soon as I heard what happened! Wendy, speak to me!”

“Ooooooohh…” The girl moaned hoarsely.

“Man, this is terrible.” Dipper looked down in depression.

“I know.” Mabel replied. “That black eye, now no one’ll ask her to the prom.”

“I had it all planned out!” Dipper took out a notepad. “August 31st, we turn 13, get promoted to Teens Next Door, and I go on a bunch of super dangerous missions with Wendy, our bond becomes stronger over time, eventually I save her from some samurai in motorcycle gear, then we finally confess our true feelings! But now… sigh, I would just tell her right now if I knew she could hear me.”

“This looks like the room.” A voice that belonged to April Goldenweek said, leading her cousins Ib and Mary inside.

“April, who are these two?” Cheren asked.

“They’re Ib and Mary, the ones I told you about.” April answered. “I thought you knew Mary.”

“I… did?” Cheren’s mind felt foggy at that statement.

“Garry!” Ib ran up to the older man that protected her in the cursed gallery, Mary by her side.

“Uh… Ib…?” Garry’s right eye peeped open (the only eye not covered by his hair).

“Who would do something like this…” Harry whispered solemnly.
“CP10.” Corporate President Mom stated.

“Who?”

“That’s the name you said was painted on the wall, wasn’t it?!” she shouted. “I knew the Government would send those clowns after you the minute you killed Carter.”

“Tell us about them, what are they like?” Cheren ordered.

“The World Government has special units called Cipher Pols who each specialize in certain tasks, i.e. science or strategy… CP10’s specialty is assassination. None of the members’ identities are known to anyone except the World Leaders. They’re trained to master a martial art called Rokushiki.”

“I remember that!” Aurora exclaimed. “When I fought Wolf on Coruscant, he used Rokushiki and mentioned CP10. Same with Black John. …But Wolf is an alien.”

“So am I.” Mom reminded. “Coruscant has connections with Earth’s Government, that’s how outsiders like me or Giovanni can work for them. Sometimes, information about our Government leaks to Coruscant’s streets… through me.” She smirked. “If you’ve seen Rokushiki, you’ve seen only a small example of what CP10 is capable of. They have mastered all Six Powers of the art:”

“**Iron Body, which makes them nearly invincible.**” They pictured a shadow person standing perfectly still while another person lays punches that don’t affect. “**Paper Art, making them as flexible as paper.**” The shadow swiftly dodged the other shadow’s punches. “**Finger Pistol, where their fingers pierce flesh like a bullet.**” They pictured the first shadow person piercing his assaulter in the neck. “**Moon Walk, the art of jumping in the air.**” The shadow kicked his legs several times and floated higher. “**Shave, to move at lightspeed.**” The shadow zipped place to place in milliseconds. “**And Tempest Kick, to cut the very air with your legs.**” The shadow spun his leg, sent a shockwave through the air, and chopped down some buildings.

“Ordinarily, they’re only called to handle special, secret assignments.” Mom continued. “However, the Leaders didn’t want to send them against the KND and create a disturbance. Judging by what happened, it seems that order is out the window. You’re too far in the Twenty Keys Quest AND you killed two Corporate Presidents. If CP10 left their signature, they must be trying to warn you. Or challenge you.”

“I’m glad they didn’t, but why didn’t CP10 just… kill them?” Cheren asked with a tinge in his heart.

“CP10 doesn’t like easy prey… nor do they like a person’s death to be fast and painless. Unless they were specifically ordered to kill, they’ll take their time.”

“The bottom line is that they’re twisted.” Aurora stated. “And it sounds like we’ll really need to fight them.”

“They can’t be all they’re hyped to be.” Cheren said. “They can’t be as strong as the World Leaders, or Viridi, or Majora.”

“Well, none of US fought battles like you, Sheila, or Nebula!”

“My point is, while we shouldn’t underestimate them, we shouldn’t talk them up, either. Our experiences are different from theirs. We have an advantage!” Cheren grinned confidently. “Even their 10 members can’t fight the entire Kids Next Door!”
“They have seven members.” Mom corrected. “You might have an advantage in numbers, but they can easily pick you off a few at a time. They wouldn’t just show up and fight you in broad daylight.”

“Then we need to caution all operatives to stay together and be on their guards. There’s no telling who they’ll aim for next. …Now that we’re talking about it, Mom, how come Aunt Morgan didn’t send CP10 after you?”

“Because she wasn’t ‘special’ enough for them.” Artie remarked.

“Don’t act like you’re worth a challenge either!” Mom shouted.

Azultown, Brazil; night

“Ahh, all finished!” Marine brushed the sweat off her forehead after putting the final touches on the hovering speedboat she was constructing. “’ere’s your water-air bike, Mr. Guy!” She presented the bike to the man in the green jacket, known as Exposition Guy. “Complete with GPS, warning lights, and immune to rust!”

“Gee, thanks, Marine!” The guy beamed as he climbed on the craft. “I run around so much, I end up in the most random places! This bike is gonna help a ton. See you on down the road!” He sped off.

“Anytime, mate!” Marine raised her wrench proudly. “Well, Lucci, I’m closin’ up for the night.” She called to her hammer-wielding coworker. “Put that hammer back when yer done playing with it!”

“Aye-aye, Captain! Coo-kachoo!” Lucci’s pigeon, Hattori cawed.

Marine walked the Azultown streets alone. Her house was located all the way across town from the seaside shipyard, but Marine always enjoyed a good venture. When Marine felt her shorts pocket—something was missing. “Uh-oh! I left me wallet at the shipyard! I hope Lucci doesn’t take it and go out clubbing.”

So she raced back to the shipyard and saw Hattori flying above in circles, going “Coo-kachoo! Coo-kachoo!”

“Good, he hasn’t left yet.” Marine walked around the piles of junk to the area where Hattori was circling. “’ey, Lucci, you seen my…?”

Her employee’s legs were arched over a pile, and when Marine looked over to see the rest of his body, she gasped horrified. “Lucci! What in the devil’s name…”

“It was to call you back here.” A dark, quiet voice said from behind.

“Eh??” Marine turned around. Hattori fled the area as the raccoon stood face-to-face with a man in a dark cloak and lion’s mask.

“Golden-Fist Marine.” The man raised the bounty poster. “International criminal worth 8 million. We’ve been waiting for the green light to hunt you down.”

“Ain’t it just annoying when them red lights never change?” Marine smirked. “That’s why I took a life at sea. No red lights, no stop signs, I’m just free!”

“Freedom has a price.” Another person stood on a tall pile of junk. She had a woman’s voice and
was wearing a blue Rainbow Monkey mask. "There is a law that must be followed. And as far as
the Government is concerned, you are guilty."

"Guilty of what? My ships are the best, AND I give people correct change!"

"It’s not enough to clean up your mess!" A shorter man in a scarecrow mask with a pointy nose
landed behind her and spoke with a peppy voice. "You’re a pirate, Miss Raccoon! I hate to bop
someone of your craftsmanship, but rules and regulations are important!"

"Yeah, but those same rules said you had to keep your gloves on in a boxing match." Marine pulled
off her work gloves. "We’re in my town, so I make the rules around here. HEYEAH!" She shot a
sudden Light Fist at the short man, turned her legs golden, and zipped behind the lion-masked man
to throw a Light Kick. (Play “Dark Clouds” from Naruto: Shippuden!)

Marine made a break for the town and yelled back, “But if you don’t mind, I wanna take this to the
roofs! Catch me if ya can!” She spun her tail like a helicopter and made a terrific leap to the sky,
aiming to set foot on one of the skyscrapers. “Heh!” she breathed after doing so—her foot stepped
on a wire. “What?!" A series of catapults from her left and right launched barrels with chi-block
symbols. “Oi, foul play!” Marine lit her legs golden and jumped with lightspeed, landing on a
higher roof—“AAAH!” her foot was snatched in a lasso that whipped down and bashed her against
the side of the building, letting Marine hang.

“We were prepared in case you would try and run.” Another girl wearing a bunny mask said,
standing on the edge of the roof. “We have traps set up all over the city.” The agent leapt off and
kicked both feet down to send Marine plummeting to the ground.

“Grrrr!” Marine spun her tail to soften her landing, glaring up at Rabbit Mask and punching two
Light Fists up. She destroyed the edge she was on, but Rabbit Mask jumped and seemed to fly in
the air.

“CAAAAW!” Marine saw an eagle flying in her direction, ready to stab with its talons, but she
easily punched the bird away with a Light Fist. The eagle turned into another hooded figure upon
hitting the ground, but when it got up, he was revealed to have a kangaroo mask. Marine’s ears
perked, hearing a faint sound behind her. She turned and saw a small black object flinging from
across town. Marine realized it was Scarecrow Mask and jumped high before he could kick her—
Kangaroo Mask zipped up and punched her from behind, flying Marine across several blocks.

The raccoon recovered and was surrounded by Lion Mask, Monkey Mask, and Rabbit Mask.
“Sigh, ’guess a gal won’t be getting her sleep tonight.” Marine lit her fists gold and did a fist-palm,
shining with more power as she forced columns of light to sprout up around her. “But I’m more
than just a Golden Fist, you know!” She directed the light at the agents, but they each dodged with
Shave, and Lion Mask appeared behind to stab a Finger Pistol. Marine swiftly dodged and kicked
up at his mask, knocking the man a few feet.

That’s when a new agent with a hamster mask flew overhead and swung a Tempest Kick, but
Marine blocked it with a Light Slice from her leg. She punched Light Spheres, but the agent
evaded with timed Moon Walks. Kangaroo Mask became an actual kangaroo, hopping in front of
Marine and throwing quick punches. Marine swiftly evaded and kicked at his stomach, but the
kangaroo jumped and kicked her in the face. Marine bounced back on her feet, then heard rapid
footsteps behind her. She turned to see another hooded figure with large chicken feet dash to her.
“BAGAAAAWK!”

Marine ducked the Tempest Kick, then Chicken Mask punched its yellow-feathered fists to attack
her. Marine dodged to its side and punched, but the chicken used Iron Body and only budge a few
inches. He flapped his wings and leapt back as Marine was surrounded by all seven agents. “I see you fellas have a thing for animals. Except Scarecrow Mask there. He must hate birds. But you forget that I already am an animal! I’m prime, pureblood Mobian.” She kicked off her sandals. “And I reckon it’s time to go Primal on your arses.”

Marine got on all fours, her fur stood on end, and invisible energy burned around her. Her pupils retracted and her fangs bared. Fast as light—she zipped behind Monkey Mask and bit her in the hip—she bit Scarecrow in the arm—then she went for Rabbit Mask’s leg, but she bit something metal through the cloak that resulted in gas to Marine’s mouth. “Always keep a spare rodent repellent strapped to your leg.” Rabbit lifted her cloak to show the small metal container on her leg. During Marine’s coughing fit, she kicked the raccoon two blocks down. “Especially when you hang around these rodents.”

“ROWWWL!” Marine was back on all fours, scowling like a beast with rabies as she pranced toward her prey.

“CP10, Seven Stars Combo Attack!” Lion Mask commanded.

“Iron Body, BAGAWK!” Chicken Mask got in front to be the first of Marine’s dinner, but her fangs were dented when trying to punch the Iron Body. Chicken Mask jumped away and-

“SHAVE!” Rabbit Mask zipped around Marine from every direction, the Primal Raccoon whipping every which way in attempt to spot her, but the act only made the overgrown rodent dizzy.

“Paper Art.” Hamster Mask glided under Marine like a magic carpet, and without warning kicked upside the chin to propel her upward.

“Moon Walk!” Scarecrow Mask jumped around the air like an Italian plumber, and once above Marine, he kicked her to the ground diagonally.

“Finger Pistol!” Kangaroo Mask pierced her in the stomach.

“Tempest Kick!” Monkey Mask slashed airwaves at a nearby building, cutting a square segment off that toppled down and crushed Marine.

“RAAAAH!” Marine burst out of the trap and zipped around to kick the six assassins, who only winced a little from the blows, then Marine returned to the center, conjured six Light Spheres that orbited her like a planet, and blasted them in the faces of each masked member. The assassins fell down, so Marine turned her ravenous eyes toward the Lion Mask.

“You make yourself out to be a predator... but your natural instincts have long been soiled by the piles of rum bottles you continuously consume. You are less of a predator than the filthy members of your family who rummage around the trash. You don’t have what it takes to face a real predator... A predator like me!” Lion Mask was on all fours, and his hands morphed into large sharp claws that scratched the street.

The lion snarled and pounced on Marine, the two rolling across the ground before the raccoon kicked him off. They were back on their paws as they darted at each other, the lion slicing his claws at her face while Marine rapidly punched him in the chest. Eventually, both animals grabbed each other’s arms, Marine’s narrowed blue eyes peering at the sharp green eyes behind the lion mask. The lion’s claws pierced the raccoon’s arms, forcing Marine to release.

“Now to complete the combination.” Lion planted both fists against Marine’s chest. “By
combining all the force points for the Six Powers, I release the Six King Gun!” A powerful beam of energy burst from his fists and pierced Marine’s chest. No gaping hole was left in the spot where it pierced, but the blow rendered Marine weak. Her Primal features and the energy around her vanished as the former pirate captain fell on her back, defeated.

Lion Mask’s features reverted into their human form as the seven assassins approached Marine. “That will be all tonight. Number 4, carry Marine to the base and have her in chi-blocks. It won’t be long until the Kids Next Door will want to come after us... and the Seven Lights by their side. The rest of us will return to our posts until the next assignment.”

Kangaroo Mask turned into a pterodactyl, grabbed Marine in his talons, and soared across the ocean. The other six agents scattered. Elijah Frantic had been watching from a bar close by. “Oh no… I better call Sheila.” (End song.)

**Azultown, the next morning**

Sector V received the call from Sheila’s father the next morning and flew to her hometown as soon as possible. They landed in the shipyard where Marine had constructed the Sunny Day. The pirate ship that had sailed them around the world was still docked where they left it. “Coo-kachoo, coo-kachoo!” A pigeon was circling over an area.

“MUUUM?” Sheila yelled as they stepped over the piles of junk. “’EY, MUM! You didn’t pass out in the spilled wine again, did ya?”

“Look, there’s somebody there!” Haruka indicated the legs in black pants arched over a pile. They belonged to a black-haired man with a white sleeveless top and close-shaved goatee. Blood trickled down his nose and his left eye was blackened. The pigeon landed on his chest.

“Oh yeah, it’s the mute guy that works with Marine.” Chris recognized. “Wasn’t his name Lucy?”

“LUCY, WAKE UP!” Sheila PUNCHED him in the stomach and startled the man awake. His right eye shot open, but his left ached too much to do the same.

“Probably not the alarm he was expecting.” Chris said sheepishly.

*Mr. Pigeon Man, what happened?* Kirie signed.

“Coo-oo! Last night, I was ambushed by some strange men in masks!” Hattori answered for his master. “They bopped me out clean and went after Marine.”

*That’s mean!*

“Do you remember what these men looked like?” Haruka asked.

“I know one wore a lion mask, another had a scarecrow, and one with a Rainbow Monkey mask. Other than that, they dressed in black coats. I didn’t see any part of their bodies, coo-kachoo.”

“It’s gotta be CP10.” Chris glared. “They must’ve went after Marine because they knew her daughter is a Light.”

“Well, that’s dirty fighting if I ever saw it!” Sheila fist-palmed.

“Yeah, this is a new low even for the Government.” Harry stated. “Attacking innocent people just to scare us, they’re pathetic.”
“Wait, look at this.” Haylee picked up a wanted poster of Marine off the ground.

“Ahhh. Me mum in her glory days.” Sheila smiled proudly.

“I know, but think about it: your mom was a notorious pirate who fought with the Government, and she’s still wanted. Maybe CP10 used that as an excuse to capture her.”

“So they’re using just cause to go after people.” Artie figured. “Like Hoagie, Wendy, and Garry being TND spies.”

“Just cause doesn’t matter.” Chris said. “They’ll want to attack the Seven Lights eventually. Why don’t they just leave these people alone and fight us already?”

“They’re probably trying to bait us this way.” Harry reasoned. “So unless something else happens, we can assume they’re only targeting spies or people on their wanted list.”

“But both Cheren and Kimaya killed a Corporate President.” Aurora argued. “Obviously, they’ll be after them, too.”

“Dillon’s dad is on the wanted list, too!” Mason remembered. “What if he gets attacked?”

“We’ll have to expect the worst. Let’s go back to the treehouse and think up a plan.”

Kirie skipped up to Lucci and handed him a green Rainbow Monkey. *If you put Hugged For Comfort After Being Beat By A Bully Rainbow Monkey over your eye, it softens the wound. I thought you would like it because he’s the same color as your eyes! You can keep him. Bye-bye, Mr. Lucy!* She waved and skipped away. Lucci stared at the stuffed green toy.

**Great Clock**

“Aww, I can’t believe we’re already leaving.” Eddy Flores of Sector Q complained as the operatives boarded the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.. “We didn’t get to fight or nothing!”

“At least Vanellope is coming home with us.” Dillon said. “And we got rid of a Corporate President and one of Gnik’s guys.”

“Do not return home just yet, children.” Orvus told them. “You must find the Seventh Light and bring her back to Earth. My Zoni will guide you.”

“So, what’re we gonna do when we get home?” Bill asked perkily. “Hit the soda bar? I can drink five cans of Silver Flurp at once!”

“Heh heh, try and beat Mason.” Dillon chuckled. His eyes widened. They all glanced at him.

“YOU’RE NOT COMING WITH US!!” They screamed at the humanoid demon.

“Awww, whyyyyy? What happened to accepting all kids no matter who they are?”

“Yeah, Dillon, what’s your deal with this kid?” Vanellope asked.

“He attacked Moonbase and killed an innocent girl! This guy isn’t a kid, he’s nuts!”

“Wow, I’ve been called a Dorito, but nuts?” He transformed into Mr. Peanut (which didn’t look much different from his triangle form).

“Vanellope, let’s go. I’ll tell you about our adventures on the way.”
Miyuki was the last one to enter the train, but stood back when Bill spoke to her. “Disappointed we didn’t learn anything, did we? Wanted to see what’s behind that door?” Miyuki was silent. “I’ll tell you one thing… it’s not good. You won’t survive. I don’t think anyone will. I wouldn’t survive either if I wasn’t on the winning team. But I could protect you.” Bill smiled and put a hand on his shoulder. “I could protect all your friends… All you have to do is submit loyalty to me. I’d lend you my trading cards, let you in my bedroom… and tell you all the deepest secrets of the universe.”

“…You’d tell me anything… You know everything…”

“I do.” He nodded. “And I really would.”

“…You don’t know jack compared to The Chronicler.” Miyuki walked forward and entered the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N.. With the Zoni leading the spacecraft, Bill watched as they took off.

“…” Bill felt a tinge in his heart at that remark. He turned away and had a smug scowl. “Screw you.” He reentered the Great Clock.

Cleveland Milk Bar

Around noon on the same day, the team of Nolan, Yuki, and Crystal paid a visit to the Milk Bar, where they occupied a table. “Well, friends,” Nolan raised his jug of chocolate milk, “here’s to a night’s work collecting 50 Riddler Trophies.”

“May we never have to backtrack again,” Yuki raised his jug, “and continue our adventure tonight.” He drank.

“So Doctor Strange is in a magic city called Magnostadt.” Crystal recalled. “What do you suppose he’s doing there?”

“Whatever it is, it’s top secret.” Nolan said as he looked at his laptop. “He has a profile on the Government’s website, but it doesn’t tell anything on his background or the work he’s doing. And all Dr. Riddles was able to send us was a map of the city and how to find where he’s hiding. Still, we might be walking into something big, so we’ll have to walk in with our A-game on.”

“Well, if it isn’t Nolan and the Night Trio!” They were approached by a large red-haired man in a teal shirt and white apron. “I haven’t seen you in a while.”

“Hey, Lime Rickey.” Nolan waved. “Yeah, it’s been a real rough month. Don’t you miss the days when all our friends could come to your bar, chill, and drown ourselves in sodium?”

“Those were the times.” Rickey looked up reflectively. “But that’s why I opened a Milk Bar… It isn’t kiddy like soda, and it’s enjoyable for adults who don’t wanna poison their selves with alcohol, ya know?”

“Come to think of it, shouldn’t this milk be contaminated with Lazarus?!” Crystal realized.

“I thought they were only poisoning people in Kentucky?” Yuki said.

“We retrieved all the shipments, anyway.” Nolan reminded. “Besides, my scanners aren’t picking up any foreign ingredients in this milk.”

“That’s the beauty of owning a family farm.” Rickey smiled. “You can sell your own milk and don’t have to let people trash it. What’re you three planning, anyway?”

“Top secret infiltration mission, as always.”
“Sticking it to the man, you know how it is.” Yuki winked.

“Okay, don’t get arrested.” Rickey laughed before going to another table.

The three heroes took a sip of their milk. Crystal stared at her half-empty glass and swished it.

“You ever wonder what the Government’s deal is?”

“I dunno.” Yuki shrugged. “What deal does any corrupt bastard have?”

“Well, it can’t be just a matter of being power-hungry. Why are they against the Kids Next Door, why did they kill Nigel?”

“It’s not the Kids Next Door they hate, it’s the Twenty Keys Prophecy.” Nolan replied. “I keep updated with the KND’s news and that’s what’s up.”

“Well, knowing my daughter is one of the Lights, I wanna hear their story.” Yuki stated. “If finding the Keys is supposed to stop the Apocalypse, why are they trying to stop them?”

“It may not be long ’til we find out. After Kimaya, there’s only one Light left. Whoever that person is… after they’re found, anything could happen.”

Pokitaru

“HAKUNA MATATA!” Ratchet, Drake, and Zach raised coconut cups. “Whaaaat a wonderful phraaaaase!”

“It’s our problem-freeeee!” Ratchet sang.

“Philosophyyyy!” Drake followed.

“It means no worries!” Maddy joined. “For the rest of your daaaayys! …” She looked at Shade, who was silent.

“I don’t wanna.” She blushed.

“You stalked me all these years, you should know how it goes!”

“Sigh, fine. I found my aroma lacked a certain appeal, I could clear the savannah after every—I don’t wanna sing this part!”

“Do iiiiit.” Zach stated.

“Ugh! I was ashamed, wanted to change my name, because I farted a lot—oh God!”

“Shade, it happens to everyone.” Maddy said—everybody burst into laughter.

“I did not!” Shade flushed horrendously. “Ergh! Alright, time to get back to training. Rayleigh?”

“AAAAH HA HA HA!” The elder cracked up and spilled some rum. “I’m glad this universe appreciates humor the same way mine does!”

“Not that my sense of humor isn’t tops, but we’re a little pressed for time.” Shade stated. “By my calculations, it’s May 18th on Planet Earth. The Apocalypse is nearly two weeks away.”

“And Maddy has made substantial progress in the time she’s been here.”
“Yeah, Shade!” Maddy turned her fist Armament without effort. “It’s as easy as a waterbender splashing in a kids’ pool.”

“You weren’t saying that two days ago. And you’re still pretty rusty in Observation Haki. We really need to start pushing you.”

“Okay, okay. But after one more verse!”

“Hakuna Matata!” the group sang, much to Shade’s dismay. “What a wonderful phraaaase!”

“It’s our problem-freeeee!” Drake sang. “Philosophyyyy!”

“HAKUNA MATATA!” Dr. Nefarious jumped out of the bushes. “It’s a WONDERFUL daaaaaay!”

They were all gaping and looked as if their hearts jumped out of their bodies. “What? Did I say it wrong? Oh wait, it’s ‘Hakuna Matataaaaa! Ain’t no action phraaaase-’ or something, I dunno.” Lawrence was behind him, shaking his head in disbelief. “So what are we all talking about; games, boys? Maddy, I saw you write in your diary how you wanted to sleep on Chris’s chest again. He musta had real comfy abs, right?” She blushed at the statement. “No?” He looked around at the glaring group.

“Excuse me.” Rayleigh approached him from the side. “We’re having a training session. Can I help you?”

“Oh, don’t let me interrupt your campsite musical.” Nefarious walked away casually. “I was just wondering if-!!” He whipped around and SHOT Rayleigh in the head with a laser.

The teacher flew back and hit the ground. “RAYLEIGH!” Maddy and Shade ran over. Where there should’ve been a wound in his head, there was a crack. And instead of blood, his body sparked, and then transformed into a Zoni that sparked from the wound. “Buzzzzzz!”

“He was a Zoni all along?!” Shade exclaimed.

“I never would’ve guessed!” Nefarious shot Maddy with an anti-gravity gun, then activated his rocket shoes as he carried her off. “BRING IT AROUND!”

“Bwah hah ha ha!” A giant saucer with four spider-like legs came up from over a mountain. “Lord Vorselon has returned, at the very moment you least expected!”

“Don’t worry, Maddy, we’ll resume your training aboard our vessel.” Nefarious smirked. “So, that old human was a robot in disguise. This story’s starting to have more twists than even Shyamalan can take a swing at.”

“You don’t know the half of it!” Maddy gripped her neck and pulled the mask off. “It’s actually me, Zach!”

“What?!! If you’re not Maddy, then Maddy is…!”

He looked back down to see Zach yank off his mask and reveal to be Maddy. “But that’s still in my room! AH, forget it! Lock this boy in the brig, YOU’RE next!” Nefarious
had the gravity bubble float into the saucer before shooting down to Maddy.

Ratchet chucked grenades at the robot while Maddy dodged, made a whistle, and jumped onto Fluzzard. “I’m coming, Zach, just hang in there!” She swooped down and caught Shade in Fluzzard’s talons. “Shade, you just-”

“Hang on here, got it!”

Nefarious tried to shoot them, but Ratchet bashed the gun out of his hand with his OmniWrench, then hit Nefarious in the head. “No! CATCH her, Vorselon!”

“Maddy, I sense the cockpit in the top middle!” Shade yelled.

“That’s better than the bottom middle! Here we go!” (Play “Boss A” from Star Fox 64!)

**Boss fight: Saucer Vorselon**

The saucer blasted lasers from satellites on its bottom, but Fluzzard dodged them with barrel rolls as they flew closer. Ships were sent at the colorful bird, so Shade broke out of Fluzzard’s talons, got on his back and threw punches at the ships that swooped by, her strong fists causing them to drive unstably for a minute. Fluzzard flapped above the ship’s roof, where they had view of the pointed tower that was the… control center.

“Enemy shields analyzed!” Maddy yelled.

“You can analyze his shields?” Shade asked.

“No, but if we’re doing Star Fox, you gotta add the reference.”

Satellites on the roof blasted lasers at them, so the girls decided to hop off and let Fluzzard fly to safety. Maddy and Shade withstood the wind and kept firm on the roof, and the satellites ceased fire on them. However, mini turrets opened on the roof to shoot them, but Shade quickly dodged to and broke each turret with one punch. “Maddy, let’s get rid of the satellites!” The two split up in different directions to go after the laser satellites, using Observation Haki to sense where turrets would appear.

“*Lord Vorselon uses his Spinning Disk Attack!*” Vorselon quickly spun the saucer in attempt to shake them off, forcing the girls to grab the roof. The saucer stopped when Vorselon became dizzy, so they resumed running to the satellites, climbing them, and using their strong fists to break the antennas. “Graaah! Lord Vorselon deems this unacceptable! I will trap you in my shock dome!” A huge glass dome covered the roof, and several small antennas emerged and connected via shock beams.

“AAAAAAHH!” Maddy and Shade were binded in place. The electricity wasn’t too painful, but they couldn’t muster the strength to move.

“We have to get up there and save them somehow!” Ratchet yelled.

“My harpoon doesn’t reach that high!” Drake replied.

Ratchet’s wristwatch started blinking. He looked up to his right with a shining grin. “No, but she does! **APHELION**!”
“Ratchet!” The Lombax’s shiny blue spacecraft soared in from the sky. “Oh, I’m terribly sorry! I
would have gotten here sooner, but Mom’s Ship Garage was having a sale and I couldn’t pass up
the opportunity to float around and find something I want.”

“All in the past, Aphelion.” Ratchet hopped onto his ship while Drake took the roof. “Let’s shoot
down those satellites!” They boosted up to the underside of the saucer, evading the lasers as Drake
shot his harpoon through the windshields of enemy ships. Ratchet rapidly blasted Aphelion’s lasers
and destroyed the four bottom satellites one by one. “Now we need to find a way in.”

“I see a hatch over there!” Drake shot his harpoon at a square segment with a handle on it, yanking
the hatch off. Ratchet flew underneath so the human could jump in there. Drake made his way
through a narrow tunnel where he had to duck or jump horizontal lasers. He stabbed his harpoon
into any wire socket he came across, then eventually found a room containing glass electrical
pipes. Drake reached into his pocket and got some M.A.R.B.L.E.s. “I really should start using
these more.” He chucked the bombs in and made a break for it when the explosions resulted.

The electrical binds disabled, freeing Maddy and Shade. They saw Fluzzard flying around outside,
looking for a way through the dome. The two ran up to it, but Shade’s strength and Maddy’s
Armament couldn’t pierce the glass. Ratchet and Drake flew up to see the girls trapped. “WATCH
OUT!” Ratchet yelled before shooting a bomb at the dome and creating a huge crack.

“HUH!” Shade punched it open as she and Maddy dropped down to Fluzzard.

“NOOO! I just had that cleaned! Lord Vorselon will make you pay!” The saucer continued
blasting them with smaller turrets and sent missiles. Fluzzard maneuvered expertly and dove
toward the cockpit.

Maddy and Shade jumped off to grab the side of the glass, seeing Vorselon inside the small
chamber as they punched the glass repeatedly. “Don’t you wanna fight us with your own
strength?!” Maddy shouted.

“Lord Vorselon is a one-eyed fish in a robot suit! He could not use his own strength if he wanted
to!” Vorselon spun the saucer around in attempt to throw the girls off, but they held tight.

“Ratchet, I have analyzed the fortress, and it seems to be a collection of parts linked together.”
Aphelion reported. “The structure would come apart if the bolts were loosened.”

“Aphelion, I’m putting you on autopilot. Drake, cover me from the air!” Ratchet jumped out of the
ship and dove toward the saucer’s roof, maneuvering around the missiles in midair. Ratchet made
land and ran to each large bolt to unscrew it with his OmniWrench. Drake used his harpoon to
shoot missiles aimed at him, and when Ratchet finished unscrewing a set of bolts, he had to jump
to the stable ground before that part of the ship collapsed. Little by little, the central tower was
becoming more exposed. The minute Ratchet detached the last bolt, the remainder of the outer
circle fell. The Lombax returned to his ship and the girls on Fluzzard.

“Initiate Coward Maneuver 57B!” Vorselon’s rocket swerved around and to the ground. The
cockpit launched itself to part of the fallen saucer, where a giant humanoid robot sprouted up and
captured the cockpit on the head. “Catch me if you can, little girl! Or your brother’s gonna become
my Gingerbread Man!” The robot was wearing a glass backpack containing Zach.

Fluzzard dove down as the robot ran through the jungle, launching missiles at its pursuers. The
Loftwing kept behind the robot, dodging the jungle trees that fell as well as the endless missiles.
Maddy and Shade drew steadily closer to the backpack, and once they were there, Fluzzard flew up
and clutched the top of the pack in his talons. The bird forcefully flapped up, pulled, and Zach’s
prison popped off, Fluzzard dropping it and breaking the glass.

The robot skidded to a halt and about-faced. “Lord Vorselon is not through with you, yet! You may have saved your brother, but Lord Vorselon will continue to fight! Lord Vorselon is forever! Lord Vorselon is-!” A silver train flew down from the sky and shattered the cockpit before crashing haphazardly in the jungle. (End song.)

Lord Vorselon’s robot was destroyed, along with his suit. His green one-eyed fish head flopped on the ground next to the crashed train. “Hrm… Lord Vorselon did not see this coming. Lord Vorselon will condemn this train as Lord Vorselon sees fit. Lord Vorselon, Lord Vorselon-!” Dillon hopped out and squished the fish like a bug.

“Ew! Well, that ruins these shoes…” He looked up. “Maddy, is that you?!”

“Dillon?” Maddy called, riding Fluzzard.

“Well, look who decided to join us!” Drake exclaimed from Aphelion.

“DRAAAAAAKE!” Sector Q trampled Dillon.

“GUUUUUUUYYS!” Drake jumped to the ground and embraced in his teammates’ hugs.

“WHERE WERE YOOUUUU!” Quill cried.

“ABDUC TED BY ALIEEEEENS!” Drake cried back. And all five boys cried to the sky.


“Dillon, how did you all find us?” Maddy asked after landing Fluzzard.

“Those Zoni things brought us. It was all after we went on a mission to save Vanellope.”

“HEY, you’re the girl with the round head!” Vanellope glitched over. “So, did Dillon give you my message? Did you find The Disbanded?”

“Yes, and I was delayed my return to Earth, thanks a lot.” Maddy glared.

“Well, you did learn Haki.” Shade reminded.

“Who’re you?” Dillon asked.

“Shade the Echidna. I’m from the Netherverse.”

“She tried to kill me once.” said Maddy.

“That was an act.”

“Okay, that aside, the Zoni wanted us to bring you home.” Dillon stated. “They said you were the Seventh Light. Are you?”

“I better be, otherwise what was the point of all this? But Dillon, there’s something I wanna show you.”

George’s cave

“AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!” George King was still consumed with unimaginable pain, his veins
bulging from the Octogan on his forehead.

“GEORGE?!” Miyuki was horrified at the sight.

“He saved us from Nefarious awhile ago and had that thing on his forehead.” Maddy replied.

“They said it’s an Octogan.”

“An Octogan?” Dillon was familiar with that term.

“Actually, it’s only the pupil of an Octogan.” A man’s voice said. They whipped around as a caped man with a scepter entered the cave.

“Mr. King?”

Jagar approached his son, but didn’t seem the slightest bit mortified at George’s current state. “When George was three years old, I journeyed to the Negaverse and found one of the two Octogan. Its power was too much even for me… so I cut off its pupil. I attached it to George because I thought his developing body would allow it to adapt with him. If we could use the Octogan’s power… we might have a chance.”

“Why would you put your son through this?!” Ratchet yelled. “Look at what’s happening to him!”

“I thought my chi-blocking headband could contain the Octogan’s power and let it get comfortable with George. I thought it was working. Even with the chi-blocks on, George was excellent at Future Sight. Since I can’t see the Octogan in my own Vision, I also thought George could help me break that block.”

“Well, he’s in pain!” Dillon stated. “You have to cut that thing off him!”

“I will.” Jagar raised his Chrono Staff. “But perhaps it’s best you forget what you saw here.” With a sudden blinding FLASH, Jagar, George, and the Zoni were all gone.

The kids rubbed their eyes. “Why are we in this cave?” Dillon asked.

“I dunno…” Maddy replied. “If you’re taking me back to Earth, why are we waiting around?!”

“I thought you forgot your makeup or something.” Ratchet said. “Come to think of it, we lost sight of Nefarious after that battle.”

“I say we get goin’ before he comes back.” Drake suggested.


“No trading my baby!!” Chimney yelped.

“Love you too, Ratchet.” remarked Aphelion.

“Wait, we never found Ratchet’s friend, did we?” Maddy asked.

“It’s okay, Maddy.” Ratchet assured. “You can head home if you want. I’ll get Clank back from Nefarious somehow.”

“His name’s Clank?” Vanellope questioned.

“Yeah. Small robot, kinda looks like a backpack… Here’s a picture.” Ratchet projected a hologram
from his wristwatch of the robot.

Vanellope gaped. “That’s Orvus!”

“Who?”

“It’s the robot I found in Cyberspace, the Zoni wanted me to carry him!”

“YOU KNOW WHERE CLANK IS?!”

“Y-Yeah, yeah! Up in the Great Clock!” She pointed upward.

“Ratchet, the Great Clock is located around Galactic Coordinate 000.” Aphelion said. “It is in the center of the universe… give or take 50 feet.”

“If he’s really at the Great Clock, I’m heading there now.” Ratchet hopped in his ship. “I’ll see you guys later. It was fun traveling with you three.”

“Good-bye, Ratchet.” Maddy waved. “Thanks for the lift!”

Ratchet smiled and waved as his ship lifted high off the ground and took off for the stars. “Well… our next stop is home.” Dillon said. “Shall we?”

“Definitely.” Maddy approved.

After the R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. left the planet’s atmosphere, Dr. Nefarious’s Star Train deactivated its cloaking function. “Are we not going to pursue them, Sir?” Lawrence asked.

“We don’t need to catch her just yet. If they are taking Maddy home, it is only a matter of time until she will find her Poneglyph. Very soon, her secret will be revealed to us.” He rubbed his hands evilly. “And we’re going to seize her the moment she does!” He pressed a button.

At the Murphy House, Sparky was fast asleep in his towel basket. The puppy’s eyes sparked to life upon his creator’s signal, and a satellite extracted on his head as he searched for Maddy’s location.

KND Moonbase

The R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. parked outside the hangar as the many passengers disembarked. “HOLAAAA!” Chimney called to her teammates waiting on the bridge. “Team Rescue Vanel-chan has RETURNED, nakama!”

Vanellope glitched in. “Vanellope von Schweetz is BACK in town!”

“You guys made it back!” Cheren beamed. “Vanellope!”

“She’s not the only one.” Dillon said excitedly. “Presenting the newly-rescued Maddy, Zachary, Drake, and… some red hedgehog!”

“Echidna.” Shade glared.

“MADDY!” Mocha ran up to greet her friend, shaking the floor with her giant steps. “You’re finally back from space!”

“MOCHA!” Maddy fist-pumped. “What’s up, my bestest gigantis?”

“You know the answer to that! Low five!” Mocha held her hand down. Maddy dealt the high five
with an Armament hand. “Yow! I actually kinda felt that…”

“Armament Haki!” Maddy hardened both fists. “You won’t be beating me now!”

“Uh, guess again.” Mocha turned her fists Armament. “I learned it from the Amazons two months ago!”

“And you never told me?!”

“I didn’t want you to feel behind.” Mocha blushed.

“So, did anything exciting happen while we were gone?” Dillon asked Cheren with slight sarcasm, given the last surprises in the past couple days.

“Um… unfortunately, yes.”

Cheren brought them to the medical room, where Dipper was still by Wendy’s side and Ib and Mary by Garry’s side. “CP10?” Dillon repeated.

“They’re top assassins who work for the Government. And last night, we think they attacked Sheila’s mom. They went down there this morning and Marine was gone.”

“They also think that, with the Seven Lights Quest almost finished,” April followed, “the Government is trying to scare us.”

“But CP10 shouldn’t be allowed to attack somebody without just cause.” Cheren mentioned. “At least… that’s what we hope. Who knows how long that’ll last.”

“Well, we can’t stand around and let them hurt people.” Dillon stated. “We need to get down to Earth and be ready to stop them if they show up.”

“That’s what Sector V and the others are doing right now. You should probably go down there and join ‘em. Given these last two scenarios, they could attack at any time…”

Rainbows Factory (and 3, 2, 1…)

Production was flowing peacefully at the colorful factory and business was successful. Leslie Meijer, the company president’s secretary, smiled as she filled a cup of coffee. She wore her usual red attire and her blonde hair was as shiny as her positive mood. “Hello, Miss Leslie!” The orange-haired scientist, Dan greeted perkily, his puffy mustache flapping with his mouth. “Wonderful weather today, eh?”

“Yes, I agree.” Leslie sipped her coffee. “Any new inventions in the works, you two?”

“Ve are developing ein human-to-toy mind-reader!” Stan, Dan’s black-haired partner, held up a small helmet with antennas taped. “So children can see what ze toys are thinking! Look!” He put the little helmet on his head and held up a dark-blue Rainbow Monkey with a mustache. “Hello, Rainbow Monkey! My name is Stan!”

“I am not a Rainbow Monkey, I’m Mr. Mogul!” The talking toy shook. “Now put me back in my real body!”

“Well, good luck to you two.” Leslie chuckled. “I’m going to bring President Sanban her coffee.”

The assistant carried a cup to the president’s office, knocking on the door softly. “Miss Sanban? Kuki? I brought you your-” She entered the office and saw her boss passed out on the desk. “…
Miss Sanban?” Leslie approached. There was a spilled cup of coffee. Leslie reached down and felt Kuki’s neck… and she dropped her own cup as it shattered.

### Outside

The factory was surrounded by police cars and GUN helicopters. Sector V, Wally, and Joey were there as well, after Kirie’s father received the call. Leslie was being escorted out of the building, breathing in and out of a paper bag and her hair a mess. “I was just bringing her some coffee—decaf and three spoonfuls of sugar—like she likes it—but now—I can’t believe it—PRESIDENT SANBAN IS DEAD!”

“Calm down, Miss! We’ll check all the cameras, do a thorough investigation…”

“Mrs. Beatles is dead?!” Haylee exclaimed.

“Kuki…” Wally was about to cry. Kirie already had her eyes buried in her sleeves, and if she weren’t mute, she’d be sobbing like her brother.

“Kirie, I’m so sorry…” Aurora held her friend close.

**NOOOO!** Kirie ran up and started pounding on the police. **LET ME IN! I WANNA SEE MY MOM! I WANNA-!**

“Kirie, settle down!” Wally pulled her back. “I’ll tell them to let us in, just be patient!”

Haylee Gilligan decided to stray away from the commotion, her head drooped down. Her older brother, her cousin, Sheila’s mom, and now Kirie’s… This was happening so fast. Everything was. They hardly had any time to rest since this adventure began. She wanted to go to a place where she could meditate. And the place she had in mind was the nearby construction site.

The manager of the site, Bob the Builder was on a coffee break, wearing a spry expression as he drank. The short man in overalls saw Haylee and greeted happily, “Boy, if it isn’t my favorite protégé! Ha ha, just kidding, it wouldn’t be right to pick favorites. You’re just the ONLY protégé! Howdy, Haylee!”

“How do you do, Bob!” Haylee smiled. “Sorry I haven’t visited in awhile. I have been swamped… with like so much work. I wanted to get my mind off it. Anything you need done around here?”

“Well, another day, another dollar! If you’re up for it, you can cut those boards. I need ’em down to seven inches.”

“Hm hm, sure.” Haylee put on a worker’s helmet. “Even though I’m really tired of the number 7 at this point.” She put the first plank over the table and began sawing it.

“Wow, that’s a lot-a commotion goin’ on over there! It sounds like somebody robbed a bank.”

“It’s worse than that. My friend’s mom has been murdered.”

“WAA-AA-AAAAH!” Bob jumped and his head leapt off his body for a second. “Cut the camera, I don’t want murder on my show!”

“Sorry I brought it up.” Haylee blushed. “That’s why I came over here, Bob. I…I don’t know what to do.” She frowned. “My friends and family are being attacked left and right. None of us see it coming. We’re trying to stick together so we can protect each other… but I’ve been thinking about splitting up from them.”
“Why would you say that?”

“I mean, I usually handle just fine in a fight, even if I’m not a monster like… some of my other friends… but this is starting to feel like a different league. I feel like… I should stay away from them. I couldn’t protect them, and I would just be in the way… that’s why.”

“Haylee, you should be ashamed for saying that!” Bob stood across the table and looked reprovingly. “Didn’t you learn anything from working in my yard? A building can’t be built by one person alone! We need people to lift the boards, hammer the nails, sit precariously on the scaffolds to eat lunch… and sentient vehicles with eyes and mouths!”

“Hi, Bob!” A red bulldozer/dump truck rolled up. “Your break’s over in two minutes! Get ready to get back on the grind!”

“You know I will, Muck! Say, have you met my student, Haylee?”

“WOW, a living dump truck!” Haylee beamed. “How did you build that?”

“I can build anything, Haylee! I am, after all, a Legoan!” Bob plucked his hand off.

“AAAAAHH!” she screamed. “W-Wait… Legoan? Like from Legola?”

“So you’ve heard of it!” Bob picked his head off. “Legola’s full of Master Builders like me!”

“I know! We flew there and met Lord Business one time.”

“President Business?” Bob put his head back, frowning. “How was he?”

“He’s a pretty sweet guy. He helped us a ton!”

“Well, it’s always good to see the big bosses lending a hand to the little ones!”

“Hee hee, yep! But… back to what we were talking about. I don’t particularly want to abandon my team… but in a situation like this, I wonder if it will matter or not.”

“I may not know what you’re dealing with, but if your team could depend on you before, they’ll be depending on you now. So don’t abandon them, Hayl!”

“Yeah… you’re right. I don’t know what I was thinking.” She smiled. “I should get back to them soon.”

“Rightio! Well-p, break time over. I’m gonna flip on the radio and see what’s jammin’ before I get back to whammin’! …With my hammer.” Bob hopped in a Mario fashion over to a small radio, tuning its dials.

“Whirrrrrrrrr, whrrrrr…”

“What the armadillo?” Bob queried.

A mysterious voice came from the radio. “Hello. This is an anonymous message… from Eldwin. Excuse me for interrupting this evening’s performance of ‘Barbie Girl’, but I have something to say to the Kids Next Door.” Haylee looked over.

“I’m sure by now, you’ve received the gifts left by my… associates.” Sector V listened on the police’s radios. “By this point, President Kuki Beatles should have had her final coffee break.” Wally growled, for he sounded like a certain bully from his childhood. “The thing is, she was a
little rude to the Inspectors For Children’s Safety five months ago, and we were waiting for an excuse to make her pay.”

Cheren, Dillon, Maddy, and the people on KND Moonbase stared at the static Global Communication screen. Mom recognized the voice. “You’ve been busting the Government’s buttons too long, Kids Next Door. Killing two of our presidents, invading Washington, and seeking the Twenty Keys? These gifts are gonna keep comin’. However, I happen to have your raccoon in my captivity. She’s alive, but who’s to say how long? I’m gonna make these instructions clear to you:

“Bring us the Seventh Light, or I’ll turn this raccoon into a fur coat and wear her like a cape! Bring us the Seventh Light, or I’ll tell them to kill some more! I may not be allowed to give orders without an excuse… but boy, am I good at making up excuses. So, what’s it gonna be, KNDorks?! You better decide quick, ’cause the next one’s coming tonight, 7:30! You gonna hand over the Light? We know who she is… and hopefully, you guys know, too. Until next time, from the hijacked radio airwaves. …This was Eldwin.” The message ended.

Outside Sector V Treehouse

The operatives were sitting on the sidewalk, watching the sky as the first hint of orange began to fill the blueness. It was 6:45. “Tonight, huh?” Aurora said. “What are we going to do?”

“Beat the SNOT out of them, of course!” Sheila got up and fist-palmed. “Those heartless blokes are gettin’ the walloping of their lives!”

“But we don’t know where they’ll show up OR who the Seventh Light is!” Chris emphasized. “And unless we find out in the next 45 minutes, they’ll…” They heard a ship’s engine and saw a C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. coming down for landing. Dillon, Carol, and Sector Q stepped off, along with some surprising others.

“Dillon!” Mason beamed. “Vanellope!”

“Maddy!” Chris ran up.

“Chris!” The two embraced in a hug. Chris looked up and saw Shade. “Who’s she?”

“I’m Shade.” she replied. “I helped the Teen Ninjas shrink Maddy.”

“Oh, I remember you!” Chris PUNCHED Shade in the nose.

“I saw that coming.” she noted, holding her bloody nose. “I let you have the honors because you couldn’t hit me last time.”

“Did you guys hear that message?” Mason asked. “CP10 wants the Seventh Light or they’ll keep killing people!”

“We heard.” Drake replied, arms folded. “And… Maddy’s the Seventh Light.”

“Maddy?!” Chris exclaimed.

“I say we hand her over and put a stop to this.” Quill Ramsey said.

“We’re not letting them have her! We’re gonna confront CP10 and stop them once and for all!”

“But we don’t know where they’re gonna show up!” Dillon argued.
“I have an idea.” Harry replied. “They said they knew who the Seventh Light was… so if it is Maddy, then let’s assume they know she lives in Quahog. CP10 is targeting people who the Government has a beef with. Who else lives in Quahog that they have a beef with?”

Dillon gasped. “My dad!”

“So they’re targeting Mr. York.” Chris deduced. “Then that’s where we’ll meet ’em. …But what about Maddy?”

They looked at the girl in question. Maddy looked away thoughtfully. “If they want me… then let’s let them have me.” She fist-palmed.

**Quahog; close to York House**

Yuki and Crystal entered Nolan’s home, prepared to make the flight to Arabia. Hamster Mask watched them a few houses away. He looked at the treehouse that belonged to Sector Q. At 7:30 on the dot, Hamster Mask swung a Tempest Kick and cut the treehouse’s stem. Creakaaaak, the giant tree slowly toppled in the direction of the York House. It squished the house flat, along with any unfortunate home in its range.

The tree was lifted by a giant shadow, conjured by Danika York as she recovered from the rubble, grunting from the strain. “I always knew these… gigantic, precariously planted trees would… backfire on us!” She hurled the tree away and retracted her shadow. “Who the hell chopped it down anyw-”

Rabbit Mask rapid-punched her with chi-blocks from behind. She kicked Danika to the ground and kept her fists raised. A hatch in the road opened as the Sandmobile drove out—Sandman immediately stopped the vehicle and turned off the Batman theme when he saw the destruction. “What the-?!”

Chicken Mask landed on the windshield and stomped it open, grabbed Yuki and Wiccan and throwing them out. He tried to kick Sandman, but he grabbed the chicken’s foot and twisted before pushing him off. Monkey Mask landed behind Crystal, who turned to be met with a punch to the face, and Scarecrow Mask hopped up behind Yuki and started choking him. Sandman tried to climb out of the Sandmobile, but Hamster Mask got behind and kicked him to the road.

Hamster Mask pinned Nolan on his back and raised his Finger Pistol. “You shoulda kept a more secret identity, Marvel Hero.”

“I’m DC!”

“No, they actually keep theirs secret. Say good-bye-” He was knocked off by a Light Fist. An ice blast hit Scarecrow and saved Yuki while Vanellope zipped down and kicked Monkey Mask off of Wiccan. When the glitch girl landed, she winked at her adoptive father. Sandman’s surprise at seeing her was masked. Their saviors were Sector V in a C.O.O.L.-B.U.S..

“Orright,” Sheila spoke with spite, “which of you animals wants to get made into a fur coat?”

“We Mobians consider that offensive.” Shade said.

“I’m half-Mobian.”

“Oh. Then I guess it’s okay.”
The plot twists are only just beginning, my friends. Next time, we will fight CP10. Let’s go Atbashing!

...

FMWVI BLFI MLHVH, RM BLFI VZIH

BLF MVEVI HVV GSVN, BLF MVEVI SVZI
Chapter Summary

Sector V, Zach, and Maddy battle CP10!

Last time, CP10 tried to kill Team Sandman, but then Sector V stopped them! Let’s watch the development!

Chapter 65: Unmasked

Quahog, Rhode Island

Vanellope was standing guard in front of Sandman as Yuki and Wiccan helped him back on his wheelchair. The masked assassins stared up at the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. as Aurora stood on the roof. “CP10, you’ve attacked our relatives for the last time!” the leader shouted. “You wanted us to bring you the Seventh Light, right?”

“Well, here I am!” A S.C.A.M.P.E.R. with a “Q” painted on it hovered over their area, and Maddy Murphy was waving from the window.

“It’s her!” Monkey Mask exclaimed. “The Light!”

Sector Q gasped when a cloaked man in a lion mask landed on the roof of their S.C.A.M.P.E.R.. “You were wise to comply with our request, Kids Next Door. We will take the Light into our custody.”

“You misunderstood!” Chris flew at Lion Mask from above to swing a flame punch. “We never said we’d let you have her!”

“Iron Body!” Lion Mask defended himself, grabbed Chris by the head, and threw him down—Sector Q performed a barrel-roll and flung the agent off the S.C.A.M.P.E.R..

“If you want her, come and GET her!” Drake yelled before the S.C.A.M.P.E.R. flew off toward Quahog. (Play “Lightning Speed” from *Naruto: Shippuden*)

“After them!” Lion exclaimed. The agents leapt in the air and began pursuit with Moon Walks.

“Haylee, let’s move!” Aurora yelled.

“Right!” Haylee turned the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S., and after Vanellope glitched back into the ship, they sped after the agents.

“Should we help them?” Crystal asked.

“I’d like to, but… we have a mission to be on.” Sandman said regrettably. “We shouldn’t doubt them, we’ve already seen them handle worse situations.”

As CP10 was flying toward the city, Hamster Mask looked back. “Those kids is chasin’ us!”
“CP10, divide and conquer! I’ll seek out the Light! I doubt she would flee so easily.” Under Lion Mask’s command, the six agents divided. There was a tiny beetle on Rabbit Mask’s back.

Haylee landed the C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. on the edge of the city as Aurora yelled, “Team, split up in groups, but be careful! Try and find where Sector Q landed.”

“Screw that, I’m thrashin’ the blokes that thrashed me mom!” Sheila ran down the street and cried, “AAAAAH!”

“Sheila, WAIT!”

Sheila stepped on a string that caught her in a net hanging from a streetlight. “AAAAAAH!” It zapped her.

“Boy, and I thought animals were smarter than boobs!” Rabbit Mask laughed before hopping away.

“THERE’S ONE!” Mason and Haruka gave chase. Aurora froze Sheila’s net with ice as the half-raccoon broke it and followed them. The operatives split up in their own groups.

Dillon, Kirie, and Vanellope searched the backstreets and saw Monkey Mask jumping across fire escapes. “It’s the one that hurt Miss Wickens! Mario, get her!” Dillon sent his shadow, and due to it being sunset, Mario was able to increase in size and snatch the female assassin in his hands.

Mario tried to squeeze her, but Monkey Mask broke free with a Tempest Kick, landing on the street to see the three kids run at her.

Vanellope glitched around the air before zipping above Monkey for a Rapid Kick, but the assassin dodged the blows with Paper Art before kicking up at Vanellope. The Program glitched and flew a few feet before Mario swooped by and caught her. “Vanellope, stay back there!” Dillon ordered.

Mario returned to him as Dillon stretched and divided his shadow in multiple directions, attempting to catch Monkey in Shadow Possession. The assassin Moon Walked and evasively dodged, but that’s when two Rainbow Monkeys dropped and smashed her to the ground, invisible to her vision. TEAR HER UP! That lady should be ashamed to wear a Rainbow Monkey mask! Kirie signed with anger in her gestures. Monkey Mask pushed the invisible forces off, but Dillon’s Shadow Possession caught her.

“Finger Pistol was one of the moves, right?” Dillon smirked, positioning his middle and index as the assassin was forced to mimic him. “Then how would you like a taste of your own medicine?” He jabbed the fingers in his waist. Monkey’s fingers didn’t pierce, so he kept trying. “Why isn’t it working?”

“I’ll tell you why.” Monkey replied with a smirk behind her mask. “You can’t make me do what you CAN’T do.”

“But I can still do this!” Vanellope glitched behind for another Rapid Kick, but Monkey did a Shave and zipped behind her. “What?”

“Vanellope!” Mario grabbed Vanel just in time and pulled her back to Dillon, who blew a great cloud of Shadow Fog over the area. “Vanellope, you have to hide!” he yelled as he ran and pulled his sister along.

“What, no!” Vanel pulled her hand free. “Dillon, why did you bring me home if you weren’t gonna let me fight?”
“These guys are on a whole different level, they’re too dangerous for you to fight.”

“So was Dimentio, but I totally clogged HIS brain! Besides, I’ll just possess the nearest technology and come back if I die.”

“I don’t wanna chance that in this place, just stay back.” He gasped, “She’s coming!” and quickly blew another Shadow Breath, fogging the whole backstreet.

Monkey Mask had a hard time seeing, giving Kirie the chance to jump her from behind and catch her head in a leg lock. Kirie tried to pull the mask off, but the agent threw her arms up and bashed either side of her head. She threw Kirie off, then Dillon caught her in a Shadow Veil for a round of punches, only for Monkey to grip his neck and choke. They came out of the Veil, and Vanellope kicked the assassin off, tempting Monkey to stab a Finger Pistol, only for Mario to pull the Program away and bring her to safety.

The Shadow Fog cleared as two Rainbow Monkeys grabbed the assassin’s arms, only to be kicked away again. “Dillon, I can fight just as well as you, why don’t you let me?!” Vanellope yelled.

“Vanellope, I don’t know what you’ve been doing in that Cyber World, but we’ve gotten stronger!”

“Well, I wanna get stronger too, y’know!”

“Vanellope, you’re surviving off other Programs’ pixels for crud’s sake!”

“W…” She glitched, feeling a little offended. “What do you mean by that?”

_Maria pulled them both in Shadow Veil to dodge Monkey Mask’s kick, bringing them over a few blocks to hide in an alley._

“Come on, Vanel, you remember that virus Sollyx implanted you with.” Dillon replied.

“I know THAT, but you sounded like I couldn’t get better at fighting if I wanted to.”

“Well, you might be able to learn, but… improve?”

“…” Vanellope showed hurt in her eyes. She fearlessly zipped out and started glitching around the masked woman as a pixelly circling stream of light.

“Vanellope!”

“Lickety Split Circly KICK!” The circle closed in, and Monkey Mask felt herself whirling from the speedy force—she grabbed Vanellope’s foot.

“You’re so predictable.” The assassin slammed Vanellope back-and-forth on the street before letting her lie. She attempted to stomp the Program beneath her high-heel foot, only for Dillon to pull her to safety again.

_Another street_

Mason, Haruka, and Sheila were still after Rabbit Mask, who looked back and saw the raccoon gaining closer with very fast feet. The beetle on her back leapt off, attached itself to Sheila’s leg, and grew pinchers that sunk into her flesh. “YOWCH!” Sheila stopped to punch the bug—which defended by morphing into a turtle, then turned into a bear to punch Sheila away. Mason and Haruka aimed their rears at the bear and farted a noxious gas. The bear cringed from the scent, giving the twins a chance to blow him back with Gas Bomb.
The bear turned into a cheetah and tackled the two with swift speed, only to be kicked away by Sheila’s Light Kick. The raccoon growled at the animal, her legs shining golden. She dodged the cheetah’s swipes with greater speed than it could match, kicking it from any angle she could find. When the cheetah was on the ground, Sheila ran up to smash him with a Light Fist, but the mammal morphed into a fly, flew to Sheila’s raccoon ear, then became an ant to crawl in.

“Oh God, He’s going for me brain!” She shook frantically.

“We’ll save you, Sheila!” Mason and Haruka shot gas into her ears.

“Duuuhh…” Sheila became dizzy, then the twins held her upside-down by the legs to shake the ant out. He morphed into a cloaked man with a kangaroo mask, and did a breakdance to kick the kids away. He morphed into an eagle to fly off, but Sheila recovered, chased, and leapt high in the air with her raccoon tail to grab his talons. The agent turned into a hippo to squish her to the ground, and when Mason and Haruka ran at him, he turned into a mammoth and swung his giant trunk to bat the two away.

Rabbit Mask hid behind a building corner to see her cohort prevailing. “Guess he doesn’t need me. Now, where did the Light go…” She turned and looked around. “Ooo, a Pet Store! I’ll look for her there… and see if they have bunnies!” She happily jogged up to the store and barged in. “What the-?!” (Pause song.)

In this rather peculiar store, men were laying on beds and letting women pet them softly. The shelves were lined with hands positioned in a way so as to pet. “Velcome, gudentag!” A man with a black mustache who looked a lot like Zach Murphy approached Rabbit Mask. “Are vu here for ein good petting, ja-ja?”

“This… wasn’t what I was expecting for a pet store.” Rabbit said.

“NONSENSE, we make ze best pettings, ja!” Zach pushed her over to a bed, laying her on her front. “Now, which woudl you like: ze gentle mother, ze happy little girl, ze evil mastermind, or ze rich girl?”

“I… don’t know? What’s rich girl like?”

“RICH GIRL!!”

“BUNNYYYYY!” Carol Masterson dashed in, wearing her green dress and puffy hair long. She hugged Rabbit Mask tight and scratched her with her long nails. “Bunnyyyyy!”

“OW!” Rabbit yelped.

“Bunnyyyy!”

“Ow!”

“BUNNYYYYY—OOOOOWWW!” Carol was shocked. (Resume song.)

“Joke’s on you, I had barbed wire under a layer of this cloak!” The assassin kicked Carol away, got to her feet, and attempted to jump on Zach—his head shot up like a spring and sent Rabbit flying through the ceiling. She recovered to see Zach spring up with her.

“Joke’s on YOU, my mom was a bed! My father is Sheriff Woody!”

“That’s right.” Rabbit Mask turned and saw a giant Sheriff Woody and a bed with eyes, a mouth,
and a star blanket. “And we don’t appreciate you attacking our Zachykins!” The bed and Woody jumped on her, but Rabbit Mask did a Shave and let the two fall through a trapdoor, landing in a spike pit.

“You don’t think I’m one step ahead of you?” Rabbit smirked. “I see through all your little tricks. For example,” she pulled out a bomb shaped like a Trix Yogurt container, “why do you think I’m in a rabbit mask?!” She threw the bomb at Zach, exploding him in colorful mist instead of yogurt, which Rabbit Mask jumped through feet first and kicked Zach off the roof. He splashed in a puddle, quickly dodged when Rabbit stomped down—the assassin splashed in the deep puddle. She struggled to swim and slowly sank, but was saved when Jar Jar Blinks shot up from below and kicked her out and to the air, landing a storm of kicks before kicking Rabbit to the street.

“Have I introduced you to Jar Jar?” Zach asked. “He’s my long-lost older brother!”

“That can’t be possible!” Rabbit yelled.

“IS NOT!!” Jar Jar screamed. He grabbed Zach and cried against his shirt, “PLEASE don’t cut me from the story, Zachypoo! I-sa sorry about spilling the monkeys in de auditorium, I-sa gonna mop them up, I’ll mop up ALL de monkeys!”

“Jar Jar, it’s okay, I forgive you—AAAAH!” The two were split up by Rabbit’s Tempest Kick. Scarecrow Mask ran from Chris and Aurora toward a towering skyscraper before making a great leap all the way to the top of said skyscraper. “Ha ha!” he laughed and looked down at them. “They’ll never have a pair of legs as spry as mine! What?” He heard an engine behind him and turned to see Haylee and Artie in their C.O.O.L.-B.O.T..

“And you’ll never make a ship as spry as this one!” Haylee retorted before the robot punched down at the short assassin. Scarecrow Mask jumped and hopped in midair, easily dodging their punches before launching himself against Haylee’s windshield. The window cracked, but Haylee withstood before spinning the robot around to shake him off. Artie grabbed the agent in the robot’s fists and rocketed toward the street, smashing him into a crater. However, Scarecrow switched to Iron Body to lessen the pain of the collision, then he quickly swung Tempest Kick to cut the robot in half, separating both cockpits.

Chris and Aurora made it to Quahog Town Square, which had a giant statue of a clam. “Where the hell are they?!” Chris angrily asked with his hands aflame.

“The others are already fighting agents, but Maddy’s still safe.” Aurora reported.

“I wish these CP Punks would stop acting like cowards, get out here and fight!” Chris was then kicked from the side and flown several feet. He got up, wiping the twin cuts on his cheek and seeing the chicken-masked assassin. He narrowed his eyes at the killer, and Chicken narrowed his eyes behind his mask. Chris charged up and threw flaming punches that Chicken blocked, flipping behind the boy to kick him down. Chris rolled on his back—grabbing Chicken’s foot when he stomped down, and the boy kicked on his jetshoes and flew down the street, carrying the assassin by the foot and letting his face bash against streetlights.

“I guess that leaves you to me.” Aurora turned to face Hamster Mask. “Or maybe you can tells me where the Light is real quick.”

“We have two Lights in our party, you’ll have to be more specific.” She smirked.

“Just the one will do.”
“No deal.” Aurora blasted ice from her left hand, but the agent dodged with Shave, zipped up to her, and threw a punch that Aurora ducked before punching her flaming right hand at his gut. Hamster Mask flew back, then Aurora leapt above and stomped down with her ice-imbued leg. Hamster recovered and swung several Tempest Kicks that Aurora dodged by flying with Rocket Boost, resulting in the clam statue being torn up.

Aurora landed and stomped her foot to open the Ice Gate, her body swallowed in the coldest ice. She froze the ground of the park, and when Hamster Mask flew up with Moon Walk, Aurora shot rounds of ice. He was able to dodge until a blast froze his right arm, then Aurora fired twin beams that sent him flying. Hamster landed in the street, so Aurora skied up to the frozen opponent. The assassin broke free, Shaved behind her, and jabbed his fingers in Aurora’s- “OH, not again!” she yelped.

“Finger Pistol: 200 Extra Years!” The icebender was launched upward, but she didn’t fly far. Hamster Mask was ready to Shave underneath and punch her away. Aurora’s Ice Fury wore off, but she ignored her exhaust and dodged a Tempest Kick, doing a Fire Cartwheel at the agent, but Hamster Mask dodged in front of her and kicked her stomach.

“Ah!” Aurora grunted after landing on her front. “You know, why do you Rokushiki creeps get a kick out of poking my butt?”

“Oh, touchy area?” Hamster raised his hands. “Sorry about that. How ’bout I get you in the head instead.” He zipped up to stab Finger Pistol at her head, but Aurora jumped up and spin-kicked him in the head. (End song.)

Across the city

Sector Q landed on the other side of the city, close to the pier. The five members, plus Maddy and Shade, were off the ship and looking around. “Maddy, I fear for your safety.” Shade said. “Your training is still incomplete, you haven’t mastered Observation Haki.”

“If I’m not here in the city, CP10 might retreat and kill someone else. They’ll stay as long as I do, and that’ll give us a chance to beat them here and now.”

“For now, it’s best to keep her hidden, otherwise they’ll all be on her.” Drake said. “If the situation gets messy, we’ll join the fray.”

“We might have to join a little early.” Maddy said, pointing up at a building. Lion Mask was staring down at them, his cloak blowing in the wind.

The assassin rocketed down—the operatives braced their selves, but the assassin zipped beside each one with Shave and punched them unconscious. After taking Drake down last, he turned to Maddy—she ran up and dealt an Armament uppercut that knocked him back. The lion landed on his feet. “You’re foolish to try and fight me. I defeated your bodyguards in one fell swoop.”

“And I punched you. I scored the first hit and you’re threatening me?”

“A lucky maneuver on your part. It will be your last. CP10 was ordered to kill you, Maddy Murphy. You are the Seventh Light… the last one before the accursed prophecy sees completion. By killing you, it will never come to be. This town will be your grave.”

“Can my scary killer at least take off his mask?”

“I could… but I want to see if you can earn the right to see my face!” He Shaved. (Play “I Think You Should Do As He Says” from Batman: Arkham City!)
“MADDY!” Shade grabbed her friend and jumped away, dodging Lion’s Finger Pistol. “Maddy, we should call one of the others to help us!”

“Fair enough. Guys, Sector Q got knocked out!” she yelled into her communicator. “There’s an agent chasing us, anyone wanna help out?!”

“We’re having problems of our own!” Dillon yelled, attempting to hit Monkey Mask with a Shadow Shockwave, but the woman stabbed his stomach with a Finger Pistol. Kirie tossed flower shurikens, but Monkey defended with Iron Body, and when Vanellope zipped above, the agent stabbed her with Finger Pistol and threw the Program away. “Vanellope!” Dillon tried to approach his glitching sister, but faltered due to the wound in his stomach.

Sheila spun twin Light Fists and shot them at Kangaroo Mask, but he dodged by morphing into a puppy, lunging at Sheila, and becoming a tiger to bite her in the waist. Mason blasted the animal with a S.P.I.C.E.R., then the agent flew up to him as a bat and started nipping his face. Mason punched the bat off—it turned into a jellyfish, landed on Haruka, and zapped her in the face. Haruka threw the fish on the ground, and before Sheila’s eyes, it morphed into a naked Marine the Raccoon.

Mason and Haru shut their eyes, but Sheila showed anger and rage in her eyes. Sheila shot Light Fists at the four-legged beast, but Kangaroo Mask dodged and slashed her in the face, going behind to bite her tail. “I think I can beat him with this Gold Flurp!” Mason declared, pulling the gold soda can out.

“No Mason, you know that stuff hurts your kidneys!” Haruka yelled.

“I have you to get it out of me!”

“I can’t usually get it all out! Besides, we have six agents after this, just hold onto it!”

Chris dropped Chicken Mask in an alley, landed, and tried to punch the agent, but Chicken grabbed and twisted his fist before shoving Chris in a trashcan. He kicked the trashcan out in the street to be hit by cars, and after Chris was bounced out, Chicken Mask leapt over to swing a bent pipe at him. Chris grabbed a sewer lid to use as a shield, and their scuffle caused several cars to swerve away and crash. Chicken Mask kicked the shield away, grabbed Chris in his talon, and spun before chucking the boy through a building window.

Chris landed in someone’s living room, scaring away the kids watching TV. Chicken Mask jumped in as they resumed their fight, wherein they knocked down a shelf and spilled a jar of Minish Dust over their selves. The two shrank down and fought their way behind the TV. They ended up displayed on the screen, and this happened to be the scene in *Willy Wonka* where Charlie pulls the candybar out of the TV. The fighters were pulled out with it, growing to normal size as they punched Charlie, Mike Teavee, and Willy Wonka unconscious.

They smashed out of the house’s TV as a repairman came. Chicken Mask knocked him out and stole his hammer while Chris swiped a wrench. Chicken swung the hammer down at him, but Chris caught it with the wrench and tossed away. Chicken knocked Chris up through the ceiling with an uppercut, and he was in a bathroom occupied by Cleveland Brown. Chicken Mask came up, and when trying to kick Chris, he kicked Cleveland’s tub through the wall and let him crash on the street. The shower was still there—Chicken Mask grabbed it, turned it up full blast, and burned Chris in the eyes.

Maddy and Shade ran into a building and dashed up several floors, scaring the people in offices. “We’ll need to formulate a battle plan!” Shade panted. “Hopefully, he won’t find us in—” The
ceiling caved in and Lion Mask dropped in. The agent swung Tempest Kick, the girls dodged as Maddy ran to kick him in the leg, knocking him off his feet with the Armament blow. She punched down, but the agent flipped up and aimed to stomp down, but Shade saved Maddy again. “Grab onto my back!”

Maddy did so, and Shade punched a window open to jump out and grab another building. She hurriedly climbed up, but both girls sensed Lion Mask pursuing them with Moon Walks. Shade climbed higher than the opposite building’s roof, so she jumped to it and jumped the following buildings with Maddy on her back. Lion Mask caught up with multiple Shaves, forcing Shade to stop and defend from his attack. Lion Mask zipped beside—Shade punched, but he dodged with Paper Art, kicking Shade like a kickball across several rooftops. Maddy threw a punch, but Lion Mask zipped above and swung both legs like an ‘X’.

Maddy dodged the crossed Tempest Kicks, which destroyed the roof and caused her to fall in. The businessmen in this room screamed and ran, and Maddy recovered in time to see Lion Mask land in with her.

The assassin stood quietly and stared at her. Maddy fearlessly ran up to throw a punch, which Lion Mask dodged before punching her against the wall. “Your friends were always amusing to me, Maddy.” The lion said. “To challenge Pirate Emperors, gods, and World Government officials alike, in an endless game of pretend where the world belongs to them. How utterly pathetic. I’ve read tales on their endeavors for the past twenty years. While they have been helpful in detaining such criminals, they have let their success get to them.”

“And who are you to say that? Just take off your mask!”

“You have quite the mouth on you, brat. Giving orders to your killer.”

“I’m assuming you have a mouth, too. That’s where I wanna hit you!”

“Very well... If that is the only way to invoke your fear.”

Aurora dodged Hamster Mask’s Finger Pistols, got behind, and swung a flaming kick at his rear. He dropped and rolled to put the fire out, and the clothing underneath seemed to be khakis. Hamster faced back at Aurora and said, “Door.” opening the ground like a door and dropping in. A confused Aurora felt her ankles be grabbed, looking down to see two hands sticking out of holes in the ground. Her feet were pulled in, and Hamster Mask hopped out the ground-door a few feet away.

He charged over to stomp Aurora, but she slipped off her shoes and used Rocket Boost to fly out of her trap. She arched over him and blasted ice down, freezing his mask, and after landing, she kicked a flame up and burned the Hamster Mask off. “Alright,” she smirked, “let’s see who you REALLY are!”

The perpetrator decided to look up after his mask melted. Aurora gasped at the red-haired man with a round nose and freckles. “You’re…

Number 6 of CP10
Bartender of Cleveland’s Milk Bar
LIME RICKEY

“Oopsie!” Rickey shrugged, slashing a Tempest Kick that forced Aurora to jump. A streetlight was chopped, and it fell over to crush her. Rickey spoke in his walky-talky, “This is Number 6, I’ve been unmasked. Ready to kill the witness. Over.” He zipped up to stab Aurora in the face, but she
dodged her head and froze the ground. Rickey stumbled slightly, and Aurora was able to squeeze out of the streetlight and ski around the frozen ground on her socks. Rickey Moon Walked to chase her, but Aurora activated Fire Fury, bursting into a fire spire when he flew above her. Rickey hit the ground and used Paper Art to evade her flames.

“RAAAAH!” Zach Murphy chased Rabbit Mask down a street—stepping on a rake she had lain, which flipped up and bashed Zach in the face. “YAAAAAI-!” Jar Jar charged, he stepped on a puddle of puke. “Uh-oh. WAAAAH!” A hidden crab snapped his toe, he ran around trying to shake it.

Rabbit Mask zipped up and kicked Zach’s head off—it flew around like an untied balloon, and then a squad of Balloon Police began chasing Rabbit, along with barking balloon dogs. The assassin smirked and popped each cop with a simple Finger Pistol, but Zach’s headless body became a cannon that blasted a swarm of rubber ducks. Rabbit Mask dodged with Shave, and when Jar Jar ran up to shove roasted lobster in her face, she jumped above and kicked him away.

“Hmph!” Rabbit chortled. A bundle of dollars landed beside her, and a family of rabbits hopped up to fondle it lovingly. “Awwww, bunnies!” She knelt down to pet the adorable animals. “You wanna be rich bunnies, huh you little Money Bunnies?”

Carol Masterson grabbed her mask from behind. “Guess Cash Combat still has some worth!” She pulled it off. Rabbit Mask was a black-haired girl of 17 years old. “Gasp! You’re iCarly!”

Number 5 of CP10
A Nickelodeon star
MIRANDA COSG-

“I’M MEGAN PARKER!!” She abruptly shouted. “NOT MIRANDA! NOT CARLY! I’M MEGAN!!”

“I’m sorry!” Carol yelped. “That was your Drake & Josh character, I like her!”

“Unbelievable!” Zach gaped. “A Nickelodeon actress by day,” he imagined Megan singing a song on a flashy stage, “and hit assassin by night.” He imagined Megan smirking as three people lay dead behind her.

“That’s not all I do.” Megan smiled mischievously. “I’m called Megan the Prankster. You got something on your nose.” She pointed at Zach.

“I do-?” He raised his hand to his face—he unknowingly lifted a syringe that poked and gave him pimples.

“Hm hm hm!” Megan giggled. “I swallowed the Prank-Prank Fruit, so I can spawn a trap anywhere at anytime. Like the infinite whoopee cushion in your skirt.” She pointed at Carol.

Poooooooooooooooot…

Carol panicked. “AAAAH! NO, I’M NOT DOING THAT, GET IT OUT OF ME!” She ran around in a panic.

Kirie Beatles swiftly dodged Monkey Mask’s kicks, doing a twirl as she leapt and tried to kick her mask off. The woman grabbed the girl’s foot and tossed her away, but the assassin was then grabbed by a giant orange hand. The hand originated from Midna’s ponytail. “Don’t mind me, just an all-powerful Firstborn you keep stuffed under your sweater. By the way, Dillon, deodorant, use it much?”
“Keep her steady, Midna! Mario, get that mask!” His shadow flew over and clutched the blue monkey mask. She shook her head to keep Mario from pulling it off, but Midna yanked the assassin and chucked her one block down, and Mario was holding the mask. The female assassin recovered and showed the kids her blonde hair and blue eyes.

Number 3 of CP10
LESLIE MEIJER

Kirie stared at Leslie with a look of terrific betrayal. My mom’s assistant…

“Well, I guess the secret’s out.” Leslie put her glasses back on. “I’m sorry about your mom, Kirie.”

Dillon glared. “You’re the one that killed Mrs. Beatles.”

“No, it wasn’t me. Number 4 was the one who was supposed to sneak in and poison her coffee as she was getting it. A pretty tricky murder to get away with, but you can always count on him for that.”

“You’re responsible either way, you heartless scumbag!” Dillon expanded a massive Shadow Shockwave and sent Mario to furiously maul her, but Leslie escaped with Shave. Vanellope was zipping around behind her for another Lickety Split attack, but Leslie again used Paper Art to avoid the following kicks.

Leslie was grabbed by an invisible Rainbow Monkey, and already Kirie had summoned an army of Rainbow Monkeys to attack the traitor. “I knew Miss Sanban had the ability to sense and speak to Rainbow Monkey spirits.” Leslie said. “It seems you have that power, too. I might not be able to see them, but I’ve come prepared.” She pulled her arm free, reached in her pocket, and pulled out a whistle designed like the Demon Apes from Mt. Gnaa.

When she blew in the whistle, the Rainbow Monkeys turned dark with red eyes, growling venomously. “Bye.” Leslie used Shaves and Moon Walks to get away from the action, and when the Dark Apes tried to attack the kids, Midna quickly tossed Twilight Balls to destroy them. Vanellope glitched up the building, glaring at Leslie once she was on the same roof. “Vanellope!” Dillon used Shadow Glide to fly up. When Vanel was building up a Lightspeed Kick, Leslie readied to stab with Finger Pistol—Mario carried Vanellope away as Dillon tried to shove his S.C.A.M.P.P. in Leslie’s throat, but the woman smacked it away before stabbing Dillon in both shoulders.

Kirie stayed behind Midna while the Firstborn struck the Dark Apes with Hair Tentacles. She looked up and saw a familiar pigeon fly overhead.

Artie and Haylee chased Scarecrow Mask to a construction site, trying to shoot the jumpy assassin with Diffusion Rifles. Their misses resulted in several planks being disintegrated, and the terrified carpenters immediately fled the field. “That’s not how you treat 2x4’s!” Scarecrow yelled before touching a few planks. They formed faces and came to life, jumping toward the kids to bite them.

Scarecrow swung precise Tempest Kicks to slice the rifles. After Haylee kicked the planks off, she grabbed her extendo wrench and tried to hit him with it. The assassin blocked her blows with his arms, but Haylee determinedly kept swinging. “You hurt our friends and family just to get to us,” she said with hate. “If you wanted to fight us so badly, why not a friendly invitation?!”

“You wouldn’t have felt like responding, of course!”

“UGH!” Haylee swung stronger blows, forcing Scarecrow to block faster. He threw a punch at
Haylee’s head. “AAAAH!” She spun and swung her wrench with greater vigor, batting the assassin’s head clean off. The mask popped off when it hit the ground, but his body quickly ran up to screw him back on.

Haylee was horrified when she saw his beady-eye face and yellow worker’s hat. “Ah, nuts.” Bob said.

“Bob… it can’t be.”

“If it’s any consolation Haylee, you really were a great student.” Bob hopped over to a concrete mixer. “But now I can show you my secret! I ate the Life-Life Fruit, so anything I touch comes to life! Like so.” He touched the mixer, and it formed a face.

“Hi, Bob! Wonderful night for an assassination!”

“Wonderful as they come! Say, could you shoot those kids with cement?”

“With pleasure!” The living mixer blasted cement globs at Haylee and Artie.

Chris Uno took the shower from Chicken Mask, wrapped it around his head, and tried to choke him, but the chicken escaped with Shave and stabbed Chris in the back with Finger Pistol. Chris jumped away, kicked on his rockets, and pushed Chicken out via the hole in the wall. He flew all the way to the sky with the chicken in tow, bursting through the bottom of an airplane. Alarms blared and passengers screamed, but this didn’t stop their fight.

When the airbags lowered, Chicken Mask shoved one in Chris’s mouth, trying to overdose him with oxygen. Chris countered by grabbing some discarded airline food and shoving it through the mask’s beak. Chicken choked and backed away, then Chris jumped and kicked him to a seat between two fat people. Chicken Mask struggled to escape and was suffocating, and Chris kept punching during his weak moment. The chicken broke free and did a cartwheel Tempest Kick, slicing the plane in two, passengers screaming as they took the fall. Chris spun like a torpedo and rocketed down at the chicken, his body burning like a meteor as he shoved the chicken toward the earth.

Peter Griffin was walking by casually, but when he saw the meteor, he ran away before it crashed. Chris climbed out of the crater, horribly beaten and tattered. When he and Peter looked, the mask had come off. The assassin stood, and with his cloak burned, he revealed to be a yellow-feathered man-size chicken.

Ernie narrowed his eyes at both Chris and Peter, both of his hated enemies. Chris and Peter exchanged glances and nodded. Both guys ran up to throw punches at the chicken, but Ernie was quick to defend, leaping upside-down to attack both with a spin-kick. Ernie lifted Peter to squash the downed Chris, but Chris punched Peter up, twirled the fat man like a basketball, and set him aflame to kick Peter at Ernie like a meteor.

Kangaroo Mask was still in the form of Marine, punching Sheila repeatedly across the face before
she was flown back. Mason and Haruka ran up, but the animal kicked both legs and knocked them back. Sheila recovered, and the beast that was impersonating her mother was snarling monstrously. The more Sheila looked at the beast, the more angry she became. “You’re… not… my… MUM!!” Sheila’s entire body turned gold, and in a split second, she zipped 5 meters behind the agent.

The attack was delayed, but in time the lightspeed blow struck and launched the agent across the city. With lightspeed, Sheila caught up and kicked him all the way back. Mason and Haruka watched as he collided and his mask came off. Sheila landed, still brimming gold as she waited for the assassin to stand. When he did, the three gaped at his blonde, bowl-cut hair, and 5-o’clock shadow. “Mr. Beatles?!” Mason exclaimed.

“Who the hell is that?” The man asked with a gruff Australian accent. Sheila bypassed her shock—the man used Paper Art, but Sheila’s lightspeed was able to strike and blow him skyward. The agent morphed into a mammoth and crashed back on the ground, and even Sheila’s lightspeed attacks couldn’t budge him.

“I wonder if that’s a Devil Fruit power?” Haruka dialed her phone. “I’m calling Caesar to see if he knows!” (End song.)

**Elsewhere**

After Shade recovered from the kick, she saw a pigeon fly toward the building where Maddy was. The man slowly pulled off his lion mask. Maddy looked up when a pigeon flew in and landed on his shoulder. Once the mask was off, Rob Lucci shook his long black hair free and opened his green eyes. The left one was blackened. “It was getting a bit stuffy.”

**Number One of CP10**

**Marine’s assistant carpenter**

**ROB LUCCI**

“The life of an assassin spy is not easy.” he said with his dark, whispery voice, wiping the black paint off his left eye. “Nor is pretending to be a mute shipwright for two years straight. Relying on some dimwitted bird to get my words out.”

“Screw you, man! Coo-kachoo!” Hattori cawed.

“We members of CP10 assume the identities of everyday people to acquire information or spy on targets. I would have liked to kill Marine much earlier… but I suppose, if I hadn’t helped construct the Sunny Day, the Kids Next Door wouldn’t have been able to destroy Big Mom. Evidently, either party could have been destroyed.” Lucci smirked. “And either death would have worked in our favor.

“It’s regrettable we didn’t have the chance to kill Nolan York before you arrived.” Lucci continued. “Ironic… I met him roughly 14 years ago when he visited GUN H.Q., when he wanted to establish a town for those strays from the Mushroom Kingdom. If I’d have known he was going to become a criminal… I would’ve slain him then and there.”

“Is that all you think about is killing people?” Maddy questioned.

“It’s become a habit of mine. A tasty one.” He licked his teeth. “Ever since I was young, people said I was an animal. But I never thought slaying children would be in my job description. Never did I think… children could do so much.”

“If you know what we can do, why don’t you all leave us alone? You must know how this is
“You are mistaken. We are unlike your past opponents... We have a special power on our side.”

“Tell me that when you’re laying on the floor. AAAH-!” She ran at him with an Armament fist.

“Iron Body!” Lucci hardened himself, but the Armament punch to the gut forced him to hack out saliva and fall backwards. Hattori flew out of the room.

“You’re really not as tough as I thought you’d be.”

Perhaps my mistake was underestimating you. I’ll rectify that.” Lucci jumped back up and stabbed Finger Pistols, but Maddy used Observation to dodge each blow and swing a kick—Lucci blocked with his own kick and shot his fingers at her head, but Maddy grabbed them in an Armament hand and blocked. She jumped and punched Lucci in the face, knocking him on his back.

Shade watched from the hole in the roof as Lucci got back up. This isn’t the potential I was expecting from CP10... He must be holding back.

“So, Haki is what you study... that should make you a worthy opponent. Rokushiki is a rival form of Haki designed a few centuries ago. Knowing Haki was a means of molding one’s own Personal Chi, martial artists believed there were other ways of doing so. And all kinds of advanced martial arts were created. In those days, the Cipher Pols were the only ones deserving of the ways of Rokushiki.” An invisible force brimmed around Lucci’s body. “We agents who could master the six ways of molding our chi were superior to any Haki user. In this era, that glory belongs to me.”

He planted both fists together. “Six King Gun!” Maddy ran when Lucci unleashed a beam of concentrated chi. It cut a path in the room’s wall, but he stopped shortly after. Maddy ran to attack, but Lucci Shaved behind to kick—Maddy dodged to the left while Lucci jumped away.

“But since people have referred to me as an animal for so long, I began to think humanity was not my style.” Lucci took off his robe and exposed his muscular shirtless body. “I wanted to change my appearance... and the Devil Fruit I was given helped greatly.” He hunched over and groaned as claws grew from his fingers, and brown fur grew on his body. “ROOOAR!” He roared like a lion as his teeth became fangs, his black hair shaped like a lion’s mane, and before long he had the complete form of a lion. But not just any lion. “The Lion-Lion Fruit... Scar Model.”

“...Cool! I like Lion King, too!” Maddy said spritely.

“ROOOAR!” He was on all fours and growled with hunger.

“...But you probably don’t wanna talk about it.”

With another hiss, Lucci pounced and swiped his claw, but Maddy dodged and punched his face, only for Lucci to grab and throw her across the room. The lion pounced up and punched her to the right, and when Maddy ran up to punch twin Armaments, Lucci Shaved behind, snatched her hair in his teeth, and swung her like a ragdoll before slamming her against the wall. (Play “Torn Apart” from Bleach!)

Maddy got up and ran to punch again, but Lucci bit her fist in his teeth, forcing her to pull back as blood leaked. Lucci zipped behind her to deal a Finger Pistol—Maddy whipped around and raised a hand, but the lion’s claw pierced the Armament. “OW!” Maddy grabbed her bleeding palm—Lucci scratched her across the face, punched her, then kicked her away. Maddy recovered, feeling woozy from the loss of blood. Lucci was on all fours, snarling like the hungry lion he was... Lucci
pranced forward and threw a combo of scratches across her face, smacking her away again. Maddy jumped up to punch him in the stomach, but bruised her fist against his Iron Body. Lucci grabbed her shoulder in his teeth and threw her across the room.

Lucci calmly approached her on his paws, crawling around his fallen prey. “Do you know what the true power in this universe is?” he snarled in her ear. “It isn’t bending… or magic… It’s not even willpower. The true power in this universe is law. And he who defines law controls the universe. And the law does not want you to live…”

Maddy gasped for breath, making a small puddle from her blood. “Why…Why are you doing this… Do you want the Apocalypse… to destroy everything?”

“It’s not what I want… it’s what the Government wants. The Government does not want the Twenty Keys to come together… it is the law that they should not. It is the ultimate order. I care not if the cosmos is destroyed… I only do as the Government demands. Tell me… why should the fate of anything be left to feeble children like you? You, who have struggled only to find your way to my fangs. You are nothing… You are powerless to defeat us… Nigel Uno was powerless to The King… You are powerless before the law.”

“MADDY!” Shade pounced at Lucci—the lion spun and smacked her across the room. Shade held her blackened eye and stared terrified as the lion crept up with hunger. “I’ve got no choice… I’m going Primal!” Shade’s pupils retracted, her fur became spiky and messy, and she was on all fours snarling back. With faster reflexes, she dodged Lucci’s swipes and pounced on his back, trying to tear his ear off in her fangs, but Lucci grabbed her off, threw her on the floor, and began furiously clawing Shade’s suit off.

Lucci felt something grab his tail. He turned and saw a tired Maddy, barely keeping herself on foot. Lucci spun and flew her against the wall. Shade pounced on him again, but Lucci grabbed and bashed her around the floor before throwing the exhausted echidna beside Maddy. “You can die alongside your pet.” The lion crept up again. “This world was never meant to be yours, Child… nor did it ever belong to your childish empire.” He planted his claw against her. “Go to the Underworld and tell that to all the operatives who have died before you. Tell them… Long live the adults… Long live the law… and long live… The King.”

“Why don’t you say that to my face?!” Lucci’s ears perked. He looked up, and none other than Cheren Uno was standing over the hole. “Because I’M THE KING OF THE WORLD!!” His sword aimed down, Cheren jumped in, but Lucci dodged.

Throughout the city, the CP10 agents looked up as KND ships began to fill the skies. Sector W7 landed in the town square to face Lime Rickey, and Mocha cracked the knuckles of her giant fists. Sector W landed in the construction site, where Anthony used his earthbending to free Haylee and Artie from their concrete traps.

Sector JP surrounded the man who looked like Mr. Beatles, and even Jinta found it hard to believe his idol would be involved in this.

Sector IC faced Leslie on the rooftops, but Miyuki was looking at the building where Cheren landed.

Chris and Peter Griffin (er, Chris Uno in case you’re confused) were still locked in their fight against Ernie the Chicken, who managed to grab both opponents and toss them back. Water slapped him from behind, and Ernie turned and growled at Melody, Danny, and Eric. While the waterbenders looked fierce, Eric was hiding behind Mel like a coward.
Finally, after Megan Parker had Zach and Jar Jar trying to tug open a pickle jar, she turned and saw Sunni, Panini, Francis, and Marcus. “Now you have to fight ALL of us!” Francis declared.

“We’ll never let you hurt our friends again!” Anthony yelled.

“And you’ll never knock us off our feet!” Aisa followed.

“Your time is up.” Miyuki finished.

“…” Bob the Builder smiled. “CP10, I think it’s time to regroup.” In a flash—he was gone. All the agents vanished with Shave.

Rob Lucci growled and lunged at Cheren, who clashed his sword against the lion’s claws. When Lucci stabbed a Finger Pistol, the Mirror Shield bounced it back. Cheren slashed the lion in the chest—“TEMPEST KICK!” Cheren was struck from behind and knocked on his front. He turned to find Leslie, Bob, and Megan behind him. He faced front to see Lucci getting up, but when he did, someone stuck him in the rear.

“FINGER PISTOL!” Ernie the Chicken shouted. “1200 Years of DEATH!”

“AAAAAHHH!” The blast knocked Cheren unconscious. Lucci turned and saw that Maddy and Shade were gone. He approached the open window and saw no sign of them from this twenty-story height. He morphed back into a human and saw their seventh member floating outside as a Sky Whale. He turned to the others as Ernie lifted Cheren over his shoulder. “Let us return to base. The children will be helpless without their leader.”

Now attacking the KND ships were Teen Ninja ships, and some of these Teens were Nimbi, catching the aircraft in tornadoes. From the ground, the operatives saw CP10 riding the Sky Whale’s back, flying away from the city. The Three Sacred Treasures hit the ground near Aurora, so she immediately knew. “CHEREN!”

“Leader.” Rob Lucci spoke into his communicator. “We retrieved the Supreme Leader and are bringing him back to base.”

“Excellent job, Lucci! President Morgan’s gonna be super happy to see her nephew again! And what of the Seventh Light?”

“I could not confirm her death before the operatives arrived… but she was heavily wounded.”

“It don’t matter. If they even think of comin’ to Enies Lobby, we got more than a few surprises in store!”

“All in all, I say this was a job well done, team!” Bob cheered.

“Drinks are on me when we get back!” Rickey offered.

“I wouldn’t mind a Paw-bagawket right now!” Ernie said.

“That’s right, brats, we have your leader!” Nya LaMar shouted. “And if any of you think of following, I’ll tell them to kill him right now! See ya later, KN-Losers!” And the Teens joined CP10, leaving Quahog and flying into the sunset. (End song.)

Shade dragged an unconscious Maddy by the shirt with her teeth, still half-naked and in Primal Mode. She saw Aurora and Sector W7 at town square, so once she arrived, the echidna dropped her friend and fell tired. “Maddy!” Mocha jogged up and scooped her bleeding little friend in her
hands. “We need to take her to Melody quickly!”

“I’ll call her over!” Aurora switched on her wristwatch.

Haruka had already phoned Caesar and allowed her uncle to watch the last few moments of the attack. Caesar was awestruck after what he saw. Tears were streaming down his pale white face, and he spoke in whimpers. “My Mammal Fruit…”

I wasn’t expecting to drag the fight throughout the whole chapter… but Ah did. ;P I’ve been planning CP10 since 2013, I hinted three of the members in Chapter 4 of Operation: RECLAIM. Obviously, they’re based off CP9 from One Piece, except they are crossover characters. Next time, Maddy dies from blood loss—I’m just kidding, we’re gonna do an Emily stage. So uh, yeah, need to cool down from that action. Until next time.
Team Emily infiltrates GUN Area Delta, where Emily learns an amazing secret!

So, my cat Berry died today, June 4, 2016. Naturally, I’m a little bummed out… There’s a Number Cipher in the upcoming stage.

Chapter 66: Metal

Quahog, Rhode Island

All of the operatives regrouped in the town square after the battle. Maddy awoke with aching pains, confused when she saw the various sectors. She was wrapped up in bandages, and so was Chris – the only other person who took sufficient damage. Melody Jackson healed them all with waterbending, and at 9:00pm, the sky had a faint amount of orange left.

“Oh, Maddy. You’re awake.” Mocha sighed with relief. Maddy looked left to find the giant on her knees.

“Mocha? What’s going on? Did we win?”

“CP10 retreated and kidnapped Cheren.” Mocha frowned. “That animal dragged you back to us.”

Maddy saw Shade asleep on the ground in her torn jumpsuit, her fur still messy. “Wait… they took Cheren?”

“They did.” Francis said regretfully.

The operatives heard tires screeching in the distance and saw a taxi speeding up. It screeched to a halt as a familiar gas-bodied scientist flew out. “COME BAAAAACK!” Caesar reached to the sky in despair.

“Oh, look. It’s Caesar.” Haruka said casually.

“THAT BOY!” Caesar cried. “That was my… Th-That was… MY MAMMAL-MAMMAL FRUUUUUIT!”

“Your Mammal-Mammal Fruit?” Aurora repeated.

Caesar sniffled and wiped a tear. “The Mammal-Mammal Fruit was literally the fruit of my research! Fifteen years ago, I created it… the ultimate Zoan Fruit that could change the user into any animal! The perfect wereanimal who could become them all and have no weaknesses! They could even become aquatic creatures and swim in water. GAAAH, I WAS GONNA MAKE MILLIONS FROM IT! But then he stole it… That sneaky little brat stole my prize! I’ll never forget him… JOEY BEATLES!”

Sector V gasped. “So that man that looked like Mr. Beatles…” Mason realized. “That was the Uncle Joey Kirie’s parents told us about?”
“The one they said went missing?” Dillon recalled. “Five years after the Firstborn Quest.”

“But when we fought him, he acted like he didn’t know who he was.” Mason followed. “I wonder what could’ve happened to him…”

“If I had the chance to touch him, I could see his past.” Miyuki mentioned. “Then I could tell you.”

“Or maybe Caesar can.” Haruka said suspiciously.

Caesar turned to them and said angrily, “Joey was one of the boys I kidnapped 15 years ago, for the same reason I kidnapped you and that fatheaded brat over there.” Mocha growled at the scientist. “It was around the same time I finished my Mammal Fruit. Then one day, my precious fruit was gone! And Joey was gone, too! Coincidence? NOT REALLY! But I didn’t think he was in CP10. CP10 was one of my customers; I would assume the lot of them have Devil Fruits.”

“And you created all the Devil Fruits.” Aurora noted. “Maybe you can tell us how they work so we’ll be able to fight them!”

“Shuroro, of course I could!” Caesar grinned. “The question is, COULD you fight them? Devil Fruits aside, CP10 was formidable before they got them. I mean, just look at what they did to you!”

“That’s why we’re all going to gang up on them!” Karin Kurosaki declared.

“My sector was able to defeat a World Leader by working together!” Aurora reminded. “I know we can all do the same with CP10!”

“Really?” Caesar raised a brow. “How did that go?”

“Well… she…”

“We locked her in Arctic Prison,” Marcus said, “but she escaped with a bunch of prisoners. Including Abram.”

“And it didn’t occur to you this Leader let herself get captured in order to bust some people out?” Caesar inquired. Sector V exchanged awkward glances. “In reality, a single World Leader could conquer an entire nation. Then again, I suppose you kids could, too. The point is, if a World Leader wanted to be serious in a fight with you, you would be dead!”

“So that Rockhead I fought in Washington was just trolling me?!” Anthony asked angrily.

“He sure was, Big Brother!” Michelle jumped him from behind.

“GYAH! Michelle, how many times you gonna sneak on our ship?!”

“You never spend time with me, anymore! I miss my Ant-ony!”

“I’m not an ant.”

“And I am FROSTY!” Suki Crystal rolled out, encased in a snowball.

“Suki!” Miyuki’s eyes widened. “You, too?”

“I miss playing with you too, Sister-chan!”

“Hello!” Michelle greeted. “I’m Michelle!”
“I’m Suki! You have pretty feets!”

“Thank you! So do you!”

“BEEEEEST FRIENDS!” They hugged.


“I wanna die again.”

“Guys, focus!” Aurora yelled. “We need to come up with a plan to fight CP10 and save Cheren!”

“I’m really not… in the right shape at the moment.” Maddy grunted.

“Yeah, and… we don’t even know where CP10’s base is.” Chris grunted.

“They make their base in Enies Lobby,” Caesar explained, “which is on the base of Mt. Mariejoa and is also home to the Teen Ninjas. That place is loaded with heavily-trained fighters, or so I heard. They aren’t all on CP10’s level, but you’ll have a rough time breaking in.”

“Sigh…” Francis sighed. “We should be thankful Maddy survived… but if she becomes the Seventh Light, they might kill Cheren. That’s why I have to wonder… would Cheren want that?”

“In other words, it’s him… or the universe.” Miyuki replied.

“What are ye two saying?!” Panini shouted. “We can’t let Cheren die!”

“But Maddy needs to become the Seventh Light!” Francis argued. “And the Apocalypse is roughly 13 days away! Do we really have time and energy to use on these assassins?”

“The two goals are the same.” MaKayla said, her eyes closed. “I’m remembering something… A vision I saw in Great Clock. The Poneglyph that Maddy must read in order to awaken is in Enies Lobby.”

“You are extremely convenient.” Lola remarked.

“So for Maddy to awaken… we really have to beat CP10.” Chris construed.

Maddy lay on her back and stared at the darkening sky. She didn’t have the strength or the motivation to challenge them again… not in this state. With less than half a month to go, she feared if she could regain her strength. Even then, it wouldn’t be enough. “Woof-woof-woof-woof!” She heard a familiar barking, and before she knew it, a little brown puppy had pranced up to lick her face.

“Sparky! I missed you!” She petted him.

“Oh, right… I was wondering why space was so relaxing.” Zach sighed.

“Let’s all go up to the Moonbase.” Aurora said with a smile. “We’re probably attracting too much attention.”

**Star Train**

“Yikes, what happened to her?” Nefarious asked as they viewed the screen from Sparky’s view. “She’s a mess.”
It must have been one walloping of a welcome-home party.” Lawrence replied.

“Well, whatever it was, they have to find the Poneglyph soon. If she waits until the Apocalypse arrives, they wouldn’t get to the Clock in time. But when she does, we’ll catch her!”

“Sir, I am concerned about your plans in… detaining her. I am aware that Sparky is meant to catch her in a chi-blocked net and fly back to our headquarters… but we haven’t the slightest clue in what is meant to happen. What if this power Lord Gnik talks about is something on a god’s level?”

“A human becoming a god, don’t be silly, Lawrence. Besides, even if catching her fails, don’t forget I have other methods. If she does not comply with my demands afterwards, I have loads of atomic bombs ready to TURN this planet into metal!”

**G.U.N. Area Delta**

When we last saw Team Emily, they had reunited with Mike Strongarm and boarded a Pipo Monkey ship that was set for a GUN base. The base was built within a towering cliffside, where the ship landed on a platform. The group had a lovely view of the sun setting over the forest. “The R.A.D.A.R.’s picking up oodles of monkeys.” Emily reported. “I dunno what they’re doing here, but no need to change the pattern.”

“So, this is all you’ve been doing all month?” Mike asked with a wry smirk.

“I know, and I barely got to explore an ounce of Adams Tech.” Emily wept. “I really hate Specter for ruining my vacation. When I get my hands on him, I’m gonna…?” Sarah tapped her shoulder and indicated the wandering Dr. Cooper.

Sheldon was slightly bent over, looking around as his nose twitched. “There is a familiar scent about.” He walked up to the cliff wall and sniffed up it. “Sniiiiiff. It’s lavender… mixed with lemon-flavored foot cream. And is that, sniiiiiff… hair shampoo that smells like pet spray!” He turned around with a beaming face, “She’s here! Amy Farrah Fowler is here!”

“Then you have served your purpose just to tell us that.” Gary remarked.

“Perfect!” Emily raised her net confidently. “We’ll wrangle up these primates and rescue Sheldon’s lady of the evening! Maybe we’ll even go on a double date.” She moved up to Mike, who blushed.

“Eh he… As much as I would love to, we should report to Moonbase after this, see how everyone’s doing.”

“You’re right. Looking back, I originally wanted to find Specter to see if he has anything to do with the Apocalypse. Sector V said he’s allied with Team Gnik… It’s now or never if we wanna get information from him.” (Play “Air Fleet” from *Shadow the Hedgehog*)

**Stage 64: GUN Area Delta**

**Mission:** Catch 20 monkeys and rescue Amy Farrah Fowler!

**Addendum:** Emily’s 7th stage, expect something good to happen.

To start the stage, Emily had to put on her M.A.G.N.E.B.O.O.T.S. and walk across a metal path on the cliffside, over a line of cannons that launched missiles. Emily had to be wary and avoid the missiles, which would then explode like fireworks in the sky. “Well, it’s nice to know my tax is
going to wasted ammunition.” Sheldon said. Once Emily was across, she could turn a gear and make a walkway emerge from the wall above the cannons. Unfortunately, the missiles destroyed the walkway whenever they launched, but Emily could keep turning the wheel so it’d come out again. The kids had to use their Super Hoops to cross. Since Sheldon didn’t have one, he hopped on Mike’s shoulders while the boy rode his bike across.

Team Emily encountered the first two Pipo Monkeys, using jetpacks to fly over the edge of the platform. The main trio was easily able to shoot them down with homing slingshot pellets—however, the monkeys took the fall down to the forest. They reactivated their jetpacks and resumed flying, safe from their range. Mike was opening the crates that were placed around the platform, and discovered a small metal object the size of a pellet. “Emily, what do you think this is?”

Emily took the strange pellet and decided to launch it at one of the monkeys. It morphed into a hand, grabbed the ape, and returned to its master, allowing Emily to net the ape. “A Returning Grabber Pellet! You’re the best, Mike!” She used it to catch the other ape. Afterwards, the team climbed to a higher platform using a pipe on the cliffside – which had an electric hole in its middle. They set foot on the upper platform and had view of a distant platform on their left. There was a chain device, and Emily launched the Return Pellet over to grab the chain’s end and pull it to them. She could hold the pellet in place while Sarah and Gary use their Balance Bikes to ride across the chain. They pressed a switch that stretched a bridge for the others to cross.

The canyon wall turned a corner from which a bridge crossed to a platform. A Pipo Monkey controlled a GUN Hot Shot, a large robot with only two legs and twin missile launchers. It blasted missiles all around the bridge, so the group hid behind the corner while Sheldon controlled the C.A.M.-C.A.R. across the bridge. He avoided the missiles and found an opening behind the robot’s foot, driving the car in to finagle with its insides. The Hot Shot fell defeated and the monkey jumped around in panic, only to be caught in Emily’s net. The team saw a metal ladder above, leading atop the cliff. Emily flew her S.P.E.C.S. up there to hack into a control panel, making the ladder lower.

They climbed up and had a greater view of more of the base. This area had more room as it wasn’t stationed on the cliff’s side. Laser Hunter robots were shooting them, and the GUN symbols on their bodies were replaced with Specter’s face. Sarah bounced between the robots with the Super Hoop and took them out, and Gary shot down the above GUN Beetles with his slingshot. There was nothing else on this platform except for boxes of provisions, as well as a switch on the edge of the cliff, overlooking a distant area of the base. Emily hit the switch, and a swarm of GUN Beetles flew out of that base’s garage, pairs of two connected via solid energy beams. “Swing Test Level 2 initiated.”

“Well, if Level 2 makes the jump to ‘hanging precariously over a thousand feet’, what does Level 1 require?” Sheldon asked with fear of heights.

“You two can hide in the Infi-Cube until we’re across.” Emily said, holding out the small box.

“Don’t drop us, Em.” Mike winked, jumping in before Sheldon.

“I now have Mike trapped in a box!” Emily’s eyes brimmed with fantasy and desire.

“And you made the jump from ‘schoolgirl crush’ to ‘obsessed.’” Sarah remarked. The trio used their Sky Flyers while jumping the solid beams. Some Beetle pairs flew up and down, and one pair floated to and fro. Gary noticed a monkey casually seated on a Beetle and proceeded to catch it. At the end of the course, they could land on a platform on the cliffside. From there, they used Sky Flyer to go up two more platforms, and the third one had a Spring Rhino. They used the spring to bounce up over the cliff, releasing Sheldon and Mike as they viewed the garage entrance.
Opening the garage required the capture of two monkeys, and one of the monkeys available was controlling a GUN Flying Dog. Sarah and Gary took the liberty of dodging its missiles and shooting it with explosive pellets, while Emily noticed another Pipo throwing grenades from the garage roof. She climbed a flagpole to get to the roof and catch the ape, and she had a lovely view as the Flying Dog crashed and Sarah caught its primate pilot. The garage opened, and a road that looked like a plane’s airway led into it. “I say we do like we did Viridi’s!” Mike exclaimed.

“On bikes!” Emily popped their bikes out of the Infi-Cube. Sheldon once again sat in the basket of Sarah’s bike as they sped into the tunnel, using headlights to see. Mini warplanes were being launched from the dark, forcing the bikers to jump. At the end of the tunnel, a red stoplight turned green, and a glass capsule containing a Pipo opened. They made it through without taking damage, so they could catch the monkey for their reward. They entered a door in the back, and were instantly bombarded with gunfire by Laser Hunters.

The team bypassed the robots and ran to a ledge over an electric pool. Another Beetle Bar pair was across the pool, and Emily could pull them over with the Return Pellet. When she released, the Beetles would float across, taking the kids with them when they clutched on. (“I am not a kid.” Sheldon informed me thusly.) They faced another electric river, in which Emily had to launch the Return Pellet to pull over a model plane, which hung by strings on the ceiling. They hopped on and rode the plane across, but it tilted left or right by their weight. Their team stood on either end to balance the weight, but there were shifts when they had to jump lasers or catch two floating Pipo Monkeys. (Why the lasers didn’t cut the strings was beyond Sheldon.)

They could jump off on a ledge with a door that brought them outside. They were on a low point on a cliff, and they could use their Balance Bikes to ride across a rail, having to jump lasers shooting from the wall. They stopped on a platform with a turret, which they would have to use to shoot down remote-control GUN Jets. While Mike took this liberty, Sheldon used the C.A.M.-C.A.R. to drive along a very thin ledge on the cliff. The thin bridge stretched away from the cliff and became zigzaggy and snaky, but Sheldon was careful in guiding the toy car across. The car pressed a switch, and a solid energy path was spawned from the thin bridge.

They raced across and each took turns grabbing a hook that would reel them above the cliff. Emily noticed another hook above where that one originated, using Sky Flyer to reach it as it lifted her to a monkey hiding in a floating metal crate. She netted the ape and dropped back to her friends. The area above this cliff had a forest area, and the R.A.D.A.R. picked up a monkey hiding in a tree. Gary bashed the tree with the Stun Club, the ape fell out, and what happened next was obvious. A steep ramp sloped down and would fly them up to a cliff with another garage, and their bikes were the only means of gaining momentum to do this.

They entered a vast room with a tall platform that had multiple computers on it. On their left were three GUN soldiers tied to wooden pegs and a monkey that threatened to shoot them. They chose not to get close in case the monkey would shoot them, so they trekked the spiral path that led up to the platform. There were two monkeys wearing labcoats. One was wasting time on Bananabook and another was looking up female chimps. (It seems Tiny Kong made the cover on *Darn Pretty Mammals* again.)

The team netted the monkeys, and from here there was a zipline that led down to the gunner monkey. First, they curiously examined the large computers, which each changed screens when they were hit by the Stun Clubs. One of the computers displayed a code: E / 23-9-12-12 / 13-1-11-5 / 1 / 4-9-1-13-15-14-4. The computer facing the gunner monkey switched to Camera Mode, and recorded the monkey threatening the agents.

*If I believe in Ape Jesus hard enough, they will die.* The caption for the monkey read. The
caption for the gun said, *If I believe in Gun Jesus hard enough, all of them will die.*

Mike grabbed the zipline, flew down, and kicked the ape in the head, holding him down until Sarah ran up and netted the gunner. They cut the GUN agents free afterwards. “Oh, thank you!” one agent saluted. “Those apes showed up on the 5th and we’ve been fighting them ever since. It was going well until a black monkey in a cape showed up.”

“That sounds like Specter’s henchman, Mojo!” Emily remembered.

“Given that he kept repeating his name, that sounds about right.” The second agent replied. “In fact, on the same day he took over the base, his apes brought in a woman with black hair.”

“Do you know where they could be keeping her now?” Sheldon asked.

“The prison wing is further down that hall.” The first agent pointed. “After that, you need to cross a bridge outside. We use impenetrable glass cages. But I can’t guess why they would need to lock her up.”

“We’ll tell you if we find out.” Emily promised, though she didn’t mean it. The five proceeded to the designated hall, which sloped down as GUN Rhinos drove up. Gary ran at them with the Super Hoop and bounced between them like a pinball, destroying each Rhino in one strike of the hoop’s charge. The slope stopped at a corner and would resume down a right hall. In that corner, an electric pipe led up to the ceiling where a Pipo Monkey was tampering with a wire socket. Emily used her auto-pedaling Balance Bike to ride up the pipe. Given the vertical angle and no prior momentum acquired, it took a minute and a half to actually get high enough and net the ape.

In the second hall, a GUN Hornet locked on from the end and launched homing missiles. Sheldon went in front so all the missiles locked onto him, using his Observation Haki to dodge each of them. This left the Hornet helpless, so Sarah shot it down with the slingshot. A door led them outside to an enclosed canyon, where a long bridge stretched to the opposite end. Two Hot Shots were already set to begin blasting them, but Emily and Mike each hid under a Hot Shot so the robots would strike each other with their own missiles. They could catch the monkeys that came out.

They came to a set of platforms that were electrified. There was a tunnel that cut through the electric, fit for the C.A.M.-C.A.R. to drive into. Sheldon parked the car on a little switch on the other side and turned the electric off. When they crossed the platforms, they noticed a spidermonkey hidden inside one of them. A mini path would lead off the main path and into an opening of the platform, so Sheldon drove the toy car in there and caught the mini monkey.

Further down the bridge, GUN Beetles shot at them from overhead. To their right over the chasm, there was a series of harmless Beetles that led to one that a monkey was hanging from. Emily carefully jumped the Beetles like platforms, but since the ape’s Beetle was higher, she thought catching it would require a quick switch to the Sky Flyer. However, a Gold Beetle appeared beneath it, serving as a platform for Emily to stand on after catching the ape, but she quickly jumped back before the Gold Beetle vanished.

She returned to her friends, and the team had to ride their bikes across four rails that electrified at different intervals. They jumped between rails that weren’t electrified and made it across. The bridge ended almost eight feet before a door that had a large key in the center. There was a drawing above the door depicting three circles inside each other, with numbers on one corner of each one. Emily launched the Return Pellet to grab the key. Going by the diagram, she controlled the hand to turn the key northeast, and when she pulled, the center circle popped out. A ‘2’ was on the west side of the middle circle, so Emily turned it that way before pulling. She had to rotate to southeast
for the third circle, pulling that segment out as the door opened.

A bridge stretched over for them to enter, and a sign on the hall’s ceiling read *Prison Wing*. Unfortunately, they were one monkey shy of completing the stage… Thankfully, a frightened ape was clutching the back of the sign. They shot it down with the slingshot and had him netted. (End song.)

The five turned a few corners in the quiet, vacant hall, glancing in the rooms that either had nothing or some unknown prisoner asleep behind a glass wall. When Mike peeked in one room, he called, “Guys, look over here!” They came to enter the room and saw a slightly pudgy woman with long black hair and glasses asleep on a vertically-standing bed, cuffed by her wrists and ankles. She was wearing a blue- and black-striped shirt with a black skirt, black stockings, and black shoes.

“Sheldon, is this your girl friend? (Which I meant as two separate words.)” Emily asked.

“Yes… it’s Amy.” Sheldon approached her.

“Now I’m wondering how you could smell her if she’s locked in there.” Sarah said.

“I have very keen senses, and Amy’s scent is… one of the heavier ones I remember.”

“Where’d you find this guy again?” Mike asked.

“In a bat cave,” said Emily. “Yalright, fellers, time to free this princess from the horrible demon that doth have her trapped! And hope we don’t have to go to another castle.”

“You are mistaken, because you see, YOU are the ones who are trapped!”

A trapdoor opened, dropping all five kids (plus adult) down a chute. They screamed upon descent and grunted after splashing in a puddle of filth. “Good Lord!” Sheldon said with disgust, shaking off a pizza slice. “We’re in a garbage chute!”

“Alright, who’s the *Star Wars* fanboy behind this insidious trap?!” Mike yelled.

A TV came on, depicting a black-furred monkey with a green face, blue suit, and striped dome helmet. “I am not a fan, nor a boy, and I do not know this *Star Wars* of which you speak. I am Mojo Jojo, the last of Specter’s simian officers, excluding the foolish human with abnormally round hair, and I have lured you here with the knowledge of Dr. Cooper’s trapped friend with the intention of executing you, and then I – Mojo Jojo – will return to Specter with a satisfactory report of your demise, because without your nuisance, we may begin the next step of our plan, which can only go smoothly with your destruction, for if you were to live, you would be a liability in our accomplishing of the-”

“LET US OUTTA HERE!” Emily kicked the wall.

“Ha ha! You are short on luck, because the trash compactors are now set to compact, as is their function, and the door will not open until the compacting is complete! You will be left as nothing more than discarded pancakes, never to be discovered before your remains are incinerated. START THE PROCESS!”

Alarms blared as the parallel walls began to close in. The trash was being shoved into piles as the five struggled to push the walls. “It’s no use, these walls are too strong! We have to escape with our nets!” Gary yelled.

“NO!” Emily yelled determinedly, hands pressed firmly against the moving crusher. “We’re so
close to saving Amy, we have to find a way out!"

“I’m not seeing any exits!” Sheldon yelled.

“Come on, Emily, you’re smart! What are we going to do?!” Mike shouted.

Emily stopped pushing to catch her breath. The walls were ten seconds from closing, and only small space was left for them. The longer she kept her hands pressed on her wall, though she couldn’t explain it, she felt the strongest instinct that she could push it. Now there was only space for her friends to shove both walls with their hands and feet. Fearlessness flowing through her, Emily took a breath and gave one final push. “HAAAAAAH!”

In a sudden burst, the wall dented and shot back to its starting point. The other wall stopped. Sarah, Gary, Sheldon, and Mike gaped. Emily’s square-shaped eyes grew wide as she stared at her hand. She decided to approach the other wall, push it, and dented it as well. They had no words and no understanding. Emily formulated theories… It couldn’t be that she had superhuman strength because her one attempt to stop a rolling garbage boulder backfired. So that left the other theory:

“HOLY COW, I’M A METALBENDER!”

“A METALBENDER?!” Sarah and Gary screamed.

“This is insanity!” Emily stared at her open hand, her fingers twitching. “I can’t be a bender, I’ve never bent an element before in my life! Well, except when the Undersea Lab let me play with the photon particle tubes—but this would make me an earthbender, and that’s illogical, because my feet are too flimsy to adapt to the earth! Oooo, but is that a chi flow I see in my hand?” she asked sadly. “No no no!” She shook. “I’m a microbiologist, so if I’m an earthbender, I’d have to become a geologist—and geology’s not even a real science!! WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?!”

“Emily, it’s okay!” Mike hugged her. “You saved our lives, that’s all that matters!”

“Look, the door’s open!” Sarah indicated, standing in the exit. “Let’s get outta here!”

“I’m sensing a conscious presence up this hallway!” Sheldon yelled, running ahead. “It might be Mojo!”

**Control room**

“No! This is impossible!” Mojo yelled, watching the five escape on his camera. “They could not have escaped, because the trash compactor is inescapable. If it were that easy, all the trash could escape, which it has not, ergo the likelihood of their escape-”

“Is as likely as the length of your SENTENCES!” Emily burst into the room.

“AAAAH!” Mojo whipped out a laser gun, which Emily bashed away before whacking Mojo with the Stun Club. Sarah and Gary scored some hits until the ape was left unconscious. “Back to the zoo with you!” Emily caught Mojo in her net and watched him teleport.

Sheldon searched through the terminals and noticed Amy’s room. “I can open her cell from here!” He pushed the button under her screen.

The glass cage opened and the Sleep Gas was sucked away. Team Emily relocated the room as the latter broke the cuffs with her club. Sarah and Gary caught Amy before she fell. “Yikes, this girl’s heavy!” Gary yelped.
“Be careful with her!” Sheldon cautioned. “Her arms aren’t meant to bend back at a full 90
degrees!”

“Then why don’t YOU help lift her!” Sarah argued.

“Of course not, I don’t know how long she’s been in here, what if they never bathed her?”

“Wh-Whuh… Who’s bathing?” Amy moaned softly. She regained control of her limbs as they
helped her stand upright. Her eyes opened, and the blurry image formed into the mantis-like face of
her friend. “Sheldon…”

“Amy…” Sheldon smiled.

“Awww, this is so romantic!” Emily hugged herself. “Hug and kiss, do whatever you gotta do!”

“Oh, I’d love to,” Sheldon said, “but we only engage in physical contact the third Tuesday of every
month.”

“It’s necessary.” Amy agreed. “My mother believes too much physical contact would cause my
hormones to overdevelop and result in mood swings. But Sheldon, what’s going on here? Am I still
in the GUN base? W-Where’s Specter?”

“We believe Specter is elsewhere. I still don’t understand why Specter sought to kidnap you.
Judging from Dr. Tomoki’s dialogue, there was a greater goal in mind than wishing to enter my
laboratory.”

“Yeah, Amy, why did Specter kidnap you?” Emily asked.

“I know why…” Amy said with regret in her voice. “It’s because I’m a World Leader’s
apprentice.”

“A World Leader?” Mike repeated in shock.

“She means a World Government Leader.” Sheldon noted. “I understand the term ‘World Leader’
is unspecific as it could refer to any person who is a leader in our world. You confided in me that
you were offered a position by Daphne Anderson, correct?”

“You’re right.” confirmed Amy.

“But the World Government’s security is supposed to be impregnable for their important officers.
Were you not considered valuable?”

“Oh, I was. But I let myself get captured on purpose.”

“Why?” asked Mike.

Amy needed a minute to collect her thoughts, but her expression was morbid. “I met Master
Anderson four years ago when I traveled to Saudi Arabia to collect research funds. I’m engaged to
a Saudi prince, you see, and it works in my favor.”

“Something we plan to work out in the future.” Sheldon noted.

“I told Master Anderson about my work in neurobiology. At the time, I was studying ways to
manipulate the brain’s structure, alter its thoughts, which would ergo change a person’s emotions.”

“That sounds really dark.” Mike said.
“I was only limiting the tests to animals. But Daphne took interest in the research and offered to let me work for her. She gave me funding and new materials like Psychic Crystals. But… after a few years, I realized what the Government planned to do with my research. They were capturing powerful benders and wanted me to brainwash them into thinking the World Leaders were their friends. They planned to use a device called the ‘Sun Chi Lantern’ to steal their bending and add it to their own.”

“That’s horrible!” Emily gasped.

“I know… and I was looking for a means of escape for a long time. Still, it wasn’t too bad. I did get to meet a new friend… Oh, that reminds me! Hey, you can come out!” Amy shouted to no one. The five exchanged glances. “Hello? Are you awake in there? Hang on.” Amy bashed the right side of her head. “I feel ya— Outta there— Nnn! Nn!” She kept slapping herself. With one stronger blow, a small thing shot out of her left ear and hit the floor.

The creature stirred, awoke, and stretched back to its normal baby size. It was a silver-bodied being with a gold head and two tails. “Mmmmmm!” She yawned. “Too much earwax!”

“UXIE!” Emily screamed.

The Firstborn of Knowledge opened her golden eyes. “EMILY! IT’S YOU!” Her eyes widened and sparkled.

“DON’T LOOK HER IN THE EYE!” Sarah and Gary shut theirs.

“I don’t have that curse, anymore!” Uxie floated up and faced Amy. “By the way, real smart thinking! Pretending you had skin termites to give yourself an excuse to go outside and get captured by the apes? Ingenious!”

“I learn from the best, bestie!” Amy grinned.

“Wait, how do you two know each other?” Mike asked.

“My sisters and I were captured by the Government three years ago.” Uxie explained. “I ended up in the possession of this big-brained gal! You see, ever since your father set me free, I developed an addiction to… shrinking myself and going in peoples’ brains to examine their IQ. And Amy’s is one of the brightest brains I’ve seen!”

“Your standards must not be very high.” Sheldon laughed like a panting puppy. “If I let you in my brain, you would be overwhelmed, and probably die. So I can’t allow you entry. It’d be tricky to disinfect without bruising anything.”

“Hey Uxie, I just learned I’m a metalbender!” Emily beamed.

“Really, you just learned now?” Uxie cocked a brow. “I knew the minute you were born. I thought someone smart as you would’ve guessed sooner.”

“Uh… of course I did.” She blushed, shifting her feet. “I just wondered if… you did.”

“No offense, but it seems like a lot of work to hire you to brainwash people.” Sarah commented. “Can’t the Government just fire up a machine or a magic spell to do it just like that?”

“My research would’ve resulted in a permanent mind-manipulation.” Amy replied. “Mind-control using swirling pictures or fancy words never lasts. Even Sleeper Agents need to be deactivated after sometime.”
“You know, if we’re gonna talk about disturbing science experiments,” Mike intervened, “I wanna do it in the comfort of our Moonbase, so can we please go?”

“Huhu, okay.” Emily changed the setting for her T.E.L.A.-N.E.T.. “I’ll warp us to the museum where we’ll take a ship up to Moonbase. You first, Uxie!” She caught the Firstborn in the teleporting net, and one-by-one warped the others.

**Enies Lobby**

Corks popped out of soda bottles as their contents came out in fizz. “CP10, let’s have a drink!” Eldwin spoke joyfully in his thuggish bully voice. He was a chubby teenager wearing Battle Ready Armor, and had a cast around his neck. “We scared those KNDorks so hard, they peed blood!”

“Hold a nail-hammerin’ second there!” Bob contradicted. “You didn’t do a thing!”

“I’m the mastermind running things from the shadows!” Eldwin set the soda bottles on the table in the center of the couches where the assassins were seated. The tall windows behind Eldwin’s desk provided natural light in this white marble chamber. “Your fearless leader, Eldwin Savinsky! And I couldn’t be more proud of you. My subordinates deserve the rarest and tastiest sodas known only to Nimbi and merpeople!”

“I don’t wanna drink this kid stuff!” Ernie complained. “What about beer, don’t we have any beer, bawk bagawk?”

“Alcohol kills the immune system, Chick.” Rickey said, wiping his soda bottle. “But you can always trust soda to keep ya energized.” He drank.

“Supreme Leader Eldwin.” Nya LaMar and her friend, Tracy entered the room. “You have a visitor. Fukuro from CP9.”

“Chapapa!” A large, yellow, egg-shaped man with a big zipper mouth and green hair, wearing a black tux, rolled in. “On behalf of CP9, the Statistics Cipher Pol, I am here for a progress report on your training.”

“Analyzing our Power Levels again.” Leslie said embarrassed.

“Hey, not many people have that ability, you should count yourself lucky!” Eldwin yelled.

“But my Power Level is always so tiny.” She flushed.

“I will now analyze.” Fukuro bundled up. “You first, chapapa!” He rolled at Leslie, who was quick to jump and stomp him hard as she could with her high-heel foot. “Leslie Meijer, your Doriki is: 1200.”

“Not bad.” Rickey smiled and patted her.

“I’ve seen better.” She still blushed.

“You next.” Fukuro rolled at Rickey, who punched him back. “Lime Rickey, your Level is: 3000.”

“Nice!”

Fukuro approached Megan, whose hand was outreached. Fukuro shook it—resulting in a painful shock from the hand zapper. He was soot-covered afterwards. “Miranda Cosgrove, your Power Level is: 2000.”
“MY NAME IS MEGAN!!”

Fukuro attacked Ernie, who sliced with his talon. “Ernie the Chicken, you stand at: 4500.”

“THAT’S what I mean, bawk-bagawk!” Ernie smirked.

Number 4 transformed into a giant bee and stung Fukuro. “CP10 Number 4, you are currently: 3500.” Fukuro rolled at Bob, who jumped and kicked both feet like a Mario Brother. “Bob the Builder, your Power Level is: 1700.”

“Can’t win ’em all!” Bob smiled and shrugged.

“Eldwin, your turn.” The Teen Leader approached the egg man and dealt a weak punch. “Your Doriki is a whopping: 9. How sad, chapapa.”

“My power is BRAIN power!” Eldwin argued.

“And lastly, I need Rob Lucci’s-”

The man had already become a lion, grabbed Fukuro in his teeth, and swung him around before throwing him against the wall. He reverted to human as the egg man weakly got up. “As expected… Rob Lucci’s Power Level is… 5500.”

“5500?!” Ernie freaked out. “That’s almost as powerful as President Morgan, BAGAWK!”

“This concludes the progress report. I’ll be leaving now.” With that, Fukuro jumped out the window and flew to the sky, giving one final note:

CHAPAPA, PA PA PA!

“Eldwin, now that we’re here, can I ask you something?” Nya asked.

“You just did, Nya.” Eldwin retorted as he filled a glass with soda. “What’s to stop you from asking again?”

“Since we brought Cheren to Mariejoa, don’t you think the brats will be after him? So what if Maddy comes here and finds the Gibberish Rock? Even Lucci couldn’t kill her!”

“If I recall, you had a perfect chance to kill her yourself once.” Lucci narrowed his eyes at her. “It would have saved us a lot of trouble.”

“She would’ve been dead if it wasn’t for Hoagie!” Nya yelled in his face. “You’re the hit assassin, so I expected more from y-”

Lucci punched her to the floor. He then pinned her neck under his foot as she failed to push him off. “You fail to notice spies in your midst… You Teen Ninjas are an incompetent force. Why the Government trusts a bunch of delinquents is beyond me. Your existence merely encourages the Kids Next Door into thinking they’re in charge. We should be rid of you.”

“Hey hey, easy, Lucci!” Eldwin tugged the man’s arm. “We’re all on the same team here!”

“Nya, you okay?” Tracy helped her friend to her feet.

Nya clasped her neck and caught her breath. “I’m fine. Let’s just go, Tracy.” Nya glanced at Lucci with spite as they left.
“What a bitch, coo-kachoo!” Hattori flapped his wings.

“Anyhoo, I’m not worried.” Eldwin said. “Even if the Kids Next Door show up, we got more than enough firepower to smash them. But Leslie, just so you won’t feel upset about your Power Level, I got a present for ya.” He went to his desk and pulled out a magenta lemon with swirly lines.

“Voila! A Devil Fruit I’ve been saving up! What it does, I dunno. But if you want, you can find out.”

“Wouldn’t you rather eat it yourself?” Number 4 asked.

“Hey, I’m a boy with very little. I at least wanna be able to swim. So Leslie, wanna give it a taste? If not, I’ll give it to Ernie.”

“I don’t need a crappy metahuman power, bawk-bagawk.”

“Well, I don’t want this to go stale, so maybe I’ll give it to one of my Teens-”

“Give it to me!” Leslie jumped over and snatched the lemon. She took forceful bites out of the sour fruit and made sure to swallow all of it. “OHH!” A strong sensation coursed inside her.

“Uuuuur…” She clenched her stomach and trembled. “UUUUAH!…” The agents were anticipating the first use of her power any minute. “…I have to use the bathroom.” They collapsed anime style.

“Yeah, those things is nasty, aren’t they?” Rickey blushed.

“Definitely!” Leslie bolted.

“If she’s going to waste time trying to adjust to a new power, she’ll never be prepared to face our enemies when they come.” Lucci said.

“The Kids Next Door wouldn’t come too soon after that performance.” Eldwin figured, pouring another soda glass. “We have plenty of time to prepare ourselves. And plenty of prisoners to kill if things go bad.”

Mariejoa; Midway Peak

Two Shy Guys carried an unconscious Cheren into a dark room. They dropped the boy as he moaned and awakened. “Where am I…”

“Well, this isn’t The Chronicler’s den, unfortunately.” A familiar woman’s voice said from a table, where she was playing chess with the General Guy.

“Aunt Morgan!” Cheren jumped to his feet. “You brought me here?!”

“Somewhat… I instructed CP10 to retrieve you while they were planning their assassinations. And before you ask, I didn’t know whom they would be assassinating, let alone Kuki. How unlucky… Because all of your operatives showed up, they had to hold off on killing the Light, but they were able to retrieve you ahead of schedule.” She knocked one of General’s pieces down. “Pity. If she had just died, no more of my old friends would have to meet a fate.”

Anger fueling him, Cheren reached for his sword—but it was gone. “My sword! Where are my weapons?!”

“It would seem they brought you unarmed. On May 15th, you challenged me to a duel. I agreed to fight you in five days. The day after tomorrow will be the appointed day. Just wanted to make sure
you showed up in time. I can show you to the gymnasium where you may train until then. You probably didn’t expect to have to use your own strength.”

Cheren glared. “How can you talk about Kuki’s death so casually? Why did you stop caring about them? Your old friends, don’t they mean anything to you?”

“Of course they did.” Morgan said seriously. “Even after I began training under a World Leader, Nigel, Kuki, Kami, and all those people still held a place in my heart. I was distraught when The King killed my cousin… I was angry at him. But I repressed my feelings because I knew… it’s all for a greater good. The King plans to save everyone… humans and spirits. He plans to save us from the Apocalypse and give us the peaceful world we longed for. I wish to go to that world… and never have to live with these feelings.”

“You want to let everybody and everything be destroyed just to escape your own sorrow? You’re no different from Dimentia or Gnaa.”

“You’re wrong. Dimentia’s fear was growing up, and Gnaa only desired darkness. They were both petty ambitions. But His Highness… King Andrew knows that the Kids Next Door will fail. He knows what power is destroying this universe, what’s causing the Apocalypse. He will take us to a world where that power will never be a burden to us.” Morgan stared at her hand. “You would think we psychicbenders have a free spirit because our powers are centered around Imagination. But at some point… Reality breaks the Imaginary.”

“…” Cheren kept glaring. “Well, won’t it be hell for you when King Andrew’s ambitions only make things worse. And wouldn’t it be downright embarrassing if I mopped the floor with him, too.”

“Don’t even make such a joke.”

“Oh, I’m not joking.” Cheren turned and walked away. “See you in two days.”

As he walked slowly, Cheren bowed his head and closed his eyes. *Sunnī… I dunno if you can hear me, but I’m in Mariejoa. I’m gonna have to fight Morgan in a couple days. Bring the Sacred Treasures if you can. If I’m being honest, I may need a little help defeating her.*

**KND Moonbase**

Sunnī’s eyes shot open. She took off her telepathic enhancement helmet and ran out to the bridge where the many sectors gathered. “Guys! I just heard Cheren, he’s at Mariejoa, in Aunt Morgan’s place!”

“So that’s where they took him!” Sugar exclaimed. “He challenged Morgan to a fight and she accepted.”

“If she planned to fight Cheren, then CP10 wouldn’t kill him if you attacked their base.” Azelf deduced.

“But what about Sheila’s mom?” Mason asked. “They still have her as their trump card.”

“Oh, my mom is tough, she wouldn’t let ’erself be skinned by some big-nosed British blokes.” Sheila said with a scowl.

“If only Jasper and Horace were behind this.” Mason chuckled.

“Look, we got more than enough operatives to gang up on CP10 and a Teen Ninja army.” Lee
Andrew reasoned. “We’ll ambush them and save Marine before they even have a chance!”

“Don’t you kids ever listen to me?” Caesar Clown questioned. “Enies Lobby is a powerful stronghold that has long been prepared for such an invasion! Speaking of strong holds, could you loosen these chi-blocking cuffs?” He was in cuffs, as well as a leash that Mocha was holding.

“Down boy.” said Mocha.

“Frankly, a large-scale invasion is all I can think of.” Francis replied. “At least with all our strongest sectors. Hopefully, Sector SA can finish the mission they took up so they can join.”

“We’re talking too much brute force.” Carol inferred. “What happened to brains winning battles?”

“We are usin’ brains!” Anthony yelled. “We’re thinkin’ how to ATTACK them!”

“Anthony’s plan is to charge on in like a bull.” Aranea smirked. “Earthbender style.”

“Oh, please. How many earthbenders run in and scream every place they burst into?”

“EVERYBODY EVERYBODY EVERYBODY!” Emily Garley burst into the bridge and started running around. Her initial outburst startled some operatives. “Guys guys guys! I just learned I’m a metalbender! Check it out!” Emily pulled out some nickels and made them levitate in the air. “Da dana daaaa! And that’s not even the best part, we broke into a GUN base, saved this nerd woman, and look who she had with her!”

“UXIIIIIEEE!” Azelf and Mesprit screamed.

“SISSIIIIIEES!” Uxie flew up and embraced the two in hugs as they twirled around and around.

“Emily’s a metalbender?” Anthony asked with interest.

“Anthony, she could be the Hornfels descendant!” Aranea said logically. “We should take her to someone who might know.”

“Sigh.” Sunni relieved the shock from the scare. “I’m really not up for anymore surprises today.”

“I’M HOOOOOOME!” Darcy Chariton burst in, scaring her sister.

Sunnim whipped around. “DARCY!” The two ran up and embraced in hugs. “WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!”

“ON A POKÉMON JOURNEY!”

“How many’d you catch?!”

“ZERO! It was just a training journey.” Darcy blushed. “SUPER BORIIING! But now I know five different Elemental Martial Arts!”

“However, we didn’t come back empty-handed.” Lucario stepped in, holding a long-tailed white cat in his arms. “We have recovered Mew.”

Sunnim and other operatives hurried over to see. The Firstborn looked pale and was moaning weakly. “Mewwww…”

“Team Rocket has been sapping his energy all this time.” Lucario said. “Using him to restore a strange corpse.”
“What corpse?” Lee Andrew asked.

“What corpse?” Lee Andrew asked. “Some guy with white hair and dragon tattoos.” Darcy recalled. “I wanted to call that chapter ‘The Guy With the Dragon Tattoos.’”

Sector RZ gasped, for they happened to know one man who fit the description. Lee Andrew glanced toward the infirmary where his fallen sister lay. It was then realization struck. “I just thought of something… Leaving Mew out,” he pointed at each Firstborn/Guardian, “we have Uxie, Mesprit, Azelf, Manaphy, Midna, Crest, and… whatever yours is.” He pointed at Sugar last. “So that makes seven all-powerful Firstborn free for our use… So, uh, WHY DON’T WE USE THEM?!”

“We’re not allowed to harm mortals.” The Lake Trio chorused.

“And even under our Guardians’ orders, we can’t go too heavy.” Midna followed.

“I never realized how useless the Firstborn were.” Artie commented.

“Look, if our enemy is a god of supreme power, give us a call.” Azelf remarked.

“Until then, I would be happy to offer some education.” Uxie said proudly. “Uxie, the goddess who knows 20,000 things.”

“Adults know at least 20,000 words by the time they’re older, among other things.” Michelle said with a smirk. “Why ask you when I can ask my parents?”

Uxie floated over and glared directly in the five-year-old’s face. “Smarty-pants…” Uxie sniffed Michelle. “You smell… weird.”

“IT WASN’T ME!” Michelle pushed her away. “It was Anthony!”

“It was Anthony WHAT?!” her brother yelled with a blush.

“…” Uxie floated away, eying Michelle with suspicion.

“Hey, what about GKND?” Harvey asked. “You think they’d want in on this?”

“Unfortunately,” Panini reported from the Global Tactical Station, “even though our intergalactic coms should be functional again, the GKND STILL isn’t responding!” The screen was static. “Ugh, just what is going on up there?”

“Hey Darcy, we could take Mew in the medical wing so me and Manaphy could heal him.” Melody offered.

“We appreciate your aid.” Lucario bowed. “But I fear it will not be enough.”

“Mew probably wants to lay down, at least.” Darcy said.

Maddy was currently at rest in the infirmary, and Zach had fallen asleep while watching her. She looked right to see Shade on the next-door bed. The echidna had finally woken up and was scratching her fur. “I hope I didn’t attract fleas…” She glanced over. “Oh, Maddy. I’m glad you’re okay.”

“You, too… What did you do back there, Shade?”

“I used Primal Mode. It’s a power that Mobians have. We revert to our primal instincts in order to
prevail in battle. Using it too much would drain our humanity. I didn’t think I could beat him with it, but I thought I could save you.”

“Well, thanks. …The others are saying the Poneglyph is in Enies Lobby. That means we’ll have to beat CP10 to get to it. But if that’s where it is… wouldn’t that mean I have to beat them?”

“It’s the ultimate Chosen One cliché. But given your current state, I don’t think it’s possible. The rest of us will have to fight and bring you to the Poneglyph.”

“I can’t let them do that, Shade. I think…I think I should go on my own.” She weakly climbed off her bed.

“Why in the world would you?”

“You spent your life waiting for me because you knew I was the Light… and CP10’s hurting everyone because they know I’m the Light.” Maddy limped toward the exit. “Either I die or… I read that Gibberish Rock. Everybody’s getting involved because of me… but I’m not gonna let that happen, anymore. I’m going to them to get it over with.”

“You’ll kill yourself.” Shade got up to grab her arm. “If the World Government fears the prophecy… they’ll do everything they can to stop you. You need us.”

“I thought you wanted me to be the Chosen One you waited for? If I let you all fight for me, how can I be?”

“I…I don’t know.” Shade let her hand droop. She looked down, melancholy. “It was supposed to be your destiny… but was destiny wrong? Just what is meant to be… What is meant to happen to us…”

The two remained and reflected her words for minutes without end. Neither of them could think of an answer. The only sound in the room were Zach’s loud snores.

I’ve been thinking about changing the name from “CP10 Saga” to “Plot Twist Saga”! Then just throwing M. Night Shyamalan in to say “What a twist!” XD Next time, we will do a Sandman stage. Amy Farrah Fowler is from *Big Bang Theory* and Fukuro comes from *One Piece*’s original CP9.
Let’s Be Monsters

Chapter Summary

The Kids Next Door must train for the upcoming battle!

Alright, we’re about to do a Sandman stage, and it should be his second-to-last stage in this story. We’ll also introduce a new crossover sector that only had small appearances before.

Chapter 67: Let’s Be Monsters

Desert in Saudi Arabia

After taking a moment to repair the Sandmobile’s windshield, the Sandman Trio arrived near the designated area marked on the map with Riddler’s coordinates. Sandman landed the aircraft in the open desert as they climbed out under the star-filled night sky. “Hey, Nolan?” said Yuki. “Thanks for playing ‘Arabian Nights’ in the Sandmobile.”

“It was only fitting.” Nolan smiled.

“Nothing helps you get adjusted to a culture like an American song about said culture.” Wiccan replied. “Which makes just as much sense as a magical city in the middle of an empty flippin’ desert.”

“The Riddler said it was under an invisibility spell. You need a passport to get in. So it should be no coincidence that, after our trophy hunt, this was in my mailbox.” He pulled out a passport that had a picture of Man With the Red Eye.

“Okay, we’re using someone’s stolen identity. To whom do we show it, exactly?” Crystal asked, showing further doubt in the magic city’s existence.

Nolan looked around before pointing, “That rock has a slot we can put it in. That reminds me, Yuki, there’s a disguise in the trunk, you may wanna don it.”

Yuki opened the trunk and found a black coat, mask that went over his right eye, a silver wig, and a contact lens that turned his left eye red. “You look just like him!” Crystal beamed. “Your white face really does him justice.”

“I aim to please.” Yuki took the passport. “Now watch a master at work.” He stuck the ID into the thin slot within the tall rock.

A snake popped out of the sand and gazed at Yuki with glowing yellow eyes. “Passport identity: Man With the Red Eye. Last visited: June 8, 2024. Please provide password to verify identity.”

“Remember it?” Nolan whispered.

“Sun Sun Lamp Moon.” Yuki stated.

“Password accepted. Enter.” The snake sunk down, and before their eyes, a line of light-pink light shaped into a doorway. The three exchanged curious glances and entered. They passed through a
narrow hall lined with torches, and by the time they reached the end, their jaws were dropped. (Play “India” from Sly 2. (I know we’re in Arabia, but it fits. :P))

The city of Magnostadt was enormous, composed of towers and buildings designed like Arabian palaces and walkways connecting them. The city appeared to have several floors worth of streets, as there were shops on the ground and on the building walkways – at least according to Sandman’s map. There were pillars with colorful glowing orbs that served as streetlights, people using magic carpets to get around the city, and patrolling guards that were wearing black vests, white pants, and turbans (like the guards from Aladdin).

“Attention people of Magnostadt.” A British accent echoed from a PA. “It appears a rather nasty visitor has entered the city. All guards are to be on high alert, and all residents are to return to their homes.”

“Riiight, because Red Eye is kind of the most wanted man in the world.” Yuki hurriedly took off his disguise.

“That was him.” Sandman said seriously. “Dr. Strange. Time to start looking for his hideout. There’s bound to be a few guards that know.”

Stage 65: Magnostadt

Mission: Find Hugo Strange’s hideout.

Act 1

The entrance was set on a walkway above twin sets of stairs. The heroes glided to the city’s ground, composed of various yards and paved sidewalks in-between. A muscular guard was crossing a small bridge over a river. Sandman rolled up quietly, jumped to grab the large guard around his chest and mouth, and ducked sideways to bash his head against the ground, knocking him unconscious. “If he’s walking around a yard, he’s probably a low-level guard.” Nolan reasoned.

The way out of this garden was blocked by a magical barrier between two buildings, and a glowing keyhole beside it. “You know, it dawns on me,” Crystal began, “in a city of gravity-defying carpets, I have a staff that does that!” With that, she sat on her staff and floated up. “I’ll get a bird’s-eye view of the area.”

She was nearly shot at from above, and three guards hovered overhead on carpets, aiming magic wands. “Carpets are the only permitted flying materials in Magnostadt!”

“Okay, okay!” Crystal lowered to the floor and stepped off her staff. “Sigh… At least it’s not for being a woman with free will.”

“Hey, if Kami still had her Keyblade, why don’t you have yours, Nolan?” Yuki questioned.

“Left it on the bus.” Nolan answered sarcastically. There was a purple- and yellow-striped magic carpet floating in front of a monkey statue within the wall. The statue had a fire symbol above it, so Crystal stood on the carpet as she shot fire into the ape’s open mouth. The statue chewed it and said, “THAAANK YOOOOOU.” The magic carpet floated up so Crystal could jump onto a walkway. From there, a bridge led over to a roofed platform where a slender, dual-sword guard was stationed. When Crystal tried to cross the bridge, the guard tossed one of his swords like a boomerang to push her back. Another carpet floated under the bridge and around to the back of the
platform, so Crystal glided onto it. Once behind the platform, she bashed the back of the guard’s head and swiped the large key on his belt.

She dropped back to the ground and used the key to open the magic barrier. Team Sandman entered the town square, which had a beautiful fountain to compliment the scenery, and a suspended walkway overhead. The heroes chose to sneak past the guards and go up the wide stairs past the fountain. A wide street led toward a humongous, three-tower building that was labeled *Magnostadt Academy*. Nolan viewed his wheelchair computer and said, “According to Wikipedia, this is Arabia’s magic school.”

“High class.” Yuki observed. “Looks like a worthy villain’s hideout.”

“If Dr. Strange is up to something diabolical, it wouldn’t be in such a public place.”

“Oh, and how many diabolical secrets did Hogwarts have?”

“Grab onto me, we’ll get a better view from that tower.” The two held onto Sandman as he grappled up to a building on their right, and from there launched to a tower with a round roof and crescent moon flag. Sandman zoomed his mask-binoculars- “Whooaaal!” He almost rolled off the slanted roof before Yuki and Wiccan grabbed him.

“Easy there, Hercules.” said Yuki.

“Hercules?” Crystal questioned.

“’Cause he’s on a roll!”

“Stick with Aladdin references.”

“HEEEEEELLLLP!”

“What was that?” Sandman activated Detective Vision and located the source of the sound. He detected the skeletons of a band of men, and two of them were holding a smaller body by the arms. “This way.” They glided to the ground and hid behind a building. They viewed a small park where a team of guards were dragging a child in a white priestess robe toward a street.

“I just wanted some apples, let me GOOO!” The child jumped and swung her feet, but remained bound by the guards.

“Enough! We know what that watch is, Master Strange told us to be on lookout for brats like you! Now behave or we’ll cut off your hands along with that robe.”

Sandman scanned the guards, and two of them were marked pink. “Those two have magic wands, but the rest have swords. Be careful when you charge them. Hey, you boys ever consider Juvy?!” Nolan was quick to speed at the guards, who whipped to face him. The wizards in question cast streams of fire, Nolan dodging left and tossing boomerangs to hit their wands and disarm. The child used the distraction to bite the hands of both her captors, running behind a bush to watch the battle.

The wizards recovered their wands, and when Yuki charged at them, they zapped a spell that flipped and landed him on his back. The other wizard shot fire at Crystal, who sucked it into her staff and backfired at the guard, afterwards bashing him unconscious. A dual-sword guard lashed his blades at Yuki, cutting his coat with his nimble moves, until Yuki froze his feet to the ground, jumped, and kicked the trapped guard in the head. The two muscular guards that held the girl captive grabbed Sandman from both sides, but he pulled his arms free, briefly punched them, grabbed their heads, and slammed them to the ground. The remaining wizard cast a whirlwind
spell, which Wiccan again sucked into her staff, batted the wizard upward, then shot the wind at him to send him flying.

Only one swordsman remained, but Yuki was quick to wrap arms around his neck from behind. “Hey, guy! Tell us where Master Strange lives?”

“Master Strange is underground! You will never find him!”

“Tell us how to get underground?”

“NEVER! I will DIE before I reveal the secrets! Or rather because I do not know the entrance.”

“Well, thanks anyway.” Yuki fell forward and squished the guard underneath to knock him out.

Sandman detected the girl still behind the bush and rolled over. His friends joined as the girl peeked up and stared at them with pretty green eyes. She looked nine years old, with bluish-white hair, clothed in a white priestess uniform with golden edges, and she had light-peach skin. “You’re not Arabian… Who are you?”

“I’m Index! Will you feed me?” she asked with a loud, high voice.

“You’re British.” Crystal noticed. “Are you a nun or something?”

“Yah. So you gonna feed me or what?”

“What?” Nolan asked.

“I’m hungry! Give me food!” She shook her arms angrily.

“I didn’t bring any food! I would lend you money, but my American dollars probably won’t work here. Speaking of, what are you doing in this country?”

“I’m starving…” She laid on the ground, making a fake morbid expression. “Why do you want me to die…”

“Sigh, I don’t have time for this. Just get somewhere safe, we’re busy.” Sandman turned to roll away.

The girl jumped over his shoulder. “Where you going?”

“Hey!” Sandman grabbed her arm and held her up. “If you need help getting home, just tell us…” Her sleeve drooped in this position, and Nolan spotted the small watch on her arm. “Wait, that’s a KND communicator! Are you an operative?”

“HAOMP!” She bit his arm through the coat.

“YOW!” He released.

“What kind of name is Index?” Crystal questioned.

“It’s a codename! Numbuh Index. Now give me food!”

“Why should we?!?” Yuki argued.

“Because I know where the underground hideout is!”
“Y…You do?” asked Sandman.

“Yeah, and I’ll tell you! But only when you bring me food.”

“You can’t be serious.”

“I’m gonna die…” Index laid on the ground again.

“Ugh… If you’re a KND operative, you might be telling the truth. Fine, we’ll look for food.”

“EXCELLENT!” She jumped back up. “Oh, you can borrow this as thanks for saving me.” She gave Sandman a flute. “I got it from a friend, so bring it back.”

**Sandman got the Snake Charmer! Snakes can’t resist the sound of this flute! Play it and they’ll help you!**

“I’m not leaving ’til my tummy is full!” Index was ready with a knife and fork. “Bring me a buffet!”

**Mission Update: Bring food to this brat.**

“I HEARD that!”

Sandman typed ‘Provisions’ into his digital map and marked three key areas in Magnostadt. They made their way to an area nearby, where a large quantity of food was located at the top of a tower. The tower was across a large pool and the walkway was too far and high to grapple to. However, there was a wood pot on the edge of the pool, and a snake peeped out of it. “Hmm… Crystal, stand on that.” Nolan instructed. The witch stood on the lid of the pot while Sandman played the Snake Charmer. Crystal felt the lid bob up and down before the 10-foot-long snake POPPED out like a spring, flying Crystal up toward the tower walkway.

The path led around part of the tower, but the witch would have to jump across open window shutters next. She jumped the shutters quickly as they would close in an instant. Crystal could climb a ladder to the next floor of the tower, standing on a safe platform as she watched a guard float over window shutters on a magic carpet, a searchlight aimed down. When the guard floated away, she jumped the shutters and hid within a large keyhole-shaped hole in the wall. The guard passed without knowing, letting Crystal make it across.

The witch stuck her staff into a hole in the wall, leapt on her horizontal staff, and quickly jumped and pulled it out to stick into another hole. She could jump to a new walkway that looped around to an open doorway. “Why are we doing what Mr. Strange says?” Crystal hid behind the door with a start, peeping in to see two guards guarding a watermelon pile. “He’s a nobody from Germany.”

“The World Leaders favor the man to great extent.” The other guard said. Crystal used a tiny ledge under the walkway to sneak under their vision, balancing carefully while crouching. “I don’t know what project he is working on, but I hear lots of rich nobles are helping fund it. He even got magic dust from Schnee Inc..”

“What if he is milking our land for its magic? Are we supposed to stand by and let him?”

“What choice do we have? The World Leaders are his shield.”

Crystal climbed a rope to a ledge around the roof of the tower. There was an open window behind the guards and over the watermelons. Crystal set her staff to float inside while she hung onto it with her feet, grabbing a single heavy watermelon upside-down. *This should be more than enough to fill*
that girl’s stomach. She flipped back up with the melon in both arms. To get down quicker, she let herself fall off the tower, then told her staff to float before hitting the ground.

Team Sandman returned to Index as the former cut the melon in half with his boomerang. “Here you go.” Sandman said. “Enjoy it.”

“NOM NOM NOM NOM NOM!” Index gobbled and swallowed both halves in seconds. “STILL hungry!”

“YOU CAN’T BE SERIOUS!” Wiccan screamed.

“GIVE ME MORE!”

“UGH! Let’s go somewhere else.” Sandman huffed in aggravation.

They headed toward the east side of Magnostadt, crossing a roofed bridge that arched up over a river. Wizard guards used magic to bring columns of water up to strike the heroes, but Yuki froze the water in icebending while Sandman rolled up to pounce the wizards and punch them senseless. After the bridge, the heroes grappled to some house roofs and bypassed the guards on the streets.

The area where the food was located was over another pool with vultures hovering over.

There was a shaking box with a picture of a spring. Sandman played the Snake Charmer, and a green rattlesnake with a big nose popped out, curled and bouncing like a spring. “This’ll be a change of pace.” Nolan hopped on the rattlesnake. He played quick notes on his flute that tempted the snake to charge energy, and when he stopped playing, the snake flew high and was able to bounce over the vultures. Sandman bounced the snake over a road with spike traps and sword guards that tried to slice them.

Wizards were perched on pillars and shot Blasting Spells, and would only be KO’ed when Rattly performs a Super Bounce on their heads. A brick wall blocked the way, but was still nothing to a Super Bounce. The last obstacle between Sandman and some food was a long pool with visible tiles underneath. Sandman played the Snake Charmer, and several snakes pushed those tiles up. Rattly could use the tiles as platforms and bring Sandman across. They found an abandoned truck with boxes of raw meat, so Sandman decided to take a few hotdogs.

He returned to his friends and sadly abandoned Rattly to get back on his wheelchair. However, he chucked one of the hotdogs into his mouth as a reward. “Crystal, you mind cooking these?” Nolan asked. “It’s probably a deal-breaker if the food’s bad.”

“Right away, boss.” Crystal blew a light fire from her staff to cook the dogs. Despite not having ketchup or buns, they brought the small meat strips to Index.

She slurped them down her throat in pairs of two. “So gooood! Now I want dessert! Give me ice cream!”

Yuki formed an icicle and held it to her. “Close enough, right??”

“BLEH!” Index smacked it away. “I don’t want it if it tastes like old man!”

“DARN IT!” Yuki cursed. “No matter how many times I wash it, I can’t get his smell off!”

“Fine, we’ll bring you ice cream.” Sandman complied. “The map says there’s some in the southwest.”

Team Sandman hurried past the town square, but it seems the area they needed to be was on a
higher level. They headed east of the square and went up some stairs, bringing them to the bridge that crossed over the square. Sandman chucked boomerangs to stun the guards before punching them off the bridge (a short fall wasn’t fatal to them). The bridge led them to a shopping district of town. There was a stand run by a blue-robed peddler called “Discount Genie Lamps,” with shelves lined with the alleged lamps. *Not responsible for unsatisfactory wishes*, the sign said.

They grappled to the roofs to find an ice cream carriage driving aimlessly around the streets. It was a magic-run carriage as no horse was pulling it. “So, we gonna knock him out and take some?” Yuki asked.

“Come on, that’s mean.” Nolan said. “Just use your bending and pull one out of the back.”

“Sounds easy enough to work. But can we stop him first? I’d rather get behind and see what I’m bending, and it won’t be easy if he’s moving.”

“No problem.” Sandman sent the Grapple-Cam to pursue the carriage as Yuki followed it. The Grapple-Cam landed on the street where the carriage would drive. *DEAD KID ON THE ROAD!*

The carriage driver stopped the vehicle, startled by the voice with no source. Yuki got behind the carriage and peeked through the back curtain. There was a magic spell that kept the inside cold. Several ice cream containers were frozen together, so Yuki used his bending to detach the ice and retrieve a vanilla and chocolate. He slipped out while the driver was still distracted by the Grapple-Cam. “Heh heh heh. Watch that girl explode like the rat from *Conker’s Bad Fur Day.*” Yuki snickered.

When the trio returned to Index, the nun grabbed a spoon and dealt away with both buckets in one minute. “Ahhhh… I’m full now.” She fell on her back.

“Great, now tell us how to get underground!” Sandman demanded.

“Sure, sure… The entrance is in Town Square, but you need a password… Could you carry me?”

“On you, Yuki.”

“What a drag.” Yuki lifted the child over his shoulder. They made their way to Town Square, where four guards were still circling the fountain.

“It’s the fountain, isn’t it? That’s why they’re so busy here. Yuki, put her down, we’ll ambush three and jump the fourth one together.” The three heroes picked a guard to sneak up on, and simultaneously knocked them out with a Stealth Attack. The fourth guard whipped out his sword to retaliate- “BZZZZ!” He was KO’ed by a shock rod wielded by Index.

“Ta-daaaa!” The girl cheered. “4x4 tech at its best!”

“Didn’t take long for that food to settle.” Yuki remarked.

“Well, as thanks for the food, I’ll open the hideout for you.” With that, Numbuh Index walked to the front of the fountain.

“Let me guess, it’s ‘Open Sesame.’”

Index spoke to the fountain with a smile: “The password is… Fath alttariq ‘iilaa qudri wayabead kl sharr.”

“YOU REMEMBER THAT?!” The heroes screamed.
The fountain deactivated and turned counterclockwise, lifting a few inches as that chunk of the ground slid aside. A stairwell led underground. “And there you go!” Index said cheerily. “If you find any food down there, bring it to me!” She skipped off.

“Odd one, isn’t she?” Crystal raised a brow.

“I really should ask how she knew it.” Nolan said. “Hmm… Well, now or never. Let’s go in.” (End song.)

Act 2

Sandman used a flashlight to see down the dark stairs, which ended in a tunnel with dusty pots and rolled-up carpets. The cave turned left, and red magic orbs served as light. The heroes gathered on a large carpet on the edge of a long pit. There was another monkey statue with a fire symbol on their left, and when Crystal shot fire at it, the magic carpet floated across the pit. “THAAAANK YOOOOU!” It stopped between two statues with ice symbols. “Shoot them at the same time!” Nolan yelled. Crystal and Yuki both hit a statue with ice to keep the carpet floating. The next statues required lightning and wind, in other words Sandman’s Shock Rod and Crystal’s gust function. The last statues wanted gas and light, Sandman used the gas gun and Crystal cast Lumos Solem.

They could disembark the carpet and enter a vast room with a bottomless pit and several wide pillars. There was a big hole facing their cliff from the nearest pillar. When Sandman played the Snake Charmer, a long snake tongue stretched out and touched their ledge. Crystal stepped on it, and a huge green snake followed suit and tried to snap her. Crystal jumped back and let the snake crash against the cliff, and the heroes could cross him like a bridge while he was stunned.

They made it atop the pillar it came from, and they repeated the process with a snake in the next pillar. The pillar didn’t have a top, so they had to call another snake from a left pillar. They could rest on that pillar, then they could call a snake from the next one. There was another hole above that snake’s hole, and playing the Snake Charmer caused a tongue to stick out as well. Crystal jumped on the tongue, dodged the snake’s bite, and Sandman quickly grappled onto the snake before the one they were on retracted. They got onto the platform and could glide down to a tunnel.

At the end of the tunnel, they stopped to view a vast room with posh blue walls and floors, golden columns and railing, and chandeliers. A great gold statue of Dr. Strange took up the center of the room. Sandman detected ten guards in the facinity, armed with magic guns, as well as wind shields to keep back intruders. “Attention all staff. There is a Kids Next Door ship flying in the skies above Magnostadt. I suspect it is the Arabian branch, Sector SA. I am going to activate the Sky Fortress and take Subject: Dark Heart. Deal with the intruders in the hideout.” (Play “You Should Have Listened to my Warning” from Arkham City.)

“We can’t stop these guards with those shields on.” Nolan said. “And I see snipers on those chandeliers.” The red lines of the sniper rifles formed an ‘X’ in front of the statue. “Why are they facing the…!” Nolan zoomed in on the statue’s mouth, seeing the white gem with a tornado symbol. “Is that generating the wind shields? Crystal, go for the left sniper, I got the right.” Sandman sent the Grapple-Cam up to the right chandelier, positioning behind the sniper. When Crystal flew up and KO’ed the left, the right sniper tried to shoot her, only to be bopped by the Grapple-Cam’s claw. Crystal quickly flew over and bashed him senseless.

Since the room was chi-blocked, Yuki couldn’t icebend, so he shot ice chunks from his pack to hit the statue’s mouth and break the Wind Stone. The eight remaining guards panicked when their defenses fell, and Yuki hurried up to knock out the guard closest to him. Crystal looked down and spotted a guard running around the statue, so when he least expected, Crystal dropped down and
balanced on her staff, floating over and jumping on him. Sandman rolled down to the middle walkway, and a guard on his left spotted him and aimed his wand. Sandman noticed the hole under the guard, and could play the Snake Charmer to have a snake shoot up and snap his leg. Sandman rolled over to KO the guard in his weak moment.

Yuki hid behind a column and waited for a guard to come up. When he did, Yuki froze the floor with his ice pack, tripped the guard, and stomped his head. When Crystal flew around the room, she drew the attention of two guards and dodged their bullet-like spells. Sandman grappled up to one of them and knocked him out, then shot his Shock Rod to stun the other one. Crystal flew down and bashed him to sleep with her staff. Another guard charged up to Sandman, who blew gas between them and escaped. The guard looked around in a panic, but was caught from behind by his opponent.

“Protego!” The final guard projected a magic bubble around himself. “You’re not getting the better of me! Nothing breaks my bubble!”

Sandman noticed the iPhone on the guard’s belt. “We’ll see about that.” He called Mr. Game-and-Watch on his wristwatch and aimed it at the phone. The 2-D Program got into the phone, which started vibrating furiously. The guard was startled to the point that he dropped his spell, allowing Yuki to finish him off. (End song.)

“I think we got them all!” Crystal said proudly.

“Excellent job, team!” Sandman raised a fist. “But we’re not through yet. It’s time to confront Strange!”

The wall behind the statue had an elevator with a golden barred door. All Sandman had to do was decode a password ‘Fairytale’ so the door would open. Instead of travel up or down, the elevator went directly straight. Ding! After five minutes, the opposite door opened. Team Sandman entered a chamber lit with purple lights. There were huge class containers filled with shadows, much like Cheshire, except they were frowning in despair. There were jars of colorful magic dust, and the lids read Property of Schnee Inc.

The heroes entered a passage filled with capsules of black, gas-like substance. Crystal was intrigued by the substance and approached one. “I wonder what it is…” She reached a finger to it. Sandman had been scanning the substance. A bunch of XXXX’s appeared on his goggles. He gasped- “DON’T TOUCH IT!” and pulled Crystal back. “It’s some kind of Death Magic! I mean, the scanner’s comparing it to Death Magic, but it’s… unfamiliar.”

“Guys, look at that.” Yuki pointed. Their gaze fell to the center of the room, where a shining purple crystal was placed on a pedestal.

The crystal contained what appeared to be a teenage boy with black hair, a white toga, and black robe. He had black eyes, forced open wide like his mouth, and his hands were pressed against the crystal. His pupils seemed to be in their direction. “Who is that?” Crystal whispered.

“It’s not ice.” Yuki could tell. “He’s trapped in… You!” he remarked at Crystal.

Nolan scanned the crystal and its prisoner. “The crystal is made of magic energy, though I can’t get more info. The Internet’s not recognizing this guy… Wait, I do have a match! The picture looks like it was made in Medieval Days… His name is-”

“Zeref.” They whipped around to find Dr. Strange himself. The bald, dark-skinned doctor wore a
black, armored uniform with small pipes flowing with colorful substance. “Or as I call him, Subject: Dark Heart.”

“Dr. Strange!” Sandman exclaimed. Before either hero had a chance to attack, they were trapped in a purple diamond barrier.

“I cannot have you disrupting this operation, Sandman.” Hugo had his right hand raised, and it was glowing purple. “We have so little time until this dreaded Apocalypse is said to arrive. The World Leaders wish to act soon. For months, they have been collecting the material and sending it to me because I am the only one capable of fulfilling the task. Imagine how difficult it was securing such a powerful subject. But I have Underworld connections, you see. Not the criminal underworld, of course. The real Underworld. And it took a great deal of persuasion for them to give him to me.”

“What are you doing with all this?! Why all the captured shadows?”

“The World Government needs absolute control for their plan, Sandman. All our enemies will be crushed and we will rid the world of evil. Once I have the remaining materials, the Grand Inferius will be complete.”

“What’s the Grand Inferius?” Yuki questioned.

“I could tell you… but I would much rather let you be part of it.” Hugo smirked.

The chamber shook. A massive area of the desert opened outside, and from the sands emerged a flying fortress with powerful sapphire engines and sturdy propellers. The underground hideout was now airborne, set to leave the desert. “The World Leaders plan to act soon.” Strange said. “If all else fails, the Grand Inferius will be their final play. Soon, we will have the final materials, and the Final War will commence!”

“Finals finals finals, what is this a test?! Yuki retorted. “It’s summer break, after all.” Hugo smiled. “But first, what do you think of my suit? We of the Strange Family have studied ways to harness and control the force known as magic. By injecting myself with small doses of concentrated magic, my body was able to adapt and control it. This suit amplifies my power, and it shall be your demise!” He clenched his hand, tightening the space inside the diamond barrier.

The three heroes were steadily squishing together, but before the doctor could see victory, a hole was blown in the ceiling. The impact caused Hugo to drop the barrier. “There he is, Mr. Gas Mask!” Index’s voice called. There was a S.C.A.M.P.E.R. III floating outside. “Morg, kick his butt!”

“I will!” Someone jumped out of the ship and quaked the floor upon landing. A 12-year-old girl with magenta hair and eyes, wearing a white robe, stood firm on her bare feet as she faced Strange. Morgiana leapt to stomp the doctor, but Strange dodged, resulting in a dent in the floor from her stomp. Strange used Levitation Magic to pick her up, only to be jumped by Sandman from behind.

The doctor blew him off with a magic pulse, but Morgiana recovered and kicked Strange with enough force to blow him against the wall. She faced the crystallized man and leapt over. “Should I try to free this person?”

“DO NOT TOUCH HIM!” Strange’s eyes glowed purple as he concentrated power into a small sphere. Gravity was centered on that sphere and was drawing the four in.

“That guy’s power levels are off the charts!” another girl’s voice yelled. “We’re getting you out of
there!” The ship blasted lasers down to break Strange’s hold, then it stretched a claw down to pull the four up.

“That will do.” Strange smiled. “This will not be our last encounter, Sandman. When you see me again, I will have achieved victory.” He conjured a vortex between his hands and expanded it to encase the entire fortress. It vanished in the sky, leaving only the S.C.A.M.P.E.R. III.

Team Sandman and Morgiana recomposed and viewed around the ship. “Whaddid I tell you?” asked a pink Goomba with a blonde ponytail and archaeologist hat. “It’s Sandman, the one and only!”

“I know! It’s even cooler watching him in action!” A Japanese girl with light-blue eyes and short hair beamed. She wore a school uniform and was ten years old.

“I found him FIRST!” Index yelled.

“Index?” Crystal said. “Who are you kids?”

“Duh, we’re Sector SA!” The Goomba jumped and twirled. “Numbuh Mark, Goombella at your service!”

“Numbuh Chapter, Morgiana.” the magenta-haired said.

“Numbuh Index!” the nun introduced again. “Uh… Index!”

“That can’t be your real name.” Crystal replied.

“I’m the leader.” the Japanese girl said. “Numbuh Period, Nagisa.”

“Shouldn’t the Arab girl be leader of the Arabian sector?” Yuki questioned. “Come to think of it, why is she the only Arab?”

“We know it’s weird, we just thought it was the best fit for us.” Goombella said. “But never mind us, who’d-a thought the noble Sandman would come to visit us!” :heart: “I’m from Roguetown. But I’m sure you know THAT, Mr. York. ’Second Index told us it was you, we HAD to come rescue!”

“Heheh.” Nolan blushed. “Good thing I did that then.”

“Hey, you wanna punch me in the head?”

“What?”

“Come on, it won’t hurt, trust me!” Goombella said excitedly.

“Um… Maybe just a little.” Nolan threw a weak punch at Goombella’s helmet.

“Nolan York, your Power Level is: 2300! Nice!”

“You can scan Power Levels?”

“Yep! And it was an honor to finally scan yours.” Goombella jumped and kissed Nolan on the cheek.

“Er… yeah.” He blushed. “So, why were you in Magnostadt again?”
“A few nights ago, we were doing reconnaissance and saw that Dr. Strange man go to Magnostadt.” Nagisa explained. “Index went into Magnostadt and got close enough to hear the password. If you’re wondering how she could remember it, it’s because she has a Perfect Memory. No joke, she remembers anything she sees or hears!”

“Wouldn’t she need a passport to get in?”

“Right here!” Index raised her Magnostadt passport. “By the way, when I jumped your shoulder, I put a little camera on your hat.” At this, Sandman took off his hat and spotted the tiny camera on the black strip.

“We used it to see into the hideout from you.” Nagisa said. “Given how much trouble the World Government’s been giving us, I guess we were right to check on that man.”

“But I never would’ve guessed he was hiding Zeref.” Index said. “He was a character in a story called Fairy Sisters. I KNEW it was a real story!”

“Well, thanks for the assist, but we need to find where Dr. Strange fled!” Sandman yelled. “If he was serious, it won’t be long until he enacts his plan.”

“We’d love to help, but we’re busy with other agendas.” Nagisa replied. “The Kids Next Door are planning an attack on Enies Lobby and we want to join in.”

“You can drop us off by my Sandmobile. But if you do catch wind of Dr. Strange, we’d like you to contact us.” Sandman held his wristwatch up to Nagisa. “I’m sending my number to you.”

Nagisa pulled out her phone and saw Mr. Game-and-Watch dancing on it. “Uhhh… Sure.” She blushed.

“Don’t worry, he’s not asking for a date.” Crystal patted Nagisa’s head. “Though he seems to have a fondness for girls with odd hair.”

“… … … I’m a boy.”

Crystal’s heart shattered like glass from the utter embarrassment. “I’m terribly sorry for my mistake, Sir.”

“If you didn’t wanna confuse people, you shouldn’t make your codename ‘Numbuh Period.’” Yuki commented.

“PERVERT!!” Index shouted.

“What?! I was just saying that-”

“HAAAMMP!” The nun leapt and chewed painfully on Yuki’s head.

“YOW!!”

KND Moonbase

The treehouse had gone quiet and most of the operatives returned to their sectors. Except for the night guards, there was scarcely a soul around. Maddy was unable to sleep for several reasons – one of them being she had a few naps after the battle. Shade was asleep on the floor beside her bed. Maddy was still wrapped in bandages, but the stinging pain seems to have subsided. She climbed out of bed, careful not to wake Shade, and put on her clothes.
Walking casually past the night guards, Maddy headed for the hangar and prepared to board a S.P.R.A.Y.S.H.I.P. “Where you going.” a boy’s voice said. She turned to see Chris leaning on his sector’s C.O.O.L.-B.U.S.

“I was gonna crash into Enies Lobby and try to find the Gibberish Rock before CP10 could get me.” She answered with no energy to try and lie or argue. “If I am the Chosen One, I won’t die.”

“Oh, cool. I was about to head there and just blow them up with Combustion Beam. Why come up with a million battle plans, it’s easier to go in and get it over with.”

“Sarcasm?”

“Nope.” Chris smiled, approaching her. “You and me, that’s all. Let’s go to Enies Lobby and burn it to the ground. We’ll drive your S.P.R.A.Y.S.H.I.P. if you want.”

“You mean it? ’Cause we’re really going there, no jokes.”

“I know that, but I don’t think YOU mean it.”

“I do mean it!”

“Fine, then let’s go!”

“Fine!”

They climbed in the S.P.R.A.Y.S.H.I.P. and started the engines. “…You don’t wanna go, do you?” Maddy asked.

“Not at all. I did at first, but now the mood doesn’t seem right.”

“Right. So, where do you wanna go?”

“The Los Angeles Beach. Some other people are there, you’ll see.”

_L.A. Beach_

“Hoooh... ho huuuum...” Manaphy was floating in the sea as the six other Firstborn held hands and circled around him. “HOOOH... ho HUUUM...” The full moon reflected on the surface. Its beauty paled to the voice of the Sea Prince. It may have been Manaphy’s song that was making the water glow… Or it could be Crest’s presence.

“Hey, Midna.” Crest spoke, holding the Twilight Princess’ hand. “If couples kiss under a full moon, you think that would boost my power?” Midna switched places with Meloetta beside her.

Their Guardians sat on the beach and eased their minds by watching the spirits dance. Sunni and Darcy held Mew in the water, hoping the song would heal him. Anthony and Michelle were also here as the sister swayed to the song. “The Firstborn haven’t been reunited in 20 years.” Chris said to Maddy. “I wonder if finding all of them will bring Arceus back…”

“He would be a big help.”

“Yeah… He was the one who started all this. And it all ends with us. You know… every night since this quest began, I’ve been up for five hours training.”

“With your Combustion Eye?”
“No, just in general. We were basically getting into a Firstborn Quest equivalent, I had to be stronger. And I still got beat by a giant chicken.”

“Five hours every night, no wonder.”

“No, I use this.” He took out a black mask with red eyes. “It’s an All-Night Mask Cheren brought home from Termina. You wear it and you never get sleepy, plus no crash later. It’s like an infinite 5-hour Energy. But I still get exhausted from exercise.”

“So much for my four-day Haki training…”

“I know… The minute that chicken wiped the floor with me… It was just like Sir Knightly back at Candy Island, I couldn’t beat him either. All this training and hard work… it amounts to nothing in the end. That’s the lesson I take.”

“That can’t be true. We’ve won countless times.”

“I know. But that’s the other thing… it never ends. Even if we blew through CP10 and you became the Light… things would only get worse. Whether the Government attacks us or whatever demon is pulling the strings, let’s face it. None of us are normal kids anymore. It’d be a stretch to say if we ever were kids.”

Chris unwrapped his headband and exposed his Combustion Eye. “Look at this eye.” Chris pointed at it. “The minute I was born, I was already a monster. If I exposed this eye, everyone would’ve hated me. And I hated myself because I was a monster. Heh heh heh…” Chris laughed and made a sardonic, frightening smile. “I still remember how you kept making fun of us. Benders and non-humans, we really were an odd bunch… and I kept telling you we’re no different from you ‘normal’ humans. Now I see the real meaning behind that. We’re cursed children who live cursed lives… It doesn’t matter how human we think we are. So why is there a reason to make fun of us? That’s how funny this is.”

“Chris…” Maddy felt concern for this behavior.

“And even after coming out with this eye, I didn’t wanna do too much damage with it! But what’s that gonna do, am I right? Even if I have a human heart with human feelings, even if I resent my demon roots… what does it matter for any of us? My point is, Maddy, that I don’t see a happy ending after this. Even if we keep saving the day… I don’t see one.”

“…” Maddy looked forward. Chris followed her gaze. It was then they realized the song had stopped. The Firstborn and the kids were looking at them, and had heard every word.

“Mana Mana…” Manaphy had tears pouring from his eyes, glinting in the moonlight. The speech must have traumatized the baby.

“Manaphy?” Melody picked her uncle up to console him.

“Phyyyy…” Manaphy made his tears float and cast them at Maddy and Chris. The touch of the spirit’s tears removed their injuries completely and the pain from existence.

“Tears of Light…” Lucario said with awe. “The mournful tears of a god cures all wounds. And yet…” He glanced at Mew. “It is not enough to restore the Ancestral Spirit…”

“Making a baby cry… How could you.” Chris and Maddy turned to the source of this man’s voice.

“RAYLEIGH!” Maddy gasped. “…No.” She shook her head. “You’re not real.”
“Hm hm, you got me.” Rayleigh stepped into the moonlight, making his playful smile shine. “I am a Zoni… but my memories and characteristics of the real Rayleigh are down to the nail. Even this one piece of hair that’s still blonde!” He tugged the blonde strand. “I came back because I knew you still needed my guidance. That was quite a speech you gave us, Mr. Uno… but so what?”

He stepped forward slowly. “Who cares if you’re humans… Who cares if you’re demons… Who cares if you’re gods? You’re this universe’s only hope. You make miracles happen! And the people of this universe CHEER the Kids Next Door! Perhaps there are some like the Government who fear you… but that doesn’t matter. You kids have a goal. If you don’t realize that goal, you’ll let everybody down! No matter what your future has in store, you need to see it to the end. You can call yourselves monsters… but you’re monsters with hearts and souls. And those are your true weapons. So, what now? You were going to attack CP10, right? Where’s that pent-up energy?”

Maddy and Chris exchanged looks. The former smiled and said, “Of course we were going to. It’s just we feel like… we slumped in our training.”

“Well, then I guess you need more. Children, follow me. My fellow Zoni should have gathered the others by now.”

KND Convention Center

Everyone in Sector V, Sector W, Sector W7, Sector IC, JP, KB, and the Moonbase commanders had come. Shade was here after learning Maddy had left the base. They gathered in the field to see Silvers Rayleigh and a swarm of Zoni. “Well, I do apologize for disrupting all of your bedtimes.” Rayleigh said. “But it seems you kids need a little help going forward. Orvus?”

“Thank you, Zoni 100472.” The Zoni leader bowed and floated above. “First, I would like to thank you kids for your assistance on Great Clock. To show my thanks, I am making a proposition: We Zoni will encase this entire field inside a Time Zone. While time moves ever so slowly outside, you will be inside putting yourselves through days of training. When you all think you are finished, you may merely say so. We wish to prepare you for the battles ahead.”

“No just CP10?” Mason asked.

“No, of course not. Naturally, you will be allowed breaks and refreshments, lest you destroy yourselves. But rest assured, you need not worry for the events outside the Time Zone. You’ll be a few days older than everyone else, but that shouldn’t be a big issue.”

“Hmm… Well, I’m game.” Karin agreed.

“Alright, let’s do it!” Ruby fist-palmed. “A few days, a few hours, it’s one long haul for me!”

“Okay, we will.” Maddy confirmed with sureness. The many operatives were all in accord. “CP10 won’t expect it.”

“Don’t leave me out!” Vanellope stomped forward confidently—glitch.

“Vanellope…” Dillon wanted to speak his concern.

“Be quiet, Dillon.” she yelled. “I might be just a broken Program to you, but I’m n—not!” Glitch. “I can get stronger just as well as you, you’ll see!”

“I’m glad you all feel the same.” Orvus smiled. “Then I would like to introduce your training instructors.”
The Zoni spawned open a portal, and in stepped several familiar faces. They introduced themselves: “Caesar Clown!”

“President Business!”

“Brook! Yohohoho!”

“Fegan Floop!”

“Me, of course.” Mom said smugly.

“Grandfather.” The son of Malladus appeared last.

“Brook!” Aurora beamed. “It’s been awhile!”

“Don’t be deceived.” Rayleigh smirked. “Brook is a Zoni, too.”

“It’s true.” The skeleton buzzed and briefly showed his Zoni form. “I am based from the real Brook, but my story and even those skeletons were a lie. I still want to see your panties.”

“STILL A CREEP!!” Haruka freaked.

“Even you, Lord Business?” Haylee asked.

“What? I’m glad I get to help you kids again.” Business smiled. “Especially when I learned Bob was involved.”

“Who the heck is Floop though?” Dillon asked.

“Duh, he’s the host of *Floop’s Fooglies!*” Zach replied. “It’s super cool!”

“I’m glad you think so, Zeak!” Floop walked up to him with a smile. “Because I’m here to train—” he tripped on a banana, “YOOOUUUUUU!” His body slipped across the ground like the curve of a “U” and flew up feet-first before hitting the ground. “And I’ve been told you’re friends of Wendy, so I agreed to it.”

“I’ll take it!” Zach beamed. “I’m so glad to be Zeak right now!”

“Get ready to be put through Hell, boy!” Grandfather smirked.

“Bring it on, Gramps!” Chris returned.

“The rest of you may train with each other.” Orvus said. “Let fast-forward training begin!” The Zoni encased the entire treehouse in a force-field where time inside moved incredibly fast. (Play “Immortals” by Fall Out Boy! Totally fits the mood!)

“The Prank-Prank Fruit is made of Psychic Chi.” Caesar Clown pointed a stick at blueprints of the fruit. “The user can make whatever little trap they dream up. It makes them a tough nut to deal with, but like with real psychicbenders, a mind that isn’t stable is their downfall.”

Shade threw rapid punches that Maddy blocked with Armament fists, unable to punch the echidna with Shade’s keen Observation. Maddy sensed Rayleigh behind her—she dodged and punched, but he sensed this and kicked her away. Shade threw shurikens, Maddy dodged, but stepped on a switch that flung darts at her, two of them blinding her. She sensed Shade and Rayleigh and managed to dodge their blows—only for Mocha to dog-pile on Maddy. The giant stood up and blushed, seeing her friend flat on her chest.
Zoni on Vanellope’s left—she zipped, on her right, zip, up-down-left-right-thisway-thatway. Vanellope kept at it until she could catch it, moving ever so faster. All this glitching wore her out, she stopped to catch her breath and let her pixels catch up. Dillon continued staring with concern, but was instantly grabbed in Midna’s Hair Hand, the Firstborn giving a reproving head-shake. Dillon broke free and stretched Mario to snatch her, but Midna dodged and sent streams of shadows to bind him. Dillon sunk in a Veil, but Midna spawned a Shadow Vortex on the ground to suck him in anyway.

Chris Uno swiftly dodged Grandfather’s beams, launching at him like a rocket, only for Ben to punch Chris away. Chris charged and threw Fire Fists at Grandfather’s body, but the former Demon King withstood, so Chris threw faster punches. Grandfather exploded a fire spire, blowing Chris skyward, then Ben shot up to punch the boy like a comet to the audience stands.

Caesar used his bending to release a cloud of toxins from different bottles, and Haruka was left to sort the mixed gasses in the correct bottles. However, her crazy uncle compressed some into Gas Bombs and threw them at her, blowing Haruka away. Meanwhile, Lord Business dropped piles of Legos around his area, and Haylee watched as he constructed an Avengers Heli-Carrier in seconds. Using her wrench, Haylee grabbed and threw Legos together, then ran up to build whatever came to mind, which in this case was a mini hotel with a couch and palm tree awkwardly sticking out—it crumbled.

Floop put a pebble under one of three cups and quickly shuffled them to confuse Zach. The boy thought carefully and concluded: the pebble was on Mars catching a movie with a coupon. Floop nodded, but he caught wind of the All-Knowing Cotton Swab in Zach’s brain. Zach panicked and called Milk Man (Jar Jar) to fly him away, but Floop called Kitty Patrol to have Milk Man file their tax claims.

After a day, they all were exhausted. Vanellope’s pixels had trouble reforming and little candles on Chris’s body dried his sweat. But the people singing this awesome song—Sugar and Harry Gilligan—created musical notes that pumped everyone up. With extra vocals from Meloetta, the kids were ready to keep going another day.

At Enies Lobby, Ernie the Chicken tore up countless punching bags of Peter Griffin. Megan Parker filled all the Teen Ninjas’ pants with Skunk Cream and attracted French skunks to love them. Lime Rickey peeped out of trapdoors at every point on the island. Bob built anti-KND cannons around every perimeter. Number 4 rested by a window, hearing ‘Mr. Beatles’ ringing in his head. Leslie Meijer was still throwing up in the toilet. Rob Lucci stood in the back of the base, staring at the Poneglyph.

At Midway Peak, Morgan Uno calmly drank coffee as she walked the halls, glancing at her tiny butler Benjamin in her pocket. She walked by the viewing window to the gym room. Cheren was besting Anti Guys left and right with his Demon State. She looked up and gasped in horror. A wood puppet of Doflamingo was hanging by the neck, and words carved in the opposite wall read FOR THE KING. Cheren glanced up at Morgan and spared a smirk. See you tomorrow, he mouthed.

Returning to the Convention Center, Maddy charged at Mocha’s leg for a headbutt, her forehead turned Armament, and the blow was able to bring the giant slight pain. Her Observation alert, Maddy dodged Shade’s shurikens, but Rayleigh snuck up and kicked her like a ball. Maddy dodged his following kicks and tried to punch him, but the elder evaded each throw and patted her head—flinging her away with the slight force.

Maddy held her throbbing head. She noticed Sparky watching from close by, panting happily.
Maddy smiled at her puppy and ran for the next round. Even in this Time Zone, Sparky’s vision was broadcasted to Dr. Nefarious, who had never taken his eyes off once. Lawrence kept bringing him nuts-and-bolts popcorn.

Mom showed Carol Masterson a map of Enies Lobby, and the computer pro marked down areas as she formed a plan. Haruka was able to contain the gasses in their bottles, but Caesar had taken this time to test Mason’s poisonbending. Mason grew tired countering his blows, and during his moment to rest, he pulled out his Gold Flurp. Haruka bent the soda out of its can, resting it on her hands as she tried to sense the harmful components.

Haylee whipped up a giant cannon from Legos, but it was crushed by Lord Business’ Lego wrecking ball. She used some pieces to make a Lego lightsaber, throwing it to cut the ball’s chain. Business retaliated by cutting some parts from that ball to make a Lego Pac-Man, throwing it over Haylee to trap her. Brook froze his and Aurora’s area in frigid ice, but Aurora used Fire Fury to melt it and replace with heat. She then quickly switched to Ice Fury and made it cold, then back to Fire Fury—she felt a painful strain and was cooled down by Brook’s ice.

At Great Clock, Bill Cipher sat close to a giant hourglass labeled Universe. The golden sands were close to hitting the bottom of the hourglass. Bill smiled and passed the time by snapping heads off dolls of the Pines and Bubble Dreamers.

Sheila Frantic used Midas Body and ran laps around the field, so fast none of the others saw her. After completing one of her rounds, her pedometer recorded 285,771 steps. Vanellope had gotten faster, zipping around the field in blinks, but still unable to catch the Zoni. She glitched so much—there were TWO Vanellopes! Both clones glitched with equal speed, surprising the Zoni by catching from both ends. Floop was teaching Zach the Classroom Attack, where depending on where you sit, you may either graduate with a belly-cleaners’ degree, a doctorate in zooatomy, or one or two associates in getting mauled by Italian turtles.

Sunny Chariton cut up a Creative Summons symbol and whipped Peas into existence, smiling at the tiny Friend on her shoulder. Swiftly, she cut more symbols and summoned Friends, trying to picture each one in a wink to spawn them quicker. Chris used both hands to block Grandfather’s heat vision, withstanding the heat and pushing closer to the elder. Grandfather shot a tiny laser from his finger, singing Chris and dropping his guard so he’d blast away.

Maddy hardened her arm to withstand Shade’s punch, and Shade dodged Maddy’s kick. Maddy dodged Rayleigh’s behind punch, threw one at his leg, he dodged back—Maddy sensed this and kicked toward him to punch his leg. Mocha ran to dive at Maddy, but she jumped on Mocha’s head and forcefully tugged her hair with Armament hands. Mocha winced from the tugs and tried to grab her, but Maddy kept a firm grip in her attempt to tame the giant.

Their final test was landing a blow on Azelf. The Firstborn was still and let herself be struck. All their Power Levels were recorded. Sheila Frantic: 4150. Chris Uno: 4095. Aurora Uno: 3900. Dillon York: 2032. Zach Murphy: 10. Maddy Murphy: 5005. Then Carol Masterson threw a punch at Azelf to see a level update: 12. (End song.)

“ALL RIGHT!” Carol cheered. “I got stronger!”

“What?!” Jinta shouted at Karin. “I have 1500 and you have 2040?! No fair!”

“Hey, I didn’t ask for ghost powers.”

“Hey, all I have is a teeny-weeny 0.5.” Aeincha blushed. “I’m weaker than a baby. Not like Mocha who’s-”
“SIX THOUSAAAAAAND!” Mocha flexed her superior muscles. “And that’s WITHOUT growing SUPERSIIIIZE!”

“Dammit!” Sheila cursed. “I coulda been higher if I weren’t sleeping all the time!”

“I think we’re ready to invade Enies Lobby!” Carol said, studying her online blueprints. “I’m surprised you helped us this far, Mom.”

“I expect a showdown with Morgan at the end of this.” Mom smirked. “Best to help you get through and make it.”

“I’ll be the one taking care of that.” Sunni used her psychic to lift the Sacred Casket, where the Three Treasures were contained. “While you guys are fighting CP10, I’m going to help Cheren. I think I should save my psychic for Morgan.”

“You were a great student, Haruka.” Caesar wiped an imaginary tear. “One day, perhaps you’ll make a more fantastic scientist than I.”

“Back on the leash for you.” Mocha caught him with the chi-leash.

“CURSE YOU, SUBJECT!”

“You’ve worked hard, every one of you.” Rayleigh said. “It’s time to put your skills to use. Lower the barrier.”

The Zoni disabled the Time Zone and exposed them to the light of day. The sky was clear as birds flew over. Five days of arduous training, enduring pain and sweat and heat, went by in ten hours.

And speaking of tireless training, work has been exhausting lately. :P Magnostadt comes from the anime Magi, as does Morgiana. Index is from A Certain Magical Index, Goombella is from Paper Mario, and Nagisa’s from Assassination Classroom. A couple shows I watched pretty recently, but nevertheless ideas brimmed in my head. ;P I was in the midst of developing Sector SA anyway, and I plan to make a story for them in the future. The far future, but still, you can consider this a prelude. Oh, and Rattly is from Donkey Kong Country. Next time, we go to Enies Lobby. And I finally have an excuse to play RWBY music!
Chapter Summary

Kimaya Heartly is sent to awaken Xehanort as a Darkness.

Well, I put this off long enough. Ready to find two more Darknesses? I am. :P This chapter comes before Chapter 68.

Chapter B-31: When Fate is Decided

Portal Chamber

Medusa approached the scanner and presented a Keyblade with a light-blue bar and a clock design for teeth, composed of intricate designs. The Multiverse Portal targeted a dimension marked with a Heartless emblem. “Destination set for: ‘Kingdom Hearts.’”

Nerehc played the Ocarina of Time, and Fi instructed the instrument to warp back 55 years. Medusa stared at the spinning blue portal before turning to her chosen candidate. “You remember why I brought you, correct?”

“Yeah.” Kimaya Heartly answered, still wearing her cowgirl uniform. “You said you would tell me about this Seven Lights stuff and why I got these keys. You said the ‘other Keeper of Keys’ was in that portal?”

“Yes, Kimaya. One of the Thirteen Darknesses, Master Xehanort resides in that dimension. Based on his information, Kingdom Hearts is the center of a Dimensional Fusion just like ours. His role in the prophecy is similar to yours, I presume. It’s only fitting you two should learn it together.”

“A’ight, then. This portal better not stretch me all funny.” Kimaya hopped on her skateboard and surfed through the Dimensional Byway.

“After she finds the Darkness, we don’t need this portal, anymore?” Nerehc asked for clarification.

“That’s right. Granted, it would be fun to explore the Multiverse, but… I have more important matters.” Medusa answered. “We still have one more Darkness to awaken after this.”

“But counting Xehanort, we only awakened 10 Darknesses. Were some of them already awakened?”

“Yes, two of them were, and I didn’t need to interfere. However, there’s another dilemma at hand: rescuing the Darknesses from Underworld Prison. I only succeeded in rescuing Teach… saving the others will require special help. We need the Firstborn.”

Dimension “Kingdom Hearts”

Kimaya skated through a sea of bubbles, some of which depicted a blonde-haired man with a goatee, a brown-haired girl with blue eyes, and what looked like Donald Duck and Goofy. She vanished in a gateway of light shaped like a keyhole. (Play “Hollow Bastion” from Kingdom
Kimaya landed on the base of a blue gorge where water seemed to flow upward along the walls. She gazed at the towering castle in the distance – pink smoke emitted from its towers, and it was marked with the Heartless emblem. Kimaya held up her key ring, then faced the castle again. “Whoever made up this prophecy… why’d they pick me, anyway?”

Stage B-27: Radiant Garden

Mission: Find Xehanort’s Pyrameglyph.

When Kimaya stepped on the water, it was unusually solid. Kimaya jumped three platforms to a higher level of the gorge, but there was nowhere else to jump to. Kimaya entered a large bubble on the water’s surface and was carried down underneath. Kimaya struck a pile of rocks clogging a drain, erupting a water spout that blew her up to a platform. From here, she faced a series of water spouts of varying height, but since they were several feet apart, Kimaya rode her skateboard into the first one, flew up, and could fly to the next ones thanks to the momentum.

At the end of the gorge, Kimaya landed on a solid laser rail, grinding it as it carried her over the misty plain and to the great castle. “This place is like major sci-fi. Am I gonna see any floating bikes? I’mma get me one of them. Whoa!” There were electric sparks traveling along the rail, forcing Kimaya to jump them. Eventually, she could land on a walkway near the base of the castle, gazing up at its marvel.

Kimaya approached a large double-doorway at the end of the walkway. She knocked on it. “HELLOOO! ANYONE HOME?” No answer. “A big castle like this has to have SOME people. …I guess they can’t afford a gatekeeper. Oh wait, but I got this!” Kimaya drew her Oathkeeper and shot a laser at the gate. It creaked and echoed as it slid open. Kimaya entered a massive foyer with a fountain in the center of the twin stairs.

Kimaya saw a silver-haired teenager walking to a door above the stairs. He wore a gray sleeveless shirt and same-colored pants with black shoes. The boy stopped and glanced at Kimaya, his orange eyes brimming with curiousness for the cowgirl. He ignored her and entered the door. “’ey!” Kimaya ran across the room—she halted when five Darkball Heartless appeared. Kimaya slashed her Keyblade at the Heartless, but one of them zipped around a center and blocked her attack while another bit her from behind. Kimaya whipped out Oblivion and jumped away, blasting laser bullets to kill the last three Heartless.

“They in this world too, huh?” Kimaya sheathed Oblivion and ran to the stairs, afterwards entering the door the teenager went. The door led her to a library, a maze of bookshelves full of volumes Kimaya would never, ever want to read. Books like these looked so confusing to her—in fact, she was literally lost within the maze of shelves. There were rows of volumes defined by their colors, but a row of blue books appeared to be missing one. Kimaya located a similar blue book in a dead end on a fourth-row shelf, jumping to grab it and bring it back to fill the missing space. The bookshelf slid open. “This actually makes libraries better.”

Kimaya entered the new passage and found stairs leading to a second floor. The stairs were beside a row of tall, yellow windows, and underneath the stairs was a small table. The silver-haired boy was occupying it, reading a book. He looked up when Kimaya approached. “Judging by your attire, I’m assuming you’re not from around here.” he said.

“Well, this ain’t look like a Western world.” Kimaya remarked. “I’m looking for a guy named
Xehanort, you know him?"

"I am Xehanort."

"Oh!" Kimaya was surprised. Recalling Darkrai’s story, apparently this was the boy who would wage a war in her universe, starting from Nightmare Land. It felt awkward meeting this young, handsome version of him.

"If I were to guess, is your name Kimaya?"

She gasped. "You know mah name?!"

"I was foretold of your arrival by myself. I was told that a Keyblade wielder in strange garb would come from a distant world and take me to my destiny."

"You were told that by yourself?"

"More or less." Xehanort closed the book. "Ha ha ha! I must sound really strange to you, don’t I?"

He smiled.

"Yeah, I kinda thought I would have to explain why I’m here without actually telling you… and I would be SUPER confused ’cause I don’t get none of this shit!"

Xehanort looked down at the Keyblade in her hand. "So, you wield the Oathkeeper. You must have made an important promise to someone."

"Oh, you recognize it! Can you tell me about any of these?" Kimaya showed him the ring of six keys.

Xehanort held up the one with king’s crown teeth as an example. "I see… These will go to the Chosen Ones. Then you are one of the Seven Lights."

"’kay, you really know a lot more than me."

"My future self didn’t tell me everything… but I was told that an ocean of brand new worlds would be open to me.” Xehanort stood and stared out the window, a wondrous smile on his face. "Worlds more vast and more amazing than any in this universe.” He raised a hand and clasped the air. "As a child, I could only dream about what worlds lie beyond my island home… Now, I want to see those worlds. I want to see and know everything."

"Well, you do that, man. Dream high, don’t let anything stop you. By the way, you seen any stone pyramids around here? I’m kinda supposed to take you to that."

"I can’t imagine where that’d be, though I haven’t seen the upper portion of this castle. Heartless lurk around up there. But no matter how much I insist I can fight them, Master Ansem forbids me from exploring."

"Well, sometimes you need to rebel if you wanna get anywhere in life. I say screw this Hansem guy and check out the upper portion."

"Hm hm. I like your spirit, Kimaya.” Xehanort grinned. “I’ll fight the Heartless alongside you.” He raised his right hand as a Keyblade spawned, the same Keyblade with a clock design Medusa had. "This Keyblade allows me to manipulate time. My future self gave it to me."

"I should ask my future self to tell me the songs I write.”
“I know a secret entrance that leads higher up the castle. It’s upstairs.”

Xehanort and Kimaya followed the stairs to the second floor of the library. One of the bookshelves had a row of green books with a sky-blue one amongst it. Kimaya removed that book and jumped down to the maze of shelves to find where it goes. She stuck the book with its other volumes, but nothing happened. She wandered around lost for several minutes, until Xehanort pointed out the book she had put back was Volume 6, and was in the place of Volume 8. Kimaya huffed and switched the volumes to their correct locations.

The bookshelf opened, revealing a crystal switch in a dead end. Kimaya ignited the switch with her Keyblade, and they heard loud WHIR sounds. Xehanort led her back upstairs, indicating the columns around the room. The columns had open slots with turnable things inside, spinning rapidly. They jumped over the bookshelves to a column in the corner. With key timing, Xehanort used his Keyblade to freeze the spinner in time, having to do so repeatedly until it would stop where he wanted. Finally, he stopped it to where they could get the green book inside, carry it back to return to its shelf, and open the secret entrance.

The passage led to the central room of the castle: an elevator room where platforms traveled along laser rails to different parts of the castle. One of the rails connected at their platform and spiraled up the room. “I guess the lift from this chamber is broken.” Xehanort said.

“We don’t need them. Can you do this?” Kimaya used her skateboard to grind up the rail, and seeing this inspired Xehanort to do the same with his Keyblade. By some force of magic, the gravity shifted in their favor while on the rail, allowing them to go up without fear of plummeting. They ducked left and right to avoid hanging, electrified rails. The rail brought them outside, but they had little time to admire the view of the misty field before spikeball Heartless appeared around the rail, forcing them to shift sideways or upside-down to dodge them.

The rail dropped them on an upper level of the outside – a courtyard with pretty flowers and numerous fountains. Wizard Heartless, purple floating witches with magic wands appeared. Kimaya crossed her Keyblades to block a lightning strike from a Wizard, then leapt for a double-slash—the Wizard dropped to the ground and melted, releasing its captive heart. “Dang, Wizard of Oz, much?”

Xehanort slashed the other Wizards, only to watch them melt on the spot. “I’ve never seen these types of Heartless before. There’s something off about them.”

With the creatures easily defeated, they searched for a way out of the courtyard (Kimaya wanted to take a “quicker” way than entering the door). She noticed two higher fountains next to a lower fountain, and she used that fountain’s spout to boost to the higher ones. The left fountain was off, so she used the right one to boost up to a pipe along the wall. Kimaya sidled across to a platform with a valve. She turned it counterclockwise, turning off the right fountain and giving power to the left.

Kimaya and Xehanort used this fountain to boost up to a fenced ledge, where a training field rested. Cannon Gun and Spiked Crawler Heartless attacked them. The cannons took one hit while the Crawlers took three hits before they melted. “Hey Xehanort, what are Heartless, anyway?” Kimaya asked over the fighting.

“They’re creatures born from the darkness in peoples’ hearts. A long time ago, they appeared when Keyblade masters were more common… but that was during an age of war. According to Master Ansem, they’re unusually common in this world.”

“Why you think that is?”
Xehanort slew a Spiked Crawler and watched it dissolve. “It may have something to do with these abominations. Real Heartless are comprised of darkness.”

The two went up stairs to an archway with a lift leading down to a lower area. Xehanort indicated the control tower on the right, wondering if they could redirect the light-rail upward. They grinded down as the rail led inside to another transmit chamber. Kimaya and Xehanort jumped sparks on the rail as they entered the vast complex of rails. The rail curved left, and when they passed a crystal switch, Kimaya hit it so the rail would redirect down, right, then curve left. They passed a rail that led into a passage behind them, but that passage was blocked by laser barriers.

Kim and Xehanort kept gliding on the beam before jumping to one on the left, which would lead into a spiral with a switch in the center. Kim jumped the sparks and hit the switch, the rail redirecting up slightly. They would pass another switch and hit it, resulting in the laser barriers moving at odd angles. They maneuvered to the rail that would carry them through the passage, but realized how fast the lasers were moving and leaving little time to pass their openings. Xehanort jumped over Kimaya and grinded in front to freeze the lasers in time when the openings were present. Kimaya was impressed with his quick reactions—she barely noticed the crystal switch on her right, flicking it just in time to change the course right.

The rail shifted up and dropped them in the control chamber, where they had view of the rail that led them into the complex to begin with. They flicked a switch and watched that rail change course up into a taller tower, starting from their tower’s window. With it, they glided up to the tallest tower of the castle. They glanced at the label Secret Projects before setting foot in a dim passage. Kimaya went ahead and entered a door, then accidentally bumped into a man in a labcoat and fell down. (End song.)

“Whoops! Sorry, didn’t realize anybody else took this route.” The man bent down and helped Kimaya up. He had dark-grey hair and a big round nose, as well as a 5-o’clock shadow. “Name’s Ford, how do ya do?” He shook Kim’s hand.

Kimaya noticed the six fingers on his hand. “EUH!” She pulled hers away. “What up with the extra finger?”

“Ah, that.” Ford raised both hands. “Just a birth defect, I’m not an alien or anything. ’Course in this world, I sort of am.” He glanced down to see Kimaya get up and brush off her cowboy hat. “Speaking of which, you look pretty different yourself.”

“Yeah yeah, going cowgirl was the wrong choice here.” Kim remarked.

“It’s not that.” Ford got down on his knees and used measuring tape to measure Kim’s eyes, head, etc.. “Head disproportionately large… eyes unusually beady… your arms are relative size; ten fingers. Take off your boots and let me see your feet.”

“Hey, back off, weirdo!” Kim smacked his hand and put her hat on. “Everyone in mah world look this way! (Most of ’em.)”

“Your world?” As they were talking, Xehanort decided to walk around them. “How did you get here, exactly?”

“Some kind of portal.”

“A portal?! Was it a triangular portal, inside a bunker?”

“Yeh, it was…” Kimaya was intrigued by his familiarity with the subject.
A look of surprise and horror crossed Ford’s features. “No… but that can only mean… he fixed it.”

“Who fixed it?”

“Bill fixed it.” Ford stood and turned. “Which means… the prophecy must be happening.”

“You know about the Seven Lights Prophecy, too?”

Ford turned halfway and stared at her with one eye. “You seem confused. Tell me… what is your business here, anyway?”

“Well, people are telling me I’m one o’ the Seven Lights, Xehanort’s a Darkness, and both of us are ‘Keepers of Keys.’ I came here to help him find a pyramid.”

“A pyramid?!” Ford gasped. “Where is Xehanort now?”

“He…” Kimaya turned. “Where did he go?”

Xehanort approached a slightly open doorway with a blue light seeping out of it. He peeked in and saw Master Ansem, a young scientist with blonde hair, as well as his assistants, gathered around a machine. Above the machine was a huge bubble with hearts floating about. “You want to cancel the project now?” a blue-haired scientist asked. “But they’re almost stable! With just a few adjustments…”

“We cannot.” Ansem stated. “The new Heartless infestation has forced many of the castle’s occupants to flee to town. I fear these experiments are only attracting them. It’s true that I hoped to control the Heartless by means of our own artificial creations… but we must consider the well-being of the other worlds. Radiant Garden is a Core World that links to the other worlds. If too many Heartless roam free… there could be disaster.”

Xehanort bypassed them and found a larger room, where a red carpet led to an altar, in-between six light-blue crystal chambers. Xehanort walked up the altar to find an incomplete machine, and a stone pyramid rested before it. The pyramid had a keyhole in its base. Xehanort drew his blade and shot a beam at the keyhole. The act caused the pyramid’s writing to glow.

“Master Ansem!” Ford burst into the laboratory. “Ansem, there’s something…”

Ansem and the two scientists were stiff as statues. Kimaya poked a silver-haired one’s leg, but got no response. “Is this some kind of seizure?”

“It’s timebending.” Ford instinctively knew.

“Xehanort’s Keyblade can timebend!”

“Then let’s go!” Ford led her further down the hall.

Keeper of the Keys, you are the key component to the Thirteen Darknesses. Bring these keys to the Chosen Ones to see brand new worlds.

Xehanort read his Pyrameglyph aloud, and a dark aura flew inside him. The pyramid opened like a triangular box, the letters coming off in the form of Unown. “Unown! Unown! Unown!” The creatures fled from the castle. In place of the pyramid was a floating ring of twelve keys. Xehanort took the ring and studied the keys. One was white and shiny with crystal teeth and a yellow diamond keychain. One was black with a white flame-design hilt, skull keychain, and flame teeth. One had six colored gems around its hilt, finger-like teeth, and a gauntlet keychain.
“Xehanort!” He turned to find Kimaya and Ford. “Xehanort, listen to me, you don’t know what you’re getting into!” the latter said.

“He kind of does.” Kim mentioned. “He talked to his future self or something. He knew I was coming, knew about the prophecy…”

“No, you don’t understand, both of you.” Ford looked at Kim. “Kimaya, I was the one who created the Multiverse Portal. I created it to visit the Original Worlds and study the comparisons between them and our world. Bill helped me realize my dream… but one night, I received a dream from an ancient spirit called The Chronicler.”

“The Original Worlds were never meant to be accessed from your world.” The Chronicler’s voice echoed in the vast, empty space where Ford floated. “Doing so would cause hazardous effects to the Space-Time Continuum. My knowledge on the Worlds is limited… but it is possible that prolonged use of the portal would cause them to leak into one-another. Doctor Pines… perhaps you should learn more on Bill’s chaotic history.”

“I realized Bill was a demon who craved destruction.” Ford continued. “I surmised he tried to spread his chaos to the Original Worlds. I was going to destroy the portal completely… but The Chronicler advised against it. He told me about the Twenty Keys Prophecy and how it could save the universe. I didn’t know what to do, but I feared Bill would abuse the portal. So without his knowing, I changed the portal’s programming and used it to escape to this world so he could never find me. (This world is a personal favorite of mine.)”

“That’s a very intriguing story.” Xehanort said. “But my destiny is already decided. Isn’t that right, Xehanort?”

“Indeed.” The two whipped around. A man in a light-brown cloak came onto the altar and removed his hood. He had a bald head, a small white beard, and orange eyes and brown skin that matched his younger self.

“You’re… the Future Xehanort.” Kimaya observed.

“I didn’t want this encounter to be interrupted, so I froze the other scientists.” Future Xehanort said with a smirk. “Kimaya Heartly… the Keeper of Keys for the Seven Lights. What is your middle name?”

Kimaya raised a brow, confused. “It’s Kamilla. After my mom.”

“Seven letters in ‘Heartly.’ Six letters in ‘Kimaya’, makes 13… seven letters in ‘Kamilla’, makes 20. You really are the Key to the prophecy. Even the word ‘heart’ is in your name, too.”

“What do you mean ‘too’?”

Xehanort used the Keyblade to write his name in the air. Removing the “X”, he rearranged the letters to make No Heart. “I came here, Kimaya, because I wanted you to know, a person’s fate is decided from the beginning. We were born to wield the Keyblades. We were born to complete our destinies. Also… I wanted to test your abilities!” Xehanort lunged forth and slashed his Keyblade.

Kimaya blocked with both her blades and leapt above to strike him—Xehanort dodged the simple attack and whacked Kim away, then flipped over for a round of swings that Kim struggled to counter. With one hand behind his back, Xehanort was faster with his one Keyblade than Kimaya with both of hers. Kimaya took a breath and farted a huge gas cloud, forcing Ford to hold his breath, but Xehanort simply jumped through the gas, threw more swings, and knocked Kimaya off
“I’m not impressed.” Xehanort said. “But why should I be? All you managed to slay were a few meager Heartless.”

“For yo’ information, I took out a crazy guy that shot lasers!”

“The Corporate President, you mean. Like I said, a few meager Heartless. Ford was right, Kim, you’ve no idea what you’re getting into. On the Day of Apocalypse, you will-” The castle began to tremble.

A powerful beam burst through the ceiling and burned into the ground. Ford pushed Xehanort out of the way and yelled, “Kimaya, you have to return home and shut down the portal!”

“Why don’t you come with me?!”

“I’m the only one who will know how to rebuild the portal, so I can’t risk coming. I’m not sure how this prophecy will play out, but I think it’s in our best interests the portal is taken down. Go home, please. But, if I could ask a favor, I would like you to find my son and give him this.” Ford gave Kimaya a small key – a Keyblade in its pre-summoned form. It had a clock-design handle and clock hands for teeth. “His name is Jagar King. I don’t know how old he is in your time, but he should live in Iceland. Tell him his dad is doing okay. Go!”

Kimaya clasped the key, nodded, and dove into the light. It vanished from existence shortly after.

“Hur hur hm hrm.” Xehanort chuckled. “You simple man, Ford… don’t you realize why I’m here? Your worst fear has already been realized.”

Xehanort awakened as a DARKNESS. There’s only 1 more…

Portal Chamber

Kimaya skated out of the portal and skid to a halt, picking her board up. “Did you find him?” Nerehc asked her.

“Yeah, I found Xehanort. BOTH Xehanorts!” Kimaya exclaimed. “There was a young one and an old one who… kinda looked and sounded like Spock from Star Trek.”

“Well, did either of them find the pyramid?”

“Yeah, the young Xehanort had a key ring, so I guess he read it. …Where’d that snake lady go?”

“Medusa already left. She trusted you would find Xehanort and said once you did, we didn’t need this portal anymore.”

“When I was in there, I also met the guy who created this portal. He said we need to destroy it or…” The chamber began trembling. “You feel that?”

“Is it an earthquake?” Nerehc asked himself. “The portal creates a lot of gravity anomalies in this town. Maybe it’s—AAAAAHH!” A blinding pink light swallowed the chamber, the silhouettes of their bodies waving. When it vanished, Nerehc and Kimaya waited for their vision to return. The room had grown darker, so Nerehc held two violet flames in his hands. “W…What?”

Dipper and Mabel reentered the chamber from the secret passage, the former holding a flashlight. “Nerehc, we saw a bright light. Is everything—WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PORTAL?!”
“How should I know?!" Nerehc exclaimed. Almost every piece of equipment in the cave had vanished, including the Master Emerald, the Tesseract, and the triangular portal burning with energy. “Fi, did you see what happened?”

“Hilariously-Confused Nerehc, I am unable to determine a source for the anomaly that has occurred. However, I took measures to recover the Ocarina of Time when the quakes began.” Fi took the ocarina out of her cape and returned it to Nerehc.

“Thanks.” Nerehc looked around, still confused. “I wonder if Medusa had something to do with it. I guess we can’t use it anymore if we wanted to. I think your job is done, Fi. You can go back to your boss.”

“Affirmative. Not Master Nerehc, it was a pleasure working with you.” Fi turned into a ball of light and flew up through the ceiling.

“Hey, can you two take this girl back to her place?” Nerehc asked the Pines.

“Hold on, Cheren told us you were one of the Seven Lights.” Dipper said to Kimaya. “Maybe we can take you to meet the other ones. It’s probably safer—if the Government knows who you are, they’ll send their assassins after you.”

“Well, I did kinda kill a CEO. Okay, I’ll go with you… but hey, do you guys know anyone named Jagar King?” Kimaya raised the clock Keyblade.

Somewhere outside the atmosphere

The Multiverse Portal reappeared on an asteroid, its equipment and pieces scattered about. A man with a black-and-white face chuckled maliciously. “Hm hm hm hm. The Multiverse… is ours now.”

Termina Dimension; Sector V

It was the 8th sleepless night Truman Kirman has had. He’s had insomnia troubles before, but ever since his trip to Egypt with AlyakAm, it has been worse. It was 7:00 in the morning when Melissa Gilligan entered his room. She was upset to see the redness in his bright blue eyes, the bags forming like an adult who passed out drinking. “Truman, you couldn’t sleep again? Not even after that cocoa I gave you?”

“I didn’t have trouble sleeping.” Truman lied. “I’m just trying to wake up.”

“Truman, this is starting to worry me. I think we should take you to a doctor.” She grabbed his arm to pull him up-

“I SAID I’M FINE!! Can you go ONE night without BOTHERING me?!”

Melissa jumped back, startled by his outburst. “I’m… sorry! I’ll go make you breakfast, you can take your time.”

Truman was once Delightfulized by Father like his parents, Eric and Ashley. His parents were broken from the spell, but they often sleepwalked, reverted to their Delightful states. Truman’s spell was not as strong as theirs, but he still had nightmares of being under Father’s control. The nightmares became worse when Truman’s soul was trapped in his own glasses by Majora, and his Delightful self took over again. Melissa has been trying to help Truman forget his past; she helps him with homework and other matters, acting as his big sister. And Truman loved her like a sister. He never yelled at her like this.
Melissa poured a bowl of Rainbow Munchies and made toast for her friend. It was a happy breakfast any normal kid enjoyed, nothing fancy or yucky like Delightfuls would like. Truman lazily chewed his cereal, holding the golden ring with five dangling points and a pyramid with an eye in its center. A strange item he had collected from the tomb in Egypt. “What is that thing you found in the pyramid, anyway?” Melissa asked. “Basing my knowledge off of movies, maybe that has to do with your insomnia. Maybe it’s… cursed.”

“The only thing cursed is this cereal, it’s DISGUSTING!” Truman smacked the bowl off the table, drenching the floor in milk and colorful treats. …Truman shook his head. “I’m sorry, Melissa, I’m sorry! I’ll clean it up!” Truman ran to get a roll of paper towels.

“No, it’s okay, I’ll do it.” Melissa took the roll and cleaned the spill herself. While she was doing so, Truman stood over her, his brows slanted over his dull eyes. The look gave her an unsettling feeling. “…Truman, are you sure you don’t wanna see a doctor? I don’t think your nightmares bothered you this much before.”

“I keep hearing this noise in my head. It’s like… an evil laugh. It goes like…”

“Hah hah hah ha, AHH hahahahahaha!”

Melissa knew only one person to laugh like that. “Truman, we won’t let anyone like Father get to you ever again. I’m sorry we couldn’t protect you from Majora, but we’ll do better next time. We won’t let anyone hurt you.”

“Like good, faithful servants.” Truman smirked darkly.

“What?”

“Hah hah. Hah hah. When I see you on the floor like that, it’s like you’re bowing before me. Like I were a king, and you were my… man-chair.”

“O-kay, now I have to say that’s a no-no. I don’t know what you learned in Egypt, but we don’t do that, anymore.”

“But it sounds fun, we should try it!” Truman hopped on Melissa’s back like a horse.

“HEY, GET OFF!”

“What the heck are you doing?!” Celeste Stork yelled. The other four members of Sector V had walked in to witness the disturbing position.

“Hello, guys!” Truman climbed off. “Did everyone sleep well?”

“Not well enough, apparently!”

“Truman, you’re too young to act like the Adult Playtime Rainbow Monkey!” Kellie stated.

Melissa stood up and said, “Truman’s been acting weird this morning. And he never lets go of that ring.”

“That ring from Egypt?” Harry Uno approached and reached for it. “Let me see-”

“DON’T TOUCH MY RING!” Truman smacked him.

“Ow! Alright, Truman, what’s really going on here? Did that girl hit you with some kind of spell? Are you being possessed by a demon again?”
“DON’T talk to ME that way!” Truman snarled. “You’ve got no power over me and I am NOT your PUPPET!”

“I never said you were a puppet!”

Truman panted, anger still fuming in his eyes. “…Ahh…” He touched his head. “Where did that… come from?”

“Truman, we already stopped Father.” Harry stated. “You already broke free of his control. Why are you acting like he’s still got a hold on you? You’re a person with free will, Truman, so act like it!”

“Huff…huff…” Truman eased his rage. “I…I’m going to lie down.” He returned to his room.

Shortly after settling on his bed, he heard someone enter his room. Kellie Beatles placed a pink Rainbow Monkey in a star-decorated night cap and sweater over him. “Happy Sleepytime Rainbow Monkey will remove the soreness from your eyes.” She turned and left.

Truman hugged the monkey to his chest and tried to sleep. But peaceful rest wouldn’t come. The laughter still cackled in his mind. He thought it was Father, trying to possess him again. And yet, part of him knew… it was something else. It called to him… and he couldn’t ignore it. He knew his friends would be upset. Truman did care for his team. He had a close bond with each of them. Sparring with Harry and Thomas, laughing at Kellie’s jokes, hanging out with Melissa… but Truman had to remember, they were only mortal.

One of the points on his golden ring stood up. It was pointing at the window. He knew, then, it was time to follow it.

One hour later, Melissa came to check on him. “Truman? You feeling better?” She saw the blanket was pulled up over him and came to uncover it. “You shouldn’t cover yourself like that, you’ll have trouble breathing—!” She gasped, realizing the lump was the Rainbow Monkey and pillow. She noticed the window was open. “GUYS, TRUMAN’S GONE!”

Her teammates rushed in and viewed out the window. “Did he kill himself?!?!” Thomas exclaimed.

“He would be laying on the ground if he did!” Celeste reasoned.

“He must’ve gone somewhere, but where?!” Melissa followed.

“I have an idea. Come on!” Harry ordered.

**Delightful Mansion**

Truman returned to the place where it all happened. He activated the Dimension Transportifier connecting to Hyrule, gazing at the pink vortex. “TRUMAN!” He turned, seeing his friends. “Truman, why are you going to Cheren’s world?!” Harry asked.

“The Ring led me here!” Truman held up the golden trinket. “My destiny is there! I’m going and I don’t want you to follow!”

“What destiny?!” Celeste shouted. “Where’s this all coming from?!”

“I should have realized it before! I was never afraid of being Delightfulized… all this time, I was denying my fate. My Delightful self was my true self all along. And my true self belongs in that world!”
“Your TRUE self belongs with US!” Melissa stated, marching up to him. “And we’re taking you back.”

Truman threw his open hand at her, the ring glowing—there was a FLASH, and Melissa was turned into a card that drifted to the floor. The back of the card was brown with a black oval. The kids were struck speechless. Truman stared at his hand, then the ring. “I…I have to go. I’m sorry it has to be this way, guys… The least I can do is keep you from following. Good-bye.” Truman pulled out a sack of M.A.R.B.L.E.s and threw them up before diving into the vortex.

“TRUMAN!!” The tiny explosives destroyed the Transportifier, but Truman was already gone to the parallel dimension.

Moments later, Melissa changed back to normal. “What was Truman… talking about?”

“I don’t know, but we’re getting him back!” Harry decided. “Let’s start fixing this portal now!”

“We don’t know how to FIX something like this!” Celeste argued. “Look, Cheren lives in that world, and he found a way to get here before. Maybe he’ll bring Truman back to us.”

“We can’t wait around and hope Truman will fall from the sky like he did! There’s gotta be another way…”

Melissa recalled their adventure with Cheren in attempt to find a clue. Unfortunately, the image of her kissing Cheren when they and Nerehc were drunk was still burned in her mind. …Her eyes widened: “If Truman went to Cheren’s world, what about Truman’s Negative?!”

**Hyrule Dimension**

Truman fell out of the opposite end of the portal before it vanished. He walked out of the mansion, under a dark, cloudy night. “Hah ha ha ha ha. Ahh ha ha ha ha.” Truman looked up: a blonde-haired boy with sharp teeth and black eyes floated down. The eye-triangle on his hat matched Truman’s gold ring. “Ha ha ha ha ha! Did ya miss me?”

“I…I know you.” Truman glared. “Don’t I?”

“Vividly.” Bill Cipher smirked, pacing around him. “You existed in Termina’s Egypt thousands of years ago. I manifested my image into the Egyptians’ minds. They honored me like a god and created seven magical items based on my appearance. The Millennium Ring you hold is one of them. Those seven items were created to destroy YOU, the God of Darkness. Your power is on par with Demon King Demise. When you were destroyed, part of your soul was locked in the Millennium Ring… while another part was reincarnated over the ages. Your newest incarnation is Truman Kirman, and your soul was awakened when Father ‘Delightfulized’ you, and again when Majora took away the human soul. But deep down, you know who you are…” Bill wrapped an arm around him. “And I know, too… Zorc Necrophades.”

A lightning struck in Truman’s mind. A tidal wave of memories washed over him. His eyes turned malicious, and he smirked devilishly. He shared the look with Bill Cipher, his fellow demon. … Zorc punched Bill in the jaw. “You ruined my plans, you phony god!”

“It was all part of my plan!” Bill raised hands in defense. “I couldn’t let you destroy the world before WE had a chance to! Don’t think of it as me robbing you of your victory… but instead, think of it as me giving you a shot at a greater goal! At the end of this month, my master will return and the Thirteen Darknesses will be his allies! You can join us and have your own number of universes to rule! Doesn’t that sound better?”
“Hmm… Very well. I will accept your proposal, Cipher. I suppose I owe it to Medusa, after all.”

The Goddess of Darkness materialized from a portal. “Oh, Zorc! How nice to see you again. You appear smaller than before.”


“Troubles in bed.” Thanatos mentioned to the readers.

“Your sense of humor is delightful as always. I’ll take it from here, Bill.” Medusa said.

“Until the D-Day!” Bill saluted before flying away.

“So, how much is there to do before the prophecy will be realized?” Zorc asked.

“All we have to do is wait for the Seventh Light to awaken, rescue the Darknesses from Underworld Prison… and of course, awaken the 13th and Final Darkness, Ganondorf Dragmire.”

“Do you have a plan?”

“Hmm, HAH ha ha ha!” Medusa cackled. “My plan is so brilliant, I can’t contain myself! We just need to ask for a little help… Sigh, I don’t think Nerehc is going to like it at all.”

With the revelation of Zorc, we officially know the identities of each of the Thirteen Darknesses. Zorc is from *Yu-Gi-Oh*, and yes, his appearance in *Operation: MASKED* was unknown until now. :P Xehanort and Radiant Garden are from *Kingdom Hearts*, and… you probably know who Ford is.

I don’t know if this was obvious or not, but as implied by Xehanort, we will eventually FIGHT the Thirteen Darknesses. Like with previous antagonist groups in this series, until we get there, it’s up to you to guess which heroes will fight which Darknesses! (Naturally, the fights won’t be limited to the Seven Lights.) If you’re following with the Main Story, the Battle of Enies Lobby is up next… Otherwise, the Side Stories will continue with Wendy family drama. See you then.
Chapter Summary

The battle of Enies Lobby begins!!

First, I congratulate IDA Official for being the 100th review of this story! Today is the day, we are invading Enies Lobby and starting the battle with CP10! Just to clarify, the KND waited one extra day before invading, just to rest and plan their attack. Now we’re here. ;P

**Chapter 68: Blood-Stained Past**

**Enies Lobby**

The noon of May 20 was crisp and clear today on Enies Lobby. Nobody felt threatened because they had defenses everywhere. The perimeter cannons had faces given by Bob, serious-looking as they were bound to shoot down any intruder. The Teen Ninjas were so confident in their safety, a lot of them were goofing off in the restaurants and hangouts built on the island, listening to music or spraying graffiti. The town composed only of skilled Teens was set before the two-sided drawbridge that would connect to Enies Lobby’s main building, the Tower of Justice. And not far behind said building was the Mountain of Mariejoa, whose top vanished beyond the sky. Did I mention the island was placed on a giant whirlpool?

Eldwin Savinsky stood on the balcony to enjoy the day, happily eating a pie. He closed his eyes for a few seconds while chewing a piece. “Hmm?” He heard something and looked up.

Pshhooooooo…

A firework launched from the clear sky, no source whatsoever. The projectile was small and it exploded a few yards from the balcony, making the word **Hi!**

A piece from the cracker flew into Eldwin’s mouth. “Ulp, uck, eck!” He choked. “Paper in my throat! Lucci, paper alert!” The top assassin nonchalantly approached, picked Eldwin up, and squeezed his belly to shoot the confetti out. “Alright, WHO’S THE WISE GUY?!?” Eldwin’s voice roared across the island.

No one responded. They were as confused as he was. Then the sounds of engines became distinguishable. Karin Uzumaki aimed to the south in a panic. “THEY’RE HERE!!”

A small fleet of KND ships arrived at the front of the island without detection, for their fronts were painted blue and white like the sky and clouds. “True artistry is supreme!” April Goldenweek held her blue paintbrush with pride in her work. “Now’s our chance to jump them!”

“They’re shooting at us!” Aurora yelled. “Remember the plan! Kids Next Door, BATTLE STATIONS! Meloetta, give us music!”

“Aye, Sir!” Meloetta was dark-red and styled her hair like Ruby Rose. “Cuatro, tres, dos, HIT IT!” (Play “This Will Be the Day” from *RWBY*)

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*Stage 66: Enies Lobby*
Mission: Defeat CP10 and find the Poneglyph!

Act I

Cannons fired at the ships, but Kodama launched storms of fireworks to counter their fire as the operatives landed on the base of the island. Teen Ninjas sped out on bikes and flew with rockets. Anthony stomped rock barriers to make the bikes crash while Fybi created clouds in the sky to strike lightning at the airborne teens. “WHAT?!” Eldwin screamed while a pie piece was still in his mouth. “These snotty-nosed punks are attacking us already?!”

“You want us to dispose of them, Leader?” Rob Lucci asked.

“Easy, Lucci. We’re more than prepared to handle this many terrors. And if not, I’m ready to start dropping a few prisoners! For now,” Eldwin grabbed a megaphone, “ATTENTION ALL TROOPS! Hold back the Kids Next Door at all costs!

“If you see Maddy Murphy or ANY of the Seven Lights, kill them on the spot!”

“Oh, you are just BEGGING for me!” Sheila punched her palms.

“Not yet, Sheila!” Carol yelled, checking her blueprints. “Our priority is getting Maddy to the Poneglyph. We need to breach their defenses before sending either of you out there. The first major obstacle is the Gates of Protection!”

“I see it!” Anthony was pushing his rock wall along to clear away enemies in their path. The operatives were storming toward a tremendous doorway and were shot at from Teen Ninja snipers.

“I’ll beat ya there, Anthony!” Michelle happily ran ahead.

“MICHELLE, I TOLD YOU TO STAY HOME!”

“Anthony, on your left!” MaKayla King used timebending to Stop a bullet that whizzed at Anthony, Rewinding it at the shooter. Anti Shy Guys jumped out of windows above the gate, and the powerful Shy Guys used Haki to break Anthony’s boulders.

“SHADOW POSSESSION!” Terry Stork, Dillon York, and Lee Andrew caught three Anti Guys, and while the Shy Guys were able to break free, Chris, Aurora, and Diwata crushed their heads with flaming fists! “Midna, go big!” Dillon set his Firstborn free. The Twilight Princess divided her Hair Hand into three giant arms and pushed them against the Gates of Protection. Teen Ninjas flew in and unleashed raining lasers at the Firstborn, but Sapphire projected a psychic barrier to protect her. Within seconds, Midna was able to push the gates completely open.

“IT’S OPEN!” Carol cheered. “Are you ready, Vanellope?”

“I told you, it’s in my CODE!” The next second, Vanellope was speeding a racecar across the field, with Carol in the backseat. The candy girl evasively dodged the Teen bikes, and their fellow operatives stepped aside to let them go.

“We’re crossing the Bridge of Despair!” Carol reported. Indeed, they were racing over a bridge, and the sounds of the swirling maelstrom flowed in the air. “Soon, we’ll be at the Gates of Power. They sure like their names, don’t they?”

“I can relate.” Vanellope said with hair blowing in the wind. “I see them coming up! And there’re the guards.”
The two teens guarding the gates were giants, wearing tattered clothes, awful odors, and goofy evil
smirks. “Look at the wittle puny wuny babies!” one of them taunted.

“Let’s take them home and make them kiss each other! Hu, hu, gay.”

“Somebody say GAY?!” Bon Clay Jr. flew overhead on a Swan Glider, dropping down to kick
the giant in the eye. The other tried to grab him, but missed and clenched his ally’s face, while
Clay ran across the arm and blasted his face with a Lipstick Gun.

“Have a mouthful of THIS!” Vanellope pressed a button that extracted fireworks from her car,
launching them to cover the giants with colorful mist. One of the fireworks missed the giants and
flew over the gates.

“Ururu, get to the tower as fast as possible and rescue Marine.” Carol ordered. “It’s not too far for
you, is it?”

“I’ll be fine.” Ururu was riding the aforementioned firework, unseen at fly size. The Tiny Devil
abandoned the projectile and flew across the vast city toward the white tower, as fast as her tiny
wings could. “Five days made me stronger, too!”

“Can their oh-so great defenses spot a fly?” Jinta smirked, batting ninjas away as he surfed on an
anti-gravity skateboard.

“They’ll have bigger problems on hand.” Aisa grinned, flying with Jet Dials and shooting ninjas
down with arrows. “Mocha, do the honors.”

The giant had been charging across the Bridge of Despair like a football player, smacking away all
the little Teens like dolls. “Hey, that brat is bigger than the others.” One of the giant teens pointed.

“Still puny! We’ll squish her!” the other one punched his palms.

“But who will be squishing WHOM!” Mocha got a red Skypian apple from her pocket and tossed it
down her throat. Mocha grew 50 feet tall, her size rivaled the tower as she drew attention from all
their enemies.

“IT’S THAT KID AGAIN!” Nya screamed.

“HOLY LUG NUTS!” the giant teens panicked.

“RAAAAAH!” Mocha stomped the two mini giants into craters, then squished the Gates of Power
into rubble. “I AM THE SUPREME CHILD!” The giant felt a rush of energy, stomping into Enies
Town and squishing all the tiny buildings like a toy set in her room. Teen Ninjas swarmed around
her like flies, but Mocha either smacked them away or clapped them between her hands. “Squishy
squish! Flatty flat! Under my feet, you’re like a mat!” She was having more fun than ever before.

“I think this is too easy now.” Karin Kurosaki said with a sweatdrop.

“SHE’S COMING THIS WAY!” Eldwin cried.

“Still got it under control?” Lucci asked.

“Grrrrr! CP10, KILL THE GIANT BRAT!!”

The seven agents launched off the balcony, crossing the chasm with Moon Walk. Ten Teen Ninjas
were flying at Mocha’s face, but the giant spat a huge glob of spit that crushed them to the ground.
“I’m not afraid of anything!”

“AREN’T you?!” Mocha looked to see the CP10 agents coming. The giant smirked and clapped her hands to send a shockwave, but the agents Shaved and flew all around Mocha. Ernie and Leslie sliced their talons and high-heel across Mocha’s neck while Lucci and Number 4 impaled Finger Pistols into her arms. Mocha swatted them all off, but all seven agents surrounded Mocha’s knees.

“TEMPEST CIRCLE!” With their simultaneous Tempest Kick, Mocha’s legs could not escape the circle of airwaves. Her knees were cut deep as blood spilled.

“AAAAAAAAHHH!” The giant lost her balance and threatened to fall on her back, but she quickly turned to collapse on her front. She couldn’t stand due to the searing pain, her giant blood making a large puddle in the ruined town.

“MOCHA!” Aisa quickly flew down to give her a blue apple.

“Cut her neck!” Lucci ordered. The agents flew down at Mocha’s neck, only to be thwarted by laser fire from above.

“Are we too late for the party?!” Nagisa shouted from Sector SA’s S.C.A.M.P.E.R. III. “Morgiana, kick ’em down!”

The magenta-haired Arab launched out of the ship and landed a blow against Leslie Meijer, blasting her away before landing on Mocha’s back. Aisa landed and threw the blue apple into Mocha’s mouth, shrinking her to her previous height. “Morgiana, glad you could make it!” Aisa flashed the Arab a grin. “Wanna show these teens a little barefoot pride?”

“I’m ready when you are.” Morgi smiled. When Teen Ninjas charged up at them, both girls stomped the ground and kicked toward them like rockets. Their soles were scorching red and burning the ninjas with their mighty kicks.

“In case you viewers don’t know, they’re using Red-Foot Style.” Goombella said to us with an open book. “It involves the usage of Personal Chi that is built up in the feet after long periods of going barefoot. It was first developed by the Fanalis, the tribe Morgiana hails from. As you can see, she gave Aisa a few pointers.”

“Who are you talking to?” Nagisa asked.

“They say imaginary audiences are good practice!”

“You jerks better keep your hands off!” Chris Uno flew at CP10 with fists on fire, blasting fire beams that the agents simply avoided.

“CP10, return to base.” Lucci commanded. “Let them play with the runts.” With that, the assassins flew away.

Melody and Danny came up to Mocha as the former used bloodbending to make some of the blood return to the giant’s cut legs. Melody then began healing Mocha while Danny defended her. “At least we made a mess of their base.” Melody said. “But I wish we coulda hurt them a bit more before we made it.”

Maddy and Sheila peeped out of the top of Mocha’s dress. “Are you alright, Mocha?”

“Just fine.” She smiled weakly. “At least they didn’t notice you.”
“Don’t come out, yet.” Shade ordered. “We need to lower the drawbridge.”

“It is now 12:10.” Miyuki Crystal reported, charging into the ruined town with her team. “At 12:20, we are scheduled to breach the Gates of Justice and lower the bridge.”

“That’s some SCHEDULE!” Strings lashed the ground before the operatives, forcing Sector IC to stop. Doflamingo Jr. and his two traitorous friends appeared. “Did you have one when you guys killed my father?!”

“We didn’t kill him!” MaKayla yelled.

“PAH!” Doffy lashed at them, but they dodged. “As far as I care, you’re ALL guilty! Don’t forget Sector DR was Number 2 of the Top 10, you’re no match for me!”

“Then it’s only fair I fight you!” Doffy Jr. dodged the Song Beam, cast by none other than: “SUGAR?!”

“Hey, Little Bro.” The 14-year-old girl said. “I guess we girls DO mature faster, huh?”

“You teamed up with them? And you’re a MUSICBENDER?!”

“Hey, it’s not the craziest twist we had lately.” Sugar surfed a Song Road across Aeral and Bison, knocking them away, and she stylishly dodged Doffy’s strings and surfed at her brother. She jumped and tried to stomp him, only for Doffy to dodge. Sugarwhirled her arms and channeled the Song Chi from Meloetta’s vocals, sending them to try and tie her brother, but the flamingo spun in a String Tornado and lashed String Whips at Sugar, who barely dodged.

Aeral Sarah made her arms into guns and shot at MaKayla, who evaded the bullets and ran to punch Sarah in the chin. “You know, I haven’t forgiven you for the boxing tournament!” Kayla yelled.

“I thought timebenders knew how to keep things in the past?” Sarah remarked.

“Except the fact you haven’t changed.” Kayla leapt to kick, but Sarah’s face became a cannon and shot her away. Lola Stork was chasing a cowardly Bison Oxford and slapping Spanking Hands at his butt.

“YOU!” cried Nya LaMar, flying at Shade with a punch, only to miss. “Shade! Why the hell are YOU with these brats?! You were a spy?!”

“Yes, I was.” Shade answered. “Not on you, I was spying on Maddy. I waited my whole life to bring her here and I’m not about to stop now!”

“I’LL KILL YOU!” Nya landed and swung furious punches at the echidna, missing each time until Shade punched her in the jaw. Nya whipped around to shoot Shade—her laser was directed at a red paint spot on the ground. “WHAT?!”

“I’m here, too!” April Goldenweek said to her. “Didn’t forget me, did you?”

“Oh, you were on my list, too.” Nya glared. “To think I planned to trap you if you agreed to come with us.”

“What?”

“We didn’t know why, but Eldwin planned to capture and have you killed before the World
Leaders. Now that we know you’re a Light, too, I understand.” Nya smirked. “Speaking of which, your friends are up ahead. They’re dying to see you!”

“…!” April hurriedly ran ahead. Shade punched Nya from behind, but the teen was quick to flip back up and kick both feet against the Mobian.

“There’s the Gates of Justice!” Carol yelled as Vanellope sped them across the ruined town. “Chris, you have to blow them open with your Combustion Eye! Once we get inside, we can lower the drawbridge!”

“Wait, don’t!” Nagisa yelled from SA’s ship. “We see some people attached to the drawbridge!”

“You do?” April questioned. “Chris, fly to my location and carry me above the gates!”

“I’m on my way!” Chris saw April’s mark on his watch’s map and kicked on his rocket boots. He swooped by and grabbed April’s hand, flying for the Gates of Justice at full speed. Bypassing the Teen Ninjas, the two were able to set foot on the roof of the gates. April gasped with horror. (End song.)

Dazun Sclice, Trenton Boom, Paula Doublefinger, and Selina Valentine were chained to the underside of the second half of the drawbridge. April’s former teammates of Sector GD were bloody and hanging to dry. “HAAAA hah hah ha ha!” They looked up at the balcony where Eldwin was laughing cockily. The seven CP10 members were lined up along the edge. “You little snorts got through faster than I woulda hoped. So go ahead, lower the drawbridge! Because these traitors will be the ones taking the plunge!”

A body of water rose up from the maelstrom below, shaping into Suigetsu Hozuki. “The plunge down my stomach!” The Logia Fishkid swiped his arm across the gates’ roof and smacked Chris and April away.

“None of us are going to Davy Jones today!” Melody pulled herself up onto the roof with a water tentacle. “Tell him, Manaphy!” She tossed the Spirit Ball and freed her Firstborn.

“MANAAA!” Manaphy summoned several streams of water to form over Melody, who activated her Water Fury and matched Suigetsu’s size with her own liquid body. Both water giants began splashing each other, and Manaphy’s added power was able to detain the Logia and drag him below the surface.

“Guys, it’s Ururu.” The soft voice came from their communicators. “I’m having trouble finding Marine, and a bunch of teens are chasing me.”

“Just come outside, Ururu.” Karin ordered. “We need you for something else.”

“We can’t lower the bridge with Sector GD hanging there!” April yelled.

“You guys must think you’re real hot stuff, treating our friends that way!” Chris shouted at CP10. “It only proves you’re afraid of us!”

“Eh, sticks and stones.” Eldwin shrugged. “I mean, I have full confidence CP10 can beat up all you nerds, but it’s good to have a few extra cards in the deck. If you got a problem with it, come up here and punch me! ’Course I’ll just hide behind Leslie.” He did that.

“BLEEEEHHH!” Leslie threw up over the edge, still sick.

“Er… Behind Ernie.” He did that. Ernie rolled his eyes.
Chris grinned with malice. “I got a better idea. I’ll blow through ALL of you!” He yanked off his headband and took a big whiff. He charged the Combustion Eye and fired straight at the agents. Spark spark spark-

The seven agents made quick movements with their hands and held them out and open. “Reflect no Jutsu!” The Combustion Beam hit an invisible barrier, bounced toward the sky, and exploded. Chris gaped in utter shock.

“Just a little FYI,” Eldwin smirked, “we’re Teen Ninjas, so don’t think we haven’t read our share of Ninjutsu. Sadly, most of them would rather watch Rock Zefron than Naruto. Ernie, poke that eye out!”

The giant chicken launched down at Chris, who jumped back to avoid his Finger Pistol, then shot fire to block the bladed feathers Ernie threw. Chris jumped off the roof, only for Ernie to pursue. With that, April Goldenweek was left on the gates’ roof. “We-hell, there’s one of the Seven right there!” Eldwin laughed. “Wanna do the honors, Lucci?”

“With all due respect, Sir, her blood smells unappetizing.”

“It smells like paint, coo-kachoo!” Hattori cawed.

“Suit yourself. Rickey, you do it.” Lime Rickey obeyed and kicked off the balcony, eyes set on April while the artist braced herself.

A wall of flames burst up in Rickey’s way, for April was saved by Aurora Uno. “Just a second, Mr. Bartender. I ordered another round!”

“Well, well, it’s Young Miss Uno again.” Rickey landed on the edge of the roof. “You really do resemble your mom, did I tell you that?”

“I would like to say I’m my own person either way. But what the hell happened to you, Rickey? Why become an assassin?”

“Well, I guess it all started when your parents beat the Brotherhood of Evil. They froze Mr. Fizz with the other villains, so with no Soda Control Board, nobody had a reason to visit my speakeasy. All the kids began freely drinking soda wherever, whenever. There was also the fact I began gettin’ too old to run a bar like that… But boy, my mom was not happy.

“I never told anyone this, but everything in that bar, all the soda and tables and cleaning supplies—I PAID for all of that! Not just from my allowance, I stole from my mom. Hey, there was an adult tyranny war going on, it was cool, right? But that age is long gone. My mom kicked me outta the house at 14 years old, told me not to come back until I paid her back in full. So I wandered the streets like a hobo, and middle-middle-middle, now I’m a member of CP10. Pays a hefty amount, I tell you what. But since I didn’t need my old house anymore, I used the money to open my Milk Bar in Cleveland. Got to chat with the old gang just like 20 years ago.”

“You stole from your mom?! Just to buy soda for a bunch of kids you didn’t even know?!?”

“I was glad to do it! Everyone was happy and I thought they were all my friends! But in the end, I guess they didn’t need me, either. Tore me up inside. And if I wanted to sound vengeful, I would blame your parents.”

“You brought it on yourself, you know.”

“I know.” Rickey smiled. “So, nothing personal, toots, but I’ll have to kill you, anyway.”
“Not at all.” Aurora smiled back. “But before I lay the beatdown on you, on behalf of our parents, we thank you for all the soda.”

“That do bring warmth to my heart, Miss.” (Play “Boss Medley 1” from Kid Icarus: Uprising!)

**Boss fight: Lime Rickey**

Rickey Shaved up to Aurora and used Finger Pistol, Aurora swiftly dodged all his blows and blasted twin flames, sending Rickey over the edge of the chasm. The bartender recovered using Moon Walks and sliced a Tempest Kick across the field, but Aurora dodged and rocketed behind Lime Rickey. She came back while performing a Fire Drill, but the assassin Shaved so she would hit the roof. Rickey zipped behind and punched Aurora away, but she pushed the floor with her hand and flipped back on her feet. Aurora stomped and entered Ice Fury, unleashing storms of icicles, but Rickey avoided them all using Paper Art.

“Door!” Rickey jumped into a trapdoor on the roof and popped up under Aurora, punching her skyward. Aurora spun and released icy waves, only for Rickey to dodge with Shaves and get behind her again. He aimed the Finger Pistol at her rear—Aurora sensed this and grabbed his hand, freezing the assassin solid. With that, she switched to Fire Fury and threw a powerful flame that broke the ice and flung him across the field.

“Am I a little tougher than you were hoping?!” Aurora taunted.

“That’s some nice moves, kid! But I got some of my own.” Rickey opened a hole in the air like a door and stuck his Finger Pistol inside. Aurora flinched when she felt it you-know-where. “Finger Pistol: Ten Years Community Service!” It was a weak blast that slid her forward a few feet. “I ate the Door-Door Fruit. I can open doors in anything, including space! I can only travel a few miles at a time, but it’ll do here.”

“That’s not a bad power. But it won’t help you against me!” Aurora dashed at him with her right fist on fire and her left fist in ice. Rickey threw open a door behind him and slipped inside, resulting in Aurora punching empty air.

“This power also gives me access to the Pocket Dimension!” Rickey emerged behind her. “And I picked up some pretty nifty items!” He pulled his hands out, clutching the Hero’s Crest Keyblade and Road to Dawn Keyblade.

“KEYBLADES?!” Aurora gaped.

“Yeah, these giant keys are just floating around waiting to be picked up. Figured ‘Hey, I’ll give ’em their two cents.’” Rickey Shaved beside Aurora and slashed the Keyblades with swift speed, Aurora ducking the strikes by hair’s end (as the ends of her hair were cut off). Aurora punched a Flame Fist at his belly, but Rickey defended with Iron Body before batting Aurora away with the keys.

Aurora went into Fire Fury, and Rickey rapidly Shaved circles around her, forcing Aurora to erupt a fire spire. Rickey spun the Keyblades to pierce through the fire and stab down at Aurora, but the girl ran away and kicked fireballs that Rickey batted with the keys. He Shaved up and furiously swung the blades at his opponent, but Aurora kept dodging before spreading fires around the field. Rickey used Paper Art to float among the smoke, aiming to get above Aurora and strike down, but the environment switched to frigid cold as she threw up an ice shield to block him. “I knew firebenders could manipulate heat, but sap it out of the air completely?!” Rickey questioned.

“Door!” Rickey jumped into a trapdoor on the roof and popped up under Aurora, punching her skyward. Aurora spun and released icy waves, only for Rickey to dodge with Shaves and get behind her again. He aimed the Finger Pistol at her rear—Aurora sensed this and grabbed his hand, freezing the assassin solid. With that, she switched to Fire Fury and threw a powerful flame that broke the ice and flung him across the field.
“I’m a double-bender, genius!” Aurora blew the Ice Shell up and knocked Rickey skyward. He recovered in time to dodge Aurora’s Ice Beam, Shaving down and to her left to slice the Keyblades, but Aurora slid back across the ice.

“Oh, so you’re using two different Fury Modes. That’s not good for your health.” Lime Rickey swung consecutive Tempest Kicks, Aurora dodging, but she wasn’t prepared when Rickey slipped into a trapdoor in which the opposite end opened above her. Rickey stomped Aurora to the ground, leapt off, and batted her away with the Keyblades. Aurora’s Ice Fury wore off, leaving her exhausted in her regular form. “Just as I thought. A bender’s full power is in their Fury Form. Unfortunately, that takes power, too. You’re forced to go all out on me, Sweet Cheeks!”

Aurora got up and forced a smile. “I am reckless that way.” Aurora threw on Fire Fury again, using Rocket Boost to fly around the rooftop and steadily create a flame tornado. Rickey stood as the enclosed area increased in heat, but the bartender made a shrug before choosing to hide in the Pocket Dimension. He remained there for a few seconds, but the rising heat began to reach him here, too. He exited the dimension gasping for breath, giving Aurora the chance to strike him with a Twin Flame Drill.

Rickey dropped the Keyblades as he bounced across the field, the flame tornado gone and the Keyblades poofed out of thin air. Aurora let her Fury dissolve, needing to catch her breath and hoping he was down for the count. Unfortunately, the bartender was up and standing again. “You pushed me farther than I thought you would, Doll Face! It’s time to bring out my secret weapon!” Rickey reached into the Pocket Dimension and whipped out a golden sword with a spiked blade, flashing like lightning.

“THE GALAXIA SWORD!”

“Left abandoned by its late owner. How sad.” Rickey Shaved up and slashed the sword faster than Aurora could see, cutting up the front of her shirt before kicking her away. Rickey zipped up to stab her, but Aurora rolled aside with the beat of her heart, jumping up to kick flames that Rickey blocked.

“Well, with no other options, I’ll have to use Double Fury!” Aurora punched her chest and stomped a foot, encasing herself in a body that was Fire and Ice. She hurled comets of both elements, but Rickey continued swiftly evading before dropping in a door that opened up behind her. Aurora dodged an inch from Galaxia’s tip, freezing the roof with her foot to make Rickey slip, then stomping his head with a flame foot.

Rickey endured the throbbing pain and Shaved over to slice at Aurora, who formed an ice sword to block Galaxia. The superior golden blade cut the ice, as well as the firewalls Aurora sprouted afterwards. Aurora spun in a Fire-Ice Tornado, spiraling toward Rickey, only for the assassin to constantly Shave out of her range. Aurora slowed to a halt and began panting. “Huff! Crap, my Fury’s wearing off!”

“Music to my ears!” Rickey went in a door and jumped out behind her.

“GOT YA!” Aurora kicked back and hit Rickey in the crotch, shot an icicle to knock the sword out of his hand, then kicked up at his face to knock him on his back. Aurora shot up into the air and performed the Fiery Icicle, taking the shape of a drill with fire and ice spirals.

“Iron Body!” Rickey made himself completely still and endured every second of the piercing attack against his stomach. Aurora kept drilling for ten seconds, but seemed to make no dent on Rickey’s body. Aurora leapt off as her Fury Mode vanished. After catching up on her breath, the Uno girl fell. (End song.)
“What’s going on with Aurora?!” Haruka exclaimed.

“Let me get a look!” Midna flew high enough to see the roof of the gates, joined by Lola and Fybi. “Aurora and Lime Rickey… they’re both lying down. Wait!”

Lime Rickey got up, panting. The bartender smirked at his fallen opponent. “No way… Aurora got beat.” Lola said.

“Aurora?! No way!” Haylee shouted.

“YEEEEEEEEEHAAAAAAA!” Eldwin jumped about like a giddy little girl. “Rickey Rickey, he’s the man! He’ll knock you down and kick your can! HA HAAA! Which twerp is up NEXT?!”

“This is terrible!” Shade said. “If after all that, Aurora couldn’t beat one… how are we going to-”

“Hold on.” Sapphire cut in.

Eldwin stared confusedly. Rickey was still gasping, and the strength of his breaths puffed higher. He wasn’t smiling, and with each breath he bowed forward. “Huff…Huff…HUFF…HUFF…BLUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUH…” And a waterfall of vomit spewed from his throat. For several seconds, the barf was unending, and the resulted puddle covered a large portion of roof. When his stomach was finally empty, the assassin fell flat on his front, left to lay in the filth. Eldwin and the operatives gaped at the sight.

“She…SHE BEAT HIM!” Midna cheered. “AURORA WON!”

“YAAAAAAAAYYY!” The operatives cheered to the sky.

“DAMMIT! PICK UP THE PACE, YOU IDIOTS!” Eldwin thundered. “You’ll need to put double the effort to make up for Rickey!”

“’Guess it’s time for my second verse!’” Meloetta turned yellow and styled her hair like Yang Xiao Long for the next song. (Play “I Burn” from *RWBY*)

Doflamingo Jr. flew overhead and caught Sugar in a birdcage of strings, closing it together to crush the older sister. Diwata appeared from a portal behind Doffy and kicked him down to Sugar, who blew a Song Beam up to propel him away. Sheila and Maddy were still hiding under Mocha’s dress as the former asked, “When are you blokes gonna lower the drawbridge?”

“We can’t lower it if Sector GD is stuck to one end!” April yelled back in her communicator.

“I foresaw this scenario happening.” Sapphire replied, running with Ruby and Jinta toward the Gates of Justice. “But we have a backup plan. With Chris distracting an agent and another one defeated, we only have the five to protect from. Are you ready, Ururu?”

The fly-size girl had returned from the tower and was on Jinta’s shoulder. “I’m a little nervous… but I’ll do my best. When you’re ready, Jinta-kun.”

“I’m hitting the home run!” Jinta threw his baseball to the air as Ururu flew and landed on it. “HE SHOOTS, HE SCORES!” He swung his giant bat powerfully, and the ball flew toward the gates like a comet.

“Aurora, better move!” Vanellope glitched up on the roof and grabbed her sleeping friend, zipping off after. Ururu was seconds from hitting the gates on the baseball, so at that moment, she turned a dial up on her suit’s belt and pressed the Grow button.
Ururu exploded into a gigantic size, falling forward and crushing the Gates of Justice, along with the building and first half of the drawbridge. “ANOTHER GIANT?!” Eldwin screamed. “WHERE THE HELL ARE THEY HIDING?!”

“AAAAAH!” Aeincha screamed. “Tiny Devil is Big Devil!”

“Huu!” Ururu gasped from the sudden change. Her soft, adorable voice echoed across the island, and her blush was clearly visible. “Um... This is my first time being giant. I’m not squishing anyone, am I? Is anyone looking up my skirt?”

“No one worth mentioning, Ururu.” Jinta climbed up on his friend’s shoulder, batting off Teens that swarmed at her. “Quick, save those guys!”

“Okay!” Ururu reached over and grabbed the four GD members in her hand, ripping their chains off and setting them on the ground on her right.

“CP10, stop her!” Eldwin commanded. Minus Lucci, four of the agents launched down.

“The HELL you will!” Ruby leapt off Ururu and punched her rocket gloves at Bob the Builder.

“Hit someone your OWN size!” Grenda of Sector GF leapt and punched at Number 4, who morphed into a gorilla to absorb the blow, grab the strong girl, and chuck her back over Ururu.

“GIVE ME FOOOOD!” Index dropped from Sector SA’s ship and grabbed Leslie Meijer’s head in her mouth. The secretary kept using Moon Walk as she struggled to shake her off.

Megan Parker was still going- “What?” The person flying at her was a sock puppet of Edward Scissorhands. Her confusion caused Megan to falter—Zach Murphy popped out of the puppet with big red lips, which kissed Megan and blasted her into the tower.

“UGH! LUCCI, WHAT’S THE MATTER?!” Eldwin shouted.

“I liked the other giant better.”

“YOU LAZY ASS!”

“All of us are here!” Carol cheered. “Ururu, make the bridge!”

“Aye-aye!” Ururu reached an arm over and burst open the opposite drawbridge. Bands of operatives began to cross the giantess’s arm and infiltrate the Tower of Justice.

Miyuki Crystal found Rickey’s body in the rubble of the Justice Gates. She touched it and saw into his past. Everything was as he said, from his mother kicking him out, being found by GUN agents, trained in martial arts, gave his mother a poison soda—

Miyuki gasped and stopped the vision. “He killed his own mom!”

“You serious?!” Terry shouted. “That twisted f***!”

“Come on, Miyuki, you need to see what happened to Mr. Beatles!” Lola reminded, flying ahead.

“Sounds like our cue!” Sheila climbed out of Mocha’s dress. “Ready, Mads?”

Maddy lit her fist iron. “Ready!” Sheila lit her fist gold as they raced across the ruined town, throwing punches at any remaining Teens in their path. “You know, maybe I should call myself ‘Black-Fist Maddy’!”
“I will tear your fists off if you rip off my nickname!” Sheila threatened. “Fact, when this is over, I’m challenging you for the highest Power Level!”

“Deal!”

“Woof, woof!” Sparky was hiding in Maddy’s shirt.

“They’re inside the tower!” Eldwin shouted. “CP10, get back inside and man your posts! Team CRDL, mow them down!”

When the operatives broke into the tower, they were facing a band of Anti Guys and four Teen Ninjas in knight’s armor. “It’s about time.” Cardin said as he drew his black mace, with wide flanges and a red crystal in their center.

“Everybody split up and comb the tower!” MaKayla ordered. “We’ll leave as few obstructions for Maddy as possible!” The operatives scattered, forcing Team CRDL and the Shy Guys to do the same.

Dillon, Kirie, and Vanellope took a hallway on the right, where dozens of Teens charged up and started shooting. Vanellope glitchwarped across the hall in milliseconds, kicking the ninjas too fast to see. Kirie turned—quickly pushing Dillon down and dodging Russel Thrush’s dagger – a Team CRDL member with a light-green mohawk and green armor. He swung black twin daggers that had colored jewels on their hilts, but Kirie nimbly dodged him before flipping above and kicking the back of his head.

Russel tossed both daggers and stuck Dillon and Kirie to the wall by their sweaters, then pressed a button on his wrist to spray gas from the jewels on the daggers, making Dillon and Kirie dizzy. Midna smashed the teen under her Hair Hand, and when he tried to recover, the Firstborn grabbed him in the Hair Hand and smashed him back-and-forth against the floor and walls. “They’re right, I do make it too easy.” Midna said boredly.

“Guys, I’m gonna run ahead!” Vanellope yelled, glitching around the corner.

“Vanellope, wait!” Dillon yelled, using Veil to escape the dagger.

Sector W went upstairs and were running across a walkway above a lower room. They encountered three female Teen Ninjas, so Harvey summoned Mesprit and ordered, “Mesprit, use Post-Prom Trauma!” The Firstborn flashed her emblems at the girls, who all began bawling and crying “He hates me, my life is over!” and “Why did I have to spill the punch?!”

“Quit crying and get out of my way!” Leslie kicked the Teens aside and faced Sector W. Sally and Harvey tossed bladed yo-yos at the woman, but Leslie flashed an invisible power from her hand and made the blades of the yo-yos into cubes, dealing no damage on her. Before the kids could process what happened, Leslie sent a Tempest Kick to scrape along the bridge, forcing Anthony to stomp a hole in the bridge for them to collapse to the lower floor.

However, Fybi had swooped under the bridge and emerged on Leslie’s right, intending to shoot from her B.O.W.. Leslie heard this and stylishly flipped back to dodge the light arrows, aiming her hand at the weapon as the bow’s handle formed an ‘L’ shape, making it arduous for Fybi to aim now. Leslie seized the chance to Shave behind and stomp Fybi in the wings, with her high heels adding to the pain. Fybi crashed onto the bridge as Leslie pinned a foot on her. “You’re one of the Lights, too. But no more.”

“Hey, what’s going on in here?!” Vanellope ran into the lower room and found Sector W on a pile
of rubble.

“Vanellope, Fybi’s in danger!” Aranea pointed. The Program looked up at the bridge and glitchwarped up. The second she saw Leslie’s heel about to stab Fybi, Vanellope zipped and kicked her in the head.

Vanellope landed and helped Fybi up. “She’s one of the agents, don’t let her get you. Just take your friends and go.” Fybi nodded and flew down to her team. Vanellope glared at Leslie- glitch.

(End song.)

“You were Mrs. Beatles’ boss.” she said. “But you were an assassin… Were you planning to kill her for a while?”

“I never planned for it. It was just an undercover, though I did enjoy President Sanban’s company. My old boss was always so… irritating. Mr. Big was his name. He sought to become a Corporate President, to the point it drove him mad. He worked us to the bone and I was always the target of his tirades.”

“Mr. Big, you’ve been up for 15 hours, I highly advise you-”

“I want FIVE THOUSAND SALES by the end of the WEEK, Leslie! I will make people learn the value of The Thing, SO HELP ME!!”

“Sir, the reason our sales are so poor is because our commercials are so vague! The Thing is just a white cube, it literally doesn’t do anything-!”

“You either devote yourself to this fad or you can file reports on the STREETS, woman!”

“Eventually, we were bested by a rival company that created The Object.” Leslie explained. “A purple hexagon that does… something. Mr. Big only got worse… and without even thinking, I…”

Leslie took a pen and stabbed Mr. Big in the back over and over and over. Recalling the distraught look on her face, Leslie’s memory was red like blood.

“I couldn’t escape the pain in my heart.” Leslie concluded. “So I became an assassin… to help me accept it.”

“You guys really are twisted.” Vanellope glitched.

“Not as much as you, it would seem.” Leslie aimed at Vanellope and whirled her glowing purple hands.

“WAAAAAH!” Vanellope’s body twisted like a knot. “HEY, what’d you do to me?!”

“Until recently, I swallowed the Shape-Shape Fruit. I can reshape inorganic forces to my whim. Even if they are sentient bodies of energy.” She fixed her glasses. “I’m still pretty new at the power, but… I’m a fast learner.”

Vanellope glitched and reformed. “Don’t you dare touch my pixels! Or I’ll reshape YOU, dirty traitor.”

“Try as you may, but my Power Level stands at 1200. At least before I got this power. What is your Power Level?”

_Vanellope did a Lickety Split Kick against Azelf, flying the Firstborn several yards. “Data invalid.”_
Azelf reported. “I can't record the Power Levels for robots or machines.”

“…” Vanellope looked down awkwardly and mumbled, “I don’t have one…”

“Well, that puts me at ease.” Leslie smiled.

Vanellope glared. “I’m STILL gonna kick your butt!”

“You may have the mouth of a normal little girl, but like the dozens of equipment in the Rainbow Monkey Factory, you’re a machine. Solid holograms are impressive, true, but in the business world, man beats machine.”

“That may be true for most cases,” Vanel glitched, “but in this one, Hologram beats Hag! Which is why I’m playing this ugly witch music.” Vanellope pressed her tape-recorder and played “Begoniax Battle” from Rayman 3.

**Boss fight: Leslie Meijer**

Vanellope zipped around Leslie to do a Lickety Split Circle, going so fast that she only appeared as a blue pixelly whirlpool. Leslie threw her arms up and erected needles from the floor, disrupting the circle as Vanellope bumped against one. Leslie swung Tempest Kick at her, but Vanellope glitched above and stomped down—Leslie Shaved behind the needle circle and escaped down a hall. Vanellope glitchwarped to chase after, but Leslie waved her arms around to erect more needles and obstruct her path.

Vanellope glitched around the needles with expert precision, but was going too fast to see Leslie kick her high-heel and jab her in the face. Vanellope fell against the needles, then glitched to dodge Leslie’s Tempest Kick—kicked the woman in the leg—the left waist- zipped up- left- right —Vanellope PUNCHED her in the face when Leslie was confused. Leslie bounced a few feet, then grabbed the floor to flap it like a blanket. Vanellope was flown up, but glitchwarped to evade Leslie's kick.

Vanellope glitched behind to do a Rapid Kick attack, but Leslie’s Paper Art nimbly avoided. The woman kicked up and knocked Vanel to the hall’s intersection, where a blonde Teen Ninja ran by. The teen stopped with confusion. Vanellope was caught in Leslie’s power as the woman compressed her into the shape of a frog. Leslie swiped the Teen’s spear and shaped it into a fork, grinning with malice as she attempted to stab the frog. A terrified Vanel-frog hurriedly hopped in the opposite direction, narrowly dodging the fork’s jabs. Every few seconds, Vanellope glitched and she partly reshaped. After four glitches, she was back to normal, so she ran on her feet as she was coming to a left turn.

Vanellope glitched around the corner, and when Leslie whipped her fork around, Vanellope was nowhere in sight. Suddenly the Program was behind and KICKED her in the butt, Leslie retaliated by swinging her fork, but Vanel glitched behind for another butt kick. An angered Leslie performed a Cartwheel Tempest Kick, which Vanellope avoided, but they fell through the collapsed floor. They landed in the tower’s kitchen—the short French chef known as Skinner yelped and fled the room.

Leslie flipped to the drawers and grabbed several knives and forks, growling murderously at Vanellope. “Yuh-oh.” Vanel said. Leslie tossed the bladed utensils like a ninja, they kept coming and coming, and Leslie could shape them into boomerangs to redirect at her again. Vanellope continued making use of her glitches, though this tight quarters resulted in a few strands of hair
getting derezzed. Vanellope decided to glitch and throw a kick, which missed, but when she
noticed the boiling pot on the stove, Vanel decided to kick it at Leslie.

The secretary was horribly burned, and in her rage she pulled the soup off with her power and
compressed it into a ball. She was able to keep it compressed as she kicked it at Vanel, then forced
the floor and walls to burst like springs and bounce the piping hot ball around. Vanellope glitched
to keep dodging, but it was at this point a few of her pixels faltered in keeping up. The kitchen door
opened—“I FOUND THE KITCHEN!” Index exclaimed. The soup ball was coming her direction,
so without questioning what it was, Index caught it in her mouth. “SPICY!”

Leslie jumped over, grabbed the girl, and chucked her at Vanellope. Vanellope grabbed and set
Index down before chasing the assassin, coming to a room of the tower with couches around a
fountain. Leslie made her high-heels into springs and started bouncing off the walls and upper
walkways. Vanellope mimicked the action using her glitches, and their battle was disrupting the
romantic make-out session between two teens on a couch. “Ugh, these people make everything a
battlefield.” The girl said.

Vanellope and Leslie launched at each other with forceful kicks, but Leslie’s was stronger on the
impact. Vanellope bounced away, holding her aching leg, but had to glitch away when Leslie
reshaped the fountain to shoot water at her. “Hate to play dirty, but I’m switching to 2-player!”
Vanellope declared, rapidly glitching left-and-right to divide herself in two. The twin Vanellops
rushed in between the two Vanellopes, Leslie blocked the one above her, but the second Vanellope
kicked her upside the chin. When Leslie was airborne, the first Vanel kicked her in the side, but
Leslie recovered and swung Tempest Kick between them.

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Leslie recovered and swung Tempest Kick between them.

The twin Vanellopes joined back together, but her body blinked for a few seconds as a result of the
power. “I hear solid holograms are hard to piece together in the real world.” Leslie said. “It seems
whatever technology brought you here isn’t perfect. You blink so much, you might blink out of
existence.”

“Not until I blink that look off your face!” She glitched.

“There may be some punch behind your kicks, but I see your body falling apart. When all’s said
and done, you’re a pile of tiny photons. Any moment, you’ll-”

Vanellope glitched behind for a Rapid Kick- glitched below- glitched to the left, then Leslie was
surrounded by a Lickety Split Circle. The secretary again sprouted needles around her, Vanellope
zipped above and continued the circle, so Leslie bent the needles to shield her from above.
Vanellope glitched through a gap behind Leslie and kicked her leg, and rapidly glitched around the
enclosed space to dizzy Leslie with the light and deal more hits against her.

Leslie broke the needle shield and escaped using Shaves. “Time to bend YOU out of shape!” Leslie
focused her power on Vanel and made her pixels into pyramids. Vanellope panicked at the sight of
her spiky body, which then became bulgy when Leslie made the pixels spherical. Leslie made
them hexagons, decagons, half-circles—eventually Vanellope’s body broke apart altogether.
“There! That should’ve even have been a challenge. WHAT?!!”

Several pixels reformed into bigger block pixels, which would take the shape of doll-size
Vanellopes. The two dozen dolls zipped around the floor as little sparks, and Leslie tried to stomp
them with her heels. Carol Masterson found her way into the room and gasped. “Vanellope! Why
are there so many of you?!”

“Just send Game-and-Watch!” a Vanel squeaked.
“Yeah, Gamen, Gamen!” another zipped by.

“You got it.” Carol had Mr. Game-and-Watch form from a holo-light on her computer.

“Huh.” Leslie cockily huffed and shaped Gamen into a 3-D box. Carol summoned another Game-and-Watch, then another, Leslie made them all into boxes that merely shook on the spot. “You girls need to focus more on dolls instead of games.”

“Don’t count us out, yet!” The Vanellopes started latching onto Leslie’s body and chewing her, but the woman shook the dolls off and furiously stomped them all. She smirked at her victory over the Program, but to her dismay, the Game-and-Watch boxes began reforming and recoloring into Vanellope clones. “Because we have plenty of extra lives to spare!”

“IMPOSSIBLE!” Leslie stretched a leg out, charged power to it, and began zooming around the room in a Tempest Spin. She chased the Vanellopes, aiming to chop them down, and she was able to derez a few. “You were divided into pixels, your pixels couldn’t have resized that easy!”

“It wasn’t easy!” Indeed the Vanellope clones had distinct black splotches on their bodies, remains of Game-and-Watch’s code. “But I only need to hold these clones together a few seconds!” With that, the Glitch Clones all began their own Lickety Circle, doing so at different heights so it became a Lickety Tornado. Vanellope’s eyes were burning from the light, and her glasses had broken. The secretary fell to her knees before collapsing on her front. (End song.)

“GAME OVER, HAG!” The Vanellopes echoed simultaneously. “Lickety Split PLANET KICK!!” They shot at Leslie from every direction, all unleashing Rapid Kicks, it was a hailstorm of pixelly boots. Carol uncovered her eyes when the tornado stopped. The Vanellope clones derezzed and formed back into a singularity, catching her breath as her body was sparking and disproportioned in various places. Leslie’s eyes were burning from the light, and her glasses had broken. The secretary fell to her knees before collapsing on her front. (End song.)

“Carol, where’s Vanellope?!” Dillon and Kirie ran in. “Where’s…!” The Program was gasping for breath and staring at her fallen opponent.

“I was programmed to be a racer.” Vanellope panted. “I was designed to be a princess. Nothing more, nothing less. Then, I was reprogrammed to be an MCP. But I wanted to come to the real world… to be more. I wanted to live like real humans do. You guys say I don’t have Power Levels… you say I can’t get stronger or develop… but I was never programmed to be a glitch. I took control of my defection… I learned new ways to use it… so in the end, are you still gonna call me a broken Program?”

“…” Dillon smiled. “I never doubted you for a second, Vanellope. I’m glad to have you back in the real world.”

“Heh… That’s what I thought.” She smiled wryly and weakly. “Nowwww… I need a beauty nap.” She fell on her back and went to sleep. Carol giggled and sat in front of her, catching Vanellope’s image on her computer’s Window Mode and using the cursor to reshape her body.

“This is Dillon to everyone.” The boy spoke to his wristwatch. “Vanellope took down another assassin!”

“Vanellope did?!” Apis exclaimed. “That’s amazing!”

“That means we only have five more to go!” MaKayla said cheerily.

“It’s 12:30 now.” Miyuki reported. “If we keep up our pace, we should have the others beaten at
12:40. By 12:45, Maddy may be able to find the Poneglyph… then hopefully, she’ll be able to read it by 1:00.”

This ends the first part of Enies Lobby. Next time, we’ll fight three more assassins. Team CRDL comes from RWBY, and Russel Thrush in particular is the star of :iconDepthcharge2030:’s story Darkling Thrush. Here’s a Caesar Cipher and- wait, I forgot something!

Zach Murphy was running through a different hall of the tower, pursued by a team of Anti Guys. Sky Lark, a blue-haired member of CRDL ambushed him, and without hesitating, swung his halberd to slice Zach down the middle.

His skin tore like paper, exposing the bones underneath. Zach’s skin fell off like a paper suit. No blood, no organs, just the skeleton. “Nnss-nnss-nnss-nnss-nnss!” The skeleton started jigging. “Everything is awesome!”

Everything is awesome! Colorful spotlights shone around as the Shy Guys danced with the skeleton. Everything is cool when you’re part of the team! Sky Lark took a liking to the song and started dancing to it. Everything is awesoooomee! When you’re livin’ the dream!

Cardin Winchester watched him from across the hall. He rolled his eyes in frustration. “Undeveloped characters.” he cursed before walking away.

ZRQ’W LW EH WKH JUHDWHVW SDLQ

ZKHQ DOO BRXU HIIRUWV DUH LQ YDLQ
Imagineers

Chapter Summary

The battle continues as the KND face more members of CP10!

I manage to cover three assassin fights in this chapter!

Chapter 69: Imagineers

Enies Lobby

Ernie the Chicken grabbed large debris from the ruined town and chucked them at Chris, who kept a safe distance and blew up the debris with combustion. Through the smoke, Ernie jumped to surprise Chris with Finger Pistol, but the boy dodged his strikes before grabbing the chicken’s fingers in his hand. He set fire to the feathers, Ernie yelped before kicking Chris away. Ernie’s hand was still aflame, so he Shaved behind Chris and singed his hair, and Chris screamed before spinning a flame shockwave.

Ernie jumped the flames and swung a Tempest Kick, missing Chris as the boy shot his Combustion Beam up. Ernie Shaved beside Chris and landed another punch, then chucked feather kunai at his forehead eye. Chris burned the feathers, then used Rocket Boost to jump over the incoming assassin and land on the ground. “You don’t talk much, do you?” Chris asked. Ernie shook ‘no’ and resumed throwing punches, Chris dodging as he kicked flames at his cloak.

Don Quixote Sugar surfed the sky on a Song Road and evaded her little brother’s String Bullets. She bellowed a Sonic Wave to crack the ground around him, then Doffy Jr. flew up and landed a kick against Sugar’s gut. After she fell, Doffy saw that Maddy and Sheila were about to enter the Tower of Justice, using the giantess Ururu’s arm as a bridge. Doflamingo shot ten strings over to stab Ururu in the back.

“HUU!” The giantess gasped and threw her arm up just as Maddy and Sheila were crossing it. Sheila thankfully landed inside the tower, but Maddy was taking the fall into the maelstrom. “I GOT YOU!” Mabel Pines swung by on her grappling hook and caught Maddy, bringing her back up to the safe ledge.

Ururu was being pulled back by Doflamingo’s strings, so Sugar sent a swarm of Bad Notes to chop them. Sugar ran up to throw punches at her brother, but Doffy dodged and impaled his strings through the ground, yanking them up to cut a strip of ground, but Sugar flipped aside and spewed another Song Beam. Doflamingo rapidly shot strings that all missed Sugar, but his brows cocked when he noticed something. “You seem to cover your chest a lot. Are you holding onto something?” Doffy grinned mischievously.

Sugar looked down and answered, “I’m developing breasts. For 12 years, I couldn’t know what it means to grow. I couldn’t cut my hair, I couldn’t clip my nails... but now I’m finally changing. My breasts are a symbol of my growth.”

“That’s very poetic! NOW I know where to hit!” Doflamingo resumed his endless array of strings.
“Ow… My back hurts…” Ururu grunted. “I think I should shrink down… before my suit takes too much damage.”

“Can that grappling hook get me across?” Maddy asked.

“It doesn’t reach far enough, we need something that can fly or something!” Dipper said.

“On it!” Grenda put Maddy over her back and ran several yards away from the edge. “This is for DESTINYYYY!” Grenda ran, leaped over the abyss, and flapped her arms.

A rendition of “Bicycle Built For Two” was heard from somewhere. Grenda was flying over the roaring abyss using the strength of her arms. Maddy held tight onto her, terrified at the thousand-foot drop and utterly amazed Grenda was flying. Dipper, Mabel, and Candy gaped, and the Teen Ninja witnesses nearly choked on their saliva. From Sparky’s vision, Nefarious was royally baffled.

But you'll look sweet! Upon the seat! On a bicycle built… for two! The song ended at this line when Grenda landed in the Tower of Justice entrance. “My dad taught me how to do that!” Grenda said. “Now GO, Maddy!” she stated seriously. “Find the Gibberish Rock for all of us!”

“O-Okay!” Maddy headed inside, leaving Grenda to fly her other friends across.

The Gilligan Triplets were charging through a hallway of Teen Bikes with faces, shooting the operatives with no pilots commanding them. “They must’ve been given life by Bob’s Devil Fruit power.” Haylee deduced, smashing the bikes’ windshields with her wrench. “He’s close, I can feel it.”

“You ain’t thinking of fighting him, are ya?” Harry questioned as he and Artie shot the enemies with Diffusion Rifles. “We shoulda brought better weapons if we were taking on a CP10 member!”

“I already have what I need!” Haylee said confidently, clutching her wrench. “Bob may commit murders, but he’s an honorable carpenter. He’ll fight in his own way, especially against me.”

“Sounds a bit too optimistic-” Harry said—he was punched in the face by Artie. “I WAS MAKING A POINT, what’s your deal?!”

“I’m sorry, Harry!” Artie started dancing. “Something’s come over me! Or else I wouldn’t be caught dead shakin’ my booty.”

“Krr!” Harry was dancing to the sound of a Spanish guitar. “It must be musicbending! But who…”

“¡Hola niños!” Rodrigo Añorga was in a left passage, strumming his guitar. “Glad you can be in time for my concert… OF DEATH!”

Haylee leapt forth and BASHED the boy in the head with her wrench. “’EY, what gives, man?!”

“Earplugs!” Haylee pointed at her ears. “A carpenter’s best friend! Now tell me where Bob is!” She aimed her wrench at his neck.

“Uah! Señor Bob is down the hall! Please don’t hurt my neck, I need it to sing!”

“Good sport.” Haylee whacked him in the stomach. “I’ll leave him to you. Be back in a jiffy!” She ran ahead.

When Sheila made it into Enies Lobby, she was joined by Mason and Haruka, leading them up the
stairs and across a third-floor hall. “Sheila, what makes you think your mom is in this direction?” Haru asked.

“I have a very keen nose, mate. If that ain’t the smell of beer-covered fur, then I need me nostrils checked.”

Sheila was several feet ahead of them with her Mobian speed- “UUH!” Her feet sunk into a liquid part of floor—she ditched her sandals and jumped back to solid land. “What the bloody hell is this?!”

Haruka bent over and stuck her finger in the goop, which was green and in square parts like the floor tiles. “It’s some kind of tar… but from a distance, you couldn’t tell. This could trap anyone.”

“Courtesy of Megan the Prankster.” They looked across the pool and saw Ashei Winters. “Be wary of what lies underneath.” She blew her horn and summoned a tentacled beast from the tar pit. The beast slamming a tentacle at Sheila, who jumped on and ran across, punching the creature in the eye before jumping over to Ashei.

“Well, I run better without shoes!” Sheila gripped the teen’s coat. “Now tell me where Mum is or I’ll clock ya in the teeth!”

“The raccoon woman will be down a hall on your left. Good luck trying to rescue her.”

“I’ll bring her back and we’ll clock you together!” Sheila pushed her and ran forward.

“Sigh, I guess we have to fight this thing ourselves now.” Mason said.

“At least Sheila’s fast, she’ll be back soon.” Haru replied.

“Hm… I wouldn’t count on it.” Ashei smirked.

Haylee Gilligan made it to the end of her hallway, reaching to grab the doorknob. The door sprouted a face and shouted, “HUAH HAH HA HA! THAT TICKLES! I’m alive, by the way.” Haylee bashed the door senseless and kicked it open. “BOB!”

She was in a construction room with scaled-down building scaffolds, steamrollers, and bulldozers that all had faces. “Oh ho ho! I wasn’t expecting to see you so soon, Haylee!” Bob said perkily as always. “You know, it’s impolite to barge in on someone during a project. One missed nail is one less eye!”

“I just hope you had your morning cup of coffee.”

Bob gasped loudly. “! You…”

“Yes, Bob. I heard from President Business what you did. Why you were banished from Legola…”

*During training, Lord Business showed Haylee a black-and-white security footage. In the silent video, a building inspector was scolding Bob, and was refusing a bribe Bob held out. When the inspector wasn’t looking, Bob hit him with his hammer and knocked him out. He covered the inspector with cement and flattened him with a steamroller. Bob built a Lego house over the cement and acted casual.*

“It’s not even easy to kill a Legoan.” Haylee said. “You’re crazy without your coffee.”

“It’s a character flaw of mine.” Bob shrugged. “Good thing I drank three cups today, BOY am I
“Ready to kill! You don’t honestly think you can whack me with that little wrench, do you?”

“Oh contraire.” Haylee pressed a button that expanded the width of her long wrench. Seeing a bunch of scattered wood around, Haylee zipped about, threw some pieces in a pile with her wrench, got some nails from the table, and began rapidly hammering them in to keep the mini hotel steady. “I’ve been training with Lord Business! You’ve been keeping me at a snail’s pace, but now I have the swift reflexes of a Legoan!”

“Howdy do!” Bob gaped. “Well, I say I’m in for a challenge! But this room falls a bit short. How about we move to a bigger playground?”

“What’d you have in mind?”

“Take a look at my Dimension Transporter!” Bob indicated the circular Lego device. “Although it was made from the lifeless Lego Dimensions set, my Life-Life Fruit powers made it the real thing! Inside is a dimension I constructed all on my own, and I would be honored if you could see it.”

“Sure thing!” Haylee raised her wrench. “I’ll beat you in your own playground!”

“Watch your mouth, Haylee! You might chip off your tongue.” Bob hopped over and activated the purple, blocky portal. “Ready when you are.”

“I’m ready!” Haylee ran up the mini stairs. She and Bob jumped in the vortex together, warping to a land where the ground and sky were Legos. (Play “Kirby Boss Theme Medley” from Smash Bros. Brawl!)

**Boss fight: Bob the Builder**

Haylee landed on a yellow Lego platform and watched Bob plummet over the edge. The carpenter rose from the depths in a Lego robot with wrecking ball fists. “Huhuhuhu!” The wrecking balls had laughing faces. “I’m gonna squish ya! Huhuhuhu! Guts and whatnot!” Haylee evaded the Ballbot frightfully, for she didn’t want their faces to be the last thing she sees upon death. It didn’t help that the materials around the field had sentience and were jumping around as well. Haylee had to clock them on the head with her wrench to knock them out. Still avoiding the wrecking balls, she collected some thin metal bars, rainbow-shaped Legos with big teeth, along with ropes and nails.

Haylee fixed the Legos into large bear traps, which she stood on as the wrecking balls came to her. When they swung down, she jumped off, pulled the rope, and trapped the wrecking balls in the teeth. Bob was unable to pull them free since the traps were hammered down, giving Haylee the chance to run across a ball’s chain and start bashing their base with her wrench. Haylee destroyed the left arm link, then hopped over and broke the right before jumping back to the platform. Bob’s robot leapt onto the platform to begin chasing Haylee with bulldozer wheels.

It was then the player’s camera started scrolling and revealed more of the platform, as it was time for Haylee to run. There was a giant face between the vehicle’s wheels, spitting Banzai Bills that Haylee ducked left or right. The path reached its end, forcing Haylee to start jumping floating brick platforms like a Mario level. Bob’s robot grew propellers to float and chase her, and cannons shot Bullet Bills at Haylee. Haylee could bat the projectiles with her wrench up to Bob’s propellers. She had to be mindful of his Banzai Bills, because they would destroy a line of platforms at her current level. Thankfully, after seven Bullet Bills to the propellers, the Lego robot plummeted down the abyss.
Bob jumped out of the cockpit and used Moon Walks to bypass the platform course, and Haylee kept moving to outrun him. Eventually, she could set foot on a stable ledge and watch Bob fall below. Almost instantly he emerged on the top of a cannon totem. The totem moved left and right depending on Haylee’s position, and the materials available to her were blocks and cannons. Haylee had to again hit the living objects with her wrench, then she could stack her own cannon towers. She couldn’t stop anything atop the cannons, so she had to set the cannons at levels equal to Bob’s cannons. She would have to lure Bob’s totem in front of her own and avoid getting hit while her cannon shoots one of his.

After all five of Bob’s cannons were destroyed, his totem was a barren cylinder. But he quickly reconfigured it with spikes, turned it horizontal, and rolled it toward Haylee. The young carpenter grabbed two pickaxes and began climbing the wall behind her, and Bob’s spiked roller gave chase. There were faces on the wall that Haylee had to maneuver around, lest they spit her. Eventually, Haylee made it to the ceiling and had to use her pickaxes to climb across it. Bob’s spiked roller was still able to cling to the ceiling, and Haylee maneuvered around hanging pipes that tried to munch her.

Haylee got above a slide and dropped onto it, sliding to an outside region of the Lego dimension, where Haylee ran along a thin path surrounded by ocean. Bob slid down and was caught by a monster truck with a scary face. It sent small toy cars at Haylee, who batted them away while also bashing upside-down traffic cones to their normal position. The spiked traffic cones punctured Bob’s tires, and once they were gone, Bob reshaped his car into a boat and sped along the sea. He collected materials out at sea to forge cannons and start shooting Haylee’s foothold.

“When destruct!” Bob pushed a button on his boat and used Moon Walk to escape. In the five seconds she had, Haylee cut off the boat’s engines, made a jetpack out of them, and flew away before the craft exploded. Her jetpacks were faster than Bob, but there were already Missile Bills in the area to provide him backup. Haylee battered the Bills away, but Bob doubled the strength of his Moon Walks to outrun her. Haylee was now soaring over the Lego clouds in her search for him. She slowed down before hitting a King Bill that launched up from below, then sped up when a King Bill appeared directly above.

That’s when a gigantic blimp emerged with Bob the Builder in the cockpit, and a giant devilish face on the balloon. Its dozens of cannons unleashed swarms of Missile Bills, but Haylee was quick in batting them away. She set foot on the deck underneath the floating fortress, running around to hit cowering materials. She formed the parts into a robot suit and used it to break down the walls in her way, as well as attack the Gun Guys shooting at her. Haylee got under a hatch and jumped up through it. Once inside the blimp’s balloon, she used her suit to jump to several platforms and destroy the power generators.

The fortress trembled before exploding into thousands of Legos. Haylee’s robot shattered with it, and as she was taking the rapid plummet from the sky, she grabbed a spring in her wrench, put it under herself, and softened the impact of the landing. She bounced high into the air, and seeing materials falling everywhere, she grabbed some and whipped them up into a racecar. She landed in the car, and realized she was on a train track. CHOOOOOOO! Haylee looked back in panic, seeing none other than Thomas the Tank Engine speeding to destroy her, having been given its face by
Bob’s power.

Haylee stomped the gas pedal and zoomed her racecar across the track, pressing the jump function to dodge boulders. “OUCH! AHH!” Thomas’s face was taking the blow of the boulders. “Bob, how could you give a TRAIN a FACE?!”

“No one likes a whiner, Tom!” Bob said cheerily. “Now speed up and decimate her!”

The train increased in speed, so Haylee pushed more gas out of her car as she sped up a steep hill. Haylee gasped, seeing a sign that said DEAD END. The minute her car shot up over the hill, she jumped out and let it explode against a wall that was camouflaged like the sky. She looked down and saw Thomas was struggling to get up the hill. “I THINK I can… I THINK I can…”

“Come on, Tom, you can do it!” Bob cheered, blowing the whistle. “FULL THROTTLE!”

An idea sparked in Haylee’s head: using the available materials, she began to whip up another portal machine. Bob was ten seconds from making it up even at full speed, but Haylee’s quickened handiwork constructed the portal in time. “I, think, I—CAAAAAAHHHH!” The train zoomed into the purple vortex without realizing.

“I knew you would.” Haylee smirked.

Outside, the living train BURST out of the portal and through the wall of the construction room. Outside the Tower of Justice it went, and down he goes into the maelstrom. Bob managed to jump out of the craft, but the haphazard act left the carpenter in pieces. “AAAH!” Haylee stomped her foot beside his severed head.

“It’s only fitting for a student to surpass her teacher.” Haylee said as she picked the head up.

“Just a second there, Kiddo!” Bob said perkily. “I didn’t recommend those private tutoring lessons!”

“Yeah, Business taught me a lot… but in the end, you guided me for most of the way.” Haylee took the Legoan’s hat and put it on herself. “Did I do it?” She winked.

Bob smiled. “Yes you did.”

“Heehee! Now byebye!” With that, Haylee kicked the severed head and sent him falling into the maelstrom. The scattered body parts scrambled over to the hole and dropped down after him. She said to her wristwatch, “This is Haylee. I defeated Bob. Getting ready to thrash more Teens.” (End song.)

In the first floor foyer of the tower, Aisa was nimbly dodging Karin Uzumaki’s punches, and when the Nimbi attempted to kick her in the chest, Karin dodged right and kicked Aisa off her feet. That’s when Morgiana flew in from above Karin’s right, denting the floor with her feet after missing the red-haired girl, but Morgiana kicked off and rocketed to shove Karin against a pillar.

Thirty Anti Guys surrounded Maddy in a passage, all diving at her, but using her Observation, she dodged each one without getting scratched. She got outside their circle and punched twin Armament fists to blow the crowd down. “The infamous Light, huh?” Maddy turned to face Cardin Winchester, wielding his black mace. “Knocking down a horde of Anti Guys like they’re jokes, I guess you are worth the effort. But you’re alone now…” Cardin approached with his mace raised. “So I’m walking home with the prize!”

Maddy easily dodged the swings from his weapon, and when Cardin shot fire from the crystal in
the mace, Maddy punched an Armament fist forward and blocked. Cardin whipped the mace at her, but Maddy clasped it in the armored hand and squeezed ’til it broke. “Why you-!” Cardin threw a punch-

An unsettling feeling in the air knocked the teen unconscious. “You’re not worth the effort.” Maddy remarked.

“Maddy, there you are!” Carol and Dillon ran up from behind Cardin. “Come on, we know where the Gibberish Rock is located. The blueprints say there’s a secret passage, let’s go!” Maddy nodded, running over Cardin’s body as she followed.

After Zach distracted Sky Lark with his Skeleton Clone, the boy made it to the third floor of the tower. “That was a risky move on my part.” He panted. “Thankfully, I remembered the Skeleton Clone only works on Fridays for five extra cents. Now I must help Maddy find the Gibberish Rock. Only when she reads it will she be able to exempt herself from all her future English classes.” I can also copy off her answer and exempt myself, too! It’s the perfect plan.

Zach noticed a bunny in the hallway, twitching its nose like an innocent little animal. “Ooo, a bunny! You know, I’m pretty sure bunnies eat dogs.” He scratched his chin in thought. “Or do I have it backwards? Eh, let’s try it! C’mere, little critter.” Zach chased the bunny and followed it into a cracked-open door. “Oh?”

“Hee hee hee! I missed you too, Nummy-Nums!” Megan Parker lay on a bed and nuzzled one of her dozen bunnies. “I missed youuuu. Huh?” She looked up. “Oh, it’s you again. Whaddyou want, Boob?”

“I’m not a boob! I’m a fool!”

“That’s a synonym.”

“No, this is.” Zach held a pack of cinnamon.

“Whatever. But you’re the Light’s brother, aren’t you?” Megan sat up. “I wonder if she would turn herself over if I threatened to kill you?”

“Oh yeah?” Zach stepped forward. “We’ll see if I- AAAAH!” He slipped on a banana peel and fell back. “OAF!”

“The oldest trap in the book was lying right there and you didn’t see it.” Megan climbed off her bed. “How are you going to beat a prankmaster like-” She stepped on a pencil.

“WATCH IT, LADY!” The pencil jumped to its feet and rapidly punched her in the face. “Can’t you see I’m tryin’ to nap here?!” Megan was knocked back on her bed.

“Oh, I saw that banana! I just needed to get close enough to give Pencilton his milk.”

Mr. Pencilton sipped a milk glass. “Thank ye, Zach!”

Megan recovered. “That’s Bo-bobo Kempo, isn’t it? I know General Guy uses it… Always looked stupid to me.”

“Well, pardon me, but I find you too boring! Heh, that’s 2 for me, 1 for you. But don’t think I’m stopping there!” Zach made a fighting pose. “Get ready for Rock, Paper, Scissors!” (Cue miscellaneous Bo-bobo music. :P)
Boss fight: Megan Parker


This is it, Zach. The moment you trained ten hours for. Zach thought with determination. The key to defeating your enemy is to lay the first strike! That’s how 60% of battles are won. 30% are won through filling the enemy’s pants with salami while 10% are won through buying them Cheetos. … I got a plan!

“Temperature Teddies, ATTACK!” Zach stood with a squadron of teddybears wielding thermometers. “AAAAHH!” They dashed stalwartly at Megan—there were strings attached to their butts, and they pulled a stretched spring off the wall as it retracted and stuck them all together.

“You spent all that time thinking, you didn’t see me set all that up?” Megan laughed. “Face it, Dweeb, nobody escapes from my traps- huh?”

Zach and the bears donned hula girl outfits, rotating as they danced with their behinds still latched together. There was a teddybear being roasted on the stake in the center. “You turned this into a ritual?!” Megan questioned.

“Senator Beary has shamed his nation by distributing mittens to our neighbors. WE’RE SO COOOOOLD!” Zach and the bears shuddered in their grass skirts.

“YOU’RE SURROUNDING A BURNING BEAR!” Megan shouted at their ‘logic.’ “If you’re STILL cold, PUT ON A SWEATER!”

“Our sweaters are going to more important tasks! The WAR against Short Skirts!”

“YAAAAAAAAARRRR!” An army of sweaters charged forth across a desolate landscape.

“WHEEEEEE!” An army of skirts frolicked across colorful flowers.

The two respective areas were Megan’s belly and armpits. “THEY’RE USING ME AS A BATTLEFIELD?!”

“I’M TIRED O’ THIS WAR!” Zach readied a cannon. “Time to NUKE these fellas!” The bomb launched, destroying both armies and blowing Megan sky high.

“Grrrr!” Megan recomposed and threw Tempest Kicks, cutting the floor around Zach so he would drop into the lower room. “Have fun in my killer whale tank!” But when she looked in to watch the spectacle, she saw Zach and the killer whale sitting on chairs, smoking pipes, and reading newspapers. “ORCY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!”

“Oh, look, Lady Gaga is traveling to Saudi Arabia.” The whale said.

“Boy, won’t she give Prince Ali a run for his money.” Zach remarked.

“Mm-hm. Mm-hm.” The whale nodded in uninterest. Then he started crying, “I WANNA BE A PRINCE SO BAD!”

“IT’S OKAY, BRO, I’M HERE FOR YOU!” Zach hugged him consolingly.

“DAMMIT, ORCY, TEAR HIM TO PIECES!” Megan stomped her feet impatiently.
“CAN’T YOU SEE THEY’RE HAVING A MOMENT?!” Spongebob Squarepants KICKED Megan into the whale tank, landing her in Orcy’s mouth. The whale viciously swung her around before chucking back into her room. Zach leaped after and stood beside Spongebob.

“Spongebob! Late to the party, as usual.”

“Don’t mind me if I’m a showstopper.” Sponge shrugged. “But I’m ready!”

“So, he’s your friend, too?!” Megan shouted. “Ugh! Look, you can throw all the random crap you want at me. I’m the trained assassin here, I’ll defeat you with my eyes closed! But first… Anyone up for cheese and nachos?” She smiled brightly and held up two packs of the tasty snacks.

“Ooo, yum!” Zach and Sponge began munching them.

Megan smirked. “HAH! You just ate my Super Sticky Cheese! Pretty soon, your throats will clog up, and your last breaths will be gooey and cheesy!”

“Oh, that’s what YOU think!” Zach countered. “But we foresaw this trap and had the nachos replaced with lizard pee!”

“OH, GROSS! …Wait, then why did you eat it, anyway?”

“. . .” Realization dawned on the two. “BLEEEEEHHH!” They started rolling around and puking.

“I THINK I NEED A THROAT TRANSFER!” Zach cried.

“Krusty Krab doesn’t provide health insurance!” Spongebob wept.

“Now’s my chance!” Megan Shaved all around the room, confusing the still-gagging fools. She moved so fast that they didn’t notice the eggs she had chucked from each direction, and the eggs all splatted and covered them in the yolks. “The egg yolks of snow birds quickly harden and freeze, trapping anything inside! By the time it breaks for you, you’ll be at the bottom of the maelstrom.”

“Excuse me, Miss, you’re standin’ in my way.”

“W-What?” Megan looked down and saw a tiny Spongebob and Sector GF, in which Spongebob was wearing a mustache and business uniform.

“As you can see,” Spongebob said to the four operatives, “our Yolk Dome is coated in a 10-inch-thick shell that protects it from missiles and magical forces.” He led the kids through the tiny door into the yolk. “Fifteen floors, complete with 10 swimming pools and gaming stations. In fact, it’s so full of cool stuff, we could only afford one bed. That’s not a problem for you, right?”

“Mabel, what are we doing here?” Dipper whispered.

“I don’t know. But he gave us popsicles.” Mabel held up four popsicles.

“Well, uh, it looks good!” Dipper played along. “I think we’ll take it.”

“Excellent! Just sign here.”

The kids signed a paper on a clipboard. Zach peaked into the tiny window, nodding with approval. “That’s what I call fine penmanship.”

Zach picked up the Yolk Dome and chucked it off Enies Lobby, the inhabitants screaming as they plunged into the maelstrom. Zach turned to Megan wearing a fox costume. “It’s called a hustle,
“I think you missed the point somewhere.” Megan said.

“GRAAAAH!” Zach burned with rage. “MEGAN, you’re going to PAY for chucking my friends off like that!”

“EXCUSE ME?!”

“I’m not holding back!” Zach formed quick hand signals. “Dad’s Television no Jutsu!”

Megan was crushed under a couch that a fat dad was sitting on while watching TV in his underwear. “Aaaaaaahhh!” Megan fell into a dark abyss and hit a cushiony floor. Spotlights flashed on, revealing the Couch Daves and their giant dust bunnies.

“For a trillion football seasons, our bellies rumbled with the unending lust for the golden provisions!” Emperor Dave announced. “Many have tried, but alas, we cannot journey far from our land. Only YOU may cleanse our lust!” Megan gasped when she was dressed in a toga. “The legendary Huus Weef!”

“Housewife? . . .” Megan felt utter embarrassment right now. “And you want popcorn. (Golden provisions.) Go buy your own snacks, you dumb boobs.”

“BOOOOOOOOBS!!” Suddenly the Daves were riled up, piling on Megan desiringly.

“What are you doing, let me go! AAAAAHH!”

Now Megan was dressed in a cozy wool coat. “We don’t want your nipples to have nippers.” Dave said. The other Daves blushed goofily.

“You people are freaks!”

“Speaking of freaks, have a GUN pop!” Zach swung a giant lollipop with GUN’s logo and batted Megan away.

The assassin recovered in midair and began Moon Walking. “That’s it! Time to use my electric floor trap!” She pressed a button on the wall. Zach gasped when the floor electrified except for his spot. “Now everywhere in this room is a death trap! Good luck finding a way out of this!”


Megan gasped. “JUNIPER!”

“If you want your bunny to be saved, you have no choice but to disable this death trap!”

“You… You wouldn’t!”

But Zach said nothing more. He looked grim as his finger was glued to the trigger. It would burn the bunny’s rope and end its life. Juniper looked so sad. Zach struggled with the inner conflict, risking this bunny’s life for the sake of his own. He couldn’t take it. Zach put the gun away and stepped off his spot. The electric floor burned him into soot.

Megan turned it off and set foot on the floor. “He… gave his own life?”
“Oh, ZAAAACH!” Juniper escaped from her cage, hopping over to cry over his remains. She spoke in a squeaky voice, “Zachary! I knew I wasn’t a hostage worth expending. I told you to threaten Carrot, that tramp has it coming. Sniff… at least… you left me in your will. What did you give me?” She took a document out of Zach’s remains. “HOLY SMOKES, MY OWN WARPLANE?! ‘I’M HITTIN’ RUSSIA!’ The rabbit immediately hopped on her warplane and soared away from the tower. “So long, suckers!”

The echo of the maelstrom roared peacefully in her bunny ears. “HUUUURRRR!” However, that’s when an angry Sector GF rocketed out of the depths and STRUCK the plane, destroying it as Juniper fell into the sea. “ZAAAAACH!” They shot back into Megan’s room, blowing the assassin against the wall. Grenda grabbed a defibrillator, rubbed the two pads together, and zapped the pile of soot so it would reform into Zach.

“Guys, you saved me!” Zach beamed. “For a second, I thought I was actually—”

“YOU TOSSED US INTO A WHIRLPOOL!” they shouted together.

“I GAVE YOU POPSICLES!”

“STOP YELLING!” Megan shouted.

“Hey, this is an adult conversation!” Zach kicked Sector GF into a ball that rolled at Megan, who kicked back and sent them falling out of the tower again.

“This is insane! You countered every prank I threw at you, even when I had them all planned out! But you… No normal person fights like you do!”

“That’s your fatal flaw, Miss Cosgrove.” Zach said, folding his arms. “Even the most careful planning is useless to someone as unpredictable as I am. You rely on some metahuman power to generate pranks, but real pranksters get by with natural talent. And that’s not all, you give pranksters a bad name. I concoct every whacky attack with pride in knowing that I’m giving someone somewhere a laugh. You only play with dirty pranks and want dirty results. Tell me something, when was the last time somebody besides you laughed at your tricks?”

“Are you joking? You can’t tell me that all of those stunts you pulled were some ‘natural talent.’ AND MY NAME IS NOT MIRANDA!!”

“Then tell me, Not Miranda: if you’re really the best prankster the World Government has to offer, hit me with your best trap.”

“You asked for it!” Megan pressed a button, sprouting a spiked fence up around Zach, closed by a flaming lid from the ceiling. Megan followed this with a shrink ray to zap it down to size, and a crocodile to come and swallow it whole. “Ha! Enjoy yourself in there!”

“Beg pardon?” Megan gasped and whipped her head up. She narrowed her vision to make out the tiny speck on the ceiling. It was Zach encased in an Easter Egg.

The egg biggified and landed on the crocodile. “Just when the lid was coming down, I noticed one of the embers had a form that said he was two days from retirement. I deduced he was mentally checked out and saw that as my window to escape. The shrinking eggshell armor was optional. Face it, Megan. Your pranks are nothing to me. And to think a gal like you could’ve been the funniest in the chuckle hut, if you had a bit more spark to your snares.”

Megan growled. She couldn’t let herself be outsmarted by this fool. After all, none could get more
foolish than Drake & Josh.

When working on the show, Miranda enjoyed her role as Megan Parker, designing her own whacky traps to snare the brothers on a weekly basis. She developed a habit of pranking the other actors, like when she left a present for Jonathan Goldstein to find, with a note that said it was from Nancy. Jonathan found a pretty necklace in the small box, but when he put it around his neck, he suddenly found it was too tight. No matter how much he tugged on it, it kept getting tighter. Eventually, he stopped breathing.

“I’m Megan Parker…” Miranda said with a distraught face. “It’s what I do.”

“I am Megan Parker…” The assassin grit her teeth. “I’ve always been Megan Parker…” She stomped up to Zach, “And I won’t be humiliated by the likes of-” She stepped on the banana peel still on the floor. Her foot slipped up and she flew back toward one of the points on the corner of her bed. “Dammit.”

The back of her head BUMPED against the brown peg, then she hit the floor. When Zach came to examine her, Megan’s expression was dim, and drool leaked from her mouth. “Hmm… Maybe it was for the best.” Zach said. “She was already cuckoo.”

The Easter Egg hatched, revealing a yellow bird with a sign. “Buy one, get 10% off Kroger-brand lemonade!”

Behind Enies Lobby

Carol led Dillon and Maddy to a back shore of Enies Lobby, where they had view of the bottom of Mt. Mariejoa across a few yards of sea. Carol stepped on a spot of ground. “This is a secret trapdoor. According to the blueprints, you’ll go through an underwater passage and get to the room where the rock is. If you want clarification, it’s directly behind that part of the mountain.” Carol pointed.

Dillon called Midna to yank the secret hatch open with her Hair Hand. Maddy looked nervously at the ocean, then down the dark shaft. “It’s better going under than over, I guess.”

“Good luck, Maddy.” Dillon bowed. “Bring us home the gold.”

Maddy climbed slightly down the shaft ladder. She stopped, still pondering Chris’s words the other night. “…So, what do you guys think will happen after I read the Gibberish Rock?”

“Are we really gonna talk about this now?” Midna asked.

“Ruff ruff ruff!” Sparky was impatient.

“I’m just nervous is all. After everything I’ve been through, I’m about to realize some important destiny. What if I come out of there… and I’m a completely different person?”

Dillon looked away, remembering a similar dilemma with Vanellope a few days ago. Even now, he feared if that was the right move, if Peridot would serve as a worthy replacement. “…Nobody knows what’s gonna happen.” Dillon said. “All I know… is we came all this way and poured all our effort into getting you here. You have to see it to the end, for Mocha, Aurora, and everyone else. Just go! Hurry before any of the agents come.”

“Right… It’s now or never. Just let Chris know where I am.” She sunk into the shaft and closed it.

Returning to the ruined town, Shade was absorbing Nya’s punches in her palms, then grabbed the
teen’s fists to whirl and toss her away. Shade closed her eyes, sensing Maddy’s location all the way across the island. Shade smiled. “You’re wasting your time, Nya. In a few minutes, all your efforts will be in vain.”

“What does that mean?!” Nya shot at Shade, but the echidna easily dodged the lasers and leapt to kick her in the face.

“Nya, it would be more worth your time to join our side. The Twenty Keys Prophecy will come true, no matter how much the Government tries to stop it. What do you have to gain from them?”

“A world of no more Kids Next Door!” Nya threw a flash bomb at the ground and blurred Shade’s vision, allowing the teen to punch her.

Chris was incredibly sweaty after 10 minutes fighting Ernie. The chicken was still in top condition and was willing to go some more. Chris looked at his watch when the message was sent. “Heh… It’s not over, yet. I can’t let Maddy see me all beaten up when she comes back. I’m taking you out, Chicken! HERE I COME!” (Play “Chicken Fight” from Family Guy!)

**Boss fight: Ernie the Chicken**

**Power Levels:** Chris – 4095. Ernie – 4500

Chris charged at Ernie with twin flaming fists, but the chicken withstood the heat and grabbed them, spinning and swinging Chris around as he slammed the boy against some rubble. He released Chris, who shot at Ernie as a Flame Torpedo and drilled against his chest. Ernie used Iron Body to defend, then swiped his talon at Chris when he stopped, but the boy jumped and punched fireballs at Ernie’s face. Ernie shook the fire off and tried to punch his Combustion Eye, but Chris slid under Ernie’s cloak and kicked up at his crotch. “BAGAWK!”

Chris got back up and countered Ernie’s punches. He saw a Teen Ninja speeding up on a bike, so with quick reaction, Chris jumped on the bike, slipped inside, and kicked the ninja out. Chris zoomed the bike toward Ernie and caught the chicken on the windshield. Ernie punched through the glass and grabbed Chris’s neck, the boy swerving the bike uncontrollably before driving it into the maelstrom. As they whirled around the current, Chris was pulled out of the bike and punched by Ernie, but they both held their breath and kept fighting.

Melody saw them about to swirl into the whirlpool, but the water giant couldn’t save them with Suigetsu holding her back. Chris and Ernie flushed down the maelstrom, down into a spiraling undersea cave that would take them who-knows-where. Eventually, they resurfaced inside a sewer, and Chris tossed a box of magazines to distract Ernie before shooting his Combustion Beam. The beam missed the evasive chicken, caving in the sewer ahead and giving the water nowhere to flow. It built up, and before long they were blown out of a hole, viewing Hollywood in all its glory.

Chris and Ernie landed outside a studio made to look like an airport, for this is where they were shooting Captain America: Civil War. Both opponents hopped up, Chris on the side of Captain America and Ernie with Iron Man. “Action!” Both teams of Avengers charged each other. Winter Soldier began his epic clash with Black Panther and Black Widow got flipped by Ant-Man. Chris and Ernie blended in perfectly and exchanged fists, the cameramen getting on every side to catch every detail of their motion.

Captain America ambushed Ernie and punched the back of his head, and Spider-Man yanked Chris over in a web trap. Chris burned the webbing and kicked Spider-Man in the head, and Ernie zipped
behind Cap to Finger Pistol is back, swiping his vibranium shield. Chris shot a Combustion Beam, but the unbreakable shield blocked it, then Ernie tossed it like a Frisbee to hit Chris in the head. “AAAAH!” He gripped his Combustion Eye.

Ernie smirked maliciously, but Chris fixed his headband back on. Ernie dropped the shield and ran to exchange more blows, enduring all Chris’s Fire Fists. They fought their way into the airplane on the set and started it up. The Avengers watched as they took off for the sky. “Oh, guys, can I PLEASE be in Infinity War, pretty pleeeeeeaaaase?” Spider-Man begged.

The airplane tilted left, giving Ernie an advantage over Chris, then right, getting Chris on top of him. Ernie kicked, but missed and hit a lever that caused the plane to shoot down. It crashed close to a warzone island, the two flying out in the explosion and landing amongst the troops in green garb. Chris and Ernie donned green helmets and began shooting each other with machineguns. They laid nary a strike and decided to clash against each other’s guns. The scuffle moved into the army base, where they both fell into a metal barrel that sealed. “Self-destruct in 3... 2... 1...”

The base exploded, sending the barrel flying across the world. The extreme speed and spinning didn’t cease their fight, even when the barrel bumped against the top of a mountain and shot them out, they still exchanged punches across the sky. Eventually, they crashed through the window of a Japanese classroom, where students were hard at work completing a test. “YOU!” The teacher stopped their fight. “YOU LATE FOR CLASS! Sit down and take your test!”

Chris and Ernie exchanged dirty looks and sat beside each other. They determinedly filled in the answers as fast as they could, pencils continuously scratching along the paper, and every few minutes they glanced at the other. Ernie finished his test and went to plop it on the teacher’s desk, and Chris was next to do so. While the teacher was grading, they began clashing with their pencils, wherein Chris scored some pokes in Ernie’s feathers, then Ernie scratched above Chris’s mouth. They locked fists for a minute before Teacher finished grading.

“You both fail! You know nothing of Japanese culture! You base everything off anime! Not everyone in Japan is 10-year-old girl or monster! GO BACK TO E-CLASS!” Ernie punched the teacher unconscious, then Chris shot twin fire beams to send him out the window. Chris jumped out and crushed Ernie under flaming feet, then their battle resumed as they knocked out several kids in the schoolyard.

It seems a Japanese girl left her magic wand by a tree, and a boy left his Power Rangers uniform under a bench. Chris seized the wand and transformed into a magical girl, and Ernie became the Red Ranger and raised his sword. Ernie blocked Chris’s magic spells with the sword and slashed across the air. Chris used magic to fly, and Ernie activated Red Ranger’s holo-wings to pursue Chris up into space. The stars were sparkly in this anime battle, for Chris summoned the stars to rain down upon the Chicken Ranger. Chris channeled full power to his wand and used the Kame Game Whatever. The powerful laser struck Ernie directly and sent him down to the Earth like a comet.

The Giant Chicken crashed into Enies Lobby, back where they started. Chris landed close by, panting after exhausting that much energy. “Gyah!” He remembered he was wearing a pink dress and blonde ponytail wig, so he threw the guise off. Unfortunately, Ernie was back on his feet.

“I didn’t think I would have to do this, but you asked for it! I’m going PRIMAL!” Ernie’s feathers sharpened and his eyes turned blood-red. With lightning speed, he Shaved around Chris and scratched him with his talons. Chris endured the pain, and when Ernie zipped to his front, he jumped and stomped in his face with Rocket Boost, burning the chicken and escaping his range. (Play “Diable Jambe” from One Piece!)
“Then I guess I’ll have to do it, too!” Chris ripped off his headband. He punched the Combustion Eye and his body burst into flame. “AAAAAAAAHHHHH!” The eye shone like a mini sun, Chris’s skin burned red, his teeth grew sharp, and the ground melted around him. “I can go for some POULTRY!”

Ernie glared and zipped up, but Chris dodged without him noticing and KICKED Ernie from behind. The chicken blew through several ruined buildings, looking up as Chris rocketed above and blasted twin flaming cyclones. Ernie Shaved to dodge, swinging five Tempest Kicks that Chris dodged with Rocket Thrusts. He zipped down, grabbed Ernie by the neck, and shoved him against the ground while burning the poultry.

“Why did the chicken get burned in the fire?” Chris rocketed skyward. “TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE! Say your prayers, you overgrown fowl!” With a tremendous charge to his Combustion Eye, a beam of supreme power was unleashed upon the chicken.

“BAGAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAWWWWWWWWWWWWW!”

Chris’s forehead was smoking when his Fury Mode ended. He approached the black mass he had created. Ernie was now an overcooked Thanksgiving dinner, no feathers, just a black steaming body of meat. Chris took a piece off and ate it. “Blech. Undercooked.” He continued eating as he walked toward the Tower of Justice, leaving his victory to speak for itself.

In a sudden strum of the orchestra, Ernie’s eyes shot open to Chris’s direction. (End song.)

Inside the tower

Sheila Frantic burst down a door to a room with a glass cage. “MUM!” She saw the raccoon woman lying down. “’ang in there, Mom, I’m bustin’ ya free!” She spun her arm into a Light Fist and shattered the thick glass. “Mum!…” Sheila ran into the cage in bright spirits. “…?”

Marine startled awake, crouched on all fours like a predator. She faced her daughter, snarling with drooling fangs and murderous eyes. “…Mum?”

“AAAAH!” Marine tackled her daughter and bit Sheila in the shoulder. Sheila screamed and punched her mom in the head to scare her off. Sheila clutched her bleeding shoulder, still on her back as she looked up at the upside-down assassin with bowl-shaped hair. “Joey…”

The assassin knelt over her. “Tell me who that is…”

Underwater passage

Maddy walked the dark tunnel calmly, able to see the way forward with Observation Haki. She grew more nervous the further she ventured in the eerie quiet. All she had was her happy, innocent puppy to keep her consoled. At the end of this passage, she would read the stone that would establish her destiny. And what happened next was up to the universe.

Maddy stopped before a great steel door that blocked her way. She took a breath: “Sniiiiff… Sigh. This is it, Sparky. This is the kind of door they would hide a Destiny Rock behind. You ready?”

“Ruff!” Sparky panted excitedly.

“Alright… Then you’re the first one who gets to see my secret power.”

“AROO??” The puppy’s ears shot up.
“Yep. I wanted to keep it secret from the others, even Shade doesn’t know. But I might need to use it to break down this door. I’ll turn it off soon as I do. And… here we go!” Sparky watched with extreme close attention when his master performed the act.

The steel door snapped off its hinges and fell forward. Maddy stepped through the smoke, flexing her arms after the minor exhaust of energy. “Still needs some getting used to… Alright, now where is that…?” She gaped.

Maddy was standing atop a mountain over a great, wide savannah. The giant golden sun was halfway below the horizon, creating a red sky. Maddy stood on the edge of the rock to savor the twilight.

“I specially requested Eldwin to install the hologram projectors.” The dark voice said. “I thought it… to be a fitting scenery.”

Maddy turned. The Poneglyph was there, atop a platform. And Rob Lucci stood before it. “Can you imagine a more beautiful place… to devour your prey.”

We’re about to wrap this up sooner than I thought. Next time, we will have the final two battles against CP10. …Oh, and Eldwin. :P Followed by a twist that will shake the whole world. Atbash’s turn.

...

GSV XOLDM RH HDRUG, GSV XOLDM RH HORXP

BLF’EV BVG GL HVV SRH IVZO GIRXP
Chapter Summary

Maddy Murphy finally faces Rob Lucci.

Probably the shortest chapter, yet. I didn’t know how to stretch the fights too much, but I think it’ll suffice.

Chapter 70: All For Nothing

Enies Lobby

“You called me Joey just now.” Number 4 of CP10 said to Sheila. “Who is that?”

“Don’t change the subject, Drongo!” Sheila retorted, still holding her bitten shoulder. “What did you do to my mom?!”

“I gave her this.” Joey held three blueberries between his fingers. “It’s a plant called Night Howler. Very toxic and can bring the true beast out of animals. Even Mobians lose control and stay Primal indefinitely. I wonder how it would affect a half-Mobian like you.”

Sheila jumped up and sent a Light Kick at Joey, knocking him out of the room. She said to her wristwatch, “Mates, I found Joey! He made my mom into a savage!”

“I got your location, I’m coming up there!” Miyuki yelled.

“RAARRR!” Marine bit Sheila’s tail, forcing the daughter to spin a Light Fist and punch her off. “I’m only focusing on you!” Sheila said to Joey. “Ain’t none of the animals you can turn into can match against me!”

“Or perhaps they can!” Joey transformed into Sheila herself. (Play “Metal Mario Fight” from Super Smash Bros.!) 

Boss fight: Joey Beatles

Sheila threw punches and kicks at her double, but Joey countered with the same moves before Shaving behind Sheila and kicking the back of her head. Sheila lit her feet golden and ran around Joey at lightspeed, kicking him across the hall, but when she zipped up for another attack, Joey turned into a giant turtle and protected himself in the shell. “Being me aint as easy as you THOUGHT, huh?!” Sheila retorted. Joey spun in the turtle shell and shot to her, but Sheila jumped and punched Light Spheres to ricochet the shell around the hall.

Joey turned into a cheetah and performed faster Shaves, confusing Sheila before pouncing her from behind. Joey turned into an eagle and picked her up in his talons, flying back around the halls and breaking through a window. “SHEILA!” Sector IC saw her, but they were unable to pursue. The kids heard a growl, and MaKayla fought back when Primal Marine attacked them. “Miyuki, try to look for Sheila, you need to examine Uncle Joey.” Kayla ordered.
Joey dropped Sheila on the top of the Tower of Justice, then morphed into a gorilla to try and crush her, but Sheila jumped away and punched a Light Sphere at his face. Joey turned human and evaded Sheila’s Light Spheres using Paper Art. “Tell me who Joey Beatles is!” he demanded.

“I don’t even know!” Sheila jumped a Tempest Kick. “My friends told me he was Kirie’s missing uncle, and that scientist guy said that he stole the Mammal Fruit. How else are you turning into all these animals?”

“I don’t know.” Joey lunged at her as a snake, but Sheila leapt and grabbed the back of his tail, only for Joey to become a chimp, flip back, and kick her off. “All I remember is fighting, killing, and being ordered to fight and kill.” Joey became a rhino and charged at Sheila, who grabbed the horn and pushed him into halting using her Light Fists. Joey became an ant and skittered up to her foot, but when Sheila stomped, he became a crocodile and snapped her leg in his mouth. Sheila shook her Light Foot and swung him off as Joey changed back to human. “But if you know anything more, I want you to tell me!” He Shaved up and jabbed Finger Pistols.

“You know, I’d have an easier time tellin’ you if you weren’t trying to kill me!”

“I still have a mission. You’re one of the Seven Lights, so I can’t let you live!”

Sheila leapt above and swung a light strip from her tail, but Joey evaded. Sheila landed and said, “Well, I don’t remember you appearing much in the Firstborn story, anyway.” Sheila lit both fists gold and charged at Joey, but he became a hippo and used Iron Body to withstand the attacks. Joey turned into a kangaroo and threw rapid-punches at Sheila, then spun to whack her across the roof with his tail. Sheila used Light Feet to zip around the roof, but Joey became a fly to make her surprise attack fruitless.

When Sheila stopped to look for him, Joey landed on her head and attempted to crawl in her ear, forcing Sheila to desperately pound her head.

This power always made assassination easy! Joey thought with malice. Crawl in the enemy’s ear, expand, explode. I usually prefer less messy ways, but as long as I-

“Rewind!” Joey was caught in an unseen force and crawled out of Sheila’s ear, reverting to a fly. Miyuki released her Rewind as Lola Stork flew up to snatch the fly in her batty mouth, spitting Joey out as he morphed back into human. “STOP!” Miyuki and Kayla combined their powers to freeze him in place.

“I hate to score such a cheap knock-out.” Sheila spun twin Light Fists and leapt to smash Joey in the frozen head. “But we’re busy.” (End song.)

When the Stop wore off, the force of Sheila’s attacks smashed Joey down two floors. The assassin lay defeated as Terry carried Miyuki down with Shadow Glide. “Let’s see what happened to you.” Miyuki touched Joey’s head.

Five-year-old Joey was brought onto a boat by men in yellow protection suits. He was greeted by Caesar Clown on Punk Hazard. While sneaking around the facility, he found a green fruit and decided to eat it. He snuck around the base in the form of a spider, and when he learned of Caesar’s true intentions, he became a bird and flew away.

Joey unwillingly changed back into a human partway over the sea. He struggled to swim and would drown, but a GUN vessel passed by and rescued him. “Where did you come from?” a soldier asked.

“I, um... I don’t know!” Joey started crying. The soldiers gasped when he turned into a fish.
flopping on deck, then a lizard.

“He’s some kind of metahuman…”

“Let’s take him to base, maybe the doctors can find out what he is.”

Miyuki fast-forwarded the vision, and from Joey’s eyes a bald-headed brown-skinned doctor was studying him. “It is quite an interesting specimen…” his British voice said. “Perhaps we can use him for our benefit.”

Miyuki quickly skimmed the memories as Joey was doing martial arts in a class of students wearing shock collars. “This one will be Agent 401.” Dr. Strange said. “His code: ‘I Cannot Wait To Get Home To My 50 Pound Mother.’”

Joey was put in the care of a government agent who assigned assassination missions. “Please let me gooo! I wanna go hoooome!” the child of seven years old pleaded.

“Pipe down or I’ll leave you activated! Is that what you want, kid?! To lose your free will?!”

“I MISS MY BROTHER! I WANT WALLY, I WANT WALLY, WAAAAAAH!”

“THAT’S IT! I Cannot Wait To Get Home To My 50 Pound Mother! FOREVER!”

Joey was activated for seven days straight, completing his assassinations without fail using his powers. Unfortunately, his next target, assigned by his own uncontrollable urge, was his handler. So he snuck into the man’s office as a snake and bit him in the neck. Joey turned back and got a powerful headache. He was no longer under anyone’s control, yet he couldn’t remember a time when he was in control. The Sleeper in his brain fried, and he was left for the other government agents to deal with. Soon, Joey was in a Rokushiki class, later to join his fellow assassins.

“So that’s what happened.” Miyuki deduced. “He was a Sleeper Agent that wasn’t deactivated in time.”

“Sheila!” The kids turned to find Mason and Haruka, alongside a familiar raccoon woman.

“MUM!” Sheila beamed. “Strewth, you don’t look savage anymore!”

“There was some kind of poison inside her, so I used my poisonbending to extract it.” Haruka explained.

“I wish those blokes bothered to bathe me.” Marine said, sniffing her armpit. “Where are we, anyway?”

“We have to secure Joey and take him back to Moonbase.” MaKayla said. “We might be able to use his powers to save Mew.”

“What makes ya think that?” Sheila asked.

“It’s just a theory. Mew contains the DNA of all animals and Joey can change into any animal… which Mew can do also. Let’s store Joey inside an Infi-Cube.” Kayla pulled out said cube and sucked Joey inside.

“Everybody, this is Haruka.” she said in her communicator. “We’ve captured Uncle Joey.”

“Nice job!” Aisa replied with a smirk. “We’re just wrapping up here!” Morgiana caught Karin Uzumaki’s head in a leg-lock, and Aisa proceeded to stomp her in the face and knock the teen out.
“We knocked out everyone in the tower!” Harry reported, standing on Rodrigo’s body.

Shade grabbed Nya’s arms and slammed the teen on her back, punching her until her armor broke under her strong fists. Nya angrily threw the shattered pieces off, charging Shade again, but the echidna jumped to kick her in the face, again knocking her unconscious. “The rest is up to Maddy.” She looked to see Diwata and Crest holding Sector DR within a midair gravity field, which she compressed into a center before having it explode. Sugar slid by to punch her brother unconscious.

“It’s not over, yet.” Sapphire said. “There’s still one more… Well, I guess two.”

**Poneglyph Chamber**

Rob Lucci gazed at the setting sun beyond the holographic savannah. Hattori was fluttering in circles, cooing as his master spoke. “I’ve always pondered the force known as fate. Like the sun is destined to set beyond the west, I wonder if we are all bound by the fates the universe set for us. If it were true… I wondered if there was a way to break our fate.”

Lucci pressed a remote, changing the hologram to that of a preschool yard. A young boy in a white shirt, blue shorts, and black hair was sitting under a tree eating his crackers. A bird flapped down and claimed one of his crackers. Lucci caught the bird and strangled it to death. “THAT BOY JUST KILLED A BIRD!” A blonde girl pointed.

“Stay away, he’s a monster!” a fat boy shouted. The yard cleared of the screaming children in seconds. The boy scowled as he resumed eating.

“So from then, my fate was set.” the adult Lucci said. “At the time, it seemed like I was a petty outcast… The children feared me and kept calling me a monster. I found myself… unable to argue… because deep down, I liked it when they did. I wanted to hear it some more. That girl who first pointed at me… I followed her to her house and killed her cat. My parents sent me to a private school… I followed all my classmates home and killed their pets. Eventually, I wound up in military school. I excelled in hand-to-hand. They realized their teaching methods were too small for me. So they brought me to him.”

The hologram projected a dojo where a 12-year-old Lucci stood before a yellow alien with a round head, crescent grin, and tentacles. “Who the heck is that?” Maddy asked.

“Korosensei.” Lucci answered. “I didn’t know what he was or where he came from… but he was the greatest master of Rokushiki. Even greater than I to this day.” They watched as Korosensei Shaved all around the room in milliseconds. When Young Lucci swung his blade at him, it snapped against the alien’s Iron Body. “He trained me to become a perfect assassin. I served the Government in CP10, killing anyone on their behest. So I learned my true fate as a murderous predator… was to do just that.

“But how little I knew that my destiny was intertwined with many others. How many times has the perfect chance slipped.” The projection showed Rob Lucci walk by Nolan York in the GUN base. It cut to Lucci training Sleeper Agents in martial arts, Kimaya among them. It then showed him and Marine building the *Sunny Day*. “Knowing today, they were people I would have to kill… I can’t help but wonder if all people I met are guilty. But who isn’t guilty of something? That was the question that made me wonder if what I did was just. So I turned to a higher power. And he had this to say.”

The hologram showed Lucci standing before the throne of The King, surrounded by fire. “*It is true that all life is sacred… but some individual lives can be a horrible factor for those around them. Only I can determine which lives those are. Trust in my words, Lucci… Do not kill mindlessly…*"
"Kill only those who are truly guilty."

“And there were no beings more guilty than the Twenty Keys, he said.” The illusion turned back to a sunset savannah. “When I learned that this rock was in Mariejoa, I knew that destiny would one day lure you here. I swear within God’s mountain… I will not let you read this Poneglyph.”

“You just wanted a reason to kill people.” Maddy stated. “People berated you for it, yet you enjoyed it… You’re only loyal to The King because he made it sound like it was okay. I might not know much on destiny, but I do know that we decide it. And I choose to read the Poneglyph because I think it’ll help me save the universe. A man that chose to be a killer wouldn’t understand.”

“There is more to it than being a killer. You see… King Andrew’s wish was the same as mine.” Lucci grinned with malice. “To defy the force known as fate… To prove that destiny is void! By putting an end… to this wretched prophecy. ROOOAAAR!” Lucci morphed into a black-maned lion and got on all fours. (Play “The Encounter” from Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep! (The last time we’re gonna hear this, so we’re playing the remix.))

**Boss fight: Rob Lucci**


Maddy ran up to Lucci and threw a punch—the lion Shaved behind, but Maddy sensed this and ducked his claw before dealing an upper-cut, knocking the lion airborne and jumping to kick him against the invisible wall. Lucci pounced off and tackled Maddy, clawing at her face before she kicked him off with Armament legs. Lucci began pouncing left and right as Maddy braced for a surprise attack—as expected, he Shaved above and stabbed Finger Pistol, Maddy dodged and punched him in the eye. She sensed a combo of swift claw swipes coming up and began jumping away to dodge them. When Lucci was in the midst of one, Maddy ducked under to throw a punch up, but the lion Shaved and punched her from the side.

Lucci ran up to Maddy and placed his hands together for the Six King Gun. Maddy gasped when she saw his posture and quickly jumped up to run around, evading the powerful beam before jumping on the lion’s back. Lucci roared and pounced around while trying to claw her off, but Maddy dodged his claws, and climbed up to punch him repeatedly in the head, her armored fist moving fast as a bullet. Lucci did a spin attack and threw her off, and when Maddy was getting up, Lucci zipped up to slash at her face numerous times, but Maddy blocked with crossed arms before doing an uppercut and kicking Lucci away.

Maddy whipped around and ran up the stairwell to the Poneglyph, its letters glowing—“ROAR!” She dodged Lucci’s swipe and hit both fists iron to rapid-punch him, but Lucci used Paper Art and avoided before grabbing Maddy’s head and chucking her toward the entrance, off the stone’s platform. Lucci Shaved to multiple areas before appearing directly in front—Maddy punched his stomach, but Iron Body protected Lucci, then he stabbed both her hips with Finger Pistols. Maddy kicked his leg and seized the chance to roll away, and when Lucci turned, Maddy unleashed her Conqueror’s Haki.

“You really think that’s going to work on me?!” Lucci swiped his claws, but Maddy dodged and countered with armored punches. “The lion that was harvested to make this Devil Fruit was a fearsome king who bowed to no one! Only the King may command me.”

Maddy locked hands with Lucci’s as they engaged in shoving, and Maddy dodged her head left and
right when Lucci snapped his teeth. Maddy kicked at his stomach, and still holding his claws, she leaped overhead and hauled him up and over. When Lucci was down, Maddy dealt rapid-punches to his face, then she leapt onto his mane and wrapped arms around his mouth before slamming his head against the wall. Lucci shook Maddy off, but the girl ran up for an Armament headbutt, then she dodged Lucci’s swipes before grabbing his claw and holding it as she leapt and spun to kick his face.

“I don’t know how you managed to get this stronger in a short time.” Lucci said as he caught his breath. “But your strength will be your downfall. The easiest way to ensnare your prey is let it wear itself down. A child will exhaust herself dry.”

“By the time I’m exhausted, you’ll be ready for the vultures.”

“How long do you think those meager punches will be effective?”

“I was just warming up, but I think I’m ready now.” Maddy rolled her sleeves up. “So, congratulations, Lucci. You’ve won the honor of being the first enemy to see my secret power!”

“Growwwwl. Secret power?”

Maddy stretched her fingers and cracked her knuckles. “You’re about to wish destiny was kinder!” She stomped a foot and sent a surge of power through her veins. Hattori was knocked out by an unseen force and hit the ground. Maddy’s arms and legs covered in black iron, but they reflected red in the twilight. Her shoulders burst into black iron flames, her pupils expanded as her contacts popped out, and the Armament Haki shaped like specs around them. Finally, an iron heart appeared on her chest, encased in a circle, and the invisible force brimmed in the air.

Lucci gasped. “It can’t be! Is that… Haki Fury?!?”

“It sure is.” Maddy replied. “My teacher taught it to me in secret before our last training day ended. We made sure no one else was spying, because it makes a Conqueror Haki force-field that knocks out anyone close by. Weaker people, at least.”

“It’s impossible! Haki Fury can only be entered by someone with full mastery of the three forms! You could barely dodge me on our last encounter... How could you have learned so much in one day?!”

“We are extremely fast learners.”

Star Train

“But it’s not the power I was hoping for.” Nefarious commented. “Sigh... At least this should wrap things up quicker.”

And back

Lucci growled and Shaved behind her—Maddy zipped behind and KICKED him against the wall, then zipped over to rapid-punch his whole body for five seconds. Lucci climbed up the wall and leapt down to tackle the Haki body, but Maddy grabbed his hands and kept him above before slamming him to the ground. Maddy jumped and stomped his belly, then Lucci grabbed and slammed her on her back before stabbing Finger Pistol at her chest. “ROOOAR!” His two nails broke, unable to pierce the iron chest, then Maddy socked him across the jaw.

“Then you give me no choice!” Lucci flexed his arms and surged with power as well. “Never in all my years did I think I would go Primal on somebody!” His fur spiked and his black mane bloomed
like a flower. The two broken nails respawned as his claws grew sharper.

“Primal?! But you aren’t a Mobian!”

“IRRELEVANT!” Maddy dodged his Shave attacks, but Lucci moved with double speed and scratched the Haki Body from behind. “If benders and martial artists can unlock Fury forms, why not us metahumans?! I have fully embraced and accepted my power as a predator! My bowels are the gateway to Hell!!” Lucci leaped away and began prancing around Maddy in circles, repeatedly slashing his claws and sending Tempest Swipes that she evaded with Observation. “ROAR!” Lucci shot at her like a bullet and scratched her flaming shoulder, then he resumed prancing and slashing Tempest Swipes.

Maddy chased the lion with faster speed in her Fury form, but Lucci jumped and Moon Walked around the air with bullet-speed pulses. He slashed Tempest Swipes at Maddy still, then shot down with a Torpedo Spin and bashed her against the wall. Maddy kicked off and headbutted the lion, shooting him across the room. Lucci roared and lunged at Maddy, the two locking fists and showing their strength in another shove-off. Maddy looked Lucci in the eye and released Conqueror’s Haki, but the fearsome lion stayed strong against the unsettling chill.

“ROOOAR!” Lucci’s sudden bellow blew Maddy back, then he shot up to slash, but Maddy jumped, kicked off his head, and flew up to the Poneglyph platform. The letters glowed and became legible—Lucci grabbed Maddy from behind and chucked her across the room. She crashed in the opposite wall, looking to see Lucci pounce forth, bend his arms back, and slash them in a Tempest X.

The outside of Mt. Mariejoa exploded. “Everybody, look!” Dillon called. The operatives had all gathered around the back of the island, looking from either the tower or the shore. The side of Mariejoa crumbled, exposing the inside for all to see. “IT’S MADDY! She’s fighting… Scar from Lion King?”

“No, it isn’t Scar!” Shade yelled. “It’s Lucci!”

Maddy was wobbling on the edge of the room, her Haki Fury extinguished and her body exhausted. Lucci grabbed her by the arm and raised her to his face. “Oh, my… It seems you’ve overcooked yourself. You mastered the Haki, but not the Haki Fury. As expected, you wore yourself dry. All that’s left is to eat-”

“WAAAAAH!” Suigetsu Hozuki was blown out of the water, crashing in the room as a dizzy Logia puddle. “Owwww…”

“MADDY!” Lucci jumped back when Melody Jackson appeared on a water cyclone.

“MELODY, HEAL HER!” Chris shouted.

“ROAR!” Lucci Tempest Kicked and cut the cyclone, but Melody landed in the room and threw rapid Water Whips using her Water Fury. Lucci dropped Maddy and lunged at her, but a giant Water Whip from Manaphy slammed him against the wall. The prince kept Lucci pinned while Melody ran to heal Melody’s wounds.

“Cough… I’m too exhausted to get up…”

“Mana Mana!” Manaphy dropped his hold on Lucci. “PHYYYY!” His antennas shone red and sent a beam to connect Maddy’s heart, and one other beam across the sea to connect Chris’s heart.

“Whoa! Are they trading bodies?!” Dillon exclaimed.
“It’s not Heart Swap.” Midna gaped. “It’s Health Swap! Manaphy’s switching their HP! (As it were in videogame terms.)”

“OWWW!” Chris felt pain surge through him, so he collapsed.

“Why couldn’t he do it with Lucci?!” Dillon questioned.

“Because the two people have to be close with each other.” Midna answered.

“Urg… It’s okay.” Chris forced a smile. “Chosen One takes priority, I reckon.”

“I take it back, Firstborn are useful!” Artie yelped.

By the time the Health Swap was complete, Lucci recovered to bash Melody and Manaphy over the edge. He saw Suigetsu reforming and decided to throw the Logia over as well. “ROAR?” Lucci looked up and was too late to dodge Maddy’s Haki punch, then she dodged the lion’s swipe. Currently, Sparky and the recovered Hattori were sitting on the edge of the Poneglyph platform. The puppy glanced at him. “What’re you looking at, coo-kachoo?”

Lucci slashed Tempest Swipes that Maddy evaded, and when she ran up to punch his belly, Lucci used Iron Body, then slashed, but Maddy rolled behind him and bit his tail. The lion hollered and swung his arm around, but Maddy kept behind and jumped on Lucci’s head to rapid-punch his face. Gonna wait at least 3 minutes before going Fury again. Maddy thought. Lucci shook off and Torpedo Spun, but Maddy dodged right and evaded his following swipes using keen Observation. The dodging game kept up for half a minute, at least.

“Running out of options, I see.” Lucci snarled. “You want to play keep-away so badly, then keep away from this!” Lucci Moon Walked near the ceiling and unleashed a storm of Tempest Kicks around the room. Maddy kept Observation active and dodged every one by a heartbeat. Still airborne, Lucci channeled power for a Six King Gun, burning it along the ground in Maddy’s direction as she kept away. Lucci landed and Shaved around her, but Maddy scored a kick when sensing one of his warp points.

“Goombella, can you sense their HP from here?” Nagisa asked.

“I’ll try.” Goombella narrowed her eyes on Lucci and used her Tattle. “Rob Lucci has 150 HP left. Maddy has… 95. It’s going to be a close shave.”

Maddy dodged a round of Finger Pistols and punched one away with Armament, then rolled to Lucci’s right to kick in the leg. “Has it been three minutes? Ugh, I’m going for it.” Maddy stomped and burned into Haki Fury for the second time (excluding her demonstration to Sparky). Lucci reentered Primal Fury and did a spin attack, but Maddy ducked underneath and did an uppercut. She hopped up and kicked Lucci against the wall, then ran for a round of rapid-punches around his body.

Lucci kicked Maddy away, and they both recomposed to face each other, catching breath. They both charged and locked fists again. Maddy dodged Lucci’s bites, then she bashed his teeth with her head. Lucci leapt and let Maddy slide under—she whipped around to catch him preparing a Six King Gun. Despite the power brimming in his hands, Maddy leaped forth and punched her Haki fist against the center of the energy. The concentrated chi burst everywhere, but the strain against Maddy’s fist was unbearable. Both opponents stood their ground using willpower alone, the energy was making it too bright for the others to see. Maddy felt Lucci’s hold weakening, she was determined to see it—Lucci abruptly stopped the attack and snapped Maddy in the waist. (End song.)
The light faded so everyone could see. They were distraught by the result. Lucci’s teeth lodged into Maddy’s flesh and leaked blood. Her Haki Fury gone, Lucci chucked his fallen opponent across the room. The lion rasped, relishing in the taste he worked so hard for. He saw the operatives watching from the distant shore. Lucci stood to full height and let the entire island hear him: “ROOOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAARRRR!”

The kids felt their excitement dying. Shade was on the verge of tears. Everything they worked for, all their effort, was for nothing. Lucci continued breathing so his exhaust would settle. Then he prepared to Moon Walk across the sea.

Plant. Lucci whipped around. Maddy pushed up from the floor with her own hands. She was back on her feet against all odds. “How can you still be alive after that?!” Lucci hissed. Maddy faced him, but her dull blue eyes showed no sense of conscious. “You’re… You’re not even awake. But how are… Are you being kept alive by your own Haki?!” (Play “Allen Walker” from D.Gray-Man!)

Goombella scanned the two again. “Rob Lucci’s HP is down to 15. Maddy stands at… 1.”

The sleepless Maddy burned into Haki Fury again. Lucci lunged over and swiped claws viciously, but without a waking mind, Maddy had nothing to distract her from dodging. She socked Lucci in the jaw, costing him 5 HP. She dodged his tackle and bit him in the neck, dealing 2 HP. Lucci rolled to shake her off, Shaving all around to stab Finger Pistols, but Maddy evaded with the quickest motion and kicked 3 HP out of Lucci. The lion leapt, and the two locked hands for another shove-off. Lucci tried to peer his sharp green eyes into her dull blue ones, but it was a futile effort.

!!!!

An invisible force erupted in the air and Lucci lost his senses. Maddy channeled power into her fist for the final uppercut. Everybody gaped as the lion rocketed all the way to the sky, higher and higher and higher.

Sunny Chariton was in the midst of flying up Mariejoa. She looked down and- “Whoa!” dodged the lion that mysteriously flew up.

The people on God’s Domain viewed up at the sky when the lion soared over their boundaries. There he flew to God’s Castle, and smashed through the roof with gathered momentum. King Andrew studied the fallen lion before his throne and crushed a soda can in his hand.

Maddy’s Haki Fury faded as she faced up at the Poneglyph. “YOU’RE NOT DONE, YET!” she looked to see Eldwin fly down in Teen Ninja armor, clutching a huge supersonic death ray. “I, Eldwin Savinsky, am the TRUE boss of this level! I’ll destroy you once and for all! It’s just you and me, Maddy! The match of the century!”

Boss fight: Eldwin Savinsky


The Teen Leader blasted the powerful ray gun in second-long intervals, but Maddy effortlessly dodged each blast on her way toward him. She kicked the gun into the sea, grabbed the bully’s collared neck, and punched him in the face countless times for five seconds. Then, without using Haki, she punched him in the neck and flew him across the room as his cast broke. Eldwin lay in a puddle of his own saliva. (End song.)
Chimney positioned her R.O.C.K.E.T.-T.R.A.I.N. to create a bridge between Enies Lobby’s shore and Mariejoa. Dozens of operatives, along with Shade, came up to witness the crowning moment. Melody gave Maddy one last heal, waking the girl up. She spared a smile to Shade, who looked relieved beyond compare. With that, she faced up at the Poneglyph. Sparky punched Hattori and knocked the pigeon out.

“Oh look, it’s 1:00!” Miyuki checked. “We’re right on time.” (Play “The First Mask” from Rayman 2!)

The holographic illusion of the setting sun made this moment all the more beautiful. Maddy began her walk up the stairs, to the rock that had inscribed her destiny. Enies Lobby was left in ruin. The agents of CP10 lay defeated, the Teen Ninjas had no motivation to try anymore. The ruins of the island were a symbol of the Kids Next Door’s hard work. Their passion to save the universe outweighed their pain and strife. At last, the fruits of their labor would dawn. The Seventh Light.

Sparky got the front row seat to watch his master step before the rock. Dr. Nefarious had his eyes glued to the screen. Lawrence silently prayed for his master, in more ways than you would think. Maddy stopped and faced the Gibberish Stone. Its letters glowed. It was legible to her eyes. And she read it aloud for everyone to hear.

Er… hello? This is my first time writing on one of these things, I’m not very good. This is just a practice one. In any case, there’s been a misunderstanding. Maddy’s not really the Light. It’s actually Zach. You just witnessed my Fake Prophecy Attack. Sorry if I wasted your time.

-Love Bo-bobo

It was a time for confusion and a time for dropped mouths. Enies Lobby had never known greater silence. Maddy outright collapsed on her back in defeat. Shade wanted to die. The Teen Ninjas didn’t know what life meant, anymore. The Zoni were going to explode—even they were taken by surprise. On God’s Domain, King Andrew’s eye twitched. It was at this moment, things such as theories and speculations became meaningless. There was absolutely no guessing this universe. Destiny is, and always will be, a troll.

“What a twist!” said M. Night Shyamalan.

White House

Kimaya Heartly gasped when the Keyblade Ring levitated in the air. One of the keys, which had a golden crown for teeth, glowed as it transformed. It was now a white key with a jester’s hat, and its keychain had a red clown nose.

Gnik’s Basement

Lesser Lord Gnik fell on his knees, clasping his head in agony. “I-I was wrong… but I spoke for Master… M-Master is wrong… Master is wrong! M-Master is never wrong! MASTER, WHAT IS HAPPENING?!?”

Star Train

But none of it compared to what Dr. Nefarious was feeling. He watched it all firsthand from Sparky’s vision. His robotic brain failed to process… and so, it went into meltdown. “Grrrrrr!” All the videos he had of Maddy, all the notes he took, he smashed and burned all of it, made completely and utterly certain her existence was gone from his life. “I AM SICK AND TIRED OF THIS STUPID QUEST!!!”
The doctor smashed a button with the full force of his anger. A bomb launched out of his ship, directly down to Quahog. The entire city was destroyed in a great atomic blast. One could almost hear the moans of despair from its wayward souls. Nefarious’s brain was steaming. “I am going to destroy EVERY OUNCE OF THIS WRETCHED PLANET!!”

Um… yeah. Sorry, everybody. ^^; I guess I’ll throw in some trivia, Scarlet Vargas can also go Primal. Never got around to showing it, yet. Korosensei is from Assassination Classroom and Night Howlers are from Zootopia.
Chapter Summary

Zach Murphy battles Dr. Nefarious with the full force of Bo-bobo Kempo!

I wrote this faster than I thought!

Chapter 71: He Who Defies Law

Enies Lobby

The silence continued for five minutes. Chris was the one to break it. “So… it's actually Zach. Zach Murphy. He’s the Light. It was a fake prophecy.”

“That’s how I understand it.” Melody replied.

“Sigh… Okay, I know we’ve all been asking it, but I’ll throw it out.” Chris approached the Poneglyph. “Who the hell has been WRITING all these damn ROCKS?!” He kicked the corner of it. The Poneglyph fell open like a cardboard box and exposed bundled-up anime characters.

“Uuuh…” Everyone stared. There was a guy with a golden afro, an orange-haired boy in a black robe, a kid in a straw hat – you get it. They were still and looked worried due to their exposed cover.

“Crap, they spotted us, Bo-bobo!” Ichigo mumbled.

“Don’t worry, guys, I have a plan.” The afro man stood up with a megaphone. “Ahem: ATTENTION, children! You are in violation of Chapter 64, Article A, Section 16: The right for strange characters to be hidden inside boxes! You are hereby ordered to turn away and pretend you never saw anything, or…or… AAH, I can’t think of anything!” Bo-bobo fell to his knees crying.

“Oh, for God’s sake.” Ichigo sighed.

“Um, guys?” A force pushed up from below. “Could all of you just—GET OFF OF MEEEE!” Sora jumped to his feet and blew the six off. “Why was I the one who got treated like a mat?!”

“You look more three-dimensional than we do, we thought it wouldn’t hurt.” Luffy replied.

“Well, it seems you’ve discovered us.” Yugi Muto said. “So we might as well come clean. We’re the ones who wrote on the Poneglyphs you’ve been finding. We don’t fully understand this prophecy or what’s been happening, we were only following instructions. It all started when our universes were suddenly invaded by interdimensional forces, as a result of something called a Multiverse Portal. Sound familiar?”

“The Multiverse Portal?” Dipper questioned. “The portal disappeared suddenly, but we don’t know why.”

“Well, whatever the case, all our universes are falling apart, and it all centers around this universe.”
Ichigo said. “We may’ve helped with the prophecy, but we aren’t the only ones of our group. There are others like Allen Walker, Ruby Rose, the Avengers – all people whose worlds were destroyed.”

“Now hold on a second.” Maddy Murphy woke up and stood. “Before we buy all this junk, you have explaining to do! I almost got killed by a lion because everybody said I was the Seventh Light! Do you have any idea what I’ve been through?! And it was all a TRICK?!”

“Look, Maddy, I’m honestly sorry for deceiving you.” Bo-bobo said. “But we had to! Tell you what, I’ll make it up to ya.” He gave a friendly smile. “Would you like it if I told you you were secretly related to Steven Universe?” Bo-bobo picked out Steven Universe from somewhere and set him on his feet.

“Yeah! I’d like that a lot!”

“TOO BAD, YOUR LONG-LOST COUSIN IS WENDY MARVEL!” Bo-bobo whipped out the blue-haired mage and held her by the ankles.

“THAT’S COMPLETELY RANDOM!” Maddy screamed.

“Um, I don’t know how I got here…” Wendy started crying.

“It’s called an impulse idea, AND WE LIKE IT!” With that, Bo-bobo swung Wendy like a baseball bat, hitting Steven and sending them flying to the sky. Twinkle.

“Oh, hello??” Zach emphasized. “Are you guys not realizing who is here right now?? It’s Bobobobo Bo-bobo! I’m your biggest fan!”

“That can’t be right. My biggest fan is right there!” Bo-bobo pointed at the enormous fan blowing at them from the sea.

“I saw that joke coming a mile away.” Maddy said.

“You forget something, Bo-bobo!” Zachary smirked. “I am actually the missing oscillator switch!” And with that, Zach turned into an oscillator switch and leapt up to fill the fan’s vacant hole.

“Excellent, Zachary!” Bo-bobo cheered. “With the oscillator returned, my fan can assume its true form… as an air hockey puck!” The fan poofed and turned into a tiny puck.

“Guys, I’m all out of breath, someone scream for me.” Maddy said.

“There will be plenty time for screaming after the gerbils win the sugar bowl!” Bo-bobo was playing hockey against Natsu Dragneel, with gerbils cheering in the audience.

“Grrrr!” Natsu grew furious. “I’M TIRED OF THIS GAME, I WANNA FIGHT!” With his flaming fist, he destroyed the hockey table.

“HEY, WHAT’S YOUR PROBLEM?!” Luffy shouted at Natsu, balling his fist. “There was free MEAT at the tournament!”

“I got a piece of meat RIGHT HERE!” Natsu raised his flaming fist.

Luffy entered Gear 4 and cried, “Gum-Gum KING KONG GUN!!”

“DRAGON KING BLAZING FIST!!”
“KNOCK IT OFF!!” Sora batted them both out to sea with his Keyblade.

“Help! Help! We can’t swim!” Luffy and Natsu started flailing their arms. The others stared in disbelief.

“So, anyway…” Naruto Uzumaki began. “Do you guys know someone named Negatar Gnaa?”

“Yes, we know Gnaa.” Aurora answered. “Not personally, but we know him.”

“He’s in our group, too! We’re calling ourselves the Dimensional Rebels.” He grinned. “Pretty cool, right?”

“I would’ve liked Dimensional Prospectors.” Dillon commented.

“Aren’t prospectors people who dig around in mines?” Ichigo asked.

“Yeah, who would call their selves that?” Naruto snickered.

“Guys, just tell us what’s going on!” Chris yelled. “Who put you up to this? What’s destroying your worlds, what did these forces look like?”

“ZAAAAAAAAACH!”

A familiar voice screeched in the heavens, and a familiar train appeared from hyperspace. “IT’S NEFARIOUS!” Maddy screamed.

Dr. Nefarious pressed a button. Suddenly, Sparky sprouted robotic limbs, wrapped around Zach, and rocketed up to his creator’s ship. Nefarious rained missiles down on all of them, the kids countering with their own powers. The seven Dimension Rebels were blown apart by a missile, and transformed back into Zoni. “THEY’RE Zoni, TOO?!” Shade exclaimed.

“If you kids need me, I’ll be destroying everything you hold dear! SO LONG, JERKS!” The train vanished in hyperspace.

“Everyone to the ships!” MaKayla yelled. “We have to find where they went!”

“I can see where they’re going!” Sapphire followed.

**Star Train**

“NNNGH!” Nefarious punched Zach to the floor. “After ALL the years I spent watching Maddy, ALL THE TIME I spent, hoping for some SECRET power I can use to rule the universe, AND IT WAS YOU ALL ALONG?!” Nefarious grabbed and repeatedly punched him across the face. “I’ve HAD IT TO HERE with your games! TELL ME WHAT YOUR POWER IS NOW!!”

“Stop it, stop! Your punching is rearranging my face! Now I look like a-” When Nefarious stopped, Zach’s faced changed into cereal, an orange, and milk on a tray.

“A balanced breakfast?” Lawrence asked.

“GRRRR!” Nefarious kicked Zach away. “I have something to SHOW you, boy! Take a look!” He pressed a button on the control panel and displayed a screen of a ruined town. “Your hometown of Quahog, reduced to a wasteland. Ah, but what of the townspeople? Behold.” The screen cut to show robots wandering the city. “My Atomic Biobliterator destroys everything else and makes organics into robots. Robots who become my slaves… but I don’t feel as merciful.” He pushed a remote. Two of the robots exploded.
“AAAH!” Zach screamed.

“I won’t stop THERE!” Nefarious continued exploding citizens.

“PLEASE, STOP!” Zach dressed in a pink dress and blonde wig, crying over Nefarious’s leg. “I’ll have no one to take to the engineering prom, please allow me to get a date!”

“NEVER!” Nefarious began stomping him. “I’ll destroy every last ounce of this planet until I learn your secret!” The screen switched to a robotic Danika York as Nefarious threatened to explode her. “Now TELL me, Mr. Murphy, what, makes, you, TICK?!”

He stomped him so much, he exposed what was inside of Zach: “YOU’RE A VIDEOTAPE?!”

“I call upon the power of videotapes throughout the land!” Nefarious looked as a fleet of tapes and cassette players flew out of the atmosphere. “With our allies, the cassettes, we will prove this advanced technology cannot dominate us! We must take back what is ours… OUR SCHOOL YEARBOOKS!!”

“NYAAAAARRRGGGH!” The Star Train took the full force of the barrage of old-timey recording devices. Before they knew it, the Star Train was plummeting to the earth, breaking and burning in the atmosphere. The train crashed into Quahog and blew all the rubble and robots for miles.

Sometime later, Maddy, Shade, and the Kids Next Door arrived at the wasteland, having quickly heard the news of the events. “Oh, man… This is terrible…” Dillon said with remorse.

“This place could really use a hero…” said Mason.

“REAAAAARRRGGGH!” Nefarious burst up from the rubble, performing Shadow Clone Jutsu and destroying all the ships with powerful lasers. As the operatives were falling, the Nefarious clones flew up and sliced them all with bladed fingers, an easy feat given they were so worn out from Enies Lobby. “Destroy-destroy-destroy-destroy-destroy! DESTROY EVERYTHINGNNNNN!” Nefarious turned red with unparalleled rage.

Maddy was dropped on the ground, horribly exhausted and helpless when Nefarious appeared before her. “What’s wrong, Maddy?! Tired from fighting Lucci?!” He stomped closer. “All these years you’ve been deceiving me… You will RUE the day YOU CROSSED DOCTOR NEFARIOUS!” Nefarious charged lasers in both hands.

Maddy cried, feeling this was the end. The first person to come to mind was…

“ZAAAAAAACH…”

The world turned white, but the fatal blow of the lasers didn’t come. It was quiet and peaceful. Maddy opened her eyes. He was there… defending her. “You rang?”

Zach was driving a Seussmobile, a whacky tacky clown car with a Dr. Seuss design. “Oh, my hero!” Maddy wept in embarrassment.

“HEY, NEFARIOUS!” Zach yanked the steering wheel off the car. “How would YOU like a turn on the wheel?!” He chucked the wheel at Nefarious—it burst into eight sexy anime girls who rapidly kicked the robot with bare feet.

“WAAAAAAAH!” Nefarious flew across the city and smashed through several fallen buildings. He landed on his feet and looked up to see Zach with the girls. “This was my Living Body Pillow Attack! Thank you, ladies.”
“Oh, Zaaaaach!”

“I’VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS!” Nefarious blasted lasers and destroyed the girls. “I’LL PUT AN END TO YOUR TRICKERY FOREVER!”

**Boss fight: Arthur Nefarious**

“SO LONG, ZACH!” Nefarious flew at his enemy with rocket shoes, shooting twin lasers that blew him backwards. With Zach on his back, Nefarious flew above and rocketed down. “Where’s your power NOW, Mr. LIGHT?!” Nefarious smashed—through Zach’s paper body and landed in a classroom. “WHAT?!”

“Welcome to Arts and Crafts!” Mr. Murphy said from the teacher’s desk. “Today, you will be creating hand sanitizer! Mr. Blinks, how is your project?”

“Alls wells, Mon-shore Zarion!” Jar Jar created a clothespin. (“That isn’t hand sanitizer!” yelled Nefarious.)

“What do you think of mine?!” Spongebob beamed as he presented a ketchup bottle.

“THAT WON’T KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN!” screamed the doctor. “Ugh, HERE, I’ll show you hand sanitizer!” He grabbed scissors and paper and hurriedly crafted. “TA-DA! A masterpiece!” Indeed, he created a full bottle of sanitizer.

“Excellent, Arthur!” Zach praised. “You get full marks for the day!”

“I do? Great!”

“Just as soon as you use that lotion to clean my booger, Sally.” He set a giant booger on the desk.

“EW, GROSS!!”

“Dammit, Zach!” Sally jumped up and pulled Zach down by the shirt. “I need to get back to the baseball field! We’re playing against the earwax and I need to teach those sculpture-loving nerds a lesson!”

“Relax, Sally, we will! I got your bat ready for ya, right here.”

The next minute, they were on a baseball field, with Sally holding Nefarious like a baseball bat. “Wait, what?”

“And the pitcher takes the field!” An earwax man walked onto the pitcher’s platform, holding the baseball firmly. He chucks the ball—“MOOO! MOOO!” It morphs into a cow.

“AAAAAAAHHH!” Nefarious screamed, but he was swung against the flying cow and shattered into pieces. *Doo-doo-doot-doot! Doo-doooot!* His head flew across the field and landed in a boy’s hand.

“Mommy, look! I caught the ball!”

“Put that away, Jeremy, it has germs.”

“GERMS?! Good thing I brought hand sanitizer!” Zach grabbed the lotion Nefarious crafted earlier and started spraying the audience, who all screamed and ran. “Get 5% off every Tuesday!”
“GRRRR!” Nefarious reattached his parts and made hand signals. “Shadow Clone Jutsu!” A swarm of Shadow Clones surrounded a terrified Zach. “ATTACK HIM!” They all leaped above.

“Gaaah!” Zach ducked and shuddered.

“HAAAAH!” The clones would pile on him soon. …Zach farted. Poot.

“HORCHATAAAAA!” The ghosts of a Mexican family burst from his rear and stabbed the clones with swords. They poofed into smoke, but the real Nefarious became a rock.

“Crud, a Substitution Jutsu!” Zach yelped.

“THAT’S RIGHT!” Nefarious charged from behind. “HrrrrrrRRRRR-!” He stabbed Zach. The boy poofed and turned into a cup of cheddar. “A Substitution?!”

“They’re substituting Ms. Dairy for Chuck!” Zach charged in on a rhino and rammed Nefarious.

“Boy, when you see Zach like this,” Maddy said, “you can hardly remember a time when he couldn’t defend himself for squat.”

“He’s risen greater than all of us.” Chris agreed.

“What’s my battle score so far?!” Zach asked with confidence. A scoreboard tallied up and concluded with 5,104 points. “SWEET! You know what that means?”

“What does it mean?” asked Maddy.

“We get to blow up Jupiter!” Zach pressed a pump, and the gas giant completely exploded. That’s when flaming tacos began to rain down. “It looks like it was Taco Night up there. Better watch out!”

“AAAAAH!” His friends were screaming and dodging tacos.

Nefarious merely blasted all the tacos with lasers. “You think these bits are humoring anyone?! I have the upper hand in this fight! If you don’t surrender to me, I’ll order the rest of these townspeople to self-destruct!”

“You know what I think your problem is, Nefarious?” Zach declared. “You didn’t give your mom a good scrubbin’! Well, it’s time to rectify that. BOYS!”

Suddenly, they were on a naval ship, where a bunch of sailors sang a shanty as they washed their moms in bathtubs.

What do you do when your mom is dirty

Boyfriends got her feeling flirty

Sing her a shanty nice and purdy

Wash her in the bath tub!

The sailors scrubbed the moms vigorously.

WASH. WASH. Wash her belly

SCRUB. SCRUB. Scrub her belly
RINSE. RINSE. Rinse her belly

NEXT WE’LL DO HER TUSHY!

The other kids wanted to look away, but the sight was so atrocious that they were frozen. There was so much weirdness going on here. “Okay, Nefarious, now it’s your turn!” Zach showed him a feminine version of Nefarious in a bathtub, wearing a wig.

“That’s not remotely CLOSE to what my mother looks like!”

“True, but she’s a hell of a tub-skater!” The robo-mother’s bathtub slid and smashed Nefarious.

The robot recovered and flew up with rockets. “If you’re not going to take me seriously, I’ll have to start destroying!” With that, he flew around and shot lasers everywhere, making a greater mess of the already-ruined town. “HA HA HA HA! DIE, all of you, DIIIIEEEE!” He decimated all the Roboticized citizens, and soon there would be nothing left.

The ruined city of Quahog transformed into a gigantic six-sided die. “I made a DIE???”

“Oh, I was looking for that!” They were suddenly on a table, where Spongebob picked the die up and tossed it. It landed on ‘2’. “Darn.”

“My turn!” Zach took and shook the die, feeling lucky. It landed on a side with numerous spots. “Sweet, 57!”

“What do you get?” Maddy asked.

“We get to blow up New Zealand!” Zach pressed a pump and exploded the island country. “No one was using that land, anyway.”

This time, flaming bike tires were raining from the island’s explosion, but Nefarious was swift in shooting them all. “You’re running out of pizzazz if you’re throwing the same basic attack at me! No matter how many landmasses you destroy, I will—WAAH!” He was squished by a giant gold statue honoring Monty Python.

“And now for something completely different!” announced Zach.

Spotlights lit up a dark stage. Jar Jar Blinks wore an orange jumpsuit covered with words spelled the same forwards and back, like Ururu, Appa, Ho-oh, racecar, or repaper. The sign above the stage read Palindrome. Jar Jar spoke with a voice most soothing:


“…” Nefarious was utterly speechless. “…Wow. That… was… impressive…”

“I cannot accept praise.” Jar Jar bowed. “It was the tentacle.”

“What tentacle?”

“THIS TENTACLE, DIPWAD!” Zach swung an octopus tentacle and bat Nefarious away.

Zach then looked over to Chris and Maddy. “It stings a little at first, but it helps the wound heal.” Chris said as he put an ice bag over Maddy’s wounds.
“Well, someone learns from his cousin.” Maddy laughed.

Zach’s eyes narrowed sharply. “DON’TCU HIT ON MY SISTER!” He kicked Anthony to the sky like a football.

“It wasn’t meehee...!”

“Waaaaah!” Nefarious landed behind a stand. He got up to see the stand had a buzzer. He was between Anthony McKenzie and Terry Stork at some game show. Zach wore a host’s uniform and announced, “Welcome to another installment of:”

“YOU! CAN’T! WIIIIIN!”

“Anthony, you get to go first!”

“Don’t I have to push the buzzer?”

“Your question is: Girls’ locker room?”

“Um... Vweeb?” Anthony answered.

AAAANCK! “Sorry, Anthony, the correct answer was ‘Richard Feynman.’ Now it’s time for the Penalty Round! Your punishment will be:” A wheel spun on the wall, landing on an icon of a desert. “Fighting Sahara Desert in a boxing contest!”

Ding ding! All three contestants were in a ring, facing a giant Sahara Desert. “Haaaaah-!” They ran to throw the first punch—a swarm of scorpions jumped out of the desert and began rapidly stinging them.

“So it doesn’t matter who gets picked?” Maddy figured. “All of them will just get pummeled?”

“Terry, you’re next!” Zach resumed. “Answer Question 64!”

“You didn’t ask any of the questions before!”

AAAANCK! “That’s where you’re wrong! Before, I asked Question 15. Gotta pay attention, Ter. Here’s your Penalty Game!” The wheel spun and landed on a lollipop. “Take candy from a premature baby!”

The contestants landed in the center of the Earth. There was a lollipop floating over the edge of the magma, but when Terry came to take it, a giant gremlin-like demon burst from the magma and burned them all in fire. “This particular baby happens to be Dark Gaia, whom was not scheduled for another ten million years. Up next is Dr. Nefarious!”

“Whatcha have for me, Zach?!”

“Take this sketchbook,” Zach tossed him a blank sketchbook, “and draw THIS... amoeba!” Zach pulled a napkin off a blank pedestal.

“Zach has this in the bag.” Maddy said with disbelief.

“HERE!” Nefarious presented the completed sketch of an amoeba lifting weights.

“HE DID IT!” Zach panicked. “I don’t believe it! Someone actually won! Do you know what this means?!”
“I think I do.” Maddy replied.

“We have to blow up this building!” Zach pressed a pump.

Meanwhile, Depthcharge2030 was coming back from a leisurely stroll. He was about to enter his house—when it miraculously exploded! Everyone who came to the game show blew to the sky. “You were hosting it at HIS house?!” Dillon exclaimed.

Flaming wax sculptures of the Prospector were flying with the contestants. “Part of being a robot means analyzing ways to adapt!” Nefarious grabbed statues of D. Carmine, Kayla Valera, and Josh Puncture, throwing them at Zach. “If I decide to play along with your games, I can get close enough to defeat you!”

Still in midflight, Zach defended himself with a sculpture of John Smith. “The only time I heard the word ‘adapt’ was when I failed a spelling test! Had to spell ‘adopt’, didn’t go well. I couldn’t drop my toy robot at Foster’s and he took over the Arabian Government.”

After blocking Rack and Ruin—“YOU’RE WIDE OPEN!” Nefarious shot up and STABBED Zach in the chest. “Your time is up- huh?”

Nefarious pierced a bottle of red potion. “Since you’ve punctured my Power-Up Potion, you forced me to use my special attack.” Zach’s body shone with light. “The Mario Kart 64 Train Level Attack!”

Nefarious became 64-bit and was on a Mario Kart, as were the other operatives. Zach sat before his TV and controlled Nefarious in driving through the desert level. The level’s calming music rang in the air. Zach steered off track and drove along the train tracks in the level. “AYAAAARGH!” Zach crashed him into the train. “AYAAAARGH!” Nefarious’s kart whirled up into the air when taking damage. “AYAAAARGH!”

“I don’t care about winning, I just wanna see him go uppy.” Zach said.

There were police sirens outside, and GUN agents surrounded Zach’s house. “Zachary Murphy, you are under arrest! For playing videogames too loud in the winter!”

“CRUD!” Zach cursed at his folly. “I thought I learned from Master Bo-bobo! Well, only one thing to do now. I’M GOING TO ARKANSAS!” He burst out of the house, driving a bulldozer that pushed his TV.

Nefarious and the operatives were still in Mario Kart, screaming as he was about to plow through a teddybear factory. “ZACH, WAIT!” Chris screamed. “WE’RE IN HERE, TOOOOOO...” The second they made impact, all the karters and teddybears were blown to the sky.

Adaptation process at 100%.

“YES!!” Nefarious was brimming with more power than ever. “Now that I have measured every part of your attack pattern, it’s time for my OWN performance! I will annihilate you all, in my DEATH CARNIVAL!” Out of nowhere, Nefarious spawned a black, metallic carnival with his likeness seen on all the rides.

“He’s mimicking Zach’s Bo-bobo Kempo!” Maddy exclaimed. “We’re in trouble!”

“You bet you are, child! Because you’re all going for a ride on my Roller Coaster of DOOM!” Nefarious strapped all the kids to a roller coaster, speeding along the tracks using rockets. “And guess its destination: a BUZZ BUNNY!” The coaster was going to speed in the mouth of a bunny.
statue with buzzsaws inside.

Chris, Anthony, Mason, and the others desperately tried to escape their chains, but the last three seconds of their lives were spent staring at the upcoming blades. They sped through, and Nefarious relished in the sound of the saws chopping their flesh. When they came out on the other side—they posed in the most graceful swan dresses. “THAT’S NOT WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN!!” the doctor screamed.

“I feel more beautiful than a lady after she bathes!” Chris spoke beautifully.

“I feel like an angel as she brushes ’cross the sun.” Mason danced.

“Internet, this was what you were invented for.” Melody Jackson recorded the boys in their lovely light.

The swans were dancing within a whirling merry-go-round. Nefarious smirked with malice and pressed a button. The merry-go-round sealed them inside and began to spin faster. “You fools will spin so fast that you'll jellify! (And that’s actually a word.) Afterwards, I’ll spray you with ice,” four cannons shot ice spray over the machine, “and voila! You’re gelatin!” The merry-go-round uncovered and revealed a big plate of red Jell-O.

“I don’t think you know much on gelatin.” Maddy said with a sweatdrop. ^^;

“Wellp, time to eat up!” Nefarious got a spoon and began to gobble the blood-colored jelly. “Mmm, this is kinda good! I wonder what these kids had for lunch?”

When he dug up enough Jell-O, he discovered a fly among other animals. “What? Judging by the animals present… One of the children swallowed a fly. So they swallowed a spider to catch the fly; they swallowed a bird to catch the spider; they swallowed a cat to catch the bird; and in order to catch the cat, they swallowed… a mouse with Titan-hunting gear?”

Suddenly, the scenery changed to *Attack on Kitten*. The mouse citizens screamed high-pitch squeaks when the Colossal Kitten climbed over Wall Mario, which had an icon of a mushroom. But there came Eren Yarnball, a heroic kitty with black fur and sharp green eyes. With his ball of yarn, he swung up to the Colossal Kitten and chopped the neck with his claws of steel.

“Wah hah haaaa!” Zach cried over the hospital bed. “Grandma! Why did you swallow all those uncooked animals?! Your colon needs liquidated garbage!”

Zach’s grandma was Jar Jar Blinks in a pink gown and grey wig. “Zachy-poo… Don’t listen to what them kids say. Eatin’ living animals is a no-no. Especially de very big ones. I don’t even know why I ate the cow to catch the dog. Since when do cows catch dogs? We shoulda sent a rabbit.”

“Grandma, please live! I promise to buy you a fresh, juicy rabbit to catch that dog! Grandma!”

Nefarious stood behind and watched this weirdly. “Well, this didn’t go like I planned. But I wonder how the poor souls at the Shoot-or-Shoot are doing?”

Artie and Harry Gilligan were forced to shoot rapid-moving targets over a table, for the bridge they were on was collapsing board-by-board and would drop them into a pit of lava. “Gulp! It was nice knowing you, Harry!” The twins unfortunately took the plunge, to bathe in the molten lava. They splashed in.

“Mwah hah hah hah!” Nefarious cackled. “They’re about to come up as dead, boney…” But while
he expected skeletons, Artie and Harry reemerged as a MacBook and ham radio. “WHAT AM I DOING WRONG HERE?!”

Ham Harry and Art Book floated wistfully down Melty Metal River, in search of a land they could harvest in order to produce leather shoes. The journey lasted for 3 years and they met many a friendly snowcone.

“A AAAAAGH, STOP IT, STOP IT!” Nefarious fell to all fours, his mechanical head throbbing. “I don’t understand what I’m doing wrong! I adapted my fighting style to match your foolishness! I should have you molded into Jell-O and melting in my stomach incinerator. Why can’t I defeat you?!”

“Because there’s one fatal flaw in your Death Carnival.” Zach declared with seriousness. “The humor in your carnival is too forced and longing to kill people. The trick is to nurture your humor and grow it with fresh organic taste.”

“Zach, I wouldn’t call your humor organic.” Maddy commented. ^^;

“Fine, so I use pesticides to keep those chuckle bugs away. The point is, I devote love and consideration to my humor. But you have NO sense of humor! You hardly have sense to begin with. I kid around knowing that my friends are depending on me!”

“We’re injured from your previous attacks.” The operatives were bruised and bandaged.

It was then Nefarious began to see the light. Literally and figuratively. It was a warm light. The emotional Kingdom Hearts music eased his internal reflection. “He’s…He’s right… No matter what I do… I can never match up to his brand of humor.”

“Don’t feel bad.” Nefarious looked up at Zach. In the light, he looked like a saint. “Everyone is funny in some way. Even the most dull boring business nerd in the universe. It’s just a matter of finding your own type of humor. But I would be happy to help you…” He reached a hand down.

Nefarious stared at it with feels building in his chest. “Oh… Zach…”

The boy smiled. “Join me… my brother.”

“…” Nefarious took his hand.

“Just sign here and I’ll take this Death Carnival off your hands!” Zach tried to force Nefarious’s finger to sign a contract, making a goofy expression while doing so. “Ha ha! Ha ha!”

“DARN IT, BOY, YOU TRICKED ME WITH FEELINGS!” the doctor shouted. “SCREW this, I just want you to DIE!” The robot extracted numerous lasers from his person and bombarded Zach. “Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide! This time, your hide is TOAST!” He kept up the assault until he was certainly positive Zach had been exterminated.

“… …Then it’s time to use my Ultimate Form.”

Nefarious was awestruck when the smoke cleared. The absolute marvel he was staring at. All the way from the edge of the universe, it was Bozobot. A tremendous mechanoid clown with sky-blue, star-covered pants, red and white stripes down its shirt, and a shiny bulky exterior. “Behold, Dr. Nefarious, my true form. If you thought I was a clown before… you’re about see more clown than clowns can be!”

And so, Bozobot leaped high into the sky, tilting so his bottom would smash Nefarious. “When
Bozobot squashes with his butt…” Nefarious braced himself from the smash, “everybody in Kentucky gets sunflowers!”

The people of Kentucky cheered jubilantly, frolicking in the field of flowers. “For every 50 flowers you collect, you get a free steamroller! MAKE YOURSELF A PANCAKE!” Nefarious was squished by a random Kentuckian’s steamroller.

“Grrrr…” Nefarious struggled to push himself up.

“Now Bozobot will spray you with a flower!” The giant clown aimed a red flower on his shirt. “There’s nothing more refreshing than a nice sprinkle of…” A storm of ocarinas shot out and pummeled Nefarious, “videogame instruments!”

“Nyargh-gah-gah-gah-gah-gah-gah-gah-gah!” Nefarious stuttered with each hit.

“And what if Bozo should kick you with his boots?” Zach raised the robot’s long red shoe and swung it to the doctor. “Welcome to the world of Twilight!” When the boot struck, Nefarious was warped to Twilight, sitting beside Bella’s father in his car.

My father always treats me like a child. An emotionless voice in Nefarious’s head spoke. I wanted to prove that I’m not, but… he keeps giving me milk. Nefarious was sitting in a baby seat, wearing a diaper, and Bella’s father was feeding him milk.

“Mmm! This is good milk.”

“THAT’S MY MILKYYYY!” Jar Jar kicked the car to the sky and sent Nefarious and Bella’s father swirling.

“FINE!” Nefarious decided. “Then it’s time to use my own trump card! Say good-bye to the people of Quahog!” He grabbed his remote and set them all to self-destruct, from Adam West, Tom Tucker, the Griffin Family, and Danika York.

“MOM!!” Dillon cried.

“KYAH HAH HAH HAH HA!” Nefarious’s madness grew. “I can’t wait to kill EVERYONE… else?” He looked at Bozo confused.

The clown robot was crying, but it wasn’t tears, they were closed DVD cases with pictures of all the Quahog citizens. “Behold the power of Bozobot’s eyes.” Dillon came up to a DVD case with Danika’s image. He opened it and his mother popped out. “When life ends, like a DVD, just play it again!”

The operatives opened all the cases and revived the non-robotic people of Quahog. “Im… Impossible…” Nefarious’s brain was melting down again. “Bringing back from the dead… Destroying planets… Just what is this?! What is the power of the Seventh Light?”

Bozobot opened its mouth. Zach was standing in the bright light inside. “I’ll tell you… what my power is…”

He channeled energy into Bozobot’s mouth. The light was growing brighter. Nefarious couldn’t imagine the devastating blast it would bring. “The power that I possess is… The power that I possess is… TOILETRY!!” A toilet burst out of him faster than a bullet and struck Nefarious.

The robot flipped across the ground. The top of his egg-shaped dome hit the concrete, and the glass cracked. Soon, there was not a trace of Death Carnival or Bozobot. Just the ruined state Quahog...
was left in. Nefarious lay, twitching with his last amounts of energy. His body sparked. “No more…” He weakly raised an arm. “No more… I… give up…” He rolled on his front. In his failing, static vision, he could see Maddy. “I…I understand now.”

Maddy stared at him. Dr. Nefarious was giving a warm smile. A relieved smile. “I think that… all I really wanted… was to find someone more mad than me. Perhaps I thought… I would find a person like that in you. But it was your brother… it was always your brother.” He sparked. “I can… rest well… knowing there are insane people like you out there. Thanks to you… I can find inner peace. And now… I am free…”

His red eyes faded. The skinny robot husk was dead. A heavenly light shone on him. The spirit of Nefarious’s green alien form rose from the metal, smiling as it ascended to Heaven. “Good-bye… Zach and Maddy. It was an honor… to spy on you. After so many years… I have what I had been searching for.” The spirit was gone into the light. The light faded as his final word echoed. “Sanity…”

Lawrence and the Nefarious Drones gathered around their master. Their heads were bowed. They were sad. Their master was gone. They would never know a one like him. Doctor Arthur Nefarious…

Lawrence turned when Zach approached him. “Lawrence… It’s time.”

“…Yes, it is.” Lawrence nodded. Before their eyes, the robot butler began to transform. His ovalish body expanded, formed six sides with eight corners, all of equal size and distance. Foreign letters appeared on the cube’s black and gray structure. Lawrence became a Poneglyph.

Zach Murphy approached the final Gibberish Cube. He read its text aloud. “Well done, you found the true Cube Thingy. With this, all Seven Lights are united. Your true test will begin soon. That is if those lazy Darknesses would get off their butts. –Bobobo-bo Bo-bobo’.”

The cube glowed and the light entered Zach’s body. He was awakened.

Zach Murphy awakened as the SEVENTH LIGHT! What’s gonna happen now…

Zach bowed his head. Maddy was behind him. “Maddy… I’m… sorry.”

“Zach?”

“I knew… all along… I knew that I was the Seventh Light… For a long time, I knew…”

“…But… how?”

“Four years ago… I was visited by an Amazonian computer… which was controlled by a robot… and that same robot was sent by a French carpet-maker. And he told me everything. …Sniff!” Zach started crying. “I wanted to tell you! But I knew… you would never have believed a story like that! And because of me, you were in danger! Can you imagine how hard it’s been for me… trying to fulfill the destiny a carpet-maker’s robot’s computer has given me?”

Tears welled up in Maddy’s eyes. “You’re right, Zach… I wouldn’t have believed you for a second!” She went up and hugged him. “But I do now! I believe you, Zach!”

“Maddyyyy!” Zach hugged back. The twins cried, and the moment was beautiful and tear-jerking. From afar, Chris, Shade, and the operatives watched.

“This will be… a hell of a story for the history books.” Chris said.
“By the way, Sparky’s a robot.” Zach noted.

“I guessed that. But since his master is gone, we might as well keep him.” Maddy replied.

“Darn it.”

“Ruff, ruff!” Sparky cuddled up with them.

. . . . . . It is time.

Zach’s eyes glowed a bright green—Sheila’s eyes glowed—Fybi’s eyes glowed—the Seven Lights were glowing. Green auras surrounded them. Maddy stepped away from Zach, gaping. Her brother closed his green eyes… and reopened them. They had a surreal, otherworldly glow. “Heroes of this universe.” Zach’s voice was low and mysterious. “The Kids Next Door.” April, Sheila, and Fybi’s voices were in monotone. “I am the author of the Twenty Keys Prophecy.” Jessie Sidney broadcasted to every TV in the world. “I am Calliope.

“The Seven Lights have been awakened.” Kimaya’s voice spoke with them. “The seven lost pieces of my being.” Suki Crystal had never looked more strange. She sounded eerie in a non-cheery voice. “All of them house a power that was mine. The Seventh Light, Zach Murphy, houses my greatest power. A power of imagination that is greater than magic or psychicbending. The Power to Defy Law. I must apologize for deceiving you with the Fake Prophecy, but it was all to prove that… his power is not absolute.

“From beyond the ends, I have watched you through my vessels. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for finding the seven pieces of my being. I do not have long to speak… so in this time, I will tell you the true meaning of this prophecy. The one whom the prophecy was meant to destroy… The one who will destroy the universe… His name is Lord English.” (Play “Chamber of Sages” from Zelda: Ocarina of Time.)

Green beams of light burst from the Seven Lights and covered the entire sky. An illusion of space was projected as two green spirits were seen adrift. “Before there was your universe, before there was law, before there was Arceus… there was us. I and my twin brother, Caliborn.” The figures morphed into shadowed children. “We ate, we fought, and we played much like you do. But there was one thing we shared… our imagination.”

Calliope was happily stacking toy blocks, and then Caliborn came and kicked it down. “It was our dream to create a world of our own design. But we had so little to work from. Nothing but our bodies and the energy of the universe. And so we molded them into one. We took the energy and merged it with our brains, creating single bodies of limitless potential.”

Energy flowed into the two kids’ brains. Before long, they formed into flashing 8-balls, which the two kids held and raised proudly. “But where did this energy come from? It was an outflow of forces that originated from millions of universes beyond our reach. That energy was creativity. We used the scattered fragments of what had been created and made our own worlds.”

Two stars flew around the sky and left galaxies in their wake. “But what of the minds? Were those lost among the creation? No… For we created bodies to house our minds. I created Polokus.” The roundish, long-armed creature with the big purple hat appeared. “And Caliborn created Bill Cipher.” The one-eyed golden triangle appeared. “They kept our knowledge bright.” Polokus was reading to Calliope a book, and Bill was showing Caliborn complex equations on a chalkboard. The brother gripped his head in agony.

“We were happy with the worlds we created. We were proud of them. And we relished in our
power to make them.” The two kids were dancing. “...But then Caliborn went mad.” The rest of the sky darkened, showing only the brother as he trembled. “The power he had developed was consuming him.” The flashing 8-ball expanded on the screen. “He wanted to expand his understanding and his power. But there was no more energy to collect. ...Except...” The screen panned away to show Calliope. With fury in his red eyes, Caliborn charged his sister and grabbed her 8-ball. Calliope struggled, the two fought greater than they ever had. The sky exploded into dust.

The dust cleared, showing only the darkness. The two 8-balls bounced across the emptiness, their clacks echoing. They lay beside each other, flashing away. Eventually, they disappeared. Polokus and Bill floated in the dark before dissolving into dust. “For millions of years, there was emptiness. The worlds we had once built became dust. But slowly, that dust formed into a new singularity.” There was a white light in the darkness. It formed into a beautiful white pony with a gold ring around its waist. “Arceus, the god who would design a new universe, with love, life, and diversity.”

They watched as planets formed within the stars. The denizens were happily interacting, the trolls, the angels, salamanders, Gems, Carapacians. “There was never a world more beautiful. Even before the other gods were born, there was peace and order. ...But the power that had lived before Arceus still existed. Slowly, it was being born again.” The two 8-balls appeared over the projection.

“The power once thought to be lost had risen again. Our quarrel continued, and our power brought chaos to the universe. Arceus was blind to the cause of these anomalies. He believed the fault was his own. So he divided his power, brought life to the other gods. He commanded the inhabitants of that world to design a new one which the gods would then make real. But to ensure that the unseen energy of that world would not destroy the new one, Arceus destroyed it.” The universe exploded in a supernova.

“But it was not so simple, because Caliborn and I continued to live. And our power was steadily seeping into that new universe.” The Great Clock was shown, connected to a stream of energy, which then scattered upon passing the Great Clock. “We knew that our strife would harm this universe as it had with the others. And I did not want this to happen. So I merged myself with my brother and divided our bodies.” The two Shimmers of energy exploded as seven balls of light rained into the universe. One struck a Poneglyph inside a candy room, one inside an ice dungeon, another Poneglyph in some underground, and so on.

“The essence of my power – of my mind – awaited the day they could find the perfect vessels. But I was forced to divide my brother’s power as well.” Thirteen dark balls rained around the space. “They were scattered to the multiverses, to await beings of divine power that would share Caliborn’s desires.” A dark ball hit a Pyrameglyph inside a forest, one atop a mountain, one in a dark swamp, and so on. “And so, the Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses would come together and bring us back. But which one of us, exactly? Our souls still existed, wandering the universe in pieces. Our energies had reformed into the original bodies we created. They were known as the Octogan.” The two 8-balls were shown once again. Bill Cipher and Polokus emerged from them.

“Caliborn’s Octogan was hidden in the Negaverse, discovered by a man who would come to know, and fear its power. The gods took the Octogan from him and hid it under the Tree of Ending.” The sky displayed an upside-down tree, and a door with dozens of chi-blocks. “My Octogan was hidden within a temple in the Termina Dimension. It was discovered by one Acnologia, who used its unparalleled power for his own ends. But as my brother and I were one, both of our energies were present in the Octogan. Acnologia became aware of us, and his descendants would gain strong visions of us, for traces of our power were passed along his DNA.
“For the most part, those energies were hardly visible except within dreams. It was only when Clockwork passed his power unto the newest descendant, Jagar King, that my presence inside him would spark. But this had a side-effect on Jagar’s Negative, Ragaj, whom was descended from the man who found my brother’s Octogan, Acnologia’s Negative. Caliborn’s essence spoke to him, and I spoke to Jagar. We now use their bodies as our primary vessels.

“Both of us still desired to win, so we gathered others to help us with our work. Bill Cipher told the gods about the prophecy, and the gods formed their own iteration, the ideology of Light vs. Darkness. Ragaj sought capable underlings that would become Team Gnik. I acquired the aid of the trolls, and lost denizens of other dimensions. In recent years, my Octogan came into the possession of a band of humans who desired to control the Earth. With it, this group called ‘Illuminati’ saw the end. They wanted to prevent our return and prevent the prophecy from coming to light. But the fragment of essence that belonged to my brother infected the holders of the Octogan. They developed his desire to make a world of their control. And when the Apocalypse comes, the current King will make his desire reality, even if he is unaware of the consequences.

“I’m sure, even now, the Octogan blinds King Andrew to this knowledge. Yet, it is because of him and his ancestry of powerful Conquerors that the Octogan’s power was kept under control, preventing the spread of worse havoc. However, the Octogan must be taken from him. They must return to the possession of our primary vessels, Jagar and Ragaj. On the Day of Apocalypse, they will fight. The winner of the battle will become the dominate force. The winner of the battle will be reborn. If Caliborn is the one restored, he will possess both our powers, and don the title of Lord English. He will destroy everything.”

The sky showed the two Octogan uniting in one tremendous body. This body, Lord English, unleashed a devastating “ROOOOOOOAAAAARRR!” Universes that were labeled Gameverse, Fanverse, Legends, Terminus – all shattered under his divine power. The Original Worlds – Grand Line, Hyrule, Disney, Fiore, Remnant, Mobius, Marvel – they would all crumble and kneel to the power of the supreme being. (End song.)

The illusion vanished in the sky, so the Seven Lights spoke Calliope’s last words. “I know there are still questions I haven’t yet answered, but rest assured, they will come. We must not let Lord English win. Even if the universe is to be destroyed, I must defeat him. Before I go, Kids Next Door, I would like to say… I’m sorry. You all have suffered because of me and my brother’s strife. All I want is to put an end to it. To let you all live happily. Currently, only one of the Thirteen Darknesses has not awakened. But once they are all together, the battle of the universe will come. Please… lend me your support. But do not fear. Keep each other close in your hearts.”

The glow in their eyes vanished. The Seven Lights were back to normal. Everyone was astonished… The world was left in worry and panic. From this day until May 31, there would be no peace or rest. Everybody could feel their happy times drawing to a close.

“I feared this day for a long time…” Jagar King appeared in the field. Everyone faced him. “I feared the inevitable doom that I could not see. I meditated… for hours on end inside Great Clock. Speaking to Calliope. I wanted this prophecy to stop… but if we don’t complete it… there will be no one left to stop him. Lord English… is truly the most powerful being there has ever been. I understand why Clockwork was so afraid. I… am afraid…”

“…We have nothing to fear.” Shade said. Everyone stared at her confused. “If there is anything I learned today… it’s that destiny truly is void.” She smiled. “We will save the universe and prevent Lord English’s return.”

“How optimistic.” Bill Cipher emerged from a burst of sapphire flames. “Look at all of you! Poor,
poor Kids Next Door. So hopeful that everything is gonna turn out all right. The classic fairytale ending!

Anthony stomped a boulder up and chucked it, Bill dodged, Melody slashed water, everyone joined in attack, but the human demon casually evaded them all as he spoke. “How will it feel when everything you worked for comes crumbling down? Knowing you are helpless before powers beyond your own.”

Bill took to the sky. “If I wanted to, I can exterminate this entire planet. I simply enjoy the sight of you skittering around like little bugs on scorching hot concrete. Struggle and fight all you want. Lord English will return, and together, with the Thirteen Darknesses under our service, the multiverse will be the dance floor of the never-ending party! Your only hope is to join us and bow to our power. You may not get to have a throne, but hey, you’ll make decent choreboys. See you in 11 days, Kids Next Door! It’s going to be a beautiful Armageddon! AAAAAH HA HA HAAAAA! MWAAAAH HAH HAH HAH!” Bill exploded and vanished.

Midway Peak

Morgan Uno stood upon the balcony, the wind blowing her coat. The sky looked dimmer after the vision ended. “King Andrew… are you really blind to what you possess?” She looked down, sensing a body of psychic flying up the mountain. “Still… what do these kids have compared to you? It’s time to find out.” She warped before Sunni Chariton could spot her.

And this officially ends the CP10 Saga. When we come back, we will begin the 8th and final arc, the Opening Saga. Unfortunately, that may not be for a while. Not only do I have dozens of work hours coming up, but I’m gonna do more Side Stories, and I also wanna write a shrink fic for RWBY… which downright tells you I’m obsessed with that. :P There’s other stories I wanna write eventually like Fairy Sisters: Sugar Fairies, right now I’m just debating exactly when. Caliborn and Calliope are from Homestuck, like the trolls. See you when we come back for the Opening Saga.
Hello, everyone. With the Opening Saga now commencing, it won’t be long until we face the Leaders of the World Government. But before we do, I think it’s only fitting you know just who the Leaders were before they were kings. In any great series, character development is a must. Even for these guys. This chapter in particular continues from Chapter 29 of Seven Lights. (A fair warning though, this chapter has religious material that some may find sensitive. ;P)

Chapter 1: God’s Messenger

Palutena’s Temple

“Phew!” Palutena brushed the sweat off her forehead after the exciting battle she just endured. “Glad to see Jennifer is as spry as ever. But at least Sector W managed to escape!”

“Um, Lady Palutena?” Pit spoke with an awkward expression. “I think the readers were hoping for an onscreen battle between you and Jennifer.”

“Silly Pit, we need to save the budget for the battles that really matter!” The Goddess of Light grinned. “And that’s only between the main characters. Besides, my first battle with Jennifer was a lot more exciting.”

“But that was 4,000 years ago. My memory’s not that good.”

“In that case, Pit, would you be up for a little story? Not just about Jennifer, but I’ve been doing some research. The World Leaders have quite the histories.”

“Can the Chronicler tell us the story?!” Pit asked excitedly. “He always makes them interesting!”

“You wanna brave the Chronicler’s Element Trials just to hear a prequel story?”

“You made me do that for Crystal’s story!”

“Well, you should have paid attention when it was happening the first time. Now sit back and listen to your goddess! Now then, let’s start with Jennifer Bush. It was over 4,000 years ago…”

4,000 years ago

It was one thousand years after the founding of the First Kids Next Door, the heroes who saved the planet from a race of demons who had ascended from Hell. As generations passed, this army of brave children slowly dwindled in numbers, until they became no more than a legend. However, the Sacred Trees that the gods had planted for them still grew about the Earth, serving as reminders of what the Kids Next Door had done. But it also reminded the world of the dark powers that be.
The world knew that demons lived under the earth, and would rise again if the need suited them.

According to that legend, the Kids Next Door were aided by fairies, and after their victory against the demons, baby gods known as “Firstborn” rewarded the humans with a delicious cake with supernatural powers. But even in this age, people followed numerous religions, and many did not see eye-to-eye. Some were strong in the belief of one God, a God who was pure-hearted and wanted His children to follow the correct path, or He would banish them to Hell. The Catholics believed that these fairies and other so-called gods were what attracted the demons in the first place. They strayed humankind from the right path, ideas of merpeople and fairies dirtied their minds and filled the demons with hunger.

That’s why, if any of these accursed trees were seen, they were to be burned to ashes. These “Sacred Trees” were a call to the demons to feed on the organisms nearby, they had to be extinguished, so that one day those legends can be erased. In one peaceful village within the Oaklands, red embers rose to the clear night sky as a giant tree was in the process of disintegration. Everyone in the village could see it. Even the innocent family who lived on the hill in the forest far away.

“La da da da da.” Jennifer Bush was an adorable girl at five years old. Her brown hair was shiny and her skin was fair. She danced outside in tiny bare feet, her pink dress flowing as she twirled. ♪ Let it burn, let it burn.” ♪ Jenny sang. “God, please punish the heathens.” Her voice would make anyone smile. She was so sweet and pure-hearted, full of love and life. “When I die, may I be rocked to sleep in your loving arms, and may the people who planted those trees be eaten by demons.”

“Jennifer, please come inside.” A teen girl in a white blouse and long blue skirt called. Her brown hair matched her little sister’s. “It’s getting dark. You know the monsters come out at night.”

♫ “I’m not scared, not scared.” ♫ Jenny sang joyfully. “I am God’s daughter, and I will banish the demons with my holy light!” Jenny twirled, and her body began to shine. She was born a lightbender with her pure spirit, but her family and the village accepted it as a blessing from God. They believed Jenny could warm the darkened souls and lead them to the correct path with her light.

“Won’t you please share your light with your family?” Amy asked. “Your heart keeps us all warm.”

“O-kay, o-kay.” Jennifer happily skipped to her home. She hugged Amy’s skirt. “Are you warm now, Big Sister?”

Amy smiled and patted Jenny’s head. “I’m always warm around you, Little Sister.”

Inside, the Bush Family said their prayers and ate dinner by candlelight. The light from Jenny’s chi kept their food warm and pure. Jenny and Amy’s mother was Mary, and their father was Joey. (Well, he prefers Joseph, but “Joey” kept the pattern going.) They were a simple family, but happy nonetheless. “Mommy, Daddy, if the evil tree was attracting demons, how come we never saw any?” Jenny asked.

“Demons don’t always appear before our very eyes, honey.” Mary replied. “Some demons become invisible and prey on our souls from up close. But I don’t think we ever had to worry. Your light has kept them away from us.”

“Do you think the priest will let me speak for him tomorrow?”
“Will you remember what to say?” Joseph asked with a chortle.

“Sure, sure! It goes, uh, in the beginning there was darkness, so God turned on the lights… Wait, but how did He do that? He lit a candle? No wait, let me try again!”

“Ah ha ha ha!” Amy giggled. “Don’t worry, Jenny. Soon, you’ll know all the words by heart.”

“When I grow up, do you think I can be a priest, too?”

“You would be a priestess, honey.” Mary smiled. “And I think you would be a great one.”

“I hope I grow up soon so that I can be!”

“Well, remember, Jenny, big girls get lots of rest. If you go to bed early, you’ll be up to greet the sun tomorrow.”

“Okay, Mommy! But if the sun doesn’t come, I’ll wake up the village myself!” Jenny lit up.

When dinner was finished, they blew out the candles and went to sleep. Jenny had trouble keeping her eyes closed, for her young body still had energy to spare. A red glow had been steadily growing from her window. Jenny thought it was the distant flames from the burning Sacred Tree, but the level of brightness was odd given how far it was. So Jenny stood up on her bed and gazed out the window. The flames glinted off her horrified chocolate eyes.

Demons had risen from Hell and burned every acre in the forest. They were pig-like abominations, roaring and waving torches as they cried, “HAIL MALLADUS!”

“JENNIFER!” Amy ran in and pulled her sister away from the window.

“Sissy, why are there demons?!”

“I don’t know, but we have to get out of here!” They were about to run outside with their parents, only to find their home surrounded by Bulblins.

“LOOK!” a Bulblin that sounded like Seth Green shouted. “We found four more! Let’s glue their mouths together and make fun of them for kissing!”

“You dipsh**,” another Bulblin smacked him, “we’re supposed to be killing everyone in sight! Just burn their house and feed off their despairing souls.”

“That idea’s better than mine!”

“GO AWAY, DEMONS!” Jennifer shouted fearlessly.

“Jenny, don’t!” Mary pulled her back as the family retreated inside. The demons set fire to the small home from all corners. The Bushes held each other close as the flames surrounded them.

“There’s no way out!” Amy exclaimed.

“What do we do, Daddy?” Jenny asked, her adorable eyes tearing.

“We have to pray.”

They folded their hands and spent the last moments of their life praying to God. Young Jenny’s faith was the strongest of all, and her light kept the family warm and vibrant. After the flames burned their flesh, they knew their troubles would end. They would go to Heaven.
Jenny opened her eyes to a beautiful sky of fluffy clouds. She stood and felt her feet on a soft, white ground. The land before her was all clouds. Her face beamed, full of more love and life than she ever had. “I’m in HEEEEAAAVEEEEEEEEEN!” She ran and danced and skipped and pranced, for she was finally in the world of her dreams. The golden sun shone on her vibrant soul as she made cloud angels and made cloudmen. She thought of nothing else and played for countless minutes. Then, a thought occurred to her: “Wait a minute: where are my wings?”

It was then she took sight of a marble temple not far away. Jenny skipped to it and entered. There was a garden flourishing with many delicious fruits, and a woman with long emerald hair and a white gown with too many decorations to describe was picking fruit to put into a basket. She turned to Jenny with a loving smile and eyes that matched her hair. “Well, hello. It’s nice to see you’ve awakened.”

“Are you an angel?” Jenny asked.

“No, just an angel.” The woman turned fully. “I’m Palutena, the goddess who created light. I was the one who blessed you with lightbending.”

“Ha ha ha! No you’re not! God created light, and He gave me the power of light!”

“I don’t mean to trample on your religious faith. Still, that was terrible what those demons did to your family. When the four of you landed in the Underworld, all they wanted to do was eat you, ignoring any judgment laws. Your parents and your sister were attacked and infected with Dark Chi by the time I sent my Centurions. Thankfully, I was able to rescue you and have the Grim Reaper uplift you to the Spirit World. At the moment, we’re working to heal your family.”

“But why did the demons hurt us? We burned the evil tree.”

“That was a Sacred Tree. The Sacred Trees were planted around the Earth to keep Demon King Malladus sealed within the core. Because the mortals burned those trees, Malladus was able to escape. It was the courageous spirits of the Kids Next Door that gave the trees their power. Our only hope is if a new Kids Next Door arrives.”

“But why doesn’t God beat the Devil?”

“Jenny, this is a little difficult to explain…” Palutena said awkwardly. “You see… we’re kind of part of a multiverse system. Meaning other universes that intersect with ours. And this universe is primarily run by… well, a different branch of gods than the one you’re thinking of. And while the influence of the Catholic God and the other religions is still heavy in this world, I’m afraid that His power… well… It lies somewhere else.”

“I… I don’t get it…”

“Sigh, I really don’t want to hurt your faith. But, the truth is, there are multiple gods out there, and not all of them can cooperate in the same universe. A while ago, the Greek gods created fearsome and destructive Titans, so we had to… send them away. But I can assure you the God you know and love still exists.” Palutena smiled. “However, I can’t take you to Him.”

“…” Jenny looked down and frowned. Palutena felt her sorrow and approached her. The goddess tilted Jenny’s head up and said, “Until your family gets better, I promise to make your stay in the Spirit World meaningful. We’re normally not allowed to do this, but I’ve given back the lightbending that you lost. You can be as sunny as you were before!”
“Um… Thank you. But where should I go first?”

“Well, do you like to read, Jenny?”

“Sure!”

“I know a library that’s chock full of books about history, geography, fairytales, you name it. If you need a good way to pass the time, I can show you. But I should warn you, the librarian is… a tad scary.”

“What do you mean?”

**Spirit Library**

Palutena brought Jennifer to a tremendous stone temple whose interior possessed endless floors of endless books. “Hello. I am Wan Shi Tong.” The librarian was a giant black owl with a white face. “He Who Knows 10,000 Things and the most intelligent among spirits. Second to the Chronicler and his smartass apprentice, Kaepora, who happens to be my cousin. Regardless.”

“Hello, Wan.” Palutena greeted. “This young lady here is Jennifer. She’s new to the Spirit World and we were wondering if she could spend a little time in your library. It is eternity, after all.” ^^;

“Of course I will allow her. She looks like a bright young child, eager to learn. And just because someone is dead, doesn’t mean they can’t still gain knowledge.”

“Wonderful! Jennifer, would you like me to help you find something?”

“No, Miss Palutena. I can manage.”

“Hm hm, you sound like a smarty already! In that case, I’ll be trying to manage the demon situation. I’ll check up on you in an hour.” The goddess left the temple.

For countless hours, all Jennifer did was read. On her request, Wan Shi Tong took her to a section with books on Palutena’s branch of gods. She read how those gods gave mortals the power of elements. She detested almost every page that defied her religion, every page that could stray people from the righteous path. Eventually, she found an article about the Challenge Agreement: An element bender can challenge the god of an element to a duel. If the bender wins, the god must grant them a portion of their God Chi. If the bender loses, they must give up their bending.

“Palutena?” Jennifer asked the goddess after returning to the temple. “Will you teach me lightbending?”

“Why certainly, Jennifer.” Palutena smiled. “With me as your teacher, you’ll be a pro in no time.”

For five years, Palutena spent her free time teaching Jennifer lightbending. They meditated under clear daylight, Jennifer learned a variety of moves like Flash or Refract. When Palutena wasn’t around, Jennifer trained herself. The five-year-old spirit became skilled enough to tell Palutena, at long last:

“I challenge you to a duel!”

“Oh?” Palutena was caught off guard.

“According to the Challenge Agreement, you have to give me your God Chi if I win. Isn’t that right?”
“Jennifer… this is really out of the blue. How long have you been planning this?”

“A long time. You’re not afraid to fight me, are you?”

“I’m not, but… do you really want to risk losing your bending?”

“I’m not gonna lose. In fact, I have other wagers, too. If I win, you bring me to life as a grown-up, AND you give me one of your temples on Earth. Deal?”

Palutena hesitated. This girl was brimming with confidence, and the fact she had been planning this made Palutena suspicious. Regardless, she couldn’t turn down the challenge. It was the law. “Very well, I accept your challenge and your conditions. In fact, I know the perfect place to host our duel.” Palutena raised her staff and warped them in a flash of light.

Next second, they were at the top of an extremely high mountain, the sun shining directly overhead. Temples and statues of Palutena covered the mountaintop. “This is the Sun Pillar, the tallest mountain on Earth.” Palutena explained. “My home away from home. If you defeat me, this entire mountain will be yours. Does it sound like a fair deal?”

“It does.” Jenny smirked.

“Now, since I am a god and can therefore never get tired, your objective will be to both: knock the staff out of my hand, and knock me off my feet. When you’ve done both things at the same time, you will have won the battle. I hope you’re prepared, because I won’t hold back. This battle will utilize both of our strengths. And it begins… NOW!” (Play “Boss Theme 2” from Kid Icarus: Uprising!)

*Hidden boss: Palutena*

Palutena swung her staff and slid a giant light column across the ground, but Jenny dodged right, quickly blocking with Light Fists when the goddess bat her staff. Jenny kicked at Palutena’s shin before rolling behind her, but when Palutena whipped around for a counter, Jenny had zipped behind with Light Feet and blasted Palutena with a Solar Beam. The goddess was down on her front, seeing Jenny coming at her and whipping her staff behind to send a Light Slice. Jenny jumped above to stomp down at her face, but Palutena zipped off with lightspeed and spawned a wide light spire around herself.

Jenny lit her feet with light and ran from the pursuing spire. She made a wide gap between herself and Palutena, but the goddess channeled her power to make giant spires around the mountaintop. They moved around in attempt to burn Jenny, but the child kept swiftly evading. Jenny was able to find Palutena’s spire and had built enough momentum to dive straight through it, tackling the goddess and biting her arm. Palutena held her staff up to shoot light at the child, but Jenny quickly leapt to grab it. She held on and kicked Palutena in the face before successfully pulling it away.

Jenny smirked, now the holder of the staff. Palutena returned the look and lit her hands with light, waving them around the air before shooting giant Light Palms at her opponent. Jenny swung the staff like a bat to disperse them, a difficult maneuver given the child’s size compared to it. Eventually, a Light Palm was able to push her back, but Jenny escaped before it could smash her into a wall. Palutena formed hexagonal shields from which her Reflections emerged, and Jenny shot them with the staff when they flew at her. Palutena suddenly zipped behind and took the staff back, knocking the child away.
Palutena manipulated the light that bounced off their figures, so the area was flashing with neon colors. The action made Jennifer confused, so she was forced to close her eyes and sense Palutena’s movements by her energy. Jenny evaded the goddess’s light attacks, turning her own fists and feet into light as she ran circles around Palutena. The goddess tried to follow her movements and brace for a surprise attack, but then Jennifer stopped a few feet in front and FLASHED! Palutena was a tad startled, then she was kicked in the back of the head and knocked down, but the goddess threw a light spire up to knock Jennifer airborne.

Palutena made Light Spheres surround the midair Jenny from all directions, but when they closed in, Jenny pulsed her own power and bounced them away. She landed, and Palutena made Solar Beams shoot from every direction, Jenny flipped and dodged with a smile on her happy face, grabbing two beams in her hands. She threw one that Palutena blocked, but the other she had fly around her and hit from behind. With lightspeed, Jenny zipped through Palutena’s legs and knocked her down, then Jenny leapt on her back and tried to tug the staff away. Palutena’s grip was firm, and the goddess was able to blow her off with a FLASH from her staff.

(“How long does this fight go on, Palutena?” Pit asked.)

(“About 10 hours. I’m surprised I remember every detail.”)

(“Can’t we skip to the end?” Pit moaned.)

(“Oh, fine.”)

Jenny’s hands and feet were shining brighter as she zipped around and threw a hit every second, and Palutena was quick to block with her staff. Jenny zipped ten feet away and shot back with a round of punches that Palutena blocked with a Mirror Shield, but the child leapt over and stomped the goddess’s face. “You’ve become more ferocious since the start of this battle.” Palutena noticed. “Your energy seems to be increasing instead of decreasing.”

“I have the power of Faith!” Jenny threw Light Spheres around Palutena, who could only block a few with her staff. “The more I believe in God, the more power I have!”

“That much is true.” Palutena smiled proudly. “Lightbending is strengthened by belief in what you hold dear. And your faith is not just your own, but your family’s. It’s that kind of faith that makes mortals stronger than gods.”

“Oh, on the contrary.” Jenny folded her hands as her body shone with white light. “O Father, who art in Heaven, if I am victorious, I will use my power to right the wrongs of this world. O God, I beg of you, give me the strength to vanquish evil.”

A great ray of light erupted from Jenny’s body. Palutena felt her growing power and formed a barrier around herself. Jenny zipped up, but instead of attack like Palutena expected, Jenny sang a high and lovely note. “Ooooooooooooooo...” Her love and faith was poured into her vocals, and a piece of the barrier scattered into dust.

She’s lightbending with the sound of her own voice?! Palutena gaped. Her faith is really strong! I guess I didn’t trample on her religion after all.

Jenny seized the chance to zip inside, behind Palutena, and kick the back of her leg. Palutena stumbled back but kept balance—Jenny grabbed the staff and smashed down the barrier. In Palutena’s attempt to zip up and take it back, Jenny erupted a light spire that surprised her, then she whacked the goddess in the face with her staff and knocked her down. (End song.)
Jenny aimed the ball of the staff at Palutena when the goddess looked up. She smiled. “You actually defeated me. A deal’s a deal, Jennifer. I’m proud to call you my student.”

Jenny grinned, showing her adorable pearly teeth, but it was a fake smile. Palutena took the staff back and raised it, flashing a ray of light into being as a lifeless body descended from it. It had shiny brown hair in curls and a pink dress like Jenny’s. “This is a Gigai I had been constructing. It’s what you would’ve looked like at 25 years old. I thought you might want to use it to revisit the Mortal World, but… I guess this will be your vessel from now on. Just jump in and you’ll come back to life.”

Jenny jumped with joy and jumped into the body. She was now a grown-up, 25 but with the soul of a carefree child. “And as promised, I not only give you ownership of Sun Pillar, I give you a piece of my God Chi.” Palutena pulled a ball of light out of her heart and passed it to Jenny’s body. “You now possess my sunbending, which also holds my power of Resurrection. It’s a power that can heal injuries or restore life. You have a kind soul, Jenny. I have faith that you won’t misuse it.”

“I most certainly won’t! Now that it is in the right hands.” Without warning, Jenny shot a Solar Beam and blew Palutena back.

“Ahh!” The goddess landed on her feet. “Jennifer, the battle is over!”

“It’s far from over, Palutena.” Jennifer said with a conniving smirk. “You are not an angel, nor are you a goddess. You’re a demon that stole God’s precious light and claimed it as your own. You and all these other false gods continue to darken humanity’s mind. But I know that my light is from God’s love. I know that He wanted me to take His light back from you and lead humanity on the right path. I will be God in physical form and carry out His will. I will destroy all the demons that plague our world and bring light to all the misguided souls who follow you fake gods! But if I cannot… I will have to destroy them, too. ♪ Destroy, destroy, destroy…” ♪ She started dancing and singing.

“Oh! Also, I am renaming this mountain.” Jenny decided. “In the name of my mother, Mary, and my father, Joey, this land will be called Mariejoa. ♪ Marie and Joa! Marie and Joa!” ♪ She twirled.

“That is what you truly believe.” Palutena smiled. “I didn’t sense this ambition inside of you because you truly believe it is the right thing to do. …Jennifer… I won’t go back on my word… but as you carry out your goal, remember the true difference between Light and Darkness. I’ll be watching over you.” The goddess ascended back to Heaven in a ray of light.

♫ “Alive, alive, I am alive, alive.” ♫ Jenny sang. “Oh, but I don’t want to spread the word of God on my own. And I also don’t want to tear down these temples and build churches all alone. O God, thank you for this wonderful gift.” She began to pray. “Thank you for giving me the strength to follow your path. Please, if I may have nothing else, send me others who share the beliefs that I have. Let us watch and protect the world as you do. Please…”

Her faith shone on her body as light and became a beacon for the whole world, and even the worlds beyond to see.

In a wasteland that was miles away from Mariejoa, the beacon shone across the cloudy heavens. But then an odd pink light flashed in the clouds, roaring like thunder as a small but powerful meteor descended unto Earth. It was roughly three inches in size, but its velocity was great enough to dent a crater in the earth. This powerful object was a simple 8-ball, flashing an array of colors and beeping as it rampanty rolled around the crater. An explorer happened by and discovered the object. His curiosity boundless over the strange phenomena, he bent down and picked it up.
“AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!” It felt like touching a million tiny suns at once. The tiny ball’s power was so vast, and holding it showed him things he had never seen or could imagine. A giant fortress in space, a door with twenty locks, a triangular portal and the dimensions inside, and dozens of planets melding together into one.

By the time he decided to throw the ball back on the ground, he was overcome with pain. Yet, he felt the longing desire to hold it again. He would let himself rest and keep picking it up as many times as it would take.

Starting this chapter took a bit of research on Christianity’s history… so the religion probably dates back way earlier than it should in this universe. :P This story will be six chapters long, one for each World Leader. I don’t think the chapters are going to be very long if I’m just focusing on the important parts. Remember Wan Shi Tong from Avatar? He was also in Firstborn? Nah, Kaepora’s better. Next time, we’ll look at Daphne Anderson’s past. Later.
Gray Rose

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 of Before They Were Kings, featuring Daphne Anderson's backstory and her history with Monty Uno/Numbuh Zero.

Today’s chapter examines the story of Daphne Anderson. This takes place about 50 years before the Nextgen Series.

Chapter 2: Gray Rose

Twilight Town

Twilight Town, Pennsylvania, was one of the most peaceful villages in the world. Bathed in eternal twilight, this village held strong connection with the Realm of Shadows. It was a poor village with wooden houses and no electricity, where pigs wallowed around in mud. The people who lived here, the Twili, were humans of unusual colors that ranged from white, blue, green, or purple. Everyone was a shadowbender, and as their shadows could freely drift and interact amongst each other, all was serene.

Daphne Anderson was a girl of five years old. She was the most quiet and most serene of all the Twili. She had the appearance of a ghost with white hair, white skin, and a white dress. She sat in the shadow of a barn, picking petals off a rose that was black like her eyes. Every day, she whittled away the hours by whittling away roses. She never knew why she enjoyed it, but it made good meditation.

“DAFFYYYY!” Daphne was tackled by a 7-year-old girl with white hair that had a hint of strawberry blonde and a green dress. She had fair peach skin like a normal human, since their father was human and their mom was Twili. Of course, enough time spent in this town would make a normal human develop Twili traits, especially if they were a shadowbender. “Tackle Hug, graaaaahh!” She rolled on her back and squeezed Daphne’s stomach.

“Ack! Bella, stop it!” Daphne gagged. “You’re choking me!”

“You’re so scarable, silly!” Isabelle dropped her sister. “Why do you always hide back here?”

“Because I like to be in the dark. It’s quiet.”

“Not anymoooordr!" Bella sang. While Daphne’s voice was soft and dull, Bella’s high voice complimented her peppy personality. "Daffy, you gotta spend more time in the sun! Mom says shadowbenders need both light AND dark, that’s why we live in Twilight Town and not Night Town. Besides, look at your poor shadow. She’s so lonely.”

“But you can’t even see her.”

“That’s the problem! If you really like picking roses, I know a garden that’s full of colorful roses! Much prettier than those creepy little black ones. Come on, I’ll show ya!” Bella grabbed Daphne’s hand and joyfully dragged her to the back of town. “Let’s use Shadow Veil and go down this cliff.”
“Bella, Mom says we aren’t allowed to leave the village.”

“Why, Daffy, I do it all the time.”

“Because there might be demons around.”

“Daffy, the Demon Wars have been goin’ on for like a thousand years, and they never came to Twilight Town. That’s ’cause the Twilight Princess is one of the Firstborn, so ya know we’re safe! Come on, Daffy, let’s go.” Bella pulled them both into Shadow Veil and slithered down the short cliff.

Bella pulled her sister along as they ran through the forest barefoot. The two sisters had always been polar opposites. Bella was full of life and excited for adventure while Daphne only wanted to sit in the dark and wait for time to pass. She didn’t think there was a point to doing anything unproductive, but her parents always told her that was a grown-up’s way of thinking, not healthy for a child.

“Look! We found the roses!” Bella exclaimed. They arrived at an area above a cliff where colorful roses grew about the soil. Bella ran to pick some blue ones and red ones and took a whiff. She looked to the right and yelled, “Look, Daffy! It’s our shadows!”

Their shadows stretched across the forest over the edge of the cliff. “Hi, shadows!” Bella waved, and her shadow Akita mirrored her enthusiasm. Meanwhile, Daphne’s shadow, Shaydes was as still as her master. “Daphne, you never talk to your shadow. You never see her when you’re sitting in the dark.”

“So what? I know she’s there. She still talks to me.”

“You should give her a present. Like flowers! Hey Shaydes, what color roses do you want?”

Akita looked at Shaydes for clarification. …I want gray.

“A gray rose?” Bella turned around. “I don’t see any like that. Maybe we could paint the roses gray!”

“That’s ridiculous.” Daphne replied.

“Daffy, just pick out some roses. We’ll put them in a cup and put them in the window, they’ll look pretty!”

Daphne sighed and decided to pick roses alongside her sister. In this dull twilight forest, this rose garden was the most peculiar thing. Bella never sees anyone else come out and tend to them, so she thought it could be the work of the shadows.

“Well, I’m done. How many did you get?” Bella asked.

“Five.” Daphne said as she was picking petals off a yellow one, and Shaydes a violet one.

“Daffy, you weren’t supposed to pick theeeem!”

“I forgot.”

“Oh, that’s okay.” Akita gathered up the scattered rose petals. “We can do something else with them!”

With their roses in hand, the girls began to return to the village. Akita scouted the way ahead, but
they were shocked when the shadow flew back and yelled, *Stop!*

“Akita, what’s wrong?” Bella asked.

*There’re monsters! Master, let’s go another-*

“RAH!” Twin Moblin jumped out of bushes from their right, the girls dropping their roses. They were large and muscular Moblin with hair on their chests. “Say, look, Phineas! Two young morsels that have lost their way!”

“Indeed, Herculi. Perhaps we should educate them on the danger of strangers!”

“Sic ’em, Akita!” Bella commanded, and the Moblin were instantly mauled by the shadow. “Daffy, run!” She grabbed her sister’s arm and raced through the forest, passing by Bulblin that tried to shoot arrows at them. Bella pulled Daphne into a Shadow Veil as they slid up the cliff back to the village. The girls were horrified to see that demons have swarmed the place, putting young Twili into carriages while the adults were out cold.

“AAAH!” The girls were grabbed by Phineas and Herculi.

“These energetic youths will make excellent specimens! Let’s clock them in the head one, Phineas.”

“A bully idea, Herculi.” They dropped the sisters and punched them senseless.

…

“AAAAAAAAHHH…”

Daphne and Isabelle were locked in a dark, cold dungeon void of any life, except for the terrified souls of the young shadowbenders. Moans of agony rang throughout the halls. All they could do was imagine the horrible pain the children were experiencing before it was their turn. It was in this dungeon Daphne felt her first true emotion: fear.

Beside her, Isabelle was petting her shadow in her lap, holding Akita in a comforting fashion. “It’s okay…” Bella spoke with a gentle voice. “I promise we’ll go home… We’ll be alright…”

“How can you say that?” Daphne yelled. “It’s over, this is the end! We’re gonna die!” The other children in the cell began to cry.

“Daphne, stop! You’re making your shadow scared!”

“She should be scared and so should you! Why are you always so happy, don’t you see there’s no way out?! This is why picking roses was a waste of time, we could’ve been running!”

*CREAK!* Light shone into their cell, and the kids froze with fear. A Moblin was looking in from the ceiling hatch, the only way out of their hole. “Guess what? One of the pipsqueaks DIED! Who wants to go next?” His pig nose whiffed inside. “That white one smells good. GRAB HER!” A Wallmaster dropped in and grabbed Daphne tightly.

“AAAAAAAHHH!” The girl swung her feet desperately.

“DAFFY!” Bella held onto her ankles, but the Moblin jabbed his spear at her to knock her off. “Daf-!” They shut the hole to muffle her cries.

Daphne was slapped onto a table and chained by her wrists and feet. “What are you gonna do?!”
“You’re a shadowbender, right?” A Bulblin in a doctor’s uniform and mouth mask took out a syringe of purple liquid. “We’re just giving you a little upgrade. You don’t need to worry.”

“B-B-But I don’t want an upgrade!”

“Well, Shadow Queen Malevolous thinks you do! And she’s dead now, so, honor her dying wish and all. Detach the shadow!”

A Wallmaster pinched Shaydes with a grabber and yanked the shadow from Daphne’s body. “They say shadows are creatures of light and darkness, but King Benedict prefers them to be all darkness. Their masters have yet to survive the procedure, but perhaps you’ll be lucky.” The Bulblin injected Shaydes with the syringe, and the shadow started to squirm and growl.

“Shaydes?” Daphne said worriedly.

“Release her.” the Bulblin ordered. “Let’s see what happens.”

Daphne was unchained, and the demons stepped away as she approached her squirming shadow. “Shaydes, what’s the matter?”

HISSSSS! The shadow bared fangs and red eyes, biting Daphne in the shoulder.

“OW!” Daphne grabbed and forcefully pried her off, trying to hold the shadow down. “Shaydes, please! Please calm down! Please calm- AAAH!” She was bitten in the leg.

“The Dark Chi we injected her with causes shadows to lose their loyalty to their masters,” the doctor said. “All our other subjects were eaten by their own shadows. What a glorious fate to be eaten by a piece of your own being!”

“AAH!” Shaydes bit Daphne again. “Shaydes, please…” The child held her softly and pet the shadow. She cried tears due to the pain and wet the shadow’s head. “Everything’s gonna be okay, I promise. We’re gonna go back home… just like Bella said…”

Hiss... Shaydes wanted to bite her, but she resisted. Her mind was swimming with rage and pain, but in Daphne’s arms, she felt warmth. This girl was her master. They lived in the peaceful Twilight Town, sat under the barn shade and picked rose petals. Daphne was quiet most of the time, but she loved her shadow. And Shaydes loved her.

“Do you want me to talk to you more, Shaydes?” Daphne was still crying and blood leaked from her wounds. “Did I ignore you too much? I’m sorry that I did. When we go back home… I’ll stand in the sunlight. So that I can see you, and we can talk. We’ll go to the forest and look for gray roses. Do you think gray roses are real? If you really want one… we’ll look together.”

Shaydes shared her master’s feelings. Her fear had become rage, but this rage was not her own. Now Daphne’s sadness was conflicting with the poison inside her. Anger…sadness…anger… sadness… Love… These emotions whirled like a maelstrom. They were all too complicated… They clashed inside her soul like a battlefield. The battle was so intense that… both sides fell dead.

Master... The fangs and eyes on Shaydes’ face began to fade. I’m... sorry... Her pitch-black color began to morph into a milky gray. I don’t think we… can talk much, anymore... But I will be with you always... Daphne...

The doctors reentered the room to see the result. “That’s never happened before.” another Bulblin said. “What do you think, Marcus?”
“You idiot, don’t say my real name in front of the mortals!” the lead doctor smacked his head. “It’s Dracon. And it looks like she actually tamed it. Let’s inject her again.”

“YAAAAAH!” A band of kids burst into the room and started blasting the demons. “Your experiments are OVER, you walking bulls!” The leader of these kids, a chubby boy with brown hair, sunglasses, and a wood plate with a ‘0’ over his chest set the room on fire. “Don’t just sit there, let’s go!” The boy grabbed Daphne and ran, her shadow returning to position.

“Who are you?”

“The name’s Monty. But you can call me Numbuh Zero.” He smirked.

“Numbuh Zero, my sister and the others are still trapped.”

“No worries, we got somebody on that. Look, there he is! Hey, Daniel!”

“Hiya, Monty!” A boy with messy black hair and raggedy clothes flashed him a grin. He was standing with Isabelle while the other Twili ran. There was green gas emitting from the dungeon room. “Don’t go in there, it smells worse than a bathroom at the moment.”

“DAFFY!” Bella joyfully ran and embraced her sister in a hug. “I’m so glad you’re okay!”

“Catch up later, we’re in the middle of a revolution!” Monty yelled. “That’s all the prisoners, boys, let’s burn this place to the ground!”

It should’ve been the most momentous thing Daphne ever witnessed: the end of Benedict Uno, Sr. and the end of the demons’ reign. The kids had begun to rebuild the Sacred Trees and rebuild the world. There was light and there was peace.

One month had passed since then. Daphne and Isabelle were in a place called Cleveland, Virginia, far away from their home. They wanted to make plans about going back as soon as the KND finished building working ships. Isabelle began to spend time with Daniel, who was a poor boy that lived in a sewer and didn’t have a family or a last name. He was a poisonbender that kept the demons away with his stench.

Daphne tagged along with them for the most part, but she didn’t engage with their activities much. Shaydes, although the shadow still moved on her own, was dead quiet. With her new gray form, sometimes she was barely noticeable in broad daylight. Today, they were at a playground that was just built. They were told it was built over a mining ground. But while the children were playing carefreely, Daphne chose to hide in the shadow of a tree. Shaydes lay in her lap as she caressed her.

“Daphne!” Bella and Daniel ran over. “Danny says he knows a place where the demons kept a lot of treasure. Maybe we can take some back to Twilight Town! Wanna come?”

“Um… I don’t feel like it.”

Bella frowned. She stomped her feet and said with a grumpy expression, “Why don’t you wanna do anything?! I’m sorry about Shaydes, but you don’t have to be so sappy! I think Shaydes would want you to be happy. –Like that rhyme just now! Sappy, happy. Happy, sappy! Isn’t that funny?!”

“I can’t!” Daphne yelled. “You said it yourself, Bella. The Demon Wars have been happening for a long time. What if they come back? None of this peace and happiness is gonna matter. What happened to Shaydes… is just gonna happen with everyone else. Maybe worse.”

“…Well, I don’t wanna sit around and be upset. I think every day is a chance to be happy. So, I’m
gonna go on an adventure. You can just stay here.” She and Daniel left.

Any other time, Daphne would be picking petals off a rose. However, there were no roses. But when Daphne looked up, she noticed a small pink flower with five petals blooming from the scarred ground. She sent Shaydes over to pick it out. She slowly plucked its petals.

“Oi, who’d-a thought saving the world would make me such a ladies’ man?” Monty Uno asked as he came around the tree. “Oh! I didn’t know this spot was taken.”

“I’ll go if you want me to.”

“No, it’s okay.” Monty sat across from her. “You know, you look familiar. Have I seen you before?”

“I’m Daphne. You saved me from the lab.”

“Oh, right, you’re the gray girl!” Monty lifted up his sunglasses. “Although without the glasses, you’re more white. Pretty weird, though. Did those demons do something to you?”

“I always looked like this. I’m a Twili.”

“Oh, one of those shadow people. Hey, I didn’t mean to call you weird.” Monty blushed, scratching his head awkwardly. “I’m one to talk, really. Benedict was my dad.”

“I heard.”

“Oh, but my mom was the Shadow Queen!” Monty beamed. “That means I’m like part-shadow! Or something.”

“I think you were adopted. You don’t look anything like your parents.”

“Yeah, I wish. But I am a firebender, and I don’t think Malladus would take two mortals under his roof. (I dunno why he got with a mortal in the first place.) So, what were those demons doing before I saved you?”

“They poisoned my shadow, Shaydes. She can’t talk to me, anymore.”

“Sorry to hear that. …So, what’s the deal with that flower? Playing ‘Loves Me Not’?”

“No, I’m just… picking it.” Daphne picked the last three petals quickly. “I don’t know why. What’s the point to doing anything? Bad things are gonna happen.”

“That’s a real ‘adult’ thing to say.” Monty cocked a brow. “We just defeated the demons, the bad times are over! Everyone’s happy. Why aren’t you?”

Daphne didn’t have an answer. She stared at the dull gray shadow in her lap. “…I guess because Shaydes isn’t happy. My parents say shadowbenders feel what their shadows feel. I wish I could make her happy.”

“What does your shadow like?”

“…Before we got caught, she wanted a gray rose. I wonder if she would still like one.”

“A gray rose? I’ve never seen anything like that.”

“I’ve never seen one, either. But black roses grow where I live. Maybe there are gray ones.”
“You wanna go look?”

“Huh?”

“I have a ship.” Monty smirked, standing up. “Let’s go to where you live and find a gray rose. Wanna?” He held a hand down.

Daphne stared at it. She wondered if there was a point in looking or if it even mattered. And yet, she wondered why this boy cared to try. She wanted to examine him. So she took his hand.

“Your ship is a dumpster?” Daphne said after he led her to a dumpster behind his house.

“I didn’t say it was fantastic-looking,” Monty blushed. “It’s clean though, at least. Come in.” They entered through a small door built in the side. The dumpster had controls and terminals inside. He began to activate it. “Where to?”

“Twilight Town, Pennsylvania.”

“Pennsylvania it is. Buckle up!” The dumpster shook as it lifted off the ground and shot off with engines.

**Twilight Town**

Daphne brought Monty to the colorful rose garden. They explored the area around, finding lone roses under trees or in bushes. “Sure are a lot of them.” Monty said. “Does somebody plant them all or something?”

“Bella thinks the shadows grow them.”

“Well, you should ask them if they plant any gray ones, ’cause I’m not seeing any. Found plenty of red ones over here.”

When Daphne was crawling by a tree, she found a bud that was in the process of blooming. When it did, it became a pretty pink rose. Daphne glanced over to Monty. She felt her cheeks redden. “Maybe we should go back. Bella might wonder where I am.”

“Yeah, I guess.” Monty stood up and stretched. “Flower picking is boring. Still, it was nice to get away from all the Supreme Leadery stuff for a few. We should hang out again sometime!” He returned first to the ship.

“Yeah…” Still blushing, Daphne followed him.

Over the next few days, Daphne, Isabelle, and Daniel have been exploring Kids Next Door Moonbase, a treehouse on the moon that had seemingly always been there. The base was dusty and disorganized, so the KND were working to repair it and establish communications with the Earth’s treehouses. “Oi, it’ll take forever to clean this dump.” Daniel said loudly. “You’d think it was made in Medieval days or something.”

“Holy smokes, there’s a treehouse in Antarctica!” Monty exclaimed after looking at some old files in an office. “Cadets come there and train to be operatives. Sounds flipping cold.”

“Monty, did you look at that computer?” his friend, Agatha Roberts pointed at the computer on a desk.

“I did, but it’s totally busted.” Monty sat at the desk and turned the device on, only to be greeted by
a static screen. “I’ve been having some tech nerds fix the machines around here.”

“YO, MONTY!” a voice called from outside. “We brought that console from the arcade!”

“Let me see!” Numbuh Zero ran out to find Hoagie Gilligan and Gabe beside a pink arcade console called *Sugar Rush*. The side of the console had a picture of a black-haired girl with candy in her hair driving a white car.

“Why did you steal something from the arcade?” Daphne asked.

“It started glitching up one day and the owner was gonna shut it down.” Gabe replied. He was an orange-haired boy with buckteeth. “I proposed we save it because of the kids inside.”

“Kids?”

“Videogame kids.” Monty approached the console. “But who says game characters don’t have feelings? Hook it up somewhere and see what pops up.”

The characters on *Sugar Rush* were little pixelly children with colorful, candy designs, and sweet-sounding names. When the scientists finished repairing the computer system, they decided it would be easier to manage with artificial intelligence. So, Gabe downloaded *Sugar Rush*’s characters into the Moonbase computer.

After a bit of tweaking, he was able to get the candy-haired girl’s pixelly image to appear on the office computer. “What happened? Where am I?”

“Whoa, you actually got her to come up!” Monty beamed.

“Who the heck are you guys? A fat kid, a big teeth kid, and that girl looks like a ghost.” She pointed at Daphne.

“We’re the Kids Next Door. We downloaded your game into our computer network. Those blokes at the arcade were gonna shut you down.”

“Shut us down? Well, we have been a little glitchy lately. Hey, my name’s Vanellope! And not to toot my own horn, but I’m the princess of Sugar Rush. So uh, I’m a big deal.” She smirked.

“So you are!” Gabe stepped in front. “Then we have a proposition for you, Princess. As the Kids Next Door infrastructure is in need of drastic repairs, we’re in desperate need of a functional network. In regards to those circumstances, we would like to offer you the opportunity-”

The screen glitched. “My brain’s not programmed to know that many words.”

“You wanna be the boss of our network?” Monty asked. “Make sure everything works, get free digital cookies, have a good time?”

“Sure I will! I mean, as long as my friends can come, too.”

“Sure, bring the whole lot!” Gabe agreed. “In the Kids Next Door, every kid matters!”

“Then you’ve got yourself a princess!”

Later, when Monty was staring at the Earth from the glass wall, Daphne came beside him. “So, did you only save her to help fix the network?” she asked.

“Well, not specifically. It was Gabe’s idea, but I thought we should save them, anyway. Vanellope
seems like a nice girl.”

“But she’s not real.”

“She talked to us, didn’t she? Take a hint from her and get a tan.” Monty smirked, poking Daphne’s arm playfully.

Daphne blushed again. “Do you… Do you like her?”

“Vanellope? She sounds nice, but I’m not in love with her if that’s what you mean.”

“Do you love Agatha?”

“Well, she… is my best friend.” Monty blushed. “Why are you asking?”

“If you’re nice to too many girls, they won’t know which one you like.”

“Heh heh, you make a valid point. But what does it matter, I’m nice to everyone. Kids at least. And just look at where that’s got us.” He opened his arms and gestured at the Earth. “If you looked at the planet when those demons were running around, you would’ve just seen a dark world that lost all its joy long ago. But thanks to us, our planet’s so peaceful that aliens would wanna land here. Hopefully not to conquer it, but actually live on it. And if the Kids Next Door keeps up the work, we can make life better for everyone. You and your sister oughta think about joining. I can find you both a nice pair of shoes. I don’t see how anyone goes that long without any.”

“I don’t know if I’m right for Kids Next Door.”

“I guess you’re younger than our other members. Wonder if I should make an age limit?”

“Monty… how many good things can you do?”

“As many as I want.”

“…Can I watch you do them?”

“I don’t see why not.”

Daniel came to live with Bella and Daphne at Twilight Town, but their parents insisted on him taking a bath in a small tub. Monty flew to Twilight Town at least every day to see if they wanna hang out. Like he promised, he brought green slip-on shoes for Bella and black shoes for Daphne. He also fitted the three with coats when they visited the reopened Arctic Base. New children that dreamed of being Kids Next Door operatives were flown here to hone their skills.

Daphne bared witness to an issue with one of the cadets, Revan Bane Sidious, who dressed like he was from outer space. He wouldn’t say where he was from, but he had telekinetic powers that made the other cadets feel concerned. Monty insisted that he should be allowed to join anyway, reminding the Drill Sergeant of his own firebending, and being friends with a poisonbender and two shadowbenders. Over the next month, Revan would make friends and become part of the Kids Next Door.

They received reports of various shores in the world getting attacked by a band of Candy Pirates called the Linlin Pirates, but with Numbuh Zero’s leadership, they were driven away before they could cause too much damage. It seemed as though Monty was truly making a better world. Daphne was filled with a sense of hope. His actions were making her believe there was meaning in life, and they could do anything if they put their mind to it. But… that was before that day.
On a starry night, Monty Uno stood gazing at a marvel unlike any other: a UFO that looked like a giant cake. On one side of the walkway stood Gabe – Numbuh 74.239, and the Jamaican diplomat, Jeremy – Numbuh Infinity. The person to come down the walkway was a girl in a purple and yellow jester’s shirt and hat, with black puffy pants and black shoes. To compliment her clown-like clothes, half her face was black and half was white.

“Greetings, Number Zero.” She spoke with an echoey voice. “I am Dimentia, Supreme Leader of the Galactic Kids Next Door. My associates, Gabe and Jeremy have been monitoring your actions and your leadership. I have decided that you are worthy to join us.”

“Join you? The Galactic Kids Next Door? How come I’ve never heard of you?”

“We are a secret society, an advanced organization that has existed longer than humankind can imagine. Our goal is to stop the dreaded disease known as adulthood, an epidemic that is continuously destroying the universe. We want you to aid us in our cause. But you must decide now. For certain reasons, we can’t stay for long.”

“The Galactic Kids Next Door…” This was so much to process. “Is… this for real? How many are there?”

“We have hundreds among us. One kid from each planet. It is a huge honor. Please, Monty… will you join as the first human operative?”

“Of course I’ll join! Just let me say good-bye to my friends.” He turned around.

“WHOA whoa whoa!” Dimentia warped in front. “The human race isn’t ready to know about us, yet. This planet is… a tad primitive, no offense. If your friends know, they will tell others, and panic could ensue if they’re aware of the existence of aliens. If you’re going to join us, we must leave now.”

“We took the liberty of packing your things, don’t worry.” Gabe assured. “The bright side is you don’t have any parents that’ll miss you! …No offense.”

“I have a little brother.” Monty reminded. “Besides, I’m the Supreme Leader! I can’t just leave without passing the job to someone else!”

“You entrusted the duties of leadership to Robert McKenzie in case anything were to happen to you.” Infinity said. “I’m positive he will be a great leader in your stead.”

“Number Zero, you brought an era of peace and good tidings to this world.” Dimentia said. “What if you could do the same with other worlds? Wouldn’t that be amazing?”

Monty contemplated. It sounded like the adventure of a lifetime. An opportunity he couldn’t pass up. But to just leave so suddenly without a sign of where he was going… Would the Kids Next Door survive? No, of course they would. Robert would be a capable leader, and they would follow the examples Monty set. Sure they would miss him, but they had nothing to fear. “All right. I’ll go.”

Nobody knew where Monty had gone. Not Daphne, not Agatha, not anyone. The pale-skinned Twili became upset, but it seemed as though things were still peaceful. Bella and Daniel agreed to join the Kids Next Door, and they brought Daphne up to Moonbase sometimes to show her how everyone was fairing. …Things began to fall apart.

The scientists designed a Program to aid in Vanellope’s MCP duties, but the Program became a virus and nearly crashed the system. It was thwarted, but Vanellope was never seen again. Daphne
had not been around when Revan Bane Sidious flew into a rage and called alien robots to attack the Moonbase, but she heard from Bella that it was something having to do with his powers. However, one peaceful day in Twilight Town, decommissioning officers landed and forcefully dragged Bella and Daniel to Moonbase. A law had been established to ban anyone with supernatural powers, so the two were decommissioned. Neither of them remembered Monty or his deeds. And some months later, through unexplained means, no one else remembered Monty.

It was like it had all been a dream. Bella returned to being her usual peppy self, and though she didn’t remember Daniel, their friendship developed all over again. Daphne had not been outside Twilight Town ever since. She wondered if the world was still the same, or if all of Monty’s deeds have been erased. All his valiant efforts were for nothing. A waste.

Daphne returned to the rose garden to pick petals. She found the pink one that had blossomed before. It could have been a different one while the first one wilted, but given how odd this garden was, perhaps it didn’t. Daphne picked the pink rose and started to work on it. “It’s a nice place you live.”

Daphne looked right. A tall brown-haired boy was leaned against a tree. He had a white T-shirt and brown cargo pants. “Name’s Reggie.” He picked up a blue rose. “I just came by to visit. I’m in the Kids Next Door, too.”

“You are?”

“Well, I won’t be for long.” He began to pick petals. “I’m turning 13 soon. Thinking of wiping my data from the Code Module and going AWOL. I saw what happened with your sister and her friend. That really stunk.”

“I never thought there was a point to anything.” Daphne said sadly. “Monty showed me that there was. I was happy. …But it didn’t last.” She finished picking the pink rose.

“He was a good kid, though.”

“Do you remember him?”

“I do. And I know why everyone else forgot him, too. That’s why I came to find you.”

“Why?”

Reggie approached her with half a blue rose. “My dad is a leader of a group, too. They’re trying to change the world. They know a lot of things. They know why bad things happen in the world. The reason demons attack us, the reason Monty’s gone, it’s all because of one thing. …They want to end it. And they want you to join them.”

“But why?”

“They didn’t say. But they know what you’ve been through and they know, deep down, you want to do what Monty tried to do. If you joined them… you could actually do it. Also… you can see a gray rose.”

“A gray rose?” Daphne’s eyes lit up.

Reggie picked the last of the petals and let them drift in the wind, across the garden of roses. “Shadows feel what their masters feel, right? Then these roses represent feelings of shadowbenders. When you see black roses, it means somewhere, someone is going to die. When they die, a gray rose appears… It represents their memory.” He pulled a gray rose from his pocket.
Daphne gasped at the wonder. She looked down, seeing Shaydes reach up and take the rose. Her silent shadow sniffed it. “Will you take me to see the gray roses?”

Reggie reached his hand and smiled warmly. “Of course.”

And from that day, Daphne would continue to pick black roses and decapitate them. Because then, she could watch as a gray rose blooms in her garden.

Trivia: Mocha got a gray rose in the Guertena Gallery. XD While writing this, I noticed Daphne looks too much like Aisling, except the eyes. :P Anyway, we kind of already knew Jennifer and Daphne’s pasts, but from here on, we’re entering some new territory. Next chapter will examine Felius Umbridge.
Open Mind

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 of Before They Were Kings, featuring Felius Umbridge's backstory and her past job as a police officer.

This chapter is the result of me working four days straight at Kroger with little free time. So, sorry if it’s short-handed. :P Today’s chapter features Felius Umbridge, our favorite naggy hag in the World Leaders. This is 60 years before Nextgen, 1972 to be precise.

Chapter 3: Open Mind

London

“Breaking news today! A man posing as some type of magician has robbed everything from a local pawn shop! Authorities have been called to detain the criminal, but it appears they have been... transformed into toads.”

The police cars were abandoned on the street with their lights still blinking, and toads hopped about mindlessly. “Pah! You pitiful Muggles and your powerless beating sticks.” The culprit was a man in black clothing and a long black mustache, wearing a top-hat. A sack was hunched over his shoulder and he wielded a parlor magic wand. “You are no match for... The Trickster!” He flapped his cape.

“What are YOU? Some pitiful excuse for a comic villain?” a girl’s voice shouted.

“Who dares to mock me?!” He turned around, keeping his cape over his mouth as his eyes glared at the speaker.

“I did! Officer Felius Umbridge! –Felius Umbridge announces herself firmly.” She was a 20-year-old woman with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing an officer’s uniform and was slightly chubby. “And I am placing you under arrest, she asserts!”

“What, are you reading from a script? Get out of my way, Child! Or I’ll toadify you as well.”

Felius winced at the made-up word. “Don’t call me a child, you... inane hapless schlemiel!”

A soundwave erupted from her lungs and blew The Trickster backward. “What the devil?!” He jumped back up.

“It’s called wordbending. Or is your feeble pea brain too clouded with magic dust, you sheep con artist?”

Trickster’s wand was blown out of his hand. “You loudmouthed, fat... bitch!”

“Ouch, how dreadfully painful, Felius Umbridge retorts with sarcasm. In actuality, she is REPULSED!” Felius spat another soundwave that knocked Trickster down, dropping his sack.

The next minute, a self-pulled carriage flew down, and Aurors hopped off to bind the thief in
chains. “It’s Azkaban for you, Norbert Crocksman. One of you take this sack back to the pawn shop, don’t forget to wipe the shopkeeper’s memories.”

The Aurors changed the toads back into humans and cast Obliviate to wipe the Muggles’ memories. “Many thanks for your aid in Norbert’s capture, Officer Umbridge.” The lead Auror said to her. “I trust that we can count on your continued silence?”

“Given how much your kind wreaks havoc in our world, there is hardly much silence to keep, Felius emphasizes logically.”

“Yes, well…” The Auror couldn’t argue with that. “Enjoy the rest of your evening.” The others returned to the carriage and flew off to the cloudy sky.

When Felius’s shift was over, she returned to her home at 10 Grimmauld Place, an average row house. When Felius entered, she hung up her uniform and saw her father, Orford in the dining room, sitting with her seven-year-old sister, Dolores, who had mousy brown hair. “Someone spilled Abyss Mud in the second floor corridor, nearly impossible to clean up since it sucks in almost everything.” Orford was telling a story. “The secret is to use a mop that is larger than the puddle, so I cast Engorgio on a mop. However, I didn’t realize that Billius…”

His words faded as Felius went upstairs and found her mother knitting a purple sweater in hers and Orford’s bedroom. Ellen Umbridge (née Cracknell) was an orange-haired woman in a green dress. She looked up and smiled at her eldest daughter. “Welcome home, darling! I’m making you a sweater. It’s getting a wee bit chilly out.”

“That’s the third sweater this week, Mum. And they’re always a few inches too… big. –Felius says with embarrassment.”

“Well, I can’t help that you’re always losing weight! But I guess being the youngest officer in the department will give ya exercise.”

“Indeed.” Felius looked with resent. “I’m starting to question their security. Evil wizards running around our city left and right, it repulses Felius Umbridge. And the officials insist on keeping our city ignorant.”

“Well, be thankful we’re exempt from the rule.” Ellen replied. “You might be considered a Muggle, but at least you have the power to fight them.”

“I consider my wordbending a gift rather than a superhuman ability. And as soon as I make enough money, you and I are leaving those two and finding a new abode to call home.”

“Oh, Felius, you’re a grown woman. You ought to find a place of your own.”

“And leave you here with Father? Mum, he detests the two of us. You know the only reason he chose to marry you was because no witch would have him. He waited years to discover if I had magic, and all I could develop was a strong vocabulary. But no, the only words he wants to hear is whatever poppycock makes magic transpire. –Felius speaks with irritation at the irony.”

“I don’t enjoy it either, darling, but until now, he was the only one paying our bills. Magical Maintenance at the Ministry isn’t an extravagant job, but the wage is decent. Besides, I’m already pregnant with another child. If this one happens to be magic, he’ll want to keep it. I really don’t want you to feel burdened by us, Felius.”

“Mum, I became an officer because I wanted to subdue villains and thwart evil. And there’s no greater cause of evil than power. That’s why I need to stay here and make sure my father’s power
does not consume him, and especially not Dolores. —Felius is confident in her decision.”

“If you’re really sure of yourself, I suppose I can’t argue. Anyhoo, I bought you a little present!” Ellen led Felius to her room.

The officer gasped with delight at the present on her bed. “DONUUUTS!” A small pink treasure chest with various donuts sat open, and Felius was quick to begin consuming them. “Felius enjoys donuts very much! :heart: Donuts are delightful!”

“You enjoy yourself, Darling!” Ellen chuckled.

(“So that’s how she got fat.” Pit commented.)

(“That’s not polite to say, Pit.” Palutena scolded.)

**The next morning…**

“Dolores, give back my baton!” Felius chased her sister around the house in her uniform. “Felius grows impatient!”

“Look at me, I’m a Muggle Auror!” Dolores swung the club around. “This is my magicless wand! Expelliarmus? Not today!”

“Premature primate!” Felius shot a string of words that tripped Dolores, allowing her to seize the club.

“I’m telling Dad you worded me!” Dolores yelled after getting up.

“My words alone prove more efficient than any matter your Aurors can accomplish. Perhaps they will be a good fit for you.”

“For your information, I don’t want to be an Auror. I’m working at the Ministry. And I’m getting a better job than Dad’s.”

“Then you better hit the books and develop your vocabulary. Meanwhile, I’ll be protecting the streets from rogues. —Felius Umbridge will return in the afternoon.” The officer marched out.

“At least I don’t say my name all the time like an eggo… an eager…”

“Egotist!” Felius finished. Dolores grumbled.

It was seven in the morning, but the cloudy sky made it still seem like nighttime. Felius got in her car and made the drive downtown to the police station. She was still stuffed with last night’s donuts, so she didn’t need breakfast. Still, with all that sugar in her body, it was a surprise she passed out on her bed afterward. Dolores often complained about her loud snoring, which their father would like to fix with a Silencio spell, if it weren’t for the Ministry’s magic sensors.

When Felius was driving down a backstreet (she prefers the peace and quiet), she stopped to notice a figure in a black coat sneak into an alley. She quickly accused him of being a wizard and parked her car to follow him. She crouched to hide behind a garbage can as the man knocked on a door. It opened, but the man inside didn’t come out. “Mr. Vargas, I was informed by my spy about the capture of a criminal who attempted to rob a pawn shop. That couldn’t have been your doing, could it?”

“I promised The Trickster money if he burgled the shop.” Mr. Vargas said with an Italian accent.
“A Muggle like yourself couldn’t have much to offer a wizard, even a petty thief like Norbert. You weren’t, perhaps, offering my money?”

“Mr. Malfoy, you have millions! All you wanted in the pawn shop was the Vanishing Cabinet, correct? Why do you care who I ask to help steal it?”

“Because I asked for your help. The Dark Lord is searching for every known Vanishing Cabinet in the country because he is certain his opposers are using them for secret hideaways. He suspects that traitorous wizards have the gall to hide Muggles in those cabinets. They wouldn’t expect an ordinary Muggle to betray them. Mr. Vargas, if you really want to borrow my Floo Network so you can return to your simple little home in Italy, you had better get ahold of that Vanishing Cabinet. One way or another.”

“I understand… I will try to have it tonight.”

“See that you do.” The door closed. Mr. Vargas sighed and turned to head back.

“FREEZE, illicit!” Felius jumped out.

“EAAAH!” The man fell on his back. His hood came off, revealing his messy black hair and mustache, and a developing beard.

“So, you’re the one who put Trickster up to it, are you? Felius Umbridge has it all on tape!” She held up a tape-recorder. “You are under arrest!” She pulled him off the ground and began to handcuff him.

“You do not understand! I came from Italy on a business trip one week ago, but my plane was attacked by flying men in masks! They took me prisoner, and that man, Abraxas told me that if I wanted to return home, I had to steal something from the pawn shop! Please, I’m not a criminal, I just want to see my family again!”

“Tell it to the chief, Felius states while aggressively pushing you to her car!”

“Why do you say it like that? Are you still recording?”

**London Police Department**

Mr. Vargas was locked in his own cell while Chief Boggum replayed the interaction between him and Malfoy on the tape-recorder. The chief was a chubby man with a long head and gray uniform. “Hrrrm… Well, if this man took part in a crime, we have the evidence to convict him. Still, it would appear the Aurors have another case on their hands.”

“Sir, do you realize what this means? The wizards are involving our people with their ploys! I think we should attempt to alert the media. –Felius Umbridge highly recommends it.”

“Slow down, Officer Umbridge. You and I might be important enough to keep our memories, but we’re sworn to keep the Magic World a secret. It’s difficult enough to keep the other officers from knowing with all these robberies.”

“How do they expect us to keep their world secret when THEY don’t seem concerned about being publicized?! Aside from robberies, there have been reports of murders under mysterious circumstances, bodies that have no external or internal injuries! The WIZARDS are responsible and the public needs to know!”

“HMPP!” Boggum slapped Felius’s mouth shut, glancing at the other cells and the guards. “Felius,
if you keep up with these delusions, we’ll have to take you to an institution!” He then spoke more quietly, “We cannot risk the city falling into a panic with the knowledge of wizards or witches. People have a hard time as it is accepting element benders like yourself. Now, tonight, when everyone else has gone, I will summon Aurors to wipe Mr. Vargas’s memories of these experiences and have him safely delivered home to Italy. With magic, there’s probably no need for flight expenses, hur hrm. I will just take this recorder with me. Now, do return to your patrol.” The chief walked away.

Felius sighed with aggravation. She spared one look to Vargas before leaving. She complied with the chief’s request and patrolled town, catching two big-nosed men that were illegally trafficking Dalmatians. All Felius really wanted was an excuse to return to the office. After she had the men imprisoned, she persuaded the guards to bring Vargas to an interrogation room. As luck would have it, Chief Boggum was on a break and was absent from the office.

Mr. Vargas was sat at a table in a small room, opposite from Felius. “Alright, Mr. Vargas, let’s get straight to the point. Tell Felius Umbridge about this Vanishing Cabinet and this Malfoy person.”

“Do you plan to help, Officer Felius?”

“While I don’t approve of your criminal activity, it’s clear you were being threatened by a wizard. And I am not particularly fond of wizards.”

“All I can assume is Malfoy is working for someone else, and they suspect their enemies are hiding in these Vanishing Cabinets. I really don’t know why he chose me instead of someone else, but I can’t say ‘no’, I don’t want to die here. My wife and child must have heard about the plane’s crash, I have to let them know I’m okay.”

“You have a child?”

“A son. His name’s Mathias. Three years old. We also have a cat. Do you like cats, Felius? I just assume, by your name…”

At this, Felius imagined her name above her head, an “=” sign next to it, ending at a cat that patted her on the head. “Meow meow!”

“No I don’t!” She shook her head. “My sister does, however.”

“Anyway, Mr. Malfoy promised to let me use a Floo Network if I brought him the cabinet. He said that it’s a magic fireplace.”

“Yes, I know. My father is a wizard, and he works at the Ministry of Magic.”

Mr. Vargas processed this for a moment. “So… it is true. There really are wizards and magic.”

“Unfortunately, yes. Mr. Vargas, what did this Vanishing Cabinet look like?”

“It’s large enough to fit a person inside. It’s black and kind of triangular. When I checked last time, it was in the back of the shop. Much too large for me to attempt to steal, that’s why I had to hire a criminal who claimed to be a wizard.”

Felius thought to herself for a moment before standing up. “I think I’m going to pay the shop a visit.”

Pawn Shop
“So, you’re the nice young officer that saved my shop.” The owner of the shop was a slim man with brown hair and a jacket with a green and yellow square pattern. “My mind was so hazy that day that I can barely remember a thing. Well, you have my sincere thanks.”

“Felius Umbridge is pleased.” She smiled. “However, when we interrogated the culprit, it seems his primary target was a large cabinet you have in the back.”

“That dusty old thing? Yeah, I found that cabinet a while ago. Moved it in back because it took too much room out here.”

“Do you mind if I see it?”

“Of course.” The man led Felius to a back room that had a large black cabinet, whose doors were diagonally intersecting like a triangle. “I’ve heard of master shadow thieves that could clean a jewel shop, but I don’t see how anyone can pick up a cabinet that big and just sprint down the street.”

Felius approached and nervously knocked the cabinet with her knuckle. She decided to open the cabinet and find nothing but dust on its empty shelves. “It does look big enough to climb in…” Felius climbed onto the middle shelf.

“Hey, if you break any merchandise, you buy, Officer! Do you have 50 pounds?”

“I hope that refers to the currency. I will just be a minute.” Felius closed the cabinet from inside. She sat uncomfortably for a minute, half-expecting some sort of magic to happen. If this was just a normal cabinet, Felius would look like a fool climbing into a cabinet like a child. There was hardly any room for more than one person to fit, unless the wizards shrink their selves. “Sigh, what am I doing?” Felius opened the cabinet and climbed out—

She was inside a filthier room with junk lain about. The dim gray light of the cloudy sky shone in from the glass roof. Felius peeked out the window of the locked door. There were two guards outside that looked like giant vulture-crows. A shadow fell over Felius from the window roof. She looked up, horrified at the sight of a hooded black phantom. Her gaze was fixed on it as she stepped sideways—tripping on a silver cup and falling into other junk.

“CAW, CAW!” The guards heard this and were trying to open the door. Felius scrambled to climb back in the Vanishing Cabinet and shut it.

Felius heard them moving around outside, but slowly that sound began to fade. She kept still and silent, heart racing. “Officer, how long you gonna be in there?”

Felius creaked the door open. She was staring at the pawn shop owner, having returned to the store. “Did this cabinet… go anywhere?”

“Unless you mean Imagination Land, this cabinet didn’t leave my eyes, Miss.”

“Sir, I think I would like to buy this.”

**Malfoy Manor**

“Abrahas, why do you waste time entrusting a simple job to a Muggle?” A pale man in a dark robe asked with a hissing voice. “A defenseless shop with a defenseless cabinet… we do not need to go to such lengths to expose its inhabitants.”

“This is not only a matter of securing prisoners, My Lord.” Abraxas replied. “This is an
opportunity to expand our rule. The Italian Ministry of Magic has sealed its Floo Network from international networks, and Aurors watch the skies constantly. The only areas left defenseless are the hearths of simple abodes. We will allow Mr. Vargas to use our Floo Network to return to his home. We will memorize the destination and send Death Eaters to infiltrate Italy from his house.”

“Hmm… Perhaps this is an opportunity to show another country our power.” The Dark Lord rubbed his Phoenix Feather wand. “Very well… but do not spend too long on this plan.” He turned to head the opposite direction. “Do you see, my student?” He spoke to a boy with an arrow tattoo on his bald head. “Amassing followers is easy… Searching for good, useful followers who are devoted… therein lies the challenge. If you rise to power one day… I hope that you will choose worthy followers.”

“I will remember to, Master.” The boy bowed.

“Good… Now, let us depart.” He opened his arms for a hug.

“Do we have to hug, Master?” The boy blushed.

“I would not want the Negatar to be splinched.” So with that, they warped into thin air.

“Well then… I had best see to our Muggle’s progress.” Abraxas said before heading to the fireplace.

That night…

There was a knock at the alley door. Abraxas answered it to find Mr. Vargas in front of the Vanishing Cabinet. “Ahh, Mr. Vargas… you have succeeded.”

“Yes, Sir, I did… There are people hiding inside.” Vargas whispered. “It connects to a basement shelter somewhere. I told them my family had been attacked, and they now believe I am going to bring food.”

“So, it has a sister cabinet? Well, won’t they be upset. Perhaps you should call and say food has arrived.”

“Will you open the Floo for me first?”

“Very well, very well…” Abraxas grabbed powder from a pot and slapped in Vargas’s hand. “Go to that fireplace. Say the name of the location you want to go and throw the powder inside. Open a network, then open this cabinet.”

Mr. Vargas calmly approached the dusty fireplace. He raised the powder over it, and Abraxas anticipated him to speak. …Mr. Vargas turned and said, “The food has arrived.”

A band of Aurors burst out of the cabinet and struck Abraxas with Stun Spells. “Abraxas Malfoy, what’s the meaning of this?!” Orford Umbridge asked, climbing out as well. “Hiring a Muggle to bring you a Vanishing Cabinet… are you really in league with the Dark Lord?”

“It’s convenient that this cabinet connects to Azkaban, because you’re being taken in for questioning!” an Auror stated.

“No, you misunderstand! I was only trying to protect the cabinet from- wait, Azkaban? I thought you told me it was-” He tried to look up at Vargas, but he was already gone through the emerald fireplace. Neither of them heard what location he warped to.
“Well, Felius, I can see you weren’t lying.” Orford said as his daughter climbed out of the cabinet. “Mr. Malfoy is a highly regarded man in the Ministry, so these actions raise suspicion. We still have no proof he is working for the Dark Lord.”

“He mentions the Dark Lord on my tape-recorder! Let’s go back to the station and ask the chief for it.”

**Police Department**

“So, you gentlemen succeeded in detaining Mr. Malfoy, eh?” Chief Boggum recapped their explanation. “Well, Officer Umbridge, I must say I was skeptical in this plan at first, but it seems it was wise to trust you.”

“Felius Umbridge thanks you for your trust.” The woman smiled.

“So, where has Mr. Vargas gone?”

“Back to Italy, I conjecture. He used the Floo in Malfoy’s hideout.”

“Chief, my daughter says you have a tape-recorder with important evidence.” Orford said. “May we see it?” He cocked a brow.

“Yes… of course you may. Follow me.” The chief led Orford, Felius, and the four Aurors through the prison wing and toward a back room. “Abraxas is secured in Azkaban, I take it?”

“Yes, but a sentence won’t be established unless we have something to present to the Ministry.” an Auror responded. “Malfoy’s position in the Ministry still stands.”

“Well, we can only hope that matter is taken care of soon.” Boggum said as he led them into an empty room. “It’s fortunate that Mr. Vargas could return home. He should be wary on any future business travels.”

“…” Felius realized something: “I don’t remember telling you he was on a business trip.”

“Oh… didn’t you?”

“N-No…” Felius’s gaze met with Boggum’s. His demeanor was calm against her shock-ridden expression. “…Chief, why did we come back here?”

Chief Boggum grabbed his baton as it morphed into a wand. “Stupefy!” He stunned the four Aurors and Orford senseless, then used it to seal the door.

“Chief!” Felius gaped. “What in the… I can’t even think of a word!”

“I suppose you were bound to find out eventually, Felius.” Boggum said. “I work for Abraxas Malfoy. He sent me to pose as the Muggle police chief in case we needed a few extra slaves. He also wanted me to watch the criminal activity of stray wizards. I’ve got their pictures, written their names, in case they would like the honor to one day serve us. And now that we have a Vanishing Cabinet that connects to Azkaban, we can schedule a plan to free our captured Death Eaters. First, I need to reconfigure these gentlemen’s memories, destroy this evidence,” He raised the tape-recorder and crushed it in his hand, “keep Abraxas from staying in prison… That leaves the matter of what to do with you.”

“And what do you plan to do, Felius questions?”
“Felius, you’re a very competent officer. You may not have magic, but your wordbending is a very useful power. I wonder if such a power could… increase the effectiveness of our spells?”

“I have no intention of aiding your insidious plans, you cumbersome grime!” She blasted a soundwave that Boggum blocked with a magic shield.

“That’s a real shame, Felius. Oh well… In time, perhaps I can mold your mind to my favor. But for now… OBLIVIATE!” His wand flashed.

…

8888888888

A hundred worlds were melding together into one. Among them was a maelstrom of magic energy. Felius saw a planet of gems collapsing as its energy was sapped into that world. The power kept growing and growing and growing, until the combined world exploded. Then, six beings in hoods collected the scattered pieces and repaired them to perfect order.

“Felius?”

She opened her eyes to see her mother. Felius looked around and saw she was in her room.

“Mum?”

“Your father said you fell asleep in your car, so he drove you home. He cast a spell, of course. You must’ve had one restless day. It’s morning now.”

“Morning…” Felius sat up, holding her head. “I don’t remember a thing from yesterday. Perhaps I will enquire the chee…” She drawled on that word. “The chi…”

“The… chief?”

“…I should go to work.” Felius got up and headed downstairs.

“Felius, don’t you want breakfast?” Ellen called.

“No thanks, Mum, I’ll buy donuts later!” She hastened to go outside.

“That means I get it!” Dolores exclaimed.

Police Department

“Chief!” Felius jogged inside. “Chief Boggum!”

“Officer Felius!” The chief greeted happily. “I see you’re ready for another day of busting hoodlums. Just don’t exhaust yourself like you did last night.”

“Chief… What did I do yesterday?”

“Well, these two ne’er-do-wells were driving a whole truck of captured Dalmatians all the way to the next city. It was quite the thrilling chase, I heard.”

“Chief, that’s the plot to One Hundred and One Dalmatians. –A sweatdrop rolls down Felius’s face to show her disbelief.”
“Well, perhaps we should hold Disney responsible and arrest them! Hur hrm!” Boggum joked.

“. . . One Hundred and One Dalmatians… is a movie…” Felius mumbled quietly.

“Didn’t it start as a book?” Boggum asked.

“…It was a movie… but it actually happened…”

“Er, I suppose it did. Disney certainly sets bad examples.”

“…It happened, but it was a movie. It happened, but it was a movie! It happened, but it was a movie! It happened, but…”

“F…Felius?” Boggum said with concern.

A hundred worlds merged into one. A boy with an arrow tattoo spoke to a Dark Lord with a bald head, then another Dark Lord in a hood. She saw a brain on a canister, a man leading an army of demons, a god destroying everything, and a complete cluster of scattered worlds.

“SHAM!” Felius blew a soundwave that knocked Boggum against the wall. He tried to grab his wand- “Fickle! Foul! FIENDISH!” The words came with strong velocity and struck the wizard unconscious.

“FREEZE!” Three cops got behind and raised batons. “Officer Umbridge, what is the meaning of this?!”

“Boggum is a wizard! He’s an evil wizard, trying to use you as slaves!”

“What proof do you have?”

“I…” Felius couldn’t determine how she remembered this.

“She needs no proof.”

The cops about-faced. A man that dressed like a knight stood in the doorway. “Not when she has... the truth.” He raised an 8-ball that flashed an array of colors. The cops’ eyes became dull at the sight of the colors, and their minds milky as they dropped their weapons. The man stepped through them and approached Felius.

“You’re a tad late for the Renaissance Fair, Sir… Felius Umbridge says with utter confusion.”

“The Octogan has sensed your presence. Last night… your mind has been opened. You saw the truth... the meaning behind our existence.”

“I…I don’t know what I saw…”

“Please, allow me to explain to you. Allow me to teach you. Allow me to tell you why you feel such hatred toward the wizards. Felius Umbridge… destiny has shone highly upon you. It is a destiny that you and I share. Come with me... and I will help you realize it.” He reached his hand.

“I…I can’t just go with you! I have a family to take care of!”

“I am aware of this. Rest assured, I will happily grant you all the wealth you could desire. I will return you to your home so you may provide for your loved ones as long as you see fit. Take your time to decide, however. I also... have donuts.”
Felius’s eyes watered. “Donuts?”

“Lots… and lots… of donuts.”

“. . . .” She made a great smile. “Sensational.”

**World News**

“*Breaking news today, master thief Donovan Vargas is still at large! Eyewitness reports say he was seen boarding a flight to England. The airplane in question was destroyed by an unknown cause, but as if by magic, the criminal has turned up in France! What is his target, what are his secrets?! Stay tuned for further development!*”

**Dolores Umbridge** is from *Harry Potter*, and Orford and Ellen were her actual parents according to the wiki. Abraxas Malfoy was Lucius Malfoy’s father. And I couldn’t help but design young Felius like the British nightguard from *Secret of the Tomb*. XD Also, if you remember Negatron from *Operation: ANCESTOR*, he was also a wordbender. Well, now that we’ve finished with the female Leaders, we can focus on the male World Leaders. Starting with Henry Churchill! See you next time!
Chapter Summary

Today’s chapter stars Henry Churchill! This takes place 30 years before Nextgen (it’s 2002, yaaaay)!

Chapter 4: Loyalty

Kingston Crossing

Kingston was a peaceful neighborhood – a mobile home park that was set on a hill in Devon, England. Lamp posts lined up along the street, set to activate when night fell. The park was clean, the people were nice, and children freely played outside even after dark. The horizon was seeing its last moments of twilight as a team of kids were on an adventure. Wielding sticks and pillows as swords and shields, the five kids crept around some houses. Fireflies fluttered about, and when one lit up beside a seven-year-old girl with orange hair, blue eyes, and no shoes, she gasped and backed against a fat boy with brown hair.

“Stay calm!” the leader said quietly. He was a 9-year-old boy with brown hair, blue eyes, a blue button-up shirt, and blue jeans with brown boots. A tooth was missing in the front of his mouth, so little whistles blew through when he talked in his soft high voice. “Thunder Dragons react to fear. Keep your wits about you and keep your eyes peeled. We’re close to the place I found the Thousand-Legs.”

Henry was a friend of the neighborhood kids even though he didn’t live in the park. In fact, they all knew Henry was a rich noble from the mansion beyond the hill. When he first came to visit them five months ago, they thought his only intention was to mock them or find some new servants. Instead, he asked them to go on a make-believe adventure to the moon and mine for Moon’s Tears to feed to the thirsty Moonflower buds, which bloomed and lit the night blue. It was all imaginary, sure, but they could picture it perfectly. So since then, they loved going on fun adventures with Henry.

“The Thousand-Legs journeys down from the mountain every night and tramples across the village.” Henry explained as they climbed the makeshift rock wall of the park’s playground. “It wakes up on the final minute of twilight. This is our chance!” They crossed the playground’s bridge. “David, don’t step there.” The fat boy gasped and stopped before stepping on an imaginary cracked board, causing the other three explorers to collide with his overweight backside.

“This is why we need to go first on these things.” A black-haired boy named Rodney commented.

“It’s here! The Thousand-Legs is on that pillar!” Henry pointed at a pole holding up a small roof. There was a tiny centipede.

“That’s all we came up here for?” Rodney asked. “I can crush it with my finger.”
“Don’t get cocky!” Henry raised his stick-sword. “It’s as big as a train and shakes the earth as it scampers! Split up so we can confuse it!”

“Oh, right!” They reignited their imaginations and divided around the cavern. The seven-year-old girl, Elizabeth, made a high leap onto the beast’s face and rapidly kicked her bare feet against its eyes, blinding it. David became round and rolled through a row of legs, making it fall on its side. A blonde, ponytail girl, Evelyn, performed a spin attack with her sword and sliced part of the beast’s belly.

“Boop!” Evelyn flicked the centipede off the pole as it fell on its back. “Crush it, Henry!”

Henry stood on the monster’s head with his sword pointed down. “You shall meet your maker, foul beast!” He would lower the stick and squish the squirming bug.

“Noooo!” A pair of little hands grabbed the centipede and took it away.

“AAAAHH!” Henry jumped and hid behind Rodney, fear clear on his features. As adventurous as Henry was, he had only one great fear. It wasn’t demons, it wasn’t witches, it wasn’t aliens… “It’s her… the Hairstress!”

Henry’s greatest fear was people with strange colored hair. And Crystal Wickens stood out among the neighbor kids with purple hair, and gold eyes that seemed to glow in the night. She was four years old and wore an indigo dress with brown sandals. “I don’t like that name!” she shouted. “Am I some kinda witch??”

“No normal people have normal hair.” Henry was shuddering, much to Rodney’s disbelief. “My parents taught me people only have these hair colors: brown, black, blonde, orange, and grey or white if you’re an old person. No purple, no blue, no green, no pink, but I see people with them! You’re not normal!” Henry had no tragic history regarding a person with colored hair, but he once had a nightmare that a witch with blue hair boiled him alive. He asked his mother, who would comfort him by saying no person has blue hair. (She proceeded to list other colors as well.)

“My brother and my dad have purple hair!” Crystal argued. “Dad said my grandpa had it! What’s so bad about it?”

“The Hairstress is protecting the Thousand-Legs!” David pointed his stick. “She must be its master!”

“I am not! I saw you picking on it like a bunch of meanies. This bug didn’t do anything to you.”

“Attack the Hairstress!” Elizabeth declared. The kids ran for attack, so Crystal turned and slipped down the slide before running across the park. Her small legs didn’t go far, so she threw the centipede off, unnoticed by the kids when they piled on her. Henry watched the assault from the playground, his fear subsided. He had turned the kids against Crystal when he first encountered her, convincing them she was a witch who fried kids in her cauldron. Neither of them knew Crystal personally, so they ganged up on her for the sake of playing along.

A laser shot the ground a few feet away. “Back off, you jerks!” They looked up, seeing an 8-year-old boy who shared the same purple hair and yellow eyes as his sister. Travis Wickens wore black clothes and a purple scarf, and held a S.C.A.M.P.P.. “Or our hair won’t be the only purple things in this park!”

The four kids got off Crystal, who happily got up and ran to her brother. “I told you not to go out by yourself at night.” Travis stated. “What were you even doing?”
“Looking for bugs to cook in a potion!” Crystal replied as the two walked home.

“I keep telling you, nothing you make is gonna turn me into a frog.”

“Bloody Travis has real weapons!” Rodney complained, throwing his stick on the ground. “Henry, you’re rich, why don’t YOU get us something like that?”

“I’m not even allowed to watch TV.” Henry replied. “Do you really think my parents would let me buy weapons?”

“They wouldn’t let you join KND, either.” David said. “But hey, what if we all signed up? Then we can go on REAL adventures!”

“I bet Henry can get us in!” Elizabeth cheered. “He’s rich!”

“Yeah, man, help us get in!” Evelyn exclaimed.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa!” Henry gestured a ‘slow down.’ “This coming from a rich kid, that’s a little unfair, isn’t it? Do you guys really want to go through the stuff they do? Training in a frigid arctic tundra, flying ships that seem like they came from a dump, fighting dangerous adult criminals who possibly have years more experience than we could? I don’t think David could endure a day of that.”

The chubby boy looked downtrodden. “But we have make-believe to give us exercise.” Henry swung his stick. “There are millions of kids who aren’t operatives and still enjoy their lives. The Kids Next Door protect us so we can play these games. Why get involved with their dangers when we have this quaint little neighborhood?”

“I guess you’re right.” Rodney figured. “Still, this comes from the guy who lives it up in a mansion. Why don’t you invite us to your place sometime?”

“Yeah, there’s probably tons of adventure we can have in there!” Evelyn agreed.

“I’ve been trying to convince my parents.” Henry blushed. “As a matter of fact, I should return home. They’ll worry for me.”

“Well, we’ll see you later, then!” Eliza waved as Henry walked away. “Let’s climb the swings like a tower next time!”

Outside the mobile home park was a gold car with clean white seats. Henry climbed in the back as his driver made the drive up the road around the park. “You’ve grown quite fond of these commoners, boy.” The driver was a brown-haired man with a blue graduate’s robe and hat. He was very skinny.

“I don’t see what’s so ‘common’ about them. They’re kids like I am.”

“Yes, but you are a noble. You must have studied the histories of noble families. They only desired slaves. The Pewterschmidts enslaved Africans, the Schnees enslaved Mobians, the Don Quixotes enslaved Minish… but you do the Churchill Family proud, son. Not a one in your bloodline has ever owned a slave. They have hired servants, but that’s besides the point.”

“Of course.” Henry smiled and bowed. “Because true loyalty is won through kindness and friendship. So if I keep being their friend, they’ll do anything I say.”

“Indeed. Still, with an imagination like yours, I’m surprised you weren’t born a psychibender. It’s
good for kids like you to be so enticed in books. Television has such ill-mannered material.”

“Oh, books aren’t saints either, Teacher. I remember this one where the cover featured the protagonist making… an unpleasant gesture with his finger.”

“Oh, my! I’ll have to remove that from your library.”

“Yes, please. It’s not the gesture that makes me cringe, but the character had green hair.”

After they returned to Churchill Mansion, Henry went up to his room. There was a small bookshelf with books he took from his house’s library, either planning to read later or they were his favorites. Henry skimmed the titles, wondering which one to read. …Henry smiled and waved his hands. The books flew off the shelf and rotated in the air above him. Henry was a rare type of bender – a paperbender. It was a sub-form of plantbending and involved the control of dead matter. His tutor was also a paperbender, so he bonded the most with him.


Henry eventually fell asleep while trying to choose. The next morning, Henry had breakfast and got ready for school. He didn’t go to an official school, but he had five teachers to teach him all he needed to know.

One of them called himself Super Principal, a short man with orange hair, a blue suit, and a red cape. He made class entertaining by flying with some metahuman power and solving equations at the speed of sound. Then there was Heli-Teacher, an old woman who flew on a wooden chair with a built-in propeller and taught him English and history. His PE teacher was Mad Dad, who sparred with Henry using boxing gloves as he taught the boy combat. Then there was Midwestern Mom, his nanny, and also his cooking teacher… he guessed. Well, she liked to bake pecan pies, but she was… loud.

But as mentioned previously, his favorite was Samuel Wilson, who called himself the Terrific Tutor. He taught Henry history and helped him with any subject he had trouble with. He also taught Henry the different forms of element bending. Not many got to learn such a subject, since most benders were encouraged to keep their powers secret. Together, they were the Parent Teacher Organization of Educating Youngsters. Whenever they weren’t available, a group of substitute teachers called the Faculty 4 came to teach him. They were a group of metahumans who… He was less fond of them.

At 5:00pm, Terrific Tutor drove Henry down to Kingston Crossing, where he regrouped with his friends. “There’s a lot of fluffy clouds in the sky today. I say we make an adventure to the heavenly land of Skypia!”

“Time to see if the angel people are only legends!” Elizabeth cheers.

“Are you just going to talk to birds?” a girl retorted. The kids turned to find Crystal Wickens, glaring sharply with hands on her hips.

“Eeeek!” Henry hid behind Rodney. “The Hairstress is back to exact revenge!”

“Look, I’m going to leave. But first I wanna show you something.” She stepped aside to show a video projector.

“Blimey, we just got out of school!” Rodney complained.
“Just look!” Crystal pushed a button, and the device projected a hologram of a large knight. “Oooooo…!” The four minus Henry gazed in awe.

Crystal got a stick and stood in front of the knight. She dodged swings from its lance and swung her stick through it. “My brother fights loads of bad guys in the Kids Next Door! And he puts them all in this box and practices fighting them!” She jumped high and stuck her stick through the knight’s helmet hole. The hologram faded. Crystal held the stick over her shoulder and turned to them proudly, “It’s way better than squishing bugs.”

“Oh, silly little Hairstress and her magic box.” Henry remarked. “Her own portable television set. It’s stuff like that which ruins imagination, and imagination is great mental exercise. Friends, don’t waste your attention with this.”

“It is not!” Crystal yelled. “My brother taught me how this works, and I can make anything!” Crystal opened the back of the projector and crawled in, fiddling with it. “Like… a dragon!” A large purple dragon was projected. “And it fights like it’s here!” She got in front and dodged the dragon’s fangs, slashing her stick. “So you can make whatever you want and fight it!”

She’s five years younger than me! Henry thought. How could she understand a shred of engineering or... even fight like that?

“Can we fight the monsters from our videogames?!” David asked excitedly.

“Uh-huh!” Crystal beamed.

“I think you guys are missing the point here!” Henry shouted. “As I’ve been telling you, what strengthens our minds greater than knowledge is imagination. The more you stand here, fighting these simulations, you are discouraged to imagine for yourself. And besides, can this device simulate a moon forest, a candy mountain, or a potion that grants you wings so you can fly to Skypia?!”

“Um… no…” Crystal frowned. Her smile returned as she said, “But my brother told me a story of a mountain made of ice cream! It’s a Kids Next Door legend! And one time, he chased some bad guys in a soda temple!”

“Are you making this up, too?” Eliza asked.

“No, it’s for real! He records his missions and brings them back to show me! I still have them, want to look at them?”

The four kids exchanged thoughtful glances. “Yeh, we might as well see what’s so great about Kids Next Door.” Rodney shrugged.

“Yeah, like watching a show nobody else saw!” Evelyn said excitedly.

“Sweet!” Crystal jumped. “Oh, can one of you carry that for me?” She pointed at the projector. “It’s kind of heavy. MUUUUM, I’m bringing friends over.” She ran ahead.

“What?! Where are you guys going, what about Skypia?!” Henry yelled.

“Oh, we can do that later, Henry.” Eliza said. “Come on, let’s go visit Hairstress’s house!”

“But what if it’s a trap?!?”

“We’ll just make David crush her if it is. But if you don’t wanna come, we’ll see you later!”
Henry could only watch in defeat as they all piled into Crystal’s house (with David getting stuck in the doorway briefly).

**Churchill Estate; living room**

“The violet-haired sorceress stole my team!” Henry complained, pacing back-and-forth while Samuel sat on a chair and sipped tea. “Brainwashed them with that magic box! What if they decide to join Kids Next Door, imagination will be out the window! It’s maddening, I tell you.”

“With all due respect, Master, why do you not join the Kids Next Door?” Samuel asked. “Certainly, you could attain a high position of power. The Prince of the World Government works for Kids Next Door, so if we had more nobles in their ranks, we could make sure they work to our satisfaction.”

“I have no intention of being under their services. And if those guys could experience the dangers the Kids Next Door go through, they’ll ask for the sweet embrace of Imagination Land once again. Ahh! An idea strikes!” Henry beamed. “Teacher, perhaps you and your colleagues can stage a scenario. Pose as typical supervillains performing an uncoordinated attack and see how they fair.”

“Are we in some sort of comic now? We’re teachers, not clichés.”

“Oh, just do it for a few minutes, at least scare the wits out of that Hairstress! Since her brother isn’t around, we have a green light.”

“Oh, if it’s what you wish, Sir.”

“But before we proceed with this plan, perhaps we could hold a quick paperbending tutorial…”

**Kingston**

“Eliza, now’s our chance, let’s get her!” Evelyn declared.

“Yah!”

“I heard that!” Crystal whipped around and waved her staff. “Try to get over this lava pit!”

“Aaaah!” Elizabeth jumped back from the imaginary lava.

“Guys, I’m still in a glue trap.” David said, standing in one place.

“Too bad! I’m turning you into a centipede!” Crystal shot a spell.

“My belly’s so bouncy, it comes back!” David retorted.

“Ahhhh!” Crystal fell on her front. “I’m a buuuuuug!”

“I’m gonna squish you!” Rodney raised his foot above her. “AHH!” He was swat away by an unusually strong purse, flying against a bush in front of Crystal’s house. Crystal and co. looked over in confusion.

“You kids should be doing your HOMEWORK!! Midwestern Mom is gonna WRECK YOU!” exclaimed a fat woman wearing a blue dress that had a large “M”.

“Midwestern Mom?” Evelyn cocked a brow. “What the devil is this?”

“I’ll tell you what this is!” Super Principal flew in the sky. “We’re the Parent Teacher Organization
of Eradicating Youngsters! And cursing is forbidden in my classroom, young lady!”

“Prepare for an education you’ve never experienced, young’uns.” Heli-Teacher had harmless laser cannons attached to her chair. (“I knew getting that master’s in engineering wasn’t a waste.”)

“They’re just crazy Americans.” Rodney commented.

“CRAZY?!?” They were charged at by a man in boxer shorts, a hunched back, and boxing gloves. “Mad Dad is VERY ANGRY!”

David ran against the mad father and bounced him back with stronger momentum. “Wow, that was pretty awesome!”

“Get your heads in the game, you fools!” The Terrible Tutor flew by standing on books. “Attack them!” He sent a swarm of spinning papers, Crystal ducking to avoid getting cut.

“Well, Liz, wanna see how high you can jump?” Evelyn asked.

“You bet!” Eliza ran around Heli-Teacher and swiftly dodged her lasers. Evelyn got under the teacher and positioned her hands, so when Eliza ran at her, she bounced the younger girl up to the old woman. Eliza made Heli-Teacher drive out of control and hit the ground.

Evelyn had to quickly jump and duck Midwestern Mom’s purse, before grabbing a knife from her pocket and cutting the purse’s strings when it swooped by. “Why in tarnation do you carry that thing in your pocket?!”

“Self-defense, duh.” Evelyn remarked before opening the purse to find a hammer. “Why do YOU carry THIS in your purse?”

“I like other things besides cookin’.”

Midwestern Mom was tackled by David. “Oi, this hag makes me feel skinny!”

“Come down here and fight, Stupid Headmaster!” Rodney taunted.

“It’s Super Principal! And you’ll have to get your grades up if you want to come up here.”

“I bet you can’t do anything besides fly.”

“Incorrect! I have knuckles of steel.”

“Then come down and punch me.”

“You don’t want that!”

“Yes I do.”

“You’re really asking for it.”

“Quit being a puss and punch me!”

“FINE! Eeeehhhhh-!” Principal flew down with both fists ready. Rodney ducked and kicked him in the crotch. “OIII!” The man fell on his side.

“Heh. Not everything is steel.”
“These children are more clever than I anticipated.” Terrible Tutor said as he made a whirlwind of flying books.

“Maybe YOU’RE uneducated!” Crystal had grabbed and was riding one of the books before it got above Tutor’s head. She dropped and grabbed his head, breaking his control as the teacher hit the street. Evelyn and Eliza proceeded to gang up, with the latter biting his arm.

“OUCH! Stop it! Stop it!”

“Oi, how thick can you get?” Rodney said. “You don’t suppose these were KND villains, do you?”

“They look like people they’d fight.” Crystal replied. “Except really stupid.”

“Yeah, they couldn’t find any better targets besides a trailer park?” David questioned.

“That was fun, though!” Eliza cheered. “I wish Henry could’ve seen it!”

The ground trembled under rhythm of footsteps. “Um… What the heck is that?” Rodney pointed.

A dinosaur composed of books stomped across the trailer park, glaring at the kids and roaring ravenously. His teeth were sure to give the worst papercuts imaginable. “Uhhhh, anybody have any fire?” Evelyn asked.

“I know what to do!” Crystal yelled. “Keep him busy!” She ran into her house.

“How is something like this even possible?” Eliza asked.

“It’s just a bunch of books, let’s push ’em down!” David charged stalwartly at the Thesaurus Rex’s left leg, trying to shove it down, but the Thesaurus kicked its leg and shook him off.

Elizabeth grabbed onto the tail and climbed up its back, successfully reaching the head and stomping its eyes. “I call this the Thousand-Kick Attack!” However, the dinosaur seemed to be unphased as it lightly shook the child off. The Thesaurus Rex swiped its claws and sent books to hit them, then they would fly back onto its body. The dinosaur ignored their petty attacks and continued toward Crystal’s house, threatening to tear the roof off.

“CRYSTAL, GET OUT OF THERE!” Elizabeth cried.

“You know, you have bad breath!” Crystal ran out holding a hot sauce bottle attached to a trigger. She blasted a ray of fire up into the monster’s mouth, setting it aflame. “Eat the KND’s S.P.I.C.E.R.! It’s a normal hot sauce bottle with a lighter to give it extra spice comin’ out.”

“ROOOAAAR!” The Thesaurus shook its burning mouth before collapsing on its side. “NO!” Henry climbed out of it, taking off his buttoned shirt to smack it against the fire. “I wasn’t finished reading The Thunder Island!”

“Henry?!” Evelyn exclaimed. The boy gasped and turned to face them. “So that was YOU controlling that thing?”

“You tried to destroy my house!” Crystal yelled. “Are you mad that I took your friends or something?!”

“Oh, give me a break!” Henry argued. “Wouldn’t you have done the same?! I was happily enjoying playing with them until you decided to brainwash them with your magic box! Did our adventures mean nothing to you guys? How could you leave me for the Hairstress?!”
“I was only trying to make them jealous of the Kids Next Door because you kept beating me up!”

“And most of the time, we thought she was in on these games, that’s why we attack her.” Evelyn followed. “But Henry, after what we’ve just been through, don’t you think we’d be great for Kids Next Door? It’s fun to pretend to go to awesome places and fight scary monsters, but I want to do it for real! Let’s have real fun and really help people!”

“And maybe fight real dangerous villains.” Rodney smirked at Principal, still holding his aching area.

“I set all this up to show you the dangers the world has!” Henry shouted. “It might not have been much, but would you really leave our safe and comfy village to go against who-knows-what?!”

“Stop acting like a privileged prince and join KND with us!”

“Yeah, we don’t wanna join without you.” David said. “You’d be our leader. But you have to tell us how you made that dino!”

Henry looked stunned by that. “You… won’t go without me?”

“No way, Henry!” Elizabeth said cheerily. “We need someone like you to take us on all the scary missions! You’ll be the best leader ever!”

“So come on, Henry, let’s do it!” Rodney encouraged.

“…My friends…” Henry almost felt like crying. “My loyal… friends…”

“What are you all doing here?!” Travis Wickens shouted from behind. He noticed the weird-looking teachers and the dinosaur made of books. “What in blazes… Crystal, are you all right?!”

“I am, Travis!” she replied happily. “I think these guys want to join Kids Next Door.”

“Huh? You do?”

They all stared at Henry. The boy contemplated his answer for a minute. “…Yes, we do. And as proof of our skill, we’d like to turn in these supervillains!”

“SAY WHAT?!” the teachers exclaimed.

“Then I guess I’ll call a S.P.R.A.Y.S.H.I.P.” Travis figured. “We’ll take you guys to Arctic Base tomorrow. I think Andrew’s going to like you guys.”

“This is going to be the best thing ever!” Rodney jumped.

“And when I get older, I’m gonna join, too!” Crystal declared.

Henry turned to her with a smile. “Hairstress? Could I… ask for a favor?”

“Yes, Henry?”

“…Would you…” He took out a spray bottle, “allow me to dye your hair brown?”

“AAAAAAAAHH!” Crystal ran as Henry chased her around the park. “No, I like my hair!”

“It’ll look better with a natural color! If brown doesn’t work, I’ll make it blonde, or orange!”
“Spray that stuff on yourself, I don’t want it!”

The five others merely stared in disbelief, but Henry’s actions forced laughs out of them. For a rich noble, he was a fun kid and had the potential to be a good leader. They wondered if other nobles could be kind like Henry.

An unknown town…

A building was set aflame as people roared with hatred, throwing bottles at a wall. Three people were tied and blindfolded: a man with light blonde hair and mustache, a woman, and a 12-year-old son, all with same-colored hair and white robes. “DEMONS!” a citizen shouted.

“FALSE GODS!” another roared.

“DOWN WITH THE DON QUIXOTE FAMILY!”

“Please, stop!” Don Quixote Homing cried as people whipped the three of them. “Do whatever you want with me, but leave my family be! They’re innocent! Please, just punish me!”

“Like we would ever trust you!” yelled a blonde woman. “We know you still have Minish slaves! You think it’s okay because you think people don’t see them?! You think people won’t care because they’re so small?! Well, we do!”

“They’re not slaves, we give them food and homes!” Homing cried. “Honestly, I’m not a bad man! I love all people!”

“Since when do World Leaders care about anyone but their selves?!” a teenage boy shouted. “You guys act like gods, but you’re pathetic!”

“Hey, what’s all this gas?!” a woman yelled when a cloud of pink gas swallowed them, resulting in coughs.

“DOFFY!” A boy with black hair and yellow eyes ran up to the Don Quixote son, using a knife to cut him free. “Doffy, I’ll save you! Vergo found a secret tunnel!”

“Caesar… don’t…don’t save Father!”

“But why?”

“He’s a terrible man!” Doffy ripped off his blindfold when his hands were free. “We were GODS, Father, and you threw it all away!” His eyes teared behind his sunglasses. “When I grow up, I’m never gonna be like you! I hope I forget you some day!” He took Caesar’s knife and stabbed his own father in the chest. “NOW DIE!”

“Cough!” Homing hacked. “D…Doflamingo… I’m sorry you had to have… a father like me…”

Mariejoa

“What a pity… Don Quixote Homing.” The King said as he stared at the 8-ball in his hand. “So, who will be the one… to inherit your throne?” The powerful gem displayed Henry Churchill and his aspiring team at Arctic Base.

Lots of major backstory here. And there’s more to come next chapter. Next time, we’ll look
at Lucas Stonebuddy’s past.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 of *Before They Were Kings*, featuring Lucas Stonebuddy's backstory and his friendship with the Earth Children.

This chapter is kind of plot heavy and previews something important. Also, time for a history lesson!

*Chapter 5: Stone Buddy*

3,970 years ago, Ancient Europe

Since the destruction of numerous Sacred Trees 30 years ago, demons have ravaged the world and Demon Wars took place for the umpteenth time. A Second Age of Kids Next Door rose to being and fought the demons, turning the war for the better. But these brave little children weren’t the only warriors in this era. There is a story of five children who could control the earth, and they hailed from different regions. One day, these children met and became close friends. They each possessed a different variant of their power, and working together, they became a formidable team.

When these children grew older, they became renowned warriors. Their base was a gigantic tree that grew within a mountain range. A girl of sixteen stood before the great tree, eyes closed as her hands and feet were planted firmly on the ground. She had messy brown hair that was cut short, and she wore green armor that covered her body, except her arms and legs. Large white rings with green emeralds were around her ankles.

Granite could see across the earth for miles. The demons were coming to sap the life from the tree. Granite smiled, feeling pure confidence in her friends. “Sovite, they’re coming up the mountains from the north. They’re Nejirons posing like moving rocks. Are they silly or what?” She spoke with a childish voice for a 16-year-old girl.

“Silly? They're as dense as rocks.” Sovite smirked, his metal earpiece ringing with the message. “Denser than you!” Granite grinned playfully.

“Not for long!” Sovite stomped the mountain and turned it into a volcano. Lava erupted from the top, and Sovite willed it to flow down over the Nejirons. Sovite was a muscular boy of 18 years, wearing only a gold armor skirt on his red hot body. He had spiky brown hair and a developing beard.

“I feel some coming from underground, four miles southwest of my location!” Granite reported.

“These Ergtoroks make me irk!” Quartzite surfed over the landscape on a sandwave along a sandy trail he had created. Quartzite was seventeen with black hair to his neck, wore dark-purple armor over his chest and pelvic areas, leaving the rest of himself bare except his metal wristbands and ankle bands. He stopped over the indicated area and broke the surrounding land into sand. “I’ll stir them into stew and eat them up!” He waved his arms from his solid sand platform and stirred the sand into a whirlpool. The sand squids – Ergtoroks appeared on the surface, trying to cough rocks
at him. Quartzite defended as he brought the squids to the center, intent on crushing them.

“**GUYS! GUYS, HEEEHELP!**”

“OUCH!” Granite cupped a hand over her earpiece. “Hornfels, you’re our information relayer, we can hear you without the yelling!”

“But they ambushed me from the sky!” Hornfels was ducking as three Kargaroks were biting him. He was a 17-year-old boy with orange hair and a skinny, frail body, wearing silver armor over his chest, pelvis, wrists, and ankles. He perched atop the stone wall around the tree. “WAAAH!” He lost balance and fell over the outside, grabbing a thin stalactite branch that Granite stomped out when she sensed this. “PLEASE HELP ME!” Four Kargaroks began to peck him.

The monster birds screeched when two large stones came and crushed them. “You’re welcome.” The fifth member said. He wore an average black robe and had brown hair. He was 16 years old and wasn’t muscular or skinny.

“Heheh… Thanks, Stone.” Hornfels blushed.

“Well, I’m not sensing any more.” Granite opened her vibrant green eyes and stood. “It seems we’re all done here!”

“I didn’t even break a sweat.” Sovite sighed.

“Like it’s even possible for you to sweat.” Hornfels remarked, still hanging on the branch. “Stone, help me get down?”

“Oh, Horny.” Stone laughed, stomping a platform up for his friend to land on.

“Please don’t call me—HEEEEEY!” The platform dropped down quickly and crashed as Hornfels plopped on his front.

Now for a little backstory: Granite came from a village outside the mountains. She was a peppy girl that loved to embrace nature and take naps outside. Quartzite came from a desert across the ocean and liked to pretend he was a king, using sandbending to construct giant castles. Sovite lived on a volcano island and was addicted to hard core exercise, placing boulders on his back and doing push-ups under a hot, scorching sun. Hornfels was more brains than brawn, and as the first known metalbender in history, his main skill was building machines out of metal. He was the one who invented the small metal pieces that fit in their ears and were sensitive to soundwaves, which he could transmit to further distances using his bending on the earpieces.

Under the instruction of Regigigas, Minish were sent around the world to find these kids and bring them to the Tree of Beginning. It was at the tree they met their fifth member, Stone, who was a quiet boy that liked to carve statues. He was apparently an orphan taken in by the Earth God, Regigigas, and while he helped his fellow earthbenders in battle, he always felt kind of distanced.

The five earthbenders regrouped with Granite as they headed toward the tree. “That was fun, so much fun!” Granite skipped like a happy rabbit. “A thousand monsters and we crushed them all!”

“They need to remember who this planet belongs to, right Horny Boy?!” Sovite punched Hornfels and made him spin unstably.

“OW! All I know is I’m getting armored shoes. You guys are lucky not to step on any sharp rocks.”
“We do step on them, they just turn to dust.” Quartzite remarked with hands folded behind his head.

“But don’t worry, Horns, we still like ya.” Sovite said. “You’re our lovable dork!”

“A pleasure.” Hornfels replied in sarcasm. “Just keep me as far from the action as you can.”

When they entered the Tree of Beginning, the local Minish in the flower forest made sure to clear away from their path. The Minish were as big as ants to the gigantic humans, but they felt no fear in the presence of their guardians. The humans approached a crystal platform where the Minish King stood. He had a white beard and un budded yellow flower crown. “Granite, Quartzite, Sovite, Hornfels, and Stone… you have defended our home once more from the savage creatures. The Minish will be forever indebted to you: the Five Children of Earth.” King Gonsho said. His small voice was heard thanks to their earpieces.

“Awe, you don’t have to do anything for us.” Granite grinned, bending forward to show the king her shiny white teeth. “We’re happy to protect you cute little things!”

“I am delighted. . . Lady Granite. . .” The king felt his gaze fall upon the top of Granite’s chest area, which was unarmored.

“Granite, you know lots of male Minish like human women, right?” Hornfels said, pulling his leader back with an awkward expression. “Same with female Minish. They’re climbing Sovite right now.”

Sovite looked down in shock to see Minish climbing his legs. “Oh, he’s so waaaarrrm!”

“Please, let me live on you!”

“Ahem, anyway, moving on.” Gonsho coughed. “We hope you will continue to defend our home. The Tree of Beginning is among the most sacred of sanctuaries, home to Earth God Regigigas.”

“Speaking of Regigigas, wouldn’t he do a better job protecting this place himself?” Quartzite asked. “Why rely on us to do it?”

“I suppose we have kept you uninformed long enough. Five Children… it is time you learned this tree’s most important secret. Come with me.”

King Gonsho led them down a flight of winding stairs, Minish guards at his side. They rode fireflies to light the darkness. “How long have we been walking for, an hour?” Hornfels sighed in exhaustion. “Why didn’t you let us rest before bringing us down here?”

“I suppose if you wanted to, you could have earthbent these stairs to carry you down faster.” Gonsho replied.

“So why didn’t we?!”

“One should always enter a new location cautiously.”

Eventually, they arrived at the bottom of the stairs, entering a shrine lit by glowing green crystals. There was a huge sealed door with a symbol of a diamond, and four pedestals before it. There were footprints in front of each pedestal and a diamond-shaped hole on top of them, both colored the same of four respective colors: green, yellow, red, and gray. “God Regigigas… you are here, I see.” The king said.
On the right of the shrine was the God of Earth himself: a massive robot with six beeping colored lights, bushes on his shoulders and feet, gold rings around his wrists and base of his arms, and a gold center with smaller lights. “I have designed this door to only open by the powers of Earth, Sand, Lava, and Metal. Will the respective children take your places on the pedestal.”

Granite planted her small feet in the prints before her pedestal, Quartzite took the yellow one, Sovite the red one, and Hornfels the gray. Stone looked confused. “Why isn’t there one for me?”

“When the seal is removed, you may use your power to open the door.”

“Sounds like a job you could do, but… okay.” Stone half-interestedly walked up to the door and put his hand to it.

“Four Children, channel your chis into the pedestals.” Gonsho instructed.

The four others put both hands over the glowing holes and focused their power. The combined powers of Granite’s earth, Quartzite’s sand, Sovite’s lava, and Hornfels’ metal all met at one core. The diamond on the door glowed, and Stone exhausted a great amount of power in pushing it open.

They all entered the chamber. Dozens of colorful crystals lined the surrounding walls—Nature Crystals that each possessed a form of nature. In the very center was a spire of solid blue gem. It grew from a shining pink crystal that appeared to have a heart inside.

“This stone is none other than the Heart of the World.” Gonsho confirmed. “Every planet has its own Heart that is heavily concentrated with a certain chi that covers the whole world. Our Planet Earth is one that’s composed of ALL chis, making this a very sacred place.”

“Is that why the demons want to destroy this place?” Granite asked.

“I fear that is why… but there is another secret even they do not know. The knowledge of this secret could very well shake the universe. So, before we divulge it unto you… will you swear to secrecy?”

“Suuuure!” Granite sang. “I can keep a secret! Can you guys?”

“I guess so.” Hornfels said with a casual grin.

“Yeah, I’m game.” Sovite shrugged.

“Me too.” said Quartzite.

“…” Stone was silent for a moment. “If this is really so important, why didn’t you ask us before we actually entered this room?”

“…” Gonsho felt a tad sheepish. “That would have been a logical approach. Oh, I trust you regardless. Up this way.”

Still riding their fireflies, the king and his guards flew up a stairway that spiraled up along the walls, the teens having to duck Nature Crystals on their ascent. “Ouch!” Hornfels bumped his head on a blue one. “Ack, so cold!”

“You’re such a stick.” Sovite touched the boy’s head to warm it up with his chi.

The stairs ended at the top of the tall spire, where a large pink diamond rested in the center. Inside was a child-size creature made of stone, wearing a pink diamond on its head. Granite was first to approach the creature, utmost curiosity overcoming her. She put her hand to the diamond. “I feel a
powerful energy inside this thing… but what is it?”

“The date in my memory files was approximately 4,978,400 years ago.” Regigigas spoke. “I met a spirit of a woman with pink hair. She entrusted me with an egg and said it must be protected at all costs. The creature hatched from the egg possessed Earth Chi more powerful than mine. It knew what power it possessed and sealed itself inside this Diamond Cocoon.”

“You five are aware that Mew lives in the tree.” Gonsho said. “And you know what Mew is. Perhaps you can guess what this creature is…”

Hornfels gasped. “It… Is it really?”

“Indeed. Although there were only eight created by Arceus… Regigigas received this egg after his destruction. This being speaks to our sages with telepathy. She will only awaken by the powers of Five Children of Earth.”

“So that means… us?” Granite asked.

“No. She does not want to awaken now. But perhaps your descendants will have the honor. Still, this deity is another reason we must protect the Tree of Beginning. And we must keep her secret from the outside. If too many people know there is another Firstborn in the universe, there will be unrest. Do not discuss what you’ve seen in here. Even most of my citizens do not know what lies beneath the tree.”

“We understand.” Hornfels said. The others nodded. “But I have to ask… is it really safe for Mew to live here in this case? I mean, two Firstborn in the same area…”

“Mew does not often stay. When he leaves, he disguises himself. Furthermore, this chamber will not open without the power of your Earth Chis. Now, let us leave. You may earthbend the stairs to carry you up this time.”

“Sigh, thank you!” Hornfels expressed.

Stone stared at the Diamond Cocoon, feeling the power radiating from it. The power felt… familiar somehow.

**Hot spring**

“I love it when the sun appears after we destroy an army of demons!” Granite stripped herself naked and enjoyed the warming, cleansing heat of the spring. They were in a part of the Tree of Beginning where sunlight shone in, and flowers surrounded them. “It’s nice to kick back and chill with the bros!”

Hornfels, Sovite, and Quartzite shared the spring with her. “I guess there aren’t many female warriors out there.” Hornfels said with a blush. In these ancient times, gender boundaries didn’t exist.

“Yeah, all those girls are missing out! So, any of you boys wanna wash me?” She smirked.

“I will!” Quartzite’s hand splashed up.

“I’m going if you guys get physical.” Hornfels said, deciding to turn around. “Why didn’t Stone wanna join us?”

“Maybe he can’t swim.” Sovite replied casually.
“The water isn’t that deep. And besides, Quartzite’s the only one that can swim.”

“Well, you could probably float.”

Stone had returned to his quarters near the top of the tree. His room was a gallery of gray stone sculptures. They resembled gods like Dialga and the Lake Trio, one was of Fairy Princess Mavis, and a smaller statue depicted an earlier Minish King. Stone’s hand was planted against a rectangular block taller than him, using Seismic Sense to see every square inch on this stone. His chi flowing through, Stone singled out a peculiar area of space within the stone. He slapped the stone and broke away the area outside, and what remained shaped like Granite, sporting her happy grin.

“Another beautiful piece of art.” Regigigas said from the entrance. “There is a high probability Granite will enjoy what you’ve created.”

“Yes, she may.” Stone replied emotionlessly.

“Your performance in battle was excellent. You deserve recreation. Will you not join your comrades?”

“I don’t feel deserving. Although I fight on the same ground as my comrades… I am not the same.”

“That is an irrelevant factor. Do you then not view these Minish the same as any human?”

“I am not certain…” Stone turned to face the robot god. “Do these Minish wear a mask like mine?” He gripped the skin under his neck and pulled it off. His head was round and bare, dark-gray, and made of stone. “Do we come from the same planet?” He used the heel of his left foot to scrape off the peach-colored paint on the right foot, exposing its true color. “Tell me again where I’m from.”

“It is understood that your origins lie in what we gods call the First Dimension. When Supreme God Arceus destroyed said dimension, he constructed me with the memory and data of the dimension. Perhaps he suspected denizens from that world will find a way here. You are a member of the Ores, a race of beings composed of stone who possessed the original Earth Chi. Your cousins were the Gems, a race of supernatural beings who possessed the original magic. I believe you sensed what I had sensed: the one under the tree possesses energy similar to the Gems. While it is true your species is unknown to this universe, you possess a heart and soul regardless. I can guarantee strong assurance your comrades will find this knowledge irrelevant and think of you as they always have.”

“Is it really so simple? I’m a foreign contaminant, as you imply. The First Dimension was a world of chaos… that is why Arceus destroyed it. The fact that I could be here, and that… creature underneath the tree. Exactly how much control do you gods have?”

“I do not recall referring to you as a ‘foreign contaminant.’ Analysis: it is a conclusion you came to on your own accord. You are accurate in your implication that there is still much we gods do not know… but perhaps it is wise to learn from mortals like yourself. Your Earth Chi is foreign to me, Stone. Although I am still analyzing… I have reached a conclusion it is not the only in this universe.”

“What do you mean?”

“I have sensed curious chis in various areas. When I journeyed to these areas… I had discovered these were Natural Chis in the form of seven cubes, and two pyramids. According to my artificial memory, they are composed of a material from the First Dimension called Permanite. I have tried,
but I could not break the stones. Furthermore, they possessed writing that I could not decipher. Permanite was native to Planet Ore, and was known as the Unbreakable Stone. The Permanent Stone. The only beings that could prove otherwise were its people.”

“In other words… my chi has the capability to break the Unbreakable Stone?”

“Perhaps… but we have determined these stones will play a critical role for a prophecy in the far future. I would advise against the action. …I will return to my resting chamber. Do carry on, my son.” The god’s quaking steps faded as he left.

“So, that’s what you really look like!” a girl’s voice said. Stone gasped and looked around for the source, but saw only his statues. “Down here.” He then looked toward the feet of Granite’s statue. There was a red-eyed Minish with a pink flower cap and white leaf dress. “I hope you don’t mind, but I’m a real big fan of your work. These idols of gods and legendary figures are detailed down to the core. But I guess in reality, an artist is what he creates! Can I take a picture?” She held up a Picto Box and snapped Stone’s likeness.

“So smooth… so perfect! It’s not enough to say you were born with talent, you were born as a masterpiece. Do you mind if I interview you? Have you always been into art, do you have an inspiration, do you admire these people in some way? (Oops, you didn’t answer the first one first.)” ^^;

“I don’t quite have the energy for a discussion.”

“Yeah, I guess you just got back from a battle. But I want to spend time with you, though! Do you want to go for a walk outside? I don’t really get out much.”

“Considering all the monsters, why would you want to?”

“Well, I want to see more of the world! This tree gets really boring, even if it’s humongous. So let’s go for a walk!”

“Very well. I need to paint my feet again first.” Stone said as he put his mask back on, with Diana jumping off his head.

Outside

“Wouldn’t you rather ride on my shoulder?” Stone asked as Diana was scampering in the grass by his left. The fluffy clouds cast shadows drifting along the earth.

“Oh, you don’t need my .5 milligrams of weight. This makes good exercise!”

“How old did you say you were?”

“Twenty-and-a-half years. Now it’s my turn to ask a question, if you’re made of stone, can you physically feel anything?”
“As odd as it is, I can. I feel the grass, I feel the wind… though perhaps flesh beings have greater sensitivity than I.”

“I don’t see why you need to hide the secret from your friends. If it was shameful to say you aren’t human, then it should be shameful to be a Minish or a Nimbi. We may look different, but we all live on the same planet and we’re all connected.”

“Maybe for the rest of you, but I’m from a universe that was consumed in chaos. I feel like my existence here is a danger on its own.”

“But what bad thing ever happened because of you? Our home is safe thanks to you and your friends.”

“I really can’t determine why I feel this way. It’s just an unsettling feeling in my chest.”

“Maybe you just feel lonely because there are no other Ores that you know about. I guess when you’re one of a kind, it’s hard to feel like you’re part of the group.”

“Perhaps that is the case. But if there are no other Ores, I have no one to call family besides my comrades. The sadness I feel is a fault of my own that I must overcome.”

“I wish I could make you feel better, but I’m not sure how to help.”

“Regigigas speaks of various pieces of Permanite that exist in the universe. If there is any possible answer to my dilemma… it would be to find one of these stones. Maybe I could ask Regigigas to bring me to one.”

“You should ask your friends to come with you, too. A family is still a family. They would love to help you.”

“I couldn’t ask them to go out of their way to come. Besides, somebody needs to protect-”

“Just WHERE are you GOING?” Granite shouted as a rock wall sprouted up in Stone’s way. He turned to find his four friends several feet behind him.

“You’ve been following me?”

“I felt you walking away from the tree. Why didn’t you invite us, Stone, we were up for a walk!”

“She just bolted after you and we figured we’d follow.” Hornfels said sheepishly. “You looked like you were talking to someone. Or was it thinking aloud?”

“Hello!” Diana sprouted a tiny rock platform up for them all to see. “I’m Diana! It’s a pleasure to meet all of you!”

“Is she your girlfriend?” Quartzite smirked.

“No, just a real big fan!” Diana beamed. “Or little fan. Do you want me to leave, Stone?”

“No, it’s quite all right. Actually… I may as well tell you four something. Let’s go back to the tree.”

**Tree of Beginning**

“Oooooo!” Quartzite softly rubbed Stone’s bald head. “So smooth!”
“Please stop that.”

“So you were a rock person all along, huh?” Granite asked. “I thought you felt weird when I touch you.”

“Surprised you didn’t notice, Granny.” Sovite said.

“You really do feel different.” Hornfels said while rubbing Stone’s hand. “And you have parts inside you that serve as organs. Odd…”

“I want to ask Regigigas to take me to one of the Permanites he spoke of. And if possible… I want to keep it with me. As a relic of my people…”

“If that’s the case, we’ll come with you.” Granite smiled. “I’m sure Regigigas can protect the tree from a few demons.”

“Five Children, there’s a creature approaching the tree!” A Minish came flying in using Wing Pikmin.

“Is it a demon?!” Hornfels exclaimed.

“I don’t know what it is, but it was huge and purple!”

Granite touched the ground and closed her eyes. “I do feel something coming. Let’s go see what it is!”

The beast crossing the field was a purple-skinned humanoid wearing black and gold armor and a same-colored helmet. He had a large chin and big, thick hands, and his blue eyes glimmered like the moon as he stared at the great tree. “Is this the Tree of Beginning Medusa spoke of? The place where the Heart of this World rests?” The titan opened his left hand, which was holding a tiny green glowing stone. “Very well. I will bring this planet to ruin and regain my Infinity Stones!”

The bottom of the surrounding wall opened as the Five Children of Earth charged out. “Hey ugly, we got a rule called no trespassing!” Sovite shouted. “Who the heck are you?”

“I am Thanos, you impudent worms! You have nerve to speak to me in such a tongue. Now stand aside or feel the power of my Soul Stone!”

“The only power WE’RE feeling is the power of us defeating your so-called… POWER!” Granite retorted.

“Leave the trash-talk to me, sweet cheeks.” Sovite fist-palmed. “Let’s kick his ass!” He stomped the ground and sent a river of lava toward Thanos, but the titan jumped forth to slam his fist on the ground in their center, blowing the five benders apart. Thanos tried to enter the tree’s barrier, but Hornfels threw a sword and used metalbending to bend it around his neck, trying to pull Thanos back. Granite then caught the titan in a rock trap, but Thanos broke free and grabbed a chunk of the trap to throw at Hornfels.

Quartzite jumped in the way and used sandbending to break the rock, then broke the ground around Thanos in attempt to sink the titan. Thanos raised the Soul Stone as it flashed, separating his own soul from his body. Thanos’ spirit flew inside Quartzite’s body, the boy screaming and struggling as he broke a sand pit toward his teammates. Thanos returned to his body and escaped his own trap, running to punch the distraught sandbender away. Sovite turned his sand pit into lava and threw it at Thanos, burning the titan only slightly as Thanos ran to punch him.
Sovite sprouted a large lava hand to lock with Thanos’ left fist, but the pain from the molten rock didn’t falter his strength. Hornfels jumped on Thanos’ head and attempted to crush it with the gold of his helmet, so Thanos grabbed the scrawny boy in his right hand and threw him at Sovite, disabling the lava hand. Thanos was then pelted in the head by both normal boulders and spherical gray stones, cast by Granite and Stone. Thanos aimed the Soul Stone and caught them in a state of hypnosis.

A gray stone shaped like an oval crashed on Earth. Found by Regigigas, the stone steadily crumbled and became a humanoid baby. “Foreign contaminate…” Stone’s voice said as he painted his skin peach and forged a flesh-like mask with hair. “Stone, why don’t you play Kickrock with us??” Granite asked him pushily. “Hehe… Thanks, Stone.” Hornfels blushed.

“I DIDN’T MEAN TO!” Granite screamed from her vision. “I thought that pie was for anyone! Window pie is too tasty to pass up!”

“What adorable memories.” Thanos smirked at Stone’s memories. “A simple stone finds comfort in the company of humans. And yet, you saw yourself as vermin that didn’t belong. Let everyone see you for what you are: a mindless rock.” The stone transformed Stone back into an ovular egg.

A large pink crystal shot up from the ground and stabbed Thanos’ hand, dropping the Soul Stone. “The only mindless one here is YOU!” Diana stated, riding the crystal.

“Diana!” Now free of the spell, Granite chucked boulders at Thanos’ face. Diana pulled the crystal out of his hand and used it to fly. Thanos jumped toward the Soul Stone, only to fall on his front when Sovite wrapped lava whips around his ankles. Quartzite used a sandwave to bring the Soul Stone over to him.

“I’m changing Stone back!” Quartzite declared as he grabbed the gem- “AAAAAHH!” A tremendous surge of power overcame Quartzite upon contact with the stone.

“Quartz!” Sovite rushed over and grabbed the stone as well, enduring the unbearable pain and successfully helping to throw it away. Thanos broke free of the lava and jumped to Granite and Stone, punching the former away and crushing Stone’s egg.

“STONE!!” Granite cried.

“A mere pebble to the power of Thanos!” The Mad Titan grinned with malice. “His fate will be that of your miserable planet!”

The Titan was immediately punched a great distance away by a three-fingered hand. Thanos recovered to find the one responsible was Regigigas. Although the robot’s expression wasn’t clear, his eyes blinked with vengeance. Thanos charged at the god, and both locked fists with each other. “What type of machine dares to oppose Thanos?!?”

“I am no mere machine, Mortal. I am the God of Earth. The Earth’s children are my children... and those who crush my children will know a fate worse than death.” Regigigas charged lasers in his lights and pinned Thanos to the ground with their force.

“AAAAH!” The base of Thanos’ left arm was impaled by a giant clear diamond. Diana was perched on it, feeling only spite for the titan. “Death would be too merciful for you.”

“Hm hm hm.” Thanos laughed. “The great Thanos has felt worse pain than this.”

“You may reinstate your claims after approximately one day in Underworld Prison.” Regigigas said. “If you claim to have been sent by Medusa… I conjecture you are one of the Thirteen.”
“Regigigas, we have to save Stone!” Granite cried over their friend’s shattered body. “Can you use that Soul thingy!?”

Regigigas approached the Soul Stone and picked it up. He aimed it at the dark-gray rubble in attempt to cast its power, but nothing happened. “Unable to register a response. Attempting to determine the anomaly.”

“The stone won’t listen to you because you’re not from its world.” A man’s voice said. A person with brown hair and a large beard, wearing a same-colored robe approached them.

“Where did you come from?” Sovite questioned.

The man reached under his robe and withdrew an 8-ball flashing an array of colors. “The Octogan desires the Soul Stone. I must follow its demands.” He aimed the ball at the green stone, slowly drawing it in. The Soul Stone sunk into the Octogan’s pupil.

“NO!” Thanos yelled. “Return the Soul Stone to me at-!”

The Octogan flashed and caused the titan to freeze. “See to it he is imprisoned.” The stranger said before vanishing in another flash.

“He’s gone…” Granite spoke with remorse. She fell to her knees, crying over the remains of her friend. “Stone…”

“We barely got to know him at all.” Hornfels said.

“It’s not too late for him.” Diana calmly approached the gray rubble.

“What do you mean?” Granite asked.

“Wait… you were bending that diamond.” Sovite realized. “That’s impossible… even Regigigas can’t bend diamonds.”

“I exhausted a large portion of this mortal form’s chi in doing so.” Diana said. “I fear I can’t inhabit it for much longer.”

“This mortal form?” Quartzite repeated. “Are you…”

Diana closed her eyes and put her hand to a piece of Stone. Stone... can you hear me?

Diana... is that… you?...

Stone... I have a secret to tell you as well. The true Diana... perished during childbirth. I sensed that she was not long, so I sent my soul to inhabit her deceased body and allow it to grow and mature. I did it so... I could walk among the Mortal World.

The Mortal World? But that means you’re...

Yes, I am. I always believed death upon birth was a horrible fate... so I keep the parents from sadness and discouragement by taking the place of their child’s soul. And until my true body is freed by your friends’ descendants, I will continue to watch them in this manner. Stone... I can do the same for you as well.

What do you mean?

I will allow you to be reincarnated as a human. You will possess the chi that you had in this form.
Your friends may not find you for some time, and your memory may grow foggy over the ages… but I am certain you will reunite with their descendants. I hope to see you again one day.

Reborn as a human… Yes. If I could be born again… I would have my own family. I could be… happy.

Yes… you could. And from now on, you will not be just “Stone”… you will be Stonebuddy!

Stonebuddy?

“Stone” is such a bland name. It needs more personality! A name like Stonebuddy is sure to attract friends.

Well, alright then… I will be Stonebuddy. Farewell, Diana.

Farewell, Stonebuddy. See you in the next life!

So yeah… we finally get to meet the Four (Five) Earthbender Family ancestors, as well as major foreshadowing. The Ores concept was something Numbuh 227 came up with some time ago. The next chapter will be the final one of this short story: the true identity of King Andrew Johnson. Of course, some of you who pay attention may already know who he is. I will see you for that.
Chapter 6 of *Before They Were Kings*, featuring King Andrew Johnson in his childhood.

I would like to thank Numbuh 227, :iconIDAofficial:, and :iconDepthcharge2030: for the comments. This story is Gameverse History in the making and I’m glad you were here to see it. This takes place about 6 years before the First Gameverse Series.

**Chapter 6: One Hundred**

**KND Moonbase**

The Kids Next Door was his pride and joy, he was proud to be a part of it. He joined Cadet Training at five years old – a record young age for a cadet, became Leader’s Assistant after graduating, and at Age 9, he was the youngest operative to earn the position of Supreme Leader. He, Numbuh 100, Andrew Johnson. His friends were by his side, but he was nervous. Hundreds of operatives were in the auditorium, awaiting the coming of their new leader.

“Andrew, how could you keep them waiting?” asked Travis Wickens, one of his good friends. “They have better things to do than sit through a boring ceremony.”

“I still don’t feel like I deserve to be here.” Andrew replied.

“Why not?” Numbuh 82.22 asked. “Dude, we wouldn’t have stopped Numbuh 296 if it wasn’t for you. You’ll be a hundred times better than he could ever be! Come on, Andrew, stop being so hard on yourself, you got this.”

“It’s no big deal!” Koda Shrieves assured him. “Just go out there and tell them what they want to hear. That you’ll be a great leader and you won’t screw up.”

“Anyone can say *that*.” Andrew remarked. “Oh well… Gotta give them something to hope for.” He looked at the frying pan in his hands, which had ‘100’ painted on it in white. Andrew put the pan over his head and stepped out.

“I proudly introduce Numbuh 100, our new Supreme Leader!” Numbuh 258.55 introduced.

The Kids Next Door ceased their chattering and faced their new leader. Andrew cleared his throat: “KIDS NEXT DOOR RULEZ!”

“KIDS NEXT DOOR rulez, SIR!”

“Kids Next Door, it is with the highest honor that I accept the position of Supreme Leader. It may take some time to erase the damages Numbuh 296 has done, but I will give it my all to put this organization on the right track! And I would just like to say… thank you for giving me the opportunity to lead. The Kids Next Door holds a very special place in my heart. When I’m at home, living under the rules of strict parents, I’m glad to have a place I can be who I am and make

...
friends. I’m sure you all feel the same to some regard.

“I don’t want to say my parents are evil, I don’t want to say any adult is evil. There are bad
decisions and there are wrong decisions. There are things we can misinterpret as evil, but first, try
to put yourselves in that other person’s shoes. The next time you’re fighting a supervillain trying to
give kids extra homework, or you’re angry at your parents for feeding you vegetables… first, try to
understand them. Maybe they have good intentions but are approaching it the wrong way. Maybe
we just don’t accept the actions as good. What I’m trying to say is, we may be an organization bent
on fighting adult tyranny… but it’s important that we know the difference between true evil and
misunderstandings.”

The kids murmured to their selves. His speech was thought-provoking, but confusing. “Maybe this
isn’t the type of thing ordinary kids are used to hearing.” Andrew said. “I think it’s something to
think about… but I don’t want you kids to get a headache over thinking about it too much. One
way or another, there are adults out there with evil plans that we need to foil. Just keep your heads
in the game and do your best. And always remember, if there’s something you can’t do, you have
hundreds of operatives to back you up. Promise me you’ll always stay loyal and you won’t lose
faith, even if the age of 13 is creeping around the corner. Can you promise me?!”

“WE PROMISE!”

“Kids Next Door: assembly adjourned. You can stay here, go home, do whatever, but the second I
call you for a mission, you better get ready. DISMISSED!”

“YEEEEAAAAAAHHH!”

“Numbuh 100!” A blonde boy named Chad Dickson, seven years old and Numbuh 274, ran up on
stage. “Can I arm-wrestle with you?”

“Arm-wrestle?”

“Yeah! Pretty please?” Chad had hopeful eyes.

“Do it! Do it! Do it!”

“Eh heh… Alright, if you want to.” Andrew said sheepishly. They went to sit at a table on the
stage and locked hands. Numbuh 258.55 signaled the match: “GO!”

Office

Numbuh 100 was later outside the Supreme Leader’s office as 258.55 handed him the key. “Your
job begins now, Sir. And I must say, that was a fantastic match.”

“I lost.” Andrew said in misery.

“I know! I guess we know who the runner-up is.” The boy laughed. “Well, enjoy your office. I’ll
be at the Tactical Station. Byeee.” He waved and walked off.

Andrew unlocked the door to his new, cleaned office. Any references to Numbuh 296 were
removed, and ‘Numbuh 100’ was written on the label. He sat at the desk and took a quick look at
the files, then started up his computer. “Well, if this isn’t a break from being out in the field.”
Travis said as he walked in, looking around. “You finally made it, Andy. Safe behind the front
lines, telling everyone else to risk their lives.”

“I could write you up for barging in.”
“Please, Andy. If that were how you roll, I would be bowing and calling you ‘Your Highness.’”

“Told you not to mention thaaaaat.”

“No no, I get it.” Travis chuckled. “You want people to like you for who you are and not someone fancy or special. You’re just like that Churchill boy: you’re a kid like the rest of us and that’s all you want people to see you as.”

Andrew gave a light sigh. When he was still in training, he remembered missing the ship to go home and had to rely on Travis Wickens to take him back. To Travis’s surprise, he was asked by Andrew to take him to the top of a mountain called Mariejoa. The guards questioned why he was on the World Government’s headquarters, but Andrew told them he asked Travis to bring him home. They chose to let Travis go with the promise he wouldn’t speak of this. And Andrew was scolded by his father for not telling Travis to bring him to his brother, Sandy’s house, so that a private ship could come get him. When Andrew and Travis began to interact more, he was sincerely grateful that he didn’t tell more people about Andrew’s connections.

Around that time, Travis introduced Andrew to some new cadets led by a rich boy named Henry Churchill. He compared Henry to Andrew, and Henry also swore to secrecy since he already knew who he was. The World Government was mostly secret to ordinary citizens and they preferred to keep it that way, for their own sakes.

“It’s just part of me thinks I should let everyone know.” Andrew said. “I want to be someone people can trust.”

“You do your own thing with that.” Travis replied. “But it doesn’t really matter where you come from, as long as you’re a great leader that leads his operatives on the right path. So whether or not you feel it’s important for your followers to know your background… that’s up to you. Anyway, good luck. But lift some weights ’cause that was silly.” Travis shut the door and left.

Andrew felt a blush form on his cheeks. He sighed and embraced the peace and quiet. *Lucky Travis… doesn’t know the whole story.*

**Johnson Home**

Hours later, Andrew landed outside a small house in Cleveland close to the beach. “Welcome home, Andy.” His mother, Roxy greeted him with a hug and kiss. She was a young, thin woman with long brown hair and purple eyes, wearing a purple sundress, and went barefoot. “I just made dinner for the others, but I can make something for you real quick.”

“Big Bro!” Andrew’s 5-year-old brother, Sandy kicked a small rubber ball at him. He wore a towel cape and green swim shorts. He liked to hang out at the beach. “You shoulda seen the castle I built today! It was as big as our house!”

“Kicking it down was a blast!” one of their three cousins yelled from the dinner table.

“Build a bigger one next time!”

Roxy was a member of the Earthbender Family Quartzite, and Sandy inherited her powers. Their cousins were the sons of Roxy’s brother and also possessed earthbending. “I think I’ll eat at Dad’s place. He’s gonna be here soon.”

“Mom, why don’t *we* ever go to Dad’s?” Sandy whined.

“I miss them too, but Sandy, it’s probably best we don’t get involved with their work. Say, why
don’t you and Andrew play catch in the yard before-…” They heard an engine roaring and looked out in the backyard. A small black ship landed, intending to camouflage in the night as the dark-clothed pilot awaited Andrew.

“Maybe some other time…” The older brother headed outside. “See you later, Mom. Bro.” The two stared with concern as Andrew boarded the ship.

Mariejoa; God’s Castle

Andrew quickly crossed from calm and restful night to eternal day. The land that was “ruled by God” never saw darkness. How any normal human got sleep in this town was beyond him.

“ANDYYYY, ANDYYYY!” A woman with shiny brown hair in many curls twirled on the doorstep to the castle in her pink dress. “Welcome home, my little prince!”

“Nice to see you, Lady Jennifer.” Andrew politely smiled. “Is Dad home?”

“Nuh-uh, he went out to McDonald’s. I’m just kiddiiinng! He’s where he always is, go on in, go on iiiin…” She danced while Andrew walked past her.

Andrew entered the chamber with giant flames surrounding the throne. The five Leader thrones were empty, so only His Highness was present. “Ever think about turning the heat down?” Andrew asked.

The King’s legs were arched over the armrest and his head was turned away. “Kids Next Door is wonderful, isn’t it? I remember when I was a boy… my father and I watched from this very throne as an army of ordinary children overthrew the demons. It all goes to prove who we really are, Son. Where we really belong.” He faced Andrew, showing the flashing 8-ball in his left eye.

“Dad, why do we need to do this? Why can’t we just… go live with Mom and Sandy, leave all this behind?”

“Oh, Son…” Reggie Johnson stood and slowly stepped down the stairs, his metal armor clanking. “As much as I love your mother, the only real flaw about her is her bending. Power like that… power like this… it was never meant to exist. If I don’t control it, no one else will. My entire family has lived to see the way we can make this world the way it’s supposed to. One day, you will have this duty, Andrew. You… the One Hundredth King.”

“But I don’t want to, Dad. And I don’t think there’s anything wrong with this. Even if the Dimensional Fusion is real… is it really so bad?”

“You are still a boy… I don’t expect you to understand. But… you will… in time…” Reggie gripped the Octogan and slowly pulled it out of his socket.

Andrew was repulsed by the sight and the sound. “Dad, please. I don’t want anything to do with that.”

“You need to master your Haki, Son. Only then will the Octogan accept you as its host. But the only way to learn is through training. No matter… the PAIN!” Reggie shoved it into Andrew’s hand without warning.

“AAAAAAAAHHHHH!” Andrew burned from the unfathomable sensation, and visions whipped before his eyes. Planets melding together, a gate bursting open, the universe awash in a wave of power, and five beings cleaning it up.

“Huff, huff!” Andrew was given a break, desperately catching his breath.
“What have you learned, boy?” asked Reggie. “Tell me what you remember.”

“The universe is flooding with energy.” Andrew gasped. “Chi, magic, Bang Gas, physics, Four Forces that grow stronger every day. One day, the power will tear the universe apart.”

“Correct, boy. And the ultimate cause of these powers is?”

“The Dimensional Fusion. Where numerous dimensions and its people get merged into one. But I don’t see how that can be possible.”

“Perhaps this will clarify.” Reggie put the Octogan in his hand again.

“Wait, Dad—AAAAAAHHHH!” An image flashed of a triangular portal, and Andrew was sucked into its light. He saw a boy with a straw hat, a girl with deep blue hair, a girl with white hair in a ponytail, a purple titan wearing a gauntlet with six gems, a swordsman clad in green… Then he saw the entire Kids Next Door army, standing proud while a storm of worlds rained down upon them.

Andrew was released from the pain again. “A powerful deity has made a single world using material from other worlds. He collected energy from those worlds and continues to build this one. It’s becoming too much for our universe to handle. If it falls apart, the other worlds could be destroyed.”

“And the World Government?”

“The World Government is dedicated to stopping it. The five World Leaders—the original five, are the incarnations of gods who wish to protect the other worlds. They teamed up with the first King, a denizen of our Original World, and who held the power to make this possible. All the World Leaders have been reincarnations of these gods. The Octogan has saw them, brought them all together. We continue to work to break the Dimensional Fusion.”

“And see that it stays broken. The World Government will design a New World Order: returning these worlds to their natural order, and ensuring they never cross borders again.”

“But if the worlds are broken, won’t that make chaos, too?”

“Not under our control. Trust me, Andrew, when I say this is for the good of all beings in all universes. You may not understand now, but you will. I sense death approaching. Despair in your Kids Next Door.”

“Are you threatening my organization?!” Andrew asked in a rage.

“I’m making no threats, I’m giving you a warning. Terrible things will happen in the near future. The Octogan foresees it all.”

“Not if I have anything to say about it! I’ll protect my operatives with my life! I’ll make your Magic 8 Ball look like a joke.” Andrew turned and stomped away.

“Go to sleep, Andrew. In the morning, you have school, then Haki practice. You are lucky to have people help you to prepare yourself.”

“I’ll be LUCKY if Jennifer turns the fucking SUN off!!”

Andrew’s father made him touch the Octogan every night, hoping for the day it will adapt to Andrew’s company. When Andrew tries to sleep in the darkest room possible in this sunlit town,
He tosses and turns, haunted by the Octogan’s visions. The triangular portal appears again, but this time it’s in the chest of some jester. Twenty keys unlock the huge gate, unleashing a wave of energy, followed by sounds of thousands of breaking glass.

His vision became a green mist as he saw one of his operatives, Dillon Simmons. “Huh? Who’s there?” asked Dillon.

“Dillon, it’s me! Can you hear me?” Andrew asked.

“Well who are you?! Show yourself!”

Andrew couldn’t respond in time before the green mist unveiled Koda Shrieves, who looked mad as he was surrounded in darkness. This was followed by glimpses of a brain in a glass dome and a dark silhouette with an arrow on its head.

Andrew woke up sweating and panting. It seems like no hours passed under this unchanging sky. Andrew would then have school with 13-year-old Henry Churchill and a 12-year-old boy named Lucas Nickel – but he wanted to be called Lucas Stonebuddy. Apparently, Henry inherited the “will” of late World Leader, Don Quixote Homing. After his false decommissioning, he was brought to Mariejoa. During Henry’s time in Kids Next Door, he was a leader respected by his peers. He made himself to be so friendly and inspiring that five sectors in Europe decided to merge into one under his leadership. Those sectors split apart when he left.

Lucas’s story was very odd, because he claimed to be a reincarnation of someone from 4,000 years ago. Even Lucas didn’t understand himself, he just had a feeling that he was. The strange form of earthbending Lucas possessed was inherited from that ancestor. King Reggie confirmed the story with his Octogan, and that this ancient incarnation was ashamed of himself for being a “foreign contaminate.” Reggie promised that, in time, Lucas would learn that he was right to be ashamed.

“Class, it’s time to brush up on your vocabulary!” Felius Umbridge, their English teacher announced. “Presently, Master Churchill has top marks in the class, so I highly advocate you follow his example, Felius Umbridge emboldens.”

Felius was also a World Leader, long running at 60-something years old. She first realized her identity as a “reborn god” when a wizard wiped part of her memory with a magic spell. The Obliviate spell opened her mind in that brief moment, and sensing this, the King of the World came down to take her to Mariejoa. Felius detested wizards for their absurd power. When her Muggle mother and newborn Muggle brother separated from their wizard father and sister, Felius used her World Government connections to support them.

When Henry had a break, he wanted to rest in the peace and quiet of Daphne Anderson’s indoor rose garden. While colorful roses grew outside, it was gray and dull inside. She only grew gray and black roses, but the black roses were meant for picking dead. She was a frightening shadowbender who could use her shadow to connect a person’s life with a plant’s life. She linked people to black roses, and when the rose was picked dead, the person dies. Then a gray rose would appear in her garden.

Finally, there was Jennifer Bush, the oldest World Leader at 4,000-something. She was inhabiting an immortal body that would only be Resurrected if killed. She believed it was the Will of God that brought the original Leaders together, and God wanted them to fix the universe.

Whatever, Andrew didn’t care about these people or their backstories. All he cared about was the Kids Next Door. The place where kids were free, a person’s background didn’t matter, everyone was happy, everyone had friends. Andrew ruled out death as a possibility, he thought it was
beyond the morals of the typical evil adult.

A few months into the job, a supervillain named Jonah Icarus made himself known and began stirring suspicion. Andrew entrusted Travis and a team of operatives from Sectors Q and T to investigate the villain. The team returned with schematics of a machine that could age children into adults. But there was someone missing: “Where’s Travis?” Andrew asked.

“Numbuh 283… He was killed.” Mario Ramsey spoke with regret.

“What?” Andrew felt his breath escape.

“Jonah got him with a knife. We were able to get his body back. Should we… bring him to his family?”

Andrew was struck silent for a moment before he gave the approval to do so. The nightmares the Octogan gave him were proven true. One of them, at least. Andrew swore vengeance to Jonah Icarus, and saw to his capture.

(“For more detail, read Sixth Age!” Palutena recommended.)

(“You don’t remember what happened, do you?”)

(“I have a busy schedule, Pit. That’s why I need you to write summaries.”)

(“I just wanna know why me and Jonah have the same last name.”)

When Andrew returned home the night after their victory against Icarus, his father had prepared dinner for him. Andrew sat at the table before the throne and started on his steak, peas, and mashed potatoes. “The Octogan saw the horrible tragedy you just experienced.” Reggie said.

“The Octogan needs to stay out of my life.”

“Jonah Icarus is the man responsible. But there is another guilty party at work. Do you know why he came to be here? How he was able to do what he did? An aging machine requires Time Chi in order to function. Where do you believe he got ahold of such material? Let me SHOW YOU!” Reggie slapped the Octogan on Andrew’s head. (Play “Uneasy Air” from Ib.)

A guy in a motorcycle mask—two people falling through a sea of clocks—a robot with a plasma cannon—

Andrew fell out of his seat. “Don’t fucking do that to me when I’m EATING!!”

“An operative was murdered by an evil adult! A friend was taken from you! Just like a boy I admired, Numbuh Zero, was taken from me. He didn’t die, but the same phenomena is responsible: the Dimensional Fusion. It will be responsible for many other tragedies, and it’s our job to stop it!”

“That’s the dumbest thing ever!” Andrew jumped up and punched the table. “Blaming all the world’s problems on some ‘godly’ phenomena, that’s STUPID! Bad things happen because we let them happen! Travis died because of my own faulty leadership!” He started to cry. “My operatives depend on me… to help them get back up after they’ve fallen down. I’m going to keep leading them… so that I can inspire them. I’m not going to let anything stop me. Not you, God, or the Dimensional Fusion.”

Andrew continued to lead Kids Next Door for three years. He would remain loyal until the day he was decommissioned. He witnessed the arrival of many new and aspiring operatives – Nigel Uno,
Nolan York, Rachel T. McKenzie… Andrew saw good things to come from these kids. Not from the Octogan’s vision, but he just knew. Maybe it was his Observation Haki that told him. Andrew had been mastering the basic forms of Haki, and he would teach Chad in his free time. The pain he felt from Travis’s death was slowly sinking, there hadn’t been any major tragedies these past few years. The worst thing that happened was a chickenpox crisis done by petty teens. There were some issues regarding cadets with bending powers; Chad banned these kids, following an old law that said benders weren’t allowed.

Despite Chad’s attitude for some respects, Andrew believed he was the most capable person to succeed him. On his 13th birthday, Andrew accepted his decommissioning proudly. “Andrew, why don’t you wanna join TND?” Chad asked. “You can still be our friend, you can still help us.”

“I just don’t think I’m right for Teens Next Door. I… couldn’t. Even if I wanted to.”

“Sigh… We’re all gonna miss you, Andrew. Good-bye… and thanks for everything.” Chad pulled the lever and sucked his teacher’s memories away with the plunger device.

Since the Second Age of Kids Next Door, their memory-erasing devices were powered by the Octogan’s energy. It lasted to this day, even in their modern devices. That’s why Andrew was immune to losing his memory. At least now, his old friends wouldn’t be concerned about him. But Andrew kept tabs on the Kids Next Door. He learned about their newest missions. Sector V, led by Nigel Uno, have become famous, Rachel McKenzie became Supreme Leader after Chad, and Nolan was making a name for himself. But bad things happened.

Dillon Simmons was killed. Koda Shrieves went rogue, killed operatives, then was killed himself. In fact, both were killed by a group called the Brotherhood of Evil. Andrew learned of it all from the Octogan’s power. When Andrew was 15, the powerful gem began to adapt with him. The pain he felt from touching it was growing smaller and smaller. It allowed him to watch the KND with a clearer vision. Things had become… much different.

Nigel Uno was accepted to GKND. His great-grandfather was a savage Demon King. Demons were enemies to God. Nigel Uno was an enemy to God—no… Nigel was a great operative. He defied his great-grandfather. In the months following, element benders made their presence known. Because of the incident with Revan Bane 30 years ago, benders had to hide their powers. They were no longer hiding. Inspired by Negatar Gnaa, they reappeared. They made friends. And then…

The universe was destroyed by God Arceus. It was put back together, but Andrew already knew, that was a taste of what was coming. In 2032, a cataclysm will destroy everything. The Scattered Realms Arceus created leaked more unstable energy into the universe. Like the Octogan predicted, it was growing. There were more benders, and they were free to do what they pleased. Benders became the superior force in the new Kids Next Door, and the dangers they would face go beyond the average evil adult.

Why was Andrew feeling so angry? Why should he be upset, knowing his organization was making proud strides and open minds, things greater than he had ever done under his leadership? Why shouldn’t he have faith that, if anything terrible were to happen, the Kids Next Door could handle it? A new generation that was descended from the heroes in the Benders’ Dawn. Why shouldn’t Andrew expect great things from them?

...Because it was organized.

Andrew gasped. There was no one in the room except for the Octogan. The Octogan his father left behind to bond with his son. “Are you… talking to me?”
You love the Kids Next Door… You save yourself the trouble of spoilers and look into the future through me. You cannot deny that the ones responsible for Travis, Koda, and Dillon’s deaths were a result of the Dimensional Fusion. And now that fusion is growing to a point where disorder is inevitable.

“But why do you say it was organized?”

The “proud strides” and “open minds” that have occurred in your Kids Next Door… have been the work of puppeteers tugging on strings. The Seven Lights and Thirteen Darknesses that you know will open the door… Everything that has happened and that will happen is all for the purpose to open that door. The ideals of development and growth are an illusion. Those things only happen because the puppeteers desire them to. They give those children a false feeling of hope and belief so they can channel it into power. You must not let such feelings overwhelm you. You have the power of Truth and Law. He who defines law controls the universe. That is why there must be World Leaders in a world where law is slowly decaying.

“I… I don’t believe you. Even if there are strings at work… the Kids Next Door can break those strings.”

Are you absolutely certain? What if Travis’s death was to tighten the strings of his younger sister? What if Dillon’s death tightened the strings on young Nolan? His betrayal of the KND, his redemption and marriage to Danika to give birth to a son, they are one move of strings after another. Nigel Uno’s return and marriage to Rachel, the fact that both Doug and Gwen could be alive, every… single… step… has been the work of a puppeteer.

“You’re LYING!”

See for yourself where the Puppet Show is going to end. See where your precious Kids Next Door will take their final BOW!

Rachel was lying dead. Nolan was lying dead. Their children despaired, they had lost. Their destruction was nigh. Cheren was dead, Dillon was dead, Miyuki, Sheila—

“ENOUGH!” Andrew cried. “It can’t happen! It can’t…”

No spoilers, is that what you want? When a puppet serves its worth, it must die. Every happy ending has been to captivate the audience until the climax. The only person that can decide a different ending is you, Andrew. And if these puppets were to defy you, even if you cherish them… you must let them burn.

King Andrew sat in silent despair. “Are my feelings… really my own? Or is the puppeteer… pulling strings on me?”

What do you believe?

Andrew didn’t feel them. He didn’t see them. But he sensed… that the strings were on him. They would make his brother marry a simple Minish. They were driving the Linlin Pirates into hunting Sugary Wonders. All of it was due to a puppeteer leading to an ultimate climax. …Andrew would not be part of it.

“I’m cancelling the show.” He stood and pulled the invisible strings off. “I’m going to save these worlds…” He picked up the frying pan that was his signature helmet. The ‘100’ had faded, but traces were still there. He put it over his head. “And my organization.”

The very next day, Reggie Johnson was overwhelmed by the Octogan and destroyed. Andrew
donned his armor… as the One Hundredth King of the World. “What are your orders, Your Majesty?” Lucas Stonebuddy asked.

“…We pull the strings in our favor.”

Remember what Chad said in Seven Lights, Chapter 2? Little backshadow. So yeah… this ends Before They Were Kings. Thank you to those who read, stay tuned for other stories.
Eleven Days

Chapter Summary

Cheren Uno and Sunni Chariton head for the final confrontation with Morgan Uno.

We are beginning the Opening Saga today, people! Brace yourselves, for this is the last arc of Legend of the Seven Lights. We are gonna find the remaining Firstborn and fight the remaining villains. And guess who’s first.

Chapter 72: Eleven Days

World Leaders’ Throne

“The Seven Lights are found, tut-tut!” Felius Umbridge shook frantically. “THE SEVEN LIGHTS ARE FOUND! The Kids Next Door have made a joke of us and it was not funny! –Felius Umbridge is not impressed!”

“The Octogan is not behaving!” King Andrew yelled as he clutched the squirming 8-ball. “It is as though it was deceived by the Fake Prophecy as well! But we will not allow these alleged writers to return to this world! The Octogan has collected more than enough souls from the Spirit World. We will conduct the Grand Inferius before long.”

“It must happen soon.” Lucas Stonebuddy followed. “With CP10 defeated, the Kids Next Door will become more rebellious than ever. I have taken the liberty of establishing bounties for all of them. Already, the ‘Sky Dragon’ Wendy Marvell stands at $7,000,000, and Augustus von Fizzuras, who insists on being called ‘Stone Fist’, is at 700,000 Chocolate Dollars. Shall we view the posters for the most notable operatives?” The Octogan projected holograms in the air of wanted posters.

“Maiden of Balance” Aurora Uno: $33,000

“Devil’s Eye” Chris Uno: $43,000

“Sunny Fist” Sheila Frantic: $77,000

“Dark Seed” Dillon York: $23,000

“Sweet Virus” Vanellope von Schweetz: 5,000 EXP

“Quick Works” Haylee Gilligan: $20x40

“Son of Earth” Anthony McKenzie: 10,000 cents

“Thunder Storm” Fybi Fulbright: 88,000 Rupees

“Snow Sparkle” Suki Crystal: 500 gingerbread cookies (or the money it would cost to buy that much)

“Bigmouth” Chimney Ukeru: 200 train tickets
“Walking Mountain” Mocha: 50 giant coins

“Reborn Artist” April Goldenweek: $57,000

“Soccer Star” Karin Kurosaki: ¥70,000

“Mad Conqueror” Maddy Murphy: 55 free punches for your bully

“King of Fools” Zach Murphy: 6,000,000 Goober Dollars

“Overactive” Sunni Chariton: 53,000 pretend dollars

“Everybody’s Friend” Cheren Uno: 10,000,000 Rupees

“You can’t expect anyone to want to seize most of those bounties.” Felius commented.

“Those are only joke prices.” Henry mentioned, turning a page in his book. “What’s life without a little humor.”

“‘Everybody’s Friend’ is a curious epithet to give him.” Lucas noted.

“But it is accurate. Like his father before him, Cheren Uno’s greatest talent is his ability to make friends.” King Andrew said. “It’ll be almost impossible to defeat a boy with as many friends as he has. But even the power of friendship does not compare to the Octogon.”

“The question is, will Morgan’s power compare to his?” Daphne Anderson asked.

“Ah ha ha!” Jennifer Bush laughed. “Don’t worry, Morgan Dear will be fine! She’ll rip that boy apart! But if she doesn’t… well, we’ll give her a worthy funeral.”

KND Moonbase

Joey Beatles was trapped inside a glass chamber, his hands bound in thick cuffs. “Shurorororo!” Caesar Clown laughed as he stared at him. “Fifteen years ago, you made off with my greatest achievement. Now here you are, trapped and under my prying eye. So, tell me, Mr. Beatles… is the Mammal-Mammal Fruit as great as I hoped it would be?”

“Mr. Clown, we didn’t bring him here to be a zoo animal.” MaKayla King stated.

“Although if he wanted to, he could be his own zoo.” Lola noted.

“Do you think we could use Joey’s DNA to heal Mew’s condition?”

“Well, of course! How do you think I created the Mammal Fruit to begin with?”

“What do you mean?”

“My good friend, Doflamingo discovered a fossil left by the Firstborn Mew twenty years ago, curiously after Arceus’s little rampage. He gave it to me, and from the traces of DNA, mixed with extra ingredients, I designed a Devil Fruit that contains Mew’s shape-shifting powers. Based on Darcy’s story, Mew lost a great portion of energy in Team Rocket’s project. Perhaps Mew can recover his lost energy through contact with Joey.”

“Wouldn’t that cost Joey his powers?” Miyuki asked.

“If I am both correct and lucky, Joey may be able to keep his powers. All Mew should need is the
chi that is present in the DNA of all those animals. Lucario surmises that it was Mew’s DNA Chi that was drained in order to revive Acnologia. Acnologia is famous for being a hybrid dragon, and Mew is considered to be the Original Hybrid. That’s why his energy was perfect for restoring a hybrid and vice-versa. Joey’s DNA has already been strongly altered by the Bang Gas, so at the very least, his powers will be mostly inoperable for some time. But I shall gladly help my dearest subject to recover.”

“He isn’t your subject.” Kayla reminded. “Because Kirie’s mother was killed, her family needs someone else to support them. Joey can fill Kuki’s shoes… as soon as he’s in his right state of mind.”

“Weren’t some people already trying to help some Madotsuki girl?” Terry asked.

“I think that issue is taken care of for the most part. But we really can’t spend much time on them. We must prepare for the Apocalypse and whatever the World Government plans to do next.”

Meanwhile, on the bridge, the operatives were viewing wanted posters on the Global Tactical Station’s screen. “I’m worth 43,000?!” Chris Uno exclaimed. “That’s so cool!”

“‘Dark Seed’?” Dillon questioned. “It’s kind of badass.” He smiled sheepishly.

The base suddenly rumbled under a powerful force. “What was that?!?” Aeincha exclaimed, having felt it greater.

“Oh, that’s just Maddy and Sheila.” Mocha replied with a casual smile. “Sheila challenged Maddy for the highest Power Level, so they’re fighting in the gym.”

“Sunny Fist vs. Black Fist can’t be a good combo.” Apis said.

“Sheila didn’t want her to use that name.”

“Guys, we’re back from the White House!” Aaron Doblemitz called as he and Rhillian entered the bridge. “We brought Jessie and Kimaya like you asked.”

“Now is someone gonna tell me what the HELL was with that voodoo?!” Kimaya Heartly shouted.

“I was possessed by a spooky ghosty!” Suki shuddered. “I only want Jack Frost inside me!”

“It wasn’t an ordinary ghost.” Jessie Sidney replied. “It was Calliope, the one who wrote the prophecy. And the one we’re trying to destroy is the same one Polokus told me. Lord Calliborn English. I don’t know why I couldn’t say his name before.”

“This is bullshit, man!” Kimaya complained. “I just learned about this prophecy five days ago, now some giant green ghost thingy is gonna destroy the universe?!”

“WHAT HAVE I been telling you?!?” Jinta exclaimed. “The world ends, with giant, green, skeleton. I’m smarter than ALL OF YOU!”

“Great, Jinta.” Karin retorted. “Now you can DIE happy.”

“You know what, why did we waste time doing this stupid quest if it was gonna bring back a monster?!” Anthony asked angrily. “Why don’t we just not bring the Lights to the Gate thingy?!”

“Because the universe is doomed either way.” Everyone turned to face Jagar King.

“Where does that guy keep coming from?” Quill Ramsey asked. “Scares the crap outta me.”
“If we do nothing, the Netherverse’s energy will leak from the moons and destroy the universe.” Jagar recapped. “Arceus will leave behind survivors to design a new one, people that have six letters in either of their names. But if Lord English is reborn, not only is our universe doomed, but all parallel universes and even the Original Worlds will be in jeopardy. This is why I feared completing the prophecy. The result of opening the Time Gate is worse than letting the Apocalypse transpire.”

“No it isn’t!” Harvey Harper yelled. “If you defeat Lord Gnik, Lord English won’t come back! Don’t you think you can beat him?”

“I… I don’t know.” Jagar bowed his head. “Every time I try to see into the future—to this very point—I’m blind! The Octogan clouds my vision. I don’t know if I’ll win or lose. And even if I did, I don’t know what will happen! What if… What if Calliope can’t be trusted, either?”

“DON’T SAY THAT!” Aurora shouted. Jagar jumped and looked at her. The kids all faced Aurora curiously. “When Calliope was speaking to us just then… she sounded sincere. She sounded like she really wants to save us and she really wants our help. All this time, Calliope and Caliborn have been fighting for the fate of the universe. Caliborn got people like Team Gnik and Medusa to do his dirty work, but Calliope got those Dimension Rebels and the Zoni, and they’ve been helping us the whole way. We have to trust Calliope, and we have to believe in her. Mr. King… you’re Calliope’s vessel. You need to be strong for her and beat Ragaj.”

Jagar bowed again. “You’re right… I’ve been afraid for too long. For twenty years, the Chrono Staff gave me the answers to everything except this day. I guess I believed my future was set. I didn’t think I could change what was to happen, and the burden of having to wait and see overcame me. But I’m going to write the future.” He looked up with passion in his eyes. “I WILL defeat Ragaj and prevent Caliborn from coming back!”

“That’s the spirit, Mr. King!” Aurora cheered. “First we need to wait for Sunni to rescue Cheren. They should be back soon.”

**Midway Peak**

Sunni finally set foot on the balcony of Midway Peak. The place was quiet and vacant except for tables, as it was the former setting for a party. Near the start of this month, the five Corporate Presidents and rich nobles gathered here, and Head President Morgan led the gala. Now it was dead and quiet, much like most of the Corporate Presidents. The presidents had all been defeated, so that just left one.

Sunni drew a small Creative Summons symbol on a paper and tapped it, spawning Peas using her psychicbending. “Howdy do, Sunni!” The tiny Friend jumped on her shoulder. “Do ya have someone ya want me to beat up??”

“No, Peas.” Sunni giggled. “You were the first Friend I formed a Creative License with, so I want you to go in with me. I’m going to bring these Sacred Treasures back to Cheren, then we’re gonna fight President Morgan.”

“Are you sure you’re up for this, Sunni? Morgan is the most powerful psychicbender in the world.”

“No she isn’t. At least, she won’t be for long. I’ll show her what true Imaginary Friendship is about. First, I wanna bring one more!” Sunni whipped out her lightsaber and cut a symbol on the floor. Sunni planted her hand against it and puffed a cloud of smoke, summoning a new Friend.

Mary Goldenweek wore a bright smile and saluted. “Salutations! Mary Goldenweek reporting for
duty, Captain Sunni!"

“Calm down, Mary.” Sunni grinned. “You’re not soldiers in the army, you’re Friends. Now, are you ready to rescue Cheren with me?”

“Are we going to fight the bad people that killed Cheren’s dad?”

“Not yet, Mary. That’ll come later.”

“Irregardless, I am ready to help my friend!” Mary held crayons between her fingers.

“Then let’s get to it!” Sunni smirked. “Mary, Peas, we’re going in!” (Play “Disco Star” from the Spongebob Movie Game!)

**Stage 67: Midway Gala**

**Mission: Rescue Cheren and defeat President Morgan!**

**Act 1**

Sunni and Mary walked up the stairs and entered the party room of Midway Gala. Fly Guys were sweeping the floor with vacuum-mops, making them too slippery to walk across. The girls jumped on a table, and Sunni used psychic to float them both to individual tables to get across the room. They set foot on the stairs to the second floor, having to jump a rolling red carpet. Above the stairs, three Groove Guys twirled up and dove at the intruders. Mary dodged while coloring White Crayon on her spot, causing a Groove Guy to be stuck like glue. Sunni slapped the other two with Psychic Stun before they proceeded down the hall.

The further they ventured, the passage seemed to morph into a colorful, polygonal dimension. The next minute, Sunni, Mary, and Peas were on a platform within a dimension lit by a giant disco ball in the sky. The distant space was designed like flashing floor tiles, whose colors made pixel images of Mario, Link, and Sonic – switching between forms of either character. “I’m feeling a lot of psychic energy in the air.” Sunni said. “This must be an illusory world created by Morgan.”

“Wow… Morgan must have tons more crayons than I do.” Mary said with a frown. The kids jumped across some colored tile platforms whose positions changed along with the changing background. They used Sunni’s psychic for safer landing on the tiles. Afterwards, they arrived at a straight path with Invader Guys floating over – Shy Guys in UFOs. They sent yellow beams at the floor, and when Sunni was caught in one, the UFO smashed down. Sunni recovered, and they took care to avoid the saucers while crossing.

The path had a dead end, and the next area was too far to float to with psychic (why must it have limitations in levels?). However, Sunni had the idea to toss Peas into one of the UFO lights, then she pulled the Friend out before the saucer smashed down. Sunni and Mary jumped on the UFO like a platform, facing the direction of the intended area so the Shy Guy would go that way (apparently, it was confused about its purpose now, so it helped them). The kids jumped off on a platform before a series of round, rotating platforms with alternating abstract images.

Upon setting foot on the platforms, Sunni and Mary felt the need to make graceful dancing motions. Groove Guys were dancing on floating disco balls, and if the kids got underneath, they would smash down. Sunni and Mary made the right motions to avoid them, and had to make correct motions when aligned with the next platform. Eventually, they danced to a stable platform with an empty doorway, but passing it caused the dimension to morph back into a normal hallway.
A locked door blocked the way, but they heard music coming from an open window above.

“Go for it, Peas.” Sunni threw the little Friend up there, giving Peas view of a party room where Shy Guys occupied the dance floor. Peas crossed a mini walkway to a chandelier of candles, where half the candles lit up on their respective intervals. There was always a safe spot between two lit candles, so Peas had to jump along those spaces to get across. The pea continued on a normal path, which went under a ceiling that was being swept by Broom Guys. The giant brooms swooshed left, right, left, right, and Peas had to quickly rush across before they would shove him off. The pea located a large key and mustered the strength to pick it up and carry it back through the trials.

Peas brought the key back to Sunni, who could open the locked door. The following room had another locked door and a wall of spider webs leading up to a high ceiling. Spinarak Pokémon crawled around the webs, and Mary took the liberty of climbing up with Glue Crayons. She avoided the spider Pokémon and pulled the key free at the top of the webs, dropping down for Sunni to catch her. They opened the door to a long hallway, wherein they stood on a ledge above an electrified floor.

The walls on either side had unlit candles. Mary stylishly tossed an Orange Flame Crayon across the right row, lighting the candles up perfectly, but the left row was too low for her to get a good angle. However, those candles were close enough for Peas to jump across, and they led to a small platform with a red nozzle. Peas jumped on the nozzle’s switch to shoot fireballs across the candles. When both rows were lit, the electricity vanished, allowing Sunni and Mary to cross the hall without worry.

The passage became wider as they viewed paintings on either side. They were portraits of the Corporate Presidents. The left wall had Carter Pewterschmidt, Norman Osborn, Charles Burns, Don Quixote Doflamingo, and Gozaburo Kaiba. The right wall had Morgan Uno, Mom, Ted Wassanasong, Giovanni, and an unknown president with white hair, a white mustache, and white tuxedo. “I guess he’s a new recruit?” Sunni wondered. “They have been losing a lot of members.” The group continued past a door, but the level didn’t end here. (End song.)

The path ahead was lined with giant Vikings, wielding axes and spiked pants. The only parts of their pants that weren’t spiky was the pelvic area. Sunni noticed a maestro on her left, ready to conduct, and a sign above that read Giant Nuts. No doubt this was a music level. And Sunni knew just what to do. (Play “Ode to the Nut Shot” from Robot Chicken!)

Act 2: Giant Nuts

Sunni ran forth, the first giant raised its axe, then Sunni jumped and kicked him in the groin! She ran and kicked another one, then up to another one, the giants charged from ahead, but she jumped and kicked their groin with excellent timing! Giants dropped from above with legs conveniently split, they flew back clutching their groins from Sunni’s strong kicks! A row of giants charged ahead, a giant flew from behind with a leg extended, so she ducked and allowed that giant to kick the others down like dominoes! To cross their bodies, Sunni jumped up a stairway of Fly Guys, bouncing in tune with the music.

Once up top, Sunni kicked more giants’ nuts that came with the faster beats. An upside-down giant was clogging a hole she had to jump down—Sunni had to Ground Pound his groin three times to get through. The music grew softer as the following giants tried to brace their selves, only to fail. A giant squirrel was making an acorn pile—Sunni kicked through it. A giant astronaut was slowly descending, she jumped and kicked him in the groin, watching him fly up and collide with a moon. The song ended as Sunni encountered the maestro. The man was humbly bowing to his audience, so Sunni charged one final kick to his groin. The final note strummed and Sunni completed the
level. (End song.)

“If that wasn’t the weirdest thing I ever did.” Sunni remarked as they entered a gymnasium. She gasped, “CHEREN!”

The boy had just defeated another team of Anti Guys using Demon State. He whipped around. “Sunni!” The Fury Mode vanished as he ran over. “Did you actually hear my telepathy?”

“It’s not telepathy when you’re thinking something.” :P Sunni stuck her tongue out. “I just happened to hear what you’re thinking at the time.”

“Friend Cheren!” Mary jumped up and embraced him in a hug.

“Ah! Mary!” Cheren blushed. “You came all the way up here, too?”

“Well, I did the flying part.” Sunni noted. “Then I warped her and Peas up here.”

“Howdy!” The pea saluted on her shoulder.

“I think these belong to you?” Sunni reached in her pocket and pulled out the mini Sacred Casket. After she resized it, Cheren touched the magenta gem as the box flashed open, the Three Sacred Treasures appearing on his person.

Fi leapt out of the Master Sword. “Master, it is wonderful to be with you again.”

“According to Rogue Goddess Medusa, further use of the Multiverse Portal is no longer necessary. However, by some unidentified phenomena, the portal and all of the material within the laboratory has mysteriously vanished. The Ocarina of Time has gone back to Tries-To-Be-Cool-As-Master Nerehc’s hands. With his permission, I have returned to my base inside the Master Sword.”

“I’ll have to talk to Nerehc after this. I’m glad you’re here, Fi, because it’s time for our next challenge. We’re going to fight Aunt Morgan and bring her back to our side.”

“I shall happily grant advice if it is necessary.” Fi returned to the sword.

“Are you ready for this, Sunni? I don’t think I can beat her without a psychicbender’s help.”

“Oh, I’m ready.” Sunni smirked. “I got something to prove to her as well.”

“It’s time to strike at Aunt Morgan’s rear quarters!” Mary cheered.

“That’s the spirit, Mary.” Sunni said with a sweatdrop. ^^;

The team of four headed up some stairs outside the gym, to the chamber where Morgan was drinking tea with General Shy Guy. “You know, Cheren, I don’t recall either of us being allowed to ask for help as part of your challenge.”

“Like you weren’t going to summon Friends to fight for you.” Cheren retorted.

“Or as she probably calls them, servants.” Sunni followed.

“I think ‘weapons’ is the word you were looking for.” Morgan replied. “A servant is one who follows trivial demands. Trivial and… pleasuring.”
“And I still declare the trials to be inhumane!” her tiny butler, Benjamin yelled from her pocket.

“How cute, you also have a tiny guy to keep you smiling.” Sunni passed a grin to Peas.

“Morgan, before we settle this, tell me the truth.” Cheren demanded. “Why did you decide to work for the World Government? And leave your old friends behind?”

Morgan closed her eyes as she recounted her thoughts. “Well, first the Kids Next Door. I joined them after the Firstborn Quest and became a member of the Undersea Lab. My Imaginary siblings and I designed 2x4 weapons that could utilize bending powers. The other scientists were afraid of being outshined by someone with a superior psychic brain, so they submitted the design ideas without crediting me, and they began to shun me. They also said that my so-called ‘siblings’ weren’t contributing because they’re just part of me. I didn’t get the same appreciation as Mika or Danika got for their talents, so I decided to leave the Kids Next Door.

“In my hometown, it became public that Buddy, Athena, Sophie, and Beckah were Imaginary Friends. Even though they behaved like their own person and I loved them, nobody else accepted them as real. And in time, I would feel the same. They didn’t age alongside me. Until the secret was known, I mind-tricked everyone into thinking they had always been by my side and they were always growing. The spells wore off when everyone learned the truth, and I didn’t want to keep exhausting power in misleading them. I dropped my siblings off at Foster’s before starting high school.

“After senior year, I began traveling to different colleges to find one that I would enjoy. And during a trip to visit West Coast Tech, I met an unusually peppy woman named Jennifer Bush, who was on a casual vacation. Little did I know I was talking to a World Leader. Jennifer sensed the powerful Psychic Chi I possessed and offered me a position in the Corporate Presidents. Jennifer gave me the opportunity to design weapons for the Government, so I helped create weapons based on my old ideas for 2x4 tech. As you could expect, the Government used superior technology.

“One day, the Head Corporate President Norman Osborn was killed by the Man With the Red Eye. I was promoted to Head President only because I was Jennifer’s apprentice. That’s when I was allowed to meet The King. He showed me the Octogan and the future that was to transpire as a result of the Twenty Keys Prophecy. The prophecy that would only come to light due to the Kids Next Door’s reckless efforts. And so, I thought back to when they disrespected me, when I began to detest them. My cousin and my old friends hadn’t let go of their old habits and began to raise their children to be monstrous delinquents who think they control the world. The Kids Next Door think their actions are just, when in reality they will destroy the universe blindly following their ‘destiny.’ I swore to King Andrew that I would-”

“Shut – the – fuck – up – you – whiny – hag.” Cheren interrupted. “Is that supposed to be a reason for me to feel sorry for you? Why didn’t you talk to my mom if the scientists were being mean to you? At that point, the KND should’ve learned better. But you chose to side with some jerk in a frying pan helmet and his magic pool ball instead of trusting your friends. I think you were just blinded by your own success and thought you were above everyone you used to care about.”

“I never believed that!” Morgan argued. “All I wanted to do was help everyone, the same thing King Andrew wants! That’s why I used my political powers to give wizards and witches more rights. They were resented in the same manner I used to be, I could understand their plight. Of course, Red Eye and that Sky Dragon girl don’t help the mages’ case. I never wanted Nigel, Kuki, or anyone to die, and the only reason they are is because you chose to follow this stupid prophecy!”

“Didn’t you see that message in the sky?!” Cheren tightened the hold on his sword, infuriated by
that statement. “King Andrew is the blind one here! The Octogan is controlling him, controlling the World Government through him! We have a chance to save the universe by helping Mr. King defeat his Negative!”

“Do you honestly believe that? How do you know this ‘Calliope’ isn’t the deceitful one?”

“Because SHE hasn’t tried to kill us a dozen times! Morgan, you seem to forget that your old friends beat the snot out of Supreme God Arceus while YOU were crying for Negatar Gnaa! They did the impossible and saved the universe! Do you honestly believe we can’t do the same thing, given how ‘monstrous’ we are?! I think you strayed farther from reality than you care to admit, Aunt Morgan! We’re going to bring you back, and then I’ll bring King Andrew back!”

“Over MAH dead carcass!” General Guy shouted. “This battle is 2-on-2! I’ll make the first move with my Tiny Man Attack!” He grabbed Benjamin and whirled his hand.

“Wait, Master General Guy! At such a velocity, I’m bound to- WAAAAAH!” The tiny butler was thrown at Sunni fast as a bullet, but Peas leaped forth and stopped him with a kick, letting Benjamin fall to the floor. Sunni scoffed and proceeded to kick him away.

“Actually, General, I would rather fight the two of them myself.” Morgan said. “Your Bo-bobo Kempo is very… uneducational.”

“UNEDUTAMEABLE?!?” the Shy Guy screamed. “Well, FINE! I’ll go over here and eat some square-shaped rice!” He stomped off.

“That’s fishcake.” Morgan corrected. “Now then.” She whipped out her lightsaber and cut a Japanese symbol on the floor, using her psychic to spawn Chompjaws into being. “Remember this one, Cheren? He’s been waiting for the second round, so why deny him? I wonder what will happen if he swallows you. Get grinded into waste or be converted into psychic energy? Let’s find out.” (Play “Graceful Assassin” from Kingdom Hearts: Re:Chain of Memories!)

**Boss fight: Morgan Uno**

Chompjaws lashed its tentacles at both kids, but Cheren and Sunni dodged to either side as the former charged a Skyward Strike to slice a tentacle off. Its individual ball parts divided and threatened to explode, so Sunni gathered them all inside a psychic bubble to contain most of the explosion. Cheren jumped on a tentacle that swung down and let it throw him up to Morgan, afterwards performing a jump attack, which the woman blocked with her lightsaber. Cheren and Morgan clashed swords on Chompjaws’ head, then Sunni flew up to aid him. Morgan swiftly defended from both attackers before flying up and shooting a giant Psycho Sphere down, missing the kids, but plowing Chompjaws into the ground.

Sunni quickly caught the sphere in her own grip and scattered its energy before it could explode, then she whipped up her lightsaber to block Morgan’s ambush. “You almost killed your Friend, didn’t you notice?!” Sunni shouted.

“A fair risk in an attempt to dispose of you.” Morgan jumped back and banished Chompjaws back to Foster’s. She teleported when Cheren jumped her from behind, appearing above and tossing five Psycho Spheres that he blocked with his Mirror Shield. Morgan binded him in place with a psychic grip before yanking Cheren up, but that’s when Peas jumped out of Cheren’s shirt and dove under Morgan’s. “UAH!” Morgan dropped her nephew and tried to grab the tiny Friend. “Dammit, get out of there you little creep! You’re as perverted as Kweeb!”
“Really, because there can’t be much under there!” Sunni grabbed Morgan’s feet in psychic and brought her to the floor.

Peas jumped out of her clothes and scampered across the floor, but in Morgan’s attempt to chase, she found her feet were glued to a white crayon splotch. “What?!”

“Hm, hm hm, hm hmm, hmmmm.” Mary hummed merrily and wagged her white Glue Crayon. Cheren and Sunni jumped the grounded president, but Morgan burst psychic and blew them back before teleporting herself free and destroying that spot with a Psycho Sphere.

Morgan warped several feet away and cut a Creative Summons symbol on the ground. “I summon Lord Perfection!” The Imaginary Friend to spawn was a purple amoeba with an angry face and jeweled crown. Lord Perfection lunged at Cheren, who sliced him in half with his sword, resulting in the amoeba dividing in two. The giant germ continued multiplying as Cheren and Sunni struggled to slice them all.

“What’s this one’s story?” Cheren asked as he sliced.

“I heard Lord Perfection was a psychicbender’s creation, designed to be some alien overlord for a make-believe game.” Morgan answered. “Sadly, he was abandoned after only a year. Goes to show how quickly Imaginary Friends lose their appeal.”

“RAAAAAH!” Cheren burned into Demon State and blew the pile of Perfection clones off. Cheren dodged to Morgan at swift speeds and threw forceful attacks with his flaming sword, which Morgan blocked with a bubble. The bubble was shattered, so the woman flew above and shot a psychic beam, but Cheren dodged and rocketed up for a flaming up-slash, only for Morgan to evade still and attempt to crush him with a psychic bubble.

The Lord Perfection clones were recovering, so Sunni summoned a giant vacuum Imaginary Friend. “Vacuumy, slurp them up!” Like a Pokémon, it obeyed its master and slurped all the amoebas into its glass capsule. Sunni saw Cheren’s situation and shot a sphere up to break Morgan’s hold, and Demon Cheren fell to the floor.

“In any other situation, what use would you have for a vacuum Friend?” Morgan questioned. “Making it clean your room like a tool?”

“For your information, I bought him cookies!” Sunni retorted.

“How sad. Let’s see how he compares to Weldar!” Morgan summoned a giant black welding torch with a snaky neck, a bulky metal body, and hissed like a snake as blue fire formed its tongue. Weldar coughed blue fireballs at Vacuumy, but Sunni defended him with a psychic shield. “Vacuumy, cough them up!” Sunni ordered, so the vacuum spat the Perfection clones at Weldar, sticking them over his body and clogging his mouth.

“Mmmmff!” Weldar burned through Perfection and spoke, “Lady Morgan, please get these off of me! I fear they are contagious!”

“You’re a giant welding torch, you can’t contact disease!” Morgan argued, but decided to comply with the request and banish Perfection back to Foster’s. “Now snuff them out!” At this, Weldar blew sapphire flames all around the room, setting the place aflame.

“WAAAAAH!” Peas ran fast as his little legs could. “SOMEBODY HELP! I don’t wanna be roasted pea!” Mary snatched the tiny Friend in her hand and drew dark-blue crayon around her area, wetting the floor and preventing the fires from burning over.
Cheren had trouble controlling the fire, so Fi told him, “Master, my analysis dictates the flames around you are partially composed of Psychic Chi. I estimate a 40% chance of commanding them to your whim.”

“Then we’ll control them together!” Sunni declared, contributing her own Psychic Chi with Cheren’s firebending. They both redirected the fire at Weldar, quickly moving it away from Peas and Mary before either of them melted.

Mary gasped at seeing Morgan with her back turned a few feet away, so with an eager smirk, the painting child ran to color Orange Flame Crayon on her. “MARY, BEHIND YOU!” Peas cried—the Morgan illusion vanished, and Mary whipped around when Morgan charged her from behind, lightsaber raised.

Mary felt herself freeze as she stared at the light sword. Time seemed to slow when Morgan jabbed the saber toward her. Life flashed before Mary’s eyes, from those endless decades inside the gallery, meeting Ib and Garry, growing furious as she tried to kill the latter, going on adventures with April’s friends, being forgiven by Ib, and hugging April after she was brought to Foster’s. She came back to reality to watch the end in the form of Morgan’s sword.

STAB!

Mary gasped and choked on her breath. Sunni warped in front of Mary and took the stab through her shoulder. “SUNNI!” Cheren cried.

“AAAAH!” Sunni blasted an astonished Morgan with psychic and fell to her knees, gripping her wounded shoulder.

“You fool!” Morgan shouted. “You took the hit for an Imaginary Friend?! They’re just bodies of psychic energy, living off your own! They aren’t worth saving!”

“YOU’RE WRONG!” Sunni whipped around. “When I formed contracts with all these Friends, I made friendships with them. I got to know them. If you knew an ounce of Mary’s background, you would know she has a real soul!”

“Hmph. Even if I wanted to believe that, you can’t possibly tell me that you share a special bond with all of them. In reality, you only formed these friendships so that you could use them as weapons!”

“For your information, I gave them the choice to fight with me if they wanted to! Not as weapons, but as actual teammates and comrades!” Sunni cut another symbol and summoned a floating roll of bandage tape. “Bandy here watched his own creator die of blood loss and regretted not being able to save him in time.” Sunni explained as Bandy proceeded to wrap up her wound. “And Vacuumy was abused by his creator, a circus carny who only made him clean elephant poop.”

“That’s a sensitive topic!” Vacuumy yelled embarrassed.

“Sorry. The point is, I took the time to understand them so that I could be friends with them.”

“Brilliant. Now maybe you can accomplish your dream of surpassing your mother.”

“Oh, screw that. I just wanna beat the snot out of you.” Sunni warped behind Morgan and swung her lightsaber, the woman whipping around to defend, only to be struck from behind by Cheren. Morgan expanded a bubble to knock them back before throwing a Psycho Sphere at Vacuumy, but Sunni warped in the way to grab the sphere and throw it elsewhere. “You can leave now, Vacuumy.” Sunni said before banishing him.
Morgan also decided to banish Weldar before making illusions of herself. The illusions scattered to attack Cheren and Sunni, who swung their swords to disperse the fakes before Cheren found himself clashing with the real Morgan. He surprised Morgan with a shield bash, leaving the woman open for a round of blows against her front. Cheren grabbed an Ice Arrow from his quiver and shot it, only for Morgan to teleport, but Sunni grabbed the projectile in psychic and threw it at Morgan when she reappeared, freezing her solid.

Mary danced over and colored the ice with orange and yellow crayon. “Fire makes ice melt! Water conducts electricity! I know science!” So the Fire Crayon melted the ice while the Shock Crayon gave a zap to her wet body.

Morgan flew above and announced, “You may be used to the Psychic Bubble by now, but how will you fair against a Psychic Diamond?” She moved her hands from top to bottom in diagonal fashions, encasing herself in a diamond-shaped barrier. Sunni shot Psycho Spheres, but they did little to penetrate, and forceful attacks from Cheren’s flaming Master Sword wouldn’t cut it. She spawned four Psycho Spheres around her and made them rotate rapidly as she sent them off, the kids keeping a safe distance when they did. She landed on the floor and threw attacks from a single standpoint. The bottom part of the barrier seemed to phase through the floor.

“Master Cheren, the Psychic Diamond appears to be of a heavier concentration of Psychic Chi. Morgan’s ability to stabilize such energy around her is further attribute to her talents.”

“Wanna give us something helpful?” Sunni asked, close to Cheren so she could hear Fi.

“In stabilizing the barrier while simultaneously using offensive attacks, she has chosen to stay grounded. However, to achieve such a feat, she has removed the bottom portion of her barrier.”

“So we have a weak spot!” Sunni cut a symbol in the ground. “I summon Ghost Dude!”

A ghost wearing a backwards cap, sunglasses, and a shirt that said ‘Spiratical’ appeared. “What up, flesh bods?”

“Ghost Dude, fly underneath and attack her!”

“No lifespan, liquid masses!” The ghost rode a skateboard, flew up, and phased through the floor. He popped up from below Morgan and propelled her upward, stopping the shield. The ghost soared around and came back for another hit, but she grabbed the spirit in psychic and threw him down to Sunni.

“Ghost Dude was abandoned for cheating at a skaters’ contest.” Sunni explained, catching the Friend. “A lot of kids didn’t like him for his creepy expressions.”

“Sunni, I know you’re trying to make a point, but I don’t think these Friends want you telling her about their sensitive backstories.” Peas informed.

“Good point.” ^^;

Morgan cut up another symbol. “I summon Lord Demoso!” A massive Extremeasaur with a black and purple, smoggy body, red eyes, and huge bull horns appeared. “ROOOOAAAAARRR!” The demon lashed its chains and caught Ghost Dude, aiming to pull him into his bowels of wailing souls.

“Ghost Dude!” Sunni grabbed him in psychic while Cheren flew up and cut the chains with his flaming sword. “You’re not becoming dinner today!” Sunni yelled before banishing the Friend.
“True lungs, smelly dungs!” Ghost Dude gave thumbs up as he vanished.

“Yeesh, his expressions are awful.” Peas said.

Demoso bellowed again and swung his chains across the floor, Mary grabbing hold of one before she was thrown up to the ceiling. Mary screamed when Demoso was about to eat her, but Sunni pulled her to safety with psychic as well. “Mary, I think we should send you back, too.” Sunni said. “This is getting a bit dangerous.”

“But I don’t wanna go back!” Mary said with a bright smile. “I don’t wanna leave without my friends!” Sunni made a sheepish smile at that statement, knowing Mary was making a reference. Mary looked determinedly at Demoso. “And if I wanna be a Kids Next Door operative, I gotta be brave!” She ran at the demon and grabbed its chain when he swung it. Mary was thrown above, seizing the chance to chuck Green Gas Crayons into his open mouth.

Sunni pulled Mary to safety as they saw Demoso gagging on the gassy sticks. Cheren pulled a Fire Arrow ready, enhancing its power with his Demon State and loosing it to explode the demon’s lungs. “Nice thinking, Mary!” Cheren cheered as Morgan banished the Extremeasaur back.

“Master Cheren, your Demon State has been active for roughly 20 minutes. I advise you revert to your regular power to avoid crucial energy loss.”

“Darn.” Cheren’s flames dispersed. “We’ve barely laid a scratch on her.”

“On the contrary, Morgan’s dependence on powerful Imaginary Friends came at great sacrifice. Her overall Power Levels, while still very vast, have reduced by 35%.”

“But I still have power to spare!” Sunni smirked. “Anything more you wanna throw at me?”

“Hmph.” Morgan readied her lightsaber and cut four symbols into the wall. “Then I guess it’s time to bring back some familiar faces. I summon The Quads!” She slapped her hand over each symbol. “Buddy! Athena! Sophie! Beckah!” Her four Imaginary siblings landed on the floor. Cheren and Sunni braced their guard. “Attack them!”

“Whoa whoa whoa, time out!” Buddy stated, turning around. “You haven’t summoned us in years and not even a ‘hello’?”

“Yeah, Morgan, what’s your deal?” Athena questioned.

“I didn’t summon you to chat, I summoned you to FIGHT! NOW!”

“Slow down for a minute, Bellatrix Lestrange.” Sophie raised hands and made the slow-down gesture. “We think this whole ‘Head President’ thing is starting to get to your head. I mean, you seriously called us to beat up some kids? Even Sirius wouldn’t approve of this.”

“And we were just in the middle of Goblet of Fire before you called us!” Beckah shouted.

“Should we stop the boss music?” Cheren asked, snickering with his friends. “It looks like you need a minute.”

“UGH! I don’t have time for this!” Morgan decided to banish all four of them. “AAAH!” Sunni grabbed her in psychic and started slamming Morgan around the walls and floor. She released the woman and unleashed a Psybeam, and Cheren joined her by shooting Light Arrows. Their combo lasted for five seconds before they decided to drop, Morgan collapsing on the floor.
“Had enough?!” Cheren slashed at the air.

Morgan gasped for breath and pushed herself up. “I’m through playing games.” Her body turned blue as she expanded a bright bubble.

“Mary, hold Peas!” Sunni tossed the tiny Friend to the former as she and Cheren were engulfed by the bubble, the world turning white as they teleported. (Play “Vector to the Heavens” from Kingdom Hearts 1.5 HD!)

Cheren Uno and Sunni Chariton were adrift miles above the vast ocean, glowing orange under the twilight. They gaped in awe at the marvel above them: the sky-blue silhouette of a giant, lovely angel. Her wings were long and flowing, her body was slender and smooth. “Oh… Why don’t you speak?” Morgan spoke in a soft, beautiful voice that would shame the angels. “Is my Fury form so powerful that… you’ve lost all your senses?”

Cheren glared. He grabbed the Fierce Deity Mask from his pocket and slapped it over his face. “EAAAAHH!” In a flash, he was a few feet taller and holding the sword with twin loops, for he assumed the form of Link’s Negative. At the same time, Sunni punched her head and opened her Psychic Gate, a strong psychic aura forming around her. This average Fury Mode didn’t compare to Morgan’s.

**Boss fight: Psychic Angel, Morgana**

Morgana formed a bubble shield around herself, flying away from the two as they pursued with terrific speed. Swarms of clones that looked like Mika, Danika, and Kami formed from her energy and flew to attack, but Cheren sliced them into nothing with the Deity Sword. Sunni teleported closer and grabbed the bubble, ripping it open with her own power so Cheren could rocket inside. The Fierce Deity slashed airwaves at the Psychic Angel, but could only land three blows before Morgana warped.

The Psychic Angel appeared in the sky, shining a blue aura over the world as Psycho Spheres rained everywhere. “So, this is why you’re called the Non-Logia Logia.” Sunni said as she redirected spheres back up.

“Whether she’s Logia or not,” Cheren smirked, batting bundles of spheres up, “it makes no difference to ME!” He blasted straight up and caught several spheres on the tip of his sword. He shot above Morgan and threw all the spheres down at her, sending her falling toward the surface at high velocity. Morgana blew the spheres off of her, but Cheren was quick to zip around her body and land blows wherever. Morgana launched feathers from her wings, and the psychic projectiles pursued the deity like missiles. Cheren batted them away, but he was instantly blown miles off by a pulse from Morgana.

A devastating Psybeam shot up from below and struck the angel, who looked down at Fury Sunni. Sunni flew up and made a psychic drill above her head, and Morgana spawned a bubble to protect herself. Sunni’s drill pierced it after three seconds, but Morgana warped further away and lashed psychic whips at Sunni. Sunni caught both whips and wrapped them into a psychic tornado, whirling Morgan around in the process. Sunni flew at the angel and slashed her with giant psychic blades, but Morgana recovered and warped off again.

The angel performed a graceful dance as whirlwinds appeared in the air, conjured by swirling psychic energy. Sunni made psychic walls around herself to push the wind back, but Morgana kept a safe distance from her by dancing. “RAAAHH!” Fierce Deity Cheren shot down from the sky with
a surprise attack, forcing Morgan to defend with her wings, but the deity scored a few cuts to her face. The angel started to cry, and from her glittering tears came illusions of her child self on a broomstick, herself wielding a bow, herself as a swimsuit model, and herself holding a rose quartz sword.

“Master, it appears that these illusions originate from Morgan’s fantasies.” Fi said.

“Too bad I have to crush her dreams.” Fierce Deity Cheren mercilessly sliced the illusions with the Deity Sword, but the energy fragments reformed around him in attempt to bind the deity. Morgana turned to face Sunni, who held a sharp glare.

“It’s time to destroy you with my ultimate weapon.” Morgana used psychic to form a giant Creative Summons. “Slifer the Sky Dragon, destroy them all!”

“ROOOOOOOAAAAARRR!” The tremendous orange, shiny snake dragon with two mouths screeched across the heavens. Sunni stared unflinchingly as the dragon charged its powerful breath, meant to obliterate her on the spot.

Sunni formed her own midair Summons. “I summon Plasma Pal!” An orange blob was the Friend to appear, average sized and harmless. The sentient jelly took the blow of Slifer’s breath and scattered into pieces.

“How pointless. Slifer will destroy ALL opponents on the field.” Morgana echoed.

“Then he has his work cut out for him!” Sunni smirked as Plasma Pal reformed. Slifer destroyed him again, but he reformed, Slifer destroyed him, he reformed, and the dragon would not focus on his other targets until that plasma is dead.

“No! Slifer’s only weakness is respawning enemies?!”

“Take a long time to look, because he won’t stop unless you banish him! And I assume his being here puts a strain on you?”

Morgana was suddenly attacked by Fierce Cheren, so the angel formed Psycho Diamonds to bat him around. Cheren drew the Mirror Shield and blocked the diamonds, and Sunni pelted Morgana with a storm of Psycho Spheres while she was focused on him. Sunni created a circle of Creative Summons, and from them summoned Vacuummy, Ghost Dude, Wilt, Eduardo, Coco, Mary, and Peas. Psychic auras brimmed around them, for they were given the energy of Sunni’s Psychic Fury.

“Sunni, you know it’s dangerous to summon this many Friends!” Peas yelled.

“I won’t need you guys for long! Everyone DOGPILE!” At her command, Eduardo grabbed the right leg, Vacuummy the left, Bandy the left arm, Wilt the right arm, Coco the right wing, Ghost Dude caught the left wing, Mary stuck Glue Crayon on the chest, and Peas decided to hop on Morgan’s nose. “They’ve got her down! Now’s your chance, Cheren!”

“Time to bring you back to the REAL world, Morgie!” Cheren charged a Skyward Strike in his powerful blade and impaled the Psychic Angel’s stomach. Morgana wailed as her psychic energy ran rampant, the Friends got off, and her marvelous body dispersed. Sunni banished the other Friends back before warping the three humans, Mary, and Peas back to Morgan’s office. (End song.)

“Huff, huff, huff…” Now returned to human form, Morgan clutched her wounded stomach as she lay on the office floor. Cheren took off the Fierce Deity Mask and became human, too.
“You’ll have to wait a few minutes if you want me to call Bandy.” Sunni panted, holding her aching head. “Turns out, your head can hurt from thinking.”

“Lady President!” General Guy ran up in a panic. “What in the Seven Seas and 54 ways to kick in the nuts have they done to ya?!!”

“I don’t understand…” Morgan panted. “I poured every ounce of power into that form… and still lost? How can I… when I have so much more experience than you?”

“Our parents had as much experience as you.” Cheren replied. “Maybe more, given they stayed with the Kids Next Door. We were lucky to have them as teachers.”

“But I don’t wanna credit my mom for my recent training.” Sunni noted. “I had to fend for myself. I never knew how easy psychicbending was.”

“Is it?” Cheren asked.

“Well, not totally easy. I mean, there’s a lot of mental patience, you gotta remember a lot of stuff- ow, my brain hurts again!”

“AHH HA HA HAAA!” They whipped toward a screen as Jennifer Bush’s image appeared. “Why, Morgie, you look under the weather! It’s not like you to be beaten by little kids.”

“Master Bush?”

“Aw, and I thought for sure you could win, Morg. With CP10 out of the picture, you were our last hope! Well, except the Inferius, so no biggie! Oh, and also, your services to the World Government will no longer be required. King Andrew is coming to give you a going-away present! Bye, Morgs!” The screen went black.

“Which brings me to another matter!” Benjamin yelled from the doorway. The Psycho Shrink on him wore off after Morgan’s defeat. “I am officially retiring as your butler!” Benjamin pressed a button on the wall, escaping as the room barricaded in steel.

“Look on the TV!” Mary pointed. The screen showed the outside of the mountain as a man in knight’s armor and a purple cape floated in midair.

“What is he doing?” Morgan asked as a light was forming in his mouth.

King Andrew took a great breath and charged power for a Hyper Beam. He unleashed directly at Midway Peak. “AAAAAAAAAAH!!” Morgan, Sunni, Cheren, General, Peas, Mary—everyone screamed at their inevitable demise, the world flashing white as the whole of Midway Peak burst into flames, completely destroyed. King Andrew floated and stared at the flames.

“That wasn’t very nice.” a woman with a Hispanic accent said. His Highness whipped around, seeing Mikaela Chariton floating in midair. She smirked as Morgan, Sunni, General Guy, and the others appeared around her, having been warped and now floating by her powers.

“MOM!” Sunni beamed. “Y-You’re back! How did you escape Team Rocket?”

“Easy! The handcuffs weren’t even chi-blocked, I coulda warped out whenever! I just stuck around for the free food. So I guess you went and became a master psychic without my help.” Mika grinned.

Sunni blushed. “Y…Yeah.”
“King Andrew!” Morgan exclaimed. They all faced up at the armored man in the purple cape. Cheren’s eyes locked dead on The King, mouth agape. Andrew glared at him with his one blue eye, while the Octogan flashed wildly in the other.

“You…You killed my dad!” Cheren yelled.

“He did?” Mary questioned. “So, is he the bad guy?”

“Technically, Daphne Anderson laid the final blow.” Andrew corrected. “But I suppose we’re all guilty in your eyes. Nigel Uno was a great man… before we learned he was a filthy demon.”

Cheren gritted his teeth, whipped out the Fierce Deity Mask, and slapped it over his face. “AAAAAHHH!” He morphed into the godly figure and flew at Andrew with his sword ready. King Andrew lit his fists Armament and clashed them with the god sword, causing the very air to vibrate with their power. Cheren slashed airwaves that Andrew blocked, then the Fierce Deity flew in for a strike. The King smacked the sword away and grabbed Cheren’s face forcefully. Power surged as a light grew from Cheren’s form, later to flash the area white.

“Aaaaahh-!” Cheren fell and was caught in Mika’s psychic, back in his human form. They looked up as King Andrew raised the removed Fierce Deity Mask proudly. The King clenched his mighty hand and crushed the mask. A light-blue spirit drifted out of the mask.

“King Andrew, you said you wouldn’t kill me!” Morgan yelled. “I thought I meant more to you!”

“I didn’t want to kill you.” Andrew said. “But the Octogan thought it best in order to destroy those two. Just as it desired to kill Mr. Uno.”

“YOU DAMN FOOL!” General Guy shouted. “My Shy Guys were still in there!! You burned them up like tomorrow’s egg rolls!”

“The Octogan…” Morgan spoke solemnly. “So you are…”

“Let’s get out of here!” Mika decided before teleporting them all.

Cleveland

They reappeared on the street in front of Sector V Treehouse. The kids recomposed from the exciting adventure. “Morgan, just what the heck have you been doing all this time?” Mika asked with reproval. “Working for the World Government, attacking my daughter and your nephew? I thought I was the mad one!”

“Now do you understand, Aunt Morgan?” Cheren restated. “King Andrew is possessed by the Octogan! You let yourself be manipulated just like he did! You might not trust Calliope’s story, but someone as smart as you has to realize the Government are the bad ones here! Your fellow Corporate Presidents – Doflamingo wiped people from existence, Carter Pewterschmidt abused a sick town – all the Government has been doing is hurting people! But who’s always there to make things better? The Kids Next Door. And maybe we DON’T know what’s gonna happen in the end. This whole thing is just a fight between two all-powerful deities. At least it seems like one of those deities wants to help us. So which side are you gonna choose? The side of the corrupted King, or the army of snot-nosed kids that have been helping people like CRAZY these past few months?!”

Morgan said nothing for a moment. She bowed her head. “…What have I been doing? I really thought I was helping people… I thought the Government was trying to rectify the Kids Next Door’s mistakes. I was aware of the evils of Doflamingo and let him do what he did for my own selfish reasons. Just like Mom in Galaxia… the only people creating chaos was us. I… I don’t know
what came over me.”

“The answer is obvious, Morgie.” Buddy said. Morgan looked up in surprise at The Quads and Beckah. “You’re just dumb.” The brother smirked.

“Buddy? How did you all find us here?”

“We came back after you banished us.” Athena said. “We’re psychicbenders too, you know. We might be your Imaginaries, but we have free will, don’t you remember that?”

“We escaped ourselves before Andrew blew up the place, and we floated close to you when Mika warped us.” Sophie followed. “Honestly, you’ve been real sour since you abandoned us. Like you left four pieces of you behind.”

“Well, of course.” Peas replied. “Imaginary Friends are a part of their creators. They’re the same heart. So when an Imaginary is away from their creator, that person is missing a piece of their heart.”

The Quads approached Morgan. “And even though you’re old and wrinkly now, we still love you, Morg.” Buddy smiled.

“Let’s live together again!” Beckah beamed. “We’ll pretend to be your children this time! And you’ll teach us about human things, which we’ll misinterpret as we set off on misadventures!”

“…Guys.” Morgan allowed the four in for a hug. “You four… really are part of me. I guess all Imaginary Friends are…”

“Not just Imaginary Friends.” Sunni smiled. “I think everyone is a part of each other in some way. …Which is either really cheesy or really crazy.”

“I like to think it’s both.” Mika nodded.

“Hm… Perhaps we are.” Morgan smiled. “Imaginary Friends… they’re as real as the people that created them. They’re proof that we… have hearts.”

Mary gave a bubbly smile at the touching moment. “Hmmm…” Cheren relished in the happiness by saying, “And just wait until everyone else sees you, Morg. They’re gonna be so happy.”

“Why is that?”

**Moonbase**

“YOU’RE IMPRISONING ME?!” Morgan exclaimed, trapped in a glass cage with chi-blocking cuffs.

“EVERYONE!” Cheren cheered to all on the bridge. “The Corporate Presidents have been DEFEATED!”

“YEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAAHHH!”

“As Supreme Leader, I gladly congratulate you ALL for your work! The Seven Lights have all awakened! But we aren’t finished, yet! It’s time to take the fight to the World Leaders!”

“Wait just a second!” Mom spoke up. “I wanted you to KILL her, boy!”

“And I said I wasn’t gonna!”
“It’s pointless, anyway.” Morgan said. “Chances are I’m losing my title as Head President. And if I were to guess, the Leaders are gonna elect President Schnee as the next Head. We already agreed to let him replace Carter. I certainly doubt they favor you as much, regardless.”

“Ugh.” Mom sighed. “Well, then I guess I have a new assassination to plan. WALT! LARRY! IGNER!” She smacked her three sons. “Pack your things, we’re going back to Coruscant.” Her sons followed her to the hangar. “I wanna leave this planet before the Inferius begins.”

“So, are we really going against the World Leaders?” Sugar asked.

“You bet!” Cheren declared. “King Andrew is being corrupted by the Octogan. I’m going to take him down and tear that 8-ball right out of his head!”

“How can you hope to do that?” Morgan questioned. “The Octogan gives Andrew control over time AND souls. He’s extremely powerful! He crushed your Fierce Deity form like it was nothing!”

“The Fierce Deity Mask?!” Panini exclaimed.

“Don’t worry, I can still beat him.” Cheren assured. “Because by now, I’m worthy enough to be Azelf’s Guardian!”

“Yyyyeah… Um…” Azelf drawled. “No.”

“What?!”

“Uhh, according to Fi’s report, Sunni was more active in the fight than you were. But hey, we still got one Firstborn out of the deal!”

“Mew!” A certain white kitten floated out.

“Mew!” Sunni beamed. “You’re all better!”

“Mew Mew Mew!” Mew twirled. “Mew Mew!”

“Mew located the fragments of his energy inside Joey’s body.” Lucario explained. “He did not need much in order to fully recover. A Firstborn gradually heals after a sufficient energy loss, but a god’s power is infinite regardless.”

“Feels kinda easy, doesn’t it?” Terry asked.

“Sure, but think of all the steps previous.” MaKayla replied. “There was rescuing Mew, there was securing Joey, and Sunni had to bond with all those Imaginaries and learn a moral, so… yeah. I say she’s earned a Firstborn.”

“Don’t mind if I do!” Sunni smirked. “Mom?”

“Here you go, Honey!” Mika tossed her the white Spirit Ball. Sunni threw it and caught Mew, and bippity-boppity-boop, the Firstborn was claimed. The ball flashed white and glowed, a ‘II’ forming on its forehead.

Sunni Chariton captured a FIRSTBORN! Only 3 more to go!

“So what’s next on the agenda?” Panini asked.

“First, I’m going to the Negaverse to see how Nerehc’s doing.” Cheren decided. “If there’s only
one more Darkness to find, it won’t be long until he does. Also, did you guys contact GKND and tell them the news?”

“The GKND haven’t responded to our calls in forever!” Francis yelled from the static Global Tactical screen. “What the heck are they doing up there?!”

“Maybe we should find out. Does anyone volunteer to go up to Galaxia and check up on them?”

“My sector can do it!” Karin Kurosaki raised her hand. “We didn’t get to do much in Enies Lobby, anyway. Well, except Ururu.”

“Wait!” Yuzu exclaimed. “Maybe Nebula is looking for Jirachi! He’s a Firstborn too, isn’t he?”

“In that case, I hereby send Sector JP to aid in a Firstborn hunt.” Cheren declared. “Let’s try and round them all up before the Apocalypse.”

“I think Uxie took Emily to do some kinda trial.” Harvey mentioned. “She might have her caught by tomorrow.”

“Good to know she’s already getting started.” Cheren smirked. “Kids Next Door: let’s all do our very best in our final 11 days in this universe!”

“HOI!” Chimney, Sector W7, and Mary raised fists.

“YEAH!” Sector W and Michelle stomped their feet.

“You know it!” Wendy Corduroy cheered, alongside Hoagie III, Garry Lincoln, and Sector GF.

“It’ll be an Apocalypse to remember!” Miyuki said.

“I am Groot!” Suki cheered. “Seriously, Miyuki-chan, what are we talking about?”

“Someone needs to explain this quest to her.” Terry sighed.

“King Andrew done blew up my Shy Guys!” General Guy saluted. “My devotion is now to YOU, Kids Next Door!”

“Cool, we need someone to clean the restroom.” Larry MayHence gave him a plunger.

“D’oh, swag sticks!” General cursed.

Jagar King smiled at the energetic children. He closed his eyes and could hear her voice. *Thank you all for your hard work, children. I promise I won't fail you.*

**Underworld Prison**

The deepest dungeon was dark and quiet. The prisoners were still and patient.

A bald man binded by too many strong locks to count.

A brown-haired man tied to a chair like a mummy.

A spike-haired man with chained hands, feet, and a blindfold over his eyes.

A red-haired man trapped in a classroom cell as he worked on endless homework for remedial English.
A cracked yellow diamond behind a magic barrier.

A purple giant whose left arm was chopped off.

Two cells that were empty. One had a round pedestal.

They were excited, too.

Okay, the Imaginary Friends, Weldar is from *Banjo-Tooie* and Lord Perfection was an OC of :iconOperativeNumbuh227:’s. I was planning to make that “Giant Nuts” segment for a long time, lost track of places to put it, then figured “Eh, what the hell.” XD Next time, we will go up into space and learn what the hell GKNF has been up to since we last saw them. Also, that new *Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* trailer took my breath away. I can’t wait for 2017.
Let Go of Fear

Chapter Summary

Jack Frost, Phosphora, Mary, and Django try to help Madotsuki recover from her trauma.

You know, I was going to make this its own one-shot, but then I thought, why not make it part of the main story? I mean, the whole Madotsuki thing was set up in the main story, it would just look weird if it went into a one-shot. This isn’t even a filler like *A Mary Day at Foster’s*, it’ll actually have relevance for other chapters. Well, maybe it’s not filler, more of a cool-down chapter.

Chapter 73: Let Go of Fear

Teensie Council Medical Wing

For six years, she had been a prisoner. She was trapped in the room of a man who did terrible things to her. She was trapped in her own dreams. And now, Madotsuki literally lived in a dream. A hospital for injured Dream Spirits. Not all things were free and happy in this world. These doctors repaired Madotsuki’s broken body, and now a group of people wanted to help her mentally recover. She hadn’t decided, yet. The doctors gave her a notebook to serve as a new diary. She hadn’t gotten off her hospital bed; she was used to wasting her days in a bed. Now it was pointless because a dream couldn’t dream. (Or could it?) Madotsuki climbed off her bed and wrote her first diary entry.

*Dear Diary: I guess this is our first time meeting, huh? You won’t believe what’s happened to me. One minute I’m deciding between life or suicide. And in the next... I wake up in a forever dream. They said that some monster took my place in the real world. These people want to help me feel better... I haven’t had a friend in so many years. Then that boy appeared in my dreams... he was different. He sounded like he really cared. I wanted to talk to him more... Maybe these people really care, too. ...I’m going to talk to them. Maybe they can help me feel happy.*

Madotsuki closed the book. She stood and stared at her cracked parts linked by bubbles. She ceased being human on that night. Madotsuki turned and walked outside.

“Timmy was an average kid, that no one understands. Mom and Dad and Vicky…”

Mary Goldenweek’s eyes were almost glued to the TV in the waiting room. Dream World TV got every channel ever, and Mary had found a very engaging show: *Fairly OddParents*. Jack Frost, Phosphora, and Django stared at her with disbelief. “You sure you don’t wanna watch something else?” Jack asked. “You watched four seasons already.”

“You know, there’s tons of good anime out there.” Django noted. “*RWBY, Soul Eater, Bleach… Bottle Fairy*. Want me to look something up?”

“But this show is so amazing!!” Mary beamed. “Most average kids don’t have magical fairies, but this boy does, and he can do anything! I wonder what he’s going to do next?! Will he wish that A.J.
has hair, or Chester has a mansion, or maybe Timmy will wish to be a movie star!”

“He did, and he now goes by ‘Drake Bell.’” Phosphora remarked.

“She’ll have to stop watching eventually.” Jack said. “She’ll hurt her eyes.”

10 seasons later

“Timmy’s still an average kid. We still don’t understand. We all went on strike, but Nick didn’t take our demands.” The singers of the opening sounded so miserable and tired. Jack, Phosphora, and Django were bored to death. But Mary wouldn’t take her eyes off the show.

“I’ve taken pretty heavy notes!” Mary noted. “The Big Wand must be plugged in, it gets recharged every Friday, and the fairies’ magic is powered by crazy people who believe in fairies. I have yet to understand why Fairy World is built over Giant Bucket of Acid World since that hasn’t been brought up again. Also, do fairies have a set of two wands? I noticed when Cosmo and Wanda lose their wands sometimes, they have another wand with them, but don’t use it to unwish the wish. Did you guys catch that?”

“Please cancel them.” Jack moaned.

“Hey, party people!” Murfy greeted from the doorway. “Look who’s made a full recovery! Well, not 100%, but what’s a B+ anyway, it’s Madotsuki!” The pigtailed girl with a window shirt stepped in.

The four looked at her in a curious fashion. It was their first time actually seeing her… They wondered how she would react or behave. Murfy left them alone. “So, are you going to help me feel better?” she asked.

“Well, yeah… I mean, if you’re ready.” Phosphora said.

“…So, help me feel better.”

“Perfect!” Django grinned, typing on a laptop. “Since you’re Japanese, I have the perfect anime for us to watch: Attack on Titan!” He showed Mado the laptop as the opening theme played. Giant naked humanoids were chasing screaming humans through the village. The animation was highly detailed as they picked humans up and chomped their little bones up.

Jack closed the laptop. “We’re not watching that.”

“Madotsuki, what do you like to do?” Phosphora asked.

“Sleep.”

“Done!” Django threw arms up. “It’s like we’ve known each other forever!”

“Guys, we’re trying to reintroduce someone to society here.” Jack said. “Let’s just go outside and find something fun to do! I’m thinking ice-skating.”

“I always wanted to go ice-skating!” Mary said happily. “Ice is like a ground you don’t have to move your feet to go across!”

“How about it, Mado?” Phosphora asked. “Wanna go?”

“Mmmm… okay.” Mado replied tonelessly.
The five exited the council and headed to the forest, finding Water Fairies fluttering above a large pond. “You think these fairies will mind if I freeze their pond?” Jack asked.

“I’ll do it.” Madotsuki reached into her window and pulled out a bubble with a snow woman inside. Madotsuki donned the Yuki-onna and created a gentle blizzard. The fairies shivered and fled as the pond froze.

“Woooooohhh…” Mary gaped and held her hands open to catch flurries. “I thought snow was magic… and it showed up like magic.” She caught snowflakes on her tongue. “It’s like magic cereal that turns into water when I eat it.”

“I didn’t know you were an icebender, too.” Jack said, amazed.

Madotsuki took the Effect off. “I’m not a bender. I can put powers in my window and take them out.”

“Brrrr, it’s cold now.” Phosphora shuddered. “If this is the Dream World, can’t we dream up a coat or something to wear?”

“Only in our own dreams.” Jack replied.

“I have a hat and scarf.” Madotsuki pulled said Effect out of her window. “Do you guys want it?”

“You can keep it.” Phosphora said politely.

“Snoooow, snooooow!” Mary took off her shoes and skied around the ice on her socks. “My feet are chilly, but they don’t have to moooove!”

“Woohoooooo!” Jack skied whipping fast on the ice. “Come on, slowpokes, 10 laps around the rink!”

Django lightly dinged a string on his guitar, making blades under his boots as he skated. “Come on, Mado.” Phosphora held a hand out. Madotsuki took it and allowed the woman to ski with her.

Django played a carefree tune on his guitar as they freely skied in circles. It continued to snow, despite the clear night sky. Madotsuki wore socks while she skated, but only shifted her feet a little bit while Phosphora did most of the work. There was a Snow World in Madotsuki’s dreamscape, but she never did any fun activities like this.

“Phos, over to me!” Jack called, so Phosphora slid Mado over. Jack caught her and began to twirl her around, and she felt the chill grow stronger in this faster speed. This was a dream world, but Madotsuki felt like she was actually skating. She was actually engaged in the activity, gaining a sense of freedom as the world spun around her.

Jack released her as Mado spun away, wobbling dizzily before falling on her rear. The four skated to her. “But I guess you did just get out of a hospital.” Jack helped her up. “Was skating a good idea?”

“It was… fun.” Mado replied. “But I…I’m thinking about something.”

“What are you thinking of?” Django asked.

Madotsuki held up one end of her scarf. “There was someone in my dreams called Mafurako. She
wore a hat and scarf like this. But she was always invisible. I wonder if she liked to skate…”

“Did you talk with her much?” Jack asked.

“No. …When I died, what happened to all the people in my dream world?”

“We don’t really know.” Phosphora answered. “But the Dream World is swarming with monsters. They said it was part of Mr. Dark’s plan.”

“I wonder if they’re all okay.”

“If they were from your dream world, then they have to represent parts of you.” Mary reasoned. “So maybe you think she liked to skate because you wanted to skate. And maybe if you feel better, they’ll be okay, too.”

“Yeah, but she’s part of Dream World now, too.” Jack reminded. “Would it still work if…”

“Blah blah blah, laws of the universe mumbo jumbo.” Django stated. “Let’s just do something else! Yo Mado, wanna hear the Django?” He started playing his instrument like an electric guitar. “Yeah, didn’t know I can change how it sounds, did ya?!” He played quickly and shook like an excited rockstar.

Madotsuki reached in her window and got the Flute Effect. She started to play music synchronized with Django’s guitar. “Now we’re gettin’ somewhere!” Django exclaimed, playing stronger notes. Jack, Phos, and Mary clamped their ears shut.

“I understand why my parents banned this now!” Mary exclaimed.

“Like, we have this in Birka, but it sounded better!” Phosphora yelled.

Django and Madotsuki jammed it out for half an hour. So let’s pass the time by going somewhere else.

Las Vegas (Play “Come and Get Your Love” by Redbone!)

The night was young and lively in this City of Lights. A limousine pulled up to a casino called Casinopolis. The door opened, and out stepped Bill Cipher, wearing a golden triangle necklace, sunglasses, and colored rings on his fingers. “Thanks, driver! Enjoy your new dream job!” Bill snapped his fingers, and the limo driver flew up up and away with his new Superman suit.

“HEY, PARTY PEOPLE!” Bill burst open the casino doors. “Who’s ready for some Billy C.?!”

“Those doors opened automatically!” the guard shouted.

“Nag, nag! I got paid $500 for a cameo in another story and I’m ready to THROW it all away! Who’s gonna catch it?! Huh?! Roulette wheel, I’m feeling lucky!” The child demon zipped over and slapped 500 dollars for “GREEN 66!” The wheel spun and the ball bounced along. It threatened to land on Purple 17, but with a quick flick of Bill’s wick, the ball stuck to Green 66 like a stick. “If those rhymes aren’t worth a thousand bucks, what is?!”

Bill jigged to the song as he passed by the slot machines, pulling all the levers and landing on 777’s. He started swimming in gold while women clung to him, asking if Bill had a divorced father or if he’d like to be adopted.

After making $100,000, Bill blew it on drinks and snacks—by which I meant alcohol and junk
Bill Cipher  
Race: Human (current)  
Age: 1,000,000,000,000  
Sex: Sure! ;)  

Well, ID’s don’t lie, thought the bartender, so he gave Bill all the stuff he wanted. He was later riding the shoulders of a bunny-eared woman out of the casino, chugging down three bottles of beer and stuffing his mouth full of Doritos, donuts, and Wonka Bars. The limo came back, and Bill gave the rabbit woman some bigger breasts before driving off.  

Bill was taken to an amusement park, where he sat in the front seat of a roller coaster. The people screamed when he made the coaster fly like a rocket, going up to space and crashing on the moon. Bill got off, assuring himself those guys would be fine.  

Then Bill visited the arcade, where kids were staying up way past their bedtime to play. He shoved one boy aside to steal his place in Donkey Kong. Using a special cheat code called ‘MAGIC’, Bill allowed Mario to float, grab a hammer, and drop it on Donkey Kong’s head. Afterwards, Bill showed the kids the secret cutscene where Mario does it with Pauline, then is beaten by an angry Princess Peach. The kids were engaged with the scene as Bill left. A dad was smoking outside, waiting for his kid, so Bill kicked him in the crotch and stole his cigar.  

With that, Bill decided to go for a stroll down the street. He flashed a grin at all the passerby and used his magic to change a dog into an electric creature that infected the city, turn a ladybug giant as it kidnapped a toddler, then turned a dumpster into Lady Gaga. With that, Bill went to rest in an alley, lighting the cigar and blowing a smoke. (End song.)  

“So, Mr. Cipher… I see you are embracing the human traditions.” Bill looked up at a brown owl perched on a building roof. “Would you like to hear that again?”  

“Kaepora Gaebora.” Bill cocked a brow. “No thank you, I’m really into piano. Though these human songs don’t bug me like they used to.”  

“Bill, as monstrous as you are, the thing you have longed for the most in your existence is to escape from your boundaries as an Imaginary being, is that correct? You are misusing a wonderful opportunity, Cipher: the chance to live like a human. Would you like me to say that again?”  

“Gaebora, I’m an inter-dimensional dream demon with a Power Level of one million. The chance to live like a human went out the window a long time ago, not that I ever wanted to.” He blew a smoke. “So, why are you here? Did the Chronicler send you to put a stop to me?”  

“He did not feel it was necessary at the moment. Rather, he wanted me to question your behavior. You appear to be enjoying this an awful lot. Would you like me to clarify?”  

“So, you guys are watching me, are ya? I was afraid I looked too sexy, now the Chronicler’s in his stalker mode again.”  

“The Chronicler suspected you are indeed in the services of someone else, and recent events have proven true. And if Lord English were to make a return, you’ll be nothing more than a tool. Enjoy your freedom while you can, Cipher. And perhaps… try to learn something.” Kaepora flapped his wings and took off, catching a glimpse of the Superman limo driver.  

“Hmph.” Bill scoffed. “Deny it all you want, Gay-bore. But these people will beg me to protect
them.” Bill blew another smoke. “Cough, cough! Damn human lungs.”

**Dream World**

After Django and Madotsuki finished jamming, the group of five went for a walk in the forest. “Thank you for ruining my good night’s sleep.” Jack remarked.

“Why should I care?” Django asked. “For the record, I’m sleeping in the same room with my dying best friend. It’s filthy and smelly. My night’s sleep’s already ruined.”

“You’re dead, why should that bother you?” Phosphora argued.

“But it looked like you were having fun, Madotsuki!” Mary beamed. “You wouldn’t stop playing! Do you like music, Madotsuki? If you do, I’m an excellent singer.”

“Yeah, I like music.” Mado replied. “I like to dance, too. One of my dreams was a world where everyone dances.”

“Oh, we were talking about your dream world.” Phosphora remembered. “Django kind of took us off topic.”

“I was saying that if Mado’s Dream Friends were her creation, then they’ll be okay as long as she’s okay.” Mary said. “An Imaginary Friend won’t die as long as there’s someone to remember them.”

“But I wasn’t really friends with any of them. None of them would even talk to me. Poniko, Mafurako… even Monoko wouldn’t talk to me. She was my friend when I was little.”

“But you think of them as friends, right? You’re worried about them. I say we go to your dream world and look for them!”

“Will the guards let us leave?” Jack asked. “Nightmares are tearing the Dream World up. The only reason we ended up here is because the Teensies are rescuing people from their dreamscapes.”

“Then they should rescue the people from Mado’s world, too!” Phosphora stated. “Let’s go ask someone from the council!”

“Good idea. You up for it, Mado?”

“Um… Sure…”

“Don’t ‘Um sure’ us, of course you want to!” Django lightly flicked her shoulder. “Let’s go!” He and Jack went ahead.

In truth, Madotsuki was still getting used to the nickname ‘Mado.’ She never had a nickname before.

Upon their return to the council building, the group found a small, dark chamber lit by glowing blue designs on the walls. Ly the Fairy was meditating. “Hey, are you with the council?” Jack asked.

“I am… You are the group tasked with aiding Madotsuki, correct?”

“Yeah, but we wanted to ask you something. You’re trying to rescue people from the dream worlds, right? What about Madotsuki’s dream world? Did you rescue anyone from there?”

Ly closed her eyes. “I am sorry… but that world has seen greater turmoil since Bill Cipher’s
Nightmares run rampant as Fear Chi floods it. It is a danger to go in there. I doubt that many of its inhabitants, if any, have survived.

The five felt despaired over the information, especially Madotsuki. The peaceful, innocent people of her dream world... it was painful to think she would never see them again. She tried to understand what their existence meant, whether or not they represented part of her being, her emotions. If they were dead, it would feel like parts of her have died.

“To that end... it seems Bill Cipher’s dreamself is gathering Nightmares and building an army. While I support the decision of Madotsuki... I must urge you to decide soon. Whether we execute Bill in the real world or have him return to the Dream World, we must defeat him before something terrible happens.”

“This Bill... He’s the monster who switched places with me?” Madotsuki asked.

“Yes... Fortunately, there have been no reports of significant damage in the real world. Still, we must have a decision. Carry on, children.”

The five headed to a large guestroom inhabited by dream world denizens recovered from their worlds, including the slumbering mortals on their Start Beds. “Those people are gonna wake up and be all, ‘WTF am I dreaming?’” Django commented.

“I don’t understand... why do I have to decide what happens to Bill?” Madotsuki asked.

“It’s not just what’ll happen to Bill... but you’re deciding what life you’ll want to live.” Phosphora replied. “If you decide to live in the Dream World, then we can kill Bill in the real world. If you want to become real again, we have to lure Bill here before we kill him. But Bill will come back as a Dream Spirit if we choose the latter. That’s what they told us, at least.”

“Is that why you’re here? To make me decide?”

“We’re not trying to make you decide on one or the other.” Jack answered. “We’re only trying to help you feel better.”

“But I have to decide, right?” asked Madotsuki.

“Don’t worry about that now! Mado, I’m sorry about what happened to your Dream Friends, but we want to be your real friends.”

“You don’t understand. Those Dream Friends were a part of me. I’m not sure how, but they are. I feel like I died on the inside just hearing that.”

“But if they’re a part of you, then they can’t be gone, because you’re right here.” Mary replied with a smile. “If they like the things that you like, you just have to do the things you like, and it’ll be like they’re doing them with you! (Does that make sense?)”

“Not in the slightest, but what does, nowadays?!” Django declared. “Come on, Mado, let’s rock it out again!” He grabbed his guitar.

“LET’S do something else.” Phosphora stated assertively for the sake of their eardrums. “What else do you like?”

“I used to play games on an SNES. It’s a really old console my dad had.”

“PERFECT!” The Birkan lit with excitement. “I haven’t played a videogame in AGES! I didn’t...
have any when I was a kid, but my friends let me come over and play at their place, and I
ROCKED at Smash Brothers! Let’s see if these Dream People have anything.”

... 

*Dear Diary:* These people are really nice. But I feel like they’re being too nice. I wonder if they
really care or they’re being paid to. Maybe they just pity me. I try to have fun, but it’s hard to be
happy. I have to decide if I want to live here or the real world. I wonder if they’ll still be my
“friends” after I choose. ...I’m going to play games with them now. See you later, Diary.

“HOLY CRAP!!” Phosphora exclaimed after they started up Mario Kart XX in the Game Room.
(Dream People really do have everything!) “Twenty different cups with 80 different racetracks?! They
even have a Lightning Chariot!! Why hasn’t this TV EXPLODED??”

“I was hoping you would know.” Jack chuckled. “You’re the only one besides Mado that’s ever
seen a videogame.”

“Not true, Apis showed me one of her games.” Mary noted. “The people inside the TV have no
free will, so we control their path.”

“I never played a game like this before.” Madotsuki said as she studied the Wii U II’s controller.
“There’s more buttons than on my SNES.”

“There’s an instruction booklet right here.” Jack said, picking it up.

“Screw instructions, you only learn from experience!” Phosphora picked the Galaxy Cup and
chose Pit, while Mado chose Peach. The race began in the Good Egg Galaxy level. Phosphora used
to play Mario Kart Wii with her friends, and the motion controls were basically the same here,
giving her the advantage. Madotsuki was already in last place, for neither moving the stick nor
tapping the ‘A’ button was working.

“I think you need to hold the button down.” Django instructed.

“Oh.” Mado did so, and Peach’s kart started moving. “That’s weird.”

“You sound older than me right now!” the skeleton laughed.

“Old guys don’t belong on the racetrack!” Phosphora smirked, evasively dodging a Red Shell. (It
should be noted she is younger than Jack, Django, or Mary.) “You all can eat my lightning dust!”

Madotsuki was able to bypass some other racers, and she got a Bullet Bill, which could breeze her
through the track. However, before she could use it, lightning struck the racers and they shrunk
down. Mado was then run over by Shy Guy. “Grrrr! Slow down, let me catch up!”

“What are you gonna do if I don’t??”

“Give me it!” Madotsuki reached and fought with Phosphora over her controller.

“HEY, you already made your pick, no switching!”

“Your kart’s better, I wanna use it!”

“DARN IT, you’re making me lose, GET OFF!” Phosphora smacked Mado’s face and pushed her
off.

The three froze at the action, as did Phosphora. Madotsuki looked up with an unhappy expression.
“…” Her eyes furrowed, “You were cheating!”

“I was not, it’s called skill!” Phosphora argued.

“You only picked this game because you were good at it!”

“I never played this game, so I couldn’t know, it just so happens that you stink.”

“I do not stink!”

“Then what was that poor performance?”

“UGH!” Madotsuki stomped out of the room. “I don’t wanna play, anymore.”

“…Okay, lesson learned:” Jack said. “If they grew up with old games, they should stick to old games.”


Dear Diary: I played a game with Phosphora. She was winning, and I got mad. We fought, and she pushed me. If she pitied me, she would have let me win. Maybe she doesn’t pity me. Why did I get mad? It was only a game. Do other people get mad over games? Do friends fight over things like that? I wonder if we would still be friends after that. Mom and Dad used to fight, but I thought they loved each other. Why did they stay together if they-

“Hey, whatcha writing?!” Mary asked, startling Madotsuki.

“Um… I’m writing in my diary.”

“Ooo, a diary!” Mary looked over her shoulder. “I used to have a diary, too, when I was trapped in the gallery! It made me feel like there was someone actually listening to me. Even though there was no one. Except mindless dolls. Alone.”

“Except a diary can’t talk back to you. You’d wait and wait for an answer, but you get nothing.”

“I guess not. But why do you think people write in diaries? Are those people lonely, too?”

“Maybe it’s because a diary won’t fight with them. Do friends get in fights a lot?”

“Well, probably. I fought with a few of my friends. ^^; And one time, I saw these two boys, Mason and Dillon fight. They were silly! I kind of think if people were really good friends, they would fight all the time.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Hmmm… I have no idea.” Mary shrugged. “But I kind of liked seeing you get all angry like that! Up until then, you were just sad and gloomy. Now it’s like I’m getting to know you better!”

“But I… feel kinda weird about it.” Mado blushed.

“It’s alright. When I was angry at my friends, it was because I was determined and confident about something. I made some bad choices, but there’s nothing wrong with having something to hold onto. It might’ve been a silly thing to get mad about, but at least you’re opening up a bit more.”

“And there’s nothing wrong with that?”
“Of course not! And Phosphora’s not mad, I promise. She’s waiting outside with the others.”

“Right…” They weren’t exactly ones for privacy. Mado figured. She followed Mary outside, finding the other three.

“Alright, Mado, you can pick the Lightning Chariot.” Phosphora complied. “I’m still going to beat you, though.”

“So, what’d you gals talk about?” Django asked. “Boys, ponies, makeup?”

“What’s makeup?” asked Madotsuki.

“You know, when you color each other’s body parts and get yelled at by your parents.”

“Like with my crayons??” Mary beamed. “I used to do makeup with April’s friends! That sounds fun, let’s color each other!”

“But we’re supposed to use paint.” Phosphora said.

“Paint is drippy, let’s use my crayons!” Mary held up her crayon collection. “Pick one. (And don’t worry, they’re not the Power Crayons.)”

“I guess since it’s a dream world.” Phosphora shrugged. “I’ll take yellow.”

“White for me.” Jack took said crayon.

Phosphora colored Jack’s white hair with yellow crayon while he dotted her cheeks with white. Django drew black skulls on Mary’s toes, and Mary colored the underside of Mado’s eyes pink and the tops purple. “So, people color their selves with crayon all the time?” Mado asked. “Why? They’ll just have to take a bath.”

“I think it’s why some boys like playing in mud.” Mary replied. “It’s fun to be dirty!”

“But why?”

“I have no idea!”

“But hey, we were human once, so why not stick with it?” Django shrugged. “Except Phosphora. Yo Mado, why don’t you color my scalp?” He took his hat off. “I’d take a mean Kermit the Frog. You Japanese have that? Maybe you have something different.”

“…” Mado stared at the bald skull for a second. “I…I don’t know.”

“What’s wrong, Mado? Aren’t you having fun?” Mary asked.

“No.” Madotsuki turned away. “You guys are nice, but… this is going too fast for me. My Dream People are gone, I have to decide what to do about a monster… and I still don’t know if you four wanna be my friends or you just feel sorry for me.”

“Of course we want to be your friends.” Mary smiled. “I know how it feels to go a really long time without friends. I think that’s all you need.”

“Then why do I still feel upset?”

“…” Jack Frost stared at her for a moment. He should’ve realized it before: Madotsuki reminded him of an old friend of his. “It’s because you haven’t let go.”
“Let go?” Phosphora asked.

“Of your past. You’re still tormented by what happened to you. Even death doesn’t rid you of the pain. Don’t you agree?”

The others bowed their heads. Neither of them had forgotten their pasts, even if they tried to. Phosphora was happy working for Viridi, Mary loved living in the real world, and Django enjoyed being a young troublemaker in Miracle City. But their pasts still burdened them, and they would task a group of kids who had nothing to do with the matter to help them. And by the time they were finished, all the pain they felt would be a thing of the past. They would laugh at the idea.

“But how do we help Madotsuki let it go?” Phosphora asked. “Even the Kids Next Door couldn’t save her. And we couldn’t just go back in time and stop all of it from happening.”

“Don’t the KND have timebenders?” Mary asked.

“Even I know changing the past is a bad thing.” Jack mentioned. “I heard the stories.”

“I got an idea.” Django stepped up to Madotsuki and faced her directly. “Ahem… Madotsuki, you were raped.”

“Django!” Phosphora shouted; they gasped at his very direct approach.

“No, it’s what happened! You were taken against your will and raped. I was thrown into an acid pit and burned alive. Phosphora’s bending was destroyed by a fake god she idolized. Those things happened, and there’s nothing we can do about it.”

Madotsuki became very distraught. The memories of her family being run over, being taken by that stranger in the darkness, and then stabbing him with the knife out of fear and vengeance. Madotsuki sank to her knees and clasped her head. A veil of darkness began to spread from her body and consume the waiting room as the four backed away.

“ALERT! ALERT!” Alarms blared. “A large body of fear has been detected in the northern quadrant, Level 3! Evacuate the area!”

“I DIDN’T MEAN TO DO THAT!” Django panicked.

“Madotsuki, calm down!” Phosphora shouted. “Madotsuki!”

“Step away, children!” a dark voice spoke. The spread of darkness ceased, and Darkrai II emerged from a shadow. The Nightmare King steadily compressed the fear back into Madotsuki.

“Darkrai? What are you doing here?” Jack asked.

“I had my concerns when I learned of Madotsuki’s fate. A Bubble Dreamer has powers over the Dream World, which means their nightmares are stronger than average. For Madotsuki to become a Dream Spirit… her fears possess great and terrible influence to the world around her.”

Darkrai was able to channel the fear into Madotsuki’s mind. Her expression was still distraught. “This girl has seen terrifying things. Her dreams were so distorted that I forbade my Nightmares from dining off the Fear Chi that looms there. I feared that the chi would make them go mad. Every night I visit her in her sleep, I can only… pity her. But do not forget, the light side of the Fear Element is the power to conquer one’s fear. The same as you all have.”

“But how do we help Mado?” Mary asked.
“This may go against my duties as a Nightmare King… but I will help. Enter this portal.” Darkrai ripped open a dark void. “If you are willing, Madotsuki.”

“…” Madotsuki slowly entered the void. Darkrai flew after, and the rest followed.

**Mado no Nikki** (Play “White Desert” from *Yume Nikki.*)

The five stepped on a mushy white ground that their feet sunk into. “GROSS!” Jack immediately floated up, shaking the gunk off. “What is this stuff?!”

“You wouldn’t like it if I told you.” Darkrai said. “This place is Madotsuki’s dreamscape. Or rather, a disclosed area of it. Look over there.”

In the far distance, there was a horrendous creature with four legs gripping hills. It was the size of a mountain, and its body was pitch-black like the sky, made visible only by the red eyes, red slobbering tongue, and flowing red hair. Madotsuki looked utterly detested by the behemoth. It looked in her direction, smiling with wide loving eyes as it squeezed the hills.

“What in the hell is that…” Django mumbled, sharing the disgust with his group.

“It was created from Madotsuki’s fears.” Darkrai replied. “What do you suppose it is?”

“…The rapist.” Phosphora choked.

Madotsuki reached in her window, grabbed her bike, and pedaled across the mushy desert as fast as she could, away from the monster. She pedaled faster and faster… but when she found herself passing by her friends again, she realized she was no further from the creature than when she started. The desert looped endlessly, and that mountain was always in close range.

“It’s the same as with any mortal.” Darkrai said. “Running away from their fears. But fear exists inside of you. You cannot run from it, Madotsuki.”

“But it won’t do her any good to face it!” Jack yelled. “It’ll devour her!”

“Madotsuki, stop!” commanded Darkrai. She stopped pedaling. “There is no other way to go. You must go to it.”

She stared at him, terror plaguing her eyes. “Do it, Madotsuki…”

“…” Madotsuki turned and pedaled toward the monster. Only then did the mountainous beast decide to crawl forward.

“Mado, no!” Mary cried.

“Darkrai, what is this supposed to accomplish?!” Jack shouted.

“Patience…”

Madotsuki saw the corpse of a green man on her right. She looked left and saw Monoko, her demeanor zombie-like as she waved her many bone-like arms. The mountainous monster was extremely close to Madotsuki. She stopped as its dripping red hand-tongue reached down to take her.

“That’s it!” Jack conjured some ice, Mary grabbed crayons, Django readied his guitar, and Phosphora sparked lightning.
“WAIT, I have my bending back?!” she realized.

“No one’s handicapped in Dream World.” Darkrai pointed out. “You should see the hunky legs Nolan gives himself. Don’t do anything, children.” The Nightmare King floated forward.

The beast’s tongue softly grabbed Madotsuki and slowly drew her in. She closed her eyes. “Madotsuki… allow it to happen.” Darkrai spoke. “Allow your nightmare to be over. Because it has already happened. Put your fears behind you.”

*Her parents and her friend were killed in a car wreck. Mom was pregnant. Their blood spilled. Monoko’s bones squished out. She was lost downtown. She was caught by a stranger. He did terrible things. Madotsuki got a knife from his kitchen, snuck behind, and took revenge. She hid herself in that room. Forever.*

Madotsuki got the knife from her window. She was seconds from the monster’s face. “What happened to you was terrible… but it has already passed. Now, the only person that can decide your future is you. What life do you wish to live, Madotsuki?”

“. . .” She opened her eyes in time to see the monster’s face. She glared. “I want to be free.” Then, she raised the knife and stabbed it. (End song.)

*POP!* The beast exploded into confetti, and immediately she was kissed by Jar Jar Blinks. Jack, Phosphora, Mary, and Django froze with utmost disbelief. Judging by Darkrai’s expression, he didn’t see it coming either.

“Mmmmmmmmmmmm…” Jar Jar made the kiss last for several seconds. Madotsuki was completely confused. “MWAH!” The Gungan succeeded in getting the box of cookies out of her mouth. “I-sa been lookin’ for you, basha-washa. You guys weren’t playing Hide-and-Seekies, were you?”

He opened the box, which had a troupe of tiny Hershey Bars. “Apologies for our lateness, Commander Blinks!” the general who looked like General Shy Guy saluted. “We was busy preppin’ our parakeets for the amusement park.”

“Das okay. But it’s time for us to go to war: WITH THE HEADPHONES!”

The Hershey Bars grabbed weapons and charged across the barren field to clash with their enemy army of headphones. Epic vocals sounded in the background and animation costs were rising high. “It’s time to pull out our secret weapon!” General Guy exclaimed. “Hit them with… the Didgeridoo Bomb!”

A giant bombshell crashed onto the battlefield, and all the soldiers started playing didgeridoos. “Crud, we struck our own soldiers, too! If this disease spreads, it could infect the entire koala ecosystem.”

*THAT’S what this war is about?!”* the Flashback Characters screamed.

“It’s okay, Gener-ral!” Jar Jar announced. “I’ll destroy the disease with my LEAF BLOWER!” The giant Gungan grabbed a leaf blower and blew the armies into a tornado.

The wind was so strong, it was spreading to the koala ecosystem. “Aaaaaahhh!” Mrs. Koala screamed. “They’re sucking in all our menorahs!”

“Quick, honey! Take the gold and run!” Mr. Koala exclaimed. The koalas grabbed their pots of gold, jumped into a giant turtle’s shell, and said turtle quickly burrowed underground where its best friend, the octopus was hiding.
When Jar Jar stopped blowing the blower, they were back in the White Desert. The entire army of Hersheys and headphones rained everywhere. Madotsuki was struck speechless. In one minute, she watched a hideous behemoth transform into an annoying slug-rabbit, an army of candybars and headphones go to war with each other, and a family of Jewish koalas escape with their pots of gold inside a turtle. “. . . . .” Madotsuki was trembling. Her eyes were tearing. Her mouth was twitching. Even if she wanted to hold it in, she couldn’t. She let it all out.

“PW AH HA HA HA HA HA! PL AH HA HA HA HA HA HA!” She rolled on the mushy ground, pounded her fist, her face was red with laughter. “HUAH huah hah! Hoof hoof hoof- cough, kuoh, cack—HA hahahaha ha ha ha ha!”

“. . . Did Jar Jar just do what we couldn’t do?” Jack asked.

“Afraid so.” said Phosphora.

The dead body of Mr. Corpse faded. Monoko disappeared. The black sky began to crumble, exposing the blue to the draining white desert. Jack Frost could happily set his feet on the orange sandy ground. The world was bright like Madotsuki’s spirit now. They were happy, too.

In his lonely cell, a warm feeling crossed Mr. Dark’s heart. He felt no pain and anguish. Somehow, for some reason, for the first time in six years… Madotsuki was smiling.

**Fairy Glade**

“Well, I guess that’s one more problem taken care of before the Apocalypse arrives.” Jack said as they returned to the bridge to Teensie Council.

“So, Madotsuki… what do you choose?” Darkrai asked. “To live in this Dream World, or to return to the real world?”

Madotsuki frowned slightly. “I still don’t know. Would I still have friends in the real world?”

“Course you will, Mado!” Mary beamed. “The real world is a super fun place with lots of great people! There are bad people too, but it’s no big deal!”

“But the choice is yours, Mado.” Phosphora said. “We’ll be your friends in any world, so it doesn’t matter.”

“. . . Then… I want to go back to the real world.”

“THEN IT’S DECIDED!” Murfy popped up out of nowhere. “I’ll go and tell the council members so we can start planning Operation: Kill Bill. Thanks for your help, guys!” He flew off.

“You know, an idea has occurred to me.” Darkrai mentioned. “By switching realities with a Bubble Dreamer like Madotsuki, Bill is able to use Bubble Dreamer powers to make dreams in the real world, if only for a short time. I wonder if Madotsuki took some of Bill’s powers in the process?”

“You mean she can transform into a triangle?” Django asked.

“Perhaps. I still have notes my father has taken on Bill during his time. I could show them to you, and perhaps Madotsuki could experiment with these powers in the future. That reminds me… Jar Jar?”

“Oopie!” The Gungan approached Madotsuki and opened the cookie box of Hershey Bars.
“You want me to have them?” she asked.

“Lookie! Dey’s are in disguises.”

Madotsuki looked closer. The Hersheys took off their costumes one at a time. Mado gasped: “Monoko!” Her monochrome friend was in her normal, two-armed form. “Monoe!” The other monochrome girl with a smiling face. “Masada-sensei?” A monochrome man with a white face, no mouth, a black body, and eyes pointing different directions. “Mafurako.” The invisible girl with a hat and scarf. “Kamakurako.” A sleeping girl. “…Poniko, too?” The blonde, ponytailed girl.

“She looks like me!” Mary noticed.

“Jar Jar took the liberty of rescuing the people from your dream world when the rogue Nightmares laid siege.” Darkrai explained. “I don’t even know why.”

“I-sa needed somebody to take to de boat show!” Jar Jar replied. He whispered to Mado, “Don’t tell Da’ky, but I lets them use his Q-tips.”

Madotsuki smiled, happy to see her little Dream Friends. “…Did you guys… miss me?” They said nothing, as always. “I’m sure they did.” Mary said. “They are a part of you, after all.”

“…They are.” Madotsuki opened her window. “You can come back in.”

Jar Jar tipped the box and poured the tiny Dreams into her heart. She could feel her heart repairing itself. “Whoops, I gave one of them my sunshades.” Jar Jar reopened the window and reached inside. “Excuse me? Where are you going with my—GIMME MAH BOMBACK SHADES!” The Gungan dove headfirst and forced his way into Madotsuki’s shirt window. They could hear him bumping and banging inside her. “Give ’em back! I need me shades to give me lipstick!” Naturally, Madotsuki was feeling sick.

“Soooo, whaddyou wanna do now?” Django asked.

**TV Room**

“Super Fist of the Nose Hair: GOOFY FACE ATTACK!”

“PAH HA HA HA HA HA HA!” Madotsuki cracked up yet again. 46 episodes of *Bobobo-bo Bo-bobo* did little to soften her humor. Mary was hard at work taking notes, making sure not to lose track of this show’s complex continuity.

“It’s a good thing time moves slower in the Dream World.” Jack said.

“Yes. Because we’re gonna be here awhile.” Phosphora sighed.

I could’ve set up the next arc, but I felt like we should leave it purely Madotsuki. Next time, we’ll start the next arc. Well, after some Side Stories. :P

…

The singers of *Fairly OddParents* fell asleep from exhaustion. The conductor hit the pedestal with his wand, scaring them awake. The music played, so they sang.

*Timmy’s still an average kid*
For 20 long years, it stands
We have five more new characters
And they’re ruining our retirement plans
Forever singing in this room
Has broken our sanity
We have no magic fish to grant our wish
’Cause in re-al-i-ty:
We will never, never, never
EVER be freeeeee!
Mother?

Chapter Summary

Wendy infiltrates Casinopolis to rescue captive Star Kids, with the promise that she'll meet her mom. Cheren Uno and Nerehc Onu meet with the Spirit KND Leader.

This chapter kind of corresponds with Chapter 74, regarding some inter-connecting events.

Chapter B-32: Mother?

Climbers House; Facilier’s Emporium

Five days had passed since Wendy spoke with her father. While Vaati was attending to business with the White Lotus, Dr. Facilier resumed giving Wendy magic lessons. Holding a blue rubber ball in hand, Wendy focused her power and thoughts and cast Transfiguro on the ball. It morphed into a blue toad. “Only thing wrong is the color.” Wendy said. “Hey Carla, maybe if I get good at this, I can turn you into a human like me!”

“It’s any Familiar’s honor to be their master’s guinea pig.” Carla remarked.

“Heh heh.” Wendy blushed. “…Is your wing feeling better?”

Carla flapped both wings and lifted off the floor. “I think I’m alright. I suppose I owe Lapis my thanks. Still, I believe the more pressing concern was that display in the sky.”

“I’m worried about that, too. I wish my dad would come back soon.”

“Wendy, why on Earth do you want to join the Revolutionaries? You haven’t even started your first year at school, you’re far too young to be a war hero.”

“I wasn’t sure about it at first, but if my dad thinks it’s best for me, maybe I should trust him. Besides, he said that I would be helping the Kids Next Door this way.”

“I see. But I have to wonder what your father would have said if you refused?”

“If she did not, it wouldn’t change the fact she is my daughter.” Carla gasped when Vaati seemed to appear out of thin air.

“DAD!” Wendy jumped up and hugged him.

“WHERE did you come from?!” Carla shouted. “Mr. Facilier said no one could Apparate in here!”

“We Minish tend to be very stealthy.” Vaati smirked. He patted his daughter’s head and said, “Moving on, whether she is a White Lotus or not, I planned to teach Wendy what I know and help her become stronger. You may not think highly of me, Cat, but don’t forget who enrolled Wendy into Hogwarts.”

“I’ve been meaning to ask about that.” Wendy said. “Dad, if you’re a wanted criminal, how did you get them to accept me?”
“That’s one of the beautiful things about that school: they don’t care about a person’s origin, as long as a body is brimming with magical potential, they will take it. Once they see what you can provide for them, they won’t regret their decision.” Vaati smiled with confidence for his daughter. “But there is still more to prepare until that day. As a future member of the Revolutionaries, I want to give you a mission.”

“Absolutely! What’s the mission about?”

“In Las Vegas, there is a casino called Casinopolis. It’s a massive casino that draws in even the most modest of men. My spies have done recon on the facility, and have realized there is mind-control in the works. The casino lights manipulate the customers into gambling away all their savings, and it all goes to the wealthy nobles. I was never a fan of casinos, but this makes me hate them more. I would like you to find the source of the mind-control and destroy it.”

“You can count on me.” Wendy nodded seriously. “But, if it’s okay… I want to take Carla with me. It wouldn’t feel right doing a mission without her.”

“Hmm… Very well.” Vaati frowned slightly. “Then it’s a good thing I acquired two of these.” He pulled out sunglasses from his cloak. “The casino employees wear these to keep from being affected by the lights. Wear them and you’ll be safe.”

Carla took a pair and studied them, suspicious at this story. “You know, the last time you gave Wendy a mission, it turned out to be ludicrous and one of her friends was captured. Why should we trust your intel this time?”

“Because it’s true. But rest assured, I plan to make it worth your while.” Vaati smiled at Wendy. “If you complete the mission, I’ll introduce you to your mother.”

“Why do you need to REWARD her with that?! After all you put her through, you should let Wendy meet her mother NOW!”

“Carla, it’s okay!” Wendy consoled. “I can wait a little longer until I meet my mom.” She put the sunglasses on and flashed a grin. “After all, I feel lucky tonight!”

**DNK Moonbase**

Cheren Uno and Panini Drilovsky climbed through the mirror to Nerehc’s office. As if he were expecting them, Nerehc was standing there waiting. “Nerehc, we have some news.” Cheren said.

“Does it have anything to do with that business in the sky?” Nerehc asked.

“You saw it, too?” Panini said with surprise.

“I saw it, too. I got two people who might know something about all this.”

Nerehc led them to the prison wing, where the Gnik siblings sat patiently in their cell. “Egroeg, AlyakAm… are you finally ready to spill?”

“The cat is out of the bag, Alyak.” Egroeg said.

“Very well, we confess.” AlyakAm followed. “Yes, Nerehc. We knew about Lord English all along. Our father spoke for English, so by extension, we were his pawns as well. My father did not want anyone to speak of English until it was time, so I entrusted English’s identity to Ydolem, along with the Octogan locations.”
“In hindsight, it was a meaningless gesture.” Egroeg continued. “There is nothing that can prevent Lord English’s return.”

“We can prevent it.” Cheren assured. “If Mr. King defeats your father, we can save everyone!”

“Even if that were possible, the Apocalypse would still transpire. Without the Twenty Keys, only those under the Will of Sixes would live to see the future.”

“Then we have no time to lose. Nerehc, who’s the last Darkness? How do we find him?”

“You’re gonna love this.” Nerehc remarked. “The last Darkness is Ganondorf.”

“GANONDORF?!”

“Well Cheren, you wanted an excuse to make Azelf like ya.” Panini shrugged.

“But our moms destroyed Ganondorf! What are we supposed to do, bring him back?!”

“Don’t ask me, ask Medusa! She’s the one that’s been treating us like lapdogs all month. I don’t suppose you guys have any ideas.”

“Afraid not, Nerry.” Panini replied. “Brave little Cherry here is in the middle of planning his climactic battle against the World Government’s King.” She nudged Cheren’s arm. “He lost the Fierce Deity Mask to that monster, so he’s totally in over his head!”

“I am not! I just have to figure out the Octogan’s weakness.”

“HA!” AlyakAm laughed. “You are in over your head. The Octogan’s power is limitless. No god in this universe can challenge it.”

“Then we need a god not from this universe.” ;;;; ) a girl’s voice said. Nerehc, Cheren, and Panini turned to find a Zoni, whose left eye had seven pupils. “Hellooooo! I haven’t seen you three since Termina.”

“Termina?” Cheren raised a brow. “You were one of those Zoni?”

“Allow me to properly introduce myself: I am Vriska Serket, a mem8er of the trolls, and a special friend of Majora.” ::;;;

“I haven’t seen Majora since January… Do you know where he is?”

“Majora has 8een captured and trapped in Underworld Prison, on the same floor as most of the Thirteen Darknesses. Medusa organized his 8eing there with the hopes you would attempt to rescue him, Cherry Cakes.”

“Why would I want to rescue Zanifr?”

“8ecause Zanifr knows a way you can overpower the Octogan. If I were you, Cherry, I wouldn’t pass up the knowledge. Granted, it would be easy to tell you myself… 8ut don’t you think Majora owes it to you?”

“This sounds a little too suspicious.”

“Think what you want, 8ut you’re missing the 8ig picture here: the Thirteen Darknesses are in Underworld Prison as well, and eventually Medusa will want you to help rescue them. You might as well get started. Trust me kids, I’m on your side. I wouldn’t 8e telling you this if we didn’t know
exactly what we were doing.” ;;;

“What do you think, Cheren?” Nerehc asked.

The former was silent for a moment. “…Majora’s the one who started all this. I think it’s only fair
he comes to watch the end with us. I say we go to Underworld Prison and speak with him. Him
AND the Darknesses.”

“You think Grim will even let us?” Panini asked.

“He doesn’t have to. I know someone who can help.”

Las Vegas

“Call me the Gamblin’ Girl!”

Wendy Marvell wore sunglasses, a black jacket, gold “$” necklace, and black leggings that went
into white shoes. Her hair was tied in a ponytail, and she made a snazzy grin. “That outfit is
positively atrocious, Child.” Carla stated. “Mr. Vaati said that all you needed were the sunglasses.”

“He says it’s cute when I dress up! And if we’re going into a casino, we can’t stand out.”

“You’ll stand out by wrecking the place in search for a mind-control device.”

“Well, now I’ll do it with style.”

The city was full of flashy people with money suits, gold cars, and even colorful hair, so no
attention was directed at Wendy and her winged cat. “Wendy, don’t you find it a bit insensitive that
he’s making you earn the right to see your mother?”

“I like to think of it as positive reinforcement. It’s better than a crummy piece of candy.”

“There’s just no reasoning with you, Child.” Carla sighed. They stopped when they found the
casino in question, labeled with big white letters. “Wendy, don’t you find it a bit insensitive that
he’s making you earn the right to see your mother?”

“More ready than I’ve ever been before!” (Play “Casino Night” from Sonic 2 HD!)

Stage B-28: Casinopolis

Mission: Break the mind-control spell over the casino!

Wendy charged through the front doors and had to sidestep various aisles of slot machines. She
would soon jump on a large roulette wheel over a gold coin pit, running in place on the spinning
wheel as a ball was thrown onto it. Between the three different directions marked by color, the ball
landed on the “green” path to the left, so a claw grabbed Wendy and threw her that way. The path
was curved like a “U” on either side as Wendy had to dodge giant pinballs rolling up and down.
“Look, Carla! A giant pinball machine!” Wendy pointed with excitement.

“I have to agree with your father on one thing: this place is ridiculous! Do they think bigger is
better or something?”

“I don’t think that’s what they were going for! Protego!” Wendy jumped down to the ball slot and
encased herself in a bubble shield. “Carla, you push the buttons!”
“Are you insane, Wendy?! Ugh, the lessons that man has taught you.” Carla flew to the control panel and pressed the spring button to send Wendy up and into the sloped machine. Carla had to alternate between left and right buttons to make the respective flippers keep Wendy aloft, as it seemed the top of the playfield would make the stage progress. Wendy fell into a slot machine, whose icons represented Pikmin, KND, Pokéballs, 7’s, Pipo Monkeys, and 13’s. Wendy got two KNDs and a Pipo, earning her 5 coins.

Wendy tried to maneuver herself as Carla bounced her up toward the top, but with all the bumpers in the way, it was an annoying and time-consuming task. Wendy fell into the slot machine and lost 3 times before Carla managed to bounce her to the top. Unfortunately, the trial was not over as Wendy was forced to roll down a great slide. Her position was recorded on a camera for Carla to see, so when the child was about to roll into a pit, Carla pressed a flipper to fling her over it.

Now on a wider path, Wendy maneuvered her ball right to hit an intangible ‘9’. There was a ‘7’ on a narrow bridge between two long gaps, but she braved the danger and hit the number without falling. Wendy was rolling to a zigzaggy path with tight turns and no fencing, but there were flippers available for Carla to bounce Wendy onto the curved path. There was a hidden path under a left curve with a ‘5’—Carla didn’t see it in time before bouncing Wendy right. The road sloped down and swerved left as Wendy kept balance within her ball, hitting a ‘6’ on her right but missing a ‘4’ on her left.

The slope dropped Wendy on another pinball playfield, whose only purpose was to hit the 1, 2, and 3, but since she already missed the other Bingo numbers, Carla let her roll to the bottom. The kitten flew to reunite with her owner as Wendy dispelled the shield, and they found a cage holding a Fire Soul that would open if they had passed the Bingo challenge. They continued to a large, rotating roulette wheel-like floor where Groove Guys were dancing, and had a shining glass container with little star beings in the center.

“Carla, aren’t those Star Children?” Wendy recognized them from a book. “They look upset.”

Carla flew over the edge to see the electrical pipe underneath the wheel. “Perhaps the Star Children are being used as a source for the hypnotism. We ought to free them, Child.”

“Reducto!” Wendy cast the explosive curse on the capsule’s bottom, but it backfired and blew Wendy back. “OW!” The Groove Guys took action and attacked the air mage, so Wendy blew them apart with an air gust while Carla used Torpedo Spin to knock some down. Wendy leapt around and defeated the Shy Guys with Cyclone Fists and Kicks, so the only matter remaining was the Star Children.

“Smash the purple spaces to free us!” they told her. Wendy noticed purple spaces on the roulette and proceeded to stomp them. The capsule opened and the Star Children flew free.

“That’s one down.” Carla said. Beyond the wheel was a pinball tunnel, which slurped the two in, passing under the casino and releasing them back in the starting room. Wendy raced back to the roulette wheel as the ball landed on the north “blue” path, so the claw threw her in that direction. A downward path led Wendy outside to a great, Golden Sea of Coins. “Don’t fall in the coins, Child. According to your father’s notes, the coins have a magic curse that is meant to draw out a person’s greed and prevent them from wanting to leave.”

“Well, if I can tread water, coins will be no problem.” Wendy used her Sonic speed to dash over the Golden Sea. She avoided the people who had fallen victim and were swimming in the sea, as well as the Shy Guy pirate ships that were shooting pinball cannons and creating huge coin splashes. Wendy ran up a green path designed like a shuffleboard table and could rest without fearing the coins’ spell. There was another distant platform and a Fly Guy available to jump off. Wendy was
propelled and whirling through the air upon doing so, but she would sink before long, tempting Carla to grab her. There was another available Fly Guy, so she dropped Wendy on it to continue her flight to the platform.

Carla caught Wendy before she would fall again and landed her on the foothold. The following path had Limbo Guys with high, low, and medium bars. Wendy ran and tried to jump a medium bar—“Ow!” she tripped, stumbled forward, and bumped her head against a high bar, causing her to fall. Wendy recomposed and resumed, jumping the low bars while sliding under the middle and high ones. At the end, she could run off a ramp that would lead her into an enclosed area within a wall. There was another Star Child container in the center of a golden fountain.

There were Fly Guys catching coins in their buckets whenever the sprinklers erupted, and the fountain was divided in two levels. Wendy noticed three purple switches around the wall, and she would have to wait for a Fly Guy to get lined with it, use the fountain to shoot her up, and kick the Fly Guy into the switch. There was a switch level with a low fountain and two level with the high fountains, but once Wendy had them pressed, the Star Children were free.

Wendy ran across the Golden Sea to get back to the main room, but on the way she noticed more intangible Bingo chips. If she found them all scattered across the sea, she would get a Fire Soul, but this wasn’t her concern at the moment. Wendy arrived in the main room and ran onto the roulette wheel once again. The ball landed on the right “red” path and the claw threw Wendy towards. She was brought outside, gaping at the marvel standing over her. “WHOA! It’s a giant house of cards!”

“Be careful running up it, Child! Too much momentum will make it lose balance.” Carla cautioned. Wendy ran up a sloped walkway onto the first floor of the house, and like the kitten said, the flimsy structure was wobbling. Wendy slowed to a fast-walk as she looked around, finding a stack of cards under a hole in the ceiling. She bounced off the stack quickly before Carla lifted her up through the hole. The second floor had Snipe Guys hiding in card forts with the beam of their guns sticking out. They were situated in a maze of card stacks, so Wendy needed to find ways around them.

At the end of the maze, Wendy ran up a card stairwell to the third floor, where she needed to make quick leaps over card fences. She ran while doing this so her momentum would carry her over the room quicker, and made gentle but effective leaps so as to avoid disturbing the house’s balance. Carla carried her up through a hole to the roof, and a bridge of tiny cards led across to the Star Child capsule. Wendy used Reducio to shrink herself and run over the cards before her small weight would overcome them. “Couldn’t you have shrunk and let me carry you up here?” Carla questioned.

“Might as well get the full experience!” Wendy resized herself once across and had to deal with three Gun Guys perched on top of card towers. Wendy cast Protego to block the bullets, got near the towers, and used Ascendio to propel herself up and Ground Pound the Shy Guys and smash their cards, hitting the purple switch underneath. The Star Children were free, and Wendy jumped to the ground around the Card Fortress to avoid toppling it.

When she ran on the roulette wheel in the main room, it was levitated upward, bringing Wendy to a new hallway. She sidestepped to avoid incoming giant pinballs, the hall sloping up until she was outside again. 40 meters over the Golden Sea, she was viewing a giant roulette wheel with a bigger shining capsule in the center. “OH YEEEEAAAH!” The casino’s master – a Goomba in a pink top-hat named Gamba – was dancing around the capsule. “Get your GAMBLE groove on! Well, Jirachi?! Are you IN the GAMBLE mood?!”
“I – am!” Jirachi the Star Child was dancing on a platform in the capsule, not knowing that his magic was being sapped at a slow pace. “I got, the, gamblin’ GOODS!”

“IN – the – gamblin’ HOOD!” Gamba sung.

“This one must be the core.” Wendy observed. “Hey, if Goombas get stomped in the head, they don’t die, do they?”

“No, they just get knocked out. Don’t get spotted, Child.”

As Wendy ran down onto the giant wheel, Gamba sang to the stage’s music. “Take me hoooome… to New Goom Cityyyyy… Where the lights are flashin’, guys are bashin’, and girls just look so dashin’. Take me tooo the laaand… where I have a haaand… as Miiister: Gaaaamblin’: Maaaaaan!”

The roulette was divided into multiple segments and had searchlights alternating between segments. Wendy ran counterclockwise around the first segment, jumping spiked tiles and halting when searchlights appeared. She stopped at a card wall that shielded her from a Snipe Guy’s vision, standing back-to-back with another Snipe Guy, and both were on a purple switch. Carla lifted Wendy above to stomp down on both of them, then pressed the switch. She kept running and jumping pinballs before a spring bounced her to the second level.

“I have millions of buckers and I’m dancing!” Gamba twirled. “I have millions of suckers and I’m dancing! I got more hoc-key puckers than Kaptain Kruckers—WHY can’t I stop DANCING?!?” On the second segment, Wendy had to jump or duck limbo sticks, because touching them would set off the alarms. Halfway through, the sticks went in and out, requiring Wendy to watch them carefully and make the right moves. A low stick retracted above a purple switch, with only two seconds for Wendy to press it, but she did so in time to dodge the stick.

“Who’s your favorite King of Shambles – Mister Gamble Man?” Gamba was unaware of the intruder running across the third segment of his wheel. “Who’s the greatest King of Scambles – MIS-TER GAMBLE MAN?” Coin fountains sprung up on certain tiles and would shoot Wendy up into Gamba’s line of sight. Fly Guys swooped down in attempt to lift Wendy up into his vision, but Carla quickly knocked them out when they were low enough. They soon located the third and final switch, smashing it.

Gamba jumped in fright when the giant capsule opened, with Jirachi still dancing. “WHAT?! Did somebody—” He turned around.

“HYAAAH!” Wendy leaped above and STOMPED Gamba in the head, squishing his hat.

“OOOOG!” Gamba hacked spit and fell defeated. Wendy and Carla lowered their sunglasses, taking in the sights of the City of Lights from this view, and not affected by the hypnotic casino. Both girls exchanged winks. (End song.)

“Dat dah dah, gamblin’ man, BAM!” Jirachi jigged. “Huh?” He realized Gamba was knocked out, floating down to him. “Hey, what happened? Partied out?”

“You realize this person was holding you prisoner, don’t you?” Carla asked.

“He was? I was wondering why he kept me in that glass.” He scratched his star head and smiled sheepishly. “Ha ha ha! It wouldn’t be the only time I was tricked like that. But thanks for helping me, I guess.” Jirachi floated skyward. “I was heading somewhere else and got kinda sidetracked. See ya later!” He became a star and shot into space.
“So, are we done here?” Wendy asked.

“We combed the whole casino and found all the Star Children we could. We should return home before authorities arrive.”

“I’m with ya. Race ya, Carla!” Wendy ran off first.

**Climbers House**

“Heh heh heh heh…” When Wendy and Carla returned to the Climbers’ basement, Vaati was on the floor, laughing at papers. “My, my… they’ve really outdone their selves.”

“Is something funny?” Carla inquired.

“Oh, you’re back!” Vaati about-faced. “I was just looking at these wanted posters.” He threw a stack on the floor beside Wendy. She knelt down and founds hers among posters of other children.

“Cheren Uno? Sheila Frantic? MaKayla King? Aren’t these Kids Next Door operatives?”

“It seems the Government has grown to hate the Kids Next Door so much, they marked them as criminals. It’s really quite a humorous act on the Government’s part. They’re so close to losing, they’ll try any sort of desperate maneuver. These kids have done nothing but help people, will anyone actually believe this garbage?”

“We’re still trying to believe YOUR garbage!” Carla snapped. “You made a promise to Wendy, do you intend to keep it?”

“Right, the mission! Were you successful?”

“Yes!” Wendy beamed. “That casino was using Star Children to power their machines. But we saved them all!”

“They kidnapped Star Children? Those monsters…” Vaati glared. “Well, Wendy, a deal’s a deal. Are you ready to meet your mother?”

“I certainly am!”

“Great! Luckily, Annie has returned from a mission of her own, that’s why I couldn’t introduce her sooner. But hey, the positive reinforcement helped, didn’t it?”


“Ugh. Where is she?” Carla asked with annoyance.

Vaati approached the fireplace and called “Palace of Winds” as he threw Floo Powder inside. When the emerald flames ignited, Vaati stuck his head inside, telling someone to come out. He got back to his feet, and the person to climb out of the fireplace was a brown-haired woman with a green shirt and black hi-tech pants. “Wendy Marvell… meet Annie Wilconson.”

Wendy was at a loss for words. She couldn’t believe it was her… standing here… “Are you really my…”

“Wendy…” Annie had an emotional smile, her green eyes brimming with love for her daughter. “I haven’t seen you since you were a baby… I missed you so much.”

Wendy smiled as tears welled in her eyes. “MOM!” She and Annie grabbed each other in a hug.
After years of loneliness and running, Wendy was finally with her whole family. Carla stared at the warm moment. She should be happy Wendy found her family… it’s the only thing Wendy’s ever wanted. But Carla wasn’t happy. She only felt anger and hatred, in a form she couldn’t comprehend. Because she didn’t understand it, she couldn’t unleash it, and the anger began to grow inside. “… … Ooooh.” Carla fainted.

“Carla?” Wendy turned to her friend. She released the hug and knelt down to put a hand on the kitten’s head. “Carla, you’re burning up…”

“What happened?” Facilier came and picked Carla up, putting one hand over her head. The cat was gasping for breath.

“I don’t know… Dad, can you do something?”

“Try Reparifors. It heals ailments.”


“Ahh!” Carla shook. “Come back… come… come…”

Facilier raised a brow. “It looks like more than a headache…” He carried Carla to his table, and Shadow moved the crystal ball aside for him to lay her on it. “I’ll try to heal her.”

“Will she be okay?” Wendy asked.

“We can trust Dr. Facilier.” Vaati said assuringly, placing a hand on his daughter’s shoulder. “Come with us, Wendy… we have more to show you.”

“I think our mother/daughter time is long due!” Annie said positively.

“But I wanted Carla to share the moment, too. I would feel bad leaving her…”

“Don’t worry, Wendy.” Facilier smiled. “I promise I’ll help Carla, it probably ain’t nothin’ big. Go spend time with your family.”

“Oh… Bring her back soon, Mr. Facilier.” She was guided upstairs by her parents.

“Sigh… sigh… sigh…” Facilier laid a wet towel over Carla’s head.

“If it were any old fever, a quick spell like what Wendy just did could fix her in no time. I think Carla’s remembering somethin’. Don’t you agree, Shadow?” Shadow nodded. “This requires special help…” He got his phone and dialed a number. “Heeey, Eva! It’s Dr. Facilier. Is Melody around? I need to ask her a favor. …Yes, I’m in Iceland. YES, I know long-distance is expensive, just tell your daughter to come to my shop in Cleveland!”

Vaati, Annie, and Wendy entered the bathroom, which was steaming due to someone taking a shower. Vaati used airbending to clear the mist off the mirror and cast a spell to make it into a portal. “Where’re we going?” Wendy asked.

“A place you’ve been before.” Vaati answered, nudging his daughter inside.

After the parents followed and the portal vanished, the man in the shower – Fegan Floop – opened the curtain and peered around, wearing a pink shower cap. “You hear somethin’?” he asked his blue back-scrubber.
“Look, man, we gonna do this thing or not?” the scrubber asked.

“Alright.” Floop closed the curtain.

**Underworld; Castle Hell**

The demons allowed Cheren, Nerehc, and Panini to enter the royal palace. In the castle’s throne room, they saw Spider Queen Velma Green resting on her ceiling web. The Arachnimorph saw the humans and descended via a web rope. “Cheren… Welcome back. My husband is in our room… he’s been under the weather as of late. More than usual, of course, he seems more than dead. Shall I bring you to him?”

“No thanks. We’re here to see your son, actually.”

“Oh, well Death is in his office. You know the way.”

Cheren led his friends to a door designed like a coffin. “This isn’t just any office.” he explained. “It’s a Supreme Leader’s office. Death the Kid is the Spirit KND leader. …Panini, you stand in the middle.” He moved her to said place. “Nerehc, stay on her left, pose exactly like me, show the Triforce, oh and Panini, better brush your ponytails like this.” Cheren fixed her rabbit ears to bend in opposite side directions.

“Why are we doing this?” Nerehc asked.

“He likes it this way. Alright, let’s go in.”

The office had skull candles lined perfectly parallel on the walls, drawers and paper stacks in symmetrical position, and even the desk items mirrored one-another. The Spirit KND Supreme Leader, Death the Kid, was a black-haired boy with scowling yellow eyes, a black tuxedo and pants, and pale skin. White horizontal lines crossed around the left of his hair. His hands were folded on the desk as he observed the three humans. Panini was the most different, she stood in the center. Cheren and Nerehc mirrored each other. A Triforce mark on Cheren’s left hand, one on Nerehc’s right. They were…

“No, no, not perfect, not perfect at all!” Kid walked around the desk. “Look at this girl’s skirt, it’s a MESS, totally asymmetrical!” He indicated Pan’s camouflage skirt. “Cheren, your glasses are totally different from this kid, your shirts are opposite, your EYES aren’t even the same! I told you 88 times, don’t approach me if you aren’t going to appear presentable! Look at these candles, I designed these candles so the flames would sway exactly parallel to each other, I print off backwards versions of my paperwork to lay in stacks parallel with my main paperwork, tell me you have not SEEN a more perfect office!”

“Dude, who are you to talk ‘perfect’, look at those lines in your hair.” Nerehc pointed.

“HUU!” Death sat on the floor, hugged his knees, and looked depressed. “You’re right! I’m NOT perfect! I’m a disgrace!”

“Nerehc, you hurt his feelings.” Cheren said reprovingly.

“He’s a nutcase.” Panini remarked.

Cheren helped Kid to his feet. He passed the Spirit Leader a smirk, and Kid matched it as they locked same-size hands. “Hi, Kid. Sorry to come in unannounced.”

“You’re not here to ask me to join Nebula’s council, are you?”
“Nah.” Cheren chuckled. “Kid, do you have a record on the Underworld Prison inmates?”

“Yes, I’ve been keeping tabs ever since the incident last year.” Kid opened a drawer on his desk and grabbed a file. “Prison escapees are a concern for we operatives as well. Who were you thinking of finding?”

“Majora.”

“Yes…” Kid pulled up a paper. “The Masked Demon Majora, whose true name was learned to be Zanifr Mimchi. Showed up at Underworld Prison under mysterious circumstances on January 6.”

“That was the day after I talked to him!” Cheren exclaimed. “It’s… way too big of a coincidence.”

“We’re looking for others.” Nerehc mentioned. “Do you have names like Madara Uchiha, Sōsuke Aizen, Thanos, Yellow Diamond…” He named the others.

“Yes, we have papers on those names. ‘Blackbeard’ Teach was freed by Goddess Medusa, there is a man named Baldy Bald in a remedial English class… However, Voldemort was not collected, and Zeref appears to be absent. Why do these names fascinate you?”

“We have a need to break into Underworld Prison.” Cheren answered. “Those people down there are the Thirteen Darknesses. They’re vital to the prophecy. And as for Majora… We were told he has something that can help us defeat The King.”

Kid looked up in shock. “You mean The King of the World Government? He’s been taking spirits using his Octogan for the past several months, tarnishing the Spirit World…”

“Well, Majora might know a way to beat him. I don’t know if it’s true, but we have to go down there and save the other Darknesses, anyway.”

“Even so… I cannot simply allow this.” Kid set the file in the middle of his desk, perfectly aligned. “As the Reaper’s son, I have a duty to the Balance. This business with the Octogan and even my father’s actions have done much to disrupt it. Disaster would befall us if a break into Underworld Prison created too much chaos.”

“There’s enough chaos with the Apocalypse happening around the corner!” Nerehc argued. “If this is our only chance at saving the universe, we have to get in there!”

“I know!” Kid yelled, irritated. “I know that it’s important… but my father has grown ill, and if the worst should happen, it’s up to me to preserve the Spirit World balance. This sort of thing wouldn’t look good on my record.”

“You know we’re just going to break in there, anyway.” Panini inferred. “It would be a million times easier if you help us.”

“Yeah, Kid. They’d have to let YOU in.” Cheren reasoned.

“Well, yes… but they wouldn’t let you in.” Kid turned to them. “The second you’re discovered, the guards will be after you.”

“Then help us sneak in so we can find the Darknesses.”

“Sigh… check back with me in a couple days.” Kid looked away. “I want to discuss it with my operatives. Just be warned… it will be extremely dangerous.”
“Then we oughta bring our own help with us.” Cheren nodded.

“The other thing is Ganondorf.” Kid continued. “Ganondorf is in Underworld Prison, but he’s in a lower level where the Sanzu River flows. He has been completely sapped of his former power. If you intend to fish him out of the river, it will not be easy to dry him off. And frankly, I advise against it.”

Nerehc stared at the Triforce mark on his hand. He felt like he knew the solution to reviving Ganondorf… and he wouldn’t like it.

This chapter was more of a set up, but hey, baby steps until the Apocalypse, right? Next time, we’re going to jump into the endgame of Augustus’s story. Gamba is from *Mario Party 4* and Death the Kid’s from *Soul Eater*. Until then.

…

Scrooge McDuck decided to visit Casinopolis. Clad in his bathing suit, he sought to take a swim in the Golden Sea of Coins. He bounced on the diving board and dove headfirst. His neck bent, he gained several bruises, and blood leaked. “AAAAHH! It’s not a liquid!! It’s a great many pieces of solid matter! That form a hard floor-like surface! EAAAAH!”
The Brotherhood of Evil have taken over the Galactic Kids Next Door! Can Sector JP stop them?!

I didn't really have the strength to make a 3-chapter arc out of this. This chapter was after a huge writer’s block. I’ll save my strength for the real action later.

Chapter 74: Galactic BOE

KND Moonbase

“So, these are supposed to be our Keyblades?” April asked as she held the colorful key designed like a paintbrush.

“These things are WAY too small.” Sheila complained, holding the light-brown key with sun teeth and a straw hat Jolly Roger keychain. “I’ll just stick with me fists.”

“Then those are seven of the Twenty Keys that will open the Gate of Time.” Jagar observed.

“Ah reckon.” Kimaya shrugged. “Oh yeh, I got one for you too, Mr. King.” Kimaya showed Jagar the key with a clock design. “Got it from some dude called Ford, said he was your dad.”

“You met my father?!”

“FORD?!” MaKayla overheard. “He was the one that wrote the journals for the Multiverse Portal!”

“The Author of the journals was your father?!” Dipper shouted at Jagar.

“Yes, Stanford Pines was my father, and your great-uncle.”

“WHY HAS NO ONE TOLD ME THIS?!”

“This is GREAT!” Mabel cheered. “Next Thanksgiving will be the best one ever!”

Jagar examined the key. “This was the Keyblade that appeared during my fight with Lucinda. Why did my father have this?”

“Forget about that crap!” yelled Jessie Sidney. “Why are all of OUR keys so puny and YOURS aren’t?!”

“I don’t know!” Kimaya retorted. “Why don’t you just wave them around and see if they-” She waved her Keyblades—the Keyblades of the Seven Lights flashed and became the size of swords in their hands.

“Much better.” Fybi held up her Keyblade with tornado teeth.

“Those Government blokes won’t stand a chance!” Sheila smirked.
“Hang on a minute, Sheila.” Cheren said. “I don’t think any of the Seven Lights should get involved in this battle. The World Leaders are gonna do anything to stop you.”

“Maybe the safest bet is to take them to Great Clock.” Dillon suggested.

“I ain’t gonna sit around in no damn clock!” Sheila protested, swinging her blade angrily. “I wanna demolish a GOVERNMENT!”

“We don’t have to go right now.” Jagar said. “I can protect them if anyone tries to attack. MaKayla, I think you should stay with them, too. I think you’re the Gatekeeper—the one who will open the Gate after they unlock it.”

“Okay, Dad. But where’s George? We haven’t seen him in weeks.”

“Your brother’s fine. In fact, he’s already on Great Clock with the caretaker, getting things prepared.”

“I’m going to the Negaverse.” Cheren informed everyone. “I’ll be back as soon as I check in with Nerehc. Stay safe.” He headed to his office.

“I’m comin’ with ya!” Panini raced after.

“Just so we’re clear,” Anthony fist-palmed, “when we fight the Leaders, I call dibs on Stonebuddy. I got a score to settle!”

“Anthony, you only survived ’cause you had ME.” Michelle remarked, poking his nose. “You won’t beat him this time.”

“What do YOU know, Dumbo?”

“More than you, Bambi. Come on, I need to show you something.” Michelle walked to the hangar.

“Where are you goin’?”

“Somewhere important!”

**Galaxia**

“YEEHAW!” Jinta Hanakari cheered, sticking two arms and fingers up. “Going on a galactic adventure, just like Numbuh One did! We’ll save the whole universe from the crazy child empress and be the best operatives on Earth!”

“Sit down, Jinta.” Karin told him. “We’re just going to ask them what they’ve been doing and maybe help look for Jirachi.”

“And how you know Nebula ain’t gonna abuse Jirachi for her own evil gain? I’ve had a bad feeling about that girl for a long time.”

“We’re closing in on GKND H.Q..” Kodama reported as the treehouse was in view. “Jinta, please don’t start an intergalactic war. I’m up for blowing up ships anyday, but—” Their ship was bombarded by Wisps wielding laser rifles. “NEVER MIND!” Kodama was quick to blast fireworks at the Wisps and alien ships.

“Attention trespassers, you have entered the territory of the Galactic BOE! Surrender or be blown to ashes!” Jerome Winkiebottom’s Jamaican voice said via intercom.
“Galactic BOE?!” Karin exclaimed. “What’s going on up there?!”

“YEEEAAAH!” The supervillain Control Freak flew by on a ship designed like a remote, slashing their C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. with double-lightsabers. “Galaxia belongs to the Brotherhood now, Kids Next Dumb!”

“The Brotherhood?” Yuzu questioned.

“They must’ve invaded GKND!” Karin deduced. “Kodama, get us in there!”

“They’ve sealed their hangar with an energy barrier.”

“Get us closer, I can fly in there and stop it.” Ururu said, fixing on her suit, which came with an air helmet.

“Okay, Ururu!” The bus barrel-rolled and bounced away the Wisps’ lasers, but their way to the treehouse was blocked by Common Cold’s Snot Bomber. “Have a Chicken Soup Cracker!” Kodama declared, blasting fireworks up the ship’s nose and exploding with warm, healthy soup.

“NOOOOO! You threw in the secret spi…spi…ACHOO! Secret spice that makes it yummier.”

The C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. swerved around the Snot Bomber and barrel-rolled the base’s defense turrets as they swooped by the hangar. Their enemies didn’t notice a fly-size Ururu fly out of the bus and squeeze into a tiny opening beside a turret. The Tiny Devil made her way to the inside of the base and pulled out an X-ray scanner. With it, she examined the barrier and could see the wires linking it through the walls. “There’s what I need to hit. But the openings are too small. Guys, I’m about to go micro size for a few minutes.” She said to her communicator. “I’ll lose communications for a while.”

“You sure, Ururu? Have you tested it?” Karin asked.

“Yes, I did. I’ll try to resize as soon as I can.” With that, Ururu flew for the wall and clicked the shrink button again, zipping to the size of a very tiny dot to fit into the wall. Her strength was still amplified, so she was able to slice the wires with her suit’s claws. Before long, the hangar’s barrier would disappear.

“The shield’s down! Let’s get inside!” Kodama suddenly turned the ship about-face and stomped the gas to boost into the hangar. Karin and Jinta jumped out and began to fight the alien kids while Kodama and Yuzu stayed a few feet behind them. Ururu resized on their right and ran beside them.

“Why are these operatives attacking us?!” Yuzu shouted.

“Maybe the Brotherhood took Nebula captive.” Karin said. “I’m going ahead. Don’t fall behind, Jinta.” She morphed into a ghost and phased up through the ceiling.

“Teamwork, much?!” remarked Jinta.

Karin briefly shot Ecto Beams at some of the villains on floors she bypassed, and in seconds she was at the top of the treehouse, before the Supreme Leader’s Throne. Karin switched back to human form and ran into the office/throne. “Numbuh Eternal, are you okay?!?”

Nebula D. Winkiebottom had one leg over the other as she sat on her throne, glaring at Karin with spite. “Who dares grace the presence of the High Supreme Leader in such an unruly manner?”

“Grace the… unruly?” Karin didn’t remember the Supreme Leader talking that way. “Numbuh
Eternal, I’m one of Cheren’s operatives. You haven’t answered our calls, so we came to check on you.”

“My, my, my.” A black robot with horns walked from around the throne. “What grand stroke of fate brought you to me, Karin Kurosaki?”

Karin reacted to the country voice with fear and hate. “Hannibal?!”

“BOOM!” Hannibal whipped out twin yo-yos. “The Yin-Yang Yo-yos! All we had to do was break into a hapless Collector’s museum, and wait for a super-child to demolish Moonbase enough for us to sneak in. I have awakened the Chaos Kin, Karin Kurosaki! The Galactic Kids Next Door responds to ME now!”

“The yo-yos!” Karin remembered. “So, the reason you were after them was to brainwash the GKND?!”

“That’s correct! And after I save the universe, the Galactic Brotherhood of Evil will rule everything!”

“What do you mean ‘save the universe’? Do you know how to stop the Apocalypse?”

“But of course I do! I’ll stop the Apocalypse the very same way Dimentia intended to start it 20 years ago: by harnessing the power of Jirachi. Jirachi’s limitless magical power enables him to grant any wish like the universe’s destruction. Why should he not be able to save the universe all the same? Unfortunately, ever since Jirachi’s bond with the Star Rod was broken, the only people who can command Jirachi to grant wishes are his Mortal Guardians. That is, ironically, Dimentia, or her devious little daughter.” Hannibal’s robot pinched Nebula’s cheeks.

“Don’t you dare touch me that way!” Nebula stated. “You’re lucky that I share the universal throne with you.”

“Right, right, apologies! But what say you, Karin? Wanna rule the universe with Big Daddy Bean?”

“Absolutely not! I’m putting a stop to your mind-control now!” Karin returned to ghost form and flew at Nebula, overshadowing her body.

“GYAAAH!” Nebula shook and aimlessly shot Starbursts. Within seconds, she stopped shaking as Karin completely took control. “I don’t understand… I can’t feel an evil spirit, no microchip or foreign presence… It’s like Nebula really wants to rule the universe.”

“She does!” Hannibal declared as Ying-Ying penetrated her talons into Nebula’s head, leaving no wound as she pulled Karin’s spirit out. “The Chaos Kin doesn’t infect a body with Dark Chi or directly possess a soul. It changes the allegiance of the soul to however it sees fit. The Yin becomes Yang for the Chaos Kin’s victims, and that power dwells in the Yin-Yang World. It’s a force of nature that can’t be stopped!”

Karin broke away from Ying-Ying and kicked Hannibal’s robot away, then quickly dodged Nebula’s Starbursts. Nebula warped above Karin and trapped her in a Space Block, exploding it as Karin fell to the floor. Hannibal jumped back to stomp Karin under his boot. “However, if you want my advice, Karin, I woulda suggested bringing more for your little army. It don’t take a tiny team of heroes to defeat the Brotherhood.”

“Shows what YOU know! My team is the best there is!”
“Yes, Ah can see that.” Hannibal looked toward the entrance and Karin followed his gaze.

The fighting robot Atlas was holding Jinta to his chest as the boy squirmed and kicked, Jack Spicer was holding Yuzu with the Third-Arm Sash, Makava held a sword to Kodama’s neck, and Karin glanced at the floor to see Vweeb holding a defeated Ururu. “We have successfully captured the intruders, Lord Bean!” Jack saluted.

“You have my applause, Spicer. Do ya see now, Karin? With the Chaos Kin, the Brotherhood of Evil has become an unbeatable army. If you don’t want any of your lovely friends severed in half, I suggest you Go Human and go with them to the dungeons.”

“Sigh…” Karin sighed and reverted to human form, laying flat on the floor. “Alright, you got us.”

“Excellent!” Hannibal stepped off and picked Karin up by the leg. “Sleep tight, darlin’.” He slammed her head against the floor and knocked her out.

Prison wing

“Uuuuh…” Karin awoke with a searing pain in her head. She was sat against the back of the cell, wearing handcuffs, and Yuzu was crouched before her in concern.

“Karin, thank goodness! Are you feeling okay? Do you remember who I am?!”

“Y-Yeah, I’m fine… It doesn’t actually hurt as much as it should. I guess I have my ghost half to thank for that.” Karin looked at the cuffs, and when she tried to transform, they zapped her. “Anti-ecto cuffs. Great.”

“It’s the least of our problems now.” Kodama sighed, standing at the cell’s barrier. “They took Jinta’s bat and all the Infi-Cubes I had under my robe. And worse, look at Ururu!”

Jinta pointed up at his hair, where tiny Ururu was hugging a strand to keep from falling. “Vweeb ripped her suit off and left her small.” he explained. “The jerk. I wish Anthony crushed him a long time ago.”

“Speaking of wishes, where is Jirachi, anyway?” Karin asked. “We need to get ahold of him before Hannibal does.”

“We can’t do much of anything as long as we’re in here.” Kodama reminded. “Not to mention we’re completely outnumbered. I don’t think we stand a ghost of a chance. Pun intended, Karin.”

A lightbulb sparked in Karin’s mind. She reached in her pocket and grabbed her cellphone. “They didn’t take my cellphone!”

“So what?” Jinta asked. “Does it get reception a billion light-years away?”

“Let’s find out.” Karin selected Yachiru on her list of contacts, texting her to come to her. A bright light appeared in their cell, and the pink-haired spirit child Yachiru appeared.

“Hello, Karin-chan! Sector JP!” she saluted.

“Hi, Yachiru!” Kodama greeted.

Yachiru gasped. “You can see me?”

“Huh?” Jinta cocked a brow. “Oh, yeah. At least you don’t have to possess me now.”
“That’s strange. Maybe it’s because you’ve been around Karin so long, her ghost goop rubbed off on you!”

“The magic of convenience.” Karin shrugged, getting to her feet. “Yachiru, have you ever heard of the Chaos Kin? Hannibal Bean’s using it to control the GKND.”

“The Chaos Kin?!” Yachiru exclaimed. “This is terrible… Luckily, you guys have Yachiru, the smartest spirit in the afterlife, to explain to you!” She raised a finger and was brimming with knowledge. “The Chaos Kin is a monstrous spirit created thousands of years ago by Hannibal Roy Bean. He designed it with Yin-Yang Chi, that which flows in the Yin-Yang World, a sub-world of the Spirit World. Like the energy of the Yin-Yang World, the Chaos Kin is able to turn any good person completely evil, or vice-versa. But as you can expect, Hannibal prefers the former. It’s stronger than any mind-control and can’t be healed through normal means.”

“That’s what Hannibal told us.”

“Camera drone coming!” Kodama yelled. A small, hovering camera floated by and stared at their cell for a few seconds.

“BLAAAAH!” Yachiru flew up and stuck her tongue at it. “BLOO-EEEHH.” She made all sorts of faces, from stretching her nose and smooshing the sides of her eyes.

Numbuh All-Seeing, an alien girl with a green body made of eyes, stared at the monitor. Sector JP was staring at her camera, and they were doing nothing suspicious at all.

The camera couldn’t detect Yachiru’s spiritual presence, so the spirit was free to be up close and slobber on the camera. The camera continued its patrol. Yachiru phased back through the cell and continued her story. “The Chaos Kin’s abilities can even affect gods. It was sometime after the Nature Wars when Hannibal had it possess Goddess Palutena. After Palutena was rescued, the gods ordered Hannibal to lock the Chaos Kin in a dungeon using the Yin-Yang Yo-yos, then give them the yo-yos so they could hide them.”

“If the Chaos Kin can possess gods, it can possess a Firstborn like Jirachi, too!” Kodama realized.

“But then why does Hannibal wanna use Nebula to get to Jirachi?” Jinta asked.

“Hannibal said that only Jirachi’s Guardians can make wishes to him.” Karin reminded. “I wonder if Jirachi couldn’t use his full power even if he wanted to without them making a wish?”

“That is exactly right!” Yachiru declared. *I don’t really know, but they don’t need to know that.*

“Yachiru, how do we stop the Chaos Kin?” Karin asked.

“Well, the Chaos Kin has a few flaws: for one thing, it must remain close to its target in order to keep its control. If it’s attacked, it will lose control, and henceforth it uses invisibility. Furthermore, the Chaos Kin can only possess one person at a time.”

“Then how is it controlling the whole GKND?!” Jinta shouted, his outburst hurting Ururu’s ears.

“Hmm… That is a good question.” Yachiru rubbed her chin. “Are you sure the GKND aren’t blindly following orders? That’s what Palutena’s Centurions did when she was possessed.”

“They have Brotherhood villains working with them!” Karin emphasized. “I don’t think they would be blind enough to not notice something’s up. Are you sure you aren’t forgetting anything?”
“Don’t question my knowledge, Student!”

“Okay, gee. What do you think, Yuzu?”

“...” The younger twin was about to break into tears. “I still can’t see Yachiru.”

“Huh?” the friends chorused, looking surprised.

“I knew I wasn’t spending enough time with you!” She started weeping. “We’re growing apart, Karin-nee, waaaahh!”

“Ugh! Yuzu, snap out of it!” Karin kicked her sister in the face and knocked her out.

“Karin, why did you do that?!” Ururu squeaked.

“Wait...”

“SHYAH!” Yuzu jumped to recovery, her brown eyes dimmer. “What up, mah Ninja Clan?! Yo, did we get arrested? Hey, who’s the pink-hair chick?”

“Morning, Night Yuzu.” Karin greeted. “I think you’re best suited for this mission. Yachiru, you have to get us outta here. Take us to the Spirit World.”

“WHAT?! You know I can’t bring living humans to the Spirit World! It’s a total violation of boundary laws!”

“What’s the point of being allies with a spirit if she won’t even help?!” Jinta said angrily.

“Yachiru-san, won’t you please help us, please?” Tiny Ururu began crying. “I’m so small and so scared! We have no way to escape and we’re afraid of dying! Sniff, sniff... sniff...”

Yachiru was touched by her squeaky pleas. She couldn’t leave someone so adorable to suffer. “Well... maybe just this once... Everyone hold hands.”

“Wait, more people are coming!” Kodama yelled quietly.

Jerome D. Winkiebottom approached the cell alongside the Ghost Warden, Walker. Yachiru phased through the floor to keep from being noticed. “Karin Kurosaki, Numbuh Eternal wishes to have a word with you alone.” Jerome said. “Any attempt at resistance will result in punishment for your friends.”

“All right.” Karin complied. The cell barrier lowered, and when Karin saw Kodama raise a brow, the leader replied, “Hai.” Walker looked confused, unfamiliar with Japanese, but chose to ignore it and relock the cell.

Karin was escorted to a room with a pedestal machine connected to a computer that took up the wall. There was a device on the pedestal designed like a hi-tech Code Module. Nebula was there with Hannibal Bean on her shoulder. “Karin Kurosaki, my acquaintance informs me that you are what is classified as a Halfa: a human that can become a ghost. Is this true?” Nebula inquired.

“Yes, what of it?”

“You see, Karin, as Supreme Leader of the Galactic Kids Next Door, my dream is to create the most powerful army consisting of all kids from every race in the universe, hybrids included. Halfas are as rare as they come. So, I would like to offer you and your team the chance to join my army.
Put a piece of your Halfa DNA into the GKN\D Code Module, and invite your team to do the same.”

“What makes you think any of us would work under your crazy rule?”

“Awe, Karin, you oughta give it a try.” Hannibal invited. “’Cause if you don’t, you’ll just be wasting away your lives in a dingy old cell. Why don’t you open your mind a little and join us?”

Karin raised a brow at the way he phrased that. “Hmmm… You promise to let my friends go if I join?”

“Of course! And iff’n you don’t like it, you can always tell the Code Module to relinquish your rights as an operative. But I think you’ll want to stay.”

“Okay, I’ll do it.”

“Excellent. Unlock her cuffs, Walker. And if she tries any funny business, I got someone ready to kill your friends.”

Walker unlocked Karin’s cuffs, and the girl patiently followed Nebula toward the Code Module. Nebula typed on the available keyboard, and when the computer asked for voice-authorization, she answered, “Numbuh Eternal, Supreme Leader.”

“Hello, Numbuh Eternal. What is your request?”

A blue mist flowed out of Karin’s mouth. She looked around for the source… and could feel something invisible near the Code Module. “HANNIBAAAL!” Jack Spicer sprinted into the room in a panic. “Sector JP escaped from their cell and we can’t find them!”

“Jack, you picked a REALLY bad time to tell me that!”

Thinking fast, Karin switched to her Halfa form, shot Ecto Rays at Walker and Jerome, and possessed Nebula’s body, throwing Hannibal off. “I wish to relinquish my rights as a Galactic Kids Next Door operative!” she yelled in Nebula’s voice. “And to remove my DNA from the Code Module!”

“NOOO!” Hannibal cried.

“Understood. Transferring Supreme Leader rights to: Numbuh 250 Trillion.” A strand of hair that was black and white came out of the Code Module. Karin flew out and took it.

“Aaah!” Nebula shook to her senses after being free of Karin’s possession. “Karin, why did you do… that?” She looked at Jack, Walker, and saw Ying-Ying above them. A look of utmost shock washed over her. “Why… did I invite the Brotherhood of Evil into my base?”

“STOP THEM!” Hannibal commanded.

“Come on!” Karin grabbed Nebula and turned intangible as she phased them out of the room. She stopped in an empty hallway and called Yachiru on her phone.

The spirit child reappeared again. “Karin, I brought your friends to a spirit park!”

“Great, take us too.” Yachiru nodded and grabbed them both.

“I still wanna know what’s going—OOOOOONN!” Nebula screamed as a ray of light took them to the Spirit World. Karin reunited with her team in a peaceful park where the spirits of innocent
families happily spent their afterlives.

“Yo, who dyed your hair, Sister?!” Yuzu asked Nebula. “You some kinda Dalmatian killer?!”

“Nebula, are you alright?” Karin asked, setting the Zathurian on her feet. “Do you remember anything?”

“I…I do…” Nebula said in a tone that implied she wasn’t sure of herself. “I remember the Brotherhood coming to our base, wanting to form an alliance… and I said ‘yes.’ But for some reason, he kept talking about a Chaos Kin. He forbade me from contacting Earth because he was afraid they could stop us.”

“From what we know, your operatives were being controlled by a monster.” Kodama explained.

“No, I told you, the Chaos Kin can only possess one at a time!” Yachiru raised her fists in outrage.

“But it wasn’t!” Karin informed. “I think I figured it out: the Chaos Kin wasn’t controlling them individually, it was controlling them through the Code Module. When they brought me to the Code Module, I felt a spiritual presence and got the idea. I decided to test my theory by making Nebula remove her DNA.”

“My precious Code Module is being tampered with by a monster?!” Nebula shouted. “That’s impossible! I designed it to be unhackable, just like Earth’s Code Module!”

“It’s not completely unhackable.” Ururu commented. “Remember the story of Father’s Animal Ray?”


Jinta set Ururu on the ground as Nebula used spacebending to stretch her back to normal. Ururu sighed in relief. “Anyway, the Code Module tracks the whereabouts of each operative anywhere in the universe via their DNA.” Nebula explained. “The inside of the module contains an endless space where the pieces of DNA are preserved.”

“So, if the operatives are tracked using some kind of satellite system, maybe Chaos Kin infected it with his Yin-Yang Chi. And it gave you the desire to form an army out of every race so that it could eventually control all the kids in the universe!”

“That probably includes the Firstborn, too.” Kodama figured. “Why stop with Jirachi?”

“Look, I’m gettin’ bored of all this talkin’.” Yuzu said, picking her nose. “The Chaos Kin is the bad guy, so let’s go beat the snot out of it.”

“It’s not as easy when the Chaos Kin has Hannibal and the Brotherhood protecting him.” Karin reminded. “What we need to do is find Jirachi. Do you know where he is, Nebula?”

“Not at the moment. Ever since Mom set him free, Jirachi’s been exploring the universe, going on endless vacations. We often get postcards, like when he was at the intergalactic waterslide, or when he went go-karting at Lightspeed Mania.”

“Would your mom know where he is?”

“Um… the Brotherhood kind of took control of Star Haven and threw my mom in the dungeon, too.” Nebula answered awkwardly. “Besides, she wouldn’t know. We haven’t really gotten a postcard from Jirachi in months.”
“The universe is a big place.” Ururu said. “It’ll take forever to find him.”

“Guys, I think I found Jirachi!” Yachiru called from the park’s fountain.

“You did?!?” Nebula yelled as they ran to join her. “How?”

“You just have to ask a Reflecting Pool to find someone and it does. He’s…”

“You gotta be kidding.” Karin said with disbelief as they viewed the image.

**KND Moonbase**

“I was flying by the Milky Way, so I decided to pay a visit to Earth,” Jirachi explained to his fellow Firstborn and the operatives who were otherwise surprised by his arrival, “and I crashed my Warp Star in this colorful city with a lot of lights. I went in this casino place and started having so much fun, I didn’t wanna leave! But then this blue-haired girl showed up… Wait, is that her there?” He pointed at Nagisa Shiota.

“. . . I’m a boy.” Nagisa corrected with total humility. He always dreamed of meeting Jirachi, the Original Operative, but he was ashamed for those to be the first words Jirachi says to him.

“Why is your head shaped like a star?” Crest asked.

“Why is your head shaped like a moon?” Jirachi asked.

“Why is Jirachi here to begin with?!” Lee Andrew yelled.

“Maybe we should go up to GKND and tell Sector JP and Nebula.” Denny suggested.

A ray of light seemed to burst from the ceiling, and the aforementioned people appeared before their eyes. “JIRACHI!” Nebula exclaimed.

“Huh? Who are you?” the Starchild asked.

“I’m Nebula. Dimentia’s daughter.”

“Ohhhhh!” Jirachi beamed. “You were a baby when we last met!”

“Why did you guys just come from the Spirit World?” MaKayla asked.

“Where’s Cheren, first of all?” Nebula looked around. “I need him to help me- mmmp!” Karin clamped her mouth shut.

“We just got a little sidetracked.” Karin said sheepishly. “Jirachi, come with us.” She led Nebula away. Jirachi and her teammates followed, confused by her actions.

“What are you doing?!” Nebula demanded after Karin uncovered her mouth.

“Look, I don’t think we should get these guys involved in this battle. We were already planning to attack the Government, that’s why we volunteered to come help you ourselves. They have enough on their plates. Besides, we don’t need them to fix this, what about all the other KNDs?”

“That’s another problem.” Nebula replied with shame. “When I was evil, I kind of demanded the other Supreme Leaders to come up there with their entire armies and put their DNA in the Code Module. When I established our alliances, part of the contract was to allow them to remain primarily loyal with their own KND, and we couldn’t order them to give us some operatives unless
the operatives themselves volunteered. After all, it’s kind of insulting to make someone not be
loyal to their own planet, don’t you think?”

“So, let’s tell them it was a misunderstanding. We’ll back you up.” Karin offered.

“Or you can just wish Jirachi would make the Chaos Kin go away and get your friends back.” Jinta
suggested logically.

“I wish I could, but I don’t even know what you guys are talking about.” Jirachi replied.

“When I last checked, the Supreme Leaders actually gathered in Galactic Kid Council to discuss
the ‘me’ problem.” Nebula blushed. “Earlier, we sent a fleet of Brotherhooders and Wisps to fight
their operatives. They could still be there.”

“Then let’s borrow a C.O.O.L.-B.U.S. and go to the council!” Karin insisted.

“Actually, can we visit someone first?” Jirachi asked. “Nigel Uno lives on this planet and he’s a
very good friend of mine. I haven’t seen him in years, so…”

The six kids exchanged mournful glances.

KND Graveyard

They showed Jirachi the grave where Nigel was buried. The sky was as gray as the day of the
funeral. “Oh… I didn’t know.” Jirachi frowned.

“Yes. It happened earlier in the month.” Nebula said. “He was killed by the World Leaders.”

“Hmm… it feels like only yesterday when he saved me. It’s kinda funny… he never drank from
my fountain like the others.”

Nebula bit her lip at the statement. She remembered the bad deeds her mom had done, using
Jirachi. “…We should hurry to Planet Wisp. We have to save the Supreme Leaders.”

“You’re right.” Jirachi said. “Well… Bye, Nigel. It was good to see you again.”

Planet Wisp

A Yokian ship was fried by a team of Solaran ships, and the fiery operatives proceeded to dine on
the fried chicken. When the Sweet Revenge was trying to bombard the dome-shaped council
building with jawbreaker cannonballs, an airborne water tanker sent by the Ocean KND flew above
the pirate ship and dumped salt water over the sugar-coated scallywags. Sector JP and co.
witnessed the battle transpire as they entered the atmosphere. “The leaders must be inside.” Nebula
figured. “Jirachi, can you make the Brotherhood ships go away?”

“Not if I can’t tell them apart.” Jirachi frowned. “I won’t be able to automatically grant your wishes
until you become my Guardian.”

“Always a catch.” Nebula sighed. “I’m taking you inside. Can you give help with the situation out
here?”

“You got it.” Karin nodded. Nebula held onto Jirachi and splorped them both.

Inside the council

“Nebula’s gone mad with power!” argued Pluey, the Pumparian KND leader. He had cyan skin and
eyes. “Having all our KNDs on her side made her cocky, we have to bring GKND down!”

“Nebula wouldn’t just betray us after everything she’s done!” yelled Mae, the Harnitan leader. She had red skin and sky-blue hair. “There has to be a reason for Nebula’s actions. It could be an imposter.”

“Then let’s go up there and beat some answers outta her!” Minksiminnian of the Kateenian KND declared.

“No, I agree with Mae.” Liaziana, the Glomourian Princess, followed. “I’ve always trusted Nebula.”

“That’s because she wants to enslave all races like YOU do!”

“I NEVER wanted to enslave you guys!”

“Mayhaps if we calm ourselves for a moment.” Jesbi, the Nimbi Leader, inferred.

“How can we be calm with all that BOOMING going on out there?!” Chrysundra the Amazon KND leader shouted.

“You Amazons would know all about THAT, wouldn’t you?!” retorted Phillord, the Terachnoid KND Leader.

“What is THAT supposed to mean, Spider Boy?!”

“We wilt NOT find yonder answer in our mindless bickering!” Jesbi shouted.

“What else are we supposed to do?!” Kaima the Mermaid Leader yelled. “Hope the answer appears out of thin air?”

Nebula and Jirachi appeared on the central platform out of thin space. The bickering silenced instantly. “Uh… hi.” Nebula waved.

“IT’S NEBULA!” Minksman pointed. “And she’s got Jirachi! Kateenians, GET HER!” His operatives revealed their selves on his platform and blasted ray guns, Nebula defending with a Space Block.

“Guys, I’m not here to fight you! I’m trying to tell you why I-”

“Jirachi, fly over to Giz!” the Irken leader called. “Giz is different from his ancestors! He will protect you!”

“Why did Ruby and Sapphire join the EARTH Kids?!” the Solaran leader, Pyler demanded, his head a tall violet flame. “Were they trying to get away from you? Or did you send them as SPIES?”

“What happened to Celebi?!” Pluey asked. “We know one of your operatives had her! Are you trying to capture the Firstborn?!”

“SILEEEEEEEEENCE!”

Everybody shut their ears under the powerful booming voice. “Mine word… could it be God?!” Jesbi asked.

“YES! I am the mighty God! Your unbearable chattering has forced me to speak! Feeeeeaarr the Almighty…”
“Bender, knock it off!” Nebula laughed. “Get down here and join us!”

“Sure!” The entire chamber turned dark and morphed as Bender’s gigantic mouth and eyes appeared on the ceiling.

“That’s the robot you were with two months ago!” Liaziana remembered. “What happened to it?”

“I hacked myself into this building’s mainframe! I can see everything and I know everything. Mostly which banks are worth robbing and what ceiling fans will fall. I can see what goes on in GKND, too. Your hatred is misplaced, my friends. For you see, Nebula and her operatives were possessed by an evil spirit called the Chaos Kin.”

“OF COURSE! Giz knew this all along!” he declared.

“No you didn’t.” Graab negated.

“Yes, this was all a ploy by Hannibal Roy Bean. Nebula meant you no disrespect.”

“I don’t trust a giant face that thinks it’s a god!” Chrysundra yelled. “Make yourself smaller, then we’ll talk.”

“Fine.” Bender rolled his eyes. The room returned to normal as he zapped down beside Nebula in his normal form, a boiling container of water inside his compartment.

“AAAH!” Jirachi screamed suddenly and started twitching.

“Jirachi, what’s wrong?!” Nebula asked.

“I feel something controlling me… it…it’s your mother’s Spirit Ball!”

Nebula’s wristwatch rang, Karin’s face appearing. “Nebula, Hannibal’s here! And he’s brought your mom!”

“Bender, protect Jirachi.” Nebula ordered. “I’m gonna see what’s up.” She warped.

Karin had assumed her ghost form as Dimentia and Hannibal floated level with her, the latter in his robot suit. Nebula saw them from where she had appeared and flew over. “Nebula, where’s Jirachi?” Dimentia asked with a scowl. “Bring him out now. Hannibal needs him.”

“Mom, why are you working with Hannibal?!”

“I ‘persuaded’ Dimentia to rejoin GKND.” Hannibal explained. “Since you ain’t gonna be a good girl, we might as well use her. Now, one of our ships picked up Jirachi’s presence in this area. Mind showin’ us where?”

“She doesn’t need to.” Dimentia raised the Spirit Ball. “Jirachi, I wish for you to come to-”

Nebula shot the ball out of her hand with a Starburst, then flew down to grab it. Karin blasted Ecto Rays at Dimentia before she could follow, resulting in Hannibal punching Karin several feet. Nebula set foot on the ground upon grabbing the ball, but Dimentia struck her with Space Lightning. “Nebula, this is our chance to start over again! With Jirachi and the Brotherhood as our allies, we can rule the universe!”

“That’s NOT you talking, Mom! You’re past that, I know!”

“I’m TIRED of living on that boring star island! I was the Child Empress, and I WILL be again!
I’ll use Jirachi to make me young again, and the two of us will rule together!”

“No we WON’T!” Nebula countered with her own lightning.

Dimentia used a Space Block to counter the lightning, then tried to catch her daughter in a Block, but Nebula warped above and struck with double Starbursts. Dimentia warped all around her daughter to confuse her, afterwards zapping Nebula with lightning and taking the Spirit Ball. Nebula centered a gravity field up above to draw Dimentia in, using her moment of imbalance to snatch the Spirit Ball back. Dimentia conjured multiple portals around herself and shot Starbursts in like bullets, but when they reappeared around Nebula, she defended herself with a Space Block.

Dimentia warped into her block to grab the ball, and Nebula warped them both out before shooting her away with a Starburst. “You fought better than this, Nebula.” Dimentia said. “Why are you holding back?”

“Because you aren’t in your right mind. The Chaos Kin is making you attack me.”

“I’m afraid you’re wrong, honey.” Hannibal Bean hovered above. “While the Chaos Kin can change a person’s thoughts or allegiance, from then on the person acts on their free will.”

“I don’t like fighting my own daughter, but you give me no choice.” Dimentia stated. “Give me the Spirit Ball!” She snapped fingers and warped the ball to her hand, then warped before Nebula could retaliate.

Hannibal grabbed Nebula and pressed her to his chest. “Ain’t it a shame when moms and daughters don’t get along? No one drives a child to the Dark Side more than bad parents.”

Karin phased through Hannibal from behind and pushed Nebula out of his grasp, letting her search for Dimentia. “You really get a kick out of ruining families, huh?!”

“Awe, is Karin still mad that I killed her mom?” Hannibal taunted. “Every punch you throw at me is out of anger and vengeance. And that’s what FUELS me!”

“But how much fuel can you TAKE?!” Karin shot twin beams that Hannibal evaded, flipping forward to kick her.

Dimentia reappeared on the ground and yelled, “Jirachi, I wish for you to come!”

A few feet away, Bender materialized out of thin air, Jirachi wrapped in his arms. “Yo, why’d you take us outside?”

“Jirachi screamed.

Dimentia snapped fingers and warped Jirachi to her, but Bender stretched an arm and punched her face before taking him back. “Bender, get him away from her!” Nebula yelled, blasting Starbursts at the ground around Dimentia. Dimentia spawned a large vortex and tried to suck her in, so Nebula warped herself higher—Dimentia quickly warped above to kick her daughter down into the vortex. Jesbi swooped by and grabbed Nebula before she could complete the fall. “Jesbi!”

“The council hast reached an understanding.” the Nimbi said. When Dimentia warped in front, Jesbi shot lightning from her rod.

“GOT IT!” Minksman swooped by on his mini hovercraft and snatched the Spirit Ball in an extendable claw. Chrysundra leapt up to grab Dimentia’s legs, dropping to slam her to the ground. “Didn’t think I could jump that high, did ya?!”
Nebula and Jesbi floated down as Giz, Liaziana, Kaima, and the remaining leaders surrounded Dimentia. “Sorry to have to gang up on you like this, Mother. Funny thing is, a lot of these KNDs still don’t think highly of you.”

“I see. It must’ve taken you a while to earn their trust.” Dimentia replied. “But you can’t deny you’re no different than how I was.”

“Oh yeah? Name the last black hole I opened to destroy the universe.”

“Your goals are different from mine, but you’re power-hungry all the same. I remember the night after you got the Amazons to join the council, you boasted about how you had the largest army in the universe.”

“What?” Chrysundra looked at Nebula curiously.

Nebula flushed. “I didn’t mean YOU guys!”

“No, she meant all of you.” Dimentia continued. “She one day hoped to make alliances with every KND in the universe, and to start a KND on each planet. It was her dream to expand the organization to all corners of the universe and be the center of it all. Isn’t that right, Nebula?”

“Dimentia, QUIT foolin’ around!” Hannibal ordered, robot hands locked with Karin’s. “The Apocalypse is just around the corner! Get Jirachi so we can wish it away!”


“YES! What, did you think I wanted a mountain of candy?!”

“Jirachi can’t stop the Apocalypse.”

“What?!"

“When we learned about it 15 years ago, I called Jirachi back and wished the Apocalypse wouldn’t happen. He said it was beyond his power, it was even beyond Arceus’s power. All he could do was choose people to survive.”

“But…But you were gonna use Jirachi to make a new world! How is that not beyond his power?”

“I was misled. Jirachi wasn’t controlling Zathura, it was my brother. It wouldn’t have succeeded.”

Karin kicked Hannibal back when his guard was lowered. “What’s wrong, Hannibal? Did things not go according to plan?”

“You smartass little twerp. Perhaps a trip to the Yin-Yang World will fix your…” The robot reached for the yo-yos in its compartments. “W-Wait a minute! Where are mah yo-yos?!"

“Snatched them when I saved Nebula earlier.” Karin smirked. “I already passed them to someone else.”

“Who?!"

**GKND H.Q.**

Yachiru found the room with the GKND Code Module, Yin-Yang Yo-yos in hand. She narrowed her eyes, sensing the spiritual presence. “I know you’re in here. You can’t hide from me. I’m very good at Hide-and-Seek.”
No response.

“Not here? Well, okay. I guess I better-” She turned away—whipped back around and shot twin rays above the Module, striking something invisible. The Chaos Kin hit the floor and turned visible: it had one eye and looked like a scorpion, its tail an axe, and its six legs also served as wings. “THERE you are!” Yachiru lunged forward to stab the monster, but Chaos Kin dodged and began to skitter down the hall like an insect.

“You’re not running from me!” Yachiru flew after the creature, dodging its energy balls before phasing under the floor. The frightened Chaos Kin stopped and turned to see his pursuer had vanished. “BOO!” Yachiru shot up from behind and sliced the creature in half. The Chaos Kin turned into black ash that floated in place. “Time to lock you back where you came from. Yin-Yang Yo-yo!” She spun the yo-yos and opened a portal.

Realization swept over the GKND operatives like a wave. For some reason, they were working with the Brotherhood of Evil on a quest for universal conquest. They didn’t know where this alliance spawned from, all they knew was it was over. The GKND turned against the Brotherhooders immediately and rounded up each and every one.

**Planet Wisp**

The Wisps snapped back to their senses and attacked the Brotherhood ships. Dimentia gasped: “Nebula, I’m so sorry! Why did I attack you?!”

“I don’t understand!” said Hannibal in shock.

“I take it the Chaos Kin is finished.” Karin deduced. “Sorry your reign didn’t last long, Hanny.”

“Villains, RETREAT!” Hannibal flew skyward. “Y’all are gonna be sorry! Mark my words, you’ll-” Liaziana sliced a sword beam up to chop the boots off the robot. Hannibal crashed on the ground, and when the bean hopped out, Yuzu caught him in a jar.

“Who’s sorry NOW, Hanni-Booger?” Yuzu retorted.

“CAWWW!” Ying-Ying swooped down in the form of an eagle and rescued her master.

“HEY, come back ya dumb bird! I was gonna eat him!”

“Just let him fly.” Nebula said. “He needs a moment to realize his plan was a bust. …Chrysundra, you can let Mom go now.”

The Amazon helped Dimentia to her feet and released her. “Sigh… I’m sorry for attacking you, Nebula.”

“It’s not your fault.” Nebula landed on the ground. “But did you say you already tried wishing Jirachi to stop the Apocalypse? Did you know about it all along?”

“Yes… All the parents did.” Dimentia said guiltily. “We learned from the Chronicler 15 years ago, but he told us not to tell any of you guys when you were born. He said to wait until Cheren told you.”

“And he took his precious time doing THAT!” Nebula retorted.

“We just awakened the Seventh Light.” Karin informed. “All we have left is the final Darkness and the last three Firstborn. The quest is almost finished.”
“Are you sure?” Pluey asked. “We all saw that message in the sky. Is opening the Gate of Time really a good idea?”

“We have faith that Jagar King can defeat Ragaj. He’ll stop Caliborn from coming back.”

“But will that stop the Apocalypse?” Mae asked.

“Er… we don’t think so. I mean, it COULD, but…”

“Opening the Gate will take us all to the New World where we can be saved.” Kodama recapped. “I think the question is how we can round up everybody in the universe before then…”

“…” Nebula looked at Jirachi. “Jirachi… if I became your Guardian and could make a wish to you… how great would the extent of your power be?”

“Uh… I would guess it’d be a lot.” Jirachi said with a confused frown.

“Do you think I’m worthy to be your Guardian?”

“I don’t know. Try the Spirit Ball and see.”

“I wasn’t asking you. I was asking… the rest of you.” She turned to all the Supreme Leaders. They all shared the confusion.

“Wait.” Kaima spoke up. “You’re asking if you are worthy to be our guardian? What does that even mean?”

“What I mean is, if the universe is going to be destroyed, do you trust me to protect every single one of your planets? Because I will admit… with all of you guys as my friends, and all your KNDs as my allies… I really do feel like I have the largest army in the universe. I take pride in being able to… unite all of you. And I feel invincible when I know I have you. I guess, in a way… I do feel like a Child Empress. But I can promise you I’m not evil. If I could have your trust, I wouldn’t abuse it. I would protect your planets with my life. So, do you think I’m worthy?”

Silence followed as everyone contemplated her words. They knew Nebula was a good leader, who led them to victory against Viridi and Dimentio. She helped stop the war between Glomour and Kateenia. But even she must know that protecting all their worlds from a cataclysm was beyond her strength. The leaders turned to Jirachi and knew… she had a plan. The Firstborn may have had limits, but his power was still vast, so Nebula must have a plan to put it to use. And they trusted her.

Minksman passed the Spirit Ball to Lia, who gave it to Kaima, then to Giz, Pluey, Mae, to Chrysundra, who held it up to Griffin Firecrystal, to Jesbi, who passed it to Nebula. Jirachi floated to her with a bright smile, for he accepted her as his Guardian. Nebula threw the ball and caught the Firstborn. The Spirit Ball glowed with Jirachi’s colors – bottom half white, top half yellow with Jirachi’s blue ribbons, and a ‘II’ appeared on the forehead. Nebula snatched the ball from the air.

**Nebula captured a FIRSTBORN! Only 2 more to go!**

“So, what now? Supreme Galactic Leader.” Lia asked.

“We don’t have long until the Apocalypse. Make sure every one of your planets’ denizens are safely in their atmosphere.” Nebula stared at the glowing Spirit Ball. “It’s time to put Jirachi’s power to the test.”
In some faraway land

Uxie guided Emily Garley and her friends to a land that was way off the maps, completely untraceable. The sky was pitch-black and they seemed to be going into nowhere. Uxie stopped, her face shining with excitement. “We’re here.” She flashed her emblems and lit the place up. (Play “Grunty’s Furnace Fun Entrance” from *Banjo-Kazooie*)

Lights switched on in the darkness, and Team Emily gaped, for they have never seen a place so amazing: it was an amusement park with Firstborn plushies, Ice Climber Ice Cream, Skypian Cotton Candy, bumper cars designed like shoes of Gameverse characters – the name of the park flashed above the entrance: *GAMEVERSE LAND!*

There were black “?”s decorated around the lit-up entrance, and there was an idol of Yours Truly up above, made of colorful lights, as I held a scepter with a “?” on it. “Are you ready for your Trial of Knowledge?” Uxie asked. Emily smirked and nodded confidently. Kris Hallows wore a red-and-white-striped shirt and top-hat, nodding to the guests as they approached the park. They passed the doorway lit with a red “G” and entered this wonderful world.

Do you guys remember the Trial of Knowledge from *Legend of the Eight Firstborn*? Well, that time has come again! Who wants to attempt the Seven Lights Gameverse Quiz?! Who thinks they know the Gameverse?! Don’t be shy! And don’t think it’ll be as easy as last time! Next time, Emily will attempt the quiz! WELCOME, one and all… to GAMEVERSE LAND! (Oh, Chaos Kin is from *Kid Icarus*.)
Chapter Summary

Emily Garley and her friends attempt the Gameverse Land Quiz! Afterwards, Team Rupert faces an unexpected challenge.

First, I want to thank IDA Official for trying the Gameverse Quiz! He can tell you how hard it was! ;D Play “Grunty’s Furnace Fun” from *Banjo-Kazooie*!

*Chapter 75: It’s Quiz Time!*

*Stage 68: Gameverse Land*

*Mission: Ace the quiz!*

Balloons were released to the night sky and lights flashed on the stage. The author of this story took the spotlight and announced to all his fans, “WELCOME, WELCOME! Gamen’s the name! Thank you ALL for playing this game! This park is the home I reside! I’m delighted to let you all inside! Emily Garley’s here, and she will play, to walk home with a Firstborn at the end of the day.” The lights shone on Uxie. “Sure, I could do some character development trial, but that’s been overdone a while.” I shrug. “I have here a wheel with icons galore.” The roulette wheel had pictures of a “?”, an eye, a note, a clock, and myself. “Whatever it lands on will be a question you can’t ignore. Around this park are various games, and they will feature the choices’ names. Focus your mind and hit the right choice, otherwise you’ll hear my disapproving voice.”

“What do the different icons mean??” Emily yelled.

“This question mark is a simple query, but if you don’t know, make your best theory! The eye will let you see a world, and see if you know it, smarty girl. The note, you’ll hear music or maybe a voice, answer the related question with your best choice. The clock holds a time trial – could be any character, and you have to complete it with great care. Then as for me, I’ll ask about me. How well you know, we’ll have to see. Are you ready? Then let’s begin! I’ll start this game with the first spin!”

I spun the roulette wheel as it landed on “?” “Which of these Pikmin is new to the Gameverse?” a. White Pikmin, b. Wing Pikmin, c. Ice Pikmin, d. Rock Pikmin.

“Ice Pikmin!”

“That’s right, and you have 2 points! A second guess is one point in this joint. Have fun, and don’t faint! (faint)”

“What do you want to ride first?” Sarah asked.

“Um, actually… I was thinking I could do this trial myself since… I probably know more than you.” Emily said with a blush.

“Well, fine!” Gary stated. “We’ll do the trial separately and try to get the highest score!”
“May the best smarty win!”

“When you think you’ve gotten a handy amount,” I continued, “enter the prize door to see the bout! If one is lowest, there they goes. What score do the other players have, who knows?”

Emily first decided to visit the roller coaster, which took her along a whipping fast track. The choices were spinning in the air, having not gained tangibility as the roulette was spinning. Emily readied her slingshot as a “Note” question was asked: “Listen to this music: Where in the story did I use it?” (Plays “Dream Room” from *Yume Nikki*.) a. Boggly Woods Act 2, b. Land of Cubes and Tea, c. Chronicler’s Domain, d. Hall of Doors.

Emily shot her slingshot at Hall of Doors. “WRONG! Does someone else want a swing?”


“CORRECT! One point for Gary, 0 for Emily!”

The music switched back to “Furnace Fun” as the coaster stopped. Emily hurried to a bumper car game and claimed a shoe designed like her own. I spun the wheel, which seemed to automatically land on an eye. “Focus and beware: match the character with correct footwear!”

A bunch of names appeared over the other bumper car shoes and began swerving around. A white shoe with a red stripe had “Nagisa”, a white shoe had “Anthony”, a sparkly light-blue shoe had “MaKayla”, and a green sandal had “Sheila.” Emily thought it was the easiest question ever and hit Sheila’s sandal. “Too easy! 2 points for Emily!”

Emily headed to a merry-go-round, and the roulette landed on ‘Clock.’ “Uh-oh, time trial time! Which character do you wanna be?” The choices rotating on the roundabout were Augustus, Rupert, Cheren, and Sheila. Emily chose Augustus.

The teen boy in question suddenly materialized in the Cinnamon Jungle, under a ceiling with lots of Apple Piranhas and pitfalls. “Get to the Goal in 2 minutes, hurry!” Augustus donned his Corn-Clambers and trekked up the wall to get on the ceiling. He quickly examined the path and tried to choose the best routes that would take him around the pitfalls. The Apple Piranhas gnashed at him, but he quickly countered with his Lemon Cutlass. There were 20 seconds left by the time he was near the Goal Ring, but three Piranhas were guarding it. Augustus hurriedly sliced the creatures and went to touch the ring.

“Emily wins! She has 4 points!”

Next up, Emily wanted to ride the Ferris wheel, and the choices were displayed above the very top. She eagerly rode the wheel as the roulette landed on a “Me” space. “All you folks should know this: what is currently my favorite fictional pairing?!” a. Romeo/Wendy, b. 10/11.0, c. Ruby/Sapphire, d. Ruby/Weiss.

Emily shot 10/11.0. “NOT ANYMORE!” I subtracted 2 points from Emily. Sarah got her slingshot and hit Romeo/Wendy. “CORRECT!”

“Darn it! Back at 2 points again.” Emily huffed. “I need to step up my game.” Emily saw a stairway leading up to a very high platform. She Super Hooped up the stairs, and by the time she was at the top, the roulette landed on the Note space.

“Listen and make note: which character has this quote?” “I don’t want to become a burden to any of you.” a. Wendy Marvell, b. Sonya Dickson, c. Sally Harper, d. Yuzu Kurosaki.
The choices appeared on four different distant platforms, forcing Emily to Sky Fly to the correct one. Though she vaguely remembered, Emily floated to Yuzu’s space. “CORRECT! Back to 4 points with Emily!”

Emily sighed at the small number, but kept a steady look as she ran to the next game with determination. She came to a small fenced baseball field, where she had to hit the ball to the correct answer with her Stun Club. The roulette stopped at “?” . “What were Ruby Rose and Weiss Schnee doing at the beginning of Shrinking Ice Violet?” a. Sparring, b. Playing a game, c. Doing homework, d. Eating cookies.

The baseball flew at Emily, so she faced the direction of- “ME FIRST!” Gary jumped in the way and hit the ball to ‘Sparring.’ “INCORRECT! Your turn, Emily.”

Emily glared at her opponent and hit the ball to ‘Playing a game’ like she intended. “Correct! She now has 5 points!”

Next, Emily went to a fenced mud farm where she had to net the correct answer. The roulette landed on Eye. “Do you recognize this place?” The screen showed a view of a coast from a wooden walkway under a night sky. a. Tortuga, b. Lunaria, c. Heron, d. Bullies’ Land. The choices ran around the field, but Emily ran up to net Tortuga. “Right again! 7 points for you!”

Emily located a mini C.A.M.-C.A.R. maze under a glass case. She would have to navigate the car in the maze and find the correct answer. The question was another Sound one. “Who is this person speaking to?” “Don’t break any bones.” a. Jinta Hanakari, b. Maddy Murphy, c. Nagisa Shiota, d. Cheren Uno. Emily navigated the maze and touched Nagisa. “Correct! 9 points!”

Emily sighed with relief, glad to be steadily building her score, but wondering how much the others had. Am I doubting my own genius? she thought to herself. The bumper shoes were open again, so Emily tried for another question there. The roulette stopped at Me. “Which of these characters wears the same colored shoes as myself?” Cheren’s name appeared over his red shoe, Fybi’s over her brown sandal, Terry’s over his gray shoe, and Dillon’s over his white shoe. Emily rammed Terry’s shoe and now had 11 points.

Emily located a pool where you had to dive and catch the answers in the Water Net. Sarah was also attempting a question here. Both girls dove as the roulette stopped at “?” . “In the story Wendy’s Mistake, who was the character Violeta based off of?” a. Vivian from Paper Mario, b. Pearl from Steven Universe, c. Viola from Witch’s House, d. Maddy from Gameverse. Sarah netted Maddy. “Wrong answer! Emily?”

The Garley swum to and caught Viola, but it was still wrong. “Guess no one’s getting this one.” Now at 10 points, Emily went to a shooting game that had stuffed plushies of Firstborn. The roulette hit a Clock. “Time Trial time! Who you wanna be?” The choices moved quick around the opposite wall – they were Emily, Rupert, Wendy, and Vanellope. Obviously Em wanted herself, but she missed and hit Rupert. “Oh, darn it!”

Rupert Dickson appeared in the gymnasium of the Iron Plains. Giant children ran about aimlessly, quaking the world with their sneakers. Rupert had 10 White Pikmin and there were two large Riddler Trophies. “Carry the trophies to the Onions in 1:30 minutes!” The trophies both required 5 Pikmin, so Rupert set them to work. He quickly called them back whenever a kid would run by and crush them, returned them to work when it looked safe—but had to constantly call them back from running kids. Thankfully, Rupert had plenty of Pikmin experience, and successfully brought both trophies to the Onions. Emily scored 2 points, making 12 total.

“Wonderful! Can I have my trophies back?” Riddler asked.
Emily explored the park further and found a platform on the edge of a chasm. Balloons with multiple different answers floated up as the roulette landed on Eye. “Here’s the picture this time, view it while I think of a rhyme.” The picture displayed a forest with white leaves and white grass. “What chapter did this stage appear?” Among the many balloons with Seven Lights chapter numbers, Emily hit the one with ‘34’. “Correct! 14 points.”

Emily jumped for joy and went to revisit the baseball cage. The roulette landed on Note. “Listen to this music!” The soundtrack “Chocolate Room” from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory played. “In what level was this music used?” a. Sweets Factory, b. Candied Island, c. Goofy Goober’s, d. Chocolate Island. Emily hit the ball to choice “B”. “Right again! 16 points.”

Emily returned to the merry-go-round and got a normal “?” . “Which of these characters has small feet?” a. Sheila Frantic, b. Cheren Uno, c. Shelly Johnson, d. Kirie Beatles. “Like you have to ask.” Emily shot choice “B” when it rotated by. She was correct and now had 18 points.

Afterwards, Emily revisited the farm as her next question was an Eye. “Look at this character.” I showed a picture of the backside of a nun with a white habit. “Catch the correct eye color!” A red eye, light-blue eye, yellow eye, and dark-green eye began to run around the farm. Gary jumped in with Emily and ran to net the blue eye. “Wroooong!”

“As it so happens, I met Index once!” Emily netted the green eye.

“Lucky you! 19 points.” Emily rerode the Ferris wheel next, deciding this would be the last question before she submitted her score. It was a Me question. “Which of these series stands as my favorite show of all time?” a. Kids Next Door, b. Fairy Tail, c. One Piece, d. RWBY. Emily shot the slingshot at One Piece. “Isn’t it obvious? 21 points!”

With that, Emily headed to the door in the back of the park, which was whitish-blue like everything else, and had black numbers decorated around it, like 2030, 6.13, 227, 321, and 1004. Emily went inside along with Sarah and Gary. It was pitch-black inside, for only their scores were visible. Sarah: 26, Emily: 21, Gary: 18. “Oh, dear! You won’t survive in the Gameverse with a score like that, Gary! Sorry, but I’m gonna have to evict you.”

“YAAAAAaahhh...”

Emily and Sarah exited the room, looking concerned. “Uh... what happened to him?” Sarah asked.

“Don’t concern yourselves with it.” Uxie winked.

“Round 2 begins with reset scores, Sarah vs. Emily! Try your best, but don’t be silly! But for this round, an extra hazard: a Death Space on the roulette leads to disaster.” An extra space with a skull appeared on the wheel. “Get this wrong and you’ll instantly die. Hope you have the extra lives to retry.”

Emily gulped and headed up the stairs to the Sky Flyer game again. The roulette spun and stopped at Clock. Emily had the choices of Sandman, Maddy, Vanellope, and Rupert. She chose to float down to Sandman’s platform.

Sandman appeared in the boss room of Freddy’s Pizzeria. “The animatronics are back again! Can you keep them away until the clock strikes ten?” Freddy Fazbear popped up, screamed, and ran at Sandman, who countered with his Shock Rod, Chica on his right, Bonnie behind him, he had to keep them away for a full minute. It was apparently 9:00, but the minutes counted up like seconds,
so 10:00 would be the stopping time. The animatronics came so fast and he always stopped them a millisecond early—Foxy got a lucky bite off of him, so Nolan lost the challenge.

“Sorry, Emily. -2 points.” Emily sighed and went to the C.A.M.-C.A.R. set. The question was Sound-based. “Listen to this sound: what collectible would you have found?” The sound was a **SHRIIIING!** a. Riddler Trophy, b. Pipo Monkey, c. Fire Soul, d. Gold Wonka Bar. Emily maneuvered the car around the maze to touch Fire Soul, the correct answer putting her back at 0.

Emily decided to try a new attraction, a circle of colorful clams. The choices would fall into four of the eight clams and rotate around. Unfortunately, the roulette landed on Death. “How old is this character?” I showed a picture of a white-haired girl with pale eyes that looked like sunset. a. 10 years, b. 11 years, c. 12 years, d. 6,000 years. Emily saw the correct answer go into the orange clam, keeping an eye on it as it rotated, but when it stopped, she whacked answer “B”. “2 points!”

Emily went to the balloon-shooting game and got a “?” . “Which of the Thirteen Darknesses does not have an alias, epithet, or a second identity in their respective series or the Gameverse?” Thirteen balloons came up. Sarah appeared and quickly shot the one with Madara’s name. “Eh, not quite!” Emily shot Sōsuke Aizen’s name. “Yep! 3 points!”

Emily got on the roller coaster again and got a Death question. “Who was the person that killed Nigel Uno?” a. King Andrew, b. Daphne Anderson, c. Lucas Stonebuddy, d. Henry Churchill. Emily waited for the coaster to speed by Daphne and shot that answer. “You have been spared! 5 points.”

Emily returned to the shooting game and got a Note question. “Which story was this quote from?” “Yes, you called?” a. The Gang, b. Viridi’s Last Stand, c. Scorched Wings, d. Anthony Ant. Emily aimed carefully and shot choice “C” . “Right again, Em! Seven.”

Emily went to the rotating clams and got an Eye question. “Look at this story cover!” I showed a picture labeled *Gamewizard2008 Presents Operation: GALACSIA*, which was uncolored, had Dimentia in the center, and five of the main characters standing on Earth (including humanoid Luvbi). “Who drew this picture?” a. Gamewizard2008, b. Numbuh 227, c. Depthcharge2030, d. Numbuh 6.13. Sarah wanted in on this question, too, but she had the misfortune of choosing me as an answer. “Heh heh, unfortunately not.”

Emily smirked, having seen Depth’s name go in the green clam and proceeded to whack it. “Das right! 8 points for Emily!”

Emily stuck her tongue at Sarah and ran for the Water Net Pool, where she got a normal “?” . “Which of these universes also features Violet McCleary?” a. Legends Universe, b. Fanverse, c. IDA Multiverse, d. Out of Mind. Emily netted choice “A” . “Right again, mah man! Er, girl. 10 points!”

Emily grinned happily and raced back to the C.A.M.-C.A.R. set, eager for another question. However, she got a Time Trial and had choices between Emily, Wendy, Vanellope, and Sandman. “Hmmm… Honestly, I wanna play as Wendy.” She decided to maneuver the car through the maze and choose her. “I’m not THAT egotistic.”

Wendy Marvell appeared in one of the pinball machines of Casinopolis. “You have to score 500 coins in 2 minutes!”

“Oh, no! I stunk at this the first time.” Wendy cried.

“**JUST DO IT!**” Emily shouted.
“Yes, mysterious voice!!” Wendy cast a bubble shield over herself and rolled into the machine. At first, she was simply bouncing around, trying to maneuver into the slot machine and score coins. Sadly, her luck ran short as she couldn’t get good combos, but by some miracle, when the minute mark hit, she got three-in-a-row “7”s and won too many coins to count.

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“Holy WOW that was awesome! 12 points and I’m glad we caught that on camera!”

Emily went back to the Net Farm, but her question was Death. “Have a look at this picture.” I displayed a hand-drawn picture of Carol Masterson in her new uniform, holding a laptop with a “$” and winking at the viewer. “Which part of this picture wasn’t in my original design for this form of Carol?” a. The dollar sign, b. The freckles, c. The puffy buns, d. The long socks. Emily ran to catch the dollar sign answer. “Bingo! Carol can only afford the best, after all!”

Emily headed for the bumper shoes and got another question relating to Me. “Choose the shoe that belongs to the character who shares my hair color!” Melody’s shoe, Nagisa’s shoe, Yuzu’s shoe, and George King’s shoe were driving around. Emily ran into George’s shoe and had 16 points.

Emily rode the Ferris wheel again and got a Sound question. “What elemental attack makes this sound?” I played what sounded like a sparking mixed with chirping birds. a. Spacebending, b. Airbending, c. Lightningbending, d. Lightbending.

“HYUH!” Sarah intervened and shot choice “D”.

“INCORRECT!” I shouted. It seemed Sarah’s mind played a trick on her, giving Emily the chance to choose “C”. “Correct! Emily now has 17 points!”

“I can go higher.” Emily declared, hopping off to run to the baseball cage. I spun the roulette and asked a Sight question.

“Where was this item found?” I showed a picture of a flower petal skirt. a. Lost Woods, b. Jungle of the Apes, c. Hidden Passe, d. Tortuga Backpass. Emily hit the baseball to Hidden Passe. “INCORRECT! Emily’s back to 15.”

Emily cursed herself and ran up the stairs to the Sky Flyer platform. The roulette stopped at “?”.

“So far, what has been the third-longest stage in the Gameverse?” a. Guertena Gallery, b. Majora’s Moonbase, c. Scattered Realms, d. Lunaria. Emily floated to choice “A”. “Right you are. 17 again.”


Emily rushed back to the balloon game. She got a Death Time Trial. “Choose your character wisely.” Balloons with various character names came up, and Emily shot Cheren’s.

Cheren Uno appeared in the Hidden Leaf Village, on the very other side from Mount Hokage. “Kill all the enemies in 10 seconds.” Cheren panicked, looking around for whatever enemy—and then he saw it… at the top of the mountain, though it looked like a dot. He smirked, aimed his arrow at the lone Bulblin, and shot it down from over 50 meters away. “Way to go, Cherry! 21 points!”

Emily sighed with relief after being spared from death. She chose to get one more question and ride the roller coaster. I spun the wheel and landed on “?”. “In what story did we see Dimentio

“Sigh… okay.” Emily braced for the worst and went to submit her score. Emily: 23. Sarah: 22.

“Wow, Emily barely had enough! I guess she gets to survive, while her friends go bye-bye!”

“EYAAAAAAAH…” Sarah’s cries faded.

“Congratulations, Emily! You outsmarted your friends to nonexistence! But that doesn’t mean you’re walking away with the Firstborn. You have one more round of questions to endure. I have taken the liberty of bringing back some old friends!”

The curtains opened, and Nick and Zach appeared in wheelchairs. “WE’RE BACK, BITCHEEEEES!” the two cheered. (“B-word.” Zach said.)

“You can only win this game by defeating both of them. Don’t worry, I’m sure you’ll do great, Em. But be forewarned, for some I may ask, a follow-up question, that is your task. This time, I will let you see their score, if you are ever going to complete this chore.”

While Nick and Zach went their own separate directions, Emily returned to the Net Farm, her first question being about Me. “What used to be my average quota for chapter lengths in 2011?” a. 5,000 words, b. 1,000 words, c. 10,000 words, d. 33,000 words. Emily netted the thousand. “Yes, it was.” I bow my head in shame. “But what is the NEW average?!” Emily quickly netted the 10,000. “And THAT’S how much I improved! 3 points!”

Emily jumped happily and raced for the baseball cage. I spun the roulette and asked her a Visual question. (“Pick a synonym!” Kris shouted.) “Does this scene look familiar?” I showed a picture of a blue and white, bright wormhole. “Where was this located?” a. Index’s stomach, b. GKNH H.Q., c. Mysterious Underground, d. Library of Galaxia. Emily remembered this like she were somewhat there, and hit toward answer “A”. “But where did it lead to?” a. Newborn Universe, b. Xedni’s stomach, c. Hoopa’s Dimension, d. First Dimension. She hit toward “B”. “Ding-dong! 7 points!”

Emily raced up to the Sky Flyer Platform, but Zach Guiles was here to steal the show. They both got a Death question. “Check out these four items.” I displayed four pictures of a banana boomerang, a handheld radar, a wooden whistle, and a small sphere with a grapple claw. “Which of these items belongs to Sandman?” Zach nervously floated his wheelchair down to the radar. “Eh… no, Zach.”

“BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB…” He was blown to smithereens.

“Correct! But where was it found?” a. A garbage can, b. Two kids were playing with it, c. A propane office, d. Sandman always had it.

“It’s ‘C’!” Emily yelled, earning 10 points. (“This score system is confusing.”) She then returned to the Water Net Pool and got a Sound question.

“Listen to this phrase and be amazed!” “I’M NOT A PSYCHICBENDER!!” “What chapter was this said?” a. Chapter 23, b. Chapter 27, c. Chapter 42, d. Chapter 65. Emily swam to answer “A”.

“I am on a ROLL!” Emily resurfaced, ran for the C.A.M.-C.A.R. track, and got a “?”.

“What was a sin in ‘Everything Wrong With Operation: GALACSIA’?” a. Sector V is useless, b. The OCs, c. The action stages, d. Violet wasn’t in it. Emily hit choice “A”. “Yes they were. 16 points.”

Emily revisited the Balloon Game and gulped when she got a Death question. “Who helped write Operation: ERASED?” The balloons listed the names of all Gameverse supporters. Remembering that story had Sunni and Darcy, Emily shot ‘6.13.’ “Nice shooting! 18 points.” Emily sighed and went to the bumper shoes. The roulette stopped at a Visual question.

“Take a look at this snowy peak!” I showed a picture of a snowy mountain, specifically a region between a trench with some cliffs going up. “Choose the footwear of the person that ventured this stage.” Emily had choices between a brown boot, a black shoe, a pale yellow bare foot, and a brown sandal. Thinking it would make a good Suki level, Emily hit the foot. “OOO, that’s wrong! Your turn, Nick.”

“BOOSH!” Nick rammed the sandal.

“Correct! Emily has 16 points while Nick has 23!”

“HU!” Emily gasped. She dashed for the Shooting Game, in desperate need of points. She got a “?” and was asked, “Which of these characters was shrunken for the shortest amount of time?” a. Nagisa Shiota, b. Jinta Hanakari, c. Cheren Uno, d. Wendy Marvell. Nick Klouse quickly rolled up in his wheelchair and hit “D”. “WRONG! Sorry, Nick, I count ALL the stories.” Emily shot Nagisa. “As it happens, I was there to do it!” she declared proudly, now at 17 points.

“Well well, I guess they’re just going to race each other.” I observed as both competitors hurried to the Rotating Clams. I spun the wheel and asked a Me question. “Which game did I play first?” a. Mad Father, b. Ib, c. Witch’s House, d. Yume Nikki. They both watched answer “B” go into a red clam, sure it was the answer as they waited for the rotation to stop. When it did, Emily kicked Nick out of the way and hit the clam. “Jingo! But which of those choices does not yet have any crossovers in this story?” Emily panicked and chose to hit the blue clam as choice “A” came out. “Very good, Em! You are now tied at Nick with 21 points!”

Emily and Nick ran for the baseball cage. They got a Death question. “Which of these characters didn’t have a monkey dress as them in Animonkey Tour?” a. Amethyst, b. Son Goku, c. Spike Spiegel, d. Aoi Yukimura. Confused, Nick Klouse shot at Amethyst. “NICK, NOOOO!” To my greatest dismay, I executed Nick on the spot.

“YAHOOOO!” Emily hit answer “B” and won by technical death.

“The winner of this game is Emily’s name! The Firstborn is yours, as well as fame! You can leave now you smartass dame, while your friends die in nonexistent shame.”

“Whoa whoa whoa!” Emily shouted. “I’m not leaving without my friends! They make me feel smart! (And chances are, I probably can’t ‘earn’ the Firstborn without choosing to save them.)”

“Very well, Emily, if that is your wish, one more round before we finish. NOW you must deal with me, over the flaming MAGMA SEA!” And so, we were both teleported onto a narrow bridge above a sea of lava, located somewhere in the park’s boundaries. Emily readied her Stun Club while I got my G-Staff. “The questions I ask have no multi-choice, you must answer with the best knowledge in your voice. One right gets you a free swing at me, but get it wrong and I will knock
YOU towards the sea.”

“Bring it on!” declared the smarty.

“Who came up with *Operation: RECLAIM*’s acronym?”

“227!” Emily whacked me.

“YOW!” I fell back. Nine spaces until the fall. “What’s the most recent anime I watched?”

*Scientific Railgun!* Another hit.

“OW! How many Nextgen operatives wear sandals, excluding DNK?”

“Uh… Eight?”

“WRONG!” I whacked her back. “What is a word Anthony never said?”

“Huh?”

“’COURSE NOT!” I hit her again. “What’s Sapphire’s element?”

“Ice?”

“NOT HERE!” Pushed her halfway. “Who’s a member of the Dimension Rebels we haven’t seen, yet?”

“ASH KETCHUM!” Emily pushed me back.

“YOW! Name a male Lilliput OC I created.”

“Avery!”

“D’oh!” I was pushed further. “Look at this picture!” The screen showed an image of the tip of an orange spiked hair curved downward.

“Shade!”

“D’arr!” I had 8 spaces left. “What’s this sound?” I played a *noing noing noing noing* sound.

“Throwing Rock Pikmin!”

“Ouch! Which character makes cameos in each of the towns?”

“Roger the Alien!”

“Oof! What story was a precursor to *Fairy Sisters*?”

“Zeiry the Fairy!”

“DAH!” 5 spaces left. “What rating did I give *Fairy Tail*?”

“9.5!”

“NOPE!” I hit her back. “My least-favorite Straw Hat?”

“Franky!”
“Yup!” I fell back again. “Why didn’t Sheldon Cooper come here?”

“He hates carnivals!”

“GRR!” 4 spaces left. “Did this character appear in the Gameverse?” I showed a picture of a brown-haired boy in a yellow shirt and blue pants.

“He wishes!” She hit me.

“Deak!” Three spaces. “Name the most depressing song I heard in 2015.”

“‘Undermine’ from Witch’s House!”

“NEEK!” Two spaces. “Speaking of which, who instigated the plot of Witch’s House in the Gameverse?”

“Crystal Wickens!”

“DOAF!” One space left. “Name one of my weaknesses!”

“Not good at confrontation!”

“DAH!” Zero spaces left. I was wobbling on the edge of the abyss. “And finally, what is Arceus’s Power Level?!”

“ONE BILLION!!” Emily struck the final blow.

“GYAAAAAH!” I dropped my G-Staff into the lava and wobbled on one foot, flailing my arms. “That’s it! It’s over, folks! Emily Garley has won the trivia, rescued her friends, and has earned herself a Firstborn! Thank you, thank you for playing! Don’t worry, for this park will be staying! If anyone would like to try the challenge, I’ll always be open, so don’t cringe! For now, let’s continue the story. From this point on, it shan’t be boring. See you later, as I take the fall! The Gameverse continues, thanks to Y’AAAAALL!” I plummet into the lava and take a big splash.

Emily reappeared at the central stage and claimed the Spirit Ball that materialized from thin air. She captured Uxie as the ball glowed – silver bottom, gold top, red emblem – and a ‘II’ appeared above the gem. (End song.)

**Emily Garley captured a FIRSTBORN! Just 1 left!!**

“YAHOOOO!” Emily tossed the Spirit Ball in the air as she left the park. “Thanks to me, all the Firstborn have been found!”

“But Cheren still ain’t catch Azelf, yet.” Sarah reminded.

“Also, Nebula didn’t find Jirachi ’til after you found Uxie.” Gary followed.

“Don’t steal this from me!!” Emily cried.

Uxie popped out of her Pokéball. “Congratulations, Emily! But we have other matters to attend to.”

“Defeating Specter, of course.”

“There’s that, but more importantly is your newfound metalbending. No doubt, you and your mother are descendants of Hornfels, one of the Noble Earthbending Families. I think you should go to the Tree of Beginning, the place where the families once gathered.”
“Why? To study metalbending? It would be cool and all, but we have monkeys to catch.”

“And that’s cooler?” Gary cocked a brow.

“It’s not just that.” Uxie replied. “For a long time, I felt… a strange, but familiar force emitting from the Tree of Beginning. I want to know what it is.”

Kris Hallows turned the camera to himself and said, “Aaaaand cut.”

**Tree of Beginning**

When Team Emily arrived at the Tree of Beginning, following Uxie’s lead, they saw another S.C.A.M.P.E.R. parked outside the stone wall. “I wonder who else is here…” Emily said to herself after landing. The other ship’s passengers disembarked at the same time. “Sector W!” The group of seven-year-olds (minus Fybi) were accompanied by Michelle, as well as an older boy who… Emily’s mouth dropped. “It can’t be… y-you’re Tom Taylor!”

“Hm?” The teenage Hawaiian with sunburnt skin raised a brow at her. “Yow, who’s the dork with parallelogram eyes?”

“His attempt at making knowledgeable humor is so sappy, and… HOT.” Emily started sweating.

“Good Lord.” Sarah rolled her eyes.

“What are you doing here, anyway?” Anthony asked them.

“Duh, Anthony! She’s a metalbender, isn’t she?” Michelle reminded. “She’s gotta be the Hornfels!”

“What do YOU know, Michelle?”

“Seriously?” Tom raised a brow. “You’re the Hornfels? You can bend metal?”

“Uh-huh!” Emily took out a nickel and made it levitate. “Pretty soon, I’ll be a real Magneto!”

(Apparently, she just discovered her power two days ago.” Aranea mentioned.

Mesprit popped out of Harvey’s Spirit Ball. “Uxie! Welcome!”

“Hi, Mesprit! Guess who just became my Guardian?”

“Cheren?”

“HA HA HA HA!” Both sisters laughed.

“Ahem!” a squeaky voice coughed. They looked at the base of the wall, where a Minish guard stood.

“What business do you humans have here? This isn’t a place where you can have your… big human parties!”

Tom’s Minish mentor, Gedra hopped out of his hair and landed on the ground, approaching the guard. “This boy Tom is the son of the Sovite Family. These two,” he gestured at Anthony and Michelle, “are from the Granite Family, and that big-eyed girl claims to be of the Hornfels.”

“The Earth Children descendants?!” the guard exclaimed. “Including Princess Shelly, that means… all four of the Noble Earthbenders are here! They must be taken up to God Regigigas and prove their selves. The four of them can come in as they are, but the others must either shrink or remain outside.”
“No thanks, I’m fine out here.” Aranea said in a ‘chill’ mood.

The guard signaled the earthbender Minish to open the wall. Emily grinned and waved to her friends as she entered, and the wall shut them out. Sarah and Gary rolled their eyes at her ego.

“So, how do you know Tom, Anthony?” Emily asked.

“Trained with him awhile ago. Then for some reason, Michelle wanted me to pick him up on our way here.”

“He’s the Sovite, isn’t he?” Michelle replied smugly.

Uxie then floated in front of her, staring sharply. “There is still something off about you… Do you mind if I enter and examine your brain?”

“Meep!” Michelle clamped her ears.

The four were led up to the royal quarters of the tree, where Princess Shelly was lain in a patch of flowers as Minish were feeding her berries, massaging her feet, and sending Pikmin to recover dirt. “I don’t even care if Shorts is the President of America, anymore. I’m living the life of luxury.”

“Good gracious, young lady!” Queen Lánshelly hopped onto Shelly’s nose. “If I can’t trust you not to enslave my people, I’m revoking your normal size privileges!”

“I’m not enslaving anyone. These kids are fine with it, aren’t they?”

“We sure are, Princess!” a girl Minish replied bubbly. “You’re really beautiful and tell funny stories about the human world!”

“Are we interrupting something?” Anthony asked as they approached.

“And who are you four?” the queen inquired.

“Your Highness, they claim to be the Earth Children descendants.” replied the guard. “I wanted to take them and the princess to Regigigas.”

“The Four Earth Children? Including Hornfels? I’ll take it from here—Shelly, get your butt up!” The queen summoned some Wing Pikmin to lift her.

“Ugh.” The Minish quickly climbed off as Shelly helped herself up. Her mother escorted the lot of them to the top of the tree.

The God of Earth, Regigigas, woke from his slumber, the beeping lights signaling his body rebooting. The god sensed the earthbenders’ presence and stomped forward, quaking the tree. Regi examined the earthbenders and scanned them. “Subjects identified: Anthony and Michelle McKenzie of Granite. Shelly Johnson of Quartzite. Tom Taylor of Sovite. Emily Garley of… Hornfels. Children… welcome back to my tree.”

“Welcome back?” Anthony questioned. “Have we been here before?”

“Not you. But they… have…” Regigigas linked his hands together as a ball emerged from the top of his body. The ball projected a holographic scan over the room, dividing it in four parts: a forest, a desert, a volcano, and a metal mine.

“It’s a hologram?” Emily observed.
“Made of spiritual energy…” Uxie followed.

“Look!” Anthony pointed. Four figures began to form in the respective areas. In the desert was a 17-year-old boy with black hair to his neck and dark-purple armor. In the volcano was a muscular 18-year-old with spiky brown hair and red-hot skin. The mine produced an orange-haired, scrawny boy with silver armor, 17 years old. And in the forest, there came a 16-year-old girl with green armor and dirty brown hair.

“Ha ha!” The girl grinned at Anthony, her green eyes shining. “Heeey! I’m glad we finally get to talk!”

“M…Mom?”

“NO, silly! I’m not your mom, I’m your ancestor, Granite!”

“Granite? Then that means the rest of you…” Anthony looked around.

“We’re the original Earth Children, yes.” Quartzite responded. “Didn’t know you kids were so famous among the Minish community, did ya?”

“In more ways than I thought.” Shelly realized.

“Yeah, those little guys are fun, aren’t they?” Quartzite chuckled. “Don’t tell them I said this, but they do make good servants.”

“Ugh.” Lánshelly sighed. “True, the Earth Children are very renowned among the Minish, due to the fact they trained under God Regigigas. Some Minish watched over their descendants and hoped to one day train the newborns... However, Hornfels steadily drifted away from his roots.”

“Sorry.” Hornfels replied with a sheepish grin. “I never quite… ‘fit in’ with the rest of you. Like, I learned I was really good with machines, and my descendants were good with machines… Before we knew it, we stopped being about metalbending and more about-”


“Hah! Nice!” Tom nudged his ancestor. “Hey, when am I gonna get abs like yours?”

“After ten million more push-ups.” Sovite punched him.

“Damn you!” Tom threw a punch, but Sovite blocked and shoved him to the ground.

“This is the first time in eons when the Earth Children have come together here.” Regigigas said. “It was I that originally brought them together for an important purpose. The purpose… I will now show you.”

“Not yet!” Michelle yelled. “We’re still waiting for someone! I feel her coming right now.”

They all looked to the entrance, curious to who would be coming. The person to enter the holographic room was a white-haired girl in a black shirt and orange skirt. Her orange eyes held the vibrance of a rising sun. “Hello!” She waved.

“Miyuki?” Emily said confusedly.

“No, it’s Ikuyim!” Anthony recognized.

“I know this might sound weird, but I had a dream telling me to come here.” Ikuyim explained.
“It was I that summoned you under... special orders.” Regigigas said. “With the Latsyrc Family of the Negaverse... we now have five benders with different forms of Earth Chi.”

“But we’re still one short.” Quartzite mentioned. “What about Stone?”

“Oh, yeah... Stone...” Sovite moaned with remorse.

“Stone?” The name seemed familiar to Anthony.

“No, guys!” Granite perked up. “I’ve been with Stone all this time! Well, part of him, anyway.”

“Part of him?” Hornfels queried.

“I mean, it’s... kinda hard to explain. I kinda don’t get it, either.”

“I can explain.” Michelle replied, facing Anthony. “But... we should go downstairs first, shouldn’t we?”

“Michelle, what the crud are you hiding from me?” the brother glared.

“Tee hee hee! Nothing, Anthony!”

**Minish KND Quarters**

Ever since Team Rupert recovered the King’s Brew from the Zingers’ Hive, the Minish have been adding the golden honey to all their fruit and bread crumbs. It was extremely delicious and brought delight to everyone’s day. Supreme Leader Lenari was impressed with their work and terrifically boosted Team Rupert’s status among the Minish, not to mention gave them more food than they could ask for. Unfortunately, after 9 days, they were still asking for something else.

“Why won’t you tell us where Malarko’s Pikmin Army is?!” Rupert shouted, following Lenari through the cafeteria.

“YEAH! You guys are STILL gobbling up this honey we risked our necks to get, we deserve to know!” Timothy joined.

“I told you guys that it’s not only sacred, it’s dangerous! Sappo and Gibli weren’t allowed to tell you about the army, but if three humans like you attempt to go there, it’ll only end badly.”

“Then take us there yourself!” Rupert argued.

“I CAN’T! And besides, that shouldn’t be your top priority. You saw that message in the sky, the Apocalypse is going to happen soon. We need to rally with the Human Kids Next Door and think of a plan. Just quit... asking about it.” He walked away.

“Y’know, he has a point.” Timmy said. “After seeing that sky show, I’m not really worried about finding Malarko’s army.”

“But this is exactly why we should try to find it!” Rupert reasoned. “If it’s really going to happen, we need to have one more adventure before we... I mean, there’s a chance that we won’t...”

“I wanna find Malarko’s Pikmin, too.” Hikari replied solemnly. “But I’m scared, Rupy.”

“And what are a thousand Pikmin gonna do for us, anyway?” Timmy asked.

Rupert sighed. “I guess you’re right.”
“All operatives, report to the southern balcony and bring your Wing Pikmin!” the PA announced. “A massive swarm of bees is approaching the tree! In fact, you might wanna stop eating that honey.”

Team Rupert rushed to action and called their Onions to the south balcony with other Minish. There was a swirling cloud flying toward the great tree, buzzing loudly. Zingers composed the cloud, and leading the swarm was a giant bee whose rage spread to his swarm. “It’s King Zing!” Sappo exclaimed. “He must’ve found out where his honey pot is!”

“BUZZ-BUZZZZ…” A squad of Zingers swooped down on their king’s command.

“I can’t believe it!” Rupert said.

“I know. That’s a lot of bees…” Timothy shuddered.

“No, I can’t believe it’s almost the end of the story and we’re just now getting a second boss fight!”

“Let’s kick their buzzing butts!” Hikari jumped. (Play “Boss Bossanova” from Donkey Kong Country 2!)

**Boss fight: King Zing**

“Gibli, run and get some Bomb Rocks!” Sappo ordered, his sister saluting. “Rupert, help us hold them off!”

“Can do!” Team Rupert evasively commanded their Pikmin to dodge as Zingers stabbed the ground, sending Wing Pikmin to beat the bees down while the Purples smashed them. Electric Zingers flew in, but Hikari was quick to toss Yellow Pikmin to weaken them. A Commander Zinger ordered a line of Baby Bees to swoop across an area, so the humans quickly rolled out of the way. Large globs of honey dropped down and stuck Rupert and some Minish in place. “We’re stuck! Guys, hurry up!” Timmy and Hikari sent the Brown Pikmin to free Rupert, who would throw Rocks to attack the Honey Bees who were going to kidnap them.

When they defeated enough Zingers, King Zing himself flew down to the field. The Bee King was more terrifying up close, and his anger burned for the humans that stole his honey. He had a sphere of bees protecting him, so while Hikari was distracting and dodging the king’s stings, Rupert and Timmy were behind, throwing Pikmin at the bees. They tossed Brown and Ice Pikmin to stick to Zing’s body, but he was too strong to damage normally. The king shook them off and whipped around to face them.

“Sappo, I brought the Bomb Rocks!” Gibli returned in a hurry.

“I’ll take one!” Hikari gave a bomb to a Brown Pikmin and threw it up onto Zing. Although she sacrificed a Pikmin, the king suffered a great blow. “BUZZ, buzz, buzz, buzz…!”

The Bee King buzzed back to the cloud of bees and sent stingers to rain down upon them. Five Reds and six Purples were killed. “Ahh!” Rupert tripped when trying to dodge a stinger.

“Rupert!” Timmy and Hikari came to his aid—they braced for cover when a stinger threatened to crush them. A group of giant vines suddenly popped up and defended everyone.

“Is anybody hurt?!” Princess Gonshiri yelled.
“Princess!” Sappo yelled. “We lost a lot of Pikmin, but the Minish are still okay.”

“I knew it was a bad idea for you to steal that honey. Sigh, well all we can do now is drive these monsters away. We’ll have to destroy the king if we want to make them scatter. I can raise a vine and lift you closer to him.”

“He’s surrounded by a sphere of bees!” Rupert pointed. “We won’t be able to get through.”

“Yes we can.” Timmy declared. “All those bees are blocking the sunlight. Let’s send Ghost Pikmin up!” They summoned 10 Ghosts from the Onions and sent them to fly straight up through the swarm. None of the bees could attack them, and when they made it to King Zing, they freely attacked his eyes and caused him to scatter the shield.

“I’ll hold you up as long as I can!” Gonshiri lifted Team Rupert and their Pikmin up a very long beanstalk, going up through the cloud of bees and becoming horizontal as it circled around King Zing. The kids dodged his blows as Timmy threw Rock Pikmin at his stinger, damaging him, but causing the king to pop stingers in many directions, with one stabbing Timmy’s cape into the vine. He ditched the cape and tried to settle his speeding heart. Their Wing Pikmin caught up, having brought Bomb Rocks. One of them threw a bomb onto Zing’s body and damaged him.

Angered, the Bee King electrified himself and zapped the Wings out of the air. He began to drill a thunder bolt along the vine, so Team Rupert sprinted across the narrow rounding path. Several Pikmin were hit and stunned, tempting Rupert to run backwards and face them so he could recover the Pikmin with his whistle. “RUPERT!” Timothy grabbed his friend and dove over the side before the lightning could hit. Wing Pikmin swooped down and rescued their masters, lifting them back up to the vine behind the king.

King Zing was still chasing Hikari, but Rupert could give a Bomb Rock to a Yellow Pikmin and run to throw it onto Zing’s stinger. “BUZZ, buzz, buzz, buzz…!” The king flew away to let his weak point recover.

“Grrrr, I can’t hold this vine any longer!” Gonshiri yelled, her hands dropping as the beanstalk collapsed. Team Rupert called their Wing Pikmin to catch them as they each picked up a Bomb Rock.

“That’s okay! We can defeat him like this!” Rupert declared. “Let’s get him, team!” King Zing glared at the humans and shot stinger bullets as they pursued through the buzzing storm. King Zing charged and tried to ram through them, but the kids dodged in time. King Zing flew under and got in front of them again. “Hikari, go for his stinger, we’ll get the wings!”

“Um… That stinger looks scary.” Hikari said worriedly.

“I know, but you’re faster, you can dodge it.”

“Okay, Rupy…” While the boys flew up and diverted King Zing’s attention, Hikari aimed her bomb at the stinger. “BUZZ!”

“YEEP!” Hikari yelped when a smaller Zinger flew by her—King Zing whipped his vision down to see her, raising his stinger.

“HIKARI!” Timothy dropped down and BZZPKOOM! King Zing’s sting felt like taking a thousand lightning bolts at once.

“TIMMYYYYY!” Hikari cried as her brother fell to the earth.
“BUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUZZZZ!” King Zing flashed like lightning, feeling absolute pride in claiming vengeance on one of his enemies. Fueled with anger, Rupert threw his Bomb Rock at Zing’s wings with great force. “BUUUUUU, buzz!”

“YOU MEANIE BEE!” Hikari chucked hers at the stinger, and with both weak points fatally wounded, the king fell. “BUUUUUUUUuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu…”

The swarm grew confused and scattered, so Rupert and Hikari told their Pikmin to take them back to ground. Other Wings had rescued Timothy, and Minish gathered around the boy. He was swelling red. (End song.)

King Zing’s dead body was collected by Rupert’s Brown Pikmin, who carried him to their Onion to produce 50 more of their kind. But the humans couldn’t celebrate their victory with Timothy injured. Medical Minish injected him with a white sap. “Timmy… I…I’m sorry.” Rupert felt responsible.

“It’s not your fault, Rupy.” Hikari said. “He tried to save me. But at least the nice nurse will make him better.”

“I’m… afraid not.” Nurse Sipi said. “The medicine I used usually fixes Zinger stings… but King Zing’s was stronger. I’m afraid the medicine will only keep Timmy alive for… at least a day.”

“No!” Rupert yelled. Hikari cupped her sleeves over her mouth and broke into tears. “There’s NOTHING we can do?!”

“King Zing had the most toxic stinger of all bees.” Gonshiri spoke solemnly. “The only thing I can think of that would heal Timothy… is the God Fruit.”

“The God Fruit?”

“Princess!” Lenari shouted reprovingly. “You aren’t actually thinking of…”

“Yes, I am! I may not be pure-hearted, but I won’t let any operatives die under my watch!”

“But you know your uncle is after the God Fruit!”

“The God Fruit won’t leave its cave. We’ll carry Timothy there, heal him, and destroy what remains of the fruit. King Andrew won’t have a chance to take it.”

“Fine, then let’s go!” Rupert insisted. “Where is the God Fruit?!”

Lenari sighed. “It’s… It’s in a country called the Wistful Wild. Deep underground. The same cavern where Malarko’s army is hidden.”

Remember WAAAAAAAY back in Chapter 46? When Team Rupert stole that honey? You didn’t think that was gonna be important. But it WAS! But yeah, anyone who wants to attempt the quiz, just say the word, it’s always open! Next time, we will do Rupert’s final stage, the Wistful Wild. The hardest of all Pikmin levels.
The Marzipan Pirates search for the secret underneath Gumdrop Cove.

Are you ready to learn why this is Noah’s Arc?

Chapter B-33: The Ark

Gumdrop Cove

It was twilight when the Marzipan Pirates returned to Gumdrop. The village was more hectic than usual—some houses were on fire and pirates were beating the sugar out of each other. “Why pirates devolve into Neanderthals?” Nel asked, riding her captain’s shoulders.

“I reckon it’s to do with that business in the sky.”

“THE END IS NIGH!” cried Gelatin Gerald, standing on a pile of defeated Soda Pirates. “Brandon, Ay’ve defeated yer crew, now BUILD me a soda rocket so that I may return home- NYAR!” Augustus grabbed him off the pile.

“Gerald, where is Brandon?! I need to ask him something.”

“Where ya think he is, boy, where ’e always is! Too afraid ta face me, he is.”

The Marzipans fought through the crowds and made it to the Soda Can, which was empty except for one person. Bubbly Brandon was at the same table he was seated at the beginning of this month, staring at the same treasure Augustus brought him: the Everbubble Fizz. “Not feeling fizzy today, Brandy?”

“Not anymore, Augustus.” Brandon replied solemnly. “I’ve foreseen such a cataclysm… ’twas always in me nightmares. They called me crazy, but now Ay’m the only one sane… The end of the world.”

“Well, I have news, too.” Augustus ejected the Lost Candies from the Infi-Cube. “I found all the Lost Candies… except for one. And it’s hidden under this very island.”

“Augustus… yer still fixated on such things?”

“I have every reason to be, Brandon. The Lost Candies are supposed to create a ship. A ship that’s supposed to save everyone from the Apocalypse. I’m talking to you because you’ve been coming to this island longer than anyone. I think you have the best chance at knowing where it is.”

“That don’t mean a thing, boy. There be hundreds of sugar-salts on this rock. If there were a giant vessel under this island, it sure ain’t noticeable. Otherwise, all the pirates would be where it is.”

“I didn’t say there was a giant vessel under the island.”

“Y-…” Brandon was confused. “Sure ya did, you said the last candy is under this island.”
“Right, but did I say it was the ship?”

“Well- I… thought the implication was…”

“Bruh, you lie worse than me.” Rallo remarked.

“Brandon, I know you know where it’s hidden.” Augustus stated. “Why are you keeping it secret?”

“Because… that’s when my nightmares started happening. I found the ship you’re talking about… found it in my 20s. I wanted to eat every ounce of that candy. But I was so tired from the journey that I took a nap… I saw the planet collapsing, stars exploding, some wave of green mist… and that ship was sailing on by. I thought it was a bad omen… I left that cave and never came back. Never told anyone about it… but I feared the worst happening. ’Tis the very reason I sought to taste all the world’s sodas, and live my life the way I wanted to.”

“And where was the cave, do you remember?”

“Aye…”

Bubbly Brandon led the Marzipans to the Scarlet Licorice, where sexy female pirates came to dance. The bar was abandoned when they stepped in. “’Shame.” Brandon said. “When that Sky Show took place, the lovely lady pirates suddenly had epiphanies and wanted to spend the remainder of their lives doing something more meaningful than pleasing the opposite gender. In my youth, I found the lady pirates here so beautiful that I break into this bar after hours to, eh, nibble on their licorice bikinis.”

“Gross!” Augustus remarked.

“Man, we the ones should be saying that.” Rallo said.

“One day, I decided to play around with the poles.” They stepped onto the stage with two licorice poles. “I got two Licoropes and wrapped them around the tops of either pole to practice my… acrobats.”

“Acrobats?” Augustus chortled. “What, were you in the Circus Pirates?”

“No, but there was a pretty lass from that crew I… may have tried to impress. But when I did, the poles bent, the tops connected, and… Just try it, Augustus.”

“Stewie, gimme yours.” August requested. He roped his Licorope around the top of the left pole and roped Stewie’s around the right. Using Haki strength, the captain tugged both ropes and bent the poles to touch the tips, shaping them like an archway. He unwrapped the ropes and gave Stewie’s back as they stared confusedly. “I don’t understand what-” Augustus walked between them and vanished.

“Captain!” Rallo and the crew gasped. Augustus’s head seemed to stick out of nothingness.


Exchanging frightful looks, the four children entered the invisible portal. They were taken to a vast chamber with a giant door sealed with a keyhole and six small doors around the wall, equal to the number of keyholes. There was an image of an ark on the ceiling, similar to the design they saw in the Deep Cream. “These doors each hold a trial that uses one of the Candy Powers.” Brandon explained. “I had to complete ’em all to see the marvel that lay behind that big door there.”
“Then we know what we have to do.” Augustus began his next lollipop. “Which door you kids wanna do first?” (Play “Tower of Riddles” from *Paper Mario: Thousand-Year Door*.)

*Stage B-29: Noah’s Shrine*

*Mission: Find the sixth Lost Candy.*

The Marzipans first decided to enter a door with a Pop Gum floating over it. The door led to a small room with several chocolate rocks, an available Pop Gum, and a sign in the middle. Nel chose to chew the Pop Gum while her captain read the sign.

> Save the stones with taste.
> 
> *Where shall the worlds go.*
> 
> *The tasteless stone must break.*

Before shooting Nel’s gum, Augustus walked around and tasted each of the chocolate rocks. While all the same color, they each tasted different, from milky chocolate, nutty chocolate, dark chocolate, minty chocolate… One of the stones tasted like mud, nearly making him puke. He destroyed that rock with the Nel Launcher. “Aye, ya did it, boy!” Brandon called. “One of the keyholes be glowing!”

Indeed, one of the holes on the central door glowed, and was in the respective location of the room they completed. Next, the kids entered a door with a Bounce Gum. There was a central cyan switch and various puddles of colored Kool-Aid around the wall. The sign read:

> Colors surround us.
> 
> *But they all share one sky.*
> 
> Combine and taste their flavor.

Augustus sat on the Bounce Gum, drenched it in the blue Kool-Aid, then the green to make cyan, pushing the same-colored switch. The switch became magenta, so the captain bounced in purple and pink Kool-Aid. Afterwards, it wanted brown Kool-Aid, which Augustus got by combining yellow with orange, then red. When the switch was hit the third time, another keyhole glowed.

Next, they entered the Fudgepuffsicle room. There was a spiked floor and ceiling, and a licorice rope-lever in one corner. (Candy corn spikes, of course.)

> Believe in your friends.
> 
> *And the gods that protect you.*
> 
> Let them guide you.

As expected, Augustus would have to eat the Puffsicle and let Nel ride him. The bloated boy maneuvered toward the switch while Nel made light jumps to keep from sinking him in the spikes or letting him float too high. When they got to the lever, Nel kept Augustus under her while she grabbed the rope in her teeth and pulled it down with her weight. Augustus barely touched the floor spikes when the switch fully hit. They made their way to the start as August deflated. A keyhole was glowing.

“I actually cheated that one.” Brandon mentioned. “Burped me a mighty big soda bubble, I did.”

The crewmates entered the Shrink Sweet room, which had three tiny holes in the opposite wall.

> The right road to take.
Augustus held Maggie up to peep into each of the holes, and she confirmed the left one was safest. Augustus ate the sweet and shrunk as Maggie put him in her slingshot. She carefully aimed at the little hole and flung him through. Augustus bounced on a marshmallow over a dark pit and landed on a safe foothold. There, he could eat a Growth Gum to stretch back to normal and press a switch. He climbed a ladder to a walkway above the room to return to the side with his friends.

The next room utilized Rock Candy. It was a humongous room that consisted of a racetrack swirling down.

Life is an endless loop.
The universe begins and ends.
Know where it stops.

Augustus encased in the Rock Candy and began rolling down the swirling, whirling path. The four kids felt dizzy while watching him, especially when he seemed to come down from the top after going down. Indeed, Augustus was trapped in an endless loop, but the captain was probably too dizzy to realize that. There was a floating pink switch between two loops, and it was lined up with a part on the opposite side. “Augustus, jump when the pink thing is above you!” Stewie yelled. Augustus saw what he was referring to. When he was aligned, he pushed up and caused the Rock Candy to jump, hitting the switch and bouncing back to the start with a marshmallow. The sixth door they had to complete was the Fizzy Lift Soda. It took place in a breezy room over a dark pit, with a Red, Green, Blue, and Dark Chuchu bubble floating around. There was a gray Tongue One on the other side.

He who hungers for strength.
Beware the enclosing darkness.
With a heavy heart, he swallows.

None of the Chuchu matched the Tongue One’s color. However, there was a ray of light poking in from the corner near the entrance. Augustus pushed the Dark Chu to the light and turned it to stone. He quickly grabbed the round stone, which nearly weighed his floating body into the pit. He struggled to carry the stone to the Tongue One and set it in its mouth. “THAAAAANK YOOOOOOOOU.”

With the six trials completed, the great door opened, shaking the cavern in the process. “Ya did it, mates! The door is open!” Brandon called. “The ship not be far now.”

“Sweet!” Augustus dropped his lolli stick. “Let’s go, team.” The passage took them down a zigzaggy cave dripping soda from the light-brown stalactites. They came to a tall wall with a cinnamon path, making use of their Corn-Clamber Boots. At the top, they were taken to an extremely vast room of the cave, most of which was occupied by a terrific mass. The five pirates gaped.

It was a gargantuan ship designed like an ark with an orange body, some yellow stripes, blue wings, and a gold central house on the deck. It had to be as big as an island. It was impossible to believe something as enormous as this was hidden under Gumdrop. “You’ve finally made it.” A tiny, childish voice said. The kids were so busy looking up, they didn’t think to look down and see the Sugar Fairy with mean purple eyes.

“Princess Zeira….” Augustus said. “Why couldn’t you have told me about all this before? About
“The Apocalypse?”

“The World Government is against the Twenty Keys Prophecy and anything that references it. If you were seeking the Lost Candies with knowledge of the Apocalypse, Lord Licorice would have been tempted to kill you more. Besides… the news of the Apocalypse has struck fear in the hearts of many. I didn’t want that fear to drive you. Instead, what you had was a desire to grant someone’s dying wish… that pure-hearted nature was what drove you.”

“Did it occur to you that I might’ve worked FASTER knowing the world was at stake?! That I could be saving billions of lives besides Luviro’s?”

“Perhaps, but sometimes faster is not better. But it doesn’t matter now. Finally, the six Lost Candies are here. We can revive the Gummi Ship, Noah.”

“The Noah? Like Noah’s Ark?”

“Exactly. The same way Noah’s Ark was to protect the animals from the floods, the Gummi Ship Noah is meant to save the universe’s population from the Apocalypse.”

“The entire universe? It’s big and all, but I don’t even think it can hold the entire world. How is it supposed to work?”

Zeira floated up to the teen’s face, glaring cutely. “How do you think, big guy?”

“Um…” August felt like he should know, yet he didn’t.

Zeira jumped away. “However, it won’t function without the powers of the Lost Candies. Bring them inside quickly. I have already placed the Sugar Fuel in its rightful place. If you’re smart, figure out where the others go.” She flew inside the ship.

“Alright.” Augustus began his next lollipop. “Let’s find a way inside.”

An invisible force appeared to be keeping the vessel propped up, giving them room to run underneath. They saw a Sugar Fairy floating near one side of the ship, and when they ran toward it, the fairy flew up into a window several feet above. “Maggie, you wanna get in there and look for somethin’?” The baby nodded and shot her grappling hook to lift her up into the window.

She was in a room with a candy corn spike floor, and across it was a lever. Maggie shot her grappling hook to the lever and flipped it. Outside, the Marzipans heard a CRASH, looking left to see an anchor drop from a hatch near the front. “MAGGIE, there’s an anchor!” Augustus called for the baby to come down. The crew rushed over to the anchor and stared up at the hatch.

“This looks much too small to actually hold a ship this massive in place.” Stewie observed.

“Yeah, it’s like they set up these puzzles on purpose. Nel, you’re small enough, climb up there and find a ladder to throw down or something.”

“Eyes, Aughsucks!” Nel responded before climbing the anchor’s chain.

“It’s just ‘Aye,’ Nel.”

The cavegirl climbed into a rather tight room of the ship, which led to a corridor with a java pit below. Nel could sidle along a horizontal pipe on her right, then jump to a left pipe when it ended. Nel set foot on the other side and up some chocolate-bar stairs. The following passage led across a java river, where Nel had to jump floating marshmallows that would sink under her weight. Nel
then had to swing three hanging Licoropes that would quickly collapse before landing at the base of another stairway. They led to a hall, where the left route led further in the ship, while the right route led to a sealed door.

Nel approached the door and stepped on a switch beside it. The door opened, giving Nel view of her crew down below. A mechanical ladder also lowered from the entrance.

“AUGHSUUUUCKS!” She waved for their attention.

“Hey, great job, Nel! Time to see what this baby’s like on the inside.” The crewmates climbed into the ship as Nel took her place on her captain’s shoulders again. They followed the passage to a massive room whose floor was messy with rotten sugar piles and giant Life Savers lain around. On their right, there were two staircases leading up to a higher floor, but there was a sealed garage door between those stairs labeled Generator.

Augustus knocked on the garage door and stuck his Haki hands underneath to try and lift it. He could only lift it slightly, but Stewie took the Infi-Cube and crawled underneath. There was a machine with a glass case and a circular space in its center. Stewie got the Cupcake Core out of the cube and placed it in the space. There was a big green button on a panel on the left, and when Stewie pressed it, the chamber sparked to life and began absorbing the cupcake’s energy.

The door to that room opened, and the pirates gaped when the Life Savers floated in the air, and everything brimmed to life. From the top of the twin stairs, one of them could jump to a small Life Saver that floated to and fro. Stewie had the honors of jumping on and making leaps to the following floating Life Savers. They led to a platform hanging on a wall with several nuts and bolts. There was a large, central peg where a nut could be screwed in, and what better fit than the Rock Nut.

When Stewie twisted it in, the Rock Nut sent some kind of energy glow across the structure of the ship. The crewmates entered a door above the stairs, leading to a room with multiple gears. One of the central pegs was empty, so Augustus took the liberty of putting the Gear Heart there. The gears still weren’t spinning, but with a few tremors from Rallo’s boombox, the Gear Heart pumped to life and began endlessly spinning the system.

The following door led to a chamber of giant gears, leading to an area where the Sun Key would go. Nel bit the Sun Key in her teeth and hopped up some vertical gears, ducked to avoid being crushed by the point in an above gear, then jumped to grab a rotating chain. She dropped on a flat gear, then jumped three hollow gears with Amps floating around them. She then had to Wall Jump between two stacks of small gears, and at the top, she jumped more vertical gears that each had only one spot for her feet. With her excellent platforming, she got into the control chamber and stuck the Sun Key in the keyhole.

The Noah shook harder when all the Lost Candies were in their rightful places. A pathway stretched from the control area down to the other crewmates, allowing them to regroup with Nel.

“The ship is fully powered. Meet us up on the bridge.” Zeira’s voice said through the PA.

From the control room, the pirates crossed a hallway and passed a vacant room that had an illusion of space. After going up a few stairs, they found their selves at the deck of the ship, where Bubbly Brandon had been brought by the fairies. Augustus approached Zeira and asked, “It’s certainly big, but how is it gonna get out of here?”

“Don’t underestimate the power of the Lost Candies. BEGIN LIFT-OFF!” (End song.)

The pirates took cover inside the gold house when the ship trembled with power. It felt as if the entire earth quaked when the ship burst up through the ceiling and flooded ocean water into the
cave. Everybody on Gumdrop Cove fell off their feet when the titanic vessel lifted up into the sky.

When the trembling subsided, the pirates stepped outside and looked over the railing. The view of the briny sea was astounding, and as the ship steadily ascended, they would soon see the entire planet. “Wow… Imagine the look on Mom’s face when I bring this home.” Augustus remarked.

“I’m afraid I will have to deny you the chance.”

The pirates whipped around and found Lord Licorice, Mandy McKenzie, Azula, and Blackberry Guards. “LICORICE! Where did you come from?!”

“We’ve been camouflaged in the dark sky all along, stupid boy.” Licorice said, holding his gun ready. “With all the Lost Candies, we knew it was only a matter of time before you awakened the Noah. But instead of ambushing you and taking the Lost Candies, we thought it far better to let you do what you must… so we may put this vessel to better use.”

“Oh yeah?” Augustus took out the lolli stick and dropped it over the edge. “And what better use is that?”

“Destroying Kids Next Door Moonbase, of course! King Andrew claims that those meddlesome brats are holding the Seven Lights up there, safe from their grasp. Our only chance to stop the prophecy is to destroy them in one fell swoop. Using the power of this indestructible Noah, I will be the man that ended the Twenty Keys Prophecy! Meanwhile, you five will be the sad little pirates who failed to stop me, and jumped over the edge in despair.”

“What makes you say that?”

“Because if you don’t,” replied Mandy, “we’ll feed your Sugar Fairy friend to Azula.” She revealed the butterfly net and the helpless Zeira squirming inside.

“Didn’t you learn your lesson from last time?” Augustus asked Azula.

“I remember what happened.” Azula replied with a snarl. Her eyes were still red from crying all month. “And I learned something: when I feel sad, when I cry… a new fire burns inside me. A fire that burns from pain… and I love feeling that way. I want to cry more… so I can BURN more!” She combusted with sapphire flames.

“Not now, dearest!” Licorice cautioned. “So, what will it be, Marzipans? Are you going to jump, or let your fairy die?”

Augustus glanced over the edge. He stared at his crewmates and nodded assuringly. “You win, Licorice. I guess we just weren’t good enough. Come on, kids. Together!” He picked the four kids up and leapt backward. Licorice and Mandy stared over the railing, but saw only open sea.

“I say… they fall fast.” The Candy Lord observed.

“Indeed, too fast.” Mandy agreed. “But what can you do about juniors. Speaking of which:” She kicked Licorice off his feet and pinned his chest under her foot.

“GYAH!” Licorice yelped when she tipped a sword to his neck. “What are you doing?!”

“Surprise, surprise.” Mandy said sarcastically. “I’m double-crossing you.” Behind her, Moblin and Fatblin had climbed onboard and were attacking the Blackberries. “A ship with this size and power will make the Boogie Pirates invincible. Could use a paint job, of course. I’m not sorry to say I’m putting you out of commission, Licorice.”
“N-Now now, Mandy.” Licorice said nervously. “Perhaps we can sit down and talk about this! Or better yet, you can GO down!” He sunk into the deck.

Mandy, Azula, and the demons were immediately grabbed in cocoons from the ship’s gummy deck. Azula was unable to burn it and Mandy couldn’t phase out. “What in the world is this?!”

“Myah hah hah hah ha ha!” Lord Licorice emerged in the form of a candy monster. “Marvelous! My powers work on this vessel after all! And how convenient, even a Logia’s power is useless against it.” He squeezed the demons into darkness. “Men! The collars! I’ll hand these pirates to King Andrew personally.”

The Blackberries placed chi-blocking collars over Mandy and Azula. Violet Beauregard dropped down from the Cinnamon Ships and kicked the women down. “Lord Licorice wants the Noah.” Veruca Salt smiled eerily, surrounded by her gas cloud. “He wants to destroy the Kids Next Door. He wants to be rid of all you pirates.”

“Our next stop is Kids Next Door Moonbase.” Lord Licorice faced the half-moon in the distant sky. “After this, no one will ever doubt the power of candy! King Andrew… will be pleased.” The Noah turned under his power and set course for the Moonbase.

The Marzipan Pirates landed on a small Cinnamon Ship piloted by Penelope Mousse. “You came unusually quickly.” Augustus remarked.

“I may have put a tracker on your neck and followed you from far away.” the mouse Mobian replied. “I hope that doesn’t violate our parley.”

“I’ll overlook. Speaking of which, where is Captain Stag?”

“I don’t appreciate being called that, boy!” Captain Slag flew up on a large hoverbike fit for his fat body. His twin Rusty Petes rode with him, and many other Slag Pirates had their own bikes. “So, this be the legendary treasure you journeyed far and long for. A ship o’ that size and beauty will be perfect in destroying the World Government!”

“We’ll discuss details later. We can’t let Licorice get to Moonbase!”

“Guys, I think some people are already ahead of us!” Penelope pointed. (Play “Hag 1” from *Banjo-Tooie!*)

**Boss fight: Lord Licorice**

Azula’s airships and the Hook Pirates’ flying ships were being bombarded by the Noah’s cannons. “OI! Give us back the captain!” Creeper yelled from the lead airship. “Fire Slugs, melt that behemoth!” A bottom hatch opened and dropped 500 Fire Slugs on the Noah. Veruca took cover from the monsters as they puffed flames, but Licorice simply forced points to jab out around the ship and push them off. “MWAH HAH HA! Do you fools not know what ‘indestructible’ means?!”

“What kind of weird super power is that?!” Penelope questioned.

“It has to be the Candy-Candy Fruit!” Augustus realized. “I remember Big Mom saying that she sent samples of her DNA to Caesar to make Devil Fruits out of them. I guess Lord Licorice managed to steal it, too. Big Mom was so mad, she ate the Gingerbread Village.”

“If I can get Licorice in range, perhaps I can neutralize the power.” Stewie said as he readied his
Neutralizer.

“Great idea. Penelope, fly higher.” The mouse girl did so, putting Licorice’s monster form in their view. While the beast was swatting at some flying Hook Pirates, Stewie locked on and fired the Neutralizer. “BYAAAAH!” Licorice sunk into the deck, and the ship halted without his control.

“Now’s our chance, let’s land and attack them!” Augustus declared. Penelope stomped the gas and flew above the Noah’s deck, the Marzipans dropping down. They faced Veruca, Violet, and Mike Teavee with battle-ready expressions.

The three henchmen turned when the control room’s entrance opened and Lord Licorice stepped out. The Candy Lord tossed a bubblegum in his mouth, chewed, and stretched a long, whip-like gum to grab Augustus’s legs and throw him and Nel onto the control room’s roof. “Take care of the larvae.” Licorice ordered. Veruca jumped to grab Stewie, Violet caught Maggie, and Mike caught Rallo before they fell into individual trapdoors.

“Ow…” Augustus helped himself up. Nel was flattened by him from the impact, the cavegirl unconscious. “Nel, are you alright?!”

“It’s cute that you’re concerned for that outdated piece of trash.” Lord Licorice climbed onto the roof. “That’s what you’ll be soon enough.”

“You know, I kind of guessed you would betray the other pirates… but why the Kids Next Door? Why the Seven Lights? Do you want the Apocalypse to happen?!”

“I serve only King Andrew. I owe him everything. Everybody mocked my family for our candy heritage, but he believed in me. He gave me a chance to be feared and respected. I will prove his trust in me by destroying all his enemies with this beauty!”

“King Andrew is wrong, Licorice. The Sky Show made it sound like he’s being controlled by that 8-ball thingy. This ship could save everyone, Licorice, you have to realize that!”

“I won’t let a junior Candy Pirate order me! My faith is in King Andrew, and with this ship, I will be the most powerful force in his ARMY!” He lashed four Licoropes from under his armor. Augustus dodged and slashed his cutlass, but it flew out of his hand and into Licorice’s. “Your friend’s little toy weakened my control on this ship, but my Candy-Candy Fruit isn’t neutralized, yet. You stand no chance against me!” He shot two bullets that Augustus dodged, but Licorice commanded them to come back and hit the boy’s arms.

“YOWCH!” Augustus grabbed the right arm’s wound. The wind from the moving ship made him fall to his knees due to this unstable position.

“You only looked formidable next to your monstrous grandmother, boy, but you’re nothing without-”

“AYAAAAA!!” Henrietta Fizzuras rammed the Ace Flyer against Licorice’s head, knocking him down to the deck.

“MOM?!” exclaimed Augustus.

“DAMMIT, BOY, I can accept you keeping a cavegirl as your pet, but VHERE did you expect to hide THIS PIECE OF JUNK?!”

“It’s not junk, Mom, it’s important!”
“Oh, I don’t vant to hear it right now!” Henrietta landed on the deck and raised her sword at Licorice. “Nobody hurts my boy except ME, arschloch!” Licorice easily dodged her swings and willed the Candycane Cutlass up at her neck, but Henrietta used Haki to keep it away.

Augustus chucked his Gobstopper at the Candy Lord’s head, giving Heinie the chance to slice him. “Aughsucks, you’re hurt!” Nel yelled after recovering.

“Nel, go inside and look for Zeira. She can heal me.” The cavegirl nodded and pranced inside the ship on all fours. Augustus withstood the pain in his arms and bounced the Gobstopper in his hand. “Are you ready for a taste of Marzipan, Licorice?”

“Cough, cough!” Stewie Griffin was trapped in a gas cloud created by Veruca Salt. The Metahuman Neutralizer turned to rust, much to his horror.

“I want you to suffocate in here.” Veruca told him creepily. “I want you to turn into dust. My Rot-Rot Fruit allows people to age. The more they age, they ROT.”

“Cough!” Stewie studied his hands. They were still baby-like and unchanging. He smirked. “Do your powers affect chronologically frozen infants, perhaps?”

“What?!” Veruca spun a cloud around Stewie. “No! I want to turn you into dust! Why don’t you do what I want?!”

“Because my show has been rotting for years already!” Stewie stretched his Hulk arm and grabbed Veruca, slamming her back-and-forth around the floor. The rotten child was quickly knocked unconscious, her gas cloud fading away. “I’m not going anytime soon.”

Maggie Simpson blasted homing bullets at Violet Beauregard, but even the bullets that never miss could not strike the nimble target. “What’s wrong, baby? Your master eyesight can’t keep up with my flexibility?”

Maggie glared murderously and whipped out a pink bubblegum – in actuality, a Bounce Gum. Maggie shot it at Violet, who dodged as the gum exploded behind and clogged that part of the hall. Violet leapt over and punched Maggie to the floor. She recovered in time to see her escape down a left hall, so she shot a Bounce Gum to the right to clog it up.

The opposite hall turned right at the end, and Maggie saw Violet clinging to the ceiling close by. The henchgirl quickly kicked Maggie against the wall and crawled away, but the baby shot another Bounce Gum ahead to block her path. Maggie shot bullets that Violet still dodged, and when the baby got closer, Violet jumped over and ran back the way they came. Violet was forced to head into the original hall with gum blocking the other. Unfortunately, gum prevented her escape here, too, and Maggie shot another Bounce Gum to trap her in place. “HEY! Let me out of here, you little brat!!”

Maggie pulled her binky out and said, “Start chewing, bitch.”

Rallo ducked under a classroom desk to hide from a group of zombies. “Come on, man, Zombie High ain’t somethin’ a 5-year-old should watch! Please change the channel to Class of 3000.”

“We can’t leave now! This is the part where the zombies eat the little kid’s brain.” Mike’s voice echoed.

“AAAAAH!” The zombies threw aside his desk, missing Rallo as he sprinted toward the hallway. His efforts were fruitless as zombies in school uniforms surrounded him from both directions. “No, please!” Rallo ducked in fear. “I need my brain! I can’t even count to 11! My head’s as good as a-!”
He just remembered: “Duh.” Before a zombie could snack on his afro, he revealed his stereos. He turned them up to full blast and quaked the digital television world.

Outside, the stereos of the HD TV caught fire and burned the whole device. Rallo and Mike were forced out. “I don’t got time for you, Teavee!” Rallo blasted a swarm of music notes to knock Mike out. “My captain needs me!”

Nel located a storage room where Mandy and Azula were chained to pipes. “Oh, it’s Augustus’s new pet.” Mandy remarked. “Do us a favor and bite these chains off.”

“Up here!” Zeira’s butterfly net was hung on a wall. “Hurry and save me!”

“Pupils!” Nel responded, bumping the wall headfirst to make the net fall. The cavegirl tore it open with her teeth and freed Zeira. “Aughsucks need help!”

“I’m on it. And it’s ‘aye,’ by the way.”

Lord Licorice made a cloud of Pop Gums circle above before sending the explosives to rain upon Henrietta, who dodged in a tap-dance fashion. Augustus tossed his Gobstopper at him, but Licorice caught it in midair, and pelted the sphere between the mother and son’s stomachs. During one comeback, Augustus grabbed the ball and was thrown against his mother. “I’m through wasting time with you so-called pirates!” Licorice stomped his foot to sink into the vessel, then grabbed the deck in his fingers.

Augustus and Henrietta slid toward the back when the Noah shifted angle and faced the moon, shaking as energy charged in the engines. “I’ll drive this ship so fast through Moonbase, they’ll never see it coming! GAAAAH!” It shook forcefully under an unseen force. “What’s happening now?!”

“By Electro!” exclaimed Captain Slag. “It be the giant Kremling, K. Lumsy!”

“K. Lumsy?!” Augustus whipped around. The giant Kremling was flying with a pair of white, glittery wings.

“Pwetty fairies tell me friends in trouble. K. Lumsy gonna protect friends.”

“Because the power of friendship is sweeter than any sugar!” declared the Sugar Fairies that composed his wings.

“Augustus, we have to defeat him now!” Zeira flew out of the ship and used glittery bubblegum to patch the captain’s wounds.

“Not without me!” Henrietta grabbed Lord Licorice around the neck.

“Rock on, Mom!” Augustus hardened his fists like stone and repeatedly punched Lord Licorice’s face.

“NNN!” Henrietta kicked the Candy Lord to his front. “You’re not getting out of punishment, boy!”

“I’ll take that CHANCE!” Augustus stomped the lord’s head with an Armament boot and knocked him clean out. The Noah was free from his control. (End song.)

“YAHOOOO!” The Rusty Petes cheered for the Marzipans as they and Slag boarded the Gummi Ship. “Augustus-gustus, he’s the man, if he can’t do it, perhaps Slag could have!”
Oh ho ho, I admit, ’twas a festive display.” Slag laughed. “But we have a parley to complete. This ship be Ours now, Augustus!”

“What do you mean yours?!” Mandy and Azula appeared, with the latter holding Nel by the ankle. “I didn’t waste a month working with that clown to let YOU take this ship!”

“You blokes have enough in your arsenal!” Captain Hook and Mr. Smee landed on deck. “Give the Hook Pirates a fighting chance, why don’t ye?! I’ll fight ye BOTH for this delicious vessel!”

“NONE OF YA are getting the Noah!” Bubbly Brandon declared. “It belong to Captain Augustus! He’s the one who earned it. He and his crew braved all the trials to find the Lost Candies.”

“You think I’m going to let some junior pirate captain the Noah?” Mandy asked.

“You don’t get to decide that, Mandy.” Henrietta stated imposingly. “I’m his mother, so I’ll deal the necessary scolding.” She turned to her son and demanded, “Augustus, what the HELL do you plan to DO with this freaking ship?!”

“Save everyone from the Apocalypse!”

Heinie’s eyes widened. “Ze… Apocalypse?”

“This Noah has the capability to save everyone from the universe’s destruction.” Zeira reasoned. “You all know what is to come. And frankly, none of you deserve to captain the Noah.”

“And we’re to entrust the duty to him?!” Captain Hook shouted. “Big Mom’s grandson?”

“Will you stop calling me ‘Big Mom’s grandson’?!” Augustus argued. “I’m Augustus the Stone Fist! I’m not the one who did all those things to you, Big Mom did! I’m my own pirate and I have my own crew. And I went on this entire adventure for YOUR sake!”

“OUR sake?” Azula questioned.

“If this ship can save everyone from the Apocalypse, then it can save you guys, too. What’s going to happen if the world ends? No more sailing, no more competing, no more treasure, no more adventure… but with this ship, we can keep doing what we love. All I ask is that you let me lead you for just a little bit. Let me lead you to the New World… and you can skewer me later.”

Silence followed for a few minutes. In truth, they all feared the Apocalypse and none knew what to do. “Very well.” Mandy finally spoke. “I’ll let you have the glory of piloting this rust bucket. But… where do we go, exactly?”

“That… is a good question. Where do we go, Zeira?”

“First, let’s make a quick stop.” Zeira glanced at Lord Licorice.

**KND Moonbase**

“CHEREN!” Larry MayHence called. “You gotta see this!”

“What the-?!” Francis gaped.

“It’s… AUGUSTUS!” Panini screamed.

The tremendous Gummi Ship casually sailed by the treehouse’s glass window. Augustus waved at all the gazing operatives, slurping a new lollipop. “What’s up, kids?! I brought you a little
present!” A cannon shot a tied-up Licorice, Mike, Veruca, and Violet through their window. “You might wanna lock ’em up somewhere! I’ll see you on D-Day!” The ark sailed to the stars.

“What… the heck has he been doing all month?” Cheren asked.

“I dunno.” Sheila said. “But it looks WAY cooler than what I’ve been doing.”

I’ve had the plan for Noah’s Ark a while now. Anyway, this concludes Augustus’s story arc. Next time, we will conclude Wendy’s story… as far as these Side Stories go.
Chapter Summary

The history behind Wendy Marvell's birth is revealed, along with the true identity of her mother.

This chapter is the longest in the Side Stories, for certain reasons. It’s the climax of Wendy’s story arc.

Chapter B-34: Windy Marvel

Outside Facilier’s Emporium

Melody Jackson was told by her mother to come to Dr. Facilier’s shop. On the morning of May 22, Melody arrived in Cleveland and knocked on the alleyway door. She waited 10 seconds before the doctor answered. “Glad you could make it. Come in.” he told her in a whisper.

Melody didn’t visit the shop often, but it was different from what she remembered. There was snow outside a window. “Mom said you were calling from Iceland…”

“I had to relocate. Melody, I need you to take a look at something on the table.”

Her eyes directed at the table. They brimmed with curiosity at the sight of the winged kitten, panting hoarsely. “Awww… what happened to this kitty?”

“She suddenly developed a fever. I know you have healing powers, so I was wondering if you can help her.”

“I can try, but you should’ve asked for Haruka, too.”

“I don’t think it’s something Haruka could help with. Your waterbending will do.”

“Okay…” Melody bent water over her hands and used Healing Touch on Carla’s head.

“OOOH.” Carla moaned, seemingly in pain, so Melody loosened the touch.

“Uh-oh, did it hurt!?” Melody asked.

“No, just keep at it.” the doctor instructed.

“If you say so…” Melody resumed healing despite the creature’s moans.

Carla was lost in a murky sea, the thick water blinding her sight and blocking her breath. Melody’s touch washed the murk away, and through it she could see a black figure with a red eye. The image dissolved, and blackness engulfed her. The only visible thing was a baby with deep blue hair.

“NO, DON’T!” Carla shot up, scaring Melody into releasing.
“Holy cow, it talks!” the girl exclaimed. “Boy, do I have an interview!”

“Carla, what’s wrong?!” Harvey asked.

“I…” She put a paw to her head. “I…I feel like I know who Mr. Vaati is…”

“You mean you’ve met him before?”

“I don’t know… but when I think of that man, I only feel anger… and when I think of Wendy, I feel concerned…!” She gasped. “Where are they now?!”

“Vaati and Annie took her to the Negaverse. I reckon they’re going to meet their opposites.”

Carla panted. “I wish I could remember where I’ve seen him… why I hate him so much…”

“You know, maybe I can bring one of the timebenders.” Melody suggested. “Miyuki mentioned having the power to see into the past. She can examine Carla or something.”

“Then go get her.” Facilier agreed. “We might be able to finally crack the mystery on where Carla came from.”

**Negaverse; Naihcalappa Mountains**

Vaati Apparated Annie and Wendy in front of a house within a mountain range. “Ulp…” Wendy clenched her stomach. “Dad, I forgot to mention this… but Apparating makes me sick.”

“Heh heh heh! It’s not for everyone.” Vaati chuckled. “Usually, I prefer flying, but we are late for a meeting.” The Minish led Wendy to the house and knocked.

“Dad, I think I recognize this place. It was from a dream.”

“You know what they say about dreams and reality.” As he spoke, the person to answer the door was a girl with blue eyes who looked like Wendy’s twin.

Both girls gasped. “Wendy!” the twin exclaimed.

“Do I… know you?”

“I’m Ydnew! We met back in Christmas, remember?!”

“EDNEW?!” Wendy gasped. “I-I thought you were a dream!”

“Ydnew here is your Negative.” Vaati explained. “She is connected to you as your ‘other half.’ Everyone in our universe has an opposite. Her father and I staged the two of you meeting.”

“I see you’ve finally made it.” Itaav came to the door. He smiled at his Positive’s daughter. “Hello, Wendy! Nice to see you again.”

“You were real all along!” Wendy grabbed Ydnew in a hug. “I’m so happy, you were REALLY watching after me all this time!”

“I’M real, too!” They looked up at a red blob with a face hanging from the ceiling above the door.

“AIE!” Wendy jumped back. “What is that?!”

“Wendy, this is Yeoj.” Ydnew sighed in aggravation. “He’s our pet… somewhat. Super useful, but
super annoying.”

Yeoj turned into a slinky with muscular arms of a superhero. “And also toying.”

“MY TURN TO PLAY!” Nil Gnofieb snatched the toy.

“Nil, I told you it’s a person!” Niyus grabbed and tugged on it.

“Heh heh! We really have a lot in common.” Wendy laughed. The two reminded her of her own sidekicks.

“Red Eye, everyone is waiting downstairs.” Itaav said.

“Right. Come, Wendy, we can’t keep them waiting.” The group entered the house as Itaav led them all down a basement.

“Who are we meeting?” Wendy asked.

“Before I came, your father asked me to gather the White Lotus members and bring them down here.” Annie explained. “Of course, Vaati didn’t plan to start this meeting without you. I’m glad you can finally be part of it, Wendy.”

“I am, too. I just wish Carla and Dr. Facilier could come…”

“You’ll have time to fill them in afterward.” Vaati replied, frowning at the mention of her.

The basement was a wide, round room consisting of a table with a big, black-and-white lotus symbol. The respective members were on opposite sides. “Wendy, meet the Black Lotus.” Itaav introduced. “Raseac Atnalamid the Plant Master, Hpot Gnofieb the Shadow Master, Atteirneh the Poison Master (our newest member filling in for her late mother), Imorih Atoihs the Earth Master, Yevrah Reilicaf the Spiritual Master, and my wife, Einna.” There was a chubby woman in an orange shirt that looked like Annie. Said woman shirked at her Negative’s appearance.

“Is that Dr. Facilier’s Negative?” Wendy noticed. “He looks-”

“Very Christiany, compared to his Positive.”

“At least I ain’t one of the crazy ones!” Yevrah shouted.


“Where’s Dr. Facilier?” Eva asked. “I wanted him to tell me what was up with the late-night call.”

“He’s tending to other business. Wendy, these people are the parents of Kids Next Door operatives, and former operatives themselves. Rather exemplary ones at that.”

“So, you’re the blue-haired girl Cheren mentioned before.” Rachel recognized.

“You’re Cheren’s mother?” Wendy asked. “It’s nice to meet you!”

“Okay, let’s get this meeting underway.” Itaav said hastily. The two leaders took seats beside each other with their daughters on their other side. Both pairs mirrored each other.

“As you may know, I have called this meeting regarding the vision in the sky.” Vaati began. “It
seems our worst fears have been realized. And like I suspected from the very beginning, the World Government Leaders have been acting as puppets. I have no doubts they will try to destroy the Kids Next Door and stop this prophecy. That is why we must aid the Kids Next Door and invade Mariejoa to stop them.”

“My son was planning to face The King of the World.” Rachel mentioned. “I didn’t tell him this, but I was concerned if he could pull it off. How do we stop the Octogan?”

“Do not underestimate the Kids Next Door. They have in their arsenal the Ten Firstborn, do they not?”

“You expect to ask the Kids Next Door to use the Firstborn as weapons?” Itaav questioned.

“Is that not what Rachel, Danika, and their friends did?” Vaati inquired. “Twenty years ago, they fueled their selves with the Firstborn’s power and defeated Arceus. Surely, their children can do the same and overpower the Octogan.”

“You’re betting everything on the Kids Next Door and the Firstborn?” Raseac asked. “If it were that easy, what was the point of calling us?”

“According to my spies in Minish Kingdom, the World Leaders have a trump card:” Vaati replied seriously. “The Grand Inferius. An army of powerful zombies that obey the controller’s command. And it seems they have a means of summoning it. I don’t know if they can or how close they are, but we must expect the worst. We cannot let the Kids Next Door, namely the Firstborn Guardians, waste energy fighting the Inferius. We must defend them and defend others threatened by the Government.”

“Maybe, but if my son is planning on fighting Daphne again, I want to be by his side.” Danika said. “I think we should have some type of plan in case we confront the World Leaders.”

“I agree.” Hpot replied. “We shouldn’t just charge them like a pack of wild earthbenders.”

“Pardon me?!” Angie and Imorih chorused.

“We could spend hours concocting a complex plan, but even now, the Leaders could be watching us with their All-Seeing Eye.” Vaati reasoned. “That’s why the best plan is no plan.”

“That has got to be the SHITTIEST THING I ever heard!” Einna shouted.

“It’s nothing really new to us.” Mika chuckled. “The Brotherhood of Evil, Ganondorf, Arceus, we never had a plan, we just jumped in and fought them.”

“Unless you count the plan my group had in sneaking in Final Brain.” Danika mentioned.

“Yes, but it went downhill after that.”

“We will not be unprepared, I assure you.” Vaati mentioned. “Based on collected info, we know the basic powers of each of the World Leaders, and we can determine weaknesses. My daughter here has faced a World Leader, haven’t you, Wendy?”

“Yes.” Wendy nodded. “Henry Churchill. He has paper powers, and he’s a Logia. And some of his papers can do different stuff, like fire.”

“According to Dillon, Daphne can use a Shadow Possession on people and kill them by picking petals off a rose.” Danika remembered.
“But what if the Firstborn can’t beat the Octogan?” Rachel asked.

“It’s not the Octogan we have to defeat, but King Andrew. And what we need to do… is remind him who he once was.”

Wendy and the Black Lotus looked confused. However, Rachel and Fanny exchanged remorseful, contemplative looks. “You two know, don’t you?” Vaati asked them.

“We… think we do…” Rachel answered.

**Climbers House**

Melody returned to Facilier’s emporium with Miyuki Crystal, who observed the winged cat curiously. Carla wasn’t panting as heavily and her eyes were open, but she still lay on the table. “Who is this?” Miyuki asked.

“Her name’s Carla, and she’s having memory troubles.” Facilier answered. “Melody thought you could help.”

“You can see something’s history, can’t you?” Melody asked. “Like you did with Joey?”

“Yes, I can.” Miyuki put a hand on Carla’s head. She focused her power and saw into the past.

_An egg fell from the sky and into the sea. It drifted along the waves for two years as Miyuki fast-forwarded time. Eventually, it washed up on a shore. A pair of feet ran up to it, arms reached down to grab it, and Miyuki saw it was Wendy. “Look, Doctor! I found this on the beach- WHOA!” Wendy tripped while bringing it to Facilier._

“EASY, girl!” The doctor caught the egg.

“Oh, man… That almost ended badly.” Wendy blushed.

“It ain’t no cookin’ egg.” Facilier put his ear to it. “I can almost feel something moving.”

“May I see?” Wendy held her arms open, and her mentor passed it to her. She gasped when the egg cracked. Both of them stared with anticipation… The head of a little kitty popped out of the egg.

“Who are you?” the cat asked.

“WOW, you can talk!?” exclaimed Wendy.

“Of course I can talk, what am I, some animal? …” The kitten observed her paws and the egg she was in. “Oh… I suppose I am.”

Miyuki sped through time to when Wendy and the kitten were in the former’s room. “I wonder if your family lost you.” Wendy said. “We should probably help you find them.”

“Perhaps… but…” Miyuki saw from the kitten’s perspective, staring up Wendy’s body like a pet to her master. “I feel… the compulsive need to stay here.”

“You mean you want to be my pet?”

“WHAT?! Where on Earth did you get that idea!?” the cat shouted.

“S-Sorry! I guess for a minute, I thought you would think I’m your mom!” Wendy flushed. “Since I
was the one who hatched you.”

“You don’t look a thing like me, why would I think that?”

“Sorry. But if it’s okay… I would like you to stay. At least until we find your family.”

“Very well. But you had better not call me your pet.”

“What should I call you?”

“Hm?” She raised a brow. She put a finger to her chin. “I guess I don’t have a name…”

“I’ll call you Carla!”

“Why Carla?”

“I just thought of it. Do you like it?”

“Hm… it does have a ring to it. All right, I’m Carla the Cat.”

“Hah hah ha!” Wendy giggled.

“What should I call you? Wendy the Human?”

“If you want to!”

“I did feel a compulsive need to stay… even back then.” Carla recalled. “But I still want to know how I know Mr. Vaati.”

“I couldn’t see anything past the egg falling from the sky.” Miyuki said. “I couldn’t even see anything… laying you.”

“If you know who this Vaati is, would he know you, too?” Melody asked.

Carla’s eyes narrowed. “He would… wouldn’t he?”

Negaverse; Itaav’s House

After the meeting, Vaati, Annie, and Wendy sat on the highest roof of the house, gazing at stars and holding hands. “Normally, stargazing isn’t what families do after war meetings.” Annie laughed. “You must think we’re pretty weird, huh?”

“Not really.” Wendy grinned. “It’s weird enough having a family to stargaze with!”

“If only we can do it all the time.” Vaati said. “But as long as the World Government and the Apocalypse threaten us, the eternal dream can never come. This is exactly what I have trained you for, Wendy. And I have waited so long to share this moment with you. After we defeat the Government and Ragaj Gnik, we can build our ideal world. Everyone will be free… everyone will be happy…”

“And we can finally live together.” Wendy faced him with hopeful eyes. “Right?”

“We will, my child. We-”

Fzzoom! They heard a light explosion and faced the ground.

“Dr. Facilier!” Wendy beamed. “Carla!”
“Wendy!” The two had come with Melody and Miyuki.

“I’m so glad you could make it!” Wendy excitedly jumped down, to her father’s slight dismay.

“What is this place?” Melody asked.

“A meeting room for the White and Black Lotus.” Facilier answered. “Your mother should be here too, Melody. VAATI, come down here! We need you for something!”

Vaati exchanged a curious and concerned look with Annie. He floated down to them. “What seems to be the problem?”

Miyuki approached the cloaked mage. She spared a look at Wendy. Without warning, she grabbed both Wendy and Vaati’s hands. Miyuki focused her energy and took them down a sea of memories.

Eleven years ago…

The stars were beautiful in the indigo sky. Their light was reflected on the surface, along with the white full moon. The ocean waves brushed against the cliffside. A setting could not be more romantic. The calm and serenity was the perfect place. Tonight, he would ask her.

Two figures, a man and a woman, walked up the hill. The woman’s brown hair was braided into a ponytail. She was in her early 20s and wore casual attire, a green sweater, blue jeans, and white sneakers. The man definitely stood out more: he wore a bluish-purple cape over his blackish-blue shirt and pants, black sandals, and his silver hair blew in the breeze. He was very lean and tall at 22 years old. The moon highlighted his pale white skin, his ears were pointed and sharp, and his red eyes shone in the night.

The couple stopped atop the cliff and stared at the horizon. “That was a lovely dinner, Vaati.” the woman said.

“I’m glad you enjoyed it, Annie.” Vaati replied with a deep, charming voice. “Your smile has always delighted me. Ever since that day, 8 years ago…”

“Hm hm hm! My birthday.” Annie giggled. “That’ll always be my favorite cake.”

“Mine, too. And I am so thankful… you’ve stood by me all these years.”

“I couldn’t think about leaving you. You’ve shown me… a whole new path to follow.”

“Yes. That is why, I wish to stay with you on that path…” Vaati slowly reached into his cape pocket and pulled out a small, sapphire box. “…forever…”

Annie’s green eyes widened. “V-Vaati. Is that…?”

Vaati got down on one knee and showed her the diamond ring inside. “I love you, Annie. I wish to spend my time in this world, and the next one, with you. I also want, very deeply, to have a child of my own. Some like Mikaela have already had their first child, and others like Rachel are pregnant with theirs. I wish to have a child with you, too. …Will you marry me?”

Annie flushed. After all of their years together… she was taken off guard. Now was finally the time. “…Vaati… I can’t marry you.”

Vaati looked up with surprise. “What?” he said quietly.

“Vaati… I love you, too… and I will always be loyal and support your beliefs. But I know… you
want to become a Logia. I wanted to help you, so I did research… to become an airbender Logia means to rid your heart of turmoil or earthly attachment. No Logia airbender has ever married for that reason. I know you’re going to save the world, Vaati, I know you’ll lead us to freedom. If you’re devoted to me, then you can’t realize that goal. You can’t be free. I’ll always follow you and follow your orders… but I can’t take you away from what will make you powerful. …Good-bye, Vaati.” With a halfhearted smile, Annie turned and walked down the slope.

A wave of realization swept over Vaati. A weight in his heart had flown away. His longing desire to be with Annie. He loved her, still… and was so very thankful for her loyalty. Vaati turned, faced the cliff, and backed away with a determined expression. He dropped the sapphire box and ring and ran for the edge. He jumped and dove into the awaiting waves. …

… Like a bird leaving the nest, Vaati flew. His dark cape and silver hair flapped behind him. Annie turned and smiled as his dark figure shrunk into the sky. Vaati had never known a greater feeling on his heart, light as air. He was free…

Vaati slept on a cloud that night and awoke the next morning. Then for as long as the sun was up, he flew. Where over the world he was, he didn’t know, but neither did he need to. Before long, he had flown his way to Skypia, where not surprisingly, the Nimbi citizens passed him odd looks. ‘Twas rare for one with no wings to soar across their very streets. He was definitely suspicious to some, and his carefree smile made him seem like a fantasizing child.

Vaati’s eyes were closed and he was smiling, chilling his face with the wind’s delight. He had never felt so free, his Logia body was air itself, it was a feeling he wanted to last forever. “Oof—aaaaaah!” Vaati stopped and gasped when he bumped into someone, and they screamed. He looked down, seeing a Nimbi girl of about 21 on her back on a small cloud. Her hair was as white as her wings, and her brown eyes were shiny and cat-like. She wore a black jacket with a white undershirt and black tie, which complimented her black pants and black high-heels. Her white fingernails were long and trim.

Vaati lowered down to her and said calmly, “Miss, I’m sorry. Please, let me help.” He tried to help the girl pick up her scattered books and pens, but she aggressively helped herself up and stuffed everything in, slinging the bag over her shoulder.

“Watch where you’re going next time!” she stated with a strict tone, before flapping her wings and soaring back into the sky town.

Vaati didn’t know how to describe it. He was… swooned. The red was clear on his cheeks. That girl’s temper was spicy. He soared after the Nimbi and put a hand on her shoulder. “You aren’t hurt, are you? Let me make it up to you if I—”

“Don’t touch me.” She pulled away. “Go bother someone else, I’m late for my class.”

“Class?” Vaati floated in place and watched the girl continue. She and hundreds of Nimbi in similar garb flew into a building labeled White University. A Skypian college, by the looks of it. He decided to fly around the campus, which was large and took place on many clouds on varying levels. Students were either socializing or studying. He saw a group of kids playing Frisbee with a Parabuzzy shell, hopefully empty. “Prithee, lift thine head up!” On a misfire, the shell came flying at Vaati, spinning rapidly with its wings outstretched, but the projectile flew right through Vaati’s wind-made head. “…Um… apologies?” The students stared bafflingly at what happened, and without another comment, they flew to retrieve their Frisbee.
Vaati loitered around campus for around 3 hours, hoping to see the spunky Nimbi again. Students passed the strange, cloaked figure looks; some thought he was a visiting teacher, others thought he was just some drifter. Finally, Vaati saw her, sitting on the cloud-grass against the side of a stairway. Her face was grumpy and strict as she buried her eyes in a book.

The girl felt a shadow over her, her eyes furrowing since her reading was interrupted. The cloaked stranger with the red eyes stared at her with a smile. “Hello again.”

The girl clamped her book shut. “Have you seriously been waiting out here for me? I have no interest for a cretin like you, so I’d like you to go away.” She grabbed her belongings and tried to leave, but Vaati hurried in her path.

“Please, forgive me. I’m not trying to impose anything, but I find you… a very marvelous creature.”

“Am I supposed to be aroused?”

“You feel so individualized. I have not been to Skypia often, but no Nimbi talks or dresses like you.”

“For your information, everyone in White dresses this way. The founders were surface explorers who took interest in the human garb and thought it would make good wear for our kind. As for my talk, forgive my discretion, but the Shakespearean speak gets old. This feels more proper.”

“Your tone suits you finely!” Vaati beamed, his voice remained calm and gentle. “If you’re free for the moment, I would like you to join me for a beverage. I saw a lovely café a while back.”

“I have to go to work in an hour, so I want this time to study.”

“I only want a little time. Please? Just one cup?”

The girl sighed. “If it will get you off my tail. May I ask for my stalker’s name?”

“It’s Vaati. May I have yours?”

“…” She looked away, as though pondering whether or not she should answer. “…It’s Charle.”

“Charle? That’s a wonderful name. Well, shall we be off, Charle?”

She sighed again. “I suppose.”

They flew to the outdoor café and ordered two cups of jasmine tea. Charle sipped hers with a smile. “I do love tea.” She frowned again as she asked, “So, Mr. Vaati, you call me a peculiar creature, but what kind of creature are you? Some elf from the backstreets?”

“Ha ha ha ha! No, my dear, I am a Minish.”

“Those little people from the surface?”

“Yes. You might be confused since I’m not as tall as your fingertip.”

“Yes, because if you were, I would’ve swatted you by now.”

“Hah hah hah! In truth, I am actually a mage. An airbending mage, to be specific. I gave myself a natural human size and changed the form of my face. This is my wand.” Vaati pulled out a bark-colored, pointed stick. “A Minish Acre Piece. It’s not the sturdiest material, but this wand has stuck
by me thick and thin.”

“Oh, I see. That's how you fly, then.”

“Actually, I have recently become a Logia airbender. My body is made out of air, so I’m able to fly. Interesting fact, though, the very first Logia was a mage, and I believe his magic helped him accomplish that.”

“Go figure.” Charle sipped.

“You might say I’m a magic aficionado altogether. One of my hobbies is researching all sorts of spells and magical artifacts, what they can do alone and together.”

“Mm-hm.”

“I also enjoy exploring the supernatural wonders of our cosmos. Some query where magic ultimately comes from, and I know that it has effect on more than a few areas. It’s just such a wonderful thing! Heheh, some say that I’m actually the reincarnation of Lord Voldemort. He was a dark wizard in case you don’t—”

“Every creature in the freaking world knows who Lord Voldemort is!” Charle outburst.

“Right… You’re probably tired of hearing about me. Tell me about yourself. What are you studying in college?”

Charle lightly stirred her tea with a spoon. “I’m studying to become an engineer.”

“Engineer, how fascinating. I don’t know too many girls who are interested in that.”

“Well, add me.”

“Like, what sorts of engineering?”

“Basically, if a device works, how does it? I can tell you about Lightning Chariots right off the bat. True, the Thundercorns are fast, but you need a carriage of solid and symmetrical Sapphium to be able to withstand their breakneck speed. Unbreakable diamond reins are also a factor.”

“You seem very smart in the topic. It’s mostly Skypian devices, isn’t it?”

“Well, mostly. In all truthfulness, I’d like to expand my knowledge. Surface devices, Oceanic, etc..”

“The magical world has all sorts of peculiar devices.”

“You know, some people want to talk about more things than just magic.”

“I am only saying, I possess knowledge of magical items and you want to expand your knowledge on engineering! I think our two interests can commingle.”

“There probably isn’t much to it. It’s magic, you say a few funny words and stuff happens, objects can suddenly do this or that, there probably aren’t any real mechanics.”

“While using a Fire Spell, I drastically increase the speed of particles within a set area and increase heat. In creating water, I mold the H2O molecules scattered about the air into one body. By transforming a mouse into a cup, I am solidifying and bending their dimensional structure while still holding their soul and life force in pla-”
“Alright alright, your people clearly have their own style. Look, I don’t have time to talk about this, I need to get ready for work.” She stood up and grabbed her bag, about to fly off.

“Where do you work? I’d like to join you.”

“No. This ‘date’ is over, and I don’t want you to follow me.”

“But I wish for us to talk more! I won’t follow you, but I want to meet you again. Can I… see you tomorrow?”

“I don’t know. Don’t you have a home to go to, too?”

“Actually, I don’t.” Vaati smiled sheepishly. “Wherever the wind blows, that is my home.”

Charle sighed. She felt like there was no getting rid of him. “I…I don’t have classes tomorrow. We’ll meet at this café tomorrow, 10a.m., and make a plan.”

“I look forward.” Vaati nodded. With that, Charle flew away, and the mage watched her. He smiled warmly, looking forward to tomorrow.

Vaati slept on the café’s roof that night, after exploring Skypia a little. At 10a.m. the next day, Charle met him again. Vaati showed her a journal he had in his possession, pointing at a page that depicted a hi-tech key-like cylinder. “This is a Warpdrive Key, a device that allows spacecraft to travel at lightspeed. They’re imbued with photons mixed with dark matter energy, that when inserted into a ship’s engine, allows it to travel galaxies in minutes.”

“A strong ship of the right metal would be needed to withstand such a speed.”

“What if I told you an ordinary Earth school bus could be reprogrammed for such a task?”

“I’d say that your Minish brain clearly forgot to expand with you.”

“Ha ha ha ha ha! You’d be surprised, the things I’ve seen. Moving on,” he turned the page, revealing one with a drawing of a mechanical circular archway, “greater than the Warpdrive Key, a Dimension Transportifier. Incredible amounts of spatial and chronokinetic energy are poured into this device. They fire lasers so powerful, they rip holes and link with the Dimensional Byway, then target specific dimensions either on perpendicular or parallel existing planes. Any and all dimensions, depending on the strength of the material and energy, are within our grasp.”

“It is very fascinating technology. You seem very fixated on it, though.”

“Hm hm hm.” Vaati chuckled softly. “The truth is… I am not only fascinated with the structure of other dimensions… I am fascinated on origin.”

“Origin?”

“I have been to the Spirit World, Charle, I have met the wisest of all spirits. The Chronicler. He knows nearly everything about every dimension, including that which created us: the Dimensional Fusion. Some unnamed god has taken elements from many a universe, denizens, landscapes, and molded them all into a single cosmos. And yet, those original dimensions still maintain their structure and timeline. So I wonder to myself, why, what, and who, which denizens of this world have an original self in some faraway cosmos? I would really love… to see these worlds.”

“It sounds preposterous.”
“Hm. I’ll tell you more on it later. Moving on, Bubble Coating from Sabaody Park…”

Vaati and Charle agreed to meet two days after that. Charle shared her knowledge of the workings of devices, and admittedly took interest in Vaati’s descriptions of magical items. A Vanishing Cabinet disperses the matter of a subject inside one, and reforms it inside the other, same for other teleportation devices like Apparition and Floo Powder. Cars or trains can be enchanted to fly by decreasing the very gravity and substantial mass of its matter. In turn, Charle discussed the workings of human airplanes since Skypia has to deal with those a lot, and Vaati proceeded to tell her how a lightbulb works, to which they both giggled.

“In truth though, Charle, I always believed magic played a factor in all things. It’s more-or-less my way of describing… wonders.”

“But some wonders are more explainable than others. Sigh… I have to go now. My boss wants me to work late tonight.”

“Hmm… very well.” Vaati frowned with disappointment. “Shall I see you tomorrow?”

“Yes…” Charle smiled softly.

She flew away from him again. Vaati was still melancholy. He wanted more time with her, their meetings were so short. He chose to ease his sorrow by flying about Skypia, seeing what other wonders it had to offer. That night, a certain restaurant caught his eyes: Yonder Goddesses, the light-up sign read, between two silhouettes of slim woman angels. The interior was a bright red, and Vaati saw why it was so popular: female angels in red high-heels, either two-piece or one-piece red swimsuits, and as part of the outfit, fake cat ears and tails that matched their hair.

“A fine welcome, fair traveler.” Vaati flushed when a brown-haired Nimbi fluttered up to him. “Dost thine stomach yearn for grub? How strong is thine hunger?”

“. . .” Vaati shook his head, “I could use something to eat.” Though you’d be surprised how little you need to, being made out of air.

Vaati was led to a table in a back corner, on a comfy round seat. He tried to pull his attention away from the lovely angels and stare at the menu. Lots of types of wine, fair amount of Skypian fruit. “Hm hmm. Hast thou decided on thine-” Vaati lowered his menu—he and his waitress gaped at each other. Charle held a sexy pose, clothed in a red one-piece, high-heels, white cat ears, and a tail. She dropped her pen and notepad. “Charle-”

“Vaati!” she hissed angrily. “What are you doing here?! Did you follow me?”

“Charle? This is your work?”

“Vaati, get out of here! I can’t let any of the workers think we’re dating-”

“Charle, pray tell!” The overweight Nimbi manager landed a few feet away. “Art thou being harsh with yon customers again?” he asked gruffly.

“N-No, pray why wouldst I, Roubi?”

“Thine appeal dost not appeal to men well. Approve on thine weakness shouldst thee wish to stay hither.” He flapped away.

Sighing with aggravation, Charle sat on Vaati’s lap, smiling seductively and leaning her back against his front. Her narrowed cat-like eyes were complimented by her fake ears and tail. “Didst I
Charle glared. “I need extra money to pay tuition and bills, and this was the only job I could land. It’s degrading beyond measure, especially when men are so repulsive and demanding. I should hope you have money to pay for a meal.”

“I carry a few Rupees, sure. Do you recommend anything?”

“Nothing that suits your magical fancy.” She flapped her hair and brushed it on his face.

Vaati blushed and held the menu above his head. “Ocean’s Marvel, what’s that?”

“Oh, I wouldn’t.” Charle brushed his legs with her hands. “They import that from Oceana, the taste is kind of strong for Nimbi.”

“But I am no Nimbi.”

“Yes, but they fill it with salty mist, merpeople are used to it, but air-light beings like ourselves… oh, fine, I just wanna get off of you.”

Minutes later, Charle returned with a glass of deep blue liquid, sliding it across the table to Vaati. “Enjoy.”

“W-Wait, Charle!” She stopped and turned, folding her arms. “I would like you… to share this with me.”

“No, of course not. I wouldn’t poison my bowels with any of this garbage.”

“You work so hard, Charle, and you are such a lovely woman. I would like my first Skypian brew to be shared with you.”

Charle sighed. Why does she keep going along with him. “You taste it first.”

Vaati picked up the glass and tipped it to his mouth. “Hoo-o-o!” He shuddered. “It does tickle my tongue.”

“How do you feel?”

“I feel… lightheaded. I mean, more than before.” Vaati swayed slightly, cheeks still flushed. “Kind of, heheh… funny.”

“Hmm… well, I suppose…” Charle hesitantly reached for the drink. She tipped it into her mouth.

Hours later, Vaati and Charle wobbled out of the restaurant, one arm around the other as they laughed hysterically. “You-hoo are RIGHT, Vaati! I fee-heel LOOOAAADS better.”

“I dost be shproiggin’ my shpiggity shpoo.” said Vaati.

“Ho HOOOOO, I am a CAAAAAT and I can FLYYYYY!”

“I am some kind of chipmunk creature, m-my darling.” Vaati’s moderate charming tone was the same, but he was senseless regardless.

“Hoh HOH, I am tired. I need to liiiieee on my bed-cloud, and go sleepy-sleep.”
“Hah-hi should be going to, for sleepy-sleep, yes.”

“Nooooo you don’t have wings, hah-hi need to do flying for both of us.”

“Hee hyes, I no have wings, you must fly me.”

“Hooookay. Up we goooo. Huuuuu,” Charle took a breath, “WHEEEE-eeeee- whoopsie! Hahaha!” Charle took flight with Vaati over her shoulders, sinking or swaying left-and-right the whole way.

Charle brought him all the way back to her house, which she had to herself, lived alone. “Felp, here we aaaaaarrre.” She let go of him when they entered the door, Vaati hunched over, smiling, and swaying. “La home of Charlllllle.”

“Well, ah- I’m glad, I brought ya home.”

“What are you talking about, I brought yooooouuu.” She poked his chest.

“R-Really, w-well why’d you bring me?”

“I don’t knoowww!”

“Y-You know, I know a couple of werecats, th-they, they got nothing on you, YOU… are just sexy.”

“You have the sexiest eyes.”

“You…” He stared longingly at Charle’s brown eyes. “You…” He was getting drowsy. “… Both of them locked arms and kissed each other lovingly. They collapsed on Charle’s bed, and the rest of their night was wonderful.

By next morning, both were passed out. Charle was the first to awaken, groggily, discovering her covers a mess. “Wh-h-whuh…” She took a moment to grasp their position. Vaati was snoring loudly, his arm slung over her. She gasped horrified. Neither of them had clothes on. There were so many words building inside that just wouldn’t escape her mouth. But she was panicking, incredibly. She quickly but softly climbed out of bed, putting on a bra and underwear. She wondered if any of the neighbors witnessed them come in, heard them last night. She wanted the nerves in her body to settle before she woke Vaati up. She took hesitant steps forward and felt a paper wrinkle beneath her foot. Looking down, she was standing on Vaati’s discarded cape.

She bent down and picked up the light-brown paper. It was a wanted poster, depicting a dark figure with a gazing red eye, half-turned away from the camera. She gaped and stared in horror at his striking resemblance.

WANTED
“Red Eye”
Reward: $56,000,000

Unnamed Revolutionary that is responsible for the destruction of 137 Government facilities. Suspected in the usage and purchasing of illegal dark magic artifacts. Possesses airbending and magical abilities. Do not engage, report to officials of any sightings of Red Eye or those suspected to be affiliated.

“Yaaaaaaawn.” Charle’s heart was racing. Her face was struck with horror. She turned as Vaati began to awaken. “Hoo, that was some party. I forget, did I eat the Tinanas or save them-”
“You’re a wanted CRIMINAL?!” Charle smacked the poster against his face.

“Oh… I see you saw.”

“When were you planning to tell me THIS?! Did you just escape from prison with your ‘LOGIA’ powers and fly here to hide out?! Are-Are you planning to hold me as HOSTAGE, force me to HARBOR you? Do you know how much trouble I’m gonna be in for associating with you?!”

“You worry too much. The World Government of Earth sent those posters, no one in Skypia will recognize me.”

“NIMBI work for the World Government, the God’s Angels air force, don’t you know that?! What if they track you here? I’m not going to be arrested because I slept with-” She froze, suddenly remembering. “Oh, God… what did we do last night?”

“Drank Ocean’s Marvel and had one hell of a party.”

Charle shook to her near-senses, “I… need to go to a hospital. I need to know if that drink has any… lasting effects. Stay in this house and DON’T leave! I don’t want anyone to see you until I know it’s safe.”

“Okay…” Vaati rubbed his eyes, still a little woozy. He noticed his wand on the nightstand and reached for it, sniffing it curiously. “…Disinfecto.”

St. Noah’s Hospital

Ocean’s Marvel was very long-lasting if drunk in large quantities, according to Doctor Orbi. Apparently there were accounts of Nimbis’ internal organs dyed blue, but it was still too early to confirm any permanent damage on Charle. That wasn’t the only reason she came, though. She needed to check another lasting effect besides the alcohol. After an hour or so of worriedly sitting on a hospital bed, Orbi returned.

“Lady Charle, ‘twould be crossing boundaries to query thee on thine recent activities, but thine results do not lie: thou art with child.”

Charle felt herself freeze. She might’ve wanted her heart to stop entirely. Last night, she got herself drunk out of her memory… she slept with a dangerous criminal… now her life may be ruined…

“Wouldst I be overstepping if I query the father?” Orbi asked.

Charle’s House

After Vaati dressed himself, he curiously searched Charle’s drawers. Magazines on foodstuffs, how to make cakes, teas, or even corndogs. “Perhaps she studies cooking as a hobby-”

“You BASTARD!!” Charle stomped in, startling Vaati into closing the drawer, and her fist swung through his wind-made head. “You got me PREGNANT!”

“I…” Vaati flushed. “I…”

“You what? You didn’t mean to? Well, stow it, because of all the daffy men I encountered, you are by far the worst!”

“But, Charle, you’re missing the big picture here. A child!” Vaati beamed. “Aren’t you excited what wonders-”
“I don’t WANT A CHILD!” Charle threw a slap at his head, but it was like swinging at air. “I can’t deal with a child right now! Not between college and home life!”

“But Charle, children are amazing. They can learn so much from us, and we learn so much from them. Just think, this child, our child, can be great beyond—”

“No! I will not care for the child of Earth’s most-wanted criminal! I will not let people connect its appearance to you, and me. I want you to leave me and never come back. As soon as this, mutant half-Minish half-Nimbi is born, I’m dropping it at an orphanage so I will never be traced back to you again. Now, please leave, Mr. Vaati. Ugh, when Mr. Roubi finds out, I’m going to have to look for another job. There’s NO point being flirty when I’m already taken. LEAVE!”

Vaati sighed solemnly, grabbed his cape and his belongings, and left out the front door. He took flight to the distant horizon, looking back as Charle stood there, watching until he was gone. Even from afar, he could feel her sharp brown eyes glaring.

Since she was only in the first phases of her pregnancy, Charle was able to continue her classes and her job without much grief. It wasn’t easy. Even if she didn’t want this child, she wouldn’t feel right if it wasn’t born into the world healthy. She made sure to eat the right fruits and vegetables, declined any alcohol she was offered at work, but her mood swings became more noticeable by her college friends. By the time September arrived, her belly was too bloated for her to hide anymore. She confronted her boss that evening.

“Thou jester me?! Pray, when hast this happened?!” demanded Roubi.

“Several months ago, as a drunken mistake. I’m sorry, but I’m going to have to ask for time off. The doctors told me I may be due on February 14, but I don’t plan to raise it.”

“I scoff at thine doctors!” He banged his hands on his desk. “In spite of thine swinging mood, thou hast brought forth more customers than ever with my ingenious bikini policy. Thou appeareth surprisingly attractive. Thou shalt be rid of thy child posthaste!”

“Be rid of—are you MAD?! I am not going to kill this child, and you can’t force me to!”

“A smutty angel hast no opinion against mine. Thou shalt be rid of this anchor and please my brethren when I order thee to—” The office door suddenly blew open, Charle standing her ground against the wind while Roubi smashed against the wall. The girl turned, gasping as Vaati marched in, his appearance more dark than ever.

“And who are you to decide the fate of two beings?” Vaati stood over the man, his red eyes sending a chill down Roubi’s spine.

The aggressive angel swallowed his worry and told him from his spot on the floor, “Thou hast no place to order me either, stranger! Be gone from hither, or I shalt summon the officials to take thee—u-uck…” Vaati raised his right hand and tightened the space in his fingers. Roubi began choking as he was lifted by an invisible force around his neck.

“The angels of Skypia know what freedom is, I was always sure of that. With wings to go anywhere, why should one deny others their freedom?”

“P-Pray, what power be this?! Art thou, ps…psychicbender?! A Sith of yore?!”

“Hm.” Vaati smirked. “I am more than a Sith. I am Air. I am Freedom.”

Vaati began to whirl his arms, and Charle stared with horror as a stream of breath flowed out of
Roubi’s mouth. “Mr. Vaati, please stop!”

“All beings deserve freedom. To me, freedom is just as vital as air. If you deny others their freedom, you should not deserve… breath.”

“MR. VAATI, STOP RIGHT NOW!”

The wind mage closed his eyes. He ceased his whirling, and softly pushed the breath back into Roubi. The Nimbi panted helplessly on the floor, staring at his assaulter. With a powerful thrust of his arms, Vaati blew Roubi through the wall with an air blast, into a back room. Charle sighed with slight relief as Vaati turned to her. “I’m… sorry.”

Charle felt the urge to punch him, but… ceased. “What are you doing back here? Sky Islands constantly move, so unless you were very close all these months…”

“I used this Grand Compass.” Vaati held a golden compass with a glass dome in his hand. The arrow pointed to Charle. “It points to whatever the possessor most desires. I desired… my child.”

“…” Charle glanced away, still glaring. “Let’s go somewhere else.”

Vaati and Charle were later seated on a small cloud several meters above the street of their café. “Aside from magic and other dimensions, I have strongly believed in the philosophy of freedom. I dislike the idea of rulers, governments, or boundaries. I dream of a world where all beings can be to commingle in peace.”

“And for that reason, you attack innocent government officials, as well as small business owners?”

“Those officials are anything but innocent. They have harmed, tormented people, ruled corruptly. Surely you cannot speak differently for that boss of yours?”

“… Well, perhaps not.” Charle looked away. “But I can hardly believe your manner of violence..”

“I know I have done some bad things, I know I have hurt people, but all I really want is a happier world. The World Government of Earth is corrupt, and my goal is to thwart them. They will lead this world into destruction, Charle.”

“I understand your reasons, but you can’t expect me to support you. Freedom has a price.”

“But little price on your people. Ever since I was young, my dream was to be able to fly like Nimbi. I have always admired your kind, to go wherever you wish just by the flapping of your wings! I would describe to you the beauties of airbending, but I guess you already know it.”

“Not true. I’m able to fly like an average Nimbi, but I don’t have airbending.”

“You don’t?” Vaati said with a look that seemed sympathetic.

“Yes, but don’t console me for it. Many Nimbi don’t, it hasn’t bothered me once.”

“That may be, but there’s more that comes with the element than just the power: the spirituality that makes that element bendable, in this case freedom. You are so strict and devoted to your goals – not a bad thing to be sure – but all beings must know freedom.”

“And what form of freedom do you plan to teach me?”

“The simplest kind. Come with me and we shall fly. For just one night, let me show you the extent of our flight. The limitless possibility.”
Vaati stood and held a hand down. Charle remained seated and stared up at him. His charming white face, his trusting red eyes. Charle still didn’t know what, but this man was so… inviting. She took his hand and stood. Then, Vaati jumped over the edge and dove toward the earth. He angled upward, and Charle held onto him as they both flew. Across miles of forest and mountains, the endless earth felt so small. They found a city and decided to glide between its buildings. Passing glances into many a window, each resident jumped with a shock. They gracefully maneuvered around the scaffolds of a building under construction, then began to skip across the roofs of restaurants, each step for one roof as they took great, air-light leaps.

They flew to the sea and glided just over the waves, skipping their fingers along the surface. Many fish and dolphins leaped by, then the two were headed to a ferry. They flew above the vessel, Vaati saw Rainier and Mikaela Chariton, with their daughters Sunni and Darcy, and the couple waved at them happily. Then the two soared up and glided beside an airplane, finding a little boy with blond hair and sunglasses asleep on a seat. Vaati and Charle laughed, then flew away.

Eventually, the duo returned to Charle’s house, landing on the front yard. The two of them still had their smiles. “Mr. Vaati… this was a very wonderful night. After all the stress I’ve had to deal with… it felt good to stretch my wings.”

“People will always say that ‘freedom isn’t free’. But in reality, it is, if we allow ourselves to feel it.”

“I…I’m not sure on your… wh-what you do.” Charle turned away. “I thank you for the night, but you’re still a wanted felon, and I don’t wish to be associated with you. And as for this child, I…”

Vaati frowned. “I shall leave you alone if it’s your wish, but I want to be there when you have it.”

“…Yes… but when I do have it… I want you to raise it. For both of us.”

“…” Vaati smiled. “You have my word.”

February, 2021

The months had flown by so quickly, and Vaati anticipated his coming child every moment. February 14, the targeted date, was approaching. Vaati followed the direction of his Grand Compass to Charle, on flight to Skypia. He was completely prepared, for everything he had planned with his new child. His eyes intricately skimmed a book of wands. “‘The Fairy’s Tail, the greatest and most powerful of wands behind the Star Rod. Wielded a long time ago by the Fairy Princess, it is a historical relic treasured by the fairies. Only those deemed worthy by the princess are able to hold it. No man, fairy, or god has earned this honor.’ …” Vaati closed the book and looked at the compass. He focused his mind on the course and flew at greater speed.

St. Noah’s Hospital

“HURRRRRRRHHH!” The day was here, all right. Charle felt it in her gut, the baby ready to burst.

“Calm thy nerves!” a doctor told her as she was placed onto a bed. “Thine pain will be over shortly!”

“Rrrrrmnnng-gh-gh. . . where. . are you. . Mr. . . Vaat—AAAAAHHH!”

“Prithee, bringeth more painkillers, now is yon shining moment!” a doctor told his colleagues.

Under the setting sun at 7:00 that evening, Vaati flew toward the hospital at breakneck speed. He
breezed past the floating and crippled Nimbi outside as a sudden gust, through the front doors, scattering many papers at the receptionist desk, across every hall and stairway until he could find the room. “Where are you? Charle!” His compass narrowed on a specific door, so Vaati barged in.

“AAAAAAAAAAHHHH!!”

“Waaaaahhh!” She was born. Her crying rang from the room. The doctors cleaned the blood off her beautiful tiny form and fetched a blue blanket to wrap her in. “Praise the goddesses, ‘tis a girl!” the doctors cheered.

Vaati was so entranced by the sight, he almost forgot about Charle. The pained woman looked at him from the bed, and smiled. “Art thou the father?” a doctor asked him.

“…Yes.” Vaati smiled calmly. “I am her father. May we… see her now?”

A nurse placed the baby in Charle’s arms. She was still crying and flailing her arms. Charle unwrapped the blanket from her head for a better view. She already had hair, which was a very deep shade of blue, and her brown eyes were shiny behind her tears. Charle’s heart melted. She couldn’t believe… this child in her arms… “My… child…” She smiled, feeling powerful emotion inside herself. “My… child!” Her own brown eyes leaked. “My darling… little angel.”

Vaati’s own heart warmed at the sight. The baby was so beautiful, he almost didn’t notice. “Her… hair.” He slowly reached his long-nailed fingers and brushed it. “It…It’s blue.”

“Oh, my… perhaps that was a result of the Ocean’s Marvel. I got pregnant just after drinking it, s-so maybe…”

“Is that really so bad? She truly is a marvel, after all.”

Charle softly rubbed the baby’s cheek. How perfectly healthy and vibrant she sounded. Her baby. “Yes… she is.”

**Charle’s House**

The baby was fast asleep by the time they were home. Charle sat on her wheelchair, rocking her in her arms. “Can you believe it… the first half-Minish half-Nimbi baby… yet, she looks so… human. She doesn’t even have wings. She doesn’t look a thing like us.”

“Not true. She has your eyes. You look generally human, except for your wings. That was a fault of my own traits.”

“What should we name her?”

“She is a marvel, so…”

“Why did I expect you to give her that?” Charle giggled.

“But it works so well, what other name should we give her?”

“Oooooooo…” They looked down when Wendy raised her arms and flailed softly, her mouth curved into an ‘o’ as she blew. A very tiny cyclone rose from her lips, up into the air, its little breeze chilling them both. “Hm hm. How about Windy?” Charle remarked.

“Yes… it’s perfect!” Vaati beamed. “Wendy Marvell… I’ve never heard any name more beautiful.”
“I… I agree. It’s a wonderful name. Wendy Marvell…”

Vaati closed his eyes, smiling softly. He would hate to ruin this moment… “I guess… you want me to take her now?”

“… I… I don’t.” Charle didn’t take her eyes off the baby. “I want to keep this child… I want to see her… grow into a fine young woman… She’s so… beautiful.”

Vaati stared at Wendy again. Her hair, blue as the deep sea. “In more ways than one…”

Charle kept her baby close as she slept that night, though allowed Vaati to sleep on the floor of her room. They weren’t actually married yet, so she didn’t feel comfortable sharing a bed. The issue at hand was a large one, eventually they would have to start making marital plans so they could raise this child peacefully. The real problem was Vaati’s position as an unnamed criminal, however the mage does speak of close friends in many places. As suspicious as this sounded, Charle couldn’t confront him, yet.

She entrusted Vaati with caring for the baby while she was off to a long day of school and work. She landed a new job as a grocery store clerk, and made friends with a delightful girl named Luvbi, a coworker who looked around 16 years old, though Luvbi claims she was much older. Luvbi plans to have her first child at 20, which Charle questioned why at such a young age, even despite what she’s done.

At 6:30p.m., Charle happily soared to her home, eager to see what development is taking place between Vaati and Wendy. “Mr. Vaatiiii. Wendyyyy. I’m home.” She called, entering the house. No one responded, and the house felt dead quiet. She filled with dread, dropping her belongings. “Vaati? Wendy?!” She searched all throughout the house, but the cradle was nowhere, nor was its lovely angel. “Where could they have-” Charle stepped on something round and hard. She looked down and found the Grand Compass. The moment she picked it up, the arrow whipped toward a specific direction.

She clutched the device tight and flew hastily across the sea, looking at the compass every few seconds to see she was on track. How long had she been flying, how far did Vaati take her precious angel? Or where were Vaati and her angel taken to?

She knew before long, that great colossus that towered over everything else in the world. Mount Mariejoa, the World Government’s headquarters. The compass was aimed at a specific level of the mountain, Midway Peak. Its outer balcony was trashed, the double doors atop the stairs forced open. Charle glided inside and found many rich types groaning and weak. There was a notable group by the stairs, Charle flew over and read their nametags. Carter Pewterschmidt, a man who looked sick beyond measure. Charles Burns, a yellow-skinned bald man who was very flimsy. Morgan Uno, a young woman around Charle’s age (don’t get confused between Charle and Burns), who looked frozen and stiff as though she’d been hit with a Stunning Spell. One man was still conscious, Giovanni, a brown-haired man with a shiny black suit.

She flew down to him, “Mister, what in the world happened here?”

“Are you one of the God’s Angels?” he asked. “That Red Eye creep showed up, he’s going for Head President Osborn.”

Charle gasped and flew up the stairs, down the corridors as instructed by the compass. Finally, a specific door was targeted, so she kicked it open. “MR. VAATI, WHAT’S-” Charle stared. The room was dark, except for a small circle of 8 candles. A pedestal was in the center, and Wendy rested atop it in her cradle. In one corner, a man with light-brown hair and a green armored suit
was chained against the wall, struggling to shake free. “What…”

Vaati stood over the child, staring at her tranquilly. Charle viewed his profile from the left, and his one red eye had an eerie feel on his dark face. “Charle… I’m glad you’re here.”

“M-Mr. Vaati… what are you doing?”

Vaati looked at her, “This child is truly a marvel, Charle, in more ways than you think. You were right, she doesn’t look a thing like us. That is why…” He looked down at Wendy with madness in his eyes, “she is proof! Proof of the Dimensional Fusion!”

“That whole thing again?”

“Exactly! Why in the world was this child born with blue hair when we have white? The Ocean’s Marvel may have seemed like the deciding factor, but it was all part of fate: this girl has an original parallel from another dimension. But were either of us connected with her in that dimension, who knows! Or maybe we were from someplace else entirely! I look so different from her, and that man over there looks so different from either of us, this is what I’ve been talking about, Charle! And yet, though we have no slated connection with each other, the gods of this universe have organized this very happening!”

“Vaati, you are absolutely crazy! Let’s assume that you’re actually RIGHT, who CARES if we have parallels from other dimensions?! We were born in THIS dimension. I want to live the life I was given HERE, and I want Wendy to do the same!”

“I know, Charle, she will!” Vaati said hastily, grinning madly. “In fact, I want her to grow up the same way that I have! I’m going to do like you once said, Charle… after this ritual is complete, I will abandon her at an orphanage.”

“What?”

“I grew up with no parents, Charle, the only person I could consider ‘father’ was my old teacher, Ezlo. He taught me the magic I grew accustomed to, but I was not obliged to obey him forever. He did not give birth to me. During my childhood, I was free, and as I grew older, I embraced that freedom. I want Wendy to grow up the same. No parental authorities to control her. Then when she comes of proper age to learn magic, I plan to meet her again. Then, we will make the most powerful team. Together, we shall seek the other dimensions of origin, and learn why in the world the gods put us together.”

“ENOUGH of this! Stop this insane ‘ritual’ and give my daughter back!”

During their conversation, Norman Osborn was able to free his right arm from its cuff. He pulled off his gag and whispered quickly into his wristwatch. “Red Eye has a daughter. Repeat, Red Eye has a daughter. Inform Henry Churchill. I will attempt to engage him, and capture her. This message is in case I fail. Good-bye… Master.”

Norman aimed his wrist at the leg cuffs, blasted them free, planted his armored feet against the wall, and kicked free of the other chains. He lunged at Vaati with bladed wrists—the wind mage whipped around and, “AVADA KEDAVRA!” with a powerful burst of green light, Osborn was dead. Vaati felt a cringe in his heart—immediately he yelled, “SEPARO!” and struck his own chest.

Charle gaped at the sight. Vaati was forced mouth agape as his very soul rose from his body. His spirit ripped in half like paper. The left half returned into his being, while the right slowly
absorbed into Wendy. The child brimmed, a breeze generated that blew the candles out. Charle fearfully approached the baby after Vaati’s essence was absorbed. … Her ears grew thin and sharp, and her little eyes peeped open, going from brown to red. (Play “Madness” from Mad Father!)

Charle was horrified beyond compare. She chocked out breath, but couldn’t find the right words to display her anger. “What did you do? . . .”

“I want my daughter to grow up without parents.” Vaati helped himself up off the ground. “However, I also want to always be by her side. So… I split my soul and put half of it in her. Wendy is now my Horcrux. As long as she lives, I will never die. And my spirit will always protect her.”

“A… Horcrux?”

“A Horcrux? What is this for?” Charle asked Vaati, viewing the page in his journal.

“It is a very curious brand of dark magic. A mage is able to split their own soul in half, and seal it inside an object. I have a necklace drawn here as an example, but a Horcrux can be anything. It can even be a person.”

“Why would anyone want to split their soul? It sounds painful.”

“Yes, but through doing so, the wizard becomes immortal. Of course, there are side-effects. The object in question becomes bound to the mage, and possesses his dark energy. I actually discovered how to successfully make one, if you-”

“No thank you. The idea of cutting your soul makes my spine tingle.”

Charle remembered seeing such a thing in Vaati’s journal. “Her… You… You monster.” The Nimbi was ready to murder. “You MONSTER!” Charle sent kick after kick at his back, but all went through like empty air. “How could you DO this to our daughter?! Have you no SHAME?!”

“What shame is there… in giving my daughter incredible power? You want her to live long and happy, don’t you?” Vaati turned to face her. Charle gasped at his grotesque visage; while his left half was mostly normal, the right of his face was gray and lifeless, and his pale right eye floated about like a rubber ball in a fish tank.

“V-Vaati. …”

Curious, the man felt his face. “Oh, my… Yes, that can sometimes happen with Horcruxes. Should be nothing a little magic can’t fix. But with the transfer of my soul to her body, her natural abilities should be drastically enhanced. Aside from airbending, I have confirmed the magic in her blood. I am so eager to see how she uses it. Why don’t we take her outside and see?”

“Vaati!” The mage took the child and flew, Charle giving chase. Outside on Midway Peak’s balcony, Vaati raised the baby overhead. When Charle made it out, she felt a powerful wind fall over the area. The curtained tables and chairs were blowing.

“I see…” Vaati smirked. “Her magic mixed with Air Chi and my soul has made her a tad unstable. This side-effect is sure to lessen as she gets older and gains more control. But I doubt her caretakers will agree. In time, they will show resent, forcing Wendy to run away. She will gain true freedom and experience, running across the earth, ALONE.”

“Vaati, you GIVE her back right now!” Charle demanded. “Are your crackpot theories about freedom and parallel universes SO important that you would curse our precious angel and let her
grow up ALONE?!”

“Not alone, my soul will be with her! And I’ll have a couple friends watch over her, too! But she cannot go with guidance; not until the right time. 11 years from today, when she’s officially at the age to learn magic, after she has learned to survive without parents or guardians… her training can begin.”

“GIVE HER BACK!” Charle flew up, swiped Wendy in her arms, and flew quickly.

“CHARLE!” Vaati chased the Nimbi with greater speed, whipped in front of her, and grabbed the baby.

“VAATI, LET HER GO! I’M NOT LETTING YOU DO THIS TO HER!”

“Our world is DOOMED, Charle! I plan to save it!” Vaati struggled to pull the child away. “I want Wendy to help me, but she has to grow up THIS way! Together, we will destroy the World Leaders, and rid this planet of borders and boundaries, including dimensional boundaries! I will take Wendy to the New World, and with our powers, WE WILL LINK ALL DIMENSIONS TOGETHER!”

“YOU’RE INSANE! Give her BACK to me! Give back. . .LET GO!!” Vaati yanked Wendy away and flew off. Charle chased after him, a passionate, desperate fire in her brown eyes. Vaati looked back; for a Nimbi with no airbending, she was uncannily fast. She wouldn’t stop until her baby was in her arms. Vaati couldn’t let her get in the way, so on a quick impulse, he whipped out his wand and flicked it at her-

“SECTUMSEMPRA!” (End song.)

A whipping flash of white light whooshed across Charle’s face and chest. Gushes of blood flew out. The Nimbi lost the fire in her eyes and collapsed onto a cloud. Vaati stared at her with horror in his left eye. She achingly outreached an arm to her child. Wendy was so close… yet so very far away. Vaati knew the spell to heal these wounds… but his plans for Wendy were convolutedly planned in his head, and Charle couldn’t get in the way. He closed his eyes and performed a series of complex waves with his wand. “Resurrección.”

Charle’s particles scattered into the air. Her blood had soaked the cloud, but it would fade before long. Vaati flew away to carry out his objective. A faint white energy existed where Charle last lay.

**Dr. Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium**

“Whoa, Vaati, Vaati, Vaati…” Facilier raised both hands and gestured a ‘stop’. “This is all a bit much to ask of me. I mean, wouldn’t you rather raise her yourself?"

“Even if I establish no rules, Wendy must not feel burdened to obey her parent.” Vaati stated, the baby still bundled in his arms. His head was wrapped with black cloth, exposing mainly the left half. Annie stood behind him. “I instruct you and my cohorts to watch her, but do not interact. I will place her in the orphanage where Jeremiah works, but he will receive the same instructions. I will let you know when she comes of age.” Vaati turned to head out the door.

“Vaati, Vaati.” Facilier put a hand on his shoulder. “You’re my homeboy, and I know y’all want to save the world, but I must ask ya to reconsider. She’s yo’ girl! And you want her to grow up alone? Please keep her, or at least let Annie raise her, so she can grow up with all the others.”
“No, Harvey… I truly believe this is the right course for my daughter. And I know…” He looked down at Wendy’s adorable sleeping face, “that she will be of use to me… someday…”

Facilier sighed solemnly, but had no other comment. Vaati and Annie left the shop, standing in the pitch-black alleyway under the windy night. “Which reminds me… I’d prefer to keep the matter of Charle a secret from her. When the time comes, you will pretend to be Wendy’s mother.”

“I… Me?” Annie asked with a somber look.

“As delightful as Charle was, you would make an excellent mother figure. My love is still for you, Annie. Won’t you?”

“… Y-…yes.” Annie nodded. “I’ll do whatever you think is right… Lord Vaati.”

Present time

Miyuki ended the vision and released their hands. Wendy was completely speechless. Her expression was matched by Carla’s, who had been touching Miyuki’s leg.

Miyuki stepped away from the three. Facilier and Melody didn’t know what they saw, but it looked traumatizing. Wendy turned, bowing her head as she played it in her head again. Carla glared at Vaati. “You knew who I was all along… didn’t you?”

No response.

“I am… I am Wendy’s real mother… aren’t I?”

“… I never wanted to kill you, Charle.” Vaati spoke. “I thought if you could be reborn… you could learn to see things my way. That’s why I destroyed your original body with Resurrección so you would be reborn as a cat. Wendy…” His daughter was still turned. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you you were a Horcrux. I planned to eventually. But I did it so I would always be with you. I did it because I loved you! And then you would always know… you were never alone.”

Wendy faced him. The child calmly approached her father, to Carla’s shock and horror. Vaati smiled and held his hand open. …Wendy kicked her father in the crotch. “Oof!” Even his Logia didn’t protect.

“I could forgive you for leaving me all alone… I could understand why you made me a Horcrux. But you lied to me, Father. How can I trust what you say?”

“If you knew the truth, you would have a harder time understanding.”

“Understanding what?!” Wendy cried tears. “That I’m a tool to you?! Living proof that Dimensional Fusion is real?! How do I know you haven’t been controlling my thoughts?! How do I know your soul isn’t eating away at mine?!”

“I’ve been protecting you all this time! I kept you from killing yourself! I made you stronger! I know that I’ve done dark things, but you were more important to me than anything!”

“THEN YOU SHOULD’VE KEPT ME!” Wendy pushed him. “You lied to me about my mom!” Sniffle. “And because of you… so many of my friends were hurt.”

“The incidents with June and Chelia were not my fault!” Vaati argued. “June was bound to her city against her own will, Chelia was captured by a World Leader… If we lived in a free universe, none of those things would happen. That’s what I’m planning to stop, Wendy, I want to save them much
like you do! I want to make the New World with you… Don’t you understand?”

“…” Wendy calmed. “Do you know where the World Leaders are holding Chelia?”

Vaati raised a brow, pondering her intentions. “If Chelia possessed God Chi… I surmise she is somewhere on Mariejoa.”

“…Then good-bye, Father.” Wendy picked Carla up and joined Dr. Facilier.

“You aren’t going to Mariejoa now, are you?”

“Not by myself. I would like to join… the Kids Next Door.” She faced Melody and Miyuki. “Would you, perhaps, be acquainted with them?”

“Y-Yeah…” Melody said awkwardly. “We can take ya to Moonbase and meet Cheren…”

“That would be great!” Wendy grinned. “Dr. Facilier, let’s go home, please.”

“Of course, Wendy…” The doctor spared a repentant look at Vaati before Apparating the group.

“Ahem.” Vaati and Annie turned to Itaav and Ydnew in the doorway. “I don’t know what that was about… but I think it’s clear who the bad father is.”


“I will still fight the World Government with you, Vaati… but I will have my eye on you.”

**Climbers House**

Upon returning to the basement, Melody and Miyuki agreed to give them some alone time, going upstairs for refreshments. Wendy and Carla looked at each other in a different way. At first, they had just been a magical girl and her talking pet. In truth, they were mother and child. Carla bowed her head in shame. “I’m sorry I couldn’t protect you. Even now, I… can’t remember a thing about my past. I can’t remember… how much I adored you back then.”

Wendy picked Carla up and hugged her. “Mom… I’m really sorry for all the trouble I caused you. None of this would’ve happened… if I was never born.”

“Don’t ever say that, Child.” Carla hugged her. “I don’t think I was ever more happy… than when you appeared in my life. And I’m so proud of you… for living and making it this far. I’m glad I got to see you… become a strong young woman.”

There was a knock on the portal-door. They watched as Facilier went to answer it. When Harvey peeked through the eyehole, he saw a familiar brown-haired girl. “Samantha!” He let her in. “I know the shop looks a little different, but…” He noticed the distraught expression on the girl. “You look a little pale… You sleeping okay?”

“Dr. Facilier… did you see the sky two days ago?”

Facilier frowned. “I did… I guess it was real after all.”

“W-What’s gonna happen? My brother’s panicking—all my classmates are afraid—and I’m afraid, I couldn’t sleep for two days, and I was afraid to come HERE because…”

“Because what?” Facilier whispered, trying to sound consoling.
“Because I…I was afraid to know what’s gonna happen. But, I just want to know now… are we going to be okay?”

“Alright then, sit down. I’ll settle this.” Harvey’s assuring smile eased her worries. Samantha sat at the table while the doctor got his crystal ball. Both put their hands over the ball. Wendy and Carla anticipated his response. “I…I can’t see nothin’.”

“Nothing?!” Samantha almost broke into tears.

“Nothin’ but the Kids Next Door… doin’ what they do best.” The doctor smiled. “And that’s give people hope. Samantha… as long as we have them, we don’t have to worry. I know they gonna protect us.”

“Are…Are you sure?”

“Yes. Because the Kids Next Door… are hope. Nothing can defeat them.”

Samantha smiled. “In that case… I want to join them.” She stood up. “I want to give people hope, too. …” She noticed Wendy standing near the couch. “Hey, I recognize you… You’re the girl in the wanted posters.”

“Um…” Wendy was nervous.

“Are you in the Kids Next Door, too?” Sam asked as she approached. “A lot of other operatives have wanted posters like you do. Can you help me get in?”

“Yo, we just got a call from Moonbase.” Melody called as she and Miyuki returned. “You wanna go up or what?”

Wendy spared a look with Samantha and smiled with enthusiasm. “Yes! We’re ready!”

Fairy World

“Yes… I’d say that she is.” Princess Mavis smiled.

In the original Fairy Tail, I always pictured Wendy and Carla having a mother/daughter relationship… and their friendship always touched me to that point. I just didn’t feel right leaving them out of the main Gameverse. Anyway, I’m sad to report the next Side Stories chapter may be the last. Next time, we will conclude the Negaverse story and find the final Darkness.

…

“One day, this month, you are going to die. Maybe it’s by the Apocalypse, maybe you’re killed trying to stop the Apocalypse. My question for you is… how would you like to go out.”

Those were the words Miyuki told Cheren. And now, as they fly to Moonbase, Miyuki felt it greater than ever. She didn’t know how, she didn’t know why… but the death of their beloved Supreme Leader was approaching.
Chapter Summary

Cheren, Nerehc, and their friends break into Underworld Prison to free the Thirteen Darknesses.

This is the last chapter of Side Stories. Get ready, folks.

Chapter B-35: Dead

KND Moonbase

“So, you’re ready?” Cheren said into his phone. “Alright… I’ll meet you there. I just need to collect my group first. See you soon, Kid.” He hung up.

“Is it time?” Panini asked.

“Yeah… we’re going to meet him in the town square.”

“Cheren, Miyuki’s back!” Francis called. “They brought some people with them!”

Cheren exited his office to see Miyuki and Melody approach. They were accompanied by a brown-haired girl and a familiar blue-haired girl. “Wendy!”

“Hello, Cheren!” Wendy greeted happily.

“ANOTHER girlfriend?!” Panini yelled with disapproval.

“You wish! Wendy, who is this girl?”

“Name’s Samantha! I wanted to join the Kids Next Door.”

“So do I!” Wendy followed. “I heard you guys were planning to fight the World Leaders and I wanted to help.”

“Well, by all means, feel free to help. But Arctic Training is kind of suspended at the moment. This Apocalypse business is making everyone go nuts.”

“Oh… I understand. But I’ll do my very best to help out!”

“Ha ha, great!” Cheren grinned. “Anyway, Miyuki, I wanna take you on a mission. We’re going to the Underworld, so we need to get you a Life Ring. Kid said he would have some. Let’s go get Nerehc.”

Miyuki followed him and Panini with worry on her features. The Underworld… is this when it happens? “Cheren, why are we going to the Underworld?”

“We’re going to meet Majora.”

“!” Miyuki gasped. Unable to think of a follow-up question, she followed them at a quicker pace.
“Yeah, I thought you would.” Cheren smirked.

“I guess I’m gonna have to wait to join, huh?” Wendy asked her mother.

“Perhaps this is good. We need to find a way to rid you of your Horcrux curse.” Carla replied.

“I agree… but I have to admit, it has made me stronger.” Wendy stared at her hand. “It could be useful… but it feels wrong using my dad’s power. …Well, let’s go talk to some people!” she said happily. “You never know which ones we’ll be seeing every day!”

Underworld Prison

A centaur-driven chariot pulled up to the gates of Underworld Prison. The prison was surrounded by a great stone wall and the only entrance was through sapphire flame gates. The chariot parked by the gate guard, a Fatblin in black armor. “Halt. This is a restricted area. What business have you?”

“I’m the Grim Reaper’s son, you disproportioned mess of a mountain.” Death the Kid, the chariot’s passenger, stated aggressively. “I demand you let me in. I’m here to see a certain prisoner.”

“Hurrrr…” The Fatblin looked at a list of approved people: below Grim Reaper and Velma Green, Kid’s name was listed. “Okay. But I need to do a disguise test. Step out of the cart, Mr. Reaper.”

Kid climbed out of the chariot. The Fatblin raised a bucket of magic water and poured it over him. Kid was infuriated by the soaking, but nothing else happened. “Okay… In you go.” The Fatblin clapped and disabled the flames.

“Thank you.” Kid passed and headed for the entrance to the small, two-floor building. Inside was the giant desk belonging to the prison’s new warden, Magellan, a huge bat demon in a black coat and horns.

“Hmm?” Magellan looked down and saw Kid. “Your Majesty. Welcome back. Is there any word regarding the Blackbeard matter?”

“We’re closing in on the case.” Kid answered. “As a matter of fact, I’m here to visit a certain prisoner: Dimentio Z. Winkiebottom.”

“Dimentio? Mmmm, okay.” Magellan grabbed a ring of keys. “Follow me, Kid.” The demon unlocked an elevator and crouched to squeeze inside. Kid was forced to stay against the wall, but he detested the asymmetry. The elevator closed and began to move down to Hell 1.

“Uoh.” There was a squeak when the lift bumped.

“What was that?” Magellan asked.

“Me.” Kid blushed. “I have… high-pitched squeals.”

The elevator stopped and allowed them to disembark. Hell 1 of Underworld Prison was Prickly Pine Hell, where prisoners were forced to walk barefoot on a floor of blood-red pine needles. (Red from the blood of sinners, of course.) “Mm-! Mm. Mm-! Mm.”

“Are you okay, Kid?” Magellan asked, hearing the squeaky sounds.

“I have a bad gulping habit and it sounds like my squeals.” Kid blushed, annoyed by his friend’s
lack of subtlety. This is what you get for not wearing shoes, Ellen.

Magellan stopped beside a cell, prompting Kid to view into it. “Dimentio…?”

The Zathurian with the jester’s uniform smiled from the back of the cell. “And so a visitor greets me like an old grandpa, dying in the hospital. To what do I owe this surprise?”

“Dimentio… my father still can’t figure out the mystery behind your extended lifespan. By any chance… are you acquainted with Lord English?”

“Is my secret out? Aha ha ha… yes. I met Lord English eons ago when I fell into a Vortex of No Return. He spoke to me as a Shimmer and granted me eternal life. After that… I found a strange stone pyramid and found myself able to read its foreign text. It said… ‘My name is English. You are the first of my Thirteen Servants. Allow me to feed you my knowledge.’ And before I knew it… I was the instigator of the Twenty Keys Prophecy. I was the one who would initiate the threat of the Apocalypse and force the prophecy to transpire.”

Kid gasped in horror. “So that business in the Netherverse—with destroying the universe’s matter… it was all part of your plan!”

“Yes!” Dimentio cheered giddily. “By tampering with the Nexus, I have weakened it! At the end of this month, it will be destroyed…”

“Grr…” Kid grit his teeth. “Then… we have to go to the New World. Sigh… Many thanks for your cooperation. Magellan, there are other prisoners I want to see. By my understanding, they’re on the 6th floor.”

“Oh, I can’t allow that, Your Highness. Hell 6 is too dangerous. The inmates down there have extremely high levels of chi and power.”

“This man also possessed incredible power. Why is he on Level 1?”

“Well, he has no power in spirit form. Besides… your father requested he be in this very cell. It was his sister’s former cell.”

“Interesting. Well, if I can’t go any lower, you can show me to the exit. Let’s leave.”

Magellan proceeded to walk him back. When they were out of sight, Ellen Wickens took off the Invisibility Cloak she “borrowed” from Grim. “Ouch, ouch!” She tingled from the prickly pines under her feet. “Climb down, quickly, watch the needles!”

A shrunken Cheren, Nerehc, Panini, Miyuki, Sipa, and Bon Clay climbed down Ellen’s legs before Sipa used magic to grow them all to normal size. “Oh! A jailbreak, is it?” Dimentio cocked a brow.

“Here’s the map Kid lent me.” Ellen unraveled a paper. “A hole connects to the 2nd floor, that way. Someone carry me!”

“I’ll carry ya, baby!” Bon Clay lifted her over his shoulders. “My, what trim, boney legs.” He softly rubbed Ellen’s half-skeletal legs. “Don’t worry, Cherry Cakes, I still enjoyed our time under her robe.” ;D

“Why did you bring him again?” Sipa asked.

“I thought his love could liven the dark of the Underworld?” Cheren shrugged.
“We’re to be at Level 6 in 30 minutes.” Miyuki reported. “Let’s get moving.”

Death the Kid watched as Magellan opened the elevator. The prince crossed both arms, clutching the guns on his belt. “Magellan…” The warden turned to him. “Open wide!” He whipped the pistols up and blasted rounds of spicy hellbeans into Magellan’s mouth, an easy task since his mouth was forced open in shock. When enough beans were in, Kid hopped on his skateboard, surfed up Magellan’s body, then stomped him in the face to push him in the elevator.

“I know you have constipation issues.” Kid said as the demon was too weak to climb out. The elevator closed on him. “Hurry to the bathroom or there’ll be a new floor of this prison. Now to get to the 6th floor.” He hopped on his skateboard and surfed across the prickly ground. (Play “Deep Into the Shadows” from Paper Mario: TTYD!)

Stage B-30: Underworld Prison

Mission: Find Majora and the Thirteen Darknesses.

Act 1: Hell's Floors

Cheren climbed onto a safe pathway above the needles, but alarms went off in the dungeon as Bulblin charged from around a corner. The darkness of the Underworld made them faster and sharper than overworld Bulblin, so Miyuki used timebending to Stop their arrows while Cheren froze the ground with Ice Arrow. Bon Clay slid along the ice and kicked the demons off their feet with his swan slippers. “Wah wah wah!” The okama almost slid off a ledge over a pit of giant needles, his top half completely bent over as he flailed his arms.

“Don’t fall here.” Nerehc pulled him back up as the path turned left, reaching a dead end over the pit. Nerehc used rockets to fly over- “AAAAH!” His flames suddenly extinguished, but Cheren caught him with the Hookshot before he fell.

“Take your own advice.”

“It’s one of the prison’s new defenses.” Death the Kid skated up. “It filters Dark and Fire Chi. The Underworld’s favorite natural elements.”

“Ya couldn’t have told us that?” Panini inquired.

“Just don’t use it too close to those vents.” He pointed at a duct above the pit.

“Say, that can be useful!” Bon Clay jumped off and kicked his slippers’ swans to stretch up and wrap around the duct. “Grab on, fellas!” He swung to and fro, so one at a time, the kids grabbed his hands and swooped over the pit, jumping off on the other side before Clay detached himself and joined them. When the path turned right, they saw a Bulblin riding a Goliath – a black Hollow mammoth with tusks. The Bulblin spotted them and commanded the mammoth to charge forth, so Ellen went into Hollowfication and pushed the beast back with a burst of black magic.

“This type of Hollow is hard to defeat with sheer force.” Kid said. “Ellen, push him under that stalactite! Cheren, climb those twin pillars and blow it off with a M.A.R.B.L.E.” The stalactite in question was a giant red needle hanging on the ceiling. Cheren Wall Jumped the indicated pillars against the wall, reaching a platform from which he could shoot a mini explosive at the needle’s base. It dropped and stabbed the Goliath along with the Bulblin, and the needle fell into the pit.

They progressed along the path and reached a field of needles, in which a certain line of needles
would briefly fall down and stand up. When they were down, they looked like a square platform was whisking across the field. Only Nerehc was fast enough to stay within the square and run along with it, doing so with excellent timing before reaching the other side. He stepped on a switch that made all the needles flat so his team could get across.

They were now on a wide, rectangular floor with four square holes in-between. A Blue Bubble, Green Bubble, Red Bubble, and Ice Bubble jumped out of the respective holes (they were winged skulls in colored flames). The distant wall over the chasm had a red Eye Switch, so Cheren shot an arrow through the Red Bubble’s flame and activated it. An ice Eye Switch was on the ceiling, so Cheren lined it up with the Ice Bubble and shot it. The green switch was on the wall next to the entrance of this area, and the blue switch was down in the Blue Bubble’s very hole.

With the four switches hit, a stairwell appeared, leading down a hallway to the second hell. Kid surfed on his skateboard during descent. They arrived at the second floor, seeing dementors hovering around the ceiling. Sensing the kids’ arrival, they swooped down to dine on some souls. “Expecto Patronum!” Ellen materialized a silvery light cat from her hands, scaring the dementors.

“This is Fantastic Beast Hell.” Kid said. “Where the fierce, fantastic creatures roam. Ah, including my half-species.” They looked right as giant Skulltulas crept up hurriedly. Sipa cast shrink spells on the spiders as they charged forward and squashed them without concern.

“HIIIIS…” A hissing language echoed in their ears, coming from around a corner of cells, the same way the spiders ran from.

“TURN AROUND!” cried Kid, gesturing to do so quickly. “It’s the basilisk! One look in its eyes will kill you!”

“What if I made it look at itself?” Cheren asked, slapping the Mirror Shield on his back.

“If it were THAT easy, Harry Potter would’ve been a lot shorter, JUST RUN!” Panini sprinted forward and her friends followed. They turned down a right path and encountered Elite Wizzerds, floating white, ovular machines with antennas and four floating hands. The Wizzerds quickly surrounded the kids and began rapidly tickling them with their fast, floating hands.

“UAAAHAH HAHAHAHAHA!” Bon Clay was naturally more susceptible to the attack. “PLEASE, fellas, one at a time, hahaha!”

“Hahahaha, does tickling even work on anyone down—ha ha ha ha!” Cheren laughed.

“Miyuki’s—the only one—who’s not affected.” Sipa spoke through chuckles. “Do something—haha.”

Indeed, Miyuki was frozen in place, her body twitching as she struggled to hold it in. “HWAH HAHAHAHAHA!” She burst into tears and laughter.

“I’m so proud of you.” Cheren remarked, still in laughter.

“WIZZERDS, where are you?” a voice called. “We need you to clean the bat cage.” Their antennas sparked, and they left the group alone.

“The basilisk is still behind us!” Kid hopped on his skateboard and rode down a different path. “You keep running, I’ll take care of it!”

Kid found the basilisk’s tail and hopped on, skating to the head across the back. The basilisk felt an irritation and turned its head—Kid shut his eyes and leapt above with a flip, shooting both guns
directly down to damage the eyes. He stopped to study his results: the basilisk furiously shook its head to the goop splattered over its eyes. I’ve blinded the basilisk temporarily, but it can still hear. Time to give it a distraction. He played a song on his skull phone and set it to fly away with bat wings. The basilisk hissed and gave chase, while Kid ran to find his team.

Ellen’s Patronus kept the dementors at bay, but three Gigabites (flying white munching skulls) flew overhead and swooped down in attempt to bite them. Cheren and Nerehc did little damage with their swords and Sipa’s Reducto spells couldn’t break its skull. “Gigabites have high defense.” Ellen noted. “They’re very annoying, too.”

“Not as annoying as ME!” Panini burst into emerald flames and rocketed up, bouncing between the Gigabites like a comet until they dropped on the floor in defeat. Panini landed and cooled down as their venture continued.

“A lot of these cells are pretty empty.” Miyuki noticed. “Did they all get eaten by the beasts?”

They arrived at an open area and froze at the sight. “Uh… I think we found them.” Cheren said.

“PLACE YOUR BETS!” Tallest Red declared while Purple chewed on blood-filled donuts. The Tallests were skinny and shriveled from dryness. They stood on a short platform and hosted the event. “Place your bets! One Goliath vs. a baby Big-Mouth Hippo!” The prisoners were roaring and waving as the giant Hollow elephant was pitted against a tiny hippo in the ring.

The elephant bellowed and stormed toward the hippo, intent on crushing its molecules. The hippo opened its mouth extremely wide and “GULPED” the entire elephant. “YAAAAAAAH!” Some prisoners cheered having won their bet, others were angry.

“What’s going on over here?!” Death the Kid caught up. “WHO FREED ALL YOU PRISONERS?!”

“Hey, look Red!” Purple pointed. “Some kids are here!”

“Welcome to Fantastic Beast Brawl!” Red waved. “Fine-quality free prison entertainment! (Admission is 10 Mon.)”

“Hey, those are the Almighty Tallests!” Cheren recognized.

“Well, whaddya know, they’re fans! We reprogrammed the Wizzerds, in case you’re wondering. They can even project artificial Patronuses to scare the dementors!”

“Do you mind if we can squeeze through?” Ellen asked, trying to get past two skeletons.

“Eh?” One of those skeletons appeared to be an old man with a hearing phone. “’EY!” the man yelled at Ellen hoarsely. “It’s you! I recognize you, Crystal Wick…Wicka… er, was it a soup or something?”

“You mean Wickens?”

“I KNEW IT! Well, I’ll get you this time!” The man raised his bone cane. “Feel the elderly wrath of Jonah Icarus!”

“GUYS, MAGELLAN’S COMING!” A small skeleton scampered by. “QUICK, BACK TO YOUR CELLS!”

“KIIIIIID?!?” The giant bat demon quaked the prison as he stormed forward in a rage. “WHERE
ARE YOOOOUUUU?!

The prisoners screamed and scrambled everywhere. “Time to go, Purple!” The Tallests jumped on a Thrino (a giant three-horned rhino).

“Take us with you!” Cheren jumped off the platform and on the beast’s back, which had room for the others.

“Find your own monster rhino!” Purple shouted.

“I’ll persuade my father to send royal snacks down here.” Kid reasoned.

“All aboard!” Red announced, convinced. The Thrino charged down the wide corridor, kicking down Bulblins riding Bullbos. “Mind if we ask what you kids are doing?”

“We’re going to break some people out of the 6th floor.” Sipa answered.

“The 6th floor? We snuck down there once before. I got a bad vibe from those guys.”

“They liked snacks, though!” Purple said happily.

“ROOH!” The Thrino suddenly stopped as two pairs of sharp teeth sprouted up in front and back on the floor, in rectangular alignment.

“It’s a giant Snaptrap!” Kid yelled. “Quick, jump!” They leapt off the front as the Thrino was devoured whole by the beast.

“OUT OF MY WAY!” Magellan threw purple acid on the Snaptrap.

“PLEASURE HELPING!” The Tallests sprinted into a cell.

“We have to hide!” Sipa yelled. “Reducio!” She zapped them down to small size except Ellen, who picked them up and backed against a wall to hide in the Invisible Cloak.

Magellan was accompanied by two dementors as he sniffed the area. His eyes directed at the space where the kids were hidden. “Do you two sense anything?” The dementors slowly floated down.

The tiny Sipa slightly peeped out of the cloak and cast, “Expecto Patronum!” A crumb-size beetle soared out. Despite its size, the dementors were frightened, so they glided back down the hall.

“That way, huh?” Magellan assumed. “What is Kid up to, anyway?” Magellan stomped after them.

When he was out of sight, Ellen took off the cloak and Sipa restored the team. “Heh-hey, pretty clever!” Red praised. “Tell ya what, we’ll give you a hint: there’s a secret hole in our cell that leads down to the 3rd level. We programmed the Wizzerds to dig it for us.”

“We’ll take it.” Kid agreed. “It’s too risky to take the stairs that way.” The team entered the cell and one-at-a-time climbed down the hole in the corner. Sipa used Lumos to provide a light, but this became irrelevant by the time they were at the bottom. “Sigh…sigh…” Kid squinted his eyes from the scorching brightness. The humans were already sweating. “Welcome to Hell 3: Scorching Hot Hell.”

This floor was designed like a desert, where bones lay dead in the sand, which according to Kid is actually the ashes of skeletons. Not far in, a giant scorpion emerged from the sand. Bon Clay Jr. leapt forward and swiftly dodged its poisonous sting. “Lucky for you, I’m quite adapted to hot areas!” Clay smirked. He danced toward a more solid space, causing the scorpion’s stinger to be
stuck when it stabbed down. Cheren charged a Skyward Strike to chop the tail in two. The beast cried before falling dead.

An army of Stalkin emerged from the sand, 3-inch tall skeletons with spears. Cheren and Nerehc swiped their swords along the ground to destroy them. “Be careful. Stalkin lurk within quicksand.” Kid cautioned. “There’s a switch somewhere that can turn it off.”

“There’s a lot of vents.” Nerehc noticed the ducts standing in the open sand ground. “I can’t fly across.”

“I guess it’s up to me.” Bon Clay spun on his slippery slippers and skated over the sand with grace. Staltroops emerged to block him, so Clay maneuvered around, sliding right, then left, slightly right, and swerved around a cell before hopping up some stairs onto the cell’s roof. Clay stretched his slippers to swing a ceiling duct to an L-shaped line of cells. Kargaroks flew up to peck him, but Clay kicked them out of the air.

The okama whipped his slippers around a high point of some twin ducts and used them to slingshot up to a fenced platform. A Moblin whipped its spear at Clay, who nimbly flipped and whipped the two demons in the face. Clay spotted a lever labeled Quicksand and flipped it down. “FELLAS, is it safe?”

Cheren ran forward. “Yeah Clay, we can move on!” Clay kicked the Moblin off the platform and rejoined his team. In the center of the room, Count Dracula was chained to a table above a garlic circle, forced to dry under the artificial sun.

“Kiiiiid?” The elevator opened as they heard Magellan’s voice. “Are you down here?”

“This is taking forever!” Panini complained. “Does the elevator go down to the bottom floor? Let’s take it and get this over with!”

“Perhaps you’re right. Let’s get under Ellen’s cloak.” Kid complied. Sipa shrunk the group once more, and Ellen carried them under the Invisible Cloak. Magellan came around the right of a wall of cells, so Ellen hurried around the opposite side. She sprinted into the elevator before it closed. The witch clicked the ‘Hell 6’ button and remained hidden during the descent. They stopped on the Forgotten Hell and resized as they disembarked. (End song.)

Most of the cells on this dark floor were gigantic, filled with what appeared to be giant humans with ravenous, grinning expressions, reaching for the little prey in hunger. “PUT SOME CLOTHES ON!” Panini shouted at them.

“I don’t think yelling at them is the best idea.” Miyuki said.

“Kid, why is this the Forgotten Hell, anyway?” Cheren asked.

“Because this floor is filled with people that history would like to forget. The prisoners here were extremely powerful, and their connection with the Dark Side makes them very influential.”

“That’s what they want you to believe.” a feminine voice said.

The group turned left. “Viridi?” Cheren recognized the childlike goddess in the cell.

“So, you’ve come to see me.” Viridi said with a quirky smirk. “Or did your pitiful species realize that the world was doomed without me and you’ve come to free me?”

“If only you were important enough.” Cheren remarked. “We’re looking for the Thirteen
“Oh, are you?” a man’s voice said. It came from a cell further down the passage. It was occupied by a brown-haired man wrapped to a chair like a mummy.

“Sōsuke Aizen.” Kid spoke.

“He’s one of them, isn’t he?” Cheren recalled.

“So, the prophecy was true after all.” Aizen figured. “I was almost afraid everyone had forgotten me… but that was foolish.”

“How could they forget us?” The kids looked up at a larger cell on the wall behind Aizen’s. Inside was a purple giant in black and gold armor, the stub of his left arm completely chained.

“And you’re Thanos.” Kid glared.

“And you must be servants of Medusa.” Thanos smirked. “What adorable subjects she has at her disposal. If you release me first, I will happily make you my children.”

“Will we rule the galaxy as father and children?” Sipa joked.

“Thanos will rule all. And if you are obedient, Thanos will allow you to live.”

“Well, if he isn’t Father of the Year.” Cheren shrugged sarcastically. “We’re looking for a prisoner with gray skin and orange horns.”

“That fellow is further down.” Aizen nudged. “Is he one of the Chosen Ones?”

“Isn’t everybody?” Cheren led his group down, ignoring the giants’ moans as they studied the cells. One of them was designed like a classroom, as Czar Baldy Bald III was trapped in eternal remedial English.

“MAAAAAAAA!” A red-eyed, round giant drooled at the sight of the kids with a wide mouth of giant, venomous teeth. “PANINI!!! You’ve RETURNED to meeeee! Get in my MOOOOUUUUUTH!”

“Suck a Great White Asparagus, Big Mum!” Panini shot back.

“Are these all her relatives or something?” Cheren asked.

“No.” Kid answered. “These monsters are-

“I see him!” Ellen peeked into a dark cell. “Alohomora.” She cast a spell and unlocked the cell door. She and Kid stood watch while the humans entered.

The prisoner was in the dark of the back of the cell. Cheren raised his sword as the glow from it highlighted his form. The prisoner’s black clothes and gray skin (except for his purple cape and orange horns) helped him blend in with the darkness. “Zanifr…”

The troll heard his name and opened his red and green eyes. They reflected the glow of Cheren’s sword. “Cheren… Just when I was wondering who’d they send to execute MMe.”

“Majora!” Miyuki exclaimed. “It’s… really you.”

Zanifr’s eyes widened, highlighting slight emotion on his features. “MMiyuki… Are you angry with MMe for what I did?”
“I’m different from how I felt back then. But I think I… still understand your plight.”

“Catch up on your romance later.” Cheren stated. “Majora, the reason I came here is because a Zoni named Vriska told me you could help.”

“Vriska sent you?”

“Wait, I remember Vriska.” Miyuki mentioned. “She was the Zoni who put us to sleep on Moonbase. I never understood what that was about.”

“The purpose of that slumber was to allow MMe to achieve God Tier.” Zanifr explained.

“You mentioned that before.” Cheren remembered. “What is God Tier?”

“In MMy universe, God Tier was the original Fury MMode. Element benders like MMyself could achieve this by developing our skills. But it is far MMore powerful than your Fury MMode.”

“Seriously, stop with the M’s, we’re in a hurry.”

“It’s a habit. The reason for its power is due to Arceus’s disregard for a proper Balance, as you MMay know by now. Or should I say, it is a result of the struggle between Caliborn and Calliope. One who is able to achieve God Tier can inherit formidable chi.”

“And this chi is on par with Lord English?”

“Hmm hmm hmm. Do not be silly.” Zanifr laughed tonelessly. “If Lord English is reborn, God Tier alone is nothing. However, perhaps it would be a power to MMatch the Octogan.”

Cheren gasped. “So that means... you can defeat Andrew. The King who’s using the Octogan.”

“Unfortunately, I don’t believe I could. My element is darkness. The King of your World uses the Octogan to steal pure, holy energy. However, I believe one of similar powers could stand against him, if they possessed God Tier. I am speaking of you...”

“M-Me? But how could I use God Tier?”

“After you defeated me, Vriska curiously conducted research on you. Your great-grandmother, Shadow Queen MMalevolent, was a denizen of the First Dimension, the Black Queen of the Carapacian race, and all of her descendants inherited her blood, including you. Cheren, on your journey to destroy me, do you recall how the Zoni transported you to the Dream World?”

“Yes?”

“In truth, it was not your dreamself in the Dream World: the Zoni were taking your dreamself to regions in the First Dimension. There were places in that world where Quest Beds lay, and if a person’s dreamself had a symbol that matched the Quest Bed, that person could attain God Tier by sleeping on it. When Vriska recorded the symbol on your shirt, she searched for a Quest Bed with a similar symbol. She found one. So, MMy theory is, since your blood comes from the First Dimension, it is possible for you to achieve God Tier.”

“God Tier… but what are the side-effects?”

“On someone like you, I do not know. It MMay not even work.”

“Well, this has been a waste of time.” Panini remarked. “Let’s save the Darknesses and get out of here.”
“Hold on.” Cheren said. “What if… it did work?”

“Hmmm… Power beyond your wildest dreams. The kind of power that could protect people, save lives, defeat ultimate evil… I assume you relish in that kind.”

“You aren’t actually considering it, are ya, Cheren?” Panini questioned. “All this just to defeat King Andrew?”

“Why not? You were just mocking the fact I was no match for him. I already lost the Fierce Deity Mask and—”

“You lost the Fierce Deity Mask?” Zanifr cocked a brow. “Hmmm… Perhaps this is the best option.”

“Why can’t Mr. King battle Andrew?” Panini asked.

“Because Mr. King needs to save his strength for Ragaj. If Ragaj is planning to use an Octogan, Jagar needs one, too. If God Tier can really help me beat Andrew…”

“We can fight Andrew together!” Panini reasoned. “All your operatives—heck, the Firstborn can fight him!”

“I’m not risking anyone’s lives against that monster! Panini, I HAVE to do this! In case… In case there’s a worst case scenario.”

“But ya don’t even know what it’ll do to ya!”

“It’d make me heck of a lot stronger than you.” Cheren smirked. “Is that what you’re afraid of?”

“N-…” Panini blushed. “No, of course not!”

“I can call the Zoni to take us to the place where your Quest Bed was found.” Zanifr said. “It is your choice… Will you attempt the God Tier?”

Cheren faced Panini and Miyuki. Panini’s face pled him to say ‘no’… Miyuki looked grim. If his other friends knew, Cheren was sure they would say ‘no.’ Perhaps, for their sake… he shouldn’t.

“I think you should.” Miyuki said. The two gasped.

“Miyuki!” yelled Panini in protest.

“I think… it may be the only chance. You said yourself, Cheren… that everyone must become their strongest if we’re to stop this. This is no longer the Kids Next Door we read about… this is the present. And it will be… the future.”

“You’re really sure?”

“I am…”

“…Okay,” Cheren faced Zanifr seriously. “I’ll do it, Zanifr.”

“Very well. Lie on the bed.”

“Wait!” Panini grabbed Cheren’s shoulders. She was about to do something, but bit her lip.

“Do you… wanna kiss?” Cheren laughed.
“I thought I did, but… Ay dunno, is the setup good enough?”

“I’m about to evolve beyond my mortal form and possibly become an entirely different person for the sake of protecting mankind. That’s more than Chicken Little ever did.”

“Fair enough.” Panini pulled him in for a kiss. Cheren wrapped arms around Panini and embraced it. It lasted about a minute.

“Hurry up!” Kid demanded. “You’re not even lined up properly!”

“Like you ever kissed someone.” Ellen stated.

“OOOHHH my Cherry Boy!” Bon Clay cried. “He’s straight after all! I’m so heartbroken!”

The couple broke apart, smiling and blushing. “I’ll, um… catch you later?”

“I won’t tell the other girls.”

“I won’t, either.” ;) Cheren went to lay on the prison bed. “Well, Zanifr?”

Zanifr snapped his fingers, and three Zoni appeared out of space as though they were waiting. They shocked himself and Cheren, and slumber followed suit. The operatives gathered as Ellen asked, “What are they doing?”

“Something spiritual, most likely.” Sipa said.

“Am I interrupting your slumber party?” The group gasped and whipped around. Medusa towered over the room in her true goddess form, holding baby Chernabog. Thanatos and Pandora floated beside her, along with a familiar black demon that blended with the darkness.

“LUCIFER!” Sipa and Ellen yelled in fright.

“ELLEN! SIPA!” Lucifer beamed. “Two of my loves… This must be fate!”

“This is a little bizarre.” said Medusa. “I planned to have you break into Underworld Prison and follow you in through the chaos… but I didn’t expect you to do it so willingly.”

“ZEEEEE HA HA HA!” laughed Marshall D. Teach, who stood beside Truman Kirman. “This reminds me of a very similar jailbreak from my homeworld! The resemblance is… uncanny.”

“These filthy savages are my fellow Chosen Ones of destiny?” Truman asked. “Delightful.”

“Truman?” Panini recognized him.

“Thank you, Nerehc, for helping us get this far.” Medusa said. “It’s true that the unfortunate souls in this dungeon are the Thirteen. But do you see the humanoid giants inside? Those were all giants transformed into savage beasts thanks to demon experiments. They’re so savage, they even swallowed other demons. For that reason, they were locked down here. I think I’ll take a few with me.”

“I can’t allow that!” Kid raised his guns. “I surmised your only intention was to free the Darknesses. This is overstepping your boundaries, Medusa!”

“I was a rogue goddess from the get-go, everyone knows that. But in 9 days, it won’t even matter. Thanatos, let’s Titan things up.”
Thanatos formed a cloud of Death Chi and sent streams into the kids’ ears, except for Nerehc. “Ahh! I can’t hear!” Sipa yelled.

“What’d you say?! I can’t hear!” Ellen followed.

“Ay’ve gone deaf!” Panini cried.

“Now I’m about to go deaf!” Nerehc was tired of their shouting.

“That was my Deaf Chi.” Thanatos remarked. “Should wear off in an hour. Now, who’s up for a little song?”

Medusa raised Baby Chernabog upward. The child began to sing an eerie, echoing song that rang in Nerehc’s ears. The Titans were going mad in their cells, tugging and thrashing the bars with greater vigor. The more Chernabog sung, the more powerful they became, and soon they tore the hinges off their cells.

“ELLEN, containment protocol!” Kid declared, running to action.

“Kid, let’s contain them!” the deafened witch went Hollow Mode and fought the Titans alongside him.

“AAAHH!” Having heard the song as well, Nerehc was forced into Demon King Mode. “What’s happening?!”

“Chernabog’s Demon Song empowers those who hear it with sheer madness.” Medusa explained. “Especially useful on demons.”

“But we can’t have you over-reacting right now!” Blackbeard grabbed Nerehc, using his Dark-Dark powers to subdue Nerehc’s chi. “Lead the way, Medusa. I can’t hear a thing with this Deaf Chi.”

“Where are you taking me?!” Nerehc struggled, unable to summon fire to free himself.

“Patience, Nerehc.” Medusa led them around the cells toward a cave with a green glow. “Thanatos, Pandora, free the Darknesses and get these Titans under control.”

“Nerehc! Come back here!” Sipa chased them.

Great Clock’s Cyberspace…

Cheren and Zanifr appeared in a strange, dark room. The troll was wearing purple garb that depicted his heart symbol and Cheren wore the golden suit that depicted the “C” with an ‘x’. Cheren glanced down at it. “Is this the symbol you were talking about?”

“Yes. Beyond this realm is a Quest Bed with the same symbol. Beware: this place is a song level. Keep with the rhythm, lest you fall behind.”

“Lead the way, Zanny.” Cheren smirked.

“Hmmm… Still overconfident, I see.” Zanifr returned the smirk. “I MMust admit, I’m impressed that it has lasted this long…”

“Heh… So am I.”

“Hmmm… It would be a shame if it goes to waste. Follow quickly.” Zanifr flew ahead. (Play
Act 2: Glub-a-Glub

“LOOK ALIVE, Starshine. 413 in the sky, but the dogs won’t quit? You’re here with me: Ragaj Gnik. I’ll be your host… your savior… your server player…”

As Cheren ran into the darkness, a deep, echoing voice spoke from afar. Faint green lights flashed within the space, and he could make out Ragaj Gnik’s form. Cheren ran into nothing for 30 seconds before guitar music began to play, and was required to jump small bumps in rhythm with the notes. “Listen up! The future is murderproof! God Tier is secondary! It’s time to keep calm and hide on the veil. Team adorabloodthirsty, make some noise!”

Glub-glubba-glub glubba-glub

As this verse repeated, Cheren jumped a pit, then a pit, another pit, rolled under a gap – he grabbed his sword and sliced a zombie troll, a zombie troll, zombie troll, jumped a pit and sliced one – he Hookshot up to a wall, Hookshot up to the ceiling, then he bounced some flying trolls and – Ground Pound down a hole!

“Slime, gimme slime!” Zanifr sang as Chuchus dripped from the ceiling, forcing Cheren to jump slime pools and slice them, “I don’t eat it,” Cheren spun through a giant Chu, “but I’ll take what you got,” Cheren jumped three Chus on rising platforms, “bake a pie and I’ll keep it.” Cheren sliced a zombie troll at the top.

“Twelve trolls to the wall,” Cheren sang as he briefly ran up a wall, “kill the King, watch him fall,” he kicked off and knocked down a king’s statue, “AND WE CRAWL AND WE CRAWL AND WE CRAWL!” Cheren performed three belly-slides to go under closing doors.

Zanifr followed, “Love, gimme hate,” Cheren hit a Spring Shroom, sliced a Kargarok while flying, “gimme quadrants ’cause we need it,” he briefly stabbed down in front of a window, cut through, and jumped out the other side, “but I’ll take what I want,” Cheren jumped pits and sliced other Kargaroks, “fill your pail and I’ll keep it.” Cheren stepped in a pail, briefly rolled, and kicked it up at a standing board to knock it down and make a bridge.

“In a folder in a card,” Cheren jumped large folder platforms before they closed on him, “put an ‘X’ on the code,” he sliced a XANA copy, “GIMME MORE, I WANT MORE, GIMME MORE!” Recovery Hearts descended over lava pits, signaling where to jump. “GET DOWN AND PLAY THIS WITH ME!” He Hookshoted Zanifr down to force him to run alongside.

The Glub-a-Glubs repeated as Cheren used the sail to glide up a windy shaft. “From Land of Wind and Shade.” Zanifr sang. They then raced up a hill of flowing tea, slowing their progress for a few seconds. “To Little Cubes and Tea.” At the top, they ran for a statue of Bill Cipher. “BILL IS THE ENEMY!” They cut through it together. “He – gave – us – his – affir-mation!” Cheren knocked away mini Bills along the way.

The duo came to a zipline and glided down. “Message to him from me!” They stopped at a cliff, where Cheren shot a Light Arrow at a giant Bill. “Destroy him totally!” They continued the path—a circle of Bills exploded around them. “IT JUST KEEPS HAPPENING!” They fell into a great long pit, Cheren stabbing through Bills and matching the rhythm. “Let – us – face – humi-lation!”

They collided with stable ground as Cheren ran up a stack of Fatblins’ shields. “Let me tell you about the Demon King!” Zanny sung as Cheren jumped over the top Fatblin and grabbed onto him.
“Ugh! Majora, don’t act like royalty!” Cheren kicked down at Bokoblin stacks while Zanifr flew. A large fireball was coming, so Zanny dropped him and flew over. “Don’t forget you are a bad guy,” Cheren bounced off a troll below and grabbed Zanny again, “and such a sad guy,” they repeated the action, “and turned the moon into a creepy guy!” Cheren bounced over two Bills and Ground Stab down a stack of Chus. “YOU’RE A JERK, YOU MASKHEAD!”

The glubs resumed as they raced through a burning region of falling debris. “In this cacophony…” A giant boulder threatened to crush, but they fell through a weak floor through a dark tunnel, “where we can barely see…” They followed the light at the end, and immediately zombie trolls surrounded Cheren. “WE’RE TRYING NOT TO BE,” he spin-attacked them all and ran from falling boulders, “murdered in our civilization!”

Cheren used the sail to float up a wind gust, “Message to him from me!” then sliced down a stack of Bills with a jump attack, “Destroy him totally!” Two Bills closed in, but he spin-attacked sliced them. Four large Bills dropped and failed to stab him. “IT JUST KEEPS HAPPENING! Everyone to battle stations!” All of Cheren’s friends sprouted up by his side.

“And right here… right now…”

The operatives disappeared as Lord English’s likeness appeared in the heavens. “All the way back on the timeline…” Bubbles depicted Dimentia and Dimentio on Zathura, of Crystal Wickens and Figure falling in a sea of clocks. “The little wigglers raise their open, shining eyes…” The bubbles displayed Cheren, Dillon, Sheila, Nebula, Aeincha, and others in their youth, their eyes brimming with aspiration. “Like tiny candles up to Heaven, and all the paraplegics and the blind girls…” Nolan York, Toph Beifong, Aisa, and Goombella’s bubbles lit aflame as their essence flowed toward English’s open hand. “Ask the purple-blood and the crazed hero from a land of wrath and angels,” Zanifr and Zach Murphy were displayed, “who screams out, ‘WHO WILL SAVE US?!’” English clenched them all in his hand. “And the veil opened up…”

The Gate of Time materialized and opened. Cheren rushed in, seeing bubbles of Fanverse, IDA, Legends, Shadow Play, and the Original Worlds as he zoomed down two ziplines. “Everybody wants to make a world! Everybody wants to make a world, but NO ONE!” Cheren stabbed through Bill twice, “NO ONE WANTED TO DIIIIEEE!” He slid down a very steep slope, quickly ducking shutting doors to Zanifr’s rhythm, “I wanna try, wanna try, wanna try, wanna try…”

“I’LL BE YOUR SAVIOR!” Cheren jumped through the Lord English illusion. As its essence scattered, Cheren stopped to catch his breath, passing his smirk to Zanifr. Soon, the song continued with Glub-a-Glubs, wherein Cheren had to jump on a high, then a low, then a high, then low platform.

“Make no apologies!” Cheren cut a Bill, jumped, and cut another. “It’s death or victory!” Cheren jumped and sail-glided over Death Chi.

“On Cherry’s authority!” Zanny remarked.

“CRASH AND BURN, it’s US against him!” Cheren used M.A.R.B.L.E.s to blow down boulder piles, then jumped to slice down a Ragaj statue.

Cheren ran up a stairwell while Zanifr flew. “I’m tired of all this running.” sang the latter.

The top of the stairs slanted and directed down. “You’re very funny.” remarked Cheren, who reached the bottom. Both chopped through a Bill statue and chorused,

“I’D RATHER BE A GOD!”

“We won our game so WHERE’S OUR GLORY?” Cheren jumped high and low platforms.

“We all died and watched our dreams EXPLODE.” Together, they smashed down on a spring that shot them all the way into space, watching the planet they were on explode completely. Cheren and Zanifr set foot on an asteroid, where a golden bed with Cheren’s symbol lay. (End song.)

“Hoo boy… that was something else.” Cheren gasped.

“This is it.” Zanifr said. “If you believe you have become strong enough, you can sleep on this bed and achieve the God Tier.”

“I kicked your God Tier butt. Of course I’m strong enough.”

“Then lie down…”

Cheren placed his weapons beside the bed and laid on it. He closed his eyes in an attempt for slumber. “…Heh. That song’s still in my head. I don’t feel tired at the moment.”

“It MMatters not. In order for the God Tier to activate… you MMust die.”

Cheren’s heart jumped. “D-DIE?! That wasn’t part of the deal! !”

“If you knew, you would hesitate to MMake your decision… but I intend to see for MMyself.” Zanifr took the Master Sword’s sheath and drew it. “AAAAH!” The sword zapped him.

Fi jumped out. “Ignorant Zanifr, only Master Cheren may hold the Master Sword. Furthermore, the Master Sword cannot stab targets against the user’s own will.”

“So, all this was a scheme to kill me?!” Cheren shouted.

“Hmmm… I cannot deny I am vengeful. However, your life or death MMatters not to MMe. There is still a chance the God Tier could be true. It seems the choice is yours…”

“…” Cheren took the sword and stared at his reflection in the metal. “Fi… what are the chances God Tier could work?”

“I’m sorry, Master, but the laws of the First Dimension are beyond my understanding. But if you so desire, you may take the ultimate test and impale the Master Sword through your own chest. Think very carefully, Master…”

Cheren replayed this month’s events in his head. His father, who possessed the power of Malladus, died by the World Leaders’ hands. He couldn’t defeat Morgan without Sunni… and his trump card, the Fierce Deity Mask, was gone. “One day, this month, you are going to die.” Miyuki told him. Perhaps her words were true. But what if the worst should happen? If Lord English returns, he will need to be more powerful… if Mr. King is victorious, then it would be for nothing. Either way, he didn’t have the power to face King Andrew. And even so, Cheren was irrelevant to the prophecy. Perhaps it would work out on its own. As long as his operatives were alive and happy, he needed nothing more… But for now, he would die for them.

Cheren lay on the bed and stabbed the Master Sword into his chest. He lay dead with the sword standing in him like a pedestal. Zanifr bowed his head in remorse. The space felt eerily quiet.

Underworld Prison
With Blackbeard still holding Nerehc, Medusa led them to an underground cave where the Sanzu River flowed. The river appeared as deep as a black hole, an infinite abyss of ghastly green. “Let Nerehc go right now!” Sipa jumped in Teach’s way and aimed her wand.

“Stay out of this.” Zorc launched dark magic from his hand and blew Sipa aside.

“This is the deepest chasm of the Sanzu River.” Medusa said. “The spirit of Ganondorf Dragmire is down there. Nerehc… you must swim to the very bottom and collect his soul from the depths.”

“But… won’t I die?”

“Thanks to the burst of power Chernabog gave you, you should be able to survive in the river for a longer period. I would say the choice is yours, but… it’s either you or the universe. Take your pick.”

Ghirahim emerged from the Devil’s Sword. “I will be with you, Master. I will ensure your survival.”

“That’s awfully loyal, Ghirahim. What’s the catch?”

“Hm hmm…” Ghirahim smirked. “I would like to bring Ganondorf back as well, Master… I would need to help you both escape to get my wish.”

“Nerehc!” Sipa recovered and took his hand. “Nerehc, you’re not really going down there, are you?!”

“I don’t think they’ve giving me much a choice. But if Ganondorf is the last Darkness… I think it has to be me. I have his power.”

“…” She stared into his eyes with strong concern, close to tearing. She knew what was to happen, and deep down, Nerehc knew. “Please don’t die.”

He gave her his cool smile. “I promise.” The two shared a kiss for a minute. The villains moaned in disgust. “Okay…” Nerehc took a breath. “I’m ready.”

And with that, Blackbeard threw Nerehc into the river of death. Ghirahim dove in after, and Medusa watched them swim into the vortex. “Even though, as a full god, I probably could have lasted longer. But who’s complaining?” she shrugged casually.

Nerehc swam as fast as he could in his Demon King Mode. He felt the Tides of Time affecting his flesh, and the souls of the deceased felt rage for the Demon King and tried to claim him. Ghirahim sliced the spirits away—dozens swarmed them, swallowed them in a cluster of agony, Nerehc burst with violet flames and scattered them.

The tunnel grew narrow as they swam ever deeper into the depths. The green glinted rashly in Nerehc’s eyes and the horrible liquid leaked into his mouth. He never held his breath for this long, if he didn’t hurry, he would drown in the tears of a million souls. But as the swim took him deeper and deeper, the number of souls were dwindling and the light was fading. Soon, it was pure quiet, and pure darkness.

Nerehc saw a stone pyramid on the riverbed. It was the Pyrameglyph. Only one soul lurked down here, drifting around the stone like a mindless fish. Its green muscular body and flowing hair… It was Ganondorf. Nerehc swam down and grabbed the soul. Assuming he already read his destiny, Nerehc began to carry him up. “MMMMM!” He gurgled a scream when the soul grabbed him in turn. Ganondorf’s vicious demonic features faced Nerehc. His mouth opened wide as the Dark
Lord tried to slurp Nerehc inside.

Medusa’s group watched in wonder as the Sanzu River bubbled. “UWAAAAHH!” A powerful figure burst from the water and crashed on the shore. As the deathly water dripped from his body, Ganondorf’s soul retained a physical appearance. He gasped for breath, for parts of his skin were still molted and boney. “Heff…heff…heff…heff…” Ganon looked up at Medusa and the demons in her company.

Medusa smirked, glancing at Lucifer and Chernabog. She raised the baby demon and declared, “Eat up, Ganny!”

“HAH!” Ganondorf raised the Devil Sword and leapt at Chernabog.

“WAAAAAH!” the baby unleashed its deafening wail in pain.

“AAAAAGH!” Lucifer was sliced afterward.

Ganondorf set foot on the ground and stabbed the blade into his chest. A shining white wound opened up… The two Demon Saints dissolved, and their essence flowed into Ganondorf’s body. His flesh repaired itself, the demon thief sporting his ecstatic evil grin. “Did you read the Pyrameglyph, Ganon?” Medusa asked. “Bill said it was down there.”

“I did.” Ganondorf snickered. “It said, ‘You will rise again, King of Demons. The world belongs to darkness.’”

**Ganondorf awakened as a DARKNESS. All Twenty Keys have awakened.**

“So, all this time… you only wanted the Demon Saints to revive Ganondorf?” Sipa spoke with utmost horror.

“What did you expect?” inquired Medusa. “You didn’t think THEY had anything to do with the prophecy.”

“But… w-where’s Nerehc?”

Ganondorf licked his lips and raised the Devil’s Sword. Ghirahim leapt out, bowing before Ganondorf. “Ghirahim!” cried Sipa.

“Master Nerehc is no more, Sipa.” the Demon Lord said. “I belong to Ganondorf once more.”

“!!” Tears spilling, Sipa bolted out of the cave.

“Should we stop her?” Zorc asked.

“Let her run.” Medusa said. “We’ll have plenty of time to snuff them all out.”

**With the others**

“Zanifr!” Panini perked up when the troll awoke. The humans were standing their ground while Kid and Ellen defended them from Titans.

“Mmmm…” Zanifr stared at Cheren’s body.

“What’s wrong with Cherry Boy? ?” Bon Clay asked. “Ya need me ta kiss him?”

Miyuki put a hand on Cheren’s chest. She waited for a pulse. …She gasped. “He’s… dead.”
“What?!” Panini ran up. She listened for a heartbeat and shook her friend. “Ch-Cheren…”

“RAAAAAHH!” Under Thanatos and Pandora’s influence, the Titans finished tearing the hinges off the Darknesses’ cells. Thanatos used his Death Chi to dissolve the chains on Madara Uchiha, along with his blindfold. Pandora used her Chaos Fire to burn Sōsuke Aizen’s mummified wrapping.

“You guys!” Sipa came charging back to them. “Nerehc is dead!”

“DEAD?!” Miyuki yelled, Panini cupping her hands over her mouth in horror. They faced Cheren’s dead body. It was true after all. God Tier failed.

Death the Kid fought to hold back a tear. “We…We must escape. It’s too late to stop all this madness. Get Cheren’s body!”

Zanifr opened a Dark Portal. “This will take you outside the prison.”

“And WHY should we trust you this time?!” Panini screamed through her tears.

Miyuki peeped into the portal. “It’s safe! Let’s go!” She jumped in.

Panini and Clay grabbed Cheren’s body, ready to enter the portal. Panini spared a remorseful glance to Zanifr before going. Sipa, Kid, and Ellen hurried in as Zanifr closed it.

The Titans were sent to rampage the rest of the prison. Medusa picked up the cracked yellow diamond from its cell. Thanos was freed from his chain, staring at the stub of his missing arm. “You have a way to fix us, I would hope.” he said.

“You can wait, Thanny. Sōsuke, Madara, carry Xehanort.”

The two approached Xehanort, who was still bound in his Multi-Lock Prison. They picked up his stiff body. “You know that some of us are still dead, Medusa.” Madara mentioned. “We will be powerless in the living world.”

“You’ll have your freedom, Madara. That is, if Zeref is still in our favor.”

“HEY, BALDY!” Thanatos yelled at the Chrome Dome Emperor in his classroom cell. “Remedial English is over, get your butt up!”

“No, I can’t!” Tsurulina III yelled, clenching his temples in aggravation as he flipped through a book. “I’ve been trying to find the origins of the word ‘Is’ for 10 years! And I was already in the middle of deciphering the meaning behind caveman songs! Does anyone know what ‘Aughsucks is the best captain’ refers to?!?” Incidentally, the book had a drawing of a cyan-haired cavegirl.

“Baldy, I think you’re a little out of date.” Pandora presented a document to him. “The government outlawed remedial English, deeming them pointless. Officially, the new way to speak now is with Internet lingo, and everyone’s good at that.”

Baldy Bald took the document and read it curiously. “BRB means ‘Be right back’, lol means laugh out loud, LMFAO my BFF…”

“Congratulations, you now speak perfect English!” Medusa stamped him with a smiley face. “You pass, Tsuru!”

“HOORAAAAAY!” Baldy kicked all his English books away. “Now that I got my degree…”
LET’S TAKE OVER THE UNIVERSE!!” His eyes burned with passion.

“Majora, aren’t you coming?” Medusa asked as they began to leave. “You deserve part of the glory for getting rid of that wannabe Hero of Time.”

“You’re not still mad at me for kicking your arse, are ya?” Blackbeard remarked.

“I am coming.” Zanifr stepped by Viridi’s cell. “Well… you must be very happy I destroyed your adversary.”

“Is Cheren really… dead?” Viridi asked with a hint of remorse.

“I do not believe you are really dead.”

“Obviously not.” The goddess smirked. “Cheren may have drained my powers, but he couldn’t totally destroy me. My molecules reassembled in the Spirit World. Unfortunately, Grim was waiting to capture me.”

“Then it would be bad for you to escape. Of course… I think we both should attend his funeral.” Zanifr used his whips to slice open the bars of Viridi’s cage. “He was a very good kid, after all.” He formed a dark portal behind him.

Viridi smiled at the opportunity. “I suppose he was… but DON’T think I’m teaming up with you.” The goddess entered the portal, and Zanifr joined her to the outside.

**Outside…**

The world turned gray around Miyuki. To her, it always seemed Cheren was the light of their world… and now that light has gone out. The others will be devastated when they find out… but Miyuki would have to press on. They all would. For him. “…Cheren…” Miyuki meant to tell him this before. Her final words to him: “Happy birthday.” (Play “Pay Your Respects” from Batman: Arkham City.)

**Seven Lights: The Side Stories: Cast:**

Sharon Mann as Nerehc Onu and Cheren Uno

Brittney Karbowskii as Wendy Marvell, Ydnew Llevram, and Sipa

Tom Kenny as Augustus von Fizzuras and Hcaz Yhprum

Keith David as Harvey Facilier

Jad Saxton as Carla

Jason Ritter as Dipper Pines, Sonny, and Popo

Kristen Schaal as Mabel Pines, Donna, and Nana

Seth MacFarlane as Stewie Griffin

Mike Henry as Rallo Tubbs
Tress MacNeille as Maggie Simpson

Cherami Leigh as Asia and Ragus

Melissa Fahn as Ikuyim Latsyrc and Miyuki Crystal

Jennifer Hale as Ininap Yksvolird, Panini Drilovsky, and Fybi Fulbright

Tara Strong as Anthony and Michelle McKenzie, Aliehs Cîtnarf, Ydolem Noskcaj, Melody Jackson, and Yddam Yhprum

Kate Higgins as Karin Kurosaki and Sarada Uchiha

Grey DeLisle as Mandy McKenzie, Azula, Cindy Cortix, and Big Mom

Lisa Ortiz as Zeira and Ellen Wickens

Todd Haberkorn as Death the Kid

Alan Cumming as Fegan Floop

Cree Summer as Medusa

Dan Green as Vaati and Itaav

Monica Rial as Annie Wilconson and Mirajane Strauss

Lara Jill Miller as Juniper Lee

Alison Viktorin as Chelia Blendy

Lindsay Seidel as Romeo Conbolt

Troy Baker as Arlon

Walt Dohrn as Henry Churchill

Wally Wingert as Rusty Pete and Tallest Red

Bill Nighy as Davy Jones

Jane Lynch as Yellow Diamond

Leonard Nimoy as Xehanort

Hynden Walch as Madame Rouge and Viridi

Aaron Spann as Zaniifr Mimchi

Alex Hirsch as Bill Cipher and Stanley Pines

The story continues in the Inferius Arc…

Seven Lights: The Side Stories: END
So yeah… if you didn’t read the Side Stories, you would’ve been spoiled in the main story. :P I agree the Side Stories weren’t as exciting as the main story, but these arcs were still necessary all the same. We got character development for Augustus and Wendy, learned who the Darknesses are, and I think this contributes to the grand adventure over all. Anyway, Underworld Prison was based off Impel Down from *One Piece* (where Magellan’s from). Anyway, thanks to those who read the Side Stories, next time we will finish the main story.
Chapter Summary

Team Rupert seeks out the God Fruit to save Timothy. Then, the Earth Children discover an amazing secret.

We’re nearing the exciting parts of Opening Saga. The only thing standing in our way is Pikmin’s most dangerous land. Time for one last venture with these little guys.

Chapter 76: The God Fruit

Wistful Wild

Gonshiri led Team Rupert to a land called the Climate Plains, a plain divided in four segments with respective seasons. They landed in the Autumn Zone, where Gonshiri claimed the Wistful Wild was located. Their Onions landed in an open area without monsters. Five Wing Pikmin were carrying Timothy’s swollen body as Rupert, Hikari, and Gonshiri stepped outside. “This part is the only place where the monsters don’t roam.” Gonshiri explained. “Unfortunately, we’re rather far from the Den of Dreams where the God Fruit is.”

“Can we make it in time?” Rupert asked.

“Under 23 hours, I’m certain we can. The only things I’m afraid of are the monsters. And…”

“And what?”

“Well… the truth is, while I have been mastering my plantbending powers, the God Fruit has been extinct for centuries. It will be difficult to revive the fruit, even from where it was last grown. But I will surely try.”

“Let’s focus on getting there first. It shouldn’t be hard with your plantbending.”

“Unfortunately, this land is chi-blocked except for the cave itself. We have only our Pikmin to rely on. How many have you collected?”

“A heck of a lot!” Rupert smirked. “Don’t worry, Timmy, we’re gonna save you!” (Play “Wistful Wild” from Pikmin 2!)

Stage 69: Wistful Wild

Mission: Find the God Fruit and save Timothy!

Act 1

Team Rupert assembled 20 Wing, Purple, Rock, Blue, and Red Pikmin, 15 Music and Green Pikmin, and 10 Yellow, Brown, White, and Ice Pikmin, making 175 total (including the five carrying Timmy). Their first bounty was a Red, Orange, Black, and Light Dwarf Bulborb grazing
in grass, but the kids easily defeated the small monsters to have them out of the way. They walked around a wall to a field with Skutterchucks, still very easy enemies for the Rock Pikmin to crush. The only way out of this field was a spider-web wall with three Arachnodes. The kids sent Wing Pikmin up to beat the spiders, then used their Brown Pikmin to carry them up the webs. The Browns and Wings helped the other Pikmin up as well.

The three Pikmineers overlooked a large pond with a Frosty Cannon Beetle on the opposite side. “That beast must have wandered here from the Winter Zone.” Gonshiri assumed. “I’ll swim over and defeat it.” Indeed, the Cannon Beetle was freezing a path over the pond using his giant snowballs. The humans kept their Pikmin out of harm’s way while Gonshiri swam over with the Wing Pikmin. Skeeterskates shot the Wings out of the air with keen aiming, so Rupert and Hikari called them to safety. When the princess was across, they sent the Wing Pikmin over to her to dispose of the Frosty Beetle.

The kids used Ice Pikmin to freeze a path over the pond for their comrades, but the Skeeterskates furiously tried to drown them. Rupert threw Blue Pikmin on the water spiders, then dove under the pond to get them back and bring them across the ice bridge again. Once across the pond, the trio overlooked a dangerous field of Gatling Groinks, patrolling circles around a central stage. There were eight on the field, so the kids ran to different corners and ganged up on the cyborg fish with Purple and Red Pikmin. Five Reds and seven Purples were destroyed.

“I can’t help but notice the enemies are more feisty out here.” Rupert commented. “Hikari, run back and get replacements.”

“The Wistful Wild puts all Pikmin users to the test.” Gonshiri replied. “You have to be on guard against these beasts.”

The kids assembled 15 Music Pikmin on the central stage. The Music Pikmin performed a rendition of “Clickclock Wood Autumn” from *Banjo-Kazooie*. Giant dandelions bloomed on the surrounding cliffs and took flight in the air. Rupert and Gonshiri could grab the stem of a close dandelion and swing up a series of the floating flowers. The Pikmin mimicked their actions exactly as they set foot on a walkway on the side of a tree. Blue dragonflies called Flitters fluttered above, rather harmless and provided nectar if they are defeated. The kids KO’ed some Flitters and let their Blue and Ice Pikmin have the rations.

“This is a Swoopy airway.” Gonshiri said, indicating the closed door under the foothold. “We need to open it with Yellow Pikmin somewhere. Perhaps up there.” She noticed the foothold and stairs high above them, a good reach for their Yellow Pikmin. The Pikmin instinctively went up the stairs, and five were needed to power a generator. The tree hole door opened, and giant red-and-white birds called Swoopies glided from there to the opposite tree. When a Swoopy was coming out, the kids and their Pikmin dropped on its back, swooped across, and jumped off on a path on the next tree.

The path led around the right of the tree, and they had to use a vine to swing over a gap. However, that vine was a Piranha Plant tongue, and would slurp in any unlucky prey. Rupert smirked and threw a White Pikmin on the tongue, sacrificing the Pikmin to poison the Piranha. The army could swing that tongue without fear of consumption. Rupert looked down at the foothold under the vine, noticing the cracked part of the trunk. “Hey, that looks like a wall we can blow up.”

“We can’t worry about that now, Timothy needs us!” Gonshiri reminded.

“Well, you said we have plenty of time, we can still look for…” Rupert fell silent under Gonshiri’s sharp glare. “Sigh, you’re right. I really would like to explore this place, though.” The duo came to a long slide that would whisk them past some trees and land on a new field. On the way down,
Rupert saw a Koopa shell (Joy of Abuse) on a platform on the left, frozen in ice. Rupert called Hikari and told her, “Hikari, are you bringing the Ice Pikmin? There’s a treasure you can get.”

“You had better pray Timothy can’t hear you in his condition.” Gonshiri said reprovingly. The field they landed in consisted of Crazee Dayzees, giant happy flowers with faces and two feet. “The Crazee Dayzees will put our Pikmin to sleep. Only the Music Pikmin are immune.” Taking Gonshiri’s hint, the duo scattered their Pikmin and took only the Magentas. They defeated the Skitter Leafs roaming the ground as the Dayzees sang beautiful melodies. Rupert and Shiri felt a tad drowsy from the singing, so they fought a few Dayzees, who would easily shake the Pikmin off and run away.

“Don’t bother, they’re hard to defeat.” Gonshiri mentioned. “I see a stage over there. Perhaps it will be of use.” They guided their 15 Music Pikmin up a small path to a platform with a stage. The Pikmin sang the sad music from *Paper Mario: TTYD*, and the emotional tune calmed the Dayzees’ spirits into slumber. Near the entrance to the field, there was a flower with a cluster of colorful petals. They used the White Pikmin to quickly carry the petals around the Dayzee field and stack them in a pile for the lot to climb up to a high pathway. “The Dayzees should stay asleep if we don’t disturb them.”

“Princess, look at that one!” Rupert pointed at a golden Dayzee within the crowd. “It’s gold!”

“That’s an Amazy Dayzee. It produces 200 Pikmin and is worth 10,000 points. But it’s very spry and powerful, so don’t try to catch it.”

“All right. Who’s that fairy drawing a picture of it?”

“Probably a sightseer.”

Hikari eventually regrouped with her team as they climbed the petal pile to the new path. A Fire Piranha rose up to block the way, so the kids had their Red Pikmin fight it. When the plant threatened to gnash down, they quickly called the Pikmin back, and repeated the pattern until the plant was down. They had the Red Pikmin carry the head back to repopulate. The path led them to an even more vast field with an orange Jasper gem in the center.

“Don’t touch that stone!” Gonshiri cautioned. “It may look ordinary, but it’s actually a powerful monster. I know you want to try and battle it, but let’s save our Pikmin for the job at hand.”

“Where do we go from here?” Rupert asked.

“The cave we need to go is just across.” Gonshiri led the two around the gem and toward a hole protected by a crystal. They destroyed the crystal with Rock Pikmin. “This is the Den of Dreams. It’s not actually the hardest cave in Wistful Wild; the Pit of 100 Trials has that luxury. Thousands of years ago, this cavern was a sacred temple housing the God Fruit as its most sacred relic. But because of the story of the Grand Inferius… my ancestors thought it best to let the fruit die off.”

“But couldn’t a fruit like this save the world from disease?”

“It could… I believe the Minish simply feared its power. ….Sigh, let’s get it over with. Follow me.” Gonshiri dove in first. Rupert and Hikari exchanged nods and jumped after. Their army of Pikmin followed, carrying Timothy still. Little did they know, a one-eyed organism was watching… (Play “Bulblax Kingdom” from *Pikmin 2!*)

**Act 2: Den of Dreams**

With their 175 replenished Pikmin, Team Rupert marched into the cave. Not long after entering,
they came to a pit where a Putrid and Frost Piranha emerged from. The towering plants would spit their elements down to stun the Pikmin, so the kids kept their Ice and Poison types at the ready. When the Piranhas’ heads would gnash down, they threw their Pikmin on to lay the beatdown. The plants’ heads snapped off, so while those Pikmin took the prey to the Onions (situated above the hole), the kids had Wing Pikmin fly over the pit and make a bridge from the tile pile.

The army crossed the bridge and entered a corridor with Piranha Buds, who would always face nearby Pikmin and be ready to chomp in their mouths. The kids threw White Pikmin overhead, redirecting the plants’ vision while their Purple Pikmin could beat them from behind. The cave turned left and would lead to a walkway on the side of a chasm. A sticky mud floor prevented other Pikmin from crossing, so the Brown Pikmin were up to the task.

Further down the tunnel was a breakable wall that was blocking their path. There was an alternate tunnel over the pit, and below was a water geyser aimed at the tunnel. The kids bravely jumped in the geyser and blew up to the new path with their Pikmin. The tunnel led them to a wider cave where they had to remain on the side of a chasm. A geyser was available to blow them back out. The cave directed down and into water, so from here, the kids had to submerge with their Blue and Ghost Pikmin.

There were snoozing Rip Van Fish, which Gonshiri advised against waking (shaking her head ‘no’ since they were underwater). The three replenished their air by swimming through large bubbles that grew from the ground. There was a foothold accessible via a slope that was blocked by a sand gate, though it didn’t matter at the moment. There was a cluster of rocks in a corner which the Blue and Ghost Pikmin could destroy, uncovering a hole that drained all the water out. The Rip Van Fish were helplessly flopping around, easy prey for the Pikmin if they wanted.

They called the other Pikmin down to break the sand gate, allowing them to get to the higher foothold. This ground was empty except for some dirt patches, but the White Pikmin detected treasure underneath a patch. They dug it up and discovered a golden acorn (Rodent Candy). “Perhaps we can use it for something.” Gonshiri said. The way out of this room was blocked by an ice wall, so the Ice Pikmin held the honors of breaking it. A slope led up to a new room, and they would have to follow a long tunnel on the left. There was a giant hole in the side of this wide tunnel, and Rupert felt some familiarity with this.

He sent the White Pikmin to carry the gold acorn across the tunnel. A squirrel peeped out of the hole and gave chase, but it failed to match the White Pikmin’s speed. On the other side of the tunnel, they would cross a tile bridge to a platform, and the bridge would collapse under the squirrel’s weight and make it fall into the chasm. The Pikmineers followed and found themselves in a deep, vast cave. “The God Fruit is not far from here. Be careful going down.” the princess cautioned.

Fire slugs (or Pyroclasmic Slooches) were occupying an open platform ahead, but they were no match to the Red Pikmin. There were platforms over the chasm with small pools and Skeeterskates sniping them with water bombs. They were too far to throw Pikmin to, too quick for the Wing...
Pikmin, and even more annoying were the glowing mushrooms that kept away Ghost Pikmin. They were forced to avoid the nuisances and progress, although five Purple Pikmin fell over the edge when running after getting soaked.

The next path had small gaps that were sprouting water jets, and would send them to the start of the section. The Ice Pikmin froze all the jets they could, but this in turn instigated a large jet on a distant platform. That platform was connected to the one the White Pikmin holding the acorn were still on, so they used it to fling back to the path. Rupert gave them the green light to carry the gold acorn back to base. The kids proceeded past the frozen geysers and came to a field of giant Clefts.

Only the Rock Pikmin were a match for the stone monsters. The Pikmineers threw the Rocks at the Clefts’ feet until they would shatter, leaving only the Clefts’ helpless stone bodies. There was a low path under the edge, leading to the next foothold, but it was too high above that path. Rupert thought the Clefts could be thrown onto the path and serve as a bridge, but before doing so, he noticed a cracked wall at the end of that path.

“You are not going all the way back for a Bomb Rock just to blow up that wall!” Gonshiri scolded.

“Fine, Timmy comes first!” Denied from treasure once again, Rupert commanded the Pikmin to throw down the Clefts and make a bridge. The road ahead was plagued with Bulborbs large and small, from white, red, orange, to shiny. They used the Purple and Red Pikmin to gang up on the Bulborbs, while the Yellows took care of the Shiny Bulborb.

The following route was more narrow and had parallel rows of Anode Beetles standing on small platforms. In a pattern, each set of beetles connected by electric beams, threatening to destroy the Pikmin should they falter. Only the Yellow Pikmin could hurt them, but attempting to do so would make the Yellows fall to their death. The kids noticed a wall of fire geysers across the bridge, so they focused on bringing five Reds past the Anode Beetles so they could destroy the geysers. They carefully worked on guiding the other Pikmin across, but 4 Blues and 5 Browns were wasted (the Browns tripped and got stuck on the ground).

Following the fire gate was an electric gate, testing their patience not to waste Yellow Pikmin, so thankfully they had plenty to tear the gate down. The cavern ahead was filled with roaming Dweevils of all colors, but the Pikmineers bypassed them as the cave grew dark and sloped down. The five White Pikmin returned from delivering the gold acorn, so with all their remaining Pikmin, they entered the center of the cave. (End song.)

On their left in the darkness of the massive cavern was a fleet of Onions, withered as though they haven’t been touched for centuries. It included colors of Pikmin Rupert had not seen, like orange, silver, and even the Ghosts’ green. It was without doubt Malarko’s One Thousand Pikmin. In the center of the cave was a great tree, long dead. “That tree once grew the God Fruit… I can’t believe it is still standing.”

“So, can you bring it to life?” Rupert asked.

Gonshiri approached the tree slowly. The princess placed a hand on the trunk and closed her eyes. There was a faint energy radiating from it. “I…I hear them.”

“Hear what?”

“The voices of the plants… They are all over this place…”

In Gonshiri’s vision, the cavern was full of blossoming flowers, warming the cave with their mystical glow. Gonshiri turned to a couple of shrinking violets. “Hello, Princess. We’ve been
“waiting for you.”

“You’ve been waiting?”

“We thought the princess would return.” a sunflower said. “A long time ago, she destroyed this place because she feared the God Fruit. She said she had a nightmare where the God Fruit brought destruction to all. But she promised she would return. I’m glad you’re back, Princess… Will you bring us back to life?”

“I… I’m not sure how to. You all have been dead for centuries. It can’t be that easy.”

“Take us with you, Princess. Back to the living world. Take our leaves and invite us home.”

“Invite you… home…” Gonshiri lightly took the shrinking violets’ hands. A light energy flowed from her hand and covered the flowers. Rupert and Hikari gazed in awe as two violets sprouted from the ground.

“Who is she talking to?” Rupert asked.

“Flower ghosties, silly!” Hikari beamed.

Gonshiri touched the sunflower and revived it. She touched a gray rose and revived it. Then, the princess looked up at the flourishing tree… the bulbous, pinkish-red God Fruit was shiny and succulent. Gonshiri smiled and climbed the tree to touch the fruit. It was humongous, so it required a longer touch and more energy. The fruit that cured all illnesses was restored.

“Sigh…” Gonshiri felt physically drained. “Quickly… Feed Timothy a piece.”

They cut the giant fruit down and brought it to Timmy. They only needed to pull off a relatively tiny portion to place into his mouth. His red skin returned to peach color and his swelling shrunk down. “Huff… huff…” Rupert helped him to his feet. He smiled at his friend, happy to have saved him. … Timmy punched Rupert in the jaw. “I want 100 bucks now!”

“Ow! Fine…”

“Now to destroy this fruit.” Gonshiri stated. “I need to restore my chi in order to kill it. Perhaps a quick bite will suffice.”

“Not gonna happen, Princess.” The four whipped around: Sheldon J. Plankton was riding a giant spider robot with four legs.

“Who the heck are you?!” Rupert exclaimed.

“The name’s Plankton, you pint-size pests. Lesser Lord Gnik knew you would be after the God Fruit and sent me to take it. Check this baby out! I tamed one of the woodland creatures and gave him a battle suit. Suits him fine, right, heh heh. Titan Dweevil, FIRE!” The giant spider blasted a flamethrower at the kids. Ten mini Pikbots raced in and grabbed the fruit, then raced out of the cave.

“COME BACK WITH IT!” Gonshiri tried to chase, but the Titan Dweevil smashed its center down and crushed her.

“PRINCESS!” the humans cried.

“You kids aren’t going anywhere.” Plankton stated. “Lesser Lord Gnik ordered me to destroy you,
too. Get ready to be the first prey of my Titan Dweevil! ATTACK!” (Play Titan Dweevil’s theme from *Pikmin 2!*)

*Boss fight: Titan Dweevil*

The Titan Dweevil used a 5-ton weight on the bottom of its center to create shockwaves and knock the Pikmin army down. Team Rupert tried to stay on their feet and hurriedly blow whistles to call them back. “Ghost Pikmin, Wing Pikmin, attack him!” Rupert commanded. Five of each Pikmin flew up to Plankton, but searchlights activated on the Dweevil to weaken the Ghosts, followed by fly-swatters to smash the Wings, killing those Pikmin. “NO!”

“Your cheesy little Leafmen can’t touch me!” Plankton laughed. “The Titan Dweevil may not be a match for the big humans, but to you, it’s the most powerful beast in my arsenal! You can almost SMELL the power!” Plankton commanded the beast to use a bug spray and spread a cloud of gas along the ground. Team Rupert held their breaths and ran onto a hill above the gas. Their Pikmin were running frantically in pain, so the kids whistled for their safety, but 4 Blues, 5 Purples, and 3 Yellows were killed.

“Timothy, Hikari, take the Rocks and Purples and go behind it.” Rupert instructed. “I’ll use the Brown Pikmin to try and stick its feet to the ground.” The kids nodded and ran separate directions around the Dweevil. Plankton smirked and used shockwaves in attempt to stun them, but the quakes didn’t affect the Purple Pikmin, and the rocks that fell from the ceiling couldn’t crush the Rock Pikmin. Rupert charged from the front using Brown Pikmin, but Plankton decided to wash the creatures away by shooting giant water droplets around the room using a hose.

Rupert was crushed by a droplet, quickly catching his breath and whistling for his Pikmin’s recovery. Some of the Pikmin waiting safely in the back were drenched, but while Rupert was whistling for them, the Dweevil made shockwaves and knocked him down. Two Yellows and 3 Reds drowned in the droplets. “Come on!” Timothy whispered to Hikari. The two went under the creature with Purple Pikmin and threw it onto the 5-ton weight.

“What the-?!” Plankton saw what they were doing and used more Ground Pounds to shake them off.

“Fooled ya!” Rupert had thrown a Brown Pikmin under the weight, and when it was squished, the weight was glued to the ground. The Purple Pikmin resumed beating it, and despite Plankton’s attempts to shake it free, the Pikmin successfully detached the weight from the body. “All your Dweevil is is a big treasure hoard!” Rupert snapped at Plankton.

“The only treasures here will be your heads mounted on my wall!” Plankton smacked the fly-swatters around the ground to scare the operatives into retreating.

“I think we should hit those searchlights next.” Rupert suggested. “We can throw our Yellow Pikmin up there.”

“Don’t leave ME out of the conversation!” Plankton launched electrical spheres from a lightbulb toward the “safe” Pikmin. The spheres connected via electric beams and immediately killed all the Pikmin between.

“NO!!” the kids cried. Almost all their remaining Pikmin were extinguished.

“BLAAAAH HA HA HA!” Plankton cackled. “You humans have yet to understand the laws of
predator and prey. If the prey doesn’t have the brains to survive, like Yours Truly, THEY’RE FINISHED!”

“We’re not done, yet!” Rupert threw Brown Pikmin on the Dweevil’s feet and glued them to the ground. Plankton growled and used a built-in ice machine to drop an ice bomb, freezing the surrounding Pikmin. The Dweevil stepped free of the Brown Pikmin and used the flamethrower to melt their frozen bodies. “Guys, hurry up!” Rupert called the Purples and Rocks into unfreezing, but 3 of each were melted in the flames.

“Hehehehehehe…” Plankton was almost giggling. “You’re all out of Pikmin, kids. What are you going to do, now?”

“Nnn…” Rupert grit his teeth and looked at Malarko’s Onion fleet. “It’s worth a shot.” Rupert ran for the red Onion.

“Rupert, I thought you could only use your friends’ or family’s Pikmin!” Timothy yelled.

“Well, do YOU have any spare Pikmin?!”

“No, but…but you won’t be able to take Malarko’s!”

“One way to find out.” Rupert blew his whistle at the Onion. 20 Red Pikmin came out of it. “IT WORKED!!”

“NO WAY!” Timmy exclaimed.

“Let me try the others!” Rupert summoned Pikmin from each of the Onions. Their arsenal was replenished, so without hesitating, they sent Wing Pikmin up at Plankton.

“Your flies are STILL no match for me!” Plankton furiously swatted the Wings away.

“You need to chill out!” Rupert retorted as they threw Ice Pikmin at the hose. Their frost proved superior against the water device, freezing the nozzle and snapping it off Titan Dweevil’s body.

“Not before I FIRE you!” Plankton blasted the flamethrower to destroy the Ice Pikmin.

“Barbeque is yucky!” Hikari countered by throwing Red Pikmin at the exposed flamethrower. Plankton shook them off and used the bug spray, so Hikari called the Reds away while Rupert ran in with the White Pikmin. Holding his breath, he tossed the Whites onto the bug spray, but didn’t deal enough damage until they were shaken off. Plankton used the lightbulb again and surrounded all the Pikmin with electric spheres. The trio scrambled to call them away from the link points, but 7 Purples, 6 Ice, and 3 Blues were obliterated.

“Hikari, let’s start throwing Yellows on that bulb!” Rupert declared. “Timmy, go get more Pikmin!”

“You shouldn’t say your plans out loud, fool!” Plankton remarked. “I’ll use my Ice Bomb now!” He used the bug spray to poison the Pikmin. “Just joking!”

“Yeah, so were we!” Rupert sent White Pikmin on the bug spray and succeeded in detaching it. “Hikari, now!” He called the Yellows back and resumed throwing them on the lightbulb. The Titan Dweevil used a glue stick to shoot glue around the ground, binding the kids and Pikmin in place. While the Brown Pikmin began trying to free them, Plankton used the lightbulb again. Timmy returned and tossed Rocks on the exposed bulb, zapping them slightly, but breaking the bulb off the spider in the process.
An angered Plankton smacked the twin fly-swatters at the ground to smoosh some Pikmin, but he had the misfortune of crushing Brown ones. The swatters were stuck, so the kids threw Purple Pikmin to weigh them down further, resulting in the swatters being snapped off the hinges. Plankton shot glue around the field and trapped several Pikmin, but Hikari avoided getting stuck and threw Brown Pikmin on the stick. Plankton was unable to shake them off quickly, and during his distraction, Timothy recovered and tossed Purple Pikmin on with them. They added extra damage in snapping the glue off the Dweevil.

“He’s not looking too powerful now!” Rupert remarked. “We’ll give you a chance to run away, Plankton!”

“Just BURN ALREADY!!” Plankton unleashed gas over the Pikmin and followed this with the flamethrower to create an explosion, killing the creatures instantly. Thankfully, Timmy was still in position to throw Purple Pikmin on the bug spray, doing enough damage until it snapped off.

“You little-!” Plankton launched the Ice Bomb and froze Timmy and the Purple Pikmin, but Hikari seized the chance to throw Reds on the ice and double the damage with their fiery bodies. When Plankton was trying to shake them off, Rupert ran up and threw Yellow Pikmin on the Dweevil’s searchlights. “NO FAIR!” Plankton desperately shook the Pikmin off the lights, but his ice-maker was detached.

Plankton reused the flamethrower, so the kids assembled the Reds and chucked them onto the device, followed by Hikari throwing Yellow Pikmin on the searchlights. Both of the parts were destroyed, leaving the Dweevil with only one means of defense. “Say good-bye to your eardrums, FOOLS!” Plankton put muffs over his antennas as the Dweevil played earth-quaking music from a stereo. Boulders fell from the ceiling and crushed numerous Pikmin.

“QUICK, THE MUSICS!!” Rupert and co. ran for the magenta Onion and called 20 Music Pikmin, who were not phased by the deafening sounds. Withstanding the horrid pain in their ears and dodging the boulders, Team Rupert threw Music Pikmin on the stereo. They were shaken off and had to be re-thrown several times, but eventually the music blaster was destroyed. The final pieces of Titan Dweevil’s mechanical armor came off, exposing the hideous four-legs for what it was: a light reddish-pink spider with defenseless skin.

“I knew I should’ve installed the rockets.” Plankton sighed.

“Pikmin:” Rupert pointed forth and blew the whistle. “SWAAAAAARRRRRRMMM!”

“GAAAAH!” Plankton and the Titan Dweevil were completely overpowered by the Pikmin Army. As the Dweevil’s body was ripped to shreds, the Ghost Pikmin took Plankton for their banquet. “W-Wait! I’ll tell you the secret formula! Free Krabby Patties for a year! They’re much tastier than I am! KAREN, TURN OFF THE STOVE AT THREE O’-” He was brought to the green Onion and sucked into the pod. Like any other captured prey, a Pikmin seed squirted out and planted in the ground. The top of this Pikmin’s head peeped out: it had two leaf antennas and a single eye. “Curses…”

“I think we just discovered a new species!” Rupert joked.

“Yah… You think the Pikmin would do this to us if we died?” Timothy asked.

“Hah, no, of course not! …Eh.” Rupert may have trouble sleeping tonight. (End song.)

“Ow…” Gonshiri recovered, holding her head.
“Are you alright, Princess?” Rupert asked.

“Yes… where did that creature go?”

“We beat it!” Hikari jumped. “Rupy borrowed Pikmin from Malarky’s Onions!”

“Malarky’s…?” Gonshiri faced the Onion fleet. “You took Pikmin from Malarko’s fleet?! How?”

“I don’t know.” Rupert shrugged. “I just did.”

“You can only use Pikmin that were owned by family or friends…” Gonshiri stroked her chin. “Did you… borrow Pikmin from any Minish?”

“Sappo and Gibli lent us their Pikmin before they were kidnapped by Shelly.”

“Lenari often lets those two borrow his Pikmin… If they lent them to you… perhaps you could have…”

“How does that make sense?” Timothy asked.

“Lenari is Malarko’s descendant.”

“Descendant?!?” Rupert exclaimed. “You mean Lenari could’ve used these Pikmin all along?!?”

“Of course… but for most Pikmineers, taking someone else’s Pikmin is cheap and lazy. They prefer to assemble their own army. Still, now that you have access to the One Thousand Pikmin, there’s nothing stopping you from taking them.”

Rupert stared at the Onion fleet. Green Onions for the Ghost Pikmin, Orange Onions, Silver Onions… brand new Pikmin would be all his. “You’re right… it wouldn’t be fun. I’d rather find those Pikmin myself.” He blew the whistle and sent Malarko’s Pikmin back to their Onions.

“Too bad we’re not gonna have time until the Apocalypse destroys us.” Timmy reminded.

Gonshiri gasped. “The God Fruit! Where is it?!”

The Pikbots made it out of the cave and were hurrying to the Crab Craft with the God Fruit. A black boot stomped in their path, and the fruit was swiped by Lucas Stonebuddy. “I’ll take this off your hands, if you don’t mind.” The World Leader leapt to the sky as his stone body soared away, under control of his true body’s earthbending.

**Tree of Beginning**

Regigigas led the earthbenders deep into the tree’s underbelly; a flight of stairs that seemed to take hours to venture down. “Are we walking to the core or somethin’?” Tom Taylor asked in exhaust. “Why don’t you just tell us what’s down here.”

“Down here is the most important secret in the entire world.” Queen Lánshelly stated. “Even Gonshiri doesn’t know.”

“WHEEEE!” Granite cheered as she flew in her spirit form. “We don’t have to walk the stairs because we’re ghostiiieees.”

“Hey Sovite, now YOUR descendant is complaining.” Hornfels snickered.

“Grrrr. Dammit, Tom, hurry up!” Sovite stated.
“Anthony, I’m beating you!” Michelle cheered as she jumped backwards down two stairs each. “I’m beating you! I’m beating you!”

“Like heck you are!” Anthony began to race down—“OW, OW, AAAH!” He quickly tripped and bounced all the way down to the bottom, which was 10 stairs away.

Michelle bounced off his back and continued on. “Lucky, nothing was injured.” Shelly remarked, stepping on his back. Tom did the same, and Ikuyim was the one to help him up.

They were brought to a great stone door with a diamond symbol. There were five pedestals planted before it. Each of them had footprints in front and diamond-shaped holes, both of which shared the same colors: one was green, one orange, one gray, one red, and another was purple. “You added another one?” Michelle asked.

“Yeah, we added one for Ikuyim’s ancestor!” Granite responded. “We met her back when we were alive. She was a great friend!”

“Positive and Negative friendships were a rarity in the olden days.” Regigigas said. “Sadly, Latysyrc’s spirit was not collected by the Reapers, so she could not be here. Descendants, channel your chi into the pedestals.”

Anthony took his place at the green one, Shelly the orange, Tom the red, Emily the gray, and Ikuyim the purple. Mimicking their spirit ancestors, they planted their feet firmly on the prints and crossed hands over the diamond holes. “…Michelle, why did you ask about the other one?”

“You’ll see, Anthony.” She winked.

The five descendants channeled their Earth Chi and sent power into the door. The diamond glowed, and Michelle used her bending to open it. There were endless, colorful crystals in this room, and at the base of the central pillar was a massive pink crystal with an illusion of a galaxy inside. “This is the Heart of the World.” Uxie observed. “The source of this planet’s life.”

“Is this the big secret?” Shelly asked.

“No.” Lánshelly answered. “Originally, the Earth Children were the human Guardians of the Heart… but there is a greater secret.”

The children were led up another stairwell to the top of the pillar. There was a baby-size rock creature inside, with a pink diamond on its chest and a pink diamond crown. “This energy…” Uxie approached the diamond. “The energy I’ve been feeling has been this… Th-This is a-!”

“DON’T SPOIL IT!” Michelle shouted.

“Children, do as you just did. Send your chi into the diamond and awaken this creature.” Regigigas instructed.

“But what is it?” Ikuyim asked.

“You will see.”

The five kids gathered around and touched the diamond. Their ancestors watched with the greatest anticipation. For 4,000 years, they waited for this moment. The diamond’s light shone blindingly as five different chiis molded into one core. Michelle and Uxie were the only ones unaffected by the light, and the Firstborn continued to stare at the child with suspicion.
The diamond cracked and shattered as the creature hit the ground. Michelle approached, smiling as she picked it up in her arms. Michelle cradled it like a baby… She closed her eyes peacefully. “I’m gonna miss this body.”

They all gaped when Michelle turned into energy. She flowed into the creature’s body as a white dress appeared over it. Its diamonds glowed and it floated upright. She opened her red eyes with purple pupils to view everyone.

“Hello, everyone!” The spirit smiled. “I’m Diancie. The Firstborn of Earth.”

“Mu…Michelle?…” Anthony was beyond confused.

“I’m sorry, Anthony.” Diancie’s voice was much sweeter and softer than Michelle’s. “But… there never was a Michelle. Your mother planned to give birth to a baby girl… but she was bound to die in childbirth. I have the power to sense when any creature is about to die. That’s why… I sent my spiritual presence to inhabit the body Michelle would have had and allowed it to grow. When I came to the Negaverse, I realized your Negative created an Imaginary sister named Ellehcim. They didn’t say it out loud, but I could feel her psychic energy. It worked in my favor. I’ve been walking in the places of mortals for 4,000 years.”

“But what are you?” Uxie asked harshly. “There was only supposed to be Eight Firstborn created by Arceus. Did Regigigas give birth to you like Kyogre gave birth to Manaphy?”

“I can only remember part of my origin… I was born as the child between Rose Quartz of the Gem race and Titan of the Ores race. My egg was given by Rose to Regigigas after crossing to this world. I had to be kept secret because the knowledge of another Firstborn in the universe would create chaos. I felt lonely… so I put myself in mortal bodies to try to learn who I was. And I met a friend who helped me understand…” She faced Anthony with a smile.

“Who…?”

Diancie floated level with him. The ancestors gathered, looking dumbfounded. Granite, however, was grinning, but their expressions filled Anthony with more confusion. “See, I told you!” Granite said.

“No way… Stone?” Sovite asked.

“So, that’s where you’ve been…” Quartzite observed.

“Stone…” Hornfels smiled.

Anthony gasped, realizing his skin had turned gray. His fellow earthbenders were royally flabbergasted. “Anthony Stone McKenzie.” Diancie said. “My Stonebuddy!”


“Stone was another one of our friends.” Granite explained. “He was an alien called an Ore, but he was killed.”

“I used my power to allow Stone to be reincarnated in the same fashion as myself.” Diancie followed. “His most recent incarnation was the World Leader. That man’s true name was Lucas Nickel, but his memories were slowly awakening. …That was before… Reggie Johnson used the Octogan to sever his memories. He still possessed Stone’s inherited chi, but the part that knew his true identity was lost in the Spirit World. I see that it found its way to you, Anthony. That’s why we were both able to counter Lucas’s stonebending before. You and I are connected as descendants
“Time out, TIME OUT!” Anthony screeched, his gray skin becoming normal. “I’m still wrapping my head around the fact my BABY SISTER was actually a... baby god diamond rock monster... THING. Like, ALL this time, you were like this?! You’re the same little sister that was better than me at everything, I train for hours because I wanted ta kick your butt one day, I tried SO HARD to be better than you... and all this time, it was POINTLESS because my sister was actually a GOD!!”

“Anthony, I’m sorry. I was only playing around, it’s part of being human.”

“YOU’RE NOT HUMAN!!”

“I KNOW!” Diancie cried. “I know I gloated a lot, but it was never easy being me! Not understanding why I had to be stuck in a diamond, why I was different from other Firstborn... I would rather be born a mortal and be like everybody else. But I don’t even have a pair of feet.” She wiggled her stone bottom. “My little toesies are gone. You don’t remember it, but Stone felt the same way. He felt like he didn’t belong here. That’s why I hoped we could reunite and... we could grow together.”

Diancie channeled energy between her hands. A Spirit Ball was created, a brown rock bottom and pink diamond top like Diancie’s body. She gave it to Anthony. “I always admired how the Earth Children learned from each other and grew together. Now that I get to see it again... I would like to be part of it. Will you let me train with you, Anthony? Will you help me learn who I am?”

“...” Anthony looked away. “This isn’t what I wanted at all. Everything is changing too fast. Everything’s gonna be different at the end of this month... won’t it?”

“I’m afraid it will be.” Diancie said. “But we can face it together, Anthony. Just remember... no matter what happens, I’m still your baby sister.” She pinched his cheek. “So you’ll just have to train even harder to beat me, Anty-Wanty!”

“...” Anthony took the Spirit Ball and smirked. “At least it’ll feel nice to carry you in a ball.” He threw the Pokéball and captured Diancie. The Spirit Ball burst into a glow.

**Anthony McKenzie captured a FIRSTBORN! I wanna say there’s one left, but who knows anymore.**

The earthbenders returned to the operatives waiting outside the tree. Sector W, Sarah, and Gary were awestruck after hearing the story. “So, yeah. This is Michelle.” Anthony showed them. “She was a Firstborn. All along.”

“I’m finally outside for the first time!” Diancie twirled in the air. “The sun feels so warm!”

“. . . . . That’s it. I give up.” Harvey stated. “First there was the music girl, then that Moon Firstborn comes along... I don’t get it, I JUST don’t get it: HOW MANY FIRSTBORN ARE THERE?!”

“Who knows?” Diancie shrugged. “I guess that’s another mystery we’ll have to find out.”


“Sally, you missed it! My sister was a-”

“Anthony, you’re back! Quick, we have to get up to Moonbase!” The girl was crying.
“Why, Sally?!” Aranea asked.

“It’s Cheren! H-He’s…”

Gnik’s Hideout

“So, Plankton has failed to retrieve the God Fruit.” Ragaj Gnik observed. “King Andrew can commence the Grand Inferius. ...Just as you had foreseen... Lord English.”

Yes, that was Michelle’s true identity from the beginning. It was foreshadowed a few times, like when she dressed as a Minish for Halloween or how she could effortlessly gembend... and it’s also a setup for the Newborn Era Project. That was Rupert’s final stage in the story, but don’t worry, we will have more Pikmin action in the future. Next time, the final battle will begin. The Grand Inferius is here...
Grand Inferius

Chapter Summary

The World Leaders enact the Grand Inferius. The Kids Next Door take the fight to them!

The final battle begins now. This chapter takes place after Chapter B-35 of the Side Stories, so if you didn’t read that, prepare to have it ruined. :P

Chapter 77: Grand Inferius

KND Moonbase

Cheren Uno was placed on a bed in the infirmary. Many of his loyal operatives, including Anthony, Aurora, Chris, MaKayla, and newcomer Wendy stared at his body in remorse. Diancie examined him closely, but was sad to report the news. “I can’t determine why, but… his vital signs have completely stopped. There aren’t any fatal wounds or traces of poison…”

“Was he hit with the Killing Curse?” Wendy asked in horror.

“We were with Cheren the whole time.” Miyuki replied. “The Zoni shocked him and Zanifir to sleep. But only Zanifir woke up…”

“It was all a trick to KILL HIM!” Panini stomped the floor with a flaming boot, crying tears. “He wanted ta kill Cheren the WHOLE TIME! And he put that Vriska person up to it!”

“I don’t think Zanifir meant to do it on purpose.”

“Why do ya say THAT?!” Pan stomped toward Miyuki. “Still have feelings for him?!?”

“…I…” Miyuki bowed her head shamefully.

“This isn’t the time.” MaKayla came between them. “Kid… if Cheren is dead, wouldn’t his spirit have appeared in the Underworld?”

“It was supposed to.” Kid replied, a hint of regret on his normally scowling features. “But I can’t feel his spiritual presence at all. It’s as though his soul disappeared the moment he died.”

“W-What are we supposed to do?” Wendy whimpered, leaking tears. “Elect a… new leader?”

“The next runner-up is Panini.” Francis sighed. “You were his second-in-command.”

“Well, Panini?” Maddy faced her.

Panini lay one hand on Cheren’s bed and clasped her racing heart with the other. I didn’t wanna be the one to do this… I acted like his rival, but Cheren’s always been better than me. I was ambushed by Majora like a ’90’s girl in the alley… Big Mum ate me like a sausage, and I couldn’t defend myself. I thought Cheren was gonna be the one to… lead us to the New World. I didn’t wanna have to do it… I CAN’T do it. I haven’t done anything all month. I… I’m a terrible vice-leader…
Harvey Harper could feel the inner turmoil inside her heart. He bowed his head and spoke. “I think we put too much faith in Cheren.”

“What do you mean, Harvey?” Sally asked.

“We can’t expect everything to go the way we want them to.” Harvey thought of Madotsuki as he spoke. “Bad things are going to happen. All we can do is make the best of a bad situation. We have to finish what Cheren started… and that’s this quest.”

“It’s okay, Panini.” Aurora placed a hand on her shoulder. “You don’t have to do anything. We’ll take it from here.”

Some of the operatives returned to the bridge to think over their possible plans. Shade noticed Maddy staring at the Earth from the glass wall. “I don’t need Haki to know what you’re thinking.” Shade said.

“I’m the only one that has a chance at beating King Andrew.” Maddy stated. “I have Conqueror’s Haki. I can take the Octogan from him.”

“I admit you mastered Haki faster than anyone I know… but King Andrew had years of training. He must have had plenty of time to adapt with the Octogan. It’ll be too much for you.”

“I still have a promise to keep to you, don’t I?” Maddy faced her.

“Maddy, that doesn’t matter to me, anymore. You were never the Chosen One. My clan was fooled and WE were fooled. That boy is right… not everything goes the way we expect them to.”

“That’s what it means to have an adventure.” Sheila Frantic marched forward, her Keyblade arched over her shoulder. “You don’t know what you’re gonna see… you just see it and keep goin’! We have to show the World Leaders they don’t own our world. Let’s go to Mariejoe and beat the CRUD out of them!”

“I admire your passion, Sheila.” Dillon said. “But except for Daphne, we don’t know what they’re capable of.”

“Yes we do!” Wendy spoke up. “Before coming here, my father held a meeting with all your parents. They’re planning to fight the World Leaders with you. They think you can win because… you have the Firstborn.”

“We Firstborn can enhance our Guardians’ abilities.” Midna confirmed. “But we only do so to their full potential when combating a god, not mortals. Even against very strong mortals, it’s against our virtues to make our masters too powerful.”

“But we CAN help!” Meloetta grinned. “It all comes down to how good our masters are at what they do.”

“And I don’t know about you guys, but I FOUGHT one of the World Leaders!” Anthony proclaimed. “I’m ready for him!”

“I fought one as well,” Wendy mentioned. “Henry Churchill. If it’s okay with you guys, I would like to face him first.”

“Why?” Nagisa asked.

Wendy looked at the boy curiously. Behind him was a barefoot girl with magenta hair. Her hair is
blue like mine... and that girl looks like Chelia. “Because he captured one of my friends.”

“Good enough of a reason for me.” Goombella ‘shrugged.’

“But what can the other World Leaders do?” Chris asked. “We know Daphne’s a shadowbender and Stonebuddy’s an earthbender…”

“Henry is a paperbender, Jennifer Bush is a lighbender, and Felius Umbridge is a wordbender.” Wendy recapped.

“I remember Felius!” Meloetta perked. “Her vocabulary was the tops!”

“We know what they do, but fighting them won’t be easy as CP10.” Aurora figured. “And we couldn’t beat them without a few bruises.”

“We can always get Mocha and Ururu to stomp around their base.” Jinta snickered.

“Absolutely not!” Mocha stated. “My legs still hurt from when CP10 cut me!”

“I guess that was my fault.” Carol admitted. “Mocha helped level the playing field, but I didn’t expect CP10 to gang up on her.”

“I hate to say it, but we may have to rely on the Firstborn if we want to have a shot at beating them.” Dillon said. “Especially if we’re gonna take the Octogan.”

“All I need to do is get close enough to Andrew.” Maddy said.

“I’ll be behind you in case you can’t.” MaKayla followed. “I am a timebender.”

“There’s something else.” Wendy spoke. “My father said the World Leaders were going to use something called a Grand Inferius.”

“I know what that is!” Index shouted. “It was in a book called *Fairy Sisters*. The bad guys created an army of zombies that were indestructible.”

“How can the World Leaders do that?” Aurora asked.

“My father said he wasn’t sure if the Leaders could do it, yet.” Wendy said.

“We should probably assume that they can.” Chris inferred.

“Then what’s our plan?” Mason asked.

Silence followed. There was too much to be prepared for, and they didn’t know how much time they had. “Everyone here needs to rest.” Everyone turned to face Panini. “Return to your treehouses and be ready for tomorrow. Because tomorrow… we attack the World Government.”

“Do you think we’re ready?” Dillon asked.

“We don’t have anymore time to train. The Firstborn will have to help their Guardians fight the Leaders, the other operatives will provide support, and Maddy and Kayla... if you really think you can, take the Octogan from King Andrew.” Both girls nodded. “GOT THAT, FIRSTBORN?!” Panini screeched at the baby gods. “You better stop sitting back and do your part, because as far as I’m concerned, YOU’RE operatives, too!”

“YES, MA’AM!” they yelped. (“Mana-Mana!”) (Midna saluted with her Hair Hand.)
Dr. Strange’s Lab, the following day

Hugo Strange placed the God Fruit inside a small cauldron and squeezed the juices out of it. “Oooo-oooo-oaaaa-aaaa…” Felius Umbridge sang a song like an opera star, her notes flowing into the pot as the potion bubbled and brimmed. The Elixir of Life was created.

“Your voice is lovely, Master Umbridge.” Dr. Strange said admiringly. “I cannot believe you were never in opera.”

“It was my mother’s suggestion, but I felt my duties lied with law enforcement. –Felius Umbridge replies truthfully.”

“Jennifer dearest, please keep your hands out of the potion.” Henry Churchill told her without looking up from his book.

“But it smells so yummy.” Jennifer replied bubbly. She was beside a boiling magic cauldron with King Andrew.

Dr. Strange came to pour the Elixir of Life into the larger cauldron. “With this, the Grand Inferius can commence.” The King spoke, raising his Octogan. “Using the Soul Stone inside the Octogan, I have collected an assortment of souls from the Spirit World and hid them inside the portions of Lazarus delivered with the milk bottles. Thanks to Sandman, we have lost some, but there is still enough to make an army. With the Fire Chi taken from Malladus’s soul, this potion is the correct temperature, and the souls can be imbued with Underworld darkness. Now, all Daphne must do is command the shadows to pass through the potion and possess the bodies who have consumed the Lazarus.”

“I’ll send a shadow to find the first subject.” Using her bending, Daphne Anderson called one of the shadows inside the glass capsules. It flew through the cauldron, and traveled across the world faster than the wind.

“AAAAAAHHHH!” An innocent child playing on a farm was engulfed by the shadow, molding and transforming his body. Under Daphne’s command, the child sunk into the Underworld and rose from the floor in the laboratory.

The boy standing before them had purple hair, black clothing, and a purple scarf. His eyes were black sclera with green pupils, but Andrew knew the color they bared before the Inferius. The King knelt before the boy, staring into his eyes. “Travis?”

The boy stared wide. “Andrew? Where…” Travis looked around. “Where am I? Who are these people?”

Andrew channeled energy into his fists and smashed Travis between them, breaking the zombie into pieces. In seconds, the pieces reassembled, regenerating Travis to normal. “Andrew, what gives?!”

“An Inferius can roam with free will and controlled will.” Dr. Strange aimed a hand at Travis and used magic.

“AAAH!” The black sclera turned white in Travis’s eyes. He stood still, awaiting his next orders.

“With most of your chis imbued into the potion, My Masters can summon Inferi to their side.” Strange continued.

“That will not be necessary. Felius Umbridge needs naught more than words. This is the last time
she wants anything to do with magic…”

“Start activating the rest of them.” Andrew turned to leave the room. “The Spirit World Project will be complete. I just have one last matter to tend to.”

In the central throne room, Abram Johnson was writhing in pain on the table. His father approached him and said, “The Inferius is starting now, Abram. By the end of this month, we will have everything under control. The Inferi will slay everyone, and with the power you and I possess, we can organize all the world’s denizens into a divided Spirit World. You should have finished adapting to him by now.”

“This isn’t going to work, Dad!” Abram grunted. “Cheren will… stop you!”

“Cheren is dead, son. Perhaps, if I can find his soul, I can revive him as an Inferius.”

“Do you really think… you’ll actually be able to make your own Spirit World?!?”

“Our ancestors have been building the perfect world for generations. For the rest of existence, the Dimensional Fusion will be nonexistent. Our worlds will have the undisturbed peace they originally had. There’s nothing that can stop this, Abram. The Grand Inferius starts NOW.”

“Misser King Andrew.” The Hispanic maid, Consuela approached them. “You no have no more lemon pledge in God’s Domain.”

“REALLY?!!? You’re talking to me about this NOW?! You waited RIGHT before I started the Inferius?!”

“Inferi leave a filth… I need lemon pledge.”

“Ugh…” Andrew walked off. “If anyone needs me, I’ll be in the attic!”

The shadows soared across the planet and claimed all the souls unfortunate enough to be their targets. Genki Sanban transformed into her late daughter Kuki, Monty Uno turned into Nigel Uno, Agatha Uno became Eva’s blood-mother Mamare, Inferi good and evil were rising from the graves. All were confused by their own return, but a strange and terrible impulse told them to obey the World Government.

“95,829 shadows went out.” Daphne announced. “94,123 became Inferi. I command them all… ATTACK.” (Play “Protocol 10” from *Batman: Arkham City*)

**Los Angeles**

Inferi comprising of Davy Jones and his Dutchman Pirates emerged from the streets. “What is the meaning of this-ah?!” questioned the Heartless Captain.

“Oi, Captain! I feel as spry as a young’un!” Maccus exclaimed.

“Why do ya suppose this happened?” Koleniko asked.

Davy Jones viewed Sector L’s treehouse not far away. “If I am cursed to walk upon this earth once again… I will have my REVENGE-AH!”

“YAAAAAAAHHH!!” The pirates ravaged the town, more undead than they have ever been, making up for 20 lost years.
“Holy freaking slag.” said Sandman. From Quahog’s rooftops, his trio of heroes watched as the zombies of fallen Kids Next Door operatives plagued the streets. They broke into restaurants and devoured food that couldn’t satisfy, and all the sodas in the world could not quench their thirst. “This is even worse than the Brotherhood.”

“Told the words right out of my mouth.” a voice said behind them. The trio turned, finding Dillon Simmons alongside Koda Shrieves and Corey Sanderson.

“Dillon… Corey! You, too?”

“I’d love to catch up, Nolan… but I’m not in the right spirits.” Dillon grabbed a S.C.A.M.P.P. and blasted the heroes with Corey’s assistance. Koda Shrieves rolled forward and swiped a knife at Yuki, who froze Koda’s arm with a single touch and snapped it off.

“Didn’t hurt a bit!” Koda wrapped his other arm around Yuki and jumped off the building, aiming to smash the icebender against the concrete. Yuki aimed both hands down and weakened their fall with blasts of ice.

Nolan took Dillon’s weapon and threw it elsewhere, exchanging fists with his old friend. “Why are you fighting me, Dillon?!”

“Do you know what it’s like to be plucked out of Heaven and forced to return to this hell? I do.” Dillon kicked Sandman and rolled his wheelchair back, then Corey grabbed the hero’s neck from behind.

“S-S-Sorry, Nolan. We’re u-under their c-control.” Corey stuttered. Crystal bashed the zombie off with her staff, but Dillon tackled the Sandman and fell off the building with him. Nolan struggled and punched the undead off, activating the chair’s glider to make a coordinated landing. He saw Yuki wrestling with Koda and chose to ram his wheelchair over the zombie’s head.

“I don’t even know where to begin!” Sandman yelled.

“What did you do last time?” Yuki reminded. “You said ‘Screw all these villains, I’m going for Brain.’”

Crystal Wickens glided down and asked, “But do you have any idea who the Brain is in this scenario? AAAAH!” Lightning struck from behind, causing Crystal to fall.

“I found you again, Crystal!” Jonah Icarus hovered above with lightningbending. “I won’t let you escape this time!”

“I don’t even know you!” Crystal argued.

“Then let me give you a refresher: I am—” A purple-haired boy flipped up, planted a M.A.R.B.L.E. in Icarus’ ear, and exploded him.

The boy landed on his feet as Crystal gasped, “It can’t be! Travis?!”

“Crystal.” He faced her. “You’re not gonna believe who’s behind this.”

“AAAAAH-!” Koda Shrieves charged Nolan from behind, but Yuki froze him and shattered the ice. “Will you take us to him?” Nolan wondered.
“Yes.” Travis twitched. “It’s the World Leaders on Mariejoa. Though I’m not in my free will at the moment.”

“We know the way.” Yuki froze Travis up to his head. “But we can’t just let these zombies wreck everything.”

When Icarus regenerated, another M.A.R.B.L.E. was thrown to destroy him. Sector Q appeared on the scene. “If you know where to go, get to it!” Drake Puncture ordered. “We’ll protect this city!”

“Be careful. Let’s go, team!” Sandman called his Sandmobile, the trio hopping in and taking for the sky.

“Crystal… put some sense into him.” Travis said to himself, watching from his ice trap.

“AAAIIIEEEE!” Jar Jar Blinks ran for his life. “I sorry, Legy-Wegy! I sorry I no share the tofu!”

“We’ll SKEWER YOU!” Legion’s Inferius chased with a desire for long-awaited vengeance.

**GKND H.Q.**

“Numbuh 250 Trillion, incoming objects heading for the cafeteria!” a Wisp reported.

“Are there signs of life?”

“It…It can’t tell.”

Five Inferi crashed through the glass wall. “YAAAAHOO!” Red and Purple cheered. “The Almighty Tallest are BACK, baby!!”

“GIVE US YOUR SNACKS!” cried Purple.

“Red and Purple?! It can’t be!” Makava exclaimed.

“TEAR THEM UP!” Tronta declared. The operatives bombarded the Tallests with a storm of lasers. Their bodies were turned into confetti, but that confetti reformed into the annoying Irken emperors.

“Still ALIIIIIIVE!”

“STOP messing around and CRUSH THEM!” the tiny Tallest Dirk ordered.

“Awwwwwww!” the twins cooed. “He’s adorable!” said Purple.

“I’m not adorable! I AM Tallest Dirk! Conqueror of 24 galaxies and 1,015 planets!”

One of the other Inferi, Revan Bane Sidious, marched down the hall. “Where are you going, my son?” Revan turned. He glared at his Inferius father, Emperor Palpatine.

“My Brotherhood of Evil is imprisoned in this base’s dungeon. I’m going to tell them the boss has returned. Why don’t you go see if your old Sith buddies are still around?”

“This is our second chance, Revan: to rule the universe as father and son.”

“NOT WITH YOU!” Revan shot a Psycho Sphere to blast Palpatine away. “As soon as I rescue my old friends… I’m coming back for NOLAN.”
The Noah; somewhere in space

“Captain!” Rallo Tubbs pointed at the sky. “There’s a big-ass meteor coming straight for us!”

“Relax, Ralls.” Augustus sucked his lollipop with a confident smirk. “Nothing can damage this—THAT’S NO METEOR!”

A big round mass crashed on the Noah’s deck, along with a smaller round mass. “NYAAAAA HA HA HA HA!” Big Mom was alive and in the artificial flesh. “AUGUSTUS… what a big piece of CANDY you found! NAAAAH!” Charlotte sunk her teeth into the Gummi Ship, but it was too strong for her teeth.

“BIG MUM!” Henrietta exclaimed. “But who is…”

“So, YOU’RE the newest sweets in my bloodline.” Sherry Linlin observed. The Linlin ancestor had strawberry hair, red swirls on her white cheeks, and wore a dress that could have been made of sweet pink gum with lollipop lace. “Or should I say a couple of them.”

“I don’t understand! How are you two alive?!” Augustus questioned, his lollipop nearly falling out from talking.

“The World Leaders revived us, Augustus…” Big Mom drooled. “They want us to EEEAT this ship… and I say, YEEEEEEEES!” Her bulging red zombie eyes swelled with hunger.

Mandy McKenzie leaped and struck the Candy Pirate with her sword. “I regret not having the chance to duel you, Big Mom.” Mandy’s body brimmed with an aura of fear. “I’m thankful for this opportunity.”

While Nel was innocently wandering the ship’s hall, she heard something crash through a hatch behind her. “Oh?” She turned to face a tall Inferius: an 18-year-old with long cyan hair, a skull mask on her head, and strong bare legs going into a green loincloth dress.

“Hi, Nel.” The Inferius glared at her. “I Nel.”

“You… Nel?” The cavegirl was royally baffled.

Mariejoa

♫ “Destroyyyy, destroyyyy, destroyyyy…!” ♫ The chaos brought joy to Jennifer’s childish heart. “The Rapture has come, and God makes the sinners fight for Him!”

“This is no time for celebration, Jennifer.” Lucas Stonebuddy spoke with one hand on the ground. “Here they come now…”

A humongous stone arm erupted from the earth of the marble town and crushed Stonebuddy and Jennifer under its palm. Lucas stomped a hole for himself and defended, but when Jennifer was crushed flat, the sun over Mariejoa vanished. The hand lifted off: the angels chorused as the Holy Light brought Jennifer to her feet once more.

The base of the stone arm opened, and out stepped the White Lotus: Red Eye Vaati, Rachel T. Uno in her samurai garb, Fanny Drilovsky, Danika York in a black leather jacket, shorts, and sneakers; Eva Jackson in her vacation wear, Angie McKenzie, Matthew Dimalanta, and Mikaela Chariton.

“This feels more natural.” Danika said regarding her clothes. She was tired of being a housewife.
“I know, right?” remarked Rachel, her katana drawn. “Look out above!”

Two giant statues of Jesus flew over on Stonebuddy’s control with intent on crushing them, but Angie erected a rock platform to lift her to the statues and shatter them with a single punch. She gasped when nine gray stone cubes flew in and surrounded her. When they collided on her, Angie found herself struggling to push them away with her bending. “Your Logia earthbending cannot meld with my stonebending.” Lucas observed. “You are not pure enough.”

A large gush of water reached from the river and smashed down on Lucas, who jumped away, only to be grabbed in Mikaela’s psychic. “You try raising two kids and see if you’re still pure at the end of the day.”

“I’ll save you, Lucey!” Jennifer declared, preparing to conjure a sun. “OUCHIE!” Vaati stomped down like a rocket and pinned the Leader down.

“Our White Lotus Revolutionaries are already combating the Inferius around the world. Once we dispose of you Leaders, they will be gone and your plans will fail. Hm?” Vaati cocked a brow when blank papers orbited around his light breeze.

“That’s always been the way you work, Mr. Red Eye.” Henry Churchill materialized above in a cluster of papers. “Violence solves everything, Captain America, hum di da la. Unfortunately, only the controllers of the Inferius can stop the Inferius, and we have no intent on doing so, yet.”

“Don’t forget how it was thwarted the first time.” Vaati smirked as the papers were slowly attaching to his form. “Fairy Princess Mavis inherited Zeref’s power and stopped the Inferius herself. I’m positive she will do the same… and that’s also when I plan to give my daughter the greatest gift of all.” Vaati BURST a gust of wind and scattered the papers. “And I’ll have you know Captain America is the 4th person I most admire!”

“You know the person I most admire?!” Jennifer shouted. “IT’S GOD! And GOD SAYS GET OFF ME!” She squirmed like a child under Vaati’s feet.

Vaati stomped her in the face and knocked her out. “Jennifer Bush, the woman who keeps Resurrecting.” Vaati drew the breath out of her with his bending. The angels sung, pulling the breath back inside her as Jennifer blasted Vaati off with light. “Perhaps there is only one way to end you: Resurrecci-”

“SILENCE!” ordered Felius Umbridge, taping Vaati’s mouth with the very word. “You dark mages repulse me! Have ignominy, wisen up!” Words shot at Vaati like bullets, but he swiftly dodged and used nonverbal magic to cast Reductor Curses at the hag.

Stonebuddy protected Umbridge with stone pillars, having chucked a stone block at Mika. The woman merely expanded into a pink body of psychic and punched down at him. “Huh?” She faced left when the twilight sun mysteriously appeared over the mountain’s horizon.

“There you go, Daphne! Teach ’em a couple!” yelled Jennifer.

Gray slithery shadows swerved all around the marble buildings, binding Danika, Matthew, and Rachel to the ground. Daphne Anderson rose out from the shadow of a building, three black roses in hand. “When a black rose withers… a gray rose blooms in the garden.”

Danika broke the Shadow Possession on her friends, using Veil to slither over to Daphne and grab her out of her Veil. “You’re the Daphne my mom always talked about. You’re my aunt, aren’t you?”
“So, you’re Bella’s daughter.” Daphne spoke tonelessly. “She wouldn’t stop talking about you.”

“You know where she is?! What about my dad, where’s he?”

“Before they left you, I paid a visit to your mother in secret, asking her to come to Mariejoa for a special project. She was delighted to introduce me, but I told her not to. She was happy to fulfill a request for her long-lost sister… In truth, I wanted her Shadow Chi to enhance my powers so that I could complete the Inferius. I took her chi using the Sun Chi Lantern, which only worked thanks to the bond we still shared. My second intention… was for your family to be left alone.”

“Why would you do a thing like that?!”

“To teach you a lesson I learned: if you depend too much on someone, you will face disappointment and be left in gloom. There was someone that I admired and trusted in the past… but he vanished, and the memory of him vanished. I wanted you to know that feeling. It would have made you stronger.”

“Where are my parents now?”

“Behind you.” Danika gasped and whipped around. Isabelle Anderson had wrinkled skin, but her patterned emerald dress and green high-heel sandals were the same. Her eyes were that of an Inferius.

“Mom…” Danika released Daphne and almost cried.

“I guess I didn’t know what I was getting into when Daphne called.” Bella giggled. “She killed me… and your father was sacrificed to revive me this way. It was worth it at least… You’re so grown-up, Danika.”

Bella approached and gave her daughter a warm hug. Danika said nothing and returned the hug. “Mom… I have so much to tell you. I have a husband and a son…”

“That’s wonderful, Dani! Will I get to meet them?”

“Of course! I’ll introduce you.”

Daphne made a sign with her fingers. Isabelle’s sclera turned white: she lost her love for her daughter and quietly swiped one of Danika’s daggers. The zombie raised it above her daughter’s back. Cheshire gnashed at the zombie, pulling her master away and taking the blade back. “Mom!”

The soulless Inferius showed no resent and sent her shadow, Akita to wrestle with Cheshire. An angered Danika whipped around to Daphne, but the ghost woman retreated into her Veil and fled somewhere in the town.

Vaatii cast a spell to destroy the word taping his mouth. Felius Umbridge was retreating to the castle, so the wind mage flew high and rocketed for her. “You won’t escape me-!” A beam burst from the castle and sent Vaati crashing to a building. Everyone turned as the mighty King Andrew leapt from his home and dented the street with his armored feet.

“I fear I will need to get more lemon pledge.” The King said through his helmet.

“ANDREW!” He faced Rachel Uno on his left. “Is this how you want to be remembered?!”

“If the prophecy is completed, no one will be around to remember. I have every intent on keeping the memories of you and your family young… Rachel.”
“I don’t need you for that! My children are legacy enough!”

“So, you are not aware... Your beloved Heir of Courage is dead.”

“W...What?” stuttered Rachel.

Twin rays of emerald fire blasted Andrew, who blocked with his right hand and repelled them at Fanny Drilovsky. The woman absorbed them with Logia and spat a comet from her mouth, another easy block for Andrew. “Don’t listen to him, Rachel! This stoopid boy will try anything!”

“But I was one of few you idolized, Fanny.”

“No more!” Fanny pelted rapid fireballs at Andrew, and while he was blocking, Rachel ran to slice at his cape, but His Highness sensed this with Observation Haki and dodged, punching Rachel with Armament.

“Rachel, you were not meant to wield a sword. And Fanny, you were never meant to command fire. These powers you all have inherited are steadily destroying the universe. Every day, the Dimensional Fusion continues growing... until one day, it will implode upon all of us. The only way to stop this fate is to divide us into separate worlds. With the limitless power of the Octogan, the solution is at hand!”

“Is it really your solution?” Morgan Uno softly descended and set her feet on the ground behind Andrew. “Or is it the Octogan’s plan?”

“Morgan... won’t you join me? I can finally give you the life you wanted... I can make everything your way.”

“You promised you wouldn’t hurt me, Andrew. I don’t think you would have. But it was never you in control. It was always... that thing in your eye.”

“The only puppets here are all of you. All your efforts will merely lead to Lord English’s return. You are dooming the entire multiverse. I will not let that happen! I’ll destroy anyone in my way! Including... those little nuisances you shrunk to fit under your coat.”

Morgan braced herself. “Did you really think I wouldn’t expect you to help them? Open your coat, Morgan... let me see the New Generation.”

“...If you say so.” Morgan threw off her labcoat and revealed... a miniature Helmaroc King hugging her waist. (End song.)

“What?!” Andrew gasped. That was not what he had foreseen at all.

“Quack quack.” Helmaroc sang. “Quack quack. Quack quack, quack quack quack.” The masked bird let go of Morgan and marched across the street, jigging his tail and flapping his wings to the rhythm. “Quack qua-ack! Quadda quack quack, quadda quack!” A parade of birds appeared one-by-one and followed him. “Quack quack... qua-qua, qua-qua quack quack quadda quack.” Helmaroc King slowly grew to his giant size. “QUACK quack! Qua-qua-quack quack... quadda quack.”

With that, Helmaroc folded his wings and faced The King. His body trembled... and instantly exploded into feathers as KND operatives popped out, ranging from Sector V, W, IC, SA, GF, and Global Command. “Kids Next Door, BATTLE STATIONS!” Aurora screamed.

“Everyone, spread out and find what’s causing the Inferius!” Dipper ordered. “If you encounter a World Leader, don’t engage until a Firstborn user arrives!”
King Andrew gripped his helmet when the Octogon began reacting to the trick. Several operatives sprinted past him to head into the castle. “The Octogon was deceived again?! But it was such a petty trick, how did it not see?!"

“Perhaps you should’ve studied.” Morgan tossed a Psycho Sphere that Andrew kicked skyward. “I remember this one kid that used a magic 8-ball to solve multiple choice questions. (Though it did get him past 3rd grade.)”

“Uhhhn...” Vaati had a slight headache after the blow. When he woke up from the rubble, the one standing before him was his daughter. “Wendy...”

“Hello, Father. I told the Kids Next Door all the information from the meeting. The Firstborn Guardians are going to combat the Leaders.”

“You’re brilliant, Child!” Vaati leapt to his feet. “Victory will soon be ours!”

Six Inferi sprouted up around them. They consisted of Bellatrix Lestrange, Mad-Eye Moody, Sirius Black, Dumbledore, and much to Wendy’s horror, Lord Voldemort. “Chapter 15 of Destroying Your Enemies.” Henry Churchill formed from papers in the air. “Give them no advantage. Hello, Miss Marvell. Come to kill me, have you?”

“I want you to tell me where Chelia is!” Wendy aimed her wand threateningly.

“I don’t believe you deserve to know. We have yet to sap the God Chi out of her.”

“What is the point in having more power?! Vaati questioned. “There will be no need for it assuming your precious Spirit World comes to be!”

“The World Government will need to remain at large to keep our world in balance. We haven’t overlooked any possible threats, ergo it’s wise to prepare ourselves with more power. Voldemort, eliminate them.”

“AVADA KEDAVRA!” Voldemort shot a Killing Curse, which Wendy narrowly dodged as it struck Vaati.

“DAD!” cried Wendy.

“I’m okay, Wendy!” Vaati smirked. “As long as you are my Horcrux, I will not die!”

“Horcrux?” Voldemort cocked a brow.

“That’s the one I told you of, My Lord.” Bellatrix whispered in his ear. “His soul is scattered. If we kill the girl, you can have his body.”

Vaati kicked them as fast as lightning and cast Reductor Curses at the other Inferi. He faced up at Henry and shot up with an Armament kick, but the World Leader dodged and formed a spinning circle of papers above the Minish. Vaati was unable to escape from their pull. “Vacuum Trees sap the oxygen from the nearby air and sends it under the sea to create long-lasting air bubbles.” Henry explained. “A Logia airbender will find it difficult to escape.”

Inside the castle, Don Quixote Sugar was sprinting through the posh halls on bare feet, Meloetta gliding by her side. The singer was clothed in a flowing magenta dress with a music sheet design and notes. “Are you sure we didn’t need to bring all the Firstborn?” Sugar asked.

“Too many enemies are here.” Meloetta reasoned. “Just throwing all the Firstborn in front of them
is asking for trouble. But I’m positive we can win with the numbers we have!”

“I hope you’re right.” They were coming to a sealed double-door, and Sugar pushed it open with both hands.

They came to a halt inside a bright blue, cylindrical room with a stain glass ceiling. It had a flower design, and the light made the room sparkle. Sugar and Meloetta kept their faces up in wonder and awe at the beauty. “How DARE you surge into my private quarters like uncivilized frat boys! – Felius Umbridge hopes you will take my criticism to heart.” They faced down at the elderly hag, whose voice echoed in the chamber.

“You’re one of the World Leaders.” Sugar knew.

“Correct. And you are Don Quixote Sugar. The traitorous Dressrosan princess who aided her father’s dark designs for a toy empire. Your family is DISGRACEFUL!” A soundwave burst from her mouth and struck Sugar.

“I’m different now!” Sugar declared. “I realized my true passion was singing.”

“Singing? How utterly meaningless. Are you quite enjoying your Japanese pop and ‘Snoopy G’, or perhaps the dreadful rubbish in your wasteful TV games? The world has ruined the poetry that was once oper-ra.” She rolled the ‘R.’

“Maybe you’re to blame for that. I may have done bad things, but those are nothing compared to what you Leaders are doing right now. How can you call me disgraceful with those zombies attacking everyone?!”

“We World Leaders desire a perfect world with order and no evil. We wish for everyone to be in our control as the Inferi are. With we, the pure-hearted saviors, there shall be no more unrest!”

“How can you not be disgusted by your own words?! All souls in this world deserve the freedom to follow their own paths. They deserve to speak with their own voice.”

“Ludicrous! If such freedom is the true balance, perhaps you wished for your father to continue his actions. Perhaps you wish the ne’er-do-wells to roam free. But instead, you thwart their actions, like you intend to thwart me! HYPOCRITE!” Sugar’s heart cringed with the force of Felius’s voice.

“Don’t let her words affect you!” Meloetta encouraged. “You have good in your heart, Sugar! Fight with all the passion in your voice!”

Sugar smiled and stood straight. “You must have had good intentions too, Umbridge… but somewhere along the way, you lost sight of what was important. Meloetta, play me a tune!” Sugar spun with her feet sliding along the polished floor. “I will free this lady’s soooouuuul!”

**Boss fight: Felius Umbridge**

*Power Levels: Sugar – 1900. Umbridge – 6623*

“I’ve enjoyed this venture… the moment since it started.” Sugar sang the first verse with passion in her voice. Music notes soared like a whirlwind around her. “But all things must come to end, my friend. Your fa-il-ure WILL be charted!”
“CEASE your irrelevant singing, you silly slipshod!” Felius unleashed a soundwave that Sugar evaded with a graceful flip. The elder sang with vocals of an opera star, her flowing words flying at Sugar like the wind. Sugar used the sound to carry her feet across the floor, swaying her arms and making the notes fly at her opponent. “Poor! Improper!” Felius blocked with a barrier of words. “I laugh as you fall before your sorrows. TUT, TUT, TUUUUUT!” Her words shook the ground and caused Sugar to lose balance.

The princess decided to flip and continue sliding on her hands. “I already fell, I already cried! Too many of my friends have died. I’m not going to LOSE here. I’ll walk with my friends tooo neeext YEAR!” Flipping back to her feet, Sugar slid at Felius, crouching down and swinging a kick at the lady’s legs, but Felius twirled elsewhere.

“Be gone from my presence NOW. DICTIONARY STORM.” Felius took flight to the air and unleashed a cyclone of words.

“Be careful, Sugar!” Meloetta dodged the words. “If they hit you, you’ll be babbling like a soulless librarian!”

“Ooooooaaaaa……” Sugar sang a Song Road that would spiral up into Umbridge. The elder’s words turned the notes into nagging old hags, so Sugar stylishly leapt between lines on the road to continue the rhythm. “YOU – WILL – FALL!” The princess stomped Umbridge in the face, sending her falling to the floor.

Felius scowled at Sugar surfing down the Song Road. The elder sung, “I see the fears inside your heart. Your skin tingles and jingles to the bone.” Sugar felt a powerful vibration overcome her, the Song Road waving rapidly until she fell.

“AAAAH!” Sugar landed on her front, unable to stand from the vibration. As Felius marched closer, Sugar felt her very bones vibrate.

“You thought I was all talk, but you have been mistaken! Your soul will crumble as your body is shaken. TUT TUT TUUUUUT…”

“SILENCE!” Sugar sprouted a barrier that muted the sound around her. With Felius’s words blocked, the vibration stopped, so Sugar hopped up and glided away. “A silent soul is a soothed soul.” she sang calmly. “I will not fear, I will stay whole. There is much more I want to see.” She closed her eyes and touched her heart, easing the pain from earlier. “Your words will not get to me.”

“Ludicrous, how ridiculous!” Felius’s words could not penetrate the Sound Barrier.

Sugar kept her eyes closed and herself silent. She danced across the room and let her mind flow with the gentle notes. She felt free and peaceful, and imagined the beautiful peaceful world, where the Inferius was not happening and all her friends were happy. But outside this pseudo reality, the world was in chaos, her dearest friend was gone, and if they did not win, everyone would die. Sugar cried at the ideas, and the ease in her soul was gone.

“WHYYYYYYYYYYYY……” Through her pain and tears, Sugar unleashed a devastating soundwave at Umbridge.

“How could you relish in this pain?!” Sugar’s notes struck Umbridge with her very sadness. “How could you play this game?! Can’t you see all this hate and hurt?! I’ll bury you in the DIRT!” When Sugar unleashed her soundwave then, she gasped when Felius sucked it into her lungs.

“Your words are sweeeet like candy… yet, they hold no health or soul. I SPIT AT YOU!” Felius literally shot a glob of spit that hit Sugar like a baseball, smashing her nose as blood shot out. Sugar
fell on her back.

“Sugar!!” Meloetta flew over her on the verge of tears.

“She attacks with the fer-r-r-rocity of a beast.” The rolling of her R’s created an extending string of the letter from Felius’s mouth. “She cannot g-r-rasp my intelligence… but it will wr-r-r-rap thee!” The R’s roped around Sugar and slammed her around the floor and walls. Felius set Sugar on her feet, keeping her tied. “Do not forget your sins… let them burn you.” Her words flowed into Sugar’s ears.

Sugar remembered the 12 years she spent turning people into toys, trapped in an unaging body. Every victim she touched would be forgotten. She touched Cheren, and everybody forgot his examples. “AAAAHH!” These memories created a feeling like fire on her skin. Sugar fell, rolling helplessly, but unable to extinguish the raging fires.

“Sugar!” Meloetta touched her Guardian’s heart. The unseen flames dissolved. Meloetta projected an unbreachable Silence Shield around her and Sugar. Meloetta’s dress turned ice-blue as her hair became a light-blonde ponytail (like Snow Queen Elsa).

“Sugar… what is this feeling I’m seeing inside your soououul…?”

Sugar was silent for a moment. “Meloetta… I am afraid. Afraid of what my future will beehooold… What sorrows will uuuunfoooold? How can we go on without him? It’s as though we lost a sun. The world is now more dim… I forgot what it means to have fun.”

“COWARDS!” Umbridge’s words rattled the shield. “You cannot hide from your fate!” She approached, intending to pass the barrier physically.

“Have you forgotten what he wanted?” Meloetta smiled warmly. “For us to live, to breathe, to sing and dance. Will you let that woman crush you? Or fight with the song of a thousand ants.”

“FAUX GOD!” Umbridge grabbed Meloetta through the shield and threw her fro. “TUUUT!” She was hit by a Song Beam from behind.

“I will fight with the song of a thousand ants!” Sugar danced.

“ERRONEOUS! Ants have no VOICE, hence they cannot SING!”

“Your ears have withered, so you cannot listen!” Sugar remembered the Music Pikmin that sung in her ear on that day. “The singing ants whose tunes I’m missin’! But I hear them like the voices of the mountain! They paint me like the colors of the wind!”

“Those lyrics are not yours! THIEF! INFERTILE!” Sugar swiftly dodged Felius’s words, skiing up to kick the woman across the face. Felius hopped back up and encased herself in a whirlwind of words, preventing Sugar from getting close. “Do you truly believe it’s productive? This meager rebellion you’re conducting? You will go as your leader has gone: his teachings FOR-GOT-TEN!”

The Word Whirlwind flew to Sugar and whirled her around. Sugar broke it and soared across the air to her notes: “What more is your leader than a puppet? I’ve seen more free will in a Muppet. Cheren will always be our King! He inspired us to do GREAT things!” The rainbow notes created along her path struck Felius simultaneously. Sugar landed and conducted the notes into the woman. “Enjoy your words as they last, because believe me, they will go fast! Your King will fall, and ALL of your, tyranny… will be for naught. Because the Kids Next Door you NEVER fought!”

“TUUUUUT!” One last Song Beam took the World Leader down for good. Felius lay with her
skinny arms sprawled.

“And you’d do well to remember that.” Sugar stated firmly.

“ASTOUNDING performance!” Meloetta raised a score. “1,000 out of 10!”

“That’s as high as my score gets?” Meloetta giggled.

“Well, er, I could make it higher if you want.” The Firstborn blushed nervously.

“Nah, I’ll wait for the encore. Let’s catch up with the others.” Sugar began to leave the room, Meloetta joining. (Play “Final Boss 2” from Zelda: Tri-force Heroes!)

. . . . . . The two stopped, feeling a terrific rising in Sound Chi. They turned, seeing Felius’s body shaking as words brimmed around her in an aura. Her body became a white light as the words shot into her. With a blinding flash, Felius acquired a dress that made her seem 15 feet tall: wide and purple with a white blouse underneath, a gigantic red bow on the back, sparkling bracelets around her wrinkly arms, and a pink heart-shaped crown with a central red emblem. “TUUUAAAAT TUT TUT TUT, TUUUUUT TUT TUT TUT!” Her cackles carried the force of her power.

“So, this is her true power!” Sugar skied to avoid a powerful stream of “Ooooooo”’s conjured by her singing, but the princess’s Song Beams couldn’t bruise the Leader’s Fury Form.

“You are an inferior being!” Felius quaked the ground and knocked Sugar down, and the O’s grabbed her by the ankles and flailed her around. “Before my power, you are a hapless sack!”

“Not with MY power!” Meloetta snapped the O-rope and Sugar landed on her feet. “Sugar, let me help.” Her hair stretched into a song wave, wrapping around Sugar’s body as she brimmed with a rainbow aura.

Sugar sung a Rainbow Road that wrapped around the room like a ball, sliding all around it and leaving a trail of musical notes. “Planet Collaaaaaapse!” Sugar slammed her hands together, crushing Felius with the sphere of notes. “All things implode, all things explode!”

“Yes, but the wisest survive!” Felius survived and vibrated the very air molecules with her power. “The fools – they br-r-reak – under the crash – of reality!”

Sugar was being rattled by the molecules, covering her heart in fear it would stop. “My dreams are… reality. My reality was a nightmare. He pulled me… to safety. I will not… go back theeeere!” Sugar expanded a barrier from her heart and blocked the vibrations. She sung and danced freely. “Everything I WORKED for has been for this moment! Every day I breathed has been to see: the very thing I lived to make! A brand New World I will create.”

“A child’s boloney is unworthy to enter my ears!” Felius corked her ears with her pinkies, preventing Sugar’s notes from penetrating her thick robing.

“Am I a child cryyying at your knees? Then direct your eyes and tell me: WHAT ARE THESE?” Sugar pointed at her breasts, which made her music note dress even tighter.

“UCK! COVER THINESELF!” Felius shut her eyes.

“Sugar!” Meloetta beamed. “You’ve… grown!”

Sugar’s body had sprouted into the blossoming 22-year-old she was meant to be. Ignoring the tightness on her chest, Sugar swayed her aquamarine hair, long enough to spiral around her body.
like a ribbon. “I kept myself from growing! I kept myself from singing! But with wind on my feet, I keep going.” Sugar flipped and created three loops with her hair. “I’m off to the future, and my friends I will be bringing.”

“Tell meee… what future have thee? For it is here you will be buuuuried!”

“AAH!” Sugar was pressed to the ground by Umbridge’s condensed soundwaves.

“Will Heaven allow entry for a monster like you?” The words blasted Sugar to the ceiling. “Nay, you will fall down to Hell.” And Sugar crashed to the ground again, denting a crater. “Your soul is bound by the weight of your demons!” Sugar felt a strong compression in her chest.

“My soul has grown beyond that weight!” Sugar released a pulse that pushed the words off her. She jumped to her feet and pulled up her torn dress to cover her breasts. “No matter how much you hurt me… my soul will always be free!” She whoooshed around the room on a Song Road, conducting music notes at Umbridge’s head.

“I command you to stop!” The word ‘STOP’ flashed in Sugar’s path.

“NO!” Sugar burst through.

“CEASE!”

“NO WAY!”

“DOWN NOW!” Sugar sunk to the ground with a surge of gravity, but she placed hands and feet on the floor, continuing to slide along the song.

“I’m in control of my body! I choose to run or crawl. I can look like a hottie, or have fun or BRAWL!” Sugar slid under Umbridge’s dress and kicked her legs. The overclothed witch bobbed for balance. “Meloetta, it’s time to close this show!”

“O-kay, Sugar! This hag has got to go!” Sugar and Meloetta locked hands and soared like a comet. “Friendship, won’t you please, listen to my pleas, let’s defeat Umbridge with ease!”

“DESIST! END! CONCLUDE! DISCONTINUE!” Umbridge attacked with all the power her lungs could muster.

“Together with my friends, we will go without fuss! The New World is awaiting for us!” The notes became as colorful as Sugar’s soul.

“I will not be vanquished by mediocre LYRICS!” nagged Umbridge.

“Tiiime to close the shoooooo-oo-ooow.” Sugar pierced the Word Witch with passion and Firstborn-powered soundwaves. “The Soooong of the Raaaaainboooow!” (End song.)

“WAAAAAAaaaaaaahhh…” Like a balloon losing air, Felius’s Fury Form dissolved and vanished. The old lady lay defeated on the ground.

Sugar caught her breath, rubbing her throat after such an invigorating song. “I did it…” She smiled. “I actually DEFEATED ONE!” She jumped—her dress finally ripped off, no longer able to withstand her adult form. “. . . . .” Sugar felt a light breeze. “AAAAACK!” She covered herself. “I’m naked in the middle of a warzone!!”
“10,000/10!!” Meloetta raised a score.

“THAT’S NOT WHAT I WANTED THE SCORE FOR!! Find me some clothes quickly! Before somebody sees!”

**Castle Throne Room**

Sector GF burst through a double-door. “This looks like the throne room!” Dipper announced.

“Just like the caption said!” Candy pointed.

“Dipper, who’s that over there?” Mabel indicated the person squirming on the table. The four kids rushed over for a closer view.

“Nnnn-aaah! Ack-aaa…” The teenage boy grunted.

“No way… it’s Abram!” Dipper realized.

“NYAH!” Abram shot up and faced them with madness in his blue eyes. The four stepped back. “Tell me… Cheren… is he… dead?!”

“Uhhh…” Dipper stuttered, “Y-yeah… we don’t know how, but… he is.”

“!!! HOW COULD HEEEE!” Abram unleashed a powerful beam from his lungs, the kids barely dodging as Dipper lost the cover of his hat. “I trusted him to **SAVE UUUUUS!!**” Abram sent another beam through the roof.

Seeing this from outside, Midna gasped. “That energy… it feels like…!”

“**Felius has fallen!**” Andrew instinctively knew. “**Jennifer, Daphne, Code White Flame!**”

Before anyone could question what that meant, everybody’s shadows suddenly slipped away from under their feet. “My shadow!!” Wendy gasped.

“**GOD SAVE US, EVERYONE!!**” Jennifer cried. “**BURN IN THE FIRE OF A THOUSAND SUNS!!**” A thousand suns appeared in the sky, ensuring there was no place for shadows to hide. All the shadowless heroes combusted into white flames, for Loneliness’ Toll would take their lives.

In the few seconds it would’ve taken to destroy them, the Sandmobile WHOOSHED in from the light and crushed Jennifer flat. The suns vanished, eyesight returned, and the flames extinguished. “Did somebody call a fireman??” Sandman announced.

“DAD!” Dillon cheered.

“Why, Hairstress!” Henry Churchill formed above them. “How delightful to see YOU here!”

“Hairstress?” Crystal hasn’t been called that since, “**HENRY?! YOU’RE** one of the World Leaders?!”

“I’m at my limits with colorful hair at the moment. So, allow me to destroy you swiftly.” Henry swooped a swarm of Sun Papers at the heroes.

Hidden from view, Sector SA heard the conversation. “What did Henry mean by that?” asked Nagisa.

“He has a phobia of people with colorful hair.” Goombella said matter-of-factly. “It was in his data
files. He used to be an operative, you know. Boy, I would hate to be you guys.”

“Hmmm…” The blue-haired boy was concocting a plan.

**Moonbase**

Bon Clay Jr. stood by Cheren’s bedside. With both hands cupped over Cheren’s left, Clay gazed at his leader’s face. “Cherry Pie… I know you’re in there somewhere. You aren’t one to die that easy. Perhaps I could just kiss you and wake you up… but I know you don’t love me that way.” Clay smiled softly. “I believe in you, Cheren… I always have… And if I didn’t have feelings for Alexei… I would keep chasing you.”

“I’m touched.” Clay gasped and whipped to the entrance: Alexei Abramovici stood with the Inferius of Ape King Gaul.

“Lexi… you came back!” Clay cried tears.

“We’re not staying. My master has ordered me to tie up any loose ends. Gaul…” Alexei pointed, “Destroy Cheren’s body.”

“Yes.” The Demon Ape hissed and raised his dual swords.

“PICK ON SOMEONE YOUR OWN SIZE!” Ruby socked Gaul with an armored fist and tipped him over. “No one’s getting their grubby hands on OUR leader!”

**Star Haven**

Nebula soaked her feet in the Fountain of Dreams, smiling as Jirachi happily floated in the magic water. Her communicator rang, and she saw her brother was calling. She answered, “Hello? … Zombies? You can’t be serious. Fine, I’ll be there in a minute.” She slipped on her shoes and ran outside. “Mom, you’re not gonna believe—hu-!” She gasped.

“Oh! My niece…” Dimentio Z. Winkiebottom smiled warmly. Behind him, Dimentia threatened to shoot him with a Starburst. “I was just telling your mother how I miraculously rose from the dead. Like a flower blooming after a cold winter.”

Nebula shot a Starburst, but it was absorbed by his Logia body. “Aha ha ha… If I wanted to, I could slurp this entire galaxy in the palm of my hand.” Dimentio clasped the air in his right hand. “But I won’t close the show before it even begins. You see, Nebula… you never would have defeated me if I didn’t let you.”

“You LET me foil your diabolical plan to destroy the universe’s matter? You know, there’s easier ways to get yourself arrested and killed.”

“That’s not to say I wasn’t trying to win… but I knew I was going to lose. I also knew he would come back for me. And he has. Lord English has come back for me.”

“Lord… English?”

“Sister.” Dimentio faced his twin. “I spent too much time with Nebula on my last visit. I want to catch up with you as well.”

Dimentia trapped Dimentio in a Space Block and exploded it. “I’ll wait until the afterlife.”

Dimentio merely regenerated. “I can’t wait that long…”
The island quaked powerfully when another force made impact: a purple alien titan with black and gold armor, missing his left arm. “Ah, but it seems you have another reunion.” Dimentio observed. “I’ll leave you to it. Ciao!” He took Dimentia and splorped.

“Mom!”

“No running, dear!” Thanatos poofed before Nebula and used deathbending to put her to sleep (not permanent).

“So, where is this Fountain of Dreams?” Thanos asked.

“In there!” Thanatos pointed at Star Sanctuary. “Say, Thanos, can I call you something else? People are going to get confused.”

Ignoring his request, Thanos stomped toward the sanctuary and tore the roof off with his right hand alone. “AAAH!” Jirachi cried. “M-M-MONSTER!”

“I’m more than that, Newborn.” Thanos held Nebula’s sleeping body. “If you don’t want your caretaker to meet a horrible end… you will do something for me.” He wiggled his stub.

Jirachi knew what he wished, but with Nebula’s life on the line, he was afraid to say no. The Firstborn channeled his magic and made the fountain glow. Thanos knelt down and dipped his stub in the water. A brand new arm grew from it like a plant, the Mad Titan flexing its purple fingers. Thanos placed Nebula down and raised his restored hand: Thanatos fixed the Infinity Gauntlet over it perfectly. The Infinity Stones shone like stars upon the knuckles.

“Thanos is REBOOOORRRRN!!!” The titan raised and flashed the powerful gauntlet. “…?” He realized there was a color missing from the index knuckle. “Wait a minute! Where is the Soul Stone?!”

“We’re on our way to collect that, don’t worry.” Thanatos assured.

The Grand Inferius is based off the Reanimation Jutsu from Naruto. Anyway, school and work are piling the workload on me, so appreciate any update that comes from now on. Next time, the war continues.
Chapter Summary

Sunni Chariton vs. Jennifer Bush and Wendy Marvell vs. Henry Churchill! This is a battle of fates!

In this part, we'll fight TWO World Leaders.

Chapter 78: The Girl With Blue Hair

Washington

“President Jessie, we’ve evacuated all the citizens to the underground shelter!” Richard Teague reported.

“Make sure they stay safe.” Jessie stood beside Kimaya, Suki, and Sheila. “I think we’re going to be here awhile.”

The four Lights were facing the Inferi of Carter Pewterschmidt, Prince Hans, and James McGarfield. “Man, I wish I was at Mariejoa with me mates.” Sheila complained. “But ’ey, it’s best not to have all the Lights where the World Leaders can grab ’em.”

McGarfield turned his fist iron and charged at Sheila, who spun her Light Fist and collided it with his. “Ouch!” Sheila jumped back, shaking her fist. “Dang Haki!”

“This beats the Lazarus by a mile!” Carter laughed as he threw punches against Kimaya’s Keyblades. “Why drown in that filthy hole when I can have an invincible zombie body?!”

“This time, I don’t intend to lose what’s mine.” Hans assured.

“NO you WON’T!” shouted Suki. “I mean… YES you will! Er, right?”

“Just fight them.” Kimaya told her.

GKND H.Q.

“HEY, GUUUUYS!” Revan announced to the prisoners in the dungeon. “Did ya miss me?!”

“Wa-ha! NO WAY!” Control Freak screamed.

“IT’S BRAIN!” Mad Mod exclaimed. “‘e’s back from the dead, he is!”

“In the sort-of-flesh!” Revan used Force Lightning to destroy the cells’ terminals and disable their barriers. The villains cheered as they escaped and gathered around their leader.

“Serves Wuya right for running off!” Jack Spicer proclaimed.

“Come on, villains! Let’s get revenge on those Kids Next Door the old Revan way!” Revan Bane captured them all in a massive teleport.
“BIIII!” Upstairs, Celebi and Team Vweeb were trapped in Tallest Dirk’s Fear Scream. Emperor Palpatine was about to strike Force Lightning, but Jerome opened a wormhole to catch it and redirect it at Dirk. Tronta tossed his bladed Light Discs to slice around the zombies’ bodies. “Someone oughta call Earth and ask them if they know anything about this.”

“I don’t know why Nebula hasn’t come, yet.” Jerome said. “I’m going to Star Haven. If you cannot kill the zombies, try to detain them.” He warped.

The Noah

“NYAAAA!” Big Mom gnashed at Mandy and Azula, who both pushed their sword and flaming foot up at the giant’s teeth and poured great strength to keeping her aloft. The lady pirates jumped away as Big Mom’s teeth loudly SNAPPED. “Using fearbending on her only makes her worse.” Mandy observed.

“Ma ma maaaa! Azula, your blue fire looks tastyyy! I want iiiiit!” Big Mom drooled poison acid on the deck. Azula set fire to make a great explosion, but Big Mom’s bulbous body was only slightly bruised before it self-healed.

Sherry Linlin had long pink nails that she swiped at Augustus and Henrietta, and they avoided in fear of catching the Candy Virus. “This is a beautiful ship you’ve found. Perhaps if you showed this to the family, they would forgive your betrayal, darlings.”

“I’m not coming back, lady.” Augustus told her. “All your family was trying to do was infect the Earth with your virus.”

“Sorry, but there were way too many creeps over there, anyway.”

On Captain Slag’s ship nearby, the Hyrule Slag was clashing swords with the Inferius of his Terminan counterpart. “Hyrule Slag… I’m sorry for not responding to your email. Ay’ve been dead, you see!”

“It’s okay, Termina Slag!” the former cried. “All is forgiven!”

The twin Rusty Petes sniffled. “That’s so beautiful!” they chorused.

Inside the Noah

“If you Nel… you… me?” Nel asked her older self.

“Augusus take Nel back home.” Older Nel replied. “Nel no know why she back… but Nel want talk to Augusus. Will Nel take Nel to him?”

“Um… Nel guess she help Nel.” replied the younger, confused cavechild.

KND Moonbase

Ruby pelted Gaul with rapid punches using her mech fists as rockets, and Sapphire caught him in psychic to throw him toward the main bridge. When Liberty Belle ran to the Ape King sword drawn, the ape slashed one of his own, but Libby jumped off it to slash Gaul in the face. “AHH!”

The ape punched Libby across the bridge, but was hit by light rays cast by Hibiki Lates.

“Why on the moon are you trying to destroy Cherry’s body?!” Bon Clay yelled as he kicked his slippers at Lexi’s hammer and cane. “Do you think he’s alive after all?!”
“I don’t understand why, but my masters ordered it!”

“SCREW your masters! How can you still work for them after knowing King Andrew’s being controlled by that Octo-thingy?”

“Because they are right! All of history’s tragedies happened because some fool was too drunk on power to control himself. It would be better to live in a world where no one could possess the kind of godly power benders can develop.”

“And you’re putting your faith in a bunch of fools who became so drunk on power, they passed out without remembering where they slept. You’re right about power-hungry fools, Lexi, but your faith is in entirely the wrong place.”

“And YOUR faith was placed in the hands of this boy! My masters know how he died, Clay: he was trying to attempt the God Tier, a transformation known only to the unstable First Dimension. He tried to do the unthinkable and shed his mortal coil. He was so hungry for power that he believed such a lie and killed himself without a second thought. Tell me why I should follow a boy so foolish?!?”

“Because Cherry did it for us! Everything he’s done has been for us! And if there’s even the slightest chance his soul’s still kicking, I’m putting every ounce of faith in him!”

“You’re disgraceful, Clay! Even if his precious transformation managed to work, he would be beyond every one of you. He would have the arrogance of a god no mortal should have, sitting high in Heaven and watching millions of mortals clash and die beneath his feet. And yet, even though his intention has failed, you still idolize him as if he WERE a god! You SICKEN ME!” With a forceful swing of his hammer, Clay was smashed on the floor.

Alexei stepped over and marched for Cheren, only for Clay to kick and wrap his slipper’s neck around Lexi’s leg, perform a flip, and slam the teenager on the floor. “Cheren was born as a mortal being, and he’ll always have the heart of a mortal! Because even if we’re different on the outside, we share the same heart. Cherry will love us forever and he will never abandon us! You hear that, Cherry Pie?!” Clay faced his leader. “Wake up as soon as you can!”

**God’s Domain**

Yuki Crystal found himself dodging spells cast by Rumpel Stiltskin’s Inferius while Nolan was exchanging punches with Dracula’s. The Sandman’s Armament Haki was able to bruise the vampire’s diamond skin, but it didn’t change the fact he was a regenerating zombie. “You know, a vampire zombie is plain unfair on its own.” Nolan commented.

“It matters not to me, as long as I attain vengeance.” Dracula hissed.

“My, they play together so well.” Henry Churchill floated above Crystal with papers orbiting him. The low half of his body was simply papers in the breeze. “Just like we used to, Hairstress.”

“But you were better than this, Henry.” Crystal stated. “My brother said you became the most respected Sector Leader in the Kids Next Door, so respected that all the other European sectors signed up under you.”

“That is all true, and to this day, I still cherish my memories in the Kids Next Door. That is why I couldn’t ignore King Reggie’s proclamation. The Spirit World Project will save the Kids Next Door and let their reputation continue. If your love for them is as strong as you say it is, you’ll understand.”
“I can’t understand why I should put my faith in some crazy adults who woke up a zombie army. Sorry, Henry, but this has to end.”

“I’ll say!” Vaati flew at Henry and stomped him in the face with an Armament kick, his Logia body reassembling and bouncing on the ground. “Thanks for rescuing me, Wendy!”

“Oh dear, this isn’t fair at all.” Henry patiently stood up. “You fellas need to put family first.” He made a whistle.

“Wendy, behind you!” Carla yelped when Voldemort appeared and cast the Death Curse, only for Vaati to take the blow for his daughter.

“You shan’t lay a finger on Wendy!” Vaati stated. “Horcrux or not, she is still my flesh and blood!”

“If you had a shred of love for her, you would-” Carla began.

“Carla, we can talk about that later!” Wendy said. “Dad, just keep them busy. I’ll fight Henry.”

“And Crystal, I was referring to you, too.” Churchill said as the Inferi of Travis and Ellen Wickens rose from the grave.

“Travis! And… I suppose you’re one of my ancestors as well?” Crystal inquired.

“I never had any children.” Ellen corrected, blasting magic at Crystal against her own will. Just as well, Travis leapt to kick his now-elder sister, who blocked with her staff and cast flames at Travis’s head.

Rachel Uno used Haki to strike Andrew with her sword, but His Highness needed only little pressure from his fist to defend. “Fighting me is a hopeless effort.” The King spoke. “In the past, I outmatched you. In the present, my power is beyond you.”

“What about ME?!” Chris Uno landed several feet on Andrew’s left, and Rachel jumped away when her son fired a Combustion Beam. Andrew punched the beam as his armor went undented by the explosion. “You’re that Sir Knightly guy that was with the Big Mom Pirates! I think you owe me a rematch.”

“Chris, don’t get close to him!” Rachel yelled. “I don’t want him to hurt you!”

“What, like YOU have any better shot at beating him?!”

“LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER!” Fanny Drilovsky shot down at Andrew as a fiery drill, missing her target as The King predicted her action. “This boy may have his fancy 8-ball, but our kids ain’t worth pittin’ against him.”

“LIIIIIGHT!” Jennifer Bush created a giant sun and set all the shadowless fighters on fire again.

“AAAAAH!” Sectors SA and IC screamed.

“If we keep going without our shadows, we’ll be vulnerable to sunlight!” MaKayla cried.

“HUH?” Suddenly, the flames vanished, despite the sun was still shining bright.

“Huuuuurr…” Midna had connected numerous Shadow Possessions to all allies on the field. “I’m using my power to become everyone’s temporary shadow. It kind of hurts, so do something about
that woman. Quickly!

“With pleasure!” Mika grew into a Psycho Giant and squished Jennifer flat. The sun vanished as the woman lay in a shoe-shaped crater. “Ooooodaa…” Jenny was revived by the angels’ chorus.

“Jennifer kept herself alive through Palutena’s God Chi for 4,000 years.” Diancie recapped. “No matter how many times she’s killed, she comes back to life.”

“That’s like an infinite lives cheat code.” Sunni stated. “Totally not fair.”

“I’ll tell you what’s unfair is using Firstborn to win!” Jenny argued. “That stupid Shadow Princess needs to burn-!” She tried to shoot a beam at Midna, but Morgan grabbed her former master in psychic and threw her across the town.

“Midna can’t safely release her hold as long as Jennifer is standing.” Mika said. “Sunni, wanna try and pin her down?”

“Sure thing, Mom!”

“Mew, Mew!” Mew cheered. The three psychics plus Morgan flew to where Jennifer landed. She hadn’t apparently died this time, but she held malice intent as she recovered.

“Her body may be really old, but it’s biologically younger than all the other World Leaders.” Morgan explained. “Keeping her down should be easy.”


“Ack!” Mika grunted. “I… can’t move!”

“The Crucifix Sealing binds you in place even if you’re a Logia!” Jenny smirked. “And if you try to use chi, you go STABBY!”

“I’ll just kill you and remove them myself!” Sunni drew her lightsaber.

“DON’T EVEN THINK IT!” Jenny wagged a finger. “Those Crosses are meant to stab them if I die, even though I’ll come back to life. I’m getting sick of getting killed, so this time, someone will die with me! Maybe I can’t kill the Firstborn, but I sure bet it’s gonna hurt him a lot.”

“So, you can’t fight by yourself, so you’re forced to threaten people, huh?” Sunni inquired.

“I can fight perfectly fine on my own! Especially against a bubbly little psychic like you.”

“My mom is the bubbly one here. You may be a sunbender, but I can be a real hothead, too. Why do you think they call me SUNNI?!” (Play “The Thieving Magpie” from *Batman: Arkham Origins*)

**Boss fight: Jennifer Bush**

**Power Levels: Sunny – 4350. Jennifer – 7700**

Sunni formed a bubble around herself, launched skyward, and dropped to Jennifer like a giant bullet, but the World Leader jumped out of her high heels and evaded. Sunni rolled her bubble to Jennifer, but the Leader called “FLASHY-FLASH!” and became a blinding sun. Sunni shut her
eyes and dropped the shield, then was stamped in the face by Jenny’s foot. Sunni grabbed her lightsaber and used Aura Sense, but the light penetrated her lids too strongly and allowed Jenny to kick again without being seen.

“I thought your name was Sunni, is it too sunny? WAH HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!” The psychic listened for the cackles and slashed her saber in that direction, but she merely cut through thin air. “OOOF!” Somebody else landed a flying kick on the adult child and knocked her away.

The light faded, and Sunni’s blurry vision cleared to reveal her sister. “Darcy!”

“You’re lucky I learned Observation Haki. Let me help fight her, Sunni.”

“TWO AGAINST ONE’S NO FAIR!” Darcy barely dodged Jenny’s Sun Beam, and when the woman flipped to shoot beams from her feet, Sunni tried to bounce one back with a barrier, only for it to burn. “Ah ha ha ha! There’s nothing hotter than the sun! Your measly barriers won’t block it!” Sunni chucked Psycho Spheres that Jennifer nimbly evaded, the woman dancing like a child in a flowery meadow as she made her way to the psychic, ducked, and grabbed Sunni’s arm. Jenny whirled around and around before throwing Sunni skyward, spawning a sun that she would crash into.

“Suni!” Darcy used psychic to pull her sister to safety.

“Darcy, I appreciate the help, but I can take her alone.”

“Not without Mew’s help! And if you hit her too badly, Mom and the others are doomed.”

“But what can you do?”

“If I get close enough, I can chi-block her, and you can mind-trick her to-”

“What are ya TALKING ABOOOOUT?” Jenny erupted a sun between them, making the sisters shut their eyes and step apart, and the Leader followed this with a circle of suns around both. The suns whirled around, and despite their attempts to fly, they followed at their level. The psychics teleported out just when the suns closed in, then Sunni grabbed Jenny in psychic to throw her at Darcy. Sunni kept Jenny bound by psychic, but this didn’t stop the Leader from Flashing and blinding them with her sunlit body.

The psychic bind burned off, leaving Jenny to leap and stamp Darcy’s head to the ground. When the light dimmed slightly, Sunni ran to her sister’s aid, noting the bruise on her forehead. “Hum hum hum, hum hum… “ Jenny was innocently dancing not far away, so a furious Sunni tossed a Psycho Sphere, but it bounced off the mirror and back to its owner, Sunni quickly kicking it skyward. “Refraction makes me anywhere, even though I’m nowhere!” Jenny sung.

“Ugh!” Sunni growled at the dancing Jenny clones around the field. “And I can’t even hit too hard or else she’ll die. I… What do I do, Mom?!”

“I really don’t know, Sunni.” Mika replied. “Even if we were willing to be sacrificed, she’ll keep coming back to life.”

“BOO!” Jenny popped out and kicked Sunni from the side. She jumped on Sunni’s chest and kicked her across the face with each word: “I – don’t – like – being – ignored!” She jumped off before Sunni could retaliate.

Sunni rubbed her cheeks and stood, glaring at the dancing Jenny Refractions. “Hmmmm…” She decided to try something: “I don’t see why you’re worth my time, Jennifer. You’re just a child that
doesn’t know any better. Beating some sense into you would be pointless.”

“**I am NO CHILD!**” The Refractions faced her angrily. However, they were all facing random
directions. **“As you can see, I’m 25, not 5!”**

“**Yeah yeah.**” Sunni kept her saber raised and navigated the mirror maze. The Refractions were
turning to “face” her. **“That’s why you’re playing these games instead of facing me like a grown-
up.”**

“**Not MY fault you can’t find your way around a hall!**” The mirrors shot beams that Sunni swiftly
deflected with her saber.

“**You probably couldn’t find your way to your classrooms! It’s a wonder you haven’t grown up.”**

“**Well, excuse me.**” Sunni noticed a reflection facing her direction. Behind her was another one.
**“But how many children have a big blossoming chest like-”**

Sunni chucked a Psycho Sphere at one, it bounced off, so she ducked and watched it collide with
the real Jennifer. **“The bigger the target, the easier.”** Sunni retorted. The light faded, so Sunni
grabbed the Leader in psychic and yanked her over. **“Perhaps this’ll jiggle some knowledge in your
brain!”** Sunni held Jennifer upside-down and shook her.

“**U-u-u-u-u-u-u-u…”** Jenny babbled like a bobbling child.

“**Hee hee hee!**” Mika giggled. **“You’ll make a great mother, Sunni!”**

“**Hey, you got her!**” Darcy beamed after recovering.

“**Now’s your chance, Dar. Do a mind-trick.”**

“**NO NO!**” Jennifer Flashed again and escaped. **“Try to catch me!”** With light on her feet, Jennifer
zipped all around God’s Domain as a white blur. **“Over here!”** She appeared behind Sunni—zipped
when she swung the saber. **“Now here!”** In front of Darcy, but gave her no time to prepare a
psychic grip.

“**Hee hee ha ha!**” Jenny ran all the way down Mariejoa and back up, and from far away it looked
like a white line spiraling up and down the mountain. **“Wheeeeee!”** Jenny zoomed for Sunni so fast,
she may just cut through her. **“WAAAAAACK!”** Mary Goldenweek leaped in front and KICKED Jenny
in the face, zapping her with a surge of electric. **“HEEEEY! You can’t do that!”**

“**I can, too!**” Mary showed the yellow crayon colored under her shoe. **“I use Shock Crayon to run
super fast!”**

“**I run faster than you!**” Jenny zipped off, so Mary pursued. A white blur raced a green-and-yellow
blur from everyone’s vision, it was a race between Light Feet and Lightning Feet. The two forces
began to bump into each other, with Jennifer being stronger than Mary and knocking her down.
**“You don’t deserve to have my mother’s name!”** snapped Jenny. **“Stupid Imaginary!”** She leapt
forth to stamp the painting child, but Sunni pulled her away.

“**You okay, Mary?”**

“**I am! Let me go at her again!**” Mary colored Glue Crayon on her hands and zipped around again.
She and Jenny chased each other, and when they were going to collide, Mary leaped and clamped
her hands onto Jenny’s eyes.
“WAAAHH! I can’t see!”

“Don’t hit something hard!” Mary grinned, directing Jenny toward a building. Jenny pierced through the marble like it were nothing. “Huh?!”

“Nothing blocks the Light of God!” Jennifer allowed Mary to control her, not stopping at any building or statue she crashed through.

When they passed by the castle, Mary glanced at King Andrew. “Let’s see for sure!” She drove Jennifer toward the bad man that killed Cheren’s dad, but Andrew easily saw their movement and dodged. Mary directed Jenny to Andrew three more times before The King used the Octogan to Stop them.

“Thank you!” Sunni hovered above and used psychic to pull them toward, flying away, and Andrew couldn’t retaliate when Chris shot a Combustion Beam at him.

Sunni dropped Jenny and Mary beside Darcy before the latter pelted Jenny with physical chi-blocks. When the Stop wore off, Mary pulled her hands off Jenny’s face, and the Leader’s body bumped in the places Darcy hit, a delayed reaction to the chi-blocks. Darcy bound Jenny with psychic as the woman-child kicked her feet. “Let me gooo!”

“You will calm down.” Sunni waved at her face.

“No I will not!”

“You will calm down…” Sunni did it more softly.

“I will… calm down…” Jenny stopped squirming.

“You will remove the seals from Mika, Morgan, and Mew.”

“I will remove the seals from Mika, Morgan, and Mew.”

Darcy released the grip, and Jennifer calmly approached the three prisoners. She raised both hands—and clasped her fingers. “AAAHH!” The three screamed when the Crosses pierced.

“HA HA HA!” Jenny laughed. “Physical chi-blocks don’t work on me, and I have God to protect my head from brainwashing! But I’m going to punish you for trying to cheat! Time to spurt blood!” Jennifer tightened the bonds.

“MOM!” the girls cried.

“Huh? Wait a minute!” Jenny noticed the pink auras on the Crosses. Mew was the one responsible. “You can’t do that! My Crosses should’ve stabbed you!”

“It looks like Mew used his psychic to keep the Crosses away from his vitals, then he focused his chi around Mom and Aunt Morgan’s.” Darcy observed with a bright smile.

“Talk about delaying the inevitable!” Mika laughed nervously.

“NOOOO it’s not fair, it’s not fair!” Jennifer stomped her feet. “No one defies God’s will, I’m gonna-” Before she could strengthen the Crosses, Sunni leapt and sliced the Leader’s head clean off.

Mika, Morgan, and Darcy gaped as her head bounced on the ground and her body fell. Mew focused his power to keep the Crosses out of their flesh. “Oooooooaaaaaa…” The Holy Light shone,
bringing Jenny to her feet, levitating the head, and reattaching it with spiritual glue. Sunni grit her teeth and sliced Jennifer to pieces, but her parts reattached. “Dang, you really are unkillable!”

“MEW MEW MEW!” Mew cried as more pressure was added to the Crosses, forcing him to use stronger psychic.

“I don’t think Mew is going to hold them for much longer!” Darcy yelled.

“Ah ha ha ha! That’s what you get for messing with me!” Jenny lit her feet with light and leaped to the top of God’s Castle. “But if you wanna see someone be killed, I’ll just kill ALL OF YOU!” A massive sun appeared in the sky, raining smaller suns upon the mountaintop. While all the combatants were defending their selves, the Great Sun was slowly lowering toward the town. “I BURN! Caaaan’t hooold meeee doooowwn…”

“What’s that crazy girl doing?!” Anthony yelled as Diancie blocked the suns. “She’ll burn herself and her friends!”

“Fortunately, my Octogan has the power to undo what has been done.” The King said. “I will revive my allies and restore this mountaintop.”

“Man, you are the royal King of Trolls!” Chris remarked.

“GRRRR!” Sunni flew up to Jennifer and sliced her head off, the sun vanishing as it fell. The angels sung as the head reattached. “Not uhn!” Jennifer respawned the sun, so Sunni chopped off the arms and kicked her down to a lower roof. With another heavenly song, the arms reattached again.

“MEEEEEEEWW!” The Crosses grew stronger each time Jennifer died.

“Sunni, stop killing her!” Darcy cried.

Sunni clenched her teeth, looking between her mom and the descending sun. She couldn’t just let everyone die, but she would hate to let Mom and Morgan die. “…Wait!” Sunni flew down to them and cut a Creative Summons, calling Ghost Dude from Foster’s.

“YO! If it isn’t my favorite kidney carrier!” the cool skateboard ghost flashed a grin.

“Ghost Dude, can you make those three intangible? We need those Crosses to get through without killing them.”

“That’s gonna be tough, dude. But I’ll try!” Ghost Dude brought the three close and wrapped arms around them. He focused his ecto energy around them without touching the Crosses sticking partway in their flesh.

“EVERYONE, KEEP THE SUN BACK!” Sunni and Darcy projected a psychic shield, MaKayla and Miyuki cast Rewind on the sun, Wendy cast a pink shield at it, and Index contributed her own lightbending. After a minute, Ghost Dude managed to make the psychics intangible.

“MEW!” Mew released his psychic and the Crosses shot through without hurting them.

“IT WORKED!” Sunni shot up and STABBED Jennifer in the chest. The sun disappeared, but Jenny Resurrected.

“You little cheater! I’ll just use another Sealing!”
Sunni beheaded the Leader before flying to the pavement before the castle. “I think you need a spanking!” Sunni cut another Creative Summons. She channeled a great surge of psychic, and a tremendous red dragon with two mouths burst into being.

“SLIFER THE SKY DRAGON?!” Morgan gaped.

“Oh, didn’t you know?” Sunni cocked a brow. “I tamed him a week ago! Lucky I didn’t sic him on you.”

“Grrrr- hu!” When Jennifer recovered, she gasped at the humongous dragon. Slifer charged a mighty beam in his mouth and burned it against Jennifer’s unending body. She was in a soot-filled crater on the castle’s roof, but the light revived her again. “OOF!” Slifer struck her. She came to life. “OOF!” Slifer struck her, she came to life.

“Slifer the Sky Dragon attacks all enemies in its wake, and doesn’t leave until they’re all gone.” Sunni smirked. “Which means as long as you keep coming back, Slifer will NEVER leave you alone.”

“OOF!” Jennifer died, she came to life. “OOF!” She died again, but was brought back on her feet.

“Have a nice eternity, Jenny.” Sunni sheathed her lightsaber.

“THAT’S my little girl!” Mika cheered.

“WOO, Sunni!” Darcy followed. “I guess I wasn’t much help after all…”

Sunni placed a hand on her shoulder and smiled bright. “I missed having your help, Darcy! After this, let’s train together again!”

“He he!” Darcy blushed. She glanced up at Slifer, who now created a rhythm between his breath attacks and the angel chorus restoring Jenny. “So, we’re just going to listen to that the whole battle?”

“SILENCE!” Meloetta appeared and cast a Silence Shield over the two. “There! That should make it less annoying.”

“Works for me.” Sunni shrugged. And so, the war continued, with Jennifer trapped in an endless loop of dying and Resurrecting. (End song.)

“Huff!” Midna dropped the Shadow Hold. “I hope she stays out of the game a while. Dillon, we need to locate Daphne and get the others’ shadows back.”

“Dillon, watch out!” Danika yelled when Isabelle sent Akita to attack him, but thwarted by Mario. When Isabelle wrestled Danika for her dagger, Nolan York tackled the zombie. “Nolan!”

“Hey Dani, sorry to interrupt, but I’m dealing with an issue of my own.”

“Danika!” The woman looked up in terror to find Dracula. “My love! Fate brought us together again…”

“You led DRACULA here?!” Danika shouted.

“It wasn’t my fault!”

“Danika… are these the people you were telling me about?” Isabelle looked at Nolan and Dillon. “Are they your husband and son?”
“Yes, we are.” Nolan answered.

Bella smiled. “You’ve been taking care of my daughter all this time… Has she been happy?”

“More happy than I’ve ever been.” Danika said.

“…I’m glad to hear that.” Bella closed her eyes. “I hope I get to see the others soon.” Her body glowed with a soft light. Nolan climbed off, staring in awe as Isabelle’s spirit rose to Heaven, her green eyes beautiful and full of love for her children. The Inferius body crumbled, exposing Daniel’s corpse underneath.

“What… just happened?” Dillon stared.

“So, the Inferi DO have a weakness.” Andrew observed. “If the souls feel a great sense of joy or relief… the spell on them breaks. But it is such a minor weakness that will become irrelevant soon.”

“And what will relieve YOUR soul?” Rachel asked. “Seeing everything you used to love crumble apart by your hands?”

“Everything was ALREADY crumbling before my eyes! I am the only one who can stop it!”

“Look us in the eye and say that, Andrew. Take off your helmet and let me see you say that with your own lips.”

“Hmm…” Andrew bowed his head and placed both hands on the helmet. Chris, Aurora, and other operatives watched with great suspense. The King removed his helmet and crown: he had messy brown hair, slightly tan and dirty skin, and a single blue eye, while the left was replaced by the Octogan. His hairstyle was extremely recognizable by his biggest fans.

“I…I knew it.” Chris gasped as memories returned to him. “I kicked your helmet off… and saw your face. …Numbuh 100…”

“It really is him…” Eva whispered.

“But… why?…” whispered Aurora.

“When I was young, I resented this life.” Andrew spoke. “I was born as Prince of the World… My father chose me… Every day, he put this… THING in my hand and forced me into pain worse than any kid can imagine!” He seethed and cupped a hand over the Octogan to ease the rage. “I didn’t want to follow my father’s… insane beliefs. All I wanted… was to lead the Kids Next Door.” His right eye teared. “They… were my true family! I wanted to lead them forever. I wanted to leave Mariejoa and live with my brother and Mom in their average little house. But after my fake decommissioning, I used the Octogan and continued to watch them. I was proud of the progress they were making… but it was all for nothing!

“I watched my organization become filled with benders and nonhumans, not knowing they were slowly rising to their own destruction. I should’ve been proud the organization was becoming more respected and more diverse… but the Octogan showed me it was never meant to be that way. The Kids Next Door were not meant to evolve beyond shunning healthy food and eating candy. They were not meant to combat powerful entities or BECOME powerful entities… All this chaos was destroying the universe. That’s why… I need to undo what the ancient gods have done and separate the worlds.”

“Andrew, it was never our fault these evil powerful entities appeared.” Rachel stated. “But the only
way to stop them was to become stronger than they were. We had no choice but to grow up. That’s exactly how we’re going to stop the Apocalypse. What you’re doing isn’t going to work, Andrew. Please… take the Octogan out and join us."

Andrew looked at the ground and panted, contemplating. …He scowled and faced up. “My vision is greater than all of yours. I can’t stop now.”

“Then I guess we’ll need to force you.” Matthew Dimalanta drank Purple Flurp and blasted a huge cloud of gas over Andrew. The King blew it away with a gentle outpour of energy—Maddy Murphy leaped forth in Haki Fury to seize the gem in his eye.

At that instant, Andrew vanished and was replaced by Rob Lucci, startling Maddy as the assassin punched her away. Lucci stepped toward Maddy with rage in his sharp green eyes. “You didn’t think I was dead, did you?”

“I saw that trick coming before you even conceived it.” Andrew said. “Just now, I froze time and went to bring Lucci for a rematch. And speaking of reunions,” He snapped his fingers and summoned the Inferi of Nigel Uno and Don Quixote Doflamingo, Sr..

“Fufufufufu!” Doffy grinned. “I heard the news that Cherry was dead! A student is only as good as his teacher.” He slashed strings at Rachel, who blocked with Haki in her sword.

“I’ll help ya, Lass!” Fanny stomped Doffy with a Fire Torpedo, doing little to scorch his body.

“Dad…” Chris felt emotional, facing his undead father.

“Chris… I’m sorry I couldn’t train you as well as Fanny.” Against his free will, Nigel turned into a dragon and spat flames at his son. Chris regretfully blasted Combustion Beams that wouldn’t damage the dragon’s immortal corpse.

“Ahh, reunions happening all around!” Henry beamed with glee. “I suppose you know how it feels, don’t you, Wendy?”

“You’re not planning to tell me where Chelia is, are you?” Wendy asked seriously.

“Section 6 of Not Fearing Your Foes is don’t comply with their demands. You can run all around the world and cry an ocean of tears, but still I won’t tell.”

“I’m done with crying.” Wendy said firmly. “I’m done with feeling bad or feeling pitied. I’m a wizard, and I’m going to fight you!” She raised her Lamia Scale.

“So be it. Then it’s time I be rid of my fears once and for all!” (Play “Power-Hungry Fool” from Smash Bros. Brawl!)

**Boss fight: Henry Churchill**

**Power Levels: Wendy – 3030. Henry – 6973**

Wendy ran from the swarm of papers pursuing her and cast Incendio behind her, but Henry spawned in front and cast paper shurikens to lightly cut her skin. Wendy cast an Aero shield around herself to breeze any papers away, only for Henry to sap the shield away with Vacuum Papers. “When you’re as rich as me, Wendell, you can afford all sorts of exotic papers. Who says dead trees don’t retain an ounce of life? Even poison oak.” Henry unveiled papers with purple poison
tips. He shaped them into planes and sent them at Wendy, who cast Incendio to burn the planes.

“The only thing that can hurt him is fire.” Wendy figured. “I guess I’ll have to keep using Incendio.” Papers glided around and tried to latch onto her, so Wendy burst an air bubble to push them off. She ran circles around Henry to form a tornado, the paper man’s body scattering and swirling in the vortex. “Ventus Tria Incendio!” She cast a fiery tornado that was sucked into the larger one, setting fire to all papers inside.

When the flames eventually dispersed, there was a ball of soggy-looking papers floating in the center. “And they thought a paper man wouldn’t last in a world of superpowers.” Henry’s wry face peeped through the bubble. “But a paper man with fire-resistant Sea Tree paper is a different story.”

“Then I’ll try Glacius!” Wendy cast ice at Henry, but the Leader easily sent Sun Papers to counter the cold. Through the steam that resulted, Maple Papers glided down and stuck around Wendy’s body, including her face. Wendy blew a strong breath to push the paper off, then saw a paper with a Japanese symbol coming.

“CHILD, JUMP AWAY!” Carla cried.

Wendy gasped and jumped far back with an air boost before the Paper Bomb exploded. Wendy fell on her back and had a hard time getting up with the papers sticking her to the ground. “Transfiguro!” She turned the papers into mice that scampered off of her, just in time to dodge the large Paper Drill Henry dried to impale through her. “Papers are like ants.” Henry said. “One is nothing to fear, but put a bunch together, they’re simply backbreaking.” Henry shot textbooks from his body, pelting Wendy’s face three times before she cast Reditio to shoot the books back, but they merely reentered his body. “Why, make a cluster of ants big enough and they’ll crush your bones.” Henry expanded his body to terrific size as a giant textbook emerged.

Wendy and Carla gaped at the *Textbook History of Textbooks*, 20 feet tall. They ran 30 feet away and narrowly avoided when Henry threw it. “How many papers can you possibly HAVE in that grotesque body of yours?!” Carla shouted.

“As much as the imagination is limitless.” Henry extracted ten rolled-up Paper Bombs and threw them around Wendy, who sealed her and Carla in a Protego to block the explosion.

“WENDY!” Vaati yelled, having shattered Voldemort and Lestrange with Reducto. “Logia benders have infinite spaces inside their bodies! They’re able to contain enormous amounts of their own element! But I’m sure he has a limit. Paper isn’t as common as air.” He refocused on his fight when the two Death Eaters respawned.

“Then I just need to destroy all the papers I can!” When Henry shot rolled-up textbooks, Wendy cast Incendio on them, but the World Leader threw Sea Papers to douse the flames and reuse what remained of the books.

“I hate to treat literature in such a manner.” Henry opened a copy of *Fairy Sisters* at Wendy and shot each individual page to deal papercuts. “Unless they consist of colorfully-haired characters like these girls.”

Wendy cast Ventus Tria Incendio to burn all those papers in one fell swoop. “What do you mean by that, anyway?”

“When I was little, I had a terrible fear of those with colorful hair, due to a nightmare wherein a blue-haired witch boiled me alive. Now I realize that nightmare was the very prophecy the
Octogon predicted. The only one I have to fear is you, Girl With Blue Hair. But I will not allow you to kill me.”

“I don’t WANT to kill you, Henry! Please, tell me where Chelia is and I’ll leave you alone.”

“If that is your promise… I will let you see her.” Henry’s body expanded as a lump emerged from his papery chest.

Wendy was horrified to see it was a slumbering Chelia. “Sh-She’s been… inside you?!”

“Sleeping like a baby.” Henry pulled Chelia back in. “We planned to have Daphne’s apprentice alter Chelia’s brain so she would consider us her friends and then take her God Chi with the Sun Chi Lantern. Sadly, we had a delay in that plan, so I chose to keep Chelia inside me and use her as my trump card. So, if you are able to strike me with a fatal blow, she may share the pain.”

“GIVE CHELIA BACK!” Wendy leapt and dove at Henry, only to go straight through and pull some papers along.

“I know what your greatest fear is, Wendell: to end up alone and be responsible for the deaths of your dearest friends. You now know what a monster your father is, the dark powers you inherited from him. But I’ll be glad to end your cursed life.” He launched Poison Papers, which Wendy burned with fire.

“Accio Chelia!” Wendy aimed her wand at Henry, but her friend wouldn’t come out.

“Child, that spell can’t summon sentient creatures to you.” Carla reminded.

Henry molded Paper Bombs into planes to send them to Wendy like missiles. She raced around Mariejoa and stayed far enough away from their individual explosions. Wendy gasped when she stepped in a patch of Paper Bombs, but Carla was quick to grab her master and pull her up to safety.

“Psst, Wendy!”

She heard a voice inside her right ear. “D-Dad?”

Carla noticed the tiny Minish in the ear. “What are you doing in there?”

“I managed to Apparate Voldemort and Bellatrix to a desert. Before they return, let me help you save Chelia. Place me inside one of Henry’s books.”

“Okay, Dad…” Wendy noticed the History of Textbooks was still on the ground. “Why hasn’t he absorbed that one, yet?”

“Perhaps because it is so large, it takes some time.” Carla assumed.

“Then I have an idea.” Wendy raced back to the massive textbook. “Just so you can’t use this one again: Reducio!” Wendy shrunk it to the size of a regular textbook. Her Minish father hid on the top of the cover while Wendy set fire to the bottom of it. “Have a gift, Henry!” She used Leviosa to throw the book back to Henry, but the paperbender wrapped Vacuum Papers over it and threw them elsewhere.

“Silly child, I was keeping my eye on that nasty rebel. Trying to infiltrate me, are you? Not today!” Henry cast more Maple Papers that Wendy burned with Incendio, only for a Paper Bomb to fly in the fire and blow Wendy several feet. Henry glided toward her, but Wendy hopped up and blew her
Sky Dragon Roar to scatter his papers. Henry reformed and extracted huge thick paper folders from his person. As Wendy destroyed them with Reducto, Henry announced, “I shan’t be absorbing any more papers into my being. As long as Chelia is in my captivity, I’ll be safe from your wrath."

“Guess again, Henry.” Vaati Apparated a few feet behind Wendy, his arm around Chelia.

“WHAT?!” Henry’s paper eyes nearly popped out.

“Dad!” Wendy was surprised as well.

“After I minimized, I sent a magic clone to inform you of my plan, Wendy.” Vaati explained. “That same clone was the one you tried to send inside him. When Wendy blew that Cyclone Roar just then, I seized the chance to meld my Logia form with it and grab one of Henry’s scattered papers. I must say, the inside of a Logia’s dimension is fascinating.”

“Oh, you want fascinating, Mr. Red Eye? Then I’ll FASCINATE YOU!” Henry blew high above Mariejoa and opened his Logia dimension. His body growing round and wide, all the battle’s participants were gazing up into a vortex of Paper Bombs. “It will be nice to rid these from my insides.”

“Seriously, we just did this!” Sunni and the psychics projected a shield.

“Sirius is dead!” Morgan joked.

“No, I’m right here!” the Sirius Inferius stated.

“Oh! Well, never mind then.”

“I fear that may not be enough. Child, quick, cast Protego!” Carla pled.

“I can’t create a shield that large! Unless…” Wendy glanced down at Chelia’s skirt. “…Accio Chelia’s Lamia Scale!” She aimed her wand a random direction. The group was growing nervous and impatient at the slowly-descending Paper Bomb Collection, but to her utter surprise, another Lamia Scale flew to Wendy’s hand.

“I can’t believe that worked!” Carla exclaimed.

“Then I hope this works: PROTEGO ENGORGIO!” Wendy cast the spell with both wands, sealing God’s Domain inside a massive pink bubble. The Paper Bombs flashed and lit the mountaintop with the powerful explosion. But thanks to the unbreakable shield, they all went unscathed.

The shield dispelled as Henry descended to the ground. “You’re very clever, little Hairstress. But if you are true to your word, then you will leave me alone… won’t you?”

“…Yes.” Wendy bowed her head. “Now that my friend is safe, I have no quarrel with you.”

“Hm hm hm… but that does not mean I will leave you alone, Wendy.” Papers stood from Henry’s body and threatened to rush at her. “If there is even the slightest chance you are my killer… I will make sure to be rid of you.”

“And what is the chance… she isn’t?” a voice asked from behind him. (End song.)

Henry turned. He gasped with the greatest horror: there stood Nagisa Shiota, whose sky-blue hair was hanging down, and his blue eyes shining with murderous intent. There was a katana locked
firmly in his hand. “It… can’t be…” His papers quivering, Henry turned back to Wendy. “T-T-Two… blue-haired girls?!!”

Nagisa stepped forward. “Eyah!” Henry flinched at hearing his footsteps.

“I know what your greatest fear is…” Nagisa spoke with a devilish smile. The world seemed to darken in Henry’s vision. Only Nagisa’s eyes, hair, and smile were visible on his shadowy form. “To think that you can’t escape fate… the strong possibility of death. Especially to a cold-blooded person like me.”

“No-o-o…” Henry fearfully stepped backward. “It ca-an’t be… true…” He glanced back at Wendy.

“You were so fixated on one… you didn’t even suspect another.” Nagisa was getting closer. “All your efforts to defy your fate gone to waste.” He raised the sword.

“Huff-huff, huff-f-f-f. . .” She was as terrifying as the witch from his dream.

“I bet… you taste delicious.” Nagisa licked his lips.

He threw the sword up. Henry faced it. Nagisa leaped, grabbed the hilt, and sliced down the middle of Henry’s body perfectly. Wendy was struck with horror when both halves of the body fell apart.

After light returned from the dark fantasy, Henry’s body halves were revealed to be quivering on the ground as scattered papers. “You… didn’t hurt him?” Wendy asked.

“I was eavesdropping on the fight.” Nagisa explained. “I study how to knock people out by using fear and wanted to see if I could pull it off. Normally, I only use a rubber knife.” He held the katana up. “But since he was a Logia, I knew it wouldn’t hurt. Mrs. Uno, you can have your sword back!”

“Thank you, Nagisa!” Rachel Uno ran up, reclaimed the sword, and resumed clashing with Doflamingo.

“That was… really impressive!” Wendy smiled. “You looked so brave when you did that!”

“It was nothin’. So, is that the friend you were talking about?” They looked to Vaati, who was knelt on the ground with Chelia in his arms.

Vaati removed some papers under Chelia’s clothes. “It seems Henry was numbing her senses with Powder Paper. Powder Trees make you very sleepy indeed. She should wake up soon.”

“Her hair…” Morgiana approached Chelia curiously. Their magenta hair made them very similar. When Morgiana rubbed Chelia’s legs, she confirmed, “She’s a Fanalis.”

“A Fanalis?” Wendy questioned.

“Do you know her, Morg?” asked Nagisa.

“No, but I can tell. We should bring her someplace safe until the battle is over.”

“I’m so glad she’s okay…” Wendy sighed with relief.

“I bet she’ll be glad to see you again.” Nagisa told her. “You were awesome just now! I bet you’ll make a great operative.”
“That means a lot! I sure didn’t think I’d meet another blue-haired girl, though.”

“I’m a boy, actually.”

“Ack!” Wendy blushed. “I didn’t mean to call you that!!”

“Ha ha ha! It’s no big deal.”

Morgiana stared at their playful interaction in silence. The world turned dark around her now. Only Wendy and Nagisa were highlighted. What is this… feeling in my chest? Is it… jealousy? That girl with blue hair… am I to consider her my rival?

Voldemort and Bellatrix Apparated close by. “My Lord!” The latter gasped when Voldemort fell to his knees, his artificial body decaying.

“What’s happening to him?” Wendy asked.

“I assume it’s his soul.” Vaati reasoned. “Voldemort created seven Horcruxes in his time, all of which were destroyed, leaving his soul mortally wounded. It seems even his Inferius body can’t support itself.”

“It’s a sad state of affairs, isn’t it, Tom?” Albus Dumbledore remarked. “An eternal life of pain.”

“How DARE you!” Bellatrix hissed. “Mocking my master when he is so ill!”

“Half the World Leaders are down.” Vaati declared. “Keep doing your best, Wendy, and we will defeat the others!”

“Absolutely!”

Los Angeles

“AH ha ha ha ha ha!” Davy Jones laughed at the three children before him, namely the black-haired girl holding Water Fists and standing beside Manaphy. “So, the Ocean Princess has had a daughter-ah! What luscious fruit they have wrought! Tell me, Melody Jackson…” His beaming tentacled face became a deathly glare. “Do ya fear death?”

“You wouldn’t know. I guess my mom didn’t kill you good enough.” Melody waved twin spirals of water around Jones. The water glowed golden as she channeled spiritbending.

“Aaaaahhh…” Jones sighed and displayed an expression of eternal relief. “BAAAAH!” He pulsed and blew the water off, whipping the kids and sending Manaphy several feet. “Spiritbending will not heal MY soul!”

“Mana…” Manaphy weakly recovered. “MANA!” He was grabbed by Truman Kirman.

“Who are you?!” Melody shouted. “What’s your problem?!”

“All I need is a single tear.” Truman forcefully squeezed the Sea Prince and held a cracked yellow diamond under his tear duct. Manaphy leaked a tear and dripped it into the diamond’s crack.

The diamond glowed as the crack miraculously healed. It floated to the air; the kids and Jones gaped as a body of light grew from the diamond. Three times the size of an adult human, the humanoid shape regained solidity and quaked the ground. A giant yellow woman with high-heel boots and a diamond on the chest: Yellow Diamond. “It’s about time.”
I had the Jennifer fight planned for a while. Such a funny way to go out. X) Stay tuned for more Inferius.

...

I miss Termina Slag. ;,( 
Beacon of Hope

Chapter Summary

Dillon York vs. Daphne Anderson and Anthony McKenzie vs. Lucas Stonebuddy!

So much is going to happen here.

Chapter 79: Beacon of Hope

Washington

Jessie Sidney blew Sleep Bubbles over the Inferi of James McGarfield and Carter Pewterschmidt, but the sleepless presidents popped them. “Don’t have any other tricks, Jessie?!” James retorted. “You ain’t nothin’ in the real world!”

“Nothing but a way better president than you were.” Shelly Johnson threw sand spheres over the two Inferi using her Fury Mode, crushing them with the Sand Coffin. “Of course, he still ain’t as tough as me.” She winked.


“Shorts?!” Shelly gasped. The Inferi broke free of the Sand Tombs and turned to attack her. That was before trees burst from the ground and encased the Inferi their selves.

“Why don’t you leave the capturing to me, Human?” a girl’s echoing voice spoke.

Shelly looked up behind her. “YIKES! Where did you come from?!”

Jessie was dropped on a field in the outskirts of town, where Sheila, Suki, and Kimaya had already been taken. “Seven Lights.” Medusa stood before them beside a man bound in several locks. “It’s amazing how close we’ve come to the climax of this prophecy.”

“Man, it’s THIS bitch again.” Kimaya said. “But that guy beside you… that’s-”

“Master Xehanort. Trapped in the most horrible locking spells known to man. Except for the Time Gate, of course.” Medusa smirked. “The power of your Keyblades should rid him of the binds effortlessly.”

“Why the hell would we do that?” Jessie questioned.

“Because he’s one of the Thirteen Darknesses. You really have no choice if you kids have any hope of surviving. So, be good little Keyblade wielders and free this bald little man.” The goddess stroked Xehanort’s head sensually.

“Sigh… Fine, then.” Kimaya raised her Keyblade as the other Lights drew theirs. They aimed them at Xehanort’s binds as beams of light connected them with the Keyblades. “I’m seriously starting to wonder if this is a good idea.”
“I’m still Groot.” Suki still didn’t understand anything going on here.

**God’s Domain**

Chris and Aurora Uno used their Fury Modes and sent a Mega Combustion and Fire-Ice Beam at King Andrew. The King combined Armament Haki with his Octogan’s beam to counter both forces, leaving His Majesty unscathed. “You CAN’T be serious!” Aurora exclaimed.

“Should you not be helping your friends?” Andrew pointed behind them, indicating Maddy’s rematch with Rob Lucci. The former used all the strength in her Haki Fury while Lucci was going Primal against her.

“Maddy defeated Lucci before, she’ll beat him again!” Chris assured.

“Will she now?” King Andrew flashed the Octogan, and instantly Chris, Aurora, and Maddy’s Fury Modes vanished.

“What?!” yelped Maddy. “What happened to my Haki Fury?!”

“The Octogan has altered your memories and prevented you from remembering how to enter your Fury Forms. You have even forgot most of your training.”

“Then we’ll just have to train them again!” Zach Murphy declared. “On the potties, all of you.”

The three kids were sitting on toddler-size potty-training toilets. “I DIDN’T MEAN THIS KIND OF TRAINING!” Andrew shouted.

“HEY!” Maddy beamed. “I remember how to use my Fury again!” She lit her body with Haki flames, using swift speed to resume landing blows on Lucci.

“GAAAH!” Andrew cried from the Octogan’s rage. “This is impossible! ! Why didn’t the Octogan see something so foolish?! Nigel Uno, BURN THEM!”

“Kids, behind you!” In his dragon form, Nigel blew fire breath over his children, but Eva Jackson beheaded her late cousin with a giant Water Slice.

“This fight will never end as long as the Inferi keep respawning!” Eva yelled.

“They’re powered by shadows, so maybe my lightbending can do something.” Index lit her body with white light.

“AAAAH!” This caused Wendy and Sector SA to catch on fire. “Index, don’t lightbend!” Nagisa ordered. “We need to wait until we get our shadows back.”

“Where do you think Aunt Daphne’s hiding?” Dillon asked. “She must have the shadows with her.”

“I’m feeling a ton of Shadow Chi from that direction.” Midna pointed to a distant, one-floor building that had a glass roof. “Daphne may be hiding in there.”

“Come on, Midna, let’s go bring her down!”

“I’m coming too, Dillon!” Danika stated. “I have a score to settle with Aunt Daphne.”

“So do I. Just leave it to me, Mom, stay out here and keep the Inferi busy. I got Firstborn power with me.”
“Would you be saying that if your father offered to help?”

“Honey, I’m a little preoccupied myself!” Nolan yelled, laying an Armament beatdown on Dracula. Behind him, Doflamingo tried to stab strings, only for Rachel to slice off the puppeteer’s hands and then his head, which only grew back.

“And honestly, I wouldn’t have.” Dillon winked. With that, he and Midna ran for the aforementioned building.

“Ugh! I hate being the stay-at-home mother…” Dani sighed.

**Rose Garden**

The chaotic fighting hadn’t spread here, yet. Daphne Anderson’s rose garden was bathed in a dim gray light, due to the ceiling window that filtered it that way, highlighting the color on the gray roses. Daphne was calmly picking the petals off a black rose, connected to a simple criminal somewhere in a distant city. Before she set her fingers on the last petal, Daphne opened her eyes and faced up. Dillon York and Midna were at the entrance. “We meet again.” she spoke softly.

“Are you the one who’s controlling all the zombies?” Dillon asked.

“All the World Leaders share control of the Inferi. However, destroying us will be a pointless effort. Only the one who developed the potion can command the Inferi to fall back into rest. Of course, if I told you where he was, you still intend to fight me, don’t you? Your hatred for me burns clearly in your eyes.”

“What you did to your sister was cruel. Zombifying her and forcing her to kill her own daughter? What happened to make you like this, Aunt Daphne?”

“It was a lesson I learned in my childhood… the world is filled with disappointment and regret. If there ever is a great beacon of hope… it will fade away and be a forgotten memory. Look at your leader: Cheren Uno died of his own and left absolutely nothing behind for his followers. Just like his father.”

“He left behind a legacy!” Dillon shouted. “He made a new Kids Next Door that was free for anyone and everyone! He inspired us to keep moving forward despite fear of death. And even now… I know he wouldn’t just leave us behind. He’ll come back… so as his fellow operatives, we plan to clear a way for him!”

“Simple boy… you know the only reason I was defeated last time was because I allowed you to win. In Arctic Prison, The King’s son, Abram Johnson was trapped. Despite his ability to single-handedly free himself, he chose to stay where he thought he would be safe. That's why The King entrusted me with going in and dragging him out.”

“What do you mean he could’ve freed himself?” Midna asked. “Does this have anything to do with that energy I felt moments ago?”

“We World Leaders have come too far to let you jeopardize our plan. I’m going to have to kill you, Dillon. This time… I won’t hold back.”

“Heh heh heh.” Dillon grinned deviously. “I’m impressed, Daphne. You actually showed a little emotion.”

“I don’t follow…”
Dillon narrowed his eyes, his smirk devilish. “Fear.” (Play “Shadow Queen 2” from Paper Mario: TTYD!)

**Boss fight: Daphne Anderson**

**Power Levels:** Dillon – 2032. Daphne – 8008

Giant gray shadow hands emerged from the walls and smashed down on Dillon, who hid in Veil and swiftly maneuvered around the garden. When he emerged in a patch of yellow roses, smaller hands sprouted up and tried to drag him down by the legs, but Midna clutched Dillon in her Hair Hand and pulled him from their grasp. They turned and gasped when Shaydes expanded into a grotesque gooey blob, moaning in despair as she tried to snatch them in her oozing mouth. Midna dropped Dillon and stabbed three tentacles from her hair into the shadow to split it apart.

“Both of you are shameful, honestly.” Daphne said as her shadow reformed. “Dillon is so weak that he’s forced to rely on a Firstborn’s power… and Midna is a god who ignores the rules set by them and battles mortals of her own element. No different from Malladus Uno or Demise – gods who overstep their boundaries are undeserving of their title.”

“At least I know how to restrain myself.” Midna reasoned. She entered Dillon’s shadow and passed a portion of her chi to him, and he spread his shadow around the room as clones emerged. The clones all dove at Daphne and swallowed her in a cluster, but the World Leader had slithered away with Veil to blow Gray Fog over them. Dillon popped up behind her and punched Daphne, but the clone became mist as the real Daphne stretched her shadowy arms from the window ceiling and grabbed Dillon.

The long paper-thin fingers wrapped around the boy and smothered him in gray, working with Mario to tear them apart and escape. Dillon gasped for breath and was already forced to run from the Dead Hands on the floor. A circle of Dead Hands surrounded him, so Dillon expanded a Shadow Shockwave with Midna’s chi and had Mario zip around and tear them up. Dillon saw Shaydes’ oozing form grow on the ceiling and sent Mario to rip her to pieces, finding Daphne at the core and gnawing her chest.

Daphne blew Mario off with Shadow Breath and landed softly on her feet thanks to her shadow’s aid. “You should watch what you eat.” Daphne said, indicating Mario’s graying body. “You should’ve known my Gray Shade was contagious.”

*Not to me, Sister! I developed an immunity!* Mario flew behind Daphne and bit her rear, the Leader flinching as Dillon snickered. Dillon sunk into Veil and emerged behind Daphne, who ordered Shaydes to bite, only to learn it was a Shadow Clone, as was the one that dove from her left. Daphne gasped—Dillon grabbed her ankles and was staring up her skirt. He pulled the Leader in Veil during her sheepish moment and laid punches on her, throwing her against a wall when finished.

“Emotions are a bane to any woman.” Dillon smirked. “Especially ones that aren’t used to them.”

“In that case, we should’ve brought Harvey to fight her.” Midna commented from the shadow.

“Disciplining you won’t come easy, it seems.” said Daphne. “Time to make use of the shadows who couldn’t become Inferi.” Five shadows grew up from the roses and flew into hers as Daphne grew up to the ceiling. The pale woman threw punches that would expand Shaydes’ fist and crush her adversary, Dillon dodging the hits and expanding a Shadow Shockwave so Mario would tear at...
Daphne easily blew the shadow off with Gray Breath and used her bending to expand the size of the roses’ shadows’ thorns. Dillon had to carefully slither around a thicket of shade thorns—“Ack!” he was pricked by one, then Daphne moved the thorns around to slice Dillon’s clothing further.

Midna expanded a barrier to block the shadow thorns out. “Are you okay, Dillon?”

“Midna, I’m gonna need more power to beat this lady. She’ll just get stronger if she absorbs more shadows.”

“I don’t want to overwhelm your body with God Chi. And besides, she’s right, it’s against our virtues to go all out.”

“Midna, playing by the rules isn’t gonna matter if we lose! You aren’t just a Firstborn, you’re a teammate, so you need to do your best to help us win!”

“Don’t you think I want to?! I’m just afraid of letting my power run rampant. Then I’ll be no different than King Andrew or his—”

“No taking breaks.” Daphne dealt an uppercut from the floor under their feet and blew the two apart. Afterwards, a swarm of Dead Hands rose from the floor and caught Dillon midair, about to drag him underneath before Midna sliced him free.

“That’s it!” Dillon yelped. “I can absorb my friends’ shadows and fight back! I wonder if she hid them in the roses like those other shadows. Mario, search around for them!” His shadow obeyed and glided under the rose stems, leaving Midna as his temporary shadow as he Veiled to avoid Gray Shadow Stabs, which penetrated the wall. Mario was wrestling with Daphne’s shadows in the garden, and sensing this, Midna stretched her Hair Hand into the shadows to strike the Gray Shades. Mario found the shadows of Chris, Anthony, and MaKayla, bringing them for Dillon to absorb.

“Huuurrr!” His body turned slightly dark as he grew in size.

“The strength that the shadows’ masters possess becomes yours when you absorb their shadow,” Midna recapped. “But be careful, Dillon. Too many shadows can result in Chi Overload.”

“Good thing I have you.” Dillon quickly sunk into Veil, coming around Daphne’s right, the World Leader threw a Shade Fist, but merely hit a clone while the real Dillon punched the back of her head. Dillon submerged again, and Daphne was pelted by Shade Fists from multiple directions, ending with Mario’s arms grabbing the giant woman and slamming her against the rose-covered ground. With that, Dillon cast Shadow Possession on Daphne and squeezed her to force the shadows out.

“AAAH!” Dillon was attacked by other gray shadows in Daphne’s garden, breaking his hold. Daphne expanded the size of the gray roses’ shadows and ensnared the boy in a wrapping of thorns. “If a black rose dies, a gray rose blooms in the garden.” Daphne linked Dillon with a black rose. “A black rose blooms when someone is close to death. Do you see all these black roses, Dillon? They represent you and your friends.” She picked the petals. “This means that your fate is truly inevitable.”

“It’s one thing to live in fear of fate.” Midna extended five Hair Hands to tear the thorns away from Dillon. “But it’s another thing to enforce that fate based on your fears.” When Dillon was rescued, he severed the binds between him and the rose and threw a Shade Fist at Daphne, who Veiled.
“Very well.” Numerous normal-size Daphne clones appeared around the room, picking a black rose. “Then see if you can stop someone else’s fate. I’ve linked my shadow with one of your friends.” Indeed, all the clones’ shadows connected at the exit and stretched outside, likely bound to a friend. The still-enlarged Dillon stomped each Daphne he could, but all were clones, and even worse they kept shifting position and respawning.

“Owww!” Dillon was forced to release his three friends’ shadows when he could no longer hold the power. “Darn it, if only Sheila was here! I could borrow her shadow and go White Shadow.”

“Hold on, that girl from Sector SA was a lightbender!” Midna realized. “Her shadow must be in here somewhere!”

“Yeah! Mario, hurry, find Index’s shadow!” Once again, his shadow explored under the stems while Midna punched at the Daphne clones with Hair Hand. After 10 seconds, Mario returned with four shadows that belonged to Sector SA, and with Index’s shadow in the mix, Dillon shone bright white. “YES! Time to bring light back to this garden!” Dillon blew White Shadow Breath and shunned all the clones. The real Daphne emerged from the bars of the ceiling window, giving Dillon the chance to throw a White Fist at her.

Daphne hit the floor as Dillon blew White Breath directly in her face, and in her weak moment, he expanded a White Shockwave as Mario sunk his light-imbued teeth into her body. “Light may fight the darkness, Dillon, but it cannot fight the dead.” Gray shadows flew in from the entrance and the window, absorbing into Daphne’s body as she grew beyond the ceiling window. Towering high above Mariejoa, Daphne blew Gray Breath into the dawning sky and made a dim shade thicker than clouds.

“HOLY CRAP!” Danika gaped.

Dillon used Shadow Glide to fly up Daphne’s body and pelt her with White Fists, but with her superior strength, she smacked and smashed him to the ground. Chris Uno attempted to blast a Combustion Beam, but King Andrew jumped in the line of fire and defended his ally without suffering damage. “Darn it!” Dillon panted. “She’s too much for me this time!”

Don’t give up, my son! Cheshire split from Danika’s body and entered the remains of the rose garden. She located all the kids’ and adults’ shadows, and on her command they flew into Dillon to increase his shadowy size once again.

“I’ll keep you from overheating!” Midna yelled from the core of his combined shadow. “Hurry, Dillon! All these are the shadows of your friends and supporters! They’re rooting for you, so take their feelings and attack her with light!”

Yeah man, show her Sector V Style! Shadow Chris cheered.

Do it like I taught ya, son! Shadow Nolan cheered.

Give one extra kick for my master! Shadow Morgiana encouraged.

The only one doing the kickin’ is me! Shadow Vanellope yelled.

That last one gave Dillon the motivational boost to slither up Daphne’s body, leaving a trail of light on her ghost-white dress. Now up at Daphne’s head, Dillon sunk his white teeth into her neck. “Taste the LIGHT, Aunt Daphne!”

The trail of light crushed Daphne in a White Strangle, squeezing all of the gray shadows from her body. Daphne shrunk back into the ruined rose garden while Dillon set all the shadows free,
including Index’s as his White Shadow ceased. “You still have no hope at succeeding.” Daphne pushed herself off the ground. “Even if you defeat me… you cannot win. Either King Andrew will finish you or the Apocalypse. Either way… it’s hopeless.”

“It most certainly is NOT.” (End song.)

Daphne faced the entrance with an expression of shock. Monty Uno was scowling with disapproval, his former brown hair gray from age. “Monty… I thought I turned you into Nigel’s Inferius?”

“I escaped, of course!” Monty said proudly. “Don’t underestimate this jolly old body of mine. You know, Daphne, ever since I was recommissioned, I thought about you. I wondered where you were, I wondered how you were doing… and I never got to tell you… I was sorry.”

“Sorry? For what?”

“For abandoning you.” Monty approached her slowly. “My absence struck a terrible blow to everyone, but you especially. I disappointed you, Daphne. I made you lose hope. That’s why I’m here to tell you… to be hopeful again. And that I… I’ve always loved you. Truth be told, if I wasn’t decommissioned, I would’ve searched for you and wanted to marry you.” He took Daphne’s hands softly. “Let’s start over, Daphne.”

“Monty…” Their mouths moved closer. Daphne’s black lips would kiss the British man’s scruffy white mustache. Their lips made contact—Monty sparked with pixels and became Vanellope. Daphne gasped horrendously and red shone on her white cheeks. “Ha ha! Learned shape-shifting.” Vanel snickered.

Dillon leapt to grab Daphne’s shoulders from behind and bring her to the ground. “Get slagged, Daphne!” Dillon PUNCHED her head against the ground and knocked the love-struck Leader clean out.

“You’re lucky I happened to be around back then to know about those two.” Vanellope noted.

“That’s why you’re the best MCP we’ll ever have.”

**The Noah**

Augustus and his mother combined Armament Haki to chop off Sherry’s nails, but like every other wound they landed, the nails self-healed. “Zere is nothing ve can do to hurt zem!” Henrietta yelled. “At zis rate, ve’ll be toast long before they are.”

“Mamamamamamamamama!” Sherry cackled. “I don’t want to kill you, my sweets. Thanks to this little spell taking place, I finally have the chance to commence the Linlin Family Reunion! I’m just dying to see all my descendants, alive and undead, sitting at a great big table and eating every sweet in the universe! But, with so many alien races out in the great vast cosmos, there are jillions more for you to marry and bare beautiful hybrids! It’s going to be so… delicious.”

“AUGUSUS NO WANT YOU!” Somebody shot up like a bullet and kicked Sherry with both feet, sending her over the deck of the *Noah*.

Augustus gaped as the stranger stood to full height—though she wasn’t really a stranger at all. “N…Nel?”

The cavewoman’s cyan hair blew with a breeze caused by the ship’s movement. Augustus noticed the younger Nel behind him, then faced the older Nel. Her legs had become very strong and firm,
her chest developed greatly, and her Inferius eyes bore strictness. “Whoa… Nel… you, uh… you’ve grown.”

“Augusus…” Teenage Nel spoke. “Nel know why she know English… Nel learn from English.”

“English?” August cocked a brow.

“Big light that appear in sky 3 days ago in this time. Lord English. English teach Nel English. Nel not remember this until Nel die.”

“Oh…” He glanced at the younger version with regret. “You die, huh?”

“It Nel fate. But Nel don’t go without fighting.” She smiled, holding up one leg. “Nel call herself Stone Foot, after great Captain Aughsucks. Nel strongest foot in all Primordial Rock… until Nel die from giving birth to child. But Nel glad to see Augusus one more time. Nel must tell Augusus to take Nel back to past. It where Nel belong.”

“Sigh… I guess she does. …It was great to see you again, Nel.”

“Augusus no need worry.” The cavewoman touched his shoulder. “Nel be with Augusus always. And Nel… always…”

“I know you do, Nel… I know.”

“…” And so, the two embraced in a deep kiss. The Baby Trio, Henrietta, Mandy, and Azula were royally appalled. Augustus deeply enjoyed the kiss with the strong, beautiful cavewoman. Nel was so happy that her Inferius body shone and crumbled, releasing her soul back to the Spirit World. “Aughsucks is best captain, Aughsucks is bravest…” The spirit sung.

“Whew.” the captain whistled. “Nothing concludes a story like a kiss from a lady!”

Again, the witnesses felt like throwing up, for they had known the 5-year-old version of that woman all this time. The young Nel, on the other hand, was infatuated with his captain greater than ever.

**Mariejoa; God’s Castle**

Sector GF continued exploring the castle after escaping Abram Johnson’s wrath. The castle trembled from the constant rhythm of Slifer blasting Jennifer and preventing her recovery. “Mabel, you ever wonder how the World Government went so long without being a focus for the KND?” Dipper asked. “Given that they have a castle on a mountain that reaches the stratosphere?”

“I thought we were trying to figure out why no one notices the weirdness in Gravity Falls.”

“Good point. I wonder what’s in this room?” The four kids entered a room labeled *Entertainment*.

“What the Heck?!” Mabel exclaimed.

“Gideon?!?”

The pudgy boy with pompous white hair was trapped in a cage, wearing a dress and tap-dance shoes. “Dipper! Mabel! Thank the stars! PLEASE get me outta this cage!”

“Why are you wearing that outfit?!” Mabel questioned.

“When that Daphne freed me from Arctic Prison, I thought she was gonna offer me a Government
position, but it turns out they just wanted a dancing monkey! I’ve been doin’ tap-dances from dawn to dusk each day. I’m so tired of it like you wouldn’t believe!” The child cried. “I won’t be bad anymore, Pines! I’ll turn a new leaf, I’ll join Kids Next Door! Just let me outta this stupid cage…”

“Okay, just hang in there, Gideon.” Dipper said calmingly. “Grenda!”

“ON IT!” The muscle girl grabbed the cage door and tore it off the hinges.

“Mah gawd, my face wasn’t meant to absorb this much makeup.” Gideon wiped off the dripping black eyeliner from his tears. “Thank you, Pines Family. Since I’m feeling generous, I’ll tell you a li’l old tidbit I picked up from the Leaders!” He winked.

“A tidbit?” asked Dipper.

“Do y’all know about that Abram Johnson feller perchance?”

“Yeah, we found him in the throne room. I knew he had anger issues, but firing lasers from your mouth is the point you need to see a psychiatrist.”

“Oh ho ho, it ain’t nothin’ to do with anger issues.” Gideon smirked cutely. “In reality, our friend Abram is actually…!”

Outside

Crystal Wickens unleashed a constant beam from her staff to counter a magical blast from Ellen Wickens. Crystal remembered a similar scenario with another witch, but she wouldn’t have the same luck against the invincible Inferius. “AAAAH!” She was overpowered and fell on her back.

“…Hmmm…” Ellen felt different suddenly. “I was being forced to attack you without control… but now it feels like that control was broken.”

“Maybe the person issuing the orders was defeated.” Travis assumed.

“Ellen!” Death the Kid emerged from a portal behind her, alongside a blonde-haired Inferius with pigtails. “I brought someone to help you.”

Ellen turned and gasped: “Viola!”

“Ellen!” Viola beamed. The two girls immediately embraced in a hug. “How is this happening, Ellen?”

“I don’t know… but I’m glad you’re okay.”

“I’m glad you’re okay, too.”

Their artificial bodies glowed and decayed, freeing the victims trapped inside. The spirits of Ellen and Viola ascended to Heaven, hugging each other with warmth and love. “Um… Thanks for that, I guess.” Crystal said to Kid, not sure of the story between those two. (That blonde girl seemed familiar, though.)

After Meloetta fashioned a new dress for Sugar, the adult singer assisted Rachel in her battle with Doflamingo. “You’re not allowed to stop NOW, Inferi!” Andrew commanded. “Keep fighting!” Under his orders, the Inferi of Sirius Black and Dumbledore fought Morgan and Mika.

Lucas Stonebuddy tried to crush Anthony with two angel statues, but he burrowed underground to
avoid. Lucas stomped a straight path up that revealed Anthony, trying to smash him between two squares, but Anthony punched each fist outward and broke holes open. “You do not wish to fight me?” Lucas questioned.

“I know you’re using a fake body. I wanna fight the real you, Stonedummy.”

“I see no benefit to disclosing that knowledge.”

“Then allow ME to disclose it!” Lucas was snatched in Angie’s large Logia rock arm. She stomped a foot through the ground and used Seismic Sense. “Anthony, I just felt where the control of this statue is coming from. It’s fifty feet directly below us. Do you need me to come with you?”

“I can handle it, Mom.” Anthony smirked. “Don’t know about Michelle, though. After all, she was born yesterday.”

“Five minutes before you, dummy!” Diancie giggled. Anthony jumped and pushed an ever-descending hole into the ground, his Firstborn sister flying after. Angie resumed her duel with the fake Stonebuddy.

The two earthbenders broke through the ceiling of a wide cylindrical room, composed of smooth straight stone. Statues and cubes filled the floor, and Stonebuddy was playing chess in the center. The fall lasted for three seconds in this tall room before Anthony dented a crater by landing on his feet. “Found you, Stonewimpy!”

One hand over his mouth, Lucas moved a chess piece of Jesus. “Your remarks get more creative by the hour. Well, boy, I suppose you won the honor of fighting me.”

“Honor, my foot. You’re not the real one EITHER, are you?”

“Ooo, my… your perception has improved.”

“Stonebuddy… do you remember who I am?” Diancie asked. “Do you remember who YOU are?”

“Yes… I do know you, Diana. My memories are severely scattered, so I cannot remember everything. But… I do know the reason King Reggie broke my soul. It seems that the person whom Stonebuddy reincarnated into… was the same incarnation as one of the Ancient Gods. You see, boy, we World Leaders are incarnations of ancient guardian deities who must prevent imbalances between the universes. Our order has lasted for 4,000 years, and our leader has always been the denizen of this dimension who gained control of the Octogon. The King and his descendants lived in the Original World which became the core of the Dimensional Fusion. The same Dimensional Fusion that is destroying our universe.”

“Ancient Gods?” Diancie questioned. “Where in the world did you learn this?”

“The Octogon saw this. With it, the original King saw the incarnations who had inherited the duty and sought to bring them together. For 4,000 years, this tradition repeated, so our existence would continue and we would eventually save the universe. And I proudly follow the tradition.” He moved a chess piece. “I don’t remember my life as Stone and I do not want to. The powers I possess, while artistic, are a curse. Foreign power like mine are the reason this universe is falling.”

“That’s not true.” Diancie spoke sympathetically. “Stone may have been different, but he was still a person. You’re still a person, Lucas. Not a reincarnated god.”

“And you are a god… A god hopelessly trying to live like a human, shunning your true identity.”
Diancie bowed her head in shame. “At least she’s fun to be around.” Anthony stated, stepping forward. “She’s got more heart than you do. But if you aren’t gonna show yourself, I’ll break every statue you throw at me!”

“Hm…” Lucas slid his chess table across the floor, away from them. “You can try.” (Play “Mr. Stone’s Theme” from Rayman!)

**Boss fight: Lucas Stonebuddy**

*Power Levels: Anthony – 3001. Lucas – 8500*

Stonebuddy leapt as high as the ceiling and shook the earth upon landing, dropping several stone cubes around the room. Lucas leapt behind one and kicked it to Anthony with great speed, the boy stomping the floor and punching through the cube. Lucas punched the floor and bounced a rectangle to crush Anthony, but he burrowed underground and dug toward Lucas. The Leader leapt above Anthony’s place to Ground Pound, but the boy punched a perfectly shaped cone up to stab Lucas. Anthony popped out, grabbing the cone to chuck at Lucas, who karate-chopped it.

“Wow, I never made a jab that smooth before!” Anthony beamed.

“Perhaps Stone’s memories are awakening inside you!” Diancie inferred. “Or it could be the Diamond Chi I transferred to you to give your rocks that extra smoothness.”

“I prefer the memories idea.” Anthony remarked (and referenced ;P).

Lucas stomped a platform from the wall, hopped onto it, and punched the wall to launch five giant cones. Anthony evaded the others and kicked one up to Stone, who jumped and smashed the ground before Anthony. The boy flew all the way up to the ceiling, grabbing the intersecting wall with one hand and both feet. Lucas punched the ground and dropped a spherical stone that was larger than his body. He kicked the stone as it ricocheted up the wall and would crush Anthony. The boy kicked the stone instead and shattered it, dropping to the floor to create an earthquake that would drop more stone spheres.

Lucas lifted a sphere up with one hand and threw it fast as a baseball, bashing Anthony in the face. “Ouchie!” Diancie flinched. “This may also be Stone’s memories, but my power is also protecting your body from severe injuries.”

“I’ll give you that one, Michelle.” Anthony rubbed his nose. Stonebuddy lifted another one and chucked, but Anthony jumped and grabbed the top, hanging tight as it ricocheted up the room again. Anthony directed it down with his bending, still ricocheting, and successfully landing a blow against Stonebuddy’s stone body. Lucas rapidly stomped the ground in a tap-dance fashion, rising to safety via a pillar while smaller blocks dropped from the ceiling. They fell in a Tetris pattern and shaped like L’s, U’s, etc., but Anthony jumped up the layers and avoided them.

Lucas jumped and sprouted a stairwell into being, stationed at the top with Anthony at the bottom. A Thwomp appeared behind Anthony, forcing the boy to quickly jump up the tall stairs to avoid the pursuing rock creature. When Anthony made it to the top, Lucas jumped again and stomped a sloped road into being – the Leader at the bottom with Anthony on top. A Rhomp appeared behind him – a cylindrical stone with a grinning face. Anthony dashed down the path to escape it, but gained an idea and punched a hole in the Rhomp to hide inside.

Lucas saw this, so when the Rhomp made it down, the Leader stomped himself to the top of a new
path and watched it roll away again. But then Lucas noticed the hole in the path, and was instantly
stabbed by a stone jab from an underground Anthony. The boy popped out and laid a beatdown on
Stonebuddy’s body, breaking it into pebbles. The slope rejoined the flat ground, and Anthony
turned to see another Stonebuddy.

The World Leader dropped a large cube from the ceiling, breaking it to create a sculpture of
Cragalanche. Lucas made the statue move similar to the real creature, diving at Anthony with a
spin attack. Anthony dodged behind and kicked a rock at Cragalanche’s rear weak point. “Stone
loved to make sculptures back in his day.” Diancie remembered. “He kept them loyal to the real
thing.”

“Good thing I know how to BEAT the real thing!” Anthony dodged Cragalanche’s arm smash and
burrowed underground to emerge behind the creature. He stabbed a cone through its weak point
and destroyed the statue, but Lucas broke through the cone tip-first and punched Anthony against
the wall. The boy recovered and saw Lucas jump to the back, shooting a barrage of rectangular
platforms. With precise finger-jabs, Anthony broke each platform and moved closer to Stonebuddy,
stomping a rectangular slanted pillar at the Leader. Lucas leapt overhead, and during this action,
ceiling pillars emerged along his path and crushed Anthony under one.

Anthony broke the pillar and decided to stomp up a stone cube of his own. He smashed it and
made a… disfigured statue of Aunt Rachel, who wielded a wavy sword and charged at Lucas
sloppily. “Utterly laughable!” Lucas shattered the statue effortlessly. “This is what real art is!” He
stomped up a cube and broke a Sovite statue out of it. The lavabending ancestor ran at Anthony and
tried to squash him with his muscular legs.

“That’s pretty awesome! Hope you don’t mind if I steal it!” Anthony punched the ground and sunk
Lucas in a ditch, seizing the chance to control the statue with his own bending. Sovite flipped
behind and stomped Lucas further in the ditch. Eventually, Lucas broke the statue with his power
and emerged from the ground in a stone-made car with wheels, using the former ditch as a cockpit.
Lucas drove toward Anthony, but he ducked under the craft’s middle, only for it to about-face.
When it sped to Anthony again, the boy stomped twin ramps for the wheels to drive up, then he
stomped a large trapezoid up to cut the car in two. “Hah! No wonder the cavemen liked trapezoid
better!”

“You would know, mm hm hm hm hm!” Diancie giggled.

“And you would know THAT!”

“Touché, Anthony.”

With half his body crumbling, Lucas erected a stone maze from the surface. He strengthened the
walls to prevent Anthony from punching through, so the boy maneuvered the maze and avoided
the falling walls. He used Seismic Sense to see the correct path and followed to where Lucas was
hiding. “I guess YOU’RE not the real one!” Anthony smirked before kicking a stone sphere to
shatter the body.

“Over here.” The maze lowered as another Stonebuddy was present. “So, I made a slight
miscalculation when estimating your abilities. Or should I say the abilities the Firstborn granted
you—otherwise, I am spot-on. I must improvise.” Lucas stomped stone pants over his legs, a vest
on his body, stone fists, and a helmet on the head. Anthony charged forward, countering his
launched fists with a punch of his own. Punching the fists left them slightly cracked, but Anthony
felt a slight aching in his knuckles.

Anthony stomped a rock jab to shoot himself to Stonebuddy and headbutt his vest, following this
with punches and kicks to the Leader’s armor. Lucas crouched, stuck his hands underground, and
drew a stone mace and club. Anthony leapt back to avoid the swings, but striking the ground
allowed Lucas to bounce stone balls to his opponent. Anthony stomped a round pillar up, and with
another stomp, that pillar’s body became a stone spring. With this, Anthony bounced around the
room to avoid the balls Lucas batted his way, the World Leader burrowing underground when the
spring tried to crush him.

From underground, Lucas sensed where the boy was bouncing and shot cones up to strike him.
Anthony sent more chi into the spring and broke holes in the ground with each bounce. He then
spun the spring around and sent a spiraling earthquake across the floor, striking Lucas’s hiding
spot. Lucas climbed out, still clad in armor and holding weapons. Anthony abandoned his spring
and charged stalwartly at Lucas, grabbing both his weapons, flipping above, and breaking the
Leader’s helmet with his feet.

Anthony took the weapons and crushed them in his palms, engaging in a fist fight with Lucas’s
stone gloves. Anthony caught the fists in his palms and applied pressure to crush them, Lucas’s
arms crumbling. Anthony then leapt to stomp his stone head into rubble. “Well, what’s one less.”
He whipped around to find another Stone Clone.

“GRRRR! I am getting SICK OF THIS!” Anthony used a rock jab to rocket toward Lucas with
greater force, head-butting the World Leader against the wall. “Michelle, give me a bit more. I’m
settling this.”

“Sure thing, Big Brother.” Diancie lent a fraction of chi to Anthony. The boy stomped the ground
and sent his Seismic Sense everywhere to see beyond the walls. Countless Stone Bodies lined the
interiors, so with a great burst, Anthony tore the walls into rubble, expanding the room’s width and
taking all the lifeless clones down. Some of them weren’t completely painted.

“I see.” Anthony deduced. “When you’re controlling a clone, you can’t control much of anything
else because you’re sending your chi to it. But I’m gonna make you come out!” He stomped two
giant cones into being and stabbed each and every able-bodied lifeless clone. He then directed
them at Stonebuddy, but when the Leader shattered them, Anthony seized the chance to shoot over
and grab him. He used Seismic Sense again to see the origin place of the clone’s control. “Oh, just
over there, huh?” He located the source in a room across the rubble. “I’ll meet you there.” He
crushed the clone in his hug and raced over.

Anthony burst down a wall and uncovered the hidden room. “FOUND YA, Stone…wimpy?” He
was taken off guard by the sight. (End song.)

Lucas Stonebuddy was pale and frail, sitting in a wheelchair while light cords connected to him
from the walls. “So… you see me for what I am.” he moaned hoarsely. “When King Reggie split
my soul… it shortened my life force… and I was placed into this coma. I was forced to use my
powerful stonebending… to interact with people via statues. The natural Light Energy from this
mountain keeps my body intact… no matter how great my usage of chi is.”

“Stone…” Diancie was terribly saddened by his condition. “You poor, poor man…”

“You may say Stone was a good person… but even though I don’t know him, I hate him. …I did
not ask to be born as him… I did not ask to be an Ancient God reborn… and I do not want to
endure this pain any longer… cough!” He kept a hand over his mouth to block the coughs. Perhaps
that explained why his clones always made the gesture. “But it’s too late now… do as you wished:
put me out of my misery. King Andrew is close to victory, anyway…”

“…” Anthony shook his head. “This is wrong. I can’t end our battle like this. Michelle, can’t you
do anything for him?”

“I wish I could… but the reason this man is dying is because part of his soul was destroyed. That part was reborn into you. Even if I could just… put it back… I’m afraid of what’ll happen to you, Anthony.”

“Cough, cough!…” Lucas coughed.

Anthony clutched his right arm in his left. “B-But… you said you were reborn as children who were going to die, Michelle. Doesn’t that mean… Stone was, too?”

“Yes, but I didn’t sense the same fate befalling you. That part of Stone just… chose you.”

“Do you think maybe… Stone was tired of being Stone?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, if the same guy was being reborn with ALL his memories for thousands of years… I don’t know, I guess if I were him, I’d feel like I wasn’t making progress. It’s like when I get everything in a game, only to start a new game, and have to do the same stuff over again. (Thanks for that, Michelle.)” Anthony glared.

“I said sorry.” Diancie blushed, recalling she erased some of his games. However, looking back at that silly scenario… Diancie understood. “Maybe you’re right, Anthony. Stone was, well, Stone for so long that he wanted to be someone else. He kept his memories until he ended up ruining someone’s life because of it. …Still… if Lucas dies, what if you remember everything, Anthony? What if you become the whole Stone?”

“Maybe I would get his memories… but I still have my memories.” Anthony smiled. “And in the future… Stone can be reborn as someone else with memories, too! It’s like those games that examine data from other saved games! But I…” Anthony frowned and faced Lucas again. “I feel bad just… letting you…”

“Do you truly believe Stone would be happier… being you?” Lucas coughed. “Would I be happier… if I were you?”

“I…I do.” Anthony spoke truthfully. “…Would you be happier… if you were me?”

“… … Yes.” Lucas weakly clasped the light cords and tore them off. The action made his body weaker, but with his remaining strength, he picked them off. “I have always despised great power… because of where my foreign power has brought me. I do not know if I shared Stone’s thoughts on that matter… but if I did, perhaps you will give me new thoughts. Anthony… please… make our final moments meaningful.” Lucas passed out on his chair, his final breath leaving.

Diancie wiped the tears from her eyes and Anthony bowed his head. A gray chi flew from Lucas’s mouth into Anthony’s body. “Do you feel different… Anthony?”

“I’m not sure. …Hold on, I sense something.” Anthony looked to his left, feeling a loose spot on that wall. He went over to slide it open, finding a compartment with a large, brown lantern. “It’s… a lantern?”

Diancie gasped, “Anthony! It’s the Sun Chi Lantern!”

“The what?”
His wristwatch rang, and the person to speak was Dipper. “This is Dipper Pines calling all nearby operatives. We rescued Gideon from the castle, and you might wanna hear what he told us.”

**Aboveground**

“That’s impossible!” Midna exclaimed after hearing the news. “The Octogan couldn’t have done that, could it!”

“That thing is WAY too powerful!” Dillon looked King Andrew’s direction with horror. “Hey, Midna!” His Firstborn flew over to Mew and Sunni.

“Mew, I need you to use your telepathy and call the other Firstborn to us!”

“Mew can do that?” Sunni asked.

“Yes, it’s one of his special powers. Of course, calling all the Firstborn in one place is usually a bad thing. In this case, I think we should. Just to see if this is real.”

“Okay. Do it, Mew.”

“Mew…” The Ancestral Firstborn closed his eyes and sent the message.

**Los Angeles**

“Mana?” Manaphy perked up.

“What’s up, Uncle Manaphy?” Melody asked.

“Mana Mana! Mana!” He pointed skyward frantically.

“You want us to take you somewhere?”

“Is it safe to leave Jones like that?” Eric asked.

Davy Jones and the Dutchman Pirates had been encased in trees that sprouted up out of nowhere. “They’ve been that way for five minutes… you boys just stay in the treehouse and watch them from there. I’ll take Manaphy wherever he wants to go. Call if something bad happens.” The three rushed to the treehouse.

Blackbeard Teach appeared from a dark portal and began tearing Jones’ tree open.

**Rozeland**

“Who’s talkin’ to me?!” Crest panicked. “HELP! VOICES IN MY HEAD!”

“What voices, Crest?!” Diwata questioned.

“Some voice is telling me to go to Mariejoa! But they’re talking like ‘Mew Mew Mew Mew’!”

“What do you think is happening?” Denny asked.

“Maybe the others are in trouble. I guess we should go. Tie Leanne up and take her with us.”

Lee Andrew was restraining his Inferius sister with Shadow Possession, leaving the others to bind her in rope. “You’ve gotten better, Lee.” Leanne smiled.
“Glad you finally acknowledge it.” Lee remarked smugly.

His sister frowned. “I never got the chance to say… sorry for not treating you right.”

“Sigh… it’s all right. We’re still throwing your funeral before Cheren’s.”

“AAAAH!” Denny was flung out of the S.C.A.M.P.E.R.:

“URSE!” The Teddiursa posed proudly. It was still stalking Denny.

Mariejoa

Anthony and Diancie emerged from the ground with Lucas’s fallen body. “Guys, we beat Lucas Stonebuddy. Er, I mean…” Anthony wasn’t sure where to begin with the story. “Actually, he kind of killed himself. It’s a lot to explain.”

“Killed himself?” Haruka repeated with remorse.

“Wow.” Chris said. “Well, it looks like we defeated them all now. Except—AAAAAAAH!”

King Andrew encased the entire battlefield in his Octogan’s glow. When it faded, Chris began rampaging like an uncontrollable demon, mindlessly shooting Combustion Beams. Anthony began moaning “Duuuuh” like a boy with no brain, Nagisa was crying and grabbing her crotch as though she lost her privates, and Maddy’s Haki vanished as her body felt flabby, leaving Lucci to pin her under his claw. “The Octogan has trapped each of you in an alternate reality.” Andrew proclaimed. “Your physical bodies have not changed, but the ideas in your brains appear real.”

“SUGAR!” Meloetta cried when Sugar was reduced to a five-year-old form, sticking out of her grown-up dress. Sugar cried, seeing her precious breasts were all gone.

“The Octogan sees your fears.” Andrew glanced at Nagisa, who believed he had become female, and at Wendy, who was hugging herself on the ground as she believed her friends were beating the life out of her. “It shows what is hidden. It opens the shrouded parts in your minds.”

“Then it’s a good thing I don’t have a mind!” Zach Murphy was pedaling a giant gargoyle with Pluto the Dog’s head. Glittery powder rained from its tongue. “I shredded this dust from old MacBooks! This oughta save everyone.”

Andrew glared. “That would be very annoying… IF I DIDN’T SEE THAT COMING!” The Octogan flashed and turned Pluto into Big Elmo Bird Thing (just imagine that combination). It fell and crashed on the ground, leaving Zachary in the dust.

“Oaf!” Andrew pinned a foot on Zach’s neck.

“The Octogan has adjusted to your trickery, boy! Now, I will end the Twenty Keys Prophecy once and for all!”

“NUMBUH 100!” a banshee voice screeched. Andrew turned: the person to bravely oppose him was Panini Drilovsky, aiming a M.U.S.K.E.T.. It was twitching in her hands as she stood on the edge of the mountain. “You are scheduled for immediate decommissioning! As temporary Supreme Leader, I order you to come quietly!”

Andrew left Zach and approached the girl instead. He could see Panini’s heart racing without cease, her fear rising to the top of her mind. The M.U.S.K.E.T. would slip out of her sweaty hands as Andrew stood high over her. In one swipe of his great power, he could wipe Panini from
existence. Instead, The King released Conqueror’s Haki and brought Panini to her knees. Her will was not totally lost, for she did not faint. “Hm… You do have your mother’s blood in you.”

“ANDREW!” The King turned once more and found Sandman. The vigilante pushed himself off his wheelchair and removed his mask and hat. “Numbuh 100… you have to stop. This has gone too far. I know for a fact you don’t want to do this. Even when you think you’re doing what’s right… it could just be the darkness blinding you.”

“There is NOTHING blinding me!” Andrew stated. “Thanks to the Octogan, I’m the only one who sees the truth! I see what all of you are blind to!”

“I may not be able to see beyond reality like you can, but at least I can see what’s right in front of me. I can see what’s around me. Look around you, Andrew! Is this what your friends wanted?!”

Andrew turned and watched as the White Lotus and KND continued to battle Inferi. They have endured many injuries and the town that belonged to God was in deep ruin. “You think you’re building a new world, but you’re just destroying the world your friends fought to protect, the world the NEW Kids Next Door are trying to protect! And now, Dillon, Travis, and the others are suffering, because you’re making them destroy everything they loved! You’re no different than the very thing you despise. The Octogan’s made you mad with power. You’re unstable. This is the very reason the Kids Next Door needed benders, to combat people like you.”

“There was NEVER meant to be benders!” Andrew seethed. “There was never meant to be people like me! You’re right, I DON’T want to do this, but there’s no other way! I need to make the world the way it’s supposed to be!”

“Don’t you understand, Andrew?! THIS IS THE WAY our world was supposed to be!!”

“?!?” Even with the Octogan, The King couldn’t find meaning in his words.

“I don’t know what world the Octogan is showing you, but it’s not the world you live in! This is the world you and your friends were born in, the world your friends loved! The world the Kids Next Door protect each and every day. And they’ll protect it FROM THE APOCALYPSE! The Kids Next Door ALWAYS have a way! And the only reason the Octogan isn’t showing you that way is because IT wants the power! It wants to destroy everything and it’s been using you all this time! But you’re not its puppet, Andrew. You’re Numbuh 100, a Kids Next Door operative. You don’t have to listen to it.”

“…” Andrew bowed his head, a tear leaking from his eye. He clutched the Octogan and tore it out of his socket. He stared at the flashing 8-ball, the gem of unlimited power and sight. “Ever since I was an operative, I dreamed of a world where all kids were free to be who they are. I never wanted to play god… I never wanted anyone to believe my father for a second.”

“It’s not too late, Andrew.” Nolan held a hand out. “You can start over… just like I did. You can be an operative again and stop the Apocalypse with them.”

“…” Andrew slowly reached to place the Octogan in his hand. The gem brimmed, and The King’s eye narrowed as its light glinted off.

“DON’T TOUCH IT!!” roared Vaati.

“AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!” Unbearable pain coursed through Nolan upon contact—he saw worlds colliding together, a green demon towering over galaxies, eggs flying across space like shooting stars…
“NOLAAAAAN!” Danika cried.

“Unfortunately… the Kids Next Door is inferior to my power.” Andrew placed the Octogan back in his eye socket. Nolan York was horribly burned and wounded, unable to move and close to death. “It must be me… now and forever.” Andrew punched the former operative and sent him falling over the mountain. He faced the operatives and adults, all speechless with horror and remorse. With the great 2030 gone, the same as Nigel Uno… there were only so many left.

Fast as a bolt of lightning, a golden comet burst from the sky RAMMED Andrew, blowing him several feet. “What?!” Andrew recovered to see who had landed the blow. Everyone else faced at the edge where Nolan fell. Andrew looked over, gaping with utmost shock. (Play “Open Your Heart” by Crush 40!)

The person to rescue Nolan from death was Cheren Uno. He lifted the adult with one hand, glowing like a golden sun. His clothes were gold, his jacket was longer, and a symbol of a “C” and an ‘x’ was featured on his shirt. A golden flame covered his body, bringing a pure warmth more loving than the sun. Panini cried at the holy light. Sugar, Wendy, Sunni, and all the kids stared at the golden light with pure happiness. At this moment, no one wanted to feel worried or weak. All they could feel now was hope.

Cheren set Nolan on the ground and played the Ocarina of Time. A blue sphere appeared over Nolan as the peaceful tunes from the Song of Reversed Time healed Nolan’s wounds. The adult opened his eyes to Cheren’s golden, godly form. The child made a joyous grin that could melt hearts. “Sorry Mr. York, but I don’t want you to die, yet! I’ve become too fond of you!”

“…Don’t I ever get a break.” Nolan chuckled.

Andrew gritted his teeth and charged a Hyper Beam. Sensing this—FLASH—Cheren slashed the Master Sword so blindingly fast, The King rocketed across Mariejoa, smashing through many buildings and statues before colliding with his castle. Cheren sheathed the sword and faced Panini, on her knees and crying. The child god floated over and set foot before her, tipping her chin up. “Don’t worry, Panini… I’ll take it from here. Just kick back and relax.”

“…” Panini smiled.

**Moonbase**

“What…What just happened?!” Alexei was agape. He and Sector KB saw it happen firsthand.

“We just watched a miracle, Lexi.” Clay smiled. “There ain’t nothing gonna stop him now. …What are you gonna do?”

“…” Lexi bowed his head.

Somewhere close by, Zanifr felt it happen. “God Tier… hmmmmm…” He smiled with humor. “This boy continues to surprise MMe.”

**Mariejoa**

King Andrew recovered, glaring at the child with hatred. He floated toward Cheren, facing each other at level air. “I won’t let you do as you please.” Cheren promised. “You strayed too far off your path, Numbuh 100. It’s time to show you what the Next Generation is capable of.” He drew the Master Sword and flashed lightning. “I will be the Beacon of Hope that guides the Kids Next Door to the future! YOU CAN COUNT ON THAT!”
Next time… the final battle with King Andrew Johnson. Numbuh 3621 vs. Numbuh 100.
Cheren Uno battles King Andrew at long last! But unfortunately, greater battles await our kids in the future.

I just learned Gene Wilder died yesterday, August 28. Everyone pay your respects to the man that played Willy Wonka. *bows head* When you’re done, play “Open Your Heart” by Crush 40.

**Chapter 80: The Thirteen**

*Semifinal boss: King Andrew Johnson*

*Power Levels: God Cheren – 9100. Andrew – 9600*

Cheren Uno and King Andrew rocketed to each other, Master Sword against Armament Fists as the atmosphere vibrated. A burst from the Octogan blew Cheren across the town, but he recovered and flew like a comet as he evaded Andrew’s energy missiles. Cheren flew in a circle around The King, and without warning shot to him with lightspeed, colliding his sword with Andrew’s fists before His Highness blew a Hyper Beam that sent Cheren 20 miles away. The King slowed time to follow him quickly, and Cheren was forced to use lightspeed to block his sped up attacks with the Mirror Shield. Eventually Andrew kicked the shield away and punched Cheren halfway down Mariejoa.

Cheren flew to recover his Mirror Shield, but Andrew grabbed the boy’s shoulders, whirled around rapidly, and hurled Cheren against the mountain. Before he could recover, Andrew flew above and stomped him with Armament. Cheren fell all the way down, but he stabbed his sword in the mountain to slow his descent and then dashed all the way up the mountainside. King Andrew blew Hyper Beams down the mountain, but Cheren sidestepped the beams, and once at the top of the mountain, Cheren leaped high above The King, charged a Skyward Strike in his blade, and sliced down his body with enough force to spill blood.

A furious Andrew flew down to clash fists with Cheren’s sword, eventually grabbing the sacred weapon and throwing it into the ruined town. Cheren and Andrew locked fists, in which His Highness would easily crush Cheren’s small hands, if the boy hadn’t bursted into golden flames and scorched The King through his armor. Cheren performed a flip and kicked Andrew into a crater in the ground, quickly blasting an Ice Arrow down before recovering the Master Sword. Andrew’s right fist was froze to the ground, so he mustered Armament Haki to pull himself free.

Using the Octogan, Andrew stopped time to attack his opponent, but Cheren immediately countered with a slice to the face. “I used the Ocarina of Time to make myself immune to any timebending!” Cheren used a Soul Surge to land four precise, deadly blows against The King’s armor, then flew 30 meters back to charge a lightspeed stab into the Octogan.

Time unfroze, making everyone confused by their change in position. “WHOA!!” Aurora exclaimed. “That was so fast, I didn’t even see!”

“Sewene is so stwong!” Five-year-old Sugar pointed.
“You think golden flames make you special, Boy?!” Andrew shouted. “Hit me all you want, but my armor will never break! It has existed nearly 4,000 years, worn by all the Kings of my family and imbued with their Haki! And with the Octogan to continue healing my wounds, it’s completely invulnerable. No weapon in the entire universe can crack it!”

“4,000 years? Holy crap, you must reek.” Cheren waved by his nose.

Andrew snarled and turned his head Armament, blasting an Iron Beam that Cheren narrowly avoided. Andrew spewed one again, so Cheren raised the Mirror Shield in defense, only to end up flying 40 meters backward. Cheren charged for a lightspeed boost, going shield-first through The King’s Iron Beam, but His Majesty’s breath proved the stronger as Cheren faltered. The King seized the chance to zip above and Iron Punch Cheren to the mountaintop.

“You may be a god, but you’re still mortal. Remember the pain of your past!” The Octogan flashed and trapped Cheren in a wave of realistic memories: his battles with Majora, Viridi, Cragalanche, and Aunt Morgan gave him painful physical wounds. The time he attacked Panini in his Demon State, he fought Sheila when he thought Panini died, his father died, he killed Doflamingo out of rage and demanded GUN lock Sugar away. His body felt the wounds, his mind felt the turmoil, and his tongue felt the nacho cheese- “What?”

“HI, ANDY!” Zach Murphy was “mooning” the Octogan to shield Cheren. “I just learned my heinie’s a natural memory filter!”

“YOU IMBECILE!” Andrew tried to demolish him with an Iron Beam, but Zach dug into a hole to avoid. “Diglett-Dig.” He peeped out as a Diglett Pokémon.

“Hahahahaha!” Cheren began giggling on the ground. “HAHAHA hahahaha!”

“YOU THINK THAT’S FUNNY?!?” Andrew fumed. “Let’s see you laugh when I BURN ALL YOUR FRIENDS!” He cast a fearsome Hyper Beam and turned Anthony, Maddy, Rachel, and others into Ash… Ketchum.

“I’m gonna be Pokémon Master!” the Ashes chorused. They were each dressed and animated like their respective series. “Huh? No, I’m gonna be Pokémon Master! Yeah, right! I bet you haven’t won ONE Pokémon League! Th-That’s not true!” They flushed. “PIKACHU, THUNDERBOLT! DWAAAAAAAH!” They lit the area yellow with lightning and wide-eye faces.

“PAH HAHHAHAHAHAHA!” Cheren clenched his chest, and the gold flames burned brighter.

The Octogan was vibrating from the deception, spreading its anger to King Andrew. “STOP LAUGHING!” The King burned an Iron Beam all the way through the core of Mariejoa. However, Cheren had already flown above to avoid the laser.

“Hyou know, you almost had me for a minute, Kingy!” Cheren grinned. “But I almost forgot my Gold Flames are lit by happiness! All it takes to defeat you is a little laughter!” With lightning speed—Cheren SLICED Andrew from his left, then went for a Skyward Jump Attack. Andrew flew away and blasted an Iron Beam, but with more light imbued to his Mirror Shield, the black beam was absorbed inside of it so Cheren could fire back. The force of the attack blew Andrew 80 miles and cracked part of his armor.

“HA HA HA HA!” Cheren kicked his legs and pointed. “You said your armor couldn’t break, but you broke it! HAH HAH HAH!”

Andrew slowed time to zip up and grab him in a choke, but seized only gold flames as Cheren flew
behind. “Haha, poke!” Cheren reached around to poke his left eye.

“Stop that!” Andrew threw a smack, but missed.

“Pbbth!” Cheren blew a raspberry.

“Is that supposed to be fighting?!”

“No, it’s supposed to be mocking! What, can your Octogan not detect it?”

“My Octogan detects only the relevant stuff!”

“Well, that explains a lot. NOW, ZACH!”

“What NOW?!” Andrew whipped around.

“Not really.” Cheren became a golden comet and SMASHED him to the ground. Afterwards, Cheren unleashed an unending flaming beam into the crater where he lay, making His Majesty a golden brown. Cheren stopped the attack and sealed the deal with a Light Arrow to Andrew’s Octogan. (End song.)

Cheren softly landed on the ground and stared at his fallen opponent. His friends and their parents, even the ally Inferi, gathered around the defeated King. Andrew’s other eye was closed, but the Octogan kept flashing away. Cheren stared at the hand with the Triforce of Courage mark. With this hand, he would reach down and take the Octogan.

“DON’T TOUCH IT!!” A bright white beam blasted and nearly hit them. They looked at the castle to see Abram Johnson at the base of the stairs. “Stand back! Let ME take it!”

“It’s Abram!” Dipper screamed. “Cheren, there’s something about Abram you need to know!”

Before Cheren could respond, several KND ships landed on Mariejoa, and one GKND. “CHEREN!” Melody ran off, followed by Sector RZ, Emily Garley, Nebula & Arianna, and even Azelf showed up. “Yo, Cuz, what’s with the flashy clothes?! Or better yet, WHY ARE YOU ALIVE?!”

“Did you bring your Firstborn?!” Midna shouted.

“Yes, they’re the ones that pestered us to come!” Nebula yelled, indicating Jirachi.

“Is there an emergency?” Arianna asked, releasing Celebi.

“Yes! Over there!” Midna pointed at Abram, who was on his knees and rasping.

“I feel some kind of power from him!” Jirachi yelled. “It’s… familiar…”

“No! It couldn’t be…” Uxie followed.

“Eleven Firstborn, together!” Azelf flew first, and the others followed. All the Firstborn surrounded Abram in a circle, aiming their hands.

“Um, what are we doing, exactly?” Crest asked.

“Channel your chi into him.” Uxie replied.

“Okay, got it!” Diancie nodded.
“WAIT, DON’T!” Abram pleaded. “I need to touch the Octogan with-!”

The World Prince was trapped in the center of their combined power. Firstborn God Chi consisting of Plant, Water, Stars, Psychic, Shadow, Willpower, Emotion, Knowledge, Moon, Music, and Earth, connected with Abram’s body. There was only one other time when the Firstborn were together like this… and now, the same effect would happen.

Abram BURST with white light, and from his tiny mortal body, Supreme God Arceus flew into the dawning sky, finally free. “AaaaaaaaaAAAhHHiHHiH!” The great god stretched his limbs and back like a pony. “You have no idea how EXHAUSTING it is to spend so long inside a SIMPLE MORTAL’S BODY!”

“Arceus was… sealed inside Abram?! All this time?!” Cheren choked on his words.

“RAAAAAH!” King Andrew had recovered and struck the god with a constant beam from his Octogan.

“With the Octogan’s help, I conducted a ritual designed to seal spirits inside mortal bodies! You won’t believe how much power I exhausted to trap Arceus… With him, Abram was going to help me design and control the Spirit World Project. But now, I’ll just have to use him myself. I knew you Firstborn were going to come here and free him, so before Arceus recomposes himself, I’ll make use of his spiritual energy.”

The Octogan’s beam sucked power from Arceus’s body as Andrew glowed with a white aura. “The Octogan sees through reality… AND IT REWRITES REALITY!” (Play “Dark Gaia 1” from Sonic Unleashed!)

A blinding white light swallowed the mountaintop of Mariejoa. The energy took solid form around King Andrew, and now he was in command of the Crown Goliath: a titanic version of his armor with giant cuckoo clocks on the shoulders, a spinning dress with purple and yellow stripes, and gears inside the chest. “WUOOOOOH HOH HOH HOH HOH!” The King cackled like the Sir Knightly he once portrayed, safe in the titan’s head. “WHATCHU GONNA DO NOW, CHEREN-CHAAAAAN?”

Cheren became a comet and shot up to the cockpit, but the Goliath spun a fist and BASHED him to the ground. “Master Cheren, I sense King Andrew is trying to absorb your chi as well. Deactivating your God Tier may prevent him from becoming stronger than he currently is.”

“I trust you, Fi.” Cheren’s golden body extinguished, reverting to his normal colors. “But I can’t defeat him like this!”

“I got ya covered, Cherry!”

“Oh?” Cheren glanced at something tiny in his lenses (his glasses reappeared with his normal form). “Zach?”

“I turned your glasses into mini TVs! Let the comical stylings of Zach, Blinks, and Floop give you a chuckle! But don’t let it out until the time is right.”

“General Guy is here TOO, ya fool!”

“YOU’RE NOT IN, YET!” Zach kicked him away.

“I don’t even know how I got here!” Floop yelled.
Zach is trying to build up my God Chi for when I use it again! Cheren smiled.

“WAAAHH!” Dimentia suddenly splorped out of space and was dropped on the ground by Dimentio.

“Sister, I would like to introduce you…” Dimentio looked around, then frowned. “Oh, it seems they aren’t here, yet. Ooo, that thing has a nice dress. Um, ciao!” He warped again.

“What was that about?” asked Melody.

“Dimentia, I’m glad you’re here!” Cheren said. “Listen, I want all of you to help fight him! Fly up there, attack from below, do whatever you can to keep him busy!”

“We’re on it!” Wendy yelled determinedly. “Let’s go, Carla!” Her kitten grabbed her master and flew up to the Goliath’s head, along with Vaati, Mika, and Morgan, while others attacked parts of the body.

“While they’re doing that, I’m heading up there.” Cheren drew his sword.

“Let me help you up the legs.” Nebula cast a Gravity Path up the Goliath’s legs.

“Thanks!” Cheren began to race up, staring directly up the titan’s skirt. Slots opened up and fired Bombshell Bills, but Cheren bounced the golden missiles back with the Mirror Shield and destroyed the cannons. He couldn’t advance farther up this leg because an electric wall was coming down, so he shot his Hookshot to a target on the other leg and ran up that Grav-Path. Bombshell Bills fired from cannons on the base of the body inside the skirt, and to break an entrance open, Cheren had to bounce the Bombshells back. Cheren punctured an opening and quickly raced inside.

He landed in a dimension of hearts where millions of clones of his many girl friends were swarming on him. Cheren stabbed Panini, Miyuki, MaKayla, Sugar, Wendy, Karin, Grenda—he knew neither of them were the same girls, yet he was terrified of being buried in kisses. “KAH HAH HAH!” One of the Meridas poofed into King Andrew as he skipped across the crowds, his mouth grinning and his eyes sticking out. Cheren charged a Hurricane Spin and sawed through the crowds in order to find The King. He hit one of the Celestes and changed her into Andrew, but the spin attack made him too dizzy to attack again.

Andrew spun his arms like fans and bonked Cheren rapidly, but the boy ducked and did a Youth Roll to knock Andrew off his feet. Cheren used Soul Surge to land fearsome blows against The King, and the act warped him out of the dimension.

Cheren was now outside and on the spinning skirt, having to jump Amps that rotated with him. Different layers of Crown Goliath’s body were rotating, and one had a ledge for Cheren to grab onto. The above layer had a Snapdragon hole, so Cheren whipped his sword up to cut the creature when it passed by. Cheren then grabbed the ledge on that layer, waited once more, and kicked up to the next ledge. Two Snapdragons waited below the final ledge, so he sliced them before climbing up.

Now on a solid foothold, Cheren had to fight past some Spear Guys to advance up stairs along The King’s body. With a burst of power, Cheren was blown several feet away from the Goliath, using the Pirate Sail to stop his fall. “Hold on, Cheren!” Vaati used airbending to blow him back onto the titan. At the end of the stairs, Cheren could Hookshot up to an opening into the gears.

The inside of the machine was much bigger, full of giant gears with Hookshot targets. Cheren latched onto one, which would rotate into an Amp, so he hooked up to the underside of a horizontal
gear. It would spin Cheren into a wall with a thin gap, so he lowered himself via the Hookshot’s chain, going under the wall while the chain passed the gap. He saw a target on one of the points of a vertical wheel and latched to it, the wheel taking him underneath before he would be crushed against another gear. Cheren Hookshoted to another higher gear and dropped on a flat one below it.

From here, Cheren could grab and swing across a series of chains hanging from rotating gears. Some of these chains had Shock Chus slithering down, tempting him to progress quicker. “Kehe-!” Cheren held in a chuckle. In his glasses TV, Floop was having an awkward first date with giant nail clippers. It was amazing how he could focus on his objective while watching that show at the same time.

From the final chain, Cheren had to build swinging momentum, wait for it to rotate aligned with, and then jump off to glide to a distant opening using the Pirate Sail. Bombshell Bills launched from the sides and homed in on the child, but he ignored them and kept flying. The missiles would simply explode against each other and Cheren would be out.

Cheren was now on the back of the Goliath, having to climb a grated wall where square segments would turn and shoot out “CUCKOO!” birds. They turned without warning, and Cheren was flung off by one of them, but he quickly used the sail while Vaati blew him back on. “Kyah hahahahaha!” He heard Andrew cackling madly. “What are ye gonna doooo, Cheren? Going to cut me up? Why don’t you go GOD TIER, HUH? It’s okay, don’t be shy!”

Cheren made it to the shoulders of the Goliath, using the Mirror Shield to block the cuckoo bird that shot out, then froze it with an Ice Arrow. He decided to do the same to the other one, so there was nothing to stop him from grabbing the ledge under The King’s chin where the cockpit was. He climbed around and up the side, where a ladder would take him to the titan’s crown. Again, Cheren sidled along a ledge, and was directly above the cackling King’s cockpit.

I’m putting all my faith in you, Zach. And with that, Cheren dropped down, grabbed the edge, and kicked into the mouth to swing slices at King Andrew. The King blocked with Armament and PUNCHED Cheren out—thinking fast, Cheren whipped out a Hookshot, latched it to The King, and the world moved in slow motion as Cheren was pulled to him. (MaKayla was doing this to help him.) Cheren drew his sword, charged the Skyward Strike, and just five inches from making impact, Cheren changed into God Tier. “SKYWARD COMEDY STRIKE!!”

“KUOOOOOOOHHHHH!” Cheren’s blade was imbued with a blinding golden fire ignited by the humor he felt in his heart, steadily built up by Zach’s comedic routines in his very glasses. The Octogan met the full force of the blow, but King Andrew received the pain.

The King was forced inside the Goliath, and everyone could hear a “Dook dag dah ow daik dah!” as The King was comically bouncing down the stairs of his robot. Once at the bottom of the titan, an airship popped out, and The King used it to make his escape. (End song.)

“You’re not getting away!” Cheren rocketed after the high-speed ship and tossed gold flames to damage the engines. After a few hits, the ship swerved out of control and exploded. This time, Andrew hopped on a hoverbike and kept flying, so Cheren had to move faster and throw quicker flames to damage it. The hoverbike exploded, but Andrew saved a wheel and made a unicycle to keep floating. Cheren stared with total disbelief, throwing one flame to destroy it. Andrew grabbed the wheel and kept floating on that, so Cheren destroyed it.

And now The King was left with only his legs to rapidly kick in the air and move ever so slightly with the Flutter Jump. Cheren shook his head in disapproval and casually grabbed him by the hair. PUNCH, PUNCH, PUNCH, PUNCH, Cheren made Andrew’s eye black and burned with his
golden fist. He combined his Three Sacred Treasures to strike Andrew’s backside with the Three Sacred Fusion. The King’s armor shattered completely, and his muscular body fell into a crater.

“GAH!” The Octogan popped out of his eye socket and bounced along the ground. Cheren gasped and quickly flew down to grab it.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH...” His mind was open to the colliding worlds, the First Dimension, and the crumbling multiverses.

“CHEREEEEEEEEN!” Panini cried.

“AAAAAAAAaaaaahhhhhhd...” His body was crumbling under the Octogan’s divine power.

“It’s useless!” Andrew yelled. “Even your godly body can’t comprehend the Octogan’s power and knowledge!”

Cheren’s body was a blinding green, the unstable energy blowing a whirlwind around the mountain. “… Maddy Murphy entered Haki Fury and rushed up to grab the Octogan, too. “AAAAAAAAHHHHH!” Even her Haki couldn’t protect her from the pain of a trillion years. King Andrew smirked wickedly as their bodies decayed.

“AAAAAAAAHHH!” Chris Uno grabbed the Octogan, sharing the pain with his brother and friend.

“WAAAAAAAHHHHH!” Anthony McKenzie grabbed it, and remained firm on his feet through the pain.

“EAAAAAAAAH!” Wendy Marvell bravely joined her future teammates.

“AAAAAHH THIS IS A BAD IDEA!” Nebula cried, linking her hand with the others'.

“AAAAAAHH STICK WITH THE REFERENCE!” MaKayla used her Timebending Fury to help them.

“Aaaahhh...!” And now, the pain was gone. Their bodies were unharmed, yet they were still holding the Octogan. Cheren smiled at all his friends. Their hands linked in the same place. Their hearts were as one.

“?!?” Andrew was in complete shock. Their bodies hadn’t obliterated at all. “But... HOW?! You’re children! H-How can you possibly...?!”

“Don’t you remember, Andrew?” Cheren asked. “We... are... KIDS... NEXT... DOOR...”

“!!” Andrew jumped up and grabbed the Octogan. “KAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!” His body was overcome with greater pain, as though the Octogan grew tired of him.

And then the Octogan’s power vanished: Jagar King trapped the gem in a steel box. “Chi Container!” he announced. “And they said we never needed one this strong!”

“...” A gaping, frozen-mouth Andrew fainted.
Andrew Johnson found himself in a grassy meadow with a gentle breeze. He looked up as his blurry vision noticed a blackish shape with a purple top. “T…Travis?”

His old friend looked very disappointed. “What happened to you, Andrew? Where did it go wrong?”

“What do you mean? I…” Andrew glanced left. Dillon Simmons was there.

“You lost it, Andrew. You spent all this time up on God Mountain… you forgot what was really important to you.”

“You don’t understand! I did it for you! I did it for all of us! The Octogan was going to show me the way… It was going to help me save everyone.”

“Andrew, if your Octogan was so all-knowing, why didn’t it stop you from getting your butt kicked?” Travis remarked.

Andrew choked on his breath. “I…"

“We understand what you were trying to do… The Octogan may have showed you the end, Andrew… but did it show you the Kids Next Door?”

“Yes! It showed me the Kids Next Door’s destruction! If they finish this prophecy… they’ll all be doomed. I’m sure of it.”

“You know, Andrew… maybe you’re right.” Dillon said. “Maybe the Kids Next Door will be destroyed. But… that’s no excuse to destroy them yourself. When Travis died, did you stop fighting? When I died, did Nolan stop fighting? Yeah, you were a bit shaken up… but you knew that if you stopped, we would’ve been upset. And your all-powerful Octogan was just beaten by the Kids Next Door. If that could surprise you… don’t you think they could surprise you again?”

“…” Andrew reached behind and took the frying pan off his back. The ‘100’ was displayed clear on it. It was true… he had forgotten who he was. He relied on the Octogan’s wisdom… but all it brought was deception. It had not seen Zach was the Seventh Light… it had not shown his own defeat… Andrew was a fool for trusting it. “Travis… Dillon… Nigel… Kuki. …I’m sorry.” The world turned into light.

“Mmmmmn…” Andrew awoke on a rugged, ruined ground, cuts and bruises all over his muscular body. In the remains of his armor was his frying pan helmet. He picked it up and pushed the broken crown off of it. “…?” He looked up. The Kids Next Door and White Lotus were holding weapons to him. Kirie Beatles smiled bubbly and had chi-cuffs ready. Arceus was floating above and watching with the Eleven Firstborn.

“Hm hm hm…” Andrew smirked and sat against a jagged rock. “If it means anything to you guys… I’m up for Lime Rickey’s.”

“Kah ha!” Cheren laughed.

Sometime later

“ON YOUR KNEES, Failed Leaders!” Mabel Pines held her grappling hook to the four World Leaders. They were chi-cuffed and on their knees. “If any of you THINKS about calling another zombie, I’ll grapple-hook you in the face! Now WHAT do you have to say for yourselves?”

“SORRY.” they complied. (“–Felius Umbridge says with humiliation.”)
“Hm hm hm.” Andrew chuckled. “Chi-blocks don’t hold well on us. The Octogon showed us the secret equation that disables them.”

“There’s a thing like that?” Dillon asked. “Is that how Daphne escaped from prison?”

“Yes. Well then… I suppose it’s time to stop the Inferius. I’ll go give Dr. Strange the news.”

“So, Dr. Strange was the one who started it?” Nolan asked.

“He’s studied ways to harness magic and use it. Quite impressive, considering the power source he used.”

Mabel started to march back-and-forth like a military trooper in front of the World Leaders. Vaati’s left eye was slanted into a glare. “Dad, why are you looking at them like that?” Wendy asked.

“Those people have done unforgivable crimes, Wendy. They put you on the wanted posters out of blind fear, they have killed innocent people… We must do more than imprison them to ensure they never harm again.”

“They’re not going to hurt anyone, anymore. Don’t you think… they wanted freedom, too?”

“Hmm… I suppose that’s true. But I still intend to continue my quest. I still believe in true freedom.”

“I think you still owe Wendy some ‘true freedom.’” Carla reminded. “Remove the curse you placed on her now.”

“I don’t know how to do that without gravely harming her. I still don’t understand how Harry Potter survived… and apparently, neither does Voldemort. I asked him.”

Team Sandman followed Andrew into the castle’s cellar, finding Dr. Strange’s laboratory. “Dr. Strange, the battle is over. Disable the Inferius—!” The doctor was laying dead on the floor. “HUGO!”

“Well, this is anticlimactic…” Crystal commented.

“The crystal’s broken!” Nolan pointed at the platform, where fragments of purple crystal lay. “Zeref must have escaped!”

“But that crystal was supposed to be unbreakable!” Andrew exclaimed. “…!” He sensed a presence outside with Observation Haki. “They’re here.”

A gargantuan vessel had risen above Mt. Mariejoa: seaweed-green and covered in coral and sea fauna, with a great mouth of sharp teeth on the keel, and five times bigger than the Flying Dutchman: it was the King Dutchman. “HAH HA HA HA HA HA HA!” Medusa towered high on the deck. “So, the Kids Next Door establish their selves as this world’s rulers! You think you’ve won this battle? Let me show you what TRUE power is. Introducing… the Thirteen DARKNESSES!” (Play “K. Rool Battle Intro” from Donkey Kong 64!)

The ship lowered and allowed them to see everyone on deck. There were some they recognized, others they didn’t… but here they were, together in one place. “Ladies and gentlemen,” Bill Cipher announced. “I’m your host, Bill Cipher, here to introduce you to the MOST POWERFUL beings in all the MULTIVERSE! Ladies first!”
The first Darkness, a yellow giantess, leapt high off the ship and shook the mountaintop upon landing in the town. “Hailing from the First Dimension, Empress of the Gem Empire, IT’S YELLOW DIAMOND!”

“Yellow Diamond?!” Anthony exclaimed. “No way! She wasn’t this big when I first saw her!”

“Hm?” Yellow Diamond glanced down, scowling. “Oh… if it isn’t Pearl’s old pet. You’ve become… smaller.”

Without warning, Thanatos appeared by Azelf, grabbed her, and warped to Yellow Diamond. “Quick, attack this creature!” Thanatos threw Azelf, and Yellow Diamond swung her massive boot and struck the Firstborn.

Azelf calculated the results. “Yellow Diamond’s Power Level is: 15453.”

The next Darkness to jump on land was someone everybody knew. “Captain of the Flying Dutchman, Ferrier of Souls, the Heartless Captain DAVY JONES!”

“Princess Eva!” Jones drew his sword. “You did not think you could hide from me again, did you?”

“YOU’RE one of the Thirteen?” Eva chortled. “I defeated you when I was an amateur waterbender!”

“Ahh, but tell me this, Eva… would you have been so lucky, had I no heart to stab?” Jones smiled wryly. “Uh huh ha ha ha hah! HAAAH!” He lashed a swift Water Ship at Azelf.

“Davy Jones’ Power Level is: 13267.”

“And Mom defeated him like THAT?!” Melody exclaimed with sheer disbelief.

“Next up, all the way from the Land of Fire, founder of Hidden Leaf Village and the Uchiha ancestor, give it up for MADARA UCHIHA!”

Madara’s Inferius eyes were in the form of Sharingan. Using the Mangekyō Sharingan’s power, Madara brought to life Susanoo, a colossal samurai composed of a sapphire body with flaming wings. Azelf gazed at the colossus in horror, but embraced for the worst as she allowed the great sword to slice her. If she were not unkillable, she would be obliterated. “Madara Uchiha’s Power Level is: 20163.”

Bill Cipher continued, “Hailing from Soul Society, master of illusions, and one HELL of a Kidō master, cry his name to the heavens, SŌSUKE AIZEN!”

“I won’t need to measure my Power Level.” Aizen said. “My example speaks for itself.”

Azelf gasped loudly—Sectors V, W, IC, the adults—EVERYONE was lying on the ground with their throats slit, blood spilled everywhere. “NOOOOO!”

In reality, the operatives were confused at what was sparking so much fear inside Azelf. “I wonder what she’s seeing?” Aizen gave a dark, yet charming smile. He had drawn his sword, Kyōka Suigetsu beforehand, and made Azelf witness the action. Without saying another word, Aizen sprouted a blackish-purple energy coffin to encase Azelf, spears piercing through it. Everyone was struck silent, but when the coffin dissolved, Azelf was still intact. To her shame, however, the Firstborn was getting bruises.
“Sōsuke Aizen’s Power Level is… 19981. Ow.”

“Please stop!” Wendy pleaded. “You’re hurting her!”

“Oh.” Aizen faced the girl. “Would you rather we demonstrate on one of you?”

“Gulp…” Wendy froze in fear, choosing not to respond.

“A Pirate Emperor who conquered treacherous seas,” Bill resumed, “he wields powers of Tremors and Darkness, the legendary Marshall D. Teach! Or should I say… BLACKBEARD!”

The large bearded pirate quaked the ground before Cheren, showing missing teeth in his big smile. “Blackbeard?!” Cheren instantly recognized the man. He was the same crazy person eating cherry pie that he met before the Viridi War.

“I’m impressed, Cheren! You came farther than I thought you would! So, did the poison work? Did you teach Viridi a lesson?”

Cheren growled and switched to God Tier, but Teach grabbed the boy and slammed his face to the ground, his gold flames extinguished. “AAAH! What happened to my God Tier?!”

“My Dark-Dark Fruit nullifies the powers of anyone I touch! I wonder if it does the same to gods?” Teach set his sights on Azelf. The pirate leapt forth and smashed the Firstborn to the ground with a punch that sent a godly tremor through the very air.

Azelf felt like she was flattened past the 2-D plane, but when she recovered, she brought the news. “Blackbeard’s Power Level is 22072.”

“Following the act, former Czar of the Chrome Dome Empire, he likes magic, shaving, and doodling in school, CZAR BALDY BALD III!”

“KAH HAH HAH!” Baldy Bald grabbed Wendy and Nagisa’s heads. “Your hair is so blue, it must taste like blueberry! Get ready to go bald, girls!”

“NO, PLEASE! I don’t wanna be bald!!” Wendy cried.

“I’m a boy!” followed Nagisa.

“Leave them out of this!” Azelf smacked Tsuru off of them.

“How dare you attack me! Red Magic Attack!” Tsuru cast a red beam and did little harm to Azelf.

“Baldy Bald’s Power Level is: 100.”

“ONE HUNDRED?!” Zach cried. “That’s so powerful!! We’re never going to win against him!” He sat on the ground and cried a stream of tears.

“It’s okay, Zach, I’ll one-punch him for ya.” Maddy patted his head.

“This Darkness came a long way from Hollow Bastian, a Keyblade Master and Seeker of Darkness, open your hearts to the wisdom of XEHANORT!”

“When I was told that children are the heroes of this universe, I was a bit humored!” Xehanort laughed as he stepped past the kids calmly. “But you children are more than what you seem… I eagerly await our future interactions.” He drew his Father Time Keyblade and froze Azelf in time, swiftly flipping around her and laying 20 hits.
Azelf unfroze and reacted to the strikes, looking like she was being beat around by someone invisible. “Xehanort’s Power Level is 21822.”

“Now, this guy decided to come here early! The darkest wizard history ever knew, leader of the Death Eaters and a Slytherin graduate, LORD VOLDEMORT!” Bill snapped his fingers and exploded the ice holding Voldemort and Bellatrix.

“AAAAH HA HA HA!” Bellatrix cackled. “Lord Voldemort is superior to ALL OF YOU! You think yourselves powerful?! My Lord can demolish you in one flick of his finger!” One second later, Voldemort’s Inferius head rolled off his body. “VOLDY!” Bella gasped and quickly put his head back. The arms fell off, so Bellatrix reattached them. “Please, My Lord, show these wretches how powerful you are.” She put his Phoenix Feather wand in his hand and helped aim at Azelf.

“Avada... Kedavra.” Voldemort shot a very small green spark at Azelf. Even if Azelf was mortal, the tiny Death Curse would only do as bad as a bloody nose. “Voldemort’s Power Level, or at least his Inferius, is... 56.”

“LIES!! MY VOLDY IS NOT THE WEAKEST!”

“It’s okay, Bella, we believe you.” Bill said awkwardly. “Let’s move on. I bet you folks didn’t see THIS comin’! A demon of Ancient Egypt in Termina, a father of dark magic, ZORC NECROPHADES! Known by modern day humans as Truman Kirman!”

“Truman?!” Cheren and Panini chorused.

“Truman is no more.” the boy stated. “I am Zorc. And soon, the universe will remember it.” Zorc spawned a card in which a Red-Eyes Black Dragon emerged. The dragon struck Azelf with its breath and vanished.

“Zorc’s Power Level is 25666.”

“Of course it’d be those numbers.” Goombella commented.

“Better show your respect, folks, because THIS Darkness will show no mercy! From Marvel-199999, he’s a powerful warlord who holds the Infinity Gauntlet, bow before Mad Titan THANOS!”

“Thanos?!” Diancie gasped. “He was the one that killed Stone!”

“You make Thanos look like a joke.” Thanos stated firmly, pushing Bill aside. “This is how you strike fear in your subjects, Child. Ahem... BOW!!” The Titan punched the ground with his Infinity Gauntlet, and with a burst of power from the Power Stone, everyone on the planet died. Thanos then used the Time Stone to rewind the events, restoring life to the planet. He proceeded to flick a horror-struck Azelf with his other hand.

“Thanos’ Power Level is 9500... but that Infinity Gauntlet is another matter. If I could, I would estimate... 1,051,788.”

“That’s a good estimate.” Emily quivered.

“A man you all know, he’s the King of Evil, ruler of demons and holder of the Triforce of Power, it’s the return of GANONDORF DRAGMIRE!”

“I never thought I would get to see you again, Rachel!” Ganondorf grinned devilishly. “How shameful that your son is... a lot more interesting to me.”
“You wanna see how ‘interesting’ I am, Ganon?!” Cheren drew his sword.

“Oh, I will… but for now… just a small demonstration will do.” Ganon faced Azelf, took a breath, and “AAAAAH!”

He blasted a soundwave that blew Azelf across the town, her ears ringing and her eyes dizzy. “Ganondorf’s Power Level is 30,000. I think that was more than a lucky win for Rachel.”

“And now, the eldest of the Darknesses, over one million years old and still looking young and sharp, it’s our FAVORITE long-lasting Zathurian, DIMENTIO Z. WINKIEBOTTOM!”

“But alas, I had already spoiled the surprise like a giddy fanboy.” Dimentio giggled. “I arrived earlier to drop off my sister. I couldn’t allow her to miss this show, I just couldn’t!”

He blasted Azelf with a Starburst. She recorded and concluded, “Dimentio’s Power Level is 36755.”

“Aren’t you glad that I held back, Dearest Niece?”

“And finally, a Darkness who was a bit late to the party, but we got that mess sorted out, he comes from the Floating Land of Alakitasia, the black wizard ZEREF!”

“How did you escape from the crystal, Zeref?!” Andrew demanded.

“During your exciting showdown, I snuck into the castle to free him.” Medusa explained. “I did it using a magical substance called Moon Drip.”

“I read about that.” Wendy mentioned. “Moon Drip is a kind of healing remedy harnessed from moonlight that can undo almost any magical spell or-!” she gasped in realization. “Or curse…”

“Yes, and Acnologia’s explosion spilled a hefty amount of Moon Drip. I guess I have Diwata’s harnessing of the Lunar Magic to thank for that as well. Zeref, honey, show us your Power Level!” Medusa spoke like a mother to her toddler.

The dark wizard attacked Azelf with a Death Sphere, and to his amazement, the Firstborn didn’t die. “Zeref’s Power Level is 4595.”

“That doesn’t sound too bad.” Mason said.

“Guess again.” Goombella was examining Zeref with Tattle. “Zeref’s HP is infinite.”

“Infinite?!” Wendy gulped.

“Every possible method to kill myself has failed.” Zeref spoke. “Such is my curse. I passed that ability onto the Inferi. That is why… I can command them.” With a wave of his hand, Bellatrix lost her free will and collected Voldemort’s remains to bring him aboard the King Dutchman.

“And my Power Level is a solid million.” Bill reminded. “But I don’t want you guys to feel bad or anything. I mean, when it comes down to, what is a Power Level, anyway?”

“CIPHER!!” Arceus’s godly voice thundered. He hadn’t looked so furious since his drive to Darkness. “How DARE YOU attack my daughter like a tattered ragdoll! If her curse were still intact, you would know pain and humiliation like no other!”

“Well, Daddy, if you didn’t want us to kick Azzie around, you should have left her curse!” Bill remarked. “But if you insist, then… DARKNESSES: attack Arceus!”
All at once, the Thirteen attacked Arceus with their fearsome power, Aizen’s Hadō 99, Madara’s Susanoo, Thanos’ Power Stone, Davy Jones’ Dark Spirit Cyclone, Ganondorf’s lightning, Tsuru’s Red and Blue Magic, and Yellow Diamond used white diamonds to absorb some energy from their attacks and amplify them. Bill Cipher joined the fray and burned Arceus with full power, the combined power would leave everything in its wake in complete oblivion. However, when it was over, Arceus was safe in his bubble barrier. (A tiny green spark floated up and popped on him like a bubble.)

“RAAAAAAH!” Arceus blew the Darknesses back onto the Dutchman with his bellow. “If your villains were not vital to the prophecy, I would deliver justice upon YOU ALL! Take heed, heathens, that my Power Level is one billion. You may believe you have the potential to conquer worlds like petty bullies, but I will always be the Principal!”

“Relax, Arcy, we’re just having some fun!” Bill said in a mock consoling fashion. “We’ll get out of your hair, okay? We just need to collect something first. Ahem… the Octogan, if you will.” He looked at Jagar King.

“What?! I’m not letting you have this!” Jagar stated.

“I wasn’t instructing you.” (End song.)

“HAH HAH HAH HAH!” The Chi Container was grabbed in psychic, floating up to Specter. The intelligent ape joined the Darknesses on the King Dutchman. “You fools were so busy with CP10 and the World Leaders, you forgot ALL ABOUT dear old Specter, didn’t you?!”

“GAAAH!” Emily panicked. “I can’t believe we forgot about Specter!! Oh, why did we waste time going to stupid Tree of Beginning?!”

“It’s simple, Emily: even as an intelligent human, you are still unevolved. This is for you, Lesser Lord!”

Specter passed the container to a man in bright green garb and a pale white head shaped like an orb. “It’s… Ragaj Gnik.” Jagar said with fear.

“His… face!” Aurora was disgusted. “…Where is his face?!”

“He doesn’t have one!” MaKayla gaped.

Indeed, Ragaj’s face was completely blank and round. “How…How does he eat?!” asked Chris.

“Kids Next Door, you have my earnest thanks for retrieving the Octogan from King Andrew. It is true that his family’s interference prevented the Octogan’s power from running unstable… but now, his use is now finished. I’ll dispose of him for you.” Ragaj aimed his hand at Specter.

“WHAT?!” Specter was suddenly lifted by an unseen force, flying to grab onto Andrew. “During one of our meetings, Specter, I froze time and implanted chronitons in your bloodstream so that I could control you. My apologies that you cannot realize your dream of an ape-ruled world, but… such is fate. Good-bye, Specter.”

Specter grabbed Andrew under the arms and flew skyward. “NO!! RAGAJ! YOU’LL RUE THE DAY YOU DECEIVED THE AMAZING SPEC-!” The ape exploded into a green light that distorted the surrounding space. No trace of him or Andrew was left behind.

“THEY EXPLODED!” Haruka screamed.
“I used my timebending to enhance the kinetic energy of Specter’s chronitons so they would explode,” Ragaj explained. “Now the Octogan is truly free of His Majesty’s control. But I’m certain you have a spare, Jagar. Bring that spare to Great Clock on May 31. There, we will have our final battle… and my master will return.”

Ragaj opened the Chi Container and took the Octogan out. He commanded the gem to release the Soul Stone from its captivity. Thanos took the green stone and stuck it in the index knuckle of his Infinity Gauntlet. “NOW Thanos is truly reborn! I will keep true to my word…” The Soul Stone shone as Thanos touched Dimentio, Madara, Davy Jones, and Voldemort. Their Inferius eyes vanished, bringing them back to life.

“Well-p, nothing left to do but bring these guys to VIP. Zeref, leave them with a little parting gift.” Bill ordered. “Fellas, turn the ship 180 degrees and let’s ditch this planet!”

The titanic King Dutchman turned and sailed to the sky. It was now that the heroes could see the vessel’s helmsmen: a red-haired woman, blue-haired man, and their Meowth smiling gleefully. “Looks like Team Rocket is sailing away with the big boys!” (“Wobbuffet!”) (“Chiiiiime…”) The ship became a twinkle in the sky.

The Inferi of Nigel, Dillon Simmons, Travis, and the others remaining lost their free will and readied to attack the heroes. Trees erected from the ground and sealed the zombies inside. “You’re welcome.” A giant 8-year-old with flowing blonde hair and a rose thorn dress emerged from the edge of the mountain.

“Viridi!” Cheren exclaimed.

“NOT HER AGAIN!” Anthony shouted. “Quick, Cheren, kill her!”

“Calm down, Anthony Ant, I’m currently on your side. Your friend, Majora freed me from prison and I persuaded him to warp me to Fairy World. With the threat that Majora would destroy the place with his power, Princess Aisling restored me to… partly my old self. I did you humans a favor and rounded up all the Inferi I could. I can’t remove the curses on them, but I can keep them contained.”

“Well, you’ve partly made up for your crimes.” Cheren said.

“Maybe this will make up: your mother forgot to bring this from home.” Viridi tossed him a little ball with a silver bottom and blue top.

Cheren smiled and faced Azelf. “Am I worthy to be your Guardian now?”

“You are a god.” She shrugged. “I don’t see how you can get more worthy than that.”

“I’d say you’re worthy of some rest after that endeavor. In you go, Azelf!” Cheren threw the ball and caught his Firstborn. The Spirit Ball brimmed and a ‘II’ appeared on the forehead.

**Cheren Uno captured a FIRSTBORN!! Once again, we have them all!!**

“Hello, Viridi!” Arceus greeted her happily. “How have you been?”

“Oh, shut up, Dad.” Viridi Ascended to the Spirit World and vanished.

“…Was it something I said?” asked the Supreme God.

“Well, we’re in for a fight, it seems.” Dillon said. “Poor Andrew, though…”
“Oh, I wouldn’t worry about him.” Zach smirked. “I’m sure he’s closer than we think.”

Next to him was some muscular guy in a top-hat, monocle, and fake black mustache. “Oh, you saved him.” Maddy observed in disbelief. “Good job, Zachy. But you put the monocle over the wrong eye.” Indeed, it was over the empty socket.

“All’s well that ends well. For now, anyway.” Aurora shrugged. “I think we’re late for something else.” She smirked.

“I’m way ahead of you.” Kid replied. “We will be ready by tomorrow.”

After the battle, the World Leaders and Abram Johnson were taken to Arctic Prison. The Spirit Kids Next Door helped Viridi search for and seal the remaining Inferi, but the ones that were sent beyond the planet had not been found. All in all, at this time tomorrow, the chaos created by the World Leaders had all seemed like a nightmare. Tomorrow was a beautiful sunny day…

Cleveland Playground, the day after… (Play “Apotos Day” from Sonic Unleashed!)

“Haaaappy birrrrthday toooo you.” Cheren was sitting on a table with a three-layer cake. It had white icing, cherries on top, and 10 candles. “Haaaappy birrrrthday toooo you.” All his friends were here. “Happy birrrrthdaay Chereeeen Uuuunoooo. Haaaappy birrrrrthday toooo you!”

“And you smell like one, too!” Artie finished. “Oops, wrong song. Haha!”

“No need to get antsy.” Death the Kid told everyone. “We baked 20 cakes of the exact same design, so everyone gets an equal amount. And don’t worry, we cut out any demon material from the recipe.”

The cake was baked with a similar recipe as the Delightful Children’s cake. Everyone took a slice and picked a table where they were happily chatting amongst friends. Wendy and Nagisa were getting acquainted, as were Chelia and Morgiana beside them… though Morg was mostly quiet, keeping her eye on Wendy. Index and Chimney were having a hotdog-eating contest—both girls devoured a sufficient amount.

Vweeb, Aeincha, and Ururu were sharing one slice of cake, which was so big to their size that they burrowed through the cake like moles. When those three couldn’t stomach another bite, Team Rupert sent Pikmin to recover pieces of cake and divide it amongst their Minish friends.

Arianna was speaking to Princess Gonshiri and Shelly, trying to form a friendship. Sadly, the twin sisters used her as a target for their snarky remarks, showing off their royal smugness.

Zuri, Gonbe, and Waddles were nibbling their own slices, but Sparky settled with a cup of oil. Carla was appalled by the animals’ behavior, using a fork to eat her cake like a proper lady.

Zach was on a stage doing a comedy routine with Floop, Jar Jar, and General Guy. By the end of the show, each participant had more bruises than the CP10 or World Leader battles combined.

Anthony was showing Aisa some earthbending moves, and while she couldn’t use the element herself, it may help her in combat. In return, Aisa would tell Anthony how to use Red-Foot Style.

Miyuki was leaning in the shade of a tree as April painted her. The environment in the painting was dull, gray, and captured emotion beautifully.

Ruby and Diwata Uno were arm-wrestling using their flaming fists. Sapphire was externally accepting of the friendship between Ruby and the blue-skinned Lunarian, but internally, her mind
was in turmoil.

The Eleven Firstborn were on a picnic blanket, sharing delicious food and sweets. They had gotten used to Diancie quickly, since Crest appeared out of nowhere as well, but it did raise questions on if there were more Firstborn. Crest and Midna were under an umbrella, preferring the shade.

Nebula was personally requesting Death the Kid to join the Galactic Kid Council. And for the 8,000,008th time, Kid said “NO.” Sheila Frantic was furiously beating Augustus up for ripping off her epithet—Augustus didn’t know why the fairies took him back for this to begin with.

Marine Frantic and Mandy Cortix were drinking rum as the former wrapped an arm around her and swayed, singing “Binks’ Sake.” Henrietta settled with soda, giggling at them.

Ib, Mary, and Garry were sharing a table. Phosphora, Jack Frost (using a Gigai), Django (who was saving cake for Luviro), and Shade were sharing one. Suki, Sonny, and Donna were having fruity snowcones and becoming quick friends. Alexei was sitting with Sector KB, still awkwardly wondering if he was allowed to be here.

“Guys, don’t start the party without me!” Everyone turned to the direction of the voice.

“GEORGE!” MaKayla jumped up and hugged her older brother. “Where were you all this time?!”

“I… don’t really remember.” George scratched his head, which was wrapped like a mummy. “But my mom brought me back. So, who’s got cake?!”

Chris stared at George suspiciously. Now that he thought about it, the ‘8’ under his headband looked just like the Octogan. “What’s wrong, Chris?” Maddy asked him.

“Uh… nothing. Hey, whatever happened to Lucci?”

“I don’t know. I guess he got scared and ran when Cheren came!”

“Lion has become a kitty, it seems.” Chris chuckled.

There was a FLASH, and pink flames appeared in the air above the middle of the park. They assumed it to be Bill Cipher coming to ruin the party… but the one to appear was Madotsuki. “Whoa!” The girl whirled in the air, trying to balance. “How do I stop??”

“Good afternoon, everyone!” Darkrai II appeared and held Madotsuki. “Well, it seems my theory was true after all. Madotsuki borrowed some of Bill’s powers when they switched realities. Bill was able to send his energy to peoples’ dream bodies and enable them to see him in the real world. Madotsuki is now doing the same.”

“She looks just like me!” Mabel expressed. “It’s like… a twin I never had!”

“I’m your twin, Mabel.” Dipper reminded.

“I always thought you were adopted.”

“Hello, Madotsuki!” Mary waved. “I’m very glad you could join this party with us! There are so many friends we wanna introduce you to!”

“This is the best birthday I could’ve asked for.” Cheren said. “Thank you all for being here. Tomorrow, we’ll have a funeral for Leanne.”
“It’s not a big deal.” Lee Andrew complied. “We have an Apocalypse to worry about.”

“Yeah, but there’s nothing else we can do now. We found all the Keys, we got all the Firstborn... we just need to root for Mr. King when he fights Ragaj... AAH!” Cheren screamed.

“What?!” Panini shouted.

“NERECH! What happened to Nerehc when I died?!”

“Nerehc was thrown into the Sanzu River.” Kid explained. “His life force was stolen by Ganondorf’s soul, and that’s what revived the Evil King.”

“No! Nerehc...” Cheren’s happiness decayed. “But if... I’m still around, Nerehc should be...”

“Perhaps on normal terms.” Another voice spoke. Zanifr Mimchi and Viridi came out of a dark portal. “But God Tier is a law of the First Dimension. Its laws do not comply with yours.”

“Happy birthday, Cheren!” Viridi greeted joyfully. “It’s so great to see all you again!”

“What do you want now, Poison Ivy?” Anthony retorted.

“I wanted to give Cheren my best wishes, for one thing. I must admit, despite his destructive tendency, there is a charm that sets him apart from other humans. ...But now that he’s a god, I can’t help but lose respect for him a little.” Viridi frowned. “I guess it’s a matter of him letting it go to his head.”

“I am impressed that Cheren was able to achieve the God Tier.” Zanifr said. “It means he was at the right strength and the right mentality, for the most part. However, Cheren, from this point forward, you will never age again. In other words, it will be your birthday forever.”

“Wow... we’re gonna need a lot more cake.” Cheren felt slightly disheartened. “Sigh... but it was a necessary sacrifice. Now I’ll have the strength to fight whatever the New World throws at us.”

“But if Cheren doesn’t age... well...” Panini twiddled her fingers. “He can’t grow up with us. He can’t be with... anyone...”

“Don’t worry, Cheren!” Mary patted his shoulder. “I’ll be happy to spend eternal youth with you!”

“Hm hm.” Nebula chuckled. “Knowing what my mom has done, this is a tad ironic.”

“You have no idea.” Sugar remarked.

“I guess I’ll just have to watch all my ladies get old!” Cheren laughed.

“CHEREN!” Panini startled him. “How can you be okay with this?! I mean, never growing up... it goes against everything you taught us!”

“Panini, just because my body won’t age, it doesn’t mean my mind won’t. I taught you all to keep moving forward and become stronger. And that’s what I’ll keep doing, too. I may be a god, but I’ll still fight beside all of you. And when the time comes... I’ll resign as Supreme Leader and pass the duty to someone else. Are you guys okay with that?”

No, Panini wasn’t okay with it. But everything else he said was true... so she nodded. Cheren’s siblings nodded, Anthony nodded, Melody, Wendy, Bon Clay, and everyone else. “I’ll make sure to stop him if he tries anything.” Viridi mentioned. “But the other matter I came here for... WAS
YOU, Wendy!” She whipped around to the blue-haired girl.

“M-ME?!” She flushed.

“When Aisling returned my powers, her friends asked me to bring you to Fairy World. They said you should feel free to bring your magic friends. We can go after the party.”

“Um… Okay.” Wendy was extremely curious, but it didn’t show on her nervous expression.

“Zanifr, are you sure Nerehc isn’t still alive?” Cheren asked.

“I have already been to the Negaverse. The DNK is terribly upset by his loss. Today, they are having Nerehc’s funeral/birthday party.”

“Sigh… I should go.” Cheren got up. “You guys don’t need to wait for me. Zanifr, can you take me to the Negaverse?”

“Very well.” The troll opened a dark portal. (End song.)

Before they could enter, however, emerald flames ignited outside the park and the Grim Reaper appeared. “Father!” Kid yelled.

“COUGH, cough!” Grim used his scythe to hold himself up. “H-Happy… birthday… Cheren. COUGH!” The reaper was a deep gray, cracks and wrinkles all over his boney body.

“Grim, you look horrible!” Cheren said. “What’s wrong?”

“Cough! Cheren… I have a confession to make. That Unbreakable Vow… dat I made with you near the start of this month… I’ve been breakin’ it every day since then.”

“W…What?!”

“I told your friends what I had been doing… but what dey didn’t know was that they were still dying… and I kept bringing dem back to life… just like I had always been doing. I’m sorry… Cheren… but I could not allow any of you to die. You had to… complete de prophecy and save de universe. All I wanted… was to do my part.”

“Grim…” Cheren didn’t know whether to feel angry or thankful.

“Father…”

“Cough! Son…” Grim faced Kid. “I dink I’ve… taken this curse as far as I can. No being can break the same Vow so many times and…and survive. It’s… over for me, Kid.” He limped toward his son. “De New Universe… is going to need a new Reaper.”

Kid shook his head. “No… I couldn’t…”

“You can. Cough.” Grim held the scythe to him. “Take de scythe, Kid… Become a better Reaper… than your old man… cough!”

“…Father…” With a heavy heart, Kid took the scythe in both hands.

Grim fell to his knees and coughed the last of his nonexistent breath. “Kid… help Cheren with the upcoming battles… I’m sure he will need it. Until I met you kids… I never thought mortals were much of anyt’ing…” He spoke to the adults as well. “But you’ve all… done amazing t’ings. I know you’ll save de universe… I’ll be watching you. Good-bye…’
The Reaper’s bones turned into ash and blew away with the breeze. His cloak dissolved into smoke and reformed over Kid’s body. The new Reaper bowed his head, holding the scythe tightly.

“…Let’s go, Zanifr.” Cheren entered the dark portal as the troll followed.

You know, after listening to “Open Your Heart,” I never realized that song foreshadowed a lot of future Sonic games. XD Well, people, this story only has two chapters left. Next time, we will do the final stage.
What is a Firstborn?

Chapter Summary

Cheren attends Nerehc Onu's funeral. Wendy Marvell is invited to a special tea party. Afterwards, God Arceus tells the KND some unique information.

This is the second-to-last chapter. Here, we will do the final stage.

Chapter 81: What is a Firstborn?

DNK Moonbase

A poster of Nerehc was placed on a stand in front of his office, surrounded by bouquets of dandelions. Cheren and Sipa stood before the poster with bowed heads. It should have been a time of remorse and grieving for the lost DNK leader. …But in the Negaverse, birthday parties were treated as funerals and funerals like birthdays, so the DNK was trying to work it both ways. Tropical island music was playing as operatives were cooking barbeque and crunching chips. Everyone was upset, truly, but Nerehc would still want them to be happy, right?

“I can’t believe we trusted that witch.” Sipa stated. “Was it really vital that we bring Ganondorf back? Was there really no other way? I still don’t understand why YOU’RE alive and he isn’t!”

“I don’t want to accept it either, Sipa.” Cheren replied. “I really want to believe Nerehc is still alive somehow. But at the same time… I don’t know what to believe, anymore. I’m a human child that has the powers of a god, there’s more than Eight Firstborn… and why was Truman with the Thirteen Darknesses?”

“You saw Truman?!”

Cheren whipped around. The question came from the familiar voice of Harry Uno. “Termina Sector V! How did you get here?!”

“It started when Truman started acting all crazy.” Melissa explained. “He destroyed the portal in Father’s mansion just as he used it to cross to your world. We were going to ask our Negatives if anything happened to their Truman, and… luckily, they were at the mirror in Harry’s room just in time to meet us, too. Basically, we used a Dimension Transporter in some jungle.”

“Perhaps we can explain the rest of the story.” another voice said.

“Oh, guess who!” Celeste jumped with a start. “Hey, Negative Sector V, this is our pal, Cheren.” The five stepped aside to reveal their Negatives, including Truman’s.

“Namurt here just decided to run off and come to THIS dimension!” Assilem Nagillig smacked him aggressively. “Wanna tell ’em what that was all about?!”

“So help me, Assilem, I…” Namurt raised a fist, which shone a gold light. “No no no, patience, patience…” He faced Cheren. “Ahem: the short story is, I am a priest in training at the Church of Acirema. I can sense when very dark forces are afoot, and have recently felt a darkness radiating
from my Positive. I quickly fled to this dimension to find him... but for the most time, I had difficulty acquiring anyone’s help since I’m sort of a stranger.”

“Well, I think I found Truman.” Cheren explained. “He’s with the Thirteen Darknesses. They called him Zorc; said he was from Ancient Egypt.”

“Do you know where he is now?” Melissa asked. “Because we aren’t going back home without him.”

“I have sort of an idea... but I don’t think he’ll be able to come home anytime soon. It looks like he’s a part of the prophecy.”

“Can you take us to him, anyway? So we can see if he’s still... Truman?”

“I guess I can... But I wanna stay for this funeral first.”

“Hold on, how come Nerehc’s dead but you’re still alive?!” Celeste questioned.

“I’m going to get tired of explaining this.” Cheren smacked his forehead.

Facilier’s Voodoo Emporium

“Maaaaaan, does it feel good to be in the old emporium again!” Dr. Facilier kicked back in his chair with his feet on the table. With the World Government defeated, Wendy was no longer a wanted criminal, and the doctor could move back into his alleyway shop in Cleveland. Wendy had invited Chelia here to tell her friend about her most recent adventures. What really caught her off guard was-

“THIS LITTLE KITTY IS YOUR MOM?!” Chelia seized Carla and held her uncomfortably close to her eyes.

“OW!! That was extremely unnecessary!”

“It’s true.” Wendy replied. “My father made her that way. She’s actually a Nimbi.”

“That has got to be the CUTEST thing ever!” Chelia hugged Carla and twirled around. “It’s like that movie Nine Lives! Except... better. Now I bet you aren’t even sure which of you is the master, anymore.”

“In all fairness, Wendy was never quite the brains.”

“Moooooom!” Wendy flushed.

There was an impatient knock on the door. *When you’re done ‘Moming’ in there, we have somewhere to be!*” Viridi stated. *And I certainly won’t violate my purity by stepping into a voodoo shop.*

“Sorry!” Wendy blushed. “Would you like to come, Chelia?”

“I wouldn’t miss this for the world!”

The two girls and Carla exited the shop, joining Viridi outside. “Close your eyes, girls.” The goddess instructed. Wendy and Chelia did so. “You too, non-cat.” Carla huffed and shut her eyes. Viridi warped them to the Spirit World, and from there they made the leap to Fairy World.

Fairy World
The magical city was situated above Avalar’s atmosphere. It consisted of dozens of islands on glittery pink clouds and rainbow bridges connecting them. The fairies looked like child-size adults with big heads, wearing crowns, bug wings that helped them fly, and star-tipped magic wands that glittered like the stars above.

“I can’t believe it!” Chelia had stars in her eyes. “Fairy World is actually real! Just like the stories said! The clouds are even cotton candy!” She dove down and ripped a piece off a cloud, eating it. “!!!” Her cheeks swelled and her stomach churned. “BLEEEH!! It tastes like… fairy vomit!”

“Ha ha ha! You humans are too puny-minded to appreciate the succulent taste of sprinkled baby powder!” a thick German voice stated.

“AAAAH!” Wendy screeched. “IT’S A GIANT!”

“I’ve seen bigger.” Viridi remarked.

“So, you are the infamously Windy Marvel’ that has caught Princess Mavis’ attention.” The giant fairy had a muscular tan body and wore a light-green sleeveless shirt and camouflage pants. “I am Jorgen von Strangle, toughest fairy in the universe and King of Fairy World. VIRIDI, BE GONE!”

“Geez, you’re never gonna let that ‘Forces of Nature’ business go, are you.” Viridi turned around with a fake resentful expression. “Every person in the modern day has anger issues, I hope the New Universe is a lot nicer in that sense. Buh-bye.” Viridi warped.

“Hello, King Strangle.” Wendy bowed politely. “If I may ask, how is it you know my name?”

“We fairies have been monitoring you ever since the crisis you caused in Orchid Bay. It seems that your father has been longing to acquire the Fairy’s Tail in your namesake. And now, against my better judgment, Princess Mavis has personally requested you come to the first Fairy Princess Tea Party in 5,000 years.”

“A Fairy Princess TEA Party???” Chelia exclaimed. “Wendy, HOW did you get us INVITES to this?!?”

“SILENCE!!” Jorgen shook the world. “You are forbidden from discussing details of the party to anyone, not even yourselves, and smuggling food will result in one year of being turned into a bathroom rug. Now, with this in mind… LET US ADJOURN TO THE TEA PARTY NO ONE ELSE MAY HEAR ABOUT!!” With a great surge of power from his King Wand, Jorgen poofed the four of them.

They landed in a dining room with a long rectangular table. The girls gaped at the gigantic cake towering to the ceiling with 10 layers, each one consisting of a different fruit. The plates had succulent fruits, sweets, and teas more delicious than anyone could imagine. They were drooling and wishing they hadn’t eaten at Cheren’s birthday party. Two people were already eating – Lapis Lazuli and a ghost-white girl with green eyes and fangs. (At first, Wendy thought it was Daphne Anderson.)

“Is it yummy-looking?” a girl’s voice said. The three turned and stared up a tall throne. Fairy Princess Mavis had shining blonde hair and a smirk on her face. Her giant neon butterfly wings flapped gently, and from her pink dress, her small bare feet hung from her seat. “Wendy Marvell… I’m glad you could make it.”

“Are you the Fairy Princess?”

“Yes I am! Call me Mavis. And you must be a friend of hers!” she said to Chelia. “You know, I
invited one of your other friends here, too.”

A door opened, and an 11-year-old Chinese girl that was familiar to Wendy stepped in. “Hey Princess, when we use the magic toilets, where do they…?” Her eyes fell to Wendy.

“JUNE!!” She dashed up and grabbed her in a hug faster than a bullet.

“WENDY!” Juniper Lee squeezed her back, delighted to see her again. “I didn’t think I would see you here!”

“I wanted to make it a surprise!” Mavis giggled, floating to the floor. “Well, don’t just stand there, you three! Dig in!”

The four Fairy Princesses and Wendy’s friends took places at the table and gorged on the marvelous sweets. Wendy reached for a little chocolate-topped cake- “HEY!” it turned out to be Sugar Princess Zeira. “I’m not a tasty treat!” She bashed Wendy with her ladle. “Apologize!”

“I’m sorry!” Wendy flushed.

“Good! Now, feed me grapes.”

“As you wish.” Wendy got grapes from a plate and held them for Zeiry to eat.

“The fairies helped us repair the Veil over Orchid Bay and wipe the humans’ memories.” June explained. “But after that, things pretty much went back to normal. The princess brought me here and asked me to tell them about you.”

“What did you tell them?”

“Just that you came to Orchid Bay with your teacher and your talking cat. And that you stopped that crazy witch.”

“In truth, I wanted to make sure there was nothing evil about you, Wendy.” Mavis explained. “Not that I thought there was, but Jorgen wouldn’t stop being paranoid.”

“What has you so fixated on Wendy to begin with?” Carla questioned.

“As you guys must know, the Apocalypse is coming soon. I’ve known about it for a while and wanted to help… but as Fairy Princess, it’s against my boundaries to fight mortals.”

“Hasn’t stopped me.” Lapis remarked.

“When you’re finished eating, Wendy, I want to show you something.”

“I’m not too hungry. I ate earlier today, anyway.”

Princess Mavis led Wendy and Carla to the main throne room. There was a pedestal before the throne that rested a golden wand with a blue gem on the tip and fairy wings on its sides. “The Fairy’s Tail is a wand I crafted thousands of years ago.” Mavis said. “It’s the most powerful in the universe behind the Star Rod, and it remains as our most sacred relic…” The princess drew it from the pedestal. “I want you to have it, Wendy.”

“M-ME?! Are you kidding?!”

“The most powerful wand in the universe?!” Carla shared her disbelief. “She hasn’t even gone to school, yet!”
“Well, I’m not expecting her to use it right away.” Mavis blushed awkwardly. “I just want her to hold onto it. When this universe faces destruction, I want Wendy to take it to the New World and use it to fight the evils that await her. I want her to protect her friends with it.”

“Do you… really think I’ll need it?” Wendy asked.

“I’ve seen the Thirteen Darknesses and I fought some of them. There’s a high probability you will need it. But I’m kind of hesitant because… I don’t know what it’ll do to you. I’ve never entrusted the Fairy’s Tail to any mortal before. But you’re the only mortal who’s worthy enough in my eyes to wield it. So… the choice is yours.”

“Wait, you said that you weren’t allowed to fight mortals, yet you fought the Darknesses!” Carla noticed. “Why can’t you help us now? Why place this burden on Wendy’s shoulders?”

“…” Mavis bowed her head. “Because God Arceus wishes to salvage as much of this universe as he can. To do this, we fairies are going to meld back into him. In doing so, we may cease to exist.”

“That’s horrible…” Wendy almost cried.

“I haven’t told Aisling and Lapis this because I was afraid. I don’t exactly want to do this… but it must be done. That’s the other reason I want you to have the Fairy’s Tail. With my power imbued inside it… it will be like I’m still fighting by all of you. You don’t have to use it, Wendy, but just keep it with you. Keep it and… remember me.”

This was just like hours ago when Death the Kid took his father’s place as Grim Reaper. They were the new generation… the guardians of the New World. “If you really want me to… I’ll take it.” Wendy nervously grabbed the wand. “But you have to tell the others, Mavis. They’ll be sad when you’re gone.”

“I’m going to, Wendy. …Hm. I don’t know why, but I have a very strong fondness for you.” Mavis smiled.

“Hmm… I wonder why.” Wendy smiled back. In truth, she knew Mavis from the parallel dimension, though not personally, as Fairy Tail’s first master. Perhaps the wand in her hand marked the connection.

“Oh! And I had Lapis get this for you.” Mavis raised a small vial with bright blue liquid. “This is Moon Drip.”

Wendy gasped. “The stuff that removes magical curses? …Do you know about…?”

“I knew you were a Horcrux, yes. Let’s see if this will rid you of that curse. Open wide.”

Wendy opened her mouth and allowed the princess to pour the Moon Drip inside. ! ! ! ! A searing pain overcame Wendy—she fell on the floor in a fashion like instant death.

“WENDY!” Carla rolled her on her back. “Child, speak to me! Are you okay?! Wendy, wake up, please!”

Her long ears took the shape of normal ones. Wendy opened her eyes in time for Carla to see the scarlet-red become a chocolate brown. “Carla… what just happened?”

“Your eyes! They’re… normal.”

“Normal?” Carla pulled a mirror out of her backpack to show Wendy the result. The child helped
herself up and felt her ears. Deciding to truly test it, Wendy reached under her dress and pulled off the Chi Stabilizers. They didn’t feel any change in wind after a few minutes. “It’s really gone… I’m not a Horcrux, anymore!”

“No charge is necessary!” Mavis beamed.

“Thank you so much, Princess Mavis! I’m so grateful!” Wendy embraced her in a hug. “Uh… but if it’s not too much trouble, could you do the same for Carla?”

“The kitty who’s actually a Nimbi? I want to say that I can… but Resurrección is more complex than any other Transformation Spell. It’s like the target is literally born all over again in a different way, even if Carla still has her speech and some of her memories. …But I think I know a good substitute!”

**King Dutchman**

“GAAAAAH!” Vaati clutched his head and squirmed in his cell, ankles cuffed to a wall. It felt as though half of his very body were chopped off.

“What’s wrong, Red Eye?” Butch of Team Rocket smirked. “Is the pain too much for ya? That’ll teach ya to fight the Thirteen Darknesses single-handed.”

“Who is screaming-ah?” Davy Jones approached.

“Hey, Captain Jones. This Red Eye guy is pretty shook up. That Diamond lady did a number on him, huh?”

Davy Jones phased through the cell door, brushing his tentacles on the squirming Vaati’s face. “I am no longer feeling the severed half of his soul. Perhaps this is what Voldemort wanted-ah.”

“It can’t be!” Vaati rasped. “Has my daughter… died?!”

**Cleveland Park**

Cheren brought Termina Sector V to the setting of his birthday party. All his friends were still together… but there were some extra guests. “NO WAY!!” Kellie screamed in anger. “Your mom got you a gihugic pony for your birthday, and I don’t even get a DONKEY?!”

“That isn’t a pony, Kellie… It’s Arceus.”

“Ah, there he is.” God Arceus looked Cheren’s direction.

“**YOU TOOK YOUR PRECIOUS TIME, CHERRY SH***!”** Karkat’s Zoni’s antennas sparked from his anger. “**WHEN IS A GUY LATE FOR HIS OWN DAMN WRIGGLING DAY?!”**

“Karkitty, he already had his purthday!” >:33 Nepeta stated.

“Can We Get Back To The Point Guys?” a green-eyed Zoni named Kanaya asked (that name sounds familiar).

“**FIRST, ARCEUS, YOU JACKASS GOD OF JACKASSES, BLOWING UP OUR UNIVERSE LIKE NO JACKASS BUSINESS!”** Karkat unhesitantly swore at the god who destroyed their world.

“It was a necessary evil to prevent the conflict of Caliborn and Calliope from spreading.”

“**BULLS***, YOU DIDN’T KNOW ABOUT THEM AND WE KNOW IT!”**
“I like that one.” Jessie Sidney commented.

“I am terribly sorry, Karkat. Truly I am. It pained me to destroy something I created from my heart. I am thankful that you and your friends are still alive.”

“EH, I’LL SWEAR YOUR ASS LATER. OKAY, SO WE HAVE ALL THE LIGHTS, THE DARKNESSES, AND ALL THE FIRSTBORN, BUT THERE’S ONE THING WE HAVE TO DO BEFORE THE APOCALYPSE.”


“You people created us?!” Midna asked. “How is that possible?”

“We harnessed Arceus’s loose God Chi.” Vriska followed. “Our technology is pretty tops, you know. ;;;; ) And we divided that chi in separat8 parts and used them to 8reed the artificial gods. Artificial, 8ut years stronger than the normal gods.”

“Only Eight Of These Eggs Was Complete By The Time Arceus Was Ready To Begin The New Universe.” Kanaya continued. “We Converted The Eggs Into Psychic Energy And Implanted Them In Arceus’s Mind. Using His Own Psychicbending, He Imagined The Eight Firstborn Into Existence. He Did Not Know Of Our Part In This, Nor Did He Know About The Other Firstborn We Were Still Developing.”

“We did the same to the egg that would become Manaphy, except that appeared in a more… mature manner.” ;;;; ) Vriska implied. “When Crest’s egg was complete, we converted his into Psychic Chi and warped it to Sunni’s mind. She unknowingly gave 8irth to Crest one Mother’s Day.”

“I… Are you serious?!” Sunni remembered that day.

“And as for Diancie, that was part of a deal we had with Rose Quartz of the Gem race. She had already destroyed her commander Pink Diamond and stole her energy. She Sorrowed some of the Arceus juice we had in store and produced an egg with Titan of the Ores race. The child of that egg would possess their com8ined divine powers! There, Diancie, now you finally know what you are!”

“Why are you telling us all this now?” Anthony asked rudely.

“Because when we were creating the eggs, we also created chambers that would enhance the Firstborn’s abilities.” Karkat explained in low caps for their sake. “But we would only let them use these Egg Chambers if they were adjusted enough with their own power. The original Eight have lived for billions of years and Manaphy had his sister to help him. But Crest and Diancie are still new to the scene in their own bodies. They aren’t ready, yet.”

“What We’re Saying Is We Would Like You To Bring The Firstborn To Their Egg Chambers.” Kanaya concluded. “Their Enhanced Capabilities Can Help Design The New World And Help You In The Upcoming Battles.”


“That’s Why The Tiny Fraction Of Power They Will Give You Will Be Even Greater. But There Is A Price To This.”
“8y putting the First8orn in their Egg Cham8ers, they will be upgraded to Second Age.” Vriska explained. “Naturally, this change can’t happen over night. It may actually 8e a few years until they are ready to come out.”

“A few years?!” Midna protested. “What if potential shadowbenders or psychicbenders are born?! We’re supposed to wait years until we see any new ones?”

“How many new benders are born each year?” Karkat emphasized. “I doubt any bender will be born and be substantially useful in that time. So, can we take you to the Chambers and get it over with?”

“I don’t know… Do the Firstborn want to do it?” Cheren asked. “Do they think they can survive without us?”

“My natural curiosity peaks my brain.” Uxie said. “I would like to experience it.”

“But you never had a chance to examine my brain!” Emily cried.

“What about Arceus? How does he feel about this?” Nebula asked.

“I find all this… very difficult to believe.” Arceus echoed. “But there have always been things even I cannot understand. The choice is yours.”

“Sigh… I’ll do it.” Midna decided.

“Me, too.” Azelf nodded.

“Man…a…?” Manaphy looked worriedly at his Guardian.

“It’s okay if you’re scared.” Melody held him comfortingly. “You don’t have to.”

“…!” Manaphy yelled determinedly, “Do it!”

“So will ILL!” Meloetta sang.

“Can we wait a little first?” Nebula insisted. “At least two days? There’s stuff I need to take care of with Jirachi.”

“Sure thing, Empress.” Vriska 8-winked. “You all can have two days with your First8orn. But on May 27, we will take you to the Egg Cham8ers. Get ready to say good-8ye, kids. 8ut hey, it’s only for a few years.”

“Children… please forgive your Father for his sins.” Arceus bowed.

“We do, Father.” The Lake Trio held hands and bowed. The other Firstborn followed.

Two days later…

Cheren was standing outside his house beside Azelf, watching the sun rise. The two turned back to Rachel, smiling from the doorway. Cheren and Azelf exchanged smiles and nodded. Karkat’s Zoni appeared. “TIME TO GO, GOD BOY.” At the same time as the other Zoni, the Nine Firstborn Guardians were warped to Great Clock’s Cyberspace. (Play “Gourmet Race” from Smash Bros. Brawl!)
Stage 70: Egg Chambers

Mission: Bring the Firstborn to their Egg Chambers.

Act 1: Gourmet Rush

Sugar and Meloetta raced forward and jumped up some stairs—lights flashed on as living hotdogs charged at her. Sugar spin-punched them in rhythm with the music, then she jumped up a stairway of Apple Piranhas that tried to snap her. She grabbed a spaghetti zipline and slid down, landing and racing across a field where she ducked and jumped flying pizza shurikens. She then sung a Song Road stairway to go above some Licorice Serpents, then downward to avoid Gumball Flies. She sidestepped left-and-right to dodge chicken bone spikes, and had to punch three living cooked turkeys at the beat of three cymbals.

Sugar ran up a giant taco loop-di-loop where more bones popped up at the guitar strums. Once past it, Sugar ducked a shuriken, jumped one, then Ground Pounded a large mushroom three times to be launched into the sky. Sugar formed a Song Road and soared down under a long strum. The road became bumpy at little strums—Sugar was dropped onto a field littered with popcorn buckets, kicking them all down as she ran, punching angry hotdogs.

She ran vertically up a falling Pop-Tart and had to Wall Jump between parallel falling tarts. Still going with the music, Sugar performed the same maneuvers with high and low flying Pop-Tarts. She landed at the tip of a cereal hill and nearly lost balance racing down, unable to see the hidden bone-spikes in the falling cereal, but jumping on cue with the music. She landed on a giant ice cream ball and rolled across a field, having to jump Gumball Flies—she ducked to go inside the cream and avoid falling cones, which stuck in the cream and forced Sugar to jump when the tips rotated by her inside.

It rolled inside a toaster—giant toast shot Sugar up, and she jumped more giant toasts that appeared with the music, and ducked toast strips that were launched higher to obscure her path. Giant toasts blocked her path, forcing Sugar to Ground Pound the one she was on to sink down and run across some falling toast. Sugar was then grinding along vertical spaghetti guitar strings, having to quickly alternate levels to dodge spiky pizza, the music still serving as cues. Sugar was set on the ground, punching angry hotdogs and turkeys, then running up a giant sausage snake to the sky. The snake’s head made roundabouts and snapped at Sugar on cue with the music, but the adult singer nimbly evaded and jumped off on the cliff up top. (End song.)

“This act reminds me of the very first level in this story!” Meloetta beamed. “Good times, good times…”

She and Sugar found a giant egg with a similar design as Meloetta. In the middle of the egg was a hatch door that was the Firstborn’s size. She danced close, and it opened at her presence. “I guess this is where I have to go in. …I might not get to see you for a while, Sugar.”

“I know. I felt like I barely had time to know you.” Sugar frowned.

“Me, too. …Even though I watched you grow from 10 to 22 years old in less than a month.”

“Hm hm hm!” Sugar giggled. “…Are you ready, Meloetta?”

“I am.” Meloetta danced in the chamber. “Always keep singing, Sugar! Come back with an even prettier voice!” And the egg closed. Sugar nodded, and in moments she was taken back by the Zoni. (Play “Bramble Blast” from Donkey Kong Country 2!)
**Act 2: Happy Flowers**

Arianna and Celebi were in a vast, gorgeous garden in the sky. Blue skies up above, blue skies down below, the only solid ground was floating in the middle. There were giant plants everywhere, all with happy smiling faces. Arianna had to jump some small flower platforms over a bushel of giant rose thorns. The roses had lovely smiles that suggested, “We’re nice, but if you touch us, we’ll kill you.” From the last flower platform, Arianna jumped to a Windmill Flower, a blue spinning plant that sent her flying like a propeller. Arianna carefully maneuvered a giant bramble tunnel and grabbed a giant floating dandelion.

The dandelion was adrift in the endless sky, and Arianna held it tightly when a strong wind blew. A flock of dandelions blew with them, it was a calming and gorgeous sight—Arianna was about to crash in some brambles, so she jumped to a nearby dandelion and avoided the fate. The wind changed course, two dandelions on either side, Arianna hopped to the right one to miss the brambles. Again the wind blew, all three dandelions would hit the brambles, but Ari saw the extra one underneath and dropped to grab it. One more breeze carried Arianna to a giant spinning sunflower platform.

The flower was steadily floating toward a flower field of rose thorns. Giant bumblebees were coming with friendly, welcoming smiles, but their true intentions were to attempt to stab Arianna once. They were coming faster and forced Arianna to dodge half a second after the previous, but she kept up the pattern until the sunflower arrived at the lush flower field. The flowers were half as tall as Arianna’s body, and they were so lovely that she wanted to take off her shoes and frolic in them. “WHOA!”

“BII!” When she did this, Arianna fell through an unseen pit under some flowers, and Celebi rescued her before she fell into the sky. Across this vibrant field was a giant green egg designed like Celebi. Arianna saw Crazee Dayzees skipping in the flowers, likely in places where there was solid ground. The Harnitan used them as guides, but the flowers cowered at her presence and ran, falling into the chasm. Arianna still made note of the solid areas and could follow the nearest Dayzee to stay on the path.

About 20 feet from the Egg Chamber, she approached an Amazy Dayzee. The golden flower panicked and zipped around the area before the chamber in a certain pattern. Arianna was positive that pattern was the exact path she needed to follow to avoid falling. The flowers the Dayzee ran through had their petals scattered in the above air, and that served as Arianna’s indicator. The path was a zigzag fashion, but very thin, so Arianna moved carefully but quickly before the petals would float down.

Arianna succeeded, and if she wanted to, she could go past the Egg Chamber and try to catch the Amazy Dayzee for a ***-load of points. But she decided she’ll replay the stage later and chose to step onto the altar. The giant egg opened a small chamber for her Firstborn. “I’ll miss you, Celebi.”

“Bi…” Celebi smiled and touched Ari’s heart. She flew into the chamber.

“When we meet again… I hope I will be a lot stronger!” Ari said determinedly. She watched until the chamber sealed Celebi inside. The Harnitan turned to head back.

“I hope I will be stronger, too.” Arianna gasped and faced the egg again. It was shining from Celebi’s presence. Arianna gave a heartfelt smile and was taken away by the Zoni. (Play “Sunset Shore” from Donkey Kong Country Returns!)

**Act 3: Twilight Hill**
A massive orange sun peered over the horizon, making the sky a deep fiery color. The entire landscape was black like shadow, so Dillon York and Midna were only visible against the sky like in a 2-D game (except Midna’s eye, Hair Hand, and blue lines). The Shadow Dillon sprinted right as 2-D levels required, passing several harmless shadow bushes. However, one of them came to life as an M. Bush and gnashed at Dillon, so he jumped to stomp it to the ground. Dillon came to a wall of gigantic leaves with Embers (flame spirits) placed around it. He used Veil to slither up the leaves, following a path in-between the light of the fires.

Still against the leaves, Dillon’s silhouette set foot on a black bar that was a foothold. Two black rectangles with torches on them moved down and would go up, allowing Dillon to Wall Jump them. Without touching the torch, Dillon kicked over the right bar to land on a platform, from which he could swing the shadows of vines over a chasm, avoiding Embers that floated up and down. Dillon set foot on the base of a hill, using Veil to avoid the giant boulders rolling down.

At the top of the hill, Dillon had view of Midna’s Egg Chamber in the distant background, making it look the size of a real egg. It was here Dillon could ignore the 2-D rules and run in the direction of the egg. From the camera’s perspective, it looked like Dillon was just running in place while the egg was steadily growing bigger. Of course, other things were growing bigger too, such as the disguised M. Bushes, which would attack Dillon when he got aligned with them. There were also fires that he had to avoid simply by moving left or right.

There were silhouettes of signs with X-shaped holes, indicating Dillon not to walk there as it would be a pit. When the signs passed the camera, it was safe for Dillon to walk on that segment of path. Signs began to come up in parallel diagonal fashions, indicating Dillon to follow the route between them. It became confusing for the player with all the signs flying up against the screen, especially when they had to watch the ones Dillon was aligned with as they indicated where to turn. Once he was past the signs, Dillon had to swing floating shadow vines over another chasm, all the while avoiding Embers.

Soon, Dillon arrived at the torchlit altar where the Egg Chamber rested. Dillon raced up and watched the chamber open for Midna. “That sure was a mind-boggling level. Pretty, though.” Dillon said.

“Hopefully, it didn’t boggle you too much.” Midna chortled as she floated into the egg.

“Well… see you later, Midna.” Dillon smiled.

“See you later… Dill.” Midna thought of another time when she said this to someone. “Make sure your dad behaves himself.”

“I will.” With that, the chamber sealed Midna. Dillon waited for the Zoni to take him back. (Play “Water Stage” from Zelda: Tri-force Heroes!)

Act 4: The Ocean Fountain

Melody was wearing a brand new outfit: a white top that showed her belly and a blue sarong with fish designs. She and Manaphy splashed in a beautiful ocean, free of any contaminates including salt, making it the most pleasant water Melody ever soaked in. The sun was bright in the cloudless sky, complimenting the sky-colored water’s beauty. Furthermore, there were fountains everywhere, and every droplet glinted sunlight.

“Mana Mana!” Manaphy joyfully jumped in and out of the purest of waters. They would enjoy swimming through this stage. They maneuvered around the fountains that had nothing of value on them—except for a Water Medal in an opening on the white pearl wall. Melody swam to a mini
waterfall that came from a river between two walls. She Torpedo Jumped above the waterfall, avoiding spiky puff-fish as she swam along. She jumped up another fall, and on this river she had to build enough momentum to jump over a spiked fence.

When they were past the walls, the river took them over a towering, suspended wall of water, pouring down in falls on either side. This marvel defied any laws of physics, but Melody couldn’t lose focus and fall over the sides. She was careful in turning the curves and staying in the very middle, but sadly the river reached a dead end. Bubbles of water floated around the chasm, so Melody would need to Torpedo Jump to each one, then slow herself before diving straight through.

After the last bubble, Melody dove into a pool at the bottom of a towering waterfall. She mustered enough strength in her waterbending to swim directly up, swerving left or right to avoid falling Cheeps. At the top of the falls, Melody overlooked a vast region of the Ocean Fountain. There were some fountains, but in the very center was a high platform with a giant egg designed like the one Manaphy once inhabited.

Unfortunately, there was no way onto the platform, so the two dove underwater in search of a solution. The floor of the ocean was tiled like a pool, but still fresh enough for fish to swim freely. Inside the opening/closing mouth of a clam was a Silver Star, and collecting it would make a fountain activate close to the platform. Melody saw four other inactivated fountains and surmised they would form a staircase.

Another Silver Star was floating a few feet away and under the edge of a very tall fountain. Melody rode the fountain to the top and swam off that ledge to grab the coin. The third Silver Star was at the bottom of a hole that kept Melody out with a strong jetstream. Melody did a constant Torpedo Spin to break through the current, grabbing the star before allowing the current to push her back. The fourth star was seen in a sphere of jellyfish, which would spread out before closing on the star every two seconds. Melody had that long to surf through and get the star before getting shocked.

There were some rock piles and Froaks swimming around them. Melody could push the bomb fish into the rocks and destroy them, discovering the fifth and last Silver Star. The stairway of fountains was complete and Manaphy was already bouncing up. Melody mimicked his action and landed on one of the only solid footholds in this world. “There it is.” Melody said as the Egg Chamber opened. “Are you scared, Uncle Manaphy?”

“Nana.” The prince shook his head and jumped in. “…Bye-bye… Melody.”

“Bye-bye… Manaphy.” She waved at him.

“Love you! Happyyyyy…!” The egg sealed. Melody missed him already. (Play “Pink Sea” from Yume Nikki.)

Act 5: Emotion Sorting

Harvey Harper and Mesprit were on an island in a peaceful pink ocean, a similar appearance to the Pink Sea in Madotsuki’s world. There were Pikmin Onions parked around and planted Pikmin around them, but the Onions were labeled with emotions: Red were Feisty, Blue were Sad, Yellow were Smart, Pink were Loving, Purple were Strong-willed, and Brown were Tomboys. There were lifeless idols of various characters lain around. Harvey would need to use the Pikmin to carry them to the proper emotions.

The Feisty Pikmin collected idols of Sheila, Sunni, Ruby, Panini, Jessie, Chimney, Jinta, and Kodama. The Sad Pikmin collected idols of Miyuki, April Goldenweek, Ururu, Sandy, Wendy Marvell, Madotsuki, and Mason (Harvey went by Mason’s old personality in that sense). The
Smart Pikmin collected Artie Gilligan, Eric Horvitz, Emily Garley, Hibiki, Nolan York, Sarah-Jane, and Vanellope.

The Loving Pikmin collected Fybi, Wendy, Haruka, Kirie, Carol, MaKayla, Suki, Bon Clay, Arianna, and Aeincha. The Strong Pikmin collected Chris Uno, Maddy, Anthony, Mocha, Morgiana, and Tom Taylor. Lastly, the Tomboy Pikmin found the idols of Shelly Johnson, Kimaya, Wendy Corduroy, Makava, Aisa, and Lorac. With all the idols organized, a stairway appeared to take Harvey to a platform with the Egg Chamber. “That’s all?” Harvey asked as they went up. “I guess emotions really aren’t that much in combat.”

“That isn’t true!” Mesprit shouted. “Emotions are the very foundation to why we fight and how we do things! You wouldn’t care about saving the universe if you didn’t love it!”

“Heh heh… I guess not.” Harvey snickered.

“Promise me you’ll be a better emotionbender by the time we meet again!”

“Oh, Mesprit, I will! …Don’t cry too much when I’m gone, okay?”

“Same to you!” Mesprit winked. The Egg Chamber sealed, leaving Harvey Firstborn-less as well. (Play “Inverted Stone Tower” from Majora’s Mask!)

Act 6: Distorted Atmosphere

Sunni Chariton and Mew were in an enclosing of a stone building. They slowly approached a ledge, gasping at the sky chasm below. Above their heads was a street: they were in an upside-down city. Bits of gravel fell into the sky, yet Sunni’s hair was standing straight as it defied the altered gravity. Sunni followed a path on her left, then used psychic to float to a path on an opposite building. The path turned a corner, and a Beamos stood guard up ahead. She grabbed a small rock in psychic and hurled at the Beamos’ eye to destroy it.

A large gap separated Sunni and the next path, and her psychic wouldn’t float her there in time (it had to be limited for action stages :P). Sunni looked up and saw a streetlight pole dangling from the sidewalk. She grabbed it in psychic and tore it off its stem, laying the pole down as a bridge to cross the gap. The following path ended as Sunni saw another one along the edge of the roof below. She dropped down, but felt the atmosphere shift in a diagonal fashion, resulting in her walking on the corner of the building and path.

Dumpsters opened on the streets due to the gravity and heavy trash bags were rolling down the building slides. The bags broke parts of the path, so if Sunni didn’t hurry, she would slide off and fall. Sunni reached the corner turn of the building and had to sidle against the building’s side along a gutter. The gutter sloped down because of the position, so all Sunni had to do was watch her feet and move slowly. The gutter would turn around the next curve, but now the width side was slanted. Since the diagonal building left little space for her, she had to hang on the slippery gutter and climb across.

The gutter would end at the wall of a dead-end alley, but this wall would let Sunni stand on it, so the universe was now sideways. Sunni headed to the bottom of the alley wall where the ground was. She jumped up some garbage cans that hadn’t been affected by the gravity and made it to the street. She could sidle against the street along the curb of the sidewalk. At first, Sunni didn’t see the point as she could’ve easily walked on the side of the building below her. However, one of the sidewalk squares was loose, and Sunni’s weight caused it to fall and break a window of that building.
Sunni could then drop in and follow a zigzaggly stairwell (or at least the wall between the stairs) up to the very top of the building. She hopped out the roof door and suddenly flipped right-side-up, her hair hanging normally again. A giant white egg was on the roof, with a small opening for Mew. “Mew…” The Firstborn made a bubble around himself, curled up, and floated in.

“Good-bye, Mew! I’ll miss yew!” X3 Sunni joked.

“Mew Mew Mew Mew Mew Mew…” The cat’s giggles faded when the egg sealed him. (Play “Special Course” from *Yoshi’s Woolly World*)

**Act 7: Great Space Coaster**

Nebula and Jirachi landed on an asteroid in a vast galaxy of shooting stars. A Warp Star appeared: the two exchanged bright smiles and hopped on. The star soared across the galaxy as Nebula stood, raising arms high and her hair blowing in the wind. “ULP!” A small comet flew into her open mouth. She spat it out and surfed left and right to avoid bullet-fast comets. She couldn’t move the Warp Star any other direction, she had to rely on its chosen path. Nebula jumped and ducked bigger comets as the Warp Star made a great curve leftward. The star flew to a miniature Saturn and flew two extra rings around it before shooting to the sky.

The Warp Star was steadily sinking by their weight—“OW!!” it bumped against the tip of an asteroid, resulting in a forceful flip. Nebula and Jirachi regained balance in time to zip under an asteroid. When they would hit a low one, Nebula pulled up to make the star rise and miss. There was an upcoming high asteroid a few feet before a low one, so Nebula pulled up just when they were under the high to dodge the low.

They flew horizontally again as the Warp Star was going to make a tight drift on the right side of a row of suns. Nebula had to tilt the star right, or else it would touch the suns, then she changed to the left to avoid suns on her right. The Warp Star flew in a straight path as two black stars called Ztars pursued them. Nebula shot them with Starbursts, but had to dodge left, right, jump, or duck Ztars that shot in from either side. “Ah!” The Warp Star was hit by one, splotching a black spot, slowing the Warp Star slightly.

There was a roaring of an engine as a King Bill was chasing them, using Star Dust to fly at the speed of a comet. It was faster than the Warp Star, so Nebula hurriedly shot Starbursts to weaken it. If they were hit by more Ztars, they would go so slow and be dead by now, but hopefully one wasn’t enough to condemn them. The King Bill was inches from touching the Warp Star, but Nebula formed a Starburst with both hands and destroyed it first.

The Warp Star finally came to a halt on a flat asteroid with Jirachi’s Egg Chamber. “This is our stop. I hate for you to be trapped in an egg again, though.”

“Don’t worry, Nebula!” Jirachi beamed. “A few years is nothing to a hundred years! I can’t wait to explore the New World with you!”

“Me either, Jirachi! There’s gonna be a ton of new races in that world! Let’s meet again soon!” Nebula yelled determinedly.

“Yes, Ma’am!” Jirachi flew into the egg and sealed inside. (End song.)

**Act 8: Simon Says**

Emily Garley and Uxie were in a small black room. The Egg Chamber was on a high platform over a pit. Before that pit was a pedestal with a *Simon* game. The first three colors beeped: *Red, Green,*
“…?” Emily pushed Red, Green, and Blue. *Yellow, Blue, Blue, Green*. Emily pushed those colors in order. *Yellow, Red, Green, Green, Yellow, Blue*. “Are you kidding me, this is a test of my knowledge?!”

“You’re too absorbed with modern knowledge, this is classic knowledge.” Uxie remarked.

“Waaaaaahh! I want another quiz!” Emily pushed the Green first just to taunt it. Part of the floor behind them collapsed.

“Your life is still on the line. Is that fair?”

“Yes, but fine I’ll do it, anyway.” Emily restarted the game. *Simon* had 15 rounds, but with her keen memory, she bested the game like a boss. Stairs appeared to lift her to the Egg Chamber. The chamber opened at her presence, so Uxie could fly in.

“I still don’t accept those trolls as our creators.” Uxie stated. “Even if this science voodoo is real… Arceus is my father.”

“That’s so loyal.” Emily smiled.

“See you in approximately three years, Em. Make that brain worth the wait when I return.”

“I will, Uxie!” she saluted. When Uxie was sealed inside the egg, only one Firstborn remained.

(Play “Multi-Man Melee 2” from *Smash Bros. Melee*)

**Act 9: MELEE!**

Cheren and Azelf landed in a battle-scarred field under a cloudy sky. A circle of Bokoblin appeared and closed in, but with a powerful charge to his Master Sword, Cheren destroyed them all with the Hurricane Spin. Colorful Chuchus of every form fell in like raindrops, so Cheren threw M.A.R.B.L.E.s and wildly swung his sword—“Zzzzzt!” A Shock Chu got the better of him, but he rectified his mistake and threw his Banarang at the remaining Chu, stunning them as his sword did the rest. Black Bulborbs had landed beforehand, the father gathering his babies before they homed in to feast on Cheren. Cheren flipped above the beast and sliced off its eyes, then furiously slayed the younglings.

A Cheep Cheep bounced on him and dizzied Cheren, and more Cheeps ended up flopping on the field to be consumed by a Gulpin. The Gulpin grew bigger with each devour, then it would munch toward Cheren. He back-flipped and shot two M.A.R.B.L.E.s in its mouth to destroy it. A Lakitu flew overhead and threw Spinies, but Cheren shot it with an arrow before focusing on the swarm of Goombas trying to headbonk him. Hoping none of them were related to Goombella, Cheren jumped around and squished every last Goomba.

Three Kremling Kasplats appeared in a triangle around Cheren. He threw swings at one as it defended, then did a spin attack to hit the two behind him. Three Zingers flew overhead and dropped grenades, so Cheren ignored the Kasplats for a moment to shoot the bees with arrows. He jumped a Kasplat’s shockwave and used a shield bash to stun one before slicing him up. Cheren whacked the other two with the Mirror Shield and decided to expend a Soul Surge on them.

Ten Anti Guys landed in the field, all empowered by a Sombrero Guy’s tunes. Cheren swiftly dodged the Anti Guys and made his way to the Sombrero’s platform, throwing his Bananarang to stun it, then shoot it with an arrow. Cheren used Demon State (now a weaker form of God Tier) to exterminate the 10 Anti Guys (their levels of 500 were nothing to him now).
His next opponents were Canvas Ladies and Headless Statues from the Guertena Gallery. None of his attacks could hurt them, but there were standing doors and breakable floors. The Canvas Ladies crawled fast, so Cheren ran to hide behind the doors. When the painting women tried to open the doors, they would fall and crush them. As for the Headless Statues, Cheren blew up the cracked grounds and lured them over the resulted holes. He heard the statues shatter at the bottom.

A swarm of Bell Heartless appeared with Large Bodies. Average spin attacks were easy to clear away the smaller Heartless, and the Mirror Shield stunned the Large Bodies when they charged. He then flipped above to behead the fat Heartless. A net trap appeared in the center of the field, and 10 Pipo Monkeys scattered around. Cheren had to use the Bananarang to lure them all in the net, but he was hit by a Chuck’s torpedo from the sky. Cheren noticed three of said Planktonbots and took them down with arrows. With that, he focused on the Pipos again and got all 10 on the net, hitting the switch to catch them.

Sleepytime Planktonbots appeared, along with gunmen from Sandman’s levels. The Sleepytimes’ defense lasers shot back Cheren’s arrows, so he had to tiptoe up to them and perform a Mortal Draw to slice them in two. The noise would make the gunmen look over, so he hid behind a rock. The gunmen came over to investigate, but with them all in a close space, Cheren went Demon State and flame-sliced them one at a time in seconds. He proceeded to stealth-attack the last two Sleepytimes.

An Amazy Dayzee and a Souflee danced onto the field, twirling beside each other while a Gold Beetle shone a spotlight on them. Cheren shot the Beetle first, but the dancing rare enemies split apart and moved swiftly around the field. Cheren shot arrows at the Souflee and missed—the Amazy Dayzee zipped by him—he slashed his sword and missed—he looked back-and-forth between the rare enemies until they both waved ‘bye’, showing their joyous smiles and jumping off the field.

And then the all-powerful Lord English towered high over the world, the same silhouetted form as the Sky Show. Cheren went God Tier and flew at his head like a comet. With a lightning blow from his Master Sword, Cheren STABBED the demon… which turned out to be a Duplighost. His sword was impaled in the ghost’s sheet. The Duplighost vanished, and Azelf’s Egg Chamber rose from the center of the field. Cheren flew down beside his Firstborn and disabled God Tier.

“Sigh… Nice workout. Don’t you agree?”

“I’ve had better.” Azelf flew into the chamber. “Until that day, Cheren. Keep getting stronger!”

“We’re going to win, Azelf.” Cheren pumped a fist. “You’ll see!” Azelf mimicked the gesture, and the egg sealed her. With this, Nine of the Eleven Firstborn were suspended until further notice. The universe already felt like a different place.

Next time… the ultimate climax of the story: what has been foreshadowed since Operation: RECLAIM of 2014: The Apocalypse…
The Opening

Chapter Summary

The Day of the Apocalypse has finally arrived.

Sigh… it’s time, people. Special thanks to everyone that survived. The End… is here.

Chapter 82: The Opening

Great Clock

The King Dutchman made port outside the Great Clock’s hangar. Bill Cipher used his VIP pass to make Sigmund open the entrance. He led Medusa and the Thirteen Darknesses off the vessel. Sigmund bowed and remained silent, quivering as the powerful chosen ones entered the station. Giovanni was also at the front of the crowd, having been appointed as a special officer.

Computers activated in the corridor, showing Peridot’s image. The lime-green Program gasped widely: “MY DIAMOND!!”

“Peridot?” Yellow Diamond viewed the screens with masked surprise. “Is this where you’ve been all this time?”

“I’m sorry I didn’t report in sooner, but I ended up in this strange cyber world and got stuck being some box-headed robot’s chore Gem! OH! And I’ve become the Cyber God! I have total control over this entire structure! All the worlds from our home universe are in here, even our homeworld!”

“Our homeworld is inside this fortress? Then everything they’ve been telling me is true?”

“I’m given to understand that my actions will help you return to Homeworld. I will be sacrificed in the process, but I will gladly do it for you, My Diamond. I promise you will see Emera again!”

“Loyal to the end… It’s almost heartwarming,” Bill said. “That’s why we had better get this started. Keep moving, troops.” He progressed.

“Why does this mere earthworm consider himself our commander?” Thanos questioned.

“I’m no commander, Color Knuckles, but it’s because of me you’re getting the pleasant end of the deal.”

“I suggest doing what he says. Aha ha ha!” Dimentio giggled.

Madara and Aizen were walking beside each other. “So, your occupation is ninja, is it Madara? I remember when those were all over the place in the Living World.”

“Ninjas have overstayed their welcome…” Madara spoke darkly.

“Is that self-loathing I hear? Hm… I think we’re going to get along perfectly.
Pandora poofed above Ganondorf in her sapphire flame form. “Oh, Ganondorf? I went and got you a little snack.”

She placed a small white chest in Ganon’s hands. Inside was a groaning Hannibal Bean. “Oh, mah… that stripper done did me good.”

Ganondorf grinned maliciously and picked Bean up. “Ahh… my favorite.”

“HEEEY-!” Hannibal cried flying into Ganon’s mouth. Munch, crunch, chew, swallow.

“Tastes as good as I remember it…”

“Now I feel a craving for sea-salt ice cream.” Xehanort said.

“Here you go!” Baldy Bald gave a friendly grin and held up two popsicles. “I had some in my refrigerated fanny pack!”

“That’s… oddly convenient.” Xehanort took one and bit.

The Darknesses arrived at the Chamber of Twenty Keys, which would only open by the power of the Chrono Staff. Xehanort chortled, using his Father Time Keyblade to open the door like it was nothing. “I almost forgot… these are for you.” Xehanort raised his ring of twelve keys. They glowed and became balls of light that flew to their masters.

Yellow Diamond’s Keyblade was white and shiny with crystal teeth and a yellow diamond keychain.

Sōsuke Aizen’s was black; its hilt was a white flame design, had a skull keychain, and flame teeth.

Madara’s Keyblade was dark-blue with the Hidden Leaf symbol for teeth, Sharingan design around the hilt, and a red cloud keychain.

Thanos’ Keyblade had six colored gems around the hilt (the Infinity Gems), finger-like teeth, and a gauntlet keychain.

Zeref’s Keyblade was dark-brown with a book keychain and black fairy-wing teeth.

Voldemort’s Keyblade was designed like the Elder Wand – bone-like tree bark – with snake teeth and a Deathly Hallows symbol keychain.

Ganondorf’s Keyblade was designed like his armor, with a Triforce keychain and demon horns for teeth.

Zorc’s Keyblade was gold, had a card for teeth, and a Millennium Ring keychain.

Davy Jones’ Keyblade was dark-green with tentacle teeth and had a *Flying Dutchman* keychain.

Blackbeard’s Keyblade was black with white crescent teeth (or a Whitebeard), and a keychain of Blackbeard’s three-headed skull.

Dimentio’s Keyblade was purple and yellow-striped, teeth designed like his jester hat, and a star keychain.

And Baldy Bald’s Keyblade was a long piece of lettuce with a price tag keychain and sweet corn teeth.
“I congratulate you, Medusa.” Ragaj said to the Goddess of Darkness. “You have fulfilled your duties admirably… as a member of Team Gnik.”

“Hmph. Don’t put me in with that pitiful little crowd of yours.” Medusa chuckled.

“I don’t see why not… You have as much value to Lord English as the rest of them.”

“…” Medusa felt a tad suspicious at that comment.

The Chamber of Twenty Keys was humongous enough to be a battlefield. The Time Gate towered on the other side, its twenty locks firmly sealed. There were thirteen thrones around the sides of the room, with giant ones for Yellow Diamond and Thanos. Ragaj Gnik waited in the center.

May 31... (Play “Inner Demon” from Batman: Arkham Knight.)

The Netherverse was in a terrible panic. The Nexus was cracking, its unstable energy spreading and striking all the planets.

The moons began trembling all over the universe. The Lunar Field surrounding Lunaria was a ticking time-bomb that would destroy Florae and likely spread to Galaxia. Everything that was prophesized was coming true. The moons were going to explode, and the universe was going to fall. It was time for the heroes to go. Every operative on Moonbase quickly boarded the Gummi Ship Noah, where Palutena and Pit Icarus were.

With deep remorse in their hearts, Cheren Uno and the Kids Next Door stared at the Moonbase. When the moon was gone, the Moonbase would be no more. They moved everything to a backup base on Earth, but it was still heartbreaking to leave their stronghold behind. Cheren looked up when his mother touched his shoulder. “It’s going to be alright, son. We’ll make another one.”

Cheren smiled.

“Easy for YOU to say!” Lehcar shouted. “Why hasn’t MY son come back, yet?! I swear if Nerehc isn’t here by the time it happens, I’ll kill you both!”

“Heheh, easy, Lehcar,” Rachel said. “I’m sure he’ll turn up somehow.”

Other operatives were on the dock of the great ship, gazing at the wonderful blue orb that was their Earth. All of their most exciting adventures, on that planet, in this galaxy. Mason looked and saw Sheila Frantic crying. He took his friend’s hand. “Don’t worry, Sheila. We’ll keep having adventures.”

Sheila sniffled and wiped a tear. “I know, mate… I just ’ad something in me eye!” She grinned.

“Ha ha! I know, Sheila! …Um…” He blushed. “Just so we’ll have no regrets?”

“Sure, mate.” Sheila and Mason shared a kiss.

Chimney was cradling Aeincha in her arms as Sector W7 gazed at the Earth. “You sure you don’t wanna be down there, Aeinchan?”

“Are you kidding, Chimney? I wouldn’t miss this for the world!”

“Yah, me too… Besides, you don’t need to be any smaller.”

In November, I became a Kids Next Door operative. Not even a year later... I would stand by my team as we sail to a brand new universe, while our old one dies. It was an honor to be a part of
“Speak up, Nagisa.” Goombella remarked.

“Gah!” He blushed. “Sorry! I’m just… nervous…”

“We all are.” Morgiana said. “Don’t lose your guard.”

“I won’t. …Would you hold my hand, Morg?”

“…Of course.” She took Nagisa’s hand.

“Carla.” Wendy spoke, holding the kitten in her arms. “I mean… Mom. If we make it… do you think we could look for your old house?”

“I suppose we could, assuming no one has moved in.”

“Well, I would like us to have one. I wanna have the real mother-daughter experience!” She rocked Carla and smiled bright as she imagined it. “Have to do chores, live under curfews, brush my teeth and eat my vegetables, all the things I missed out on!”

“I’ve never known a child so eager to have such a lifestyle.” Carla giggled.

“Those kids don’t know what it’s like to NOT have one!”

Maddy and Shade were staring at the moon, pink cracks already forming. “The Netherverse will suffer a fearsome blow when the moons rupture.” the echidna spoke. “There’s a chance… I won’t see my old clan again.”

“I thought you would be kinda mad at them for banishing you.” Maddy replied.

“It’s my home… I can’t help but feel sympathetic.”

“Well, when we make the New World, we’ll get you a new home.”

“Hm…” Shade smiled. “I think I already have one.”

A gigantic stingray with a landscape on its back soared beside them: the Encyclopod. “Sheila… did you bring what I asked?”

“Yeh yeh. Kept him nice and fresh for ya.” Sheila presented the shrunken Great White Asparagus, captured last month during the Candied Adventure. The Encyclopod drew the Asparagus into its body so it would one day be repopulated.

“Children of the universe… it is time.” The Encyclopod flew in front of the Noah. Augustus Fizzuras was at the helm, ready to follow it.

“I still have a fraction of Jirachi’s power.” Nebula said as she positioned her hands in a frame with the Earth inside. “The Earth is coming with us. Don’t worry.” Nebula slowly closed the space in her frame. Her powerful Space Chi was focused around the great planet. The Earth was growing smaller and smaller. Nebula softly drew it in with gravity. Cheren, Anthony, Wendy, MaKayla, Chimney, and Aeincha stared with awe: the Earth was the size of Nebula’s palm.

Wendy held the Fairy’s Tail above the tiny planet and whispered, “Protego.” An invisible bubble protected the Earth, blocking their godlike soundwaves and any other force that could harm it.
“Hi, Mary. Hi, guys.” April smiled and waved at the Earth. “I can see you guys down there!”

From the surface of the planet, April’s tremendous face was visible in the night sky. “HI, APRIIIIIIILL!” Mary waved from Foster’s roof, alongside Ib and Garry.

“Heh heh. Talk about feeling small when you look at the sky.” Garry chuckled.

“Hey, Mom!” Nagisa said to the Earth. “Your little boy’s gonna protect you from here on out.”

Hiromi Shiota was seeing her son’s face in the sky. She giggled: how often does a mother watch her child reach such heights?

“Is that you, Shelly?” Jessie Sidney smirked at the Earth. “I didn’t recognize you from this height.”

Shelly Johnson growled at Jessie’s image. It was bad enough he went from first-grader to president… but President to God was too high. “Better hope I don’t come up there, Shorts!”

Nebula carried the Earth to the Galactic Hull inside the Noah. Hundreds of planets had been shrunken by Nebula beforehand, floating in an illusion of space, orbiting a shrunken sun. All had received the same protection from Wendy, and it would last indefinitely with the Fairy’s Tail’s magic. Nebula set the Earth in a stable orbit. She glanced at the planets that her Kid Council members inhabited. “Don’t worry… I’ll protect all of you until it’s safe to grow you back. We’ll make sure everyone gets to see the New World.”

“As you say, Supreme Leader.” Liaziana nodded. In Glomour’s sky, they could see Nebula’s face.

“Seven Lights: thank you all for making it this far.” Palutena spoke. “Let’s go… to the New World!” (End song.)

**Great Clock**

Jagar King and Palutena led the Kids Next Door to the Chamber of Twenty Keys. Sigmund was standing guard at the entrance, looking beyond terrified as he fiddled his hands. “W-W-Welcome back… Mr. King. Y-You have guests, Sir…”

Jagar unlocked the door with the Chrono Staff. Medusa, Ragaj, and the Thirteen Darknesses were already here. Jagar King entered first, walking to the center to stand before his Negative. “Invited yourself in, didn’t you?”

“Have you lived for 30 years without a face? Asked for a fate you couldn’t defy? Never once able to think your own thought… as you walked in the shoes of someone higher. And now, after ages of torment, I, Lesser Lord Gnik, will shed my mortal form, so that Lord English can be whole.”

“That’s not going to happen. Calliope will be the one to return. She’ll help my friends build the New World!”

“Then let us wait no longer. First, the Seven Lights: take your places.”

The Seven Lights each took one of seven thrones around the center. They had their Keyblades ready, as did the Darknesses. Medusa looked down at her sister, who stared back. “You know, I’m quite proud of the Darknesses, Palutena. They endured years of suffering… becoming stronger under Evil’s veil. What do your Lights have to their name?”

“Medusa, don’t you see this isn’t about you or me? The two of us were just pawns in a game. And no matter which side wins, it won’t benefit either of us.”
“You’re wrong, Sister. When Lord English returns… I will relish in his anger and desire. The universe will bathe in darkness.”

“In due time, My Lady!” Bill announced. “There’s one last piece of the puzzle, however: MaKayla?”

The girl cocked a brow. “What?”

“Your father told you you’re the Gatekeeper. Or should I say, the Gatekeeper of the Light Side. The Gatekeeper of the Dark Side is Yours Truly. Follow me downstairs.” Bill went down a small stairwell over the edge of the floor. Kayla followed him down to a platform with a gold piano and violin. “You play violin as a hobby, right?” Bill handed her the instrument. “Follow along with the notes I play.” He took his position at the piano.

The Twenty Keys raised their Keyblades skyward. Beacons shone at the tips, becoming beams that connected with the twenty keyholes. Giant clicking sounds were heard: the Gate was unlocking.

Ragaj Gnik opened the Chi Container and drew the Octogan, sticking it on a green Chrono Staff. “In the beginning, there were two singularities: Calliope and Caliborn. Their strife destroyed the worlds they created… and has continued to this day.”

Jagar King opened his own Chi Container and drew another Octogan. The KND were curious as to where he got it. “I am impressed, Jagar. Thanks to the Time Chi you inherited from our masters, you severed the Octogan’s pupil. But trying to force your son to adapt with it was a futile effort.”

“Wait… What?” George cocked a brow.

“Don’t you remember, George?” Chris asked.

“I say my plan worked perfectly.” Jagar stated. “It doesn’t even hurt when I touch it, anymore.” He attached the Octogan to his Chrono Staff. “I admit that I lived in fear of your existence… but I know now that it’s a fear I borrowed from Clockwork. I’m going to defeat you… for the sake of him and my children. Unlike you, I have something worth fighting for. I have a passion in my heart.”

MaKayla and Bill began playing the piano and violin. (Play “Darkness of the Unknown (Part 3)” from Kingdom Hearts II.)

“There may your passion die… with the universe.”

Final boss: Ragaj Gnik

The two Ghosts of Time crossed their staffs and jumped apart. They kept a safe distance from the Keys and the kids. With that, they both blasted a Chrono Beam, creating a powerful tremor by the connected Octogan. In the blinding light, Jagar froze time and ran to bash his Negative across the orb head, then Ragaj quickly countered by clashing his staff against King’s. Ragaj sped his own time and zipped around the room to confuse Jagar. The Positive easily foresaw himself being hit from the right, back, right, then legs, so he positioned his staff to protect those places.

“AH!” After the swing to the legs, Ragaj’s Octogan shot a laser to knock him away. When Jagar stood to recover, Gnik cast an Octogan barrier over his enemy, in which Jagar would feel horrible pain endured by people in the past, like Revan Bane having his legs severed. Jagar broke the bubble with his own Octogan and healed the invisible wounds, giving Ragaj time to freeze time
and run to bash him. Thankfully, Jagar knew this would happen, so he pretended to be frozen and waited to kick Ragaj in the leg, then whack him with the head of the staff.

Ragaj jumped to his feet and raised the Octogon skyward, drawing in the energy of the Great Clock. He sent columns of chrono at Jagar, who nimbly dodged before catching one on his staff and whipping it at Ragaj. The Lesser Lord leapt the whip and flew forward with a kick to King’s chest. Jagar bounced back to recovery and Replayed the actions, so Gnik hit a Time Clone while Jagar landed a blow on the back of his head. Sadly, Gnik predicted such a maneuver, so he left a clone to take the hit and blasted a laser directly into Jagar’s back.

“We shall be together.” Gnik echoed as he kept the beam connected to Jagar using a Time Glitch. However, Jagar thought ahead, so his Time Clone ran to attack the spot Ragaj would appear, thereby breaking Ragaj’s hold with a successful prediction. Jagar Rewinded the wound to repair and slowed time to run around and shoot rapid chrono bullets at him. Suddenly, Jagar was surrounded by a team of Ragaj’s, trapped in the connected beams they would simultaneously shoot. The individual Ragaj’s warped seconds back in time to carry out the attack, leaving the sole Ragaj.

Jagar was on his knees and panting, but he defended quick when Ragaj came for more melee attacks. “Even when you were a child, you knew deep in your heart I existed. Your entire family has lived in fear of my master. But fear is a prophecy engraved in your mind, destroying your heart until the day it must be realized. The only way to end this fear... is to accept that you cannot avoid it.”

“That’s honestly cooler than any of Scarecrow’s lines.” Nolan commented. (His team wasn’t missing this, either!)

Jagar and Ragaj performed a mirrored swing of their staffs and clashed the Octogon with the pupils. A surge of energy was crackling in the air, the glass dome cracking above the chamber. The echoing creaks of the Gate of Time still rung as the door opened inch by inch. Then Jagar replayed the Time Recordance and whacked his Negative from behind while he was still shoving against the clone. Ragaj froze time and ran far away, unleashing a giant Chrono Beam that Jagar ran from. Jagar gasped when the kids were about to taste the blow, so he stuck the Octogon in the beam to direct it upward.

“Their lives will not matter in the end.” Ragaj sent an illusion of pain to Jagar’s left kneecap, bringing the man down a peg. More Paradox Clones surrounded him, but Jagar froze time with a greater surge of power, crawling away from the attack so he could Rewind the damage. Jagar then shot quick chrono bullets at four Ragaj clones, sharing the damage between each other as Ragaj fell on his front. With passion in his heart, Jagar leapt on his Negative’s back and channeled a powerful beam to burn his head off.

Ragaj froze time, grabbed Jagar, and positioned him directly in front of the Nextgen Kids. Time unfroze—the kids gasped in horror and awaited death—Jagar easily sensed this trick and whipped around to give Ragaj the full blast like he intended. “No person can decide his own destiny.” Jagar watched in worry as a thousand Time Recordance Clones appeared around and over the room.

“YOU WILL REALIZE THAT... NOW.”

Jagar stood guard in front of the kids, so when the clones began shooting their simultaneous bullets, Jagar slowed time and rapidly deflected each and every one. It seemed like millions of bullets were raining down, and the clones felt so present that he couldn’t determine which was the real Ragaj. The kids were impressed by Jagar’s speed, and angry that Ragaj was resorting to these tricks instead of fighting directly. It meant that Ragaj was afraid of losing, so if there was even the
slightest chance he could lose, then it was their greatest beacon of hope.

Maddy Murphy closed her eyes and saw with only her Observation Haki. The clones all had a substantial weight about them... but just one felt a tad more present and focused than the others. “MrKingit’s that one.” she spoke quickly so he could hear her through slow-motion. “It’s that one. It’s that one.” She gave a little point.

“It’s... that... one...” Jagar heard her and looked that direction. Jagar slowed time even greater and blasted bullets to disable all the ones currently coming. He ran to bash Ragaj Gnik to the ground and impale his spherical head with the handle of the Chrono Staff. Bill and MaKayla stopped their song. (End song.)

Time returned to normal flow. The clones disappeared. Blood leaked from the moon-shaped head. The kids were both disgusted... and extremely happy. “This... This is not what I predicted.” Ragaj choked. “Lord English... you were wrong again? Why... Why did you lie to me... Master.” That was Lord Gnik’s last breath.

A smile appeared on Jagar’s face. A smile full of joy and relief. The kids and adults lost all the fear in their hearts. “It’s over.” Jagar left the staff impaled and laughed. “It’s over! I did it! I really saved the universe!”

“More like Maddy saved the universe.” Chris punched the girl’s shoulder. “Those were some damn keen eyes.”

“Maddy... thank you.” Shade felt every burden on her heart fly away.

“I have experience dealing with dumb tricks.” Maddy said proudly. “That was nothing compared to Zach’s nonsense. Huh, Bro?”

Zach was still on his throne with the Seven Lights, releasing the last fragments of power from the Keyblades. “…Bullcrud, Maddy.” Zach stated angrily.

“Um... Zach?”

“...How can you FALL FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?!?” Zach leapt off his throne and attacked Sōsuke Aizen with a Chapstick-in-the-box.

Ragaj Gnik’s dead body vanished. “WHAT?!?” Jagar gasped. “UOECK!” He was stabbed in the heart with the Octogan of Ragaj’s staff. It created a wound too deep and powerful to repair. Jagar fell, as did his staff. The Octogan rolled off the head.

“DAD!” George cried.

MaKayla rushed back up. “FATHER!”

“B-But... I thought...” Maddy stuttered.

“Oops!” Aizen made a fake blush. “I accidentally drew my Kyōka Suigetsu during the battle. It seems all of you saw the illusion of Ragaj losing and peace restoring the universe.”

“An illusion?!” Maddy shouted. “I would’ve seen through that!”

“Yeah, I didn’t feel anything either, what gives?!” Sunni followed.

“My Suigetsu does not create illusions: it deceives the very senses. The sight of his victory, the
smell of his blood, hearing his dying words… Your senses have lied to you. Even your special senses.”

“Dad!” MaKayla ran by her father’s dying body, crying tears. “Please! It can’t be…”

“Cough! M… MaKayla… *take the Chrono Staff.*”

“What?”

“The staff… needs a new master. Take it, MaKayla. And whatever you do… don’t fight him. Just… run… I’m sorry… for disappointing you all…” Those were Jagar’s last words.

MaKayla fell to her knees and let the sadness flow. Her sobs were the only audible sound for so little seconds.

“Everything… is… planned…” Ragaj spoke his last words, too. (Play “Begin Intermission 2” from *Homestuck.*)

**BOOOOOONG. . . BOOOONG. . .**

The bells rang louder than anything they’d ever heard. It signaled the arrival… of unbelievable power.

It was happening. The gates were opening. The gates that had been sealed for a trillion years. Very, very slowly, it was opening, a creak that echoed for millions of light-years. A great light shone from inside, growing wider as it opened, the most fearsome wind they ever knew generated from its power. Finally, the gates stopped. A vortex brimming with energy too powerful for mortal understanding awaited their entry.

Then, the entire fortress started rumbling. Rumbling so furiously, no one had sense of direction. To think any kind of force could shake a station so big. The light shone brighter. They felt it. From the distance of that vortex, a green mist was flying to the gate. That mist—that Shimmer—stopped above Ragaj’s body. The Shimmer shot directly into his faceless moon-round head. Ragaj fell to his knees. Everyone’s hearts were racing; what could possibly be happening.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH! MOOOOOUUUUUUURRRRRRAAAAAAAAAAAAAA. . .” The immeasurable power fueled Gnik. He screamed with so much ferocity and pain that his flesh ripped like paper. Ghastly green skin was exposed underneath, with venomous teeth and red eyes. Muscles strong enough to lift continents, feet that could shake whole worlds, unimaginable power that can break whole universes.

By the time he stopped growing, he was 20 feet tall. Snarling a hoarse breath, its sound chilling everybody’s spines. He saw the two Octogan on the floor. Stomping forward with great power in his steps, he sought to retrieve his eyes. He picked both of them up, and squished them into his already-occupied eye-sockets. The Octogan projected white, torn shorts and a green jacket, whose edges were flashing neon colors. He stood to full, imperial height, and roared with a sound to be heard across universes. “**I’M SO HUNGRYYYYY!**”

*Lord of Time and shaper of universes*

*L8RD ENGLISH*

“Didn’t you hear me?! I said… I’m… HUNGRYYYYY!” Lord English took his first breath in a trillion years. His lungs were so mighty, the chronokinetic energy of the Great Clock flowed inside without a second thought. **BONG. . .** His Roar of Time sounded like the toll of a bell. It burst
through the glass dome, straight to the stars above. . . . Two galaxies were destroyed.

MaKayla hugged herself, shivering on the floor. She looked unbearably cold. “Th-Th-This is. . . the most powerful being in the multiverse. . . It’s over. . . we’re all going to die! . .”

Everybody was afraid. They all felt it. The power… and evil inside this being. It was too great for words. He was too great… for them.

“Here you go, Lord English!” Bill spawned a bag of Doritos. “I packed a snack for that long trip!”

English snatched the bag and poured the chips down his godly throat. His crunches echoed for several galaxies. “NNNNN?” English saw a little gold ball in the bag.

“Oh, look! It’s a special prize!” Bill grinned devilishly. “Your weapon.”

“Weapon? What can a little gold ball do?” Cheren asked.

Lord English held the ball above his head. He channeled his power and willed the ball to become a golden sword. Medusa approached him. “Hello, Lord English! I’m Medusa, Goddess of Darkness.” She bowed humbly. “I must say, it’s an honor to meet you. I look forward to working-”

FLASH!!! Medusa was the first one to taste the power of English’s blade. Without feeling a thing or knowing what happened, the goddess dissolved into dark matter.

Ganondorf slurped Medusa’s remains down his throat like a straw. “Heh heh heh. I needed something to wash that bean down.”

The Great Lord’s flashing eyes fell to Fanny Drilovsky. He didn’t feel she deserved the green firebending she possessed. “Hnnn… You die.”

Half of Fanny’s body exploded, the other half falling dead. “MOOOOOM!!” Francis and Panini cried.

Anger overcoming him, Cheren whipped out his sword, went God Tier, and lunged at the English. “YAAAAAAAHHH!”

“CHEREN!!” Rachel Uno dashed in, sending her son flying with a Haki kick. Her eyes swerved to English and saw their last inch of life.

“No without me!!” Lehcar jumped in the way, her own sword drawn. Both women were obliterated by the power they could never hope to match. Cheren wanted to go blind. They all did.

The glass dome over the chamber shattered when the Noah pierced through. Lord English focused his sights on the titanic vessel, but Angie, Mika, and Eva struck him with massive Logia power. “ALL OF YOU NEED TO GET ON THE BOAT AND GO!!” Angie screamed with furious eyes.

“But…” A tear dropped from Anthony.

“Mom…” Sunni spoke.

Mikaela unleashed a pink beam with all her power at English’s head. The god humored her by not moving during her attack. “YAAAAH!” Then Patton dashed up, leapt, and Mika stopped as his fist flew directly through English’s teeth. His entire body was Haki-imbued, so he was expected to hurt the Logia. English crunched and snapped off Patton’s arm. Then as fast as lightning, the gold of English’s sword went through Mika.
“MOM!!” Sunni couldn’t believe anything. If Sunni’s lightsaber went through Mika’s chest, her Logia defense would protect her. The great gold sword had blood on its other end.

English scraped the woman off and let her drop. As she lay groaning, last moments of breath, Sunni rushed up to her. “MOM! Please tell me it’s a trick, TELL ME IT’S A MIND-TRICK!!”

Mikaela looked up. Her eyes were closing, but her grin was still shiny. “I guess I imagined… another impossible thing before breakfast. I imagined myself… slaying a Time God. …Don’t stop believing the impossible, Sunni…” She died.

Now at a point when Sunni no longer needed her mom’s guidance… her mom was still insane. She would honor that imagination… by running for the ship.

All children were storming for the vessel, until Dimentio splorped in the way. “My, where are you going? Don’t you want to relish in this GLORIOUS-”

Nolan York flew from the side and tackled the Zathurian using his Haki. “I’m going to relish in seeing your blood pour.” He extracted his boomerang, also Haki-imbued.

“Ah ha ha. Is the Sandman going to kill me? Is a life… really not important to you?”

“You lived long enough.” Dimentio’s throat was slit, his alien blood pouring. His psychotic smile would stay on him always. Yuki and Crystal helped Nolan onto his chair as they hurried inside the ship.

“MaKayla, get up!” Wendy shouted at the sitting girl, pulling her to her feet. “We have to get-…” She felt his presence behind her. Wendy turned. Lord English’s flashing eyes glared at her. She felt frozen… there was nothing she could do to protect herself from this god.

“CHILD, GO!” Carla screamed, flying between her and English. “I’ll try and distract him!” She glared sharply at the beast.

“MOM, NO!” Tears spilled from Wendy’s eyes.

A white energy tentacle grabbed Lord English and hurled him miles away from the Great Clock. “LORD ENGLISH!!” God Arceus was more furious than when the Negatar controlled him. “I WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO RUIN MY UNIVERSE! Prepare to face ABSOLUTE JUSTICE!” The Supreme God charged a tremendous Hyper Beam. Mavis Vermillion, Jorgen von Strangle, and the entire Star Fairy population became lights and melded with his body. The core of the Hyper Beam was bright as a sun, and with its full power, it swallowed Lord English’s puny body.

“GRAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!” The Lord had never known greater pain.

“YEEEEEEEEEAAAHUUH!” The Nextgen Kids cheered.

After three minutes, the Hyper Beam disappeared. The pain Lord English had never known… was nothing more than the amputation of his right leg. “He only lost a leg?!” MaKayla shouted.

“No, he lost a tooth, too!” Sheila noticed.

“HA HA HA HA!” Bill laughed. “Lord English can recover from that in a heartbeat! Whatever Lord English decides, it happens! His Logia timebending enables him to rewrite Past, Present, and Future with just a single thought! Show them again, Master.”

With a single thought, Dimentio Winkiebottom came back to life. “Aha ha ha! I have nothing to
fear with my new best buddy!”

“See, I thought something like that was gonna happen.” Nolan commented.

“Future children, there is nothing we can do here.” the Encyclopod echoed, absorbing the fallen humans’ bodies into his system. “Follow me through the First Byway. The New World awaits.”

The Noah readied to sail in the vortex after the manta. Cheren bit his teeth and looked toward the clashing gods. Their battle alone would steadily tear apart the universe’s structure. “LORD ENGLISH!!”

English narrowed his Octogan and glared in his direction. The gold flames of Cheren’s God Tier burned like a star. “WE WILL DESTROY YOU ONE DAY! We will take back our universe from you! So, you better get your warm-up from Arceus because you’ve never faced kids like us. We… are… KIDS… NEXT… DOOR!”

“And with that, we make our getaway!” Augustus winked. The Noah sailed into the First Byway. The journey to the New World begins now.

Another Lord English appeared in the Chamber of Twenty Keys. His Paradox Clone was keeping Arceus busy. “Oh, my. You can create clones on a whim, too?” Aizen cocked a brow.

“It’s a handy way for English to manage his schedule, right?” Bill shrugged.

“Congratulations, Lord English.” Thanos smirked. “You’ve earned Thanos’ respect. I will happily… work with you.”

“He hasn’t earned mine.” Yellow Diamond stood from her throne firmly. “They said I could return to Emera! Was that a lie?!”

“SILENCE, DIAMOND BITCH!” English thundered.

“What did you say…”? Diamond hissed as she drew her sword.

“No no no, he didn’t mean it, really!” Bill nervously laughed, floating between them. “Lord English, don’t forget, these people are your new friends. You might have supreme power, but having friends is always a good thing! And we can’t rule out the itsy-bitsy little speck of a possibility the kids will find any minor weaknesses, heheh. Don’t worry, Topaz, you’ll get to see your homeworld soon. In fact, we should send Dimentio on the task now. Send him back in time to collect the Multiverse Portal.”

“What crappy Multiverse Portal?!” English scratched his skull. “Oh, that Multiverse Portal. GET TO IT, DIMENTIO!” He zapped the Zathurian and warped him back in time.

Dimentio reappeared seconds after. “I have accomplished my task, Lord English. The multiverse… is now in my stomach.” A spiraling neon portal was shining from his spatial belly. “But what are we to do about our intrepid heroes? Shall we sail after them?”

“The energy radiating from the First Byway is too powerful for us to survive.” Bill answered. “Even Lord English and Dimentio working together won’t make it without bruises. The only reason that Gummi Junkheap isn’t falling apart is because of the Giants’ Candies. It’s easier for us to let the heroes have their three years of fun and wait until the First Dimension is finished downloading from Cyberspace. Meanwhile, we’ll get started taking over the Multiverse. Everyone return to the Dutchman! We have a tight schedule to keep and infinite time in which to keep it!”
Thanks to the powers of the Lost Candies, the Noah sailed a perfect course through the Dimensional Byway, unable to suffer any damages from the powerful chi. “It will take approximately three human years until the First Dimension is finished restoring.” Karkat’s Zoni explained. “Until then, you humans are trapped in that BORING-ASS space-tunnel. But at least you have your PUNY INSECT PLANETS to go back to. (Man, I just can’t do low caps.)”

“When we get to your world, you trolls are going to help us, right?” Cheren asked. “You’re going to help us defeat him and save our universe.”

“…YES. YES WE WILL.”

“Mewtwo!” :33 Nepeta grinned.

“Well, I didn’t spend all this time in a computer room for nothing.” ;;;;; Vriska winked.

“Thank you, guys.” Cheren smiled. “You trolls were always our teammates, too. So, keep supporting us until the end.” The Supreme Leader turned to his team. “Kids Next Door, we have three years until the REAL battles begin! Let’s all work hard and become stronger than we ever imagined! We will meet the Firstborn again, we will fight the Thirteen Darkesses, and show Lord English what happens when you mess with our universe! KIDS NEXT DOOR RULEZ!”

“KIDS NEXT DOOR RULEZ, SIR!!” The people on deck and the denizens of the tiny planets saluted.

“Kids Next Door: we resume operations in three years!” (Play “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough” by Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell!!)

**Legend of the Seven Lights: Cast:**

**Sharon Mann as Cheren Uno and Nerehc Onu**

Jennifer Hale as Emily Garley, Panini Drilovsky, Fanny Drilovsky, Fybi Fulbright, Luvbi, and Jesbi

Rachael MacFarlane as Aurora Uno, Arorua Onu, Rachel Uno, Lehcar EiznekCm, Emily Dickson, and Hayley Smith

Zoe Slusar as Mason Dimalanta

Kerry Williams as Carol Masterson, Haruka Dimalanta, Leanne Grayson, and Jirachi

Tara Strong as Sheila Frantic, Marine Frantic, Maddy Murphy, Harvey, Angelie, Anthony, & Michelle McKenzie, Hikari Gilligan, Yin Dimalanta, Ava, Makava, Melody Jackson, Eva Jackson, and Scarlet Bean

Tom Kenny as Augustus Fizzuras, Zach Murphy, and Spongebob Squarepants

Brittney Karowski as Wendy Marvell, Apis, Sipa, Mocha, and Black Star

Greg Cipes as Dillon York

Lauren Tom as Suki Crystal, Vanellope Schweetz, Kirie & Kuki Beatles, Lola Stork, and
I would like to thank Numbuh 227, IDA Official, Epik, and Sarstar98 for their comments. The Gameverse has been my pride and joy, and I’m so proud of how far it’s come since Operation: GALACSIA. True, this series was originally a continuation of KND, including some crossovers, but I truly believe it’s evolved from being any mere fanfiction series. Not many people understand what a marvel the Gameverse is or the love I feel in constructing it piece by piece. This series is my treasure, and it’s an honor to have people—

“PUT A SOCK IN IT, YOU HAPLESS COMPUTER DORK!”

In the midst of typing the credits, I hear a flash behind me. I slowly turn… Lord English was towering over me in the flesh.

I was beaten to a bloody pulp and left to die under my table. Lord English took my seat and resumed typing.

**I’LL GIVE THESE FAGGOTS A REAL STORY TO ENJOY.** Lord English highlighted every word and paragraph in the Gameverse and deleted it. **A STORY ABOUT A LITTLE FAGGOT UNIVERSE WITH LITTLE FAGGOT PEOPLE.** Every planet in every galaxy was obliterated in English’s wave. **AND EVERY UNIVERSE CONNECTED TO THIS PIECE OF DUNG DESERVES NO BETTER FATE.** In one sweep, he shattered the KND: Universe, Fanverse, and all the parallel dimensions long abandoned by their gods. **THIS IS A STORY OF A UNIVERSE THAT HAD NO CHANCE AND DESERVED NO CHANCE. I WILL WRITE THIS WORLD THE WAY I ALWAYS ENVISIONED. FROM THIS POINT FORWARD, EVERYTHING BELONGS TO ME!** (Play “Divide” from *RWBY*)

Dee Bradley Baker as Joey Beatles, Wallabee Beatles, Timmy Gilligan, Tommy Gilligan, Terry Stork, and Gonbe

Jad Saxton as Gonshiri and Carla

Grey DeLisle as Sunni, Darcy, & Mikaela Chariton, Chimney Ukeru, Mandy and Cindy Cortix, and Big Mom

Alyson Leigh Rosenfeld as Aeincha

Cherami Leigh as April Goldenweek, Aisa, and Don Quixote Sugar

Akiko Koumoto as Nebula & Dimentia Winkiebottom, and Midna

Amy Birnbaum as Arianna Dunfree, Nova Dunfree, and Azelf

Benjamin Diskin as Nigel Uno, Artie Gilligan, Hoagie Gilligan, Matthew Dimalanta, and Elijah Frantic

Seth MacFarlane as Carter Pewterschmidt, Stan Smith, and Stewie Griffin

Mike Judge as Ted Wassanasong and Hank Hill
James Arnold Taylor as Jack Frost, Ratchet, and Sandy Johnson

Jensen Ackles as Nolan York

Cricket Leigh as Danika York and Daphne Anderson

Bill Rogers as Darkrai II

Keith David as Dr. Facilier

Rob Paulsen as Jessie Sidney, Shaunie Fulbright, and Dimentio Z. Winkiebottom

Amber Hood as Sandy and Jessica Sidney

Olivia D’Abo as Shelly Johnson

Jason Marsden as Andrew Johnson

Scott McGregor as George King, Jagar King, and Ragaj Gnik

Melissa Fahn as Miyuki Crystal

Scott Burns as Bowser Jr. and Lord English

Dan Green as Vaati, Mewtwo, and Customer Service

Hynden Walch as Mary Goldenweek, Viridi, Madame Rouge, and Mesprit

Kevin Michael Richardson as Malladus Uno and Kyogre Neptune

Walt Dohrn as Henry Churchill

Yu Shimamura as Fi

Ali Hillis as Palutena

Cree Summer as Nya LaMar, Cree LaMar, and Medusa

AND A BUNCH OF OTHER ASSHOLES THAT VOICED STUPID CHARACTERS!

GAYWIZARD AS STUPID PUPPET.

STORY WRITTEN BY LORD ENGLISH.

ART DRAWN BY LORD ENGLISH.

UNIVERSE DESIGNED BY LORD ENGLISH.

CHARACTERS CREATED AND CONTROLLED BY LORD ENGLISH.

Special thanks to: Bill Cipher, Dimentio Z. Winkiebottom, Yellow Diamond, Davy Jones, Madara Uchiha, Sōsuke Aizen, Zeref, Xehanort, Zorc Necrophades, Thanos, Baldy Bald III, Voldemort, and Ganondorf Dragmire
A BIG F.U. TO: MEDUSA, X.A.N.A., PLANKTON, MR. DARK, SPECTER, DR. NEFARIOUS

EVERYTHING ELSE BELONGS TO LORD ENGLISH. THERE WILL BE NO MORE ORIGINAL AUTHORS.

SUBMIT TO LORD ENGLISH OR BE ERASED FOREVER! THE UNIVERSES ARE NOW MINE! BROOAA HA HA!

...

“?” Space Dandy opened his eyes. “Qwark?”

Captain Qwark opened his eyes. “Dandy?”

They were drifting in an infinite, distorted space. “Where… are we?” asked Qwark.

“I think the universe just… forgot us or something.” Dandy assumed.

“But why?”

“Well… if I could guess, my power saved us.” Dandy stared at his hand. “Ever since I ate the Escape-Escape Fruit, me and everyone around me escaped death without a scratch. …Who’d-a thought it was this good?”

“No kidding… What are we supposed to do now?”

“…Start a new civilization?”

“Oh, fine. But I’m not getting the sex-change, buddy.”

_The story continues in Seven Lights: The Last._

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