Hear No Evil

by soulfulsin

Summary

When the kids are afflicted by a magical curse and they, along with Scrooge McDuck, are left stranded, how are they going to rescue themselves and get back to Duckburg?

Notes

All right, so, I pulled these chapters off the DuckTales one-shots, since they're no longer technically part of a one-shot. So now I'm reposting.
Chapter 1

Webby awoke to darkness. She blinked, rubbed her eyes, and still saw nothing. Shuddering, she forced herself to her feet and leaned against what appeared to be a wall. She had no memory of where she was or how she’d gotten here. The last thing she remembered was snow falling, about to crush her, but that wouldn’t explain the blindness. Her heart in her throat, she relied on what senses she did have.

Sniffing the air, she smelled mildew and decay. The wall beneath her palm was scratchy, like hardened cement, and the air was cool on her face. She stuck her tongue out to taste the air and hissed when something burned the tip of her tongue. She heard dripping, which might explain her tongue burning. Tapping her feet on the floor produced a hollow sound, indicating she was in a cavernous space, perhaps a warehouse.

The last thing she remembered was being with the boys and Uncle Scrooge. Instinct told her now was not the time to call them. Instinct also told her to be as quiet as possible, lest someone hear her. Lowering herself back to the floor, she ran her fingers over the cement flooring but encountered nothing.

Thinking back to her grandmother’s training, she assessed what she knew. She appeared to be alone in an unknown location, albeit not bound or gagged in any discernible way. She couldn’t see, which might be temporary or permanent, and she didn’t know if help was coming. Her grandmother had taught her to always assume help wasn’t en route, which meant relying on her own devices.

This particular scenario, however, had never appeared in her training. To simulate real-world environments, Mrs. Beakley had put her through rigorous tests, but she’d never denied her the use of one of her senses. She’d also used the manor’s locale as a backdrop. Webby doubted she was in the manor; Duckworth and Mrs. Beakley would never have permitted anywhere to reek of decomposition the way it did in here.

Losing her eyesight ought to make her other senses stronger to compensate, but Webby felt no different than she had before. She was wary of moving too much, lest she encounter an unforeseen danger. It was odd that she’d been brought here, left untied, and then abandoned. She didn’t know what to make of this.

In her pocket, her phone vibrated and she added that to the list of things she knew. Wherever she was, she had service. She guessed where the ‘answer call’ button was and hit it. The dial tone told her she’d picked the wrong button. Since she couldn’t read the screen, she couldn’t tell whether she’d thrown away potential assistance or her captor’s voice.
Not that she could verify she was being held captive, either. She’d only been conscious for about ten to fifteen minutes, but she wasn’t restrained the way a captive might be. She clenched and released her fists. The boys had been with her the last she remembered. Where were they? Were they in worse danger than she was? What if she was holding out for rescue and they were in dire straits too? Her heart thudded and she bit back the temptation to call for them.

Scooting backward, she rested her head against the wall and listened to the unpleasant drip. Attempting to tune it out, she likewise ignored her breathing. She discerned another person breathing nearby and this time ventured a greeting. Her voice echoed, regardless of how softly she’d spoken.

“Hello?” she whispered and winced at its echo.

“Webby!”

It was...someone. Someone who recognized her, but she couldn’t recognize them. The voice sounded garbled and rough as if the person had been strangled before. It might be one of the boys or it might not be. She held still as someone inched closer to her and she reached out to them. A small smile twisted her lips. Hoodie. Louie.

“Hey, what’s with the tugging on my hoodie strings?” Louie protested. “What are you...oh my god. Your eyes, Webby.”

She glared at him or, rather, intended to glare at him. She wasn’t sure the power of her glare considering she couldn’t see the person in question. Rather, she radiated disapproval.

“I can’t see my own eyes, Louie,” she pointed out, testy. “And I wouldn’t have been able to without a mirror before this.”

“That’s not what I meant,” he snapped. “What happened to you?”

“What happened to you?” she countered. “You sound like your voice was thrown into a compactor.”
“I don’t know.”

The words chilled her. Webby’s hands dropped from his strings to her sides and Louie took one of her free hands in his. He was shaking.

“I don’t know what happened to me and I don’t know where Huey, Dewey, and Uncle Scrooge are,” Louie said.

“What’s the last thing you remember?” she asked, dreading the answer.

“An avalanche.”

She cursed inwardly. That was the last thing she remembered too. He was huddling closer to her now, using her as a defense mechanism. She didn’t know what good she’d be, considering that she couldn’t see anything coming. Moreover, she felt useless without her sight.

“What’s wrong with my eyes?” she whispered.

“You know that meme about the owl that can see forever?”

“No?”

“You can’t see me at all, can you?”

She shook her head.

“This is bad. This is really bad. We don’t know where we are, where the others are, and you’re blind. And I’m--”

She cocked her head. There was something Louie wasn’t telling her and she almost didn’t want to know the answer. Was it something she would’ve been able to tell with her sight? Or would it have remained an enigma even then?
“You’re what?”

Louie swallowed hard and gooseflesh rose on her arms. He sounded like he was about to cry. Then again, Louie never handled adventuring very well. He preferred to make money without the risks involved. He also ended up the one getting hurt, so she guessed it evened out.

Instead of answering, he guided her hand along his arm, down his stomach, and toward his leg. Perplexed, she allowed him to move her until her hand hit his knee, which was encased in a cast. She looked up at where she thought his face was in bewilderment.

“Wait, what?” she whispered.

“I don’t remember breaking my leg, but I can’t walk on it. And whatever happened to you, you don’t remember either, right?”

She shook her head.

“I have a bad feeling about this,” he whispered.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Still backposting.
I'm leaning towards Loubby for this fic.

Webby dozed, seeing as there was little else to do here. She woke up with her head on Louie’s shoulder. Though she still couldn’t see anything, the world seemed less black than before. There were vague grey outlines that gave her hope this might be temporary. She couldn’t distinguish shapes, not yet, but that might change soon. Perhaps all she needed to do was rest.

That explained her. It didn’t explain Louie’s broken leg. Someone had gone to the trouble of putting it in a cast, at least, so he didn’t risk standing on it and hurting himself further. She ran her fingers along his hoodie, down his stomach, and toward his leg. Since she couldn’t see it, this was the best way to acquaint herself with it. It felt like plaster, but there were gaps in it. Beneath one particular gap, she could wedge her fingers. Louie hissed.

“Ow! What the heck are you doing, Webby?”

“Trying to figure out how your leg was put in a cast when you just woke up with it like that.”

“Or I could describe the cast to you instead of you poking at my broken leg.”

“Or that.”

He hissed again, uttering a curse. She removed her fingers from his cast; she’d gotten the picture. It felt like part of his bone was protruding beneath her hand, which answered the question of why he had a cast and nothing else. If it had been done so shabbily, she wondered if putting any weight on it would shatter it. Her gentle touch had been enough to make him swear and she heard the pain in his voice.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry.”
“You don’t see me poking you, do you?”

“I don’t have a visible injury. Before the avalanche, what’s the last thing you remember?”

“We were climbing another peak,” he said and then groaned, stretching out again. Her hand rested in a safer place, in his hoodie pocket. She didn’t want to release him. In an unfamiliar world, he was safe and known. Louie didn’t seem to mind, now that she wasn’t prodding at his wound. He curled in toward her.

“Uncle Scrooge had roped me into going along on another treasure hunt for a missing magic lamp. We were all tied together and the mountain rumbled. What was weird was we weren’t high enough up or in the right climate for snow. But we looked up and...all I saw was white before I woke up here.”

That tallied with what she remembered too, but there were gaps in her memory. Louie reached inside his hoodie and squeezed her hand. His hand shook atop hers.

“Webs…” he began, cautious. “What do you think happened to us?”

“Magic.”

She wanted to get up and pace, but she wouldn’t be able to see where she was going. Possessed of frenetic energy she couldn’t dispel, she trembled too and his grip tightened on her hand. Though she couldn’t see his expression, she felt his gaze upon her face.

“That leaves one person, doesn’t it?” he grumbled. He cursed again.

“Uncle Scrooge would wash your mouth out for that,” she said absently.

“He’s not here, is he? Besides, I’ve heard him and Uncle Donald say worse.” She felt him shrug. “So, if it’s magic, it’s gotta be Magica. But what I don’t get is--why? What do we have to do with Uncle Scrooge’s lucky dime?”

Webby sighed, resting her head against the wall. It was scratchy and pulled at her hair.
“Besides the fact that we foiled her plot last time?” she pointed out.

“I’m surprised we’re still alive if that’s the case. I mean, after what you did to her after Lena…”

It was the first time anyone had brought up Lena in months and she stiffened. She didn’t like to talk about her best friend, shadow traitor, whatever. They’d been tiptoeing around it for weeks now. When Webby had refused to discuss it, they hadn’t pried, though they also hadn’t realized Webby shoved down her emotions whenever possible to avoid conflict.

Her grandmother had noticed and attempted to speak with her about it, but Webby had refused to budge. She didn’t want to discuss Lena. Ever. She hadn’t even said her name since she’d died, not where anyone could hear her.

“All I’m saying is that I don’t know why we’re still alive if it’s Magica,” he said, sidestepping the topic of Lena.

They fell silent, Webby brooding and Louie probably calculating the angles and attempting to figure a way out. She didn’t take her hand away from his, as its warmth was reassuring, but she wasn’t happy, either. Thinking about her was painful, exceedingly so. She hadn’t appreciated even the cursory reference.

“Webby?”

“What?” she said, snappier than she’d intended. She was still cross with him.

“Your shadow’s moving on its own.”

Webby whirled about, forgetting that she couldn’t see it. As she did, she felt tightness in her chest. Confused, she glanced in Louie’s general direction. Or where she thought he was. Spinning had dizzied her and she collapsed back onto the floor.

“It started moving when I mentioned Lena.”
Confused and irritated, she glowered at him or where she perceived him to be. “Don’t be ridiculous.”

“I’m not lying. Your shadow really is shifting in place.”

She didn’t know what that meant. Lena had been Magica’s shadow and Magica had been bound to Lena as her shadow until they’d been reversed again. Lena was dead, though. Webby had seen her die. Perhaps this was some other strange phenomena. She didn’t know how else to explain it.

Louie moved, attempting to stand, and crashed back to the floor with a howl. He cursed a blue streak, more words than she’d thought he’d know; his vocabulary was impressive, even if it was a bit filthy. This time, she heard the tears in his voice and he collapsed against her. He panted and his hands went to his broken leg.

“I thought maybe with the cast on, I could stand,” he explained once he had his breath back. “Clearly, I was wrong. I can’t walk and you can’t see. The lame leading the blind.”

“That’s it!” she exclaimed.

“Ow...what’s it?”

“Lame leading the blind. If she’s going by old adages, that means either what you just said or also that your brothers are possibly deaf and mute. Hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil.”

“And Magica broke my leg for, what? Kicks?”

“Because she’s a sadistic, evil woman?”

“You could just call her the ‘b’ word, you know. It’s not like I’m going to tell anyone.”

She shook her head. It was the principle of the matter. Though his breathing had slowed, it was still accelerated. His chest rose and fell rapidly beneath her hand and she felt a moment of panic. If it was the lame leading the blind if he couldn’t walk, then how were they supposed to get out of here?
She reached into her skirt and handed him her phone.

“Here. It rang before--it must have service.”

Louie kissed the phone screen. “We can call for help. Wait, first I need to check how my cons are going. It’s been a few hours--my phone’s gone. That was the first thing I checked before you woke up.”

So he’d been awake before her and then fallen back asleep. That explained how he’d known he couldn’t walk on his broken leg. Still, it was a little rude that he’d not woken her when he’d roused. She caught herself twisting her head around to look at the shadow she couldn’t see. Lena? She didn’t dare hope. Chances were she’d have her hopes dashed.

“You didn’t charge this before we set out?” he huffed. “It’s at twenty percent battery.”

“I did charge it,” she said defensively. “It was fully charged before we climbed that peak.”

“Probably something else Magica zapped, then,” he scoffed. He was silent while he poked at the phone and she didn’t speak either. She patted the floor as if she could feel the shadow; as if it had heft.

She heard the phone ring and ring.

“Who are you calling?” she asked, puzzled.

“Launchpad. Unless he’s been kidnapped too, he should be able to crash the plane into wherever we are and get us out.”

That sounded like a good plan, actually, assuming that they could be located. Unfortunately, the phone went straight to voicemail with the Darkwing Duck theme song in place of Launchpad’s greeting. Webby rolled her eyes as Louie left him a desperate voicemail. In the middle of pleading with him, the phone went dead.
“Okay, I know I’m terrible with phone batteries, but there’s no way it should have died that soon. We’re being sabotaged.”

She nodded; her mind was stuck on the idea of her shadow morphing. She wished she could see it or tell what it meant. Louie continued grumbling about the phone, especially that he’d “wasted his one phone call”. She tuned him out.

Her thoughts drifted and she wondered what Huey and Dewey were up to and whether her hypothesis was correct. If so, then they weren’t exactly in a great state either.

Huey wasn’t sure if he was deaf or Dewey couldn’t speak. Whatever the case, someone had trapped them inside a small, dingy room that looked like a glorified tool shed. For the life of him, he couldn’t find the exit. Outside, it was pouring rain and small holes in the ceiling sluiced cold water down his back. He shuddered, glancing at his younger brother.

Dewey kicked at the walls and then, when that didn’t work, headbutted them. Huey sighed, though he couldn’t hear it. This was getting them nowhere fast. The only thing he’d ascertained was that Uncle Scrooge, Webby, and Louie weren’t here. He didn’t know why nor did he know why he and Dewey were trapped. As his brother attempted to free himself through stubborn and ill-thought out methods, he cast his gaze about the shed. What looked like an old broom rested against the side and he picked it up. Cobwebs and dust drifted to the floor.

Dewey was mouthing at him and Huey shook his head. Dewey shook his in response and grabbed the broom. Before Huey had a chance to stop him, his younger brother jabbed at one of the holes in the ceiling. It widened and the rain, which had been a mild inconvenience at first, drenched them in seconds. Huey sputtered, tempted to take the broom and whack Dewey on the head with it. He snapped at him, though he wasn’t sure what he was saying, as he couldn’t hear it.

It didn’t matter. It prompted what Huey knew had to be the “if you’re so smart, why don’t you do it?” face. In response, Huey grabbed the broom and slammed it against the wall, which wasn’t a wall at all. Glass shattered, thankfully falling outside of the shed, and wind gusted along with the rain. The rain pelted them in the face and Huey ignored it to clear the window frame of all glass. It wasn’t like they could get any wetter.

Beckoning Dewey to follow him, he forced his way through the window, which was just big enough to allow two ducklings egress. Wind battered them and sent them tumbling back through the broken frame. Determined, they forced their way back out and moved to either side of the shed; they used the walls to brace themselves.
How were they going to go anywhere or find the others with wind strong enough to knock them off their feet? It was a struggle to remain outside and he couldn’t see anything more than six inches from his face. Dewey was a blue blur.

It occurred to him that he might not be deaf. The wind might be too strong to allow him to hear anything. Then again, he couldn’t hear the wind howling, so that shot that theory down. Grimacing, he attempted to make headway against the wind. It slammed him into the shed so hard that it knocked the breath out of him. Dewey hadn’t budged.

Maybe the problem was they were too high up. Huey dropped to his stomach and Dewey followed suit. They crawled along the ground and it felt like a battle, where every inch was hard won territory. He dug into the ground with his fingers and pulled himself along. His chest was tight and his arms hurt. Nevertheless, he pushed himself onward. The shed hadn’t provided shelter, not really. He stopped when he bumped into a stone edifice. Looking up, he could barely make out an altar.

Gasping and panting, he tried to take a closer look and the wind bowled him over. Dewey rolled into him and Huey crawled up the stairs until he fell under an awning. He rolled, again not of his own volition, and then tumbled down another set of steps until, at last, the wind and rain abated. For a while, he lay there, catching his breath and enjoying not being rained on. Dewey landed atop him and then sprawled out on the floor nearby.

Wherever they were, it was smoky and he couldn’t see the ceiling. A door slammed shut behind them and he felt the reverberations. He caught a glimpse of it closing a split second before it did, but he couldn’t hear it. Frustrated, he pushed himself to his feet. His arms and legs were like jelly, however, and he crashed right back down.

Dewey tugged on his sleeve and pointed ahead of them. Huey wrung out his baseball cap and looked in the direction his brother pointed.

A woman was there, stirring a cauldron. She paid them no attention whatsoever. A raven rested on her shoulder and its beady black eyes focused on them. Huey gulped, pinned to the floor by its gaze. The Junior Woodchuck Guidebook, at least, hadn’t suffered despite the deluge. His hat had kept it nice and dry.

Not that he expected there to be a section in there about what to do if you found yourself inexplicably deaf and your brother was mute. That fell under the purview of magic, which was something Huey admittedly knew little about.
He didn’t know if he wanted to be noticed by the sorceress. It didn’t look like Magica, but then again, it was so dark in here, it was difficult to tell. Dewey had no such compunctions. Jumping to his feet, he rushed over to the woman. Huey sighed. Leave it to his brother to be headstrong and foolhardy. Seeing as there was no point in laying on the floor any longer, Huey rose to his feet too and joined him.

Another gust of wind rose, seemingly from nowhere, and blasted them off their feet and into the walls. Gasping, Huey attempted to stand only to be knocked flat again. The sorceress observed them with a frown; that was all he could distinguish. Despite standing under candlelight, her face remained in shadow. She flicked her fingers and Huey’s eyelids grew heavy. He fought it and glanced around him to find Dewey. Dewey had passed out and there was blood on the wall. Frantic, ignoring the fatigue swamping him, he half stumbled, half crawled over to him.

Blood matted the back of Dewey’s head, his hair, and his white feathers. Head injuries were serious. The sorceress shrugged, stepping away from them, and the fatigue lifted. In its place, however, anxiety mounted. Dewey had a head wound and they were in a foreign place with no help forthcoming. He wanted to shake Dewey awake but knew better. Hands trembling, he extracted the JWG from under his cap and leafed through the pages. What to do about head injuries...besides not moving them…

Darkness loomed over him and the book flew out of his hands. Outraged, as the JWG was as sacred to him as a Bible might be to someone else, he jumped to his feet, swayed, and collided with the wall behind him. He watched the JWG land in the cauldron and the sorceress sneered. Her beak and her cold, glinting eyes were all he could see of her. She then turned away from him and coldness spread throughout his body.

Frigid, he curled up against Dewey and shivered, rubbing his arms for warmth. He wanted to pursue the JWG, though he feared his copy might be beyond saving. His thoughts slowed and his limbs grew turgid. Blinking rapidly, he fought unconsciousness. Dewey needed him. He was the big brother and it was his duty to take care of everyone. He might not be able to do anything for Webby or Louie right now, but he could help Dewey.

Yet he couldn’t move. Everything had grown so heavy that it took an effort to keep his eyes open. Soon, his eyelids refused to obey his commands and fell. Huey worked on controlling his breathing, which had slowed. He was fighting this as best he could to no avail. The darkness swallowed him up just as he managed to brush his fingertips along Dewey’s hand.
And now we're up to date. I was going to originally poison Scrooge, but I've done that before. Also...I'm thinking I'll take Magica's plan in a different direction than the show. It's a source of limitless power, right? So, in the grand scheme of things, wouldn't something be better than just what happened in the Shadow Wars?

Also...when will my goth child return from the war...:( Not really in this fic. She's referenced, but she won't actually be in it, I don't think.

Scrooge McDuck, Magica reflected with a scowl, was hard to kill. He remained unconscious, slumped on the floor, behind a curtain. His great-nephews were in the same room-they just couldn't see him. She had no plans to let them have a family reunion, either. Once she had disposed of Dewey and Huey, she could move onto her true objective. Dear little Scroogie.

He still wore the dime on a string around his neck, but there was a magical protection on it. Try as she might, she couldn’t even touch the damned thing without shocks running through her body. She needed to call her assistant in...even though the idea of working with him made her clench her beak in irritation. Flintheart Glomgold was the means to an end, but he seemed to think he had a chance with her. He also thought the same of Goldie O’Gilt, so she supposed it had more to do with the man’s ego than anything else.

Glomgold was busy inspecting the treasure he’d stolen from Scrooge’s hands. She discovered him sipping wine from a goblet in her waiting area. The Mount Vesuvius lair wasn’t terribly polished and since she’d been trapped in a dime for all those years, she could hardly say she’d had time to redecorate or clean it up. As a result, the waiting area had dusty couches and equally dust wine bottles held in a rack on the wall.

If the older man was perturbed by her cleaning skills, he didn’t comment on it. Instead, he raised his eyebrows at her when she entered and then put his goblet down on the coffee table near the sofa. Not near the coaster, of course. She hissed. No wonder he and Scrooge hated each other. She hated him too, though admittedly for far pettier reasons.

“Maggie,” he said. He might’ve been intending to make a pass at her or proceed with that sentence. He soon found her staff at his throat. Her eyes blazed anger and loathing and she pushed the staff further, choking off his air supply. He pushed at it and she used magic to hold it in place. The staff burned with her suppressed rage.

“Never. Call. Me. That. Again.”

“Sorry,” he choked out. “Won’t...do...that...again.”

“Scrooge might tolerate being called ‘Scroogie’,,” she sneered. “But I do not appreciate nicknames. Got it?”

He nodded, swallowing past the staff against his throat. It was up against his Adam’s apple and she
smirked, lowering her weapon. Shoulders sinking, he glanced at the prickly sorceress. Magica glowered back. Glomgold ought to show her the proper respect. Yes, she’d been imprisoned for fifteen years, but that hadn’t been her fault.

“Now that that matter’s settled, I need you to procure his number one dime from around his neck.”

“Why can’t you do it?”

He was whining. She slammed her staff into his head. Any minute now, Scrooge would rouse. Unconscious people didn’t stay that way forever. Fury and loathing raced through her and she considered whether it might be more prudent to end their partnership. At least, before she ended up murdering him. Of course, if he had a death wish, she’d be more than happy to oblige him.

“Because I can’t touch the blasted thing,” she hissed. “Do you have any more stupid questions?”

Glomgold opened his beak and then closed it. Perhaps her recent threat weighed on his mind. Perhaps it was possible that he could learn from his mistakes. If so, there might be hope for him yet.

Scowling, glaring back at her, he shuffled off to do her bidding. Hmm, already more obedient than Lena. It was a good thing she’d killed that shadow. Laughter bubbled in her throat. “Lena could never be your friend because she was never real!” Stupid Webby. She should have done more than blind her, but time had been of the essence. She hadn’t had full control of the spell that she’d unleashed on the children. It’d been enough to impair them and prevent them from hobbling after their great-uncle. Magica laughed aloud. Literally hobbling in Louie’s case.

Come to think of it, she wasn’t sure how permanent the spells she’d cast had been. They might wear off. Oh, well, that was a problem for future Magica.

Magica sauntered back into the ritual chamber and scowled again. Scrooge was awake and fending off Glomgold. He kicked the younger man in the stomach and sent him rolling away due to his lower center of gravity. As Glomgold rolled, he pulled the curtain back, revealing Dewey with a head wound and Huey flipping that stupid book to find treatments for him.

“Magica de Spell!” Scrooge roared and then his gaze fell to Huey, who was speaking but couldn’t hear himself. His anger changed into concern. “Huey! Dewey!”

“Oh, he can’t hear you,” Magica crooned. “He’s deaf. Dewey is mute. And I dumped Webby and Louie somewhere, but don’t worry. They’re not coming anyway. Your stupid Webster is blind and Louie is lame.”

Scrooge might be unsteady after the blow to the head that had knocked him up, but that didn’t stop him from surging to his feet and snarling, infuriated. Glomgold had managed to get himself back up again and Scrooge whacked him with his cane hard enough to send him sprawling. Scrooge paid him no more attention than one might an ant. His attention was focused on Magica and she could feel his mounting rage. She laughed.

“You should know better, Scroogie,” she cooed. “I have no problem killing children. It was only expedience that left them alive.”

She attempted to use her staff to extract the dime’s necklace and he hit it away. The force of his blow was sufficient to send it flying across the room. She’d never seen him quite so furious.
Magica’s beak twisted into a cruel smile. Was now the wrong time to tell him that she’d been on more than civil terms with his niece?

Della was a sensitive subject with him and she relished the idea of hurting him further. Then she ducked, as Scrooge had aimed his next strike at her head. She bent to retrieve the staff and he struck her about the shoulders to impair her. Magica fought her way back to her feet and Scrooge hit in the head with enough power behind it to leave her seeing double. She shook her head and her vision cleared.

“What did you do to the kids?!” Scrooge demanded.

“I told you,” she said, still smug. “It’s not my fault you weren’t listening.”

It was odd. Scrooge had no magic of his own, yet she could feel his furor like a physical thing. It battered at her. The older duck rounded on her and Glomgold; Glomgold retreated like a coward. Magica held her ground. She was enjoying seeing Scrooge unhinged.

Scrooge turned his back on her, however briefly, to look at the two boys on the floor. Quickly, she scooped up her staff and hefted it, ready to blast him. She didn’t move fast enough (how the hell did a 152 year old man move that swiftly?) and he slammed his cane into her staff. This time, however, she kept her grip on it.

“Uncle Scrooge!” Huey yelled, oblivious to the fact he couldn’t hear himself. Dewey winced; the boy was mute, not deaf. Likely Huey was overcompensating for his hearing difficulties.

“Shouldn’t you be more concerned with your great nephews than me?”

This was the “in” that she’d needed. Scrooge faltered, about to step closer to them, and she zapped him with her staff. Immobilized, she spun him about to face her. This was one reason why having someone you cared about could be such a crutch. Scrooge fought against her magical constriction, though, and she increased her power behind it.

She wasn’t watching her back or what Glomgold was doing. Glomgold had no interest in stealing the dime for himself--she had known that from the start. Otherwise, she never would have teamed up with him. What she hadn’t realized, however, was that he was only interested in beating Scrooge and seizing the treasure. So he didn’t particularly care when a red, duckling shaped object collided with her and knocked her over. Hissing, she rounded on Huey Duck.

“Impudent brat!” she snapped. The break in concentration had disturbed her spell and Scrooge likewise fell to the floor, unfortunately unharmed. She reached out for her staff and Huey kicked it into the corner. Magica gave him a long suffering look.

Scrooge picked himself up and she hastened toward the staff with him at her heels. He knocked the staff away with the cane--what was this, a game of keep away?--and she tripped, rolled, and lunged for it. Scrooge’s cane struck her in the back and then Huey flattened her to the floor.

“Where are the others?” Scrooge growled, his voice low and dangerous.

“What are you doing, you buffoon?” Magica said, not paying the slightest bit of attention to them now that the fourth player had re-entered the room. Flintheart Glomgold had seized her staff. He couldn’t possibly intend to use it. To what end? As far as she knew, the man had not a drop of magical blood in his body.
Huey and Scrooge tackled her and she squirmed out from under. “Give me that back!”

Glomgold tossed the staff, she batted Scrooge’s cane away, grabbed her staff, and cast a spell causing her traditional smoke bombs to rise. While the others were distracted, she waved the staff again and then grinned. She had intended to transport way, but...she had an idea. See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. The lame leading the blind. And, well, it wasn’t quite as poetic, but she was running on fumes here. She blasted Scrooge once the bombs had dissipated and when his cane flew out to counter her attack, the magic parted around it. The magic swept through him and she nodded, satisfied.

Now she could make her escape. Should she bother to take Glomgold with her? No, what fun would that be? Besides, he could handle himself.

Just before Huey and Scrooge lunged again, she vanished, leaving Glomgold to his fate. He was a villain. He ought to be used to being double-crossed.

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Webby was frustrated. They needed to explore their surroundings and mount a plan for escape, but Louie could barely put any weight on his leg without yelping in pain and she could barely see her hand in front of her face.

“Maybe if I help support you, we can make a quick tour of the place and figure out where the exit is?” she suggested.

She stood and then offered him her arm. Louie reluctantly put his weight on her shoulders and leaned on her. He hissed when he moved the wrong way and when she attempted to walk off at her normal pace, he yelped and cursed.

“Webs, lame leading the blind means that the lame can’t walk that fast,” he snapped.

“Is there anything in our way?” she asked. Louie panted, putting more and more of his weight on her shoulders. She didn’t mind. She could carry heavy loads--she’d once carried Scrooge McDuck over her shoulders. Louie wasn’t a lightweight, but he wasn’t as heavy as a full grown duck. Maybe he was a little pudgier than his siblings, but the slight different meant very little.

“No….not that I can tell. You could totally carry me in your arms, couldn’t you?”

“I might jar your leg.”

“Right. Almost forgot about that.”

Louie was half walking, half hopping around. They shuffled along, as a result; Webby had to trust Louie wouldn’t knock them into anything. While she wouldn’t have trusted him necessarily if money were on the line, she did trust him a great deal regardless. She knew he wouldn’t lead them into danger.

Louie cursed again and they almost walked headlong into a wall. Louie kicked at it and stumbled. He would have fallen over if Webby hadn’t been taking most of his weight already. This prompted another round of cursing and she wondered briefly whether she ought to wash his beak out. Where had he even heard of half of those words?
...not that she was one to talk. She knew how to curse in several different languages. She just didn’t, since she had the strange sense that regardless of where in the world she was, her grandmother would somehow know and reprimand her for it.

“There should’ve been a door here. There’s an outline of a door and I know I’m not crazy,” he snapped once he’d ceased his tirade. Webby reached out tentatively, brushing her fingers over the area in question. There was a slight recess, indicating that the door or whatever it was wasn’t quite flush with the surface. Frowning, she let her fingers skate along the wall.

“It feels like one of those doors where the doorknobs retract into the door,” she mused.

“Great. So how do we open it?”

“Hang on.”

“I literally can’t do anything else but hang on,” he huffed, exasperated. “Could you speed it up a bit? I’m having problems balancing on my left leg.”

It was Webby’s turn to curse, albeit mildly. “Crap. The way the doorknob was installed, we can’t get out without someone on the other side. We’re trapped.”

“You’re kidding me. You’re effing kidding me right now, Webs.”

“We have to find a window or something. We’re not getting out this way.”

“There are no windows!” he exploded. “This is the only thing vaguely resembling a door and now you tell me that only if someone’s on the other side can they let us out?! How are they even supposed to know there’s someone inside if there are no windows or other doors? We’re trapped. We’re gonna die in here. We’re gonna die and I can’t even walk and you can’t see where you’re going and I don’t know where Uncle Scrooge, Huey, and Dewey are.”

Louie groaned. “We’re gonna die and I’m only eleven.”

That reminded Webby of a quote from a cartoon. “Hey, you lived a good life.” “I’m only ten.” “I said good, not long.”

“We’re not going to die,” she said. Louie collapsed against her and she ended up taking all of his weight. Suppressing a sigh, she scooped him up into her arms and held him against her chest. She was careful not to jostle his right leg.

“This is the last time I go with Uncle Scrooge anywhere. Crap. This might really be the last time I went with him anywhere. LET ME OUT!”

“You just said there were no windows or other doors. Who do you think is going to hear you?” she asked, nonplussed.

“I don’t know! But if we’re trapped in here, that means we only have a finite amount of oxygen. And that means that we’ll die of asphyxiation.”

“How big is this room, anyway? You never said.”
“Big enough to suffocate in.”

That wasn’t a useful description. Webby rolled her eyes. If Louie was going to panic, then it was up to her to figure out a solution to their problem. They had no tools at their disposal, she assumed, which meant that you couldn’t use a plunger to suction cup the doorknob back out. Her bow was just that, a bow, unlike her grandmother’s chopsticks in her hair. Their phone was dead or else she could have tried to figure out a way to possibly force the doorknob to unlock on its own. No, wait, that was too far-fetched even for her. Huey was the one with the computer skills.

“That doesn’t tell me anything. Breathe, Louie. We’re not going to die here. If there’s a door, then we might have to bang on it...we don’t know where the others are, but they must be nearby. Magica wouldn’t have scattered us too far. She’s after the dime--she’s not focused on doing anything more than knocking us out of her way.”

“Your shadow’s going under the door.”

Again, Webby whipped her head around to look and again, remembered she was blind. This was getting to be seriously vexing. She scowled.

“I think...I think it’s unlocking it.”

“How can you tell?” she asked. “We can’t see under the door. I can’t see anything.”

That also begged the obvious question of how her shadow had autonomy, but she thought that might be better left for later. They heard a click and a door handle popped up below her hand. She turned the knob and then Louie sighed. Wherever they were, the wind was blowing hard and rain pounded at them.

“What do you see?”

“Not much. It’s too windy and rainy to see anything. We might’ve been better off inside the room.”

“I thought you said we were going to suffocate?”

“Well, we can’t walk across to wherever. It’s all muddy.”

Webby thought this through. The footing would be treacherous enough for her without adding the instability of loose soil. Shaking her head, she charged forward anyway. To hell with it. She was Webbigail Vanderquack and she didn’t quell before anything, regardless of how much the odds seemed against her. Louie was just along for the ride.

Unfortunately, her grit and determination superseded her ability to traverse the muck. She stumbled, caught herself before she fell, and then tripped, sending Louie flying and herself sprawling in the mud. Louie screamed when he hit his broken leg and guilt swamped her. She pushed herself to her feet and fumbled in his direction.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” she said.

The cursing that followed was both profuse and impressive. She reached his side and he was gasping for breath. She brushed her fingers along his cheek.

“We’re not doing that again,” he said when he’d gotten his breath back. His hand caught her wrist.
“What did you do, fall face first into the mud?”

She nodded, chagrined.

“There’s a shed with a busted window and broken roof ahead of us and some weird magical altar in the distance. And...there are people moving on it! HELP!”

The wind whipped away his voice and he struggled to stand, forgetting about his leg. He crashed back down and splattered her with more mud. She sighed and curled up against him. Maybe she ought to try heading in that direction and seeing if she could manage to find the others.

“I know what you’re thinking. And you’ll just trip again.”

He was holding onto her too and smearing mud on her arms. She didn’t mind. Shuddering, she pushed herself up again and he clung to her. When Louie meant she shouldn’t move forward, did he really mean he didn’t want her to leave him behind? She could see him in her mind’s eye.

“I’m not going to leave you,” she promised.

He didn’t reply and she scooped him up again. They were both liberally splattered with mud by now and his hoodie had mud in the pouch. It was hard to tell quite how dirty they were, however, considering that they were also soaked now.

“Webby! Louie!”

She thought she heard that, but she wasn’t sure. Maybe it was her mind playing tricks on her. Whatever the case, it didn’t repeat and she sagged, disappointed. It was impossible to see anything in this deluge anyway. And with the wind howling, almost impossible to hear anyone unless they were right beside her, as Louie was.

“Kids!” That sounded like Uncle Scrooge.

“We need to get out of the storm,” she said.

Something blurry was heading their way and it was moving rather fast. She didn’t have time to be surprised before the figure grabbed her. She spun, readying an attack, and Louie grabbed her.

“Webs, it’s okay. It’s Uncle Scrooge.”

“I know it’s raining hard, lass, but you cannae see me?” Scrooge said and then tilted her head.

“Curse me kilts.”

She felt him glance down. “And Louie too. That blasted sorceress! Ye cannae stand, can you, lad?”

Louie shook his head and she felt his head loll against her arm. He was holding onto her tightly.

“And Huey cannae hear and Dewey cannae speak…” Scrooge mused.

“So, you were right,” Louie said to her. “Don’t you ever get tired of that?”

“What do we do now?” she asked, ignoring him.
Scrooge coughed and stumbled, lurching into her. Louie opened his beak, perhaps to utter another epithet, but a glower from Webby convinced him otherwise.

“Whelp. We’re dead,” Louie said as the rain poured upon them and the only relatively well and capable person in their group passed out. Something glowed in her vision and Louie snatched at it. He cried out when it seemed to burn him and he reluctantly released it. The glowing something flew through the air and she watched it, such as she could see (bright white in a grey background) until it disappeared.

“We’re dead and Magica has the dime,” Louie said. He hissed, apparently out of swears. It was okay. Webby knew more than enough to cover him.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

In which Magica acts like her '87 counterpart and there's a plot twist.

If Webby had thought perchance that her sight might be improving, she was sadly mistaken. The further she and Louie trudged through the muck, the less she seemed to see until it was like a curtain had fallen over her vision. Frustrated, she kept moving forward and tripped over Louie, who would have fallen over if not for someone else steadying them. That someone else smelled like wood smoke and fresh paper. Her beak twitched toward a smile.

Huey.

“I’ve got you, I’ve got you,” Huey said. “Not you, Dewey. You have a head injury.”

Dewey splashed his foot angrily down into the water and splashed them. She swayed and Dewey caught her wrist. Dewey smelled like sweat, a hint of bubblegum, and oddly enough, blueberry. His touch was familiar and comforting, especially considering how discombobulated she was without her sight.

“What do we do now?” she asked. “We can’t take control of Uncle Scrooge and seek shelter at the same time. Plus...did anyone notice that the wind changed direction?”

The wind, which had previously been battering them from the front, now struck them from the back and she staggered, the muck sucking at her legs. Louie intertwined his fingers with hers and if she hadn’t had more immediate concerns, she would have noticed his heart rate kick up against her palm.

The rain, when she let it hit her tongue, tasted odd, too. It reminded her of stale water, which was a strange attribute for rain. Perplexed, she held out her tongue again to double check. No, she was right. Stale water. The wind buffeted them and drove her to her knees. Louie crashed to the ground and, since they were holding hands, he brought her down with him. They landed in a heap in a mud puddle.

“Ow...Webs...ow.”

Near her head, she heard coughing and then the sound of wood striking mud. She sensed someone moving and she didn’t need her sight to determine who it was. He smelled of paper money, gold, and ink. Scrooge McDuck. Her heart kicked up, relieved, and she wondered if that was what explained Louie’s peculiar reaction. Maybe. Probably. Sure, why not?

“I dinnae know what Magica blasted me with, but I’m all right now,” Scrooge said and then coughed, a wet sound that sent shudders through her. She bit back a response. If Huey couldn’t hear it and diagnose his condition, then she wasn’t going to help. Louie struggled to a sitting position.
“I’m not moving from here,” Louie announced. “I’ve had enough of falling over. Magica can go--”

She smirked. Louie had forgotten they had an adult audience.

“Oy! Where did you hear that language, lad?” Scrooge reprimanded.

The wind increased and she felt like they were trying to move through molasses. Every shift of her body required more and more energy and she found herself, for once, agreeing with Louie’s philosophy. Falling over stunk and not being able to see her way, coupled with the wind and rain battering them, was making her disinclined to stand. She hunched over Louie.

“Huh, that’s weird,” Huey observed and she turned her head toward his voice. “The clouds are disappearing like they were never there. It’s like they’re running backward.”

Frustrated, she snapped her beak. Within a few minutes, she felt the sun on her face and it was as Huey had described. The strangest thing wasn’t the sun, though. It was that the ground solidified beneath her and her clothes remained soaked. The weather didn’t progress that quickly. Cocking her head curiously, she inhaled deeply. She tasted sand in her beak and she spat it out.

“If I didn’t know better…” Scrooge mused and then coughed, another wet sound that sent shudders through her. He bent over and spat out a metallic smelling liquid. For a minute, he didn’t speak, only coughed, and then, to her profound relief, the coughs sounded drier and less like he was hacking up his lungs.

“Where are we?” she asked. “We’re not on Vesuvius anymore.”

The air, which had previously tasted stagnant and acrid, both the magic and the volcano burning her throat, had transformed into what felt like a desert. She coughed too and the sensation faded, the wind returning only to diminish to nothing thirty seconds later.

“That...was weird,” Huey said.

“Aye, we’re not,” Scrooge agreed, speaking to Webby as Huey couldn’t hear him. “We’re in the Klondike.”

“How did we get halfway across the world?” Louie asked.

“I cannae tell you,” Scrooge said and she heard the frown in his voice. “If I dinnae know better, I’d say we were back during my gold rush days.”

“We’re not back in time,” Louie said, disbelieving. He pulled out the dead phone from his hoodie and then yelped.

“What?” Webby said, baffled.

“It’s...it vanished. Into thin air. Dewey, do you have your phone?” Louie pleaded. Whatever the result was, Louie groaned, so Webby took it as a negative.

“This was the day I found that chunk of gold as big as a goose egg…” Scrooge mused. Webby would’ve been more thrilled with the history lesson and the possibility of watching history unfold before her eyes if not for Huey’s next comment. Even if Huey couldn’t hear them, he could still ruminate and be heard by the others.
“Why are we here, if we’re back in time?” Huey asked. “Unless there was a reason we’ve been sent back in time.”

“No, we’re not back in time,” Louie said, his voice tinged with hysteria. “We’re not. My phone did not just vanish into thin air and neither did Dewey’s. We are not in a place before modern technology where we can’t contact Launchpad and get home. We aren’t.”

Webby squeezed his hand. “We’ll figure out how to get home.”

“No, you don’t understand,” Louie protested. “No one knows where we are. If we are back in time, then we have no way to get home.”

“Not unless we find Magica,” Scrooge said, rising and pounding his cane on the ground. “Don’t give up so quickly, lad. We’ll be home before ye know it.”

Webby righted herself, pulling Louie up after her, and they formed a strange chain, she and Huey supporting Louie and Dewey. Scrooge groaned and she felt wind passing. A thump accompanied it and Huey cursed. Startled, not expecting it from the oldest triplet, she frowned at him.

“He’s out cold,” Huey said. “And there’s no way we can carry him on top of Louie and Dewey.”

“There has to be a place nearby to hole up,” Louie said. He was still frantic and his hand trembled in hers. She squeezed his hand to reassure him.

“There’s a cabin nearby,” Huey observed, oblivious to his youngest brother’s comment. They shuffled, awkward, attempting to support both Scrooge and the others, toward the cabin. Before they reached it, the door creaked open and, startled, Webby staggered back a step, carrying Louie with her. She felt Louie look toward the cabin.

“Goldie?” Huey exclaimed in disbelief.

“What do you know? Four kids and an old man show up on my porch in the middle of the busiest day of the gold rush so far,” Goldie said and Webby stiffened. She’d never quite forgiven her for locking Webby and Mrs. Beakley in that armoire. Of course, this Goldie wouldn’t remember that, if everyone’s hypothesis was correct. The past Goldie wouldn’t know what the future Goldie would’ve done.

“I don’t believe it…” Goldie said, coming closer. “Scrooge McDuck? What happened to you?”

“You’re a sight for sore eyes, Goldie,” Scrooge breathed. Webby hadn’t realized he’d regained consciousness.

“What are you doing here? And so old? You’re supposed to be out digging…” Goldie said. “What is this? The lame leading the blind with see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil? And...lemme guess--the old and feeble.”

“I resent that!” Scrooge snapped. She felt Goldie roll her eyes.

“Resent it all you want,” Goldie retorted. “That doesn’t stop it from being true. Now, if you don’t mind, I’ve got gold to dig up.”
“He needs your help and you’re going to brush him off?” Webby snapped.

“Maybe you should’ve been speak no evil,” Goldie mused. “This isn’t my Scrooge. Or my version of him, anyway. This is someone else’s problem.”

“We need your help!” Huey protested. She doubted he’d understood the conversation beyond beak reading, but he had to realize what was going on.

“And I need to get rich,” she retorted. Still, Webby sensed hesitancy. “All right. You can come into my cabin and stay there while I go pan for gold. If you’re still there when the sun sets, I’ll come back for you and we’ll figure out what’s going on. You can’t pan in the dark anyway.”

That seemed to be the best possible solution and, reluctantly, they accepted it. Webby would have preferred that they got attention right away, but tearing Goldie away from gold would’ve been impossible. Huffing, they shuffled into the cabin and settled themselves. Webby still couldn’t see anything and stubbed her foot on the front step. Stupid Goldie.

“What possible reason would Magica have for sending me back to this day?” Scrooge mused.

“Today’s the day you made your fortune, isn’t it?” she asked, though she already knew the answer.

“Aye, it is, lass,” he said. Then he groaned. “We have to get back out there.”

“You, maybe,” Louie said. “In case you haven’t noticed, I’ve got a broken leg that isn’t getting any better.”

If Magica reached the gold vein before Scrooge did, she’d be the billionaire, not Scrooge. Moreover, she could probably prevent him from ever achieving his goals. Webby wanted to rush back out there, but with everyone’s impairments, they needed a plan before running headlong into danger.

“We have to stop her before she steals me gold out from under me,” Scrooge growled.

“Is there any way to actually know if Magica’s succeeded?” Huey remarked. He seemed to be talking to himself. “We’re not going to all vanish if she has.”

“No,” Scrooge said. “But if she has, she’s gonna regret crossing Scrooge McDuck.”

He yelped. “Me lucky dime! It’s missing!”

“Again with the dime? What’s so important about it now? She’s not trapped in it anymore,” Louie remarked.

“It holds a lot of power; it’s imbued with Scrooge’s hopes and dreams. Over time, it became a magical item of its own because of how close it’s been to him,” Webby said. “As I said, it holds tremendous power and Magica might be the only one to unlock it.”

But thinking about Magica doing so reminded her of Lena and her stomach clenched. She didn’t want to think about her. It hurt too much.

“She must’ve stolen the dime from past Scrooge...and that means...” Webby frowned, unwilling to complete her sentence.
“Good thing our existence doesn’t depend on Uncle Scrooge being loaded,” Louie said in an undertone to Webby.

“No, but this might make things worse,” she whispered back.

“How?” he demanded.

“I don’t know. Yet. We’ll find out,” she responded. She knew it wasn’t encouraging, but that was the best she could offer right now.

One thing was true. If Goldie O’Gilt discovered Scrooge was no longer wealthy in either the past or the future, she might be disinclined to help them further. Then they’d be up a creek without a paddle. They had to make sure, no matter what past Scrooge had told her, she didn’t find out.

Mrs. Beakley could hardly fail to notice that, in the middle of dusting the mantle (and ignoring Duckworth critiquing her), the manor flickered and vanished only to reappear. When it reappeared, however, the picture she’d been in front of had vanished. Scrooge was no longer standing in front of the Klondike with a pickaxe and a prospector’s outfit. Instead, it was Flintheart Glomgold and she backed up, gasping.

Someone had been meddling with the past. That was the only explanation. She rushed toward the sitting room two doors down. Scrooge had a clock that could manipulate time—it sounded like the others needed help. She didn’t know what was going on or how they’d ended up back in time, but she wasn’t going to abandon her boss when he needed her. Not to mention the kids, especially Webby. She had a sixth sense something was wrong with her granddaughter.

“Not so fast,” Glomgold snapped from behind her and she whirled, wielding the feather duster like a weapon. “You’re my housekeeper and I didn’t tell you that you were finished with the mantle.”

“I most certainly do not work for you, Glomgold,” she snapped.

“Oy! Show your master some respect!” he demanded.

“Master?” she repeated, her tone dangerous. If he thought he was standing in the way of her rescuing the others, then he was sadly mistaken. She loomed over him.

“Would you care to repeat that?” she snapped.

Glomgold faltered and then found his backbone. “Aye, I would. You. Work. For. Me. And I’m not letting you near that clock. I finally have things how they should be—I’m the richest duck in the world now.”

“If you’re my employer, then I quit!” she retorted and threw the feather duster in his face. She stormed off toward the clock and he rushed to beat her to it. To her consternation, he hadn’t faltered as much as she’d hoped when she’d flung the feather duster.

“You’re not getting anywhere near it!” he repeated, growling. He skidded inside the door first and then locked it. Mrs. Beakley backed up, trying to assess the best way to break the doors open. Unfortunately, Scrooge had designed McDuck Manor to prevent the brute force from working,
although the Beagle Boys had burst through the outside wall years ago. Since then, he’d sought to prevent it from recurring.

Mrs. Beakley looked for a blunt object to crash her way through and encountered a DT-87 droid similar to the one Webby had destroyed. It aimed lasers at her that she dodged with ease. Other droids appeared, surrounding her. She didn’t remember Scrooge having so much ambulatory security. Perhaps this was another alteration with history being rewritten. It didn’t matter.

She had to see if the others were okay. Unfortunately, she didn’t have time to grab a sledgehammer and attack the walls. The droids were herding her toward the exit and while she could dodge a few attacks, she was outnumbered and they were far faster. Four robots back in Black Heron’s lab years ago with her and Scrooge was one thing. There were at least six droids hemming her in now.

Forced to dash through the manor with them nipping at her heels, she tried to assess her options. She contemplated heading into the Other Bin and seeing whether Scrooge had anything else that might be able to alter time. On the other hand, the droids were definitely not going to let her penetrate deeper into the manor, not if they were under Glomgold’s control. Taking a right turn, she headed for the security hallways. Not looking where she was going, a net caught her leg and took her out. She rolled, snarling like an angry cat, and kicked out. One of the droids produced a hypodermic needle and she reached for her chopstick weapons to knock it away. Another droid moved in on her and she was fighting on two fronts.

She couldn’t move very quickly or sense what was behind her beyond a vague notice. The hypodermic needle jammed into her neck from a droid she hadn’t detected and its effects were instantaneous. Her muscles went slack and she landed in a heap on the sidewalk outside of the manor. She heard Glomgold cackling over the loudspeaker.

Oh dear Lord. She just realized who her only option for assistance was. With Duckworth dead and bound to the manor, the only possible person who could let her back in and might be able to rescue the others was...Launchpad McQuack. And that was assuming he wasn’t stupid enough to get himself fired or quit. Mrs. Beakley groaned. She couldn’t do anything about that now. She’d have to wait for the sedative to stop first...and in the meanwhile, her face was pressed up against the ground. This was far closer than she’d care to get to a sidewalk, thank you very much.

What had the others gotten themselves into?

Magica crooned at the gold nugget she held in her hand. She had discovered the same vein that Scrooge had originally found and thrown the younger Scrooge into a ditch after disabling him magically. Unlike the older Scrooge, she’d taken her time with her hex. That Scrooge wouldn’t pose a problem again any time soon.

And now...she would be the richest duck in the world. Well...she still only really wanted the dime. She supposed she could split the wealth with Flintheart Glomgold, as long as he let her amass a fortune on her own on top of this. She could be generous, she supposed.

“All’s fair in love and war, Scroogie,” she said and knelt by the unconscious and half-dead duck. “And this is a little of both.”
“I’ve always been Mr. G’s driver, haven’t I?” Launchpad asked. He glanced over at his Double-O Duck poster hanging on his wall and she frowned. Unlike when Scrooge had owned the manor, Launchpad didn’t live on the grounds. He lived in a garage a couple of blocks away. The place desperately needed a good cleaning and she wrinkled her beak. That could wait until later.

“You don’t remember Scrooge McDuck? At all?” she pressed. She was shifting from foot to foot and being chary of stepping on fast food wrappers. It was clear that Launchpad didn’t have a woman in his life. Her gaze slid over to the Double-O Duck poster again. The actor didn’t look a thing like Jim Sterling. How could Scrooge not earning his fortune have altered Darkwing Duck of all things?

The pad was tiny, with barely enough room for a bed beside his car, and the whole place reeked of motor oil. There was a hallway behind the couch that presumably led to the kitchen and bathroom, assuming they weren’t one and the same. Considering the state of his “home” (and she used the term loosely), she was willing to bet Glomgold was as big a penny-pinner as Scrooge when it came to salaries. Perhaps more so, because he probably hated having Scrooge’s employees on the payroll.

“O’course I remember Mr. McDee,” he said and then paused, tilting his head and looking at her quizzically. “He’s the second richest duck in the world. He lives in St. Canard.”

Of course he did. Because none of this could be easy. She bit back impatience.

“But no one’s seen him since he went on an adventure with his grand-nephews and the housekeeper’s granddaughter,” he said with a shrug. “It’s been three weeks.”

“Three weeks?!” she exclaimed. The kids had been trapped in the past for three weeks?! That was inexcusable. How could the world have shifted so far, so fast? It made no sense. Mr. McDuck and the kids had left two days ago. Two. Days. Ago. This was impossible.

Then again, how was she supposed to discuss something this complex with a simpleton?

He shrugged. “Time skips around a little, but you get used to it. Something to do with someone breaking the space-time continuum. I don’t know. It’s all beyond me.”

“I’d believe that.”

She balled her fists. Had three weeks passed in the past where the others were? Or were they stuck on the same day? She couldn’t tell. Never before had everyone seemed so far beyond her reach. But Launchpad...Launchpad could get into the manor, couldn’t he? Scrooge gave him free rein over the house so long as he didn’t crash anything inside of it.
“You can get into the manor and to the clock,” she said, already thinking through a plan. “Once you’ve gotten inside, you can bring me in--”

“No can do, Mrs. B.,” he said and shrugged, glancing back at the TV. “I’m not allowed in the manor. I’m barely allowed to drive for Mr. G. I’m on probation, too, ‘cuz I crashed the Sunchaser during his latest treasure hunt. One more strike and he’ll fire me.”

Clearly, Glomgold didn’t have the same soft spot for Launchpad that Scrooge did. It was perfectly understandable considering how much collateral damage the pilot caused. It did, however, put a damper on her plans. She wracked her brains trying to think of anyone that might be allowed to enter the palace--she was starting to think her quitting had been hasty, though the idea of begging for her job back was beneath her dignity.

She might have to swallow her pride if it came to that. She would look for an alternate solution in the meanwhile.

“You do know you were supposed to work for Scrooge McDuck, right?” she asked. “None of this was supposed to happen.”

Launchpad stared at her like she had two heads. “That’s just what the mole people want you to think.”

Mrs. Beakley facepalmed so hard that she bet Webby could feel it in the past. Her eyes watered and she groaned. Was he really on about this again? That’d been just a movie and she’d thought he’d be over it by now. How on earth could that have been a thing in this alternate timeline but not, say, linear time and Glomgold not inheriting McDuck Manor?

“For the last time, Launchpad, there is no such thing as mole people. That was a movie,” she said, wishing she could shake sense into the pilot, but it was a lost cause.

“Right,” he said in a way that indicated he didn’t believe her. She groaned.

“If you get fired by Glomgold but fix the timeline, you’ll be Mr. McDuck’s chauffeur and won’t have to worry about losing your pay.” That assumed that Launchpad wasn’t in arrears to his employer, which she had a hard time believing he wasn’t. Of course, mentioning that wouldn’t be prudent (not to mention she’d have to explain the concept of “arrears” to him). She hated that her last pathetic hope before pleading for her job back was to recruit Launchpad.

“I’m not allowed in the manor.”

He wasn’t following her. She wanted to throttle him.

“Listen to me,” she said, keeping a tight rein on her temper, “I am telling you that it doesn’t matter. If we can get to the clock and prevent the past from happening or repair the timeline, then your transgressions will be forgiven.”

“Trans-what now?”

Mrs. Beakley groaned again. Why did her last hope have to be an imbecile?

“Your wrong-doing,” she explained, resisting the temptation to facepalm again. “If you fix the
“timeline, none of this will have ever happened.”

“I’m not following you.”

“Of course you’re not.”

She groaned and added, “Look, all you need to know is that if you help me, you won’t get in trouble because it’ll all work out. All right?”

“If you’re sure, Mrs. B…,” he said, sounding none too certain himself. He pushed himself to his feet and the couch groaned, springs popping up. While she knew his digs at McDuck Manor hadn’t been posh, this was grubbier and worse maintained than his room at the garage had been. She made a mental note to check the garage once the timeline was fixed to ensure Dewey wasn’t hanging out with Launchpad on a couch with protruding springs.

“I’m sure.”

He glanced back at the couch, which had sagged to the floor and looked like it was on its proverbial last legs. She almost pitied the poor thing.

“So what do we do?” he asked.

“When you say you’re not allowed in the manor, does that mean that the security is primed against you? Or that you’re strongly discouraged from entering the manor but can physically do so?”

“The last time I tried to get in, the DT-87 kicked my butt and threw me to the curb. I’d barely even opened the garage door connected to the rest of the house to check on Mr. G when they tossed me out.”

That was not encouraging.

“But, wait, aren’t you working for him? Why can’t you get in? What do you need me for?”

She sighed. “I’m afraid I let my temper get the better of me and quit before I could reach the time clock and repair the timeline.”

“You shouldn’t have done that.”

“No kidding,” she said in a deadpan voice.

“Maybe if you beg him, he’ll give you your job back. It’s worked for me.”

Interesting—Launchpad’s memories had been modified to accommodate the new timeline. Hers hadn’t. Maybe he was more susceptible to it because he wasn’t very bright. Anyone with any modicum of sense would’ve…would’ve…

Gyro! Could Gyro be allowed access to the manor? She remembered that he’d burst in there during Game Night and his invention had caused everyone to shrink. If she could ride his coattails into the house, she might be able to sneak off and attack the clock, especially if she explained the situation to Gyro first. She couldn’t believe she hadn’t thought of that.

Although, there was the same distinct possibility that Gyro’s memories had been wiped and
replaced too and she, along with Flintheart Glomgold, remembered the altered timeline, but no one else did. She glanced at the Double-O Duck poster and remembered, though she wasn’t sure why she did, that Darkwing Duck had been pitched as Double-O Duck originally by Tad Stones. Why they would have allowed that to go through instead of Darkwing was anyone’s guess and certainly not relevant to the current predicament. She stowed that away for later, in a mental box called “things I don’t have the time to ruminate on”.

She strongly suspected Magica’s hand in this, but she couldn’t prove it. Moreover, she couldn’t reach the sorceress, who was presumably holed up somewhere to prevent such a confrontation. Mrs. Beakley didn’t have the strength or time to battle her and anyway, that was a red herring. She couldn’t defeat her and force her to replace the altered timeline, especially not when she stood to lose so much by doing so. No, her best bet was to get into the manor and change the clock. Or enlist Gyro and figure out how to circumvent the clock and otherwise implement her plan.

“I’m not begging him,” she said. She’d rather swallow Scrooge’s top hat.

“It’s not that bad. I can coach you.”

“Do I look like I need lessons on how to be pathetic?” she snapped and then regretted it. “Sorry. I’m worried about my granddaughter and the boys.”

“Did you work for Mr. McDee too? ‘Cuz I don’t really know the Duck kids and your granddaughter all that well…”

“Dewey’s not your best friend in this timeline, I take it,” she murmured.

“Mr. G doesn’t want me to interact with anyone related to Mr. McDee.”

Of course not. That might spoil his plan. She didn’t know how Launchpad had so much backstory when time had literally changed a couple of hours ago at the most, but then again, Magica’s intervention might be providing a lot of background.

“So you don’t know the boys at all.”

“I didn’t say that.” A mischievous grin lit his face. “I just said he doesn’t like me interacting with them. He’s too obsessed with staying rich to notice what I do all the time.”

“So you’ll join me to help Dewey?”

He nodded. “I still think you ought to grovel to Mr. G. If he’s nice, he’ll only dock you a couple weeks’ pay.”

Considering how fluid time seemed to be here, that could be anywhere from a couple of hours to actually two weeks. She didn’t intend to remain here that long if she had a choice. And the pay wasn’t the important thing (something told her that Glomgold paid less than Scrooge). Her family needed her.

“Why don’t we take a pit stop first? Are you allowed in Glomgold Industries’ lab?” she asked, assuming that Gyro, Fenton, and Manny (well, maybe not Manny) worked for Glomgold in this timeline.

“Yeah. Of course I am. Why wouldn’t I be?”
Why not indeed.

“Then we’ll start there and see if Gyro and the others can help us.”

“Help us with what?”

She facepalmed again. “Never mind. Just follow my lead. And I’ll drive.”

“Anything you say, Mrs. B. But if you quit, are you allowed in the lab?”

“Hopefully, good news doesn’t travel fast.”

They headed out and Mrs. Beakley wrinkled her beak at the state of Launchpad’s car. It seemed like a good kick might dismantle it. It took her a couple of seconds to remember in which direction Glomgold’s office was since it wasn’t near McDuck Enterprises. Heaven forbid the two biggest tycoons in Duckburg history share a common border.

When she saw the Money Bin and realized it belonged to Glomgold, she hissed. Whereas at the top in the normal timeline there was a dollar sign, in this timeline Glomgold’s giant gold head sneered down at them. How gauche. Then again, money didn’t equal class or taste.

How much of this had happened naturally because of Magica’s and Glomgold’s interference and how much had Glomgold commissioned before she grew aware of the split? Had she been in a daze before and not noticed time passing? Was time passing as quickly in the past as it was here? The thought had returned to the forefront of her mind and try as she might, she couldn’t dislodge it.

She parked in a spot further away from the staff entrance so she didn’t attract undue attention. Launchpad escorted her to the security station, where they admitted her by dint of her and Launchpad’s ID cards. It looked like, as she’d theorized, Glomgold hadn’t had time to strike her from the registry yet. It’d be encouraging if the situation weren’t so dire.

They found Gyro and Fenton staring at a blackboard covered in equations that she couldn’t make heads or tails of.

“I assume you’re here because we were standing in McDuck Enterprises and suddenly found ourselves in a tacky, gold-lined lab with sub-par equipment instead,” Gyro said, studying the board and not turning. “Well, one of you, anyway. I doubt Launchpad noticed.”

“You remember the right timeline, then?” Mrs. Beakley asked. She assumed that whatever they were puttering with had to do with the time fluctuations, as well as the schism in the time stream.

“Of course I do,” he said, sounding offended she’d even questioned it. “And so does Fenton. Why wouldn’t we?”

“Launchpad doesn’t.”

The man in question had gone wandering over to an experiment and Gyro hissed, snapping his fingers. Manny, one of the many things that didn’t belong in this timeline, was nonetheless present, Scrooge McDuck’s head atop his shoulders and all. She supposed the slapdash alterations had led to a few...snafus. Manny pushed Launchpad away before he ignited a couple of compounds that probably weren’t meant to be lit. Mrs. Beakley rolled her eyes.
“That man is a hazard,” Gyro snapped. He glanced back at the board and then at her. “But you do.”

He was returning to their previous conversation. She nodded.

“I’m sure Mr. McDuck would remember too...if he hadn’t gone missing,” Gyro said and scowled. “We both know who’s responsible for that.”

“Doctor Gearloose?” Fenton asked and tugged on the man’s sleeve. Gyro whirled, glowering at the younger man for daring to touch him. Fenton shrank back and pointed toward the security cameras. The blood drained from Mrs. Beakley’s face.

“So?” Gyro said, but she detected a hint of unease in his voice. “He’s not watching that.”

“He may not be, but he has a whole security team that might be,” Fenton replied.

Gyro hissed, apprehension flooding his features. “As much as I hate to admit it, you’re probably right. Probably. We should continue this conversation elsewhere, somewhere soundproof.”

Manny tapped out a frantic Morse code message and Gyro scowled at him.

“How do you know that?” he demanded.

“He’s a magical construct,” Mrs. Beakley pointed out. “He probably has preternaturally strong hearing.”

“All right, there’s an escape route through the Money Bin,” Gyro said. He looked mournfully at the equipment. “But if I leave my babies here, he might hurt them.”

“It’s just tech,” Mrs. Beakley said and Gyro gathered up Lil Bulb, as well as an assorted amount of components she couldn’t identify at a brief glance. She wasn’t exactly up on her technological know-how.

“Just tech?” he repeated as if she’d cursed him, his mother, and his entire family. “Just. Tech? Are you mad, woman?”

“Doctor Gearloose takes his work very seriously,” Fenton said in an undertone.

“Especially when it turns evil,” Mrs. Beakley added.

“They’re not evil. They’re just misunderstood. And occasionally cranky,” Gyro said.

They glanced at the security cameras and then, in sync, all three winced. A red light flashed over them and then sirens pealed out. They were followed by klaxons and Gyro gestured for them to follow him. She glanced back to spy Launchpad trying to put back together a model ship. Gyro looked apoplectic with rage and it took Mrs. Beakley and Fenton dragging him away to prevent him from launching himself at the much larger and more muscular man.

They rushed through the tunnel and though she couldn’t hear their pursuit, she sensed it as a prickle along her spine. If Gyro didn’t have access to tech beyond the lab, they’d have a larger problem on their hands than they already did. And they didn’t need any further complications.
They encountered a fork in the road and Gyro directed them to the right. Mrs. Beakley froze and this time, it was Gyro’s and Fenton’s turn to tug her along. Unfortunately for them, she was heavier than them and also disinclined to move.

“Are you insane?” she countered at Gyro. “That way leads to McDuck Manor!”

“Of course it does,” Gyro said, implacable and having to shout over the alarms to be heard. “That’s exactly...oops.”

He cursed.

“Exactly where we shouldn’t be going!” Mrs. Beakley snapped.

“Why’d we stop?” Launchpad asked. He’d been bringing up the rear and hadn’t heard the conversation. Then again, she was standing right beside Gyro and could barely hear him.

“Any other ideas?” she said tartly.

“Retreat!” Gyro announced and they spun about only to be confronted by more of the DT-87 droids. It looked like Glomgold was outsourcing his security and replacing it with robots. Then again, they were probably cheaper and easier to maintain than people. They were also a nuisance.

“Stand and fight!” Launchpad announced.

“Blathering Blatherskite!” Fenton announced and then, as the suit raced to him, “Oh, yeah, by the way, I’m Gizmoduck. Nice to meet you.”

“Why don’t you tell the entire world you’re Gizmoduck?!?” Gyro snapped.

“It wouldn’t be much of a secret identity if I did,” Fenton replied.

“It’s not much of one now,” Gyro shot back.

The suit slammed into Fenton and there was a brief moment where Mrs. Beakley wondered whether she was trapped in a pretty sailor soldier anime as he had a transformation sequence to rival Sailor Moon. She rolled her eyes and Gizmoduck blasted whatever came his way. The other four took on the five remaining bots. With five to six, the odds were much better and she thought they might stand a chance.

Evidently, this had occurred to Glomgold or whoever was manning security, because five more flew out of nowhere. Ten to six. Sweat trickled down her back. Hopefully, wherever the kids were, they were faring better than them.

The bots moved aside as Glomgold came into the middle of them. He leaned on his cane and leered. Gyro and Mrs. Beakley glowered back. Launchpad and Fenton mostly looked bewildered. She assumed a defensive stance, though she knew he wouldn’t attack her, not directly. He had minions for that.

“I should’ve thought you’d come crawling back to me,” Glomgold said.

“You’ve screwed up time so badly that it’s skipping,” Gyro snapped. She noticed he didn’t hold Glomgold in the same reverence as Mr. McDuck. Then again, he had only the McDuck
Enterprise’s lab team through trickery.

“It wasn’t me!” Glomgold retorted. “And anyway, you work for me. All of you. And if I tell you to
leave well enough alone, you will.”

“I don’t work for you!” Gyro spat. “I work for Mr. McDuck. You manipulated things so that you
took everything from him, but that doesn’t mean you’ve earned my loyalty.”

Glomgold surveyed the group with a critical eye and his gaze landed on Mrs. Beakley. “You
shouldn’t even be here. I fired you.”

“You didn’t fire me. I quit.”

“Semantics,” Glomgold said, waving her objections aside. “I’ll overlook this if you’ll get back to
work. Now.”

“And if I refuse?” Gyro retorted, his tone dangerous.

“Then…” Glomgold smiled and snapped his fingers. “Get ‘em, boys!”

Manny thumped out a message that Mrs. Beakley thought said, “You and your stupid pride.”

“Oh, like you’re any better,” Gyro countered. “Like anyone here doesn’t have an ego problem.”

“I don’t,” Fenton said, honestly baffled.

“That’s because you’re an idiot and don’t count,” Gyro said dismissively. “Those of us with a brain
are offended.”

“Hey, I take offense at that!” Launchpad said.

“I stand corrected. One of us without a brain is still capable of umbrage,” Gyro said and rolled his
eyes as he aimed his blaster at two approaching droids.

“Isn’t that the teacher from Harry Potter?” Launchpad said blankly.

Then there was no time for chit-chat. The droids occupied their full attention and she was grateful
Gizmoduck was on their side. She wondered whether Glomgold would realize who Gizmoduck
was when the timeline reverted back. Perhaps he’d just assume that the superhero had materialized
out of nowhere and not connect the dots.

The droids were more bothersome than the shadows had been. Shadows could be ripped apart
easily and curbstomped. The droids dodged, weaved, and then aimed laser blasts at them. Mrs.
Beakley leaped into the air and kicked a droid into a wall only for another one to take its place.
Glomgold, she noticed out of the corner of her eye, was still watching with a smirk. She punted the
next droid at him and it swept him off his feet and onto his butt. Served him right.

Rising again, Glomgold snapped and ordered more droids to the scene. They were already
swamped. Mrs. Beakley didn’t have time to look to see whether anyone obeyed him. Instead, she
concentrated her firepower on defeating the ones she could see. Her heart pounded. Three weeks
had passed. And even though the situation here wasn’t optimal, she worried far more about her
granddaughter and the boys. She had confidence in her skills to pull through. She had no idea what
had befallen the others.

After they’d knocked over a good ten droids, at least, she realized that no reinforcements were forthcoming. Glomgold was speaking into a walkie-talkie and looking peeved. She flung another droid into his head and he keeled over. Gyro kicked the walkie-talkie into the wall.

“Now,” Mrs. Beakley snapped. “We’re going to get the clock.”

“No, you’re not,” Glomgold snapped. He gasped, the breath knocked out of him, and glanced about. “Gabby McStabberson? Take care of them.”

A trio of assassins materialized and Mrs. Beakley, along with the others, backed into a wall. The assassins were armed; she wasn’t, not really. Five against three might seem like good odds, but if they were trained by FOWL, that could all change in an instant.

By Magica’s little trick, she’d learned that everything could change in an instant, especially if you weren’t expecting it to. There wasn’t much she could do with that information. They were waiting for Goldie to return and the boys were watching the window. Scrooge was pacing, judging by the wind that brushed past her as he moved. Webby sat still, unable to see what was going on and afraid to walk into a table or another piece of furniture if she paced.

Goldie might still turn her back on them. She wasn’t known for her magnanimous ways. Webby sometimes doubted she even cared for Scrooge at all or whether she simply cared for his fortune. “Ex-everything”. Her stomach twisted and then gurgled. They hadn’t had anything to eat all day or whatever time had actually passed since the avalanche, their trip to Mount Vesuvius, and then their unceremonious shove into the Yukon during the Gold Rush. But thinking about eating made her sick.

What had happened in the present while they were sequestered in the past? She didn’t know. The whole timeline might be altered and, as a result, nothing might be the same. Or some things might be and others not. There was nothing they could do for the present. They needed to fix the past.

Scrooge halted, coughing up blood again, and Webby’s stomach churned harder, bringing bile to her mouth.

“Is it close to sunset?” she asked, desperate for any news.

“Aye, it is, lass,” he confirmed. “But whether Goldie actually returns is another story altogether.”

“And whether her greed gets the better of her and she ditches us is another story too,” Louie muttered.

Webby tuned out Scrooge’s response as she pondered something. She inadvertently interrupted as she thought aloud.

“If time’s been rewritten, then our disabilities should go away too, shouldn’t they? The reason for them isn’t there anymore. It’s a paradox.”

“Man, I wish you could talk to Huey about that,” Louie said. “He’d understand better than I
“She’s right,” Scrooge said. “We shouldn’t be disabled anymore, not if the whole point was to weaken us to steal me dime.”


A wagon pulled up outside the cabin and Webby’s vision flickered, shades of grey and black appearing before darkness consumed it again. She sighed, balling a fist in frustration. Whatever this was, it wasn’t permanent, but she couldn’t figure out the pattern. There had to be a catalyst somewhere.

“Hey, Webs?” Dewey called and his voice was faint, cracking. “I think maybe...maybe the spell’s wearing off.”

“I don’t know if that’s good or bad, though,” Huey said. “Because if the spell is wearing off, that means that history’s definitely been rewritten, which means we’re already stuck in a paradox. We wouldn’t be here if Magica hadn’t coveted Uncle Scrooge’s dime. But she has it, which means we don’t have a reason to be here, which means we shouldn’t be here, but we are anyway.”

“Did anyone follow that?” Dewey asked. She scowled. The others were regaining their voice and hearing and she still couldn’t see.

“I think--” Huey froze. “And...my hearing is gone again.”

“My leg never stopped being broken,” Louie said and Webby’s beak twitched. It seemed the green triplet was a bit salty about that.

“I never regained my sight, so don’t feel bad,” she answered.

“I guess some people are just luckier than others,” Louie muttered.

The wagon pulled away and they heard footsteps approach up the wooden steps. The door opened and boots hit the floor. Despite not being able to see it, she nonetheless turned her head in that direction. She assumed it was Goldie. Sad as it was, she thought Goldie might be the lesser of two or three evils running about in Scrooge’s past. At least she belonged in this timeline.

“Well, aren’t you all a sight for sore eyes. Well, the ones who can see,” Goldie remarked and then put down a metal object that clanged. “All right, Moneybags. Spill. What’s really going on here?”

Scrooge proceeded to explain that they’d been hunting for a treasure lamp on a snowy mountain top when they’d ended up buried in an avalanche. From there, they’d been separated and awakened to discover themselves injured in a specific manner, as well as how they’d been transported from Mount Vesuvius to the Yukon. When Scrooge was done, he was coughing again and Goldie poured him a glass of water. The older duck swallowed in big gulps.

“You’re coughing up blood,” Goldie commented and it was sans her normal sarcasm. “I know you’re older than you look, Moneybags, but this is serious, even for you.”

“Ye think I don’t know that?” he countered and coughed again.
“So, you need my help,” Goldie said and sat on a chair beside Webby. “That’s what you’re telling me. You need my help to retrieve your number one dime and restore the gold vein to you so the future will be as it’s supposed to be.”

She huffed. “What’s to stop me from stealing the gold vein for myself, Scroogie? All you have is my word that I’ll help you and I haven’t even given you that. Plus, what’s in it for me? What do I get out of all of this?”

“A few years ago,” Scrooge said and then paused. “In your future, my past, I found another gold ore deposit and gave the land to you. It’s in your name. If ye can stand to wait a hundred or so years, ye won’t be rich, but you’ll be better off than ye are now.”

“Tempting, but the payoff would take a rather long time,” Goldie said. “I have no guarantee I’ll even live to see it.”

“We both find the Fountain of Youth,” he said. “You’ll live to see it.”

“I’m the only able-bodied person in your group. You’d have to rely on me an awful lot, Scroogie. Do you even trust me that much?”

“Do I have a choice?” he spat.

“Well, sure. You and your gang of misfits could go after Magica yourself. I’m sure she’s still around. Unless, of course, she isn’t, which would compound the matter.”

“If she’s not here, then we can’t retrieve the dime and we’re stuck,” Louie commented.

“And then I have a bunch of freeloaders,” Goldie muttered. “At least, until I throw you all out.”

“You wouldn’t,” Webby said and then hesitated. “No. Wait. You would.”

Goldie turned and Webby hissed when the blonde duck grabbed her head and tilted it this way and that. “Quite a group you have here. She might even be formidable if she could see her hands in front of her face. And your grand-nephews might even be helpful if they weren’t also impaired.”

“I already know that!” he snapped. “Are ye gonna help me or not, Goldie?”

Goldie released Webby’s chin. “I haven’t decided.”

“Ye cannae hear that and stew on it! We need your help!” Scrooge protested.

“See, that’s the thing. You need my help. I don’t need yours. Like I said, the payoff is a long way away.”

“Goldie, ye backstabbing--” Scrooge started and Goldie interrupted.

“Though there is eventually pay off,” she mused. “Plus…”

She shrugged. “I’ll sleep on it. I’ll give you my answer in the morning.”

“In the morning?!?” Scrooge objected.
“That’s what I said. In the meanwhile, there’s a cantina a mile down the road. You could get some food, if you wanted,” Goldie said and shrugged again. “I’m going to bed. You’re welcome to come with, but I don’t think the kids would be too happy about that.”

“Wait, what?” Louie said. “Ew, gross!”

“Like I said, kids are such a dealbreaker,” Goldie scoffed.

“I need to move quickly if I’m gonna catch Magica before she jumps ship,” Scrooge snapped. “I donnae have the time to wait and dither! And neither do you!”

“See, you haven’t convinced me of that. I don’t see where my urgency comes in,” Goldie responded.

“My other self is lying in a ditch somewhere and could die, for all I know, at any moment,” he snapped.

To Webby’s surprise, the female duck hesitated. She could hear it in her next question, as well as feel her tense.

“Die?” Goldie repeated.

“Yes, die,” Scrooge replied, impatient. “Magica did something to my past self but I cannae figure out what yet.”

“You didn’t mention dying before,” Goldie said accusingly. “Why didn’t you say that?”

“I dinnae think it’d make any difference. And if I’m dead, you’re not getting paid.”

“That’s not--I didn’t--” she stopped. She cursed softly. “You really know how to motivate a girl, don’t you?”

Goldie sprang from her seat and paced the floor. “Do you know where your other self might be? If we can find him, we might have a lead.”

“So you’ll help?” Scrooge asked.

“Yes, I’ll help. But there’s still not much point in rummaging around in the dark. None of us has a torch and we’re not going to be able to do much with only the moon shining.”

Scrooge hesitated too. With Webby blind, Louie limping along, and Scrooge with an unknown disability, it might be dangerous to wander about in the dark. Goldie had a point, though Webby was loath to admit it. She was also growing tired, perhaps from all the magical transportation. She stifled a yawn.

“All right. But we’ll start at first light tomorrow,” Scrooge said.

“Anything you say,” Goldie said. Webby heard her brush her beak against Scrooge’s head. “I don’t have a lot of room...and as I said, you’re more than welcome to share my bed.”

“Ew, no, gross,” Louie said.
“Like I’d really do that in front of kids,” Goldie said and Webby could hear her rolling her eyes. “Find a nice piece of floor to sleep on, kid. Because the bed is mine and I’m not sharing with anyone but Scrooge.”

“We’ve slept in worse places,” Webby volunteered, trying to cheer Louie up.

“We’ve slept in better ones, too,” Louie grumbled.

“Good night, all,” Scrooge said. Webby curled up on the floor and Louie and Dewey curled up next to her. She felt Dewey’s arms go about her and Louie pulled her closer to him too. Sandwiched between the boys, between the magical fatigue and the stress of the situation, she fell asleep sooner than she’d like. Her last impression was of Louie holding her hand.
Morning came entirely too early and Louie groaned, holding up his arm to fend off the sun. He reached for his cell phone, which he didn’t have and even if he had had it, it would have been of limited use. Sighing, he glanced over at Webby, who was curled into a tiny ball, and then from there to Dewey, who had his arm slung about her waist. Louie’s eyes narrowed, though he was more concerned with Webby whimpering in her sleep than Dewey hugging her to him. Pick the battles you can win if you have to fight at all.

“Lena…” Webby whispered and Louie’s heart thudded. He knew that she’d been having nightmares about her best friend, especially because she was keeping it to herself. He was willing to bet she had nightmares about almost drowning, too, but she wasn’t going to dwell on that in her waking hours. He watched her for a minute more and then sat up. Standing was beyond him and he had to crane his neck to see the bed in the corner of the room.

Scrooge had fallen asleep in a chair; Huey was staring out the window at the morning sun. Goldie, on the other hand, was right in front of him. How had she done that? He hadn’t even heard her move and, unlike the others, he hadn’t lost one of his senses. Or whatever it was that had happened to Scrooge.

“Someone took ‘break a leg’ literally, huh, kid?” Goldie asked and Louie shrugged as if this didn’t bother him.

“Eh. Someone always gets hurt and that someone is usually me.”

“Who are you three, really?”

Webby tossed and turned and sought out Louie. His heart skipped beats and he was painfully aware of Goldie’s attention upon him. Maybe if he weren’t being observed, he would have tried to mollify Webby. Right now, he felt like he was on trial for something.

He didn’t know Goldie all that well, past or present. Or future, since they were in the past and ugh, timelines were annoying. He matched her gaze and tried to figure out what kind of game she was running. Everyone had their own agenda. Getting a leg up on them was a matter of working out what they wanted and how to get it before them.

“We’re Uncle Scrooge’s grand-nephews,” he said.
“I don’t have any kids running around in the future that I don’t know about, do I?”

Louie shrugged. “How am I supposed to know? You’re just Uncle Scrooge’s ex. No one tells me anything.”

In truth, he knew a little more than that, but it was never good to tip your hand too early. You had to hold some cards close to the vest and know when to play them. Besides, he was pretty sure that if Huey could hear himself, he’d be prattling on about disrupting the timeline and altering it and blah blah blah. Like Magica stealing Scrooge’s gold hadn’t done that already. What did it matter if they kept wrecking things? They could hardly do worse than what had already happened.

She cast him an appraising look. “Maybe you ought to keep an eye on your girlfriend.”

“Wait, what? No. She’s not my girlfriend,” he sputtered, glad Huey couldn’t hear and that no one else was awake. Color rushed to his cheeks and Goldie smirked, enjoying his discomfort. She spent a few more seconds staring at him before turning her attention to Scrooge. Louie glanced back at Webby.

“It’s so cold…” she whispered and he knew her dream had transitioned from Lena to Glomgold throwing her overboard. Since Goldie wasn’t looking at him, he thought it safe to take her hand and squeeze. His heart thudded and his stomach flip-flopped. She was supposed to be like family. She was supposed to be like his sister. This wasn’t a familial feeling he had toward her and he wanted it to go away.

“Webby?” Dewey whispered and Louie realized that his brother had spoken for the first time since the avalanche. On a whim, he glanced at his broken leg and flexed his toes. They moved. Could whatever Magica had done to them be wearing off? Experimentally, he heaved himself to his feet, but the cast threw off his sense of balance and Huey caught him before he crashed into the floor.

“I can hear again,” Huey remarked. He glanced over at Webby. “I wish she’d have told us she has nightmares.”

“Oh, good,” Goldie said from behind them. “You’re not lame, blind, deaf, and dumb. I can work with that. We’re wasting time. We need to get moving if we’re going to find the younger Scrooge and fix the timeline.”

“I said I could hear again. I didn’t say that my hearing was perfect,” Huey said. “And I don’t think Louie can walk on that leg. Nor can Dewey speak very loudly.”

“In my defense,” Dewey rasped, “I was trying not to wake Webby.”

Webby gasped, springing upright and then staring around her in concern. She scrubbed at her cheeks, where a few errant tears still fell. Her beak quivered and she clamped it shut. Louie took a tentative step toward her and swayed on his feet. It still didn’t feel like his broken leg wanted to support his weight, regardless of how the others were faring.

“I can see. Sort of,” Webby said. “I can see your shapes.”

“That’ll have to be good enough,” Goldie said. She nudged Scrooge awake and he coughed, but it was a dry sound, compared to his hacking earlier that sounded like he’d been trying to expel his lungs. Webby was orienting herself while Dewey whispered to himself. It sounded like, now that
Dewey had his voice back, he was desperate to hear it. Louie rolled his eyes. Typical middle child.

“What about breakfast?” Louie asked as his stomach growled. He couldn’t remember the last time they’d eaten, either. After everything they’d been through, it was hard to tell how much time had passed.

“This could be life or death and you’re worried about food?” Scrooge snapped, clearly thinking Louie needed better priorities.

“We haven’t eaten in at least a day, Uncle Scrooge,” Webby said quietly. Scrooge glanced at her and then at the others.

“They should have food at the digging site,” Scrooge said. “Can ye wait until then?”

“Yes,” Huey said, shooting Louie a dirty look. “We can wait.”

Louie glowered back and then studied Webby. Webby’s gaze was still occluded, but there was something beyond the film on her eyes. She caught him looking at her and smiled at him. His heart skipped a beat again and he pushed himself to his feet. She caught him before he fell and, to his relief, he found that he could take a few tentative steps with her assistance. This was better than it’d been yesterday.

“If Magica injured us in the proper timeline, then by changing it, she’s erased what led to our injuries,” Huey said. He wasn’t yelling anymore when he spoke, for which Louie was grateful. The cast remained on his leg but that might’ve been a lingering effect, like Webby’s blurry vision. Or whatever happened when you had cataracts. Louie wasn’t clear on the details.

Goldie was watching Scrooge carefully and she nudged him with a wicked grin.

“Move it, old man,” she teased. “Or we’ll leave you in the dust.”

Then, before he had a chance to object, she bolted out the door. The kids followed with Scrooge grumbling, though he moved surprisingly fast for his age. (Huey had it pegged at 152, which was ridiculous and probably true). He guessed he was spry, which brought disturbing thoughts regarding Goldie and Scrooge given Goldie’s invitation.

“Ye cannae wait five minutes?” Scrooge complained.

“The early bird gets the worm,” Goldie said serenely. “And it looks like you’ve lost your share of worms, Scroogie.”

“Yeah, but who would want to eat worms?” Louie objected.

“The early bird also gets her choice of the gold,” Goldie continued, ignoring Louie’s commentary. She stretched, having dressed before they awoke. She was wearing her prospecting outfit, which, while it did nothing for Louie, apparently drew Scrooge’s attention. Louie was still leaning on Webby and had almost forgotten, perhaps because he’d been so focused on not hyper-focusing on it. Remembering made his heart race.

“We’re not out here for gold,” Scrooge reprimanded. “We’re lookin’ for my counterpart.”

“It was a figure of speech,” Goldie said with a shrug. “You probably know them all, since you’re
“So, is this flirting?” Huey asked innocently and Dewey and Louie snorted.

“It is not flirting!” Scrooge snapped. “Oh, grow up!”

“What fun would that be?” Goldie said and then smirked at him. “Oh, wait, you weren’t talking to me.”

She led the way and Louie tuned out their banter. Webby was having problems with her footing, especially when she found a creek and nearly pitched headfirst into it. Apparently, her vision couldn’t distinguish between dry land and wet. He yanked her out before she fell, though it sent him off balance and Dewey and Huey had to grab both of them.

“It’s wearing off,” Huey said, though whether he believed that or he was repeating it to convince himself, Louie didn’t know.

“It’s taking forever,” Dewey muttered and then glanced over at Louie and Webby. “Are you two okay?”

“I’d be better if I didn’t have this stupid cast on my leg,” Louie groused.

“I wish I could appreciate our surroundings more,” Webby said wistfully. “It’s hard to fangirl over being in the Yukon where Scrooge McDuck made his fortune when I can barely see anything.”

“It’s hard to do anything when you can barely move,” Louie grumbled.

They had walked about a mile and Louie’s stomach grumbled louder. To Huey’s consternation, the older boy’s stomach grumbled too. He looked chagrined and said, “How much further?”

“We’re here,” Scrooge announced. They found a man standing over a boiling pot of what Louie assumed was stew and what he strongly suspected was duck floating in there. He hated duck. For one thing, it was greasy and fatty. For another, it was entirely too close for comfort. Those ducks weren’t domesticated, which meant they were edible, but it also meant that the only difference between that duck and him was that he could talk and walk upright.

“Are you two okay?” Huey asked, looking queasy.

“You eat that or you starve,” Scrooge said, but his voice was soft, taking the sting out of his words. “We’ll see if we can find anything else later, if ye want.”

He coughed, another wet sound, and spat out blood. Goldie paled and the kids winced. Webby and Huey looked beside themselves with concern.

“Maybe you should sit down, Uncle Scrooge,” Huey suggested.

Rather than chairs, they found tree stumps and Scrooge didn’t so much sit as collapse onto one. He coughed again, harder, and this time, fat globules of blood came out. Goldie stroked Scrooge’s whiskers and Louie knew she wasn’t feigning her anxiety. For someone who claimed she loved gold more than him, she wasn’t acting like it. Or perhaps it was that she loved Scrooge too and the gold was temporarily taking a backseat. The gold wasn’t in danger of perishing.
Whatever sentimentality Goldie had, however, vanished as she cast a glance about the dig site. “This is where you usually go, isn’t it? So, where are you?”

The man doling out the stew looked confused and they ignored him. Huey looked over at the bowl the dog with floppy ears gave him and Louie bet he was worried about contaminants. Sometimes, he swore Huey had a touch of OCD. It was ridiculous. Who cared if anyone had eaten from that bowl before? Food was food.

“No one was worried about germs back then,” Louie said. “Maybe they didn’t exist.”

He said this knowing it’d rile his brother up. True to form, Huey puffed up, looking like an angry cat. Louie grinned.

“You and I both know they existed,” he snapped back.

“Oh, I don’t know,” Louie said. “I’m pretty sure that germs were only invented in the last fifty years. As a way to make people like you go crazy.”

“That’s not true!” Huey said and Louie snickered.

“Are you calling me a liar?” Louie said, pretending innocence. “Me? Your own brother? I’m hurt, Hubert.”

Webby was getting soup, as was Dewey, so they weren’t privy to the conversation. That meant Louie could tease his brother to his heart’s content or until Huey got snippy about it. Louie took a step back, not liking the look in his older brother’s eyes.

“Germs predate cell phones, which means while we can both get sick, you can’t run your games,” Huey said.

“Where there are people, there are suckers,” Louie said smoothly. “I’m not worried. Afraid you’re going to die of smallpox?”

“Afraid you’re going to lose control of your cons while we’re stuck here and you can’t monitor them?” he shot back.

Louie’s smile flickered. As a matter of fact, that was a valid concern. Judging by the smug look on Huey’s face, he knew he’d scored a hit. Louie glowered at Huey, who, despite the unhappy expression, nonetheless quaffed his soup.

Webby and Dewey came back over, putting an end to the conversation, though not to the smug look returning to Huey’s face.

“Do I want to know what’s in this?” Webby asked, prodding at it with a wooden spoon.

“Probably not,” Dewey said. His voice remained raspy and they sat on the ground, seeing as there were only a couple of tree stumps. Scrooge sat on one and Louie on the other. Louie was afraid if he sat on the ground, he wouldn’t be able to get back up.

“No, you don’t,” Huey said.

“How are you feeling, Louie?” Webby asked, studying him as carefully as she could given her
“Hungry,” he said, sidestepping her worry. He dug into the soup and glanced over at the adults. Goldie was eating slowly and watching them, all the while also glancing about. Scrooge had gotten up to converse with the food vendor and was too far away for them to determine what they were talking about.

Webby pressed a hand to his forehead and he blushed.

“I’ve got a broken leg, not a fever,” he reprimanded.

“You feel warm anyway…” she said, frowning. She pressed her hand harder against his forehead and he blushed deeper.

Huey and Dewey were watching this with frowns and Louie jerked away, painfully aware of his brothers’ scrutiny. Dewey might be clueless, but he bet that Huey wasn’t. And if Huey knew, it was a matter of whether he wanted to complicate Louie’s life by telling.

“I’m fine,” he grumbled. Webby looked put out and he grimaced, looking away.

“If you’re sure…” she said in a tone that indicated she wasn’t.

They lapsed into silence and Louie pulled a face. The soup, as it turned out, was duck and it was gamey in addition to being greasy and fatty. Still, food was food and he supposed he wouldn’t complain. Too much. For drink, there was plain, cold river water, which he also hated.

When they finished, Scrooge and Goldie led them deeper into the mines. Louie didn’t know what they expected to find. The torches only illuminated so much and the further they went, the more claustrophobic Louie became. He was used to close spaces because of Uncle Donald’s houseboat, but this was ridiculous. They had to lower their heads and walk hunched over. And, just when Louie was about ready to complain, loudly, about this exercise in futility, they stopped.

“He’s down here,” Scrooge said, pointing to an even narrower and shorter tunnel. “I vaguely remember waking up there.”

They proceeded slower and then stopped. Somewhere, a bird was whistling.

“That’s a canary,” Huey said. “But this isn’t a coal mine. So why is it whistling?”

“That usually means there’s a gas leak,” Webby mused. She was holding onto Dewey and Huey to keep from tripping over rocks. “But…”

Scrooge’s and Goldie’s eyes went wide and they rushed forward as one. They couldn’t both fit and it became apparent that only a child would be able to travel much further along. Louie wasn’t volunteering.

“I’ll go,” Huey said. The earth rumbled threateningly around them.

“No, ye won’t,” Scrooge snapped. “If anyone’s going, it’ll be me.”

“Don’t be an idiot,” Goldie snapped at him. “You won’t fit. You’re small, old man, but not that small.”
“If I could see, I’d go,” Webby said.

“I’ll go,” Dewey said and, in unison, Huey, Scrooge, Webby, and Louie shouted him down.

“No!”

“No! We can’t yell if you’re in trouble, lad,” Scrooge reprimanded.

“I’ll go,” Huey repeated. Then, before anyone had a chance to stop him, he darted forward, scrambled lower, and shifted out of sight. Louie’s heart was in his throat and he glanced over at the others. At that moment, his leg chose to buckle and he had to latch onto Dewey and Webby.

But was his leg weakening or was it…

“Cave in!” Webby gasped.

Rocks fell over the entrance Huey had just used, blocking him and possibly Scrooge’s younger self from getting to them. Scrooge cursed softly.

“If only we had Launchpad,” Scrooge said. “That big lunk would’ve been useful for something.”

“I wonder what he’s up to now?” Dewey said. He glanced at where the rocks had fallen and began digging, just as the canary whistled again and the ground rumbled ominously.

Again, they had barely escaped with their lives. Mrs. Beakley didn’t know how Glomgold had outfitted the DT-87 robots or why his hired help was so adroit at fighting nor did she want to know. It might have had something to do with the manor flickering around them and reality-altering again. As it did, she could feel her own senses falter and she had a disturbing thought.

If Scrooge McDuck wasn’t the richest duck in the world now and he hadn’t helped SHUSH with their operation, she might still have defeated Black Heron, albeit by the skin of her teeth. If that was the case, then she wouldn’t have practiced her skills as much, which meant she was inadequate. And if she was failing, then so was Webby. Anxiety choked her and she had to order a retreat, both because they were outmatched and because visions of Webby suffering in various ways kept rushing through her mind.

They regrouped at Launchpad’s garage, although Gyro wrinkled his beak at the smell. Launchpad seemed oblivious. Fenton was pacing, Gyro was hunched over the couch like it had a communicable disease and did the utmost not to touch it, and Mrs. Beakley was staring at the TV without seeing it. Launchpad had put Darkwing Duck or, rather, Double-O Duck, but thankfully, he’d placed it on mute.

If Mrs. Beakley were an inadequate SHUSH operative, that meant that Webby’s mother would have been less efficient at her job and the same went for her son-in-law. How old had this version of Webby had her parents before FOWL came down upon them? She couldn’t answer that, not without access to a computer, and although Launchpad’s garage had many things, a device connected to the internet was not one of them. Besides, there was a thing as too much information.
“That was a resounding failure,” Gyro said. He glanced at Mrs. B. “I’m not blaming you. It feels like someone’s actively rewriting the timeline and making things worse for us.”

“Is there anything we can do in the present?” Fenton asked and winced at the pessimism in his voice. “I’m not saying it can’t be done. I’m saying that aside from the clock, is there any other way to effect change from this side?”

Gyro frowned at his assistant/intern. Even though Scrooge McDuck had hired Gizmoduck on full time, there was still a power dynamic between Gyro and Fenton. Gyro considered himself superior to many people, Fenton most definitely included. Still, Gyro looked thoughtful rather than dismissive. She wondered whether she wanted to know why.

“Not unless we build our own time machine,” Gyro said. “Glomgold’s going to be keeping a closer eye on us—we’d need someone else to sneak into McDuck Manor, someone that can slip beneath the radar. He’s onto all of us now.”

“Like a kid?” Launchpad suggested, mouthing along with the words with the TV show.

“Huh. Lightning does strike idiots once in a while. Yes, like a child,” Gyro said. “But Mr. McDuck’s grand-nephews, along with your granddaughter, Mrs. Beakley, are trapped in the past.”

“What about Donald?” Fenton said and Gyro gave him a strange look.

“Donald isn’t a child,” he said as if he were explaining this to a simpleton.

“Nor is he considered particularly close to Mr. McDuck,” Fenton pointed out. “Think about it. Out of all of us, who’s the one he’d regard with the least suspicion? Who’s the one that Mr. McDuck is furthest from that he’s related to who isn’t...possibly lost in space somewhere?”

Mrs. Beakley grimaced. How had Fenton learned about Della? Well, never mind that.

“You bring up a good point,” Gyro said and then huffed. “Unfortunately. Well, better to have Donald on our side than no one. And if he finds out that the kids are in danger, he’s bound to want to help.”

“So it’s decided,” Mrs. Beakley said. “We’ll ask Donald.”

Despite the many things around Duckburg that had changed, including too many pictures of Flintheart Glomgold for Mrs. Beakley to stand, Donald’s houseboat was not one of them. It wasn’t in the McDuck Manor pool, which made sense as he was no longer even remotely a houseguest. Instead, they found it at the marina and it looked exactly as the same. Mrs. Beakley was slightly relieved, though she didn’t know why she’d thought his houseboat would change. It wasn’t like Scrooge had funded his nephew’s living quarters. Quite the opposite.

Donald Duck wasn’t home (of course not, given the luck they were having today), which meant they had to figure out where he might have gone. They split up, Team Science heading off toward Glomgold Industries and Mrs. Beakley, saddled with Launchpad, tracing out Donald’s usual haunts. She didn’t know Donald had any usual haunts, which made matters worse. Launchpad
insisted he did and she wasn’t sure she should trust the pelican. On the other hand, he had proposed this idea, which meant he wasn’t completely devoid of sense. Just mostly.

They headed for the supermarket, where they discovered Donald having an argument with an overweight, beleaguered cashier named Beverly. She was a duck with curly brown feathers and a purple streak that oddly reminded Mrs. Beakley of Lena. The cashier kept pointing to the circular and then an expired coupon that Donald kept producing. She looked like she wanted to be anywhere else but here.

The disagreement was quickly arousing the interest of customer service and Donald was sputtering, hopping up and down.

“Really? To save fifty cents, Donald?” Mrs. Beakley said, startling the duck and prompting a grateful look from the cashier.

“It doubles!” he said. “And it’s expiring today!”

“It expired yesterday,” the cashier said, exasperated. “You can’t use it. My system won’t recognize it. It’s not my fault. Please calm down.”

“We have bigger problems than saving a dollar,” Mrs. Beakley said, arching her eyebrows. “In case you haven’t noticed, we appear to have entered a parallel universe in which Flintheart Glomgold is the richest duck in the world, among other things. The kids are in danger. I have a feeling and I trust my instincts.”

Donald looked like someone had sucker-punched him. The anger faded from his face and the cashier sighed, relieved.

“Parallel universes?” the cashier exclaimed. “That’s so cool. String theory in motion.”

“Not cool,” Mrs. Beakley said. “This is a problem.”

She proceeded to ignore the cashier, who was rambling about string theory behind her. Launchpad looked completely lost, which was expected. Donald, on the other hand, left his groceries behind and charged out the door.

“You don’t want any of these?” the cashier said, aggravated again.

Donald ignored her and they walked out. The cashier groaned and Mrs. Beakley’s last impression was of her explaining to the manager that they needed to put the mostly frozen food away before it thawed.

“So, what do we do?” Donald asked, more worried about the kids now than his precious dollar. At least he had his priorities in check. That was good, because they didn’t have time to bandy about.

“We need to get into McDuck Manor,” she said. “And you’re the only one of us that he won’t throw out.”

At the words, she remembered to call Gyro and tell him that they’d located Donald, lest the others go wandering about the city in search of him.

“Does he even know how to use that clock?” Gyro demanded on speakerphone.
“I’ll figure it out,” Donald snapped back.

“We’re doomed,” Gyro groaned.

“I’ll figure it out!” Donald repeated, growing agitated again. He pawed the ground and glowered at the phone as if he could reach Gyro through it. His fists balled and he hopped up and down.

“Yes, you will,” she said, wishing he had someone to calm him down or that they had the time to expend on that.

“I will,” Donald said. They walked to the limo and Launchpad hopped inside. As they traveled, it looked like Duckburg transformed before their eyes. Scrooge’s few holdings grew fewer and fewer until they vanished entirely. Uneasy, Mrs. Beakley looked at Donald and Launchpad.

Donald squawked in dismay and tugged at his seatbelt.

“What is it?” she demanded.

“I need to get to the manor,” he exclaimed.

“You’ll be faster if you let Launchpad drive us,” she reprimanded. That didn’t stop Donald’s fidgeting and attempting to get out by pulling on the door release instead of pushing. She didn’t know what he was remembering or not remembering, but whatever it was, it had the younger duck frantic.

She closed her eyes and sighed, unable to rest and worried more than ever about the kids. Her memories were being supplanted too. She had a bad feeling about this, though she wasn’t chomping at the bit to get out. Not yet. That would come later.

She briefed him on the situation further while they traversed Duckburg’s roads. As she did, she glanced back up at McDuck Manor. It might’ve been her, but it looked like an ominous dark cloud hovered above the building that threatened to take everything good with it.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Might solve a mystery...or rewrite history. ;)

Chapter Notes

Okay, so, this chapter is shorter than normal because (one), I wanted to get it out by today and (two), I have a birthday party to attend in less than an hour. XD So I needed to hustle.

Also, LOUBBY!

Huey noticed the cave-in right after it happened when it was too late to turn back. Beyond him, the canary sang, its high-pitched warble setting his teeth on edge. Even with the transience of his hearing, he could still hear it and feel the accompanying rumbles along the walls. Unconsciously, he touched his hat, where the JWG lurked, but it was too dark to see anything. He hadn’t thought to bring a flashlight, but, unlike Louie, his cell phone still worked. Of course, it had no service, but a Junior Woodchuck was always prepared and it was fully charged. He even had a power bank with him in case he needed to charge it again.

Armed with his phone, he was able to aim a small beam of light along the walls and help guide his way. With one hand holding the phone, the other ran along the wall to help orient himself. Aside from his breathing and the bird, he heard nothing. He didn’t expect to hear the past Uncle Scrooge; his hearing wasn’t that acute yet. Chances were the cell phone’s flashlight would illuminate him before he approached the vicinity.

This was the first time he’d been alone, truly alone, in a long time. He found it unsettling and wished one of the others was here. Then again, he was the ablest of the group to sound the alarm. Webby wouldn’t be able to see anything, Dewey couldn’t yell, and Louie could barely walk. They were all counting on him to locate the past Scrooge and he knew he could do it. He had confidence in himself. It was just that he wished he had company. That’s all.

Even with the flashlight, he tripped over his own feet and went sprawling. Scrambling for the phone, he held it up and tried to discern what had caught him up. Blood suffused his cheeks. Oh. While part of him was glad he hadn’t stumbled over nothing, the fact that he’d literally fallen over the object of his search was embarrassing in and of itself.
“Uncle Scrooge?” he called and then groaned. He wasn’t going to respond to that, even if he were conscious. Scrooge wouldn’t know his grand-nephews from a hole in the wall this early in his life. Straightening up, he scooped Scrooge up and grimaced. He was heavier than he looked and his breathing was shallow. In addition, the older duck was warm to the touch. What had Magica afflicted him with?

Huey tried to divine how far he’d traveled since the cave-in. Time and distance were relative and as he trudged along, he realized it was silent, save for their breathing. The canary had ceased singing. That usually didn’t portend anything good. As Webby had noted, canaries entered coal mines with miners to detect noxious gases. If the canary had stopped detecting it, it didn’t mean the gases had ceased. It meant the canary had died.

Huey rushed forward, half carrying, half dragging the younger version of his great-uncle along with him. It was hard to hold the phone steady while he did it and the older duck showed no signs of waking. Panic clawed at Huey’s chest. They were stuck in a cave-in, he didn’t know how to reach the others, and he had a person with an unknown affliction down here with him. The timeline had altered, his family was injured, and the only able-bodied person here was “Glittering” Goldie O’Gilt, who wasn’t renowned for her loyalty and devotion.

“Help!” he called, knowing it was probably hopeless. “I found Uncle Scrooge, but we’re trapped!”

If there was a response, he couldn’t hear it. Grimacing, he shuffled his way forward, still barely managing to maneuver with Scrooge. He was heavier than he looked. They could’ve used Webby’s strength right about now. Webby—could she knock down the barrier? She was powerful, but was she that strong?

He stood well back from the barrier, lest he end up getting dirt and rocks flying at his face. That assumed that they’d heard him. What if they didn’t? What if they couldn’t and the barrier dampened sound too much? What if he was trapped down here, with limited oxygen, and the noxious gases suffusing the air? Huey told himself to hold it together, that panicking wouldn’t help anyone. Unfortunately, panic didn’t often respond to logic.

Beside him, Scrooge coughed, the same wet sound that his older counterpart had. Huey’s stomach lurched. This was not good. How the hell had it traveled backward in time? Or had Magica been non-specific in her spells? How did magic even work, anyway?

A percussive boom shook the area and Huey retreated further, keeping a firm grip on his great-uncle. Had the canary stopped singing or was he no longer capable of hearing it? He’d heard himself speak, hadn’t he? Or had he only thought he had? He didn’t know.
The waiting was torture. He could have entertained himself scrolling through his saved pictures on his phone or rereading the JWG’s ebook edition, but that would’ve drained the battery. Therefore, he shut off the phone, including the flashlight function, and bided his time. At best, he was waiting for someone to break through the barrier and rescue them. At worst, he was waiting to die. He shuddered.

To take his mind off his problems, he reviewed the JWG, which he had memorized three years ago. Closing his eyes, he pictured leafing through the pages and then recited what each one had said in detail. He’d never told Dewey and Louie that he’d memorized it. Somehow, he thought they wouldn’t let him live it down.

He was about twenty pages into the book when a light poked through. After the near pitch darkness of the tunnel, it was almost blinding. He didn’t miss the swift movement of a bird taking flight through the gap. That must’ve been the canary. That answered one question--at least it hadn’t died.

What felt like an eternity later, there was more air to breathe and he saw the others standing on the opposite side of the rocks. Goldie reached him and tugged him and the younger Scrooge out. Once they were out, the younger Scrooge coughed again, spitting up blood, and, dismayed, Huey looked from one person to another.

The younger Scrooge cursed, seemingly unaware of his audience, which consisted mostly of children. When his eyelids fluttered open, he cursed again and then flushed, realizing the crowd before him.

“Who are you all?” he demanded. “And what the blazes am I doing here?”

“It’s a long story,” Goldie said and then smirked. “But you owe some gold, by the time this is through.”

“I owe you nothing!” Scrooge retorted and then coughed, hacking up what sounded like a lung. His older self winced in sympathy.

“I saved your life. I think I do,” Goldie said smoothly. “Unless you want me to leave you here?”

“No!” the kids cried in unison. Webby glowered at Goldie, or, at least, where she perceived her to
be. Huey wasn’t sure how well she saw right now, particularly in the dark.

“It wouldn’t surprise me if ye did,” the older Scrooge said coldly. “Back-stabbing Goldie O’Gilt.”

“What can I say? I see a situation and I take advantage of it,” Goldie replied. Webby balled her fists.

“So it was a mistake to even think of trusting you,” Webby spat. “In the future, you tie me and Granny up just so you can get at a map for more gold. Now you’re talking about leaving Uncle Scrooge for dead while you steal even more gold.”

“Webs…” Louie said, putting a hand on her shoulder.

“No,” Webby said and her eyes flashed. “You don’t care about anything but yourself, do you?”

“I brought you here, didn’t I?” Goldie retorted. “I brought you all here and you dragged the younger Scrooge out from under. And now I’m going to lead you all back. I’d appreciate some gratitude.”

“I’ll show you gratitude,” Webby muttered.

“Easy,” Louie said. “Calm down, Webs.”

“Don’t you tell me to calm down,” she retorted. “If it were up to her, she’d leave us stranded.”

“That’s enough. I’m not arguing with a child,” Goldie snapped. Huey frowned, wondering whether any of Webby’s comments had hit their mark. Goldie stiffened, leading the way out but refusing to engage in conversation. Sporadically, she glanced behind them at the younger Scrooge and her expression was inscrutable.

Dewey and Webby assisted the younger Scrooge, who shook them off as they made it out into the sun.
“I’m fine,” the younger Scrooge said and then nearly collapsed. Louie rolled his eyes. His youngest brother was capable of walking short distances unassisted and when they reached the outdoors, he crashed against the cave’s side. Webby rushed toward him, tripped over a rock, and went sprawling. Huey groaned. This was a comedy of errors.

“How about no one move until we figure out how to get back to Goldie’s cottage?” Huey suggested, trying not to let his frustration show. Louie slumped to the ground and Webby ended up almost in his lap. Louie blushed and then looked away, determined not to reveal anything. It was too late for that. Huey might’ve been half deaf, but he wasn’t blind. The only person he could hope to conceal it from was Webby, who was normally oblivious to those sort of things anyway. Even if she could’ve seen him, she probably wouldn’t have thought much of it.

“I’ll scout ahead,” Huey suggested. Bright lights flashed before his eyes and he heard cackling. Blinking, his senses feeling like they were under assault, he almost missed Dewey’s croak.

“Magica!”

“What?” the older Scrooge demanded. “Where?”

When his vision settled again, he saw a note drift down and land in Webby’s hands. Louie snatched it, seeing as Webby couldn’t read at the moment, and scanned it. It had arrived with Magica’s trademark purple gas, which might explain the flash. She was nothing if not showy.

“‘Enjoy your trip to the past,’” Louie read aloud. “‘Because you won’t be coming back!’ Okay, does that strike anyone else as ominous? Or just me?”

“The question is: what is she doing in the future, our present, that would keep us from coming back?” Huey asked.

For that question, no one had a response. Huey hadn’t expected one; it was rhetorical, after all. Not knowing the answer, however, left him queasy. He had a feeling things would get worse before they got better.
“You want a job,” Glomgold said flatly and Donald nodded like a puppet on a string. In response, Glomgold scowled. On the one hand, Donald had already accomplished more than the others would have expected. Glomgold had taken him into the same room with the clock, but his DT-87 droids blocked it from easy access. Donald would have to both keep a lid on his temper and disable the droids before he could fix the past.

The latter might be possible, but the former? The McDuck/Duck temper was legendary for a reason. Della would paw the floor when she was angry, compared to Donald hopping up and down in rage. The thought of his sister didn’t help. Della was gone now, Scrooge’s fault, but he couldn’t keep blaming the old man for everything. Della had chosen to go up there, after all. And if this didn’t work, then they might never find Della. (Donald had a sense she was still alive, though he didn’t vocalize it. He didn’t want to give anyone false hope).

“Beakley!” Glomgold yelled and then grimaced. “Oh, that’s right. She quit. Good for nothing housekeeper. You, droids! Go make tea!”

The droids stared at him blankly or would have if they had had anthropomorphic qualities. Security was what they were good at. Preparing meals and drinks was beyond their purview. Glomgold glowered as if that would help, and, when he realized it wouldn’t, left the room. Unfortunately, the droids didn’t follow.

It didn’t really matter, though. Reality wavered before him and he saw a picture of Scrooge, disgraced, on Glomgold’s mantle. The picture was shimmering in and out and Donald’s memories were readjusting too. He remembered growing up here and then he didn’t. He remembered losing Della due to the Spear of Selene and then it crashing before leaving the Earth’s atmosphere, killing her instantly. He remembered raising the boys in the houseboat and then having to tell them that their mother was dead. The two sequences of events didn’t fit together and were jarring, competing for space in his memory.

The idea of Della dead petrified him. It also stoked his rage and he lunged for the clock only to get blasted by one of the droids. Rather than deter him, it spurred him on. He hopped atop one of them and, using the picture, bashed it against the other droid’s head. Without the proper financing for the Spear, Della’s rocket hadn’t had the right equipment and couldn’t leave Earth, much less end up getting lost in a cosmic storm. There was more, though. His memories of Scrooge raising him and Della were vanishing too.

And without Scrooge acting as their guardian, the boys were flickering in and out of his mind too. Three distinct timelines had emerged. One of them, the correct one, faded in and out. The second one, in which Scrooge was alive but the second richest duck in the world, had resulted in Della’s death. The third one, which threatened to crowd out the other two, frightened him the most of all because, in it, Scrooge had never survived to watch the twins. Donald and Della had ended up orphans with no family to take care of them.
Donald squawked, indignant at history rewriting itself and beside himself with the results. He grabbed one droid to hit it against the other and its laser scored a deep gouge in the other’s shell. Donald latched onto the clock as soon as the droids had other matters at hand, just as Glomgold was re-entering the room. Donald cursed. He should have thought of bringing back-up.

However, he couldn’t think clearly. The boys were his life. They were all he had left of his sister and they were so precious to him. If he lost them, he didn’t know what he’d do. And then there was Webby, their honorary sister. What would become of her?

Would she exist at all?

Donald didn’t know how the time clock worked, only that it did. He didn’t know where the others were lost in time, only that they were. So, spinning the clock’s dials, he hoped for the best. If things turned out worse, he’d never forgive himself.

It was probably a good thing that Louie was being overlooked right now. His head was killing him. Memories flooded him, ones he didn’t recognize, and they controverted each other. They had made it back to the cottage and he was holding tightly to Webby’s hand. Right now, he didn’t care what it said about him or what his brothers might infer.

He had never known there was an option to fade out of existence and into oblivion. There was the feeling when you were watching a really good TV show or playing a good video game that you weren’t yourself anymore, but this wasn’t it. This was the sense that, with the slightest tug, he might be unmade and cease to exist. Webby seemed solid. He clung to her.

“What’s going on?” Webby whispered.

“I don’t know,” Louie admitted. “I remember...I remember Uncle Donald telling us Mom died…”

His throat was tight and he had to swallow back tears that escaped anyway. The other two boys were having a half-whisper, half-shout conference with the Scrooges and Goldie. Their edges were blurry like they were out of focus, and Louie realized, heart sinking, that they might vanish too. Whatever was going on, whatever Magica had done, it wasn’t over yet. It was barely beginning.
No, he had no intention of leaving. He would fight whatever it was. Or not, since, you know, he didn’t know the first thing about it.

But if he was going to leave the world, if he was being unraveled, then there was one thing he had to do before he shuffled off the mortal coil.

“You don’t have any proof Della is dead,” Webby started and Louie cut off the rest of her sentence. He kissed her on the beak and held her to him. If he was going out, then he wasn’t leaving without letting her know exactly how he felt about her.

Webby was shocked. She’d gone still in his arms; he knew she wasn’t going to pull away, though he couldn’t have said how he knew that. Then, just when he thought that he was pushing the matter too much, he felt the lightest of touches on his neck right before she kissed him back.

If he was going to fade, at least let him take that into oblivion with him. That one moment, if nothing else.
Chapter 8

She didn’t know what was going on, only that Louie appeared to be fading before her eyes. Being able to see him took a backseat to his form rippling and wavering. Then that, too, ended up being displaced by him kissing her. Of all the outcomes she could’ve foreseen from this situation, his kissing her was not among them.

But there he was, kissing her, holding her in his arms as though she was the one about to fade into oblivion. She brushed against his neck with a feather-light touch and she could feel his heart pounding against her chest. She could taste that strange stew along his beak and feel him shaking as he clutched her. Of the three triplets, she never would have imagined it was Louie harboring feelings for her. Then again, he could be fairly adept at concealing his vulnerability if push came to shove.

He smelled a little sweaty and one of his hands left her back to run through her hair. Feeling as though she was about to take a plunge too, she kissed him back. It was her first kiss and she hadn’t imagined it being in such a strange place, either. If none of this ever happened, if they fixed the timeline, would that mean that Louie’s kiss wouldn’t have happened either?

That idea didn’t appeal to her. At all. She kissed him back harder as if the ineluctable future could be altered to suit them. Her hand fisted into his hoodie, at least as tight as his hand in her hair. She’d closed her eyes, to better feel his beak against hers, and she found herself inching closer to him until they were pressed tightly up against each other. She was practically in his lap at this point.

Eventually, they’d have to come up for air and she was distantly aware of Huey complaining about them making a scene. They ignored him. Her hand trembled on his neck and she wished she could pull him into her to prevent him from evanescing. Despite the strict hold, he wasn’t complaining or moving backward. He feared to lose her just as much she feared to lose him.

She didn’t want to risk that. Perhaps if she clutched him to her, he couldn’t disappear. Perhaps all it took was sheer willpower to defy the fates. Louie’s arm was tight about her back and she could both hear and feel his trembling breath. They broke apart, gasping, and rested their foreheads together. For a minute, there seemed nothing to say. Their gazes linked.

“Webby, I…” Louie faltered, unwilling or unable to say more.

“There’s nothing like a life or death situation to get the blood pumping, eh, lad?” Scrooge teased and Webby turned her head to spy the older Scrooge smirking at them.

“We’re in danger of disappearing,” Huey objected. “What is going on in the future, in our present?”

“My guess would be that if young Scrooge here bites the dust, something-something you three won’t be hatched,” Goldie suggested. “But only you three. Not the girl.”

“So…how long have you had feelings for Webby?” Dewey asked in a would-be casual voice. Louie still wasn’t releasing her. He’d stopped flickering, to her profound relief. For the time being, all three boys appeared stable. Of course, that could change at any minute. She hadn’t realized that their future was as fickle as all that.
“How would Scrooge not getting his fortune affect us when we’re not directly related to him?” Huey inquired.

“Your father must be someone I met with Della and Donald,” older Scrooge mused. “If I didnae live to do that, then I couldnae have taken Della and Donald in and she never would have met him.”

“...wait. You’re telling me even you don’t know who our father is?” Louie said, pulling away slightly from Webby but still holding onto her. He wrapped an arm about her waist.

“It’s not like Della confided everything to me!” older Scrooge snapped, defensive.

The younger Scrooge caused a slight diversion by coughing up blood and then passing out on Goldie’s bed. Goldie groaned, eying the blood on her bedspread with distaste. Webby wasn’t sure whether the irritation was real or feigned. Then again, she also didn’t know deeply Goldie’s real feelings ran for Scrooge and being aware that she could backstab them at any time was putting Webby on edge almost more than the idea of losing the triplets.

“I just cleaned those sheets,” Goldie huffed. “We’d better find out what’s wrong with him.”

“Maybe it’s nothing serious,” Dewey said and the others stared at him. “What? Someone has to be hopeful, right?”

“I doubt Uncle Scrooge would be coughing up blood if it weren’t serious,” Huey pointed out darkly.

“If it’s a magical affliction, how are we supposed to help?” Webby fussed. They heard a faint chiming, which was odd because there were no clocks nearby. Puzzled, Webby exchanged glances with the triplets and then Uncle Scrooge. She wasn’t sure why she’d heard a clock or why it looked like their various disabilities had faded for the time being, though she wasn’t complaining about the latter. The former, however, was rather peculiar.

“Isn’t there a counterspell? Or something else we can try?” Louie asked and Webby frowned, thoughtful.

“There might be, but I don’t have the books...they’re at home,” she said. “Not that I’ve been looking at magic books. Why would I be looking at magic books? Because I’m not.”

“Wow, just when I think your lying can’t get any worse,” Louie said, shaking his head.

“I’ll be upset about that later,” Uncle Scrooge said, sounding aggrieved. He glanced at his younger self. “Aye, but Louie might have a point. There must be a counterspell. Or some way to fix this.”

The clock sounded again, and Scrooge cocked his head.

“That sounds like the clock in my parlor...” he said, frowning. Before he had a chance to ruminate further, a figure came crashing through Goldie’s roof and landed in a heap on the floor. It took a few minutes for the dust to settle and when it did, Webby blinked, certain her vision was acting up. The boys’ uncle Donald was pushing himself to his feet and spoiling for a fight, yet there was no one to fight here. He had his fists balled and swept his gaze over the assembled group.
“Donald?” Scrooge said, incredulous.

“What’s going on?” Donald demanded. “I thought the kids were in trouble.”

“We are,” Huey said. “We’re in danger of disappearing. But Uncle Scrooge is the main problem.”

He pointed to Scrooge’s younger self, who had curled into a ball and was coughing non-stop. They were the horrible coughs that fed off each other, each one engendering another worse than the previous one. They were wet sounding, too, producing more blood. Donald flinched. He glanced from the older Scrooge back to the younger and then to the kids.

“What’s going on in the future?” Dewey asked. His voice remained quiet and Webby knew that the other two hadn’t recovered from Magica’s afflications, not entirely.

“Glomgold’s the richest duck in the world--and Della--” Donald stopped, throat too tight to speak. Webby hugged Louie to her and Dewey and Huey came closer so they could all hug. All three trembled, fearing the rest of that sentence, though whether Donald could choke it out, she didn’t know.

“Mom’s gone,” Dewey said in a small voice and a world of pain was within it. Webby’s throat tightened too in response. She hated that the boys were so miserable.

“If you weren’t the richest duck in the world, you couldn’t afford to keep the rocket running on gold,” Donald said quietly to Scrooge. “And you couldn’t afford all the top-notch parts for the Spear. Della didn’t make it off Earth. She crashed and burned.”

Louie clamped his beak shut tight, but a whimper escaped anyway. Tears pricked the corners of his eyes and then slid down his cheeks.

“Mom’s not dead, though,” Huey said.

“Technically…” Webby started and then stopped, noticing the dirty looks she was getting. Even though her vision remained hazy, she could see well enough for that. What she was going to say was that technically, they didn’t know if she was alive in their proper timeline, either. Ashamed, she lowered her gaze.

“She’s been gone for twelve years, Huey,” Donald said heavily. “And no one ever found any trace of her.”

“She’s not dead,” Scrooge insisted.

“Glomgold and Magica rewrote the timeline so she is,” Dewey whispered and his lower beak quivered too. He pressed his face into Webby’s shoulder.

“How are you going to fix this?” she asked Donald quietly.

Throughout this all, Goldie was quiet. Webby had almost forgotten she was there, but not quite. Her senses were not that selective as to ignore a possible threat.

“Magica must be in the past right now,” Scrooge hypothesized. “Or the timeline wouldn’t keep fluctuating.”
“So now we have to find her,” Goldie said and the others glanced at her. Donald stiffened when their eyes met. Webby wondered what Goldie had or hadn’t done to him (and Della, for that matter).

“And if I were a conniving, backstabbing shrew with too much time on my hands, where would I go?” Scrooge mused.

“She can’t be in the gold mine,” Huey said. “We just checked there for the younger uncle Scrooge. And it collapsed before we left.”

“Then where?” Donald asked, eying Scrooge.

“You have a cottage around here too,” Goldie said. “You weren’t shacking up with me, that’s for sure.”

“So we need to find it,” Huey said. He was still talking a little loudly, which was making everyone else speak louder to compensate. It hurt Webby’s ears and threatened to give her a headache.

“Good thing I still remember where it is,” Scrooge said. He glanced at Donald and then, to Donald’s surprise, clapped a hand on his shoulder. “I’m glad you came here, lad. You’re the one able-bodied person here I can trust.”

“I’m able-bodied,” Goldie huffed, looking affronted.

“Aye, that you are. No one ever said I could trust you, though,” Scrooge pointed out.

“What happened to the kids?” Donald asked, suspicious.

“Louie’s leg is broken, I’m half-deaf, Webby’s half-blind, and Dewey can barely speak,” Huey answered.

“What?!” Donald squawked. He looked ready to throw down again and was hopping up and down in agitation. “She did what?”

“Relax, Uncle Donald,” Louie said. “Once we fix the timeline, all of this will go back to normal. None of it will have ever happened.”

Webby looked away. She didn’t want all of it to never happen. Okay, yes, the injuries were one thing. But the kiss? Would she forget that they’d kissed and that he had feelings for her too? What if it took them months or even years to figure out what was going on? She didn’t think she could bear it.

“Then let’s go,” Donald said, still eying everyone suspiciously. He scooped Louie up like the boy weighed nothing at all and carried him in his arms. She knew he wouldn’t have offered to walk instead, especially considering his difficulties, but she almost felt like she could already sense the separation growing between them. She cast her gaze downward.

Yes, okay, it was a big deal to her. She’d never been around kids her own age, not locked up in McDuck Manor, and the triplets were close to her. She didn’t want to lose them in any respect. Plus, Louie was her first real crush, besides her first kiss. She didn’t want to lose that feeling, either.
“We’ll be okay, Webs,” Louie said as if sensing what she was thinking. “Chill.”

“I don’t want to forget about all of this!” she burst out.

“How about this?” Huey suggested. “We’ll make the younger Scrooge write himself a note later telling him what happened so he can warn him.”

“That could work,” Louie agreed. Webby wasn’t reassured, however. Why would Scrooge tell himself that his grand-nephew had a crush on his housekeeper’s granddaughter? That wasn’t important to him. Still, she nodded along. Better to keep it to herself than to make a scene, even if she was miserable.

Flintheart Glomgold stared blankly at where Donald Duck had stood. The clock’s hands were set to twelve and eight, but he didn’t know what that meant. Although he’d inherited the manor, he didn’t know how half of the magical things worked. However...he had an idea of what might prevent them from ever coming back.

He grinned wickedly. Magica wouldn’t bring them back and if he destroyed the clock, he’d strand them in the past. That way, Scrooge McDuck would never amass his fortune, he’d never become the richest duck in the world, and Flintheart Glomgold would finally win. Yes, he liked that idea very much. He was so glad he’d thought of it.

Grabbing a ceremonial sword from a nearby hallway, he walked back into the sitting room and leered at the clock. Mrs. Beakley had gotten lazy, anyway. This would be one less thing for her to dust if he ever convinced her to return. Then again, if Scrooge was trapped in the past, maybe Glomgold could steal his housekeeper for good too. It’d be another victory, another notch on his belt.

Raising the sword up high, he brought it crashing down through the clock’s middle. Magic fizzed and sparked, sending shockwaves everywhere. The rug caught fire beneath his feet and he yelped, jumping about. Nonetheless, he proceeded to finish his swing and severed the clock neatly in half. The two halves remained standing for a few seconds before falling to either side.

There. Let Scrooge McDuck fix that. He couldn’t. He would be stranded, along with his family. It served him right, after all.

It was a shame about Della, though. While he’d never liked her particularly, he’d never borne a grudge against her, either. But he supposed there were bound to be casualties in this particular fight and if Scrooge lost family members, well, then, that was his problem. Not Glomgold’s.

With that finished, he set about using his DT-87 ‘droids to isolate any problematic visitors. He found Mrs. Beakley, Launchpad, Gyro, and Fenton lurking nearby. Hmm, maybe letting them off the leash hadn’t worked. He’d be better suited to keep them close at hand.

And what were they going to do, anyway? There were no magic books in the house. Scrooge McDuck hated magic in all of its forms. It wasn’t like someone had snuck books into the house right under his nose.
He was also certain that Scrooge must’ve devised a way to hold people hostage in his house. Glomgold had, after all, so it stood to reason that Scrooge would’ve thought of it first. Never mind that Scrooge had never seemed that devious—if Glomgold had done it, then Scrooge must’ve too.

Besides, at least with them all under his roof, he could keep an eye on them. They’d plotted against him, after all. And they might still want to rescue the others. He didn’t care what happened to the kids, either. They weren’t important.

He kept his eyes on the prize, where it belonged. All’s fair in love and war, after all.

“Oh, no,” Donald mumbled. He felt the instant that the clock broke and stranded him there. He was still carrying Louie and he wasn’t sure whether to be mildly grateful to Magica for at least putting Louie’s leg in a flimsy cast or vexed that she’d broken his leg in the first place. He cuddled his nephew close to him and Louie wrapped his arms about his neck like he was a small child again.

“What is it?” Webby asked. She’d stuck close to Donald and Louie ever since the kiss. “What’s wrong?”


“The clock’s gone?” Scrooge demanded and Donald nodded. Scrooge muttered imprecations Under other circumstances, he knew the triplets might’ve been interested in that. However, they had more important things to worry about. Besides which, Huey and Dewey had to keep Webby from accidentally wandering off the beaten path or tripping over something she couldn’t see.

“You mean the time machine clock?” Webby asked.

“Yeah,” Donald said.

Scrooge cursed again.

“You know the kids are here, right?” Donald said. For some reason, he wasn’t angry. Instead, he was exasperated and fatigued. Seeing Louie in that predicament had incensed him and now his anger was ebbing and flowing, temporarily shoved to the back until he could vent his spleen on Magica. He had to be careful how he moved, anyway, to avoid jostling Louie.

“Yes, so?” Scrooge replied, testy.

“So, you might not want to paint them a picture of every vulgar term you can think of,” Goldie commented. She was bringing up the rear.

“Curse me kilts,” Scrooge muttered. “Good point.”

Donald didn’t miss that his uncle occasionally swayed or that he’d turned to cough up more blood. It made his heart pound and he was frantic about everyone here, except for Goldie. With his free hand, he patted Webby’s head. The girl was preoccupied with other matters.

“That’s an impressive amount of smoke,” Goldie whistled.
Donald glanced behind them to ensure that the other two boys were keeping pace and then blinked. They were gone. Webby stumbled and he threw out his arms to catch her. His arms were empty too. Louie had likewise vanished.

“Oh, no…” Webby breathed. “Oh, no, no, no. Huey! Dewey! Louie! The timeline must’ve resolved itself! Without them!”

She struggled, frantic, and Donald, stunned, released her. The boys were gone. The boys were his whole reason for living. They had helped him cope with Della’s disappearance. He had dedicated his life to them. How could they be gone, just like that?

“We’ll get them back, lad,” Scrooge promised.

Webby was tearing off down the trail toward the cottage without being able to see where she was going and Donald stared for a minute. She tripped, skinned her knees, and then sprang back up, undeterred. He could see why Louie liked her so much. She reminded him of Della. Della. Oh God.

He bolted after Webby.

“Would you slow down?” Scrooge demanded though he had little difficulty keeping pace with Donald. “I…”

He trailed off. The cottage was on fire, large smoke clouds billowing. If Magica had been there, she wasn’t now, and they had no leads. And the boys were gone. Even though he knew they hadn’t lost, not yet, it certainly felt like they had.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

I've been watching The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina if you're wondering about the Latin.

Also, unless I write an epilogue, this story is done. :P

For a minute, Webby faltered. She couldn’t piece together reality and wasn’t sure she wanted to. Magica had won. Her steps flagged and she crashed to her knees. Magica had won and Webby...no. She wasn’t the type to give up without a fight. True, she didn’t know how to combat this new opponent, but she would figure it out. She scooped herself back up and glanced at the adults. With the triplets missing, she was the only child here.

The curse over her vision had lifted, but she would have rather been impaired than without the boys. Donald looked stunned, Scrooge had recovered from his shock and progressed to anger, and Goldie looked baffled.

“You really care about those kids, don’t you?” Goldie said quietly to Scrooge.

“Of course I do!” he bristled. “They’re me grandnephews!”

They were also all he had left of Della, but he wasn’t going to say that. Webby stared at the smoking cottage, glad that they’d left the younger Scrooge behind but aware he probably wouldn’t stay there. Her mind raced, trying to think of where Magica might be hiding. It was time to take the fight to her.

If she were an evil sorceress bent on revenge and on hurting Scrooge the worst way possible, but also in the past with them (because who else would’ve set the cottage on fire?), where would she be? Webby froze. They’d left the younger Scrooge back in the cottage. She yelped.

“We left the younger Scrooge with the dime!” she exclaimed.

“Of course I didn’t,” Scrooge said dismissively. “I’m not that daft, lass. I have it right here.”

Out of his coat pocket, he pulled the dime. The other dime he still wore about his neck. Webby tried to piece together what had happened. Magica had thought the younger Scrooge was home and set it on fire--she must have gone to the mine and discovered him missing. However, she hadn’t bothered to check the cottage.

How long would Magica linger until she realized her prey wasn’t in there? They needed to return to Goldie’s cottage now. Or, wait…

They had halted in the middle of the road and she turned to Scrooge again. “Does Magica know about Goldie?”

“You sharing me with all of your enemies, Scroogie?” Goldie asked and looked amused. Her
eyebrows were raised. “How generous of you.”

“Of course she doesn’t know about her! And even if she does, she wouldn’t know where Goldie’s cottage is or know why we might be staying there.”

Webby’s heart, which had begun to race, slowed. It was odd and unsettling to look about and not see the triplets, but they had bigger concerns. They had to fix the timeline--it had gone wrong enough as it was. Without the triplets, she felt more like an outsider, although Donald was eying her like she might disappear next and he was determined to keep that from happening. She appreciated the thought.

“There aren’t that many cottages around here,” Goldie pointed out. “She’ll figure it out by process of elimination.”

“There’s also the saloon,” Scrooge replied.

Meanwhile, Donald pulled Webby aside. It was one the few times, if not the first time, that she could recall having a private conversation with him. A little bit of her natural fangirlishness poked its head and she squashed it. Now was not the time to squeal over having a conversation with the Donald Duck.

“And there’s a small town nearby,” Scrooge said and Donald cleared his throat to catch Webby’s attention.

“Are you okay?” Donald said in an undertone.

“What do you mean?” It occurred to her a few seconds later that such a response was abnormal.

“The boys…” Donald looked crushed thinking about the triplets and Webby patted him on the shoulder. Donald suddenly swept her up into a tight embrace that left her stunned.

“I’m glad you’re still here,” he said. “The boys care a lot about you. I’ll try to keep you safe while we get them back.”

Webby smiled, relieved both at him releasing her and pleased by his words. She squeaked and then flushed, embarrassed at her own enthusiasm. Donald gave her a strange look and her smile turned into a look of chagrin. Oops. She’d spent her life studying up on Scrooge and his family. How could she not be a little excited when the great adventurer Donald Duck hugged her?

“Now. Tell me what happened,” he ordered.

Webby started at the beginning and how they’d been pursuing a treasure in a hidden cave on a mountain when they were caught in an avalanche. She went on to explain they’d been separated and given different disabilities, like a twisted version of “hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil” and “the lame leading the blind”. Donald’s frown increased hearing how the boys had suffered; she knew he was incensed that Magica had literally broken Louie’s leg.

From there, she went on to describe how they’d ended up back in time, found Goldie, and then located Scrooge’s past self, trapped in a gold mine. After that, she brought him completely up to speed and Donald scowled, glowering at Scrooge.

“This isn’t my fault,” Scrooge protested. “How was I supposed to know Magica would strike?”
“You put the kids in danger!” he objected. “And they could’ve gotten seriously hurt. Louie was seriously hurt. Now they’re not even here, except for Webby. How could you have let this happen?”

“I dinnae let anything ‘happen’,” Scrooge objected. “It just...happened.”

Donald scowled, unmoved by this defense.

“And it donnae matter, lad. We’re all stuck here, so we might as well figure out how to get home,” Scrooge said. “What’s been going on in the present?”

Donald told them about Glomgold becoming the richest duck in the world, Mrs. Beakley quitting, Team Science joining them, and corralling Launchpad into assisting. He went from there to describe the DT-87 going crazy and their last-ditch plan to bring Donald into the fold to head back into time with the clock to fix things. Donald surmised, and Webby had no reason to believe he was wrong, that Glomgold had destroyed the clock in the present to prevent them from returning.

“So, we need to prevent Magica from destroying the past to restore the present,” Scrooge said.

“And avoid creating a paradox,” Webby added.

“I know a thing or two about time travel,” Scrooge scoffed. “I think I can handle this.”

“You’d better,” Donald muttered.

“Are ye questioning me?” Scrooge demanded.

“Of course not,” Donald said, rolling his eyes at his uncle.

“You said there’s a small town nearby,” Webby said to forestall an argument. “We should check on the younger Scrooge and then head there. Magica’s probably in the saloon.”

“Aye,” Scrooge said, taking his gaze off Donald. “We should.”

They walked in silence for a while, each lost in his or her own thoughts. Webby’s beak still tingled from the kiss and she wished, though she knew it would have had no impact, that she’d held Louie tighter. He would have vanished either way due to Magica’s meddling, but that didn’t stop her from wishing he was still here. At least no one seemed to have noticed Louie kissing her or, if they had, they weren’t discussing it.

She hugged herself; the day was warm, yet she felt chilled from within.

Up ahead, the town loomed. The sky above it was dark, like it presaged a thunderstorm, and Webby’s heart clenched. It almost felt like there was an imperceptible gloom that threatened them; a tightness in her chest and a dry mouth she couldn’t quite explain. Nonetheless determined, she decided to ignore that and the way her stomach flip-flopped. She wasn’t scared. She was Webbigail Vanderquack and that sorceress was going to pay (again) for taking the people she cared about away from her.

“Just how many enemies do you have, old man?” Goldie asked in a conversational tone as if she were immune to the pall hanging over them.
“It’s not like I’ve counted them!” Scrooge huffed, indignant. Webby rolled her eyes and looked to one of the triplets for a comment. A beat later, she remembered they weren’t there. It was like a kick in the stomach.

“Give me a rough estimate,” she replied.

“Too many to count! He’s probably offended people he hasn’t met yet,” Donald chimed in and Scrooge glowered at Donald.

“Betrayed! By my own nephew!”

“Actually, it depends on how you define ‘enemy’. Magica de Spell and the de Spell Clan have been feuding with the McDucks for generations. Then there’s Flintheart Glomgold, who’s a business competitor and has really elaborate plots to kill Uncle Scrooge that fail miserably. Then there’s Mark Beaks, who’s another business competitor but not a direct threat to him. Then you have the Beagle Boys, that are always trying to steal Scrooge’s money…”

Webby trailed off, realizing no one was paying any attention. Here was another reason to miss the boys. No matter that Louie probably wouldn’t have cared and Dewey would’ve been raring to go attack Magica, not to mention Huey boning up on trivia related to the JWG, they would have paid attention to her. Here, was one voice among four and since the adults were arguing, she fell by the wayside. Webby sighed.

They hadn’t checked on younger Scrooge first, like they had planned, and Webby hoped that he was all right. Somehow, without speaking, they had decided to change their plans.

The saloon proprietor stared at them as they entered. Scrooge glared at the others to keep them from jumping in and said, “Donnae worry. I’ll handle this.”

In the corner of the room, a figure dressed in black knocked back shot after shot of something. The acrid tang of alcohol stung her nose and Donald put a hand on her shoulder.

“Isn’t she a little young to be in here?” the saloon proprietor said. He was an overweight Irish setter with floppy ears and a gun tucked into his belt. As this was the wild west, Webby wasn’t surprised to see it, nor did she feel particularly threatened by it. Guns were a fact of life in these days...and most states in the present, too.

“She’s with me,” Scrooge said dismissively. “What can ye tell me about a black-haired sorceress that might’ve been seen around these parts?”

“You mean that one?” the proprietor said, pointing to the corner where that shadowy figure perched. She seemed too deep in her cups to notice them. At least, Webby hoped that was it. There was every chance that, if it was Magica, then she was feigning an incapacity to lull them into a false sense of hope. Nonetheless, the only reason Webby didn’t rush over there was because of Donald’s hand on her shoulder. If it had been one of the triplets, she wouldn’t have paid much attention to it. Donald was another matter altogether. If the legendary Donald Duck, whose temper almost superseded his treasure hunting, was preaching caution, then she had better listen.

“That can’t be her,” Donald hissed when Scrooge returned to the group. “That’d be way too easy.”

“Especially if she’s just sitting there, doing nothing,” Webby agreed.
The sense of impending doom that had been lurking threatened to spill over and the gas lights flickered in the saloon. Scrooge walked, with Donald and Webby at his side, toward the corner booth. There, the occupant looked up and smiled, throwing back her hood.

“You’ll have to try harder than that, Scroogie,” Magica crooned and disappeared in a flash of smoke. Donald’s hand left Webby’s shoulder and he squawked, his temper mounting. He was hopping and up down in agitation. Goldie approached at a languid pace.

“Of course,” Scrooge said darkly. “I should have known it wouldn’t be that easy.”

“What now?” Goldie asked.

“We need to check on my younger self,” Scrooge said. “From there, we wing it. She knows we’re onto her. That’ll make her careless.”

Webby wasn’t so sure about that. She’d predicted they’d find her in the saloon and then dispersed, if she’d even been here in the first place and not an illusion. Donald growled at the empty booth.

Where else would Magica have gone, if not to the gold mine or Scrooge’s cottage? She knew by now that the younger Scrooge didn’t have the dime, didn’t she? Or did she lack a way to track it beyond assuming it was on Scrooge’s person? Webby chewed the inside of her cheek thoughtfully.

“Are you sure she doesn’t know about Goldie?” Webby pressed as they left the saloon.

“I cannae say I am, but what does it matter?”

“Does anyone around here know where she lives?” Webby pressed.

“Curse me kilts,” Scrooge huffed, his version of an oath. “We’d better get back to the cottage.”

Aside from Goldie’s cottage, she couldn’t think of anywhere that Magica would care to lurk in the past. Magica would want to ensure that Scrooge couldn’t interfere with her plans in the future, too, which meant eliminating him now, before he became an obstacle. And that meant she’d have to check the cottages, one by one, unless she asked around. Even if Scrooge had been discreet in the present, he wasn’t necessarily discreet in the past. Magica was bound to have connected the dots.

It looked like they were headed for a showdown, which was fine with Webby. The sorceress had hidden from them for long enough.

Webby, as it turned out, was right. Scrooge had been less than discreet in his dalliances in the past and most people knew he and Goldie were working together. It was a simple matter of following the breadcrumbs to Goldie’s house and then, from there, tracking down the younger Scrooge. He was unconscious on Goldie’s bed and Magica grinned. The old coot was ripe for the taking.

But where was the dime? It wasn’t around his neck and it wasn’t stuffed into a coat pocket. There were other places it could be, of course, but she wasn’t about to stick her hand just anywhere. Plus, to her magical senses, she couldn’t detect the dime anywhere. Stripping him to search wouldn’t just
be repulsive, it’d be counterproductive.

Vexed with herself for being stymied again, she looked at her staff. She’d recovered it, albeit broken, from an annoying sabrewing. It’d taken a while to mend in its amulet form and had required her feeding magic into it, but she was proud of the result. She could see, swirling in the orb, company coming. She grinned. That would be the panacea to her problems. And with two Scrooges running around, she’d be able to wield twice the power from his lucky dime. She rubbed her palms together with glee. She couldn’t wait.

They returned to the cottage to check on the younger Scrooge. As they approached the door, they discovered it ajar and Webby’s heart kicked up. She stormed inside, followed by Donald on her heels and Scrooge, with Goldie bringing up the rear. Donald was hopping mad and Webby snarled at the sorceress sitting on the bed beside the younger Scrooge. She wasn’t doing anything, though it was apparent she’d ransacked his clothes for the missing dime. Scrooge scoffed.

“Looking for something, Magica?” he taunted and removed the second dime from his coat pocket.

“What did you do with Huey, Dewey, and Louie?” Webby snapped. “Where are they?”

“Oh, them,” Magica said, though her gaze was fixed hungrily on the dime dangling on its chain between Scrooge’s fingers. “They’ve ceased to exist. What a tragedy, Della never survived long enough to have children.

“Now give me the dime.”

“Why the blazes should I do that?” Scrooge snarled. “You offed my niece, you ruined my future, you maimed my nephews and their sister, and now you expect me to just stand here and hand you the dime?”

Magica leveled a stare at him. “I would like that, yes. Or would you prefer to live in a world without Della and her sons?”

“That’ll happen regardless,” he snapped. “I donnae know what kind of spell you wrought, Magica, but this needs to end now.”

“I agree,” she said and then dove for the dime. He twirled the necklace on his fingers and stepped back. Donald was snarling, but Webby guessed he wasn’t about to hit a girl. Webby didn’t feel similarly. When Magica stepped forward again, Webby punched her in the face.

“You took away someone I cared about again,” she snapped. “Just so you can have Scrooge’s dime. You don’t even need it. You hurt Huey, Dewey, and Louie because you could. You’re evil!”

“Yes,” Magica said, stepping back and regarding Webby coolly. “I was quite aware of my alignment. As for losing a loved one, Lena was never real and it looks like the brats weren’t real either.”

Webby’s shadow wavered and Magica’s eyes narrowed. Webby’s heart skipped a beat and she ignored the strange adrenaline rushing through her. Instead, she put it to better use, sweeping Magica off her feet. The sorceress rolled, springing back up.
“Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t kill you right now,” Magica snapped. “You’re an annoying thorn in my side. You’re the reason Lena took forever to steal the dime and why I had to possess her to do it. You’re the reason I lost. I see no reason for sparing your life. It won’t even affect the timeline.”

Scrooge knocked her staff out of her grip and it went flying with Magica hastening to catch it.

“You do realize that without my being the richest duck in the world, ye would have no reason to take the dime?” Scrooge said softly. “That that dime represented an opportunity to me? Ye’re creating a paradox, Magica.”

Magica looked temporarily stymied. “No, no, I’m not.”

She raised her staff again and Webby wrenched it out of her grip and struck her in the face with it. In her hands, the staff glowed and grew warm to the touch. Her shadow was definitely moving out of sync now and that distraction nearly cost her dearly. Magica wrenched the staff away and focused on Webby’s shadow as if it were an insect she intended to obliterate from the face of the earth.

“She’s supposed to be dead,” Magica snapped.

“Wait, what?” Scrooge said, baffled at this random change in conversation topic. Goldie edged into the room, though she looked like she wasn’t about to spring into action. Like Scrooge, she remained confused.

Webby also had no idea what Magica was talking about, but that wasn’t the point. Magica was distracted. She had an iron grip on the staff and Webby yanked on it; the staff was growing almost too hot to touch now. Webby focused her will on it. She’d never really dabbled in magic before, aside from the friendship bracelets, and she didn’t know what it involved. All she knew was that she wanted everything to go back to how it was before the avalanche. She wanted it so badly that it consumed her.

Lena’s voice echoed in her head, “That’s not how magic works…”

“I don’t care how magic works!” Webby snapped, oblivious to the fact that she was probably confusing everyone else. “Bring them back!”

Donald and Scrooge joined her in grabbing the staff and, together, Magica’s grip slid down. Scrooge shoved Magica aside and Webby heard in her mind unfamiliar words that she nonetheless recognized. They were Latin, which could be used in incantations. They echoed in her head, much like Lena’s voice had earlier.

“Eadem mihi omnia et quomodo esset!” Lena cried in her mind and Webby repeated it aloud. The staff was now far too warm to hold comfortably and power rushed along it, coursing both ways. It blasted Magica away and enveloped them in a hot embrace. Webby was sweating beneath her feathers.

“No,” Magica hissed. “No. Conterere!”

This time, Webby heard the voice aloud.
“Not this time,” Lena hissed. “Not gonna happen.”

A white flash flung them all backward and, as they moved, Webby had the sense they weren’t just falling through the cottage but through time itself. The staff was burning her palms and yet she clung to it, because without it, she sensed she’d lose Lena again. She didn’t know how Lena had resurfaced anyway or whether it was her mind so desperate for any link to her best friend that she was fabricating it?

“Not again!” Magica cried and then her screams faded into nothing. The world was made anew and softly, so softly Webby might’ve been mistaken, just as her hands fell off the staff, she heard a whisper.

“Webby!”

Webby came to in a pile of snow. Before she had a chance to study her surroundings, three people landed atop her. The strangest thing was that she didn’t remember how she’d gotten here or what had come before. The others pushed themselves off her and Huey helped her to her feet. Emotion surged through her, taking her by surprise, and she hugged them all, reserving the longest and tightest hug for Louie.

“What’s going on?” Dewey said. “Not that we don’t appreciate the hugs.”

“I just had the weirdest feeling that I lost you…” she admitted. “But I don’t understand how.”

Louie was studying her avidly and yet, when she glanced at him again, he looked away. She didn’t understand that either, but she was willing to let it slide. Looking at him produced butterflies in her stomach.

“What are ye doing here, standing around?” Scrooge demanded, coming from around a bend. “This whole mountain’s unstable. We need to get into the cave ‘fore we have an avalanche.”

That sounded familiar, but as soon as she thought about it, the memory faded. Shaking her head at herself, she followed the boys and Scrooge into the cave. Outside, the wind was picking up and it threatened to be a nasty snowstorm that might leave them sequestered here for a while.

She had the strangest sense she was forgetting something, something important, and she caught her gaze lingering on her shadow (same as usual) and Louie. Again, she shook her head at herself. If it was important, she would have remembered. That was all there was to it.

They gathered around a campfire and prepared their rations. They’d blocked up the cave entrance for the time being, so they weren’t inundated with snow come the morning. The mountain shuddered and Webby wondered if there really would be an avalanche. She hoped not.

After dinner, they settled down to sleep and soon, it was only her and Louie that were still awake. Louie was eyeing her shrewdly.

“What?” she asked, feeling oddly self-conscious.
“Nothing,” he said. “I just feel like we’ve forgotten something.”

“Like what?” she said, though she thought she knew what he was hinting at.

“This, maybe,” he suggested and then, leaning forward, kissed her. It was a brief brush of his beak against hers and she pulled on his hoodie to pull him closer before he had a chance to move backward. She didn’t know what had precipitated this and honestly, she didn’t care.

Her fists wrapped up in his hoodie, she was aware of his heart pounding. Hers was too. She was also aware, if it was possible, of a ghostly Lena rolling her eyes at them.

“Took you long enough, pink,” Lena muttered.

It was almost enough to make her stop in confusion. Almost, but not quite. Again, Webby had the sense she’d missed something important. But, well, it was late. Perhaps she was mistaken.

They pulled apart and Louie said, “Man, am I glad my leg isn’t broken.”

“How?”

“Great...I’m the only one who remembers,” he muttered. “Huey and Dewey don’t remember anything either. What is going on around here?”

“Remember what?”

“Nothing, never mind. Go to sleep, Webs.”

But what was she supposed to remember? She was about to fall asleep when Louie muttered, “Say hi to Lena for me.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” she demanded.

“You’ll find out soon enough,” he said and this time, he looked positively smug. She wanted to smack him. What was he playing at here? Her feathers stood on end and she glanced about the cave, but there was nothing to see. Her feathers stood on end.

Unless it was something she couldn’t see, not without guidance. Webby frowned, deciding she needed to up her research at Duckburg Public Library. Clearly, she’d missed something important. Maybe that was what was bothering her, but she didn’t think so.

The thoughts swirled around in her mind until, finally, she drifted off into an uneasy sleep.

How was he the only one who remembered what had happened? No one was going to believe him. Louie stared up at the cave ceiling. He’d been less than a spirit after Magica had eradicated their timeline, but he’d still been able to watch what was going on. Perhaps he’d been too determined to stay by Webby’s side to abandon her to Magica’s whims. The same, it seemed, had held true for Lena. He’d seen her around Webby, even if Webby herself was oblivious. Then again, Webby was oblivious to a lot of things. He really shouldn’t be surprised.
He loved her and she was bright, but she could be remarkably dense about certain things.

He snorted. Who did she think she was fooling? They knew she was sneaking out to the library all the time. It was only a matter of time before something came of it. Maybe she would bring Lena back. If anyone could do it, Webby could. She was nothing if not determined.

Still, he wondered, what had happened to Magica? The last he’d seen of her was her flying in the opposite direction as Webby’s spell activated.

Magica de Spell was cold, cranky, and bitter. She’d been thwarted by Lena not once but twice when the shadow girl was even less than a shadow. Webby had been so desperate to reclaim the boys that she’d commanded the staff to “put them back” and Magica’s counter had arrived too late to stop it. To make matters worse, she’d been flung into the avalanche that the others were supposed to be stuck in.

She’d managed to take refuge in a small cave, but she had no provisions and nothing to make a fire. She would get them back for this, oh, yes. Her hands were clenching and unclenching to retain warmth and she’d been making something in her right fist. It was a replica of Scrooge’s dime.

Magica snarled. Maybe not this time. Maybe not the next time, either. But she would win again. And when she did, she’d make sure Lena was destroyed for good. Apparently, she hadn’t done a good enough job last time.

As she curled up, wet and miserable, she realized she’d lost her staff/amulet again. She was too tired to be sufficiently enraged, even though she knew someone else had it. Someone who had no idea what she was getting herself into…

Magica’s beak curved into a cruel smile. Maybe if she was lucky, she’d get to witness the girl fail spectacularly in person. Wouldn’t that be a nice twist?

Goldie, in the present, had the feeling that she ought to pay Scrooge a visit. It was just a vague feeling, but she’d learned to trust her gut. Besides, the old coot could stand a little more excitement in his life. And she was just the person to give it to him.

Mrs. Beakley and Launchpad knew the moment that the present was righted. They remained in the manor, but it was McDuck Manor again. Relieved, she hugged him, more as something to do than because she had strong emotions either way for the pilot.

“So, I should pick them up soon, right?” Launchpad said. “I mean, normally, I would’ve flown them, but I had that court appearance for running three stoplights in a row and I had to drop them off…”
“They should be fine,” Mrs. Beakley said, breathing a sigh of relief. “Perfectly fine.”

This called for a spot of tea. And maybe something a little stronger. It’d been a long, strange day.

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