"The eventual heat death of the universe must be stalled. Imagine if your species finally developed enough to reach beyond your solar system only to find the rest of the inhabited planets have succumb to the inevitability of entropy."

"And that's worth tricking hordes of kids into doing your dirty work?" Dipper sneered, his head not moving from the pillow as he spoke, he felt too heavy to move under the crushing information. But the creature held no sympathy for the boy. It held nothing for him. That was even less than the amused scorn Bill showed his family.

"Your sister is a valuable asset to the Universal expansion process."

At least Bill knows he's a jerk.
The Journal was full to the brim with a million and one wonderful and horrible creatures. Some of them Dipper had turned over and over until he was afraid the pages would tear, some he’d just barely glanced at after he’d gotten grips on the codes and entries hidden within.

The discovery of the invisible ink just the day previous had given him a new zeal to turn every last entry over and over to discern just what was hidden on the pages.

He’d spent the last few hours pouring over it with nothing but the blacklight illuminating the room. Mabel had been exhausted from a long day of cleaning up the Shack and de-Zombiying Soos, so she was curled up in bed snoring a bit. He didn’t blame her, just because his newest discovery about the Journal had him too excited to sleep didn’t mean his sister shared his level of enthusiasm.

Once or twice his hand would hover over the glowing ink pages to trace out the patterns, commit them to memory before he turned off the blacklight and reformed the images in his mind.

He didn’t know why, but his shaking hands would turn past a certain page with such ferocity he’d nearly rip it right out of the Journal every time.

He’d never be able to articulate why. It seemed like something that should interest him to no end, but instead just filled him full of dread.

‘Witches’ Maze’ and a picture.

A black—was it supposed to be black? it could just be how it was colored in—little ball that looked like it’s been impaled by a spike, cages and designs cover the bulb with a little teardrop shape on the top.

‘They don’t seem to be limited to Gravity Falls. Witches and their counterparts, Magica, are found all over the globe, the only reason they have yet to be reported on is it seems one can only see them and what they do if you’ve already been exposed to their magic. So I find it strange that I can accidentally wander into a maze but have had no previous experiences with them.’

He’d thought Witches would be like… you know, just normal people who used magic. But the Journal described strange creatures that brought despair and preyed on the weak. There wasn’t much else on them, and less on the supposed ‘Magica’. What they were in comparison to Witches or where either of them could have come from, he didn’t know.

It was one of the creatures that the Journal described that Dipper wasn’t all that excited to do extra research on.

He kind of hoped he’d never run into a Witch really. The idea of being trapped in a labyrinth full of despair just sounds depressing.

Mabel had been feeling a little fidgety all day. She couldn’t exactly put her finger on why. She just… felt eyes on her everywhere. Maybe that was from the fact that they’d spent the majority of the evening and night monster hunting, but freaking out over every little thing wasn’t her forte at all. It was Dipper’s.

Speaking of her brother she was currently hiding in the bushes, totally not eavesdropping, on his conversation with Wendy. A mental checklist slowly started forming in her head as she scrolled
through girls their age she knew.

She wasn’t going to admit it to her brother, but she knew it wasn’t going to go anywhere with Wendy. She’d encouraged him to tell her his feelings sure, but it was far less for the romance she’d implied and more for closure. Her brother was terrible with things when they're left open ended. He needs endings to his stories or he tries to keep them going. Thankfully that’s exactly what he’d gotten. She knew Wendy was going to give that to him. The teen was nice like that.

The hairs on the back of her neck prickled a bit as she felt a pair of eyes on her again, but she brushed that aside. Wendy was just starting to leave and Dipper needed support. Yeah her brother needed closure with Wendy, but she was way too intense about strong arming him into it this time. She made her way out of the bushes, Soos deciding to stay put instead of following her, and sneakily slid up beside Dipper.

As long as whatever it was that was staring at her wasn’t going to try and make her its queen of darkness or whatever, it could wait. Her brother needed her first and foremost.

The day came where it did reveal itself. The next day after her Rematch with Pacifica, when their rivalry finally came to an end. She didn’t know why, but she felt like what ended up finding her had been waiting for that.

After both twins had stuffed their faces with sugary cereals enough to keep them awake for another good few hours, and Mabel sent a silent curse to the heavens for making the rematch last all night, She and Dipper had decided to just take the day easy. There’d been a lot of fights and horrors until dawn recently and neither of them wanted to push their luck before Dipper had a lead with the Author, whether that ended up being a tip from the Journals newly found entries, or the laptop Soos had found.

Mabel had just been horsing around with Waddles for most of the day in the backyard, Dipper sitting under a nearby tree and reading one of his Summer Mystery novels. Stan had closed the museum for that day simply because he didn’t want to bother with customers on less than three hours of sleep.

Mabel sympathized, if she wasn’t as naturally bubbly as she was she’d probably not want to be polite to people after being awake so long either.

Anyway, the current game between her and Waddles was something like Fetch. She’d toss the tennis ball, Waddles would chase after it, sniff it a bit, and try to eat it. Mabel would then laugh and run over to retrieve them both, wrestle the tennis ball from her pig’s mouth, and toss it again. Waddles would squeal with delight and continue the chase.

Eventually though, when she’d wrenched the ball from her pet’s mouth the slobber made it all slippery and it slid neatly from her hands. Mabel huffed slightly as the Tennis ball rolled into the nearby bushes but shrugged and followed the moist instrument into the brush.

Scanning the edge of the forest floor she kept her eyes open for the glistening neon green ball. And while she spotted it easily, there was something else there.

Something considerably more interesting.

A white cat--Or was it? It looked kinda like a fox too--It had strange, arm-like appendages sprouting out of its ears that were pink at the bottom and had rings around them like bracelets. There was a weird red mark on its back that reminded Mabel of the foxes from Princess Mononoke.
“Hey lil’ guy.” She cooed, rubbing the tips of her fingers together like one would do to beckon a cat. The fuzzy creature took a few steps forward and sniffed her fingers, just as expected. She hoped she didn’t smell of pig slobber. Its little red eyes flickered up at her, was it an albino?

“Greetings Mabel Pines.”

Well… that was unusual.

“Dipper?” she called out, her brother looked up from his novel, raising a brow at her. She nodded a little, a silent motion to come over. Dipper furrowed his brow and closed his book with a snap she could hear from here and slowly made his way over.

Mabel eyed the creature once before slowly retracting her hand, the bushes closed around her wrist as she watched her brother approach.

“You got anything in the Journal about talking cat things?” Dipper’s eyes widened a bit, what she’d said had clearly been the last thing he’d expected.

“Anything in the Journal about what now?” He blinked at Mabel, confusion and a bit of shock well on his face. Shrugging, Mabel pulled back the bushes a bit for her brother to see the fluffy white creature.

There it sat, enormous white tail flicking the air, its head tilted to the side a bit as it observed Dipper.

“Hello there Dipper Pines, or perhaps I should call you by your real name-” Dipper cut the creature off before it could continue.

“What are you? How do you know my name?” he’d had the Journal out by the first question, the last one added more as an afterthought. Mabel sighed good naturedly at her brother before offering her hand to the creature again.

“I am called Kyubey. I’ve been watching you lately Mabel, You see, I’m here with a very special offer.”

Dipper’s brow furrowed, the creature, Kyubey, scampered up Mabel’s arm with ease, resting on her shoulder. She giggled a bit, the fluffy tail tickling her neck.

“What offer?” She asked, Dipper still paging through the Journal, checking the blacklight every so often.

“I would like to make you one of the Elite Chosen set to fight against despair in the world. A Magica.”

Dipper’s blacklight slipped from his hand.
Chapter 1- It's my Decision

Chapter Summary

"Do you understand what you need to do?" Mabel nodded again. She’d use her powers, hunt down Witches, be a hero.

It didn’t sound too bad.

She hoped Dipper wouldn’t be mad at her.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mabel had grown up on fairy tales and mythology.

The wonderful world of unicorns, fairies, spells and fae, it was her favorite kind of escapism when she was young. Sure, she’d never taken her interest in fantasy the same way Dipper had taken his interest in the supernatural, but she still found enjoyment from the world of Fairy tales.

And like any girl her age her favorites had been the stories of true love.

A princess awoken from a deep slumber by the kiss of a handsome prince. A mermaid giving up her voice to be with the prince on land; and even though she didn’t get to live happily ever after she learned that love in and of itself was selfless. A young maiden climbing a mountain to save her dearest friend from the clutches of a Goblin’s Mirror. A brave warrior princess saving her loved ones and her sweetheart from the clutches of the evil queen that destroyed her kingdom thousands of years ago.

Okay that last one was Sailor Moon, but it counted as far as Mabel was concerned.

She loved the stories they told, the intrepid girls and boys that went through hell and high water to save those they held dear. She’d squeal like a toddler when rereading her favorite tales. Dipper would always smile at her over his newest mystery novel and roll his eyes when he’d see her paging through her well loved Fairy tale compilation.

She was nowhere near the level of bookworm Dipper pulled off, sure. She preferred making things with her time rather than reading, but there was just something about those old stories with their colorful pages that she’d always come back to.

The world would always just.. appeal to her. The land where true love and strong hearts were what decided if fate would smile upon you.

Truth be told her love for the stories was what probably perked her ears to the idea of romance in the first place. Now, there were a million and one types of love, She already knew that. She also knew that the only one she’d yet to have work out for her was romantic love. So It had to be the one she’d end up trying for.

True love conquers all after all right? And love isn’t true unless it’s returned.
Anyway, the stories, the intrepid heroes, the passionate lovers. She’d been daydreaming about them since she was a toddler. She’d wondered what she’d look like in shining armor, or a Mew Mew dress, a Sailor uniform, a Revolutionary Girl suit.

“A Magica stands for hope and battles against creatures that cause Despair; The Witches. In exchange for one reality bending wish, a miracle, if you will, Your powers will be incubated and you will be set to fight Witches.”

And here was her dreams, all wrapped up in a fluffy cat-like box.

Dipper was flipping through the Journal, looking for a certain entry under the black light. Mabel shrugged and opened her arms to the small white creature. Kyubey hopped into her arms without complaint.

“So you’re pretty much telling me we’re gonna become superheroes? In exchange for a Wish? A real wish not a genie-irony wish.” she could feel a bubble of excitement start to well up in her chest at the thought. It was simply too good to be true. A magical girl superhero, it was everything she’d ever daydreamed about since she was little.

“I will awaken your powers as a Magica, and your wish will be granted to the specifications you set. What you do with them is up to you so long as you fulfill your half of the contract and fight Witches.”

“Hold on, hold on, I have something on Witches in here. Don’t make any deals, gimme a second.” Dipper flipped through a few more pages as Mabel gently stroked the creatures fur.

Kyubey nuzzled its head into her hands as she scratched it just so, and Mabel squeezed it tight against her chest.

“You’re so cute!” she cooed, nuzzling her cheek into its fluffy face. Kyubey rubbed its head against her in response.

“I am indeed called ‘cute’ by most who encounter me.” Mabel nodded solemnly as Dipper flipped to one last page and let out a cheer of triumph.

“There it is! ‘The Witches’ Maze’.” carefully, Dipper turned the Journal around to show the image presented.

“Is this what a Witch looks like?” Kyubey leaned over in Mabel’s arms a little bit to examine the picture, and bobbed its head once in the affirmative.

“That would be an accurate Rendition of a Grief Seed. They are what you would call, the heart of a Witch. When a Magica uses her magic, the heart of her own powers--a Soul Gem--loses a bit of its energy. So Grief Seeds are used to clear away the corruption and keep the Soul Gem in top shape.”

“Like unclogging a drain?” Mabel offered curiously as the creature squirmed in her grip.

Dipper hummed when he checked the notes on Witches in the Journal, skepticism laced in his tone.

“It says here the Witches are pretty much concentrated despair. You want us to plunge headfirst into that on a daily basis?”

“You misunderstand, Dipper Pines.” Kyubey climbed out of Mabel’s grip and rested on her shoulder. “While Witches do spread despair, Magica battle against it, and spread hope. Magica fight against them with the only kind of magic that Witches are weak to. We would never send a
Magica into her battles without the tools necessary to survive.” It sounded like a pretty decent deal as far as Mabel was concerned. They’d be protecting people and saving the day with magical girl magic.

And that wish wasn’t too bad of an idea either.

Oh just the thought made her giddy. She could wish for anything she thought of if she wanted to. A human sized hamster ball, a never ending bezazzle gun, To become a famous artist, anything she wanted!

Oh, she couldn’t decide!

“Dipper, relax.” she found herself saying, slinging an arm around her brother’s shoulders. Dipper flinched when her arm came down hard upon his back. Kyubey curled a little tighter onto her shoulder to avoid falling. “You and me are gonna become superheroes, it's gonna be great. Don’t over think it for once, you can use your wish to find the Author.” Dipper’s eyes widened at that, the idea of the wish finally starting to sink into his brain. Slowly a small smile started to stretch across Dipper’s face. She smiled, the offer of solving the mysteries of this town immediately piquing his interest.

“Actually, this contract only extends to Mabel Pines.” Kyubey’s voice almost immediately interrupted what could have been a beautiful act of her brother being an absolute nerd. Mabel darted her eyes to the side to look at the small creature, its expression never changed as it reached a paw up to scratch behind one of its ears.

“Magica can only be girls you see. Boys are raised to suppress their emotions and that makes it harder for their magic to flow. Therefore this contract can only extend to Mabel.” Mabel chuckled slightly at that, trying to tamp down the smallest bit of dread pooling in her gut. Dipper’s brow was already starting to furrow.

“Dipper? Psh, he can’t suppress anything if he tried.” She waved a hand at Kyubey and chose to ignore her brother’s spluttering in indignation. Dipper pulled himself away from her grip to stand straight again.

“Nevertheless” Kyubey continued. “For his own well being I’d suggest against it. If his magic locked up in the middle of a Witch fight things wouldn’t end very well would they?”

Well that was true…

“Well wait, it’s one thing to offer this to both of us, but you’re thinking of sending Mabel into all of this alone?” Dipper closed the Journal with a decisive snap. “My Sister? We’re talking about the same person here right? That girl right there?” He gestured to Mabel. She would have taken offense at the incredulous tone in his voice if she didn’t see the face he was making.

He wasn’t making a joke. He wasn’t grinning wryly, or even looking jealous. He was glaring at Kyubey, mouth pressed into a firm line. He was worried.

“So you admit your Magica can die in these battles!”

“Dipper!” Mabel cut in. “I didn’t even agree to do this yet!” Kyubey hopped off of her shoulder at
that. Dipper’s eyes darting to his sister at her voice piercing his thought process.

“Mabel, Do you really wanna get involved with a magical war? Powerful or not is it really worth it?” At that Mabel shrugged, a sort of hopelessness in her gesture.

Honestly she wasn’t entirely sure why Dipper was making this out to be such a bad thing. She was getting the chance to become a superhero for Cosmos’ sake! And a Wish, let’s not forget the wish! Well yeah she would have to fight bad guys, but come on! She could practically BE Sailor Moon for her troubles. Why was Dipper so worried? She could handle herself.

“Let me think about it? I won’t say yes or no. It’s not exactly a decision to make within fifteen minutes you guys.” That compromise seemed to pacify her brother as well as the cat-like creature. Kyubey scratched its ear with one if its hind legs and started to walk back into the forest.

“Should you agree simply call for me and we’ll get things started up.” And with that it was gone.

“You’re not really considering it are you?” Dipper’s grip tightened around the Journal, clutching it to his chest like a shield. Mabel tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

“Let me think about it.” She repeated. Dipper still didn’t look convinced so she decided to add on “It’s my decision Bro.” That seemed to do the trick, as Dipper huffed.

“It’s still a bad idea.”

She knew that it would be dangerous, this wasn’t a cartoon or fairy tale, but it was destiny wasn’t it? She just needed the right inspiration for her wish.

Whoever invented the phrase ‘be careful what you wish for’ should be kicked, repeatedly.

The ride back to the Shack was far too bumpy for Mabel’s taste. She knew Gravity falls didn’t have much in the way of state resources for things like well paved roads. Most of the streets weren’t much more than the first layer of asphalt they’d ever gotten, Some of which not even getting that. It was natural that there were a lot of potholes and cracks in the pavement that would make the road ahead of them jostle the passengers of Grunkle Stan’s car whenever they were ran over. It was natural, and believable.

But she’d still flinch when they car would bounce in place, Waddles would snort from his spot by her feet, and Dipper’s head would snap back upright from the psuedo drowse he’d fallen into before. Her brother almost looked like he had more bruises than skin right now. The shadows under his eyes reminding her less of a vampire now and more of a dead man. She shuddered when that comparison made its way into her brain. His left arm was in a sling from the abuse his body had gone under in the hours previously, and there was a roll of gauze wrapped around his head for the possible concussion he had.

While Stan had risked the horrendous hospital bills to get Dipper looked at at the Gravity Falls General, he didn’t want them keeping his Great-Nephew overnight. Mabel had volunteered to stay up to look after Dipper, of course she did. Dipper wasn’t mad at her anymore sure, but he still gave up a lot of sleep to both work on the laptop and help her. The least she could do was donate one night to making sure his concussion didn’t get worse.

Her heart was still hammering in her chest at the thought of what had happened in the middle of her opera just a few hours previous. Bill had possessed her brother. He’d probably been possessing him since after their fight that afternoon.
And she hadn’t noticed.

There was a literal demon wearing her brother’s skin and she was too distracted to even notice until Dipper found a way to contact her.

And then she’d seen him on the catwalk.

She swore her heart literally stopped for a moment.

Her brother was a naturally unintimidating person, that much was certain. A lot of the time he was cuter than any cute cryptid they’d found that day. Dipper shouldn’t have been as terrifying as he was.

Maybe it was the way he held himself. All straight lines and right angles, Like a marionette with short strings that would crash together often. Perhaps the wide grin that stretched muscles that should never be used. It looked more like he was bearing his teeth like a predator than smiling. It was disturbing.

But no… she supposed the scariest aspect of Bill in her brother’s body had to be his eyes. Dipper’s cedar brown eyes, only a few shades lighter than her own, had gone from a little too serious and slightly cold, to tight as a bowstring and shimmering eerily. There was a sort of manic glee in his eye that Mabel wished she’d never see in her brother again.

Her arm curled a little tighter around Dipper, whom barely stirred from his dazed staring out the window.

She hadn’t been much of a sister this past week had she?

Half carrying her brother from the car and up the steps of the shack was very distressingly easy. Had he lost a couple of pounds alongside the rest of his wounds? She made sure to check that out at her next opportunity.

“You okay with taking care of him on your own kid?” Stan glanced over at Mabel while flicking through some instructions the doctor had written out to him.

“Yeah, I got it. Only half hour naps until the morning, no aspirin, ask him simple questions every half hour or so.”

“’M fine.” Dipper mumbled against her shoulder. To which Mabel rolled her eyes and tightened her grip around his shoulders. Dipper leaned gratefully into her side as she helped him up the stairs.

“G’night Grunkle Stan.” She heard Dipper mumble something against her that sounded similar to ‘night’

“Night runts.” She was just about to keep heading up the flight of stairs that lead to the attic before Stan spoke up again.

“Uh, Mabel? If he starts getting bad, go ahead n’ wake me up and we’ll check him out, got it?” Mabel glanced over her shoulder at Stan once and smiled.

“Roger Dodger!”

He acted so hard on Dipper but it didn’t take much to see how much he cares about them both.

The lantern on her nightstand was the only light in the room as she started to knit another sweater.
The hot pink yarn scratched lightly against her nails as she twisted it around the aluminum knitting needles. The light ‘clack clack’ of the tips banging together the only sound beyond her brother’s somewhat labored breathing.

She wished this would be the last time she’d see Dipper doing this sort of thing to himself.

She knew better.

“I can’t just let you keep doing this kinda stuff to yourself Dipper. Getting so sleep deprived you’d make a deal with a demon? Come on. You’re way smarter than that.” her voice wasn’t above a whisper, silent and hissing, quick to vanish in the blackness.

“I just wish You’d be safe, even if you keep pushing yourself for the sake of mysteries.”

“Do you truly wish that?” Still high strung from everything that had happened, Mabel had immediately jumped to her feet at the unknown voice, Gripping the knitting needles in her hand like a knife, ready to fight.

And there in the gloom of the single lantern it sat.

“Protecting your brother? Is that the wish you’d stake your contract upon?”

“Kyubey…” The creature flicked its tail once and stared at her, unblinking. Mabel lowered her knitting needles to rest at her side.

Her gaze flicked over to her brother once. Dipper let out a painful sounding wheeze but wasn’t roused from his nap.

Jaw tightening she nodded.

“My wish will be that no matter what crazy adventures Dipper gets into, that he’ll come out of them safe and sound.”

“Very well. Do you understand what you need to do?” Mabel nodded again. She’d use her powers, hunt down Witches, be a hero.

It didn’t sound too bad.

She hoped Dipper wouldn’t be mad at her.

“Yes we get started then?” Kyubey raised its weird arm like things at her.

It felt like the time Waddles had helped her shoot her grappling hook at herself. Like something small and hard was repeatedly slamming into her chest, trying to beat something out of her.

She tried to keep quiet, as to not wake her slumbering brother, but a small whimper of pain did escape her lips.

She curled around herself protectively, hands scrambling over her breastbone to alleviate the pain.

“You have such potential. A powerful Magica indeed.” Mabel reached a hand up to bite at her knuckles and avoid screaming. The wires of her braces dug into the skin around her index finger.

The dull impact pain slowly started to lesson, that in and of itself should have been a relief, but the sensation was quickly replaced with a far sharper pain.
She wondered if this was what feeling impaled was like. Her teeth dug into her knuckles harder. She could taste the blood starting to well in her mouth.

Slowly, she started to creak an eye open to see what it was that was causing such pain.

There was a huge pink glow somewhere over her, casting shadows against the attic that were oblong and strange.

As though her observing the glow had been what the pain was waiting for, it started to fade, replaced now by a feeling of weightlessness.

Slowly, slowly, she could feel her feet leave the ground, her back straighten and then bend backwards against the feeling. Eventually she was facing the source of the light. The small pink ball of light shone like a star above her.

“That is your Soul Gem, the very core of your wish. You must accept what you’ve been given for the contract to be complete.” She could barely hear Kyubey over the roar in her ears. She hoped briefly she didn’t wake Dipper up with whatever noise she’d been making.

Her hair arced about her in strange patterns as she lifted her hands up, the long purple sleeves of her nightshirt rippling in the air. A small smile graced her lips as her fingers curled around the small pink star.

She held the small thing to her chest, the warmth of the orb, her wish, filled her to the very core and made shivers crawl up her spine.

Her eyes shut once more as she was gently lowered to the ground. Mabel’s eyes opened once more when the noise wasn’t the soft pad of her socks against the wood, but rather the sharp clack of heels. Glancing down she was greeted with the poofiest pink skirt she’d ever seen. Everything about her new outfit for that matter was a shade of pink beyond her shoes and the gloves on her hands. White boots with little pink bows, cute cherise socks that went up just past her knees with little powder and dark pink cuffs on the ends. her nightshirt had been replaced with a top that was more of a vest with poofy sleeves and the aforementioned skirt.

She shifted her weight from foot to foot and her skirt followed her path with a small kick of air. the dark pink curving designs contrasting sharply against the bottom layer of the skirt, a pink so light it was nearly white, and the top layer, a far more sedate bubblegum pink.

But the thing that caught her eye the most. Every last part of her outfit, was Bezzazzled. Tiny blue crystals lined every stripe of hot pink, was at the center of every bow, lined the edges of her gloves and boots, and decorated the stripes on her sleeves and socks. Tilting her head to the side she noted there was something around her neck, probably a tied neckerchief like she’d seen in all those old cartoons, she’d always loved those. And the weight of earrings.

She wondered what color the earrings were, and her headband for that matter, as she could feel it press against her scalp.

She tried not to be too noisy, lest she wake up her still peacefully slumbering brother --whom was breathing far less laboriously she noted with a smile-- or their Grunkle one floor below. Quickly, she twirled in place, the shimmer from the crystals on her outfit sparkled in the dim light, but the smallest glow from the top of her collarbone drew her eye the most.

Right above the beginning of her blouse was a hot pink gem. It glimmered every which way she
turned and she smiled at the realization that it was giving off a glow of its own. Her gem was in the shape of a shooting star, a long comet tail with a little star burst at the end.

It was pink, it was cute, and it was everything Mabel could have ever asked for in a Magical Girl uniform.

“Razzle Dazzle.” she mumbled breathlessly.
“Contract is sealed.” She looked up with a start, remembering once more that Kyubey was there. She smiled widely at the creature, whom merely tilted its head to the side. “You may want to check up your brother before going on your first hunt.” It nodded at Dipper and Mabel noted that he was starting to stir, right on time as far as her inner timekeep was saying.

In a flash of pink light Mabel was back in her pajamas. She smiled slightly and swayed her hips once. That was easy! Hopefully transforming back into her Magica form will be just as easy. She didn’t exactly want to go through all of that pain every time.

“Hey Dipper?” She reached over to her brother, gently rousing the dazed boy. Dipper’s eyes flicked open with a half aborted yawn and let out a thin groan at Mabel.

“What’s the month?” Dipper mumbled something that sounded close to ‘July’

“Okay, where are we? Town and State.”

She’ll tell him when he’s not concussed.

The trees swayed ominously with the lightest of breezes, the forest around the shack nearly black in the cloak of night. Nothing but the moon, already starting to wane from its full phase, and the glimmer of stars lit up the darkness. Mabel tried to suppress the shudder that worked its way up her spine as another gust of wind chilled her to the bone.

It was summer dangit it shouldn’t be this cold.

The shingles of the roof dug into her bare feet sharply as she stood there, mentally preparing herself for what she was about to do.

The little silver ring was cool against her skin, left middle finger. The little band was decorated with intricate designs and what looked like runes. The small pink gem glinting with a light of its own. On the same fingernail was a small pink starburst the same shape as her soul gem.

Taking a deep breath Mabel raised her hand infront of her, a flick of her wrist changing her Soul Gem into its full form. A glowing pink egg with little silver bindings.

“Transform!”

Thankfully, this time her transformation was nowhere near as painful as her first one. In fact it wasn’t painful at all. The glow from her Soul Gem encompassed her body turning the world around her to pink stars and stardust.

Dozens of pink ribbons sprung from her fingertips and wrapped tightly around whatever part of her body she gestured toward. She smiled slightly at the feeling, it was like diving in a cold pool after a long day in the summer heat.
Just as all the pink on pink started to hurt her eyes a bit little blue glimmers of light started to fill her vision. Those were going to become the crystals on her uniform, she knew it. Her smile grew and she twirled in place to entice the little blue lights to stick to her easier. Sure enough they were contained and her transformation was complete.

Mabel giggled to herself. She looked so cute!

“Shall we be going?” Her fuzzy companion pawed at her leg a couple of times before Mabel offered it a hand to climb up with. It gratefully trotted up her arm and rested on her shoulder.

“Okay. Witch hunts… Can’t be too hard right?”

It was, as it turned out, rather hard.

Finding the Witch and entering her maze had been simple enough, but the simplicity started and ended with that.

She had just barely entered the maze when she’d been surrounded. The whole maze seemed to be one long hallway with white walls scribbled almost entirely black. Everything was eerily silent, the thrum of her heart and ringing in her ears the only noise in the void.

In less time than she’d had to blink she was cornered by four big chess pieces. Two pointy heads, white and black ones, a white castle, and a black horsey.

Mabel swallowed hard as the four pieces circled around her, made all the more menacing by the dim light. She stiffened her legs, ready to jump into action, and tried to focus on her magic. She’d need a weapon, or something she could use to fight. Something she could use to protect people from the wrath of Witches.

She felt something bump against her hand lightly, her eyes snapped down to whatever it was that touched her, ready to fight, even if that just meant swinging a fist in its face.

It was the handle of a battle axe. The handle was the same shade of pink of her vest and the stripes up her socks and sleeves. The blade was a beautiful silver, ornate with the same blue crystals that line her outfit and etched with star patterns. Mabel smiled slightly before lifting it into her arms.

She swung at one of the chess pieces, the white pointy head. She noted with a sort of satisfaction when the piece shuddered at the impact before cracking, that this axe handled kind of like a golf club.

The other pieces started shooting themselves at her, enraged at the destruction of one of their own. Mabel barely dodged the first one, the other Pointy head, and had to immediately throw herself in the other direction before the Castle slammed into her other side.

This put her right in the path of the Horsey though. Mabel held out a hand to protect her face when it came to her.

Only for the piece to slam into the wall and splinter on impact.

Was that one of her powers?

She didn’t have the time to think about it. She dove out of the way when the black pointy head came at her again, this time swinging her axe so it would slice cleanly through the piece, and held her hand out to the castle.
How did she use that magic? She’d just hoped it wouldn’t hit her and it happened.

So maybe she should hope this one would run into a wall?

the smallest pink glow appeared on the tips of her fingers, a similar glow ensnared the castle and held it in its tracks.

Wait, does she have telekinesis then? She’d used that kind of power once before, but Gideon’s creepy amulet wasn’t the same as her own actual magic.

She gestured upward, intending on smashing the chess piece into the ceiling. It only moved slightly to the left, following her hand but not defying gravity to do it.

Mabel slammed her hand to the wall behind her and the piece immediately rammed into it, missing her by a good few feet. She didn’t move things so much as she pushed them.

Okay, she could handle this.

She gripped her axe tighter in her hand and ran through the long hall.

For a bit the only noise was the heels of her boots clicking against the stone floor and her panting for breath. Every so often a couple more chess pieces were sent her way, which she either sliced into or pushed into walls.

Eventually she could see a door on the far side of the hall. Guarded by another two chess pieces, the black and white cross heads. They weren’t just pieces though, they looked like mannequins whose heads were replaced with the tops of the chess pieces. Mabel gripped her axe tighter and let them come to her.

Though she ended up very nearly getting her leg chopped off with the White Cross head’s sword, she was able to beat both of them, their wooden heads rolling on the ground before the doors opened.

The room was cold, like the walls were lined with that misty kinda ice she and Waverly Jong would dip the tips of their pencils in in science class.

And Then Mabel faced the Witch.

She felt a shudder crawl up her spine at the creature.

It was almost a tower in how still and tall it was. Made entirely of wires and ice it absolutely dominated the room. it made strange clicking and hissing noises, the wires inside its ice tower speaking in a garbled language it along spoke. Somehow Mabel still knew what it was saying.

Matilda.

It was saying its name was Matilda.

The Witch, Matilda, stayed still as a statue, silently sizing Mabel up. She didn’t even know if it had a head, the long branching parts of it were way closer to resembling a spiders web than any sort of arms or legs, and she wasn’t sure where its heart could even be. Let alone its weak spots.

Mabel took a deep breath and held her free hand out to summon another axe.

The creature’s strange garbled speech turned into high pitched screeching, loud enough for Mabel to want to cover her ears. She didn’t though, she just threw the axe in her left hand at the creature.
Matilda took the axe to its side as if it were no more than a small insect. Mabel swallowed hard and gripped her remaining axe tight in her hand.

Well…. That had happened.

Her skirt was torn up and dirty, hunks of dark ice and metal fibers clung to her gloves and boots, she thinks she lost a couple small chunks of her hair in the battle. But she was victorious. Matilda had gone down once she finally hacked through her ice tower like body, and Mabel was holding the trophy of that fight gingerly in the palm of her hand.

Huffing for breath, Mabel leaned heavily against a tree trunk and looked down into her hand to look at the little bulb in her grip.

A Grief Seed, The things that live in the hearts of Witches and ‘clean’ magical energy.

Mabel transformed back into her nightshirt in a flourish and held her Soul Gem in her free hand.

What on earth was she supposed to do with it though?

“So what do I just press them together until my Soul Gem is shiny and new again?” she wondered aloud, worried that if she tried just that something bad may happen.

Even she wasn’t oblivious enough to not know how badly that could go if she was wrong.

“More or less.” Kyubey took then to come out from the shadow it had been hiding in. Mabel hadn’t actually expected it to answer her, it had left her on her own for the entire time she was in the maze, she was wondering if they only stuck around long enough to make a contract with the Magica they’re with and then let them handle themselves. Turns out that wasn’t true.

Slowly, Mabel brought the Grief Seed closer to her Soul Gem, the slightly dimmer pink light flickered brighter bit by bit until one last little black spot on her soul gem raced off into the Grief Seed.

“Huh…” She flicked her wrist to turn her soul gem back into its ring form and observed the Grief Seed a little closer, It used to have only a couple of splotches of black in the center, but now it looked like it was filled until it was pressing against the little grey bars of the bulb.

“You may want to give that to me Mabel. If anymore darkness is put into that it my hatch into another Witch.” Mabel yelped at that, dropping the grief seed to clatter between them. Kyubey padded its way over to where the seed fell and lifted it with one of its weird arm things.

“You did rather well for a first hunt. Though you may want to get home now. The sun will be rising soon.” Mabel jolted at that.

Dipper.

She hadn’t checked on Dipper’s concussion most of the night!

Oh man, even when she was trying to be a good sister she ended up messing up! She transformed again and took off through the trees.

She hoped her brother would be okay.

Well… Actually he’d probably be fine. That’s what her wish was there for after all.
She was still worried.

At least she beat the sun to the Shack. If only barely.

Chapter End Notes

Y’all don't know how long some of these parts took me to get in order, but now that things are started up once more I can figure things out from there
Chapter 2- You Are

Chapter Summary

She had to stop procrastinating and tell Dipper. She’d found a sturdy cord to hold her ring around her neck to hide it under her sweaters, but the longer she put off telling him the angrier he’d be at her.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“How does she look?”

“Nice!”

“What are her stories?”

“Interesting!”

“And who’s gonna pay for dinner?!!”

“Soos is!”

“Aaaannnd Date!”

She and Dipper were seated further away from their protege, peering through eye holes cut out of a pizza box.

Every so often they’d whisper observations to each other, Dipper complimenting Soos’ wit, Mabel nodding in approval at Melody being thoroughly charmed.

She was so happy things were working out so far, though part of her wondered how long it would last.

Not the date, she had full confidence in Soos’ dating ability. But this. Normal life.

She loved matchmaking, she honestly did. It made her heart race in excitement to help people find those they connect with and bring romance to them.

But now that she was a Magica did she really have time to waste doing this kinda stuff?

“Is something going wrong?” Dipper whispered to her, a sort of lost look on his face. Her brother wasn’t very good at reading people, so he was mainly using Mabel’s reactions as indicators as to how the date seems to be going. Shoot, she’d been thinking too hard hadn’t she?

“Nothing, sorry Dip I got distracted, but that Big ol’ Panda thing was cute wasn’t it?”

She had to stop procrastinating and tell Dipper. She’d found a sturdy cord to hold her ring around her neck to hide it under her sweaters, but the longer she put off telling him the angrier he’d be at her.
She shouldn’t be worrying about her own problems right now. Right now she was focusing on Soos and his adorable date with Melody.

Speaking of which what on Earth was he doing coming over to their booth?

She was worried that things would be going downhill from there.

And she wasn’t wrong.

She hadn’t been paying much attention when Dipper had brought Rumble McScrimitch to life, she’d been busy getting Stan over his fear of heights, while also developing her own temporary fear of them at the same time. So she wasn’t entirely sure what to expect when the beaver girl animatronic was possessed with Soos’ evil videogame girlfriend Giffany.

Her hand hovered over her necklace as Soos tipped an arcade game for them all to hide behind. She should transform now, she could probably cut through those ski balls or chop down the metal grate door and get them all out. Her heart was racing as Dipper patted down his hat to make sure he wasn’t on fire. What a way to tell her brother…

Soos had just run out into the warzone around them to distract Giffany and left them to hide.

Mabel took a second to curse herself, she should have gone with Soos to cover him. He shouldn’t have to do this alone. But she could protect Melody and Dipper with her magic, so she’d go that way.

“Alright, on three we split.” But one of the animatronics wasn’t taking anything of the sort.

Mabel’s axe collided with its wrist as it tried to chop through the arcade game. The steel of her axe slicing cleanly through the steel of the creature’s hand. She felt like that shouldn’t be possible, then again was her axe even made of steel? She never thought to check.

“Run!” she pivoted on her heel as the rest of her uniform started to appear on her after her axe had been summoned.

“Mabel?!” Dipper shrieked.

Melody half lifted him into her arms as she ran for the both of them, whether out of fear or the fact that child or not Mabel was handling a battle axe half her size like it was nothing and decided she could handle herself, she didn’t know. But Mabel swung for the animatronics’ other arm and decided it didn’t matter.

“I’ve got this!”

While the giant bear.. mole… thing… the animatronic that was playing the banjo, was broken pretty easily Mabel was still restrained, Giffany had been planning for everything as it turned out. She got pinned down by a small army of extension cords and wires shooting from their consoles.

One of the barrel rats had their butts handed to them by Melody whacking at it with a metal chair, but she ended up restrained by the owl, Dipper was alternating between running from the other rat and giving Mabel looks she couldn’t pin down.

She knew he was mad at her, but was that all he was?

He ended up getting held down by the frog robot as Giffany moved all three of them outside the kitchen, whether just so she’d have a better grip on them or to show off to Soos how she’d captured
them she had no idea. The wires and cords tightened around her middle, threatening to break her arms as they were pressed harder against her ribs. Melody thrashed around in the Owl’s grip, Dipper kicked his legs uselessly.

Some Magical girl she turned out to be.

To tell the truth she was pretty happy Soos saved the day. It took the pressure off of her to immediately prove to Dipper she was suddenly a magical hero. Of course the fact that her friend being the Hero of the Hour instead of her meant that he must have proved himself as pretty dang brave or noble alongside his other charms to Melody, was merely coincidental.

She and Dipper were hanging out near the ballpit, watching them talk and Soos ask her out to Cousin Reggie’s Engagement party.

Mabel hadn’t thought to detransform yet, she didn’t want to take her attention off of Soos. Also taking Dipper’s attention would lead to a conversations she’d like to put off just a little longer.

But as time has an annoying habit of pushing things forward, Her brother turned to her. A mix of expressions played across his face, confusion and anger fighting for dominance. Mabel shrunk a bit under his glare and rubbed at her arm, her satiny glove sliding smoothly across her elbow.

“We should talk.”

Quiet as they could they both slipped from the ballpit, silently waving goodnight to Soos’ Abuelita, whom smiled her kind old lady smile at them before passively watching Soos and Melody talk a little more.

The parking lot was dark, lit only by the dim streetlights, casting a warm orange glow over the both of them.

“Mabel...” Dipper folded his arms. She tugged a strand of her hair nervously and tried to grin at her brother.

She hoped it didn’t look like a grimace.

“Er yeah... So.. I may or may not have made a contract with Kyubey a bit ago and kept it a secret cause I knew you’d be mad.” Dipper’s eyes narrowed even further as his hands balled into fists.

“You made a deal. With Kyubey.” He reached up a hand to pinch his nose bridge. “Are. You. Crazy?!” He looked up at Mabel again and glared, Mabel flinched at the betrayed venom, and the abject worry. “You promised me you wouldn’t talk to that beady eyed rat again!”

“No I didn’t.” Mabel quickly defended. “I told you to let me decide for myself. It’s my choice Dipper!”

“Well you chose wrong!” Dipper swiped a hand in the air to make his point, Mabel tried to not get too mad. Dipper wasn’t good at expressing himself and he was frustrated. That said the satin material of her gloves was the only thing keeping her nails from digging into her palms.

“Isn’t my opinion what matters?” Her teeth grit a bit as she glared back at Dipper “Dipper we’re twins but not everything needs to be run by you.”

“You could die Mabel! You know that as well as I do! You could die and then I’d be stuck explaining to Mom and Dad how that happened! ‘yeah turns out that there’s this magical girl
“making fox thing that Mabel sold her life to for a Human Sized Hamster Ball’ are you kidding me?!”

“I didn’t ask for a human sized hamsterball! I wished for something important!”

“Like what!? Mabel there isn’t anything worth risking your life!”

“You are!” It slipped out before she had a chance to think about it. But she was just so frustrated with Dipper not realizing that she wasn’t as naïve as he was acting like she was, that she actually had reasons for what she was doing.

Dipper stopped immediately, eyes widening a bit and arms dropping to his sides. The lightbulb from the streetlight above their heads chose that moment to fritz out.

In the darkness of the night the only light came from Mabel’s tiny pink Soul gem, illuminating their faces and casting strange shadows across Dipper’s face.

“What?” His voice was breathless, a sort of denial and sadness about it that made Mabel wish she’d kept this a secret instead.

“I said you are.” She responded, her voice resolute in a way she did not feel. Dipper’s brow furrowed a bit more, trying to comprehend what she meant. He opened his mouth a couple of times, trying to say something, but never getting anything out. For a few moments in the darkness there was nothing but the wind in the nearby trees and the buzz from the other streetlights, useless unless they were to walk underneath them.

“What did you wish for?” He finally settled on. His right hand reached up to rub at his left arm, no doubt feeling over the small scars left by that triangular menace jabbing him full of forks not too long ago.

“It was after Bill possessed you.” Her eyes darted to the ground, the asphalt black as pitch beyond the odd stone glinting back her pink light at her. “When you were down with a concussion that night. I wished…” she sighed, Dipper could probably guess from that, but she had to say it anyway. Her eyes darted back up to her brother’s. The shocked quality in his gaze never lessened, if anything it got worse.

“I couldn’t stop you from going on adventures, I wouldn’t take that choice from you, so I wished that you’d be safe no matter what adventures you’d go on.” She wished Dipper didn’t look so Heartbroken at that. He didn’t look mad at her anymore, but this was worse.

“You… wished for me to be safe?” He still sounded distant, a type of quiet horror to his voice Mabel had barely ever heard before. Dipper was always loud when he was expressing his emotions, so the brief horrified whisper was enough to send goosebumps up her exposed arms in warning.

“Yeah.” She reached out for him, trying to take his arm. Dipper flinched away from her like he’d been burned and she retracted her hand.

“Why…” He looked so confused, so sad. “Mabel you didn’t have to..”

“Yes I did.” she reached out again, slower this time, and took his hand in her own. “Bill could have killed you. He could have stayed in your body and done Cuckoo-bananas things to you. And with how crazy this town is I should have done it a long time ago.” Dipper looked down for a second, eyes locking on the pink glow of her Soul gem.
“Hey, it’s not all bad! Wanna head back to the shack in Style?”

At least when he looked back up at her he had that normal look of bewildered curiosity that seemed to be his natural state. If anything were to snap him from whatever aspect of His sister becoming a magica had had him so stunned, the wish, or the battles, or the magic, or whatever, then the thing that would snap him out of it would be his curiosity.

“What do you mean ‘in style’?” his expression turned suspicious as Mabel grinned widely at him.

“Hold on!” before he could protest or even say anything at all she’d lifted Dipper into her arms, princess style, and started to run for the trees. Dipper shrieked in fear and threw his arms around her shoulders, clinging to the fabric of her blouse for dear life as she jumped into the foliage.

Traveling by tree branch, the only way to party if you’ve got heightened magical girl agility.

“Mabel What are you doing?!” Dipper cried out, nails digging into her blouse and actually managing to leave a couple scratches on her upper back. Wow she needed to remind Dipper to clip his fingernails.

“Showing you the fastest coolest way to get around!” She dropped Dipper’s legs in midair, Making her brother screech in fear and clutch his arms around her neck tighter. Her hand slipped down to cling to his waist as her free hand summoned an Axe in the air.

“Watch this!” She flung the axe into a seemingly empty space, but with a flourish of her hand she pushed a tree branch down so it was in the path of the blade.

It cleanly severed the branch from the tree and vanished with a flurry of pink sparks.

After they’d landed on a nearby branch, thicker than the one she chopped down and far more stable; She smiled to herself when she heard Dipper’s breathless, fascinated ‘oh’.

Mabel smiled widely at Dipper, who turned to look at her with a sort of stunned awe that she took as a victory. At least it meant that he wasn’t angry at her anymore, or feeling all mopey and guilty.

“Never drop me midair again.” He huffed out. Mabel grinned even wider and dug her hand into his hipbone.

“Don’t worry Bro bro. I was just showing off!”

Dipper glanced down, probably about to tell her to let him go already, and promptly whimpered when he realized they were still far too high up to safely get out of the tree. His arms clutched around Mabel’s neck even tighter, noodle arms locking like a vice around her.

She laughed a bit and reached behind herself. That was another interesting thing about being a Magica, she learned. The Hammerspace or ‘Sub space pocket’ as Kyubey called it, but whatever Hammerspace sounded cooler. After focusing on putting her hand where it needed to be she pulled a familiar tool out. Normally it was up one of her sleeves in her sweater but her clothes tended to go into her hammerspace when she was transformed.

“Here, I’ll use the grappling hook to get us down instead of just jumping, happy?” Dipper didn’t answer but he was breathing less harshly against her as she slowly lowered them to the ground.

There was a moment of silence after Mabel returned her grappling hook to her Hammerspace. Dipper nudged a pebble along with the tip of his shoe, she shuffled her feet and tucked a couple strands of hair behind her ear.
“So… You fight witches now.” Dipper huffed, it wasn’t a question, and so Mabel didn’t rush to answer. He was still wrapping his head around it. “And you’re… well you’re magical now. Not just whatever spells are in the Journal but… real, Ancient Arcana magic.” She tried to smile at Dipper. “Why did you keep it from me?” There wasn’t any anger anymore, just hurt. Confusion. Mabel’s weak grin immediately dropped.

“Because I know you Dipper. I knew you’d feel guilty if I told you what I wished for, but I also knew if I didn’t tell you my wish you’d just be angry at me. And you know, at first you were concussed. A shock like that could have made you way worse.” She clutched her hands together in front of herself. “I should have told you once you were better but like… I was scared. I thought it would be easier to just wait until You’re so wound up in code cracking or hanging out with Soos or Wendy that I could sneak in a Witch Hunt. I didn’t want you to worry. I’m sorry.”

Dipper furrowed his brow at her a bit, but sighed and grinned slightly at her. “Since when are you the protective one?” Mabel shrugged at that and smiled back.

“Mystery twins?” She offered her fist.

“Mystery twins.” The light thump of their fists connecting filled the air.

Stan wasn’t home when they got back to the shack. Wendy had looked up from her spot at the register, let out a cheer of triumph at finally not being the only one in the building. Without a word she passed the keys of the Shack over to Dipper, probably so she wouldn’t have to be the one to lock up.

“Stan’s off stealing an animatronic badger or something, He was kinda creeping me out, but like, don’t expect him back till dawn.” She shrugged as she pulled on her jacket, about to head off for the night. “By the way Mabel, Love the new dress.” Mabel smiled widely back at the teen, and they waved her off as she vanished on her bike into the night.

“Good thing we had Pizza before things got supernatural then.” Dipper huffed and locked the door after Wendy was gone. Mabel shrugged, she’d forgotten for a bit that she was even transformed in the first place, she should probably take care of that.

“Hey Dipper, wanna see me transform back?” Dipper turned to smile at Mabel. But it still looked a bit strained to her. Was he hurt? Probably, Just because he knew it was for him doesn’t mean he wouldn’t still be allowed to be upset at Mabel for keeping it a secret.

“Sure, Can I take notes?”

It took a couple of minutes for Dipper to take out the Journal, quickly check the Witches’ maze page with the blacklight to make sure he wasn’t writing over anything important, and started to scribble something in the Margins.

“What is it Kyubey called you again? A Magica?” At Mabel’s confirmation Dipper started to write a little faster. “And what kinda magic do you have besides your axes? Speaking of which why Axes? Since when are you a Melee fighter?” She couldn’t help but let out a sigh of relief as Dipper started to more or less interview her. His curiosity had finally won out against whatever he was feeling at Mabel.

“I can push things with my mind, I can’t like, make them float like Gideon’s creepy amulet did, but I can still move them. Uhm… I don’t really know about the Axes.” She summoned one in a flourish and twirled it idly in her grip. “I just wanted something I could use to protect people, and it
came to me.” Magical girls in cartoons tended to use Batons and Whips and Arrows, so she really was curious why her magic gave her an axe. “But I’m good at using it. It swings like a golf club.” Dipper hummed in thought and walked over to her, tugging at the hem of her skirt once, tapping his fingernail against the crystals lining her stomach. She felt a bit uneasy when his hand strayed to her soul gem.

She couldn’t put her finger on just why though.

“Why does it just stick on your collarbone like that?” Mabel shrugged, a quick ‘I dunno’ noise answering the question for her. Dipper’s hand returned to scribbling notes into the margins of the Journal after a small considering hum.

“So… You gonna let me de-transform or are ya gonna run experiments all night Dip Dop?” Dipper chuckled and stepped away, closing the journal with a definitive snap.

“Sorry, got carried away.” Mabel smiled back at him.

One shower of pink sparks and a flip of her hair later and Mabel was standing in her referee’s sweater again in front of an amazed Dipper.

“Cool huh?”

“Now that’s some Ancient Arcana…” he responded, voice a breathy whisper. Mabel smiled and held out her soul gem to him.

“Wanna check it out?”

His fingers twitched a bit as he held his hand out to accept the tiny pink gift.

She didn’t know why it made her felt a bit strange, to be handing the little gem over to her brother. I mean it’s not like she didn’t trust Dipper to treat it well. She’d trust Dipper with her life.

But she felt strange when he moved the Soul gem away from her, like she was going a bit numb. Her fingers tingled like her hands had fallen asleep, and her toes were much in the same boat.

“So this is the source of your magic?” He rolled it over in his hand once. Mabel nodded and started to rock back and forth on her heels. She was trying not to let on how uneasy she felt. Dipper was taking a leap of faith to trust her about being a Magica and not immediately looking for ways to reverse it, so she should let him hold her Soul Gem.

“Yup. Pretty cool right?” He spun it once in his hand, taking in the way it reflected light.

“What do you think would happen if it broke?” he just sounded curious, not like he was gonna do anything, but Mabel’s gut still froze over at the prospect.

She didn’t actually know what would happen, that much was certain, but if the heart of her wish was broken then wouldn’t that mean her contract would break?

“Then my wish would stop too.” Dipper hummed and handed the Soul gem back to her, his eyes focused in a way that kind of made her skin crawl.

Mabel tried to look as casual as possible as she flicked her wrist to turn her soul gem back into its ring form. She hoped Dipper wasn’t planning on breaking it. Didn’t he see the worth in keeping himself safe? Or maybe he was going to try and force Kyubey to make a contract with him? Even though Kyubey had told him he couldn’t?

Even then it was the same question. Dipper was the smart one. She didn’t know what on Earth he
had eaten when they were babies that made him so smart but she does know that of the both of them he had the chance to do some great nerd things. She was a creative person and she was cute. But as she dominated the art world, Dipper would dominate the sciences.

Why would he risk that to fight evil too?

Nah Dipper was smarter than that.

“No. A hundred times no.”

“Aw! Mabel come on, You’re not being fair!”

“Absotively posolutely no Dipper! You’re not coming on a Witch Hunt with me!”

“Are you trying to imply I can’t take care of myself?”

This argument had been going on almost the entire night. She’d just been playing a game of suction cup darts downstairs to loosen up, Stan had reminded her that that wasn’t a thing, and while she’d been working out in her head just when Stan had started calling her ‘sweetie’, Dipper had interrupted that train of thought with this.

“Dipper I know you can take care of yourself, but Witches mazes are dangerous enough when I’m only watching my own back! You can’t expect to follow me in there and not have me trying to keep an eye on you too.” Mabel sighed, She still didn’t understand why Dipper was so insistent on following her into a maze, the Author had described one well enough in the Journal, so it wasn’t for research purposes like he kept trying to tell her it was.

“Then I’ll watch your back too! We take care of each other don’t we?” Mabel groaned. He was not letting up on this.

Wait…

While there was no way she’d let him go on a Witch Hunt with her, Familiars were pretty weak. She could probably trace down one of them easily, and since there would only be one of them then she wouldn’t have to spread herself too thin looking after Dipper as well as herself.

“Fine. Just a Familiar though, no Full Mazes.” Dipper huffed and puffed for a bit about being able to handle a real Witch, but eventually he agreed.

The Journal still didn’t have much about Witches and their mazes whatsoever anyway. And literally nothing on Familiars.

So it was a win-win right?

Stan was still downstairs, charming whoever the wind blew over to their Shack tonight as they prepared to go. Mabel transformed, and quickly checked her Soul Gem, it wasn’t as bright as it was the night previous, but it was still a healthy enough pink that she wouldn’t have to worry about a magic shortage from one night of Familiar hunting.

Dipper took a bit to pick out whatever weapon he wanted to take along beside the Journal, but eventually decided upon the rusty shovel he used to slice a zombie in half with a couple of weeks previous.

“Ready Dip?” Dipper huffed and took a few practice swipes with his shovel.
“Yeah… yeah I got it. So what are we just gonna walk through the forest until you catch one?” Mabel snickered.

“I was thinking more along the lines of the Magica Express.” Dipper furrowed his brow at her phrase before a look of horrified realization passed over him.

“The Mag… No. No. Mabel Not the Magica Expr-!” Before he could finish his sentence Mabel had grabbed him around the waist and hopped through the open window.

“The Magica Express!” Dipper clung to her shoulders and shrieked as she bounded out the window and into the trees nearby. Mabel’s laughter and Dipper’s screams were the only sounds in the night at first.

But as it turned out it stopped being funny after a bit, and stopped being scary just a little later, so both the screams and the laughter died down relatively quickly.

There weren’t a lot of Witches’ Mazes out tonight. Which was odd, Even though Gravity Falls was a small town it was a bit of a Witch hub. She could find at least three per night if she was paying attention.

But nothing so far.

Was Dipper being here messing with her sensory powers somehow?

Nah, it was probably just a slow night. Anyway, she wasn’t even looking for a Witch in the first place. Familiars were slippery, but far less powerful. So long as she kept her senses sharp and her reflexes quick she would be good.

The smallest shout of ‘lookout’ was all she got in warning before a creature slammed into the tree beside her. It looked like it was cut from textured construction paper and moving of its own accord.

The little creature let out little buzzing noises as it putt-putted through the air on what looked like a mini hot air balloon. The trail it was leaving behind made tiny, easy to vanish walls behind it.

A Familiar.

While it was floating around on its little balloon, Mabel regarded the creature. It looked almost like a fly, with giant beady eyes and a weird hose for a mouth. It didn’t look like it had any arms, but made up for its loss with two sets of legs. Its beady face started to follow her as it moved, a low buzz emanating from its mouth, Or maybe the tiny wings adorned on the edges of its colorful balloon.

Familiars would kill humans without a second thought, it would be best if Dipper wasn’t near by.

After the Familiar passed them by again, trying to lead them to it with its strange walls She set Dipper down onto the branch of the tree. Without saying a word she slipped her twin her grappling hook.

“The second that if things get bad, you get yourself to the ground and run, okay?”

“What? I thought you said Familiars weren’t as danger-”

“Dipper!” She grabbed his shoulder with one hand, the other already summoning her axe. Dipper glanced to the Familiar, and then back to Mabel once, before nodding his head.
“Don’t get hurt.” he said instead, clutching the grappling hook tight in his hands.

“I’ll try not to.” She smiled at him, waited for the tentative return of the gesture, and jumped from tree branch to tree branch until she faced the Familiar.

It must have thought that Mabel was better prey than Dipper, thankfully, because it zipped through the air immediately, headed right for her.

She met it head on, her axe singing through the air as it collided with its balloon. The creature shuddered and ricocheted off of her axe. As though it were made of rubber it bounced around, hitting tree trunks and branches over and over until it righted itself.

Instead of heading toward her again it started to zoom around her, fast enough to replace the walls that it was making before they could fall.

It was trying to box her in.

She grumbled under her breath, Familiars didn’t normally let Magi attack them, they fight for an opening and then run, but it seemed like this one wasn’t fond of following rules.

She held her hand out and at her command a thin pink strip of light surrounded the familiar, and with a flick of her wrist it was sent hurtling toward her. She met it head on, forcing their impacts over and over again.

The creature would bound around for awhile, shiver and shake off her attack, and keep flying, it was barely slowing at all. She growled under her breath, it was tougher than she’d thought.

She had to get rid of it quickly. If it started getting bored it would start to look for easier prey.

And Dipper was still right there.

Okay she had to think about this a bit. Her axes were bouncing off of the creature like it was nothing. She’d hit it from the sides and from above.

So why not below?

She smirked slightly and forced the creature to speed toward her once again. It tried to twitch to the sides, already losing the silent game of chicken she’d called out.

Mere seconds before it would have slammed into her she jumped from her perch.

It slammed into the tree head first as Mabel swung to safety on a different branch further down. Once she had her footing she swiped up with her axe, letting the blade fly she kept the Familiar in place.

Her aim was true and the creature began to spasm as her axe landed its mark on its bottom.

It let out a trill that sounded almost like a scream, which was a welcome, if uncomfortable, change from the droning buzz it had been emitting earlier.

She kept at the creature, hitting it in the bottom of its balloon over and over with her axes, until it eventually fell from its perch in the air.

When the creature hit the ground it half exploded in a shower of sparks. Mabel pumped her fist in the air once in victory.
A quick leap and she was on the ground.

The sound of a rope sliding through a metal pulley system was at first the only indication that Dipper was on his way down behind her.

She turned to her twin with a large grin, who gave her a thumbs up before returning her Grappling hook to her.

Dipper looked around, a type of curiosity on his face that made her happy to see again.

“Where’s the Greif Seed? Don’t familiars have them too?” Mabel shrugged

“Nah, they have to become full Witches before they develop Greif Seeds.” It was no big deal anyway. She’d been planning on saving the Witch Hunt for later anyway, when Dipper was too exhausted to go along with her.

Dipper didn’t look like he agreed with her levity though.

“They don’t have Greif Seeds, remind me why you’d hunt them in the first place if they don’t help your magic or do anything useful?” he pinched his nosebridge, exasperation clear on his face.

“Mabel if you’re straining yourself to show off or something I swear-”

“Dipper calm down! Jeez….” she waved a hand “Familiars have to kill people to turn into Full blown Witches. I’m a superhero, we gotta save everyone!” she puffed out her chest and made sure to tack on, with as much melodrama as possible “And if that means spending night after night fighting for no rewards to protect the people, then that is what I must do.”

Dipper stared at her for a moment, a kind of bewildered skepticism on his face that she’d gotten used to receiving since they were very young.

And then threw his head back and started to laugh.

And Mabel knew that things were gonna be okay.

Chapter End Notes

Oh Mabel, don't you know? Nothing is ever okay in a Madoka Magica story.

Okay, this took a bit longer to figure out, but now that everything is set up, i can use my actual outline and get things rolling.
Chapter 3- He Just Creeps Me Out

Chapter Summary

“Wanna come with me?” It came out before she had the chance to really think about it. Dipper straightened up almost immediately, grin on his face triumphant and excited in a way that had Mabel sincerely worried about her brother’s self preservation instinct for a moment.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The lightest trail of wispy pink magic spiraled around the room, lighting the attic up in a gentle pink glow. Dipper smiled slightly as the wisp brushed against him gently. Mabel grinned tiredly at him from her spot on her bed.

“Mabel, your magic is pushing my hair around.” He warned her in a voice that belayed nothing but amusement. Mabel’s grin got a little wider as she twirled her fingers and made the spindle of magic press against his cheek a little harder. “Come on Mabes, I gotta finish decoding this!” he chuckled as he spoke, So at least she knew he wasn’t focused enough on what he was doing to be irritated at her.

“Awww come on Dipper!” She flicked her wrist and his hat was harmlessly pushed off of his head. “You love it!” Dipper squawked and scrambled to retrieve his hat from the bed.

“Ok seriously though Mabel, can we make it a rule to not use your magic to mess with me while I’m decoding?” His voice went serious in that way that normally just made her more intent to mess with him even more, it wasn’t like he was actually on the verge of a breakthrough at the moment. So why not?

“Psh! No fun. What if my magic is what’ll stop you from getting too swamped and raising the dead again?”

“I’m not doing anything to worry about Mabel… And I said I was sorry about that!”

She blew a raspberry in response.

Silence reigned a little longer after that, Mabel dutifully keeping her magic spindle away from Dipper and instead baiting Waddles to chase it around the room. She snickered to herself when her little piggy let out a frustrated whine when the stream of magic eluded his piggy grasp.

“So why doesn’t Kyubey hang out with you anyway? Isn’t he your ‘animal guardian’?” Mabel tried not to be irritated at Dipper’s clear derision when he mentioned Kyubey. Like, she got it, he was creeped out by the little guy, but she didn’t get why he was so rude! She huffed and made her magic spiral upward. Waddles rose to his hind legs to try and catch it.

“He just goes off and does what he wants most days. Something about only really being needed to take care of the Greif seeds. It’s fine. We already have one adorable animal guardian here!” she lifted Waddles into the air at that, the pig still snapping his jaw at her little magic spindle.
Dipper rolled his eyes. “Well good riddance that creep isn’t welcome here anyway.”

Mabel huffed “What you got against Kyubey anyway Bro-Bro? You still sore cause he wouldn’t let you become a Magical Boy or something? Cause that’s kinda petty.”

“Okay first of all.” Dipper closed the Journal with a quick snap. “It’s not petty to be annoyed with him for making you do all of this alone.” He pinched his lips at her when she heaved a sigh.

“Second of all It’s not even that! He just…. creeps me out.”

“So he just gives you the willies?” At Dipper’s nod she couldn’t help herself.

Of course chortling loudly in the middle of the night wasn’t exactly the best idea, but it was simply too absurd. Her brother was such a loon sometimes. Friends with a Multi-Bear, trained under Manotaurs, fought zombies, but a little talking fox-thing gave him the willies.

“Mabel!” a pillow flew through the air and smacked her clean along the face. She huffed in surprise, lips pinching into a pout before grabbing the pillow and throwing it back at Dipper. He’d thrown down the gauntlet, it was Mabel’s job to pick it up.

It was about fifteen minutes of fake battle cries and the thud of something or another falling over by a missed shot before there was a loud thumping coming out of the floor.

“Lights out you miscreants!” muffled slightly through the wooden planks, but Grunkle Stan’s voice was still distinct. They both quickly quieted down, Mabel’s magic trail fading as they waited in silence.

But when there were no more interruptions from their Great Uncle, Dipper reopened the Journal and went back to decoding. Mabel huffed a breath and stood from the bed.

“Welp, I’m going for a Witch Hunt.” She announced, just quiet enough to not carry through downstairs, but just loud enough for Dipper to hear her clearly.

His eyes darted back up to her and he took a breath, Of course. She mentally prepared herself for another argument between them about bringing him with her, to which she’d immediately shut down and things would get heated and annoying.

“Good luck.” His smile was pinched, Sad and worried. Mabel fought down the hesitation bubbling up that told her it may be better to stay home tonight instead.

She was doing this to be a hero. To protect Dipper and protect anybody who was threatened by witches.

But she can’t just leave him in the dust about this. Dipper was trying so hard to keep her in the loop about mysteries.

“Wanna come with me?” It came out before she had the chance to really think about it. Dipper straightened up almost immediately, grin on his face triumphant and excited in a way that had Mabel sincerely worried about her brother’s self preservation instinct for a moment.

She consoled herself with the fact that she did indeed wish for him to be safe no matter his adventures, She supposed Witch Hunts counted as Adventures. As he started excitedly storing his Shovel and a wooden bat into his backpack she tried not to feel bad about letting her Brother into this side of the supernatural. At least she was prepared magically enough to look after both of them.
She grinned back at him, if still a little unsure, before holding a hand over her ring, sitting snugly upon her finger instead of around her neck, as it should be, and transformed.

Once she was nice and sparkly she offered a hand to Dipper, whom took it with such a look of annoyed resignation she couldn't help but laugh.

At least now that they were both used to this mode of transport, Dipper wasn’t screaming into her ear as she leapt from tree to tree.

Eventually she felt the pull of a Witch in the bottom of her gut, She had to wait until she found a sturdy enough tree to support her and Dipper long enough for the right turn, but she started to track it. Dipper’s arms tightened around her just a little bit, But she felt like she should be thankful he wasn’t half throttling her in the process.

“A Witch?”

“A Witch.” Dipper nodded against her, His backpack shifted a bit in the air, The ridge of the shovel started to dig into her upper arm, but she ignored it as she went up a couple of tree branches to get at the Entrance.

Eventually, she stopped on a branch just sturdy enough to hold herself and her brother as she faced, what looked like a bare tree trunk.

The feeling in her gut, and what she’d seen before, told her otherwise though.

“Mabel? You know there’s nothing there right?”

“Nuh-uh, there’s something.” She kept her grip on Dipper as tight as possible while reaching for the tree trunk with her other hand.

The smallest pink glow spread from the tips of her fingers across the trunk, the littlest sheen of magic swirling about, trying to pinpoint the entrance of the Maze.

Eventually the thin trail of magic started to gather in the center of the tree trunk, just a couple inches above Mabel’s head.

She smiled slightly as her magic faded and a pulse of black energy started to spiral, tiny little tendrils curling around themselves into a shape that looked like a musical note.

She couldn’t hold back the small smile at that. At least the Witch’s Maze would probably be loud and musical.

“Remember.” She turned her head to glance at Dipper. “Don’t argue with me on telling you to hide or run okay?”

Dipper pinched his lips a bit as he contemplated what that could entail. “But I can help! Mabel I do know how to defend myself!”

“I know you do. But Dipper, normal people shouldn’t be in there in the first place. You know that.” Dipper huffed a breath and she was about to tease him for pouting when he nodded.

“Fine. But promise me you’ll keep safe even if I do have to…” he swallowed, like the very idea of running away and leaving Mabel to fight was like bile in his mouth “Even if I do have to run.”

She nodded and pulled her arm tighter around Dipper as she swiped her free hand through the air.
The door was open.

Inside was… well.. she was right about it being musical.

The whole entrance looked and felt like an old abandoned theater. There were posters advertising the witch with gibberish scrawled across them, but the dank dampness of the hall made her afraid to touch them and hand them off to Dipper to decode, lest they dissolve in her hands.

Dipper, unsurprisingly immediately took interest in the posters along the walls. Though his grip on both his shovel and her hand never lessened, he looked like all he wanted was to find out what the scrawl meant.

For a couple of minutes they were walking about in the gloom, the corrupted concerto of loud violin music drowning out their footsteps.

“Are you sure we’re heading in the right direction?” Dipper asked, voice shaky in a way that made Mabel wish she hadn’t offered to take him along.

“Yeah…” Dipper’s hand tightened a little bit around hers. They went through a door just a little bigger than they were and found what looked like the audience area of a play room.

Witches had style, she’d give them that much, but the way Dipper started crowding closer to her when what looked like wooden wheels fell from the roof around them, made her detest the Witch even more.

There was a jolt around them, the world shifting to open up the stage. The main room.

Dipper yelped and released her hand to hold his shovel out in defense. The walls dissolved from the dark gloom into dozens of red spotlights to the front.

A pair of little armored creatures pulled back a pair of blue lace curtains, showing them the full area, and the Witch right smack in Center stage.

The area lit up a giant suit of armor, holding a pair of conductors sticks in its hands, and a mermaid’s tail for legs. It sat on a big platform and swayed back and forth.

She didn’t seem to even notice them when a high trill came out of her helmet. Dipper clutched his head in pain, it must have hurt his ears.

Octavia

Her name was Octavia

Why do Witches even take human names in the first place? What, were they the names of their first victims?

With a flick of its wrist another small horde of wooden wheels spun out from behind the curtains

She had to shove quite a few away from Dipper before he even had a chance to swing his shovel back. Her axe sliced cleanly into the wooden discs, either slicing through them cleanly or splintering on impact.

She blew a small flyaway curl back into her hair as she glanced back at Dipper once to check up on him.
He was smacking at one stray wheel with his shovel, not exactly doing much, it would bounce away and then come back at him, but he hadn’t gotten hurt.

“Need a hand?” She smirked slightly and At Dipper jumping out of the way of the creature she tossed an axe at it.

There was a loud crunch as her axe passed through it cleanly.

They kept at this, Mabel making a clean kill circle around them both and Dipper shoving any wheels she’d miss into it.

Only once the area was clear did they keep moving toward the Witch.

Strange. She hadn’t seen any familiars yet, was this Witch still too young to make Familiars on its own?

The stage was littered with abandoned instruments far bigger than they should be, a flute the size of a school bus was sitting just a few yards away, and a violin was a little behind them now.

The Witch gestured toward them again, what looked like a massive swirl of blue and red ink heading right for them.

Without even thinking she swiped her hand and Dipper was shoved away from the Witches’ blast range, she jumped after him with only a couple of seconds to spare, standing firmly over him as he regained his footing she quickly summoned another axe.

She took a deep breath and could hear her brother mumbling to himself about how she didn’t have to shove him.

“Dipper.” She whispered, barely turning her head, eyes firm on the Witch. “See that giant violin? Take cover behind it for me okay?”

“What? I’m not gonna-!” his hand suddenly was back and at her shoulder, gripping it to try and convince her as he stood straight again.

Of course he’d forget.

“Dipper!” she glared a bit at him over her shoulder. “You promised me.” He looked down to the side for a moment, He opened his mouth, like he was going to argue again, but eventually just nodded.

Mabel couldn’t hold back the sigh of relief as he darted away from her and behind the violin as asked.

Turning back to the Witch fully she summoned another axe for her free hand and started to run toward her.

Not a single spinning wheel sent her way was able to get close before she’d shoved it into a wall or sliced right through it.

But for some reason she wasn’t approaching the Witch anymore. Like there was a bubble around her that kept Mabel from coming near.

She growled and ran back a bit to sit on the mouthpiece of a giant trumpet.

She can’t fight it up close, but maybe she could fight it long range?
She took a breath and threw one of her axes at the creature.

Bingo.

It did close to nothing, but it hit the Witch’s armor with a resolute clang and fell to the ground.

Okay, so she’d be fighting long range.

The Witch raised one of its conductors sticks at her and another wave of blue and red ink came toward her. She held her hand to try and push it out of the way.

No dice. It hit her head on.

As she got blown back, Mabel wondered for a moment if the sensation was hot or cold, she couldn’t really tell, but when the ink had sent her tumbling to the ground the black charred skin and the singed sleeve on her left arm, and the small sheen of frost on her socks spoke that it was a little of both.

There was a scream from behind her, she forced herself to not look back at her brother.

Dipper had to know she was okay, and the best thing for that would be to focus on the fight.

She groaned to herself and threw her other axe at the Witch, immediately summoning another pair. She had to think of a better plan.

But how could she if she didn’t have anything that could get close and actually do damage?

A violet blur caught her eye as someone else darted through the air, faster than she could ever imagine moving. They ended up on the other side of the Witch, a loud, what sounded like a sonic boom came from the purple blur, echoing around her.

The Witch shuddered at the noise, arms ceasing their tempo directing to clutch at her head.

“Run for her now!” She couldn’t recognize the voice, amplified and distorted by the noise magic she was using, but she could make out a head of long blonde hair from the other side of the Witch.

She didn’t need to be told twice, and ran for the Witch.

Surprisingly, she was able to pass through the border the Witch had set up around herself.

Okay, now that she was here, the joints and the tail looked the weakest.

She didn’t know who this other Magica was, but as she hacked at the elbows and shoulders of the Witch, dozens of little knives lit up by a purple glow were perfectly aimed to hit right after her swipes.

The Witch roared and seemed to try and throw Mabel off of her.

Clearly she underestimated the perseverance of Mabel Pines. At one point she’d even finished her grappling hook from her hammer space and coiled it around the Witch’s wrist, keeping herself rooted.

Eventually the Witch was wearing down. Mabel huffed to herself and sliced at the neck once before dismounting and jumping for the other Magica.

She didn’t take more than a second to take in the other girl, blonde hair, purple uniform, held
herself like she was someone important, before pulling a small army of axes around herself.

“Fire everything.” she huffed.

Axe after axe combined with a shower of knives and the rattle of noise magic, and eventually, in one flash and clatter, it was over.

Mabel took a few deep breaths, thankful it was over, before she turned to thank her fellow Magica. Pacifica.

She was standing next to Pacifica Northwest as the Witches Maze crumbled around them both.

The blonde heiress looked at her with a mix of disgust and disbelief, fists clenching around a pair of throwing knives in either hand. Speaking of which, she was surprised for a moment that the other Girl’s Magica uniform looked so different from her own.

Pacifica’s uniform was sleek and dark where Mabel’s was puffy and bright. She had some sort of raised collar that dipped into a V-neck, and a sleeveless uniform, made up for with unattached stripey sleeves that went down to her wrists. Her top was made of two big sashes crossing over each other. The gap between the two x’s the pair of sashes made exposed her stomach, and her soul gem, which looked like it was in the shape of an animal, but she couldn’t tell what it was exactly, right over her navel.

The closest thing to ‘cute’ that was on her uniform, besides the stripey socks and combat boots (both in the same shades of purple as the rest of her uniform) was a pleated skirt with a little bit of lavender lace at the bottom. That and her head accessories, a pair of giant purple hairclips and silver earrings in the shapes of giant rounded triangles.

She shouldn’t be surprised that Pacifica’s Magica uniform looked all sleek and cool on her. She was just surprised that the Northwest girl had even had a wish to make to Kyubey in the first place.

She glared a little harder at Mabel.

“What are you doing here.” She demanded, taking a step toward Mabel, just a little more confrontational than she was comfortable with.

As the forest started to come back around them, she could see Dipper from the corner of her eye start to run over, picking up the Grief Seed with him.

“Fighting a Witch… you helped me didn’t you?”

“I didn’t know it was you! What are you even doing here?” She was shouting now.

Dipper had just gotten near, and Mabel tried not to take a defensive stance when the rich girl’s eyes immediately darted to him.

“And the nerd brother’s here too...What a surprise!” she said in a way that didn’t sound surprised at all “You’d drag normal people in this too huh? Is that really how little you get what you thrust yourself into?” Her gaze immediately darted back to Mabel, a kind of venom that was unlike anything she’d ever used on the brunette before.

Pacifica always looked at Mabel like she was beneath her, but now she just looked angry. Angry at an equal.
“What do you mean? I know how dangerous witches are.” Dipper chimed in before she could defend herself. “I begged Mabel to take me along! You’re just jealous you don’t have a brother to watch your back!” He held the Grief Seed out for Mabel to take. She smiled gratefully at Dipper before taking it.

Pacifica groaned, like this entire experience was nothing but trouble.

“Why would I be jealous?! People die in Witches’ mazes! Exposing yourself to their magic will just make it easier for them to curse you!”

“Dipper knows spells and magicky stuff better than anyone, he’d find a counter curse in his Journal in no time!” Mabel huffed proudly, Dipper puffed up his chest at the compliment. Pacifica on the other hand, was not as impressed, she reached a hand up to pinch her nose bridge.

“It’s not that kind of curse! People can die Pines! Witches can influence people through Curses, they can make them commit mass murders and suicides if they want to! There is nothing to counteract that than getting rid of the Witch!” She let out a quick groan“ Why am I even explaining this to you?!”

for a moment the air went still around them.

“What?” It felt like the floor had given out underneath her. What Pacifica was trying to say, that this somehow wasn’t just fighting Witches and saving the people that wander in the mazes… That can’t be real… Pacifica was just lying to scare Mabel… right?

“You thought this was some Magical Destiny Sailor Moon garbage didn’t you? This isn’t a cartoon.” She spat out, voice as sharp as one of her knives.

There was a long silence as Mabel kept trying to process what she’d been told.

“How many people have died since you became a magical girl?” Pacifica snorted.

“None, and I intend to keep that record.” Pacifica wilted after a moment, as the shock started to pass for Mabel she suddenly very much wanted to comfort the other girl. “But you don’t know disturbing until half of the Manotaur clan is chasing you down because you threw out an oil drum they were going to burn themselves alive with.” Dipper sucked in a breath at the mention of the mythological creatures.

“Wait… Pacifica, you know about the mystery stuff in Gravity Falls? Like, beyond the Little golf jerks.” Pacifica scoffed.

“I have since I made my contract, I just keep quiet about it.”

Mabel started to wring her hands together, the pressure not the way it normally is with the lack of friction from her gloves. She took a deep breath, the question building up in her throat.

There were a lot of Witches in Gravity Falls...

“Were you always alone before I made a contract?” If the way She immediately turned away from them was any indication, she was.

“There were a few passers by, never stayed long. Witches tend to come here on their way up to Portland or down to San Fransisco. Something about Wind Currents.” she pulled a strand of hair behind her hair clips.
She’d been alone this whole time, nearly dying probably more than she and Dipper ever had.

Mabel pressed the Grief Seed to her Soul Gem, making sure it didn’t remove all of the black gunk, but just enough to be considerably healthy again.

Once she was taken care of she handed the Grief Seed to the other Magica.

“Help each other if we run into each other?” She smiled slightly. Their rivalry was over, but they weren’t necessarily friends.

Pacifica looked up at her, one of her hands raising up to grab at her upper arm, just at the top part of her sleeve things.

“Most Magica are ‘everyone for themselves’. I’ve had to fight a few because they wanted my kill.” The blonde huffed, a kind of hesitance that made it look more like she was convincing herself that it was okay to do the opposite instead of proving it to her.

But she reached out and took the Grief Seed from Mabel, and pressed it to her stomach.

A small purple glow started to spread around them as her Soul gem was cleaned. Pacifica took a deep breath and tossed the Grief Seed over her shoulder.

The sound of paws against the pine needles made Mabel look over the other girl’s shoulder.

And there it was. Kyubey had pretty casually caught the Grief Seed and already stowed it as Dipper puffed up, she could hear her brother grumbling to himself as he marched over to the fuzzy creature.

“Alright you beady eyed creep, You didn't tell the full story about all of this.” He glared at the creature and pulled his shovel out from his backpack again.

Mabel worried for a moment he’d attack the little creature, but Kyubey remained calm.

“I told Mabel Pines what she wished to know before she faced her opponent, When Witches Curses were encountered I would have explained them to her. Pacifica Northwest simply happened to have told her before I had the chance.”

“What else have you been keeping from my sister you little..”

“I assure you Dipper Pines, everything of current necessity has been shared with your sister and yourself.”

“Isn’t he just the worst?” Mabel jumped when she heard Pacifica speak to her as Dipper kept trying to get Kyubey to speak more. “Dances around the truth so much you’d think it was a sport.”

Mabel turned to look at the other girl, confused for a moment when she realized that the other wasn’t looking away from the argument, nor had her mouth moved at all.

“When we’re in close enough range to each other we can use Kyubey as a middleman and talk with thoughts only.” Pacifica glanced over at her for only a moment to give her an unimpressed look.

“Surprised he didn’t show you that.”

“Does he really hate talking about this stuff so much?” she asked, and wondered for a moment if it were possible to control the volume of your thoughts too.

“Yeah, ugh it’s so annoying.” She rolled her eyes “There are things I know I haven’t figured out yet
and he’s just keeping his stupid mouth closed. You’d think he’s hiding some sort of horrible secret from us to make contracts in the first place or something.” Mabel snickered at that.

“What’s so funny?”

“That, just… I’m picturing Kyubey like a mad scientist, and the lab coat is all trailing on the floor, and his goggles can’t go over his ears.” Pacifica’s shoulders twitched at that, accompanied by what sounded like a snort of surprised laughter.

Did she get Pacifica Northwest to laugh at a silly thing?

Well now she’d seen everything.

“Thanks for sharing the Grief Seed… or something like that.” Pacifica tugged at one of her sleeves slightly, “I guess of everyone to make a deal with Kyubey, you’re not the worst.”

She waved, and with a small hop into the tree branches above she was gone.

After waiting for a bit, just to make sure she would be out of hearing range, Dipper turned to raise a brow at Mabel.

“Pacifica Northwest is a Magica too...I feel like associating her with Justice may break a couple laws of nature.”

Mabel chuckled a bit and shook her head.

“Nah, I guess Magica don’t have to be for justice. Must be what makes me super special!” she puffed up her chest, bright smile covering up her swirling thoughts.

“Yeah but like, what would she even have wished for? Couldn’t she just solve whatever problems were in her life by waving some money at it?” Dipper chuckled and looked to the side ruefully.

Eventually though he offered his arm to Mabel. She quickly understood what he was suggesting and grabbed hold of her brother before taking off into the trees.

As she hopped from tree branch to tree branch she let herself think.

She supposed she had only been at this for a little over a week. She had no idea how long Pacifica had been doing this for, But she’d been doing it for long enough to have seen thing Mabel never had.

But what had she wished for anyway?

Anyway that didn’t matter, she had bigger things to think about.

Yes she’d known that people can die at the hands of Witches, but she’d had no idea how big of a threat they truly were…

Would the fight ever end for girls like her and Pacifica?

More importantly, would she ever have time to truly do the things she likes to anymore?

What about Grenda and Candy? If she was so busy hunting Witches and keeping people safe would she have time to still hang out with them?
Would she ever be able to hold down the summer romance she’d had no luck with so far?

Would she ever be able to hold down a romance at all?

She stopped in her tracks at that.

They were only a couple of trees away from the clearing that the Shack was in, Dipper looked over at her, a weird mix between worried and annoyed.

“Uhm, Mabel? The Shack’s right there…”

“I can’t do Summer Romances anymore.” It wasn’t a blatant realization, more a fact. Which it was. It was a simple equation, less free time, less time to chase boys, less time chasing boys, less chances to get a date. She could do math too when it came to the important stuff.

Dipper chuckled slightly, a kind of nervous trill against the still air.

“What? That’s ridiculous, since when do you give up any shot at romance?”

“Since I realized that people can die from something other than a Witches Maze… Dipper, I have to do more than just hunt down Witches now, I’ve gotta like, wander around and make sure no one is being influenced by them too… I might not have time for Grenda and Candy anymore either…” her voice caught at the end of that. the idea of abandoning her friends in the middle of summer enough to choke her up a bit.

“Or…” Dipper trailed off, trying to find a way to phrase his response. “Or you could just leave that stuff to Pacifica?” He didn’t sound very behind the idea, he was probably just saying it to try and cheer her up, but Mabel still reeled back at the thought of leaving another Magica in the dust like that.

“Dipper you know I can’t do that.” Dipper sighed slightly.

“Yeah I know. But c’mon, just because you won’t have as much free time anymore, doesn’t mean you won’t have any right? You can still work out your summer romance if you want to.” He shrugged at her, and smiled a bit, even if it was a little uncertain.

Mabel couldn’t help but grin back, “You really think so?” He wasn’t one for optimism, so when he was being positive for her sake she’d best respond to it. Mabel tightened her grip on Dipper’s waist before bouncing back through the rest of the trees and cleanly into the attic of the shack.

Her boots barely clacked down onto the floor before Dipper was pulling away from her, still somewhat indignant about this form of travel.

“Yeah, Totally. Since when does Mabel Pines let anyone tell her she can’t date?” Mabel chuckled slightly at that. “Never I guess.” She gave him a light thump to the shoulder. “Thanks bro-bro.”

“Ah, no problem Mabes. For Magica stuff, I’m always here when you need me.” Mabel nodded at Dipper and detransformed in a twirl.

“Well now I’m off the clock so I can go back to helping you with mysterie-” A yawn punctuated her words almost immediately. “After we get some sleep that is.” Dipper laughed in surprise at her and took a couple of steps backward to sit on the edge of his bed.
“Yeah Yeah, Normal people need sleep, I’ve heard it before. Just let me write everything down.” With a small click of a ballpoint pen Dipper was scribbling something down into his little notebook. She supposed an entire Witches Maze would end up being too long to fit in the margins of the Journal.

“Need any light?” she lifted a hand as she flopped back onto her own bed. A Pink glow started to shine out from her soul gem. Dipper hummed once in thanks before continuing to write.

“Hey, what would you call Pacifica’s Special Ability? Sonic Frequency?”

“Maybe just Sound Magic.”

“Well sure go the easy route.” Mabel laughed a bit at that, taking a moment to silently stare into the darkness and let her thoughts spiral.

Was Pacifica her top choice on her list of people she wanted to join her Magical Girl SuperStar Team? No.

Was she upset at this turn of events? Surprisingly, no.

She supposed there were scores of girls she’d rather not have to deal with being on a Magical Girl team with. At least she and Pacifica had buried the Hatchet.

But that still brought up the question of what the other girl had even wished for. Pacifica Northwest had everything going for her. Rich, the kind of popular that had everyone nice to you, even if you weren’t really nice to them, she looked good in almost every outfit she would wear.

What made her think she’d need a miracle to happen?

But then again it wasn’t her business. If Pacifica wanted to tell her what she wished for she would.

Which may be possible, since they’d be working together an awful lot, especially if Pacifica really was as serious about Saving people under Witches’ Curses as she said she was.

Eventually she heard the telltale click of Dipper’s pen being put away and the smallest cracking of her brother’s joints as he stretched and yawned.

“Welp, I’m going to get some summer reading done and go to sleep. Big Day Tomorrow Mabel, Get the cork board ready.”

“Yeah.” She called out listlessly as her pink glow faded, only to be replaced by the small shine of Dipper’s book light.

She glanced at her brother from the corner of her eye, he was reading another of the Sibling Brother’s Books. He’d finished the Caped Capers awhile ago, and was now working on what looked like it said ‘the case of the Nabbed Nougat’ What was with that book series and stolen food?

Waddles snuffled at the foot of her bed, long since passed out from a full day of being a pig.

Eventually, with Dipper only barely audibly mumbling to himself about the newest twists in his book, she fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes
And surprising absolutely No one as it turns out Pacifica is also a Magica!

And the appearance of a Familiar Witch.
Chapter 4- I don't have time to argue

Chapter Summary

Just because she wished for him to be safe it didn’t mean she was comfortable with the idea of some Witch getting into his head and messing with him. Bill was already trying to do that and she didn’t need to help that isosceles menace with anything.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Though McGucket wasn’t the Author, he wasn’t a complete dead end. An assistant who just needed some time to remember. It was enough to make Dipper double check everything in the journal to be a million times sure he didn’t miss anything.

Mabel had gained something from the event too, she didn’t need to forget to move on.

Losing Mermado for good had done something in her head.

She had told Dipper she’d promise to keep trying for summer romance, but if fate itself didn’t want her to have a summer love that stayed, then why waste time better used protecting people?

Besides, just because she would stop drooling after boys (or rather, she would stop going out of her way to drool over them) didn’t mean she’d have to stop hanging out with Grenda and Candy, or mystery hunting with Dipper Soos and Wendy.

Dipper had encouraged her to keep trying, but in the end it would be best if she just stopped.

Easier on everyone involved really.

It was still a little disheartening to think that she’d end her romance hunting with another failure.

Of course the evening hadn’t been without its struggles, she still felt the slightest curl of guilt in her gut that refused to alleviate when she remembered how cruelly she’d fought against normal humans. How savagely she’d slammed Bud Gleeful and Toby Determined, into the walls of the Blind eye’s hideout just a few hours previous.

Grunkle Stan wasn’t home When they’d all gotten back to the Shack after depositing McGucket at the dump, despite her insistence that he could probably stay with them for the night. So Soos and Wendy had stayed over for a couple more hours and made sure they got some form of dinner.

Soos and Wendy of course, had to be told she was a magical girl once they were back, and the more pressing matters had been taken care of.

Wendy had been so excited for her, being a real life Revolutionary Girl Utena, and Mabel couldn’t help but feel the littlest bit of dread in her gut at the reference. Soos had been a little more worried. Of course his stint in the world of Magical heroes was ongoing, unlike Wendy who’d only recently gotten out of it. He’d warned her that a lot of those shows were only cutesy and fun if you look at it at surface level. It can get dark and she should be careful.
She didn’t have the heart to tell him it had already gotten dark for her.

Soos made some good Quesadillas for them for dinner, but eventually he wished them a good night and Dipper and Mabel made sure to lock up before heading up to the attic.

“Those Blind Eye guys were off the deep end.” She huffed with the lightest laugh. Dipper hummed a bit, paging through the Journal again, but this time with just a little more care, the newest lead in his hunt for the Author making him just a little more distracted, rereading to check for something he may have missed. Mabel hummed to herself, biting the inside of her cheek as she debated what to do next.

She should be going on a Hunt right now, She could feel a presence nearby, and she didn’t want anyone to get hurt if she didn’t take care of the Witch as soon as possible.

“I’m heading off.” Dipper furrowed his brow. After a moment of silence he nodded and closed the Journal. Mabel watched for a moment as she prepared herself for another argument about not taking Dipper. Yes she’d taken him on a hunt last time, and a familiar hunt before that, but if she’d known what Witches could do to people she never would have ever done so.

Just because she wished for him to be safe it didn’t mean she was comfortable with the idea of some Witch getting into his head and messing with him. Bill was already trying to do that isosceles menace with anything.

But surprisingly instead of grabbing his shovel and stashing the Journal inside his vest, as always, he opened up his trunk and put the Journal there, hidden amongst the rarely touched yet disturbingly similar orange shirts and grey shorts.

Before she could process the idea of Dipper putting away what had quickly become his most prized possession over the Summer, her Brother held up a finger to indicate her waiting and darting downstairs.

“Gimme like three seconds!”

She should probably head off now, just avoid the argument and face her brother’s passive aggressive wrath for later, But he wasn’t making any sense.

May as well watch and see what he was planning on doing.

The heavy thudding of his footsteps made her feel a bit squeamish. Dipper was always really light on his feet, so he must be carrying something mighty heavy to make his footsteps so loud.

A mace.

He was carrying a mace.

She’d almost forgotten they even had a mace in the shack. She knew Grunkle Stan had a lot of guns somewhere, and she’d seen a crossbow once that had made her think ‘Grappling hook 2.0’, but she’d completely forgotten there was any melee weaponry in the shack.

Wait wasn’t the last time she saw that…

“Didn’t you lose that thing when you were capturing the Gremloblin?” Dipper waved a hand, arms locked around the handle, like the thing he was carrying couldn’t put a dent in his skull if he handled it wrong.
“Nah, hid it under the porch after I got back from that. Didn’t want anyone calling Child Services or something. I figured things are getting more intense may as well use a real weapon now.” Mabel hummed in understanding.

She understood where he was coming from in getting a real weapon.

Didn’t change the fact that he wasn’t going, but she understood.

“I’m not taking you.”

Dipper’s response was so immediate and predictable she felt like it might have been scripted.

“So what, you get to wish for my safety and risk your life to fight creatures of darkness every night, but the second I want to use the ability you gave me to help, I’m the reckless one?” His eyes widened after that, like he was surprised at his own words.

She knew she probably shouldn’t feel so offended at that, but she felt her gut boil just a bit.

“You’re not coming with me!” it came out as far more snappish than she intended, but it did the job of silencing Dipper for a moment, and he did lower the mace to the ground in surprise, so she supposed it worked well enough.

“Just because we got lucky with Pacifica showing up and helping with the Witch doesn’t mean it’ll happen again and again and I can’t afford to look after you too when I go out!”
Dipper’s brow furrowed a bit, he looked upset, some part of her said she should probably either back off or pull the jokey jokes out lest, her brother get mad at her for real.

“You really don’t think I can hold my own in a Witches’ Maze, do you?” his fists started to clench at his sides. He looked about ready to hole himself up in some part of the shack and not talk to anyone for a few hours.

Wait...

Maybe that was what she needed to do…

“No, You can’t! Witches aren’t anything you’ve dealt with without me and you know you never would have if I didn’t fight them. My wish means they won’t kill you, but if you think that’s all they can do…” She took a breath, she’d really need to hurt Dipper’s pride to get him mad enough to ignore her.

“Then you haven’t been paying attention and you aren’t as smart as you want to be!” It was the lowest blow she could think of. His Intelligence was always a bit of a soft spot for her brother, and she felt bad that it had to come to that.

But a Dipper that’s mad at her wants nothing to do with whatever they were fighting over, and in this case that’s Witch Hunts.

As she predicted, his chest puffed up in affront, his cheeks churned scarlet, and his fists clenched around the hems of his shorts.

She probably just opened up a massive can of worms, but for now he wouldn’t be following her anywhere anytime soon.

She just hoped he’d forgive her.

“Well Fine! If that’s the thanks I get for worrying about my sister, then maybe I shouldn’t bother!” He stiffly marched back over to his bed and turned away from her, facing the wall, hunched over and angry.

She tried not to let the fact that she’d intentionally picked this fight show through as she climbed up the nightstand to open the window.

“Maybe you shouldn’t.” She was a little surprised at herself about how brutal she could force herself to be. Especially in the face of intentionally making her brother upset.

Her heel caught on the window sill, and she took the moment to look back at her brother one last time in the lantern light.

His shoulders were trembling a bit, from anger or hurt she didn’t know. Her own heart clenched at that. She hated making Dipper feel bad.

But if playing the Mean Ungrateful Sister meant that he’d keep himself safe, then she’d just have to deal.

The Witch today smelled of sugar.

That was her first observation as she’d entered the Maze.

Mabel’s mouth began to water at the wide opening of the entrance. The sweet smell so deeply
entrenched in the air she’d almost forgotten for a moment she was in a Maze and was contemplating hunting down the source.

Though the cave entrance was dark and damp, the very smell in the air made her crave candy. She had some of her Summerween stash still back at the Shack didn’t she? She’d make sure to check, if not she still had a bag of cherry Fizz Wizz in her suitcase if she remembered right.

And then she entered the first real room of the Maze, and all thoughts of eating were strangled in the multicolored filth of the labyrinth.

Little jars lined the walls, small pastries and candies enclosed within, they were probably fake sure, but she could still consider them pretty. But coming from every last jar was the sickly smell of long rotted pastry and loser candy. The constant assault contrasted so harshly against her eyes and nose, combined with the peppy circus music in the background, Mabel felt a bit sick from just being in this room.

No point in staying in this labyrinth for longer than she needed to then.

She took a deep breath through her mouth, tried not to gag as the taste of rot added in to her sensory overload, and started to dash through the room at top speed.

Get in, fight witch, get out, work on apologizing to Dipper while simultaneously proving that she would be better off hunting on her own so he wouldn’t join her on hunts that would risk his mind as much as his body.

Sounded easy enough.

Besides, it would be for the best, she got herself into this, she didn’t need to drag him down with her.

Even if he started to think that the magic was going to her head.

She had no time for any familiar that wasn’t directly in her way now though. Nothing more than a quick shove or a slice of her axe to keep them away from her as she ran though.

As she’d reached the end of the room and reeled back a leg to kick the door down, she could have sworn she’d heard the sounds of a fight behind her.

The same clang of metal against hard candy that she’d been hearing in her own attacks.

Pacifica? Was Pacifica right behind her and launching her little knives at the hard candy familiars?

Well she supposed it didn’t matter, if Pacifica was indeed behind her and it wasn’t just echoes of her own struggle than she’d make herself known by the time they reached the main room.

Almost immediately after kicking down the door of the Maze and entered the next room she was swarmed by another set of familiars.

So she took an extra moment to inspect the little buggers.

They were primarily black, but had little splotches and spirals of neon colors all over them. One massive eye in the center of their heads and little drills for mouths. they fluttered around like little bees, they’d brush up every so often against the pictures of sweets that still lined the walls, ‘pollinating’ as they wandered about.

They had formed a wall around her to stop her from going any further. So Mabel huffed a breath
and gripped her axe a bit tighter.

The fight went relatively smoothly, she forced the creatures to let her through as she crossed the room. The lights dimming to two or three giant dinner candles and a dark red bridge that looked almost like an IV bag.

This Witch had probably formed near a hospital.

As she’d hit the halfway mark of the room she’d heard the sounds of struggling again.

And now that she was listening for it she noted that it sounded nothing like how Pacifica’s knives would work. It sounded like way more sloppy imitation of her own fighting style than anything else.

So that’s what she was dealing with…

She’d handled an Imitation Witch once before, her second Witch after the Chess one, and it sounded a bit like that. Trying so hard to mirror her actions it would follow her through the maze.

But even when she turned around at the end of the bridge, the area starting to glow strangely from the falling medicine around her she decided to give it one more chance.

“Pacifica?”

Nothing.

Well, she supposed the Witch wouldn’t want to reveal itself until she made it to the main room.

She’d just have to draw it out before then.

The next area she’d enter would be the set before the main room. The entrance.

She took a deep breath, was briefly surprised at how easily she’d gotten used to the rotted sugar smell of the labyrinth, and destroyed the door with a clean sweep of her axe.

It looked like she was in the center of a giant cake, stacks upon stacks of spongy white angel food lined the walls, a small horde of familiars marching upon every tier of white frosting.

May as well clear the room so the Witch will face her.

Her main home was the top of the cake she knew it.

Mabel stomped her boot into the ground once, swiping her axe so it collided with the ground in the same place.

She stiffened her knees and began to draw an arc in the ground with the toe of her boot. She closed her eyes and focused on summoning as many axes as she could in one shot.

A small arsenal of five appeared in front of her, Five spares and the sixth axe still in her hand.

Mabel smiled slightly as the horde of Familiars started to reel back in anticipation. She took a breath and picked up one of her spare axes in her free hand.

Now that she was actually concentrating on beating them, these little punks were easy to destroy. Just a jab to their creepy eyes and a slash against their backs.
She’d beat the Witch lickety split if the familiars were any sign.

Speaking of the Witch, she could hear it fumbling around behind her. Was it still copying her movements?

Well.. if the Witch was going to charge her with familiars, she may as well return the favor.

The next familiar that came her way wasn’t even touched with her axe. There was no point in it. She instead jumped out of its way and used her magic to send it rocketing to where she once was.

The Witch was probably right behind her at this point, so she’d land the sucker unaware.

There was a crashing noise, the familiar’s squeals of surprise, and a scream.

A familiar scream.

Mabel’s blood ran cold.

Dipper.

Turning to face her brother, she’d moved so quickly she’d almost hit herself in the face with her own hair.

How was Dipper here? Why was Dipper here? Dipper was supposed to be furious at her Why did Dipper follow her into a labyrinth?!

But that didn’t matter, somehow, he’d followed her, and she’d thrown a Familiar in his face.

“Dipper!” Her brother was swinging that darned mace around like a mad man. Trying in vain to copy her fighting style. Maces and axes weren’t the same things though. Was he so determined to prove he could do the same things she could that he’d forget something like that?

Dipper looked up from the familiar he was fighting, distracted from his opponent by her.

She was already running across the room toward him. But the Familiar reeled back before she had the chance to reach him. Slamming itself into her brother’s side.

Mabel wasn’t sure who screamed first, Dipper or herself.

But for a moment she saw red.

Nothing mattered

Not the fact that Dipper was currently mad at her

Not the fact that he was there in the first place.

Not the fact that once she raced back for Dipper dozens of other familiars starte dto join the fight.

Nothing mattered beyond getting to her brother.

By the time she’d calmed down enough to actually look around she noticed she was right beside Dipper. The familiar that had attacked him nothing more than a stinking pile of pastry rot.

In fact she’d cleared the entire room in one go.

Dipper was hunched over, Mace dropped and forgotten on the ground. He looked up at her and for
a moment Mabel couldn’t pin down his expression.

He looked like he was still mad at her but he was scared, and he was hurting, badly.

She didn’t bother talking as she grabbed his shoulders to straighten him up.

His hands were clenched over a part of his thigh in pain. Thin trails of blood making their way through his fingers and down his leg.

Oh this Witch was gonna pay.

But for now…

Mabel was yelling even as she was untying the large ribbon around her middle.

“What are you doing here?” Her voice was shrill and angry. It better have been. She hoped it sounded as horrified as she felt.

Dipper grunted in pain as she yanked his hands away to wrap his leg up.

She could heal him if she focused hard, but they weren’t exactly in a safe enough area to do so.

Even still her brother tried his hardest not to look hurt at all and glared back at her.

“You said I wouldn’t be able to handle myself in a Witch's Maze, so I’m here, proving you wrong. And I could have wrapped that on my own you know.” he tugged his leg away after she’d tied the makeshift bandage up; but almost immediately he hissed in pain and staggered a bit.

Mabel tried not to grab him to help him back up. Dipper would just tug away from her and probably hurt himself even more if she tried.

She groaned a bit, annoyance already starting to come to fore at her stubborn brother. Mabel took a breath, about to insist that Dipper hide behind one of the giant cookies that lined the room.

But apparently the Witch was tired of waiting. The ground began to rumble as they were taken to the top of the cake.

“Get down.” She glared at him, jaw tightening into a grimace when her brother glared back.

“No.”

“Dipper I don’t have time to argue!” They were already being speedily elevated to the top. The final room. She wished for once that the witches would let her get to them in her own time

“So just let me help and you won’t have to argue!”

“No! You won’t be able to handle a Witch head on!”

“Mabel!” Dipper crunched his shoulders up to his neck, that thing he did when he was too frustrated to speak right. “Just because you let this magical destiny garbage go to your head doesn’t mean I’m not gonna give you a reality check! I can fight too!”

That shouldn’t have stung as much as it did.

“Not against witches!”
Then again maybe he was right.

She probably wouldn’t have been able to be so mean on purpose before all this.

Maybe becoming a Magi did do something to her...

And then there they were.

Like she’d assumed the final arena was on top of the cake. Every few meters or so there were little mounds of candy or cookies that could probably be used to hide behind.

Tall chairs and tea tables were dotted all over the top of the cake like scattered birthday candles. The buzzing that Witches used to speak began before she could even see the creature.

She glanced back once at her brother to try and gesture him behind a giant shortbread cookie not too far away. But he wasn’t even looking at her, Gaze drifting around the area suspiciously.

His jaw was clenched, the only sign he was anywhere near in pain, either from his leg or the sound. Mabel groaned as she fought back the urge to forcibly shove him behind the closest thing to a shield that existed in this maze.

She might just hurt him more.

Then, as if rising from the ground itself, the Witch appeared.

She was smaller than Mabel would expect. A little pink creature with an almost clown-like face. Its head was shaped in the way that some old-timey candies had their wrappers.

Charlotte. Its name was Charlotte.

She took a deep breath and glared back at Dipper one more time, silently begging him to take cover.

He just picked his mace back up and gripped it tighter.

She had to convince herself not to scream in frustration.

Fine. If Dipper wanted to be stupid and keep fighting, likely make his leg even worse. Then she should at least try and draw most of the fire.

The Witch was barely moving at all as she drove the handle of her axe into its middle.

Seems like it’ll be quite the easy kill, so that was good.

She supposed it’d be okay to let her mind wander a bit while she pummeled this Witch into the dust.

Dipper was being such an idiot, why would he follow her here? He was supposed to not want anything to do with her for the rest of tonight!

Why isn’t he hiding like he should be? He was still swinging that darned mace about wildly, aimed at one of the last familiars. He was barely ever even hitting the thing.

And every so often he’d have to stop to grab at his leg. Blood was steadily soaking through the makeshift bandage. The familiar wouldn’t even attack him, Maybe because it was curious? Maybe even something weirder like it believed in a fair fight?
She drove her axe into the Witch’s head.

How on Earth did he get hurt in the first place for that matter? Safe and Sound meant Safe and Sound! Did Kyubey lie about her wish to get her to make a contract?

She hoped not...

Then how in Cosmos’ name did Dipper manage to get a drill in his thigh that was still bleeding?

It's not like following her on hunts would be unique against her wish or anyth-

Her thought process froze at that. The Witch had been tossed into the air, but she halted. Stopping herself from throwing what should have been the finishing blow.

Her wish had been to protect Dipper on his adventures.

He had wanted nothing to do with Witches Mazes until she started hunting.

Witch hunts are her adventures, not his.

As the Witch hit the ground it started to open its little mouth. Something far far bigger than should have been able to fit in its little body slithered out. Mabel didn't know what it was supposed to be, an eel, or a leech thing….

Its face was clown like, much like the little Witch shell, with a drill for its nose like the familiars it kept.

It wasn’t even looking at her anymore.

Her legs were moving before she’d even really comprehended what was going on.

Her left hand was held out in front of her willing, demanding, her power to gain enough force to affect the Witch. Her right hand as still clenched around one of her axes.

Her lungs burned, but the raw fear charging her blood with adrenalin made her put her own problem aside.

Dipper hadn’t even seen the Witch coming yet. The horrid thing was far too fast.

He was still swinging his mace at a familiar as the Witch raced toward him.

Her legs were so tiny, this thing didn’t have to obey the laws of speed. But she took what little breath was still in her lungs and pumped her legs faster than any twelve year old could travel.

The Witch opened its gaping maw, Dipper finally realized what was coming toward him, eyes wide in horror.

She threw her left hand out again to shove him out of the way as she kept running.

The Witch’s jaws closed around her arm.

She hadn’t had much experience with such intense pain before. The closest comparison could only be the time she’d gotten mauled by cats put together with that Tea party obsessed Witch a week ago.

She took a deep breath as the Witch started to open its mouth again, undoubtedly to gobble the rest
of her up.

She could still feel her arm on the inside of the gross thing’s mouth, even with as clouded with pain as the sensation was.

She slammed her axe into its teeth.

The sharp white bone shattered under her assault, a hole where it once gripped her in its jaws.

Her arm slid out limply, another wave of pain washed over her entire left side at the jerk of motion.

Her eyes never strayed from the Witch. There was a light thump somewhere to the side, accompanied by her brother whimpering. Did he just fall? Normally when Dipper fell he made a much louder thump than that.

But she was getting distracted. She couldn’t feel her left arm beyond the searing pain that was already slowly starting to numb itself.

She probably shouldn’t move it much.

She’d have to do something she hadn’t done much of before.

Use her axe with the same hand she’d be using her magic with.

She tried to hold her left hand as close to herself as possible as she drew the creature’s fire toward her.

Every time she’d land a particularly good hit, or forced a table or hard candy to skid across the area and do it for her a new ‘skin’ would come out of the Witch through the mouth.

She’d have to be faster.

Ditching an axe every time it landed a hit and summoning a new one was the quickest way to go about it, they got duller after the first hit and if she kept using them she’d need to to eventually go from one hit to two.

Bouncing on the chairs and tables that littered the top of the cake, drawing the creepy creature to her and launching an axe when it got close enough. Skin after skin she got rid of with a slowly aching right arm, and a numbing left.

Thankfully, before her grip began to falter she’d cut through the last of the Witch’s protective skins.

The monster fell like a dead bird. The weird colored wings on either side of its head going limp as it slammed into the ground.

Mabel took a deep breath and hopped off the table.

Dipper was staring at her, a horror on his face she’d never seen before.

She felt a sick sort of dread in her stomach as she walked toward him a bit. Why on Earth would Dipper be afraid of her? Yeah things got a little intense just now, but that was no reason to be afraid.

Huh… how hadn’t she noticed that before.
For some reason her sense of balance was off, she felt more right heavy than before.

Maybe it was just because she’d been using her right hand so much in this fight it felt heavier.

Another dulling spike of pain raced up her left arm and she let out a small grunt of pain, taking another step toward Dipper.

“Let me see your leg, are you hurt anywhere else?” Dipper’s leg was still sluggishly bleeding, soaking the already scarlet red ribbon as well as the tips of his shorts if they got too close to his wound.

Dipper was leaned back, shoulders trembling a bit, from blood loss no doubt.

He flinched when Mabel reached for him again. If he didn’t still look so frightened she’d think he was still mad at her.

Tears began to pool in his eyes as he opened his mouth to say something.

Now Mabel was starting to freak out.

His eyes kept darting to her left side, what was wrong with her left side? Did she have some nasty bite marks or something?

Weird...She hadn’t even bothered to inspect her own arm after the Witch bit her.

She reached her right hand upward to grab at her left elbow.

She could already feel the blood soaking through from the stump halfway up her upper arm.

Oh… Well that explained a lot.

She could feel the panic trying to uncurl in her gut. She couldn’t let that happen. Dipper needed her to be calm or he’d panic.

Or rather, he’d panic more.

So… She lost her arm? Big deal! She’d healed a lot of cuts on herself before she could probably… Reattach it? Or something? That’ll probably take a lot more magic than she’s used to… Good thing the Grief Seed was still there.

The Maze started to fade around them the stinking smell of rotting sweets mixed with the metal twang of blood.

Mabel took a deep breath and looked around them.

She should find her arm…

Oh! there it was! Right by Dipper’s feet, resting in the newly reappeared fallen pine needles.

Yikes…

She clutched at her arm, Or rather Stump…

You know, It may have been the blood loss but she couldn’t help but find that term funny when referring to a body part…a stumpy stump arm…
Cute.

Anyway, she should check on Dipper first though. She was clearly alright right now, but he might not be.

“You okay? How’s your leg?” The noise he made could have been considered a laugh and could have been considered a sob

“My Leg?! Your arm got ripped off and you’re worrying about my leg?!” His voice was getting louder, more shrill. Panic slowly starting to lace his tone.

Okay maybe that was a dumb question…. 

Before he had the chance to flinch away from her she grabbed his shoulder and pulled him into a quick hug. Just enough to quell his panic, but not long enough to let him fall apart.

Her left arm had already stopped a lot of its bleeding, and she probably should reattach it before it starts getting gross.

“Okay, if you Insist. I can probably reattach it, but I need your help.” Dipper gave her this sort of helpless look that really made her wish he was back home and angry at her.

She tried to avoid Dipper being mad at her, but oh, this would always be so much worse. It was terrible when she’d first told him she was a Magica, it was terrible when she’d gotten him out of that closet the bullies locked him in when they were ten. It was terrible when she’d gone to the hospital because she’d eaten a puffy sticker, and it was terrible now.

“Dipper, Look, I know it’s scary and it’s gross, but I need you to hold my arm to my body.”

He looked like he was going to puke just at the idea, but eventually he slowly started to crouch down and reached for her arm.

“This… this is my fault.” He tentatively poked her elbow, flinched back as though it would start moving on its own, and gingerly, like holding a baby, started to lift her arm.

“No it’s not. I was the one who threw my arm out like that.” She quickly plucked her soul gem off of her collarbone; She’d transform back to conserve magic, as she hadn’t done this much healing before, but the sleeve of her sweater would get all bloody.

And she was wearing that fluffy blue one with the clouds on it too.

“You wouldn’t have had to if I just hid like you told me to.” His voice was still wobbling, but they’d have time to scream and cry about her maiming and his injuries once they weren’t maimed and injured.

“Well you wouldn’t have been so determined to prove me wrong if I didn’t pick a fight with you that blew up in my face.”

“You what?” The ripped ends of her arm met with a painful jerk that sent another hot spike of pain across her shoulders and down her ribs.

“Ow… gentle please… and yeah, I wanted you so mad at me you’d want nothing to do with me for the night and avoid a hunt.” She huffed out a breath of air as she held her Soul gem to the place where her arm connected. “Guess I made a bad call huh?”
A weird tingling feeling washed over her left side, the pain began to fade as the bone reattached, then the meat, and last the skin.

Mabel sighed in relief when the process was complete. Yikes, she didn’t wanna do that again.

She wondered idly why she was so calm about the fact that she’d just had her arm ripped off. That probably should have had her freaked out beyond all belief.

Maybe it was shock, maybe it was the fact that if she freaked out Dipper would have freaked out and they’d both be stuck there screaming and bleeding. But she supposed that didn’t matter.

She reached a hand out to Dipper’s leg, her right one, so he wouldn’t freak out too much over her left arm moving around good as new (the fact that it felt good as new would probably harm her case instead of help it)

The same pink glow filled the night once again as she healed up the, probably rather nasty looking, gash in his thigh.

“Okay… That good? Are we good?”

Dipper nodded slightly, and she noted with a small bit of dread that his eyes had started to fill with tears again.

“Hey… hey… It’s okay.” Slowly, to not startle him any worse, Mabel wrapped her arms around her brother’s shoulders.

Dipper’s arms almost immediately latched around her waist, and that weird huff of air that could be laugh and could be a sob happened a couple of more times until he finally leaned his head on her (thankfully non-bloody) shoulder.

And now he was actually sobbing.

His hands fist into her vest, chest heaving, hands shaking. She couldn’t make out what he was trying to say when he did try to talk, but she could make out fragments of her name and things that sounded kind of like ‘all my fault’ and ‘sorry’.

She could have sworn she heard ‘just trying to protect me’ at one point.

She should probably de-transform…

Instead of a shower of sparks, her blood stained Magi uniform simply melted away into her sweater and skirt, thankfully cleaning off her skin as well.

She hushed and shushed, the same thing mom did when either of them came to her in tears. Her right hand gently removing his hat so she could comb her fingers through his hair, the other stroking his back.

“I’m okay, You’re okay, we’re okay.”

She hoped she wasn’t lying to him.

Well Today had been a bit of a fiasco.

But She’d gotten Dipper to get some sleep, her brother didn’t usually get so upset, so it was very important to take care of him when he did. And in this case, that meant forcing him to change into
his, barely used to still clean, Pajamas, and getting him to bed.

But she had some questions that needed to be answered.

She should have been right there with Dipper though, trembling, rubbing her arm every other second to make sure it was still there. Curled up with her twin gripping her as tight as he could and they’d both fall into an uneasy sleep.

Was there something wrong with her?
The tree branches all blurred together as she darted through the forest, across Gnome territory, and up the hill.

She’d go to Kyubey, but he probably wouldn’t be able to answer her, this was about being a magica yes, but being a Magica isn’t exactly something that fuzzy little guy knew about.

And there was only one other person with answers.

Northwest Mansion was full to the brim with fancy security features, but they weren’t prepared for Mabel Pines.

Thankfully she had remembered to grab the Greif Seed before she’d taken Dipper home, else she’d be way too low on energy to do more stumble in and hope security would let her get close enough to Pacifica’s room.

That said she didn’t actually know where the blonde heiress’ room was in this big old mansion, or even if the other girl was home.

But eventually she ended up at a certain wing of the mansion, long bubblegum pink curtains in the balcony a couple of floors up.

“Pacifica? Are you up?” She could distantly hear a thumping noise, as if someone had just rolled out of bed.

“I am now, what on earth do you want Pines? It’s two in the morning.” she hissed under her breath as a silent apology as the other girl walked out onto the balcony.

Her long blonde hair was missing its big poof and was pulled back into a careful braid. Lavender pajamas with her initials embroidered on them (probably silk or something) and her Soul gem on a silver chain around her neck. She was looking around the distance, as if Mabel was sitting on the gates instead of in the yard.

“Down here.” Pacifica’s eyes darted down to her and Mabel noticed briefly that her soul gem glowed on a normal basis while hers would look normal unless she wanted it to glow.

That was weird.

“How did you... whatever, what do you want?”

“My arm got ripped off today during a hunt.” Pacifica didn’t even flinch at that. Mabel wondered what on Earth she could have done to be unperturbed by someone telling her of their own dismemberment.

“Well clearly you got it back onto you before it got all gross.”

“Yeah, but that’s my point. Dipper was freaking out on me, and I was fine I was calm after the
initial bout of woomyness, it barely hurt, and I’m still not freaking out about it. Something’s wrong with all of this, and I don’t think Kyubey can answer me.”

The sigh Pacifica let out could be heard from the ground.

“Pines, it’s simple. If we felt pain as intimately as we did before we made contracts you probably could have died from that Witch playing Tug of War with your arm. If the pain was too much you’d certainly have never reattached it in time for it to still work right.”

“So what, when we become Magi we stop feeling pain as hard?”

“Yup. They say that with a lot of injuries the pain fades pretty quickly and it’s mainly shock that makes you think it still hurts.”

“Oh...Wow...”

“How’s your Soul Gem looking?”

“It’s okay. Used a lot of magic for the arm thing, but I hadn’t used the Grief Seed at that point so I’m good.”

There was silence for a moment, and Mabel could her Pacifica sigh in resignation all the way on the ground.

“What’s your other question?”

Busted

“Well... it’s just... you know my wish was to protect Dipper right?”

“You made that rather clear last time.”

“It’s just, the wish only protects him on His adventures, not Witch hunts or anything. I was wondering... Did your wish kinda do something like that?”

There was a long pause, Mabel feared for a moment Pacifica would stop answering her and go to bed, maybe even call security on her. Just as she was preparing to run away from bloodhounds the other girl thought back to her.

“Yeah.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. It was my mistake.”

“What did you wish for?”

“None of your business.” Mabel chuckled a bit, she supposed she couldn’t have expected anything less.

“Thanks for talking to me. I’ll stop bugging you.” Mabel turned to leave, but before she could bound into the air the Pacifica was in front of her.

Jeez, how was she so fast untransformed?

“Well now that I’m up I may as well get some extra hunting in.” She shrugged in a sort of offhand
way that Mabel wasn’t entirely sure was meant to be an invitation or not.

Mabel nodded at Pacifica, unsure what she should say, if anything.

“The Gnome Grove has been teeming with familiars lately--they normally are able to take care of themselves, pack hunters and all--but I’m not letting any new Witches hatch in this town.”

Pacifica’s transformation, much like her uniform, was sleek and quiet. She brought her hands up so her wrists made an ‘x’ and sliced them both down to her sides, two trails of purple magic made the slashes with her hands wrapping around her chest and making the straps on her top.

It was over in a span of seconds.

“Well?” she folded her arms impatiently and Mabel started when she realized the other girl was waiting for her to transform as well.

“Right!” She held her hand over her soul gem, the little shooting star coming out when she pulled her hand away.

Her transformation felt more… well more like a magical girl transformation. There was sparkles and ribbons, and music.

But she supposed when it came down to it they were both fighting despair so it shouldn’t matter whose transformation looked more like a ‘real’ magical girls.

“Ready!”

She had a lot of energy to take out.

Chapter End Notes

Yikes, I didn't intend for that to end up as gory as it did, may have to up the rating from this point. To tell the truth I only tacked on the conversation with Paz at the end because otherwise the Chapter would be way too dark.

And just so everyone's aware, Charlotte will be the last cannon PMMM Witch in this fic. I'm gonna be making the rest up from here. Actually the only reason I even had it be Charlotte is because that was kind of the scene that I first envisioned for this AU
Chapter 5- Who says that that has to be you?

Chapter Summary

“I still don’t like this.” He brought his hands up to rub at his upper arms. A motion that he always tried to do when he was trying not to look like he was hugging himself.

Mabel smiled and put a hand on his shoulder.

“Hey… I’ll be fine. Just… use your protection and solve mysteries and stuff, and I’ll handle magical girl things.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hunting with Pacifica beside her was interesting.

She’d pile drove some living Exclamation Point Familiar into the ground while Singing a Sev’ral timez song, only to be surprised when the blonde joined in for a duet.

She didn’t know Pacifica liked Sev’ral Timez…

She actually learned a lot of things about the blonde in those scant few hours.

She didn’t like dream boy high, the art style made her eyes ache, but she was fond of the music.

Her favorite food was anything involving noodles, though most of the dishes she named were confusing sounding, and she’d never had Mac and Cheese or Ramen.

Finding out that the other girl was following Ducktective was a very pleasant surprise. Especially with the season finale coming up soon.

It only took a little bit of needling to convince her to watch the last episode at the shack with her and Dipper and Grunkle Stan (and maybe Grenda if she wants to join them)

She was right in the end, Pacifica really was just another kid, rich or not.

But the sun had started to come up and Mabel was harshly reminded that her search for answers had interrupted the fact that she’d left Dipper in a far more fragile state than he usually was.

Thankfully Pacifica didn’t get mad at her, despite the fact that the Gnome Grove was yet to be entirely De-familiar-ified.

“Yes whatever, make sure Your nerd brother doesn’t freak out on you.”

Thankfully when she got home Dipper had still been asleep, barely moved beyond probably rolling over once.

She could take a nap at this point, she probably should actually, she hadn’t slept at all that night, but she just wasn’t feeling tired.
She was still twitchy from her conversation with Pacifica, despite all the steam she blew off in the faces of familiars.

It still felt strangely surreal that everything had happened only yesterday. She took a deep breath and walked over to Dipper’s side of the attic, Her Brother remained undisturbed, tired body and emotionally drained mind refusing to put too much work into anything but staying asleep.

Mabel sat on the edge of her brother’s bed; It was around the time Dipper liked to wake up now, should she let him sleep in? It was about midnight when she’d put him to bed, and he needed sleep…

So… she could just brush off losing an arm and getting it back immediately now that she was a magic, that was something that was probably pretty good to know. She didn’t think she could do that if she were still ‘normal’, but you learn something new everyday.

Maybe she should treat her brother to one of the candies in the vending machine. She should probably make up for intentionally making him upset and then scaring him like that.

Just as she was thinking of the best candy to treat Dipper with, he rolled over to face her, his face pressed just so into his pillow that his bangs pushed back to reveal his birthmark.

Mabel watched with a detached sort of amusement as her brother slowly started to wake up, He still yawned like a kitten…

She took a moment to consider the best way to pull her brother into the world of the living again. And proceeded to pounce on him.

“Rise and shine bro bro! I think Grunkle Stan is making pancakes downstairs!” Dipper flinched under her as he was shook awake. Eyes tired as he stared at her, trying silently to figure out what had actually happened last night and what his subconscious made up. Before he simply groaned and started shoving at her shoulders.

“Ugh, Mabel get off!” in a flurry of blankets and flailing brother limbs, Mabel found herself on the floor, giggling like a loon.

Dipper seemed a lot better this morning.

It seemed a good night’s sleep was just what he needed to curb the events last night.

“Hey, how about after Breakfast we get some candy from the vending machine? My treat!”

Dipper furrowed his brow at her, tired confusion still clouding his face before finally throwing the bed sheets off of him.

“I thought vending machine funds were my department and you had rent-a-bike and those times Stan makes us pay for gas?” Darn, she’d hoped he wouldn’t notice.

“What? A girl can’t just be nice to her twin brother once in awhile?” Dipper narrowed his eyes at her before a look of realization dawned on his face.

Double darn. She hadn’t put on her sweater of the day just yet had she? Though the white scar along her left arm was small, it was somewhat gnarled looking, and definitely not unnoticeable.

“Mabel…” Her opposite hand darted up to cover the scar, cheeks heating up, embarrassed. But it
wasn’t like it would do much.

Dipper pulled her hand away, while she could overpower him pretty easily, she let him.

After all, maybe a good night's sleep wasn’t all he needed.

Though the skin around the rip area wasn’t hurting anymore, it was still a little tender to the touch. So she did flinch a bit when Dipper reached toward it, tips of his fingers running gently over her bicep.

“Mabel... Your got your arm ripped off last night.” Mabel pinched her lips, kind of sad at how this had to be restated.

“Yeah, but I’m fine now, Magic and all.” She slowly pulled her arm away from Dipper and gave a few experimental punches to the air to emphasize her point.

“You got hurt because of me.”

“Hey, don’t say that. That Witch was tricky, it probably would have gotten a few licks into me anyway.”

“But I distracted you.” Dipper was starting to pale again; his breathing becoming a bit short, and Mabel tried her hardest not to sigh in aggravation.

“Dipper, It’s okay, really, it is. I’m not hurt, and I’m not mad.” True she was plenty mad at him when they were still in that labyrinth, and if he ever tried that again she’d be infinitely more angry. But unless and until that became a problem there was nothing to stay mad about.

“Why did you take that for me though? I mean, you did wish for me to be safe right?” he was no less upset, but now there was a level of confusion there that hopefully meant he was getting back to that good ol’ Dipper she knew and loved.

“Well yeah I did, But like, the thing is…” Mabel huffed and spun around to sit on the bed beside him.

“I wished for you to be safe no matter your adventures.”

“So why…”

“You wanted nothing to do with Kyubey and the Witch’s Mazes until I became a Magica.”

“What does that have to do with it?”

“Witch Hunts are My adventures. Your adventures are like, Zombies and aliens and Goblin creatures.”

“Wait, so if like, Bill comes back then he can’t kill me, but I can just as easily be mauled by a Familiar?!” If anything the explanation was making him even worse.

Mabel huffed.

“Well I mean yeah kinda. But like, other than that You’re totally indestructible!” he didn’t look impressed.

“That’s not exactly comforting Mabel.”
As if she didn’t know that…

“Hey, how about I show you some fighting stuff?”

“What?” And now he was looking at her like she’d grown a second head.

“You heard me! You know I got good really fast with my axes and You’re only used to the tiny hatchets that Grunkle Stan and Wendy trust you with.”

“Hey, I can handle a real weapon! You saw me with that mace!”

“I saw you on the verge of denting your skull.”

“I wasn’t gonna dent my skull!”

“And if you let me teach you some things you never will. Come on there’s a couple of wiffle bats in the other room I think.” She hopped off the bed, snatching a random sweater out of her trunk as Dipper started to shrug on his vest.

“How’s a wiffle bat gonna help me handle a battle axe?”

At least he wasn’t feeling weirded out at her teaching him something instead of it being the other way around.

“You’ll see!” The least she could do for her brother was make this day generally magic free, or at the least make it Magica free.

And to be honest smacking her brother around with a wiffle bat, getting some candy from the vending machine and having a fight free day sounded just perfect to her.

Somehow she felt like the candy getting stuck in the vending machine was the perfect omen for how the rest of the day would play out.

The promise of Soos’ birthday that had gone miraculously unmarked gave them the option to party plan, the perfect median between their strengths and the perfect amount of practice between them, only to realize after everything had been set up that he hated his own birthday.

How could someone hate their own birthday? It was such a horrible thing to begin to resent! You’ve been a growing person for a full year and you get to celebrate your success, that’s good!

But in the end whether they understood their friends reasons or not it was their fault that he was suddenly feeling down instead of taking the day like any other. So it was their responsibility to fix it.

“Welcome… To Globnar!”

And now here they were. The proverbial candy bag wedged in the vending machine.

So they were challenged by the Time traveller guy, Blendin apparently, to time gladiator combat. She felt like this was pretty firmly breaking the ‘no supernatural business’ rule she’d imposed on herself today.

Blendin was getting set up for the ‘game’ with one guard (if it could even be called that, he was getting his face painted) while she and Dipper were watched by the blonde guard.
She could see the gears turning in her brother's head as he glanced once at her ring, before snapping his gaze to the time controlling measuring tape on the Time Guard's hip.

What was he Planning? Was he trying to make her go full Magica? She could summon an axe and use that without transforming if she focused really hard... was he trying to tell her to push the guards so they can make a break for it?

He tapped his collarbone and pantomimed an explosion with his hand.

Oh….Oh!

"Excuse me, uhm... Lolph was it?" the blonde Time Guard glanced down at her, unimpressed expression not changing.

"I'm not exactly in an outfit that can work for fighting, would you mind if I changed into something more... Comfortable? Keep the fight fair?"

He barely raised a brow at her, but she did have his focus.

Okay Mabel, big transformation, as glittery as possible.

She could practically feel the air get heavy and darken around her as her ring morphed into its full Soul Gem form.

A giant shooting star formed between her hands and danced around her as the pink ribbons of her uniform sprouted from her fingertips and encased her. She could practically hear the music in the air; A strange mix of synth pop and music box lullaby as she danced around to form her gloves and boots.

If she was going to make this as fancy as she could, she decided to do a cartwheel to bring the little blue balls of light to her dress instead of spinning. She’d have done a flip, but the last time she tried that she’d landed on her face, and that wouldn’t make a very impressive transformation.

The giant shooting star that was still swirling around her split into a bunch of tiny golden star patterns that came to become her earrings and the pattern on her headband.

Last step. She summoned an axe just as the heaviness in the air that signified her transformation started to fade, and just for a little Sailor Moon flair, she posed.

As Dipper had predicted the blonde guard was indeed distracted, but instead of simple shock or even anything that would give her the creeps, he was clearly afraid.

Even Blendin and the black haired guard were staring at her like she'd grown ten feet and formed spikes on her back instead of just changed her clothes.

Dipper had the Time Tape in his hand just as he'd planned, but even he was looking at her uneasily.

But his discomfort was probably just a situational thing.

But after that simple moment, both guards turned to Blendin; the abrupt movement and the blonde guard striding over to the bald time convict was enough to bump against Dipper and make him scurry over to her side.

"Code of Globnar 6675: Those afflicted with the Incubators cannot be put up for Globnar tribute to
avoid infestation.”

Hers and Dipper’s responses to this news were about the same.

“Afflicted?”

“The Incubators?” Incubators… Did they mean Kyubey?

Why would they treat her like she was diseased because she’d made a contract with Kyubey?

Was her magic like an unfair advantage or something?

“I-I-Didn’t know she was infected! She wasn’t when they ruined me I-I-I swear I wouldn’t let an infestation into the Globnar Arena!” Infestation?!

Mabel could already feel her her blood begin to boil at being called infested. But before either of them could question the guards further, the dark haired guard already had put Blendin into a pair of weird looking handcuffs.

“Back to the Infenitentary.”

“Th-Th-Th-Then just let me challenge the boy! He’s unaffected!”

“No go Blendin, He’s a carrier at least, if not in line to be infected soon enough.”

“Carrier?” Dipper whispered to her, to which she could only shrug. “But it already said it doesn’t make deals with boys?”

“Um excuse me?” Mabel waved a hand at the guards, the blonde guard, Lolph, or whatever, turned to her with nothing short of pity etched onto his face. “What do you mean by afflicted? I just made a deal with Kyubey to protect my brother…?” He sighed and shook his head before the wall behind them opened up to reveal Soos tying his shoe, just as they’d left him.

“They always do. Mabel and Dipper Pines, you are hereby free from any charges pressed against you. May Time Baby have mercy on your soul, Magica.” He shuddered as he said the last word, like it was something horrible to be.

Dipper took a breath, trying to inspect further but the guards were rather quick in shooing them out of the area. When Mabel glanced over at him again she noted that he still had a grip on the Time Travel Tape.

She was about to demand answers again, but they were already on the other side of the room and with one quick shove they were back in the lazer tag arena.

“Woah, Dudes, Coulda’ sworn I saw a weird room in the entrance there..” Soos stood up, just recently tied shoes well and in order.

“Time Traveling shenanigans Soos, don’t worry about it.” Dipper huffed as he snuck the Time Travel Tape under his vest.

To tell the truth she didn’t feel very up to lazer tag anymore, and by the look on Dipper’s face, he didn’t either.

But they had a duty to see this through with Soos.

Maybe neither of them were as heads in the game as they’d like, but they were able to coax a laugh
out of their large friend after She and Dipper had done their special move of shooting back to back and managed to snipe Robbie from his own kill zone.

Grenda and Candy spent a third of the time in the arena organizing a sniping pit for Candy, Grenda covering her. From that point on none of them ventured near for their own safety.

Wendy and Stan were simply playing berserkers, lazers everywhere, no strategy, Dipper and Mabel may or may not have accidentally received one or two blows of friendly fire.

By the end of the day, just a bit before the sun began to set, Soos was laughing and smiling again. Maybe not as cheerful as either of them would have liked, but he was on his way.

Maybe when they came back next year (because they would be coming back next year) he’d let them throw an actual party without leaving in the middle.

Her pencil made a nice ‘snitch snatch’ noise as she finished up one of her newest pieces of art.

A beautiful angel girl with long pink pigtails in her hair and a beautiful white dress. She’d had the image in her mind ever since they’d gotten home and she’d decided she should use it now.

Dipper was working on his summer reading again, he was almost finished with the next book of the Sibling Brothers, but it was obvious he wasn’t really into it.

“Aren’t you going to go on a hunt?” He spoke up when he glanced over his book once and caught her staring.

“Yeah Probably.” Dipper swallowed hard, a loud ‘gulp’ echoing through the air.

“I don’t…” he took a deep breath, trying to find the words. “I don’t think you should be doing this. You lost your arm Mabel, It doesn’t matter that you were able to get it back on.”

And now it was Mabel’s turn to take a deep breath.

“Dipper, come on, It’s not that bad usually, that was just an off day! And besides, I’m not gonna be alone! Pacifica is gonna back me up sometimes!” she wouldn’t have had to be looking at Dipper to feel him roll his eyes at the mention of the blonde.

“Anyway, it’s not like I have much of a choice anymore. Witches aren’t going to be stopped without Magica.”

“But who says that that has to be you? I can handle not being guaranteed safety Mabel, but the fact that those future agents treated you like you were deceased? That can’t be a good thing.”

That was true…But at the same time.

“I promised Kyubey Dipper. You know I don’t go back on my promises.”

“Mabel You’re not thinking about this!”

“I am.” She wasn’t about to pick a fight with Dipper twice in a row. “And I have to do this. If it was supposed to be someone else Kyubey would have come to them.”

Dipper wasn’t one to believe in destiny, but he did know that things happened for a reason. So thankfully he couldn’t directly answer her.
“I still don’t like this.” He brought his hands up to rub at his upper arms. A motion that he always tried to do when he was trying not to look like he was hugging himself.

Mabel smiled and put a hand on his shoulder.

“Hey… I’ll be fine. Just… use your protection and solve mysteries and stuff, and I’ll handle magical girl things.”

She supposed she wouldn’t go on a hunt tonight. It wouldn’t hurt to stay home every so often.

The Moon shone silver through the dirty attic window.

Mabel was snoring away on her bed.

Just a few paces away.

And on her hand, currently flopped over her peacefully slumbering pig, was her Soul Gem.

Dipper’s hands dug into the pages of his Research notepad, sharp fingernails making irregular marks.

Why did such a tiny little thing… Sometimes a ring sometimes a little pink gem… why did it have to mean so much?

The source of his sister’s magic.

The thing that made her decide that she needed to risk her life every day but somehow decide that it was unimportant compared to other people.

Why did other people have to matter if there was already a Magica in Gravity Falls?

Why did Mabel have to do this in the first place? Just because he was reckless didn’t mean she had to take it upon herself to fix that!

And now she was the one being reckless…

He glanced over one more time to his sister.

Mabel was snoring soundly. She wouldn’t notice if he dumped a bucket of ice water all over her.

Let alone of he pulled a ring off her finger.

Slowly, quiet as he could, he crept across the room until he was beside her bed.

Every so often a floorboard under his foot would creak ominously and Dipper would hold his breath.

But Mabel barely sniffled and turned her head.

His hands trembled as he steadily gripped the little pewter band around his sister’s finger, and slowly pulled it off.

The metal was cool against his palm as he gripped the Soul Gem tight in his hand.

Just as he started to turn to leave Mabel snorted once in her sleep, rolling around a bit.
Dipper noted with a sort of muted horror that her eyes started to crack open.

Somehow his heart both jumped into his throat and plummeted to his feet when his sister raised her head a bit, chestnut hair falling over her eyes and blinked sleepily at him.

“Dip?” She hazily asked, voice thick with sleep. “whuzgoinonn?” Her voice was slurred and heavy. She wasn’t really awake.

The smallest squeak came out of Dipper’s throat at being caught. He fought down the urge to panic, Mabel’s Soul Gem was tight in his hand, she wouldn’t be able to see it, and better, she was tired enough that…

“You’re dreaming Mabes, go back to sleep.”

She’d listen to any explanation given to her.

Mabel nodded sleepily, and almost immediately flopped back down onto her pillow. Dipper sighed in relief and took a moment to watch her.

She was sleeping so peacefully, how on Earth she could get any sleep at all considering everything they’d been through so far was completely beyond him. But he wasn’t about to wake her up just to ask. Waddles snuffled under her hand once and she burrowed her head into the pillows a little deeper.

Dipper felt the ghost of a smile quirk his lips as Mabel silently mouthed what looked like meowing. What he wouldn’t give to see how wacky his sister’s dreams must be.

His smile grew just a bit and he reached his free hand out to place on her head, gently enough to not wake her.

How his sister got her hair so soft despite the fact that she used shampoo laced with glitter he’d never know; and quite frankly he was afraid some sort of black magic was involved.

He wondered just how mad she would be at him for this. It wasn’t like he was going to get Waddles stolen by a prehistoric bird, so maybe she wouldn’t pull the silent treatment out on him.

The only thing she seemed to keep doing all of this for was for upholding her wish (her wish to protect Him, why on Earth did his sister have to be so perfect? He’d sacrificed a few things for her, but god, she’d sacrifice her own life. How did he ever get so lucky?)

Then it would be his choice to end it and live without it.

He could deal with a world like before.

A world where he would wonder in the back of his mind what would happen if he wasn’t quick enough to pull himself out of the fray after making sure Mabel was out.

A world where his choices would mean something when it came to his own safety.

A world where Bill could come back and do terrible things.

He froze on the top stair. The descent into darkness down below making his gut freeze over.

‘Race you to the bottom of the stairs!’ And then the sick bash of his body meeting the stairs again and again.
A shudder crawled up his spine as he forced his legs back into motion to descend.

A world where Safe and Sound wasn’t guaranteed to him.

A world where the next time he rushed headfirst into the supernatural it could mean his life all over again.

He was ashamed to admit it, but maybe he did take comfort in Mabel’s wish.

Was this really a good idea?

He paused in the doorway, the cold wind brushing against his face. Dipper opened his hand, and gazed pensively at the small pink soul gem in his hand.

Was it?

He thought to Mabel for a moment. How pale she’d looked in the gloom of the Witches maze, the only color on her cheeks being the splatter of blood from that… awful thing… ripping into her.

He was unable to help her, and if he hadn’t pulled himself together he would have probably hurled all over her arm instead of helping her reattach it.

There had been so much blood.

He felt woozy just thinking about it.

No.

Quickly as he could, before those more selfish thoughts from before rose up again, Dipper strode out into the yard of the shack.

Mabel’s Soul Gem gleamed brilliantly in the night. Shining almost like a star in the gloom.

The grass was cold and damp with the nighttime dew, and Dipper took a deep breath to steady the shaking slowly starting to rise in his shoulders.

“I’m going to do this.” He told himself, no louder than a whisper in the breeze, as he set the small pink jewel on the stump they used to cut firewood.

“I’m going to free my sister.” He reassured himself. He was doing this for Mabel.

He got her into all of this because of his own recklessness, so he should pull her out before her recklessness made things worse.

The hatchet they used to cut the firewood was thankfully, already lying on the ground, Mabel had been the last one assigned to chop, and more than likely she had just used it to practice Axe work, so the hatchet hadn’t been touched.

The weapon was heavy in his hands, splintered wood digging into his palms, and the rusty tip of the blade worried him a bit.

He wasn’t about to make himself catch tetanus or something.

He was just going to do this fast. Quick and easy. One swipe and it’d be over.

One swipe, and his sister wouldn’t have to worry about fighting Witches and losing arms or worse
ever again.

He stood with his legs spread, like Mabel taught him, and stiffened his knees, like Grunkle Stan had told him, so he wouldn’t go flying afterward.

Dipper took a deep breath, and lifted the axe into the air.

For Mabel.

The blade came down with a sharp push of air.

A shout of pain filled the night, piercing and shrill. Even if he didn’t keep his hearing aids on while he slept (making sure he’d never be jumped in his sleep again) Stan would have heard the scream.

His aching muscles groaned in protest as he bolted out of bed. Arthritis heavy hands groping blindly in the dark for his glasses.

There were no other noises afterward to follow up the scream, and if he wasn’t sure that it sounded just like a certain Great-nibling of his he would have probably just written it off as a dream he didn’t remember and fallen back asleep again.

Muscles tense and prepared for a fight, Stan barely paused to grab a hold of his lucky pair of brass knuckles. Damn things had fought off three different gangs of muggers, half the Columbian Mafia, a couple of Goblins, and an entire zombie hoard. He felt like they deserved the title of lucky.

He was grossly unprepared for any actual trouble, he knew that, lucky or no, fighting off anything in your underwear was never exactly an easy win, but he didn’t have time to put on something better suited.

One of the twins was in trouble.

And it was the middle of the night on top of it.

The wood of the staircase threatened to crack under his steps as he thundered up toward the attic.

Oh both of those punks had better be in bed, it better have just been some nightmare spurned up by Dipper’s weird taste, or Mabel playing a prank.

Mabel was turned on her side, back to him. But he noted with a small hint of relief she was still peacefully sleeping. Not hunched over in pain or anything.

Dipper though.

Damn kid.

He cursed harshly, forgetting in his quickly mounting worry that Mabel could wake up at any time and hear her Grunkle Swear.

But she wasn’t stirring, so he had nothing to worry about.

Maybe the kid was still on the property.

Stan’s fingers twitched against the brass instruments they clutched as he strode to the Attic window to peer outside.
He wouldn’t be able to see very far, especially with the shitty cataracts that had been developing since last year. But thankfully he could make out the faint outline of two bodies tussling in the dark, right by the Wood Chopping Stump.

While neither of them were distinct, they were about the right size for Dipper, and some other punk about his height, maybe a bit taller.

Why on Earth was that kid picking fights in the middle of the night?

He resisted rolling his eyes as he braced his knees for another round of stairs, this time, thankfully, downward.

By the time he was outside the fight was as good as over. Stan noted with a bit of relief there was no clear indication of bloodshed.

That snooty rich kid, Pacifica or whatever, Had him pinned down in the grass, face pressed into the dirt with the blonde practically sitting atop of him.

“Hey!” he barked out, and sure enough the girl reflexively stood from her spot, freeing Dipper.

The kid quickly hopped to his own feet, rubbing at a bruise quickly developing on his forearm.

“Is this some kind of moonlight revenge rumble? Cause if so, You should have told me so I could sell tickets.”

Dipper was panting for breath, and even in the dim moonlight Stan could see his face was flushed bright red. Pacifica on the other hand was pale as bone as she nervously wrung her hands together.

“I was trying… I was trying to save…” Dipper looked up at Stan for a moment before glancing over to the Chopping Stump. “She’s selfish enough to keep her involved just so she doesn't have to fight alone.”

“Excuse me?!” Pacifica rounded on Dipper at that, fear of being caught doing something ‘So un-Northwest-like’ or whatever clearly forgotten. “You’re the only one being selfish here! I’m trying to save your sister’s life!”

“What about forcing her to stay in this… this… War Zone is saving her?!” Dipper reached behind him, groping for a moment around the Chopping Stump, before lifting up some little trinket Stan hadn’t noticed before.

What looked like a little pink jewel embellished in silver.

What on Earth…

“Uhm, I dunno, maybe letting her make the choice for herself instead of you deciding you know what’s best?” Pacifica rolled her eyes and made a reach to grab the small jewel.

Dipper reflexively turned away from her and shoved her shoulder with his free hand.

“She’s my sister! I have to protect her!”

Pacifica shoved him back. “You would have killed her with that kind of garbage ‘protection’!” They more likely than not would have gotten into another fistfight again if Stan hadn’t stepped between them.

“Dipper! Northwest! ” Almost immediately Dipper began to deflate, Pacifica on the other hand
puffed her chest out like an offended peacock.

“Mister Pines! If I hadn’t stopped him he could have killed Mabel!” she jabbed a finger at Dipper, the weird outfit she was wearing, all purple sashes and stripes, was ripped and torn; from the few good shots that Dipper had gotten in he was sure.

Kids and their weird fashion statements.

“What!?” Dipper shrieked from around Pacifica. “Grunkle Stan she’s lying! She just wants Mabel to keep fighting so she won’t have to do all the work herself!”

“Are you seriously still on about that!?”

“Hey! Hey!” Stan waved a hand between them again, both of them it seemed had completely forgotten the was there for a moment.

“Both of you, inside. Now.” Dipper opened his mouth once, about to protest, but finally gave in and began to walk back toward the shack.

Pacifica stood there for a moment longer, whether trying to bite back a comment about how Stan doesn’t have any authority over her, or simply not actually aware he meant her as well he didn’t care.

“You too missy. I’m sure your snooty parents don’t actually know you’re here, and If you’re lucky it’ll stay that way.”

“I don’t think I need to ‘present my case’ or whatever. I mean it’s not like you’re gonna take my word over your nephew’s. Just… believe me when I say that I’ve been a Magica long enough to know. Never break the Soul Gem, I don’t know how it is, but it’s the worst thing you can do to us.” She took a deep breath, and Stan thought for a moment she was about to vanish into thin air. That would have at least fit the ‘weird magical nonsense’ aesthetic she was trying to achieve.

Instead his hearing aids acted up and started fritzing out. By the time he was a little less deaf from too much noise she was gone, though he could see a faint purple glow vanishing into the trees.

He always knew the Northwests were weird rich people. But wow..

He always knew the Northwests were weird rich people. But wow..

Their daughter was even worse.

So, Stan had insisted he tell him everything.

Mabel had trusted him with her secret, Though it was slowly starting to get out.

Could he tell him the truth?

Well he just might have to with everything that had just happened.

But… at the same time it wasn’t his secret to tell. So all he could do was insist he wake Mabel up and ask her.

It took a bit of convincing of course, but he was able to get Grunkle Stan to listen to him.

He already failed at doing one thing behind his sister’s back today.

He felt bad about throwing Mabel under the bus like that, especially after such a failed attempt to
save her life, but he wasn’t going to find any other way around it.

Stan had taken Mabel’s Soul Gem from him, and while he balked for a moment, worried that his Great Uncle may have been mistaking it for some sort of precious gem, he simply held the thing in his hand as they made their way up to the attic.

Mabel looked like she hadn’t moved since he left the room, and while that would normally be a comfort, she was still enough in the dark that his nerves kept trying to tell him to check to see if she was even breathing.

But thankfully, once Stan put her Soul Gem down onto the nightstand and shook her shoulder a bit, Mabel started to rouse, chest expanding a bit with a little yawn.

“Blugh… whazamattawitya.” she mumbled as she slowly began to sit up, rubbing an eye with her fist. “It’s really really late….”

“Kid, Your brother stole that pink jewel thing from you and got in a fistfight with the richest kid in town. And he tells me it’s ‘not his secret to tell’ whatever that means.”

Leave it to Grunkle Stan to handle the fact that he did something massive behind his sister’s back with delicacy.

Mabel blinked once, processing for a moment before her eyes drifted to her soul gem.

“Dipper did what? And… you mean Pacifica?” slowly, she reached over to grab the little thing, flicking her wrist to turn it into its ring form again. “Okay…” she shot a tired glare in Dipper’s direction before gently moving Waddles of of her and getting up from bed.

“So much for not telling Stan about their supernatural mischief.

Dipper took a deep breath and sat down onto his bed, trying not to feel like a complete failure.

One swipe with that stupid hatchet.

It should have been enough.

He shouldn’t have let Pacifica throw her stupid daggers and make his swing go wide.

He should have been able to save his sister’s life tonight.

And more likely than not now, he was way passed grounded.

“Close call if I do say so.” Dipper bolted upright, hair standing on end.

That little jerk had some nerve to show up right now.

“Of course, If I hadn’t interfered it certainly would have had disastrous consequences.” Kyubey was perched in their window, Its flippant tone enough to bring a hot coil of rage into Dipper’s gut.

“You called Pacifica to stop me?”

“I couldn’t let a soldier such as Mabel Pines go.” Dipper grit his teeth and reached over his bed to
his headboard. The first thing that enclosed in his hand, the Pterodactyl fang they’d gotten from saving Waddles.

He thought nothing of throwing it, point first at the thing.

Quick as they come Kyubey snaked out of his way, Curling tail fluttering about wildly.

“Don’t you dare call my sister a soldier.” he hissed. “Why did you even decide to take Mabel in the first place? Why take anyone?!”

“Dipper Pines… my species comes from beyond the stars you see, and the Witches have been created by a force beyond our control in attempt to stave off something that threatens to destroy all.”

“And what exactly is what?”

“Your kind call it ‘Heat Death’ when Universal entropy exceeds to infinity, and there is no longer any friction to keep life going.” Dipper knew what Heat Death was, he’d looked it up back in the 5th grade when he was bored.

“So, what?” He pitched himself forward, face colliding with his pillow immediately. “you trick hoards of girls to make contracts to fight the Witches, but they don’t really need to? That’s how you and your species keep entropy at bay?”

He felt like it should be just his luck that the first alien he met was one he’d detest immediately.

"The eventual heat death of the universe must be stalled. Imagine if your species finally developed enough to reach beyond your solar system only to find the rest of the inhabited planets have succumb to the inevitability of entropy." It stared down at him impassively, creepy beady red eyes boring into him.

"And that's worth tricking hordes of kids into doing your dirty work?" Dipper sneered, his head not moving from the pillow as he spoke, he felt too heavy to move under the crushing information.

But the creature held no sympathy for the boy. It held nothing for him. That was even less than the amused scorn Bill showed his family.

"Your sister is a valuable asset to the Universal expansion process."

At least Bill knows he's a jerk.

“Well I’m grounded entirely for a week, No Witch Hunts, no Walking Waddles, nothing.” Mabel grumbled, flopping face first onto the bed. “Thanks for that by the way, Dip Dop. Way to let your blood feud with my ex-rival throw me under the bus!”

Dipper tried not to wince when Mabel poked an eye out from over the covers. “Even when you told him you did it to protect me?”

“Even then. Oh yeah, Before Grunkle Stan went back to bed he told me to tell you the same. And if he didn’t know you’d find a way to grab hold of it anyway he wouldn’a’ asked for the Journal to make sure too.” Dipper reflexively scrambled to retrieve the Journal from the corner of his bed at that.

“What? What? Why? What? You told him we’ve been keeping supernatural adventures from
him?”

“Well I wasn’t about to take all of the blame here.”

Dipper tried not to feel too betrayed as Mabel crawled under the covers and softly started to meow to herself.

Did his sister really just tattle on him in revenge for his mistake?

He could feel spikes of anger try to settle in his gut, but, to be honest, his little chat with Kyubey had taken most of the fight out of him.

Too drained to be much more than a little upset, Dipper rolled over in his bed and tried to get a bit of sleep as well.

He’ll just spend tomorrow hanging out with Soos, or maybe Wendy.

Chapter End Notes

What did you expect Mabel loosing her arm to not have any consequences?
Chapter 6- Cherub’s only help once

Chapter Summary

“Bill. Come out, I know you’re watching.”

The word around him seemed to still. A shudder unrelated to his ill feelings made goosebumps race down his arms. A single point on the horizon became awash with grey and rapidly, the whole world around him followed suit.

He willed his shoulders to spread firmly.

Chapter Notes

Emetophobia warning
detailed depictions of panic attacks

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So, you two officially off grounding today?”

“Well, yeah kind of, we have to finish these last couple of chores, but after that We’re free.” Dipper huffed as he got out the dustpan, clearly holding back a sneeze as Mabel finished sweeping up the Gift Shop floor.

“Sweet! The Guys and I were all gonna hang around the Graveyard. You in?”

“Totally!” Mabel nodded in agreement after Dipper’s, maybe a little too loud, acceptance of Wendy’s invitation.

The last week had been.. tense maybe was the best word. despite being stuck within the walls of the shack together, she didn’t exactly go out of her way to include Dipper in her activities. Which wasn’t hard since he generally wasn’t interested in her activities anyway.

Sure, she joined him when he came to her, and yeah, they didn’t get into any other arguments or fights.

Mabel outwardly acted like what Dipper had done barely mattered.

But he had tried to go behind her back and break her Soul Gem. And then he picked a fight with Pacifica.

He may think at this point that it was as good as forgotten, but, she was finding it a little harder to keep up with her forgiving nature in this instance.

Her brother, her twin brother, had just decided he knew what was best to the point of doing that to her.
He wasn’t even going to tell her was he? He was just going to wait until she woke up and couldn’t find it.

She knew it was silly, but she kept feeling like if she let her guard down around her brother again he’d try the same thing.

She’d started keeping her Soul gem around her neck again, make it harder for someone to take off of her without her knowledge.

Not like she’d gotten up to any Witch Hunting this week. Grounded meant grounded.

Speaking of which, that was certainly what she should do tonight. Her Soul Gem was so due for a Recharge. It was starting to get these grody black spots all over it.

Mabel took a deep breath and willed herself not to hold it against him every time she’d think about it.

Never really did much beyond let her force a smile for another few hours.

Maybe hanging out with Wendy’s friends would be a good detox.

She felt bad about being so annoyed with Dipper for a full week, Maybe the other older kids around them would temper things out.

Thompson, Lee, and Nate were all pretty funny, and Tambry would be a good person to just sit by when her dumb thoughts threatened to strangle her and even she needed a bit of quiet.

Graveyards aren’t exactly her place of choice to hang out, but she supposed that didn’t matter.

Thompson was a mother hen, like always, Tambry was pretty quiet beyond tapping a few things on her phone, and Nate and Lee were joking, as usual.

But the uneasy feeling in her gut that had been keeping her away from her brother didn’t leave her alone.

What was wrong with her? Since when could she hold a grudge at all, let alone hold a grudge at Dipper.

A week, this was the longest she’d ever held a grudge toward anyone, especially Dipper.

She wanted to forgive him. She was sure she did. She didn’t know why she couldn’t just up and do it.

Every time he talked to her conspiratorially, or his hand drew a little too close to her neck, her soul gem would pulse hotly against her skin.

As though admonishing her for letting Dipper nearly break it.

And then the memory of what nearly happened would come back.

She’d been having a weird dream since she fell asleep, Fighting Witches, but every Witch would ask her ‘Why? We are Sisters’ before vanishing. It was surreal. Every Witch she’d ever faced spoke to her like she was killing her own kind.

She didn’t know why but something about that part of the dream truly disturbed her, maybe she’d
started meowing to herself, like she normally did after her nightmares, just to keep herself right in the head.

And then everything had gone black. She couldn’t see much or hear much, but she felt a warmth encompass her. Like a hundred Dipper Hugs all pulled together around her.

It felt nice, so she had been willing to ignore the abrupt change in her dream.

“I’m going to do this” she could barely recognize the voice as Dippers, it was so big and vibratory. “I’m going to free my sister”

Free her? Was she trapped somewhere?

Almost as suddenly as it came the warmth faded, Mabel had panicked for a moment, especially when the breeze started to pick up.

There was a clanging noise around her. Metal on Metal, then the pounding of fists on skin.

Yelling

Yelling

Why was there so much yelling?

And then she felt warm again, but a different warm.

A Grunkle Stan hug warm.

And that was when she woke up.

And she woke up to the news that her brother had tried to go behind her back and break her soul gem.

Her hands would ball into fists, she’d will herself to calm down.

Act like nothing was wrong

Repeat process.

This was wrong, she knew it was wrong.

Why couldn't she stop it?

Her thought process was immediately derailed by what sounded like a moan of agony.

A moan of agony

In a cemetery

Needless to say, she panicked a little bit. Hand immediately darting to her neck and ready to transform in front of a bunch of teenagers.

Slowly, calmly, all of them started to follow the noise to an open grave. Mabel at the ready incase what they found inside was anything she should take out her axes for.

Nate and Lee of course took this as another excuse to mess with each other.
She nearly screamed at Dipper when he played along and demanded Thompson look into the grave.

Thompson screamed, Tambry made a deadpan remark, and Mabel breathed a sigh of relief.

Not a Witch, Just Robbie.

Did she really just feel relief at someone feeling legitimately miserable?

What was wrong with her?

There was something wrong with her. She couldn’t deny it at this point.

Something in her, something natural and inherent, had changed.

The thing that made her so attuned to people’s moods and how they affected her...she didn’t like it.

She had to do something about it.

She had to do this.

It might be the only thing left of the old Mabel that could bring back whatever it was that changed.

She couldn’t do Summer Romances anymore.

She could be really mean to Dipper if it was for a purpose.

It was possible for her to lose her arm and shake it off.

She could hold a grudge against Dipper.

Everything that made her Mabel was being changed around and switched. There was so little left of the Mabel she was before. She hated it.

She had to get that Mabel back, even if it’s through the one thing she had left.

“You now what Robbie needs? A new Girl!”

And that was matchmaking. If matchmaking was all that was left of herself, the last thing she could put her time into without letting being a Magica mess it up; well, she’d just have to grab a hold of it with both hands and not let go.

With that in mind and Robbie’s Address scribbled on the back of a receipt given to her by a dubious Wendy; she raced down Gopher Road, maybe throwing a bit of Magica speed in her step.

She was sure, She’d feel like herself again, and this would go wonderfully!

This was going terribly.

She’d done the social math, she’d gone through everyone in town who might be compatible with Robbie, and Tambry was the solution.

She was gothy, held a disdain for the world, and she was enough on the shallow side to give someone a chance because they were in the same niche.
She supposed she forgot to calculate in history.

Oh, but this had to work! This had to! If she couldn’t matchmake anymore, not only would Robbie still be miserable over Wendy, but there would be nothing left that was Mabel before.

She’d be nothing but a Magica until the day she died.

The door to Greasy’s Diner crashed open with what felt like an explosion.

Maybe the budding failure was making her a little tense, but she immediately stiffened, her hand going over her Soul Gem and preparing to transform.

A chubby blonde guy in flip flops and cut off jeans had burst into the room. The little plush wings on the back of his backpack flapped around wildly as he strutted down the hall.

“Who’s ready to fall in love tonight?!?” Girls cheered, and for a moment Mabel completely blanked on who this guy was.

The first thing that had processed in her mind was ‘human’ and then ‘not a threat’

After a second longer of watching him swagger about, almost drunkenly, Mabel recognized him from the video Wendy showed them.

Love God. One of the performers at the Woodsticks festival.

Her first thought was that he was human and not a threat?!

She groaned and let her head thump against the table.

“Status Update: On blind date with sociopath.”

“Oh! And out comes the phone, classic Tambers...”

That’s just it, she was a failure.

She could feel tears starting to build in the corners of her eyes as she accepted it.

She’d failed Dipper at being a good Sister. She’d failed everyone at being a 12 year old girl who should have freaked out at too much pain. She’d failed herself at romance.

And now she’d failed Robbie and Tambry at matchmaking.

Was there nothing left of the Mabel that lived before her Destiny came to her?

“Meredith, Meredith, We got a problem. That cutie right there is your Soulmate, and she’s living her life without you.”

Her thought process was broken by the deep, surfer boy voice of Love God.

Slowly, she lifted her head and cracked an eye open. He was leaned conspiratorially over the booth on the other side of her, talking to an adorable old lady in a headscarf.

Was... was he matchmaking? With a complete stranger?

The old lady wasn’t rolling her eyes, she wasn’t calling him delusional. She looked... like she believed every word, and was honestly distraught at the idea of her ‘soul mate’ living alone. Said
‘Soul Mate’ Being another elderly woman with dark skin and silver hair, obliviously munching on a sandwich.

“Get it girl! You know what you love!” There it was. The thing she’d forgotten, when it came to matchmaking. Whatever it was, the secret to matchmaking, she’d had it but she forgot.

The little old ladies ran off out of the restaurant together, both looking excited and happy.

When she approached, Robbie and Tambry were still fighting; Love God was a little too busy shoving a hoagie in his mouth to really be paying attention to her.

“Excuse me, Hi, I’m Mabel. Big fan.” Love God glanced at her around his sandwich and swallowed. Slowly, he relaxed against the seat of the booth and smiled lazily at her.

“Hey Magi, You lookin’ for an autograph?”

“Not exactly you see I’m…” it took her a second to catch up with exactly what he’d said to her. “Wait… Magi?” He knew she was a Magica? At first glance? How did some musician know she was a Magica immediately? Love God snickered, before pushing his sandwich a little to the side so he could lean in conspiratorially.

“Kid you’re magic ring is right there around your neck.” He gestured toward her torso before grabbing a paper napkin from the table and started wiping his mouth off.

How did he….? She patted her collarbone once to be sure. Her Soul Gem was still around her neck yes, but it was also under her sweater.

But… She supposed she was getting distracted. It probably didn’t matter that he knew she was a Magica, so long as it would get the master matchmaker to talk to her.

“Right… anyway, I’m a bit of a matchmaker myself and I have to know, how do you do it?” Love God didn’t look the least bit surprised by this question; He raised a brow and held a hand to the corner of his mouth as though to pass on a secret.

“Well, from one magical force of hope to another, my name ain’t exactly metaphorical.” He jerked a thumb to his yellow backpack. The plush wings she’d once thought stitched on the back fluttered cheerily, a though waving at her.

Mabel had to bite her lip for a second to hold back screeching the secret aloud in disbelief.

“You’re an actual Love God?!?” she whispered back, the shout-like tone enough to convey her surprise. Love God chuckled before answering.

“Technically a cherub. The internet does most of my job for me nowadays, so I’ve been working on my music career.” He dug around in his pocket before pulling out a cassette tape. “Here, have a mixtape.”

Seriously, who used cassette tapes beyond Grunkle Stan anymore?

“So… how do you make matches like that?”

“Love potion.” He answered breezily. “I’ve got it all. Summer love, Interspecies love, Anti-love, just dip a little on my fingers and boom!” He demonstrated by dipping his pointer finger into a bright magenta bottle on his waist and flicked it at nothing, a small pink cloud following his finger.
A love potion. A guaranteed success every every match.

She felt something start to build in her chest.

She didn’t know what it was, but it was big, loud, and excited.

It was something bubbly and shiny, like sequined kittens and rainbow ducklings.

It felt like the Mabel from before Kyubey and Contracts, before Triangle Demons and Possessed Brothers, even before Gnomes and Leaf Blowers.

She felt like Mabel again.

“How much for one?” She blurted out, leaning over urgently onto the table. “And will you accept…” she pawed around her sweater, looking for something that could possibly tempt the blond Cherub. Unthinkingly, one of her hands curled around the chain she kept her Soul Gem on and yanked it into the light. “Would you accept a Magical Warrior Favor as payment?”

Love God didn’t hand her a potion. He didn’t look the littlest bit interested. He chuckled a bit, good naturedly, of course.

“Kid, I like your style. Been awhile since I seen anyone use the barter system and mean it.” He shook his head. “But I got a duty to not hand any of these to mortals. Other cherubs and immortal beings only. Kind of an honor bound thing, you get the picture.”

Mabel could feel her heart begin to sink.

Already the dizzy, bubbly feeling in her chest was starting to fizzle out and fade.

No! She couldn’t lose it! that was all she had left of the Mabel before!

“Then please, I need your help with something.” Love God took another large bite from his sandwich, but he was still looking at her, still listening.

“Mmph?” She took that as a cue to keep going.

“See, I was on a matchmaking excursion when I came here. My friend Robbie has been all kinds of torn up over his breakup with our other friend Wendy. He agreed to let me help him and I know for a fact that getting him a new girl would be the best way to help him move on.” She took a deep breath. “I just want everyone to be happy again… so I really needed this date to hit off!”

Love God wiped the corner of his mouth free of mustard as he looked around the diner, probably looking for who she was talking about.

“Black Hoodie and Purple Hair over there?” He asked, nothing much to his tone but curiosity. “And you know they’re a good match how exactly? They could just not mesh well together and it could bite you in the behind if I helped kid.” Mabel nodded, small grin slowly starting to curl back onto her lips as she pulled out a pink notebook covered in glitter glue.

“Positive! I’ve done the social compatibility and everything adds up!” Quick as she could she flipped to the page that had her ‘Robbie’s new girl’ notes on it and slid the book toward Love God.

He didn’t pick up the notebook or really touch it, just skimmed over the pages with a noncommittal hum.

“You’re thorough Magi, I’ll give you that.”
She decided to take that as a compliment.

“What the hell, your kind don’t live very long anyway. Just Remember kid, Cherubs only help once.” He downed the rest of the sandwich in one bite, signed the face of some fan, and strutted his way over to Robbie and Tambry’s table.

“Hey, you two.” Mabel watched with rapt attention as Love God noisily slammed one hand onto the table, the other subtly dipping into one of his love potions. This one a hot pink. “Just wanted to say, You’re one heck of a cute couple.” He pulled his other hand out between them, snapping his fingers and letting the pink cloud of dust puff between them before walking out of Greasy’s.

There was a moment of silence as Robbie and Tambry blinked at each other. Either having the affects of the Potion start to sink in, or simply in shock of the loud interruption to their argument, Mabel wasn’t aware.

A plate of chili fries in a plastic to go box arrived at their table, breaking the silent daze.

“Well…” Robbie huffed before leaning back, folding his arms nonchalantly. “It’s not like he was wrong.” Tambry shrugged in response before immediately eating one of the fries.

“Hey, I know I’m pretty. And I guess… from like.. an outsider’s perspective, you’re not too bad.” Tambry huffed, tucking her pink streak behind an ear. Mabel didn’t miss the way Robbie’s eyes immediately darted to her hair when she moved.

She could already feel the tension building between them. And not the kind that would mean a fight.

Her grin started to get wider and wider as another small silence settled between them, but not an awkward kind.

“You think we should like… give it a shot?” Robbie popped one of the chili fries into his own mouth as he spoke. “We could take these to the Woodsticks parking lot and heckle the creeps who wear too much fringe or something…” Tambry cracked a small smile at that.

“Sure.” She turned to her phone. “Status Update: Giving it a’…. You know, forget it.” She pressed the power button on the side of her phone and pocketed it. “Need my hands free for chili fries after all.”

Robbie smiled back at her, quickly closing the to go tray and standing with her.

Right before they left the Diner, Robbie looked over his shoulder to meet Mabel’s eye. He looked… excited… lighter. And through a love potion opening his horizon or not, that was the happiest she’d ever really seen him.

She grinned and gave him a thumbs up.

He winked back at her, mouthed the word ‘thanks’, and followed after Tambry.

She waited a good fifteen minutes before she left herself, Lazy Susan mumbling to herself, wondering of Mabel even ordered anything, she didn’t.

The second she was out of immediate sight of the Diner she transformed and leaped into the trees.

She felt so Giddy she could almost fly!
She had to tell Dipper about her success!

Because next step was making things right between them.

The parking lot outside the Woodsticks Festival was little more than a dirt lot cleared away of grass and plants.

She leaned in close to Dipper, nearly vibrating with excitement, when she saw a flutter of purple hair.

She’d convinced the others in the group that Tambry would meet them at the festival gates, hoping that should Robbie and Tambry have hit it off (which she was sure they would be by now) it would be a happy surprise for everyone! They had a friend back and the start of another wonderful relationship.

Tambry and Robbie were beside each other, sitting in the back of Robbie’s van, snickering and trading comments every so often as a particularly ostentatiously dressed concert goer passed them by.

They looked so cute together! In a weird goth-couple-y way.

“Look Dipper there they are!” she whispered urgently to her brother. Dipper raised a brow at her but followed her line of sight.

“Wow… Guess it worked…” She glanced to her brother once again and grinned widely, noting with a bit of triumph he grinned back.

The slightest heat pressed onto her chest as he glanced back at the new couple, shoulder bumping her own in comradery.

She could almost feel the knot in her gut start to fade a bit after she sent a silent ‘chill out’ to her rapidly heating Soul Gem.

The other teens had been a little busy pumping each other up to have a damn great time at the festival, but now that they were all razzed up one by one the group started to follow Dipper and Mabel’s gazes.

Lee was the first, immediately whooping and making those ‘oooh’ noises that accompany taunting a new couple.

Nate stiffened behind her, and she could almost immediately feel the sudden hostile air around Wendy.

Before she’d even known it there was fighting.

Nate had marched right up to Robbie and grabbed him by the scruff of his collar, Wendy and Tambry were almost immediately in a screaming match with each other, Lee and Thompson were trying to mitigate, failingly, and Lee didn’t look like he had any real idea what was going on.

“I can’t believe you! You didn't even have the guts to date my ex in front of me!”

“C-Come on guys… now’s not the time we.. we came to have fun here!”

“Well excuse me for considering Robbie my friend before your ex!”
“You knew I liked her and you did it anyway you asshole!”
“Dude! Chill out! You’re gonna get us kicked out!”
“I always said if you drag your feet someone else would do it!”
“And why the hell should I believe that you’re just not using her as your shitty rebound?!”

A fight.

The entire group of the teens were fighting.

Because of her putting Robbie and Tambry together.

It was just barely not getting physical because of Thompson and Lee putting themselves in the fray.

Everyone was upset and everyone was yelling and it was her fault.

It was her fault, this was her fault, all her fault, all her fault….

Dipper might have said something beside her, might have shouted something, but she couldn’t tell.

Everything was suddenly starting to feel far away, Like Dipper was talking through a tube of paper towels and on the other end of a long tunnel.

Her fingers felt weird and tingly, like she was drifting away from herself, her vision began to wobble, she might have gone underwater…

Mabel huffed for breath, chest feeling heavier and heavier by the second.

She’d messed up. Messed up big time.

And everyone was yelling and everyone was upset and Dipper knew it was her fault and it was her fault and it was nothing but her fault.

“Mabel, what did you do?” Her brother’s voice finally cut through the fog she’d found herself in.

She only had a second to take in the changes.

Tambry was clutching Robbie’s arm as they marched into the festival. Her face set in a determined scowl, Robbie nursing a slowly swelling cheek.

Nate’s nose was bleeding and Lee and Wendy were looking him over, Lee was half scowling himself, and maybe that was for something else, but he did seem pretty sure that whatever that was for, right now wasn’t the time nor place.

Thompson was talking to a guard, likely trying to convince him to still let them in.

Dipper’s hand was on her shoulder—when did it get there?— And he was glaring at her, looking about ready to shake her to get an answer.

What did he ask again?

“I… uh…” She stumbled, trying to catch up with what had just happened. “I was….”

Trying to be a good matchmaker?
Trying to make Robbie happy again?

Trying to prove she wasn’t a failure at everything she used to succeed in?

“Mabel!” He snapped his fingers in front of her and she yelped in surprise.

Everything still felt vaguely not-real. Almost like she’d downed a pack of Smile Dip and everything was just a hallucination.

“Dipper…” Her chest was heaving. It felt like there had been massive weights attached to her lungs and they were trying to drag her into the ground.

Dipper was glaring at her, Dipper was mad at her too.

Her Soul Gem burned hotly against her neck.

Love God.

Her mind went to the blond Cherub almost immediately when she remembered the events that lead to her thought success.

Slowly, slowly, her breaths started to calm down as she remembered the fact that it was magic that made this happen.

Magic made it, magic can unmake it.

“Mabel! Hey... are you alright?” His glare had dissolved into a worried gaze.

But she wasn’t listening anymore.

She pulled out of his grip as she turned on her heel and ran toward the Woodsticks entrance.

Love God.

Love God had the answers.

Love God had the solution.

Love God could do it.

She’d never ever mess with magic beyond her own again.

She’d never rematchake again.

She’d be just a Magica until the end of her days and never complain about it again.

Just let this work.

Just let this last little good thing happen.

Please, have the answers. Please fix this.

She had no idea where she was running, but she did know Love God would be performing here.

She heard shouting all around her taxing to her ears and thrumming in her head.

Knives, knives knives knives.
Pacifica’s knives.

Knives of steel and sound and sticking themselves into her skull at every turn.

She pumped her legs harder, running into people and the edges of stalls. There was a long line of indignant shouts behind her, but they barely processed beyond just more knives into the back of her skull.

The force of running into something head on as the first indication that there was anything in her path, followed by the hollow ‘bang’ of hitting something metal, and large.

The pain didn’t come in until she’d realized she was already on the ground, her nose was bleeding a bit from where she’d slammed into the side of the van.

And right there, painted in neon

‘Love God’

There was more banging from the inside of the van, and what sounded like a muffled voice yelling.

She flinched when the door to the back of Love God’s van burst open. Love God himself, disheveled, hair and clothes looking rumpled and thrown on.

“Who’s runnin’ into my van?!” He boomed, a weird sort of vibrato in his voice that made her ears ring.

If they hadn’t been already ringing that is.

“L… Love god…?” The almost frighteningly pink eyes of the cherub fell onto Mabel and she resisted flinching.

Everyone was yelling all the time….

“The Magi kid from before.” Thank Cosmos, the yelling had stopped. He had just somewhat mumbled to himself before blowing a sigh “Jeez kid, I thought you were some kind of kidnapper.”

She nodded slowly, shoulders trembling a bit before he leaned on the edge of the van.

“Magi, I told you, Cherub’s only help once. If you’re pick wasn’t as perfect as you thought then I can’t help ya.” She wheezed, trying to relay what she needed to be said.

Finally, her breaths were even enough to even consider speaking.

“Please.” She was able to get out.

“Sorry.” He shrugged “If you weren’t as thorough as you should have been, it was your own fault.” He gave a sort of wry laugh ”So eager to please everyone, huh kid? No wonder you let those creeps rip your soul out.”

Her mind went blank at that.

She couldn’t… she wouldn’t process that.

Rip her… Rip her soul? Rip her soul out?

Soul Gem…
“What?!” it came out as more of a shriek than a question. Love God jolted back in surprise.

Tears filled her eyes once again, and this time she had nowhere to run, so they fell freely down her cheeks.

“What did you just say?” She had to have heard it wrong.

She had to have.

Love God blinked down at her once before his eyes darted away, a sudden guilty expression making his round face soften.

“Jeez, you.. you mean they don’t tell you?” He huffed. “Always thought they told Magi before they did it.”

Her hands were shaking, she couldn’t bear to stand. She may have been rocking in place.

No… no… no…

“They... when they made my…”

“Er… yeah, when they made your Soul Gem, they put your actual Soul into it. Sorry kid, thought you knew…” Slowly, awkwardly, Love God reached over to pat her head.

His heavy hand made her head bob up and down with the motion, she could barely feel it.

She could barely feel anything.

Her gaze drifted downward, until she was staring intently at her knees.

“It.. it nearly got broken… a week ago…” she heard Love God hiss through his teeth in sympathy.

“Yikes… that would have definitely killed you. Lucky that didn’t happen huh?”

She let out a thin laugh, shrill and warbling, it sounded more hysterical than she felt.

She was starting to wonder why she didn't feel so panicked anymore. Just minutes ago she was practically manic with fear and guilt...

As though he were approaching a wild animal, he slowly crouched and put a hand on her shoulder, free hand tipping her head back up to him.

“Look kid, I’d really like to stay here and like, make sure you don’t go on some kinda magical rampage, but I really gotta be on stage.” He looked genuinely apologetic too.

She supposed she should feel sad at the only person who was explaining things was leaving her alone.

She couldn’t muster the energy to feel anything but vaguely disappointed.

She nodded hollowly and he tousled her hair.

“Oh... and.. hey! Is that your brother? Sunglasses too big for his head? V neck that really doesn’t look good on him?” That confused her for a second

Her brother? In a V neck? It took her a moment to remember that Wendy had picked out a special
outfit for him today.

That.. that was a V neck wasn’t it?

Dipper must have been worried if he ran after her for so long. She did use a lot of Magica speed right then.

She nodded and Love God smiled at her before turning for the stage.

“If things are still tough Magi, I’ll be out in an hour or so, if you can wait that long.”

And Then Dipper was there.

She watched idly as her brother bent over himself, heaving for breath and gasping.

“Ma… Mabel… what…” He looked down at her, and Mabel noticed after a moment she was still sitting on the ground, legs still buckled beneath her.

“Dipper…” Saying his name sent a spike of something through her. Maybe it was relief, maybe fear, maybe even joy at her brother being here.

But with it came a pulse of heat dancing around her neck from her Soul Gem.

From her Soul

And she remembered.

The dream after, the one that felt like a Dipper hug, it made so much more sense now.

He was carrying her Soul Gem outside to break it.

He was carrying ‘Her’ outside.

‘She’ was her Soul Gem.

Dipper tried to break her Soul Gem.

“You would have killed me.”

She distantly thought she might have been in shock. There should be something rolling around in her gut at the understanding, disgust, anger, betrayal, pure sadness.

But she couldn’t feel a thing.

Dipper froze, sneakers right in front of her, he was probably about to crouch down and ask if she was okay.

Or demand answers about her mess up.

Her Soul Gem burned hotly, her soul a tiny supernova across her skin.

Finally she felt the first stab of something she should be feeling.

“What? Mabel what are you-?” She stood abruptly and shoved him once.

“You almost killed me!”
Dipper stumbled and hit the ground with a small yelp of surprise.

She should probably feel bad about that. But she couldn’t feel much beyond the sharp stab of betrayal twisting in her gut.

“You would have killed me! If... if Pacifica didn’t… if Kyubey Didn’t…” Kyubey…

Kyubey tricked her.

Kept it from her from the very start.

Tears started to build in her eyes. Her knees shook with strain, as quickly as she’d stood she’d fallen back down.

Dipper hadn’t gotten back up yet, sitting eye level with her, staring in a kind of shock and worry and confusion that would have her reeling if she was doing more than idly taking it in.

“It… it is me… my Soul Gem.. it…” she choked. “Kyubey made my Soul Gem.. out.. of…” she gestured toward herself, trying in vain to get the point across.

“Your Soul Gem?…” Dipper’s jaw dropped when he put the pieces together in his head. His face went pale, and his shoulders started to shake.

“He made… your Soul Gem.. out of your Soul.” He summed up. Before Mabel even had a chance to confirm He’d reached out to grab her shoulders.

“I knew that creep was bad news I knew it! Mabel I... I’m gonna get you out of…” She flinched away from him the second he touched her sweater. Her Soul Gem was still burning, but despite the heat there was no real pain.

Probably because she was practically possessing her own body at this point.

She reached up to grab at her Soul Gem. Tugging at the black chord holding it around her neck.

The snap of rope seemed to trigger something in Dipper’s mind, only to be emphasized when she slipped the ring onto her finger. Like how it should be.

The heat dissipated. Maybe because she was wearing it how she should be. It allowed her to look over at her brother again.

Dipper’s eyes widened a little more, if that was even possible, and the look he gave her was nothing short of horrified.

“Oh… Oh Cosmos… Mabel! I…” He opened his mouth a few times after that start, never quite getting words out, until he settled on “I had no idea…” he looked like he was on the verge of sobbing right now.

This should be the time for her to pull herself together and comfort him. Dipper had been through so much stress lately. She’d put Dipper through so much stress lately.

She knew he didn’t know. She knew he wouldn’t have done it if he’d known.

She knew since her Soul Gem wasn’t broken and she was alive it shouldn’t matter.

But she couldn't do this with him right now.
She needed to be somewhere else.

She forced herself to stand, croak out a small ‘It’s not your fault’, because Dipper would always need to be told that for how often he blames himself for things, and turned to walk away.

She needed to think.

She needed to be alone.

She needed to hide in Sweater Town for awhile.

He had no idea how long he’d been sitting here. The sunglasses Nate had loaned him were tossed to the side at some point from running his hands through his hair nervously.

Mabel’s Soul was in her Soul Gem.

He’d nearly smashed it.

After she’d walked away, halfheartedly mumbling that it wasn’t his fault, he’d felt sick.

He still felt sick.

He’d nearly killed her.

Nearly killed Mabel his sister, his twin, his best friend.

He arched forward, slumped over and clawing into the dirt for something to hold onto as he rode out the nauseous feelings.

Cold sweat dripped down his back as another fit of dry heaves passed over him, the idea of what could have happened enough to send cold chills down his spine.

If Pacifica hadn’t come around and stopped him…

If he hadn’t missed...

Mabel would be dead right now.

His hands lifted from the ground to clutch at his gut with the last heave. A burning up his throat was the only indication that something was finally coming out before the acid taste of bile assaulted his mouth.

He spat and shuddered, the slimy orange bile quick to vanish into the dirt below.

She looked so hollow when he found her. So scared and angry and sad that everything ended up just wiped away.

He’d never seen Mabel like that before.

He couldn't comfort her. He’d freaked out and she’d walked off.

He wouldn’t be able to make it right.

How could he break her contract without hurting her?

He couldn’t. He couldn’t do anything.
He couldn’t help her.

Tears started to sting his eyes for a moment at the idea.

Unless…

He took a deep breath, the anger slowly boiling in his gut giving him voice despite his nausea.

“Bill. Come out, I know you’re watching.”

The word around him seemed to still. A shudder unrelated to his ill feelings made goosebumps race down his arms. A single point on the horizon became awash with grey and rapidly, the whole world around him followed suit.

He willed his shoulders to spread firmly.

“Well Well Well.. Pine tree… Didn’t expect you to ask after me.”

She didn’t know how long she’d been walking, but eventually she could barely hear Love God’s performance, drowned out by the other performers of Woodsticks.

The wind was musty and warm as it blew against her face.

Without her Soul Gem her body was as good as dead.

Her cute curly hair, her braces, her pretty brown eyes, her rosy cheeks.

Everything about her body died the second she made the contract with Kyubey.

When Dipper hugs her he’s hugging a dead body. Grunkle Stan was ruffling the hair of a corpse yesterday.

She wasn’t even human anymore.

She felt sick.

“Oh dear, are you upset with me?”

She felt a shiver crawl up her spine, and in a second realized just why Kyubey always weirded Dipper out.

He must have sensed something about the creature that she never did.

She should have listened to him.

She should have shot her grappling hook at Kyubey the second he offered a contract.

“Why would you do that?” She asked hollowly. “Why would you trick us?”

It tilted its head to the side.

“Our kind do not force Magica to make contracts, we do not lie. Just because some aspect of the deal was not understood by one party does not mean that party was treated unfairly.”

She could feel the rage beginning to boil in her gut. How dare this thing.
How dare it trick her into ripping out her soul and act like it was in the right.

“You lied to me!” Without even thinking about it, she summoned an axe, the rest of her uniform appearing in a flurry of light. No ribbons, no sparkles. Just a flourish of pink light.

She was too angry for anything else.

“We did no such thing. You were told the truth. Simply not the whole truth.”

It didn’t back off. She could see red at the corners of her vision.

How dare it how dare it how dare it.

A liar, a trickster, tricking her and girls like her for laughs.

What would she tell Pacifica?

“Why didn’t you tell me?!” She hissed, the last bit of restraint in her mind focused on keeping her voice down.

“Would you have decided your brother’s safety wasn’t paramount if you knew? Perhaps that’s why you’re struggling with this information. If you wouldn't have done differently, even if you did know, then it would not matter.”

Her axe flew through the air with barely a sound.

Kyubey’s head came off with little more than the sound of tearing meat.

It didn’t bleed. There was nothing to imply it wasn’t just an enchanted doll.

Liar

Trickster

Playing Magica for laughs

She’d just killed it

Liar

Trickster

Playing Magica for Laughs

She felt sick

Liar

Trickster

Play-

“What?!?”

A deep voice pierced her inner mantra, the gravelly tone of a boy in the tail end of puberty.

The deep rage still peeking at the edge of her vision tempted her to ignore whoever was on the
other side of the voice. Or to snap at them and go off to destroy something else, angry enough to not feel guilty about it.

Kyubey were aliens after all, it’s not like she should feel bad about killing it, stupid cute face or not.

Slowly, she turned to face whoever was behind her.

Robbie.

The Goth teen was still nursing the swollen cheek from before, and something that felt like guilt started to temper the anger heating her torso.

But despite the injury, he was beaming at her. Looking happier and lighter than she ever thought possible.

“Glad I ran into you!” He continued on, as though she weren’t wearing a magical girl uniform and there wasn’t a decapitated mascot just a few feet from her. “I just wanted to say thank you. You were right, I really did just need to give someone else a shot.” Robbie glanced behind himself, where, no doubt, Tambry was located.

It didn’t process in her head for a moment.

He was happy.

In the face of everything that had happened in such a short time, Robbie Valentino was happy.

Because of her.

Because she helped him find a new love.

Something cool settled in her gut. Relief? Sadness finally catching up with her? It wasn’t bright like joy, but it certainly was calming her from her anger rather quickly.

“You… You’re happy.” It came out as more of a question than anything else. “Nate hit you and… you’re okay with that?”

Robbie shrugged, as if getting punched in the face by a friend was something that happened every Tuesday.

“I probably should have guessed he’d take it bad. But like jeez, guys gotta learn that you can’t ‘dibs’ a person. Anyway that’s not the point, the point is Tambry literally told me ‘let’s be as couple-y as possible out of spite’ and Seline almighty that’s gonna be hilarious when we finally run into-woah…” He stopped mid sentence.

“You okay?”

She blinked once as he looked at her, uncertain.

Was she bleeding? Did she nic herself with her axe earlier? Did he finally notice her outfit wasn’t something very usual for her?

She reached up to check her face of injuries and was honestly surprised to feel tears running down her cheeks.

How long had she been crying?
“Um…” She started out intelligently. Robbie huffed a sigh and anxiously rubbed the back of his neck once before crouching down to her level.

“Ah… there there? I guess things weren’t as smooth on your end?” He slowly reached out, like approaching a wild animal, and patted her head.

Not dissimilar to how Love God tried to comfort her. God that felt like eons ago already.

A sob finally found its way out of her throat. Before the teen could pull away she launched herself against his chest.

There were half panicked noises coming from the goth teen before he finally gave in and called out for Tambry.

They were talking lowly, but she could barely hear them over her sobbing, her small wailing noises.

“You should probably hug her or something.” And then the click of a camera.

"Are you seriously taking a picture?"

Slowly, awkwardly, Robbie rested his arms on her back, in a very loose definition of a hug.

"What? You should hold small children more often."

His hoodie smelled like chili fries and a lot of body spray.

That should have been gross. She shouldn’t even be doing this, searching for comfort from someone she was supposed to have just set up and left alone.

Tambry had knelt down, because she could feel a smallish hand start to rub her back as she cried.

It was like a damn had burst.

She was glad that if anyone had let her do this, it was two people who weren’t involved in all of this contracts and magic stuff.

“So, you may want to tell someone what’s up if you’ll just jump into the arms of anyone…”

Another sob choked her throat.

“When you can breathe right that is…”

“So, Pine tree, Pine Tree, Pine tree… what In all the dimensions in all the world could convince you to ask me to come around? Really, I’m flattered.” That weird noise that the demon made when he was doing illusions run through the air with a strange echo.

Dipper tried not to scream.

“Hey, Bother looking up for a second Kid? I just wanna offer you an eyeball with teeth that hisses the deaths of your loved ones as you sleep!”

“How do I break a contract with a Kyubey?”

“Well jeez, straight to the point. Not usually your forte Pine Tree…”
“Can it be done or not?”

The glow of the triangular demon started to show through from this peripherals, he knew if he’d looked up Bill would be right there infront of him.

He fought down a wave of revulsion.

“Fine fine, Y’know normally I wouldn’t tell you squat without some sort of deal. But hey, as it turns out, my plans are reliant on Shooting Star living to see the day they become real. And she can’t do that if I don’t fork up some information.”

He felt a sharp jab to his back, forcing him to sit up straight and stare bill in the eye.

*Eeny Meenie Miney… You!*

Dipper tried his hardest to set his gaze. Not show a trace of fear.

This was for Mabel.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

For Mabel.

“Then tell me.”

Bill looked pleased at that, floating away a bit and twirling his cane a few times.

“There is no way to break an Incubator’s contract without either killing the party in question or making a contract yourself.”

He tried not to snap at Bill, getting angry would only be playing into his hand.

“You’ve gotta be kidding me.”

“Nope! Sorry Pine tree! Those little pests can make such tight loopholes even I can’t break ‘em! well… yet. Anyway, Shooting Star’s stuck unless you can convince one of her little friends to make a contract to turn her human again!” Bill laughed. “Those little creeps are so arbitrary. Hm, but maybe if you get emotionally unstable enough you’d have enough of the emotional energy they use!” Bill brought one of his hands up to press tot he corner of his eye, something he was trying to do to be endearing.

Dipper’s jaw tightened.

“Maybe you can give me a little spin in your meat bag again since that worked out so well last time!” Dipper jolted and flinched away.

"In your dreams!"

“Well fine fine! Be picky!” Bill hovered away.

“I mean, It’s not like someone else's contract is your only option for Shooting Star to live to the end of the summer or anything.” Bill laughed at that.

“Oh wait, It is! Buh-byeeee!”

There was a flash of light.
Dipper jolted awake with a scream on his lips.

His heart hammered in his chest as he quickly started scrabbling at his arms. Nails digging harshly into his forearms.

Pain. Pain. Pain meant he was awake.

Pain meant he was still in his body.

He hissed when his nails dug a little too far into his arms. He’d have marks in the shapes of little crescents for a couple of hours now.

But he was awake. The world around him was in color.

He was in his body.

His shoulders were shaking. Funny, he could barely feel that.

his gut lurched with another wave of nausea. He was going to throw up again, he could feel it. The bile was already rising in the back of his throat again.

There were no preliminary dry heaves this time. Dipper barely had a second to bend over the ground again, shaking arms the only things keeping him from falling face first into the dirt below as the acid-y taste of bile made its way around and out of his mouth again.

Didn’t he need that for digesting things? He should probably not eat much fatty foods tonight.

Eventually he was left spitting and shaking. Skin drenched in cold sweat and feeling overall clammy.

As Dipper gasped for breath, the sick feeling in his stomach finally starting to alleviate a bit he felt a warm hand place itself onto his back.

“Dude… hey… hey… you eat something bad?”

Wendy.

Another shiver crawled up his spine, cold and sickly, just like him.

Slowly, Dipper dragged his wrist against his chin, cleaning himself up a bit before sitting up straight.

He must have looked pale as a ghost.

Nate was standing a couple of paces behind her, nervously rubbing at his arm, while Lee was half jogging toward them.

The blonde teenager was clutching something in his hand before he crouched to Dipper’s level, showing him the contents. An Alka seltzer.

“The best part about Thompson being lame is that he always brings this kinda stuff with him.”

Dipper gratefully took the offered tablet and broke it in half. Dropping the first half into his mouth and quickly swallowing with a water bottle Wendy had handed him.

He usually only needed half when Mom gave these to him…
He took a very small bit of water into his mouth again and popped the other half in.

Nate and Lee were beside themselves with laughter at his ‘rabid dog’ impersonation.

Wendy just looked like she was happy he was still in the mood for jokes.

He didn’t have the heart to tell her he was just trying to distract himself.

Thankfully he didn’t have to do that alone. It took only a couple of seconds after wiping the foam from his lips when Lee was lifting him up on his shoulders again and leading the charge toward the right side of the stage.

Nothing could shake the dread pooling in his gut, even when Thompson rejoined them with some sort of ‘please stop punching each other in the face’ cake. Robbie and Tambry just a few paces behind him.

And perched on Robbie’s back, a little too gloomy for Dipper’s liking, and sniffling every so often, was his sister. Red eyed and trembling if he got close enough.

He felt the dredges of guilt he’d been trying his hardest to forget surge back up when Mabel clung to Robbie’s shoulders just a little tighter and hid her face in his hood.

She hadn’t noticed him, perched on Lee’s shoulders or not.

Why did he think that that could be a good idea? Not just breaking Mabel’s soul gem (who would think that an idea that gave him such wistful relief just a couple of hours ago could now make his blood run cold?) But talking to Bill about it, and not even getting any real answers.

What did he mean? He needed Mabel alive till the end of the summer?

What was he going to do at the end of the summer?

Where those his ‘Big plans’? Whatever those plans would entail?

Thankfully, if anything, Robbie and Nate weren’t going to punch the daylights out of each other again, and Wendy and Tambry were already bonding again over heckling some guys wearing a whole lot of denim.

Mabel looked up when the goth teen shifted his grip on her, and finally caught Dipper’s eye.

She smiled a little weakly and waved at him.

Dipper tapped Lee’s chest with his heel once, silently asking to be put down.

He hit the ground around the same time Mabel jumped from Robbie’s back and landed on the ground.

The group was moving on to the next performance, but they hung back for a bit. Silence dominating the air between them.

He had to start. He had to apologize. He couldn’t do anything to make it right, but he could at least do this.

“Mabel if I’d known I swear I wouldn’t have dreamed of-”

“It’s okay Dipper.” She waved his words away with a hand. “You didn’t. Besides… It shouldn’t
matter. Yeah I’m still kinda upset, and yeah you were definitely right about Kyubey… but like… Broski, It’s not like if I’d known from the start I wouldn't have still made the contract.” She reached up and toyed with her hair.

“Do you… Are you gonna be okay?” Mabel shrugged at that.

“I just feel really down right now.” Dipper nodded and slung an arm around her shoulders.

“Well Bad First Impressions is playing in a couple minutes, wanna head over there?”

Mabel nodded slowly and let herself be led.

Something clicked in Dipper’s mind.

“You were with Robbie and Tambry right?”

“Yeah?”

“Did you tell them?”

“Mm-hm. Robbie Seemed really excited for some reason, and actually asked if he could draw me in my uniform sometime, Tambry just asked if she could kill Kyubey if I didn’t already.” Mabel raised a brow at him. “Why?”

“Nothing… Just wondering… Maybe you should tell Candy and Grenda now too…”

Mabel gasped and turned to look at him as if he’d suggested cooking Waddles for Dinner.

“Dipper! Are you nuts?! If I told them they’d both want to become Magical Girls so badly it wouldn’t matter if I told them how messed up all of this is!”

“Right… Sorry… sorry…”

Maybe it would be a bad idea to go behind Mabel’s back about this too…

But she’d never risk one of her friend’s lives, even if it meant her own.

But if Bill was right, and it was frustrating how often that was, the only thing that would keep her alive till the end of the summer, let alone afterward, would be someone else making a contract to guarantee her that.

And Kyubey wouldn’t make a contract with him...

So who else could save his sister but the two people she’d been able to befriend here?

He was pretty sure if he explained everything about the situation, how Soul gems worked and all, under the caveat of Saving Mabel, they’d both still want to try.

How could he get to talk to Grenda and Candy alone without Mabel to hear?

He’d have to bide his time for that wouldn’t he?

His fist tightened, balling up Mabel’s sweater in his hand.

He felt like trash for planning this, not just considering, but planning it.

But he couldn’t chance Mabel not making it to see their 13th birthday. He couldn’t.
That wasn’t allowed to happen.

Chapter End Notes

You know initially Dipper was going to talk to Kyubey about this, but this is still Gravity Falls after all.

However unless things don't go as I plan them to, Bill won't be doing much else in this fic. Kyubey make some annoying unbreakable contracts after all, so there's not much he can do.
Chapter 7- It’s called caring about Someone

Chapter Summary

“Ah! The man of the Hour!” Preston Northwest just dripped with arrogance as he talked. And yeah, Pacifica did sometimes too, but she could at least control it. “Glad to see you here.” He leaned down to get at Dipper’s eye level, completely ignoring Mabel, even with the fact that she had the Journal in her arms instead of him.

Dipper groaned and pretty clearly resisted rolling his eyes as he glanced at Mabel.

“But actually, I’m a monster hunter, my sister does the Ghost busting, I’m just here for backup.” Dipper gestured toward her and she tried her hardest to look noble. Puffing up her chest and all.

Chapter Notes

Okay, first off I am so sorry that this took so long! It was surprisingly difficult to figure out. But either way I hope the wait was worth it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She wasn’t sure what was worse.

The terrible discoveries that had taken place barely three days ago, Sapping her mind of anything relatively close to a good night’s sleep. Or the fact that everyone was treating her like glass now.

Dipper kept talking to her like she’d break at the littlest provocation, taking a little extra time to take care of himself, and if Mabel wasn’t well aware he was doing it because he thought her looking out for him was somehow stressful, she’d be proud of him.

Not even just that he’d been... well... Weirder. Her brother was deferring to her about such odd things. Letting her pick the toppings when Stan wasn’t feeling up to cooking and tossed them a pizza delivery menu, offering if there was something she’d want to see on TV, and watching Teen Titans reruns with her instead of asking if he can flick the channel over to Ghost Harassers.

He was even somewhat mothering her a bit. It was a little too weird to be annoying.

It was really small things, making sure she got her food for Dinner first, taking care to be quieter with his summer reading to help her sleep, things that may be miniscule to him, but she’d noticed every time.

Stan, thankfully, hadn’t caught onto Dipper’s mood. But he’d already been treating her a bit differently beforehand. Not like, bad, he was still calling her ‘sweetie’ and ruffling her hair.

But he kept giving her these sad looks when he thought she wasn’t looking, the occasional hug she’d steal from her Grunkle grew more and more likely to be returned.
She still didn’t know how to tell Pacifica.

Her fingers would twitch randomly over her Soul Gem when it was out of its ring form.

It still didn’t feel like it was real.

How could this little gem, Something she could hold in the palm of her hand, be her?

Waddles snuffled on top of her, his snout breathing piggy breaths under her chin as he slept.

Kyubey hadn’t come around recently. She knew it was still alive, despite her chopping its head off that day.

If the stuff in the Journal was right, and it probably was, Magica were all over the globe, there needed to be more than one Kyubey to have that many magica.

Besides, even if she wasn’t able to justify it to herself she may not have felt very bad about it.

Another thing that showed she was changing.

That she was more Magica than Mabel now.

She huffed to herself and got up from her bed, Waddles rolling off of her obliviously, taking the few steps necessary to sit on Dipper’s bed beside him.

He leaned over a bit, eyes never straying from the paper he was working on, but showing her what he was doing at the same time.

There were a bunch of runes scribbled into the file paper he was writing on.

They didn’t look like anything the Journal had in its pages, Even anything under the blacklight. Mabel had to honestly think for a moment to realize just what Dipper was decoding.

They were Witches’ runes. From the few mazes he’d been in.

Mabel’s brow furrowed as she leaned over just a bit more, chin resting on her brother’ shoulder.

“So you’re decoding Witches’ runes?” He hummed and nodded before crossing out a word on his ‘translations’ page.

“At first I thought it was just gibberish, but their runic does have a language of its own. Kind of like how you can tell that those nasty buzzing noises are their names.”

Mabel furrowed her brow a bit and read through the page.

She could recognize the few rune messages from the Armor Witches’ maze and the Candy Witches maze.

Beneath the candy witches’ messages was a bunch of crossed out translations, everything from ‘CHEESECAKE’ to ‘MOTHERSILL’ Nothing that made too much sense.

The Armor Witch only had a couple of translations until Dipper had circled ‘LOVEME’

“I think I remember some Runes of other Witches.” She offered. Dipper looked over at her and smiled a bit, if a little unsure.

“You wanna help then? I think I almost have the alphabet finished.”
Mabel nodded and accepted the pencil Dipper handed her with a small smile.

Let’s see… the ones she could remember the runes to…

Didn’t the Mimic Witch have…. And the Tea Party Witch… Mabel hummed to herself as she scratched out the runes she could remember from her hunts.

She hadn’t been on a hunt lately, she’d realized with a start. She hadn’t wanted to go on one.

She didn’t want to see Kyubey. Even to collect her used up Grief Seeds.

“Mabel?” She felt her brother’s hand cover her own. Mabel was confused for a moment, before realizing that She’d been Gripping the pencil so tight it had broken in half in her hand.

She hadn’t even noticed.

At least there were no splinters.

She didn’t pull away when Dipper opened her hand to double check though.

Eventually he let her go with a small hum of acquiesce and picked up her paper.

“Sweet! there are a lot of new symbols in here!” He smiled at Mabel before starting to copy them down on his work paper. “Thanks Mabes.”

There were a couple more moments of silence until it was broken up again.

This time by a tapping on the window.

To think a tap on the window used to be a warning. A reminder that nothing normal could get so high without a ladder.

To think she considered other Magica ‘normal’ now.

“Psst!” Pacifica hissed through the Window, a purple gleaming knife wedged into the windowpane to keep her aloft.

How on Earth could a Magica with Sound Magic be so quiet?

Dipper rolled his eyes and hunched even more firmly over his work, fully intending to ignore Pacifica.

But he didn’t object when she got off of his bed to open the window.

Probably because he didn’t wanna start a fight.

“Hey Pacifica, I was just wondering if I should find you… Look there’s something about all of this that I think-”

“Later. I need your help.”

Immediately Mabel was at the ready. She pulled her Soul Gem out, ready to transform.

The smallest collection of black gunk dimming the pink light made her wince a bit, but she opted not to mention it.

“What is it? A Familiar nest? A really nasty witch? Traveling Magica who don’t know how to play
nice?” Pacifica held a hand up, cutting her off again, silently asking (Telling) her to slow down.

“My family has this annual party coming up tomorrow, we were doing the mock-up tonight when something went wrong.”

“What? The gold spoons were in the shop so you had to use silver?” Dipper snorted over his workpage. Pacifica rolled her eyes before continuing as though he hadn’t spoken.

“Things started levitating and attacking. I thought it was a Witch trying to set up a labyrinth in our house, But it wasn’t. We think it’s a ghost and Dad is insistent that you two can get rid of it.”

“Of course we’ll help!”

“Absolutely not!”

She felt like she shouldn’t be surprised.

“I’ll get Dipper to Come around.”

“No She won’t.”

“Just come over tomorrow and we’ll be ready!”

“I’m watching a Ghost Harassers marathon tomorrow.”

Pacifica was watching them argue like it was a particularly close tennis match. All wide confused eyes darting between them.

“You can tape it!”

“Not with the gross old VCR Grunkle Stan has! It’s all or nothing with that thing!” Mabel puffed out her cheeks.

“Well then just lend me the Journal and I can help Pacifica with her ghost and you can watch the marathon. And Grenda and Candy can come with me for the Exor-thingy”

“I don’t want her anywhere near the Jour-”

“Hey!” The heiress’ voice finally broke them up. Pacifica folded her arms and glared them both down.

“How about Mabel and I go on a hunt right now, and give you some time to discern just how much you hate me, okay Dipper?” Her tone was mocking, the slight lit in it that Mabel was used to hearing before they’d stopped being rivals.

Dipper’s brow twitched a bit, but he glanced over at Mabel quickly, and, surprisingly(or unsurprisingly), backed off.

“Don’t come back too late. You need sleep more than I do.” Mabel nodded and smiled a bit. She could hear Pacifica snort as she started to climb back out the window.

“What are you? Her Keeper?”

“It’s called caring about Someone, something you’ll probably never understand.”

“Okayyy Time for a Witch hunt! Dipper get some sleep yourself okay? I won’t be back too late,
but still.” She was half pushing Pacifica out of the window at this point. Her fellow Magi simply rolled her eyes before jumping out on her own.

Dipper smiled weakly at her and gave her a thumbs up.

At least he wasn’t trying to come with her on hunts anymore?

Pacifica huffed to herself once Mabel met her outside.

“What does he even have against me? Even when you and me were against each other, I barely ever talked to him.” Mabel shrugged.

“You know, it’s a ‘Your family hates your enemies more than you hate your enemies’ kind of thing.”

She didn’t think she’d ever get such a confused look that wasn’t tinged with vague disgust from Pacifica.

“What? Your friends don’t hate someone you hate more than you hate them?” The blonde stammered for a moment, like she was trying to pretend that she wasn’t as clueless as she was.

“What about those two girls you’re always with?”

Pacifica huffed and summoned two streams of knives, they hovered around her, crossing over each other once, like that diagram Dipper showed her once of an atom.

“Can we just go?”

Mabel huffed a sigh and summoned an axe.

“Fine.”

“Hey, Pacifica?”

“What?”

“What do you think you’d do if I told you that Magica’s souls get ripped out of their bodies to make Soul Gems?”

Okay, true, she could have handled it with a lot more tact.

But if she waited until they were in a Witches’ maze they’d both get distracted. Here, when they were still looking, hopping from tree to tree, was the best place.

Also if Pacifica attacked her she’d be able to hide in the shadows.

“I’d say You’re lucky I already figured as much or I’d probably attack you for being such a jerk.”

Well… if her surprise made her slip from her next landing and have to swing like a gymnast on a branch below to keep pace with Pacifica again, that was her own business.

“How in Cosmos’ name did you…” Pacifica huffed.

“Look, I know I said none of your business last time, and I still mean it. So None of your business. I suspected, but I didn’t know for sure until now.”
She’d thought that the vaguely cordial relationship she’d made with Pacifica would mean that she’d get to learn a little bit more about the Heiress, or at least be able to probe about how much she already knew. Especially from the things she’d learned the last time they’d been working together.

But maybe she’d gone a little too far into something without knowing what.

Even her attempts to change the conversation to more lighthearted topics were of no avail.

“I think my favorite Disney movie is Tangled.” She’d say casually before ramming headfirst into a familiar.

Pacifica would flip her hair before driving a flurry of knives into the familiar pile.

“My Mom didn’t want me to watch that one.” She said, a tad too defensively for Mabel’s comfort.

“What? You didn’t like, buy out the theater for a private screening or something?” Pacifica maybe punched through the door into the next room of the labyrinth a little too savagely.

“No. But Avery and Waverly liked it.”

“Avery and….?” Pacifica’s friends names rhymed. Cute.

But now they were in the middle of the main room.

The Witch looked like a giant balloon animal, but all twisted and curled around itself that it didn’t look a thing like any actual balloon animal.

Its name was Genevieve

But at least with the two of them they took her down pretty easily.

As the labyrinth fell around them Mabel turned to Pacifica and smiled.

“Will I be meeting them tomorrow? Your friends that is...” Pacifica scoffed.

“You sure your keeper will let you leave?” That cold tone was back. Mabel could already feel the hairs on the back of her neck standing on end in challenge.

“You mean Dipper? He’s just looking out for me.”

“By being hovery and suffocating? Sounds more controlling than protecting.”

“Hey.” She stopped Pacifica there, making sure her voice was just firm enough to get Pacifica to know she meant business.

“Don’t talk like that about my Brother. We’ve been together our whole lives, and now I’m a Magica, and he can’t help me.”

“Ugh… whatever. I don’t know how you two are able to be so dependent on eachother...” They passed the Grief Seed between them, Mabel’s still had some gross black gunk along the sides, but it wasn’t as bad as it had been lately. It wasn’t too bad that she’d been letting so much gunk build up on her Soulgem right? On her Soul?

She really tried not to get too upset at Pacifica being so incredulous at Dipper looking out for her.
She just didn’t know what it was like to have a twin.

When they parted ways and Mabel headed back toward the shack she decided she’ll invite Candy and Grenda over tomorrow.

At the very least she’ll probably convince Dipper to let her use the Journal, and she’d need backup if it was her and Pacifica against something neither of them had fought before.

Her father wanted Dipper. She couldn't fight against it, he wasn’t going to listen if she tried to tell him Mabel had already agreed to help.

She took one of the family’s sports cars down Gopher Road toward the Mystery Shack, already securely wrapping a headscarf around herself to hide her identity to most passers by.

The dirt beneath her was lumpy in that gross way that clearly indicated that nobody actually worked on the yard of the tourist trap.

As she walked up, the events of the night previous played back in her head. The Mockup and how badly it went awry.

She just wanted to wear that Lakefoam Green dress, but the slightest difference in color was enough to show her mother’s distaste. It had looked good, she liked how she felt in it. But her mother didn’t like it. And she wasn’t allowed to speak against her parents.

Disobeying the bell was worse than pretty much any Witch that she’d ever had her butt handed to her by.

And then the plates started moving.

She was so stupid for thinking it was a Witch. Witches don’t interact with the physical world when they set up labyrinths, They warp the air around them and dammit she’d been doing this for too long to have been fooled by that.

Oh and she’d been so excited about it too.

Finally, an excuse for her parents to know the truth about her. To see what Good she’d been doing with her magic.

“Don’t scuff up the floor with those little knives of yours.”

“Oh Pacifica, you don't actually go into battle wearing that, do you?”

Her fists clenched into the hem of her trench coat as she stepped up along the rickety rotted wooden porch of the Mystery Shack.

It was her own fault for hoping.

She rapped on the door three sharp times, already flinching at the slight dampness that seemed to permeate everything in and around the shack.

Thankfully, it was Mabel that answered the door.

“Oh! Pacifica! Right on time! Just finished with making my dress!”

The entire Foyer (if the dinky room with an old TV could be called that) was covered in glitter and
multicolored fabrics and feathers.

Dipper was struggling against Mabel’s weird friends, Grenade and Coco or whatever. They were trying to force him into what looked like a business suit with blue rhinestones hastily sewed into the lapels (Not even a Dinner suit either! She might have seen shoulder pads. Gag.)

Granite and Sugar’s dresses didn’t look too bad, they were actually pretty close to adequate, in a stunning turn of events.

But ugh that suit Dipper was struggling against, and Mabel was excitedly showing off some fluffy pink monstrosity covered in feathers and glitter.

Great, Just great.

So as it turned out, she was able to get Dipper to go to the party, even if it was just to go to a party(and maybe flirt with some cute rich girls, she’d yet to set Dipper up with a rebound crush like she’d promised after all) He’d let her use the Journal, as long as she promised not to write in it with any of her glitter pens, even if she was writing something pretty important into it. Ballpoint or no deal.

Honestly, Dipper had no sense of color.

Pacifica had grumbled a little bit about explaining Grenda and Candy’s presence to her father, but she did grudgingly hand over an extra two party invites to them.

She kept eyeing Mabel’s dress with a weird sort of mix of revulsion and confusion. Mabel was tempted to ask what her problem was, but she supposed it didn’t matter.

It’s not like the gown was going to interfere with her fighting after all.

Everything in Pacifica’s house was so… so… Big

She’d seen the inside of the yard when she’d snuck in before, so while the peacocks were no surprise, everything else was.

Pacifica had Staff! A butler and maids, and fountains and statues… she was almost dizzy by the grandeur of it all.

Dipper fiddled with his lapels fussily beside her, angrily picking off the little blue sequins she’d stuck on. He shot her an annoyed glance which she returned with a shrug. What? He was the one who was reusing the Boy of Mystery suit from when they’d ran the shack, she just tried to make it look more presentable.

“Ah! The man of the Hour!” Preston Northwest just dripped with arrogance as he talked. And yeah, Pacifica did sometimes too, but she could at least control it. “Glad to see you here.” He leaned down to get at Dipper’s eye level, completely ignoring Mabel, even with the fact that she had the Journal in her arms instead of him.

Dipper groaned and pretty clearly resisted rolling his eyes as he glanced at Mabel.

“Actually, I’m a monster hunter, my sister does the Ghost busting, I’m just here for backup.” Dipper gestured toward her and she tried her hardest to look noble. Puffing up her chest and all.

Preston Northwest gave her a far more critical look than he gave Dipper, certainly not fond of
making a mistake right off the bat. Mabel tried not to waver under the glare.

“So then, Pacifica, Show your little friend the… problem room.” He didn’t even break eye contact with Mabel when he talked to Pacifica, barely tilting his head in her direction to indicate he wasn’t talking to Mabel.

“Right.”

She felt Pacifica’s hand close over her wrist before she was tugged down the hall.

“Good luck!” She heard Dipper’s voice bounce down the halls. “I’ll make sure Candy and Grenda don’t go overboard…” Mabel glanced back once at her brother.

He was picking at the sequins in his lapels again, She waved before being tugged around a corner.

“Okay Mabel, before I let you and your crazy axe fighting run rampant around my house I have a condition.”

“Condition?” While Pacifica knew (she must know) that Mabel was doing her a favor, and so she probably shouldn’t be the one setting conditions, Mabel was curious. Pacifica was going to be really picky with what happens in her home, So she supposed conditions were better than mid-hunt fighting.

But what could she…

Pacifica raised her hands to form an X before snapping them down and transforming.

“Transform and stay transformed. I do not want to see our house get covered in fake pink feathers and blood because you couldn’t run properly from a ghost in that thing.”

That sounded like a Pacifica Northwest brand insult, it really did, but there was something.. kinda off about it.

“Pacifica are you worried I might get hurt in a long dress?” A large grin blossomed on Mabel’s face when Pacifica sputtered in response, cheeks turning a bright red, even under all that foundation.

“Are you kidding me? I just said I didn’t want you getting my house dirty!”

“Yeah but you said something like that when we were familiar hunting, that you didn’t want me to get blood on your uniform, right before bleeding on it yourself.”

Pacifica scoffed and made a ‘follow me’ gesture.

“Just transform and we can get this over with.”

Mabel acquiesced, spinning in a circle and letting the ribbons and sparkly balls of light encompass her.

The room was creepy, something she supposed all haunted rooms had in common.

It was like one of those places you’d see in a hunter’s house, chairs and a pool table and a fireplace with a good view of the outside.

Oh and let’s not forget the scores of dead animal heads lining the walls.
“So, what does your brother’s nerd book even say about ghosts? I mean, we probably can’t hit it.” Pacifica huffed and summoned a knife with a flick of her wrist, cleaning under her nails with the tip of the blade.

Mabel hummed to herself and paged through the Journal, thankfully it had stayed in her hand even as she transformed.

“Well there’s something about ghosts in here somewhere…. aaaaahh aha!” She smiled triumphantly as she found it.

“Ghosts are sorted based on how dangerous they are. You said it only made cups and plates float and stuff right?” She flipped through the pages, “Looks like it’s the easiest to get rid of then! Category One!”

“They ahhh, hate bright light and are weakened by Anointed Water.” She was pretty sure she didn’t have Anointed Water, but she could use the bright light thing. “And exorcism after it’s weakened is pretty easy.”

“Well hurry up.” Pacifica ran a hand through her hair “I’d like to get back to the party before my image is ruined.” Mabel felt a prick of annoyance at that.

Sometimes it was really hard to believe they were on the same team.

The fire chose then to start going berserk. Almost immediately Mabel shoved the Journal into her Hammerspace, quick to make sure none of the embers would singe the pages.

Dipper would kill her if the Journal got burned on her watch.

A loud thump, like a body hitting the ground, made them both jump in place. Mabel summoned an axe as Pacifica summoned a bunch of knives, revolving around her and ready to fire.

The drip drip of something caught Mabel’s attention before dozens of deep voices rang through the room.

“Ancient Sins Ancient Sins Ancient Sins”

When furniture started hovering, Mabel shoved as many offending objects away from them as she could. She’d have to protect Pacifica, it was her job after all, to get rid of the ghost tonight before she could party.

Pacifica was busy ramming knives into any and all offending plates, tables or chairs, that Mabel missed.

Her fellow Magica met her eye, hazel and unimpressed.

“Category One, Huh?”

The tile floor clacked against Dipper’s nervous boot as he kept an eye on the party. He’d told Mabel he’d agree to come along to only make sure things don’t get too bad.

Make sure this Ghost wasn’t going to get too powerful and provide backup if necessary.

Part of him still couldn’t believe he’d missed an entire Ghost Harassers marathon for this. It almost felt like sacrilege to skip out on watching something he wanted to do himself so badly, without actually doing the ghost busting himself.
It’s not like he didn’t trust Mabel to do it, he just… was kind of regretting letting his grudge against Pacifica make him miss out on real Ghost Hunting.

“HA! Gullible! Loser!”

His thought process was immediately derailed at Grenda’s deep gravelly voice boomed through the area.

She’d just done the ‘something on your shirt’ prank to some rich boy and taunted him as he’d walked away angrily.

Candy and Grenda had talked to him once Mabel had been ushered off for the Ghost problem. Something about making sure neither of them flirted with a certain… he remembered the face of the guy, but couldn’t for the life of him remember his name, Or status, or whatever; anyway, they asked Dipper to keep an eye on them.

It almost felt ridiculous, and if he hadn’t already had a long list of times he’d embarrassed himself from lack of self control around Wendy he’d call it unreasonable.

Eventually, just around the time people watching was getting boring, he noticed a flutter of dark hair in the corner of his periphery vision.

Candy strode up next to him and cleared her throat.

“Would you like to get fondue with me Dipper? Last time I tried I couldn’t stop dipping them and Grenda had to pull me away. I would do well with someone to accompany me.” Dipper smiled slightly and followed beside her.

When they reached the fondue table Candy speared a tomato with her long fork, dipping it in the cheese.

Dipper stabbed a marshmallow for the chocolate fountain as he thought.

He’d wanted to get Candy and Grenda alone so he could talk to them about everything. But actually, now that he was thinking about it, he probably only needed Candy. Grenda did seem rather busy with her flirting to agree to talk to him for longer than a couple of minutes anyway.

“So Candy, how’s it going ignoring that…uh… Marcus?” Or was it Maruise? Mario?

“No Marius. His name is Marius.” She mumbled around her cheesy tomato before pressing her hands against her cheeks dramatically. “He is so beautiful! But he is the White Whale! And I cannot perform such a betrayal to Grenda!” Before Dipper had a chance to change the subject in his favor Candy’s tiny hands shot out to grab at his face and force his head to turn in the right direction.

“Just look at him Dipper!” He could barely see the guy, Marius apparently was his name, chatting with some adult. “It is not possible for a boy to be that handsome before Puberty!”

“Ahm… right… Well…” He grabbed Candy’s hands and pulled them off of himself. “How about we get you outside for a little detox? I got something I need to talk to you about anyway.”

Candy raised a brow at him but nodded, expression suddenly dropping into solemnity.

“I agree, I cannot do well to our promise if I must constantly be assaulted with his perfection.”

Dipper swallowed hard as he led Candy out the main doorway and into the courtyard.
There was a bit of what sounded like shouting in the distance, but that wasn’t important right now.

“The fresh air is doing well already, I can feel the romanticism bleeding out. Soon my heart will be cold as ice once more.”

“Right… uhm, Candy, Do you know why Mabel’s the one handling the Northwest’s ghost problem and not me?”

“Because you said she was more experienced?” Candy peeked an eye open at him. “Also because I do not think it is possible for Mabel to truly hate anyone, while you detest Pacifica more than myself and Grenda combined.”

“Well… yeah, but also…Ahm… how to put this…well..”

Candy waited expectantly, Dipper took a deep breath, may as well go all at once.

“She’s kind of a… Magical Girl? Like a Sailor Moon kinda thing?”

Candy choked at that, whether she was choking on her own spit or simply the very idea of her friend being a magical girl Dipper didn’t know.

“You must be joking.”

“Nope. Transformation and mascot and everything. In exchange for a wish she became a Magical girl. Actually, speaking of which…” he looked out around them, the warm summer night wouldn’t exactly help his voice carry, but he hoped he didn’t need to.

“Hey Kyubey! I know you’re out there! Get over here!”

Candy clapped her hands over her ears in surprise at his sudden shout. “Dipper! What is the meaning of all of this?” she shouted back.

Oh shoot, he was freaking her out wasn’t he?

“Sorry, see, the thing is, Mabel was really gung ho about it at first, and like, she was doing really good, but Grunkle Stan found out and he flipped, and then she realized he’s gonna tell Mom and Dad and… well… she wasn’t sure if she could handle that.”

Candy stared at him all the more at that, brow furrowed into a concerned lit.

“Mabel regrets making that.. wish… you say, and wants to take it back, but she cannot?”

“Yeah, uh, no…She can’t, and I can’t make one to turn her normal again because I’m a boy.”

Candy turned to stare off into the distance, Dipper wasn’t sure if she was considering what he was asking, or if she was just being melodramatic.

“You want me to wish for Mabel to be not magical again and take up the mantle of Magical Girl of Gravity Falls in her place.”

“I can’t believe we’re hiding, I feel like a clueless civilian.” Pacifica griped beside her as Mabel flipped through the Journal.

“No no no, it’s just for a bit, I got this, I got this…. The category was obviously off, so she checked all of the other ghosts in ascending order. Slime ghost? No… Dream Hipster? No…
Category ten? Ugh… creepy, but it looked like it fit.

The ghost in the room had finally materialized, a giant bulky lumberjack ghost. He didn’t even touch the ground, but Mabel could tell he carried himself with pride. The glow from his beard, bright and blue made of flames, lit up the pages of the Journal as Mabel skimmed the descriptions of Category 10 ghosts. Can be imprisoned in a silver mirror, weaknesses though, she couldn't find anything about weaknesses!

Ugh, She should have grabbed the blacklight before they left!

"Silver mirrors. Do you have any silver mirrors in this place?" Pacifica rolled her eyes, as though her even asking the question was absurd.

"Of course I do! There’s a big one in the East Sitting Room." Mabel nodded, no idea where this ‘East Sitting Room’ even was in relation to here, but at least Pacifica was faster than her, so she could lead the way.

Unfortunately, before she could even get close to forming a plan, the ghost finally found their hiding spot and yanked the table away, revealing them to the room.

“Shoot!” Mabel squeaked before summoning an axe.

The ghost laughed eerily before pulling his own axe out, from the split in his head. She felt a little sick at that.

At least she had technically seen worse.

The blade of his chopping axe clanged against the hilt of her battle axe.

Magi enhanced strength or not Mabel immediately knew she wasn’t going to last very long under the strain.

She let the blade from his axe skirt across the hilt of hers before darting out from under the ghost and grabbing Pacifica by the wrist.

“Then lead the way!”

Soon enough it was Pacifica dragging her by the wrist as they tore through the halls.

“Hey Ugly!” She called out, turning her head only once to ensure that the ghost was still trailing behind her. Pacifica stuck her tongue out and lifted her free hand to pull at the bottom of her eyelid. “Catch us if you can!”

The ghost roared in rage and soared down the hall after them.

“Don’t let him mess up the Sitting room. That place has got my parent’s favorite rug designs.”

“Isn’t stopping a ghost a little more important than a rug design?”

“That’s not how they’re gonna see it. Just don’t okay?”

Mabel huffed but nodded.

Rich people problems.

“Northwest!” The ghost bellowed, but Pacifica was already a good room away as she led them
through the halls turning in directions Mabel wouldn’t have considered until

“This way Ugly! Follow the Leader!” She shrieked back, using just a bit of sound magic to be sure he could hear them.

They heard another roar of anger before they turned into a pristine white room.

Well, technically off-white, but close enough.

“Is that it?” Pacifica nodded, staring intently at the long silver mirror infront of them.

“Okay, help me get it down?” Mabel hopped up onto the long couch that was stood beneath the mirror, she made a reach for the mirror bot stopped abruptly at Pacifica’s yelp.

“Get down from there!” Pacifica squeaked, face pale and awash in horror. “You’re gonna scuff up the couch!”

“How else can you get a mirror down?” Mabel demanded back, reaching for the edge of the mirror again.

"My parents are gonna kill me if this room is anything but pristine!"

"Stopping a ghost is more important!"

One of Pacifica’s knives flew the air and embedded into the edge of her glove, pinning it to the wall.

“Get. Down.”

Her voice was quiet, low and dangerous, and if Mabel wasn’t so upset she’d be worried about that.

The ripping of cloth filled the air as Mabel climbed down from the couch. Pacifica breathed a sigh of relief, glad Mabel was doing what she said.

Well, that wasn’t going to last long.

Mabel could feel the rage starting to bubble up in her gut. Pacifica had thrown her knives at her; Attacked her.

She thought they were friends now.

She forced her hands out and Pacifica let out a yelp of surprise as Mabel’s magic forced her from the room and into the hallway.

“Northwest!” the Ghost boomed.

Pacifica reflexively summoned a stream of daggers to fly through the air and shoot at the ghost, steadily backing up as she tried to keep it away from here.

But she kept her eyes on Mabel the whole time, like she’d been personally offended on a level that had never been touched before.

“What was that for?!” She shrieked, turning her head only to turn her scream into a sonic boom.

Mabel folded her arms and resisted summoning an axe to help, eyes darting to the side.
Pacifica knew how to get rid of the ghost, if she refused to let Mabel do it, well… What could she do about that?

“You think this ghost is bad?!” She shouted, darting back in to grab Mabel by her sleeve and drag her out.

A shower of knives was constantly pelting at the ghost, and while it didn’t do much it did reverberate against his axe and kept him back for a little bit.

“The nastiest Witch You’ve ever fought has nothing on my parents.” She summoned another flurry of knives, steadily backing up, Mabel could only follow her until they got close to a portrait on the wall.

“They’re parents! The worst they do to you is ground you!” She gestured to the rip in her glove “You would have taken my hand off if I got too close! And that’s all you have to say about it? Using your cellphone is more important?”

“I will not be put in that closet again!” Pacifica finally booms. The Shockwave from her shout sending them both flying back.

But they didn’t hit the wall, there was the sound of canvas ripping and the smell of musty stale air hit Mabel’s nose as they hit the ground.

They were in a hidden room.

The white sheets that dotted everything in the room started flying about, more likely than not to distract them as the Ghost went in for the kill.

Mabel scrambled behind her, looking for something, or at the least to summon an axe.

Her hand curled around something small and metal.

When the Ghost finally materialized, raising his axe to swipe at Pacifica, Mabel swung the little handheld mirror forward.

“Dipper Pines, is your sister no longer angry with me?”

Finally, Dipper held back sighing in relief when he heard that grating nasally voice.

“No, she's still ticked, Infact I’d be very happy if she never spoke to you again. Speaking of which.” He turned to Candy, guilt and dread already pooling in his gut despite the hope that was building in his chest.

“Candy, this is Kyubey. If you want to do this, he’s your Cat.. fox… thing.”

Kyubey tapped one of it’s hind legs, and moved to stand in front of Candy, but made no other motions to interact with her.

Candy’s gaze flickered around the night for a bit, passing idly over Kyubey as if he were some stray pebble, before she finally glanced back at Dipper and raised a brow.

“What is it?”

Huh?
“Right… there?” Dipper gestured to Kyubey, still sitting in clear view of Candy, the fuzzy white alien looked up at her impassively (though, come to think of it, everything it did was impassive)

Candy looked around, off in the distance, as though Kyubey were hiding behind some bush or on top of the hedges.

“Dipper, I see nothing.” She turned back to him and raised a brow. “Is this some sort of practical Joke? I am not sure what your goal is here, Dipper, but I find it in bad taste to spin such a lie about your own sister.” Candy straightened her glasses and took a deep breath. “But thank you for bringing me outside, it has done quite a lot to clear my head.” With that, she turned on her heel and marched back into the mansion with her head held high.

Dipper’s gut sunk somewhere near his knees.

Kyubey scratched the back of its ear with a hind leg and turned to look at Dipper.

“Why couldn’t Candy see you? What did you do?”

“She has no potential to become a Magica. She has no reason to see me.” Dipper tried not to be annoyed by Kyubey’s blasé answers.

“So why can I? You already said you don’t make deals with boys.”

“Contracts. And while that is true, your connection with your sister is stronger than we initially assumed. There are some oddities in your perception powers that allow you to see us.” At least the little jerk was being straight with him now.

“Of course, these anomalies aren’t enough to do much, but you can see and interact with us while most others cannot. In fact, most of your bloodline possesses a similar trait. Curious.”

Dipper had heard enough.

He angrily tugged his jacket closer to himself and trudged inside.

Useless. Again. He couldn’t do a thing to help Mabel. He hadn’t been able to since she made that contract.

He wanted to scream, maybe punch something, fight someone, Do something with this pent up frustration.

He opted instead to storm over to the food table and shove his face with cheese covered sausage chunks and chocolate covered marshmallows.

Mabel’s breaths heaved against the stuffy air of the hidden room, the ghost was nowhere to be seen, here one moment, roaring in anger, and gone the next after a single swipe of…

She wasn’t holding one of her axes… the handle was too thin, and even through her satin gloves she could feel the ornate designs.

Confused, wondering idly why she hadn’t summoned an axe, she looked down at her hand and realized with a start, She was holding a silver mirror.

Pacifica rolled over, now lying on her back, to stare up at the ceiling, her breaths were coming out in short huffs as she slowly gathered her strength again.
Mabel turned the mirror over in her hands to see the ghost on the inside. His glowing blue eye drilling into her with a heat she couldn't name. He pounded on the glass, and his side of the mirror trembled, but it didn’t seem to give way at all.

“Foolish girl!” He tried to boom, but his voice came out tinney and weird “You’re being played child!” Mabel huffed and turned the mirror away from her again.

“So loud…” She mumbled to herself as Pacifica began to sit upright.

“Is it gone?” Mabel nodded as Pacifica looked around the room. Mabel noticed the look on the other girl’s face. She didn’t look miffed at their tussle before, she didn’t even look disgusted at the fine layer of dust coating this hidden room. She just looked confused. Like she’d never been in here before.

“Yeah... uhm... do you think we can set up an exorcist circle in here? I’d like to get Mr. Axe head here far away while there’s still some party left.” Carefully, Pacifica stood and dusted some grime from her skirt.

“Alright. There have to be candles in here somewhere…” To be honest, Mabel didn’t even know if they needed candles or not. It’s not like she’d ever done an exorcism before.

The mirror shook gently as the Ghost inside pounded even harder against the glass.

“Okay… I’ll make sure he doesn’t break himself out or something.”

Pacifica disappeared around a corner to look for the candles, Soulgem bathing the darkness in a pale purple glow. Mabel looked down to the mirror in her hand, her own Soul gem igniting to illuminate the ghost on the other side of the glass.

“I can sense honor in your heart, girl! The Northwests have duped you into believing their cause just, you must understand their true motives!”

“What are you talking about? You’ve been haunting their house of course they wanna...” the Mirror flashed, outshining her soul gem with a bright white light.

Pacifica’s knees felt weak. The dim purple glow from her Soul gem did little to illuminate the area around her, but if the handful of long candles said anything, it lit up enough.

Said candles, the waxy gateway to keeping her family’s name from forever being affiliated with haunted houses, fell to the floor, completely forgotten.

This whole room had a lot of old paintings in it, she could even recognize one of them being her parents from before the current family portrait was hung in the ballroom.

Some of the paintings were simple things, alpacas in a field, a young couple in a paddleboat, the sort of thing turn of the century art collectors would pay millions for.

But a small alcove of them, the one she was staring at right now, made her blood run cold.

Like some twisted sadistic family tradition she’d never been informed about, all of her ancestors, back to the oldest family member they could track, had portraits depicting the truths of their exploits.

“No Pacifica, Remind me of the Importance of Samuel Northwest?” Father had gestured toward
the first portrait in the Northwest line.

“Oh, Samuel Northwest was not only Nathaniel Northwest’s Grandfather, but he made very important agreements with local Native Americans allowing our family’s caravan into Oregon. He paid them off in kind, as Northweets always are true to their word.”

Samuel Northwest, pictured here, in what she could only be sure was the true image, was still shaking the hand of a Native American chief, but he was smirking at the painter, fingers crossed behind his back. A liar.

“Now, Pacifica, I know it’s late, but tell me the importance of Jonathan Northwest.” Pacifica had puffed her chest up proudly, despite the heaviness of her eyes and limbs and gestured in a sweeping motion to the man in the portrait carrying two large sacks of Apples.

“Jonathan Northwest inspired Johnny Appleseed to do his work, but never got the recognition he deserved for such a feat. He tilled the once thought barren soil of Gravity falls, until rows and rows of apple trees spat out of the ground.”

Jonathan Northwest, no longer wearing a farmer’s outfit, dressed in a dark striped shirt and bandits mask, carrying bags of money instead of bags of apples, freshly harvested. A thief.

“Last one and you can come out an hour earlier than normal. The importance of Sawyer Northwest?” Pacifica curled up around the hardened wood of the closet door, making herself as small as possible, and took a deep breath.

“Sawyer Northwest was Nathaniel Northwest’s first son, and he secured the already growing Northwest Fortune with a delegation of fur traders heading back east. He took the furs from hunters and sold them to others at decent prices. Never spilling the blood of the animals himself.”

Sawyer Northwest standing on a pile of dead and dying animals, some huge rifle toed at his side that Pacifica could recognize from the antique that hung proudly in the trophy room. A killer.

Her Soul gem flickered brighter in her influx of emotions, lighting up even more portraits to Northwest’s she’d never learned the histories of.

Never learned the lies of, at least.

A mad scientist looking man with her Father’s cheekbones, a man in an old military uniform that reminded her of the pictures of World War 2 German Soldiers in History class. And there were sure to be more if she dared move these.

Her knees finally gave out underneath her and she collapsed to the ground, a bright white flash filled the air, but she didn’t have the mind to investigate.

These portraits… they wouldn’t be here if they were lies. Nobody would put that much work into a lie. This was some sort of… sick tradition…the portrait of her parents drew her eye again, she was half tempted to tear it to shreds with a silver knife, but she noticed, with a sort of dawning horror, something she’d never seen before.

In the broom closet in the background, That closet, she could see her own hazel eyes, shining from behind a pair of glasses she hadn’t needed and beneath black bangs. A little hand, her seven year old little hand, was barely seen at the corner of the doorframe, keeping the door crack from opening any further.

She transformed back into her normal clothes or at least, her dress, heavy weights pressed onto her
wrists and suddenly everything felt too tiring to fight.

This… This was what she was fighting for. This was what she’d sold her soul for.

Eventually the sharp clack of heels against the wooden floor registered in her head. Far too fast and sharp to be anything but infuriated. Her Gaze flickered up to the pink glow quickly rounding a corner and quickly, she wiped her eyes with her silk burgundy gloves.

She had to talk first, she could already feel it, if she let Mabel say her piece first she would loose the only ally she’d ever gotten in the world of Magica and Witches.

“I’m sorry.” Mabel’s chestnut hair glowed auburn against the pink light of her Soul gem. She looked like she was about to say something, but quickly quieted at Pacifica’s word.

“I’m not gonna make any excuses, my father knew about the curse and he told me too.” She sighed heavily and turned away from the puzzled look on Mabel’s face.

“Your brother was right about me, You’ve been way too nice to me and I’ve done nothing in return. I understand if you don’t wanna help if we run into each other during Witch Hunts.”

She took a deep breath

“If you wanna evacuate everyone but my family and me, and then set the ghost loose, I won’t be mad.” And she wouldn’t be. Her eyes stung just a little bit at the admission, her pride, shattered in one fell swoop, pricked the back of her throat like broken glass. “I probably deserve it.”

Her fists clenched into the fabric of her dress. She’d sold her soul for all of this…

Maybe she’d been better off before.

Pacifica closed her eyes, taking deep breaths in the musty air as she anticipated the sounds of Mabel’s retreating footsteps. The quiet admission that they’d never fight beside each other again.

The confirmation that if the ghost doesn’t kill her and her parents, and if Mabel sees her in a Witch’s maze again, it won’t be the Witch that kills her.

And Mabel Pines would just be another on the long list of Magi that had struck for her Soul Gem and stolen her kill.

The darkness and gloom of the hidden room was starting to close in around her. Her heart felt heavy and so did the little ring on her finger.

“Hey…” Mabel started, and Pacifica cringed, waiting for the final blow.

Why was this affecting her so much? She used to hate Mabel, why was the idea of her inevitable rejection so horrible now?

“She made a contract, just like me. Just… listen. Let me get to the bottom of it. Please? I promise I won’t exorcise you…” It actually took her a second to realize that Mabel was talking to the little silver mirror in her hand, to the ghost, and not to Pacifica herself.

She carefully placed the mirror on the floor, leaned so that the ghost could see her.

He was still sneering, but he wasn’t trying to knock himself over to hopefully shatter the mirror keeping him trapped.
Mabel walked the rest of the distance to sit beside her.

She couldn’t help the fact that she still cringed when Mabel reached out and took her hand in her own.

“What did you wish for?” Pacifica snorted out a laugh at that. Was that what she was focusing on? Really? Was she trying to figure out what made her even more miserable than she felt now?

Fine… at least someone finally asked and meant it.

“Once upon a time.” She started with a sneer “There was a little girl who nobody ever payed attention to. Ever. The only time she ever heard her name called out by a living person was a maid wondering where she’d run off to, only to check her room and see her there, and ignore her once again.”

It was funny, she really wasn’t trying to gain a sympathy vote, but once she started she found it hard to stop.

“When she broke her arm when she was nine and trying to make herself some lunch, she’d had to call the hospital herself because nobody would answer her cries.

“When she turned eleven she actually would have preferred it if no one had shown up to her party, but instead she got maybe four other girls who stacked purses and scarves wrapped in glittery wrapping paper she hated who then proceeded to have cake and curl around each other in a little gossip circle. The next day she heard rumors about being the most boring rich girl there ever was.

“So, on the eve of her twelfth birthday, when a fuzzy white fox showed up on her windowsill, like something out of a fairytale, and told her she was special, she believed it. She believed with the stupid childish naivety that would make her believe that a dumb wish could make her parents love her.

“So she wished to become the kind of person that would make people look at her, that would make her parents pay attention, that would make people want to be her friend. And she got it.” Pacifica chuckled wryly and shook her head.

“She just didn’t know that it would mean she’d become a monster. She justified it to herself over and over, when she’d pick on girls that were just as invisible as she used to be, when she started gaining a taste for things she once thought too flashy, when she started getting ‘etiquette’ lessons and punishments to match the mess-ups… ‘it’s all for the greater good’ she said. ‘It’s better to be thought of as just another vapid pretty girl than to not be thought of at all.’” She hadn’t even realized that there were tears pricking her eyes until they were already well on their way racing down her cheeks, positively ruining her makeup, she was sure.

“Besides, even if she tried being that person again, her parents could ring a stupid bell, to keep her in place, and if she kept being a ‘bad daughter’... into the closet again.” her fits clenched into her dress "Locked in there for hours until she ended up claustrophobic."

She couldn’t bring herself to care about her stained makeup or her wrinkled dress.

“Pacifica…”

“But then…” she interrupted Mabel, she wasn’t done yet. “She met another Magica. Someone she used to hate, someone she knew was easier to hate… but she was nice to her. Nice even when she didn’t deserve it, and this girl turned monster saw things between the other magica and her normal brother, things that made her wonder if the ‘attention’ her parents gave her was actually
synonymous with love or not.”

“And just tonight, the girl turned monster realized that the world she wanted to be apart of… the world that she was born into but kept away from… was full of liars and cheats. The very people she’d been defending for a year and sold her soul to be included in with are...this.” she gestured toward the paintings once last time, more of a sharp jerk of her arm than anything else. A knife flew through the air and embedded itself into the painting in front of her. Funny, she hadn’t even thought of transforming… But now here she was. The fruits of her own labor, a monster in blonde hair and a frilly purple magical girl suit.

“I think I was better off when I was invisible.” She finally finished, a sob catching in her throat.

For her credit, Mabel didn’t say a damn word. No pity, no condemnation, just company and a weight on her free hand.

For a couple of seconds at least.

She’d seen this before. She’d seen it. People on TV, herself to her stuffed animals when she was young, sometimes other kids back in elementary school, maybe even in the lost vestiges of her toddler memories before her mother had decided she could entertain herself.

When she lifted her arms to weakly cling at Mabel’s, wrapped securely around her, she couldn’t help but feel the littlest bit of relief ease into her chest.

“You’re not a monster. You know you’ve been mean, and you feel bad about it. Nobody who can admit that to themselves, or someone else…” Mabel took a deep breath and squeezed her a little harder. “You’re not a monster. Your parents put you in a bad place and you became bad to survive. Wish or not, you don’t have to be that kind of person anymore if you don’t wanna.”

When she pulled away Pacifica tried not to feel a bit disappointed.

“Actually…” Mabel tried off, looking at Pacifica with a big grin. “I think I have a plan on how to start your turn around!”

“Psst!” Mabel hissed out from behind the stairwell. Just barely in hearing range, Grenda, who’d been dancing excitedly to, possibly the only upbeat song in the playlist tonight, stopped with a jolt.

“Huh? Candy, you hear that?” Candy, whom had been her dancing partner, adjusted her glasses and looked around.

“Yes I did, perhaps it was the quail from your gift basket?” Grenda shrugged.

“Nah, left that thing at the door.”

“Psst!” Mabel tried again “Grenda! Candy!” She hissed. Grenda looked around again, albeit a little more suspiciously, until her gaze fell on Mabel. Candy was all to quick to follow suit. Grenda’s expression completely lifted as she raced over to hers and Pacifica’s hiding space.

“Mabel! Girl! Are you done with the Ghost?” Normally, Mabel absolutely loved how loud and in charge Grenda always was, but it wasn’t exactly the best idea right now. Mabel held a finger to her lips and shushed her.

“Not just yet.” She whispered. Pacifica peeked over her shoulder, clutching the silver mirror to her chest protectively, she was pretty pointedly not making eye contact with Candy and Grenda.
“Do you need our assistance?” Candy whispered back to Mabel, and she nodded, already grateful as her two best friends immediately changed stance. Candy spread her legs apart and held herself in a loose defensive stance, while Grenda lifted her fists, form narrowing into a boxer’s stance. Huh, maybe she should talk to Grunkle Stan about training her…

Either way, they looked ready to fight the world if it could help.

Mabel loved her friends.

“Okay, we have a plan, but we need to distract Pacifica’s parents. The only way the ghost can move on is if a Northwest.” She gestured to Pacifica “Opens the main gates to the rest of the town. We can’t let her parents know until it’s done though.” Grenda’s expression crumpled a bit and Candy folded her arms as they both thought of a solution.

“Ah!” Grenda finally exclaimed in excitement “Duh! We can fight over Marius!” Candy’s eyes widened at the name.

“Yes!” she responded “We can pretend to fight and the resulting drama would be sure to bring them in!” something clearly occurred to Candy after that though.

“But we must tell Dipper first! Else he won't know to let us be!”

Mabel didn’t know who Marius was, but Candy and Grenda nodded firmly to each other and ran off into the fray before Mabel even had a chance to ask.

Sure enough, there soon came the sounds of Grenda and Candy bickering, and then Dipper shouting.

Mabel waved her hand for Pacifica to follow her as they made their way around the edge of the main room and toward the front door.

Wow… they were already causing a scene.

Candy and Grenda were loudly (and maybe a little too over the top-ly) arguing in front of a very spooked looking boy with long hair (and Mabel just had to take a second to appreciate that said boy was very very cute)

Dipper was unsuccessfully trying to break them up, but Mabel could see the ghost of a smile on his face, enjoying the act as much as Grenda and Candy clearly were.

Mr. and Mrs. Northwest looked only barely interested for most of the argument. Only glancing at the commotion every so often without breaking the conversation with whoever was talking to them.

But apparently, that wasn’t all her friends had in store.

A sort of phase two started up almost immediately.

Grenda shoved Marius out of the way to get herself closer to Candy, while Candy pushed Dipper away from her.

Aaanndd there it was

Mr. Northwest had his eye trained on the event, already reaching into his jacket pocket to call Security, Mrs. Northwest intent on keeping the adult guests away from the show.
They were already almost at the entrance.

Dipper glanced over and saw them from the corner of his eye.

Mabel waved at him and he waved back.

Then for good measure, reeled his arm back to further ‘try and break them up’ and ‘accidentally’ elbowed Marius in the jaw.

There was a splutter of indignation from Mr. Northwest and a call of pain from Marius.

And now they were at the Lever.

Mabel carefully took the mirror from Pacifica and raised it up high, ready to smash it against the wall, as Pacifica gripped the handle of the lever tightly.

“Okay. On three.” Her shoulders were shaking a bit but Mabel was sure that was just nerves.

“One…” Pacifica started. The Ghost looked up at her from the other side of the mirror, as though he couldn't believe what she was doing.

“Two.” Mabel smiled in encouragement.

“Three!” Mabel threw the mirror to the ground as Pacifica forced the lever down, opening the main gates.

The howl of the wind and the burst of flame from the fireplace were only barely able to drown out the uproar from outside.

For a couple of moments chaos was the only thing that could describe the setup as the Lumberjack Ghost rose from the mirror prison to stare triumphantly at the gaggle of townsfolk rushing into the yard, heading straight for the doors.

“Yes! Yes!” He boomed. “I can feel my heart, once hard as oak, soften to… something softer like a birch or…” He trailed off for a moment before turning toward Pacifica and smiling widely.

“Pacifica.” He lowered himself to her level, reaching out a hand as if in offering. “Your heart is valiant indeed to face the cruelty of your family line and vow to do better.” Pacifica wiped her eyes and reached out her own hand in return. The ghost was still a ghost though, so he couldn’t shake her hand in thanks. But they came close enough.

“I’m sorry it took me so long to figure it out.” She smiled slightly, a sort of bashful look on her face that Mabel had never seen before.

“You have a kind soul. While you cannot change the past, The future lies with you. And now that my soul is free who knows.” The ghost pulled away and raised his head toward the sky.

“You may bring Lumberjustice for us all.”

As the ghost faded, degrading his form from his normal look, to a skeleton, to finally vanishing, his axe fell through the air and lodged itself into the ground.

They were barely allowed a moment before the front door banged open, loud with the joy of true celebration.

Pacifica leaned against the wall after noting her parents weren't looking for her in the chaos, wiping
her face on her long purple sleeve. Mabel took a second to join her.

“Are you okay?”

“The ghost was talking about me like I was going to do something revolutionary…” she huffed
“Thy’re probably just going to lock everyone out again next year.” That was true… Mabel
hummed and turned toward the party.

She could see Tyler messing around with the fancy forks, Manly Dan had hopped happily into one
of the cider fountains, Old Man Mcgucket was dancing on top of one of the tables, as Mr.
Northwest looked on all of this in horror, clearly confused as to how this could have happened.

“We may wanna move from here before we get caught.” Pacifica hummed to herself briefly,
tugging at a lock of her hair in thought.

Funny, Mabel had never seen her do that before.

“Nah, let it happen.” She turned to Mabel and smiled. “I kinda wanna see if I can be the Old
Pacifica again or not. Let’s see if they’ll just look right past me.”

“You’re not invisible.” Mabel huffed, angrily pulling an arm around Pacifica as if to prove her
point.

“And you’re too nice.” She huffed, but didn’t push away from her.

“Sure… hey… is that Dipper patching up that Marius Guy?” sure enough there her brother was,
carefully applying a pack of ice to the rich boy’s face, looking very sheepish, and Mabel was sure,
apologizing profusely. Marius, to his credit, didn’t look mean about it, he waved off Dipper’s
apologies with a smile before talking to him quietly about something, pointed in Grenda and
Candy’s direction and…

Did he start blushing?

“Ooohhh I think Marius likes one of my friends.”

“Really?” Pacifica followed her line of sight, smirking slightly as Marius made his way over to the
pair, still gingerly holding the ice pack to his jaw as he interrupted Candy and Grenda dancing
around with each other.

“Oh whichever of them it is, I so call Maid of Honor.”

“I’ll verify that.”

Mabel couldn’t help but laugh when both Candy and Grenda yelled out in surprise.

She maybe felt… a little lighter. She was wrong about Pacifica, and Dipper was too. She made a
real friend in the other girl now.

Pacifica’s Soul gem, a little animal she still couldn’t name, was glowing bright, but not in a way
that made her worried that the other girl was using a lot of magic. In a way that looked nothing but
happy.

Mabel noticed that her own was doing the same.

She felt like Mabel again.
All of this Magical Girl stuff wouldn’t beat either of them yet!

Chapter End Notes

Marius was talking to both Candy and Grenda. Cangrendarius OT3 forever
Chapter 8-Witches can wait a day

Chapter Summary

‘Have Faith, Dearest Magi. All will be well.’ It whispered to her. And so she did.

The feeling of hands on her shoulders gripped her a little bit tighter as she hovered slightly above the lever, as though keeping her from hitting anything that could have hurt her.

The portal’s light got too bright after a moment encompassing them all in a cold glow.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Sun was beginning its climb into the sky by the time she and Pacifica had decided to head in for the night. It couldn’t have been any later than six in the morning, Mabel took a minute to curse her lack of sleep lately.

Last night had been quite the adventure, even after the Ghost in Northwest Manor had been freed.

After they’d partied their hearts out, she and her group were some of the last kids to leave, almost immediately after most of the rich people left Grenda and Candy finally told her the good news. Marius, as it turns out, was wanting to befriend them both, in a sort of pen pals thing and gave them his phone number. Mabel was so happy for them.

She had tried to prolong their stay, maybe even convince the Northwests into letting them all stay the night with Pacifica, but she’d been turned down. ‘We would like to have some family time after such a… lively… party’ Mr. Northwest had all but sneered at her before shooing their little group out the door.

Mabel had let the others go home, She wanted to make sure her partner was okay. Dipper looked just a little more on edge than usual (and that was saying something) to the point where he’d forgone their usual ‘awkward’ disclaimers and immediately swooped in for a Sibling hug. Candy had eyed him almost sternly, and she could have sworn she hear her quiet friend go off on Dipper once they were in the car.

It felt weird to watch them leave without her. She felt terrible for having to leave Candy and Grenda behind so often nowadays, especially since they couldn’t know why she was doing it, or else there’d be even more problems than there are now.

Heh, she felt like an angsty superhero when she thought about that kind of stuff…

Either way, it was dead silent outside Northwest Manor, If she hadn’t been told about how Pacifica was treated she would have probably gone home by now.

“Pacifica? Are you okay? Do you need me to help?” There was a long pause before she was given specific instructions on how to get to her room.

She’d busted her friend out of her own linen closet, let Pacifica cling to her as she took deep breaths
and calmed down, and silently escorted her outside for some fresh air, and maybe a Witch Hunt, to clear her mind.

Pacifica had been grateful for the distraction, and together they cleared out the entire west side of the forest. Sure that was only two Witches, but hey, that was still a lot for one night!

Mabel made sure that Pacifica got the most use out of both Grief Seeds they’d found. She was still fine after all, so she didn’t need them like she was worried Pacifica did.

Sure, she may be in a bit of a pickle if say, her arm got bitten off again, but she was fine for now.

It was weird though, right as they’d finished up the second witch, they’d floated for a couple of moments, before they’d hit the forest ground.

Anyway, that was just how they spent most of the night. But eventually dawn started to loom over the horizon and Pacifica waved Mabel off with a false smile. Assured her that she’d be fine and should probably get back home and into the linen closet before her father wakes up and realizes she wasn’t there anymore.

The idea of Pacifica willingly returning to such a place set something sour in Mabel's gut. She wanted to kidnap her newest friend and bring her back to Piedmont with her and Dipper at the end of the summer. Or convince Grunkle Stan to let her stay with him in the Shack until she could do things on her own.

Just.... something that wasn't going back to that house.

But here she was, waving goodbye to her friend as she returned to the house that treated her so poorly. Too awake with feeling useless and too on edge from battle to even contemplate sleeping for a couple of hours until Dipper and/or breakfast woke her up.

So she did what she always did when she couldn't sleep and it was early enough to start the day.

She wandered through the house and opened random doors.

Grunkle Stan seemed to already be awake (despite it barely being six thirty in the morning) So she opened and closed his door a couple of times, she did it to the bathroom, the Ballroom, Soos' break room, the boiler room, and all of the closets in the house a couple of times.

When she looked up to the nearest clock she sighed when she realized it was almost seven. Good, she'd gotten some time brutally killed.

So, the next matter was simply as thus: Waking Dipper up and abusing the heck out of those fireworks she'd found in the broom closet upstairs.

A doomsday device, what a load of whooey. They knew Grunkle Stan was innocent, but the government guys just wouldn't listen to them, something about children's statements being unreliable.

And then taking them to Child Services? Mabel held back a groan. She'd seen enough of Dipper's cop shows to know that they should be holding them at 'Headquarters' until they called Mom and Dad.

Did they not know that Stan wasn't actually their legal guardian?
“The Security tapes! Grunkle Stan has them on *all* the time! There has to be one from that night!”

“Right!” Mabel felt silly for not having thought of it herself to be honest. But the question was now, how did they escape the government guy driving the car? Or Agent Trigger... or whatever his name was.

Could she risk throwing them into a car wreck? Probably. She'd be okay if she made sure her Soul Gem was protected, and Dipper would be okay because of her Wish. But she didn't want to chance killing the Government Agent. Decapitating Kyubey was one thing, but she couldn't just let a normal person die like that. That was unforgivable.

So no Car Crash.

Then maybe...

“Hey, uhm, Agent Trigger was it? Yeah, I got a question about what you guys have been researching.”

“Classified. All details pertaining to your Uncle's work are under strict lock and key, Missy.”

“No no.” She waved it off with a chuckle. “I just want to know, are you familiar with the phrase 'Magica'?”

Trigger raised a brow at her from the other side of the rear view mirror and narrowed his eyes at her when she showed him her Soul Gem.

“Where did you get that? I thought you were both searched for anything of-!” his sentence was cut short when Mabel held out her hand, a pink aura suddenly surrounding her fingers.

For just a moment, the entire car flashed Pink. Trigger shouted in surprise as they were forced from the road.

Dipper clutched the side of the car in fear as they swerved into the trees, Agent Trigger barely able to avoid crashing. The air bags puffed out and Mabel and Dipper's seat belts locked up.

“What on Earth was that?!” He huffed in surprise, seemingly unnoticing of Mabel's transformation.

“Mabel?” Dipper looked over at her, but she had already undone her seat belt and summoned an axe.

“Hey! Where did you-!” She shoved the back of the Agent's seat, so he slammed into the steering wheel airbag headfirst.

Dipper undid his seat belt just as Mabel rammed the hilt of her axe through the window.

After they'd gotten outside Dipper had immediately ripped the earpiece from Trigger through the open window, and smashed it.

Mabel, thankfully, had kept him pressed into the airbag so he wouldn't get in their way or call for backup.

He tried to shout out to them to try and 'reason' with them to turn against Grunkle Stan, but she was having none of it and neither was Dipper.

In fact, he'd stopped while she'd kept going just to specifically tell Agent Trigger how wrong he was.
Well... she hadn't actually heard their conversation, but she was sure that that was what had happened.

Either way she offered her hand to Dipper, to which he tentatively took, she stopped holding Agent Trigger down with her magic, and leaped into the forest with Dipper clinging to her shoulders.

Dipper let out a weird sounding nervous hum as she turned sharply on a branch, heading toward the Shack.

“You okay?” She asked quietly, barely loud enough to be heard over the roar of the wind.

“Yeah... yeah... just...” he huffed for a second “Just forgot how stressful 'The Magica Express' is.”

He was lying, but... she supposed there was no away around it. If he didn't want to talk about it he'd get annoyed if she pushed him.

But with barely any time to spare they'd already made it to the Shack.

The whole place was swarming with Government agents, SWAT Team, Special Ops. Dipper clutched to her shoulders a little tighter as she vaulted the tree branches toward the window.

She sat on her bed as Dipper crept down the stairs to try and figure out if there were any agents downstairs.

But there weren't and so they crept over to Stan's office to find the tapes

There had to be some sort of explanation for all of this. Some sort of reason why Grunkle Stan would have told so many lies, some sort of reason why he might not actually be Grunkle Stan...

She knew it

There had to be.

It just... wasn't possible that Grunkle Stan might have been lying about everything. That he might not love them...no. No that was impossible.

Just because someone does bad things like steal toxic waste, or be okay with killing fuzzy jerkwad alien creatures when they're upset... that doesn't mean they don't care about the people they care about.

She believed that. She had to believe that.

Even as they descended the staircase behind the vending machine with Soos.

Even as they found the secret lab with the big looming vortex in the background.

It was still Stan, he still loved them.

Maybe it was just her own nerves, but she could swear, as she used her powers to shove herself off the wall and toward the big button in the center of the room, she felt a pair of hands resting gently on her shoulders.

Her hair drifted about her in weird shapes that reminded her of when she'd made her contract oh-so long ago. And the gentle hands she felt tightened their grip. Mabel closed her eyes and sighed as
her arms latched protectively around the lever that the button was held on top of.

She was ready to slam her hand onto the pulsing read button that would end all of this. Dipper was counting on her, Soos was counting on her, hell, the entire world was counting on her.

And she was a Magica. She was supposed to create hope.

She couldn't let such destruction happen on her watch.

But Grunkle Stan just had to speak, to throw everything resembling logic out the window and send a wave of sadness all over her heart.

Dipper was still insisting he was lying, but Stan didn't stop talking, about how a lot of the bad things people might say of him were true, but that didn't mean he was evil.

“Everything I work for, everything I care about, it's all for this family.” She could feel tears escaping from her eyes, despite the Zero G.

She had to believe him. It would break her heart not to. Grunkle Stan. The same Grunkle that had punched a pterodactyl in the face to save Waddles, the same Grunkle that was willing to send them home early if he felt like he couldn't take care of them, the same Grunkle that fought off an entire Zombie hoard to protect them.

The idea that all of that meant nothing to him? That he didn't love them and want them safe? Wasn't that why he had pretended to not believe in the supernatural in the first place? Because he wanted them safe... The destruction of the world can't be what his intentions were to use this thing. It can't be.

Dipper was shouting at her, assuring her that Stan was lying, that she had to shut down the portal. Dipper had done so much for her for so long, she'd put him through heck ever since she'd made a contract, she should trust him like he'd been trusting her lately. Dipper was her brother, and his hunches are really often right.

A voice echoed into her ear, a gentle calming voice that eased the fear in her throat. It was... well she couldn't describe what it was. It was calm, it was kind.

It reminded her of angel wings and red ribbons in pink hair.

'Have Faith, Dearest Magi. All will be well.' It whispered to her.

And so she did.

The feeling of hands on her shoulders gripped her a little bit tighter as she hovered slightly above the lever, as though keeping her from hitting anything that could have hurt her.

The portal's light got too bright after a moment encompassing them all in a cold glow.

It didn't hurt. And even as they all fell to the ground none of them had any extra wounds beyond the ones incurred by the fall.

For a moment Mabel had just sat there, hand gently covering her Soul Gem, running her fingers along the surface to check for any cracks.

Thankfully, even though she'd landed on her face and chest, it wasn't enough force to crack her Soul Gem.
Almost immediately after the check, she'd bolted to her feet, turning on her heel to find Dipper and Stan and Soos. Soos was rubbing his head and wincing, but he looked okay. Stan had lie there for a moment on his stomach before pushing himself up, a look of apprehension and vague dread heavy on his face.

Dipper was grimacing in pain, his hat somewhere forgotten, as he rubbed at his head. Almost immediately, Mabel rushed over to him.

“Dipper!” As if in response, Dipper shot to his own feet. Stretching his arms and checking himself for wounds.

Mabel gently grabbed her brother's arm and helped him to his feet. Almost immediately, Dipper yanked himself away from her, maybe a little harsher than usual.

“I'm fine.” he huffed, and Mabel was worried for a moment that he was mad at her, before his vision focused on something behind her, eyes widening in a pix between confusion and awe.

Mabel followed his line of sight, to see a figure in the remnants of the portal. They were dressed in mostly grey and black, goggles and a scarf covering most of their face.

“Who... is that?” Dipper huffed

Stan sat up beside him, fixing his fez and looking up to the figure.

“The Author of your Journals...” he numbed in response. “My Brother.”

The person—the man, removed his goggles and pulled down his scarf, so they could see his face.

He looked just like Grunkle Stan.

Mabel felt woozy.

The rest of the day flew by in what felt like no time at all.

They realized that Grunkle Stan was actually 'Stanley' and not 'Stanford' and the real Stanford was another Grunkle that they hadn't known about.

Dipper had nearly puked, she'd appreciated Great Uncle Ford's extra fingers, and they'd been told a story.

And then they fooled the entire American government and been sent up to bed.

Dipper seemed to be on pins and needles now, jittering all over his bed and scribbling questions he planned on asking Ford into his notepad.

Mabel had volunteered herself to be the eavesdropper on the conversation. She was speedier, and stealthier than Dipper after all, so instead of straining her ears at the door of the attic, she was sitting on top of the stairs to the attic, the door wide open so she could get back inside quicker.

She could hear everything.

She supposed it made sense for Ford to want his identity back, since Grunkle Stan had really only taken it out of necessity than anything else. But the idea of the Shack shutting down at the end of the summer was so sad the thought almost made Mabel tear up.
And what did Ford mean when he said he'd “Let Stan stay for the rest of the summer” and only to take care of her and Dipper at that! He wasn't going to let Stan stay after the summer? A bit of anger pricked the back of her throat at that.

And maybe a bit of fear too.

She hoped Mom and Dad would let them take Grunkle Stan home with them if that was the case.

Mabel hummed to herself Stan started to give as good as he got. Stan had made Ford promise to stay away from them and keep them out of trouble, bitterly adding on that they were the only family he had left. Mabel felt a bit of shame lace her gut at the fact that that had still made her feel happy.

Then she heard Ford scoff.

“Oh, and you've done a wonderful job of keeping those two out of trouble. Stanley, were you even aware of what the girl was wearing?” He huffed exasperatedly. Mabel prickled in offense, and silently prepared herself for having to listen to someone berate her Magica Uniform as if it were their business.

“What's wrong with Mabel's dress? It's cute and she's good at bein' cute. Compliments the axes she'd be all too willing to throw at your head if she heard ya criticizing her fashion like that.”

“No the dress! The Soul Gem! She's a Magica Stanley. And I can imagine she only became one after she came to stay here.”

What?

Well... she supposed going into other universes, Great Uncle Ford must have known something about Magica, and he did write a little about them in the Journals.

But why was he acting so mean about it? Was he just going to be mad at Grunkle Stan about letting her get her soul ripped out?

“Yeah, and I already grounded her for that. She knows she wasn't supposed to look for trouble behind my back, but what's done is done.”

“Stanley, I could give you the full rundown of exactly how bad of an idea leaving her be like this is, but I doubt you'll follow me on it... But the gist of it is, she's going to... ugh!” Ford finally exclaimed in frustration.

“Fine! If you're going to roll your eyes at me then I'll let you find out for yourself!”

“Well Excuuusee me for not being a literal genius Poindexter! Sorry that I'm too stupid to handle the explanation that's not 'Taking care of your Magical Niece for Dipsticks'! Mabel can handle anything. She's tougher than you or I ever will be!” Mabel felt a smile quirk her lips at that.

“Besides, Don't think I don't remember you using Sammy, our niece, as a counterbalance for your studyin' during your physics final! So don't you be criticizing my parenting skills!” and then footsteps heading for the first level stairs.

Mabel quickly hopped to her feet and dashed into the attic, silently shutting the door behind her.

Dipper looked up from his notebook and smiled slightly at her. Mabel tried to smile back.

“So, what were they talking about?” Mabel hummed and shrugged slightly.
Should she tell Dipper? She didn't want to hold any secrets from him that were that big, but, she also didn't want to ruin Dipper's excitement about meeting Grunkle Ford after spending all summer with the Journal.

Maybe when his hero worship stuff levels down a bit. Hopefully wouldn't take too long, just because Ford was a super nerd like Dipper didn't mean that their super nerdiness was compatible and stuff.

“Just... normal old man things. They're still all mad at each other and are acting all stupid.”

“Right...” Dipper placed his notebook down on the nightstand and tilted his head at her a little bit. “You okay? Today was... well.. crazy...” Mabel nodded and hopped up onto her bed, crossing her legs decisively.

“Yeah... Everything is different now, isn't it?”

“It's not like everything hasn't changed before.” Waddles wandered onto Mabel's lap, and she hummed noncommittally as she lie down.

“I'm sorry.” Dipper flopped back onto his bed, but she could still see his incredulous face from where she laid.

“What? About the portal thing? Mabel, c'mon. Sure, Stan could have told us, so we wouldn't have worried, but you were right to trust him in the end. He just wanted Great Uncle Ford back.” Mabel hummed, she still felt bad, right decision or not.

“Besides” Dipper added on, catching Mabel's attention as he reached over to their lantern. “I'd do the same for you.” The light flickered off, leaving only the pale moonlight to light the room. Mabel was about to laugh, nervously or not, but there was no denying the seriousness that hung in the air.

“Since when do you talk like that?” She finally forced out a nervous chuckle. Thankfully, Dipper chuckled back.

“Since you sold your soul and left me in the dust, dummy.” She found a small, genuine giggle at that. Since when had they both developed such morbid senses of humor...?

She supposed that didn't matter.

He paused for a moment before adding in “No Witch Hunt tonight, okay? The world almost ended, Witches can wait a day.” Mabel nodded, before another thought occurred to her.

“I wouldn't punch you in the face... and... you know, if we can help it, can we try not to end up like Stan and Ford?”

“Hm?” Mabel pulled her Soul gem from her finger and let it take its egg form.

The Pink light looked almost eerie as it glimmered weakly in the night. Oblong shadows cast over absolutely everything, the beds, the walls, Dipper's face, and she was sure her own as well.

“You know, best friends that started getting all stupid. I'll try not to get stupid, but can you promise to try too?” Dipper quirked a small smile, it almost looked sinister in the shadow.

That was just the lighting though, she could still fell the warmth emanating from her brother. Dipper was terrible at expressing himself, but when he got something, he got it good.
“I promise. But I don't think we have anything to worry about. We're not Stan and Ford 2.0, we're Dipper and Mabel, right?” Mabel smiled back and nodded.

It didn't leaven the anxiety sitting heavy in her gut, but at least she had a little reassurance.

She switched her soul gem back into its ring form and the room grew dark again.

It had been two days since Great Uncle Ford had stepped out of the portal, and so far they were... well.. they were still adjusting.

Dipper sounded like he was about to hyperventilate whenever they were in the same room, and refused to focus on anything else beyond drilling Great Uncle Ford for answers about Gravity Falls.

And when Great Uncle Ford wasn't in the room then Dipper was absolutely lost in either Journals One or Two.

She hadn't seen Dipper so single minded and focused on something for more than a day for awhile. It was kind of worrying to tell the truth. She had to remind him that food existed sometimes, and she was sure he was only keeping time at all because of how long he could read or talk before somebody turned on a light.

She'd taken to using her magic more often around him to catch his eye and break him from the nerdy spell he'd fallen under.

Of course, then he'd pinch his lips all weird and then get even more intense about acting like the rest of the world beyond the Journals didn't exist

Grunkle Stan had this constant aura of sadness about him now. He'd pulled his brother from another dimension where who knows what had been messing with him, and got punched in the face for it. Sure he was trying to act like nothing had changed, that that kinda stuff didn't get to him and never could, but Mabel was better than that.

And now Great Uncle Ford was just sequestered downstairs all the time. 'Containing' the damage and generally making strange bumps in the night.

So... they were coping.

Dipper had asked if he could help Ford contain the creatures that had escaped numerous times, since he'd been educating himself on what Stanford was generally fighting, and was turned down pretty much every time. Even she'd offered to lend a hand when some weird cycloptic octopus had been causing some trouble.

That was when things got a little weird.

Stanford was trying to stay away from them, keeping up what he'd promised Grunkle Stan. But at least he'd been nice to Dipper in the little they talked. He seemed genuinely pleased at how much interest Dipper showed in his Journals.

And while Mabel wasn't exactly as eager to please as Dipper was, and she did share a joke every so often about Dipper's nerdiness being an inherited trait with Grunkle Stan, she did want their new Great Uncle to like her.

But he just seemed to... not. Sure, he'd said he'd liked her when she'd commented on the
friendliness of his hands when they first met, but then he'd focused in on her Soul Gem, still stuck proudly to her collarbone, and his smile just vanished.

Then there was how he had talked with Grunkle Stan about her for a little bit, like there was something even worse on the way he was going to try and warn Grunkle Stan about.

She hoped he was only going to warn him about the Soul thing... she didn't know why but the idea of Great Uncle Ford knowing even more about being a Magica than she did kind of... disturbed her.

But, if he really did know something horrible he believed she was being kept from he would have told her, right?

Instead, he'd just give her a sad glance every so often and then talk even less to her than he did to Dipper.

It was just the Soul thing. It had to be.

She had wanted to try to play Dipper's game with him. She really did. After all the things that had been going on lately, how much stress Dipper had been under, he deserved to just have a day where she sucked it up and played Dungeons Dungeons and more Dungeons with him.(But ugh, even the name sounded tedious)

Of course, she was glued to the calculator as he carefully spelled out what she had to do, because Cosmos knew she could never do any of these graphs and numbers and things without it. It was slow goings, Dipper had to remind her of 'castes' and 'guilds' and a bunch of special things she could barely follow, and most of the time he'd have to correct her math because she'd forgotten something.

He seemed a little annoyed with the whole process, and her brain was hurting already. Finally, Dipper had sighed and offered her a hand.

“Hey, if you're not up to this, I can probably hunt down someone else to play.” Normally, Mabel would welcome the way out. Give her aching mind a rest, or at the least beg Dipper to simplify it, because not everyone had his nerd numbers magic.

But not this time, this time he'd taken a shot at her pride. Maybe all of the numbers she was coercing herself into crunching weren't making any sense in building a 'character profile' to her, but now that he'd implied that it was because she couldn't do it... oh... now it was on.

“Nuh uh! I can do it! Come on BroBro, next one, What's my... uhm... Did you say charisma is a power? How can charisma be a power? It just means your good with people...” That got Dipper started on a whole other tangent about how Charisma became accepted as a power stat way back when nerd dinosaurs and nerd cavemen played this game.

Really, they'd better be riding some amazing unicorns for all of this setup to be worth it.

Eventually though, they'd compiled their 'character profiles' Dipper was playing 'Dungeon Overlord' or something, which pretty much meant he was telling the story. And so that meant that Mabel was the Hero.

She was Lady Maybelle, Beast Tamer and Nobelwoman to the Kingdom of Piedmontia, and she and her trusty Battle Hog Sir Waddlington were going to storm the Goblin King's castle (Thankfully, Dipper had at least taken her suggestion about basing the Setup on the Labyrinth movie)
She'd been doodling her 'Costume design' into a scrap of paper around the time Grunkle Stan had finally noticed both of them.

She wasn't sure if he had actually come by with a message, or if he simply had wanted to save her from her nerdy prison, but he'd told her that her 'Big friend with the gecko' had called to confirm that she was going to be coming over to see the Ducktective Finale with them, and she should confirm if her 'snooty blonde friend' was coming too. She shot an apologetic look at Dipper, who clearly resisted rolling his eyes at Pacifica's mention, and waved her off before turning back to his calculation sheet.

“'I'll just work on the first Dungeon while you're talking.'” Mabel took that as the best go ahead she'd probably get out of Dipper.

Quickly as to help herself remember the number, she punched Pacifica's cellphone number into the house phone.

She'd picked up right after the third ring.

“Hey Avery.” Mabel jumped in place for a second at being called a wrong name, before she reminded herself of what she'd seen a couple of days ago.

“Calling me by a different name so your parents won't know?” She asked, a slight grin on her face when Pacifica huffed on the other side.

“Yeah, A, I know. It's a little ridiculous that they think they can get away with that sort of thing.” She actually kind of liked this, it was cool.

It felt like she and Pacifica were super spies, and she was relaying a message that Pacifica could only answer in code!

“Okay, so are you still coming over for the Duckteteive finale tomorrow?”

“Ugh, puh-leeze, as if I'd be caught dead anywhere else. Did Danny give us use of his Drag Carts? Or am I gonna have to threaten him? And what about Waverly?” Danny? Did she mean...?

“You mean Dipper? Yeah he's gonna watch with us, so hes good... and if by Waverly you mean the others, only Grenda, and Grunkle Stan from what I've heard. Candy said something about Grandparents coming over, and Soos will only be over in time for the second showing later.”

“Good, Last thing we need is your brother deciding to be all high and mighty for no reason. So yeah, I'll be there, Is noon okay?” At least that was a straight sentence.

“Yeah, Noon's perfect!”

“Good. Oh, by the way, What's your stance on Marvel Movies? My parents normally get the newest movies on DVD early, so...?” Well, she'd just released a bit of a can of worms. Though possibly that was the point, after all, she wouldn't have been speaking on code if her parents weren't near enough for her to not want to change it.

Now that she was confirmed for showing up to the Ducktective finale she just wanted to have an excuse to not have to talk with her parents for longer.

So Mabel proceeded with her enthusiastic rant. About the Dreaminess of Captain America, to how Cool and awesome Black Widow is, to How bad she felt for Hawkeye, to how Loki, while very handsome, was too much of a jerk to ignore.
Pacifica made a joke about how when they were all eating their Shwarma at the end, Loki was sitting outside with Mjonir tied around his ankle.

As Mabel was laughing she saw Grunkle Stan from the corner of her eye step out into the TV room to call Dipper in for lunch, and then walk out even further. Probably to pound on the vending machine and shout for Great Uncle Ford to come up and eat.

Neither of them came into the kitchen, and eventually Grunkle Stan walked in and rolled his eyes.

“Welp... Mabel, Hang up that dang phone I am not paying for the bills you run up talking to your friends.” Mabel sighed, wishing a small goodbye to Pacifica, and getting in return a promise to show up at noon tomorrow before she hung up.

Grunkle Stan looked into the TV room once more and rolled his eyes before offering her a half burned Grilled Cheese.

“Jeez, he took one look and suddenly he's sucked in. Well, hey, Guess that means more for us.” Grunkle Stan pointedly took a big bite in hos won sandwich.

“Whatcha mean?” Mabel asked before taking a bite into her Grilled cheese. She was right, it was a little burnt, but Grunkle Stan made it for her so she wasn't about to gripe.

“That Nerd Fantasy Game your brother coerced you into trying. Ford took one look and bam! It was like he was fifteen again.” Grunkle Stan shrugged. “But hey, at least he made it so you don't have to humor Dipper anymore.”

Huh?

“Great Uncle Ford and Dipper are playing the Dungeon game now?” Stan nodded and Mabel furrowed her brow before taking a big bite of her grilled cheese. Her face reflexively pinched up as the taste of Burned bread hit her tongue, but she wasn't really contemplating the flavor enough to cover it up.

She should be relieved right? Now she wasn't going to have to keep going with an entire game that was practically just Math Homework and maybe a little creativity if she was lucky.

But she wasn't. There was something that was almost... gnawing in her gut at that. Maybe it was just disappointment, she'd spent a long time working on her character sheet just to have Great Uncle Ford walk up and suddenly take her place.

Or maybe she'd just gotten a lot more selfish and didn't want to share her brother.

She took another bite of her Grilled cheese.

“Ah! But you see! Probabilitor had an Ogre hidden behind a pillar you overlooked three turns ago!” Stanford announced, hands raised infront of himself to wiggle menacingly.

“Ahh! You gotta be kidding me! You had to have made that up right now!” Dipper laughed and snatched up one of his dice.

“I most certainly did not!” Stanford puffed his chest up proudly “Don't blame me because you got a three the last time you had a perception roll!” Dipper rolled his eyes playfully.

“Fine fine! I still have three Move tiles left, so I sidestep its attack and roll to counter.”
Mabel huffed and leaned against the doorway of the kitchen. Stan had already stumbled his way through the TV room, and nearly gotten into an argument with Ford about sitting in a walkway. Thankfully Soos had taken then to come in and distract him.

So here Mabel was, Lunch finished and watching her New Great Uncle and her brother play a game she could barely wrap her head around, let alone truly enjoy.

And for some reason she was still jealous.

Carefully, she started to walk through the TV room, making sure she didn't step on the papers littering the area.

Of course, she'd still caught Dipper's eye from her movement.

“Oh! Mabel!” he looked down at the board and then over to the side where her Character Profile had been, completely untouched since Stanford sat down across from him. “Ah Jeez, I'm sorry, Great Uncle Ford got excited and then I got excited to play with him and I completely forgot!” He bit his lip and rubbed the back of his head sheepishly.

Stanford's eyes widened in surprise when he looked over at Mabel, as if completely taken aback at the very idea that she'd been playing with Dipper before he was.

“Oh, I'm sorry Mabel, I had no idea you were in the middle of a game with Dipper! I'll get out of your way...” Ford moved to stand, but was almost immediately interrupted by Dipper.

“No! Wait! Mabel can just join in!” In a rush to keep Stanford playing with him, Dipper quickly reached out and grabbed the sleeve of Mabel's sweater. “Besides, you're a much better Dungeon Overlord than I am! We'll have so much more fun than if it were just her and me!”

Somehow Mabel already knew this was a bad idea. But, she did make a promise to play with Dipper at least once today, so she still sat down and gathered her Character Profile stuff onto her lap.

Well... that was singlehandedly the most frustrating evening Mabel had ever experienced in her life. And that included the Mimic Witch and the time she'd gotten her arm bitten off.

Dipper hadn't had a spare game piece, only one 'Hero' piece and then pieces for enemies. So, Mabel had made due and decided to use her Soul Gem in its egg form as her character piece.

Great Uncle Ford had looked really uncomfortable for a second, asked her if she was sure if she wanted to use her Soul Gem for such a thing. And at her nod he seemed to steel himself over for something.

And proceeded to barely acknowledge that this was the first time she was playing at all. Almost immediately She'd mistaken something about attacks and defense and had lost nearly all of her Hit Points.

Dipper had to waste at least three turns in the Dungeons just to heal her.

When She'd made a joke about maybe throwing her a break Great Uncle Ford had smirked playfully at her and responded that he knew she was too tough to need him to hold her hand in an easy Dungeon like this one.
Should she have been flattered about that? Because frankly, she wasn't.

She died half of the way through the first Dungeon.

She was barely able to pay attention through the rest of the adventure. She'd just closed her eyes and tried to imagine the story they were making, while rolling her Soul gem between her hands.

She knew Great Uncle Ford probably just wasn't used to playing with newbies, and Dipper was already an expert in his own right.

All the time they'd put in to making her character aside, it would be nothing but frustrating to her if she tried to keep up with the event.

She sadly shuffled through her papers as Great Uncle Ford and Dipper kept going on; only pausing to jot down equations every so often on their scratch paper. Dipper shot her an apologetic glance only when she rose to her feet and placed her character sheets down.

“Welp! I'm going upstairs. You guys can use my character if you wanna.”

“Wait Mabel, I can probably revive Lady Maybelle if I nail this roll!”

“Actually Dipper, if you'll remember, Probabilitor stifled your necromancy magic three turns ago.” Stanford butted in.

“Dang...” Dipper snapped his fingers in defeat, before looking back up at Mabel. “Sorry Mabes.” Mabel was quick to wave him off.

“Don't worry. I wasn't really following anyway.” She added, as more of an afterthought “I'm not nerdy enough to keep up.” Dipper lifted up his chest in fake affront, cheeks puffing out, but clearly resisting smiling. Ford just sighed, as if he'd expected her to say that for a while and was simply waiting for it.

She left the room with a quick 'Make sure to clear this place out before the Ducktective finale tomorrow'!

Dipper gave her a sheepish thumbs up as she turned into the hallway.

She couldn't make out the words eventually, but she did at least catch that they were just around the final battle of the Dungeon at this point.

She ended up blasting music in the attic, knitting, and curled up alongside Waddles, until Grunkle Stan eventually called her down for Dinner.

She felt like she shouldn't be surprised.

The Day for the Ducktective finale came along, Mabel woke a little tired from an unsuccessful Witch Hunt, pulled on her Ducktective Sweater, and looked over to the other side of the attic to see Dipper wasn't there.

He'd been there last night sure, hunched over a Dungeon diagram of his. Even when she'd prepped herself for their usual argument after she'd announced she'd be off hunting tonight, he barely nodded his head and mumbled something close to 'good luck’

She was a little worried, but she supposed that this was no different to when he'd loose himself in Ciphers and codes.
She tried to beat down the jealous spike in her gut with that information.

She'd fought a couple of familiars that night, but couldn't for the life of her find any Witches.

By the time she'd made it back home she'd been exhausted to the point where she'd barely acknowledged the lamp light was still on, and simply collapsed into bed, mumbling a goodnight to Dipper.

Dipper didn't usually wake up earlier than her, so Mabel noted with a bit of annoyance that probably meant he'd stayed up all night.

She'd huffed to herself, ready to traipse downstairs and maybe even to the basement if that's where he and Great Uncle Ford were, and demand Dipper take a nap before he passed out in the Middle of Ducktective.

She'd nearly slipped on the papers littering the stairs.

Dipper and Stanford had long since abandoned the TV room, but not out of courtesy to let everyone else in the house watch their show, but clearly because they'd ran out of things to tape their calculations onto. (and they didn't even clean up after themselves!)

Mabel grumbled to herself as she started yanking the papers away from the TV and walls and tables, carefully stacking everything as neatly as she could, while also being quick.

Eventually, she heard a car pull up outside, and waited with baited breath until the door tore open with a loud clatter.

Grenda.

Mabel felt a smile grow onto her face as her loud friend barged through the hallways and into the TV room with her She was happily wearing a Ducktective Detective hat, and holding a plushie.

Mabel couldn't help but laugh when her friend's eyes bugged out when she looked around the TV room.

“Ugh! Graph paper! Kill it!” Quick as they come Grenda slammed her foot down into a nearby sheet of graph paper Mabel hadn't picked up just yet.

“Heeeeyy Grenda! And yeah I know... Dipper and Great Uncle Ford are all caught up in some nerd game that's like 80% math and it's like... whaaat?” She took extra care to ignore the fact that Ford had all but dismissed her within ten minutes of all three of them playing together.

He probably wasn't even aware he was doing it. He did say it had been a long time since he'd handled children. He was probably just clinging to Dipper since they have the same nerd Likes.

“Anyway, Can you help me clean all of this up? Grunkle Stan will be pretty mad when he comes out if the whole TV room is covered in nerd things.”

Grenda Nodded and smiled determinedly at Mabel before carefully, as though disgusted just to touch it, began to clean up with her.

“Say, how much snack stuff do you guys have anyway? I didn't have Breakfast at all so I could gorge myself here!” Mabel gasped in response, ready for just a moment to immediately drop all of the cleaning pretenses and shove a bag of Cheese Boodles into Grenda's arms.
“Well You'll just have to have first dibs on the snacks then!” Grenda nodded appreciatively and threw all of the papers she'd gathered into the pile Mabel had set up in the corner of the room.

As if taking some sort of silent cue Dipper walked into the room. His eyes were somewhat shadowed and his hair was mussed up.

He really hadn't slept all night.

Mabel resisted groaning.

“Hey Mabel, Hey Grenda do you--!” he cut himself off when he looked around the room to see their success in cleaning.

“What happened? What did you guys do to our setup?!” He shrieked. Dipper was a little more on edge than normal. Probably from staying up all night.

“We cleaned that Nerd Game stuff up! This is Prime TV Room Area!” Grenda announced, either unaware or uncaring of Dipper's distress. As though he'd just been punched in the gut Dipper stared at Grenda in horror before shifting through the pile of papers.

“You guys had no idea what you were doing! We had a system all set up!” Oh, and why does he get to act like the injured party here?

“Hey, you're the one who promised you two would clean this place up before the finale today. Not my fault you didn't.” Dipper groaned

“Mabel, come on! I was gonna do it like an hour before it starts!”

“Dipper, it is an hour before it starts, it's Noon. Pacifica is gonna be here any minute.” Dipper looked honestly surprised for a moment, had he really lost track of time that deeply?

“jeeez really? We've just barely started a new Dungeon!” Dipper bolted upright “Don't you think we could... I dunno... hold off until the second showing later?”

“Dipper! Come on. You need a break. Did you even sleep last night?” Dipper puffed up his cheeks and looked away from Mabel.

“I'm fine. I just need my mage shee-” He cut himself off with a massive yawn, and Mabel held back smiling in triumph, her point proven,

“You just need a nap.” She patted Dipper's shoulder and tugged him away from the pile and toward Stan's chair.

“Come on BroBro, I'll wake you up five minutes before the episode airs.”

“But I...” Dipper yawned again, body already starting to go pliant under Mabel's hand at the offer of sleep. “I can't leave Great Uncle Ford Hanging.”

“What you can't do is try to stay up for so long after such a stressful week. You can last a good four days without crashing normally, and yet here we are!” Grenda thankfully helped her out at this point, forcibly lifting Dipper into her arms and placing him carefully on the bed.

“Come on Brainiac.” her big friend mumbled, patting Dipper contently on the head. “We'll break it to the Bigger Braniac.”

Mabel nodded solemnly as Dipper let out one more quiet protest before curling up contently.
“Okay! Now to tell Great Uncle Ford that Dipper needs to sleep more than he needs to play their game.” She looped an arm around Grenda's shoulders before escorting her out into the hallway.

Just down the way they could see Soos’ break Room (now retaken by Stanford as his actual bedroom) open, and Mabel could make out the littlest bit of Ford's jacket as he leaned over what was presumably the Dungeon Board.

“Well! Shouldn't be too hard! He's a smart guy right? He should understand.”

“Yeah, He should know...” a knock on the door broke up her thought process. It was probably Pacifica. Mabel hummed before looking over at Grenda with a smile.

“Hey, think you can warm him up for a second? I gotta greet guests!” Grenda's grin faded a little as she looked up at the door, no doubt well aware who was on the other side of it.

“Yeah, I can talk to the other Mr. Pines.”

She supposed Forgive and Forget wasn't as easy if you've known someone for longer than a couple of months.

Grenda huffed to herself as she strode into the door that was pointed out to her. Honestly when did Mabel become friends with Pacifica Northwest? Ugh, just the idea made her flinch a bit in horror.

Pacifica wasn't necessarily a Bully, sure, she was a jerk, had a very narrow view of perfection, and if you were on her hit list (as Mabel was for a bit) she'd embarrass you when she could, but she wasn't unneedly cruel.

Still, what sort of adventure could Mabel have gotten tangled up with with her for them to have been working as well together as they'd seemed to a couple of days ago?

Candy had been just as wierded out thankfully, so it's not like she was just seeing problems where they weren't any. And Dipper was just as hostile towards Pacifica as he'd ever been. So God knew what made Mabel change her mind.

It clearly didn't involve anyone but them both.

And quite frankly, while she had no idea how this New Mr. Pines worked, or even if who he really was, anything was better than being third wheel to that new weird friendship.

It was times like this that she was reminded forcibly that Mabel would be gone by the end of the summer and it would just be her and Candy against the rest of Gravity Falls again.

But, hey! Now wasn't the time to get wrapped up in such stupid problems! Now was the time to tell New Mr. Pines that Dipper was too busy sleeping to play their nerd game anymore.

“Hey! Uhm, New Mr. Pines? You in here?” she asked rhetorically. He was clearly in the room, but she didn't wanna startle him.

He looked tight as a bowstring already, she didn't need to give the poor man a heart attack or something.

“Mr. Pines was my father. It's Dr. Pines or Ford.” New Mr. Pines, or rather, Dr. Pines, responded, almost automatically.

“Okay. Dipper's taking a nap, cause he stayed up all night like a wimp for your nerdy game.” Dr.
Pines turned to her, brows raised in surprise.

“He said he was fine though, I've stayed up for much longer without crashing...” Grenda shrugged. She wasn't in the business of determining how long someone can go without sleep and she wasn't interested in it to be honest.

“Mabel said you guys have been playing nonstop since yesterday. Do you wanna watch the Ducktetcive Finale with the rest of us?” she figured she may as well invite him, sure, it was likely that someone else had already done so, and she was beating a dead horse, but hey. Grenda is nothing if not Polite!

Dr. Pines chuckled and waved a hand

“No no, I'll probably get bored fast with your show. When you've seen a detective show in a dimension when intelligent live evolved from corn, nothing surprises you.”

Well Grenda didn't know what that meant, but she also wasn't all too curious to find out.

“Kay. I'll tell Mabel then.”

“Oh uhm... before you go... uhm..” he trailed off, probably realizing he didn't know her name.

“Grenda” she supplied with a nod.

“Grenda.” he repeated gratefully “About Mabel... You know she's going through a lot right now, right?” Grenda raised a brow at him.

“I guess?” Dr. Pines shook his head, as if he already knew what she was going to say.

“Just... Well...” He thought for a moment about what to say. “Actually... nevermind. Just... be careful.”

What was that supposed to mean? She honestly had no clue.

Grenda nodded slowly and moved to close the door.

Ugh! She felt a shudder crawl up her spine and she clutched her Ducktective plushie a little tighter to her chest.

Something about that entire conversation felt off. Like, Dr. Pines was keeping some massive secret from everyone; but not keeping it to be mean, just because he didn't know how to say it yet.

“Oh ho! Looking snazzy Grunkle Stan!”

Was Mabel going through things? Things she couldn't tell her or Candy? Was Dr. Pines just being weird or did he actually know what was going on?

Grenda resolved to not bring it up today. After all, Today was Ducktective Day.

She marched into the TV room to see Pacifica Northwest sitting on the Skull table, a grey hoodie and navy blue skirt on.

It was the simplest Grenda had ever seen Pacifica dress. But she supposed she was probably wearing it so people wouldn't recognize her.

Pacifica was also wearing a Ducktective Hat on her head, Mabel's to be specific, as she came back
into the room without hers on, and toting two liters of soda under either arm.

Stan was leaned against the door frame, counting the bags of snacks they had, a snazzy bow tie and pocket hanky hanging out of his usual suit jacket.

Dipper was curled up on the chair still, asleep and completely oblivious to the brewing party around him.

Grenda smiled to herself and trotted over to claim her spot on the right side of the easy chair.

Pacifica looked over at her once or twice, immeditaley looking away when Grenda wold look back at her.

Was she... embarrassed? Eh, it was probably just because she was nervous she'd blab to the world about how not perfect she looked at the moment.

“Hey Uhm... Gretchen, was it?” Grenda resisted groaning

“Grenda” she supplied, for the second time in an hour. But Pacifica nodded, and flushed a bit.

Embarrassment again, she was sure.

“Right... Grenda... I just... ah...” She folded her arms and looked away. And before Grenda was able to offer a sarcastic reply, finally feeling like she had some sort of footing against the far richer girl, Pacifica reached up and tugged at a lock of her hair nervously.

Huh, she'd never seen the blonde do such an obvious tell when she was nervous before.

“I just wanna like... say I'm sorry?” It came out as more of a question than anything else, but it still threw Grenda for a loop.

Honestly, she was speechless for a second.

“Huh?”

“I mean like, You and your Littler friend don't deserve being picked on as much as I did, and... I even knew it was wrong back then, so I'm not making any excuses, but... like...” she sighed “I'm sorry.”

Silently, almost a little dumbly, Grenda nodded.

Pacifica Northwest. The Pacifica Northwest. The heiress to the richest family in Gravity Falls, the Snobbiest girl to ever trot up Main street, was not just aknowlegeing that she did something wrong, but actually apologizing for it.

She couldn't believe it for a moment, Grenda was actually almost inclined to think that sometime between talking to Dr. Pines and now, she'd slipped into some bizarre alternate world where this could be a thing.

“I just... Kinda had my eyes opened recently, about how messed up my family is, and I wanna do better. And so... that pretty much starts here.” Pacifica tugged at that same strand of hair once more before Mabel rushed over, smile as wide as it could go.

“Ohhhh My gosh! Grenda! Pacifica! Is this happening? Are you two making up? Oooohhhh! We gotta get Candy over for the next sleepover then! Now all my friends are gonna be friends-” her voice dropped into a whisper “With Each other!”
Pacifica snorted out a laugh at that, and Grenda found a surprised giggle bubble up in her own throat in response. Pacifica Northwest snorting, who would have thought she’d see the day.

Dr. Pines’ words were still in the back of her mind though, even after they’d woken Dipper up with the Five minute warning, and Mr. Pines had reclaimed the chair for himself.

Mabel sat on the other side of the armchair, between Pacifica and Mr. Pines, Dipper sat practically front and center, it was a good thing he was so small or he'd have taken up all the viewing space.

She'd have to bring up what Dr. Pines had told her with Candy later. Probably in between Lunch and their Afternoon chat about boys tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

So, let the record show I am not entirely comfortable with my writing of Stanford, but I did my best. He really does want to help, But in the scope of this AU it's not gonna do much.
Chapter 9- Lost Cause

Chapter Summary

Stanford took a deep breath and put his pen down onto his workshop table with a loud clatter.

Well... here went nothing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A lot of strange things had infested the Portal room, quick to either find places to hide or walls to burrow through. He'd told the others he was working on containing the damage, but honestly, nothing that had come through with him had been truly dangerous.

Really, he was working on dismantling his 'greatest achievement'.

The portal was surprisingly easy to dismantle. It was a good thing all sentimental value to the damned thing had been long since tainted by his discovery of Bill's betrayal, else he wasn't sure if he'd have had the guts to do it.

First, the power source, (thank god the rest of the toxic waste Stanley had been using for fuel had already been burned away; unless it was in the power cell it could easily leak into the ground or the water supply) then the shutdown switch, then what was left of the already ruined base frame, the navigation poles, and the four exhaust pipes.

He huffed to himself as he scribbled down any results, just in case.

Stanford gripped his pen just a little tighter in his hand. Everything about this whole situation was so wrong.

Stanley had ignored his warnings and opened the portal to bring him back. He'd written it out explicitly to never open the portal again (sure, it had been in invisible Ink, but still, they used to write messages to eachother in the damned stuff all the time) He hadn't been listened to. Again. And now the very thing he'd been afraid of forming had done just that.

The Rift pulsed strangely in its snowglobe-like container, Casting odd shadows across the Basement Workshop whenever exposed. It was almost ridiculous, how something so dangerous could be something so small. Well... he supposed that's what Singularities did, but still. It was almost obscene to see in real life.

And not only did he have the fate of the entire dimension to worry about, there were some glaring internal problems with their family as well.

Normally he'd be fine with ignoring such things, after all, people were tricky, hard to pin down and generally not worth the effort. But the Rift was more or less contained at the moment, so he was at least able to address the lingering problems with a bit of his natural multi-tasking abilities.

Stanley had not just endangered the world by saving him, but he'd also taken his entire identity for
thirty straight years. There must have been other ways to go about it, he was sure. He'd hoped, foolish actions aside, that Stanley would have grown up at least a little bit over time. But it was just like when they were kids! He wasn't sure if Stanley knew how ridiculous this entire thing was, or if he just didn't care, but either way, as usual, it was up to Ford to take care of the important things. Stanley could focus on taking care of the kids for the rest of the summer, but he had to know this farce would end.

And then there were the kids themselves that posed a completely different (and considerably more intricate) problem.

Dipper, well, he was fine as far as Stanford was concerned. In a lot of ways, the young boy was a lot like Ford when he'd been his age. He was smart, he knew what he was doing most of the time. He was absolutely fascinated with a lot of the same things that Ford was. But he was also brilliant in his own right, far more resourceful than he anticipated. Leafblowers could defeat Gnomes, Who knew!

Actually, Ford felt like he could probably be trusted with knowledge of the Rift if he explained its importance.

Dipper was fine, Dipper wasn't the problem.

It was the girl, Mabel, who really worried Stanford.

She was a lot like Stanley in a lot of ways. Boisterous and loud, quite the personality on her, unafraid to taunt her own brother in a surprisingly cruel way because she can't catch up with him. He hadn't interacted with Mabel much, but he figured she probably had a bit of an ego on her too, again, similar to Stanley.

Her codependency on her brother was challenging. It reminded him a little too uncomfortably of his relationship with Stanley before the science fair all too long ago. He knew it wouldn't really be his place to try and address that, but he'd have to let Dipper know there were other ways out. He didn't have to just be 'Mabel's brother'.

Especially when he remembered a certain, considerably more worrying aspect of the girl.

Mabel had run into an Incubator at some point (probably recently) and had made a contract. She was a Magi now.

The Incubators liked holding their hands as close to their chests as they could, but Ford had spent a lot of time in dimensions where they were around. And the strange property of his that allowed him to see and interact with not only the Incubators, but also the Witches, certainly served him well.

He'd told so many poor young girls the truth that way. He rarely could stick around to see the fallout, but he was sure they must have been bought a few more extra days from knowing the truth.

Of course, he did consider the possibility that he was maybe less than tactful with some of those girls and pushed them closer to the edge than before, but he was sure that he'd done more good than harm on that front. The truth had its own way of comforting people that other forms of communication could not.

And he knew this was what he had to do with Mabel. But this was different. It wasn't just some girl who he could wave goodbye to and vanish into another dimension. He'd be seeing her until her very end unless he sequestered himself entirely in the basement until it happened, or if she lasted until summer's end; neither felt very likely.
He didn't want to risk pushing his own Great-Neice over the edge into despair. But he knew she'd be going over the edge sooner or later.

And if she wasn't informed she couldn't make proper decisions about the time she had left.

Stanford took a deep breath and put his pen down onto his workshop table with a loud clatter.

Well... here went nothing.

The cool night air bit pleasantly against Mabel's exposed skin, trying unsuccessfully to worm its way into her bones.

She was nursing a glass of chocolate milk from the lip of a mason jar without the lid. She'd have grabbed a normal cup, but After her Mabel Juice had stained the inside of Grunkle Stan's blender with edible glitter three milkshakes later; he'd insisted that any drinks she made herself had to go into mason jars. Even a simple chocolate milk.

The stars were bright in the inky black sky, and the moon was on its last sliver, tomorrow it would be completely gone.

She took another sip from her 'cup' and realized with only a bit of surprise that she wasn't alone anymore.

"Hello Mabel." She smiled up at the lone figure behind her.

"Hi Great-Uncle Ford." Ford smiled thinly at her and stood close to her on the porch, arms folded behind his back and eyes to the treetops. He didn't try to strike up conversation, but Mabel didn't really mind, even a loud girl like her just needed a quiet moment every so often. The past couple of weeks had been a little on the crazy side after all, And Magica business didn't help for that matter, so the quiet was a bit like a nice balm on her nerves.

Had it really only been a couple of weeks since then?

"You can sit down if you want." She found herself offering, even scooting a bit to the side to allow her newest Great-Uncle the space to sit.

Ford looked honestly surprised at her for a moment before he tentatively sat down.

Silence came back over them both as Mabel turned her eyes back to the sky, tracing any constellations she could remember and any she'd made up on the spot.

"Mabel..." Ford started, only to trail off when she turned to look at him.

"What's up Great-Uncle Ford?" The corner of Ford's mouth pinched a little weirdly. Some sort of nervous tell (looks like Grunkle Stan's poker lessons have been paying off)

"You uh..." He seemed to change what he was going to say at the last second. "I noticed you and Dipper refer to me with the full 'Great-Uncle' title, but you seem to have mashed the words together for Stanley." The implied question hung with a lot more weight than such a thing should.

"Oh yeah, he made that up. Grunkle Stan was uncomfortable with being called Great-Uncle all the time cause it took too long, so he just decided to mash them together into 'Grunkle'." Mabel shrugged, the slightest smile on her face as she looked back at the sky.

"We can call you Grunkle too if you want."
“That... uh.” Ford coughed lightly “That won't be necessary.” Mabel nodded and took another sip of her chocolaty treat.

“M'kay.”

Silence came over them for a little longer. Great-Uncle Ford clearly had something he wanted to say, but didn't know how to say it. So, Mabel decided to wait him out. He'd figure out the words eventually.

She still had half a cup of chocolate milk left after all.

It took a little bit of gently sipping at her cup and darting her gaze over to Ford every so often for her Great-Uncle to speak again.

“I... Mabel, you know it's been some time since I've been around children. I don't really know how much detail I should omit; I don't want to confuse you, but it's imperative you understand the full picture.”

“Just give it a shot. I'm not very good with all the science-y nerd talk like you and Dipper are, but I'm not stupid.” Ford chuckled a bit at that.

“I hope not. It's... It's not your fault though, alright? No matter how this conversation goes, The predicament is not your fault.” Well that got Mabel's attention.

“What'cha mean?” He can't give those kinds of disclaimers before he's even said what he needs to say can he? Stanford took a deep breath and squeezed his eyes shut briefly, as though gathering strength.

“I... I don't think what you've been doing with Dipper, is a very good idea, He shouldn't be entangled in Magica affairs.”

She honestly hadn't expected that. For just a moment her mind drew a complete blank before she could even think of responding.

It had been awhile since Dipper had even come with her on a hunt after all. There were times when he'd still want to come along, but after the whole thing with the Witch that... well, after that he'd been a lot more compliant when she insisted he stay behind.

“Wha?” She started intelligently “But he hasn't come along with me on a Witch hunt since....” She lifted her hand to her sleeve to rub absentmindedly at the scar on her upper arm. She thinned her lips and turned back to the darkness. “He hasn't come with me for awhile. Even before you got back to Gravity Falls.” That kind of raised the question of how Ford even knew Dipper was involved in the first place. Did Dipper tell him when they were playing their Dungeon game together?

“It's... It's not just that Mabel. I can only Imagine you don't know the full story, god knows in all of the dimensions I've been through, nearly every one of them with the Kyubey inhabiting it, they've kept their trade secrets from people. But... Look, I'm just going to say it. And please, Know that my knowledge comes from experience.”

Why was he starting everything with so much preface first? Assuring her that he knew what he was talking about and stuff, it sounded like nothing but bad news was coming.

“I think you should limit your time with Dipper strictly down to what's necessary with you both sleeping in the same room. And perhaps also with those friends of yours as well.”
For a moment Mabel's brain completely shut down, promoting her to just stare at Ford, Mouth slightly hanging open. Ford, for his credit, did look like he felt bad about saying it.

Of course, feeling bad for having to say it was completely different than regretting he said it.

“Huh?” Her voice came out more as a breathy whisper than anything else. nervously a small giggle began to build in her throat, he was just messing with her then, right? Silly Great-Uncle Ford didn't have a normal sense of humor anymore after so long in bizarre-o dimensions....

“Mabel, With your position as a Magica, you should be prepared for what will happen when time finally runs out. It wouldn't do to end up leaving such huge scars in your wake.”

Mabel's breath caught in her throat. Her brain drawing a blank when she tried to form a response, the idea of Ford messing with her was beginning to dry up, and very quickly. But Ford, apparently, wasn't done just yet.

“I just feel like you should be sensitive to the people you'll be leaving behind. It'll be easier on everyone if you limit your interactions with them to the strictly necessary. Besides, it may end up buying you a few more days as well! The less people to disappoint you, the more likely you can hold on for a little longer, right?”

Her gut had dropped to somewhere far below her feet, her mind kept trying to turn over what Ford was saying, but it simply wasn't making any sense. It felt like gibberish, even if she could comprehend what his point was.

Great-Uncle Ford, their new uncle, the person Grunkle Stan spent thirty years working to get back, was telling her to....

Telling her to....

To....

“Huh?” She repeated. Ford looked over at her, startling for a moment when he saw her look. He reached over to put a hand on her shoulder, in what he must have assumed was a comforting touch. It felt like a sandbag thumping against her back, weighing her down.

“Mabel, believe me when I say I'm not saying this out of malice. I just think it would be for the best to consider your full situation.

“Think about Dipper. You and Him are so close, when your time runs out he will be devastated no matter what, of course. But with how you two are right now, he might not even be able to recover. Wouldn't it be better to lessen his pain a bit?”

Her voice failed her at that, her breath catching in her chest.

Ford's hand thumped onto her back a couple more times, patting her.

“It's not your fault of course Mabel, I think I may have already said that, but it's worth saying again. The incubators are good at what they do. They're a bit like.... well, I was tricked once by such creatures, so it's really highly believable and nothing to be ashamed of.”

It wasn't making sense... none of this was making any sense.
Her legs shot up underneath her, her mason jar of chocolate milk falling and clattering heavily to the ground. If it had been made of thinner glass it would have cracked.

She felt something starting to prickle in the back of her throat. Something sour and ugly and way not something she liked feeling.

What was he even talking about 'time finally runs out' 'buy her a few more days'? Why was he acting like she was some kind of ticking time bomb?

Why was he telling her to stay away from Dipper and Stan and her friends?

“Why...” She chocked out, voice strained. Stanford's brow shot up, before something similar to realization settled on his face.

“You don't know what happens to Magica do you....” He shook his head like he'd overlooked some sort of number in an equation. “I suppose I should have assumed that. After all, if you already knew you wouldn't be... I'm sorry this must have all been rather confusing.”

That sour thing in her throat finally decided to make itself known. She recognized it; Helpless fury. She remembered this kind of feeling. The same kinda feeling when she'd found out that Kyubey had been lying to her.

Was Ford lying to her? Maybe not. He wouldn't have much to gain by doing that.

But why would he say that kind of stuff to her?

Why would he tell her she should be avoiding Dipper and her friends?

Grunkle Stan had worked for thirty years to bring him back. He had to know how important family was.

So why was he acting like she would 'last longer' without them?

“Right... Well... The Kyubey they.. they lie to their Magi about a lot of things. The first thing you should know is that when you made your wish they removed your soul from your body. That's why you need your Soul Gem, Mabel. I uhm... I'm sorry I have to be so blunt about this, but it's a lot of information to process, and I know you're a child so I'm trying to not overwhelm you...”

“I can't believe you...” she mumbled, finally finding her voice again.

“Hm?” Stanford looked over at her, brow raised. He looked like a teacher that was aggravated with their student for interrupting. “Mabel, This is really important, if you have any questions, I'm sure they can wait...”

“You've...” She gulped, rubbing at her cheeks with the corner of her sleeve. “You've been here for like a week.” She choked out. The black sleeve left weird fuzzy feeling trails along her jaw as she gulped again, trying to get the slight wobble out of her voice.

“I made my wish almost a month ago.” She took a deep breath. “You don't know what I wished for, or why Dipper was 'involved'. You don't know and You're acting like you do.”

One of her hands reached up to clutch at her chest. The little red rose embroidered into her black sweater crumpled up in her grasp.

“Mabel, please, I know you want to trust the Incubators, they did give you your wish, and they're
“Stop it!” She jolted her arms down with a bit more violence than necessary. “It's not the Kyubey! Those beady eyed little jerks ripped my soul out! I know all about that!

“But you can't expect me to just pretend like Dipper trying to help me and Grunkle Stan letting me still feel normal are bad in some way!” Her jaw clamped shut before she looked away. Ford straightened a bit, fists curling in reflexively.

“Mabel I’m trying to help you by saying all of this, besides, I haven't even told you the truly important part yet.”

“Well whatever it is, I can find out for myself! Since for all I know it's something I already know!” She puffed her cheeks out angrily and moved to stomp inside.

The grip on her sleeve froze her in place.

“I know you don't know it Mabel. Don't be stubborn! If you keep going on like this, trying to help may as well be a lost cause!” Mabel felt her hopeless rage begin to sharpen into a far more focused anger at that.

He didn't really wanna help her. He already thought she was a 'lost cause' (whatever that meant) and how was she supposed to trust that?

This is the person Grunkle Stan spent thirty years trying to get back.

She transformed in a flash of light. With the vanishing of her sleeve, Ford's hand was gripping at nothing as she turned on her heel and stormed in the other direction.

“Tell Grunkle Stan I'm Hunting.” She grumbled, barely loud enough for Ford to hear, before she turned and gave him an almost petty glare.

“Y’know, actually helping people.” She stuck her tongue out at him before hopping into the trees. Maybe a little on the childish side sure, but she wasn't about to admit it.

Besides, he had it coming. He didn't know what he was talking about and he was pretending he did. He was just being a jerk!

Mabel held her hand toward her Soul Gem and hummed to herself, focusing to try and hunt a little bit on the way. She would be okay. She would be okay and Great-Uncle Ford would just have to deal with being wrong about her!

And whatever he was talking about being 'Truly important'.... She was sure it wouldn't matter.

Grunkle Stan was right, he was just a Dangerous Know-It-All

Dipper jumped in place when he heard a shout of frustration from outside. His nails dug into his notebook almost reflexively as Great Uncle Ford marched unto the house, Looking a weird mix between despondent and aggravated.

Wow... he...well... Great-Uncle Ford didn't usually get so upset, at least, not since he'd first come back to this dimension. Or well, if he had been, then he'd started tempering himself around him and Mabel. Kinda like how Grunkle Stan didn't like swearing around them.

Anyway, Great-Uncle Ford half stalked his way through the TV room and straight into the kitchen,
he either hadn't seen Dipper, cross-legged on the recliner, or he'd ignored him in favor of getting to the coffee pot as soon as possible.

Dipper rested the end of his pen against his bottom lip, idly wondering if he could get a couple of questions for Great-Uncle Ford in before the Author eventually goes back down to the Basement.

Their game had been broken up by the Ducktective Finale and his nap. Dipper didn't know, maybe the space of time in between had thrown him out of the flow, but he'd been a little off, after they'd finished up that dungeon he'd called it a day.

It was pretty disappointing to end so quickly sure, but he was willing to take that on himself. He probably would have survived if he'd turned down Mabel's offer for him to nap and kept going.

Honestly, he'd stayed up later doing considerably more stressful things. He should have been able to handle it.

It wasn’t until Great-Uncle Ford had forgone a mug and took a long swig of coffee straight from the pot that Dipper decided to ask if his Great-Uncle was okay instead of any of the other questions dancing on the tip of his tongue.'

“Hey... Uhm... Great-Uncle Ford? Are you... alright? Is it something about the portal?” Ford looked up at okay Dipper from the rim of the coffee pot and heavily set it back on the counter before answering.

He looked like he was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.

“I'll be fine Dipper, My boy. It's...” he trained off for a bit, eyes darting to the side and staring at the coffee pot like it had the words that he was trying to say. Dipper patiently waited, Almost with baited breath, as he let Ford gather the words he needed. He never really considered the idea that the Author may be lost for words at times.

Whatever it was though, Dipper was certainly going to let him get it out.

“It's something else entirely...” He finally said. Eyes turning toward the hall, no doubt thinking of whatever it was he was doing in the basement.

Ohh the things that must be being done in the basement... Dipper was always so excited when he thought of it. It was way past depressing that Ford wouldn't let him down there. He knew he could help with whatever was down there, even if his Great-Uncle knew more than he did, he'd at least be a another pair of hands.

Dipper really did just want to help. The idea that he'd finally be able to help someone that's important to him only occurred once or twice, and he didn't consider it very closely.

Or at least, he tried not to.

Besides, it was Great-Uncle Ford, The Author of the Journals! Who wouldn't want to help him out in the weird, amazing, stuff he must be getting up to.

“Is it something I can help with?” He smiled weakly up at him. Ford smiled back at him; it was tiny, barely a twitch of the lips, but he was. And that was good.

“Are you always this helpful?” He asked, more rhetorically than anything, arms slowly folding behind his back.
“I Uh... I try to be.” He answered, only a little on the uncertain side. Ford darted his eyes back down the hall again before sighing heavily.

“Alright... Dipper, what I'm about to show you has to stay as secret as possible. It doesn't leave either of us. Not to Stan, not to...Your sister. Do you understand?”

No way... he was actually going to show him! Needless to say, Dipper's jaw had dropped for a moment; Honestly he hadn't thought he'd get this far, he'd certainly not expected to have been taken up at his offered assistance.

“Y-Yes! Of... of course!” He cursed the crack in his voice. He'd been doing so well too! But Ford waved for Dipper to follow him anyway, and Dipper nearly tripped over himself to follow.

“When Stan opened the portal, he'd ripped a hole in space-time to do it.” The vending machine door closed behind Dipper and Stanford paused to wait for him to meet him at the bottom of the stairs.

“He saved me, but he caused the one thing I was worried about.”

The elevator rattled and clanged, the rust smell almost overwhelming Dipper's nose for a moment. He sniffled and kept his eyes trained to Great-Uncle Ford. Ford was staring forward intently as the dim lighting of the elevator shaft cast strange shadows over his face.

Eventually they reached the bottom level of the basement. The portal room.

Stanford walked swiftly out of the elevator and across the room toward the Control Panel.

Dipper noticed briefly the picture of him and Mabel hidden by one of the monitors, but was instantly ensnared in Stanford pulling the book section open.

He could see the glint of something strange on the inside, glittering strangely in the shadow.

“The portal formed this, an Interdimensional Rift.” He pulled it out further and Dipper's eyes widened when he took in what Stanford held in his hand.

A snowglobe, with the base painted yellow and black in the universal symbol of Biohazard. But floating in the glass orb, was something even stranger. It moved around like it had a mind of its own, splitting and reforming and swirling about at random. Its color somehow darker than black, Dipper could only think of it as 'void'; the darkness only broken up by small pinpricks of light shining like stars. It looked like Ford had stolen a piece of space and taken it with him through the portal.

“A Rift? Like... something outside of time or space?” He repeated, tilting his head to the side a bit as Stanford held it closer to him.

“More or less. If this is ever broken from its containment, it could tear our universe as we know it to shreds. The less people who know about it the better.” He looked at Dipper severely, and Dipper gulped, trying his hardest to tamp down the anxiety that was beginning to form in his gut.

“So that's why I can't tell the others?” Stanford nodded solemnly. Dipper took a deep breath and nodded, expression mirroring Stanford's.

“Okay.” Great-Uncle Ford smiled at him, if a little sadly. He was probably just worried, but Dipper at least could help him shoulder the burden of knowing what this Rift could do.
Great-Uncle Ford needed him. He could help. He could help and actually do more than making the
person he was trying to help even more stressed. He felt a small smile pull at the corners of his
lips. Something like relief pooled in his gut.

“Good, now come here, let me show you some of the projects I've been working on.”

Dread.

She didn't know why, but Pacifica Northwest felt pure unadulterated dread beginning to pool in her
gut.

Something very wrong had happened. She didn't know what, and she didn't even know to whom,
but it happened, and she needed to do something about it.

She'd been dismissed for the night, her father a little less openly cruel and a little more on the
naturally cold side. So at least she knew these feelings of doom weren't towards herself or her
parents, she was generally okay.

So why then, did she feel something gripping at her gut? Freezing over her chest in fear and filling
her with a nervous energy that demanded to move.

Maybe she just needed to go on a hunt.

She glanced at herself once in the full length mirror in her room, right beside her closet, and
checked her hair over. Okay, she had few strands out of place, and her bump was nice and
symmetrical. Not that it'd really stay that way after she'd end the night, but it's always nice to start
out with your best foot forward isn't it?

She noted with a piece of distaste that her roots were growing in again.

…How long had it been since she'd liked her hair when it was black?

Six months? Seven?

She'd dyed it almost immediately after making her wish, the idea was that blondes were way more
likely to be noticed that girls with black hair.

She'd wanted to stand out, and eventually she'd grown to like the color on her. It didn't accentuate
her eyes as well sure, but it's not like people had been lining up to get a glimpse of her 'pretty green
eyes' for eons beforehand.

She transformed with a flourish and immediately leaped into the forest, looking for a distraction to
quell her rising fear.

She glanced down at her Soul gem briefly, the purple light over her naval glowing just a little on
the eerie side. Other Magica, those few that had arrived in Gravity Falls chasing Witches, only to
vanish after a couple of days, had always struck for her stomach when they'd fight her.

She'd thought they'd just seen her exposed midriff and thought it an available target for awhile,
until that time back in May....

Was it really that short of a time ago?

Pacifica pinched her lips into a thin frown as the memory played back in her mind. It was burned
into her brain, and it probably always would be.
Natalie, she'd called herself... Pacifica had had her on the ropes of the battle, she'd saved a couple of Goblins from a Witches' Maze, and the other girl had been tailing this Witch since Salem. Pacifica had been able to get her cornered and had swiped for her right arm. She'd just intended to get her to drop the bejeweled harpoon that she was toting all over the place, but she'd missed with how harshly the other Magica had flinched.

Like a switch had been flipped, Natalie was huddled in the corner Pacifica had backed her into. She started babbling nervously about how she could have the Grief Seed, and how she'd leave town immediately. She'd admitted that she wanted the thing because it had killed her friend, but she didn't want to die in some stupid tussle.

Pacifica had been confused of course, but Natalie had almost immediately left after the Witch was defeated, only looking back once and running even faster back north.

That girl had to have been older than her, maybe thirteen or fourteen, when Pacifica had only turned twelve and become a Magica early last October.

That was around the time she started having her hunch about Soul Gems, by the time Mabel had come around to confirm it to her, she'd already pretty much come to terms with it.

She knew Kyubey had been hiding things from them. And maybe if she'd known beforehand she would have made her wish very different. Maybe wished to cross paths with people whom she could befriend on her own without changing anything.

She probably had it on the nose a few nights ago, at the party. She probably had been better off back then.

Maybe if she'd stayed invisible she would have met Mabel and Dipper anyway, and maybe she would have befriended them both from the start. Been invited into their little group.

That was a nice thought.

She tried to picture how she would look now if she were the same person, the girl who never made a contract and remained as invisible as before.

Plain black hair, carefully plaited into a neat braid, simple cardigans and wispy blouses, pleated skirts and black tights. Everything was still designer and cost more than anybody else's clothes in this backwater town, but none of the embroidered initials or giant hoop earrings that pulled at her ears painfully.

That girl, curled nervously in on herself, pulling at her hair when she was nervous (a habit she'd almost immediately picked back up once she started to try and reclaim some of those old parts of herself) surrounded by those two troublemaking, wonderful twins, and on either side of them were Mabel's other two friends, Grenda (she was glad she'd asked for her name) and the smaller girl with the glasses, whose name still slipped her mind.

Dipper looks at the girl with something that isn't derision, and Mabel throws her arms around her and gives her a hug just because she wants to. Grenda and the other girl carefully (or not so carefully) take her hands in their own and paint her nails as many colors as she has nails to be painted. A poor job compared to most manicurists, obviously, and done with very cheap sparkly nailpolish that was mainly glitter. But the shy girl, even if she thinks all of these things (she wouldn't) wouldn't dare voice them out of fear of being rude. She smiles and accepts the manicure her friends had given her, she'll maybe learn to knit or watch campy scary movie marathons. Try lower class snacks like popcorn.
She's happy.

Nobody else in the world would ever really know she was there, but she'd have people that honestly enjoyed her company and wanted her around.

She'd be happy.

Pacifica couldn't picture that girl as her anymore.

She'd maybe gotten a little too distracted, but she'd at least gotten the dread in her gut to abate. Loosing herself in a small fantasy was allowed as far as she was concerned. She was too often a realist nowadays, she felt she deserved to be a little escapist every once in awhile.

Eventually, her heightened hearing finally picked up on something that could possibly be what had been worrying her.

Shouting, a lot of angry shouting and what sounded like metal splintering wood.

Pacifica took a deep breath and squared her shoulders. It sounded like Mabel, and while she couldn't sense any Witches or Familiars around, she could still be in trouble.

The wind whipped past her, no doubt messing her hair up beyond saving without heading home. Green eyes pierced through the darkness as she focused on the gentle pink glow in the distance and added just a little more kick into her travel. The splintering wood noises grew louder as she got closer, and the once unintelligible shouts finally started to make sense.

Boy, Pacifica would hate to be the person that had gotten Mabel this mad.

“Just. Because. He's. Super smart. Doesn't mean. He knows. What. He's. Talking about!” Every word or phrase was punctuated with another swipe of her axe, until she finally took down the whole tree.

As Mabel kept at it with the tree trunk, Pacifica slowly began to approach. She was trying to make her footfalls heavy enough so that she wouldn't startle her fellow Magi, but she wasn't too sure if she'd succeeded or not, as Mabel did still jolt in place when she got close.

At least she didn't turn her axe toward her.

“Pacifica...” Mabel huffed, voice breathy and small, a weird contrast to all the shouting she'd been doing. She looked at Pacifica for a moment longer before turning her gaze to the shattered tree trunk, face heating up in a shame that looked foreign on her face.

“You uh.... you saw all that?”

“Yeah, what even happened? I thought I was the only one that could get you that pissed.” Pacifica scoffed in amusement, the joke in her tone hopefully enough to break the tense miasma that seemed to surround Mabel.

Mabel's axe vanished with an audible 'pop' and she huffed a deep sigh, fist now clenched tightly into her skirt.

“It was... well... Someone was sure they could 'help' me with being a Magica, but they just made me feel worse.” Unsurprisingly, that raised far more questions than it answered. Pacifica raised a brow at Mabel and motioned for her to continue. Mabel's lips pinched unpleasantly, she looked for all the world like she wanted in no way to keep going.
“It's... kinda a long story.” Well there was no doubt about that. Pacifica shrugged and sat down, Mabel mirroring her.

“We have time.” Whatever it was, even if it was way past crazy even for them, she was sure she could handle it.

“You know how Grunkle Stan is a twin too right? And his brother just came around a couple of weeks ago, right?” Slowly, Pacifica nodded, she did remember vaguely, Grenda coming back from talking to someone she said told her to call him 'Dr. Pines’

“He's the one who was playing that nerd game with Dipper all night wasn't he? The one that made him crash before the Ducktective finale?” What was up with that guy anyway? He must have been gone for a long time, since Pacifica had never heard of him (and she would know of anyone who lived on her Parents' real estate)

“Yeah...” Mabel's lips pinched into a thin scowl, as if summoning the memory were worse than pulling teeth.

“He's been lost in other dimensions since way before we were born, Grunkle Stan spent like 30 years working to get him back from the other side of the portal.” Mabel shrugged, as if that were the most commonplace thing to have ever told your friend ever. “A bunch of different dimensions have places like our world but different, and apparently a lot of worlds have Magica.”

Pacifica could practically feel her eye beginning to twitch. Other dimensions? Other worlds? Portals? It sounded unbelievable, way more so than Mini Golf creatures, or Magical contracts and Ghosts. Completely ludicrous. So why was she nodding her head in agreement and urging Mabel to go on?

“He found out immediately that I was a Magica, I was transformed when he came back, so it's not like I had to tell him or anything. But... maybe it was because He knew I was a magica... It's like... there were times when it seemed like he was starting to like me, and then stopped himself.” Pacifica didn't miss the hurt look on Mabel's face when she said that. And it made sense, Mabel, much like herself, was a people pleaser. She always preferred it when people liked her. It must have hit especially hard to think that someone in her family was actively trying not to like her.

“So...you two fought about that?” Mabel shook her head.

“I wish it was just that. He was being a mega jerk. He kept talking like now that I was Magica, I was some kind of time bomb, and for some reason, I had to... Ugh!” Mabel punched the ground with a fist.

Wow... whatever her other Great-Uncle had said, it really shook her up.

“He said I should stop hanging out with my friends, or spending time with Dipper, that I needed to 'think about them' and how I have to be 'Sensitive to the people I leave behind'. Like I'm gonna get killed or something in a couple of days! And somehow he kept talking like instead of people being around me... you know... helping me, it'll somehow make things worse for everyone!” Mabel sniffled, some sort of true look of hurt starting to crawl into her expression. “He's barely been here a week and he's acting like he knows all about me an' Dipper an' he talks like I'm some kinda lost cause.”

“And the worst part about it?” She huffed, an almost hysterical note to her voice. “The more I think about it more I wonder...Maybe I am.” She shook her head at that, brown hair flying almost
everywhere despite the minute motion of her head. Pacifica's gut started to sink in her chest. “I've become such a jerk ever since I made my contract, maybe it really would be for the best...”

Something about how Mabel was freaking out, was just sort of... rubbing her the wrong way. She remembered what it had been... when it was a slow week... She'd gotten in so many more fights than she normally did, she'd talked back to her parents, broke down the door to the closet and gotten in even worse trouble.

It was possible that Mabel was just having a bad week, that she was just on edge and more volatile as a result. She probably could be worried over nothing.

She... she should probably check.

“Mabel, let me see your Soul Gem.”

Mabel looked up to her now, even in the dark of the night her eyes were dim and even a little on the glassy side. Pacifica tried not to let the worry in her gut begin to coil too tightly.

“Huh? What does that have to do with anything?” Pacifica took a deep breath through her nose and willed her voice to remain calm

“Just... let me see.” Mabel furrowed her brow at Pacifica, but at least she did reach up and remove her Soul gem from its spot on her collarbone.

“Here...”

Pacifica had never really hated being right before, the thought was errant and strange as she inspected the Soul Gem in her hand.

The pink was barely visible through the black gunk that had built up in her Soul Gem. The slight pulse that you could barely feel from a Soul Gem was no more than a whisper. She was holding on, obviously, but they needed to get her a Greif Seed, before the end of tonight preferably.

Pacifica had never found out what could happen if a Soul Gem went entirely black. But if there was as much as there is right now, It stifles magic, stops their rapid healing, affects moods...

She didn't want to know what would happen if it gave out entirely.

“Let's get you home...” She gently stuck the Soul Gem back onto Mabel's collarbone, fingers gently resting over the darkening jewel for a few moments longer than necessary.

It was like all of the fight had been drained out of Mabel after Pacifica had taken her Soul Gem. She slumped forward against Pacifica's hands as the Blonde gripped her shoulders and guided her to stand.

This didn't feel right.

Something about this felt so so... wrong.

The pit of dread she'd thought would uncoil once she discovered the source of Mabel's distress had, unfortunately, tightened and intensified.

Maybe she should take Mabel home with her instead of taking her back to the shack...

No, she'd need her parents permission first, and they'd find out even if she kept it secret. Besides, Mabel should probably be in a place that had people who loved her, so she'd be able to chill for
longer while Pacifica...

While she what?

Was she going to hunt down a Witch and slay it on her own just to bring Mabel the Greif Seed?

Some part of her brain told her that was a stupid idea. The same part that she'd grown so used to listening to over her time as a Magica. That stupid voice that had formed from the magic of her wish to make her terrible. It brought up the scant few Magica she'd met in passing, the ones who'd struck with intent to kill, it brought up Natalie.

It did this every time she tried to help Mabel on hunts. It tried to remind her of the things she'd seen, that it was every Magica for herself in this side of the world.

And so, like every time it came up lately, Pacifica grit her teeth and ignored it. Her grip tightened around Mabel's shoulders and let her lean against her a little heavier. Mabel was different. Mabel was nice.

“Hey, maybe you should transform back, huh? Conserve power?” Mabel didn't make any motion to imply that she'd heard Pacifica, but she'd obediently changed back into her normal clothes.

Pacifica considered hopping back into the trees and taking the fast way out, but eventually decided against it, the Shack wasn't too far away at this point, and she wasn't sure if she wanted to carry Mabel for so long anyway. She was a fast Magica not a strong one.

She'd picked fights with Dipper and held grudges against him; Dipper, her brother, her most important person.

She'd chopped off the head of a creature that honestly, was no worse than a jerk.

She'd almost considered letting Pacifica Northwest, her friend and fellow Magica, handle a powerful and very angry ghost on her own.

She'd become pretty terrible hadn't she?

She felt a chill begin to settle over her bones, like a pair of cold hands resting themselves firmly on her ribcage.

She shivered and leaned heavily onto Pacifica's shoulder. The blonde gripped her tighter and began to walk a little faster.

Despite the vice grip being the only thing keeping her upright at the moment, Pacifica was being surprisingly gentle with her.

Her mind flickered back before she'd began to demolish the tree. How angry she'd been, how had she been so angry about such a considerably small thing? Even if Great Uncle Ford was Dead wrong about her, she shouldn't have been that upset at him.

It didn't feel like it was a normal reaction... but it didn't feel like something else was manipulating her either. It was just... something strange, but unavoidable.

She's already known something about being a Magica had changed her, something went wrong, very wrong, and now she wasn't much of a Mabel anymore. She'd hoped that that feeling could pass, now that she'd helped Pacifica, now that she'd been able to enjoy a simple season finale of a
show she loved... She'd hoped the whole Magica thing wouldn't beat her.

Pacifica's grip tightened around her shoulder briefly, and Mabel looked up.

They were back at the shack. Back home.

Mabel's brow furrowed, how did they get all the way back here so quickly? She didn't think she was too close to the shack while she was in the forest, but maybe she'd been wrong?

“How did we...?” Pacifica led her up the steps and knocked pointedly on the splintered wooden door.

“I'm a fast Magica. I'm fast.” She rapped sharply on the door another couple more times.

“I'm comin'! I'm comin'! Hold yer horses!” She could barely hear Grunkle Stan's gravelly voice, but she did, and couldn't help the weak smile that began to bloom on her face.

Grunkle Stan was safe. Grunkle Stan hadn't treated her any different ever since he'd found out. He made her feel normal.

Grunkle Stan was safe.

When her Great-Uncle opened the door, he had the same amount of gruff annoyance on his face as he always did when dealing with late night visitors.

“Yeah yeah, what's the big hubu-” He cut himself off when he looked down to see them both.

“Oh geez, What happened Pumpkin?” Pacifica seemed a little hesitant to pass her off to Stan, choosing to walk Mabel inside herself. Mabel opened her mouth, weak smile still planted onto her mouth, about to wave off Stan's worries, maybe even spinning a lie about some Witch getting a lucky shot in.

Pacifica was quicker than she was.

“She's really low on magic Mr. Pines. Way too out of it for a hunt, so I'm gonna find a Greif Seed for her.” Pacifica was very clinical with her words, detached like she was some kind of doctor.

“Geez, how'dya end up doing this to yourself?” Stan asked her in specific, not really doing much to acknowledge Pacifica's words beyond crouching down to their level and gently putting a hand on Mabel's back.

Grunkle Stan's pat on the back felt different than Great-Uncle Ford's did, she could feel the warmth emanating from him even through her sweater, it was far more comforting that Fords could have even tried to be.

Mabel shrugged. Clearly, that was the incorrect answer, as Stan almost immediately scowled in reaction.

“Oh no missy, don't you shrug at me. I want answers. If getting low on 'magic' or whatever can drain a twelve year old so much, I wanna know how it happened.” Well, she couldn't just say no to that now could she? Her smile grew a fraction of an inch and she leaned a little heavier into Pacifica's shoulder.

Slowly now, they three began to make their way through the hall and up the stairs.

“I just... haven't been able to go on hunts much lately...” She tried to go for the easygoing route,
but the heavy tone to her voice wasn't doing much to belay that. “And so much stuff has happened all of a sudden....” Mabel shrugged. “It just sorta happened.”

Pacifica hummed beside her. “It's understandable, but even if you'd been out there the cursed things have grown way more scarce, it's wierd...”

“You two can hash out migration patterns or whatever once Mabel's better.” Stan chided them, but a little quieter, gentler, than she'd expected.

But here they were now, In the hall space before hers and Dipper's attic room. Stan nudged the door open, and Pacifica was quick to escort Mabel to her bed.

When the lumpy spring mattress compressed under her weight, she was hit with another feeling that didn't feel normal, but didn't feel abnormal either. They were both being so kind right now, she didn't feel like she deserved it. She knew she didn't actually.

Stan lifted his hand to pat down onto her head affectionately. Mabel's weak smile, well, at least it was genuine.

“Get some rest, okay Sweetie?” Mabel nodded up at him. She wasn't sure if she actually could sleep at the moment, and she was sure he'd said rest specifically because of that. “You want me to go hunt down your brother?” She actually spent a moment considering that.

She didn't feel like she deserved it. She knew she didn't actually.

Stan nodded, and she wished the smile he gave her wasn't so sad looking.

After the door closed behind him, Pacifica tucked a few loose strands of blonde hair behind an ear before she began to head for the window.

“I should get going then.”

Mabel reached out and grabbed one of her sleeves. She didn't know why, but even if Dipper was on his way, she really didn't want to be alone.

She supposed she was just selfish.

Pacifica, thankfully, didn't ask for any explanation. She simply nodded and moved to sit beside Mabel.
Waddles rolled his way out from under her bed, snuffling at her shoes experimentally. Mabel smiled and offered her hand to her piggy.

Waddles happily began to sniff into her hand. Licking at the salt from her skin.

“Ugh, you let it do that to you?” Pacifica couldn't hold back the revulsion in her voice if she'd tried. Considering how her emotions were supposed to work right now, Mabel felt like she should have been irritated at that. But it really was just amusing.

Once a rich girl always a rich girl she supposed.

“*He*’s just trying to see where I've been. That's how animals do it.” Pacifica hummed and, slowly, nervously, offered her hand to Waddles.

Waddles took only a brief whiff of her hand, before walking back over and curling up at Mabel's side. Mabel was forcibly reminded of the time she'd first got Waddles, and how in the timeline where Wendy and Robbie hadn't dated for a bit, Pacifica had gotten him instead of her.

Waddles hadn't been very happy with it, and honestly, Pacifica hadn't been either.

“He'll warm up to you.” Pacifica hummed and wiped her hand on her skirt.

“Sure.”

The brief silence was broken up before it even had a real chance to settle. There was a loud thump beneath them, like someone was shoved against the wall in the floors beneath their spot in the attic.

Pacifica stiffened up beside her, and almost immediately darted her eyes to Mabel like she were afraid something so small could set her off.

Mabel felt her hand curl into a fist, but other than that held no other reactions to the now very audible, if unintelligible sounds of arguing beneath their feet.

Maybe it was a grim sort of curiosity, or maybe it was just her being weirdly morbid, but she wanted to know what her Grunkles were arguing about. (And it was obviously her Grunkles, Dipper would never have the strength to make someone hit the wall that heavily)

Her knees were shaking a bit, and so were her arms when she leaned heavily against the bed and pushed herself back onto her feet.

“Hey, come on that's probably a bad idea.” Pacifica reached out to stop her, but Mabel shrugged her hand away. She could handle it, whatever it was. She was a little on edge and pretty weak right now, but what was the worst that could happen at this point?

She staggered out of Pacifica's grip every time she tried to either stop her or support her stride. She could do this. She could already feel the strength in her legs and arms returning. She was good in that way. Eventually (about halfway to the first flight of stairs) she was able to walk normally. She could do this.

About halfway down the first flight of steps she could begin to make out the actual argument her Grunkles were partaking in.

“Dipper and I are doing very important work down there, Stanley! You can't just come down whenever you feel like it to pluck him away! If I hadn't had my gun on me that creature would have-”
“You never go anywhere without that thing! You're a grown man Ford, ya don't need a twelve year old to protect you!”

“I was trying to protect Him Stanley! I was about to explain that! You never listen!”

“Oh, I never listen? That's surprisingly rich coming from you!”

Before Mabel could brave the last flight of stairs to break them up herself, her brother's voice rang out from downstairs.

“Hey! Hey! Why don't we ask Dipper what he should be doing right now.” The impatience in his voice in unmistakable.

The voices immediately began to quiet into indistinct tones; neither of their Grunkles were too keen on shouting at Dipper just to prove their point after all.

So, Mabel started to creep down the last flight of stairs, until then there was only a hallway separating her from the arguing boys in the family.

She could catch Grunkle Stan trying to explain that she needed Dipper, without having to talk about any of the Magica stuff.

“Mabel, come on you shouldn't be...” Pacifica whispered, moving to grab her arm again, but then Dipper's voice interrupted what would have been Mabel's rebuttal. His voice was resolved, but strained, like he didn't want to say what he was going to.

“Me and Great-Uncle Ford are doing something really important right now, Grunkle Stan.”

Mabel's breath caught. The cold cold hands that had been gripping at her ribcage came back full force. Something like dread began to pool in her gut, only to be tamped down by dull realization. Of course this happened. She should have known better.

Dipper was bound to be tired of how mean she was to him eventually. He was bound to want to spend time with Great-Uncle Ford, someone who could be smart with him and wouldn't push him over for mistakes and wouldn't hold grudges and wouldn't be so mean....

Her hands were shaking.

It felt like she was being pushed.

That didn't make any sense, she knew Pacifica wasn't touching her. She could see her from the corner of her eye. Nervous and curled around herself, as though afraid to touch her.

But she felt it. The cold hands on her shoulders, urging her body forward.

A voice hissed in the back of her head. A voice that reminded her of black crow feathers and red ribbons in black hair.

'Leave' it hissed. 'They don't need you. He was right about you. So leave'

Her legs felt so heavy. But the cold hands gripping her ribcage were turning her to ice. If she didn't move now she'd be frozen here forever. 'Till the end of time.

Her footfalls felt too heavy, too loud. She didn't know if anyone else could hear her. She didn't care.
Her head felt surprisingly light. Like when she'd suck up helium to make her voice all funny and she'd end up dizzy.

For a couple of moments, she'd gone deaf to everything outside of the thrum of her heart.

She felt like her body was starting to go on autopilot. Dragging herself out the side door, surprisingly quiet as to avoid anyone in the Gift Shop arguing. Her hands felt so heavy when she moved them to open the door.

Pacifica tried grabbing hold of her, stopping her, talking with her, she could barely feel the blonde's hands on her shoulders and barely heard her voice.

Dipper was tired of dealing with her.

Dipper, her twin brother, the person she'd shared a womb with and came out into the world screaming with.

He was done with dealing with her. He thought she was a lost cause too.

'I'll try not to get stupid, but can you promise to try too?'

'I promise'

But she'd already gotten stupid when she'd made him promise hadn't she? He wasn't getting stupid, he was doing what was best for himself.

He shouldn't have to be so stressed out over her anymore.

She was snapped from her reprieve by Pacifica catching a hold of her, and keeping her grip.

“Come on, if you don't want to stay at the shack then we'll go to my place. I'll call Mr. Pines when we get there.” She started tugging Mabel's sleeve, and the noodle-like feeling in her legs didn't really give her a shot at saying no to such a thing.

The cold cold hands that had been moving her forward before were abating. A cold spot on the top of her head formed instead, like some kind of kiss of ice.

Maybe it was because of Pacifica's speed, but she'd barely blinked and they were closer to Northwest Mansion than the Mystery Shack.

Maybe she'd just blacked out for a while.

“I changed my mind, you're coming with me for a sleepover. You can watch TV in my room while I go find a Witch, okay?” She should feel relived. Pacifica as still being nice to her, she was still trying to help. Maybe even guilty, Cosmos knew she didn't deserve it. But she didn't. She couldn't feel much of anything.

Ice cold hands gripped her heart as she slowly reached up to pry Pacifica's fingers from her arm

They must have walked in at the wrong time, or walked out too early.

They must have missed something.

Dipper wasn't like her parents. Dipper would never turn down his family if they needed him.
He must be dealing with something else. He must have had some reasoning behind why he was willing to ditch Mabel for whatever they were doing in the basement.

Heck, maybe it was just self care, and he emotionally couldn't handle comforting someone else right then.

Dipper holds his family higher than anything else. She knew that, it was obvious with every sneer he'd sent her way. She barely said two words to him back when she and Mabel were still enemies, and he hated her on Mabel's behalf with a vehemency that even she couldn't have matched.

They missed something. She was sure. And she was even more sure that until either they found out what that thing they missed was, or Pacifica was able to bring a Greif Seed to her friend, they weren't going to go back in the Mystery Shack.

She kicked up the speed as much as she dared to. Mabel was still detransformed, and following along behind her with such a dazed, 'nobody's home' sort of look that Pacifica was sure meant she would definitely fall over if she went too fast.

They were only walking for a few minutes, Mabel lost in her own head, Pacifica urging her in the general direction of Northwest Manor. They'd have to pass through the more magical side of the forest eventually, but by the time they were a little over halfway there she felt Mabel reach up to grab her hand.

Pacifica had frozen in her spot, turning back to Mabel with a slight grin she'd hoped looked reassuring, but her friend wasn't looking at her.

“I changed my mind, you're coming with me for a sleepover. You can watch TV in my room while I go find a Witch, okay?” Mabel didn't lift her head, but she heard her, she knew she heard her.

The slight flicker of relief at Mabel responding to her was immediately drowned when her cold hands pried Pacifica's grip loose.

“Hey, come on...” She tried instead. She felt like she'd said that over and over again in the past hour alone, But she wasn't exactly very good at comforting people, even before her contract. “It's not too long, we can make it.”

Pacifica's gut froze over in fear for the briefest moment, Mabel finally raised her head to meet her eyes... And the look on her face...

“It's okay.” she looked so tired. She was smiling at her, but tears were filling her eyes, not passionate tears, not hurt tears, but the kind of tears that happened when you just had nothing left to do but cry.

The kind she remembered crying all alone at nine years old, doodling hundreds of designs into the cast on her arm because she knew nobody would want to sign it.

“It's okay.” Mabel said again, slowly, far too slowly, stepping away from Pacifica and turning to face a nearby tree.

It felt like the world had lost what little heat it had left on such a cool summer night. Pacifica wanted to talk to her, to reach out and continue guiding her toward her home, but she felt she couldn't move.

Mabel lifted her hand, opening it to stare down idly at her soul gem.
Pacifica felt a shiver crawl up her spine. At this point it was glowing more black than pink. The one bright cerise, warm and comforting, all but gone. The gem itself was thrumming, like the pulse of an erratic heartbeat.

Cold dread, colder than ice, clutched at Pacifica's heart like a vice.

“I'm a lost cause.”

There was a strange sort of snapping noise in the air. Like a piece of cheap Iron ore breaking in half. The wind began to whip and pull, lifting Pacifica nearly off of her feet before she'd grabbed hold of a nearby tree trunk. She shouted, she wasn't sure what, but she shouted.

She'd never seen what happened when a Soul Gem runs out of magic, she never wanted to see that.

But she couldn't deny what was before her; She was seeing it now.

They were out of time.

Chapter End Notes

:)}
Chapter 10- I wouldn't forgive me either

Chapter Summary

Slowly, afraid to hurt her, Pacifica lowered her friend to the ground, leaning her up against a tree to keep her upright.

Maybe she was in denial of what she'd just seen, but she gently shook Mabel's shoulder, calling her name.

Chapter Notes

This one wasn't as long as I intended, but it's horrible and terrible enough to work anyway.

Also, first chapter after the finale, so I hope I still did everyone right.

The wind was howling. For just a moment Pacifica had been sure she'd blacked out, the Cold night air turning frigid and reminding her idly of the time her family had gone to Alaska for a vacation some years back. For just a moment she as able to convince herself she'd blacked out and stayed out of it.

But her vision returned to her, the wind making her long hair flap behind her like a banner was.. well.. for lack of a better word, dark. It seemed to practically ooze dispair, and she flared her Soul Gem once to try and compete against it.

She'd never bothered to question just why her soul gem had taken the form of an animal, but right now she wished it were at least a little bigger than the average soul gem. It would have done her a lot better if it had more surface area.

She wondered why she'd have such weird off topic thoughts when she was nervous.

She took a deep breath and convinced herself to focus.

She didn't have time to get off topic, and she didn't have the time to think very intensely about what was going on. If she tried she'd shut down.

Pacifica gasped for air for a brief moment before peering out over the tree trunk she held in a vice.

The light that hit her eyes was nearly garish and unneededly technicolor. Strange patches would glitter randomly before going back to their normal spark. The sound of music began to fill the air, a strange mix of techno and music box melody. Walls started to form from these weird glitter patches, almost reminding her of a knitting pattern.

And right in the center, laying right ontop of what she could only describe as a large puffy sticker, was Mabel.
She was curled up into a little ball; sleeping peacefully even as the wind crested around her, blowing her hair and the edges of her clothes absolutely every which way.

Slowly, slowly, Pacifica could see the beginnings of what looked like a cocoon of yarn climbing up her legs.

She clenched her jaw and willed her eyes to focus. She was a fast Magica, she was fast.

She cut through the air with a sharp whistle, legs barely able to keep her running as she neared Mabel.

Around her the knitted glitter walls began to thin out, not weaken necessarily, but become... flatter. Almost like the pages of a book.

Behind Mabel was a hunk of wood; slowly being carved away at by the gusts of wind, as though the wind itself were trying to whittle it into a shape.

_The Witch_ her mind unhelpfully supplied. The wooden piece was gaining color rather quickly, like it was being doused with technicolor paint. Like, when you were a little kid and you didn't understand that colors combine into a murky mess in the water of your paint, and you pour it out on the floor and expect everything to be a pretty rainbow of color, not the gross brownish grey it ends up being.

Streaks of yellow and purple and pink and green and every color imaginable (and maybe even some Pacifica wasn't sure there were even names for) glowed and glittered ominously.

She stiffened her legs and took a gulp of air before she charged to close the remaining distance toward the wooden cocoon slowly encasing Mabel.

It was hard.

The second she got too close the wind was hitting her so intensely she could barely leave the ground without getting blown back a good fifteen feet, but eventually, with one really good jump, she was able to get there.

The puffy sticker felt cushy under her feet as she crouched down to Mabel.

Her friend didn't stir, or really even move, as the wooden cocoon began to crawl up her waist.

Pine wood.

She shook the thought loose from her head as she summoned a dagger.

This would be so much easier if she had a larger blade, but she was at least making progress in chipping Mabel free from her soon to be prison. She couldn't speak, if she tried to speak the only thing that would come out would be a scream, she could feel it. And if she screamed then she'd loose her concentration, she may hurt Mabel. That wasn't allowed.

But eventually, eventually, enough wood had been carved away from Mabel's legs so that Pacifica could simply lift her up and break her free of the remnants of the soon to be prison.

She was almost startlingly light. She'd never deadlifted Mabel before, She'd helped her walk just hours ago, but that was different. And Mabel had strength based enhancements, she was a strong
Magica like how Pacifica was a fast one. Pacifica would have expected her to be heavier, denser, but that wasn't the case.

Long auburn hair, still soft to the touch, brushed against her upper arm as she tucked her friend's head under her chin.

The witch behind her started to spasm, slowly beginning to take form. The music intensified, the heavy synth in the air ringing against her ears harshly.

Pacifica gripped Mabel tighter and let the wind carry her away from what she knew was soon to become the heart of a truly bizarre labyrinth.

Her knees were beginning to feel weak, she could feel a thick knot of panic beginning to build in her gut, tightening its cold claws across her chest and urging her to freeze and obsess about the weight of the truth she was religiously avoiding.

But she had all the time in the world to do that once she got her friend to the relative safety of the Woods.

Mabel lolled lifelessly in her arms, head flopping at odd angels when she'd jump over a giant puffy sticker that had sprouted up, or dodge the bright paint colors that were splattering along the walls.

Pacifica could see the exit in the distance, She knew, with the way Witches warped space, it was probably much closer than it seemed, especially since it felt like she hadn't moved at all when she had left for heart of the labyrinth to get Mabel.

She took as deep of a breath as she could before letting out a shrill shriek. Mabel didn't flinch underneath her, or respond at all, but the tentative walls of the Witch's Maze trembled at the noise. The distant opening almost immediately grew closer at the break in concentration.

It only took a few more bounds, and one more well placed screech, before they were back on the forest floor.

The Witches' Grief Seed was embedded in a nearby tree. A large rip in the air being where she'd forced herself out of. Almost immediately after Pacifica had exited the maze the Greif Seed had faded from sight, vanishing into the heart of the labyrinth. The air around it seemed to flicker, like the connection of a Bad HD television.

And then it was gone.

Mabel felt heavy in her arms.

Slowly, afraid to hurt her, Pacifica lowered her friend to the ground, leaning her up against a tree to keep her upright.

Maybe she was in denial of what she'd just seen, but she gently shook Mabel's shoulder, calling her name.

Her head lolled to the side, but she didn't respond.

She pinched her lips together and shook her shoulder a little harder.

“Mabel! Come on, wake up!”

Mabel slid back a bit, her position jostled by Pacifica's grip.
She already knew, she could feel the realization trying to push its way past the denial raging in her head.

She shifted Mabel so she was laying on the ground and put her hands together. She learned CPR in health class last school year, she knew what she was doing.

Right over the center of the sternum, press 2/3rds of the way down to the beat of some 1970's song that she unfortunately knew by heart for the sake of the lesson.

Count to 30

Pinch nose and tilt head back to give two slow breaths.

Check for breathing.

She lost herself in the repetitive cycle for a bit, the strength of Denial was quite a powerful thing.

Count to 30

Pinch nose and tilt head back to give two slow breaths

Check for breathing

Count to 30

Pinch nose and tilt head back to give two slow breaths

Check for breathing

Count to 30

Pinch nose and tilt head back to give two slow breaths

Check for breathing

Over and over, her normally eternally fluctuating mind narrowed down to the single minded task. She was humming the melody of the stupid 70's song, her hands were trembling from the exertion he was putting on her arms, she could feel a rib or two crack under the pressure.

Mabel would forgive her if it meant saving her.

Once more

Count to 30

“It's no use.” she heard behind her in a horribly familiar voice.

Pinch nose and tilt head back to give two slow breaths

She was lightheaded, she wasn't sure how much longer she could go about this, she was loosing it fast, but she had to keep rhythm. If she lost rhythm then Mabel could die.

Check for breathing

“I don't see why you're so adamant about attempting to revive her. Without her Soul she's just an empty shell.”
Count to 30

Will her arms to keep strength

Block out that demon's voice

Pinch nose and tilt head back to give two slow breaths

Pinch your eyes shut to pretend your vision isn't swimming

“Normally I'd just let you go about this, but it's a waste of time to let you keep trying to resuscitate a corpse.”

Check for breathing.

A paw rested on her hand and she acted on instinct.

A knife flew through the air and lodged itself in the white creature's head.

Its body crumpled to the ground with a light thud, but the damage was still done.

Kyubey had broken her of the singleminded monotony that her denial was hinging on.

Her hands were shaking so badly she couldn't possibly give reasonable CPR at this point, her gaze so blurry if she even tried to stand she would no doubt fall over.

There was no point in continuing, she couldn't help her.

There was no point in continuing, she was already dead.

She ran out of magic.

She was the Witch Pacifica had taken her body back from.

Finally, the cold cold hands of realization sunk their way into her chest.

Mabel was dead. She had turned into a Witch.

Her Soul Gem had ran out of magic and turned into a Greif Seed.

Magica become witches when their Soul Gems run out of magic.

Her hands tightened into fists, bundling Mabel's soft black sweater in her hands. The extra hairs from the yarn caught against her nails, sticking to one or two hangnails that she had intended to get fixed the next morning.

She'd always attributed Mabel's rosy cheeks to a very good blush job, but even in the slight moonlight she could tell the other girl had paled.

Her breath slowly returned and her vision went back into focus. Her hands were still trembling with all the force of a small earthquake, but she still gathered Mabel back up into her arms.

She dully noted she had probably gone into shock.

It felt like a herculean effort to stand back up with the rapidly cooling body weighing her down, but she couldn't sty here forever, it was summer, and that meant she'd need to get her somewhere cool fast, else she'd begin to stink.
Her legs wobbled with every step, she felt nothing when she'd accidentally kicked Kyubey's body with the side of her foot.

She had to get Mabel back home, She'd call her family and Mabel would be brought to the family mortician.

She felt sick.

She could see the road in the distance, one direction lead into town, the other up to her house and eventually the highway.

She couldn't force herself to move faster. If she tired her legs would give out on her and she'd send them both sprawling to the ground.

Slowly, after nearly tripping on three stray roots and crushing exactly 6 pine cones under her feet, she made it to the road with Mabel.

Once her feet hit the crashed asphalt she almost wanted to just fish her phone out of her Sub Space Pocket and call the Pines family now, to let them pick Mabel up there.

But no... that would be too selfish, even for her.

Just as Pacifica took a deep breath, steadying herself for the walk back home, she heard the sound of loud whooping in the distance.

Panic jolting through her like a lightning bolt to her spine she straightened and turned toward the side of the road that came from home and the highway with dawning horror.

Someone was coming.

She was far enough to the edge of the road that unless they were being particularly reckless she wouldn't get hit, but the very idea that someone would catch her, lugging a dead body home with her in the middle of the night....

She didn't exactly want to go to jail at the ripe age of twelve.

But still...

Those steadily approaching voices, now accompanied by distant headlights...

They meant a car, someone that maybe could drive her home. Maybe if she explained what had happened, lie and say her cellphone got broken, tell the truth and admit to being a Magica... maybe she wouldn't have to make the whole walk home alone.

Carefully, just gently enough that no more than a few hairs were misplaced on Mabel's head, she set the body down and ran into the center of the street, waving her hands and glowing her Soul Gem for emphasis.

“Hey! Hey! Stop the car! Please!” she cried, adding just a little bit of her sound magic into her voice to make sure she could be heard.

The car, that she now confirmed was a large van, was rapidly approaching, and she could hear someone swearing harshly before the screech of breaks stopped them a few yards away.

It was impossible to see whoever poked their head out of the drivers side, the headlights were near blinding, but she ran up all the same, breath once again fleeing for greener pastures.
“What the hell kid!!” she heard a brief shriek of exclamation from whoever that was, their face and voice completely undefinable. "Is that Pacifica Northwest!!"

“Status update: Driving home from actually quality burger joint and psycho rich girl threw herself infront of the van.” Came a far more deadpan voice.

The rest of the voices (approximately 3) became a clamor for who would go out to ask what was going on.

“Dude, is that really Pacifica Northwest?” Chimed in another, fourth voice, Pacifica was at least able to recognize that one, the lumberjack's daughter.

What was her Name...

Wynnie? Wanda?

“Wendy!!” Third time was, apparently the charm, because she heard a loud clamor from the inside of the car, and one of the side doors opened to reveal a tall figure. “Wendy I need your help!”

Slowly, slowly, the tall figure trotted up until she was illuminated by the headlights and Pacifica could see the troubled furrow in the redhead's brow.

Whether that was just her natural state when hearing the phrase 'I need your help', or Wendy had picked up on the distress in her voice, she didn't know.

“Dude, what are you even doing in the middle of the road at night? You're gonna get hurt.” She dropped to a knee so she'd be down on Pacifica's level and smiled gently.

She must be a great babysitter.

After shaking the idle thought from her head, she gestured toward the side of the road, where she'd left Mabel.

Her voice was shaking when she began to explain.

“I...me and Mabel Pines... we-we're these things called Magica....we.. we're like superheroes and we fight and st-stuff but kyu-Kyubey lied to us! He said witches are born from dispair b-but he meant our despair" she realized that the second her stutter left she began to speed up, she was nearly babbling at this point.

“theycamefromuswebecomethethingswefight” Wendy started to wave a hand, to gesture for her to calm down, but she couldn't stop, she had to get the whole story out. She had to.

“idin'tknowididn'tknowandnowMabelswitchandthatmeansshe'sgoneandididn'tknow” eventually, probably because she was sick of Pacifica's yammering, Wendy put her hand on her blonde's shoulder.

“Dude, Pacifica, calm down. Slowly okay? Where is Mabel?” She hadn't realized she wasn't breathing in until Wendy made her stop and she noticed how winded she was.

Her hands were shaking, but she pointed toward the side of the road. Wendy's eyes darted in that direction before turning away from her and shouting.

“Robbie!!” the car door opened and another tall lanky figure tumbled from it. She could hear his muttered questions to himself as he walked past the headlights in the direction she pointed.
“What happened.” That was less of a question, more of a demand. Accentuated by Robbie swearing harshly when he found Mabel.

“Magica turn into Witches” She repeated. “When our... when our magic runs our our Soul Gems become Greif Seeds.” The other teens had slowly filed out of the van to see what had happened for themselves.

“Okay... What is a Soul Gem?” Wendy's hand on her shoulder gripped her tighter, and when Pacifica looked ups he saw the older girl very purposefully looking away from her and away from where the others had gathered around Mabel, looking off into the distance.

“It's our Soul... Life Force. They... they don't tell you what it's made of when they turn you into a Magica...”

“Selling your soul because you didn't read the Terms and Conditions.” chimed in a more deadpan voice. Pacifica reached down to grip at the hem of her skirt when someone else crouched beside her. A gentle hand stroking up and down her back. “Yeah, she... uh... Mabel told me and Robbie about it during the Festival. Didn't know you were involved too...”

Wendy looked up at the purple haired girl that had sat herself beside Pacifica, but she had to take close her eyes and take a deep breath. Whatever they talked about without words she didn't know, but it was bad.

“I'll call the Mystery Shack.” the purple haired girl huffed before pulling out her phone.

Wendy removed her hand from Pacifica's shoulder and pulled off her plaid shirt.

“Here, it's way too cold out to be going around in a magical uniform with no sleeves.”

Wendy's over-shirt smelled like tree sap and cheap moisturizer, but the warmth was a balm on her numbing arms.

There was some sort of commotion between all of the boys over where they were. The sound of retching, before the especially lanky Teen's voice bit out, harsh and unforgiving in the air.

“If none of you can stomach it, Fine! I'll do it myself!”

The lankiest teenager, some guy in a dark hoodie, had Mabel on his back, He looked especially pale in the glow of the headlights, and he had to pause every so often to shift his grip and let a sickened shudder crawl up his spine.

The other three boys, the one with the hat and the one with the long hair were supporting the big guy, who looked Green around the gills and trembling.

“Machine...” the purple haired girl hissed through her teeth before hanging up and redialing.

Slowly, Wendy guided Pacifica to stand, leading her to the middle door of the van. When she got in the threadbare vehicle, a long middle bench seat, the first thought that came to her was that it smelled like cheap rubber and some kind of car air freshener.

Pacifica's sight was going blurry again. This time she knew it was tears.

The purple haired girl got in the seat infront of her, shotgun, still hovering over her phone and cursing when it ended in the machine, only to try again.
Wendy slid into the bench, reached out and pulled her over-shirt a little more firmly over her shoulders.

The three boys piled into the backseat, the big guy slumped over one side and the other two sitting a little closer to each other than was probably necessary.

The one with the dark hoodie had opened up the very back, rummaged around for a bit, before closing the trunk and sliding into the driver's side.

His hoodie was missing.

The purple haired girl jumped in her seat right as the one with the dark hoodie started up the van.

“Oh! Uh.. This is Tambry Madan, I'm uh.. Wendy's in our group…”

She listened quietly as the purple haired girl, Tambry apparently, spoke with Mr. Pines. Something like a rock beginning to settle in her gut.

She'd known this would have to happen. She already knew she would have had to tell Mabel's family what had happened. She knew this.

But she still felt sick.

“That's... uh... that's not exactly what's going on... We were... well... we were driving home from a burger stop a couple of miles out, better than Greasy's actually…” Tambry chuckled nervously. Her hands were shaking as she clutched the phone tighter to her ear. The Driving teen took his hand off of the gearshift to gently rest on her arm.

“It's not Wendy... It's um…” She audibly grit her teeth and choked the next bit out. “We found Pacifica Northwest on the way home, And she had Mabel with her.”

She couldn't let this continue on. She knew how to clean up her own messes, she knew she was supposed to face her own demons at this point. She should be the one talking to him.

A weird sort of determination climbed its way up her throat, a second wind of sorts.

“Let me talk to him.” she stage whimpered, gathering Tambry's attention. The dark eyed teen peeked at her from over her shoulder and, after seeing her hesitation, Pacifica tacked on: “I'm the only other Magica here. It's my duty.”

Big words for a coward like her as it seemed, she could feel the courage drain out of her mere seconds after Tambry handed her her cellphone.

She took a shaky breath and put the phone to her ear.

“Mr. Pines…” The answer was so immediately and accented, that for a moment she didn't actually recognize it as Stan Pines at all.

“Northwest, what are you two gettin' up to? Mabel was way too messed up for the both of ya to be wandering around in the middle of th' night and gettin' picked up be these yahoo teenagers.”

He seemed to be someone whose accent got thicker the more worried he got. According to Mabel, he'd grown up in New Jersey...

The memory forced her back into the matter at hand. The mention of Mabel being 'messed up' an almost hilarious understatement. She wasn't sure what had come out of her mouth, it felt like a
weird mix between a laugh and a sob, but she'd barely been able to smother it before it came out and she either burst into hysterical laughter or the ugly sobs she'd been feeling trying to fight their way to the surface.

Almost immediately Mr. Pines' tone changed. His voice got this soft sort of worried quality to it that honestly, she'd never heard before. Not just from him but from anyone, for a moment she wasn't sure what to do with that information.

“Pacifica, Where is Mabel? Put Mabel on.”

“Mabel's...” She took a deep breath, trying to steel herself over “She's...” her voice faltered and her breath came out of her with a silent *whoosh* “I'm So sorry...” She finally croaked.

She sniffled, the long fight against her sorrow finally conceding defeat. Tears were trekking down her cheeks quickly, She sniffled at odd intervals, trying her hardest to keep herself together; to no avail.

But apparently Stan Pines' patience could only go so far when it was concerning Mabel.


Of course he was. From what little she'd seen about the Pines', they all loved the heck out of eachother. Loved eachother in that unconditional way that she'd once been sure only existed in cartoons and books.

She'd been taken aback for a moment, unsure of how to proceed, her valiant hold on her emotions slipping with every second.

She cursed herself for a moment for not thinking about what she would say, weighing the options between announcing their arrival, explaining the situation as well as she could through her trembling voice, or apologizing again; before Wendy saved her from the decision and gently pried the phone from her grip with a quiet “I've got it from here dude.”

“We're bringing her over now Mr. Pines... It's not good... really fucking bad actually...” Wendy closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “Kind of hard to say over the phone. We'll be there in a few minutes.”

She paused before answering with a quick 'yeah' and hanging up.

“Here Tam. Robbie, Stan said to floor it.” She handed the phone back to its owner with a faraway look in her eye.

Pacifica pulled her knees up to her chest, folding her arms over them and clutching at herself tightly.

Wendy's hand returned to her back.

The first sob came out of her throat with an almost painful grate to it.

And everything but the aching pain and newfound horror faded away.

Fake it 'till you make it.

The mantra she'd lived by ever since she'd realized how truly insane her family was.
It was okay that she was a bundle of nerves, it was okay that she was the only girl in the family, just so long as she didn't let it outwardly effect her. If she pretended to be lazy and relaxed all the time eventually the alarms that felt like they were constantly going off in her head would go away.

The same mantra had served her well long for the past near three years she'd spent as an official teenager. Shooting up like a beanstalk literally days after she'd first turned thirteen had been one of her most challenging projects to acclimate to. Nowadays, pretending to be confident would come as easy as breathing, but back then it was exhausting.

Pretend all the 'hows the weather up there' jokes weren't getting less and less funny with every passing second. Pretend she didn't feel awkward and out of place all the time.

Eventually it'll be real.

It had served her well over her life.

Now... Now was the worst case of it she'd ever faced.

Mabel. Little Mabel Pines... Dipper's Sister, Stan's Niece, her *Friend*, a little magical girl like something out of Revolutionary Girl Utena, was gone.

Not missing, and not hurt, she was dead.

Dead dead.

No ghosts, no zombies, just dead.

Pacifica Northwest, someone she'd never really expected to talk much to... like ever...Was curled up in the middle bench of Thompson's van, inconsolably sobbing.

What she'd said... that Mabel's Soul had... turned into something dark and twisted? It didn't make any sense. Mabel was the sweetest kindest kid she'd ever met. The idea that she could become one of the things that she and Pacifica would fight... Witches... it didn't sound right.

And the way Pacifica was talking about it beforehand, that they didn't know, that almost sounded like... like it was something that was inevitable for them. Something that was so inevitable and so horrible it was hidden by whatever furry guardian gave them their powers.

Everything about what she'd been told was raging against her mind, against hat she new of the world. Everything had changed this summer, so many of her worldviews had been shattered, but of all things she'd believed in that she never expected to change, was that her two newest little friends would be able to overcome pretty much anything.

And now here they were. Robbie's hands trembling on the steering wheel because Thompson was too busy being nauseous in the back seat to drive. Tambry taking deep breaths from her spot in the passengers seat. Lee and Nate mumbling to eachother almost inaudibly just behind her, and her, numbly comforting a tiny blonde heiress.

She felt something close to panic trying to well its way up her chest, fighting its way past her normal anxieties and working its way up toward her throat, where it no doubt would come out in a scream.

No.

She'd done this a million times before she could do it now.
Her friend is gone. It fell on her and little Pacifica to tell her family; she couldn't force that message onto her own friends, they weren't as close to the Pines' as Wendy was, and they weren't there like Pacifica was.

She swallowed hard, feeling the panic slowly drift back down into the depths of her gut, where it could be pushed aside and drowned in her will.

She would keep herself together. She would not sob, or scream, or yell, or be anything but perfectly calm. She could probably excuse a few tears if she couldn't hold those back, but she would not loose control.

Pacirfica chocked on a sob beside her and her crying was cut short into a series of coughing fits. Wendy gently began to pat at her back to help her get the air out.

The car stopped with a light jolt. Almost immediately Robbie was exiting the car, rubbing at his upper arms when the cool night air bit into his skin.

It took a little coaxing to get Pacifica to crawl out after her, and She had to convince Tambry to stay n the van to calm down the other boys, In the end Wendy was guiding the little blonde toward the side door of the mystery shack, Robbie carrying a little bundle wrapped in his hoodie.

Her hand was steady as she knocked on the door.

He was doing the right thing.

Mabel didn't need him anymore, so he should let her do her own thing. Staying downstairs with Great-Uncle Ford was the right choice.

Pacifica was taking care of Mabel, he would have just gotten in the way and caused them more trouble.

He didn't know what kind of 'Magic Trouble' Grunkle Stan was talking about when he'd dragged Dipper up from the basement, arguing with Great Uncle Ford the whole time, but it probably wasn't anything he would have actually been able to help with.

If he couldn't help with Witches' Mazes, and he couldn't free Mabel from her Contract in any way, then really, how would he be able to help at all?

But down here, in this basement, with the pieces of the portal hanging in the distance, with strange creatures and science fiction-like Infinity sided dice, Down here with Ford he could help. He could lend his Great-Uncle his intelligence, his willingness to solve puzzles presented, his fascination with pretty much anything Ford had to offer.

It was a good thing, that he was doing things he could actually help with, and Mabel was in the hands of someone who could actually help her.

It was a good thing.

The guilt would pass.

Every time he'd tried to help Mabel in this new amazing horrible terrifying world she'd started wandering through, he'd not just been useless, but he'd been a distraction and he'd made things worse for her.
He'd fought her on hiding so many times and she'd paid for it.

She'd *Lost her arm* because he refused to stay put.

He tried to save her and he would have *Killed her*

He couldn't even convince someone else to save her and just made one of her friends angry at him.

Honestly Great-Uncle Ford was a godsend at this point. Finally, someone he could help, someone who he could offer his assistance, and actually do good with the chance even.

He was useful to someone he cares about again.

When Stan came back downstairs, he was going to ask if Pacifica had solved things, like he'd expected her to, in far quicker time than he'd ever could have helped at that.

But no.

When Grunkle Stan came downstairs, his face was ashen and pale, but clamped into a determined scowl.

He didn't really even acknowledge Ford asking him what he was doing down here *again* and ignored Dipper's yelping in protest when he was lifted into the air.

Dipper struggled maybe a little less than he normally would in such a situation. If anything, the stiff, tight way that Grunkle Stan was gripping him was worrying. It didn't hurt, he would have made his way out if it hurt, but It showed that there was something wrong.

“Grunkle Stan is somethin-”

“Stanley, honestly, that isn't necessary, if you need Dipper for something you can use your words like a civiliz-!” Ford was cut off when Stan grabbed the sleeve of his Jacket and pulled him along with the both of them toward the elevator.

“Shut up for once in your goddamn life.” He mumbled. It wasn't like his usual barbs toward Great-Uncle Ford when they'd argue. He wasn't angry, just distracted and, for lack of a better word, worried.

When the elevator closed behind the three of them he jostled a little as Stan shifted his grip under Dipper's midsection.

…Alright this was getting a little demeaning.

At the least it didn't take much effort to wriggle from Stan's grasp, once the doors shut and it was obvious neither him nor Ford were going to take off, his Grunkle was far too easy to release them both from his iron grip.

He felt like that should be even more of a red flag than the heavy silence that had surrounded Stan.

Unfortunately he had the idea to inquire at the same time as Great-Uncle Ford, so both of their questions came out as a sort of mishmash of words and worry and frustration.

“Grunkle Stan, what's going on?”

“Honestly Stan, what could be so important as to interrupt us a second time, and not even take a moment to explain yourself?”
The door of the elevator popped open, leading to the long Stairwell.

“Mabel's hurt.” he grunted out before immediately climbing the long steps. “Bad.”

The vague worry in his gut froze over.

Pure fear began to race up and down Dipper's spine, he took the steps a good 2 at a time, quickly passing Stan and pushing his way through the vending machine door.

His hands were shaking, and he knew if he tried to speak his voice would crack in a million different places.

Stan didn't really process danger, he had problems understanding what was the line between excitement and reckless endangerment. (He let both of them sit in the car with him while he taught a bear to drive for heck's sake!)

The last time he'd heard Stan sound so grave when dealing with one of their family injured, it was through a foggy concussed mind after a long night of being a ghost and going back to a sleep deprived and injured body.

And it was Mabel.

Mabel, who he had been so sure was safe and fine not three minutes ago. Whom he had conceded himself to defeat with not being able to help.

Every time he tried to help her she got hurt.

And now the one time he didn't she got hurt anyway. And Hurt bad.

He couldn't do anything right anymore when it came to his sister could he?

He hadn't paused to ask Grunkle Stan where Mabel could be like Ford was now doing. He was just darting around, peeking into every room, the adrenalin racing through his veins quickly turning his fear into outright panic.

He knew he should have checked the attic first. That was their room after all, the most likely place for her to be.

But he felt like he couldn't stop moving and if he went back down after he went all the way up it would feel like a waste of a trip.

His sister was hurt, and he had chosen to ignore her instead of trying to help.

He was never letting Mabel out of his sight until they turned eighteen.

He felt like he should be lucky that the shack was so small, it took very little time until he was climbing the last fight of stairs to the attic, sure that this is where she was, maybe she wasn't even as hurt a Stan was making her out to be, maybe she was just banged up and sleeping it off.

He yanked open the door, and deflated to see an empty room.

Stan's hand came down onto him hard and quickly. Dipper jumped in place, he hadn't even heard him come up the stairs.

“Kid, like I said, Wendy and her yahoo friends found her and her snooty friend. They're bringing them over.” Stan's voice was no less gruff than usual, but there was a sort of softness to it he
couldn't explain.

Numbly, Dipper nodded.

Since when was Wendy involved in this?

He let Stan lead him down to the TV room, Ford was already waiting there, sitting on the T-rex skull nightstand uncomfortably.

What sort of conversation did they have while he was running around the shack like an idiot?

Stan lifted him onto his leg while he sat in his easy chair.

And then there was just waiting.

And if there was anything Dipper hated, it was waiting for inevitability.

How badly was Mabel hurt? How bad was enough for Grunkle Stan to consider it 'Bad'?

When had he even seen her last...?

She'd been nursing a glass of chocolate milk right after Dinner and said she wanted to stargaze outside, she'd invited him out too so he could talk about real constellations while she made her own up.

He'd turned her down, why did he do that? Why did he turn her down when Grunkle Stan had said she needed him?

For a brief horrifying moment, he tried to consider how bad she was going to look when she came home. It started off from simple things, like Wendy piggyback carrying her with a sprained ankle, then maybe she took a hit to the head and was unconscious.

More and more bruises littered this Spectral Mabel's body, more and more rips in her sweater and more and more stress in Spectral Wendy's step.

Until his imagination really ran away with him.

Mabel standing alone on the porch, covered in cuts and bruises, hair missing from her head in sloppy chunks, frost or singe marks clinging to the fibers of her sweater.

She barely has a chance to Get out Dipper's name before she crumbles into his arms. The weight shift was so unexpected he wasn't able to keep her upright after he caught her, only able to lower her to the ground.

She cracks an eye open and she's smiling weakly and of course she is, of course she is.

“We don't have time to argue anymore.”

And he looks down, the blood is so easy to miss with a black sweater....

And he looks down and Mabel's left arm is missing.

When three firm knocks echoed through the otherwise silent Shack, Dipper jumped in place, catching Ford doing the same form the corner of his eye and feeling more than seeing Stan follow suit.
He could hear both of his great-uncles hot on his tail, but he was first to the door.

And he expected it to be Wendy, and he supposed Pacifica would be there too...

But Robbie was certainly a surprise.

For just a moment he was about to ask where Mabel was, demand it, yell and scream and fight until he found his sister and made sure she was okay.

And then he noticed Robbie was carrying something wrapped up in his hoodie.

Something very distinctly sized, with the hood covering where the face would be.

The floor fell out from under him. He would have fallen to the ground if Ford hadn't been standing behind him and put a hand on his shoulder that felt heavier than lead.

Everything was starting to blur at the edges, He could see Wendy grip Pacifica's hand tighter in her own, and hear the teen apologizing, hear Pacifica's choked sobs, hear Grunkle Stan directing Robbie toward the attic in a sort of stunned breathless tone, see more than hear Great-Uncle Ford immediately close off from the corner of his eye, huddling in on himself and mumbling things only he could understand.

He was taking all of it in, but barely anything was processing. His eyes didn't stray from the little black bundle in an ex-rival's arms as he quickly but carefully made his way to the attic.

He followed behind like instinct, hoping, praying, that somehow this wasn't happening. This couldn't be happening. This... this wasn't the kind of thing that just injury could do, her face wouldn't be covered, she'd still need to breathe...

This couldn't be what was going on. It couldn't be.

..Maybe... maybe it wasn't real at all, Maybe it was Bill again, messing with his dreams because he was bored and decided to make things as worse as possible.

Maybe this wasn't real and he'd wake up and Mabel would be across from him in bed, curled up next to Waddles and snoring lightly.

He opened the door for Robbie and gestured vaguely toward the bed on the right side of the room.

He put her down gently, but in that way that people do when they're all too willing to stop carrying something. He was probably only the one doing this because he was used to handling dead bodies or something.

Robbie took the hoodie off of her and folded it up in his arms, unwilling to put it back onto himself.

And for a moment, Dipper didn't want the teenager to leave. Even for something as simple as one last barrier, one last thing in the way so he wouldn't have to approach the bed.

As though sensing something was wrong, Waddles jolted up from his slumber on the foot of Mabel's bed, sniffled around, and squealed in distress before hopping from the bed and running to hide behind Dipper.

Dipper watched as a visible shudder crawled up Robbie's spine and he took a deep breath before turning and leaving.

“You should probably find a cooler place to put her tomorrow, heat makes the smell worse.”
And the teen was gone.

There was yelling from Downstairs, Grunkle Stan roaring what sounded like denials in every language he knew (English, Spanish, and what sounded like a few Hebrew curse words) he could feel Waddles at the back of his legs, confused, like he didn't recognize her smell anymore.

And he could see her now. Laying on the bed she'd taken up this summer, hands folded across her stomach peacefully.

From here it looked like she was just taking a power nap.

He'd like to stay here forever. With his sister just napping, and him standing here, standing guard.

Like a knight protecting Sleeping Beauty.

It was a childish wish, to want to hide away from reality, loose himself in a fairytale world just like she did does sometimes.

The yelling downstairs went quiet, almost all at once. Grunkle Stan must have finally ran out of breath.

The silence was the only prompt to move he was going to get. He may end up staying here until he fell over from exhaustion if he didn't move then.

Even with that in mind it took an almost herculean effort to take the short few steps across the room and to the bed with the pink sheets.

Even in the dim lantern light of their room he could see.

Anyone who said that when people died it looked like they were just sleeping was a liar.

Her skin was turning purple, a sort of buildup around her cheeks looked like she was carved from wax (and for a brief, almost insane, moment, he'd been sure that this was a screw up, this was obviously a wax dummy, maybe carved by Gideon or something, maybe in a couple of days when the moon was waxing again it would come to life) her lips had gone pale and her eyes were sinking in.

She didn't look like she was sleeping, she looked dead.

“Why...?” he found himself whispering into nothing.

He jumped in place when he was answered anyway.

“It's what happens when we run out of Magic.”

Pacifica was hugging herself tightly, he noticed vaguely that she was transformed, her purple striped outfit looked nearly black in the dim light.

“I... uh...” She stumbled over herself, a hand drifting up, seeming unknowingly, to sake a fistful of her own hair and tugging harshly. “I didn't know until it happened.”

A flash of purple light and she was in her normal clothes, that stupid purple dress and black tights thing. She stumbled over to stand beside him, brows furrowed in a grim sort of comprehension.

“We run out of Magic, our Soul Gems break on their own.” when she pulled hers out it was still glowing a brilliant purple, with only one or two dimmer spots along its surface. The violet glow
filled the room, and maybe it was a trick of the light, but it looked almost like the sallow purple
look of Mabel's skin had faded back to an unnatural pale color. “And they turn into Greif Seeds.”

When she turned to face Dipper, he was reluctant to drag his eyes back away from his sister again,
but Pacifica sniffled and it caught his eye.

“We turn into Witches.” She choked out, before she turned on her heel and fled.

From that point on everything passed by in a blur.

He didn't get any sleep the rest of the night, it was only a couple of hours until dawn at that point
anyway, so it didn't mean much.

He stood at Mabel's bedside; whatever Pacifica had done to her, she didn't look near as bad as she
did when Robbie had brought her in.

He didn't cry, he didn't scream.

But he gripped her stiff hand with as much ferocity as he possibly could.

At some point, some brief time alone before the others started coming in, he'd rummaged through
her stuff, putting everything back where he found it, but making sure to find one certain thing.

He had to take his vest off so the sweater would fit him properly, but it was a small price to pay.
The warmth, the vague smell of craft glue and sugar and old wood, the hot pink fabric and the
happy little shooting star on the front, it was the only comfort he was going to have in this so he
was going to take it.

He wasn't Sleeping Beauty's loyal knight, standing sentry over her body until the handsome prince
would awaken her, He was a dwarf watching over Snow White's corpse.

It sunk in. It had happened.

He wasn't denying it.

He may or may not have been in some pretty heavy shock.

Stan sat on the corner of the bed, his hands were shaking and his voice was rougher than normal.
Dipper didn't need to see him to have known he was crying.

He pointedly didn't pay attention to whatever it was his Grunkle had said. It didn't feel right to
overhear. But he did hear the phrases 'Sweetie' and 'Pumpkin' used quite a bit.

For a moment something jolted in his gut and he'd been scared that he may break down right then,
completely stealing Stan's thunder. But his eye had caught Ford's from the doorway and the feeling
faded back into numbness.

He didn't enter in, there was a sort of... instinctual fear... in his stance. Like if he came in he'd be
popping an invisible barrier around the room.

Stan didn't leave for the longest time either, for awhile Dipper was thinking all three of them would
be standing vigil for the night. But eventually his head started bobbing at random intervals and
Dipper had to speak for the first time in hours to quietly urge him to go try and sleep.

It was a quiet argument, normally he always lost the battle of wills whenever it was against Stan,
but for once, it seemed fate was on his side; Stan stood to leave the room, but purposefully and
roughly bumped his shoulder against Ford's as he left.

Ford lingered in the doorway, still unable to step in. But that didn't matter, his voice carried well enough. Even with the hushed horror absolutely lacing his tone.

“I really thought I was helping,” he admitted. “I thought that if I told her the truth about her condition, that she'd have more time.”

The truth?

“You knew?” his own voice was no less louder than before, but for once he didn’t feel like it needed to be.

Stanford closed his eyes and nodded.

“There are many dimensions that had the Incubators and Magica... and Witches. I spoke with her alone to try and warn her, but I suppose I'm not very good with comfort and she ran off before I could finish my warning.” He pinched his lips and took a deep breath. “I've been working under the idea that her fate was already sealed. I was trying to make damages as small as possible, but it seems I've just made them worse.”

His voice cracked on the last sentence, but Dipper wasn't all too eager to be paying attention to that.

It... it took a moment to process what he'd said, let alone how he said it.

Great-Uncle Ford knew.

He'd known about Magica, and Witches, and he'd known that Magica become Witches like Pacifica had said, and he'd known Mabel was a Magica the second he met her.

And he'd kept it a secret from them, from her and when he tried to tell her the truth he just made her upset.

He'd been 'distancing' himself from Mabel from the start because he already knew she'd be right here one night.

He'd stressed the importance of their experiment when Grunkle Stan had dragged him upstairs to insist that Mabel needed him. He might not have chosen to stick with the experiment if Ford had let him go.

In the span of a moment Dipper's entire view of Stanford Pines was shattered.

For only that moment, something pushed its way past the numb fog. Something hot and cold at the same time dancing on the tip of his tongue. Something cruel and horrid and a part of his fracturing mind was surprised that he was able to feel something like this toward someone he cared about (once cared about?)

For only that moment there was nothing but pure rage clouding his head and boiling in his gut.

For just a moment he'd truly hated him.

For just a moment he let himself believe that he was just another threat that tried taking his sister away from him. But this time had succeeded.

It was immature. It was stupid. Ford didn't cause this as much as anyone else did. If Magica always
either die in fights or run out of Magic, he knew logically, that sooner or later this would have happened. It wasn't his fault, it wasn't Ford's fault, it was inevitable.

But that stupid, base, primal part of him; the part whose first hazy memories were of a smiling, rosy cheeked girl pressing a stuffed dinosaur into his face, loud proclamations of 'giving Reptar a kiss' ringing in its ears. The part that always would split the last cookie in half, and when it didn't break evenly, give up the bigger piece to her. The part that had decided to take the electric razor he'd smuggled into the second grade for laughs and make what was shaping up to be a terrible picture day hilarious and memorable. The part that always made sure she was out of danger and take her by the hand to lead her away from monsters.

The part of Dipper that was a brother before he was anything else.

The part that was feeling her loss on such an intimate level he could barely breathe when he let it have control.

That part absolutely hated Stanford.

He didn't speak on it. He didn't need to.

He wasn't sure what had happened, if he'd started glaring, or shifted his stance, he didn't feel like he'd moved, but Stanford still winced and took a step back.

“...I understand.” He said eventually, a sort of sad but resigned smile on his face. “Honestly, I wouldn't forgive me either.” He folded his arms behind his back. “Just... Just know, it wasn't out of malice. I was trying to help. I really was. And I am truly sorry.” He took a deep breath before straightening his back and turning to leave.

“I won't be up here again if you don't want me to.”

He descended the staircase, and was gone.

And then there was just Dipper.

Waddles was buried in her pile of sweaters, as far as that pig was concerned, the thing on the bed didn't smell like Mabel anymore, so it wasn't.

Slowly, with the relaxing of his hand, hers slipped from his grip.

It fell down lifelessly to the side of the bed. Her nails were already starting to pale again. Where on Earth could they put her before someone gathered the strength to call whoever would take a dead body?

What was he going to tell their parents?

Whatever numb strength had kept him standing for so long finally wore off. His knees began to shake, his hands were trembling, just as the sun was beginning to rise, he fell to the ground. He was looking up at her now.

From this angle he could almost trick himself into ignoring how utterly still she was.

Her eyes, the same shade as his, never going to give him the wide eyed puppydog stare he hated ever again, she was never going to burst into song spontaneously or make weird noises for no reason again. She was never going to get infatuated with the weirdest (and sometimes worst) boys to ever cross her eyesight again.
No more knitting needles clacking through the air at a steady, calming rhythm.

No more stickers.

No more scrapbooks or arts and crafts.

No more Mabel.

For twelve, nearly thirteen years (nearly thirteen, they had gotten so close to being able to really grow up together) He'd been a brother. He'd been a twin.

And the sun was rising on his first day of being an only child.

Finally, finally, he felt something lodge in the back of his throat. The sting in the back of his eyes and the hitch in his breath.

Dipper looked upwards, threw his head back as if to ask the heavens why this had to be, and let the first sobs begin to rupture from his throat.

There were so many things he'd admit to not knowing, things he'd want to find out things he thought better left buried. But of all the things he didn't know, he knew one thing was absolutely certain.

Nothing would ever be okay again.

Cold

Cold

Cold

She was so cold.

Nothing felt right. She felt too small. She felt too light. She felt too alone.

She needed to fix these things. If she were going to live she needed to fix these things.

First, she needed to grow.

Her energy swarmed and expanded around her, making her bigger and bigger, and when the tiny purple and yellow thing brought the brown and black thing away from her it was made all the easier.

The bigger she got the heavier she got. Her bottom and the tips of her appendages weighing down and anchoring her to the floor. She slumped under the wight at first, it was what she wanted, but it was hard to get used to.

Eventually, once she'd gotten used to the weight, and the new size, she stood up straight, appendages with their shiny knew ends raised toward the air as the walls of her new home began to build around her.

She felt better, but she wasn't complete yet.
She was still too alone.

A hunk of one of her walls chipped away and fell in front of her. She felt excitement curl in her core as she began to hack at the hunk of wall with her appendages.

She'll make friends, and anyone from the outside could come to her too.

She'd just need to be patient.
Chapter 11- Once upon a time

Chapter Summary

“Pacifica?” She paused in the doorway.

“Yeah?”

“I will fix this. For Mabel mostly, but for you too.”

She felt the ghost of a smile quirk her lips but she smothered it before it could turn into something stupid like hope.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She was sitting in the back of one of her families limos, staring idly out the window, hand on her cheek.

People’s eyes would catch on the limousine in the big city, but only briefly before they bustled away in their own lives and adventures. It wasn't often that they'd holiday to big Cities like San Francisco, her father more preferred seclusion through things like trips to Hawaii or Alaska than places where, if someone saw their obvious wealth they'd shrug and just move on with life.

A sea of faceless people as they bustled around the business district from point A to point B, from the subways or the sidewalks or a million other modes of transportation, she didn't pay attention to any of them.

She twirled a lock of her hair, shiny and black as night, around her finger as her green eyes scanned over the crowds with a impassive air.

At her side, excited and happy in their seats, were her friends.

Dipper had a camera in hand, snapping a million pictures out the other window, Avery and Waverly splitting a root beer, Waverly on twitter and Avery writing more of that novel she was working on. Mabel was leaned up against her shoulder, looking out the same window she was, but eyes full of wonder and waving at anyone who seemed to catch her eye. Grenda and Candy (was it Candy? She'd never gotten the confirmation) where excitedly chattering between eachother on where they should go first, Beach Blanket Babylon, or Fisherman's Wharf.

The cab of the limo was warm, but not unpleasantly, there wasn't the sound of a brass bell to be found, and even if she wasn't speaking and taking up attention at the moment, she was there, and She was just as important to the group as anyone else.

She closed her eyes and smiled. For a moment, she could feel it. She was happy.

When she turned away from the window, to look at her friends directly and ask them what they wanted to do now that they were in the city, she noticed something strange.

In the moment that she turned, all conversation died, Dipper had put down his camera, Avery had
closed her laptop, Mabel straightened in her seat.

Everyone was staring at her. Six sets of eyes, three brown, one black, one hazel and one dark blue, burning into her.

“What?”

Soundlessly, Dipper pointed out the window, and Pacifica realized they had stopped.

Curious, and more than a little worried, she turned to look out the window, and took in a tall girl wearing a yellow frilly dress. She had her hair in a messy braid, and a shining yellow gem glowing on her bicep. In her right arm she had a harpoon loosely gripped in her hand.

Pacifica recognized her.

“Natalie?”

The older Magica was staring at her, amber eyes glinting strangely in the sunlight. Her brows were furrowed, and without her say so, the door opened, and she was forcibly shoved from the car.

Now she was sprawled on the street, looking at a ghost.

Natalie was staring at her, in that same, distant way that everyone in the limo had been.

“Runt.” she hummed, in that same weird way she'd called Pacifica before. “You killed me.”

Her eyes widened a bit, but within the span it took her to blink in surprise Natalie was changed.

Her outfit was black, with strange copper gears locked into each other and turning at various speeds. When she opened her mouth next a sour smelling cloud of black smoke tumbled from her jaw.

She knew what she was doing. She was Amalthea, the first Witch she'd ever fought.

“Why?” it hissed out in its shrill creaks and squeals. “Why? We are the same. We are sisters.”

The limo door opened behind her, and Pacifica's gut froze over.

All of them, her friends.

They had formed a circle around her, but... but they weren't really themselves.

She could see Avery and Waverly on either side of Natalie.

Avery's short hair had grown down to her feet, her longer bangs covering her face, there was a putrid smelling flower crown along the top of her head, she was wearing a raggedy muted green dress, sleeves going long past her hands. Olga, the garden witch.

Waverly's fluffy black hair, normally so carefully pulled back in a stylish Afro, was pinned back into near nonexistence, hidden by a garish yellow bonnet, pink flowers on her face covering everything from her chin up to the bottoms of her eyelids. She was wearing a teal blue dress that puffed out like an umbrella and long yellow sleeves. The tea Party Witch, Candeloro.

Her knees felt weak under her, and she didn't even need to glance to her sides to know who was beside her.
Grenda’s entire body, from her vantage point at least, seemed to be covered in mirrors and fancy gilding, casting her reflection back at her at a million different and unflattering angles. Anita, the mimic Witch.

Candy's petite body seemed to be covered head to toe in multicolored ribbons, like some sort of technicolor mummy. Her long black hair pitched over herself, like her entire head was on backwards. That disturbing image was thanks to the first time she'd gotten seriously hurt on a hunt. That was Monique, the dollhouse Witch.

And she knew if she turned around fully the twins would be right behind her. She knew, she knew that if she deigned to turn to face them they'd be the worst.

But she also knew if she didn't, if she ran now, let their images be unknown, it'd follow her until the end of her days. Until her Soul Gem shattered or corrupted she would be wondering what forms they would have taunted her with.

So she took a deep breath, wondered idly what on Earth she'd done to warrant such a punishment, and turned to face them both.

Only Dipper was behind her.

He was still sitting inside the car, his legs couldn't support him. It seemed like they'd been replaced with a technicolor fish's tail. He was wearing a shiny silver set of armor, and holding a sword in his hand like a scepter.

“Oktavia, the music Witch.” She mumbled aloud. Oktavia, the Witch she'd first fought alongside Mabel. He wasn't wearing the helmet, that was the only reason she could tell it was him and not her. But he smiled at her, he smiled with grim, dead eyes and too many teeth.

“Why did you kill us Pacifica?” He responded, his words more an accusation than a question, a sort of light, near chuckle in his voice that made the hairs on the back of her neck stand up.

As she watched with more than a little unease, his hair was changing colors, a bright blue replacing the ceder brown, his eyes glowing eerily in the dim light.

Dipper's head tilted to the side, skin of his neck catching on the seam of the armor, before he gestured with his sword, nearly cutting into Pacifica's head at that, and pointed to something behind her.

“You killed all of them. And either they'll have their revenge on you, or you'll join them.” The manic, nearly unhinged grin dropped almost immediately, a sort of passive disdain filling his features.

“Just like my sister did.”

“Hi Pazzy.” Pacifica's back straightened, ice quickly clinging to her gut and enclosing into her rib cage. The voice was a whisper, barely audible, but she could recognize it.

This time when she turned, it wasn’t of her own accord, it didn't even feel like she’d moved, more like the entire world shifted to turn her around and face her.

Mabel was just as she’d been when Pacifica saw her last. Smile bright and sweater black with a pretty red rose on it.

Wait... no... she'd been.. in the limo with them... wasn't she?
Her skin was purple, eyes sunk deep into her head, fingernails pale and hair waxy and fake. It looked like someone had replaced her body with a plastic skeleton with cheap, discolored wax stretched over her.

She was holding her Soul gem in her hand, black as night.

“You can come with me if you wanna.” She smiled, looking up at her over the dark, nearly void-like, energy swirling around her, removing all the light from the world and the color from the people.

“Or you can kill me too if you want. Besides...” She closed her eyes when she chuckled, and Pacifica was reminded, even more horribly, of a corpse.

“You killed so many girls just like us anyway. What's one more?”

Pacifica awoke with a start. Her heart wasn't picking up, her breathing wasn't choppy, but she was terrified all the same.

It was rare that she remembered dreams in their entirety, but this one...

It was always the nightmares you could remember vividly wasn't it?

It was a weirdly long dream really... well... not the one she'd woken up from, but the one before.

The one where she had to drag Mabel's body back to the Mystery Shack. Where she'd spent much more time crying than not. When her subconscious decided to make things even worse for her as a Magica than before and make her kind turn into witches.

It was a weird theme for her dreams to latch onto... and the first one felt really real too.

Everything about it, the warmth from Wendy's over shirt, and the smell on the inside of the van, the look on Mr. Pines' face when he'd directed Robbie as to where Mabel's room was. That weird, unsteady breathing that was nearly wheezing coming out of Dipper, the distant, panicked look, on other Mr. Pines' face, like he'd realized he was horribly wrong about something.

She had to give her subconscious props, it really felt real. She even felt that kind of deep exhaustion now, the kind that happens after you've cried for so long and fell asleep.

Maybe she had been crying in her sleep?

If the sun in her room was anything to go by, it was just a little before eleven; she stretched her arms. Hopefully Mabel wasn't actually as low on magic as she'd been in that nightmare, so she'd be able to help her out on a hunt. Witches had been a little on the scarce side lately, so they should probably split their earnings pretty evenly.

When she started to move to pull off her nightgown, she noticed a speck of green on her lavender silk sheets.

That hadn't been there before, had it?

More curious than anything else, she approached the bed, and reached for it.

A flannel shirt, green and far too big for her.

It looked just like...
Something froze over in her stomach.

No... No... no that had to be a dream. It didn't make sense for it to be real.

It couldn't have been real.

Just because she could remember Wendy finally letting a few tears fall and her shoulders shaking with small, silent sobs. Just because she could remember the teen buttoning the first two buttons on her over shirt around Pacifica, and claiming that she could keep it, that didn't mean it was real, did it?

She could remember Robbie Valentino, pale but weirdly serene, hands shaking only a little bit as he gestured for her to follow him.

The utter silence in the van as he dropped everyone off stop by stop, the Tall teen and the Purple haired teen, Tambry wasn't it? Lived next door to each other, the teen with the tattoos lived next to the big guy, and Robbie had shouted through the window that he'd bring the van back after he dropped her off. Wendy brusquely scrubbing at her eyes and rubbing her shoulders against the night chill as she stumbled into her house.

The sun hadn't been even close to coming up by the time Robbie drove up to the gates of her house. Pacifica had crawled out of the passengers seat and offered to wash his hoodie for him.

He'd handed it over with a shudder and drove off into the darkness.

Her parents had been furious, but too tired to punish her, she'd been sent to bed and the hoodie had been washed.

She'd kept Wendy's flannel with her when she'd decided to sleep.

…She could remember that entire day

That... that didn't mean it had happened. It was just a really detailed, really vivid dream!

She didn't...

She didn't have to drag her friend's dead body through the forest.

Mabel isn't dead.

Mabel didn't become a Witch.

It couldn't have been real.

She... she couldn't deny it.

She dropped to her knees, already feeling weak, Wendy's shirt clutched to her chest.

She felt like all of the tears in her body had been wrung out, her gut ached from sobbing for so long last night.

So she could only sit there and tremble, images from last night, images her mind had already carefully separated from her actual dream, played back with a sort of clarity she wished she didn't have.

Her phone alarm began to ring somewhere behind her, but she didn't move to turn it off, It wasn't
until one of the maids came in to ask her if she was alright before she snapped out of her little silent spell.

Pacifica took a deep breath, and shakily got to her feet.

She could feel something in the back of her head pushing its way to the surface, something firm and determined.

It was stupid and minute and probably will end up doing nothing but hurt her even more.

But she needed to go back to the Mystery shack.

She asked, and the maid, Annette, helped her to her closet; She gave her opinion when asked about what she should wear.

The hoodie she'd worn last time, the pretty little designer royal blue one, was unfortunately ruined when Grenda had spilled nacho cheese onto the sleeve right before the big reveal about Ducktective's secret brother (bleh, what a cop out) And she didn't want to just wear that winter coat and headscarf thing again, it was way too hot out for that.

Her hands were trembling when she lifted up the little white blouse, cream cardigan over the buttoned green flannel and underneath a plaid skirt.

She was always fond of clothes that didn't fit just right back then, even though she'd grown a decent amount since she was eleven, it actually made the outfit fit her better than it used to.

She only glanced at herself once in the mirror, she looked demure, sad and quiet.

Even if it were just for today she would reclaim that part of her. It was one thing to ignore the voice she'd wished into existence, one thing to reclaim one or two nervous motions, but this was something else entirely.

Today she was dressing like Pacifica the eleven year old. The girl that nobody ever paid any attention to before she was ever approached by the white fox creature of horrid destiny.

“Bill, show yourself, I know you're there.”

Silence.

“Bill this isn't funny, you said it yourself. She needs to be alive.”

The bright glow of a morning nearing noon filtered through the tiny window and set everything to a warm glow.

He was sweating a bit under the scratchy warm sweater, he probably should take it off if he didn't want to give himself heatstroke.

Hah, a good joke even when he was the only one to hear it.

“Bill? Don't tell me you decided to pick new people to harass just because of this. I'm sure we can make a deal and you can give me Mabel back.”

…

…
“Bill, come on, I'm desperate here.”

Mabel's hand was stiff and the only heat on it was coming from the sun and his own hand. Her skin had turned lavender.

“...Kyubey?”

A shadow cast in the window was the only alert he got.

And he should have felt such rage at it. A violent, horrible, animistic rage at the damned creature.

But when you spend countless hours crying into the side of the bed, a sleeve of a sweater, and the open air, it's hard to get yourself riled up again so soon.

“You said once boys' suppression of emotions make their magic go all screwy, and you said I'm an anomaly among boys. Maybe it's because we're twins. That... that has to count for something doesn't it? I mean we don't have any of that 'twin telepathy' stuff, but that doesn't mean anything, right?”

The shadow twitched, the fluffy tail taking up most of the silhouette moving this way and that.

“I talked to Bill Cipher about you once, you gotta know who he is, and he said that if I got emotionally unstable enough I could work for one of your stupid contracts.”

It said nothing, just let him puzzle over things in his head.

“I certainly feel emotionally unstable. So for my wish, can you make Mabel human again? Really human, so she won't only come back, but she won't have to worry about becoming a... a witch... ever again.”

The shadow was gone.

“Was that too greedy? I'm not powerful enough for that kinda wish am I? I can't ensure protection like she can... could.”

Silence.

“Can I wish to turn back time so I can stop her from making a contract without the Time Police getting on my butt?”

...

...

“Still too big? I'll think of a better one.”

“Well, aren't you just a cute little bundle of blonde hair!” Pacifica flinched at the loud announcement, raising her shoulders high in what little it could do to shield her face. Wendy's shirt pressed the ruffles of her blouse against her upper arms unpleasantly and the sleeves of her cardigan rubbed against her wrists like static.

The graying waitress cooed down at her and when she meekly ordered five burgers to go, asked with nothing but pleasantness in her tone if she was picking up lunch for her 'little friends'

“Something like that.” She'd offered and slipped one of her credit cards onto the receipt after she'd
been rung up.

Greasy's diner was called that for a reason, but she fought through the revulsion crawling up and down her arms when the box of burgers, the cardboard only a little bit soggy, was placed in her hands.

She thanked the waitress who waved at her cheerily, as she left.

She'd kick up a bit of dirt as she trotted from Greasy's across certain roads of town, thankfully, usually no bigger than a few blocks, until she ended up on Gopher Road.

The walk was quick, thanks in part to her natural speed. Eventually she was on the edge of town and it was a straight, yet long, shot to the mystery shack.

“Who the hell is that?” She flinched at the familiar voice.

“I dunno, but she looks familiar.” She put in a little magical speed in her step, her grip on the bag tightening.

No, no she couldn't be found like this. Not by them. She could handle her parents, she could handle the news reporters...

But not them

Waverly and Avery's footsteps were that kind of fast that made it seem like they weren't trying to catch you, they were just naturally speedy.

She clenched her hands tightly and took a deep breath through her nose. The smell of grease and rapidly cooling burgers assaulted her and made a small shudder crawl up her spine.

As they approached she shifted her grip on the bag, so it was held close to her chest.

The smell was even worse from here, but the top of the bag might hopefully cover her face a bit.

“Wait... holy crap is that..?”

“Pacifica! What are you wearing?!” Avery's appalled shriek made her jump in place.

She shut her eyes and took a deep breath, silently sending a 'why me' to the heavens before turning and dropping the bag back to her side.

Waverly had a brow raised at her in suspicion, hands on her hips and painted red lips pinched to the side.

Avery's arms were folded over her chest, her normally pristine A-line cut mussed from her speedy pursuit.

Pacifica sighed and tried to go for a careless grin, no doubt immediately missing the mark.

“I'm just having a day. Honestly, I just need people to not know who I am today.”

Avery was about to say something again, but Waverly put a hand on the girls shoulder and nodded at Pacifica.

Avery had moved to Gravity Falls pretty recently compared to Waverly. They were two of her dear friends, and Waverly knew how big of a jump she'd taken, whether knowing it was magical or not.
But she couldn't handle being around them right now.

Waverly swung an arm around Avery's shoulders and trotted away, fluffy Afro bouncing with every step.

Pacifica smiled slightly and waved them off as they left.

Her parents were bad, but she had amazing friends.

Her smile dropped at that, eyes going back down to the lukewarm bag of greasy burgers.

She hadn't really talked to them much lately had she? Once she and Mabel had began working together, she'd become Pacifica's go-to pretty quickly. Less secrets.

But she was getting distracted. She had all of the school year to talk to Avery and Waverly.

Pacifica took another deep breath, willing the nerves boiling in her gut to dim.

She started to run down Gopher road, throwing in some Magica Speed with her.

Cheeseburgers can be reheated right? She was sure the damn things had gone far past cold by the time she'd made it to the Mystery Shack.

A bike was chained to a nearby tree and a pickup truck was parked in the lot.

The dirt that was kicked up by her footsteps made tiny clouds as she walked forward, it felt grainy and strange against her knees and upper legs, but she didn't move to brush it away. Wasn't worth the effort.

The Mystery Shack was as it ever was; Nearly derelict and half falling apart in some places, shoddy repair jobs keeping the place standing in others.

The sun flickered through in a show of false cheer and if she didn't know any better it could have just been a normal day.

As it was she felt her gut drop with every step she took toward the tourist trap, well and truly afraid of what she'll find when she finally knocked on the door.

The scratchy wood poked at her knuckles and she had to quickly check herself for Splinters before the door opened.

Wendy looked.. well... pretty bad honestly, but if Avery was any indication, Pacifica was sure she didn't look much better.

“Oh, hey Pacifica.” Wendy stepped aside and gently put a hand on her shoulder to help guide her in.

Pacifica's grip on the bag tightened as she took in the inside.

The warm afternoon light came in through every window as it was supposed to, There were no echoes of yelling from any of the above floors. If it weren't for the pickup outside and Wendy standing in the doorway she'd have thought the place was empty.

“Ohm, I brought food, I assumed nobody was thinking about lunch...” She offered the bag to Wendy, whom smiled wanly and took the bag from her offered hand.
“Not sure if anyone's very hungry, but I'll try and get Soos and Stan, if you can get Dipper and the other Mr. Pines that'd be great...” Wendy bit her bottom lip, carefully setting the bag onto the table in the tiny kitchen before walking back and gesturing toward the stairs. “I'm ah... I know Stan and Soos better, and your Mabel's friend so Dipper'll probably listen to you. He hasn't left the attic except to go to the bathroom and he needs to eat.”

“Think you can handle it?” Pacifica took a deep breath and nodded.

As they ascended the stairs Wendy glanced down at her and snorted out a mirthless laugh.

“Dude how are you not getting heatstroke? You're wearing a coat over my shirt?” Pacifica looked up at her, confused, before she realized that she was indeed, still wearing Wendy's shirt under her cardigan.

Oh, maybe she'd want it back...

“Here...” She quickly unbuttoned her yellow cardigan, and was working on the buttons of Wendy's shirt before the redhead put a hand on her shoulder on the top stair to stop her.

“Nah, I said you could keep it, so you can keep it. Just don't want you passing out or something ya know? Anyway, Dipper's in their room, and the other Mr. Pines is probably in the basement.”

Pacifica nodded and the two parted ways once they passed what Pacifica could only assume was Stan's room.

The stairs at the end of the hall loomed overhead like some sort of horrible omen. Maybe she shouldn't go to Dipper first, maybe she could find whatever door lead to the basement and find the other Mr. Pines (Dr. Pines?) It... it would probably be a lot easier. Last night was annoyingly clear in her mind, including How quickly other Mr. Pines had collapsed in on himself. How he was mumbling things, and from what Pacifica could remember from what Mabel had told her just hours before, he couldn't exactly be feeling guilt-free. But... At least that would mean he could at least try to help her and they could both get Dipper downstairs?

But.. then again he could be so messed up that she needed an extra set if hands with him instead. And she did know Dipper better... if barely.

Besides, she still needed to cast her spell.

The warmed wood creaked with every step as she ascended the staircase. Now that Wendy had mentioned it, she was feeling a little on the extra-warm side. Not enough to warrant removing her cardigan fully, but enough.

The door opened with a creak.

The room... Well... it was almost like the color had vanished. The yellow sunlight streamed in and lit everything in a near glow, the posters and paintings on the walls shone with whatever colors they had in the daylight, the pig, Waddles, was poking his head from a frankly absurd pile of multicolored sweaters.

Color existed in the room, but everything felt washed out, too bright but too faded at once.

Dipper was curled up beside the right side bed, wearing some fuzzy pink Blob she was sure must be one of Mabel's sweaters.

And there Mabel was, laying peacefully on the bed.
There was some kind of blue jewel balanced on her forehead, another right between her ankles.

As Pacifica approached she noticed that, while it had been awhile in summer Oregon heat, Mabel hadn't began to look any worse than she'd been last night.

Her skin still had a near purple look to it, her nails had gone pale and her face looked like it was made of wax, but she was pretty sure dead bodies in heat looked way worse than that. Maybe it was those jewels, keeping her in some kind of 'stays as she is' field?

Pacifica felt a wave of... well a wave of something. It was like a mix of horror and sadness and disgust, she felt it heavy in her gut, weighing her down and making her knees shake under the feeling.

She took a step forward and Dipper startled when a board creaked beneath her.

When he looked up at her it was almost easy to forget how much he detested her, and how she should probably hate him right back.

She'd cried herself dry last night, but it seemed like he simply hadn't stopped. His eyes were red and irritated, his hair was a mess.

And he looked up at Pacifica as if she were here to save the day with some unseen solution that she must have gone through a whole year's worth of fighting and interrogating Witches and Kyubey and other Magi to find.

His eyes were hazy and unfocused, but his expression lit up in a kind of hope that looked a lot more like Denial.

He jumped to scramble out of her way when she approached the bed, She hadn't come here to 'fix' anything. Not really. She just wanted to lighten the load.

“Has anyone called your parents yet?” She gently waved a hand over Mabel's chest, the purple glow from her Soul Gem turning her cheeks a dark violet for a moment, before the warm sunlight took back over. The purple tint to her skin faded, she was still unnaturally pale, her body was still a little on the stiff side when Pacifica tried to curl her fingers into a loose fist. But if the jewel on her forehead had been keeping her okay...

At least she wouldn't have to look gross.

Dipper shook his head. Looking down at her body and up at Pacifica, as though something could happen.

“What about a mortician? I can get my family's personal on it, he's been pretty bored since Loony Aunt Persephone.”

“No.”

Pacifica flinched. She... she had to do this and she couldn't deal with doing this song and dance with Dipper right now.

“Dipper we need to get things in order. You can't just keep her here until the end of the summer and let your parents find out the hard way.”

“I don't need to.” His arms folded tightly, maybe he was trying to look stubborn or angry, but honestly, he just looked like he was trying to comfort himself, especially when he tilted his head
downward to bury his face into the collar of her sweater. “I can fix it.”

It was absurd, useless and stubborn and Pacifica could almost find humor in it.

Maybe it was needlessly gloomy of her, to argue against it, to seal her own fate as well as Mabel's. Dipper was dangling possible salvation infront of her, and she was turning it down immediately.

But honestly, she wasn't an idiot. If there was a way for that to work the Kyubey wouldn't have hidden Witches from them in the first place. They would have straight said it. 'Hey if your soul gem gets too gross and muddy you'll turn into those monsters, but don't worry! Just get some of your friends to do x y and z and you'll turn right back!'

“You can't.” her voice was cold, colder than she used to use, even when the Pines' were her enemies.

“Yes I can.” Dipper folded his arms tightly and glared at her so venomously, emphasized heavily by the red in his eyes, he almost looked crazed.

“What do you expect to do? Throw her pig at the Witch? Show it her scrapbook? Try and make it remember what having a soul was like?” There was the slightest sting in the back of her eyes, not the threat of tears, not really, she didn't feel like she could cry anymore. Her Sadness had passed, her horror, her rage.

Pacifica was tired.

“You don't understand!”

“I think I understand more than anyone else.” he visibly grit his teeth and Pacifica was reminded once more that he really didn't like her.

“No, you don't. I won't let this lie Pacifica. I can't. Mabel is my sister, five lousy minutes younger or not it's still my job to protect her.” He reached forward and clutched at Mabel's forearm, apparently not wanting to struggle with her stiff fingers again.

She could already feel a headache beginning to mount behind her eyes.

“You know, fine. Sure. You can protect her. You'll find a way to fix this.” She agreed without an ounce of conviction. “But you have to eat or you'll pass out before you can think up a solution.” slowly, almost like approaching a wounded animal, she reached forward and gently started to pry his hand free.

“I'm not leaving her, Grunkle Stan can bring food up.”

“You're not gonna get much work done if you're just brainstorming in the same place. Come on, have you even moved since last night? It'll be good for you.”

“I don't care.” She could feel the slightest prick of frustration building. It... it was a familiar feeling, and welcome in the haze of numbness and fear.

“Then what about the others? Your uhm... Grunkle...? Is that what you called him? Or Wendy, or your Servant?”

“Soos.”

“Right, Soos.” She thought it may be prudent to not mention Dr. Pines.
“They were fine before we came along. They'll be fine.” Pacifica closed her eyes and breathed a heavy sigh.

“You know what, I'll make it easier for you. You are coming downstairs to eat if I have to drag you down myself.”

“You can't tell me what to do Pacifica.” That was the wrong thing to say. Her frustration spiked, cleaving a nice hole into the fog that had been surrounding her thoughts.

Quickly, so he could only let go of Mabel's arm in surprise, but not do anything else, she lifted Dipper over her shoulder, similar to how someone in a movie would carry a sack of potatoes or a bag of flour.

“Come on.”

She blithely ignored Dipper's protests as they exited the room, only acknowledging his shouts about not wanting to leave when he became near panicked as she moved to nudge the door closed with her foot.

“She's not going anywhere Dipper. You need to eat.”

“I don't want to.”

“You need to.”

“I don't wanna leave her.”

“You can come right back up here when you're done.”

They were halfway across the second floor, just passing by, what Pacifica could only assume was Stan's room, if the three voices from the inside were confirmed to be Stan, Soos, and Wendy, when Dipper struggled in her grasp again.

“Put me down.”

“Are you gonna run away back to the attic?”

“....No.”

“No.”

“Oh come on Pacifica!”

“Too bad.” They reached the second set of Stairs and Dipper was wriggling around in her grasp to the point where Pacifica was half tempted to just drop him down the rest of the stairs.

Mabel wouldn't appreciate her treating Dipper like that though, So she didn't.

She didn't put Dipper down until they were in the kitchen. Complete with scooting out his chair and pulling a burger from the lukewarm bag to set on a chipped ceramic plate infront of him.

“You don't need to baby me.”

“I do if you're gonna act like one.”

Dipper didn't dignify that with a response and simply slumped down in his chair.
Pacifica heaved a sigh and looked around them.

“How do you get to the basement?” Dipper scoffed as he distastefully began to unwrap his burger.

“Don't tell me he has to be here too?” Pacifica sighed.

“According to Wendy, he hasn't come up since last night either.”

“After what he did to Mabel?” Dipper took a bite of the burger and tried valiantly to not look like he hadn't eaten all day. “He shouldn't be showing his face up here at all.” Pacifica rolled her eyes.

“Since when was your other Great Uncle Kyubey?”

At Dipper's snort Pacifica felt a quick throb in her temple reminding her intimately that she does still have a headache.

“Don't get all pissy Pines. It's... it's inevitable. I've... accepted that. I accepted it and it didn't break me. So you can do it too. Nothing anyone could have done would have stopped it. Just delayed the inevitable. Was what the Other Mr. Pines did pretty friggin' stupid? Yes. Could he have thought of a better way to handle Mabel? Oh yeah. Don't get me wrong mistakes were made. But it's no more his fault than it's mine.”

Dipper angrily took another bite of the Burger. Pacifica noted he refused to meet her eyes.

“Dipper. Look. You said you wanted to find a way to...” she bit back a groan. “Fix' this and from what I can tell, he's the only other brainiac in this household that could do that. If your nerd games were anything to go by then he can at least think outside the box and throw the dang fox demons for a loop.”

Dipper was silent for a while. For a moment she thought he would still stubbornly cling to the blame game, but eventually he lifted a hand and pointed out of the kitchen.

“The gift shop, behind the Vending machine. There used to be a keypad code to type in but we usually leave it unlocked now. Go down the stairs to the elevator and go all the way down.”

Pacifica nodded and turned to leave the room.

“Thanks.”

“Pacifica?” She paused in the doorway, flipping the tail of her braid over her shoulder so she could properly look at him.

“Yeah?”

“I will fix this. For Mabel mostly, but for you too.”

She felt the ghost of a smile quirk her lips but she smothered it before it could turn into something stupid like hope.

“Sure.” She wasn't running away that was crazy talk.

Sure she did reach the vending machine in the gift shop less than a few seconds later, but that was because she was a Fast Magi. She was Fast.

She could hear the creaking wood a few doors down, and the muffled sounds of Wendy, no doubt giving Mr. Pines and Soos some sort of pep talk.
The vending machine pried open with the screech of metal and a hissing noise.

Everything below smelled like... well... a weird mix between ozone, rust, and stale air.

It made her skin crawl, but she had at least actually seen worse in most Witches' mazes.

The elevator rattled and creaked ominously, and she cringed at the feeling of motor oil keeping the hinges from rusting shut.

Eventually the arrow above the elevator door hovered over the three at the end of the dial and the door opened with a metallic 'hiss'.

She'd never been this far below ground. Especially not in the Pines house. She'd never seen this room.

As far as she knew it was normally in this sort of state of decay.

Ugh, she couldn't even lie to herself about something small like this.

Papers were scattered everywhere, what looked like a conspiracy board covered in notes and hand drawings of Soul Gems and Grief Seeds as big as she was tall was leaned against a door. Papers and blueprints were scattered like leftover New Years balloons, taped to the metal walls and monitors, scattered in between what looked like switchboards and old school sonar consoles.

And right in the middle of it all; leaning heavily against a desk with three red books scattered around him, holding a picture frame, and unmoving like he was in some sort of trance, was Dr. Pines.

Pacifica cleared her throat and nearly transformed in surprise when he turned abruptly and reached into his jacket with the hand that was supporting himself on the desk, pulling out a strange triangular gun.

"Who's there?!" he bellowed, swinging his gun around in his right hand, the picture frame still tight in his left hand. "Have you come to take my nephew too?!"

Pacifica shrieked in surprise, darting behind a nearby machine for cover.

There was the sound of shattering glass and she realized a moment too late that she actually had transformed in her fear.

She really needed a better grip on this, it had nearly been a full year now! Why was she so jumpy she could reflexively transform again?

Why did she bother asking that question to herself, she knew the answer.

She was back in her normal clothes (well... her civilian clothes) when she came out of hiding.

The wide eyed, nearly wild look on Dr. Pines' face vanished, instead turning to excited delight.

"You! You're the other Magi girl!" he sheathed his gun with a small 'click' as he strode over to her, getting down on a knee to look her in the eye.

She jolted, only a bit, when he placed his hand on her shoulder, tilting the picture frame to her.

"Your friends with Dipper and Mabel right?"
And there they both were, Dipper smiling in a weird, almost nervous way, and Mabel making a funny face at the camera. Frozen in time in a happy moment. Before he waited all night beside her, and before her body went cold.

She wasn't even wearing her ring in the picture. This was taken before she was even a Magi!

Something bone deep ached in Pacifica's chest. But all the same, she nodded.

“Wonderful! Wonderful!” Dr. Pines carried on, shooting to his feet and darting about the room excitedly. “I got Wendy and Soos to place pure Sapphires on her bed and cast a spell from down here to halt her body's decomposition, just... just to give us time.” He ran his hand through his hair, something he seemed to have done many times this morning and last night, as his hair was truly a mess.

“I've come up with a lot of ideas but without access to Magi magic, nothing has gotten farther than untested prototypes.” before she could even get in a word edgewise, he'd thrust a glass jar with some sort of weird device as a lid, infront of her.

“Now Most Magi I've run into over my travels tend to carry a spare Grief Seed on them for emergencies. Can I trust you're the same, My dear?” When she just stared at him for a moment, trying to figure out what the hell was going on with him, Dr. Pines' expression fell into a weird kind of aggravated scowl, not like he was mad at her, but rather that he'd overlooked something super important.

“No, No, that's wrong, if you had a spare you would have given it to Mabel last night.” He turned away from her, the bottle thrown to the side with a violence that made her jump in place. It shattered against the Conspiracy board against the metal door.

“I have something here than can use the same principle on Magi magic. It'll be simple enough to reverse it when her Grief Seed is found.” He turned to the desk, gently placing the photo down, hand lingering just a little longer than necessary over the frame, before abruptly turning and rifling through a corner full of what... well what honestly looked like a pile of junk to her.

He hummed angrily to himself before he straightened his back and pulled out what looked like a shoe box with some kind of design made of candle wax drips scrawled along the top.

“Here! Now, I'm going to need you to summon something of yours that's pure magic. Let it rest there, and don't feed any extra power into it.”

“What?” She found her voice finally, an incredulous scoff trying to rumble its way from her chest.

“What are you even doing?”

“I don't think explanations are in our best interest right now, My dear. Trust that I know what I'm talking about and do as I say.” Great. She didn't have a chanse in heck at getting Dr. Pines up to eat something if she didn't play along with... whatever it was he was trying to do.

She transformed again with a breif nod and a shower of purple sparks, no time for her fancy 'x' patterns today.

“Fine.” The metal from one of her knives felt heavy in her grip, and tingled oddly when she placed it in the opened shoe box. “But what's a shoe box with a dumb pattern gonna do?”

“Give it a moment.” Dr. Pines knelt down on the floor again, but this time his eyes were firmly on the box. He placed his hands over the top, weaving all twelve(!) fingers together and pressed gently against the wax diagram.
When Dr. Pines opened his mouth next, what came out most certainly wasn't English. Pacifica wasn't even sure if it was human, all hisses and clicks, some sort of rumbling noise low in his chest as he kept going on. What must have been a full minute went by with her standing there, feeling out of place and awkward amongst the Chaos of the basement, and Dr. Pines speaking this strange, near disturbing language.

How was this her life? What the heck happened along the way to make all of this her life?

Eventually, thankfully, the creepy Language(?) ended, and Dr. Pines removed his hands from the box.

“Okay, and you cut your magic off from it, didn't you, my Dear?”

“My name's not 'My Dear', it's Pacifica.” She huffed, before tacking on a quick “but yeah.”

Dr. Pines took a deep breath, smiled up at her crookedly, and mumbled 'Moment of truth' before opening the shoe box.

And there sat her dagger, Platinum blade glinting strangely in the dim light.

Dr. Pines' lips pinched into a firm line, he glanced up at her briefly, as if to check to see if she hadn't been lying to him for some ungodly reason, before closing the lid to look at the design, he lifted the dagger, inspected it, did everything he could possibly do.

At least when he crushed the box with the handle of her blade it came as less of a surprise than the bottle had been.

“Dr. Pines, hey...”

“I know what I'm doing.”

“I'm... sure you do, but how long has it been since you've eaten? I brought some burgers from the diner upstairs.” Dr. Pines looked up at her, and she noticed with a bit of satisfaction, that he sort of got that hypoglycemic look that she herself would sport right after tennis practice at the very mention of food. Unfortunately that was followed by a nervous laugh and a dismissive wave as he got to his feet.

“Oh don't worry about me My Dear...I mean Pacifica.” he amended after her unimpressed glare. “I've been on the brink of starvation hundreds of times I can go for much longer without the need for food becoming pervasive.”

“That's like, considerably more worrying.”

But Dr. Pines wasn't listening to her anymore. He was far too busy looking for something to write on, eventually he simply flipped over a page of one of his, apparently less important, notes, and began sketching on the back of that.

This all felt way above her social ability, she probably shouldn't be doing this, getting someone as one track minded as Dr. Pines seemed to be to take a break felt like it was going to be different than Dipper was.

Primarily because she wouldn't be able to carry him to the elevator.

But, she had to try. If for nothing else, than because she told Wendy she could.
And she owed it to Mabel to try.

She took a deep breath and strode forward a few steps so she was right in front of him and waved a hand in front of his face.

He didn't even blink.

She tugged at the sleeves of his jacket, quietly saying 'Dr. Pines...” over and over. He waved her off like she was some kind of annoying fly.

She huffed, lips pinching to the side as she considered something.

It was maybe a little risky, she didn't know Dr. Pines, so she didn't know how he'd respond to it, but she should try.

As quick as she could, she snatched his glasses from his face and darted into the Elevator.

Dr. Pines gave a shout of surprise, pencil flinging to the side as he'd reflexively reached for his gun briefly. She made sure to stay in a ducking position, only to straighten to pull the lever to bring her up.

“You won't get them back unless you follow me upstairs!”

The door slid shut, cutting off Dr. Pines' response of 'Pacifica! Don't be so childish!' right in the middle of the word 'child'.

She tittered nervously in the dim elevator light, wondering if he was going to do some override crap and she'd have to jump her way to the top of the elevator shaft on her own because he'd sent it back down.

No such thing happened, it was probably too hard to find the right override controls under all the papers and without his glasses. She clutched the cracked frames close to her chest as she darted up the stairs the second the elevator doors opened.

Just in the nick of time too; she'd barely made it out before the door had closed again to go back down.

She darted up the stairs, taking the darn steps two or three at a time and slammed the vending machine door open.

She'd just stolen an old man's glasses to get him to come upstairs. Her Friend's Great Uncle, Dr. Pines, whom had been in other dimensions for 30 years and was working on reversing the process of a Magical Girl turning into a Witch.

This was so absurd. Ridiculous. Absolutely ludicrous.

She felt a giggle bubble up in her throat, a sort of giddy disbelief washing over her.

_How was this her life now? How on Earth could this have been something she could have seen coming when he was Eleven and making a deal with an alien?_

Her laughter came just a little harder from her throat. She was sure everyone in the shack could hear her, and maybe she sounded a little on the unhinged side, but she couldn't... she couldn't stop.

Tears she thought were beyond her just minutes prior pricked at her eyes and eventually rolled down her cheeks. Her knees buckled beneath her, sitting her down on the ground.
She heard the bang of approaching footsteps, from the stairs a few feet to the right, and from the inside of the shack.

She wondered who was coming to get her, probably to ask why the hell she was laughing at such a time.

Who would it be to burst upstairs at the same time as Dr. Pines? Whom was bliiinnddd a a bat.

Another peal of laughter came out so violently she could feel her stomach beginning to ache.

This was so horrible, everything about this day was so terrible and so so ridiculous.

Maybe she wasn't entirely as over the shock as she thought she was...

“Pacifica, for the love of Cosmos what possessed you to-”

“Dude, I swear, if this is some kinda cackling monster, it's not exactly a good t- oh.”

Aaannnd the winner was the Serv-... was Soos.

The hysterical laughter didn't abate, she couldn't stop it if she wanted to.

Her chest hurt, her eyes stung, she couldn't breathe.

But it was all so ridiculous.

She raked a hand through her bangs, wishing now more than ever that when she pulled her hand away they would be inky black once again.

“Woah... uhm... Blonde Rich Girl? ah... Pacifica! Right... uh, dude, do you need to like... I dunno, Breathe?” She cracked an eye open, her vision was blurry, and wobbling from her heaving chest, but she could still Make out Soos' form.

She could barely remember what he normally looked like, dim memories of the dance party oh so long ago and the flickering car light driving home from the Mini Golf course, but she could still see the change.

Soos, he looked older sure, Older than Wendy and her other teen friends, but she'd never expected him to look... well... weary. His eyes weren't irritated, but in the way that his hands were shaking, she could only assume that was from the trick her own mother had taught her, the wet towel to the eyes to get rid of the swelling. The dopey grin of his that she'd seen on the rare few occasions that she was able to interact with him, was nowhere to be present. His shoulders slumped, she... she didn't have to have known him to have known that finding out what had happened had put him out like a candle against a windstorm.

She could see more than feel his hand as he reached over to pat on her back, just letting her get it out.

She was thankful for that. She ran out of tears to cry, she couldn't afford to sit and sob dryly.

All there was left to do was laugh.

Her gaze flickered briefly over to Dr. Pines, and honestly, even without his glasses he'd zeroed in on her perfectly. He looked like he was bearing witness to something horrible and heartbreaking, not just some twelve year old girl laughing uncontrollably about how unfair everything in the entire universe could be to mount such horrible circumstances on the shoulders of kids who couldn't even
drive yet.

Her hands were shaking so hard she wasn't sure how she was able to manage it, but she held her arm up, and offered him his glasses back.

Slowly, as though he weren't trying to startle her, Dr. Pines reached over and took his glasses from her, affixing them back onto his face.

“I... I should probably... Go into the kitchen... for those... burgers...you were offering...” he smiled shakily at her.

Finally, finally, she choked. Her breath came in wrong and her hysteria cut off into a series of deep coughs.

She leaned over her knees, coughing the rest of her breath away, Soos still leaned over to pat at her back. Dr. Pines had vanished into the next room, glancing over his shoulder every so often.

It felt like a timeless eon as she finally got her breath back. Every so often she could hear Soos above her muttering something like 'take your time, Dude' until there was nothing left of her episode beyond the pain in her chest, the ache in her gut, and the tears drying on her cheeks into itchy streaks of skin.

Her voice was gravelly and hoarse when she spoke again.

“T'm sorry for causing such a scene.”

She heard him sigh heavily above her, and before she knew it, she was being lifted under her arms into the air.

“Don't stress about it Dude. I get it. Sometimes things are so bad you can't even cry anymore.” She could have struggled, but there was something about hysterically laughing and then coughing that kind of took a lot of the fight out of you. So she more or less let him place her on his shoulders.

Sometime between her laughing and coughing, she must have transformed back into her civilian clothes, because she could feel her tights catching against the cotton of his shirt.

“And when that happens, and your body is still wantin' to do something it says 'hey, why not laugh?', And it may kinda hurt and if you don't know any better it might look like... super insensitive or something, but it's what your body has 'ta do. So let it happen y'know?”

Pacifica pressed her lips into a fine line, hands resting on top of Soos' baseball cap.

“I guess.”

“I'm goin' through the doorway, watch your head Dude.”

“It's Pacifica.”

“Yup.”

She ducked as low as she could, thankfully that let her pass under the doorway with a few inches of space.

The kitchen seemed to still be the hub for everyone, if the deserted TV room was any indication.

She had no idea what she was supposed to do, if she was supposed to give some kind of pep talk,
or just make sure everyone was eating?

When Soos exited the TV room and into the stairwell, she'd expected him to turn on his heel and march them both into the kitchen, but instead he began to curve down the hallway, leading straight into... well... she supposed 'workshop' was the best word for it. The floors were slicked down with what looked like melted wax, and there was a large table and a couple of chairs in the middle of the room, covered in taxidermy parts.

He placed her down to sit on the edge of the table.

“Uhm, mind telling me why we're not in the kitchen with everyone else?” Soos chuckled to himself and rubbed at the back of his neck.

“Ah, well, dude, Me, Wendy, Dipper N' Stan were talking, kinda family meeting type business, and well... See, You're Mabel's friend! You're a really good friend too Dawg! And like, your opinion is important an' all cuz you're the only other Magical Warrior in Gravity Falls, but like...”

“I'm not family.” She summed up quickly, trying her hardest not to feel too disappointed. She shouldn't be disappointed, she had no right to be. The were the Pines family after all. And Soos and Wendy were the only honorary members there.

She was Mabel's friend, but the invite had never extended to her. It was presumptuous to assume she'd be welcome there.

They were probably only barely tolerating her being in the Shack at all because she brought food.

“Woah, hey, hey, dude, Don't give that look. We're glad you're here, really we are.” Soos leaned down to very specifically put his hands on her shoulders in a way that felt... well.. strange she supposed was the best word. It kind of... felt nice? Reassuring...

Genuine in a way she rarely ever saw.

“We super appreciate how much you wanna help and like...” he cringed “And like take care of her body and stuff...” he nodded at her with a determined sort of set to his shoulders. “I gotta go back in there, but I'll come right back out to get you when we have a decision.”

At the frustrated pinch of Pacifica's lips, Soos gave her a crooked smile and patted her head.

Well... not necessarily 'patted', he more put his hand on her head and moved it back and forth a few times to mess up her hair.

She... She kind of liked the sensation. It felt... it felt nice. Like he was kind of.. 'paling' around with her. Like... even though the situation was horrible and terrible somehow, someway, things were gonna be okay.

She wondered if he had that kind of effect on everyone.

And then she was alone.

She could hear clamor in the kitchen every so often when the arguments got a little louder than normal. But other than that the only noise was what she made.

At some point, a stuffed wildcat with a monkey's head and crow's wings captured her attention.

By the time someone came back in to get her, she was gently holding the little thing in her lap,
gently stroking its fur. She was never allowed to have any pets beyond the three ponies her parents
got her for her equestrian training, it was weird to hold an animal in her lap, stuffed or not.

Dipper jittered unhappily in his seat, his half eaten hamburger lying forgotten on the table. Grunkle
Stan had finished his, though by the listless, yet automatic way he'd been eating, sitting heavily
across the table from Dipper, he could tell Stan had kept himself functional through terrible things
a million times before Dipper was even born. ('Like accidentally throwing your twin into an
interdimensional portal?' his mind unhelpfully supplemented)

Stan, Soos, and Wendy, had arrived just after Pacifica had left for the Basement, simply plucked
their own burgers from the bag, and began to eat.

For awhile Soos had been a wreck. He hadn't cried himself dry just yet, still sniffling occasionally
around bites and his shoulders hadn't stopped shaking. Wendy was falsely chipper in such a way
that Dipper wouldn't have even known she was faking if not for the steely, distant, look in her eye.
Wendy had compartmentalized, and she'd done it quick, and seamlessly.

He'd always envied that in other people.

And Stan... Well...

To tell the truth Grunkle Stan looked older than Dipper ever thought he could look.

Dipper didn't actually know how old Grunkle Stan was in years, he'd never bothered to ask, but he
was old. He had always been old, sure, he was gray and Wrinkly in all the scant few photos he'd
ever seen Stan in long before Mom and Dad had ever thought to Send them both to Gravity Falls
for the summer. He must at least be in the late fifty-somethings, and Sure, he was old enough
where he tried to excuse every single irregularity in his behavior with the fact that he was old.

Grunkle Stan had always been old.

But not like this.

With how drained he was last night Dipper had assumed he had gotten some form of sleep, some
indication that at least someone in this family had. But the wrinkles under his eyes were heavy as
ever. His fez was askew, and so were his glasses, everything had a sort of... throned on look, that he
couldn't describe. Even when considering that Stan was still technically in his underwear.

But it wasn't just that. It was how he was holding himself. Stan normally had pretty poor posture,
constantly relaxed and willing to vegetate, only to square his shoulders and appear in shape for the
sake of customers (or fighting a Zombie hoard) But still, Dipper had never seen him look so tired
before. He'd winced as he walked in and sat heavily in the seat across the table from Dipper. Like,
just seeing him down here, all alone in the kitchen, gave him physical pain.

He'd reached across the table and patted Dipper on the head briefly, in a way that was far too heavy
to be condescending.

That had been when Dipper put his hamburger down, he suddenly wasn't very hungry anymore.

Stan hadn't said a word the whole time.

He'd never been one to believe in the phrase 'silence speaks louder than words' but it seemed like
he was going to retract that statement if this kept up.
Anyone who maybe was less likely to notice what he did may have seen Stan's non reactions as some sort of impassivity, but Dipper wasn't anyone.

There were just some things that words couldn't convey.

And that's what had been the norm; the dead silence had felt, almost on the suffocating side, Dipper could only pick at the sleeve of Mabel's sweater, trying hard both to keep himself busy, and not ruin the yarn.

When the laughter started none of them had been prepared. Dipper had to barely bite down a scream, teeth clenching down into the neckline of her sweater.

Stan had jumped out of his seat so fast he'd knocked his chair over, immediately darting over to Dipper and moving into a protective stance. It would have been moving if Dipper hadn't known the reason.

After a brief moment of validation, looking at eachother to make sure everyone was hearing the same thing, there was a quick debate on who would be the one to check things out.

Wendy had volunteered at first, but Soos almost immediately placed his hand on her shoulder and shook his head in that uncannily grave way that only Soos could pull off.

“Dude, you gotta stay here. Keep a nice balance on the mood in the room. Dipper's all neurotic and twitchy and Mr. Pines is barely movin'. Keep things in equilibrium ya know?”

Wendy had sighed, but she didn't fight him on the matter, she went back to leaning against the refrigerator and finished the rest of her burger in one bite. Stan returned to his spot, righted his chair, and sat back down.

Within a minute there was the sound of heavily approaching footsteps, right about when the hysterical laughter peeled of into a series if heavy coughs.

Great Uncle Ford stuck out like a sore thumb in the doorway of the kitchen. For just a moment Dipper could feel the white hot rage he remembered all too clearly from the night before.

He tamped it down with a force he was surprised he still had.

It was easy to blame Great Uncle Ford, easy, but unfair. In the end Pacifica was right. It wasn't his fault any more than it was anyone else's.

It felt like swallowing gross grape medicine that didn't taste like grape at all to admit it to himself. Not only his mistake in scapegoating his former idol, but also admitting that Pacifica Northwest knew better than him in any sort of manner.

Ford looked around at them all. He couldn't see Wendy's face from his vantage point, covered by a mass of her hair, but it looked like Grunkle Stan wasn't too happy about it. His outward expression didn't change much, a scowl pinching faintly along his mouth and an unimpressed glare.

Maybe it was that look that gave Ford the bolster he needed to step through the threshold. He puffed his chest up and marched into the room, taking the last burger from the bag.

“I'm on the verge of a breakthrough. If you haven't called their parents yet please don't. I only need the rest of the day, tops.” He was speaking directly to Grunkle Stan at that, whose glare had immediately dropped into something far more hostile than before.
“Sammy is our niece,” he growled, and Dipper couldn't help but wince at the venom he laced his words with. “I'm not going to hold up on telling her that her daughter is dead just to give you some kind of.”

“I'm not asking for much Stan. I just need the rest of the day, and then it'll all be moot! Look, if all else fails...” He took a deep breath. “If all else fails I'm willing to make a deal with something I would rather avoid.”

“You mean Bill?” Dipper finally spoke up. Stan looked over at him, raised a brow in a kind of way that he could tell meant he'd briefly forgotten that Dipper was there.

Ford's eyes widened in undisclosed horror.

“You've encountered him?”

Dipper nodded and turned his gave back to the sleeve he'd been picking at.

“He tried to invade Grunkle Stan's mind once,” He ignored Stan loudly denying remembering something even remotely close to that. “Turned me into a Meat Puppet another time when I was trying to find out who you were.” He glanced up briefly at Ford just to watch him flinch. He felt like he deserved to be just a little petty right now. “And I already tried contacting him a few weeks ago to try and break Mabel's contract.”

“Okay, wait, I'm lost here, who is Bill?”

“Yeah, I'm a little out of the loop too.”

Wendy and Stan looked at eachother over Dipper's head with almost bizarrely similar looks of confusion and suspicion. Ford's grip on his burger didn't waver, but he did bite down with a little more force than necessary.

“Bill is... No longer an option, so not worth explaining apparently. I'm ah... I'm assuming that's Mabel's sweater you're wearing?” He didn't meet Dipper's eye, but all the same he caught Dipper's nod. “He's been planning something for a long time now, but things need to be perfectly in place.” Ford closed his eyes and pinched his lips into a fine line.

“If Bill won't answer, especially if you've dealt with him before, then he's possibly putting off what he's been planning until a new full set come into play.” That wasn't all he wanted to say, that was very clearly, not all that was on his mind.

“But that's no longer a priority. Our priority is Mabel.”

He could have responded to that, he really could have. But he wasn't sure if he could have contained himself. More likely than not he would have ended up snorting in response, sneering at about heel-face turns and things.

He could have.

He folded his arms and rested his chin atop of them.

“ Took you long enough to admit to that poindexter.” Stan sneered, crumpling the wrapper of his burger up into a fist.

“Stanley I already told you that-”
“What you 'told me', was that I couldn't even fathom that my twelve year old niece was going through magical puberty. What you didn't tell me was that she could die if something went wrong.” Ford's lips pinched into a thin line as he looked away, not wanting to admit to Stan's stance.

“That's... I didn't intend to-”

“I don't care what ya 'intended' to do Stanford, Ya made things worse for her and 'intentions' only go so far.” Something like challenge sparked in Ford's eye at Stan.

“Well I'm sorry Stanley, I suppose I'm not very good with children, being lost in the multiverse for thirty years might do that to a man!”

“Then maybe you should have considered that before you took one and left the other in the dust because she was some sort of 'lost-””

“Stop.” His voice was flat, he didn't have the energy for much emotion or urgency, but he was at least able to get himself loud enough to call both of their attention.

Mabel once said she was afraid she and him would end up like them.

Well... she got her wish in that way at least.

That was almost funny actually...

“We don't have time for your stupid arguments about nothing.”

“Uh Dipper, maybe you should just let them-” Wendy leaned over to poke at his shoulder, but he waved her off.

“The longer we all spend arguing about stupid things the more likely it'll be that whatever's left of my sister in that Grief Seed dies forever. If we want to even have a chance at getting Mabel back, we need to track her down while she's still in Gravity Falls and we need to get her Grief Seed.”

“Uh, dudes, I'm kinda with Dipper here...” Soos' voice came as a surprise. Dipper actually jumped a little in his seat when he interrupted.

Ford and Stan had at least quieted down, now all eyes were on Soos. He of course, hadn't expected this, eyes darting across all four of them with nothing short of anxiety on his face.

“Soos, How's uhm...” Ford waved a hand in a circle, as though trying to remember something. “Pacifica? Is she alright?”

“Yeah dude.” Soos answered, walking through the doorway and jerking a thumb over his shoulder. “I put her in the Ballroom. Ya know, Stan's exhibit workshop. But yeah, If we wanna save Mabel we gotta get her... Soul gem... or whatever it was that got taken from her back. Then we can think about how to get her back to normal altogether afterward.”

“Okay yeah, I have no idea how any of this is supposed to work. Like, what, we find her... Grief Seed... and remind her that she's Mabel Freaking Pines?” Wendy folded her arms and pinched her lips together annoyedly. “That little chat last night barely filled any gaps in, and uh, thanks for that Other Mr. Pines. Very descriptive, all that...'entropy' stuff... totally explains everything to a fifteen year old who barely made it out of Trig last year.”

“It doesn't matter.” Grunkle Stan answered, not even giving Ford a split second to open his mouth,
let alone get an answer from him. “All the hows and stuff don't matter. Here's what we're doing. Only those... Magi or whatever can beat those... Witch things, right?” At Dipper's quick nod, Stan continued. “So it's simple. We get Blondie in the other room there to take a couple'a us with her while she hunts down Mabel's Witch. Ford probably has to go so he can do... whatever the hell he needs ta do to turn her back. Blondie defeats the Witch, boom, Mabel's Soul Gem or whatever comes out instead'a the Grief Seed. We bring her gem back. We have a niece again.”

“All the hows and stuff don't matter. Here's what we're doing. Only those... Magi or whatever can beat those... Witch things, right?” At Dipper's quick nod, Stan continued. “So it's simple. We get Blondie in the other room there to take a couple'a us with her while she hunts down Mabel's Witch. Ford probably has to go so he can do... whatever the hell he needs ta do to turn her back. Blondie defeats the Witch, boom, Mabel's Soul Gem or whatever comes out instead'a the Grief Seed. We bring her gem back. We have a niece again.”

“Stanley it's not going to be tha...” Ford trailed off, the condescending tone in his voice dropping with an quiet “Wait...” He thought to himself for a while. Tapping his fingers against his thumb as he made mental calculations. “Reversing the magic of a Witch while its Labyrinth is still existent...Well it wouldn't be all focused in one place, its magic spread about to upkeep the labyrinth... it would be weaker when less concentrated... That's... not too bad of an idea Stanley...I need a Pen and paper.” Stanford turned on his heel, brushing past Soos and Wendy as he marched out of the room. “I'll be back!” he called out to the air.

Dipper could feel something building up in his chest as Stan leaned back in his chair, something close to satisfaction on his face.


“So, uh, who's coming with Pacifica then?” Wendy had almost immediately pulled her hatchet from the sheath on her hip, polishing it with a spare cloth.

“I gotta go. I wasn't there when she needed me I have to be there now to pull her back.” Dipper responded immediately. A light thump on the table making him jump. Grunkle Stan had punched the tabletop, but more in the realm of just letting his fist fall to hit the cheap metal.

“I ain't gonna let you go with just my stupid brother as protection. I'm comin' too.” Soos stepped forward to place his hand ontop of Stan's.

“I'm coming too dawg. Mabel's my friend and I-I probably should have lent more of a hand around here after she told me y'know? I just assumed that like... civilian friends never do much so there wouldn't be much for me to do...” Wendy huffed angrily, spinning her axe before resheathing it, it was pretty obvious that she was trying to display as much power as she could.

“You think I'm just gonna sit behind? Me and Stan are the strongest fighters here, we can't expect Pacifica to watch out for everyone while Dipper and Other Mr. Pines think their way to victory.” Soos jumped a bit in surprise, and looked no more than a little upset at Wendy when he responded.

“I'm a good fighter Too Wendy! I'm not just all fluff ya know?” He flexed an arm to emphasize his point. Wendy sighed.

“I didn't mean it like that Soos. I know you love Mabel, So do I. But you know I can beat you in a fight.”

“I just don't know why fighting has to be the only thing we have ta be good at ta go! Like dude, if Other Mr. Pines is gonna fix things I don't know why we gotta focus on fighting!”

It was weird to watch Wendy and Soos argue. Sure it was pretty lowkey compared to others, Soos’ non-confrontational attitude keeping Wendy's temper form boiling over, it was practically cordial compared to other things.

“I just mean there's gonna be... whatever the hell there is in Witches mazes, we have to be prepared to fight to get to wherever Other Mr. Pines needs to be to save her! And that's gonna take fighting
not just muscle.”

“Mr. Pines did teach me some boxing! I may not be a super soldier like you but You need some defense too, right?”

“That's enough, the both of you.” Ford interrupted as he strode through the doorway, tapping idly with the tip of one of Mabel's fuzzy pens against a notebook. “You can both go.” Dipper opened his mouth, a veiled insult dancing on the tip of his tongue, was it really that easy to forget that someone had to stay here?

Before he could even take the breath to speak Ford held the notebook under Dipper's nose for him to grab.

“If you're there while I build it, can you operate it?”

Slowly, Dipper grabbed at the paper. He wasn't sure What Ford was getting at, but the system he'd sketched up looked pretty easy to operate.

“Yeah, probably, just chant what you wrote in the margins and flip that lever right?”

“Exactly, the best part of combining magic and technology is a pretty user friendly interphase. I ah... I think I might not be the best person to bring along if we're trying to get Mabel back. I didn't exactly have a good last interaction with her... besides.” he waved dismissively as he started to walk out, gesturing for Dipper to follow him.

“It would be the best way to make it up to her, to stay with her body while the people she loves are with her Soul.”

“She loves you too you know.” he responded as he followed Stanford, curving around a few hallways. “You're family. You made some incredibly stupid mistakes in handling her, but she probably won't hold it against you.” Ford looked back at him with a sort of furrowed brow before shaking his head and sighing.

“I'm sure she would. You two are better people than most. I'd thought that you would never forgive m-”

“I don't. You made a terrible move and you succeeded in virtually killing my sister.” It's funny, now that they were finding solutions, it was easier to say. “And I don't know if I can forgive you for that, but in the end it really is that jerk Kyubey's fault for making the contract with her in the first place. So I can't hold it against you.”

“... That's.. that's still more than I expected.” And then they turned into the doorway.

Pacifica was sitting on the edge of the table, but wow, there was still something about what she was wearing that Dipper still couldn't fully recognize her in. It was weird how... still she looked, how quiet.

Especially with Grunkle Stan's 'Catphon' (it's a Cat Gryphon!) in her lap, and she was petting it like it were some kind of fluffy kitten!

God he's never gong to understand this girl.

“We have a plan, Pacifica. And we'd like you to come down to lab with us to aid in its assembly.”

She raised a brow at them, but silently placed the stuffed monstrosity down and followed them out.
“Why the heck do you need to be in the basement to just call a mortician?” Her lips pinched weirdly when she said the word 'mortician'. And Dipper may kind of detest her sometimes, but he did at least know one thing. Mabel was one of three friends she had, and the only one she made on her own.

She wasn't as close to this as the rest of them, but she did care about Mabel. She cared about the hope of her own salvation, even if she was desperately fighting against it.

“We're not. I only need a few hours to put together a devise that can reverse the magical output of emotional energy, effectively turning a Grief Seed back into a Soul Gem” Pacifica folded her arms together, a sort of pinch in her expression that showed she had this conversation with Ford earlier. “but it'll need to be applied when the Witch's magic is less concentrated. That is, while her Witches' maze is still in affect.” He had to shoot a hand to grab her Shoulder when Pacifica nearly tripped over herself.

“What?! You want me to hunt her down and instead of focusing on Not Dying to do this... whatever the heck you want me to do instead of focus on not dying?!” Dipper tried not to scoff.

“Come on you're good. You know you're good enough to do both.”

“Hunts aren't that easy Dipper, you know that as well as I do.” he was just barely able to hear her muttered addition “Maybe even better than I do.”

Blood staining a pink and white dress and a question about his well being.

“Well then it's a good thing you're not going to go in alone!” Ford responded with a tone that was way too cheery to be real. “I have to say behind to keep an eye on Mabel's body, make sure the enchantment I used to keep her body in stasis will hold, but the others are going to join you. Dipper will work on the technicality and Soos and Wendy and Stan will protect him and try to reach out to Mabel while you focus on fighting the Witch and leading the group.”

Pacifica's shriek was so high and shrill Dipper was surprised she hadn't used any of her magic in it.

“WHAT?!”

“Shh! Jeez, you're gonna alert everyone in the state of what we're doing....” Dipper muttered before Pacifica rounded on him, just steps short of the vending machine.

“You want me to escort, not just Dipper, not just one, but four normal people into a Witches maze with the full expectation of everyone coming out alive?!” he was gesturing so violently as she spoke that She nearly smacked Dipper in the face at least three times even as they were all descending the staircase.

“Wendy, Soos, and Stan are all very strong fighters, and I'd go myself but it wouldn't be wise to tell any of them to stay at the shack and Wait while Mabel needs them. Dipper will learn how to operate what I'm going to make, in this situation my marksmanship, while would be useful, is no more important than Wendy's use of an axe or Stanley's left hook. What's important is we make this devise and we get it running.”

The elevator dinged, and maybe if both Dipper and Pacifica weren't so small the ride would have been a bit cramped, but from the nervous way Pacifica was beginning to tug at her hair, she could have had an entire ballroom's worth of space and she would be uncomfortable.

The lab looked... well... it looked nothing like it did less than a day ago.
Dipper was able to step around hundreds of loose leaf papers and make his way to the desk as Ford copied his idea in the notebook onto a page of blueprint.

“Pacifica will only be needed for the testing portion and Dipper, I'm not going to need you for the next while until I'm working on the runes. Feel free to... play? I suppose?”

Pacifica scoffed and leaned a hand against the wall, Dipper reached for the picture of him and Mabel he knew had been down here.

She looked so happy.

Dipper smiled back at the funny face she was shooting him beyond the image.

He hugged the frame close to himself as he went to sit by Pacifica.

They'd get her back. This would all be like a bad dream by sunrise tomorrow.

“That thing was taken before she was a Magica wasn't it?” She asked him, her eyes were focused on some indeterminate point in the darkness, but he nodded, and if her hum of acceptance meant anything she could still see him in her peripheral.

“I figured as much. You make a contract and... your stance changes. Even if I couldn't see both of her hands I could tell. She looks... lighter.” now that was interesting.

Maybe it was because he was with Mabel all the time afterward, the change was gradual for him, but he'd never noticed. Especially since she'd kept it a secret from him for so long before Soos' date with Melody.

“Really...?”

“Yeah, it's easy to tell.”

“Were you the same?” She turned to look at him at that, her eyes wide and distrustful before she sighed ans sank to the floor beside him.

“You really wanna know?”

“If it'll help me understand what the heck is up with you and why you made friends with Mabel, yeah...”

She sighed and went back to staring off into the darkness, but he could swear he saw the ghost of a smile quirking at her lips.

“Once upon a time there was a little girl...”

Chapter End Notes

This one was surprisingly difficult in comparison to the rest of the series, but I'm rather happy with how it came out.
Chapter 12- What do ya say Mabes? Mystery Twins?

Chapter Summary

“How will I. . .”

“Just keep your eyes on how she moves, You'll find it.” Dipper could see her looking at him in the reflection, and tried to grin back when she smiled grimly. “On three.”

Chapter Notes

Tw for Animal Abuse, if you count killing the shit out of a Kyubey as Animal abuse.

If you do then you really should avoid it, it's graphic. Stop reading at 'His gaze flickered upward, into the darkness, and it had actually taken Pacifica a moment to see it.' and go straight to 'Dipper's voice cut through the fog of red.'

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Now! Lesson 5! Bandaging! Wendy, Not everyone can fight the bare knuckled MANLY WAY! So show these mongrels the best way to wrap your fists during a FIGHT!”

Her dad's voice echoed through her head as she laced the worn bandages up and down her left hand. One along every knuckle and up and down her wrist. Her right she just put on one of her black racing gloves. Her right hand was her axe hand, so she couldn't restrict her movements on that side.

Just a few feet away Stan was pacing anxiously along the length of the gift shop, he had thrown on his suit, claimed it was the most fight adaptable outfit he had, and was clutching his favorite brass knuckles in a white knuckled grip. Slung on his back was an old shotgun, and while Wendy wasn't necessarily a marksman(she favored crossbows herself) it looked to be an old Winchester hunting rifle.

She could see, from her perch sitting atop the register counter, that Soos was in the living room, holding both a spear and a baseball bat with a scrutinizing look. She'd decided to ask while Stan had been retrieving his old boxing bandages, what he was doing, and Soos had answered that he didn't want to go in over-armed. They have to be ready for fighting sure, but they also have to still look like themselves, so, he should only take one.

Pacifica had come up a few hours ago to get some water, it seemed like being the 'tester' was taking a bit more exertion than she'd expected, and on her way down had offered Wendy her shirt back.

She'd turned her down of course, there was something naturally comforting about warm flannel and while Wendy did feel a little off without her trademark, clad in only her lucky gray wolf tank top, she knew Pacifica was already really dubious about all of this, she needed to feel safe more than Wendy did.
Soos was at least right about one thing, over arming themselves would be a bad idea. Maneuverability was key in this whole thing, so she only had her hatchet, nice and snug on her hip like it always was.

The next three hours came and went, the warm afternoon light streamed through the gift shop with an almost gentle glow by the time Other Mr. Pines and Dipper and Pacifica finally rose form the secret stairwell together. Other Mr. Pines grinned up at them all tiredly, Pacifica was loosely holding her Soul gem in one hand and... well she wasn't necessarily smiling, but an energetic purple glow lit her up. Dipper's brow was set, shoulders squared in determination and walking with Purpose.

There were times when Wendy was so proud of him, how far he'd come from the nervous sweaty kid that asked her to borrow the golf cart within the first three days of coming to town, and this was another of them.

She already knew there was pretty much nothing that could stop Dipper when it came to protecting the people he loves, and that goes tenfold when it comes to protecting Mabel. She just kind of had an aura about her that made people want to protect her. And now they had to save her soul.

She pulled her toque a little lower across her brow as Dipper rummaged under the pink sweater he'd been wearing all day, before pulling out his baseball cap from some sort of hidden pocket. Though the sweater still looked somewhat foreign on him, she was glad his hat was going back on. He didn't look the same without it.

Loosely gripped in his other hand was... well it kind of looked like Other Mr. Pines' blaster, but with a bunch of additions, some kind of firing lens, and... what she could only describe as magic runes, carved along the barrel.

There was a silence that hung in the room for a moment, the silent affirmation that they were really doing this. This was happening. Wendy pinched her lips together and took a deep breath through her nose.

They were doing this.

They would get Mabel back, because that's what family does.

If anything, this was going to be one hell of a fight.

Pacifica headed straight for the door, holding her arms up to form an 'X' before flinging her hands back down to her sides. Two streaks of purple light remained in the air, rotating around her faster and faster like an atom, until they closed in on her body and formed her Magica uniform.

“Everyone ready?” she asked.

Dipper reached under the sweater with his free hand and pulled put, of all things, Mabel's Grappling hook, and nodded. Stan crackled his knuckles, Soos tossed the bat somewhere behind him and held his chosen spear loosely. Wendy removed her hatchet from its holster and smirked.

“Ready as we'll ever be.”

“Wait.” Other Mr. Pines raised a hand, and took a deep breath, as though to steel himself over for something. “Stanley, I need to speak with you briefly. It's... very important.”

Other Mr. Pines practically pulled Stan through the TV room and out of sight before he could even tell him where he could stow his 'very important' stuff.
There wasn't any yelling this time, thankfully. When they were back, Stan actually looked a little more solemn than before. He was hiding something under his suit jacket, Wendy could tell that much, she just couldn't figure what it was.

She supposed she'd find out.

Within moments the six of them were on the porch. Other Mr. Pines nodded at the rest of them before glancing back up at the house.

“I suppose I should wait up in the attic with her. She'll be just as you left her.” he assured Dipper, who'd almost immediately tensed at the idea of someone other than him standing vigil over Mabel's body. “Good luck. Have fun Storming the Labyrinth.” he said hollowly, and Wendy chuckled. She wasn't sure if he even knew he was quoting The Princess Bride or if that was just some kind of massive coincidence.

The forest floor crunched beneath her boots as four humans followed behind a Magical Girl.

“Uh, Pacifica, real quick, how are ya even gonna know its Mabel you're finding?” Soos asked about halfway through the journey, Pacifica had removed her Soul gem and was following a small pinprick of light that would dart around the edge of her Soul Gem like a homing beacon.

“She knows.” Dipper responded, voice harsh in a way that even had Wendy a little on edge.

Dipper was on the threshold right now, anyone with eyes could see how viciously he was clinging to this, and while Wendy was sure they could pull it off, there was at least a part of her that was willing to accept it if they failed. Dipper didn't have that; admitting defeat would kill him as easily as anything waiting in that labyrinth.

They all loved Mabel, but she was his in a way that the rest of them couldn't even touch.

They'd only known Mabel for the span of the summer, Dipper had known her his whole life. They all cared but they weren't exactly in Dipper's league.

Pacifica darted him a quick reproachful glare over her shoulder before turning to look at Soos.

"She just formed last night, the Magic trail on her is still pretty strong. That, and the fact that Witches have been super scarce around here lately, I think we're on the right track."

“She knows.” Dipper reaffirmed, bolstering just a bit when Pacifica nodded and said back to him “I know.”

Eventually, after what must have been an hour of walking through the woods, Pacifica stopped in... well what may as well have been the middle of nowhere.

“Uh... Pacifica?” Wendy asked, just a little bit of unease building in her chest when the blonde turned toward a particular tree. Pine Tree.

Of course.

“Blondie, what are we even looking at here? Some kinda secret door nonsense or-” Dipper cut Stan off.

“Just let her work!”

He didn't look even the least bit apologetic when she shot him a glare over her shoulder.
Wendy wasn't anywhere close to understanding just what Pacifica was trying to do when she turned to face the tree. She was holding her little purple Soul Gem in her hands, the glow steadily making itself known past the yellow afternoon light.

Thin streams of... well of what she could only describe as Magic, seeped from around Pacifica, curling around the tree in strange arcs and swirls.

Eventually the light began to form into one big arc about Soos' height. Pacifica reached out and pressed her hand against the glow.

She hissed in surprise when a spike of... well what looked like living shadow or something, started seeping from the cracks in the arc of light. Oozing out of every crack in the bark of the tree and sliding downwards.

In about the same time it took Pacifica to summon all of that light, the living shadow goop had formed into a starburst kind of form.

Wasn't Mabel's Soul gem a Shooting Star?

“It's not gonna be fun in there.” She warned, turning back to the four of them. Her eyes glowed weirdly in the purple light.

“I'm gonna try and take the brunt of things but you guys have to protect each other too. Keep light on your feet and try not to get separated. I'll keep slow so it won't be too hard.”

Wendy took a deep breath and held her hatchet a little higher.

Pacifica went in first, Dipper right on her heels. The went Stan, who had to duck his head a bit, the Soos, who had to turn to the side because he was a little wider.

Wendy took up the rear. She looked around them briefly, to be sure no one and nothing happened to be tailing them.

The portal closed behind her.

And she was assaulted with the smell of craft glue and sugar.

If Dipper could describe his sister's labyrinth, he supposed the best word to do that was... bright.

The floor was doused in rainbow glitter that kicked up in clouds when he walked, the walls seemed to be made of that weird holographic foil paper, like the silvery kind that sparkled with the light, and giant stickers, puffy, fuzzy, and a few googly eyed, dotted the area at random intervals.

Every so often in the entrance room there was a picture of a purple little pincushion-like creature with Witch Runic written underneath in... well in what honestly looked like gel pen.

Wait... he'd seen these kinds of runes before...

He didn't have to stop walking to look at them, thankfully there were enough that he could keep pace perfectly. Now... that was a “va” noise... he thought... and then that was a “si”

“Va... Vaslisa.” he translated with a raised brow.

Pacifica kept walking ahead of him, he knew she heard him. He felt a prick of annoyance that he trampled down.
“Vasilisa?” Wendy asked from the rear of their little caravan.

“Yeah uh... I think that's what it says.”

“What the heck is a Vasilisa?” Stan growled, his eyes were trained on something near the doorway. The doorway itself being what looked like the entrance to a bounce house.

Soos opened his mouth, maybe to reply, but before he could even breathe in there was a sharp horrible buzzing noise in the air.

Dipper flinched, his wrists pressing harshly against his ears as he tried to muffle the sound without any hands to use.

As though summoned by... what must have been its name.. the creature depicted in the pictures bounced forward. The pins in its little purple body moved at odd angles and Dipper knew that whatever kind of weird familiar this was, It wasn't going to attack them.

He didn't know how he knew, but he knew.

Pacifica drew out a throwing knife to fight, and Dipper had to grab at her shoulder to get her to stop.

“hey! What are you-”

“It's not going to attack.”

“And you know that how?”

“Look at it.”

Pacifica grumbled to herself, but she did at least do as he asked of her.

The pin cushion creature turned and bounced into the next room, like it was leading them. The statue like creature beside the door followed it with.. what Pacifica could only consider its head, long black arms dragging along the floor.

“Somebody keep at my heels and keep an eye on this thing.”

Before Dipper could argue that he could easily be the one to be point with her, Stan stepped forward and walked in stride with Pacifica.

Dipper let himself fall behind a bit, so he was nestled between Soos and Wendy.

The two of them... He could get why Stan was being protective, even though they were getting her back the fact of it is that they'd lost Mabel, he didn't want to lose the rest of his family. And Pacifica just really wanted this to work, she was trying so hard not to admit it to herself, but she did.

And Dipper could respect that.

But they had to know he was a fighter too.

“I can protect myself here...”

“Dude, if this place gets crazy you gotta focus on fixing Mabel's soul.” Soos spoke up almost immediately in response, he kept the tip of his spear angled at the hulking familiar beside the door.
The creature didn't follow them or take any swipes. It just stared at them with the strange glass-like boxes on the top of its body that Dipper supposed were its eyes.

The hallway they entered looked a lot like the last room, the walls looked to be made of old paper, stickers of happy shapes, stars and moons and hearts, only punctuated by Polaroids of the purple pincushion familiar, but now there were two other creatures the pincushion was posed with, the hulking black familiar that was guarding the door, and a blue one that honestly looked like a mannequin with empty pits where its eyes should be. The more Dipper looked at the blue one the more his gut felt like it was sinking into his chest.

There was something about it in specific that rubbed him the wrong way.

But either way it seemed like her familiars weren't designed to hurt people.

The Guards probably could, but they probably needed to sense trouble first. And the pincushions seemed to want to lead them through the maze.

“This thing is leading us into a trap.” Evidently, Stan disagreed.

“Why would it do that?” Dipper asked, and honestly, why would it? Mabel wasn't too sneaky, so why would her Witch be any different? Maybe the whole point of her maze was to just bring people to her?

He fought down the small despondent wave at that. What if Mabel just wanted people to be with her? To have 'friends' again?

He had to make this right. He wouldn't let the lonely creature that made such a colorful maze and played such crazy music be alone forever.

He was going to save Mabel.

He could feel the determination harden in his gut all over again as he strode through the hallways, almost immediately catching up to Pacifica and Stan.

“Why else would it not be attackin' us?”

“Maybe that's not how the labyrinth works...” Pacifica responded before Dipper could “I've seen a couple like this before, not exactly, but the principle is the same, the main path leads you right through to the heart, it's when you stray that the traps set off.”

“That doesn't make any sense.” Stan huffed as they came to the end of the long hallway. In front of them was an array of doors, about seven of them, made of different materials. A wooden door, pink yarn curtains, yellow paper (and colored in with what looked like crayon), what looked like leather or rawhide, Something that looked like pure glitter, a multicolored quilt hung from the top of the door frame, And what looked like the entrance to a hobbit hole.

The pincushion creature zipped around the seven doors, a strange chirping noise coming out when it reached every doorway, as thought it were making up its mind about something, before it settled on the far right door, the Hobbit hole.

It turned the hatch with a little beak that seemed to come from nowhere and zipped through the crack in the door.

“Oh for the love of... It just picked what trap it wants ta' use!” Stan gestured toward the door, walking toward the area but stopping before the collection of doors, looking to the other six
apprehensively.

“Blondie... you can magic your way around this place can't ya?”

“Mr. Pines, with all due respect.” Pacifica turned to him and rested a hand on her hip. Dipper cringed, expecting the next blow before it came. “I have been doing this for a year now, and while I'm sure your experience in the world of fighting is extensive, the world of Witches is not.” Okay that wasn't as bad as he was afraid of but He could still see Stan stiffen.

At least, thankfully, She wasn't done yet. “We all want the same thing here Mr. Pines, and we're on the right path, so far that purple little thing hasn't steered us wrong, so let's keep following the path. I promise the second it seems to be leading us into a trap we'll walk off on our own, okay?” As though to emphasize her point, Pacifica strode over to the circular door and stepped through.

Stan went in almost immediately after her, in sort of 'just in case' fervor, he was sure.

Eventually, after carefully looking up and down the hallway, Stan sighed and gestured for the rest of them to follow the two of them.

The hallway, was startlingly different than the rest of the labyrinth so far. It wasn't even a hallway, it was the inside of... well... it looked like the house from that one fairy tale... the one with the old woman and the wooden doll?

What was it... Baba yaga and Vanessa the Brave? No... Valerie? No that wasn't very fairy tale-ish was it? Veronika? It started with a V....

“Baba yaga and....”He murmured to himself, looking around the decrepit shack, In the corner was.. what Dipper could only assume was supposed to be the Wooden doll. It was a beanpole like creature, there was a wooden stand jutting out from the bottom of it like an old wooden soldier, twelve spindly arms that looked almost like the spines of a porcupine jutted out from its body, six on either side, with large glass orbs dotted along its head in a single row.

There were little glowing yellow lights in every orb, following them as they moved like some sort of disgusting pupils.

The pincushion familiar didn't acknowledge it as it zipped through the shack, bouncing along the other side of the house before it lifted what looked like a trap door with its beak.

It was possible the creature couldn't see.

“What was that?” Wendy looked down at him with a raised brow.

“Oh, just... uh, this place looks like the one from the fairy tale... Baba yaga and... Someone the Brave. I keep forgetting the name.”

“Vasilisa.” Pacifica answered. The familiar darted upright and turned its little beak in their direction.

“Why'd you recall the familiar dude?” Soos gripped his spear a bit tighter and moved a bit so put himself a bit before Wendy.

“I didn't, the name of the fairy tale is Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave.” The pincushion familiar, the Vasilisa, bounded over toward them again, waiting patiently for some sort of indication that they'd keep following it.
It was almost like a dog with how it acted.

Pacifica moved forward, sparing only a glance at the eyeball creature, and heading in the direction of the trapdoor.

The Vasilisa began shrieking.

It opened its beak and let out some sort of horrible screeching noise that made Dipper cringe and clap his hands over his ears in attempt to block out the noise.

Thrown into action by its fellow familiar's distress, the Watching Familiar scooted along the floor to stand directly in Pacifica's path. Its twelve quills began to move rapidly, cutting back and fourth like some sort of blades.

Pacifica had drawn her knives, an entire army of them spinning around in two crisscrossing circles around her like a diagram of an atom.

She fell back just a bit, about four knives flying from their positions into the Watcher familiar, it spun its quills and blocked all but one of the knives like it were the easiest thing in this world.

The fourth struck it between two of its many eyes, the lens to the left began to crack and splinter along the side, the right remained intact. It flinched as the knife embedded itself into its head, and suddenly it was no longer blocking her attacks.

The glow in its many glass eyes snuffed out, and suddenly the quills on either of its sides began to spin, like some kind of deadly windmill.

Pacifica hissed before spreading her feet apart and takng a deep breath. She had to have a lungful of air for her magic, so Dipper took a second to shout 'incoming' before clapping his hands over his ears in anticipation.

He hadn't heard Pacifica's sonic scream in some time. And he'd never heard it in such a contained space before. It seemed almost like the floorboards beneath her, more of a strange stone and plastic mix than actually wood, were crumbling under her boots.

The Watching Familiar shuddered and three of its quills broke off from the assault.

The Vasilisa Familiar began to shriek even louder, like trying to compete with Pacifica.

Witches have themes, they always have themes. That's why they can be described in a single adjective. Why Mabel called the armored one that he'd first joined her with the 'Music Witch'

The Fairy tale Witch.

Mabel's was a Fairy tale Witch.

He thought back to the well worn book of fairy tales nestled snugly amongst her hundreds of sweaters and clenched his fist over one of his ears.

They'd bring her home.

Pacifica fired another dozen knives at the familiar, she hadn't stopped her screech, so it didn't have the motor control to block these ones, nine of the knives landed home onto its remaining nine quills, the final three aimed toward its head.

With that, Pacifica began to gasp for breath, her scream ending abruptly and sending the Vasilisa
Familiar flying, the Watcher Familiar looking around blindly.

Dipper noticed that all of its glass 'eyes' had been cracked under the knife assault.

“Hurry!” Was all she gave them the warning of, before she ran toward the trapdoor on the other end of the room. She was practically a purple blur, Dipper was barely taking his first few sprinting steps before she was there and propping open the door.

Wendy cut past him, taking a long swipe at the Watcher familiar with the blade of her axe.

It splintered down the middle and exploded in a burst of wood.

Stan tried to take a swipe at the Vasilisa familiar as he passed, but Dipper could see him miss.

Soos gripped his spear tighter and kept looking behind them as they approached the trap door.

“Come on! Get in!”

Wendy was first to dive in, sliding across the last few feet like a baseball player striking home, she fell through like it was the easiest thing in the world.

Stan was next, Putting a hand on the edge of the door and jumping through as though he were hopping a fence. Pacifica gestured urgently toward him and Soos, pulling up the rear.

“Come on!”

“Dude, I got you.” Before he could question it, Soos had scooped him up in his arms and cannonballed through the entryway. The door slammed shut behind Pacifica, her lodging one of her knives into the crevice, sealing it shut right as he could hear the sound of something impacting the door.

The Vasilisa familiar.

“Well, that was a waste of Time.” Stan huffed as he hauled himself to his feet, brushing some imagined dirt from his shoulder. “That's what ya get for following a monster through the lair of another monster.”

“It was leading us in the right direction.” Pacifica groaned as a few more thuds to the door nearly made it give in. “I don't know what triggered it to attack...”

A few more thuds made the trap door shudder before it finally lay still.

Slowly, Pacifica removed her hands, but there was no surprise Guest in the Vasilisa Familiar.

“I think we're safe.” She said in a hush. Wendy gripped her axe a little tighter, and Dipper took a moment to look around the room they'd fallen into.

It looked like a castle made of ice. They'd fallen onto a bank of snow, and in the far side of the room was what looked like a mirror. Beside it rested another of the black and gold familiars. The walls were lines with Polaroids again, these were mainly of the Watcher familiar of the previous level, and the black one.

“We're not done yet.” Wendy took a deep breath and began to run point, before Pacifica could even brace herself for the sprint across the room she'd cleared the hallway and was standing infront of the mirror.
“I've had it up to here with all of this!” he could hear Wendy's voice bouncing around the walls as Pacifica made her way beside her.

Oh great, now they all had to run to catch up didn't they? He could hear Stan wheezing a bit behind him, and Soos a bit closer huffing and puffing, and really from all the running he'd done today he was feeling a bit lightheaded too. They probably needed some sort of break, but Wendy apparently disagreed.

He glanced only once toward the Polaroids, the Witch's runic scribbled across the bottoms of everyone picture, naming the Familiar's within.

It took a long moment of thought as he caught himself from slipping a good three times before he got the translations in his head.

The red one, the Watcher Familiar, Was called William, and the Black one, the one that was following all of them with its glass eyes right now, was called Kay.

Weren't like 90% of Prince charming characters named William?

And Kay, Kay... where had heard that name?

Wasn't that the Snow Queen?

And the whole thing with the Snow queen was the...

“Get away from the mirror!”

Too late.

The black familiar began to attack.

Wendy was taken by surprise, she was a little off of her game, Pacifica was panting heavily, she probably couldn't do her sonic scream, but she'd started firing knives at the black familiar, the Kay familiar.

The blades of her knives lodged into its back, but it didn't even flinch. It swung its lumbering big arms at the two of them, aiming to hit someone. Dipper grit his teeth and raised Mabel's grappling hook. His aim wasn't as good as his sister's, but he could hit something at the very least.

The shock wave of the grappling hook made his hand tremble, he wished for a moment that he could in put down the Labyrinth Ddestabilizer to steady his hand and be confident that it would still be there when he went to pick it back up.

As it was he stiffened his legs as he watched the shank of the grappling hook rocket across the hall and lodge itself into the Kay familiar.

It stopped its swinging, one of its golden arms still hovering over Wendy's axe.

He had to give this thing credit, it was quick. It was already using the pulley system from the grappling hook to rocket its way over to Dipper before his distraction could have been useful for Wendy.

He gripped the Grappling hook tighter. He already had an idea. He was going to use the handle of the Grappling hook as a sort of impromptu blunt object. He was going to bash at its little glass eyes, and Blind it for Pacifica to help her defeat it.
Grunkle Stan's black coat passed by him in a blur, slamming his fist into the side of the creature's head. A long crack splintered across the left glass 'eye' and it swung one of its arms at Stan.

Soos' spear lodged into its side, the wood beneath began to splinter a bit, and Dipper's brow furrowed just a bit.

Wait... wait a second.

The gold tips on the Kay familiar's arms looked an awful lot like Grunkle Stan's brass knuckles.

It felt almost like the ice from the room began to make its way inside his gut.

The Vasilisa Familiar is purple, it has quills, it shreiks, it can't see.

The William familiar has lots of eyes but six quills on either side. It's ruthless.

The Kay familiar is bulky and black, it protects the rooms that lead to the Witch.

Pacifica shrieked and the Kay familiar, the Stan familiar, trembled. Stan punched it again, and Wendy swung her axe at its head.

It shattered into spikes of wood and the hook from the grappling hook clattered to the ground, slowly climbing its way back to him.

He lowered his hand when he heard a gentle click and felt the hook of the grappling hook latch into place.

“That was a tough one...” Wendy huffed before looking at the mirror again. It took Dipper a few moments to reengage his brain and jog over to join the others by the mirror.

“So what is this the way to the... heart of the labyrinth or somethin’? Stan slumped over to grab ahold of his knees, but he'd been able to choke his question around wheezing breaths.

Soos was checking the tip of his spear, a pensive sort of look on his face. “Wait uh... I'm kinda confused dawg. Shouldn't there be... like way more of these familiar things beyond one each except for the two big ones?” Pacifica took a deep breath and tucked a stand of hair back into her rapidly falling out braid.

“In order: probably. And not for a Witch so young.” She summoned another pair of those knife orbits, though the knives inside were looking less like actual knives and more, vaguely knife shaped bursts of purple magic. “She's just formed, she's still testing things out. Trying to see what works for her and what doesn't.” A sort of wry grin lit up on her face.

“We're experiment one, familiars.” She took a deep breath.

“No more running ahead of eachother. We're close to the Witch's lair now, so what I say goes. Be ready. Who knows what's going to be on the other side of here, it could be an entryway, it could be the main room, either way, stick together, cover Dipper. Dipper?” She looked at him and raised a brow.

“Yeah...” Dipper swallowed hard and nodded. “Yeah, I wait for an opening and then I shoot.”

“Not just that.” Pacifica's gaze shifted back to the mirror. “not just an opening, keep your eyes on her, find her weak spot and aim for there.”

Weak spot? He... he didn't know witches had weak spots, he'd always thought they'd just hit and hit
and hit them until they fell.

“How will I…”

“Just keep your eyes on how she moves, You'll find it.” Dipper could see her looking at him in the reflection, and tried to grin back when she smiled grimly. “On three.”

Dipper’s gaze shifted to the Mirror. From his position in the center of their little diamond formation he could see everyone.

“One”

Soos and Wendy on either side of him, Soos’ spear had a couple of wood fibers clinging to the point that he wasn’t able to shake loose, Wendy's axe arm was bleeding a bit just under her wrist wrapping.

Stan was right behind both him and Pacifica, His fists were brought up into a loose defensive position.

Dipper glanced at his own reflection only briefly.

“Two”

The blue rim of his hat pushed a few stray tufts of hair into his eyes, he looked tired, but he could see something reflected in his stance. There was a burning feeling deep in his chest and he could see it in how he'd squared his shoulders. Mabel's pink shooting star sweater, cheerful and colorful against the pale landscape, glittered happily at him, his shorts barely peeking out from under the hem. Gripped in one hand was Mabel's Grappling hook, a few wispy fibers of wood clinging to the spikes, and in the other lay Mabel's Salvation.

He looked like a strange mix of himself and his sister in the mirror. All he needed was kind of longer hair and rosy cheeks.

He smiled briefly at his reflection.

“Three!”

Pacifica's knives slammed into the mirror, shattering it to reveal the doorway.

And in they ran.

The first thing that Processed in Dipper's mind was the smell of cheap sugar, the Loser Candy kind.

They were running, there was no time for much else beyond what he could pick up as they ran. The ever present glitter on the floor was glowing an almost ominous dark blue, for a long second it was the only illumination in the room, turning Pacifica infront of him a strange shade of Indigo.

Almost all at once the lights went up in the room, big puffy yellow stickers in the shape of stars all began to shine like some sort of ornamental lights.

Dipper had to bite back a wave of gut turning horror.

He... He knew that Witches heavily reflect the Magi they once were sometimes but this...

The whole room wasn't just paper and pictures like the entrance, it was a full blown Scrapbook.
Pictures lined every available surface, some warped and faded by water and wind, but some clear as day. Dozens of pictures of the familiars they'd seen, along with some sort of blue blur he couldn't identify in time. Some were of the surrounding forests, and...

And some he knew were in her real scrapbook. He could feel something crack in his chest when he recognized the first one. Gompers and Waddles' wedding photo, with Stan as their officiate.

There was a sort of heavy base in the air, but it was constantly punctuated by this sort of tinkling noise... almost like a music box.

Pacifica skidded to a stop and held a hand out to stop the rest of them, it was cacophonous and certainly unplanned, but they stopped before anyone ran into each other.

And there she was.

Mabel's Witch.

She seemed... almost fragile from where he stood. She... she was a doll. Quite literally, her Witch was a giant ragdoll.

She looked to be stitched together from... pretty much every color known to man and several known only to mantis shrimp, an odd sort of patchwork that made her no certain color. Honestly for a moment he hadn't even recognized her as a humanoid ragdoll because of the strange stitching.

Her button eyes were black and shiny, a stitched on mouth of shiny silver fabric sewn into an eternal smile, big jagged patches of hot pink were sewn onto where her cheeks would be, and long gnarled yarn hair sprouted from her head in hundreds of colors.

She was sat on what looked like a giant yarn ball, wearing... what he could only describe as a sweater... that was made of the same material, and out of either sleeve was... were those the blades of her axes? She would easily be the size of the water tower if she were standing, but sat upon the yarn ball she was only slightly shorter.

This... This was Mabel's Soul turned into a Grief Seed, Her life force corrupted toward despair. This was his sister.

She sat up straight and crossed one of her hands over her abdomen, bending slightly, as thought greeting them with a bow, and letting out a shriek.

Dipper flinched, but honestly at this point he was getting used to the shrieks. He couldn't understand them, like Magi seemed to be able to, but his ears had at least grown used to the sound.

“Serenity.” Pacifica hissed out between her teeth. Dipper could see Soos tense up at his side.

“Like... Like the uh... The Sailor Moon Princess? Dude...” Soos gripped his spear a bit tighter. “That's messed up Dude...”

Pacifica still had her hand out, still signaling them to remain stopped.

“She's not attacking... She's probably a reactionary Witch. I'll draw her fire, you all stay here and take cover if you have to.” She twisted her head left and right just a touch, probably just enough to look for cover in her periphery.

Dipper barely had the mind to pay attention to Pacifica at all really.
Because right behind Mabel—the Witch—Serenity, was an odd collage. Pictures of her familiars were on the corners of the whole thing. The Kay familiar, the William Familiar, the Vasilisa Familiar, and a Blue Mannequin he was sure they hadn't seen.

Surrounding the center was Pacifica, Soos, Wendy, and Stan, maybe from when they were staring down the mirror, if he could see the glint from Stan's brass knuckles just right.

Dipper wasn't alone in the center of the image though.

Now she was beside him. She had her raggedy arm thrown across his shoulders like an old friend and her button eyes were looking at him.

…

Did Mabel recognize him? If only a little?

He felt an arm grip the back of his shirt (sweater, he was wearing Mabel's sweater still) and pulled him to the side abruptly.

Pacifica had made a run for the Witch and Stan had grabbed him by his scruff to drag him behind.... what looked like a giant spool of thread.

“Can ya get a shot from here?” His Great Uncle's eyes were fierce in the yellow light of the Witches' room. Dipper's mind snapped back to the task at hand and glanced down to the Labyrinth Disruptor in his hand, then over to the Witch.

He had her at more of an angle now, a little more on her left side than her center, but unless her weak spot was on her right side, he'd have a good shot.

“I think so.”

“Good. Stay put.” Stan removed one of his Brass knuckles and began to crack the knuckles of his right fist, he quickly did the same to the left.

“Huh?”

“I said stay put. Make yourself invisible or somethin', They need another set of hands.”

It occurred to him all at once that he hadn't seen Wendy or Soos.

He leaned just a bit to the side, to see around Stan's back, but he moved before he could get more than a glimpse of something blue.

“Take the shot when you can Dipper.” He placed a hand, heavy with brass, on top of Dipper's head briefly, before turning on his heel and running.

“Grunkle Stan!”

The blue blur made itself seen. As Stan's form shrank the further he ran, the more he could see.

Wendy was cornered by two of the William familiars, the spin of her axe was the only thing keeping their quills from tearing into her arms, Soos was playing tug of war for his spear with... what looked like a thick black chord, he couldn't see what it lead to.

Stan was running for Wendy, she seemed to need more help, and Dipper carefully took aim with his grappling hook, luckily the black rope that was trying to take Soos' spear from him was easy
enough to aim for. He kept his dominate eye open and leaned that side of his temple so it was lined up with the grappling hook.

Now he just needed to...

The kickback was normal, the feeling of the rope uncurling from the side, the hollow gunshot like sound, he had this, he was gonna save Soos' spear and then While Pacifica was fighting-

Aannd he missed.

He overshot the grappling hook, it soared right past the black chord and hit the round. Soos jumped in place, but he didn't loose grip of his spear. Quickly Dipper pulled the lever a second time, and the hook rapidly began to return to him.

And, thankfully, it caught onto the chord then.

Dipper grinned a bit at the way the chord began to tug toward him. He pressed the trigger again, reengaging the return pulley.

The chord trembled a bit, before the point of the hook ripped a hole through the chord. Soos stumbled back a bit, but stayed on his feet, and he heard some sort of shreik from just beyond the edge of the spool of thread.

Soos turned toward him and saluted Dipper as the Grappling hook returned to its holster.

“Thanks dawg!” With that he lifted his spear above his head and gave out a war cry “Viva La Familia De Pines!” before running and vanishing from his view.

Dipper smiled slightly before glancing over at Wendy and Stan.

Wendy already had one of the William familiars on the ropes, she'd severed five of its twelve quills and was striking for the 'eyes'. Stan was struggling a little more with his, but that was more for his late start than lack of skill. He'd sent spiderweb-like cracks into its glass eyes, its quills were starting to rotate madly and horribly close to Stan's body.

Dipper aimed the Grappling hook again, this time aiming for the William familiar's left side quills, when he heard the hollow release sound of a grappling hook.

But not Mabel's.

He glanced about, The hand gripping the Labyrinth destabilizer going white at the knuckles as he tried to find the source of the noise.

There was a sort of hissing noise then, giving him no time to dodge or run, he could feel the giant spool of thread crumble beneath the press of his shoulder.

“Oh no you don't dawg!”And now he could see what Soos had been fighting his spear for.

It was the blue mannequin from the picture, but its face wasn't little more than a slightly head shaped mound of... whatever it was made of, its eyes, or at least, what he could only assume were its eyes, sparkled silver in the light, like two very bright stars on the dark blue that was its body.

Dipper forced his eyes from the fight scene, it seemed like he still hadn't been noticed by the familiar squad, even with his hiding spot gone.

He looked back at the Witch, squinting just a little bit in the light of all of the glowing stickers, to
see Pacifica fighting her. She was shooting... what Dipper could only assume was glitter, from the tips of her hair, swinging her head every which way in attempt to hit Pacifica. Pacifica was too fast thankfully, so she was dodging it like she was born to do nothing else.

Of course, if she got even within an inch of too close the Witch, Serenity, Mabel, would swing her axes down into her. Pacifica was able to dark out of the way whenever that happened, and shriek up at her to cover her path, but She wasn't actually fighting back.

She was waiting for something, waiting for him.

Ugh, duh! She was waiting for him!

His gaze was glued to the Witch now. For only a moment of his concentration, the rest of the battle faded away. This was what he was here to do, this may as well be what he was born to do.

He just had to find its weak spot, something he'd know when he saw.

Pacifica spun away to dodge another flash of glitter, and Dipper's eye was drawn toward its left arm.

There was a sort of hesitation to use her left arm, a stitch on the sleeve that shouldn't be. There.

Of course it was.

He almost wanted to laugh at that.

He began to chant, raising the Labyrinth destabilizer aloft, watching as the runes carved into the blaster lit up in a strange orange light. One by one. He closed his non-dominant eye and double checked his aim.

She turned her head and her button eyes bored into him.

A shrieking noise that didn't sound like her filled his ears and a blur of silver and blue filled his vision. He felt a thick chord wrap its way around his chest, pinning his gun arm to his side, and felt his back hit the ground.

When his head knocked against the floor his ears began to ring, and he had to take a second to breathe, eyes shut and world spinning.

When he dared open his eyes to face the creature that had pinned him down, he came face to face with himself.

The blue mannequin familiar was staring him down, silver shine of its eyes making his hurt. And in the dark blue of its body, were constellations. He could see Pegasus on its right shoulder, Orion on its left, Gemini was splayed across its chest, and its arms were lined with the Lazy W and Draco.

And right there, above its eyes, was Ursa major.

The chord that was wrapped around him lead up into its right hand, the left was the head of a mace, a giant steel ball scattered with spikes.

Pacifica let out another shriek and the Mannequin familiar, the Dipper familiar, sat up, its chord still heavy around Dipper's torso, but it aimed its mace at Pacifica and that shot out with the same Grappling hook like chord.
He couldn't see her from here, but if her shocked screech was anything to go by, it had hit her.

“You protect her.” it slipped out before he could stop it, the familiar looked back at him, and, slowly, began to rip its own head open. A strange, jagged hole that was approximately where its mouth should be was Dipper's only warning before the creature shrieked in his face.

His ears were ringing and he couldn't see anyone from here, he may have heard someone say his name but he couldn't be sure.

“You protect her! From people that are gonna hurt her!” he was maybe shouting, he couldn't tell, he may have gone briefly deaf.

And the Witches' name was Serenity.

“You're name's Endymion isn't it?”

The familiar raised its mace arm into the air, he could see a blur of black from the corner of his eye.

He kicked at its knee with his leg, taking just enough from its concentration to wriggle his own Grappling hook hand free.

“You're gonna put a dent in your head with that thing, buddy.” The hook hit its face immediately, it reeled back and he could feel the chord loosen from around his torso just a little bit more.

He'd squirmed from its grip the second Grunkle Stan reached his location, punching the creature in one of its glimmery eyes.

“Don't touch my nephew.” he hissed. “Soos!” He'd grabbed dipper by the sweater collar again, yanking him away just as Soos' spear tore through the air, piercing its way through the Endymion Familiar's chest.

Soos came running up, heavily panting for breath. “Don't try'ta steal another guy's spear, familiar dude, not cool.”

The Endymion familiar's grotesque ripped mouth opened wide, a loud roar of pain echoing through the room. Dipper's ears were still ringing, so really, this was an extra throb of pain straight to his brain that he didn't need.

Slowly, the familiar began to crumble, but the rumblings from the labrynth didn't cease.

“Pacifica! On your left!” Wendy's voice cut through Dipper's ringing world, his gaze immediately locked onto the Witch again.

Wendy was helping Pacifica fight, if only by blocking those splashes of glitter that were tripping Pacifica up. The room must have been cleared of all familiars beyond the Endymion one while it had had Dipper pinned down.

The Witch had swiped to the left, something Pacifica had barely dodged, and flung a splash of glitter at where she'd dodged. Now she and Wendy were a matching set of sparkling girls.

The witch turned her head and stared directly at the three of them. No doubt heeding the call of her blue familiar.

There were strange shrieks coming from her for a moment, almost mournful.
…Like she knew what Endymion was based on.

It was nothing more than a hunch. Just a stupid pipe dream of an idea.

“Mabel!” He shouted, his voice cracking just a little bit at the end. Her buttons glimmered at him strangely.

“Mabel! I know you can hear me, and I think you might remember me!” He stuffed the grappling hook in the secret holster Mabel had sewn into the inside of this sweater as quickly as he could, stuffing the muzzle of the Labyrinth Destabilizer into the waistband of his shorts. He couldn't be seen as a threat.

“Mabel, it's Dipper!” He tried to smile up at her, but it didn't feel right, tight and fake, so he clutched his hands together instead. “Your brother! We're twins!”

“Dipper She's not gonna-” Wendy put a hand on Pacifica's shoulder to quiet her down. The rest of the labrynth had gone silent, even the techno music box melody had stopped playing. Mabel had stood from her yarn ball throne, but slowly, she was lowing herself to sit down into the floor.

“You may not remember being twins, but I think you remember having one. That's why you made the blue familiar right? Its name is Endymion isn't it?” Her head tilted to the side, the stitched silver smile on her face folding in, making her head smaller, but also making it look like she was listening to him. “You made him so he'd protect you, right? So he'd never leave, you invite guests in and show them the way with your familiars, but you make sure they get rid of anyone that may hurt you, and he kills them so you won't get hurt.”

He felt a thump against his shoulder, and turned to see Grunkle Stan's weathered, wrinkly hand, offering him Mabel's scrapbook.

He smiled slightly and took it, flipping through the pages took away a sort of heavy weight he wasn't aware he was carrying.

“See? Here's three Halloweens ago! You'd just watched Sailor Moon and I agreed to let our Costumes be Princess Serenity and Prince Endymion! Sound familiar?” She didn't lean down to inspect the picture. It was possible that she didn't even understand human language anymore, that he was wasting everyone's time and just delaying the inevitable.

“We've always been there for eachother. Or at least until recently, it was my fault really…” She straightened a bit, and he could see Pacifica and Wendy creeping closer, ready to fight even more if she was angered.

“But I want to make things right.” he closed the book and handed it back to Stan, slowly, as to not startle her, he pulled the Labyrinth destabilizer out, passing it to Pacifica behind his back.

“What do ya say Mabes?” He raised a fist. “Mystery twins?”

She lifted one of her hands, looking at the thick silver blades sprouting from the sleeves.

But slowly, far too slowly to be an attack, she reached over to place the very tip of her left axe against his knuckles.

It cut in a bit sure, he could see just the littlest bit of blood welling up from his knuckles, but he couldn't stop grinning. His eyes were stinging a bit, he'd thought he'd cried himself dry this morning, but he was already tearing up.
It made the orange glow from Pacifica's quiet chanting while she charged the gun all the more brilliant.

It made a strange sort of cooing noise, something that started with a 'mmmm' and ended with a hiss, he could only assume it was her attempt at repeating what he said.

A ball of light the size of a cantaloupe shot from the muzzle of the gun, Pacifica was a knife thrower by trade, her marksmanship was amateur at best, but her aim was the best there was.

The orange light tore through the seams on The Witch's left arm, the arm itself went flying to the side, carving a shallow divot into the rest of Dipper's knuckles, But the orange glow circled around a little dot of black. The Witch arched its doll-like back backward and let out a shriek of what sounded like pain.

Stan hoisted Dipper over his shoulder, and for a moment he was about to protest, insist that a dissolving labyrinth really wasn't dangerous, but before he could open his mouth to do just that the room trembled, yellow star stickers falling like deflating new years balloons, the light the labyrinth was dissolving in line with its Mistress' destabilizing.

Pacifica whistled sharply to get their attention, gestured in a 'follow me' type way, and began to lead them toward the door of the main room, the shards of the Endymion familiar, the splinters of the William Familiar's, Splinters of a Kay familiar he hadn't seen fighting, and the left over cotton and quills from the one Vasilisa familiar was right by the door.

The ceiling of the labyrinth came apart just when the last of them came through the doorway.

The World shifted, and suddenly, the five of them were in the forest of Gravity Falls once again.

Dipper blinked his eyes briefly to try and adjust to the late twilight darkness. He rubbed at one of his eyes briefly, and noted distantly that whatever tears he'd had built up were gone.

“Pacifica?” He asked as Grunkle Stan slowly placed him o the ground. “Where is she?”

Pacifica looked around, her puzzled look a little hard to see in the dim light. “I... I don't know... Give me a second.” She transformed back, and it still looked really weird to see her in that cardigan and braid. She opened her hand, her purple Soul Gem glittering brilliantly in the night. “Ah...” She walked a couple of trees down and turned behind it.

It... It was only taking some time because she hadn't actually believed they could do it. Right? This was the foolproof one, the moment of truth, she wouldn't be putting it off unless she hadn't believed they could do it and was in shock.

“Pacifica?” It was Grunkle Stan that asked again, and the flutter of blonde hair from the edge of the tree was all they had before she'd turned back toward them and ran for the center of their little group.

She was crying, but there was no relieved smile or astonished laughter from her.

No...

“Dipper... Mr. Pines...'n Wendy 'n Soos” She reached up with her free hand to cover her mouth. “I am so sorry.” She offered her hand to Dipper, giving everyone a perfect view of the Grief Seed hovering delicately in her hand.
It looked like something had broken in Dipper.

His eyes were firmly on the Grief Seed Pacifica was clutching in her hand, but they were unfocused, dilated in the dark and glassy, the firm set to his shoulders that he'd been carrying with him ever since they'd left the basement with the Labyrinth Destabilizer in hand was gone. He looked like he could collapse from a gentle breeze.

She'd grown used to seeing around the blur of tears when she was seven years old, the tears she could feel climbing down her cheeks now were silent, just two at a time every other blink. She could see everyone else.

It was like someone had hit a pause button on everyone, it was a silence heavy in the air that the only creatures that dared to interrupt were crickets who didn't know any better.

She couldn't make a sound. She had to do this every time didn't she? She had to be the bearer of bad news. She had to go and let herself hope for a stupid second that this would work, and now she had to deliver the bad news again. That was twice within a day.

It was her own fault for hoping.

Wendy was the first to move, She looked down at her axe, and grit her teeth before letting out a grunt of fury and slamming it into a nearby tree, She slammed her axe into the tree trunk over and over, something that sounded like 'it's not fair' coming out with every swing, the mantra only finished when she was about halfway through the trunk. She leaned against the tree trunk, axe hanging lifeless from her hand, shoulders trembling.

Next was Soos, he began to sniffle, his spear clattered to the ground and his hands clapped over his mouth, in what she could only assume was an unsuccessful attempt at stifling his sobbing, confused, lost questions, began to tumble from his mouth.

“But... but the Gun!... And she recognized... and the labrynth...”

“I'm sorry.” she repeated, blinking around a pair of especially big tears as Soos fell to his knees, hands slowly pressing against eachother, now more in prayer than an attempt to stifle his own cries.

Mr. Pines and Dipper remained unmoved. Like Soos and Wendy's reactions were on the other side of soundproof glass. She couldn't see Mr. Pines expression through both the shine from his glasses and his height, but either of his Brass knuckles had fallen from his hands, sitting undisturbed on the pine needle and grass covered ground.

Slowly, as though he were afraid of it, Dipper reached his hands out to take the Grief Seed from her.

Pacifica flattened her hand and let the levitating object slide into Dipper's waiting palms. The gray cage was as dull as any Grief Seed before it, but the inside was what made it unique, the little blotches of black magic, the patterns that discerned one witch from another, were long thin streaks, two of them, chasing eachother around the center of the Grief Seed cage, like a pair of comets orbiting around the same planet. The little star shaped ornament on the top was still clinging to a few fibers of yarn, unwilling to let the last pieces of its labyrinth to fade.

“Hi Mabel.” Mr. Pines fell to his knees at Dipper's quiet greeting, and Frankly, Pacifica wanted to join him for a second. Yesterday she'd heard him, she'd heard him detached and scared and despondent, and determined to do something that couldn't be done.
He sounded so... defeated now. Like this was the end of the story and he had to accept it. The determination that had been carrying them all was proven to be false.

“I guess there’s no other choices anymore.” Stan put a hand on Dipper's shoulder, weather to pull him away from talking to a Grief Seed or just for the presence, she wasn't sure. “We tried, we tried so hard, you have to know that...” Stan had pulled Dipper into an embrace now, spun him around and pulled him against his chest. Dipper hadn't even reacted. He was well and truly in his own world right now.

“Dipper, come on kid, we... we gotta get home. We... we gotta call your parents.” Dipper continued on as though Stan hadn't spoken.

“So please don't be too mad when you wake up.” he wriggled in Stan's grip until he was turned out toward the forest darkness.

“I know what I wanna wish for now.” his gaze flickered upward, into the darkness, and it had actually taken Pacifica a moment to see it.

She’d sprinted to its position, lifting the creature by its scruff and slamming its fuzzy body against a tree.

“You've got a lot of nerve to show up here! Of all times!” Its beady little red eyes shifted toward her, passive smile grating on her very last nerve.

“Who else would get rid of the Grief Seed?” How Dare it?! Let everyone go on their adventure, let everyone have the hope that they'd save Mabel and only show up like a big fat ‘I told you so’ at the end?! She lifted the creature into the air only to slam it against the tree trunk again.

“Someone give me a weapon! I'm not transforming for this piece of garbage!” She thrust open her free hand, reaching uselessly toward everyone. She could see movement from her periphery, Wendy's red hair, and felt the splintered wooden handle of her hatchet being placed into her hand.

A sort of primal pleasure surged through her when she glanced at Wendy as a silent 'thank you' and watched a sneer light up on the redhead's face as her gaze focused onto Kyubey.

Exposure to a Witches' labrynth tends to give others the ability to see all Magica magics. Kyubey included.

“So you're the little monster that tricked Mabel.” She hissed, folding her arms and leaning against another nearby tree. “Don't kill it just yet Pacifica, I want a piece of this thing.”

She nodded and raised the axe high.

“First, For Natalie.” She swung the axe down, aiming the blade for the creature's tale. It swerved out of the way, and Wendy reached over to grab its tail and pull it straight.

“Who's Natalie?”

“She was the Magi who taught me about Soul Gems. She's probably dead now.” She swung the axe against the creature's tail. It sliced through cleanly, a strange sort of red pulp coming from the base of its body. She could only assume that's the gross stuff it was made out of.

“Do the arms next.” Wendy suggested, and Pacifica grinned at her as she grabbed the creature's forepaws, bringing them up against the tree.
“This is for an eleven year old who just wanted to be seen all of her life.” She cut through them, chopping off the hind legs as an extra, adding on a quick “And that's for the fate you stuck her with.”

She shifted her grip on the creature's body, going from the rapidly reddening scruff to the bases of its ears.

“All yours Courderoy.” She held its wriggling, now limbless body, like a sort of prize. Maybe once it was dead she'd regret all of this, consider it excess, consider it cruel, but right now all that mattered was ending this horrible thing’s existence.

All that mattered was avenging the hundreds of girls it and its kind must have escorted straight to death.

Wendy's hand curled around the hatchet, a sort of dark rage in her gaze that Pacifica could feel boiling in her own chest. It was like a cloud of red had settled over the two of them.

“And this is for Mabel.” Wendy hissed, raising her hatchet high into the air. Its body fell to the ground, and Pacifica was all too quick to drop its head. The red goo, far too bright and far too thick to be close to blood, lazily leaked from its body.

Pacifica huffed, a sort of hollow triumph enough to get her to crack a small grin.

“Honestly, what a waste. And for nothing but to quench such violent urges.” An incredulous laugh, more of a bark thank anything, came out of Pacifica in a way that almost scared her.

“I could do this all day.” She hissed at the little white blob in a nearby branch.

The new Kyubey didn't even approach them, she could have grabbed at it if she wanted, or simply taken Wendy's axe back and thrown it at the creature, she should, she already was about to.

Dipper's voice cut through the fog of red.

“Please stop you guys. I wanna talk to it.” Pacifica's gaze snapped to him. He was staring back at her with a look she couldn't describe.

Kyubey took a few steps closer to Dipper, Stan clutched at him even tighter, she still couldn't see his eyes from here, but the streaks of wet clinging to his cheeks had yet to dry and the scowl on his face was more than enough to divine he was glaring.

“Don't. You. Touch. My nephew. You flea bitten magical fucking Kadokhes!” He clutched Dipper even tighter to his chest, pressing the side of his head into his jacket, one of his hands covering Dipper's exposed ear. “Vete a la mierda, Shtik drek! Nem zich a vaneh, pendejo!”

“Grunkle Stan!” Dipper finally pried himself away from Stan, just a bit, just enough to sit up and face Kyubey again. “I can do this.” Only one hand was holding her Grief Seed now.

He took a deep breath, somehow, through all of this, he was still standing, and looked Kyubey in the eye.

“I spoke with Bill Cipher about you, and I know you were at the windowsill.” his voice was shaking, but his eyes were as hard as stone. “He said that your kind do actually make contracts with boys. But only when they're 'emotionally unstable' enough for their emotional magic to work.” Pacifica felt something like ice begin to form in her gut as Dipper laughed bitterly. “Am I 'Emotionally Unstable' enough now?! Because I feel like I can't get any worse!” His free hand
reached up to cling to Stan's arm.

"I know what I want to wish for. All the ones I was trying to make were too big for my soul. But we're twins, and you'd have to wait longer, but you'd get two instead of one."

"No." She found her voice. "Dipper what are you-"

"Absolutely not" Stan cut off, already beginning to stand. "Ford'll find another way Dipper, he'd better, I'm not letting you give up your life for something if we can-"

"But we Can't!" Dipper slid from Stan's grasp, feet hitting the ground and covering the small distance to stand in front of Kyubey. "We can't and you know that don't you. Only a Wish can turn a Grief Seed back into a Soul Gem, right?" Kyubey tilted its head to the side, but it answered.

"That is true. Your guns and containment fields may attempt to stay the problem areas, but falling into Despair is unrecoverable for anything but another contract." Dipper nodded.

Pacifica felt rooted into her spot, she couldn't speak after that, what could she say?

"Dipper, you know what you're doing right?" Wendy spoke up in her place. "If you do this, you've got as much time as Mabel had after she did it, maybe less."

"That's long enough to get us home." Dipper looked to the two of them where they stood, and it was probably Wendy he was smiling at, but some part of Pacifica felt warmed anyway. "Just ah... when that happens, be nice to other Magi okay Pacifica? Tell them the truth from the start." She nodded, unsure of what else she could say to him.

"Okay." Dipper nodded back at her before turning toward Kyubey.

"I wish that this Grief Seed will turn back into the Soul Gem it once was. Fully charged and ready to take its body back." He barely had a moment to finish his sentence when he flinched, gripping his head in pain.

A blue glow began to fill the air.

Chapter End Notes

So right about when I was finishing the Witches' maze I was going to have the end of the chapter be there, but it was way under my word standards, so I broke up the last chapter, first part goes here, second part gets combined with the epilogue into the last chapter.

Stan's swear words, let the records show this was the most fun google search I have ever gone on.

**Yiddish**
- Kadokhes: A worthless person
- Shtik drek: Shithead
- Nem zich a vaneh: Go jump in a lake

**Spanish**
- Vete a la mierda: go to hell
Pendejo: Asshole

EDIT: It has been brought to my attention that my fic was rife with the its/it's error, so I fixed that up, along with any other typos I could find. Thank you anonymous tumblr syntax blogger for informing of this error!
Chapter 13- You are

Chapter Summary

The end of a journey

Chapter Notes

And here we are. This story has been on my mind for a long time now, long before I even started writing it. I looked back on the first image I had of the My Madoka Magica AU, back when it was still called Lost in the Maze and realized that when I finished writing the story yesterday, it was exactly two years after I'd made the first proof of concept image for myself. Sometimes the universe is funny like that.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once upon a time in a place far far away, there was a teenage girl, she was short, and had funny pink hair she would always keep in pigtails.

Her name was Madoka.

Madoka wasn't very special, wasn't very good at a lot of things, but she would always go out of her way to help other people, and in this way she was incredibly special indeed.

One day, she answered a strange call for help, and she and her friend Sayaka were thrown into the world of Magical Girls.

But this world was not as it seemed.

The more time that Madoka spent wondering if she should become a part of this world or not, more and more terrible secrets were surfacing, the Soul Gems, the source of a Magical girls power, were their own souls ripped from their bodies without their knowledge, the Magical Girl territory war that always ensured that noone was your friend there, the truth behind Witches through her friend Sayaka becoming a Witch, and the threat of the most powerful witch to date, Walpurgisnacht, looming on the horizon. But along the way, Madoka learned something even more special about herself. She possessed power, so much power that if she made a contract and became a Magical Girl, she could become a god should she choose.

On the day of Walpurgisnacht only one of her friends was still left to fight, the time traveler Homura. Homura had spent countless years reliving the same month over and over again to try and save the people she cared about from a calamitous fate, but the more times she failed the narrower and narrower the scope got. Eventually, the only person she knew would always make it to Walpurgisnacht night was Madoka, so it was Madoka she would protect. And she had been protecting her the only way she knew would ensure her safety, by keeping her from ever becoming a Magical Girl.

But she realized, along the way, that the more and more times she spent protecting Madoka, and
Madoka being so irrevocably kind, the more and more power was building up in her reset after reset, until she had become far too powerful for the Kyubey to accept a 'no' from.

So on the day of Walpurgisnacht, Homura faced the Witch alone, and Madoka showed up to the battle, desperate to help.

Her wish to Kyubey was to eradicate all Witches before they were ever made.

This formed a completely new world, one where Magical Girls fought creatures called wraiths, and their Soul Gems shattered before they could fall into despair. But Madoka, in order to make her wish come true, became a goddess, and was deleted from this new world entirely.

No one could remember her, except for Homura.

No one else had as many memories in their heads as Homura did. She could never talk to anyone about them, as they wouldn't believe her. No one knew how deeply she'd failed, no one even knew the reason why she was still fighting at all.

She was never of any use to the people she'd sold her soul to protect.

This information ate at her until it drove her mad.

When the time finally came for her life to end, after acting as a pawn in someone else's rebellion against the Kyubey, she'd snapped.

When Madoka, in her long flowing gown and fluffy white wings, reached out to her, Homura stole something from her.

She'd locked them in a reality of her own making, wrestling power for herself and turning the world into a place with no Witches, and no Magical Girls either. She separated everyone from their memories and took the mantle of 'demon' as opposed to Madoka's stance as a goddess.

But her world, much like her mental state, was not stable. Eventually Madoka and her friends regained their memories, but could not take the power away from Homura.

A fourth and final world was created from Madoka's power colliding with Homura's; The old System of Witches and Grief Seeds was used as a sort of judgment hall. While Madoka wished to take all Magical Girls in with her so they could know peace, Homura refused to let go the ones that had fallen to chaos.

Those that fell in honorable battle would go to Madoka, and those whose Grief Seeds were collected by the Kyubey would go to Homura.

Homura would send her Witches to many Magica, test their mettle and how powerful they'd become when they became Witches.

Madoka would try her hardest to bend fate and make Magica run into each other, let them team up and be friends.

The Kyubey kept their secrets, but to tell the truth, what do two immortals really care for such wretched creatures anyway?

For a quick moment, Homura mourned the loss of who would have been a great Witch on her side, seethed for just a moment at the rules of the Kyubey bending enough to allow in their first boy in the longest time, but quickly shrugged it off and moved on with the war.
The pain was incredible. It felt like his head was splitting in two, the extra pulses of pain traveling down the rest of his body like blood from an open wound. Just behind his clenched eyelids he could see the faintest glimmer of light, the color impossible to determine in his pain.

He could feel Stan's grip on his shoulders drop, replaced instead with a hand on his left shoulder to steady him and a hand slowly moving up and down his back, like if he were sick. The air became thick and heavy, it was getting hard to breathe.

His knees were wobbling, he felt himself fall onto the ground, hunched over himself in pain. He could barely hear over the ringing in his ears but he thought maybe Grunkle Stan had called his name. He'd never had a migraine before, headaches sure, but never a migraine, and some part of him was sure that that was what he was dealing with right now.

Slowly, one throb at a time, he could feel the pain beginning to abate. Steadily, pulse of pain after pulse of pain the overall ache began to grow weaker. Soon enough, he could move again. He didn't get back to his feet, he wasn't sure if his legs were strong enough, but he straightened his back, turned his head to the sky, and slowly, slowly began to open his eyes.

He could barely see the rapidly darkening sky around the bright blue supernova going off just a few feet above his head.

He could still feel Mabel's Grief Seed in his hand, the paltry squeeze against his head while he'd been writhing in pain hadn't bent a single spike.

His fingers uncurled around its pewter cage, it began to hover in the air, just a little farther from him than the blue light, his Soul.

The light show, well... it was beautiful. Small streamers of light, like Moses turning the Nile to blood, began to creep from his Soul staining the dark evening air as bright blue as high noon. It didn't take long for the light to find its way to the Grief Seed, wrapping around it like some sort of cocoon. Eventually it was bright enough, from the power of the blue light—His soul—that he couldn't see the outline of the Grief Seed any longer.

"It seems as though your wish has triumphed over the entropy of the universe. That was... not entirely expected." He heard Kyubey somewhere in the distance, but he paid the creature no mind as he opened his hands, watching as the two little bubbles of blue light began to lower in the air. Mabel's Grief Seed fell into his open palms, but his Soul rested onto his head, right on his hairline, at the corner of his forehead.

Dipper closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

When he opened his eyes again the blue light was all but gone, reflexively, as though afraid of somehow being proven wrong, he clenched his fist tightly, obscuring any pink light or black energy that could escape.

It was a long moment before he raised his hand so he could see.

He was wearing... what looked like some sort of light blue long sleeved jacket, with orange fabric along the edges, and stitches that he couldn't figure the color of in this light. He was also wearing those kind of bulky racing gloves, the kind with the big wrist guards, that he thought might also be blue or gray, the wrist guard padding was orange like his sleeves.

He was biding time.
Dipper took a deep breath and uncurled his fingers.

A shiny pink Soul Gem blinked happily up at him.

He wasn't sure if the thing that came out of his mouth was a breathy laugh or a weak sob, but a smile curled it's way up his face, a real one, and it had to be because no one could fake smile as such pure relief coursed through their body.

Mabel. This was Mabel. This was his sister.

He let out a few more of those breathy laugh/sob things. He'd ran out of tears to cry, he'd honestly thought he did, but his sight was going blurry again, Mabel's Soul Gem turning from an exact form to a blurry but bright pink light.

“Hi, Mabes. You had us all really worried.” And maybe it was the blur of his sight, but he could have sworn he saw a small tendril of pink light snake from Mabel's Soul Gem and brush against his thumb, as if in apology.

Pacifica choked out a laugh somewhere to his left, Wendy was mumbling something, maybe 'oh my god' in repetition? He could hear Soos' boisterous laugh, laced with triumph as he felt a pair of beefy arms wrap around his middle and pick him up in an excited hug.

“You did it dude! Dipper, you're like a Hero among Magical kids or somethin'! Tha' First Magical Boy!”

“Not necessarily the first,” Kyubey chimed in, and Dipper was able to see just enough to watch it's little form retreat into the night. “A more accurate term would be the first Magical Boy in the past Millennia.”

But with that last quip it was gone.

Soos kept him in the air for a few more seconds, the hollow triumph was already starting to spoil the feeling of relief, and if the careful way Soos set him down was any indication, he wasn't alone in that.

He'd barely been given a second before Stan was lifting him into the air. Dipper let out a breif shout of surprise as Stan lifted him over his head, placing Dipper squarely on his shoulders.

He didn't say a word, and Dipper wasn't sure if he should try to get anything out of him. So, instead, he glanced back to the rest of them, Soos' excited grin had faded, a tenuous, almost nervous shadow of what he'd seen, Wendy was rubbing at the back of her head, worry strong along her brow, and Pacifica was clutching to her hand like it were some sort of lifeline, she was grinning slightly at Dipper, but it was as fake as anything.

“Let's go home. We gotta get this back to Mabel.” Stan grabbed his ankles, and they set off into the darkness, slowly making their way back home.

It was a few minutes before they'd make it back home, the sense of urgency that had laced their original setting out into the woods was dimmed with their victory, though depending on who you asked the use of the word was loose at best.

Dipper felt odd. Maybe it was just becoming a Magi, having his soul ripped from his body, that was leaving some strange after affect feeling, probably not.
Most of him was... well, ecstatic was the best word he supposed.

They'd done it! They'd won! They had Mabel back! Her Soul Gem was glittering and healthy, safe in his hand. He had his sister back, in a few minutes she would stand up and smile at him and hug him and knit her sweaters and cuddle Waddles and put stickers on everything and put things in her scrapbook and break out the glitter glue the second she was inspired for something!

He had his sister back.

And he was a Magi too now, now he could help her. He could go into labyrinths with her and he could help and not just distract her!

But... There was the littlest bit of dread that was pooling in the back of his head.

They couldn't turn her human again, wouldn't that mean that she'd have to go through this again? Wouldn't that mean that he had to go through the same eventually? How painful was it to become a Witch? Or was it just darkness? Would Mabel remember it? Would his deal to save her soul just end up damning her to living with those memories?

Ugh, why couldn't he just let himself be happy about this? Just for tonight, just for tonight he should only be happy. Because they did the impossible. Because they got his sister back from Despair.

Dipper nodded to himself, tapping Stan's shoulder with the heel of his foot. He noticed his shoes were the same blue color of his jacket (at least, he thought they were in the light)

"Hey Grunkle Stan, I'm gonna get down now." May as well use his new Magi enhanced body for something fun!

Grunkle Stan was moving to lift him off of his shoulders but Dipper had already began to tip over backward.

Stan let out a small shout of surprise as Dipper fell, twisting around and looking surprisingly horrified for a moment.

Dipper landed in a handstand. He...actually hadn't expected to do that, he was intending more for a roll-land like they do in movies, but here he was, perfectly balanced on his hands, one palm flat, the other clenched protectively around his sister's Soul Gem.

Dipper chuckled to himself and leaned backward, his legs twisting as they fell to plant firmly in the ground and stand him up. That was cool, he barely needed to think about it! He was just picturing how people did that kinda stuff in movies and cartoons and the next thing he knew his body was rushing to match!

"Sweet Cosmos Dipper!" Stan clutched at his shirt. "You're both gonna give me a stroke at this rate!"

'An Agile Magi' He heard Pacifica's voice and jumped in place. He turned to look at her, at least, turned his head and peeked at her from the corner of his eye.

"Huh?" Pacifica's eyes widened briefly before she shook her head.

'Sorry, didn't know we could do this without that little jerk around, just think at me and we can talk.' he startled for a quick second again before He took a deep breath.
'Right. What do you mean by Agile Magi?' Was this just a thing that Magi could do just communicate telepathically? That was super cool! Why didn't Mabel tell him about it?

Okay probably because he couldn't join in or something, but still! It was weird and cool like Professor X or something! Wait, Did Pacifica hear all that? Or was it just when he was trying to talk to her with his thoughts? Was he summoning her to his thoughts right now by considering that?

'Well when we become Magi we all get some upgrades, we're all stronger, faster, more agile, things that would help us fight.' apparently not.

'But Mabel's like super ultra strong now, I tried lifting one of her axes once and they're really heavy, I couldn't even imagine throwing one of those as far as she can.'

'That's because We all get a little something extra, so we don't have to rely on our weapons and our secondary magic to do all the dodging and blocking. I'm fast, Mabel's strong, and it seems you're Agile.'

“So I'm like an acrobat now?” Dipper smiled and glanced down into his hand again. Mabel's Soul Gem glittered at him, and there was an extra spring in his step as he took the lead of the group. “Pretty cool.”

Tomorrow they'd deal with the bad parts, but tonight was a night of triumph. The night where Dipper was finally able to truly help his sister in the time since she'd became a Magical Girl.

After that it felt like no time at all until he could see the shack through the dark leaves. He could see most of the lights in the house shimmering through the colored glass, casting a warm yellow glow into the night.

He was running. He could see Pacifica from the corner of his eye falling into line at his heels, he could hear the surprised shouts of Wendy, Soos, and Stan at being left in the dust; but none of that mattered. All other thoughts of being a Magi now and having powers and fighting things were immediately banished from his thoughts.

His normally racing mind narrowed into silence, beyond one narrow glowing light. The only thing that mattered now, the only thing that mattered at all, was getting to his sister and watching her open her eyes.

As the treeline ended he glanced to the door, then to the Attic window. Mabel could make the jump in one bound if she wanted to, she was strong, Pacifica could jump from a nearby tree and make it to the windowsill that way. How would he do it? He didn't want to waste time running through the shack and up the stairs, that was way too long for something when he could go the direct route now.

He ran up to the porch and grabbed hold of one of the support beams, He'd shimmied up ropes before, but he could never do it with something that was difficult to grab hold of like this.

But now maybe? He stashed Mabel's Soul Gem under his hat and jumped.

His ankles locked around the beam and quickly and concisely carried him to the scaffolding of the first floor.

He'd pulled himself up and was skirting along the rooftop with an ease that he'd never really expected of himself, especially granted that every other shingle would wobble unpleasantly under his feet. He just had to make his way past the sign and up to the attic window...
He could hear Stan shouting for him, telling him to get down and go up the sane way, Wendy whooping and hollering him forward, But neither of them were given more than just a brief thought.

Because at that moment he dropped from the edge of the roof, hands grasping on the sloped edge, hanging mere inches from the attic window. He heard Soos shout, and from the very corner of his eye see Stan run underneath him, ready to catch him if his grip slipped.

That sort of gave him the bolster he needed to swing his body and kick the stained glass window open.

Great Uncle Ford was sitting on his bed, and had apparently been flipping through one of his Sibling Brother's books, As that's what had been thrown at Dipper almost immediately from his side of the attic.

He swung his body to the side to avoid it as it careened out the window.

He was barely able to swing to the other side as his Binoculars flung through the air. Dipper huffed heavily and was just barely able to shout out.

“Great Uncle Ford! It's me!” thankfully, Ford stopped right as he'd grabbed ahold of Dipper's pterodactyl tooth. Dipper huffed a brief sigh in relief as he watched Great Uncle Ford quint into the darkness at him.

“Dipper?! What in Cosmos' name are you doing hanging from the roof?!” He backed up a few steps as Dipper began to swing his body again, just to get some momentum so he could fling himself inside. Which he then did, catching himself on the windowsill and front flipping into the room.

Ah man he was not gonna get tired of that for awhile.

“Dipper What are you wearing? I...oh no... Don't tell me... Did it not work? Did you have to...?” he could hear the muted horror in Ford's voice, the hollow sound of him clapping a hand over his mouth.

He wasn't necessarily paying attention.

Carefully, just to make sure he didn't accidentally mess anything up, Dipper turned to Mabel's bedside, the brief pang of sadness passed quickly when he felt the slight weight of her Soul Gem, still resting delicately under his hat. He removed the two sapphire's Stanford had had Wendy and Soos put onto her, there was no need for them anymore after all.

Just as he was removing his hat, a blue beret with pink stitches along the edge and his Soul Gem delicately stuck to the side (a Blue Pine Tree, figures); he heard the door bang open.

“You jerk!” Pacifica strode across the room and slugged him in the shoulder. It didn't actually hurt so he didn't react to it. As careful as he could, as though he were holding the most precious thing in the world—and to his word, he was—he took Mabel's Soul Gem into his hand. The Heavy thud-thud-thud of the stairs indicated that Stan and Wendy and Soos were on their way up.

He wasn't going to wait for them though. This was Mabel, she shouldn't have to wait for a crowd. He placed her Soul Gem into her stiff hand, curling her fingers around it into a loose grip.

The happy pink glow began to pulse, He held his breath.
He heard Stan enter the room, heard him take a deep breath as though about to berate him for being reckless before silencing abruptly.

Mabel furrowed her brow, making a sort of croaking noise.

She surged forward and began to cough.

She remembered being lonely.

Being in a cold dark place, and feeling Not Right, and she remembered she had the power to fix that, so she did. She made herself bigger, heavier, she brought light to the cold dark place and lined it with everything she loved.

She made friends from scratch, friends that would protect her and invite in even more friends. She carved them from wood and paint and fashioned them from things she used, pincushions and Mannequins, and she made them colorful, she gave them eyes of starlight or inherent memories of how her new home was formed.

Her new friends lead in a whole group of new friends, she’d been so happy when her Brave little Pincushion, her little Vasilisa, came into her room and reported to her. So when she heard it’s name being called out she sent it to greet them. She made a few Judges, Williams, to watch these new friends, see if they would follow Vasilisa and find their way to her, or if they chose wrong and run into her traps.

She hadn't wanted to make her traps at First, but Endymion told her she should have something just in case people weren't here to be friends. People he would take care of. Her little mannequin familiar... she'd never dare make more than one of him. He was there to protect her so why would she?

Then they'd killed him. The new ones. They'd punched and stabbed and shot their hooks at him, and she'd mourned him, and she'd wanted so badly to hurt them for hurting him.

But the smallest one, he said things, said things she couldn't understand, called her something strange, but something... something was familiar about him, about the book he'd opened, the thing he wore over his body.

And then pain, hot white pain in her arm that hit her to her very core. She'd been in o much pain, feeling her home dissolve around her, the crumbling walls, the dissolving familiars they'd killed. Endymion, she'd felt them all be taken from her and she'd shrieked.

And then she was somewhere very dark again. But she couldn't change thing to make her feel less bad, less small.

And then there was blue light.

And then Serenity knew no more.

She felt warm, and she was someplace dark. There was a kind of pressure on her, like someone was giving her a big hug.

The dark, the hug feeling, the warmth, it had her in an almost dreaming state. But no matter how much she wanted to let the feeling carry her off she had to stay awake. She had a lot to sort through.
She remembered feeling so sad, so lonely, she remembered the voice of a friend, trying to call her back from the pit she'd found herself in. She remembered... She remembered Mason... No... No Dipper. She remembered Dipper saying something that made her feel bad, and then her friend... Her friend Pacifica... trying to help her.

But it had already been too late, and some part of her had already known that.

And she remembered not remembering. She remembered being a Witch.

It was so natural it was almost like breathing with lungs that she no longer had to be a Witch, to make familiars based on her family, based on her friends, without even knowing.

She.... She might have killed someone. She didn't, she didn't remember a single person going into her Labyrinth before they did. Before Dipper, Pacifica, Grunkle Stan, Wendy, and Soos all did.

She didn't kill anyone.

But she might have. Her familiars were certainly more than willing to attack them, she'd hit Pacifica and Wendy with so many of her Glitter waves.

Endymion had been one swing short of killing Dipper.

It didn't matter that she hadn't killed anyone, the fact of the matter was that she was willing to.

The warmth didn't fade from her, the pull to a dreamy sort of unconsciousness was still strong. But she had to finish sorting things out in her mind.

Dipper had appealed to her as a Witch, she hadn't understood, but somehow anyway, she'd known. Maybe that was just curiosity on her part, she couldn't really remember it all too clearly, but she did know Dipper a bit, even when she couldn't remember being Human.

Then the pain, and the blackness, and the blue light, and now the warmth.

Until eventually, after a timeless eon of wondering if this was some sort of hell of it's own making, she could feel something new.

A tingling feeling in her hands, a rush of energy in her gut. Like something had changed. She clenched her fist and found with a little surprise she couldn't close her hand fully, there was something invisible there that she was holding onto.

Her brow furrowed, it took effort to open her mouth, like it had been glued shut, and when she tried to question what was happening all that came from her mouth was a small growling noise.

It hurt to make, it peeled and scraped at what felt like the driest her throat had been in months. She tried to take a breath to alleviate it, but her lungs felt constricted, like they were balloons, deflated and gross.

She tried to force some air into her lungs, but it came out far too quickly with a series of loud coughs. Her eyes squeezed shut even tighter—had they been closed the whole time?—and She felt a hand place itself on her back.

Her lungs forced her to take another breath, that was all to quick to follow the first into a cough. Oh now that she was started she felt like it would hurt more to stop. There was some kind of gunk in her throat, now that she was coughing she could feel it beginning to loosen. Her limbs felt stiff, almost unresponsive as she shakily lifted a hand to clutch at her neck. Before her hand had hit it's
mark she felt someone else take it.

Whoever they were she could feel that they were wearing fingerless gloves, bleh.

She kept trying to breathe, kept coming short with coughs, for what must have been a good minute and a half, until she heard a voice.

“It's alright... Your lungs have been deflated for almost a full day now.”

What the...?

She cracked her eyes open to try and identify the voice, but her vision was swimming too much, both from the motion and the dim light of the room, before another, particularly painful round of coughs forced her eyes shut again.

It was another thirty seconds after that or so before she'd finally been able to take a breath without coughing. It was short, shallow, but she didn't have to release it in a violent whoosh of air.

She felt the hand on her back move up and down a bit, the hand in her own squeezed.

“There ya go Pumpkin...”

Grunkle Stan?

She was panting for breath, her voice was probably all raspy and gross right now, and she probably wouldn't be able to speak without coughing. So instead of trying to answer she cracked open her eyes again.

Everyone was here, and staring at her like she was some sort of miracle.

Why was everyone here? She thought they'd defeated her. Was... was she in the attic? What was she doing in the attic? She thought she was a Witch now! And she'd been defeated and....

“Mabel!” Before she could even think to try and voice her questions she heard Dipper shout her name. The hand around her own released only to be replaced by her brother's arms around her midsection, pressing his face into her shoulder and...

Was Dipper crying?

Her hands still felt heavy, her fingers stiff, but she was able to wrap her arms around her brother's midsection and hug him back.

She noticed she hadn't been hit in the face with his vest. He was wearing something completely different actually. Some long blue jacket that went past his shorts, this weird pink embroidery thread stitched along the hem before some orange(?) trim and grayish dark blue socks with the same pink stitches, and blue and orange shoes with the stitching too.

She was so confused for a moment, before she'd glanced to the side, to peek at her brother from the corner of her eye, and see a blue pine tree jewel, shimmering blue in the dim light.

He wasn't... he wasn't wearing that when they were in the maze....

She felt the hem of Grunkle Stan's suit press against the back of her head, watching her vision get a little darker at the sides as Grunkle Stan's big arms circled around them both, she could feel his chin resting on the tip of her forehead. She felt something wet, tears? Drip onto her cheeks from above. Was Grunkle Stan Crying? Since when did Grunkle Stan Cry?!
Soos ran forward. She was a little less distracted now, so she could really... you know... look around the room. Soos and Wendy were in the back of the room, but Soos was quickly rectifying that as he ran forward, Wendy no more than a few inches behind.

She couldn't even really feel them join in on the hug. She could see Soos wrap his arms around the steadily growing pile, but he was touching Stan and Dipper. But she could at least smell the Soos-y smell of sweat and motor oil in the air now, and Wendy had crawled up between her and the wall to wriggle her way into the hug pile. She could feel some of those scratchy old bandages that tough people wrapped their knuckles in on her hands as she snaked an arm across her shoulders.

She couldn't even see Waddles when he'd joined in. She could just hear the piggy noises of him shuffling about, smelling thing and snuffling into the air, then she felt Stan move his arm a bit, and then she suddenly had a pig in her lap. She was barely able to move one of her hands, the one that was still gripping something, to scratch behind his ear where he liked it.

She tried to laugh, but it was weak. She couldn't get too much air into her lungs, both from the coughing fit and the lack of breathable air around her.

She peeked through a small hole in the huge, unexpected hug, the feeling of warmth, just like when she was in the dark warm place, began to form in her chest, tempered by confusion or not. But she could have sworn she'd seen Pacifica's blonde hair earlier.

Ah! there she was. She...

She looked so sad.

She was smiling, and there were tears in her eyes, but she still looked so sad. Like she thought she didn't belong in this... whatever this was.

She lifted her hand from Waddles and wriggled it out of her tiny peephole, offering it to her friend.

She felt Pacifica's hand in her own and smiled. Her free hand still stroking Dipper's back in comfort.

She felt another hand come out from above, a six fingered hand wormed it's way around Stan and Wendy and placed itself on her shoulder.

After Dipper had shouted her name nobody had said a word, as if what ever had happened when she was in the darkness was too momentous to break with silence.

Even if she felt like she could she wasn't sure if she wanted to be the one to break it.

Dipper's shoulders shook still. Grunkle Stan's tears, and now Soos' were dripping onto her cheeks, Wendy and Pacifica both held steady hands, So did Great Uncle Ford. Waddles snorted into her skirt.

She had so many questions, but she already knew, today was a day of triumph.

When they'd beaten her, somehow someway, they'd changed her back to.

She was so confused.

But she couldn't have felt more loved.

Dipper had been the first to pull away, after that everyone else (except Waddles, who'd fallen
asleep) had been all too quick to give the two of them some space.

Now that Mabel had an actual bit of space to look at her brother, one of her questions was answered, the question of 'what the heck was her Brother wearing'

He was wearing this white kerchief, kind of like Fred's ascot from Scooby Doo. The blue jacket as it turned out, only was put together about halfway down his chest, it flared out in that pink embroidery and Orange trim in a sort of 'V' halfway down. Showing this...kind of a weskit? Those Hobbit vests, in a dark blue like his socks, with those same three orange blocks that were on the fronts of his shoes. The pink stitching went all around the three blocks and the hem of the Weskit-thing. His shorts were bright blue with grayish blue cuffs. Why did everything seem to be lined with that pink embroidery thread?

Oh, and his baseball cap was gone, which was dumb because she really thought he looked good in that thing. He was wearing this light blue... was it a beret? It looked like a beret... or maybe a newsboy cap? And there was the Blue jewel, shaped like a Pine Tree and giving off a sort of light.

If she didn't know better she'd say it was...

Oh no.

“Dipper?” Her voice cracked and wheezed, it sounded foreign even to her own ears. Gross and raw, like when she'd first gone to a concert and screamed so much she'd lost her voice for a week. “What...?” Dipper's eyes widened in surprise, like he was surprised she could talk at all, before glancing down to his outfit and.. of all things... started chuckling under his breath. *Chuckling!* Like he wasn't crying himself dry three seconds ago.

“Oh right, right... So... Ah... Do you uhm... Do you remember what happened?” She pressed her lips together and flickered her eyes into her lap, stroking Waddles' back slowly.

“I'm Sorry... I was...” She coughed weakly, her voice protesting against it's use. “I was so mean...And I became a Witch because of it too!... All because I was being selfish and stuff.”

“Mabel!” Dipper's hands returned to her, gripping her shoulders and making her head turn back so she could meet his eyes. “You weren't being Selfish. You... You were lonely.” He looked truly pained for a moment, now he was the one that couldn't meet her eye. “You just didn't want to feel alone, and I made you feel alone. I just...” he Grunted, face crumpling into something that almost looked like self loathing. “I just thought I couldn't help you anymore. Everything I did always seemed to make things worse for you! So I thought...If all I did for you was get in the way and make things worse, then I should be somewhere where I could help. I didn't mean to make you think I didn't care anymore, but I... I guess I did anyway.”

Well she already had had enough of that look for one lifetime. She raised her hands from where she'd been petting Waddles and lifted his head to meet her eye.

“Don't blame yourself either okay? Just tell me what happened.”

“Actually, it may be a more worthwhile explanation if we all tell it.” For only a moment, she'd pricked a bit when she'd heard Great Uncle Ford's voice. But when she'd turned to him he looked... So tired.

His hair was a mess and he wasn't wearing his jacket anymore, it was lying on Dipper's bed, all but forgotten.

“Okay... what happened?”
“Well...” Great Uncle Ford cleared his throat. “Dipper, Pacifica, and I were all sure we could fix what had happened. To change you back after... after you went away.”

And then the story went on. From Ford explaining the gun and how it was put together, to Wendy explaining the Family Meeting, in which they'd decided who went on the mission, Pacifica would add things in every so often, Wendy giving her her green flannel shirt, Soos putting her in another room

while they decided, Stan told her about the Labyrinth, how he had been so suspicious of everything, saying with a voice that was too shaky to be truly lighthearted, that he should have trusted that she would make a labyrinth that would take people straight to the center. Soos told her of the battle, of how cool her labyrinth was now that it wasn't actively trying to kill them.

She wanted to tell them that they didn't need to tell this part, she knew this part, but she let Pacifica finish, talk about how they'd fired the 'Labyrinth Destabilizer' on her arm (the arm that she'd lost against that Flying Eel Witch too... go figure) And how it hadn't worked.

When all gazes turned to Dipper she knew what he was going to say. She could already feel the anger boiling in her gut. Oh man... she'd like to hear his excuses about this. Why would he do that? Why would he ever do that to himself if he already knew what was really going to happen?! Her lips pinched into a flat line and Dipper almost immediately picked up on her look, he raised his arms in a sort of placating gesture, but Mabel didn't feel placated at all.

“No... No no no....”

“No, don't get mad....So... we were all pretty shaken up after it didn't work, but the thing is... I actually talked to... I talked to Bill about how to break your contract awhile ago...” He talked to Bill?!! about her contract?! Oh man was she wrong? Was this some sort of deal with Bill and he had to wear this because Bill was a sick jerk who liked Irony or something?!

“And that's not the part I'm asking you not to get mad about!” he quickly amended. “He told me he couldn't do it because the Kyubey make really Airtight contracts, the only thing that could break one was another Wish. And boys actually can make Contracts, they just say they can't because we're always really weak or something. We need to be 'emotionally unstable'... and let me tell you holding your Grief Seed in my hand certainly made me feel that.” He smirked, but she could see the haunted sort of look in his eye.

“So I may or may not have made a contract that could only turn your Grief Seed back into a Soul Gem because I wasn't strong enough to make you human again.”

No... No no no....

“Are... Are you crazy?!” She shrieked, her throat pinched tightly in protest and her voice turned into such a high squeak in the end Waddles jolted awake in fear.

“Dipper! You already knew what you were getting into but that Didn't make it any less bad!” She could barely get the words out, she could see Great Uncle Ford offering her a cup of water from the corner of her eye but ignored him. “You decided to throw yourself into the same thing that me and Pacifica had to get tricked into joining! I'm not worth that!”

“You are.” She wasn't sure what stopped her, the throbbing pain in her throat, the urgency—the need for her to understand—in Dipper's voice, or the immense wave of Deija vu, but she went quiet.
“Mabel... Mabel you are my sister. You sold your soul to keep me safe, even if you didn't know it at the time, you said to me already if you did know you'd have done it anyway. So let me do the same for you.”

“D... Dipper...” her eyes were stinging, and she really meant stinging, she could feel tears building in her eyes and it **hurt**. Her eyes hadn't produced tears in a day, they were dry, and the tears hurt. “**Mason...!**”

He leaned forward hugged her again, but this time he wasn't clinging to her. He wasn't holding her like she was going to vanish if he let go, his arms were gentle around her, stroking up and down her back, like mom did when one of them came to her with a nightmare when they were little.

“I've got you Mabel...” She leaned her head forward a little, so only her forehead was resting on his shoulder. She didn't return his hug, she was just staring down at both of their knees, only slightly obscured by Waddles, who'd quickly settled back in her lap.

She opened her hand, and her Soul Gem glittered at her with a cheerfulness she didn't necessarily feel.

She flicked her wrist slowly, making sure not to hit Dipper, and it dutifully shifted into it's Soul Gem form.

She lifted her hands and wrapped around Dipper's chest.

“Finger less gloves Dipper? Really?”

“They're racing gloves!”

Nobody wanted to leave the room, everyone wanted to stay with Mabel now that she was back with them, but the fact of the matter was the attic was far too small for seven people and a pig to sleep over in together. Eventually, after little discussion, everyone decided to make a quick relocation to the TV room.

Mr. Pines and Soos quickly took Dipper's blanket (the sheets on Mabel's bed were crumpled into a ball and probably were to be washed the next morning), a bunch of rolled up sleeping bags, and as many blankets as they could, and lead the way downstairs. Wendy raided one of the closets and came out triumphantly with an entire army of pillows, half of which she'd assigned Dr. Pines to help her carry.

Dipper helped Mabel down the stairs, she was pretty unsteady on her feet, Pacifica's magic may have undone the worst of the damage to her body, but there was still a little bit of Rigor Mortis that she had to shake off. The way it looked to Pacifica, he was probably going to need to be in physical contact with her at all times for the next... well at the least until tomorrow morning.

She was holding Waddles, the chubby little thing was snorting and squealing, kicking it's weird little pig feet into the air as it tried to follow Mabel, but Pacifica could only make sure it didn't escape her arms. If Waddles got too excited and rushed up to Mabel the force alone could knock her over, and that wasn't something one would want to have happen on the stairs.

So she was keeping Waddles in as tight of a grip as she could dare to without causing it any pain.

She'd taken up the rear, so by the time the three of them (or rather, the four of them) had made it downstairs and into the TV room, Stan, Soos, and Wendy had all turned the area into a massive Pillow Fort the likes of which Pacifica had only ever seen in cartoons.
Dipper carefully lowered Mabel down onto a rolled up sleeping bag. Something she’d almost immediately waved off before flopping dramatically onto the floor and laughing.

“My legs feel like big wooden poles...” Dipper's smile looked a little painful as he sat down beside her.

“Well your knees need to stretch out again...” Pacifica took then to place Waddles down. The little pig let out a happy squeal and ran over to the two of them, Mabel had sat up just then, opening her arms and squeaking in happiness when Waddles ran into her.

“Waddles! I'm sorry my darling Waddles! I must smell terrible right now!” Waddles snorted excitedly into her sweater and Mabel took a second to smell the collar of the little black thing, wincing, and taking off the black knitted garment.

“I'm gonna try climbing up the stairs on my own then, gotta grab some fresh clothes! These smell all gross and Rigor Mortis-y.” Dipper darted to his feet, his Soul Gem flashing quickly and undoing his transformation.

“I've got one here!” His cap fell from his hand as he rushed to struggle out of the sweater he'd been wearing.

Mabel's look got a little sad at that, pinching her lips together for a moment before she took the offered sweater.

“My shooting star?” Dipper gave a laugh that sounded far more self deprecating than lighthearted.

“Yeah... Only thing that kept me grounded ya know?” Her brow furrowed and she held the sweater a little closer, sniffing it experimentally and then recoiling.

“Phew! Gross! It smells all sweaty!” She crumpled the pink sweater with her black one, before smiling slightly at Dipper. “It's okay, I probably need a full clothes change anyway.” Dipper's eyes darted around nervously before he nodded.

“Right, I can get those for you!”

“I can do it on my own Dipper.”

“You might hurt yourself...”

“How about I escort Mabel to her room?” Pacifica took then to chime in. Taking a step and waving a bit, her Magica uniform had already faded away some time ago, on the stairs probably, But either way Mabel hadn't been paying attention to her, if the honestly shocked look on her face meant anything.

“oh! Pacifica! I almost didn't recognize you! Wow, you really are wearing Wendy's shirt!” She smiled a bit and grabbed ahold of Dipper's arm to hoist herself to her feet. “You look good!”

Pacifica felt her cheeks heat up a little bit at the compliment and but back a refute. She knew she must look like a mess, her face was probably all pale and sallow with every last piece of foundation wiped away by sweat and tears, her hair was barely still held together in the braid, long strands were already gone, hanging around her sides like detached streamers and gross stuff like that.

Not to mention her outfit was terrible. It was drab and boring and it had flannel where flannel shouldn't be—
Mabel took a few staggering steps towards her and Pacifica was all too quick to rush forward and grab hold of her.

“You gonna make sure I don't keel over halfway up the steps or what?” She let out a sort of surprised snort at the black humor. Carefully, she held onto Mabel's arm with both of hers.

“Back to the attic!” Mabel cheered, thrusting her free hand in the air like some kind of knight off to war.

Thankfully, beyond one or two times when Mabel had to pause to try and stretch out her back or catch her breath from overexertion, the trip back up two flights of stairs was pretty uneventful.

When the two of them reached the attic Mabel indicated Pacifica to toss the two sweaters Dipper had handed her onto the bed with the crumpled up bed sheets, while she plucked a red blue and dark pink one from her bag.

“My Sailor Moon one.” She turned to Pacifica with a dramatic sort of flair and really, what else would it be called? It was Sailor Moon's uniform turned into a sweater, three rings on the elbows and on the shoulders, the bottom was the mini skirt and her First broach was sewn into the center in sparkly gold embroidery thread.

She took the sweater as Mabel handed it to her and dutifully looked away as her friend began to undress.

About three minutes later they were working their way downstairs again, Pacifica had talked Mabel out of wearing the matching headband and giant moon shaped earrings, after all, the rest of the night should be things they could sleep in. Just in case they passed out before they got into their pajamas.

Mabel was humming something to herself, something Pacifica couldn't necessarily identify. She liked it, whatever it was, it was a pleasing melody, but she'd really like to know what it was.

“What are you humming?” Mabel's eyes widened a bit and she pinched her lips to the side a bit.

“I dunno, I guess it sounded different when I was a Witch, but I was humming that song to myself. I kinda made it up awhile ago, it's just like... some mood music I think in my head when me an' Dipper go on mystery hunts together, makes everything feel more real.”

Oh...

“You... Remember?” Mabel nodded and Pacifica's gut dropped a bit.

“I'm glad nobody got hurt.”

“I'm sorry.” Mabel raised a brow at her, honestly she was looking at her like she 's sprouted another five eyes or something.

“Why? D'you think I'm mad about the whole 'shooting a science-y gun at my arm' thing? Cuz I'm not.” She smiled crookedly at her. “I'm glad it was you. Gosh knew that Dipper would have freaked out last second.” Her smile faded and she turned to face forward again as she gripped the handle of the stairs a little harder.

“He's protective like that.” Pacifica thought back to the way Dipper was gripping her hand when she'd become a witch, the spring in his step when he'd saved her.
“He loves you a lot.”

At least she got Mabel to smile again, even if it was a little sadly.

“Yeah...” She shook her head so abruptly Pacifica was sure she got a few strands of brown hair caught in her mouth. “But anyway, you look super cute like that! Wendy's jacket and the cardigan and the skirt!” She smiled at Pacifica and she felt herself begin to blush again.

“I'm probably a mess right now...”

“Yeah that's why you look so great! You're always so prim and proper and it's pretty but it's boring! You look absolutely adorable because you're not all perfect and stuff!”

Was... that supposed to make her feel so happy? Because it did.

She smiled back slightly and they turned the corner into the Pillow Fort room.

There was a sort of silent unanimous decision to let Mabel pick what they would watch tonight, And yeah sure, it was because she was brought back from witchdom and stuff, but honestly her mind was on other things right now. She wasn't sure if she could really enjoy whatever movie was playing, paying attention or not.

So she just kind of decided to pick one of her old favorites. Quest for Camelot. While she didn't necessarily agree with Kaylee at the beginning of the movie, she saw nothing wrong with both getting a new dress and saving Camelot, she loved pretty much every other aspect of the story. From the music to Cornwall and Devon to Garrett to that Stone Giant farts on Ruber scene.

Before she'd even had a chance to decide on where she wanted to sit Grunkle Stan had picked her up and placed her carefully onto his lap in the easy chair. Dipper was all too quick to crawl up beside her. It was a bit of a tighter squeeze than only one of them like usual, sure, but it was coming from a place of love, so she could understand it.

The movie was barely halfway over by the time most of the room had fallen asleep. Stan was leaned back in the chair, Dipper had his head resting on hers, Pacifica was curled up at the foot of the chair, Wendy and Soos were splayed on the ground, while here Mabel sat, wide awake and unwilling to disturb anybody.

Yesterday had been really tough, everyone deserved to rest.

But their little landmine of love was incomplete. She was going to have to do it anyway. Slowly, making sure she didn't wake him, she wriggled out from under Dipper, replacing her shoulder with a pillow and Grunkle Stan's belly. Simple enough, Dipper snorted, scratched under his nose and snuggled his head into the pillow.

Now to get away with pausing the movie without disturbing anyone. Lucky her the remote was only very loosely grasped in Stan's hand, so she was able to slide out and hit 'pause' right before the big romantic song between Kaylee and Garrett.

Now the challenging part, getting out of Stan's lap without waking him up. He'd flinch if she even shifted, let alone if she'd just get up.

What could she do? She wasn't fast enough to try another switcharoo with him. Even then he had no idea what would be heavy enough that could pass as a Mabel in his lap.
She looked around the room, the minefield of fluffy pillows and blankets and Quest For Camelot, looking for anything that could help.

She saw Great Uncle Ford in the kitchen making tea.

Aha!

“Psst!”

Ford jumped in place looking all around suspiciously, before turning and looking into the TV room.

“Psst!”

“Mabel?” Ford whispered, approaching slowly and nimbly avoiding running into Wendy or Soos. “What are you still doing up?”

“I can't sleep.” She whispered back. “It's late but I can't sleep. This is so dumb.” Great Uncle Ford chuckled at that, going as far as to shake his head wryly at her.

“Would you like some help escaping Stanley so we can talk?” At her nod Ford moved a little closer, reaching down until she realized he was lifting Pacifica up.

Her head lolled over to the side and the braid that Mabel had put in her hair after the first one had come undone swished around like a streamer.

Carefully Mabel scooted from Grunkle Stan's leg, but right before the change could wake him Great Uncle Ford carefully set Pacifica in her place.

After that it was easy to avoid Wendy and Soos and escape to the hallway with Great Uncle Ford.

“Alright.. Well.. Mabel there's something I feel is important to speak to you about.” She looked around themselves in the hallway and gestured toward the side door.

“There's a big couch on the porch, let's talk there.” Great Uncle Ford nodded and followed her out.

The couch was as squishy and almost lumpy as it always was, the night air, well past midnight night air, tried to make it's way to her arms but her Sailor Moon sweater fought it off before it could. It did however made a little extra blood rush to her cheeks making them a bit rosier than before.

“I ah... I see most of the cells in your body have repaired themselves just fine with the return of your Soul Gem.” He sounded so nervous, he even coughed awkwardly after he ended his sentence.

“Yeah, Pacifica helped, and those blue crystals you put on me.”

“They were Sapphires.”

“Ah.” she nodded.

Ford was ticking his fingers across his knee, then started to pull at the hem of his sleeves.

Eventually he just took off his trench coat entirely. Showing her the empty gun holster and the bright red sweater underneath.

“I'm sorry Mabel.” before she even had a chance of asking what he ant he kept going. “Your initial
assessment about my position in this matter was completely right, I was simply being too... egotistical to understand it. I didn't understand the system you and your brother and Stanley had set up and decided there was none at all and didn't bother to even ask you of how you were fairing.” He took a breath, Mabel realized she was holding hers. “I exacerbated an already bad situation and became an unwitting catalyst for the worst result, and you were the one who paid the price for it. And for that I am sorry.”

… What was she supposed to say to that?

Well... it was all over and done with, She wasn't a Witch anymore and they were still trying to celebrate that, but she could remember the hot spikes of rage that felt like they were positively coating the inside of her throat just at the mention of the previous night's conversation.

“Oh...”

“Now obviously I don't expect you to forgive me so willy nilly. What I did was a grievous mistake for this entire family, I shouldn't expect such a thing simply because I apologize. I know a lot of the time, 'I'm sorry' really can't cover all the damage done. I suppose I was just so... used to the results and the inevitability that I stopped fighting.” he shook his head.

“I can fight for thirty years against a demon entity but I can't fight for three weeks for the sake of my own niece.”

Slowly, she didn't want to scare him or something, she reached over and put her hand on top of his.

“It's hard to keep hoping if you already know what's gonna happen.” She glanced at Ford and noticed with a bit of sadness how absolutely stunned he was at her response. “I couldn't finish watching one of the Transformers cartoons because Dipper told me my favorite died at the end.”

A sort of surprised smile cracked it's way onto Ford's face, he let out a small chuckle.

“Y... yes I suppose that's an accurate comparison. But Transformers? I think I may have missed that one in between dimensions.”

“Oh yeah, I was on a Biiig transformers kick last year! Mom helped me find all the episodes of one of the versions, Transformers Animated; and I totally fell in love with the motorcycle robot! His name was Prowl and he was a ninja!”

The rest of the night blurred away, when she woke up it was from Great Uncle Ford nearly jumping out of his skin beneath her, the trenchcoat he'd pulled over the both of them fell to the damp porch floor as Dipper rushed out of the shack, yelling her name, transformed, and holding a...

Was that a Mace? It had a spiky ball at the end like a mace but it didn't have the chain, it was just a stick with a spiky ball... was that still considered a mace?

“Dipper!” Dipper turned to her and sighed heavily, gripping his head in exhaustion.

“Don't do that to me Mabes... I thought my wish made it so you were only here for one day....”

“What? That doesn't make any—“

“I know it doesn't make any sense!” Dipper stormed over to her and slung his Mace over his shoulder. “Just don't do that to me again!”

“Okay, okay, I promise, me and Grunkle Ford just got sleepy out here...” she hopped to her feet and
Watched from the corner of her eye as Ford struggled to put his coat on with his hands shaking a bit. “Your weapon's a Mace?” She grinned slightly “Are you sure you're not gonna put a dent in your--”

“I actually think it's called a Morning Star...” Stan walked through to the porch, rubbing his eyes and yawning. “Slick moves by the way Pumpkin, putting Blondie in your place so I wouldn't wake up...”

Stan walked over, ruffled her hair, and then flopped down onto the couch in the spot Mabel and Ford had vacated.

Wendy burst from the door with a small shout.

“I forgot to tell my dad I was staying the night!” She rushed over to give Mabel a hug. And it was a really big hug too, like, Mabel was lifted from the ground and spun around quickly before she was carefully placed down and Wendy ran to her bike.

“I gotta go make sure he doesn't send out a search party or something!” She waved to the lot of them before peddling away. “If I don't get grounded I'll be back by lunch! If I do then I'll be back by lunch!”

Pacifica and Soos were the last two out, Pacifica perched almost like a bird on Soos' shoulders.

“And that's why you keep your cellphone on hand if you have one.” Soos nodded.

“Wise words.”

“What about you?” Dipper smirked up at Pacifica. “Soos probably pops in and out on Abuelita all the time, what's your excuse?” Pacifica shrugged.

“I told them I'm spending the weekend at Waverly's. By the way, can I borrow a shirt?” She looked down at Mabel expectantly. “I've never slept in my clothes before and I feel gross.” Mabel nodded and waved it off.

“You know where my stuff is!”

Pacifica squirmed down from her perch on Soos and nodded before vanishing into the house.

Dipper sighed and transformed back in a shower of blue sparks.

“I can help you make that extra cool looking?” She offered, Dipper shook his head.

“Nah, if I wanna look dumb, I'll charge into battle in my normal clothes.” Mabel stuck her tongue out at him at that and was pleased when he laughed.

Pacifica darted back outside, her title as speediest member of the family as unchallenged as ever, wearing one of Mabel's purple t-shirts over Wendy's plaid shirt, her hair was free from it's braid, but it certainly wasn't as styled as normal. She wasn't really even wearing any makeup.

Mabel thought that this was the prettiest Pacifica had ever looked to her.

Noon came and went, Wendy showed back up on her bike, winking and saying that she was 'never here if her dad asks'.

They ordered a pizza, Pacifica patted the grease off the top with a napkin, Soos ate three slices and made a throwaway comment about how cool it would be to have a slice of pizza that could
regenerate after it was eaten.

Eventually there was a warm silence that fell over everyone, nobody had left the porch, Dipper was still sitting a little closer to her than he usually did.

The silence was comfortable but... strangely brittle, like everyone was afraid of breaking it and what it could mean.

Eventually, Grunkle Ford was the one to take the plunge.

“We'll give you three some privacy. Stanley, I think it's time we had a bit of a talk. A real one that is.” He stood, offering his hand to Grunkle Stan. Stan glared at him suspiciously, but took it and followed Ford inside.

“I'll uh... go too. For Moral Support.” Soos offered, scratching the back of his head and giving them three a thumbs up before walking through the doorway.

Wendy huffed to herself, and Mabel took a moment to note that red flannel looked weird on her. Not bad of course, Wendy could probably pull off wearing a paper bag, but different.

“I guess I'll make sure they don't kill eachother or Soos or whatever.” She ruffled Mabel's hair, nodded at Pacifica, and then paused at Dipper.

“Hey Dipper, your Soul Gem's a Pine tree now, huh?” Dipper looked kind of bewildered and frankly Mabel felt the same, where was Wendy going with this? She smiled and reached down to snag his hat off of his head.

“Guess you don't need this anymore then.”

“H-Hey! Wend--” He scrambled after his hat before Wendy removed her toque and handed the fluffy hat to him.

“Trade ya?” She slipped Dipper's cap on over her hair and Dipper practically rushed to put Wendy's toque onto his own head.

“O-oh.. uhm... alright.” he chuckled nervously and Wendy shook her head.

"I expect to trade back by the end of the summer, that thing’s an heirloom, but it's yours for now." She winked.

The door clattered to a close behind her.

And then the three of them were alone.

Mabel was the first to talk.

It had been three months since that day. Summer ended, they both turned thirteen, they said their goodbyes and loaded onto the bus home, Waddles smuggled aboard thanks to Grunkle Stan and Grunkle Ford.

California Witches weren’t much different than Oregon Witches, they kept in close contact with everyone in Gravity Falls, Mabel talked boys with Candy, Grenda and Pacifica. Dipper traded stories with Soos and Wendy, they both did videochats with Grunkle Stan and Grunkle Ford. Apparently they’d finally got their heads out of their butts and were trying to really reconnect. Apparently one of the side effects of the portal had been something called a Rift and Grunkle Ford
wanted to abandon it in a place where Bill could never get ahold of it, the middle of the Arctic Ocean.

They were building a boat, who knew what they were planning on doing with it afterward.

Stan had told them in confidence that Soos would make a great Mr. Mystery in his place.

He'd responded in all exclamation points and all caps when they'd told him after only a moment of considering morals.

Wendy was looking at collages in Portland, it was a little too early to be serious about it just yet, but it was nice to fantasize.

Candy had forgiven Dipper for his 'tasteless prank' some time ago, and they were happily exchanging stories about Witch Hunting verses Monster Hunting, while Mabel insisted she and Grenda tell her everything about their Pen Pal adventures with a Baron of Austria (Like holy shamoli, a Baron she wished she'd gotten to meet him!)

They mainly talked Shop with Pacifica when it was all three of them. Witch migration patterns, any Magi passing through, any word of Walpurgisnacht after it's last sighting in Japan.

Apparently she and Dipper would talk a lot about books she'd never red when they'd speak to each other only, and when she and Mabel spoke alone it was mainly movies and music.

None of them wanted their relationships to be professional. They all had to stay friends or it'd fall apart super quick.

A week ago they'd received news.

Police suspected a murder due to lack of a weapon, but they knew better.

“Mabel, Mabel look at me. You're going to be okay. I swear, you are going to be okay.”

“Dipper! D-Dipper You can't You can't... I was already... Dipper you can't say that I'm going to be okay because you know that this isn't okay!”

“Mabel! Please. I'm going to help you. Look! Look at mine, I'm no better off than you are! Look, we can do this really easy, it won't even hurt.”

“...Dipper...”

“Just trust me. On three.”

“Mason!”

“...What?”

“I love you.”

“I love you too Mabes. Ready?”

“Mmhmm.”

“One...”
Everything was dark around her, like someone had turned off the lights to the world. She didn't like that.

She felt around herself, confirming that she was in her Civilian clothes, her sweater, her skirt, but when she tried to turn the light up sun that she could feel the pattern out on she couldn't. The glowy buttons didn't react when she pressed them.

“Hello?” Her voice felt almost hoarse and that made her more confused than anything else. After all she'd been in dark places before but she couldn't remember screaming in any of them.

“Hello?” She tried again. “Anyone?”

Maybe it was her mind playing tricks on her but she could have sworn she heard someone.

“I think it's her! She who was pulled from the brink! And that's the first Boy!”

“Huh? Who are you?”

”Bring Madame Cycle here! There are two!” Two?

She heard a groaning beside her, down where she was once laying. A familiar groan.

“Dipper?” Dipper groaned and she could feel his head brush against her wrist as he sat up.

“What? Where are we? Why is there no...?”

“I dunno, it's dark.” She felt along his head until she reached his shoulder. Dipper grumbled a bit but let her find her way down his arm and to his hand.

“Do you remember what happened?”

“Nu-uh... Were we like kidnapped in our sleep or something?”

“No clue.”

”Hey, I think they're awake!” she could feel Dipper bolt to his feet beside her and she squeezed his hand a little tighter.

”Hello there! The Pines Twins, right?”

“Who wants to know?” Dipper asked at her side. “Where are we? And why can't I see?” There was much whispering among... who she could only assume was a collective of people.

”Oh jeez, their eyes don't work yet! Is Madame Cycle coming?”

“Yes she is, but Mademoiselle Chaos is holding her up with another skirmitch off the coast of Italy!”

“Really? You've got to be kidding!” She could feel Dipper lean a little closer to her.

“You getting any of this?”

“Not really.” She answered. The two voices were interrupted after a moment by a third, this one much higher than the two.

“Your sight will come back in a bit, eyes are always last to come back, but can either of you
Mabel couldn't, she really couldn't remember a thing. Her brow furrowed and she looked around in the nothing, willing herself to remember, only to come up with ash and smoke.

Dipper as it seemed, had a better memory than her.

“We... uh... Oh Cosmos...”

“Dipper?”

“Okay, now, this is more of a formality, but please state your name and incorporeal magic.”

“What? What are you even—“

“Di-....Mason Pines, Amplification Magic.”

”And you miss?”

“Wait, hold on, I still have no idea what's going on here.”

The voice in the darkness chuckled and Mabel felt a prick of annoyance when they answered.

“Right, silly me, you don't remember. It's okay, having Witch Memories in your head is probably what's going on. You're in the Realm of Madame Cycle. She who retrieves the souls of Magica after they die in honorable battle.”

Huh?

“Wait... So.. So I'm.. So we're dead?” Her hand tightened around Dipper's a bit. The voice at least, was a little more subdued afterward.

”Ah... yes... I'm sorry. But if it's any consolation, your choices were that of the most kindhearted Magica of them all.”

“We're Dead...”

“Mabel, remember? We promised not to let it happen again.” The promise? Right... right. The day after they'd got her back.

“Right...Mabel Pines, Pushing Magic.”

The promise...

“Good, good, now that the formalities are all laid out Joan should be back soon. She's bringing Madame Cycle to welcome you two herself. You two have made quite the ruckus in our ranks.” The voice insisted. Mabel nodded and she could feel Dipper straighten at her side. ”Oh, and your guide should come along momentarily.”

“Hey! Let me through! Come on, they're my friends!” Mabel jolted and Dipper gripped her hand tighter.

Was that...?

“Pacifica?” Mabel asked into the darkness. Dipper let out something that sounded almost like a scoff.
“Oh man, duh! Of course she's here! She made the promise too! Ugh, I'm such an idiot!” She could see him in her mind's eye, bopping his fist against his forehead in aggravation.

The sound of approaching boots thumping heavily against... what sounded like stone floors.

“Mabel! Dipper!” Pacifica's body hit her from the side, half on her and half on Dipper, an arm wrapped around her neck and pulled her to her shoulder.

“Pacifica!” Mabel wrapped her free hand around what she could only assume was her waist.

She... everything was clearing up a bit. The room had remained black, the stone useless and gray, but she could see the yellow of Pacifica's hair, the purple of her shoulder.

“Wow! My sight came back all at once! I've got 20/20 again! No seeing eye dogs for Mabel!” she squeezed Pacifica tighter and she felt her friend chuckle.

“Nah, it's a touch thing.” Her hand slid so she was gripping Mabel's shoulder and she pulled away from them both.

Okay maybe her sight wasn't fully back, she was still a little blurry, but she was coming into focus the more Mabel stared at her. And looking to her side confirmed that Dipper was much the same.

“You guys are gonna love it here! Sure, nobody's over sixteen, and there's fights like... every night, but it's like Valhalla from Norse myths.” Mabel was sure her brow furrowed a bit and she heard Dipper make a confused sort of 'hah' noise beside her.

Pacifica's grin faded a bit and she let go of Dipper's shoulder to rub at the back of her head sheepishly.

“Ah... right, I like mythology, I never got to tell you guys that.”

Mabel nodded. “I like fairy tales!” she cheered.

Dipper shook his head at the both of them. “At least my conspiracies can be proven.”

Mabel tried not to laugh. “Dipper, you tried to convince me last week that the government is lying about Platypuses.”

“I'm telling you they can't be like that normally!”

Pacifica apparently had no qualms with laughing aloud like Mabel did.

“Ah man, Madame Cycle is gonna love you guys so much. Come on, I'll get you two there.”

She tugged at Mabel's hand and guided them forward.

Mabel could already see a stain of white against the darkness.

“Ready to head into... whatever Magical Afterlife is?” Mason smiled at her, uncertain as ever.

Mabel squeezed his hand.

“Not even a little.”

Pacifica tugged them forward and Mabel was just barely able to make out a face in the distance.
“Let's do it.”
Thank you all so much for joining me in this exploration of character. I will be posting little 'bonus features' type things on my Tumblr [over here](https://vegalocity.tumblr.com), But this story as it is, is finished. I'm not done with Gravity Falls as a whole just yet, I still have Rhinestones and True Gems, as well as a new story I've been plotting out for some time now. But as a narrative whole, Equivalent exchange has come to a close. To every last person who has taken the time to read my story, and show appreciation for it, be it in kudos or bookmarks or comments, I thank each and every one of you for your support over the past year.

Previously titled 'Lost in the Maze'. Rewritten and revamped. If you wanna talk contact me over something that's not comments, check my tumblr vegalocity.tumblr.com

Please [drop by the archive and comment](https://www.tumblr.com) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!