

CHAPTER 28

The Magic Words



Wallaby fell to the ground again. The grass didn't feel as soft the hundredth time, and though the field was familiar, the cover of night had started to put fear in him. *Am I just afraid of France?* He wondered. Wallaby looked up at the misshapen door in front of him and dreaded trying to knock on it again, forcing it to take them to the supposed hidden wonder known as Nomanisan.

"Can you try again?" Stevin asked, but in a tone that was more direct than a question.

It was hard for Wallaby to answer immediately. He arose and wiped the dirt from his pants. “I could use a break, Stevin. We haven’t eaten in over a day, and I’m sure the cottage has something we can cook up.”

Stevin glanced at the cottage behind them. It didn’t look as condemned now that the sky was black, but he shook his head, regardless. “There’s no time, Wallaby. As we speak, anomalies are tearing the world apart and forcing time to become fluid. Is that what you want?”

“Well, no, obviously not—”

“Then let’s keep going! Once you’ve mastered door travel, we can catch up with Kevin and finish our search for Mary. Isn’t that what you want?”

“Well, yes, obviously, I—”

“Perfect! So try again, but this time with a more distinct rhythm in your knock. Do you, by any chance, know the jingle for that gum commercial?”

“How could I not? It plays on TV every single—”

“Great! Hum that and then strike the door with all of your love for Mary. It’ll be easy. If you truly love her, of course.”

So Wallaby knocked on the door again. It was made of wood assembled from the cottage, courtesy of Sadie’s surprise knack for carpentry. It had only taken them an hour to get the frame together, though Wallaby couldn’t get the actual door to work for some odd reason. It wasn’t like the other doors they had come across, which Wallaby had managed to finesse with relative ease. When Wallaby

opened the door to see if something had changed, he instead tripped over the frame and tumbled to the ground.

An amused Sadie walked up to them. “Still not working, eh? It would appear the limits of your magical prowess were a little underestimated, ally.”

I’ll remember that, Wallaby thought. He also wondered why she still called him that. “Yeah, yeah, I’m not an expert. Maybe if Alec was still around, you could give *him* a hard time.” Wallaby immediately regretted mentioning their old professor. Suddenly, the grief of his defeat at the hands of Agent Willem came rushing back to Wallaby’s mind. A quick look at Stevin’s face confirmed just the opposite. Stevin Parker was unmoved.

“Again,” he ordered Wallaby.

Sadie shook her head. “Maybe it’s the wood that is preventing Wallaby from carrying out his objective. I can gather more and assemble another test door.”

“I agree,” Sumner agreed from out of nowhere. He had been reclining on the hill soaking up some rays. But with the sun gone, even he was starting to grow bored.

“The problem isn’t with the door,” Stevin replied, looking back at Sadie. “It’s with Wallaby.” He turned back to Wallaby. “Again.”

Wallaby tried several more times, each attempt more grueling than the last. Each time he fell to the ground, he thought of other solutions to their problem. *We could travel back in time and do this or that. We can prevent the Unforgivables from finding us in the first place.* But

each idea was immediately shut down. *Time is almost fluid now. If we try to jump around, we'll cause anomalies and make everything worse.* It was true. Every time they had tried to use time travel to aid their search or escape danger, it had only caused more problems upon problems. There was only one path ahead of them at this point, and it was to Nomanisan.

The sky had been dark for an hour by the time they heard the sound of a helicopter flying over their heads. Sadie had heard it first, but it was Mr. Sumner who first voiced caution. "Something about the sound of that machine makes me think it's...I don't know, out of place," he had said to them.

Eventually, the helicopter reached the group and descended quickly, forcing Sadie and Stevin to their guard. Wallaby crawled away from the door and tried to see where the helicopter was landing, so he could be far from it. The aircraft was unlike anything he had seen before, helicopter or otherwise. It was a unique, pointed, shape, and it seemed to almost levitate due to the exact precision of its landing. It had flown in so quickly and sharply, Wallaby barely had time to wonder who was flying it and why.

Stevin looked over at Sadie and crossed his arms. "Any ideas?"

"Yes," she responded. "We engage with reckless abandon."

"You're learning new words," Stevin complimented. She grinned and nodded as Mr. Sumner flew to Stevin's shoulder.

The blades of the helicopter were still running when a figure stepped out, alone. He tossed his helmet away and stepped toward the

detectives. When they recognized him, the man smirked in response, almost as if he was taunting them.

“We finally reunite, Mr. Parker,” said the man. “Though your friends haven’t had much time to miss me.”

Stevin stepped forward. “How did you find us, Randall?”

“Please, I’ve known where you are for months. How did you think Logan Parr managed to find you?”

That was a good question. Wallaby could see that Stevin was unsure about this. All he remembered was something about Logan telling them that Al, the tinkerer, had been working against them.

With a sigh, Stevin finally spoke up. “Al helped build a few things for us with Cara. I’m guessing he placed some sort of tracker in my hat or in Sumner’s necklace.”

“Good guess,” Randall replied coldly.

“So why now? Are you tired of waiting for us to do your work for you? Finding Mary that is.”

“More or less,” said Randall. “We’re on a time limit, in case you haven’t noticed already. Anomalies have been sprouting up all over the world. People have been disappearing. Events have been erased from the memories of entire populations. Ya da ya da ya da. And it all comes down to finding out where our mutual friend Mary has gone.”

“Why?” Wallaby interrupted, to his own surprise. He gulped as soon as he asked it.

“Yes, why?” Stevin added. “What does Mary have to do with any of this?”

Randall sighed and adjusted his glasses. “It’s simple, really. A powerful, time-traveling sorceress has captured her. We’ve been hunting this witch for years, as she’s been known to disrupt entire timelines for unknown reasons. We think she wants to reset time altogether, and for some reason, Mary is the key to all of this. If we can find Mary, we’ll find her captor.”

“And what does this witch want with Mary?” asked Stevin.

“That, I can’t say. Children have been known to hold tremendous... power.” Randall looked down for a moment, as if he was recalling something. “As I said, we don’t have time, so I’ve decided to bring you and your friends in on our little search. Officially. You have my word that no harm will come to Mary, despite what my employer, Mr. Forthright, has alluded to. I will provide the resources necessary for you to find her, and we even have your magician, Wallaby or whatever his name is, to round out the magic side of our little alliance. And of course, when this is all over, BnL will no longer pursue or monitor your team of misfits. You all go free. Even Sadie and the monster.”

“Hey, I have a name!” Sumner peeked from behind Stevin.

“Yes, the purple one,” Randall said. “What do you say, Stevin? How far does your desire to find Mary go, exactly? I’m truly curious.”

There was a short pause. Wallaby wanted to take Stevin aside, but the detective spoke before he got the chance. “What kind of resources can you provide?”

Randall smiled. “First, transportation. The helicopter behind us isn’t normal. I’ve borrowed it from the future. Once we reach a certain

altitude, it can reach speeds ten times faster than a jet. With my help, we can cover more ground much faster.”

“That all?”

“Please.” He turned around and snapped his fingers at the helicopter. Out of it came Cochran, the Pixar University student who betrayed Cara and Logan. He was holding something covered in a sheet. Cochran approached them and put his hand to the cloth, waiting for Randall’s signal.

“Stevin, Wallaby, I’m sure you remember your old friend?”

Cochran lifted the sheet to reveal a cage with a small bunny inside. It immediately noticed Stevin and Wallaby. The bunny thrashed around the cage in excitement, chattering something they couldn’t understand.

“A bunny?” Stevin and Wallaby said, almost in unison.

“What? You don’t remember your favorite, peculiar professor?”

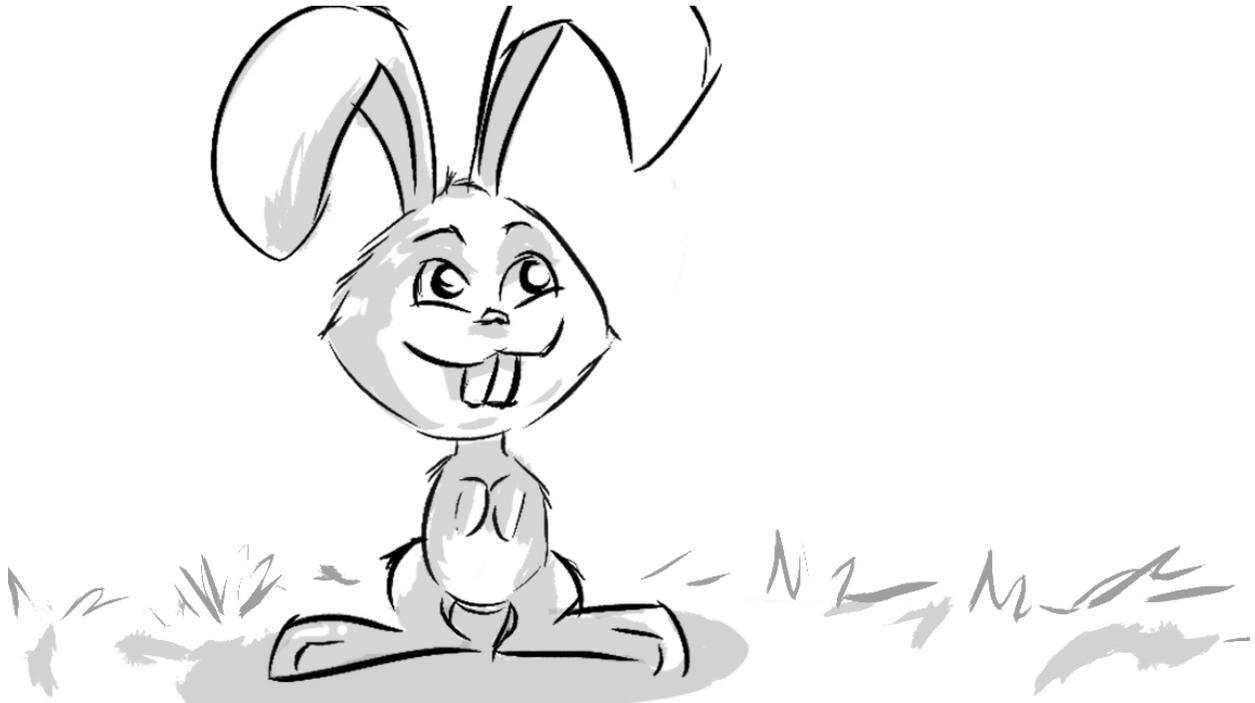
Disbelief crowded Wallaby’s mind. *Mr. Azam? Could it be you?*

Sadie walked up to the cage and inspected it as the bunny walked out. “The bunny is saying something strange,” she said.

“Since when can you talk to animals?” Wallaby asked, immediately feeling stupid.

Fortunately, Sadie ignored that. “The bunny is saying, ‘It’s me, Alec Azam!’ Over and over again.”

Those words rang in Wallaby’s head like a rusty bell. *Impossible. That can’t be...* Wallaby looked over at Stevin, who seemed just as



confused. He watched Stevin bend down to look the bunny in the eye directly.

“Is that you, Mr. Azam?”

The bunny nodded.

Randall put his hand on Stevin’s shoulder. “Cochran extracted the professor here from where you left him. In Metroville 80 years ago. I was there when Agent Willem used the Maestro’s serum to turn your friend into this animal. They gave the bunny away after the Hexagon collapsed, so it took Cochran quite a while to find him. Luckily, he has a gift for knowing good information from bad.”

That’s right, thought Wallaby. Cochran is able to tell if a person is lying, supposedly with perfect accuracy. He looked over at the bunny, presumably Alec, and wished he had the same ability.

Stevin stiffened his shoulders. “So you would just hand Mr. Azam over to us?”

“Not exactly,” Randall replied as he took out a bottle of hand sanitizer and wiped both hands. “Only on the condition that we work together from here on out. You should know that your professor and I have been on the same side for a long time, perhaps begrudgingly. So you’ll see that even he will tell you to get with the program on this. It will take *all of us* to figure out where Mary is and save her before the witch tears time apart.”

As their eyes met, Alec nodded. Though Stevin didn’t appear fully persuaded. “Well, there’s a big issue with that, Randall. We’re about as close to finding Mary as you are. She’s on an island that’s literally moved across the world, and we have no way of finding her.”

“Ah, Nomanisan.” Randall stroked his chin. “That is a tricky one. What do you think Alec?”

The bunny spoke for a minute as Sadie translated. “He’s saying, ‘Have you already forgotten, Mr. Parker? What did we do the last time we had to find someone by a hair?’”

Stevin looked up. “That’s right. The locator spell we used to find Mr. Sumner. Wallaby, we can use that same spell to find Mary!”

“But wait,” said Wallaby, “Mr. Azam already told us we can’t use that spell to find Mary. Obviously, he never explained why...”

The bunny continued, through Sadie, “Yes, good memory on you Mr. Jones! Mary has been shrouded in a spell that hides her from us, likely from the witch that took her. That’s why we’re not going to

search for *her*. We don't know for sure that Mary is on Nomanisan, this is true, but we know that's where the Spirit of Adventure went. I'm assuming you have something that belongs to Kevin Sohn?"

How does Alec know about... Suddenly, it dawned on him. Wallaby took a tennis ball out of his pocket. "This belonged to him. He used these things to fight the robot thing back in Paris."

"Perfect!" the bunny said through Sadie. "Now, we just need the other ingredients!"

Stevin looked at Sadie and shrugged. "We need a hair of the catalyst. And we have a red-haired girl who just happens to be the first super. Will Sadie do?"

"Expertly, as long as Mr. Jones remembers to say the magic words."

"Wait, I have to do this?" Wallaby groaned.

"Of course!" the professor cackled, though Sadie had a hard time translating that part. "I can't do magic as a bunny. Seriously, Mr. Jones, keep up. Also, for this spell, you'll need the hair of a monster."

Everyone looked at Mr. Sumner.

"Alright, fine. Might as well," Sumner shrugged.

"Please don't say we need milk," Wallaby groaned. "There might be some in that cottage, but I doubt it's appropriate."

Randall snapped his fingers and Cochran emerged from the helicopter with a mini fridge. "Let's hurry this up," he said with a chill in his voice.

They assembled the ingredients as Alec summoned a book from the helicopter. It was a large tome that Wallaby immediately recognized. “That’s the book you had back at the warehouse, right?”

“Indeed,” Alec said with Sadie’s help, though she was somewhat distracted by Stevin’s attempt to cut her hair without making a mess. Alec lifted the book up to show Wallaby the page. “See here? This is a depiction of the island we’re searching for. It’s had many names, Nomanisan being the most recent. On this island, you’ll find a large tree, exactly like the one that sprouted from Mary’s house. This tree is very important. You see, the island uses the tree as a sort of lightning rod for the collective imagination of every creature on Earth. It’s where a magician is most powerful, because energy is drawn to that island continuously. There are many mysteries on that island, including fruit and plants that can be extremely deadly. Some may even turn living things insane. It was here that the Maestro found what he needed to create the serum that would form his first supers.”

When he said that last part, Sadie looked at her arm. “That’s where I come from, then? A tree?”

Alec chattered for a bit, but Sadie didn’t translate. Wallaby noted that he shook his head. *There’s no way it’s that simple*, he concluded.

Stevin dropped Sadie’s hair into their makeshift pot, just as Randall unscrewed the lid of the milk. He leaned in close. “When you return to the future, tell Forthright to let Cara, Logan, Willem, and the others go. There’s no reason for them to fight anymore.”

“Doubtful,” Randall replied. “I understand you’ve grown fond of that lot, but it’s outside my power and yours. Pixar University will always contend with BnL. That’s how we’ve found balance with the timeline. Disrupt that, and you’ll become just as dangerous as the sorceress who caused all this.”

“I’m guessing that’s a threat.”

“You *guess* a lot for a detective.” He poured the milk into the cauldron and walked away.

A cautious Sadie stopped him in his tracks. “My tattoo,” she told him. “It’s been glowing, and I have reason to believe the magic that gave me my powers is unstable and will ultimately cause me to self-destruct. Do you know about this?”

There was no visible reaction on Randall’s face, but Wallaby swore he could see empathy from the strange man. “I do, Sadie. I know what happens to you in the correct timeline. The Maestro built a failsafe in your arm in case you ever escaped the Hexagon. The tattoo is both the source and the end of your powers, and if it’s glowing unprovoked, that means you don’t have much time left. Not unless you return to the Hexagon *immediately*.”

She looked down, horrified. “I can’t. Finding that place...that would mean I have to forsake my life debt to Stevin Parker.”

“You don’t have much time to decide. What’s left of the Hexagon is still in Metroville, and if you leave now, you might make it. Just barely.”

Wallaby could the uncertainty in Sadie's face. *How can she make such a difficult decision?* He wondered what she might do, just as Stevin approached her.

"Sadie? What's wrong?"

"I'm sorry." She transformed into a falcon and disappeared into the sky.

...

Aboard the Phantasm, the Unforgivables looked on in horror from the sky. Though it was dusk, they had no trouble understanding what was ahead of them.

An island floating in the sky. Robert Best scrambled for his freeze gloves as fast as possible and strapped them on. "We have a fight on our hands, people."

"Why do you say that?" Badger asked timidly from the pilot's seat, trying desperately to slow down their speed.

"Only a sorcerer could cause *that*," he reasoned. "Since Agent Nomanisan has gone dark, I suspect the forces on that island are the reason." He looked over at Petit. "Get your bombs and prepare to land on the island."

Hearing this, Rey tapped Robert on the shoulder. "You're right. Look." She pointed at an old woman walking near the edge of the island. Behind her, a young girl was cowering on the ground. "That old woman there. *That* must be the sorceress."

What's she doing? Robert could see that the woman was raising her hands, but to what end, he couldn't understand. Suddenly, a cloud appeared directly in front of them, causing the Phantasm to hit turbulence. As the jet shook, everyone but Robert and Badger fell to their feet. Looking ahead, Robert could see several more clouds forming out of nowhere. *Those are storm clouds*, he observed. And sure enough, a bolt of lightning escaped one and came within several yards of the jet. The crack of the thunder seemed to echo for an eternity.

“Badger, Petit, you're up. Rey, take the controls. We're steering into this skid.”

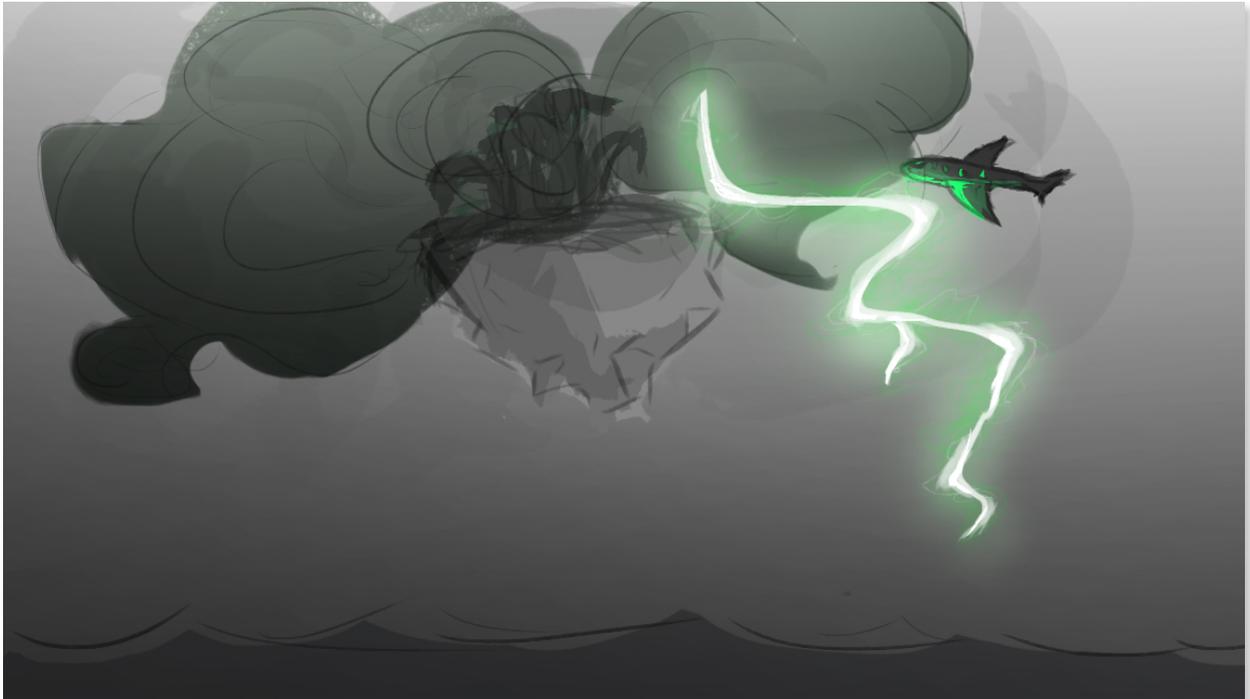
With a gulp, Badger scratched his head. “Um, not to be a bother, Captain Best, sir, but how are *we* supposed to get down there?”

“Parachutes. Now, move it!”

As they scrambled away, Robert could hear Rey say under her breath, “Excellent delegation, boss.”

...

The sky seemed even darker now that it was covered with storm clouds. Mary gripped the grass as she lay on her back behind Princess Belle. “What are you doing, Belle? There are people on that jet!”



“Really, Mary? I just lifted this island miles above the ground and *that’s* what you’re thinking about? Oh, that soft side you have won’t last long, little dear.”

Though her hands started to ache from the pressure of the ground pushing against them, Mary crawled backward, hoping to elude the witch while she engaged the trespassers. *No sense in sticking around*, she decided. Though Mary had taken on the android before, she had no sense of pride in her ability to take on a witch with this much power. Suddenly, she felt a hand cover her mouth.

A voice whispered in her ear, “Be quiet, and let’s go.” She knew immediately that it was Russell.

With the witch distracted, they were able to sneak away and start sprinting toward another corner of the island. Mary wanted to ask where they were going, but she answered the question for herself. *The*

Spirit of Adventure, she remembered. Russell's dirigible was still safe and sound across the island, and all they needed to do was reach the cockpit before the witch could realize they were gone. They ran through the stream that served as a shortcut through the hills that would take them to ship. Lightning flashed and shined off of the water, making it almost impossible for Mary to see where they were going. Her clothes were soaked by the time they leapt over the rocks that separated them from where Russell had landed earlier.

Finally, the ship was within sight. "Come on," Russell urged her. "We'll head to a place the witch would never bother to look for us."

"Like where?"

"I don't know...Paradise Falls or something. Let's just go!"

The hatch was just ahead, but something jumped out in front of them. It was the android. Its eyes glowed blue instead of red this time.

"RUN!" Russell yelled to Mary, pushing her behind him. The android stepped closer. "I have a new directive. You will not leave the island." It clenched its fists.

Mary did too. She focused all of her energy and pushed her hands toward the android to disassemble him. But nothing happened. So she raised a few pinecones from the ground and launched them with as much force as she could. As she did this, the android rotated its head and leapt from its spot. Two more limbs sprouted from its side, and each one swatted the pine cones away effortlessly.

"It learned from our last fight," Russell said with dread. "That's how this thing works. It literally *evolves*."

But how? Mary wondered. She had rendered it useless before. *Who repaired that thing?*

She had no time to think. The android grabbed both of them and forced them to the ground. “My new directive is to prevent subjects from leaving this island. At any cost.” Its other two limbs came toward Mary and Russell, but they were now blades. As the blades touched their flesh, something erupted from behind them, causing the android to miss. It fell backward, giving Mary and Russell a chance to break free. They looked behind them to see a woman rushing toward the android with bombs in her hand.

“What do you think you’re doing Nomanisan?! Those are civilians!” She chucked several bombs at the android, but they didn’t explode. Instead, they let out an EMP blast that shut it down. “Who are you?” the woman asked Mary and Russell forcefully.

Mary was the first to speak up. “I was captured by the witch who made this island rise. Are you with the university? I saw your jet.”

“That’s right. My name is Petit. Is that ship operational?”

Before they could answer, a fist struck Petit in the face, sending her back several feet. Russell looked back to see it was the android, just before a fist hit his as well. Mary rolled over just in time to miss it the third one, but a fourth fist with a blade came at her as well. She lifted a log sitting next to the android and used it to knock Nomanisan off of his feet. When he fell, a hole emerged from under him. He disappeared as quickly as he had shown up, much to Mary’s confusion. She looked at Russell and Petit to see if they were alright. She saw them staring at

something ahead. From the hole, a machine had arisen with Nomanisan attached to it. A strange boy with large teeth and thick goggles was driving it.

Is that a drill?

Nomanisan pushed itself off the drill and turned two of its limbs into helicopters. He was now levitating in the air, using his other two fists to grab the drill and flip it over.

“Badger!” Petit screamed from behind them. She tossed another EMP bomb at Nomanisan, but he quickly realized what it was and used his leg to swat it at Badger. The bomb shut the drill down and caused a tremor that pried him off of the machine. Nomanisan used this opportunity to strike Badger from the air, but he pulled a small drill from his jacket and unleashed it on the fist coming for him. His drill let out a fury of sparks that shocked Nomanisan to his core, causing him to tumble to the ground.

Petit approached Badger to make sure he was unhurt, but Nomanisan wasted no time recuperating. They continued to fight as Russell grabbed Mary’s arm.

“Let’s go!” he told her.

“But those guys...they don’t stand a chance!”

Russell frowned. “There’s no time.” He led her away from the fight and pulled down the hatch of the dirigible. They crawled inside and rushed through the ship toward the cockpit. Russell grabbed her hand and led her down a few long hallways. Mary couldn’t even catch her breath as flashes of lightning barely illuminated the path ahead. As

they passed a window, she tried to glance outside in order to see the fight taking place outside. Lightning was now striking everywhere, though she caught a glimpse of the jet still gliding around with one of its engines on fire. When they passed the window by the mess hall, Mary could see the fight between Petit, Badger, and Nomanisan still raging. She wondered how they had already known each other. Before she could dwell on it, Russell shook her shoulder.

“The cockpit’s just up here!” he whispered, though Mary didn’t understand why he was whispering. *It’s not like something is going to*—but something interrupted her thoughts. The wall started to creak, and a rippling effect like a pebble thrown into a pond started to blanket the walls. A voice echoed from them.

“Where are you going, little dear? Why would you want to be on this ship? So far...”

Mary shut the voice out and closed her eyes, though she wanted to open them to see if Russell could hear the voice too. She saw the wall, and it had the face of the witch clearly stitched on it.

“You’re going the wrong way, little dear. Where, oh where, are you going?”

A tingling chill crept down Mary’s spine. She rubbed her eyes and kept rubbing, not bothering to say word. Russell kept on as well, but the voices were now speaking over each other. Mary couldn’t understand all of them. It was a mix of, “Where are you going? What’s down here? You would leave me now? This is your new home. There’s

no reason to leave.” Mary’s stomach pulsed. Finally, Russell stopped and opened the door to the cockpit.

“Let’s get out of here,” he motioned.

Mary opened her eyes and saw the witch standing directly in front of them, smirking. Then she frowned. “I thought I told you to stay put.”

Russell screamed, “Get away from us!” He jumped backward and threw a tennis ball at the witch, but she stopped it in midair. Behind them, knives and brooms were floating indiscriminately.

“You can’t leave now. I’m your host. Leaving now would be *rude*.” A flurry of string started to rise above their ankles, as if to tie them up. The sensation of this wire against Mary’s skin made her skin turn white. She shrieked as it crept up her body and near her mouth.

“NO!” she screamed, summoning a force that caused the string to recoil from her, as if it had a mind of its own.

The witch lifted Russell from the ground and threw him toward the hatch at the end of the hall. “Say, Mary. Would you like it if I sent Russell to another time period? No big deal, of course. It would just be a period of time in which dinosaurs rule the Earth. Since we’re dealing with millions of years of possibilities, you’ll never find him. And he’ll probably survive about a day before dying. Those are harsh conditions after all, considering the climate and human issues with adapting to other time periods. You understand. Oh, look! The door’s opening now. I could send him and that’s that.”

“Don’t you dare.” Mary’s face darkened, but she lowered her guard. “Don’t do this, Belle. He’s just trying to help me.”

“He doesn’t care about you, little dear. He never did. And now that I think about it, I can just do whatever I want.” The door opened, and Russell was flung through it.

“NO!” Mary shouted at the top of her lungs. She ran of the door, but it was closed. When she opened it, nothing was on the other side.

She turned to look the witch in the eye. “Bring. Him. Back.”

“Sorry, little dear. You’ll never see him again. It’s for the best.”

Mary ran toward her and took control of the brooms of the knives, away from the witch. She flung them at her with her full fury. The witch narrowly stopped them, surprised at what had happened.

“How did you...?”

But Mary wasn’t listening. She pushed the knives further and further, and her strength didn’t let up. “Why are you doing this?!” Mary pleaded. “You capture me. Hold me against my will. Do terrible things to my FRIEND. Why?! What did I ever do to you?!”

As the knives started to kiss the witch’s face, she finally revealed her true face, and it was terrified.

“Because *I’m you!*”

The words made Mary stop.

“I’m you, Mary. A long time from now.”

The knives dropped to the ground, and Mary walked backward.

“No. No, no, no, no. No.”

“It’s true,” the witch said as lightning flashed over her. She reached her hand out. “I’ve done all of this to protect you. To protect us. And not just us, but the world. Don’t you see? We’re so powerful. We’ve caused so much pain. But now, we’re going somewhere we can’t do any damage. Don’t you see?”

“No.” That was all Mary could say. Her mind flooded with conflicting thoughts. But she knew it to be true. But all she could say was, “No.”

Mary ran. Far. She tried to remember where Russell had led her. As she fled, she wondered how it would be possible to find Russell, wherever...the witch...had sent him. *I left him. I just left him. I can’t leave him.* Despite these thoughts, she kept running. When she reached the hatch, she noticed it was still open from when they had entered. She stepped out and saw Nomanisan dismantling Badger’s drill. He was lying on the ground motionless. Petit was crawling away, bruised and nearly passed out. Nomanisan grabbed her and lifted her up. He dropped her on the ground until she stopped moving. Mary wondered if it was safer back inside, but Nomanisan saw her. The fury inside her was gone, and with it, her ability to fight back.

If this is it, so be it. I’m done fighting. She sat down and looked up. *I don’t even have to cry.*

From the corner of her eye, she could see snow.

Wait, is that snow?

A stream of ice appeared above them, as if it was a rail. A man was using it to descend to the island. He was a tall, dark man with metallic

gloves. Out of them came frigid blasts of snow and ice. They hit the ground around Nomanisan, forming a barrier of ice.

“Are you OK?” the man said to Mary. He had a striking air of confidence, which was the last thing Mary wanted to feel.

“F-fine. My name Is Mary.” *Well that’s a dumb thing to say at a time like this*, she thought to herself.

“Robert. Now, let’s get out of here, Mary.” He reach out his hand to grab hers, but not before a loud tremor alerted him. Several pieces of rubble came flying at them. Mary stopped some of them, but they still made contact with Robert’s chest. He used his left arm to shoot a few blasts as he fell backward. Mary quickly looked to see if his efforts carried meaning, but they didn’t. Nomanisan dodged them easily. The android managed to grab both of Robert’s arms and crush the gloves in a matter of seconds. He struck Robert in the gut several times, forcing the man to the ground. As this happened, Mary could see the witch emerging from the hatch.

“Easy, Nomanisan. I don’t want you to finish them off quite yet. That’s such a permanent solution.” She looked over at Mary with disgust. “Pile them up. They will be executed immediately.” She clapped, and the android obeyed. “You know, Mary. I captured you for a reason. I want to reset time. Prevent all of this. You know, at this point, nothing I do matters. So, maybe it’s time I do what I set out to do when I took you from your room all those months ago. Getting rid of you is the solution to all of our problems. Without you, I don’t exist. None of my mistakes will happen, and everyone will be happy. Even

your precious Russell. Do you like that? Of course you do. But that means one thing.”

Several knives came out of the ship and surrounded Mary. “That means you have to *go*. I hope you don’t take this personally.”

A loud sound interrupted them. The witch immediately looked up and forced the knives to stop.

Mary looked up as well. She saw a helicopter with a young man at the side. He wore a bowler hat and a trench coat. On his shoulder was a purple ball of fur. He looked at her like he had looked at her all his life.

He’s here.

*

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