

# Ep. 1: Burning Black - Act 1: Dimmsdale By Black Light

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*4 yrs ago, Dimmsdale tragically lost 10-year-old Timmy Turner. Now, it's covered by a darkness that's killing magic. Resurrected, Timmy returns to save the city, the world, and maybe even discover the truth about his death....*

FOPXToSXDp

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# 1 - A Name for the Nameless

## ***Burning Black***

Act 1:  
Dimmsdale By Black Light

1

*"Hey, hi. I guess now's as good a time to say some things about my life... or lack thereof. Or am I somewhere in between? Wanda, you really have to help me figure this out one day.... Okay, going off topic, sorry.*

*First off, my name is Timothy Thomas Turner. Or at least it was. Nowadays you'll probably recognize me as Timothy Neogene. And it's pronounced 'Nay-oh-jeh-neh', okay? Caleb's idea. This way I can get my old Timmy nickname again, but no one gets the idea it's really me. Well, they shouldn't anyway, seeing as the only Timmy T. Turner of Dimmsdale, California up and died some four years ago. Cosmo, quit crying over that, it's getting old. No, it's not your fault. Just... here, take this and blow your nose.*

*Now where was I? Oh yeah. So, if I'm Timmy and I 'died' four years ago, how can I be talking to you now? That's easy. Or not. Wanda! I'm confusing myself again! Never mind. Let's just say that the whole thing involved my fairy godparents, an ancient advanced angelic android (too many 'a' words) who has a buttload of magic of his own, and my cousin from out of state who just so happens to be half ghost.*

*And my enemies. It definitely involves my childhood enemies. See, 'cause without me to keep them in line with my crazy wishes that **eventually** makes things better (or worse if you see it from Wanda's view), they basically conquered all of Dimmsdale. So guess who has to free the town and make sure they don't spread over the world?*

*That's right. Me, Timothy Neogene, Timmy Turner to you guys; the kid who broke the most powerful rule of all. 'No one escapes Death.'"*

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*

Dimmsdale, California, 2006~

The night was clear and warm, and for once in his life the weatherman was right about it. At least, the fact that there was no light from a thousand torches obliterating the peaceful ambiance and no screams of outrage filling the air suggested that he had been right; for all Victoria knew he could have predicted a hurricane and was allowed to stay in Dimmsdale for being wrong about it. Of course the chances of there being a hurricane this far inland of California were somewhat remote, so predicting one and knowing he'd be wrong was probably the man's only hope at keeping his job and home.

Either way, Victoria didn't care. She had an appointment to keep.

Walking to the gravesite in Dimmsdale Cemetery was always a saddening experience. Among all the tombs and markers, this one was the most decorated and well-kept. She could see from just a yard or so away the dozens of flowers and toys and pictures left by any number of mourners. She paused for a moment, sighed sadly, then pressed on with her offering clutched in her hands. A small bouquet of pink flowers, all to represent the color he wore the most, trembled in her grip as she trudged on.

Brutal and vicious in the world of business, Victoria could dance with the best of them in any hostile takeover she undertook. Her keen senses for making money ranked her the best at it for such a young woman. And yet for all that power, all that she could gain, it was nothing compared to what had been lost so long ago. And nothing when getting jumped by a gang of thugs.

"Hey! Hands off the suit! It's worth more than the bunch of ya will ever make together!" she screeched in outrage as a pair of the grunts grabbed her by the arms and lifted her off her feet. The leader of the group stood before her, grinning as he aimed a menacing gun at her.

"Now, now, babe. We just want the money. Ain't nothin' bad gonna happen if you work with us." he chuckled harshly. He motioned to the flowers in her hand. "Visiting a boyfriend? How's about one of us replace him?" he added insinuatingly. Victoria shot him a glare despite shaking at the thought of having the weapon go off on her.

"Why you-!" she began only to yelp in shock at sudden bursts of lightning that shot into the two thugs holding her. They were knocked away and sent sprawling into the ground, motionless. The air smelled of smoke and singed flesh as the thug spun around to see what had happened, where the lightning could have come from. Victoria stood still, staring beyond the oaf who was ordering his grunts to find out what caused the mess.

Someone was standing there.

The moonlight was strong tonight, and it played over the statues and tombstones to create hundreds of shadows and illusions, but the boy standing under a nearby oak tree was no phantom. She could clearly see his anger, half shrouded by the darkness. Odd; something about him seemed faintly familiar.

He was holding a long thin pole of wood in one hand, the other pressed open-palmed against it, positioned horizontally before him. A quick spin of it and he set it beside him in the soft earth. Victoria swallowed; what was this kid doing out here this late?

"Get away from her and drop that gun." the newcomer growled. All eyes turned to him as he finished speaking and the leader of gang bared his teeth in a fury. "I don't like anyone who disrespects the dead, or messes with the mourners."

"Tough talk coming from someone about to **join** the dead!" the larger man barked out and opened fire. Victoria shrieked in horror as the kid took every hit, not even attempting to block or dodge the spray of bullets that tore through his darkly-colored shirt. When he fell forward, her heart sank and a sick feeling rose to take its place. This was the first time she actually witnessed someone die... now she could understand the trauma all those little kids went through that day....

She was only partially aware of the thug turning his attention back on her, as her eyes were still riveted to the body of the stupid, but still heroic, boy that lay on the grass. He had to be dead. No way was he getting up from that. If the Heart of Dimmsdale could fall, then anyone could. Mortality was mortality.

And yet that boy was getting up....

"Ow. Darn it... that hurts.... I'm never getting used to stuff like that." the boy grumbled and complained as he pushed himself up and climbed to his feet. He grabbed his staff and pointed it at the thug. "Hey! You! I thought I told you to drop that gun and get out of here!" he shouted, "And don't even try shooting me again! It doesn't work!" The guy spun and stared at him in shock, disbelief sounding in the guttural noises coming from his throat.

"What the hell?! I shot you! I killed you!" he rasped, shaking violently as he tried to aim again.

"Meh. I get that a lot." the boy replied cheerfully and threw his hands with the pole forward, a circle of light blooming at his feet and a sudden gust of wind rushing up around him. Another miracle lightning bolt struck, slamming into the thug and sending him flying back to join the first two that were hit. Scrambling to their feet, the gang fled, at least three of them probably hoping there was a hospital of some sort nearby. Victoria only stood frozen to the ground, staring at the youngster who ran up to her. "Hey, are you okay? They didn't hurt you or anything did they?" he asked, then halted, a look of surprise and, recognition?, on his face, "Oh." His last word was only a whisper.

He was definitely a kid, probably fourteen or fifteen, not old enough for a driver's license that's for sure. The boy turned away from her and pressed fingers to his chest, probably poking at the holes that had to have turned him into Swiss cheese.

"Whoa. Bullets. That's new. I don't think I've been shot at yet." he remarked in mild surprise, "I suppose I'll have to get them out before I cast *Cure*?"

"That was incredible!" Victoria cried in amazement, "How did-?" She pointed at him, then at the fading figures of the gang, "But they... and you...! You saved me!" The boy blinked up at her in confusion, familiar blue eyes and dark hair standing out against the light of the moon and several dozen candles marking *the* grave. She took the time to better study the strange kid. Dark red or maroon shirt, either that or it was pretty badly soaked with blood; black pants, okay, she could see that. Victoria was an expert on black pants. He had on a backpack, like he'd been traveling for some time, it was old and fairly tattered. The outfit would have been considered normal, if it weren't for all those weird accessories he carted around. Who ever heard of a green iPod, for heaven's sake? And there was a pink watch on one wrist; both the iPod and watch must have been from the same company, they each carried a gold crown logo.

He also wore a strange silver necklace that looked as though it belonged in a Goth shop, and a slightly matching ring on one hand that she noticed still had a faint glow to it.

"Uh, why are you staring at me like that?" the boy asked warily. Victoria blinked and shook her head clear. She put her hand to her head, both to see if she wasn't dreaming the whole thing and to check on her hair. It was loose from the usual red bun she tied it in.

"How did you survive that?" she finally asked hollowly. The boy shrugged and made a vague gesture with one hand, stepping away from her as he began to leave the area.

"Bulletproof vest. Duh." he retorted and dusted himself off before searching around for his fallen staff. Victoria frowned at the answer and narrowed her eyes.

"Where does a punk kid get a bulletproof vest?" she growled and the boy hunched his shoulders suddenly, looking almost cornered.

"Erm... the Internet?" he replied weakly and forced a chuckle. She gave him one of her best glares and he straightened, grabbing up his staff at last and shaking his head. "Never mind. Look, what are you doing out here anyway?" he asked and tilted his head. The older woman scowled and folded her arms over her chest.

"Yeah, like I'm gonna tell a freak like you what I'm doing!" she snarled viciously, "How do I know you're not gonna 'magic' with *my* head?!" The boy sighed in exasperation and shoved one hand into a pocket, grumbling for a bit.

"Because if I wanted to, I would have done it by now?" he replied in an insulted tone, "Geez, give a guy a break. It was just a simple question." He looked around at the ground and took in the sight of the pink flowers scattered around the area. "I didn't think you were the type for flowers... especially pink ones." he added in a puzzled voice, "C'mon, indulge a kid. What are you doing out here by yourself?" Victoria muttered to herself in frustration as she began picking up the flowers, lessening just a bit when the kid bent to help her.

"Fine." she grumbled and led the way to the grave marker that had been her goal the entire night. The boy walked along beside her, looking appropriately somber for the trip. When they reached the grave, Victoria arranged the small bouquet into a soup can left by the tombstone. "If you laugh, you're dead." she threatened the boy over her shoulder. It was habit, and one she wasn't going to suspend just 'cause this kid saved her. Not that she needed saving or anything.... "I was visiting an old friend." she finally admitted quietly, reaching out to run her palm along the stone in a strangely affectionate gesture. The boy stepped closer to see the marker, then gasped sharply, scuffling back. She looked back at his pale and shocked expression.

"*Him?! But I thought you hated this guy!*" he blurted out in surprise. Victoria glared at him in suspicion and he flinched. "I was a pen pal of his. We wrote to each other during the summers." he explained quietly and made a weak gesture at the stone, "I figured something had happened, so I came to see what I could do. For him, for his loved ones, for his home."

"I didn't really hate him. That was just how I was when I was younger." Victoria sighed mournfully, "He was a pain sometimes, and could be awfully stupid, but he had a good heart." She managed a smile at the marker. "Sometimes, I wonder if he'd turn out to be cute when he grew out of that dorkiness. Now, we'll never know." she went on softly. The boy remained silent, gazing down at the assorted flowers and mounds of small toys that decorated the grave.

"Were you at his funeral?" he finally asked, words heavy with a strange emotion. Victoria propped up a fallen plush doll against the marker, nodding slowly as she felt her eyes watering with unshed tears. She

bent her head to hide them.

"Kid, the whole *town* was there. How could anyone miss the funeral for the Heart of Dimmsdale?" she managed to say and shut her eyes tightly, wishing she had more control over her tears. "It all felt so unreal. Like, it didn't really happen. Some mornings I wake up and look out the window, expecting to see him run by doing stupid crap." She covered her eyes with a hand, unwilling to let the falling tears be revealed. "Those days are the worst." she managed to sob out. There was a slight gust of wind and she heard the boy sigh softly in relief. Victoria looked over her shoulder at him a second time, wondering what he was up to. He had one hand over his heart, a relieved look on his face.

"Sorry. I needed to heal. The blood loss was making me feel dizzy." he murmured an explanation. Huh, Victoria remembered him saying that he had worn a bulletproof vest. Why would he have been bleeding then?

"What's your name?" Victoria asked at last, "I don't think I've seen you before in town." The boy gave a half shrug at that.

"I moved in a couple of months ago. Usually I stay home. There's nothing I need in town that isn't provided for me there." he replied evasively and bit his lip, "As for my name, well...." He glanced at the grave marker and smiled. "How about I borrow his name for a while?" he asked, pointing at the tombstone. Victoria followed his gaze, blinked, then glared back at him angrily.

"You can't have that name!" she hissed almost protectively. The boy smiled wider.

"Why not? He's been dead for four years, right? It's not like he's going to be needing it anymore." he remarked brightly, "He has no future, and I have no past. I like his name and everyone knows it already. It's perfect!" He began to run off, waving good-bye to her as though they were old friends. "Thanks for the name, Vicky! See ya!" he called and disappeared into the darkness.

"I said you can't have that name!" Victoria screamed in a fury, but he was already gone. Sighing at the thought of the strange kid laughing at her, she turned her sad eyes towards the small grave. "Well, I can at least trust *you* not to blab about this, right, Timmy?" she laughed weakly, "Dead Turners tell no tales." She knelt and gently traced her fingers over his name before freezing in place, eyes wide.

Name....

That boy called her Vicky, the name she went by when she was sixteen.

She never told that boy her name....

## 2 - Timothy

2

It was a week before Victoria ran into the boy again. He was at a bus stop, leaning back against the sign pole with his eyes closed. He looked calm and his pose was relaxed. Was he napping while waiting for a bus? She took a deep breath, set her face and marched up to him.

"Hey!" she yelled and smiled in satisfaction as the boy jumped forward in alarm. He may have strange powers, but in the end he was still a kid.

"What the heck-?!" he yelled and turned to stare at her, "You again?!"

"Yeah, me!" Victoria growled, "What are you up to now, you little freak?" The boy gave her a sidelong glare, facing the street as he stood impatiently. His clothes were similar to the ones he wore that night in the cemetery. The shirt was definitely a dark red. For some reason, it looked wrong on him. He still had the iPod and watch, as well as the weird necklace and ring, but he was absently rubbing his thumb against the iPod. Was he nervous?

"I was meditating while waiting for my ride home, up until you broke my concentration. But then breaking things has never bothered you before." he grumbled and muttered something under his breath that Victoria couldn't quite make out. She scowled and tapped her foot.

"Don't trash me, you little twerp!" she snapped and he managed a small grin at that before it vanished into annoyance. He was definitely growing nervous, shifting around on his feet and looking away from her. "So what were **you** doing at the cemetery last week? And how did you know my name?" she pressed, determined to get some answers. That brown hair of his was somewhat messy, and the style he wore it in looked familiar. Where did she see hair like that before?

"I was meditating. It's quiet and peaceful in the cemetery, so it helps me relax." the boy replied and smiled. "And you're the youngest businesswoman Dimmsdale has ever produced. *Everyone* knows your name! You're ruthless and vicious and that inspires a lot of people in the business world." Victoria soaked up the praise for a moment, then narrowed her eyes at him.

"Don't kiss up. I never got *your* name, twerp." she pointed out. The boy scowled at her, then waved a hand at her almost negligently.

"Fine. You want my name? Here it is." he grumbled and folded his arms over his chest, "My name is Timothy Neogene, but my friends call me Timmy." He cried in pain as Victoria socked him in the head suddenly, a furious rage overcoming her. How dare he?!

"**Never!** You will *never* be called 'Timmy' in Dimmsdale!" she fumed and took a sort of pleasure in his shocked expression as he rubbed his head, "In this town, there's only one Timmy and he's resting at that

cemetery!"

"He's dead!" the boy yelled back, painful tears in his eyes that she could see he was fighting to contain. Victoria shook her head.

"Doesn't matter! You don't get that nickname!" she shouted and turned her back on him in a huff, "You can be called Timothy, there's no avoiding that. But if you tell anyone else here to call you 'Timmy', you're gonna get kicked out of town." The boy merely made some strange noise at her, then returned to waiting for the bus. After another few minutes, she decided to let the matter drop as well. No sense in hanging on so tightly to the past, right? Even though this kid got on her nerves as much as little Timmy did so long ago....

"Do you want a ride home, Timothy?" she finally asked begrudgingly. She's only doing this to get him off the street so he doesn't bug anyone else. As long as she thought of it like that, then it doesn't count as being *nice*. He stared at her blankly and she bit back the urge to hit him again. God, this kid was *dense*! "I'm offering you a ride home, twerp! Take it or leave it!" she snapped and pointed at a black convertible parked not far from the bus stop. It wasn't technically legal to park so close to the office building where she worked, but then who was gonna stand against her on the issue? Timothy lit up at the sight of it.

"Really?! I get to ride home in that?! Cool!" he cheered and raced for the vehicle as Victoria trudged along behind, grumbling under her breath. Once the two were seated and Victoria started up the ignition, Timothy gave a little sigh and looked over at her warily. "You're taking me home, right? Not some insane asylum?" he asked.

"I should. Normal kids don't chuck lightning bolts at people." she growled, "But hey, if you keep hurling them at the stupid people, then who am I to stop ya?"

"Will I have to **earn** the nickname 'Timmy' in this town?" he went on and dodged another swipe.

"Dimmsdale's still out of it since Timmy Turner died, so there's no chance of anyone else getting that name." Victoria muttered as she began following the random directions the boy tossed out to get him home. "Mayor himself had it outlawed. Kind of going overboard for one name, but that's how much this city loved that kid." She grinned toothily, a smile that would put any piranha to shame. "The last idiot couple who moved here and tried to name their new kid 'Timmy' got chased out of town by the same guys who mob the weatherman."

"You're all so overprotective of that name. What's the deal? He was just a kid." Timothy grumbled, "Stupid kid that got killed in a stupid accident...." Victoria gave him another punch, to the arm this time, and hissed.

"You shut up! *I'm* the only one who can call him stupid!" she fumed and turned her eyes back to the streets, "He was an okay kid, though freaky stuff always happened when he was around. I guess it was part of his charm." She sighed as the boy rubbed his bruised arm. "The day he died, it was as though the heart of Dimmsdale had been torn out. The city's never been the same since." she added softly, "Like we're all depressed and we'll never escape some weird darkness that fell on the town."

"So all of this is his fault?" Timothy murmured quietly, a strangely guilty tone in his voice, "Sorry." He



seemed to slump a little. "The Heart of Dimmsdale...."

The rest of the ride was in silence as the car moved onto the next street. Victoria looked around, taking in the neighborhood as Timothy dozed off in the passenger seat. At one stoplight she tried to examine the contents of his backpack, but the kid had a lock on the clasp. Had it been one of those key-triggered gizmos, Victoria could have easily picked the lock; combination locks fell to bits under her trained ears and fingers. This one was weird, as though it was set to open only under his fingerprint or something.

She *did* notice the strange bruise on his neck though.

"Hey, kid, what's that?" she asked suddenly and he jumped awake with a start. He muttered something that sounded like 'Does it matter?' and pulled the collar of his shirt higher. The silence resumed after that for another few streets. Finally he pointed at one house and announced it as his own and got out of the car.

"Thanks for the ride." he remarked cheerfully, "I didn't think you'd actually be nice to someone on your own!"

"I'm **not** nice! And don't get used to it, twerp!" Victoria yelled after him as Timothy ran for his house. She lingered to see if his parents were home; after all, it was noon and he wasn't in school like normal high school students his age. Apparently not, as the boy opened the door and hurried in to turn on the lights. Did he live alone? "No way. Who in their right mind lets a kid his age live by himself?" she wondered aloud, both puzzled and alarmed by the situation she was witnessing. Who bought food for him? Who paid for the house? Who took care of him? Does he even go to school? He said he moved in two months ago, so he should have been enrolled in Dimmsdale's Oberon High School by now.

"Something's not right. A boy with no past, living alone, doesn't go to school and knows about Timmy Turner even though he says he doesn't know much? I smell a dirty secret." Victoria muttered and drove off, noting the address of Timothy's house. She'd call for the police to check it out first. No sense getting electrocuted somehow if things went sour.

Still, he seemed happy to know that she would at least call him Timothy, even though he looked like he wanted to get the shortened name for his own. She sighed and shook her head. He may have some of the same qualities Timmy did, what with annoying the hell out of her and all, but he could never replace Timmy Turner. Something about that boy had been almost... magical. But, magic didn't exist and neither did Timmy. Not anymore.

### 3 - Young Hero

3

"She's gone." Timmy murmured and held out his arm, allowing the pink watch to disappear in a puff of pink smoke. A fairy hovered near him after a second puff, pink hair curled up on her head and gossamer wings beating furiously. She was clad in a simple yellow shirt and black pants, looking almost panicked as she twirled a wand in her hands. The iPod made the same puffs, only green, and a male fairy took its place, floating in the air as he rubbed his head gingerly.

"Timmy, that was dangerous! If Vicky finds out you're still alive, she'll tell everyone in Dimmsdale!" Wanda, the pink-haired fairy, exclaimed frantically, "We'll end up back in New York, or worse!" Timmy pulled a hat from his back pocket and put it on his head, smiling at the familiar pink cap he'd had since childhood. Clutching her wand more tightly, Wanda looked to her husband for support. "Don't you have anything to add to this, Cosmo?!"

"Besides the fact that I'm hungry? No." Cosmo returned tiredly, fluttering to the sofa to rest his tiny battered body. His white dress shirt and black pants were torn, his black necktie undone. Part of his bright green hair was singed and he suffered from a few bruises, cuts and burns. Timmy bent to pull a small blanket over him, then sighed as he put a hand to the fairy's forehead.

"Sorry, Cosmo. I guess some of Crocker's older fairy traps still work." he murmured, "I thought he would have left them to rot, but apparently not." He stood by to watch Wanda fly down by her husband. She held her wand over him, the golden star at its end shining with magic as she began healing him. "So what are you guys up for today? Cheese sandwiches, tomato soup and apple juice sound good?" Timmy asked his fairy godparents, looking up at the clock, "We have some time before we meet Caleb and Cousin Danny for my training."

"That will be fine. Thanks, Timmy." Wanda replied distractedly. Cosmo had fallen silent, passing out for the third time since Timmy had raced out of the booby-trapped warehouse with the fairy in his arms and Wanda firing bursts of magic at incoming shrapnel from an explosion. "Disabling Crocker's fairy-hunting gadgets has gotten a lot more dangerous! Poor Cosmo!" she added, "It's not like the old days where they just blew themselves up!"

Dishes rattled in the kitchen as Timmy set to work preparing lunch. He heard the last comment and sighed, nodding in agreement. A lot of things had changed since he moved back to Dimmsdale from New York. He would have returned sooner but Caleb told him that time was needed to fade the town's memories and change his appearance. The android bought a house for him, provided food, clothes, communication and a teleporter to connect his home to Caleb's home in New York. For everything else Timmy could want he'd have to rely on his fairy godparents and himself.

Entertainment was easy; Cosmo and Wanda could poof up any video game or toy he could ever want, and on days he felt like going out, the three of them would poof to island locales and watch the people

from the rooftops. It wasn't that he couldn't interact with normal people, more that Timmy just felt out of place and preferred to just watch the crowds move to the whims of human nature. Wanda had told him once that it didn't seem like him to do that, didn't suit his personality. It wasn't *normal*.

But what was normal for Timmy now? Since the days of chaos and heartache that tore up everything he considered normal, the word simply became laughable. Besides, with all that he'd gone through since then, he seemed to have grown up rather quickly and stopped taking the fairies' company for granted.

"And even if I was still a jerk, it's not like they can leave me anymore. There's nowhere else for them to go." Timmy sighed to himself as he warmed up the soup. For allowing their godchild to die and then to aid in the interference of Death to resurrect said godchild, Cosmo and Wanda had been banished from Fairy World. The punishment would have been death for themselves, but Jorgen twisted the rules to give them a more 'severe' sentence. Cast out of the world that provided them with magical energy and was once their home, the couple was forever bound to Timmy Turner, or as long as he stood beyond Death's reach.

The whole thing still seemed bizarre to him. All Timmy could remember of the events that led to this situation was falling from the jungle gym at school, a flash of pain, then a lot of cold. Cold and dark; Timmy didn't like it and he couldn't speak to wish himself away from the cold and dark. Then he saw his cousin's face, the determined expression, the snow-white hair, shining green eyes and brilliant white aura. Cousin Danny, in ghost form, had reached out to take him into his arms. There was a bright light and warmth, and Cosmo and Wanda were crying, Jorgen standing over them with a look that was so full of mixed emotions that Timmy's young mind couldn't process them all.

He learned soon after what had happened; his death at Dimmsdale Elementary, his godparents fleeing Jorgen with his body encased in a magic crystal coffin to preserve it, their contacting Caleb for help in healing his broken neck and reviving him. Caleb couldn't resurrect Timmy, too much time had passed since his death and the Grim Reaper had already claimed his soul. The only hope they had in reviving him was in Cousin Danny Fenton. Danny held the Veil Between Life And Death sealed with his body, a responsibility implanted in him the day he became a halfa. With the Lock and Key to the Veil in his hands, Danny tore open the barrier and sent his ghost half in to rescue Timmy's soul while his human half held the door open and secured.

Jorgen Von Strangle had arrived as the resurrection took place and demanded to know if they realized what they had done. In stealing Timmy's soul back from Death, the natural order of his life was suspended and Death could no longer see him as a mortal being, having already touched his soul once and being bound to a rule of its own, 'No mortal can be taken by the Reaper twice'. As Da Rules decreed, Jorgen punished the fairy couple to the utmost severity. In this case, instead of death, they were banished from Fairy World, doomed to watch over a child Death could no longer find.

"Lunch is ready!" Timmy declared as cheerfully as he could, bringing the tray of soups and sandwiches to the table. Cosmo, now awake and fully healed, grinned hugely as he flew into the kitchen, eyes shining happily. Wanda followed after him, a shaky smile on her face as she still held a few last traces of worry on her mind. Timmy grinned at her and reached out to stroke her hair, doing his best to soothe away that worry.

"Yay! Red soup! Mmm-mm! My favorite!" Cosmo cheered and immediately began lapping it up like a

mistrained puppy. Wanda only rolled her eyes, but her mood lifted and she sat to dip her sandwich in her own bowl of soup. Seating himself at the table with them, Timmy smiled as he watched the fairies munching cheerfully. He might have lost his old life, but his new one *did* have its benefits. He could never lose his godparents, he could go on ghost-hunting trips with Danny, and he was learning magic from Caleb. The fairies' wands could only do so much without access to Fairy World to recharge and they were still bound to Da Rules. So it fell on Timmy's shoulders to be the offense-heavy magic user, though the thought of actually taking another person's life to protect someone else still made him queasy.

"Timmy, about Vicky...." Wanda began after a few minutes and the boy pouted, stirring his soup idly.

"It wasn't like I was *looking* for her! **She** found **me** first! And that night in the cemetery was just an accident!" he protested and winced, touching his fingers to his throat. "I haven't healed yet, have I?" He closed his eyes, summoning up the mana he had learned to tap into as a child, and murmured an incantation softly, "*Light of mana, soothe the wounds of this battered form! First Aid!*" Cosmo stopped his mess long enough to clap his hands and laugh, tomato soup staining his face and clothes.

"Ooh! Ooh! I love that part! The sparklies! Sparklieeeees!" he crowed, wand floating by him as he clapped harder, "Do it again! Do it again!" Wanda gave him a nudge to quiet him, then returned to looking up at the teenager sternly.

"It doesn't matter who found who first. The fact is she's suspicious of you, of your knowledge about your former self... don't act so hasty to get your old nickname back!" she lectured and jumped as the boy glared at her fiercely.

"I'm *still* Timmy Turner, no matter what anyone says! I don't care about some stupid death certificate or whatever law the mayor put into effect!" he yelled and dropped his head into his arms on the table, hiding his face from view. "I'm still Timmy.... Even if I'm dead to *this* world, I'll always be Timmy Turner...." he mumbled, voice muffled by the barrier of messy brown hair and folded arms. Wanda walked across the table top to run her hands through the strands, a soft sigh escaping her mouth.

"I know, honey. You'll always be Timmy Turner to us and to the rest of Fairy World. But you have to understand that Fairy World and the human world both don't like the idea of someone escaping Death. It's not natural." she told him in a motherly tone, "And if anyone finds out about you, you could be taken away for government study and experiments." Timmy lifted his head and smiled weakly at her.

"So now I have to watch out for people like Crocker coming after me for being immortal? This must be what life's like for you guys, huh?" he asked with a forced laugh and listened to the clock chime, "Well, it's one o'clock. Let's go to New York." He stood up and collected the dishes as Wanda aimed her wand at Cosmo and poofed him clean once again. When everyone was ready, Timmy headed for the teleporter hidden in the downstairs closet and pat his shoulders, a silent signal for Cosmo and Wanda to perch there. With his fairy godparents sitting on him, he stepped onto the glowing violet disk set onto the floor and vanished in a beam of light.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*

Derris-Kharlan~

Target practice. Timmy loved target practice. Cousin Danny did not. Cosmo and Wanda floated by Caleb, watching with wide eyes as Timmy shot a flurry of fireballs at his target. Danny held up his ecto-shield, wincing each time a fireball missed the shield and hit some random ruin or the surface of Earth's second moon.

"He's hitting four out of six times, so he's improving." Caleb remarked neutrally. Wanda watched with a droll expression.

"It doesn't help that Danny Phantom's not moving. Half of the bad guys Timmy takes down fall because they run **into** his fireballs by mistake." she pointed out and flinched along with Cosmo and Caleb as a yell of pain sounded out across Derris-Kharlan.

"*Timmy!* That **hurt!**" Danny shrieked, racing by them with his arms over his head. The redheaded android watched him fly past and sighed.

"Timmy! Just *Fireball*, please! Or tell your cousin that you're switching spells!" he called out. The boy laughed harder, clutching his staff as he tried to catch his breath. Target practice was one of his favorite exercises. And because Danny's ghost powers made him immune to magic, at least until the ecto-shield went down, he made a perfect target for Timmy to practice on. Between studying how magic and mana worked in a world that didn't believe in it, and disabling fairy-hunting devices scattered throughout Dimmsdale, ways of having fun with magic was hard to come by. And with Cousin Danny more interested in going on dates with that girlfriend of his than goofing off with him, Timmy felt the halfa deserved a hot foot now and then.

"Whoo-hoo! Ghost toast! I'll get the butter!" Cosmo cheered and raised his wand to poof a tray of butter and a butterknife into the air. He grabbed both and flew after Danny, laughing playfully at his new game. Wanda pulled her hand over her face.

"This is embarrassing. Isn't there some other magic lesson Timmy can work on?" she asked the teacher. Caleb thought carefully about it, rubbing his chin as he mulled it over.

"There's always Enhanced Curative Magic." he remarked absently, "Know where I can toss Cosmo to get the crud beat out of him?"

"Fried Phantom is fine." Wanda sighed in resignation.

Timmy ran up to his cousin, who sat on a fallen pillar and combed his fingers through his hair a few times to clear out the sparks of electricity. Four years had changed Danny as well as Timmy. The haz-mat suit remained largely the same, but was now adorned with a pair of armlets ringed with small green crystals and a shimmering golden gem was mounted on a crest attached to the base of his neck. Both he and Caleb claimed they aided in ghost-fighting, but Timmy had yet to see the real benefits of them. The halfa had grown stronger and mastered many of his powers, and trained often as new powers appeared over time.

"Heh, sorry. But you deserved it for blowing me off last week." Timmy told him with a chuckle and held

out his staff, bracing his legs as he focused, "Now let's try that spell again. *Light of mana, soothe the wounds of this battered form! First Aid!*" The curing magic circled around the phantom, restoring health and repairing the singed hairs and skin from the *Lightning* spell Timmy had fired off. Danny looked up at his cousin and grinned as the boy sat by him on the pillar.

"Thanks. Hey, I'll make it up to ya. We'll go exploring in the Ghost Zone next Saturday. Promise." he remarked and reached out to rub his hair, flattening the pink hat on his head in the process. Timmy yelled and waved his hand away, fixing both hat and hair as he did. He matched the older boy's smile with one of his own, the buck teeth that had once dominated his face as a child shining in the light of the mana-filled world.

"Okay! Just you and me, then! No running off to make out with that weird Goth chick!" Timmy pointed out and laughed as the half-ghost's face turned a deep shade of red. He jumped to his feet again, staff in hand. Yup, he deserved that. Because of him, he wandered to the cemetery out of boredom and got spotted by Vicky. "So, wanna help me some more with my aiming? I'm pretty good with light and lightning attacks, but the rest of my elements are still way off." Timmy added brightly, spinning the staff in one hand.

"Yeah, your *Fireballs* are more like **flyballs!**" Danny taunted, flying up and erecting the ecto-shield. The staff spinning stopped abruptly and a circle of red light bloomed at Timmy's feet. The brunet looked up at his cousin with a determined smile.

"Them's fightin' words, Danny Phantom!" he declared with a laugh and threw a hand towards the halfa, "Burn! *Fireball!*" The storm of small flames assaulted the ecto-shield, several flying off wildly to hit more of the ancient ruins Caleb had teleported them to from New York for training. "Aww! Six out of eleven!" The circle faded as Timmy made a face, sounding both exasperated and berating. "Man, at this rate I'll wind up being an arsonist more than a hero." he grumbled as his cousin landed. He looked around himself, now realizing that in the whole time he'd caught up with Danny, he hadn't seen Cosmo around. Hadn't the fairy been chasing the halfa? "Cosmo? Are you out there?" he called out.

"Over here! I found a new friend! I'm gonna call him Pete!" the fairy answered airily. Timmy ran towards the sound of Cosmo's voice as his cousin took flight to follow him. Cosmo sat on a piece of broken rubble not far from them, holding a charm of some kind that was big enough to be held comfortably in both of the fairy's hands. He looked up at his godchild happily and held out the charm, showing off the gray stone that was shaped somewhat like a sarcophagus.

"What is that?" Timmy wondered aloud, taking the item from him for a better look. It lay in the palm of his hand as Danny floated by him and peered at it himself. He tilted his head thoughtfully.

"I've seen this before. Caleb calls them Reverse Dolls. They start off like that but you carve them to make them look like a person." he replied, "That person wears it like an accessory and if they get hit with a fatal blow, the doll breaks to take the place of them dying." Timmy studied the charm with a sudden new intensity.

"Danny...." he murmured after a long silence, "Does it... work for fairies, too?" The halfa lifted an eyebrow in confusion, moving his green-eyed gaze from the charm to his cousin.

"Dunno. Magic is universal, isn't it?" he returned in a puzzled tone, "Or am I confusing it with mana? You can ask Caleb. These charms are from his era, created during the time of the Lost Age of Union." The younger teen nodded and stood from his crouched position, tapping his shoulder again. Cosmo flew up and sat there, smiling cheerfully as his wings fluttered once, then stilled in rest.

"Yeah. I think I will." Timmy murmured, eyes still on the charm in his hand.

The android was just as puzzled by the question as Danny had been. He turned the charm over in his hand, eyeing the fairies hovering around Timmy. Though Caleb's face remained perfectly clear of emotion, both Timmy and his cousin knew from his lack of an immediate answer that he was stumped as well. After several more minutes, the redhead sighed.

"Maybe." he finally answered, "Fairies are a magical race with their own source of power. It runs alongside mana in the energy spectrum, but it's not quite the same. Charms are supposed to be universal, but compatibility with a magical creature is, at best, questionable."

"Uh, English, please?" Timmy grumbled in annoyance, blue eyes narrowing at the strange phrasing of his teacher's answer. Caleb blinked, then shrugged.

"It's iffy. I can carve it for you but the chances of it working on a fairy.... Eh, your guess is as good as mine." he amended. The boy frowned and looked up at his godparents.

"Wanda's good at dealing with stuff. She can get herself out of most situations. I trust her with handling the dangers we go through." he remarked, earning a sheepish grin and blush from the pink-haired fairy, "But I worry about Cosmo. The last fairy-trap littered building we cleaned had a nasty trap that tore him up pretty badly."

"It wanted to shake hands!" Cosmo put in as a protest, holding out his hands for emphasis.

"With twelve blades, five baseball bats, three boots and a hammer?" Wanda asked dryly, giving her husband a sidelong glare.

"It was the super-secret twelve-blades, five baseball-bats, three boots and a hammer handshake!" Cosmo insisted, "I messed up 'cause I didn't have the blades!" Timmy pulled both hands over his face and groaned as both Caleb and Danny laughed at the fairies' antics.

"Make it for Cosmo. The next trap might have a nastier surprise." he muttered.

"Ooh! I love surprises! So does Pete!" Cosmo declared joyfully, catching the teen's last word, "Is it Pete's birthday? Pete! Why didn't you tell me?! I thought we were friends!" He flew off, sobbing dramatically with Danny watching, baffled. Wanda sighed and flew after him.

"Give me ten minutes." Caleb muttered flatly, picking up the charm and digging into his satchel for carving tools. Timmy nodded and began walking after the fairies. His cousin called out to him as he left.

"I gotta run! School and all. See ya next practice!" he cried and waved before flying off towards a large

blue disk that was the main teleporter Caleb had built long ago. Timmy waved back and pressed on with a wistful sigh.

"Can't believe I'm saying this but... I miss school." he murmured, "I know just as much and maybe more than average kids my age, but without my old friends to hang out with it just doesn't seem the same." He continued his search, calling out his fairies' names as he peeked around rubble and into decrepit storage rooms. It didn't take very long. He eventually found them both sitting on a boulder, gazing at the Earth that seemed so far away and the normally invisible Fairy World with its rainbow bridge to the world. Silent, he joined them in their planet-gazing.

Fairy World stretched over vast pink clouds, suspended far beyond the world's gravitational pull and completely out of sight from the eyes of the masses. Those who had fairies, or knew of the world's existence, could see Fairy World and the bridge that joined it with the human world. Derris-Kharlan had to be repositioned after Caleb met Timmy and his godparents, as he had not realized Fairy World existed above the Earth and the comet-turned-second-moon had been dangerously close to colliding with the magical realm. Since then, Caleb would relay information back and forth between Fairy World and Earth, archiving the fairies' histories for safekeeping on the comet.

"I didn't mean to get caught in the trap." Cosmo suddenly remarked softly, voice strangely clear and intelligent, "It was an accident." Timmy snapped out of his musings and managed a small smile.

"We know. Things happen; we just have to keep going and learn what we can so we can be better prepared for stuff like that." he returned and sighed, leaning back and bracing himself as he gazed at the world. "Do you think I'll make a good hero for Dimmsdale someday? Like the Crimson Chin?"

"You'll make a **great** hero, Timmy!" Wanda answered confidently, "You're already *our* hero!" She waved her wand around, tracing circles with the star point. "Once all the fairy traps and anti-magic devices in Dimmsdale have been destroyed, we'll be able to safely use our magic in all parts of the city! We'll be the first fairy godparents to use wishes to stop criminals on a regular basis!" Timmy smiled at that, the idea of disabling every last bit of Crocker's gadgets appealing to the kid in him, the kid who managed to foil evil schemes with very little effort at times. With the anti-magic gear gone, he could roam the city more freely and start seeing what had changed and what was still the same.

"We'll protect Dimmsdale like Cousin Danny protects Amity Park." he agreed and grinned, "And who better to do it than a kid who can't be killed?" He blinked as a charm suddenly dropped into his view. A tiny recreation of Cosmo dangled before him and he looked up at Caleb holding it suspended from a cord.

"All done." he remarked with a smile.

Timmy brightened and took the charm in his hand, looking it over. It certainly resembled Cosmo, though in a very simple form. Hair, face, clothes, wand, wings, crown; everything was recreated in the stone. It was even painted the right colors!

"Thanks a lot! Wow! This is so cool!" he exclaimed gratefully and looped the cord over Cosmo's head so the charm rested by his necktie. Wanda smiled at how large the charm was compared to her husband's small frame and waved her wand to resize it. "Don't lose it, Cosmo." Timmy added with a grin. Cosmo



blinked at them, then down at his new accessory, confused, before lighting up in joy.

"Pete! You got a makeover!" he cried and laughed, "Hey! Wow! You look so handsome! But you look familiar, too; did we meet at the Fairy World Wand Convention?" Wanda shook her head in exasperation but Timmy only smiled wider and returned to gazing at his home planet.

It wasn't much but anything he could do to keep Cosmo and Wanda safe was worth it. Just a little longer and all of Dimmsdale will be safe for them. He would be a real hero, just like he often wished he could be when he was a ten-year-old.

## 4 - Strange Things

4

Stepping off the teleporter and entering the living room of his house, Timmy set aside his staff and sighed tiredly. Cosmo plopped himself onto the couch, hugging the Reverse Doll charm in his arms. Wanda flew off to join him, snuggling up against the throw pillows sleepily. The boy watched them with a grin, arms folded over his chest.

"Good idea. Let's all rest up. Later tonight, we're gonna finish clearing out the industrial district of Dimmsdale. We only have three warehouses left to clean up and then that area will become a safe zone again!" he told the fairies cheerfully. He headed upstairs for a change in clothing as the couple watched him leave.

"So soon?" Wanda asked once he came back downstairs in a fresh set of his standard pink shirt, hat, and jeans, "Why not do it tomorrow? We all could use a break from destroying those traps." She yawned and blinked slowly as Timmy reached for a small blanket draped over the back of the sofa and carefully pulled it over her. "Between traveling around by foot, smashing traps, healing up and laying waste to criminals on the way home, we all get pretty exhausted." she added, bringing the point home by promptly falling asleep when she finished. Cosmo paused in playing with the charm to look at her sleeping form, then up at the teen.

"She kinda has a point." he remarked and gave a little yawn of his own as Timmy sat on the floor before them. The godchild sighed and rested his cheek on one fist, studying his green-haired godparent. The corner of his mouth twitched into another smile as he reached out to muss up the fairy's hair, the style Cosmo wore it in so similar to his own it was almost funny.

"I suppose, but I feel fine." he murmured and brightened, "How's this? You and Wanda stay here and catch some z's, and I'll go search out the last three targets." Cosmo shook his head and started trying to fix his hair with one free hand, the other arm hugging 'Pete' close to his body.

"Nah, that won't work. The Timmy Sense will go off the minute you find a trap and you know we can't ignore *that*." the fairy replied and rubbed one eye drowsily before yawning again. The teen stood and headed for the windows, lowering the blinds as he made a face at the comment.

"I don't see why you guys still worry about my 'safety'." he muttered as he fiddled with the cords, "Not like I can die of anything. I stand beyond Death's reach, remember?"

"Like that's gonna stop us from caring?" Cosmo grumbled and crawled under the blanket with Wanda. Timmy didn't answer to that, frozen at one window and staring in horror at the police car parked at the end of the driveway. One of the officers was already walking up the path to his house!

"Oh crud!" he murmured and looked back at the fairies in a panic, "Guys! I wish-!" Both of them were fast

asleep, tired from the training and the trap-hunting from earlier that day. "Darn it!" Timmy hurried to them, gathered up several pillows and placed them around the couple as a screen. There was a knock at the door and he winced. Why? What possessed local law enforcement to bother with this place **now**? He ran a hand through his hair absently, felt the cap still on his head and quickly hurled it away into a corner of the room. No sense in triggering memories; the town was messed up as it was already with the abundance of anti-magic gear.

Another knock and Timmy took a deep breath to calm himself. He formed several stories in his head and carefully opened the door. He glanced out warily at the officer.

"Can I help you?" he asked cautiously. The officer smiled at him, but it seemed strangely fake, as though the effort of smiling brightly was difficult to do.

"Hello there, young man! Are your parents home?" he asked in return. Timmy shifted his stance to block the man's view of the house interior as much as possible.

"They're napping." he answered shortly, resisting the urge to glower at the older man, "They were very tired from unpacking and I told them they could sleep while I finished up." He glanced at the parked vehicle, then turned his gaze back towards the officer. "They won't be happy to wake up and find cops all over the place."

"We won't be long." the officer made a half-hearted attempt to reassure him, "So, why aren't you in school, uh...?" He waited patiently for Timmy to fill in the gap. The boy's eyes narrowed in suspicion. Maybe Wanda hadn't been too far off the mark about Vicky's nosiness.

"We just moved." the teen growled, "Please leave. My parents really don't like strangers." The officer matched his suspicious glare and Timmy gave himself a mental kick. He was losing his cool too quickly. Not good. He was too out of practice with lying to adults. "I'm enrolling as soon as they finish resting. My name is Timothy Neogene. Can you *please* go now?!" he hissed, gripping the doorknob tightly. The expression only grew on the older man's face.

"I'd like to meet your parents, son. You know, to welcome them to Dimmsdale. That's not a problem, is it?" he remarked casually, relaxing a tiny bit now that he no longer had to maintain the illusion of joviality. Timmy tried his best not to flinch at those words.

"Fine. But you have to wait outside. The place is a mess of packing boxes and there's nowhere for you to sit." he muttered and retreated, locking the door quickly. "Great, now what? Cosmo and Wanda are too tired to pretend to be my parents, and those cops won't leave until they see I have them." he sighed and looked around desperately for something that could help him. His eyes fell on the staff resting against the wall near the teleporter room and a crazy idea bloomed in his mind. "Or they find something more important to deal with!"

Timmy ran for the back door, pausing to grab the slender wooden pole along the way. Bursting out into the backyard, he scanned it quickly; open and clear of witnesses, perfect. He turned his eyes on the neighborhood itself, searching for something to use as a distraction. Something he could set on fire without hurting anyone. A group of trash cans set by the road just seemed to scream 'Burn me!' Timmy grinned, spinning the staff in his left hand as a circle of light bloomed at his feet.

"Excellent! Cops bail to check out a trash fire and I can make a run for industrial Dimmsdale!" he exclaimed and abruptly pulled the staff before him in a horizontal position, free hand slamming the open palm against the pole as part of the release of mana, "Make it count! *Lightning!*" A bolt shot down from a sphere of violet mana high above the cans, igniting the garbage in a near explosive display of magic. Timmy winced and tapped his fingertip against his two front teeth. "Whoops.... Guess I overdid that one." he murmured and blinked as the sirens of the patrol car started up. Seconds later, it was racing off towards the fire. Timmy took that as a cue to run, dashing for the alleys of the neighborhood.

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Getting to the industrial district had been easier said than done. There were more truancy officers prowling the town than before, and Timmy had several close calls evading both them and routine patrol cars for Dimmsdale's police force. Once he tried to distract a group of officers with a quick *Stone Blast* spell, but the magic circle flickered and died at his feet, a sign that he was near a magic nullifier. He was forced to crouch in the alley and wait until the group finished their small chat and returned to their patrols.

Now, panting by one of the three targets warehouses, he took the time to puzzle over the surge of traps and devices that infested Dimmsdale. During the four years Timmy spent in New York recovering, studying magic and training, Caleb, the ancient living android, had sent a number of spy cameras into Dimmsdale to see how the town was faring. The first year brought a wealth of information for them; the Turners had decided to stay in the town despite their sorrow, hoping to rebuild their lives in honor of their son, the jungle gym was taken down after the police finished their investigation, and the playground itself was named after him as a memorial.

Timmy had spent the majority of the year trying to wish the events undone, but none of those wishes could be granted. If Cosmo and Wanda were to try, the consequences would echo through time and space, affecting more lives than the original sequence had altered. To stop Death from coming after Timmy would not only break one of the most important of Da Rules, but drain the fairies of every speck of magical energy, reducing them to nothing but fairy dust. If by some miracle they survived the attempt, they would end up revealing themselves to the world once their magic weakened to the point of making disguises useless. Timmy might have survived as well, but the injury would have rendered him paralyzed or in a vegetative state. And stopping Death would create a dangerous ripple in the Veil Between Life And Death, tearing Danny Fenton to shreds from its force, as the defender of the Veil kept its balance so delicately.

It took many days of explaining for a ten-year-old mind to understand it all, but in the end Timmy finally accepted the fact that his old life was gone forever. It had not been easy.

After that first year, though, fewer camera signals were coming out of Dimmsdale; less and less information was returning to New York. Caleb grew more concerned with each passing month that resulted in signal loss. Finally, he sent a single camera with a sensor on it and both Caleb and an older Timmy Turner waited, watching the readouts on a giant screen that made up one-fourth of the Archive's secret conference room. When the camera flew into Dimmsdale's city limits, the graph nose-dived and the picture that they watched was of the airborne camera's final moments before it impacted the streets.

Caleb explained afterwards what might have happened. In the time after Timmy's death, someone or something began covering the town with a strange barrier that nullified anything and everything that used magic. The sensor was measuring magical activity, and it had died once it penetrated that invisible barrier.

Timmy, Cosmo and Wanda had just been ostracized....

The boy shook himself out of his memories and tucked himself deeper into the shadows of a stack of shipping crates, waiting for the patrolling guards of the Blubber Nuggets warehouse to pass far enough to be safe. He looked down at himself and sighed; why didn't he think to change clothes a second time? Pink was too eye-catching and far too risky to wear in public, at least the way he was wearing it now. He looked up at the changing of the guards, then quietly slipped through a newly opened window, dropping softly to the floor in a crouched position, something he learned from stealth training with Cousin Danny. Timmy smiled briefly at that, remembering the amount of help his cousin had given him so that he could get back to his hometown.

Once it was determined that returning to Dimmsdale as he was would not do him or the fairies any good, Caleb and Danny decided to do something to help Timmy get home safely. The idea of an anti-magic barrier surrounding his hometown had riled up the young immortal in a way that Timmy himself had not thought was possible, and he threw himself into magical training to gain the strength to free the city. While he practiced, Danny Phantom made the first sweep of Dimmsdale, deploying ghostly force to destroy many of the devices that were generating the barrier in the suburbs and middle-class neighborhoods. He would have made a second sweep, but he feared the city would contact his parents in attempts to get rid of him and the trip to California would leave Amity Park unprotected.

For Timmy, the first sweep was good enough as a starting point. He made a plan; return to Dimmsdale and begin a systematic destruction of the anti-magic barrier. As long as it was up, anyone in Dimmsdale with a fairy godparent would be unable to make wishes or have them granted. For the sake of preventing another accident that took his life before his fairies could help, Timmy would become Dimmsdale's hero and restore magic to the town.

Before returning to Amity Park, Danny gave Timmy one of the devices he had destroyed. It had the name 'D. Crocker' etched into the casing. The halfa told him that he had seen many similar gadgets planted all over the area he had gone through. Timmy had stared at the crushed device in his hands, baffled. It was a fairy trap, he was sure of it. But, all of the traps his old elementary teacher, Denzel Crocker, ever made were hobbled together out of random parts and the few more technologically advanced gadgets he used were cumbersome, self-foiling things. These new devices were far more advanced and more dangerous-looking.

Which led Timmy to his present day situation of searching his hip pouch for something other than the anti-magic radar to help him destroy the device in the building. Security within the warehouse was normal enough, nothing too alarming beyond the noise of forklifts rushing around, carting goods, and crews moving crates for shipment. Hidden behind a veritable mountain of crates, the teen pulled the PDA-like device from its case clipped to his belt and studied it with a frown.

"Man, I can't believe I forgot my other stuff!" he murmured in frustration, "Without the rest of **my** gear, I won't be able to knock out the guards or hit a magic nullifier from a distance!" He gripped the staff in one

hand, memorized the location of the device on radar, then took a deep breath as he slipped the radar away. Well, he'd just have to be more careful and figure out another way to smash the traps.

Darting among the stacks of crates and shipping boxes, pausing only to listen and watch for guard movement, Timmy made his way to the location of the anti-magic device. The constant motion of trucks and forklifts presented him with a new problem; moving past all of that to reach the general area of the device was going to be a pain. He muttered angrily to himself as he began scaling one of the piles of crates, leaping from stack to stack as quietly as he could to get to the highest point in the building. Crocker often put traps somewhere in the open, and Timmy could get a good view of the area from a high point. He just had to be sure that he wasn't spotted by someone in the office room that overlooked the warehouse for that same purpose. Once perched on a sufficiently situated catwalk, he took the time to look over his aerial route, surprised momentarily by the distances between a few of his jumps.

"Okay, *that* ain't normal." the teen remarked to himself and tilted his head to one side thoughtfully. Had his new immortality made him cocky? He frowned; no, because he'd been trying harder not to get caught in situations where he'd be forced to rely on it to get him through. Wouldn't want the citizens of Dimmsdale to freak out over a 'ghost' in their midst again. That in itself made him paranoid about the lethality of many things. He shrugged it off and looked around, pulling the radar free for another scan of the building. Caleb's little gadgets, though well-crafted, left quite a bit to be desired in their accuracy for pinpointing Crocker's devices. The android blamed Crocker's shoddy work on his anti-magic gear, the signals emitted were erratic at best and difficult to lock onto for tracking. Timmy suspected that the gear's nullifying abilities threw the magical locator for a loop the closer it got to the device.

"I'm playing *Hot or Cold* with Crocker's stupid fairy-hunting junk! Gah!" he complained and stuffed the radar back into its pouch. According to the second scan, the device was in a general location roughly twenty to thirty feet away from him, but whether he was on the same altitude as the trap was up in the air. Then there was the problem of figuring out which of the three types of traps this thing actually was; nullifier, capture, or destroyer. "Well, one way to find out...." Timmy sighed and held out his hand, focusing on calling up mana for a particular little trick he'd been teaching himself.

Light mana gathered over his open palm, coalescing into a sphere that glowed brightly and was roughly the size of a softball, its aura of light spreading out several inches to illuminate large sections of a room. Once tossed free, the Light orb would either orbit the teen or float before him to light his path. Once, Timmy actually poked his staff into the ball and created an interesting torch; it was fun to jab that into Danny's room at night and startle the halfa.

Light orb completed, Timmy tossed it out into the air, murmuring a small spell to let it wander the area on its own. No sooner had it ventured down the catwalk than the ball simply evaporated into nothing. He raced after its last position to begin hunting down the nullifier and that's when he heard a strange humming. He halted and looked around, trying to pinpoint the source of the sound as well as the nullifier device. Shouts of surprise and alarm called his attention to the people below him on the warehouse floor; so much for keeping to the shadows, that Light orb caught the eyes of a lot of crewers.

"What is making that *noise*?" he muttered to himself and returned to searching for the nullifier. As long as he wasn't in 'mortal' danger, Wanda and Cosmo wouldn't appear because of their Timmy Senses going off, and the last thing he needed was them around and magic-less because of some nullifying trap left here by crazy old Crocker. Jumping from the catwalk onto a second one brought up a chorus of

shouts and cheers from the men and women below him as security guards whistled fervently, sending officers scurrying for ladders and stairs to reach him. With an exasperated sigh, Timmy darted down the walkway, calling up another Light orb to pinpoint the nullifier.

This time it died just as it formed at his fingertips.

"Ha! I'm right on top of it!" Timmy cried in triumph and yelped in shock as something strange flew down at him. He ducked the blur of silver, then twisted around to see what it was. The object was spherical in shape, with a ring of black metal circling its middle and what looked like a butterfly net attached as an arm to the top of the sphere. It spun in the air and dove for him again, humming loudly as it managed to stay airborne without any sort of wings or jets. Timmy ducked again, covering his head as the basketball-sized oddity zipped by with the net now pointed downward. What the heck was that?!

Instinctively, Timmy called up the mana for a *Lightning* spell, but the dying magic circle at his feet reminded him that the nullifier was still nearby and the net-ball-thing made another swipe at him. This time, the teen lashed out with his staff, smacking it and sending it spinning away from him. He looked around himself, trying to locate the nullifier amidst the shouting of the men and women below and the barking orders of the security guards quickly advancing on him. Not good; a little more hectic activity added to this already outrageous mess and his fairy godparents will poof in to see what's up. Bending to hide his face and search for the nullifier, Timmy scrambled to get the device, disable it and then escape. This mission was going to be botched no matter what he did now.

"Come on, come on! Where is it?" he muttered in frustration, running his fingers along the edges of the catwalk in the search. There! He brushed against something that was attached to the underside of the walkway. Jumping to his feet, Timmy gripped his staff in both hands, then slammed the end of the pole against the floor. The force jarred the nullifier loose, and a second slam sent it tumbling to the warehouse floor. "Heads up! Out of the way!" Timmy yelled down as the textbook-sized array of mini-dishes plummeted to its doom. People scattered as it smashed to pieces against the concrete. "One down, one to go. Why the heck didn't the radar pick up this *other* thing?!" he grumbled, turning his attention back to the flying sphere just as it made another dive at him.

The brief lapse it took to find the nullifier and dispose of it was all it took for the sphere to lock on and dive at the source of magical energy. Timmy barely had the time to knock it away with another swipe of the staff, but the force he used put him off balance. Amid cries of shock and horror from all the people watching him, he toppled over the rail of the catwalk as the sphere spun away momentarily, then was downed by one of the guards.

Concrete hurt. A *lot*. Timmy managed only barely to keep conscious as one of the workers rushed to his side and began yelling out orders. He could just about make out some of the words; somebody was to call 911, somebody else had to get a first aid kit, someone else check what the heck it was that had attacked him to begin with. Sticky and warm. There was a sticky warmth that was spreading beneath him and a pounding headache that made him want to cry.

"Owww...." he managed to groan, coughing as the same warmth rose up his throat.

"Hang on, kid. Help's coming. Good Lord, it's a miracle you're still alive after that fall!" the crewer told him in amazement, but Timmy looked past him at the clouds of pink and green smoke that burst into

view high above the crowds. Wanda and Cosmo; they must have had their senses go off the moment he was pushed from the catwalk. Timmy managed a frown, turning his focus back on the man kneeling by him.

"Is the... device... gone?" he murmured brokenly. The crewer looked puzzled and he took that as a good sign. Well, now was as good a time as any to see if he got the hang of that second-level spell. "*Light of mana... heal these... savage wounds...! Heal!*" he whispered and the circle of light bloomed beneath him, mana spinning around his body and repairing the worst of his injuries. The group of men and women pulled back in shock and awe as Timmy lay still for a moment, then flipped back onto his feet, spitting out a mouthful of blood. "Yuck! I am *never* getting used to that either!" he yelled in irritation and winced as his muscles complained about the sudden motion, "And I guess I need more practice with that spell. Ow...." He smiled suddenly. "But hey, I should thank your security guys for taking out that weird fairy trap for me." he added brightly and waved up at his fairy godparents. They both seemed to wilt in relief, then held up their wands in preparation for a wish.

"That's impossible! You've completely recovered?! How?! What the hell are you?!" the crowd of people shouted in alarm. Timmy only grinned wider at them, ignoring the current mess he was in.

"I am known as The One Who Stands Beyond Death's Reach!" he declared with a laugh, "No matter what happens to me, I can never die!" He shifted his weight to jump back into the shadows of the stacks of crates. "But, you won't remember any of this in a bit." he finished, "I wish everyone here but the three of us forgot what happened!" With that, he leaped back out of view. Cosmo and Wanda waved their wands in concert, the stars shining as they granted the wish. They poofed out of sight once they were done, leaving behind a very confused group of people.

"What's this?" one of the men asked in confusion, staring down at the spatter of blood left behind on the concrete. They gathered around it, puzzled.

Safe in the darkness of several hundred yet-to-be-shipped crates, Timmy sat back against the wall of the building and cast *Heal* a second time, closing his eyes out of exhaustion. Going after that anti-magic device on his own so soon after practice had been a bad idea, doubly so now that there was a new type of gadget out there that the radar couldn't pick up.

"I told you." Wanda murmured and the boy laughed softly.

"You'd think after everything we've been through together I would have learned to listen to you." Timmy replied and partially opened his eyes, looking over at the fairy couple, "How are you guys feeling?"

"Squishy!" Cosmo declared happily and began poking himself, singing the word over and over. Wanda shook her head, but smiled at the antic anyway.

"A lot better than you from the looks of things. Let's get out of here, Timmy, and get you into bed for some rest." she suggested. The teen nodded in agreement.

"Good idea. First, I wish my clothes were clean again." he sighed and the fairies poofed his outfit into perfect condition, "Now, I wish we were at home." Another poof of magic smoke and nothing remained in the darkness after that.



## 5 - Special

5

It was another week before Victoria spotted Timothy again. She was driving by Dimmsdale Elementary and halted at the sight of the young teen standing by the Children Crossing sign. She pulled up and blinked at him, the strange feeling of familiarity tugging at her again. He had his eyes closed again, green iPod silent and pink watch displaying the time digitally. This time, though, he went from red shirt to deep blue turtleneck, making the silver necklace stand out even more.

"Hey, kid!" Victoria yelled out, laughing when Timothy jumped in shock. Oh, how that brought back memories of messing with Timmy's head!

"Why do you keep *doing* that?" Timothy grumbled, resuming his position against the sign pole.

"What are you doing hanging around **this** dump?" she asked in return, scowling at the school. This was where Timmy died, where the Heart of Dimmsdale shattered that sunny day. The school should have been torn down in her thinking; it did not deserve to stand after what happened.

"Waiting." Timothy replied, watching the front doors to the building intensely. Victoria blinked at the serious sound of his voice and glanced at the doors herself.

"For what?" she questioned after a minute of staring.

"Something I can recognize. Now shut up; this is important." the boy told her in a low, harsh tone. They waited together in silence until the final bell rang at three and the doors opened. Children poured out at a speed comparable to a lethargic sloth. Victoria looked over at the young teen and noticed the grim expression on his face. "Every last one of them looks completely miserable." he murmured and set a pair of sunglasses on his nose, frown deepening after a moment of looking through them, "So many of them, helpless. They can't last much longer like this."

"What are you talking about? Of *course* those brats are miserable! They're stuck going to a killer school!" Victoria shot at him. Timothy removed the sunglasses, shaking his head.

"Not that; there's something **in** the school that's making them miserable." he tried to explain but the carrot-top only gave him a flat glare. "How can I explain this?" he sighed, "Um, hm. How's this?" Timothy held an arm out to the dispersing crowd of children. "Some kids have a sort of specialness to them, almost like a magical quality no one can quite understand." he began. Victoria nodded slowly; she understood that, sure. Go with that, kid. "They can be miserable just like anyone else, but that specialness helps them shake it off easier. And when they get older, it's that specialness that becomes their potential to do good in the world. Sometimes it doesn't work out; the kid uses their specialness for incredibly selfish things, and they learn only to be more selfish. But most of the time, the kids learn to bring happiness to others who may not have that same specialness they did." the boy went on and held

his arm out to the rest of the city, "But it's come to my attention that this place is full of certain things that is disabling that specialness, blocking it out. And as long as that continues, those kids will lose the part of them that is magical."

"So? It's not like it'll do any of us *non-special* people any bad if they lose their *magic*." Victoria sneered at him. Magic? That stuff was for twerps! The boy only narrowed his eyes at her dangerously.

"Vicky, I might have this wrong, so you tell me again. Didn't you say that Dimmsdale's Heart was ripped out the day Timmy Turner died?" he growled. Victoria gaped at him in shock, recalling those words she spoke in the cemetery. That's right; Timmy had that specialness he was talking about, that magic air to him, and when he died, all of Dimmsdale seemed to darken in misery. If there were others like him, and they managed to lose *their* magic and die, what would happen to their town?

"You look like you saw Death." Timothy murmured softly, folding his arms behind his head as he continued leaning against the pole, his backpack and staff lying on the ground by him, "And that's pretty close to the truth. If those kids lose their magic, they might not be able to handle things making their lives miserable. So, they might actually die. And this city will continue to suffer because of that until it falls." His face became a mask of seriousness, blue eyes gleaming with a mix of anger and sorrow. "Dimmsdale will die if I don't bring down the shield that is destroying magic." he finished and turned his gaze back on the school.

Victoria stared at him in shock, mind racing with the revelations. It sounded crazy, and at one time she would have lumped him in the same class as that old nut, Crocker. But after what happened to the town when Timmy died, and hearing this explanation for it, she could believe it. Something was happening to Dimmsdale, something awful, and if it wasn't fixed soon, more tragic things would happen. And it all started because of Timmy's death....

"Is that...?" she began to ask, tightening her grip on the steering wheel. Timothy gave her a puzzled look, as though he hadn't expected her to still be there, let alone talk to him again. "Is that what happened to Timmy? Is that why he died? He lost his magic and he died because of it, because of something here that killed his magic?!" she blurted out, tears welling up in her eyes. The boy took on a startled expression, stepping away from her and the pole.

"Vicky?!" he exclaimed and tried to regain his composure, obviously amazed at the sight of her crying. "Um, I don't think so. From what I can tell about those events, he died from an accident, right?" he stammered out, the guilty look on his face again, "The anti-magic barrier didn't come up until after he died, so he couldn't have been the reason for it." His eyes met hers for a split second before glancing away. "Right?" he whispered.

"So, nothing could have saved him? Not even that specialness you were talking about?" Victoria pressed on. Timothy seemed to consider that, a grimly pensive look on his face. After a bit, he sighed and shook his head sadly. Victoria sat back in her seat, a defeated expression replacing her sorrowful one. "He was doomed that day. There was no chance we could have saved him." she whispered.

"Timmy's death was an accident, Vicky, so stop trying to wish it undone!" Timothy suddenly yelled, fists held stiffly at his sides, "I've tried it for years and it doesn't work! That's a wish that will **never** come true!" The carrot-top blinked at him, baffled, and he calmed down quickly, running his hands through his hair.

"All I know is that, since then, Dimmsdale got a bunch of these anti-magic pieces of junk that's basically destroying what little hope is left here." he added and made a pathetic attempt at gesturing towards the bulk of the city, "If I don't get rid of them, this city will die. It needs the hopes and dreams of these kids to stay alive, now that its Heart is gone."

"Well, what the hell is causing all this?!" Victoria snapped back angrily, "And why didn't you come sooner to do something about it before it began crapping up the place?!" Timothy made to answer but froze, pressing a hand to one ear, attention diverted. She blinked at the earphone wire that led to his iPod. He seemed to be listening intently to it, then he glanced over his shoulder at the school, eyes narrowed. "What is it?" Victoria asked, wondering what he had been listening to.

"Something's up." he muttered and glanced at Victoria, "This could be my only shot at the device in the school. Once I blow it away, this place will be safe for little kids again." With that, he snatched up his belongings and ran for the elementary school, bent as if to avoid being seen or identified. Victoria watched him vanish into the building and sighed.

All in all, the day had been okay up until she ran into Timothy again. The things he talked about, it was as if he knew a lot more was going on than he was telling her about, and it all sounded deadly serious. Was something *really* affecting the 'special' children of Dimmsdale, slowly draining away the town's life by destroying their hopes and dreams?

And why was he so evasive when it came to talking about Timmy Turner? Victoria frowned, tapping her fingertips against the steering wheel of her car. It was suspicious, the way he tried to deflect attention away from the deceased Turner, as well as any implications that he knew Timmy in any way. Yet, he wanted the shortened name for himself, despite the knowledge that no one was allowed to have it.

"That twerp's got more info on him than he's lettin' on." she growled, "I want answers, you brat!" She killed the engine and got out of the car, running for the school herself. No way was she gonna let some mystery boy disappear on her without answering all her questions! Not when she was sure as hell that it had something to do with Timmy!

~\*~\*~\*~\*

The sounds of her heels in the dark, empty halls of Dimmsdale Elementary echoed far too loudly for Victoria's liking. What if Timothy heard them? He'd probably make a run for it to escape arrest. She looked around the vacant halls, frustrated. Where was he? She began to turn down another hall when a yell caught her attention.

"No! It's got him! That stupid thing's a capture trap!" Timothy's voice cried out in shock and fury, "He freaking *upgraded!* That maniac!" There was a muffled explosion, followed quickly by a strange crackling sound that erupted loudly and Victoria could see a flash of light at the far end of another hall. "I got the nullifier! Get that trap! Wanda! Move it! It's another of those flying things!"

"Timothy?!" Victoria yelled and ran for the source of the flickering lights. If anything happened to him, Dimmsdale could be doomed to lose its special kids! No one else had any clues and definitely not the same powers!

"Hey! Get off! Why's this thing tracking **me**?!" the boy was growing panicked from the sound of it, "Incoming! Get out of here! Hey! *Stop!*" An explosion in one classroom hurled the door against the far wall of lockers and halted Victoria's mad dash. Eyes wide with shock at that display of force, she looked into the room and blinked at the chaos of desks, papers, chairs and posters. It was as if a storm had decided to drop in on the place, leaving smoking heaps of metal all over the place and Timothy slumped against the upturned teacher's desk, breathing heavily. Scattered around the floor near him were shards of metal and smoking bits of plastic, as well as a bent circular saw blade and the burning remnants of Timothy's staff.

"Oh my God, what happened?!" Victoria whispered in shock and stepped cautiously into the room. Her dark green business shirt and skirt didn't make for the best escape outfit, even though she was fairly sure that there wasn't anything left to attack *her*.

"Anti-magic traps...." Timothy wheezed and winced in pain as he pulled a jagged metal piece from his stomach, unable to contain the accompanying cry. The carrot-top snapped her attention to him, spotted the wound and paled. "It's okay. It's safe." the boy murmured as she knelt by him in alarm, "But all this junk... this is what was blocking the magic for the school area." He smiled weakly. "I must have triggered it by accident. I'm still kinda new at this Hero business."

"Why aren't you dead? This... this should have killed you...." Victoria asked, staring at the bloody wound in the boy's body, "No bulletproof vest in the world can stop *that!*" She reached out shakily and touched her fingertips to his hand as it covered his stomach. The blood was definitely real. She pulled away quickly and Timothy laughed, a hollow, weak sound.

"I stand beyond Death's reach, Vicky. I *can't* die. Trust me, though, sometimes I wish I could." he told the businesswoman and closed his eyes, a look of concentration twisting his features slightly, "Please, let me have enough strength for this.... *Mana around me, mend this broken form. Cure!*" Victoria watched in awe as a shimmering light passed over the teen, fading the ugly wound and the mess of blood away into nothingness. He smiled weakly, looking up at her. "All better. See? Magic can be so handy when used right." he added faintly. His eyes closed once more and his body went limp. Victoria blinked at him, then began poking his shoulder.

"Hey, wake up!" she hissed, poking harder, "Get up! What if the cops show up?!" Nothing. Grumbling under her breath, she began the effort of picking up the unconscious teen. No way was she getting arrested because of this twerp! That chaos *had* to have set off a burglar alarm or something. She looped her arms underneath his knees and across the back of his shoulders, then straightened, eyebrows lifting in surprise at how light he actually was.

"Well, *this* doesn't look too weird." Victoria muttered sarcastically, looking over at the fallen backpack, its contents of strange gadgets and items strewn across the floor near his forgotten iPod and watch. "Ah, he can always buy a new set, stupid kid." she added and hurried for the exit with Timothy held close. She couldn't take him to a hospital; there would be too many questions she wouldn't be able to answer. She couldn't take him to his house; not only did no one else live there but those idiot cops never actually checked the place out to see if he even had parents. That left only one real option, and she didn't like it.

"Argh! Stupid twerp!" Victoria growled as she set the teen down in the passenger seat, then rushed to her own. She gunned the engine and raced away from the elementary school to her own house. What a

time to deal with the mystery boy; Tootie was home and good Lord did that twerpette act like an idiot around boys!

## 6 - Complicated

6

At the first sound of tires screeching into the driveway, twelve-year-old Tootie began emergency maneuvers. She shoved a majority of her things into her closet and under her bed, then threw open the door to her bedroom to keep it from getting kicked open. Hurrying downstairs, she unlocked and opened the front door, then raced for the kitchen. There, she tied on an apron, murmured a wish for one of the 'good days' that had long since ceased to be granted, then began washing dishes.

"Of all the lousy, rotten days to get tangled in this mess...!" Tootie could hear her older sister fume and rant as she stomped through the door, "Tootie! You better be doing dishes, ditz!" She made a noisy clatter as a signal and waited until the grumbling and stomping began to ascend into the second story of the house.

"Romi, please be safe." she whispered.

It took a bit but Vicky made it downstairs and into the kitchen, grabbing a soda from the refrigerator. Plopping into a chair, she began drinking it down, pausing once to glare at Tootie. The younger girl was used to it and continued her work without a word.

"There's a kid snoozing in your room." Vicky finally growled, "Don't mess with him." She took another hit of soda and gave her a second, more evil glare. "Lemme know when he wakes up, 'cause I plan on beating some answers outta him!" Tootie froze and stared at her sister in shock. There was *someone* in her room?! She yelped and raced out of the kitchen. "Do what I said, ya footstool!" Vicky yelled after her.

Tootie rushed upstairs and into her bedroom, eyes widening at the sight of a boy a little older than her lying asleep on her bed. She looked around, then quickly shut her door before turning back.

"Romi? Are you okay?" she called out softly, glancing into her mirror to be sure she looked all right. Black hair tied in pigtails that brushed the tops of her shoulders, check; cat's-eyes glasses straight and not detracting attention from her lavender eyes, check; black t-top, white shirt and dark violet skirt still clean, check; no runs in her black stockings, check; black shoes still shiny, check; she threw off the apron and double-checked her face, praying that no sudden breakout of acne decided to ruin it. Clear, good. She bared her teeth for a quick check, happy for the millionth time since her braces were removed that she didn't have to worry about them blinding somebody when she smiled. "Romi?" she repeated.

"Down here. I rolled off the bed when I heard the signal." a timid voice replied and Tootie turned with a smile as her fairy godmother crawled out from under the bed. Andromeda, Romi for short, was cute for a fairy, with black and silver hair tied in fluffy pigtails, large eyes the color of the evening sky and a dress of rich blue silk. She had been assigned to Tootie shortly after Timmy's death to help her cope, and things were a bit rocky at first. At the time, all of Tootie's wishes centered on the boy, whether it was a plea to bring him back to life or be sent in time to stop the fall or something in between, and Romi couldn't grant a single one. Da Rules forbade it. When she got her Fairy-versary muffin for a rule-free

wish, Tootie had put it away for safekeeping, unwilling to attempt the one wish she wanted for fear of it failing and completely breaking her spirit.

Eventually, the wishes turned to normal ones that Romi could grant and things were okay. Then something happened, something that she couldn't explain or figure out, and her power was halted. No more wishes. By then, Tootie was more glad for a friend than for magic and they made do with just playing together and talking about 'girl stuff'. They soon found some parts of the city were able to allow magic, and Tootie would make trips to the 'safe zones' with Romi in her backpack to make a few wishes for the sake of keeping her healthy. Life, so far, was pretty nice.

Tootie turned her attention to the dozing boy, carefully moving closer to him to study him better. The first thing that caught her eyes was his jewelry. What boy wore jewelry? A weird ring and weirder necklace, both of which glittered against the dark color of his clothes, looked as though they would fit more with the décor of her room, what with the Goth streak she picked up on to deal with her grief. Romi flew up beside her, clutching her wand in both hands as she looked down at the boy in shock.

"Vicky brought him in." Tootie remarked softly, "I guess he knows something she wants to know too." She heard the fairy gasp and looked over at her in concern. "Romi? Are you sure you're okay?" she asked worriedly.

"I'm fine!" Romi squeaked, face paler than usual, "Just fine!" Tootie sighed in exasperation; Romi was a horrible liar. Instead of pressing on, she only pulled up a chair and sat by the boy, watching him. He seemed cute enough, with messy brown hair in a familiar style and a slightly athletic build. Why Vicky seemed bent on getting this guy to talk was beyond her; Tootie could only assume that her sister had finally lost it.

"Unngh...." the boy suddenly groaned and shifted. Romi squeaked in a panic and dove for her bed in a nearby dresser drawer. Tootie looked at her in alarm, then turned back as the boy lifted a hand to his head and opened his eyes, a dazed expression on his face. "Wha-? Where am I?" he mumbled.

"You're in my room." Tootie replied lamely, captivated by the blue eyes full of confusion. Such pretty blue eyes, and so familiar too. The boy blinked at her, then sat up and looked around himself.

"Ooh-kay. This is a weird jump. I hate those." he muttered and put a hand to his chest before panicking suddenly. He looked himself over, then gasped in horror. "They're gone! No!" He pat himself down, then shot a desperate look at Tootie, "Have you seen my iPod and watch?! I've got a green iPod and a pink watch; they're **very** important to me! Where are they?!"

"You didn't have them when you were put here." Tootie replied and pointed at the door, "You can ask Vicky about them. She said she wanted to talk to you."

"Vicky?" he echoed, confused, and she nodded.

"Yeah. She's my older sister." she explained.

"Your sis-?" the boy murmured as though trying to recall something, "So you're...." His eyes suddenly went wide, face paling as he scrambled back away from her. "Aagh!" Tootie jumped up in alarm.

"Watch out! You're gonna-!" she blurted out as he backpedalled right off the bed with a thud. "Fall." she finished with a sigh and blush, a faint smile on her face, "Um, you okay?" The boy scrambled to his feet and pressed his back to the far wall, staring at her in shock.

"You! But, you're... and you're not...!" he stammered brokenly and looked around wildly, taking in the sight of her black walls, the heavy curtains, antique furniture stained so dark they looked burnt, and dozens of lit candles that illuminated shelves of books bought from local Goth shops. He froze, furrowed his brows in confusion, then lit up in realization. "Oh! That's right!" he murmured, then looked crestfallen, "That's right. You wouldn't." Tootie gave him a wary look, eyes narrowing in equal confusion.

"I wouldn't what? What're you talking about?" she asked as Vicky kicked open the door.

"I heard screaming! And I didn't cause it!" she declared and shot the boy a glare, "It's about time you woke up! I have questions; you have answers! Get the idea?"

"Where are my iPod and watch?!" the boy shot back.

"What's the deal?! You can buy more!" Vicky snapped, "Now I dragged your sorry self here to get some things straightened out! Tell me what the hell's really goin' on here!" The boy closed his hands into fists, growling dangerously. A light seemed to flicker near him, then faded. Startled, he looked down at his feet, then up at them.

"Oh, no, not here." he murmured and something just *exploded* through Tootie's bedroom wall. Tootie screamed in alarm as the strange thing started running after the boy. It looked somewhat like a large Aibo robo-puppy, only with huge metallic jaws and not-so-friendly spikes protruding from its forehead. The boy jumped onto her bed and gestured at the gaping hole in her wall. "The nullifier! Over there! Shut it off!" he yelled.

"There's one of those things in our house?!" Vicky shrieked in alarm and ran out of Tootie's room for her own. The younger girl only stared at the robotic mutt that ripped her black comforter to shreds in its attempts to climb onto the mattress. After another moment of shock, she snapped out of it and grabbed one of her old dolls from inside the closet, hurling it at the dog.

"Get away from him! Stupid thing!" she yelled angrily and yelped as the boy kicked at her bedpost, snapping the wood off and snatching it as it fell. He spun around and slammed that against the dog, sending it skidding against the wall it emerged from and into the magic nullifier, crushing it into scrap.

"It's an anti-magic trap!" he yelled at her, "What the heck is it doing here?!"

"I don't know! I didn't *order* it or anything!" Tootie yelled back and looked towards the dresser drawer where Romi hid, "Anti-magic? Is that what was blocking your powers?"

"Probably. I felt a dark presence here and I couldn't use magic because of it. Good thing, too; that thing would have come after *me* if I tried!" Romi whispered loud enough for only Tootie to hear, then fell silent as Vicky ran back into the room with an axe in hand.



"**Away** from the twerp!" she raged and began smashing the blade onto the robotic dog. Sparks flew while the machine twisted under the force of the blows, still trying to get to the boy standing by in shock. His expression remained stunned as Vicky finished pummeling the trap into bits and pieces. "Stupid piece of crap. How'd this thing get in our house?!" she grumbled, axe still in her grip as she kicked at the rubble, then turned on the boy, "What's going on here?!"

"I already **told** you! This proves that kids are the target!" he shot back and glanced past her out the bedroom window. A look of relief came over him and he held up two fingers in mock salute, tossing aside the broken bedpost. "Thanks for smashing that device for me, though. Without my staff and gear, it's hard to destroy them. I have to get going, but I promise that this city will be free again!" he declared and ran out of the room. Vicky snarled and raced after him, leaving behind a huge mess in Tootie's room.

"Get back here! I'm not done with you!" she raged. Tootie blinked after them, then looked at her room, now in shambles. Romi flew up to join her, a smile on her face.

"My power is free now." the fairy said cheerfully, "Go ahead! Make a wish!" Tootie nodded and looked out at the room again.

"I wish all this 'anti' junk was at the dump!" she began and Romi waved her wand to grant it, "I wish my room was back to normal and didn't have that hole in the wall!" Dark blue puffs of magic filled her room. Tootie pumped her fist into the air with a cheer and looked up at her fairy godmother excitedly. "Now, I wish I knew that boy's name!" she blurted and Romi winced, her wand drooping with a strange noise. Tootie tilted her head, puzzled. "What's wrong?" Another wave and a copy of Da Rules appeared, opening up to let the fairy read through it.

"I'm sorry, Tootie, but that boy is immune to fairy magic." she apologized and turned a few pages, "It's a rule that was written four years ago."

"He's not affected by fairy magic? Why?" Tootie asked in disappointment. Romi fidgeted, twirling her wand in her hands as the book vanished on its own.

"It's complicated." she mumbled.

"I wish you could tell me in the easiest way possible why your magic doesn't work on him." Tootie finally declared and Romi sighed in resignation.

"Because, Tootie... he's dead." she replied bluntly. The dark-haired girl stared up at her in disbelief and Romi repeated her sigh, "I *told* you it was complicated!"

## 7 - Dark Information

7

Wanda waited anxiously as Timmy raced out of Vicky's house towards her and Cosmo. She held her wand out and poofed the boy's backpack onto the teen, then looked towards her husband as she readied another burst of magic.

"Cosmo! Timmy's on his way! Quick! Get into his backpack!" she shouted at him. The green-haired fairy was looking through Tootie's window again, a strangely thoughtful expression on his face.

"I guessed right." he muttered, "She definitely would have gotten a fairy godparent after *that*."

"Cosmo!" Wanda barked at him and he lifted his wand, poofing into the teen's pack as he raced by them with his former babysitter in hot pursuit, still swinging her battle axe around. She followed after him, poking her head slightly out from under the flap to see what was going on.

"I can't wish us home, guys, so I'll have to make do with running!" Timmy huffed as he pulled away from the tiring woman behind him. Wanda blinked and allowed herself a small grin; those heels were meant for walking, not running. There was a sudden shift in scenery as Timmy darted into a nearby alley to rest. "Wanda... are there... any anti-magic devices... here?" he panted and she flew out of the bag with Cosmo, holding out her wand for the test. Firing a harmless burst of magic into the air, the group waited tensely for an ambush. No reaction.

"Danny Phantom must have cleared this area already. It was part of the first neighborhood sweep, right?" she remarked, floating down near him as Timmy leaned back against the wall of the building and tried to calm his breathing. He shot her a glare.

"Yeah, well, how'd he miss the one in Vicky's house?!" he growled and dug through his backpack, tossing out broken gadgets and pulling his pink hat free from the inner pocket.

"That one was recent." Cosmo muttered, poking at the bandages wrapping his left arm, "The safe zone Danny Phantom cleared is being taken over again."

"Darn it! You mean those two months we spent here spreading out the gaps in the anti-magic field meant *nothing*?!" the teen fumed and pulled his hat forcefully onto his head, an angry huff escaping him. Wanda stared at her husband in alarm. That sounded far too much like Anti-Cosmo for her liking. She frowned as the green-haired fairy looked up at them from his poking.

"We were doing what now?" he asked, his lost expression bringing Wanda a bit of relief. Ever since that day four years ago, when Timmy fell from the jungle gym, Cosmo had been getting strange moments of clarity that were getting more frequent and lasting longer as the days went on. The bursts of insight and intelligence worried her at times.

"Not nothing, Timmy! You freed a large section of the neighborhoods on top of what Danny cleared, and you're very close to liberating the entire industrial sector of Dimmsdale!" Wanda tried to reassure her godchild as he stood there and sulked silently, "You're taking to this hero business like a natural! After all, you stood by the Crimson Chin as Cleft the Boy Chin Wonder so many times; it's not like we don't know how to save a city!"

"It doesn't count if all I'm doing is delaying the inevitable!" the teen snapped at her angrily and threw himself back against the wall in frustration, gesturing furiously as he continued venting, "How does Cousin Danny *do* this?! He puts the ghosts in the Ghost Zone but they come right back out, like, a week later! I wreck a dozen anti-magic traps, and **two** dozen more take its place everywhere else!" He scowled at the ground and shook his head. "I'm still too weak to keep this up, but if I stop for too long then the whole city will be swallowed by anti-magic!"

Wanda winced as her godchild suddenly turned and slammed a fist against the building in a burst of rage. This wasn't good. Timmy had always been a cheerful, optimistic kid, but ever since that day and learning what was happening to his hometown, he'd become more quick to anger. She raised her wand and poofed in a magical meter, then aimed the device at the boy. Once it beeped to signal the end of its scan, she studied it carefully.

"According to this Light and Dark Meter, Timmy's Light is being overrun by Dark!" she told her husband in alarm. Cosmo only gave her a flat glare, folding his arms over his chest.

"Well, you didn't expect him to stay happy-go-lucky after all that craziness, did you?" he asked her bluntly, "Both Caleb and Danny Phantom warned us that no one escaped Death unchanged." Wanda glared at him. That was getting annoying. She tapped him forcefully on the chest with the meter.

"That's enough smarty-pants talk out of you! Don't make me zap you another zipper for a mouth!" she growled and blinked as the meter beeped a second time. Wanda pulled the meter back in surprise and studied the image of Cosmo that had replaced Timmy's image. She looked up at her husband after a few minutes, a frightened look on her face. "Cosmo, why does the Light and Dark Meter say you have more Dark than Light right now?" she asked and the fairy only gave her a small grin before flying down to sit on their godchild's shoulder. The boy looked at him in surprise, then up at Wanda, waiting for an explanation.

"What are you guys doing?" he asked, his previous anger spent and replaced with concern for his godparents. He glanced aside and touched fingers to the bandages on the green-haired fairy's arm, "Cosmo, are you doing okay? Most of the traps are set to your DNA, so they tend to be a little harsher on you."

"I'm fine!" Cosmo cheered and held out the Reverse Doll, "Pete says he had a booboo, but you can make it all better with pizza!" Wanda stared at him, then aimed the device at her husband once more. This time, Cosmo was purely Light again. What was going on?

"Well, we're safe for now, so I wish we were home." the boy remarked and the fairy couple poofed the group back to the house.

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Back at the house, Wanda continued to stare at both Timmy and Cosmo. Something was causing darkness in the both of them. She could understand it coming from Timmy; he was only human, so to speak, and humanity had a tendency to dip into darkness at random times, and no one escaped Death unchanged, so that might also be a factor. On top of that, the poor boy was letting the frustration of fighting a losing battle get to him. So, yes, Timmy's darkness was accountable that way. But, what was causing the darkness in Cosmo?

"Yeah, one large pizza, sausage and pepperoni, one dessert pizza, low-fat... and you guys still do those cinnamon sticks?" Timmy remarked idly, ordering over the phone as Cosmo sat on the couch, polishing his pet nickel, Philip, "Great! Get me one of those, too. My address? Sure, it's...." Wanda looked between the two of them worriedly. She couldn't help it. No matter how hard she tried to put it out of her mind, it still came back to worry her. Timmy's darkness wavered back and forth depending on his mood and current magical strength, both of which were at an all time low right now. Wanda wasn't sure exactly how mana-based magic worked, but she knew from watching her godchild that it took time to recover from using a lot of spells, especially high-level ones. The more badly depleted Timmy was of mana, the more testy he got. This was human nature.

But Cosmo was a fairy, and a fairy godparent above that. There shouldn't be *any* darkness in him! That was the role of the Anti-Fairies. Besides, he was an idiot and that idiocy just about guaranteed his purity and innocence. Light would shine brightly from him.

Wanda redirected her gaze to their godchild, watching as he sifted through his wallet for the amount of money he would need to pay for the pizzas. Timmy Turner had been innocent and naïve as well, and his light shone brightly with each good deed he did, whether he wanted to have done that deed or not. But one week in Death's grip had done something to darken his spirit, and it progressively went downhill as time marched on. So if it was possible to corrupt Timmy's spirit, was it also possible to corrupt Cosmo?

"Pizza should be here in about a half hour. Saves us all from having to cook dinner." Timmy remarked and looked out the window at the town, "The guy on the phone sounded so sad. Did my death *really* do this to Dimmsdale? It's not just random babble from people who can't let go of the past?"

"Well, it wasn't Wanda's cooking that did it! I ate it all up and won the Fart Contest! Whoo-hoo!" Cosmo cheered and fell over in laughter, clutching both Philip and Pete tightly. Wanda debated feeling relieved that he sounded like himself again, or beating him over the head with Timmy's cordless phone for being an insensitive idiot again.

Relief won and she fluttered over to sit on the windowsill with the teen, gazing out at the skyline of Dimmsdale in the light of the moon. She sighed after a moment and looked up at her godchild, who gave her a vaguely tired smile before turning his pensive gaze on the city.

"Aw, come on, Timmy! Make a wish! That should cheer you up!" Wanda exclaimed brightly, a hopeful expression on her face. Timmy blinked at her in surprise, then lifted his gaze thoughtfully.

"A wish, huh? Hmm. How about... I wish I had a map that would show me the status of magic and anti-magic zones at all times so I can keep track of them!" he declared with a grin.

"Low-tech or high-tech?" Cosmo muttered from the couch, "Be specific." Wanda shot him a look as the young immortal rubbed his head.

"Hmm. Make it like a computerized armband so I don't lose it anywhere." he amended and the fairy couple lifted their wands. In a burst of pink and green smoke, a white armband appeared on the teen's right arm. "Cool! White metal! I'm like a spy or something!" Timmy laughed, tapping at the keys embedded in the band, "Thanks, guys! I wonder if I can download mp3s with this...."

A map was projected into the air on a virtual screen by the armband after he tapped out an initializing sequence by accident. Wanda smacked the back of his hand with the star of her wand to get him to stop, then began explaining the functions of his new 'toy'.

"This is the Adventurer's Map 3000, the latest in portable magic navigation and tracking technology!" she told him proudly, "It can update itself via the Fairy World Wide Web and the human world's Internet using satellite signals, is highly accurate for a distance of a hundred and fifty miles, and comes with a global positioning system built right in so we never lose track of you and you can't lose us!" She tapped the star of her wand. "Our homing devices are our wands, so you can look us up by inputting our names into the band." she added as Timmy continued to tap at the keys, experimenting with various settings until he stopped suddenly, a puzzled frown on his face.

"That's strange." he murmured and Wanda halted her explanations to blink at him. He pointed at the map. "According to this, roughly eighty-five percent of Dimmsdale is under the effect of the anti-magic barrier." Wanda and Cosmo flew up to study the digital map with its sections of gold and gray painted on the city.

"Gray is an icky color." Cosmo remarked and tilted his head, green eyes taking in the map, "That's a big patch of gold." Timmy nodded and pointed at the patch.

"This is the area Cousin Danny cleared before we moved back." he told the couple and moved his finger to another patch, "And this is the industrial district we've been working on for two months." Wanda nodded in agreement, then blinked in surprise.

"But there are *three* patches of gold! A part of Dimmsdale is still receptive to magic!" she cried in disbelief. This was insane! Caleb had said that **all** of Dimmsdale was under lockdown against magic, and the odds of the ancient android being wrong were very slim. Unless....

"He didn't check it all. That sector is deeper in Dimmsdale than Caleb's cameras could reach." Wanda realized, "But if we didn't clear out that section of the city, who did?" Timmy frowned at the virtual map again.

"I don't like this. There's something more going on here than just Crocker setting out traps to capture fairies for his crazy world-conquest schemes." he grumbled and pressed a key to shut off the map. He looked towards the window and brightened. "Hey! All right, pizza's here!" he cheered.

"I smell something fishy!" Wanda declared as Timmy hurried to beat the delivery boy to the door, "Why would Crocker ignore that one sector of Dimmsdale? I thought he'd cover the whole city in fairy traps!"

"It was located in the upper-class neighborhood." Cosmo murmured almost coldly, floating behind the pink-haired fairy. She froze at the sound of his voice, tensing as his breath seemed to tickle her neck, "Close range sensors failed to detect it. Doesn't Caleb have access to long range sensors? Like, from a satellite?"

"Cosmo?!" Wanda exclaimed, spinning around to stare at her husband in shock. It was happening again! Cosmo only pressed a hand to his temple, wincing as he fluttered in the air. He shook his head with a soft groan, then blinked at Wanda as though just realizing she was there.

"Huh? Where's the pizza? I want low-fat pie!" he cried and flew off in innocent laughter. Wanda only watched him zip away, completely baffled.

What was going on?!

## 8 - Plan of Attack

8

Morning brought a lot of activity once Wanda passed on Cosmo's strange hint. Timmy picked up the phone and dialed quickly as the fairies ate breakfast. It sounded so obvious; if Caleb had a bird's-eye view of the world from equipment set up on Derris-Kharlan, then wouldn't some of that equipment be measuring magical output from the world? Just to be sure that the levels of magic on Earth was sufficient enough to let the mages and summoners and other magic-using people do their thing without fizzling out?

"Good morning, Caleb!" Timmy greeted cheerfully, then took on a puzzled expression, "Huh? My business? What? Pre-programmed response?" He frowned as the chatter on the other end went on irately. "Okay, sorry! Sheesh! You could have told me earlier! Next time I won't say 'good morning!'" he griped, "Listen, I have a favor I need to ask of you." Timmy held up his arm, looking over the virtual map as he went on, "Do you have any aerial scans of Dimmsdale? You do? Of all cities of interest? I just want my town's... look, do you have any magic strength scans of the city?" He made a face. "Magic strength; you know, that graph you showed me the first time we figured out the barrier was up? You only scan for that every six months? Well, I need to see all the ones you have dating back over four years." Timmy rattled off, peering into a wall-mounted mirror to check his appearance.

"My milk turned pink! Look! Look! It matches!" Cosmo's voice cheered from within the kitchen.

"Stop pouring your cereal on me, you idiot!" Wanda yelled back in annoyance. The teen grinned, half-listening to the fairies' conversation.

"Why do I want them? Something came to my attention last night and I want to know more about it. Also, can you get Cousin Danny to meet me at your place? I need to talk to him about some stuff. Thanks. See ya in a while!" he finished and hung up. Finally! Things were starting to go his way! He might have spent his first two months as Dimmsdale's hero complete screwing up, but now there was a chance that he could make up for lost time. "Okay, guys! We're going to New York!" he declared, poking his head into the kitchen and shaking it at the sight of the puddles of pink milk, strewn cereal, and the two messy fairies standing on the tabletop. Wanda scowled as she poofed herself clean again.

"Aww! New York cheesecake goes straight to my thighs!" Cosmo complained as his wife waved her wand a second time to get him cleaned, "It's so hard to keep a girlish figure up there!" Timmy sighed and shook his head again, unable to keep a smile off his face. He needed the cheering up; he had yet to mention to the android that he'd lost his staff. It was just a simple wooden pole that he was given when he first began magic training, but it was also a symbol of his moving on from his old life and accepting his new one. The destruction of it hurt.

"Ready to go?" he asked and the couple flew up to sit on his shoulders, Wanda perched demurely and Cosmo occasionally kicking his feet as he whistled nonsensically. "Okay, here goes!" he exclaimed and

stepped onto the teleporter disk set under the stairs.

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Timmy emerged in the vast halls and rooms of the Archives of the Twin Blades, a museum dedicated to ancient and modern heroes and histories, as well as being the secret home and base for Caleb. He looked around in confusion; where exactly was the android? Weren't they to meet in the teleporter room?

"Hey, Timmy!" The boy looked up in time to see his cousin fly down from the ceiling, "I came as soon as I got the call. What's up?" Danny Phantom hovered before the young immortal, a carefree grin on his face.

"Hi, Cousin. Where's the old robot?" Timmy asked jokingly. The halfa shrugged, circling the younger teen out of boredom.

"Eh, some of the other androids here said he went out to get some stuff. The maps you want are in the library. We can talk there." he replied and held out a hand, "Grab on. I'll fly us there." With all four of them airborne, it was a snap to find the library, especially since ghost powers allowed Danny and Timmy to phase through walls and the fairies just poofed along to follow their godchild's trail.

Once in the room, Timmy raced to the maps on the nearby table, eager to get started. Cosmo and Wanda stood on the tabletop, examining the printouts themselves as they hopped from sheet to sheet as only fairies could, wings a blur as they barely touched the tips of their shoes to the papers. Timmy picked up one of the sheets, studying it carefully.

"These were all taken over the course of four years, right?" he asked Danny. The half-ghost nodded, sitting in a lotus position and hovering just above the table as he looked over the fairy couple with some curiosity.

"Yeah, but why the interest in them? All they do is show the decline in magic in Dimmsdale, which we already know has been pretty steady and even kind of accelerating." he pointed out and lifted an eyebrow, "And you haven't told me why you wanted to talk to me." Timmy lifted a hand to quiet the halfa as he studied the maps. "Okay. Whatever, man." Danny sighed and resumed his study of the fairies. Cosmo hopped about erratically for a bit, then flew away from the table for a higher view, arms folded over his chest and a slight frown on his face. Wanda tiptoed between the sheets, hands behind her back as she looked them all over with an intense glare. "Do they always do that?" the halfa asked his cousin.

"What?" Timmy muttered, comparing two of the sheets from the years between his death and his return to the city.

"This zipping around thing. They can't seem to sit still." Danny elaborated, watching with some irritation as Cosmo waved his wand and changed his appearance to resemble the halfa, "Stop that."

"Look at me! First I'm a fairy! Now I'm a ghost!" Cosmo laughed, then poofed into a butterfly, "Now I'm a bug! Wheeee!" He gave Danny a smug look, "Can *youuuu* transform into anything?"



"I can turn into a human."

"Oooh!" Cosmo cheered and immediately poofed into a human form, "Now I'm a human! This is fun!" He crashed to the floor moments later as his lack of wings made him subject to gravity. "I'm okay!"

"They're fairies. Comes with the territory." Timmy finally replied and pulled up several more sheets for comparison. The minutes stretched on in silence and eventually Danny agreed to a game of tic-tac-toe with Cosmo to relieve them both of some boredom. Halfway through the game, Timmy let out a triumphant cry. "Got it!" he crowed and pumped one fist into the air, "Hah! I knew it!" Danny drew out a circle in the air with ectoplasmic light to end his turn, then gave his cousin a puzzled look. Timmy laid out a few of the maps and had the group huddle around to see them.

"Look. As the years went by, sections of the city began to lose touch with magic." he began, pointing at the colored parts of each sheet, "But here's something we overlooked. This section right here." He pointed at the upper-class neighborhood. "Despite the flood of anti-magic devices, this part of Dimmsdale still had magic. See?" They peered at the portion of city he called attention to and looked for the same area in each map. Over the course of the four years, colored sections of the scan shrank as magic was drained away, yet the section of color for the upper-class neighborhood remained unchanged, as though under its own protective shield against the anti-magic barrier.

"He's right! That sector was untouched the whole time!" Wanda exclaimed and fluttered over the group of maps, "Only the richest of Dimmsdale's population got to keep their magic!" Timmy nodded, an angry look on his face.

"And guess who among them would do anything to make sure he didn't lose access to magic? Namely, fairy magic?" he growled.

"Mr. Nay-Nay!" Cosmo shouted with a huge smile.

"Remy Buxaplenty!" Wanda corrected, then repeated the name in shock as she realized what that meant. Danny lifted his hand.

"Okay. You lost me." he remarked flatly and Cosmo waved his own arm wildly.

"Me too! Me too!" he wailed, "Someone find me! I don't wanna be lost forever!" He suddenly broke into a smile, flying in to press his cheek against Wanda's own, "Unless I'm lost with Wandaaaa! Then, find me some other time!" The pink-haired fairy blushed and pressed a kiss to his cheek as Timmy rolled his eyes.

"Right. Well, when I was alive as a kid in the eyes of the world, Remy Buxaplenty was one of several rivals and enemies I had made." he explained to his cousin, "He had a fairy godparent, too, and from the looks of these maps, he still does. Remy's goal in life was to make me lose Wanda and Cosmo just because he couldn't stand the idea that I had fairy godparents."

"What a jerk." Danny muttered, "Well, you revealed his secret, right? Doesn't that mean he'll lose his fairy?" Timmy shook his head, setting the sheets back down, then folding his arms over his chest.

"Fairy World decided sometime after we each discovered the other's secrets that your status as a half-ghost made you exempt from Da Rules, so it would be safe to consider you an ally when necessary and fairies wouldn't need to worry if you see them." he told the older teen, "They lumped you with Caleb in that category of 'Not Really Magical, But Not Really Human Either', so you're cool with them as long as they feel you're still on the good side."

"Gee, I feel so honored. Not really human, am I?" Danny grumbled. The young immortal snickered and twirled his finger in the air.

"Well, you fly around and use cool ghost powers, plus you're border patrol for the Veil Between Life And Death. Normal humans can't do that." he pointed out and gestured towards the maps, "But that's not the issue here. Crocker is the one setting up the anti-magic field and all the fairy capture traps in Dimmsdale, yet Remy is safe within the sector of the city that doesn't seem to have Crocker's gizmos." Wanda and Cosmo both touched down on the table and looked over the maps again. "Guys, doesn't that seem wrong to you?" the teen pressed on.

"You don't suppose the two are connected somehow? Remy doesn't have a reasonable excuse to stop Crocker's barrier, not without Crocker suspecting him of having a fairy godparent to protect." Wanda pointed out and walked around the color-coded section of map, tracing the border with her steps, "And if Crocker thought Remy had a fairy, then the anti-magic net would be strongest in his area. Instead, it's nonexistent!"

"If he's rich, he doesn't need an excuse. Just a checkbook." Danny growled, green eyes suddenly blazing with a furious light. Cosmo yelped and shot towards Timmy, who barely had time to open his arms and embrace the little fairy. The boy lifted an eyebrow thoughtfully, cradling his trembling godparent.

"You mean, a bribe?" he asked and the halfa nodded, "That's definitely in Remy's style. I bet he's still under the impression that money can grant him wishes a fairy can't." He paused, a sudden chill running up his back as soon as those words left his mouth. A confused expression came over him; why did that happen? He moved his hand and tapped at the keys on his armband, bringing up the virtual map and shoving the strange feeling out of his mind. Now was not the time to get psyched out for no reason. "Um, that could also explain how Crocker's toys got so much better and more lethal. Sheesh! Look at this! Only twelve hours and already he's trying to muscle in on the industrial sector again!" he griped and shook his head as Cosmo yawned and dozed off, having forgotten his earlier fear already. A knock against wood caught the group's attention and they looked over to the library doors. The red-haired android stood in the doorway with a slightly puzzled look, dressed in his standard servant's uniform of green clothes, the jacket he usually wore with it missing from the ensemble.

"Sorry. Am I interrupting something?" Caleb asked cautiously, looking between the two 'humans' as he waited for an answer.

"Nope. Matter of fact, you might be able to help me, too." Timmy remarked brightly and looked up at Danny, "Now I can tell you why I asked for you." The redhead joined them at the table, adjusting the open-ended sleeves that decorated his arms as he waited. "Oh, yeah...." the boy added sheepishly, "Um, you know that staff you gave me? It kinda got burned up in a fight yesterday against some of the new trap models I told you about last week." Caleb repeated the puzzled look.

"You can't wish it back?" he asked and the boy shook his head.

"It got left in a public area and the pieces were moved into one of the sectors under the anti-magic field. We tried a wish and the net killed the magic." he replied.

"Sorry to hear about it. I'll get you a new one." the android remarked and pulled out a cell phone, pressing a series of keys and speaking into it, "Phantom? Could you fetch me the staff I had stored in Timmy's locker? Thanks." He looked up at the fairy couple, eyebrow raised. "You guys still have those battle wands I made for you, right?" he asked dryly, "Or did *those* get lost too?"

"We still have them, thank you very much!" Wanda shot back haughtily and gave her husband a glare, "Though Cosmo keeps using the Windcutter Scythe to slice bread!"

"It's pre-sliced, isn't it?"

"Try telling *that* to the green-haired moron here."

"Never mind." Caleb sighed and looked down at the young immortal. "So what did you call us for?"

"Right. Here's what I had in mind." Timmy began and pointed at the virtual map, "I've spent two months working on those traps in the industrial sectors of Dimmsdale. In that same time frame, Crocker's little gizmos have started to move back into the area Cousin Danny cleaned up." Both halfa and android studied the map grimly. Timmy sighed softly. "I'm not strong enough yet to take out the traps and nullifiers as fast as you, Danny, so I'm asking if you can do another sweep from here to downtown Dimmsdale." he went on, tracing a red line from the edge of the neighborhood being overtaken by gray towards a large patch of black, passing through a half dozen anti-magic sections of the city.

"Ouch. That's a lot of acreage." Danny Phantom muttered with a wince, setting his feet back onto the floor in all seriousness. He folded his arms over his chest and blew a short burst of air to get his hair out of his eyes. "It's a solo run, right? Sam and Tucker weren't exactly thrilled about the first sweep we did. If I leave them out of it, I might be able to clear it in one night." He shut one eye in concentration, "Cutting out the time to carry them from area to area, the need to keep watch on them if things go awry, and the fact that small breaks are needed to let them rest... yeah, I can pull it off."

"Caleb, I'll need you to finish the industrial sector for me. Move along this path to meet with Danny...", Timmy continued, tracing another line from the gray tinted section of the map, across another half dozen patches of gray, and connecting with Danny's goal point, "...here. The two of you together should be able to clear whatever is causing that black patch."

"Sounds good. I'll have to rely on physical attacks and my wings to get around, but I think I can handle it. More so if I take along my Lens weapons." Caleb remarked with a smile, "So, what will you be doing, Timothy?"

"Cosmo, Wanda and I will be checking out the upper-class district to see what exactly is going on there." Timmy answered, "Some kind of deal must be on the table between Remy and Crocker. If we can force it to fall through, we may be able to deal a heavy blow to Crocker's anti-magic and fairy trap supply lines."

No money, no upgrades." Danny grinned at him.

"I like the sound of that! Hit 'em where it hurts, Timmy!" he laughed. The younger teen nodded.

"It's open to magic, so we can pull out all the stops if anything decides to surprise us. Since all of Fairy World decided that my continued life is a violation of Da Rules, all effects of fairy magic that could be made to me were halted, except for magic that comes from Cosmo and Wanda." he pointed out, "Basically, they made me immune to fairy magic as a way of showing that I don't exist to them. It's actually going to come in handy, as Remy's wishes won't be able to touch me because of that new rule." He frowned and lowered his head in thought. "Is that what Jorgen was after the whole time?" he murmured and blinked as a younger version of Danny Phantom suddenly flew into the room through the ceiling, clutching a staff in his hands.

"Phantom! How ya doing, kid?!" Danny greeted with a laugh, "Still getting a kick out of that insubstantial technology?" The second 'ghost' floated down to them and smiled broadly, handing the strange staff to his creator.

"I'm doing okay. Just got off my shift for patrol so I'm gonna hang out with Daniel at Rockefeller." the robot copy replied and looked up at Caleb, "Is that okay? I kinda promised my twin I'd help him get the hang of flying..." The android took the staff and nodded. "Great! I'll go change uniforms. See ya!" He sped through the wall, cheering happily.

"Did he get more hyper since I last saw him, or is that a botched upgrade?" Danny asked the redhead.

"Column A, column B. Keeping those two androids in good condition is kinda tough; they keep getting beat up in women's bathrooms for using that technology to steal panties." Caleb muttered and held out the staff to Timmy, "Here you are. I think this should be an improvement over the original." Timmy accepted the new staff, setting Cosmo back into the air where he continued floating and dozing, then stared in shock at the wicked metal hook rimmed with spikes that formed the head of the staff. The wood was thicker and sturdier; the whole staff seemed more weighty and intimidating.

"It's kinda heavy. What is it?" he asked, eyeing the hook warily, "And is that part legal in this country?"

"Battle Staff, and it is in thirty states. Last time I checked, at least." Caleb replied with a grin, "You might wanna train with it some to get used to it. This staff should help you in physical combat a lot more than the old one." Timmy gave it a tentative swing, nearly falling over as the stronger staff pulled his weight more forcefully than he was used to with the lighter pole.

"Y-yeah! I'll do that!" he stammered and laughed sheepishly, "Definitely training with this one." He set the staff down and raised his arm again to display the virtual map. "We're moving in on the plan tonight. Once I finish my end at the upper-class sector with Cosmo and Wanda, we'll meet up with you in the commercial district. Something's up with those black patches and I gotta find out what it is!" he declared and glared at the points on the map. Eight sections of the city were completely blackened, spaced evenly across Dimmsdale in a formation of some kind. Timmy didn't like it one bit. There had to be some kind of connection between Crocker, Remy and the black patches. If he didn't get Dimmsdale freed soon, who knew what more could come? For all Timmy knew, his hometown could just be a first step towards a world-wide lockdown against magic!

## 9 - Holding Out for a Hero

9

Tootie walked slowly down the street to her house, thinking over Romi's words from the day before. It just didn't make sense; how could a boy who seemed so alive and vibrant be *dead*? She puzzled and pondered and fretted for so long, she barely got enough sleep to get her through the school day. She used her lunch time to go to Oberon High School and ask around there to see if anyone had seen or knew a boy with messy brown hair, shining blue eyes and strange silver jewelry. No one had a clue what she was talking about and she soon found herself escorted back to her own school at the end of the lunch period by Timmy's old friends.

"Romi, c'mon, tell me!" Tootie whined softly as the fairy peeked out from the safety of the girl's backpack, "Can't you find a way around Da Rules and tell me what his name is?"

"I'm sorry, Tootie, but every fairy in Fairy World swore to not reveal his name to anyone!" Romi whimpered, "The only way for you to know is if he told you himself or you discovered it on your own!" Tootie sighed and pushed her glasses up higher on her nose, letting them slide back down as she thought things over again. She couldn't understand it. Why was her own fairy not able to help with this?

"Okay, then how about what you meant about him being dead?" she asked, "Can you explain that? 'Cause he moved way too fast to be dead!" Tootie smiled, oblivious to the fairy's eyes going wide and skin turning pale white. "He was kinda cute, and the way he jumped like that reminded me of Timmy. I miss him still." she murmured and glanced back at her fairy, "Romi? Hello-o?"

"Um, well, he died, but then he came back to life." Andromeda finally answered. Tootie frowned. What kind of answer was that?

"That's impossible! No one can come *back* to life!" she exclaimed, "Isn't there a rule against that?!" Romi looked around, decided it was safe, and flew out of the pack to float by her godchild.

"There is, but it was broken by that boy. Since then, no fairy magic can touch him, because that would be like admitting he's alive again when he shouldn't be." she explained, "That's why it's against Da Rules to grant any wishes that involve him."

"Can I wish you'd tell me *how* he came back to life?" Tootie asked dryly and Romi poofed up the book again, flipping through the pages.

"Um, it doesn't directly affect him, so yeah, I can do that." the fairy answered and waved her wand to grant the wish. A photo poofed into the air and Tootie plucked it down, studying the image of a white-haired boy in a black and white uniform. "That's Danny Phantom, the Lock and Key to The Veil Between Life And Death." Romi told her, putting the book away and digging out a small card from within one of her large sleeves. She began reading off the card. "This halfa has the power to cross into

purgatory and retrieve souls from within its confines. He was the one who brought 'name block' back to life. As of -oh, this is kinda old- his status as ally to Fairy World is under debate because of this obvious abuse of power."

"Did he know it was against Da Rules?" Tootie asked in confusion. Romi nodded, shoving the card back into her sleeve. "So why did he do it?"

"Well, first off, he's not a fairy, so Da Rules don't bind him like they do us fairies. And the second reason, um... I'm not allowed to tell you." she mumbled, "Sorry. All I can say is that what he and Fairy World's other ally did messed up the natural order of things for that boy." She clutched her wand tightly and gave Tootie a sad expression. "In Fairy World, we call him The One Who Stands Beyond Death's Reach. He can never die until he finds the Grim Reaper himself." The two of them stopped at a crosswalk while Tootie chewed on that bit of information, stuffing the photo into her backpack.

"So, basically he's immortal?" she wondered aloud, "Isn't that a good thing? He'll live forever!" Romi shook her head, eyes wide and face growing even paler.

"**Not** a good thing! It means nothing can kill him, but he's not protected against injury or pain!" she cried in horror, "Like if something came along and bit off his head or something, he'd still be alive and the pain would be unbearable! It's a horrible curse! Endless agony; he'd be doomed forever like that!"

Tootie stared down at her shoes, pushing that thought out of her head with a grimace, then working her mind on the other bits of information she'd gathered as she pushed her glasses up on her nose again. Eternal life filled with the potential for endless pain; that **did** sound awful. But if it was so bad, why was that boy so happy-sounding? At least, up until he thought his stuff was missing? And if he broke a major fairy rule, why would the fairies work so hard to protect his identity?

She began to ask about it but halted as she saw the mystery boy from yesterday race by on the opposite side of the street, heading into downtown Dimmsdale. He seemed so intent on something, he didn't even see her. There was a long stick of some kind strapped to his backpack, and he was dressed all in black this time. Why did he keep wearing dark clothes? And more importantly, where was he going and why?

"Romi! I wish I had a hoverscooter so I can follow him!" Tootie whispered loudly. The fairy yelped and granted it, presenting the girl with a shining white scooter that floated several inches off the ground. Tootie jumped on with a happy shout as Andromeda transformed into a deep blue and silver helmet on the girl's head. "Here we go!" the young Goth declared and stomped her foot on the pedal, shooting after the boy.

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It was dark by the time the boy stopped running and Tootie parked in the shadows, sneaking out after him with Romi disguised as a jacket she wore. She looked around in confusion. This was the upper-class district. Only the super rich lived here. Why was the mystery boy sneaking into this place?

"Romi, can you use magic here? Is this a safe zone?" Tootie whispered as she followed the boy to one of the more opulent mansions. It was hard to see where he moved until he actually shifted in the shadows and bushes. If she didn't know any better, she would have thought that the boy was a ghost

himself. He was further up ahead than she was, and Tootie was finding it difficult to follow his exact steps to avoid getting found herself.

"Must be a safe area. Look at the boy. He's using magic." Romi answered and poofed from jacket to binoculars for the girl to use. Tootie looked through them and gasped in awe as the fairy directed her vision to the mystery boy's location.

He stood in the shadows of several majestic trees, holding out his hand as a ball of light blossomed into existence above his palm. Two fairies hovered around him as the sphere of light floated down to keep hidden as well as light another path. One of the fairies was a boy with green hair in the same messy style as the mystery boy's; the other was a girl with pink hair all curled up prettily. How amazing! He had magic *and* not just one, but **two** fairy godparents! Wait a second....

"Hey, Romi. If fairy magic doesn't work on that boy, why does he have fairy godparents?" Tootie asked in suspicion. The blue and silver binoculars seemed to shake in her hands.

"Uh, well! Those two helped bring him back to life, so, um, they were banished from Fairy World and sentenced to be his godparents until he finds Death, or for all eternity. Whichever comes first." Romi stammered, "They... they were his godparents when he died, so they remained his godparents when he was brought back."

"When did he die?"

"I-I'm not allowed to tell you. Sorry!"

Tootie huffed as she held the binoculars away, blowing her bangs upward with the exhalation. Romi poofed back to her normal self and apologized again, looking flushed and nervous. The girl let the words slide over her, thinking furiously. If she ever wanted to know more about the mystery boy, she'd have to rely on her own self to find the answers! It was obvious now that Fairy World was doing its best to keep clues about him very few and far between. Moving quietly, she continued trailing the boy and his magic light, inching closer with every brief stop for cover.

He was headed for one of the biggest houses in the neighborhood, the home of that one guy, Remial Buxaplenty, better known as Remy. Tootie took on a puzzled expression as she closed in on the boy. What did this mystery boy have to do with Remy? In her opinion, the guy was the worst kind of snob and brat to ever disgrace the Earth; a true blue slimeball. The jerk was even laughing the day Timmy died!

There was a brief flash of light and Tootie blinked as she saw the boy leap out of the bushes in a flying kick that knocked over a pair of security guards. She nearly yelped in shock and watched with wide eyes as he murmured something to his fairies, who waved their wands in unison and poofed the fallen men away. One surprise after another, what more cool things could this guy do?!

"Tootie! Quick! Get down before he sees us!" Romi squeaked and they ducked in the bushes themselves, crawling across Remy's vast yard to catch up to the boy. The ball of light had disappeared, maybe that had been the flash from earlier? She was still able to peek past several decorative flower bushes to spot the boy making his way to the side of the mansion. She crept closer, then stopped when he began to speak; maybe this was close enough, if she could hear his whispering loud and clear.

"We're going to have to split up here, guys. It'll be easier to investigate the place this way. Plus, I don't want Remy to figure out who I am, and if he sees you two, my cover's blown." the boy ordered softly.

"I don't know about this, Sport. What if he's got a whole arsenal of traps inside?" the pink fairy exclaimed in a hushed voice.

"Wanda, I'll be fine. I checked the radar. No traps." the boy assured her, "Just come into the house from the back; you might find a secret room or something. Take a look around and see what dirt you can dish up." He turned to the male fairy. "Cosmo, fly in from the ceiling and do the same; please, try to stick to the plan! We can't have the whole place wake up just because you couldn't resist the urge to do something stupid!"

"You got it! Resisting urge to do something stupid!"

Tootie sighed dreamily as a blush crept over her face. A leader! A real, honest-to-goodness leader type! Those were rare in Dimmsdale; yup, she'd definitely chase this one around! Well, not as much as she did with Timmy, since that never worked, but that's what she has a fairy for now, right? She could already picture the chases now, running towards the mystery boy across a vast sunset-painted desert, arms open and ready for a hug. He'd turn to see her and....

It wasn't the mystery boy in his dark clothes and silver jewelry that smiled at her, but a familiar figure in a pink hat and shirt with those buckteeth that so often haunted her dreams. Tootie stopped running and just stood in shock at the boy standing before her. Those eyes, that hair; it was the mystery boy, but at the same time, it wasn't.

"Timmy?" she whispered, feeling tears of joy well up in her eyes, a surge of hope rushing through her. Had her wish finally been granted? Had Timmy Turner returned? "Timmy!" The boy shoved his hands into his pockets, smiling wistfully as the desert wind began to blow across the sands, sweeping over the two of them.

"Sorry, this is just a dream." the strange mix of mystery boy and Timmy told her, the scratchy voice of the ten-year-old she remembered mingling with the softly serious tone of the older boy's voice. "I'm dead to the world, remember?" Tootie felt her joy dwindle into sorrow, her hopes dying as she reached out in an attempt to touch him, to prove to herself that he was really there, not just another vision of the boy to taunt her broken heart.

"Please, don't. Don't go away. Dimmsdale... all of us, we miss you." she whispered, "I miss you. Please, Timmy. Don't go away. Come back." The boy only smiled brightly and shook his head.

"Tootie, you dork! I never left!" he laughed, "You still have the memories of me, after all. You and everyone else back home. How can I be gone if you have me with you all the time?" He shrugged nonchalantly. "Besides, even if I got lost, you always seem to know exactly where to find me. I can't get away from you for very long!" Tootie shook her head furiously, unable to keep the tears from falling.

"You don't get it! We're all hurting because you left!" she yelled at him. The boy only turned and began to run from her.



"That's because you're *letting* it hurt! I have to go, but remember that I'll always be close by, even if I can't be there as myself." that strange mixed voice called back to her. She gave chase, crying for him to return, but no matter how fast she ran, she couldn't catch up.

"Timmy! Wait! Come back!" Tootie wailed, "We need you!"

"Of *course* you do!" Timmy's voice echoed around her cheerfully as the desert and the sunset began to glow a brilliant white, blinding her vision and hiding the receding pink-clad figure, "I'm the hero!"

Tootie snapped back to her senses as Romi squealed loudly in terror. The mansion lights were on, guard dogs were barking madly, and the sounds of angry yells and crashing things filled the air. What was going on in there?!

"Romi! C'mon! That boy needs our help!" she declared and raced for a broken window.

"Eeks! Wait for me!" Romi cried and flew after her. Tootie leaped through the window and gasped as she watched the mystery boy dart about the huge main lobby, dodging a multitude of blows from what looked like a giant metal octopus.

"Ahhh! A monster!" she screamed, "Romi! I wish it was a bird!" Romi flew forward and brandished her wand, the golden star shining brightly. With a blast of fairy smoke and magic, the giant octopus was gone and in its place, a small blue bird fluttered around an angry blonde teenager in money-print pajamas.

"What in the hell is going on?! / didn't wish for this!" the teen raged and shot a furious glare at the mysterious boy standing before him, panting. "You! I bet you had something to do with it, you wretched urchin!" The other boy only grinned at him as he breathed harder, staff held before him horizontally in one hand, the palm of his right hand pressed against it. He managed a slight shrug, uncaring of the sudden shift in the whole situation. "You might have a fancy light show, a dirty stick and some vaguely interesting martial arts moves, but you don't have *this!*" the blonde declared arrogantly, "I wish for an army of robot ninjas!"

"He has a fairy godparent!" Romi exclaimed with a shocked gasp as a puff of purple smoke revealed dozens of golden robots wielding swords and daggers.

"Why?! Remy's a cruel and heartless little snot! What makes him deserving of a fairy godparent?" Tootie demanded to know and shook her head, "Oh, never mind! I wish those robots could only juggle their weapons!" Romi held out the wand again and another poof transformed the ninjas into jugglers.

"What the bloody hell is going on?!" Remy yelled in a fury and searched the room for another fairy interfering with his wishes. The mystery boy also looked around, puzzled, and both teens spotted Tootie at the same time. "Another piece of lower-class trash?! And *she* has a fairy godparent?!" Remy shouted in outrage, "You little wretch! **I'm** the only one who should have fairy godparents to grant wishes!"

"Tootie, get out of here!" the mystery boy yelled at her, "Remy's gone nuts with power!" The blonde

turned on him angrily.

"And for the last time, **how** do you know my name?! I've never seen you in this town before!" he shrieked at him. The mystery boy only began murmuring to himself, a circle of light appearing at his feet and spinning plumes of pale violet color around his legs. "Oh, no, you don't! *Juandissimo!* Get in here!" Remy ordered and, in a burst of purple smoke, a Latino fairy appeared beside him. He struck a pose to show off his muscles and his white t-shirt ripped to shreds. A new one replaced it almost instantly.

"Never fear; my sexy self is here!" he purred flirtatiously, his accent thick in his voice. He spun a few times to show off his physique even more and snapped another two shirts in the process.

"Oh, great. *Everyone* here has fairy godparents!" Tootie muttered under her breath, a rising panic threatening to overwhelm her, "Romi! What do we do?" The fairy only yelped and flew into her arms, trembling fearfully.

"I don't know! This is going to end so badly, I just *know* it!" she cried.

"Juandissimo! I wish that brat lost all those annoying powers he's been using!" Remy yelled, shaking his fist at the boy. Tootie looked startled. No! If he lost his magic, who would save her? Who would stop Remy from taking Andromeda away?

"I would love to, but alas, my not-so-sexy friend!" the Latino declared and struck a dramatic pose of despair, snapping another few white shirts, "I cannot grant your wish! This boy, he is immune to fairy magic! Even from my sexy, sexy self!"

"Oh, you *can't* be serious!" Remy growled in disbelief and clenched his jaw as the boy finished the spell, casting a bolt of lightning that plowed through several robots that stood around juggling swords and daggers. "Fine! Then I wish I had *his* powers so I can get rid of him myself!" Juandissimo waved his wand and watched it go limp.

"Alas, yet again!" he cried theatrically, "I cannot grant that wish either! His magic is of an ancient art that only a few select and super-elite persons are able to acquire!" He gave his godchild a dazzling smile and posed again. "And you are not one of them. So sorry." he added.

Tootie watched the exchange between boy and fairy, baffled. She blinked as the mystery boy ran to her side, puffing. Funny, what was with those weird green earrings he was wearing? He touched his fingers to one and began to whisper.

"Cosmo! Wanda! Abort! Remy's going bonkers out here! I wish you two were my iPod and watch!" he ordered softly and Tootie stared at the green iPod and pink watch that appeared on the boy. So *that* was why he panicked that day; those items were his fairies in disguise! And those earrings were some kind of communicator? "Tootie! Let's go! Before you get hurt!" the boy added, grabbing her hand. Her face suddenly felt too warm and her heartbeat raced.

"Well, what **can** I do?!" Remy screamed in frustration.

"You still have an army of robots here. May I suggest wishing them back to normal and using them to

capture those two persons before they escape?" Juandissimo purred and poofed into a megaphone. Remy smiled cruelly.

"Oh, yes, of course! I wish these robots were vicious ninjas again!" he declared and the golden androids stopped juggling weapons, brandishing them in all their lethality. "Now, I order you to go forth and eliminate that annoying, magic-using brat!" he yelled through the bullhorn. The ninjas gave chase, rushing after the boy in a shining flood of blades and gold. Tootie cried out in alarm, then again as the mystery boy raced out the fallen front doors of the mansion, dragging her along.

"Come on! I have to meet my other friends and get them to help us!" he called over his shoulder to her, "When did *you* get a fairy godparent anyway?!" Tootie panted as she tried to keep up, her black boots clacking on the sidewalk along with the clangs of golden robots hunting them both. Romi poofed free and flew by them, too scared to even squeak at their situation.

"After Timmy Turner died! But something happened to stop Romi's magic!" Tootie cried out, gasping for air as they turned out of the neighborhood into the rest of the city, "When you were at our house, and Vicky broke that thing from the wall, her magic came back!" She looked back and screamed as she spotted the horde of robots. "Romi! I wish-!"

"Don't wish!" the boy yelled back at her sharply, "We're entering an anti-magic zone! If you make a wish, we're done for!" He touched his ear again. "Caleb! Danny! I'm coming, but I've got a train charging me down! Derail them when I get there!" he cried.

"I don't want to die!" Tootie sobbed, a surge of fear coursing through her body. This couldn't be happening! Not to her, not in Dimmsdale! "Please, don't let them hurt me!" The boy looked back at her and she blinked, taking on an astonished look as he managed a smile for her sake, a cheerful expression on his face as he gave her hand a gentle squeeze.

"Hey! Don't worry, Tootie! Everything's gonna be okay!" he reassured her with a hauntingly familiar chuckle, "I'm the hero!" Romi glanced back at her, worried, but Tootie could only stare at the back of the boy's head as he continued hurrying them to his friends.

Did the ghost of Timmy Turner send this boy to help her? To help all of Dimmsdale? Was that why she had that vision?

"Timmy." she whispered softly, but whether the boy heard or not, she didn't know.

## 10 - Revelations

10

As much as running for her life with a mysterious boy hero holding her hand was both exciting and romantic, Tootie wished silently that they could find a safe place to hide and rest. Her legs were aching and the boy wasn't sounding too good himself. Romi fluttered around them like a moth, nervous and pale. Tootie wondered why her fairy was so jumpy now. She'd always been calm and level-headed, a polite but cheerful fairy. It was Romi who helped her ease out of her shell after Timmy died and, with a little magic makeover, showed her she could be pretty on her own. Though she didn't really approve of the Gothic streak Tootie picked up on, she still remained supportive and was the strong, caring friend the girl could depend on to help her through tough times.

Now here she was, so stressed over something that her fluffy black and silver pigtails had exploded into puffs of frizz. Tootie could only hope that they could work out whatever it was that could be causing the stress.

They were slowing down. The little Goth took on a worried expression as the boy came to a stop and pressed a hand against his side, breathing hard. She looked back in the direction they had come, but the faint forms of the golden ninjas seemed safely far away. Romi whimpered loudly and she turned back to the boy.

"Are you okay?" Tootie asked and winced as he shot her an exasperated look, "Sorry. Standard question. Can I help?"

"Know how to suture?" the boy asked with a weak smile. Tootie shook her head. "Then I'll just have to deal with it." He touched fingers to the green earrings. "Danny, how are things...?"

Danny? As in Danny Phantom, the one who brought this boy back from the dead? Well, it made sense, kinda, that a ghost and a dead boy would be friends.

"Danny! I can't... what?" the boy exclaimed and looked up at the sky, directing his gaze at some strange green fireworks going off several blocks away. Tootie watched with him, puzzled. Were the bursts of green light important? "It's a- what? Danny, you're breaking up! Caleb, what's happening over there?!"

There was a strange smell. Tootie sniffed around, frowning. Instinct told her it was the smell of blood, but where would...?

A trail of deep red dotted the path they took. She followed it with her eyes, pushing her glasses higher onto her nose and letting them slip down as she tried to figure out where the blood-trail was coming from.

"Danny, Caleb, get out of there! Forget the mission!" the boy ordered and cried in pain, dropping to his

knees with a gasp. "I'm okay!" he hissed through his teeth, "Just get out of there! Please!" His hand fell away from the earring and braced against the concrete, supporting him as he uttered a second gasp.

"You're bleeding! You're hurt!" Tootie cried once she discovered the source of the trail was seeping through the boy's fingers as his hand remained pressed against his side. Romi flailed in the air, panicked.

"The robots are getting closer!" she screamed, "We're doomed!"

"Not you... just me.... They were ordered to come after me...." the boy murmured weakly, "Danny! Pull out! No, don't bother with Ghostly Wail! Forget it and converge on my position!" He fell silent save for the shallow gasps of air he tried to gulp down before he choked and coughed.

"C'mon! Let's get you to a hospital!" Tootie urged, "You could bleed to death!" The boy looked up at her with a faint grin.

"Tootie, I've been 'bleeding to death' since we left Remy's mansion. Any normal kid would have dropped after a block or two." he told her softly and shifted his weight to free his hand. He removed the watch and iPod, placing them both in her hands. Tootie winced at that gesture of trust; he was *giving* her his fairies! "I already died, so I'll be okay. Cosmo, Wanda, keep Tootie safe for me."

"What about you, Sport?" Wanda asked, her face taking the place of the digital screen. Her pink eyes were filled with worry and fear, "We're in an anti-magic zone! You can't use magic to heal yourself!" Tootie strapped on the watch and looped the iPod around her neck. She paused, then looked at the boy in confusion as a sudden thought came to mind.

"Hey, I don't think we ever got introduced. How do you know my name?" she asked him. The boy shook his head.

"Doesn't matter. Get out of here." he whispered and lifted his right arm, bloodied fist clenched tightly as he pushed his sleeve aside and tapped at a few keys on a white armband he wore. A map bloomed into the air and Tootie looked at it in awe. "Areas in gold are safe zones. You can use magic there. The closest point is south of here. Take Willow Street down another block. Wanda, Cosmo, when you get there, grant this wish for me." The clanging footsteps of the robot ninjas was getting louder. "Take Tootie home."

The young Goth looked around fearfully. There was a light of some kind coming from where they had seen the green fireworks, red and twinkling like a star. She turned her gaze towards the approaching horde of robots and shuddered. What was going to happen to the mystery boy if he was left here alone?

"I don't want to go!" Tootie whimpered and tried to pick the boy up by the arm, "We'll go to a safe zone together! Come on! Get up!"

"Get out of here!" the boy yelled at her, yanking his arm away, "If you don't leave, you'll *die!*"

"But what about you?!" Tootie cried and jumped back as he shoved her away.

"Never mind me! Look at your fairy!" he ordered and she turned her eyes to Romi, "The longer you stay here, the weaker she gets! If you don't escape, you'll die and so will she!" Andromeda *did* seem ill, standing on the sidewalk and practically wilting before her very eyes, wings drooping as her hair seemed flat and dull, her eyes dark and nearly vacant.

"But...!"

"Ugh! Look, if you leave now, I'll do *one* favor for you later!" the boy growled, "Anything you want; just get out of here!"

Tootie bit her lip and took another look around the area. The red light was getting closer and so were the robots. If the robots showed up before the mystery boy's friends did....

"Okay, but you **have** to be careful and not get killed!" Tootie finally told him fiercely and blinked as he laughed dryly at her words.

"I wish someone could have told me that four years ago. Would have spared me from all this." he murmured.

"Sorry. Can't grant that wish." Wanda seemed to say automatically. Tootie looked down at the pink watch in surprise. There were wishes a boy who was exempt from Da Rules couldn't have granted?

"All right. I'm going." she mumbled and quickly used up the last of her fading courage to press a kiss to the boy's cheek. He stared at her in shock, mouth open in surprise as she stepped back from him and scooped up her fairy. "For luck. See you later!" she told him and raced away, heart pounding. She hoped she *would* see him later; he could be the only hope Dimmsdale had for recovering its magic!

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More running. Tootie held Romi in her arms as she raced down the street. Odd, how Dimmsdale's streets seemed eerily vacant the whole time they were being chased by the robots; almost as if the city's people no longer cared to emerge from their homes at night. What was the point, now that the Heart was gone and there was nothing to bring life and excitement to their world?

Tootie didn't know how long she'd been running, but she was getting exhausted. She stumbled, slowed and finally came to a stop, slumping against a storefront as Romi pulled free and shook herself off. Now free of the oppressive force of the anti-magic field, she began regaining color and vigor, wings beating rapidly as she hovered in the air.

"I'm feeling better now. Are you going to be all right, Tootie?" Romi asked her godchild worriedly. The young Goth nodded.

"Yeah, though I wish I knew if the mystery boy was okay." she sighed absently and gasped as Romi flicked her wand up to grant the wish.

"No! Don't!" Wanda cried but it was too late. A shimmer appeared in the air, creating a magical window of events. Tootie peered through and cried out in horror, eyes going wide and hand flying up to her

mouth.

The ground was littered with broken gold and robot parts, but several robots were leaving the area in obvious victory. Amid the mess were three figures lying almost lifeless on the ground; a redhead in a tattered green suit lay face down on the asphalt, beautiful red wings of light spread from its back and lying limp; the boy in black and white, Danny Phantom, lay on one side, badly beaten and covered in cuts and burns and a strange green liquid that must be a ghost's version of blood; and the mystery boy was among them in a pool of dark red, gasping for air as he lay half-curved in pain.

"They're hurt!" Tootie exclaimed, instinctively reaching for the window to try to scoop up the boy and hold him close.

"And we have to grant that wish!" Cosmo declared as both watch and iPod poofed back into fairies. The couple lifted their wands, waving them in unison. With another blast of magic, the group vanished from the dark, empty street and reappeared inside a cozy little house. Tootie looked around in surprise, Romi floating beside her.

"Stay here, Tootie! Don't go anywhere; we'll be right back!" Wanda told the girl and poofed out with Cosmo. She only blinked at the now empty space, then took another look around as Andromeda fluttered to the couch for a bit of rest. This wasn't her house. Didn't the boy tell his fairies to take her home? She mentioned it to her fairy godmother.

"I think... this is that boy's house." Romi answered hesitantly, twirling her wand in her grip as she swallowed nervously. Tootie lit up with happiness and curiosity.

"Really?! Wow! So he lives here? By himself?" she remarked and immediately headed for the stairs, "Awesome! That would be so cool, if it was just you and me in our own house! Don't you think, Romi?" The fairy flew up after her.

"I don't know. Wouldn't you miss your family after a while?" she mumbled and squeaked as Tootie grinned at her, standing at the top of the stairs. "We should go back downstairs. Whuh-why are you smiling?" Romi managed to stammer out.

"Two doors." Tootie replied and pointed at a door with the initials 'C' and 'W' engraved on the wood, "That one belongs to his fairies." Romi blinked at it in sudden awe.

"Wow. The stories were true; he *did* change how he treated them!" she whispered, "They have their own *room!*" Tootie tilted her head in confusion, calling her name questioningly. Romi jumped and looked at her sheepishly, rubbing her head. "Oh, nothing! Just thinking about something!" she stammered, "Why don't we wait downstairs for Cosmo and Wanda, like they asked?" Tootie began to open the second door.

"I just want to find out some more about the mystery boy. This room must be his." she chuckled, "I wonder what it's like...." Romi sighed in resignation as they passed through the doorway.

It was clean and somewhat neat, with games, toys and comics piled along one wall. The bed was made and an empty fishbowl rested on the bedside table along with a clock-radio. Crimson Chin and Crash

Nebula posters decorated the walls. Tootie stepped carefully through, looking around in confusion.

"I don't understand. This is like a little kid's room." she murmured, "He's a couple of years older than me, right? This place is set up for someone way younger." She looked to her fairy godmother for an explanation.

"Oh, how sad." Romi mumbled softly, hand lifting to rub away tears, "Poor boy." Tootie didn't quite understand, pushing her glasses up and letting them slide down again. It dawned on her as they resettled on her nose. Didn't that boy say he wished someone had told him not to get killed four years ago? That meant that he must have died when he was just a little kid!

Just like Timmy....

Tootie walked towards a dresser that held a few framed photos, tears welling up in her eyes. What kind of world was this, to let such innocent lives be lost and let the bad guys get what they want? She picked up a photograph and touched her fingertips to the glass. The mystery boy stood proudly with his fairies, wearing black clothes that showed off the silver jewelry and holding a slender wooden pole in his hands.

"How can you be so happy when you're considered dead to the world?" Tootie asked the picture and set it down. Her gaze fell on another photo for just a moment, but it was enough to make her freeze in place. Her eyes went wide with shock and disbelief. "It can't be!" she whispered and grabbed the photo.

It was definitely Timmy Turner, she'd recognize that pink hat and buck-toothed smile anywhere. But, he was a little older than when he died, and the smile seemed a little sadder. The boy was standing on a grassy field with the red-haired angel she saw in the magic window. The angel, a very pretty-looking man, was reading from an old book, and Timmy was holding his hands out in a familiar way.

Tootie was thoroughly confused. How could this be? Timmy died when he was ten, yet here was a picture of him at about her age, twelve years old. She blinked, then picked up the first photo, looking at them side by side. The hair was the same, the buck teeth weren't showing but they had to be there, and those beautiful blue eyes were the same. Tootie gasped, dropping the photos. The way the twelve-year-old Timmy held out his hands, it was the same way the mystery boy held out his staff to cast his magic!

"Eeks!" Romi squeaked in surprise, "Tootie! You broke his pictures!"

"Romi! It's Timmy!" Tootie cried, tears running down her face, "It's *Timmy!*" She fled the room, mind spinning with the idea of it, the sudden, heart-wrenching revelation. How could she not have seen it sooner? Because she wasn't supposed to know? Was that why Romi couldn't grant her wishes, couldn't talk about him?

She heard Romi call her name as she ran downstairs but she couldn't stop. Why? Why?! Why did he continue letting the world think he was dead if he'd been brought back to life? Why didn't he say anything? Why did he let the city fall apart like this? *Why?!*

Tootie halted at the bottom of the staircase, taking in the sight of the group that had just come through



the door. The mystery boy... no, Timmy Turner closed the door and locked it, then turned and sagged against it, an exhausted look on his face. The red-haired angel leaned back against a wall, wings gone and one arm cradled in the other. Danny Phantom lay on the sofa, limp but breathing softly, probably unconscious. Could ghosts breathe? Cosmo and Wanda floated near Timmy, equally as tired as their godchild. They spotted her first and paled. Tootie swallowed the lump in her throat as she stared at the battered form of her childhood crush.

"Timmy?" she called out hesitantly, almost afraid that just saying his name would make him vanish again, like he had in her vision and in every single one of her dreams since his death. The boy in black clothes lifted his head to look at her, puzzled at first, then horrified.

"Tootie? How did...?" he began and shot a glance towards the stairs, "Oh crud!"

## 11 - Dwindling Hope

11

"Oh crud!" Timmy managed to cry in shock. What happened?! He wished for Tootie to be taken home, didn't he? Ugh, he didn't specify *which* home, did he? And Wanda and Cosmo, such literal fairies, took her to the first home that popped into their minds: Timmy's.

"It **is** you, isn't it? Timmy Turner!" Tootie went on in a weak, but joyful voice, "You're alive!" She began to sway and Romi squealed in fright. Timmy darted forward to catch the girl before she could topple over, uttering a soft grunt as Tootie fainted dead away in his arms.

"Urgh. Awkward moment." he muttered and looked up at his friends. Caleb had a smirk on his face despite his mangled arm and battered body. Wanda looked oddly proud and Cosmo just floated there with a giant cotton swab rammed into one ear. Timmy scowled. "No one say anything." he growled and looked up at the dark-haired fairy, "So, who are you?"

"My name is Andromeda, Romi for short." the fairy answered shakily, "I told her to stay downstairs! Now she knows who you are!"

"Got it covered. Wanda, Cosmo, I wish Tootie was at **her** house, in **her** bed, and thinks all this was a dream!" Timmy called out and the two fairies lifted their wands to grant it. Tootie vanished in a puff of magical smoke. Romi gave a little bow to him in mid-air, wings fluttering nervously.

"Thank you for removing that trap from her room, and for helping us escape Remial." she told the boy, "Good luck in your quest, Timothy." With that, she disappeared as well. Timmy sighed tiredly and returned to his group. Luck; yeah, he was gonna need a ton of it now.

"We got our butts kicked in a real bad way, didn't we?" he groaned, flopping back into a chair. Caleb moved to check on the halfa lying on the sofa and pulled back as Danny Phantom shifted and opened his eyes. "Hey, Cousin Danny. How are you doing?" the brunet asked with a slight grin.

"Ugh.... I'm still in one piece. That's good enough for now." Danny muttered, sitting up and rubbing his head, "That was unreal!"

"Can you guys tell me what happened? It sounded like a war had broken out when I called you two!" Timmy cried, leaning forward in concern.

"More like a one-sided massacre." Caleb growled, "We reached the target sector like you instructed, but what we faced was unlike anything I've ever come across in my life. And I've lived a *very* long life."

"There's a huge black tower standing there, pumping out dozens of these anti-magic things." Danny continued, pressing down on a deep gash in one leg, "I tried to take it out by blasting it but the Ghost

Ray didn't even *scratch* the walls of that thing! On top of that, it set off some kind of defense system and a couple dozen round things just flew out after me!" He winced in pain as he continued the pressure. "Some had blades, most had nets, but all of them seemed dead-set on piling into me. I could escape a few here and there by turning insubstantial, but I need to be solid to get the best effects of the Ghost Ray." he added and sighed, "I haven't been this battered since I first went up against Plasmius."

"I tried getting in for an interior assault through one of the main entryways, but the same system must have control of the anti-magic devices. They barred my way into the tower and ran me down, the whole mess of them. I can handle about five of those mechanical mutts on my own with little difficulty, but not more than a dozen!" Caleb sighed in irritation, "When I took to the sky to escape them, I became a second target to those flying drones. Between me and Danny, those things had plenty of opportunities to test the strength of their hulls and weapons." He shook his head grimly, "And each time we managed to get rid of a group of traps to get anywhere, the tower released dozens more to take their place. There are very few times in my life where I honestly thought I wouldn't survive to see the next sunrise. This night has become one of them." Timmy stared at them in horror. This was a *nightmare!* A tower in Dimmsdale, making these things constantly? No wonder he wasn't making a dent in the anti-magic shield!

"I wanted to use Ghostly Wail; I've improved on its use a lot over the years. When you said not to, I gave it another thought." Danny sighed, still applying pressure to his injured leg, "The way that tower is built, and the way it reacted to the Ghost Ray, even *with* the maximum amount of energy I put into it, I don't think Ghostly Wail could take it out. Not by itself, at least." He looked at Timmy curiously. "And what went on with you? How did you get so many robots ticked off? I thought they were gonna finish us off, we barely had anything left after that assault at the tower!"

"Our investigation of Remy's mansion went sour." Timmy groaned as the fairies sat on the back of his chair, looking downtrodden from the accounts, "He doesn't have any anti-magic gear of any kind, but he *does* have infrared and heat sensors. I triggered those alarms by mistake and he came down on me with some robot octopus he wished up." He rubbed his now healed side with a wry grin. "He got in a good hit. I didn't know Da Rules specified that only wishes that *directly* affect me personally were the ones that were banned. Paid for that cockiness with about half my blood supply." Timmy smiled up at his fairy godparents, proud of the parts they played in helping him, both at Remy's place and in poofing to human form before running into the anti-magic zone to carry him and Danny out safely. "Cosmo and Wanda were busy looking around for clues to whatever deal was between him and Crocker, so I had to keep Remy distracted. That's about when Tootie jumped in and started wishing things to help me."

"Girlfriend?" Danny asked with a grin. Timmy made a face, blushing despite himself.

"Dude, she's **twelve**, and she's more like my stalker than anything else. She used to have this huge thing for me when we were really little and she wouldn't leave me alone! I saw her Timmy Shrine once; geez, I still have nightmares about it!" he griped and shook his head, "Anyway, Remy is definitely nuts or something; he tried to steal Tootie's fairy just 'cause he thinks he's the only kid who should have fairy godparents. Then he tried to wish away my spells, which would have been a direct violation of Da Rules, so Juandissimo alerted him to my immunity." Caleb frowned at the report.

"That isn't good. Did he recognize you?" the android asked.

"No. Time and his own arrogance wiped me from his memory. The only way he'll figure out who I am is if I have Wanda and Cosmo with me in full view." Timmy replied, relaxing in his chair only slightly, "I got us all out of there, but he sicced his robots after me for poking around his place. I tried to get to you guys, but the blood loss kept me from going any further." He waved a hand at the fairies above him. "Cosmo and Wanda were sent with Tootie for everyone's safety, and the robots showed up minutes later. We all know the rest."

"Total smackdown." the halfa agreed, "We're lucky we can all play dead."

"Peh. Who's playing?" Timmy grumbled, "Stopping my heart is easy but an internal *Lightning* spell to get it to beat again hurts like all get out!" He drummed his fingertips on the armrest irritably. "The sooner Dimmsdale is free, the sooner I can start my life over."

"Black towers manufacturing anti-magic and fairy capture devices; possible connections between Remy and Crocker; it's all insane!" Wanda cried in near despair, "If the combined powers of Caleb and Danny Phantom couldn't bring *one* tower down, how can we hope to destroy **eight** of them?!" Cosmo shrugged and brought out a large object from his pants pocket, juggling it in his small hands.

"We could try asking really, really nicely!" he suggested brightly. Wanda snatched the item from him. "Hey! I was doing important fairy stuff with that!" Cosmo complained. Timmy watched them both in confusion.

"What is that? Can I see?" he asked, holding out his hand. The pink-haired fairy looked it over, then placed it in his open palm.

"It looks like a switch of some kind. But, it's kind of broken." Wanda remarked, "There are a few wires sticking out." Timmy turned the switch over in his hands, puzzled. It **was** broken, with some mangled wires and a chipped plastic casing. It also looked very cheap, something one would find at a hardware store on sale.

"Cosmo, where did you find this?" Timmy asked the fairy, pointing at the switch. The green-haired fairy smiled and clapped his hands.

"It was in a box called 'Souvenirs' in a secret room in Remy's house!" he laughed.

"Why would a broken switch be stored in a rich kid's house like a special memento?" Timmy wondered aloud, studying it again. His cousin leaned forward to look at it himself.

"Rich people have their own way of seeing things." he replied, "You'd be surprised the kinds of things they place a great deal of value on." Timmy felt that cold chill again. Why was he getting that feeling of wrongness? "So what should Timmy do about the black towers, Caleb? As long as they stay up, it'll take a miracle for him to free the surrounding sectors of the city!"

"Well, nothing for now. Not while we're in this condition and Timmy still needs time to recover from the loss of blood." the android replied bluntly, "Immortal or not, he can't function without enough of *that* to keep his brain aware." The brunet frowned, glaring at the both of them in turn.

"Can you guys *not* talk about me like I'm not here?" he grumbled.

"Then, we'll need a better idea of what it is he's up against. Until a weakness is found in that tower's layout, any assault he tries and we aid with will ultimately fail." Caleb finished and gave the boy a look, "Sorry, but you looked as though you had tuned us out for the moment." Timmy sighed and shook his head.

"Never mind. I should be used to it anyway." he mumbled, then ground his teeth and slammed his fist against the armrest. "I can't believe how much power Crocker got backing him up since I left Dimmsdale!" he exploded, sending the fairies scattering into the air in panic before they could resettle themselves, "Whenever I dealt with him as a kid, he usually ruined himself *without* much help from me! Now he's got all of Dimmsdale in his hands and he's crushing the magic out of it!" He ran his fingers through his hair as the sudden burst of passion sputtered and died into dejection, eyes studying the switch half-heartedly. "I don't get it. Crocker always wanted to prove fairies exist by capturing one. With this anti-magic field, he's only blocking them out and preventing the fairies that are already here from doing anything that could reveal themselves."

"This *is* really confusing." Wanda agreed tiredly, reaching down to pat the boy on the head in an attempt to comfort him. For a minute or so, the group was silent, reflecting on the events of the night and what they had learned so far. It seemed as though Timmy's first steps into the world of a Hero would not be easily taken. Caleb held out his working hand suddenly, allowing the broken arm to hang at his side.

"I need to head back to New York for repairs. May I see that switch? There must be something special about it if Remy kept it hidden away." he remarked and pocketed the item when Timmy passed it on, "I'll set the equipment on Derris-Kharlan to focus on the tower in Dimmsdale for a full intensity scan. Maybe I'll learn something that will be of use to you." Danny stood with him, favoring one leg.

"I have to get home too. My parents think I spent the day at Sam's place so I'm gonna have a hell of a time explaining my injuries." he agreed and Timmy held out his hands.

"Let me help with that. *Light of mana, soothe the wounds of this battered form! First Aid!*" he exclaimed, sending a quick burst of healing magic to his cousin. Several small injuries faded away, leaving only a few of the more serious ones behind. Timmy sighed dejectedly. "Sorry, Cousin. I don't have the strength left to do a full heal." he apologized, "I used up a ton of mana dealing with Remy."

"It's okay. My ghostly regeneration can focus on these better now. Thanks." Danny returned and ruffled his hair, "Good night. Hope things turn out better tomorrow." With that, both Caleb and Danny Phantom stepped onto the teleporter disk, vanishing in a beam of light. Timmy waved good-bye, then sank back against the chair with a fairly defeated expression as Wanda began chattering on about his need for rest and basically grounded him from trap-hunting for the next three days.

"Why do I get the feeling that this will only get worse?" he groaned, "Yes, Wanda. I'm going to bed, Wanda. Please don't poke me with your wand, Wanda...."

## 12 - Undercover

12

Oberon High School, one of many school-based hot spots for an anti-magic field. It looked normal enough, what with the tall brick building surrounded by trees, open, grassy yards for outdoor lunches, and a fairly decent fence to keep kids in and perverts out. Timmy looked up at it and frowned. What on earth was a pair of devices doing stashed in a high school? The elementary school was obvious; the younger the child, the better chance they had a fairy. It wasn't often that young teens had fairies, but Timmy supposed Crocker wasn't going to let anything slip by.

His plan that morning, cooked up after three days of being confined in bed by Wanda, was simple. Pretend to be a student, search the school for the traps and nullifiers, destroy them, then get out; he thought it was brilliant. Wanda, and even Cosmo, did not.

"What if they recognize you?" Wanda had pointed out as she and Cosmo put together a magically created breakfast for the three of them earlier that morning. The green-haired fairy had spent twenty minutes constructing a scale model of the Eiffel Tower out of bacon, and twenty seconds splattering it all over himself, which meant Timmy was spending the same amount of time cleaning up his godfather. "Technically, you're *undead!* What if the guys that hunt ghosts come here to hunt **you**?!" she went on worriedly and her hair poofed itself to resemble an electrified set of porcupine quills, "The guys from that one organization... the ones that have been chasing Caleb for years and started chasing Danny only a year ago... what if they catch wind of an immortal and decide to add you to their list?!"

"No one's going to know, no one's gonna find out. They've got their own problems to worry about." Timmy remarked confidently, finger-wrestling Cosmo for the fun of it, grinning as it took the fairy's entire grip to hold onto his index finger. He easily flicked it and pinned his godfather's arm to the tabletop. "Besides, Dimmsdale believes that I'm dead; my grave is in the cemetery to prove it, and it still has that dummy Caleb put together for me. Who's gonna bother to think that Timothy Neogene is really Timmy Turner when they can go dig that up and find 'my' ten-year-old body?" he added on and Wanda turned a faint shade of green to match her husband's hair.

"I wish you wouldn't be so graphic, Sport." she mumbled and picked up the pair of Fenton Phones they had used the night of the failed mission, "We'll be in New York to see what Caleb found out about that switch; call us with the Phones to wish yourself there when you're done." Handing him one of the earpieces, she added a shaky smile. "Please be careful, okay? We love you, you know that, and we don't want anything to hurt you." the fairy murmured.

"I'll be fine, *Mom*." Timmy had teased back and she winced.

In retrospect, calling her that probably wasn't the best idea, but it was too late to take it back and he was already standing in front of Oberon High with a backpack loaded with gadgets and bottles of liquids the android had insisted would be of assistance, and a homesick feeling that probably was the reason why

he had taunted Wanda. With a sigh and shake of his head, he entered the high school, radar in hand to locate the devices. He hoped for a nullifier, something he could take out on his own without the aid of his fairies or the Battle Staff he'd left at home.

Pictures and stories of Cousin Danny's high school days did not prepare Timmy for the hustle and bustle of hundreds of teens crowding the halls. The chatter, the laughter both real and not, the scents of dozens of perfumes and colognes, it was overwhelming! Covering his nose and mouth to avoid breathing in the pungent air, Timmy ducked into the first isolated corner he could find. Too much noise, too many distractions; his head was throbbing painfully from the assault on his senses. If he didn't do something about the sensory overload, he was liable to just run out of the school in screams.

Concealed by both the shadows of lockers and his dark blue ensemble of jeans, boots and sleeveless turtleneck, the young immortal set to clearing the mess mentally. He closed his eyes, shutting out the bright colors of designer clothes and the latest fashions from The Gap's spring lineup, then let his mind drift as he relaxed into meditation. Arms folded over his chest, head bowed as his sense of self rose above the clutter of high school normalcy, Timmy felt the world fade into the background. The babbling, the aromas, the feel of dozens of people around him, it was all receding as he stretched for that perfect moment of nirvana, for that comforting little corner of the universe where he could curl up and be protected from the ills of mortal life.

"Nice necklace. Does it come in gold?" a girl's voice asked suddenly, breaking Timmy's concentration and bringing his awareness crashing back into the reality of the here and now. The urge to thrust his fist out in retaliation was only barely restrained; it took a fair amount of mana to support the zen-like state and this intrusion just wasted it all.

"No, it doesn't. It was given to me as a gift." he growled, opening his eyes to see a pretty face blink at him curiously. Timmy blinked back, then narrowed his eyes. She looked familiar; she sounded familiar, too. That hair, those clothes, those eyes; who was she?

"So it's a custom piece? Wow! That must have been really expensive!" the girl purred and flicked her hair back, "I'm Trixie Tang, queen of the A-List high school teens. Of course, you've heard of me." Timmy stared at her in disbelief. *This* was Trixie?! Four years hadn't hurt her at all! Was this because her home in the protected zone allowed her to keep her 'magic', her hopes and dreams? Had she been made immune to the depressive darkness that overshadowed the whole city? He slipped on the sunglasses that allowed him to see fairy godparents in their disguised forms and looked her over quickly. No fairy. So there wasn't any magic to help her cope with life.

If his death affected all of Dimmsdale to the point that even Vicky thought fondly of him, in her own strange way, then why didn't it do anything to Trixie?

"No. As a matter of fact, I haven't." Timmy finally answered, quelling the hurt for later. Trixie blinked again, this time startled by the response she received. "But if you're part of the A-List, perhaps you know of someone I am looking for." he went on, a plan forming in his head, "He goes by the name of Remial Buxaplenty."

"You know Remy?" Trixie asked and smiled, pulling Timmy out of the shadows, "Then you must be an A-List student! C'mon! Let me show you the popular spots!" They hurried down the hall towards a door

marked with a golden star and painted a rich violet. Trixie opened the door and pulled him through, laughing with delight. "So what's your name? I haven't seen you here before." she went on cheerfully. Somehow, her voice was more irritating than Timmy remembered.

"Timothy Neogene." he answered curtly, looking for an excuse to escape his former crush, "And I'm kind of busy right now, so...."

"Ooh! I've heard of you! You're the kid who hangs out with that New York billionaire, aren't you?!" Trixie cooed.

"If you mean Trump, no. I doubt I'd want to hang around with him. Real estate tycoons are a bit too dull for my liking." the boy grumbled as they walked down a regally decorated hall. Candlelit chandeliers adorned the ceiling and provided the soft glow that lit the path, marked by a plush red carpet with intricate designs woven from golden thread.

"This hall is one of several used only by the popular teens." Trixie remarked, seemingly ignoring his prior words, "It's quiet and keeps us away from the unpopular people." She broke into another brilliant smile and waved at a pair of boys milling by a stoic waiter and his tray of delicacies. "Hello, Tad! Hello, Chad! I'd like you to meet Timothy!" she greeted brightly, dragging him towards the two boys, "Timothy, these are two of the top popular teens here in Oberon High, Tad and Chad."

Both young teens stopped their idle chatter to look Timmy over, searching for something about him that would warrant exile from the A-List and possible future exclusion into the bottom rungs of the social ladder. Timmy shot them both a warning glare. He was still hurt from Trixie's obvious lack of caring that he had died and was in no mood to be ridiculed for the amusement of others.

"I don't have the time for this." he growled, "Just tell me where I can find Remy and get out of my way." Tad and Chad stared at him in surprise, jaws dropping open at the blunt tone of voice he used, then pointed down another hall.

"He's in the afternoon break room. He's usually there for about ten minutes before he heads off to algebra class." Tad replied and smiled weakly, "Nice diss, though. Quality A-List material!"

"Timothy, right? Cool outfit. Tommy Hilfiger?" Chad added sheepishly.

"If I wanted designers, I'd hire my own." Timmy answered shortly and walked off, "And I told you I don't have time to waste on you." He had only gone several feet away when he learned that the plush carpet of the A-List hall worked against him as easily as it worked *for* him. "Hey!" he exclaimed as Trixie grabbed and hugged his arm, smiling brightly.

"Oh, do you *really* have to talk to Remy? Why don't we go to class and then have lunch together?" she purred, "I brought my personal chefs today. Did you bring yours?"

"I gave them the day off." Timmy muttered, "Now, will you let go of my arm?" Trixie dug in her heels, pulling back as he tried to move onward.

"Really, really!" she pleaded, "You **don't** want to bother Remy today! He's been grouchy ever since he



had that weird break-in at his house!" The boy stopped and looked at her in confusion. That sounded like panic in her voice. Was Trixie panicking? Why? What did *she* have to worry about, living in luxury in a magic-rich safe zone? He thought that over, frowning. If that was the case, then maybe Remy's power, backed by his fairy's magic, was causing a pocket of stress for the other rich kids. Especially for those without fairies. That was something to look into later.

"I suppose Remy's security isn't as up to par as I thought?" he wondered aloud and Trixie shook her head.

"It's first-class, all the way. But someone got through and trashed his mansion about three days ago. He's been really sore since then." she whispered and glanced around, "To be honest, I'm glad someone got under his skin. He's been acting all weird and super-confident ever since *that* day."

"What day?" Timmy asked, putting on a puzzled and concerned expression even as he grinned internally at the mayhem he caused the blonde. If it was bringing him down *that* low, then it was worth the fog he lived through while trying to recover from that night. Trixie suddenly broke into another smile and shook her head.

"Break's almost over! Let's get to class!" she cheered and dragged him down yet another hall to a classroom door.

Class as a popular student was far different from class as an 'Other'. Timmy sat at one of the desks, studying the anti-magic device detector in his hands. The teacher had tried to take it away as well as demand his identity, but his name and a flash of a hundred-dollar bill got him off his case. Timmy made a mental note to request extra funding from Caleb; pretending to be an A-List student was going to be costly. He'd just handed off his grocery allowance for the next two weeks, and all that was left in his wallet was enough to pay off utilities if he kept dinners on Cosmo and Wanda's chore list.

"It's nearby. Probably in the science class lab." he muttered and tapped at the keys of the radar, "There's two of them; one is on the other end of the school. Crocker doesn't make this easy." Trixie sat by him, watching him with interest.

"What's that?" she asked, pointing at the device. Timmy tucked it back into the pouch at his side, ignoring the question. "You're so cold, Timothy." she added in a petulant tone, pouting as she gave him a puppy-eyed look.

"Maybe, but it doesn't compare to you, Ice Queen." Timmy grumbled, sitting back and closing his eyes for another round of meditation. Going undercover as a popular teen to get close to Remy and discover his connections to Crocker was going to be very unpleasant. Already he could feel his nerves fraying; to think he once obsessed over this girl! Back when she was a *real* person, with real feelings and a strange sort of affection for him that was manifested in slightly gentler oustings from Popular hangouts, Trixie Tang was someone he had placed on a pedestal in his mind. A goddess among girls, especially during an age where he insisted he had no interest in girls yet.

Timmy heard a faintly defeated sigh and tried to push her out of his thoughts. He turned his focus to his list of spells and ran through the incantations a few times. Despite his near mastery of just about all

levels of healing magic, his offensive lineup was still weak and far from any amount of true leveling. The botched mission only confirmed his fears; as he was now, Timmy didn't have the power to free Dimmsdale. He could spend a hundred lifetimes smashing gadgets and gizmos, but in the end he would fail. Exactly how he wasn't sure, but he was positive he would fail his mission.

The bell rang for lunch and Timmy looked up at the clock to be sure of the time. Once the students and faculty were out eating, there would be no one to interfere with his sweep of the high school. He left the classroom with the other students, then darted away to escape Trixie as she called his name.

"For the love of God, go away!" he muttered under his breath and spotted a janitor's closet not far from the science lab. With a grin, he dashed inside and waited until he heard the girl's footsteps fade away. Lifting his arm, he tapped at the keys on the white band, bringing up the map of Dimmsdale. There was a great deal of gold now, thanks to Caleb and Danny Phantom, but those black spots, the locations of the anti-magic control towers, worried him. No, Crocker would not make the task of bringing down the field any easier.

"Well, I'd better get to work anyway." Timmy sighed and left the closet. The lab room was close by and empty, so he headed inside to start searching. Radar in hand, he began a scan of the room. Beakers and vials filled with strange liquids of various colors lined the tables and shelves. He smiled as an old memory surfaced, thoughts of Cosmo and Wanda screaming 'Do it! Do it! Do it!' as he worked on a science project bringing a much needed burst of warmth.

The radar beeped and he snapped out of the moment of reminiscing to study it. It was a few feet away, somewhere. Caleb was still working on perfecting the locator, and was forever blaming its inaccuracies on Crocker's erratic signals. Most of its problems lay in the fact that it used a mix of technology and magic to hunt down the devices, and it couldn't identify the signals as being from a capture unit, a nullifier, or a destroyer.

"Be a nullifier, please, be a nullifier." Timmy muttered, searching around himself for anything that looked out of place. One would think that an advanced piece of technology would stand out among the myriad of homemade science projects, but this was more proof that Timmy was not prepared for high school. Teenagers had more resources at their disposal than a bunch of ten-year-olds. "Man, how am I supposed to do this **now**?" he grumbled, scowling at one of the devices made by a student, "Stupid Crocker and his stupid pieces of junk!" It beeped at him and he lifted an eyebrow in return, glancing at the score-sheet by the assembly of mechanical parts. He peered at it more closely and whistled in surprise. "A.J.? Wow, he made this? I guess he just got into science a lot more than I remember...." he remarked.

The detector beeped again and Timmy left his old friend's project in favor of finding the device. He knelt to open the storage doors of the counters and lab tables, nudging aside jars, microscopes, and Bunsen burners in his search, muttering to himself in frustration. None of this was fair. One slip on the jungle gym, those infernal monkey bars in that confounded dome shape, and now he's stuck wandering Dimmsdale on an endless search and destroy mission for all eternity. And there was no one he could place the blame on for the whole thing; **he** was the one who wished Wanda and Cosmo would have the day off to do anything they wanted so long as it didn't involve him in *any* way whatsoever, **he** was the one who thought he'd be perfectly fine climbing those bars on his own to finally reach the top. He'd done it before, once, with the fairies' help.

And so there was no comforting pink helmet and soft green air mattress that day, and Francis sat like some behemoth king on top of the dome, chortling his pizza-face off as he shoved away other boys trying to climb the bars. His friends told him not to do it; as long as Mr. Glandular-Problem squatted up there, making his feeble attempts at a jungle call, any attempt to unseat him would end in disaster. Heck, even Tootie told him he'd be stupid to try it, but she'd root for him anyway if he did. But Timmy had been confident in himself, in the training that he'd received from his fairy godparents, and up the dome he went, willing to face even Francis for the chance to prove his ability to climb the thing and maybe curry a little favor with Trixie.

"Ugh! Finally!" Timmy growled, grabbing a silver case from within one of the storage compartments. Looking it over, he decided that it was definitely the nullifier unit. He snapped off the sensory array and studied it. "It can't sense me anymore, so it won't be able to nullify my magic." he murmured and brightened, "Hey! If I take this to Caleb, he can analyze it and improve the radar even more! I guess bringing him trashed parts doesn't help much, but if he's got a working nullifier, then he can really come up with some cool gear!" He shoved it into his backpack and checked the radar again.

The second device had moved.

"What the heck?! Is someone moving that thing around?!" Timmy exclaimed, baffled by the relocated spot on the radar screen. Determined to find out what was going on, he raced out of the lab and followed the halls, moving closer to the destination point marked by the radar. With the nullifier disabled, he was free to use his spells on whatever the second unit was, and he'd have to rely on them without the Battle Staff to do most of the physical wrecking.

The radar was leading him outside; Timmy could hear the other students milling about the yards and gathering points. Rather than burst through the doors and possibly get run over by Trixie, he chose to duck into another classroom and climb out the window. Dropping into the hedges that surrounded Oberon High, Timmy shed the backpack and leaned it against the wall for later recovery. Traps were dangerous things; triggering either the capture unit or a destroyer would set off a damaging chain reaction and he couldn't afford getting his gear and the nullifier destroyed. Once the second trap was history, he'd return for his pack and escape.

"Okay, now where is it?" Timmy muttered, heading out into the ocean of students. They were divided up into groups; the social ladder still ruled supreme, with the popular students gathered at the choicest spot in the yard, a tree-shaded hill that offered good view over the rest of the teens. The social outcasts, the 'Other' kids, were confined to a lowly bench on the outer fringe of the yard. He stopped to see them, and froze.

Chester McBadbat and A.J. Ibrahim, his two oldest and closest friends, sat there in their usual isolation, but Tootie sat with them, talking and laughing along with the older boys. How did **that** work? She was *twelve*; she shouldn't even **be** in high school! And when did she become friends with *his* friends? Was he that far gone in the past? Timmy watched them from a distance, heart twisting painfully. Chester and his eternal braces, he chatted excitedly as he gestured almost wildly; A.J. commented now and then, his focus mainly on a laptop he held, fingers flying over the keys; Sanjay in his glasses and forever optimistic smile sitting by them, pointing out things on the laptop screen; Elmer, the Boil Kid, barely putting in a word or two as he kept himself in a defensive posture. Timmy blinked; the boil wasn't on his

face anymore, he noticed. Had it finally been removed? And was that his other pink hat Elmer was wearing? In all the days he'd lived, there had only been two pink hats Timmy ever possessed; one that he wore now in private for the sake of keeping some connection to his past, and the other he gave to Elmer long ago, to give the boy a dream to look forward to.

*"If ever the real Timmy Turner fails to fulfill his duties, you will be the new Timmy Turner."*

Guess he wasn't comfortable with the role.

And Tootie seemed normal enough, though she would often rub at her head and look distant, as if trying to recall something. Timmy slipped on the sunglasses and scanned her figure. There was Andromeda, her fairy, sitting in her lap in the guise of a geisha on the cover of a book. He removed the shades and sighed forlornly.

"I really miss you guys." he whispered, brief moments of their childhood adventures flickering in his memory, "Do you miss me too?"

"There you are!" Trixie's voice sang as she latched onto his arm again and began leading him to the hill, "I didn't see you at lunch! Where were you?"

"Business." Timmy muttered, thinking through a list of stories and excuses in order to get away. She pulled him to the table where the A-List students sat and introduced him to the group. He recognized Tad and Chad already; there was Veronica, the second most popular girl in school, with her cheerleader outfit and near manic obsession to become Trixie herself. That same manic obsession once included Timmy as well, as she harbored a secret crush that scared him more than Tootie's variation, more so as she had the potential to turn violent if she so much as thought he was spurning her. The rest were new faces he'd not paid much attention to, or were new to the city entirely. He tensed as he spotted Remy at the head of the table, lording over Populars and non-Populars alike. The blonde glowered at him, baring teeth ever so slightly; obviously, he recognized the young immortal from the night of the break-in.

"Our club is always on the lookout for cool new kids." remarked one of the newer boys, the glint of dreams to be fulfilled still shone in his eyes, "So your name is Timothy Neogene? It sounds oddly familiar." The Populars with dull eyes seemed to stiffen in anticipation, ready to tear into him if he suggested they use the 'sacred' name in its stead.

"I attended several social gatherings with Hounder in New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Barcelona and Rome. The Italian Winter Olympics were the most amusing of them. Hounder was an unnamed sponsor for the American team." Timmy answered truthfully, glad that appearing at the boring parties finally came in handy. To be honest, the trip to Italy had been more of a treat, and one that Cosmo and Wanda had done on a spur of the moment. He'd wished for a fun retreat from the drab droning of Fortune 500 CEOs and the two whisked him off for a few days of watching the Olympics. The boy stared at him in surprise and Timmy smiled. "We may have passed each other there, but I'm not good at remembering the little details." he added coolly and the group as a whole relaxed, assured that they were in the presence of a true comrade.

"Hounder? I've heard he's richer than all of us combined and more reclusive than a Yeti!" Tad remarked in surprise, "How did you meet that guy?!"

"A family friend. I've known him for as long as I can remember." the brunet replied and shot Remy a challenging glare, "Though, honestly, I really don't care at all whether you include me in your little local club or not. I have more important things to deal with."

"And it's **that** attitude that guarantees you a place on the A-List!" Chad declared and the teens lifted bottles of soda in a toast. Timmy kept his eyes on the blonde overlooking them, frowning just a bit in restrained confusion as Remy picked up his backpack and pressed on the clip that held the front flap shut. At the same time, Timmy's radar sounded a double beep; the device it had been tracking just disappeared from the scanner.

"Ah?" he gasped softly, glancing down at the black hip pouch that held the radar. *"The scanner's saying the trap is gone. It couldn't have left the campus, though; it was planted here for a purpose."* he thought, puzzled, then narrowed his eyes at the blonde boy sitting at the head of the table, *"The signal vanished when Remy pressed that clip on his backpack, and the detector reported earlier that the device had been moving. His backpack must be the anti-magic trap!"*

Remy set the pack down and threaded his fingers together, smiling as he rested his elbows on the table and his chin on his hands, a mockery of Saturday morning cartoon villains. Set by him on the table was a purple candlestick, a gold crown logo emblazoned on the wax.

"You may be a part of our super-elite club, but I'm worried for the rest of my dear friends. It would be most unfortunate if they caught that awful cold you have. You know, with that runny nose, endless sneezing and hacking cough." Remy told him pointedly, smile growing wider. Timmy matched the grin. He already knew what was coming.

"Funny. I feel perfectly fine. I don't have a cold at all." he baited, running gloved fingers through his hair in a cocky gesture.

"Oh? Pity. I wish you did." Remy purred. The group waited in a tense silence, eyes glued to Timmy. Remy leaned forward in anticipation, smile growing wider with imagined triumph. Even Trixie swallowed and stepped aside from the brunet, her pretty Asian face paling further.

Timmy only smiled and folded his arms over his chest. This was kind of funny. Had Remy forgotten about his immunity, or was he just in denial about it? Maybe he should read Da Rules more often; Lord knows Timmy ransacked it constantly himself, searching cover to cover for a loophole, and quite often multiple times in the same day. Never knew when Da Rules changed until he made a wish and found it blocked.

"I said, I wish you **did** have a disgusting cold that would ban you from the A-List!" Remy hissed, eyes now focused furiously on the candlestick. A drop of wax dripped down very much like a sweat drop. Timmy made a show of yawning, then slid onto a corner of the table for a seat.

"Remy, Remy, Remy... wish all you like, it will never come true." he remarked lightly, "Don't you know?"

Not all wishes can be granted. There are rules to life, and none of them apply to **me**."

"Timothy, stop it. Don't cross Remy. He can do things no one else can." Trixie whispered in warning, eyes darting up to his face before dropping down to stare at the grass, her body stiff and arms held rigidly at her sides. Just from looking at her, the young immortal could feel a strangely hot energy, a compulsion to explode at something or someone and she was doing all she could to contain it within herself.

He couldn't help it; he gave her the same reassuring smile he had given Tootie, then turned back to eye the backpack as he gathered up the mana for a spell. The circle shone beneath him, hidden by the table so no one could really see it spinning just below their feet.

"Don't worry. He's not the only one," he murmured and mentally released the *Lightning* spell. Remy jumped aside with a cry as the bolt shot down and destroyed the trap hidden in the backpack. The other teens leaped away from the smoldering wreckage in shock, chattering excitedly as they crouched and covered their heads, scanning the skies in search of where the next bolt may strike. Trixie stared at the remnants in disbelief, wide eyes turning to stare at Timmy's face as he gave Remy a smug grin. "...with power." he finished and slid off the table with a satisfied sigh, "Strange weather we're having today, huh, Remy? I'd like to see you try to wish *that* away. Assuming, of course, you even have the influence to change the laws of nature." He waved a casual good-bye to the group, then walked away to reclaim his own backpack.

More mysteries now. Why would Remy carry around an anti-magic trap while Juandissimo was with him? What was he doing that kept the rest of the A-List from making any sort of stand against him? Why were the Dimmsdale rich kids just as miserable as the others if they lived in a safe zone? And Trixie was acting strange. He wasn't sure whether to be bitter about her lack of caring or concerned by her random shifts in mood and sides.

"I'll find out soon enough. More training and a better plan, and maybe I'll actually become the Hero Dimmsdale needs." Timmy murmured, then sighed again, this time more dejectedly as his shoulders slumped down, "Or I'll just keep screwing up until every fairy in this city turns to dust. Why can't being a Hero be easy?" He picked the Fenton Phone out of his pocket and clipped it to his ear, "Wanda? The anti-magic field on the high school is gone. I wish I was in New York with you and Cosmo."

He disappeared in a blast of smoke and magic, leaving only tag-along Trixie behind to watch in a stunned silence.

## 13 - Timothy's Mission

13

Having lunch at the high school with Timmy's friends was somewhat therapeutic for Tootie, and knowing that she shared the pain of losing someone so close and important with them meant that they had no qualms over inviting her to their open lunch periods. She felt a sort of pride at being able to say that she had older friends, could walk from her school to the bus stop, hop on it to get to Oberon High and sit down for lunch with a circle of fellows who commiserated with her over the absence of Timmy Turner. It made things a little easier to deal with, especially since the high school was another of those magic-blocked places.

"It's awful nice of those boys to be friends with you." Romi remarked cheerfully as she floated by her godchild. The walk from the bus stop to the actual middle school covered two streets and the area was clear of witnesses; everyone was either at work, in their homes or at school. Tootie nodded, pushing her glasses up on her nose and letting gravity pull them down again. "Is something on your mind?" the fairy asked tentatively, "Maybe I can help with it. There's almost nothing my magic can't handle."

"Huh? Oh, it's nothing big, I don't think." the young Goth murmured and managed a smile, "It's funny, sort of, how A.J., Chester, Elmer and Sanjay all insist that Timmy should have been fine that day. They've been working on that computer program for four years; you'd think the police would have spotted something sooner themselves." She rubbed her head again, a frown replacing her expression. "Y'know, that dream's been bugging me for a couple of days now. I can't figure it out. My dream translation books don't have a clue as to what it means." Romi paled and held her wand tighter, putting on a smile for her godchild's sake.

"A dream? What dream could be bothering you? It's probably nothing important." she remarked airily, "We're almost to your school. Why not make a couple of wishes before we go in? Just to tide us over until we get home?" Tootie pushed her glasses up once more and the fairy sighed, waiting for the shoe to drop.

"I wish I knew what my dream was all about." the girl finally said and Romi raised the wand, only to have it flop over as a dud, "Okay, so why was it blocked this time? Are we still in an anti-magic zone?" Her fairy shook her head.

"Sorry. I can't grant that wish. It violates Da Rules." she explained and squirmed under Tootie's expectant glare, "You remember what I said about that boy and his immunity? Well, your dream was put under that same protection because granting a wish involving it has no degree of separation from him." The glare became a blank stare and Romi sighed again. "Your dream reveals his identity, so it violates the vow we fairies made. I can't grant a wish involving it because Da Rules forbid it." she explained further. Tootie threw up her hands in exasperation, fed up with hearing how every step forward she tried to take was being forced away because of that stupid book.

"Ugh! Fine! Whatever!" she yelled in frustration, "I don't wish I knew about that stupid dream! I wish I could be with *somebody* who could just explain what the heck all this craziness with magic-blockers and mystery boys is doing in Dimmsdale!" Romi whimpered, shut her eyes and lifted her wand. It didn't matter where her magic took them to grant the wish. It filled no requirements to be blocked and she didn't want to face what could happen once the wish actually went through. The two of them vanished in a burst of magical smoke.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*

When the smoke cleared, Tootie found herself in a room filled with people dressed in strange costumes. For a moment she panicked; Romi was fluttering by her in full view, one arm raised to cover her eyes for some reason. What if she was seen and Jorgen Von Strangle came to take her away?

But no one moved and after a puzzled prodding at one of the costumed boys earned her no response, Tootie realized that she'd been taken to a place full of statues, very realistic statues. She looked around herself in confusion. Where was she, exactly? The young Goth could see from the walls and floor that the building was huge and built to resemble something akin to a castle or cathedral, an ancient-looking structure of some kind. There were tapestries all over and, as she began exploring the area, rooms filled with artifacts, pictures, statues and random items that didn't seem quite real. She assumed that she was in a museum of sorts, but what kind?

Romi finally brought her arm down and opened her eyes, squeaking once as she realized Tootie was wandering off without her. In a flash she was in her jacket disguise, wrapped around the girl as she headed down another hall in the quest to find answers.

"That's weird. I wished for someone to explain all the stuff going on in Dimmsdale and you bring me to some museum?" she remarked to the fairy, "Why? What does some old guy know about magic and...?"

"...doesn't explain why Remy would have it if someone else had it first." the mystery boy's voice drifted from a nearby hall. Tootie froze, then brightened. Hey, forget looking for someone to explain this; she'd rather find out from the cutie himself!

"Romi! I wish I was invisible!" she whispered excitedly and Romi poofed free to grant it. She held the wand out to her godchild, the star glittering gold, and the young Goth watched her fairy godmother use it as a fountain pen of sorts, sucking away the color that made her visible. Waving her hands before her, Tootie chuckled. She knew her fingers were wiggling, but she couldn't see them at all! This was going to be fun! Grinning, she hurried off to find the source of the voice, leaving Romi behind to look around in confusion, calling her name softly.

It didn't take her that long. All Tootie had to do was turn a corner and there was the mystery boy in a room with a red-haired man in green clothes. She halted dead in her tracks, mouth open in shock. She knew that man, he was in her dream! He was an angel with beautiful red wings of shining light. And if he was real, then that meant....

Her eyes went back to the mystery boy and it was as if the laws of physics decided to play with gravity for her alone, plummeting her heart into the deepest pits before shooting it into the heavens. That was no mystery boy standing there in pink shirt and hat, glaring intensely at something the older man was



holding out to him. That was Timmy Turner, alive and well. Somehow her feet carried her into the room, placing her in a position to study him better as he shook his head slowly.

"Does it matter? We know, now, that at least two other people besides you and Cosmo handled this thing. Whatever this switch was involved in, it was important enough for Remial to consider it a trophy of sorts." the redhead remarked in answer to the partial question Tootie had heard. The fairies from her dream, the green and pink ones, floated by Timmy with equally confused faces. The boy lifted his head with a frustrated glare, arms folded over his chest. Tootie couldn't help it, that serious face, those blue eyes she thought she'd never see again, that messy hair she always was tempted to push out of his face; she gave a happy little sigh of pleasure at being able to see him again, and not in a dream this time.

And both Timmy and Caleb shot their gazes straight at her, eyes narrowed dangerously.

"Eeks!" Tootie squealed as the boy fell into that spell-casting pose from her dream, a large circle of white light spinning at his feet as the fairies dropped low to hover by his shoulders, strange wands in their hands. The pink one, Wanda if she remembered correctly, now wielded a large half-war hammer, half-battle axe creation in both hands, a fierce expression on her face not unlike that of a mother willing to tear into Hell itself to protect her child. The green-haired fairy, the one who must be Cosmo, gripped onto a long scythe with a slightly angled handle, its reverse-edged blade shimmering in the light of the museum. Beforehand, he'd had that vacant, dopey look that made him seem fun and kinda stupid; now there was a near-malevolent glint in those green eyes, a strangely twisted smile that seemed to dare her to give him an excuse to use the scythe. The angel-man only stood calmly, staring straight at her before finally speaking.

"All right. I have you on an infrared spectrum, girl. You are an intruder here. Reveal yourself immediately or I will not be responsible for what these three will unleash on you." he ordered coldly. Tootie squeezed her eyes shut with a whimper. This wasn't supposed to happen! She wished to find out what was happening, and now the boy she'd considered her one true love was going to conjure up a magic spell to wipe her out!

"Romi! *Help!* I wish I was visible again!" she screamed and her fairy flew into the room in a panic.

"There you are! Eeeks! Don't hurt us!" Andromeda wailed, waving her wand maniacally to grant the wish, eyes just as tightly shut as her godchild's. In a blast of smoke and magic, Tootie's body came to full view, huddled and trembling before the group. What was going to happen to her now? She whimpered again.

"Tootie?!" Timmy exclaimed in shock, and she cracked open an eye to look at him, "How did you find me **this** time?!"

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*

One hour earlier~

The burst of pink and green smoke dropped Timmy into the conference room of the Archives. He pat his clothes clear of excess fairy smoke, then looked up at the couple who'd poofed him there. Wanda had a

relieved look on her face, Cosmo was cheerful as always, grinning as he folded his arms over his chest.

"Have fun?" he asked, "Smashing traps is fun, isn't it?" Timmy managed a smile for them, unsure exactly what to say. Between learning Tootie was hanging out with his old friends, seeing Remy ham it up as practically King of Oberon, and watching Trixie sway back and forth between loyalty to Remy and panicky need to protect others, the thought of answering that question made him physically ill. Either that, or he'd come down with a bug somewhere and it wasn't happy with his skipping lunch just to find a nullifier and smash a trap.

"I need to sit." he managed to mumble and headed off to his room in the building to do just that. The fairies looked at each other worriedly, then shot after him.

"What's wrong, Timmy? Something happen in school?" Wanda pressed, clutching her wand tightly as she searched his face for clues. The boy shook his head slightly, quietly walking down the hall to a door not far from the conference room.

"Not really. Not anything that involved a fight or stuff." he replied and pushed the door open, stepping into his 'home-away-from-home'. It was a perfect replica of his bedroom back in Dimmsdale, right down to the empty fishbowl by the bed. This particular bowl was actually used to house the fairies. Timmy flopped back onto the bed, sighing as his mind continued spinning with questions. This wasn't going to work. With all that clutter and confusion, he'd be hard-pressed to focus on the true problem at hand; the destruction of the eight control towers for the anti-magic field.

"See? Everything's fine!" Cosmo cheered and zipped into the bowl in goldfish mode, swimming around happily. Wanda shot him a glare, then looked down at their godchild, unconvinced.

"You don't look well. Are you sure nothing happened? The field on the high school is gone, so you can always wish something away or fixed or...." she suggested, watching his face for a reaction. Timmy looked troubled, brow furrowing slightly in thought.

"I wish...." he began softly, then closed his eyes with a sigh, "No, never mind. It'll undo what I did today. Where's Caleb?" Wanda uttered her own little sigh of defeat and spun her wand in the air, tracing circles with it aimlessly.

"He's doing his final scans on the switch. He didn't look at all happy with it either." she began and mirrored her godchild's previous troubled expression, "According to his early scans, there are four sets of fingerprints on that switch; yours, Cosmo's, Remy's and one other. He hasn't been able to pinpoint exactly who the last set belongs to yet." Timmy sat up suddenly, startled as he looked up at her.

"Someone else had that switch before Remy had it?!" he cried and turned a faint shade of green, gloved hand rising quickly to cover his mouth, "Uugh-mph...." The pink-haired fairy now looked frightened.

"Timmy? What's wrong?! You look sick!" she exclaimed and began waving her arms in a panic, "I knew I shouldn't have let you out of bed so soon! You haven't recovered from that robot ninja army attack!" The boy shook his head and pulled his hand away.

"It's not that." he murmured confusedly, "This is something else.... I feel... weird...." He blinked, then shot

out of bed for his bathroom door, slamming it shut behind him. Wanda and Cosmo blinked at the sealed room, then jumped as a knock came at the bedroom door. She waved her wand to partially open the door, flying over to look out at the redhead that stood there just outside.

"The tests are complete. Are you ready for the results?" Caleb asked and tilted his head, "Did Timothy arrive yet? He should hear this as well." Wanda tapped her fingertips to her teeth, eyes darting from the bathroom door to the android furtively.

"Erm, actually.... could you give us a few minutes? Timmy's feeling a bit out of sorts." she remarked vaguely as Cosmo pressed his ear to the bathroom door and mimicked what he heard.

"Bleh! What's 'Bleh'?" the green-haired fairy asked innocently, "Wanda! Is 'Bleh' the latest fad?! I don't wanna be uncool!" Wanda winced and glanced back at the now stern expression of the living android just beyond the doorway.

"I'll wait a little longer for you all, but I'm going to want to run a few tests on him as well." Caleb growled and walked away, muttering irritably to himself about having to play nurse yet again.

"Now, there's rain sounds. Is 'Bleh' out of fashion already?" Cosmo put in and Wanda merely sighed in a mix of exasperation and frustration as she shut the door. "What? I just want to be hip! These fads move too fast!" he added in annoyance. After a moment, he flew back from the door, a strangely serious frown on his face. "It's another step. We'll need to monitor him more closely from here on." he murmured coldly, then smiled brightly at Wanda, "When's dinner?"

The meeting with Caleb in the conference room a half hour later was with mixed feelings. The android stood before the computer with the switch in hand, looking up at a group of charts and graphs on the screen. Timmy walked into the room with the fairies floating by him, one concerned, the other blissfully oblivious to what was going on. He felt somewhat better, now that he'd changed from the often dark clothes of the Neogene persona into his usual pink shirt and hat. The shower helped as well, providing a refuge which was further enhanced by another meditative state, filing all the puzzling mysteries he'd picked up that day into corners of his mind for later contemplation.

Now he could focus on what the android had learned, calmed but still curious.

"Feeling better, I see." Caleb remarked without looking at him, "Are you ready for this? It's still an enigma to me, but this is what I've learned so far." Timmy nodded, hands shoved into his pockets.

"Wanda gave me a basic rundown. You found four sets of fingerprints on the switch. You also figured out where three sets came from, but that last one...." he began and the android finally turned to him.

"Belonged to an adult. The fingerprints that were Remy's are of a size consistent with that of a child." he finished seriously and the young immortal pulled his hands free in shock, stepping back from the redhead as his godparents took on puzzled expressions. "This switch... it was handled by Remy when he was younger, and before that, it was in the possession of an older person." Both of them looked down at the cheap bit of plastic and wire. "Also, I ran a background check on this brand. It's only sold in the Imperial county, and only a small supply of it sold before the company that manufactured it went belly

up." the android went on, "I'm assuming this particular switch was bought in Dimmsdale during the time the company existed, and, from the prints I lifted, by the adult I haven't identified yet." Timmy blinked in confusion, then glared down at the switch.

"So you're saying that this thing was bought in Dimmsdale by some grown-up? And somehow it wound up in a rich kid's house?" he asked and shook his head, "That's strange, but it doesn't explain why Remy would have it if someone else had it first." Caleb shrugged slightly.

"Does it matter? We know, now, that at least two other people besides you and Cosmo handled this thing. Whatever this switch was involved in, it was important enough for Remial to consider it a trophy of sorts." he remarked. Timmy continued scowling at the switch, folding his arms over his chest. This was confusing and even more irritating; first a possible deal between Crocker and Remy involving magic zones and traps, now a mystery involving a cheap switch he got as a kid from some older guy....

Wait....

He lifted his head to speak, a sudden insight on the tip of his tongue, when a strangely wistful sigh came out of nowhere. No, not nowhere. He turned a sharp glare towards what appeared to be empty air not far from him, noticing out of the corner of his eye the android doing the same. Something was there. He couldn't see it, but Caleb could be searching through different spectrums of vision to find the source of that sigh. He heard a squeak of surprise and immediately dropped into his stance for spell-casting; without his staff he could only take up a crouched form, ready to dart aside once he finished the incantation.

In the meantime, Cosmo and Wanda caught onto the sudden shift in mood and swapped out their star-topped magic wands to the non-magical battle wands crafted for them by the living doll. They dropped to flank him at shoulder-level, a formation they often trained with on Derris-Kharlan in team practice. Wanda was the physically stronger of the fairy couple and, with the Heartache Hammer in her hands, she could obliterate traps in only a few slams using either the war hammer head or the honed edge of the battle axe blade. Cosmo was lighter, faster, and used the Windcutter Scythe with such lethal brutality at times it scared the young immortal. It was rare for the blade to actually touch anything; usually, Cosmo just whipped it before himself, generating multiple blades of air pressure to slice into his targets from a distance. Timmy hoped there wouldn't be a need to actually use it.

"All right. I have you on an infrared spectrum, girl. You are an intruder here. Reveal yourself immediately or I will not be responsible for what these three will unleash on you." Caleb remarked icily and Timmy looked at him in surprise. Girl?

"Romi! *Help!* I wish I was visible again!" the voice screamed in terror and he dropped the spell as the fairy from several nights ago flew into the room. Romi? Andromeda? Then that meant....

The fairy squealed something out but she waved her wand and Tootie suddenly appeared in normal view, half-curved in a defensive posture and shaking so hard it looked as though she were trying to generate her own personal earthquake. Caleb raised an eyebrow in surprise, then turned to look at Timmy, but the boy could have cared less at the moment. Just the fact that she was **there**, she'd followed him **again**, despite his wish to blur her memory of his identity, was enough to blow away any amount of calm and sense he'd managed to recover.

"Tootie?!" he exclaimed in disbelief, watching her open one eye to peek at him from over her glasses,  
"How did you find me **this** time?!"

## 14 - A New Team Member

14

She stared at them all, watching as the two other fairies relaxed and poofed their strange wands away, replacing them with the normal star-topped ones. That let her relax a little more. They were really scary-looking with the other wands; fairies weren't supposed to be scary, right? Or was it okay for them because they were banished from Fairy World?

"Caleb, it's okay. It's just Tootie." Timmy told the angel-man beside him. He was only standing there, watching her with a stern look. Well, now she had a name to the strange angel that was helping her childhood crush. He gave a little shrug and folded his arms over his chest, looking away at something else. She relaxed even more; it seemed like everything was okay now, so she hurried over to throw her arms around the pink-clad boy, letting her heart soar at the contact. He didn't disappear! He *was* real! This wasn't a dream; Timmy was really here in front of her!

"It's you! It's really you! I found you!" she laughed in joy and relief, pressing her cheek to the soft fabric of his shirt.

Romi busied herself with bowing repeatedly to Cosmo and Wanda, apologizing so quickly and so often, the words ended up ramming into each other on their way out of her mouth.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Please forgive me! I didn't know he'd be here! She wished for someone to explain things for her and I brought her to Caleb because he was one degree away from Timothy, but I didn't know Timothy *himself* would be here!" she begged, "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!"

"It's all right, dear. We can't really blame you. She wished it, you dished it. Rules are rules." Wanda sighed in resignation.

"Hmph." Cosmo muttered irritably, folding his arms over his chest and glaring at the floor. He said nothing else about the situation.

"It's really you...." Tootie murmured, still hugging her long-lost love. So warm; someone who was supposed to be dead for four years shouldn't be so warm. He'd been gone for so long, and she'd been so heartbroken when he died. There was a brief movement and from the corner of one eye she could see the angel, Caleb, walk silently out of the room, granting her and the boy some privacy.

"Cosmo, Wanda." Timmy murmured and Tootie turned her face enough to watch the fairy couple nod once in response to their names and fly out the door. Vaguely, she wondered how much in tune he was with his fairy godparents, to say only their names and have a silent wish be granted.

"Romi?" she whispered, wondering if her own fairy would understand her desire to be left alone. Andromeda looked at her, puzzled, then with widened eyes as it seemed to dawn on her what she

wanted.

"Call me if you need anything. I can't be too far from you. Rules." she replied and followed the pink and green fairies. Tootie smiled briefly, then returned to burying her face in the pink shirt. Detergent, rain-scented, this shirt was freshly washed, and mixed with that was the scent of a living, breathing human being. Not just any human; this was Timmy Turner, the Heart of Dimmsdale.

The boy who crushed her dreams when he was pushed off the jungle gym at school, and refused to move from his prone position on the grass despite all her wails and pleas.

She sobbed as that memory dredged up still more, each driving buried pain to the surface. Endless days of loneliness and sorrow after the funeral, and with every day she went to school and found his seat forever empty, and then the grief turned to anger. She twisted the pink cloth in her white-knuckled fists, fury building at the memory of Remy's smug expression from the day of the funeral on, that look that spoke of some perverse pleasure in the knowledge that Timmy was gone, and this... this final straw!

He had been alive, all this time, and he had the **gall** to hide the truth from **her**! From Dimmsdale! From the people who lost hope because of him!

And then it all melted away again, drowned in confusion as she felt him return the hug. Not a word, not an attempt to escape her as he used to do as a kid, but just a silent acceptance of the embrace and even one of his own for her.

"Tootie, why are you crying?" he asked her softly. She managed a tremulous smile. What a stupid question... and yet he sounded as though he were trying to hold back his own tears when he asked. Maybe it was to cover up the fact that he was crying too?

"I missed you so much, Timmy. I thought you were dead. Everyone said you were dead." she mumbled and pulled back to look up at him. Her glasses were dotted with teardrops, and she managed a small laugh as she pulled them down to wipe the lenses. Slipping them back on, she pulled together her courage and looked right up at him again, her tear-stained face determined. "Why did you lie to us, Timmy? Why did you go away for so long?" she demanded, trying not to let her emotions overwhelm her again, "Four years, Timmy! You left us all for **four** years! *Why?!*"

He looked stunned, baffled even, like this was some bizarre joke she was playing and he was the victim. Then his expression changed, somber, sorrowful, regretful. He opened his mouth to speak, closed it, then looked away from her.

"Tootie, that wasn't... what I mean is...." he began and a hurt look flashed across his face, "That wasn't a lie. That day, when I fell... Tootie, I really am dead. I just... didn't *stay* dead...." The young Goth stared at him as he turned back to her. "I had to stay away from home, I didn't want to, but I had to. Dimmsdale had to forget about me, forget what I looked like, and I needed time to recover and learn what happened to me... when I was brought back." he went on haltingly, "And then I found out what was happening to Dimmsdale, and... I had to change, had to train and learn magic, to come back and help, and...."

"*Liar!*" Tootie shrieked at him in sudden rage. Did he honestly think she would buy this load of *garbage*?! Cute he may be, but that didn't excuse the hell he put everyone through for four years! Especially the

hell **she** went through over him! "You're *not* dead! You're here, *alive*, talking to me!" He stepped back, startled, maybe even a little afraid. Good! He deserved it!

"No, that's not it! I really *did* die! Some friends of mine, friends that aren't really human themselves... they helped bring me back to life!" the boy stammered. Tootie flipped her hand at that, snorting in disdain.

"Yeah, yeah! The angel Caleb and that Danny Phantom guy. Romi told me all about it." she declared, "I'm twelve, Timmy Turner, not **stupid**!" She shook her fist at him, the fury returning. He just left the city without a single explanation; he didn't even leave **her** a good-bye note! Weren't they *supposed* to have been childhood sweethearts?! "You standing there is **not** something a *real* dead guy would do!"

"But...!"

"No!" Tootie snapped at him and started pounding on the boy with her fists, venting the hurt and frustration and pent up sorrows, "Liar, *liar*! You're *not* dead! Do you hear me?! *You're not dead!*" She only barely registered that Timmy was just blocking her blows, deflecting a few here and placing his palms out to take several there, silent the entire time. "You were just a stupid coward in a stupid pink hat who staged a stupid plot to run away from home with your lousy fairy godparents and because of you...!" She jerked away from him, shaking violently from the hurricane of emotions, one fist still raised for another futile attempt to inflict some kind of physical pain to the boy who stood before her. "Because of you...!" Tootie choked out, dropping her fist to point accusingly at him, "Because of you... *everyone* in Dimmsdale lost their hopes, their dreams! They're all **suffering** because of **you**!"

He flinched at the verbal dagger she plunged into him and she managed a vicious smile of victory. Finally! A response! Now she was getting somewhere! Drill it into this boy's thick head and drag him home, announce it to the city, to the world. Timmy Turner still lived; the Heart of Dimmsdale still beats!

"What do I have to do?" he finally asked softly. She stared at him, uncomprehending, and he took on an aggravated expression. "Tell me, Tootie! What do I have to **do** to *prove* I'm dead?!" he snapped at her and she shrank back, eyes wide. This was new. This wasn't how Timmy reacted to yelling; he hid behind things, panicked, fled to avoid confrontation.

This wasn't the Timmy she remembered.

"Never mind. I think I know." the brunet muttered and closed his eyes. Tootie watched him take in a sharp little gasp of air, then exhale slowly. For a minute, he was still, calm and perfectly relaxed. Then, "Tootie. Come here. Do me a favor, okay?" he murmured and opened his eyes, holding out his hand to her. She looked at him warily, unsure. What else was he going to do, this boy who had Timmy's name and appearance but not his personality?

"Why?" she shot back and yelped when he grabbed her arm and pulled her back into a hug.

"Just shut up for once and listen. What do you hear?" he growled. Tootie blushed despite wanting to stay angry with him. How could she, when a warm feeling was flaring up in her cheeks and her ear was pressed against his shirt so closely?



"I don't hear anything." she managed to stammer out after a moment, "What am I listening for anyway?"

"A heartbeat."

"Oh, well, in that case...." Tootie smiled and pressed her ear closer. Maybe this was just an excuse to get close to him, riling him up enough to want to prove... he... was....

Something was wrong.

She halted her train of thought, brought a rein on her emotions for a moment. Something wasn't right.

Timmy said to listen for his heartbeat.

She was listening, but she wasn't hearing it.

There wasn't a heartbeat to listen to.

Timmy didn't have a heartbeat!

"*Aaaiiee!* What's **wrong** with you?!" Tootie screamed in alarm and horror, shoving herself away from him, "Your heart! It's...!"

"Not beating. I know." he sighed, leaning back against the computer and its many charts and graphs still running on the screen, "I don't have a pulse. I can force a heartbeat if I need one by doing a self-electrocution with a *Lightning* spell, but if I relax my body completely, the current fades and my heart stops." He looked straight at her, locking eyes with the young Goth to be sure his words, their meaning, truly got through to her. "My **real** heartbeat ended four years ago, the day I fell from the bars at school."

She looked down at her boots, taking it in. That was proof enough. How could anyone just stop their heart like that and continue to live, if they weren't already dead? Simple. Romi and Timmy were both telling the truth; Timmy Turner had died, but through the actions of others was brought back to the world as an immortal, doomed to live a life with a potential for endless pain.

Like that night, when he ran almost two whole city blocks with her while pouring half his blood all over Dimmsdale's streets. And only minutes later was completely torn into by golden ninja robots, left for dead on the asphalt. This was the new reality of Timmy's life, and she wasn't helping ease his future pain by whaling on him like this.

"Tell me." she murmured, lifting her gaze at last, "Tell me everything. I want to know why this happened to you, why Dimmsdale is losing touch with magic, everything." The boy looked surprised, then relieved. He waved a hand towards a nearby table and they sat together.

She listened to the story, the whole thing as far as Timmy himself could remember. How he was brought back to life; what the fairies did to cover up his death and his godparents' interference with the laws of nature; the judgment and sentence; his having to remain in New York to hide from the world; his training to use healing arts to keep himself whole if ever he were injured; then, finally, why he returned to Dimmsdale. She took that in, pushing her glasses up and letting them fall several times as she absorbed

the story. She watched his face alternate between emotions as he explained his new life, mostly a deep sadness and a vengeful anger. And when he was done, one hand threaded through his hair as he propped himself up tiredly on the table, Tootie moved around to his side and gave him another hug.

"It doesn't matter anymore. You're here, you're alive, and you're helping us all." she told him, blushing as he made no move to escape her. She especially liked that new aspect of his personality; made it easier for her to resume the chase. "So what if you're the boy who can't die? You're still my hero and my favorite cutie!" she added cheerfully. She laughed as Timmy groaned at her words.

"How embarrassing." he muttered and lifted himself up, giving her a serious look, "This is important, Tootie. You can't tell *anyone* about me! No one must know that I'm alive again." She nodded and pulled away, pushing her glasses up one more time as a smile grew on her face.

"Okay! Promise! We'll tell everyone *after* we bring down the anti-magic barrier!" she agreed. Timmy stiffened, eyes narrowing.

"*We*? Excuse me, but there **is** no 'we'!" he pointed out incredulously, "**I'm** trained to fight and use magic; you're not. And we're not telling anyone about me **ever**!" She only stared at him, puzzled, and he waved his arms excitedly at her. "Don't you get it?! If people found out I escaped Death and became this un-killable, immortal being, what's to stop secret organizations from grabbing me to do weirdo experiments and tests on me forever?!"

"They wouldn't do that! You're a hero!" Tootie replied confidently, "Besides, if they tried, you could just escape with your fairies' help!"

"And **expose** them? No!" he shot back, "Cosmo and Wanda can't be taken from me, but if they get revealed or anyone finds out I'm existing beyond Death's reach, then all of Fairy World is exposed! And all other active fairies will be instantly recalled, not to mention that other people tied to me now will also be exposed!" Tootie repeated her earlier look; what again? He sighed and pulled his hand down over his face. "That means you lose your fairy. And so will everyone else in the world who has one." he told her slowly. Tootie gave a small gasp, eyes wide. Romi! If anything like that happened to Timmy, she'd lose Romi forever?!

"I can't let that happen! I finally have you back and I'm not losing you again!" she yelled determinedly, "No way! If you're going to fight, then so am I! We can't let Remy get away with being the only guy who can make wishes! And we can't let Crocker seal away Dimmsdale's magic and make every kid there miserable forever just so he can prove fairies exist and take them from us!" She sighed and shook her head, looking exasperated with him. "Oh, Timmy, how did you get yourself into this mess? It's because you didn't listen to your girlfriend long ago, that's why!" she scolded gently, then smiled, "But don't worry, 'cause I'm going to be right there with you from now on!"

"Why do I feel like everything I told you just flew through your ears without hitting anything?" Timmy grumbled as the three fairies poked their heads into the room to see if it was safe to intrude on them. Tootie motioned to her fairy with a smile.

"Romi! Guess what?! We're gonna help Timmy fight back against Remy and Crocker!" she exclaimed, "Isn't that gonna be so cool?! And romantic!" she threw her arms around the boy again and squealed.

"The two love-struck heroes, defending magic and freeing the town, together, forever!"

"God, I wish I could die right now." Timmy muttered and twisted his face in frustration as Wanda opened her mouth, "I know, guys! You can't grant it! Geez!" He glared down at the little Goth hugging him tightly. "And you're not getting involved! It's too dangerous! I can't die, but you **can**!"

"Remember that night on the street? When you said you'd do me a favor, *anything* I wanted, if I listened to you then?" Tootie murmured coyly, tracing a small heart on his shirt, "I'm calling it in. Let me help you!"

"I thought you'd forgotten that, but I guess I should have been a **lot** more specific with my wish." Timmy groaned in defeat, "All right, fine. You can help. But try not to get in my way too much and at least wait until I learn a spell to keep you safe!"

"That clinches it! Romi! We're teaming up with Timmy, Cosmo and Wanda!" Tootie whooped, thrusting a fist into the air in triumph.

"We're going to fight Remy and Crocker?! With the Outcast Ones?!" Romi squeaked and fainted, flopping back onto the floor in a dark blue and silver heap. Tootie giggled as she returned to nuzzling the brunet in her arms.

"That's right!" she laughed, "We're gonna save the city with Timmy!"

## 15 - Trixie's Secret

15

Timmy found himself doing more fast-talking than he liked when it came to convincing Caleb that Tootie and Romi would be helping him bring down the barrier. The argument was strange in itself; sometimes he wasn't exactly sure what the android was thinking when he talked.

"She's got her own fairy and she can wish for stuff, too! She could back me up once the nullifiers are destroyed!" Timmy had pointed out.

"I agree. She'd make an excellent alternate target for the destroyer units. Have you decided which lawyers to hire when you get sued for her death?" Caleb replied casually. Tootie sat at the table, watching them both with a catty smile on her face. It wasn't helping his mindset in the least.

"She's not gonna get killed!" Timmy protested, "Just teach me that *Revive* spell you said could prevent death and we'll be fine!"

"So now you're a high-level cleric? When did this happen? I would have recorded it for posterity."

"Caleb! Quit mocking me! I do better at healing spells anyway! We both know that! Or how about making me another Reverse Doll for her, like you did for Cosmo?"

"It's a fifty-fifty chance it'll actually work when she gets struck down. Did you want to place your bets before you take her into the target zones? You can't cash in afterwards if you don't, you know."

Timmy wanted to yank on the android's ponytail hard enough to pop his head off, the sheer frustration of trying to reason with the man was getting to him and fast. What the heck was he trying to do, drive him insane enough to tell Tootie that she couldn't help? Fat load of good that was gonna do him now; she called in the favor, made a 'wish' so to speak, and Timmy was dead-set on granting that wish. If only to get her to keep quiet about his continued life.

"I made a promise to her. I told her I'd do her a favor if she didn't get involved the night we found the tower. She called it in. I **have** to do this for her." he explained, slowly, through clenched teeth.

"Oh, I see! Now you're a fairy!" Caleb remarked brightly with a clap of his hands and smiled at Cosmo and Wanda, "Your godchild has evolved from immortal to fairy! What a delightful turn of events!" Wanda gave a vague smile and shrug, Cosmo only glared at him, absently twisting the head off of a small doll he'd conjured up to busy himself with.

"Will you take me seriously on this?!" Timmy shrieked, "She wants to help! I say let her help!"

"Why?"

"Because I need help!"

"Why?"

"Because I can't **do** this by myself! I told you that already! I'm too weak to do anything!" He blinked and shut his mouth, face turning red as he felt the stares of his godparents, Tootie and her fairy all focus on him. Caleb frowned and shook his head.

"Not the response I was hoping for, but fine. She'll be made a part of the team. Do you want her to have some magical ability to back her up on her own or is she going to be relying on Andromeda completely?" he sighed.

"I wanna do what Timmy does!" Tootie declared and Timmy just flopped down into a chair, too tired to continue the argument. "How did Timmy learn magic anyway?"

"I let him train with a pair of aionis bracelets so he could get the hang of tapping into the stream of mana. You're going to be using similar bracelets." the android told her and tilted his head, "I think, for the sake of safety on everyone's part, you will only be taught to access mana for the purpose of healing. In case Mr. Immortality here is unable to do it himself, you will cover for him in the curative department." He nodded. "Yes, that will work very nicely. In the meantime, there are other matters I wish to address. Primarily, the black tower we couldn't face that night."

Tootie blinked and leaned forward, listening as Timmy, Cosmo and Wanda all went on alert. The android leaned back against the computer console, a grim expression on his face as he slowly shook his head. Just from that, the brunet knew he wasn't going to be getting good news.

"The scans couldn't penetrate the tower. There's too much electrical interference surrounding it, and the anti-magic field is too powerful to let magic break through for another search." Caleb reported, "I have no idea how to destroy it."

A defeated sigh escaped him before he could hold it back and Timmy slumped back in his chair. Well, that was it then. The verdict was in; he would spend eternity picking at a tumor whose cancer was already spreading out from the city. That sick feeling in his stomach returned and he kicked the backpack containing the nullifier away from him.

"I guess that means the little present I got you was for nothing." he sighed and grunted as Tootie gave him a small punch to the gut. He sat up, rubbing his stomach irritably as he shot her a glare, then watched the doll open the backpack and pull out the nullifier, his eyebrows shooting up in surprise. Wanda jumped up with an alarmed cry as Cosmo dropped his doll in shock.

"You were carrying this around the whole time?" Caleb asked him, a strange look on his face. Timmy gave a vague gesture, still depressed over the lack of good news. The android looked at the fairies. "Did you know he had this with him?" he asked.

"Timmy! Why didn't you tell us you were carrying around a nullifier device?!" Wanda scolded her godchild, "Don't you know how dangerous that is for us all?! We could have gotten sick from the barrier!"

"Hey, I snapped off the dishes! It shouldn't even know there were magic-users around!" he argued weakly and gave Tootie a warning glare as she lifted her fist again, "Don't start with me...."

"But you didn't turn it off. It's still emitting a low-level pulse. I can feel it." Caleb remarked, holding the device in his hands, "It's fairly weak, and its range doesn't extend very far, but close proximity to it would be detrimental to a fairy's health."

"See? You could have gotten **us** sick!" Wanda pressed, "Warn us the next time you decide to bring home a trap to play with! Or don't do it at all!" Timmy stuck out his tongue, watching the doll set the trap aside.

"All the same, thank you for the device. I'll reverse engineer it later and see how it can help us. In the meantime, even though I haven't been able to analyze the tower, you may have a way of finding out about it yourself." Caleb pointed out, "Wanda, you said that Timmy had gone to the high school to locate Remy and gain some information from him, correct?"

"That was a bust. I got taken in as an A-List student, which means I'm going to need a bigger bank account to keep my cover, plus the teachers think I'm a regular student, so I'm going to need to have enrollment data set up so they don't think otherwise." the brunet counted off on his fingers, "Also, I think Remy's been doing some major usurping of power now that he's got a safe-zone that covers the whole upper-class district and lets him use Juandissimo's magic all he wants. The Populars are completely freaked out." He frowned. "Somehow, I think I'm forgetting something important." he muttered and shrugged, "I guess it'll come back to me later." The doll sighed and shook his head.

"This is getting complicated. All right; I'll wire additional funds to your account in Dimmsdale, hack the school server to add your name to their student list, get to work on improving your hunting equipment and prepare a training session for both you and Tootie to take over the weekend." he declared and gave the brunet a frustrated look, "Timothy! You're giving me way too much to do! I'm just one man!"

"Angel."

"Whatever! I'm going to have to call in a staff to do all this so soon!"

"Do it by tomorrow morning. I'm going back to school." Timmy remarked and smiled as the group collectively protested that decision. Even if he was doomed to fight a losing battle, at least he was going to have some fun annoying Remy while he was at it.

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His first true day at Oberon High School was met with some resistance, primarily from Wanda and, to some extent, Cosmo. Wanda kept coming up with reasons and excuses for him to not go and her husband spilled everything he could get his hands on all over himself in efforts to keep Timmy at home to clean him up. In the end, he grabbed both fairies by the collars of their shirts, threw them into their room and ran out the door before they could reorient themselves enough to try again.

Ultimately, Cosmo and Wanda won the 'argument' and Timmy found himself still able to go to school, but

followed by the pink and green squirrels he came to depend on as a source of comfort in any public yard. In this case, they were still a comfort, just knowing the squirrel pair was darting from tree to tree, bush to bush, chattering like animals while keeping an eye on him, helped him relax and forget for a moment that he didn't really belong in Dimmsdale anymore. This was a normal day of school. On the other hand, most of the chatter was about how sick he had been the previous day.

"Cosmo, for the last time, it's **not** a fad. I threw up in the bathroom. It wasn't fun, it wasn't cool, it was actually very gross." the brunet sighed in exasperation, "Now quiet! We're here." Timmy looked up at the brick building that dominated the campus, then down at the radar in his hand. One new fairy-hunting device; unfortunately, the detector was not updated, so it was still a game of hit and miss in tracking and identifying the devices. He'd called Caleb about it earlier that morning and was met with a yell of frustration and a demand to be left alone for at least the rest of the week.

Considering it was Tuesday, that was going to be a long week.

"Are we ready? Do we know the plan?" Wanda asked softly, hiding the movements of her mouth behind an acorn.

"Just go through it normally, try to find Remy and take that stupid trap from him, and maybe see if he drops any clues as to what he's doing with the other Populars, or what his deal with Crocker is." Timmy replied and adjusted the shoulder straps of his backpack. As comfortable and confidence-boosting as his normal clothes were, he was still better off in the Neogene wardrobe while in public. Never mind Tootie said he looked like a rich Goth punk....

He looked down at himself, eyebrow raised as he held his arms away for a self-examination. Let's see, dark blue jeans that were partially ripped because he wore them on his first fairy-trap hunting mission, rust-colored turtleneck with long sleeves, black hightops meant to let him run on rough terrain, and the same blue-black gloves he wore the previous day to prevent leaving fingerprints on anything....

"I do **not** look like a Goth punk!" Timmy finally declared and marched for the school doors, "Stupid Tootie and her stupid ideas...."

Classes wouldn't have been so bad if Timmy didn't know that at least two of them were scheduled in as punishment from Caleb. He hated algebra -why the heck would letters even be involved in math to begin with?- and he could just *feel* Wanda's large eyes boring into the back of his skull all throughout chemistry. He knew exactly what she was thinking too. 'Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it! But don't get hurt, Sweetie!'

And there was the matter of Trixie Tang, who sat by him in at least three classes, watching him, studying him, those slanted Asian eyes recording every movement he made. Why was she *doing* that? It was creeping him out! The fairies sat on the windowsill of the classroom and he was sitting right by them. All he had to do was mouth out his wish, with the barest hint of his voice to satisfy Da Rules' regulations, and Trixie would have something else to look at.

But this was the first time her attention was riveted on him and no one else. How could he pass **that** up? So he tried to keep calm, raised a slight mana shield to promote a semi-meditative state, and made sure

he didn't look as if he was absolutely loving every moment, which he was. Just that it also felt weird.

The armband Wanda and Cosmo had given him was hidden under the sleeve of his shirt, updating itself almost constantly. He checked earlier to see if it would let him access a record of his new account, and nearly passed out at the amount that Caleb dumped into it. Why didn't anyone tell him *that* many zeros could be shoved behind a number?! Was the android insane?! That couldn't be right! He called his cousin's private number to question him about it all, and got his answering machine instead.

*"I'm sorry. Danny Phantom is currently saving the city from another ghost attack. Please leave your name and number, and he'll get back to you if he survives. Thank you, and have a pleasant day!"*

Just **how** personalized did those things get?!

"Mr. Neogene, are you listening?" the professor questioned irritably. Timmy returned his focus to the current class, scanned the blackboard's contents, then turned a puzzled look on the teacher.

"What? You want me to actually *answer* that?" he asked incredulously, "Can't I just hire some nerd to do it for me?" He grinned, careful not to reveal his teeth, the darn things were still recognizable. "Better yet, how about I pay **you** to finish it for me?" Tad and Chad laughed at that, gave him thumb's-ups and whooped it up as the teacher turned red and moved on to another student. Trixie just kept watching him.

"That squirrel wants to talk to you." she finally whispered to him, leaning out of her seat a little to appear as though she searched for a book beneath her desk. Timmy shot her a wary look, but glanced towards the window anyway. Sure enough, Wanda was frowning at him, wagging one finger in disapproval as Cosmo shoved acorn after acorn into his mouth, then spat them out to start again.

"Squirrels don't talk. They just sit there and look stupid." Timmy snapped back at the girl. An acorn hit the glass and he made mental note to buy Wanda a chocolate bar and get Cosmo a cookie. Otherwise, he was going to get it back home for that remark.

He was thankful for the lunch bell. It meant escape, relief, a chance to get to what he was there to do. Slipping by the majority of the Populars as they headed outside, Timmy made it into the secluded halls of the rich teens' personal travel network and pulled the detector free again, plugging the Fenton Phone into one ear.

"Cosmo, Wanda, I'm in the halls. I'll start looking for...." he began and jumped as he felt a hand press against his shoulder.

"Those must be the names of your fairies, huh?" Trixie asked softly as he spun to stare at her, "I didn't think you'd have two of them. You must be *really* miserable if it takes **two** fairy godparents to cheer you up."

"What are you talking about? I don't know anything about any fairies." Timmy managed to reply evenly, "That's stupid. Wake up and smell the C-notes; this is the 21st century. There are no such things as



fairies." Thank heavens Wanda wasn't screaming in his ear in outrage; he'd left the microphone on so she could at least hear what was going on.

"I know you have fairies. How else could you have vanished like that from school yesterday?" Trixie pressed on, stepping closer to him. He backed away hurriedly, face paling as his mind raced to that moment in time. Hadn't he checked to be sure the coast was clear before he made that wish? No, he hadn't; he'd been too busy wallowing in his own misery to check for witnesses. He'd been clumsy, neglected a duty that he'd been so careful to maintain for years, and now he was paying for it.

More proof that he was a failure.

"You must have been seeing things. Are you sure you're not on drugs or something? They say kids in counseling get put on drugs that make them see things that aren't real." he tried another approach. Maybe there was still a way out of this. If he could just make her doubt herself, her memory....

"No. I saw you disappear with magic smoke." Trixie murmured and shook her head, "You don't have to worry about anyone from Fairy World taking your fairies away. It's okay for me to know." She gave him a shy smile as he blinked at her in confusion. "You see, I have a fairy godparent, too." she confessed, "And I need your help."

"*You?! Why would you need a fairy...?!*" Timmy blurted out in shock.

"It's because of what happened here." Trixie interrupted, putting a hand out to cover his mouth, "You're new here, so you don't know how this city works. We had a little boy who lived here long ago. His name was Timmy Turner and for the longest time, before anyone really knew it, he was the source of our town's fun and joy and hopes. He was also a really sweet kid who kinda had a crush on me." She smiled helplessly, "I didn't mean to, but sometimes I strung him along. Deep down, though, I thought of him as a really good friend. He surprised me sometimes, with how honest and sweet and nice he could be to me. Out of all my popular friends, he was the only one who looked past all the surface stuff and liked me for me, for liking Skull Squisher and Kissy Kissy Goo-Goo. He was the truest friend I had and he never even knew it."

"He didn't have a chance at your heart, then." the brunet muttered in a low voice, pushing her hand away and folding his arms over his chest, "You only saw him as a friend, nothing more?"

"Well, it might have been more, but he died when he was young. Just four years ago. I saw him fall and...." she stopped abruptly, tears rising in her eyes. She shook her head and wiped them away. "Anyway, when he died, Dimmsdale lost all of its hopes in having a bright future. The city just seemed to turn stale and drab, as though its pulse was gone. That's why we call Timmy the Heart of Dimmsdale. He was the one who made our town seem so alive."

"Such a pretty sob story. Wah, wah." Timmy mocked, "My heart's breaking here. You haven't told me what this has to do with me or you needing help." He snapped his fingers a few times. "I'm on a schedule; I ain't got time to cry you a river! Give me the info fast, or just leave me alone!"

"All right! You don't have to be so cold-hearted!" Trixie cried and hugged herself, "I got my fairy godfather, Apollo, sometime after Timmy's funeral. He helped me get through the tough days, brought

back some hope that, maybe one day, things will get better." She shifted on her feet, scuffing the tips of her white boots against the plush carpet. "But one day, here in school, I made a wish with Apollo. He couldn't grant it, but it set something off. The next thing I knew, Remy was in the hall with some strange machine that just reached out and snatched Apollo in a butterfly net and sealed him away." Timmy stared at her, dumbfounded, as she raised a fist and shook it in restrained anger. "He *stole* my fairy from me! I told him to let Apollo go, that it was against Da Rules for him to just take Apollo, but he started bragging about how he had all the power. Da Rules didn't apply to him anymore because no one from Fairy World could enter Dimmsdale to stop him!" She dropped her fist and sighed. "He threatened to give Apollo to Mr. Crocker if I didn't do what he said, so I had no choice but to give in. As long as I behave like Remy's girlfriend, Apollo would be safe and he won't be taken from me by Fairy World for being exposed to someone other than another godchild."

Timmy watched her wilt with hopelessness, then turned his attention to the Fenton Phone. Wanda was pressuring quietly to just help her with whatever problem she had. It was the right thing to do, it was okay because she was also a godchild, they were still protected by Fairy World's ruling of banishment. He'd already decided to help her, long before he saw her just deflate from lack of hope. This was Trixie, she was in pain, she *hurt* when he died as Timmy Turner; how could he turn away someone he'd cared about and knew now cared for him too?

"You want me to rescue Apollo." he finally stated and she looked up at him with such shining hope and relief that he had to look away or he'd end up making a confession of his own.

"If you would, I'd be so grateful! I'll do anything to have Apollo brought back to me!" she exclaimed in a rush, "Just name whatever you want; I'll do *anything!*" This time he did look at her, but just to give her a glare of warning. That was a vague promise, and there were few things he hated in the world more than vague remarks. They invited trouble and disaster.

"To tell you the truth, I was the one who broke into his house several days ago. I was trying to get some information, but I wasn't fully prepared for what he had in his arsenal." Timmy told her slowly, "But you're close to Remy, right? Can you get your hands on the data I need?" Trixie blinked at him, looked slightly disappointed, then shrugged.

"He tells me things now and then, kind of to show off and brag about his power. What are you looking for?" she asked and gasped as Timmy brought up the armband and tapped at the keys, showing her the map of Dimmsdale.

"I'm here on a special assignment." he reported, "This city is under the influence of an anti-magic field designed to prevent the use of any kind of magic, as well as being filled with devices built to capture fairies or destroy them if they prove too strong for capture." Trixie's face paled further, hands clasping together in prayer as her eyes remained glued to the patches of gold, gray and black. "My fairies and I have been passing through anti-magic zones and destroying the traps to free sections of the city for magic, but these black zones here are where we discovered a new threat. Tall black towers are making hundreds more traps, more than we can destroy to free Dimmsdale. I want to destroy the towers, but I don't know how." Timmy explained, "I think Remy has something to do with them, but I can't prove it and I can't do anything until I have an idea of what makes those towers so strong. If you can get something from Remy that will help me...."

"The Dark Spires." Trixie whispered and caught the boy's gaze, "He told me about them. Those are the Dark Spires. He said someone had designed them to create a giant blanket of darkness to stop magic, and only he would be immune to its effects." She touched her fingertips delicately to her lips, brow furrowing lightly in thought. "I think I saw something about it somewhere. If I got that for you, would you rescue Apollo?" she whispered, searching his face for a response. Timmy smiled at her.

"Trixie, if you get that info for me, I'll do more than save your fairy. I'll destroy the towers and save Dimmsdale. I can't bring back the Heart of the city, but I can at least give you back your hopes and dreams." he told the raven-haired girl. She cheered and threw her arms around him in a hug.

"Thank you, Timothy! Thank you!" she exclaimed, "But you really should have gone bigger with your request. If you had just asked me to be your girlfriend instead, I would *totally* have dated you!" Timmy only sighed and hoped his face really wasn't as red as it felt as he hugged her back. Well, this was great. He finally had the girl of his dreams falling all over him and it was for the wrong Timothy.

Didn't Cousin Danny have this problem once?

## 16 - Truths?

16

Tootie ran for the bench to have lunch with her friends, heart soaring as she knew that today would be the day Timmy would be at school. Maybe he would be there with Chester and A.J. and the others! They'd all get together and it'd be just like old times! Elmer wouldn't be so nervous now; Timmy would get the hat back and everything would be back to normal!

Or not.

She slowed to a stop, watching in confusion as Timmy walked to the popular kids' table with Trixie Tang smiling brightly beside him. Oh, that's right. Timothy Neogene was rich and popular; he'd never sit with the 'Others' like Timmy Turner was forced to do. And now he even had Trixie, that pretty and super popular girl, hanging onto his arm like a chimp on a limb.

She didn't stand a chance.

"Tootie? Are you okay?" Romi asked softly from her disguise as a crescent moon earring dangling from one ear. The young Goth watched her childhood crush sit at the regally decorated table and strike up a conversation with the Populars, blending in so perfectly she could have sworn that she wasn't looking at Timmy Turner.

"I'm fine." she sighed. Too young, maybe? Trixie was sixteen, she could have any boy she wanted. Heck, she could even drive to another part of the city and grab a guy from another district. But she went and snatched up Timmy, and of course he wouldn't have a reason not to go along. Not pretty enough? Tootie looked herself over quickly. So she might not be the first choice to be in the next Junior Miss Dimmsdale pageant, big deal. Romi told her that her real beauty was inside of her and that was what really mattered. Could inner beauty really compete with outer beauty?

"Hey, Toots!" Chester called out to her, waving as the other boys settled onto the bench and clustered around A.J.'s laptop in their usual routine. She smiled and waved back, running to join them. She'd talk to Timmy later, ask him what was going on. Maybe he was doing it to get close to Remy; maybe Trixie didn't mean anything to him anymore; maybe she had a chance at capturing him herself.

Maybe, maybe, maybe.

"So what's been going on since yesterday?" Tootie asked as she plunked herself down and pulled out her sandwich from her lunch bag. Chester pointed at the screen of the computer, chewing through his own sandwich. Both of them peered at the monitor, watching the program A.J. had written run yet another simulation.

"Well, I've added in five new variables based on the deterioration of the jungle gym's support bars, the

speed of the wind, the direction of the wind and the amount of strength Francis used in that push." A.J. remarked scientifically, tapping at the keys as the tiny model representing Timmy Turner repeatedly fell from the top of the dome of bars. Each fall was followed by a series of test results marked by target points circled on the simulation itself, each being led off by a line to a short note on what the program calculated. "The worst case scenario I found so far is that Timmy would catch his arm on a joint in the dome and break the bone." he deduced and shook his head, "I still can't put together the right variables that would justify his death."

Tootie watched the tiny figure fall again and winced. Even though it was just a model, even though the only passing resemblance it had to the real Timmy was the color of the shirt and hat the figure wore, it still was a pain to see. It just brought up the memory of watching him hit the bar, then collapse into the grass; and that was the only vivid thing she could remember. Everything else was a blur of sorrow, grief, anger and fog.

"Maybe he came out of the Timmy Tuck somewhere? Maybe a little?" Sanjay asked in that slow, accented tone as he continued trying to be sure he was speaking proper English. A.J. lifted a finger and eyebrow simultaneously, then went to typing again. The simulation ran again and Tootie forced herself to swallow her peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Did Timmy unfold from that instinctive little ball he would roll into when taking a fall? Could that have been the true cause of his death?

"Doesn't look like it. Just another catch on the bar. What did that do?" Chester asked with a disappointed sigh.

"Broken leg. He'd have been back in school within the month." A.J. muttered and shook his head, "This is tough. If I just had some more clues and variables to work with, I could set this thing up to show me exactly what should have happened to make Timmy die from the fall." He waved a hand at the screen in frustration. "I'm a super-genius, for God's sake! I should have figured this out long ago! The simulation of the day four years ago, I ran it with the exact conditions that were present that day... Timmy should never have died from that fall!"

"I really hope we solve this soon. I can't keep wearing this hat. People are staring at me like they wanna lynch me!" Elmer complained miserably, hugging his knees as the pink hat drooped on his head. Chester jumped from the bench to stand behind him, pulling his mouth open to form a wide smile.

"Elmer! Dammit, you *know* we all made that promise to Timmy! If he can't continue his duties as Timmy Turner, and we all know a dead kid can't do that, then **you** have to wear the hat and be the new Timmy!" he yelled in exasperation, "Now smile, dammit! *Smile!* Be Timmy!"

"Buh Ah dun hwannah beh Thimmeh!" Elmer managed to slur out despite the disfiguring of his mouth and rubbed his cheeks once Chester released it with a disdainful pout, "He's the Heart of Dimmsdale! How do you expect me to fill *those* shoes?" Sanjay turned and poked at his nose accusingly.

"You are not feeling his shoes! You are wearing his hat! It is an honor! **Honor!** Do it for honor!" he declared, glasses flashing in the light of the noon time sun, "You made a promise! We all made a promise! We keep it until Shangri-la burns to ashes!"

"It's not even a real place!" Elmer whined, hanging his head in resignation.

"Timmy shouldn't have died. But he did." Tootie whispered to herself as she watched the model fall again and again, "He thinks it was an accident. He doesn't even remember Francis pushed him off." She pushed her glasses up and let them slide slowly down her nose. "If I told him that A.J. found out that he shouldn't have died that day, could he use that to find a loophole and wish himself alive again?"

"Something on your mind, Tootie?" A.J. asked, hearing her mumbling to herself. The Goth lifted her head and smiled at him.

"Nah. Just wondering what else we could put in to test out." she replied and thought back to Timmy, "Hey, you know what? I met a new friend yesterday. Maybe he can help us with this. He moved here recently to help other kids at the elementary school with their problems."

"We're high-schoolers, Toots, not babies." Chester remarked dryly, pulling Elmer's mouth open in another forced smile, "We don't need counseling. We're coping just fine." He shot a glare down at the boil-less kid as he struggled to free his face from the blonde's relentless grip. "Dammit, Elmer, I told you to smile! Now smile and be happy! Like *Timmy!*" Tootie stared at him, then looked back at the Populars' table.

Timmy had jerked back at the name and was looking towards them, but it was hard to see what expression he had on. A moment later, one of the other Populars grabbed his shoulder and shook him, and his attention was pulled away.

"You think he can help us solve the mystery of Timmy's death?" A.J. asked curiously, "He's not gonna tell us to leave it to the police, is he? 'Cause the cops gave up on it *loong* ago." Tootie shook her head, a secretive smile on her face and a slight blush coloring her cheeks.

"No, he'll help us. He has a special interest in finding out what happened to Timmy Turner. They used to be good friends." she added.

"**We're** his best friends, Toots. Wouldn't he have told us about this other friend of his?" Chester asked in confusion, stretching Elmer's mouth out to an even wider smile before releasing it to fold his arms on the back of the bench, "What, is he a pen pal or something?" Tootie shrugged.

"I guess. He doesn't talk about himself that much, but he...." she went on and yelped as the sounds of shouting and whooping stirred up the school yard.

"*Fight! Fight! Fight!*" the voices of hundreds of teens chanted the call as the group watched a mass of bodies form a large circle. Tootie instinctively sought out the popular kids' table, hoping to see Timmy safely sitting there. No, he wasn't. He was gone, and chances were good that he was in the center of that pit of bloodthirsty, hormone-ravaged teenagers.

"No!" she squeaked and raced for the mass, followed quickly by her friends as they gave chase to keep her safe and see what was happening themselves.

It was hard, pushing her way through the bodies, but she murmured wishes when she could to have

people suddenly step aside for no reason but to obey a sudden impulse to do so. Chester managed to slip through with her as the other boys were scattered in the depths of the pit. Both of them stood in awe at the sight before them.

The kids had formed a sizable arena of open grass, surrounding Remy Buxaplenty in his spotless white suit and Timmy Turner in his darkly colored outfit with the necklace that shimmered in the light. Remy stood confidently, straightening his little bow tie with a smug smile as a strange ball of shining silver floated nearby him, a wickedly curved blade lining the top of the sphere. Timmy stood in a semi-crouched position, arms poised for some kind of attack or defense. Tootie recognized it as being kind of like the poses she saw on the cover of a martial arts book in one of the Goth shops. He was also glaring up at the ball more than he was glaring at Remy. Was the ball more important to him?

"Now, where was I? Oh yes. You were about to tell me who you really are, Neogene. I was quite thorough in my investigations. Until a few years ago, you didn't even exist." Remy remarked haughtily, "I doubt even Hounder knows who you really are!" Timmy didn't answer, just made an audible huff and shifted in preparation. "Oh, come now. I'm sure it's not that bad. What are you? An orphan? A ragamuffin? A lying piece of trailer trash?" the young millionaire sneered.

"I have no future, and I sacrificed my past. I am a virtual ghost to the present." Timmy replied coldly, "Who am I? Why should I tell you? Some days, I don't even know myself. Maybe when I finish what I came here to do, I'll know for sure. Till then, just call me the pain in your neck."

Tootie clasped her hands together, mind racing for a wish she could make in secret that could help Timmy without getting them all into more trouble. Chester gave a low whistle and she looked up at him in surprise.

"I don't know who that guy is, but he's got a lotta guts to stand up to Remy like that! Does he even know the kind of stuff he can do? I saw him snap his fingers once and a whole bunch of kids turned into mimes on the spot!" he remarked excitedly, "Wonder what the guy's gonna do to stay in one piece?" Tootie sighed and returned to watching the two boys, noticing with a touch of alarm that Trixie Tang stood on the opposite side of the circle, also watching them, her eyes locked on Timmy.

"Not fair! I saw him first! I know who he really is! Back off!" Tootie hissed jealously under her breath and bit a knuckle to keep from screaming in frustration.

"Fancy talk coming from someone who was right about not having a future." Remy remarked with an icy smile, "I'll definitely make sure you never will!" He threw out a hand, and the sphere raced right at Timmy! Tootie covered her eyes with a cry, unable to watch what was happening. The crowd roared in a mix of approval, disapproval and shock, and it was incentive enough to warrant a peek from the young Goth. Timmy had dodged the ball, clutching one arm in pain as it spun away into the air, gathering distance and speed for another pass. He was glaring up at it, but why wasn't he using his magic? Tootie looked around for his fairies. Where were they? Why weren't they helping?!

There! On the branch of a nearby tree, a pair of squirrels, pink and green, were perched together, tiny wands in their hands and aimed at the sphere. They stood back to back, arms outstretched as they traced the flight of the bladed silver ball. She looked back at Timmy, who was mouthing words out, keeping his head low so he wasn't easily seen. Was he giving orders to the fairies in the tree? No, it

looked like arguing, his face was twisting in frustration and anger, and the sphere came down again. The squirrels lowered their wands out of range, both looking distressed at their inaction. Did Timmy tell them not to do anything? Why?

She blinked as she thought back to his words from yesterday. If anything forced Cosmo and Wanda into being exposed, Fairy World would have no choice but to call back all the other fairy godparents simply because those two were bound to Timmy and could not be brought home as punishment. He was trying to protect the other godchildren, but it was costing him, and dearly too!

He dodged the sphere, lashing out with his leg to kick it into the air, but he yelled in pain as he fell back onto the grass, a long slice cut into the jeans. Tootie winced and felt the bitter taste of helplessness rise into her mouth. Oh, if only she could use magic like him too! Or at least could wish him to a safe place!

"I wish...." she murmured and her earring tinkled to signal that Romi was listening, waiting for the rest of her words, "I wish...!"

Remy sauntered up to the fallen brunet, smiling smugly all the while. He stood over him, bent just enough to grin at Timmy. He said something, Tootie couldn't hear what it was, but then he was reaching out to the young immortal and she panicked.

"I wish that stupid ball thing would just blow up!" she cried and the kids closest to her looked down at her in confusion. Romi tinkled, hidden safely by her godchild's ebony hair, and the whole crowd of students looked up to see the silver sphere suddenly explode into so many twisted bits of metal. Remy shot his gaze up in utter disbelief, giving Timmy the opportunity to roll aside and scramble to his feet, limping away quickly into the mob of panicking teens as they scattered to avoid being hit by debris. Tootie felt herself get picked up and carried off, yelling in alarm until she realized it was Chester.

"Whatever the heck happened, it sure saved that guy's bacon! Come on, Toots! Let's get outta here!" he exclaimed and they fled the school yard as the bells suddenly screamed in a frenzy, blasting their drills into what had once been a peaceful afternoon.

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"What a blast!" Chester remarked sometime later as Tootie walked with the boys to the cemetery. He insisted that they all visit 'Timmy' and let 'him' know about what had happened. "Weirdest school yard fight I ever saw, but man, that was *awesome*! Too bad we don't know who actually won."

"I'd say the Goth kid. Remy's mechanical aide was destroyed and since his opponent was using only his body for defense and offense, then it's quite obvious who won." A.J. remarked, carrying the laptop under his arm as he rubbed a soft cloth over his bald head. Tootie had asked him once why he did that. His explanation, 'Girls don't like shiny heads', still baffled her.

"I hope he's okay." she murmured worriedly as they passed through the wrought-iron gate and made their way up the path to the grave where Timmy was supposedly buried. She frowned slightly. That was a confusing thing. The day he was buried, she remembered seeing his little body dressed up in a black suit and sans hat inside the coffin, and it was closed up just before it was lowered into the grave. So if Timmy was alive and never got buried, who was it that was lying six feet under?



"We can ask him if he's all right. Isn't that the guy right over there?" Elmer pointed out and the group followed his outstretched hand to see the teen from the school yard fight slumped against a bench not far from the grave. Tootie gave a little yelp and raced ahead of the group to meet with him, hoping that he was all right, that the cuts were healed with magic already.

"Hey, you!" Chester called out and Timmy turned his head to watch them in surprise. Tootie slid into the bench beside him and hugged him, only to yelp again when he shoved her aside and leaped from the bench.

"Who are you?!" he snapped at the group of boys, taking on a defensive stance as he clenched his fists tightly. Tootie looked up at him in confusion, taking in the sight of him favoring one leg, the slit in his sleeve still stained a dark color. She glanced around, spotted pink and green birds perched in a nearby oak, then looked back at the brunet. "Why are you here?!" he added angrily.

"Hey, Dude. We could ask you the same question." Chester grumbled, "*We're* here to visit our best friend. What's your excuse?"

"T-Timothy? Are you okay?" Tootie stammered out, nearly forgetting not to call him by his nickname. The group of boys stared at her and she blushed.

"You know this very rude person? Is he not one of the popular kids? Did you not see the chart?" Sanjay asked her in irritation, "We know popular people care nothing about us!"

"You should see a doctor about those cuts. They could get infected." A.J. pointed out as Timmy stepped back from them.

"I don't care." he muttered, pulling out of his stance and averting his eyes from the young Goth, "This is a public place, and it's quiet. I needed a place to go and remind myself of who I am." Tootie sighed, remembering his little speech from earlier. She supposed it could get confusing, going by one name among close friends and in private, and going by another in public. Maybe, sometimes, he got the two confused, or wondered which of the two was really him?

"Guys, this is Timothy Neogene, the friend I told you about. I didn't really think he was one of the popular teens." she explained to the boys, "But he's the one who would be interested in your program, A.J." Timmy looked at them warily. "Timothy, did you *walk* the whole way here? While you were hurt?" she asked worriedly. He shrugged uncaringly.

"The simulation? What makes you think he'd want to see that?" A.J. remarked in confusion, looking towards the twelve-year-old, "If he doesn't care enough to get himself to a doctor, why would he care about our research on Timmy's death?"

"*What?!*"

Tootie flinched at the explosion from the brunet standing before them. That was not good; an angry

Timmy could use magic to chase them out of the cemetery, or worse. The birds puffed themselves up, eyes burning into them with all the fury their tiny bodies could muster.

"What does it matter to you what we do? You are not from Dimmsdale!" Sanjay pointed out contempt, "We are searching for the reason why our friend Timmy died!"

"He fell from the jungle gym, broke his neck, and died. His stupidity cost him his life. There's nothing to search for." Timmy answered coldly, "Stop wasting your time on things that can't be changed." He pointed at the grave with its small mountain of gifts and flowers. "Go ahead and show him your little program. See if it makes him jump out of his coffin." The group of boys gave a collective snort of disdain at him and marched off to visit the grave, leaving Tootie behind to stare up at him and wonder why he said those things about himself. She reached out to him and he stepped back again. "Don't touch me, okay? I'm not feeling well." the boy rasped and continued moving until he collapsed against the tree, his godparents hopping excitedly around on the branches above him.

"Did you have to be so cold?" Tootie demanded softly and stepped closer to examine his injured arm, "Now let's see about this cut. Why didn't you heal them when you got away from school?" Her earring tinkled nervously.

"There is a dark presence here, and many more where we were walking. Anti-magic; I don't think he could have used magic." Romi whispered to her, "That's probably why Cosmo and Wanda haven't done anything to help him. They must have changed to birds at the school to follow him, but now they're trapped like that until they find a safe place." She tinkled again. "I'm not feeling so good either. We shouldn't stay for too long." Tootie blinked, then looked up at the fairy couple. They were still hopping about, but they took a lot of breaks between hops, wings drooping tiredly. And Timmy....

Timmy looked as though he were going to lose his lunch.

She took a handkerchief from her bag and began tying it around his arm, gently scolding him for letting himself get cut up so badly. He was supposed to be the hero, right? Heroes didn't let themselves get beat up over nothing. He gave a little huff and she smiled as she dug around for another handkerchief. Kneeling to tie that around the boy's leg, she continued berating him lightly, then went on to explain exactly what it was A.J. was doing with the laptop.

"And he's just trying to figure out what it was that caused your death. They want answers, Timmy, and since everyone else has given up on you, they're going to keep working at it until they know why you died." she remarked, "So why not give them a hand? If we can prove to Fairy World that you weren't meant to die, maybe they'll let you have a wish to fix it so you're alive, really alive, again."

"Doesn't matter. I fell, I died, I'm stuck beyond Death's reach." Timmy sighed, "Let them play with the program. Let them think they can make a difference. What are they hoping it will do? It was all an accident."

"Timmy, Francis pushed you off the jungle gym. You didn't just slip and fall." Tootie told him quietly, tying off the knot on the makeshift bandage around his lower leg.

"So? Arresting him won't fix me, won't fix the order of my life." He waved it off erratically. "I'm heading

home. I have a mission to go through later tonight and some sleep would be really nice about now." She watched him push away from the tree and begin a slow walk out of the cemetery, the pink and green birds fluttering down to perch on his shoulders.

"Can I come?" she called out to him and he paused, turning to look back at her in confusion.

"I don't have everything I need for you yet." he answered carefully, motioning to the group of boys at his grave with one hand, "Maybe next time." With that, he left and Tootie stood there with a sigh of disappointment. Next time. Next time, she would have magic on her side, and she'd be able to help him if he got in trouble.

Turning back to the rest of her friends, she made her way up the hill to sit at Timmy's grave and murmur a prayer for his safety.

## 17 - Apollo's Rescue

17

Sunset was coming. There wasn't that much time left to get things set up. The sooner Timmy had Apollo in his possession, the sooner he could get the data on the Dark Spires. Once he had cast *Cure* to heal himself up, he and the two fairies all collapsed together in a tired heap on the sofa, falling asleep on the spot and not waking until the clock chimed at seven p.m. By then they'd all recovered from overexposure to the anti-magic barrier and began making their preparations for the rescue mission.

It hadn't been the first time Timmy had seen Cosmo and Wanda get sick from overexposure to the blanket of magic oppression. It had happened twice before, and each time he raced from the zones back to a safe point to let them rest, begging them for forgiveness for making them stay too long in the field. Of course they held no ill will against him; they'd willingly gone in with him to help. He was their godchild after all, and if he was willing to march into a building and expose himself to the dangers of something blowing up in his face, then so were they.

This was, however, the first time Timmy himself fell ill to that same overexposure. He didn't like it, hoped he wouldn't have to go through it again, and wondered briefly why it took so long for it to even manifest itself in him. Probably because he was human.

But Caleb had specifically said that the field was bad for fairy health. Why should it bother him?

Well, it wasn't like Caleb had never been wrong before.

Timmy ransacked his closet for a fresh set of clothes. The cloak of anonymity was partially lifted from him when it came to Remy. He wouldn't bother trying to hide his face this time, but he still needed to sneak around the area to find the captive fairy. Where in that mansion could he be held? Probably somewhere where his parents couldn't find him, and behind a lot of security.

He picked out the black ensemble again and sighed. If he really wanted to screw with Remy's head and confuse the system in that mansion, all he'd have to do was wear his normal clothes. But that was inviting trouble he didn't have the strength to deal with, so Neogene was going in, not Turner.

Cosmo and Wanda were busy with their own preparations; he could hear the racket in the next room. Changing quickly, he made his way out and knocked on their door. What exactly were they doing that involved so much noise in the bedroom? The door opened and Wanda stuck her head out, blinking at him.

"Are you guys ready? What are you doing in there?" Timmy asked, puzzled. She smiled at him and waved her wand, poofing a bottled ball into the air so that it floated before him.

"Magical decoys! We're making a few for emergencies and Cosmo keeps uncorking them." she

remarked and vanished back into the room, the noise having continued on without end. Timmy picked the bottle out of the air and studied it. It seemed like a good idea. He knocked again and Wanda poked her head out once more. "We're almost done, Timmy, just a couple more...." she began but Timmy held the bottle out to her.

"Can you make a few of these, empty, for me? I want to try to put some mana-based magic decoys in them." he remarked and she stared at him, a few strands of her pink hair popping out of place.

"You... you want to make decoys?" she stammered, "You can't.... That's a fairy magic technique." Timmy blinked at her, then sighed.

"Oh, fine. Never mind then." he muttered and handed her the bottled ball. She disappeared into the room once more and he headed downstairs to search the kitchen for empty jars. Fairy technique, yeah, right. Magic was magic and if they could bottle up extras, then so could he!

He found a pair of mason jars and opened one up, peering into it with some confusion. So, how exactly was he going to put magic in a jar? He thought back to the little ball in the bottle and brightened. Maybe his Light orbs would do the trick? Timmy set the jar on the table, stepped back and held out his hand, focusing on the mana of Light. He gathered it together to form the shining sphere, then murmured an incantation to float it into the jar and hover in its center. He screwed on the lid and held it up with a smile.

"Ha! Got it! It's not so hard!" he laughed and promptly placed a second Light orb in the other jar. Racing back upstairs, he knocked on his godparents' door for a third time and both fairies poofed out, wearing backpacks of their own. Timmy held out the jars proudly, showing off the orbs within the glass. "Wanda! Look! I told you I could do it!" he laughed. Wanda blinked at the jars in surprise, then smiled vaguely.

"Magic is magic, I guess. All right, Sport. You proved your point. Let's go." she murmured and flew down the stairs. The brunet watched her leave, then looked up at Cosmo in confusion.

"Did I do something wrong?" he asked and the green-haired fairy only smiled vacantly, reaching out to pat his head.

"Nice pets!" he remarked and followed his wife. Puzzled even more, Timmy shoved the jars into his pack, slid the Battle Staff into its place against his back, then headed off to join them.

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The security around Remy's house had increased. The guard dogs roamed freely and hulking guards stomped around the area in white shirts and black pants. Timmy recognized the outfits; Crocker's anti-magic suits. He wouldn't be wishing these guys to the tropics anytime soon.

He darted among the bushes, froze as he nearly collided with one of the dogs and watched Wanda deal with the canine as it began sniffing around to pinpoint him. She waved her wand, conjured up a robotic cat, and set it loose in the yard with one of the bottled decoys on it. The dog chased after the cat until they vanished into the hedgerows nearby. There was the sound of shattering glass and a large puff of smoke exploded from that point. Timmy stared at his fairy godmother but she only smiled and put a finger to her lips in a signal for silence.

"Somewhere better. I promise." she whispered and fluttered on ahead. The group picked their way through the yard, stopping only when they began to cross paths with the guards. Timmy kept low to the ground, watching with some amount of fear as the towering men swept the grass with flashlights and stony expressions. One beam of light passed so close to him, he had to curl his fingers into a fist to avoid them being spotted. He tried not to breathe, not to move, until one pair of guards walked on in their patrol. He trembled from the effort and that brought a new degree of stress for him.

"Got this one." Cosmo murmured, pulling another bottle free and swapping the star wand for his Windcutter. Timmy gave him a wide-eyed stare and shook his head quickly. Cosmo and the Windcutter; anytime the two were paired, *something* came away bloody. He couldn't take that risk; not here, not now! His hand shot out, grabbed the fairy's leg as he darted from the safety of the underbrush.

"No! Cosmo! Not the blade!" the brunet hissed, "Something else!" The green-haired fairy only poofed free and skimmed over the grass. He twisted in mid-flight, sweeping the air with the blade of the scythe as he aimed for one of the burly men about to intercept their path. Timmy shut his eyes, uttering a soft moan of despair. This was going to end badly.

But somehow it didn't, and when Wanda finally coaxed him into looking again, all that remained of the guard was the lingering smoke of magic and a few shreds of the anti-magic suit drifting on the wind. Cosmo stood on the lawn, scythe swept behind him in a mimicry of Timmy's own finishing stance, glaring at the empty space where the man had been. The brunet crawled along the ground to him and gazed at the empty space. Fairy magic could not be used to bring death to anyone; this was the most sacred of Da Rules. Cosmo wouldn't break it.

Never.

"Where did he go?" Timmy whispered to his godfather and Cosmo smiled up at him cheerfully.

"Singles bar. It's ladies' night!" he replied with a laugh and changed back to his normal wand, floating on to find another safe route for them to take.

Darkness helped them immensely, and the bright lights that now lined the walls of the mansion were determined to kill their best cover. Timmy sat against the trunk of a tree, gazing up at them in frustration. Now what? Wanda sat on his knee, looking up at them as well, a thoughtful expression on her face. Cosmo stood on his shoulder, leaning against the side of his head as he hummed a nonsensical tune.

"We can try killing the lights." Wanda finally murmured, "If we zap them all at the same time, we can do it. It's just three big ones." She floated up with her husband as Timmy got to his feet and pulled free the Battle Staff. "I'll take the one on the right. Cosmo, get the one on the left. Timmy, take center light." she planned, "On three. One...."

The young immortal summoned up the mana circle, whispering the spell for *Photon*. It was localized, pinpoint accurate and never missed its mark.

"Two...."

Both fairies lifted their wands in concert, aiming for their assigned light sources. The couple claimed that Cosmo had the most horrible aim in the world; recent training exercises cured him of that fault. The oft brainless fairy now had an accuracy that could only be described as deadly.

"Three!"

Two bursts of magic and a blossom of light hit the three searchlights in synch, shorting them out with small explosions as the glass showered down from the roof. Timmy winced, expecting a horde of dogs and golem-like guards to converge on them, but when nothing happened he looked to his godparents for an explanation.

"You didn't expect us to not silence the sound too, did you, Sport?" Wanda asked with a smile. He rubbed her head gratefully, then made for the wall of the mansion, peering through windows to find a clear entry. "Why not wish for an entrance? We can make one for you on the spot!" Wanda whispered.

"Let me check for anti-magic traps first." the brunet murmured and dug out the radar, "Even though this is a safe zone, he might have a few to keep Apollo confined." He studied the screen and frowned. "It's reporting nothing, but I don't think I can trust this thing anymore. Remy's using newer models of those devices, and Caleb's gear doesn't sense it." he sighed and shoved the radar back into his pouch, "We'll have to risk it for the entry. Guys, I wish we had a door we could walk through to get in Remy's house!" The fairy couple waved their wands and a small door popped into the wall of the mansion. Timmy pushed it open and looked through, scanning the hall visually for signs of detection. Nothing. Dark, quiet, peaceful... all was calm.

It made him nervous.

They went in anyway and silently made their way down the halls and stairways, searching for a room or door that looked as though it was meant to hold a fairy prisoner. Timmy opened one of the jars and let the Light orb out to guide their way, murmuring commands to sweep the little sphere into various corners and niches. Cosmo and Wanda held their wands tightly, looking all around themselves in tense alertness. The moment it looked as though they were to be discovered, they had to hide in Timmy's pack. He couldn't afford to let Remy or Juandissimo Magnifico see them both.

"This place is huge! How are we supposed to find Apollo in this maze before sunrise?" Wanda murmured worriedly.

"Can't fairies sense other fairies, or something?" Timmy asked with a tired sigh, "You guys need to start carrying pagers or better yet, a GPS tracker!"

"We already do! Our wands!" Cosmo answered cheerfully, waving his at the brunet's face, "La-la-la! The wands are all tied to Fairy World's Fairy World Wide Web! We're networked!"

"It's no good to us if we can't go to Fairy World and access the network, you idiot!" Wanda shot back, "We're banished, remember? We can't even get our wands recharged!"

"Then why do you keep asking me to make wishes if your wands are running out of power?" Timmy sighed and blinked, lifting his right arm with a sudden thought, "Hey, you're right. You said your wands

are your homing signals. The map you guys gave me, it can access the Fairy World Wide Web and track your wands!" He pushed aside the sleeve and began tapping at the keys. "All I have to do is type in the name of the fairy I want to track, right? A-P-O-L-L-O. Hope it works." the young immortal muttered and pressed 'Enter'.

The virtual map bloomed into view, magnifying itself down with each passing moment. There was Earth, now North America, now the U.S., now California. It zoomed further down to the Imperial county, again to Dimmsdale, once more to the upper-class district. Timmy watched hopefully as the map continued narrowing down to Remy's mansion, and finally... a floor-plan of the building blossomed in place of the map, a three-dimensional holographic representation of the mansion with a tiny golden crown shining in place.

"Wow! Technology sure comes in handy!" Wanda remarked idly, blinking at the map. Timmy tapped at a few more keys and a second marker appeared in the hologram, a small pink spot that pulsed with light only two floors down from the crown that represented Apollo.

"Okay, here's where we are, and there's Apollo. Now we're getting somewhere!" he laughed and traced a path to the crown, "We'll take these stairs here, follow this hallway to the next staircase up, pass by this hall and he'll be in the room at the end of this one."

"Yay! A dollhouse!" Cosmo cheered and struggled in surprise as Timmy turned and grabbed him, clasping one hand over his mouth.

"Keep it down, Cosmo! You wanna wake up the whole house?!" he growled, "This is a rescue mission! We can't rescue Apollo if we all get captured, too!" He slowly released his godfather and glared at him until Cosmo nodded in silence, then turned and began walking down the hall towards the staircase on the map, the Light orb bobbing along to illuminate the path.

The house itself, the mansion, didn't have any guards within the walls. Timmy decided it was because of Remy's arrogance; who could make it past all that security outside to get inside? He smiled. The One Who Stands Beyond Death's Reach, that's who. He finished climbing the last set of stairs and sent the orb flitting towards the hallway where Apollo's room was located. Just as the group began walking towards it, the orb suddenly was snuffed, vanishing as though someone had puffed it out like a birthday candle. Timmy froze, throwing out his arms to stop his fairies from going any further.

"Nullifiers." he whispered, eyes wide, "He's filled that hall with nullifiers." Cosmo and Wanda fluttered close to him as he brought up the map again, staring at the corridor with the captive fairy's room. All along the walls leading to the final door were strange curves. No doors, no rooms, just a line of half-spheres embedded in the architecture in a staggered formation, filling the hall with a thick blanket of anti-magic energy.

"We can't get through that! We've barely recovered from the exposure earlier today; another heavy dose and we'll be out of commission for good!" Wanda cried softly, clutching her wand close to her body as though its presence would protect her. Timmy pulled the staff from his back once more, holding it steady in both hands, eyeing the wicked hook and its row of spikes.



"I can go in first, smash up the nullifiers and clear a path for you." he remarked and began to move on when Wanda grabbed his shoulder to stop him.

"You can't go in there, either! You're being affected by the nullifiers too!" she exclaimed. He looked back at her, puzzled.

"But Caleb said they only affect fairies. I'm human, remember?" he pointed out.

"Or *are* youuu?" Cosmo sang in that insinuating tone he so often used at the wrong times. Timmy gave him an exasperated glare.

"I'm human; I may be immortal, I may have magic of my own now, but I'm still human." he grumbled and shrugged, "For all we know, I could have just had a bug that made me sick at about the same time you guys got sick from the anti-magic field. It's just a coincidence."

"Caleb could be wrong." Wanda pointed out.

"About so many things in a short span of time? Hello-o! He's a super advanced robotic angel with more magic in his pinkie than I have in my whole body!" the brunet shot back in annoyance, "I'll be *fine*! Trust me!" He turned to start attacking, only to be held back by the fairies yet again. "What **now**?!" he hissed.

"You can't just smash them up. That will make a lot of noise and we can't use our magic to erase the sounds!" the pink-haired fairy added desperately, "There's no way a magical creature can get through that field safely, and no chance of you being able to destroy the field without giving us all away!" Timmy scowled at her words. This was getting annoying.

"Ugh! Fine! I'll just run down the hall really fast and get in the room, okay?!" he finally declared, throwing his hands up in defeat.

"What if it's locked?" Cosmo asked and Timmy shook his fists at him.

"Then find the key! I wish you would just find that key to that stupid room!" he snarled and the fairy pulled a red ribbon tied to a small brass key from his pants pocket.

"You mean this one? It was in the same box as the switch." Cosmo remarked and blinked as the brunet snatched it from his hand, "Hey! I was doing important fairy stuff with that!" He held his arms akimbo and put on an annoyed face, "Get your own ribbon key!"

Timmy shed the backpack and staff once again. He didn't need the extra weight slowing him down. If Apollo was in that room and couldn't get out, then there was a good reason for it. The only way to escape with him could be to run him through that gauntlet of nullifiers, and the faster he got them through, the less risk that Apollo would get sick from the field or, worse, turn to fairy dust.

He took a deep breath, strode to the maw of the nullifier gauntlet and stared down the hallway at the white door far at the end. Even standing here, not even a step into that corridor of fairy doom, he could feel a sick sensation curling in his stomach. He wanted to hurl again, find a bathroom, bury his head into the porcelain bowl and never pull it out again.

He should have taken some kind of medicine for that stupid bug, chugged down a bottle of Pepto or something. This wasn't helping him at all.

"Make it fast." Cosmo murmured.

"Fly." Wanda whispered, eyes wide with worry and fear, "Don't just run, Timmy... *fly!*"

"I'm so gonna regret this in the morning." Timmy sighed and shot down the hall of nullifiers, key in hand.

The reaction was almost instantaneous. His stomach lurched only a few steps into the hall. He kept his mouth shut, focused on the door, moved forward as fast as he could. And yet it was like running through a pool of gelatin, everything physics could come up with working against him, desperate to make sure it would be eternity before he reached that door. The world tilted askew, his mouth went dry.

Maybe Caleb had been wrong. Anyone with magic in them could feel the nullifiers ripping through them.

And then he was there, the key in his hand moving of its own accord as it clicked into place and the door flowed open, streaks of paint and wood swirling before his eyes as the colors spun and mixed in a kaleidoscope of paint and matter. He fell into the mess and gasped, shutting his eyes as he lay there on the floor, thankful for the cool tile that pressed against the side of his head.

Once the world stopped spinning, he was going to go back to that android and kick him in the shin. Only affects fairies, yeah, right. Maybe it went chaotic on him, too, flying so close to the Dark Spire. Sure would explain all his crazy actions and speeches lately.

"Ugh." Timmy groaned and pushed himself up at last. He couldn't stay there for very long, no matter how good the floor felt. He looked around himself dazedly, then snapped back to alertness at the sight of a male fairy staring at him in confusion from within the confines of a butterfly net bolted to the top of a table. The fairy had a mop of red-gold hair that flopped over one of his eyes, the matching color orb locked on him. Dressed in fiery-patterned jacket, blue pants and black shoes, he did seem more impressive than most fairies Timmy had ever seen. Was this Apollo, Trixie's fairy godfather?

"Okay. So what's your deal?" the fairy asked at last and Timmy rolled his eyes in exasperation.

"I'm here to rescue you. Duh." he griped and braced himself until the world finally decided to just pick a spot and stay there. "I'm Timmy Turner. Trixie sent me to save you." The fairy froze in the middle of his wings fluttering, eyes growing wide and round as his face went from summer tan to winter pale.

"She knows who you are?!" he squeaked and the boy shook his head. "Then why did she ask you to help me?"

"She saw me wish myself away from Oberon High. My identity is still safe, but your godchild isn't." Timmy explained and began pulling at the net, snapping strands to create an opening, "She's stuck playing girlfriend to Remy to keep you safe from Crocker." Apollo flew out the hole and stretched in relief, twirling his wand in one hand before sliding it into a sheath at his side.

"You've changed quite a bit since last anyone in Fairy World saw you, Timmy Turner. I didn't even recognize you!" he remarked with a slight grin, "You have no idea just how bummed that place got, knowing you can't go visit them." Timmy snorted at the words, shaking his head.

"Don't go telling me that I'm the Heart of Fairy World, too." he muttered.

"Nah. You're not *that* vital to us. Just that we don't fill our quota for crazy adventures quite so easily now." Apollo corrected with a laugh and floated down to hover before the brunet at face level, "So how do we get out of here? Remy's got the only hall out of here full of magic-blockers and there's some weird fairy trap in this room. If I so much as charge up my wand, it'll be all over me." Timmy searched the room visually, trying to spot the trap. Just like he thought, the radar hadn't picked up anything. It must have been one of the newer models like those nullifiers outside, a redesigned trap Crocker put out on the market after getting a buttload of cash from Remy.

Assuming there really was a connection between them.

"We're going to have to go through the hall. There's no other way out." he finally decided and looked up at Apollo's incredulous face, "I made it through okay. If I can keep up the speed, I can get us both out fine as well." He held out his arms to take in the fairy. "Trust me, Apollo. For Trixie." he added and the fiery fairy sighed in resignation, fluttering down to be held close. "Let me apologize ahead of time if I squeeze too hard. Those nullifiers have been making me feel wonky lately."

"They hadn't before?"

Timmy didn't answer, just took another deep breath and dove through the open door into the hallway. The fairy uttered a moan of agony as the world decided it didn't like its spot and began spinning away in Timmy's vision to find someplace more comfortable to sit. The hall seemed to stretch endlessly long, the fairy in his clutches went into a fit of convulsions, and then he was through, falling, twisting in mid-air before someone caught him, held him close as he was dragged away from the field of anti-magic energy. A cooling hand pressed against his forehead and cheeks and he thought back to the comforting touch of his mother as a small boy. He loosened his arms around Apollo and sighed in relief.

"Mom...." he murmured, drifting in the dream of home, of being in his own room, in his own bed, and the not-very-bright woman that was his mother sitting by him during rare times of need she actually was there for.

"Timmy, Sweetie, you have to get up...."

"Dun wanna, Mom...."

"Heh, he thinks you're his mother." Apollo's weak voice chuckled, "Jorgen would have a fit. Fairy godparents aren't meant to replace a human's true parents."

"Oh, hush! I just took a human form to have the strength to catch him!" Wanda's voice snapped and Timmy cracked open an eye to see if the world had chosen its new spot, his dream quickly fading in the face of reality. Apollo was now leaning on Cosmo, whose wings fluttered maniacally to keep them both supported in the air. Wanda had indeed made herself taller, more human-like, her arms wrapped around

him protectively as she knelt on the floor to support his weight. He smiled slightly. Lucky, he was so lucky to have them as his fairy godparents; who else would have a fairy so willing to get horribly sick for their godchild? His eyes picked out Apollo, sagging in the air as he tried to recover from the dash through the hall, and mentally sighed, reminding himself that all fairies would do that. They had to protect their godchild and do anything they could, within reason, for them. It was in Da Rules.

He blinked in surprise as Wanda nuzzled her cheek to the top of his head, murmuring softly in words he couldn't understand. Cosmo just grinned and Apollo... well, if he didn't look sick before, he did now.

"Okay, that's taking it too far, lady." he griped, "He's awake now; let him up!"

"Feeling okay, Timmy? How was it? Rough ride, huh?" Cosmo chirped out jokingly and Timmy sat up to rub his head, Wanda immediately poofing back to normal and floating by him, blushing furiously.

"How many nullifiers did that guy put there?!" he exclaimed in a low voice, "Geez! I thought I was gonna get pulled inside out!" He held out his arm, blinked at sudden dullness of the white metal armband, then shrugged and checked the map. "Well, we got you free. Let's get down to the first floor so these things don't affect us any more. From there, we'll use a magic warp to get to Trixie's place." He gave the group a cheerful smile despite still feeling dizzy from the experience of running past so many nullifiers. "We got lucky tonight! I didn't set off any alarms or anything!" he exclaimed and led the way back to the stairs.

Their exit from the mansion was a little stranger and somewhat less frightening than the break-in and the rescue itself. One floor to go before the group could reach the main foyer, they ran into Remy Buxaplenty himself, standing in his money-print pajamas and clutching a small sack of bills like a stuffed animal. He gave them a sleepy glare.

"Who the hell are you people and why are you in my house?" he demanded in a slurred tone. Cosmo brightened and flew up to him before Timmy could grab onto the fairy.

"Well, Mr. Sleepy-Head, we're **not** a group of your old rivals being led out of your mansion by Timmy Turner, who was brought back from the dead as an immortal, after rescuing Trixie Tang's fairy godparent in an attempt to find out more about these Dark Spire things so that we can destroy them and free Dimmsdale from its magic-oppressed doom!" he reported in a breathless and cheerful rush. Remy frowned and blinked slowly at him.

"Run that by me again? I don't think I quite heard you properly." he asked with a small yawn. Wanda joined the green-haired fairy, shoving him aside as she plastered on another smile.

"This is just a dream you're having, Remy. You were getting up to have some water and then this straaaange dream snuck up on you!" she told him, wiggling her fingers at the blonde. She waved her wand and a glass of water poofed into the boy's free hand. "But there's your water now, so you can go on back to bed and finish this crazy, wacked-out dream!" The blonde blinked again, then nodded slowly.

"Um, of course. Yes, that seems to make perfect sense." he agreed and shook his finger in a trance at Cosmo, "Because this idiot here made no sense whatsoever. You, you buffoon, are fired. Good night and cheerio." With that, Remy turned and shuffled back to his room. Timmy watched with one eyebrow

raised, arms folded over his chest.

"I can't believe he actually bought that." he remarked and smiled at his godparents, "Way to go, Cosmo and Wanda!"

"You'd be surprised what sleepy teens believe when you tell them stuff in the right way and at the right time." Wanda remarked smartly as the group continued on.

"Really? I should remember that." Timmy mused, then blinked in sudden realization, "Hey, you haven't done that to *me*, have you?"

"You? Course not."

"Really?"

"Really."

"All right...."

"Hah! Works like a dream!" Cosmo laughed, inciting yet another confusing argument as the boy and the three fairies made their way out.

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The blast of smoke that cleared in Trixie's yard was a mix of pink, green and red. Timmy waved away the excess and looked up at the girl's balcony. Her light was on; was she up late doing homework? *This* late? It was two a.m.! He murmured a wish for stairs leading up to the girl's room and raised an eyebrow at the two floating planks of marble that appeared before him.

"Trust us. Just walk." Wanda pointed out to him, "We're conserving some magic right now." With a shrug, the boy stepped onto the planks, noting with a pleasant surprise that as long as he continued stepping into the air, the marble would shift to take its place and create another stair towards the balcony. He jumped off at the apex and landed softly before the glass doors leading to Trixie's room. Cosmo, Wanda and Apollo all floated around him, watching as he knocked on the glass.

From within, he could see some movement, and he swallowed as the Asian girl pushed aside one of the filmy white curtains that partially blocked the doors to see what had caused the knocking. A look of surprise passed over her face, followed by a joyful expression as she opened the glass doors and held out her arms to the red-haired fairy.

"Apollo! You're home!" she exclaimed and hugged the fairy as he flew into her embrace. Timmy shoved his hands into his pockets, looking down at his boots as he kept quiet. A reunion between a fairy and their godchild was something he couldn't intrude on, not even with the importance of the data he was hoping she had now. That, and Trixie's nightgown was playing havoc with his mind.

"I wish she was wearing something more covering." he mumbled absently and the fairy couple lifted their wands in response. Trixie blinked as her nightgown was wrapped in a plush violet robe, giving the brunet

some amount of relief.

"Huh? Oh, that's right. You're still here." Trixie remarked with a laugh, "Sorry, but I'm really grateful you rescued Apollo!" She hugged the robe and gave him a strange little smile. "So, you're a shy one. How cute!"

"Um, yeah. About the info on those spires?" Timmy changed the subject quickly, "And why were you up so late?" Trixie shrugged and headed for her dresser, opening one of the drawers and rummaging through its contents.

"I had a feeling something was going to happen tonight, so I thought I'd stay up and find out what it was." she replied and pulled out a small glass case with a mini-disc tucked inside. She held it up, tapping the glass as she walked back to him. "This was a pain to get, Timothy. I had to do a lot of sweet-talking and kissing-up to have Remy show me his files, then I had to do a lot more to get him to leave the room on some silly errand just so I could have the time to burn them onto this mini-DVD." the girl told him with a slightly exasperated huff.

"I'm sure it was." Timmy muttered, reaching out for the disc, blinking in confusion as she moved it out of his reach, shaking a finger at him.

"Not quite so fast. I had to *really* work at getting this for you." Trixie purred.

"Oh, and you think all I did was walk up to Remy's house, ring the doorbell and say to him, 'Hey, Trixie wants her fairy back now. Can you just dump him in my arms for me, pretty please?'" Timmy growled in frustration and tried to grab the disc, "Hand it over! We had a deal!"

"Apollo, I wish there was a glass wall between me and him." Trixie remarked and Timmy's hand smacked into an invisible wall conjured by the fairy he had just rescued. He pounded on it in frustration, then glared at the fairy.

"Traitor! After all I went through for you!" he yelled. Apollo shrugged.

"You're not my godchild. Hey, I'm grateful for the rescue and all, but she wishes it, I dish it." he replied and spread his hands out peaceably. "Business, man. Sorry."

"Two can play this game. I wish the wall was gone." Timmy growled and both Cosmo and Wanda waved their wands to grant it. The glass shimmered out of existence and Trixie watched it fall with disinterest, arms folded above her waist as she continued tapping the mini-disc against herself.

"I wish for a barrier his fairies can't get rid of." she retaliated softly and Apollo conjured a disk on the floor that erupted into a second wall that blocked the brunet's access to the data disc. "It really was a lot of work, Timothy. Just rescuing Apollo doesn't seem like a good enough exchange." the Asian girl remarked thoughtfully, "I'll just keep this barrier up until I think of something else you can do for me."

Timmy kicked at the disk experimentally, ignoring the words coming from Trixie. His fairies couldn't get rid of it, so making a wish to that effect would be pointless. He couldn't physically damage it, magic equipment had that kind of durability to withstand a thousand blows before the paint got scratched. That

left the option of blasting it away himself, using mana-based magic. He took up the stance, focusing as he conjured the circle of light and took aim at the disk. He needed that data to save the city, and he wasn't about to let Trixie dangle it over him like a bone until she had every one of her little whims met.

That's what Apollo was for.

*"Release the light! Photon!"* he exclaimed and the girl jumped back in alarm as the disk on the floor erupted into a mess of metal and silicon from the explosion of Light mana. She blinked at it, then at him.

"How did you do that?!" she blurted out as the barrier collapsed. Apollo stared at the burnt-out disk.

"I told you that Remy wasn't the only one with power. Now, the disc, Trixie. We had a deal, and I want that data." Timmy growled, holding out his hand for the case. She looked down at the disk again, then up at him.

"Tell me who you are, and you can have it. Normal kids can't do stuff like that. Are you a super-hero? Like from the comics?" she asked him quietly.

"I am The One Who Stands Beyond Death's Reach. I'm here to prevent more deaths like mine. That disc you have is all I need to save more lives than you could ever know." the brunet replied coolly, "The longer you hold it from me, the greater the chances someone will lose their life because their fairy couldn't use magic to help them. Do you really want to go through life as an accessory to murder?" She paled, staring at him in shock as she held out the disc at last.

"Finally! The data!" Wanda exclaimed, "Let's get it and go home!"

Timmy reached out and grabbed the disc with a sigh of relief. Home sounded really good now. Just head back, flop into bed and sleep the rest of the day away. Oh, and wish up an excuse for the teachers in school to cover his tracks. Hand the data to Caleb for analysis....

What was she doing?

He froze in shock as the Asian stepped close and pressed her lips to his in a kiss. She held it for a moment, long enough for his mind to start spinning as the rest of him relaxed, then pulled away to look up at him with a strange expression on her face.

"I'll find out who you were, then, ghost boy. I'll avenge your death." Trixie murmured and turned away, "You can go now."

He left, wondering why he couldn't just wish for a better understanding of girls in general, fingers pressed to his mouth as though the whole thing were just something his mind conjured up.