

Den 10

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Here's the story! It took long enough to write due to having to re-write it so many times, but...well...enjoy!

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1 - In the Beginning

“In the Beginning”

“Awesome!” exclaimed the teenage girl known as Hazel Felina. She twirled around in place towards the center of the rusty camper RV that she currently inhabited. But just then, a 10-year-old named Ben Tennyson walked by and knocked her over. He seemed not to notice as Hazel landed with a loud thud. “Hey fathead, watch where you’re going!” she yelled after him. She tried to get back up, but toppled over in the process. Ben seemed to ignore her though as he sat down and opened up a packet of cookies. Grr, Hazel thought. But then an evil smile consumed her frown. She reached for the blue collar around her neck and rubbed it. She closed her eyes and slowly started to become invisible.

Ben took a bite off of a cookie and hummed a familiar tune that regularly played on his favorite video game; Sumo Slammers. Hazel crept up behind him and she was surprised that he didn’t notice her presence. Then again, she had always thought that he had a brain the size of a cookie crumb. She had always known him to love his video games, but she couldn’t remember where the cookie obsession had derived from. She figured that it was just a phase. At least, she hoped it was just a phase. She continued with her plan and snatched one of the cookies from the foil wrapping. Ben seemed oblivious to her actions and kept on humming. The cookie seemed to be floating on its own as it passed right under Ben’s nose. His expression became blank and his eyes widened. “Cookie,” he said, as if hypnotized. Hazel stifled a snicker as she moved it around in front of his face. His eyes followed every movement, not blinking. She suddenly threw the cookie out of the window with all of her might. But to her surprise, Ben actually followed it. In the process however, he became hopelessly stuck in the window. Hazel couldn’t take it any longer and fell to the ground with laughter.

“Ha! I can’t believe you actually fell for it! You are such a dim-witted doofus!” she gasped between breaths.

Ben struggled to get out of the window, but finally gave up. He glared down in defeat. “So, do you want to try that again?” Hazel asked from behind him. He shook his head solemnly and sighed. I’m sorry, he thought, sorry that you’re such a rude freak that can’t even control your own strength. But at least Kevin finds you attractive. I guess somebody has to though. Hazel gasped. She was able to read minds and heard every last word that Ben thought. “You...are...” her voice began to rise, “Unbelievable!” She huffed and stomped off. She sat down quickly and the seat beneath her made a ‘chht’ sound. She couldn’t believe the brat. He had always annoyed her, but never this much. She wanted...revenge.

“Um, a little help here?” Ben asked, starting to get a little worried that he would never be free from the metal clutches.

“Pssh, yeah right,” Hazel retorted.

“Come on, please,” he begged. But Hazel turned away from him and crossed her arms.

Ben’s cousin, Gwen, walked in at that moment. She observed her surroundings and she raised an

eyebrow. "Okay Ben, what did you do this time?" she sighed.

"Nothing! I swear!" he yelled. His voice had been loud and the RV seemed awkward from the silence that followed the yelling. Hazel grunted and started to get up. "Wait," Ben said, now with a serious tone. But she walked out of the camper and slammed the door.

"Nice going dweeb," Gwen commented.

Hazel found a vacant lawn chair and occupied it. It was a sunny day, so she figured that she would just watch the clouds float by. She never noticed just how beautiful the earth could be until she looked around and saw the campsite. There were woods surrounding the camping spot, and the noon sun shined with a golden glow through the leaves. The sky was a crystal blue and everything seemed to glitter. There were only a few clouds appearing, but none of them showed even the slightest hint of rain. Birds chirped, squirrels chattered, and other small animals made their own unique sound. It was like a song. The song of the forest, Hazel thought. She sighed with awe and envy of beauty.

"Hello? Anybody home?" a voice asked.

She turned her head and saw Kevin standing beside her sitting figure. She jumped at his presence since he had surprised her, but smiled after only a few moments. Blushing, she pulled a strand of loose hair behind her ear. "Oh, hi Kevin," she muttered. She was too embarrassed to look directly at him. Normally she wouldn't care, but she felt so weird after freaking out. She hoped that she hadn't offended him.

"Sup?" he asked in his normal tone. Hazel shrugged and stared down at her sneakers. He seemed to notice her quietness and knew immediately that something was wrong. But before he could even ask what was wrong, she was already spilling all of her feelings out in one big rush.

"Kevin, I feel so horrible and like an outcast or something. I know I normally don't feel like that, but Ben and his family just seem like they don't need anybody else here with them. I feel like I don't belong," she stated.

"Look, you have done so much for them. You've helped them fight battles, whether if it was with villains or amongst themselves. You even seem like one of them. You argue with them and laugh with them. I think you're just fine and need to think some things through," Kevin said.

Hazel nodded in reply and closed her eyes.

"Come on, let's walk to that little town that's nearby. I bet they have some cool things to check out," he offered. Hazel nodded yet again and grabbed onto Kevin's hand as he helped her up. It seemed like only yesterday that she had met him, but it also seemed like she had known him all of her life. He had come so far from being the stubborn, rebellious teen that he had been when the two first met. Hazel smiled in appreciation and her hopes were suddenly raised. As they walked, she felt as if she were on a cloud. Everything seemed like a dream.

Within a few minutes, they arrived in the small tourist trap of a town. "Well, let's get started," Hazel said as she headed towards a small music store. Kevin walked in and said "Déjà vu." Hazel sort of laughed

and flipped through CD's. The scene was almost like a repeat of a time they had spent together before. It had been at a music store, only in a different place. They had flipped through CD's and Hazel had even sung a song. Kevin wondered what CD she could possibly want now. She had talked about her music collection back at her home and it sounded to him like she owned every CD known to man. But he shook his head and headed toward her.

"Having fun?" he asked.

"As always," she replied happily.

As Hazel scanned through the list of artists and music genres, a loud cracking noise occurred. Hazel stared blankly at Kevin. "What? Don't look at me!" he blurted out. But then the roof started to lift up and the ground beneath them shook dangerously. "What's...going...on?!" Hazel asked while yelling. She tried to hold on to the CD holders that stood in front of her. Kevin did the same, but kept coming close to losing grip completely. Hazel screamed. A large tornado-like vortex popped up in the middle of the store. Screams came from other customers in the store. One of the clerks jumped onto the cash register before the money in it could fly out and be lost for good.

Hazel rubbed her collar and turned into a falcon. She tried flying upward to see what was causing the strange occurrence, but the wind started to pull her into the center of the monstrous tornado. She rubbed her collar yet again and turned into a leopard. She grabbed onto the nearest wall with her claws and the claws dug in firmly. Kevin lost grip and flew up towards the sky. But Hazel caught him just in time. She pulled him closer to the wall. "Are you okay?" she yelled. There was so much raucous in the small area that barely anything was audible. Kevin nodded quickly and clung onto the wall as best as he could. There's no way to escape this thing, Hazel thought. She suddenly realized that she would have to try to stop it herself. She wondered if there was a way to possibly stop or even slow down a tornado; much less a vicious one like this. But then she remembered something. "Hold on tight!" she yelled to Kevin. "What?!" he yelled, but she let go and flew off into the heart of the storm. "Oh my god! Hazel!" Kevin yelled. Please let her be okay, just please, he thought.

Hazel thrust forward and up into the air. She turned into a small bird and flew off towards the RV. She figured that she could have Ben use his Omnitrix to turn into a speed alien; XLR8. If he could run in the reverse order of the tornado, then that should be able to slow it down. I hope he's not mad at me or something, because then he definitely won't help me, she thought. But then she remembered how much of a glory hog he was and knew that he would do anything to be the hero and get all of the attention. She arrived to the area of the RV and landed as human Hazel. She sprinted frantically to the RV and ran in. "Ben! You've got to help me! Please!" she yelled, out of breath.

"Ok, ok I will. Calm down," he said, staring at her ruffled attire.

"Thank you so much! We have to try to save Kevin and all of the other people in the music store that was in that small town we passed while driving to this park!" she instructed. She filled him in on the rest of the plan and he nodded in agreement. He activated the Omnitrix and chose XLR8. He waited as his face turned blue, he grew a tail, and as his body underwent other various changes. Within seconds, Hazel and Ben raced off to get to the store in time.

Ben zoomed into the heart of the tornado and a blue streak appeared around the bottom of it. "Go

XLR8!" Hazel yelled. She found Kevin still clinging to the wall and she picked him up. She flew him off and set him down on the ground outside of the building. People had now filled the street and they questioned what was going on. Hazel ran into the crowd and tried to calm them down and tell them that everything was under control. They all finally left, and she sighed with relief. Ben suddenly ran out of the building.

"All taken care of," he assured.

"Thanks so much, Ben," she said. She gave him a hug and squealed with delight.

"Ah! Get it off! It's attacking me with all of its cooties!" Ben joked. Hazel playfully pushed him and laughed. They left the scene before anyone came out to inspect the aftermath of the storm. But Ben and Hazel walked in silence, for they were questioning where the strange tornado had come from. It was no ordinary one, and they assumed someone, or something, was behind it. And it irked them that they didn't know who or what.

Hazel laughed a little as she remembered the look on Kevin's face when she had left him. Sure, it was sad-looking, but his eyes had been wide and the whole thing was hilarious to her.

"What?" Ben asked.

"Oh, nothing," she said. But then she stopped dead in her tracks. Standing right before them, was a strange girl.

2 - Who's That Girl?

They didn't know her though and her appearance was mysterious. She had headphones on and she was dancing to a song that played on her pink mp3 player.

"He was a skater boy
She said see you later boy
He wasn't good enough for her

She had a pretty face
But her head was up in space
She needed to come back down to earth"

"Who...is that?" Ben asked quietly.

"Not sure" Hazel replied.

The girl continued to dance around. She seemed not to even notice her sudden audience. Her hair was long with a golden-blond color to it. On the ends of the hair, were black dyed tips. Her shirt was hot pink with black around the collar and the sleeves. Her pants were regular light-blue jeans. Her shoes matched her shirt; they were solid black with pink towards the bottoms of the shoes. Her accessories included a black bracelet on her left wrist and a plain black choker around her neck. The girl started to sing as the next song came on her player.

"Why don't you go ask her just who in the heck she is?" Hazel asked. She shoved Ben forward and he lost balance. The girl was closer to them, although she still hadn't realized it. Ben ran into her and knocked her to the ground. Her headphones flew off and they both screamed as they fell.

"Oh my god, I'm so sorry," Ben apologized quickly. He got up and held out a hand to the fallen girl. She rubbed her head and opened her light blue eyes for the first time since Ben and Hazel had come back.

"Ah! Who are you people?!" she screamed with wide eyes. She backed away and tried to escape. But it was no use. A few seconds later, she was against the edge of the nearby picnic table. There was nowhere else to go. "What...what do you want from me? I'll give you all of my money! No wait...even better...my mp3 player! It holds like a thousand songs! You can have it...just please don't hurt me!" she yelled. She crossed her hands over her face and looked away.

Hazel stared down at her like she was some kind of maniac. "Um...ok...this is weird," she raised an eyebrow. Ben nodded in reply, as he was still shook up from the fall. The two of them continued to stare at the girl until she couldn't take it any longer.

"What?! Haven't you ever seen a girl before? Which obviously you have since one of you is a girl," she snapped.

“This girl’s got attitude,” Hazel remarked. But she thought that she might like this girl. Their personalities seemed very similar so far. “Yeah, so what?” Hazel retorted, “And why are you acting like it’s weird that we’re here? You’re the one that showed up out of no where.”

Ben nodded in agreement. The girl looked down towards her shoes, “Whatever. All I want to do is get home.” She got up and started to walk off.

“Um...” Hazel started. She noticed that the girl was walking straight into the heart of the woods. She knew that there were all sorts of wild animals in there and that it would be easy for someone to get lost. Within a few minutes however, the girl was gone. “Well, I guess that’s it,” Hazel stated.

But almost as soon as she said it, the girl was back out of the forest. She was being chased by a large moose and was running for her life. “Ah! Somebody help me!” she screamed. But a large root stuck out from the ground and her shoe got caught in it. She fell to the ground and the moose came near her.

Oh no, Hazel thought. She rubbed her collar and quickly turned into a moose herself. She ran up to the other moose and grunted. The other moose snorted and tried to make itself look inferior. Hazel understood what it was saying though since she now understood moose language. “Alright wise-guy, that’s it. You’re going down!” she shouted. She ran towards the large creature and slammed into its side. It flung a few feet away, but caught its balance. It heaved itself forward and was heading back towards the girl. She screamed yet again and closed her eyes, expecting pain. But when nothing happened, she opened her eyes. The moose was now lying on the ground next to her, unconscious. She screamed at the sight, and she feared that it was dead. “What happened to it?!” she screamed. She had no idea that Hazel had even fought it. Hazel simply shrugged and replied, “Oh, it’s just asleep, that’s all. It’ll be fine.”

“But how did you- oh, never mind,” the girl said. She sighed with relief and lied down on her back. Phew, that was a close one, she thought. But then she noticed Hazel and Ben staring at her. She wondered for a few moments, but then a wave of realization crashed over her. “Okay...,” she started, “Maybe I need some help.” Admitting it made her feel a whole lot better, but at the same time, she was upset. When would she ever get home? She looked at the two strangers before her. Maybe they could help her; maybe even become her friends. She stared at them momentarily and for the first time, noticed what they looked like.

The girl had brown hair with black tips. It was pulled up into a high ponytail and was as sleek as the top of a metal table. Her hazel eyes seemed to be gold and pierced with intensity. The rest of her outfit though seemed like a normal teenaged girl’s outfit. She had on a black tank top, blue jeans, and black sneakers with blue on the front of them. A black armband was placed on her left forearm.

The boy also had brown hair, but with no black tips. It was short and slightly messy. The boy’s eyes were green with a yellowish tint to them. His white shirt had a thick black line down the center and it matched his white and black sneakers. His pants were baggy and had a forest green color to them. It seemed like a pretty normal outfit too. But the boy looked younger than the girl. They looked almost related, but not quite.

The girl then noticed something very odd about them. Hazel had on a collar, a blue one. It looked like

one that was always placed on animals in the pictures that the girl has read as a little kid. The sun hit the golden metal and it shined. But something seemed very odd about it. Ben also had a weird accessory; his watch. It was large and bulky with black, white, and green colors placed on it. The girl figured that it was just a toy of some sort. It looked like it didn't even tell time, so she had no other reasonable theories for it.

The boy then held a hand out to her. "Come on, we'll help you get home," he suggested as a smile formed on his face. The girl smiled back and started to feel a little better. "By the way," the boy started. The girl wondered what he was about to say and she held her breath. "You have a leaf in your hair."

The girl rolled her eyes and laughed. She figured that she might like the new strangers. The boy suddenly grabbed her arm and dragged her to the RV. "Hey! Wha...what are you doing?" she asked frantically. But the boy didn't answer. "Grandpa!" the boy yelled.

"Oh great, what now?" Gwen greeted them. But she stopped what she was doing when she saw the girl. "Who...is...that?"

But nobody spoke as an older man walked towards Ben. He was heavy-set and had gray hair due to age. His red shirt had orange Hawaiian flowers printed all across it. The rest of his outfit consisted of blue jeans, brown boots, and friendliness. It was Ben and Gwen's Grandpa Max. "Well, hello there," he said in a gentle voice.

"Hi," the girl squeaked. She was nervous around adults, especially ones that she had never seen before in her life. The man studied her and she could feel his eyes bore down on her. She felt as if she could die right then and there. She moved her foot around a little and looked downward. The man smiled and started to speak again.

"Well, you seem like a very nice young lady," he commented. The girl nodded in reply and continued to stare down at the floor tiles. "What's your name?" he asked with that same kind voice. It sounded like when a policeman was talking to a young child that needed help finding his/her parents.

"Denny," the girl replied.

"What a pr-," the man started, but was interrupted by Ben. "Pretty name, yeah yeah, we get the point," Ben muttered. The man gave him a death glare and put his hands in his pockets. He sighed and looked annoyed.

"You're so inconsiderate," Hazel whisper-yelled at Ben. She jabbed an elbow into his side and he jumped. "Ow!" he yelled in response.

Grandpa Max simply sighed. He turned back to Denny. "So Denny, where are you from?"

"Well," Denny started, "I'm from Daytona Beach, Florida. And to tell you the truth, I really have no idea of how I even got here."

Grandpa Max thought for a moment. He wondered how she could not even know how she had gotten there, but he had seen enough strange things happen in his life to know better. He didn't know how they

could get the girl home anytime soon though. They were in Nevada and that was a long ways away from Florida. "Where were you before you arrived here?" he asked.

"I was by my home, at a concert hall. You see, I'm a part of my very own band. We were supposed to be performing on stage for the first time since our band had been started up. But about half an hour before it was time to go on, there was a purple streak the zoomed right past me while I was waiting backstage. Then suddenly, there were flashes of light and crashing sounds. I didn't know what to do and couldn't really move because I was so scared. My friends and family were looking for me; I could hear their calls. I felt lost and even a little bit insecure. I just put my headphones on and hoped that it was all just a dream and that it would all be over soon. Then a song came on that I really liked. I sang to it and hoped to calm myself down, and it started to work. I even danced a little just to help out further. But then I felt something run into me and I fell to the ground. I looked up and right before me were these two," she pointed towards Ben and Hazel.

They looked up at Grandpa Max and shrugged. "We came back and she just happened to be here," Ben said. Hazel glared at him for a moment and said, "Well nothing would've ran into her if it weren't for your doofusness." She hit him in the back of the head and huffed.

"Are you still mad at me?" Ben asked worriedly.

"Uh, what do you think?" she asked with a raised eyebrow.

"But why? I helped you save Kevin and everything!" he yelled.

"That still doesn't make what you did right," she sighed.

Ben looked down and sulked a little. He realized that people had been looking down a lot that day. But he went on to think about how he would make Hazel realize that he was truly sorry. He knew that just apologizing for it wouldn't be enough. He wanted to know what he could do. He looked up and noticed Denny staring at him. "What," he said more than asked. He was too upset at that point to be considerate.

"Oh, nothing," she shrugged, "You just looked pretty upset there and I didn't know if you were okay or not."

"Yeah, sure" he replied sarcastically.

A pouty look formed on Denny's face. Hazel glared up at Ben again. Ben couldn't take it any longer. "What's your problem? Won't you ever forgive me? And why have you been acting so weird lately?" he blurted in Hazel's direction. He had kept his emotions and questions in for too long. He wanted to know why she was acting like she didn't even care about him or anybody else lately.

"I do forgive you, Ben. It's just that what you did was pretty wrong. At least I think so. And I haven't been acting weird lately. I just feel...left out, that's all." her voice had been loud but had decreased so much within the sentence that by the end it was barely audible.

Everybody in the RV got quiet at the moment. Nobody talked and the tension was so thick that it was

almost like a fog that hung around each and every one of them. “Look, it seems like I’m just causing a lot of unnecessary trouble and I think I should just leave and try to make my own way back home,” Denny said while showing no obvious emotion. But as she turned, she felt a hand on her shoulder.

3 - State Your Name and Power

It was Ben's hand. Denny stopped in place and turned back to face them. "Don't leave," Ben pleaded.

"Yeah, you didn't do anything," Hazel agreed. Everyone else nodded their head and tried to smile encouragingly. "There are just some problems that were already here and we all just need to get through them. But your situation is more important to us right now. You need to get home. I know this place seems pretty depressing right now, but trust me, it's usually never like this. Honestly. But please stay. We can help you and we will help you."

Denny thought about it and said, "Okay, fine. But will you people try to liven up at least a little bit? All the fighting is putting me in a bad mood. And I'm almost always happy."

Everyone smiled a little and even laughed. A wave of relief had washed over them and they needed it now more than ever.

Later that night, everyone except Grandpa Max sat around in a circle towards the center of the RV.

"Guess we should introduce ourselves," Hazel announced. Everybody nodded and looked at Denny.

"You mean I have to go first?" she whined. But everybody continued to gaze and she felt as if their eyes had a spell over her, making her talk. "Fine. My name's Denny Tennet, but I usually go by Den. I'm 11 years old and in the fifth grade. I come from Daytona Beach, Florida and have lived there all my life. I'm a member of many things: the volleyball team, my band which me and my friends started, and many other small clubs here and there. I'm very easy to get a long with and I have a lot of friends. My best friends are Shelbie Carter, Alyssa Calloway, and Kyle Manson. I'm an only child but Shelbie is like my sister. We've known each other all of our lives. We are the guitarists as well as singers for our band. Our band's name is 'L.O.V.E.' It doesn't really stand for anything, but we chose it over 'S.A.D.', which is all of the first letters of the names of the band members put together. If there's one person I can't stand though, it Reshana Canini. She has hated me ever since about the third grade when I got a part in a school play that she wanted. But that's really about the only person in the whole school that I don't really get along with. Except for her sister. I love music and I usually play guitar and sing. I also like to spend time outside. Besides volleyball, I play soccer, tennis, and softball. I'm also interested in guys. I always thought that being boy-crazy was weird, until I hit fourth grade and all of that changed. Speaking of changes, I used to be really shy. But then I joined the school teams and clubs, and then that really got me talking to all kinds of new people. And that's about it for now. I have so much more to say, but I'm sure that you guys don't really want to hear it all," she noticed their bored looks and yawns.

"Oh, it's fine, but I guess we should move on since there is quite a few people around here," Hazel commented. "I'll go next. So, my name's Hazel Felina, but everybody just calls me Hazy, Lil' H, or Hazy-Kitty. I grew up in a town known as Panama City with my parents and my annoying twin bro' named Ansem. I'm 13 and will soon be 14. I'm a major tomboy and can't stand girly stuff. My best friend would probably have to be Kevin. I know I have a lot of other friends, but he's been there for me and he helps me out. I would be living at my home right now, but I just go where ever the wind blows

me. You see, there's this evil guy named Mastermind, and he's out to get me. Well actually, my collar," she pointed to the collar around her neck, "It's the Felina Family Treasure. It gives me the power to turn into any animal I want, read minds, turn into anybody or anything I want, absorb energy, put people to sleep, and so much more. There's even stuff on it that I haven't even discovered yet! But that's basically me. Nothing special. But of course I don't mind if you think I am." She beamed with a bright smile and surely didn't seem to have any low self-esteem issues. But she seemed a lot happier now than she had earlier.

"That is so cool!" Denny exclaimed. She seemed to be entirely fascinated by the blue jewelry around Hazel's neck. She stared at it and didn't take her eyes off of it. That is, until Kevin started to speak.

"Sup? The name's Kevin but I sometimes will go by Kev. Yes, I know, just one more nickname to remember. But it's simple enough. I can seem pretty serious, but that's only to people who don't know the real me. I can actually be pretty funny when I want to be. But I haven't always been like that. Not too long ago, I lived in a subway in New York. I caused a lot of trouble and was pretty selfish, I'll admit that. But then I met Hazel, and she helped to change me. But I wouldn't have gotten into so much trouble if it weren't for my powers. I'm like an energy sponge, you see. I can soak up energy such as electricity and can shoot it out whenever I need, or want, to."

"Woah," Denny said quietly to herself. This guy seemed pretty tough, and he even scared her a little. Normally she would've started to like him since she was totally boy-crazy, but he had an edge to him. Something dark and it creeped her out. She turned to the last two people there, so they could introduce themselves. It was the brown haired boy from earlier, and a red haired girl that she hadn't really even noticed yet. It was Ben and Gwen. Ben shoved Gwen over and said, "Move over dweeb, it's my turn.

"You are such a selfish jerk!" Gwen exclaimed.

"I know you are, but what am I?!" Ben shot back.

"Fine, whatever, just go and get it over with," she huffed, crossing her arms.

Ben smiled and started, "Well, I really actually don't know how to do this. But I'll just put it in simple terms, so that even my doofus cousin here can understand." He pointed to the redhead beside him.

"Uh hello, if anybody needs simple terms, it's you. I actually get A's in school and have a high IQ. You on the other hand just guess on all of your tests and sleep through the rest of class," she poked the boy's forehead firmly with every syllable.

"Okay, nerd," he replied. Gwen gasped and stomped her foot on his shoe. "Ow!" he yelled.

"Ha," she said, her arms still crossed.

The boy got quiet for a second and closed his eyes. Then he re-opened them and began to speak, "Now, where was I? Oh yeah. A summary of my life. Well, my name's Ben first of all. And three words to describe me are Sumo Slammers, video games, and..."

"Mega-Dweeb?" Gwen questioned with a smirk.

“No, what I was going to say was cookies,” he grimaced.

Denny almost fell completely fell out of her seat when she heard the last part. “Cookies?” she asked. She laughed so hard that tears started to roll down her face. Then Hazel and Kevin started to join in on the laughter. Gwen tried her hardest to stifle a chuckle but then failed miserably. She too fell out of her seat and joined Denny on the floor.

“What?! It’s just cookies! God!” Ben yelled.

That just made Denny laugh harder. She could remember only one other time where she had laughed this hard. Of course, she was easy to make laugh, but this was ridiculous. Ben glared at all of them as they humiliated him. He couldn’t understand how they found his favorite food to be funny. It made no sense. But he thought everyone in that RV was weird anyway. He hadn’t known Denny for long, but she seemed like one of them. He stomped off to the front of the RV and sat down quickly in the passenger seat.

“Okay, maybe that’s enough,” Denny finally said, “I hope I didn’t make him mad.”

“Oh, he’ll be fine. Just give him some time to get over himself and he’ll be back to normal soon enough,” Gwen said. “But wait, I forgot, he’s never normal.”

Denny nodded and said, “Thanks, uh…”

“Gwen,” Gwen replied.

“Oh, Gwen. That’s a cool name.”

“Yeah I guess, but it’s so insanely popular. At least it seems like it.”

“Well, it’s not as bad as ‘Ben’. Now that one’s popular. I think Denny is a little. I’ve even known quite a few other people named Denny. They were guys though. All of the girl’s were spelled differently; they were ‘D-e-n-e, instead of ‘D-e-n-n-y’.”

“Oh, well I think Denny is the nickname for guys with the name of ‘Denis’.

“Yeah, all of the guys were named Denis. But eh, oh well. It’s still the way it is, although I don’t really appreciate having a boy’s nickname for a name.”

“Well, I think it’s killer cool,” Hazel added to the conversation. She had felt left out and couldn’t stand being by Kevin at the moment. He was all smiley and it annoyed Hazel like crazy.

“Thanks,” Denny said. She then turned back to Gwen. “So, you want to do an introduction of your own?”

“Well, you already know my name, but I’m 10 years old and as you’ve already seen, I’m stuck here in this RV all summer with my geek-a-zoid cousin, Ben,” Gwen sighed.

“He’s your cousin? You guys acted like siblings. I guess you two just really don’t like each other,” Denny remarked.

“Yeah, but I don’t think that it’s possible that we even share the same DNA. I think that his parents adopted him. I’ve seriously always thought that. He’s so weird and doesn’t know how to use that pea-sized brain of his,” Gwen said.

“That’s how me and Ansem are,” Hazel said, “I think that the collar malfunctioned or something and just made an opposite version of me. Now they think that he’s my brother, but I think he’s a deformed clone.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t know what it’s like. I don’t have any siblings, but I guess I mentioned that during my intro,” Denny commented. She looked up towards the front of the RV. Gwen noticed.

“You still think he’s mad at you?” she asked.

“Yeah, but I was wondering who that older man was. You and Ben were referring to him earlier as ‘grandpa’, so I assumed that he was your grandpa,” Denny said.

“Yup, that’s our grandpa. Hazel calls him that too, but he’s like a grandpa to just about everyone. He’s really kind and generous. I’m sure he wouldn’t mind if you called him that too,” Gwen said.

“Oh, sounds good.”