

A Beany Adventure

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When Yoshi has a mysterious disease, the only doctors that can cure him are in the BeanBean kingdom. Adventures explode from there! Written when I was 14. :D

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1 - In The Beginning

Chapter one: In the Beginning

I lied there with my eyes closed listening to the rain. By the temperature of the room, I could tell that it was around ten o'clock, much later than I usually wake up. I'm always such a morning person. The other thing I noticed was that the bed was empty except for me; Daisy must already be awake and about.

May as well get up, I told myself; still listening to the rain beat down on the window. I opened my eyes and slowly at up.

There was a mirror across the room directly in front of the bed. Still sitting in it, I glanced at my reflection. It looked back at me, half-asleep and drowsy-looking.

With a large nose and thick, black moustache that took up a lot of my thin face, I was rather unusual looking. (But not ugly, mind you.) My large, vibrant blue eyes were half-closed now. Usually they had a tint of violet as well, but now, having just woken up, were blank. I had medium-tint brown hair that looked even more unusual going with my black eyebrows and moustache. My trademark hat usually covered it, however. Something that nobody knew about me was that I actually had bangs that came down almost to my eyes, but they were usually slicked back in order to look decent when I wore my hat.

My favorite thing about my own appearance, however, was my sideburns that ran down past both of my ears. Being of Italian ethnicity, I spoke in a heavy Italian accent. I liked that too, though. Daisy always comments on how she absolutely loves the way Mario and I talk. Can't argue with that!

I glanced at the grandfather clock on the other side of the room. It was 10:15, just like I had thought. I planted my feet on the floor and stood up. Yeah, okay, I wasn't very tall, standing at only around 5'5. Even Daisy was taller than me, at 5'7.

The only person on the face of the planet who resembled me at all was my twin brother, Mario. But then, even he didn't look too much like me. We shared the same facial features, (Only he styled his moustache and hair differently,) but anything else was different. Even though we were fraternal twins, it seemed that he had inherited a lot of things from our parents that I hadn't.

For example, I've always been more tall and lanky than Mario. He's spent his whole life on the chubby side. He was also a good five inches shorter than I was. His hair was almost red it was so light brown. His voice was a lot higher than mine, and even our skin tones didn't match. Mario was a little bit darker than I was.

Our personalities couldn't be more different, as well. I'll admit that I'm very high-strung and cowardly, but Mario often likes to tap the Grim Reaper on the shoulder and say hi. Mario's very laid back, not scared of anything. All right, all right... I'm scared of everything. Not much of an optimist, am I? Though, if you don't know either of us very well, I'm much friendlier to strangers.

But despite all of our differences, Mario and I got along famously, for siblings, at least. Perhaps that was because of all the crazy adventures we've been on. Twice I've had to risk my life to save his. Just last year, we had to travel to a distant land to get rid of an evil witch that had supposedly stolen a powerful, ancient relic from the castle. That experience in the Beanbean Kingdom is one I'll never forget... but the haunted mansion ordeal is harder to forget. I'm still scarred by that.

I lifted my nightshirt a little to get a glance at my left side. Just above my hip was a two-inch long, white scar. That was where a Shy Guy ghost had stabbed me with his spear in my haunted mansion. Yep, still scarred.

I left the room and caught vision of a large, dusty book on the hall's side table. That hadn't been there last night. There was a note on top of the book, and I recognized the scribbly handwriting immediately.

Luigi-

I was going through our things in the attic of the castle, and I found this. I have no idea how this got here, miraculous, actually. Anyway, I thought you'd enjoy seeing this. I got a couple of good laughs.

-Mario

I picked up the book and opened it. It was a photo album. Inside were pictures, pictures that were amazingly old. There was a yellowed photo of Mario and me as babies, throwing mud at each other, and one of me and... no, that couldn't be, Waluigi! In the third grade. Then there were seventeen pictures in a row of me...

I chuckled out loud at the pictures. There was a picture every year between ages 0 and 16 of me sleeping during the day on a cot outside. I had forgotten how much I used to sleep during the day. But there I was, as an infant sucking my thumb, as a four year old hugging a teddy bear, as a ten year old with a soccer ball on the floor under me, as a fourteen year old just starting to grow my moustache, and as a sixteen year old with car keys hanging from my hand. Heh, heh... I remembered how much I loved my first car.

On the next page, there were a couple of pictures of Mario and I as teenagers. I supposed we were fifteen. We were standing in front of a building, Jefferson High. That was my high school.

I sighed and closed the book. How did Mario come across this?

The smell of bacon frying reached my nose. I found it a little odd that our cook was still making breakfast, but I didn't mind. Good timing on his part, actually. I made my way down the spiraling marble staircase. I swear, I'll never get used to this castle. I finally reached the dining room, but it was empty. There were a couple of dirty plates on the table, which suggested that Daisy had already been here. Where was she, though?

"Slept in late, today, did we?" came a startling voice behind me that made me jump. I turned around and made eye contact with Weston, one of the castle butlers. He was a very tall man, a little more than a head taller than me. He was of average build and in his late fifties. He had grayish hair that was balding, but there was a tint of yellow in it, suggesting he was a blond in his youth. He always wore a scowl, though, one that reminded me very much of Waluigi.

"I suppose," I said.

"Well, you can't have forgotten about your appointment today?" he said, in a voice that hinted that he didn't like me very much. Of course, I've thought that for a long time. I think he saw me as an immature little boy, though my 24th birthday was approaching.

"Appointment?" I asked. I hated it when I made mistakes like forgetting things. That seemed to make Weston despise me a little more. His upper lip twitched slightly, and then he said agitatedly, "Think."

I felt my face go red, but I scanned my mind for any appointments I could have made. No, my next dentist appointment is in a few months... I didn't have any cars to pick up from the shop; do I have contacts or glasses to pick up? No, I have 20/15 vision, I don't need that...

I shook my head, as much as I didn't want to. Weston sighed.

"You're getting fitted for your robes today," he said.

"Oh, that's right." I said in a small voice.

"You know," he said, looking at me funny from behind his square glasses, "We can't have a king who keeps forgetting things."

"I'm sorry," I said, getting more agitated with him by the second. "I'll write it down next time."

"See to it that you do," he said slyly, turned on his heel, and left.

Getting fitted for my king's robes... how could I have forgotten? I've been looking forward to this for a really long time now, what could have gotten my mind off of it? I scolded myself slightly for forgetting, but then, after getting a glance of myself in another mirror in the dining room and seeing that my hair was sticking up in sixty different directions, realized that I must have looked pretty stupid in front of Weston. After all, I looked pretty stupid in front of my own reflection. I snatched one of the cherry pastries off the table and left the room.

2 - A Problem Rises

On my way up to the bathroom to take a shower, I tripped over our cat, Rose. She was an old cat, one of Daisy's favorites. Our other animals were Petunia and Pansy the cats, and Lily and Sakura the dogs. We also had a rabbit, Daisy called that one Tulip. I almost got to name Tulip, but Daisy was afraid that I wouldn't name it after a flower, and pounced on the opportunity. She names everything of hers after some flower.

"Sorry," I told Rose. But she hissed at me and sped off. I didn't curse after her or anything, because how would you like to have a grown man kick you in the stomach and then sprawl over you?

I reached out to grab the bathroom door, but I heard that someone was in it. I would have got to use another one, but it was across the castle and would take five minutes to get there. Besides, I heard the toilet flush inside; signaling that whoever was occupying it was almost done.

"Just a second," came a girl's voice from inside. How did she know I was there? I didn't knock. But the door opened, restricting my pondering time.

A girl stepped out. She was a slightly tanned girl with dark brown hair that reached to her waist, and eyes the same color. She was as tall as I was, and was smiling profoundly. What I thought was the strangest about her was her shirt. It was black with a picture of some rugged-looking prisoner that said, "Have you seen this wizard?" I recognized him as Sirius Black from the Harry Potter movies. She was wearing simple jeans with it.

"Ah, I was looking for you." She said.

"How did you—" I began, but she held out her hand.

"I'm Lauren, I'll be designing your robes."

"Oh!" I said, taking her hand and shaking it. "Nice to meet you. Have you talked with Daisy yet?"

"No," Lauren replied, bored. "She had some kind of village business to attend to this morning.

"Ah." I said quickly.

"Well," Lauren said, "I'll wait until she gets back for us to start getting the clothes done. In the meantime, I hope you don't mind if I...er... explore the castle a little?"

"Oh, go ahead," I said, pointing toward the staircase. Lauren let out a little squeal and then rushed past me.

"Kay," I said quietly, and went into the bathroom to take my shower.

After making myself look decent and leaving the bathroom, I heard Daisy grumbling to herself in the foyer.

“Stupid hicks... can't make any good choices...” and then something about a swimming pool.

I stood on the little balcony of the second floor that overlooked the foyer. Daisy was digging around in a large duffel bag, still muttering about how someone was a loser.

“Hello,” I said. Daisy looked up and made eye contact with me. She smiled.

“Good morning!” she said, obviously in a brighter mood. I walked down the final staircase and met up with her. She planted a kiss on my forehead, and I felt my face go red.

“What have you accomplished this morning?” I asked her.

“Ah,” she said, seemingly getting agitated again. “Well, the people out in the Subcon want to have a museum built. Of course, nobody wants to pay for it. That little town doesn't have many imports... they just wanted me to sign a contract, anyway...”

“Who's going to pay for it?” I asked, getting the hint that the contract had gone through.

“Only the richest man in the kingdom,” she said, smirking and patting my head. These gestures hinted that it was someone I knew. And boy, did I.

“Waluigi?” I asked. “But isn't he really stingy with his money? He wouldn't just donate a couple million!”

“His parents live on that side of the kingdom,” she explained casually. “He does a lot of things for them.”

“I see,” I said quietly.

“So!” Daisy chirped, perking back up again. “We're getting our royal outfits today! I can't wait. Is the designer here?”

“Yeah,” I said, pointing my thumb at the second floor. “She said she was going to go look around the castle a little.” Daisy chuckled a bit. “Yes... fascinating place, isn't it?” she said sarcastically.

“I'm still getting used to it,” I said. “There are rooms I haven't been in yet, I'm sure.” Daisy snickered again.

“Well, okay, we better go find her. I know her well enough... I think I know where to look.”

“Okay...” I started, but Daisy was already out of the foyer. She didn't realize it, but she walked very fast. I followed her to the third floor hallway, where sure enough, Lauren was gaping at Daisy's Harry Potter collection. Daisy liked Harry Potter a lot. Probably because there are people in it named Lily and Petunia... she named one of our cats and one of our dogs after them.

“This is incredible!” Lauren whispered to Daisy. “How do you get all of this stuff?”

“Ah, if you wail juuuuuuust enough,” Daisy joked, “You can get anything you want.” Lauren beamed.

“I’ve got to try that sometime,” she said. She picked up a little plastic doll of Scabbers getting his head chewed off by Crookshanks. “I like this one a lot,” she commented. Noticing that I was standing behind them, she turned her attention from the little wizard dolls and cards and pulled a notebook out of nowhere.

“Okay, then... I’ll get the blueprints out.” She slapped a few pages on the table. “Fill these out,” she said. I grabbed one form, Daisy the other, and looked it over. It was a form that asked for our sizes and such. Of course it would be. I got a pen from the vase on the table.

First question asked for my name. Mario, Luigi, I wrote.

Second for shirt size on a scale of small to extra large. I circled medium.

Third asked for my pants size. 34, I wrote.

The form asked for the rest of things such as shoe size and hat size. I finished my form much earlier than Daisy did. Apparently, they wanted more information from her... Cup size? Hah, hah.

I folded my form up and handed it to Lauren, who said, “That was fast! Now, let’s look at our options for you.” she opened the notebook and flipped to a yellow tab.

“Now...” she started. “I know your signature color is green.”

“Of course,” I said, with a quick glance at my shirt sleeve.

“So, I assume that you’ll want some green in your clothes?”

“Whatever works.”

“Okay...” She flipped a few more pages. “And you can also shoot lightning out of your palms?”

“Yeah,” I laughed, and shot a spark out of my index finger.

“Very nice,” she said, eyes following the spark. Thunderbrand, right? I’m a master of the Firebrand. Anyway, so I’ll put that as some sort of token on there somewhere. And you’re Catholic?”

“Yeah,” I said.

“Good, good,” she said, scribbling something on an index card. She started mumbling quietly to herself, I could hardly understand her. But I did catch the words “Black shoes,” “metal” and “cape.”

“Daisy, you finished?” she asked. Obviously, she was done with me.

“Just a sec...” Daisy said, and set her pen down. “Yep.”

“Good,” Lauren said, taking the form from her. “Now, you like yellow and orange?”

“Yeah,” Daisy said. “Do I have the option to have pants instead?”

“You can have a shorter skirt...” Lauren started. “See, I was planning on giving you a large sash, and the slacks wouldn’t hook right...”

“Short skirt.” I pleaded in my mind. “Say short skirt...”

“Well, I’ll go with the short skirt, then.”

Woohoo!

“Okay, better for a tomboy anyway...” Lauren said, scribbling more on her index card. “You want boots or high heels with that?”

“Boots,” she responded. “Can you make them tall?”

“Of course,” Lauren said. “That’s all I need. You’ll get your outfits this evening.”

“Today?” I asked. “Gee, that seems quite fast...”

“Well, for the royals of Sarasaland, we put those on the top of the to-do list.” Lauren said, smiling. “See you guys later!” she took a quick bow, and left.

“Well,” Daisy said. “What do you want to do now?”

But the doorbell rang. I could see through the stained glass windows, that there Lauren was, with two large boxes.

“No way...” I whispered. “She left five seconds ago!”

“That girl must be sort of a psychic,” Daisy said, amazed, as Weston answered the door and let her in.

Maybe she was a psychic, though. I mean, everything was hinting that...!

“Daisy, do yo-“

But she had already bounded downstairs, and was scribbling something on a clipboard.

“Come here!” she shouted to me. “Get your box!”

But she changed her mind quickly, and ran upstairs with my package. She stuffed it at me, and ran with hers down to her room.

After taking a second to catch my breath, (since it had been whacked out of me by this rather heavy box,) I went to the bathroom to change. Once there, I opened the box, put on the robes inside, and was amazed by what I saw.

The entire outfit was made of silk. It was a deep blue with a silver collar and stripe that reached all the way down to my waist, and ended at the metal lightning bolts attached to the top of my pants, which were also blue silk. A cape that reached down almost to the floor was attached to my shoulders by gold medals, and a small silver cross hung from my collar. At the bottom of the box was a tiny golden crown. I stared at myself in the full-length mirror. I'm not the modest type, but I have to say, I looked pretty good.

I stepped out of the bathroom and crashed into Daisy.

"Sorry..." I began, but was immediately taken breathless. She looked so amazing! Her costume was all orange and yellow, like she asked, with her trademark flower charm stuck here and there. It was also made up of a ruffled miniskirt, and the top was almost like a leotard. Flower petals (or what looked like them) hung off her shoulders, and a gold band was around her neck. Her white boots reached up almost to the skirt, and the white gloves only to her wrist. The same golden crown that I wore rested in her hair.

"Wow," was all that I could muster to say. But she seemed to be gaping at me, too.

"You look so cool!" she finally squealed. "This is awesome!"

"I'm glad you like it!" I said. "What do we do now?"

"Change back, I suppose." Daisy said. "We're supposed to save these for after the induction."

"Oh... okay." I said, and turned back to go into the bathroom. I changed back into my normal clothes and went back down to the second floor. Lauren was still there, scribbling something on a notepad in front of Daisy.

"There you are, Luigi," she said to me. "I was looking for you."

"You were?" I asked blandly. "What for?"

Lauren grabbed my wrist and slapped a gold band on it.

"W...what's this?" I asked, starting to get a little nervous.

"Oh, nothing. It's just... see this mark?" she pointed to a little etching on the band that I didn't recognize. "It's a..." she looked around suspiciously... "Boo mark."

"Boos?" I asked, feeling sweat drip on my face.

"Oh, yes. I heard all about your haunted mansion ordeal. See, this band attracts Boos... they love the charmed gold. I would like to see you capture some of them."

“WHAAAAT?” I shrieked. “You can’t... you can’t do that! I don’t have a Poltergust or...”

But I couldn’t talk anymore. All I could see was a white light. A funny blue light was bursting out of the gold band and making its way up my arm. But as the light traveled up my arm, my clothes were changing...

My normal gloves turned to shiny white silk, and as the light made its way up my arm, my sleeve turned blue. This all happened rather fast, the light made its way to my neck, and then made its way down...

I recognized what was happening to my clothes. These were my king’s robes. But why was I wearing them?

Finally, I felt my hat shrink into a small, gold crown. The white light clouding my vision was gone, and I could see the room again. Daisy was amazed and whispered, “Ooh, impressive”, but Lauren was beaming.

“All right!” she cheered. “It worked!”

“Hey, what’s going on here?” I asked, getting more confused by the second. I hated it when people had planned things to happen to me that I didn’t know about.

“See, that band...” Lauren said, “It’s no Boo-attracter.” She snickered. “Actually, it’s programmed to check your pulse. When you get too nervous or scared, and your pulse gets rapid, the band reacts, and automatically changes you into those clothes. You look more intimidating to predators, etc. Bit of a defense mechanism, if you will.”

“Oh,” I said, completely relaxed. “I get it. That’s pretty cool. But how do I change back?”

“Take the band off,” Lauren said casually. “You’ll still be able to change into your actual robes when you normally get dressed, this is sort of a portable version.”

I clicked the band off my wrist, and sure enough, was immediately flashed into my normal clothes. Except, my hat was on the table.

“Okay,” Lauren said, “I’m done here. I believe this is yours?” she picked up my hat, but it immediately burst into flame.

“AUUGGHH!!” I screamed. The band on my wrist turned hot, there was a flash of light, my king costume was back.

Lauren was laughing. “You’re a little too high-strung, sir,” she said. My hat wasn’t in her hands anymore.

“You-“ I panted. “You toasted it!”

“No,” she said. “Don’t worry. Once you take that band off and return to normal, your hat will be restored.” she snickered. “Well, best be going. Bye!” she zoomed out of the hall and I heard the castle

door slam. But before I could say anything, the doorbell rang again.

“Ugh,” I said, taking the band off of my wrist, which returned me to normal, and clicking it back on.
“What now?”

After a second of waiting, Weston approached Daisy and me. He seemed a little paler than usual.

“We’ve got a problem,” he said slowly. “In the Mushroom Kingdom.”

I laughed on the inside, but made sure that outside I looked serious. It wasn’t too hard to guess what most likely happened. Daisy snapped me back into reality by grabbing my arm.

“Come on,” she said. “Let’s go investigate.”

I followed her to the foyer, and once there, was surprised into shock when I saw both Peach and Mario standing there.

3 - The Mark

A funny feeling of loathe nipped at my stomach when I saw Wario and Waluigi standing behind them. Only today, they weren't wearing their usual clothes. Today they were dressed like gangsters.

I made my way down the marble stairs and over to the group. Daisy followed behind.

"What's the problem?" I asked.

"It's Yoshi," Peach said. "He's really, really sick."

"Is it serious enough to come all the way to Sarasaland for?" Daisy asked. She seemed skeptical.

"Yes," Mario said. "I have a suspicion, but I wanted to get your opinion on it." He glanced at me.

"Yeah," Peach said. "See, the doctors in the Mushroom Kingdom are toads... and well... honestly, they aren't very good doctors."

But after making eye contact with Mario, both of us burst into hysterical laughter.

"What?" Peach asked, obviously shocked, and maybe a little offended. "What's funny about that?"

Mario got a hold of himself, but I was cracking up so hard that I could barely breathe.

"We know," he said. "We know through experience."

"And... they're..." I choked, trying to contain myself, "Not just bad... they're..." But I couldn't do it. I accidentally made eye contact with Mario again, and burst into another hysterical fit. He simply chuckled.

"Anyway, once Luigi stops inhaling laughing gas, we can try to see what's wrong with Yoshi." Mario said, nudging me in the arm. I took a deep breath.

"Oh..." I said. "Uh... sure, where is he?"

Wario left the castle and returned a second later with a very limp, very pale Yoshi. He was conscious, but it looked like he was fighting to stay that way.

"Yoshi?" Daisy asked. He lifted his head a little and said "Hmm... beh."

"I found him like this," Wario said, proudly. "The toad doctors said it was just the flu. They think they're top-notch," (that word started to make me laugh again,) "but I don't think it's the flu."

"I think it's a Belly Blech Worm," Mario said. "What do you think?"

“Probably,” I said. “But how did he get it? They only live in the Beanbean kingdom.”

Mario pushed his lips together tightly. “You don’t think...” he began.

I started getting nervous. There’s no way that a Belly Blech worm could have traveled all the way to the Mushroom Kingdom on its own... and that could only mean that someone brought it here...

With a flash of light, my robes were back. But nobody seemed to notice.

“So what should we do?” Daisy asked. “There is a cure, right?”

“Oh, yes,” Mario said. “But I don’t know if anyone but the Beanbean kingdom would have it.”

“Chuckola Cola,” I said.

Mario squinted a little and frowned. “Do you feel that?” He asked.

“Feel what,” I said.

“That... that rumbling.”

“Are you trying to scare us or something?” Peach asked.

“No,” Wario said. “Now I feel it too.”

And the ground beneath my feet started to shake.

“What’s going on,” Waluigi, who had remained silent this whole time, said. “Don’t tell me you can’t feel that.”

Daisy looked confused. “I can’t feel a thing,” she said, obviously getting nervous. A funny pressure started pulling on my head.

“What’s wrong with you-“ Peach started, but her voice drained away. The room turned black. I knew I had my eyes open, though. And I could see Mario, Waluigi and Wario, but nobody else. They all looked panicky, and I became too when I realized that there was no gravity. I could feel my hair and the weight of my cape flowing around.

“What’s going on?” Wario asked.

“Nothing serious,” came a horribly familiar voice from under us. “Just wanted to say hi.”

All four of us looked down and made eye contact with the ghastly face of Cackletta. All four of us gasped, Mario in surprise, I in horror, and Wario in amazement and Waluigi in disgust.

“Yes, so nice to see you all again!” she said sarcastically.

“Hey,” Wario said. “What do you mean ‘us all?’ I don’t know who you are!” But Cackletta ignored him. She floated up to our level, and I got a good look at her. She looked awful. She was still a cloud-looking ghost with no legs and huge arms, and bloodshot, red eyes. The problem was, though, that she looked a whole lot stronger than she did when Mario and I battled her last. This time, she had fangs and everything.

“What are you do-“ I began, but she pressed her finger to my lips in order to shut me up. There were two things that surprised me, one that she was solid and didn’t go through me when she tried to touch me, but also the temperature of her finger. I suppose I should have thought a ghost would have a temperature of negative forty degrees, but just the touch of one sent a horrible chill down my back.

“You all are surprisingly smart,” she said, eyeing Mario. “I never thought you’d figure out about the Belly Blech Worm. Well, yes, it’s true. But I’ll only tell you because, hey, what’s the problem? I’ll only end up killing you all anyway.”

I inhaled sharply. Mario scoffed.

“Yeah,” he said. “You mean like you got rid of us last time?”

Cackletta glared at him.

“Beginner’s luck,” she said. “I’ve got new weapons now, such as your precious Beanstar. Anyway, once my worm kills off your dino friend, I’ll take care of you all. Ta-ta,” she said, and disappeared with a puff of smoke.

“What was that all about?” Waluigi asked nobody in particular. “And who was that?”

But I didn’t have time to respond. A horrible pain shot through the base of my neck like an arrow, and everything went blacker than before.

“What do you think happened to them?”

“I don’t know.”

“Are they all even alive?”

“Of course they are, don’t be stupid.”

“Well something happened. People don’t just faint because they can.”

“Actually, ma’am, they do. When you faint, it’s because you’re sick or something.”

“Quiet, Weston. I’m really worried.”

I heard a lot of voices, but didn’t bother to try and find out whom they were from. It took me a second to realize that I was lying on the cold marble floor of my foyer. I was freezing all over, and too tired to open my eyes. The only thing I could muster to say was “Ugh.”

Someone seemed to realize that I was regaining consciousness. I felt someone grasp my shoulders and give me a quick shake. It was probably Daisy who did this. I forced my eyes open and Daisy’s face swam into view. I was right; it was Daisy trying to wake me up.

“What happened?” she whispered to me. I slowly pushed myself up.

"I have no idea," I said. "One minute I was here and..." I looked around the room, and apparently I wasn't the only one who had lost consciousness. Waluigi, Wario and Mario all were groggy looking.

I put my hand to my forehead. What had happened to us?

"I remember seeing Cackletta," Mario said, face as white as chalk. He was standing with his arm around Peach's shoulder; her arm was around his waist, holding him up. "Cackletta told us what happened to Yoshi."

"We were like..." Waluigi said, thinking, "In another dimension or something!"

"You guys were right here," Peach said slowly. "You sort of... paused after you said that you felt an earthquake. Then after about fifteen seconds, you all collapsed."

"Poor thing," Daisy said, putting her hand on my forehead. "You look really sick."

"I feel really sick," I mumbled, as Daisy gently put her arms around my back. My stomach gave a funny churn. Yoshi was sitting in a chair, burping occasionally. If I didn't feel like throwing up, myself, I probably would have laughed at his awful gas.

"Anyway," Mario said, now looking much better, "It's true what we thought. Yoshi's got a Belly Blech Worm."

"So what do we have to do to get a cure?" Peach asked.

"Go to the Beanbean kingdom," I mumbled, as Daisy let me go, and I pushed myself into a standing position. "Like Mario said earlier, nobody but they would have it."

"So we get to go there?" Waluigi asked, excitedly. "Sweet!"

Mario and I exchanged looks.

"Not sweet," he said. "The Beanbean kingdom isn't exactly my idea of a vacation."

"Yes, it is." Peach said, her voice an octave higher than usual. "I've been there before, and know exactly what it's like."

Mario and I exchanged looks again. My mouth broke out into a smirk. I had to force myself to keep from snickering by biting my lower lip.

"Well," Peach said. "I suppose it's no Yoshi's island." (Yoshi raised his head at this sentence.) "But, you two probably didn't enjoy it because you spent the whole time battling and getting sick."

Mario's face went red. I knew that he hated having that Bean Fever ordeal mentioned. But Peach had a point. Mario and I probably didn't like the other kingdom too much because we spent all of our time solving other people's mysteries. I spent a lot of the time getting hit on. Mario (after laughing his head

off at me for being poked in the rear end by Prince Peasley,) said that it was because I reminded them of themselves; I was tall, (ish) slender, but probably the fact that turned them on the most was that I dressed in green all the time. Still, it wasn't all pleasant to have the prince tell you that flowers go well with your shirt, or to be poked in the butt on numerous occasions.

"Do we have to g-" I began, but Daisy squeezed my arm really hard in order to get me to shut up. And it worked, that hurt.

"Of course we'll go!" she squealed happily. "Let's go book your plane, Peach, tonight!"

I groaned quietly.

"Oh, yes, I can get my plane booked! We will leave tomorrow morning. Everybody, pack your bags!"

Mario was frowning. He seemed to be dreading this trip as much as I was. And I'll assure you that he wasn't looking forward to eating anything there.

"Fine," he sighed. "We can look for Cackletta while we're there. After all, seeing her in some kind of impossible vision must mean something. Huh..."

Yoshi grumbled something that I couldn't understand.

We were leaving for that kingdom tomorrow... tomorrow morning... I really wasn't looking forward to this. While everyone else, except Mario, was ecstatic, I slowly walked up the long, winding staircase to the fourth floor to get my suitcase packed.

Once I made my way to the third floor, something on my chest started itching. It was really irritating, to the point where I unbuttoned my collar to see what it was.

Probably a mosquito bite, I said to myself. I looked in the small hall mirror, and was horrified at what I saw. If this was a mosquito bite, it was one talented bug.

Etched into the spot where my collarbones met was a purple mark the size of a dime. What terrified me the most was that it had the shape of Cackletta's head. I ran my index finger over the outline of the mark. This hadn't been there this morning, and that was the exact spot that had hurt so much just before I just fainted.

I buttoned my collar back up and ran to the foyer. Mario was standing with Peach, talking about something that I didn't care about. I ran down to him, breathless.

"What do you need?" he asked.

"Come here-" I said, and pulled him under the staircase.

"What's wrong?" he asked, eyes narrowing. "Did you see a ghost?" he chuckled slightly.

"No, no ghosts," I said, trying to remain calm. "Before Cackletta knocked you out, did she hurt you at

all?"

"Yeah," Mario said, breaking eye contact with me and looking down to the side. "She gave me a really bad, really quick headache." Mario scratched the left side of his forehead. "Why, did she do that to you?"

"Sort of," I said. "Take your hat off."

"Why?" Mario asked, raising an eyebrow and looking at me like I was insane.

"Just do it," I said. "I want to see something."

He shrugged slightly and took his hat off. His messy hair fell into place; he had the same unruly hair that I did. He scratched the left side of his forehead again.

"Anything out of the ordinary?" He asked me sarcastically. Nothing seemed to be.

"Well..." I said, but then when he scratched his forehead for the third time, I got the hint.

"Lift up your bangs, right here," I said.

"Is this some sort of test?" Mario asked, seemingly getting a little annoyed with me.

"No, I just-I just want to see something."

"We've been twins for twenty-four years, almost, and now you want to see what my forehead looks like?"

"Just do it!"

Mario sighed, turned around and faced the mirror behind him. He lifted up the hair on the left side of his forehead, and just like I suspected, etched into his hairline was a dime-sized drawing of Cackletta's head.

Mario's mouth dropped open.

"Hey," he said breathlessly, "That wasn't there before. What is tha-"

"I have no idea," I interrupted. "I've got the same thing."

Mario didn't look surprised anymore. Nothing scared him. "Do you think Wario and Waluigi have got it, too?" he asked.

"I don't know..." I said. "I just discovered this."

I had a hard time sleeping that night. It was a chilly night, so tonight I was happy to be surrounded by way too many pillows. (Daisy likes having forty pillows.) It was about two o'clock AM, but I lay awake,

not sleepy at all. Daisy was sleeping peacefully, I could tell by her breath on my shoulder. Every night, she seemed to use my chest as a pillow. I think my heartbeat is a lullaby to her.

I sighed. I was really frightened by the vision of Cackletta I had seen earlier. Why did Wario and Waluigi see it too? They had never seen Cackletta before! If Daisy, Peach, Yoshi and Weston hadn't seen it, and claimed that we were still in the foyer, didn't that really mean something...?

And what about that awful mark? What was it really?

"What's bothering you, Luigi?"

I was startled by Daisy's voice. I could have sworn she was asleep!

"Oh... well, I'm still a little freaked out about what happened this afternoon." I replied. That was the only way I could say it... but to my surprise, Daisy chuckled.

"You're scared of everything," she said.

"I know," I said quickly, "But I just can't get over how you said we were in the foyer at the same time."

"Never mind. Please don't worry about it. We'll go to Beanbean tomorrow and get this all sorted out."

4 - The Beanbean Kingdom's Warm Welcome

I was staring out the window as our plane landed. Daisy was almost bouncing out of her seat, and Waluigi and Wario had brought vacation clothes. Wario looked awfully strange in his bright purple “sunshine” shorts. Waluigi looked less like a stick figure in his baggy shirt that had the same pattern as Wario’s shorts. They were talking excitedly.

Mario had his chin resting on his hand, sipping a soda. Peach was scribbling in a magazine.

I sighed as the plane finally skidded to a halt. Daisy patted me quickly on the shoulder.

“Come on,” she said, “Liven up a bit! This visit won’t be as bad as the last.”

“I suppose,” I said, unbuckling my seatbelt.

But even I looked more laid back than usual. I didn’t want anyone to recognize me as well, so I didn’t wear my usual clothes. Today both Mario and I were dressed in baggy jeans and loose t-shirts. (Of our signature colors, of course.) I didn’t slick my hair back, like usual, so today it showed its true unruliness and stuck up everywhere. (Especially in the front.) Hopefully this would make me look a lot less like a string bean. The part I didn’t like, though, was that I forced myself to not wear my hat. I convinced myself that without my hat, I was practically impossible to recognize. I told this to Mario, as well, and he reluctantly left his behind.

“Welcome to the Southern part of the Beanbean Kingdom!” came the pilot on the intercom. “If you’re returning home, welcome home, if you’re vacationing, have fun! And if you’re here for a certain purpose besides fun or coming home, then you’re a loser. HAHAHA! I mean... then I hope you get it done!”

I groaned and sunk into my seat.

“Oh, don’t fuss,” Daisy said, standing up. She walked into the aisle and pulled our carry-on bags out of the overhead compartment.

“AUUGHH!” she screamed.

Flash.

My clothes had changed again from that wristband. I had gotten nervous from hearing Daisy scream. Quickly, I pulled it off, was normal again, and slapped it back on.

“What?” I asked. But Daisy had her back to me and was fuming at Wario.

“How could you do this to him, you know he’s not feeling well...”

“Well, what was I supposed to do? I thought he was going to barf on me!”

“Well, why put him up there?! AND WITH THAT NOTE!!?”

“He kept making awful noises all through the night! What was I supposed to do? Let him die here? He’d rather die up in the compartment, where it’s warm.” (Waluigi laughed.) “Then we can make ribs.”

“WARIO!”

I stood up, crossed Daisy’s seat, and peered into the overhead compartment. I was dumbstruck by what I saw; Yoshi! He was crammed behind our suitcases, with a note taped on his nose that said “SHOOT ME!”

I couldn’t help but snicker lightly to myself. I lifted Yoshi out of the compartment and set him in my seat.

“You okay?” I asked him.

“Beh,” was the bleak reply.

I looked across the aisle and saw Mario pulling on a sweater. I hadn’t really noticed it, but it was cold on that plane. The plane doors opened, and everyone got off. Yoshi lay slung on my shoulder (he was very light) as I walked out of the narrow aisle way and down the stairs.

The smell of lima beans reached my nose. Why hadn’t we crashed and died before we got here?

“So where is the hospital?” Waluigi asked casually.

“Little Fungitown,” Mario said. “It’s pretty far from here, but Luigi and I know a way to cut through the desert.”

“Yeah. Let’s head to the castle town. There’s a pipeway there.” I said, and crossed the bridge that lead from the airport island to the main land.

“Oh, yay!” Daisy said, running to catch up with me. “I love traveling by pipes!”

It didn’t take long to get to the Castle Town. Everything was rebuilt from Cackletta’s last attack, and now the city was a bustling little place.

“There’s the pipeway entrance,” Mario said, pointing at the place with a red roof.

“Oooh!” Wario said, turning a different way. “A coffee shop! I want some coffee. Come on!”

Only Waluigi followed him. Mario and I exchanged looks. That coffee shop was owned by Elvin Gadd, a tiny ghost-hunting professor who Mario and I owed our lives to. On our last visits, every time we ordered coffee, Professor Gadd showed up with a couple of ghosts. It would be only a few more seconds...

“AAAAUUUGGHHHH!” Wario and Waluigi screamed in unison.

“Bingo!” Mario and I said at the same time. Both of us laughed.

“Better go take care of this,” I said.

Just as I thought, a small orange ghost was chasing them around. This was one of the ghosts that had terrorized me in my haunted mansion ordeal. Just seeing it made my pulse rise.

Flash.

Once again, my clothes had changed. But I didn’t bother to change back. I grabbed the Poltergust 3000 off of a coat rack and aimed it at the little ghost.

The flash of light that had morphed me stunned the little ghost. I turned the vacuum nozzle to the on position, and with a puff of smoke, captured the ghost. The lights came back on and I quickly took the band off and put it back on.

Waluigi, who had been cowering under a table, stood up and brushed himself off.

“I coulda used it,” he said. “I just didn’t see it over there.”

I scoffed and turned on my heel. “See you guys out there,” I said.

Wario returned momentarily with a cup of Teeheespresso. That one was my particular favorite, though it looked like pee. ‘Course, all of their coffees tasted and smelled fine, but looked like either watery snot, urine, melted dung, or blood. Your choice.

“Okay, now can we go get Yoshi de-infested?” Peach laughed at the word she made up.

“Sure,” Mario said. “Come on-to pipe seven.”

We entered the pipe house, and Mario flipped the switch to pipe seven. He entered it and disappeared, followed by Yoshi and me. These warp pipes were very large, and very fast. You couldn’t remain standing once you got to where you wanted.

The force of the transport shoved me face down into the grass. Mario was standing and brushing himself off. Lucky for Yoshi, he had been thrown a few yards in front of me. I had just started to push myself up when Daisy exploded out of the warp pipe and landed directly on top of me. (Stop laughing, you pervert.) The back of her head slammed into mine, knocking my face back into the grass.

She quickly got off of me and helped me up. Stars were blinking in my eyes.

“I’m so sorry...” she said.

“It’s nothing, really...”

As soon as Wario, Peach and finally Waluigi burst out of the pipe, (I was thanking God that it wasn’t

Wario who came through the pipe directly after I did, his weight probably would have killed me. At the least, Yoshi wouldn't be the only one who needed the hospital.) we walked the short distance to the hospital and into the very room where Mario had once stayed. His face was red again.

"What can I help you with?" the toad at the front desk said.

"We need to get some help," Peach said to him. (She worked the best with Toads.) "Yoshi has ingested a Belly Blech worm. Do you have any Chuckola Cola?"

The toad lifted his glance from Peach to Mario. His eyes perked up.

"Are you-?" he began. "Are you Mario?"

"Yes," Mario mumbled, and his face was now as red as his shirt. He was looking at his feet.

"Hey- you're the guy who had Bean fever, aren't you?"

"Yes," he said, barely audible. I had to try very hard to not laugh.

"Mario?" came a girl's voice from the next room over. The girl who had spoken approached us. She was actually pretty with wild crimson hair, light brown eyes and very fair skin, and was only as tall as Mario. A couple of freckles dotted her nose and upper cheeks.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I just couldn't help overhearing your conversation." I recognized her immediately- this was Julie, the same girl who had been here last time we came. She was only fourteen, much too young to be a doctor or even one in training. Why was she here, and in a lab coat?

"It's nice to see you again," she said. From first impressions, you wouldn't think that Julie was too smart, but she spoke with good intelligence for someone her age. "I remember you all too well." She was smiling profoundly- Mario and I were her idols.

"Mmhmm," Mario said, still not making eye contact.

"Anyway, I did overhear your problem. A Belly Blech Worm, huh? Of course we have Chuckola Cola." I raised both of my eyebrows. The last time we came here, they didn't have the ingredients we needed. I was half-expecting this time to be the same. Julie noticed my surprised expression.

"Yes, shocking, huh?" she whispered. "Yes. Well, that's why I'm here. Mario, you learned the hard way that Toads are very bad inventory keepers. So, though I have only an eighth grade education, things are going much smoother now that we know what medicines we have and what medicines we need to restock. Anyway, bring Yoshi back to the room. Chuckola Cola takes almost no time to get rid of the worm."

My stomach gave a funny churn. I had witnessed Queen Bean throw up a Belly Blech Worm. It was likely the most disgusting thing I've ever seen. I swallowed hard and quickly tried to think of an excuse to not go.

But to my surprise, Lauren, the girl who had given Daisy and me our costumes, burst into the door of the embassy. Julie leaned her head out of the next room. She was holding a rather large jug of Chuckola Cola.

“Hey!” she said, gleefully. Apparently, these two were close friends. “I’ve got a patient right now, I’ll be with you in-“

But Lauren snapped her fingers, and Yoshi’s pale face turned a deep green. His eyes opened to their normal size, and he wasn’t making any more choking noises.

“How did you-“ Julie began, but then paused.

“Right.” she said. “Okay, then, Yoshi will be fine.”

Peach smiled as Yoshi jumped off the bench and was strong enough to do so. I was relieved for two reasons: One because Yoshi was all right, and two, because he didn’t have to barf up the worm. It just magically dissolved. Now I was really thinking that Lauren was a little more than just a teenager.

“Well, it’s nice to see you again,” she said, brushing past me and meeting up with Julie. They did a high-five and then turned around.

“So,” Julie said. “Did anything besides Yoshi bring you to the Beanbean land?”

“Yeah,” Mario said. “We’re hunting for Cackletta again.” Julie frowned.

“Again?” She asked. “What did she do this time?”

“I don’t really know,” I said. “She just told us that she wants all of us dead.”

“Oh, since when is that anything new?” Lauren and Julie said in unison. They both laughed.

And with a flash of light, my clothes were changed... again.

“Oh, sorry,” Julie snickered. “Lauren told me about your wristband.”

“Yes,” I said, pulling the band off and then slapping it back on.

“Well, good luck with that. Cackletta isn’t too hard to beat, as you proved last time.”

“Thanks,” Wario said, obviously feeling proud of himself. Of course, that was nothing new.

“Well,” Peach said, now wearing sunglasses that she hadn’t before, “Daisy and I are going to do some sightseeing. You guys can go look for your witch. Meet us back here! We found this adorable hotel.” And both her and Daisy ran off.

I curled my lip slightly. Oh, great... another wasted vacation.

5 - The Hunt Begins

Lauren poked her head out of the room that she and Julie were chatting in.

“Just so you know,” she said, “If you’re looking for Cackletta, she’s built a fortress near Stardust Valley. She’s kind of stupid. That’s probably where she is.”

“I guess we go there, then,” Mario said. “Which pipe is it again?”

“One,” I said. “Let’s go.”

Wario and Waluigi seemed eager to get to the bottom of this. Apparently, they had been spooked by the vision and wanted to see what’s up. I did, too. Why did Cackletta want to meet them? It just didn’t piece together.

It took about three minutes to make it to the Stardust Fields. Two of them were walking from the embassy to the pipe; one of them was getting up after being slammed through it. I made sure that I was the last one to go through it.

After brushing the purple dirt out of my eyes, the fortress was hard to miss. It was very wide, but not very tall. And it had an emblem of Cackletta’s head on it.

“Ooh,” Mario snickered sarcastically. “What a good hideout. Nobody would guess she’s here.” he opened the large doors and we all stepped inside.

The first room was dark. I was scared, but it seemed as if nobody else was. Waluigi seemed bored, actually. His arms were crossed, and he sighed occasionally. The room was empty, as well. I could have sworn the floor was hollow; our footsteps on it were extremely loud and echoing.

“This is boring,” Wario said. “What is it we’re looking for, again?”

“The Beanstar,” Mario replied lazily. “It’s gotta be around here somewhere. Cackletta isn’t the brightest of all witches...” he snickered slightly. “Remember, Luigi, when we got to play “Dogpile on the Beanstar” with Popple?” Mario likes to recollect.

“Mmhhh,” I replied, staring at the ceiling. “The fall wasn’t too pleasant, though...”

“No, I think that was fun.” Mario laughed. “Even after getting picked on by crabs.”

Wario snickered, and Mario shot him a nasty glare. It took me a second to realize that Wario’s dirty mind had interpreted that last statement as something, well, dirty.

“Yeah,” Mario sighed. “I doubt that Cackletta has changed much since last year.”

“Gee, I hope not.” Waluigi said sarcastically. “Anyway, what did she look like when she was alive?”

Mario put his finger to his chin thoughtfully. Did he really have to think hard to remember what she looked like? Or was a decent memory another “twin gene” that I inherited and Mario had not?

“Pretty similar as what we saw back at my castle,” I said, anguished. “Only...she didn’t have those fangs.”

“Yeah, I remember those.” Wario said, rather quickly. “You mean those weren’t there before?”

“Huh-uh,” Mario said, eyes widening suspiciously. “Cackletta didn’t have those before.”

“Her teeth were more round,” I said, trying as hard as possible to not make eye contact with Mario. I don’t know why.

“Round? Is that because she ate a lot? Was she fat?”

What odd questions for Wario to ask...

“No, she was in pretty good shape,” Mario said, a twisted grin forming on his face.

“Sounds intimidating,” Waluigi stated blandly.

“She’s a lot stronger than you think she is,” Mario said, that grin still wiped on his face. But he all of a sudden stopped moving and stared at the ground, eyes slightly narrowed.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“Peach is in trouble,” he said, looking up, and looking very serious.

“You mean you have sort of a mutual connection, and you get some kind of signal through your mind when she needs you?” Wario asked. “That’s pretty cool...”

“Nah,” Mario said, relaxing. “That sort of stuff only happens in really cheesy love stories. I put a homing device on myself, right here-“ and he pointed to his left side, “so whenever something happens to her, I know to come help.” he shrugged. “It happens so often that I figured I could use it.”

Waluigi laughed.

A bolt of lightning zapped suddenly from the middle of the floor, startling all four of us. Everyone except me, though, seemed happy for a little excitement. I knew a lot about lightning ...you would too if you were able to shoot it out of your palms. That wasn’t lightning from a storm or wire.

“Luigi,” Mario said, smirking even wider and shaking his head slightly, “Don’t do that again, please.”

“It wasn’t me!” I wailed. “That came out of nowhere!”

“Nowhere, huh?” Wario said sarcastically. “How can that come out of nowh-“

Boom. The ground shook violently. Not again...!

Only, the room didn't disappear this time. There was no funny pressure pulling on my head, no droning voices...

Boom.

"What's going on!" I shrieked frantically. I was afraid to blink, in case I missed anything.

Five or six, I didn't want to count, tentacle-looking vines burst through the floor. Two of them grabbed Wario and Mario by the waists, and in a split second, crashed them face forward into the floor. It gave in from the force, and collapsed. To my horror, both of them were out of sight; probably fell to the bottom floor below us. A funny ringing sounded in my ears.

"No!" I screamed, pleading desperately in my mind for them to still be alive. The band on my wrist became hot, and that all-too-familiar light shone again, morphing my clothes into robes.

My mind was racing wildly. Nasty thoughts of them both having their brains knocked out from the force of hitting the floor raced through it, and I tried my hardest to shake them away. I was comforted by the thought that Mario falls thousands of feet out of the sky and ends up alive.

Waluigi was whacking at the tentacles with the explosives he always carried with him. But at the sight of me, he paused and gaped.

"What?" I asked.

"What... what ARE you wearing?"

But I didn't have time to respond. Soon, the tentacles had cornered him to the wall, and snatched him around the waist.

"What do we do now?" I wailed. Coils of the tentacles wrapped around my feet. I tried shocking them with electricity, but to no avail. They quickly made their way wrapping around my legs, then up to my stomach, pinning my arms to my sides, then finally stopped at my neck. They had done the same to Waluigi.

I spent the next ten seconds trying to figure out a plan. Other than just suspend us 6 feet in midair, the tentacles weren't really doing anything. They weren't spike-covered, they weren't really restricting my breathing, and my only problem was that my electricity alone wasn't enough to make them let me go.

"Well?" I barked at Waluigi, hoping he had a plan. I didn't really have to shout, either. Then a strong jolt of pain shot through my entire body. The tentacles were now surging with some kind of energy that was more than obviously harmful to us.

"Ack!" Waluigi choked. I figured the same fate was coming to him. About every four seconds, that jolt of pain hit again, getting more intense each time.

"Waluigi!" I choked. "Bring out... ack...your explosives! If we both use our... ow... abilities at the same time...unk... we can beat them!" But to my horror, Waluigi just scowled at me.

"I... ow... am not going to... ack... work with you!" He snarled. I felt a strange sensation of fury eat at my insides.

"What?" I shrieked, out of anger and fear. "If you don't... ow... do that, we'll...ahh!... both die!" The tentacle around my left arm tightened its grip. I heard a loud tear, it had to be my shirt ripping.

"Not... ack... doing it!"

My brain took a second to absorb that sentence. He hated me so much, he would rather let himself die than just work with me once?

"You... ack!... are the absolute worst... oww... slimeball I've ever met!" I spat. I would have said something worse, but I didn't want my last words to be obscene. My vision was becoming blurry and I was becoming tired. It became harder and harder by the second to keep my eyes open. I had to do something...

"Listen," I said, my voice involuntarily becoming a plead, "We're both going to... ahh!... be killed if you don't just...unk... drop your pride for two seconds and... ack... use one of your explosives!"

Finally, my words had some effect on him. He turned his palm over and formed a bomb.

"Ready?" I panted. The tentacle around my chest tightened, and it was very hard to breathe now. I charged a ball of electricity. "One... ack... two...!" At the precise second, he dropped his explosive as I dropped my lightning. There was a brilliant flash... some sort of squealing... and I felt the tentacles loosen their grip on me, gradually falling apart until I fell six feet to the ground below. I landed face down, on my stomach. I was strong enough to lift my head a few inches to see Waluigi fall, and then see the monster ignite in a purple fire and disintegrate.

I took a few seconds to regain my strength, and then pushed myself up. Waluigi was standing already, his back to me. The furious feeling in my stomach just built, forcing my hands involuntarily into fists.

There was a large tear down my left sleeve as I had anticipated, and my cape was ripped into about seven shreds. The metal lightning bolts sewn on my side were chipped and scratched. I pushed my sweaty bangs out of my eyes, realizing from the crimson stains on my glove that it wasn't sweat, but blood. My hair had a large amount of it from having my sharp crown cut into my head. How this happened, I'll never be able to explain, because the monster's tentacles hadn't gone higher than my neck.

"Allright!" I exploded at Waluigi. "What do you have against me?" I stopped and panted for a second. "Are you still mad at me for beating you at a tennis match six years ago? How long are you going to make me pay for that! Make me pay with my life?!"

Waluigi turned around, his upper lip twitching obviously with anger. I held my open palm to the hole in

the floor where the monster had disappeared.

“That!” I snarled, in a furious voice that I don’t think I’ve ever used. “You were about willing to die just so that you could see me go too?”

Waluigi’s eyes narrowed, nose wrinkled, and he seemed to be breathing quickly. He was just in as awful shape as I was. Clothes torn, bruised, slightly bloodstained... I realized that I looked awful, and quickly took the band off my wrist. With a flash, I was back to normal. Waluigi didn’t seem to notice that I had done anything.

“You want to know why I detest you?” he said, biting his lower lip. He looked really angry. I felt really angry. I’ve never felt so mad in my entire life. It was an unusual adrenaline feeling that I very rarely got. I had every right to be, though.

“Yes!” I spat, feeling my breathing rate rise, as well. My nose wrinkled involuntarily. We spent a second or two just glaring at each other.

“Fine!” He snapped. “I envy you, okay?”

All of the anger and fury drained from my head. I was a little surprised I didn’t see it as a puddle under my feet. My eyes narrowed in confusion, mouth dropped open slightly.

“What?”

“You heard me! I’m jealous of you!” He looked mad, but it seemed like he had wanted to say this for a long, long time. Almost like he had planned it as a speech.

“Why?” I whispered, no hint of fury in my voice at all. “You’re filthy rich...”

“Rich!” He said loudly, getting in my face. “Okay, one quality! I envy you! I envy your perfect fiancé and perfect athletic abilities! I envy your perfect family, perfect fame, eyes, personality and future! I’m jealous of your perfect life!” He took a breath.

“OKAY?”

I was dumbfounded. He didn’t really hate me? Well, I mean, he did, but it wasn’t for the reasons I thought? (Revenge, etc...)

“Really?” was all I could muster to say.

“Yeah.” He sighed, much calmer now. “Really.” And he did something I’ve never imagined he’d do... he smiled at me. It was weak and simply out of the corner of his mouth, but it was a smile nonetheless. My breathing slowed down considerably.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “I...I don’t want to make you feel that way,”

“Ah, don’t get emotional, heart boy. Let’s just go find Mario and Wario.”

Heart boy?

“Okay,” I said, still looking at my feet. But he had already turned around and went through the double doors at the other side of the room. I sighed. I still wasn’t too fond of Waluigi, but I felt better knowing the truth, and didn’t despise him quite as much.

The next room was a lot different. It was filled with furniture and items, cozy-looking. Some room that Cackletta probably didn’t build. Still, I felt suspicious. Who in their right mind wouldn’t? Though after recent events, I wasn’t all sure that I was in my right mind.

“Keep your eyes peeled,” I warned, forming a lightning-bolt sword. I didn’t know I could do so, but I did... it was a magnificent sword as well. About half as long as I was, made entirely out of my electric power. Sweeeeeet.

A horrible pain shot down the mark on my chest, making me drop to my knees. As soon as it had come, it was gone...

“What?” Waluigi asked. “What, what’s wrong?”

“N...nothing.” I said, still clutching my chest. “Must have been heartburn or something...”

Waluigi eyed me as if he didn’t believe me, but looked away and opened a box.

“Woohoo!” He said suggestively. “Take a look inside this box! Heheheh.” He held up a magazine, and I clearly read the title, which made a drop of sweat fall off my forehead.

“Playboy?” I asked, voice breaking.

Flash.

My pulse had risen considerably, and that caused the gold band to react... again.

But Waluigi had his nose in the magazine. Dang, I wanted to, as well...

“No.” I told myself. “You’re loyal to Daisy. Only Daisy... only...”

Waluigi was whistling at the pages.

“You’re marrying Daisy...she’s going to be your wife... only Daisy....”

“Put that down,” I said, hoping I wouldn’t explode with excitement. “We have to find Cackletta... and Mario and Wario.” Waluigi scoffed.

“Come on,” he said. “Take a look at... WOOHOO!”

“Aww, maaaaan...” I moaned. “No, I can’t.” Waluigi laughed heartily.

“Fine, fine.” He steadily put the magazine back in the box.

“That was fun, wasn’t it?” came a squeaky voice behind us.

“Fawful!” I said aloud. The tiny ghost of the Toady hung in the air above us, giggling hysterically. He looked like an idiot, much more than usual.

“Who?” Waluigi asked. “This little thing?” I gulped. “Yeah.”

“Oh, please!” he scoffed. “This thing? It can’t hurt anyone!” Waluigi approached Fawful’s ghost and swished at it.

“You’re not so strong...”

“Waluigi, NO!”

But it was too late. Fawful fumed.

“That is all the mercy I will be giving you!” he snarled. “O Great Master has commanded me to be the commandee! And obey I will! Now you will feel the horrible agony of my horrible wrath!” And he raised his hand.

A funny warmth exploded from my Cackletta mark. It was glowing; I could see it through my clothes. Bewildered, I put my hand to it, and it immediately stopped.

“Wonderful!” Fawful chirped happily. “So you two fink-rats are the ones whom master will want to banish! I should have known.”

“What?” I gasped.

“Oh, yes, Master will not want to smell foul roses such as you for much longer. Master wants sweet revenge... dark revenge.” Fawful came up to me and slid his ghostly finger up under my chin, sending a chill down my spine, making me drop to my knees.

“Okay, good. Master will recognize you, king.” He said with a sarcastic sneer. He disappeared with a wisp of smoke, and some sort of relief dawned. I sighed and slowly stood up. My knees were shaky.

And for the first time, I realized that Fawful had been speaking with a rather french accent.

“Are you okay?” Was the first thing I asked once I found my voice. Woah... did I really just sound worried about Waluigi? My worst rival?

“Yeah, wonderful.” Waluigi said, seemingly a little angry. (How unusual!) “Why did that freak call you king, anyway?”

And for the first time, he noticed the tiny golden crown in my unruly hair.

“Woah,” he whispered.

“Well, yeah,” I said, surprised that he hadn’t figured it out. “Daisy’s a princess, right? When we get hitched...” I paused and broke eye contact with him, wishing I hadn’t said that, because I knew that Waluigi had some feelings for Daisy as well... and he had quite a tendency to get jealous. Ask how I know. “Well, she’ll be queen...”

“No way,” he whispered, eyes very small.

“But that doesn’t matter anymore.” I said quickly, wanting desperately to change the subject. “We have to find the staircase!” I quickly walked past him and to the door in the corner of the room. Waluigi didn’t follow me. I turned around.

“Come on,” I said. “You want to find Wario and Mario, or what?”

He just kept staring at me. I sighed in exasperation. I took the gold band that Lauren had given me off my wrist, and my normal clothes appeared.

“Okay, better?” I asked him, and put the band back on.

“Yeah, whatever.” But he didn’t sound agitated, to my surprise. I leaned my ear against the wall, listening for some sound.

“What are you doing?” Waluigi asked, in his normal “you’re extremely stupid” voice that he often used when talking to me.

“Trying to see if there’s anyone in this area.”

“Try using that door,” Waluigi said, pointing at the other side of the room.

“Good idea,” I mumbled, walking toward it. I put my hand on the handle to open the door.

“Ow!” I screamed, and let go of the handle. It was extremely hot, and it hurt to touch. Waluigi examined it as I tried to cool down my throbbing left hand. Flashbacks shot through my mind. The last time I had to wave my hand back to normal was when I obtained my lightning powers. While it was literally shocking after I touched the orb, I could see all the bones in my hand like an X-ray. That was pretty cool, I had to admit. I remember being momentarily distracted from the lightning bolts being absorbed by my fingers to examine the bones. I hadn’t ever seen anything like it.

Waluigi dropped an explosive and the wall blew up.

“Cackletta will murder us for ruining her lair,” I said, but not saying that as a warning.

“Oh, like she doesn’t always want to kill us anyway,” he said. I felt my pulse rise at that statement, and the gold band reacted to that. With another brilliant flash of light, I was back in my king’s robes. Waluigi laughed.

“How do you do that?” he asked, still snickering. “Whenever you get freaked out, that happens?”

“Yes,” I said irritably, pulling the band off. My clothes were back to normal, and I snapped the band back on. It was beginning to become annoying, but I kept my eyes open about the fact that I could immediately look more intimidating if an enemy came our way without us knowing.

Waluigi all of a sudden fall backwards, motionless.

“What’s going on?” I asked, in a panic. He didn’t seem to be breathing.

“Waluigi?!! What happened!”

In one swift movement, I felt a pair of hands attach themselves around my neck.

“AUUGGHH!!!”

With a flash of light, my robes were back. After the light subsided, I realized that the hands were from Waluigi. Only now, his eyes were open, and he was laughing.

“Sucker! Got you! Hahahaha...” he said and stood up. He wasn’t hurt at all!

“That...” I gasped, “That was not funny!”

“You are way too high-strung,” he said, slowly residing laughter. “You’re like a nervous cat.”

I scoffed. “Whatever.” I took the band off, and with another all-too-familiar flash of light, was normal again. I put the band back on.

“Don’t make me have a heart attack,” I said.

“You think I have the ability to do that?” he asked, interested, and seemingly blooming an idea. His eyes were wider, and his mouth was very small, forming an upside-down D shape.

“No!”

And with a flash of light, Waluigi had done it to me again; made my clothes morph.

“Hahahahahaha!” he cackled. “This is too much!”

“Errrrggghhhh...” I grumbled. I took the band off and slapped it back on.

“Well, whatever. Let’s go, now.” He went through the blown-open wall, and I followed him. To our luck, there was a staircase leading down. I was becoming nervous again, who knew what was beyond those stairs?

Flash.

“Hahahaha!” Waluigi laughed. I felt my face go red as I realized that once more, my clothes had changed. “You’re so jittery!” I took the band off and put it back on. But Waluigi was gone.

“Hey... where’d you...” I began, but felt a hand grab my shoulder. I turned around and made eye contact with a phantom, in a blood-drenched cloak.

“AAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGHHHH!!!!”

Flash.

But I heard Waluigi’s hysterical laughter, and he pulled off the cloak, and I noticed that they were dripping with red paint, not blood.

“Stop it!” I growled, and pulled the band off in order to change back to normal.

“That’s-just-so-funny!” he choked, bending over with laughter.

I grumbled a little under my breath, and then went angrily down the staircase.

6 - Blast from the Past

The door at the bottom of the staircase was locked.

“Hey,” I cried to the top of the stairs where I was sure Waluigi was still, “Drop one of your bombs down here.” I paused for a second. That did not sound right.

But I looked down and saw a bomb explode at my feet.

“AUUGHH!!”

Flash.

BOOM!

But in the horrible, red and dusty light, I noticed that I was completely unharmed. I wasn't on fire, scorched or in a thousand pieces... just no longer in my normal clothes.

I took the wristband off quickly and put it back on before Waluigi noticed anything. He came sliding down the handrail on the stairs.

“Pretty cool, huh? I can program it to do anything. Right now, they can't harm humans.”

I nodded, mouth agape.

“Otherwise, you'd be in about a million pieces,” he laughed, passing me through the huge hole in the wall.

I swallowed, and then followed him. My mind started racing again. A horrible thought hit me... if those charged tentacles had done so much damage to me, in the time we were looking for Mario and Wario, would it have done something worse to them...?

Nah, I thought. The girl who wrote this story likes Mario too much to kill him off.

I heard some whining... whining that was strangely familiar... behind a curtain to the right of us. “What's that?” I asked.

“What's what,” Waluigi replied.

“That whining,” I said. “It's coming from over there.”

I slowly approached it. There was definitely something behind this curtain. I lifted the sheet; there was a Chain Chomp behind it. It was a little smaller than the usual adult, signaling that it was still young. It had huge brown eyes that were horribly familiar. The chain's links were green and slightly scratched. But I

didn't want to try and see where I had seen this Chain Chomp before. It stopped whining and growled at me, (which caused the wristband to react again,) all ten thousand of its razor teeth showing. It leaped from its sanctuary, knocking me off my feet. Waluigi let out a strange yell.

The Chomp, bubbly drool dropping onto my shirt, (Which was now my costume,) was now lying on my chest, the metal slab where its chain attached to its body pressing painfully into my left ankle. Chain included, this Chomp was a lot longer than I was, its gigantic body several times the size of mine. Its face was right in mine; I could feel its breath on my face. I thought I was about to be crushed.

But after a second of staring me in the eyes, it stopped growling, sniffed me, and licked my face.

"What the-" I choked, freeing my left arm from under it and wiping my face. The Chain Chomp was barking excitedly. I gasped sharply; I finally remembered where I'd seen this particular one before.

"Chompy," I whispered.

This Chain Chomp had been my pet when I was a baby! And when I first found the pipe to the Mushroom Kingdom, I had lost him. Chompy leaped off of my chest, (I was surprised by how much easier it was to breathe,) and was barking at my side. I stood up. He was only a little taller than I was, despite how wide he was.

I threw my arms around him as much as I could. "Chompy!" I said happily. He hadn't changed at all... he was just many times larger.

Waluigi's jaw was dropped. And a mouth as big as his looked quite funny with his lower lip at his feet. "You mean to tell me..." Waluigi panted, pointing at Chompy. "That you know this thing?"

"Yeah!" I said, voice an octave higher than usual, then remembering to morph to normal. "He's my pet!"

"Your pet?"

I smiled and nodded.

Chompy was bouncing and twirling, signaling that he wanted us to follow him.

"He wants us to follow him," I said, putting my foot on the head of his chain and hoisting myself to the top of his head. "Want to go for a ride?"

"What do you mean?" Waluigi asked. "You mean this thing will drive us where we want to go?"

"Sure," I said. "He's a good boy. He does anything I tell him to." Chompy barked happily as I patted him again.

"Uh... okay," Waluigi said, and pulled himself onto the back of Chompy.

As soon as Waluigi's foot left the floor, Chompy raced off. He was zooming forward at probably no less

than 65 miles per hour. But I didn't worry about being scared that I would fall off the back. I was just happy to see Chompy again. It's been eleven years since I've seen him last.

Chompy seemed to know exactly where he was going. He was racing down hallways and corridors, and finally skidded to a halt. I was thrown off of him and crashed into the floor in front of him.

My head was spinning wildly, and it took a second for me to make sure that it was on my shoulders correctly. I stood up, and Chompy was whacking himself against a wall.

"Stand aside," Waluigi said to him. Chompy growled in his face and continued attempting to demolish the wall.

"Waluigi has a plan," I said to him. "You can move back."

Immediately Chompy receded and stood behind me. Waluigi shot me a funny glare and dropped an explosive at the wall.

When the dust cleared, there was a hidden room. It was completely dark. But it didn't take long to find Mario and Wario. Actually, they found us. Mario tapped me on the shoulder from behind, surprising me so bad that my wristband reacted.

"It's just me," he said, once I caught my breath enough to morph to normal.

"Mario," I exhaled. "There you guys are. What happened to you?"

"Well, those vines crashed us through the floor, and then went back up for you guys. But we tried to stop them." Wario said. It hit me, that's why the tentacles had just hung in the air for a little while.

Mario wasn't paying attention to Wario anymore. He was staring, wide-eyed, at Chompy, who was barking frantically.

"Luigi, this can't be... Chompy?" he asked, breathless. I smiled.

He exhaled quickly, smiling with his mouth open. He turned around and faced Chompy, and slung his arms (as much as he could, at least,) around him.

"I can't believe you found Chompy!" he said, almost a squeal. "It's been so long!"

Chompy whined happily.

"Well, okay," Wario said, "Now that we've got another party member, now what do we do?"

"Well, we can go see if there's any light in here-" Mario began, but I cleared my throat and slung a lightning bolt out of my index finger, illuminating the room.

"Right," Mario said.

I walked in front of the group, my index finger outstretched. We were using it as some kind of torch. I stared at the ceiling as we made our way out of the room and down the pitch-black hallways. The ceiling had a lot of art on it. It was nice to just look at the pleasant landscapes.

I tried taking another step, but a pair of arms grabbed me around the stomach and ripped me backwards.

“Woah!” I screamed, as my wristband became hot and lit up, and changed me again. I fell to the tile floor somewhere in front of Mario. The light at the tip of my index finger went out; I took the wristband off, then put it back on, and re-illuminated the room.

“What was that about?” I panted. Wario was leaning over me.

“Sorry if that hurt,” he said, as I stood up. “But you were about to-“ he held his open palm to a giant hole in the floor.

I exhaled in shock, and leaned over it. That hole didn’t seem to end.

I swallowed hard, and turned my gaze away from the hole. My stomach churned. “T-thanks,” I told Wario. He and Waluigi seemed to be dropping their grudges on Mario and I. I was astonished at how well they were working with us.

“It’s okay,” he said. “Just watch where you’re going next time.” I swallowed again and spied another hallway.

“I see a light from down there,” I said, pointing at a small yellow orb. My voice was a little shaky.

“Fine,” Mario said shortly. Chompy barked.

Waluigi ran ahead. The light from my hand was large enough to spread far in front of us. He was heading for the yellow orb. It was only the size of his fist.

“What’s this?” He asked nobody in particular.

“I don’t know,” Mario said. “I’ve never seen it.”

I didn’t look at the orb. For some reason, I didn’t want to. Something in my head was telling me “Don’t look at it... “Don’t look at it...” But I didn’t know why, because everyone else was and they weren’t bursting into flame.

“What do you think it does?” Wario asked.

“Who knows,” Waluigi said in a sort of awed voice. “Let’s bring it!”

“Uh... I don’t think we should,” I said.

“Why not?” Mario asked. “It’s not like anyone owns it or anything.” Waluigi cupped his hand over the

orb and trapped it. With a brilliant flash of light, he was gone.

Wario screamed in horror. But Mario was smiling.

“I know what this is!” he said. “It’s nothing but a transporter. Come on, let’s see where it leads to.” Mario made the same gesture that Waluigi did, and with a flash, he was gone.

I was nervous, but trusted Mario enough that the wristband didn’t do anything. I grabbed Chompy’s chain and transported alongside Wario.

A second later, I felt my feet hit the ground with a strong impact. My knees buckled and I fell to a crawling position. Mario and Waluigi were standing there, waiting.

I stood up quickly and grabbed Chompy’s chain. He seemed to have been knocked insane.

“Where are we?” Mario asked. I sighed. I knew this place all too well. It was dry and barren, with stone statues everywhere.

“The Ruins,” I said, in a matter-of-fact tone. “Gruffawha Ruins.”

7 - The Dinner Party

Mario's face went red again. Gruffawha Ruins was the place I had to come and get Crabbie Grass to cure his Bean Fever last year. Oh, yes, I knew this place too well. There was supposedly a horrible monster in the ruins, but that was just a rumor. I never found such monster. I had found out from numerous lectures from Julie that you could almost never believe anything a Toad told you. Though I got along very well with toads, I had to admit that it was mostly true.

Chompy barked again, and nudged me in the arm, signaling that he wanted attention. I patted him on the head briefly.

"Come on," I told everyone else, still holding Chompy's chain. "I know a way out of here."

Waluigi and Wario started talking excitedly. I could hear every word they said, which made me feel rather sick.

"I hear the monster sucks out all of your blood!"

"No, no, it breaks every single bone in your body."

"I think it wouldn't do either of those. It probably just peels off all of your flesh."

"Maybe it does all three!"

"It's a rumor," I convinced myself. "Last time you were here you didn't see anything but a talking statue." I didn't want my wristband to react.

Mario was laughing at what they were saying.

"No," he said. "I think it probably eats your intestines like spaghetti!"

All three of them were laughing hysterically, and then going on about how the monster uses your blood for taco sauce. I was becoming very sick to my stomach. I kept my lips pressed together tightly to avoid nausea.

"You guys, could you please-" I turned around. They had stopped talking, and were now staring, wide-eyed, at something behind me. They were all very white, and their jaws were dropped. They all looked like little statues wearing identical expressions.

"What's wrong..." I asked, starting to get nervous. Chompy started barking frantically, as a deep voice said, "What are you five doing here?"

I slowly and shakily turned around. I made eye contact with a creature, that if it was the size of a normal person, I was the size of a housecat. It had eight arms and pincers, which resembled a spider closely,

except that it was standing on what looked like a single leg. Eight arms were attached from its shoulders to its waist.

“Well?” It demanded. Chompy whined. I could see something dripping off of its teeth, unmistakably poison.

“AAAAAAAUUGGHHH!!!” all four of us screamed in unison, as my wristband became warm, and with a flash of light, did what it was supposed to do.

I tried to run, but I felt something grab me around the waist. I turned around in horror to realize that the monster had picked me up.

“Nooooo!” I heard Mario scream from the floor. But to my surprise, the spider creature had picked me up simply to stroke my hair.

“You have the neatest fuzz on the top of your head,” it said, in now a female voice. My heart was racing wildly. What was going on? This monster was treating me like its pet!

I could see Mario’s shocked expression from all the way up here. Two of the spider’s hands were holding me by under my arms, and the other six were occupied in messing with my hair. (This was getting a little annoying.)

“So you’re another one of those... humans?” she asked me. I nodded slightly, mouth agape. She squealed slightly. “Ooooh! Wow. Humans almost never come in here. Except for three... they always come in.” She slowly put me down. Mario bolted next to me.

“Where are your other two friends?” she asked.

“They...uh... ran away,” Mario said. Clearly, he didn’t know what to think.

“Oh, dear... did I scare them?” Mario smirked and nodded.

“Kai!” came a voice from behind the spider. Apparently, Kai was its name.

“What happened here- hey!” A young boy appeared from behind Kai. He look around 12 years of age, and was a little shorter than Mario. His hair color was strangely similar to mine, only slightly darker. It was also about the same length.

“Aren’t you guys Mario and Luigi?”

Mario and I nodded in unison.

“Cool,” he said. “I’m Rick. I work with the hospital in little Fungitown, I’m collecting Crabbie Grass from the ruins.”

Mario’s face went red.

"I'd better go get Waluigi and Wario," I said, and turned to leave the way that I was sure they had gone. I was right. Almost immediately, I found them both hiding behind a rock.

"Woah," Waluigi said once he saw me, "You aren't dead!"

"No," I said. "The spider thing is nice, actually."

Wario stepped out from behind his rock. "Really?"

"Yep," I said. "You get to keep all of your blood." I smirked.

"This is getting frustrating," Wario said, coming out from behind the rock and going into the chamber I just left. "I want to go back to the hotel."

My mind raced. I tried to think of something to say other than "I told you so," but came up with nothing.

"It is," I said.

Ricky walked out of the next chamber with Mario.

"You know," he said. "I've got reservations at the same hotel that you guys do. I'm meeting Lauren and Julie for dinner, you guys want to bring your friends and come along?"

"Sure!" Wario said happily. "It's almost dinnertime anyway!"

Mario grumbled something and looked at his feet.

"Well," I said, clapping my hands together. "We could go now."

"Good," Wario snapped. "I'm starving."

Still looking at his feet, Mario mumbled "Since when is that new," in a barely audible voice.

Back at the hotel, Peach, Daisy and Yoshi met up with us for dinner. The hotel was very fancy. Daisy and Peach insisted that we dress up a bit. This was easy for me, I just replayed the Haunted Mansion ordeal and in an instant, my wristband reacted, and I was immediately changed into the most formal clothes I own. Julie and Lauren came a little later. They were wearing twin everything: The same black dresses, pearl necklaces, and diamond bracelets. Except one thing, Julie had a gold bracelet with teacups on it, (she always wore this,) and Lauren just had a plain gold chain around her wrist.

I was surprised to find that Julie was a master of the Thunderbrand, as well as I was. I noticed this when she electrocuted her glass by mistake. Apparently, she wasn't really a master.

And of course, Daisy and Peach being princesses, were quite dressed up. Daisy was wearing her favorite really short dress (that was perhaps my favorite on her, too,) and Peach was wearing a slender, long dress. Mario and Rick looked like they were about to go to church, and Wario and Waluigi were

wearing identical black silk outfits that almost looked like tuxedos.

And Yoshi... well, he doesn't wear clothes.

After waiting for what seemed like forever, the waiter finally came. Mario was silent and sulky, and said that I should go first. I picked up the beverage menu and glanced at it. I caught sight of a drink called "Green Bean Tonic." I didn't know what that meant. I was curious, and wanted to try it.

"I'll have that," I said, and pointed at it. Daisy leaned over my shoulder to look at the menu.

"I'll just have your Hoolumbian coffee," she said.

Wario was next. But he didn't get a drink; he picked up the dinner menu.

"I'll have this... and this... and this and this and this and this and this and this and this." He pointed to about a thousand things on the menu, saying this rather loudly. Waluigi whispered in his ear that we are ordering drinks now.

"I see," Wario replied casually. "Then I'll have..." he snatched the drink menu out of my hands. "This and this and this and this and this and this and this and this and this."

Lauren picked up her napkin to put it in her lap, but accidentally used Firebrand on it and ignited it. With a loud scream, she threw it over her shoulder and it landed on the Toad at the table directly behind us. Julie burst out laughing as Lauren tried to go apologize, but while leaning on the Toad's chair, set it on fire as well. She snatched the chair from under the toad and tried waving the fire out, but all that did was spread the sparks around. The curtains and carpet were ablaze as Lauren ran to get a bucket to put water in it, only setting that on fire as well. She dropped it on her toe, igniting her shoe, and after kicking it off quickly, it hit the face of a Toad and set that toad's face on fire. Julie started choking on air as she laughed at the panicking toads... and the panicking Lauren. Now, her hair was on fire, as well as the back of her shirt. She was running around in frantic circles.

"It's okay," I said loudly, and stood up. All eyes came to rest on me. I shot a single lightning bolt into the floor, and almost instantly it was glowing and the fires went out. All of the toads relaxed, and sat down to resume their eating and conversation. I sat down. Lauren did, as well, hair and back charred. I snickered to myself as Julie caught her breath and picked up a basket off the floor.

"Hey, everyone," she said. "Do you want to try my homemade breadsticks?"

"Sure," everyone said in unison. Julie lifted the napkin off the top. I let out a tiny gasp of horror.

The breadsticks looked like something that you'd pull out of a clogged sink. They had hairs, warts, and were a vomit-green. They smelled like someone had peed all over them. One of the breadsticks leaped onto the table and barked. Julie slapped it with a fork, and it whined.

"Uh..." I said. "I'll pass. I ordered a large entrée, anyway. I uh... don't want to ruin my appetite."

Everyone else came up with an excuse to not eat Julie's er... fabulous cooking. The excuses ranged

from “I’m allergic to poisonous things” (Mario) to “I’m sorry, I just waxed my otter and for some reason are not in the mood to eat bread.” (Waluigi)

“I’ll try one,” Wario said. He reached into the basket and picked up the mildest breadstick, one that smelled like iodine rather than urine. After calming the breadstick so it stopped growling at him, he took a bite of it.

Everyone was curious about what would happen. Wario lifted his eyebrows.

“Hey...” he said. “They really aren’t that bad, once you get past the tough alligator skin.”

“You like them?” Julie squealed.

“No!!!” Wario spat. “It’s disgusting!” Julie sat down, disgruntled.

“Finally,” I heard Waluigi say. “Here comes the waiter.”

And indeed, here comes the waiter. He set a cup down in front of me. I peered into it. The liquid was a dark green similar to the color of Julie’s “Breadsticks.” It smelled good, though.

I lifted the cup and took a sip of it. Lauren suddenly jumped out of her chair as if to stop me, but it was too late, the liquid slid down my throat.

My hands rushed to my neck, making me drop the glass. With a loud crash, it broke into fifty million pieces and the liquid spread all over the floor. I painfully swallowed, as a few tears budded in my eyes. I’ve never tasted anything so disgusting; it was even nastier than the fried dandelions Professor Gadd made for me in 2001. I thought I was going to die.

Mario stood up, too, dropping his fork with a slight “clink”. His eyes were widened with alarm, widened to the point where they were greatly boasting their purple tint. “You don’t feel sick, do you?” he asked suddenly.

I nodded, feeling a little more than just “sick.” I was so desperate to get this taste out of my mouth that I almost grabbed one of Julie’s breadsticks. But I snapped into my right mind and grabbed Daisy’s cup of Hoolumbian that the waiter had just set down. Finally, I was able to exhale.

Waluigi was in hysterics at seeing this. He had fallen out of his chair, clutching his stomach, laughing.

“S...sorry,” I said to Daisy, setting down the now empty cup of Hoolumbian coffee. “I’ll order you a new one.”

But Daisy was laughing too. So was Julie. In fact, everybody was. Out of the whole group, only Mario seemed upset.

With a quick glance at my hand to make sure it wasn’t turning green, I turned to the waiter.

“Uh... can I just get some of your red wine, and another order of the Hoolumbian coffee?”

“Sure,” he said, scribbling this down. “Now that the dilemmas are over, might I take your order?”

“Yeah!” Wario said. He picked up the menu. “I’ll have this and this and this and this and this and this and this and this and this and this and this and this.”

A different waiter came and set a glass of red wine in front of me. A fly flew by Yoshi’s head.

“Ooooh!” He said, interested. The fly zoomed away from him and toward a different table. It landed on a Toad’s napkin. Yoshi chased the fly, and pounced in the toad’s lap. The toad made a funny “Nnngack!” noise that made Julie laugh so hard her soda shot out of her nose. Yoshi, still sitting on another diner’s table, stuck his twelve-foot tongue out of his mouth and snatched the fly. He swallowed it.

His eyes widened. “Yuck!” he said, and hurled in the toad’s lap.

“Luigi,” Waluigi said from across the table once Yoshi had finished barfing and sat down. (Julie was still dying of laughter; Yoshi had puked all of his stomach out. Yoshi has a big stomach, let me tell you. It looked like he barfed so much that you could fill a bathtub with it.) “What is that you’re drinking?”

“Just wine,” I said and took a sip. To my relief, it was delicious. Waluigi called the waiter and ordered some.

A few minutes later, the waiter brought our food. Wario was a sight to watch eat; he unhinged his jaw like a snake and swallowed the hamburger as big as his head whole. Julie and Lauren started laughing again. Rick raised his eyebrow quickly, and then picked up his fork.

Waluigi took a few sips of his wine. His eyes drooped.

“That’s good stuff,” he said, voice droning. He stood up. “I’ve got to go shave my car.” he took a few steps and fell, face down, to the carpet, mumbling something about a kitchen sink.

I burst out laughing. I couldn’t help myself. “Are you getting drunk too?” Daisy asked me with a smirk. “What’s in that wine?”

I shrugged. “I don’t feel funny,” I said. Apparently, Waluigi got drunk very easily.

Everyone who stayed in this hotel was very rich and proper, and were probably disgusted at our group of girls who make breadsticks that looked like a lion coughed them up, laugh loudly at everything, squirt Pepsi out of their noses and set every tangible thing on fire, pets that barf a swimming pool in peoples’ laps, and men who order every single item off of the menu, fall out of their chairs laughing and then get severely drunk, and go rigid at taking a single sip of bean juice. Peach, Daisy, Mario and Rick were probably the only pleasant example-setters here. But then again, they had all laughed loudly, which is also very “Improper” to these elderly, wealthy toads.

Julie was the first to finish her food. Wario would have been, but he ordered so much that it took a while

to finish.

“So...” she said, obviously wanting to make conversation. Waluigi stood up, clutching his forehead.

“Man,” he said. “I’ve got the worst headache...” he sat down. “What have I missed?”

“Nothing, really...” Peach said. “Now eat. All of us are almost finished.” I snickered to myself; she sounded like his mother.

8 - Unwanted Surprises

Mario finished the last bit of his spaghetti and pushed the plate toward the middle of the table. Lauren started talking.

“You know,” she said to Julie. “Who delivers the mailman’s mail?”

Julie looked down thoughtfully. “Gee,” she said. “There must be a never-ending chain of mailmen.”

“Did you get that idea from Spongebob Squarepants?” Rick asked with a smile, though hardly looking up at them.

“Yes,” Lauren said quickly. She and Julie snickered.

I glanced sideways at Daisy. The clock on the wall read eleven o’clock. Many of the other diners were leaving. After the waiter came to take our check, I stood up.

“We should check into our room,” I said. “Daisy, do you have our card?”

“Yeah,” she said. She opened her purse and fumbled through it a little. “Here.” she handed me a small card that read “534.”

“Allright,” I said. Everyone else at the table stood up. Wario and Waluigi went to the front desk to get rooms, and Julie, Rick and Lauren turned to leave the hotel.

“Thanks for the dinner,” I told Rick as he opened the door.

“No problem,” he said, smiling widely. “It was funny.” The three kids left the room.

Daisy was punching buttons on the elevator door and laughing.

“What’s funny?” I asked her, as Yoshi, Mario and Peach turned up behind us.

“I can play the tune to Funkytown!” she said, pushing more buttons. She was right; it was the little Funkytown song. I chuckled.

“Very nice,” I said. The elevator doors opened about an hour later. It had to stop at practically every floor in the hotel at least three times. Daisy was embarrassed about that, and quickly pressed the button to floor five, while Mario pressed the button to floor seven. Apparently, they wanted a room that was higher up.

The elevator doors opened on floor five and Daisy stepped out. “Our stuff’s already up there,” she told me. After a quick wave to Mario, Yoshi and Peach, the elevator door closed and they were whisked to floor 7.

Daisy turned one hall and stuck the key into the door of room 534. She opened the door.

“Wow,” was all I could say. The room was very elegant. It was a large room with some expensive-looking lamps stuck here and there.

“Nice, isn’t it?” She asked.

“Very,” I said, pulling off my wristband and setting it on the counter. Daisy threw herself onto the couch and grabbed the remote.

“Let’s see if there’s any good movies on,” she said, clicking on the TV. It was a wide screen.

Daisy started flipping through the channels. I wasn’t in the mood to watch TV.

“I’m going to go take a look at the balcony,” I said.

“Kay,” Daisy replied, lazily. I opened the sliding door to the small balcony. This was the only part of the room that was really ordinary.

“Hey,” came a voice from two floors up. I looked up. Mario was leaning over the railing of his balcony.

“Oh, hi,” I said back to him.

“Peaceful for a change…” he said slowly. I looked out over the mountains where Little Fungitown was. He was right. You could see the lights of the castle town, and it was actually relaxing.

“For a change,” I said. “Night.” I turned around and went back into my room. After what all happened today, I was exhausted.

“I think I’m going to turn in,” I said sleepily.

“Oh, alright.” Daisy said and got up. “I’ll come to bed later. I think I’m going to watch a horror movie. I hear “The Ring” is pretty good.” I laughed.

“Well,” I said, “You’re not going to want to sleep for seven days.” She smiled and planted a kiss on my forehead.

“Good night,” she said, as I went through the double doors into the bedroom.

Even the bed was elegant. The covers were made of silk and everything. I threw myself onto it and sighed. I didn’t bother to change into sleeping clothes. I was content sleeping in jeans.

A few hours later, I was jolted awake by a crashing noise coming from the other part of the hotel suite. I glanced at the clock, it read 2:56. I yawned and put my feet on the floor. After a quick glance behind me, I noticed that Daisy wasn’t in bed.

“Daisy, what’s going on in he-“ I said, but was cut off by Daisy’s light snoring on the couch. She looked okay, apparently nothing was wrong until I heard rustling coming in from the bathroom.

“What the... Who’s in here?” I pressed my ear to the door and heard what I identified as paper rustling. I grabbed the doorknob.

“Mario?” I asked, thinking that he was going to play a practical joke on me. I opened the door and gasped loudly at what I saw in the bathroom. Sitting on the toilet was an alien. It was a little shorter than me, purple, and had very long fangs. It had no hair, but two pointy ears on the top of its head. Its piercing, red eyes were verrrrrrry familiar. It was holding a newspaper.

“Do you mind?” It asked in a surprisingly deep, charming voice.

I slammed the door in horror and leaned against it. Panting heavily, I convinced myself that I didn’t see what I know I just saw.

The door opened. The alien stepped out, a piece of toilet paper trailing his shoe.

“Well, well,” he said. “I wondered when I’d be seeing you again.”

I was dumbfounded. “Ga...buh...unk...” I stammered. I found my voice and was finally able to scream, “WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM!?”

“This?” the alien said casually. “This isn’t your room. You’re in a hotel.” he approached me. “You look different, you know,” he said, eyeing me suspiciously. “You’ve lost weight... boy, I wish I could say the same.” He poked slightly at his stomach, which by all means, was as bony as Waluigi’s. “You remember who I am, do you not?” he asked.

I shook my head. I was sure we’ve never met. I pointed at his shoe.

“What?” he said, looking down and spying the toilet paper. “Oh... right. Thanks. I’m Tatanga, of course,” he said, after clearing his throat and peeling the toilet paper off of his shoe. “We’ve battled before... you must remember.” I scanned my memory briefly. No, I had never fought any Tatanga. Still, I knew that he shouldn’t be here. I made a strange rasping noise. “Get away from Daisy!” I screamed and made a lightning-bolt ball. “I’ll destroy your ship!”

Tatanga frowned. “Why?!” he screamed, in a way that reminded me of a five-year-old. “You don’t even love her!”

Something happened to my mind at that time that I couldn’t explain. It felt like a circuit had popped in my brain.

“Excuse me?” I barked. I could feel my pulse pounding.

“You’re getting married to Peach!” he wailed like a baby. “You aren’t marrying Daisy, Mario!”

“Hold on a second,” I said, cooling down, “Did you call me Mario?”

“Yes,” he said coolly, and picked Daisy up. Her mouth was curved into a tiny smile. Apparently, she was having a good dream... hopefully one about me. I stopped thinking about that and sent a jolt of lightning to his spaceship, and it exploded.

“I said, get away from her!” I yelled, trying as desperately as I could to sound intimidating. Tatanga sighed and dropped her.

“Not like I can even make a getaway now,” he said, setting Daisy back on the couch. “You want to fight me or something?”

“If it will make you leave,” I said shortly.

“Fine, okay.” Tatanga said. “I think that’s fair.” Before I could react and create a lightning bolt to hurl at him, two large, purple orbs hit me squarely on the chest. With a small “ugh!” I was slammed into the wall.

“Gee, Mario,” he said to me. “You’re not as strong as you were so long ago.” Tatanga must be one of the villains Mario’s fought before. He stopped moving as I stood up.

“Hold on...” he said slowly. “If my memory serves me right...”

And instantly, a white-hot pain shot through my right side, just below my last rib. With a loud yell of pain, (that surprisingly didn’t wake Daisy up) I was slammed into the wall again. Sweat dripped down my forehead as I felt a warm sensation fall onto my hip. Blood, unmistakable.

I raised my trembling hand to cover the deep gash. It was throbbing viciously.

“What did you...” I said through clenched teeth, but then noticed a sparkling green gem on the floor. I picked it up with my vacant right hand and examined it. It was a little smaller than the palm of my hand. Etched into the top of it were three little drawings, one looked like a fireball, one looked like an ice cube, and one looked like a drop of water.

“Ha, ha,” Tatanga said playfully. “Now you can’t see Elemental Ghosts.”

“What?” I gasped. It was hard to breathe without pain.

“Please tell me you remember that,” he said, using the same tone of voice that was heard so often from Waluigi. “Remember, three years ago? The haunted mansion?”

Of course, that was the medal I had gotten in the mansion in order to see the elemental ghosts. Tatanga snatched the small gem out of my badly trembling hand. I was about to protest, but he backed off.

“Be seeing you,” he said, and disappeared with a puff of purple smoke.

Wait a second. I had never met Tatanga. How on earth did he know that out of all of the people in this whole kingdom, only I could see the elemental ghosts of fire, ice and water?

On the couch, Daisy sat up abruptly and caught sight of me.

“Luigi, what are you doing on the flo-“ she gasped loudly.

“Oh my-“ she abruptly cut herself off. “What happened!”

I was breathing sharply by now, half-surprised at how red my hand was. “Do you know any Tatanga?” I asked.

“Tatanga?” Daisy said, and her face went white. “Yes, I do. Let me look at that...” She walked over to me, and I slowly removed my hand from my side.

“Take that shirt off,” She said, her voice trembling almost as badly as my hand. “It’s getting soaked...”

I painfully pulled my shirt off.

“That has got to be an inch deep,” she said and ran her finger near the gash. I gasped in pain, and my hand quickly returned to cover it. I pulled myself up and onto the couch.

“Oh, I’m sorry...” she said soothingly. “That looks so awful.”

“It’s okay,” I winced. “It’s nothing really serious.”

Mario stuck his head in the hotel door.

“What on earth is going on in here,” he asked, as if annoyed. “I heard you yelling, and-“ he stopped and gasped when he saw my badly bleeding cut.

“How’d you get that?” he asked in alarm.

“Tatanga,” I gasped. “Tatanga stopped by. Do you know him?”

Mario and Daisy exchanged looks.

“Yes, I know him,” he said, and sat on the couch next to me. “Through him is how I met Daisy.”

“Really,” I said, not really caring about that right now. My gash was stinging horribly, and I was beginning to feel a little dizzy.

“Do you mind keeping it down?” Waluigi asked, standing in the doorway. I snickered to myself at the sight of him. He was wearing pajamas with feet, and a nightcap that made him look nearly seven feet tall. Wario was standing next to him, his head drooping forward onto his chest. He was mumbling something.

“It’s like... four in the morning,” Waluigi said agitatedly. “This is no time for parties...mama mia, what did you do to yourself?”

“Some alien attacked us,” Daisy said.

“So let me get this straight,” Waluigi said. He was in his night outfit, and looked quite funny. He had one of those sleeping caps on, and extremely baggy pants and shirt. “You guys saw some alien life in here?”

“This is getting ridiculous,” Wario said, eyes half open. He looked even funnier in his feet pajamas with bears on them. “Are we going to see every monster you guys have ever faced here? Sheesh.” He left the room. “I’m still tired,” he said, voice echoing through the hall. “I’m outta here.”

“Me too,” Waluigi said. He followed Wario out.

“We need to call a doctor about that gash,” Daisy said. Mario went pale.

“I don’t mean your Toad doctors,” Daisy said quickly, and I chuckled weakly. (This hurt.) “I mean the human doctors.”

“The only one they have is Julie,” I said. “She’s a complete idiot.”

“But she’s better than you or I would be,” Daisy said, getting up.

“Yeah, I said, realizing that was the truth. “A lot.”

“Julie’s staying in this hotel, too. She’s next door, actually.” Daisy said, putting her finger to her mouth thoughtfully.

“Gee,” I said weakly, raising an eyebrow. “That was oddly convenient.”

“Yeah, well,” Daisy said, as I closed my eyes, starting to feel hazy from blood loss.

“Right,” Mario said quickly. Daisy smirked and walked out the door.

“What did Tatanga look like when you saw him?” I asked Mario, gritting my teeth in pain, not bothering to open my eyes.

“Hmm...” Mario said. “Well, he was about as tall as you, purple and didn’t have any hair. And he had two little ears and gray eyes... and bottom fangs.” he paused. “Why?”

“Just... wondering.” I said. Despite my dizzy feeling, my mind was racing. Mario said that Tatanga had gray eyes. When I saw him, he had eyes that were as vibrant red as Julie’s hair. And he had really long top fangs, but not bottom. Something was fishy... either that or he got some kind of facial since Mario saw him last.

“Daisy said you got hurt,” Julie said, rubbing her eyes sleepily and following Daisy into the room. She looked rather scary. Her hair was bigger than her head. She was wearing silk blue pajamas with Garfield all over them, and was clutching a doll that looked... just like Mario. He eyed it quickly in a confused

manner.

Julie set the doll down on the counter and approached me.

“So tell me the whole story,” she said. Obviously, Julie was anything but a morning person.

“Well, I got up at about 2:45 or so, and I heard sound from the bathroom. When I realized it wasn’t Daisy in there, I opened the door and saw Tatanga.” I said slowly.

“Tatanga, huh?” Julie asked with a small smirk. Julie knew practically every detail of any adventure Mario or I have ever been on.

“...And so he thought I was Mario, and tried to take Daisy,” I continued. “And then after a brief fight, he struck me in the side and took the medal that lets me see Elemental ghosts.”

Mario pursed his lips. “How would he know that?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” I said, closing my eyes again. “But I don’t know why he wanted it... I don’t need to see those Ghosts anymore.”

“Well, I’ll put some surgical tape on it. It’ll heal the best that way.” Julie pulled a plastic bag out of nowhere and dug through it a little.

“Move your hand,” she told me once she had a small roll of clear tape.

I did so. The bleeding had begun to stop, but it was still an angry cut that hurt viciously.

“We ought to wash it first,” Julie said, suddenly remembering. I frowned.

“I have my ways,” Julie said. She poured a bottle of pure alcohol on the tape.

“There,” she said. “It’ll be less painful with the purifier already on the tape.”

I cringed as Julie pressed the large block of tape to my side.

“All done,” she said. “That’s a nasty gash.”

I took a look at it. I hadn’t noticed it earlier, but the cut was nearly four inches long.

“Thanks,” I panted.

“That’s specially designed tape,” Julie said, almost proud. “It tests the activity of your skin cells. Once they are operating normally and no longer trying to repair themselves, the bandage should simply fall off.” she paused for a second. “Which shouldn’t be too long. The way you heal, I’d say that bandage will fall off in a matter of four days or so.”

“Good,” I said, relieved. Having to change the tape would be very painful.

“My work is done,” Julie said, handing me a medium-sized bottle. “You’ve lost quite a bit of blood, so drink that now to keep your circulation strong.” I uncorked the bottle and took a sip of the tonic inside. It tasted like water, but immediately my vision became a little more clear. “There you go,” Julie said, smiling warmly. “I saw a little bit of color return to your face- drink the whole thing, and you’re going to be fine. Good night.” She grabbed the doll off the counter and left.

“Okay,” Mario said. “Good night.” He followed Julie out of the room.

I was groggy the next morning. I stumbled out of the elevator and yawned. The hotel we were staying at offered a free complimentary breakfast, and both Yoshi and Wario were taking advantage of that. Both of them had their mouths stuffed with waffles, pancakes, and something that I didn’t recognize.

“I’m going to have some of those,” I said, and pointed at the bagels.

“Kay,” Daisy said. She sat down at a table next to Peach, and they started talking excitedly.

I grabbed a plate from the buffet table and picked up a small tub of syrup.

“Luigi,” Lauren called from across the room.

“Yeah?” I asked, turning around.

“Want a watermelon?” Julie asked, mouth stuffed with the red, juicy fruit. A whole watermelon was carved out and sitting next to Julie. There was a half-eaten one in her lap. Clearly, she suffered from some kind of watermelon disease. “They’re addictive!”

“Okay,” I said. I started to approach them, but Lauren held out her hand.

“Let me throw you one,” she said.

“Uh... is that really a good idea?” I asked, but she didn’t give a response.

“Think fast!” she said, and hurled the huge fruit at me. I tried to catch it, but it hit me squarely in the side, fate has it, directly over the gash that Tatanga had given me last night. Hot pain surged through the area surrounding the wound.

“Ow,” I gasped quickly, my voice a barely audible squeak. Then everything went black.

“Luigi!” came Daisy’s voice from in front of me. I forced my eyes open, and realized that I was in a rather humiliating state. I hadn’t fallen to the floor; apparently I had only been knocked out for a minute or two. I was almost in a standing position. I was leaning on the buffet counter. My side was throbbing horribly; sweat was dripping down my face.

“I’m so sorry!!” Lauren screamed. “I can’t believe I didn’t see that coming!”

“It’s okay,” I said quickly. “I’m fine, really.”

"I'm glad to see that you're okay," Daisy said, smirking, "But your hair..."

I lifted my hand to the top of my head and realized that I had tipped the tub of syrup when I fell, knocking it upside down. Syrup was coating my hair. I felt my face go red in embarrassment.

"I'm fine," I repeated, and stood up. "I just...am going to go take a shower." I left the floor hurriedly, and pressed the button on the elevator to the fifth floor. My hand was clamped tightly to my side in an attempt to stop it from throbbing.

After doing the messy job of getting maple syrup out of my hair, I got dressed and spread shaving cream on my chin. I had just started to get rid of my five o'clock shadow when someone knocked on the bathroom door.

"Ow!"

"You still in there?" Daisy asked.

"Yeah," I said. Her voice had startled me so badly that my hand jerked and dug the razor into my cheek. I dabbed at the cut (that really didn't hurt at all,) with a tissue, but not before a single drop of blood splattered onto the side of the sink. It disappeared with a puff of yellow smoke.

I stared at it in amazement. How did that happen? No liquid ever evaporated that fast, and how come my blood hadn't done that last night?

I looked back up at my reflection, face half-covered in shaving cream. (I resembled Santa Claus.) The cut that I had just given myself was gone. Mario and I had been given amazing abilities that night on Yoshi's Island, such as amazing jumping, speed and endurance, and one that just showed, incredibly fast healing. The side effects to these strengths were that we were both annoyingly easy to knock unconscious. I sighed and didn't give that strange drop of blood another thought.

An hour or two later, Mario was raring to get started on the search for Cackletta. I wasn't so enthusiastic. Neither was Wario.

"Some vacation," he kept on saying.

Chompy stayed with Peach. I bid him and Daisy goodbye, and made the short walk to the warp pipe.

As soon as we got to the Stardust valley, (and Waluigi stopped coughing up purple dust,) we entered the all-too familiar fortress.

"Okay," I said. "We know our way around half this place. Where do we go?"

"To the other half," Mario said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"And how do we get there?" Wario asked, a tone of annoyance in his voice.

“Well, there’s a door over there,” Mario said.

“Gee,” I said, scratching the back of my head. “This story is really convenient for us.”

“Well, don’t argue with the author, “ Waluigi said. “Let’s go.”

“Hey, that’s my line,” Mario whispered to me. I laughed.

Waluigi pushed open the door. A funny tingling formed in the mark of Cackletta on my chest. It was strange... I had practically forgotten about that mark.

I pressed my finger to it, and the feeling returned to normal. Mario scratched his forehead.

“Alright, now what is this?” Waluigi said. He was leaning over a platform with a clock on it.

“I don’t know,” Wario said. “Step on it.”

Waluigi tapped the platform with his shoe. It flashed blue for a brief second.

“Cool,” he said. I wanted to try, so I set my foot in the middle of the clock, covering the hour hand. It flashed again. Some sort of code appeared in the air above the platform. The entire room was blue now; it was sort of funny to see all of us with blue faces.

Then the platform showed a picture of me and some of my information. It said “Name: Luigi Mario, Height: 5’6, Weight: 135 lbs, Eye color: cerulean, Hair color: D. Brown.” Then it had a long page consisting entirely of the letters A, G, C and T.

“Cool,” Mario said. “That’s your DNA code.”

But there was a problem, it said age: 76.

“You’re seventy-six years old?” Waluigi asked, with a laugh.

“No, you idiot. I’m twenty-three.” I said, keeping my eyes on the letters.

There was a huge flash of light, and a man was now standing on the platform. He rubbed his eyes sleepily and looked around.

With a large nose and thick, black moustache that took up a lot of his thin face, he was rather unusual looking. (But not ugly, mind you.) His large, vibrant blue eyes were looking around in a confused manner. They had a spot of violet, as well. He had medium-tint brown hair (With some gray in it,) that looked even more unusual going with his black eyebrows and moustache. He wasn’t very tall, standing at only around 5’5 or 5’6. Long sideburns reached down the side of his face.

I gasped. That was almost exactly how I described myself in chapter one!

9 - The Beanstar

I stared, mouth agape, at the platform. If by chance the man on the platform was me, was I dead or something?

"Is there something on my shoe?" the man asked. He had a deep, rich voice and spoke in a heavy Italian accent.

"Wooooaaah!" Mario said, smiling. He approached the platform, face turned to me. "Is this what you're going to look like when you're old?"

"Are you calling me old?" the man asked, smirking.

"Are you Luigi?" he asked, ignoring me.

"Yeah," the man replied. "And boy, do I remember when I was you today." he pointed at me.

"When you were me?" I asked. "What, are you from the future?"

"What year is it?" he asked.

"2004,"

"Then yes," he said. He put his hands on my shoulders.

"Listen," he said. "Don't you dare take Daisy to Teehee Valley. Got me? She's going to ask if you want to go. Say no, go to the castle town instead."

"Why?" I asked, eyes narrowing.

"You'll see. And go to the Castle town meeting in three years. Believe me, you'll enjoy it."

"Okay," I said, mouth curving into a smile. "Do you know where the Beanstar is?"

"Sure," he said. "You're the one who's going to find it, anyway."

"Where is it?" Wario asked.

"In the fifth floor closet," my future self replied. "And Cackletta isn't what you think."

"I've got so many questions," I said. "How old are you?"

My future self frowned. "Seventy-six," he whispered. "The best year of your life will be when you're twenty-eight."

“Okay,” I said. Duh... that’s why the platform said 76.

“How long will this hurt?” I asked, and pointed at my side.

“Until tomorrow,”

“Is it fun ruling Sarasaland?” Mario asked.

“Sure,” he said, smiling, showing all of his teeth. “But you have a better time ruling the Mushroom Kingdom.”

“Really?” Mario asked, smiling just as wide.

“Do I still hate you?” Waluigi asked.

“Sort of.”

“Is Daisy okay when she’s 78?” I asked.

“Yeah,” My future self said with a small sigh. “Though having two forty-eight year old kids with teenagers of their own is tough on yo-“ His hands clapped over his widely grinning mouth. I felt my jaw drop.

“Oops... wasn’t supposed to tell you that.” he said quickly. My face was burning. I could imagine that it was as red as Julie’s hair. Mario was laughing hysterically.

“Hey, hey, don’t laugh, you’ve got three of ‘em.” Mario shut up abruptly, and his face went red too. He stared at the floor.

“Well, it was nice talking to me,” my future self said with a chuckle. “Remember, the Beanstar is in the northern closet on the fifth floor. And Wario... don’t get that beard when you turn 45.” And with a quick blink, he was gone.

“Woah,” I said, exhaling loudly. “This story really is 100% fiction. Is it even possible to have a conversation with yourself like that?”

“No,” Waluigi said. “That’s why this story is based on video game characters.”

“Right,” Mario said. “Still, that was pretty neat. I want to try!”

Wario grabbed his arm just before he shot forward and set his foot on the platform.

“Let’s go get that Beanstar so we don’t have to come back tomorrow.”

“Fine,” Mario said, disappointed. “Okay. How do we get to the fifth floor?”

Waluigi pointed at a staircase leading up.

“Okay...” Wario said, and walked in front of us. He climbed one stair, and paused.

“What?” I asked.

“Creating dramatic tension,” he said with a laugh. He set his foot down and made his way up to the second floor.

“The staircase ends here,” Wario said. “It doesn’t go up three more floors.”

“Then we need to find another,” Mario said. “It shouldn’t be too hard.”

“There’s a bunch of doors around here,” Waluigi said. “We ought to split up.”

“I’m with Mario,” I said quickly. But I didn’t really need to say that, because Wario had grabbed Waluigi’s sleeve in an almost protective manner.

“Okay,” Mario said. “You guys go through that door, we’ll go through this.” Mario turned briskly past me and left. I followed him.

“You said it was in a closet on the fifth floor,” Mario said.

“No I didn-“ I began, but stopped. “Right.”

“There-“ Mario said. It was getting dark, there were no windows, and so I lit a spark at the tip of my index finger and illuminated the room.

“There’s a staircase. Come on.” Mario grabbed the handrail and with a small “Ahh!” quickly retracted his hand.

“It’s burning up,” he said. I remembered that the doorknob yesterday had been so hot.

“Wonder what caused that,” I said. “Yesterday, there was a doorknob that was really hot.”

“Well, it doesn’t matter.” Mario said. “Just don’t touch the handrail.” He took a step up the staircase.

“Watch your step,” He warned. “It’s pretty creaky.”

This staircase conveniently wended up all the way to the fifth floor. Mario planted his foot on the wooden floor of the fifth story, and didn’t move for a second.

“What’s wrong,” I asked, not making that a question.

“I think the floor is hollow or something,” he said. “I’m just making sure it’s sturdy enough to walk on.”

“I think it is,” I said, and walked past. It was, but very creaky.

“So it’s supposed to be in a closet,” Mario said. “There’s a bunch of small rooms here. Let’s look around.”

I slid open the door to an empty, dusty room. It was very small. A single window was on the opposite wall. Other than that, it was completely empty.

I left the doorway of that room and went to the next. This was a sliding door, too. I poked my head into the room and looked around. This room was the opposite. It was full of trinkets and toys, and in the corner, a small, floating star.

“I’ve got it!” I yelled to Mario. “I’ve got the Beanstar!” My future self was right... I was the one who found it.

I coughed from the large amount of dust I kicked up by rummaging through some of the boxes and brushed myself off.

“Hey...” I said, looking around and noticing that Mario was gone. “Where’d you go?”

I heard footsteps behind me and whisked around.

“Mario?” I asked. But it wasn’t him... well, it could have been, but I didn’t see anyone.

“Where did you go?” I asked in exasperation.

I felt warm air down my neck. I turned around and saw a phantom, one that was a head taller than me, draped in a long, black cloak.

“AUUUGHHH!” I screamed, and dropped the Beanstar.

Flash.

“Hey, Waluigi was right,” Mario said. “That was fun!” He pulled the cloak off his head and there he was, standing on a cinder block.

I tossed the Beanstar at him. “You loser!” I pulled off my wristband and put it back on.

He laughed. “Well, good you found it. Let’s go find Wario and Waluigi.” he paused for a second and looked at the floor.

“It’s awfully damp in here,” he said after a second. “Is there a mist fountain nearby or something?”

But a horrible feeling rose in my stomach. The last time the room was this misty and damp was when...no way...

“The mansion,” I whispered.

“Pardon?” Mario asked, now bored and clutching the Beanstar loosely.

“The mansion! The haunted mansion! The last time the room was like this was when I had to brave that haunted mansion!” I wailed.

A little of the color drained from Mario’s face. “But this is Cackletta’s fortress.” He said, “Not a haunted mansion...”

“I know.” I mumbled, staring at my feet. “I suppose I’m being paranoid again.” Mario chuckled.

“Again, you got that right. Now, where do you think Wario and Walu-“

His eyes widened to a huge size, though it seemed like it was in interest rather than horror. His mouth was agape.

“Luigi, I think you ought to move,” he whispered.

“Move?” I asked, feeling my breathing rate rise. “Move from what?”

He raised his finger, slightly trembling. “Just turn around.”

Slowly, shakily, I turned my head and made eye contact with the horrible ghost of Cackletta.

10 - Mario's Plan

I let a small “*Augh!*” escape my lips and stumbled back. And with a flash, I was a king... nice thought. Cackletta hung in the air, smirking.

“You guys are so stupid,” she said. “You fell right into my trap! I was hoping you’d come here.”

Mario had his face buried in one hand. But he was *laughing*.

“*Are you psycho?*” were the thoughts that zipped through my mind.

“Don’t laugh,” Cackletta said in an almost offended tone. Actually, it’s no matter. I like you two— though she glanced at me... “Dead better than obvious.” She formed a sword, it was pretty long and dripping with what was obviously poison.

“Puh-leeze!” Mario said, in exasperation. “Is that the weapon that is so new?”

“Sure,” Cackletta said proudly. “Pure Boo Poison.”

“If you didn’t beat us last year, what makes you think that you’ll succeed this year?” Mario asked. He didn’t seem scared at all, but my heart was racing viciously.

“Oh, you’ll see.” She said. Her ghost started shining. She just floated there; he almost looked like a holographic statue... Mario tossed me the Beanstar and slowly approached her in order to investigate.

“Shouldn’t we be worried at all?” I asked, my grip on the Beanstar tightening.

“Nah,” Mario said. “She’s not so hard.” I got his idea immediately. Cackletta wanted us dead as revenge for last year, but she was quite stupid. (In my opinion.) Her sidekick, Fawful, was the brains of the group, and he was nowhere in sight. So, she’d have some faulty in her plan, and this was going to be easy! I was comforted by that thought. My pulse and breathing rate went down.

“Well,” he said, swishing at her. “I suppose this is one of her new moves...?” Cackletta turned into a cloud, and that cloud slammed and disappeared into Mario’s head, exactly on the spot where his Cackletta mark was. He let out a quick wail of pain, and collapsed.

“*Mario!*” I screamed, feeling my pulse pick back up.

But he only stayed down for a second. Apparently, all Cackletta had done was whack him in the head.

“Woah,” Mario said, putting his hand to his forehead. “You’re right, Mario. That did hurt.”

I stared at my older brother. His accent was gone, and he was talking to himself. He bent down slightly and poked at the back of his ankle.

“Wo-hoa,” he said, lightly laughing. “Feet. It’s been a while.” He picked his leg up, and then put it down with great interest. “Nice. Now, what was I doing... oh yeah!” And for the first time, I noticed that his eyes were blood red. They met up with mine, and Mario slowly approached me.

“I’ll just finish what I came here to do.” He lifted his hand and quickly pinned me by the neck to the wall.

“*Mario!*” I choked in panic. “*What’s going on!*” Mario bent down, still choking me, and picked up the sword that Cackletta had made. I froze in fear. *He was going to kill me!*

“*Stop!*” Mario shrieked, and with what seemed like a ton of effort, pulled his hand away from my neck. “Don’t you dare... *Silence!*” he yelled. Mario was arguing with himself?

“*Don’t you dare touch him! No, foolish boy!*” He was seemingly struggling against himself, raising his arm to choke me again, snapping it back, trying to step backwards, and approaching me again... was he dancing or something? “You aren’t going to use me like this! Oh, I am!” he kept yelling, his accent coming on and off.

For a second, I had forgotten about being scared. Right now, all I felt was confusion. Had Mario lost his mind? My eyes were narrowed, mouth agape.

“Mario, what are you doing?” I asked.

“Luigi, run! No! Stay put! Get out of here! Once I kill him, I’ll destroy the rest of your family, too! *YOU CAN’T! I WON’T LET YOU!* You can’t fight back! Don’t try!” Mario said.

I had no idea what to do! Should I leave him? He was going insane! Or, should I try to help? But how would I do that?

Then it hit me... Cackletta must have possessed him!

No way, I told myself. That kind of stuff only happened in biblical times! But that’s the only explanation I’ve got now...besides, she did it to Bowser...

“Boy,” I said aloud, “This story is getting more fictional by the second!”

“You can’t win!” Mario screamed, and then fell to a crawling position. All of a sudden, he stopped struggling. His eyes grew wide, and he slowly exhaled.

“You’re right,” he whispered, chest heaving. “I can’t. You’re stronger than I am. Thaaaat’s a good boy. Now go ahead... kill him, or we can do this all night.” Mario formed a sword with his Fire powers, almost identical to mine; only it was red-orange and surging with flames rather than electricity.

I froze in horror. Mario was stronger than I was. And infused with Cackletta...?

You’re doomed, Luigi, I told myself. *I’ve got to run for it!* But my legs wouldn’t move. Mario *had* to be joking.

Mario shakily raised the sword in my direction.

"I have no choice but to do this, Luigi," he said in a very solemn tone. "Excellent! Now with him out of the way, I'll just go ahead and get rid of Princess Peach, and Princess Daisy, and ...ooh! Yoshi too! They can't resist you, can they? This will be fun, won't it?"

"Mario, you *can't*..." I whispered, shaking my head slightly, and backed up against the corner.

"I already told you," he said hopelessly in his normal-accented voice, so I knew it was really Mario saying that, not Cackletta. "I have no choice." He raised the sword and held it at my chest level. There was no escape...

"Love ya, Bro," he said quietly, smiling through a few small tears in his eyes.

I was stunned with horror. I couldn't breathe, blink or anything. He lifted the sword slowly, with a kind smile on his face, a smile that was not made by Cackletta. And to my horror...

...He stabbed the sword through his own chest.

I let out a horrified, strangled scream. Cackletta did as well, and escaped from Mario's head in a puff of light.

Mario fell backwards, and his sword clattered on the floor a few feet away from him.

My hands rushed to cover my mouth involuntarily. I couldn't feel my legs; I was frozen in the spot where I stood.

"Noo..." was all I could muster to say. "*No!*" a single tear dripped down my face. The room was so quiet that I actually heard it give a tiny "splat" on the floor.

My hands and knees were shaky. I tried to keep ahold of the Beanstar, but my fingers were trembling too badly and I dropped it. My vision started to cloud and head started spinning. I half-expected myself to faint. I finally got feeling of my legs as I slowly made my way, the agonizing ten feet walk, to Mario's crumpled figure. His face wasn't white; he looked normal, and he was smiling as if satisfied. Another tear dropped off of my face and landed on his sword, which sparked and disappeared in a puff of smoke.

In one swift move, his eyes opened and he sat up.

"Is she gone?" Mario asked. But I couldn't answer. I was surprised into shock. Mario laughed at the horrified expression on my face.

"Am I a good actor, or what!" he exclaimed and stood up.

"Bu- you-" I began, still in a state of shock. Mario was smiling, all teeth showing, at the ceiling.

"Loser!" he cried, still laughing. "You fell for it, Cackletta!"

I noticed that my mouth had dropped open, but didn't bother to close it.

"You want to know what just happened?" he asked, reading my mind. I nodded as much as I could (which was not a lot.) He smirked.

"I made Cackletta think I was going to kill myself. If I'd have done that, she would have been forced to depart to the afterlife, and... well... never come back." he snickered. "I'm, of course, immune to my own powers, so that sword didn't hurt me one bit."

"I can't *believe* you!" I shrieked, shaking with relief. "You scared me so badly!"

"Oh," He said sarcastically, crossing his arms. "Since when is that hard to do?" He smiled and patted my shoulder. "I'm completely alright," he said.

And immediately, the wall exploded open, and Wario and Waluigi rushed in.

"What took you guys?" Waluigi asked. "Come on! Did you find the Beanstar?"

"Yeah," I said, still a little breathless. "I've got it." I held up the star.

"Good," Wario said. "Now, let's get out of here. I'm hungry."

"We still need to get rid of Cackletta," Mario said. "But I think we'll leave that for later."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well," Mario said, leaving the room, "We're not in our home countries, right?"

"Yeah..."

"And usually, when you leave your home country, it's because you're on vacation?"

"I suppose..."

"Then let's not make that statement a lie," he said. "After all, I didn't pack sunglasses to eat!"

11 - Now, This is what I Call a Vacation!

I couldn't have been happier to be back at the hotel. It was only about noon, and we had made up our minds to not go Cackletta hunting for a while.

Daisy rushed up to me, an ecstatic look on her face.

"Luigi! It's on the news, a really awesome parade is going on in Teehee Valley!" she said. "Let's go!"

My mind raced. My future self had forbidden me to go.

"Uh... "I said. "Why don't we go to the Castle Town instead?"

"Why?" Daisy asked, disappointed.

"Because," I said. "They've got everything there... they've got shops and food and you can tour the castle... and a beach really close by."

Daisy dropped her shoulders. "I wouldn't mind shopping for a souvenir and going to the beach."

"Then let's do it!" I said quickly. "We need to drop off the Beanstar at the Castle anyway." I held it out for her to see.

"You got the Beanstar back!" she said, delighted. "So that's what it looks like."

"Yep," Mario said. "It wasn't so hard." he smirked at me, but I frowned.

"Then let's go." Wario said. "I like the beach."

After changing into vacation clothes, (I loved Daisy's bathing suit. It was rather revealing. However, Wario looked a little disturbing in a wetsuit) all of us, including Chompy and Yoshi, made our way to the warp pipes south of the hotel. Julie, Ricky and Lauren were standing there.

"Hi guys!" Julie said happily. "We're going to the beach!" And you could tell. All three of them were in bathing suits, and sunglasses that matched. Julie was carrying a towel with a ...picture of... me on it.

"So are we!" Peach said. "We've got to make a stop at the castle first, but then I guess we'll see you three there!"

"Actually, I wanted to go to the castle, too," Ricky said. "Mind if we follow you?"

"Not at all," Peach chirped. "Feel free."

An ecstatic smile spread across Julie's face. "Holy crap..." she whispered. "I'm going traveling with

Mario and Luigi! I've gotta admit, this is pretty sweet." Julie had an interesting way of talking. Lauren, however, scoffed.

"That castle's been empty for days now," she said. "There's not anything interesting there."

But we all went into the pipe anyway. Chompy went first. Nobody wanted him accidentally sprawling over them. As I was sucked into the pipe alongside Mario, I crashed into something cold and hard. Stars blinking in my eyes, I noticed in the pipe's dim light that Chompy was hopelessly stuck.

Wario came bursting through the pipe and slammed into my back. All of the air was knocked out of my lungs.

"Chompyyyyyy..." I gasped. He whined in a pitiful way.

"What are we going to do?" Mario asked. The pressure of the pipe was building. The pipe seemingly wanted us on the opposite side of it. The pressure didn't make sandwiched between Mario, Wario and Chompy any more pleasant.

And pretty soon, our whole party was crammed into pipe three, clogging it severely. I was losing feeling of my right side with Wario, Lauren, Yoshi and Daisy being pressed into it. It was like there was an invisible hand, forcing all of us into one huge pile, stuck like magnets.

"Wow..." Julie kept saying. "I'm going to die with Mario and Luigi."

There was a loud ripping noise, and a horrible scent reached my nose. Lauren laughed.

"Sorry," Wario said. My stomach lurched.

Waluigi and Daisy started laughing as Yoshi threw up all over Peach's bathing suit. She let out a scream of disgust as dead mosquitoes, a computer mouse, a billfold that I recognized to be mine, (so that's where my wallet went...) toilet water, fragments of a wooden table, doll stuffing, half-digested waffles and pancakes, fifteen apple pieces and a long, stringy piece of half-digested cheese slid down her very expensive bathing suit cover-up.

"I have to go pee," Ricky complained. "And this is boring."

I groaned loudly as Chompy started fidgeting. He was having a hard time doing so, but he was slowly inching forward. I swallowed hard. "I think Chompy is trying to move," I said.

"Good," Mario growled. "I can't feel my butt."

Chompy slowly inched his way to the edge of the pipe and was free. With a huge explosion-like noise, all ten of us (excluding Chompy) crash-landed into the dirt of the castle garden. I was slammed into a mud puddle, and I could hear Julie screaming with excitement as she flew over my head and landed in a huge pile of dog mess.

I pushed myself up and noticed that Waluigi was hanging from a light post, Wario had flown into a sign

and dented it, Ricky had landed head-first into the castle's landfill, Mario was pulling himself out of the riverbanks, Lauren was trying to pry herself out of a thorny rosebush, Yoshi was swimming in his own puke, and both Peach and Daisy had landed safely in a flowerbed.

I stood up and tried as desperately as I could to get the mud off of me. Then I remembered... if I made the wristband activate, my clothes would change... and then I'd change back and be back to normal!

So I did just that, and it turned out exactly the way I hoped it would. Yoshi jumped into the river to get all of the half-digested waffles off of his skin, while Mario was wringing out his shirt on the grass. Julie was, perhaps, the unluckiest. She had a huge amount of sticky, brown feces in her fiery hair, and had to dunk her head in the river to clean it out. Still, she wasn't able to get it all off of her shirt.

As soon as we were all in our right minds again, we approached the castle gates. I dreaded going to the castle. Prince Peasley lived there, and though I knew that he really wasn't such a bad guy, he just freaked me out a little.

"Here's the castle," Daisy said, knocking me out of my little trance.

"I know what to do," Mario said and walked in. His clothes were dripping wet; a huge puddle of water was forming under his feet. We must have looked quite strange... two of our party members dripping wet, one of them smelling strongly like poop, one of them smelling strongly like trash, one with mud all over his hair. The Castle was just the same as last year; huge and echoing.

"This way," Mario said. I knew where he was going, to the queen's chamber.

We turned down two simple hallways. I hardly took thought to it, but the castle was rather empty.

"Gee," Daisy said, with a small laugh. "These people like green more than you do, Luigi!"

"I think I'll actually believe that," I said.

"Um... excuse me?" came a timid voice from above. "A little help?" All eleven of us lifted our heads and looked up. What seemed like fifty million Bean people were stuck to the ceiling.

"Holy crap!" Julie said. "What are you all doing up there?"

"It's not our fault we're up here," Queen Bean said. I was amazed that she was sticking to the ceiling, as she was probably sixteen times bigger than I was, but only a little taller. That must be some strong glue. "Poppo, that stupid bandit, trapped us all up here."

I gulped. "How can we help?"

"This glue is especially weak when warmed," a castle guard said. "Could you heat it up?"

"Sure!" Lauren and Mario said in unison. They both shot fire sparks at all of the bean people, and all 78 of them fell, facedown, to the floor.

Queen Bean crashed to the floor, cracking the tile. She got up and brushed herself off.

"Well, we came to give you the Beanstar back," Mario said. I handed it to her, but she had a surprised look on her face.

"Wow," she said. "You know, I never noticed that it was gone."

Mario's jaw dropped. "You didn't?!"

"Nope," she said. "But thank you anyway."

"Sure," Mario said. He turned to face the rest of the group.

"Well... shall we?" he motioned for us to leave.

"Yeah!" Lauren said. "I haven't been to the beach in a while!"

Peach bent down and picked up her beach bag. "Hey," she said after looking around a little, "Where'd Rick go?"

She was right; he was gone.

"Wait," Waluigi said. "Didn't he say that he had to go to the bathroom?"

"Oh, yeah," Daisy laughed.

Ricky met us outside.

"Sorry," he began, but Peach nodded approvingly.

"I'll take Chompy down the path to the beach," I said. "The rest of you can travel by pipe."

But nobody wanted to.

It was a short, pleasant walk to the beach. Daisy hummed a song that I couldn't identify the whole way. Julie and Lauren were going on and on about Harry Potter characters. All in all, this was one of the first good times I've had at the Beanbean Kingdom... ever.

"There it is," I said, and pointed at the sand on the horizon. The beach was the same too; a couple of bean people surfing, a couple of bean people tanning, and a couple of bean people eating each other.

"Here we are," Mario said. I pulled off my shirt and tossed it in the sand. I didn't want to do anything today; I only wanted to sleep like I was seventeen again.

I laid out my towel and sat down on it. Despite the rotten morning, today was a pleasant day with a pleasant temperature of 86. Hopefully, that didn't mean that the water was cooled down. It was one in

the afternoon.

"Luigi," Daisy said. "Do you want some sunscreen?"

"Nah," I said. "That stuff smells bad."

Daisy sat down next to me and put her hand on my cheek.

"Oh..." she said slowly and almost trancelike. "But, you don't want to ruin that beautiful skin of yours by just getting a sunburn!"

After a second of staring at me, I yelled, "Give me that!" and grabbed the sunscreen bottle.

Daisy laughed slightly and walked off. Peach joined up next to her, and they went on talking about how easy men were.

After coating myself with sunscreen, (that made me smell strange,) I laid on my back and fell asleep almost instantly.

"Hey, Luigi! Get up!"

I opened my eyes and saw Mario. His face was inches from mine.

"Come on," he said. "Quit being lazy. Wario challenged us to a race!"

I sat up. "A swimming race?"

"Yeah," Mario said. "First one to the buoy over there is the winner!"

I stood up. "Oh, alright. Where do we start?"

Wario was signaling for us to come to the edge of the water. Waluigi was standing there, in a wetsuit that matched Wario's. I walked to the edge of the water and stood, ankle-deep. The water was a pleasant temperature.

"Ready?" Daisy asked. "Set..."

But before she said "go," all four of us were rushing into the waves. Before I knew it, I was diving into water that was deeper than I was tall. I lifted my head out of the water to catch a glimpse of Mario slowly inching in front of me. He reached his hand out just before I did and tagged the buoy.

"Dang," I panted, breathless. "You win."

Mario grinned widely. "Cool," he said.

"I want to go back to sleep," I said, and turned around and swam to the shore.

"Who won?" Peach asked.

"Mario, like usual," I said, with a yawn. I had just begun to turn around and lie back down on my towel when a pair of tiny arms fastened themselves around my waist.

"Daddy!" squealed a small girl's voice. I turned around. A girl who looked around the age of six was giving me the biggest hug she possibly could. She had hair similar to the color of Daisy's, and the brightest cerulean-violet eyes I've ever seen. She was wearing an expensive-looking sundress.

"Daddy...?" I asked, confused beyond belief.

"Yeah!" she said, letting go of me.

"Sorry, kid..." I began. "I don't think I've ever met you."

She pouted. "But-but... you look just like him!" her huge eyes got even bigger.

"What's your father's name?" I asked her. She shrugged. "I don't know. He said his name is Daddy."

"Do you know where he is?" I asked. She was probably a missing child who had mistaken me for her father.

"Yeah. He said he would be here."

The only people here were bean people, and this little girl was human.

Daisy appeared behind me.

"Mommy!" shrieked the girl.

"Excuse me?" Daisy asked, obviously baffled.

"This girl thinks we're her parents," I whispered to Daisy.

"Does she," Daisy said. "What's your name?"

"Rooooooose," she said.

"Oooh, I like that name," Daisy said.

"I'm a princess," Rose said, with a huge grin.

"Of course you are," I said. "Come with us... we'll help you find your parents." she pouted again.

"But I did," she said.

"Come on," Daisy said, and took her by the hand. Mario approached me. His eyebrows met in confusion.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"Some missing girl," I said. "We'll take her to the police and see if we can find her parents."

"Have fun," Mario said, and walked off.

I pulled my shirt on.

"My daddy likes green," Rose said.

"Green's a nice color," I said.

The police station was in the castle town. It didn't take long to get there, and the whole time we traveled Rose went on and on about what her father was like. I had to admit, he did sound a lot like me.

"My daddy likes cherry pastries..." it was starting to become a little annoying.

We approached the police station about five minutes later.

"Can I help you," Said the fat Bean cop at the desk.

"We found this girl," Daisy said. "She's lost her parents."

"I see," he said, with a chomp of his doughnut. "What's your name, little missy?" he asked.

"Rose," she said. "I'm a princess."

"Of course you are," the cop said. "Do you know where your mommy and daddy are?"

Rose pointed at me with one hand, and at Daisy with the other.

"We've never seen her before," Daisy said. "Honest."

"Yes, you two do look a bit young to have a child her age... well, we'll post a found child report. For now... we'll give you guys permission to look after her."

"But we're on vacation," Daisy said. "We don't live here."

"It will just be for tonight," the cop said with a sip of Chuckola cola.

"I suppose we could do it," I said. "She can sleep on the pullout couch in the hotel."

"Fine, okay," Daisy said. "We'll call you tomorrow." we left.

"Can I have an ice cream?" Rose asked. "Princesses deserve ice cream."

"Yes, they do," Daisy said, with a grin and glanced at me. I sighed; I was outnumbered.

"Oh, alright." I said. I pulled a couple of dollars from my half-digested wallet. "We could each get a cone."

"Yay!" Daisy and Rose squealed in unison. They had eerily similar personalities.

After buying some ice cream, we met back up with the rest of our party at the hotel. Everyone wanted to know who Rose was. Julie frowned, she usually didn't do too well with young children.

"We've adopted her for tonight," Daisy explained with a sigh. Chompy seemed interested in Rose.

"My daddy has a pet chain chomp," she said.

"Your daddy has everything." Waluigi sighed.

"He does," Rose said, beaming. "'Cause I'm a princess."

"Sounds more like a brat to me," Wario whispered. Waluigi laughed.

"Well... shall we all go get lunch?" Peach asked.

"Not here," everyone said at once. Ricky laughed.

"There's a cafe in Stardust valley," Mario said. "Or we could get a sandwich at the coffee house."

"A brownie from the coffee shop sounds great," Lauren said.

"Sweeeeet." Julie droned. She and Lauren laughed.

"I like sweets," Rose said.

That night, Rose had found her way into my suitcase and was wearing my clothes. She looked quite funny with shirts and pants that were far too big on her.

"I think you ought to go to bed now," I said, as soon as the clock hit 9:30.

"No way," she said. "I'm not tired. A princess can stay up late." I sighed.

"Then here; watch a movie."

"No!"

"Then what do you want to do?" I asked. I was getting a little agitated, but I had no idea how to take care of a kid.

"My daddy always gives me fireworks before I go to bed," she said. I snickered.

"Tell me about him," I said. It seemed like talking about her father was a favorite pastime. I wanted to give her something pleasant to do.

"Well," she said. "You look just like him. 'Cept... he's oooooold." I laughed. So did she.

"He's got a funny moustache too," she said. "It's the wrong color."

"The wrong color?" I asked.

"Yeah. His hairs aren't black, but his moustache is."

I glanced sideways at her. "Right," I said.

"My uncle says that my daddy is kind of stupid," she said with a loud laugh. "My uncle likes to read my daddy's diary. He said so."

"Sounds like a mean uncle," I said.

"No, he's not mean... he's funny. My uncle looks just like my daddy. They're... uh... twins."

"Are they really?" I asked, knitting my eyebrows.

"Yeah. And they're both SUPERHEROES."

"Are they," I said with a snicker. "Do they have costumes and save people?"

"Noooo..." she said and yawned. "But they both have super powers. And they do save people."

"Super powers? Do either of them have heat vision?" I asked jokingly.

"No..." she repeated. "But he has lightning in his hands. He can zap people. I think he calls his powers..." she yawned again. "Thunderbrand, or something like that."

"Really... does he..." I began, but paused. Her father could use the Thunderbrand? How else would she know about it...

"You look just like my daddy, 'cept your hair has no white." she said again.

"Do you know your mother's name?" I asked.

"Mommy," she said.

"What about your uncle?"

"Umm..." she said, and put her finger to her mouth. "Uncle Mario."

12 - Cackletta's First Trick

I was dumbfounded. I don't have any kids, Daisy and I aren't even married yet. Yet, as I looked at Rose, I realized that she looked exactly like me... well, except being a girl. But Rose had the same eyes, mouth, ears, frame... everything I did. She was my mirror image, only female...

But it just didn't make sense. It was too coincidental. What other man on earth named Mario has a twin brother with a black moustache and brown hair who can use the Thunderbrand? Technically, Mario and I were both heroes, we've both saved tons of lives...

I turned around to talk to Rose again, but found that she had fallen asleep. I went through the double doors into the other room in our suite, where Daisy was reading a book.

"Get her to go to sleep?" she asked.

"Yeah," I said. "Listen. I think this girl really is ours."

Daisy knitted her eyebrows. "What?"

"Look at her, Daisy! She's got my face and your hair!" I sat down on the bed.

"Either we've both been genetically re-created, or we've both got an evil twin." Daisy snickered, to my surprise.

"I think your evil twin is two stories above us," she joked. I smiled.

"See... I don't know what to think," I said. "She just said that she's got an Uncle Mario..."

"Mario is a common name," Daisy said.

"Not just that, she said her dad can use Thunderbrand, and that he's a twin to her Uncle Mario."

"Listen," Daisy said. "You must have mentioned your ability during dinner and she got the idea to make up a story. Kids have vivid imaginations. Know how she likes to call herself a princess? She probably knows about superheroes and likes to think of her dad as one. And perhaps she has a twin sister, so she knows about twins. It's all in your head, Luigi."

I sighed. "I guess you're right," I said, pulling off my shirt. "I just can't get over how much she looks like me."

"Well, she said her dad looks like you, enough for her to mistake you for him. She takes after him, perhaps."

I snickered. "Then she's right," I said. "He must look just like me."

"I'm sure that by tomorrow the police will have found her parents." Daisy said. She stood up and went through the double doors. I followed her. Rose was snoring lightly.

"She's kind of cute when she's asleep, you know." Daisy said, with a quick glance at me.

"True." I said.

I woke with a start the next morning to see Daisy glancing out the window. The sky was as dark as if it were midnight, but the clock said 8:00 A.M.

"What's going on?" I asked, and stood next to her.

"Get a load of that sky," she said. "It looks horrible."

"This is probably the setup to a really strange climax in this story," Daisy said. I had to agree with her. I went through the double doors to see Rose sitting on the couch, eating ice cream out of a tub.

"Hi, Daddy," she said when I entered. "I'm watching the green people on TV!"

I sat down next to her. She set the ice cream tub down and grabbed the remote.

"What are the bean people saying?" I asked.

"Oooo.... I don't really know." Rose said. "They're talking about ghosts. My daddy likes to battle ghosts."

I glanced sideways at her, and then turned my attention to the TV. I realized that I had walked in at the precise time. The reporter on the news channel was trying his hardest to explain what was going on.

"News of a terrible storm brewing above Stardust Valley has hit, making the sky pure black..."

Stardust valley? Oh, dear... Cackletta.

"I need to go find Mario," I called to Daisy. "I'll be right back."

"I wanna go see Uncle Mario too," Rose complained.

"Fine, okay." I said. I was only going to go and see if Mario knew what was going on. Rose yelled with delight and threw off my shirt and pants that she was wearing, and she hurriedly pulled on her flowery sundress. I quickly put on my shirt and walked out the door.

"Daddy," Rose said. "Can I have a puppy?"

"Not now," I said. "Do you want to push the elevator button?"

"Yeah!" Rose squealed. She hit the buttons 5, 2, 8, 1, 9, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6.

"Just.... the 7." I said. She punched the button 7 about a hundred thousand times

"Oh, okay. Will that work?"

The elevator doors opened quickly.

"Yes," I said as she beamed, "That works."

It only took a few seconds to reach the seventh floor. Mario was leaning back in his recliner, watching the same TV program that I had been earlier.

"Hiluigi," he said quickly, without looking at me. He was wringing his hands in what I thought could be nervousness.

"Have you been watching this?" I asked and sat down in the chair next to him. Rose clung to my leg, sitting on the floor. Mario glanced down at her for a second, then his eyes returned to the TV.

"I just turned it on," he said. "I've only been awake for a little while."

"That sky is drastic," Peach said. "We're checking the weather channel."

The Bean reporter on TV was showing a forecast of the weather. Now, black clouds were above an orange sky.

"Daddy," Rose said. "Is it going to rain?"

"I don't know," I said quickly. "Watch the TV."

"The storm seems to be artificial, coming from above Stardust Fields."

"Cackletta," Mario said, with a snicker. "'Suppose we oughta go get rid of her."

"Can I go?" Rose asked hopefully.

"Stay here with Daisy," I said sternly.

"You sounded like Daddy when you said that," Rose said in a pouty way.

"That's nice," I said. "Now, run along. Me and Mario need to take care of something."

"My daddy doesn't like Cackletta either," Rose said.

Mario looked at her, eyes narrowed. "How does she know about Cackletta?" he asked me silently.

"She's just making it up about her dad not liking Cackletta," I said, taking Daisy's advice. Mario pursed his lips but nodded.

"See you later, Peach," he said. "We're going to go sort out this Cackletta business."

"Be careful," Peach said slowly.

"It's nothing," Mario said, with a warm smile. He rushed out the door, and I followed him.

"Should we find Wario and Waluigi?" I asked.

"Sure," Mario said. He turned down a few halls and rapped on the door of room 712.

Waluigi agitatedly opened the door. "Do you know what time it is-?" he asked, yawning.

"Eight," Mario said. Waluigi's eyebrows lifted in defeat. Rose giggled.

"Oh," he said. "Well, what do you want?"

"Have you been watching the news?" I asked. Waluigi rolled his eyes.

"No," he said. "I just woke up."

"Well, the reporters are saying that an artificial storm is brewing around the Stardust Fields," Mario said in a strangely professional tone. "We think it's got something to do with Cackletta."

Waluigi inhaled loudly. "Fine," he said. "Go get Wario."

"I don't know which room he's in," I said.

"Fine. I'll buzz him." Waluigi picked up a remote that I didn't recognize and pressed a large red button on it. Within a few seconds, Wario was standing at the door, rubbing his butt.

"I thought I told you to burn that," Wario said in a nasty tone.

"Wow," Mario whispered, impressed. "I may need one of those." He glanced evilly at me, and I raised an eyebrow. Rose laughed.

"You know," I said, "You may be immune to your own powers, but not to mine. Capiche?" I shot a spark out of my index finger. Mario smirked and looked back at Wario.

"So what did you want," he asked.

"Have you been watching the news?" Mario asked.

"Sure," he said. "I think I know what's going on well enough. Cackletta's doing something to the air?"

"Something," I said.

"Well, look what I've got," Wario said. He held out his hand, enclosed in his palm was a bright yellow orb.

"The transporter!" Mario exclaimed. "You had it all along?"

"Sure," Wario said. "I was the last one to travel through it last time, and managed to grab in on my way."

"Smart," Waluigi sneered. "Then let's go to Stardust Fields. How do we tell it where we want to go?" Mario paused and thought for a moment.

"I think it may be some kind of mind-reader," he said. "I think all of us need to somewhat...telepathically... tell it to go to Stardust fields."

"That seems really stupid," Wario said, eyes half closed.

"Well," Mario said, "It is really cheesy, but it's the only way we've got." Mario closed his eyes and walked toward the orb. He was gone with a flash.

I tried Mario's plan. Stardust Fields, I told the orb, and walked into it.

I opened my eyes to see Mario standing in front of Cackletta's fortress. It worked! I looked at my feet. Rose was clinging to my leg.

"Auuugh!" I screamed. "What are you doing here?"

"I want to help daddy look for Cackletta!" she chirped.

I frowned and looked at Mario. He looked interested.

"Oh, let her come," he said after a little while. Cackletta was dangerous. I got a hint that Mario was going to grow up to be a daredevil father.

Waluigi and Wario appeared behind me.

"Cool," Waluigi said. "It worked."

The orb flashed once more, and Julie, Lauren and Ricky landed in the dust behind them.

"What are you doing here!" Wario exclaimed.

Lauren looked around quickly.

"Hey," she began. "This isn't the South Park Timmy store!"

"Where are we?" Ricky asked.

"Stardust fields..." I began. "...We're looking for Cackletta."

"OOOOO!" Julie said, her large eyes widening even more. "Mario and Luigi are going on another adventure!"

"Want to come along?" Mario asked. "It's like we're having a party!"

Julie stared at me, eyes the size of apples. Her face went a little blue.

"Julie?" I asked. "Are you okay?"

"Get..." she sputtered. "Adventure... you..."

Wario laughed. "Dang, you really are an obsessed loser."

Julie snapped out of her little trance. "Of COURSE we'll go!"

Ricky and Lauren scoffed. "Fine," they said in unison.

Julie rushed next to me. "Sweet, sweet!" she kept whispering.

Mario opened the door to the fortress that I knew all too well by now. Only, Cackletta was floating over the desk in the middle of the room. She had that poisonous sword that I had seen her with last clutched tightly in her transparent hand.

Waluigi's large jaw dropped. "Gee, that was easy," I heard him whisper to Wario.

"So... you came to check out my little storm?" she asked.

"Woah," Mario said sarcastically. "You're some kind of psychic."

"Hey, you're supposed to be dead," Cackletta said as if annoyed. Mario pursed his lips in trying not to laugh, but he let a few snickers out.

"Let's have some fun," Cackletta said playfully after a minute of silence.

"After all, being a ghost means I can do anything!" She raised her hands. Rose let go of my leg.

The floor shined with a hypnotic blue light. All eight of us stared at it.

"Sweet," Julie whispered.

Some kind of snake-looking coil wrapped around my leg. It was nothing but light, but I could feel it. It was surprisingly cold, and after a second I couldn't feel my leg.

"What's going on?" Waluigi demanded of Cackletta. The same coils were now past his knees.

"You'll see," Cackletta said. "Have fun!" And she disappeared.

And then it was as if all hell broke loose. The light exploded. It was like a thick fog, so thick that I could only see the silhouette of Julie, because she had been standing right next to me. I could hardly see, but that wasn't what was bothering me now. I was staring at my hands. They were black and throbbing viciously.

I flexed my fingers in order to try and return them to normal, but now it hurt to move. It felt like my bones had a temperature of negative thirty degrees. My head felt funny, I could feel my hair flying around. After a few seconds of utter confusion, the light was gone.

I looked around in confusion. There were six people standing near me, but I didn't recognize any of them. The one closest to me was a relatively young woman clutching her forehead. She was very pretty with her wavy, flaming mid-arm length red hair that stuck out in a thousand places. She had long nails that were glossed, and was of ideal weight. She looked up after a second. I could tell that her eyes were brown, and a couple of freckles dotted her nose and cheeks. She looked to be around age thirty or so.

"My word..." someone said. I recognized it to be from a man standing not too far from her. He was pretty short and sported a black goatee. He could also stand to lose some weight. He had a cleft chin and small, malicious eyes that had blue rings under them. His messy brown hair was long and reached down past his shoulders. He, too, looked to be around thirty.

"Oh my gosh... look at us! This is insane!" The man next to him looked a little like my father. He had crisp cerulean/violet eyes and a very bushy moustache. He had thick eyebrows that looked strange with his very light brown hair. It was coifed neatly. He was shorter than I was, but not by too much, and looked like he could stand to lose a little weight.

The woman standing about seven feet to the left of him was looking around, seemingly as confused as I was. She had very long black hair with the ends of her hair dipped as firey red as the woman next to me. She was of ideal weight, too, and sported a small tattoo on the top of her arm that looked like a couple of circles and triangles morphed together.

I put my hand to my cheek and couldn't believe it. Not only was my face thinner than usual, my sideburns were now down almost to my jaw. I put my hand on the top of my head and saw that my hair was slicked back. I also noticed that my hair was longer, it almost reached to my shoulders. I looked at

my feet. With satisfaction, I realized that I was a little taller than usual.

"Uh... who are you guys?" I asked, and realized that my voice was incredibly deep.

"Who are YOU?" snarled a man that I hadn't noticed. He was incredibly tall and incredibly thin. He had hair the same tint as mine, only it was much, much shorter. He had a few select wrinkles in his forehead, and a couple of snake tattoos coiled around his arm. A moustache that was long and thin stuck out from under his large, pink nose.

"Mario?" I gasped, recognizing the man I thought looked a lot like my father.

"Do I know you?"

"It's me, Luigi..."

"HOLY CRAP!" exclaimed the woman next to me. She reminded me strongly of Julie. She was examining the back of her legs. "Look at me! I'm like... forty years old! And..." her eyes went to her chest. "Wo-ho-hoah," she said in astonishment. "Sweet."

Cackletta suddenly appeared in the middle of the floor, laughing hard.

"You guys look so funny! Yep, you've all aged to what you'll look like when you're thirty-five," she said, with a sneer.

13 - Cackletta's Invitation

"Thirty-five?" Wario asked. He was the man with the goatee. "This is me when I'm thirty five?"

"I'm thirty five?" Julie asked, seemingly overly happy. "REALLY? SWEET! I can drive!"

Cackletta frowned. "You like it?"

Julie dropped her shoulders.

"Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore. Of course I like it!"

Cackletta frowned even deeper.

Rose was sitting next to her. Somehow, she had avoided the charmed light, and was looking cheerful as her 6-year-old self.

"You know, Luigi, you ought to take care of your kids better," she said as Rose bounded up to me.

"What?" I asked, a little offended. "She's not my daughter."

"Yes, I am," Rose said. "Myyyyyy birthday is in the year 2024. Mommy told me."

Everyone in our party had their jaws dropped by now. None of them were as wide open as I was, though. Though perhaps you couldn't tell... as both of my hands had clamped over my mouth.

"She's from the future." Cackletta said. "I brought her here, just like you got to have a conversation with your future self."

I KNEW it!

"Holy CRAP!" Julie exclaimed again. "I could have predicted that!" She put her finger to her mouth. "Well... I suppose I did."

Rose hugged me around the waist again.

"You people are boring," Cackletta said, and disappeared in a puff of light.

"Seeeeeeee?" she said. "I really AM a princess."

Yes, she was...

"Wait a second," I said aloud. "You said that your Uncle Mario likes to read your father's diary."

"Yep," Rose said. "He learns so much about my daddy from that!"

I glared at Mario. His face was beet red, and he was sweating.

"I... I don't know where she gets that idea," he said nervously. "I have better things to do than find out that you're afraid of your own shadow..." His eyes widened and hands clamped over his mouth in horror of what he just said.

"Ah-ha!" I said. "That's a secret!"

Julie, Lauren, Waluigi and Wario were laughing to tears. Julie and Waluigi were wiping their eyes.

"Well anyway," Ricky said irritably, let's find a way to get back to normal.

"No way," Julie said, getting ahold of herself. She was brushing her hands from the base of her neck to her waist. "This figure rocks." Lauren laughed.

I picked Rose up. Wow... my own daughter.

"Princesses never lie," she said.

"I should hope not," I said under my breath. "Say... what am I like when I'm your dad?"

"What do you mean?" Rose asked, eyes widening.

"Well, what is your dad like?"

"Dead," Rose said quickly.

"Excuse me?" I asked, getting a little nervous. "Your father is dead?"

"Sure," Rose said. "I did it."

Her eyes flashed red, and her small hands attached themselves surprisingly strong around my neck.

I gathered all of my strength and threw her off of me. She landed on the floor.

"What's going on!" I demanded.

Mario leaped in front of me, holding his left hand in front of him like a gun.

"Don't move," he snarled. Rose took a step forward

"I said... don't move!" he shrieked, and he snapped his hand back, releasing a huge fireball that rammed

into Rose and slammed her into the wall on the other side of the room.

"Mario!" I wailed, not knowing whether to thank him or be angry with him. I tried to take a step forward, but Mario held his arm out, blocking me.

"Woah," Waluigi said, leaning over Rose. He laughed. "She's a robot."

"She's a what?" I gasped, pushing Mario's arm out of the way. Everyone rushed to get a better look, and sure enough, what I had thought was a six-year-old girl had springs and gears sticking out of her back.

"Gee," Ricky said. "She'll do anything to make you guys miserable!" he had remained quiet the whole time.

"Cackletta is a loser," Julie scoffed. "You guys can beat her again. She was cake for you two." Julie pointed at me and Mario.

I smirked. Mario smiled and shook his head.

"You really do know every detail of any adventure we've been on?"

"Sure," Julie said proudly.

"Well, we'd better find that witch," Wario said. "She keeps disappearing on us."

"She's on the roof now," Lauren said calmly.

"How do you know that?" Ricky asked.

"I just do," Lauren said. "Trust me."

"Fine," Mario said. "I know where the staircase is."

"No kidding?" I joked. "Come on."

As we walked through the long, winding hallways to get to the staircase, I was beginning to get a little annoyed with our teenage party members. Julie was finding huge fun in begging Waluigi to let her electrocute him with Thunderbrand, and anything that Lauren touched caught flame. (I stayed away from her.)

"Puh-leeeeeeze?" Julie begged. "I want to see if I still have my ability when I'm 35!"

"No!" Waluigi spat. "Use it on Luigi."

"But he's immune to it!" Julie wailed as I turned around and shot a funny glare at Waluigi.

"Then use it on Mario." I heard Waluigi whisper. "No... I've got a better idea."

He grasped Julie's shoulder and whispered something in her ear.

"Ooooooooooh!" she said, eyes widening. "That is a good idea!"

"What is?" Wario asked.

"We'll be right back," Waluigi said. "I'm going to show Julie something." Julie was snickering uncontrollably.

"Should we wait for them?" Ricky asked me.

"I guess," I said. "I wonder what they're doing."

"Probably beating her up," Lauren laughed.

There was a funny rushing sound behind me.

"What's that noise?" Mario asked.

I turned around. Two grim reapers were standing behind me, holding scepters that were taller than me and covered in blood.

"AUUUUGHHHHH!!" I screamed.

Flash.

"Woooooah," Julie said, pulling the cloak off of her head. Waluigi did the same. "That IS fun!"

"You-" I sputtered and took off my wristband.

Waluigi laughed and put a hand on Julie's shoulder.

"I like this kid," he laughed. "Good sense of humor!"

"Woohoo!" Julie said. I grumbled under my breath. Great... was Waluigi going to turn Julie into a Waluigi-ite? No... Julie's too madly obsessed with me.

Mario seemed to be fighting laughter. "Let's just keep going." he said quickly.

"Woah..." Wario said, and bent down. He picked up a gameboy off the floor.

"Sweet!" Julie said. "A gameboy Advance! I wonder what game's in here..." she flipped the switch on. It started rumbling and flashing like crazy.

"Is this a game?" Julie asked stupidly. But Mario and I recognized it immediately; it was a hologram messenger that Cackletta had used last year. And this is exactly what it was doing; sending us a message.

Julie dropped it, and Cackletta's silhouette appeared out of the gameboy.

"Haha, I was hoping you'd find this," she said in a snickering voice. "Anyway, if you do, then I want you to come visit me on the seventh floor!" (Everyone glanced at Lauren for predicting this.) "I've got something for you two-" She pointed at me and Mario... "To die for." she paused and put her finger to her mouth.

"Oh, haha, by the way, I want you all to look nice when you come visit. You can... haha, be kids again." She lifted her hand.

A cloud appeared at my feet, and with a blink of an eye, was gone. I stared at myself in the reflection of the window at the other side of the room. I was 24 again, only, I was dressed in a silk white tuxedo and my hair was slicked back neatly. I realized in horror that my wristband was gone.

Mario had a tux identical to mine, only it had an orange tint to it. Julie was 14 again and in a very long, emerald dress with elbow-length gloves. Her added sparkly jewelry that was stuck in her hair and around her neck made her look like she was about to go to a prom. Lauren was in black shorts with boots that came up to her knees, and a deep red shirt. She wore earrings that hung nearly as long as her hair.

Waluigi, Ricky and Wario looked surprisingly charming. They were in triplet suits, Wario's was yellow, Ricky's was navy blue, and Waluigi's was a dark purple. They all looked like they were about to meet the president.

"Haha, you all still look like clowns, but at least you're dressed nicely. Be seeing you." Cackletta said. She then vanished into thin air.

I felt all the blood drain from my face. She had something for us to die for?

"Woah," Waluigi said, studying my face. "How do you DO that?"

"How do I do what," I asked.

"Just make your face... white." He spread his hands in front of his face as if swimming. "Is there a flusher on the side of your head?"

I scoffed. "No, it's not a special ability."

Julie laughed. Her necklaces clinked together.

"See, I must be some kind of a psychic," Lauren laughed. I completely believed her.

I tugged at the bowtie around my neck. I didn't often wear ties and wasn't used to it at all.

"Well," Mario said, obviously liking his new duds, "Let's move on, I suppose."

It didn't take long to get to the staircase, but before I knew it, Lauren and Julie were going on talking about Harry Potter characters.

"I think Rupert's the oldest."

"Well, he actually portrays someone two years younger than him."

"No kidding?"

"Yeah. He's actually 15."

"Okay," Mario said, as if he was a tour guide on a roller coaster. "Follow me. I know which way to go."

"So do I," I said, knitting my eyebrows.

"Me too!" Julie said.

"You do?" Wario asked.

"Sure," Julie said. "I wrote this story."

"Well, don't give away the ending." Wario said sarcastically.

After a quick glance back at her, I cautiously grabbed the handrail to the staircase. It was the opposite of what I had expected; it was colder than ice.

"Cackletta's been here," I said.

"How do you know?" Ricky asked with interest.

"Believe me," I said, with a funny glance at him. "I know ghosts." Julie laughed, but Mario frowned.

We made our way to the second floor easily. By now, Julie was walking next to me. She seemed to walk faster than the rest of us. Her high heeled shoes made loud "clack" noises on the floor. It was funny; our entire party all looked like we were going to a wedding or very fancy party.

Wario kept turning around and looking behind him. Disappointed, he'd turn around, only to whip back around and find nothing. After a little while, it wasn't only me who noticed this.

"What are you doing?" Mario asked.

"I can't help but think there's something following us." he said slowly.

"You aren't trying to scare me?" I asked, exasperated.

"No, I'm serious." he said. Wario was in the back of our crowd, so nobody else could see if there was something behind him.

"I've got a good idea," Julie said. She pulled a mirror out of nowhere.

"Where'd you get that?" I asked, amazed.

"With Julie, all is possible," She said with a smile. "Let's keep going."

She held the mirror up slightly above her eye level and watched Wario through it. After a second, she gasped loudly.

"Wario, MOVE!" she shrieked.

Wario dove to the right, getting dust all over his bright yellow suit. I was standing behind Julie, and could see what was in her mirror. Wario turned around, still on the floor, and made eye contact with a small orange ghost.

"Get away from it, Wario!" I screamed. Small as they were, those ghosts were very dangerous. I shot a few sparks out of my hand, stunning the ghost. It stared, heart pounding, at my lighted hand, then disappeared.

"Great," Mario mumbled. "This place is haunted?"

"Cackletta must have some contacts," Waluigi said.

"With Vincent Van Gore?" I asked, as a drop of sweat made its way down my face. "But I imprisoned him years ago."

Mario's face went white. He didn't like to hear me talk about ghost paintings. Of course, I knew why.

Julie was a little pale, too. She knew, with GREAT detail, my haunted mansion ordeal, and how horrible it had been.

Wario was very quiet as Mario led us down all of the familiar hallways and staircases to the seventh floor. It consisted of a single room, one that was dimly lighted. Mario cracked the door open, and gasped sharply. He slammed the door shut, and leaning on it, panted heavily. On closer inspection, I realized that his eyes were now a bright gray.

"Mario, what's in there?" I asked.

He was panting heavily, shaking his head.

"Luigi, don't look... please, don't look..." he panted in an almost sad, scared way.

"What's in there?" I asked again. Mario slowly moved away from the door, shaking madly.

I grabbed the doorknob, but didn't turn it.

"Luigi, don't..." Mario gasped.

"But what is in there?" Ricky asked.

"Horrible, horrible..." Mario panted, his hand moving slowly to cover his mouth. It was scary to see the drastic change in the color of his eyes. He was standing on the stair behind me, but directly in front of Waluigi. Everyone was as confused as I was. Something in that room was obviously terrible to Mario, and I wanted to fix it...

I cracked open the door, just like Mario had, and gasped loudly. It felt as if someone had taken an ice pick and stabbed it through my chest.

14 - Up a Notch

I couldn't believe my eyes. I just couldn't... I didn't want to. Both Peach and Daisy were in the room, wearing next to nothing. In the room was practically any male enemy me or Mario had, besides Wario and Waluigi. But the evidence that pointed to the fact that they seemingly were having an affair with us, (though there were no male characters in there,) didn't bother me at all compared to what really did; the fact that the two of them were lying on the floor with huge stab wounds. Daisy's eyes were open and blank. (Peach was face-down, I couldn't see her face,) and it seemed as there was no blood left in their bodies at all.

It looked like it was all over the floor and in Daisy's long, brown hair. Peach's short, blond hair was stained as crimson as Julie's.

Cackletta was sitting on a couch nearby, sipping wine as if there was nothing wrong. One thing I noticed briefly about her was that she wasn't a ghost at all anymore. She had seemingly gotten her body back...?

I screamed and slammed the door shut. Mario was looking at me with an expression that I don't often see on anyone. It wasn't a sad expression, nor was it shocked... I couldn't really explain.

My back was pressed firmly to the door. The bottom of my stomach was surely dropped, and my heart was racing painfully in my neck. My brain was very numb.

"What's in there?" Lauren asked, getting a little nervous.

I shook my head, mouth agape. I was in too much shock to talk.

"I'm getting a look," Julie said, and brushed past me. I stumbled to the stair that Mario was standing on. Julie opened the door wide, and everyone in our party, (except Mario and I,) screamed in unison. Cackletta looked up.

"Told you I had something for you to die for," she laughed.

I saw in the dim light that Mario's eyes had returned to their normal cerulean. He was clenching his teeth and fists, and his face was very white. He shoved me, Lauren and Waluigi out of his way, and bounded up to Cackletta. I realized what he wanted to do, and followed him, rage pounding in my head.

He grabbed Cackletta by the neck.

"What are you doing-" she choked.

"You killed my fiance," Mario said in a falsely calm voice. "I'm going to kill you."

I formed an electric bolt sword, and pointed it at Cackletta's face. Mario let go of her neck. Cackletta smirked.

"Okay," she said. "You win. But one thing first..." She grabbed my sword by the tip, but wasn't electrocuted... I was still holding onto the sword tightly, and so her grab of it jerked me forward. She locked her arm around my shoulder and held the sword at my chest. I realized in horror that her gloves were lined with rubber. Brilliant...

"One false move..." she laughed. "One, and he gets it..."

I tried to move, but she was pinning me so strongly in her grip that I could only move my feet. My bow tie was pressing uncomfortably into my neck. Cackletta couldn't make Mario finish me off, however; she was quite capable of doing it herself.

"No..." I gasped, but then remembered what Mario had said... we are immune to our own powers.

Mario stared at me, pale-faced for a second, but I winked at him. He got the hint and nodded quickly.

"Oh, dear," Mario said, slowly backing up towards the rest of our group. "She's going to kill my brother!" I laughed on the inside at the shocked expressions that the rest of our group had, all of them obviously thinking, "What's wrong with you?"

"Good hint," Cackletta snarled, and jabbed my sword into my lower neck. I closed my eyes and smiled; other than slight pressure in the beginning, this was actually pleasant. Warmth was slowly spreading from the spot where my Cackletta mark was. I felt like I was sinking into a hot bath.

Julie screamed loudly, but I opened my eyes and smiled at her. (Cackletta couldn't see me doing this.) Julie's lips parted, but then she, like everyone else, got the hint.

"Oh, no!" she said, unable to keep a straight face. Cackletta let go of me and the sword protruding from the base of my neck. I planted my feet firmly on the ground and turned around quickly.

Cackletta gasped. I pulled the sword out of my neck and pointed it at her.

"Oh, dear..." I said. "I completely forgot that I'm immune to my own powers." Cackletta made a funny rasping noise, and then disappeared with a flash. How she was able to do that, I'll never know.

Mario was leaning over the crumpled forms of Peach and Daisy, looking at them in interest rather than sadness. Gee, Mario... they may be in thong bikinis, but shouldn't you be sad rather than interested?

I slowly approached the door, and turned around, facing Mario. I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was Lauren.

Mario laughed loudly.

"What's wrong with you!" I exclaimed. "They're..." but I stopped. I didn't want to go on.

Mario was shaking his head as he approached me and grabbed me by the arm. "Come here..." he said, snickering.

"Cackletta's really gone off the deep end," Mario said. "Look."

I bent down over my dead fiance and gasped in astonishment. Peach and Daisy were both robots, just like Rose had been. I guess I was just so horrified at the thought, that I just didn't stop to notice that Daisy's hair was too long and Peach's too short.

"Robots," I gasped in relief.

"WHAT?" I heard Ricky and Wario exclaim.

"How dare she!" I said. "Cackletta is really trying to freak us out."

"Well, it almost worked," Mario said. He sighed. "Guess we're just too smart for her."

"Sure right we are!" Julie said loudly. Waluigi laughed.

"Well, I suppose we ought to find her again, then," Mario said. "Maybe she won't be a coward and try to run away."

But another Gameboy Advance dropped into the middle of the floor. Julie picked it up.

"Ooh, I hope this one's got Yoshi's Island," she said. Mario and I exchanged looks.

But like the first one we saw, all this one did was flash and glow. Cackletta appeared above the screen, Julie still holding the gameboy.

"Are you calling me a coward?" she asked Mario.

"Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore," he said, quoting Julie. He and her smirked.

"Well, let's see how you do like this!" she snarled. With a wave of her hand, everything went white...

I opened my eyes. It was very warm, and it took me a second to realize that I was on my back, looking up at the crisp, Beanbean sky. The storm was gone. I lifted my hands and realized that they were coated with sand. I recognized where I was immediately. This was a small island, on which were two temples. One contained the Thunderbrand orb, the other the Firebrand orb. This is where Mario had gotten his fire powers updated, and I had lost my fire powers and obtained the

Thunderbrand.

I looked around. I couldn't see any of the people with me. In fact, all I saw were a few crabs and a few little Oho Jee people. One of them was standing on my chest and staring me in the face.

"Auugh!" I yelped and sat up. Oho Jee people were only about the size of a balloon. It tumbled into my lap.

"Hey, you getting married or something?" it asked.

I looked down and found that I was still wearing my pearl-white tuxedo. My hair was still slicked back neatly, although now it had some sand in it. My face went red; Daisy wasn't dead, so yes, actually I was. I stood up.

"Not right now," I said.

"Well, you just appeared out of nowhere," the Jee said. "What are you doing here?"

"It was an accident, why I'm here," I said. The Jee walked away. Now, there were no Oho Jees anywhere near me.

I leaned against a palm tree. I was a little freaked out. What had happened to everyone else... what had happened to me?

"Excuse me, what do you think you're doing?" came a voice from behind me. I turned around and saw a mirror. Only... my reflection wasn't doing what I was. Neither was it wearing what I was.

"Well?" My reflection said. I stepped back, realizing that there was no mirror there.

"Wh-what are you?" I gasped.

"Your conscience," it replied.

"My ...what?"

"Conscience," it said casually, as if we were long-lost friends. Perhaps we were, though... because I had a strange feeling that my mind wasn't in my head right now. "I've come to knock some sense into you."

I reached out my hand to try and touch the transparent figure in front of me, but my hand went right through its shoulder.

"Woah," I said, briefly forgetting about being freaked out.

"Yeah, cool, cool," it said. "Now, what are you doing in here?"

"Thinking," I said truthfully.

"Doesn't look like that to me. Looks to me like you're being a coward."

"Well, who asked you?"

My conscience sighed, shaking its head slightly.

"Try not to be scared, at least," it said.

"Oh, how easy," I spat.

"It should be for you!" it said, in almost a plead-like voice. "Look at you! You've braved ghosts, monsters... you name it, you've seen it! And are you dead?"

"No," I said quietly.

"Are you missing any limbs?"

"No," I replied, finding this conversation a little funny.

"You're going to be a ruler soon, ruler of a kingdom and five subcons! Shouldn't that make you confident?"

"I suppose," I said, now smiling.

"You've got a heart of gold," it said with a large grin. "See... I'll prove it to you." it extended its hand and punched it through my chest, and quickly pulled my heart out.

I stared at my reflection, mouth open, in astonishment. More surprising, however, was the fact that I was still alive and didn't have a large hole in my chest. I raised my finger to my neck. No pulse... was I really alive?

My reflection held my palm-sized organ in its hand. How it was able to hold it, I'll never know.

"See?" it taunted. "It's... uh...red. Okay, you win."

"Uh..." I said, still slightly in shock, "You think I could have that back?"

"Huh? Oh, sure. Sorry," my reflection jabbed its hand back between my ribs, and I had a pulse again.

"Now," it said, "You need to get back to the fortress."

"What happened to everyone else?" I asked.

"I don't know, I'm not a psychic." it disappeared.

I tapped myself on the head to see if I was really there, and when I realized that I was, remembered the only way off this island is to swim underwater. Funny thing about the Beanbean kingdom's water is that you can breathe under it.

I entered the large yellow pipe on the east side of the small island and was instantly dragged into an underwater cave. Everything was the same as I had seen it a year earlier... a couple of coral banks here and there, and tons of fish. This was a very well-kept kingdom.

It only took a minute to make my way through the water and get to the beach on the mainland. Julie was there, still in her long green dress. She was making her way toward the large green pipe that would take us back to the Stardust Fields.

"Julie!" I called out. She looked at me and grinned.

"There you are!" she said as I stood next to her. "I was worried that I wouldn't find anyone I knew."

We both went through the pipe and landed in front of Cackletta's fortress. Mario was there.

"Mario," Julie said. He turned around.

"What happened to you guys?" Mario asked. "I found myself back at the hotel!"

"You were at the hotel?" I asked. "I was on the shrine island."

"I was at the Yoshi Theatre," Julie said. "It's hard to believe that so many Yoshis exist!" she paused. "I have seriously never seen so much puke at one time. Is hurling in front of each other a sort of respectful gesture to Yoshies?"

I snorted with laughter. Mario nodded curtly. "Fraid so. It's sort of like a handshake to them."

"Is it really," Julie said calmly. "I thought they licked each others butts."

"No, they only do that on Lavalava island." Mario said. "Gee, we three are the only ones who know our way around this kingdom. I hope the others can make their way back..."

I hadn't thought of that. Wario, Lauren, Ricky and Waluigi had only been following us. What if they got sent to a part of this kingdom that we hadn't even visited?

"What should we do?" I asked nobody in particular. "We can't scour the whole kingdom for them."

"What is important now is getting rid of Cackletta." Mario said. "She's obviously dangerous... especially though she's got her body back."

"I oughta put her in a painting," I laughed. Mario frowned.

"Could you do that?" Julie asked. "That's actually a good idea."

"It's a good way to get rid of them," Mario mumbled. "There's a lab in the fortress... Wario said so. I think there is a Poltergust in there."

"I was kidding!" I shrieked.

"No, seriously," Julie said. "That really is a good idea."

I sighed. It stunk that I was the only one who professionally knew how to work a Poltergust.

"Alright..." I said. "Showtime."

15 - Memories

I opened the door to the fortress. It was different, however... Cackletta seemed to be anticipating our arrival. The fortress was decorated with purple.

"Oww!" Mario screamed.

"What?" Julie and I said in unison.

"Something really bad just happened to Peach," Mario said, clutching his side.

"You mean you have sort of a mutual connection, and you get some kind of signal when she needs you?" Julie asked. "That's pretty cool..."

"Nah," Mario said, relaxing. "That sort of stuff only happens in really cheesy love stories. I put a homing device on myself, right here-" and he pointed to his left side, "so whenever something happens to her, I know to come help." he shrugged. "It happens so often that I figured I could use it."

I sighed. Deja vu...

Julie smirked. "Of course," she said. "I don't know what I was thinking."

"I think I ought to check on her," Mario said. "That surge really hurt."

"That's pretty cool how you can measure the intensity of her problem like that," I said.

Cackletta appeared behind Julie. She whipped around, screaming "Holy crap!"

"You can tell if Peach is in trouble?" she said.

"Sure... hey, you've been spying on us?" Mario snarled.

"Duh," Cackletta laughed. "Anyway, you're absolutely right."

"What did you do?" Mario said, forming a fire sword and pointing it at Cackletta.

"Take it easy," she said. "I didn't kill the woman."

"Not another robot?" Mario snarled. Cackletta laughed.

"So, you figured it out!" she said. "You're a bit smarter than I thought."

"You should have learned it last year!" Julie barked. I was a little surprised, Julie didn't seem like the defensive type. Cackletta frowned.

"You're right..." she said slyly. "I should have learned better... sending away the ones that knew the most about the Beanbean Kingdom."

"Huh?" I asked. "What about the other four?"

"Still here," Cackletta said. "I was a bit stupid... I thought I could send away the most powerful, but I suppose I was wrong."

"Most powerful?" Julie said, blushing slightly. "You mean that I'm more powerful than Wario or Waluigi?"

"Sort of," Cackletta admitted. "You know the most about this kingdom."

"I suppose I do," Julie said in a modest way.

"Bring them here," Mario snarled. "Bring them here."

"How bout I take you to them?" she asked.

"I don't trust you," Mario said.

"Well, you'll have to." she laughed. Mario retreated his sword, but still stood his ground.

"Hold this," she said, and formed a rope that was light blue.

"Grab on," she cackled. I resisted at first, but Mario raised his eyebrows at me, and so I grabbed on. Julie did, too. Cackletta tugged upward on the rope, and I felt like I was flying up. I closed my eyes, but I could hear Julie shrieking with excitement. Finally, when everything was silent and I felt my feet planted firmly on the ground, I opened my eyes and looked around.

"What the..." I said. "Where'd everyone go?"

I poked my head into an empty room. This was the fifth floor.

"Hellooooo..." I called. "Mario? Julie?"

No answer.

I opened a door to a room that I hadn't seen earlier when I was looking for the Beanstar. Another little platform was in the middle of the room. This platform looked identical to the one that I had seen earlier when I spoke with my future self. He gave me tips on what to do... perhaps he could do it again.

I planted my foot in the middle of the platform. Again, a little screen said: "Name: Luigi Mario, Height: 5'6, Weight: 135 lbs, Eye color: cerulean, Hair color: D. Brown, Age: 76," and a long list of the letters A, T, C, and G.

There was a flash on the platform. I shielded my eyes, but the flash only lasted a second.

My future self stood there. I laughed loudly at what I looked like. My head was slumped forward, I was in a nightshirt and pajama bottoms.

"Hello?" I said, forcing myself not to laugh. My future self looked up irritably.

"Do you have any idea what time it is?" he asked. I glanced quickly at the fancy watch I was wearing.

"Three o'clock," I said.

"Oh. Well, what do you want? I'm trying to sleep."

"Where did Mario and Julie go?" I asked.

"Hmm... I can't remember, it's been nearly forty years. I forgot that I got to talk to myself twice."

"Do you remember anything about today?"

"Cackletta's not who she seems." he answered blandly.

"What does that mean? I asked.

"You'll see," he said. "Now can I go back to bed?"

"Sure," I mumbled. And with a flash, he was gone. I sighed and left the room.

Cackletta was standing on the other side of the hall. She turned around and made eye contact with me.

"Well, well." she said. "Funny I'd find you here."

"What happened to the rest of the group!" I demanded. But Cackletta ignored me. "Do you even remember what you're doing here," she said in an unusually serious voice, "What you're doing in the Mushroom Kingdom or Sarasaland?"

"What do you mean," I asked.

"How you got there," she said. All of a sudden, my head started hurting. It was true... I couldn't really remember where I was before the age of seventeen.

"I remember waking up in a hospital..." I said.

"Hmm, yes," Cackletta said as my headache got worse. "Want me to show you?"

I didn't know what she meant.

She lifted her hand, a now familiar gesture, and a funny pressure pulled at the top of my head. I closed my eyes briefly, and then opened them. Only, I wasn't standing in Cackletta's fortress anymore. It was warm and sunny, and I was standing on the porch of a middle-class house in an obviously large city.

I looked around. The garden was nicely kept, it looked like something Daisy would do. There was a hammock on the side yard of the house. A teenager was snoozing in it.

Something burst in my memory. The picture of the teenager was the same picture that was in our photo album... the one that Mario found and showed me. I reached out to try and wake the boy up, the boy that was me... but my hand went right through him.

"Kid," I said aloud. He didn't stir, only made a slight snorting noise.

"Luigi," another seventeen year old said. I turned around. Mario, as a teenager, bounded up to my sleeping self and shook the hammock violently.

"Woah!" he said, jerking awake. I noticed that my past self had vibrant emerald eyes. Wait a second... my eyes aren't green! "Mario, do you mind?"

"Sorry," Mario said. "But I found the neatest thing! Come on!"

Mario grabbed the teenage me by the shoulder and dragged me down the street a few blocks. I followed them.

"What is so cool that you want to sho... woah," I had said.

Mario had his hand outstretched to a large green pipe, one that was so common in the Mushroom Kingdom.

"Neat," I had said. "What is it?"

"Looks like a pipe," Mario said.

"It is," I said, but forgot briefly that I sort of... didn't exist as a 24 year old.

"It looks big enough to fit through," Mario said. "Wanna see what's at the other side?"

"No way." I had said. "I think we oughta check with dad." I had leaned my elbow on the pipe as Mario was already fingering it. The sky turned a navy blue.

"Did you do that?" Mario asked. I shook my head.

"Luigi, move!" Mario shrieked, pointing behind me. I had turned around and made eye contact with a holographic Bowser and King Boo.

"I thought we'd never meet," King Boo said.

"Who are you?" I had asked in amazement.

"You don't remember me?" Bowser asked. He looked so funny as a teenager!

Mario shook his head. "I don't know any of the teenage mutant ninja turtles." he laughed heartily.

Bowser grumbled under his breath. It sounded strongly like he said "stupid."

"What's going on...?" I had asked.

"We want you guys gone," King Boo said. "But let's check something first..."

King Boo lifted his stubby arm, and both me and Mario's hands caught fire. Mine, was of course, green.

"Woah!" Mario exclaimed, staring at them. "This doesn't hurt!" he looked up at me.

"Woah," he said again. "Your eyes... they're blue."

I supposed that when we were first able to use our abilities, our eyes changed color. That was the only explanation I've got...

"You idiot!" Bowser snarled at King Boo. "You let them know that they've got fire abilities?"

"We've got what?" I had asked.

"Fire abilities?" Mario asked. "You mean, we can shoot it out of our hands?"

"Nice going," Bowser mumbled.

"Yes," King Boo said. A huge crack ran down the side of the street.

"No!" I had screamed.

I blinked a few times. I was back in Cackletta's fortress. She was smiling evilly at me.

"You were born on Yoshi's Island," she said. "but you grew up in America."

"America..." I repeated. Yes, Brooklyn, New York. "Why couldn't I remember?"

"I erased your memory, I helped bring you here." she said.

"No, you didn't," I said irritably. "It was King Boo and Bowser. And you didn't even let me see the whole thing!"

"Close enough." Cackletta said. "And yes, I was there."

"I didn't see you," I said.

"Au Contraire, since you won't get out of here alive, I'll tell you a little secret of my own... my real weapon." The gem on Cackletta's forehead shone with a blinding light. I shielded my eyes, but not enough to not be able to see Cackletta. Her figure was twisting and changing...

16 - Final Showdown

After the light was gone, I unshielded my eyes and let out a strangled yell. I couldn't believe what I saw... what Cackletta really was.

"King Boo?" I gasped.

"Yep," he said.

"You framed her?" I roared. "All of this was you?" King Boo smiled and nodded. Well, rather, bobbed in the air a bit.

"Yep," he said, proud of himself.

"I knew it," I whispered. "You turned into Cackletta during that vision." I remembered that Cackletta had King Boo's fangs, and Fawful had the French accent of King Boo's assistant, Boonique.

"You were also Tatanga that night in the hotel!" I exclaimed after a second of thinking. "That's how you knew that I could see elemental ghosts!" Of course, why hadn't I seen it? King Boo... that's where I had seen those fangs and eyes before that were so horribly familiar.

"Huh," King boo said, his ...er...eyebrows lifting slightly. "Maybe you aren't quite as stupid as I originally thought. Yes, it was me. I was Tatanga... Cackletta... My first, second, and third sabotage attempts to break your heart were foiled by your clever brother. It's true... it's impossible to create an exact copy of another. I created the robots of Peach and Daisy that you saw, and the Rose robot. She isn't really your daughter from the future. I can't predict the future."

"Brilliant," I whispered, and meant it.

"Anyway," he said casually, as if we were just out getting a coffee, "I suppose I can't have you going around telling everyone that Cackletta was really me? You've got no Poltergust to protect you now," he hissed. "What do you have?" I formed a lightning bolt sword as fast as I could, but then I remembered, duh... he's a ghost, I can't hurt him with a physical attack...

King Boo laughed. Chills ran up my spine.

"Before I finish you off... I'd like to dedicate this to the true King Boo. You trapped him in a painting..." he paused and smiled evilly. "You're not that stupid, I'll have to admit. You'd rival your clever brother."

"You can't beat us," I said.

"You look like you're about to get married," Boo said.

"You wouldn't hit a guy in a tux, would you?" I smirked.

"Sure," King Boo said. He raised his stubby arms and formed a purple energy ball, one that was identical to the one that Tatanga had used on me before.

"Bye-bye," he said.

I jumped out of the way just in time for the purple ball to hit the ground and disintegrate. Perhaps now, I thought, having the reflexes of someone who was very high-strung was a good thing.

King Boo growled in frustration. "Don't even try..." he started and shot another one. Again, I leaped out of the way and landed on the floor with a soft "ugh!" I formed a steady stream of electricity and it hit him in the top of the head. He let out a small "Auughh!"

I can hit him!

A new ray of hope lit up for me. I planted my feet firmly on the ground and tried hitting King Boo with the same continuous stream of lightning. He recoiled in what I hoped was pain, but was able to shoot a purple stream of energy at me. It was interesting to see; a purple stream of light from King Boo, and a light blue one from me. That is... until the purple stream of energy hit me in the stomach.

"Don't stop," I told myself, as I felt my energy steadily draining. It wasn't painful to be hit by the energy stream, it was just very tiring. "Don't stop. Keep attacking him. He's falling faster. If you let go, he wins."

I kept my entire mind focused on staying upright and hitting King Boo with electricity. It was working. Through blurred vision, I could see him recoiling in pain.

After about twenty seconds of hitting Boo with electricity, I could hardly keep my eyes open. All of my energy was gone, but from the weakened purple beam, I realized that I was winning. As everything started becoming black, I heard a door slam open.

"Holy crap!" came a teenager's voice. I think it was Julie, but before I could try and figure out who it was from, everything went black.

"Hello..." came Waluigi's voice a little later. I could imagine that he was bending over me. I felt him poke me in the nose. "Are you alive?"

I was exhausted. I managed to say "unk." to answer his question.

"Gee..." Julie said. "I never would have guessed King Boo." I opened my eyes. I was right, Waluigi was leaning over me. Julie was standing next to him. I sat up.

"Good afternoon," Julie chirped. "You've only been out for about ten minutes."

"Wh...what happened to King Boo?" I asked. Julie smirked.

"Taken care of," she said proudly. "Funny thing is, King Boo's pretty dumb. He can't find any flaws in his flawed plan. When we got transported by the rope..." Julie pulled a strap off her shoulder and in her hand hung the Poltergust 3000. It was a red vacuum-looking machine that was nearly half the size of Julie. "He transported me to the lab. Sure enough, I found this puppy, and then found you."

"What did King Boo do to you guys?" I asked Waluigi. "And where is everyone else?"

"He locked us in that room on the seventh floor." he replied quickly. I stood up. Julie was now holding a portrait.

"Isn't it pretty?" she squealed. I eyed the portrait and smiled. It was King Boo, his face permanently frozen into a painful grimace.

"Wonderful," I said. "Where's everyone else now?"

"First floor," Julie said. "We came here to find you."

"So... can we actually have a vacation now?" Ricky asked once we were all reunited on the first floor.

"What happened up there?" Mario asked, noticing how exhausted I was.

"Well..." I said and held up the portrait of King Boo. Julie snickered as Mario's face went white.

"You can't mean..." he started.

"King Boo," I said. "King Boo was Cackletta the whole time." Mario shook his head in amazement.

"He's pretty smart, I've got to admit." Lauren said. "I don't know why I didn't see it before."

"I want to go home," Wario whined. "I'm tired and hungry."

"I want to go back to Sarasaland," I said. "I'm sick of this place."

It didn't take long to get to the hotel. Daisy, Chompy, Yoshi and Peach were all waiting for us. Only I noticed that Peach had a cast on her arm.

"You broke your arm?" Mario asked in astonishment. "That's what I felt!"

"I want to go home," Daisy said. "I'm sick of this place."

"I can book my plane for right now," Peach said. "I would like to go home, too."

And so it was... Peach booked her plane. It was scheduled to take off that night.

Julie, Lauren and Ricky bid their farewells at the Beanbean Airport.

"Thank you so much," I said, shaking Julie's hand. She wasn't interested in shaking my hand, she threw her arms around my neck, making me drop my suitcase.

"I'm going to miss you," she said. I patted her awkwardly on the back.

"You're most likely going to lead the next amazing adventure," I said. "After all, you can use a Poltergust just like I can." Julie let go of me and smiled.

"Really?" she asked.

"Of course," I said, picking my suitcase back up. I turned around.

"You'll have to tell me about America next time I see you," I said, and boarded the plane. Lauren laughed. I could see through the plane's windows that Julie and Waluigi were doing a high-five. They had, apparently, become close friends.

Yoshi sat next to Wario. He had hoarded all of Wario's peanuts and Cracker Jacks. At about midnight, I was awakened by a desperate struggling I heard above me in the overhead compartment. I had the window seat, so I carefully stepped over the sleeping Daisy and opened it up.

"No way..." I said, choking down a laugh. Yoshi was crammed into the compartment, straining against ropes, and had a sign taped on his nose that said "SHOOT ME!!!!" written in what looked strongly like blood. I glanced at Wario. He was sleeping in a disturbing way, his mouth was open and he was drooling and snoring loudly. Waluigi, who was sitting on the other side of him, had earmuffs and everything.

I pulled Yoshi out of the overhead compartment and sat him down in the vacant seat next to Daisy. Now that I was awake, it was a little hard to go back to sleep. I opened a pack of peanuts, but a long red tongue snatched them out of my hand.

"Yoshi..." I said irritably. He smiled and ate my snack, wrapper and all.

I sighed and opened a pack of pretzels. Only, this met the same fate as the peanuts.

"Yoshi, stoppit!" I said. He just kept on grinning.

I opened a can of Sprite and took one sip of it. I set it down on the pull-down table and glanced out the window. We were flying over a kingdom that I didn't recognize, but nonetheless, it was pretty. You could see all the lights of the city, and from thirty thousand feet up, that

looked pretty cool.

My eyes didn't leave the window, but I retreated my hand to reach my can of Sprite. But I couldn't find it.

"What the..." I said, and looked at the pull-down table. It was gone. I looked over at Yoshi. He was emptying the can in his stomach.

"Arrggh!" I said. I leaped on top of Yoshi and tied him up. Usually it wasn't in my nature to do this, but I was sick of him eating my food. I stuffed Yoshi in the overhead compartment above Mario's head. He jerked awake, forcing himself out of the fetal position he had curled up into the seat to sleep in. Eyes half closed, he mumbled something that sounded like "Unkhuh," and then laid his head back on Peach's shoulder and started snoring lightly again. I picked up a piece of paper off the floor and scribbled the words "SHOOT ME!!!" on it, and then set it on Yoshi's nose.

The next day, Daisy scolded me strongly for treating Yoshi like that. Wario thought it was hilarious that not only he felt that way. The plane touched down in Sarasaland thirty minutes later, and I was the first one off the plane.

I leaped off the final step of the plane and breathed deeply. The air didn't smell like lima beans. And as the warm Sarasaland wind lightly ruffled my hair, I think the last time I felt this glad to be home was when I took my last step out of my haunted mansion, never to return there.

-The End-