“I first learned about Giant Step from my father, who was an explorer,” Frank described, leaning against the fence. “He told me one day when I was young that he had found something incredible, and said that I could come with him to look at it if I wanted. Being the curious youngster that I was, I agreed to go with him. As such, my father took me to a cramped cave entrance in a secluded spot along the cliffs of Onett.”

“Inside of the hole was a beautiful cavern, unlike any that I had ever seen or have seen since. The cave had been previously unexplored by others, so my dad had taken the liberty to set up some ropes so that he could scale the walls. We climbed up the cave walls and eventually made it to an exit back outside. The opening put us out to an amazing view of the then young Onett. There was another entrance to the cave from that point, so we continued inward, and after ascending a large obstruction, we were lead back outside. What stood at that spot was a sight I hold close to my heart.”

“It was a gargantuan footprint, likely made by some ancient creature eons ago. As I approached the print to get a better look, I suddenly felt an incredibly intense aura surrounding the spot. It was as if the footprint held some sort limitless power that I was not able to tap into. I asked my dad about it and he said that hadn’t a clue about why the spot emitted the strange aura; however, he then said something that I did not understand until our meeting, Ness.

“This giant footprint seems to be generating some sort of powerful energy, energy that neither you nor I are able to properly comprehend or utilize. But, perhaps this isn’t a spot we are supposed to be at. Perhaps we are invading upon someone else’s sanctuary, someone with the power to use the energy that this step exhales.”
“And now, after our confrontation, I believe that the person that sanctuary belonged to is you, Ness, for you have fantastic abilities, unmatched by myself. Although you have only shown the ability to heal yourself and others so far, I think that with enough experience, you will be able to master other skills as well.” I stood and thought for a moment. Buzz Buzz had said that I would unlock more skills as I gained experience, as I did with Lifeup α, so I wondered if that meant that I would obtain additional powers from the sanctuary locations as well. “After my initial visit to Giant Step, I would occasionally go there to admire its beauty or to rest, but now it seems that the mayor has blocked off that area due to some weird monsters inhabiting the cave. I believe the mayor is in possession of the key to shack that leads into the cave, but it would take a pretty big event to let a kid like you see the mayor in person. This is where I come in. Since you beat me fair and square when I was trying my hardest, I no longer see myself as a worthy leader to the Sharks; because of this, I am permanently disbanding this organization,” Frank said, looking down at the ground.

“Woah, Frank. Are you seriously doing this just for me, after all you’ve worked for?” I said in disbelief.

“The answer is yes, Ness. I have a few reasons for this decision. One. I’m done with doing foolish things like picking fights with strangers and clearing out arcades to hog the games for myself. I am still a spring chicken, and I do not want to taint my reputation any further by being a criminal. Two. Although Giant Step holds a very special place in my being, I’ve always felt like I was enjoying something that did not belong to me; and now that I have determined that the rightful owner of Giant Step is you Ness, I feel it is only correct to help you claim what is yours.” Frank turned away from me and took his sunglasses off to wipe his eyes, and then quickly put them back on. “Now, let’s go break the news to the others,” Frank said as he walked to arcade door, myself following after him.
When we reentered the arcade, I noticed that all of the Sharks had come back downstairs and started playing the arcade cabinets. When they noticed Frank and I, they all scrambled into a line, with the green Shark from before stepping out front.

“B-b-boss! Did you show that punk who beat us up what for?” the Shark stammered. Frank let out a sigh and then spoke.

“No Mitch, I was not able to defeat the child,” Frank said. A collective gasp was let out by the horde of Sharks. “I also come bearing other unfortunate news. I’m sorry to say, but from this day forward, the Sharks are no more.” Another gasp shot out from the crowd before they all began to dance around and panic wildly.

“What?! But how? But why? We were doing so well, and we were practically untouchable! Why do you wanna quit when we’re on top of the world boss?” the green Shark cried.

“SILENCE!” Frank shouted. At an instant, the wild Sharks froze and reformed in a line. “I’ll have you know that I have reasons for my choice. Being a Shark was fun for a while, but now I’ve realized that a life of crime is not one that I want to live. And as the one who formed this band in the first place, I feel it is my right to disperse it as well. As for all of you, my last command as the leader of the Sharks is for you all to go home, take off those ridiculous jumpsuits, and try to do something nice for a change. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Frank,” the group said all at once.

“Good. Now get out of here before I call the cops,” Frank threatened. On command, the Sharks slowly filed out of the arcade, heads down in disappointment. “Now, as for myself, I’ll go around and spread the word that the Sharks have disbanded, and tell everyone that a boy named Ness is the one who forced them to split. Once everyone knows about your feat, they’ll regard you as a local hero, and you’ll be able to visit the mayor for sure,” Frank said to me.

“Thank you for everything Ness. I wish you well on your travels. Let’s part as friends, not enemies.” Frank then stuck out his right hand, showing that he wanted a hand-shake. I grabbed his hand and shook
Figuring that it would take some time for Frank to spread the word of the Sharks’ downfall, I decided that I would go for a little walk around town and stretch my bones. As I walked, I was refreshed by the afternoon sunlight and the gentle breeze blowing on my face. Once I had strolled around for about 30 minutes, I sat down on a public bench to rest my legs; moments later, an assortment of people approached me out of seemingly nowhere and began cheering.

“Hip hip, hooray! Cheers for the hero Ness!” the crowd cried out. I guessed that Frank must have gotten the word out fast, as it seemed like the entire town had appeared before my eyes. Among the mob, I was able to distinguish the drugstore cashier, the man wearing the blue bowler hat and suit, and several news reporters. One reporter came up to me and started assaulting me with questions.

“Mr. Ness sir! You don’t mind answering a few short questions for the folks at home, do ya? How did you feel about daring to face the Sharks head on? How did you manage to overcome the leader of Sharks, Frank, and come out completely unscathed? If you were a scratch-‘n’-sniff card, what would your smell be?” The reporter was suddenly shoved out of the way violently by other reporters, who started blabbing away. It turned into utter madness until the Onett police arrived and told everyone to leave me alone. After the paparazzi went away, one of the officers came over and told me that he was the mayor’s bodyguard, and that the mayor had requested to see me. Not wanting to miss my ticket to Giant Step, I accepted the mayor’s request and followed the officer to the Onett town hall. I had never been inside the town hall before, and judging by its ostentatious outward look, I thought that it would be just as extravagant on the interior; but, much to my surprise, the inside of the town hall turned out to be just a dull grey hallway with some rooms off to the sides and a staircase leading to the mayor’s office. I
suppose I shouldn’t of expected so much from a town as small as Onett, but I digress. Once inside the building, the officer led me up the stairs to the mayor’s office. We entered the office and I took a seat in front of a shiny wooden desk with a backwards facing chair behind it. When the chair turned around, it revealed the face of Mayor Bald Head Pirkle himself.

"Well, howdy there little hero! It must be such an honor for you to sit in the face of your good ol' mayor B. H. Pirkle, eh kiddo?" the shiny domed man said. Mayor Pirkle was a character to say the least. According to the adults, he also did a pretty lousy job as mayor. He was a highly narcissistic man despite ironically having almost no hair, and he always slacked off on the job, mostly relying on his political advisors to get him out of trouble whenever a controversial issue popped up. No wonder his political opposition came up with the phrase, “Pirkle is a jerkle.” He also talked extremely loudly all the time, no matter the volume of the others around him. "I must say pally, good work takin' down those awful sharks! Yessiree, you sure did a number on those punks! What’d ya do, spit in their eyes? Bite their heads off? Kick their butts? All of the above?" Pirkle asked emphatically, spit flying from his mouth like a sporadic garden hose. "Err, nevermind that. No matter how ya took ‘em out, Onett is in your debt, kind sir! How can we ever repay you? Video games? New car? Drugs? Isn’t that what kids these days are into?" Pirkle asked, turning to his secretary, to which he responded with a shrug.

"Uhh, that’s, umm, very kind of you to offer Mayor Pirkle, but what I actually would like is the key to the fenced off area around the cliffs of Onett," I answered the bumbling mayor.

"Whazat? You want the key to that weird cave filled with all them monsters? Heh heh, sure thing kiddo! But first I’m gonna have to ask you to sign this here form," Pirkle spat as he slammed a moldy paper onto his desk.

“What’s all this about?” I asked as I filled in all of the blanks with my initials.

"Oh, it’s nothin’. All this paper does is insure that anything that happens to you or others as a result of me giving you this key is entirely your doing and is not the fault of
MY PERSON AT ALL, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE! YA GOT THAT SONNY?" Pirkle asked obnoxiously.

"Yes sir, I understand," I replied, really wanting to walk out of the room.

"YEPPITY YEP YEP, THAT'S CORRECT ALL RIGHT! NOW GO ON AND BE GOOD KIDDO, AND REMEMBER TO TELL EVERYONE YOU KNOW TO VOTE FOR PIRKLE AT THE COMING ELECTION!" Pirkle advised selfishly. I did not take any time getting the heck away from that bozo when he handed me the key to the Giant Step cave. As I clomped down the stairs, a man I recognized as the janitor of our school approached me and asked me a question.

“So Ness, how was your first meeting with Mayor Pirkle?” the man asked. I turned to him and said unironically:

“Pirkle is a jerkle.” The man burst out laughing and gave me a quick pat on the back before walking off into one of the other rooms. I subsequently left the town hall and headed off towards the now accessible Giant Step.

When I arrived at the spot Frank had described to me, I saw that it was indeed fenced off, with a sign hanging on the fence that read in big bold letters: “DO NOT ENTER”. I of course ignored the warning and used the key that Jerkle had given me to unlock the door to a shack that was positioned in between the protective fencing. The sign on the shack read “Traveling Entertainer’s Shack” and looked as dilapidated as the building it was placed on. When I entered the cabin, its broken-downness became even more apparent to me, as the entire back wall of the cottage was missing, revealing the entrance to Giant Step just a few feet beyond the edges of the walls. I closed the door behind me and continued forward into the spooky grotto.

The first thing I took note of when I entered the cave was just how large it was. From where I was standing, the cave looked to be about as tall as the cliffs that surrounded north Onett. Frank wasn’t kidding when he said the cave was beautiful either, as the stalactites
hanging from the ceiling glittered magnificently as I observed my surroundings. After I was done taking in the majesty of the cavern, I advanced forward and saw several murky ropes leading up the cave’s walls.

“These must be the ropes that Frank’s father put here,” I thought to myself. I wondered if the lines would be stable enough to climb and tested the rope’s strength by giving it a hard tug. It held together, so I assumed they were safe to scale and started ascending the damp walls. When I reached the top of the first rope, I was greeted by the sight of a large and filthy rodent standing on its hind legs and looking straight at me. As I got up on my feet, slightly alarmed, the rat lunged forth at me and bit down on my ankle. The bite didn’t hurt too bad, and only really irritated me, so I grabbed the rat by its tail and chucked it somewhere to the side of me. I was only able to take a few more steps when I was attacked several small ant-like creatures that started climbing up my body, all while biting me repeatedly. I smacked and stomped on the bothersome insects and tried to make a break for the next rope when a horde of grape-sized slimy slugs fell on me out of nowhere. I got covered in the horrible slime secreted by the slugs as I desperately tried to pick them off of me. Once I rid myself of the vile intruders, I made a beeline towards the cave exit that I saw glowing at the top of the cave. I bolted out of the cave and almost plummeted down the side of the cliff.

I stepped away from the edge and took a moment to catch my breath. “No wonder Pirkle had this place sealed off,” I said to myself. When I felt I was sufficiently calmed, I turned and looked out on the town of Onett; it was a gorgeous sight, one that made wish I had a camera. As I was looking at the town, a brilliant shimmering butterfly fluttered down from the air and landed on my nose, making me feel very relaxed. I was about to sit down and take a nap when I remembered the goal at hand. The dazzling butterfly flew away as I
began to move. I watched it zoom off to places unknown, and then continued on my way.

I re-entered the cave through a hole adjacent to the one I had exited from and cautiously headed deeper into its recesses. Eventually I came across a wall much higher than the one I had previously climbed, with ropes leading up it like the one prior. I hastily climbed up the ropes and arrived at a small platform leading to a bright light. At first I thought that the light was just the sun shining in through a hole in the wall, but I soon realized that this was a separate light from the one outside. I carefully approached the light, and as I got close, a deep, booming voice shot out from within it.

“You finally got here. This the first ‘Your Sanctuary’ location. But it’s mine now. Take it from me, if you dare,” the voice challenged.

“Who are you, and why have you claimed my sanctuary as your own? Show yourself, whatever you are!” I yelled as bravely as I dared.

“Hm hm hm. If you insist, I will show you my true form.” As the voice ended, the light receded, revealing a goliath ant creature smiling mischievously. “I am Titanic Ant, a humble servant of Master Giygas. After your encounter with the Starman Junior, Master Giygas utilized the power of these sanctuary locations to amplify the power of eight everyday creatures, and then entrusted the protection of the sanctuaries to these guardians. I am the first of the eight Sanctuary Guardians. I used to be a puny ant, crawling about aimlessly, but now, with the power of Giant Step, I have grown big enough to crush you like a bug! Have at you, worm!” Titanic Ant said, spreading its great fangs. I assumed a defensive pose as I prepared to do battle with the powerful beast.

Titanic Ant
Sinister Guardian of Giant Step
Titanic Ant's first move was to summon a bunch of the smaller ant creatures I had dealt with earlier and send them after me. They crawled all over my body and dug into my flesh with their oversized mandibles. As I tried to swat them away, I caught a glimpse of Titanic Ant rushing at me. I dove out of the titan's way, knocking the smaller ants off of myself. Titanic Ant turned around and tried to ram me again, with myself once more dodging in the nick of time. At that point, Titanic Ant became tired out, giving me time to strike it with my bat on the back of its thorax. The creature did not seem fazed by my blow and attempted to bite me with it mighty fangs, to which it almost succeeded in doing until I smacked it on head with my bat, sending it backwards.

“Arrrgh! Insolent little boy! Let's see how you deal with this!

Titanic Ant casted. At the beast's command, a blue field of energy came forth from its insectoid arms and instantly wrapped around the ant. I found myself quite surprised to see this powerful beast execute a PSI move, which up to that point I had thought were only able to be used by certain humans and skilled warriors.

“What?! How are you able to use the powers of PSI, you fiend?” I asked the ant in shock.

“Hm hm hm. Are you surprised to see this display, punk? Master Giygas has PSI abilities so great that he can grant the use of them to other entities. This gift is normally reserved for his most dedicated followers. But that is all you need to know, because you will soon breathe your last!” Titanic Ant said as it reared back and charged at me once more, although seemingly faster than before. I continued to dodge out of its way, now starting to feel weary myself. I tried to hit the monster once again with my bat, but it appeared to have no effect due to the creature's shield. “Ha! Pitiful human, attempting to harm me with that miserable stick you call a weapon. I am unstoppable now, and after this attack, I will eat you for lunch!” the ant shouted. “Come my people! Let us show this interloper our
“strength in numbers!” Suddenly, the ground began to shake as a tidal wave of ants gathered around Titanic Ant like moths to a beacon. Titanic Ant then pointed towards me, and I immediately found myself drowning in a sea of insects. The ants enveloped me so that I could not move my limbs, and I felt my skin being cut and torn by the ant horde. I didn’t know what to do, and for a second, thought that I was going to be lunch for this terrible fiend and his cohorts. At that moment, I saw that my only chance was to use one of my PSI powers; however, I knew that Lifeup wouldn’t help me in that situation. As a result, I closed my eyes, and tried to find something inside myself that would save me from otherwise certain doom. I had to use all of my strength in order to block out the feeling of the ants around me, and eventually, I felt the same feeling I had felt after I defeated Frank return to me. The feeling quickly faded, and another phrase bubbled to my mouth.

I shouted. Instantly, an intense wave of psychic energy spurt from my forehead, creating a multicolored explosion in front of me. This blast disintegrated all of the ants around me and knocked Titanic Ant onto its back, disabling its shield in the process. Using my remaining power, I ran over to the behemoth and struck its abdomen at full force.

“ARRRRGGGGHHHH!!!!!!” Titanic Ant screamed as it burst into a flash of light. This blast knocked me on my rear and made me feel a little dizzy. Yet, I felt fantastic about another successful victory. I quickly stood up, picked up my bat, and headed out of the cave exit that Titanic Ant was previously blocking.

I then found myself standing on a tall plateau, the evening air whistling against the sides of the many cliffs. At first, I saw nothing out of the ordinary; that was, until I realized that I was now in the presence of an incredibly large footprint, exactly like the one Frank had described to me. As I approached it, I suddenly felt light-headed and my vision became blurry. I then heard some music play for a brief
moment, as if it was a piece of a bigger melody. As the music played, I saw a glimpse of a small black and white puppy for just an instant before my vision returned to normal and the music ceased. I looked around for moment, trying to find my composure, and abruptly felt much better than I did before, as if I had used Lifeup on myself. I then abruptly remembered that I had the Sound Stone contained in my hat and pulled it out to touch it to my forehead. As the stone grazed my head, my thoughts became gathered in my mind, and I saw an image of many small footprints arranged in a squiggly pattern in front of an entrance to a cave. As I viewed the image, I heard the piece of music that I had just perceived a moment earlier, notifying me that the Sound Stone had in fact recorded the melody of Giant Step. When I had the image of the next sanctuary location thoroughly ingrained in my mind, I took the Sound Stone off of my head and placed it back into my hat pocket. I turned one more time to take another look at the beautiful spot before heading back into the cave.