Chapter 9
Party of Two

I eventually caught up to Paula, who had stopped to take a breather on a bench in Happy-Happy Village.

“ Took you long enough, slowpoke,” Paula said as she stood up. “It seems the people really hate the color blue now that you’ve snapped them out of their brainwashing. That’s ok for me, blue isn’t my favorite color either,” she said with a chuckle. “Anyways, our main objective at the moment is to continue collecting the Eight Sanctuary Melodies. I know you already have the first melody; I found out about it in a dream of mine. I tend to have these all-seeing dreams now and then, but I digress. Thanks to my visions, I found out that the second sanctuary location is somewhere around Happy-Happy Village; however, that’s just it’s relative position, so we’ll have to find the actual location of the sanctuary on our own. Do you have any conceptions on how we should go about looking for it?” Paula asked.

“Um… We can ask around the village to see if the townspeople know of any strange places near here,” I suggested.

“Good idea. Let’s split up to cover more ground; after a while, we’ll meet up at the drugstore in the corner of town, where we can buy some equipment,” Paula said as she pointed to a small building at the edge of the town. I nodded to her and took off into the town, asking anyone I could find about the location of the next sanctuary. After having no luck for a good while, I came across Carpainter, who was busy washing blue paint off of a cow in someone’s front yard.

“Ah, greetings Ness. Do you need something? I’ll give you anything you desire after everything you’ve done for me,” Carpainter said as he furiously scrubbed the cow’s hindquarters.
“Well, do you mind answering a question that I have? You see, Paula and I are searching for these places called ‘sanctuaries’ in order to save the world from an evil alien. Paula knows that one of these locations is around Happy-Happy Village, but she doesn’t know it’s exact position. Do you know of any places in this village that could pass off as a sanctuary of some sort?” I asked in the most coherent way I could.

“Hmm, you’re trying to save the world? Well, that shouldn’t be an issue for you, considering how strong you are. Anyways, sanctuaries... Ah ha! I think I know what you’re looking for! In the corner of this town, there lies a mysterious cave entrance that only I know about. I discovered it when I first founded this village. I tried to explore it, but soon found out that it was full of dangerous monsters; because of this, I hid the entrance to the cave and never revealed its location. There’s bound to be something important somewhere in that cave,” Carpainter said as he finished cleaning the cow.

“Thanks for the info Mr. Carpainter! We’ll be sure to check it out.”

“Whatever you do, promise me you’ll be careful when heading into that cave. Like I said, there are some nasty creatures in there, and I don’t want to see you or Paula get hurt,” Carpainter said with concern on his face.

“Don’t worry, we’ll be careful. I’ve already claimed one sanctuary location, so how much worse can this one be?” I said as I walked off towards the drugstore.

I entered the store and was almost hit in the face by something blue. I stumbled backwards and looked up only to see Paula holding a blue frying pan and laughing hysterically.

“Ahahahaha! You should’ve seen the look on your face! How do you like my new weapon?” Paula said, waving her pan around in front of her.

“1. Not funny. 2. Why a frying pan? Isn’t that a little stereotypical?” I said.
“Stereotypical? It’s not my fault frying pans make good weapons and also happen to be used for cooking. Besides, I took a class in blunt weaponry and aced it, so I know what I’m doing. But that’s a story for another time; let’s get back to the main topic. Did you learn anything about the whereabouts of the second sanctuary location?” Paula asked.

“Why, yes I did. Our good friend Mr. Carpainter told me about an enigmatic cave located near this store that houses a lot of monsters. There’s gotta be a sanctuary somewhere in that cave, I’m positive about it,” I said assuredly.

“Hmm... Sounds like the right place to me. There may be monsters in that cave, but I’ve taken some initiative and bought a few things that will help us out. Besides my fry pan, I also bought you and me some copper bracelets; the clerk said they make you more resistant to bodily harm,” Paula said as she handed me a shiny copper-colored bracelet. I took off my old bracelet and sold it to the clerk before I put on my new one. “I also bought us some calorie sticks, in case we get hungry. It’s basically an edible stick, with no preservatives or distinct flavors. Think of it as eating solidified water. Other than that, I think we’re all set! Let’s go spelunk that cave!” Paula said as she walked out of the drugstore, followed by myself.

Paula and I approached the spot that Carpainter had told me about; a small alcove in corner of the cliff faces around Happy-Happy Village. It looked like an ordinary wall from where we stood. Slightly confused, I carefully poked the wall with my bat, causing it to ripple like a puddle.

“Oh. It’s literally just a sheet made to look like the cliff. Carpainter didn’t do a very good job of hiding this place. I’m surprised nobody had found this cave before us,” I said as I tore the sheet away, revealing a large hole in the mountain face. We were about to step into the grotto when we were startled by an obnoxious voice from behind us.
“Would ya look at that. Two lovebirds out on an adventure. It warms my heart to see such young love! *pig-like laughter*” We turned around to see the face of Pokey Piece-of-Crap Minch staring right at us. He was no longer wearing that stupid blue robe that he had on before, and was grinning his irritating grin from ear to ear.


“Woah there, cowboy! I didn’t mean to hurt you’re feelings! I just wanted to say thank you for freeing me from that awful nightmare. It was horrible, wanting to paint everything blue. Those cultists guys were punks too; they made me eat blue ve-, ve-, vegetables… *shiver* Ug, that word burns my tongue… What I’m trying to say is, I was miserable being a Happy-Happyist!” Pokey said overdramatically. “Oh, I also wanted to congratulate you on your new girlfriend! You two are so cute together! It’s like a match made in heaven, or in your case, the pig pen! *snicker snicker, snort, snicker*” Paula suddenly lunged forward and grabbed Pokey by the collar of his shirt, lifting him off the ground.

“Hey there, little guy. You must be new around here. My name is Paula, and if there’s one thing that reeeeally grinds my gears, it’s people bringing up my relationships. People who do this usually don’t live to see the sunrise again. Do you understand?” Paula said in a disturbing tone.

“Heh heh, Ness and Paula, sittin’ in a tree, k-i-s-s-”

“I’ll say it AGAIN. I don’t like it when people bring up my relationships. Be a good boy, and DON’T DO THAT. Ok?”

“-i-n-g!”

“You don’t value your life, it seems.” Paula quickly spun Pokey around and flung him, with the fat pig landing on his face about twenty feet away. He slowly got up, took a frightened look at us, and then bolted from the area. “Now that’s how you take out the trash,” Paula said as she turned to me. “If you don’t mind, I’m gonna get
going. Feel free to follow.” Paula then walked into the cave with a
fearless expression on her face. I quickly made a mental note to never
tick her off before I headed into the cave behind her.

Aside from a few a crystals that glowed brightly, the cave was
pitch black. Not being able to see, I tripped on a rock and fell into
Paula.

“Ophh! Hey, watch where you’re going!” she yelled.

“Sorry, but I can’t see anything in here. Do you have a light?” I
asked, checking my own pockets to see if I had one.

“Oh, I’ve got something better than a light. Check this out.

Paula yelled as a small flame spouted from her hand, illuminating
the cavern.

“Woah… That’s awesome! How did you do that? Can you teach me?”
I said, now able to see past my own nose.

“Tee hee, impressive, isn’t it? The joys of having psychic powers.
Now that we have some visibility, let’s get a move on,” Paula said,
leading the way through the cave. The cavern had a domed roof and
didn’t appear to be too large. The terrain was very jagged and
uneven, almost causing me to fall a few times. We had only gone a
small distance before a mole the size of a dog leapt out at us from the
darkness, gnashing its fangs at us.

“I’ll handle whatever comes our way, you stay behind and keep the
light up. We’ll be dead meat if we can’t see,” I said striking the mole
with my bat, sending it packing into a crevice in the wall. We
continued forward, encountering a few more moles and a swarm of
weird bats along the way. Eventually, we saw a light coming from the
back side of the cave and headed toward it. As we were walking, I
suddenly ran into a huge, furry mass positioned in the middle of the
path. I retreated backwards as the mass stood up on two legs and
turned to us. It was a bear, slightly larger than the ones that roamed
the cliffs around my house. The mighty bear snarled at us before
rushing forward and pinning me to the ground. I tried to fight back,
but it was no use, as the bear weighed far more than I could lift. The bear reared back and prepared to take a bite out of my face when a voice cried out:

The bear was suddenly hit by a blast of ice energy created by Paula, freezing its mouth shut. The bear clawed at its face, trying to get the ice off, before it rushed away into the recesses of the cave. Paula relit her PK Fire, once again brightening the dank cave.

“Phew. Thanks for the save. You’re just full of surprises,” I said, breathing deeply. My compliment caused Paula to let out a small giggle. “So far in my life, I’ve always had bad encounters with bears. Erm, don’t ask what I mean by that. It’s a little awkward to talk about... Ugh, let’s just go on before it comes back,” I said as we continued towards the light shining at the cave’s end.

We kept trucking along until we finally reached the light. Paula disabled her fire and began to head into the light before I jumped in front of her.

“Hold on a minute! That light isn’t what you think it is!” I said as I took out my bat. “Show yourself, you fiend, minion of Giygas!” Obeying my command, the light receded, revealing a bloodstained mole, larger than the bear we had just encountered.

“Hmm hmm hmm. So, you already know the drill, huh? That means you must have defeated Titanic Ant, guardian of Giant Step. Impressive. But that means nothing now.”

“I am Mondo Mole, guardian of Lilliput Steps, the second ‘Your Sanctuary’ location. I used to be an average mole, with claws only slightly sharper than those of an everyday mole. That was until Master Giygas put me in charge of guarding of this spot. Now my claws are sharper than any blade in the galaxy! I will slice through your flesh and pick your bones clean! Have at you, weaklings!” Mondo Mole said as it jutted its claws out in front of itself. Ready for the
battle at hand, Paula and I prepared ourselves for the mole’s opening attack.

**Mondo Mole**
*Bloodthirsty Guardian of Lilliput Steps*

Mondo Mole began the fight by burrowing into the ground, hiding itself from our view. The earth rattled as the mole tunneled in the dirt, causing us to become disoriented. Mondo Mole suddenly burst out of the turf behind us and swiped its talons at us, striking Paula in the face, creating an enormous gash in her cheek. This angered me, and in my rage, I jumped up and smacked the mole with my bat, knocking it on its side. The mole quickly got up on its feet and began swiping at me rapidly, with myself barely able to keep up with its onslaught. While it was busy dealing with me, Paula casted a PK Freeze α on the mole, encasing its claws in a cube of solid ice. Using the opportunity laid before me, I casted my own psychic damage-dealer, PK Rockin’ α, at the mole, sending it onto its back.

“Ugg, now you’ve done it! My veins course with the anger of a thousand suns! I will disembowel you two, and present Master Giygas with your remains!” Mondo Mole chanted as it got back on its feet. On Mondo Mole’s command, a red energy encapsulated its claws, strengthening them to incredible degrees. Mondo Mole then turned to Paula and rushed at her, ready to tear her in half. In my panic, I suddenly felt an incredible feeling well up inside me; the same feeling that I had felt when I learned my previous PSI abilities. As the feeling subsided, a new phrase came to my mouth, and I shouted it out.

As I spoke the words, a multicolored energy blasted from my fingertips and struck Mondo Mole dead on, causing its entire body to stiffen up and freeze in place. Mondo Mole grunted fiercely as
it tried to move its body, but it was truly stuck. I nodded to Paula as we struck the mole with both of our weapons simultaneously. Mondo Mole released a heaven-rending cry as it burst into a cloud of light. Paula and I celebrated our victory with a high-five before heading out of the cave.

We found ourselves in an enclosed area, with light green grass and several small trees dotting the environment. The spot did not seem to be anything out of the ordinary at first; that was, until I laid my eyes upon a bunch of tiny footprints arranged in a squiggly pattern, the same footprints the Sound Stone had shown me at Giant Step. I slowly approached the footprints, and once again became light-headed as I closed in on the spot. My vision blurred, and I heard another short piece of music; while the melody was playing, I suddenly saw a small baby wearing a red cap rocking back and forth in a cradle. After only a brief moment, I returned to reality, and noticed that Paula had come over to me and was holding my shoulder.

“Hey Ness, are you alright? You sorta blanked out for a moment there,” she said with a look of concern.

“I—I’m fine. This has happened before, when I visited the first sanctuary location. This is how the sanctuary records its melody into my Sound Stone, the object that holds all of the Sanctuary Melodies I’ve collected. Hey, what happened to the scar on your face?” I said, pointing to Paula’s cheek. She touched her hand to face and gasped.

“What? How did my face heal so quickly? I guess this sanctuary must have the ability to heal us if we’re injured. That’s pretty amazing!” Paula said as she clapped happily. While Paula was dancing about, I took out the Sound Stone from my hat and touched to my forehead. My thoughts gathered and I saw an image of a smooth rock gushing out water in a remote location; I also heard the combined song of the two melodies I had collected so far resonate through my mind as I viewed the image. I took the Sound Stone off of my head and put it back in my hat pocket before signaling Paula to follow me. With
our mission a success, we left Lilliput Steps, traversed back through
the cave and ended up back in Happy-Happy Village.

We were greeted by the face of Carpainter as we exited the cave.
“So, how was your expedition, kids? Did you find what you were
looking for?” Carpainter asked. I told him about our trip through the
cave as Paula munched on a calorie stick. “Ah, so you found that
sanctuary you were yearning to visit, and you had to fight a huge
mole to get to it. Sounds like a pretty unique experience. When I was
your age, all I ever got to do was (blah blah blah) because my mother
wouldn’t let me (blah blah blah). Needless to say, I never got to go on
a cool adventure like you. Consider yourselves blessed. Anyways, I’ve
got to finish removing the blue from the inside of the grand chapel, I
mean town hall. Have fun on your journey children, and may the luck
of the moon ride shotgun with you!” Carpainter said as he walked off.
“...Well, I don’t know why the moon would have a shotgun, but I
appreciate his generosity. With Lilliput Steps taken care of, I suppose
we can start heading back to Twoson. I bet my parents are worried
sick about me. They get kinda, overactive, when they’re worried,”
Paula said with a odd face. I remembered how her parents reacted
when they saw that she was missing, and dreaded them doing the
same thing when they see that she has returned. “What’re you waiting
for Ness?! Lead the way! Let’s get out of this wacko town!” Paula
said as she shoved me forwards. Not wanting to agitate her, I
hurriedly walked out of the village, Paula skipping merrily behind me.