The country of Winters, in terms of size, was exceedingly large; it was so positively massive that it occupied the entire northern half of the continent of Foggyland. However, despite its scale, the country was mostly uninhabited, and the overall population was much lower than that of the southern half of Foggyland. This was mostly due to how much of the country’s land was perpetually covered in ice and snow, making life very unorthodox for those who lived there. Even though most who occupied the country hated the cold and the seemingly never-ending patches of forests, I took these things as positives rather than negatives. I loved the beautiful landscapes and grew used to the cold weather at a young age. It is truly unfortunate that most of the time that I lived in Winters was inside of a deplorable boarding school.

Before I set off on my trek through the Winters wilderness, I took some time to visit a tiny 24-hour convenience store located just outside the walls of Snow Wood. The inside of the store was awfully cramped, as the store shelves were positioned much too close together. I looked about the store and was about to purchase a crumpet when I realized that I only had £2 on my person. With this fact in mind, I approached the cashier and asked him if there was anything in the store that I could buy with that small sum of money. “Ehh, let’s see here... The thing that costs the least here in this store would be this,” the cashier said as he pulled out a cage that contained a tiny monkey with red fur. “This monkey was donated to
this store a few years ago by a strange woman. The manager of this store named him Bubble Monkey, ‘cause he likes bubblegum. We’ve been tryin’ to sell him to someone for ages now, but nobody wants him because he’s noisy and likes to make a mess. We kept lowering the price of him for a long time, but now we’ve decided to just give him away to anyone who wants him. So, would you like to be the owner of your very own Bubble Monkey?” the attendant said as he patted the monkey’s cage. I took a moment to ponder. A monkey that was fond of chewing gum sounded like an interesting proposal, and one that I thought might come in handy when presented with a peculiar situation.

“Alright then, you’ve convinced me. I’ll take that monkey off your hands chap,” I said formally.

“Excellent decision my man! The monkey is yours!” the cashier said as he opened the door on the monkey’s cage. The monkey sprang out of the cage and landed right beside my foot. “Oh right, one more thing mate. In order to truly assume possession of this monkey, you must give him a piece of gum. If you don’t have any on you, then you can buy a pack for £1,” the cashier said as he pulled out a pack of bubblegum from behind the counter. I checked myself to see if I had any gum, and in realizing that I did not have any, pulled out one of my coins from my pocket and handed it to the clerk, receiving the pack of gum in return. Suddenly, a high-pitched voice began to speak up from beside me.

“Yo! I’m Bubble Monkey! Gimme some gum new pal!” The voice appeared to be emanating from a scintillating headband wrapped around the monkey’s forehead. I was startled by this sudden phenomenon, causing the cashier to laugh at my fear.

“Hehehe! Surprised? Most people are. The device on Bubble Monkey’s head is recent invention by the brilliant Dr. Andonuts. The Animal–Thought Translator! It does what the name implies; it translates the thoughts of animals into distinguishable speech! This
thing is revolutionary! I finally know what my cat thinks of me! (She hates me.) *sniff*"

“Wait a minute my good man! You wouldn’t happen to know where Dr. Andonuts lives, would you?” I asked, hoping for some information that would make my journey easier.

“Eh? Dr. Andonuts? I heard some time ago that his laboratory is located near the monument Stonehenge, which is somewhere on the other side of Loch Tess. If you plan to visit Dr. Andonuts, well, good luck, ‘cause the currents of Loch Tess are awful this time of year, and no one in their right mind is going to want to go out on its waters,” the cashier said. As he spoke, I felt something tug on my trousers; I quickly noticed that it was Bubble Monkey, desperately craving a piece of gum. When the clerk finished his recount, I hastily opened the pack of gum and handed Bubble Monkey a piece of the sticky material. He snatched it out of my hand and began to chew on it fiercely. After a few seconds of chewing, Bubble Monkey blew an enormous bubble; the bubble was so large that it acted like a balloon and lifted the creature off of the ground and up into the air. His bubble eventually hit the ceiling, causing the monkey to plummet into my arms.

“Err, thank you for the tip, good fellow. I have to go now, I have other matters to attend to,” I said as I awkwardly walked out of the store with Bubble Monkey in my arms.

“Alright chap, perk up your ears,” I said to Bubble Monkey as I placed him on the ground. “Now that you’re traveling with me, there will be several rules in place. #1: No rummaging through my things. I know monkeys love to do that. #2: You must always follow behind me. I don’t want you to get lost. And finally, #3: If trouble arises, you are to stay out of it. It would be a tragedy if you were injured. Do you understand these conditions?”

“Yeppity yep! Done and done good buddy!” Bubble Monkey “said” as he hopped up and down in place.
“Good. Now that we have things squared away, let us begin our trek. Our current destination is Loch Tess, which is not too far from here. Come now, stay close,” I said as I began to march through the snow. Although it was nighttime, the illumination from the moon allowed me to easily see where I was going. I occasionally stopped to check if Bubble Monkey was still following behind, which he always was. The sub-zero winds chilled my face as we made our way through the rough terrain and intertwined trees. Along our path, we encountered several tents and cottages that signified the rarity of life in the country of Winters. For about an hour we trudged through the snow, making surprisingly good progress considering the conditions we were put up against.

Eventually, we came to the edge of Loch Tess; a titanic body of water that connected many parts of Winters together. Along the outskirt of the lake stood many tents which belonged to the Tessie Watch Club; a group of people who dedicated their lives to the research and documentation of Tessie, an elusive creature that had supposedly occupied Loch Tess since ancient times. As we approached the camp, we were greeted by a member of the Tessie Watch Club, who told us that we were free to make ourselves at home. I asked the member if there was anyway that we could cross the lake, and he replied saying the same thing the cashier had told me: the currents of Loch Tess were too strong to even consider going out on its waters. Despite being slightly aggravated, I still thanked the man and asked if there was a place that we could stay for the night, to which I was told to visit a tent with a red flag beside it. We worked our way through the maze of tents and eventually came across a tent with a red flag waving next to it. We entered the tent and were immediately greeted with the wonderful smell of exquisite cuisines. The tent was larger than most of the other tents occupying the area, and on the interior stood a bed and a miniature kitchen, complete with a large pot in its center. Also inside of the tent was a portly man with
a curly black moustache, who was initially busy cutting some vegetables, but turned from his work when we came in the tent.

“Ah, buonasera! Welcome to Mario’s Ristorante! Our menu includes spaghetti, ravioli, pizza pie, and many other fabulous dishes made with all-natural ingredients! Come in, come in, take a seat, enjoy yourself. The weather outside is dreadful tonight. You must be worn out from your travels. Here, have some soup, it’s guaranteed to make you feel better!” the plump chef said as he handed Bubble Monkey and me a dish of red-ish liquid with various vegetables sloshing around in it. Chef Mario poured himself a bowl of the same soup before sitting down on a tiny stool near his pot. “So, tell me, what brings you to Loch Tess? Have you come seeking the mysterious Tessie? If so, why don’t you join the Tessie Watching Club? It’s a wonderful experience! *sip*” the chef said jovially as he swigged his soup. I took a sip of my own soup before I responded to him, clumsily spilling a little on myself at the same time; what can I say, it was truly excellent soup.

“Well sir, you might not believe me when I say this, but I am currently attempting to travel to the distant continent of Eagleland. To accomplish this feat, I plan to visit the miraculous scientist Dr. Andonuts and utilize one of his fantastic inventions,” I explained.

“Mmm. That’s quite ambitious for such a young man. What’s with the monkey then?” Chef Mario asked as he pointed to Bubble Monkey, who was busy chugging his bowl of soup.

“Umm, he’s my travel companion. He likes bubblegum, so his name is Bubble Monkey.”

“What’s good Guiseppi! I’m a fan of your soup!”

“Also, he can talk. It’s because of an invention by Dr. Andonuts,” I explained in as simple terms as I could.

“Ah, I see. Well, you are certainly on quite the adventure it seems! And that’s not a bad thing either; it’s good to be productive so early in life. Why, I remember when I was boy, I always dreamed of cooking
delicious meals for all to enjoy, and look at me now! Dreams do come true if you work hard enough. Remember that kiddo. And, oh wow! You finished that soup really quickly! It was pretty good, huh? Here, let me take your dishes,” Chef Mario said as he grabbed our bowls and sat them on a table with many other dirty dishes. “Now that you’re all filled up, why don’t you get some rest? The night is still young, and if you plan on crossing Loch Tess, you’ll definitely have to wait till morning. Feel free to sleep on that bed, I’m used to sleeping on the floor,” the chef said as he began to clean the dirty dishes. Having been awoken in the middle of the night and having traveled a great distance through highly unfavorable conditions, I was eager to reenter the world of slumber. Tiredly, I picked up a sheet that rested on the tent’s bed and slowly wrapped the comforter around myself as I lied down on the mattress. I felt Bubble Monkey hop on top of me and coil up into a sleeping position. His warmth was appreciated. Gently, I closed my eyes and fell into slumber once more.

When morning arrived, I exited my cozy bed, grabbed Bubble Monkey and my suitcase, and bid adieu to the hospitable Chef Mario. I exited the aromatic tent and took a deep breath of the fresh Winters air. The sun shone brightly against the waters of Loch Tess and the sky was covered by bustling white clouds. This was the type of scenery that I had come to love about Winters. After taking in the marvelous setting, I took notice of the large gathering of Tessie Watch members gathered at the edge of the Loch. I approached one the members, a black-haired girl who had her face sunk deep into a pair of binoculars.

“Excuse me ma’am. Why are there so many Tessie Watch members accumulated here at the edge of Loch Tess?” I asked.

“What? Do you not feel this gentle breeze? Do you not see the golden leaves flowing in the wind, or the calm waters splashing against the shore? This is the classical sign of the arrival of Tessie! Everyone here is on watch for when Tessie shows up so they can
The object rose to meet Bubble Monkey in the air, allowing him to pop his bubble and rest on its peak. The object then turned towards the Loch’s edge, revealing a set of cartoonishly beady eyes and a wide silly smile. This was the face of the creature known as Tessie, and while it was not quite as majestic as I had previously imagined, it was certainly a sight to behold. A roaring applause rang out from the Tessie Watch Club as the creature fully emerged from the water,
exposing its humped back. The beast slowly waded over to peninsula that I was occupying and slowly bent its head down to meet my own. I looked into the eyes of Tessie and saw a kind and gentle soul. Bubble Monkey climbed down from Tessie’s head and leapt onto its back.

“Yo! Check it out! I found a way to get us across Loch Tess! Somehow, Tessie was able to communicate with me and tell me to float over to that spot! Such elegance! Such intelligence! It smells like clean laundry! If you’re all set, hop on, Tessie won’t mind!” Bubble Monkey “said” as he scaled back up Tessie’s long neck. Although I wasn’t exactly comfortable about the idea of riding on the back of an ancient lake creature, it was the only way that I would be able to reach Dr. Andonuts in a reasonable time. Taking this fact into consideration, I carefully stepped onto the back of the creature and sat down. “Okie-dokie! We’re ready! Set off, Tessie ol’ pal!” On Bubble Monkey’s command, Tessie sluggishly started to advance away from the coast. As we departed, I peered back at the Tessie Watch Club, who were still clapping and cheering for Tessie and I; among the faces, I was able to spot Chef Mario and the girl I had previously met waving farewell to me. I waved back at the group before Tessie accelerated and the edge of the Loch faded into the distance.

As Tessie sped along the surface of Loch Tess, I took a moment to consider my situation; I was riding on the back of an ancient lake creature in order to meet up with my father, a world famous inventor. This entire scenario was truly miraculous, and I already felt more alive than I did staying at Snow Wood. By the time I had finished reminiscing, I saw that Tessie was approaching a small bank on the side of the Loch. It gradually decelerated and stopped at the side of the bank, signifying the end of our lake travel. I carefully stood up and leapt off of Tessie’s back, landing safely on the edge of the shore. Bubble Monkey soon slid down from his perch on Tessie’s head and plopped onto the snow beside me. Tessie gave us a gentle nod
before slowly heading away from the bank and descending back into the depths of the Loch.

“Well, that was certainly a pleasant ride! What a nice chap, that Tessie. Now that we’re here on the other side of the Loch, I suppose the next course of action is to find my father. Come along, Bubble Monkey, we have no more time to waste!” I said as I headed up the edge of the bank, Bubble Monkey trailing behind me.

We walked along the Loch’s edge until our progress was halted by a peculiar oddity. In our path stood a massive iron statue of a pencil. At first I thought that I was hallucinating from the cold weather, and went to see if the statue was real. I knocked on the structure and confirmed its presence as a reality. Going around the obstacle was an impossibility, for on one side we were blocked by the frigid waters of Loch Tess and on the other were blocked by a tall cliff face. I was about to double back and look for an alternative way around the statue when I heard Bubble Monkey cry out from a place I could not see.

“Yo buddy! Check this out! There’s a secret cave entrance here!” Bubble Monkey “said” as he shot out from the cliff face. Upon further examination, it turned out that a hole in the cliff was being hidden by a hanging sheet painted to look like the cliff wall.

“Ah ha! Excellent work, chap! This cave might be able to lead us around that intrusive pencil!” I said as I pushed the fraudulent cliff face out of my way and entered the secret cave. What I was greeted by on the interior of the cave left me with feelings of confusion.

On the inside of the cave stood a maze comprised of shoddily made yellow fences. The cave was illuminated by plastic torches containing LED lights. Beside the entrance to the maze was a sign that read

“Greetings! Welcome to my dungeon!
~ Brick Road” in large sloppily written letters. This sign allowed me to gather two things. 1: I was apparently in a dungeon, even though
the cave had no characteristics of a traditional dungeon. 2: The person that made the “dungeon” was a fellow by the name of Brick Road. Although I was still very perplexed by the whole situation, I decided to play along with Brick Road and traverse their “dungeon”. Bubble Monkey and I entered the odd maze and attempted to find our way through it. All throughout the maze were an assortment of signs that were written in the same handwriting as the first sign.

“My survey shows that 62% of people prefer apple pie to cherry pie.

~ Brick Road”

“Warning: Brick Road Incorporated is not responsible for any damage to your pet hamster.

~ Brick Road”

“Your fly is open.

Ha! Made you look!

~ Brick Road”

The strange signs along with the smell of freshly cut grass emanating from the “dungeon’s” walls made me eager to escape from the maze. Eventually, I was able to spot light from the outside leaking into the cave from a square hole in the cave wall. Standing in front of the exit was a red and white gift box and a sign that read “Congratulations! You made it through my dungeon! However, before you can leave, you must defeat a ferocious beast! He’s in the gift box. Be warned, he’s vicious!

~ Brick Road” Having been warned of a beast in the gift box, I armed myself with my air gun and proceeded to carefully open the container. Inside of the box was a purple blob of slime that had two black specs for eyes. I lifted the mass of jelly up to my face and to more closely inspect it when the blob suddenly began to speak.

“RaRr! Bee afRaid! *slurp* I wiL enD u! *scorp Smack* aRg, PleasE, kiLL Me. my eXisTencE is painfUl,” the protoplasm said in a distorted, quivering voice. Now genuinely
horrified, I accepted the blob’s request and pitched it straight at the wall, causing it to burst into a purple puddle. After erasing the memory of the blob from my mind, I wiped my hand on my coat and hastily exited the cave.

The cave exited out to a snowy clearing located near the edge of Loch Tess; sitting in the middle of this clearing was a bald man dressed in green overalls. The man was surrounded by stacks of papers inscribed with pictures of odd structures shaped like humanoid figures. The man was busy fiddling with an abacus before we approached him, causing him to jump back in fear.

"Wha!? Oh, uh, visitors? I, uh, didn’t expect anyone to defeat my dungeon so soon!" the man said as he lied his abacus down and stood to meet us. "My name is Brick Road, Brick Road the dungeon maker! I, um, make dungeons! Yeah, big surprise. Anyways, I suppose I should tell a little about myself. You see, ever since I was a small boy, I’ve been obsessed with creating puzzles and mazes and things of the sort. Up until recently, making dungeons has only been a hobby of mine, nothing serious. But, after meeting the genius inventor Dr. Andonuts, I am now preparing to ascend to a new plain of dungeon creating I previously thought was impossible. Are you ready for this? I, am going, to become a dungeon. Yes, I am not deceiving you. Dr. Andonuts, after seeing my passion for dungeon making, has promised to convert me into a living dungeon. If he is able to pull this off, I will become the first human-dungeon chimera in history, Dungeon Man! This is a monumental time for dungeon makers across the world!" Brick Road said as he danced with glee.

“Pardon me, Mr. Road, but did you say you met Dr. Andonuts, the famous inventor?” I asked the slightly psychotic man.

“What? Oh yes, I met Dr. Andonuts. He lives in a secluded laboratory located near the monument Stonehenge. There’s a cave somewhere close to this clearing that will take you
straight to Stonehenge; however, the cave is full of weird monsters, so I wouldn’t suggest a kid such as yourself to trek through it. But, judging by the look on your face, it seems like you’re determined to get to Stonehenge and meet Dr. Andonuts, so, as a gift from me to you, take this stun gun. It’s a creation of Dr. Andonuts’s, and it shoots out powerful bursts of electricity. It’s state of the art self-defence technology. Here you are,” Brick Road said as he handed me a sleek silver pistol. The gun appeared surprisingly similar to the design of my own air gun.

“Why, many thanks for the gift and advice chap. My friend Bubble Monkey and I are seeking Dr. Andonuts so that we can ask him for help. It is a matter of utmost importance. We really must be going now. Farewell, Mr. Road,” I said as I walked away from the shiny-domed man.

“No problem, new friend! The next time that you meet me, I will be transformed into dungeon man! See you then!” Brick Road yelled as we departed from the clearing.
Eventually, after walking down the banks of Loch Tess for what seemed like an age, Bubble Monkey and I came across another hole in the cliff side. Unlike the last hole, however, this hole had an ominous and ghastly atmosphere about it. There were several signs and papers plastered around the hole that read “Warning: Dangerous Creatures Inside Cave; Enter at Your Own Risk”. Judging from its appearance, this was the cave that Brick Road had previously informed me about. Although I had been twice warned of dangerous monsters living in the cave, I was not intimidated, for I had an excellent weapon at the ready. Carefully, I stepped into the dark cavern, Bubble Monkey following closely behind.

At first it was too dark to see any features of the cave, so I pulled out my handy pocket flashlight and illuminated the area. This cave was much more worthy of the title of “dungeon” than Brick Road’s miniature maze; the walls were a bleak grey, strange glowing mushrooms dotted the walls and floor, and much of the cave was coated by an odd liquid. Despite being slightly more disheartened than before, I swallowed my fears and continued into the cave’s recesses.
For a good while I did not encounter any “dangerous creatures” the signs said inhabited the cave; that was, until I began to hear soft footsteps coming from me. The steps sounded different from Bubble Monkey’s, so I was able to rule out him as the source of the sound. I quickly whirled around to check behind me, and was unable to find anything that could have logically been making the noises; the only peculiarity I spotted was a large pink and white mushroom, which had previously not been there. I simply assumed the fungus was a figment of my imagination and proceeded further into the cave. However, the soft footsteps once again began to sound off, and I turned around to once more see the large mushroom. Not wanting to take any chances, I pulled out my stun gun and fired a shot at the fungus.

The shot connected and caused the mushroom to burst to life with a chilling shriek; the fungus quickly jumped out of the ground, revealing two little legs. The mushroom shook itself like a dog before turning to me and hissing loudly. Although I was confused at how this mushroom had suddenly gained sentience, my primary feeling at that moment was panic, which caused me to rapidly fire at the menacing lifeform; the strutting shroom danced and weaved around my blasts like ballerina and swiftly retaliated at me with a fierce blow from its sturdy cap. The impact sent me onto the moist ground and disoriented me greatly. I regained my senses quickly enough to see the mushroom shake itself violently, releasing thousands of tiny yellow spores into the atmosphere. The spores formed piles on the floor which somehow began to amalgamate together into a different shape; I soon realized that the spores were coming together to form duplicates of the diabolical mushroom.

Now being severely outnumbered, I speedily leapt to my feet and snatched up Bubble Monkey before retreating farther into the cave. As I was not able to properly use my flashlight while running, I ran in the dark, able to hear a symphony of footsteps reverberating closely
behind me. Not being apt to see where I was going, I clumsily smacked face-first into a solid stone wall, indicated by the audible *crunch* of my nose bone. My situation at this point looked hopeless; I had a pack of bipedal mushrooms hunting me down, I had a headache and a broken nose, and I was toting around a monkey with an unhealthy affection for bubblegum. In a desperate attempt to save Bubble Monkey and myself, I shined my flashlight wildly at the surroundings, trying to find something helpful; my light eventually shone on a coil of rope sitting on a high ledge. I had found my escape, but had no way to reach it. While I tried to think of a way to get the rope down, I felt Bubble Monkey repeatedly tug on my trousers.

“Yo! Gimme some gum! Quickly! I can get that rope down! Move it, I don’t wanna get mauled by mushrooms!” Bubble Monkey “yelled” as I hastily pulled out the pack of bubblegum and handed him a piece of gum. He snatched the gum out my hand and began to chew it furiously. After a short second, he blew yet another giant bubble and floated high into the air. He quickly hovered over the ledge and burst his bubble, allowing him to knock the coil of rope down from the shelf to where I could reach it. Without wasting another moment, I tightly clutched the line and climbed until I reached the top of the cave wall. When I reached the ledge, I stood up and caught my breath as I stared down at the vicious horde of mushrooms, who spat and hissed loudly while scraping against the tall cave wall.

“Ah, ahahaha! Who are the tough ones now, you miserable fungi! Ah yes. All is right with the world again. And look, I can even see the exit to this wretched cave! Let’s hurry up and depart from this place before those mushrooms suddenly find a way to climb walls. Errr…” I shivered as I walked towards the beacon of light that signified the way out of the cave. As I stepped out of the cave, I was able to catch a glimpse of a mysterious light shining from a distant hole in the cave; I ignored the light, however, for I had other matters to be concerned with at the moment.
We emerged from the cave into a remote area that was fenced off from the outside world by enormous natural cliff faces, undisturbed by the touch of man. Did I mention that Winters was beautiful? Anyways, from where we exited out of the cave, I was able to spot an odd formation of stones in the distance and immediately recognized it as the man-made wonder Stonehenge. In front of the monument stood a small monkey with a bow tied to its forehead; the monkey looked to be in the same species as Bubble Monkey.

“Woah woah woah! Hot tomali! That is one good lookin’ lay-day! I, I think I might be smitten.” Bubble Monkey began to look at the distant monkey and then back to me, and repeated this several times. “Hey, Jeff, buddy. You know, monkeys don’t live as long as humans do, and uh, I’ve already lived out a good few of my years already, so... I’m kinda thinkin’ about goin’ off and startin’ a family! Yeah, I know I literally just saw that girl a few seconds ago, but monkeys are quick decision makers! It’s, well, I’m sorry, but I think this is where we’re gonna have to part ways, pally. I know, we’ve been through a lot together, and we’ve had some good times, but please understand, it’s time for me to move on. So, I sad to say, but... Hey, why are ya lookin’ at me like that! I know I was only introduced one chapter ago! It’s not too early to have a dramatic goodbye scene! *sigh* Anyways, boo hoo, yatta yatta, farewell, have a good life and all that. I’ll catch ya later, Jeffy; I’ve got a date with destiny! (it would be hilarious if that was actually her name.)” Bubble Monkey “whispered” as he sprinted towards the female monkey. I watched as he skidded to halt beside the monkey and began to communicate with her; after a minute, the two began to play joyfully with each and then ran out of my sight.

“Well. That certainly happened... What a waste of £1,” I thought jokingly to myself. After chuckling for a moment, I gathered myself and headed off towards Stonehenge.

Stonehenge was truly a breathtaking sight. The gargantuan circle of rocks positioned in cryptic and elaborate arrangements... I thought
that my heart would implode from the splendor that I was witnessing at that moment. Although I was in awe over the unnatural masterpiece, I was equally intrigued about the cave boys that inhabited the area. I had read about the cave boys in a thick encyclopedia back at Snow Wood; they were one of the last civilizations on the planet to have remained completely isolated from the influence of the outside world, and because of this, they behaved like wild animals and didn’t seem to possess any more than basic intelligence. The cave boys could usually be spotted wandering around Stonehenge, lugging about huge wooden clubs that they used to hunt with. The encyclopedia also mentioned that they were highly hostile and easily provoked. Because of the time I had spent reading that dusty tome, I desperately wanted to observe a cave boy in its natural habitat before moving on to Dr. Andonuts’s lab. In an attempt to achieve this, I squatted down behind a bush close to Stonehenge in hopes of spotting a cave boy. I waited for around 3 minutes before I suddenly felt a tap on my shoulder. At first I thought it to be a leaf blown by the wind, but ruled out that possibility when I felt the tap again. Thinking that it was Bubble Monkey coming to tell me something nonsensical, I frustratedly jolted in the direction of the tapping. What tapped on my shoulder was not Bubble Monkey; instead, I sat staring at a 24 decimeter tall boulder of flesh.

I sat absolutely still in hopes that the cave boy would think me only to be an oddly-shaped rock. Knowing that my eyes were shielded by my thick glasses, I dared to inch my eyes up at the intimidating native; the boy had a narrow, funnel shaped head with a small spec of hair sprouting from it, round, almost cartoonishly large eyes, many rolls of insulating fat that comprised its torso, and wore a wide skirt made out of the fur of wild bears. The boy peered at me with its unblinking eyes, most likely assessing whether or not I would make a good meal. It reached over and repeatedly poked my forehead with its ogre-sized fingers; it then leaned over and started sniffing me all
over. The neanderthal must have smelled the soup I had spilled on my coat the night prior, for it hoisted me off of the ground by the arm and began to lick me incessantly. It kept licking me until I was thoroughly soaked in its drool; once the cave boy had its fill, in nonchalantly tossed me onto the ground and clomped away, leaving large footprints in the snow. After I was certain that the cave boy had left, I slowly got up off of the ground and tried to ring the slobber out from my coat, to no avail. Now that I was wet, the freezing Winters wind began to chill me to the core. I rapidly shifted my arms to try and create body heat, but did not get much of a result. Exhausted, hungry, and very, very cold, my thoughts became thoroughly clouded with hatred and regret.

"Why, why did I leave that infernal school? Why did I leave the only two people that ever cared about me? Why did I come all the way out here just get assaulted by demonic mushrooms and an obese boy with the brainpower of a walnut? Why did I waste half of my money on a stupid monkey who abandoned me not even a day after I bought him? Why, why, why?! Perhaps I'm not as intelligent as I once thought I was. Perhaps I am just a 'little four-eyes', or a 'snot-nosed pig weasel', or whatever those welts at Snow Wood called me. Perhaps I am just a-" My rageful thoughts were interrupted by another tap on my shoulder. Dreading that the cave boy had come back, I cautiously turned around, only to be greeted by a middle-aged man with white hair wearing a lab coat.

"Hello? Are you alright, good lad? What are you doing out here in this ghastly glade? Oh, my word! You are soaked from head to toe! I haven’t the faintest idea how you ended up like this, but I will see that you are given proper treatment! Come with me, old bean, my laboratory is warm and dry. Hurry, before you get hypothermia!" the man said as he took my hand and pulled me along with him. After walking for a minute, we came upon a decently-sized grey metallic building that had the word "Lab"
written on it in light blue letters. The strange man entered in some sort of code on a keypad located beside the door to the building; the code was accepted and the door swung open, allowing the man and I to enter.

The interior of the building was delightfully warm and practically spotless, the floor appearing as if it was a massive mirror. The laboratory contained several metal tables with an array of vials and beakers sitting on them; the lab also held a chalk board positioned at its rear and a peculiar cylindrical machine that was about 2 meters tall positioned at the western end of the lab. When we entered the building, the coated man lead me over to the tall device and opened a door on the front of it.

“This is the Instant Revitalizing Machine! In mere moments, this machine will make you feel fully revitalized, just like a good night’s sleep. I created this machine so that I would never have to take the time to sleep! Now I can focus on my work 24 hours a day! Go ahead, step inside, it won’t hurt a bit!” the man said as I cautiously stepped inside the alien-esque contraption. When I was completely encapsulated, the man closed the door and began to fiddle with something on the exterior of the device. Suddenly, a red light shone forth from the top of the machine, enveloping me in its glare. After a few seconds, the red light faded, and I was dry and feeling fully revitalized, as the man said I would. The man once again opened the door to machine, allowing me to step out. “Are you feeling better now? Excellent! Come, take a seat, let us have a chat,” the man said as he pulled out a chair from under one of the tables and motioned for me to sit on it. I sat down in the chair as the man opened a small grey box sitting on one of the tables and pulled out a donut. He then took a seat himself as he began snacking on the pastry. “*chomp* Mmm, so, tell me lad, what *smack* is your name? *chomp* Oh, cream-filled, my favorite!”
“*cough* Ahem. Well sir, my name is Jeff, and I have come from across Loch Tess seeking the help of Dr. Andonuts, the world-famous scientist. Judging from the laboratory, the remote location, and the arrangement of scientific appliances, I assume that you are Dr. Andonuts, are you not?” I asked as the man stuffed the rest of the donut into his mouth.

“*muffled speech* *swallowing noise* Ah, that was good. Anyways, yes, you are correct. I am Dr. Andonuts, the ‘world-famous’ scientist. I work day and night to help improve the lives of people across the globe! Although I have already invented many useful gadgets, there is still much more that can be done to make the world a better place! Now, I know that my name is one that is praised as much the likes of Einstein and Heisenberg, but for you to have come such a long ways just to meet me? Either you really wanted to get my autograph, or there is a serious problem that you need help with. Do tell me which of these is correct,” Dr. Andonuts said as pulled another donut from the grey box.

“Well, you see da--, I mean, Dr. Andonuts, while I was sleeping last night, I received a telepathic call from a girl in the distant country of Eagleland. In the call, the girl said that I was a member of the Chosen Four, a group who are destined to save the world from a titanic evil. She said that in order for the Chosen Four to defeat the evil, they would need my help; the girl also said that she and the leader of the Chosen Four, Ness, were trapped in a murky cave with no way to escape. For this reason, I traveled across the Winters countryside and across the waters of Loch Tess to meet you and ask if you had a way for me to get to Eagleland,” I explained as Dr. Andonuts finished his second donut.

“Hmm... this is quite the tale. But, I believe you, for stranger things have happened in this universe. Also, because you have come from such a great distance, I feel it is only proper to grant your request. So, you want to go to Eagleland? Although the country lies many kilometers away from Winters, I have an invention that will take you there in a matter of minutes. Come with me,” the doctor said as he walked to the back of the room. Dr.
Andonuts then opened a secret door on the back wall and entered in a passcode; moments later, a large square section of the floor sank into the ground, and a few seconds after that, the floor returned, now carrying a shiny silver sphere held up by tiny legs.

“This is the Sky Runner, a rather old creation of mine. Despite its age, this lovely machine makes modern airplanes look like ancient history; however, there is a reason why I never released this device to the public. A long time ago, when I had just completed the Sky Runner, my wife succumbed to an awful disease. This event left me stricken with grief, and my life began to fall into pieces. Because of my wife’s death, I sent my only son away to a distant boarding school, for he had her eyes, and merely looking upon his face made me well up with incredible sadness; this was also the reason why I’ve kept this device hidden for so long, as it also reminded me of her. But, now that those occurrences are in the past, I finally feel that the Sky Runner is ready to soar through the clouds! Now, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but for an exceptional young man such as yourself, I believe that this is well-deserved! Could you say your name again lad, I didn’t catch it the first time.”

“Jeff, sir. Jeff is my name.”

“Is that so? How odd, my son’s name was also Jeff... And, if I recall correctly, he also had blonde hair, freckled cheeks, and wore glasses and green coats, just like... you. Umm... If it’s not too much of a hassle, do you mind taking off your specs for a moment?” Dr. Andonuts said, now trembling slightly. As the doctor requested, I removed my spectacles, allowing him to see my bright green eyes. Dr. Andonuts eyes suddenly widened significantly, and he appeared to lose his balance. He began to tremble rapidly, and shakily removed his glasses to get a better look at me. “C-c-can it be? Could... you be... no, could it? What, what is your full name, l-l-lad?”

“Jeff Andonuts.”

As I said my name, Dr. Andonuts’s eyes began to fill with tears. He suddenly rushed forward and wrapped his arms around me, encasing me in a hug.
“J-J-Jeff... My son... It’s been so long since I last saw you. Look at how much you’ve grown! Those glasses look good on you! I, I, I am a fool. I should have never sent you to that horrible boarding school. I was so heartbroken by the loss of your mother that I could no longer think clearly. I was a weaker man back then, but now, I am more happy than I ever was. My son has come home.” Dr. Andonuts released me from his grasp and grabbed another donut from the grey box. “W-would you like a donut? I know that you used to love them so much, just like your mother and I. H-here, take the whole box, I have much more where that came from!” Dr. Andonuts said as he thrust the crate of sweets into my hands. “Oh ho ho! This is utterly fantastic! Now that you’re back with me, I can drop you out of that wretched school and teach you myself! We’ll have so much fun together; we can explore so many theorems, we can create so many inventions, we can, we can... *sigh* I know what you’re thinking, and it breaks my heart. You came to me so that you could use the Sky Runner to depart to Eagleland. You came back to me, just so that you can leave me. Do not believe that it is your fault lad; sometimes, things occur that are out of our control. Yet, that does not change the fact that this is utterly depressing. After all these years, our reunion is so brief,” Dr. Andonuts said as he wiped his eyes and put back on his glasses. I sat the box of donuts down and went over to the saddened doctor’s side.

“It is alright da--, Dr. Andonuts. Despite our short time together, this meeting is a monumental event in both of our lives. By embarking on this journey, I will help fulfill your dream of making the world a better place. Do not cry, there is no need to be upset. I have a great feeling deep in my heart that we will meet again someday. Uhh, thank you for the donuts. I, will take my leave now,” I said I climbed into the Sky Runner via an opening on its bottom, intentionally leaving the box of donuts for Dr. Andonuts. The interior of the Sky Runner was neat and clean; there were four leather seats and a large control panel that encircled the whole machine. Through one of the Sky Runner’s windows, I saw Dr. Andonuts approach the vehicle.
“Jeff, my boy! I know the control panel looks complicated, but it’s actually very simple to use! There should be a green square screen somewhere on the panel. When you find it, simply type in the name of the location you want the Sky Runner to take you to, and press the big blue button! It will automatically pilot you to your destination! Remember, don’t press the big red button, it cuts off the engine! It was nice seeing you again, my good lad! Let’s get back together in another 10 years or so!” Dr. Andonuts said, voice muffled by the Sky Runner’s exterior. I peered around the sphere until I spotted the green screen. Using a keyboard located under the screen, I typed in the name of my destination, “Threed, Eagleland”. After pressing the enter key, the Sky Runner suddenly jumped to life. The previously blank screen now showed a map of the world with miniature icons indicating my current location and my eventual destination, as well as a line that represented my path of flight. A few seconds later, I felt the Sky Runner begin to lift off of the ground and rise towards the ceiling. Through the window, I saw Dr. Andonuts waving farewell to me, and I happily waved back. Moments later, I saw the Sky Runner exit the laboratory through a hole in the roof and begin to accelerate in the direction of Eagleland.

At first I was frightened, for I had never ridden in a flying vehicle before; but I soon began to feel better as I stared out of the Sky Runner’s windows and saw the country of Winters zoom by me at a rapid pace. This sight made me feel as if I was weightless and had no concerns in the world. My euphoria only continued to grow as I saw the land end and the sea begin. I soon found myself with an impetuous grin on my face as the Sky Runner floated higher into the air, competing with the clouds for airspace. While this was happening, a funky tune began to play from the Sky Runner’s speakers, and I started to dance along with the song.

“Ahahahaha! This is absolutely excellent! I would have never gotten to do things like this if I had stayed at that abysmal boarding school! I take back what I said earlier; I have no regrets now!” I said to myself
as I grooved joyfully. My happy romp was abruptly cut short by the Sky Runner starting to descend. As I regained my balance, I peered out of the window again and saw the Sky Runner approaching land. I saw the machine fly over a large city; using my prior knowledge, I identified this city to be Fourside, the grand metropolis of Eagleland. After passing Fourside, I saw the Sky Runner pass over a dreadful-looking wasteland, which I recognized as the infamous Dusty Dunes Desert. Once we were past the barren area, I saw that the Sky Runner was now approaching a town that was being covered by an ominous red nimbus. After checking the Sky Runner’s radar, I realized that this town was in fact my end destination, the town of Threed. I suddenly began to get unnerving feelings as the Sky Runner slowed to a halt over the vacant municipality. It was at this moment that I remembered my ultimate goal; to find and rescue Paula and Ness from their imprisonment. I searched the Sky Runner’s massive control panel and found exactly what I was looking for; a thermal tracking device.

“If Ness and Paula are indeed trapped in a cold and damp cave, then it will be straightforward to identify them using this device,” I thought. After tinkering with some knobs and buttons, a blank blue screen lit up and began to show me the heat signatures of the surrounding area. The Sky Runner suddenly started to hover in a circle around the large town, allowing me to search more of the area. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, I was able to spot two distinct heat signatures radiating from underneath a small cemetery in the southern part of Threed. “Ah ha! I’ve found them! Do not worry, Ness and Paula, for Jeff is here to save you from your captivity!” I said triumphantly. Despite how confident I was, there was one thing that I had forgotten to account for; I did not know how I was going to breach the underground prison. After brainstorming for a few minutes, I came to an unfortunate conclusion. Using a manual control stick, I carefully positioned the Sky Runner over the spot where the heat signatures were emanating from. “*sigh* Forgive me Dr.
Andonuts, but this must be done!” I said as reluctantly pushed the large red button labeled, “I would appreciate it if you did not press this button.” Upon pressing the switch, I felt the Sky Runner jerk and wobble for a moment. After a second of this, there was complete silence, and I braced myself for what was about to happen.