After Paula sent her call to the one she called Jeff, we decided that there was nothing else for us to do other than to wait patiently for his arrival. In knowing this, I took off my backpack and sat it down on the damp ground, using like a makeshift pillow. I quickly fell asleep and was having a surprisingly pleasant rest; that was, until I was suddenly thrust back into reality by the sound of a massive crash that came from nearby the spot I was sleeping at. As I jerked into a sitting position and wiped my eyes, I noticed that the cave was now being illuminated by the light of the outside that seeped in through a gaping hole in the top of the cave. Sitting under the shower of light was a strange silver sphere that looked severely damaged. I suddenly felt something tap my shoulder and jumped back a bit; however, it was only Paula, who had also been awoken by the noise.

“Ness! It’s only me! Don’t be such a scaredy cat! Look at that weird machine. Do you have any idea what it could be?” I shrugged my shoulders and shook my head. “*sigh* Well, why are you still sitting there then? Go check it out! Ugg, if you’re too afraid to go, then I will!” Paula said as she stood up and slowly approached the alien craft. Before she could reach the device however, an eerie moan started to emit from it. Suddenly, a hatch opened on the side of the machine, allowing a dense cloud of smoke to escape from the inside. After the smoke cleared, a human-esque figure began to emerge from the craft. I speedily put on my pack and rushed to Paula’s side, in case of an emergency. The figure coughed and wheezed as it wiped away the smoke, letting me see its true form; a young boy with blonde
hair and many freckles, wearing thick glasses and a green coat. The boy appeared to be around my height, but was still a bit shorter than Paula.

“*cough, cough* Oh dear. *cough* What a bloody mess. *deep inhale*” The boy wiped some soot off of himself as he turned towards us. “Ah, salutations! I’m sorry if I startled you, that was the only way I could get in here. If I am not mistaken, you two are Ness and Paula. I believe you were the ones who summoned me yesterday. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Jeff, Jeff Andonuts. I’m reckless, a bit timid, and a lover of tea and explosives. I might not be the greatest person to ever live, but I strive to improve! I hope that you will accept me as your new friend, and if you don’t, I hope that we can at least be mutual acquaintances,” the boy said as he stuck out his hand, wanting a handshake. After realizing that this boy was the person that Paula summoned, I was so overcome by joy that I found myself rushing at the boy, encompassing him in a massive bear hug; Paula seemed to have the same idea.

“Yes! Salvation has come at last! You can be definitely be my friend!”

“My hero! I knew that you would be able to save us! Consider yourself befriended!”

“Oh, oh my! Such affection! I thought for sure that you two would pass me off as just a pale nerd or loser. I suppose I was mistaken after all! I gladly welcome you two to my (miniscule) friend roster! Ah, yes, that’s enough hugging, you’re hurting my back!” Jeff said, struggling to breath under our happiness. Upon his request, we let him go. “Ok, that’s a tad better. Anyways, would you chaps mind giving me a formal introduction to yourselves? To help better connect with you as friends.”

“Well, if you want, sure! I’m Ness; a boy that has psychic powers and a love for baseball and hamburgers!” I said as I struck a cool pose.
“My name is Paula! Like Ness, I too have psychic abilities, but you knew that already! I also enjoy nice walks in the sunset and ultra-soft stuffed animals!” Paula said as she spun around joyfully.

“Ah, I see. I’ve done some research into the field of psychokinetic abilities, and while most of what I’ve seen has been unimpressive, you two exemplify far greater powers than any other I’ve observed. This adventure will allow me to collect some fascinating hardcore information on the whole matter. Yet, I will try not to think of you lot as test subjects, and instead think of you as my good chaps! I am sure that we will get along well; but, for the time being, let us focus on the issue you that you mentioned in your call.”

“Oh, that’s right! I was so happy to see that you made here that I totally forgot why I called you in the first place! Ahem. If you don’t mind, could you do something about that door? It’s locked up tight, and we can’t bust it open using our powers,” Paula said as she pointed to the door in question. Jeff calmly walked over to the door and thoroughly examined it.

“Ah... I see the problem... The door is locked. And it is locked well. This is quite the conundrum you have here, but it is easily fixable. Watch and be amazed!” Jeff said as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a small cube. He held the cube up to the doorknob, causing several arms to emerge from the cube’s interior. The arms instantly began to fiddle with the doorknob, and after 10 seconds, a click from within the door signified that it had been unlocked. “Annnnnnd it’s done. Easy as crumpets! Is there nothing that the power of technology cannot overcome?” Paula and I stood in awe at how effortlessly this young boy had been able to defeat an obstacle that not even our combined might was able to. After a moment, Paula began to cheer for Jeff.

“Yeah! Awesome! Jeff, although you look a little dorky, you’re actually really cool! We’re free at last! This time, let’s not go following any seductive women into strange rooms,” Paula said as she glared at me hostially. She then ran out of the now-open door, bulldozing
Jeff out of the way. I walked over to Jeff and helped him off of the ground.

“Good grief! She is quite the bombastic one, that Paula.”

“Yeah, I know. You’ll get used to after a while. Come on, let’s get out of this crappy cave before she gets impatient!” I said as Jeff and I exited the murky room. We trekked down a dark hallway until we finally saw light coming from above-ground. Using a conveniently placed rope, we climbed out of the spooky trench and arrived back on the surface.

We ascended back onto the surface world via a hollow stone sarcophagus. Paula was waiting for us by a large tombstone, tapping her foot impatiently.

“Finally! Both of you take forever to get anywhere! When we get done with this adventure, I should take you guys to a gym so you can get in shape! Anyways, now that we’re free from that horribly humid cave, I say we should get something to eat! I remember seeing a pizza place when we came into Threed, but I don’t know if it’s open right now. Even if it’s not, I’ll find us something to eat eventually. After we chow down, we can refocus our efforts on ridding Threed of these horrible zombies. I’ll go on ahead; keep up with me if you can!” Paula said as she bolted out of the graveyard.

“Mercy! She has so much energy for one who is apparently starving! Although, at the same time, she is right about my physical condition. You see, where I come from, it’s not that easy to get sufficient exercise. Perhaps I will be able to get a workout on our adventure. But enough chat, let’s catch up to Paula!” Jeff said as we followed Paula’s footsteps out of the cemetery.

We eventually met up with Paula in the main plaza of Threed, where she was gazing longingly at the only lit building in the town.

“Hey you guys, check this out! The pizzeria that I saw earlier seems to be open for business! Come on, let’s get some grub!” she said as we
all entered the building at once. The inside of the place was
shockingly barren; there were no tables or chairs anywhere, and the
only thing in the restaurant was a counter positioned at the south of
the building. Standing at the counter was a plump man with curly
moustache wearing a ridiculous red & white outfit and a top hat.
Being the apparent leader of our triad, I approached the man in hopes
of getting a bite to eat.

“Buon giorno! Welcome to Mach Pizza, the only place in Threed that
is not afraid of zombies! We work 24/7 makin’ mouth-watering dishes
for all who can foot the bill! My name is Gonzares; I will be your server
for tonight!” the man said with a generous smile.

“This place smells heavenly! I bet the food tastes just as good! But,
uhhh, quick question. Why are there no places to sit? Shouldn’t a
restaurant have someplace to sit down and chow down?” I asked.

“Oh ho ho! Silly boy, this isn’t a place where you can sit down and
eat! Everyone is too busy runnin’ away from zombies to be worryin’
about sitting down! This a take-out restaurant; you simply call our
number and order whatcha want, and in no time we’ll be right at your
side to bring you your hash (and to collect your cash.)”

“Well, can’t I just order something from the counter and take it with
me?”

“Nope! That’s against our traditional policies. In the words of Mach
Pizza’s founder, Giuseppe P. Zah, ‘Any bologna distributed in our
workplace is simply a phoney.’ You gotta order from at least 10 feet
away from our restaurant, or we won’t serve you. Sorry bud, we’ve
been doin’ this for years! Here’s our number. Call us from a distance
and then we’ll make your food!” Gonzares said as he handed me a slip
of paper that read “1-994-PIZA”. Frustrated, I walked back to Paula
and Jeff.

“Ness, what’s the hold-up? Are they making our food?”

“Um, yeah, about that. Just, wait right here for a second. I’ll be right
back,” I said as I walked out of the door, leaving my companions with
looks of confusion on their faces.
I looked around the area for a minute and spotted a lonely payphone sitting under a single lamppost. I hurried over to the object, inserted $1 dollar into it’s slot, and punched in the number I was given. After a second, a familiar voice began to speak from the receiver.

“Buon giorno! Welcome to Mach Pizza! This is that kid who tried to order at the counter, isn’t it? You’re using that payphone outside, aren’t you? Heh heh, don’t ask how I know, just tell me whatcha want,” the voice said.

“Uhh, ok... I would like a large pepperoni pizza, with extra cheese, please,” I ordered warily, creeped out by the man’s sudden omniscience.

“Large pepperoni pizza, extra cheese! Got it, kiddo. I’ll be there in 2 seconds!” Before I could say good-bye to the man, I felt a tap on my shoulder and flew back in horror. It was the same man from before, standing an inch away from the payphone holding a pizza box.

“Heh heh, why the surprised look, boyo? I told you I would be here in 2 seconds! Anyways, here’s the pizza you ordered! That’ll be 7 smacks!” Shaken and perplexed by the man’s sudden appearance, I took out my wallet and quickly handed him the cash, receiving the pizza in return. “Why, thanks for your business! Oh, but before I go, I’ll give you a little interesting tid bit, for bein’ such a loyal customer. Now, I’m not saying this is true, but I’ve heard that the zombies’ base of operations is located in the northernmost part of Threed, and that they’re hiding something there that will help you defeat their leader,” the man whispered.

“Umm, thank you for the information, but, how did you know that my friends and I we’re trying to stop the zombies?” I asked.

“Oh hohohoho! That’s a good question, my boy! Let’s just say, I have some reliable sources.” The man winked at me, and then disappeared in a flash of light. Let’s just say, I was more than a tad spooked at this moment.
Jeff and Paula were ecstatic to see me return to them with the steaming hot pizza in hand. I didn’t say a word as we exited the building and sat down on a bench in front of the restaurant. Paula and Jeff hastily opened the box and started chowing down; I on the other hand, had lost my appetite after my encounter with the mysterious pizza man. Jeff caught on to my inactivity and asked me what was wrong.

“I say Ness, you look like you’ve seen a ghoul. Do tell us what is troubling you. I promise I won’t tease you, (I know the feeling all too well.)” I took a deep breath and related my tale with my two acquaintances. As I finished, I could see worried looks form on both of their faces.

“.............N-Ness, you know it’s not nice to try and scare your friends with your ghost stories, especially in this eerie town.”

“What? I’m serious! I’m not trying to creep you out, I’m telling the truth!” All of a sudden, the door to the restaurant flung open, and the same man from before came bustling out, pizza box in hand.

“Buon giorno! Here’s your pizza!... Hey! Where’d you get that other pizza? Did you get bored of waiting for me? Did you head over to a rival restaurant? Explain yourselves!” yelled Gonzares.

“Huh?! It’s you! What are talking about, you gave me this pizza a few minutes ago, and then told me some weird information and teleported away! Explain YOURself!” I said, now incredibly confused.

“What the hey? I never did any of that! When I said that I would be there in 2 seconds, I didn’t actually mean I would be there in 2 seconds! Mama mia, you’re makin’ my head spin like a tossed pizza!”

“B-but, if you didn’t give me this pizza, then who did I give my money to?”

“...”

“...”

“...”

“...Well then. That’s enough outside for me today. If you don’t mind, I’m gonna eat the pizza you ordered since you already have one.
Thank you for shopping at Mach Pizza. Never come back,” Gonzales said as he ran inside the restaurant. Jeff and Paula looked at each other, and then both looked at me.

“I, I think I’m full now. I’ll go take a few laps around the town and then come back. D-d-don’t have fun without me!” Paula said as she took off and began to run circles around a nearby building.

“P-perhaps, you did see a ghoul after all... Bloody bother. This simple excursion to get something to eat has now turned into a horror story. There is definitely someone sinister behind all of the ghastly happenings in this town, like a ringleader of some sort. Ness, did that mysterious pizza man say anything strange to you? Well, compared to everything else he said,” Jeff said with a curious face.

“Well, now that you mention it, he did say something pretty odd. He said that the zombies’ headquarters was located somewhere at the northern edge of Threed, and that they were hiding something there that could help us defeat their leader,” I said, still shaken from all of the recent events.

“Hmmmm, intriguing. If that man were to be siding with the zombies, then why would he give you information on how to eradicate them? Is this mystery man even siding with the zombies at all? Who is this mysterious person, and where did he obtain this knowledge? So many questions, so little answers. *sigh* On the upside, we now know where the zombies are basing their operations in Threed. I suppose taking down their HQ will be our next objective. Oh, uh, sorry about eating all of the pizza old boy. I tend to eat more when I am frightened,” Jeff said as he closed the empty pizza box.

“That’s alright, I’ll just eat something from my pack later. When Paula gets done with, whatever she’s doing, I guess the best thing for us to do would be to take out the zombies at the source. Zombie HQ.”
Chapter 16
Boogey Woogie

When Paula finished her anxiety-induced jogging session, Jeff and I met up with her and described our current goal.

“Hmm, I see. Umm, even though we kinda have our minds set on helping the people of Threed out with their little zombie problem, we shouldn’t forget about our overall mission, which is to collect the Eight Melodies,” Paula said, wiping the sweat off of her forehead.

“Oh, that’s right. We have melodies to find. I, kinda forgot about that. Err, well, let’s look at it this way. By ridding Threed of its zombie problem, we could potentially get some solid information about the locations of the remaining sanctuary locations. And remember, whenever we defeat monsters and help people out, we gain experience and grow stronger, so it’s not like this a waste of our time,” I said.

“...I guess you’re right. Well then, if zombie extermination is our task, then let’s go kick some undead tail! Ness, you take the lead; Jeff and I will follow behind you, in order to cover our blindspots. Oh, and one more thing. If you’re going to be the leader of this group, then you have to hustle! Don’t go slow! Other than that, I think we’re set! Head off Ness! Those zombies are toast!” Paula cried as we began our trek.

We hurried along the vacant street of Threed for about 20 minutes, passing many dark and boarded up buildings. I would occasionally spot pairs of eyes peering at us through the shutters of windows as we walked along. It was during this hike that I realized just how afraid the citizens of Threed were of this zombie apocalypse. This gave me even more motivation to rid Threed of its zombie plague than I had previously. Eventually, the paved road came to an end and lead us to a large clearing at the northernmost point of Threed. The clearing
contained many bizarre things, such as empty circus cages and slips of paper that read
“Hail Belch. Hail Giygas.” in poor handwriting; however, the most peculiar thing in the clearing was a large purple and green big top, attached to the ground with ghostly white ropes. Emitting from the tent’s entrance was a conspicuous ray of blue light.

“I don’t know about you guys, but something tells me that tent is the place we’re looking for,” I said to my following associates.

“Are you certain about that Ness? Let’s not act prematurely. We might end up running into trouble,” Jeff said as he adjusted his glasses.

“Whatever it is, there’s definitely something fishy about a random circus tent sitting out in the middle of nowhere. Let’s check it out, but be careful. Who knows what could happen in this town,” Paula said as she clutched her frying pan. Taking the advice from my acquaintances, I cautiously began stepping towards the ominous tent, bat at the ready. I approached the entrance to the tent and took a careful peek inside; the interior was almost completely empty, aside from a strange crate sitting in the middle of the room.

“The coast is clear! Come here you guys, take a look at this!” I said as I motioned for Paula and Jeff to come to me. They quickly came over and gazed inside of the tent.

“Hmm... That’s weird, there’s almost nothing in this spooky tent. This place just keeps getting stranger and stranger.”

“If this were truly the headquarters of the zombie horde, then why is there a great lack of zombies? Something is off here, but I don’t exactly know what. I, I wouldn’t recommend going in there, it could be-” Jeff was cut off by a sudden gust of wind that came from behind us. We were all caught off guard by the abrupt wind and were sucked into the maw of the tent, landing face-first into the dark grass. We hurriedly picked ourselves off of the ground and tried to run for the
exit; however, before we could reach it, the walls of the tent receded, blocking our escape. “-A trap!”

We frantically attempted to puncture the walls of the tent, but were unsuccessful, for the walls had hardened to the level of steel. As we panicked about, a voice echoed from all around us.

“Ooo hoo hoo hoo! Looky wot we got ‘ere! A couple a sucker kids, thats wot! Geeoorrg! Whata delightful treat this is!” the voice said in a sinister gargled tone.

“What-who are you? Show yourself, you coward!” I bravely yelled out.

“If you insist, you miserable human!” Suddenly, a section of the tent began to gyrate, and after a moment, a pair of eyes materialized in its place, followed by a gaping, fanged maw. “Well, ‘ere I am! Surprised? I’m the Boogey Tent, loyal servant of the esteemed Master Belch! The boss made me so ‘is zombie operatives could ‘ave a place to store their valuables; but after you worms escaped from your cozy prison, he assigned me with the eradication of your lives! No ‘ard feelin’s, but I’m afraid you’re gonna ‘afta take a lil’ ol’ dirt nap now! Geeoorrg! Let’s boogie!”

The face on the wall let out a mighty roar as we all prepared for a fight. Paula and I rushed at the menacing face with our weapons in hand while Jeff stayed back and charged a sleek silver gun. We both swung at the face and missed it, for it had disappeared from the spot.

“Ooo hoo hoo, that’s rich! You bloody badgers couldn’t ‘it an elephant if stood 2 feet in front of ya!” the tent taunted as its face rematerialized in a different location. Jeff attempted to blast the
cackling apparition with his pistol, but his shots were dodged every time. All of a sudden, the face appeared right behind me and tried to chomp me with its sharp fangs; I barely managed to roll out of the way before I got bitten in half. The face laughed hysterically as it rapidly slid around the area. In my anger at the tent’s arrogance, the thought to use PSI suddenly came to my mind.

My attack caught the irritating tent off guard and hit it directly in the face.

“Yowch! What kinda bloody black magic was that? The boss said that my defenses were impenetrable! You’re breakin’ the rules o’ the supernatural!” the face whined.

“Good idea Ness! Let’s show this terrible tent the power of PSI!”

Paula said as a string of flames burst from her hands and roasted the pesky tent. We continued to launch our most powerful attacks at the tent, causing it to dart around uncontrollably.

“So, Izat ‘ow you wanna go?! Fine, let me show you a bit of me own magic!” The face suddenly vomited out a stream of yellow liquid from its mouth, hitting Paula and covering her in the vile fluid.

“Yuck! What is this stuff? It smells horrible, and it’s really, sticky! Arrgg, really, really, sticky... So sticky, it’s preventing me from moving! Help!” Paula yelled as she struggled to wipe off the yellow muck. Out of impulse, I rushed forward in an attempt to strike the face; before I could it reach however, the face once again coughed up the yellow slime, coating me completely in the stuff. I found myself unable to move an inch after getting slimed.

“Ooo hoo hoo hoo! Look at you blokes, all wrapped up in a snug blanket of me special concoction! You practically statues now! So, all that’s left is you, four-eyes!” the face said as it appeared behind Jeff. “Stickier than molasses, worse smelling than burning garbage, and Master Belch’s favorite treat, it’s fly honey! Why don’t you indulge yourself in some?” the face said as it prepared to slime Jeff with the same yellow goop.
“No thank you, I would prefer to eat something healthier. Why don’t you try a more EXPLOSIVE diet?!” Jeff said as he pulled out an object in the shape of a pencil from his pocket. He then quickly pressed something on the object, causing it to launch into the Boogey Tent’s mouth. The face choked and gagged on the object for a few seconds before it was suddenly enveloped in a fiery explosion, leaving a massive cavity in the wall of the tent. After a second, both the rest of the tent and the fly honey covering Paula and I vanished into nothingness.

“I say, what a truly dreadful fellow. Barfing up disgusting liquids onto young teenagers? That’s just indecent, even for a pompous circus tent! Anyways, what did you think of that weapon? I made it myself from everyday appliances. I never had a place to try it out before, so I suppose I have the Boogey Tent to thank for that,” Jeff said as he wiped himself off.

“Woo hoo! Hooray for Jeff! He saved us not just once, but twice in one day! I knew that you would be an indispensable member of the team, I just knew it! Come on Ness, give him a hand!” Paula said as she clapped for Jeff. To show my gratitude for Jeff, I also gave him a round of applause.

“Oh, come now. I am only doing what is right. I deserve no extra thanks... But I suppose it is nice to have.” Jeff glanced over to mysterious crate that was previously guarded by the Boogey Tent. “Oh right, I guess we should see what’s inside of that crate now that there is no immediate threat,” Jeff said as he strolled over to the odd box. When he arrived at it, he carefully lifted the splintery lid off of the crate and peered inside before reaching in and pulling out a small jar. “What’s this? It looks like a jar of honey, expect, a tad different. Oh, there’s a label on this container. It says, ‘Fly Honey: Like how bees make bee honey, flies make fly honey. Warning: Contents are sticky and inedible.’ So, this is the putrid substance that despicable tent covered you two in. Judging from how easily and effectively this fluid
was able to incapacitate two fully capable combatants, it must be proficiently dangerous... Yet, it might come it handy. Perhaps we could throw the jar at an enemy and render them useless, or we could knock them out cold by using the odor of the fly honey. There are many possibilities, really. I'll take the responsibility of carrying the jar," Jeff said as he slid the small cylinder into one of his pockets. As Jeff was rambling on, I noticed Paula had turned away from us and appeared to be in deep thought. When Jeff finished, she turned back around, clearly wanting to say something.

“So... I've been, doing a little thinking, and I believe I've found out how we can get rid of these zombies once and for all. Up to this point, we've constantly heard about someone named Master Belch. After doing some brainstorming, I've determined that this person, or whatever he is, is the one behind the zombie invasion. I've also came to the conclusion that this Master Belch is not hiding out in Threed itself, and instead is commanding the zombie forces from an outside location. If we were to find and defeat Master Belch, I am certain the zombies would leave Threed forever.”

“But, don't think that I am just stating the obvious, for I also have a good idea on how to find this Belch character. Ness, do you remember when we found those two dark zombies guarding that sarcophagus? If that casket is like the one that allowed us to escape from our underground prison, then it might lead to a secret passage as well! That would explain why the zombies were guarding it so carefully. And if all goes well, we should be able to follow that passage directly to Belch's lair!” Paula said with a confident expression.

“Woah, you're right Paula! I had forgotten about those two weird zombies. I would say that your plan is almost perfect, except for one thing that I'm not certain about. How are we going to get past those zombies guarding that remote area? The last time that we tried to get to that sarcophagus, they just teleported us away from it!” I said,
recalling the sudden flash of red light from the dark zombie’s soulless eyes.

“That... is a good point. That’s the one thing that I didn’t account for; actually getting to the secret passage. There has to be some way to get around those guardian zombies. I just don’t know right this moment. Let’s head back into central Threed; we can probably concentrate better there than we can standing around in this spooky clearing,” Paula said as she looked at our surroundings.

“Good idea. Come on you guys, I’ll lead us back into civilization (even though it’s not very civilized at the moment.)” I murmured to myself as started towards town, Jeff and Paula following closely behind me.

Abruptly, as we gradually walked away from the shadowy clearing, I spotted a dark figure with glowing red eyes observing us from a distance. As soon as it noticed that I was looking at it, the figure disappeared in a blink of light. I was about to tell my companions about what I had seen, but decided against it to avoid frightening them.