

Part 1:

Welcome Back

October, 1983

Many kids have explicit imaginations. It shouldn't surprise you; this part of your life is when people do things such as make up imaginary friends and play house. This may seem like pretend to us, but how do we know for sure if these kids aren't making up their false realities? Can we explore what this child is supposedly making up?

Hikaru Ozawa, a half Japanese (we think), half Hispanic child who lived in central Tokyo, was one of those children who preferred imagination over real life (but don't we all?). Parading around with a traffic cone on his head, he proclaimed himself the wizard of the Outer Universe. His parents became worried with this behavior, so they tried counseling to get his problem out into the open. All of the child psychiatrists said the same thing: he just had a vivid imagination.

Let's not forget, when the coast was clear, Hikaru liked to spend his free time in the Rhythm and Melody World (this was before music monsters were widely accepted). He felt like his music monster, Danny, was his only true friend. He loved to play his koto, which is why the monster became his friend in the first place. His frequent music-making probably explains why he's trained Danny to a strong level.

One day, Hikaru's older sister, Esperanza, was taking a pop quiz in class. She was struggling not because of the difficulty, but because of her energy. She didn't get enough sleep the night before. In the middle of the test, she closed her eyes and laid her head on her desk. The teacher came over and nudged her shoulder. She immediately flinched and woke up.

"Is anything the matter, Ms. Ozawa?" asked Mr. Ishikawa sternly. Esperanza was red in the face.

"No, Mr. Ishikawa..." she replied, "I'm fine." The other students giggled and went back to answering their questions.

In the cafeteria, Esperanza was laying her head on the table and not eating her lunch. Her friend had noticed that she had not been feeling well for most of the day. She decided to sit at her table so her curious teenage mind could get all the information about this predicament.

"Hey, Esperanza," said Machiko, "You've been acting sedated lately. Why?" Esperanza lifted her head up and attempted to explain to her friend.

"It's my brother," said Esperanza, "He's been going absolutely loco lately. Every night before he goes to bed, there has to be this song and dance."

Last night...

Mr. Ozawa was walking Hikaru to his room, but Hikaru wasn't too happy about it. He didn't want to go to bed, he wanted to play some more.

"Why are you putting me to bed, anyway?" he wailed, "What do you have against me? Don't think I won't find out what you and Madre are really doing while I'm asleep!" Mr. Ozawa put Hikaru's pajama shirt over his head while he was complaining.

"Hikaru, I'm your father and if I say 'go to bed,' you go to bed," said Mr. Ozawa. After tucking Hikaru into his sleeping bag, he began to walk out of the room.

“You’re not my real dad; you’re just my earth dad!” Outraged, he got out of bed and slammed the bedroom door many times. He did this until he finally became exhausted and went fell asleep.

“I wish there was something I could do,” whined Esperanza, “If only I could figure him out.”

“He’s seven years old,” said Machiko, “He can’t be that hard to figure out.”

“I’ll see how he acts later on tonight. In the meantime, I’ll just rest my eyes...”

That night, the Ozawa family was sitting down to dinner. Mrs. Ozawa made a favorite from her side of the family – fajitas. Three of the four family members were kneeling on pillows at their traditional Japanese table awaiting their feast. Mrs. Ozawa put a big plate on the table with tortillas, beef, vegetables, sour cream and salsa. Hikaru quickly grabbed two of the tortillas and started assembling them as fast as he could. As soon as Mrs. Ozawa sat at the table, she noticed Hikaru’s rude behavior and was disappointed.

“Hikaru,” she said, “Don’t even think about eating dinner until we’ve said grace!”

“Why do you pick on me?” he whined, “I don’t even believe in your god!”

“Hikaru, this isn’t just about God, it’s also about having good table manners and knowing when it’s appropriate to eat.”

“Well maybe my traditions aren’t the same as yours!” Esperanza decided that this was the perfect time to put in her two cents.

“Hikaru,” said Esperanza

“What?!”

“No offense, but... why don’t you grow up?” Hikaru was offended by his sister’s remark, so he decided that enough was enough.

“I hate you people!” With that, he ran out of the kitchen in a sobbing mess.

Esperanza felt sorry that she had to ask her question in that manner. She had to phrase her question better.

“I’ll go talk to him.”

Hikaru was in his room with his face in his pillow. He was soaking the pillow with his sorrowful tears and running nose. The door made a creaking noise as Esperanza opened it.

“Are you okay, Hikaru?” she asked. From the expression on Hikaru’s face, she could tell that he didn’t want company.

“Go away, you evil maiden!” He reached for his toy Gigantor and threw in the direction of his sister. Esperanza closed the door to defend herself. When the toy hit the door, she opened it again.

“Hikaru, I’m sorry that I hurt your feelings. I’m just concerned about your social behavior. The kids at school think you’re weird, and you take your anger out on your family. Face it; you aren’t the wizard of the Outer Universe or any other universe for that matter. Do you know what I’m saying?”

“I do have friends. They’re just not the ones you know of.” Esperanza was a bit confused, but she accepted the answer.

“Whatever.” She decided to leave her brother alone so he can get over his emotions and recover at his own pace. Shortly afterward, he decided to talk to himself.

“What am I going to do? The only friends I have are the ones I met in the Rhythm and Melody World, and I’m probably never going to see them again.” As he was about to bury his head into his pillow once again, the song book for his koto started to flip to various pages. It stopped on page 58, where a pink and purple light was glowing in the center.

“Whoa!” said a voice inside the book. Hikaru stared at the book as if he didn’t know what was going on. But could it be...? Within seconds, a melody apparition popped out of the page and shaped itself into a monster. The monster was none other than Daniel, the coniglio del antler.

“Daniel!” Hikaru got up and hugged his horned rabbit friend. All that wishing had paid off.

“I haven’t seen you in forever!”

“So why are you here?”

“I have a surprise for you.” Hikaru didn’t hesitate to leave his room and enter the portal that was still open. He grabbed his partner’s claw and jumped in.

Hikaru and Daniel jumped out of another music book that was located in Ogagez on the Continent of So, the same area of the planet where they battled Silence almost a year earlier. The grass was lush and green as if it were untouched. His older friend, Duncan, was sitting beside a small waterfall. Chappie the miniathan, young and spirited, bathed under the waterfall.



“Wow!” said Hikaru, “I haven’t seen you in so long!”

“Who said that?” asked Duncan as he sat there delirious. He noticed the weird little boy wearing the traffic cone on his head along with his pet jackalope.

“Look what weirdo little kid the cat dragged in.” Hikaru was happy that Duncan was acting like himself.

“Aw, you haven’t changed a bit!” He ran over and hugged Duncan, but Duncan wasn’t as happy as he was.

“Duncan?” said a British voice. In the distance was none other than Audrey, the girl that Duncan had his heart set on.

“Audrey?” he said as he stood up. Audrey ran up to him and hugged him as tight as she could.



“I’m so glad to see you!”

“I’m glad to see you, too!” Hikaru was a bit jealous of Duncan paying more attention to Audrey.

“Oh, so you’re not glad to see me but you’re glad to see her?” he asked. Dot the arcobea started rolling around in the soft grass like she didn’t have a care in the Rhythm and Melody World.

“You’re here already, Hikaru?” asked another familiar voice. This time, it was Ethan. He was with Indigo the almanole and his little half-brother Cliff.



“Hi!” said Cliff. On Indigo’s head was a round monster with a dog face and two feathers on its head.

“This is my bother’s monster, Edgar.” Hikaru was delighted with the monster’s appearance.

“Your brother has a b-plume?” he said, “He’s so lucky!” He ran over and pet Edgar without trying to touch his feathers.

“There’s a party and nobody invited us?” asked the next familiar voice. Caitlin arrived with Jolie in her arms. Caitlin had fully recovered from her salmonella since she was released from the hospital nine months ago. Her partner looked happy and healthy as well. “How are you doing, Hikaru?”



“I guess I’m doing fine.” He answered in a tone that sounded unsure. A girl with long, dark hair walked into the scene. She was with her fat, purple, mouse-like monster. She wanted to join in the reconciliation.

“Hey, Caitlin,” she said, “Are these the other kids you were talking about?”

“Oh yeah, I forgot! This is Midori. I met her just today.”

“Hello.” Hikaru was delighted that he was about to make a new friend.

“So glad to meet you!” he said excitedly. He couldn’t help but shake Midori’s hand, even if she had to bend down in order for him to do it. “You are shaking hands with the official wizard of the Outer Universe!”



“Well, I’m glad to meet you, too,” said Midori, “This is my monster, Blake.” Blake waved hello with his stubby arm. Midori was a bit unsure about Hikaru’s behavior, but she didn’t want to say anything to offend him. “You’re quite... interesting.” Hikaru was so glad to meet Midori that he didn’t want to stop shaking her hand. “So where are you from?”

“I’m from Tokyo.”

“Me too!” The two already found one thing they had in common. “Now why do you call yourself the wizard of the Outer Universe?”

“Because I am! Allow me to explain...”

“Okay, but first stop shaking my hand.” Hikaru sat on the grass and expected everyone else to do the same; everyone did.

“I shall tell you how I got this title... eight years ago, Ablias Zonn, the almighty sorcerer of the Outer Universe, became sad that he didn’t have a wife to father a child with, so he traveled to the our inner universe to look for a suitable woman. He came upon the planet Earth. When he arrived on Earth, he disguised himself as a regular Earth human. He met a beautiful señora, that’s my mom, who happened to live in Tokyo at the time. He had a conversation with her, but in the middle of the conversation, he pointed to something that wasn’t there to distract her. As my mom’s head was turned, my dad fired a ray gun at her belly and left.”

“Hikaru, that is ridiculous,” said Duncan, “Babies don’t come from ray guns!”

“Alright, genius, then where DO they come from?” Everyone was speechless as to what answer to give Hikaru that moment.

“Ahem...” started Midori, “I’ll tell you one thing, you do have quite some imagination.” Hikaru wanted to prove to the other children that this wasn’t a figment of his imagination, but he didn’t know how. He just accepted that they didn’t believe his wacky story.

Before Hikaru knew it, the weekend started. He was in his pajamas playing the latest game on his *ColecoVision*. Esperanza was packing her things to go to her swim meet. She was in a hurry because she usually started getting ready fifteen minutes beforehand, but she had overslept.

“Esperanza, remember to take your brother,” said Mrs. Ozawa. Esperanza was a bit annoyed at this request.

“But mom,” she whined, “What’s going to entertain him for a half an hour?”

“I have to be out for the entire day, so he’ll have to sit in the waiting room and read a magazine.” His sister sighed, but quietly agreed to her mother’s request.

“Come, Hikaru. Get dressed.”

Esperanza and Hikaru walked through the city while the air was brisk. Esperanza was wearing fall apparel, as was Hikaru. They took a shortcut through a park where birds were singing their songs. Esperanza made sure that Hikaru was not far behind, because that’s what an older sister is supposed to do. After a while, she looked back, only to see that Hikaru was slowing down.

“Come on, Hikaru!” she ordered. Hikaru tried to walk ahead, but he was still slowing down. Esperanza became concerned with his behavior, so she turned back. “What’s wrong?” Hikaru’s face was red, not from embarrassment, but from a high bodily temperature.

“I feel weird,” he said with a faint voice.

“We’ll be at the city pool soon. Do you want me to hold your hand?”

As soon as they entered the city pool, they took their jackets off and hung them on the coat hanger. Hikaru wasn’t feeling any better, but he took his jacket off despite the fact that he had the chills. Esperanza was wearing a pretty summer dress with her bathing suit on underneath. Hikaru’s vision was getting blurred, but he held onto his sister’s hand.



Esperanza took Hikaru to the waiting room before entering the lady’s locker room.

“Now, Hikaru,” she said, “I want you to wait here while I’m at my swim meet.” Hikaru’s state of mind was consumed by his illness, so he didn’t reply. “Now you be a good boy.” She kissed his forehead and left him in the waiting room. Hikaru sat down, too tired to stand up any longer. Since he had no interest in magazines, he stared at the wall. A picture of a dolphin was hanging on the other side, but Hikaru couldn’t

appreciate it because to him, it was doubling and moving around. The picture swirled and duplicated itself until Hikaru fell on his side and went unconscious.

Hikaru awoke in an awkward place. He was floating in space, where he could see stars and rushing comets. As soon as he gained consciousness, he realized that he was finally in the place where he wanted to be all this time: The Outer Universe. Hikaru was see-through because he was no longer inside his body. He was delighted to see the one place that he had pined for.

"I'm... home," he said, "I'm home!"

He floated toward a galactic castle in the distance until he got to the pathway leading to it. He ran toward the open gate, where there were grass and trees. Nobody knew how such a mysterious place could fit so perfectly in outer space. When Hikaru got to the big door, he knocked on it with a clenched fist, since he couldn't reach the knocker. He was excited to be back at Galactic Manor, the headquarters of the Outer Universe. The big door opened and in the entrance stood an old man. This man had a pointed cap, a cape, and a long beard; the perfect description of a sorcerer.



"Hikaru," said the man, "Is that you?" Hikaru was ecstatic to see his true father after a long time.

"Dad!" he said. He ran over and hugged the sorcerer and the sorcerer put his hand on Hikaru's back.

"Son! I'm so glad to see you. Allow me to give you some pseudo-skin." The sorcerer cast his magic and in an instant, Hikaru was no longer a ghost. He then took Hikaru's hand and walked with him inside the castle.

The main corridor was almost endless. There were famous paintings on the wall, including ones from artists that live outside the solar system.

“What did you bring me here for?” asked Hikaru as he was admiring the paintings.

“Well, son, there seems to be a big problem,” said the sorcerer. Hikaru wanted to know what the problem was, so he stopped paying attention to the painting. “Remember my rival Awai?” Hikaru nodded his head. “Well, he’s about to hatch you-know-what any day now.”

“Oh dear!”

“I knew this day would come sometime. For quite some time now, you’ve been taming a creature from the world where the evil egg comes from... correct?”

“Yes.”

“I ask you this favor: would you please bring your monster and other monsters to this universe to defeat the catastrophe that is about to ensue? As you know, you will become sorcerer one day and inherit the entire Outer Universe. Completing this task will further prove that you are ready for such a responsibility.” This was a hard decision for Hikaru to make, but since he cared so much about the Outer Universe, he agreed to the task.

“Yes! I will do it!” The sorcerer was glad to hear the answer. “I’ve made some new friends in the Rhythm and Melody World, and I’m sure they’ll be happy to help me!”

“Good. I shall send them over right away.” The Sorcerer swirled his magic wand in the air, as if he was going to do something sinister.

Duncan and Caitlin were in the hustle and bustle of New York City, going from store to store. Duncan had significantly less bags than his sister did, partly because he wasn’t interested in shopping, unless, of course, it was for video games.

“So where are we going now?” he asked.

“To wherever the wind takes us!” said Caitlin. A gust of wind blew past them for about a second. “And I believe the wind is taking to that store right there!” Duncan sighed; he didn’t feel like being spiritual.

Caitlin was about to walk into the store until she noticed a cat on the edge of the street.

“Duncan,” she said, “Look at that cat.”

“What about it?” he asked.

“It could be run over by those cars if we don’t do something.” Duncan could care less about the cat. He just wanted to get going.

“Then it’s his loss. I say if the cat isn’t smart enough to stay away from moving cars, then he deserves to die.”

“No he doesn’t!” Before Caitlin started fighting with Duncan, the cat started walking across the street. The light still indicated that it was safe to cross and that there were no cars coming. Caitlin was a bit relieved to see that the cat was crossing at this time. Unfortunately, the cat decided to sit in the middle of the street. Caitlin got so worried that she dropped most of her bags and ran into the middle of the street. “Shoo, cat, shoo!”



The cat noticed Caitlin's pleading and ran to the other side. "Phew." Unfortunately, the sign switched to "no walking" and the cars started moving again.

"Caitlin, look out!" shouted Duncan. He dropped his bags and ran across the street to push Caitlin away from the upcoming eighteen-wheeler. And then everything went blank...

Meanwhile, in London, Audrey and her brother were sitting on the couch and watching TV because the weather outside was dreadful. There was nothing good on the *BBC*, but they didn't mind. Thunder was roaring outside and the television's picture became fuzzy.

"Not again," said Eliot, "I just fixed the bloody antenna." Audrey listened to the tone of her brother's voice and assumed that he didn't want to fiddle with the antenna again.

"Fine, I'll do it," she said. She got off the couch and proceeded upstairs. Her brother didn't mind that she was about to stand on their roof in the middle of a thunderstorm, he just wanted to watch TV.

Audrey stepped onto the roof, where rain was pouring down on her like a million sprinklers and thunder was booming only miles away. The antenna was on top of a soap box and it had seen better days, even without the storm. As she was being drenched, she tried to arrange the antenna like she had done in the past.

"Let's see..." she said, "Left one up... right one pointing west?" She couldn't remember what shape the antenna had to be in for the picture to be clear. Unfortunately, before she could fix the darn thing, something quick struck her. BOOM!!! And then everything went blank...

Meanwhile, the television's picture in the living room couldn't have been any clearer.

"Thanks, Sis!" shouted Eliot.

There was still darkness. Everyone's eyes were shut, despite being semi-conscious. They slowly opened their eyes to what looked like a night sky. This seemed normal to them, since people normally slept at night, but there was also night sky below them. How could this be?

"What's going on?" asked Blake the Kilblai, who was now a blob of white stuff and musical notes. His human partner was floating right next to him, just as frightened as he was.

"My skin is see-through!" said Midori looking at her hand. She took a look at her partner and became even more afraid. "What happened to your shape?!" Everyone else was see-through or stripped down to their simplest forms, and they were pondering about where the ground was.

"This is outer space!" said Caitlin.

"Then how can we breath?" asked Duncan.

"Hey, everybody!" shouted a little boy's familiar voice. Since Hikaru could no longer float in the nothingness, he had to wave his arms from the path to his father's house. "You made it!"

"Hikaru?!" everyone exclaimed simultaneously.

"Float down here!" Everyone did what he said and landed on the path.

"Welcome the Outer Universe!" Nobody EVER expected this to happen. They were outside their own bodies in an area unfamiliar to the rest of mankind... what next?!

They arrived at the castle door and Hikaru pushed it open as hard as he could. Everybody thought that Hikaru was speaking of a childish storybook wonderland when he mentioned the Outer Universe, but they were really the fools.

"I'd like you to meet my father," said Hikaru, "He runs the place."

"It's nice to meet you, Mr... what's your name?" asked Caitlin.

"My name is Ablias, but you may call the almighty sorcerer." The Sorcerer shook Caitlin's hand like expected. "You must be chilly without your skin. Have some." He waved his wand and within a second, the group wasn't see-through anymore. The monsters no longer looked like floating white blobs.

"So that story about you fathering Hikaru WAS true," said Midori.

"Yes, but I'm afraid I didn't use a ray gun."

The Sorcerer took the group to his control room. In the room was a big computer that looked like it was years ahead of its time. The chair near it was big and comfortable, as if someone could fall asleep on it.

"This is where I run the Outer Universe," said the sorcerer, "All these buttons do different things and I advise you not to touch them."

"What does that do?" asked Cliff as he was reaching for a button. In the nick of time, The Sorcerer tapped his hand with his wand so he would not touch the button.

"Young man, do you know what 'advise' means?"

"Uh... no," he said.

"Well, admitting that you don't know is half the battle."

"Mr. Sorcerer," said Jolie the unieye, "Why is this place called the Outer Universe?" The Sorcerer chuckled.

"I'll be glad to answer your question." He sat in his chair and turned on his giant computer. On the screen was a diagram with tiny dots on it. "The dots you see before you are universes. You see, your universe is part of one big 'multiverse' that holds all

the universes in existence. None of these dimensions are chained together, though. The Outer Universe is the space that separates all the other universes. Without it, every single dimension would clash with each other and destroy themselves.”

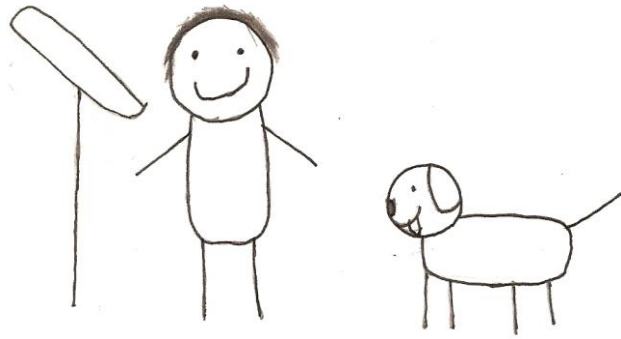
“So... this Outer Universe is just filler?” asked Blake the kilblai.

“It’s more than just filler. It has many different pocket dimensions with many different inhabitants. Ironically, we have no idea what the other universes are like.”

Meanwhile, in the universe of the author’s kindergarten drawings, a poorly-drawn person looked through his poorly-drawn really, really, really powerful telescope and found the sorcerer talking to the group.

“Preston, come quick!” he said with his device set at 200,000,000,000,000. A poorly-drawn dog entered the room. “There’s a wizard, a bunch of kids, and a bunch of monsters in a castle at the edge of the universe, and I think they’re talking about us!”

“You’ll hurt the telescope if you keep using it to break the fourth wall,” said the dog.



“The Outer Universe is the only place in the multiverse where one can practice magic.”

“But music monsters can practice a watered-down form of magic,” said Blake, “There was that coniglio della capra who used his magic to bring humans to the Rhythm and Melody World.”

“Let’s not forget the fact that we can use element-based attacks,” said Jolie the unieye.

“It is good that you brought that up. Outer Universe magic for the most part doesn’t exist in the inner universes, but each universe, I have discovered, has its own form of carbon-based magic that is hidden. Music monsters were the ones who have discovered it and they are also the only ones who can use it. Carbon can overpower anti-carbon, the element present in the Outer Universe, which is why inner universal magic can be used in the Outer Universe, but Outer Universe magic cannot be used in any inner universe. Now, you may be wondering why Hikaru brought you all here.”

“Yes, we are wondering,” said Duncan.

“For the vast history of the Outer Universe, we had no idea what went on in the inner universes because each of them is sealed in a barrier. In my studies I have discovered a type of Outer Universe magic that can not only break that barrier, but can also render me the ability to use Outer Universe magic in the inner universes. This is how I got to your universe, which is how I met Hikaru’s mother. My rival, Awai, heard the news of our courtship and became furious. He didn’t want someone from the Inner Universe taking control of the Outer Universe in the future. When Hikaru first came to

the Outer Universe as a small child, Awai made an attempt to kill him with his tainted magic. This landed him in a jail for quite some time. While he was there, he learned how to play the goray.”

“What’s a goray?” asked Caitlin.

“It’s a type of flute not native to your universe. Where was I? Oh yeah. One day, he took out his goray and played a depressing, dark-sounding song. When he played long enough, an egg appeared from the Rhythm and Melody World appeared because your universe’s barrier had a small puncture. He, along with many others, had already known about the Rhythm and Melody World because I had made my studies public, so he was familiar with music monsters.” While the group was listening to the fascinating story, Chappie the miniathan felt uncomfortable.

“Duncan,” he whispered, “I have to go to the bathroom.”

“You should’ve gone before we left,” said Duncan. Chappie whimpered a bit until Duncan felt sorry for him. “Here, use these cups.” He gave Chappie some plastic cups from his bag. Delighted, Chappie put one of the cups near the area between his legs and began relieving himself.

“After he was released from prison,” continued the sorcerer, “He decided to keep playing his song so the monster inside the egg got stronger. He started using his magic to keep the egg from hatching until it had reached strength of the highest proportions. A few days ago, I received news that the egg will be ready to hatch any day now.”

“Where does he keep this egg?” asked Ethan.

“He keeps it at his castle just several miles from here. Unfortunately, like I said, his magic keeps the egg from shattering. Not all hope is lost, though. Mysterious forces created a template that had a prophecy written on it. It says ‘when a monster has reached its most powerful state, only the metronome of life can defeat its promises of doom’. I don’t know what this metronome of life is, and this monster didn’t know, either. I want you children to explore the different worlds and find the metronome of life.” At first, the children and monsters hesitated, but Cliff, being the little brave boy that he was, agreed to the challenge.

“We won’t let you down, sorcerer!” he said.

“That’s right!” said Edgar the B-Plume, “Let’s get going, everybody!” Everyone walked ahead. Chappie the miniathan was holding two full cups that were rather heavy.

“I feel so much better,” he said. Daniel the coniglio noticed the filled cups as he was walking by.

“Where did you get the complimentary apple juice?” he asked.

The back yard of the castle had green grass and magnificent topiaries that prospered despite the lack of a sun. Some of the plants were alive, including a man-eating Venus flytrap.

“You will need a mode of transportation for your journey,” said the sorcerer, “And I have the one you’re looking for.” He led them to what looked like a giant, orange ball of fluff. The fluff woke up and stood on his lizard-like legs. His fur covered his left eye, like a sheepdog. He even acted like one as well.



“Scruffy!” said Hikaru. He ran over to hug his giant canine friend.

“Rooroo,” he barked delightfully. Everyone was afraid of the big beast, thinking that it might slobber them to death.

“What the heck is that?” asked Duncan.

“He’s my nebula shepherd, Scruffy. He can fly everywhere and do all the tricks in the book. Can you believe he’s only ten thousand years old?”

“He... flies?” asked Caitlin.

“Of course! Don’t all nebula shepherds fly?” Scruffy shook his back end in an attempt to wag his stubby tail. Hikaru gave his giant canine a command. “Down, Boy.” Scruffy listened and lay down on the grass.

“Before you go, I would like you to change that fake earth costume you have on,” said the sorcerer. He took his wand out of his pocket and waved it. Within seconds, Hikaru was engulfed by golden light. His clothing changed into a much more realistic wizard costume, complete with a golden wizard’s hat and a beautiful blue cape.



“Looking good, Hikaru!” commented Daniel the coniglio.

“I have equipped you with your wand and the outer-universal key. You should be safe with those things, but be very careful not to loose them.”

“Let’s go!” said Hikaru he climbed on Scruffy and sat near his head. “What are you all waiting for? Hop on! It’s not every day that you get to foil the plans of your father’s crazy wand-wielding enemy!” Everyone climbed Scruffy’s fur like it was a bunch of thin, orange ropes. They didn’t feel entirely safe riding a giant dog through the galaxy, but it was their only option.

“Bye, Dad!” said Hikaru.

“Bye, Son!” replied The Sorcerer. Scruffy jumped into the air and began flying, despite the fact that he had no wings. The Sorcerer shed a tear that dripped off his cheek and fell onto a blade of grass. He was glad to see that his little boy was on the road to responsibility and maturity... he thought.

Part 2:

The World of Kakaan

Scruffy flew into the endless vacuum of space, taking with him some friends who, to him, were the size of fleas. No matter how far the group would go, the stars always seemed far away. Everyone was doing their own thing: Duncan was practicing a saxophone (not his); Caitlin was reading a magazine; Jolie the unieye was seeing how long she could stand on her head.

"This place is so big," said Ethan, "How are we going to find this metronome?"

"If you think you'll find it here, you're dead wrong," said Hikaru.

In the distance were what looked like tiny doors on top of little clouds. As the group got closer, they could see designs on the doors, and some with strange writing on them.

"What are those?" asked Caitlin.

"Those are others worlds," said Hikaru. None of the children had seen worlds that didn't look like planets before. How could this have been explained?

"But I just see doors," said Edgar the B-Plume.

"The worlds are BEHIND the doors, Silly!" Scruffy flew east, where there were more doors.

"Halt!" shouted Hikaru. Scruffy listened to his command and paused in the air like magic. Next to him was a purple door with a design of a creature of some sort. There was also a message encrypted near the bottom. "Our first stop is Kakaan."



"Will there be living trees?" asked Ethan, "Or giant, psychotic cubes?"

"Nothing like that. Now we have to get going!" Hikaru hopped off his furry friend and onto the cloud island. He took out the outer-universal key and it glimmered in the starlight. He inserted the key and turned it until the door clicked. He turned the knob and opened the door. Inside was a tall forest with all sorts of birds making noises.

"You may now enter," said Hikaru. Everyone slowly got off Scruffy and walked into the new world filled with new expectations.

The shining sun was adding to the beauty of the scenery. The weather was humid, but the heat felt nice. After Hikaru closed and locked the door, he led the group through the forest, feeling important that he was given the position of leader.

"We're almost there," he said.

"Almost where?" asked Duncan.

After slashing through a few more trees with his wand, Hikaru led the group to an open patch of grass. Odd-colored flowers were adorning the grass, poisonous and non-poisonous.

“What a beautiful day!” said Cliff.

“You said it!” said Edgar the b-plume, who was resting in his arms. A woman wearing a green hood with a pink skirt saw the group from the other side of the patch. As soon as she saw that there were music monsters in the group, she acted fast.

“Ilga!” she said. Everyone was stunned by the tone of her voice.

“What did she say?” asked Dot the arcobea. The woman was threatening the group with a long stick. The lizard-like cat was growling beside her. She stood very still while the group questioned her behavior. Duncan decided to talk some sense into the woman.

“Listen,” he said, “We’re not trying to hurt you. We’re trying to help you. These monsters wouldn’t hurt a fly... unless it’s an evil fly.” The woman put down her stick and threw it to the side. It took her a few seconds to remember Hikaru.



“Is that you, Hikaru?” she asked.

“Is that you, Owela?” asked Hikaru.

“I’m so sorry for threatening your group. But you should be really careful around music monsters.”

“But these monsters are on our side.”

“I know, but not all monsters are good.” Her zardynx growled at the strangers that were in front of him.

“Now, Goliath,” said Owela, “That’s not how we greet our guests.” Goliath started rubbing himself against Hikaru’s leg.

“How has the tribe been doing?” asked Hikaru.

“It’s doing well.” Owela walked the opposite direction and the group followed her through the cluttered mess of twigs and branches.

The group finally arrived at the tribal grounds, where there were teepees and little straw houses. People were doing their daily routine, working and doing what needed to be done. The children were playing near the bonfire, which was then a pile of soot.

“You guys,” said Hikaru, “You are looking at my heritage. My father came from the Bepsona tribe and I am an honorary member as well.” The chief, who was clad in a leather outfit with a feather in his hair, noticed the monsters that were with the group and panicked.

“Those are music monsters!” he said as he pointed his index finger at the monsters.

“It’s not polite to point!” said Daniel the coniglio. Owela jumped in to defend the creatures as they were about to be persecuted.

“Dad, they’re not on the side of Awai,” she said, “They’re on our side!” The chief paused and put his hand to his side. He noticed that the monsters didn’t LOOK evil. They looked normal and interested in exploring the vast, complex dimension.

“I believe you, honey,” he said, “It is wrong of me to make false accusations.” When the drama was over, the chief became curious about the beings. “So what do you creatures like to be called?” One by one, each monster stated its name.

“I’m a coniglio della capra, but you may call me Daniel,” said Daniel.

“I’m a miniathan, but you may call me Chappie,” said Chappie.

“I’m a unieye, but you may call me Jolie,” said Jolie.

“I’m a kilblai, but you may call me Blake,” said Blake.

“I’m a b-plume, but you may call me Edgar,” said Edgar.

“I’m an arcobea, but you may call me Dot,” said Dot.

“I’m an almanole, but you may call me Indigo,” said Indigo.

“It’s very nice to meet you,” said the chief. “And who are the people who assist you?”

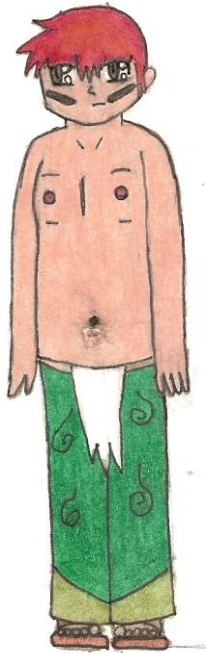
“As you know, we’re humans from the planet Earth in the Inner Universe,” said Hikaru, “This is Duncan, Caitlin, Ethan, Cliff, Audrey, and Midori.” Midori, being from Japan, bowed in respect.

“Why don’t you stay for a while?” asked the chief. “While, you’re at it, you may try on the traditional clothing of our tribe.” The gang wanted to rest a bit, so they agreed to get accustomed to the people before setting off to save the Outer Universe.

The children went into separate teepees to change into traditional bepsona garb. The rustling was heard as they were trying to get their new clothes on. Owela sat on a stump patiently waiting to see what the children would look like.

“Is anybody done yet?” she asked.

“Just a minute,” said Audrey. Duncan was the first out of his teepee. He had on a pair of leather pants with no crotch. A loin cloth was covering the naked area.



Midori came out wearing a cloak-like top; she had on a pink skirt, just like Owela and the other women of the tribe. Everyone else came out wearing the apparel that was appropriate for their gender.



“Are these clothes comfortable or what?” asked a shirtless Hikaru.

“I could sleep in this!” said Audrey. Everyone was enjoying their new outfits, but they needed more than that to be members of the tribe.

“You are now ready to become bepsona,” said the chief.

“I was born into the tribe,” said Hikaru, “But in order for a non-baby to be a member, you need to do some big tasks.”

“How big are these tasks?” asked Ethan. The chief was glad to explain to them the tasks they had to complete.

“Men need to hunt a big animal to prove his bravery and dominance,” said the chief, “Women need to cook a fancy dish in order to prove their skill and responsibility.”

“That doesn’t sound too hard,” said Caitlin.

“That’s easy for you to say,” said Cliff.

“Don’t worry, Cliff,” said Ethan, “Hunting will be fun.”

“But I don’t wanna kill an animal!” Cliff burst into tears. He wasn’t used to the rugged way of life.

“Cliff,” assured Duncan, “Hunting will make you a man!” Cliff dried his eyes when he heard the benefits of the action.

“Let’s go hunting!” Everyone was surprised at how fast his mood changed. Cliff was excited about how he would soon explore and connect to nature like he had never explored or connected before. Caitlin looked to her female friends and their monsters beside her.

“C’mon, girls!” she said, “We’ve got a dish to cook!”

The young men and their monsters set off on their trek through the woods. The trees dwarfed the group and created shade for them. Each young man had a long spear they had to lug around. Not everyone was delighted about this.

“These spears are heavy,” said Duncan, “Just how big is this animal we’re hunting?”

“You’re just jealous because I didn’t have to do squat to get this spectacular stone you see around my neck,” said Hikaru. There seemed to be no being of particular interest wandering the woods at that moment. Cliff, being more curious at his stage in life, looked closely at the rock to the far right of the group.

“Look!” he said. On the rock was a small, red-orange deer, about a foot and a half tall. It was observing the view and not noticing the visitors that were higher on the food chain.

“It’s a pygmy deer.” Ethan doubted that this was hardly worth carrying big spears.

“They’ll never acknowledge us for killing that puny thing,” he said.

“YOU don’t have to kill it,” said Indigo, “You’re forgetting that you have monsters with you that can kill any animal within milliseconds. Indigo crept forward and stood very still. The pygmy deer didn’t notice him. When Indigo felt that it was the perfect time to attack, he unleashed his fury.

“Spray shocker!” he cried. His eyes gave off an electric shock that would’ve hit the deer had it not noticed that it was coming. Alarmed, the deer leapt off the rock and galloped away.

“Smart move,” commented Duncan. Indigo was saddened by his failure to hunt a wild animal; he was so close.

“Never mind,” said Hikaru, “There are other animals out there.” The gang continued into the unpredictable wilderness.

Back at the grounds, the girls and the female monsters were scrounging ingredients needed for an unusual stew. Audrey set up the pot and had the wooden spoon ready.

“According to these instructions,” she said as she was reading a sheet of paper, “The first thing we need to make yology stew is some baica leaves.

“That’s easy,” said Caitlin, “Owela told me that they grow everywhere.” With that, she walked out of the teepee and came across some baica trees outside the grounds. She picked the ones she could reach without any difficulty and took them back to the teepee. The girls were delighted with the amount that Caitlin had picked.

“That’s more than enough,” said Dot the arcobea.

“The next thing we need is a couple of pinecones,” continued Audrey.

“I’ll get those,” said Dot the arcobea. Dot ran outside like the little dog she was and rushed into the woods. After little looking, she spotted a pine tree. The problem was that the pinecones were too high on the tree to reach. Then she remembered that she had a secret weapon. She raised her tail into the air and unleashed her rain-blow attack. A ray of colored light shot out from her vibrant tail and the intense heat caused the pinecones to break off of the tree. She took this opportunity to catch the cones in her mouth. She ran back to the grounds feeling proud of her accomplishment.

Audrey was happy that Dot got the ingredients so quickly.

“Thanks, Dot,” she said, “You’re the best.” She looked at the recipe and kept reading it aloud. “The next thing we need is the slime from a mountain snail.” Midori went outside for a second and came out with a snail the size of a chicken. It was oozing with slime as it was moving its antennas and curling its massive tail.

“Is this what you’re talking about?” asked Midori. Audrey was a bit grossed out by the creature’s ghastly appearance.

“We have to get slime from that thing?”

“I prefer to suck it out,” said Jolie, hinting that she had tried it before.

The boys and the male monsters trekked through the woods some more to look for another worthy animal, but there was no luck. They came across a marsh with trees that had their roots holding them up. It smelled funny, but the boys decided to try looking there.

“Let’s look for frogs!” said Cliff.

“Anyone can hunt frogs,” said Duncan. Everything looked dreary and still, but one bunch of swamp “trees” was blending in a little too well.

“Come out, come out, wherever you are!” called Chappie the miniathan. His cry echoed throughout the land, despite coming from a monster that was barely 2½ feet tall. Young and naive, he didn’t know how to get a meaty creature to come to him. Indigo got an idea that was more dangerous than he thought it was.

“I have an idea,” he said, “Let’s attack this tree and see what comes out!” He eagerly unleashed his spray shocker attack on the tree; nothing came out. “I guess I should try harder.” His eyes glowed with electric energy once again, but this time, he built it up longer. He fired another attack that would’ve caused much damage to the tree. Instead, the blast caused the tree to lift itself off the ground. Indigo was perplexed by this.

“What is that tree doing?” asked Edgar the b-plume. When everybody looked up, they saw that the “tree” was actually a leg; a leg of a giant, hideous-looking reptile. From the way he reacted, he didn’t look like he wanted to make friends. The beast showed his teeth and made a growling sound similar to a jackhammer.



“Hikaru...” said Duncan, staying perfectly still, “What is that?” Hikaru was a bit afraid to answer because he was just as scared stiff as everyone else.

“That’s a...” he said, “A...” Duncan became impatient with Hikaru’s stalling.

“Spit it out!”

“A grand woodland dragon!” In a desperate attempt to not get killed, everyone ran for their lives. Duncan thought that this was the perfect time to be sarcastic.

“Oh joy, oh rapture, we haven’t even spent three hours in this universe and we’re already going to be MIA!” The dragon started walking and the ground shook with each step he took. The group sprinted for a while and their fear and anxiety caused them to not look back. Daniel the coniglio remembered that his job was to fight threatening beasts, not run from them. He stopped and turned the other direction, but he knew that it was a matter of time before the dragon would squish him. Meanwhile, a tiny star appeared in the distance, causing the group to stop sprinting. The star slowly turned into a golden charm that looked like it was the missing piece of a bigger charm. It dropped into Cliff’s hand, and Cliff didn’t know what to make of the situation.

“What is it?” asked Ethan.

“Make sure you don’t lose it,” said Duncan, “It could be very important.” Hikaru focused his mind off the charm as his partner cried for assistance.

“Hikaru!” he called, “Get out the koto!” Hikaru stopped running and used his wand to make his koto appear in his hands. With his talented fingers, he played a simple yet rapid scale. Feeling the energy in his veins, Daniel mutated to his handsome, armored top level: mammifero mega.



“All right!” cheered Hikaru. Startled by the sudden change, the grand woodland dragon jumped back a little. Daniel cupped his claws and formed a golden bubble that expanded until it was half his size.

“Sunset bubble!” He released his bubble, which flew toward the dragon at a rate that he couldn’t comprehend. The bubble hit him in the face, causing intense pain. The boys cheered Daniel on while keeping their distance. The dragon, humiliated, fought back by biting Daniel. When Daniel escaped from the beast’s mouth, his armor was significantly dented. He clawed the woodland dragon, leaving a scare on his scaly cheek. Finally, to finish him off, Daniel powered up for one of his strongest attack. “Aero raid!” Faster than lightning, he darted at the dragon’s chest and sped upwards after leaving a fatal wound. The woodland dragon couldn’t stand anymore. The group watched as he closed his eyes and slowly tipped. This eventually led to the dragon falling to the ground with a thump that shook the ground for miles.

Everyone waited a moment to make sure the dragon was actually dead. When Daniel was finished with his job he reverse mutated back to his antlered rabbit form. Unfortunately, the dragon opened his eyes and lifted his head up.

“Every man for himself!” shouted Duncan. Hikaru used his magic to make the correct instruments appear before their musicians: a saxophone for Duncan, a piccolo for Ethan, and a harmonica for Cliff. Duncan started by playing a C scale. Ethan played a C scale, except he played each note twice. Cliff played a G on the harmonica.

Chappie and Indigo mutated to their highest levels, that sea serpent known as serpy and that big-eared green dog known as paggle. They volunteered to take Daniel’s place, as well as making their side twice as powerful. The monsters figured that since the dragon was almost dead, they wouldn’t have to use special attacks. Chappie rammed his giant horn into the dragon’s leg, while Indigo leapt onto the dragon’s head and bit him in the ear. The boys thought that it was a good time to launch their spears, so they did just that. When all three spears hit the dragon (he wasn’t that hard to miss), he fell to the

ground with another earth-shaking thump. After waiting thirty seconds, the group officially declared him dead.

“That was too close,” said Ethan.

“What a kill!” said Duncan, thinking with his stomach, “This ought to feed those natives for a year!” Everyone was delighted that they took out a huge, rare animal on their first hunt. It was as if Lady Luck was watching over them.

After the sun went down, the tribe found the boys and their kill and decided to have a dinner with a campfire and everything, since the dragon was too heavy to move to the tribal grounds. People took pieces of meat from the beast, put them on a stick, and cooked it over the fire. Everyone was enjoying the other’s company and they talked and sang songs, which delighted the music monsters.

“I am quite impressed with the nourishment you have brought to us,” the chief said to Duncan, Ethan, and Cliff.

“Our monsters did most of the work,” said Ethan, blushing.

“And kudos to the girls on this phenomenal yolo stew.” The chief put another spoonful of the stew into his mouth with a satisfied expression.

“You have no idea how long it took to squeeze that snail dry,” said Audrey with slime dripping from her hands. Everyone had a joyful time at the dinner near the big, decomposing dragon corpse until the fire eventually died out.

At the giant straw house on the other side of the tribal grounds, the initiation ceremony took place. It was the chief’s duty to give the children their gem necklaces and declare them members of the tribe.

“With these beautiful gems, I shall declare you all honorary members of the tribe,” said the chief, “You’ve all done excellent jobs with your tasks, especially with the help of your music monster friends, so it would be unfair not to initiate them as well.” One by one, the chief took a necklace with a specific gem on it and placed them around the necks of each child and monster.

“How does he decide which gems we get?” asked Caitlin.

“The gem you get depend on what month you were born,” said Hikaru, “Since I was born in October, I got red selexi. I told them your birthdates ahead of time.” When everyone got their gem necklace, the chief picked up a rain stick and turned it upside-down. The pitter-patter of the rice sounded until the last few grains reached the bottom. The children and monsters were anticipating about what would happen next in the ceremony.

“The ceremony is complete,” the chief concluded. Everyone clapped their hands and the group cherished their remaining five seconds of fame. The monsters were happy enough to unleash some of their more festive attacks in front of the people, trying not to harm anyone.

Later that night, everyone went to sleep in different teepees. They were lying on top on furs and using fur blankets with the pelts showing on the outside. Midori couldn’t sleep, so she starred at the pointed top of the teepee’s ceiling.

“Hey, Blake,” she said to her partner. Blake the kilblai, being the lazy, corpulent monster he was, awoke irritated from his slumber.

“What?” he asked.

“I love my stone,” she said while stroking the blue gem in the shape of a spark on her chest. “We haven’t even been here for a day and we’re already considered celebrities.”

“This is only one of a million worlds in this universe,” said Blake, “We’re not going to be celebrities until we find the metronome of life and defeat the menace that comes from within the evil egg.” With that, Blake closed his eyes and continued his slumber. After a while, Midori got tired fiddling with her necklace and continued her slumber, too.

Part 3:

The World of Darlee

The next day, the children put on their regular clothes and said goodbye to the Bepsona tribe. Hikaru, with his photographic memory, found the dimensional door and lead the group to the outside. Like any person practicing to be responsible, he closed and locked the door behind him.

Scruffy flew off into the vacuum of space with his tiny ears lifted up to signify that he was flying. Nobody knew where they were off to next, so they had to guess. In the meantime, they were examining the trinket that the boys had found.

“What do you think this is?” asked Cliff as he was showing everybody.

“It looks like something that broke off of something,” said Midori. Out of the blue, Chappie thought of what it could be.

“Call me crazy,” he said, “But I think this may be a piece of the metronome of life!”

“You may be on to something there,” said Midori, “But where are we going to find the other pieces?”

“Let’s look in random places,” said Duncan, “This piece appeared out of nowhere, like we did something to cause it to appear.”

Hikaru ordered Scruffy to halt at another door. This door was green and it had leaf designs on it. Hikaru was in the mood to go to a lush, exotic place, so he hopped off his big, furry friend and unlocked the door. As soon as Hikaru went inside, everyone else hopped off one by one and followed him.

Through this door was a forest, but not like the one in Kakaan; this looked like a normal North American forest. Things in this area looked pristine and natural; the ocean could be heard from several miles away.

“This is Darlee,” said Hikaru, “Where the entire world is a garden!” Caitlin looked above her and saw green birds with leaves for wings. The blue flowers on the ground had faces that looked directly at the group. The other flowers, however, were just that: flowers.

On the grassy hill in the distance was a town. This town was different from any town the kids have seen. For one thing, it was unusually small.



“Is that civilization I see?” asked Audrey.

“Maybe they’ll help us,” said Dot the arcobea.

The group got closer to the town and felt awkward at how big they were in comparison. The town was filled with houses and shops that were only four feet tall. The people inhabiting the city were people of a variety of races; some were dark green with broccoli stalks on their head, some were red with a tiny leaf on their head, some were light green with celery stalks on their heads. It became clear that these were vegetable people. They eventually noticed that they were in the presence of humans.

“The giant has returned!” said one of them, “And he’s brought more giants with him!” The people stood still, but didn’t fear the taller visitors. Walking through the crowd was an elderly vegetable person with a cane.



“Welcome to the town of Yabuus,” he said.

“What are you, anyway?” asked Duncan.

“Why, we are molcues, people who not only dine on food, but sunlight, too.” Just then, Daniel noticed that these people resembled things you would see on a salad, and rabbits just love vegetation. His mouth started drooling and he started lusting for the taste of little plant-based people.

“Must... eat... people!” he said. The molcues knew that this was a reason to run, so they screamed and ran all over the place. Daniel chased one of them throughout the town, eventually focusing his appetite on another.

“This is a disaster,” said Hikaru, embarrassed about the situation.

“You’re the leader,” said Ethan, “Why don’t you do something?” Hikaru thought of a way to control his partner and he tried enforcing it. He walked through the town to find Daniel, and he chased him until he caught his first molcue near a tiny general store.

“Daniel!” he scolded, “Drop the molcue!” Daniel looked at the molcue woman in his claws and how terrified she was. He slowly put her down near a tiny barrel and she ran off. “Bad bunny!” Hikaru felt bad for yelling at Daniel, but he felt good that he caught him just in time. Daniel wilted at the sound of Hikaru’s voice, but he learned his lesson.

“Now that the hysteria is over,” said the mayor, “We can make you feel at home. I’m afraid there is no room at my house, so you’ll have to sit outside.”

Later, the mayor went inside his house, which was conveniently on the edge of town, so the children and monsters had plenty of room to sit. The children introduced themselves and the conversation continued.

“So what is it exactly you do?” he asked.

“We play instruments and fight monsters!” said Cliff.

“What I mean is what is the concept behind siding with monsters?”

“Well,” said Ethan, “Years ago, monsters invented dimensional travel, which is how they found out about humans. They noticed that humans were entertaining themselves with the one thing that the Rhythm and Melody World produces – music. The great earth composer Mozart befriended a monster for a short time, but things got ugly and it had to return to its world, promising never to use dimensional travel again. But then, some two hundred years later, a catastrophe happened and the monsters knew that the only way to defeat it was to repair the bond between monster and man so they can grow stronger and defeat the menace.”

“That some story. What was this... menace?”

“I don’t know the further details of that, sir.”

“Well, as long as you can do something to stop the current menace. Heaven forbid I’m too old and too insignificant to stop the hatching of the egg myself. Help yourself to some dinner.” The mayor went to his kitchen table and grabbed a tiny plate with a leaf on it. As soon as he showed the leaf to his guests, Chappie the miniathan grabbed it and ate it and one bite. The mayor wasn’t amused. “For crying out loud! I marinated that leaf in the finest imported sauces and slow cooked it for six hours!” Chappie didn’t care; he was busy licking his webbed fingers.

“You got any more marinated leaves?”

“Don’t listen to him,” said Hikaru, “His human partner comes from a country that thinks they rule the world, but in reality, I could easily use my magic to overthrow their government and declare my new world order.” Everyone was amazed at what Hikaru said, not only because he wanted to overthrow a government, but also because he used such big words. “What are you looking at me for? You all know that I have a big vocabula-la-ry.”

Before they could get a word in edgewise, a grey blur swooped down and grabbed a baby molcue and flew into the air with her.

“Help!” yelled a woman, “That flying rabbit has my baby!” The rabbit, which had huge ears for flying and gliding, soared higher into the air and it was making sure that its talon-like grip would not let its meal slip through its paws. The group wished they could do something.

“I’ll save her!” said Blake the kilblai. He flapped his tiny wings until he elevated several inches off the ground. Unfortunately, a kilblai has a poor structure for flying, so the wings didn’t do much good. Indigo tried and got a little farther off the ground, but he couldn’t reach the sky. Edgar the b-plume didn’t feel like he was ready to take on such a challenge, but he didn’t want the baby to be eaten. He had to act fast.

“I’m coming!” he said. He jumped out of Cliff’s arms and used his big ears to reach to sky. Cliff was a little more than flabbergasted.

“Edgar!” he called, “Get back here!” Despite his partner’s pleas, Edgar took to the sky anyway.

Pretty soon, the people, both human and molcue, looked like insects from Edgar’s perspective. He gained on the flying rabbit as soon as he caught sight of it. The baby didn’t know of her fate; she thought that this was a free ride.



“Baby laser!” shouted Edgar. His two feathers crossed and formed a purple beam of light. The beam missed the rabbit by several inches. Edgar’s ears were feeling tired, but he was so close to rescuing the plant-based rugrat. He unleashed another baby laser which hit the rabbit’s backside. The rabbit spun out of control, releasing the baby from its grip and dropping her to her doom. Edgar swooped down and grabbed her with his ears. Because he was using his ears for something other than flying, he was falling to his doom as well.

Luckily, Cliff already noticed that there was nothing else his partner could do. He ran out of the city without telling his friends why.

“Where are you going?” asked Ethan. Cliff ran past a tree with living flowers growing beside it, and they were pretty irate when he ran past them and caused their pedals to fall off. Edgar closed his eyes so he wouldn’t see what the outcome of his plummeting would be. But Cliff came just in time and he caught him and the baby in his arms. Edgar was relieved not just because he and the baby were okay, but also because his plan had worked.

“Hooray, Cliff!” said Caitlin. The rest of the group welcomed the heroes, including the baby’s mother. The baby hopped out from Edgar’s ears and crawled to her mother.

“I can’t thank you enough!” said the mother.

“Don’t thank me,” bragged Edgar, “I did this out of love.” Just then, a glowing spark appeared in the air. This was the same eerie, golden glow that appeared in Kakaan. It produced yet another golden trinket, yet this one looked different. It was shaped differently, but it still looked like it was part of a bigger trinket.

“Wait a minute!” said Cliff. He took out the trinket from before and grabbed the one that was still floating. When he put the two together, it all made sense.

“Cliff, you’re a genius!” said Ethan. Hikaru, being the jealous type, became less than proud.

“No fair!” he said, “You’re all paying attention to him? I’m the group leader! I have magical powers!”

“Hikaru, Cliff is just enjoying his moment in the sun,” said Caitlin, “Don’t block the sun from him.” Hikaru was being a good leader up until that point, but he let his impatient, immature side show. The good news was that the group figured out the concept; but they haven’t solved the puzzle yet.

Part 4:

The World of Geluskia

Our heroes were on their way to the latest destination. Once again, Scruffy was flying them to wherever Hikaru told him to go, and Hikaru wasn't quite sure where that was. Duncan looked at the stars twinkling in the breathable atmosphere and it reminded him of the stars that he used to see in his own night sky. Audrey noticed that Duncan wasn't being his usual talkative self, so something must have been wrong.

"Duncan," she said, "Why are you just staring out into space?"

"Do you think our parents miss us?" he asked.

"They might not miss us, but they're certainly worried about us. After all, it was only our souls that went to this wacky place. Our bodies are still on Earth." Duncan realized that Audrey was making a good point, but he was still pondering.

"Where do you think our bodies are?"

"Why are you asking me these things?" Duncan decided that all this pondering made his head hurt, so he decided not to think about such complicated things. Feeling comforted by Audrey's presence, he put his arm around her, like he was a teenager at a drive-in matinee.

Hikaru soon became sick of riding on top of a giant, orange pooch, so he ordered Scruffy to halt. Everyone ceased what they were doing and looked at Hikaru.

"Why did we stop?" asked Ethan.

"I figured that it's about time to explore another world," said Hikaru, "You don't want to be stuck on Scruffy all day, do you?" Though this decision was sudden, everyone agreed. It was about time they looked at another world to see if there was another piece of the metronome to be found.

The next door they were about to open was solid pink; no wacky designs, no foreign messages, nothing.

"This door looks suspicious," said Daniel the coniglio, "It has nothing on it."

"This is just Geluskia," said Hikaru, "Everything is girly through this door!"

Hikaru stuck the key into the keyhole and turned it. Everyone was anticipating a calm, brightly-colored world like Hikaru told them about.

He opened the door to a mesmerizing place. Everything wasn't the color that it was supposed to be. The dirt was orange, the trees were gold... to a human everything seemed out of place. Nevertheless, everyone entered.

"Where do we start looking?" asked Edgar the b-plume.

"I'm an excellent digger!" said Daniel the coniglio. He then used his mighty claws to tear apart the oddly-colored soil. Once again, he embarrassed Hikaru to almost no end. He knew that this was a time to act responsible and control his monster.

"Daniel, stop!" he scolded. Hearing the tone of his voice, Daniel ceased his reckless behavior and cleaned his fur. Hikaru may have been responsible at that moment, but he was still leering at Cliff, the little attention-getter.

A young woman fifty feet away was pulling some herbs from a small bush to put into her sack. She wasn't human at all. She was a unicorn that stood on two feet (or in that case, hooves) and had a human personality. Her sensitive ears heard the group talking amongst each other. Being the shy person she was, she stood still. She didn't know much about human nature, and these humans could turn on her at any second.



Luckily, the group had no interest in hurting the girl. Daniel the coniglio spotted the girl, and being the rude monster he was, he pointed at her.

“Hey, look,” he said, “A horse person!” The girl was mortified at what the antlered rabbit had called her.

“That’s no horse person!” said Hikaru, “That’s a unitiri. I haven’t seen one of these in a while.” Everyone looked at the girl in admiration. They had never seen anything like her; a unicorn person with tiny hooves at the end of her fingers. She also had a tail, which they’ve never seen on a person before.

“What’s your name?” asked Caitlin, treating her like a person.

“I’m Dalla,” said the unitiri. She then realized that among the people in the group was the sorcerer’s son. “Wait... are you Hikaru, wizard of the Outer Universe? THE Hikaru?”

“That’s my title,” said Hikaru. Dalla was delighted that she was in the presence of whom the entire Outer Universe deemed a celebrity.

“I never thought I’d meet you!” Excitedly, she touched Hikaru’s hand, as if his greatness would rub off on her.

“It’s a pleasure.” Not everybody was glad to see him, though. After Hikaru enjoyed his warm welcome, a burly-looking unitiri man appeared. He was quite mad that his fiancée was being “handled” by someone else. Everyone, including the monsters, gulped at the sight of him.



“Oh... I forgot to introduce you to my mate, Alexander.” Before Alexander could use his fists to express his anger, Daniel the coniglio stopped them with his claws.

“Leave him alone!” said Daniel.

“Yeah!” said Duncan, “He wasn’t trying to hit on your girlfriend!”

“Alex, you nearly punched the wizard of the Outer Universe!” said Dalla, being assertive, “What do you have to say for yourself?” Alexander stayed angry for three seconds and then gave up.”

“I’m... sorry,” said Alexander, the unitiri man of few words.

“Don’t mind him,” said Dalla, “It’s that time of the year when he’s driven by his testosterone.”

“Where do you live?” Caitlin asked Dalla.

“I live in the town below this hill,” she said, “Allow me to take you there.”

In the village of Roddersheim, unitiri people were busy with their errands. Market places had their busiest hours and many conversations could be heard in the native tongue. The cars on the road looked like the ones seen on earth at the turn of the century. Every person and domesticated animal had a horn on his or her head. For fun, Cliff decided to pet the barukai (a giant purple dog).



“Hello, doggy,” he said. The barukai growled a bit and lifted up his paw as if he was pointing at him. Since he had the chance, Cliff petted the barukai’s paw. “Nice doggy.”

“Cliff, leave the dog alone,” said Ethan, “He doesn’t want to entertain kids right now.” Ethan grabbed Cliff’s hand and dragged him away. After all, he was responsible for what could happen to his half brother.

Dalla and Alexander stopped in the middle of the street and turned around.

“Have fun!” she said, “Go off and see the stores and people. You won’t be disappointed!” The group ran off in all directions, going where their hearts desired.

Duncan and Chappie the miniathan walked to what looked like a sweet shop. When they walked in, there were shelves and containers filled with candy that none of them recognized.

“Wow,” said Chappie the miniathan, “This place is filled with... what is it?”

“I guess their candy is different from ours,” said Duncan. The unitiri man behind the counter was pleased with their presence and curiosity.”

“Here,” he said, “Try some magolaks.”

“What’s a magolak?”

“It’s this.” The shopkeeper held up what looked like a gleaming spiked sphere; it looked quite appealing.

“How much does it cost?”

“These two are on me.” Duncan and Chappie were delighted. This was an opportunity to try a sweet from another world, one that was far different from the typical candy bar or lollypop. They bit into the sweet spheres and found a little ecstasy with each chew.

“These are great!” said Chappie.

“I suggest you eat it all before it crawls away.” The two didn’t know what he meant until they saw their candies opening their eyes. This freaked them out a bit, which made them drop the candies on the ground. The candies skittered out the door using their bottom spikes. After that, Duncan and Chappie didn’t want to try any more sweets.

Hikaru strolled down the road with Caitlin and their monsters. They could hear the sand and pebbles crunch as they stepped on the unpaved path. The monsters were feeling the sand and pebbles since they weren't wearing shoes. They passed a unitiri woman who was sweeping her front stoop. She was a bit angry about certain events that had happened.

"Hello," greeted Hikaru.

"Good afternoon, young human," said the woman.

"Is there a reason why you're cleaning?" The woman looked around before replying to the predictable question.

"Because... THEY came a few days ago."

"Oh." Hikaru and Daniel knew what she was talking about, but Caitlin and Jolie were confused.

"What does she mean by 'they'?" she asked.

"She means..." Hikaru put his hand up to his mouth and gave the signal for Caitlin to kneel down a bit. He whispered the words so that unsuspecting listeners wouldn't hear. "Waka-lakas."

"What's a... waka-laka?" asked Caitlin.

"They're these crazy creatures from a far-off world we don't know about. If you say their name out loud in the Outer Universe, they'll appear and trash the place."

"How do they hear you?"

"In the Outer Universe, we prefer that you don't ask too many questions." Daniel didn't bother to listen to what Hikaru was saying, so he asked a question anyway.

"What are we supposed to do if a waka-laka attacks?" he asked. Caitlin and Hikaru gasped at Daniel's ignorance.

"Daniel! I told you not to ask any more questions!" A stampeding started from the edge of town. The kids and monsters could tell what it was, and it wasn't going to be pretty. A green lizard the size of a small child hopped over a wall and looked at the group. Jolie the unieye jumped into Caitlin's arms out of shock.



"It's waka-laka time!" said the lizard. Dozens of others like him stampeded into the town and kicked up dust. The strange beings hyperactively jumped around and destroyed things like monkeys that were released from their cages. One ran into a shop and broke the expensive vases. One went to the bakery and covered himself in flour while the others ate the pastries. One even ran into a house of a citizen and jumped on her bed. Duncan angrily walked toward Caitlin when he saw her standing in the street.

"Caitlin, what the hell is going on?" asked Duncan. Caitlin couldn't believe that Duncan was expecting an answer from her. He thought that if anything bad were to happen, he would just pin the blame on his sister.

“I have no idea!” she said. The tone of her voice was convincing, so he stopped being mad at her. Of course, this was Caitlin’s chance to tell him who the real culprit was. “It was Daniel!” Daniel’s ears went up when Caitlin pointed to him. There was no use in denying what he did, so he stuttered.

“Uh... uh...” he said.

“I’m going to give you such a thrashing!” Just as Duncan’s violent urges were about to take over his mind, a waka-laka started humping his leg. He stopped punching his palm and looked down. “Please don’t do that to my leg.” Dot the arcobea attacked a waka-laka with the beam from her rainbow tail. Despite their rowdiness, the waka-lakas weren’t that hard to miss.

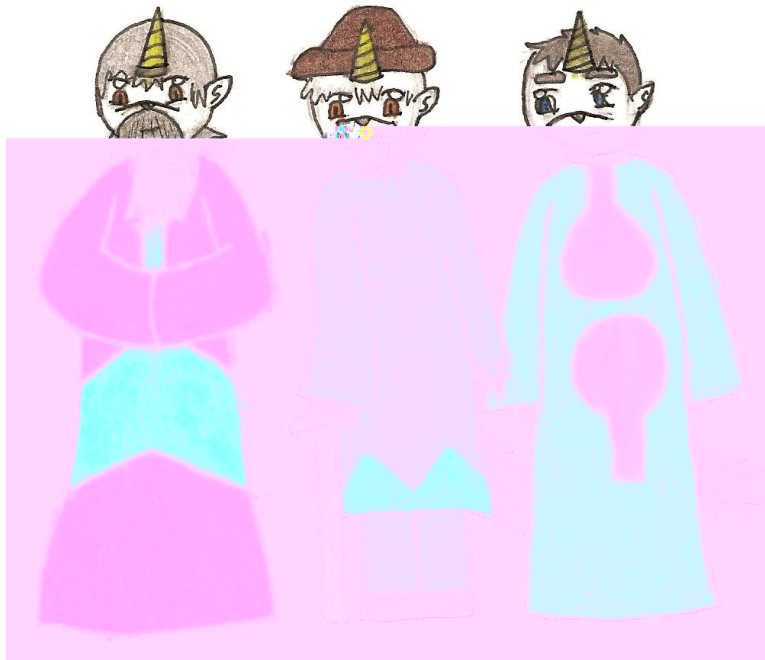
“Get back, you animal!” she said. Daniel knew that since he caused the problem, he should fix it, too. He jumped into the air and kicked a waka-laka in the face. He did this to several wakas that were currently causing trouble. The remaining ones scurried out of town as fast as possible. They may have had the brains of monkeys, but they weren’t stupid enough to stay in a place where there were monsters attacking them.

When the crazy animals disappeared from sight, everyone came out from hiding. Their town became a mess; garbage and debris were everywhere and various possessions were no longer of their original value.

“What a mess,” said Jolie the unieye, “And all because Daniel said those two dreadful words.” Daniel couldn’t believe how stupid he had been.

“I guess words CAN hurt people,” said Daniel.

“You’ve finally learned your lesson,” said an aged voice. Behind the group were three elderly unitiri men. They wore important garb and had serious looks on their faces.



“We would like an explanation of this,” said one of them.

“It’s my fault,” said Hikaru, “I should tame him better.” The men’s eyes widened at the sight of the boy.

“Hikaru?” asked the second one, “Is that really you?”

“Sure it is! It’s funny, because you all know my name, but I don’t know yours.”

"I'm Zarund," said the first one with the white beard.

"I'm Kel," said the second one wearing the funny hat.

"I'm Warren," said the third one, who was balding.

"We're the town elders," said Zerund, "We run this place and make the rules."

"Is there anything we can do to help?" asked Caitlin. The elders didn't want to be a burden to their new guests, so they took it easy.

"Why don't you come to the townhouse? You look like you've traveled far."

The group agreed and walked through the mess to the elders' headquarters.

In the west of town, there was a cozy dwelling with flowers outside. Nobody would have believed that it was a townhouse. Then again, this town only needed three people to run it.

"Here we are," said Kel as he opened the door. The abode had two cozy sofas and a coffee table nestled in the front room. In the back were a stove and a cupboard. There was another room that had a table where important meetings took place. The house had all this and a small bathroom.

"This is a nice place you have here," said Duncan, "Why didn't the wakas destroy it?"

"Wakas are very mysterious creatures," said Hikaru, "If we were to know anything about those guys, our minds would turn into mush."

"I'll put up a pot of tea water," said Warren. Cliff looked behind the second sofa and starred at what he discovered. Edgar the b-plume was wondering why Cliff was so fascinated by the area behind the sofa; maybe it was just a little kid thing. He wanted to see for himself, since he too was a young one.

"What are you looking at, Cliff?" he asked. When he peered behind the couch, he saw the marvelous thing that Cliff couldn't stop looking at. Soon, Caitlin became curious.

"Did you find another piece of the metronome?" she asked. Soon, everyone peered behind the sofa, whether they were little kids or not. What was behind the sofa... was a monster.



"What the hell is it?" asked Ethan. This oddity was a halfway developed monster nestled up inside a placental bubble. It had an umbilical cord for ingesting nutrients.

"How did it get here?" asked Jolie the unieye.

"One of the wakas must've left it here," said Dot the arcobea.

"How did a waka get his hands on a music monster?"

"What did I just say about wakas and trying to figure them out?" reminded Hikaru.

"Hey..." said Chappie the miniathan, "I know what that is!"

"Then tell us."

"That's a featu. It's a halfway-developed bottom-leveled monster that grows inside a placental bubble."

“Why didn’t you tell us before?”

“Thank you for telling us that it was a music monster,” said Warren.

Immediately, he flipped out a pistol and aimed it at the monster. “See you in hell, demon seed!” Everyone was shocked at the sudden behavior change of the pleasant, old man.

“What are you doing?” asked Ethan, “This monster wouldn’t harm a fly!”

“How do I know that he’s nothing like that damned egg that Awai is keeping?”

“It won’t be evil if we raise it to be good!” said Caitlin as she pushed the gun down from its targeting position. “You’re not even giving it a chance!” Warren knew the error of his ways, so he put the gun away.

“Let’s set it on the coffee table,” said Daniel. He picked up the monster and put in the center of the table for all to see. “There. Nothing makes a more beautiful centerpiece than a fetus.”

“What’s this note right here?” asked Duncan. He picked up a piece of paper that had partially slipped under the sofa. It said this:

HALL0 WE HOWP U LYK DIS EG!!!1 WE GOT IT 4 U GAIZ BKUS ITZ
PRTY LOOKIG!!!! DONT LTE N E TING HAPN 2 IT!!!

“Oh my god,” said Duncan, “They’ve massacred the English language.”

“So they gave us this monster as a present,” said Caitlin, “Despite the fact that they trashed the entire town.”

That night, the kids sat in the main room and told funny stories in their borrowed pajamas. They had a blast.

“You see, Duncan was only two years old and he wasn’t exactly toilet trained...” continued Caitlin. Duncan buried his face in a pillow. He couldn’t stand to hear any more embarrassing stories from his sister.

“Look on the bright side, Duncan,” said Chappie the miniathan.

“What?” asked Duncan as he looked up.

“At least she’s not talking about me!” Quickly, Duncan grabbed Hikaru’s wand and waved it to make his saxophone appear. Instead, a funny hat with a feather sticking out of it appeared. “Are you trying to be like Yankee Doodle?” Duncan waved the wand again, only to find a live parrot. The parrot squawked loudly, ending the silence that Duncan was taking advantage of.

“Duncan, what are you doing to my wand?” asked Hikaru with a bit of annoyance in his voice.

“I was just trying to make a saxophone appear,” said Duncan.

“Why didn’t you just say so?” Hikaru grabbed the wand and waved it around in his usual way. Within seconds, a saxophone much like Duncan’s appeared. He was so happy to see it that he didn’t bother to thank Hikaru.

“Play us a song!” said Cliff.

“Yeah, a song!” said Edgar the b-plume. Duncan put the instrument up to his mouth and played the song “Take Five.” The monsters were delighted to hear music once again. After all, they need all the strength in the Outer Universe in order to fight Awai’s secret weapon. Like a regular at a jazz café, Caitlin started snapping her fingers

to the American art form. Everyone enjoyed the music as the temperatures dropped in the foreign climate. The featu obtained strength from the music, even if nobody noticed.

The next morning, Hikaru was the first to awake to the crisp geluskian day. Everyone around him was still asleep; some of them were snoring. He couldn't wait to see everyone's reaction to what had "happened" in the middle of the night. Being the growing kid that he was, he rushed over to the cupboard to see what food there was. He made so much racket that he woke Duncan up.

"Hikaru, what are you doing?" he whined.

"I'm hungry," he said. Duncan just pulled the covers over his head so he wouldn't need to listen any more.

Several hours passed and everyone was awake. It didn't take Ethan long to notice something sinister on the wall.

"Cliff, get over here!" he yelled. Cliff slinked over to the wall and was prepared for anything that Ethan could throw at him.

"What is it, older brother?" he asked.

"Did you write this on the wall?" On the wall in big, blue letters was the message "I did this – Cliff." Cliff was outraged.

"How did that get there?"

"You should know. You signed it." Daniel walked by the message and noticed something familiar about it.

"Cliff, if you wrote this, than why is it in Hikaru's handwriting?" Cliff was relieved that someone believed him. Unfortunately, Hikaru was in trouble. They walked over to the couch where he was sitting as he was whistling nonchalantly.

"Do you know anything about this, Hikaru?" asked Ethan. Hikaru had no idea how to answer since he didn't plan this far.

"Heh heh, well..." he started, "A group of ravenous anteaters broke in last night and..." the group just wasn't buying his lie. "Alright, alright, I did it to frame Mr. Goody Two-Shoes here!" He pointed to Cliff, who didn't understand why Hikaru hated him so. "He's been trying to steal my spotlight since we started this adventure! So far, he's found all the pieces of the metronome!"

"Get a grip, Hikaru! So what if he's good at finding stuff? You're not acting like a very good leader right now!"

"Shut up!"

That afternoon, everyone went exploring the town again. Audrey went to a pub with Dalla to have a drink. She didn't know what she wanted to have since most of the drinks in this world were far different from drinks from Earth. A bartender came over and asked them their order in a wooing manner.

"Would you fine young ladies like a drink?" he asked. Audrey was flattered by the way this man talked. She even blushed a little.

"Not for me," said Dalla.

"I'll take... something that is purple and fizzy," said Audrey, trying to describe a soda.

"A lopsku it is," said the bartender. He turned around and started making the extravagant drink. Audrey was curious as to why her new friend didn't want anything.

“I can’t help but notice that you don’t want anything to drink,” she said.

“Oh yes,” she said, “As you know it is mating season for my people. I have found a mate and he has successfully planted his manly seed into my womanly soil.” Audrey was quite surprised by Dalla’s news.

“So that’s what you meant by ‘mate?’”

“What else did you think I meant?”

“It’s just that... where I come from, that event doesn’t take place until AFTER the couple is married.”

“Oh. So you get married before your mating season?”

“Actually, we humans don’t have a mating season. We participate in intercourse whenever we want, even if it doesn’t result in offspring.”

“Your species are weird.” Audrey felt awkward about the conversation, so she took this time to change the topic. By that time, her fizzy drink was ready and was set in front of her. She leaned over a bit to sip from the colorful straw. The drink had a taste that was sweet at first, but then left a stinging sensation. She decided not to take another sip for a few minutes.

Midori was helping a shopkeeper clean up where the waka-lakas were. They did the keeper a favor by putting all sorts of messes in the bin. The keeper decided to make conversation during this otherwise boring chore.

“I heard that the shadow dragons are out tonight,” he said. At first, Midori thought that this was just a childish attempt at scaring her, but she wanted to find out more.

“What are you talking about?” she asked.

“The shadow dragons are terrible lizards that appear during the dusk hours. They terrorize entire villages and steal small children. We have no idea how to stop them since they are not solid beings like us.” This worried Midori a bit. How can someone stop something that cannot be affected by physical force? There was not time to think about these things if there are messes to clean up.

That night, everyone was back at the townhouse in front of the fireplace. Hikaru was fascinated by the developing appearance of the featu. He watched it even if it didn’t do much.

“I think I saw it kick!” he said in excitement.

“Yeah, it’ll do that,” said Daniel the coniglio. Just then, the flame in the fireplace went out as if a strong wind blew in its direction. The entire room became dark and cold. Cliff and Edgar the b-plume had a fear of the dark, like many small children.

“What’s going on?” he asked as he hugged Edgar the b-plume.

“The shadow dragons are coming,” said Zarund in a serious tone.

“That shopkeeper warned me about those,” said Midori, “But I thought he was just joking.”

“We should brace ourselves,” said Dot the arcobea. People all over town were running indoors to escape the impending horror. As soon as the streets were empty, a fleet of dark lizards crawled into town looking for something to terrorize. These lizards were so dark that you could barely see their features – only their eyes. These lizards had the ability to sink into the ground, like they were somebody’s shadows, hence the name. Back at the townhouse, the elders were trying to keep the children and monsters calm.



“Okay, everyone,” said Kel, “Stand very still and they won’t notice you.” One lurking shadow lizard crawled under the door and rose up from the ground. It licked its lips as it eyed the children. Despite what Kel had said, it did notice them. Hikaru held the featu in his arms and squeezed it to feel more comforted. It kicked a little as if it could feel Hikaru’s squeezes. The moment finally came when yet another piece of the metronome appeared in the air. Little Cliff grabbed it and put it in his pocket.

“Glad that’s over with,” said Ethan.

“I’m attacking that lizard!” said Chappie the miniathan. He got up and aimed his horn at the hungry-looking reptile. A blue beam shot out of his horn, but the lizard evaded it by sinking into the ground. The dragon took this chance to bind itself around Chappie and squeeze him until he couldn’t breathe.

“Chappie!” called Duncan, who couldn’t get himself to stand still anymore. The featu wobbled around a little bit. It sensed the danger that was taking place on the outside, even if it couldn’t see or hear anything. Hikaru became even more afraid since it was becoming hard to hold on to it.

The other shadow dragons were crawling into people’s houses and stealing their children and domestic animals, preferably for an easy meal. Some were walking on two legs while stealing the unfortunate victims of their scavenging. As the children kept hiding in the corner of the room, the featu started glowing. Hikaru closed his eyes, but kept holding on the placental bubble. The fetus shape-shifted amidst the fear and confusion and everyone watched.

When it was finished, it broke through its placental bubble and emerged as one of the most beautiful things anyone has ever seen. The featu had become a winged puppy wearing pajamas. Its rattle looked almost as if it had been bought at FAO Schwartz.



“What is that?” asked Caitlin in disbelief.

“That, my friend, is a sun baby,” said Jolie the unieye. Hikaru was still holding the placental bubble, which was torn and slimy.

“Eww...” he commented. The sun baby viewed his surroundings that he emerged into. As soon as he saw the shadow dragon in the middle of the living room, he started quivering. The group became hopeless at the sight of this terrified imp.

“What do we do now?” asked Ethan. Cliff took advantage of this opportunity to cheer the sun baby up. He bravely got up and walked across the room.

“Are you scared, little one?” he asked. The sun baby flinched as he turned to look at Cliff. “Well, you know what cheers me up? Tickles!” Cliff attacked the sun baby with his dancing fingers and the sun baby was feeling joyous all over. The sound of his laughing itself was enough to make somebody happy. As his happiness escalated, he began giving off sunlight. As soon as the shadow dragon saw this strange occurrence, he scurried away under the door.

“My god... that puppy’s happiness caused the shadow dragon to run away.” The sun baby was able to comprehend the fact that sunlight = scared shadow dragons. He flew into the air and scratched at the door.

“You want to be let out?” asked Cliff. He gladly opened the door for him and followed him out into the dangerous night.

In the middle of the road, Cliff started tickling the sun baby again. The sun baby laughed and screeched for joy as he glowed from the sunlight being released. Everyone watching out the window didn’t know what to make of the situation. They somehow thought that the monster was going to explode.

“He’s gonna blow!” said Duncan. They ran away from the window to hide somewhere safe. Meanwhile, the sun baby reached a state of pure ecstasy in which sunlight shot out from every direction. The light masked the dusk hue and sent every single shadow dragons packing. They left the town in groups as fast as they could and didn’t look back.

A few minutes later, everyone stepped out of their houses knowing that there were no threats of dark lizards anymore. Dalla, the girl from earlier, spotted the group and thanked them immensely.

“I’m so proud of you guys!” she said as she was hugging Cliff. Her mate stepped in, but wasn’t too happy about her hugging another male. She assured him that it wasn’t going that far. “Relax; I have no feelings for him.” Hikaru was still jealous that the one kid who was younger than him was getting all the attention.

“At least I have magic powers!” he asserted. The sun baby flew into Dalla’s arms because he thought of her as a nice, motherly figure. He looked into her eyes while grabbing on to her dress.

“Can you be my mommy?” he asked.

“Aww,” said everyone in unison.

“I’m sorry, little one,” said Dalla, “But I’m already expecting a baby in five months.” The sun baby was saddened by Dalla’s answer, but he didn’t give up hope. He fluttered to the elders and started asking the question.

“Yes, you may stay with us,” said Kel, “We need you more than ever to protect this town from another shadow attack.”

“Can I call you Slimy?” asked Hikaru as he admired the monster that saved everyone.

“Why would you want to call him that?” asked Daniel the coniglio.

“Because that’s what I called him before he mutated.”

“Slimy will stay here with us while you guys go and save the Outer Universe,” concluded Zerund. And away they went.

Meanwhile, the evil egg was resting on its fancy-looking pillow. The magic surrounding it prevented it from hatching at the wrong time. Awai came into the room and took out his flute.



“Any day, my dear,” he said to the egg, “Any day.” He then started playing a dark melody on his instrument, thus causing the egg to absorb more melodies that it would convert into power. The egg was reaching abnormal strength and would continue to do so.

Part 5:

The World of Bophline

Finally out of the oddly-colored world, Scruffy decided to fall asleep on a tiny planet. The group continued to sit on his soft fur and watch the universe go by. No matter where they were, the stars followed them wherever they went.

“Something is troubling me,” said Cliff.

“What is that?” asked Ethan.

“This metronome doesn’t look like a metronome at all. The one in my music class made a ticking noise, but this one doesn’t even have a thing on it that makes it tick.” Ethan could plainly see that the “metronome” looked more like an incomplete gold heart.

“Can you decipher what exactly this is, Hikaru?” Hikaru wasn’t in the mood to investigate anything. He was too tired to care.

“Leave me alone,” he said, “Let Goody Two-Shoes figure it out for himself.”

“I wish you’d stop being jealous of my brother. He just happened to be in the right place at the right time. Who cares if he found the pieces and you didn’t?” At this time, Hikaru fell asleep, hoping that this would get him out of arguing with an older kid.

Sea horse-like creatures were floating through the air in schools. Each one was puke green and about the size of a cat. They ate tiny dots that were aloft in the not-so-airless space. Caitlin, who was happening to play with her *My Little Pony* figure, looked at these creatures.



“I just want to watch these things all night,” said Caitlin, “What are they called, anyway?”

“They’re called ogguers,” said Daniel the coniglio, “I choose to ignore them.”

“I think they’re rad!” Caitlin continued to watch the antics of the playful creatures. Audrey felt like talking to Duncan, specifically about her feelings.

“Oh, Duncan,” she said, “I had no idea that the universe would look so beautiful at this time of night.”

“It looks like this 24/7,” said Duncan. Audrey felt that Duncan was being a bit literal, so she came out and told him why the night sky was better at this moment.

“But it’s even better when you’re here.” Duncan had never heard such a comment since Audrey admitted that she loved him just as he was about to sacrifice himself. “If we don’t save the Outer Universe in time, we could never experience the wonderful things that young people experience. Do you know what I’m talking about?” Audrey was talking about more romantic things, but Duncan got the wrong message.

“You mean like driving a car over a big ditch?” Audrey was a bit disappointed with his answer, so she rolled her eyes and gave a sarcastic reply.

“Yes, I mean driving a car over a big ditch.” Her head sank into her knees and she decided not to say a word for the rest of the night.

The next morning, Hikaru unlocked the fourth and final door to the rest of the missing metronome. He inserted the key, but wanted to make sure that his friends were ready.

“Are we ready to embark on our journey into a world that not even I have been to yet?” Everyone nodded their heads, since they survived the last three worlds. Hikaru turned the key and bravely opened the door...

Through the door was a paved road surrounded by a jungle. The jungle had different noises since this world’s wildlife weren’t quite the same as earth’s wildlife.

“Where are we headed to now?” asked Duncan.

“We’re headed there!” said Hikaru. He pointed to a city over the horizon that looked far more advanced than the other civilizations they visited. The towers were made of chrome, just like in the sci-fi movies.

As they approached the entrance of the civilization, there was a sign that was printed in an entirely different language.

“What does that say?” asked Daniel the coniglio.

“I don’t know,” said Hikaru. Nevertheless, they entered the city anyway.

In the city were people dressed in clothing made from an artificial fabric. Flying cars graced the skies and robots were making a living working as ATM machines. People were walking pets that looked like crosses between other pets. Everything was quite new and fascinating.

Up the street was a chrome castle. The trees and bushes were plugged into the ground with giant electrical sockets.

“Maybe the person running this place can give us a clue of where we are,” said Daniel the coniglio.

Through the huge door was a front room that was sparkling clean and as fancy as could be. A fountain graced the center and exotic flowers were juxtaposed near the windows. The secretary at the desk did her futuristic duties in an organized fashion.

“Uh... excuse me,” said Duncan.

“Yes?” she said.

“May we see the person who’s running this place?”

“Nice try, kid. We don’t let just anybody see the king.” Everyone was flabbergasted to hear that they were in fact in a kingdom and not a city.

“We’re not just anybody,” said Hikaru. The lady stopped doing her work and paid more attention to who was speaking.

“Are you... the son of the almighty sorcerer? Why, that changes everything!” Everyone was relieved. “You may see the king if you want.”

Everyone traveled up the royal staircase until they saw the lounging room. This room had everything that everyone wanted, especially if you lived in a world that wasn’t as advanced. There was a hot tub, a holographic fireplace, and, of course, couches and chairs. A middle-aged man with some stubble sat in one of the chairs drinking tea. Hikaru didn’t know how to approach a Bophlinian man of royalty, so he did it the way that he would for normal strangers.

“Excuse me,” he said, “Do you run this place?” The king looked behind him and saw what he thought he’d never see, especially at this very moment.



“Why of course, young wizard,” he replied. “Is your father here?”

“No, he isn’t. He still uses colorful language when he speaks about you.”

“Yes, I’m sure he does. Years ago, I jokingly encouraged his neighboring tribe to go to war with his tribe. Unfortunately, they took me seriously.”

“And he’s still angry with you to this day, huh?” said Duncan.

“I’m afraid he is. Would you like some grub?”

“That’s informal language coming from a royal man like you,” said Caitlin.

“Well, when the press isn’t around, I like to act typical.”

A while later, the children and monsters were kneeling at a small table with no legs. The king came in with a covered plate. The kids were anticipating the meal that was coming and the monsters were drooling like hungry dogs. As soon as the king set the plate in the middle of the table, he lifted up the cover.

“Bon appétit,” he said. On the plate were a small pile of red and white capsules. Everyone took one without question and swallowed them with their water. Duncan was disappointed in his meal.

“You’re giving us pills?” he asked as he examined his “food.”

“Half our food is in capsule form,” said the king, “With it, you get all the nutrients you need in just one meal.”

“But where’s the nourishment? Are we going to go to bed hungry?”

“Don’t be rude,” whispered Caitlin. Ethan wanted to know more about the rest of the royal family, especially if there are any girls he could meet.

“Is there a princess in your royal family?” he asked.

“Yes, there is,” said the king, “And she’s very cute.” Ethan was excited to hear about a cute girl and was interested in meeting her.

“So where is she?”

“Princess Minerva is very sick at the moment. There’s an epidemic going around and people are dying of a powerful fever.”

“If you live in a futuristic society, then wouldn’t you have the technology to combat this sickness?” asked Indigo the almanole.

“Listen, just because our society is far ahead of yours doesn’t mean we’re miracle workers.” The king took another sip of his tea before continuing with the conversation. “So... what are those pets you have here?”

“We’re not pets!” exclaimed Chappie the miniathan, “We deserve more respect than that!”

“I apologize.”

“The reason we have these monsters is because we play instruments,” said Midori, “Since we harness the power to create music, we are perfect candidates to team up with monsters and make them stronger with our musical talent. You see...” Ethan took this time to escape from the conversation and sneak into the hallway. It wasn’t long until Indigo the almanole, Edgar the b-plume and Cliff noticed. They decided to follow him out of the room.

Ethan heard footsteps and bouncing (from Edgar) behind him while he was enjoying his moment of unsuspecting freedom. He wasn’t too happy with his brother and two other monsters following him.

“What are you guys doing?” he asked sternly.

“What are YOU doing?” whispered Cliff. Ethan sighed and told him the details.

“I don’t know about you, but I would like to meet this cute daughter that the king has.” Cliff snickered and sang a song to the teasing melody we all know.

“Ethan has a girlfriend! Ethan has a girlfriend!”

“Be quiet. You all can come with me, but don’t say a word.”

Ethan explored the hallway until he came upon a bedroom. This bedroom obviously belonged to the king and the queen, since it was so big and elegant. The wall above the bed had all sorts of space weapons, such as ray guns and plasma tasers. Amazed by all these gizmos, he reached for the ray gun on the bottom of the display. He rubbed the weapon to feel its authenticity.

“Should I, or shouldn’t I?” he asked himself. He pulled the trigger on the gun and released it, expecting the worst. Surprisingly, all that came out was a rubber suction. “That’s all this is? A suction cup gun?” He fired the gun again, only to release a laser bullet that ricocheted off the lamp and punctured the wall. He took a close look at the suction and saw these words printed on it: THIS WEAPON IS SUCTIONED FOR YOUR SAFETY. REMOVE SUCTION BEFORE USE. Ethan was a bit embarrassed by his mistake, but carefully put the gun back as if it was never touched.

“Hey, Ethan!” called Cliff, “I found the princess!” Ethan, excited as a small dog, ran down the hall to where his brother was.

He came upon a large room with pillows, pink toys, and other girlish luxuries. Cliff, Edgar the b-plume, and Indigo the almanole were staring into a bassinet. As he saw the sleeping infant, he figured that this was far from what he expected.



“This is the princess?” he asked in disbelief.

“Well, the king said that she was cute,” said Indigo to almanole, “He didn’t say how old she was.” The baby was sleeping deeply but her face was red as a beet from her fever.

“I hope she feels better soon,” said Ethan. Cliff was fascinated by her room and just had to touch something.

“This baby has it all,” said Cliff. He reached the box of blocks on the top shelf, but because of his height, he accidentally spilled them on the ground. Ethan was irate with his brother’s curiosity.

“Cliff, you idiot,” he whispered. Surprisingly, the princess didn’t wake up. Her fever was rendering her unconscious. Cliff was also amazed.

“Hey... if this baby doesn’t wake up, we can do whatever we want!” He then ran around the room playing with different toys and entertaining gizmos. Ethan tried to constrain his brother from the forbidden fun he was having.

“Cliff, if the king sees this, he’ll have you beheaded!” Cliff stopped in his tracks when he heard the final word that Ethan said.

“What does ‘beheaded’ mean?” he asked. Ethan then noticed the futuristic video game system in the corner with top-of-the-line graphics and sound.

“That doesn’t matter; let’s just do whatever we can get away with!” He ran to the corner and turned on the GyroSphere 12 as if he had never played a video game in his life.

The children and monsters in the other room kept conversing as if Ethan and Cliff were still there.

“I can’t wait to get home so I can play my *Atari 2600* again,” said Duncan.

“You earthlings are still peddling out those cheap games?” asked the king.

“What do you mean ‘cheap’?”

“We bophlinians have the latest in video game technology with state-of-the-art graphics and game play. Duncan was speechless. “Is there anything wrong?” Duncan began to shake and smile like a Cheshire cat. He slammed his hands onto the table and sat up a little. Everyone observed his strange behavior and wanted to know what he would do next.

“Take me to your games!!!”

Ethan and Cliff bounced on a giant stuffed animal that looked like a fat pink ant. Ethan found nothing wrong with what he was doing; the only ones watching him were Cliff, Edgar, and Indigo. The princess was still asleep and unaware of her unwanted visitors. For fun, Cliff decided to jump off of the bouncy stuffed animal and onto the floor. He did so with a loud thump.

“How was my dismount?” he gleefully asked. Unfortunately, that thump was heard by the sleeping princess and she woke up immediately. The boys knew that they were in big trouble when they heard her whining. Cliff didn’t want to take any chances, after all, he didn’t even know what it meant to “behead.”

“You’re on your own, man!” he said. With that, he and Edgar zipped out of the room. Ethan and Indigo were left out in the open for all to see that it was probably his fault. He looked at the crying baby and decided to make the predicament a little less nightmarish. He walked over to the baby’s basinet and held her tiny hand.

“There, there,” he said in a calming voice, “No one’s going to bother you anymore.” As soon as the baby princess grabbed onto Ethan’s finger, she stopped crying.

“Ethan, what are you doing?” asked Indigo the almanole.

“Well, Indigo,” said Ethan, “I’ve always wanted to hold a princess’s hand, and here I am doing it right now.” Ethan was basking in his moment until the king and the other children came wandering through the door.

“What is the meaning of this?!” he asked in a booming voice.

“Your majesty, please! Your daughter is sleeping.” Everyone thought that it was sweet that Ethan comforted the sick child instead of cowardly running out of the room like his half brother did.

“Who gave you permission to go in here?” Ethan didn’t think of any white lie to tell at this moment, so he stuttered.

“Uh...”

“Mr. King, I didn’t touch your baby’s stuff,” said Cliff as he was peering in, “I’m an angel.”

“Yeah, a fallen angel,” commented Ethan. Indigo wanted to top that comment.

“Yeah, or an angel of... being stupid,” he said.

“Mine was better.” The king was still frustrated.

“I would punish you severely,” he said. Ethan and Indigo shook with fear upon hearing the king’s plan. “But that means that you wouldn’t save the Outer Universe. I’ll let this slide.” Ethan, glad that he wasn’t executed, let go of the princess’s finger. She rested her tiny hand next to her face and continued her deep, uninterrupted slumber.

Several hours later, Ethan felt chills and nausea while he was relaxing on the intergalactic floating couch. Indigo the almanole was getting concerned about his partner’s state, so much that he had to tell the king.

“Your majesty!” he called, “Your majesty!” The king, enjoying a soak in the royal Jacuzzi, heard Indigo’s pleas.

“This better be good!” he said as he sat up to reveal his wet, hairy chest.

“Ethan isn’t looking too good,” said Indigo, “He’s all shaky and red.” The king would’ve rather stayed in his warm, bubbling tub, but this was truly a cause for concern.

Everyone gathered in the living room with the king. They were all wondering why Ethan had fallen ill all of a sudden. He was sitting on the couch covered in a blanket amidst all the attention.

“Are you feeling okay, Ethan?” asked Caitlin.

“I’m cold and my stomach hurts and my sinuses are stuffed up.” He wrapped the blanket around himself tighter as his chills were getting worse. Just then, at the most inconvenient time, the last gold shard appeared in the air. This was finally Hikaru’s

chance to reach out and grab it. Before he could do so, Ethan coughed, which made Hikaru turn his attention toward him. Cliff swiftly grabbed the shard and put it with the other pieces. Hikaru was irate with Cliff, but there were more important matters to attend to.

“Good job, Cliff,” applauded Caitlin.

“Ethan probably got sick from touching Princess Minerva’s hand,” said Duncan.

“Why do I have to be such a good citizen?” asked Ethan, regretting that he calmed the baby.

“I heard that there’s an aiphida flower near here,” said the king.

“It’s just like that song, ‘My Ears Detected it Through the Wisteria,’” said Ethan.

“Don’t you mean ‘I Heard it Through the Grapevine?’” asked Caitlin.

“There’s no way I’m going to remember THAT title!”

“Aiphidas?” asked Cliff.

“They’re the second most intelligent animal in this world,” said the king, “They are fun-loving, hard-working insects that produce a serum that can revitalize an immune system.”

“Then what are we waiting for?” asked Jolie the unieye, “Let’s go!” Everyone thought that the plan was a decent one, but everything was halted when Midori started to cough.

“Oh no, you’re getting it too!”

“No, it’s just a scratchy throat,” assured Midori.

“Princess Minerva’s sickness started with a scratchy throat.”

“What are we going to do?” asked Blake the kilblai, “We can’t do this unless the entire group is involved.” All the children except Ethan huddled to plan a last minute decision. A minute later, they split and talked it over with the monsters.

“I think it’s time that we trusted you to go out on your own,” said Duncan. The monsters were positively shocked at the idea.

“Are you crazy?” asked Chappie the miniathan, “What if something attacks us? You won’t be there to play your instrument and power us up!”

“There won’t be any other music monsters out there,” said Hikaru, “There are just jungle animals and they don’t have special attacks like you do.” All the monsters looked at each other to see if anyone seemed sure about this.

“You can count on us!” said Daniel the coniglio. Everyone was happy for their monsters. The monsters walked away in dignity to embark on their unpredictable journey. As the children were waving goodbye, Cliff started to cough.

“I guess we shouldn’t have huddled,” said Midori.

The monsters walked out of the city even though people were staring at them. Even in this crazy Outer Universe, the people had never seen any creatures quite that unusual.

They were relieved to be outside of civilization when they passed the welcome sign (which said the opposite message on the back). On the outside, jungles graced the landscape and there were no humans in sight.

“This is a strange jungle if I’ve ever seen one,” said Chappie the miniathan, “I think a tree tried to eat me.” None of the monsters had a map and they had no idea what this flower was supposed to look like. They were all equally clueless.

"I give up," said Daniel the coniglio.

"But we've only been in this place for fifteen minutes," said Jolie the Unieye, "And you know more about the Outer Universe than we do!" Everyone looked at Daniel as if he had all the answers when, really, he didn't know anything.

"Why don't we ask one of the locals?"

"Good idea!" said Blake the kilblai. The portly monster waddled over to a calm river. An animal that looked like a cross between a penguin and a hammer was lapping the clear water with his tongue. Blake didn't know how to approach a creature of this caliber.



"Excuse me," he blurted out. The animal lifted up his awkward-looking head and starred at Blake. He stood still as if he were threatened. "Can you tell me where a giant flower is?" The animal cocked his head to the side, trying to comprehend this monster's language. "I said 'can you tell me where a giant flower is?'" The animal waved his wing-like claws and made several clicking/honking noises. He dove into the river to escape the weirdness of the Inner Universe. Blake turned around to see the other monsters starring at him from behind the leaves. "Well, the locals don't have any idea."

Lurking in the leaves was an enemy that none of the monsters bothered to notice. Everything in the jungle was new to them, so they didn't know what was normal and what wasn't.

"Ow!" said Dot the arcobea. She pulled an orange caterpillar off her leg and held it in front of his eye. "How long are we going to be here?"

"If anything else bites you, brutally attack it," said Daniel the coniglio, "It's not that hard." The monsters kept walking, but at the same time being cautious. The man behind the bushes aimed his wand at the unsuspecting monsters and zapped his magic. When it hit the monsters, something quite sudden happened.

"What's going on?!" exclaimed Edgar the b-plume. All of the monsters were trapped in a box before they knew it. That person behind the bushes... was none other than Awai. He jumped out of the bushes and proclaimed his victory, despite no one being there to hear it.

"I can finally destroy those filthy monsters that have been standing in my way!" he said. With his magic, he lifted the box off the ground and dropped it into the river. The monsters were unaware of what was being done to them. All they knew was that they landed in something that made a splashing noise.

"I think we're sinking!" said Chappie the miniathan. As the box kept sinking down and down, the monsters grew agitated, especially Daniel the coniglio.

“Gee, this sure is a small space,” he said. He looked at everyone in the cramped box and started going ballistic. “My oxygen... you’re stealing my oxygen!” All the monsters looked at him as if he had three heads. “Stop stealing my oxygen!” He then leapt forward and landed on his nose.

“This is horrible,” said Jolie the unieye, “We’re cast off to die in some god-forsaken box and Daniel’s claustrophobia is driving him to the brink of insanity.”

“Actually, he’s always like that,” said Dot the arcobea. Daniel reached into the air to “grab” his oxygen as if it was going anywhere.

“Give me back my oxygen...” The other monsters awaited their doom until something caused them to rise up.

“What the...” said Chappie the miniathan, “Are we on a volcano?” The ones who were rescuing the distressed monsters were none other than the local aiphidas themselves. The insects had dove into the wild waters and used their strength to carry them out.

A very long time passed before the monsters felt the box being set down on dry land. How far had these good Samaritans traveled? One of the aiphidas chewed through the chains and managed to undress the box. Daniel pushed open the box and looked around. There were thousands of aiphidas crowding and looking at him. The monsters gradually stood up and saw for themselves.



“Who are you?” asked Jolie the unieye. None of the friendly insects answered because they didn’t understand their language.

“Could this be the place that Hikaru was talking about?” pondered Edgar the b-plume. He decided to ask the insects for what they originally came for. “Greetings, bugs. We have come for your sweet, revitalizing serum. Do you happen to have any?” The aiphidas were still clueless as to what they were being asked.

“Maybe you should act it out,” said Indigo the almanole. Edgar hopped out of the box and stretched his ears. He didn’t know much about acting, but he gave it his best shot.

“I want,” he said making a gesture toward himself, “your serum.” He then made a drinking gesture. The insects understood that he wanted something, so they nodded their heads and walked the other direction.

“I think we’re supposed to follow them,” said Jolie the unieye. They all got out of the box and raced toward the giant flower’s hallway.

Meanwhile, at the castle, the children were feeling less than cheery. Duncan was on one of the royal settees shaking from his escalating body temperature.

“Felicia!” he called. He desperately wanted a tissue, but he just couldn’t get up. “Where’s the indentured servant when you need her?”

“Where’s the bloody serum when you need it?” asked Audrey, who was doubled over, “We don’t have any immunity to this disease, so we could die in a matter of hours.”

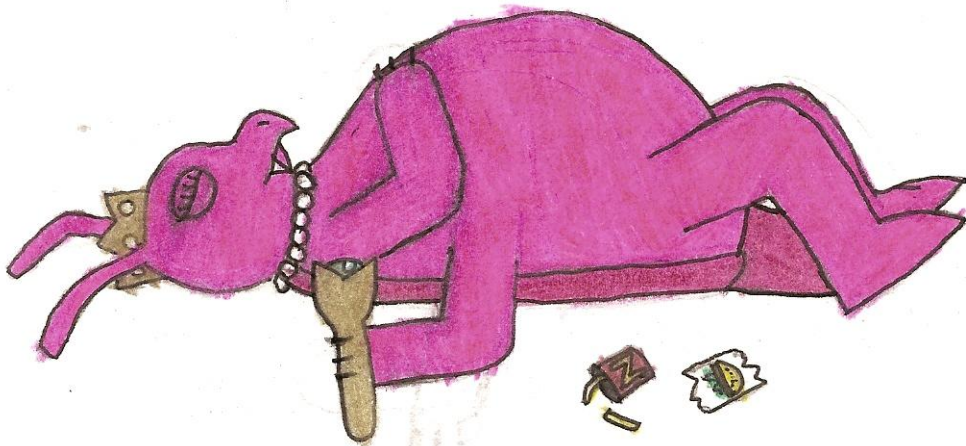
“That makes me feel A LOT better.”

“At least your sarcasm hasn’t been affected.”

“I need my puke bucket!” said Caitlin as she was writhing on the floor.

The monsters, who were fascinated by the extremely roomy flower, were brought to another large room. There were so many aiphidas that the monsters couldn’t see what the big fuss was about. They eventually sneaked through the crowd and saw something wonderfully strange.

“Are you the head bug?” asked Chappie the miniathan. In front of them was an enormous pink aiphida wearing a crown. She was lying on her back with her eyes closed and her snoring could only be compared to a jackhammer. She opened her left eye to look at her guests. Like any queen, she considered anyone significantly weaker than her to be a burden.



“Hello, corpulent insect...” said Dot the arcobea, “May we have some of your serum that your fellow aiphidas produce?” The queen rolled over on her stomach and continued her sleep. The monsters grew impatient with the queen’s permissive attitude.

“Are you going to give us the serum or not?” asked Daniel the coniglio. The queen muttered some things in her deep voice that only the other aiphidas could understand. All the aiphidas cheered upon hearing the queen’s proclamation. An aiphida in the back ran into the other room.

In this room were pools of thick yellow liquid. They were all bubbling at their own pace. He scooped some of the liquid into a flower bud as delicately as he could.

When he got back to the queen’s lair, he presented the serum to the monsters. The monsters were intoxicated by its sweet smell; so much, that they wanted to drink it, too.

“Who will carry it back?” asked Blake the kilblai. Everyone thought for a moment.

“I think that Jolie should carry it back,” said Chappie the miniathan, “She’s the most gentle out of all of us.” Jolie the unieye was flattered by the comment.

“That’s so sweet of you,” she said. She took the serum from the aiphida’s hand and held it carefully.

“We can’t have very much time to take this back to the castle,” said Dot the arcobea.

“We thank you from the bottoms of our hearts,” said Edgar the b-plume. The aiphida looked at Edgar for a few seconds and then bowed. He knew from the tone of his voice that he was thanking them. The monsters wanted to stay longer in this surreal yet productive society, but time was a factor.

The monsters returned to the kingdom safe and sound. Jolie was lucky not to have spilled a drop of serum.

The children were patiently awaiting their monsters as their health was deteriorating. They looked toward the stairs when they thought they heard footsteps coming from them. They were excited when they saw the first monster, Jolie the unieye, sliding (she moved with her tail) around the corner.

“We’ve got the serum!” said Chappie the miniathan.

“Wonderful!” said the king, “You need to give only a tiny bit to each child.”

“Do we have any spoons?” asked Hikaru.

“Let’s make them appear,” said Daniel the coniglio. He grabbed Hikaru’s wand and waved it.

“No, Daniel!” In front of him appeared seven spools of purple thread, each spaced an even distance away from each other.

“Will you stop embarrassing me?” scolded Hikaru. Daniel wilted as soon as he understood his thoughtless behavior... once again. Hikaru picked up his wand and used his experience to make seven silver spoons appear. Everyone grabbed a spoon and obtained some ambrosial liquid. They didn’t hesitate to consume the sweet, sweet remedy.

“Slow down, everybody!” said the king, “One spoonful is all you need. You need to save some for the princess!”

“Sorry, your highness,” said Duncan.

“Can we just have a taste?” asked Chappie the miniathan.

“Oh, fine.” Chappie dipped his webbed finger into the serum and had the pleasure of tasting it.

“Mmm... ecstasy... ecstasy! It’s like the sugary sunshine fairies of happiness are copulating on my tongue!”

“You really don’t have to describe anymore,” said Duncan, “We all get the point.”

“Oh, Myrna...” called the king. A giant otter wearing a blue dress came into the room. The children were intimidated by her appearance, only because they haven’t seen a giant otter before.

“Yes?” she asked. The children were even more amazed that she could talk.

“Please prepare a bottle for the princess with this revitalizing serum in it.”

“Very well.”

“So when will this stuff kick in?” asked Duncan.

“In a few hours,” said the king, “But in the mean time, you can with the Gyrosphere 12.”

“You mean it?” Duncan had waited the entire time to play a video game system that was far beyond that on planet Earth at the time. “Let the games begin!” He started

running, but stopped short because he had to cough. Everyone laughed, which was just what they needed because, like they say, laughter is the best medicine.

The Outer Universe: A Battle of Epic Proportions

The children fully recovered by the time they exited the world of Bophline. Scruffy, like any dog (intergalactic or not), was excited to see the children again. The children climbed on his hairy back and he sped off. Their quest for the metronome of life was finally complete.

The children crowded around Cliff as he was holding the beautiful heart-shaped charm. The only problem was it didn't look at all like its name.

"This is the metronome of life?" asked Caitlin.

"Aren't metronomes supposed to have strings?" asked Edgar the b-plume.

"This can't possibly be right," said Audrey. Hikaru eaves-dropped on the conversation as he was steering Scruffy from his head. He wanted to assure everyone that this charm couldn't possibly be "wrong."

"Who cares if it doesn't look like a metronome?" he asked, "We're still going to use it to defeat Awai." The children passed the three other worlds they had visited, along with the hundreds of other worlds that were unknown to them. Hikaru had memorized the way back to his father's castle ahead of time.

Knowing that they didn't have much time before the worst would happen, the children ran into the castle to show the completed object to the sorcerer. Hikaru impatiently pounded on the huge door.

"Open up!" he shouted, "Open up!"

"Hold your horses," said the sorcerer through the door. The children ran in as fast as they could when the huge door opened.

"We have it!" said Cliff, "We have the metronome!"

"What's your hurry? You've made record time."

"I grabbed the pieces all by myself!" Hearing this made Hikaru spiral downward into a haze of jealousy once again. Luckily, he didn't say anything. The sorcerer held the heart-shaped charm in his hand and felt its gold exterior.

"I can't believe this is a metronome. Maybe in one of the planet's native languages, 'metronome,' or a word sounding like it, means 'gold.'"

"They didn't appear out of nowhere for nothing," said Caitlin. The sorcerer wanted to study this object some more and he didn't want children and monsters to distract him.

"Why don't you children play in the other room while I examine this 'metronome'?"

The children nearly forgot about the prophesy mystery as they were enjoying the material objects in the other room. The most technologically advanced of these objects was a home computer; an actual home computer (remember that this was the early 1980's). Caitlin was playing with a neat program that she just couldn't turn away from, except maybe to tell someone else about it.

"Duncan, come here!" said Caitlin. The last thing Duncan would do is develop an interest in what his sister was doing, but this was an exception since this involved a screen and a central processor. "I'm playing with a program that lets you create your own game!" On the screen were primitive graphics with different windows where one could create a background, characters, bad guys, etc. Caitlin pressed a button and a loading bar appeared. Above it said "publishing..." As soon as the bar was full, a title screen appeared. It said "Mr. Bells in Color Land' by Caitlin Thatcher." Level one showed a little man who was flashing all the colors of the rainbow. The background and

the platform were flashing different colors as well. It was impossible to look at it for more than three seconds. "See? There's Mr. Bells and he's in Color Land! He can jump and move forward, but I forgot to give him the ability to move back." Duncan felt dizzy and nauseous from looking at the colors.

"No offence, Caitlin, but I think I'm about to have an epileptic fit." On the other hand, Caitlin kept looking at the screen because she liked colors and her brain could tolerate it.

"Hehehehehe..."

The sorcerer returned to the children holding the sacred object. His research was finished.

"Papa!" said Hikaru, "Did you find out anything?" The sorcerer looked hopeless as he bowed his head.

"I'm sorry, Hikaru," he said, "But this object is a mystery and it will always be that way." Hikaru was devastated.

"What can we do?"

"We should try using it on the egg anyway. What do you say?" Everyone agreed, so they shouted their answer in unison.

"Yeah!" they all said.

With that, the children and monsters followed the professor back outside to go to a different part of the galaxy. This time, the sorcerer was driving the giant dog.

"I don't wanna be on Scruffy anymore," said Audrey, "His fur makes me sweat."

"Quit your blubbering," said Dot the arcobea, "It's worse for me because I already HAVE fur."

"Gache!" said the sorcerer (meaning "go" in the bepsona language). Scruffy dashed away from the castle and into the galactic sky. He was quick on his paws, but he knew where to go.

After an hour, the sorcerer finally found his rival's address: 616 Demon Blood Lane.

"He chose this address just for the name," commented the sorcerer. Scruffy whimpered from the sight of the slightly dilapidated castle. "C'mon, Scruffy, float near the castle so we can enter it." Scruffy cautiously floated to the front gate to let everybody off. Everybody jumped off as fast as they could, thinking that it was only seconds before Scruffy would speed off afraid. Soon enough, he flew off and left the group.

The group was faced with a challenge that determined the fate of the multiverse. Instead of topiaries, this castle had statues of gargoyles eating peoples of the other worlds (the statue of one chomping on the innards of a unitiri was especially graphic).

"Scruffy was right to run away," said Daniel the coniglio, "This place gives me the creeps."

"You're supposed to be the one protecting ME," said Hikaru, "Stop chickening out."

They arrived at the worn-out door, which had a large spider crawling on it.

"I'll use my magic to get us inside," said Hikaru.

"Why couldn't you have done that to get us to the other places?" asked Duncan.

"The rules are complicated, okay?" He waved his wand and the children disappeared from the gloomy scenery. They didn't know what was to come.

Everything looked so medieval. Instead of star-powered light bulbs like the sorcerer had, there were torches inside holders. The place had a musty smell, like that of a basement. The sorcerer led the way with Hikaru standing close by.

The corridor seemed endless, but they finally reached the room. The sorcerer pulled down the handle and opened the door. Right there in the torches' light was it: the heavily protected egg that harnessed the most unspeakable evil.

"There it is, children," said the sorcerer.

"I can't believe I'm saying this, but it's beautiful," said Caitlin. The egg was still resting on the pretty pillow, like it had been for the past seven years.

"Who will have the honor of setting the charm near the egg?" This was Hikaru's chance; Cliff may have grabbed all the pieces, but this was the chance to use the charm for its rightful purpose. Unfortunately, he wasn't fast enough with the request.

"I'll do it!" said Cliff. He went up to the podium and set the charm in front of the egg. To make sure it would have an effect, he made it touch the egg. Hikaru had enough. He became so angry that steam would've shot out of his ears if this were a Tex Avery cartoon. Without much thought, he extended his arm and ran his fist into Cliff's lower lip. The boy who was joyful and innocent before was now on the ground in pain.

"Waaaah!" he cried. Ethan rushed to his side as any brother would.

"Somebody get a first aid kit!" he said, "I think he's bleeding!" Nobody had ever seen Hikaru act this strangely. The sorcerer was especially jarred. "I said this before and I'll say it again: what is your problem?!"

"I'm sick of you taking the spotlight!" said Hikaru, "I'm the magical one!"

"You know, Hikaru," said Duncan, "We can complete this mission just fine without you!" Just then, Hikaru stopped being angry and started forming tears in his eyes. Swimming in emotions, he ran out of the room crying. Ethan held a handkerchief to his half brother's bleeding lip.

"I guess he wasn't as mature as I thought he was," said the sorcerer, "I sent him out on this mission thinking that he became more responsible since I last saw him." Daniel the coniglio felt obligated to find out what Hikaru was up to.

"I'll go talk to him," he said. Daniel was brave enough to walk into the spooky corridor by himself, which showed the others that he was a real friend toward Hikaru.

Daniel walked down the musty-smelling hallway calling out his human partner's name.

"Hikaru!" he called. As soon as he passed a residing spider the size of a baseball, he heard the familiar sobbing. Hikaru was close by. Using his incredible hearing, he could detect where Hikaru was crying.

He finally found Hikaru inside a hollowed-out gap in the wall. He was curled up in the darkness so nobody would find him. Fortunately, Daniel did.

"Hikaru," Daniel said solemnly, "What's wrong?" Hikaru stayed silent for a second as he wiped his nose with his sleeve.

"Why does Cliff have to be the one who finds all the pieces and saves the day?" he sobbed.

"Hikaru, jealousy is not what a good leader is made of."

"But all of a sudden, he is more important. Why aren't people paying attention to me?"

“They ARE paying attention to you. You’re the most important person in our group. Without you, we wouldn’t know where to go or what to do or how to make our problems magically disappear. You’re the wizard of the Outer Universe, heir to the sorcerer’s fortune and position. It wouldn’t matter if Cliff found the most valuable treasure. You’re still important to us.”

“But Duncan said that they could go on without me.”

“Duncan is wrong. We need you now more than ever.” Hikaru was moved by Daniel’s encouragement. He blinked the last of his tears out of his eyes and stood up from his fetal position. He jumped out of the hollowed-out space with hope.

“You’re right, Daniel! I have to be the one to save my well-being!” He ran off before Daniel could say anything more.

Not wanting to hesitate, Hikaru ran back into the egg’s room to see the affect that the charm had on it.

“Look who’s back in the game!” said Caitlin. Hikaru was disappointed when he saw that the charm didn’t do anything.

“Did anything happen to the egg?” he asked.

“I’m afraid not,” said Audrey, “I think something is missing.” Awai arrived at the door just in time to catch the children red-handed. Chappie the miniathan was the first to notice.

“You guys...” he said nervously, “You should probably look behind you.” Everyone did what he said, although they wish they didn’t. Awai’s grimace look told them that he wasn’t at all happy with their presence.



“You children shouldn’t be here!” he said. This was Hikaru’s moment; though he was but a child, he wanted to stand up to the man who was trying to kill him. He stepped up to him when nobody else would. He had something important to say.

"I have something to say," he said. Just in time, about two dozen of the Bepsona tribe's members appeared out of the darkness to face this menace. Nobody knew how they got there. "You're crazy!"

"You've been working for all this time so you could kill an innocent child!" said Owela, the young woman from day 1, "Just because he's half earthling!" Owela's courage to stand up to a wizard caused Ethan to swoon.

"It's like that song, 'On One Occasion, On Two Occasions, On Three Occasions a Female of the Genus Homo'."

"Don't you mean 'Once, Twice, Three Times a Lady?'" asked Indigo the Almanole.

"How the hell am I going to remember THAT?"

"You're an embarrassment to my tribe, but most of all, you're an embarrassment to the entire Outer Universe!" said Hikaru.

"You people are fools!" said Awai, "You're forgetting that we're never allowed to intermingle with anyone in any of the inner universes! It destroys the multiversal balance that has existed since the dawn of time! The sorcerer has broken the rules, and for what? The selfish desire to have a successor? Who knows how much damage he has caused?"

"For your information, my parents don't believe me when I mention the Outer Universe!" said Hikaru, "And my magic doesn't even work in the inner universe!" Awai didn't like a mere child questioning his beliefs, especially if it's the child that he has set out to destroy.

"Burn for your sinful existence!" Awai blasted his wand toward Hikaru and hit him in the chest. Everyone gasped. Only a heartless jerk would intentionally harm a child. "Are you going to call for your monster now?"

"You're the monster!" said Hikaru.

"That line is so predictable," commented Caitlin. Hikaru's impulses caused him to shoot his wand at Awai. The resulting lightning bolt barely missed his shoulder. Awai then forced his wand toward Hikaru and a flash of light emerged. Out of the wand came a giant laser spiral. Hikaru managed to dodge it by falling on his stomach.

"It's not every day that you get to see a middle-aged man and a child going at each other with magic!" said Duncan.

"If I wanted to see a guy in a purple suit and a little person wearing golden boots going at each other's throats, I'd turn on professional wrestling," said Caitlin.

"I don't know about you, but I'd be really surprised if this were all staged," said Jolie the unieye. Awai then stood near the egg with his wand all powered up.

"You were too late this time," he said, "But better luck next life!" He tapped his wand on the egg. The magic made the egg's shell weaker, causing it to finally wobble and crack. Nobody did anything about it because they were too afraid to move. Several flashes emerged from the egg as the shell fell apart. Finally, the shell exploded and the flash started growing. As soon as it touched the ceiling, it took on the form of a creature most hideous and unusual. Awai stood in front of it with his legs evenly spaced out. "You have awoken... Rendulvas!" Now that the beast knew who she was, she could better proclaim her greatness. She squawked with delight.



“Like I said, you’re crazy, man!” said Hikaru as he was backing away. To defend himself, he cast a bolt of lightning toward the beast. It didn’t affect her any more than a spaceship would be affected by a pillow.

“Destroy him, my beauty!” Rendulvas slammed her front talon on the floor trying to crush the boy wizard. Luckily, he rolled aside to dodge her.

“Hikaru, you don’t have to fight alone!” said Daniel the coniglio. He looked him in the eye and became afraid that he was about to ask too much. “Do you have your instrument?”

“Way ahead of ya” Like magic, his koto appeared. All he needed to do was play a simple scale and Daniel was ready to mutate.

When Daniel returned to his top level, mammifero mega, he went straight to work.

“Sunset bubble!” After releasing the giant orange bubble from his claws, it hit Rendulvas’ eyes, stinging her a little. Rendulvas fought back by using her awesome powers to make a meteor shower appear. The falling flaming rocks slammed into the floor at an alarming rate, but Daniel tried his best to dodge them. Unfortunately, his skills weren’t good enough to evade all of them. One rock crushed him, even though he was wearing armor.

“This is your chance, my beauty!” said Awai, “Kill the Inner Universe spawn!” Though she was just born, Rendulvas understood what he was saying. She shot a beam of light from deep within her throat at Hikaru, but he blocked it with his own beam of light coming from his wand. Daniel woke from his state of unconsciousness just in time to notice his human partner trying desperately to defend himself. Before Rendulvas’

beam could overtake Hikaru's, Daniel flew toward the conflict and separated the beams using his body and speed. What Hikaru was doing was just too risky. As soon as Daniel got off the ground, he performed his aero raid attack and slashed every inch of Rendulvas' body. This affected her to a certain extent, but she got back up again. Her talons turned red with fury and she performed several back flips. Each one pummeled Daniel, rapidly decreasing his hit points. Despite this, he had no intention of quitting.

After about a half an hour of seemingly unstoppable onslaught by Daniel and Hikaru, Rendulvas grew weary. She wasn't fully weakened, but she collapsed from her exhaustion. The children, monsters, and Bepsona tribes' people became hopeful at this sudden change of events. Awai wanted to assure everyone that this battle was far from over.

"Get up, you sedentary beast!" he scolded. He fiercely lashed Rendulvas with a whip made of light that extended from his wand. Rendulvas felt oppressed by her controlling master, like an elephant at an ancient circus. She didn't enjoy her creator nor did she didn't enjoy the fact that her existence was only for one reason. Like a rebellious teenager, she fought back.

"I don't need some worthless bug barking orders at me!" she snapped, "I'll be my own master!" She opened her monstrous beak and clamped Awai (he didn't move out of the way, since he didn't know what was going to happen).

"What are you doing, my beauty?" She jerked her head back, hurling Awai into the air. As soon as he started dropping, she caught him with her beak and swallowed him whole. Everyone froze; disobeying your master was one thing, but eating him? Hikaru was a little relieved to see that his assassination was no longer the main plan. But what was? Now that Awai was inside Rendulvas, her body could absorb his magic. It flowed through her blood at a rapid and unprecedented rate. The magic caused her to become stronger, thus leading to a higher, supernatural form of mutation.

With Awai's magic running through her veins, Rendulvas got stronger and stronger with each second. Daniel floated toward the ground as he watched the transformation. He started feeling small and insignificant. When the beast stopped transforming, she took on the appearance of a hideous chimera with multiple arms and humongous wings.



“I have magic within me!” she proclaimed, “All the universes be damned!” Her size caused the ceiling of the castle to shatter. Everyone ran out of the castle, but Scruffy wasn’t there. He stayed far away from the location, and he was smart in doing so.

“Scruffy!” called Hikaru, “Here, boy!” He whistled loudly by putting two of his fingers near his lips. Within seconds, an orange dot started getting closer and closer. Scruffy appeared despite his lingering fear of the mansion. Knowing that he would fly away again, everyone got on his back and away they went.

They arrived back at the sorcerer’s castle to hide from the newly changed beast. The humans had to protect themselves, but the monsters were ready to fight. Luckily, they didn’t have to go anywhere; Rendulvas followed them all the way there.

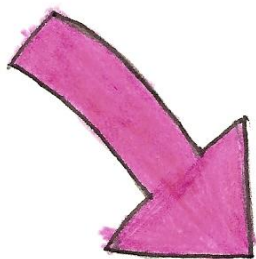
The people ran into the huge doors, but shut them before all the monsters (except Edgar) could get in. They became confused and scared, but Hikaru opened the door a teensy bit to explain why this happened.

“You guys have to stay and fight,” he said, “It’s scary, but it’s your job to protect us. Since this all had to do with me, I’ll help, too.” He sneaked out the door, making sure that no monster would try to desperately sneak through.

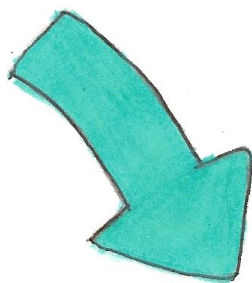
“Are you guys ready to battle mutate?” he asked. The monsters got back on track and felt ready to battle the impending horror.

“Yeah!” said the monsters in unison. With that, the mutation began...

Chappie the miniathan mutated to serpy.



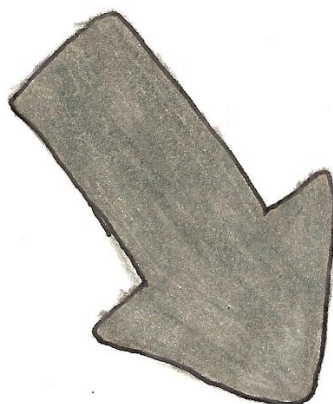
Jolie the unieye mutated to glorygon.



Blake the kilblai mutated to cepunar.



Indigo the almanole mutated to petit meow.



“Charge!” shouted Hikaru as he heated up his wand. The fully-mutated monsters flew into space as the ghostly bolt from Hikaru’s wand made its way toward Rendulvas’ abdomen. An explosion resulted from the impact, but it didn’t feel so strong to a music monster the size of a satellite orbiting Jupiter.

“Water breath!” shouted Chappie the serpy. A stream of water jetted out of his large serpentine mouth.

“Pure crystal!” shouted Jolie the glorygon. A large crystal appeared out of nowhere and slammed into Rendulvas.

“Dynamic laser!” said Blake the cepunar. Out of the palm of his hands came a powerful beam.

“Crimson staff!” shouted Indigo the Petit meow. His staff turned a fiery hot red color and he whacked Rendulvas. None of the attacks were effective.

Inside the castle, everyone hid for their dear lives. The children were with the Bepsona women and children in the attic while the Bepsona men were downstairs having a meeting with the sorcerer.

“What should we do?” asked one of the tribally-clad men, “This monster is a threat to literally everything!”

“Calm down, Keharr,” said the sorcerer, “It’s not like this hasn’t happened before... oh wait, it HASN’T happened before.”

“Surely we can’t fight this beast,” said another man. The sorcerer, thinking of his own powers, thought of a radical method. He didn’t know if it would work, but he was desperate.

“Yes, we can.” Those three words got all the anxious men at the table listening. “This monster can be defeated using the most surreal and unpredictable power of all: magic.”

“But Ablias, none of us no how to use magic.”

“And this creature has magic inside her,” said another man, “Doesn’t this mean that she can easily overcome our method?”

“We can at least try.”

The children and their monsters were in the attic with the women and children. The cloaked women were huddled with their half-naked children, who were just as scared as they were. The children were silent, as they didn’t have anything to say to make the situation better.

“What a bunch of sad sacks,” said Caitlin.

“Maybe one of us should say something,” said Midori. There was a few seconds more of silence until Midori elbowed Audrey. She immediately started talking, even though she was speechless.

“Look on the bright side, people,” she assured to the crowd, “If the universe is destroyed, your death will be quick and painless.” Nobody in the attic felt any happier about Audrey’s remark; in fact, a little boy started crying. The girls gave Audrey a mean look. “Sorry, that’s all I’ve got.”

The brave tribal men lined up outside the castle to put their plan into affect. They had no knowledge of how to use anything other than their kajuas, wooden guns that shot

arrows. They weren't much aware of the more advanced societies that were scattered across the Outer Universe. All they could do was at least TRY to fight Rendulvas.

They stood facing the beast with wands in their hands. The sorcerer stood in front of them holding the wand that was more powerful, since he was a ruler more powerful than even the US president. Rendulvas was preoccupied with destroying all the stars, space rocks and intergalactic biodiversity in her path. Already, it seemed like her damage was irreversible. The monsters were eagerly trying to lower the monster's hit points with their strong attacks, but not much could be done.

"Energy flow!" shouted Chappie the serpy. His dynamic wave of vibrant pink light hit Rendulvas with the intensity of a thousand tsunamis... but not much affect.

"Emerald blade!" shouted Dot the mamma mia. Her three tails formed the appearance of a green blade and she sliced Rendulvas with much force... but not much affect.

"Glory flare!" shouted Jolie the glorygon. She breathed a mighty flame from her powerful lungs and engulfed the back of Rendulvas' head... but not much affect.

"Thunder dome!" shouted Blake the cepunar. With an unknown ancient power, he created a huge dome lined with electricity and fired it at Rendulvas... but not much effect.

"I don't know if I should do my strongest attack or not," said Indigo the petit meow.

"Anything will do in this situation!" said Chappie the serpy. Indigo wasn't quite sure of himself; this attack would be very affective (after all, it defeated Silence), but it would reduce his magic points greatly. He gave it a shot.

"Eternal miracle!" Just like that night in 1982 when he last performed the move, a blinding and heavenly light shone through his staff. The other monsters had to shield themselves so they wouldn't get hurt, too.

After some time passed, the light cleared and all seemed like it had been dealt with. Unfortunately, only one hit point was lost from Rendulvas. She gave them a look that said "is that the best you've got?" In response to being irritated by weaker monsters, she batted them all like flies. Though this wasn't an actual move, this hurt the childrens' monsters greatly.

"Alright, men," said the sorcerer, "Fire!" The brave men fired their wands at Rendulvas; all sorts of colors, like violet and crimson, did tiny amounts of damage to certain parts of her large body that was simply too big to be fully damaged (insert "yo mamma" joke here). Rendulvas' madness had corrupted her and slammed her claw onto the front of the cloud that the castle was sitting upon. Many of the men escaped, but a few were crushed and died instantly. Hikaru knew that this situation looked hopeless; he wanted to do something big; really big.

"Dad," he said in a whiney, little kid voice.

"Yes, son?"

"I wanna cast the 'big bang boom' spell."

"Sorry, Hikaru. You didn't finish your peas or brush your teeth last night. For that, I'm not letting you cast any really big spells." Hikaru looked at the sorcerer with his sad puppy eyes. He really, really wanted to do this.

"Pleaaaaase?" The sorcerer sighed, showing that he gave in to Hikaru's pleading.

“Alright, alright. But only because the Outer Universe is in jeopardy.” Hikaru swirled his wand around like it was brandy and a tiny dot appeared on the tip of it. He forced the wand toward the direction of Rendulvas. The dot eventually moved to the point where it was touching her feathers.

“Oh Renduuulvaaaaas,” called Hikaru. She looked beside her and spotted the seemingly non-threatening dot.

“What the-” she said in confusion. The dot slowly expanded until its color was that of a lava lamp. The colors swirled while there were intense beams of light bursting out of the ball. Within seconds, the ball produced a massive explosion. *Boom!!!*

When the nova was finished and the blazes cleared, Rendulvas was harmed only a little bit, but a little bit is better than nothing.

The children were too restless to stay in the attic, so they went back downstairs for some more space.

“Duncan, I’m scared,” she said. She put her hand on Duncan’s shoulder to feel more comfortable. Duncan didn’t want to turn around, because his view of the battle from the window was getting a little more interesting. “First that monster wanted to destroy Hikaru, and now she wants to destroy everything? My head hurts.”

“If your head hurts now, play ‘Mr. Bells in Color Land’ and then we’ll talk,” said Duncan.

Rendulvas used her four claws and immensely powerful magic to form a strange force; it was round and green at first, but then it started getting as flat as a pancake. Nobody knew what was going on.

“What in the Outer Universe is she doing?” asked one of the tribesmen. The circle that was forming developed a swirl in the center that spun around as the circle got bigger. Pretty soon everyone got the picture; this was some sort of dangerous, powerful vortex.

“Stop shooting, men!” the sorcerer said to his soldiers, “This beast is getting too powerful!” Hikaru hid behind his father, like any young child would.

As soon as the vortex reached the right size, Rendulvas began sitting on it. She used more of her magic to start up the vortex, making it suck and absorb like a vacuum. The childrens’ monsters, who were already so weakened that they were just floating in space aimlessly, began being sucked in.

“Oh no,” said Duncan, still watching from the window, “It’s worse than I thought.” The sorcerer frantically ran into the castle’s small room and threw his arms up.

“Everyone!” he said, “This is not a drill! Something very bad is going to happen!” Everyone was already scared. The last thing they needed was somebody to rub it in. “Everybody into the panic room!”

All the children hurryingly followed the sorcerer screaming until they got to what looked like a giant safe. After they all stepped inside, the sorcerer wound the lock so they would be safe and secure.

“Is everybody okay?” he asked while panting.

“What about the women and children?” asked Audrey.

“What about those men out there?” asked Duncan.

“What about Hikaru and our music monsters?” asked Ethan. Edgar the b-plume was rummaging through the supplies in the corner and didn’t find what he was looking for.

“And we’re out of food,” he said. The sorcerer then figured out that he didn’t give this all that much thought.

“Everybody OUT of the panic room!” he shouted. As soon as he unwound the lock, everyone ran out screaming, just like they did when they ran in. Duncan was about to join them, but then he noticed that Audrey was sitting near the supplies and moping like a weeping willow. Duncan knew Audrey for a while, so he cared about how she felt.

“What’s wrong?” asked Duncan. Audrey sighed and turned her head away from Duncan. Duncan became a bit annoyed because he really wanted to know. “C’mon, you can tell me.”

“We’re all going to die and there are so many things that I haven’t done in life,” she said.

“Like what?” Audrey thought a bit and remembered the one thing she wanted.

“Like my first kiss.” Duncan felt his heart skip a beat by hearing those words. He had never had his first kiss either. They were probably going to get destroyed by Rendulvas, so he felt like this was the perfect moment for what Audrey wanted.

“It’s not too late.” He knelt down in front of Audrey and looked into her eyes. He could tell that Audrey was getting a bit happier because she smiled a bit. Their eyes closed as their lips moved closer and closer. Before they got a chance to make their lips touch, the romance was ruined by Caitlin opening the heavy door.

“What the heck are you guys doing?” she asked, “The castle is moving, ya know!”

“You mean the earth is actually moving under our feet?” Audrey happily asked.

“No, I mean the castle is literally moving toward Rendulvas!” Audrey and Duncan quickly snapped out of their pubescent romantic mood and ran to the nearest window, albeit holding hands.

They looked out into the starry sky and saw that with each second, they were being pulled closer and closer to the portal. This was something that even the sorcerer had no knowledge about, even in his one hundred and twenty-two years of living.

“Where the devil is Hikaru?” he pondered. Hikaru was still outside, staring at the wounded monsters floating in space. With his beginners’ magic, he created a cloud and stepped onto it. The cloud floated towards Danny the mammifero mega, who was unconscious with various cracks in his strong armor. Hikaru had so many things to say to him.



“Why did I talk you into doing this?” he sobbed, “I should’ve known that you weren’t ready.” His tears dripped onto his damaged armor one by one, each expressing powerful emotion. “I made a terrible mistake. Please forgive me.” Hikaru placed his small hand on Danny the mammifero’s chest plate. Then, something amazing happened.

Danny began slowly regaining consciousness as he felt Hikaru’s heartbeat. It was difficult for him to talk, but he wanted to tell Hikaru that he was doing something good.

“Hikaru...” he muttered, “You’re not... doing... anything... wrong.” Hikaru stopped weeping and looked Danny in the face.

“I’m not?”

“Don’t worry.” As Danny the mammifero felt Hikaru’s raging heartbeat, he began glowing and growing stronger.

Everyone watched from the moving castle.

“What the heck is going on?” asked Duncan. The children could just about make out the sight of Hikaru touching Danny’s armor and Danny glowing. It was then that the sorcerer conducted one of his biggest and most brilliant epiphanies.

“The metronome of life!” he gasped, “I know where it is!” The others were listening, though they weren’t sure if this was just the sorcerer being senile.

“Where is it, oh might one?” asked Edgar the b-plume.

“It’s... it’s all within us!” The group began looking at each other in confusion. “Don’t you see? Can’t you figure out what all those tasks you’ve completed have in common?” Soon, everyone figured out what the sorcerer was saying.

“Well, when the grand woodland dragon was mad, we were running as fast as we could,” said Duncan.

“And when Edgar was chasing that flying rabbit, he was doing it out of love,” said Caitlin.

“And when those shadow lizards attacked the Geluskian village, we were all scared,” said Ethan.

“And when we got sick, our systems couldn’t take it,” said Audrey.

“The metronome of life is our beating hearts,” said the sorcerer, “All those times, your hearts were beating rapidly! Now Hikaru is strengthening his music monster with

HIS heartbeat, the one musical sound that matters to all life!” Everyone understood now; they all got the picture.

“Oh, sorcerer,” said Caitlin, “You’re a genius!” She opened her arms and excitedly wrapped them around the elderly man.

“Yes, that’s why I’m the leader around here.”

As Hikaru was still resting his hand on Danny the mammifero’s armor, Danny began changing and forming some new details to his physique. After a few minutes, he was done. Not only did he look like new, his drastically different armor was also a lovely shade of pink, along with two large wands in each paw. He had a horn that had a design that almost looked like a wizards’ hat. Hikaru was amazed at his friend’s new form. Did he help do this?



“Hikaru,” he said, “The rhythm of your heartbeat has made me stronger. Right now, you are sharing your pulse with me and I can feel it along with mine.” Hikaru couldn’t believe it. His very existence was helping his monster win; he and his monster were now fighting as one.

“All right!” said Hikaru. He was so excited that he stopped noticing that he was slowly being sucked into the portal that Rendulvas made. It didn’t take him long to notice again, because the suction was becoming more and more powerful. The monsters that had already returned to their middle forms were getting super close to the portal... until they were finally sucked in.

“Oh no!” said Duncan from the moving castle, “Our monster are gone!” Danny the mammifero lifted his left wand and prepared to attack in the noblest manner.

“Blue lightning!” he declared. A blue bolt shot out of the wand and directly hit Rendulvas. Nice shot!

As the castle was moving faster and faster toward the portal, like everything else, the force was making everything in the room fly toward the back, along with the children. They were lucky that they weren’t crushed by the furniture.

“Well, Caitlin,” said Duncan as he clang on to the back wall, “Don’t say nothing exciting ever happens to us.”

Soon, Hikaru was sucked into the portal along with the various stars and space animals.

“DAAAAANNNNNNNYYYYY!!!” he screamed! Within seconds, he was gone.

“No!” said Danny. Fortunately, he knew that Hikaru was still alive because he could still feel his pulse within his system. Doors that lead to different worlds were sucked through the portal and vanished like a bubble when a finger touches it. Danny the mammifero was trying to avoid being a victim of Rendulvas by moving away from the portal amidst all the debris.

Whoosh! The sorcerer’s castle disappeared along with everything else and joined the collection of items in Rendulvas’ clutches. Pretty soon, Danny was the only one left. He moved through the debris, trying not to destroy the doors to other worlds (that was Rendulvas’ job). After putting so much strength into avoiding the portal, he finally released himself from the suction. All he had to worry about was dedicating the rest of his strength to saving the Outer Universe.

While Rendulvas was sitting on top of her portal and monitoring it, she unleashed one of her powerful attacks.

“Positron cannons!” she shouted. A light came from each of the cannons on her back and blasted right towards Danny. He managed to miss one of them, but the other hit right on target. His hit points went down by 1/4.

“Pagan warp!” shouted Danny. With his wands, he formed a tiny, alternate dimension that magically warped Rendulvas’ body and caused tremendous damage.

Not much time had passed, though the Outer Universe was already being crushed by the weight of the inner universes that surrounded it because it was being hallowed out. It was then that Rendulvas began to speak with her two voices - her voice and the voice of Awai, who was still within her system.

“I have a master of magical power within my veins,” she said, “You have but the heartbeat of a little boy. You shall not surpass mine power!”

“You’re forgetting that we are both music monsters,” said Danny the mammifero, “Magic may give you power, but music is what gives us REAL strength, even if it comes from the pulse of a little boy!” As the area became increasingly darker, Danny brutally attacked Rendulvas with his two wands.

“Quadruple talons!” said Rendulvas. She clawed Danny with each of her super-sharp, paranormal talons and damaged his armor, just like she did while he was battling her in his last form. The suction of the mighty portal died down, as pretty much everything had been sucked into it. Like a closing flower during dusk, the portal shrank. The atmosphere got darker and darker as the universes crowded around the scenery, preparing to collide.

“This is it,” said Rendulvas. Now that there is no Outer Universe, every universe in existence will collide, thus destroying everything. So if I die, I’m bringing you with me!” Danny knew that Hikaru was in trouble, along with the others, because his pulse was slowing down beneath his chest.

“I only have one more shot at this,” he thought to himself, “If I get it wrong, everything will be destroyed and it’ll be my fault. Here it goes...” H raised his right wand into the air and aimed it at the center of Rendulvas’ head. “Midas strike!” He magnificently stabbed Rendulvas in the head in one blow. Golden beams of light erupted from her skull as she was wailing in pain. The one powerful blow he made to the enemy was almost a beautiful sight. It’s too bad he was the only one to see it.

After his significant final attack, everything stopped and went white. He couldn’t see a thing in front of him and before he knew it, he blanked out.

The Outer Universe: The Aftermath

“He’s waking up,” said Caitlin’s voice.

Danny the coniglio’s vision was blurred as he opened his eyes. It eventually cleared enough to recognize the faces staring directly at him. He felt as though he was broken apart and then fixed again. He was; he had various bandages on his body and one of his antlers was broken.

“Where am I?” he asked. He looked around him and found all the children and monsters, as well as the sorcerer and the tribal people. He thought they had all disappeared into the portal. “Is this the afterlife? Did I let you all down?”

“No, you didn’t, Danny,” said Hikaru. “You saved us all. After a while the portal just spit us out.”

“That must’ve been after I defeated Rendulvas.”

“After everything was put back where it originally was, we found you in an asteroid belt.”

“You saved us all, Danny,” said Cliff, “You’re a hero.” The young bepsona children ran up to Danny the coniglio and hugged him.”

“I wanna pet our savior!” said one of them.

“Really, children,” said Danny the coniglio, “I’m quite flattered at your affection, but my sores need to heal.”

“You should be proud, son,” the sorcerer said to Hikaru, “You and your music monster were the messengers sent by the Almighty Guardian and Maiden, the male and female forces that created Kakaan and bring peace and balance to the Outer Universe. We don’t know what we would do without you.”

Later, everyone went back to the world of Kakaan for a ceremony. They were celebrating Danny’s bravery, strength and care for his fellow monsters, people, and animals. Everyone was in the same big tent as they were when the kids were being declared tribal members.

“We have come here to recognize Danny the... what is he called?”

“He’s called a ‘coniglio del antler,’” said Hikaru.

“We have come here to recognize Danny the coniglio del antler as an official hero. To symbolize this, we shall award him with the silver crown of bravery.” He then lifted the cloth to reveal a beautiful, shiny, silver piece of headwear that had designs of feathers and animals on it. Everyone applauded and cheered when the shiny piece of headwear was placed on his head. He may have had a broken antler, but this made up for it greatly.



Everyone spent their last day at the tribal grounds, relaxing, having fun, and learning about the culture. Midori and Caitlin were swimming in the Kanaga River. Duncan and Audrey watched the river and observed nature in all her beauty. They were happy with their free time and that they didn't need to worry about any impending doom.

"Duncan," said Audrey.

"Yeah?" asked Duncan.

"I'm glad we have the rest of our lives to do the things we've always wanted to do in life." Duncan was secretly looking forward to kissing Audrey soon, but he figured that later was better than sooner, since life was about to go on as usual. "Duncan?"

"Me too, Audrey, me too." With that, he stretched out his arms and put his left one around Audrey. Audrey closed her eyes and snuggled against Duncan.

Hikaru emerged from the bushes to greet everyone.

"Hello, everyone!" he said.

"Hey, Hikaru," said Midori as she was swimming in the river, "How are you doing with... ah! You're naked!" Hikaru was indeed naked in front of everyone.

"It's okay," he said, "On nice days such as this, bepsona children stroll around naked. I feel great!" Despite seeing Hikaru in all his glory, the girls decided not to shield their eyes. In this society, what Hikaru was doing was appropriate.

The rest were back at the tribal grounds hearing stories and learning the religion from the local shaman. He was decorated in the most colorful clothes and noticeable headwear.

"So in the end, the Almighty Guardian and Maiden blessed us with the gifts of the land and the sea, the sun and the moon," he said. The children and monsters wanted to hear more, they were just so interested. Duncan, Audrey, Midori, and Caitlin came back from the river to see what the others were up to.

"Hey, guys," said Duncan.

"We just heard the creation story of Kakaan," said Cliff.

"I'm sure Chappie will tell me all about it later."

"Say..." said Caitlin, "All the other monsters are here, but where's Danny?"

"Oh, Danny said that he was going to Darlee to eat his celebratory feast," said Cliff.

“Say, isn’t Darlee that world that had the vegetable people?” asked Duncan.
“Oh no!”

Within a blink of an eye, everyone headed out the dimensional door (Hikaru and Cliff put their clothes on first) and flew Scruffy to Darlee.

As soon as they got to the capital city in the land where they arrived, it had turned into a ghost town; there were still buildings, cars, parks, and stores, but no people.

“Danny!” called Hikaru.

After wandering the empty city for a while, they finally found Danny. He was sitting beside one of the many tiny buildings and needless to say, he was fat and content. The children could tell that he was finishing off the last of the people because he had a stalk sticking out of his mouth that he was munching on.

“Danny!” said Hikaru. Danny flinched and noticed the angry group beside him. He knew that he was caught was going to be in trouble.

“Yes?” he guiltily replied.

“Did you eat all the molcue in the capital city?!” Danny gulped before he answered.

“...maybe.” Everyone thought Hikaru was going to lash out at his monster partner. They were ready for his scornful side.

“It’s okay. There are way more where that came from.”

“Are you serious?”

“Yeah.” Everyone sighed with relief. Hikaru took it easy on his partner. After all, he saved everything from imminent doom and he was wearing a crown to prove it.

Back at the castle, the sorcerer took the group into his huge living room. He wanted to make his final announcement to the children and monsters that they didn’t need their services anymore. They all sat in a circle below the crystal chandelier.

“Children,” he said, “I know you’ve had a wonderful, albeit crazy, time in the Outer Universe, but I’m afraid your work here is done. You should go home soon.”

“But I wanted to stay longer,” said Ethan, “I think that pregnant unitiri girl liked me.”

“She wasn’t even of your species, bonehead,” said Indigo the almanole.

“So, Hikaru,” said Audrey, “You brought us here. How do we get home?” It would’ve made sense if Hikaru knew the answer, but he didn’t. He almost felt stupid for failing to answer the question.

“Err...” he stuttered. “I don’t know.”

“Don’t worry, Hikaru,” said the sorcerer, “You have many things to learn as a wizard. Right now, I’ll tell you how to get home.” The sorcerer then put his hand on Hikaru’s shoulder and Hikaru looked up at his elderly face.

“Photo op!” interrupted Chappie the miniathan, “This is a perfect opportunity for a group photo.” Everyone was exhausted, but they agreed to preserve their memory of possibly the greatest adventure they had ever been on. “Now everyone crowd on the couch.”

Everyone sat on the sorcerer’s big, luxurious couch preparing to smile and not blink. The sorcerer held the Polaroid camera in a position that he was comfortable with.

“Midori, you and Blake should scooch over a bit,” he said making hand gestures, “Now, everyone say ‘monster.’” The group sat still and smiled, saying the word simultaneously while keeping their smiles.



“Monster,” they said. Flash! The Polaroid spit out the photo and the sorcerer took it out. He shook it to make the image appear more quickly.

After that was done, everyone sat in the circle again to hear how they would get home.

“So how do we get home?” asked Hikaru, who still didn’t know what he was supposed to know. The sorcerer once again put his hand on Hikaru’s shoulder and Hikaru was anticipating an answer.

“Remember the first time you came here, Hikaru?” asked the sorcerer, “You should know that all you need to do to leave the Outer Universe is wake up.” Hikaru didn’t understand.

“Wake up?” he asked.

“Yes, wake up. Please, for the love of Pete, wake up...”

With that, Hikaru’s vision went blurry...

“Please, wake up,” sobbed Esperanza. She was sitting by Hikaru’s hospital bed, thinking that any second now he would open his eyes and join the real world once again. She became a bit excited when she saw Hikaru’s finger move. Pretty soon his hand moved a bit and he opened his eyes slowly. He immediately recognized his sister.

“Oh Hikaru!” she gasped, “You’re alive!” She then wrapped her arms around her brother as if she hadn’t seen him in many a year.

“Where am I?” Hikaru groggily asked.

“You’re in the hospital. You’ve been in a coma for two weeks.” He looked and saw that there was a tube attached to his arm held on by a bandage. When he lifted up the covers, he saw that he was wearing a hospital gown with a tie in the back. He was back in the real world, no longer in a place where he could practice magic.

“I’m back,” he said.

“I’m going to call Mom and Dad and say that you’re okay.”

“Tell Dad that I’m really, really, really sorry for yelling at him.” Esperanza was quite surprised at this request; “sorry” was something that Hikaru would rarely ever say. He was finally becoming more mature... but how did he do it in his sleep, she wondered?

Duncan and Caitlin returned home from the hospital. They were equally glad to be back on earth again. Glad to see his bed, Duncan jumped onto his mattress and spread himself across the sheets. Caitlin wanted to tell Duncan everything that she thought happened between when they got hit by the truck and when they woke up.

“Duncan,” said Caitlin, “I had the weirdest dream while we were in the hospital.” Duncan lifted his head up and began listening, seeing if this had anything to do with *his* dream. “You know that ‘Outer Universe’ place that Hikaru is always talking about? Well, I dreamed that we actually went there.” It shocked Duncan that her dream and his dream were very similar.

“I had the exact same dream,” he said. Caitlin couldn’t believe it.

“Gag me with a spoon! Did it have a giant space castle and magical doors and unicorn people?”

“Yeah!”

“No way!”

“And you know what the weirdest thing is? We’re still wearing the necklaces we received from Hikaru’s tribe.” Caitlin looked at her chest and saw the necklace with a garachu gem, the bepsona birthstone for February. Obviously, this was more than just a coincidence; it was more than “just a dream.”

The years have passed and Hikaru eventually became the sorcerer of the Outer Universe. After thinking a lot (and I mean A LOT) about it, he decided to marry an earth woman instead of a tribal woman. As of 2007, he meditates for an hour a day so he could be transported to the Outer Universe to see how everything is going. He is planning for his oldest child to go there someday to tell him/her that he/she is indeed capable of practicing magic.

Hikaru kept training Danny and their friendship grew as much as they did. Danny died in 1999 at the age of 20. He reverted back into an egg, but he was never reborn. To honor their savior, the people in the Outer Universe held a traditional bepsona funeral for him and buried the egg near the Kanaga River. To make up for the fact that the king of the Ubalia kingdom did a great disservice to the tribe years ago, he had a beautiful tombstone built for Danny that sits by the river to this day.

Many things were learned from this adventure, like how to be mature in a serious situation and that some things should wait until later in life. But the biggest lesson the children learned was that each and every day is a day to celebrate the metronome of life, for it is the beat that has been pulsating within us since before we were born and will continue to pulsate within us until the moment we die.