

Episode IX: Legend of the Emerton Swamp Monster!!

Daylight, stretching vast across the shores of nearby California, waves crashing against the rocks, the sand, the people; a bell ringing, 10:22 A.M. The hallways abuzz of a school, people spilling out yammering.

Walking through the halls: Derrick, Sam, Amber, Monte, and Dilan, yapping amongst themselves.

“So what are we going to do when we go back?”

“I told my parents I was going to go study at a friends, I’d suggest you all come up with similar excuses Derrick.”

“Eh... my folks don’t care what I do so long as I tell them I’m going out... could probably tell them I’m going to chill with some people over the weekend.”

“I can tell mine that I’ll be busy with Monte for practice.”

“Like... my folks also won’t care, haha, so we’re like set and stuff right?”

“Perfect, we can head back there tonight and be set till Sunday night then.”

“Hey Samantha!”

The group turning around to see Stark walking up quick holding several books.

“Oh hi Stark, what’s up?”

“I was wondering if you’ve taken that one test yet, Mr. Collinsworth’s.”

“Oh uh no, I completely forgot about it, heh heh.”

“You, forget a test? Heh, that’s not like you,” he’d chuckle stopping, looking at those around Sam, “Oh... I didn’t realize these guys were with you.”

“Oh, yeah we uh, got assigned a project together.”

“Oh... say, the new Apprentice of Fire comes out this weekend, I was wondering if you'd like to go and get a copy?”

“Oh uh, sorry, I'm supposed to work on the project with these guys over the weekend... and some of them are, well... less than decent,” with a mumble looking at Monte.

“Hey, I resemble that remark!”

“Uh, Monte, that means you look or fit the bill.”

“Oh... hey, I resent that remark!”

“Haha, alright Sam I uh... I'll catch you around. Good luck with that project!”

“Heh, thanks Stark.”

Walking away passed them, Monte would be growling, rain cloud over his head spitting anger, “What was that for Sam!?”

“Hey, I'm trying to keep a low profile on what we're doing.”

“Yeah but what if he wants to see the project you spoke of?”

“I'll just... tell him I handed it in already, that should do it.”

“Right then so, we'll meet up at six, sound good?”

“Right.”

“Right!”

“Yeah.”

“Like... whatever.”

“Perfect... see you guys then then I guess.”

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The sun, quickly setting, the crimson hue sinking through the trees with the rising darkness, shadows cast across the swamplands of Emerton, once more a familiar situation with the limo driving off down the road, leaving the five in place... though this time, no one in sight from the town.

“Wow... deader today than it was yesterday.”

“Should we ask around for Sindra again?”

“Hmm... you guys go ahead, I want to check out the library.”

“Heh, nerd.”

“No, not really, I’ve just been thinking I’d look into why a... uh... Spotted Dragon Monster might be in the area.”

“Alright. Dilan can go with Sam, the rest of us will fan out and look for Sindra again.”

“Right.”

Moving away, Dilan and Sam remained standing, turning to face the library and with both sighing, began to approach. Dilan’s eyes covered by his hair, yet still observant, “No one around... fishy isn’t it?”

“Uh, yeah I suppose.”

“The faster we find Sindra the faster we do our duty and get out of here.”

“Mmm... yeah, I know.”

Their steps echoing off the creaking wood stair case, the bell attached ringing, the door opening with a mild creak and shutting rather hard, both eyes looking around, only twelve shelves, all six foot, alphabetical signs up, nothing more or less, at least up front. To the left, a small fiction stand and to the right, a room marked *History of Emerton*.

“Hello??!”

“Shh, don’t you know to never speak like that inside a library Nerd Girl?”

“Nerd Girl? I’m just checking... my, the whole town is deserted.”

“Let’s just find what we need and get out,” Dilan mumbled, walking towards the history section passed a large glass window with writing on it, backwards inside yet readable outside, with Sam slowly following, looking around.

Dust, cobwebs, cracked shelves, broken splintered wood, creaking floor boards, a completely old top up above. Walking inside the room, candles all around, a large platform with a giant leather book atop it, a feather, and multiple other pieces of parchment. “This is it?” she’d mumble turning open the book.

Flip flip flap flap smack.

“In 1852 the town of Emerton was established by European Explorers and became a form of refuge against Native Americans in the region who for unknown reasons avoided the swamp. They seemed to believe that these lands were unholy and best left avoided though this was never truly proven, though it is believed that sacrifices were made to appease the beasts within the swamp.”

“Huh... seems interesting...”

“There’s more. In 1667, Spanish Explorers arrived on the coast on a wrecked ship attacked by the British, believed to have been adrift for days, stormed onto the land and later discovered Emerton, devoid of life. Sending a scout away to report back to the ship and back, the entire expedition disappeared minus this lone man who was later found believed to have gone insane.”

“Huh... rich history... man this place bites.”

“1791, it is believed that pirates stormed across into the swamp after being attacked by the British, carrying with them treasure plundered from the Spanish, only able to escape when the Spanish and British attacked one another... though the pirates were never reported to have come out of the swamp, nor were the British explorers that followed after them, or at least, none of the sane ones. Four men reported back, screaming about a creature that had attacked them dubbed El Diablo Lizzardo. Some believe this creature is responsible for the many disappearances of multiple people. It wasn’t until 1857 that the town was truly populated and the legend of the swamp established by-”

“By what?”

“Ink on the page, no good. But this tells us one thing, this isn’t the doings of Zaraka or his men.”

“Heh, which means we don’t know what we’re up against but I bet dollars to donuts that this has something to do with that treasure. Maybe Sindra can tell us more?”

“So do I.”

The shattering of glass, both flying around to see glass flying in, a giant green and black leg crashing through, stepping down with thick black claws visible, a long tongue zipping in and out three times, and then the appearance of what appeared to be a giant alligator though not just any, one with spots.

“Oy Sam, is that what I think it is?”

“It’s the Spotted Dragon Monster!”

Both looking, both surprised, stepping back a pace as the beast let out a low growl, sounding very echoey, it’s eyes glowing black and red as it’d clamp forward, dragging itself across the wood floor, soon standing on all fours, as if ready to attack.

“Hey uh, Dilan, what are your powers again?”

“I can use hypnotism... you?”

“Telekinetic but I can’t do anything to something that big.”

“The book shelves!?”

“Oh, good idea!”

Her eyes flashing sky blue, a sky blue glow quick to appear around a book shelf, the wave of her arms and a swipe, sending one shelf crashing out forward, the Spotted Dragon turning its head only to be surprised, a shelf of books crashing into it and burying it quick, hissing as it disappeared under the books.

The crack of wood, the left side of the room broken out by Sam, “Let’s get out of here!”

“Right!”

Both jumping out, they'd book it far away as fast as possible, turning around a corner and stopping, breathing heavy, "Oh... that should take care of that right?"

"Yeah no, I bet we just made it angry."

"We need to regroup and find the others."

"Agreed."

"Hey... what are you kids doing out here?"

The sound of a wood cane striking the ground and foot steps behind, their heads turning back, an elderly man in cardinal robes though black in color, a long white beard, and thick black hair, a wrinkled fellow, slowly approaching.

"Running from the Spotted Dragon Monster."

"You saw the creature? Where?"

"At the library, it came in through a window."

"You don't say... thank goodness you got away."

"Uh... who are you if you don't mind me asking?"

"Why, my name is Sindra."

"You're Sindra!?"

"This is him? I wasn't expecting him to be so... old man."

"Heh heh... so why are you kids here anyway? I don't remember you being from around here."

"Bro, Victoria of ONUS sent us here to find you."

"Finally here to take out that thing eh? Heh heh."

Episode X: Treasure of the Pirate King

The library, now deserted. The town itself, not deserted. Sam and Dilan, gathered. They and Sindra, gathered at the town center, mere seconds after meeting, finally speaking...

“Well you kids are pretty lucky I gotta tell yee.”

“What do you mean Mr. Sindra?”

“Most folks new around here don’t typically escape the Spotted Dragon.”

“Well it wasn’t that difficult.”

“Still yee all got lucky with the powers you were dealt but you won’t be able to take it down like that, trust me. I knew a lad once who tried to set it on fire by throwing gas on it and it just became a Fire Spotted Dragon.”

“Why burn a dragon?”

“Eh, can’t really tell ya, not very smart though I can tell ya that.”

“So how did you and Ms. Victoria meet anyway Mr. Sindra?”

“Why, I don’t really recall, memory not as good as it used to be, sorry to say.”

“Oh well, that’s fine but... we were wondering if you could help us. ONUS, like you guessed, wants us to take care of that thing.”

“Ah, heh heh, alright young lady. I admittedly don’t know as much as I should just yet, been explorin’ this town.”

“Have you asked any of the townspeople about it?”

“Townspeople? I’m afraid I don’t know any townspeople.”

“Uh... the people that live here?”

“Young man, there haven’t been any inhabitants here for over forty years.”

Both Sam and Dilan would look to each other, then back to Sindra.

“Heh, swamp gas might be playin’ tricks on ya kids. All five of ya should be a little careful ‘round here.”

Dilan, glancing at Sindra, then back to Sam, “Ah... well, Sindra, it’s been nice talking to you but we need to go find our friends.”

“Dilan, shouldn’t we find out more?”

“Oh uh, right-e-o, heh heh, I need ta go myself. Ta-ta for now kiddos,” he’d chuckle taking a walk away, Sam and Dilan doing the same back towards the bus stop.

“Why did we have to stop Dilan, we could’ve asked him more.”

“Didn’t you notice it? He said five of us... we never said anything about the five of us.”

“Maybe he met the others or saw us arrive?”

“Then why wait so long to approach us... and acting like he has no memory of Ms. Victoria? I could tell that was a lie.”

“What are you saying?”

“I don’t think the old timer is what he claims to be... something IS going on and I am determined to find out what.”

“Hmm... now that you mention it...”

“Hey, Sam, Dilan!”

Running up to them from behind, their backs turning, were the others.

“Oh, you guys!”

“Did you find anything out?”

“Did you guys meet anyone by chance?”

“No, why?”

“Sam and I met some guy claiming to be Sindra but he lied about not knowing who Ms. Victoria was... and he let slip that he knew there were five of us.”

“We also were jumped by the Dragon.”

“You found the Dragon!?”

“Like, what old guy could that’ve been?”

“Why wasn’t I told about this, I could’ve punched him!”

“We found out that there is a lot of history to this town... apparently this swamp is holy and people kept disappearing inside. We also found out that there is a treasure in the swamp somewhere.”

“And you both think that the strange activities around here are connected to that?”

“Oh without question.”

“Hmm... I suppose it’s worth looking into...”

“Like, Derrick, you want us to like, go out into the swamp? Gross!”

“We’ve got a lead and now we need to go out and check out the swamp.”

“Mmm.”

“Right!”

“Sounds good.”

“Like... whatever.”

“Alright, let’s get to it then.”

“How do we do this?”

“I’d say we need to act based on powers... none of us are really solo players so, I’d say Amber and Monte. With Monte’s speed, you could easily hit while he distracts. Dilan is similar to Amber so him and I guess Sam again. Mine are the most balanced so I can go solo... we’ll use our phones to contact one another.”

CRASH!!!

Creaking!!

EXPLOSION!!!

Crashing through the wall of a nearby building, howling like a shrieking wolf crossed with a monster of some sort, The Spotted Dragon Monster.

“Karabast!” Dilan spat.

“Wait what?”

“Something off of Star Wars Rebels, I just like the phrase Monte.”

“Like, nerrrrd!”

“Focus!”

“Run!”

Breaking apart as the creature began to charge, Dilan and Monte going right, Derrick and Sam left, Amber straight ahead, all scattering quickly into the swamp as the

Dragon hauled itself to a halt, looking both ways, howling, two other figures bolting from the rubble however, covered in smoke, one darting after Dilan and Monte, one for Sam and Derrick, then the first right after Amber, all three howling the same way.

Episode XI: Enter the Dragon

Crunch!

Splash!

Friction!

FHWACH!

CRASH!!!

Through the swamp they'd run, Dilan and Monte, Dilan falling quick behind Monte who'd be bolting fast though still relatively slow trying to keep from running into anything, behind them roaring and constant crashing.

"That thing is right behind us man, move faster Dilan!!"

"You idiot, I don't have super speed like you!"

Crashing right behind them, about ten feet back, the Spotted Dragon Monster, roaring with its jaw snapping, open then SNAP, closed, roaring yet again quickly after.

"We need to take care of that thing man!"

"And how do you expect to do that!? I have super speed, not Atomic Heat Vision!"

"Well just keep running then!"

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Roaring

Snapping

Crashing

Crackling

After both Sam and Derrick, yet another would chase, chomping, roaring, the Spotted Dragon Monster, its tail flapping and slapping down, both Sam and Derrick looking back, concerned.

“We can’t outrun this thing!”

“You guys stopped it with a bookshelf right!?”

“Yeah, why!?”

“That means it can be hit! Take a tree down on top of it and mess with it, I’ll delay it!”

“Gotcha!”

Both skidding to a stop and turning around, Derrick would rush forward, Sam putting her hands to her forehead concentrating, all as Derrick neared the monster, “Come on you big turkey!”

The Dragon, launching itself through the air like a shark, or rather like a bullet, legs close to its body, Derrick with a simple hop up, bolting high, and then dropping, aiming and crashing down on its back, crashing it down into the mud, its shriek heard as it’d then snarl, Derrick leaping off the back to receive a whack from the tail, though flipping through the air backwards would land on his feet, “Hyah!”

Head snapping back with the body curling, the Spotted Dragon growled, launching forward.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH
HHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! HELP MEEEEEEE, BUGS ARE
RYWHERE AND ACK- SWALLOWED... GROSS, WET, SWAMPY, AND
NG BEHIND MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE-”

Leaping right in front, the Dragon, snarling, her feet stopping, “Eh, eheh-
EEEEK!!!”

The loudest, ear shattering scream, a pulse wave flying forward ripping apart tree branches, vines and plants uprooted and shredded, logs sent flying and breaking up, slamming into the roaring Dragon, now roaring as if hurt, skin peeling away to reveal... metal?

Her scream stopping, “Huh?” Sparks, wires, metal, and fake skin, all peeled and in a pile.

“A robot!? The Spotted Dragon Monster is a robot?!”

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SMACK

SPLASH

CRASH

CHOMP

Leaping around, Derrick now barely dodging the jaws of the Spotted Dragon Monster, back, forth, back, and forth, his shout, “SAMANTHA!”

“I’m on it!”

The crackling of tree bark, the groaning of wood and the splitting breakage, a tree glowing blue around the roots giving out and slowly falling towards both Derrick and the Dragon. Looking up and taking a quick jump back, the Dragon glancing up and then CRASH!!

Dropping right on top of its head, the body pulling back with sparks flying everywhere and wires flying, the head detached, flopping onto its back and twitching... then, total shut down.

“That’s..!”

“A robot?”

Screaming behind, the brush shaking with two people coming forward, both Dilan and Monte yelling at the top of their lungs with a Dragon close behind them, looking back at it not paying attention.

“Wait, hold up!”

“STOP!!!”

Looking ahead, too little too late as both crashed into Sam and Derrick, flopping backwards through some brush into a cave, piled.

“Oops... sorry.”

A roar behind, all looking up to see the shrieking Dragon, all four screaming, then a fifth scream, the Dragon sent flying blowing apart into metal and wires, disappearing to the right, stepping forward in its place though, Amber.

“Amber!?”

“Like guys, you won’t believe it, the Dragons are-”

“-are robots, we know.”

“So this whole thing has been a hoax?”

“Not necessarily, look!”

Sam pointing ahead, a massive mound of dirt in the cave, entrance now exposed, gold, gems, great riches piled inside of and around several chests, their eyes all going wide, Sam smiling, “I think I’ve just about wrapped this up...”

“What now?”

“For us to finish this, we need to capture the person making the robots... and I know exactly how we can.”

Episode XII: Arrival! Gator Tator Takes The Stage!!

Splashing

Ripping

Flopping

A Spotted Dragon swerving through the swamp, quickly arriving at a scene with two destroyed robots. Looking left, then right, then moving forward, locating the cave, moss down with vines, exposing it unlike before. Tongue hooking out and going back in, it'd step forward, head poked in, seeing inside, the group of five... and the treasure.

“Well, with this we’re rich!”

“Like, yeah, even my parents aren’t this wealthy.”

“Guys, we need to call Flavo and get the limo into town to pick this all up.”

“I agree, we should take it back now, what do you all think?”

“It’s gotta be worth billions and billions of dollars!”

Tongue out and then back in, feet crunching, the Spotted Dragon slowly stepping back.

Splashing

Scraping

Crunching

All five now looking at the entrance, all laughing, all smiling.

“Ha, off to tell its master.”

“Well, let’s not keep the mastermind waiting,” Derrick would laugh, “This guy is in for a real surprise.”

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The stroke of five in the morning, the town empty, no one present, other than the five slowly approaching, all carrying a large wooden chest, struggling, even Derrick, “Man this is heavy even for me-”

“Like, stop complaining and put your back into it.”

“Ugh, this is sooooooooooooo heavy!”

“Pst, we’re almost there... keep it real now.”

Slowly approaching the bus stop, all five would then set the chest down with a thud, all winded.

“Oh man, this’ll make us rich rich rich!”

“Yeah, there is like, so much money here!”

“Gold-”

“Like, whatever.”

Silence, all five looking around, seconds passing and then minutes, the wind blowing, brush slowly moving, echoing of the wood of the town creaking, nothing more, nothing less...

“I don’t think this is working.”

“Quiet you’re going to blow it!”

Just then, rumbling, the swamp water shaking, the puddles splashing, the crunching of brush, the crashing of trees... the shattering of the trees next, a massive fifty foot Spotted Dragon ripping through and slamming down, shrieking out a super loud call, drool flying as it'd shriek towards the group.

“That’s... big!”

“Hey, on its head!”

A man, or rather a humanoid looking figure, wearing an alligator suit standing upright, looking down chuckling, his arms crossed, “HAHAHA, FOOLS, you have found the treasure for me, exactly what I was counting on, mwahahaha!!!”

“This guy...”

“Yeah...”

“Pretty dumb.”

“I heard that, how dare you call me dumb!? I am an evil mastermind, I am the one who caused all this! You only got lucky by destroying my robots somehow but I doubt you can crush this one!!”

“Oh yeah and what’s your name?!”

“Heh...” he’d chuckle, arms thrown out, “I am...” glaring now down at them, “I am!!...”

All five looking at him, Derrick’s expression annoyed, Sam’s blank, Dilan’s sleepily, Amber’s head tilted with a disgusted expression, and Monte with his eyes closed looking down, fake sleeping.

“I AM GATOR TATOR!!!”

All five quickly looking up, eyes blinking, all speaking, “Gator Tator!?”

Immediately, all breaking out in group laughter, Dilan falling over, Monte spitting out gum, Amber’s head going backwards, Derrick bent forward, and Sam trying to cover her mouth, the man stomping his foot, “How dare you!?”

“Like, is this guy for real?”

“You’ll never stop me!”

“Hold that thought.”

With a single leap, Derrick bending down with his knees and a leap up and...

WHACK!!!

“Gyuhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-”

SPLASH

SPLAT

Down in the muck, now laid Gator Tator, a red swell on his right cheek, gator mask off revealing him to be Sindra... the Spotted Dragon giant just standing with no direction anymore, as if awaiting orders, Derrick landing atop the Dragon’s head, looking back and down at his team, “Alright, let’s get out of here guys!”

“EHHHHHHHHHHH!?” all four in turn gasped.

“What?”

“You know, that was pretty anticlimactic.”

“We’re super human now... and he was just human. It isn’t to be unexpected you know.”

“So... why was Sindra against us?”

“It wasn’t Sindra. It’s just some guy who spied on us using his robots pretending to be Sindra to trick us. He used the legends of the swamp to fool us and used holograms of townspeople so people would see them. He’d claim there are none and have them disappear to make people think the area is haunted, then send in his robots to scare people off while he looked for the treasure. He probably fabricated that book you and Sam found to make us think weird things were actually happening here, which, well they weren’t. When we found the treasure and pretended to bring it back, he decided to reveal himself, especially after we beat his robots.”

“So... we essentially just wasted our time here is what you’re saying?”

“Something like that. I mean, if we didn’t have powers, we might’ve been in trouble but because we have some, this was just easy.”

“WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!?!?!?!?”

Episode XIII: The Struggle of Highschool Life

The ringing of the bell, beginning of a day like most others. Monday morning, a favorite for many students as far as complaining goes, for the DreamScapers it being no exception. Walking up among the crowd, a tired Sam and a bland looking Dilan; waiting at the door a groggy, hair messed up looking Monte.

The two stopping at Monte, Sam looking with absolutely tired eyes, would be the first to speak, “Hey Monte...”

“Man you look like garbage Sam.”

“Speak for yourself, you look like the school’s Sloppy Joes.”

“Normally I’m the one that nods off. You see Amber or Derrick yet?”

“Oh Derrick? Yeah he went to the infirmary. He got clobbered by the ball while practicing because he was nodding off... and I think Amber-” he’d say stopping, yawning for a good few seconds after before resuming, “-Amber I think stayed at home...”

“Man... how are all five of us like this...”

“I’m always like this Sam.”

“Could it be because of our powers?”

“You’re the brainiac, you tell me... but... yeah probably.”

“Well we are only human... odds are our bodies aren’t used to what we’re doing with our powers and what not so it’s exhausting us quicker than normal activities might.”

“Makes sense.”

“Heh, and you know what, we have exams today.”

The group of three quick to groan with exhaustion, not ready as quickly Stark approached, “Hey guys, ready for those exam practice exams?”

Monte groaning, Dilan sighing, and Sam blinking, the three looking to Stark.

“No.”

“Pass.”

“Eh... for once no. Sorry Stark uh, that project took us for forever and we’re all on the tired side.”

“Oh that happens Sam; you just need to drink a little Pepsi or something to get your brain roaring. Here I think I have a couple in my backpack.”

“Is that alright? The staff usually don’t care for outside drinks, especially soda.”

“Oh they totally let you just bring whatever for exams, since our scores reflect on the school itself. If we’re too tired and mess it up, boom, they look horrid and they don’t want that.”

“Ah, fun.”

“Well... shall we get this over with?”

“Yeah, talk with you guys later-”

Running off, Stark blowing right past an approaching Derrick who in turn would shoot a glance back, then approach, “Hey guys...”

“Whoa man, you look bad. That’s a big bruise.”

“I’ve been thinking... what if having these powers is why-”

“We already covered that.”

“I... will be honest... I like being a DreamScaper but I just... I just can’t if it means feeling like this after using our powers.”

“No way Derrick, you’re going to let something like this stop you from being one of us? What about the team and what Victoria said, we all are in this or we all aren’t.”

“Ugh, I know it’s just...-”

The ringing of the bell yet again, an indication to get to class immediately.

“Ugh... let’s continue this later at lunch, we have exam practice to do.”

“Mmm...”

“Right.”

“K.”

“Why have such major exams anyway?”

“Why worry about it each semester is the better question, plus end of the year testing.”

“Ugh.”

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“WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAT!?!?!?!?! WHAT DO YOU MEAN IMP KING FAILED!?”

“Bu-bu-but my lord, please calm yourself, what I speak of is the truth-!”

“GRAA!!!!

IMBECILES!! How do you expect me to rule an empire with incompetent subordinates!?”

“My lord, please calm down!”

“GAH, send Snake King to deal with the vermin then, I want a report of their destruction by midnight!! Do you hear me!?!?!?!?”

“Ye-yes milord!”

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Pencils tapping, the clock ticking, eyes drifting, tiredly, the munching of candy and the slurping of drinks, steps from one end of the room to the other. Papers turning, pencils clacking on the desk, eyes shifting forward to gaze upon the instructor, standing center point in the room.

“Your time has come. We’ll begin to mark off what you did or did not finish. Once done, we will begin the next portion of the exam following a fifteen minute break. You will take lunch here, then we repeat with the last two segments after lunch into the end of the day. Dismissed.”

Seats pushing back and the tapping of multiple feet on the ground, door opening with a gust of air moving in, students sighing, yawning, chattering, whispering, and yelling.

“How do you think you did?”

“Not sure, how about you?”

“Hey guys, that last problem was a pain.”

“Last problem? I didn’t even get past the third page!”

Standing grouped together, Sam, Dilan, and Derrick.

“Man... this just makes out job all the more difficult.”

“Well, at least Winter Vacation is coming up right?”

“Yeah I suppose.”

“That will make the job easier...”

“I wonder what Amber’s up to?”

“Not sure, she doesn’t have practice exams until Wednesday.”

“Heh, probably out shopping.”

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A building on fire, a tree fallen, and a car smashed up, heavy breathing heard and groaning with several footsteps. Standing at attention, Amber, in front of her a man with a tail coated in green scales looking like a human lizard, passed out on top of a car with two people beside it dressed in uniform.

“Thanks Ms. Amber, we’ll take it from here.”

“Right... oh man,” and the crackling of her back following those words, “What a great stress reliever. I think I’m going to love this job after all.”

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Tuesday had come, a day of relaxation for many a student as one third of the student body had completed practice exams, while another would begin their own, the

true exams not being for another two weeks at this point, the October air spreading over the entire area with a slight chill. The second half of the school year, soon to end.

“Man I’m sick of this exam stuff. Why can’t we be like other schools!?”

“No idea but I’m sick of it.”

“Why complain?”

“We start in January, take off July and August, then wrap up the year in November taking December off too, with three main testing periods in April, October, then that big hurdle in November right at the end.”

“We still get more time off than most schools though.”

“Eh, whatever.”

“Hey guys, can it will ya? I’m trying to read.”

“Oh, sorry Sam, whatever could be the importance of whatever you’re reading?”

“Well, I’m reading about the Forest of Evercant.”

“Ever what?”

“Evercant. It’s about four towns away but get this, lot of rumors about supernatural occurrences have been going on there in recent decades. I think it sounds fascinating.”

“So you want to check it out... right?”

“Maybe, uh... what do you all think?”

“Can’t, Monte and I have a game tonight.”

“Like, I totally am fine with going but like, I can’t because I have a hair appointment and stuff.”

“Eh... why not, I don’t do anything. I’ll go with you I suppose. I did testing yesterday so I’m good.”

“Alright. Will the two of us be fine?”

“Sure we will. Your telekinetic powers, my... hypnosis or whatever, we can manage.”

“Well alright then. After school?”

“Deal.”

“Oh shoot, I just remembered, I told Stark that I-”

“Eh just tell him something came up uh... family emergency a few towns over and that you’ll be gone.”

“But... I don’t want to lie to him...”

“Ah just do it. He won’t know.”

“Oh... oh alright...”

“Right, meet me by the pickup spot after school then.”

“Right.”

The bell ringing next, signifying the soon to begin classes and to get to them, leaving the group to scatter as they’d say goodbye, moving on to the next area.

Five PM, a short drive later in the limo, Flavo driving with the back window down to talk back, “So... Evercant huh. Queen Galakin has been meaning to investigate that place for awhile though Zaraka’s return sort of delayed that. It’s nice that you youngsters are so willing to step in.”

“I’m just fascinated by the idea of supernatural occurrences now that I know they are real. I... I want to learn more, I must know more.”

“I just want to do something other than going home to my folks, it bores me.”

“So Flavo, what do you know about Evercant?”

“Oh... stories similar to the swamps you visited I suppose... supposedly the towns people are all Amish that act weird even for Amish-”

“How rude, Amish people aren’t weird, they have their own unique life style that is truly inspiring.”

“Er... right, sorry. Anyways, I guess the towns people just try to drive away a fair number of visitors and any who manage to convince them to let stay just get watched the entire time. People living nearby have spoken of strange things... people going missing here, strange dust in the air, random house fires, abnormal wolves, the whole works.”

“That’s definitely unusual. Are there any leads?”

“Nope.”

“Great.”

“Then this will be a blind mystery... oh man, that sounds exciting!”

“At least Zaraka isn’t connected to this.”

“Hold on now kids, we’re here.”

“Finally. Flavo, if you would, just outside of town and uh... maybe stay in the area?”

“Of course Samantha, I shall.”

“Sweet.”

Episode XIV: Pixie Stix

Strolling into town, cloaked in cloth fabric of a gray black patch design, both Sam and Dilan would move in through the main dirt road, plenty of eyes staring right at them. A look to the right, wood buildings as if it were still the old west, people hiding behind some barrels while others would be making themselves better known, mostly women and children. To the left, the same, a Saloon, a bank run down, and several houses...

“Hey Sam.”

“I know...”

Looking each in the face, nothing but a blank sleight striking back at them. Some a little more thick in the face with beards and mustaches, some grumpy looking.

“Is it just me or are there more buildings in this town than there are people?”

“And so very few men...”

Looking ahead, a group of three slowly approaching, one dressed nicer in a black suit and top hat with two muscular people alongside him.

“Welcome strangers... why are you here?”

“We uh, we don’t know. Our home burned down far from here and we’ve just been wandering for weeks from town to town...”

“Is that so missy? Hmm... and what should we do about it?”

“We-well sir, w-w-with your permission, we’d like to maybe just, sleep on a bench or something for the night and just, rest here for now.”

“Hmph... do I look stupid to you kids? Cut the act.”

Both Sam and Dilan then looking to one another with their heads turned would look back to the man.

“Alright, we’ll play the not so fun game then,” Dilan in turn mumbled slipping his arms inside the cloth cloak letting it flop drop around his feet, holding up a black badge, “We’re agents with an order that investigates strange occurrences such as the many rumors surrounding this town, an order so secret that not even the CIS or FBI know we exist, only staffing members of the president are told outside of the Supreme Court. We are agents from the Order of Natural, Unusual, and Strange known in short as ONUS. We’re here to scope out this town, you can either allow us access to do such or we will arrest you here and now on the spot along with anyone else who impedes us of our duties.”

Sam, with a quick glance to him, a quiver, then a glance back to the man in the suit who would appear to be looking over the badge, black with a gold plating, then to Dilan.

“ONUS you say... I... eh... alright uh, I guess... I’m inclined to believe that one.”

“Good answer,” Dilan would mumble back in response placing the badge back into his pocket.

“So uh... what can WE do for YOU then?”

“Allow us access around the town without any interference and into the forest.”

“I uh... well I... er...”

“Is there a problem?”

“No, no, no problem... uh... yeah just... just do what you need to do and begone as soon as possible. Those folktales about our town being possessed and what not aren’t true though I can assure you,” he’d say, stepping back and going left with the other two.

“We’ll soon see. We’re going to check out the town for now then the forest. Have a nice day sir.”

Both Dilan and Sam would walk forward, Dilan paying him no attention, “Where did you come up with that idea...”

“What, that little stretched lie or the phony badge? Figured after the last charter it might come in handy even though we didn’t really need to reveal ourselves. Made it in metal shop.”

“Ah... neat.”

“Well, you’re the main brains, where do we start?”

“Hmm... I would say the library but considering how the people here are and how it went last time, we should just check the forest first.”

“Ah, yeah, library didn’t help last time. Plus, yeah, they probably hid everything already judging by their nature anyway.”

“To the forest then.”

Both walking away, the townspeople murmuring among themselves back and forth, an object in the shadows darting off into the forest nearest their entry point. A girl behind, looking up to the man in the suit, his hand placed upon her and then a nod, her nod back and a slight smile as she in turn would run right after both Dilan and Sam.

-

Continuing forward, further into the forest, both Dilan and Sam glancing around, her hair blowing in the wind as Dilan's shaggy purple greed dyed hair flopped back and forth.

"Man... what are we even looking for Sammy?"

"Sammy? Really..? And I don't know, anything out of the ordinary?"

"Like what?"

Dropping down in front, a black object, followed soon by several others about thirty feet ahead of them. The figures landing, several black wolves with glowing red eyes, snarling with foam the color pink coming from their mouths, one barking out, the others clawing at the ground as if ready to charge.

"Like that?"

"Like that."

"Oh."

Both looking forward, Dilan yawning and Sam not even batting an eye, behind something else quick to approach though from that direction as well, the voice of a young girl, "You guys, quick, run away!"

Sam turning a side step to look back, seeing the girl, "Huh? Oh, it's you, that little girl we saw. Why, what's the problem?"

"Those wolves- urk," she'd spit before stopping, out of breath, "Those wolves, those wolves aren't normal wolves, they're the Pixie Guardians, you can't beat them!"

“Pixie Guardians?”

Snapping, one wolf bolting forward with Sam turning back to face it, Dilan’s eyes glowing yellow as the hair in his face parted, sending its red eyes into a yellow mirror affect, collapsing stiff as a board which in turn was followed by more running by the others. A blue aura appearing right before Sam & Dilan and a blow forward.

SLAM!

CRASH!!

CRACKLE!!!

Crashing into the trees, the wolves dropped, whimpering and quick to run off.

“That... was nothing.”

“I kind of expected more to be honest.”

“Just like that time with Gator Tator right?”

“That time? Dilan, it was not even a week ago!”

“So.”

“Whoa... what are you guys?”

Both turning round to look at the girl, Sam smiling as Dilan in turn spoke back, “I said all I needed to say back at the town... so what can we do to help? You clearly know more than you let on before.”

“Well... you wouldn’t believe me if I told you...”

“Oh trust me, we can handle it, right Dilan?”

“Probably, yeah.”

“We... we were just trying to make you leave. Most people get attacked by the wolves if they enter the forest, they get really hurt.”

“And why might that be?”

“Eep... well... because of the Pixies.”

“Pixies?”

“They’re these little guys that came to our town forever ago and... well... they’ve just completely run it .”

“Run it? What for?”

“It’s... it’s best if I just show you... a few minutes up ahead you’ll see why. The wolves are meant to stop intruders at any cost, which is why we try to make people leave.”

“Show us.”

“We can handle it, trust us.”

“Er... alright, follow me.”

-

Ahead, twenty minutes now away from town, stumbling through shrubs and bushes the three of them went, continuing at a slow pace, the sound of the running wolves ahead moving away, as if in a way leading them back though also stealthfully as if trying not to be followed. The gap closing until the sound of crunching gravel and sliding, the girl holding her arms out to show as a stop, pointing forward at a bush. Heads poked through, they’d soon see what is to be seen...

In front of them, an outdoor factory. Large mushrooms with men slamming away at with a pickax, stationed high on the stalks, the caps regrowing just as quick as they were being broken apart. The caps, dropping down into carts with people pushing them away to a large kettle system, then from there a batch to a grinder, then to people bagging them up with many other machines between the mushrooms and the baggers.

“What is this-?!”

“It’s called Pixie Dust. The Pixies pick *optimal* climates to grow the mushrooms, then grind them into powder after mixing in their wings when they shed them, like deer. The two things together make some sort of super drug that makes you more energetic and gives you super powers.”

“Pixie Dust?”

“It goes into Pixie Stix. I remember in my research that ONUS has been trying to crack down on Pixie Dust and Pixie Stix for ages. A lot of humans and other entities buy them at high prices and get temporary super powers from them which is a threat to ONUS and the rest of the world. They’ve never been able to bust many of these though.”

“But why does it matter if people have powers?”

“It would uproot the world’s natural order and even the balance of beings like Zaraka. There are also side effects Dilan...”

“Side effects?”

“They-”

“-People who take Pixie Stix can get addicted to the powers they gain but they also destabilize your mind and turn you crazy, which is where monsters can come from. People also use them for black ops military groups. There’s a huge history behind it.”

Both Sam and Dilan would look to the girl, then forward at the operation.

“Yeah, like she said... they can drive you crazy... and prove to be harmful to innocent people when in the wrong hands.”

“So that’s why ONUS is trying to crack down on this... but surely they could figure it out, right?”

“No. The Pixies are just everywhere. It’s nigh impossible to perfectly trace an operation because once the seasons change, they could shift hundreds of miles away or only a few city blocks. The growing conditions for the giant mushrooms are too specific.”

“That’s troublesome but hey, we found one didn’t we?”

“They use our town as an exporter and make our people do the hard labor. It’s been this way for hundreds of years...”

“That’s terrible!”

“Shh, Sam, you’ll-”

“HEY, you three, what do ya think yer doin!? Intruders!”

Sam and Dilan in turn would both bolt up, getting into a serious stance overlooking the op, all eyes on them.

“We’re agents of ONUS, here to place you under arrest and shut this place down!”

“ONUS!?”

“Them, here!?”

The wolves, quickly launching in front of the operation, would snarl, even though they appeared exhausted due to the prior confrontation.

“That won’t work. It takes more than simple dogs to beat us!”

“Then how about me!?!?”

Crashing down, a red bolt of molten rock, followed by an explosion on impact right to the left of the operation and the wolves, standing tall in trousers and boots, a muscular wolfman, fire quickly spreading out and setting ablaze the mushrooms.

“The mushrooms are on fire!”

“Quick, get some water, quick quick!!”

The two looking to the fire, then down at the Wolfman, the eyes of the wolves near him turning black with a red-orange glow, stepping towards him while snarling and still facing the trio above.

“I am Wolf Beast. EdgeLord Zaraka sends his compliments, now let’s dance, eh!?”

“Are... are you serious?”

“Whazzat?”

“A wolf man... for real? Sam, is he serious?”

“I... I think so?”

“Do you know any fun tricks or are you just a wolf man?”

“I am a wolf that walks like a man you twits!”

“Right... alright, we can dance for like, the five minutes it’ll take to turn you into a fur coat.”

“Mmm, right Dilan, let’s do this!”

Episode XV: Spell of Luck

Trees down, mushrooms burned, lights everywhere, helicopters in the air and hovering trailers, armed enforcers running around in all directions with Pixies in various cages, men being bundled together with rope and the enforces around. People in gray trench coats and badges running around with various technology including stunners, trappers, and flamethrowers.

Standing idle near the middle, around a tied up Wolf Beast, the trio and Damerick with plenty of others.

“Well, that about wraps that up I think... nice job kids. You stopped a Pixie Operation and one of Zaraka’s flunkies with little effort.”

“Thanks Mr. Damerick.”

“Honestly you two are some of the best of the group I think... but that’s just my opinion. Anyways, we’ll wrap everything up here and give a report to the boss. I recommend you guys get home before your folks start to worry; it’s bad enough we have to negotiate with the town and potentially wipe away decades of memories, if we even can, but if your parents find anything unusual out well, that’s just bad business.”

“Oh, right, we probably- oh man, Flavo!”

“Bruh, we totally forgot about him. He’s probably taken off already.”

“Old man Flavo? How long?”

“Six hours almost...”

“Ah, don’t worry about him then. He should still be there. Usually he just sleeps on the job when waiting for clients.”

“Does he?”

“Yeah. Anyways kids, see you around.”

“Right. Goodbye Damerick.”

With a nod, the two would walk away, the girl staying near Damerick, turning back and shouting to them both, “Thank you guys so much!”

A slight wave back and then the shuckling of the bushes, both gone from sight.

-

Walking through the woods, both chatting to one another, laughing, smirking.

“That was awesome Sam, how you just picked up that guy and hurled him into a tree like that.”

“Haha, thanks. You were pretty good too the way you made those wolves act like trained dogs.”

“It’s these eyes of mine you see, with them I can command whatever I want to do whatever I want.”

“Heh, and this brain of mine allows me to hurl you into a tree if you try anything funny.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it... ya know, unless I want you to go get me some food but really I’d just do that to anyone.”

“You-! Oh man, haha.”

A crackling quickly heard, both looking right, eyes wide, Sam bolting left and Dilan right with a single tree crashing down the second after, big enough to crush them.

“Whoa!”

“What the devil?”

Standing, brushing himself off, Dilan then looking at the tree trunk, “Eh... looks like the tree rotted out.”

“Did it now? Oh...”

“That was the most dangerous thing to happen this week... anyways, let’s keep going,” he’d reply hopping over a trunk looking back as the two in turn began their walk once again.

“More dangerous than our practice exams?” she’d say with a chirp.

“Eh... I wouldn’t go that far actually now that you mention it.”

The two laughing as they’d pull out of the forest upon the road, though flying right in front of them their limo, nearly hitting them.

“WHOA!”

“What the-”

Looking after it, crashing into a tree, the tree crackling and quickly falling down towards them and atop the limo, though quick to stop via a blue glow. The door kicked open, rolling out was Flavo, looking right then left towards them, crawling away, both Sam and Dilan stepping away with the tree crashing down, smashing the limo.

“Flavo!”

“Lady Sam, Master Dilan!”

“Flavo, what happened?!”

“I don’t know, the limo just shot forward. The petal fell down to the floor and the break broke.”

“And another tree...”

KAPOW

KABOOM

KERBLAM

Looking back at the limo, Dilan stepping right barely dodging a flying tire, the tire slamming Sam’s right shoulder sending her back crashing into a tree. The tire bouncing, her flopping, Dilan spinning though stopping with the wind flying by as a truck launched on by.

He’d look after it, then to Sam, “Sam!”

“I... I... ugh... I think I’m... I think I’m fine?”

“What sorcery is this?!”

A popping could be heard and then another crash, ahead through a building that same truck, its tires all blown out, Dilan’s eyes going wide with the hair parted from the front of his face, “This isn’t normal... is this...”

“Urk... Dilan, call Damerick. It’s Zaraka... has to be-”

“R-right. Dilan to Damerick, come in and get here now. Sam’s down, we’re being struck out here!”

“Dilan, what’s going on, what’s attacking you!?”

“I... everything... I think it’s... bad luck?”

“Bad luck? Stay still and do nothing, we’ll be there quick. Everyone, move out to their coordinat-”

Static, the radio now out.

-

“Sam’s in the hospital... a string of bad luck hit us and I want to know why. It nearly got us and Flavo killed!”

“Yeah Victoria, what gives?”

“Damerick, you were there, tell us why two of our teammates are-”

“I don’t know, don’t question Queen Galakin and don’t question me!”

“We’re investigating... you said it was bad luck Dilan, there are a number of potential monsters that could fit the answer... we’ll keep you updated. Unfortunately, we need you to head to Michigan next on another assignment at once.”

“How can you order us there!? We have school, what about Sam, what’s the deal Victoria!?”

“Calm down Derrick... Sam will be fine. The doctors said it’s a mild concussion though considering her telekinetic powers, it’s... wait... she got a concussion... and you... please, excuse me, Damerick fill them in.”

Walking out quickly, she’d then leave the four and Damerick.

“Right... we think Zaraka is connected to this... and recently, we discovered strange activity a few days following his awakening. If you can go and investigate, you might be able to find out what’s going on.”

“But what about-”

“We’ve shut down the school for the week and programmed a couple of our chameleon bots to take your place.”

“... and you’re sure this will help?”

“If you don’t you may never find out what happened to Dilan and Sam.”

“... alright.”

“For Sam.”

“For revenge for nearly getting me run over... and for Sam.”

“Yeah!”

“Your jet leaves in one hour. Please, prepare yourselves.”

Episode XVI: Ghouls On The Town

Clouds gray, a loud rumbling. Rain pouring down on a distant horizon. Flashes of lightning in the sky, dancing up and down, zigzagging. Cool breeze blowing swiftly. The waves, jumping with the wind, splashing on the shores and flowing up and over on the surface.

Atop the surface, a boat moving in, a small ferry moving across the water. Under the platform, a group of four in rain coats together, the group of Dilan, Derrick, Monte, and Amber, looking off to the shoreline about a mile ahead of them, a small harbor town.

“So... this is it then...”

“Yeah... somewhere in that town we’ll find out what happened.”

“Maybe we’ll find Zaraka with this one.”

“Can we really be that lucky Derrick?”

“Don’t talk about luck right now. Two of us nearly got put in the ER or worse.”

“Alright, sorry man... uh, Amber, how-”

“Like, don’t bother talking. I’m not in the mood.”

“Er... right... so Derrick, what’s the plan?”

“Go into that town, find out what’s going on, and then see if we can find out what’s going on with the enemy. We find out who hurt our friend... and make them pay!”

“I just... don’t see how we’ll find out anything here, you know?”

“It’s worth a shot... plus maybe the thing we’re after is another monster that’ll follow us here.”

“You really think that-... yeah you’re probably right.”

“The things we’ve gone up against lately have just not been that smart.”

“I’ve... definitely noticed.”

“What’s the problem here again?”

“Gillman, or rather gillmen. Supposedly they’re... fish people, I believe.”

“Fish people? Are you for... never mind, why would I question anything with this job.”

“Like, Monte, Derrick, why not include the rest of us.”

“Then speak up. Monte and I are able to discuss the mission ourselves you know with you guys listening.”

“Who died and made you the leader?”

“ONUS’s President.”

“Queen.”

“More like a corporate president actually.”

“Whatever.”

“Guys, focus. Whatever attacked me and hurt Sam is out here somewhere potentially and that something is dangerous.”

“You kidding me? Wolf Beast and Gator Tator were easy, we only lost to Imp King because we weren’t accustomed to our powers at the time.”

“But what if they aren’t all push overs?”

“Uh, hey guys, we’re here,” came the voice of an older gentleman, black beard and stache, standing just behind them. Turning to him then forward, it was true, they had already docked.

“Oh...”

“Thanks Captain.”

“Right-”

-

Walking forward into the town, the group forward looking around, yet another town of people down, looking up, hiding, blank stares, though here a spell of emptiness soon accompanied by despair of the town itself, a broken state, old school just like most others with few industrial upgrades.

“Ugh... no time for this. Oi, where can we find the Gillman!?”

Many eyes staring back, chattering commencing, then a crash, down in an approach a massive figure, looking now forward upon the group, snarling. Quick to pop out into view, several intangible objects surrounding that figure, a hooded jacket wearing entity of very humanoid appearance.

The heroes, turning to face, would get ready.

“Who are you? Are you the Gillman?”

No answer.

“I’m talking to you! Judging by your attitude and those things, you must be the guy. Take up positions!”

“But Derrick, are you-”

“Yes I am sure!”

“Alright...”

“Amber take the front, Monte the right, I’ll take the left. Dilan, the rear. This formation should be keen. Monte and I are physical combat types, Amber not so much, you especially.”

“Wait so is that my left or-”

“Why do, like, I have to be center stage?”

“And why can’t I prove myself?”

“Guys just focus!”

“Not happening,” came the grunt of the thing before them, then the intangible entities launching forward right at the four. An annoyed Amber taking a step forward, mouth open, a super sonic shriek pulse sent flying from her mouth right at them though quickly, dust blowing up, the entities still on the approach.

“What the-”

THWACK!!

Sent flying back and rolling, Amber flipped, flopped, and finally crashed on the ground, a glance forward in shock. Monte and Derrick quick to jump to the left and right of one entity, the presumed hitter, Monte’s leg up and Derrick’s fist flying.

“Gotcha now!”

“This is it!”

KAPOW!!!

CRASH!!!

Crashing through a window went Monte, off to the other Derrick into a water troff with only his legs sticking out, leaving just Dilan wide eyed, “Your attacks went right through and hit each other!”

“Ugh,” came the grunt of a rising Monte, the spitting of water from Derrick.

“What was that?”

“You hit each other right through these things!”

“Then... that explains Amber missing but they hit her-”

“These things can probably slip through things like ghosts, targeting them is useless!”

“How do we beat them then?!”

“Take out the guy controlling them of course!”

“Hmph... easier said than done outsiders,” came the mumble and with the snap of his fingers, twenty more quick to appear around him as if to guard, with seven breaking off and moving forward towards Dilan, the rest from earlier also.

“Man, we can’t do a thing like this-”

“Watch me!”

“Monte no!”

“HYRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA- UAH!!”

Sent flying back, the charging Monte having gone for the mystery person was immediately sent flying back and off the side of the dock into the lake, having been struck by several ghouls.

“I don’t know who you four are but forget it and leave here now.”

“No way pal!”

“Derrick, hold it!”

Derrick, quickly called out by Dilan, Amber stumbling passed with an aggravated expression looking at the entities and the mystery person, scowling.

“Hey buddy, that was just me warming up, here’s my hello!”

“Amber, don’t!”

Mouth opening and with a grunt, a massive shriek, the ground ripping itself apart with fragments flying, wood send shredding, glass around shattering, people shouting with their ears covered to their knees, though the mystery man and the entities standing just fine.

KERPLOW!!!

Five strikes to Amber and back she went, crashing into Monte climbing out upon the docks, both flying back in. Derrick, glancing back quickly, then forward to the mystery person with arms crossed looking back it would seem, as if waiting.

“Why you-”

“DERRICK!!”

The shout of Dilan, a glance over, surprised.

“Look, I know what this means to you, you think it’s your fault as the self proclaimed leader that Sam got hurt and I got messed up almost but this isn’t helping matters. We don’t know this guy, we need to retreat.”

“Tch... but... oh- fine... for now, we’ll play it your way. Retreat!”

Dilan taking a back away, Derrick doing the same, glancing back as the entities slowly would begin to vanish, the captain from before pulling both Amber and Monte from the water. One final glance back... and then, the mystery person’s disappearance.

-

“That was... GAH!!”

“Derrick, calm down, we don’t know what we were getting into back there.”

“No but like, I wanna kick that guy like a horse for getting me soaked.”

“He flung me, twice... and then threw you into me. I have more of a right to be angry.”

“Guys... let’s contact Ms. Galakin quick and get an update.”

“Actually mates, I have a message for you, here,” came the voice of the captain, then the tossing of an old tape recorder, “She left it cuz ya’ll was out of radio range I guess and your boss won’t be back for awhile. I’ll leave ya to it.”

Looking down, the tape playing, “DreamScapers, this will be my last official transmission back to you as I’ll be out directing an investigation personally. You’ll have to link up with Flare or Damerick for now but I have an update on your bad luck. Please contact Damerick and or Flare immediately for an explanation, I think it’s a being

known as The Goblin King, they'll best explain the situation and how dire it could be.

Talk when I return, talk to them now."

The tape ending.

"Oh great, another weak enemy to fight?"

"I don't know... she said it could be dire."

"Like, we've heard that before."

"Hmm... we'll check on Sam, then arrange the meeting with the two of them... as soon as we can. If it's this Goblin King then it clearly isn't that Gillman guy and probably not who we encountered. We'll leave that to another squad or something for now in which case."

"Right," they all chimed.

"Let's hope this goes quick, for Sam's sake."

Episode XVII: The Phantom's Legend

White lights, white curtains, white sheets, white walls, white cabinets... just nothing but white other than the door and window outside, plus some metal appliances. In a hospital bed would rest Sam, sighing with several others in the room, her *team*. In the corner, Damerick.

“-and so that turned up no leads other than a supernatural force controlling ghosts is in the town protecting it from... *something*.”

“Well that’s not very helpful... Derrick, it isn’t your fault. If the whole team was there then who knows what could’ve happened, we all could have been taken out. Stop beating yourself up over it.”

“But still... I promised to lead this team during coronation, that we would stick together to stop evil. I dropped the ball.”

“It’s just as well that you didn’t Derrick. If this is who we think it is then you wouldn’t have stood a chance.”

“Right, about that, you still haven’t said who this Goblin King guy is.”

“...”

“Care to spill the beans so we know what we might walk into? If he’s anything like the goons we’ve faced then-”

“He’s nothing like anyone you’ve faced before,” came to mutter reply of Damerick, looking up, “You kids... just aren’t ready.”

“I think we can handle the news... plus if you tell us now, it’ll save us from going in blind should this guy ever appear.”

“... alright... what I am about to say you must take with the utmost caution in the future.”

“The Goblin King... is a Nightmarish Warlord nearly on par with an Edgelord. In the past, he worked under them as a top general, right now likely serving as Zaraka’s most powerful minion.”

“Is he really all that?”

Damerick glanced down, sighing, “The Goblin King is one of the most powerful... because he is the most powerful. He’s known as The Hunter by some for hunting past DreamScapers and those of higher rank, even myself and our leader. The Goblin King is a true warrior who can control all of the major elements... he has super strength, super speed, can fly, can grow multiple heads, shapeshift, and so much more. He can even take control of a person through the darkness in their hearts such as fear, anger, sadness. The stronger the emotion, the more power he has over them.”

“Whoa.”

“Yeah, that’s just the start. The Goblin King also isn’t able to be harmed by normal means, only one with the power of a Nightmare would have any chance at stopping him one on one. He can tank so many hits, likely having the most stamina of any of Zaraka’s people. In the past, it took ever leader of ONUS just to seal him, let

alone stop him. He and his Goblin Horde raised the lands, burned forests, leveled towns, and caused some seriously bad luck for anyone near.”

Amber looking down, shaking, “How are we supposed to fight something like that?”

“You don’t. You people are not authorized to take on, to not even APPROACH the Goblin King.”

“But how do we do our job with him-”

“Calm down, we’re readying all of our people to deal with this matter. You are not yet prepared for such a task. He plays with his opponents minds to put some form of doubt into their heart, some form of fear... if he puts any of that into a person, they’ve lost the battle. He can subtly influence what they do, such as missing him by an inch with an attack, amplify their fear... or worse case, completely take control of them.”

“That’s too much for us right now.”

“That’s why I don’t want you getting any funny ideas.”

“Alright Damerick, we understand. I won’t risk our team on something as petty as revenge... so what about the Gillman?”

“We’re still working on that one actually. We think now, that it isn’t tied to Zaraka though we still want you to investigate this weekend, after Sam recovers enough of course. From what you described the target doesn’t appear to be afflicted by physical attacks, though, her telekinesis might be the key to beat that thing you encountered.”

“How long could that take?”

“The doctors say I can leave tomorrow actually... after all, it was just a mild concision.”

“Then it’s settled. Wait till the weekend to be sure of her recovery. She uses her mind for her powers so I’m not certain what an unhealed concussion might cause... it could blow back at her or worse.”

“Right... thank you Damerick. Well, I guess we better get going, class tomorrow and all.”

Opening the door, Derrick would blink, sitting in a chair across the hall, Stark, reading a book who in turn would also look forward as the door opened, a sack of paper next to him.

“Oh, Stark right?”

“Er... yeah. I just came by to drop off Sam’s homework for the week.”

“Oh, well, we were just leaving.”

Walking left down the hall: Derrick, Monte, Dilan, Amber... and Damerick, Stark standing with the bag, entering the room.

“Oh, hey Stark. It’s good to see you.”

“Yeah I uh, I heard about the accident. I figured I’d stop in and see how you were uh, oh and the school wanted me to give you your schoolwork for you.”

“Ack, no thanks, haha.”

“Heh heh, right... so, when do you think you’ll be good to go again?”

“The doctors say I can go home tomorrow, relax over the weekend, and then return to school on Monday.”

“Oh, that’s great to hear! Oh and uh, hold on, here,” he’d say reaching into the bag pulling out a book.

“The next volume of Midnight!? Oh Stark, thank you my dude!”

Giving him a hug, he’d laugh a little uneasy, “I wish I could stay longer but I’m needed back home... oh uh, think you’ll be up for that movie this Saturday night yet? I mean, if they’re letting you out and all.”

“Oh... sorry, something came up after the concussion and... I won’t be home this weekend actually.”

“Oh... well, maybe next time then. Anyways, I’ll uh, see you around. Have a good night Sam.”

His head hanging a little low, he’d then exit the room, Sam turning her head to the window to look out, sighing, “Sorry Stark...”

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The waves splashing, splashing upon the shores, storm clouds overhead, rain far off the shore, ahead the town of before without a person in sight. Sam walking forward, scanning the horizon as the vessel would come to a dock and stop, the team stepping off quickly.

“We were attacked not long after arriving.”

“Like, more like we got into it not long after arriving... the people here are still hiding.”

“Mmm... yeah.”

“Split up for now and start asking... no... we’ve seen it enough, the townspeople won’t likely help... alright, that means we need to explore the lake for a Gillman.”

Turning left and down the shoreline, they’d walk... and walk... and walk...

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Walking along, looking out on the lake, Amber sighing, “Man, we’re not going to find anything.”

“Just give it time.”

Walking, and walking, and walking...

“We’ll find something eventually, we just have to!”

“Sam, can’t you detect anything? I mean, I know you use telekinesis, surely you have some sort of sensory ability, right?”

“Mmmmmmm... wait, I’ve got something now that you mention it, hold on...”

Her eyes glowing yellow, her body still, seconds passing with the ground turning towards her, until her step left, eyes flashing blue, “Got something!” A splashing of water, a shriek, water spraying everywhere. Flailing in the air, a human girl with long blond hair and a fish tail.

“A mermaid?”

“For real?”

“No please, don’t eat me!” she’d shout afraid.

“No no no no no, it’s alright,” Sam replied back immediately stepping forward, “I uh, I thought you were someone else. By chance... do you know where we can find the Gillman?”

“Gillman? A cave, down by the rock shore, please just let me go!”

“Alright, thank you.”

The glow fading and a splash, the girl being released back into the water, the group then nodding to Sam and bolting off towards the not too far off rock shore.