



CHUCKLES AND GIGGLES

VOLUME THREE

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Chapter

43

The peace lasted for all of a month. During that time our heroes went swimming, had fishing and camping trips, played games, went to watch the Brisvegas Leos repeatedly lose (but always believing they would finally win!), ate food and read so many books that everyone began to despair of Belle having a social life.

When it finally ended, it ended with a bang.

“Give it up Revolver!” Giggles flew alongside the truck that the Death Valley Mobsters were speeding down the main street in. In front of them was an armoured van full of priceless jewels. Beside it, Chuckles was speeding along on his motorcycle, yelling directions at the driver.

Up ahead, Sir Lionheart and Sir Hedgehog were getting ready to plant roadspikes, while Sir Hyper and Sir Dark cleared the streets of any innocent bystanders.

“I’m coming with the armoured truck, be ready with the spikes after we come past!” Chuckles said into his watch.

“No problemo!” Sir Lionheart turned to Sir Hedgehog. “Time to roll!”

Sir Hedgehog ran to the other side of the road. The armoured car sped past, and Sir Lionheart rolled a line of road spikes out towards Sir Hedgehog.

“Look out! Here comes the DVM!” Sir Hedgehog yelled.

As expected, the truck ran over the road spikes and blew all of its tyres, sending it spinning. Giggles floated in the air, trying not to laugh as the truck stopped right in front of an adult store.

“Not funny you little pest!” Master Revolver jumped out of the truck and slammed the door shut.

“You’re right, it’s freaking HILARIOUS!” Giggles giggled (oh har har har), until she landed on her backside, courtesy of the Backpack again.

“You should really get that fixed.” Master Revolver pointed out.

“It’s a work-in-progress.” Giggles shrugged, getting up and rubbing her sore bottom.

“Anyway, time to sort you out!” Master Revolver aimed his shotgun at her.

“Rude!” Giggles frowned. She pulled out the Lucky Seven Gun and aimed it back at him.

“Well this looks entertaining.” Chuckles walked over casually.

“I wouldn’t be so cocky. It’s sheer dumb luck that you lot are alive at the moment.” Master Revolver snarled.

“A sword to a gunfight Chuckles? REALLY?” Giggles shook her head at her best friend.

“At least SOME of us have class.” Chuckles stalked off. Without warning, Master Revolver turned his gun on Chuckles and fired, striking him in the shoulder!

“CHUCKLES!” Giggles cried. She fired the Lucky Seven Gun at Master Revolver, hitting the hand that had shot Chuckles. As Master Revolver dropped his shotgun and yelled in pain, Giggles flew over angrily and kicked him fair in the face.

“HOW DARE YOU SHOOT MY BEST FRIEND?!” She screamed in rage. “And in the BACK as well you COWARD!”

“Police are coming Giggles, we need to get outta here!” Sir Hedgehog called to her. Chuckles was being held up by Lady Courage and Sir Hyper, while Lady Luck was looking at his shoulder.

Giggles gave Master Revolver one last kick to the crown jewels before escaping with the others. She was seething. How could she have let Chuckles get shot?!

Chuckles leapt gingerly into her arms and she flew back to the tip.

“You okay mate?” Giggles asked as they soared through the sky.

“He shot me. How rude!” Chuckles said, affronted.

“We'll get Petunia to look at it when we get back to base. She'll fix it up no problem.” Giggles promised.

Suddenly, the Backpack gave out again.

“FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THAT IS GOOD IN THIS WORLD!” Chuckles roared angrily as Giggles managed to straighten up.

“Sorry.” Was the sheepish reply.

—

“Aren't you just the cutest?” Lizzy Begly lifted up baby Madeleine Masters, who squealed with laughter.

“You're smitten.” Izzy laughed as Lizzy danced around the Begly lounge room with the baby Masters.

“I can't help it.” Lizzy defended herself. “Isn't that right Madels?”

Madeleine hugged Lizzy tightly in response.

Suddenly, Belle and Charlie burst in, with Thomas and Betty close behind. Petunia was with them, and started directing everyone at once.

“What happened?!” Izzy noticed that Belle was holding a sodden red rag to Charlies shoulder.

“Master Revolver shot Chuckles.” Thomas told them, pulling a chair from the dining room into the lounge room so that Petunia could get started on cleaning Charlie up.

“Owch.” Was Charlies contribution to the chaos.

“How did it happen?!” Izzy cried as Lizzy went to sit on the couch near her brother.

“Giggles and Master Revolver were having a stand-off when Revolver turned around and shot Chuckles in the back.” Petunia said. “Thankfully it only went through his shoulder, no major organs hit.”

“WHY DIDN'T YOU FINISH OFF REVOLVER?!” Izzy roared at Belle. “YOU COULD HAVE GOTTEN OUR BROTHER KILLED!”

“I'm not a killer Izzy, you know that.” Belle scowled as Peter Masters ran in.

“Is Charlie okay?” He asked.

“Never better.” Charlie groaned sarcastically.

“Oh good.” Peter took Madeleine off Lizzy, who was staring daggers at Belle. “Oh dear, we're not going to have THIS fight again are we?” He sighed.

“We wouldn't be having it if these two could do their job correctly!” Lizzy scowled.

“It's not OUR JOB thank you, we happen to do it out of the goodness of our hearts.” Charlie scowled as Petunia stitched up his shoulder. “OW!”

“Well you should do it properly or not at all!” Izzy snapped. “You got Grandpa killed-,”

“UPSTAIRS.” Thomas Begly pointed to the stairs.

“Dad-,” The twins began to protest. However, one look from their father was enough to have them both begrudgingly head up the stairs to their room. Betty followed them, looking harassed.

Not long after, Daniel and Sam burst in.

“I found the bullet!” Sam grinned, holding a small bullet in his hand. “I also found the one you shot Revolver with. Should I give it to him?”

“In his shoulder would be fantastic.” Charlie quipped dryly, feeling sorry for himself. Petunia had finished stitching him up and was admiring her handiwork.

“No fighting now for at least a month.” She said, setting his arm up in a sling.

“Say WHAT now?!” Charlie cried.

“The bullet fractured your shoulder blade. You're going to need to rest for a long time.”
Petunia told him matter-of-factly.

“I really don't like Master Revolver right now.” Charlie groaned.

—

“What's the matter with my girls today huh?” Hugo Graziano, son of business mogul Great Graziano, looked bemused at the Begly twins as they all sat together in a high-end restaurant for lunch the next day.

“Nothing.” Izzy scowled, viciously ripping a bread roll in half and dipping one of the halves into her pumpkin soup. Lizzy rolled her eyes.

“We're a bit upset that Chuckles managed to get shot, personally we think he, Giggles and the Knights of the Last Order need to step up their game.” She smiled at Hugo.

“You mean those vigilantes?” Hugo looked amused at Izzy. “I don't know why they don't just mind their own business.”

“Especially if they're not going to do their job properly and get themselves shot.” Izzy growled through a mouthful of bread.

Hugo chuckled. “I didn't have you two pegged as social justice warriors.”

Lizzy narrowed her eyes at him. “You do realise we live in a city where we could get mugged at any second and our legal system wouldn't do a thing about it?”

“Oh come on, you would NEVER get mugged with me around. I'll protect my girls.” Hugo patted her cheek. Izzy giggled as Lizzy blushed.

“Have you girls ever thought of joining the cause yourselves?” Hugo asked as they continued their meal.

“Not really. Like I said, it needs to be done properly. It's sheer dumb luck that Chuckles and Giggles are so well-armed, and you've seen what the Knights have got.” Izzy replied, completely ignoring the fact that the Masters have been gunslingers for centuries and that the Howzats were brilliant hand-to-hand combat specialists paired with the Begly swordsmanship and blacksmithing.

“Fair enough. Although it IS a bit rich of you to dump on Chuckles and Giggles when you're not prepared to put yourselves on the line as well.” Hugo pointed out.

“Is it rich of someone to criticize a meal without being a chef?” Lizzy frowned.

“I'm just saying...” Hugo threw up his hands. “Put yourselves in their shoes.”

“You have no idea.” Izzy said bitterly. “You seriously have no idea.”

Chapter

44

"So let me get this straight." Charlie stood in the back yard, one arm in a sling. "You can make the recoil on the Lucky Seven Gun look non-existent but you can barely pick up the Lions Claw Blade?!"

"IT'S HEAVY." Was the sullen reply.

The logic behind this latest exercise was that with Charlie out of commission until his shoulder healed, it would be beneficial for Belle to be able to use the Lions Claw Blade. Given that the Lions Claw Blade was now stuck firmly in the ground in the backyard, one could surmise that the exercise was going poorly.

"I'm flabbergasted. How are you NOT able to swing a simple sword around?" Thomas shook his head.

"Same way you couldn't fire a gun if your life depended on it." Peter came to his daughters defence.

"It's a piece of metal, you simply swing it around and hit people with it!" Thomas cried.

"I think you're seriously underselling the art of sword-fighting." Peter replied.

"What would YOU know?" Thomas glared at his best friend.

"Obviously more than you!" Peter got riled up.

"You saying I'm dumb?"

"No need, it's plainly obvious to anyone with a brain!"

Enraged, Thomas slapped Peter. Infuriated, Peter slapped Thomas back...look, for the dignity of both men, let's not go into the specifics of what happened next, other than to say Charlie quickly grabbed the Lions Claw Blade and took off with Belle as to not be seen with the pair.

—

Of course, no matter how bad Belles training was going, the world wasn't going to stop. Not even a week after Charlie got shot, Ruby Daryl decided to wreck some havoc. Not trying to steal anything or help take out a historical monument to create space for progress, he just wanted to get out and hurt people.

He's not a very nice person.

"There's no point in carrying this on Ruby, your Ruby Weapons can't hurt me and I'll be lucky to get a shot in with the Lucky Seven Gun. Why don't we both just go home and call it a day?" Giggles tried to reason with the bully, both of them hovering above Pleasantville Central Park.

"Get stuffed. That Backpack of yours will give out eventually, then you're screwed." Ruby Daryl smirked.

“Not really, I think I can make your life miserable from the ground.” Giggles folded her arms.

“Oh really?” Ruby Daryl readied himself to attack.

“Either way, I can stop you from hurting people.” Giggles said.

“Even without your little boyfriend?” Ruby Daryl sneered.

“She's still got us!” Sir Hypers faint voice could be heard somewhere below them.

“What he said.” Giggles shrugged. “Now will you please sod off or do I have to bop you?”

Ruby Daryl laughed.

“Come on then, come and get me!” He readied himself for an attack.

Giggles grinned to herself and flew towards Ruby Daryl, who started floating upwards.

Or, rather, Giggles started sinking downwards.

“This is embarrassing.” Giggles groaned as she landed squarely on her backside again.

“You make this too easy!” Ruby Daryl howled with laughter. He threw a Ruby Shard at her, making her flinch unnecessarily as it hit her, not having any affect.

“Whatever Ruby, I can still stop you from hurting people down here!” Giggles yelled angrily.

“And we can help!” Sir Dark piped up as Sir Hedgehog helped Giggles to her feet.

“Oh really? Let's see how you can deal with this!” Ruby Daryl began to form Ruby Shards in both hands. When he had ten, he started flinging them in all directions.

“Scatter!” Sir Lionheart cried. The Knights of the Last Order rushed to stop the Ruby Shards as Giggles tried to hit the Shoulder Fuses on Ruby Daryl. Ruby Daryl was wise to this strategy however, and formed two Ruby Shields to protect them. Laughing, he formed more Ruby Shards and kept throwing them, mixing in some Ruby Blasts for the fun of it.

The Knights tried to block the Ruby Weapons with whatever they could, but soon their limbs got hit and they started falling, none of them having the immunity to the Ruby Power that Giggles had.

“So Giggles, do you still think you can stop me?” Ruby Daryl grinned as the Knights lay wounded.

“I won't stop trying until I do!” Giggles snapped. She racked her brains. She had about fifteen minutes until the numbness from the Ruby Shards wore off and the Knights of the Last Order could help again. If Ruby Daryl fired off Ruby Shards in all directions again, then it was almost a certainty that someone innocent was going to get hurt.

Ruby Daryl readied his next lot of Ruby Shards as Giggles pulled out the Lucky Seven Gun and fired. Ruby Daryl was about to laugh that she'd missed, when he heard a loud "Clang!" behind him.

A small throwing star landed on the ground. Ruby Daryl realised that if Giggles hadn't shot the star out from the sky, then he'd be dead. He looked towards where it had come from, and saw three figures standing on a rooftop.

Two of them were female, with long, flowing red hair. They wore beautiful one-piece suits that covered from their feet to their necks, including their dainty fingers, and they both had beautiful masks covering their faces. One was gold, and the other was silver. Behind them in a very professional-looking white suit was a man with a similar mask on his face.

"What did you do that for Giggles?! I almost had him!" The one in silver yelled angrily. In her hands were a mess of throwing stars.

"Because I'm in this business to save lives!" Giggles roared back.

"You're saving the wrong ones, try saving innocent people in future!" The gold one leapt to the ground, in her hands a weird yo-yo looking thing in the shape of the sun, with the rays being golden blades sticking out of the yo-yo. The other two jumped down behind her, the one in white shouldering his bow and wearing a quiver of white arrows.

"Get out of here, let the professionals handle this, little girl." The white one walked over to Giggles and shoved her aside.

"Rude!" Giggles scowled.

Ruby Daryl looked at the scene unfolding. "Man, I don't need this drama. I'm going to go and see what Mum's got on for me for dinner. See yas!" He turned to fly away.

"Not so fast." The one in white loaded up his bow with an arrow. Just as he fired, Giggles slammed him to the ground, sending the arrow flying into a nearby bush.

"YOU LITTLE WITCH!" The one in white roared in fury.

"I. Save. Lives." Giggles scowled at him. "Who the hell are you?!"

"Sir Moonlight, if you must know." The man stood up and glared at her. "My associates are Lady Sunlight and Lady Starlight, and I think even YOU can figure out which is which."

"No, I couldn't actually." Giggles spat sarcastically.

"We," Lady Starlight walked over to them. "Are the Outer Knights of the Last Order."

"YOU ARE NOT!" Sir Lionheart raced over, livid, his Ruby wound healed. "You will NEVER be a part of the Last Order if you insist on using the same tactics that our enemies use!"

“OUTER Knights of the Last Order.” Lady Sunlight smirked. “We're not quite as pathetic as you are, even if our mission is the same.”

“We don't have the same mission.” Lady Courage scowled, standing behind Sir Lionheart.

“The liberation of Pleasantville from crime?” Lady Sunlight said. “Sounds the same as our mission to me.”

“Stay out of our way. Or we can't be held responsible for what happens.” Sir Moonlight warned.

The “Outer Knights of the Last Order” made their exit.

“Who were they?” Sir Hyper walked over, holding up Sir Dark.

“Trouble.” Giggles replied. “Lots and lots of trouble.”

—

“Baby talking makes you sound like an idiot, you know that right?” Izzy smirked at Lizzy, who was gabbling to Madeliene Masters later that evening.

“She's a gorgeous little girl, aren't you sweetie?” Lizzy cuddled the baby Masters, who squealed happily.

“You are SUCH a sucker.” Charlie teased from the couch. “You'll spoil her rotten if you're not careful.”

“Wittle Maddy Masters could never be wotten, could you my little munchkin?” Lizzy cooed to Madeliene, making her siblings laugh.

“Her big sister could use some cheering up. What's with the frown?” Charlie poked Belle, who was sitting on the couch next to him.

“Just what happened today.” Belle sighed as Betty came out with a steaming hot tray of freshly roasted meat, followed by Bill Masters with the vegetables and Peter with the gravy train.

“Here mate, let me get that for you.” Thomas rushed to help Peter with the gravy train.

“It's fine mate, here, let me get your chair for you.” Peter put the gravy train down and pulled out a chair for his best friend.

“This is going to make me sick.” Lizzy gave Madeliene back to Lara and sat down.

“Tell me about it.” Belle rolled her eyes as Thomas and Peter continued to smother each other with compliments.

Parents.

Chapter 45

“GET OUT OF MY WAY!” Lady Sunlight roared in fury, throwing her sun yo-yo and narrowly missing Lady Silent. She reeled in her weapon and prepared to fire again when she was taken out with a solid hip-and-shoulder by Lady Courage.

“We nearly got rid of Marion for good, and you stopped us you FOOL!” Sir Moonlight shot another arrow at Giggles, who cartwheeled out of the way and landed on a nearby balcony.

“Will you give up?! What did we ever do to you?” Sir Dark and Sir Hedgehog fought against Lady Starlight.

“Stop getting in our way!” Lady Starlight threw some more of her throwing stars at them.

Let's rewind a little bit. Mobster Marion had actually been very good the past few weeks, keeping her nose out of crime, but it all came undone when she went to get her hair cut and didn't like what the hairdresser had done. Obviously, this is a valid reason to call in the rest of the Death Valley Mobsters and have the place destroyed.

(Personally I'm with Marion but for the purposes of this story let's just agree it was a massive over-reaction)

The Outer Knights of the Last Order were first on the scene, and had nearly killed Mobster Marion when Giggles stepped in, telling Mobster Marion to get the hell out of there and stop being such a stuck-up bovine. Infuriated, the Outer Knights of the Last Order chased Giggles to the abandoned old school, where they landed in the middle of a Noble Knights of the Last Order ambush.

Another arrow barely grazed Giggles helmet as Sir Hedgehog threw one of his blades at Sir Moonlight. Sir Moonlight dodged easily and fired an arrow at Sir Hedgehog, which was shot out of the air by Giggles and the Lucky Seven Gun.

“You guys have tried to kill both Ruby and Marion, what makes you so different from them?!” Sir Hedgehog asked as Sir Moonlight grabbed another arrow.

“They're criminals! We're trying to save people!” Lady Sunlight threw her yo-yo again, nearly hitting Lady Courage.

“Can't we all just get along!?” Lady Luck pleaded, holding her first-aid kit close.

“If you lot would do your job properly, we wouldn't be here!” Lady Starlight thundered.

“Look at you, you easily outnumber us three to one, yet you still haven't beaten us!” Lady Sunlight laughed.

“We're not trying to BEAT you, we're trying to make you see reason!” Sir Hyper groaned as he dodged another throwing star.

"You're pathetic." Lady Starlight scowled.

Sir Moonlight dodged a punch from Giggles and swerved to avoid Sir Hedgehog. He then shot an arrow directly at Giggles, whose Backpack decided to malfunction again, leaving her a sitting duck.

CLANK.

"No way has your shoulder healed yet!" Sir Moonlight roared in anger. At the last second Chuckles had stepped in with the Lions Claw Blade and cut the arrow in two!

"You're right, it hasn't, but I can wield with one hand unlike some people who can barely lift a sword with two." Chuckles replied, arm still in a sling.

"Nobody likes you." Giggles sulked.

"What are you doing Chuckles, you're going to get yourself killed!" Lady Starlight looked in horror at Chuckles.

"He definitely will if he gets in my way!" Sir Moonlight pulled out another arrow, but was stopped by Lady Sunlight.

"Leave him alone Moonlight." She warned.

Sir Moonlight looked confused, but backed off.

"Stay. Out. Of. Our. Way." He warned threateningly, before the Outer Knights of the Last Order escaped.

"What was THAT all about?" Sir Dark asked.

"You know you look really weird wearing only one Arm Scythe right?" Giggles asked, poking Chuckles un-injured arm.

—

"So what's for dinner tonight?" Charlie sat in the tree next to Belle later that evening.

"Dad's having some friends over from Awesomica, they're doing a tour of the world and thought they'd stop by." Belle replied, pulling some dead leaves off the tree. "They were going to head to the Great Nations but things there are starting to get dicey."

"I saw on the news." Charlie sighed. "Guess what else I saw on the news."

"Demon resigning as Mayor?" Belle asked hopefully.

"Worse. Pro-Outer Knights crap." Charlie told her. "People are calling in to these news shows and giving the Outer Knights their support."

"This really isn't helping our cause. Don't these people think long-term?" Belle groaned.

“Anyway, I'd better go. The twins are having a friend over and they want us to meet him.” Charlie sighed, stretching out.

“A guy?” Belle looked surprised. “Not guys?”

“I have no idea, apparently he's a bit older than them.” Charlie tried to keep the distaste from his voice.

“And so you're going to play big brother and scare him away, right?” Belle grinned.

“If Dad doesn't get to him first.” Charlie grinned back.

He headed back inside and straightened his hair before heading downstairs to meet his sisters friend. He got to the bottom of the stairs before seeing the dark-haired, handsome young man.

"Good evening. You must be Charlie." Hugo smiled a little too graciously.

Charlie immediately scowled. He didn't like the look of Hugo Graziano one little bit. Thomas didn't look thrilled either.

"That's my name." Charlie reined himself in a little. "And you must be Hugo."

"Indeed. It's nice to finally meet the beloved big brother of my two favourite girls." Hugo smiled politely. Charlie didn't trust that smile.

"That looks like it hurt." Hugo continued, looking at Charlies arm.

"Broke it at work." Charlie replied coolly. Who was this creep?

"You should come into the kitchen and meet Mum." Izzy quickly grabbed Hugos hand. The twins dragged him away as Charlie shared a look with his father.

"Don't like him and don't want him near my sisters." Charlie said bluntly.

"Agreed. I'll be keeping an eye on him." Thomas scowled after the young man.

Hugo, meanwhile, was inspecting an old scroll on the wall near the kitchen. Lizzy smiled.

“That's not the real one, it's a copy. The Masters have the original.” She told him.

“I will never kill another human being again. I will always respect my elders, even if I don't agree with them. I will endeavour to dress nicely and appropriately. I will never hold back, and will fight forever for what is right. Most of all, I will always believe.” Hugo read.

“Signed, Maurice Masters.”

“The Masters Code. They live next door, and they've lived by it for over 500 years.” Thomas came in from the lounge room. “Which is about the same amount of time our families have been best friends.”

“A bit archaic needing a code to tell you how to be a decent human being though.” Izzy scowled.

“It's tradition.” Charlie stood behind his father, also scowling. “We honour the past by honouring the Code!”

“You set WAY too much by the code, you even use a capital C when you say it!” Lizzy cried.

“How on earth do you know whether or not someone is using capitals when they speak?” Thomas wondered out aloud.

“You're right, I do. Because that Code has survived 500 years for a reason. Because our friendship with the Masters family has survived FIVE HUNDRED YEARS.” Charlie fought back.

“Can we not do this with guests in the house?!” Betty snapped. She turned apologetically to Hugo. “It's an old family argument, I apologise for their rudeness.”

“No need Mrs. Begly, I understand.” Hugo smiled politely. Thomas didn't like that smile. It was too polite for his liking!

“Oh, Liz, Lara was over earlier, she was wondering if you could take care of Madeliene again next week?” Betty turned to her daughter.

“Of course!” Lizzy squealed, making Izzy chuckle and Charlie smile. No matter how much she wasn't thrilled with the older members of the Masters family, Lizzy Begly was a sucker for the baby Madeliene!

“Lizzy is madly in love with the baby Masters.” Izzy explained to Hugo, who chuckled.

“It's nice to see that one of you likes children.” He commented, earning him veiled glares from the two male Beglys.

Betty sighed. It was going to be a long dinner.

Chapter 46

“YAY!” Lizzy clapped her hands with Madeliene, who had just finished a shape matching game on the computer. “You’re such a smart little girl!”

Madeliene laughed. Lizzy beamed. Sure, for a seventeen-year -old babysitting wasn’t the coolest thing to be doing, but there was just something about the young Masters that drew Lizzy to her. She agreed with Sam that childcare and teaching were the best things in the world, and was already preparing her University application to get into early childcare.

We won’t go into the crush that she has on Sam though.

Madeliene was moving on to the next level of the very simple puzzle game and Lizzy helped her. Already Madeliene was showing signs of her family heirloom, the Masters high IQ that got the Beglys out of so much trouble.

If you believe in that stupid Improbability Clause. Lizzy smirked to herself.

Izzy soon walked in with Hugo, both carrying copious amounts of shopping.

“We got you some nice things too!” Izzy waved a bag at Lizzy, who laughed.

“Thanks guys. Who’s the smartest little girl in the world?” Lizzy soon returned to doting on Madeliene. Hugo chuckled and Izzy rolled her eyes.

She flopped down on the couch and flicked on the news.

“WE ARE REPORTING LIVE FROM PLEASANTVILLE CENTRAL WHERE CHUCKLES AND GIGGLES HAVE ENGAGED THE DEATH VALLEY MOB AFTER THE MOBSTERS TOOK OVER PLEASANTVILLE MEMORIAL SHOPPING CENTRE.” The newsreader cried. Video of Chuckles, Giggles and the Knights of the Last Order fighting off the Death Valley Mobsters showed.

“We should get going! Come Liz.” Izzy quickly got up. “I’ve got your stuff in my room.”

“I can’t just leave Madels!” Lizzy retorted. “Lady Sunlight and Sir Moonlight can handle this without me.”

“She’ll be fine, Mum’s home!” Izzy pointed out, pulling her twin sister up.

“Well...sorry kiddo, I’ve gotta go save Pleasantville.” Lizzy reluctantly got up.

Madeliene looked devastated. Tears began to form and fall from from her eyes.

“I’ve gotta save the city.” Lizzy pleaded.

“Iggles!” Madeliene cried. “Uggles ‘n Iggles!”

“Chuckles and Giggles won’t save Pleasantville...” Lizzy tried to tell the little girl.

“Uggles ‘n Iggles!” Madeliene pleaded, crying loudly.

Lizzy looked sadly at the little girl.

"Come ON." Izzy urged.

The last thing Lizzy saw as she walked out the door was Madeleine in tears.

—

The interaction was still playing on Lady Starlights mind when she, Lady Sunlight and Sir Moonlight rushed to the shopping centre. The plan was to rush in and finish off Master Revolver and Mobster Marion.

"Hurry up Starlight, you're slowing us down!" Lady Sunlight urged her twin sister on as they ran.

"I'm just...I'm just thinking we should go the other way." Lady Starlight said suddenly, for some reason wanting to delay the inevitable clash between themselves and their brother Chuckles.

"Why?" Sir Moonlight looked at her quizzically.

Lady Starlight was about to say "Never mind", when she heard little Madelienes voice again.

"Uggles 'n Iggles!"

"Because I do." She shot. Without waiting for a reply, she ran down another street, leaving Sir Moonlight and Lady Sunlight bemused.

"Well, let's go." Lady Sunlight ran after her sister, followed by Sir Moonlight.

Their path lead them close to the Council building, and sure enough they found Ruby Daryl three blocks down heading to the battle between the Death Valley Mobsters and the Noble Knights of the Last Order/Chuckles and Giggles.

"Oh, it's YOU three. I thought you'd be at the mall already, looking for your fill of blood." Ruby Daryl saw them first, and smirked beneath the Ruby Mask.

"Well, you're definitely not getting there!" Lady Sunlight threw her yo-yo at him. He dodged and threw a Ruby Blast at the three, who scattered.

"You honestly think you three stand a chance against me, all nine of the Last Order took me on and they LOST!" Ruby Daryl laughed as an arrow from Sir Moonlight was expertly blocked by a Ruby Shield.

CRACK.

"You're kidding me!" Ruby Daryl cried as one of Lady Starlights throwing stars landed in one of the shoulder boxes. "Do you know how hard it is to repair this thing?!"

"I have some idea." Lady Starlight thought of Ruby Giggles.

Lady Sunlight tried another shot with her yo-yo, managing to embed it in Ruby Daryl's arm. He roared in pain and yanked his arm into his chest, pulling Lady Sunlight in for a direct hit. She went sprawling to the ground, the yo-yo landing beside her.

Sir Moonlight tried another arrow, which was blocked by the Ruby Shield, as was another throwing star from Lady Starlight. He threw two Ruby Shards at the pair, missing Lady Starlight but hitting Sir Moonlight.

“Oh no.” Lady Starlight groaned. It was just her and Ruby now. She didn't think she was strong enough nor fast enough to take him alone.

She leaped out of the way as another Ruby Blast was thrown at her. She threw one of her throwing stars in retaliation, which was stopped by a Ruby Shard. She only had five left. She couldn't waste them, unless she could somehow gather up the ones she'd already lost.

She decided the best method of survival was to try and either wear him down (nearly impossible) or antagonise him into a rash close-range attack. She ran circles around him, barely dodging Ruby Shards and Ruby Blasts.

“Stay still you little witch!” Ruby Daryl roared in fury. He was getting agitated, playing into Lady Starlight's plans. What she HADN'T planned for was his new trick - a Ruby Sword.

Thankfully, she didn't have to. A bullet that was obviously from the Lucky Seven Gun narrowly missed Ruby Daryl's other shoulder box, causing him to swear loudly.

“YOU TWO?!” He roared in fury.

“Leave. Now.” Chuckles stood below Giggles, his arm still in a sling.

“Fine.” Ruby Daryl hissed through gritted teeth. He wonkily flew away in a huff.

“It's a good thing you guys DID get him though, if he'd arrived at the mall any earlier and we would have all been in deep diabolical doo-doo.” Giggles waved to the three Outer Knights, who were slowly pulling themselves together.

“Oh go blow it out your ear Giggles.” Sir Moonlight scowled, before making off with his two companions.

“Rude!” Chuckles and Giggles were appropriately affronted.

“They do have a point, it WAS lucky we went that way instead of heading directly to the mall.” Lady Sunlight smiled approvingly at her sister as they headed back to their base of operations, a small deserted café near the edge of the city.

“Amazing what a bit of dumb luck can do.” Sir Moonlight agreed.

Lady Starlight said nothing. She had an uncomfortable, sneaking suspicion that what had just happened hadn't been dumb luck at all, and if her sister ever found out, well, she'd never

forgive her. For Lady Starlight was coming to the dreaded realisation that with the help of the baby Madeline Masters, she'd just done what she'd sworn she'd never, EVER do.

Lizzy Begly had just taken advantage of the Improbability Clause.

—

Thomas Begly sighed as he walked into the kitchen after a long day at work, followed by his usual philosophical beer with Peter Masters. As he walked to the fridge, he noticed his wife digging into a very large chocolate mudcake.

“Is that really necessary dear?” He foolishly asked.

“I look at it this way, if you or the kids piss me off I still have to deal with you, I can't just get rid of you. If this cake gives me the shits I just have to go to the toilet and the problem is solved.” Was Bettys reply.

Thomas opened his mouth and raised his finger ready for a rebuttal, but wisely thought the better of it. “Can't argue with that logic love.” He said, walking out of the kitchen.

He walked into the lounge room and had just sat down when his two daughters walked in, one looking pleased but bruised, and the other looking harassed but fine.

“Do I even WANT to know what you two got up to?” Thomas raised an eyebrow.

“Horse riding. Lizzy wouldn't get on, but I did and I might have had a tumble or two.” Izzy lied, looking cheekily at her father.

“Yeah.” Lizzy agreed quietly.

“You okay Liz?” Thomas looked at his youngest daughter (by ten minutes), concerned.

“Just tired out. I think I'm going to go to bed early.” Lizzy sighed and slowly trudged up the stairs, her mind weighed down by the conflict between what she thought she knew and what had happened.

She remembered the fight that her grand-father Charles Howzat had had with his long-time best friend and the grand-father of Belle and Madeliene, Joe Masters, who had also been the best friend of her other grand-father, Tim Begly. She flopped down onto her bed. She couldn't deny that she had Begly blood flowing through her veins, but there was also the strong Howzat influence as well. She couldn't unhear the arguments, the assertion that the 500-year-old Masters Code was old and redundant, an excuse to be a coward, the assertion that the 500-year-old Begly Improbability Clause was nothing more than dumb luck and a complete myth. Yet she couldn't deny what she had not only seen with her own eyes, but caused by the fact that she had listened to a Masters.

It was doing her head in. How Charlie had managed to reconcile the two sides together was beyond her, but it seemed that he had done it. How else could he justify using his grand-fathers weapons as his own? The Arm-Scythes had been Charles Howzats signature weapon for most of his life.

She rolled over onto her back and sighed. It was just a coincidence. That's all it was. There was no Improbability Clause and the Masters Code was still archaic.

This is what Lizzy Begly believed.

That's what she thought, anyway.

Chapter 47

“I'm glad your shoulder is okay again.” Belle poked the now healed shoulder of Charlie, who grinned.

“It means I can use both Arm Scythes again. Also means you don't have to worry about using the Lions Claw ever again.” Charlie teased.

“Meanie pants.” Belle teased back. The pair sat in their tree, watching the sunset. Below them, Lizzy was in the new sandpit with Madeliene and Oscar, building sandcastles.

“Have you noticed Lizzy's been a little off recently?” Charlie asked off-handedly.

“A little. Except when she's with Madels or sucking up to Sammy.” Belle replied, pulling a leaf off the tree and shredding it. It was hard to believe that she'd seen this tree fall down.

“Sucking up to Sammy?” Charlie asked incredulously.

“Yup, she's had a crush on him since before you went to Awesomica.” Belle told him.

“Surely you've noticed?!”

“Nope.” Charlie admitted.

“Worst. Older sibling. Ever.” Belle frowned.

“Then why is my sister playing with YOUR younger siblings instead of you?” Charlie smirked.

Thankfully, he didn't injure his shoulder again in the ensuing fall.

—

That night, Ruby Daryl decided that a bonfire was in order. Unfortunately, the site of aforementioned bonfire was already occupied by a small book store.

I think you can see where this is going.

Anyway, Ruby Daryl had just started pouring the petrol when Lady Courage showed up. Now, while Lady Courage was fully aware of who was in the Ruby Suit, Daryl had no idea that his sister was one of the Noble Knights of the Last Order.

“How in the world did you know I was here?!” Ruby Daryl yelled. “Do you have a tracker on this Suit or something?!”

“I wouldn't know, I didn't build it.” Lady Courage lifted up her arm and pushed in the face of her watch. Pretty soon, the whole Order would be there, and then there'd be a battle!

“All I want to do is have some fun, I'm not hurting anyone!” Ruby Daryl complained.

“You're ABOUT to destroy someones livelihood.” Lady Courage pointed out.

“They'll have insurance!”

“There's only one insurance company that'll insure around here, and they're in your fathers pocket.”

“So?!”

“Do you REALLY think they'll get an insurance payout?”

“Not my problem!”

“You really are a selfish arse.”

“Lady Courage!” Sir Hedgehog arrived with Sir Dark, Lady Luck and Sir Lionheart. “Is he serious?”

“I'm ALWAYS serious!” Ruby Daryl sounded offended.

“You're a serious moron you mean.” Sir Lionheart snapped. “Chuckles and Giggles should be here soon, why don't you run off before you get your backside handed to you again like last time?”

“That was more the Outer Knights than Chuckles and Giggles!” Ruby Daryl sneered.

“Because Chuckles and Giggles have NEVER taken out the Ruby Suit.” Lady Luck rolled her eyes.

“You know, that's a good point.” Ruby Daryl sneered. “Don't you agree gentlemen?”

The four Knights looked horrified. Four Death Valley Mobsters appeared, each wearing a green copy of the Ruby Suit!

“What do you think of the Emerald Suits?” Ruby Daryl laughed. “I will admit, they're no where near as good as the Ruby Suit, whomever created it was a genius, but they're still pretty good!”

Lady Luck looked at Sir Dark in horror. The Emerald Suits might be inferior in power, but they'd be much harder to take out – there were NO shoulder boxes!

One of the Mobsters threw an Emerald Shard towards the four Knights. Dodging, they saw the first limitation of the Emerald Suits – the Emerald Weapons didn't last long before evaporating.

“Definitely not the Ruby Suit.” Lady Courage smirked at her brother beneath her mask, earning her a scowl back from under his mask.

Sir Dark, Sir Hedgehog and Sir Lionheart had already begun to fight off the new Emerald Mobsters. Lady Courage meanwhile made a beeline towards Ruby Daryl, while Lady Luck hung back waiting to treat any wounds. It wasn't too long before Sir Hyper and Lady Silent showed up, and the numbers began to favour the Knights of the Last Order.

“You really think it's going to be that easy?” Ruby Daryl took a swing at Lady Courage with his Ruby Sword. “You don't know HALF of our new tricks!”

“I'm sure you're going to show us.” Lady Courage groaned, breaking the Ruby Sword in two with her baseball bat.

Ruby Daryl snarled and opened his hand, four Ruby Whips appeared. Each Whip connected to one of the Emerald Mobsters.

Suddenly, the Knights of the Last Order were now dealing with FOUR Ruby-powered Emerald Mobsters, which were now just as dangerous as the original Ruby Suit.

“Not good!” Sir Lionheart squeaked as an Emerald Shard came flying towards him. He rolled out of the way, but was struck with an Emerald Whip on his hip bone, paralyzing him.

“We have to separate them!” Lady Luck rolled out of the way of an Emerald attack, clutching her first-aid kit tightly.

“How?!” Raped Lady Silent, trying to block a barrage of Emerald Shards.

Meanwhile, Chuckles and Giggles were rushing to the scene as fast as they could.

“If you hadn't been so caught up in doing your hair we'd be there by now!” Chuckles groaned as he ran below the flying Giggles.

“Hey, YOU were the one who wanted a toilet stop before we left the tip!” Giggles shot back, annoyed.

The pair shot down a small one-way street, hoping to save time. Alas, the Outer Knights of the Last Order had the same idea.

“Not you lot again.” Chuckles rolled his eyes.

“I thought you'd already be at the scene causing havoc and mayhem?” Giggles asked.

“Sir Moonlight wanted a toilet break before we left.” Lady Sunlight shrugged.

“Hey, you two were the ones who had to have their hair right!” Sir Moonlight defended himself.

“Nevermind that, we need to get to that book store and figure out what's going on!” Lady Starlight looked harassed.

“Chill out already!” Lady Sunlight looked concerned at her sister. “We'll get there and save the day, no problem.”

“Because it's all about the glory.” Giggles rolled her eyes.

“What's your issue?!” Sir Moonlight snapped.

“Look, let's get going already!” Lady Starlight tore off, agitated.

“Hey, come back here!” Giggles flew after her. Chuckles was about to follow, when an arrow from Sir Moonlight stopped him.

Lady Starlight approached the battlefield. The Noble Knights of the Last Order were in complete disarray. Lady Courage, Sir Dark and Sir Hyper were the only ones left standing, while Lady Luck tried desperately to tend to the others. Her task was made more difficult by the Emerald Mobsters. Ruby Daryl meanwhile had returned to pouring petrol around the book store, while being careful to maintain his connection to his lackeys.

Lady Starlight was about to rush in and attack, when a strong hand pulled her back.

“You can't just rush out there by yourself, we need to wait for Chuckles and the others!” Giggles told the younger woman off.

Lady Starlight shook her off. “I could sort them out easily.” Was her arrogant retort.

“I might be able to sever the connections between Ruby and the guys in green, but there's still four of them to one of you and we don't know where the conversion points on these other suits are so FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THAT IS GOOD AND RIGHTEOUS IN THIS WORLD WHY DOES NO ONE LISTEN TO ME!?” Giggles roared in fury as Lady Starlight made her way out to fight.

She'd seen her target. The Emerald Suits might not have had shoulder boxes, but the conversion between thought and matter had to be made somewhere. Logically, that would be made somewhere in the upper region of the body. That's when Lady Starlight had noticed the small green lights on the chest-plates of the Emerald Suits. Giggles could easily sever the connections, making any attack easier.

All that was needed was a little luck.

Lady Starlight ran into the line of sight of the four Emerald Mobsters.

“Why don't you come after a REAL fight?!” She taunted, which drew the Emerald Mobsters after her. Meanwhile, Giggles executed a perfect aileron roll through the Ruby Whips, destroying the connection between Ruby Daryl and his crew.

“What the...oh, it's YOU. Where's your little boyfriend? Scared of me?” Ruby Daryl sneered at Giggles.

“Just doesn't think you're worth the effort, sorry sweetheart.” Giggles shot back, pulling out the Lucky Seven Gun and aiming for the shoulder boxes.

With the Ruby Whips destroyed, Lady Starlight found it easy to take out the Emerald Suits. The first one was by far the easiest, as Sir Hyper had the Emerald Mobster in a reverse sleeper hold, exposing the chest-plate to a direct hit from one of Lady Starlight's throwing stars. The second was a bit harder, as Lady Courage wouldn't stay still, making the Emerald Mobster have to duck and weave to keep from having his head removed from her trusted baseball bat (why wouldn't you stick with the classics?). Eventually she got stabbed in the

shoulder with one of the Emerald Shards, and Lady Starlight scored a direct hit when he stood over his fallen prey. The third one was mainly the work of Sir Dark, who saw what Lady Starlight was doing and tried to emulate her. He managed to hit the chest-plate on a fluke when the Emerald Mobster tried to dodge a throwing star.

Lady Starlight grinned, certain that the fourth and final Emerald Mobster would be a breeze. Alas, upon seeing the carnage she had wrecked upon his co-workers, the last Emerald Mobster decided to go on the offensive. Just as Lady Starlight turned around ready to throw the last star, she was stabbed in the middle of her back with an Emerald Shard.

She staggered, the effects of the Emerald Shard not nearly as punishing as a Ruby Shard, but still enough to give the Emerald Mobster the upper-hand. Forming an Emerald Dagger, he prepared to finish off the Outer Knight.

Thankfully her big brother Chuckles stepped in, or who knows what might have happened. With one punch, the light on the Emerald Mobsters chest-plate was cracked by one of the Arm Scythes. All four Emerald Mobsters were defeated, and Ruby Daryl decided to scarper.

“I’ll get you back for this, just see if I don’t!” Ruby Daryl flew away in a rage. Giggles prepared to give chase, but as per usual her Backpack cut out and she was left on her backside. Why she doesn’t have lower back trouble is anyones guess.

“You’re lucky I got here when I did.” Chuckles scolded Lady Starlight. Giggles head snapped up. Luck? LUCK?!

Lady Starlights blood ran cold. That hadn’t been luck at all. There was no way she could deny it now, not after what had just happened.

“Let’s get out of here. C’mon Starlight.” Sir Moonlight grabbed Lady Starlight by the arm.

“You shouldn’t have run off on us, you could have been killed.” Lady Sunlight said crossly as they made their way back to their hideout.

“I’m sorry.” Lady Starlight mumbled.

“SORRY?” Lady Sunlight fumed. “All you can say is sorry? We’re supposed to be a team you know, we’re supposed to do this together. How are we supposed to...”

The rest of Lady Sunlights speech was lost on Lady Starlight, who was deeply shaken.

She had just activated the Improbability Clause.

Again.

Chapter

48

Lizzy Begly just wanted to go to bed and pretend that none of this had ever happened. Ever since she was nine she'd believed that the Improbability Clause was nothing more than some make-believe magic that Charlie was a fool to believe in.

She'd been wrong. The Improbability Clause was about friendship and working together, creating a little bit of that mystical energy called luck. It was far from a myth or a coincidence.

She felt confused and isolated. There was no way she could talk to her twin about this – Izzy was determined to believe that the Code and the Clause were nothing more than myth. She wasn't ready to talk to her brother or father either.

She followed her sister and Hugo into the house that night after her second use of the Improbability Clause, hoping she'd be able to escape quickly after dinner and spend the night in her room alone. She needed a chance to think things through and decide what she was going to do next, and she couldn't really do that with the usual hustle and bustle of the family around her.

Not a chance. The Masters had been invited over for dinner again. Belle was a very, VERY intelligent young lady, and the use of the Improbability Clause had instantly alerted her to the fact that the Outer Knights of the Last Order were none other than the Begly twins and Hugo. She figured she should have picked it sooner, what with the twins long ginger hair being a dead giveaway.

Of course, Lizzy gave herself away by hanging back and holding her head low – Belle wasn't surprised, given the bond that Lizzy had with Madeliene, of course she was going to discover the Improbability Clause, sooner rather than later. She frowned at the younger Begly twin, her eye twitching ever-so-slightly from annoyance.

Lizzy groaned silently. The look Belle was giving her said everything she needed to know – busted.

“So, what are you three doing this fine Knight?” Belle asked a little too casually as they sat down to the amazing dinner that Berry had prepared.

'That K isn't as silent as you think it is.' Lizzy thought bitterly, sitting next to her father, who immediately piped up.

“Wrong “night” Belle. Strange coming from you, the Queen of Spelling and Grammar.” Thomas pointed out.

“Oops, my bad. I have NO idea how I made such a silly mistake.” Belle intensified her stare at Lizzy, who was feeling VERY uncomfortable.

Charlie, who was sat next to Belle at the dinner table, looked at her quizzically. She gave him a small nod. His eyes widened in shock and he glared at his two sisters. Izzy looked confused and shot a look at Lizzy, who suddenly became engrossed in her soup. Thomas shared a look with Peter, who raised an eyebrow at Belle, who quickly directed her glance at Charlie, who tried to look innocent. Betty sighed and shared a knowing glance with Lara, who rolled her eyes and gave Peter a look of exasperation. Peter looked insulted, causing Izzy to shoot a

look of amusement at Hugo, who shrugged and shot a look a look of sympathy at Lizzy, who pretended not to see it. She was too busy trying to avoid the stare from Belle.

“So, what did you guys get up to today?” Betty broke the silence.

Cue the rush of everyone to answer the question and fill the void.

—

Her phone had finally stopped going off, leaving Lizzy to her thoughts. A few days had passed since the second use of the Improbability Clause, and it was a bright, beautiful Saturday afternoon by the creek.

Not that most of Pleasantville was able to enjoy it, Master Revolver and Mobster Marion were trying to get a small shipment of kidnapped children out of the city, and our favourite (and not-so-favourite) heroes were off to save the day.

Lizzy had declined to join her fellow Outer Knights, her mind a complete mess. Izzy was furious and had been badgering her twin via text messages to get out and help. As much as she knew she was needed to help the city, Lizzy couldn't bring herself to even read the text messages. She was laying on a blanket near the creek, holding one of Lady Starlights throwing stars against the glowing light of the setting sun. The old arguments were raging a war in her head, her beloved grand-fathers, both on opposite sides of the fight. Her older brother, her hero. The girl next door who had been like an older sister. The baby who she had such a strong bond with. Her parents, also on either side of the argument, both loyal to their respective fathers.

Izzy. Her twin sister. Together from their very conception. Once one, divided into two in the womb. Now they would be divided again, this time by an ancient tradition that one was ready to accept, and the other would continue to scorn.

"Hey Lizzy."

Lizzy nearly jumped a mile. Sam had found her, waking her from her reverie.

"Hi Sam." She recovered., quickly hiding the throwing star before he could see it. "What was up with the DVM?"

"Human trafficking of all things. I seriously don't know where they get off doing that to children." Sam looked livid. Lizzy felt a mix of anger and guilt. She should have sucked it up and gone to help.

"How could they? Did you save the kids?" Lizzy asked.

"Yup, Belle told Charlie that there was no way he could stop the truck and next minute he's used the Improbability Clause and the trailer's fallen off the truck. TJ got his cop buddies to take the children home and all is good!" Sam grinned.

Lizzy flinched at his mention of the Improbability Clause.

“That's right, you don't believe in the Code or the Clause do you?” Sam asked.

Lizzy looked away. “No, I don't.” She said, trying to sound convincing. Sam looked at her, and she couldn't help but watch him out of the corner of her eye. He had grown into a very handsome man, not even the scars left by years of fighting crime could tarnish him in Lizzy's eyes.

“You sure?” Sam prodded, with a little cheekiness in his voice. Lizzy couldn't help but smile.

“I don't know.” She sighed. She looked at him, taking in all of his features. It then occurred to her that he was a twin too. “Have you ever had a real fight with Tammy before?”

“Did you and Izzy have a disagreement?”

“No, but I think we're about to.”

Sam sighed. “When she wanted to learn how to talk again. I'd been her voice for so long that I got angry when she said she was going to try. I'm Sir Hyper, she's Lady Silent. I didn't want that to change.”

Lizzy sat up and looked at him. “What happened?” She asked.

“We realised that we're two completely different people and that we shouldn't base our identities on simply being twins.” Sam replied. “I'm not just a voice, and she's not just there to look pretty.”

“I guess I was scared of things changing. But just because some things changed, doesn't mean the important things did too. Tammy is my sister, my twin, and we'll always need and love each other. That's all that matters.” Sam finished his speech after a small wistful pause. He smiled at Lizzy, hoping he'd helped her.

For the first time in a few days, Lizzy found herself smiling back. “Thanks Sam.” She said, genuine warmth seeping into her words..

“By the way, have you told your parents that you're an Outer Knight yet?”

Smile gone.

“How in the-?!” Lizzy squeaked. Sam laughed.

“Well, I saw the throwing star for a start.” He pointed out.

“Oh.” Lizzy held the star in her hand.

“Plus anyone who's been around Belle and Charlie long enough can pick the Improbability Clause a mile away.” Sam continued. “Belle's LIVID that someone else pulled it on her.”

“It was just dumb luck.” Lizzy desperately tried to hold on to her belief.

"Dumb luck? No, I'll tell you what happened. You, being a Begly, were about to rush into battle with a half-baked plan. Belle, being a Masters, decided that letting you go through with aforementioned half-baked plan would be disastrous, and so told you everything that was wrong with the plan in an attempt to make you stop and think. Being a Begly, you DID stop and think, and you with that intelligence of yours you were quickly able to see that Belle was right and recalculate your plan to suit the conditions. THAT is what created the dumb luck, and that's how the Clause works." Sam told her.

"How do you know all of this?" Lizzy asked.

"I was talking to Charlie one day and he explained it. He was a bit like you, only he thought it was some sort of magic." Sam chuckled.

Lizzy looked at the creek. It wasn't dumb luck or magic, it was friendship that powered the Improbability Clause. Five hundred years of strong friendship that no amount of petty squabbling or even fights could ever shake.

Maybe it was magic after all.

"Anyway, I need to get home. You should get home too, it's still not safe for you to be alone." Sam got up and offered her his hand. She accepted it, and together they headed back home.

Despite her inner turmoil, Lizzy couldn't help but grin as she walked alongside the Noble Knight of the Last Order, Sir Hyper.

Trust me, no one missed it either.

"So, how's Sam?" Charlie asked a little too innocently as Lizzy walked into the house. Izzy tried not to giggle at how red her twin suddenly was.

Lizzy wanted to strangle both of them as they both continued to needle her about her crush on Sam.

Family.

Chapter

49

Bill Masters wiped down the restaurant bench, watching his niece play with Lizzy Begly. Technically Lizzy SHOULD have been washing dishes, but who was Bill to deny the baby Madeliene her favourite babysitter?

The pair were happily reading a book together, while Bill prepared for a huge event being held at his restaurant – some 90th birthday party for one of Pleasantville's big families. He was hoping it would go off without a hitch, business had been waning since the appearance of the Emerald Mobsters, who made life a bit more difficult for the citizens of the besieged city. Going out was more a mission than anything, and most people played it safe in their homes.

The television droned on quietly in the background as Lizzy read aloud to Madeliene, who was fully focused on the story before her. Bill was about to start getting the cutlery out and onto the tables, when a news alert came on.

“The Death Valley Mobsters are attacking Pleasantville Central Apartments, from what we know they're after one of the residents about a owed debt!” The reporter yelled. “HERE'S CHUCKLES AND GIGGLES!”

“Oh Belle!” Bill groaned. “Don't you go getting yourself OR Charlie hurt!”

Lizzy watched the television as Chuckles got thrown by one of the Emerald Mobsters into Sir Dark and Sir Lionheart, knocking the latter two down while winding the former. She desperately wanted to help, but her mind was still scattered. Thankfully her sister and Hugo were away that week, making her feel a little less pressured.

“I wish I could help.” Lizzy sighed.

“Best not to.” Bill advised, tweaking something within the young Begly. “You wouldn't be much help when they're already outnumbered by Emerald Mobsters, especially with Marion and Revolver keeping tabs on things. Those two will make life so much more difficult...Liz?” Bill looked around. Lizzy had disappeared. “She's gone. Huh. ARGH MY EYE!” He suddenly grabbed at his eye, which was now violently and uncontrollably twitching.

—

"We're completely outnumbered and there's only so much Emerald power I can absorb before I get sick!" Giggles groaned to Lady Luck.

"We have to do something, those residents can't save themselves!" Lady Luck looked out of the window at the Emerald Mobsters who were trying to break in.

"Where are those Outer Knights of the Last Order, they'd have this sorted out quick-smart!" One of the older residents poked his head out of his apartment.

"Thanks." Giggles replied dryly.

"Hey guys, we managed to secure all of the doors." Sir Dark came running up the stairs with Sir Hedgehog close behind him.

"That Lady Silent sure is good with technology." Sir Hedgehog said appreciatively. "She managed to get into the security system and locked the place down tight."

"She's good like that. Where's everyone else?" Lady Luck asked.

"Sir Lionheart is downstairs with Chuckles at the front door and Sir Hyper is with Lady Courage at the loading bay." Sir Dark replied. "Although we probably have a little bit of time until they break through."

"If they don't think of cutting the power first." Giggles looked out of the window, narrowly avoiding a bullet from Master Revolver.

"Wouldn't work, the building is designed to become a fortress when the power is gone. Funnily enough, it was designed by the firm that Mr. Jones owns." Sir Hedgehog grinned.

"Poetic." Lady Luck replied.

Suddenly out went the power.

"I thought you said that cutting the power to this place would turn this place into a fortress!" Giggles yelled.

"Well...a very airtight fortress..." Sir Hedgehog replied sheepishly. "They might not be able to get in, but we can't get out either. We're trapped."

"Are you telling me," Lady Luck glared at him. "That they could now blow up this building and we'd have no way to escape?!"

"Looks like it. I think we fell right into a trap." Sir Dark tried to calm his girlfriend down.

Meanwhile, outside, celebrations were starting.

"We did it!" Master Revolver grinned at Mobster Marion. "We finally trapped the Knights of the Last Order and those bothersome pests Chuckles and Giggles!"

"FINALLY!" Mobster Marion smirked up at the building. "And once they're dead we can finally have the Lions Claw Blade and the Lucky Seven Gun back!"

"Can't we just blow the building up already?" Ruby Daryl groaned from behind them. "This waiting is BORING!"

"These things take time you little brat, do you want to blow us up too?" Mobster Marion chided. "Besides, we blew up the transformer between this grid and the main power plant, there's no way those brats can escape and there's nothing anyone can do to save them!"

A few metres away, hidden behind another building, Lady Starlight heard every word of the plan. Her heart sank. She was going to lose her brother and the woman who was like a sister to her, before she'd had the chance to make things right with them. She was going to lose her beloved Sir Hyper, who inspired her and looked out for her.

She felt something vibrating in her pocket. It was her phone, and more specifically, a phone call from Bill.

"ARE YOU INSANE?" He hissed over the line. "Get your scrawny little behind back to the restaurant NOW!"

"My brother is going to die. I have to save him!" Lady Starlight replied quietly. "If I could just restore the power to the place then everything would be fine!"

"Impossible, the transformers have been completely destroyed." Bill told her sternly. "Although, there IS the secret passageway to the dam but that's been abandoned for-,"

CLICK. Lady Starlight knew what she had to do. It was time to activate the Improbability Clause and get her brother out of that building!

She poked her head out. The first order of business was to get past the Death Valley Mob and that moron Ruby Daryl. Then she had to communicate that fact to her brother.

Communication was easy, she could just send a text message. She quickly relayed her plan via a couple of hurried text messages. Now to deal with the DVM, and hopefully give her friends time to get out of the building.

"Be careful with those explosives you fools, they're volatile and could kill us all if you drop them!" Ruby Daryl snapped at a nearby Emerald Mobster, who glared at him.

"We're Emerald Warriors, our suits protect us!" The Emerald Mobster replied sneeringly.

Lady Starlight smirked, and threw one of her Throwing Stars at the Emerald Mobster's arm. She scored a direct hit, and the Emerald Mobster quickly dropped his load, causing a huge explosion in the middle of the empty road.

"WHAT DID I JUST SAY?!" Ruby Daryl roared angrily, his Ruby Shield protecting him.

"What the hell happened here?!" Master Revolver ran over.

"Something hit my arm and I dropped the explosives." The Emerald Warrior pulled the Throwing Star out of his arm, dripping blood.

"DON'T pull it out you idiot, you're just going to damage yourself more!" Ruby Daryl groaned.

"That's a Throwing Star! The Outer Knights of the Last Order have arrived!" Master Revolver yelled. "Lady Starlight threw that no doubt about it!"

"Well where is she then?!" Ruby Daryl quickly got his guard up. "She's the most dangerous of the three."

"Damn straight I am." Lady Starlight muttered to herself, throwing another star at another Emerald Mobster who was carrying explosives.

"IF YOU DON'T MIND!" Mobster Marion yelled after the following explosion. "WHAT are you idiots doing?!"

"Lady Starlight is around somewhere trying to blow us up!" One of the Emerald Mobsters complained bitterly.

"She has to be close by. I'll go look for her while you lot clean up - and TRY not to waste any more of those explosives, we need them for getting rid of Chuckles and Giggles!" Mobster Marion snapped, getting out her small katana. She began to make her way to where the two Throwing Stars had come from. Lady Starlight saw her and quickly made a dash for it over a nearby fence and around the back of another building, where she could still keep an eye on proceedings and make sure her brother didn't die that day.

Seeing another Emerald Mobster head towards the building with more explosives, Lady Starlight launched another Throwing Star, causing yet another explosion.

"This game is getting tiresome Knight! I WILL find you and when I do, you're going to PAY." Mobster Marion fumed, running back to the site of the explosion.

"This is easy! I can keep this up all day until they run out of explosives!" Lady Starlight grinned to herself as she set up explosion after explosion.

"I bet you're feeling pretty proud of yourself right now aren't you?"

Never mind - she'd just been discovered by Ruby Daryl!

"I've beaten you before Ruby, and I'll happily beat you again!" Lady Starlight cried, pulling out some more Throwing Stars.

"True, you HAVE beaten me, but can you beat me AND the Emerald Warriors without your little friends?" Ruby Daryl clicked his fingers, summoning the ten Emerald Mobsters to deal with the Outer Knight of the Last Order!

"I'm sure I can make your life hell until Chuckles and Giggles get here with the rest of the Knights!" Lady Starlight smirked, trying to appear braver than she felt.

"Chuckles and Giggles aren't going anywhere brat, and now, neither are you!" Ruby Daryl readied a Ruby Shard to incapacitate Lady Starlight with, with the Emerald Mobsters following suit with various Emerald weapons.

"Not good!" Lady Starlight backed off slightly. Ruby Daryl grinned and threw the Ruby Shard, which never made it to its intended target.

"HOW?!" He roared in fury. Lady Starlight almost cried with happiness.

"GIGGLES! You're safe!" She yelled.

"Thanks to you Lady Starlight, you've done great!" Chuckles also appeared, holding the Lions Claw Blade ready for action.

"What the hell?" Master Revolver saw what had happened.

"No point blowing that place up now, there's no one in it!" Giggles laughed at the look of fury on her hated enemies faces.

Mobster Marion grimaced. She glared at Master Revolver and Ruby Daryl, as if this was somehow their fault.

"We're leaving. You win this time, Chuckles and Giggles!" She ordered her forces back.

"I'm glad you see it our way!" Chuckles waved pleasantly as the Death Valley Mobsters left. "And now we're going to head home too."

"Yeah, home sounds good around about now. Although I don't think your Uncle is going to be very happy with me." Lady Starlight made her way to the tip with her two companions.

"Why?" Asked Giggles.

"Hey Bill...why is your eye twitching?" Peter Masters walked into the restaurant to pick up his daughter. "And where's Lizzy?"

"The stupid freaking CLAUSE!" Bill roared.

—

"So that's why I've decided that I'm going to focus more on my studies and leave the superhero stuff to Belle and Charlie." Lizzy explained to her sister and Hugo that night.

"You've always been on my side when it comes to that stupid Code and that ridiculous Clause, when did you start talking nonsense?!" Izzy cried in hurt and anger.

"When I found out it wasn't so much nonsense as it was common sense and team work." Lizzy shrugged.

"Whatever. Looks like we'll have to give up the hero caper too if you're not going to join us." Izzy sighed in resignation.

"It's a shame, we were having such fun." Hugo agreed with Izzy.

"Yes, well, it's not about fun, it's about doing the right thing and making sure that Pleasantville has a future." Lizzy told them.

They were sitting in the living room a few days after the dramatic rescue, and Lizzy had finally worked up the courage to tell her sister the truth. It had been hard, and Izzy wasn't thrilled about it, but what was done was done, and it couldn't be changed.

"I don't know why you had to go and change your tune though. I guess that baby has had more influence on you than I thought." Izzy slumped back into the lounge.

"Amongst other things." Lizzy shrugged. Just then, there was a knock at the door.

"I'll get it!" Thomas walked from the kitchen to the front door. "Hi Sam, how can I help you?" Thomas opened the door to Sam, who was looking particularly handsome that day.

"Good afternoon Mr. Begly, I was wondering if the lovely Miss Lizzy would like to come out for a walk to the dam?" Sam poked his head in the door, looking for Lizzy, who had gone bright pink.

"I reckon 'Miss Lizzy' would love to go for a walk." Charlie poked his head out of the kitchen to needle his sister, who poked her tongue out at him.

"I'd love to go for a walk." She got up and smiled at Sam, who grinned back.

"Have fun on your walk Miss Lizzy." Izzy teased.

"Don't be home too late Miss Lizzy." Betty called from the kitchen.

"Don't forget your hat Miss Lizzy." Thomas grinned, handing his daughter her hat.

Lizzy couldn't help but chuckle, and yes, she did enjoy her walk with Sam very much indeed!

Chapter

50

"How the time has flown." Belle sat back in the tree, looking up at the sky.

"It certainly has." Charlie replied, half-asleep.

"Remember the time Masked Revolver took over the school?"

"How could I forget. Remember the first time we pantsied Master Revolver as Chuckles and Giggles?"

"Will never forget that. Let's not forget when we met the Knights of the Last Order, or Sunny for that matter. Didn't she turn out to be a great friend after all?"

"She sure did, in more ways than one."

"I really don't need to know the fine details!"

"Still, it wasn't long after that...I still wish he'd just stayed put instead of getting himself killed."

"It wasn't your fault your grand-father got killed Charlie. Just like it wasn't my fault that Johannas got my Aunt Jessie."

"That flood was something, wasn't it? You'd think after something like that the people of this city would learn."

"They almost did, until Tate got involved over her stupid infatuation with Webster. That University was the best thing that happened to Pleasantville in a long time and now it's gone with no plans to build another one."

"Yeah, well, I wasn't too fond of that University at the time. It took my best friend away."

"You were too busy with Sunny at the time!"

"It didn't end well either way. We had a huge fight after you left for Brisvegas and I went to Awesomica not long afterward."

"That was fun, living in Brisvegas. I ended up in Awesomica for a bit though when I went with Dad on a world trip."

"You never told me that!"

"It never came up. I was glad to get back to Pleasantville though, even if it wasn't so pleasant at the time."

"We put Daryl back in his place. It's just a shame that Mr. Jones got into power."

"I tried to stop him and his ilk, but the people of this city wouldn't back me up."

"I still have nightmares about that mattress."

"At least Izzy and Lizzy weren't Knights then. I don't think you could have coped knowing your baby sisters were being hunted as well."

"Did you know that Lizzy is going out with Sam now?"

"I know! Isn't it great? Better than that Hugo creep that Izzy hangs out with. How OLD is he?"

"Early twenties I think."

"He's still gross."

"HEY! BEAUTY! CHARLIE!" They heard Peter calling for them.

"Yeah Dad?" Belle poked her head out of the tree.

"Dinner's ready! Then afterward we're going to Ozzys school play!" Peter replied.

"I love having a little brother and a little sister. I wasn't sure about Mum at first, but I'm glad my Dad married her." Belle slipped effortlessly out of the tree.

"Especially considering your past." Charlie landed with a thud next to her.

"Yeah. You know, now that Dad's married, I don't mind being an unwanted bastard anywhere near as much as I used to." Belle headed inside.

"You're definitely not unwanted Beauty." Peter caught his oldest daughter up in a strong hug. The bond between father and daughter had never wavered, and was stronger than ever. For the start that Belle had, Peter was bloody proud of her.

—

20 year old Peter Masters ran as fast as he could home. Not because he had to be there any earlier, but because running helped him forget.

His mother was dead. She'd died two weeks prior from cancer. It had been a huge blow to hear her diagnosis a year ago, especially when his girlfriend of three years had dumped him the day before.

He wanted to forget that he'd lost his mother. He wanted to forget the woman who'd left him. He wanted to forget that his best friend wasn't talking to him, and hadn't spoken to him in years. He wanted to forget that his father was disappointed in him for breezing through his Law degree instead of putting in an effort. He wanted to forget that his sister hadn't been heard from since Mother died.

His long hair was coming loose from its ponytail. He pulled it loose and shook it out as he made his way up the stairs to his apartment. It was a cold, wet day and the stairs were slippery. But that isn't why he slid over.

The baby crying on his doorstep was the reason he slid over and landed on his backside. A crying baby with a hacking cough.

He didn't stop to think. He grabbed the bundle and hurried inside to try and help the poor creature. Not that he had any idea about babies.

"Are you okay little fella?" He asked as he lifted the baby from its basket. It looked up at him, and started screaming again.

"Yeah, I'd scream if I saw me too." Peter sympathized. He found a small collection of bottles in the bag attached to the basket - several had milk in them. He threw one into the microwave while trying to soothe the disquieted child.

"It's okay, I'll look after you until we find your Mummy and Daddy." He cooed. The baby settled, and looked up at him with such trusting eyes that he almost teared up. Those eyes were his eyes. His deep, brown eyes. There was no doubt that this child was his.

"So I guess I'm your Daddy. Hi!" Peter said softly as the baby reached up to touch his face. The microwave signaled that it was finished, and Peter tested the bottle before giving it to the tiny child. Another sign that it was his child - Peter Masters had always been short - even shorter than his best friend Thomas Begly.

As he fed the baby, his eyes fell upon a piece of paper that had fallen from the basket. Guessing that it would lead to the identity of the child's mother, he picked it up and read it. What he read angered him, and destroyed what little love he had left for his ex-girlfriend. The baby was a little girl, with no name, and apparently was too much of a burden to be kept by her mother, who had dumped her onto Peter.

"Well, we'll get along all right little one." Peter told the baby, who coughed in response. "We'll need to get you to the doctor first though, that cough doesn't sound good at all."

He finished feeding his daughter, before grabbing the phone and calling his father.

"Hey Dad, my lovely ex has dumped my daughter on my doorstep and I think she needs a doctor, do you know any child-friendly doctors in the area?" Peter said the moment his father picked up.

"WHAT?" Joe Masters yelped. "Say that again?" Peter then explained the situation a bit clearer. His father exhaled sharply.

"I'm coming over in the car to pick you up. The kid sounds very ill and needs to get to the doctor quickly." Joe decided.

"Thanks Dad." Peter replied, hanging up. The baby looked up at him quizzically. "That was your Pa. He's going to come and take us to the doctors. Then we'll get your cough sorted out."

He looked into those brown eyes again. He traced her features with his eyes, marveling in how much she looked just like him.

"You're beautiful. So very, very beautiful. My darling little Belle." He whispered, kissing her on the forehead.

—

Meanwhile, back in Pleasantville, 20 year old Thomas Begly was having trouble of his own.

"You're FIRING me?" Thomas cried.

"We simply have too many staff, and seeing as you're one of our newbies, you're first cab off the rank. We're really very sorry." 25 year old Arnold Jones didn't sound sorry in the slightest. "Unfortunately these cost-cutting measures are necessary."

"Really." Thomas narrowed his eyes at his now former employer. "You do realize I have a child to try and support?"

"I have two." Mr. Jones replied.

Thomas glowered at Mr. Jones, who smirked back. He got up and walked away from his former boss, seething. Thomas had been a metalworker for as long as he'd been able to, and this was how he was repaid?

The worst of it was, Arnold Jones owned a fair few of the businesses around the city. Getting another job was going to be impossible. At least he had the house that his father had let him have after he'd moved to the retirement village. Tim Begly was good for that kind of thing.

He didn't want to move out of Pleasantville, but it looked like he'd have no choice. He got into his car (a brand new Elantra, that'd have to go) and headed back home to break the news to Betty, who thankfully still had a job.

"You got fired too?!" Betty cried when Thomas told her the news.

"This is insane. I can't believe he's fired both of us. What's he playing at?" Thomas sank down into the couch, defeated.

"Maybe he wants the house. His simpering little wife was over here earlier asking about it." Betty sat down, holding onto the sleeping Charlie.

"Well he can't have it. The Beglys have lived here since the dawn of Pleasantville, and they'll be here when she burns, which will be sooner rather than later at this rate." Thomas said bitterly.

Just then, the phone rang. Thomas got up gingerly and answered it.

"Begly residence." He said wearily into the phone, not looking forward to any further bad news.

"Hey Tom? It's Billy. How have you been?" The voice of Bill Masters greeted him.

"Billy? Billy Masters? Mate, it's been too long!" Thomas cheered up, smiling at Betty. "We're having a few issues up here at the moment, how are things down there in Brisvegas?"

"I really don't know if they're good or bad. You know Mum died a few weeks ago." Bill started.

"I was sorry to hear that mate, she was like a second mother to me." Thomas felt a pang of loss.

"But that's not all, Pete has a daughter." Bill continued.

On one hand, Thomas was thrilled for his former best friend. On the other, he was still very bitter about the falling out that had occurred.

"A daughter you say?" Thomas ventured cautiously.

"Jill dropped her on his doorstep and skipped town. He's fallen in love with the poor thing already, calls her Beauty and named her Belle." Bill said.

"And he's sure she's his?" Thomas worried slightly.

"We did a DNA test. Even if we didn't, she looks like his little clone anyway. Definitely his progeny." Bill chuckled. "But she's dying."

"Dying?!" Thomas cried. "How old is she?!"

"Six months old. She already had pneumonia when she was dumped. It's gotten worse." Bill said sadly. "Tom, I know you and Pete had a huge fight, but he really, really needs you."

"Of course he does! I'll be there as soon as I can!" Thomas slammed down the phone and turned to Betty. "Pete's got a daughter, she was dropped on his front doorstep with pneumonia and it looks like she might not live to see her first birthday!"

"NO!" Betty shot up, waking Charlie who began to bellow. "You have to go to him Thomas, I don't care what happened in school."

"There was no question of it." Thomas kissed his wife, before heading upstairs to pack his bags. Pretty soon, he was on the road south to Brisvegas, praying with all his might that little Belle Masters would be okay.

—

Peter Masters sat next to the humid-crib that currently housed his infant daughter. He'd only known her for a few weeks yet he loved her with all of his heart. He hadn't needed the DNA test to know that they were family. He didn't want to lose her, not so soon after meeting her, and not so soon after losing his beloved mother.

"You okay Pete?" Bill came over and sat next to him. In any other situation, the pair would have looked comical, both of them nearly identical with their long blonde hair, one large like their father and the other small like their mother. It was hard to believe that Peter was four years older.

"She has to live. She has to. I know she has to because if she does she's going to have a brilliant future ahead of her. Look at her Billy, she's going to change the world one day." Peter replied, looking sadly at Belle, who was still shuddering with every difficult breath.

"I hope you're right." Bill sighed. "Look at how tiny she is. She looks so much like you."

"Hopefully she'll be a bit taller though." Peter chuckled bitterly, still a bit sensitive about his height.

"She looks just like you did when you were that age son, right down to the coughing and spluttering." Joe said from near a window. "You were as sick as a dog for your first few years too."

"Stunted your growth perhaps?" Bill teased lightly. He felt bad when his older brother didn't retaliate in typical Masters fashion.

"Mr. Masters? There's someone here to see you." A nurse popped her head into the room, startling all present.

"Thanks, you two keep an eye on her for me." Peter warned his father and brother. He headed out of the room and down the hall, where an old friend was waiting for him.

"Tom?" Peter did a double-take when he saw his former best friend standing before him.

"Hey Pete. Bill told me what happened." Thomas looked sheepish. "I had to come and see you."

Peter couldn't believe it. He grabbed Thomas into a fierce hug, and then and there the friendship was restored permanently.

"You don't look so well old friend, are things okay at home?" Peter noticed the worry lines around Thomas's eyes.

"Not really, but I think your worry is a bit more pressing." Thomas tried to shrug it off.

"I need a break from my worry anyway mate, sit down, we'll talk." Peter motioned towards some nearby seats.

So Thomas proceeded to tell Peter what had happened with Mr. Jones.

"I know he has one son, Daryl, who's a bit older than my Charlie, but I didn't know he had another child too." Thomas finished his story. "I don't know why he'd be after my place though."

"Dad was saying how he'd been inquiring about our place too, the greedy mongrel." Peter grimaced. "We might not be living there anymore, but that's Masters land and it always will be."

"I think he's sick of the renters to be honest." Thomas replied.

"Well, we'll figure out a way to get him back, you'll see." Peter stretched his tired muscles.

"We could always ruin his business." Thomas chuckled.

"Yeah, but he's the only metalworker in town and has a monopoly on the place. Even if he was slandered pillar to post, people will still go to him." Peter quickly tried to put a damper on that plan.

Thomas began to smirk.

"No. NO. You don't get to do that when we've just become friends again and my daughter is dying!" Peter yelled.

"Actually Petey, the doctor just came past. It looks like Belle will be okay!" Bill came rushing out to tell the pair the news. He saw the look on Peters face and blinked. "Did you just get Claused again?"

Peters eye twitched.

—

"So you're going to go into business AGAINST Jones?" Peter cried a few days later. Belle was back at home, and Thomas was ready to head back to Pleasantville.

"Yup. I've found a creditor here in Brisvegas, so there's no way he can sabotage me." Thomas grinned.

Peter chuckled. "So you're heading back home tonight to get started huh?"

"Yeah, I've just got to fix up a few more things this morning and then I'll head back after dinner." Thomas finished packing his bag. "Betty and Charlie will be missing me."

"Maybe one day we'll come back to Pleasantville, and Belle can meet Charlie." Peter mused.

"And continue on the family traditions." Thomas smiled. He looked out of the window. "I wonder what would have happened if Jack was still around. He and Bill reminded me a lot of you and I."

"They probably would have had a huge fight too. We're Masters and Beglys, we need to have one good fight in our lifetimes otherwise it'd get too soft and sappy." Peter joked.

"Anyway, I'm going to the bank, I'll be back for dinner!" Thomas high-fived Peter and headed out of the apartment. Peter watched the door close behind him and thought.

"Hey Beauty, do you wanna go and help your Uncle Thomas?" He said slowly.

Baby Belle gurgled.

"That's what I thought. Good girl!"

And when Thomas returned to the apartment to get his bags and be off, he found a large dual-cab ute waiting for him. Not wanting to leave his friend without a mode of transport, he decided to leave the Elantra behind.

—

Which was the same Elantra that Charlie, Lizzy, Sam and Belle piled into to go and see Ozzys school play.

"Even though this place is a horrid crime-haven, I'm glad my father brought me back here." Belle drove the car towards the school.

"I'm glad too." Charlie grinned at his best friend.

"Me three." Lizzy piped up. She'd been getting along famously with Belle since she'd tossed in the Lady Starlight mantle.

"I think we're all glad that things turned out the way they did." Sam took Lizzys hand, and the pair smiled at each other. Charlie gave Belle a knowing glance and she giggled as they reached the school, Peters car not far behind.

"I remember when the old private school was around, where you guys used to go to." Peter ruffled Belles hair as they sat down towards the front of the stage.

"The one where we got taken hostage?" Charlie sat down next to Belle.

"That was one of the scariest days of my life." Thomas shuddered. "I thought you and Belle were goners."

"I was so scared that the DVG were going to come after Daryl and I, because of who our Dad is." Sunny sat on the other side of Charlie next to Patrick, who was holding Melody.

Belle looked up at Charlie, who smiled down at her. That had been the day that changed everything for them. It had been the day that Belle had first gotten a hold of the Lucky Seven Gun, and that Charlie had decided to become the unnamed hero who would eventually become Chuckles.

The play started. It was the story of the founding of Pleasantville, how Simon Masters and Louis Begly dammed up Pleasant Lake, creating a big enough hole in the ground to fit a safe, little city. Unfortunately it had all gone wrong when the Mobster Kings and the Red Valley Gang (the precursors of the more modern Death Valley Gang and the Mobsters of Misneach, who had now fused) moved in and turned what was supposed to be a haven into a hell-hole.

At intermission, Belle stepped outside into the cool air. So much had changed, yet so much was still the same.

"Thinking again?" Charlie came out and joined her. She leaned on him and he put an arm around her.

"I've been alive 22 years. So much as happened." Belle looked up at the stars. "I just wonder about the next 22 years."

"So much can happen. You might even be a mother by that stage." Charlie pointed out. "I could even be a father."

"We'll just have to see what happens, won't we?" Belle hugged her best friend tightly, and he squeezed her just as hard. For a few minutes, they were both silent, simply enjoying each others company. Finally, they both pulled away and looked at each other.

"IT'S THE DVM! RUN FOR IT!" They heard someone screaming inside.

"The stuff is in the car." Belle rolled her eyes.

"Best get to it then." Charlie sighed.

They both grinned. No matter what happened in the next 22 years, 50 years, 100 years, there was no doubt that it would find Belle Louise Masters and Charlie Thurlow Begly as best friends, and Chuckles and Giggles as the heroes of the city of Pleasantville.

Chapter 51

Petunia was made for nursing. Ever since the days of playing with the boys and Tammy back in school she'd always been the one to bandage them back up again after they'd inevitably managed to injure themselves.

"Karate practise again?" One of the older nurses at the hospital where she worked asked kindly as Petunia folded clean linen.

"Pretty much." Petunia chuckled, looking at a few of her new bruises. Technically, karate HAD been involved, only it'd been more directed at Mobster Marion the day before - a dry-cleaning accident had sparked another outrageous overreaction by Pleasantvilles local prima donna.

--

"Marion, I understand you're upset, but calling in a helicopter strike over a ruined dress?" Lady Courage tried to reason with the irate Mobster Marion who was bright red with fury. Today, she was trying to destroy a dry-cleaning establishment for ruining a dress. Heretics.

"THIS DRESS WAS MY FAVOURITE! IT COST ME A FORTUNE!" Mobster Marion screeched back.

"In man-power to steal it maybe." Giggles had quipped dryly.

"I loved that dress!" Mobster Marion started sobbing as Lady Luck rubbed her back.

"It'll be okay." She soothed the irate villian.

"Really?" Mobster Marion hiccoughed.

"You look like a complete cow in everything you wear so what's the loss of one dress going to hurt?"

--

"You really need to be more careful." One of the other nurses said, waking Petunia from her brief daydream. "Someone your size won't heal quickly."

The words were meant kindly, but Petunia had to resist the urge to flinch. Her weight was still a very sore point with her - she wasn't drastically overweight, but her large frame and extra baggage was noticeable, no matter how healthy and fit she tried to be.

"To be fair, at least you're only practising. Have you SEEN that Knight, Lady Luck?" Another younger nurse piped up.

"Oh. My. God. I never thought the world would ever see a chubby superhero, but there she is!" Another nurse joined in the gossip.

"Not that she actually does much, I daresay that extra weight holds her back!"

"Not someone I'd want protecting me, that's for certain."

"I need to go and make my rounds, I'll be back." Petunia quickly made her way out of the storeroom and headed out to check on her patients. There was nothing wrong with her, and there certainly was nothing wrong with Lady Luck! She knew her limitations, that's why she stuck to healing her fellow Knights if they fell, that's what they loved her for. So what if she didn't go out and fight directly, she still did her fair share and copped a fair amount of abuse for it, her various bruises and scrapes were testament to that!

Still, they didn't know. They were as ignorant as everyone else in the city, Petunia supposed. She wheeled her trolley of supplies to the first door, ready to check on some young men who were in there after a foolish joy-ride in one of their cars.

She pulled out some bandages, and couldn't help overhearing what they said.

"It's the fat one again."

"Blow! Oh well, best be nice to her, probably doesn't get much male attention."

"Her own fault for not losing weight."

Petunia had to count to ten and take a breath. She had a husband!! A husband who was a police officer too - TJ had followed in his fathers footsteps and was currently a junior officer for the Pleasantville Police Force.

She sighed. She supposed she should be used to it, stuff like this happened all the time, but it always somehow managed to get under her guard and wound her ever-so-slightly - and all those wounds added up over the journey.

Picking up the bandages, she went in to change dressings and clean up any mishaps. It was her job after all, even if she wasn't appreciated.

--

"Okay, the dry-cleaning I can understand. I can cop the ruined shoes. The botched jewellery I even sympathised with. But because they overcooked your steak slightly?!" Lady Courage looked dumbfounded at Mobster Marion and her band of Emerald Mobsters, who were trying to destroy a high-class restaurant that overlooked Lake Pleasant.

"I LIKE MY STEAK RARE!" Mobster Marion snarled. "Today is my BIRTHDAY and these morons RUINED it!"

"Happy Birthday!" Giggles beamed.

"Thank you!" Mobster Marion smiled back.

"How many centuries old are you now?" Giggles followed up.

"Did you REALLY need to poke the bear?" Chuckles facepalmed.

"It was just so tempting!" Giggles argued.

"DESTROY THEM ALL!" Mobster Marion roared in anguished fury.

"Well, bear's been poked. Now what?" Sir Dark sighed as he prepared to see off an Emerald attack.

"At least if she's taking out her angst on us then she's not blowing things up." Lady Luck pointed out.

"Works for me!" Chuckles pulled out his beloved Lions Claw Blade and rushed at Mobster Marion, who had her short-sword out ready for him. The swords clashed and the battle was on!

"I don't understand why you bother with Ruby or Emerald power against me, you know it doesn't work!" Giggles floated above the scene, antagonising the Emerald Mobsters.

"Easy Giggles, don't absorb too much or you'll be ill!" Lady Luck hissed.

"I'll be careful, promise." Giggles saluted her friend.

"Why don't you get in and fight instead of leaving it all to Giggles then? Too fat for your own good?" Mobster Marion overheard the conversation and snapped at Lady Luck.

Something snapped inside Petunias head. After hearing jibes about her weight all day, this last insult from Mobster Marion was too much. She glared at the Mobster, before throwing down her first aid kit and rushing angrily at the woman who insulted her.

"LADY LUCK!" Sir Dark screamed. Lady Luck was no match for Mobster Marion, who quickly knocked her out cold with one hit.

--

"Wha...Where?" Petunia opened her eyes. She went to sit up, but several pairs of hands stopped her.

"You need to lie back and rest young lady. No more karate for you!" She heard the voice of her senior nurse, stern but gentle.

"You copped quite a nasty knock to the head. You'll need to rest for a while." Another nurse said.

Petunia blinked. She was in the hospital, in bed.

How embarrassing.

"Where's Teddy?" Petunia mumbled.

"I'm right here you silly girl." She could hear the exasperation in TJs voice and see the worry in his face as he leaned over to kiss her. "What were you THINKING?"

"I really don't know. I just got so angry..." Petunia sighed. Her head was throbbing and her arm felt heavy. Probably broken.

"We'll leave you two alone." One the two nurses smiled, and the pair left. Petunia looked towards the window, where morning light was streaming in.

"You didn't stand a chance against Marion. She dealt with you in thirty seconds flat." TJ sighed. "Thankfully Chuckles stepped in and stopped her from finishing you off. However he did manage to ruin her new dress, so she'll be after blood next time."

"She's such a cow. A stuck-up, pretentious, spoilt cow." Petunia replied. "She's great entertainment value though."

"You should have seen her face when Lady Courage told her to learn to sew." TJ chuckled. He stroked her face tenderly. "Is there anything you want to talk about?" He asked quietly.

Petunia put her hand over his, but couldn't meet his eyes. "I'll be okay." She whispered.

TJ looked at her, concerned. Wisely, he decided to say nothing. This was something that Petunia had to work out for herself in her own time, her own way.

Suddenly a small stampede burst into the room, or so it seemed.

"Are you okay Tuney?" Sunny cried.

"You were so awesome going after Marion like that!" Sam grinned.

"It was a foolish thing to do!" Tammy disagreed with her twin.

"I'm just glad you seem to be on the mend." Daniel patted Petunias shoulder.

"Is it REALLY necessary for all us Knights to hang out and do EVERYTHING together?" Webster raised an eyebrow, having been dragged along by his fellow Knights.

"YES." Was the resounding reply.

Some things you just don't screw with.

Chapter

52

"What is it THIS time?" Chuckles grumbled as he and Giggles made their way to the Pleasantville Entertainment Centre.

"She didn't like the direction the play was taking." Master Revolver told them, looking harrassed.

"She's getting out of control!" Giggles facepalmed. "Just about anything sets her off nowadays!"

"She's not the only one." Sir Lionheart muttered under his breath.

--

"Hey Tuney! Sunny, Lizzy, Tammy and I are going for a walk to the dam with Maddy and Lara, do you want to come with us?" Belle asked a few days earlier, thinking some good quality girl time would help get Petunia out of the funk she was in. Instead, Petunia looked at her coldly.

"I'm fine, thank you." Was the reply as she sat down at Bills resturant eating chips.

"Tuney, sitting around eating isn't going to help anyone." Belle tried.

Of course, she inadvertantly put her foot in it.

"I'll manage my life as I see fit, and I'll thank you not to judge!" Petunia snapped angrily. "Leave me alone!"

"Petunia!" Belle gasped.

"Leave. Me. Alone!"

--

"Anyway Lady Luck, we were thinking it'd be worth you getting in on our combat training." Sir Lionheart said as the Knights of the Last Order (and Lizzy) assembled for their "training" the next day.

"Why? Isn't my job to make sure you're all healthy?" Lady Luck frowned.

"Well, yes, but-," Sir Lionheart began.

"So why should I bother learning "combat" for?" Lady Luck narrowed her eyes at him.

Sir Lionheart turned to look at Sir Dark, who looked confused.

"We all thought that you'd benefit from knowing how to fight." Sir Dark tried.

"What are you trying to say to me?" Lady Luck stood up.

"Lady Luck, we're just trying to help." Lady Silent pleaded.

"Well I don't need help, thank you." Lady Luck turned on her heel and left.

"Tuney wait!" Sir Dark bolted after her as the others looked at each other, upset and confused.

--

"It must just be that time of month." Master Revolver shrugged, earning him a slap upside the head from Giggles. "I rest my case!"

"Can you NOT antagonise my partner when we're trying to stop Marion from destroying the entire city one temper tantrum at a time?!" Chuckles glared at Master Revolver, who scowled back.

"Where's the rest of your Knight friends? I thought they'd all be here rallied around Lionheart the instant I looked at him." Master Revolver grumbled.

"We've been having some issues. Look, here's Lady Courage, Lady Silent and Sir Hyper now!" Sir Lionheart breathed a sigh of relief as three of his Noble Knights of the Last Order appeared.

"Sir Hedgehog is on his way, but I have no idea about Sir Dark and Lady Luck." Lady Courage informed her leader.

"Fair enough." Sir Lionheart frowned.

"So how many innocent people has she got in there hmm?" Giggles turned to Master Revolver, who flinched.

"You act like this is MY fault!" He winced.

"Well, you're the idiot who brought an emotionally-unstable psychopath with a severe entitlement complex to the theatre." Giggles pointed out.

"There's at least 100 people in there, I managed to escape with a few others." Master Revolver sighed, defeated. "You're not going to be able to stop her though, she's completely off her rocker at the moment."

"Alright, I'm going in there to stop her!" Chuckles announced. Giggles facepalmed again.

"She's armed to the teeth, probably with explosives and Emerald warriors, not to mention CHUCKLES I SWEAR I AM GOING TO HURT YOU IF YOU KEEP RUNNING OFF MID-SENTENCE ON ME!" Giggles roared with fury as she rushed in after her best friend.

The pair burst into the lobby, weapons drawn, ready to subdue the irate Mobster. It was too quiet though.

"This is up there with one of your very WORST ideas." Giggles grumbled as Chuckles headed towards the main theatre. Sure enough, ambush. I think we all saw it coming a mile off.

"I suggest the pair of you just STOP right there. I don't know what prompted you to come rushing in here, but I can tell you right now you're outnumbered, outgunned and outdone." Mobster Marion stepped towards them, flanked by Emerald Mobsters.

"Who takes minions to a play?" Chuckles questioned, eyeing the Emerald Mobsters.

"Yeah, one would think you'd want a little privacy on your date." Giggles pointed out.

"What, and you two don't take those Knights with you everywhere you go?" Mobster Marion scowled.

"We don't go on dates." Chuckles and Giggles replied simultaneously.

"Riiiiight."

"We don't!" Giggles frowned.

"We've never been on one single date together, ever!" Chuckles protested.

"Suuuuure."

"It's true!" Giggles yelled. "Besides, Chuckles was more interested in Lady Courage than me."

"I forgot about that, how does it feel to know your partner liked a secondary character over you?" Mobster Marion grinned triumphantly.

"Better than getting stuck with that loser Revolver. When are you two getting married anyway?" Chuckles stepped in to defend Giggles.

The mention of marriage seemed to set off a firecracker in the head of Mobster Marion, who immediately flew into a rage and started swinging her sword at Chuckles.

"Oh dear." Giggles scratched her head as Mobster Marion screamed like a furious banshee.

"'Oh dear' is right, she's been itching for a ring for a while." One of the Emerald Mobsters said, looking bemused at the scene in front of him.

"You should see some of the hints she's been putting out. It's getting quite sad really." Another Emerald Mobster piped up.

"Wow. Just wow." Giggles said, her voice laced with pity as Mobster Marion made life hell for Chuckles.

"GIGGLES WILL YOU HELP ME HERE?!" Chuckles roared, barely holding his own against the onslaught.

"I'm not a swordmaster though." Giggles pointed out.

"SHOOT HER!"

"And lower myself to the standard of that moron she's dating?"

Outside, the Noble Knights of the Last Order were milling around when Lady Luck and Sir Dark finally showed up.

"You two okay?" Sir Lionheart asked kindly.

"Fine." Lady Luck bit.

"Chuckles and Giggles rushed in there. So far nothing." Lady Silent looked at the doors of the theatre. Just then, an Emerald Mobster walked out, sighing.

"Get in there. It's getting ugly." He said to the Knights, before turning to Master Revolver. "I'm not working for that psycho bitch any longer, I quit."

He stripped off his Emerald Suit, leaving him in only his boxers, before stalking off with as much dignity as his fashion would allow him.

Master Revolver looked at the Emerald Suit at his feet.

"Well." He frowned.

"Come on guys, let's go." Sir Lionheart motioned for his Noble Knights to follow him into the theatre.

They found Giggles checking her fingernails as Chuckles desperately tried to protect himself from Mobster Marion.

"Wow." Sir Hedgehog gaped at the scene in front of him.

"Yeah. All over an engagement ring that Revolver is too thick to give her." Giggles checked the Desert Eagle. "Dad really needs to polish this."

"I actually think it's smart of Revolvers part." Sir Hyper said.

Mobster Marion stopped attacking Chuckles, eye twitching. Suddenly she rushed at Sir Hyper, who yelped and ran screaming from the psycho Mobster.

"Just...I got nothing." Lady Courage threw up her hands.

"I think I can understand." Lady Luck sighed. "You just want someone to recognise that you need love, don't you Marion?"

The Mobster stopped chasing Sir Hyper and glared at Lady Luck.

"Everyone always has a go at me about my weight. The man of your dreams doesn't get the hint that you want to be with him forever. It sucks being female, doesn't it?" Lady Luck approached Mobster Marion, whose bottom lip was starting to tremble.

"I know." Mobster Marion dropped her sword.

"I still got nothing." Lady Courage groaned as the two women in front of her started hugging and crying together.

"At least nothing's going to get blown up." Sir Lionheart pointed out.

--

"I'm going to go and do my rounds." Petunia sighed as the nurses at work started talking about diet plans and dress sizes. Another day, another round of hearing about weight and body shapes and ugh!

"Oh, Petunia? Can you cover my rounds again please?" One of the other nurses asked. "I'll take yours if you like."

"Sure." Petunia sighed. She headed out to the ward, ready to clean up messes and fix up bandages.

"HEY! It's Nurse Petunia!" She heard a young voice cry, followed by several cheers. She grinned. Her wards for the afternoon were the children who were currently in hospital - and THEY certainly didn't care about how fat she was!

Chapter

53

"She's reading AGAIN." Charlie rubbed his temples.

"Your best friend has a hobby. Big deal." Sunny shrugged, sitting at Bills restaurant trying in vain to feed Melody without a major mess.

"What's she researching this time?" Tammy asked, sipping her thickshake.

"She's found out that the two ringleaders of the protestors who were slaughtered 93 years ago were none other than James Masters and Frank Begly." Charlie slumped down next to Sammy, who offered him some chips. "So now she's wondering what else our family has been involved in."

"Sounds interesting." Webster said, taking a mouthful of beer. Sunny frowned at him.

"Where's Maddy and Tate?" She asked.

"At home." Webster replied shortly.

"Why aren't they hanging out with us?" Sunny pressed.

"Because they're at home." Webster scowled.

"Shouldn't you be at home with them?" Sunny continued her onslaught.

"I'm a Knight of the Last Order as much as you are. Where's Patrick then if you're being so high-and-mighty?" Webster shot back, annoyed.

"At work, he's been putting in extra hours due to the destruction wrought by the DVM." Sunny replied triumphantly. "We're going out for a family dinner tonight when he gets home."

Webster didn't reply, he just glared at his beer like he wanted to kill it.

"Is there something up with you and Maddy?" Sam asked innocently, earning a thwack over the head from Tammy and a kick in the shins from Sunny.

"It's nothing." Webster got up. "But if you guys don't want me around, I'll piss off."

"Webster, don't be like that!" Tammy tried as Webster stormed off. On his way out, he shoved past Belle, who looked super-hyper-mega affronted.

"What happened?" She sat down next to Sunny, dropping a small mountain range of books on the table.

"We were just wondering why Webster isn't spending much time with Maddy and Tate." Sammy said, rubbing his sore shin and head.

"Oh, that'd be because it's coming up to the anniversary of when his friend Tate offed herself." Belle said with all the sensitivity of a dead cod fish. "Plus Maddy's been a doing a bit of a Mobster Marion and started talking about marriage."

"And you know all of this how?" Charlie looked sceptical.

"Because I talk to people and do my research, dumb-dumb." Belle smirked back.

"I thought Webster adored Maddy?" Tammy asked.

"He does. But he misses Tate too, especially around this time of year." Belle sighed, thinking back to her own part in the whole affair, nearly getting herself killed out of pride.

"What's with the books?" Sunny asked, remembering her own part in what had happened and feeling awkward.

"I've been looking up James Masters and Frank Begly." Belle replied brightly, making Charlie groan.

"You're not going to make me hear this story AGAIN are you?" He whined.

"Stick a cork in that whine, this is our family history we're talking about!" Belle snapped.

"I wanna hear the story!" Sam decided.

"I do too!" Tammy grinned.

"Why don't we all go back to my place? The others can meet us there and we can all hear it!" Sunny beamed, cleaning up Melody.

"Swell." Charlie muttered.

--

"So, we all ready?" Daniel asked the next night.

The group were all sprawled out over Sunnys lounge room, all in their pyjamas, some wrapped in blankets, the lights low.

"This will be interesting." Maddy snuggled into Webster, who smiled weakly.

"Only the first sixty-nine times." Charlie scowled, sitting in the window frame, looking out over the creek.

"Let's get started!" TJ grinned, sharing his popcorn with Petunia.

Belle felt important.

"It was 93 years ago, when the DVG didn't exist and the Mobsters of Misneach were only a very minor player in Pleasantvilles growing underbelly..."

--

Pleasantville had just celebrated her 100th birthday. To celebrate, Crusader Roger of the March Hill Crusaders had decided the time was ripe for a heist. A small convoy of wagons carrying gold from the mines that lay north of the city was heading that way, and the March Hill Crusaders wanted to get in first before the Mobsters of Misneach, the Silent Lake Gang, the Light Reach Gang or the Hidden Fear Crew heard about it.

It was early one Monday morning when the convoy was meant to shuffle through. They were going to stop to refresh their horses and supplies before heading off again. The plan was to steal the booty while the drivers were busy.

Alas, the March Hill Crusaders hadn't planned on the crime-fighting hero duo Damon and Pythias coming to spoil the party.

"Hi Roger! Why are you hanging around those wagons for?" Damon asked as Roger approached the stationery wagons, ready to call his men over.

"YOU!" Crusader Roger growled. He glared at the cowboy in front of him, who wore a black hat, a red scarf over his face, a red flannel shirt, black pants and carried a very strange-looking gun that he dubbed the Lucky Seven Gun.

"Yes, me. Me Damon." The cheeky hero replied. "You wouldn't be after the cargo of these here wagons would you?"

"Never you mind that!" Crusader Roger felt for his own pistol. He wanted to get this over quickly before any of the other crime groups showed up. "You get out of here before I call my men."

"Oh wow, like THEY'LL do anything." Damon rolled his eyes.

"Especially if I have anything to do with it." Said a voice from behind Crusader Roger. Suddenly, he felt his pistol fall to the ground, still in its holster.

"Pythias! So glad you could be bothered to join us!" Damon grinned at his best friend.

Pythias smirked. "Why would I let you have all the fun?" Pythias was dressed almost identical to Damon, only in blue and white instead of red and black. Instead of a gun, he held a long, five-foot blade that was called the Lions Claw Blade.

"I am warning you two. Let me go and get out of here. You wouldn't want to be here when everyone else gets here." Crusader Roger warned.

"Well, you can discount the Light Reach Gang, Gangster Steven is still out with a broken jaw." Pythias pointed out.

"I really should apologise for that." Damon mused.

"Yes, you should." Pythias agreed.

"That still leaves the Mob, the Silent Lakers and the Crew." Crusader Roger grimaced. Why oh WHY did these two INSIST on incessant babbling?

"Well, I dealt with Mobster Michael on the way here, so he won't be showing up." Pythias said. "By the way Damon I wouldn't go near Misneach Manor anytime soon if I were you."

"Why?" Asked Damon.

"I might have insinuated a few things about you and Michaels wife."

"For the love of-! Will you two can it already?!" Crusader Roger roared furiously.

"Are you going to leave these wagons and their cargo alone?" Asked Pythias.

"Nope." Was the snappish reply.

"Then we're not leaving until you've been brought to justice." Damon replied with a nod.

"Well, well, well. If it isn't the March Hill Crusaders. Looks like you've got your hands full there Roger."

Damon grabbed his gun. Crewmate Theodore and his men had arrived to claim their share of the booty.

"Damn this! Where are my men?! They should have stopped you!" Crusader Roger roared in fury.

"They're busy dealing with the Silent Lakers. So we thought we'd bypass the crap and get straight to the treasure." Crewmate Theodore casually explained. "Now move."

"Nope." Damon and Pythias replied together.

"Then so be it." Crewmate Theodore growled. "FIRE!"

Crusader Roger fled the scene in a rage while Damon and Pythias hid behind the wagons.

"Get out here you little cowards!" Crewmate Theodore cried.

"Well, this has gone well." Damon sighed as Pythias quickly poked his head out from behind one of the wagons, nearly getting it blown off.

"No big deal, we just wait here until the drivers come back and then we help them escape." Pythias brushed his best friend off.

"Pythias, the Crew are advancing on us, we have NO way of holding them off, the drivers are probably inside scared stiff after hearing the noise and you want to - PYTHIAS!" Damon cried in exasperation. He grabbed the Lucky Seven Gun and fired at the feet of the Crew while Pythias opened the gate of a nearby cattlepen. The beasts, happy to have some room to move, stampeded out towards the Crew.

"Oh I am going to SLAUGHTER him when this is over!" Damon growled to himself, eye twitching. He quickly ran into the saloon where the drivers were hiding.

"Here's our chance to get out of here, let's go!" He beckoned for them to follow him. Keeping an eye out for any criminals, Damon led the drivers back to their belongings and went with them to the city boundaries.

"You're safe now. Whatever you do, don't come back here!" Damon warned as the last wagon made its way over the ridge.

"Trust me, we won't!" The driver of the wagon assured the young cowboy. With a flick of his whip, he set his horse to a trot and it wasn't long before all Damon could see of the convoy was a trail of dust.

Sighing, Damon made his way back to the scrapyard, where he knew Pythias would be waiting. Sure enough, when he got there Pythias had already shed his disguise and emerged as Frank Begly.

"Before you yell at me, I managed to get all the cattle back into the pen, so no one is losing out." Frank chuckled at the look on his friends face.

"You could have been killed - AGAIN." Damon pulled off his disguise to reveal James Masters.

"I swear Jimmy, I'll never get myself killed. In fact, it'll probably be you who gets me killed!" Frank laughed. "How would that be for irony?"

"Irony and coincidence are not the same thing." James scowled.

"Oh, sorry, I forgot you're all educated now." Frank teased. James couldn't help but grin back.

"You're an idiot." He punched his friends shoulder.

"How are the plans for tomorrow anyway?"

"Ready to go." Frank replied. "Graham and Jack have managed to get about 20 people who are sick of the direction this city is going in. They've all agreed to a sit-down protest outside of City Hall."

"Perfect." James replied. "If we include the 60 people that I managed to muster, that's 80 people who will be protesting with us."

"You really think this is going to work?" Frank asked as the pair headed home.

"I know it will." James smirked.

Chapter

54

The morning of the protest dawned clear and calm. At the crack of dawn both boys were up to do their chores before heading out for what they believed was the turning point in the history of their city.

"Just promise me you boys will be careful." Thomas Masters said to James as the family sat down to breakfast.

"We will. We'll be going as Damon and Pythias. That should discourage anyone from trying to attack." James helped himself to another slice of bread and butter.

Meanwhile, Peter Begly was having a similar conversation with his son, Frank.

"Any sign of danger and I want you to promise me you'll come straight home." Peter warned as Frank drank his milk.

"We promise." Frank agreed.

The pair met at the scapyard, where they changed into their disguises and headed out to meet the crowd - and their destinies.

"Did your father read you the riot act too?" James asked as he pulled on his black pants.

"Yeah. Anyone would think he didn't have two other sons to carry on if I was lost." Frank chuckled, putting on his blue shirt.

"I have three for the old man to fall back on, although I don't think Lachlan really subscribes to the family ethos." James mused. "He's never had the Improbability Clause used on him, and I don't think he knows any of the rules from the Masters Code."

"A Masters who doesn't know the Code? That's a bit worrying." Frank raised an eyebrow.

"Montague Masters wrote the Code because of his violent tendencies, which he got from his father."

"That's MAURICE Masters, Montague was the Begly, but that's just a legend though. I mean, I've never had any violent urges in my life." James pointed out as he tied on his scarf to finish his transformation into Damon.

"I guess so." Frank laughed, putting on the hat that finished his transformation into Pythias.

--

"WHAT DO WE WANT?" Yelled Damon.

"A SAFE CITY!" Was the reply from the slowly increasing crowd in front of the the Mayors office.

"WHAT WILL MAKE OUR CITY SAFE?" Yelled Pythias.

"COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY!" Was the cry.

"For the last 90 years our Council has sat in the pocket of criminals and scum, letting them terrorise this city and those who live here!" Damon cried. "We won't let this city become overrun with corruption, the time to stop the rot is now!"

The crowd cheered.

"You really know how to give a good speech." Pythias grinned as Damon took a breath.

"That's because I'm educated." Damon smirked.

The front doors of City Hall opened, and out walked the Mayor.

"What is the meaning of this disturbance?" He asked coldly.

"We're sick of the underbelly this city is fostering!" Pythias replied. "We're sick of criminals hurting people and either getting let off or getting piss-weak sentences!"

"Or even the state of Pleasantville Correction Centre, anyone would think you WANTED to allow criminals to walk out of there without any worries!" Damon added. "And it's the same crims every time, the ones who are paying you and keeping you in your snug little office!"

"I have no idea what you're talking about." The Mayor replied coldly, and getting jeered and booed by the crowd for his trouble. "I will now ask that you move along, you are creating an unlawful disturbance."

"We're allowed to protest!" Damon retorted.

"You two are known for your violence and insufferability." The Mayor pointed out. "How do I know this protest won't devolve into something more sinister?"

"We've left our weapons at home. We plan to do this peacefully." Pythias opened his arms to show that the Lions Claw Blade was no where on his person. Damon copied him, to prove that he didn't have the Lucky Seven Gun either.

"So be it. I will not be held responsible for anything that goes wrong, you hear?" The Mayor scowled before stalking back to his office.

"Believe me, nothing is going to go wrong." Damon grinned.

--

Several days later, the protest was still going. Many people had left in boredom, and tempers were starting to rise.

"This ISN'T working." Pythias groaned as another small group of people left, leaving only 48 people and the two cowboys.

"Trust me, it will work. The Mayor is starting to crack, believe me." Damon insisted.

He was half-right. The Mayor WAS starting to crack. A government representative was going to be visiting in the next few days, and if the protest was still going then questions were going to be asked. It could very well mean the end of his time in charge of the city.

"You're the highest power in this city." The Mayor looked out of the window of his office at the crowd below. "They fear you, as they rightly should. That's why I called you in here."

"And what do I get out of it?" Crusader Roger scowled, his arms shackled - after the attempt at stealing the wagons, Crusader Roger had been captured by Pythias, who had tied him up and left him for the sheriff to deal with.

"A pardon, of course. For you and your men." The Mayor turned to the angry criminal. "Get rid of them."

"You have yourself a deal, Mister Mayor." Crusader Roger grinned.

Outside, Pythias was talking to another protestor while Damon was stalking the front of the crowd.

"We've almost got them. I'm certain we do. They can't just ignore us." He muttered to himself.

"Who says we're ignoring you? A bit stupid to do this unarmed, don't you think?"

Damon and Pythias spun around. In front of the Council building stood Crusader Rodger and over a hundred of his Crusaders.

"We're protesting peacefully. You have no right to be here." Pythias said, but his voice wavered slightly. Each of the Crusaders held a shotgun in his hands, and they were all pointed at the crowd.

"What are we going to do?" Whispered one of the protesters.

"We're staying here." Damon glared into the eyes of Crusader Roger. "He'd never fire on an unarmed group, and even if he did, he'd be finished within the hour."

Crusader Roger laughed. The colour drained from Damons face.

"Don't you get it you fool?" Crusader Roger pulled out his own pistol and aimed it at Damon. "The Mayor is the one who ordered us to do this."

A look of pure horror covered Damons face, before Crusader Rogers bullet went through his heart and ended his life.

"JIMMY!" Pythias screamed, before his head was blown off by another bullet. The Crusaders had begun firing on the crowd, who were sitting ducks. Some managed to start running, but they too were easily mowed down.

After the dust cleared, nothing was left of the protest but bloodied, dead bodies.

--

"And it was after the massacre that Lachlan Masters, fuelled by his rage, formed the Death Valley Gang." Belle continued to explain. "He kept the Lucky Seven Gun for himself, and traded the Lions Claw Blade to the Mobsters of Misneach for help in destroying the March Hill Crusaders."

"Damon and Pythias." Daniel mused.

"The forerunners of Chuckles and Giggles." Sunny said.

"Yeah, only they didn't have the luxury of seven Noble Knights of the Last Order behind them." Sam pointed out.

"And luckily, we don't have to deal with the March Hill Crusaders." Petunia shuddered.
"They sound brutal."

--

In a small cabin just outside of Pleasantville, two men were meeting.

"I can't thank you enough for giving me this job." One said to the other. "After I stormed out of the Death Valley Mobsters in the middle of a job, I thought I was done for."

"Not at all." The other replied. "Your information has been beyond helpful, not to mention your skill and experience as a criminal. They were foolish to let you go."

"Well, I think Revolver was too concerned with what his psycho girlfriend was plotting, not to mention it's kinda hard to shoot a man in his jocks." The first man laughed.

"Either way, I'm glad you're on our side for now." The second man got up out of his chair and poured two glasses of whiskey.

"It's admirable that you and your people have managed to stay hidden for so many generations." The first man accepted the glass of whiskey from his co-conspirator.

"To our return to power." The second man lifted his glass in a toast.

"To your return to power." The first man grinned.

Chapter

55

It was time. A time for long-held rivalries to be renewed. A time for long-forgotten battles to be re-fought. A time for old wounds to be re-opened.

"THAT WAS SO NOT OUT YOU CHEATERS!"

It was time for a game of cricket.

"Earth to morons, if you don't want to be run out, stay in your crease!" Sunny snapped at an irate Daniel.

"I WAS in my crease thank you, I was MILES inside my crease!" Daniel yelled back.

"Not from where I'm standing." Petunia piped up. "You were no where near it!"

"It was a run out fair and square!" Belle agreed.

"Of course YOU'D say that!" TJ glowered.

"What are you accusing us of?" Belle fumed.

"You're cheaters, plain and square!" Charlie stalked over from his wicket, throwing down his bat.

"Them's fighting words!" Sunny prepared for an altercation.

"You're on!"

"Are you guys seriously going to get into fisticuffs over a stupid game of cricket?" Webster looked amused at his younger friends.

"YES." Was the resounding reply.

"It's great to see that maturity is a pre-requisite for joining the Last Order." Webster rolled his eyes.

"Well go home then if you're too good for us!" Sam folded his arms. "Maddy says you haven't been around much anyway."

"And what would you know?" Webster frowned at the younger man.

"I might be going through a teaching degree and trying to save the city, but I can still make time for my friends and family." Sam replied snarkily.

"Sam has a point." Sunny agreed. "Patrick and I have a great relationship, we're even getting properly married in autumn."

"And we're going to be the bridesmaids!" Belle, Petunia and Tammy started dancing happily.

"So this is what this is about. You think I should give in and marry Maddy." Webster scowled.

"Mate, we just want you to start being a family with her again!" Charlie groaned. "It's been nearly five years since Tate was born-,"

"Don't." Webster snapped. Belle rolled her eyes.

"You are NOT still wrapped up over that petty criminal you used to call a best friend, are you?" She asked.

"Tate wasn't a petty criminal!" Webster was now fired up. He narrowed his eyes at Belle.

"Easy mate, Belle has a point!" TJ pointed out. "Sure she might have done a few good things, but that doesn't make up for the fact that she went completely psycho and tried to kill a University worth of people."

"She had a few issues but there was nothing that couldn't be fixed!" Webster protested.

"Why are you still protecting her? It's not like you loved her." Tammy said.

Webster grimaced, before turning on his heel and storming off.

"I really don't know why he decided to join the Last Order, he really doesn't get along with us at all." Daniel frowned.

"He probably thought we were all scholars like Belle." Charlie rolled his eyes.

"It wouldn't hurt you guys to follow my example every once in a while." Belle narrowed her eyes at him.

"He'll figure it out." Sunny shrugged. "I know Patrick and I had a lot of issues when we first had Melody. Trying to balance being a Knight and a parent is hard work, and it took us the best part of a year to sort it out."

"Yeah, we remember." TJ smirked.

"Anyway, let's just ease off him for a while." Sunny continued. "He's only been a Knight for what, six months? Give it some time."

"I agree. Webster gets in moods sometimes." Belle added. "I lived with him and Maddy for four years, trust me, I know."

"If you say so." Petunia shrugged. "Now are you boys going to bowl or what?"

"THAT WAS NOT OUT!"

--

"WHY HASN'T HE ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM YET?!" Mobster Marion wailed.

"Will you stop it already?!" Daryl Jones groaned, sitting at his father's desk, feet resting next to the monitor. "I don't know why your stupid boyfriend won't propose."

Mobster Marion pouted and flopped onto the sofa. "Where's your father anyway? My best henchmen are in prison and I want them out."

"He's busy at the moment with a few of his other projects." Daryl checked his phone.

"You're an absolute brat, you know that don't you?" Mobster Marion scowled at the younger Jones. "Tell Arnold when he gets in that I want to see him."

"Toodles." Daryl waved half-heartedly as Mobster Marion stormed out in a huff. He continued playing with his phone, not paying attention to anything that went on around him. Suddenly, he felt a knife at his throat.

"Hello Daryl. You're giving the Ruby Suit to us." Said a voice behind him.

"Oh am I just?" Daryl grinned lazily. "You really think I'm scared of a little knife at my throat when I've been on the wrong end of the Lions Claw Blade?"

"Given the Lions Claw is currently wielded by a simpering idiot, I think you should be paying the knife at your throat a bit more respect." The voice said, a note of anger coming through.

"I recognise you from somewhere...ah yes. When Marion tried to blow up the theatre, you declared her a psycho and left the Death Valley Mob." Daryl spun around in the chair, his foot narrowly missing his assailant.

"My name is Mark if you must know. Crusader Mark, to be more precise." The man stood up at full height, knife still pointed in Daryl's direction.

"Crusader?" Daryl looked confused.

"You would be too young to know of the March Hill Crusaders, they've been underground since before your father was born." Crusader Mark told him. "We used to rule Pleasantville until the Mobsters of Misneach got too strong."

"And now you want your throne back?" Daryl smirked.

"If you don't mind." Crusader Mark smirked back.

"And you thought my father would give a damn if I was killed?" Daryl rolled his eyes.

"We just want the Ruby Suit. It's a powerful weapon, and too potent to be left in the hands of a moron like you." Crusader Mark told the young man in front of him.

"If you think insulting me is going to get me to hand it over, then you're wrong." Daryl put his feet back up on the desk. "Besides, I don't have it here."

"Liar." Crusader Mark pulled out a large revolver. Daryl's eyes widened.

"Is that the Lucky Seven Gun?!" He asked warily. "How'd you get it off Giggles?"

"It is NOT the Lucky Seven Gun, as nice as it would be to have it. No, this is the cousin of the Lucky Seven, the Mystic Eight Gun. There are seven guns in total, each with a weapon of some sort as a brother." Crusader Mark rolled his eyes. "For example, the Lucky Seven and the Lions Claw are brothers. The Trinity Three and the Tigers Tooth Scimitar are another set, as are the Palatable Six and the Stingrays Tail Whip."

"So what's the brother of that one?" Daryl couldn't help but ask.

"Never you mind. The Ruby Suit please?" Crusader Mark cocked the gun. "I won't ask again."

"Nope." Daryl replied.

"Fine. You die then." Crusader Mark prepared to fire the Mystic Eight Gun.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you Mark."

Crusader Mark groaned. Standing at the door was Demon Jones with a small posse of Emerald Mobsters.

"Who are you with?" Demon Jones glared at Crusader Mark.

"I've gone through enough exposition with your son, I'm sure he can fill you in later during a timeskip." Crusader Mark replied.

"Lazy." Demon Jones scowled. "Get out of my office."

"Hmmm...I think not." Crusader Mark smiled. "I quite like it in here."

"You're completely outnumbered and outmatched; what makes you so certain you're going to get out of here alive?" Daryl glared at his attacker.

"You REALLY think I came in here alone?" Crusader Mark began to laugh. "I have Crusaders throughout the building, there's no way I'm leaving without the Ruby Suit."

"And I told you, I don't have it here. Even if I did, you'd never be able to get it off me." Daryl replied coldly.

"So be it." Crusader Mark pointed the Mystic Eight Gun at Daryl's head. "Good-bye Daryl."

Daryl flinched as a gunshot rang throughout the room. Crusader Mark screamed.

"It's YOU!" He pointed at the now broken window, his other arm now dripping with blood.

"Yeah, it's me. You're lucky I know people who work here Demon, otherwise Daryl was a goner." Standing in the broken window frame stood Giggles. "It seems the March Hill Crusaders have taken over the building."

"Well, I never. Giggles coming to save little old me." Daryl sneered at Giggles, who replied by flipping him the bird.

"I'm here to make sure no one gets killed." She aimed the Lucky Seven Gun at Crusader Mark.

"Oh really?" Crusader Mark aimed the Mystic Eight Gun back.

Downstairs, Peter Masters was hiding under his desk as Crusader Roger stood with the Dragons Scale Scythe against Chuckles and the Lions Claw Blade.

"So you're the ones who murdered all those people over 90 years ago." Chuckles glared at Crusader Roger.

"That was my great-grandfather." Crusader Roger said proudly. "It wasn't like YOUR little 'protest' last year where you all escaped. WE made sure that Damon and Pythias didn't live to continue to cause trouble."

Chuckles growled angrily. His hands gripped the Lions Claw Blade tightly.

"You're out of your league Chuckles. Why don't you just drop your weapon and scurry off home where you belong?" Crusader Roger continued. "I might even be inclined to let you live if you do."

Chuckles ran at the Crusader and swung at him with the Lions Claw Blade, but it was blocked by the blade of the Dragons Scale Scythe. "I'll never surrender, I'll fight until the end."

"How cute." With the slightest of movements, Crusader Roger blocked another blow from the Lions Claw Blade. "I'm sure your bravery will be remembered...for a little while."

Chuckles continued to try and get a blow in, but Crusader Roger was far too smart and strong. Upstairs, Giggles was having the same problems with Crusader Mark.

"If you could actually HELP that'd be great!" She snapped at Demon Jones, who shrugged and continued to polish his boomerang.

"I'm too busy enjoying the show." Was the reply.

Giggles cartwheeled out of the way of another bullet. The Mystic Eight Gun seemed so much more potent than its smaller cousin, it might have been completely psychological but Giggles was hopelessly outclassed.

"And THIS is why you don't take on those who are better than you!" Said a voice that Giggles could scarcely believe was coming to her rescue.

"Master Revolver?!" She yelped.

"Marion!" Chuckles cried as Mobster Marion blocked a deadly blow from the Dragons Scale Scythe with her sword downstairs.

"You're out of your league kiddo, get your little buddy upstairs and get out." Mobster Marion warned, an iciness to her voice that Chuckles had never heard before. "My forefathers wiped these punks off the map and I intend to do the same."

Chuckles stepped back. He didn't want to hand this fight over to his sworn enemies but it didn't seem like he had a choice.

"You've done what you've needed, you've saved the innocents, now GET OUT." Master Revolver growled at Giggles. "This isn't your fight."

Giggles groaned, but she knew he was right. She quickly flew out of the building and tapped on one of the downstairs windows. Chuckles motioned to Peter and the other Council Workers.

"Come on, let's get out of here." He said. They all rushed out of the doors, where Giggles grabbed Chuckles and they flew off to the tip.

Chapter

56

"You're joking right?" Sunny gasped.

"Nope."

"You mean the March Hill Crusaders are back?!" Sam yelled.

"Yup."

"And they're trying to take over the Council?" Daniel looked concerned.

"Absolutely."

"And REVOLVER and MARION saved your necks?!" TJ couldn't believe it.

"Believe it."

Chuckles and Giggles had returned to the hideout at the tip, and were instantly swamped by the Knights of the Last Order (minus Webster, who was still snotty with them).

"This is bad." Tammy sat back, thinking hard.

"You think? You wouldn't believe what they have. They have the Mystic Eight Gun and the Dragon Scale Scythe, which are like the nastier versions of the Lucky Seven and the Lions Claw." Chuckles pulled off his bandanas, becoming Charlie Begly again.

"The whatta?" Petunia asked.

"I didn't get it either." Belle shrugged off her Backpack. "Charlie knows more than me."

"I found out when I was in Awesomica that the Lucky Seven and the Lions Claw had cousins." Charlie went on to explain. "I ran into the guys who had the slightly inferior versions if you will - the Palatable Six Gun and the Stingrays Tail Whip. I guess that means there's more of those weapons out there."

"Hmmm..." Belle began to think. "I think I might have read about something like that in one of my history books."

"Are we going to hear about it all day every day for the next month?" Charlie asked dryly.

Luckily for him, Belle is too short to strangle him. Unfortunately, she could still kick his shins.

--

The March Hill Crusaders were back with a vengeance. Over the next month they raided every bank in the city, attacked the school, robbed each of the shopping centres and antagonised the Death Valley Mobsters at every opportunity. Between the crimes and the gang-war, Chuckles, Giggles and the Noble Knights of the Last Order found themselves exceptionally busy.

"This is insane. I seriously don't know who I am some days!" Belle complained to her father. "Yesterday we helped the Crusaders stop the Mobsters from stealing some valuable paintings

that were being transported through town, but the day before we were helped by the Mobsters to stop the Crusaders from killing the City Counsellors!"

"Be grateful none of the other crime families have come back." Peter said dryly. "I'm as confused as you are."

"At least there's no chance of them teaming up together, there's a LOT of bad blood between them; Master Revolver hates Crusader Mark with a passion, and Mobster Marion isn't that fond of Crusader Roger. I haven't even started with how much trouble Demon and Ruby are causing." Belle was slumped back on the couch next to her father, who was also exhausted.

"The return of the Crusaders has seen a spike in my work." Peter groaned. "I haven't had this much work since before the Mob and the DVG merged."

"Hey, you're just prosecuting, I'm prosecuting AND protecting the city!" Belle poked her father in the ribs.

"Well I'm prosecuting AND taking care of your scrawny arse!" Peter tickled her back, and the pair laughed.

Just then, Maddy walked in with Tate. She looked upset and Tate looked ropeable.

"Is Lara around?" Maddy asked.

"What happened?" Peter asked as Belle went to hug her friend.

"Webster happened. We had a fight. A really big one." Maddy began to cry. Belle sighed.

"Was it about you-know-who again?" She asked.

Maddy nodded. "He refuses to hear even the slightest bad thing about her, and if I try to talk about us he shuts down."

"This is getting beyond a joke." Peter shot up the stairs to get his wife, while Belle tried to comfort Maddy and the young Tate, who was still too young to understand what was going on, and what her namesake had done.

"Hey Tate, you wanna come and see my new scooter?" Ozzie came flying back down the stairs. Belle could have hugged him.

"Sure." Tate ran off after her older friend.

"I have the best little brother in the world." Belle grinned at Maddy, who smiled back.

"I have two older sisters and three younger brothers. They drive me insane." She tried to laugh. Soon Lara was downstairs and the three were digging into a bowl of ice cream together.

--

"THRUST! PARRY! THRUST! PARRY!" Yelled Daniel.

"I really don't think this is how swordfighting works." Sunny watched as TJ and Sam thrust and parried respectively at the tip.

"I KNOW this isn't how swordfighting works!" Webster rolled his eyes. "You ever see Charlie resorting to this sort of tomfoolery?"

"You are SERIOUSLY starting to get on my nerves." Petunia scowled.

"I honestly don't know how you guys aren't dead yet. Your weapons and armour are seriously flimsy and outdated, you have ZERO training and you don't take it seriously at all!" Webster groaned.

"We learned on the job. Best sort of training there is!" Tammy fired.

"We DO take it seriously, we just know how to have a laugh at ourselves!" TJ snapped.

"And our weapons have served us well thus far, why mess with the classics?" Sunny finished.

"No wonder Belle gets exasperated with you lot." Webster shook his head.

"At least she has a sense of humour." TJ frowned.

"Why do you even bother with us if you think we're so inferior?" Daniel threw himself up to his full height, which rivaled Charlie. "There's nothing forcing you to join us, you could easily do what Izzy and Lizzy did and form your own crime-fighting group."

"Because I thought you guys knew what you were doing! Instead, you're constantly getting your backsides handed to you requiring Belle and Charlie to come flying in to the rescue!" Webster groaned.

"Not entirely true, there's been plenty of occasions when we've jumped in to save their skins!" Daniel told him. "And we're the ones who kept this city safe while they were on hiatus!"

"And you did a brilliant job at that." Webster muttered.

"What's going on here?" They jumped at a voice coming from behind a pile of rubbish.

"Just this idiot being...well...an idiot." Daniel scowled at Webster, who sneered back as Belle and Charlie joined the fray.

"I wouldn't push your luck, Maddy told us what you said to her - telling her she's not your best friend and never will be was a low blow." Charlie frowned at Webster. "You seriously suck as a boyfriend."

"And this all because I won't marry her?!" Webster bit back, his face beginning to colour with rage.

"NO, because you're an absolute prick to her! How come you keep bringing up Tate? Didn't Pleasantville University get destroyed because YOU chose Maddy over Tate?!" Belle immediately launched into an offensive (well, the Masters Code does stipulate that a Masters

shouldn't hold back). "Surely you would think that you loved Maddy enough that you wouldn't need to bring Tate up again every five seconds!"

Webster let out a low growl. They didn't understand. Tate had been more than just his friend, she had been...

"You don't know anything, so quit acting like you do. You're all still just kids." Webster turned on his heel and made to leave. Belle made to go after him, when her phone rang.

"You're joking right?" She said as Bill politely informed her that there was ANOTHER gang war going on over Lake Pleasant. "We'll be there as soon as we can. Got ya. Love you too!"

"Another turf war?" Sunny groaned as Belle hung up the phone. "Why don't we just leave them at it?"

"We try to, unfortunately they tend to pick battlegrounds where there's a wealth of civilians around for them to kill and injure." Belle shrugged off her rucksack and pulled out her Giggles attire. "Are you going to join us or are you sulking?" She scowled at Webster.

"I'm coming." Webster scowled back, getting his Sir Hedgehog gear out of his bag.

"Well, it's nice to know that we'll have team unity on our side." Charlie joked as he clipped on the Arm Scythes.

--

"Why is it when ever there's a turf war I seem to get caught dead in the middle of it?!" Peter Masters whined as a battle raged in the streets around him. He, Lara and Maddy were hidden under a market stall near the shores of Lake Pleasant.

"Chuckles and Giggles should be here soon." Lara said hopefully.

Maddy looked down. If Chuckles and Giggles were coming, then it meant the Knights of the Last Order would be with them.

Webster would be with them.

Chapter

57

The young man groaned. The only seat left in the science class was next to the new girl, and everyone knew she was crazy. She'd already been kicked out of three schools that year for violence.

"Please take a seat Mister Schnider." The teacher said. Sighing, he took the seat next to the crazy new girl, who merely glared at him.

"Excellent, we've managed to fit two to a table. You'll be spending the rest of the year working with your partner, so make sure you get to know each other." The teacher beamed.

"Tough luck Webster!" The young man heard a voice from behind him. He could hear whispers around the room. "Poor Webster! Getting stuck with Markington!"

It couldn't be denied; the scowling, isolated Tate Markington next to him was a dangerous young lady. Or so everyone said, Webster really hadn't had much to do with her.

The teacher set them their assignment and started reading his book as they started to "work" (read: Do whatever they liked, it's not like the teacher cared). Webster gulped.

"Scared of me, are you?" Tate sneered, turning away from him to read her own book.

"I don't even know you!" Webster protested.

"Well, I'm Tate Markington. Now you know me." Was the short reply.

"I'm Webster." Webster smiled, trying to connect with the young lady in front of him. "So, the sheet says we need to pick a plant species and write a report on it. Any suggestions?"

"Cactus." Tate replied snappily.

Webster tried not to laugh. Tate raised an eyebrow at him.

"I'm sorry." Webster giggled. "I don't know why I find it so funny."

Tate shook her head, but started laughing too.

"And they call me mental." She shook her head. "Seriously, though, cactus would be interesting, and no one else will do them. They're all about trees and flowers."

"You mean things that people actually like?" Webster finished chuckling.

"Hey, cactii might not look appealing, but they're super-hardy and can be useful if you're stuck in the desert and don't have any water." Tate defended her choice.

"Cactus it is then." Webster wrote it down in his notebook. "You know, you're nothing like what people say you're like."

"How so?" Tate blinked.

"You actually seem to have a sense of humour." Webster poked her. Tate grinned, but then looked downcast.

"Yeah, unfortunately it's only on good days I have a sense of humour. The rumours are true you know. I got kicked out of a few schools because of my temper and my ability to hold a grudge." She began doodling in the margins of her notebook. "It's just when I know people are trying to hurt me or the people who I care about I go spare."

"Well, you just need to learn how to NOT go spare. Do you see a doctor at all?" Webster asked, flicking through his textbook to see if he could find anything cactus related.

"My foster parents can't afford it. Besides, it's not like I'll be with them for much longer anyway, they said if I got kicked out of one more school they'd send me back to the orphanage." Tate stabbed at her notebook with her pen. Obviously, she'd spent a lot of time at the orphanage and didn't want to go back.

"Well, we're friends now, so I'll try and help you keep your temper." Webster smiled.

"You mean it?" Tate looked up at him, hopeful.

From that day forth, Tate and Webster were inseparable. Nothing could get between them.

Except Tate's feelings.

--

Webster sighed. It had been a long day, between his horror lectures and keeping people from picking on Tate. It had been six years since their first meeting, and she had made awesome progress - she had a few friends now and was much happier. Alas, mud sticks and she was victim of many taunts and pranks.

Webster tried to stick up for her, but it was hard work with her flash-bang temper and nasty habit of holding cold, long grudges. Also, Webster had a sneaking suspicion that Tate had a crush on him.

He walked into his bedroom, shutting the door behind him, before flinging his bag onto his desk and flopping face first onto the bed. Tate was his best friend. She was his sister, the twin sister he had lost to death in early childhood. He groaned at himself - Tate and Wendy were two completely different people, and Tate could never be Wendy and Wendy could never be Tate.

He sighed. That wasn't the real issue at all. The real issue, although he was ashamed to own it, was that Tate was just too weird. She was rapturous, imaginative, spontaneous, and completely and utterly insane. He often laughed, not with her, but at her, because he could never follow how she got from one thought to the next. He couldn't understand her ideas, he couldn't understand HER. While he could have lived with that if it was just her, he couldn't live with people laughing at him, pitying him, turning up their noses at him because of her. He loved her - of that there was no doubt, despite her loopy ways, but public pressure was too much for him to bear.

He lifted his head and looked at his laptop, which was on the bedside table next to him. He reached out and grabbed it, flipping himself over, making himself comfortable and turning it on. He opened up one of his favourite chat rooms, where he often went to try and forget about the rest of the world.

He soon got into an argument about the latest sci-fi movies with a couple of idiots. He had a feeling he was being trolled, but it was fun, so he continued. A private message window popped up after a while.

"Why are you entertaining those idiots when you could easily squash them?" The message said.

He typed back. "I've got nothing better to do. My assignments are all done and there's no tests to study for until next month."

"And trolling in chat rooms is the best you can do? You're a bit pathetic." Was the response. Webster smiled to himself. He was a bit pathetic really.

"So why are you wasting your time with me? I'm Webster by the way."

"I'm Madison. I get the feeling there's more to you than you let on. Like you're trying to hide something from the world."

Understatement much? Webster sighed again. He could always tell this anonymous person about his problems with Tate, about how she loved him and how he was trying not to love her back lest he become an outcast like her too.

"I'm complicated." He said.

"So make it easy for me."

Why was she so interested?

Webster was curious. After a while, he discovered that Madison was a year younger than him and lived up north in a city called Pleasantville, which was a bit of a crime haven.

"Yesterday one of the local gangs tried to take over the private school. Two kids named Belle and Charlie stopped them though. At the same time, the other local mobsters tried to rob a bank. Both gang leaders were killed, but I doubt it's the end of the gangs." Madison told him. "My dream is to study law and eventually help the local prosecutor Peter Masters become the Mayor and finally clean up this city."

"That's a pretty noble dream. I'm just doing a Bachelor of Arts right now, I don't really know what I want to do." Webster typed back, feeling for the first time like he was connecting with someone other than his psycho best friend.

"Don't you have any ambition at all?" Madison asked.

Now she was starting to sound like Tate, who often told him how he was wasting himself due to his cowardice.

"You're starting to sound like my nutcase best friend. She's always trying to get me to push myself."

"Maybe you should listen to her. Anyway, I've gotta go and have dinner and do my homework, I'll talk to you again sometime!"

Webster smiled to himself. For the next few months, when he got home he immediately went for his laptop to talk to Maddy. She was an outlet for his pent up emotions, and she in turn often asked for his advice. He found it easier and easier to put aside his feelings for Tate, who was starting to get a bit desperate.

"Hey Webby, I'm going to go out for dinner, would you like to come with me?" Tate asked after a lecture one day, about a year after that first conversation with Maddy.

"Um, probably not Tater. I've got a lot of study to do." Webster lied.

"We never hang out any more. I miss you." Tate grabbed his arm and cuddled up to it, making people stare at them. Webster tried to shrug her off, but she wouldn't budge.

"Look, I promise we'll go to the arcade this weekend and go and play computer games. I might even let you win." Webster tried. Tate grinned.

"You're on!" She punched his arm before running off in her stupid, almost skipping way. For a moment it felt like old times again, before her stupid feelings got in the way. Webster smiled, and went home to talk to Maddy.

"I'd really like to meet you. I'm going to be in Brisvegas next week to look at the University, would we be able to meet then?" Maddy asked that night.

Webster couldn't wait to say yes.

--

Of course, everything went smoothly when Webster met Maddy, and after a fashion they became a couple. Of course, Webster never told Tate about this.

Several years later, Webster announced that he was moving to Pleasantville. Tate was distraught.

"But WHY do you want to leave?" She asked Webster as they sat in his room while he packed.

"Because I think my future lies there." Webster replied, silently adding, "With Maddy."

"I guess you need to follow your dreams. I hope you make it, whatever they are." Tate said quietly.

"Thanks buddy." Webster hugged her tightly, before forcing himself to let go. 'You can't stay here with her.' He told himself. 'You know what she's like.'

"Maybe someday you'll come back." Tate tried to smile, for his sake.

"Maybe." Webster shrugged non-committally. There was no way he was going to come back here as long as Tate was around.

"I'm sure you will." Tate hugged him. "When are you going?"

"Day after tomorrow." Webster lied. His bus left the next morning.

"Then I guess we'll still have tomorrow, right?" Tate kissed his cheek.

Webster felt awful for lying, but he really didn't want Tate there to say farewell and make a scene.

The next time he saw Tate, she was surrounded by destruction, less than twenty-four hours from her own death.

Chapter

58

Peter Masters tapped the ground impatiently as chaos reigned supreme around him. Lara was pressed up against him and Maddy was up against her.

"This is the LAST time I let you talk me into retail therapy!" Maddy scowled at Lara, who shrugged.

"It's because we brought HIM along. Him and his bad luck!" Lara jabbed her husband in the ribs.

"Next time we're carrying our own shopping!"

"Gladly!" Peter snapped. To be honest, he was kinda glad that the turf wars had interrupted the shopping excursion - being the pack mule was no fun.

"Hopefully Chuckles and Giggles get here soon." Lara looked out from under Peters arm. In front of them, a Crusader was fiercely battling an Emerald Mobster. The Crusader, surprisingly, was winning easily, the shield on his arm protecting him from the Emerald Power while his replica Mystic Eight Gun provided plenty of firepower. The Emerald Mobster didn't survive long, and the Crusader was about to help one of his gangmates when an Emerald Shard hit him in the chest, paralyzing him long enough for his neck to be snapped by another Emerald Mobster.

"Brutal." Lara turned pale.

"HEY! LOSERS!" They heard a familiar voice that made them feel better.

"Although why she has to be inflammatory all the time is beyond me." Peter muttered.

"She's YOUR daughter." Lara pointed out.

Giggles went right for the head of the battle, where Crusader Mark and Crusader Roger were battling Mobster Marion and Master Revolver. Behind her, Chuckles was trying to herd civilians to safety.

"The Knights of the Last Order should be here soon!" He called to Giggles. "So I'll give you a hand in a second!"

"Will you two-just-will you cut it out?!" Giggles tried to pull Crusader Roger and Mobster Marion apart. "NO! Revolver! MARK!" She then rushed over to stop Crusader Mark and Master Revolver from killing each other. "WAIT MARION STOP!" She then had to separate Mobster Marion and Crusader Roger again. "REVOLVER STOP SHOOTING MARK!" She rushed back to stop Master Revolver from killing Crusader Mark.

"It's like running after toddlers." She groaned, trying to wrestle Mobster Marion and Crusader Roger apart.

"HEY! GIGGLES! Let me help you there!" Sir Dark ran over to help. "Why do you guys INSIST on doing this where there are innocent people around?!" He groaned as he pried Crusader Marks hands from Master Revolvers neck.

"Because it keeps people in fear of us. Kinda the major thing that keeps us in power around here." Master Revolver replied, firing off his shotgun and nearly blasting off Crusader Marks

face. Crusader Mark retaliated by trying to shoot him in the chest - the only thing that saved Revolver was Sir Hedgehog pulling him to safety.

"This is chaos!" Lady Courage quickly pulled an unfortunate citizen out of the path of a pair of battling criminals. "You try and get people out of here and your path is blocked by guns and swords!"

"Tell me about it." Chuckles groaned, running to the aid of Giggles, who had both Mobster Marions sword and the Dragons Scale Scythe at her throat.

"Easy guys!" Giggles tried to back away slowly.

"If you insist on getting in our way, you're going to get hurt!" Crusader Roger prepared to slash her head off.

"Don't even think about it!" The Dragons Scale Scythe connected loudly with the Lions Claw Blade, while Chuckles deflected Mobster Marions sword with one of the Arms Scythes.

"Thanks mate." Giggles jumped backwards, putting some distance between her and the two warring criminals.

"This isn't any of your business, leave this to the grownups punk." Mobster Marion swung her sword at Chuckles, who dodged and deflected a blow from Crusader Roger. He narrowly missed having his head removed by the Dragon Scale Scythe, before Giggles grabbed him and flew to safety on a nearby building.

"I give it ten more minutes before they get bored of it." Chuckles noticed that there was a large number of dead or injured criminals.

"You REALLY think a lack of bodies will stop them from fighting?!" Giggles groaned. "You KNOW that what you see in front of you isn't even HALF of these guys manpower; in fact I wouldn't be surprised if they call in WILL YOU AT LEAST DO ME THE COURTESY OF LETTING ME FINISH MY SENTENCES YOU JERK?!"

Chuckles had bolted, jumping down from the building top down balconies towards the road that lead to the markets. Sure enough, two convoys full of Crusaders and Mobsters was heading towards the battlefield. Quick as a button, Chuckles ran at the vehicles using the Lions Claw Blade to slash the tyres of the two convoys.

"Are...you...KIDDING me?!" One of the Crusaders jumped out of his van and scowled at Chuckles. "Not cool man. Not cool."

"Tell me about it." Another Mobster looked at his own tyres.

"You could always just head home and leave it for another day." Chuckles pointed out.

The Mobsters and the Crusaders scowled at each other.

"Fine then. You got off easy this time Crusaders. Run on back to March Hill before we change our minds." One of the Mobsters snarled, before walking back to Misneach Manor.

"So be it." The Crusaders headed back to their home base, all scowling.

"How Improbable." Chuckles laughed to himself. "I wonder how things are going back at the markets?"

The last of the Crusaders and Mobsters back at the markets were either injured or exhausted. They all eyed each other warily.

"Give up. You were washed out fifty years ago, and you should have stayed dead." Master Revolver snarled at Crusader Mark.

"You barely existed fifty years ago Gangster, if it hadn't been for us killing that Masters fool than the Death Valley Gang wouldn't have ever formed!" Crusader Roger barked back. Livid, Master Revolver fired off a nasty shot that nicked Crusader Rogers arm. He retaliated by attacking Mobster Marion, who was in range for a swing of the Dragons Scale Scythe.

Meanwhile, the Knights of the Last Order were sneaking the rest of the civilians out of danger.

"This feels far too familiar somehow." Lady Luck said to Sir Hyper as the last few frazzled citizens made their way to their cars and out of the market.

"Familiar how?" Sir Hyper asked.

"Just...familiar." Lady Luck wiped her brow.

Sir Hedgehog was panting, standing near the entrance of the markets, watching Mobster Marion and Crusader Roger continue to exchange blows. He had to admit, they were both exceptionally skilled with their weapons.

"C'mon, let's get you out of here." Giggles helped her father to his feet.

"Thank you Giggles." Peter smiled at her, as he took Laras hand and jogged to the exit with her. Behind them was Maddy, who eyed Sir Hedgehog warily.

Suddenly, the arguement between Master Revolver and Crusader Mark turned violent again, and gunshots were heard all around.

"Shoot!" Giggles groaned.

"Well, that IS what they're doing." Peter shrugged.

"Of all the times for bad Dad jokes." Lara scowled.

"We should be able to get past them, follow me closely!" Giggles pulled out the Lucky Seven Gun and lead the three stragglers to the exit.

"MADDY!" Sir Hedgehog cried. Crusader Mark was aiming the Mystic Eight Gun right at her!

"KEEP MOVING!" Giggles cried. Maddy froze. She couldn't move.

One of Sir Hedgehogs spines stopped Crusader Mark from firing the Mystic Eight Gun, but then Mobster Marion saw a chance to get one up on her hated rivals. Getting in between Sir Hedgehog and Maddy, she prepared to strike the young mother down.

"NO!" Sir Hedgehog threw another one of his spines towards the Mobster, who was speared out of the way at the last minute by Master Revolver.

Maddys eyes widened. She felt herself vomit blood, just as the spine entered her body.

She felt herself falling, hitting the ground.

She felt her world turn black.

Chapter

59

Whiteness. Blinding whiteness. A dark spot. A dark spot getting bigger. Taking form.

Maddy blinked. A black-haired young lady with hazel eyes looked back at her. She was wearing a grey top with some sort of insignia on it, and black pants with combat boots.

"Your eyes. They were green." Maddy pointed out.

"Yes. They were. Not anymore though. Usually they're either hazel or red now." Tate Markington smiled wistfully back.

"Am I dead?" Maddy asked.

"Doubt it. Knowing Webby he probably got you out of there as soon as you got hurt. You'll be fine." Tate smiled.

"He misses you so much." Maddy sighed.

"He needs to let go. We all need to let go." Tate let one tear roll down her cheek.

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"She's awake!"

"Maddison!"

Maddy slowly opened her eyes to more whiteness, which eventually faded into the forms of the Masters and Begly families.

"Webster?" Maddy asked groggily.

"He's currently trying to drown himself in alcohol." Betty Begly looked disgusted.

"Tate?" Maddy tried to sit up. She felt Lara Masters help her up, and put a cup of water to her lips.

"Tate is right here sweetheart." She stroked the younger woman's cheek.

Maddy held her daughter, but in her mind she was thinking about the dead woman from her dream. Obsession killed her. Would it kill Webster too?

--

Charlie, Daniel, TJ and Sam sat at the pub, watching their fellow Noble Knight of the Last Order get completely plastered. He didn't know they were there, sitting in a booth keeping an eye on him.

"This is embarrassing to watch." Sam sipped on his soda water while Webster started drunkenly slurring a story to the bartender.

"If it were any other situation it'd be funny." Daniel replied, beer in hand. TJ frowned at him.

"If you saw the number of domestic disputes I had to go to as a cop that were fuelled by alcohol you'd never touch the stuff again." He snapped, clutching his lemonade.

"Easy there tiger, one beer won't hurt. It's self-medicating like Webster is doing that's the problem." Charlie took a swig of his own beer.

"Complacent." TJ scowled.

"It was my fault!" Webster suddenly cried loudly. "Everyone I love gets hurt or killed because I'm such a bloody coward!"

"Easy mate, I think you've had enough." The bartender tried to calm him down.

"DON'T YOU PATRONIZE ME!" Webster yelled, prompting his friends into action.

"Time to go home Webster." Daniel took one of his arms.

"NO!" Webster tried to fight him off, but Charlie had his other arm. Between the two brutes they had the situation pretty much under control.

"I'd really hate to be on the wrong side of those two." TJ mused. While he and Sam definitely weren't small, they paled in comparison to their bigger friends.

"I could take 'em easily!" Sam bragged.

"Yeah, right."

"I could!"

"Tell him he's dreaming." Daniel called back. "And get over here, one of you two has to drive us back home, we can't leave him in the back seat by himself!"

"Your car." TJ smirked as they headed out to the carpark. Sam grimaced and went to the drivers door, while TJ held the rear passenger door open for Daniel, Charlie and the invalid.

Suddenly Webster lurched and gagged, which was followed by a large amount of vomit landing on TJ.

I don't think Sam's laughed so much in his life.

--

Webster sighed. His headache had subsided after the bender from the previous night, but the guilt still lingered.

He had to see Maddy again. He knew that. He had to make things right again. He loved Maddy, with all of his heart.

So why was Tate still on his mind?

He rolled over in his bed and drifted off into an uncomfortable sleep.

"Really Webby?"

He spun around in surprise. Standing behind him was Tate Markington.

"You ditched me, remember?" Tate folded her arms. "You chose her over me."

"Tate, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I was too worried about what everyone else thought of me, that I couldn't care for you the way I should have." Webster felt tears stinging his eyes.

"That's not Maddys problem. You have to learn to live with that, not her." Tate frowned.

"I know. I just..." Webster looked away.

"Don't worry about me Webby. You're my best friend, and you always will be. I know that now." Tate smiled at him.

"We were quite a pair, weren't we Tater? You'd love baby Tate." Webster smiled back. "You would have been a great Aunt."

"I wish I could have been. But still, I'm in a better place now. Somewhere where I can fix my faults without the scorn or ridicule." Tate replied.

"Yeah. You never had that chance before." Webster sighed. "I wish I could have helped you more."

"We both screwed up. Anyway, I gotta go. They're waiting for me." Tate turned to go back into that bright whiteness. Webster could make out six other figures behind her.

He smiled, and turned to head back too.

--

It was nothing short of a disaster. TJ was clutching his head, Daniels ankle was twisted, Sunny had a sprained wrist, the twins had a black eye apiece and Petunia was nursing a sore jaw. The only two who had any fight left in them was Belle and Charlie, and THEY were still going at it hammer and tongs (or Lucky Seven Gun and Lions Claw Blade, they're interchangeable).

"THAT WAS WIDER THAN MY AUNT MAUD!" Charlie roared in fury, swinging at Belle, who dodged.

"IT WOULD HAVE HIT THE STUMPS IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR YOUR FAT FOOT!" Belle ducked under his arm and kicked him in the knee, which he barely felt through his rage.

"You know, maybe we should give up on our cricket games." Petunia said to TJ as they watched the pair fight.

"I think that'd be wise." TJ groaned, his head throbbing from where she'd smacked him with her first-aid kit.

"You weren't kidding when you said this lot were immature Webster, I can't believe what I'm seeing!"

The six Knights spun around. A pale Maddy was walking slowly towards them, supported by Webster and the young Tate.

"Maddy! You're out of hospital!" Belle and Charlie quickly forgot their quarrel and bolted over to see Maddy.

"Yup, and almost as good as new." Maddy smiled at them.

"Wait, you two are talking again?" Sam asked, earning him a clip over the back of the head from Petunia and an elbow in the ribs from Tammy.

Webster laughed, his clear green eyes full of merriment.

"We had a long, long talk. We've decided that we're going to move back to Brisvegas permanently." He told them. "We're going to try and bring outside attention to plight of Pleasantville, and hopefully mount a stronger case for people to start to change their ways."

"Well, we hope it goes well for you both." Daniel smiled ruefully. "Although that means we'll be down a Knight."

"I'm sure you'll...manage." Webster frowned at the current condition of the Noble Knights of the Last Order.

"I think we should all head home and get cleaned up." Sunny looked sheepishly at her friends.

"Besides, Patrick will be home with Melody soon and I need to have dinner ready."

"Where were they?" Belle asked.

"Doctors. I can't stand needles and I couldn't bear to watch Melody get her vaccinations." Sunny shivered, making Petunia roll her eyes.

The troop headed home (Melody LOVED her needles, much to the horror of Sunny and amusement of Patrick) and two weeks later they farewelled Sir Hedgehog from the Noble Knights of the Last Order forever.