

As the coordinates came back on the screen, the Captain was furious. She slammed the monitor with her fist very hard and sent the device reeling to the ground. CICERO, feeling a sense of horror for his fellow electronic, called out, but there was nothing he could do. The screen shattered when the clunky setup hit the moon ground, and Danny saw the "SG-24" disappear.

"For the love of the Space God, people, does anyone have any idea where these transmissions are coming from?" Captain Caspian circled around her troops gathered there, staring them in the face with keen, falcon-like eyes. No one budged or made a sound. "I apologize to Mr. Foster and Mr. Jones. I'm normally not this angry or vengeful, but these transmissions have been going on for weeks now, and we're no closer to discovering the perpetrator or the location than we were when they began."

She kicked some moon rocks around, then she stopped, listening. Suddenly she pushed through the crowd and went racing toward another tent. She burst into the tent and disappeared from the view of the watching soldiers. Danny and Gerald were particularly confused. Then a body came flying out of the tent flap and landed hard against a table nearby. It was a young soldier, portly, with greasy hair.

"I didn't- no, Captain!" the young soldier protested, holding his arms up to protect himself against the advancing Captain's blows. She picked him up by the shirt and heaved him up onto the table. On his right hand was a puppet that appeared to be identical to the one used in the video.

"Then what's this?" She tore the puppet from his hand and shook it in front of his face. "This looks awfully familiar, peon. Come on, talk! Where did you get this?" But the poor soldier was stricken with panic. He couldn't move, his face contorted in spasms. Then his eyes rolled into the back of his head, his eyes closed, and he slumped to the ground. "Great. He passed out."

Captain Caspian pointed at two soldiers, gesturing at them to grab a hold of the boy. "Take him to the infirmary. Tell the doctor what happened. This is ridiculous." Then to the rest of the standers-byers, she said, holding up the puppet, "Does anyone know where he got this?"

A hand rose slowly in the group. "I might have an idea," came a clear voice very near to Danny. He turned and saw his brother, Gerald, had his

hand up. He put it down. "That toy is a very popular fast food toy. He probably got it from a local Space Burger. Can anyone corroborate this theory?" Gerald panned around the base, looking people in the eyes. A few other hands went up, shakily, and the Captain sighed.

"So, you're telling me that this little toy is as ubiquitous as the fast food joint, Space Burger?" The Captain came up to Gerald, facing off with him. "Is that what you're saying, Private?"

"Actually, ma'am, I'm a citizen with no military rank. But, yes, that's what I'm saying," replied the stalwart Gerald Jones, the bass player for YasBM. He stared into the Captain's eyes, showing no sign of giving in or giving up. Then the Captain smiled.

"I like you, Mr. Jones. You've got gumption. Of course, this means that as much as a clue as I thought this was, we're no closer to finding out about these transmissions." She turned and addressed everyone standing there. "I want this to be a tier-two action item. Make this a priority item. Remember: *la'chonno de'literato!*"

Then, the whole group called out "*La'chonno de'literato!*" Then they went back to their regular stations, presumably to perform their tier-one action items first. Captain Caspian motioned for Danny and Gerald to follow her. She led them back into the mess tent, gathered her papers, and then they exited the mess tent. They walked for a while, passing all sorts of odd tents, built of shiny metal cloth and with weird angles.

"The tents allow us to keep from burning up when the sun hits us. They also keep the heat in when the sun goes away, which can be disastrous. If you've ever spent a night in the desert, then you know what I mean." There were all kinds of soldiers fitting together large guns, sorting through personal belongings, and pinning up pictures of loved ones.

Danny asked, "Have you just made camp here? It looks like a lot of people are still unpacking." He noticed that it seemed like the camp had just recently been made, and it hadn't become home to anyone yet.

"We have to move around a lot. There are a lot of people who need our... unique services," Captain Caspian answered. She smirked as she said it,

proud of herself and her division.

“What is it that you guys do here?” Danny asked. Captain Caspian stopped and turned back to Danny.

“Magic,” she answered. “This is piece twenty-four, lads. You won’t be here long. We’re setting up for your journey. Just hang tight, take a seat, and this Private will get you anything you need.” The Captain pointed toward a young soldier who was checking the pH level of the water coming out of a hose. At the sound of the word Private, the young man turned around, apparently unaware that there were other people around him. “I’ll leave you to it,” said Caspian, and then she was off back the way they came.

“G’day, mates!” shouted the young soldier. He had a strong Australian accent and a perpetual smile. “Wot’ll it bay?” But, Danny and Gerald, tired, just sat down and said little else. The Australian soldier went on and on explaining the options they had available for drinking and eating. ““Un ay ‘et yoo sumfin?”

“I’m fine, thank you,” answered Danny and Gerald made no sound or comment at all. They simply sat there, listening.

“Way yoo bos frumen?” The young soldier tried to get them to pay attention to him, but they just ignored him, looking out over the moon terrain. Danny tried to picture it, as if it were Earth. Many people had considered making the Moon into Earth 2, since population troubles were once again cropping up in the newly overpopulated countries of England and France and Africa.

“Tanner, leave them alone. They’re the key parts of this mission. Now shut-up and go back to purifying the water like a good Private,” came a voice. Danny and Gerald looked up and saw an older man. His head was shaved, and he had a scar on his upper lip that pulled it up a bit. He smiled at them.

“Dat wutta’s fine, mate,” said Tanner, tasting it. Then the strange man walked over to the water source, a well, and tossed in a large collection of powder. The water instantly caught on fire, and it caught Tanner on fire, too. Tanner dropped to the ground, flaming and screaming.

“Holy Moon Rocks!” shouted Danny, in surprise. The strange man just

seemed to ignore his flaming fellow army friend. The moon dust didn't seem to put the fire out, it just got worse, smoking and smoldering as Tanner thrashed about.

"My name's Gary. I know who you two are, so no need to introduce yourselves. How do you like the moon so far?" said Gary.

"Put him out! He's burning to death!" shouted Danny, and he tried to douse the soldier with water, but the water was on fire, too, and soon the fire was coming out of the hose. Danny looked around and saw that the fire was spreading to all the water sources on the Moon, and that no one was able to put them out. Then Danny saw armed people in uniforms rushing over to where the three of them were. Gary stood up just as one of the armed and armored men crashed into him, knocking him to the ground.

"I've got him," shouted the armed guard, and he quickly snapped a couple of handcuffs onto Gary. Then he grabbed Gary by the hair and yanked him up. "How do we put out the fire?"

"Oh, it'll go out in a couple of minutes. Fantastic to meet you two. Really great," he said, and they pulled him away. One of the armed men threw a blanket onto Tanner, suffocating the flames. When they peeled the blanket back, Tanner was in extremely bad condition.

"Medic! Over here! Section Twenty-four!" shouted the armed guard, trying to take Tanner's pulse. Then Danny heard Magnolia's voice in his head, saying, "Something terrible is going to happen. Twenty-four, Danny!" He couldn't help but wonder if this was the terrible thing.

The medic came running over with his suitcase of supplies. He spent a good deal of time applying aloe-bandages and removing the charred bits of clothing. Portions of Tanner's uniform had melted into his skin. When they could, they put him on a space stretcher and hauled him off to the sterile Medic Tent in Section Thirty.

"It's called Moon Madness," they heard Captain Caspian say. "That's what Gary had. There's a creature on the moon named The Gorgatron. It's harmless to us humans, and one of the few creatures that exist on this planet before we came. However, there is a toxin in its feces that seems to cause

human insanity. That's one reason we move around. That's also why we do a pie-shaped base instead of neat rows. A pie-shape helps cut down on the crazies, usually. Gary went a step further because he's a demolitions expert. And Tanner was just unlucky. Gary probably intended to kill you two."

"Captain," said CICERO, rolling up to them. "It appears that SG-24 is fully functioning and ready to go. Should I tell Engineer Roberts?"

"Yes," answered the Captain. "Go tell him that we'll have the cargo ready soon."

"Yes, Captain," answered CICERO, and he rolled off the direction he had come.

"Well, boys. It looks like it's about time I told you what it is we do here." She smiled and pulled out a notebook and began to write.