

# Theo & Pudelle's (and Balto's) Summer Vacation!

A story by DJ Napsta

The shuttle was constantly swaying side to side as it moved across the waves, giving a slight feeling of vertigo to the cabin-boy. It was the first voyage of the day, transporting newcomers from Symphony to the Crossroads, but already it felt nauseating.

He contemplated whether he should've stayed back in Ropehide. At least then he'd be sitting back with a nice cup of fruit juice.

“Comin' through!!!”

The boy was nearly knocked over by a charging Thunderbolt of force, as he spun around to evade the oncoming missile. His eyes focused on a chipper, red-haired rat-girl making a mad dash for the front of the shuttle.

“W-what was that!?”

“Sorry about that Sir, she's excited about this vacation.”

The cabin boy turned around to see a tall boy in a purple jacket, giving a sheepish smile. He was slightly intimidated by the fellow's size; he could probably snap a log in half, he thought to himself. But the friendly demeanour that this guy displayed made him feel more at ease.

“Scuse' me sir, but I'm going to go catch up with her, sorry for the inconvenience.  
Puds! Wait up!”

“No problem.”

The cabin boy coughed, grabbed his things and kept walking on his merry way.

~~~~~

Theo finally made it to the front where Pudelle was waiting. Her eyes were glued to the front window of the shuttle, as she stared at the distant entry gate to The Crossroads.

She couldn't believe it, she and Theo had gotten back from fighting a literal God, then attended Pudelle's birthday party about a month ago; and now they were going on a vacation to a whole new destination, all thanks to her dad.

Theo was initially afraid of Pudelle's dad, having heard about his title of Admiral. But Pudelle got Theo in her parents' good graces, with her dad officially giving Theo his blessing to hang out with her.

After some scuffles and misadventures, Raloran and Pressatra had relented to letting their daughter and her boyfriend go on a little vacation abroad, especially after her boyfriend Theo received a mysterious letter from a fox one day. Having heard about a rift gate opening up to a destination outside of Symphony, Raloran spared no expenses on getting two tickets for them to go on a trip.

Theo finally joined up with Pudelle and sat next to her, looking at their travel destination with wide-eyes. Pudelle had given him some minor info about The Crossroads, namely about their fighting coliseum.

“Puds, are you sure I should participate in the Tournament?”

“Oh come on, Muscles! Ever since we got back from the Worldbeast, you've been more and more hesitant to go all out. C'mon, ya gotta live a little.”

“I know, I know... But, what if somebody gets hurt?”

“As long as it's some jerk who picks a fight with us, and insults us before or after... Then I say, it's fair game.”

Theo rolled his eyes and snorted.

“Puds.”

“What? There's nobody stronger than you.”

“Ehhh, I can think of a few people.”

“Dude, I'm tryin' to hype you up!”

The pair laughed loudly as the shuttle continued its journey forward. The Crossroads gateway opened wide, as the shuttle moved forwards to the dock area. Lizardfolk,

Gnome and Beetlefolk dock workers tossed grappling hooks to the sides of the shuttle to help slow its movement.

Theo and Pudelle held onto their seats as the shuttle stopped its movement, nearly tipping the pair over.

“This is your captain speaking, we have made it to our destination. So everyone, make sure to grab your belongings, as we all prepare to leave the shuttle. Thank you all for choosing **StarCross**, and welcome to **The Crossroads**.”

Pudelle and Theo looked at one another and smiled brightly. They quickly gathered their things and made for the exit.

The pair stood in awe as they saw the opening to The Phoenix Coast. Huge walls with intricate oriental designs greeted them as they walked past the gate. And vendors formed a long marketplace from left to right, with numerous wares.

“Oh yeah, this is gonna be fun.”

Pudelle instantly dashed to a cart to see what goodies she could scrounge up, while Theo hurriedly tried to keep up with her. She was small, but she was **quick**.

As she darted to the nearest stall selling fondue apples, Theo struggled to keep up with her. Just as she was about to buy a particularly juicy looking apple with the gooiest Gruyère cheese coating, she and Theo were tugged on the shoulder by a particularly strong looking man with long orange and white hair. He looked down at the pair, and gave a warm smile to them both.

“Excuse’ moi, are you two Theo Thunderbluff and Pudelle Ellsgood?”

“Yup, that’s us”

“Oh perfect, I came on behalf of the tournament to greet you. It’s a pleasure to make both your acquaintances, my name is Tenki.”

Tenki gave a courteous bow, took Pudelle’s hand, and bestowed a kiss upon it. Pudelle reeled back in disgust.

“Watch it, Buster!”

“My apologies! It’s just that when I see a beautiful maiden such as yourself, I can’t help but compliment their beauty.”

Pudelle flushed profusely and buried her face in Theo's side. Tenki gave a light chuckle and shrugged, before clearing his throat.

“Now, if you two will come with me, I'll show you the way to your quarters. Think of it as your temporary home while you're here for the tournament.”

Theo raised an eyebrow and scratched his chin.

“Will we still have time to relax and enjoy the sights?”

“And eat cheese apples?”

Tenki gave a chuckle.

“But of course. Can't go fighting on an empty stomach, or a bored mind, now can we?”

The pair nodded their heads and mumbled in agreement. Without another word, Tenki waved at the pair for them to follow him through the open market.

Excited to see what the Crossroads had in store, Theo and Pudelle made their way down the path with Tenki, occasionally stopping to look at the goodies offered by the shopkeepers, or to buy a snack for the road.

~~~~~

While the pair were busy inspecting the foodstuffs of the marketplace, a familiar wolf-boy with vitiligo snuck past the dockworkers. He paid close attention to the pair, following their movements while staying out of sight.

“Don't worry guys, I'll try not to get in the way of your vacay... But there's no way in heck I'm not sticking around to keep you two safe.”

Theo's ears perked up.

“Puds, did you hear something?”

Balto's eyes widened as he dove behind a trash-can.

“Hm? Nah, I didn't hear anythin'.”

Theo looked back at the trash can for a good minute. Eventually though, he shrugged and continued walking with Pudelle.

“... that was way too close.”

Balto felt a tapping on his shoulder. He looked up to see a slightly peeved cart-vendor holding a sandwich.

“Hey buddy, you stick by my cart, ya gotta buy somethin’...”

“Oh! Uh, right, sorry.”

“Tch, weirdo.”

Balto grabbed some notes, paid the vendor, and he was handed a chicken sandwich. He was almost turned-off by the amount of barbeque sauce dripping from the meat, but eventually he caved and took a bite.

.

..

...

He blinked.

“Dang, that’s some good chicken.”

***To be continued.***