Silverlite - R

by CynthiaCrescent

Summary

Four years after team Galactic's defeat, Sinnoh welcomes a new champion.

Notes

This is the remastered version of a fanfic I wrote four years ago.
“We are here to welcome the new champion of Sinnoh.” The female reporter’s smile was as immaculate as ever. “Barry, you’ve just become the region’s top trainer at the mere astounding age of sixteen. How are you feeling right now?”

“It’s the most amazing feeling in the world.” Barry’s smile, on the other hand, was shaken. Whether it was because nervousness or adrenaline was anyone’s guess. “I’ve been going at this for years, and to finally get here has to be a dream come true.”

“Before Mr. Lucian induct you to the Hall of Fame, would you like to express your thanks?”

“Absolutely!” He practically grabbed the microphone. "I wouldn’t be here without Professor Rowan. He gave me my first starter pokémon all those years ago, and gave hope to a little boy with a dream. My mom too, for always being there and supporting me throughout hardships. Your little boy’s grown up, mom!"

Presently, Barry left in excitement to confirm his long-awaited accomplishment as the previous champion led him deeper into the facilities and out of view. The reporter came into the focus once more.

“Those were the words of the new Pokemon League Champion. There hasn’t been one since Cynthia’s stepping down two years ago, and today we’re all here to celebrate the glorious return of this tradition.”

The television shut off.

The sound of pouring coffee filled the silence. Two women sat across the living room table, each with a cup in front of them.

“He’s grown so much,” said the older one while adjusting her slightly stained apron, “I remember when he was just a baby. It’s hard to believe it’s been a decade since that little boy came over to this house for the first time.”

“He’s made good progress,” said the other woman. She caught her blonde tresses before they spilled onto the coffee. Presently, she drank it with some haste.

“You don’t sound impressed, Cynthia. Your standards must be so unrealistic.”

“Perhaps.”

Cynthia leant back into the sofa, a manuscript in hand. It was a printed draft on fossil patterns and their curiosity. She wrote it herself, and was busy reading the editor’s notes.

Johanna drank her cup as well. Her friend wasn’t oft one for conversation, but she enjoyed the company. Their paths first crossed four years ago, but little came of it. They met again in Hearthome a year back, and Cynthia has been showing up to her house for morning coffee ever since.

Presently, Johanna’s gaze wandered towards the stairway. She sighed.

“Dawn has been out for days. I don’t know when that girl’s coming back.”

Cynthia didn’t look up.
“Has she not been answering your calls?”

“She never does. I don’t know what to do with her anymore.”

Cynthia put away her manuscript.

“Maybe she just needs some space.”

“She could at least tell me she’s alright so I don’t have to worry so much, but she just leaves for days on end and come back all moody.” A pause. “Maybe you can talk to her. You’re much more her age group then I am.”

“I’m a decade her senior,” Cynthia protested.

“So am I to you, but we get along fine.”

Johanna displayed a beaming smile full of not-so-subtle expectation. Cynthia could do nothing but sigh and put away her reading.

“Fine, where is she?”

“Floaroma Town is my best guess. The forest there used to be one of her favourite spots. She’d always ask me to take her when she was younger. The flowers soothed her.”

Said meadow flourished in this time of year, enveloping all in its fragrant folds. Flowers bloomed atop intertwined tree branches, weaved in and out of view in a whirlpool of colours. A lazy stream ran beneath the wooden walkway, gently caressed the grassy banks and its smoothed stones, and headed north. The most prominent specimen this year were the exuberant fuchsias, which shaded the earth in a deep magenta beneath the peering sunlight penetrating from above.

Under this serene landscape, leaning on the fence, overlooking the vibrance of it all, was a girl.

A sad girl.

Her hair was slate blue, running all the way to her hip. The fur on her jacket fluttered in the breeze of the ending autumn. Despite this gracious beauty before her, she couldn’t help the bouts of melancholy overtaking.

“The leaves will be falling soon.”

The girl twitched at the the silky voice. She turned around to see Cynthia approaching from the opposite end of the walkway, whose eyes followed the stream’s reserved flow.

“What do you want?” Her voice was like venom.

“Your mother wanted me to talk to you. I can’t say I welcomed the idea myself.”

Cynthia didn’t meet the girl’s doubtful gaze, instead opted to keep her distance to an arm’s length.

“She needs to leave me alone. That goes for you as well.”

Cynthia shook her head. This wasn’t going any better than she had foreseen.

“She just worries for you, Dawn. I’m sure you understand that.”

The girl could not seem less interested.
“I don’t answer her calls for a reason. I’m sixteen already. I know what I’m doing.”

“What you’ve been doing is avoiding me.”

Cynthia’s statement was firm, and it got the reaction she expected. Dawn looked red in the face, flustered and offended. She lashed out in retaliation.

“So what if I am? Just because my mother and you start becoming best friends doesn’t mean I have to deal with you. I don’t want to see your face.”

Cynthia didn’t answer, but her gaze hit the ground. She cupped her lips. One could almost see the terse string of tears so well hidden behind her golden bang.

The mood deteriorated, as the woman’s sullen expression matched up poorly against Dawn’s unwavering defiance and bluntness.

Pipiri.

The purring of Dawn’s togekiss drew their attention. The fluffy flying creature returned to its owner after a stretch of wings around the forest. It spotted Cynthia, its original trainer, almost immediately, and flew into the woman’s nostalgic embrace. Cynthia caressed its round head, and that seemed to have brought a bit of life back into her complexion. Taking a deep breath, she turned to the girl.

“Dawn.” A pause as the togekiss lightly flapped its wings. “This can’t go on forever.”

“Why can’t it?” The girl’s voice was almost breaking. “What I think certainly doesn’t matter to anyone.”

“That’s not true.” Cynthia’s objection was weak.

“Don’t lie to my face.” Dawn was enraged by then. “Did you catch that Hall of Fame broadcast this morning?”

“Yes.”

“Barry’s the League Champion now. It’s the thing he has wanted most in his life. He used to tell me, his best and only friend of seven years, that I was the one who pushed him the furthest and taught him to never give up. Now that he has the cup in his head, not a single word about me.” Cynthia had no rebuttal. “Then there’s Professor Rowan. Two and a half years of my life I dedicated to completing his stupid pokedex. I even relinquished my own Champion title for it, and what did I get in return? The man didn’t even bother to show up to say thanks before disappearing off to god knows where. Yet when I turn on the television, I see his damned face on the news accepting awards for the work he didn’t even care enough to credit me with.”

It was all true, Cynthia knew. Seeing no reply, the girl continued.

“But all of that could’ve been alright. I didn’t need any of that.” An accusatory finger pointed straight at the blonde woman. “But you…”

Cynthia inadvertently looked away.

“I’m sorry,” was all she could say. It was all she could have ever said.

“It’s far too late for that, years too late.”

The girl stormed past Cynthia, who didn’t have the heart nor the ground to dispute this outburst. The
togekiss wriggled out of her embrace, and flew after the girl, leaving her by her lonesome.

She wished the flowers would dry her tears.
“Dawn!” Johanna’s voice echoed throughout the house.

The girl groaned.

“I don’t know what’s wrong with you, but you have to eat.”

Dawn wanted to scream back that she wasn’t hungry, that her mother should just leave her alone, but that was far from the truth. She had no idea how long she had been wallowing in bed, or even what day it was. She only knew her stomach rumbled.

As she dragged herself downstairs, Dawn greeted her mother with a glowering expression, before settling at the dinner table without so much as a word. Johanna elected a to keep the silence temporarily, and served up the food. She watched her daughter trudged through it with growing concerns. She waited for Dawn to finish her food, before speaking up.

“Honey, what’s going on?”

“Nothing,” was the both predictable and disappointing answer.

“You can’t expect me to believe that.” She fixed her daughter’s unkempt hair. “Ever since your return two days ago, you’ve locked yourself in your room without so much as a peep.”

“I don’t really mean to worry you, mom.” Dawn conceded. “I’m just going through a lot.”

“Can’t you just tell me why?”

“I can’t. I’m sorry.”

Johanna sighed. Presently, she produced an envelope.

“This is for you, honey.”

“What’s this?” The girl couldn’t see any information on it, but she could tell there was a letter inside. “Who’s this from?”

“You’ll have to figure it out.” The woman placed her hands on her daughter’s. “Just know that I’m always here for you, ok?”

“Ok mom.” Dawn presented the most assuring smile she could muster. “Thank you.”

She disappeared off into her room once more. Tearing up the envelope with haste, she placed the letter beneath a modest desk lamp.

“Dawn,”

She knew who it was immediately.

“I gave this letter to your mother because you’d never agree to listen to these words were they to come from me.

Seeing you like this gives me no pleasure. You say people have wronged you all your life. That isn’t wrong, but I cannot allow it to lead you down this self-destructive path. I may sound dramatic, but
Johanna confirmed that you’ve been like this for years now. If that’s partly my doing, then I have to fix it.

I promise I’ll remove myself from your life. You’ll never have to see my face again. In exchange, I’ve attached a formal invitation to the Sinnoh Pokemon League at the end of this letter. I want you to participate. I hope that this will give you something to look forward to again.

The league returns in three months. I will return. Find me, and tell me how you feel then. I’ll respect whatever decision you come to.

Yours,

Cynthia.’

Dawn read the letter, then put aside the attachment at the bottom. She then read the letter again, before crumpling it up and throwing it into the trash. Within the hour, the bin lay kicked over with its previous contents scattered about. The letter was once again in the girl’s hands as she wept.

For the first time in months, Dawn was out of bed as the sun made its round.

Johanna couldn’t believe her eyes when she saw her daughter walking down the stairs. The girl’s puffy eyes concerned her somewhat, but this was progress nevertheless.

“Honey?” A cautious question.

“I’m hungry, mom. Can I have some breakfast?”

“Of course, dear.”

Johanna had her toast and eggs ready with speed, which her daughter consumed with some vigour. Dawn simply stared at the ceiling as her mother cleared away the dishes.

“Mom.”

“Yes, dear?”

“I think I want to be a trainer again.”

Her mother had no visible reaction.

“What brought this on, dear?”

“I think I need to be doing something again.”

Her mother didn’t reply, but finish washing up. Presently, she sat in front of her daughter, fingers intertwined in front. She thought of what she was going to say.

“Honey,” she began, “when you first left my care five years ago to go on your first adventure, I was very excited. I have to tell you that I regret that decision deeply.”

Dawn was taken aback. She fumbled for a moment.

“You did?”

“I never realised just how much your leaving would affect me, until it was a week in and this house became so empty. I came to Hearthome just to see you again.”
Dawn acknowledged that the meeting with her mother did feel a bit too convenient at the time.

“What about afterwards?”

“I got over it eventually. I just needed to make friends with more people my age, and travel around a little. I was alright, but that’s not what worries me.” Johanna grasped her daughter’s hands. “You left for three years. Your visits became less and less frequent. Then one day, out of the blue, you turn up, asking to return permanently. I could see the sadness in your eyes, dear. You have hardly recovered.”

Dawn recalled that being the day after seeing Professor Rowan’s interview. A lot happened within those twenty-four hours, but she eventually crawled back home because she felt there was nowhere else to go. Thinking back, that feeling of devastation made her shudder.

“I know, mom.”

“But you’re set on going anyway, aren’t you?” Johanna asked. She received a shy nod, as expected. “I shouldn’t have thought this was my decision in the first place.”

“I just don’t want to worry you, mom.”

Having said that, Dawn was unsure of her position. Never in all these years had her mom been anything but supportive.

Or did she never notice.

Johanna pulled her daughter in for a hug, who returned the gesture in kind.

“I’ve always known that you’ll leave again eventually; I just didn’t think it’d be this soon. I can’t stop you, honey. Just be careful out there.”

Dawn kicked the dirt off her shoes as she walked the steps of a trainer again. She picked Sandgem Town to be her first destination, partly for its nostalgic value and partly because she desperately needed another pokemon. Togekiss was the only one in her current possession, but she had an entire team to reassemble.

It was a short enough walk, but she could feel her waning physique catching up with her. Taking public transportations everywhere had hampered her ability to walk long distances. Her endurance would return eventually, but at that moment she had doubts.

The first building she encountered walking into town was also where she needed to go. It was a familiar establishment with a sentimental tinge. Metal doors, closed blinds, white walls, and the blue roof painted a picturesque demonstration of a truly tasteless designer. The colour scheme didn’t always appear so horrid and tacky, but with the change in ownership it was inevitable.

She rang the doorbell.

“Who is it?” A very prompt reply from inside.

Sounds of footsteps echoed closer. It was just like him to wallow in complete darkness at this time of day, she thought. The door creaked open.

“Hello, Lucas,” said Dawn.

The boy stood speechless for a moment. Presently, he awkwardly fixed his pajamas and grabbed the
red beret from the coat hanger by pure instinct.

“This is unexpected,” he said, “what brings you by?”

“I’m here for my pokemon.”


The inside of the laboratory was different from what Dawn remembered. The intellectual air of rows after rows of bookshelves and research paper were gone, replaced by tightly-packed machinery and tubes which she could not identify. In the far corner sat an unassuming bed, its sheets half-spilled over the edge.

In the meanwhile, Lucas managed to scour up the object in question from the back of an old basket. Dawn almost felt offended.

“Here you go.” He gave the pokeball a check and saw no blemishes. That was good enough. “How long has it been?”

“Too long.”

Dawn received the device. It was different from most of what trainers would oft come across. The vibrant azure colouring of its bottom coupled with the orange top was the custom mark of a great craftsmanship of a foreign master, who told her it would allow the pokemon to sleep indefinitely inside. She pressed the foremost button, and a bright light flashed to release its tenant.

Her empoleon chirped in surprise the moment its feet touched the ground. Presently, it recognised its owner and shuffled towards her. Dawn smiled and, with great care, manoeuvred around the bird’s sharp wing before drawing it into a hug. Two years it had been, and she was glad to find that the special pokeball did as it was advertised.

“Thanks for taking care of Empy,” she said.

“Of course, no problem.” Lucas appeared zoned out for a second. “Is he coming back for good?”

“I think so.” Dawn hoped she had as much confidence as she sounded.

“What makes you decide to take him back?”

“I’m thinking of returning to the League.”

The wide-eyed look of disbelief on Lucas’ face said it all. He fumbled for words to say momentarily.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?”

“No. Not at all, actually.”
Dawn drank her cold soda, her left arm rested hanged loosely off one side of the office chair.

“Has it just been you all this time?” she asked.

Lucas didn’t stop adjusting the microscope.

“Pretty much. There’s a visitor maybe once every few months at best.”

Dawn gave an unnoticed side glance and took a deep breath.

“Have you not seen the Professor?”

Lucas stopped.

“Have you not heard?” he asked, turning his head to the guest.

“Nothing since that day.”

“His papers didn’t get accepted in the end.”

That answer caught her off guard. She fumbled trying to think it through. The last memories she had of Rowan was him on TV talking about the most complete pokemon research project in all of Sinnoh. It was going to propel him onto the top of the regional scientific community. She heard how he said it was his life’s work, and how he was hoping this was the next step to uncovering the secrets of the ancients. There were a lot of ambitions in those words, she recalled.

“What happened?” she asked.

“People were impressed with the work, but no one accepted his conclusions. It was actually very controversial at the time, and his TV appearance didn’t exactly help.”

Dawn realised that she didn’t actually think about all of that at the time. She was no scientist, and assumed that the paper was going to do to Rowan’s career exactly like he said it would. She didn’t even know what it was about, being too concerned by her lack of credit at the time.

“So where is he now?”

“I haven’t seen him in a year.” Lucas scratched his head. “Shortly after the news of his peer review came out, he packed up and told me to take over the facilities. He only came back once to check on me, but said nothing of what he was working on.”

Dawn couldn’t explain what she was feeling. It wasn’t guilt, for she was the one who was wronged. It wasn’t sympathy, for she understood not of the controversies surrounding the Professor’s efforts. It was rather an odd sense of comradeship found in the least expected of places. Presently, she shook herself out of this bout.

“What about you, Lucas?” she asked. “You look busy.”

“I’ve been acting as remote assistant for a few people in the field.” He has resumed his work by this point. “I don’t really have any goals for now, just gathering experience.”

“I’ll leave you to it.”
Dawn set down her cup and headed for the door. Lucas’ gaze broke to follow her momentarily. The mild frustration in his furrowed eyebrows betrayed his reservations. He wanted to this conversation to continue, yet he could not find anything to say. Dawn had been like this since the first time they met: driven. He had always felt as if she moved too fast, but at times he wondered whether it was him who was simply too slow.

As the lab’s door shut behind her, Dawn released her togekiss. She dusted off her skirt, and climbed onto the surprisingly large wingspan of the avian creature.

“Come on, Pipi.”

The togekiss took to the sky. She steered it north, towards a familiar destination. The late autumn air lightly ruffled the locks of her hair. She wondered if she should’ve brought her hat.

Floaroma town hasn’t changed much since the last time she was here a few days back, but seeing these gently swaying trees without the iron ball in her stomach made her smile. She had her reservations, but a goal to work towards gave her the much needed sense of purpose.

Her destination was off to the east. The togekiss landed by the edge of route 205 by the time she could see the crimson horizon enveloping her aerial view. Eterna Forest was the next part of her quest, but heading blindly into it under the incoming darkness didn’t prove an enticing thought. Instead, Dawn approached a pint-sized wooden shack by the right of the entrance. The modest front porch must still have had her footprints, she thought. It also still creaked just like she remembered. There was no doorbell in sight, but three knocks should do it.

“Dawn!” A familiar smile welcomed her. “You’re back.”

“I’m back.”

Cheryl have looked the same as Dawn had known her throughout the years, and today was no different. Deep emerald hair, lightly shaded dress skirt, and green jacket gave the older girl a very striking appearance. She let Dawn in as she has so many times before, then glided back into her meal she had been cooking.

“Will you be staying long?” she asked.

“Just one night, actually.” Dawn smiled a bit at the anticipation. “I’m not actually running away from home this time.”

Cheryl let that sink in. The girl looked sincere enough that those words should be trustworthy, so she waited an amount attributed to healthy scepticism, and then she waited a bit more.

“That’s great.” The aversion in her voice was apparent.

“What’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing. I’m happy for you.”

Dawn’s concern could not be more blatant. She touched Cheryl’s hand and felt their shaking. Cheryl has stopped moving entirely, frozen in time amidst a flurry of emotions. Dawn guided the distressed woman onto the couch, who then proceeded to cross hands on her lap, staring blankly at nothing in particular.

“You’re not fine. What’s going on. Do you feel nauseous?” Cheryl nodded. Dawn ran to grab a brown paper bag lying nearby. “Here, breathe into this slowly.”
She watched Cheryl struggle to do as instructed. The woman’s rigid movements slowed down as Dawn could see the colours returning to her face. A few minutes passed until Cheryl deemed the exercise no longer necessary.

“Do you feel better now?” asked Dawn.

“I’m sorry you had to see that.”

“Don’t talk like that. I’m your friend. I’m here for you.” The girl put her hand firmly on Cheryl’s. “Was what I said really that distressing?”

“I must be nervous. You’re the only person I talk to these days. The thought of you not coming back scares me.” The woman spoke nervously. “I know that’s not true, but I can’t help it.”

Dawn had no immediate reply, but figured a hug will have to suffice.

“I’ll visit, don’t worry.” It was the least she could do for someone who’s been housing her moody bursts for the last two years. “We could even go places, let you see the world safely.”

Cheryl’s smile finally found its way back on her lips.

“Ok.” An embarrassing resignation. “Thank you.”

She stood up and attempted to go back to cooking. Dawn, however, insisted on doing it instead. She didn’t think there would be another panic attack today, but wanted to be on the safe side.

The result was less than desired. It wasn’t the first time the girl had ever handled a spatula, but it might as well have been. Cheryl giggled watching the arduous process of trying to flip an egg without making a mess of the stovetop. Eventually, a very meagre amount of food made it onto the dining table. Dawn’s exasperation contrasted well with Cheryl’s amused expression.

“Thanks for the meal,” said the woman.

“Sorry it turned out like this,” replied Dawn.

“I’m sure it’s not as bad as it looks,” said Cheryl, as she took a modest bite of the sauced pancakes. She was wrong.
The sun was firmly in the sky; its rays weaved through the opening of the branches to create shifting spots of light onto the grassy clearings below. Eterna Forest was beginning to welcome the season’s arrival, and with it the reddening of the leaves and the cadence of the winds.

“We’re taking a left here,” said Cheryl.

She and Dawn laced between the walker’s path and less obvious ones. Years of abandonment has led this once popular tourist destination to become an overgrown maze. The wild life in the mean time has boomed in its variety. There has been species here Dawn has never seen in a 50-mile radius, and she used to know pokemon ecology of the entire region in-side-out.

“How do you even remember these paths?” asked Dawn, brushing the branches away from her hair. “I can barely see anything 3 meters ahead of me.”

“Every morning, if I’m alone, I take my walk here. Years went by, and I end up remembering the layout of the entire place.”

Dawn watched as a starly glided down towards Cheryl and sat on the woman’s shoulder, who proceeded to nudge its striped beak. The bird tapped its forehead on her cheeks, and chirped as she cupped her mouth and giggled.

Dawn stood and took in the scene.

They were on their way once more soon enough. Their destination was north bound, or at least that’s what Dawn could recall. It stirred up a few unpleasant memories.

“Why do you need to come here?” asked Cheryl.

“I left something that I need to get back.” Dawn paused as a small branch slipped from her fingers and flung at her forehead. “I didn’t think it through at the time.”

“Well, I believe we’re almost there.”

The dirt path cut off just ahead. Foliage had overtaken the old steel gate which lead into the inner courtyard, but Dawn could glimpse parts of the rustic paint glinting beneath the shade. The metal door whined a tragedy as it slowly opened inward.

“Is this like you remember?” asked Cheryl.

“It’s too much like what I remember.”

Dawn approached the front of the wooden gate. Despite the chaotic overgrowth around the clearing, the inner house itself seemed to radiate an aura that repelled all changes to its exterior. Two feet from every direction the grass perfectly uniform in height. There were no vines nor flowers to be found within this invisible perimeter despite their abundance outside, and Dawn could not hear a breath of life within this suffocating dome of foliage. Cheryl raised her hand as if expecting a gust of wind which never came. The purple tinted glass windows provided no shine, not helped by the lack of sunlight penetration from above. As far as Dawn could see, this place looked exactly the same as she had last seen in two years prior.

Except for one thing.
Cheryl tugged on the girl’s shirt and pointed towards the western side of the house. From there, they saw a dim, flickering light from inside. Ears to the glass, they heard rapping sounds of intermittent footsteps.

“Who could be here?” asked Cheryl.

Dawn gave no answer, but prompted the woman to be silent. The two looped towards the front door and waited for any more discerning noises. None came, and eventually there was a decision to make. Presently, Dawn slowly twisted the doorknob.

The inner chambers of the Old Chateau greeted her with a devious draft of air. The combination of decades of neglect and concealed ecosystem created a miasma that assaulted the senses with every step. The damp, smoky atmosphere was smothering, but it was something they could tolerate. The paint on the wall looked to have been seared off, and the lack of any furniture didn’t fit the expectations of an abode of this scale.

Quiet steps led them into the main hall. To their sides were swirling staircases, and into the middle was the sizable dining room. From here was where Cheryl spotted the glimmering candlelight. Dawn couldn’t be sure for which to prepare, but she had one hand on the trainer belt regardless. Approaching the entrance with caution, Dawn didn’t expect to hear a loud crashing sound behind her. Looking back, she saw Cheryl fumbling over a fallen coat hanger.

“Who goes there?”

She recognised that croaky voice, if only vaguely. All doubts disappeared, however, when the balding spectacled man came stumbling out onto the hallway in his white lab coat.

“Charon?”

“Little brat!” He also had no trouble recognising her. “What are you doing here?”

“I have to ask you the same thing.”

The two entered into a momentary stare down, as neither was willing to budge with their intentions. Simultaneously, they threw out their pokeballs. Dawn’s togekiss took to her side, while the claw-fisted amphibian toxicroak was at Charon’s. Dawn might have been rusty, but she was sure she had never seen Charon actually engage in a battle before. She had always taken him to be the loud but cowardly type, and his shaky stance confirmed her suspicion.

The toxicroak made the first move, throwing its right arm in a hook with some speed behind it. Pipi weaved through the punch easily, but it was the single claw on the back of its opponent’s hand that was the true threat. A scratch from its sharp tip was enough to cause the avian pokemon great pain. As the togekiss yelped, Dawn commanded it to gain both distance and height. Its enemy out of reach, the toxicroak retreated back into a defensive stance, ready for the imminent counterattack.

Dawn’s togekiss made a sharp turn as it skirted the ceiling. Its cylindrical form shot like a bullet, ripping through the enclosed chamber. Prepared, the toxicroak managed to roll dodged to its side and out of the line of impact. It didn’t, however, expect the rippling current of air that accompanied the wing dive, the strength of which was strong enough to send the poisonous flying towards the nearest beam, defeated.

Recalling it, Charon released his only remaining team member unto the battlefield: the dual-horned dark canine houndoom. As Dawn commanded her Pipi to return to a neutral hover, she could see black energy fuming inside the dog’s mouth. It primed an ethereal orb of abyssal power before
crunching it into a fast-expanding pulse, large enough to hit the flying togekiss and almost knock it out. Sensing a need for adaptation, the girl switched out to her team’s recent return. The emperor penguin’s golden fin slammed onto the dusty floor as its metallic wings crossed to block the incoming attack. As she predicted, her empoleon took minimal damage.

Taking the initiative, the houndoom prepared for another attack. Smoke and sparks simmered from within its massive jaws, before it unleashed a sizable ball of fire threatening to overwhelm all in its path. Dawn had her pokémon take the brunt of the damage. The empeleon wobbled a few steps, but shrugged off the char on its plates. Its beak popped open. The first to come out were mere gargling noises, but soon an eruption of water propelled forward. It engulfed the fiery canine on first contact, extinguishing the residual flames and washing it up on the far side of the room. Out of a team, Charon slumped in defeat.

“Time to start talking.” Dawn glared down on him as she approached. “What are you doing out of prison?”

“I escaped. What do you think?”

“To come here?” she asked.

“I should be asking that question. This is my house.”

This declaration stunned Dawn. Presently, she raked her memories of all that she has found in this house. The notes, the burned cabinets, and this revelation all pointed to one thing.

“You stay here, do not move.” She walked past him and towards the dining room. “Cheryl, come with me.”

The green-haired woman followed her steps.

The dining room was shrouded in darkness, except for the single which Dawn presumed Charon brought in. The first thing she did was to close the door behind her, then sat at the furthest end before gesturing Cheryl to do so besides her.

“What are we doing here?” asked the woman.

“Please close your eyes. Trust me,” said Dawn.

Cheryl obliged.

It didn’t matter, but Dawn needed to prepare her for what’s incoming, if able.

Minutes passed in complete silence. The single light source wavered occasionally, despite their being no wind. Dawn kept her breathing to a minimum, and simply focus on the candle. Its eerie aura extrapolated to the rest of the chamber, creating a dense cavity of pure claustrophobia. She could hear her own heartbeat at this point, and saw the teetering light syncing up with its rhythm. The atmosphere became heavier, as she noticed Cheryl’s breath drawing short. Taking the woman’s hand, Dawn noticed how she was beginning to sweat. She returned to staring at the fire, focused on it so much she was beginning to see double.

The second flame moved.

From just off sight, it drew closer to them. Despite the darkness, it was not possible to see who was holding this candle in motion. It stopped a mere arm’s length from the original flame.
“Welcome back, young mistress.”
Dawn gave it a moment. She could feel Cheryl’s hand shook upon hearing the disembodied voice, but her own firm yet gentle grip assured the woman.

“Christopher,” she replied.

Dawn hid the shaking in her voice as well as possible. Despite this being the third time observing the ritual, it still frightened her quite a bit. For the sake of keeping her companion calm, however, she too must remain above ground.

“What do you need?” asked the voice of Christopher.

“We have guests. Prepare the table and bring him in.”

“Very good, miss.”

The gate connecting the dining room with the hall outside flung open. Charon was still outside, incredulous. As the meek light rays from yonder bled into the previous pitch black chamber, a figure could then be seen holding the second candle flame. It was easy to tell he was a man of some years, whose angular beard and eyebrows were pure white. Dressed in black and white tuxedo jacket, Christopher appeared exactly as Dawn remembered. He bowed down to her, and continued.

“Is there anything else, miss?”

“Get Cassie.”

The air stiffened. A shuddering breeze licked the open flame

“Are you sure that’s wise, miss?” asked Christopher, whose cadence slowed to match.

“I’m sure.”

“Very well, miss.”

From this end, Dawn could not see him below the abdomen, but she could tell he was not walking as he moved away towards the kitchen at the back room.

“Get in here, Charon,” she commanded, before turning to her left. “Cheryl, you can open your eyes now.”

Charon sat down at the table, across from Dawn at the far end. He did not appear to be in a cooperative mood. She knew he could have run whenever he wanted, but the fact that he’s still around practically confirmed her suspicions to be true.

“What’s going on, Dawn?” asked Cheryl.

Dawn saw that Charon was also expecting some answers, and elected to give it right then.

“Years ago, Gardenia showed me this place, as I’m sure she did the same to you,” she said as Cheyrl nodded. “Here, I discovered a strange pokemon possessing electronic appliances. It is called rotom, which I’m sure Charon here is familiar with.”

He begrudgingly nodded.
“It is why I’m here. It belongs to me.”

“I also found a few notes scattered around the house that spoke of a time before the disaster that befell its inhabitants, decades ago.” Dawn pointed towards the ceiling. “Many things have been reduced to ashes and carried off over the years, but you can still see the markings of a raging fire in the burnt paint.”

“Get to the point,” said Charon.

“You must be aware of this, if you are truly the owner of this house.”

“I am,” he confirmed, “and I did lose family in that fire. Why are you bringing this up now?”

“It’s because there are people who have been looking for you,” said Dawn.

She felt an icy touch on her shoulders and heard a whisper in her ears. A gaze backwards told her what she needed to know.

“Is it time, miss?” the embodied voice has returned. Charon heard it, but saw nothing. He just stared blankly at a space besides the girl, stunned.

“Yes.”

From the ether, Cheryl yelped as two figures materialised beside her. She didn’t have the chance to see Christopher’s tall form yet, and the little girl of no more than twelve who held his hand as well.

Charon, on the other hand, sat in a daze. His eyes could not avert from what had transpired; they could not even blink. His quaking legs almost fell when they trudged off of the seat. On his knees, he crawled forward. His hands, many times bigger, carefully reached for the little girl’s. There was no touch upon contact, for his plump fingers simply passed through the shade. This realisation had him weeping.

“Charon,” she spoke. “It’s been a long time.”

“Cassie.” He could not face her. “How is this possible?”

“They have been here all this time, Charon,” said Dawn. “They simply didn’t want to see you.”

The lamentation became even more intense.

“I’m sorry,” he cried. “I didn’t mean to. It was an accident.”

Dawn sighed. After all these years, there it was, finally.

“I’ve missed you, brother,” said Cassie. “You’ve aged so much.”

“I’ve missed you too.”

Charon so badly wanted to hug her. His hands fumbled about the air like a blind man’s, trying to clutch at the ethereal.

Dawn left him to his devices, and gestured Cheryl to follow. It was at a curiously untouched refrigerator beneath the cabinets where she stopped.

“This is what I came here for.”

She pried open a pokeball in her belt. The familiar bright light appeared once more, sucking in the
entire fridge at once, revealing a charred, decade-old model one beneath the camouflage. Stashing the rotom away, the two returned to the dining hall. There, they found Charon on his feet, the two spirits to his sides.

“Dawn,” he spoke with a cooler voice. “I have a favour to ask of you.”

“What is it?”

“Please take care of these for me?” He handed her his two pokeballs. “I won’t be needing their services anymore. Set them free if that’s what you see fit.”

“Why can you not do that yourself?”

He exchanged gaze with Christopher.

“I believe it is the time for you to go, young mistress.” The butler took another gracious bow. “I thank you for everything.”

Dawn felt a strong gust pushing her out onto the hall, before the door slammed shut before her. Agitated, she thumped her fists against it to no avail. There was no response from the inside, despite her best efforts. Presently, she could smell a malevolent aroma. Smoke sipped from beneath the gap, and she soon could feel the heat emitting from the inside.

“Charon?” she yelled. “What are you doing?”

There was no reply. The flames could be heard flaring. She grabbed for her belt, but felt a hand against her wrists. It was Cheryl’s.

“I think it’s time for us to go,” said the woman.

“But this place is going to burn.”

“I think it’s time for old ghosts to rest.”

Dawn wanted to protest, but she knew Cheryl was right. She just wanted to reconcile the spectres of the past, not create more tragedies. Kicking the wooden door one last time, Dawn obliged her companion’s request.

A towering inferno overcame the entire mansion. The inevitable smell of charcoal assaulted the nostrils, causing a rustling from nearby insects as all evacuated the vicinity. Dawn and Cheryl looked on as the flames slowly consumed the house for the second and final time. As the roof began to cave and the walls started to hollow out, Dawn released her empoleon. She commanded it to drown the remaining ill-fuelled fire under a gigantic wave before it could spread to the rest of the clearing.

“It’s over,” she said.

On the walk back to Cheryl’s cabin, Dawn had to confront the reality that she stood as a man burned down his house and himself with it while she stood and watched. It was his wishes, but she felt the obligation to have denied it. She didn’t intend to cause something like this when she pushed for a confrontation. Would he still be alive if she had just taken the rotom and left?

“Dawn.”

She jerked back to attention as Cheryl grabbed her hands.

“What is it?” she asked.
“You’ve spaced out ever since we left. Are you feeling alright?”

“How are you so calm? We just watched a man burned to his death.”

“It sounds off if you put it like that, but isn’t he better off? No one’s blaming you except yourself, Dawn.”

The girl took that hard. She sat silently on the bed as Cheryl did the routine clean-up of the cabin, questioning herself. There’s so much weight on her mind that it baffled her how carefree her friend was taking it all. Cheryl being an asocial recluse didn’t explain it. Was it all in her head, then? Should she simply be shrugging off this demise?

Is she supposed to live with this forever?

Cheryl finished cooking at this point and sat down next to her.

“Tell me the story,” said the woman.

Dawn mused for a moment.

“I came to the old Chateau on Gardenia’s recommendations to investigate the presence of a mystery pokemon, and was how I found rotom.” She held the pokeball up to view. “I also discovered the past of the mansion, and why it was abandoned. Turns out, an oil fire broke out some twenty years ago. The butler along with the daughter perished in the tragedy. It was only on my second visit when I returned the rotom that Christopher and Cassie revealed themselves to me, for what reason I do not know.”

“And today we found out that it was the brother who caused the fire.”

Dawn thought about this. What exactly was going through Charon’s mind as he decided to let himself be consumed in the flames? Would the mansion burning down for the last time actually put all of this to rest? Was the weight of his sin so great that he felt the need to pay for it in this way?

She couldn’t sleep that night.
The next day came with the cool breeze. As she sat upon her togekiss’ large wing span, the outskirts of Hearthome city rolled into view. It has expanded since she saw it last, with residential areas cutting into many of the old grassy areas. Rumours had it: as Jubilife city continued its economic downward spiral, the capital city of Sinnoh will soon shift to Hearthome. She didn’t understand things enough to point out the factors at play, but she could see the signs. The old gates in and out of the perimeter stood in decay as the city has far outreached their usefulness.

She flew past above the contest hall. It looked remarkably modern compared to the rest of the city’s downtown, where old brick and mortar constructions still stood. The hall, on the other hand, looked like an actual structure built this century, with its convertible roof the size of a football stadium. The prominent, and perhaps gaudy, neon graphics in front of its entrance glistened as the display flickered to catch the eye of passers-by. An array of stalls decorated an entire walkway before it, no holds barred when it came to exploiting the crowd of thousands who flocked here every weekend.

Dawn recalled how her mother used to bring her there as a kid. She pondered for a moment whether that was what caused her hatred of all pokemon contests, having to wait for hours for Johanna to prepare for these competitions. She liked the dresses, but not the boredom, the older women fawning over her, nor the blaring speakers.

As the city disappeared from sight, Dawn began to lament the frosty gusts, especially at this height. A few other flyers could be seen at a distance, but she didn’t have the desire to engage with any of them. She hadn’t a desire to speak with any stranger for a long time. As if sensing her hesitation, Pipi slowed down slightly, angling its head upwards and awaited orders. Dawn just caressed its forehead, sending it forward as before.

The trip only felt longer afterwards.

They managed to reach Lake Valour only when the sun was straight above. Dawn’s togekiss manoeuvred down towards the small island in the middle of the clear, misty body of water. A single opening into the rocks had moss growing outward. Dawn momentarily wondered if what she was looking for was still there. Turning on her flash light, she carefully approached the pitch-black interior of the cavern. Initial observations showed very little, but she could feel her skin becoming warmer. Presently, three small sources of light with a ruby tinge appeared amongst the depths. They drew closer to Dawn as she avoided shining her light towards them. Instead, she offered a slow palm, where Azelf snugly planted its cheeks.

“Hey there.” Dawn whispered to the grey fairy, whose golden eyes were now within view.

Azelf rubbed its stubby fingers on her coat, before giving it a light tug. She reminded herself that it wasn’t on her team for very long, and she had changed a lot in four years, especially in the height department. At sixteen, she was already taller than her mother, and would pass even Cynthia before long at this rate.

She smiled at this thought.

Azelf returned to its pokeball without much fuss.

Taking to the sky once more, Dawn’s togekiss rode the updraft to bring her to a better vantage point. She noted a shift in temperature since she was last up to this altitude an hour ago. The sun hasn’t moved much, yet her jacket felt a bit damp with sweat. A quick check of the poketch’s weather
programme reported no abnormal forecast, but the local measurement was through the several degrees above expected. At this point, she began to actively look for any disturbances, and found it before long. To the north west was where the noise was coming from, along with a copious amount of fauna fleeing the area.

Dawn headed straight for what she believed to be Solaceon town. The ranches would be lively at this time of year, which didn’t bold well if what she feared had taken place.

Her destination not yet in sight, she felt a chill. She thought her eyes were blurred momentarily, but realised quickly it was actually the imminent shockwave. A thundering roar flew past, almost throwing her and Pip off course. Mt. Coronent at a distance emitted thick, hazy smoke. She feared the most, before remembering that it was not a volcano. However, burning chunks of hot lava spewed into the air with such velocity as if to mock her perception. It then rained down towards the ground below in a fiery storm, igniting everything it touched. She heard screams of pain and confusion, and knew she had no choice but to press onwards.

She was already sweating buckets by the time the once green fields of Solaceon were in view. The residents were in a state of panic, for this was not a settlement equipped to deal with this kind of natural disaster. Help from big cities were dozens of miles away, and she could only hope shelter was at hand. Instead of joining the evacuation efforts, Dawn flew towards the mountain. The storm of magma had yet to stop after all this time, and she was aware enough to realise this was not a cruel joke of nature.

Circling around the other side of the mountain, she saw the source of the catastrophe. Almost hidden beneath the intense fog was the quadrupedal embodiment of steel and fire, identifiable only by the erratic patterns on its back. From its gaping mouth a pillar of lava disgorged upwards, creating the maelstrom of flames causing havoc beneath.

Dawn approached Heatran with great speed. She could feel her clothes burning up under the blazing atmosphere, but shrugged it off. She held onto her trainer belt, awaiting a shorter distance. She had a solution, but she may only get one chance. Her togekiss went into a dive, darting left and right to avoid molten projectiles erupting from below. Twenty metres above her mark, Dawn saw the opening. Toto went back into its pokeball and left her in freefall. Her empoleon took stage instead.

“Hydro Pump.”

It unleashed a massive volume of water that rode the momentum down. Heatran noticed the attack, and scattered in an attempt to escape. However, the precision with which Pipi discharged the geyser overwhelmed its stubby legs. The metal beast nearly drowned under the wave, and its magma storm could not go on. It writhed in pain, before succumbing. Dawn summoned her togekiss again, just in time to save its herself from an unfortunate collision with the ground.

She hit the slanted surface running. The smog had begun to dissipate, but this wouldn’t do. She needed to capture the threat. Her legs were weak, but she walked with assured steps toward the knocked out pokemon. She thought of the destruction caused below, and how long would it take to fix. She wondered why Heatran became so aggressive. She last saw it in Stark Mountain years before trying to prevent Charon from capturing it. What could have prompted this?

A distraction hit her.

Dawn stopped. She recalled the rumbling from when she was still in the air. Heatran might have been responsible for this molten upheaval, but that earthquake she felt was from something else. She considered the idea of it being a natural occurrence, but deemed such a coincidence ridiculous.
The ground quavered in confirmation.

Dawn took to the air immediately just as giant fissures began ripping into the mountainside. A great tremble accompanied, as if the mountain itself was moving. Giant slabs of rocks and boulders were lifted from the ground and flung at her with immense force. The speed was so great that she didn’t have any time to manoeuvre away.

“Azelf, reflect.”

The grey fairy flew out of its pokeball under her command. It conjured a purple bubble around the three of them. The rocks which smashed into the barrier lost most of their mass, but still medium-sized chunks of it made it through, despite the reduced velocity. Dawn turned around to protect her face and chest, but left her back battered by those gravelly projectiles. A bigger one slammed straight into her lower back and caused her to cry out in pain, nearly losing grip on the flier.

Daring a glimpse backward, she saw what the crevices’ openings have revealed. It had been here all along, buried beneath the once grassy soil, a silhouette of a colossal golem. Its three-fingered hands, at a glacial pace, pushed the very terrain apart. The fleeting sun rays that managed to pass through the fog revealed those dreaded black stripes on its limbs and the tri-coloured gems running down its chest. Golden bands wrapped around its shoulders and wrists swatted trees about like flicking off toothpicks. Its immense caused irreparable damage to the earth with each movement. Dawn knew that those dotted holes in its front place were looking at her.

Regigigas has awoken.
The massive golem pulled itself upwards, creating craters where its hands met the earth. Dawn noticed how its movement had gradually become faster as time went on. It would soon return to full power, and that would be a big issue. She didn’t know how it even got here from Snowpoint Temple, but just like Heatran, the people of Solaceon cannot be safe with how aggressive Regigigas was acting, especially if they had been lured into a false sense of security after the magma storm had ceased.

She turned her togekiss around. Azelf, who had been flying nearby, shot up towards the sky. Its eyes flashed a shade of red which matched the gemstone on its forehead, from where a wave of psychic energy burst out. The golem on the ground was hit with the blunt force of the attack, but shrugged off the damage without much reaction except for a momentarily shift in momentum. Dawn expected this, but seeing it happen still disheartened her. No one on her team had the sort of damage required to quickly take this behemoth down, and if she didn’t do it quickly the Heatran might wake up and cause problems as well. Thinking it through, she let Toto put her on the ground. Jumping off onto the shaky ground below, she sent it off to get help.

Only two members left on her team, Dawn scurried to find a way to stall Regigigas’ imminent rampage. Hiding behind a nearby tree, she noticed how the golem was scarcely paying attention to much of anything. The only reason it seemed to have attacked her was because she was too close. Even after Azelf’s aggression, Regigigas still made no attempts to retaliate, instead focusing purely on getting up right, no cake walk on this slanted surface with its weight.

Dawn released her empoleon once more. Per instructions, the metal bird spewed forth a sizeable stream of water directly beneath Regigigas’ feet. The giant slid and fell backwards onto the earth below. This was enough to cause a small tremor, and had Dawn clinging to the nearest tree trunk. She knew the attempt did little damage, but it got the hulking pokemon’s attention.

Regigigas had no neck with which to turn, but the way its shoulders slightly shifted towards her prompted Dawn to flee the immediate vicinity. The giant’s colossal arms slammed the ground with surprising speed in her direction. A shockwave tore through the already shaky grounds and created an artificial earthquake no less powerful than a real one. It was Dawn knees’s turn to buckle. Unable to hold onto the tree, she had only a moment to curse her lack of upper body strength before rolling down the mountainside. Pipi ran after her, but it was Azelf who was quick enough to pulled her up above ground, even if just for a moment. As its tiny fingers gave way, Dawn fell back down to earth. She stayed still for the quake has passed, but she was bruised and bleeding all over after the impact.

Wiping the crimson liquid off her cut lip, she kicked backed up to a standing position. Regigigas saw this and prepared another barrage of attacks. Chunks of stones in each hand, it flung these boulders towards her at great velocity, similar to before. At this point, Dawn’s empoleon has reached its trainer. Turning around, it crossed those sharp steel wings crossed into a defensive formation, taking the brunt of the rocks’ collision and keeping Dawn from being hurt any further.

Dawn took this moment to take a breath. She ran further downhill, with Azelf hovering close by. She hoped to at least steer the golem’s attention from the town, thus aimed down the other side to run. She could hear emergency vehicles pulling in from neighbouring cities. If Regigigas’ rampage came down on those unsuspecting innocents at this point, the consequences would be dire. She had no idea how long she could keep this up, which was a thought she was quick to discard.

Her first glance back revealed suspicious movements from all four limbs of the giant. She made a swift turn.
Her second glance back saw a curious change in shape of her target. The Regigigas began to curl up into a sphere.

She barely made it to her third glance. The giant took a moment to aim. This chilling moment of silence had Dawn switch direction, but it was not fast enough.

Those massive legs propelled off the ground with unfathomable speed, sending the immense form of Regigigas at her as quick as a bullet. Azelf had just finished conjuring up a protective barrier before the projectile hit both it and Dawn at near full speed. Even with the psychic shield taking the brunt of the damage, she still felt the breath living her body as the added velocity threw her into the air at great speed. As the initial shock wore off, she scrambled to not fall to her death for the second time. Her Azelf was still disoriented, and Empoleon had to take the stage again. A waterfall gushed from its beak in a smooth arc, allowing Dawn to surf the penguin down to relative safety. Even if she was soaking wet and might have had a few bones broken, she survived.

Regigigas landed not far behind her, causing another quake when its feet hits the ground. The giga impact left it momentarily stunned, allowing Dawn to put more distance between them. She didn’t have very much time, however, as the giant was on the move again before long. Seeing how her metal penguin shrugged off its boulder, it went for a different strategy. Raising its arm high, Regigigas repeatedly slammed its fists into the ground like an enraged primate, causing fissures to appear at the base of the mountain. The earthquake caught up to Dawn quickly, forcing her Empoleon to suffer its effects. It crumbled quickly trying to get her on its back, leaving the girl defenceless.

She heard a familiar noise approaching.

Dawn turned around to face the titan. Regigigas, seeing her exposed, hurled another barrage of boulders at her. Out of the corner of its eyes came a figure fast as a blitzing bullet. Standing in front of Dawn was a blue, bipedal canine pokemon. Its spiky fists matched the speed of the thrown rocks with great precision, rendering her completely unharmed. Before Regigigas could go for another attack, the lucario had already closed the distance. Its steel fists unleashed a flurry of powerful punches targeting the joints of the titan. Dawn could hear the thunder of each impact as the strikes break down the weak points of the titanic creature.

The pummeling lasted for a full minute. As the lucario took a step back, Dawn could almost taste the stunned silence. Regigigas’ limbs crackled before dropping stone cold down to the earth below. This immense weight was enough to nearly topple her.

“Dawn.” She turned around, from where a young female voice came. “Are you alright?”

Maylene ran into view, with Dawn’s togekiss following quickly behind, wearing the all too familiar sweatpants and sleeveless shirt by which Dawn remembered her. The only difference was the eye-catching pink hair was now curved inward.

“I’m fine. I’m glad you got my message in time.”

Dawn lightly caressed Toto as a reward for a job well done.

“How come you knew I would be helping with the rescue efforts?” asked Maylene.

Dawn just smiled. She was too tired and didn’t want to explain just how much of it was blind faith. She certainly expected someone like Fantina to show up, but this was good too.

There was a flash.
Jerk ing her head back, she noticed how the titan pokemon was no longer there, instead only the enormous crater where it fell. Not wasting any time for further questions, she immediately took to the skies on Toto’s back. Steering it where she defeated Heatran, it became clear to her that the volcanic turtle was no longer there either. The reality of the situation became clear to her. Someone, who had been keeping a very close proximity, had been using Dawn to weaken these legendary pokemons and capture them as soon as they’re down. Try as she might, she couldn’t see anyone who might fit that description.

Dawn could only curse at the wind.

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