Gift of the Protector: Fractured Unity
by Edge_Feyera (Solar)

Summary

He was an aspiring young Pokemon Researcher, until the accident two years ago took away a fraction of his memory. Tired of his current dead-end job, he experiences vivid dreams urging him to interact with Pokemon again. What better way than going on an adventure with them? This arc is the exposition to a massive storyline that isn't your average Gardevoir tale.

Notes

This is the prologue to my story "Gift of the Protector". It functions as an introduction and provides background information. While this chapter is written in first person, all subsequent chapters in this arc titled "Fractured Unity" will be written in third person. Just wanted to clear up some confusion. Also, this story is lengthy.

A full guide to various words and names from the story along with their pronunciations has been posted on my series page for Gift of the Protector.

*I am currently in the process of transferring over my other chapters from FF.net so please be patient.*
Prologue: A New Dawn

Chapter Notes

Protector’s Timeline:

Arc 1: Fractured Unity*-Arc 2: Pristine Embrace*-Arc 3: Radiant Heart

*Published

Prologue: A New Dawn

It was the dead of night, well after midnight. Frozen in my bed, I cursed the brash sounds of thunderclaps keeping me wide awake. Cascades of rain flowed down the eves of my small apartment building in torrents. Brilliant flashes of lightning revealed these swift rivers and tumbling waterfalls to me, cloaking the entire scene outside my tiny window in purest white. Amid the immaculate display of organic photography, my every heartbeat anxiously awaited the inevitable crash of thunder to follow the bright light. Time, bridging each flash of lightning and every rattle of wooden floorboards, remained a carpeted mystery, ever-changing and amorphous as lucid dreams.

Come to think of it, this isn’t the first time I’ve been “trapped awake” while knowing I’d be better off sleeping. You see, I haven’t been able to stay asleep for the past few nights. My mind’s been racing with thoughts. Certain nights, I would stay awake in thought alone; my contemplative brooding ranging from my current situation to the cute girl at work I’ve had a crush on. Other nights would be filled with imagination, with fascinating bursts of creativity yearning for an outlet strangely absent from my life. And still others, I would drift off completely into a combination of thought and imagining, fully immersing myself into another world. A world where I went on adventures with Pokemon. Only in my recent dreams could I access these dizzy imaginings.

Dreams…That’s what they’re called. Psychologically speaking, dreams are inherently mysterious. But dreams for me had somehow changed over the past few weeks. They had evolved; morphing into a separate world, filled with color and light. It was a world I would frequently allow myself to become immersed into for hours upon hours. What made them so entrancing? For starters, the scenery around me would always change, but the feeling remained the same. Sometimes, there were expansive visions of wide, panoramic scenes. Other times, there were paradoxes; simultaneous sunrises and sunsets, concepts the eyes cannot grasp, but strangely enough, the mind can. Rarely, I would become enveloped completely by the scenery, living in a land with luscious green gardens overlooked by marble balconies dotting the hillsides, their lofty visages supported by gilded buttresses rising from a thick mist of clouds and sea. They were places I’d never been to, places so whimsically dreamt up that they would be forgotten before dawn; impossible to touch, yet indubitable in regards to their effect on me.

Over the past few weeks, I’ve done nothing but indulge in my bizarre dreams; taking naps during the day to try and escape from reality. Actually, that’s not all true. I wasn’t trying to escape regular reality as much as I was trying to escape my reality. And who could blame me? I didn’t dream since the accident. Sure, I slept a lot, but now…something was different. I felt as if I was satisfying a creative side of me, or rather allowing for creativity to take hold of me. Strange indeed, but the places
felt real enough. And as for the Pokemon, they were real too. I questioned my sanity for a moment. Why did I wonder so much about what Pokemon were like when I lived in a world full of them? Let me just say that one bad experience with the creatures can really ruin your perspective. But I don’t want to be paralyzed by fear any longer—the dreams I’ve been having are too exciting to pass up! I have a life of my own to live out; wasting away and fantasizing in dream worlds won’t do much good. I can make those visions that I have real; I can overcome the past. I have to take the first step of going out and doing it myself! But if I’m going to undertake a Pokemon journey, shouldn’t I be well-rested on the dawn of my departure?

Cold wails from the passing storm allowed me to focus on something external in the world, nature’s strength was truly something to behold. I ran my hand through my light bronze hair like a comb. Then I pulled myself up from bed and whipped my feet out from under cream linen sheets and onto an icy cement floor. The floor was freezing! I made haste to put my slippers on, which I had left in the kitchen of my small apartment. As I paced around in searching, the loud crash of thunder was deafening. I trembled without volition. I hated sudden noises! My disdain derived from being startled by the unexpected. There is a lot to say about unpredictable events, especially in our world. As for the storm, we were in dire need of rain in this part of Kanto, so it was at least welcome in that regard. However, soon enough, I’d be leaving it all behind.

Pouring myself a tall glass of water, I glanced over last week’s paper. I felt disconnected, isolated even. I was on my own, with memories that were not my own. It all began two years ago. After taking the glass to my narrow lips and forcing a sip, I pushed the old newspaper aside, uncovering my diary from underneath. It was a small notebook, a durable collection of tatty parchment bound by a russet leather strap. I flipped through the pages slowly. Even my handwriting changed. What was there that hadn’t?

I turned back to my earlier entries. The first few pages were blank. I came upon text soon enough in the form of a simple question written in sharp, block like characters: “What happened before my memory loss?”

Silently, I read the next paragraph to myself; hardly remember even writing this entry. “Monday, June 9th, 21 EKNR. Recovery has been slow. I remember my name obviously. I’m Christian Feyera. I also remember up until my seventeenth year. The problem is I’m nearing twenty, and there’s hardly an adequate information trail for me to follow between then and now. No alibi, no paperwork, absolutely nothing useful! It’s as if a part of my life disappeared! What’s worse is I’m never up to date on any current events; it’s terrible. I just sort of exist now, trapped in chronic bouts of confusion. I hope that I can at least find a job to support myself now that Aunt Bethany left to go back to Agate…Her advice was to stay away from Pokemon because they caused my memory loss.”

The next entry was short and simple. “Friday, June 27th, 21 EKNR. Luckily, I managed to find a job. Though it’s nothing special, I’m focusing on paying my bills.” For a while, that’s all that really mattered to me, because it gave me security. “I have a small place where I feel relatively safe.” Too bad that complacency was beginning to fade away. Pensively, I kept reading.

“Tuesday, July 1st, 21 EKNR. I’ve finally made some headway! Academic records reveal that I attended Kanto’s University, School of Genealogical Studies. I contacted the school, and they confirmed my attendance and doctorate. Imagine that! I can’t believe it! What happened to me? Where did my memory go?” I stiffened my posture, reading those words sent a chill down my spine. “It was an intensive, three-year program in Saffron City. I finished it in half the time, starting at age seventeen. I asked them to mail my research materials and diploma.”

“Thursday, July 10th, 21 EKNR. This is incredible! Charizard Express Mail brought my transcripts
and academic records today. I’ve earned a doctorate in Pokemon Bioinformatics! I’m published too, under the name Doctor Feyera! I’ll admit, this is all very strange. I’m happy to be learning about what happened during my gap of memory lapse, but frustrated to find that the academic degrees I’ve earned are totally useless to me! All that hard work and I can’t remember a dime’s worth of tuition! Curse my fate! Curse the Pokemon that did this to me and their wicked masters! Sometimes I become so angry I can only see in red. It doesn’t seem fair. I hardly had a chance to use my Pokemon knowledge, despite being qualified to do so. And since I hate what Pokemon did to me, it doesn’t look like I’ll be going back to researching them anytime soon.”

I thought about the oddity of having done all that schooling for naught. My diploma was somewhere in storage now. It didn’t matter; I couldn’t use it to do anything. Through memory loss, I’d been stripped of any academic prestige I once held; though that didn’t stop me from occasionally flaunting a hallow title. Call it my pride, call it a label, the writing was on the wall. It was the only proof of who I was, and who I am.

Flipping to a more recent entry, I found my handwriting had slenderized, and was a lot less sloppy.

“Wednesday, November 12th, EKNR 21. I’ve been doing some information digging to unearth pieces from the past two years. Unfortunately, my current list of contacts isn’t much help. About half the names mentioned in my publication lead to nowhere, and the other half are members of the DBC’s ‘Gideon Group’. I also found out that most of my work at Kanto University took place in the form of private internships. According to the dean, I was hardly ever on campus; always working on off-site projects directed by the senior scientists and researchers instead. No luck otherwise; retrograde amnesia still has me in the dark.”

Next to that entry, I came across a clipping of myself shaking hands with a white haired man in a charcoal grey dress suit. His eyes were half closed. Faces sometimes looked familiar, but I could never quite make the jump to naming them. He may have been one of the other researchers or even a professor in charge of reviewing my work. It was taken at least a few years ago, back when I had shorter hair. I wore a narrow sapphire tie and a black suit jacket with a faint pinstriped vest underneath. A small note on the side of it said “Dissertation Presentation”. This was probably the height of my academic glory, clearly defining when I had peaked as a researcher.

I read the caption under the attached photograph, “I’ve always considered myself a researcher and a scientist at heart; even before the amnesia. I’ve had an inquisitive mind from young and at least I can remember that. I know the quest for knowledge is important, imperative even, especially now that I’m looking for answers…”

Peering over at the clock, I smiled to myself. My retentive personality might’ve been the best clue I had. “…I also know there’s much work to be done in this vast world! With a plethora of Pokemon inhabiting the planet, it’s always been a hope of humanity’s to understand them. An airtight encyclopedia depicting all of the Pokemon species in the world was a distant dream, but nonetheless fascinating. This curiosity originally led me to the path of empirical research during my early teens. Of course, all this was before I was attacked and lost nearly everything thanks to Pokemon. Pokemon are frightening creatures. Or rather, ever since the attack and amnesia, they’ve frightened me. I’ve lost faith in my ability to be around them and feel safe, even after all those years learning about them. Being psychologically barred from intermingling with them, my logic at this point is simple: I need to gain enough courage to be around Pokemon again. Plenty of trainers get along with Pokemon just fine. Therefore, I need to become a Pokemon trainer before I can interact with Pokemon. Hopefully then I can research again. And get my memories back.”

I stopped reading and stretched. In retrospect, I should probably have mentioned to the regional professor that I’ve been — for lack of a better word — frightened by Pokemon ever since ‘the incident’ two years back. The thing is, I don’t think it will be hard to fool him into giving me one;
I’m half-way decent at manipulation. And besides, ever since the war professors have been handing out Pokemon to anyone with half a brain. According to the Pokemon League, the practice is good for business.

If ‘the incident’ does come up today, I’d dislike to talk about in great detail with Oak. I’d have to be quick about it, so that I don’t get too upset. I’d say something along the lines of “I’m a little nervous, I had localized amnesia after being attacked by a Pokemon. It caused me to forget nearly sixteen months leading up to the occurrence.” Surely then he’d understand my apprehension. Especially after I told him the name that this attack on innocent civilians had become known as. Everyone knew about the tragic Pokemon Sanctum Robbery!

But back to where I stood now. I turned to one of the last blank pages and began to write. I was told it would be therapeutic for my missing memories. I’m certain that one day science can help restore my memories. Actually, I have a lot of faith in that. As a scientist at heart, I have to. Pokemon can already do a great deal for us. Science is always finding new ways to take advantage of their natural abilities. In order to get better, I needed to be back at the forefront of knowledge and at the crossroads where I had left off: the place where science and Pokemon met. There was a lot to be excited about. Metaphorically speaking, I was going to be getting my wings back very soon. Writing would help take my mind off the big day ahead of me! So, I put the pen to paper and let the jet-black ink flow once more. I was going to write something corny like “Dear Diary” but decided against it; just a date would suffice, there was no need for anything more.

I wrote, “Monday, August 15th, 22 EKNR. About one year ago, I moved to the quiet, temperate town of Pallet in order to recover. I didn’t have much choice. Unfortunately, this life isn’t really going anywhere for me. I work—or rather worked—at a nearby coffee shop to pay for rent, and to be honest it’s about as unfulfilling as it’s demeaning.” I grumbled thinking about the job where I was ‘Gainfully Employed’ according to last month’s census. “For starters, the place’s name is Prevoy’s, and the stupid motto is ‘Prevoy’s Coffee: Everyone’s First Choice!’ They think it’s SO clever because they’re selling coffee to people first thing in the morning, at least they don’t require me to say that dumb phrase to the customers anymore. I convinced the manager that would probably end badly.”

I thought about finding a clipping or something, a paycheck or receipt. I needed something to prove that this was all real. I panicked about losing my mind sometimes. Memory loss will do that to you at the worst times. Especially when you’re alone with your thoughts as much as I am. The docs warned me about psychogenic retrograde amnesia relapses. Doctor Benjamin told me to write down what I can remember as soon as it comes back and to document my new experiences in a journal so I don’t forget those. Sadly, I’ve only been partially successful in undertaking either of those tasks. Then again, everything changed two years ago.

I frantically flipped through the book, but relaxed after I realized I had placed a picture of myself in a Prevoy’s apron on a prior page of the journal. Tucked in there with a paperclip, it was a small passport size identification and name card with a “P” watermark under my glowering face. I sure looked unhappy in that shot. Must’ve been taken when I first started. I laughed quietly; turning back to the page I had begun to write on, and continued to allow the black liquid to vigorously pour out of my pen in gentle arcs and curves.

“Prevoy’s. Stupid name right? I wish I could tell the owner that, but then he’d probably fire me since it’s his last name. Not that he could at this point; I’m done with that job. Gave my letter of resignation the moment my trainer’s license came in the mail. Prevoy’s…what a total flop! You see, Mister Prevoy tried to open up a chain of these coffeehouses all throughout Kanto, but it was a major failure. Overpriced beverages, packed seating, insider trading, you name it! These places were doomed to go pear-shaped before the front doors opened for the first time. All of them closed save
this sorry one in Pallet. And the only reason this one is even still around is because Mister Alexander K. Prevoy himself lives here.” I laughed aloud as I finished my sentence. Sonorous thunder continued to echo in the background; it was less upsetting now that I was preoccupied.

“To think, I earned my PhD and was unable to use any of it!” I wrote, feeling my hand quiver. It made me angry. Irritated. But I had to get it out, I didn’t want to bring the baggage with me on the upcoming trip. “My frustration has a rather open scope. I’d qualify it as internally-directed disapproval, referencing my desire for success. And sadly, that once bountiful promise of success has been neutered…maybe even permanently by bastards like Team Rocket who attack innocent civilians with their Pokemon!” I shook my head in anger. Upon briefly reflecting, I realized that I was not just upset, but instead I was lacking satisfaction. I glared at the blank white apartment walls as if to focus my frustration elsewhere. “Studying Pokemon as a ‘Researcher’ had so many career opportunities, but now, thanks to recent memory loss and because of my apprehension to deal with the creatures, I’ve been nothing but restricted over the past two years. It’s a vicious cycle, feeding itself with each sunrise that whimsically passes me by. And I need to get out.” Those last lines sounded almost poetic; strange, considering I don’t have a bard’s bone in my body.

Scratching my head, I pushed down harder on the pen and continued to write, my words flowing in elegant cursive humps and dips. Strange… Writing like this was something I hadn’t done since I was a little boy back in the second grade, back when cursive was the mandatory form of written expression. Heck, I think I forgot how to write cursive and remembered it after losing all my actual important memories; my youthful memories, up until around age sixteen, are easier to recall than more current ones from ages seventeen to last year. That’s all beside the point though.

“I’m tired of clocking in day after day at Prevoy’s Coffeehouse. Greeting the same faces day in and day out. Making ‘small talk’ with people I didn’t care about; they weren’t there to see me, they were there for their morning cup of Joe. What a bunch of phonies! And man, did the customers always have something brainless to say to me about my injury along the lines of: ‘What is that? What happened to you? Did a Pokemon do that?’ People don’t understand, some scars won’t—or rather can’t– heal. I tried my hardest to cover up the oddity with my uniform’s apron, I really did. At least they could look at my face and make me feel better about it. I wish I had enough courage to tell them, ‘Gawk all you’d like to on your own time, please don’t be wasting mine though! If I want to talk to you about what happened to me, I’ll initiate the conversation. Besides, there’s always someone else waiting behind you in line, so why waste their time too?’” With shaking lips, I wrote out my bitter thoughts, forcefully venting my inner frustrations with long, airy breaths.

“Brewing batches of ground coffee beans and making beverages to satisfy my customer’s endless cravings for sugar and calories. It’s boring. There’s no spark in my life. I’m missing out. Sure, it had been therapeutic to have a routine after the attack, I could practically do my job in my sleep.” I shuddered again in my teak chair thinking about it. Quickly, I wrote down the process. “Pour ground coffee into the filter. Push the filter in and add hot water. Take the correctly sized cup from the stack. Pour the coffee, add the cream first, followed by: flavored syrup, sugar, or milk. Cover the lid. Wish the customer a nice day.” It was a rhythmic routine to be sure. Straightforwardness was good in the early months following my amnesia. I couldn’t remember who I was for a couple of months and needed to perform simplistic tasks to maintain my sanity.” I paused and looked at the growing paragraphs.

The only sound came from large raindrops pelleting my window like Bullet Seeds. I peered out the window, past its black hairline crack and at the dreary rain.

I started a new line a few inches down, “Now it’s different. I’m growing out of this sheltered lifestyle. Strange and unscientific as this sounds, I feel…driven by an inexplicable, invisible force. I want to change my boring and lackluster life. I’ve had dreams about going on adventures with
Pokemon whose names were all alien and strange to me. In the dreams I don’t have a blind fear of Pokemon. My best dreams always involved Pokemon. Odd don’t you think?” I asked the paper rhetorically. “Especially coming from someone who had been nearly killed by Pokemon.”

Finally, I decided to get to the meat of the matter. I let out a tight exhale, to break the rain’s monotony. “I’ve decided to go traveling on a Pokemon journey. I know, it sounds crazy but it just might work. I don’t want to have to be afraid anymore. I need to get my old life back.”

“The best way to involve myself with Pokemon would be to play to my strengths—or ex-strengths. I was a researcher with a little clout from back in the day.” I thought again about the past and pressed onwards in a strange dialogue with myself. “It gave me an idea. A quest or an adventure, keenly disguised as a field-work exercise for a scientist trying to reorganize his brain’s beaker set! I took a gander at the latest developments, and learned that cataloging Pokemon species is as big of a deal as I remember it being. I remember finding a bit of fascination in it myself; the Pokédex was one of a kind. About a month ago, I finally made up my mind and devised a plan. I had to make some arrangements for my ‘fieldwork’ with Pokemon in the wild. I knew of no one better than the Kanto regional expert, a Pokemon Professor by the name of Samuel Oak. His laboratory is conveniently right here in Pallet! Oak’s borderline famous, he even runs a Pokemon Sanctuary approved by the DBC; that’s a big deal considering all the paperwork ecological approvals require. Everyone calls Oak ‘The Professor’. Like he’s the only one! Sheesh, the man must have an ego the size of the moon.” I chuckled realizing that today was the day I actually would go and meet ‘The Professor’ in person. “But he’s earned it, and retained it throughout his years. I hope he won’t ask too many details involving my research…I don’t want to look like a fool because of my forgetfulness!”

“I’m a little nervous to be honest. Not only about meeting a Pokemon either. You see, I feel like I’ve grown to know almost everyone in this backwoods, one-and-a-half-star town. Heck, most of the people here know me because of my survival story. And yet, never have I seen Professor Oak stop in Prevoy’s Coffeehouse. Figures, he’s so busy, he probably has an apprentice or intern working as a coffee-boy 24/7.”

“After a brief exchange of letters, Oak signed me up for an appointment with him. There, I would obtain a guardian of sorts to protect me during my quest. The world is enormous and dangerous, but the Department of Biological Conservation takes their role to create a safer environment very seriously. The DBC—” I turned to the newspaper and sure enough it had their little, ornate leaf on it on the corner representing ‘greener products’. I rolled my emerald eyes, thinking, “Yeah right, greener for their pocketbooks.” “—is a major branch of Silph Incorporated. The DBC were the ones who accredited my doctorate from the university, so I can’t complain too much about them. Silph on the other hand, is about as corrupt as a corporation can get! In case I forgot to mention in an earlier entry, Silph’s pulling all the strings here in Kanto through political lobbying. The environment’s conservation is just one of the controlled aspects of the world.”

I paused and took a short breath, flexing my wrist as I did so. “Silph has direct control over Kanto by being founded here, but their reach of influence extended globally. Over people and Pokemon alike! Starting with capture-devices, or Pokéballs, Silph Incorporated successfully secured control over many forms of technology.”

“This all took place following the Industrial Revolution which occurred approximately thirty-five years ago. Since the world stopped using Pokemon for energy, technology has grown exponentially. As a researcher, I get all excited about that because it promises future advancements. It’s amazing to think that the last two generations didn’t even have PC systems. People back then were still figuring out how to generate electricity without using Pokemon, starting with steam power. What a terribly inefficient world that would have been. I couldn’t imagine having to live back then.” I wrote, visualizing how alien the past was. “How terribly awful. It must have been a dark time for the world,
but not nearly as bad as the Darkened Ages predating industrialization. While I would have hated to be alive during a war, I would have hated it even more to be born during the time before mankind’s first recorded golden age but after the Terminal War. Back then, there was no rationality; people savagely killed one another like mindless, frightened animals. They were worse than Pokemon in the wild! At least Pokemon have an ordered food chain. People in the Darkened Ages killed based on fear. Fear of differences, fear of anything really, but especially psyonics (people with latent abilities similar to Psychic Type Pokemon). Those persecutions were senseless! We could have studied and learned so much from psyonics and now they’ve all but disappeared.”

I liked to write about what I learned from history. World history wasn’t too difficult to remember, I took those classes well before attending Kanto University. My memory wasn’t completely destroyed. Rather, it was fragmented into parts that can’t quite yet make a whole. In other words, my memory is unabridged save for an eclectic facture dividing it into two. The docs call the phenomenon a “Fractured Unity”. I remember up until a specific point, a couple of months before my injury, and then it all goes dark. It’s like jumping from age seventeen to nineteen in a single heartbeat, in a sudden flash of black light. At least I’m back in the light for now though.

I continued to recount my history lessons from nearly a decade ago in order to avoid dwelling on the strangeness of my situation. “While there were numerous advantages following the Industrial Revolution, it also inadvertently brought about a major conflict called the Great War. It was the largest international clash in recent history, starting twenty-six years ago—lasting four years, drawing to a close two years before I was born.”

I stopped, overwhelmed with déjà vu. Maybe I had written this before. I decided to go back in time and check. Flipping backwards, I came across a section titled “Commit it to Memory: World History”. Bingo! The text here was much more choppy and rigid. Not in style alone but also in physical form. I’d also forgotten to date it. Judging from the location of this page in my diary, it had to have been early on during my arduous recovery.

I read the first paragraph silently in my head. “There were plenty of wars in the distant past, many of them much more brutal; but our knowledge of their belligerents and weaponry is limited. Perhaps for the better since no civilization survived to tell the tale. Modern-day historians can only be certain of one thing; there was at least one war prior to the recent Great War. But to this day, the vagueness and incongruity of ancient conflict remains. Why did it happen? No one really knows. Records don’t exist. All anyone knows is that contemporary archeologists discovered several ruined settlements with technology greatly surpassing our own. Many of these artifacts, although powerful, are still not fully understood even by our best scientists. What were they used for? What was their purpose? How did they fail their masters? In time, scientists will figure it out if it leads us to an easier lifestyle so long as you give them enough time. It’s worked in the past. Chances are, without discovering some of these relics, we’d still be in the Stone Age—technically speaking. Humans have always had Pokemon to fall back on thankfully, but it’s also nice to be able to stand up on our own as an independent species. Thanks to various types of technology, modern civilization is basking in the shade of a recent Golden Age.”

Flipping the page over, I started to read the next section. “Teachers in history classes often just have us memorize that there was one war in ancient history, and the only one that mattered. Entire civilizations were unconditionally destroyed by this early and mysterious global battle, dubbed the Terminal War. Despite possessing the most advanced technology, civilizations of that era were all but wiped out. This paradox seemed to resonate with many. The antiquity of the Terminal War actually postponed conflict; the apocalyptic aftermath echoed a dull warning to humanity to this day. It wasn’t until after the recent Industrial Revolution that a grand scale conflict took place on our planet. However, the Great War was not nearly as destructive as the Terminal War. I personally think us humans never had the resources to conduct a war without Pokemon until we generated our own
form of weaponry. The Industrial Revolution opened that door. It also allowed for Pokemon to be tamed, stored, and controlled by anyone with a Pokéball.”

That all sounded right to me. I remembered the history lectures from Mister McClaine back in boarding school. “The Great War began due to numerous economic reasons. Since Pokemon were no longer necessary for profitable human industry the policy of protecting them became vital to prevent over-capturing or possibly extinction—especially due in part to the severe brutality involved in Pokemon battles. Either way, Silph elected to market its Pokemon products globally, further spreading the technology. There was a surge of Kanto nationalism when there was a shift from Pokemon labor to Silph-founded machinery. Silph’s development of the steam engine, railroads, and shoreline drilling for natural oil caused this monopoly and allowed for market control.”

I nodded softly at the page as the rain continued to pour outside. Those devices were archaic from a computer’s standpoint, but the railroad system operated to this day—a combination of antiquity and functionality.

“Superior infrastructure and economies of scale in densely-populated Kanto increased the size of Silph’s market through the lower transportation costs. As the various ‘inorganic’ technologies became mainstreamed, Pokemon were no longer considered a necessity, but an advantage. This enlightenment changed the way people thought. Mankind had devised a way to exist as its own species. For instance, electricity, once thought to have been only obtainable through the means of using Electric Type Pokemon was now available for humanity to utilize unconditionally with the technology that came along with burning oil and coal in power plants around the region. Being able to freely generate power, humanity’s use of technology surged forth at an unprecedented rate.” I felt like quite the historian reading through my thorough notes on the past. Maybe I had missed my calling!

I was picking up the pace and reading quicker as the lessons came back to me in beautifully stitched together memories. The types of memories I possessed far too few of in recent years. “This surge in technological advancement gave clear advantages to larger firms such as Silph. It was all too easy after the invention of the ‘pokeball’ device, marketed under the various Silph brands: Pokéball, Great Ball, and Ultra Ball. Without Pokéballs, the world would be a very different place.”

“With booming business, Silph took over competitors in neighboring regions such as the Devon Corporation in Hoenn and the Poketch Company in Sinnoh. Of course, they let the companies keep their names. This made it appear as if there were competing firms in the Pokemon industry, but the reality was that Silph owned more than anyone would care to admit. Or count for that matter. Their patents and civil influence generated enormous profits.”

Deep down, I disliked Silph, but that was because of personal reasons. I couldn’t help it, I was opinionated! True, they made the world ‘better’ although neither I—nor anyone else with half a brain—would say they were necessarily good. They did what was good more out of necessity.

“The Kanto Government—a democratic structure established during the Industrial Revolution—endorsed Silph as a prominent attribute for the nation. Silph’s mastery over commerce and technology helped turn it into a national symbol. Legislation after legislation was passed to grant Silph greater ability to produce. Kanto, being a newly industrialized nation wanted to protect its main corporation. With more funding came more successes. That’s because Silph gave plenty of domestic benefits. At the time, alternatives to steam energy were being refined in other regions and Silph saw a method to secure permanent global market control through aggressive arbitration.”

I kept following along with my notes, “There was a great deal of dispute over resource control after Kanto became industrial. When a nation becomes industrialized, it becomes more reliant on proper
business strategies and allocations of resources. However, Silph was also effectively the government of Kanto. Or at least, lobbying it up to the gills. Politics…”

“Of all the nations, the one that suffered the greatest loss from Kanto’s new technological prowess was Orre. Orre’s on the distant continent, southeast of the Kanto mainland. Orre’s region is noticeably arid, a huge desert wasteland. Orre has only few above-ground settlements in it due to the dry unforgiving climate. However, the largest problem for Orre is the rarity of wild Pokemon. I should know this fact better than most. I have an aunt who lives in the Orre region with her husband. Her name’s Bethany Hale. She’s my late mother, Valerie’s, sister. Although kind, I’ve been out of touch with her for a long time—almost a year. After my accident, she helped take care of me for the first few weeks when I returned from the hospital. I was grateful for her help. I was probably frustrating to contend with during the early phases of my recovery. She’s a saint in my mind. How she manages to live in Orre’s desert is beyond me, but it must have been what made her strong enough to help me.”

I kept reading, “In Kanto, where the Industrial Revolution originated in, Silph Incorporated was able to shift the balance of technology so that Pokemon were no longer fully necessary. For instance, generating power became much easier with the introduction of steam power. No longer did nations need to rely on the unpredictable nature of Pokemon. This was incredible, however not without consequence. When Orre citizens attempted to continue trading with Kanto through their main city of export, Gateon Port, Silph’s board of directors suggested an embargo. A nationalistic Kanto saw foreign technological dependence as something profitable. Any person knows Orre is rich in natural resources and poor in Pokemon. Therefore, Orre needed the new Pokemon-free technologies more than any other nation. Silph placed high tariffs on their new Pokemon independent technologies. They claimed that this was protectionism from international competition, making the argument that their industry was in its infant stage still and needed a high return for it to be profitable. Of course, this was not true; Silph Co. was price gouging an exploitable market.”

“Orre citizens began to rally behind the concept that they were being taken advantage of by a corrupt international power. And there was some truth to their claims. Silph’s global control over technology and the political spectrum allowed for unmatched abuse. Shortly after trading embargos were tightened, Stephanie Harquelin: the prime minister of Kanto, and her family, were assassinated by Orre extremists calling for an end to an unfair exploitation of the free market. The Kanto media blew it up, made it appear to be a full-scale invasion. Silph demanded military control in order to defend Kanto with their state-of-the-art countermeasure combat technology.” Noiselessly, I read on.

“Kanto’s military was signed over to Silph’s directors, who promised a swift conclusion to the conflict. The newly transformed Kanto New Republic Army mobilized and the majority of the nation’s cities were placed under martial law, losing democratic freedoms. Through essentially becoming the reigning government and seat of absolute power, Silph could not possibly become any more involved with the Great War. Their Research and Development Branch, perhaps the same division that my father once worked for, developed a wide array of weaponry. Typically, battles were fought and won by Pokemon sparring matches. Pokemon were a lot stronger than people, and often pitied humans in a natural setting. Human beings had longer lifespans than most Pokemon, but little else to offer the beasts of the word. But technology had changed that. By discovering Pokéball tech, people became capable of taming and indeed expanding the lifespans of many species of Pokemon from their wild counterparts. Of course, Pokemon come in all shapes and sizes, some being more adverse to humanity than others, but their yearning for competition remains. As superior tacticians, people could be freed from the shackles of helplessness in a dangerous world. People never developed special powers like Pokemon; and when they did, there was a prompt movement to eradicate the human anomalies. Fear has been and always will be a catalyst for witch-hunts and the like. People are afraid of what they don’t understand. That’s why research – rising above petty emotions of fear – is important, if not essential, to humanity’s survival
in this world.” I sighed wondering if I could even call myself a researcher any longer; I had the will, I had the attitude, but had lost the aptitude.

I turned through the wrinkled pages and found the section titled, “Technological Rediscoveries”. Feeling the texture of worn parchment, I silently followed along by dragging my finger on the paper reading to myself, “There were a number of prototype weapons developed during the Great War, some of which still exist to this day. Many were brutal. Their ability to place power into the hands of human beings did not go unnoticed by the creatures we once coexisted with. Prior to the Great War, people relied on their Pokemon to protect them. The Great War changed all of this when the first firearms were developed. Drawing from initially simplistic designs, found in ruins of the Terminal War, our firearms rapidly evolved to answer the increasing rarity of Pokemon as human settlements expanded. Technology never seemed to stop advancing. It grew with us. Being the inquiring type, I believed it was our power; and, much like how certain Pokemon had certain abilities, humans had ingenuity. Although ‘ingenuity’ would refer to being smart enough to dig up and construct schematics from prior civilizations. Semantics though. Humans developed steam power, allowing us to access the first subterranean ruins and now we have computers capable of generating algorithms to locate new resource caches. The process uses a synthetic link between ancient technology and Pokemon. The modern hope is to somehow link humans to this chain. Who knows what we’d learn!”

I gazed down at a tiny picture I had cut out and glued into the book of an ancient rust covered flintlock pistol. I thought to myself, “What an amazing discovery!”

“Originally, the synthesized ‘firearms’ used a crude form of explosive powder to eject bullets at about a Voltorb’s lethal force. However, often times they would misfire and reloading was a deadly chore in the heat of combat. However, in the hands of a skilled marksman, reloading wouldn’t be an issue. Despite such drawbacks, to this day, firearms utilizing gunpowder have been tried and true. They aren’t issued to many people, usually just the police and wealthy or paranoid citizens.”

“Paranoid citizens,” I said aloud, suppressing a laugh because that included me. After the attack, I considered investing in a firearm for protection. “Typically, Pokemon were the best defense against other Pokemon. However, weapon technology did not cease with powder-based firearms. Silph invented the first of the RAIL-firearms a few years ago. RAIL stands for Rail Aligning Ion Launcher. Known for its long, hissing barrels—caused by the shifting metal of cooling vent plates — RAILs fire an electrical current between two parallel, internally-housed metal rails and guide charged ions onto a precise trajectory.”

Again, my eyes gazed at a clip-out of a magazine, this time detailing the first of the so-called RAIL class weapons. Its twin silver metal beams were fused together at the base. Mounted below the stock was a coiled fission box, its lustrous texture and shape reminiscent of a waning full moon. If Silph did one thing right, it was making their weapons look attractive, graceful even. And RAIL variants were so much more than eye candy. Even if it’s used for destruction, the device shows scientists how highly reactive molecules act.

“With a projectile as fine as a laser beam, but packing the punch of in excess of eighteen hundred Newtons per millimeter, the RAIL’s particle beam was dubbed the ‘Portable Ion Cannon’. There were even different molecular compounds devised to change the effect of the beam and its color. Additionally, the RAIL weapon class had cell batteries accompanying the clips, which varied in size. Typically, a smaller magnum would have less carrying capacity but was much more transportable. Rifles of course held the greatest power, and were held in high regard due to their value in combat. Their projectiles were accurate and able to pierce all but the most reinforced composite armor and Pokemon hides.”
I wondered what it would take to punch through Rhydon hide. That was top-of-the-line armor.

“Granted, RAILs were only extremely lethal at close range, the atmosphere causes the ions to disburse and lose their unified mass. RAIL guns focus a great deal of radioactively bound ionic energy upon a tiny area. They’re destructive. But thankfully about as rare as a Legendary Pokemon! To own a RAIL weapon, you need to be either really well connected or in the Special Forces. Silph could only manufacture a handful considering the rarity of the design’s base materials. Not to mention the processed ammunition. RAIL designs were based off ancient artifacts from the distant past once thought to have been lost to the pages of history. Uncovering these blueprints shifted the balance of power in the world. No longer were humans weak and frail compared to their Pokemon counterparts. The event was revolutionary, but in actuality, it was more of a rediscovery than a revolution. Semantics.”

“Regrettably, humanity’s dependence on Pokemon still remained to a certain degree. The majority of nature was forged by the wild creatures, their power over the elements had nearly unlimited potential. Additionally, humans presided over Pokemon by being superior strategists. They were not all that different, people and Pokemon. Both yearned for competition. The thrill of a battle and the rush of a confrontation were a part of their genetic encoding, a primal urge hungering to be satisfied…” The sentence had trailed off.

“Humph…” I grumbled to myself. “Guess I never finished that thought. What was I getting at? I get so distracted at times.”

Frustrated, I turned to the next section titled “Silph Co.” It had a small photograph of my father in his youth on the corner of the worn page. His suit had grown toffee-colored with time. Undeniably, I had his exact stature and prose. The caption read, “My father, Daniel West, practically remarried his job at Silph after mother passed. We don’t talk. Our terms aren’t the best. And for the most part, he does his thing and I do mine. I’ve made it clear to him that I’m no longer a West. I abandoned that name. Earning my degree as Doctor Feyera is proof.”

I turned my eyes back to the text itself, reading quietly, “Silph created everything from Pokéballs to airships. Way back when, there were a lot of company mergers throughout Kanto and Silph was the end result. It also helped that their blossoming as a corporation occurred at the start of humanity’s first recorded Golden Age. Without any regulations, Silph grew terribly large. The corporate juggernaut was able to keep any competing product off the shelves by simply buying patent rights from the authorities. Of course, bootlegging and black markets existed, but only for a very brief amount of time. After Silph was given executive power to prosecute perpetrators through the Kanto International Police Force, the quantity of such transgressors diminished all too quickly. Present-day Silph was effectively the government, military, and technologists all rolled into one. Those on Silph’s executive board were some of the most powerful people on the planet.”

I looked back at that picture of my father, Daniel West. The man looked like a personification of Silph. He had piercing eagle eyes, a face with sharp features, and a hawk nose. He combed his dark brown hair straight back. Rich, hazelnut colored eyes matched his tan complexion. He was always wearing a business suit too. “That’s exactly how I remember him,” I mumbled. “Heh…guess some things never change.”

The caption read, “I hardly knew Mister West, even without my amnesia. When I was young, he used to work for an offshore branch of Silph. To be honest, I’m not even sure if he still does, for all I know he could be on the board of directors. Funny how he’s a part of my remembered past. I won’t forget how he sent me away, enrolled me at the Pokemon Academy—a boarding school. Since then, I’ve had no reason to contact him. I’m self-sufficient and smart, a winning combination that gets me by. The saddest thing is that I don’t know whether he tried to reach out to me after the incident. He
had to have known, but after all those years away from him, it seemed improbable that he cared anymore for me as his son. I’ve been lead to believe work is the only thing left in life for Daniel West. The truth is he didn’t take Valerie’s passing very well.”

I miss my family. Or, rather, I miss what used to be my family. I have a picture of the three of us that I always keep in my dark chocolate colored wallet. It’s a memento of sorts, a reminder of what used to be before everything fell apart. Sometimes I’ll flip the leather case open, and look at the faded picture when I’m feeling down. It’s preserved in thick plastic, though the edges have begun tearing with time. On the back, the faded photographer’s watermark reads the surname “West”.

Then there was my mother Valerie. She was a tall, slender brunette, with deep features adorning her silken face. Even in direct sunlight, her skin shimmered like smooth porcelain. Her straightened bangs were trimmed short of her two jewel-like eyes. Her eyes were a faded pea green, almost blue, and complementing her open, sunny smile. Next to her in the picture was Mister West, my father, frozen in a partial laugh. All of us were smiling our best on that day, blissfully unaware that this would be one of our last pictures together. Even my father wore a tight smile, and he was always such a serious man, even back before mother passed. Between the two parents stood a young boy with a carefree grin and a bright pair of emerald eyes. Me. I had a less translucent variety of my mother’s eyes, but then again, one picture might have not been an accurate portrayal. Still, I rarely needed to actually look at the photograph because the image is so well engraved into my mind.

It was too good to last. I felt a bit of pain in my chest, a sudden onset of heartburn. I hated it, but I knew why I felt that way. Finding closure is difficult; I’ve never had it completely in my life. My mother died when I was younger, although I couldn’t have possibly remembered it. I was only five at the time. After that, nothing was ever the same. My father buried himself in his work and sent me off to become a man of my own as soon as I was seven. That meant boarding school. At least he was generous enough to pay for it. There was a time when I was younger where I thought that I would’ve preferred it if he spent time with me instead. However, now I realize the foolishness of such a wish. When she died, that was it. It was the end of a family. There’s not too much else to say. Other than that unfortunate bit, my background is rather generic, but memorable up until my eighteenth year. Since then, I have been through a lot, although most of it remains a half-buried mystery.

I brushed my right hand through my bronze hair, pausing above my ear as I took another sip of water. Yes, my past wasn’t the most ideal, but at least I felt confident enough to interact with Pokemon again. There was a time where I would not even go near any Pokemon out of fear. The negativity derived from realizing that my entire study revolved around Pokemon caused me to become depressed. How could I expect to ever use my talents? I wasn’t strong, I didn’t have the greatest stamina, and I was certainly not willing to compensate for my lack of such traits by pretending to desire them. I remember bullying I endured from my peers. I never gave up. Never quit. I always came back mentally stronger and more outwitting. That was my strength. But the way I had learned to invoke such a skill was through Pokemon research. For the past two years, I thought I would never research another Pokemon again. Now, things were different. Much different. I couldn’t really explain the feeling in words. It was a steady drive to interact with these creatures—Pokemon—despite the awful experience I had in the past. It was something still a very much a part of me. Call it masochistic, call it self-indulgence, I wanted it. I didn’t want the fear to define the rest of my life.

I sighed, the glass was empty, and my chest continued to hurt.

Feeling my sternum, I felt that odd sharp protrusion. A scar from two years ago, caused by a series events I was unwillingly pulled into. According to the authorities, that day I was in a branch of the Kanto National Bank, minding my business, quite possibly making a deposit to pay back some of the
interest on my university loans when a great deal of commotion from across the street drew my attention. It was the Pokemon Sanctum.

I flipped a few pages ahead from where I was last reading in the journal. Sure enough, I found an entry titled “The Pokemon Sanctum” with a picture taken after the incident. The building was charred and dilapidated. “The Pokemon Sanctum, in Saffron City’s older district, used to have religious affiliations, but prior to the robbery it was treated as more of a museum than anything else. The Pokemon Sanctum was a religious temple said to ‘house the spirit of retribution’ or something wild and along those lines.” I never understood religion personally. Now I know it’s a complete stereotype for scientists not to believe god, but it wasn’t only my rational mind that deterred me from religion. In this day and age, not too many people trusted the various faiths. Especially after the Great Purges lead by religious zealots. But that’s another topic entirely.

“The entire situation was unusual insofar as the event had taken place in one of the most fortified and well-defended cities in the entire world: Saffron City, Kanto’s capital, and seat of Silph. Until the Sanctum Robbery, Saffron had the lowest crime rates and was voted the ‘Safest City in the World’ title twenty years in a row uncontested by Pokemon Annual.”

I got up from my seat and walked over to my tiny closet of a bathroom. I took an abridged shower, careful to clean off well for the adventure ahead of me. Putting on a fresh pair of dark, denim pants and a solid grey-collared shirt after my brief shower, I walked back to the bathroom in order to dry my hair. But I forgot; I had already put the brush into storage! Guess I would have to let it fall naturally over my face. I had my mother’s hair I think. Actually, I’m not all too sure about that, her hair was a few grades finer than mine. Funny how I remember what it felt like even to this day. Despite this, I never had messy or unclean hair, even when I neglected to take care of it. It predictably adhered to the same form; unregulated, but subtly shaped despite shaggy chaos. Being knot-free made taking care of it easy, great for a guy like me. Its color is a brownish amber, with the rustic tones of a kettle’s copper mixed in and throughout. Sometimes out of boredom I try and count the different shades when my bangs cover my eyes.

Wishing the rain would yield to a bright and sunshiny day, I was disappointed to find that the puffy greying clouds hadn’t left the sky.

My meeting with Oak was in twenty-five minutes. The rain had stopped, leaving a fresh and invigorating scent in the air. With a bit of haste, I walked to his laboratory; it was about seven blocks away from my apartment building and fifteen away from Prevoy’s.

I tightened the knot on my subdue tie as I entered the large building where Oak worked. According to his secretary, the Professor was running late, so I stood in the brightly lit foyer waiting for the Professor.

Aimlessly playing with the pointed tails of my red tie, my gaze traveled to the portraits of various Pokemon hanging on the blue walls. Some of them were familiar, and others were completely foreign. I continued to observe the Pokemon diagrams and schematics, deep in my thoughts. For I too had studiedPokemon, but never before in their wild habitats; my research consisted of observation from computer monitors. Many of Professor Oak’s photographs contained Pokemon in their natural environments. It was interesting to say the very least, and it made me feel unusually happy.

“Ah ha! You must be Christian,” said a deep voice.

It definitely startled me. I didn’t jump, but my voice did sure did. “Ah! Ha… Yeah. I mean yes. That’s me.”
“Thank you for being on time. Sorry for making you wait.” I didn’t expect Oak to apologize for being late.

“It’s not a problem. I was occupied with your research.”

“Ah, well that’s great,” he said walking over and extending a hand.

“Nice to meet you, Professor Oak,” I said with a smile while shaking his elderly hand. His hand was pale, wrinkled, and rather coarse. My skin was a beige cream colored. Oak wasn’t taller than me, but then again I was tall. I think I’m almost six feet tall. That’s what I told people anyway. I was probably a fair bit shorter than that to be perfectly honest. Being frail didn’t help either.

The Professor gazed speculatively at my chest, and paused for a moment. The way the narrow projection stuck out between the second and third top buttons made it look like an oversized amulet, draped by the two curtain-like tails of my red tie. Whenever I wore a jacket, you could hardly tell it was there.

“Judging from our conversations, you seem more than capable of aiding me in categorizing Pokemon. There’re still many mysteries in the world to be unraveled. Many of them can only be dealt with…how should I say—” he put his hands together “—‘hands-on’ or ‘in the field’.”

“Of course. I want to be close to them. I want to overcome the barrier that has impeded my research.”

“In my youth, I once was like you, eager to spread my wings and soar off into adventure. Humph, those days are over though. Like I said, you seem capable, but I must warn you that it is a dangerous world out there, and more unkind than it may appear. The task you have set out to do is a long and challenging one, you’ll need more than your average dose of adventure spirit,” said the professor. He flipped through some paperwork. “Humph! You have a higher degree, but that might get in the way.”

“Hold on! I’ve struggled to come here, Professor Oak. To come back to…this. I was injured during the Sanctum Robbery and I haven’t been able to face Pokemon ever since. Even though they are what I once studied. It is a debilitating thing really,” I briefly reflected upon the prospect of working at that stupid coffee house chain for the rest of my life before continuing, “But I need this. I need to be with Pokemon again. I have hope. A wish if you will. I even dream about it sometimes.”

“You…still have a dream to raise Pokemon?”

“I—yeah,” I answered. It was the truth.

“People used to pay great fortunes to have their dreams deciphered by occultists, mediums, and soothsayers. But the truth is, we’ve had the answer all along; we’ve always known what our dreams meant. To dream is to theorize a genuine wish, young man. It’s your sub-consciousness speaking, it’s the mind at play. Tell me something, young researcher, what do you dream about?”

It wasn’t the answer or question I was expecting. “Professor?” I asked warily.

“Mmm? I’m curious.”

“Every night. Pokemon. And adventures. Last night I’m sure I was soaring on the back of a Pidgeot over spectacular distant lands,” I said recalling the feeling of wind blowing through my thick hair. “Come to think of it, the dreams had grown more vivid, I remember when they were only in black and white. That was nearly seven paychecks ago. Now I always dream in color. I can see their plumage.”
“Hmm. Dreams…” Oak stared at a window. His reflective, solemn eyes showed he was feeling commiseration. Finally, he spoke, “Come with me, I have a young Pokemon for you, Mister Fayra.”

I gave him a look of disapproval.

“How do you pronounce that anyway?” Oak asked.

“Feyera.” I emphasized my surname with a tight expression. “With a silent second ‘E’. I know it looks like Fey-era, but it’s ‘FI-rah’.”

“Oh! On paper it looks different, you’re right.”

I nodded. “I might as well be ‘FAY-RA’ since that’s what everyone at work called me. Who could blame them? It wasn’t a common name, and not even a true last name; I took up my middle name as my surname, which is why I’m ‘Doctor Christian Feyera’ according to my university doctorate and not ‘Christian F. West’ as my birth certificate would suggest.”

“You’re a West?” Oak asked.

“No. I cut off ties with family sometime in college,” I lied since it was actually the other way around; I had been the one sent away to boarding school. “I’m Mister Feyera. That’s the way it is. Christian Feyera, Ph.D.” I gave Oak a friendly smile; I was trying to be polite to him, and was pleased to see a slightly amused expression repaid on Oak’s face. “You know how many people think I’m related to that famous actress from Unova, Victina Fey?”

“Hoho, afraid I don’t even know who that is, my boy. My, I must be getting old!” The Professor laughed half-heartedly as he waved his arms up in the air to dramatize his statement. “Ha! Come along then, Mister Feyera.”

“Right away.” I did so with as much poise as I could muster! In an immodest manner, I glided along next to Oak with my curled-up nose raised as high as I could. With the educated elite, an aura of pretentiousness went a long way. Though with my head so high up in the air, seeing where I was going became difficult!

Walking with the veteran professor through the lab gave me a sense of confidence; I knew that I could help, or at the very least fill a few pages of the Pokédex for him. And I’d be getting an opportunity to see why Pokemon were becoming such a big part of my subconscious. Really, it was the best of both worlds. We had gone over some of the details in prior communications, and he was leaving it up to me to choose the scope of my project. In essence, I could decide the range of species I would study. Learn about many Pokemon, or hone in on a few species; the choice was mine. It was up to me, I was going to be studying Pokemon once more and I was filled with excitement. I thought I would be afraid of this moment, especially after my encounter with vicious Pokemon that wiped my mind during the Sanctum Robbery. But my anxiety was drowned out by a sincere desire to be partnered with Pokemon. A feeling I could not fully comprehend, yet was sublimely influenced by.

When Oak brought me to his desk, he glided his hand over a keyboard and tapped a sequence of keys. The white board mounted on the desk illuminated with light and projected a series of holographic creatures. They were on the wide-legged display table. I raised my arm and scratched the back of my head. My hair had dried at this point and it was slightly stiff despite my neglect to care for it this morning.

“Ah! And here we are!” My attention was pulled back to the computer-generated three-dimensional figures in front of me. “Out of these three starting Pokemon, you can pick only one; choose wisely,” the Professor dryly stated.
He saw my apprehension. Darn! If only I hadn’t flinched. Quickly, I made an excuse. “Sorry. Just got the chills, you know?”

“I know, it’s an emotional time. This is a big step forward for you.” Carefully, he told me, “They are contained in Pokéballs, these are just holographic previews of their biological anatomy.” There was an amphibian that had a symbiotic relationship with plant life, a tiny turtle with a sturdy shell, and a bipedal salamander with a flame-tipped tail.

“Hmm…Pokemon…” I felt a peculiar connection as I ran my outstretched arm through the projected light emerging from the Professor’s high-tech desk. As I passed my palm through the rays of light, the warm energy enriched my experience.

“You alright?” Oak asked me.

“I’m…fine.” I tried to keep a positive expression on my face. “I’ve never traveled with Pokemon before. I researched the creatures however, their behavior and physiology. I studied them. Intensely. Shame I have difficulty remembering details…”

“Oh. Well, once you settle on a choice pick up the Pokéball of the Pokemon you want.”

“Okay.” Little time passed before I settled on the fire lizard, after telling Oak, he handed me a red and white capture device. “My very first Pokemon!” I told myself, fighting the butterflies. I couldn’t run away now. I’d come to close to overcoming this fear. I clicked the stasis switch with a nervous finger. Violently shaking, the orb split in two and released an orange reptilian-like creature known as “Charmander” or biological species *Ignis Caudata*.

I gasped. Not out of fear. The Pokemon was, I dare say, rather charming despite its razor sharp claws, glistening fangs, and fire-producing tail. He looked scary at first, but his chubby features did downplay his predatory features. The Professor assured me that these creatures in his possession were fully domesticated, raised in the Pokemon Sanctuary he founded years ago.

I continued to stare at the small creature. I needed a protector, a Pokemon to guard me on my journey and it seemed to me that this was my best option. I chose a Pokemon with Fire typing since personally I’ve never been a fan of darkness. I smiled as I looked at my new Pokemon intensely. The fear was gone. Or at least being repelled. I began to feel comfortable. It wasn’t that bad. The Pokemon wasn’t going to hurt me. I never thought it’d be this easy. I was no longer afraid because here I was flooding myself with genuine interaction.

It bent its small head up, wrinkling his chubby neck as he did so. I flinched ever so slightly as the Pokemon gazed at my figure with his bright blue eyes. Seeing me flinch, the Charmander also recoiled somewhat, probably unsure of what I was even doing. I could only imagine the creature’s apprehension, it could rival my own. Here he was being given away to someone who’d lost their marbles, a Pokemon researcher with nothing left!

But I had to do this. This was a way to overcome my fears. I relished the moment and slowly lowered the Pokéball, trying not to look as timid as I actually was the entire time. I forced a smile.

“You should give him a name,” Oak said in response to my positive reaction. At least I hadn’t freaked out like I thought I would.

“A name?”

“Yes, you can’t be calling him ‘Charmander’ when he’s an individual just like you and me! Ho ho! Imagine if I called you ‘Human’, Mister Feyera!”
“Umm… Sorry, in the researching world I suppose I never thought about it that way.” Puzzled, I continued to stare at the salamander-like Pokemon, racking my brain for a fitting name. What could I possibly call him? Definitely something starting with a B. That just felt right to me. I wanted to give him a name to reflect that. Maybe Bryce? No, he was a friend from boarding school. Bryant, nah that was too weird. Ah, yes! I had it, “Brucie,” I said, “looks like he’s energetic and competent as well.”

“Very good,” Oak replied, stiffening his posture. “Take good care of Brucie, don’t let him perish. Keep him safe for as long as you can. He’s your protector, but you are also his protector. Pokemon and their trainers work as a team. You used to do research projects so I’m sure you are fully aware of the importance of cooperation. ‘There is no ‘I’ in ‘team’’, keep that little phrase in mind on your journey. Now, if you don’t mind I need to go and attend to other business, I’m a busy man as you know. Good luck, Christian Feyera.”

“Of course, and thank you again!” I doubt that Oak even heard those last few words. His hearing was diminishing in his old age.

I never felt such a wave of excitement; I had my own Pokemon as my partner now and could actually explore the wilderness outside of Pallet town. I had not stepped more than two feet outside of the lab before I heard a stern and elegant voice stop me. “Excuse me! Where might you be heading, young man?”

I turned to the source of the voice. It was a rather gorgeous looking professor. She was adorned in a lab coat, and yet her natural beauty shone forth. One could not miss her long thick red hair. Besides this, I noticed that her frameless glasses concealed a silvery blue set of eyes. She was definitely in her mid-twenties—a few years older than me. Her tall figure accentuated her slender frame.

She was gorgeous! I felt my face flush beet red, but played it off as if I had been startled. “Oh! Sorry, you gave me a start! I’m Mister Feyera, I am on a Pokemon journey to aid the Professor in categorizing pages for his Pokédex. I just finished filling out my identification and Professor Oak gave me a Pokemon to protect me,” I said grasping the Pokéball containing my Charmander.

Rotating her wrist, she smoothly continued, “Ah a researcher turned into a trainer, intriguing. My name’s Lorelei Carese, you must be Christian Feyera!”

“Pleasure!” But I raised an inquisitive eye. “Where’d you hear about me from?”

“Oh! The Professor talks about you more than you’d think. He shared with me one of your dissertations a while back. ‘Concerning the Paranormal’ was the title. You’re that Feyera, right?”

“Yeah. You can call me Christian if you want to,” I said with a smile. “Whatever’s easier. I go by Chris too…”

“That’s so dreadfully informal. Ha! I’d say it’s personal even!” she joked lightheartedly. Her chest bubbled with the muffled flirty laughter. “It’s an honor to have a degree like yours, Doctor Feyera,” she repeated.

I blushed. My past life’s reputation always seemed to precede me in scientific circles. Too bad my formal (and former) title— ‘Doctor Feyera’ —was as hollow as the apartment I was moving out of! I had to quickly downplay the title or risk embarrassment. “Yes, I have a doctorate, Miss Carese, but I’m Mister Feyera—”

“—Lorelei is fine, doctor,” she said with a sunny smile. “Unless you’d rather be formal with me.”

“No! I mean…if you didn’t want to be formal—that’s okay, but even if you did, then that’s okay
too!” I was beginning to sweat. “Err…umm never mind! I’m getting off track!”

“Want to tell me about your work? Why did you pick your dissertation’s topic?”

“Concerning the Paranormal”—*sigh*—that was a report on amplifying certain Pokemon powers. I got credit for theory behind a project involving genetics,” I said, prudently leaving out the fact that I couldn’t remember the theory, much less comprehend it! That dissertation was the only key to what I did during my forgotten past, and I couldn’t understand the first fifty words! Strangely, some of its citations led me to old rhetoric involving the theoretic splicing of Pokemon abilities and traits. However, I was not going to ask someone to explain my own theories to me! At least I had some pride left; at least I understood the gist of what my project was about.

“Theory?” she asked girlishly. “And genetics?”

“It was a collaborated effort of strictly hypothetical research, Lorelei.”

“There wasn’t any experimenting? Only calculations?”

“On my end, yeah, I’m a numbers guy,” I shrugged. “If there was a trial project that followed, it probably ended in failure. I haven’t heard a word about anything. There’s no trace of what happened. And, believe me when I say I’ve tried to find answers. I’ve tried hard to retrace my steps.”

“Mmm mmm,” she hummed, pulling out a small PDA and quickly typing a search. “…Well, isn’t that something!”

“What is?” I asked.

“According to my feed, an excerpt from your dissertation was recently featured in an article on evolution concerning Psychic Type Pokemon published by the DBC’s Gideon Group. Ha! Aren’t you a smart one!”

“Wow…” That was quiet the honor, but the problem was whoever had written that dissertation, this ‘Doctor Feyera’, had vanished along with my memories. No doubt I was that very same man, but I had been emptied, drained of whatever had made me an academic doctor in the first place. I knew I could no longer satiate Lorelei’s inquisitive demeanor! What would she think of me if she found out I was basically a hoax now? Quick, baited breaths interwove into my response, “Um…I mean…there are fewer limits present in Psychic Type Pokemon, especially considering their mental mind frames.”

“That sounds like quite the challenge. Intriguing that you study the least understood of all the Pokemon Types,” she said. Placing her slender hand on her curvy hip she reiterated, “Fascinating to study, I’m sure.”

“Studied,” I said correcting the tense she used. I was no longer researching after all. That had ended when the Sanctum incident took place. Now I was just trying to become more accustomed to Pokemon before I could even think about possibly working in a laboratory with them again. I was taking small, incremental steps.

“Not a fan of them anymore?” she asked pointedly. “Something bad happen?”

“Uh…” My gaze traveled down from her eyes for a moment. I rubbed my temple casually saying, “…Psychic Type Pokemon were a field of study during my research days. They tend to be scientifically understood in a manner that’s similar to how we understand people. Both can be observed and understood based upon their psychological states.”

“Emotions?”
“Unscientifically speaking, I think so.” I said to her, averting her direct stare. “Mental projections, psychology, psyonics…there’s a link. Pokemon and people, they’re different, but there must be similarities.”

“That reminds me of a friend of mine from Saffron,” she nodded. “People who possess psionic powers are very much like Psychic Type Pokemon, no?”

“Umm…Right, I believe.” Personally, I didn’t even know of a single psionic; society did not take kindly to the so-called ‘mindcraft’. That word made me cringe; psyonics were about as magical as Pokemon, but a great deal rarer. “There has to be an explanation out there. Psyonics have something to do with physical manifestations of the brain’s processes, emitted outward into the world—a rare sort of ‘sensory output’: the reverse of our five senses.”

“Ooh. Sounds like a reversed mental process, doctor.”

I flushed again, scratching my head in order to conceal the discomfiture present on my face. “Um, you don’t need to call me ‘doctor’…I’m only a researcher.” I felt like a guilty charade.

“Tee hee. You’re humble too, mister. Say, I’m curious, where did you obtain your results from?”

“Well…” Frustrated, I tried to ramble my way out. “I lived at the Pokemon Academy boarding school before moving to Saffron City. There, I attended the Pokemon University for a year and some change. Got involved in genetic theory. I graduated early, got straight into research, and found myself working for a privately owned branch of the university’s graduate program. I think it was called Evercrest or something silly down in the tropics. Whatever. It’s all in the past.” Truth be told, I didn’t know if I was chasing phantoms or not.

“You make it sound like your research team wasn’t the slightest bit important to your research!” she joked innocently. “Come on, what were the details behind your research? I want you to tell me all about it!”

“…! I don’t—can’t remember it.” My tone grew serious. “Lorelei, my life changed when I was eighteen. Do you recall the Sanctum Robbery two years back?”

“I do.” She looked concerned. “I was dispatched immediately to the situation. We knew they were with Team Rocket. But between you and me, we still haven’t ascertained much information. We do know this however: they were collaborating with another organization. Unfortunately, the trail ran cold after that.”

“Wait, were you there at all? When it happened…?”

“No.” Shaking her head, her clear, solemn complexion answered my quandary. “Only after it was too late. They stole a myriad of ancient artifacts, all of relatively low value. Yet, it escalated so fast into a devastating ordeal. Why such cruel violence? I just don’t understand.”

“If only the Elite Four had arrived in time to stop them…” I said. Lorelei swooping in along with the rest of the Elite Four would have certainly changed the violent outcome.

“My father still is trying to track down the criminals who destroyed the Sanctum,” she somberly said, pushing her frameless glasses up further along her long, narrow nose.

“Your father?”

“Yes, he’s Kanto’s High Justice, who’s been working with the D.A. in Saffron. Too bad the criminal trial against Team Rocket has ground to a halt… But go on with your story.”
“Right…Not that I remember any of this but this, but I had apparently gotten too close to the turmoil and was taken hostage by the Rockets during the robbery,” I said to her gentle face. “Amnesia is a strange thing, you’re told everything and have to take it all on faith.”

She nodded, clearly intrigued by my rendition of the story. Although it wasn’t really my version; it was what I had been told after the events transpired and I lost my memory.

“According to witnesses, I was just a bystander following their instructions to stay out of trouble. Something went terribly wrong however. Their robbery went south when a man defied their demands and decided to try to be a hero. This unnamed opposition tried to take down the organized syndicate invading Saffron City with his loyal Pokemon. That’s when everyone found out the robbers stealing from the Sanctum were professionals. Their business was not petty robbery. They had Electrode; they came to fulfill a contract, and were prepared for resistance. Rockets, in all of their sick brutality. To clear out any opposition, they ordered their Pokemon to destroy themselves in a violent attack.”

Lorelei looked down. “A lot of people died.”

“It wasn’t like in the movies, the criminals actually prevailed,” I said grimacing. “Everything happened so fast. And then I got hit by close by debris.”

“You are lucky to be alive, Mister Feyera,” Lorelei responded as her glance shot straight through her frameless glasses and into my own pair of eyes. “The Sanctum was destroyed from that explosion.”

Swallowing hard, I kept talking, “Yeah I know. There was a huge explosion. Twenty-four killed outright, seven died from injuries, and I was among the eleven known survivors. And that’s only the number of bodies actually found. Who knows how many were instantly vaporized?”

“Don’t think about it,” she recommended.

“I’m unable to not think about it, it changed my life; I want to know, I want closure. And yet I can’t remember any of it! I was told everything.”

“You were?” she asked looking me over. “Just…told?”

“I woke up with satchel and debris penetrating through my sternum bone. Most of it was removed except for a thin crimson crescent shaped fragment, which had securely embedded itself too vertically deep into the marrow to take out.” I pointed to the obvious piece on my chest. It wasn’t too large either, maybe four and a half inches top to bottom and protruding only about three outwards at the height of the arc. Sometimes it makes clothing look funny, so usually I just allow it to stick out by cutting a small incision in the upper center of my shirts.

“That? You’re still scarred?”

“Ah yes, I had thought about getting it removed. The problem is that it’s anchored into the bone marrow, attached even,” I said with a sigh.

“You’re kidding!”

“Wish I was. In a years’ time, the bone grew around it. That was the healing process, I couldn’t go under the knife thanks to the amnesia, meaning no pain-killers for surgery.”

“Anesthetics?” she corrected my lay terminology with a laugh. “You mean anesthesia right?”

“Yeah…I forgot what it was called. Point is, there’s no pulling it out. Humph! That would at least
prevent it from being snagged on something…and save me from ruining perfectly good shirts!”

“There’s no way?” she asked endearingly. “The good physicians out there weren’t able to do anything to help you?”

“No they weren’t; not in my case, not without high doses of sedatives. I’m at a high risk for total memory loss. Even if I wanted to go through with the potentially mind-clearing procedure, on the physical side it would be far too dangerous to saw off the piece, given the close proximity to my internal organs.”

“What…what is it?” she whispered.

“It’s a metal alloy, a Pokemon’s substance, stubbornly strong too. Electrode are tough blighters.”

“They’re deadly living bombs, you’re lucky to be breathing.”

She didn’t need to tell me that. I was on death’s door thanks to their Explosion attack. “What’s worse is I have my heart and blood vessels all right there. X-rays show arteries twisted and tangled around it. The force of impact was enough to change local anatomy, before I even healed. And with all the internal scarring…it’s a delicate thing.”

“So an incision isn’t possible?” she asked as her glasses reflected some sunrays into my eyes. “Filing?”

“No. If it shook too much due to some operation trying to saw it down, the vibrations might cause a rupture in one of my pulmonary arteries, lungs, and erm whatever else is behind the sternum bone,” I grumbled. She gave me a confused look. “…The scientific term escapes me,” I said after a brief silence.

“Your heart?”

“Oh right,” I said embarrassedly. “I knew that.”

She nodded, satisfied to hear an explanation for the oddity on my body. She raised her glasses again with her pointer finger, higher on her trim nose. I found it to be slightly attractive.

“Maybe one day I’ll recall the whole story but it seems unlikely without therapy. And I’m healthy otherwise. Considering the circumstances, like you said, I am just lucky to be alive.”

“True, it was terrible indeed. I can’t believe Team Rocket resorted to using Electrode as sacrificial detonators; life is more valuable than material goods,” she sighed.

“I’ll tell you what, I can believe it. Team Rocket is inherently evil. I hate them all; I was permanently scarred by their worthless Pokemon!” I was feeling really upset about the entire chain of events, and even more upset by the fact that I could not actually remember them. “I was only told what happened. It was incredibly frustrating. It was like waking up months older and in a battered and unfamiliar body.”

She tried to comfort me, “You were just in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

“Peh, even so, I don’t believe in falsehoods like fate! *Sigh* Serves me right, I should’ve done something…anything…to avoid this,” I grumbled. I felt guilty, I had probably been too cowardly to stand up to them, I was weak; I hardly stood up to anyone for anything. But I wasn’t about to tell Lorelei that! “You know I wouldn’t allow it to happen again now that I’ve been given a second chance.”
“Second chances can sometimes make you softer…You look okay though,” she said as she continued to study me.

“Appearances can be deceiving, Lorelei; but I try my best to put on a good show.” I thought about the shard embedded in my chest once more. “In addition, there was the psychological impact. It took me a while to overcome my fear of going out after the attack. Only recently did I decide to interact with Pokemon again. If you’d asked me immediately after the incident, I would’ve told you I wanted nothing to do with Pokemon ever again.”

“And yet here you are!” she laughed. “On the dawn of your departure, the start of an adventure to interact with Pokemon. Sounds like you’ve turned around quite a bit! You didn’t let that change you,” she said pointing at the crystal partially concealed behind my necktie’s fabric.

Did the injury really change me? I couldn’t tell, however it did give me a fair deal of vengeful spouts. “It’s unfortunate, but that’s life I suppose. I’m stronger now,” I said, pressing down on my silk tie. That was my style now that I had a wound to cover up, and besides, anyone looks better when dressed professionally. Moreover, what else could I wear besides my professional clothes? This was a research investigation first and foremost!

“Seems like you’re well on your way, Mister Feyera. But please be sure to remember exactly what it means to be a Pokemon Trainer. You have a great deal of responsibility now. Battles can be merciless. You’re not only responsible for your own life, but also the lives of your partners,” Lorelei said. “It’s a dangerous but rewarding challenge. The Pokemon League privatized trainer licenses, battles, and badge collecting as a means to promote commerce and to encourage traveling following the Great War’s aftermath, but –wouldn’t cha know!–, it’s developed a high-stakes, competitive edge on its own.”

It was my turn for questions. “Do you mind me asking why you’re here?” I asked.

“Ah, curious aren’t you? Well, the Pokemon League needs me to conduct an investigation!” she said. “And I just happen to be their expert on the matter.” Her pretty face seemed proud of her position.

“You’re joking! The Pokemon League needs you here in the backwoods town of Pallet?” I asked, completely stunned. “Why on earth would you need to be doing that?”

“Ha ha. Yeah, yeah. It’s top secret governmental business and all that!” she chuckled and moved her slender hand to cover her open smile, “Kidding, it’s much less interesting than I am making it out to be.” She winked at me. “Mister Feyera, perhaps one day I’ll see you again and we can talk some more.”

“Hey, that’d be great.”

She raised an alluring eye. “Tell you what, get that Pokemon of yours trained, and we can have a little contest of wits.”

“What? Really? You and me?”

“Yes, together. I’m a Pokemon trainer, and one of the best! Run your little errands for Professor Oak and you’ll eventually need pass the Pokemon Gyms in order to find new Pokemon. So, why don’t you earn some League Badges while you’re at it? It would make me proud to see from the young doctor!”

“P—Proud?” I asked, unsure of what would make her proud of me. “I’m Mister Feyera now,” I said,
slowly shaking my head. “I really am not anyone special. At least not anymore. But I have my hope; I believe I can get my memories back by researching Pokemon again!”

“Yes, you’ve been through a lot; it’s a challenge that’ll help you take your mind off things. I’ll be waiting for you at the end of that road though.” She lifted a heavy lidded eye. “Should you make it that far, of course…”

“Uh huh.” It wasn’t really first date material, but I popped the question anyway, “Say, do you suppose maybe we could go out for a drink?”

“A drink?” she asked skeptically.

“Yeah…” I paused; my palms were on fire with nervousness. “Maybe some coffee…?”

“Oh! Haha, of course, why not?” she replied lightly. “That would be a great idea!”

*YES!* I wanted to shout, but I refrained. “Ahem, well there’s no way I’d pass an opportunity like that up! This gym challenge will be over in no time.”

“Hmm… The challenge isn’t easy, nor is it for everyone,” she said with a faint smile. “In any event, there’s a small Pokemon Gym to the north of here in Viridian City, on the way to Pewter. It’ll give you more control over your new Pokemon. I’m sure you’d like it.”

“I guess I could,” I said. “What could possibly go wrong?”

“That’s the spirit!”

“I hope Professor Oak would be okay with me doing that. Come to think of it, hadn’t his grandson done something like that years ago?”

“I don’t follow The Professor’s family life, but I’m sure you could do it! Make it a hobby, no big deal. Do it for me,” she said winking. “I love seeing new trainers take the challenge, I’m sure you’ll do great!”

“Thanks Miss—I mean Lorelei.”

“Hey don’t mention it, it was nice to meet you before you became famous, again!” she said with a chuckle. “You know, it isn’t every day I come across a Pokemon researcher. Or researcher-turned-trainer for that matter, most of the lab coats stay in the laboratories if you know what I mean. You’re rather unique, I like that!”

*Unique?* I didn’t want that. “Thanks I guess, but I’d say it takes one to know one.”

“Hey, don’t look at me like that, I meant that to be nice.”

“Mmm,” I said with a friendly smirk. “Well, I can say the pleasure has been all mine. Glad you enjoyed our conversation as much as I did.” I tried not to make it as awkward as it sounded.

“I’m looking forward to seeing your face again over our coffee, Mister Feyera,” Lorelei said as her busty hair blew in the wind of the beautiful day. “Ta ta!”

I sure could use motivation to do what I was about to do, and a promised date with her was more than enough. Lorelei turned around and began to walk off; I could imagine the rosy smile on her lips. The cool scent of her coconut cream perfume was lovely; tropical scents were among my favorite things, though I couldn’t tell you why.
Excitedly, I went back to my apartment to pay my final occupancy bill to my landlord. Gee, it would be great to have him off my back. Mister Austin always had something to say to me about paying in a timely fashion; I didn’t understand the problem, I always paid him monthly, just not always on time. “Big deal,” I thought, “I’m not as punctual as I used to be. Besides, it’s his fault for trying to collect in the middle of the month! Who does that?! *Sigh* Okay.” Sealing the cash-filled envelope containing most of my recent paycheck from the coffeehouse job at Prevoy’s, I felt a surge of relief. I was done here. “Moving on.”

I had transported all my research materials and texts into storage for the time being, so the room was vacant except for a few bare necessities. Now that I think about it, the sheer size of some of those academic tomes could have made a set of furniture. Most of them are written in another language, with so many scientific terms. Memory loss is a terrible thing. I still recall some basics such as the scientific names for discovered Pokemon species. But other things that I learned while interning are completely forgotten. When packing up last week, I remember picking up a book on advanced cellular bonds and practical ways to manipulate such components at the molecular level. To say that I was stumped would be putting it mildly. I hadn’t the foggiest if half the words on page one were even written in English! All I could do was laugh, throw the text into a cardboard box, and continue packing without giving it a second thought.

I was naturally intelligent and, ironically, that’s what frustrated me. I only lost my memory after all, not my brain. Facts were gone, but my ability to analyze wasn’t impaired in the slightest. And, being a somewhat smug researcher, I didn’t want to have to go back to the university and relearn everything that I had forgotten. Instead of doing that, I saw this as a golden opportunity to face my fear of Pokemon and get out of this dead-end life. It had taken me long enough, but here I stood on the threshold of a Pokemon journey to call my own. I picked up my backpack, full of supplies I would need for the quest including my belt holster. I loosened my necktie’s knot for comfort, this wasn’t going to be a stuffy day indoors! Finally, I bolted the apartment door shut, very eager to begin my adventure.

It was time to head off north towards Viridian City. Still, my heart was aflutter from Lorelei’s flirtatious body; the prospect of her saying yes replayed over and over in my mind, causing my chest to feel airy. I was so full of happiness! I found the bright sunlight invigorating as I walked north towards the edge of town. Some of the sunlight reflected into my eyes, obscuring my vision slightly. Must have been the shrapnel. Then again, it could have been reflected off the puddles from the earlier rain.

Ignoring this minor peculiarity, I stared off into the distant mountain range to the north. I felt ready to depart from Pallet Town and begin my quest. Despite all of my fears and worry, there was desire. Desire itself was allowing me to overcome my irrational fears. The very idea of being able to interact with Pokemon once more annexed positive thoughts, multiplying the sanguinity ceaselessly with possibility upon possibility, the possibility of possibility itself was daunting. Strangely, I was not overwhelmed by this flood of optimism. Instead, I was hopeful. I wanted to feel this way forever. That was my dream.

That was my dream.

It would be the first of many.
Chapter Summary

Following a brief introduction to Mister Christian Feyera, we learn about his unusual abilities as he attempts to earn his very first official Pokemon League Badge.

Italics are Christian's thoughts.

Christian Feyera's journey had begun and it was off to a smooth pace. As a young, inquisitive researcher, he quickly found himself immersed in observation of various wildlife inhabiting the windy road north Pallet Town. The dusty pathway – usually riddled with ditches and ridges – was wet and muddy from the morning's rain. Avoiding the patches unevenness had given the new Pokemon trainer some time to reflect and collect his thoughts. Pale-blue mountains, faded and awash in the distant horizon loomed ahead like aloof guardians, stoutly affirming the edge of the world and his sight. Feyera's emerald eyes stung as a slightly chilly northern wind blew against his face. Closing his eyes, he proceeded to massage their gently curved lower lids with his thin hands, wiping away the involuntary tears.

"I can't believe I'm doing this," he whispered in a soft, boyish voice. "It's all so unreal…"

Clenching a determined fist, he reached for his crescent moon shaped "Smith and Salven's" trainer's holster riding above his left hip. From the waist docked rotating "C–Plate" the greenhorn trainer released his Pokemon from the confines of the capture device.

"Shink! Click!" and a flash of light rivaling the sun heralded the emergence of his Pokemon.

Christian looked cryptically at his fire lizard Pokemon, who in turn emitted a soft growl. "Chaaaaaaar…" The reptilian Charmander was not taller that Christian's thigh. He had a few small birthmarks along his protracted back, which contrasted sharply against his vivid orange hide. The creature's most distinguishing feature was the brightly glowing tip of flame at the end of his thick tail.

Feyera stared into his Pokemon's eyes and felt a sense of the creature's own fear. Here was a creature thrust into the hands of a no-name trainer. Sure, Christian Feyera had credentials as a scholar; his doctorate in Bioinformatics proved he was a quick learner at the very least. However, the doctorate said very little if anything about his abilities as a trainer. These were untested and ambiguous waters to be sure. It was frightening, but exciting.

Unsure of what to do, Christian extended his arm to the young Pokemon. It recoiled initially, growling louder and more defensively than before. "Hey there Brucie." When the lizard Pokemon did not respond to his greeting, he reached into his bag and retrieved a small loaf of bread he had saved from last night's dinner. "Are you hungry?" he asked. "Do I need to feed you are something?"

"Char!" The Pokemon adamantly shook its head and proceeded to dramatically wave his flame tipped tail in the breezy environment.

Christian suddenly realized the sheer mistrust held by his first Pokemon. "Hey, it's okay. Brucie, I'm
your trainer now. Listen, I'll take care of you," Christian said.

"CHAR!"

Feyera jumped as the Fire Pokemon spat a tiny ember on the ground from his small mouth. A tiny lump of grass caught on fire as the projected ember ignited it. "AH!" Christian promptly stomped it out with his Alterieno shoe-boot. "Stop! What the heck do you think you're doing!?" Christian shouted at Brucie.

"Char! Char!" The bipedal Pokemon crossed its arms in defiance. "Chaaaaar!"

"What's your problem?! I thought Oak said you'd obey me!" muttered Christian. "We're a team now!"

"Char!" it repeated. This time the Pokemon defensively coiled its tail around his light beige underbelly. "Charmander!"

"You don't trust me do you?" Feyera said eventually. How did he know this? How could he tell? Pokemon were diverse creatures each with their own quirks and oddities. Yet this empathy Christian had was able to cross numerous boundaries between him and Brucie despite their short-lived bond. This sensation was different somehow. It wasn't like seeing the facial structure of another being and determining its mood. Christian's gaze darkened, he had never interacted with Pokemon on this level. In a strange way he was able to fully comprehend the creature's chariness. Christian detested the feeling of presumed inadequacy. The fact that he fully understood his Pokemon's distrust made him angry; in fact, it was starting to make the arrogant young man begin to doubt himself. "C'mon Brucie, I'm not that bad!"

"Chaaar!" it grumbled, shaking its head.

Feyera crossed his willowy arms. In frustration, Christian questioned why he was even doing all of this. Wasn't he sacrificing enough by running Professor Oak's errand? Couldn't his new Pokemon at least give him a chance? "What's wrong with me? I didn't even do anything wrong!"

The Pokemon was clearly ignoring him at this point, aimlessly flicking its nails against a nearby rock. Sighing, the young researcher recalled basic psychology. If he wanted to build a trusting relationship, he would need to first show trust. Christian, biting his lip, reached into his backpack and retrieved a small lighter. It was coated in silver, its smooth base shaped like a tetrahedron with elevated ridges along its sides, fitting into Feyera's palm rather comfortably. The shiny, polished metal was cool to the touch. Right underneath the ebony-tipped butane jet, there was that name again stamped into the sides, branding it property of "West."

"Char?"

"Heh…you see this?"

"Char?" the Pokemon asked with intonation matching its apparent interest in the lighter.

"Nicked from my old man when I wasn't much older than seven or eight. The man was always a smoker, said it calmed his nerves. I don't recommend it though. …Heck, he probably never noticed that I took it from him. …Or maybe he just didn't care. Must have cost him a pretty penny though since its personalized and all. Ha…" Christian laughed dryly, talking softly to himself and restlessly flicking the lighter's top open and shut. "I remember things like that, things from when I was young…but not things from a short while ago."
"Char! Char?"

Christian playfully grappled with his rouge necktie. "Well, I suppose two years isn't exactly a 'short-while'. You don't tend to live that long out in the wild. That's why you're with me."

"Charmander!" it cried out.

"Yeah I know right? Shame isn't it, Brucie?" Christian's gaze never left his Pokemon's azure irises as his thumb reached for the golden switch. The Pokemon's intrigue led him closer to Feyera. "Ah, you don't—can't understand me. *Sigh* that's okay, buddy, I was rambling again anyway. Here we go now…!"

Brucie flinched, cowering behind his brightly lit tail. "Chaaaaaar!"

"Hey hang on!" Feyera raised an arm, "Don't be afraid, I'm trying to show you something cool. You know, in order to make you feel more comfortable around me. Okay, pal?"

"Char?"

"Just relax. Eyes over here." Winking, Christian swiftly clicked the lighter's golden nob. "Click!" The butane torch ignited with a loud "FA-WHOM!" as two pressurized shots of hot flares lofted into the air above the lighter, much to the delight of Brucie.

Feyera recoiled from the jet's intensity; feeling like his shallow-arched eyebrows had just been singed from the heat. "Whoa! Not what I was expecting! Guess it was built up pressure. Haven't used it in a while. Ho…are you all right, Brucie? Did that scare you?" But Christian could have sworn he saw his Pokemon's eyes twinkle with happiness.

"Char! Char char!" The Pokemon danced around, wagging its tail.

How quickly things had turned around. Christian could sense his Pokemon's content; this satisfaction was rapidly transmuting into eudemonia. "See, I can make fire too!" He shared a playful grin with his Pokemon. "Like the fire on your tail. Here, want to hold it? …It'll stay lit on its own until you cap it."

The Pokemon joyfully waved the lighter about, synchronizing the swaying motion with his brightly lit tail. "Char! Char!"

Feyera looked at the path ahead of him and his Charmander. Somehow it seemed brighter. Returning his gaze to Brucie, he realized that little Pokemon was starting warming up to him, figuratively speaking. He was surprised to see the little Pokemon clutch his pants and hug his leg. However, the creature's tail, vigorously spurting flames worried him. Unsure, Christian patted his Pokemon's head and Charmander let out a faint hum.

"You have no idea do you?" Christian rhetorically asked his Pokemon. The Pokemon nodded his head, acknowledging his trainer's voice but not understanding it. "You haven't a clue how strange this is. For me that is, not you. Your types are probably used to humans looking over them by now. But for me as a researcher…I'm actually dealing with Pokemon again, and hands on to boot! It's surreal. I suppose I've earned some of your trust…but do you trust me?"

No response, instead Brucie proceeded to clutch at Christian' right leg with his small, chubby arms.

"Phew…" Christian sighed. He didn't have to be afraid of his Pokemon thankfully. The anxiety had past. It was peculiar how his own Pokemon's comfort seemed to have rubbed off on him. Rather than question the reason, Christian laughed. It was just as Lorelei had said. He was really doing it. Despite
his unfamiliarity with Pokemon, he had persevered. "Come on, let's go!"

Christian thought about how he could have given up, but that moment had long since passed. He was genuinely happy to have overcome his fear of dealing with Pokemon. Or at least, he had made great progress. Only one thing puzzled him at this point: did the happiness he felt belong to him or his Pokemon's? What if it was both of them? Pondering this possibility, Christian quickly became sidetracked by the light green trees surrounding the path they had been walking on. Their branches moved even though the breeze had settled down.

"Wild Pokemon," Christian told his Charmander, who suddenly had become anxious by his trainer's distraction with the external world. Brucie snarled, but in an affectionate way. Both trainer and Pokemon could not see what was causing the rustling in the trees, but both assumed it would be a low leveled Pokemon. Typically, stronger Pokemon lived on the frontier of human settlements. They had just left Pallet Town, and in effect, were very much embraced by the developed world. The closest undeveloped areas were Victory Road to the west, and the Cerulean Mountain Range to the north; both of which were still quite a ways off.

"COO! Whoo!" Christian heard a loud chirp coming from one of the nearby branches. Golden-brown and tan feathers suddenly contrasted the plant's thick jade leaves as a wild Pokemon sprung forth from hiding amid the tree's canopy.

Feyera felt his blood pleasure elevate as the bird Pokemon flew towards him and his Charmander. His eyes narrowed. He felt completely ready for combat. His orders to Brucie were issued in an instant. "Scratch Attack it!" he yelled.

This was better than any simulation! To his amazement, the Pidgey dove straight at Brucie's claws, a foolish move, but one that demanded a degree of respect for its boldness. The bird Pokemon soared up into the air after Brucie's scratch had clawed its underbelly. The Pidgey's thick down feathers protected it, but the damage had still been done. As the bird Pokemon swept around Charmander, Christian ordered his Pokemon to sidestep the diving tackle. Pidgey missed, but only barely. Brucie used his Ember attack and scorched the tip of Pidgey's tail feathers as the bird pitched and rolled into higher elevation. Soon the bird Pokemon was tumbling down from the injury inflicted upon its chest. As the bird tumbled down out of the sky, Feyera's emerald eyes gleamed and he reached for a spare Pokéball he had packed prior to his journey, and flung it at amazing speed toward the falling bird. To his surprise, he made a direct hit, despite nearly impossible odds. To calculate the exact trajectory and velocity of the Pokéball needed to connect with the in transit Pokemon, would have taken a great deal of calculation. But surprisingly, it was nothing for him when he relaxed his overly tense nerves. What an incredible feeling! He had successfully caught his first Pokemon. Triumphanty, he threw a tight fist high into the air. "Yes! I did it!" He tossed the new Pokéball down to the ground. "Score!"

"Let's call you Lawrence," he said to the now chirping, potion-healed pigeon. He'd caught a wild Pokemon! It was different from being given one by Professor Oak, almost as if he'd gone through a rite of passage. He felt like Brucie and him—as a collective unity—had earned the right to expand their ranks. "You're going to do great here with us!"

The brave, but tiny bird seemed full of promise and hope. Pidgey's soft cheeps were rather high-pitched. Christian knelt down to reach his Pokemon's height. The young trainer smiled as he pet his two Pokemon using both his hands. He noticed the contrast between Brucie's leathery hide and Lawrence's rough feathers. He had no preference; it was just interesting to see how his Pokemon were original.

Feyera's scheming thoughts began to race. Now he had two Pokemon to aid him in his endeavors. This would allow him to employ more strategies in combat. Having a Flying Type Pokemon would
be of great use in the Pokemon Gym challenges ahead. Lawrence's ability to maneuver quickly in the
air would complement Brucie's strong attacks. Although Feyera's Charmander was deft and agile, the
Pokemon was limited to the ground, whereas Pidgey could soar in flight. Battles were all
mathematics; based on the television programs he'd watched, they took place in a geometric field,
typically outlined by rectangular, protective wireframes during sparring matches. Christian didn't
need another advanced degree to know adding in the dimension of depth via flight was crucial to
maintaining an advantage!

However, this went beyond mere contest, he felt comforted by his Pokemon, strangely enough. They
were not as frightening as his memory had suggested. Sure, they were not powerful like Team
Rocket's Pokemon or the League's Pokemon, but they were his Pokemon and his alone. Maybe this
was the difference, and the reason why he was at ease around them. He was able to discern how they
felt better than he could read people. Did all trainers feel this way? If so, than the reason behind
becoming a Pokemon trainer made a lot of sense to Christian. But to be fair, dealing with Pokemon
had some drawbacks the young man had not yet seen.

"Good work!" he said as Charmander tugged on his clothing. Looking down at the young Pokemon,
radiating in the warm sunlight, he thought to himself, "This is great! We're well on our way!"

Brucie was looking confident as his tail burned brightly and full of vitality. Feyera pondered what he
would face with his Pokemon next. Remembering his geography, Christian peered into the distance.
"Up ahead is the Viridian City, and then the poisonous Viridian Forest, we would do well to stock
up on antidotes in the city", the greenhorn trainer said. His two Pokemon were the only recipients of
his voice, and yet neither of them could possibly understand the complex organization of the
English language. Brucie, whom he had known only slightly longer than Lawrence, barely knew
four battle commands. "Hmm..." "Scratch, Ember, and...was it Tail Whip?" Feyera couldn't
remember the species' juvenile techniques. In that regard, it was rather exciting to be discovering
Pokemon all over again. Although it was from a completely different angle.

Christian stood up, and towered over both of his Pokemon. He smirked, proud of how he had come
so far. He remembered being slightly traumatized when trainers would visit the coffee shop he used
to work at with their Pokemon out of their Pokéballs. While this practice was not always frowned
upon, Feyera's own negative experiences with being maimed by the Rocket's Pokemon made him
naturally fearful of Pokemon. He clutched his chest, feeling the slim glossy protrusion rising from his
chest, piercing through the two buttons of his shirt. Its bright reddish hue contrasted the bright grey
shirt he wore. It was so foreign and yet so familiar.

He sighed, and instinctively closed his eyes as the late afternoon sun gleamed off the shard's fine
edge.

The crew of three arrived in Viridian City in nearly no time at all. Upon walking past the busy
residents, Christian noticed a large sign over the Pokemon Gym of Viridian. It seemed as though the
building was closed for construction purposes.

"Aw! Really...? What are the odds! So much for THAT!" Feeling bummed out, he told himself that
this was just an inconvenience, a small bump in the path. He looked over at Brucie, who seemed
confused. Maybe it was because his trainer's irritation had shown up in his white knuckles. "I'm not
mad at you, Brucie. I'm just irritated. Now we'll have to go through the forest in order to get to
Pewter to get a gym challenge."

Charmander seemed slightly comforted, but still uneasy. Did the Pokemon even understand?
Viridian Forest was a dangerous place. It was full of numerous poisonous creatures, mostly insects,
but also venomous Pokemon. And they came in swarms too. "Bug Types are the worst..." he
muttered, trying not to allow the thought of them to trigger his arachnophobia-like reaction. As the evening brought forth an outstandingly vivid sunset, Christian could sense his Pokemon's lack of ease. A small ear quiver, a tiny purr, and a nervous kick at the dirt. Were they able to perceive his unease? They were so much like pets!

"We won't be traveling through the forest unless it's daylight. Don't worry," Christian said to a very uncomfortable Charmander. He recalled Lawrence the Pidgey and kept Charmander out by his side as he roamed the city's bustling streets. After a fair deal of wandering amid the City's center, Christian and Brucie came across a Pokemart. As per custom, Pokemon were returned into their Pokéball within a certain proximity to most stores.

Upon entering the general store by himself, Christian walked up to the main counter. "Hi there." A pleasant young lady with soft eyes and black hair by the register asked him what he felt like purchasing today. "What can I get for you today, hun?"

"Umm…I'll pick up an antidote, since we'll be traveling through the Viridian Forest tomorrow morning. Yes, that should do…oh and three Pokéballs along with two potions…umm…should do it. The wilds of the forest are dangerous."

"Okay…you said only one antidote right, bright eyes?"

Christian blinked. "Bright…eyes…?"

"Thought so. *Giggle* Tell you what, I'll toss in a sample pack we have along with your purchase." She rummaged through the various merchandise behind the counter and grabbed the items Feyera had requested.

However, Christian had become very self-conscious and had immediately begun browsing the revolving sunshade display on the checkout countertop.

"Hey, don't be covering those sweet eyes up!" she said, making him jump and nearly drop a mirrored pair of aviators. "I mean, unless you're planning on going to the beach."

Gingerly, he put them back onto the rack. "I probably couldn't afford those anyway. You know, with my student loans, rent, and such…"

"Oh don't I know! I'm still trying to pay off my college debt and working two jobs. Looks like you can at least get out in the fresh air."

"Fresh air, huh?"

"Yeah, as a Pokemon trainer. Here you go sweetie, that'll be 1300P," she said beaming at him.

"Okay." As if in slow motion, Feyera reached for his wallet, which he had thankfully not managed to lose yet, and gave the money to the young lady apparently obsessed with his peepers.

"Thanks. I'll be off now."

"Ta ta! Stay sharp out there!"

The sun had set by the time Christian and Brucie walked out of the store. Christian recalled his Pokemon to the Pokéball, and walked to the local hotel, guided by faded neon signs above. Though called a city, Viridian wasn't much more than a glorified suburb. If one wanted to see a real city, the kind with skyscrapers and such, Saffron was the best bet.
A few hours later, Christian was warmly tucked in bed at the hotel ever eager to continue his journey tomorrow. The moon above was still almost full. As he looked out the window from his pillow, the trainer dozed off into a deep slumber.

A ray of sunlight breaching the blue and tattered curtains woke him. Taking heed to not forget anything at the hotel, Christian Feyera boldly exited the room hoisting in his palm a granola bar for breakfast. He walked north and outside Viridian City's limits, and his pace quickened to make the most of the sunny day.

Entering the forbidding canopy of trees comprising Viridian Forest put Christian at unease immediately. It was as if the very nature of the environment brought stress to him. The coldness, the darkness, and the insects, overall it was not a suitable place to find peace. Especially since he had read about venomous creatures inhabiting this forest. Amid all this, there were still trainers and bug-catchers wandering through nearly every corridor of the vast forest. It was significantly cooler in the dense woodland. Anxiously, Feyera grasped the first Pokéball on his belt holster and released Brucie from his stasis.

Not more than a moment after the Pokemon was free; he felt a small amount of pressure on his back. Wheeling around, in confusion, he heard Charmander let out a loud cry and he felt his back smacked. There was a startled looking Weedle, still attached to the slender tendril of silk it had used to creep down upon to land on his back.

Recoiling, Christian jumped backwards from the wild Pokemon startled by its sudden appearance. Seeing his new friend leap back, Brucie went into a defensive fury, lunging at the wild Pokemon on all fours! But the pudgy worm stuck Charmander with its venomous Poison Sting! Bruce wailed in pain as the poisonous toxin from Weedle's large stinger entered his bloodstream.

"No!" called the small Pokemon back, resorting to Lawrence's gust attack to deal critical damage to the perpetrator of Brucie's agony. Flinging a capture device, Feyera tried to catch the Bug Type Pokemon. Unfortunately, it broke free. Again, the worm attacked with its dreaded Poison Sting. Lawrence flew out of range of Weedle's stinger and quickly barreled upwards into the canopy. Christian ordered Lawrence to knock out Weedle since he was unwilling to face the challenge of dealing with yet another victim of the poison. The young bird tumbled down from the trees and clasped Weedle in its beak. Christian heard a loud snap, and Weedle was stilled.

In relief, Feyera sighed. He absolutely hated insects, things with too many legs freaked him out. So debilitating was this phobia, he typically froze at the mere sight of them. There was this one time when a Caterpie had crawled into his apartment's window. Needless to say, he sleeplessly spent the next forty-eight hours searching for it, with a broom in hand. He quickly withdrew Brucie, whom was entering a convulsive state due to the toxin. Feyera fumbled about through his knapsack and swiftly extracted one of the antidotes he had purchased yesterday. He sprayed the wound on Brucie's left thigh and bit his lip as the lizard squealed from the sting. He felt the pain too. What would this do to the relationship he had built up with his Pokemon? It was so awful, so painful! Just looking at his wounded companion made him shudder, he groped the empty vial of antidote and tried to read the directions. He couldn't see, his vision was blurring ever so slightly. He was panicking. What if his Pokemon was severely hurt?

All of these thoughts culminated when guilt arrived. Christian felt responsible for Brucie's pain and therefore his own. As the thought of accountability rapidly began to take hold of him, he felt a soft nudge on his shoulder. It was his Pokemon's plump little arm. He looked at Charmander and saw the Pokemon smiling. The worst was over. Brucie was going to be okay. The weak venom had been cured by the medicine!
"Oh, Brucie! *Gasp!* You're okay!" The trainer was ecstatic about his Pokemon being such a trooper even amidst something as dangerous as poison. Despite the forest's danger, they were not far away from Pewter.

As they ran out from the dense forest, Christian Feyera was relieved to feel the sun's direct warmth once more. It energized him, and he saw that Pewter City was only about a quarter mile away on the dusty road. Pewter was a sleepy city governed mostly by anthropologists and archeologists alike. The Pewter museum was famous for holding the records of many prehistoric and extinct Pokemon, according to a city resident.

Since it was still daylight, Christian had his mind set on challenging the Pewter Gym leader, Brock. Starving off hunger, Feyera entered the dark Pewter Gym. There were large quartz rocks decorating the whole lobby, making it look like a cave people had moved into! A receptionist inside asked him for his name and trainer identification. He willingly obliged.

"Christian Feyera. Trainer ID Number 82-971. Here's my identification card."

"Thank you, Mister Christian Feyera and welcome to Pewter Gym. Will you be challenging our leader as soon as possible?" she asked him.

"Yes. That would be ideal," Feyera responded dryly, his muscles quivered from anticipation and nervousness. He wanted to earn his first badge more than anything else. He concentrated hard to stop his thin framed body from shaking. A Gym battle of his own! He'd seen video footage of these! In his youth, he spent a fair deal of his free time streaming battles. Shame the recorded quality was garbage.

"Very well, this will be a public challenge you realize. Take heed to remember that spectators will not tolerate anything less than your best efforts. You've been cleared by the League to issue challenges. Battles are relatively safe in our carefully moderated sport, which is why it's imperative you keep in mind all of the rules and regulations of professional Pokemon battles," the young receptionist curtly responded, eyeing Feyera from head to toe, only stopping to briefly gaze at his chest. "Hmm." She opened the stadium door to the left of her desk with the push of a button, and Christian cautiously walked into the dark arena.

Giving little time to allow his eyes to dilate and adjust to the low light, he nervously clenched a fist, quivering as he spoke, "I've come to challenge you for the Pokemon League's Boulder Badge!"

Feyera's yell was received by the tall figure on the opposite side of the indoor field. "Then Brock, the Pewter Gym Leader and Rock Type Pokemon specialist, will accept your challenge!" the loud voice responded from the opposite side of the wide field.

Lights from above illuminated the interior of the stadium, and Christian was momentarily blinded. Shocked and stupefied by the sudden brilliant flash of light, Feyera recoiled noticeably before regaining his composure. Alone on the field, he stared up at the rafters, where powerful fluorescents beamed down their light upon the contents of the turf. There were even some spectators scattered in the bleachers. "Those must all be the locals!" Feyera thought, avoiding their gaze by looking at the massive Pokéball logo drawn into the sand in the very center of the field.

"Very well, I assume you know the rules and regulations behind an official Gym battle," Brock said eagerly. The leader's dark complexion showed few details. At the very least, Feyera was able to discern a slight smile, and a readiness to get the battle rolling. Brock nodded to the Pokemon at his side, a Pokemon not much larger than Brucie. Its two rock arms joined at its center, where it wore a scowl for a face. "It's a Geodude, their heavy rock-hewn hides are nearly impenetrable...I remember seeing one back at the Pokemon Academy, all those years ago," the trainer thought as he rubbed his
hair. He hadn't remembered seeing any video footage with this particular Pokemon. But he had seen Ground Type Pokemon like Sandshrew before. "Hmm!" "Weak to Grass Types and…um…Water Types. Ground shouldn't resist Fire and Flying moves though. Piece of cake," thought Christian, trying his hardest to usurp his anxiety as the rival Pokemon bounded forward onto the field and swung its bolder-like arms about. He hoped that his Pokemon's training on the Weedle in the Viridian Forest adequately prepared him.

"Go Brucie!" Charmander exited his Pokéball and spewed forth a tiny ember upon realizing his situation. His new trainer was counting on him. Christian was sure of it. Brock's tough Pokemon was not going to go down without a fight, but Feyera had confidence in Brucie's sharpened claws.

"Geodude, Stealth Rocks!"

"Scratch at it!" Christian yelled. The young lizard sped towards Brock's Geodude, who had caused sharp pillars of pewter to erupt all around the arena! "Dodge the spikes!" As Brucie closed in, deftly swinging past each immerging rock, Christian could feel the rush of battle. Seeing air and quartz alike aerodynamically breeze past his Pokemon, Feyera felt the sensation of charging into battle. Amid his stationary position, he was vicariously battling. It was amazing!

Brucie's fierce claws dug into the living rock's external layer. A howl of his Pokemon's agony pierced his ears as the hit connected. Brucie's claws were deflected! He'd forgotten that Brock's Geodude was a Rock Type too, resisting Normal Type attacks!

"Oh no!" he said as Geodude retaliated with a sturdy Tackle, whaling into Brucie's gut with a rocky head.

"Trainer, you're using ineffective moves!" Brock scolded. "Tackle again, Geodude!"

"No! Brucie, run away!" Feyera screamed. His Pokemon darted to the side, clutching a nearby bolder and running up its face with a quick leap. Geodude gave chase, but it was not as agile as Brucie. With only two limbs, it took the Geodude twice as long to hobble up the bolder! That was it! Feyera would have to use those sneaky sediments to his advantage! "Brucie, jump off and Ember Geodude while he's climbing!"

Swift as the wind, Brucie hopped from the rock and into the air, spraying spurts of fire from his maw.

Not expecting to be attacked, Brock's Geodude was knocked down. Unfortunately, the Geodude's fall proved more damaging than the resisted Fire Type attack. They were heavy and their hides were not nearly as well protected as Golem's.

"Use Ember!" Feyera hollered. Darts of flame spat around the room as Brucie engaged an organic spitfire mechanism.

"Another resisted attack, trainer?! Did you even graduate trainer school?!!" Brock egged on. "Your knowledge of resistances is lacking!"

"Oh no…!" Christian was failing; he couldn't think, everything had happened so fast. What was he doing here challenging a Gym Leader? Looking back at his grounded partner, he ordered another barrage of Scratch strikes. They connected, but Brock's Geodude managed to grab one of Brucie's arms, twisting it back with strength. Soon it was clear that Christian was running out of options. This battle was falling out of his control. "Please no!"

But in a bold maneuver, Brucie raised his free paw high into the air. His nails glimmered like a silver
star under the bright lights. Geodude's eyes opened wide as the Charmander brought down a Metal Claw like a guillotine, without Christian even ordering it. Shiny claws split into the head of Brock's Pokemon with a "Clunk!" shattering the once invulnerable rock hide!

Brock ordered Geodude to use Mud-Sport, and the weakened Pokemon proceeded to toss dirt and mud about, coating the Gym's floor with a thick earthy residue.

"What an unusual choice," thought Feyera. Mentally or verbally, he could not even tell which, he ordered Brucie to promptly finish Brock's Geodude, "Attack it again!" It was as if his Pokemon knew exactly what to do on its own, exactly where and how to strike. "Maybe Charmander — I mean Brucie — is a natural born fighter!"

"Enough!" Brock recalled his Pokemon before it was too late and submitted that his first combatant no longer had any will to fight.

"This is too easy, I can't believe it, I got this one in the bag!" His spirits were elevating higher and higher without any limits it seemed. It was impossible to falter. "Yes!" He threw a hand high into the air with pride. "We did it! Yeah! Way to go, Brucie!"

The slight smirk on Brock's dark angular face suggested otherwise however.

"Tell me challenger: do you feel like you've bested me yet?" Brock chided as he motioned to the dirty mud—now somehow moving—that Geodude had created prior to being recalled. The sand in the center of the field shifted faster and faster until it transformed into a rapidly swirling whirlpool. "Hnmhmhm! Onix, use Sandstorm!"

Suddenly a humongous snake, encased in rock erupted out of the dark mud. Its body twisted and squirmed as the gaps and fissures in its body expelled the thick brown mud. The unprecedented emergence of Brock's second Pokemon had both Feyera and Brucie bewildered.

"What is THAT!?" Christian questioned before issuing orders, "Ah! Brucie, be careful, nail it in the face with your Metal Claws!" he called out quickly. "Hurry, before it gets out of the pit!"

The rock snake had only risen a few feet out from the ground; its total length was still indiscernible as its body was still buried underground. Judging by the size of that head, it must have been the size of a bus! However, the rock snake was just too agile! Brucie was struggling to reach his target, the swirling dust stung his eyes upon the approach. "Char!" he shouted into the tempest of sand.

"Now Rock Throw!" Brock ordered.

"GAARROOOOGHH! ONIX!" Onix flung a huge boulder, strong enough to kill a frail human, at the lizard who had to redirect his iron-encased claws at the thrown rock to split it before being crushed. Looking past the split boulder, the snake had vanished into the cloud of dirt leaving Brucie completely clueless.

"Now do you see?" Brock said, but greenhorn trainer Mister Feyera hadn't the foggiest. "Mud Sport. It's a shield for electricity and also an incredible field effect for my cumbersomely slow Pokemon. Stealth Rocks scattered around the gym will be all the ammunition my Onix needs for powerful Rock Throws! And Sandstorm is the ace, you'll run out of steam before penetrating my Pokemon's ramped up defenses! Onix, time for a full-on Tackle Attack!"

"Shoot! Time to change strategies! Attacking from the ground isn't going to work! Brucie, get back here!" said Christian, eager with excitement from the smell of battle. His pulse was rising faster and faster. It felt like his heart was going to explode out of his chest. "Brucie, pull back!"
"Onix, use Rock Throw followed by Magnitude!"

"Come back to me, Brucie!" Dodging the rock-hurling beast the Charmander grinned as he back-stepped, landing close to Feyera. And reaching for Lawrence's Pokéball on his Smith and Salven's brand holster, Feyera belted, "Hurry! It's using a Ground Type attack!"

The incoming attack was discernible; he could literally feel the ground shaking with power beneath him, all of his bones shuddered with the weak earthquake. But Brucie had made it next to his trainer just in the nick of time, hopping off the field into the protected box where challengers stood. Feyera petted his Pokemon's head, "Great job out there!"

"Char! Charmander! Char!"

"Only a four, Onix?" Brock asked his Pokemon. "Come on, step it up! Challenger, send out your next Pokemon or take a forfeit!"

"Go, Lawrence!"

"Chirp! Ca-coo! Chirp!" Lawrence the Pidgey was sent out in Brucie's place to take up the mantle against Brock's brutal rock-hewn beast.

"Hmm. A Flying Type? Onix, Screech to disorient it!"

Christian suddenly grasped his head as a horrifying screech was emitted from Onix's massive mouth, disorienting trainer and Pokemon alike. He saw his bird Pokemon fly in a small circle, clearly confused by the high-pitched frequency. This was looking bad.

Feyera yelled, "Lawrence, use your Sand Attack! If Brock's Onix loves dirt so much, let's see how it likes it right in its eye sockets!" Lawrence obeyed and swooped down low to kick some of the dirt and debris at Brock' Pokemon. Scoring an opening, the tiny pigeon was able to briefly blind the rock snake, which howled in disarray.

The battle was turning back around again in Christian's favor; he knew he could win this stalling game of attrition. This confidence surged from within him and provided him with a sense of unwavering determination. This determination was an excellent sensation, empowering even. The new trainer grinned. Had he been only doing this all along. Wouldn't that have been wonderful? Maybe if he had Pokemon to protect himself, he wouldn't have lost his memories. Regardless, the feeling of yearning and excitement was great; it filled the greenhorn trainer with cheerfulness. Feyera felt enveloped by his own sense of unlocked potential discovered through the tactical mastery over his Pokemon. But this was not enough. He wanted to be there. On the battlefield and with his Pokemon. He could not explain why. His head felt light. Such eudemonia could only be achieved by actually experiencing battle firsthand. "Lawrence, use Quick Attack!"

"Onix, Rock Slide!"

"Lawrence—! Feyera called out. "Ah!" His body began shaking suddenly. Involuntary spasms confused him. He was incapable of understanding the sudden onset of inescapable trembling. "W-what?" And then Feyera lost it. His entire body seemed to be rattled by something beside the enormous snake staring down his little Pokemon. The pain emanating from his body was not ignorable. Unable to escape from the surging waves of invisible force, his posture wilted as he pulled his frail arms close to his chest. Repulsed by the phenomenon of holding his core so tightly, Christian could not understand the reason for his incredible discomfort; the stinging in his head would not subside. He held his head, pulled on his amber hair now crimson with a few stains of blood as the pain was more unbearable than ever before. But he couldn't move. His eyes remained fixed. Time
slowed, breaths became separated by oceans. Images seemed to fade in and around the battlefield in fast and slow motion simultaneously. Colors faded in and out in a mysterious dance of light and shadow. Christian could not tell what was happening. It was as if his vision had been saturated with color to the point of distortion. Then suddenly, the images aligned with each other and he gasped breathlessly as the mental pain reached its apex.

Lawrence was dead. His body lay still on the gym's dirt floor. Instantly, Feyera sought to yell and to cry but no words were to be heard. His violently shaking legs were barely strong enough to support his body. Collapsing, the trainer's frame started wilting, his shoulders buckling, his knees rattling together. Death? Of one of his Pokemon? The realization that he had failed was simply too much. It was all so detaching, Christian did not even feel as though he was embodied anymore. The pain came from beyond realizing his little friend's death. The agony haunted him as he realized that he could not stop his friend's demise even though he saw it...no...he knew it was coming.

"Argh!" "AHHHHHHHH!" Feyera cried out in pain. How could this have happened? Lawrence was dead! The very first Pokemon he had caught! And now all he was able to do was watch from this wretched perspective.

He hated it. The vile feeling of being helpless. He wanted to escape to a place where atrocities such as these could not happen. Another growing surge of energy overtook his mental capacity as his knees buckled and he came crashing to the earth. His eyes were locked in complete unquenchable rage as the sand mud and debris all swirled around. His vision now clearer and narrower than ever before, he turned his ice-like gaze towards the rock snake. What killed his Pokemon? It was Onix. Feyera's vision narrowed, focusing on the opponent's Pokemon across from him. He watched as Onix slowly begin to squirm in extreme pain. But how? And from what?

"Garroo!" The rock snake twisted and coiled, in deep distress, completely powerless despite its massive size. This continued for a few moments before Feyera lost focus and shifted his tear-filled eyes from Onix to his deceased Pokemon. It took much effort to force his weakened body to cooperate. He exerted a great deal of energy to clutch his last Pokemon's Pokéball. The sweat from his forehead was mixing with the few droplets of blood emerging from his scalp. "Gawoah!" Onix now turned and glared at Christian. He did not know why. He was not a Pokemon, only a trainer—and a new one at that! And still, the Onix began to rush towards Feyera at blinding speed, roaring and slamming its megaton tail along the dirty Gym floor. The charge was unprecedented and took both combatants by surprise.

"Onix! No! Leave the trainer alone! Do not disobey me!" Brock hollered, but his words were useless—the fell upon deaf ears. Onix swung his enormous rock tail at Feyera's body. Like a man confronted with the guillotine, terror filled his heart.

"No! Not like this! I...only wanted to be with Pokemon. No!" he thought, unable to do much else besides scream, "AHH!" Feyera squinted, heard the "wham!", but felt nothing. It was if pain had been shut off. Feyera was whipped square in the torso, and sailing through the air like a rag, he was knocked back well over fifteen feet. Feyera slid right into a rounded boulder, as his arm's skin was ripped raw by the dirt's friction. Behind him, the crowd screamed. The knockback had all but numbed his nerves. He tried to move his arms, tried to move his legs but to no avail. His eyes darted about and focused on his chest where he had been hit, their gaze remaining fixated upon the straight and smooth shrapnel to the right of his heart as it reverberated in dull indeterminable frequencies.

As he felt sorrow instead of fear, Christian heard a brusque and angry voice in his mind, [You - wound- me, and for this-pay!]

The snake wrapped around his limp body, tightening. He felt no pain in his limbs. Either they were
broken, or the mental energy being exerted overtook him and nullified all of the trainer's senses. But there was still sight. In his mind, there was no question that the end was drawing near.

"Gah!" "So stupid...did it have to end like this?" "NO!" "Why? Everything was so promising...I had to do this though. I just wanted to have a chance with Pokemon once more...not be a—afraid." "Gurk!"

Feyera's gaze met the snake's menacing eyes. No doubt it was ready to deliver the dreaded neck-breaking blow.

Defiantly, he gathered all of his willpower to brace for the seemingly inevitable. He felt his body reacting to the insurmountable mental heightening. Feyera pulled on every sense of self-preservation he had left as he tried to squirm free from the monster in a last ditch effort.

Freezing up in a spurt, Onix's eyes rolled backwards in their cavernous sockets. The muscles of the rock snake relaxed, and it released Christian from its terrifying clutch. As Feyera fell, he could feel his body slowly drifting downwards as the sensations of everyday life returned. The sound of groaning metal could be heard from above. Large steel pieces of the Gym's ceiling began to fall sporadically. They crashed all around them. The sheets of thin metal sheets cascaded down into the center of the field as the sunlight breached into the arena.

Amid the loud echoes of falling metal, Feyera heard Onix's roar. He opened his eyes right in time to see one of the bigger pieces of metal slam on top of Onix's head. The behemoth tumbled to back to earth from the impact. A huge cloud of dirt plumed up when the beast crashed into the sand. Christian winced as Brucie quickly hopped over towards his trainer's battered body, below the ferocious snake. And just like that it was all over. He closed his eyes, the mental exhaustion taking over. The last thing he felt was an insatiable force that drew upon everything and left nothing.

Light peered through two horizontally splitting curtains. "My eyes?" With great concern, Christian looked around the room as the smell of rubbing alcohol pierced the back of his nose. "Where am I?" he thought.

As if he heard, Brock looked at him from across the bed and answered, "You're in a hospital. You're trainer number 82-971. Humph, Mister Christian Feyera, or is that doctor? ...It was a real pain to track down your identity since you didn't have a wallet on you or anything."

"My...oh...must have left it somewhere; maybe at the registration counter." "I...I..." but he could not speak. The red stains on his jaw from all the blood originating from his head made him feel terrible. Upset by his predicament, he attempted to move his limbs, however this act proved just as fruitless his body was just as useless as his vocal chords were.

Brock chuckled, mildly amused by something, "You've made tremendous progress you know that kid? In healing you're nearly fully recovered after a week in intensive care. And that's after Onix tried to strangle you."

"A week! No. I was—out that long?" thought Feyera.

"That's a handy trick you've got there too," Brock said. The man looked intrigued.

"Uuh?" "What does he mean? How do I know I'm not dead? I still don't feel any pain. Something's wrong...something is terribly wrong... I felt death."

Brock rubbed his eyes. "You've got guts kid, I couldn't possibly imagine why a fully trained Pokemon such as Onix would attack you," said with a hint of sarcasm.
"I…I need to know. It killed my friends but why…?" Christian thought about Brucie for the first time. "I hope he's okay."

"You violated a rule in our battle, you somehow got my Onix angry enough to attack you. Usually it's the other way around ya know, people attacking Pokemon during the battle…what you did…what you employed…that's cheating."

"Nugh!" "What? How did I cheat?"

"I'm stunned that Onix lost all control. For him to attack you…you'd have to be considered a threat."

"What? No!" How could he be a threat to a massive Pokemon like Onix?

"I felt it. When Onix stopped obeying orders. It was if all inhabitations had been lowered, subsequently discarded after the unfortunate death of your Pokemon," said Brock.

"Lawrence!" Feyera's face tightened. Finally, he was feeling his body. At least parts of it. His face was numb.

"You know you might as well have killed my friend too. Pokemon that attack trainers need to be executed," Brock said with a scowl.

"I didn't mean to…I'm sorry none of them should have to die. This isn't what I wanted!" he pouted, yet he could not speak. Feyera tried shaking his head, but it hurt too much.

"You should have trained your Pokemon before barging into my Gym guns blazing."

"No…can I take it back?" He knew Lawrence was gone, but the thought of still having the fate of Brock's Onix in his hands worried him. Was it still even alive? The frightening Pokemon had killed his Pidgey, but how much of Onix's fault was that? Didn't he have some responsibility as Brock had said for bum-rushing the Gym?

"You're not going to be welcome here." Brock shook his head. "Not after your little scene. Onix will be fine if you are willing to cooperate with me."

"He's alright?"

"Your Charmeleon only managed to faint him."

"Charmeleon?"

Brock sighed, "Your Charmander saved you, from what I couldn't tell, and as a result evolved. I could not recall Onix, and although he was dear to me, he had violated part of a strict law of conduct placed forth by the DBC themselves: domestic Pokemon shall never harm their human masters. It would have been all over the news and surely they would come to put Onix down."

"But…Onix caused me harm by killing my friend!" His right hand began to twitch. And both his legs seemed to regain their mobility. He could tell by being able to rock his feet side to side.

"A battle is like any other natural process, there will be a winner…and a loser. But never both. You challenged me before your Pokemon were strong enough. That was a mistake. You need to learn from your mistakes. I can't believe you thought you could rely on your psyonic powers alone!"

"You're wrong! I didn't use any psyonics!"

"You sure did. There's proof if you want to see."
"No—I don't have psyonics." Christian was just an average guy as far as he knew. Psyonics were far too rare, far to obscure. "Impossible! This isn't possible!"

"Fine then. Answer this one Christian: If you don't have psyonic powers, how can I hear your thoughts?"

"#Gasp!# At this, Feyera became very still as the wave of revelation overcame him. Somehow without moving his lips, Brock had heard him.

"You're not even a registered 'Psyonic'. Humph! Imagine that. Now, I've seen it all."

"Psyonic…? I'm a psyonic?"

"Don't worry I won't tell a soul about your little secret should you be willing to work with me."

"Work with you? How? You killed my Pokemon!"

"Mister Feyera, your lack of training and unwillingness to prepare killed your Pokemon. The sooner you accept that the easier it will be for you to improve your ways."

"Improve? My ways…? What?"

"Yes. Sometimes battles can end this way. I've seen it happen before. It isn't common but that's because taking a Gym Challenge is a big step. What are you doing in a Gym? Your card says you should be categorizing Pokemon."

"Groan… "For Oak, yes."

Brock sighed, "I worry in this circumstance because usually it is the Pokemon's fault and not their trainer's…"

"Wait…wait one minute!" Christian had come back to reality almost fully but there was still a bitter aftertaste about what had happened, before Onix had attacked him of course. "You're lying. You have to be lying! It—this—can't be reality!"

"It can't be your reality? You say that in a world filled with Pokemon, creatures of immense powers."

"No but in humans…" Raising his left hand to his now palpable cheek, Feyera went on, "I hurt Onix? This is all very silly, he must have been…maybe…just had a bad day…nuhh…all a dream. Only a dream." Christian's thoughts were a riddled with doubt and thus serrated. "I'm not a monster, I did not harm your…" "…friend," Feyera's mouth finished what his mind could not.

"Wonderful to hear that you're speaking again! I will call the nurse in right away. I can go in peace now knowing I didn't harm a psy—" Brock paused "—Never mind. Oh, I left you your Badge with Charmeleon, maybe you should consider having him hold on to your belongings from now on," Brock said snidely.

"Don't—" "—leave—" "—I need—" "—to know—" "—why—" "—this is—" "—happening!" Broken English made little sense, but it got the job done based on Brock's reply.

"If you want to keep your psyonics under wraps I understand that. I—I've had to hide things too." Brock said with a solemn face that showed more age than Christian thought possible from someone no older than twenty-five.

"H—Hide stuff?" Feyera said, his voice cracking like an icy pond in the spring's sunlight.
"Yes. Things that aren't accepted by society. Things that make you an outcast. Things you—well, can't change about yourself," Brock said exhaling softly. "I can sympathize with your position for this reason."

"My? "Position?"

"I've made my call. Do me a favor and accept the grace without question. My Pokemon will help me rebuild the Gym. You're free to go as long as you promise to stay out of trouble."

"—But wait! What do I do now?"

Brock scratched his chin, "Don't make a peep about Onix attacking you."

"I won't; why would I? What would you do in my circumstances?"

"I—hahaha," Brock sighed. "What I would do—what I did—was continue the Pokemon Gym challenge."

"But what about…?"

"You'll find answers in time. I can make you that promise; I remember Pokemon helped to provide me with answers to my own personal questions before I became a Gym Leader."

"But my Pokemon…" Feyera insisted. "My Pokemon died."

"It isn't supposed to be this way. As a Pokemon trainer, you have the ability to change the outcome of any battle. Carelessness is an incompetency, not an incapacity."

"But I…"

"Never forget the friends you lose in battle, always remember where you came from. Don't allow this one instance to get the best of you," Brock said with a frown. "You screwed up. But now, you can make that sacrifice count by becoming better and making sure it doesn't happen again. Don't walk away from the challenge in defeat. What would that accomplish for you? Learn how to handle your Pokemon and more importantly, yourself. You are the one directing them after all."

"I…I can't."

"You are just going to just give in? Toss in the towel now because you made a mistake? What about your Pidgey?"

"He's dead."

"True. But not forgotten. If you chose to forget him by saying this was all just some fluke, then he never was a Pokemon of yours to begin with—just a wild sparrow taken out by nature's innumerable cogs."

How he hated Brock's rational for the death of his first captured Pokemon. Then again Christian might as well have nearly killed more than Lawrence through a lack of control. He knew Brock was right, he felt like he rushed the challenge. Why didn't he know better? All he wanted was to win a Gym Badge. Indeed he had, but at a steep price.

"Feel better. It'll get better. Keep the whole disaster to yourself and I'll cover for you. The last thing I need is more heat from the Pokemon League."

"Thanks," Christian replied. "I think." Then overwhelmed by the bittersweet emotion of being
rewarded for a confrontation which wound up kill his first captured Pokemon made him begin to shiver in disgust. Fighting back the urge to inflame his silent rage by dwelling on the negativity, Feyera gently pushed his hair back from covering his swollen emerald eyes.

The tall Gym Leader stared into his eyes for a few moments before looking away, as if there was something familiar about them. Feyera entertained the thought of breaking the silence, but Brock had beaten him to it, "Oh, you might want to consider changing your name as well."

"What?! No, you need to be kidding," Christian retorted.

"Well, the spectators of your Gym challenge believed you had been killed by your wounds… Without question, you should be dead, all things considered," Brock sighed again placing his hand on the back of his head, "I saw what you did back there, Christian. You singlehandedly brought a battle-hardened Pokemon to its doom. More so, you…manipulated it. Somehow. You took command of it, angering it well beyond reason. This is all beyond my understanding, and yet somehow I am compelled to believe everything I saw. The evidence of destruction remains present in the Gym itself, the well of rogue psyonic energy brought forth when you passed out destroyed some of the Gym. Try as I may to convince those in the crowd that it was Onix, he was indeed very incapacitated by the time the surge of energy came forth. And believe me when I tell you this, there are sinister minds among us that would love to claim your…ahem…psyonic skills."

"I couldn't have…"

Silently, Brock walked over to the window without saying a word and pulled back the hospital window's white curtain.

"…!"

Pewter's Gym was all but destroyed. The twisted metal walls revealed the extent of the damage. In addition, he was able to discern the remnants of a small fire. The scorched sections of the metallic walls were charred with the black stains of fire. How did he know this? He didn't care. The walls were dilapidated and curved inwards as if gravity itself had pulled them from their original concure, dome-shaped alignment into the crunched state he now beheld in awe. "I didn't do that," Christian sheepishly said. His head rumbled with anxiety. "There's no way…"

Brock replied, "You're absolutely right, the trainer Christian Feyera from Pallet Town did. So, craft an alibi for your psyonics and you better be getting on your way since the hospital bill has been paid for in full—" his expression quickly turned sour however, "—you'll need to find a way to control whatever it is you did with psyonics; I don't think that Pewter is the place to do that however."

"Ha…" Feyera forced a laugh as the tall and commanding leader turned to leave the room. "But I don't have psyonics, I've never had any psyonics…"

"Tell that to my gym. I mean it Mister Feyera. I saw you, and I know what you're capable of. Take up an alias until you sort this out, that's my only condition to letting you go without trouble. I've seen Pokemon use those abilities, I've seen mental projections that can change the world around them, but in people…" He paused realizing that the young trainer was drifting to sleep. "…Psyonic. That's what the anomaly is called in human beings. Hmm…Sabrina…what if she wasn't the only one…and that crystal shard…what does it all mean…?"

His eyes now shut and arms crossed below his chest, Christian heard a soft, effeminate voice uncharacteristic of the gruff Brock. It couldn't have been the Gym Leader, but there wasn't anyone else in the room!
"Don't die..." It sounded like a faded melody, spiraling down into dissonant hums as he fell into a deep sleep. "Please, make the life I saved count for something more...something more than what you can't remember..."

The next day Christian arose with a start. "HA! Wow, what a dream!" Sadly, his 'dream' soon became an accepted condition when he saw a pudgy nurse staring down at him. "Huh?"

"My, oh my, don't you look chipper today Mister...?" She was hunting for a name as she pulled the intravenous line out of his arm.

"YA-ouch!" Recoiling, Christian grabbed the edge of the nearby table. It was sharper than he anticipated and in response he unintentionally knocked over some medical supplies with a loud racket.

"Oh my, are you okay, sir?"

"Oooff! Ouch! Yes, I'm fine, I bumped into the edge! Ow..."

"I can see, do you need some icepacks? Dearie please, c'mon, what's your name?"

"It's...Edge!" he said. "Gosh that was stupid," he thought. It was the first thing that came to mind.

"'Edge' huh? What kind of mother would give her boy a name like that after suffering through childbearing?" she smiled.

"Aha..." Christian chuckled. Laughter felt good.

"It's a name I gave myself. When I came of age," Christian's emerald eyes darted about the room avoiding her gaze. "Yeah..." There was truth to this statement as far as Feyera was concerned; he'd dropped his true last name, 'West' entirely, replacing it with his middle name, 'Feyera' sometime around college. Too bad the amnesia had gobbled up the memory of that decision! But considering his distant relationship to his father, his past-self's decision to do so was of little surprise. At least he had physical evidence...all his secondary school documents had him enrolled as 'Christian Feyera' and he was the infamous 'Doctor Feyera' at one point!

"Humph," the tubby nurse coughed and smiled at him once more, "you don't know how lucky you are, mister. Out of all the injuries associated with the battle, yours were the most severe. Speaking of which..." her eyes dropped to his heart.

"—That's nothing!" Feyera tried to conceal the red shard with his forearm, and then his light hospital bed's blanket. Strangely, she did not question him. Maybe they had already given him a prognosis while he was passed out recovering. Did the hospital staff know more about him than he did? With an ambiguous identity given to him by Brock, they couldn't have accessed his old medical records and consequently would be unable to link Christian Feyera and his encounter with the Rockets to this new... 'Edge' character.

Despite a logical analysis, he was worried about being found out. Logic didn't help to quell the young man's anxiety. If there was anyone in the Pewter Gym who saw him now, they would know that he was the mysterious trainer. The crimson like razor protruding from his chest was the best way to recognize him. Undoubtedly, the Gym spectators had witnessed the sharp reflective glow emerging from his center during his challenge against Brock—especially when those fluorescents brilliantly illuminated the contents of the arena. The paranoia was driving him mad.

Urgently searching for a way to quell the disquiet sensation, Feyera asked, "Wait! How long ago
was the battle that destroyed the Gym?"

The heavy nurse shook her head, "You've been in Pewter Hospital's VIP Care Center for five days, you recently came to. Let's see, Friday, just in time for the weekend!"

It took Christian a brief moment to decipher the acronyms. Very Important Person, was that a good thing? Did it matter?

"Well, 'Mister Edge'," the chubby nurse sardonically sneered, "your hospital bill has been paid by Brock's insurance, he filed a claim sayin' you were a spectator injured during the battle. But *sigh* I know it must seem like a long while ago, but can you please tell me: do you remember any of the details?"

Feyera shook his head, "No afraid not, must have hit my head. Debris fell from the ceiling." He pointed to the sky whimsically.

She looked at his eyes skeptically, and then back to his medical chart. "Hmm…you had a severe concussion, so I guess that makes sense."

"It wasn't fun."

"Are you a Pewter City native? I haven't seen your face around here."

"No, I was just passing through."

"I understand you want to retain anonymity, Edge, but now really isn't the time."

"It's really for the best, miss," Feyera emphasized with a stern expression.

"*Sigh…* Okay, I won't pry. I wish they would release more information on the battle. You see, I'm curious. This mystery trainer takes on our city's Gym leader and then, the next thing you know, chaos ensues! Now, the whole building is in shambles. And what has the League done about it? Next to nothing," she wrote down a few scribbles on her clipboard and returned to stare at Feyera.

He sighed, still cloaked from the neck down by the thin blanket, "Yeah, it's all peculiar…I suppose Brock wanted to keep things on the down-low for publicity's sake. It would be difficult to attract trainers if they knew that their Pokemon and their own lives were in jeopardy. Could be bad for business ya know?"

The nurse seemed pleased with his logic, "Either way, you are free to go anytime you feel you are ready," she said joyously handing him a discharge certificate. "You've taken a fair amount of time to rest your body." The nurse then turned to face the small desk and retrieve a set of syringes.

"Ready? But my wounds!" Christian thought.

"Did you say something, dearie?"

"*Gasp!*" He was able to discern just by how quickly his head whipped down to investigate his once battered body that somehow, he healed. In such utter disbelief, he began to shake. "I…I can't…"

"If you really want to stay, you can," said the nurse. "But if I had your stamina, I would get out there and take on the world. Ya know, all chipper and such! Your trainer things are on the other side of that table you bumped into, 'Edge'." Smiling, she left him, whistling a foreign tune as she waddled down the corridor.
"Ha..." Christian—or rather Edge—looked at the clouds dissipating over the decrepit Gym as the sun's rays pierced the window. He picked up the containers of the two Pokemon companions he had left, still wondering if Lawrence had even gotten a proper burial. Somehow, he knew judging by the state of the decaying Gym, that during his episode nothing had been able to escape the vortex unless it had the volition to do so. Lawrence's small body, along with Brock's Onix were probably crushed by whatever it was he had done. It was all beyond his control though.

What caused it? How was it possible? Did he do something to deserve all of this? Was he cursed? The rational part of him wanted to deny it all; it didn't make sense! And even if somehow psyonics were triggered, he had acted out of self-defense and somehow saved himself from a grown Onix. It still made no sense. Just thinking about it made his head spin. It was revolting. How was this all possible? One thing was for sure, this 'Edge' character—as Christian had termed it—had to be controlled somehow.

It was imperative to his survival. And equally imperative to his uncertain future.
A small stream of water gently flowed in the darkness of the cavernous Mount Moon. Its tranquil trickling was soon joined by another sound. A pair of footsteps. Light beamed through one of the numerous passages, illuminating the numerous stalagmites, which had taken hundreds of years to form. The shadows bounced about the spacious cavern, as their perpetual dance of emergence and retreat became apparent to the two figures that had entered the once peaceful grotto.

There was a loud "thud!" and a "splash!" as a thick, black boot stomped into the stream of water. This interruption of tranquility was further breached by a man's brisk tone as he spoke to the one at his side, whom had not stepped into the stream just yet. "He isn't responding to our transmissions, Laurie," the battle worn man said gruffly to his female accomplice. The woman at his side stood tall, her height nearly even with his. Her hair gracefully fell across her shoulders, like a stream of bright yellow gold. She wore thick charcoal eyeliner and her lipstick was a deep wine-red. In her gloved hands, she held a small pistol and a single Pokéball.

"Hmm? Brady?" she asked. Coated in powder and makeup, she was a dolled-up young woman, though certainly attractive on her own. She wore a snugly fitting uniform, its ebony fabric adhering to her lean and eye-catching body. Her long, puffy blonde hair fluffed up and about with even the slightest pitches and tilts of her pretty face.

He shook his head. "Yeah. It's a no-go." His uniform, an obsidian-colored getup with intimidatingly sharp shoulder pads, had a large emblem below the right shoulder. In the background of the lavish design was an embroidered, burgundy "R". Team Rocket. To him, what it stood for was more than a crime syndicate's name, it was an idea. He rubbed his jet-black hair under his equally dark hat, resembling a cloth military helm. Sweat begun forming on his palms as his small handheld radio transmitter continued to yield nothing but static from his side holster.

"Brzz…brzz…"

"*Sigh* No dice…" he said grimly. The man's angular nose drew in the cool air of the grotto. He briefly held his breath before expelling a visible gust of air from his mouth. "Cough!" He placed his hand over the light he was holding, darkening the room. The woman next to him shivered.

"You think we'll find what we're looking for…after that…?" she asked him clasping her hands together. She rubbed them, trying to keep warm; the depths of this cave were damp and chilly. He remained quiet, so she asked again, "Brad, what's happening to us?"

"The hell if I know! There's no way to tell. We're likely to be reassigned. Again…" Brad was uncertain of so many things. He wanted to leave this cave obviously, but he also didn't want to be perceived by his commander as a coward. After the things he saw in its unspeakable depths, there was no telling what the next move was. "Dammit!" He despised it when he was in the dark. Somehow, he was beneath knowing all the variables. Ranks in the Rocket organization still mattered, even if the criminal organization was being systematically altered from within. Softly rubbing his fist in his hand, he stared at one of the larger rock stalagmites. The static persisted. "Damn…" he grumbled.

"I'm tired of this!" she said pouting. "We haven't done anything but look around for stupid rocks. What's the point?! Why can't we be going after loot or something? Or how about Pokemon? You know, things that aren't lethal!"
The man could sense her frustration. It was all too easy to read her. She needed to vent her pent up aggression. He smiled slowly. "Pokemon...can be lethal too, Laurie." His hardened expression showed slight strain as the mid twenty-year old grinned. His left check had a slight indentation from a scar he had gotten a few years ago. Though it was razor thin, it still stung when he smirked. He hated the feeling but had grown accustomed to it. Imperfections like these were tolerated so long as he had Laurie by his side. Having her gave him the strength to do the things that he did. "Danger or not, we're here to do this, Laurie," he said coldly pointing at the excavation tools. "Try to understand, don't get all emotional...We have an assignment that needs to be fulfilled."

"An assignment?! But what about me, Brad?" she asked. "Don't you care about how I feel?"

"I want to be with you when I do anything. You know that to be true, don't you? Don't you, Laurie?"

"Sigh..." Laurie buried her distress in a tight, faux smile. "Brad, let's just run off together. You've gotten your pay from the last mission we went on! We can go off and live our lives with one another! We don't have to put up with the...the...*gasp* T—those things down there!" she said, her shrill voice echoing in the cave's natural chamber. She knew they were safe for now, but who could tell for how long. Brad never away before, never retreated. It was all so unbelievable, it felt like she was in a dream.

His stern voice snapped her out of her thoughts, "You'd consider leaving everything we're part of? Everything that brought us together?"

"It could be just us..."

"What about our squad? The Rockets? Laurie, what about me?"

"Brad!" she shouted. "I didn't meant that!"

"Why are you overreacting?" he asked.

"I—I'm not overreacting!" she said unconvincingly, Brad's condemnation had actually exasperated the melodramatic responses from his partner. "You don't get it! You can't! You're too wrapped up in this world of organized crime!"

Reaching out and grabbing her skinny wrist, Brad ordered, "You need to calm down! Don't cause a ruckus!"

"No!" she said tugging away. "Just stop already! Don't threaten me! I'm not overreacting!"

"You are. Humph! However—" he tilted his neck in deep thought "—I don't know why you're overreacting. Are you scared? Is that what all this is about?"

Laurie covered her rose-painted lips with a delicate hand. "N—no! I'm not!" she lied.

Brad advanced on her. "That's it, isn't it? You see a few scary things and suddenly you're ready to abort, jump ship, and forget about the duties we have? You're gonna let that stuff beat you!?"

"NO!" she protested, but Brad had already made his conclusions. "I'm trying to—"

"Quiet! You'd drop it all on a goddamn dime wouldn't you?! *Huff!* And you'd try and get me to go along too. You're manipulative as f—"

"—Wait! I don't want this! Please! Listen!" She looked incredibly distraught; her voice cracked as she
wailed, "I want you and me! We can steal, we can make a living, just on our own terms for once. We can do whatever we want together, you and me."

"Stealing…? 'On our own terms'? That would be more meaningful for you?" he asked in wonder. Obviously the thought had crossed Brad's mind before, but it never had manifested in such a charged plight of his partner. "For us…?"

Laurie snapped, "It would be a hell of a lot more meaningful than whatever was down at the base of the cave…it was twisted! Something's terribly wrong Brad, and I know it! *Gasp!* I just know it!" Her body quivered not from the cold, but from fear, "Team Rocket doesn't want us to live, that's why they sent us down into The Crypt!"

"Quiet!" He knew she was wrong. Team Rocket hadn't had a blunder since the incident two years back at the Pokemon Sanctum. In response, they'd become a very cautious organization.

The young woman shivered from the cold; however, it was not the damp air of the cave that chilled her bones. It was a feeling from within. "I…I don't want to stay here…please. It's making me feel all wrong."

"You really were affected by it, weren't you?" Brad asked as his smile faded. "This isn't you. What is it, Laurie? Is it paranoia?"

"N—No! I—I mean, you weren't frightened?!"

Brad, twisting his lower lip, softly mouthed the word "No." He'd gone into survival mode. What else was there to do? He thought best when he was on his feet, when things were on the line.

"W—what's happened to you!? You've gone cold…What's *sniff* happened? Didn't it frighten you when they came out of nowhere and—" she began to sob. "And then to Logan…"

"Nothing. Nothing's changed! The circumstances may have temporarily…shifted…but nothing else is going to happen so long as I'm in charge of this battalion. We're still under contract. It's because we're the best that we have this job in the first place," he said, his teeth shining like icicles. "It's a blessing we don't have to work for those scientist creeps in Branch Zero. Can you imagine what kinds of torment we'd have to put up with at a place like Evercrest, Laurie?"

She shuddered hearing that name, her spine tingled all the way down. That place was a black hole: Rockets assigned to the Cipher lab were rarely ever heard from again. "I don't think we'd be suitable candidates—" Laurie answered haphazardly.

"Exactly," Brad quickly said, cutting her off. "And why is that? Because we're not your average grunts! This mission might not be a walk through Goldenrod Park, but at the very least we have leniency with our current assignment. We only have to answer to one, not the whole panel. The boss cares about our wellbeing, unlike Cipher's panel! Hell, I'm sure our odds of survival double when you take stuffy folks like *them* out of our operations. Too many chiefs and not enough indians. Either way, I prefer to go at it alone…" Brad didn't realize his statement was abrasive and consequently offensive.

"Alone?! I hate what's become of you!" she yelled, flailing her arms and kicking a mound of dirt causing the dust to plume upwards. "You have no feelings! Don't you care?"

"…Laurie…wait!"

"No!" she shouted, causing him to back off in shock. He considered his accomplice's temper. He knew the origin of it. They had been sent on a multitude of missions to secure a rare earth material
called "Mercurium". For the past few trips, they were unsuccessful and there hadn't been conflict until recently. This was troublesome for his small squad and Laurie in particular. She was certainly rattled by the things discovered in the deep, dark depths of this seemingly innocent mountain. When confronted with the strange creatures, her vicious tendency could not even help her. Usually it would. Brad liked to think of her as not only his significant other, but also an impetuous version of himself. While he was composed, she loved to embellish in her voracious side. Was this a derivative of her affection for him? Either way, she knew that every mission came with its own set of risks. Be it lawful bullets or lawful Pokemon, their missions always carried danger. Still, she was really shaken up. Almost inexplicably so.

"You know what, fine! I'll tell you what, we'll radio H.Q. right now and give a frickin' worthless, half-assed report!" he barked. Swearing and twitching, he took out a tiny black communicator, not much larger than his palm, from the strap above his vest's right pocket. Aggressively, he flicked the small switch on the side causing the round speaker to utter an eerie static.

"Zzz…"

"Wait…" Laurie was clearly upset, she clutched at his muscular forearm saying, "I—I just want to go home."

"Go home?" His eyes narrowed and he turned his head to stare at her before responding in a way she'd understand by snapping back, "Yeah, well do you think I'm having a freaking picnic down here?!"

"I…I'm sorry I just got…"

"…Got what?!" He grabbed her arm with his free hand. "Huh?!"

"B—Brad!!" She continued to stammer, unsure of what exactly to say to her significant other. She had never felt this way before. His grip tightened. She was scared of where they were, but more afraid of what he'd become. "I…I…"

"What?!" For emphasis, he abusively shook her a few times. Then he released her and used his hand to violently hit the communicator a few times. Still nothing. "What the hell did you get? Emotional? Cause you saw someone die?!"

"Y—yes," she said with tears in her eyes. She was tired of the abuse. "I felt so afraid, I couldn't act. I don't want to feel like that again."

"And you call yourself a thief! Laurie, Team Rocket isn't a place for petty Meowth-burglars!"

"I know Brad! I know! But I got scared. I got so scared!"

There was a brief pause. Then he recited words he had heard during the advent of his life of crime: "To see past fear, you need to put death under your control, you need to gain power over it, you need to be able to kill without remorse if you wish to face death unafraid." He released her with a jolt.

Her expression revealed that the 'advice' Brad receive years ago had been influential, maybe even persuasive. Why not? He followed it, and now he could look death square in the face unafraid.

"…And if you want to be in charge of our personal affairs, that's fine, but I'm running the show down here. I'm not going to get anyone…I mean, us killed. Remember that." Grunting, he turned his eyes to the communicator. He paused for a few seconds before looking back at Laurie. She bit her lip nervously. He had already broken that first promise, and her faith in Brad —though he was
"Brad, what do you think we need to..." Laurie began, but then stopped as she heard a sound in the distance. It sounded like a rock rolling on one of the paths leading down to these unfathomable depths in the mysterious "Lunar Mountain".

"...!"

"Is someone there?"

"Are we being followed? I thought we lost 'em back in The Crypt!"

"No, it can't be! Those are human noises!"

Amid their panicked whispering, the pair looked at each other skeptically; they were able to see each other's facial features as a bright light came in from a nearby corridor. Brad quickly switched off his light. He raised his thick brow and put a finger to his lips, hushing Laurie. "Shh! Keep calm, and listen to what I say. No one's supposed to be down here, I thought we set up a com rely on the way in...how'd anyone slip by?"

The two of them waited in the darkness, as the shallow stream beneath them resumed its peaceful flow. Brad saw his partner's crystal eyes illuminate despite the darkness of the cave. It was as if something lived within those azure eyes, shining with cruel brilliance, waiting to be released.

As the light began to approach them, wrapping around the walls in unnerving patterns, Brad instinctively reached for his weapon of choice, wrapping his fingers around the handle jutting out from his waist's holster. With a deft hand, he had muted the static coming from his communicator, but if they were exposed by this light there was only one option. Force. And that meant the risk of casualties at worst. This mission was of highest priority, and there could be no witnesses; he could not risk word getting out to the Pokemon League concerning Team Rocket's activities here. The rest of his squad was still in the camp closer to the lower levels of the cave system. While the main cavern of Mount Moon was a straightforward mountain pass, there were hidden areas and depths blocked off by landslides leading to a range of mysterious levels. The main path going through the mountain was infrequently taken by trainers looking to travel from Pewter to Cerulean or vice versa, and even then, it did not gain much traffic. There was this recent craze for League Badge collecting. Brad never understood it. He was a mercenary not an adventurer. Perhaps his father would have wanted him to go adventuring with Pokemon; the old man always liked Pokemon after all. Suddenly frustrated, Brad dismissed the wandering thoughts of his father's Pokemon.

Then the figures appeared, trailed by their long shadows. A small trainer, not much older than twenty and his Pokemon entered the very room where the two rouges remained motionless. The young man's Pokemon floated in mid-air and gave off a radiant light originating from its brightly lit eye.

"Ah-ha! There's our problem," Laurie said, pointing towards the young trainer's Magnemite. Magnemite could interfere with all kinds of electrical radio waves after all.

The trainer, realizing he wasn't alone, spun to face the source of the voice.

"...Dammit!" Brad instinctively darted forward towards the trainer, concealed by rapidly dancing shadows cast by spinning of lights within the catacomb.

"Who's—?" By the time this trainer had raised an arm to demand questions, Brad's leg connected with the trainer's chest knocking him backwards into a rocky wall. The resulting impact caused the trainer to gasp in pain. Staggered, he hunched over and clutched the wet rocks. "Oof! You rotten
crook, you're with the mob!"

As the trainer got up, Brad demanded, "Leave!"

"Ugh..." The impact had disoriented him, but not enough for him to fire off a few obscenities Team Rocket's way. "You worthless scoundrels! What the hell are you doing here?"

"I told you to leave; you'd do well to listen to orders," Brad shrugged, "who knows, it could wind up saving your life."

"Right now, before we have to hurt you for real, you little worm!" Laurie chimed in; the thought of taking up Brad's advice to confront her fears was slowly seeping into her head, like the insistent drips of stalagmites all around. She wondered if fear could really be overcome. Could she really be in control?

"Yeah sure! I'm not listening to you thieves!" the trainer retorted with a crooked expression. "You're with Team Rocket!"

"And what if we are?" Brad asked. "Does that make you any safer from us, punk? Does that make pretending to be a hero seem like a smart option?"

"To hell with you!"

"What are you going to do about it?" Laurie taunted. "You look too hurt to do much against the both of us."

"I'm going to—" he collapsed and begun to cough heavily. "*cough* *wheeze* you're done… you're so done…"

"—Wrong answer!" she scolded, taking the opportunity to advance.

Brad raised a hand into the air. "Let him finish, Laurie; let's see if the vermin's reasonable enough to do what he's told."

"You guys, you think you're so tough as a group. *Cough! Hack!* No. You're not! You're bullies. You wouldn't be able to take me on alone! You're a waste…!" Laurie flinched, taking a second to glance at her weapons, a pistol and a Pokéball. Brad raised an arm to stop her from resorting to either of them yet. Seeing this, the trainer went on. "...You're nothing. You're not even human! You're nothing more than a bunch of mindless lackeys blindly taking orders from your masters without a damn thought to call your own! You're worse than Pokemon!" he shouted, giving Brad an offensive hand gesture. "Who's really the one in charge of your lot, motherf—?!" Brad spun on his back foot and kicked the weakened man again with the heel of his combat boot, this time square in the gut. "Oof!" the trainer belted as spit flew out of his mouth.

"Got something you wanna say to me, punk?"

"Help! Magnemite!" he cried out. In defense, the levitating Pokemon at his side began to glow yellow before releasing a quick surge of electricity upon the male rocket.

The fury of sparks connected. Brad shuddered violently as waves of electrical energy jolted throughout his body. He couldn't even shout in pain, his jaw had been snap-frozen shut by electricity. He had to endure it, shaking as involuntary muscles fired off their natural responses.

"NO!" Laurie screamed, releasing her Pokemon. "Growlithe go!"
"Ark! Ark!" The Growlithe she released barked vigorously at her side, adding to the unfolding chaos. But Laurie couldn't bring herself to fire her pistol. Not with Brad in front of her. Even if he was being attacked. She prayed that he'd withstand it, Magnemite weren't supposed to be lethal unless in groups greater than two.

There was a small pause, and the magnetic Pokemon stopped as Brad leaned forward wearing an expression of disgust on his face. His hands were shaking uncontrollably. "Y—you're a weak trainer. Your Pokemon's a flawless reflection of your inadequacy. P—pitiful," Brad stammered, clutching his heart. "You want to fight me? Fine. I'll fight you, I won't even use Pokemon to deal with you! You're garbage, you insect!"

"Brad don't!" Laure screamed.

"Magnemite, use Thundershock!" exclaimed the trainer. "Kill him!" Complying with orders, the Magnemite began to rapidly spin to produce another electric based attack. But, to its trainer's surprise, the target ran his hand down to his belt holster, grasping a thin handle ruggedly strapped with tape like a knife's grip. The man's coat bellowed outwards, revealing the weapon. Along its wide blade were thin copper wires, running along the metal's face much like a circulatory system, spreading out into numerous capillaries that buried their ends into the sharp edges. The thickest of wires were connected to several silver nickel compartments: battery boxes mounted onto the metal, each capable of humming countless volts into the cold, black steel's ridged edges.

In a single, heart-stopping moment, he drew the weapon, and swiftly clicked the "On" switch located on the handle. "Click! Zzrrr...!" The device didn't have time to purr its threatening warning, for Brad wasted no time swinging it up through the air; the vicious, electrified machete made a distinct whirring noise as it sliced through the cave's damp air. "Woosh! Shing!"

The blackened metal, charged with electricity, smashed into the levitating Magnemite, followed by a huge "Bang!" and a brilliant burst of sparks as the electrical charge was set loose. Out of the smoke and dust, the Pokemon fell to the earth, its external metal horribly dented, as it bounced on the ground, falling further apart. It hit the wall beside its trainer and fell to the earth; its tiny eye flashed bright a few times as it lay stilled in the dirt. The twin magnets on either side of its body slowly ceased to spin. The female rocket's Pokemon sprung over to the fallen Pokemon. Its fangs glistened white as they began to glow with fiery energy. "Growlithe, Fire Fang attack!" she yelped in earnest.

"NO!" The trainer yelled. "No, damn you! Damn you!" Obscenities flowed from his agonized expression like swift water.

Brad frowned at him. "I told you to run, kid. You're nothing. Don't stand up for anything you can't defend. You don't belong here, and neither do your Pokemon. Learn your lesson yet?"

"I'm gonna end you, you filthy animal! Pleh!" he spat. Pointing at Laurie first and then at Brad, he barked, "You and you! And anyone else in Team Rocket! You're all done! You'll have the Pokemon League halfway up your ass before you know it!"

Agitated, Brad pawed at his chin; for the trainer would not go quietly. "...Then looks like this will be your grave." The dull humming of energy filled the cave with faint whirling vibrations. He looked down at his weapon. The Lambda glowed a faint orange from the recent transference. He could use the device's sharpened blade, but why waste a perfect opportunity to teach Laurie how to overcome the fear which had seemingly possessed her? Brad nodded, "Luckily, or unluckily depending on how you look at it, I'm all out of power. The Lambda is a delicate device. Ha...but not as delicate as your Pokemon."

"Or you!" Laurie chimed in.
"No…*Sniff* No! This isn't happening! This can't be happening!" Now in tears of bottomless rage, the trainer pulled his body from the sharp rock Brad had kicked him into, feeling the abrasions and punctures in his back. Stumbling, he wobbled towards the man slowly. "You'll never take me alive!"

"Heh—Wasn't planning on it," Brad said with a smirk. "The ship of mercy set sail long ago. You're nothing but a dead man. But first—" he signaled to Laurie. "Give the order, Laurie."

For a split second, Laurie appeared to be taken aback, but the young woman quickly reoriented herself. "Finish his Pokemon!" Her hair whipped back as she zealously ordered yet another Fire Fang attack. Her hound ripped the pieces of the Pokemon further apart, thoroughly enjoying it with each crunching snap and disjointing tear.

"…!" he didn't have words. However, the trainer's mute reaction was of great delight to the sadistic blonde haired agent. Why? Because this young man was where she usually was. He was powerless, defenseless, he oozed perceivable fear. Her silvery eyes glowed, the internal, chaotic bloodlust gaining intensity with each passing second. She wanted to be in charge for once. She had to be! Slowly, she walked in a straight line, each foot stepping directly in front of the other.

"No…oh no…!" the unnamed trainer stumbled; he noticed blood was dripping from the base of his shirt. Shifting his gaze from the two Team Rocket members to his stomach and then back to them again, he saw the male turn around, taking the bright light with him. "P-P-Please…*cough* no, you can't…!" the trainer responded, still completely clueless. Perhaps he was denying the possibility of death. Wild thoughts crossed his mind, training Pokemon, adventuring through caves; this was only a game, wasn't it? All he wanted right now was to go home. Sadly, the simplistic joys of life were but a distant fantasy as he confronted death in the form of a fiery hound. Pokemon could go just as bad as the humans who trained them, making Team Rocket one of the few organizations capable of unleashing terror upon their victims; in truth, they were all Pokemon trainers save for a select few.

"Growlithe, sick the trainer! Take his life away!" Laughing, Laurie ordered her Growlithe to finish the job. "Bite attack!"

"Rrrgggh!" the Pokemon viciously growled. It was a large member of its species, well over three feet, having attained a high combat proficiency without evolving. Her Pokemon had also not tasted meat for a long while, just a bite of the trainer would taste a fair deal better than the ferrous components of Magnemite. "ARK! ARK!" it barked, snarling and glaring in an intimidating leer before the climatic pounce.

The trainer had only a moment to attempt shielding his face with his arms. "No! AHH! NOOOO!"

"Crunch!"

Laurie smiled, her silvery eyes beaming. Why? Was it out of excitement? No, initially it was rousing to be in charge for once, but, like a tidal wave, passion had seized control of her actions. Her smile opened to reveal her pearly teeth. Brad was right. She looked down upon her victim. She was in control. For once, she wasn't being ordered about by Brad, or any other overwhelming dominance in life. Her power was demonstrated and unquestioned. This feeling inside of her was simply purpose itself. The feelings fed into themselves over and over. She was master over life and death. It took only a word and the obedience of her Pokemon. In rapt, she recalled her Growlithe; coming slowly to terms with she had just done, realizing the fate of others rested upon her whims. Kicking the still body, she turned and walked back towards her companion and field commander. "I—" she wanted to say "did it" but she had run out of breath.

"Huff…huff…" Hearing her approach, the other Rocket spoke, his tone still uneven from being slightly zapped by Thundershock. "There, we've got a clear patch now Laurie. You were right about
Magnemite interrupting our signal." She forced a tight smile, her hands still violently trembling. "Good girl." Between baited breaths, he began his transmission through the small microphone: "H.Q., this is Agent Kelvin we have progressed into the deep section of the mountain and are broadcasting our signal now. We found deposits of the heated material you spoke about. It's strange…ever changing and amorphous as the Cipher report predicted. I don't think we were the first ones down here either. At least, for a while."

Pausing, the unshaven young man looked down at his communicator, as if it would exhibit some sort of human quality or response. No response. His report continued, even more solemnly than before. He knew the man on the other side was listening, waiting like an Ekans in the grass.

"There were…machines down there. Extraction machines of some sort, predating our tech."

"So you're a historian now, Braddock?"

Brad ignored the snide remark and responded without a hint of animosity, "Those things, those hulking pistons built into the rock face, were not built by us or anyone I know of."

"Do they work?"

"Work? No. Didn't get that far."

"Explain the machines' construction to me."

"They're cryptic in nature, we couldn't investigate much into their inner workings; they look like large-scale versions of those old steam engines you see in museums. Their presence proves worrisome structurally speaking, but there's something else…"

"…Go on."

"Did you know this place was a tomb? There were bodies…"

The other side dryly responded, "I wouldn't have sent you Kelvin if I needed someone incompetent to get this job done." Brad fought the praise he was being given with a stern expression. Laurie quietly giggled into her pale palms. "As for the ancient machinery, I would like a report detailing the nature of such technology. Perhaps we can synthesize a prototype based off of their designs…much like the firearms some of us choose to use."

Brad paused; his commander was addressing him specifically. "Sir, I don't believe I will ever use one of those again. You need to respect my decision." Brad had used a Gauntlet M-class revolver at one point. He was never very good at shooting with it. Accuracy was only a meager twenty-nine percent on targets under thirty paces away. Normally most Team Rocket agents would carry the weapon in its 'M' class. It was a six barreled revolver, utilizing flint lock technology to prime explosive powder in the chamber. The original design was crude to put it mildly, but at least it worked without requiring Pokemon—a huge step forward for the criminal syndicate that would often abuse Pokemon through illicit trafficking. Brad's Gauntlet however, misfired during one of his earlier missions. The result scarred his face permanently as the explosive debris burned his visage. Even if they ever became commonplace, he didn't care if other people used firearms. He couldn't. He wouldn't. He had his weapons of choice, first and foremost being the 'Lambda Xtella', a prototype weapon made by Silph. It was originally designed for law enforcement agents to carry and use to stun escapees. Though the design was for it to not be lethal, in practice electrocution proved to be a very fickle method of incapacitation. Needless to say, it was banned for military use only. However, Brad had his connections, after a few modifications such as an increase to the channeled voltage and bayonet edges made it into the brutally effective lightning truncheon he now carried with him on all his
assignments. In addition, Brad had some skill in martial arts. He also had his Pokemon. And he had Laurie at his side wherever he went. "So much for not using a Gauntlet," he silently thought to himself.

"I'll respect it so long as your decision gets us results, Kelvin." The voice held a dull anger at the tail end of the sentence.

"Permission to speak freely?" asked the male rocket as he combed some loose hair from the ordeal back underneath his hat.

"Granted," said the voice impersonally and sarcastically.

"Is this line tapped?" Brad asked.

"No. At least not for now… Tell me what's on your mind. Quickly, Braddock."

"I honor no other organization higher than the Rockets. Team Rocket's given me more opportunities than anyone else. I must confess that there is little solace in the knowledge that my personal decisions are not taken into account. I've respected this group, this idea of Team Rocket—'The Rockets' without question."

"'The Rockets'," repeated the voice, mulling over the last time someone had referred to Team Rocket as that. Not that 'The Rockets' was discourteous, quite contrarily, it was an archaic title of prestige. Laurie's figure caught his eye. "I take my orders very seriously," he said in a tone grave enough to bring envy to the dead. "Sir."

"Sigh… You aren't expendable, Kelvin. You're valuable to our organization, Team Rocket. Take care to remember that your own timely joining happened at the most opportune moment for us. I don't say this often, but it was meant to be. We lost a lot of good men two years back. Especially him," the communicator hauntingly said. Brad knew exactly what the commander was talking about. Two years ago, Team Rocket lost one of their best operatives during the Pokemon Sanctum mission. Little was known about the circumstances. At first, some believed he had gone rogue. Now the general opinion was that this agent was overtaken by what was discovered within the Sanctum's depths. "You're a shining example of Team Rocket's indomitable spirit."

Laurie padded Brad's arm, as his superior praised him once again. When Brad joined Team Rocket, he met Lauren Tiffany almost right away. He always teased her about having two first names; in fact, that's where the nickname 'Laurie' came from. In either event, they were under the same commander and mentor during their early years in the Rocket Organization. Laurie's fascination for Brad was evident since she first laid eyes on him. She was trying to pay off some of her expenses at the time, and was notoriously passionate in all ways imaginable. A little while after the blunder made in Saffron City, Brad was shaken and considering quitting the crime syndicate because things were changing a little too fast for him. He didn't like shifting powers above him. It made him uneasy. But Laurie urged him to stay, and the two of them formed a strong relationship that went beyond the physical connections they already shared. Together, they were as malicious as they were efficient. Now they were on some of the most dangerous missions imaginable. Nearly all the recruits who had joined their crew were either dead or incarcerated indefinitely. Being part of Team Rocket wasn't all it was cracked up to be unless you went up in the ranks; almost in a 'survival of the fittest' type of way. It was a risky career, but one where the cream always rose to the top.

"After the Sanctum, all of our resources were dumped right into Cipher's hands. 'Rocket Don' insisted that we could always rebuild. But we could not save one of our most trusted operatives and his henchmen. Rallsen…*sigh*…Tragic. It seems like it was yesterday. You remind me of him in so
many ways, Braddock."

"I…I do?" Brad didn't know what to make out of this statement. It felt off to hear that considering two years ago Team Rocket was in their prime, and Rallsen was the team's champion, their pride and joy, the bread and butter of any assignment. However, he was long gone now, and his shoes would be difficult, if not impossible, to fill. Especially with Cipher bearing down on their operations like a watchful parent.

"You understand what it means to be a member of Team Rocket, through and through. And yet you're so young." Laurie gave Brad an affectionate nudge. "Hmm…come to think of it, one of the field commanders chosen two years ago was around your age, and when he went rogue, I realized my mistake. He had other objectives. Perhaps Cipher brainwashed him. But the difference is this: I trust you. Your loyalties are here with the team. And because of that, we'll remain loyal to you in any way you need us to; that's how this works. We will persevere through the current state of affairs and regain our prior glory. It's good to have you as a field commander, Braddock Harrison."

"Right…" Hearing the commander call him by full name made Brad feel mildly uncomfortable, nervously he took a deep breath and brushed some dirt off his uniform, "Two of our agents arriving from Pewter mentioned an anomaly. According to them, there was an incident involving grossly powerful and uncontrollable Pokemon in the city's gym. Witnesses claim the building itself was damaged by a supposedly lethal battle. Is there need for concern?"

Silence, and then a click on the other side—almost like a gun being cocked. It wouldn't be much of a surprise if the noise was real, because Team Rocket were major contributors to the black market for firearms. "Let me deal with the circus that is Pokemon League affairs, Brad. I'm in a better position to do that. You just do what is necessary to extract the rare material from the mountain. They want it to be the exact quantities that your mission report requested. Do not fail us in this assignment. I want you to report back to me with any more news. I will be sending Agents Engelhart and Maxwell on ahead to recruit, keep communication lines with them open."

"And the anomaly?" Brad's face sharpened, he did not like hearing about mysterious events occurring in Pewter. An outpost stationed at the mouth of the cave had radioed in the recent event a few days ago. Days seemed like weeks down in the belly of the earth. Time was hardly a constant.

"I'm sure you and your agents can handle the mission without interference from an anomaly like the one you're talking about."

"But sir!" Brad hated when his boss would skirt around his questions. Didn't he understand the value of transparency? If his boss wanted results, Brad had to be given details. "Don't you have any more information? We're in the dark."

"We're still attempting to ascertain information pertaining to the incident in Pewter. If there's a need to alert you, I will do so personally via this communication patch."

"So…nothing's known yet?" asked Brad.

"No. Nothing is known…yet." The voice seemed distracted, preoccupied, as if someone else had just entered or left the room. Quickly, the man said, "Braddock, concerning the Pewter City incident, something I'm seeing isn't right. Those levels are sky high…and aren't even buried below the surface."

"Commander?" Brad asked, trying desperately to piece together some of the fragmented hints.

"For now, extract the rare earth components. If there's any more of this 'mercurial' component, you
are to directly report to me. No excuses. If you should encounter an elevated reading be wary. You have the proper equipment to handle opposition. Should you be lacking, use your Pokemon and your —"

"—Commander, the things we found down there amid the corpses...they're..." Brad couldn't word it. Far too much had happened in a small amount of time, and he wasn't even able to get a clear view of it as the squad retreated.

"What are you trying to tell me, Braddock?" asked the rigid voice, now sounding pressured to leave. "Did a few dead bodies down there spook you?"

"No. I mean there were bodies but they weren't all dead. They're.... I don't know what they look like. I don't know how to describe them. We only found two. They were cloaked in shadow and darkness."

"Inform me," said the voice, now intrigued. "Details, Braddock, details."

"That's the problem, sir. There isn't any information. We only know where they came from."

"Where?"

"'The Crypt'."

"Is that some kind of joke?"

"No. That's the nickname me and the boys have been calling the section past layers two and three in the northern section. Looks like a graveyard."

"A graveyard? With bodies?"

"I...think. It's strange, I can't recall it exactly. I just remember assuming they were dead and inanimate."

"You didn't scope the area out?"

"No."

Laurie chimed in softly, "It was a strange feeling, boss."

"How?"

Brad answered for her, motioning with a finger for her to keep quiet. "...We felt as if there was no need to investigate the corpses. But then others, very much alive, came out of nowhere when we started to tinker with one of the larger machines."

"You tampered with the machinery?"

"No. I couldn't tell you the first thing about how it all works." Brad shook his head, knowing the lives of his men exceeded the unnecessary concern about inanimate machinery. "We weren't even able to collect any samples from the rich deposits collected by the ancient machinery."

"So, you fled without obtaining any of the Mercurium from 'The Crypt'?"

"...!" With a gasp, Brad recalled the events, "Sir...I don't think you understand. They hunted us...followed us around like we were animals. Lured us to the back of the room with muffled noises. Laurie said she felt different, cold... The next thing I know, we're cornered. Instantly! Left and right,
both sides simultaneously. I used my magnesium light flare to try and ward them off, but it was promptly extinguished."

"Your chemical light was turned off?"

"Correct. Never seen anything like it before. In pitch darkness, I had to order an immediate retreat. There was only one light, the light out. …Before we got to the door, I lost one of my squad, Logan Kirm. He was one of our new recruits from Olivine."

"Confirmed dead?"

"Might as well be. One of the monsters grabbed him, pulled him under this black shroud they were wearing. I tried to look back, but could see nothing but utter darkness. I heard him scream, then a loud crack. The yell was immediately cut off, must have snapped his neck in two…"

"How did they sneak up behind you? I didn't expect you to be so oblivious to your surroundings, Kelvin."

"I…couldn't see anything down there. I thought it was safe."

Laurie whispered, "It felt safe."

"There were only dead bodies riddled about the floor. Skeletons mostly, but a few corpses still intact. Which is really odd when you think about it because—"

"—In the north you said? In layer three?" the voice said, cutting off his thoughts.

"Yes, that's correct. The deepest part."

"Click! Click!" It sounded like the man was typing something on his keyboard from the other side. "Stature?"

"Bipedal. We weren't able to get a clear idea of what the figures actually were. They came out of nowhere. Almost as if to protect the machinery down there."

"Hmm…hmm," he hummed. "Pokemon?"

"No. Highly improbable. They couldn't have been Pokemon that we know about. Far too deep for most to survive. I'm pretty sure they weren't Ground Types either. The whole nature of that crypt… it's warped somehow—" he shot a glance at Laurie "—we were…helpless, powerless."

"Warped you say? Physically?"

"I can't confirm that either…Boss, you start to see things down there. Things that can't be real. Things that don't make sense. It…messes with your mind somehow. It's been putting us all on edge. Three of our members have been getting the shakes, but that may also be because of the recent loss of Kirm." Brad dared not to tell his superior about his partner's deep fears of whatever it was that lurked in the depths. He wanted them both to be cast in as much competence as possible considering the recent fumble. And that meant not expressing fear.

"Kelvin, I want you to remained stationed at the first level of piercing and collect more of the material from the shallower sections. Do not explore deeper into the cave until backup arrives. Remain invisible at all costs. No one is to find out any information concerning your mission down there. Plug all leaks by any means necessary." Then a pause. "…I'm told Cipher isn't paying for us to slip-up again!"
"Rodger that, Commander," the dark featured rocket said.

"Click!" and then static.

"Oh Brad," the woman said playfully, her arms still shaking from her recent peccadillo, "You're so dreadfully formal when it comes to business."

Brad's stiff fingers removed Laurie's advancing hand from his broad shoulder, "Such behavior has kept me alive. It'll keep us alive together, Laurie. I promise."

Advancing ever quickly, young Christian Feyera had made his way to 'Lunar Mountain' or as common folks called it: Mount Moon. The young trainer had not captured any Pokemon on his recent excursion east of Pewter City. Christian's thoughts were too entangled with his failure to defend members of his party during the unprecedented and destructive battle with Brock. Mister Feyera's seemingly innocent adventure was about to undergo an interesting turn however.

Feyera's Charmeleon, Brucie, was full of vitality. Now more than ever, Christian counted his blessings, his Pokemon evolved, meaning he had a stronger protector now...though he wondered whether he needed Pokemon, now that he exhibited the early signs of psionic abilities. "Of course I need Pokemon," he thought. "I just never want to experience whatever happened in Pewter's Gym again, that was awful. Terrible..." Simply thinking about what had occurred seemed to put him into an inescapable state of reflection. The problem was these feelings were bittersweet. Though an unseen force had taken over him for a brief instant, he still felt compelled to collect more League Badges; there was something incredible about his recently earned badge. Why though? It wasn't like he had earned it. Or had he? Regardless, the ecstasy that took place when 'Edge' had taken over would not soon be forgotten by Feyera. Psyonics were as much of a miracle to the external world as they were to the person overrun by their whims.

While Christian and Brucie marched forward, they were met with little adversity. While the path west of Pewter was calm and lackluster, it was during moments like these where he felt especially vulnerable. Feyera knew that he had to protect his Pokemon partners from others, but could he even manage to protect them against himself, this psionic-wielding Edge? It seemed impossible. Had Christian really attack Brock's Onix? He couldn't remember, the last thing he felt was a euphoric happiness during the battle. Was that wrong, considering the outcome was tragic? Did he derive some kind of sick pleasure from it? Christian could not even hold a candle to this daunting question without being overcome with guilt breeding more guilt. "My poor Pokemon...what if I'm hurting them? But whatever happened...it felt so amazing. I never knew Pokemon battles felt so good. No wonder there are so many trainers out there."

Upon entering the Pokemon center, its structure half buried into the mountainside, Christian was bumped into and nearly knocked back by an overly hyperactive man in his mid-forties. The man quickly turned and smiled at him, his already wide grin broadening further as he did so. His tight expression was wrinkled by the sun. He was wearing a large brimmed cowboy hat and a sported a foreign accent. "Well yee'ha! Say, howdy there...TRAINER!" The man's bright brown eyes looked at Feyera's "C-bladed" Pokéball holster. It was a Smith and Salven's brand holster, holding Pokéballs on a retractable rotating "C-plate". Each member of a Pokemon team had a unique slot this way. Brucie was first, and thus at the top of the arc. The important thing was that his present occupation as a trainer was easily ascertained by anyone who looked him over.

Christian forced a faux smile. "Err... Hello there, can I help you?"

"Well, ho ho! Sonny, ain't you a somebody!"
Feyera nervously rubbed his shoulder. "Ah… Nah, I'm more of a nobody."

"Nobody or not! That ain't all too important, boy. What's important is whether o' not you're on a Pokemon journey!"

"Um, yeah, so what if I am?" Feyera responded haphazardly. Conveniently through his stretch, his arm now covered his chest. He'd gotten quite good at it before Prevoy's gave their employees coffee aprons to wear.

"I'm talking about Pokemon dealings."

"Deals? I can't trade with you…" Christian said, knowing he couldn't relinquish his new Pokemon friend.

"Ha! Trading?! Seems ya ain't too familiar with dealings outside o' Suburbia, boy!" the burly man joked with a deep drawl.

Christian tilted his head and squinted his eyes in confusion. "Excuse me?"

The man responded with a dry rhyme, "Sonny, I look fo' the coinage not fo' the plumage. Name's Jay. Jay Wayne."

"Oh…" Feyera responded, feeling as though he had just tasted something sour. "You mean cash for Pokemon? You run one of those businesses?"

Jay nodded suspiciously, "Ah yes, quite the notorious trade, with Silph cracking down on smuggling; but –conveniently enough– do I have just the deal for you! Right on here! Ya' see feller, in this here Pokéball—brand name, worth 200P mind you—there's a Pokemon—worth well over your life's savings! I'm willing to sell them both to you, sorta a package deal-o for only 500P. Ya got the cash?"

"Umm…that's kinda expensive." Feyera was usually frugal with his money. Mostly because he didn't have much. This whole journey was meant to be a soul-search anyway.

"Ah no, it isn't! This is a good deal, busta. I've marked this way down low an' even gave ya a 'professional discount' since you're a spunky trainer, ain't ya?"

"Uh, sorry but I'm good thanks," Feyera said trying to ward the man off.

"But wait! I'll also give ya the latest addition of Pokemon Battle Weekly! Hurry sonny, this here deal ain't gonna last forever! I swear by it, you won't be regretting this, that's for sure! C'mon." Feyera felt thrown and a little cornered by the energetic baritone's voice, but his flinch only encouraged the shady merchant to persist!

"But I'm only supposed to be researching!" Feyera thought to himself. "I'll put myself in the red if I wind up buying my Pokemon."

"Don't worry, it's cheap! Ol' Wayne wouldn't rip ya off! In fact, I'll bet yer gonna look back and thank your smart young self one day! You'll get a new Pokemon ta up 'n protect ya from harm. And besides, it's a good idea if yer doin' research!"

"Ugh…" Feyera's weak point, he was always a curious type "What Pokemon is it? Curious…very curious. I wonder…" Quickly halting his wandering (and projected) thoughts, Feyera replied in fright, "Hold on! What do you mean?!"
"What's got yer spurs spinning?" Jay asked with the rise of a brow.

"Well," Christian tried to make it sound as nonchalant as possible, "how do you know I'm researching?!"

"Heh…I know a scientist when I see one." However, Jay seemed to notice the interest Feyera was taking and retracted the arm holding the capture device as if to reel him in. Jay dragged his hand around his hat's brim. "Heh heh…why don'tcha just look at them longing eyes of yours! Ho ho! This yer first time buyin' off the streets? Oh my does it show!"

"Humph!" "He's right." In response, Feyera asked him, "Listen, I don't know, I never really am one to go on hunches but this seems different, you've reasoned with me. What are you offering in particular?"

"My good friend, this here's a Water Type Pokemon. Mmmhmm! A big old guppy! Fish are incredibly useful. Water's very diverse, the whole sea is teaming with life. I used to have an off-shore oil rig, back when drillin' was profitable." The salesman's attitude had changed now that he had Christian interested in his offer. "Ah yes, in the South! 'The Baron o' the South' they called me! Ha! 'Jay Wayne', digging 'n drilling underwater for black gold with my Water Pokemon!"

"I don't have a Water Pokemon yet," Feyera thought to himself. "And Fire is weak to Water. It would be a good complimentary type for Brucie in battle." Why was he thinking about battling again? Couldn't he let it take a rest? Especially after everything that just happened! "Um… You mentioned Water Type Pokemon?" Christian asked innocently. "I don't believe much in buying my way to success though!"

"Oh boy, oh boy, Water Pokemon can do a whole bunch for you and your other Pokemon! I'll be willing to bet that you don't even have a Water Type yet!"

"Well…no but…" "I—"

"Hmm hmm!" As if reading his thoughts, the man responded swiftly, "Well, I guess not!"

"How?" Christian asked in confusion. Salesman or not, this man was far too good at reading his thoughts. It was so eerie. "How long have you been selling Pokemon?" Feyera asked, his pitch dropping.

"Me? Ha! Not very long, bud! Maybe a couple years, on and off. Here's the thing, this ol' bloke ain't got any savvy business tricks or nothing! Only what you're looking for. At a dirt cheap price ta boot!"

"No, I mean how'd you know what I was looking for?" "It was only a passing thought, but now…"

At this, Jay enthusiastically grinned. "Hey, everyone knows you need some diversity in your crew. One Pokemon ain't gonna cut it in the big leagues! What if your next opponent happens to have a type advantage you cannot overcome? Gotta keep fueling the old train's furnace with fresh coal, no? C'mon! Manifest Destiny! Expansion 'n all!"

It seemed all too simple. Feyera wanted to expand his team. It was worth it. Despite the man's urgency to sell to him, his own urgency to further grow his team was the deciding factor.

Sighing and whipping out his wallet, "I'll take it," Feyera said. He didn't even flinch as he handed over the last few of his large bills; he'd made a decision, and that was final. That was the good old Doctor Feyera, dedicated and committed to a decision as always.
"Atta boy!" Jay quickly grabbed the wad of paper money, "Now, I don't give no refunds or nothin'! Enjoy! Yeehaw!"

After the exchange, the man hurried off, Christian opened the Pokéball with all the curiosity of a pent up child on Christmas morning. The ball split open and revealed a large carp fish Pokemon with a gapping mouth and two curvy barbells. They were extra curvy, a female characteristic for Magikarp.

"Gah, it's a Salire Cyprinus! Oh no! I've heard about how weak these Fish Pokemon are!" Feyera said, "Aw, darn it! I've been duped!" The frail orange fish flopped around the Pokemon Center's lobby helpless and completely powerless. Feyera sighed, at least he had a copy of one of his favorite magazines. "...Oh no!" Tricked again, the magazine was from last year! Stamping his foot on the ground, he swore under his breath. "Tauros shit!"

Grumbling with disappointment that he had been conned, Feyera set out to explore the cave calling the newly obtained and terribly weak Magikarp "Desperado" since he had been swindled by a real rapscallion. Seemed like an outlaw had just philtered his money from of him. "Of all the rotten luck..." he muttered placing his hands into his pockets as he walked outside into the crisp air.

"Let's do this—" Christian began to say, but realized he was thinking more than he was speaking. It was strange. No denying that. "Everybody. Brucie and Des..." he emphasized hoarsely. Once again, guilt seemed to trump his good progressive intentions. He spoke to a group different from before the Pewter City Gym battle. Rebuilding his team with scientifically proven weak species such as Desperado—even if she had a name he was fond of—did not making the grieving process any easier. Hopefully he could fix his mistakes. In fact, he was determined to.

The cave within Mount Moon was dark, but not pitch black. The stalagmites reached almost to the ceiling, a testament to the age of this place. Countless waves of Zubat flew around eager to taste blood with their Leech Life attack. Fortunately, the bat Pokemon were deterred by Brucie's flaming tail and although they danced about the trainer and Pokemon occasionally, none of them seemed interested in attacking Feyera or his loyal companion as they progressed past the antechamber of the cave's interior.

Stumbling clumsily in the dance of shadows, Christian braced against wall to stop his fall. To his surprise, the rock moved!

"AH! It's alive!" he shouted in fright.

It was alive—a Geodude just like Brock's! "Anima Petra!" he thought. Knowing exactly how to handle it, but not necessarily wanting to go overboard with Brucie's new powers a Charmeleon, nor accidently summon the psyonic Edge, Christian ordered a weak Ember. Quickly the Geodude curled up into a ball.

"It's using Defense Curl!" The flames pirouetted around the Pokemon, crackling and sizzling its outer shell but not doing much damage. The Pokemon removed its arms from its face and smirked at Feyera. It was taunting him! "Brucie, use your claws!"

The Charmeleon dashed at his target, claws above its head, ready to strike. But the wild Geodude was ready. It grappled Brucie's grip, punching him in the gut with a fist of solid rock.

"Chaaaaaaar!" Feyera's Pokemon whined.

"This looks bad!" "Enough! Pokéball, GO!" Twisting and shouting, Feyera threw a Pokéball and it
was an instant capture. The "click" and "ding!" could not have sounded better.

"YES!" he shouted, the voice echoing throughout the cave's wide mouth. Here he was actually capturing Pokemon. He was doing something right for once! All the excitement sent pleasure down his spine, and he shivered wildly. 'Sheesh, what a hard-headed Pokemon. Let's call you 'Jill'. My name's Christian — or actually 'Edge Feyera'. I'm a Pokemon researcher with a doctorate on a Pokemon journey, welcome to the crew!"

Jill's rocky hide was especially brittle, with a few imperfections, but she still had a large deal of stamina despite facing Brucie's fire attack only recently. It must have been a strong Pokemon. He was beyond lucky to have caught her in one shot.

The Geodude smiled at Feyera; it was nice for him to have earned a Pokemon so quickly, uncanny really. Typically capture rates were abysmal unless you bought premium grade pokeballs. And who had the kind of money for that? Feyera only had two Pokéballs left to his name. While he wanted to expand his crew, he also didn't want to be overzealous in capturing Pokemon. Even if the populations of wild Pokemon were diminishing, there were still plenty of the creatures throughout the world—but especially here in Kanto. Regions like Orre were the only regions where the DBC actually took Silph's product 'Pokéball' off the shelves. This of course lead to an entire underground market. He got the chills from realizing he'd purchased Desperado off a smuggler. Had he inadvertently contributed to Team Rocket's black market for Pokemon? Nah, the salesman he'd bought from was only a scammer, and apparently one pretty good at it, considering he managed to fool someone as cynical as Feyera. "That jerk must've been some kind of mind reader!" Christian grumbled, "Can't believe I was tricked like that!"

Lightly and lithely, the small group pressed east through the cave. Jill was great cover for Desperado as they trained together by repelling the native Zubat. Jill had no real blood so the Zubat could only rely on their Supersonic attack to fight her. Even then, her ears were probably filled with dirt! On the offensive, they were no match for her powerful Rock Throw technique. This was Anima Petra's natural environment after all. Heading deeper into the cave, the group began to hear wailing, a steady out-of-place moaning.

"Oww…ugh! Ow…."

"That definitely sounds human!" Christian said worriedly. Feyera's Pokemon were poorly skilled at listening, their ears were not accustomed to hearing low pitches, so he had to lead the way for them.

As he walked, his mind began to race with thoughts. "What's going on? Who was in trouble?" Something drew him ever closer to the origin of the sounds, it was a tingle in the air guiding him towards the source, his pace growing ever quicker. Turning a corner, and rushing down a steep incline, Feyera saw the reason, but he did so feeling strangely out-of-touch with himself.

A young trainer similar to himself, lay against a small rock formation. Gasping and coughing, the man was in dire condition. His nails dug into the earthen floor as he saw Christian approach.

"…! Oh…! Oh mercy…!" Terror swept over Feyera while he breathlessly tried to stop the other man's severe bleeding. "Hold on!" whispered Edge, through a bizarre mix of words and telepathy. Shaking, the auburn haired researcher used a damp cloth from his backpack's med-pack to tighten around the gaping wound, struggling to pull hard enough to create a splint. Jill, who had suddenly become very interested, helped Christian pull the knot.

"Mmm." The injured trainer gave a whimper of affirmation.

"It's too much blood," he thought, "I can't save him!"
"N—no!" The wounded trainer tensed up, clinging tightly onto Feyera's sleeve. "I can't die! You can save me! You have to try!"

"Shh shh! I didn't say that!" Looking down in despair, Feyera noticed the incisions on the trainer's leg. "Where did those bite marks come from?! Pokemon?"

Weakly, the other trainer nodded. "It's—*cough!*—it's going to kill me, isn't it?"

"No! Hold on!" Feyera finally said as the young man began to stir again after freezing up. There was a nagging headache in Christian's mind, the once illuminated room began to dim. "What did this? Wild Pokemon?" raced the psyonic thoughts.

"N–no," he said with a bone chilling shudder he could not control nor cease.

"–Quickly, tell me what happened!" he asked aloud. "You need to tell me everything that happened!"

The victim shook his head, beyond saving due to all the blood loss. "I *cough* tried to stand up against 'em…the savages…"

"Dammit! I swear, whoever did this to you will have to answer for their crimes! They won't get away!" Feyera suddenly said with surprising certainness accompanied by a cool flush of psyonic rush.

"You will?" the man asked. Clouds began to roll over his once bright eyes.

"I–I promise!"But the longer he looked at the suffering trainer, the worse he felt, the more he felt like he was sinking into Edge. "I'll get them!" First there was a sharp pain in his chest, followed by a tight constriction of his feeble lungs. His mind was in shambles, all he could focus on doing was firmly holding onto this man's trembling hand. "Hey! Hey! Keep it together! You're going to be okay!" he tried to lie, while also trying to suppress what felt like psyonic energy pressing against the frames of his mind, feeding elevated sensations to Feyera's consciousness. Without realizing it, he asked in telepathic thought: "Who attacked you? You need to tell me so I can help you. Time's running out."

"Cough!" Gurgling and spitting blood, the young man said barely audible words, "A Growlithe… there was a yellow haired woman, and a man with…Team Rocket…they—they're the ones that killed m—" the last word was left unfinished as his eyes glazed over.

"No…" Feyera said, shaking the still body leaning on his knee. "NO! Wake up!"

But he wouldn't. He was gone.

Feyera was left only with his empty thoughts. "…I…I couldn't save him." Thoughts of inadequacy echoed throughout the dingy cave's walls. Trembling, Feyera released the man's stiff hand. "Rockets…" His thoughts continued to gain volume in the empty cavern. "Is this—Death? Right here? In my arms?" Feyera shook his head. "I never see anyone as an object until death. Prior to dying, they are subjects. Subjects…like me. And then—not anymore…"

"Ah! *Sniff!* No!" In a daze, he looked down at the peacefully sleeping man. He didn't look like Feyera, he was a bit broader around the waist, but in spite of this, he saw a bit of himself in the deceased trainer. Gently, he closed his vacant eyes, which had greyed like foggy windows on a cold winter's morning. Feyera felt tears forming in his own eyes. "Fragility…death…this feeling." Was he seriously about to lose it all over again?

In their dire concern, the nearby Pokemon looked at the two young men, forming a tight circle.
Breathlessly, Feyera muttered his thoughts to the stilled body, 
"Fragility's revealed in death. I'm sorry. I wasn't able to do anything. I let you turn into an object; I'm...sorry." Feyera shuddered violently. He knew the facts, being devoid of life consequently made one into a thing rather than a being.

"Dammit." Feyera looked away. "I...I don't want to die. Will Pokemon be able to protect me? Will hiding behind these psyonics, as Edge, keep me safe? Hmm..."

A rocky hand patted his ankle. His Pokemon must've known how distraught he felt. At least there was that comfort.

"Please, let's make a hole for him to rest in." Feyera requested that Jill dig a small grave for the dead man. She complied while fighting back tears of her own. Feyera had no idea that Pokemon were capable of experiencing empathy. Much less understand death the way humans did. It was strange seeing her nearly as sad as he was. Despite being a Pokemon, it seemed as if there was some mutual understanding between the two of them. Jill was able to see how upset Feyera was, and not just based on appearances either. His essence was overflowing with pain and distress.

"His name wasn't known. It will never be known..." he said. He couldn't believe this had all happened. "Where will it end?!" Feyera had always heard the Pokemon world was a dangerous place. Death was never out of the question. But he never thought he would experience death firsthand!

But he shook his head thinking to himself, 
"What am I talking about? Of course I've encountered death! But I was far too excited by the cracking of newfound psyonic knuckles to remember that Lawrence died—" 
"—People." 
"And Pokemon." 
"Where do the differences end and the similarities begin? Both are here on this planet to grow and live together. Neither one is safe from death however." Feyera pocketed a blood-stained hand. He said quietly, "Stay close to me, everyone. Let's keep one another safe."

Spirits wilted in the inexperienced group while they moved onwards through the heavy atmosphere. As they pressed on, there was a faint tremor that caused him to wobble. Feyera looked questionably at his Pokemon. None of them seemed phased by it; perhaps it was all just in his head.

Or perhaps a buried orchestra of secrets had begun to stir deep underground, in a place where depth becomes both vague and meaningless...
The cave's still air, swiftly brought in by the panicked breaths of young Christian Feyera, remained chilly and dank, stuffed by death's bitter aftertaste. Feyera couldn't find any derivative of solace. He felt his vision blur, his eyes burn from the recent tears he had wiped away all too recently.

"Why am I so shaken? I didn't know him! What significance was there?" Feyera wanted to question himself. "And then... then there was that thing I felt, right in my chest." "Ugh..."

It had hurt wildly, right before the trainer had passed on. There was a deep, presiding emptiness, a surge of insurmountable dread. A feeling which occurs only once in a lifetime, if that. The fear of confronting death. Somehow the fear had been transferred, not vocally, but mentally. The second Feyera had looked into the fading eyes of the young trainer, something strange had happened. If, only for a moment, he saw himself in the dying man. Alone. Afraid... Yet he could not explain it, which in turn made him upset.

"What's the big deal...? People die. It's a consequence—it's a natural part of life!" Feyera tried to tell himself. It seemed reasonable enough, but it couldn't dismiss the experience entirely from his mind; the feeling of trepidation returned, amplified in strength. "But... what's stopping me from dying out here?" That sure made it all seem a lot closer. He was at an even greater risk! The likelihood of him encountering death was higher than ever before. It was because of this repulsive and uncontrollable power he had. Psyonics. But how could it be? "If anyone found out..." he whispered, seeking to fill the cavern with something other than mute thoughts. "What would they do to me? Would they try to—oww!" The frazzled trainer gasped as a sharp pain overtook him! It felt like the dark cavern all around him was closing in, engulfing him! As he tried to regain control of his senses, his legs buckled and soon he was on the ground. To his surprise, the world around him felt so far away, so withdrawn. The cave's walls, with their natural sculptures and designs, felt distant and far off even though he was right next to them.

"Argh..." He lifted his arm, and reached out. His pulse elevated when his hand made contact with the stone cave wall. His eyes flickered open and shut uncontrollably, so rapidly that his sight was not even impeded, though he felt the strain of this involuntary action. The pain was tremendous, but why, what was causing it? Was it just because he had witnessed death? Surely, he knew what death was. Christian's mother had died when he was younger. But that event seemed like a lifetime ago.

"What was that feeling? Empathy?" It had to be that. He had inadvertently made some emotional connection to the stranger. By seeing a body transmute from living to dead, he became unwillingly attached to a person he never knew. It was atypical to say the very least. As he further reflected upon the event, he realized that his eyes were staring blankly at his chest, focusing on its only notable aspect—a thin red shard expelling itself from his sternum, a crystal of glimmering light.
"Ugh…" He hugged himself as he exhaled in sporadic increments. "What's happening…? The world…won't stop spinning…!" How could he possibly alleviate this alien sensation? As he sat still, rubbing his now sore body, he felt an urge to be released from the invisible pressure he found himself caught underneath. He sought liberation, or maybe an escape of some sorts. To be free of the position he found himself in. This was peculiar. It wasn't just the situation, it was also his body. In response to his seemingly desperate circumstance, it had become very heated. Radiating, he felt repulsed by the sweat gathering on his extremities. His temperature was rising steadily; he could feel it. Stunned by the warmth given off by his body, Feyera dropped his arms to the cooler soil below him. "What's happening to me?!"

"Gah! Even the ground feels hot!" Feyera sought cooling, but he found no reprieve, for wherever his arms carried him, the bizarre aura of warmth followed. It was everywhere and nowhere. He could not give it an origin because it permeated his entire essence. Everywhere he moved, the heat followed, containing him in his own body unwilling to give him even the slightest of reprieves. Distraught, Feyera muttered, "I want out already. This is awful. I want out." Out of what? The cave? His life? His body? How absurd. It was as if he had been overtaken by a constrictive fever. He felt warm and his eyes dilated as the trainer bashed his arm against the cool earthen floor of the cave. Doing so only augmented his sensation of warmth, by contrasting cool relief with the domineering temperature he was running. Swinging his head side to side like an animal, his vision blurred again as the cool earthen browns of the cave became inflamed, giving way to worry. "Cough!" "Will I be okay?" he thoughtfully asked himself before realizing the selfishness behind such a question. Here he was in a dark cave, alone, afraid, and reminded of the fragility of life. Heart pounding uncontrollably, Feyera tried to soothe himself by crawling to a tiny stream of water. Yet, its trickling coolness was but a tantalizing hope. "Haa no…not you too," he said to the scalding water. It couldn't be real. It had to all be in his mind.

"Oh no! Is this a breakdown? Have I lost it?" Such questions seemed undefeatable by any logic the trainer employed. "I have to put the pieces together before it's too late! The psyonics! It has to be—" Feyera's thoughts became interrupted by involuntary dry heaving; coincidentally, his nearby Pokemon helplessly watched as their trainer spilled dark liquid from his mouth. "Ugh!"

The throbbing in his chest no longer brought pain, only warmth. While it was not welcome, it became more and more natural as the seconds gradually turned into minutes. Even the dim lights within the cave began to shimmer wildly. "Psy…psy…psyonics…" he said out of breath. The sensation overall felt nice. Not as foreign as it had originally felt. With this rush, Edge's mind was leap-frogging like Politoad, springing from one lily of thought to the next. Thinking. Reflecting. Calculating. All at once and in every which way!

"Why did they kill him…? Why would they kill him…?" he whispered to himself; however, he was fully aware of how ruthless Team Rocket could be no thanks to his sustained injuries. Speaking of such things, his scar hurt. While intense heat permeated his essence, a scented breeze blew from one of the hallways leading to the cavern's deeper regions. It smelled like floral perfume. Gardenia and honey.

His Pokemon looked questionably at him.

"Don't look at me like that!" scolded the researcher. "Team Rocket has something important to do with all of this, they have to still be here!" He stood up, slowly and in defiance, his body stopped him midway. Feyera paused complying with his body's paranormal demand. The stillness made him feel itchy. Wondering how he had wound up in such a situation, Christian considered his options: "I could return the way I came in and forget about making it to Cerulean City. But that would mean giving up my second and subsequent badges in Kanto." He shook his head. "There're other Pokemon Leagues out there, Johto isn't too far off, but none of them had Lorelei in their top
brackets." Strange as it sounded, the prospect of a rendezvous with his interest of desire proved to be a motivator. "I could go further into the caves. Team Rocket is here. They killed that trainer. Maybe I can catch them. Maybe my psyonics can... – maybe Edge can... stand up to Team Rocket."

The latter seemed very appealing, a feeling of blind excitement overtook him. It wasn't just a sense of adventure, it wasn't just a drive to earn more Gym Badges, it was revenge. Feyera knew the Rockets all too well from an encounter with their organization some two years ago when they had robbed the Pokemon Sanctum. The syndicate's suicidal Pokemon gave him the parting gift now present on his torso. "Maybe I can get back at them somehow...? Would...whatever I did in Pewter work again? ...On command?" he wondered, wishing he had retained more of his memory from his researching days. "Do psyonics even work like that?"

"Hmm..." As the internal pressure subsided, and the trainer was able to fully stand up, he gently grasped the red shrapnel protruding out of his center. It wasn't normal. The heat wasn't right, he'd never felt that sensation before. It made him wonder if there was more to the story he was told. As his thin hands ran along the smooth sides of it, he only could think one thought: "It's time to take justice into my own hands! They can't just kill people! They can't use their Pokemon to hurt people!"

And yet that's exactly what Team Rocket had done. And Feyera knew in his heart that they would continue to do wrong unless someone did something! "It has to be me," he said airlessly, "I made a promise to a dead man." Yet he couldn't quite determine for what purpose he sought vengeance. But it felt extremely personal. It was strange; Feyera was hardly a vengeful type. Nor was he one to act on impulse. Typically, he would plan ahead every one of his movements. Something was different though. The psyonics – Edge – gave Feyera an unfathomable rush of adrenaline. Psyonics gave him a vibrant sense of consciousness, peerless focus, from commencement to conclusion. Even if they brought him pain, even if they were destructive, that untamable sensation of pure ecstatic pleasure giving way to psyonics was amazing. In this licentious state, Edge opened the door to courage.

"I'll get my revenge on them. I have the means now. They'll pay. They'll all pay," he said twisting his Alterieno's boot heel into the soft earth with a loud crunch.

Walking quickly ahead, Feyera found himself in a narrower corridor. The cooler air graced his face, but it was not this air which made him shiver. It was that noise. A strange noise coming from deeper within the cave. Echoes. Ominous whispers, foreboding in their ethereal presence. "It has to be the wind or something..." he muttered. The steady thumping was akin to a heart beating. He briefly wondered if it was his own.

Treading carefully as the rhythmic sound continued, Edge found himself only a few meters away from a human figure. It was evident that a Team Rocket grunt was up ahead. Standing close to six feet tall, the scruffy looking man wore a stereotypical black uniform. He also had on photosensitive adapting goggles to aid in the cave's dim light. An empty magnum holster and one or two Pokéballs at the waist. Feyera watched the man for a few moments. He was separated from the rest of them, perhaps a wanderer, no...a patrol. Regardless, he looked weak save for that gun he held in his right hand.

Stretching his arms silently he thought, "Okay...How do I sneak by him?" Whilst loosening the knot of his necktie, Feyera was calculating his next move, and becoming increasingly emotional as he did so; like the very unknottyng of his tie freed him. "Team Rocket...they killed that man. Those monsters made him suffer and die. I don't think it was this one though; maybe I should ask him a few questions. A little interrogation can't hurt, right?"

Sneaking behind the daydreaming guard, Feyera inched ever closer to his prey, heart pounding and fingers twitching his breath grew cold as he extended his right arm. In a daze, Feyera dropped his crimson tie onto the cave's floor. "Wouldn't want to give him anything to grapple onto..."
The thug seemed slightly perturbed, scratching his head skeptically and looking quickly from his left to his right. "Say, is someone there?" he asked.

"Shoot! Is he alone?" Feyera wondered.

"Hmm…I'm hearing voices…did I leave my com on again?" Lazily, the man pulled out a small communicator. It looked like a short-wave radio transmitter. He juggled his magnum revolver over into his other, non-dominant hand.

"…Now's my chance!" belted the researcher as potent adrenaline guided his actions. In a swift motion, Feyera grabbed hold of the grunt's collar. "Drop the weapon!" Edge ordered with surprising authority. "Drop it right now!"

"GURK!" went the man, reaching for his neck. "Oof!"

Feyera took this opportunity to shake the Gauntlet out of his hand, causing the firearm to fall to the earth. Then he kicked the gun down the steep slope, which hopped past where the handheld radio had fallen. Since a Pokemon battle was not initiated, he promptly began interrogating the recruit by pulling tightly on his uniform's already rigid collar.

"Who the hell killed the trainer back there in the caves!?!" Edge yelled more in a rhetorical way than questioning.

"Get off me, or I'll call for backup!" said the man, scrambling for the communicator he had dropped.

"There's no backup! You'll only waste your breath," he spat, kicking the communicator away and into the a growl, Edge pried the low-light goggles off his quarry's eyes, revealing their lackluster brown.

"Arh!" Momentarily blinded, the grunt's narrow eyes dilated in the cave's inky darkness, searching frantically for Feyera. "W—who're you?" asked the panicked member of Team Rocket.

"I'm what's known as 'a man on a mission'!" Edge asserted.

"Urck! What the–?!"

"—And I'm looking for a murderer. Any idea where I'd find one of those down here?!"

"Ugh! Get off me!" the other man belted. He tugged away with a great amount of strength.

"Hey!" Feyera shouted. "Look at me when I'm talking to you!"

"I can't see!" He continued to squirm about, unable to focus on where Christian's face was. "Get off me, pisshead!"

"Not until you start cooperating!" said Feyera.

"No! Let go!" the grunt said. "I said, get off me!" Breaking loose with a mighty flail, he pulled further away from the young researcher's grasp.

"Gah! There's stupidity, and then there's you!" a flustered Feyera exclaimed, trying to keep a steady hold on his larger prey. Thinking ever quickly, Edge brought his hand down to his trainer's belt, using his free arm to release his trusty Charmeleon. With a defined "Clink and click!" of Feyera's Smith and Salven's rotating C–plate, he released his first Pokemon with ease. "Brucie, help me hold him down!" Brucie apprehensively began to sharpen his claws. As his Pokemon did so, he felt a
slight twinge in his left calf as he pressed his weight upon the grunt and pinned him against the cave's damp wall.

The struggle persisted until Brucie clutched onto the Rocket's legs and stopped him from thrashing. "I said…*huff!* Look at me when I'm talking to you!" Feyera growled, "Tsk, don't you dare put yourself between a researcher and his answer! Who killed him?!

"What are you talkin' about? I haven't killed anyone!"

"Oh really?" an unconvinced Feyera replied, having held death in his arms all too recently.

"Get ahold of yourself!" The grunt stammered, "You're crazy! Psycho! You're not a man on a mission, you're a dead man! You've got no idea who you are messing with, kid!"

"I'm…messing with Team Rocket…" Feyera felt his head becoming light with rage. "I know EXACTLY who I am dealing with!" Glowering at the man's swollen eyes, he felt strange, it was as if he were communicating to the man through eye contact. Like the grunt's irises were somehow speaking to him through a sense he hadn't ever been aware of, a sense that made him feel happy. Feyera tried to dismiss the tingling feeling by acting tough saying, "You better start talking," "Right now!" he added for good measure, by thinking the thought and closing his mouth.

"What the hell was that!? Telepathy?!” demanded the grunt, his shifty almond shaped hazel eyes darted rapidly about within their sockets. He didn't see Feyera's lips move. The trainer's stoic expression did not change, and yet he had heard a voice within his mind. "W—what'd you do?"

"Talk's cheap," Feyera said taking a moment to savor the sweet sensation his psyonics bestowed upon him. "Give me information or face the consequences: why are you here? Why is Team Rocket here?!" Feyera's fingers dug into the man's forearms, deriving a slight satisfaction from the act.

"I'm not telling you anything!" insisted the grunt. "You're wasting your time!"

Bemused now that there was a definite presence of Edge-psyonics present within himself, Feyera glared menacingly at the unsighted Team Rocket grunt. "We'll see about that!"

Once the brief struggle subsided, there was brief eye-contact between the two. "*Gasp!*" Feyera felt an ear splitting rush in his head! And then he just knew. He couldn't explain it. All he could do was let Edge project it: "It's not a hard question, Ryan!"

"That's my— How do you know my—?"

"Your name…?" Edge asked, unaware of how he came to know something as personal as a name, but marking it off as psionic manipulation. In fact, it seemed completely natural to discern that type of information from staring into someone's eyes. "Wait…"Something about it wasn't right, he was feeling far too elated with each new discovery he made. But who could blame him, this was exciting. It felt great to be in control. Whatever was happening to him felt absolutely amazing. "If you don't talk, I'll keep going!" Feyera threatened verbally. Uncannily, he already made the decision not to stop anytime soon; it was too much to hold back the psyonics. Controlling Edge was like trying to halt a speeding train. Stranger still, Feyera was slipping into the role of the speeding train he so desperately sought to steer. Becoming more and more of Edge with each and every passing second.

"Stop! I swear I don't know anything, you freak! I'm just a recruit! Following orders and all; they'll kill me if I tell you anything! Ouch!" Ryan exclaimed, wincing uncontrollably in discomfort. The man's sudden spasm couldn't have been from Edge's grip, for Feyera wasn't all that strong and he didn't even have sharp nails. Once again, 'psyonics' swooped in as the rational answer.
"Very well..." Edge recoiled much to the grunt's surprise, taking a short breath and trying to steady himself from the involuntary shaking both men were experiencing. "You want to play difficult! I'll have my answer though; a researcher always gets what he's looking for! Brucie, I want you to give this criminal a reason to talk..." Edge had barely raised his hand high enough to the point where it fully exited his grey sleeve, when something happened. The surge of psyonic ecstasy puttered out like a steam engine that had lost its pressure. Abruptly, Feyera realized what he was doing, he was about to order his Pokemon to attack someone! "NO! Wait!" Feyera shouted, but his voice was lost in a swirl of aberrations gathering around, their twisting forms as irrepresible as his breathing.

There was a great burst of light. Not white light however; it was an equivocal mixture of blended rays, a substantial and unprecedented influx of color, rapidly emanating from the rocket's body. Like a cocoon of magically wavering fabrics the swirling colors surrounded him in a chilly embrace. A sinister, violet streamer emerged from the grunt's torso. As he shook, the immerging deep colors sunk into shadowy, darker colors. Finally, the colors fully receded into black. The shadows mixed and blended, dancing around the cave all the while.

"HUH?!" Edge blinked a few times. The whole room appeared to have dimmed, but other than that nothing had changed. Was he seeing things? He was relatively sure he hadn't been eating any hallucinogenic fauna from the indigenous Paras; he knew better than to do that.

"No wait! Don't...! Don't hurt me!"

"GUH!" He felt like he had just been knocked in the chest with a club rivaling the tail of an Onix. "W—who are you working for?" Feyera asked trying to feign that he wasn't in pain. "Tell me who's in charge down here."

"My superior, Agent Kelvin," Ryan answered cooperatively.

"Kelvin?" Feyera asked, trying to remember where he'd heard that name before. With the room spinning around it was impossible to think rationally. "That's it? A man named Kelvin is in charge?! That's all you can fricking give me?!" Edge said brusquely; searing rage on the horizon of his mind, like a wicked steam dying to escape from the tight confides of a kettle.

"I don't know his real name, bud! All the higher-ups use codenames."

"Code? Like a cipher?"

"Exactly."

"There must be some kind of personal element though, no? You can't be calling everyone 'sir'." Feyera growled, "Are there any other hints you might be willing to part with?"

"His girlfriend, Lauren Tiffany, always calls him 'Brad' though. Hack! *cough!* *Gasp!*"

Feyera raised a skeptical brow. "Lauren Tiffany? That's the name of the operative's girlfriend?"

"Yeah... Laurie's a fine piece of ass; I'd like to teach her a thing or two about where Pokemon eggs come from—"

"Shut up!" Feyera shook the man. "Give me information on Team Rocket's objectives."

"Oww! Hey! Kelvin's in command of this operation, the guy eats kids like you for breakfast! He's going to be the one you want. Damn! Let go of my arm!"

"You're repeating yourself!" Edge scolded through narrowing eyes, "What's he sent here to do on
behalf of Team Rocket?"

"Nuh…” Ryan looked up at the ceiling. His eyes darted around, trying to find some type of escape. Feyera would give him no quarter, tugging on the hairs above the back of his neck to control the flailing grunt's movements. "Answer me!"

"Alright! Alright!" Ryan belted. "He's been having Pokemon mine out a special material found here in the caves. It's an ore of some sort."

"An ore? Here in the Lunar Mountain?"

"I told you, I'm just a recruit. They don't tell chums like me anything useful! You're interrogating the wrong guy."

"Well, then…ahem! How do I know you're not lying to me?!" Edge demanded. "You crooks have a nasty tendency to resort to such…*huff*…tenacious deceit! I'll have you know: lies aren't helpful to conducting proper research!" embellished the young man fluently riding the waves of his power trip.

"You…You…" The man squirmed once more, Feyera's fingers naturally clenched down harder on his twisting arm. "Argh! Let me go, you psycho!" Soon, the patrol unit was drained of his strength, blindly struggling in the darkness and partially collapsed against the jagged rock wall.

"You're not getting away! I'm not done with you!" Clenching a fist, Edge said, "Now, the ore you spoke of here in the cave system. What exactly do you know about it?"

"I'm sorry, pal. I don't know any details behind it. You nabbed the wrong grunt!"

"Ugh…" Edge sighed; he was starting to feel lethargic, burnt out, and expended. Why though? Psyonics? Couldn't be; he was only holding down a man about his size, he didn't need any extra strength. Did psyonics even work that way? He had no idea; psyonics were always quarantined, and he couldn't recall studying them. One thing was for sure, he knew he was being lied to. Subtle nervous twitches dancing on his enemy's face were painfully obvious to spot! "You'll have to try harder to lie to me!" Feyera shouted. "What's the truth?!!"

The grunt cracked. "I—I heard the higher-ups talking about 'Mercurium'. More valuable than any other Pre–Terminal War buried tech out there. There was some talk about it being an evolutionary gateway. There you go, you freak!"

"Evolution?" Feyera asked, immediately thinking about the phenomenon in Pokemon. Apparently, his dissertation was closely tied to the matter according to Lorelei; Gideon Group referenced it.

"Yes… Brad called it a 'Philosopher's Stone'. Worth a pretty penny!"

"It's valuable?" Edge asked. "Typical. You're only in it for the money. What else can you tell me? Details, Ryan, details!"

"All I know is that some experiments were done a while ago with the unpurified ore, which wasn't good enough. It's got a mind of its own. Turns out a bunch of people died from overexposure or something."

"Shit." Edge swore under his breath. "Team Rocket's at it again!"

"That's freaking me out! Stop it! I'm hearing voices!"
"Anything else you might know?" Feyera smiled. "Tell me. So that I don't need to pry," he bluffed, hoping Ryan wouldn't catch onto the fact that he had little to know idea what would happen next. It was miracle Edge was even able to ascertain the grunt's name from a stare. This small victory was worth well it, it felt good—to be in control for once. But the energy from exerting psyonics were beginning to wear on him. It wasn't the surging rush of endorphins as much as it was the thought of him losing himself to them.

"The boys were searching for an anomaly as well, a tie in with Pewter City's mysterious challenger."

"Ah! I suppose your commander wants to know all about that!" Edge's ego inflated from the notoriety.

"Yeah, and there's some sorta loose end in conjunction with the things that went down two years ago. …Mentioned a guy by the name of Rallsen, I've never heard of him."

"Huh?" "Two years ago…? Could it be related to the Sanctum?"

"Y—yeah, before I joined Team Rocket. Please, don't kill me. I told you everything I know, even things I'm not supposed to know! H—have mercy!" he stammered, his crooked face awash with sweat.

"Mercy? What a pathetic term. You joined a group of thugs, Ryan. A syndicate who preys on the weak! Team Rocket! How balanced, that now the predator has become the prey…like a perfect equation. A perfect order of natural law—" Flames of scarlet danced around his vision's peripherals. Edge could feel his hatred for this man was justifiable. In fact, his mind was making it justifiable. Just as he was feeling the emotions take over, he halted. "—No…not this! This isn't me!" But it was too late. Psyonic gateways had access to his adversary's fear, Edge felt like he could pry that gate open until it ripped clear off its hinges. As whatever in his mind he did this, visible shades of royal violet returned, their origins residing in the grunt's torso. This foggy light only lasted for a moment before vanishing right before his eyes. Stranger still, the impact caused him to topple over.

"Gasp!" Feyera caught his breath. "What was that?! Are you okay?"

"Get your hands off me! You're a monster!" screamed Ryan.

"Hardly," Feyera replied thinking about his frail stature; was a member of Team Rocket actually afraid of him? "*Ahem* I doubt you'll survive long without a little help. Go back, take refuge in Pewter; I want you to burn those clothes and never allow Team Rocket to have anything to do with your life. Ever. Trust me; I'll remember a liar like you. And if I ever find you working with these scumbags again I'll…" Feyera couldn't finish the sentence though. He'll what? Kill the man? Stoop to Team Rocket's level of disregard for life? "No…! GAH! This *pant pant* this isn't me…!" he said dipping into a pool of cognitive dissonance. "I'm not…! Just go! Get out of here!"

The look of confusion on Feyera's face lasted a few seconds, but it was not even remotely comparable to the surprise on the Team Rocket member's face. "Has this kid lost his mind?!" he thought. In either event, he had ample time to regain his composure. Feyera was frozen, peering down at his scalding chest with glassed-coated eyes. As the grunt stood up, his facial expression said everything. Ryan was terrified of Edge and his mysterious psyonics. Who could blame him? Edge was moderately terrified of them too.

Without saying a word to him, Ryan jolted off into the deeper crevices of the cavern.

A few minutes passed. Feyera looked blankly in the direction he'd run off in. Reflecting on what had just taken place, he stood transfixed like a statue, his thoughts racing in too many directions. One
thought in particular drowned out all the others: "What's happening to me?!" Time had slowed significantly. Feyera clutched his panting chest, fondling the seam of his shirt, the lone fragment of his past felt heated beyond any prior experience, burning even. It had never done that before. "Ow —"

"AHHHHH!" went a loud yell in the distance. Edge felt a sharp jolt of sensation, it punched him straight out of his trance. He didn't know what had happened. He didn't want to. Maybe the man had fallen into a chasm, maybe it was a wild Pokemon, who knows. He didn't care, he had resorted to intimidation. But where did intimidation end and potential actions begin? The grey area between them was slowly driving him mad from the inside out! Christian needed to get out of these caves before it was too late; he feared the recently acquired psyonics were slowly changing him into Edge! But then again, how could he hope to go back? Frightened, he returned back to the main path of the cave without further investigating Ryan's frantic yell.

"SHING! CRACKLE!"

A bright stroke of sparks flew across the dark room, followed by a gruff man's voice. It was none other than Brad's. "What a pity, Ryan Marshall, you could have simply lied to the so-called 'man on a mission' rather than compromise Team Rocket's mission! Disgusting weakness has no purpose here!"

"Brad! …Stop! He's dead!" Laurie screamed, holding her partner's arm tightly to stop it from coming down again upon the stilled body. "—He's dead already!"

"I won't let his foolish mistake cost us our lives, Laurie!" barked Brad.

"He's not going to be any less harm if you run another hole through him!" she pleaded.

"Dammit! I need loyal recruits, people with some spine! Not this trash!" Brad said kicking the electrocuted body into the darkness. "Betrayal is a terrible thing, and not without consequences." It was rare for Brad to show his temper, but whenever he did violence usually ensued. He hid it well however behind a cool demeanor.

Indeed, no one would again find Ryan wearing a Team Rocket uniform. The entire conversation had been tapped though sheer luck. Ryan's shortwave radio stayed switched to "ON" broadcasting the entire conversation to an eavesdropping Team Rocket commander by the name of Brad.

"Sigh…It was recruit number thirty-seven who gave away crucial information to an unknown source, this so called 'man on a mission'. He sounds like a jackass to me." Now, Brad had to conduct some research of his own in order to find out who knew about Team Rocket's recent plans in Mount Moon. An information leak was the last thing he needed after his most report to the boss! "Damn!" he burst out, unable to cope; all he wanted to do was fulfill his mission's objectives. However, as he felt a soft hand brush against his rough face, he thought otherwise. It was situations like these which strengthened his team, removing the weak from the pack. Brad smiled. Wiping a bloodstained blade clean, he reflected upon the facts: someone else out there knew the Rockets were here in Mount Moon. Whoever it was knew about the ore present in the caves around this region. His codename was also exposed. Hopefully, the spoiled information wouldn't grant too many leads before the operation was complete. He pause and reflected, shivering from the dampness around him in a similar manner to the man he was pursuing.

"Brad, please calm down, your hands, you're shaking!"

"It's *cough* from the electricity. From before, Laurie," Brad said in a lie, he knew very well his
nerves had been filed down from rage. But, he couldn't become overwhelmed, that would be pointless; he had to find out who ascertained the Rocket's plans and bring him to his death, or better yet, have this outsider join the syndicate's ranks to replace the blood shed today. Brad only had a copy of the man's voice, but he decided to forgo forwarding the conversation back to Headquarters. This was his blunder, the last thing he needed was more heat from the boss. He sighed as Laurie stroked his thick black hair tenderly.

She let out a slight chuckle and clawed his uniform's top affectionately with her dainty, polished fingers. "You can do it. You'll find that jackass, Brad. We'll find him together!"

Brad didn't say a word. He would make things right. He had to. It didn't matter what foul things resided in the bowls of the cave. Be they people or Pokemon—the mysterious creatures killed one of his squad. The psychological terrors had taken hold over the rest of his crew. Maybe even Ryan. And now their clandestineness was all but compromised.

The faint dripping of lime-crusted water from the stalagmites echoed throughout the chamber.

"We should go to the entranceway!"

Brad frowned. "Yes. Whoever got to Ryan must have been powerful enough to make him snap and spill the beans. Who could've been that intimidating?"

"Not likely to be law enforcement, this guy sounds like he's taking matters into his own hands."

Puzzled, Brad asked, "How can you tell? You're sure he won't alert the authorities?"

"I can just tell from his voice in the recording, he's on the run for a few things of his own. *Sigh* He sounds like a cutie, actually, I can't wait to meet the rouge!" she sneered sarcastically.

"A vigilante? …Could it be the anomaly from Pewter? The report mentioned a trainer and Pokemon, correct?"

"'Grossly powerful Pokemon', Brad," said Laurie, repeating the earlier description verbatim.

"Perhaps this cavern is more sinister than we thought, Laurie…” Brad took a long sigh and reached into his pocket to retrieve a small vial of pills. Popping the lid open, he swallowed two of the white coin-size tablets. "Cough!" Their chalky texture rimmed the corners of his mouth.

As he gulped down, he felt Laurie physically against him. She was closely hugging him, but strangely he felt completely alone. "Brad…?" she asked with a rising pitch.

But he was not there to respond to her. He was not there to even hear her. Brad was entirely trapped in a whirlwind of calculation. How would he find out who was prying without more control over the situation?

"Dammit…” he swore, choking on the medication's taste. Additional responsibility made him anxious. The mission might need to be postponed. He had an information leak that needed to be plugged, and he was not going to fail. Not again.

Christian Feyera and his Pokemon ran forward as Mount Moon's exit made itself present to their fervent sight. Exiting the dark cave seemed to be great for everyone. Feyera was feeling better when he saw the sunshine. His eyes squinted as the beams of sunlight reflected off of the nearby stream of gently flowing water. The way that the bright light shown on the stream dazzled him and his Charmeleon alike, and they sat down to rest for a few minutes. As he reached into his knapsack and
pulled out a small package of trail mix, he thought about just how happy he was to be safe. Even though he had made a promise to the trainer who had died in the caves, such a promise could not be fulfilled quite yet. Feyera had not encountered any other members of Team Rocket on his way out of the cave, and he certainly wasn't willing to go blundering about in the cave's depths looking for trouble. He already had enough trouble following him as it was; he couldn't deny that psyonics changed him. The worst thing was this 'Edge' character was the type of trouble he couldn't run away from. How could he possibly run away from himself? That was absurd in and of itself!

He considered filing a report once he reached Cerulean to specify Team Rocket's activities in Mount Moon, but decided against it since he wasn't even supposed to be alive, much less running round the countryside with unchecked psyonics! Undoubtedly, the authorities would call his name into question. One didn't simply go about town yelling "Team Rocket" expecting others to believe them. You needed to be a credible source or have your reputation on the line to get the International Police to open up an investigation. Feyera now had neither of these. He was stuck as Edge until he could control these psyonics. Hopefully he could manage that task.

Feyera rubbed his head gently. He cracked his neck making a soft audible "snap." Then he worked his hands down to his biceps. The trainer ran his hands along the cotton fabric surrounding them and flexed. "It's weakness." He was always on the scrawny side, but he was feeling stronger now in comparison to how he felt only moments before while still within the cave. Now he felt free and unshackled in the brisk mountainous air. The landscape was capacious and mostly wilderness. All fear, death, and worry were behind him. Beyond the claustrophobic grips of Mount Moon, Feyera finally felt able to relax. He did so by first eating his trial mix and then taking a brief stroll over to a nearby stream to wash off in. He still had some bloodstains under his nails from trying to help the attacked trainer. He vigorously wiped them clean, eager to purge the memory. As he did so, he felt a surge of sorrow leaving his body. It was really something. He didn't feel burdened as much as he used to.

Along the narrow mountain path, the soft wind began to pick up and dry his wet face. "Ah! That feels great!" Stretching, he reveled in the sensation taking in a huge breath of evergreen-rich, valley air. It felt so refreshing after all! The way the wind seemed to dance about and kiss his dripping face made him smile. "So much better than that claustrophobic cave!"

After enjoying the brief reprieve, his spirits were rejuvenated, if only temporarily. It was time to enter Cerulean City's limits. Cerulean was not quite a metropolis, but it was certainly larger than most towns. It was close to the northern cape and considered a suburb of Saffron City as well.

"Mmm!" he mumbled. The city had a coastal smell to it. Not the typical ocean smell either, it was more of a delicate waft of shallow water vegetation. It had a really organic feel. The numerous power lines and buildings that seemed to stand against the coast in adamant opposition contrasted this natural unrefinement.

After a quick stop at the Pokemon Center, he headed north as per the recommendation of a sightseeing advertisement saying: "The Golden Bridge" in bright, flashy letters that simply sprung off the billboard. "Legend says that deep below the waters under the bridge, there exists a cave filled with gold and other various treasures!" read the sign. "Cerulean Cape to the north is a famous romantic getaway, couples who kiss there are said to have long and healthy relationships."

"It's a total tourist trap," grumbled Feyera. However, the thought of taking Lorelei there did cross his mind. Several times actually. He dismissed the fantasy with sarcasm, "Humph, yeah-huh, I'm sure she'd love to find out about my psyonics."

The way the sun reflected upon the cape's coast ever so perfectly made him want to at least check it
out. Although he was eager to earn his next League Badge, Feyera's motivation to explore the most visually attractive part of "The Floral Lagoon City" a little bit proved to be persuasive. He had traveled all this way, gotten through Mount Moon alive, and needed some time to clear his head. In other words, it was a worthy detour.

There were only two ways to get to the actual cape north of Cerulean City. One was the natural eastern landmass. The other was the western Golden Bridge. Since Feyera had just come from Mount Moon, the Golden Bridge was much closer anyway. The Golden Bridge was not all too impressive, maybe fifteen years old, with some renovations done here and there. There were two enormously tall power cables on the southern city side of the bridge. Their wires went from the buildings, and followed along the railings of the bridge to the northern section. They provided power for the entire cape region. Seeing those large ominous wires dangling overhead, Feyera felt a little nervous since they were over water and all, but was reassured by the fact that they were coated in Volt-Absorb grade rubber and supported by metal I-beams. "Seen those before, I think..." he muttered recalling his old apartment's power supply. Kanto was a nation that had a solid infrastructure capable of getting by without Pokemon.

The young trainer was surprised upon taking his first step on the yellow-painted, steel bridge. For he saw that there was a tall man, garbed in pure black, from head to toe on the north end of the bridge's length. "Huh? Who's that?" the young man wondered.

The suspicious man, with the frame of a wardrobe, man saw Feyera from the other end of the bridge. He beckoned Christian over with a friendly wave. "Guess he wants me to go over there. Seems a little sketchy but..." "—Ah whatever, carpe diem!"

Walking carefully along the small bridge, the psyonic researcher's suspicion only rose as he continued across, but he could not help the seemingly obedient behavior. The man stopped Feyera with an abrupt hand motion once he was within ten strides. "Hold up sonny."

"Hey, are you some kinda toll-collector?" Feyera asked. "What's with the heavy coat?"

"Hah! Name's Jude." The man mysteriously proceeded to reach into his dark trench coat revealing a chunk of solid gold. Edge's bright green eyes were fixated on it. It must have been worth a small fortune! The perplexing man lifted the ingot above his head pulled on his mustache with his free arm, "You're a Pokemon trainer, aren't you? I can tell from your Smith and Salven's. Is that last year's model?"

"An ingot of gold?" Feyera thought, bewildered and dizzy from the shiny allure. "Excuse me, What's going on here? Did you steal that?!" said the trainer quickly gathering his thoughts.

"Ah!" Almost as if sensing something paranormal, Jude flinched but only for a brief moment. "My, that's impressive. More impressive than what I read about in the brief."

"What is?" Edge asked, realizing that his telepathic thoughts were probably projected straight into Jude's mind. It made Feyera feel vulnerable. Naked even. It was like his mind was on display to the world. Steadying his youth-filled voice he said, "What brief?"

"Your psyonics. Psyonics capable of meshing thoughts into projections. I felt it, just now—" The man smiled mischievously as if to acknowledge Edge's incredulity. "—And yes, it is a stolen ingot of gold, in case you were wondering. Now, I'm supposed to tell you to join Team Rocket as a recruit and you'll be guaranteed riches like this one for the rest of your purposeful life."

Feyera raised a brow. "...!"
"—But I'm not gonna do that. You're smarter than that," Jude said licking the side of his parched lip. "Haa..." he went on, his thick coat making him look out of place in the bright sunshine. "You want to get rich? I got a job for you."

"Rich?" Feyera thought, his desires overcoming the inhibitors of projected thought, opening the had been hard to come by. That was for sure. Ever since his father had left him, he struggled to get by. Scholarships and grants got him through the university. Still, how he managed to pay off the interest was beyond him. Most things he had forgotten about after the Pokemon Sanctum Robbery.

"Yes... Rich. Very rich," Jude's grin widened. "Son, are you feeling lucky? We've got more where this came from. We could use someone like you. Bet you'd like it."

"I don't trust you," Feyera said biting his anger. "How dare you try and make me into a criminal!" Calmly, he sedated the rushing thoughts. "I'm not one of your kind."

"Oh...of course you're not. Heh. Heh heh. But do you think this is some kinda hold up?" Jude asked with a smirk.

"I don't want to start a confrontation. I don't want to fight," thought Edge. "So you're with Team Rocket?" he said trying to stall. "And your name is Jude?"

"Yes. But what's a name like that mean to someone like you anyway? I'm Agent Engelhart, commissioner of Team Rocket's valuables excavation. I oversee how the digging jobs are done; Team Rocket always needs someone not afraid to get their hands a little dirty, be it under a vault or in an abandoned mine!" Suddenly, Jude broke his stare with Edge. "Ahem! You seem different from the rest. Unmotivated by the sheer sight of a gold ingot. You see, many people would be on their hands and knees saying, 'sign me up!' HAH! Ho-hah! But no, not you. You desire something more. Something which cannot be derived from the earth. Could it be because you're somehow different?"

"Um...I..." he was fidgeting with his hands as he stood facing Agent Engelhart. "Stunning, so honest, so true. But this feels wrong; something isn't right. He can't be telling me everything." Feyera finally spoke out loud asking, "What do you want from me?!"

"What's your name, son?" Engelhart asked, lowering his voice.

"Edge. Nothing more nothing less," Feyera spoke but his tone did not seem to be assuring. "This is the name I'll use to cover my vigilante tendencies!"

"Vigilante Tendencies'...ha," Jude laughed.

"Whoops." Psyonic thoughts were a lot harder to control than Feyera imagined.

"You don't look much like a vigilante, but those tend to make the best ones." Engelhart smiled, "Haha, I can hear it now, 'Agent Edge'. Now that's what I call edgy! Ha–ha. That could use a fair bit of refining. Nevertheless, I understand. We all have our true names, names Team Rocket can't bring with them to work. Our codenames allow for anonymity. I'm sure your 'edgy' decision will be no less worthy than any other imaginable pseudonym. Ha–ha!"

"What?" "I never said I would join you!" Edge thought. He hated that the man wanted him to become a part of the criminal organization. The mere thought of association stung at his nerves like a Weedle's prick.

"Oh, you didn't think I'd let someone like you slip by did you?" Jude sighed. "It could be bad for business. And I'm a numbers man."
"I'm none of your business!" He hated the idea that he could not escape from them. "First, Mount Moon and now here? At least Engelhart isn't trying to kill me like the crooks in the cave did to that helpless trainer. Maybe resorting to psionic projections spooks them…"

Jude shook his head. "—I'm not spooked by much. In addition, you should know that you're a part of Team Rocket's concerns now. …A very important part, I might add."

"No," Feyera replied in courageous defiance that only psyonics could grant him.

Engelhart moved back slowly replying, "But I respect power. Tell you what, Edge. Why don't we have a little Pokemon battle? You win, you walk free; I win, and you consider my proposition. Simple, no? Put your trainer skills to the test."

Feyera rubbed his narrow and gently curved nose in contemplation. He thought about his options. Perhaps he could just engage in a battle. It would buy him more time if anything.

"Fine!" Edge's telepathy was not misinterpreted by his opponent, Engelhart retrieved a Pokéball from one of his many coat pockets and flung it onto the bridge, where it opened revealing a pig-monkey creature—Mankey. *Suidae simian*. The young researcher noticed the lightly tanned creature was significantly experienced and quite wily. Its fur was a light bronze and his hairs were long and thick. The dagger-like swiftness of its movements made Feyera nervous. Mankey sprang about wildly thrashing and kicking its arms as if possessed by some devil.

"If I use Des, she might wind up in trouble!" "Alright Brucie! You're up! Take Engelhart's Pokemon down!" ordered the novice trainer with a "click and swift!" of his Smith and Salven's.

Brucie, once released from the Pokéball's confines, turned to Feyera and smiled. His white fanged teeth gleamed as sharp as his claws. Mankey let out a howl and charged at Charmeleon with blistering speed. Brucie was more than ready. He rolled out of the way and used his fiery tail to singe the approaching creature's outer layer of fur. Mankey shrieked. Not out of pain, but of anger. Feyera knew the difference. The creature's rage was building quickly. Edge could sense it.

Still, Charmeleon proved to be more levelheaded than his opponent. While Mankey was a powerful Fighting Type Pokemon, his rage attack made him single minded and unable to adapt to Brucie's constantly changing battle style. The pig-monkey leapt high into the air raising both its paws above his head and came hurling downwards towards Brucie. In retaliation, Brucie avoided the Mankey's karate chop, striking back with the deadly Metal Claw. The razor sharp claws dug into Mankey's hide. The creature's thick fur could not stop Brucie's potent attack, which dug in deep. Mankey shrieked loader and proceeded to kick Brucie directly in the shin with a Low Kick.

"CHAR! RAWR!" Brucie growled in pain, his left claw dug deeper into Mankey's hide. Edge ordered his Pokemon to use Mega Punch. The fire lizard's right fist grew white with power as he charged his attack. Mankey was petrified by fear and tried to leap away, but Brucie's Metal Claw kept the opponent firmly within his grapple. Swinging his fist, Edge's Pokemon unleashed Mega Punch right into Mankey's face and knocked him out cold.

Gasping for breath, Brucie turned and looked at his trainer smiling ear to ear. It was a total victory for Edge and his first Pokemon. They really were quite a team with psyonics bridging their consciousness.

"Great work!" Edge was almost as happy about his victory as his Pokemon. In fact, Feyera was so happy that he forgot completely about his opponent. The bliss was short lived, as he was reminded soon enough. "Alright, I defeated you fair and square. Stand down and let me go on my way, Engelhart—urgh!" Just then, it began to happen again. Edge was watching a world like his own try
to keep up with the faster world it mirrored. As haze and mirages entered his field of vision, Feyera saw Engelhart pulling out a metallic device, cocking, aiming the barrel—pointing it right at Brucie's heart before unloading a bullet into his body. It wasn't the future. It couldn't be. Things were too sporadic. He just had an inkling of an intuition. The Team Rocket member was angry, furious even; he could see it in the man's eyes. He saw the man reach down to his holster. Team Rocket members carried guns, Feyera quickly put two and two together. Everything was adding up too fast for him to even think! What was happening?!

"NO! Stop!" Feyera withdrew Brucie back into the Pokéball, and not a second too soon! Engelhart pulled out his firearm — a Gauntlet Class revolver — however, it was aimed at Feyera's head instead of where he predicted.

To Feyera's surprise, Engelhart paused rather than open firing as Edge's intuition had led the young trainer to believe. "Sorry pal, but you're not getting off this bridge alive if you don't join us. You're too powerful," Engelhart raised a stiff finger as he released the safety. "Click!"

"Powerful? Sure, you have no idea—" Edge stopped mid-thought. "—No! Wait, what did I promise never to do again?" It was so hard to think in this situation, all he wanted to do was act. "Wait…! You don't want to!"

"Save your thoughts!" Engelhart said, his neck twitching. "Now, your cooperation…or your life."

Feyera tried to fight a smile. The psyonics were drilling into his head. The humor of it all was too much to take. Slowly he responded, "You know…I've heard that line about a million times, you unoriginal highwayman—"

"And what are you going to do about it?" Jude sneered. "I'm the one holding the gun! And you can't outrun bullets."

"Neh…no I don't want this!" Edge tried desperately to fight it, but it was calling out to him. The unprecedented amounts of power he had at his disposal made him go crazy with the prospect of employing said power. "What about the promise I made not to do this?!" However, another perspective came to the trainer's mind: what was stopping his own life from being snuffed out by this ruthless member of Team Rocket? "I have to, there's no other way! I have to! This is my life!" All this had taken place in mere heartbeats; Edge experienced increased neurological functioning when he was under such fearful conditions.

"I said…the answer is no," Feyera said stoutly.

"I'll give you one last chance. Join us. Or die," an imposing Engelhart commanded. His finger quivered above the firearm's itchy trigger. "Psyonics in people are rare to come by! And even rarer in free humans! Consider this to be the best alternative to turning yourself in to the authorities! You can't get away. You can't run forever. Even this world has its limits!"

"You won't have me! You won't have my psyonics!" Edge roared, feeling his body enter a state of physical stasis as the mind took command. "Do your absolute worst to me, you goddamn criminal!"

Engelhart's smile twisted. "With pleasure, you prick," he said.

"Bang!" The grey bullet exited the magnum's barrel with a smoky tail pursuing it. The distinct bang of a magnum was muffled and slowed down, as were all sound frequencies in this bizarre state. Fear morphing into anger soon took over Edge's consciousness. He felt needles crawling along his spine. Around his shoulders and in his ribcage, like dance of internal electric flurry.
"AHH!" Feyera screamed. A hot rush of heat flooded his head, submerging his brain in sensation; the world became drenched in the swirling hues of apocalyptic burgundy. So thick was the red fog, it had rolled in, completely concealing the space between the two men. The bullet shot through the mist, becoming cloaked in heated amber. It began to curve midflight, gaining luminance from heat, it accelerated towards Edge's chest rather than his head. "…!?!" Once it entered the swirling field of energy now forming just outside of arm's reach from Edge's center, the bullet dragged to a halt. Entering the misty vortex, the levitating projectile's shimmering exterior began to buckle and cave inwards upon itself. Edge could feel the smooth steel exterior of the bullet's shape begin to morph and mesh into a different form. Imploding into the size of a sand grain, the projectile stopped its intended path, entering the swirling field of dust. Windy howls echoed out from the haze of psyonic power.

"What?!" yelled the valuables excavator. "SHIT!" Confused, Engelhart unloaded the device's entire capacity. Each "click" and "bang" was muffled. Each bullet was sucked into the swelling vortex in front of Feyera and subsequently crushed right before them!

"Stop!" Feyera heard himself yell into the gathering wind. But it was too late. It had already started. Helplessly out of control, he looked up at his bewildered opponent. "They'll only fuel the psyonics, nothing more!"

"Psyonics…?!" said Engelhart. "They're advanced enough to comport bullets? I—impossible! That's not possible!" Jude fumbled with his revolver, ejecting the spent ammunition pack and inserting a fresh one. "You're done!" he cried taking aim again at the maelstrom dividing them. "Team Rocket can't have a man like you running loose!"

"Help...me!" Edge's projected thoughts echoed telepathically. It was as if he wasn't even in control any more. The tingling sensation had wrapped its way over both his shoulders and now manifested in the center of his chest. "Ahh! STOP!"

The purple spiraling energy field mere feet in front of Edge soon darkened and grew in size. The Gauntlet was tugged – shredded – out of Jude's hand, drawing blood as it was unwillingly relinquished and sucked into the vortex. "ARGH! Christ!" Howling in agony, Engelhart became terrified as his body began to waver and slip in the direction of Edge's malicious creation. Jude fell to his knees and helplessly grabbed onto the rails of the bridge. His coat's large belt snapped off, flying like a helpless ribbon into the vortex, and soon his legs were rising off the ground as well. It was like trying to swim out of a massive bathtub once the drain had been uncorked. Jude hung on to the steel rails of the Golden Bridge knowing his life depended upon these few bars of steel.

"Ah!" Edge had it, he was at the point where this power consumed him and reached a state of self-sustainment. Each new wave triggered a more powerful one, escalating exponentially. The bridge rails pulled towards him along with the water beneath Edge. Cascades of unstoppable power were finally doing what they did best, unleashing devastation without prejudice. The rocket's screams were not even capable of being heard due to sound waves being pulled towards the dense core and feeding it. It was fulfillment in itself to allow this chain reaction to continue.

Feyera heard a groan of metal and saw a few planks and beams of the bridge become crunched into unrecognizable shapes as they entered into the purple field. There was a loud snap from above and some of the metal beams containing electrical wires were drawn into the dense core, which spewed forth huge arcs of blue electricity in every direction imaginable. The immaculate lightshow was short lived, soon the bridge itself began to buckle and bend inwards towards the tear in space.

Gasping for air, it was becoming oh so difficult to breathe. Edge suddenly realized that his own life was in jeopardy. This revelation shocked him. He was absolutely mortified. Furthermore, he could
not even comprehend stopping the well. It was all so perfect. It was self-sustained due to his thoughts and everything it could absorb. It was too perfect.

The field climaxed as it swirled about creating a vague spiral shape as it pulled in the debris into its unspeakable pit. It reminded Edge of a small galaxy. Where had he even seen such a shape before? Maybe in one of his early astronomy classes. Ever spinning and insistently drawing, the arms of the vortex were crushed particles of all sorts of nearby matter.

Suddenly silence.

Edge was stunned. He had the spins. The entire world was shaking. He could not focus. Colors around him seemed to dangle around the scenery in unexpected kaleidoscopic patterns.

“What happened? Where did the vortex go? What have I done!?” he wondered breathlessly.

And then he saw.

A yellow orb of twisted metal spanning not much wider than the golden nugget promised to him by Agent Engelhart. It slowly revolved around him, almost like a planet would around the sun. He had fallen to the sandy ground below the bridge. Whole sections of the Golden Bridge were gone, ripped from the earth and sea.

"No…it can't be. This isn't happening." The yellow orb slowly sank from the orbit and rolled gently into the ground five feet away. Psyonic influence faded. Its form expanded outwards to reveal crumpled metal beams and supports. This piece of highly dense metal was a large portion of the Golden Bridge crushed into oblivion by psyonics.

Feyera looked at the rocket's charred body on the shoreline. He had been shocked by the electrical outburst from the power cables buckling. He then looked back at the huge section missing from the Golden Bride. It wasn't possible. It couldn't have been him. Collapsing, his head sunk forward. The inflamed red crystal obstructed his sight of the ground. It was giving off flames of agonizing heat. These flames licked at his face, their searing blazes felt real, realer than anything he had ever felt. Closer to him than anything else. An incontrovertible part of whomever he was.

"It…isn't…me…"

On the other side of the bridge, another member of Team Rocket: Agent Maxwell looked upon the sight in horror. He had recorded the whole event from the Cerulean's side of the shore after the mysterious vortex began in order to report to his boss, but he had never expected what had transpired. Agent Engelhart, or Jude Engelhart—his associate—didn't stand a chance. At least ten feet of the bridge's north end was ripped right into the spiral. Now the last sixth of the Golden Bridge led to nowhere. Worse still, the power cables were still exposed and oozing forth electricity in all directions. The buildings behind him began to shut down in surge defense. He heard their air conditioner fans grind to a halt as the power was cut to stop further damages.

It was like being a spectator to a miracle. Maxwell just could not catch his breath any longer. The bridge was composed of solid steel. The bridge was built to stand up to coastal weather. The metal I-beam encased electrical rails never failed. Maxwell tried terribly hard to steady himself after witnessing such an event. His heart was racing, how did such a power exist outside of Pokemon?

Maxwell felt drained; it was breathtaking and it was horrendous all at the same time. As he knelt down on the rocky shoreline, he switched off the video monitor. He needed to report this to his boss. A human psyonic was able to generate that magnificent power. A human that was able to rip the
bridge asunder and crunch it into oblivion. A human was able to generate such a beautiful vortex of swirling arms of smoke and dust. But how could that possibly be? Were psyonics alone responsible? Were these simply mental manifestations of an untapped psychokinetic mind?

Of course not, the truth was darker than that. It was darker than the heavy lids covering Edge Feyera's emerald eyes. And, oddly enough, it had everything to do with darkness.
Chapter 4: And Nothing Without Consequence

"…!"

Unexpected and sudden consciousness tore him awake. From nothing but starless nightfall came images of scarlet figures. As their elongated forms faded into perception, Feyera noticed that they were half in shadow, twinkling, teetering back and forth in a slow waltz of pundit age. As dark corners of his sight blushed with hues of warm crimsons, the shadows retreated to the outer reaches of consciousness.

"Huh...? What...what on earth...am I seeing?" Unfortunately, Feyera's musings quickly collapsed under strange incredulity, brought on by the flare of color. "Who?"

For a moment, he had known exactly what they were; he knew exactly where they were from! Alas, the epiphany soon drowned in colorful seas blanketing his mind. If only he had a name at his disposal! As if to mock him, a flash of hazy light drove the vision back. The light came from above their heads and majestically sparkled about. And this mental light soon dimmed, growing a thick burgundy aura. As this happened, the sudden change in hue saturation caused Feyera to see something. A face! With warm eyes and a compassionate smile. It reminded him of something he had seen long ago, perhaps from the bliss and comforts of childhood. But in an instant he'd forgotten. The scarlet redness, emanating wildly, drove out the images and their suggestions; all became distant dreams, untouchable by recollection.

Ringing in his head brought him back to the physical world. Groaning, he tried to move, but it was impossible. Something right behind his eyes hurt, it felt like something smooth and fluid was pressing against them. "Oh no...please no..."

He felt trapped by the unknown and the fear as uncertainly consumed his thoughts. What had he done? How had he done it? The seconds turned into hours. Time ebbed and flowed, connecting each moment with the new one which superseded the incumbent.

"Where am I? I've gotta still be alive." "Mmm...oww...ohh..." Feyera mumbled, trying to feel his numbed body. His extremities tickled as if they'd fallen asleep; he felt alive, just very stuck. He wondered if this is what being an object was like. He was utterly trapped beneath the waves of uncertainty, and they continued to pull him down with each passing heartbeat.

Then it dawned on him. Maybe he wasn't actually in a physical prison, but a mental one because of his recent psyonic overexertion. Or maybe it was his body which imprisoned his mind, the forces at work were certainly powerful enough to cripple him if they could destroy metal! The latter proved to be correct, at least for now.

Feeling around himself with a tingling hand, he felt the coarse soil, damp with what felt like a small pool of water. Perhaps his body was downright helpless at the bottom of a shallow crater. It was nighttime since he felt the cool air. "Must've been knocked out for at least a few hours." Yet he couldn't be sure, for he couldn't see; his eyes were sealed shut by some foreign force. Even more
Worrisome, there were noises, trashing about right above his resting place. "Wild Pokemon!" he thought. "Oh no!"

What could he do? Nothing. His eyes refused to open, and the trickling that had begun behind them now flowed like a river of internal tears. He got to his knees only for them to collapse under the stress triggered by this act. They were weak and unable to support him. Feyera felt his waist. Other than the copper smell accompanying the dried blood his hands touched, he felt fine. Happy even. His Pokemon were still intact. Moving his arms up his chest, he felt the piece of embedded shrapnel radiating inconceivable amounts of piercing heat. "AHHH!" he yelped, fingers burning from touching the strange crystal. "Oh no, it hurts! What do I do?"

Ironically, there was little he could do, and yet only moments ago he had shaken the very fabric of the universe. Or at least, that's what it felt like. However, what felt like moments ago to Edge, were in fact hours. Some time had passed and now he was frozen within his imprisoning body. It repressed him, locked him with its confines. He thought he would never be able to move again. Maybe never even see again. "I…what…what did I do? How did I let psyonics overtake me like that?"

Depression set in. He rubbed his closed eyes, allowing the warmth proliferating from his core to put him into a state of dreamless sleep. A soft whisper was the last thing he heard before passing out, and although he could not understand what was said, he could be sure of one thing—it was a comforting, effeminate voice. Perhaps it was Lorelei's; after all, Feyera admired her a great deal…

Thankfully, Christian had survived the night. When dawn arrived, he sat up. Feeling the waves of sunlight caress his body gave him an unexpected rush of strength, but it was short-lived to be sure. Pulling his throbbing legs closer to his chest, he inched a hand down to his waistline to grab Brucie's Pokéball from the Smith and Salven's holster with a faint mechanical click.

"Go Brucie!" he tried to say, but the words would not leave his lips. Instead, he muttered incomprehensibly. Suddenly, there was warmth nearby, the second his hand made contact with the leather hide of his Pokemon. "B—Brucie, my first Pokemon, help me please..." He was able to coax the fearful Charmeleon to help carry his wounded body out of the shallow hole.

"Char? Char!"

"Ahh ahh!" Trembling ceaselessly, the burning in his eyes had subsided slightly, and he felt his eyelids separate on their own. Painful as it was, he desperately wanted to see again!

At first he couldn't, everything was hazy, the entire world a fogged mirror. Eventually though, shapes began to organize themselves, second to color of course.

"Oh…oh…" Shades of color were incredibly vivid and pure. Even the grey clouds to the south were alarmingly saturated. He tried to put his hands in front of him, just to make sure all this was real. They were nicked and scratched, with bright red cuts staining his beige skin. Even so, the scene behind his palms was worth a look at, it was so clean and sharp.

Cerulean had lost power completely based on the absence of any electrical lighting. There was smoke rising from some of the city’s larger buildings in the northern section. He knew that the hospital there would not be able to treat his condition as he looked into the water to the right of where he had collapsed. Gazing into the gently lapping body of water, the trainer hardly recognized himself. Feyera's emerald eyes were set back in his face, he appeared sallow and ill. The longer he looked into the stream's reflection, the quicker his eyes dilated. Where they even his eyes? He couldn't recall. They were green, but there was something different. He wasn't able to figure it out.
Frustrated, he knelt over and allowed his knees to become wet as he moved his face closer to the water. The cape water soaked his jeans, but he didn't care, they were already torn and mangled anyway.

Completely focused on their ambiguous essence, Feyera finally figured it out once he had gotten close enough to the calm water. Two golden rings, the color of iron had formed around the perimeter of his green irises. These halos of nebulous mystery enveloped the trainer's irises, brightly aglow with the sunlight.

"Is that...dried blood inside my eyes?" "Gasp!" "Oh no, I felt a dripping sensation behind my eyes before," he thought in a panic, "shoot! This is bad. Really bad!" "Urgh..." Besides a few scrapes on his face, there wasn't too much damage in his reflection. The foreboding, invisible sensation was by far the worst.

However, soon he noticed that his hanging hair bangs of an autumn's leaf, were dripping from sweat. And the liquid they dripped was stained a faint red. "Oh no!" Quickly scooping up some cool water in his palms, Feyera rinsed the stain out with a squeeze and a tug. "Am I bleeding?" He felt at the roots of his hair. Nothing was there. No cuts, gashes, sores, or anything.

Brucie looked at the trainer with worried intrigue. "Char?"

"Odd...It's like I had a concussion," he thought. "Perhaps from exerting so much psyonic energy? Drat, I need to see an expert, but I should be an expert!" Coughing, he pouted. "It isn't right. It isn't fair! What's happened to me?" All he wanted to do was protect himself and his Pokemon and his psyonics had seemingly taken the most extreme option. "I didn't ask for this! I didn't deserve this! First in Pewter, and now in Cerulean." Feyera was flustered, he didn't want to be whoever he was. And yet he was exactly who he had always been. Almost undeniably so. Slowly, he left the shallow water source, headed to the east; his heart still heavy, and his spirit at a record low. "I need to find a way back to the mainland." He couldn't fathom swimming across in this weakened state, plus he was a poor swimmer to be sure! And besides, his diminished fortitude could barely keep himself aloft on the solid land.

"Sigh..." Feyera thought for a moment, recollecting his geography. There was a natural land path leading off the cape back into the Cerulean district to the east. "Okay. One step at a time." He just had to make it there without passing out or worse. Having a mission seemed to motivate Feyera, but he still felt a debilitating downheartedness from the recent events. His somberness rubbed off on the rest of the team. Brucie, now at his side for protection, carried a burden that would rival Atlas'! Brucie had to guard and protect his Pokemon trainer not only from the wild Pokemon indigenous to this environment, but also from the maddeningly powerful force that overtook his trainer. How could a Charmeleon even hope to stand up to Edge's psyonics if his trainer went into another meltdown? Feyera was terrified by the thought. "I can't let whatever that was overcome me; I can't believe psyonics can do those types of things. No more confrontations. No more...!" he concluded, swearing off the domineering power for a second time.

The pair walked onwards slowly. The uneven sand made it difficult to maintain balance, even with the bulk of his weight against his starter Pokemon. Brucie was partially supporting his body; Feyera's legs were oddly still too weak to carry his light body. They felt numb, as if he had slept on them for too long. Grumbling, he stroked them. His black boots were probably in the best condition out of everything he wore. After all, they were built for wear and tear. Feyera had spent a week's salary at the petty coffee shop in West Pallet to pay for them. What was the name of the company? Something like Alterieno's. It didn't matter. It was a fairly tiny fashion company that valued function. Their quality leather held up well, and his feet were still dry from within. No sand entered either; the shoes were tightly fastened by a series of interlocking loops, straps, and rings. Each step he took left a
distinct cursive “A” in the warm sand; unsteady heels engraving the Alterieno Company's opulent logo along the shore.

The drone of gulls above made Edge feel lethargic. He considered stopping. His Charmeleon urged him on with a faint nudge. "Nuh…" "Brucie, I can't go much further. "Huff…wheeze…" "Gotta take a break."

"Char! Char char!" The lizard growled at him, as if hearing his voice. The growl was various pitches, but longer and more drawn out than Feyera had remembered. Maybe he was hearing other frequencies. It wouldn't be all too farfetched considering the ringing in his ears had not subsided. He decided to comply and push himself a little bit further.

They had not walked further than twenty strides when Edge felt very tense. His legs quivered, and Charmeleon nearly fell when he lost his balance and collapsed on his Pokemon. The lizard scowled disapprovingly at him. "Sorry buddy." "...I'm too weak right now," he whispered. "Psyonics are draining."

Complying with his trainer's wishes, Brucie set down on the sand, coiling his flame cloaked tail warmly close to Christian's heart. Feyera raised a trembling arm and patted Brucie on the head. Finally, he spoke, "Thanks, pal. You aren't so bad at understanding me."

"Chaaaaaaar!"

"Mmm…" Feyera didn't want to stay here too long. He didn't even want to close his eyes, and after all seeing again meant a great deal to him. All he had wanted to do was get out of the atrocious mess he had been a part of. With the damaged Golden Bridge out of sight, he felt a little bit relieved.

The warm tide lapped against the sand. Rhythmically. Soothingly. Soon, his head was rocking back and forth with it.

"Zzz…"

It was a short-lived nap, perhaps two minutes at most. Feyera awoke with a start because there was a loud, rustling noise coming from nearby! Persuaded to act based upon what he felt, rather than mull over his other options, a psionic-bound Feyera grit together his teeth and sat up. He glanced at his Charmeleon, who also seemed to have sensed something rustling in the weeds to the left of them. Together they stood like statues, glaring together at the now visibly shaking grass, waiting for the worst.

"Who's there!" he said. In the taller dunes of the cape, Edge sensed movement. The man's eyes automatically darted directly to the source of motion! "Phenomenal! Is this psionic focus?"

However, it was a strange sensation, not one to be taken lightly; conjuring psyonics felt awfully bizarre, like being anesthetized, ethereal, and euphoric all at once! And each time it felt even better to allow himself to be swayed about in the flurry of crescendoing psychological projection; at the place where the temptation to submit to the power might have been about as strong as the temptation to summon it again!

And suddenly a Pokemon leapt out from the dune! "Oddish!" it shrieked like a banshee. Frightened, the living weed sprung out of hiding and proceeded to rush at a weakened trainer. Perhaps it was scared because Feyera and Brucie had been recently trampling about in its environment of cape dunes. Come to think of it, Edge could definitely sense some derivative of fright within Oddish. "It's Oddium Wanderus!" thought the researcher.
"Ember attack, burn a perimeter around us!" ordered Feyera, figuring Brucie's Fire Type attacks would be overly powerful on a weaker Grass Type Pokemon. Plus, Brucie was partially supporting his body, Feyera's legs were oddly still too weak to carry his frail body; should they need to escape, he'd be relying on his Charmeleon to help him run.

Brucie complied, dousing the dry dunes with sparks of scarlet flames ejected from his maw. Like a firewall, the defensive attack caused the wild Pokemon to be singed on its advance!

"ODD!" is shrieked, catching flame.

Responding swiftly, Edge reached into his bag and discovered he only had two free Pokéballs left. "Pokéball go!" he yelled.

"Tink! Snap!" The first Pokéball he threw at Oddish was a dud. It didn't even open.

"Gah! What happened?" he growled at the Pokéball which had bounced off Oddish's leafy head; it seemed to pester the creature further. Out of the corner of his right eye, he saw Brucie's mouth glowing with yellow fire in preparation for another assault. "Argh! Pokéball, go! …Please."

The second Pokéball worked like a charm, Feyera hit the Pokemon dead center and despite weakly throwing the Pokéball, the ball accelerated and upon impact shook three times and sealed shut with an euphoric "Click!" and "Ding!" all trainers know and love.

There was a brief reprieve. Feyera looked down at the first busted Pokéball asking, "Could it be the microboard?" It was possible that the internal circuit board was affected by the psyonics; Pokéballs were able to be damaged and even shattered through force. It happened less frequently with the Silph brand names such as "Pokéball", but to even find a knockoff Pokéball was a challenge in itself. Difficult to capture Pokemon often would destroy weaker varieties of pokeballs with their potent attacks. While Pokéballs made a good last minute defense for any trainer, they were never one hundred percent reliable. Of course, Silph made Pokéballs that were better against surviving Pokemon attacks, but they were a fair deal more expensive. Like "Great Ball" and "Ultra Ball" for instance. Christian's rationality was that had neither the funding nor the need for such devices this early in his journey.

"Go Oddish!" Feyera said, releasing his newest Pokemon.

"Oddish! Odd! Odd!"

"You are odd, that's for sure," joked the trainer. "My name's Christian Feyera, but I'm going by Edge until I figure out why I've developed psyonics so late in life. Regardless, I'm a professional researcher…a doctor of academia…a published author…a scientist by vocation… Oh…and I'm your new trainer." The words were hoarse and muffled under the trainer's heavy breathing. He could hardly bring himself to welcome her to the rest of his crew after that draining introduction. Still, he made an effort, there where sacrifices he had to make because of his fragility, but at the very least, he owed a formal greeting to his new Pokemon, if anything to promote solidarity amid the group. That was important right?

July was what he decided to call his Oddium Wanderus. She seemed to like the bright and sunny name. Releasing Magikarp and Geodude, Feyera could only point at them and the Charmeleon supporting him announcing their names, "Des, Jill, and Brucie." He grinned softly, feeling the tense muscles surrounding his eyes begin to relax.

Even though he felt worse than ever, being with Pokemon cheered Edge up. He liked seeing their smiling faces. Their eyes reminded him of long lost friends. They would stay by his side no matter
where the journey took him. But did he really want them to? Was he putting them in risk just by association? There were four of them now, he'd almost have a full team if he hadn't lost his Pidgey to the recklessness he employed back in Pewter. Feyera told himself that was why he needed to learn how to control the psyonics.

The group reached a house along the cape, close to the panhandle by nightfall. It was clearly lit from inside, and shown like a lighthouse on the dark cape. The small cottage was not too far away from where they had started out, but at their sluggish pace, it took an entire day to traverse the distance. Feyera approached the wooden structure and recalled all of his Pokemon. Typically keeping more than one Pokemon outside of a Pokéball was frowned upon, since it invoked hostility. The practice was even banned in some nations! But Feyera considered his current state of affairs to be an emergency.

He stepped up to the house's narrow stoop and glided his hand to touch the doorbell button. It wouldn't ring. So he knocked instead. Paint was peeling off from the sides of the door. Undoubtedly, this salty environment took its toll on structures.

He was greeted by a young man who opened the door to quite a sight. "Hel…Yikes!" shouted the cottage's owner who wore a tight expression, loose summer clothing, and a Johto League cap.

"Hi…" Feyera tried to say friendly.

"Are you all right? Were you caught in the blast radius?" said the young man, not much older than Feyera. However his expression made him appear older, as did his hunched posture. "Quick! Come inside, let's get you some help! I'm Bill Reynolds."

"Thanks, Mister Reynolds."

"Do you need to go to the hospital? I'd call an ambulance but we have no power."

"*Cough!* Oh no, I don't need to go to the hospital!" Feyera answered, laughing to himself. Imagine a world with medicine able to treat his condition. That would be something else. What would he even call his condition? Edginess?

"Do you have a name, mister?" Bill asked. He guided Feyera to a couch close to the hearth.

"Yeah…it's Chr— umm…Edge…err…actually West…just call me that, alright…?" his voice shivered, for he had almost revealed his identity. Turns out West was the first thing to come to mind because it was his surname, and didn't involve 'Christian Feyera' or 'Edge', both of which he needed to dissociate from, albeit for different reasons; the former to remain anonymous and the latter until he understood psyonics better.

"West, eh?" Bill tossed him a wooly blanket. "Are you saying you're from the west?"

"Hah," Edge laughed nervously. That was true. "If you count Pallet as west from here, which it is."

"Mmm mmm. Wait here, I'll be back in a moment."

"Okay," responded Feyera. He studied the quiet living space. It wasn't much larger than his old apartment building, though the beach-wood trim made it feel a lot more comfortable.

"Here, this should help." Bill returned from the kitchen brought him a warm bowl of stew. "Had some myself earlier, can't say it's the best, but it is what it is. Alarming what we have to do when there's a power outage. PC systems stop and you can't even prepare a half-decent meal."
The stew was more than half-decent by Feyera's standards. "Thank you." Bill did not need to hear Edge's psionic message of projected thought to know he was appreciative of the hospitality. "Cough! I can't cook much myself," Feyera said between two bountiful spoonfuls. "Terrible at it."

"Honestly, West, you look like you've been through hell and back. What happened to you?"

"Could say that. Mmhmm," Eating a spoonful of stew felt strange. He could not taste the flavor. It was all bland. Something was missing. It was as if someone had just removed a part of him that he always took for granted. At least he could feel the warmth of the broth. In fact, the warmth had a distinct taste of its own. Unusual, but who was he to be questioning this minor alteration? The flavor reminded him of a happy time when he had come back from school after a difficult exam. That was comforting. Warmness had its own taste. No words were exchanged. Bill kept on glancing at Feyera's eyes and his torso. Edge was too exhausted to explain everything, and Bill was perceptive enough to pick up on this underlying cue.

"If you need to rest, there on the couch by the hearth is fine. The nights here surprisingly are chilly without electric heat."

Feyera could imagine how confused Bill must have been. The two stared at the fireplace for a while. The minutes began to converge. Feyera's head began to rock back and forth, as the flames in front of him turned to liquid smoke. It wasn't long before his insurmountable exhaustion knocked him into a deep sleep on the couch.

He was safe for now. But was he truly safe from himself?

Only time would tell.

Waking up to the afternoon sky bearing down on him through the parlor's window, Feyera found himself in a strange place. He couldn't turn the various sensations around him down, the lights were so bright, and the colors so vivid.

"West, you feelin' all right, pal?" said Bill's voice.

"Mmm…" Feyera groaned softly, rubbing his stomach. He began to worry if he'd be stuck feeling as he did; like when his psyonics were active. It was a new sense of existence he couldn't ignore, that's why he called that state of mind "Edge". Though it was much less of a state than it was a feeling. Regardless, that's who he was now, that's who he expected to be until he got this all under control. The way he saw it, 'Edge' was a condition to be treated. Or rather: tamed.

" Noticed you were shaking a lot. Thought you were running a fever."

"Tend to do that," he said thinking back to what happened in Mount Moon. "Though it's only been getting worse recently."

"You're feeling stable though?"

"Yeah. Fine. Got some restful sleep no thanks to your hospitality."

"You really sleep late, you know that?" Bill said jokingly. "Would've made you coffee this morning if you didn't sleep past noon."

At the thought of coffee, Feyera gave Bill a tight smile. "Yeah, I'm recovering. Suppose that makes me sleep more." Then he begun to ramble dryly, "Has to do with metabolism and such, cells rejuvenate faster during sleep…there's a lot of science behind the whole process…" His eyes began
to wander; he'd forgotten the scientific explanation. Frustrated, he excused himself. "...I don't have
time to explain it though."

"Ah, ho ho. I believe you. You would be in a world of trouble if you didn't find rest here, West."

"West?" Feyera asked with a look of sudden confusion. "Huh? That's my father's — ah wait, never
mind."

Bill appeared confused. "The Pokemon aren't the most hospitable. Don't think they'd take too kindly
to company, 'specially since you're a Pokemon trainer!"

"Hah yeah. I'm not the best trainer either. Actually...I suck, but that's only because I'm a researcher
first and foremost..." he said, wishing he could swallow his words. Senseless pride made him mess
up the whole anonymity aspect of his plan. "I mean I used to be!"

"Ah, you're a researcher? I'll look you up, West."

"Nah!" Feyera answered in panic. He didn't want Bill to trace him! "I'm more of a behind the scenes
type of guy, ya know? One of those scientists that fiddle with beakers and test tubes in the back
rooms of research facilities. ...One of those folks always in the laboratory."

Bill looked at him quizzically. "Uh...?"

"Honestly, I'm no one," said Feyera as convincingly as he could. Feeling a faint quiver from behind
his eyes made the young man blink in panic. "Don't worry about it."

Bill paid little attention to the odd behavior. "Ah! You're modest, I suppose I know a few folks like
that myself."

"Oh yeah?" Feyera nodded, happy he had derailed the conversation. But suddenly, a rush of
tiredness caused him to zone out. A warm sensation was gushing through his mind. He still managed
to reply, although lackadaisically, "Science...science-people?"

"Uh huh, 'specially the ones over at that place...oh...'Seacrest' I think it was. Yeah, something or the
other like that. Anyway, Seacrest's scientists stopped by my place a few years back, well before I
made any real headway in the PC storage system or became somewhat of a celebrity. Turns out a
fictional dramatization about a man splicing with a Clefairy wasn't exactly what they were looking
for. They probably thought I could produce the real thing using the PC system...Humph! As if it
were THAT easy! Anyway, it was a take on what could happen if the PC system scrambled code,
heck I was awash on my cot when I wrote the story, and whadda'ya know, they're making a movie
and calling it The Flygon. Stupid, right? At least I get royalty rights. Now personally, I always
thought it would be more sinister to be trapped as something cute and helpless instead of something
big and scary because there's something 'specially dark about that." The man noticed Feyera dozing
off from the boring story. "Anyway, have you ever heard of it?"

"—No. Sorry, never heard of that one..." Feyera replied weakly. He was barely tuned into the
conversation. It felt like a heavy fog from the sea had just rolled over him, trapping him in its sleepy
embrace. He hadn't resorted to psyonics again, had he?

"Oh, heh heh I forgot, we're in Kanto. There are a lot more Pokemon out there in the world, West.
Flygon is a large, green winged dragon that lives in Hoenn's desert. Kind of a scary Pokemon,
'specially because they have these big red orbs for eyes to protect them from the sand."

"Nuh huh," the trainer nodded sleepyly. "Sure, Hoenn...nice place, plenty of water. Longest
coastline in the world I think."
"Ha! There's more than water routes!" Bill responded. "You ever been there?"

"Nope," pouted Feyera. "But I can't get the nation's blaring anthem out of my head. It's catchy with all those trumpets."

"Ah well if you ever travel to that country, Flygon look something like massive, flying bugs—"

"—What was that?!" Feyera asked, startled and tuning back in to the conversation the second his phobia was mentioned. "Did you say massive bugs that can fly?"

Bill looked at him funnily. "Technically they're Dragon Types. But I guess it doesn't matter, they still scare people. Humph. 'Specially when they're flying around at about fifty miles per hour on vibrating wings that can rapture the sound barrier."

"Sorry, I should mention I'm a bit of a wuss when it comes to Bug Type Pokemon. They freak me out. By far the worst variety of Pokemon out there! Hate 'em all: from insects to arachnoids. Always have, always will."

"You seem passionate! I guess Hoenn's getting crossed off your list of places to travel to, there are lots of things with more legs than four there. Anyway, back to what I was saying, after all the attention from streamlining the PC storage systems and then my brief stint as a 'movie producer' by label, well, I had to get away from it all, so I bought a sea cottage here on the cape. But the darn place's been without power ever since the tower collapsed out west! Plus, kids keep stealing my canoe and snoggling down the creek nearby. *Sigh* I'm thinking about moving to Orre or something."

"Mmm, shame really." Feyera yawned, not really caring all too much about Bill's boring backstory; he wanted to get moving. "You know Mister Reynolds, thanks for all you've done. I would be in deep trouble if I didn't stumble upon your house out here."

Bill nodded. "Yeah the cape isn't that populated."

"I…don't mean to be rude…but I need to get going, Bill. I appreciate the hospitality, but my wounds need to be treated. You know, by the professionals." Feyera lied.

"Okay but first—" Bill stared inconspicuously "—What's that crystal thing on your chest?"

"Ah, that lovely question. Was wondering why you didn't ask earlier. It was an accident. From before. And I'm okay," feeling the object sticking through his partially shredded clothes he had noticed that it had cooled significantly. Was he really okay? "I'm…going to be okay…" he reiterated.

"Where're you heading anyway?" Bill looked at him eager for an answer.

"Well, I'm on the Pokemon League challenge, I was going to help Professor Oak fill the Pokédex you see, because I'm a researcher…"

Wait…what exactly was he doing? He was out in the wilderness, ever since his psionic display in Pewter he'd been on the loose. As Feyera's thoughts wandered, he remembered the parting words of Brock. If he wanted to find answers he needed to continue his Pokemon journey. There was no way he could simply return everything back to normal. The pondering trainer also recalled what Lorelei had said to him, about collecting the League Badges. Even though his interaction with her had been a relatively recent event, he found it to feel like a distant memory. Maybe those goals would give him a motivator to command the psyonics!

Lowering his voice, afraid to project too much information via telepathy; Feyera continued his
explanation, "I want to collect the Gym Badges to accomplish my goals. I don't know about the Pokédex. I have many questions which require answers. Running around filling Pokédex pages won't solve that. I'll have to contact Oak and inform him about my changing plans." He tried to make it all appear genuine.

"A sudden change of plans?"

Then it dawned on him that he was already considered dead or gravely injured. He had no obligations. Ever since the incident in Pewter, ever since he was bailed out by Brock. "I'm free now."

"Did you say something West?" Bill asked.

Feyera looked out the window at the lazily drifting afternoon clouds. "No."

"Well, okay. I don't know Professor Oak personally, but he is a rather busy man from what I hear. Are you feeling better at least, West?"

"Yes, lots better actually." A blatant lie made evident by a nervous half smile. Physically, he felt more like himself, but facing his mental encumbrances were a different story!

"Well, let me get you some spare clothes, you can't go out like that and look civilized," Bill said jokingly. "Your tie is all tattered and you have mud on your sleeves…"

Feyera let out a weak laugh, his hand still grasping the thin vertically embedded metal; it sure took one heck of a beating, however no dents or scratches could be found anywhere on the reflective surface. His clothes were shredded around it. "Wow, I really do look worse for the wear." Indeed his clothing was torn apart in several locations and rather dirty. He thanked Bill, and graciously took the young man's spare set of clothes. Bill showed him to the restroom; where he quickly changed. The pants, although narrow, were still baggy and loose on Feyera's waistline. Fortunately, his belt, which also functioned as a holster for the trainer's Pokéballs was fully adjustable, and he used this to his advantage in securing the pants around his waist. Putting on the clean burgundy-colored collared shirt, the trainer was careful to leave one of the middle buttons open for the shard in his center to go through. He looked in the mirror and laughed at his reflection. He wasn't sure why he was laughing, he just was. There wasn't anything humorous about how he looked, but he had come this far now and was still kicking.

"Do you happen to have a spare necktie I can use?"

"To cover that up?" Bill shrewdly asked Feyera.

"Precisely, I don't like to call much attention if I don't have to. Red works best. But beggars can't be choosers; I'd be surprised if you even had one out here in this bungalow."

"Actually, I might have one, but it's kinda threadbare. Heh…I wore it on my last day of work at my computer company, I didn't even go back to my flat that day, hopped in my convertible, and drove up here."

"That's fine," Feyera said. It sure beat exposing that scar of his to the world.

"All right, I'll give you time to get ready."

"Thanks," Feyera said, "should only take a few minutes."

"Sounds good, use the restroom. You'll have to pump first to use the running water though. Power's out."
After washing up and brushing his chestnut-auburn hair back, Feyera proceeded towards the cottage door, feeling much better in this un-tattered apparel. Bill had graciously given him a set of dated office clothes and while they weren't exactly the most comfortable, they accommodated Feyera's present needs.

"Hold up!" Bill's voice stopped him on his way to the door.

Feyera froze. He was scared stiff by the order. "What now?" he thought instinctually before turning around.

"Hey relax." Bill assured. "I was gonna say: West, I think I can help you out with your Pokemon journey."

"My Pokemon journey?" Feyera's green eyes lit up greedily. "Really? How?"

"You're taking the Pokemon Gym challenge aren't you?"

"Yeah-huh."

"Tell you what; I'll give you my ticket to a ferry service for Pokemon Trainers on the S. S. Anne. She used to be a luxury liner back in the day, but now that longer, transcontinental cruises have become more popular, she's changed roles."

"What do you mean?" asked Feyera.

"Have you heard of the new S. S. Libra being constructed by Silph out in Orre?"

Feyera felt strange and airy as he responded, "Yeah, umm…a massive cruise liner, it's nearly complete right?"

"Yes, I was just going to say that! With Libra sailing across the continents, there's little use for her predecessor, the Anne. Pales in comparison! Libra's supposed to be at least three times her size and three times as luxurious!"

"Yeah, I'll bet the maiden voyage won't be cheap," Christian halfheartedly laughed. Almost two years working at a coffee house in Pallet barely earned him any revenue and now here he was dirt poor exploring the world with Pokemon.

"Uh huh, either way, the Anne is on her way out as the top-of-the-line luxury liner. The ship's seen better days. So she's going to become a Pokemon trainer themed ferrying service."

"So what does that mean?" Feyera asked.

"It's a program to transport young, aspiring trainers like yourself to cities of interest on their journeys to earn League Badges. She'll be traveling out of Vermilion Port to the southern coasts of Kanto. Since the voyage is Pokemon trainer themed, it will make stops along the way in places where you can challenge various gym leaders."

"Really?" he asked excitedly.

"It stops southwest of Celadon, and docks in Fuchsia and Cinnabar. There are Pokemon Gyms in all of those locations. If you count Vermilion, that's four Pokemon League Badges you can earn – half the mandatory eight you need. Moreover, it's a journey with other Pokemon trainers like yourself. You'll get some good experience out of it to say the very least. I got this ticket from a good friend of
mine, but I really don't care for cruises—I get motion sickness. I prefer living on the shore quite honestly. Plus, I'm not even a Pokemon trainer. Based on what you told me, you might get a lot out of it."

"You can't be serious!"

"Yeah, I was gonna toss the offer. The ship leaves in two days from Vermilion, so you've got plenty of time even if you are on foot. You appear be stronger too, so that should help."

Feyera smiled and took the ticket. "Thanks, you've been all too kind to me, Mister Reynolds, I don't know what else to say. I don't suppose you give out cruise tickets to all your guests!"

Bill laughed, his shabby brown hair blew about in the cape breeze as he opened the cottage door, "Haha, of course not! And please, call me Bill." The two young men shook hands.

"Alright, Bill. You didn't have to do all this for me; I'm just an average guy. I can't afford to pay you back!"

"Nonsense, you needed help and I provided. I would have done it for anyone. 'Specially after that disaster," Bill said softly. "Reminds us of how dangerous the world out there is, eh?"

Edge flushed knowing he was somehow responsible for the calamity. "Yeah, it might have been a wild Pokemon. I'm not sure to be honest," Feyera said. Pokemon was the only reasonable explanation he could come up with, and yet it made much sense as far as an excuse goes.

"Yes indeed. The world's filled with mysteries. Pokemon are certainly some of the most fascinating inhabitants of this world. They can be a little frightening at times though."

"Yeah." Feyera nodded his head in somber agreement. It hadn't been too long for him to forget what evil Pokemon had done to him. "Trust me, I know."

"Glad you're okay though. Promise me you'll get that looked at," Bill pointed to Feyera's chest, "I saw you clutching it in your sleep. It looked like it was bringing you some kind of pain."

"Okay, yeah sure. I'll do that Bill."

Bill quickly put a hand on the young man's shoulder, stopping him. "Honestly, West, I've never seen anything like that before. Or, maybe I have--" Bill squinted "--is it…?"

"EH!" Feyera coughed loudly. He wanted to say "Neither have I!" but instead Feyera glanced at the man's warm eyes and nodded in reassuring agreement. "—It'll be fine," insisted Feyera. "It's just a scratch." He wasn't sure who he was trying to convince: Bill or himself.

"Okay, good luck out there."

"Yep. It was very nice meeting you, Bill. Thanks for everything."

"Have a good time on the ferry!" Bill patted him on the back. "Later!"

Feyera laughed knowing for sure such a day would probably never come. To make matters worse, he didn't know whether he was being friendly or manipulative this whole time. Bill had done nothing but nice things as a Good Samaritan, but paranoia remained in Feyera's mind. "Could I control people? Is this all not real? Not genuine?"

"Haha!" Bill let out a hearty laugh, which took Edge's mind off the frenzied worry. "You sure you're
feeling alright, man? You're not dreaming any more, the world out there is pretty dangerous. Stay out of trouble so I don't have to save your life again!"

"I'll try," Feyera said with a grin, but trouble had a way of following him. And troublesome things could not be manipulated so easily.

Christian and company traveled south towards the eastern border of Cerulean. The gentle air of Cerulean Cape was invigorating. Feyera released his Charmeleon from the Pokéball Oak had given him. The young Pokemon grinned, happy to see his trainer had recovered. Feyera still looked under the weather. His swollen eyes and their golden rims slightly worried the young Pokemon. Feyera was able to sense his Pokemon's unease. "Hey, I'm going to be alright Brucie. Don't worry." Feyera felt somewhat nostalgic, for he remembered being in a similar circumstance not quite so long ago when he first received the Charmander. Brucie was concerned for different reasons, Feyera was no longer just a mysterious greenhorn trainer—but a threat to himself and everyone around him. But at least he was strong enough to support himself now that he had rested.

Feyera sighed and took a look at his hand. The shaking had long since subsided. He turned his gaze back to his Pokemon who looked drained. It was up to him to soothe his Pokemon's anxiety. In doing so, Feyera had to overcome his own apprehension—an apprehension which infiltrated into every fiber of his being. "Psyonics? Why?" The questions came in like torrents of unstoppable rushing water, flooding his mind. The entire adventure had taken a mysterious turn ever since Pewter, but at last, Edge was trying to confront his problems rather than hide from them. He was looking at the big picture. "What's going to happen to me in the long run? I can't run forever," he said to the cape's dunes. "Engelhart is right."

…But then again Engelhart was also dead.

Cerulean was much closer now. Traveling along the slim strip of land joining the cape to the mainland, Feyera and company avoided the northern section of the city completely. He'd thought long and hard about the possibility of entering Cerulean, and the best manner of doing so. There was a Pokemon Gym in the city, and it probably wasn't affected too much by the recent incident. Nevertheless, the audacity to enter a city that he had debilitated with his powers…

"It's not going to be easy," thought Feyera as his hair was whipped back by the briny sea breeze. "I don't know if I'm ready for a Gym battle. I don't know Edge is ready…"

[Well, I am,] said a mysterious voice directed at him.

"Who said that?!" Feyera twirled around, scanning the perimeter and looking for threats. There wasn't anything he could see. "Hello?!" he hollered out in confusion. He hated the unknown. "Am I hearing voices?" he wondered.

[I'm down here boss!]

"Eh?" Christian belted, nearly falling backwards from surprise.

[Haha, it seems like it was yesterday when you showed me that fire trick! I gotta admit, I was pretty wary of you at first, but you're an okay trainer you know that?]

"Brucie?" Feyera questioned. "Wait, you can talk?" Needless to say, the curious state of shock triumphed the rational disbelief.

Brucie calmly shook his head, [Not like you can with your vocal chords. I can understand battle orders, but this is different somehow. It's psychic, mental, like before when—]
"—What!? No!" Feyera said holding his head. "I'm losing my mind! What the heck? Shut up!"

[Relax, boss. We've been friends for quite some time and I've notice you use the same type of signal in your projected thoughts. It's kinda monotone now.]

"What? But how do you—?"

Brucie shrugged. [Sometimes they are different, but for the most part, I can recognize the frequency you use. Really, it only took a couple of days to become familiar with them. Are you sure you're not a Pokemon?]

Speechless, Edge looked down at Brucie and stared into his light blue eyes. "You don't mean…I can talk to Pokemon!?" Overjoyed, Feyera smiled ear to ear, something he hadn't done in a long time. This was amazing if it was true. But how could it be false? He couldn't have been hallucinating. He pinched his forearm just to be sure.

[Whoa, don't get too far ahead of yourself. I can hear you now, but it took time for me to figure out how to get you to read my thoughts. I'm only able to communicate to you when you use that weird thing.] The Pokemon tilted his head softly to the side and blinked. Feyera felt less panicked now. At least his Charmeleon was making bodily gestures that coincided with the voice. That comforted him substantially, until the Pokemon raised a paw and pointed at Feyera's chest [Like that thing that talks to my head.]

"Huh?" Feyera parted the frayed necktie Bill had given him, revealing the small red crystal. "Ahem! Excuse me? This thing?! It doesn't talk, it's a wound from Team Rocket's Electrode!"

[I meant felt, not talk.]

"Preposterous! Psyonics originate in the brain. I'll prove it." Feyera closed his mouth projecting, "I'm thinking right now, and you're understanding me. People can hear my thoughts and now Pokemon too…what does it all mean?"

[It's like I understand you, when you do that. It's a warm glowing feeling like the flame on the tip of my tail.]

"Great." Feyera said. "Just great…I've completely lost my sanity."

[Nah boss. Tell me to do something in code.]

"In code…? Oh! Okay…" Christian tried to concentrate, voluntarily letting the psionic energy seep back into his mind. "…Raise your right paw."

The Pokemon complied with a smile.

"Amazing!" he exclaimed. "You heard that?"

[Felt is probably a better way of describing it, but yeah.]

Feyera tried to bottle up his excitement, but he couldn't help but entertain the prospect of employing this newfound ability. "Psyonics…wow. I need to research this!"

[You don't understand how you are doing it?]

"Of course I do!" Feyera lied.

[Why are you shocked about it all then?]
"Umm… It's simply because psyonics aren't understood very well. They're so rare in people, Brucie! That's why I'm so excited about this! I can draft a paper on my own experiences, make an academic study on extra physical interactions and finally get my life as a researcher back together!"

[Yeah as long as you don't wind up doing that thing.]

"What thing?" he asked his Pokemon.

[Oh, you know…that thing…where it is like…I don't know…how do I put this? It's almost like you are pretending to be someone else.]

Feyera was at a lost. "Someone…else…? I'm me though, Brucie. Christian Feyera, Ph.D. I've always been me. You know that. I'm only pretending to be Edge so that I don't get caught."

[That's not what I meant. It's different than what I'm used to seeing. I don't know what it's called, I'm not the best at this honestly, when I was in Oak's laboratory I only had limited interaction with humans.]

Edge then realized the absurdity of what was happening. "Whoa, hold on. You're a Pokemon!"

[And you're a psychic!]

"No such thing in people, only 'psyonics'. That's the proper term, psychic is used for describing swindling magicians and a subset of layman's Pokemon types."

Brucie shuddered, as if he had just been scolded or something. [Maybe it's that weird power you've got, when you last used it I'm pretty sure I was able to sense your heart from it.]

"My heart?" wondered Feyera. "Oh, you mean my temperament? That makes sense considering these are broadcasted brainwaves."

[Yup, like what's on your mind, but without needing to look in your eyes like it was at first.]

"Hmm…eyes," Feyera said rubbing them.

[They scare me sometimes though.]

"What do you mean?"

[Before, at Pewter City.]

"That was a fluke."

[I like the more serene, thing. Like right now for instance. We're able to communicate because we're both happy now. Does that make sense to you? It's a connection!]

"No, it really doesn't, Brucie. I'm a person. I shouldn't be able to hear what you're thinking. Much less let you know what I'm thinking!"

[Then how do you make those things happen?] Brucie asked.

Feyera had no idea. He was cornered by his Pokemon's logic. "I understand you. Somehow. And there needs to be a trick to it."

[Well we've been together since you started your journey. I think you have a natural affinity for Pokemon.]
"I guess you could say that means we're on the same wavelength!" Feyera said, smile still unwavering. "Shame I didn't figure out how to access the psyonics until recently. Could have really bolstered my academic title that way! I can see it now: Christian Feyera, Ph.D. in the study of Bioinformatics and Psyonics."

Brucie shook his head, not really understanding why it would have been such a big deal. [I think it may help us in battles. Think about it. I don't even need to see you, much less hear your commands. How many trainers out there can do that?]

Feyera replied with a devilish grin, "You're right. It gives me more opportunity to test out the psyonics. I don't know how reliable this is though honestly. I've never felt this way before. So well connected. Not just to myself, but those around me."

[I suppose we'll need to test it out then. Just try not to use the scary other power. Honestly, we could have died last time!]

"Haha, well at least you can retreat to the Pokéball." But his grin quickly faded as he realized the seriousness of his Pokemon's concern.

[I don't want to have to carry you again. That stunk.]

"Back there…I could have killed myself. I could have killed us all. It was too powerful to control; instead, it wound up controlling me."

The Charmeleon sighed; their telepathic bond was waning as the psyonic connection shifted into murk and disarray.

Though it returned for but one moment.

[Almost.]

Chapter End Notes

To avert confusion: the main character's projected thoughts are represented in italics. This functions as a telepathic bond between him and those around him, human and Pokemon. When he communicates with his Pokemon, their thoughts are represented by [bracketed text] rather than quotes.
Chapter 5: Path of the Fugitive

Being able to communicate with his friends telepathically was a great boon to the self-christened "Edge" Feyera. The happiness young Christian gained from connection to his Pokemon allowed the bond to grow even stronger since the telepathy itself was contingent upon his state of mind. Psyonics were as strange as they were useful. Overall, it was a wonderful feeling to be in control of them instead of facing their bizarre fallouts. He was hurt, yes, he was scared of course too, but at least he was not alone. Unleashing such devastation had taken a great toll on his body. He could communicate without straining his voice and his increasingly atrophying body. In addition, it was instantaneous, something which would prove oh so very useful in Pokemon battle confrontations. How nice it would be to convey battle orders in the way Brucie had suggested.

The grass swayed in the wind as Feyera examined his Pokemon for any outstanding wounds and injuries, praying that he had not caused any of them inadvertently by unleashing his uncontrollable power on the Golden Bridge. Brucie the Charmeleon was a little bruised up from the waist down. A nick or two on his fleshy calves already begun to scab. He'd been slightly wounded during the battle with Agent Engelhart's Mankey.

Feyera thankfully didn't have to worry about dealing with the Rockets for now. He had devastated the Golden Bridge without leaving much of a trail for them to follow. They'd need to use electricians to get past the destruction and follow him directly. Feyera had employed a wicked power that drew from thought itself, saving his life from the Team Rocket operative's firearm. Of course, it hadn't taken long for such thoughts to grow into vicious, destructive ones.

The Pokemon trainer sighed. It was him against the world now. He had to survive. He just wished that it didn't have to come to him killing anyone.

It would be false to say that he did not slightly enjoy it. It was the blooming cascades of self-sustained energy. They made him feel invincible. The purple spiraling gravity well, that was the fruit of his mental exertion and it was beautiful beyond measure. All so beautifully orchestrated.

But then there was the aftermath. He had never felt worse in his life, save possibly after the Pokemon Sanctum Robbery. It didn't matter, he couldn't really remember that time period anyway. It was too long ago. This was recent and far too strange to ignore. What happened to him? If he was able to utilize such a power then it had to come with a limit of some sorts. Feyera felt as though he might have even surpassed that maximum. It was as scary as it was evident through his physical state. Though he had begun to feel more normal, he still felt weak. His muscles were sore and his stamina had little permanence. The crushing anxiety might have taken hold of him if it were not for the fact that he knew he was unquestionably alive. The vigorous outpour of riling sensation came on in waves, but had recently subsided. Sensing a stiffness in his shoulders, the question dawned on him: "I'm gaining so much, but what am I losing? I feel like I can't stop it…"

The thought made him shiver in angst, so he quickly refocused on his Pokemon. Shifting his eyes from team member to team member, he feigned a smile. July, Feyera's recently captured Oddish, looked rather wilted; her petals drooped appearing she dehydrated more than anything else. Fortunately, the sea close by blew a humid breeze into their faces as they headed south. However, this taunting breeze bore with it the scent of smoke from the south. "A generator might have
overloaded after the cable fell. After all that…” Not even a psyonic like Edge could run from the past.

Feyera peered over at his Water Type Pokemon, Desperado. Her wide, bright eyes gleamed in the sunlight. Subtle lashes and thick fins alike swayed rhythmically to the crisp breeze. The Magikarp followed Feyera and company close to the shoreline, where the water was shallow. She was a small animal, and certainly not the most aerodynamic sea creature Feyera had ever seen.

Looking down near his thick black leather Alterieno adventuring boots, Feyera saw Jill, his female Geodude who was also looking healthy. She bounded about, easily able to keep up with Feyera's pace by using her two muscular, rock-hewn arms. It was funny, every time he looked at her he couldn't forget his first encounter with a Geodude against Brock, the Pewter Gym leader. "Maybe they could have been friends,” crossed Feyera's mind.

Using psyonics, he was only able to communicate short phrases and commands telepathically to his newer teammates. The longer he knew the Pokemon, the easier it was to keep the telepathy-transmission open. He hoped that they would all eventually be able to communicate with him as well as Brucie could. The psycnic tension was strange, it wavered at times. This just brought worry to Edge though, and his companions could sense it. "What if I accidently killed my Pokemon by mistake? What about all of the electricity arching out from the power lines…What if they were pulled into the…thing that destroyed the Golden Bridge!? That power, that feeling, it was all consuming…What if I lost it…"

[You didn't though, mister,] said July. July had a sunny deposition, but she was levelheaded. [It wasn't your fault if you got hurt. You didn't know. We all mess up sometimes, hun. I remember the first time I tried to use an Absorb attack! I fell and went topsy-turvy!]

[Haha. Watch out, the rose's got thorns!] whispered Jill.

[Jill!]

Feyera raised an arm. "Hang on, hang on!" They stopped, waiting for him to say something. "*Sigh*"

Listen, I've been considering just letting you go…it's just too dangerous to stick around me. I'm not normal. Psyonics aren't normal. You deserve better than to risk your lives for me."

[No!]

[That ain't true!]

"Yes. It is. That's the way it is. I need to research all of this! That comes first and foremost." Guilt was feeding itself at this point. Feyera didn't want to be told that he was innocent. He felt unworthy in a plethora of ways. The young man wanted his Pokemon's condemnation. In some sick and twisted way, it would make him feel better. "It would be easier, utilitarian really. If I could protect you from the destructive, side of my psyonics, that's at least four lives spared."

[Oh, yeah, great number work! And then what? You'll die out here, or worse, maybe you'd even inadvertently hurt someone in a measure of uncontrollable self-defense!] Jill angrily responded. The Geodude put her rock arm around his right leg, halting him in place, [If you want to leave fine, but don't think for an instant that we won't be following you. We're not normal either since we're able to talk to our trainer. That's pretty unconventional for most types of Pokemon. So we can all be abnormal together. Done, and done. Moving on!]

Feyera forced a smile at this childlike logic. He couldn't escape her grip with his diminished physical strength. "If you're okay with being around me. I suppose you know I'm happy with you guys.
You've been my pillars of support through all this and it would be rude of me to simply abandon you out of my own self-doubt. It wouldn't be fair to you."

Desperado smiled, as she splashed in the water close by. Her fins flopped against her scaly orange body, [And besides, Edgy, who would cook for our lil remuda anyway? We need our rancher even if he can't make canned food good 'n proper. Ya ought to get yourself a chuck wagon! Right-ee ya know, pardner?]

"Hah ha!" This made Feyera laugh; he was a terrible cook after all.

Desperado joined in his laughter, [Well, I'm a big fan of shootin' straight and speakin' the truth. At least in this here posse!]

"Can't help it, at least I'm here to feed you." The group had eaten canned beans for the past few days before making it to Bill's cottage. It was too bad really; Feyera hardly ate because he was so terrible at making food.

[Why can't you make yummy food?] asked July. [I thought you'd be good at that Edgy. Ya know, because you're a researcher and all.]

"Cooking's not like science, don't be silly! That's preposterous!" But truth be told, Feyera knew there were similarities between the two arts, as far as their respective directives went. It didn't do much for his pride to admit he was bad at that variety of science!

Jill chuckled, [What's preposterous is that you made it to adulthood without starving!]

"Eh, I don't always have to cook. Human towns and cities are different. You can get food from people who are better than you are at cooking. That's how it works."

[But then how do they eat?] asked July.

[Well, I'd reckon they hunt enough food for the whole cavalry!] shouted Desperado.

Christian shook his head. "Nah, people don't hunt. We're what's known as 'civilized'."

[Aye now, buckaroo! That's why I like you humans!]

"#Gurgle*!*" Feyera's stomach growled noisily. "Err… Speaking of food, who wants something to eat?"

[Well that depends on who's cookin']! Brucie said, [Tell you what boss, maybe we can help you out.]

"All right, we can set up camp soon and then get cracking," he said with a carefree shrug. "Who knows, maybe with your help I can make something that you guys won't complain about."

[You got it!] [Right on!] [O'course!] [Yep!]

The solemn thoughts were leaving him. He was feeling better and less driven by doubt and insecurity. He felt lucky, not because of his powers, but because of his friends. And perhaps that was all the luck he needed.

Feyera had been pleased with the progress he'd made. All things considered, he was happy; the journey had suddenly become a lot less lonely. The group was now right beyond Cerulean's city limits. But it was getting late, and Feyera figured that he would rather just camp out with his
Pokemon outside the city.

Opening a broth of canned beef was the simple part of making dinner. Chopping the onions was the real chore; they made the young man's eyes tear up. He hated that feeling. Tears and crying, it made him feel vulnerable. It was one of those things the young trainer could not help. Hopefully his power was more controllable than the tears he now involuntarily produced.

Charmeleon was tending to the stew pot keeping it nice and hot with his Ember originating from his fire-tipped tail. Brucie gave Feyera a wink as he caught his trainer wiping away water from under his large eyes.

July had gathered some spices and seasonings from the local foliage. July's knack for finding a few herbs here and there was greatly appreciated since it made the meal smell so much better.

Meanwhile, Jill was stirring the broth with her strong stony arms, and cracking wise comments to Desperado who really couldn't do much to help out being a fish and all. [I told you to go get some water; at least I thought you knew Water Gun. What kind of Water Pokemon doesn't even know Water Gun!?!]

Desperado laughed, [Say, when I get the chance to learn that attack, you're gonna be my first target, Jill!]

[Well, if you put it that way sweetie…hope there isn't too much of a waiting line. Even if you have a double type advantage, you're not gonna get through my tough hide.]

[Yeah! I bet I could toss ya! Like, way far too!] she said while swinging one of her arms around like a steam engine's fulcrum. [Up, up, and away!]

Feyera scowled. "Well, aren't you proud of yourself? Would you like a medal?"

[No thanks,] she grinned mischievously. [Rock Type Pokemon are weak to metal, brain boy.]

"I said "medal" not metal," he grumbled. "Do you have soil in your ears or something?"

[Hey, hey, easy does it now you two,] Desperado interjected. [Don't be up 'n tangling yer lasso's.]

"What is with you and those cheesy lines!?" Feyera said.

[Anyhow, I reckon do have a bit of a southern drawl. S'pose it's an inflection picked up from my 'ol rancher.]

"You mean cheat! That man was a scammer!"

Des grinned. [Ah, the ol' mule sure was. Every time he'd show us off at the trail drives, he'd—]
"—How could you have respect for that? Why would want you mimic his mannerisms when you have an upstanding trainer like me?"

[Ha. Always thought of myself as a maverick,] Desperado chuckled, [it's funny how you pick up the quirks of those 'round your waterin' hole. I like you too Edgy, don't be getting' all green with jealousy.]

"Hmph…?" Feyera scratched his head.

[I think your accent makes you sound silly, Des!] Jill chimed in.

[Humph! I figure ya can talk anyway ya like so long as ya got the guts ta back up whatever it is you might be ramblin' about.]

"And you sure like to ramble…” Feyera laughed at the playful bickering. Both Jill and Desperado had dominating female personalities. "All right, enough is enough!" Feyera called them both over. Together the team gathered around the fire as the sun sank beneath the horizon glowing sharply right before it fell out of sight. Their trainer tasted the stew before sharing it with his comrades. Even Desperado was joining them; Magikarp was one of the few fish capable of surviving outside of water for extended periods of time due to their durable constitution. Feyera made a face as the spoon touched his shallow lips. "Oof… Not bad, but not good either." The team shared a laugh. Christian didn't need psyonics to pick up on that.

It was a strange situation. Christian never thought he would find himself in this position. The mere fact that he was adventuring with Pokemon was astounding considering he swore off being around them following what happened at the Pokemon Sanctum. And now, to think, he was relying on them as his friends, companions, and support structure. They were alone, outlaws running from society. Their flight was because of him, because of Edge. But he also knew that his Pokemon wished to remain together. That made everything more bearable for him.

"C'mon, let's get some rest so we can get up bright and early. Approaching Cerulean from the northern road, we'll be there in half an hour."

Retrieving more supplies from his backpack, Feyera set up a small mat on the side of the path. He was going to be camping tonight. His Pokemon gathered close to him, Brucie's tail kept them warm despite the chilly night's wind.

"Hmm…” Feyera's mind wandered as the stars shone brightly above. The power outages in the Cerulean made the stars appear much brighter and much closer. It was strange to see the world from this perspective; Feyera was typically an urban-dwelling person. Then again, he’d have to learn to control these psyonics before returning to that type of life. "That's the mission…that's the mission I'm on…” he mumbled, sleep quickly overtaking him.

"I'm a man on a mission."

The morning dew covered the faces of the fugitive as a hazy morning sun woke young Christian from his slumber. Feyera could have sworn that he heard a voice as he was waking up. It followed a very bizarre dream he had during the night. It felt as if he were coming up out of a deep trance, where the dream remained in his consciousness just long enough to feel like reality. He looked about frantically from his sleeping bag trying to discern the origin of the voice but he was unsuccessful. Instead, he tried to remember the dream. He was in a Pokemon battle, that was for sure. He recalled a lot of vivid details: powerful moves, rapid execution, and a plethora of colors. Maybe this was a sign? In any event, he made his mind up.
"Guys, today we take on Cerulean City's Pokemon Gym. I know you might have reservations, but I will do everything I can to keep my psyonics in check." He was trying as hard as possible to conceal his inner fear, but it wasn't working too well. His Magikarp's eyes shifted down from Feyera's glance and observed her trainer's fists shaking impulsively from nervousness.

[You gotta be kidding boss! Today?] Brucie said with a uneasy grin, [I mean, I have your back and everything no matter what, but do you really think that issuing another Gym Challenge is the best idea? I thought we'd wait a little. You know, like practice and stuff.]

"Practice?" Feyera asked. The thought didn't cross his mind, he was very single-minded once he had a goal in mind. "I guess we could…but what good would that really do? I want to be sure that I can control psyonics during the real thing. Moreover, I want to be able to try out projecting telepathic orders. That'll give us a huge advantage. Besides, we're on a timeframe, we need to be in Vermillion by tomorrow!"

[Hey Brucie, if he wants to do it, let him Brucie, he's a big boy!] Jill retorted, making a fist and pounding it into the dust beneath her body. [Let's bust some heads.]

"No! No head busting!" Feyera said.

[Gee, you're edgy today.] Jill scratched her noggin. [Was only joking, what's the big deal?]

"I'm the one giving the orders around here that's all."

[Oh yeah sure…] Jill bemoaned. [You and that nasty side of you are giving everybody round here orders.]

Feyera's Charmeleon snapped back, [I've known Christian longer than you've been around Jill!]

"Jill, your Rock and Ground typing will be a major hindrance against the Water types there," Feyera said to his Geodude.

[Humph, and your destructive psyonics won't be a "major hindrance"?] the Geodude replied sarcastically. She rolled her large brown eyes, [Last I checked, you couldn't bring a big spiral of psychic energy into the big leagues unless you're a Pokemon…!]

"They're called psyonics!"

Des piped up saying, [All the same, Edgy, yer supposed to leave those at the saloon's coat check.]

Tasting the rebuke, Feyera felt his eyes swell in anger. "You know, if you two had been around during my Pewter City challenge, then you'd know just how difficult this is for me to do!"

[Then why do you want to do it so badly? Huh?] Jill asked.

"Umm… I want to do it because of…because it's not supposed to be easy," Feyera said. However, he wasn't sure if this was the truth.

[Challenges are good!] July said happily.

['Cept if you act all brash about it like this one!] sniggered Jill.

Brucie stood next to his trainer and let out a growl. [We have to have confidence in him Jill, if he can't rely on us, who is he going to trust?]

Jill nodded, [Sorry I…just…]
"It's okay. I'm coming to terms with the whole psyonics deal. To be honest, I don't think you could understand. You're a Pokemon. You've had special powers your whole life that help you to survive."

[Yeah but I can tell there's more,] replied the Geodude.

"Maybe there is."

Jill gave him a look that said "try me". So he did.

"I want it. That feeling, that rush. When I'm in the heat of combat."

[Sounds like a bunch of—]

"—Let me finish!" Feyera said. "Anyway there's only one thing I need, your support. I know that can get me through this. It has in the past. I need to do this. I want to issue this gym challenge, please understand that it's important to me. I need information, what triggers the augmented psyonics?"

Brucie looked at Feyera, and his expression said it all. The young Pokemon did not want to see another companion fall. The young man understood, and nodded slowly.

"I promise you Brucie, I won't forget about what happened. We'll keep Lawrence in our hearts."

[Who's Lawrence?] questioned Jill, who had picked up on the telepathy.

Brucie motioned with a paw to cut her off. [Don't worry about it—]

"No. I'll be upfront." Feyera stroked his auburn hair, traveling back in time in his mind. "Jill, Lawrence was the name I gave to my first captured Pokemon, a Pidgey from outside Pallet Town. I… lost him during my first Gym Battle. I didn't even get to know him."

[You killed a Pokemon?!] Jill gasped, shaking her head in disbelief. [I knew your psyonics were no good! I knew you had no control over them!]

"No…it isn't what you think." Feyera knew Jill thought that he had used his powers and killed Lawrence. And that would have made some sense. "It wasn't my psyonics! At least I don't think…I don't know what it was. I blacked out. When I came to, I was able to project my thoughts through. I got a strange, tingling feeling in my chest every time it happened. With anxious hands, Feyera adjusted his shirt. Come to think of it, it doesn't feel as strange anymore."

[That doesn't matter! Why didn't you say something?]

"I didn't know how to bring it up," said Feyera. "Honestly. Brock's Onix was too strong. My friend paid for it. I almost did too. When Onix overpowered Lawrence, I reacted. I wanted to protect my Pokemon. That's when the psyonics first saw the light of day. I…Edge, attacked Onix with my mind…"

[You, you're serious? I'm shocked…really?] Jill asked.

"Yes, really. I was upset when I met you, remember? Then we encountered that nameless trainer who died of blood loss in Mount Moon. That really made me tumble into a state of anguish. Disarray really. I don't understand it. Everyone dies one day; I used to think it was a distant threat…when you think about it, there's no reason I should care—"

[Don't you dare say that!] Jill looked like she was ready to hit him. [Life's too precious not to care about others!]
"You didn't let me finish, Jill! I did care. I had compassion, stronger than I ever have. I was … overtaken by it."

[How?]

"I'm not sure. Each time it was a possessive feeling, a rush of endorphins, like at the end of an exercise regiment. I didn't want Onix to hurt my Pokemon. Engelhart was going to shoot Brucie with a magnum pistol. And I made a promise to the trainer in the caves to avenge him. All those times were followed by more intense psyonic outbursts. Ones I could not control. I've never felt like this before. For once, I feel empowered; for once, I can help. Edge can help the world."

[Just be wary of where 'compassionate-use-of-your-power' turns into vengeance, they are on two sides of a very sharp stone!] Jill suggested to her trainer.

Feyera didn't blink, his mind was racing very quickly, he could feel his eyes rapidly shifting to and fro, almost like when he employed his heightened psyonic powers. He responded her in mute thought, "I'll heed those words, Jill. Trust me. I need to get this under my control."

She paused before acknowledging his telepathic statement, [Good. Now let's go earn your second badge!]

Eventually, the crew arrived at the Cerulean City Pokemon Gym. As Feyera had predicted, it was unaffected by the recent devastation he had unleashed to the north. Entering the Pokemon Gym, he found the main arena to be an enormous, Olympic-grade swimming pool! Feyera walked up to the poolside and tightened his grip on the holster he wore.

"So, you're here for the Cascade Badge I take it?" questioned a fiery orange haired, tight bikini wearing Gym Leader. She stood perched on a diving board in front of him. Her posture was commanding despite her petite figure.

Feyera nodded, "Yes and…" A large splash of water from the pool caught the trainer off guard as it drenched him from the waist down. "Hey! What was that for!?" he angrily thought.

"Listen, I don't like to fool around with challengers all too much!" yelled the short and enthusiastic leader. "So if you've got a stuffy attitude, leave it at the door mister! Staryu, let's show him how we take care of challengers!"

Christian was annoyed that his new clothes from Bill had gotten soaked; it made them look even more baggy on his thin frame. "You can at least give your challengers a chance to introduce themselves!"

"Sure, sure, I'm Misty, the 'Mermaid Princess' of the Cerulean City Gym. And who might you be dearie?" she nonchalantly asked.

"I'm Edge." Feyera said. He looked at the sandy colored starfish Pokemon in the pool staring up at him. Soon, he returned his gaze to Misty's bright eyes.

"Edge?" she asked. "That some kind of cocky-ass nickname?"

Christian shook his head. "So says the 'Mermaid Princess'."

"Touché."

Feyera looked around the spacious arena. "I take it you don't take ID here based on your eagerness
"Well, you're right about that," Misty smirked, concealing her surprise. "We used to, until our computer systems took a tumble when that disaster took place in the northern end on the Golden Bridge. No power for a few hours, and then the system at Central Control went haywire with overload. We amassed all our city's resources to fix the problem, but we're still lacking an integrated system here in this sector. Gosh, I hope whatever it was that caused the catastrophe is long gone. Must have been a powerful Pokemon, but in this close proximity to a human settlement? It doesn’t add up at all! There's a cave to the north with some strong Pokemon in it, but it's been sealed for a long time."

"Hmm." Feyera felt himself sweating slightly, but it blended in with the pool water already soaking him. "Is the Pokemon League going to be getting involved?"

"Beats me," said Misty, "even if I did know, I wouldn't be able to tell you."

Feyera felt as if she was untrusting. Did he give her a reason to not trust him? Was it his wound? Did he look like he stole Bill's clothes or something?

"It's nothing personal, Edge," Misty answered calmly. "The League is very secretive in their affairs."

"You trust me, a total stranger, to challenge you?" Feyera asked apprehensively. "Even with all the crazy things going on around here?"

"I don't have much of a choice in the matter." Misty raised a brow. "Hah hah! Don't worry, I trust you! Unless you're trying to tell me there's a reason why I shouldn't trust you!"


"Hah! Relax a little, no need to be uptight." Misty stretched. "Look around! We're at the pool."

"Excuse me? Relax? I need to relax?" Feyera asked.

"Gee, you sure live up to your nickname. Are you always this on-edge?"

"...!" Feyera was at a loss for words. Misty was right, he was panicking more than he was planning. But who could blame him? He had an awful lot on his plate right now.

Misty gave a friendly wink. "You're a registered trainer, I can tell by your overly orthodox mannerisms, not to mention your stuffy attitude!"

"Am I really that stuffy...?" thought Feyera. "Excuse me? Stuffy?"

"Haha, you look like you're off to the office with that cute necktie on! How do you expect to battle fluidly when you're dressed all high strung like that?" Misty laughed and pulled her hairband out of her hair, allowing her moderately long reddish hair to flow freely. "It makes you look like a total square!" she said making a finger rectangle with two outstretched arms. "See, you fit right into this adorable little box!"

"Humph! Why I ought to eradicate you, I'm a professional researcher—" he began to say angrily. But Feyera refrained from dispensing his usual clout-filled introduction. "Ahem! I do a lot of official work, but I'm a Pokemon trainer. Shouldn't that be the only thing that matters?" he said, swallowing his pride.

"Guess so, pal. Stuffy or not, a battle's a battle, and this one's an official challenge, so don't you dare
come up short, challenger! The rules are simple. It's two on two, single matchups. Hehe! Pick wisely, office boy."

Worried, Feyera let out a sigh. "Fine, I'll kick things off with Desperado!" he shouted as his Magikarp sprung onto the arena's slippery floor outside of the pool. The enthusiastic fish flopped about the Gym floor, but this was just a ploy. Misty may have been well versed in aquatic Pokemon but upon seeing a splashing Magikarp, she severely underestimated its ability to strike quickly with Tackle. And that is exactly what transpired. As her Staryu leapt out of the water to meet its adversary, Desperado let out a loud cry. As the starfish was still in transit, Edge's fish lunged into the disoriented Pokemon, nailing it in the critical core. The impact was harsh, and the strong scales of Magikarp made a devastating thud as she slammed Staryu exactly where Edge wanted her to. Feyera knew from reading *Pokemon Insider* that Staryu could recover, but only if its gem core was left undamaged; and this unlucky specimen was already injured in that location. The gem was like the starfish's heart; as the red glow began to flicker and fade as Staryu's five legs relaxed. Edge looked down at his own unusual centerpiece protruding from out of the soaked shirt sticking to his torso.

Grinning at her swift dispatch of the opposition, Desperado turned around and smiled at her trainer. [I won't stop kickin' till the clock stops tickin', Edgy. You can take that one to the bank!]

Smiling, Feyera looked at his victorious Pokemon. "Nice work out there, Des!"

Things were just getting started however. After withdrawing her wounded Staryu, Misty called out to her loyal Starmie, a mutation of the Staryu Feyera had just faced. This specimen's main body was a deep violet retaining the core-holding gold formation on its front. Starmie's red jewel core was much larger than Staryu's and it had seemingly developed to resemble a cut precious stone along with amplified psychic powers. As it made its way into the water, Edge could feel the surge of energy permeating from Starmie. The biggest change that took place upon evolution to Starmie was the growing of a second star on its back, which spun mesmerizingly. He could feel it. Like a disturbance in the air, like a soft drone of a distant radio, something alien and strange was infiltrating his mind. Deeply anxious about facing a Pokemon with some form of psychic abilities, Feyera was taking no chances. "Des, get back! I don't know what it can do."

"Use Swift!" ordered Misty.

"Des, dodge it!" But it was too late, Magikarp flailed about as numerous star shaped energy projectiles exited the core of Starmie. The numerous missiles made distinctive panging noises as they made contact with Magikarp. Multiple abrasions and scratches on Desperado's body made it evident to her trainer that her health had been knocked to a critical level.

[Tough enough. Guess ya should never corner something meaner than you…] Des said forcing a humorous laugh even though she was really hurt.

"Go! July! Take care of this!" Edge commanded, releasing his Oddish from the Pokéball without even recalling his Magikarp. The energetic Oddish sprung onto the field, her roots greedily absorbing the nutrients out of the pool.

"Use Water Pulse!" Misty ordered. "Knock his little weed into the water!"

"*Here it comes!*" Feyera thought. "*One, two, three, jump!*"

His Pokemon sprung high into the air, using her spring like feet to sail above Starmie.

"*Great! Now put it to bed July! Dump Sleep Powder all over it!*"
July shook her leaves about and countless bright yellow green spores covered the pool, floating and sticking to the surface. The potent powder soon knocked out Starmie, stilling it.

"No!" Misty shouted. "Get up!"

"Ah ha!" Edge grinned wildly; victory could not come soon enough for him. He felt ecstatic everywhere, as if he was walking on air. "Perfect timing and calculation. July, hit it with your best attack! Give it all you've got, aim for the core!" "Use Mega Drain attack!"

[You got it mister!] July jumped from the side of the pool to the floating body of a sleeping Starmie. Warping her leg roots around it, the little plant ripped out the life force of Starmie. She was sapping the life-energy of the sea star with her bulging and pulsating roots. And with that, the confrontation was over. Misty recalled her knocked out combatant. There were no causalities. What a huge relief!

Misty conceded defeat, "You've beaten me, fair and square. I was outmaneuvered by your Pokemon and their superior strategy. For that, I can confer to you this Cascade Badge! Congratulations!"

"Thanks. Huff…huff…"

"Don't mention it. Hey, take a breath, it's over." As Misty handed over the badge in a less than formal manner, Edge felt a strange sensation. It was incredible. He felt truly elevated in victory. He was flourishing. As the trainer embellishing in this feeling, a huge rupture in the pool's basin was heard and the aftershock knocked both Misty and Feyera to their knees.

"Ack!" shrieked Misty as she tumbled to the ground.

"Ah!" "Oh no!" thought whilst holding his head with both his arms. "Not another attack. Not a repeat of Pewter!"

[Easy does it now, cowboy. Don't squat on your spurs.] a familiar voice said.

"Wow Edge, look at that!" Misty said. "Hey! Open your eyes you scaredy Meowth!"

Still squinting instinctually, Feyera slowly opened his eyes. What he saw made him gasp in awe. "Wow!"

"Well I'll be darned! You have some skill! Looks like your Magikarp evolved into a Gyarados! Amazing!"

Indeed she had, Desperado's new serpentine body was mostly blue. When she roared in pride, her mouth was enormous and gaping, bearing razor-sharp canine teeth. Her underbelly was yellow, as well as a few spots along her long scaly body. Her barbels were relatively short, a sign of her young age. Finally, she had a trident dark blue crest on its head and four white fins down its back. She was a fair deal smaller than most Gyarados he had remember seeing in diagrams. Was it because of her gender? He could not recall if this species of Pokemon had different characteristics based on sex. The Pokemon gave of the aura of potential destruction. Everything about her besides her diminutive size was intimidating. But perhaps being on the smaller size made her an even better predator.

Feyera was completely caught off guard by his partner's new appearance. Nevertheless, he was thankful since now it seemed like Desperado would be able to finally take care of herself competitively. For this, both trainer and Pokemon were equally happy, and they relished in this mutual understanding of emotion.

"Edge, Gyarados are really strong aquatic Pokemon. They are sometimes referred to as…"
Eagerly, Edge cut her right off "—The Harbinger of the Sea!"

"Wow! I didn't know you studied Water Type Pokemon legends!" Misty exclaimed.

"Yeah, I didn't either..." Feyera thought, musefully projecting.

"What was that?" Misty looked confused, as if she had heard something. But Feyera quickly covered his slip-up, saying, "Umm...yeah I've done some research, can't you tell I'm a Pokemon researcher by the way I'm dressed?"

"So that's why your stuffy as the Professor."

"You mean Samuel?" Feyera warily answered.

"Hah, you're on a first name basis with Professor Oak? I should have known you were in cahoots with him."

"Yeah, well I was. And now I'm doing my own thing."

She smiled. "Maybe you're not as stuffy as I thought you were."

"Misty, I wish you the best in the restoration processes. Cerulean is a beautiful city."

"Thanks for that, and Edge..."

"Yes?"

"Thanks for living up to your end of the bargain; I'm glad I was able to battle with you. Even though losing leaves a bitter taste in my mouth, at least I can say that I've witnessed a Gyarados evolution. Those types of evolutions are very rare," Misty said while curled her arms back.

"Hey, no problem, I'm sure Des appreciated the battle enough to evolve," Edge said. He was still thinking about how he actually thought Desperado's evolution was his power acting up again. Was it paranoia or conceit at this point?

Misty sighed, reaching the apex of her stretch, "Farewell Edge, stay safe out there on your Pokemon journey. The authorities haven't determined what destroyed the Golden Bridge. Whatever it is could still be on the loose!"

Dryly, Feyera replied, "Yes. I know. Bye Misty!"

After saying their goodbyes to Misty, Edge recalled Desperado. Her long body made it imperative to keep her contained in the Pokéball unless she was in combat. He made his way south of the city, noting the extensive damage, which had been done to the north end. He felt terrible about causing so much damage, but it could not have been helped. It was destroy the bridge or take a bullet to his brain. It was a shame that he had to choose between extremes. As his thoughts raced, Edge remembered that he had been able to keep things under control during the battle with Misty, and this at least slightly boosted his moral.

The dark sky ominously loomed ahead as the young man left Cerulean and began his journey to Vermilion; still oblivious to the obstacles that lay ahead of him would be darker than the night he and his friends were entering.
The woods were dark and cold north of Vermilion City. The underground subway system running from Cerulean to Vermilion was closed off to Mister Feyera since it ran under Saffron City. Additionally, the above ground path through Saffron City was obviously impenetrable. Why all the security? Simple, Saffron was the commercial headquarters for numerous high profile establishments, namely Silph. Silph Incorporated had created an artificial barrier to entry and exit. A few years back, there was an incident where some of their latest technological products had been stolen. The Sanctum Robbery also occurred only a few days afterwards. Since then, Silph had poured resources into protecting their city of residence. In addition to the lofty electrical gates surrounding the golden city hewn with skyscrapers, there were armed guards charged with protecting the city.

Feyera frowned at his luck. Even if he applied for a permit, which was the only reasonable way to access the City of Commerce, he still needed to wait two months for the verification to be complete. His change of identity meant that this process was going to be difficult, if not impossible if Brock had spread the news that Christian Feyera was in fact dead. Or at least injured by the battle with Brock. He didn't know which would be worse.

Young Feyera looked down at his Charmeleon. "Hmmm…Maybe one day I'll get a permit. But Brucie, could you imagine their expressions when I say, 'Yes hi, I'm Christian Feyera Ph.D., I've been dead for over a few weeks after I destroyed a Pokemon Gym with psyonics. Also, fun fact: I opened a dimensional rift that swallowed the Golden Bridge. Very nice to meet you, I'd like a permit to enter the wealthiest, most-important city in all of Kanto! Oh and you can call me 'Edge' for short'."

[Heh! Heh!] Brucie, at his side, chuckled at the thought of this. While Feyera's proposition was humorous, it had also been very factual. Except for that second-to-last part. Saffron City was also the wealthiest, most-important city in the entire world, thanks to Silph Incorporated. That's wasn't to say Silph was only located in Saffron. They had buildings all over the globe. If you came across a skyscraper piercing beyond the clouds and covered in golden leaf, chances are it was owned and built by Silph Co. Feyera recalled reading that some of Silph's newer structures even had defensive RAIL turrets installed following the Great War.

"Wow." Dizzily, Feyera looked at the tallest of buildings from outside the city's high walls. Its luminescence pierced the dark heavens with gilded resistance. "Hey look!" Feyera pointed to the far off building, which dwarfed all the other dizzyingly high structures. "That must be Silph's main headquarters. I wonder what they could be researching there. I had connections at one point. My father… Daniel West." His thoughts trailed off. "Silph…"

[Humph!] Brucie scowled. [Probably things we'll never see in our lifetimes, boss.]

"Yeah, but maybe we can find a way. One day. You and me can do whatever we want to."

[Do you Silph would pass up an opportunity to cage you, boss? You're different than most humans I've met.]

Christian had never thought about this and he shuddered thinking about it. He wasn't even considered human by his Pokemon? That was strange. He made his unease present in his mental
signatures. "Different? How? Just cause I developed psyonics later in my life doesn't make me that different! I mean they're rare yes, but…!"

The Charmeleon frowned knowing what he had inadvertently done, [I'm sorry, I just thought you had considered it before. You're going to have a rough time fitting in, but you always have us at least.]

"Right you are." Feyera forced a smile. But the thought of being ostracized still stung. He pointed towards a path running parallel to the city. "We can use the light of Saffron City to help guide us to Vermilion; we've got a ship to catch in the morning!"

[Hmm...I don't like the idea of being on the water,] Brucie said; the feelings of his dread entering his trainer's consciousness.

"Aw don't worry about it, the S. S. Anne is huge!" Feyera insisted. "You won't feel any turmoil. The waters are typically calm around Kanto, and hurricane season is pretty far off. There will be plenty of time to relax on the sundeck too!"

[Okay I can get behind that last one!] Brucie said.

"Haha, it's gonna be great Brucie! Trainers, Gym Challenges, and relaxing! I can't wait! We really lucked out on this one pal, I haven't a pot to piss in, let alone afford a cruise!"

[Yeah, your friend Bill was especially nice!] said Brucie [Especially after everything you did.]

Feyera frowned. "I don't think Bill knew that I cut the power. If he did, I doubt he'd let me stay until daylight."

Brucie folded his arms and stood up tall on his hind legs. [Oh well, he coulda been stuffy and cold like 'The Professor'.]

"Haha!" Feyera laughed hearing even his Pokemon refer to Professor Oak as that. "Yeah, it's good to see that. People can be nice. I like it when they're nice to me."

Brucie grinned. [Yup!]

"You know, I'm really glad you see that. It kind of reminds me of my revelation that Pokemon can be nice." Christian patted his first Pokemon on the head. "Thanks for teaching me that, Brucie."

Brucie smiled without saying a word.

The pair walked further south, kicking tiny rocks and pebbles along the path east of Saffron as the moon and stars faded from view due to the bright city lights.

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Scanning the nearby port city in the morning dawn, Feyera scanned the watery town blanketed in the clouded sunrise. A thick mist was being repelled by the new dawn. While sleepy from last night's late travels, he did not want to miss his scheduled departure so he headed towards the pier in earnest.

When he laid his eyes on the massive ship, he shuddered to think that the S. S. Libra was three times its size. The S. S. Anne adorned with party flags, balloons, and other Pokemon-themed apparel was simply impressive. It was amazing what people could accomplish when they worked together. Sure, Pokemon probably aided in the construction process, there were probably a few fighting types involved in lifting the heavy metal. But the ship ran on energy not generated by any Pokemon. There was no need to strap any Electric Pokemon to the power sources to turn the turbines. Coal and steam...
provided more than adequate energy for S.S. Anne; the massive steam chimneys belching out clouds of black smog bore testimony to this. The newer ship, Libra, was even able to utilize crude oil in its power generation integral.

[Wow!] Brucie exclaimed placing both his paws over his small maw. [Humans built that!?!]

"Mmhmm," Christian nodded proudly, as if he built it himself.

[Incredible.]

"It's pretty amazing actually; to think, we're going to be voyaging on that thing, as guests," Feyera calmly replied. Deep down, he was cynical of the fortunate turn of events, but his excitement drowned out any derivative of pessimism.

[I just never thought it would look like that! I'm so impressed, I want to stare at it.]

"Don't worry, I'm sure the interior is even nicer," Feyera glanced at a large brass clock tower above one of the pier's taller buildings. "C'mon Brucie, quit lollygagging, it's almost nine o'clock, we need to board the ship before she sets sail at eleven!"

[Right-o, sorry!]

"I know you've been up all night, but we can always rest in our cabin. Remember we're guests, not stowaways! You gotta act like you own the place!" said Feyera. He tightened his necktie and slicked his auburn hair back.

The queuing line was empty since nearly all of the passengers had already boarded the cruise liner, starting at eight. Rushing, and out of breath, Feyera made it to the vessel right before the bon voyage party. Checking in was simple because this was a Pokemon themed event, he had no need to relinquish his friends at the entranceway.

As he slowed his pace down and walked to the gangway, he saw a stiff suited security guard armed to the teeth. The port's security guard looked angry, mean even. This was going to be tricky. He presented the ticket Bill had given him and his trainer ID card. He had scratched off the 'Christian' part of his name. It only read 'Feyera' now. The security guard looked extraordinarily skeptical.

"Ahem. This card looks tempered with, Mister Fay…how do you pronounce that?"

"Umm…" Christian nervously bit his lower lip. "I…" What could he say? Just when it looked hopeless, a sudden wave of intuition overwhelmed Edge. Psyonics guided him; he felt exactly what he needed to say before he processed it, making his words sound genuine and natural. "Ah yeah, I've been on the road for some time. Last week my card got nicked by a wild Pokemon, I'm just lucky to have gotten it back in one piece! Wouldn't you know, it was a Mankey! Suidae simian! Blasted creatures."

"You were able to get your card back from a Mankey?" the guard asked. "That's impressive. Usually when they take something, it's gone for good."

"Of course! I've researched Pokemon for my entire life! Name's Vince Feyeraseer. I haven't had a chance to get a new ID card yet—" he flashed his Bolder Badge and Cascade Badge "—I got two league badges right here, I'm legit."

The gruff man lifted a brow. "Feyeraseer?"

"Mmhmm." Feyera said charmingly. "What's with the funny look?"
"It just reminded me of something I saw on the news."

"Oh you mean that Feyera guy? You think I'm him?" Christian said with a laugh. "Ha! Thanks a lot!"

"No," the guard shook his head. "I suppose that wouldn't make much sense. Pretty sure you'd be terrorizing me if that were the case. Can't imagine the Pokemon League letting a psyonic run loose!"

"I almost feel bad for that guy," shrugged Feyera, "ya know."

"Well I sure don't. He sounds like a thug in cahoots with Team Rocket or something." The port gatekeeper raised an eyebrow and moved closer to his desk computer. Edge was almost sure that he was going to run his ID number through the system.

"Ahem!" Feyera cleared his throat and got the guard's attention. "That whole ordeal gave me a bit of fame I'll have you know!"

The guard paused. "Hmm?"

"Most people see my name and make the association right off the bat, so I understand why you were confused." Edge was practically guiding along on speech autopilot, curving his words to perfectly suit the situation and address the man's concern. "But I'm trustworthy."

"Yeah, I was a little riled up by the stuff in the news to be honest. Must be difficult having a similar name to that guy, Vince."

"Heh, of course. Glad you understand… how I feel." Feyera felt a slow trickle of inner tears. "Psyonic," he thought.

"What was that?!" the guard looked up quickly.

"Erm. I need to ask, are you from around Vermilion? I've seen your face before…before, um—" pain heralded the guard's name as Feyera's psyonics were invoked with eye contact "—Peter. Yes. How could I forget?"

"Why…yes actually, I'm a native." Peter looked even more quizzically at the trainer. "I don't remember where we met though, Vince."

"Haha, of course you wouldn't!" And then it clicked. Like a glint of sunlight from above it came to him! Edge was on a roll! "You were at the Drifting Mary Pub down on Salisbury Street!"

Peter's once coldly worn face turned beat red. Feyera could've sworn he noticed a vein on his temple bulge when Peter answered. Edge was becoming increasingly observant of the latent behavior of others. "Erm…dunno what you're talking about…"

Feyera chuckled, a steady warmth filling the area behind his eyes like a soft cushion. "Oh come'on, that was a fun night, wasn't it? Remember when you leapt off the bar's fake crow's nest because you 'always wanted to be a pirate'? Absolutely priceless!"

"…!" Peter looked clearly embarrassed. "Erm…hey, keep that down, I'm trying to be professional here."

"Heh…of course, Pete." The guard then looked past Feyera at the dock leading back to the city and rather suddenly, the heated psynonic residue was fading, clarity was dissipating. Nervously, Edge begged for it to come back, aimlessly talking. "Vermilion is one of those cities I wished I could have
grown up in. Maybe it's the charm of adventure. You know, that led me to becoming a Pokemon trainer! Ships always coming and going, new people to meet, exotic Pokemon, the Vermilion fleet, they're unquestionably the best vessels in the world. I've heard nothing but good things about the S. S. Anne you know."

Peter glanced over at the massive ship behind them both. "Yeah, she's a fine vessel. Old though."

"Hardly." Edge grinned enough to make his face feel strained. "I can't wait to attend the trainer parties and obtain more League Badges. Pokemon battles are fun. They can be a little bit unruly though sometimes. Kinda like people when you think about it."

"Mmm?" The guard tried to look guiltless. "How so, Vince?"

"Well, I hope there's law and order on the Anne considering what I know about you! How'd you land an upstanding job like this anyway?"

"Err…it wasn't that bad, buddy." Sweat was staining his neck collar. "Everyone likes to let loose a little, ya know?"

"Heh, if that was you letting loose, I'd hate to see what out of control is!" Feyera wittily responded. "Say, I got a bottle of Captain Ander's with me if you want to get drunk!"

"Shh!" insisted Peter. "My superior – the port master – is making rounds mate, keep it down."

"You're a real party animal." Languidly, Feyera waved his arm in front of him. "But I understand that, Pete. I can understand you."

"—You can?" Peter said.

"Sometimes you gotta relax, right?"

"Are you trying to be my shrink or something?"

Feyera never thought about that. "Nah, I'm just talking. Making conversation. You seemed friendly when I first met you."

Peter nodded. "Great, great."

"I always wanted to ride on a luxury liner, but I didn't know I would see a familiar face! Tell me, does the Anne have a bar on board? We should down a round of Eeveelutions shots like last time and catch up. That sure should get the ship rocking."

That made the guard twitch, but he ignored the suggestion. "You seem…enthusiastic," he replied softly.

"Well, I can hardly wait to attend the events!" Edge's eyes tinged with the eye contact; it felt amazing. Coarsely he went on to say, "Think there'll be any rowdy people on board?"

"Rowdy folks? No…Why would you say that?"

But Edge had Peter right where he wanted him to be, completely manipulated by his psyonics. "Speaking of, are you planning on coming along?"

"Err…no. I ain't Partying Peter anymore."

"Haha! Partying Peter!" Feyera laughed heartily. "So it's back on the wagon for you?"
"Well, no. Sheesh man, you gotta keep my drinking habits on the down-low. I could lose my job."
The man peered over at where the ship officials were walking. They were approaching and nearly
within earshot. Their uniforms consisted of primarily decorative military wear.

Feyera beamed, "Oh, that's just too bad. Ah well, we can talk about the good old days while you fill
out my oh–so–important paperwork."

"I'd rather not talk about that night at the Drifting Mary," Peter insisted, paying attention to his
encroaching supervisors.

"Aw come on! Auld Lang Syne," Feyera hummed, "as time goes by, remembering friends from the
past and not letting them be forgotten."

"I don't remember you, Vince. I was too smashed that night to remember anything. Now if you don't
mind–"

"–Say, Pete, why do you keep looking over there? Do you know those guys? …Do they know
you?" Edge said, deviously emphasizing the latter question.

"Umm." Not wanting to be revealed as the carouser he was, Peter motioned towards the gangway
with a tilt of his round head. "Listen, I don't want to hold you up. Why don't you get on board and
have a good time before you miss out. I've got some other things I need to attend to. Forget about
what happened over at Mary's, okay?"

"Mary's? Ha! Can't say I know her, pal!" Edge smiled brightly, as the man gave him his ticket and
license back. By now he was exhausted. Not from just last night's travels, but also from a sudden
sensation of psyonic overexertion. It was almost as if just speaking to the guard had completely
drained him of any stamina Feyera had left.

"Yeah, yeah, here you go then; have a pleasant trip, sir."

After receiving his keycard, Feyera triumphantly crossed the gangway onto the S.S. Anne. The gulls
squealed in melody with a whistling sea breeze as he crossed the threshold. "…Amazing…" he
whispered, in awe of his psyonic's mysterious the young man was soon impressed by something a lot
more physical.

"Oh wow!" The ship's main atrium was enormous and expansive. Spanning at least four stories high,
was totally decorated in red and white drapes. The glass ceiling let in natural sunlight through
windows. He made his way to the stairs and elevators. Feyera glanced at his keycard. He was in the
aft, in cabin 3–280. First number stood for third deck above sea level. The second series of digits was
the actual room. Taking the steps down, Christian walked through the very narrow corridors until he
made it to his cabin. It wasn't a spectacular place, Feyera was sure that there were majestic suites that
made this room pale in comparison. But he had gotten this for practically nothing. And now he'd be
able to continue his Pokemon journey with style!

"I'm on top of the world now!" Christian hollered. But then he thought about Brucie's words, about
not being accepted into society because of psyonics. It reminded him of his mission, he needed to
maintain control. He couldn't risk the strange abilities further changing who he was. Though what he
had done to get on the ship was certainly something that went beyond what he was used to. As far as
he knew, tiny spurts of psyonic abilities didn't have painfully crushing side effects.

The luxury liner was already in motion by the time he had laid his head down on the soft pillow. He
buried his face in it. His eyes were on fire, he felt himself tearing compulsively. He dared not rub
them. Thankfully, the soreness was ephemeral; any pain was overcome as soon as sleep overcame
Scarcely resting for more than a few hours, Feyera woke up to the sound of rain outside his cabin's small porthole. He felt the ship rocking and lurching uncontrollably. His eyes flickered open and exotic colors zoomed into his visual range for a few brief moments before being toned down, and pushed back to the perimeters by some force originating from the center of his sight.

Tumbling from bed, and smashing onto the floor, Feyera banged his elbow. "Oww…" he groaned, "broke the fall at least." The furniture in his cabin was bolted down securely, but any items placed on the tables were now rolling about on the floor.

Instinctively, the Pokemon trainer released Brucie from his Smith and Salven's holster. "Click! Swift!"

The Pokemon immediately got down on all fours and shook in discomfort. The boat lurched back once again. [Urf…say, boss, I'm feeling a bit queasy,] the fire lizard said, paler than usual and locking his mouth shut while his small feet attempted to steady his body. [Mind if I sit this one out?]

"Oh! I'm sorry, I forgot you got seasick!" Christian recalled his friend and decided that maybe Desperado wouldn't mind the rocking ship. However the young trainer thought better of this, knowing a Gyarados was easily larger than the cabin he was now inside of. Even if Des was tiny for a Gyarados it would be impossible to even move in here with her body taking up most of the space. Edge sent out July, the Oddish whose plant like features made her body quite impervious to the unpredictable rocking motions of the vessel.

[Hey sunshine, what's up?] said the little plant Pokemon with a smile.

"Hi July." Feyera said quickly, "Listen, I have no clue what happened. I just woke up, the ship's lurching around, and I need someone to accompany me."

[Can do!] she said.

"Great. Brucie isn't feeling well. Can you feel all that turbulence?"

[I can, but it doesn't bother me all too much! Let's go on an adventure!]

"Thanks, July." He knelt down and ran his hand through her leafy head. "Stay close to me please."

[No problem, sweetie,] the Oddish said with a hearty grin. [I won't let you outta my sight!]

"Let's get this door open!" he said. With July by his side, Christian left his cabin room, and proceeded down the thin dimly lit hallway towards the main dining hall. As the power began to wane, laminated emergency lights covered the base of the corridors. The ship lurched again, this time far enough to knock Feyera into the hallway's wall. "Oof!" Rubbing his shoulder, he and his Pokemon picked up the pace as they ran towards the bow. The cabin doors were eerily flapping open and closed with the rocking of the boat. And strangely, most of the people had left because the rooms were empty.

"Attention, attention!" A loud intercom interrupted their rush down the hallway. "This is your captain at the bridge, the ship… is under control, I ask that you please remain calm, the engine has been having some difficulty in this unprecedented storm. Once again, there's no need for concern, the ship is…THUMP!" the message was cut short by a loud thud and then static.

"Great, just great," thought Edge. A few seconds later, he heard a loud scream and someone yell
something about capsizing.
"AHH!"
"Get to the lifeboats!"
"It's a disaster!"
"Help!"
"Run!"
"Hurry, women and children first!"

Hearing all the pandemonium, Feyera growled, "Looks like we're not gonna be relaxing after all. July, we gotta get to the lifeboats!" But then, he looked at the massive number of people running towards the lifeboats. "Aw shoot!" He wasn't going to be getting on those anytime soon, there was just too much pandemonium.

[What about the captain, Mister Feyera?] July asked. [Will he get to the lifeboat?]

"Usually a captain goes down with his ship. But, based on that last transmission he's in trouble; you're right about that." Feyera had to make a decision. The ship's emergency lights flickered a dull orange in strange patterns out over the dark sea. "It's a distress signal! Something isn't right!" Edge – with a psyonic inkling – had a bad feeling about this.

[Do you know what's going on?]

"My psyonics don't work like that." Edge shook his head. "July, let's go find the captain at the ship's bridge."

[What if the ship goes under the water? Will we drown?]

"The Anne isn't about to sink, it's built to weather storms like this."

[Christian…?]

"Hmm?" Feyera answered, almost afraid to reply to a name that would only further confuse him. "What is it July?"

[I'm scared.]

"Don't be! After all, they always say, 'Silph ships never sink'." Feyera tried to be reassuring. "All these people are needlessly panicking; we've got plenty of time, c'mon!"

[Okay!]

The two hurried towards the ship's deck, once they were back in sight of the pitch-black ocean their hearts sunk. The rainstorm was tossing about the boat uncontrollably and the engine was in fact not functioning at all to make matters even worse. It just groaned and vibrated the boat with its eerie timbre. The waves smashed into the vessel, its engines lurched as if it had run aground. Still swaying with the boat, Feyera heard people below deck scream in panic. "This is no ordinary storm. The water is higher and concentrated around the vessel. Is it under attack…? Oh my gosh!" There was a massive whirlpool off to port. "We gotta get back inside before we get tossed!" Cursing softly, he ran forward, albeit stumbling occasionally.
"Are we going to be okay?"

"Yes! July, we're gonna be fine. Keep moving with me!"

"Okay!"] she shouted hobbling along behind Feyera with her stubby root feet. [Oh! I'm right behind you, in case you need me!]

"Gotcha!"

Running back indoors, Edge slammed his whole body into a door labeled "Crew Only". Entering the huge belly of the ship, the crew access door led him and July to a towering staircase, easily eight flights above him and eight flights below. It was barely illuminated save the ominous fiery glow from the engine room at the very bottom.

The relentless rocking motion made it seem as if he were in a tunnel of rotating walls and stairs. He could hear the sound of water lapping far below. He ran up the narrow staircases higher and higher as fast as he could without losing his balance. The scenery of white painted metal reflecting the deep burgundy heat was flying by. As the ship swayed further and further with each new cascade of waves, Feyera held on tightly to the railing. His sweaty grip caused his knuckles and fingers to grow pale.

His sense of down shifted, his feet were no longer on the floor. Desperately, he tried to grip the metal with his boots; but to little avail, for the ship was tilting enough to make the trainer feel like he was in a funhouse. "Ah!" shouted Feyera who felt like if he let go, he would fall down the massive swirling tunnel beneath him. Steam and debris ejected from a nearby metal door as it flung open on its own.

Down below, in the bowls of the ship, he could hear crew members shouting orders. "Seal the primary bulkhead! She's loosing fuel and we're taking in too much water!"

Another voice from below shouted, "Don, what's the status on the bridge?! ARMOS is going haywire. It's overheating…!"

"We gotta get out of here!"

"Look out!"

"Agghhhhhhh!"

A loud crashing noise echoed in the center of the ship, as a violent rumbling made the entire ship tilt nearly fully to one side. He didn't hear any more voices from below. Biting down firmly on his lower lip and grasping the railing with all of his strength, he forced himself to clamber up the next two flights, compensating for the change of directions. As the boat rolled back, he saw the sign saying "S. S. Anne Bridge".

In earnest, Feyera pushed on the door frantically, now that he wasn't holding on to anything, he was fully at the mercy of the ship. The harder he pushed the more desperate the situation became. He was losing his grip on the door's handlebar. The boat was turning back fast, and the floor moved from underneath him. Soon he'd have nothing keeping him from falling into the stairwell's pit!

"ARGH! I can't! I can't get it open!" Feyera shouted, shoving the door in agony. "SHIT! I'm not strong enough!" The trainer lost his footing, screaming wildly as the ship around him groaned, ready to swallow him whole!

[Feyera! PULL!] July screeched like a banshee from his side, her roots loosening their grip on the stairwell's grated metal.
"Huh?"

[It says 'PULL']! she wailed.

"Ugh!" Yanking the door open with a heave, Feyera dove into the ship's bridge room and called back his Pokemon into the Pokeball before she fell down the stairwell. Relief ran over him as to have made it out of that swirling tunnel of death in one piece was no easy feat. Hearing himself pant made him feel even worse about the entire situation.

The door sealed shut behind him. "CRASH! HISS!"

"Phew…"

The massive control station was aglow with numerous dials and switches all going berserk. All of the windows had been smashed to bits, allowing for the cold stormy air to penetrate into the large room. A monotonous alarm could be heard in the background, but it too was fading as the ship's power dwindled. In the middle of the Bridge, the captain was hunched over in a defeated stance. He wasn't alone. Two people, a blonde and a dark haired man stood over the captain's figure. Feyera whispered under his breath, "It's Team Rocket!" He could tell from the uniform's embroidered "R's".

The man carried a serrated blade in his right hand and Pokéball in his left. Pokemon were holding down the rest of the crew members throughout the room. He remained silent as his dollish blonde of a partner threatened, "Captain, we'll bring this whole luxury liner to the bottom of the sea if you refuse to corporate! Won't we Dragonair?" She glanced to the ship's port side where a massive blue serpentine creature with glowing orange eyes churned the waves ceaselessly from within the whirlpool. The Dragon Pokemon's tail waved and whipped the water, churning it as if it were frosting.

As the boat took another lurch, the distant Pokemon slowed down just enough for the ship to regain its balance and not capsize. She continued, "Dragonair have the incredible power to manipulate weather. Amazing right? I'm sure you've read about them back in captain-school. And lucky you! You get to see one in your lifetime!"

"Pleh!" The elderly captain spat on the ground, his uniform restricted his movement as he tried to maneuver his battered body and look at the faces of his assailants. Straws of shaggy grey hair covered the seadog's wrinkled face. "Get off me, you curs!"

"Daw, come on now. Help us out here. What we're looking for is here on your ship after all," the female walked up behind him and tugged on his thinning hair. "You're the commander of this ship, aren't you? The lives of the people on board are on your hands. Their fate rests with you."

"You'll never get away with what you're doing! You'll pay for your crimes," the captain's rough voice contrasted the delicate and playful tone she adopted. "I'm not going to let you do this to me!"

"I think we have a problem here with your comprehension, captain. You see, Team Rocket is in charge now, Evan." She pulled harder on his hair, and dug her sharp heel into his back until he gasped.

"AH! I'll never yield to you!" shouted the captain.

"Listen, you old goat! I tried to be nice, but now it's time to play dirty!"

"Ooof!" he exclaimed as she dug her pointed heel further into his back. "N–no."

"We've stopped the engines, cut the radio transmitters! Made it awfully easy for you to make a
Then we'll get out of your business," the dark haired man chimed in, spinning a handheld scanning tool in his hand. Brad clicked the circuit board. "You'll even be able to save your passengers and crew from certain destruction as a bonus."

"Right--" Laurie looked over at her partner "--Otherwise, we'll have to kill every last one of your passengers. That won't be nearly as efficient, a lot of people will die, but it'll work. We'll wait for the dust to settle in order to find what we're looking for if you don't give in."

The captain made a groan and bowed his head. "I won't let you control me through fear!"

"You're already in a hole," Laurie insisted.

Brad looked down at the handheld monitor. As it began to purr, he asked, "Do you want your passenger's blood on your hands?" Brad's expression turned sour as he read aloud, "Mercurium levels are elevated here, it's only a matter of time before we find it now. Make this easier and less violent than we're willing to make it, captain."

"It will be tragic if you don't heed our demands. I can see the headlines already for tomorrow's morning paper: 'Ill Captain Guides S.S. Anne into a Stormy Demise'." She chuckled. "So, oh captain, my captain, what will it be? Will you save your passengers?"

"My passengers deserve better than for me to give in to Pokemon terrorists like you!" Evan averred.

"Team Rocket loves radicals like you, captain." Brad taunted, "You're typically the ones who cause the most blood to bleed."

"The only blood to be spilt will be your own!" the captain huffed. "Justice will see you two at the gallows!"

"What a noble cause!" Laurie said pressing the captain with her boot. "Brad, don't you think this briny sack of salt is being cute? Do you think he really believes in something as asinine as justice?"

Brad quietly observed his monitor with increasing fascination as it began to boil with an ear-splitting screech.

"Heh..." The captain looked up at Brad, who in response lowered the mechanism's volume. Laurie continued to push on Evan's back with her sharp heel. Strangely, the pressure caused the captain to laugh even more. "Heh hahaha!"

"He's lost it," sneered Laurie. "Must've snapped."

"Hah–haha! Oh–hoho, no. Ha–hum, I haven't lost anything."

"What is it, old man?" asked Brad finally. "What's so funny to you?"

"Brad is it?" Evan said, meeting the commander's gaze. The captain forced a smile, winking an old, greying eye. "You should learn to keep your bitch on a leash. That's all. Ha ha!"

"Ha! Ah ha! I like that. Humor in the face of danger." Brad laughed along.

"You...!" Laurie looked like she was about to lose her temper, but she refrained while her partner talked.

"Haha! Oh yes! Jesters like you make my job more entertaining." Brad kneeled down, reaching for
the handle of his weapon. "Want to know why I like it when people crack a joke right before they die?"

"I couldn't imagine," Evan responded with a playful grin.

"You see, captain… I like to see the change—" Brad leaned in close, bending down to be at eye level with the captain. "—I like to watch that cheeky smile as it fades right off your dying face."

"Ha!" The captain snorted, "You're more twisted than I thought, Team Rocket must be so proud of you."

"They are," Brad assured. "But now, back to business. Captain, my dear associate doesn't require a leash. And neither does her Pokemon, as you'll find out soon enough. I thought you'd know better, considering your age, but here's a wisecrack of my own: 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.' Standing upright again, he gave a swift nod of approval to Laurie. "Execute him."

"We'll see who's bitch is unleashed!" Laurie nodded at her loyal Growlithe, who sprang forward eager to bite the elderly man.

"No!" The captain tried to ward off the Pokemon with his fist. "Stay back!"

"ARK! ARCK ARCK!" cried the Pokemon. It snarled and growled viciously.

"You'll bleed out! Slowly and painfully while all the people around you die!" taunted Laurie.

"Oh no!" Feyera saw where the Pokemon was aiming for. "The Growlithe's going for the captain's thigh! Same spot as before! These were the members of Team Rocket from Mount Moon! These are the same bastards that killed that trainer!"

"GROWLUUU! ARCK!" The Pokemon reared up on its hind legs ready to pounce! He had to do something!

"That's enough!" Feyera yelled, stomping one of his thick black-leather adventuring boots on the bridge's metal floor with an echoing "pang!". Everyone paused, surprised to hear a young man's voice in their presence.

"What?" Both of them wheeled around even quicker than the Pokemon. Evan clutched at his heart, feeling saved.

Musteriing whatever courage he could find, Feyera ordered, "Get away from the ship's captain, Team Rocket!"

"Looks like we have an unexpected guest." In unexpected swiftness, Brad rushed at Feyera, dropping his transmitter in the process. "Cover me!" he cried out to Laurie.

"Uh oh!" Feyera attempted to get out of the way by sidestepping, but it was too late. By the time he had turned towards the observation deck, the ship lurched again, bowling him off to the side. Quickly getting to his feet, Feyera reached for his Smith and Salven's Pokéball release switch.

"Hi—ya!" Brad had already extended his leg, kicking the researcher square in the chest. Punted right out of his body, everything went quiet, save for a distant "Crash!" behind him, followed by the sound of glass shattering all around him.

"Ugh!" he caught his breath as he found himself outside in the elements. There was loud ringing between his ears as his focus came back. He'd been knocked clear out of the room's side window
and onto the outside deck, wet with fresh rainwater. Shrill pain from being struck right where he had sustained injury before, riled him with sensation. Heated blood coursed throughout his entire body. The crystal did not bend or break, deeply embedded into Feyera's torso, it took the full shock of the impact. His tie was mangled and torn around the wound's contour.

Brad exited the bridge as well, smoothly sliding over the control schematics onto the large deck surrounding the bridge. He made a hand motion and a fist towards Dragonair. The Pokemon in the stormy sea slowed down the water turbulence significantly in response. "Good…" Brad mumbled.

"Gah…" Groaning, Feyera got to his feet, the deck wasn't rocking as much, but the slippery rainwater covering the wood made him stumble. He wasn't sure what had just happened and felt very lethargic. He imagined it was from being hit right where that crystal shard was. It felt like the strange piece was just embedded deeper into his chest, although examining it with his hand made him realize that this wasn't the case, it still protruded the same distance outwards from his sternum. However, the impact disoriented his sight. As he looked forward at the smirking member of Team Rocket, he could not shake the double vision.

"Take a load off, clerk boy." Brad smiled. "Working hours are only nine–to–five."

Enraged, Christian moved towards his adversary in a wobble.

"Ha ha!" Brad laughed as Feyera stumbled closer to him. Upon Christian's quavering approach, Brad drew his sheathed blade, revealing the deadly Lambda Xtella. The dull vibration of the coils may have been absent, but the wickedly sharp bayonet was not. "Want to press your luck with Team Rocket more than you already have?" Brad asked.

"Shoot!" Feyera tried to back off, but Brad jumped into the air and smacked the trainer's back with a blunt strike from a steel pommel. He felt his spine stiffen in pain. Colored spots began to cloud his sight. Feyera fell on his back and looked up at the pouring rain. A large lightning bolt illuminated the sky for one instant, and then the whole ship faded into darkness. He heard the man's footsteps approach along with the thunder's rumble. "Urgh…"

"Who the hell are you?" Brad questioned, coldly drawing the Lambda's blade up Feyera's portrait, careful not to touch him with the exceptionally sharp edge. Brad couldn't use the device's electrical power while in the rain without risking shock himself. After dragging it around the contour of his face, and nudging him with the flat side of the uncharged weapon for good measure, Brad backed off. "I'm going to leave you to my associate."

"All the same to someone like you," Feyera whispered.

"What's that?" Brad raised a hand to his ear. "I can't hear you over your whimpering!"

Again, Feyera tried to talk, but it was no use, the wind had been knocked right out of him. "*Gasp gasp…*" He rolled helplessly onto all fours, his back felt like it was on fire. "You're…all the same to me. Stupid lackeys following orders blindly. Team Rocket in a nutshell."

"—You have no idea who you're addressing right now, and you arrogantly confront me as if I were a mere grunt. I doubt your boldness would ever fit into Team Rocket's ranks. Now, I would love to
give you a second chance, maybe see if you would do things differently. Sadly, we cannot live in the past. Every choice has a consequence."

Feyera made eye contact with Brad, but it wasn't enough to invoke psyonics. The rain dripped down his gaunt face, his vision had begun to correct itself and converge back to one series of images. Another bright flash of lightning lit up the deck.

"Huh?" Brad's hand moved off from his Lambda's handle and pointed at Feyera's chest. "What's that red thing under your necktie?"

"..." Feyera remained silent. He didn't dare make any sudden movements to his Pokéballs just yet. Hollowly from afar, the thunder echoed over a pitch black sea.

A shrill voice broke up the confrontation. "—Brad, we've got to get moving, the captain sent out a distress signal before I could kill him! It's only a matter of time before the Coastal Vanguard arrives!"
The female and her pet Growlithe had made their way outside as well.

Feyera didn't need to look twice at her Growlithe's dripping maw to know what happened. "You killed him!" wheezed Feyera in disbelief. "NO!"

"Life's a very delicate thing. One minute it's there, and the next it's not—" Brad rolled his almond eyes "—we're in a bit of a hurry now, and we can't have people openly rebelling against our demands. I would love to cut you down myself and set an example. However, I leave the messy work to my dear associate. She derives a certain pleasure from this type of business." He nodded at Laurie.

She swallowed nervously, clearly distressed.

Brad encouraged her softly. "Like before, Laurie."

She began to approach Feyera, crossing her legs as she walked in a narrow path, waving her hips side to side. Her Growlithe loyally followed suit at her side, viciously snarling.

"He's just a nobody who thinks he's a hero. Show him what happens when he crosses the two of us. Show him what happens when he crosses Team Rocket!"

"No! Not this time!" Feyera belted, feeling an influx of wasn't going to let Team Rocket step all over him again.

"What was that?!!" Brad asked, confused by a thrown telepathic voice.

"Humph! Me? A nobody? I'll have you know that I'm Doctor Feyera, professional researcher and scientist, published author of various academic dissertations, licensed Pokemon trainer and Pokédex carrier..." Edge replied with a cocky smile, capriciously looking the two over. "And to whom do I owe the pleasure? Are you Rocket Grunt A or B?"

Brad turned pale for an instant. His angular face seemed to contort, slowly he lowered his venomous gaze to the ship's shifting floorboards. "Wait...what did you just say?"

"I asked if you were tick or tock, genius!" Feyera scorned. "Are you tweedle dee or tweedle dum!"

"No...before...Feyera. Doctor Feyera...?" Brad said without wasting a breath.

Laurie chimed in, twirling her blonde hair around her slender fingers, "Who is he, Brad? Who's the doctor?"
"FEYERA!" shouted Brad.

"Feyera? The scholar?" Laurie asked.

"The very same," Christian said haughtily. "A Ph.D."

"Yes!" Brad smiled and his eyes glistened golden in the pouring rain, "It's him! It's the same Feyera! He's who we came here for! And the anomaly from before! They're one and the same! I don't believe it!"

Feyera began to laugh, "Hah ha! *Cough!* …Me?! Wait a minute, let me get this straight! You—" he pointed dramatically "—and you. Rockets! Hijacking a government vessel, killing a defenseless old captain, and nearly capsizing the entire cruise ship in order to find me? Wow…just…simply wow." Tingling in Feyera's spine made him shiver in anticipation of the unpredictable psyonics.

"…" They both eyed him, their hands nervously grasping their weapons and Pokéballs.

"—Wait, you're actually serious? Guess I must be pretty special then," Feyera joked. "But do you have the audacity to tell me that you know who I am, what I am capable of, yet still show only shades of hostility? Do you even know what I can do? Do you even know what I've done? Ha! HAHA! As I always like to say, there's stupidity, and then there's you!"

Lightning illuminated the dark sky once again while Brad's expression changed from genuinely pleased to genuinely concerned. "Subdue him!" Brad reached for his weapon but was unable to undo his holster's possessive grip around the Lambda. "Charge!" shouted Laurie.

"What the devil?" Brad growled angrily, too weak to remove it. He pulled with both hands and still the metal remained completely anchored, he didn't have enough strength or will to draw it, little did he know, but he was being drained of those very things. "LAURIE! Call it off!" Brad shouted to his partner, "he's using the psyonics…!"

But Laurie was already rushing at Christian, Pokemon at her side.

Careful not to break eye contact with Brad, Feyera stood up, holding his chest and extending his other arm. Laurie spun backwards and fell flat on her rear as if she had just tripped over herself. Feeling completely in control, Edge shot taunting words, "You should've taken some advice from Engelhart, Brad. *Cough* …Oh wait, sorry, I forgot that scum is long dead. How does that feel? Jude crossed me, and you know what happened? You'll never be seeing him again!"

"You—" Brad said in frustration. "You used psyonics! You're using psyonics right now!"

"Well, well, well! Aren't you a smart one? Keep this up and maybe one day you'll actually learn something," Feyera goaded. "But yes, I killed your gang member. Psyonics – Edge – killed Engelhart. And you're next." As hate-charged telepathy gripped hold of him, he could sense Brad's fury. The telling signs were all too obvious, the nervous eye twitch, the contorted smile, the clenched teeth all signified a rattled spirit. Knowing he had infuriated the man, Edge could feed off his hatred and tainted malice. Scarlet auras of tinted light surrounded Brad, growing thicker and richer with every passing second.

Vexed over his Lambda becoming all but useless, Brad decided to attack physically. He had already hit Feyera in the chest back in the bridge, and that seemed to have done the job of debilitating him. The only problem with Brad's strategy was that Edge was more than ready for him. His amplified
psyonic prediction and knowledge of the human psyche were combined to create a deadly amalgamation.

"Hurgh!" Brad sprung into the air to launch a kick with his steel-toed boots, he soon found himself pulled right back down to the floor. "Thud!"

"Oof! The hell?!" It was as if a force beyond the visible had amplified gravity. "L—Laurie…! Laurie, stay back!" Brad looked on in horror as the wooden boards beneath his feet buckled inwards and his heavy boots became trapped him in the deck floorboards.

Edge was locking him in place. It was as if Brad was giving him the fuel to do so. Feyera's vision started to waver and shake. The feeling was incredible. "You thought I'd be weak and now look where you stand! Who's weak now, Brad?! Answer me!"

"Brad, are you okay?" Laurie shouted from afar. "Brad, get up!"

"Do you remember Mount Moon?" Edge recalled Brad's exact behavior via his psyonic powers. Picking up on the pair's twisted malice, he spat on the dock boards. He glared at the female, who had begun to rush over to her partner. "Yes, you remember don't you? I don't need to remind you, do I?"

"Laurie, stop! Don't come near me," ordered Brad. "It's going to happen if you do!"

"I need to help you!" she cried.


Laurie was inching closer to them, but Feyera kept Brad between them to prevent her from firing her Gauntlet.

Brad tried desperately to dig himself out from being buried ankle deep in the ship's wooden planks.

"I…ugh!"

"Actually," Feyera gently said, "maybe you can help me with a research project of mine. Don't worry; it's only a single-question survey. Should be simple for someone of your intellectual caliber."

"What do you want to know?" Brad asked. "How to turn all of Team Rocket against you?"

"Hah, oh no, that would be an honor though. It's a personal question, tailored just for you Brad. And here it is: what gives you the right to kill?" The painful memory of him holding the nameless trainer in his arms moments before he died made Feyera clench his teeth tighter in pain as he asked Brad. He felt like he was reliving the death over again by standing near the murderers. It sickened him.

"Go on! Answer! What gives you the right?!"

"Laurie, do something!" Brad's ankles began to swell from the deck boards closing like teeth on his feet. "Laurie! LAUREN!"

Feyera stopped paying attention to Laurie; he was drawn into the emanating emotion from talking to Brad. The sensation of just deserts was too strong to ignore. "I'm going to enlighten you, Brad. I want to show you what it feels like to fear. The man you killed might be gone, but I'm not. I'll be honest, I want to get even with you. I promised your victim I would."

"You're a dead man Feyera!" Brad yelled at him. "Killing me won't change anything! It'll only make things worse for you!"
"You think I'll fall for your empty threats?" Feyera mocked, "I think your luck has run out, Brad! Now… how would you like to become a part of my research project on psyonics!?

"Dragonair!" yelled Laurie. "Aqua Tail!"

Out of the dark, narrow perspective held by the power-driven trainer, a huge tail swept at Edge's ankles knocking him over. It was Dragonair. The Dragon Pokemon had flown from the sea onto the deck, joining the chaos. Briefly, Feyera was beyond confused and stupefied after being knocked on his back and hitting his head on the solid rain-soaked deck boards. "Nuh…Huh?"

"Growlithe, rip his throat straight out with Bite!" he heard the woman scream.

"ARK! ARCK ARCK!"

Premonition kicked in, and Christian deftly rolled to the side barely dodging a rushing Growlithe's brutal fangs. The fire hound sprang over his body, and revealed a set of glistening white teeth eager to bite. Frightened by this, he focused his energy on preserving himself. This dire defensive mentality manifested in the form of a psionic kick. A bluish purple column of energy moved outwards from the tip of his leg carrying with it great force causing the rest of his body to tremble in its wake.

As the column of energy connected with Growlithe, it made a distinct "KA–Thump!" sending the small Pokemon sailing up into the stormy sky. When the Pokemon reached a high altitude, where its orangey fur was barely in sight, a second more powerful knockback resounded, "KER–PUNK!" shooting the Pokemon straight down. In a flash, the creature went yelping downwards into the churning waves off to the ship's side. Seemingly sucked into ocean, the Pokemon disappeared into thick inky blackness.

Laurie screamed. "NO! AHH! You monster!" she yelled at the top of her lungs, drawing her tiny silver revolver.

"No!" Brad hollered in the background. "DON'T!"

"DIE!" she cried out, firing two bullets at him. "Click! Bang! Chink! …Click! Bang! Chink!"

Hardly having time to react, Feyera rolled to the side. "Ah!" The world spun about as his perspective changed. Looking across the way, he heard – or rather felt – more gunshots. With a tight fist, he threw his arm up in defense.

"CRACKLE!"

A slight shredding sound followed by a deep purple swirl appearing outside of arms reach signified that it had worked once again. Whirling chaotic tugging pulling matter towards Edge dragged Dragonair straight into the crossfire. The Pokemon helplessly bent and twisted as the unforgiving waves of gravity warped its serpentine body.

Laurie had also fired the rest of her firearm's clip in quick succession. Dragonair's narrow but thick hide shielded Edge from the incoming rain of lead. And still, the cloudy swirling dust pulled harder with each new element added to its pulsating core.

"No!" Laurie's arms flailed frantically about. She dropped her weapon, bewildered that she had inadvertently shot one of her own Pokemon allies. It too was tugged into the vortex.

Fortified by Dragonair's levitating carcass, Feyera fumbled about, trying to stall the psionic peak. Desperately, he reached to his belt holster, clicking the C–plate. But before his Pokemon manifested fully next to him, he froze hearing a loud groaning noise above him.
"CREAK!"

Everyone (and everything) stopped briefly, in an unprecedented lull. They all looked up at the pouring rain. There was an enormous smokestack tower in close proximity to the deck they were all standing on. It was starting to lean towards all of them, as it creaked and groaned in dismay. Edge must have unintentionally pulled it when he generated the gravity well. As the colossal piece of steel came tumbling down two things happened nearly simultaneously. First, Feyera saw Brad trying to get out of his prison, the prison Edge had put him in. Sensing how fast the chimney was falling, he exerted a great deal of energy to sprint over to the entombed man. Feeling like he was practically gliding at the very end of his rush, Feyera felt his entire body lifting clear off the unstable ground as the boat's deck fell out from underneath him.

Falling with the ship, Edge's powers loosened the floorboards anchoring the feet of Brad from a distance, but it wasn't enough. Sliding along the slippery deck, Feyera reached out to save Brad once within arm's reach.

But before Christian could clasp the violently trembling hand, a thick blue tail coiled around his body and pulled fast, whipping his body with great force as it dragged him clear off the ship's crumbling deck. Like a whip, the lasso of a tail snapped him backwards from the tumbling metal and breaking ship deck.

The fall seemed to last for a few seconds. The trainer didn't even feel the impact of splashing into the deep water. Didn't feel the water all around him. Everything was detached and distant. Looking up through the sea, a brilliant explosion lit up the entire night sky, however it was barely audible from under the now less turbulent water.

Holding on tightly to Desperado's tail, Feyera was dragged to the surface where he gasped for air. The stinging in his eyes was unbearable. It wasn't even from the salty waters. It wasn't even from the dazzling explosion. The S. S. Anne was finished; with any luck, its occupants would make it to the lifeboats in time to escape. Brad was surely dead – Edge – he had killed him. Worse still, Feyera would have been killed too by the collapsing chimney if it were not for his Gyarados' timely intervention.

Something about the whole picture bothered Christian though; he had little memory of the events leading up to the destruction. It all happened so quickly. His eyes moved from the burning vessel towards Desperado's disapproving gaze. Feyera tried to apologize, but when he opened his mouth to speak, no words would come out. Bemused and angry, Feyera tightly hugged Desperado's scaly hide as the sea serpent carried him to the shoreline, which was now visible from the bright flashes of light originating from the S. S. Anne's destruction. The water felt warm, he knew it wasn't and yet still there existed this strange comfort. Thanks to psyonics, he wasn't defenseless against Team Rocket. That in and of itself warranted a sense of consolation.

However, Feyera's psyonics made him vulnerable in different ways. Unfortunately, he could not hope to understand their ramifications while within the fog of amnesia.
Chapter 7: Destruction and Regret

Soft, cool water lapped against his skin. Silently, the pace of waves began to pick up frequency as the nearby Vermillion Coast loomed ever closer. Dream-like heat from the water began to dissipate, the warm comforts of respite became gradually replaced by the cruel reality of frigid water. Feyera slowly began to regain bodily sensations. Beginning with his core and extending to his extremities, the warmth from his center never really left him, it just dispersed throughout him, spreading outwards. Damp and feverish, he vigorously clutched at Des' scaly hide with his numb fingers.

By the time his eyes regained focus, the shore was right there in front of him. As the waves cascaded over his face, he tightened his grip on his aquatic Pokemon's hide. She didn't seem to approve and stirred. [What were you thinking back there, Edgy?!] his Gyarados said, tossing Feyera onto the sandy beach. The rough sandy shore absorbed his light impact.

"…" only air would come out. Again, he tried to mummer a sound, a grown, anything! "…!" It wouldn't happen.

[Well, don'tcha have something ta say?] Desperado admonished. [C'mon, you've always got some witty wisecrack laying around in yer textbook!]

Feyera decided to resort to utilizing his telepathy to communicate to the rattled Gyarados. "I-I don't know Des! What came over me, whatever it was…nearly killed us."

[Us? Us?! I thought this was about more than just us, hoss!]

"It is," Feyera projected. "Why wouldn't it be?"

[You destroyed the entire ship you 'ol galoot!]

"I didn't do it! It was Team Rocket's Dragon Pokemon!"

[Yeah right! I saw the destruction!]

Feyera flushed. "It was an accident I swear."

[Not based on that manic grin you were wearing. I swear, I had to pull you out of there. You weren't thinking rationally! That barrel was 'bout to cave yer head in!]

"No! I didn't know!" Feyera flailed his arms. "I couldn't have known, Des!"

[Oh yeah?]

"How could I know the ship would be pulled down by my little stunt?! I was only trying to protect us!" Strangely enough, he found this rationalization hard to believe. He was trying to create as much destruction as possible. When he confronted Brad he remembered not only thinking, but feeling one simple idea: kill the evildoers. It was possessive. It was dark. Brooding even.

[Yeah but look around! Ya did exactly what ya said ya wouldn't do, fella. Where's your integrity, 'member how you swore off psyonics until you could control them?]
"Yeah but—"

[Huh? Why'd ya off n’ do that?]

"The thought of Team Rocket's atrocious crimes was nauseating. They killed that old captain, they killed that trainer, who knows how many Pokemon they've killed!"

[Darlin', look what you did ta the boat. Look how many people you scared.] She shook her head. [Looks like most got away safely before the ship went belly up, but that was over the top.]

"It was collateral damage!" Feyera retorted. "Team Rocket had to be stopped at all costs. Team Rocket wanted to kill me. They wanted to kill us. And why? Because I have psyonics! I had no other choice; but to use—"

[Hmm? Use what?] pressed the Gyarados.

"I had to be who I am. I had to be Edge. It was all an unbalanced equation. I had to fix it."

[You sound torn, hoss. Why can't you keep your word?]

"Because—" But young Feyera didn't have a good reason. Everything had changed for him so quickly. "Des, psyonics are rare. They're a strange glitch in humankind's genetic encoding. I…I've never had the opportunity to learn about them, but now…*sigh* here I am. Getting a taste of the sixth sense firsthand."

Feyera's Gyarados stared at her trainer, aware of the turmoil within his mind. The longer she looked at him, the less he focused on her and the more he honed in upon the fiery destruction present behind the Pokemon. Maybe he had gotten out of line. Either way, he was trying to defend himself from not only Desperado, but his guilty conscience as well. [You know, good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of experience comes from bad judgment.]

Feyera opened his mouth to speak, but faint breaths were all that would come out. "…*sigh* *huff*…"

[You got something to say for yourself?] she asked in a sweet fashion contradicting her imposing form.

Feyera shook his head. "No."

[Nothin'?! Especially after I saved ya?!]

"Oh right, thank you."

[Humph! You ungracious lil lamb-chop!]

"…I've lost my voice entirely, Des. Psyonics are all I have left. I need Edge now."

[Goodness!] The serpent sea creature looked down at him; the desire to scold him was now being suppressed by her growing concern. [How? Wait, what? Were you injured?] she asked in confusion.

"I don't know…what did I do to cause this anyway?"

[You did that thing again. Where you started to lose yer mind.]

"Lose…my mind?"
[Dunno if yer just pushin' the envelope or what, but it ain't workin' in your favor one bit,] Des protested.

Feyera let out a long sigh and twisted on clumps of his auburn hair in order to dry it. "Wait, I think it can be attributed to the sensory process. It seems as though they are eroding my corporeal presence more and more..." Looking down at his bruised arms, he saw the healing scabs from the Golden Bridge incident had reopened. His skin's complexion had grown pale from the cold water. "You see, brain chemicals affect the body through chemical synapses. Neurons and neurotransmitter molecules all reach into muscles, glands, and tissue. If psyonics alter the chemical balance—"

[You ain't got a fancy–shmancy degree like you, doc. Break it down for me.]

"Okay. Chemical synapses are like bridges connecting the brain to the body. But the more congestion on those bridges, the more strain they are put under. Those bridges are everywhere in the body, everything is made up of them. From what I can tell, psyonics switch the balance and my bridges become packed with psyonic bulk. It weighs on me!"

[So you're saying you're a big set of bridges 'n switches?] Desperado raised a thick brow. [You feelin' all righty, hoss?]

"There must be a reason for all of this. It can't be coincidence. There has to be correlation...there just has to be...I can solve this. I—...I'll research it. That's what I do. I'm a researcher."

[Yeah?]

"I need to find out more about psyonics. The state of mind– Edge itself is... kinda overwhelming. I can't treat psyonics objectively when I'm buried in their possessive grasp."

[Objectively?]

"I need to test it. It's good research after all. Why me? Why now? If I can understand why I have these powers maybe I can figure out how to control the mental outbursts. And stop it from doing... this to me." Drops of red-stained water fell from his ragged, soaking hair onto the rocky shore. "Unngh..." He felt his arms with his hands as he gently hugged himself feeling the heat radiate wildly from the shard on his chest. From this position, it felt like his forearms were right against a stovetop.

[You ought to give it some more thought, 'cause you don't seem to be the same trainer I met back at Mount Moon,] Des groaned. She was right.

"We need to leave Vermilion as fast as possible."

[Hmm?] she grumbled.

"We're running against the clock. We need to go, Des. I don't want to be tied to this event at all." Feyera paused for a second. "...But first, we should at least confront the Gym Leader."

[Bah, you and the Gym Badges...Don'tcha think you have more important things to worry about? Like oh, I dunno, maybe yer life, pardner?] she said rocking her large head.

"I need this Des! I need to prove to myself that I can do this! I can't walk away now!"

[How will you even issue a challenge without a voice? It's not like you know sign-language. And ya can't shoot thoughts in--ta people's heads without bugging them out worse than a midafternoon stampede o' Tauros!]
"I'll figure it out, Des. I need time to recover. I feel like... my body needs to retune itself, somehow. I got too hyped up last time. It broke me down. I gotta take it slow, treat things like they're normal."

She pouted. [Well, buckaroo, that sounds totally normal!]

Her sarcasm was not misinterpreted. "Yeah well, I'm not normal. Deal with it." Edge shrugged trying to display apathy rather than reveal his own fright. It was difficult to do, all his fidgeting was a telltale sign.

Des roared loudly and then closed her mouth, [Well the rest of us have to put up with you until you figure this out! You know what they say out on the frontier? "It ain't all 'bout you, Jack!"]

Feyera crossed his arms. "Look, just have some faith in me!"

[There'll be plenty of time fer 'faith' when ya stop putting other lives in danger! Yer psyonics are far too out of control to be researching, hanky-panky!]

"I was fine at Cerulean Gym!" Feyera dropped his gaze to the sandbar. "You gotta give me – Edge – credit for that!"

[Oh?] Des asked. [Now you want credit? Credit for what? Keeping that beast inside ya cooped up for a couple of tense minutes?]

"It isn't like that!" Edge vehemently denied. "It's not some light switch; it's me!"

[What were you doing north of the Cerulean? What were you doing a few minutes ago?]

"It was Team Rocket. They drove me to this. They made it happen. They didn't give me a choice in the matter!"

[Kiddo, you drove yerself to this! Take up some responsibility for once, will ya?! I promise it don't taste as bitter as ya think!] Des bellowed mentally, clearly frustrated by Feyera's lack of conscientiousness.

"You don't get it! I've been hurt in the past. I...I used psyonics as a tool to accomplish my goal. You should understand that, you evolved from a weak Pokemon!"

[I wasn't as weak as ya think. Strength comes from how big ya are the inside, not how big ya are on the outside.]

"You're stronger now Des. You have the ability to accomplish more than what you were before. Don'tcha see? That evolution; that's exactly like my psyonics. They let me do incredible things... feel incredible... accomplish my objectives..."

Des grunted, [What objectives? To be a bigger fish for once?]

"Yes. Exactly, Des. I wanted to have control for once. Besides, I'm this way because of Team Rocket in the first place! They injured me, and because of that injury I lost my mind... but there still may be some good that comes out of that."

[Humph!] Des shook her head moaning. [No! You're this way because of you, Feyera. You made yourself into 'Edge'!]

"Explain this then!" Feyera pointed to the crystal shard embedded in his chest. The Gyarados stared blankly at him. "That's right! Didn't think you could. Do you know what it's like to lose your
memory?! Do you know what it's like to not have a past?! To forget over a year of your life? Forget your livelihood? Have a worthlessly hollow doctorate!? Then to go off on a Pokemon journey under the impression that everything will be just fine and dandy, only to have your dreams crushed by some possessive power you cannot explain?!

Des remained still and calm. Only her tail fins moved in the soft wind. Her barbels quivered as her jaw opened once more as if to say something. [Boy, that doesn't give ya the right to—]

"—Des, come on! We should get moving now, before we can be connected to the destruction of the S. S. Anne. Please. Understand—I mean—trust me on this one."

[I swear, Christian, if you don't start takin' care of yourself…] Des called him Christian, a name he hadn't heard in a while. It made him feel nostalgic. She must have overheard Brucie referring to him as Christian or something. Either way, it seemed to resonate with him. He was less angry and more reflective. Maybe she had a point. He might have changed too much. He was still a human deep down, he had to remember that. Psyonics wouldn't make him invincible, even if they made him feel that way.

"Fine." Feyera took a deep breath. "I will. If it's important to you then I will."

[Deal, pard. Keep up yer end of the bargain.]

"Okay, we've made it this far. I want you to know that I could not have made it without you. I…I owe my life to you. Thanks."

The Gyarados nodded, her rage had subsided. Anger would not solve anything. For a Gyarados she had a surprisingly high threshold for tantrums. Feyera remembered reading about how an angry Gyarados could even topple offshore oil drilling facilities. Of course, Des wasn't big enough to do any real damage to one of those, but she could still thrash about a fair bit more now that she possessed a larger body than Salire Cyprinus.

Feyera brushed his palm against her tail fin as he stood up. Des forced a half smile.

The clear morning air filled Feyera and company with hope. He had made numerous mistakes in the past, but he sincerely wished to rectify these errors. His voice had returned, but only barely. He had to struggle just to make an audible mummer. This would be devastating for a normal trainer. But Feyera had a different way of addressing his Pokemon. His telepathy would carry them further than most simple battle commands. Despite the incredible power he held, he was still unsure of how they would fair against the Electric Type Pokemon used by this city's gym leader. And rightly so. There was little difference between using his psionic abilities to communicate as opposed to destroy.

The sun's first light rays illuminated the dark building's façade. Feyera would certainly be the day's first challenger. "What day is it anyway…?" the trainer wondered.

Lieutenant Surge of the Kanto Republic Army was not only a war veteran—he was a war hero. His actions of sheer tactical genius proved himself worthy of his title time after time. He never backed down in combat. His policy was to remain on the battlefield until the objective was complete, disregarding his own safety in many instances. His Electric-type Pokemon shot down enemies with paralyzing force. Despite frequently being initially deployed at artillery barrage range, Lieutenant Surge would always find a way to the frontlines—directed by courage and his partners: people and Pokemon. To him, they were both soldiers.
The Great War between Kanto and Orre brought about such turmoil, with death tolls ranging in the thousands. Cities had been leveled by the very minds responsible for building them. Crops were destroyed by biological warfare and many supply lines were utterly ruined. There was such damage to infrastructure; many people's lives had to be changed forever. Technology became mankind's saving grace. People turned to their mastery of science and reason. These alone provided the necessary boost to launch humankind out of the shadowy aftermath of the Great War. Since that time, humankind had come leaps and bounds.

The main adversary of Kanto was a man who had grown up in poverty, Renault Atherum. He would later call himself "Arcturus" after the bright star in the celestial constellation. The reason for him doing this was simple, he saw himself as a guiding light, an illuminating source for the dark world. He rose to supremacy in the Orre region and he was able to manipulate others using his persuasive words. Able to effortlessly craft speeches and rally the masses, his political motives and quest for dominance became fully realized and nearly unstoppable when he denounced Kanto as an oppressive slave driver. His speeches riled countless individuals, until his followers reached a cult-like status.

Renault had convinced those who wished to usurp the wealthy nation of Kanto were "The Chosen Ones". He amassed followers faster than anyone ever could expect. It was as if he was able to indoctrinate large groups of people all at once and unite them against a common enemy. His enemy. The Kanto Republic.

It was all a very peculiar war. Feyera had never really followed politics, but he understood that the premise behind the war differed insofar as it had begun from a small grassroots town in Eastern Orre, and spread even to the colonized Sevii Islands at the climax of the Great War. For Kanto, and Silph in particular were expansionary in every sense of the world even to this day. Kanto's imperialistic tendencies during the Industrial Revolution just gave fuel to the passionate speeches given by Renault Arcturus.

At the very outset of the Great War, it appeared as if people of Orre were simply overreacting. There were a few riots, some civil unrest, and eventually an occupation of the Kanto embassy. To the rest of the world, it seemed as if Orre citizens were just upset about Kanto raising import and export tariffs. This single economic reason made it difficult to increase productivity in the Orre region, but it never truly debilitated the nation. It just kept them behind and dependent. Submissive, but not helpless. They still had sparse numbers of Pokemon to aid them after all. Nevertheless, the deep-seated anger could have arisen from the feeling of being treated as a second-rate nation. Almost like a poorly treated younger sibling.

As the tensions escalated, in an act of diplomacy, Kanto's prime minister, Stephanie Harqulin traveled to Orre to ease political unrest. It backfired completely. She and her family were assassinated in Pyrite Town. In no time at all, Arcturus claimed responsibility for this brutal murder. This audacious proclamation was the spark which started the Great War. He was the original belligerent, creating the perfect storm for conflict to erupt. His orchestrated arrangement as the leader of people willing to die for their sense of convoluted destiny was crucial to the onset of the war. The war was more than a battle for Renault's followers—instead, it became as indoctrinating and controlling as a religion.

It had begun as a mere political game, but ended with people throwing their lives away for a madman's dream to control the world.

The rebels found recruits in the more rural areas of the globe, and continued to grow their passionate support. Unfortunately, it was only a matter of time before the paramount researchers of Silph discovered blueprints and developed an array of weaponry to cut off the rebels at their source.
Namely, the firearms, areoships, navalships, and long-range ballistic missiles. Many of their designs were unearthed and further refined to adapt them to the technology available at the time. If only the scientists had considered the potential consequences of their research before calling it into action much death would have been avoided, but then again there is no right way to win a war.

No one knew where Arcturus had gained the capital to back his war machine. Some historians argue that he liquidated Orre's various mineral-based industries. Others believe that he was able to receive generous grants because of his persuasive skills. Neither was right. Renault Arcturus had his own unusual set of circumstances. Although raised in a normal impoverished household, the most intriguing part of Renault's past is when he claimed to have received a "Spiritual Awakening" of sorts. The megalomaniac stated he bore witness to the truth and divinity. He claimed that the two of these would set him free, and those who joined him would attain salvation. He made wild claims about mankind needing to be "reborn". Arcturus was possessed by the idea that if progress was not made soon, the world would once more fall into the Darkened Ages as it did at the conclusion of the Terminal War. In his mind, it was all a cycle. The only feasible way to do this was an evolutionary willowing, and a birthing of a new being capable of resisting the seemingly inevitable corrosion of time and corruption.

This is the point at which the man had developed his ideal world. The frantic maniac sought to obtain a method of overcoming the "inevitable destruction" he so often spoke about. Of course, this was coming from a man who had initiated the largest war since the Terminal War. If that wasn't paradoxical nothing was.

The Terminal War sent humanity back to the stone age. Why? Was it internal struggle? Abuse of power? Or maybe, just maybe it was the outgrowing of a world too fragile to contain overly ambitious creation. According to Arcturus, when a civilization reached an epoch, it would fall without question. The anxiety of being trapped in such a world plagued him day and night.

Patterns, numbers, and ancient artifacts all led Arcturus to become madly romanticized by the idea that he could be the one to prune humanity of imperfection and usher in a new age of prosperity without the fear of self-destruction. That is, of course, considering humanity had all but destroyed itself during the apocalyptic Terminal War.

How could this series of historical falls be averted? It seemed to be a galling proposition. What would save man from himself? It was then that a certain ancient relic was discovered by a team of archeologists in the bowls of an antediluvian temple far to the south. It was something more powerful than any of the other rediscovered technology found in similar archaic sites. It was believed to be even more powerful than the technology and weaponry arising from the Industrial Revolution. According to Arcturus, this Philosopher's Stone could send humanity into the next stage of its own evolution. In this regard, he saw people as very similar to Pokemon. Renault often spoke of this "Philosopher's Stone" as if it was a tangible object even before its discovery.

It only took him a few months of conflict to realign his ambitions. The artifact would be his objective; he had outgrown his plan of equalizing the economic injustice. He wanted to be responsible for the next stage of human existence. He wished to create a world where he controlled all things, but such a goal was not going to be painless to reach. He needed followers, and he needed political motivators.

Most of the history behind Renault's rise to power remains an enigma to this day. His personal publications were burned, and his name became a banned name throughout the globe for all the turmoil he created. Such censorship did not stop the people from wondering however. Many wished to have their curiosity sated. Who was this man? Was he even a man? A prophet perhaps? As he idealized his goals and spread them to others, his cause was only aided by the incredible odds he had
defied. During the early part of the war, his small militia developed into a radical cult, capable of holding their own against the superior Kanto Armada and the New Republic Army.

The quixotic idea of revolution and a radical shift in power fueled the growth of Arcturus' underground cult; whose headquarters became located in the distant Pyrite Town of the Orre region's far north. From there, Arcturus organized the attack on the Kanto leadership. After the brutal killing of minister Harqulin, conflict erupted. The minister represented a symbol more than an acting power in Kanto due to Silph's inception as the main body of power. Silph Incorporated had been given control of the Kanto Army; they entitled it the New Republic Army and outfitted its soldiers with some of the best technology of the time.

Believing Renault's group of vigilantes and freedom fighters to be not much more than a mere nuisance, Kanto responded as a slumbering power would, slow and cautious, fully able to pull from nearly infinite resources. The Kanto Armada invaded Orre by sea and air using their massive steamships and zeppelins to carry land troops over. Silph created massive transports to carry over huge numbers of troops to occupy Orre. Many of the dirigibles where in fact products of their own historical undertaking, that is to say, by rummaging through ruined Terminal War battle sites, the schematics for such impressive machinery was unlocked. Silph and Arcturus were fighting a battle of rediscovery, but it would turn into a war of attrition. That was the precise type of war Arcturus could never win, although he tried.

As the New Republic Army slowly pushed into Orre, careful to avoid casualties when dealing with the maniac and his followers, they delayed their response believing that time would solve their problems. Kanto's army, once docked in Orre, fortified themselves around major rebelling cities and towns, postponing invasion. How wrong they were to do so. Arcturus built his military not on strength or numbers alone but on other forms of engineering. His forces had a knack for processing superior tactics despite the underground and seemingly disorganized nature of the rebel organization. Renault built a unique taskforce, which synchronized people and Pokemon. During the first few skirmishes, his soldiers mowed down opposition during the Great War with the ability fight in tandem with their Pokemon. Even if their abilities were not as good as Kanto's trained professionals, there was no questioning the efficiency of a fully synchronized taskforce. Renault's followers would be able to flank their opponents almost effortlessly since their Pokemon covered them perfectly. Combined with the new firearms available, Renault's forces had little difficulty pushing back the invading Kanto New Republic Army for quite some time.

However, Kanto's Army proved to have a series of advantages of their own. Back on the mainland, Silph developed a small number of prototype weapons, drawing from a great deal technological inspiration, which lay hidden in the pages of ancient history. They were the firearms, and they were paramount. These gunpowder operated flintlock riffles were given to the best operatives and generals including Lieutenant Surge. Though this generation of firearms was significantly cruder than modern counterparts, one must consider the time period in which they were introduced. There was no such thing as composite armor during the Great War. The closest you could get to invincibility was heavy Rhydon Hide.

Eventually, the war was won by Kanto but at a terrible price. To this day, there exists resentment between the two nations, however the economic restrictions have been relaxed and few would dare call Renault a hero. Since the Great War, technology has grown at unprecedented rates, although the bulk of the tech boom came from Silph financing the war.

And probably the most important characteristic of Silph Incorporated lies right here: the intensive cooperation of thematically related but to date organizationally separate research groups: that is between university research, several federal research institutions and an international project on researching the past. Not least, the novel quantum engineering technologies will probably also lead to
forward-looking cooperation amid Silph's other controlled industrial partners and, thus, to new commercial applications.

Feyera opened the massive Gym doors, and walked inside. The veteran army lieutenant, face riddled with battle scars, sat on a metal chair at the end of the vast arena. It did not look comfortable, in fact it reminded Christian of the type of chair criminals were typically executed in.

The man stood up slowly from his seat. "Welcome to the Vermilion Gym. I take it you're here for a challenge."

Christian nodded his head, still unable to speak without pain. "Y—yes," he said, voice cracking.

"Speak up, son!" Surge ordered.

Taking a second to consider his options, Feyera mouthed the words "Ahem! Let's go" with the intention of sending a psyonic message.

"You'll have your wish then," the hulking man said in a whistle. Brushing his greying blond hair back, he chuckled. A large scar ran up his face connecting his chin to the tip of the right eyebrow. "I'll show you what helped me to win the Great War for the Kanto Army. You better not back down, or I'll jolt you into submission. I only use one Pokemon, and he's just as much a hero as I am. What do you say? This'll be a private battle between you and me: no spectators, no fancy lights."

Feyera tried to respond but his voice would not return to full volume.

"Quite the silent type, huh? Well, I'll tell you what. I think that is a good thing. When I was in the war, I cannot tell you how many men lost their lives because they couldn't keep their flaps shut. 'If it don't shoot, don't use it'," Surge smiled, his large facial scar stretching as he did so, "Good luck challenger."

Too bad that he didn't have much of a choice concerning his voice fading off. Feyera was thankful that the Gym Leader had neglected to ask him for identification. He wanted to get right to the battle. By living through the Great War as a commando, he must have valued quick behavior. Less jargon and more action. Maybe he'd incorporate that into his battle technique.

The gruff veteran called upon his faithful Riachu. The Pokemon's old face was riddled with battle scars from a life lived in war, mirroring his trainer. His orange hide contrasting the bright cheeks gave the mouse Pokemon a sharp look. His long black tail ending in a brilliant yellow lightning bolt design radiated blue sparks occasionally. This Pokemon was even older than Feyera. Out of the wild Pokemon age was not as impressive, but in a Gym setting it sure was. Even with precautions, mistakes still happened. Mister Feyera knew this all too well from his battle in Pewter City.

This was an Electric Pokemon. "To effectively defeat them, I need to employ a grounded Pokemon," he thought. Feyera had just the right Pokemon for the job: Jill. Riachu would be no match for Jill's impressive Magnitude attack.

Feyera sent out his Geodude, "Go Jill!"

[Let's rock 'n roll kids!] she exclaimed trouncing around on the shiny, steel gym floor.

"A Ground Type, eh?" Surge taunted. "In all my years, I didn't ever see that one coming!"

But Feyera ignored the jeer, instead reveling in the sensation a Pokemon battle gave him. "Okay Jill, Magnitude Strike!"
The Geodude smashed her stone hewn arms upon the Gym floor, shaking the very foundation of the building. The minor earthquake was more than enough to weaken Surge's Pokemon. Riachu shuddered and rocked along with the attack.

"You're quick, trainer! But not as quick as me!" Surge smiled, "Double Team! And then Quick Attack, Riachu!"

As the Gym Leader's Pokemon bounded behind Jill, it quickly took its two front paws and dug into Jill's rocky hide. [Ow!] Jill recoiled as the electric mouse punched her in quick double succession grinning as it did so.

Feyera shook his arms, "Get out of the way! To the left, watch out!"

Hearing this, Jill raised her arm and caught Riachu's muscular paw. But as Jill wound up to throw Surge's Pokemon, the mouse took his thick tail and smashed the lightning bolt into her face, releasing a flow of blue electrical energy.

[Just a scratch…] Jill backed off and held her face in confusion, still seeing sparks.

"Take Riachu on with another Magnitude attack!" The battle was allowing Edge to speak again, at least partially. It started with a faint huff of air, and like magic, the cool air seemed to coat his vocal cords once more. He could not explain why, it just occurred naturally. He was falling into the experience, his senses absorbing every aspect of the battle. Thankful for this, he did his best to exhibit command over the situation. "Ah!" he exhaled.

Surge grinned, "Step it up now Riachu!" The evasive mouse was cable of dodging the quake by leaping high into the air, making him impervious to the Ground Type attack.

Edge anticipated this the second the agile mouse rose into the air and was already conveying orders telepathically. "Now Rock Throw!"

"Charge! Slam attack!" Surge ordered.

Lifting a heavy stone, Jill hurled it at the opponent's airborne Pokemon, landing a direct hit. It was as if the stone was guided right into Riachu from Feyera's perspective. "Perfect aim!" He hollered. After the hit, Riachu fell to the ground with an equally loud thump. The Leader's Pokemon gasped for air. The wind had been completely knocked out of its lungs.

"Enough!" yelled Surge. He ran into the arena. Kneeling next to his defeated Pokemon he asked if it was okay. The Riachu nodded and began to breathe normally once more as Surge administered a dose of Hyper Potion. Sighing in relief, Feyera was nervous that something might have gone wrong. He was incorrect though. Surge and his Pokemon were fine. It was all too perfect a battle. Flawless even.

"Huff…huff…" Feyera's exhales grew louder and louder as cold sweat coated his sallow face. "Did…it…"

"I will confer upon you this League Badge, trainer," Surge began, "but I must ask you a question. How is it that you are able to communicate with your Pokemon? You issue battle commands quicker than I've ever seen, and as a soldier that intrigues me."

"I'm…" Feyera wasn't sure what to say, "Well I have been close with my Pokemon and I guess we have developed good synergy. You know…Together." Was this even true? He wasn't even sure how things had gotten this far without him questioning why his battles were so successful. Luck? No. He had the worst luck. He had been scarred just from going to the bank on the wrong day of the
"I…” his voice cracked, and Edge quickly raised a hand to cover his mouth. "Maybe I am just better at this because I can communicate well with my Pokemon. Like by using my—" he couldn't bear to call it a gift "—ability.”

Surge looked at him quizzically. He didn't see Feyera say anything, but had heard a voice. Then again, the trainer was looking down and Surge couldn't see his mouth. The old veteran slowly shook his head. "Sometimes, I forget what it is we're fighting for. When you think about it, maybe this whole deal has been a huge mistake. I've seen more death than I'd care to admit to anyone, challenger. The reason for this escapes me time to time. And still we battle, for sport of course, but why does it not just end there? These are the things philosophers bicker about tirelessly, yet I feel inclined to at least share with you my thoughts on the matter." Pausing before taking a long inhale, Surge took a Thunder Badge from his pocket, his hand shaking slightly. "I believe we're all natural killers, challenger. Feral even. There are evil people in this world. That is for sure. Nevertheless, to kill them, maybe you yourself resort to evil. That would mean that evil must be defeated by evil. It's just so very odd."

"*Cough* You do what you can. I can't say much else," Feyera grumbled. "If you choose not to fight then you become a coward and allow evil to perpetuate." he knew this all too well. He should have been killed by the Rockets but he wasn't. He didn't die a hero. His valor died. And his body paid the price. He was still paying in ways he could not yet understand.

"Perhaps. Yes, perhaps you're right," Surge patted his Pokemon on the head and Riachu murmured softly, "I'm sorry, I haven't been formerly introduced to you. It's just that with so many challengers coming and going, it all seems meaningless. What's your name anyway?"

"It's Edge," Feyera claimed.

"Nice. I like it. You're different than my other challengers, I feel like I can talk with you. You understand. It's those compassionate eyes of yours."

Feyera instinctually raised a hand to one of his eyes as if to pad it. Of course he didn't, it was just self-consciousness. Had Surge seen the micrometer golden rim? He thought it was only visible under scrutiny.

"Now, I'm not going soft on you. You're a brutally efficient battler. But your face tells me you've been through your own brew of pain and struggle."

The young trainer forced a nod. "Mmm."

"Don't give up. You always have tomorrow." Surge patted the young man's shoulder. "Tomorrow is a gift you fight for today. You can hope for a brighter future by looking forward."

Feyera thought for a moment before sensitively responding, "The past won't change. Even if you forget about it."

"Son, I wish I could live out the rest of my years without the memories I have of the Great War…so much loss," he handed Feyera a sleek yellow League Badge. "It wasn't a just war."

Feyera stared at the badge he had been given with an unwavering blank expression on his face. "War isn't just," he said to the retired soldier. "It was never intended to be, and sadly that's what society's made it. I'm sorry you had to live through it."

"I did it for kids like you." The man gave a half nod, "Good luck, Edge."
"Thanks," Feyera hollowly replied, his voice returning to its normal volume.
Chapter 8: Fighting the Darkness

"Heaven may seem within sight, but Hell always resides by our side. Are you one of sight or side?"

Christian could not recall where he had heard these words before as he woke up from his otherwise uninterrupted sleep. He grunted at the morning light, which had temporarily blinded him. "Hnn. Ahhh!" he said for there was a sharp pain coming from his heart. "Blasted wound... won't stop hurting. OW!"

Feyera sat up and crawled out of his sleeping bag. The Pokemon trainer had just obtained his third Pokemon League Badge and was heading towards Lavender Town. With the S. S. Anne unable to ferry him to the southern part of Kanto, he had to travel on foot. That meant passing through the Rock Tunnel. "Darn," he grumbled as he rolled up the portable bed. The morning air was cool. As he stowed the bedding into his knapsack, he removed his brown jacket and tossed on the lightweight article. While not exactly fitting like a glove, at least the soft cotton fabric kept him warm.

Gnashing his teeth tightly together, he sighed deliberately louder than usual, growling to the otherwise noiseless atmosphere. The crisp morning air outside of the Rock Tunnel was incredibly still. Feyera longed to hear a bird or maybe a wild Pokemon, but there wasn't a sound. If he listened hard, he could hear sound of the wind blowing through the southern valley surrounding the mountain pass.

"Err..." The stinging pain wouldn't go away, and his entire body was aching. "I feel hung-over..." Stiff and sore from head to toe, his eyes focused on the sun rising above the lonely Eastern Sea. Vision was undeniably hazy. Stretching his sleepy arms, he looked over at the nearby, dew covered grass blades. The wind stirred them ever so slightly, wafting the fresh scent of sward. Reaching into his obligatory trainer's first aid kit, he fumbled around looking for an anti-inflammatory agent. Locating a tube of antiseptic, he gingerly rubbed the wound on his chest. It burned initially, but subsided shortly after the application of the medication. Even with this short-lived-peace, the question of relapse constantly pervaded his thoughts, haunting him in terrifyingly unexpected ways.

"It's all out of my control. Isn't it?" he silently thought. Touching his temple with his hand, he felt his head swell with sudden throbbing pain. "Ooh, not another headache." He dropped his arms to support himself. The trainer thought about all that had taken place in a very short period of time. It wasn't natural. He wasn't natural. His psyonics proved it.

It wasn't his personal secret either. His immerging psyonics were not known only to Feyera, but to others. Evildoers and innocents alike. Feyera cringed. It was bound to happen sooner or later: someone innocent would eventually die. How could he control it? How could he curb it? As such questions inflamed his mind, he further considered the apparent lack of faith in himself. Once, only once, he allowed them to take command, and now he couldn't help but indulge in their beckoning call. The sensation was incredible.

"Ah-choo!" Sneezing, he rubbed his itchy nose. "Sniff... ...Oh great, I bet I've got a cold..." he said pessimistically. "Maybe from being in the night water. Urgh. Never again..." He then tacked on the oh-so-important caveat, "Unless I have to. Of course." Feyera couldn't deny that he got a rush by
taking justice into his own hands. But the best part was whenever psyonics overtook him. At those moments, he could find little comparison. It was purest ecstasy. The addictive pleasure was probably more dangerous than the actual psyonic incident in this regard.

"What am I going through?" he wondered silently to himself. "It's all like some sick, convoluted metamorphosis. I never had psyonics. And now, that I do, I can't help but love the feeling. Is this what all psyonics have to put up with?"

Closing his eyes in a trance, Christian Feyera nodded his head in deep thought. It was only a matter of moments however before he was startled awake by his compulsory (and involuntarily) stroking of the crystalline injury.

"Gasp!" His lungs tightened sharply, and he lost his breath for a second. "Phew. I can't let it take over. I'm learning. This is all a learning process..." Giving a final stretch and a yawn, the young man began packing up and got ready to enter into the pitch-black cave connecting to Lavender Town. Distraught, he concluded, "This is all a test. A test to use my mind as it has never been used before. And I won't fail. I'll find a way to make 'Edge' work..."

The deep thicket seemed to embrace the young trainer as he ventured further along the desolate path of shady trees and colorful foliage.

Scarlet color dousing his sight as he invoked the psyonic link to his Pokemon, Feyera fought the rush of adrenaline accompanying the feeling with a bite of his lip. "Brucie, that was a close call," Christian said to his Charmeleon.

[Yeah, I wasn't too sure we were going to get away!] Brucie responded shaking his head back and forth as he did so. [You should be more careful!]

The two of them reminisced about the events, which took place after Feyera had earned his badge from Surge. Upon leaving Vermilion, Christian and his Pokemon were caught off-guard by a group of patrol officers. They questioned him, and he was able to convince them that he had no idea about the events which transpired on the S. S. Anne. In a sense, he had passed as just an ordinary trainer. He considered telling them about Team Rocket's interest in him, but decided against it. For if he said anything, they would only further question him.

Team Rocket was not an organization keen to let anyone more powerful than them escape. To a degree, this helped them to preserve their power over others. By feigning weakness, Feyera was safe. However, he wasn't sure if he could keep up this exigent charade for much longer. Opposition had a way of following him and forcing his hand. Or in Edge's case, his mind.

In addition to being a selective organization, Team Rocket was ruthless. Christian had learned this from his first encounter with them at the Pokemon Sanctum. But he now had the power to fight back. His Pokemon could fend off their Pokemon. No, that was not entirely correct; there was more than just Pokemon at Edge's disposal. He had his manifesting power. Terribly untamed and destructive power. Sure, he could survive the Rocket's and their firearms. Could he protect himself from himself though? It would appear impossible based on the experiences he had.

He was losing touch with his former self. It was if a rift had split him apart, fragmenting his being. In solitude, these feelings of division only amplified. Something about silent reflection pulled him away to a place where he was unsteady in his own wholeness. There was Christian Feyera, the esteemed researcher who had lost his way, and now there was Edge, who gave him a fascinating new discourse. Psyonics were gradually changing him, steadily morphing his identity. It was a slow process. A gradual slip into obscure griminess. Indeed, he was as much Edge as he was Feyera. A
"Brucie, what's happening to me?" Feyera asked as a spurt of anxiousness overtook him. He was seeing the vivid colors again – a sure sign that the psyonic force was well at work within him judging from the past. "I know who I am, but when I question what I am, I lose touch with the former. I started out as an adventure-seeking researcher. Everything looked so hopeful for me. I had resources, I had intelligence…"

[–You didn't have Pokemon though!] interrupted the antsy Pokemon. [Give yourself a break bud!]

"Ah, maybe you're right. Had I been a Pokemon trainer instead of a researcher, maybe I would have been able to strike back against Team Rocket when they robbed the Pokemon Sanctum." Wishful thinking did not console him. "Then maybe, I don't know…I'd be normal." Feyera considered the absurdity of this. "I'm alive today because I did not fight back on that fateful day. In fact…I still don't know the reason behind the psyonics! But it has something to do with this scar on my chest."

[Psyonics come out when you're hurt, or when you're scared!] Brucie gave him a brief glance and then kept walking. [That's what I've noticed at least.]

"There's a physical connection though, Brucie." Then the thought came to him. "I was wounded. It's this thing, that made me hate Team Rocket, isn't it?" "The pulsating red shard still seemed to echo a distant memory. Edge did not know what it meant, but he knew that it had everything to do with his current predicament. "But why now?"

[Maybe 'cause now you're ready.]

"Hmm…" The young man's tension only grew in the silent mountain air. Everything was still. All too still. Something was not right. Things were too quiet. Feyera began to panic. As horripilation set in, he thought, "I want to go now. We need to get going." Urgently, he rushed forward ahead of his Pokemon. "If we keep moving, I'll be able to think faster."

Charmeleon looked perplexed. [What's up? What is it, boss?]

Feyera turned around. "You don't…? You didn't feel that?" There was something chilly in the air, and the way it caressed his skin sent his thoughts to a state of unease.

The Pokemon shook his head, [Feel what?]

"Huh?" Why couldn't his Charmeleon see? It was so obvious, but maybe only to Edge. This sensation, like approaching darkness in the bright daylight, loomed just beyond his sensory perception. The closest feeling he could relate to this very particular sensation was the strange feeling being watched. The environment was very flat, and he had a good sense of where things were. Nothing was within his sight. This made the fear grow even more. It was so unnatural. He was almost looking forward to going into a dark cave. Maybe the change in environment would help him escaping the coldblooded sensation. "Never mind. Let's keep moving."

Brucie ran to keep up with his trainer. [Umm, do you need my help illuminating the cave with my flame tail, boss?]

Feyera wished that his Charmeleon's brightly lit flame tail could repel this dark sensation he felt surrounding him now even in the daylight. The black dread was encroaching on him from all directions. It couldn't have been physical darkness. If it were, then Charmeleon would sense it too. He quickly nodded and panted, "Yeah. Please, that would be useful."

[Okay, let's go!]
Stepping into the mouth of the cave, his eyes adapted to the low light from his Charmeleon's tail. Drawing on his heightened perception, Edge moved silently through the mysterious cavern. At first, it was difficult to see anything, but after a few minutes, he was able to use his advanced cognition to perceive his immediate environment. A dim outline of nearby hazards became visible not through his eyes but rather through his mind. Of course, he stumbled once or twice. He gently grazed past a wall as well. Overall, he was pleased with the progress he was making. If he could just get to the end of the cavern a little quicker. He sped up slightly, and the murky dampness made him shiver. Every time he began to increase his movement speed, the visions would dissipate, and he would find himself in utter darkness momentarily. He was frightened by this. It was if a thick blanket covered his field of sight, taking away everything. Directed by this pattern, Edge slowed his pace and the weak clairvoyance returned.

"Gotta keep balanced I suppose."

[How do you know where we're heading, boss?]

"I'm... Call it an intuition," Feyera answered. He was not completely sure. He couldn't be. "It's like being led by something your eyes can't see or something." Though to the young man, it was more of a feeling of being chased rather than being led. Feyera's movements all felt reactive, rather than preemptive, though they led to the same result: a blustering pace through the Rock Tunnel.

[Well obviously! But how do they work?] Brucie asked. [The psyonics?]

Not wanting to sound ignorant, Feyera attempted to make a comparison. "It's a form of thinking." Although it was a poor analogy, it still got the point across. "Psyonics...it's a state of mind."

[State of mind?]

Feyera tried to think of an analogy for his Pokemon. The problem was Feyera himself didn't fully understand the psyonics; to him describing psyonics was like trying to articulate a bluish pastel redness. By definition, they seemingly contradicted itself. "I guess it's like smelling, Brucie. You don't know why you can smell, but you do. It just sort of happens to you, you know?"

The Charmeleon nattily answered, [Well you smell because you can find food that way! Everyone knows that!]

Edge tried to repress a smile, "Maybe, but I think it's a lot stronger following the scent of apple pie."

[Well if you had baked the apple pie, then I think we'd be running AWAY from it!] quipped Brucie.

"Aw c'mon! Is my cooking that bad, Brucie?"

[Yeah it is, and that's coming from a Pokemon! Even Professor Oak knew how to cook, and he's like...three evolutions older than you!]

"Well I'm SO--RRY!" Feyera made a disgruntled face. "Guess next time I'll take your portion for myself."

[Boss!] the Pokemon whined.

"Kidding. Look, pal, I feel motivated to move forward. Keep up with me."

[I'm going as fast as I can, I don't have legs as long as yours! What's the big rush?]"}

"I want to leave this place. I would like to be rid of the darkness. That haunting feeling I had outside
was awful."

[No...Not trying to be rude, but why on earth would you go into this cave if you wanted to escape darkness?!] Brucie exclaimed in distress. [Even my tail can't illuminate much in here.]

Feyera groaned, the pain in his chest was now at a state where it throbbed perpetually. "It's not the psyonics doing this to me, is it?!" He paused and knelt on the rocky soil as the pain caused his body to stiffen and muscles to throb. "Urgh..."

[Are you alright?!] Brucie gingerly helped Feyera steady himself by clutching the young trainer's wavering hand with a helpful paw. [How do you know where we're going?]

"Yeah..." "hmm" Feyera whispered, "I'll be okay. I keep telling myself this is all temporary. The sensation will subside. It has to. I'll be okay..."

[Boss, you're losing it. The cave we're in is pitch black; I'm telling you, it wasn't dark outside! It's your mind playing tricks on you!]

"No." Feyera shook his head. "It isn't physical darkness, Brucie. It's worse. It's what you feel when you're in the dark, but while in the light. That's how it feels like. What is that? Why is that...?"

They walked a little further through the large cave. [Paranoia,] Brucie said bluntly, [you're afraid of what isn't there!]

"Maybe..." Feyera sighed. "If they psyonics are based off bio-chemical interactions in my mind, then maybe I'm starting to losing my mind. What if Des was right? What if this is a consequence?!"

His breaths grew steadily irregular.

[Don't lose that, boss!] Brucie implored. [You don't want another Edge incident to overtake you.]

"I'll do my best. But my mind isn't whole to begin with, so no promises," Feyera joked.

[You always have to make some kinda wisecrack, don'tcha?] Brucie chuckled. [Start off slow, try to not use the violent psyonics first. That's the worst of it, if you can cut that out...]

"Yeah, good idea but...that's what I love most about psyonics. I mean, second to talking with you."

[Yeah, yeah, I know. But why? What's there to like about doing that?]

"I've never felt so happy. Even if it was only a brief moment!" Feyera shrugged. "I was content to exist, content with everything! Embraced in eudemonia."

[But it wasn't worth being happy over! Look what happened afterwards! To those around you! To yourself!] Brucie looked menacingly at Feyera's dimly reflective eyes.

"You don't get it Brucie," Feyera replied, "I was enraptured by the process, not the consequences. Do you think I wanted to hurt myself? I know psyonics hurt me. And I know they can hurt others. I'm not a moron. It's a matter of craving."

[Couldn't you fight it though, boss? Can't you say no to it?]

Christian sighed, "That's what this journey's turned into. I wish there was a way to deny it outright, but for now, I have to push myself to understand it instead of letting it take over me. That's difficult to do. However, if I can figure out a way to curb the out-of-control side of Edge, maybe then I can be happy."
[Happy?] asked the Charmeleon.

Christian shrugged, admitting, "Yeah... it's something I like. A lot."

[Why do you like it so much? I don't understand!]

"Do you know what it's like? It feels incredible!" Feyera pouted and crossed his arms disapprovingly. "I can't just let it go!"

[Well, why not?]

"Brucie?"

[What? What can be that good in life where you can't say no?]

Stumped as to how to explain the sensation to his Pokemon, Feyera squeezed his nose bridge with a sigh. "Brucie, I've got two questions for you: What's the happiest moment you've ever had? And have you reached sexual maturity yet?"

[Huh?] Brucie said. [What's the second one?]

"Exactly what I thought," Feyera grimaced, "you can't understand then."

[No, honestly, tell me!]

"Breeding. It's when... ah, oh never mind," grumbled Feyera. "I'll tell you when you're older."

[Oh! Maybe one day when I find a mate. That would make me so happy too! But what does breeding have to do with your psyonics...?]

"You don't get what I'm trying to say." Feyera shook his head.

Brucie shrugged care-free. [What's there to get?]

"Hopeless... this is what you get for talking to a Pokemon..." Feyera muttered – silently wishing he had a human companion to share these types of conversations with. "Point is, psyonics feel a lot better than the feeling you get when you land a critical hit in a Pokemon battle."

[Oh. That must feel pretty good then!] Brucie said with a grin. The Pokemon was happy to receive an analogy he could relate to.

Feyera's firm gaze belied his sallow stance. "Like I said before, you have no idea..." But the young man held off; for to describe the ecstasy, he'd be tempted to bury himself in it again. "Trust me."

[Okay boss, you're the boss.]

"Hah..." Feyera stammered. He wasn't much the boss of anything, especially not his psyonics. As the young trainer moved through the quiet cave structure with deft sensitivity, the thought of being watched continued to haunt him. Nevertheless, he pressed onwards. His fear would only hold him back and allow whatever it was he was escaping to catch up with him. This logic sufficed for now, but it was getting difficult to believe it. That was odd, since rationality had always been one of the researcher's strong suits.

Dangerously so.
"We're almost there." The inescapable anxiety had only grown upon nearing the exit of the pitch black Rock Tunnel. "Almost…"

Brucie turned to face his trainer. [Boss?]

"Brucie, I'm worried," Feyera said walking a little ahead.

[I know.] The Pokemon at Feyera's side knew that his trainer wasn't afraid of the dark, or caves. Maybe Feyera feared his psyonics, but this was different. He wasn't acting right. Worst still, Edge's projected anxiety was practically radiating off his every expression.

Brucie turned to Jill, who had just cleared a small path leading towards the cave's exit. [Jill, what's going on? Do you know why the boss is so upset?] he asked his battle partner.

The Geodude looked at her fellow Pokemon and scratched her earthen head, [I don't know what you're talking about, Feyera has always been a strange character. Remember how we said he's not like the rest of his species? Maybe that has something to do with it. He's like a shiny Pokemon, but for humans!]

"Hardly." Feyera snickered. "Having psyonics as a human is more like contracting Pokérus and needing to be quarantined. It has more negative connotations than positives."

[What's Pokérus?] they all asked.

"Don't worry about it, it's rare." Feyera rolled his eyes. "One-in-a-million rate of contraction amongst Pokemon or something crazy like that."

[Do we have Pokérus?] He replied, "I don't think so. You all seem healthy to me. Pokérus is actually a parasite-virus more than it's a disease. Research shows it dramatically increases metabolism though which is useful. Wish I remembered more about researching it, but the memory escapes me."

[Do you have Pokérus?] asked his first Pokemon and second in command.

"No! Of course not. Pokérus is a Pokemon virus, it doesn't naturally belong in humans, Brucie." Feyera picked up his pace. "Let's keep moving. I don't like the feel of this."

[Yeah, but I don't sense anything wrong externally with the world. Usually, when boss is scared, I'm scared. I'm starting to think he's paranoid.] Brucie took a deep breath. [He's gone through a lot and I think he feels like an outcast, maybe it snapped him.]

[Naw, he was snapped from day one!] Jill joked.

"HEY!" Hearing this, he turned around to scold the both of them. "I know it's bizarre. Do you think I believe this is all normal?"

[I'm not sure.]

[What's it like? Maybe we can help.]

"I…I feel like I'm going to get hurt or something, by someone, something. I don't know, for you Pokemon it would be like being chased in the wild, I guess."

[That's scary. But no one's after you. And no one is gonna hurt you!]
"Yeah, we got your back, boss!"

"I can't help it though. I sense it. I wish I knew what it was. I know only to keep moving. I have to act on that. I need to get to a place of stability so I can reason everything out."

[Dawww, Edgy!] the Geodude laughed, [Ha ha, you're adorable, don't you know that we'll protect you from the big bad monsters in your head?]

"It's not funny Jill! I'm losing control over things that I need to survive. It's crippling to have a fear of being attacked at every corner." This was only partially true; in fact, Edge had experienced the sensation of being watched and pursued—not necessarily attacked. Whatever it was, it was unfamiliar. The suspicion and dread were driving him equally mad. Was he putting on a spectacle for a pursuing predator? "Do you ever feel like it's all just a game where you're on the run?" he asked.

[Hah, well take some advice from me; I've lived in the wild until you captured me, ya know?] Jill said. [When there are predators out there, you gotta stick close to your family. No being brave, mister!]

"Brave?" Feyera asked, feeling as though that was the last trait he had. Feyera didn't have a brave bone in his body without psyonics. Unless of course bravery included flaunting his hollowed academic title of Doctor. But out here, his Ph.D. didn't seem to matter. "Being 'Edge' has made me brave, Jill."

[Yeah, but reckless!] July the Gloom tried to insist. [Edge makes you reckless.]

Jill shook her stone head. [Being smart is your top priority.]

"Fine," Feyera answered silently as dusk approached. "I've been smart all my life. My doctorate proves it. I'm Doctor Feyera, Ph.D. in Bioinformatics. I can do this."

[Yeah!]

[Atta boy, doc!]

The valley-bound town of Lavender loomed ahead in the south. As the sun was setting, the team was enveloped in a thick coat of twilight.

A few minutes into the dusk, Feyera's attitude had completely changed. "I don't know if I can do this. I'm not ready for this." His pale arms were still riddled with tiny goose–bumps.

[We can't turn back into the cave now!] Jill retorted.

"Calm down, I wasn't suggesting that!" Feyera insisted.

[You calm down, 'Edgy'!]

"Grr…I'm trying to, but I'm not feeling comfortable with all this."

[All right, all right, so maybe Lavender is a spooky place; you wouldn't want to take your kids on vacation here, but at least we can make our stay brief.]

"You're right, Jill. Plus, there's no Pokemon Gym to challenge," Feyera responded. "Should make the stay brief."

[Good,] Jill answered, twirling a fist and saying proudly, [cause they wouldn't stand a chance against
[What about Pokemon that live here? The Ghost Types?] asked July.

"I've heard legends about Ghost Types, but they aren't real. Just a figment of the overly creative imagination. Nothing more. But this feeling, I can't describe it... It's not a ghost, it is a real thing. Something powerful and mysterious. Chasing me, hunting me. I don't know any other words for it."

[Do humans have predators?] asked Jill.

"No. Not that I can think of. Humans are their own predators and prey. Not sure if it's natural, but it's true."

[Strange.] Jill responded.

"What?" Feyera stroked his arm's length as if to rub away all the goosebumps. He pulled his sleeves down and fiddled with their cuffs. "What's strange?"

[Your response sounded unorthodox but maybe that's just me. Aren't you a human?]

"Yeah. Of course I'm a human." Feyera wondered if Jill was giving him trouble because of his powers. He was different from the rest of humanity because he could employ mental energy in physical form. But that didn't mean he wasn't still human. He still felt human after all. "I want to feel human. Being afraid is a part of being human, isn't it?"

[Yeah, but are you afraid of Pokemon?] said Brucie. [I thought you got past that already.]

"No. It isn't that. You guys would protect me from wild Pokemon."

[Of course!] Brucie shrugged, [And if you leave it well enough alone, and then there's nothing to worry about.]

July shuddered, shaking her curly leaves. [Brucie, don't be ridiculous! If we found a Ghost Type, we should run away as quick as we can!]

[You guys are all such gullible little babies!] Jill laughed, [There's no such thing as actual phantoms, only Pokemon that look like them.]

[So what?]

"As our presiding scientist, I'm with Jill on this one. Scientists only call them Ghost Types since they've got amorphous properties. They're organisms without physical bodies that act as gaseous parasites."

[What difference does that make?] July asked. [Call it a ghost, call it a Pokemon, it's got moves and attacks just like the rest of us.]

Brucie nodded. [Right, that's what makes something dangerous. Who cares what you call it, doesn't make it any less scary.]

"Of course, but knowing the reason behind something gives you power over it." Feyera brushed his hair back. "There's a rational explanation for everything. All you need is the time and effort to study it. Given the opportunity, I'm sure I could write a dissertation on Ghost Types and have it published."

[Make sure to include how dangerous they are!] said July.
Feyera rubbed his head. "Yeah, shouldn't be a problem. 'Doctor Feyera' already wrote an extensive tabloid on Psychic Types. Ghost Types shouldn't be all too difficult to research when I finish looking into human psyonics with the help of Edge."

[I've seen some strange things, but the dangerous stuff always comes from you.] Jill said. She raised a strong stone arm and pointed a rocky finger at Feyera's heart.

"I'm not a Pokemon though," he protested, "I can't use psyonics like you can use your attacks!"

[Jill, he's trying hard to control himself. I'm sure if YOU had those types of 'Edgy psyonic powers' we'd all be screwed!] Brucie snarled at Jill.

[Hahaha! Good thing I don't then,] Jill smiled again, this time rubbing her thick skull as her eyes narrowed sensing potential hostility.

[We should support him, not bicker about his powers. We all got special powers of our own, right?] July said.

[You're right about that one, July. I can hurl rocks, Brucie can spit fire, Des can thrash about and yell 'giddy-yup!' at the same time, and you dearie can make a fresh, garden salad for us all to enjoy when we're done doing the heavy lifting,] Jill chuckled.

[Quit being a bully!] July snapped back. [At least I could stand up to Misty's Pokemon, Jill!]

Jill gave her a childish grin. [Haha I'm kidding! I'm kidding! I'm only trying to make light of our situation. You could prolly knock me out with a Mega Drain, July!]

[I wouldn't want to hurt you though,] July answered in confusion. She was the most passive in the group, hardly ever sparring with the others. [Why would I do that?]

[Sigh!] went Jill. [You're far too nice, July.]

[Why can't you be nice?] July rustled her leaves. [Are we really all a joke to you?]

[Sometimes!] Jill said. [But that isn't a bad thing!]

Brucie, the team's second in command, dryly responded, [It isn't a joking situation if our trainer can't shake the chills he's been getting. What if he freezes up when we're in a battle? What if Edge can't telepathically transmit orders as quickly as we're used to?]

"I told you, I'll be okay." Feyera had been quivering nearly uncontrollably. From his powers? Or from something worse? It was like their trainer had lost control and his body was reacting negatively to some invisible force. "It's a fever I think. From the psyonics."

Jill lowered her tone, [I'm just sayin' any old 'ghost',] waving with both her arms as she said the word to emphasize, [ought ta think twice before messin' with us and our trainer. Edge'll kill a ghost a second time if he uses that psionic power! Ha, get it? Ghosts are already dead, so he'd kill em once more!] The Rock Pokemon punched an uppercut into the air.

"No…it isn't like that Jill. Ghost Types aren't actually dead, they're as alive as you and me," Feyera insisted, flaunting a rationale, "they're collections of cells that work together as an amorphous whole like any other organism. However, by being less dense than air, they can float and slip through physical walls."

[Sounds pretty handy!]
"Evolution gives each creature its own handbook to survive. The one's that adapt to those imposed conditions best stick around longest."

[Well whatever.] Jill said with a laugh, [bet being able to turn into flatulence isn't as handy as Edgy's psionic punch! Hi–ya!]

"Sigh…"

[Isn't the point for him not to resort to using the dangerous psyonics? You saw what it did to him physically, Jill. It…changed him.] Brucie looked at his trainer. While he recognized many of Christian's features which had been present when the pair first met in Professor Oak's laboratory, he could not shake the sensation that some of these aspects were changing and not quite the same. His eyes were often dilated, and the familiar colors had been pulled and twisted around his pupils in braids of iron. Feyera had lost weight, and while it could have been because of all of the crummy food he made, there was something suspicious about all of these factors being connected to the employment of psyonics.

"What is it?" Feyera asked uneasily. He felt like he was being analyzed by his Pokemon.

Brucie wasn't sure what mysterious force was manifesting itself in Feyera's corporal essence. [Your eyes are different, I feel like I'm looking at a different trainer sometimes.]

"Why? Is it the remnant rings of blood from my psionic climax?" he asked.

[Is it you?]

"Yes, it's me," insisted the trainer. "That will heal in time, pal. Eyes heal faster than any other part of the human body."

[I don't know, it's like you said before, it's a sensation.]

"Enough!" Feyera had an epiphany that the apparent fear he had been giving off had polarized the group. He swallowed hard and told them all, "Okay, enough is enough, we're going to continue. I felt scared back before Rock Tunnel but we need to press onwards if I want to get better. I have you guys to help me through this!"

He wished he wasn't the only one feeling anxious. Somehow it made him feel insane. If there was a big, scary Pokemon staring them down, then at least he'd have a justifiable reason to be afraid. There was no real reason for fear. But that did not dismiss the mind-numbing sensation. In fact, it amplified and exacerbated the young man's worry. He took a heavy breath, pressing onwards with concerned friends at his side.

The orange hues of fading sunset gave way to the dark night. The radiating glow from Charmeleon's tail even seemed to diminish as the Pokemon trainer and his Pokemon entered Lavender's rustic town gate. The buildings were deep colors and the scarce light present in the valley did little to remove the somber mood. Facing a nearby building that said in bold letters "INN", the trainer looked at the large gravesite settled on the hillside of the valley just beyond. Noticing that there was a tall building behind this burial site, he shuddered to think what was inside. He heard about Lavender's mausoleum, to think of all the dead inside made him feel queasy. Telling himself that everything was going to be fine did not make the situation he was in any better. He walked along the dusty path towards the inn. Judging from the appearance, the building had not been renovated in years. Hoping to find people within, Christian opened the wooden door. It was unlocked and squeaked loudly.

Feyera walked up towards the large counter in the center of the entranceway. The interior of the
building was deserted it seemed. As if it was removed from a page of history without any of the inhabitants of the time.

"Hmm…" he murmured. There was an oil lantern on one of the shelves radiating a dim light throughout the otherwise still inn. Shadows from the flickering flame ceaselessly danced around the old furnishings. His palms began to grow wet with perspiration. "Umm, hello? Hello, is anyone here? I would like to rent a room for the night please," the trainer said to the empty foyer. "Hello…?"

There was no answer. A cold breeze caused the door to slam shut with a loud "Thud!".

"…!" The trainer jumped up in fright. "Phew…" Realizing that it was just the strong valley wind, he stretched his arms and let out a loud sigh. He did it just to hear something. Anything. "This is really weird. Something isn't right." Stumped, Feyera turned around and proceeded to exit the deserted building. "This place is a ghost town."

Upon walking out the door, an unsettling yell shattered the silence! "Errracckk! Aaaahhhhh!"

It was definitely a person. Female too. Feyera quickly glanced at Charmeleon, who was eagerly looking about for the source of the scream.

[Boss, what was that?!] Brucie beat his tail to and fro.

"I…I…don't know for sure! You heard it too, right?!" He was glad that he wasn't losing his mind completely. He might have been on death's doorstep, but as long as he had his mind intact, he stood a chance. Prior experiences had proven this. He knew where the shriek had come from: the aboveground burial site west of the inn, an enormous mausoleum made home to many deceased: The Pokemon Tower. Feyera had heard stories about the fabled Pokemon Tower, where the souls of departed Pokemon were put to rest. Swallowing his fear of the unknown, he moved towards the tower at a light sprint, his Pokemon close behind. The crew walked stealthily through the outdoor gravesite around the perimeter of the massive tower.

"Where are all the people?" Edge asked his Pokemon. Houses were empty and no lights came from any of them. "The whole town's empty! Something's wrong. Something is terribly wrong!" Each thump of his heart grew louder as he ran alongside his Pokemon through the desolate town.

[Don't worry, we'll get to the bottom of this!] said Brucie.

Once at the tower's enormous cast-iron gate, Feyera vigorously pushed the rusty barred door, but he had no idea just how physically weak he had become. It was like trying to push against a cement wall. Feyera grunted softly, his psyonics urging his consciousness to resort to their untapped strength. But where was his atrophy from? Fear? Or something worse? "I can't…not enough strength!" admitted the young man.

Quickly, Charmeleon and Geodude helped him to force the door open.

[We got this, boss!]

Jill heaved alongside Brucie, [Yeah just…*grunt*…there we go now!]

"Thanks you two." Stumbling into the pitch-black darkness within, the group found themselves clueless. The coldness in the tower was predictable considering that it was a massive crypt. "I…I think we should start with the floor that we're on now. I…*sigh* stay close please guys," Feyera said surveying the perimeter of the dingy catacomb. He truly felt encapsulated in darkness. Usually there was a faint hint of what was to come, but not in this infernal environment. He was just as helpless as any human would be. Stumbling about, he fell into a massive spider's web that had taken
up most of the floor.

Squirming in panic, Feyera shouted, "Ugh! Ack! Get it off! Get it off!" The bewildered trainer fell backwards in confusion. "Ahhh!"

[Hey! Hey! It's okay, mister!] Charmeleon sensing Feyera's distress hurried over to him and helped him get up. The fire lizard even helped remove some of the silky threads dangling from the trainer's knees. [Calm down.]

"I got spooked. Phew…" Exhaling a long breath in the deep darkness, Feyera realized how shallow minded he had been. Even without his psyonic powers guiding him, he always had one distinct advantage. His Pokemon. Relishing in this thought, the trainer decided to share his epiphany with his Pokemon. "I've been stupid. I'll face whatever's up there, because I have friends and they're right here by my side. Through good times and bad times; I have my Pokemon!"

[Course.] Brucie replied.

Nerves now tempered, Feyera said abruptly, "You guys are here for me. At least I've got that. C'mon; let's go…!" He clambered up the dark staircase, its ominous crevices and crannies only illuminated by Brucie's fiery tail's light. The dark shadows flickered and twisted reality, but not to Feyera's will this time.

The group's determination was ephemeral; the positive feelings of hope quickly waned as the group gazed upon what appeared to be a rotting pile of carcasses, exposed from their respective coffins. The putrid odor was nearly unbearable. Feyera gazed up at the ceiling, where he saw a group of hooded figures through the holes in the structure's ceiling.

"This is…!" He couldn't find words for what he was experiencing. They were rummaging through body parts. How could such heartless people exist? They were grave robbers. It did not make any sense. Why? What could anyone want with the corpses of Pokemon? "Ugh!" he shook his head in denial. "This can't be real. What's happened to the gravesites? Why are the bodies exposed?!"

Out of the hazy darkness a voice called out, in musty agony, [Oh, but it is very real…]

"Huh?" Bewildered, the trainer turned about trying to ascertain the source of the mysterious call. Turning left, right, up, and down, Edge could not even feel the direction it came from. It was as if the voice had surrounded him. "Who's there?" Feyera demanded as stanchly as he could.

[*Snicker snicker* You know who I am. Doctor Feyera, we've met before. However briefly.]

"What?" The telepathic voice wasn't familiar at all! It was too askew, buried in static, Feyera could not discern the gender. Quickly the young trainer retorted, "I don't know you…! How are you in my mind?"

[It's a matter of convenience, dear Feyera; an after effect of your dabbling in things ought not to be dabbled in.]

"Dabbling? I'm sorry but I don't—"

[Don't play coy with me!] hissed the voice.

Feyera scratched his head, and took a moment to look at his Pokemon, who had all been seemingly frozen in place, facing the same direction of the mysterious vocalization.
"I…what?!!" Feyera's head hurt, his face felt strained.

"Wasn't that your intention? But you've already opened the gate. Haven't you, tiny angel?"

"How do you know me?" asked the young man. "Who – what – are you?"

"I know the truth. Isn't that all that matters to you? Or has scholarship deluded you into thinking a lofty flight from your new self would save you? How desperately deluded…"

Still shaking, and frantically searching Feyera cried out, "What are you talking about?! I bring no harm! I'm a Pokemon trainer!" In panic he thought, "Where did the scream come from anyway?" His green eyes dashed about the room searching, but to little avail.

The voice laughed, crackling and spitting out an ambiguous response to Edge's telepathy. [Hahaha! One of your associates left the protective barrier above, and I feasted with delight.]

"W—What?"

[Hack! The humans,] it said. [Those who refer to themselves as 'Team Rocket',]

"So you're not a human," Feyera thought. [That's correct. My, aren't you brilliant.]

Feyera ignored the taunt. "How are you reading my thoughts?" Judging from experience, Edge's psyonics took time and disciple to establish a connection to Pokemon, and he could barely discern what type of a figure was on the other end of this new – albeit familiar – tether of telepathy. One thing was certain: whatever it was, it couldn't be good.

[Pah! Hah! You're one in the same as them, aren't you? The only difference is, you've committed your crime already.]

"What are you talking about?" Feyera asked. "What crime?"

[Remember…remember, Feyera…] It repeated his name a second time, this time slower, announcing each syllable laboriously, [Feyera…the voice of reason—that which swayed your stiff heart off its detached perch so long ago…] The voice trailed off, and suddenly Edge was facing a huge spectral figure. Its black form swallowed a nearby tombstone, absorbing into it the remains of a buried Pokemon. The being's ethereal qualities were absolutely terrifying, they morphed into the physical and contorted the body. In the pitch-black darkness, Feyera could only discern two large spiritual claws protruding from the ghostly beast's massive form.

"W—wild Pokemon!" yelled the man in fear, calling forth his trusty Charmeleon. "Help me, Brucie!" he blasted telepathically to his Pokemon.

But nothing happened. There was no response from his Pokemon. Brucie acted as if he had not even heard Edge's telepathic cries for help as the black smog emerging from the ghost's mouth slowly engulfed the room. "Cough Cough! Ack!" Coughing uncontrollably as the gaseous air filled his lungs, he felt the stinging pain when he tried to speak using his voice. Pain turned to fear when he saw the advancing shadow-form inching ever closer to Edge, blocking the exit. Feyera looked around frantically for a window; somehow, his reflexes had diminished to basic fight or flight.
Squirming madly, his limbs had been made strangely distant from his body. They felt miles away from him and impossible to control amid the delirium of fearful sensation.

Pulling a long exhale to a stop, the shadow spoke once more, [You've made an awful mistake, Feyera. It can be fixed however. I can fix it for you. Oh yes, mistakes can be mended.]

"Ack!" He tried to move but his body froze up once more! The man could move his extremities but his chest remained completely locked – frozen – ominously in place. "Let me go!"

[Ah haha, why would I let you go? You've crawled right into my web. You've fallen into my pit.]

"Bleck!" Spider analogies were the last thing he wanted to hear. "My Pokemon will rip you apart!" "Brucie, attack! Use Ember! Light up the room!" Feyera ordered in a telepathic volley.

[Tsk tsk. That won't do at all...] the murky voice insisted.

Feyera coughed. The psyonic messages sent by Edge weren't working! "Attack! There's a wild Pokemon! Brucie, use Ember!" Christian cried out loud.

But there was still no answer from his Pokemon companions. Only a brooding taunt from the shadowy husk before him, [You poor soul...how can your Pokemon hear you, when you don't have the ability to speak?]

"Cough! Hack! Bru–cie! He–lp!" It was true enough. Feyera could only gurgle a few incomprehensible syllables as invisible smoke filled his lungs. He again focused his mind on thought, seeking the familiar psyonic jolt he usually felt when his Pokemon received a message. "Ember! Ember Attack! Brucie! Em...ber...!"

[That voice is useless in fear; I thought you'd have figured that out by now, researcher.]

"N–no! *Cough! Ack!*"

[Yes. Oh yes. But take your time to come to terms with it, I love to see the learning process. Yes! Yes! The gradual trickling of your fear is flooding the room!]

Just when he couldn't breathe any longer, and began to grow numb, the smoke in his lungs disappeared. "GASP!"

[Good. Now, take a breath...good. It has to be rhythmic buildup. Doesn't it?]

"Stay back or I'll deal with you myself! With psyonics!" Feyera twisted his back, breaking free of a brief paralyzing spurt. Trying to summon the energy, and desperate to feel psyonics course through his veins once again, Edge sought only one objective. That warm glow of a feeling was nowhere to be found however; he was cut off, sensation was slowly wilting into mires of desperation.

[Oh, will you?] The inky being paused before laughing menacingly, [Heh... Heh heh! I'd love to see you try! Go on! Go on!]

"Ugh!" Edge squirmed against the foreign convulsion, he was feeling airy and wispy, as if he'd held his breath a little too long. In panic, he began taking quicker inhales, each breath rebounding into a shorter, faster one. "Oh no...I'll have to! Brucie, Jill, July! Where are you?!" He reached to his Smith and Salven's brand Pokéball holster, searching for Des' capsule device, but it was nowhere to be
found! His trainer tools had seemingly vanished!

And still the voice nagged. [Do it Feyera. You know you want to. You know you have to! Use what you love!]

It was as if he had been pulled into a sphere of darkness, his Pokemon were nowhere to be found. Angrily, he addressed the only figure discernible, demanding, "Where are my Pokemon?! What have you done to them!"

The husk answered him rhetorically, [Strange isn't it? They won't be the only ones to vanish before your eyes should you continue to refrain from 'psyonic' bliss.]

"I've had it with you! Arrrgggghhhhh!" Feyera groaned attempting to channel any cognitive energy he could muster towards the objective of self-preservation. But there was no surge of mental ecstasy heralding 'Edge'. Instead, he was faced with only silence. "What?" thought the young man.

[Oh? That feels strange, doesn't it?]

It did. But Feyera couldn't think of anything to say, so instead he greedily gasped for air. "...! *Pant...pant!*"

The still air was ruptured by a dark inquiry, [Mister Feyera, how will you use psyonics, when they'd much rather use you?]

"Huh?" But then Feyera felt exactly what the voice was referring to. It began with a tight squeeze against his ribs, followed by a sudden flush of warmth. "Gasp!" Looking down at the shard embedded in his chest, Feyera panicked seeing the terrifying sight of the injury spewing forth small bright rays of ruddy light. "AHH!" he shouted as the half-embedded slit of metal burned with fury. "What the fuck?!" he hollered in dismay, unable to control the sensation.

[Ha! Ahahaha!] There was laughter. Everywhere. Laughter foreign and antagonistic surrounded him. [It's a shame isn't it? Power always has its price. You'd do well to remember that!]

"What? No!" And then Feyera began to feel the psychic rush, but not on his own terms. Slow, rhythmic, mental heaves abased the outer regions of his mind, pressing outwards on all sides of his skull. Between a series of labored breaths, he asked, "...What are you doing to me!? Don't do this to me! STOP!"

Deep down, he knew it was too late. The world around Feyera had begun to quiver and shake beyond his control, the colors of the dark walls all began to slowly bleed toward the floor. It terrified him.

[—You don't want to use your dearly treasured 'psyonics'?] The shadowy voice seemed slightly bemused. [Why not...? They seem to want to use you.]

Feyera was losing sensation, his legs had gone numb. "I don't want your help! Gasp! Stop this at once!"

[—You're vulnerable. ...And going down the wrong path — it's time to relinquish control of that vessel.]

"No! Let me go!" Edge cried. "Stop this right now! Please!"

[—I can't do that. I hunger. I hunger maddeningly. As maddeningly as you hunger.]
"Hunger…?" Edge wheezed. It was impossible to see clearly, the feeling of psyonic takeover from within his head had him in a fog.

[I hunger like a vampire. Your body. Your mind. Your blood. Your heart. It will all become mine… as it should have been all along!]

"No! This isn't–this can't be–happening!"

Suddenly out of the dark void he heard his Pokemon's incomprehensible growls. "Char! Char char!" The source of his Pokemon's noise was far too distorted, he couldn't tell where it was coming from! But he was there! Brucie was alive!

"Brucie!" Feyera shouted. It had been far too long since he had heard his Pokemon's actual cries.

[Crackle… It's already out of your control! You can feel that, can't you? Now, look again at what fate awaits you!]

"…!" Feyera's eyes widened as he heard this. The specter had amassed physical components. In front of him, a shaded corpse of vile rags lurched in steady procession towards him. Was the monster really going to try and take his body too? "You won't! No! Nooo! Stay away!"

[Don't you see? The husk nodded, sensing Feyera's distress. [I long to have you as a part of me… I relish in the sheer idea of taking from the living what they cannot take from me.] The creature inched closer, slowing its heavy movements as it approached him. [Seeing that you've answered my call, I want you to join me. Eternally.]

"No! Stay back! Away!" Feyera flinched as much as he could, but it wasn't much more than a shiver. And still, his chest burned. "I won't let you kill me! Brucie! Somebody! Help!"

[–Kill you? No. I won't 'kill you'. Why would someone like you fear death anyway?]

Feyera's nausea was nearing a breaking point as the scent of the abomination before him exhaled a putridly aged breath, gagging him once more. "Urf!"

[…But what awaits you has to be a special death I'm afraid. An…intimate death. You must die in my arms. No other method will do. Every procedure has a method; and every method its professional. You know that, doctor.]

Feyera twisted violently trying to break himself loose. "N—no help…! Stay away! Brucie help me please!"

[It isn't the worst, Feyera…] The creature tilted its rotting head. [You've been a reasonable man all your life. You know that you're more than any person can hope to become with your gift—]

"NO!" Feyera shouted as a piercing jolt racked his senses from within his chest.

[…and yet, rather tragically, you lack something. What is it? What could it be?]"I—I don't know what you're talking about!" he insisted. "Let me go! Stop this and I'll help you!"

[Stability… *Hiss!* That's the term used by humans of this age. Equilibrium. That's the primordial meaning underlying control.]

"E—equilibrium?" asked the trainer, his breaths weakening.

[Yes, Feyera. It's why mortals exist as they do for only a flash. They long for a connection… A
catharsis to ease the heart's struggle. An outcry against the ambiguous purpose Life so tragically bestows upon you with her – oh so tender – kiss.]

Feyera remained quiet. A mixture of awe and possessive fear kept him locked in place.

[Without question, Feyera...being bound-up in your pessimistic search for truth brought you here. Why, ironically, it's the quest for desire which made you who you are now.]

"You're wrong! You're wrong!" he bellowed. "Get out of my head, monster!"

[The 'truth' has become rather complex, wouldn't you say? Desire is a fickle mistress, don't you agree? Ka–ha. Now that you've learned the weight of consequences.]

"Consequences? I... There aren't any!"

[Oh, your denial runs about as thick as your silvery blood!]

"What?!"

[Don't you remember? The man who grew up in hatred of his kind; not just of his species, but all creatures. In your search for truth, you so desperately sought out the fringe of thought... searching tirelessly... seeking something to hold... something to feel.]

"How do you know anything about me!? How do you have control over my psyonics!!"

[They're not yours Christian Feyera. I know more than you can ever know. More than your wildest imagination. I've seen it all. It's almost tragic that it has come to this. But this doesn't have to be the end. Become a part of me, truth-seeker. Together, you and I...kehehe...we will do great things from beyond the veil of death. I can rebuild your memories...into a unified whole. *Hiss* Together.]

Feyera gave a blank stare, confused beyond measure. "I— no."

[No?] asked the creature. [Think about where you came from. Those feelings of insecurity, self-doubt, ah yes, even your self-loathing! Don't you want to cure your unexplainable predicament? Don't you want to make amends?]

Unwillingly, his head tilted down to face his chest's pulsating wound. The sight alone made him gnash his teeth.

[Doesn't the guilt tug...ah, tug so tightly! Yes...on your depraved heart, wrapping you in its turmoil, dragging your once reasonable mind into the arms of the unknown? Doesn't it hurt to be out of control?]

"I didn't mean to harm anyone."

[It's what you always wanted! Admit it. You wanted EVERY bit of it. You wanted to feel something, Feyera. You needed to. And now it's a part of you.]

"No..." Feyera whispered.

[—And didn't it feel wondrous?]

"..."

[Yes. Yes it did. I can sense it. I can feel it. Those ambitions led you to commit your sins. But sin it is not. No, you have been deceived, duped by those who envy you. And how they delight in envying
such power. To be saved and given a second chance...born from the ashes of certain death to sin once more."

"Ashes of death? And sin? You're wrong, you've got the wrong guy. I'm innocent! I've been fighting Team Rocket, doing the right thing!" Feyera shook his head, and the feeling of burning radiance again consumed his chest in scarlet rose. "...Ah!"

[WRONG!] echoed the voice. [It doesn't matter who you fight, so long as you fight! If you search for enrichment, injuring others, earning more than you can spend, you'll find yourself in the exact place you are now! This is your lesson; this is what you must learn in your heart's last beating moments!]

"My heart!" Feyera cried out as streaks of light radiating from his core doused his vision in shades of color he'd never seen before. "My wound!"

[Feyera, this is your ascension. You were once helpless, like the rest of life. Now I see the strength of humanity echoed in your very existence. Such ripe power and brimming with potential. You'll finally achieve your objectives. You will become better than any of your Team Rocket companions could ever aspire to. And do you know why?]

Unaware of what the spectral monster was talking about, he retorted, "My Team Rocket companions? Don't you mean my human companions? We're not all the same! There are good people out there in the world too. Just because you despise Team Rocket doesn't mean all humans are evil!"

[Ahaha! Feyera, Feyera, what's next, your Pokemon companions as well?! You've grown so very attached to those around you...it's an effrontery considering your past!]

"They're...they're my friends!"

[No. They're your slaves. You seek to syphon their strength to further your own...a miraculous attribute of evolution hard at work within you.]

That word again. "Evolution? Evolution of what?"

[Evolution of the heart! Pah! You're pathetic on your own, a blank slate. Your mind is empty! You have no true knowledge concerning your origin. A pity, and a weakness. Appears memory was robbed from you. But, do not fear, I will restore it for you...yes kehehe...]

"What was robbed from me?" Feyera asked. "My memories?!"

[No, not your memories. Memories. All you are right now are fractured memories of an imperfect unity.]

This confused the young man. "What I need are my memories back."

The groan of a foreign heartbeat severed the still air, like soft impetuous drums. [What you need is already set into motion; it's evolution, evolution of the self: extending beyond the self.]

"Of the self? Myself? There's truth to what you're saying. I don't know why I have these psyonics,"Feyera shook his head. "But I don't want this; you have to let me go!"

[And it is out of your control. Isn't it? It FEELS out of control.]

"Fine then!" Feyera answered warily, "If it's out of my control, you're not going to do anything to change that! You can't! You won't!"
[*Sigh* Change is a matter of course, not perspective. ...Although, it can certainly shift the latter, wouldn't you say? However you raise an interesting point: what can you do on your own? Don't you need help? Don't you need the truth?]

And although Feyera agreed with the beast's preliminary statement about change, he defiantly answered, "Not from you. You're full of lies!"

[Incorrect, young man. The truth rests with me! I AM the truth!]

"I don't believe you!" Feyera said, squirming in a seemingly airtight prison of his body.

[Once again, you're mistaken, Feyera; allowing beliefs to triumph over inference. It's pitiful to watch someone like you grope helplessly in the darkness. Yet not without a subtle twinge of irony.]

"Like me…? What's the truth?! Tell me!"

[You'll bring about the undoing of the world you love in time. I wish to preserve you, protect you. However, the truth is, so long as you are living, none are safe. And it will only be a matter of time before your final experiment collapses in on itself.]

"Huh?"

[You've felt it haven't you? The emptiness in your heart? That's only the beginning of the process! It's the start of a deterioration that knows no end other than death...heh...]

"I can control it!" Feyera lied. "I can command the psyonics!"

[Psyonics... No. You're wrong. It isn't what you believe it to be. Either a Pokemon or a skilled trainer can do the things you're capable of...but not at the same time. Not without years of tiresome work and commitment. It shouldn't have been handed to you, and you know that!]

"What are you saying? That I didn't earn all this? You're right; I didn't! I got hurt, I lost my memory, and now I'm putting things back together with Pokemon at my side!"

[That's a lie and you know it. You plucked those psyonics from an unwilling tree with your academic prowess! You worked tirelessly for it, but you didn't expect the consequences.]

That word again. "Consequences?"

[Oh no! How could you have? How could you have anticipated the result of your theoretical prying? It would make no sense to someone so married to reason! Hahaha! Your mistress, your logic, wound up betraying you! And now you're trapped in the grip of your own insurrection!] The shadows around them began to crawl. [Don't you want her back? Don't you hear her calls? You need her. Don't you? What is she to you?]

"Who?"

[…]Your reason, your faith, your purpose. Rationality is one of the few things that keeps humans from losing their fragile minds. Reason – she's gone now, Feyera.]

"Reason helps to prevent apparitions like you!"

[And yet here I am in front of you. Face it, things are beginning to make a lot less sense now that you are in touch with 'Idea'. Reason is slipping away, and you're scared. This is a whole new world. Your fear is projected outwards, palatable even, no thanks to your assiduous research!]
"My research? Wait…you can't mean…"

[The research you brought into this world must depart into eternity to gain permanent merit, or it may very well be forgotten. You're afraid of forgetting…you've already forgotten so much. What if you are forgotten along with all your hard work, Feyera? I can promise you, eternity forgets nothing. You've only lived for mere blinks in existence. Eternity has permanence. Eternity won't flee from you like reason will whenever you become emotional. Eternity is the completion you're frantically searching for. And I'm the gate to that fulfillment. Don't you see, Feyera? You've been running from Life all along by trying to preserve your findings forever. Running towards the embrace and comfort only Death can grant your soiled soul!]

"What are you saying? I have to die to be free? That's preposterous!"

[No, young scientist, you don't understand Death. You don't understand everlasting. Even your truth-seeking mind can't grace the surface of forever and ever.]

"This…doesn't make sense! I don't want to die!"

[But you will. Everyone will. …Feyera, let me tell you a story. A story that has been passed down throughout the ages.] The coldness continued to thicken in the room. The young man could see his breaths. [There were once two lovers.]

"Lovers?" Feyera's heart skipped a beat at the word. A warm glow filled his torso. It felt so strange and out of his control, like an automatic response to a stimuli.

[You like that word, don't you?] Feyera shook his head back and forth disapprovingly, but the apparition continued to speak regardless. [Ah yes, lovers… So intimately attached, so affectionate beyond measure. They were madly in love with one another, enthralled by the very existence of each other. However, one day, they lost something… Something disappeared. It was their hearts. They lost their love for one another. Do you want to know why?]

"Why?" he asked weakly.

[Because one of them had something the other didn't. You see: love can spawn greed, love can spawn jealously. Love begs the questioning of 'why?'…]

A lecture on love was the last thing he expected to hear from the mangled corpse, but an imprisoned Feyera could do little else but listen.

[And so, one day she approached him, in all of her splendid, radiant beauty, her golden hair flowing like the sun's rays, her smile whiter than winter's snow, and —there at the pedestal— she asked him the hardest question…]

[She asked him why her children loved her and not him. She asked him what she had that he didn't…]

Feyera's chest was searing with scorching flames that were licking at his neck.

[She wanted the truth. Like you did for all those years Feyera…]

"I—did?"

[You've been there Feyera, diligently unfastening the tresses to Pandora's Box like a good scientist. But the truth was not what she expected. Oh no! Imagine her surprise!]
"It wasn't?"

[It was not what he lacked, but what she lacked! And he – the keeper of the truth – needed to let her know why they were together. He needed to tell her what had lured him into her possessive arms. He needed to explain to her why he had fallen for her. It wasn't her beauty alone. You see, it was what she did for him, it was what she did to him. He could not hide from her. She made him...feel.]

"Feel?"

[Desperately, almost manically, she sought out the emotion of love. She wanted it, she needed it; when he was no longer enough for her...she sincerely believed that love could be derived from her children. And so, she had turned away from him, to care for her children. But it was not enough for her. Where else could she receive such passion? How could she feel the world around her so vividly without his presence? Ha... And so, she turned to her children without realizing that in fact I had granted her wish...]

Entombed in a cascade of boiling anguish, Feyera screamed out from the swirling clouds of fog: "What was her wish?!" The wind and the turbulence subsided. Christian grasped the crystalline shard on his chest with a sudden rush of relief. "*Pant...pant...*

[The very same wish you had, Feyera... You're exactly like her,] it said hauntingly. [She wanted to feel something, she wanted to be buried in the experience of experience itself...]

"What?!"

[Come now, it shouldn't be all that obscure to you any longer! *Crackle* It started off small. Emotions were new, they were exciting. But quickly, she became enthralled by their possessiveness. The thought of feeling love gave her access to the limitless Plane of Ideas. She drew ceaselessly from this fountain of consciousness, creating new beings and creatures to fill the world with love. And love her they did. But not for the reasons she thought. And that unearthed truth made all the difference...]

Another waterfall of sensation doused Feyera's body, and he lost his ability to see clearly through the mirage of radiating hues rising from his heart like clear smoke.

[You see, her unwavering dependence on him created what you call 'love' in the first place. It was this craving dependency that drove to the very core of our relationship. Strange how learning the truth can change everything. Stranger still is the power of one's words...]

"What did he say to her? What was the truth?! Tell me!" begged Feyera.

There was a pause. A cold draft brushed against Feyera's ankles, chilling him to the bone. Then the creature answered, [I slowly turned to face her, and as the words left my frosted lips, her smile began to fade away forever...]

['Life, my eternal love, my precious rose, don't you see? You're a beautiful lie...and I'm the cold truth. Life, without me, there can be no love for you.]

"What?! Life's a lie?"

[Creation's love for life is only guaranteed by my presence. Life...she needs me, as much as you need her precious breaths to fill your lungs!]

"If that's the case, then you're trying to say that you...you're..." but Feyera couldn't finish the sentence, he was too afraid to. How could he be facing death?
[And now you see it. Now you feel it. The emptiness of your heart. It's the void you cannot fill with the fantasies of love! No, you are wiser than that, Doctor Feyera. You seek to obtain the truth! I am the only truth! I am Death! Give me your life, feed me your body. Forfeit the foolish quest for love! I will make it worth your while… I can see into your past. I can perfect you.]

"NO! NEVER!" Feyera screamed at the top of his lungs. "This is absurd!"

[I was afraid you would say that… Your resistance is unwarranted; there is a consequence for everything, Feyera. That body isn't your own. Didn't you realize that you were not yourself after the sacrifice? Didn't all the riling sensation drive your mind mad? Didn't it tug on your macabre heart? Can you even call that scar your heart?]

"What do you mean? You're not making any sense! I've always been me! This is a wound from Team Rocket! You don't know anything about me!"

[Ah, denial. A marvelous contraption that began well before your time, young one. Heh…how ironic that you – a lover of truth – inherited that. But I suppose it cannot be helped.]

"I might be abnormal. I might have psyonics. But I've always been me! There is nothing changing that! Your manipulative words are empty promises."

[Hmm…you're changed.] It lurched forward unexpectedly and its eyes glowed white. [Perhaps there is some inhibitor preventing you from seeing the obvious.]

"The obvious? You're insane! You're evil! Now let me go!"

[Categorize me with your petty judgments. They're semantics. Evil doesn't exist, it never has, and never will. There is only truth and lies.]

"That's wrong! People can be evil! Pokemon can be evil! Team Rocket for instance, they're—"

[Hah! Team Rocket? Really, Feyera? You're terribly deluded, but by what I can't tell. It's an awful shame too. I want to help you find what you're looking for. I want you to find what you've always been looking for! I want you to finally find undeniable truth!]

"You want me to die! You want to process my body! That's insane. Wrong. Evil. Even if you want to do good, you have no right to my body!" Feyera said, sensing the cold chill the creature brought to the room.

[No… You've gotten it all wrong. I want your heart.]

"…!"

[You seem to have forgotten what taking a body implies. Taking a life, removing a natural cog and replacing it with an artificial whirlwind of deceit, doesn't that sound like 'good research' to you? Doesn't that sound like what you've done, Feyera? Maybe if you remembered a little more, you'd understand.]

"There's nothing to understand. You're a monster!"

[You never had a right to what you took away. You're unworthy, you can't command it. I can change that, I can wield you, I can grant you truth. Don't you want that? A lack of knowledge is highly frustrating, isn't it? Especially to a sullied man like yourself. You lost something two years back. True, you were granted your wish, but at what price?]
"I didn't wish for any of this!"

[...Don't you understand? You can't take back a wish. I am Death from the proverb; I killed Life when her children's curiosity sent them into my arms in droves.]

"Argh!" Edge now filled with rage, broke out of the paralysis freezing his center. "I owe you nothing! My life is my own, you cannot have that!"

[Tsk, such adamant opposition. ...Burning the candle at both ends gives forth a lovely light. Until you reach the bitter end, of course.] The apparition chuckled softly. [Hm hm. I've always hated that about your kind. Hope is the brief denial of reality. You have a price on your head, Feyera. It's an unpaid debt, gathering interest since the day of your conception. One does not steal from Death, young one.]

The monster snuffed out the lighting with a wave of its shadow-cloaked claws. Suddenly Edge was engulfed in darkness. He looked frantically for Brucie's lighted tail but could not find it. Then returning to his thoughts, Edge panicked. He looked down at the only light in the room, a faint flickering coming from the crystal imbedded his chest."What—what did you do?!"

[I'll ask you the same question I asked her: Will you willingly accept me into your heart?]

"NO!" Feyera cried out. "I won't give you this! I won't give you any part of me! This is me, and you can't have it!"

[Such a shame. You pathetic being, I'll have to take it from you,] the invisible voice said with a hiss. [Did you really believe you were special?]

"What are you?" screamed Feyera. "Enough of the riddles and stories!"

[...I've been called many things but this Pokemon, Haunter, is my nature, my spirit. I will bring an end to you and your miserable sensations of life. Your existence is a defiled one. You're unnatural. An abomination! Look at yourself! What do you represent? A cross between worlds? And for what purpose? To greedily feel the world around you?]

"This doesn't make any sense! A Pokemon can't be this powerful!"

[Ah, but a Pokemon can feel this powerful. Hahaha! And now you see it. No...you can feel it, the creeping anxiety. That's what you do isn't it? You don't only see, you feel. But what is it that you so robustly sense? The feelings of Pokemon? The thoughts of others? It doesn't matter, it's your own undoing. You will destroy yourself unless I intervene. And I shall. You'll curse the day you took it upon yourself to saturate your existence in sensation! Through your uncanny marriage to emotion, you'll weep in remembrance of the hour you foolishly sought to save your life from Death!]

"Aaa—!" The spectral ghost moved into the young man's corporeal presence. Feyera could not see anything. But he felt the blood freeze in his veins. As the tingling sensation gradually arched around his body, it began to converge on his center. "Nuhhh! Im—impossible!" Feyera groaned as the cold embrace wrapped against his body in cruelly bitter confinement. "This is impossible!"

[Impossible?] Haunter laughed. [No... in this universe, whatever remains at the end – however improbable – is the truth, Mister Feyera.]

"AH!" Feyera clutched his center as the dark cloud pervaded his essence. "Let go! ...! Let me go!"

[Don't fight it. Let yourself succumb. Remember, you're adulterated. Your existence itself is fundamentally flawed. Let the ice pull you under and into eternal rest. Ne timeas obscurum, id autem
"AHHH!" Feyera felt the ghost hold him so tightly; he began to breathe spastically. The frozen exhales exited his body but remained just removed from his mouth. Try as he might, he could not breathe in. He longed for air. Suffocating, he only had one option left. Shutting his eyes a surge of energy had to be accessible! He had to believe in it! With a loud click, his senses returned, light came back, and he felt re-embodied. He swiftly employed this reprieve to pull on his Pokéball belt and snap open the closest one, releasing Jill, who sprang into battle.

The bright flash of light stunned Haunter. [Gawaogh!]

"JILL! HELP ME!" Feyera bellowed before the smoggy air covered his face in a haze once more.

[I'll save you, Edge!] Jill roared as she rushed at the Pokemon asphyxiating her trainer.

"…! *GASP!*" Feyera looked on in awe as his Pokemon slammed into Haunter's massive corporeal husk, knocking bones and debris loose in a powerful Tackle.

[Let me show you something, 'Edge!' the phantom bellowed, reabsorbing itself into the husk. The lighting returned but only slightly. In spectral form, Haunter drew a circle in the floorboards of the tower with one hand and another directly above it using his demonic claws.

"Get around it, use Rock Throw!" commanded the trainer.

[Pah! You seem to have forgotten the bitter taste of Death. I blame your escape from it two years ago. Allow me to refresh your memory.]

"Get out of the way of its arm!" But it was in fact already too late.

The ghost parried Jill's Rock Throw, and grabbed her with its black claw.

[Ooof!] she cried out as Haunter squeezed down firmly on her skull. [Edgy, he's got me!]

[Be gone! HAA!] Haunter said dancing a slender finger in a circle below her body. Feyera watched in horror as she was thrown into the ominous portal appearing on the floor. [Taste Death! Fall ceaselessly into despair! Night Shade!]

"JILL! Get out of the vortex!" Feyera cried out, running recklessly towards Jill, but fell right into the body under Haunter's possession, which shoved him back in disgust. "Argh!" He tried to punch at Haunter, but the ghost had dematerialized into a nearby wall, vanishing and leaving nothing behind but a limp corpse which felt neither the force nor the pain of Feyera's attack.

"JILL!" he screamed. She fell faster and faster from the ceiling to the floor, over and over. There was nothing he could do! Haunter had left the zombified physical body behind, and it lifelessly fell to the ground, nearly tumbling on top of Feyera.

[Feyera…] he thought he heard from the chaotic waterfall of miasma, although it was nothing more than a whisper in a well.

[Watch, Feyera. WATCH! NIGHT SHADE!] Haunter said, menacingly pulling its claws from the lower shadowy gateway.

"No—!"

It happened in slow motion. Jill, still falling, shattered upon impact with the newly solidified floor,
her heavy rocky hide unable to protect her from an attack that used it against her. She split apart, fracturing into countless shards and unrecognizable pieces.

"NOOOO! JILL! DAMN IT! Damn it you demon!" Feyera screamed realizing the death of his Pokemon.

[Ah ha ha!] laughed Haunter. [Damn me, you who are in fact damned to begin with. Your soul searches for a resolution, a catharsis, and still you deny me. I feel your yearning. Join me, my hunger, it yearns for your body, however tainted it may be. I accept you, your sins, your imperfections. Feed my appetite! I will have your heart as my own!]

"*Sniff* Like hell, you bastard! I'll die before you control any part of me!"

[I already control you! Through fear, your weakness.]

"You won't survive this! Hargh!" he strained for some psyonic pulse to overtake his heart. At this point, anything felt like it would be enough to trigger a flow-blown cascade.

[The psyonics, Feyera! You never earned them, you stole them! They don't belong to you! They belong to ME! To DEATH!]

"I'll deny you, Haunter, no matter what!" Edge sensed the spectral creature would once again try to consume him with its gaseous embrace. But how could he possibly kill the apparition if it was amorphous? It seemed impossible! Time was running out. Making a split second choice, he ran towards the ghost and holding an outstretched hand in front of him, mustering all of his mental energy in an attempt to generate that precious swirl of dense psyonic glow. "ARGH!"

[Don't you dare try it! This is MY domain! Where could I be, Feyera? Do you want to know? Can you even know? Your eyes, your precious eyes you worked tirelessly on, can they see me yet?]

"Huh?" Feyera said, his stride slowing. He could not find Haunter anywhere, it had completely vanished from existence according to his perception. "Where did it go?" he wondered. Feeling a strong cold force gather behind him, Edge dodged the brunt of a Shadow Claw attack. His arm was slashed at the elbow, and his shirt had been torn at his waist. Blood splattered out from his shoulder, flowing down his sliced arm in a river of red. "AH!" Feyera screamed, clasping his arm close to his chest. "GAH!"

[I don't wish to damage you further. Submit to me!]

A dark fog suddenly engulfed the young trainer. It lifted him above the ground and pulled on his extremities, tearing at his very existence. He gasped for air but the fog was too dense. The draining sphere in front of his outstretched arm slowly waned from its original strength. He felt himself leaving his body. Or rather being pulled out of his body by the supernatural fog. When the familiar tightness of his chest wane to the point where his heartbeat seemed like nothing more than a distant thunder, blue and yellow sparks flew from his raised arm, jumping into the darkness temporarily banishing it with their phenomenal light. The fog slightly dissipated. Light was returning with each pulse and beat of his heart.

[I've devoured people and Pokemon but never anything quite the same as you! And that is what makes this processes as sweet as it is.]

"Enough!" Edge channeled more of the mysterious, blood infused energy outwards through his arm. The sparks continued to illuminate the terribly dark tower. "I told you this is it!"

[Uagh!] Haunter moaned, and the cloud once again fell out of physical manifestation. Maybe the
unusual power had stunned the phantom Pokemon. Feyera was just as astonished as his victim. He had no idea how he made light spring forth like electricity from his palm. Was it all originating in his mind? Did his mind make it real? Regardless, time was rapidly running out. Edge gripped his chest shard as he rushed forward out of the seemingly impenetrable miasma. While his long stride cut effortlessly through the abysmally darkness, his pursuer was catching up all too quickly.

"*Gasp! Gasp!*" Edge tried to run even quicker; his feet were not fast enough to keep up with his mind. He felt paranormal pressure tugging his frail body. Glaring forward, his eyes narrowed and his vision split through the foggy room. Through the breaking mist, a wall with an open set of narrow windows appeared. However, it was still a great distance from him. He wasn't going to be able to make it. He just wasn't quick enough. Haunter grabbed and clawed at him from behind, fraying his clothes with Shadow Sneak. Feyera twisted his good arm around, feeling a cold burst of tingling energy releasing from his palm.

By dumb-luck, he was able to briefly repel the phantom with his psyonics. Those abilities would stop soon as they always did; he was nearing the climax of exerted psyonics. Physical mobility was just not enough. His expedient pace would not get him out of the Pokemon Tower in time. He could feel it, this premonition: it was not foreign. Somehow familiar, he felt his body acting on its own accord, completely synchronized with his own mental signatures.

"Go to hell!" he yelled running faster than he thought possible, dodging collapsing boards and tombs alike, as the howling darkness bared down on him from all sides.

*[No! YOU CAN'T...! Get back here!]*

Diving headfirst into a scaffold's drape, he found himself falling out of the building, helpless and afraid beyond measure. The distant scenery blazed by, the young trainer witnessed structures and power lines pass him by as he gained momentum. Edge looked down at the rapidly moving ground beneath his falling presence. "AHH!"

He put his hands out in front of him. Strangely, the ground did not come any closer. For a few seconds, it was miraculous. Simply sublime. He had no part in his mind's reaction. There was just action. Pure unadulterated survival instinct. It was so wonderfully simple, so wonderfully far beyond his control.

Laughing from the sensation, he looked up at the stars spinning past him. The Pokemon Tower was gone from view. Floating on nothing but air, he felt himself soaring, flying. However this strange phenomenon was like riding a bicycle, insofar as the moment he questioned how he was doing it, he forgot entirely how to do it. Edge lost focus of what was occurring, and just like that, he fell to the ground with a loud thud. No longer kept afloat, Edge became subjected once more to the earth's possessive draw, but luckily at a much lower distance than the elevation he'd burst out from.

Then the ecstasy began to wear off. His knees buckled as he forced himself to gaze upon the environment he now found himself in. He had lost a dear friend, yet escaped with his life. This consequence, was it worthwhile? Did he deserve to survive through the ordeal? Furthermore, he had unlocked a part of himself he never had gotten in touch with before. What did it all mean?

Reality set in all too soon. Coughing, the coppery taste of blood filled his throat in waves. "Hack!"

Feyera began to run. He ran as fast as he could to the west, climbing the shallow hilly path until he was out of the valley. Time didn't seem to pass.

Collapsing from fatigue, Feyera stared up at the stars.
The constellations were so beautiful. His sight linked them together, making bright paths between them and forming abstract shapes. These shapes morphed and changed as the creativity continued to blossom and formulate relationships. But the stars themselves never moved. They simply were. They had no reason to worry. Their fate was dictated by a compelling force stronger than themselves. "Wow..." he echoed in an intoxicated awe, "How could I find that...peace?"

The young man knew such ideas were nonsensical as his vision began to fade. He desperately attempted to stay awake. All the same, the effects of exerting so much psyonic energy had its penalty. Such an influential ability was to be used sparingly he thought. However, it was already too late. He had already utilized far more energy than ever before. The sky began to drift upwards perpetually as his eyes lost focus upon the world they inhabited and the dissolute being they serviced.
Chapter 9: Burning Heart, Burning Spirit

The sun's warmth had never felt so good. Feyera stretched out his arms, as if to capture a part of this moment. It was ephemeral bliss and not meant to last. The longer the sun's heat radiated on his body, the less attractive his position became.

"Chirp chirp! Coo!" went the birds above.

"Ugh. Groan…" Everything was so bright. The midday sun was scalding. The young trainer forced his eyelids open, and the provocative pain returned. Blotches of color were scattered about on a hazy bright canvas. After blinking numerous times, sight restored itself.

"I'm alive!" Those first words came to mind as he sought to deliberate his next action. "Gasp!" he immediately looked down to investigate his body. Nothing appeared broken, but his left arm was sore to the touch and pulsing with agony from a Pokemon attack. "Haunter," thought Feyera. "All of that… Was it real?"

It was real enough considering his bruises and torn garments. At first, he dared not pry at his exposed chest wound, but curiosity got the best of him. Grasping the crystal, he gave a tug, but it remained completely locked in place. "Glad to know you're still here," he mocked at the tenacious chest injury. Checking for other damages, he found wounded arms, dirty palms, and scratched kneecaps. At least the sun seemed to have given him a little tan. He placed his hand against his right forearm, and saw that by applying some pressure, he had indeed been burnt. Removing his hand, an imprint of paleness returned but only for a moment, before reverting back to the very light russet tone.

"Ooh! That's awfully sensitive! I must've been out under the sun all day… Where am I anyway?" he asked aloud. Looking around, it appeared he had made it to the Celadon district's outskirts. The afternoon sun was behind him to the west over Saffron City's massive skyline of towers.

"Huh? How'd I get all the way out here? Did I run all this way from Lavender Town?" Confused, he racked his brain searching for a logical answer and realized the loss he had incurred last night in the Pokemon Tower.

"Jill!" he exclaimed. He reached for the now empty Pokéball and began to feel ill from the thought of her death. It had come too soon. She deserved better than that.

Haunter's Night Shade attack was absolutely devastating. Feyera's Pokemon didn't stand a chance. "What was the last thing she had said?" She wanted to protect him no matter what. Jill had died saving Feyera from Haunter by giving him enough time to escape. But he couldn't even remember what her last heroic act was! "Dammit! Why's it so difficult to remember?" Tenderly rubbing his head and fighting back tears, the young trainer searched for the strength to stand up. His body felt numb and he was still stiff all over from the exceptional exertion of psionic energy. Taut from head to toe, he grunted, cursing his worsening condition. He lay on the ground, in a small clearing. Feyera wondered if anyone might have passed him by while he was in recovery.

"Gotta get moving." Eventually gaining enough stamina to overcome the initial pain threshold, he tried to move. As if he were a victim of cruel atrophy, the muscles in his body ached as he sat up.
Touching his face, he felt the steady heat of sunburn from being passed out in the sun for most of the day. It was like being encapsulated in warmth. "Ow…I need to get help."

"What am I doing?" Feyera asked himself quietly in introspection. "I should just give up on being a trainer. I'm no good at it. All of this never should have happened to me."

Now more than ever, he felt responsible for the deaths of his Pokemon friends. Lawrence and Jill were gone thanks to him. If he had been a normal trainer, it wouldn't have happened this way.

"I don't know how I can go on like this. Even with psyonics, I can't protect my friends. I—I failed her…I failed you Jill, I'm so sorry." "*Sniff*"

Feyera drew his legs inwards placing one over the other, his pants stained with a few drops of blood. Closing his eyes, he tried to imagine things differently. Consolidating his thoughts, he came to one conclusion: "I'm trapped."

The fear of Haunter had left him for now. Daylight repelled the darkness but not the memories. He shivered, despite the joyful light from above. His blood vessels felt like frozen tubes coursing through a tired, hollowed body. Pulling himself up, Edge clenched his fist to redirect the pain he felt, digging his short nails into his palm. Once he was standing again, he felt better. Lighthearted and ready.

It didn't take long to reach the Celadon Archway. A magnificent pillar of granite, it divided the less governmentally protected Celadon, from her neighboring district of Saffron. Feyera swiftly breezed by the unmonitored southern border, holding his injured arm close to his chest.

Harsh neon lights ranging from all across the color wheel, in ever hue imaginable drenched the vision of Feyera who aimlessly roamed the busy streets. Thankfully, despite his gruff appearance, he didn't seem all too out of place downtown because Celadon was the gambling capital of the world; ruffians, thugs, and casinos riddled every one of her alleyways. A long time ago, Celadon was a small suburban section of Saffron City. Eventually, due to population growth, the town grew into a city. But Celadon was a deceivingly friendly place. Sure, it brought in a lot of tourists and money. You didn't need to be a fancy-to-do in order to get by customs. Celadon attracted a myriad of people from all walks of life, but in recent years crime rates have gone up, and the city's dependency on earning massive revenue from gambling did little to help stop this.

Besides being a magnet for various types of questionable people, Celadon City had an enormous shopping district. As you could imagine, the market worked perfectly in tandem with the casinos present in the city. People would travel here, and spend their money on clothes so that they could at least look rich while the slots made them poor!

There was a Pokemon Gym here too. Feyera saw large rainbow signs depicting the attraction on his way in.

It was strange, Feyera felt compelled to obtain his next Badge, more than ever before. Why? Because he had to become stronger! The Pokemon trainer couldn't allow Jill's sacrifice to have been in vain!

Never before had he felt the need to obtain a Pokemon League Badge so insistent. The desire to become stronger, and handle his psyonics more appropriately was relentless! Soon, the wandering young man had forgotten all about his wounds as he headed to declare a challenge in a hasty frenzy. It was all he had left. The drive to be a normal trainer made him seek out the contraption of a League Badge as a soothsayer to a degree.
Precognition overwhelmed him as he walked through the busy streets. He didn't need to look for signs, he knew where he was heading. The people around him had blank and generic faces; as they passed by chattering away, Edge's stare cut through them. As he walked past people, some paused and gawked. It didn't matter though. Who were they? Gamblers, prostitutes, alcoholics, and criminals. How he distrusted this city so! Feyera had a goal in mind and was going to achieve it no matter what. He did not question his motivation, only allowed it to move him.

Regardless, possessing more Gym Badges was equivalent to more power, more control. He wanted that power; there was a mystical quality to it. After obtaining his first three League Badges, he had become latentlly addicted to this process. Use psyonics for an easy victory, keep Edge in check, and earn a badge like any other trainer would. Rinse and repeat.

And then there was Lorelei Carese, the apple of young Feyera's eye. She wanted him to go far in the Pokemon League. If he could prove to her that his determination was true, then maybe she would see something in him besides his fascia intelligence. This thought resonated with him, he desperately wanted someone to appreciate him despite his character flaws.

Was it lust or fatal attraction? He didn't really know which it was, she was beautiful though. He didn't want to be alone. These emerging psyonics put him further on the line of desperation for companionship.

Falling into a mild trance, Feyera pushed open the large Pokemon Gym's doors. The building was a massive dome shaped greenhouse. Walking inside, the moist humidity made his lungs feel heavy. The scent of flowers and vegetation made his nostrils flare. He heard water running, irrigated to nurture the plants within the gym. There was a fat man sitting behind a reception desk. His stocky frame made him look even more bloated. That and his security uniform was a size too small. The chubby man gazed up and right before their eyes met, Feyera noticed that the man was armed with a small pistol.

"Whoa hey now buddy. What's going on?"

"I'm here to earn a badge." Feyera's quivering voice carried with it mild apprehension.

The surprised guard seemed skeptical. "Are you sure you are alright kid? Your eyes look a little tired. Long night?"

Feyera was taken aback by this offhand comment. What else could be wrong with him? "What? My eyes?" he thought, covering his mouth in shock from the burst of telepathy that involuntarily attuned to his thoughts and projected.

"Erm…look for yourself." The plump security beckoned over to a nearby indoor stream. "Did you get beat up at one of the casino's last night?"

"Hold on, I need to see this!" Feyera ran over to the water and looked at his reflection in the level part of the stream. "My…!" He blinked once. Then twice. What he saw shocked him. He appeared ill. No longer did his features represent the familiar characteristics he had grown so accustomed to. In a trance he could only stare at large, blown up pupils resembling a swirling moonless sky. The golden rims skirting around his emerald irises had narrowed in width but attained a notched copper color. It was like Feyera was looking at a different person! At a different pair of eyes! And those eyes were staring right back into his own eyes!

"No!" Edge pulled on his thick bronze hair in anger. "What have I done? What did Haunter do to me?!"
"Haunter?" asked the custodian. "What are you talking about?"

"D–damn it…" Trembling as he ran his fingers through the hair, he felt awful. Like he had just woken up trapped in a foreign body. "W–who am I? H–how is this happening to me?"

"Tap…tap…" The guardian had gotten up and was walking over to him. Edge swiftly turned around, trying to shamefully cloak his eyes beneath his bangs.

"Listen, we don't have any prejudice here. If it's a challenge you seek, Erika: Celadon City's Flower Maiden will accept. I just want to know if you're physically okay. Ever since that Pokemon trainer perished in a battle at Pewter, we've had to be exceptionally careful. For insurance purposes, you understand."

"Oh I understand," he said. But deep down, Edge wanted to hit him. Feyera wanted to take his arms and strangle the ignorant man who hadn't a clue about who he really was. Heck, Feyera didn't even know who he was any more. Angry and afraid, he laughed to himself at the thought of this chance encounter. "Ha! Yeah. Perfectly fine."

"Glad you do," responded the guardian.

"Just… Give me a minute," Feyera said, leaning against a pedestal, deep in thought. Pressing a swollen temple with his index finger, his contemplations grew evermore grand and expansive. It especially pleased him to know that he was alive, even if his memories were all but gone, he was here and able to bear witness to his own legacy. The uncertainty of his own existence filled his mind with horror. Glancing at the chubby man beside him with foreign imposing eyes, he began to realize that he might not be who he thought he was. Entertaining this thought, Edge found his mind spiraling down an avenue of ambiguity. The sheer thought of not being human, it bothered him. Yes, he could deal with the idea of not being a regular human. After all, he did have extraordinary psyonics. This was not enough to console him. The physical changes were too severe, too sudden, too foreign. "What's happening to me?" he wondered.

And then he was also terribly alone. He'd never find another in the world with a similar set of circumstances. Feyera also didn't even know how to go about reporting his psyonics to the authorities! Based on records from before the Psyonic Purges, psyonics usually manifested in children at an early age. Even if he was a late bloomer, they did not coincide with mainstream acute psyonics. He felt alone. Abandoned by whoever had the sick thought of creating him, and ostracized by the rest of creation.

"Kid, you okay?" asked the man from afar.

"Yeah," Feyera said. The young man danced a finger around his chin impishly. "I have issued my challenge, and there will be only one Pokemon I will use for this battle." Now more than ever he needed stability, and Brucie was the most likely to help him accomplish that considering the time the two had shared so far on the journey. Besides, he couldn't fathom having to tell July and Des about Jill. Brucie would cooperate without much of a fuss.

"Very well." The custodian nodded his head, his tubby neck bulged outwards as he did so. From his shirt pocket he pulled out a Personal Digital Assistant. "Name and certification I.D. number please."

This was bad. Never before was he required to present identification. He supposed that in the larger cities they would allow Gym challenges to simply take place, if anything for spectacle. Maybe ever since his presumed death in Pewter Gym, security was increased.

Christian Feyera was a dead man, a wandering corpse as far as the authorities were concerned.
Gazing at the man's PDA, Edge had an idea. Or more of a bluff. If he could just employ a little bit of his precognition, maybe he could talk his way through this and establish a new identity. Feyera's glance honed in on the chubby man's face, and sensed an embryonic distress originating from within his consciousness. His psyonics were alarmingly good at reading people, and they were only getting better with practice.

"My name is… you can call me Edge," he said rather unconvincingly.

"Edge?"

"Yes. You would do well to remember it…mister…" feeling the rush of psychometry, a sudden epiphany of a name was all the young man sought. Gasping, Feyera clutched a tight fist, well aware of the warm, rosy glow of his vision. It was as if his eyes had been coated with two crescent moon red shields. Soft vision blurs and flickers of colored light danced around as Edge entered the mind of the man standing in front of him with little more than a stare. All he needed was a name. But there needed to be a bridge as well.

"Umm…" the man said quivering slightly in apprehension. "Why are you staring at me?"

And there it was! "Anxiety!" Like a guided missile, locking onto trepidation, Feyera forced a twisted smile, bridging his own consciousness to the man in front of him with a parallel emotion of anxiety. "Right…*sigh!*" Edge exhaled loudly as the man's anxiety merged with his own. "Ross. Allen. Nice to meet you."

Mildly perturbed by all this, Allen replied, "Wait, you know me?"

"Yes." Edge smiled, it was easy to read Allen's thoughts. The union of consciousness grew thicker with each passing second of mutually shared trepidation. "You've done well for yourself."

Allen squirmed as he stammered, "What…? Whatever do you mean?"

Now he needed to find a temporal link. Edge glanced quickly at his target's forehead carefully scrutinizing the recent wrinkling patterns, reaching out, expanding, linking consciousness with little more than an emotion. "…After that incident a few weeks back."

"Huh?" a startled Allen said folding his hands tightly together.

"Oh come now, a little gambling here and there ain't the worst thing in the world." The mental connection was so very strong, Feyera felt like he was driving Allen's mind. More impressive was the honeyed fluidity of his words; it was as if he didn't have to think to speak. Indeed, Feyera didn't even the time to think, it simply wasn't necessary. "Sigh…You just have to know to quit while you're ahead sometimes." Edge smirked, fully aware that he was penetrating every hidden memory of this man, but sublimely unaware of just how he was doing it. It didn't matter as long as he continued to get favorable results from his psyonics.

"I…uh…don't know what you're talkin' about, kid," said Allen. Unrelenting sweat was staining his face with gloss. The more he tried to wipe away the numerous droplets of perspiration, the quicker the sticky beads gathered on his rounded visage.

Feyera raised a hand to silence the man. "Listen, I like to gamble too, which is why I'm here. I want to challenge Erika, your dear 'Flower Maiden', so that I can continue my quest."

"All trainers need to show registration," said Allen stoutly. "That's policy, I'm afraid."

"Policy?" rebuked Feyera, waving his hand with an air of haughty self-importance. "That's
ridiculous!" Thankfully, Edge was already two steps ahead. "–Now, correct me if I'm wrong Mister Ross, but you still owe a few people some money, don't you?"

"N…No…"

Feyera quietly nodded.

"–How do you know?! Who sent you?" The man was sweating uncontrollably at this point, from exposure or from the strain Edge was putting on his mind. Feyera didn't care which it was. He had the upper hand, he was going to get what he wanted, and it was going to be done his way.

"Oh, does it really matter who sent me? I'm here now, aren't I?"

"I…I'm afraid that I'll have to see some identification. Listen, it's not me, it's the Pokemon League, ever since the resurgence of the Rockets and increasingly catastrophic events they've ordered us to document all Pokemon challenges," Allen Ross said. He bobbed his head up and down nervously as his uniform's thick collar absorbed the running neck sweat. "C'mon, it ain't anything personal Mister Edge."

"Ha!" 'Mister Edge' grinned exposing his bright pearly teeth. "Well then, I suppose I'll just have to leave and report you to the authorities. Your scandal is no longer under wraps, Al."

Ross squinted and squirmed uncomfortably.

"And if you know what's good for you, you'll follow my instructions to the T." Beaming, Feyera leered menacingly at the pudgy man, his mind absorbing all sorts of delightful mental residue.

Ross grew very still physically, despite expelling a sea of berate emotions. Hues of purple followed by the yellow of cowardice, these colors were radiating from the guard's body. Then he opened his mouth to speak. "I…I'll put you down as an inspector…for the government. Edge, was it?"

"Correct. Three League Badges so far as well. Boulder, Cascade, Thunder. Got that?"

Allen Ross nodded again.

"And if you ever squeal on this little…numbers job…" Edge raised a narrow arm above his large glowering eyes. "There's stupidity, and then there's—"

"—I won't say a word. Trust me." Allen made a slight whimper as the tendrils of invisible psyonic energy relaxed. Though it was surprisingly difficult to relinquish from Edge's perspective.

"Good." Stretching – his psyonic appetite now quenched – Feyera continued lazily, "Now, if you'll just go along and tell dear Erika that I would like to issue a challenge then we are all square and done. You go on your way, and I'll go on mine. This conversation never happened. If you're smart, you won't have to see me again."

"But…just how did you know?" Allen asked. "Who told you about me? Who sent you?"

"I'm a freak," Feyera said with a sour glance. Displaying whatever narcissist tendencies he had left; he continued to pull on his narrow frame by stretching his arm back further over his head. On a whim, he answered, "It was all so simple. The way you hold your palm pilot. You gingerly use your left hand to scroll, and your eyes focus on the information appearing on screen while at the same exact time; you never take your gaze off me. You're no amateur at the tables, Al. It seems you have just run into a bit of sour luck. Your left cheek still has bruise marks on it. Probably brass knuckles, but who am I to say—" Ross instinctually raised his hand to touch his face. "–Also, no wedding band,
but an indentation on your ring finger. Divorced? No, she probably left a sorry man like you without saying a word. You have no spine left, when you try and talk, you routinely bob your head upwards and downwards when you speak. Like so," Edge mimicked him sarcastically.

"You can't be serious!" Allen replied.

Fully stretched, Feyera exhaled and proceeded to relax once more, growing ever more comfortable in his body from behind his new set of eyes. He really was Edge. He didn't have to pretend any more. "Yawn… That's one of the more noticeable nervous habits, Allen. I don't miss a trick. Judging by your unwillingness to display a nametag or collar, you wish to remain anonymous. You carry a small gun at your side, but I doubt it is necessary to defend this gym. Pokemon can do that just fine. So, maybe, you have a weapon to protect you as you walk home late at night, since Pokemon take too long to draw. Perhaps you are afraid of someone recognizing you. Overall, you come across as a very reserved, frightened little man, who is in over his head right now."

Blankly, Allen stared at Edge at a loss for words. How could he answer such an arrogant character who was pulling all the strings?! Feyera had even described himself in that very last sentence for good measure. Indeed, that was the last step to completing his dissociation from a prior identity.

"–I'm glad you like my eyes though, Al." Dramatically blinking, Edge walked past him and towards the main floral arrangement.

A surge from the potent florescent lights illuminated the large arena. The brilliantly glimmering shine momentarily blinded Edge as artificial sunlight doused the shiny wet plant life all around him.

"Challenger?" squeaked a tender voice.

Squinting and using his wrist to shield his inflamed eyes, Feyera patiently waited for his eyes to adjust to the light. The room was in the center of the enormous arched greenhouse, filled with a myriad of flora. The earth beneath his legs was covered in vines and other creeping vegetation. He sincerely hoped that it was not poisonous. Even though he had a thick pair of calf-high Alterieno brand leather boots on, the whole gym reeked of hemlock and poisonous oak!

In the center of the arena sat a brunette in a yellow kimono. Her hair fell loosely over her shoulders. She was arranging flowers in a pattern, twisting their juicy stems together to bind them. Again, she addressed him. "Challenger?"

"I wish to issue a challenge." Edge looked at her, confused by her refusal to conventionally acknowledge his presence. Then again, what was conventional for a gym leader? They were all quirky in their own way. And, strange as their mannerisms might have been, none were as bizarre as Edge himself. Feeling a burst of confidence, he trampled forward, his adventuring boots crunching loudly on the vegetation and fertile soil.

Hearing the distinct crunch of plants being disrupted, Erika suddenly jumped. "What are you doing here?!"

Her apparent fear startled him. "Do I know you?" he questioned.

"No, I don't think so," she shook her head. "Forgive me, I am prone to daydreaming. I just thought… you were someone I knew from a while ago."

Feyera had no clue who she was. Was it amnesia again? Maybe he'd seen her in an old battle magazine. "I've never met you before," he thought, the brief anxiety passing. He was here to win, and victory would be his.
"Forgive me, but are you alright?" she said as she studied Feyera with her bright hazel eyes. "I could have sworn I heard you say something."

"No. I didn't say anything, Erika. It's probably your imagination. Or your 'daydreams'. Speaking of, are those plants the kind that make you…?"

"—Of course not!" Erika said defensively. "What would make you think that?!"

"Ahem!" Allen Ross walked in from behind Edge, "Miss Erika, this is a Pokemon Inspector referring to himself as Edge."

"Edge?" Erika asked with a feeble smile.

"Yes," Allen answered. "He's a Code Vector who needs to conceal his identity on behalf of the government."

"A C.V.?" Erika seemed charmed. "Sounds mysterious."

Feyera grinned, things were going great. The ruse was working!

"Correct," Allen went on with the fabricated lie, "as an inspector, he'll be challenging you with a single Pokemon, to assure the quality of our gym is up to snuff."

"Inspector…" Erika said in half trance, "I have this feeling… I feel like I've seen you before. Somewhere…maybe in a photograph. You just look somehow…familiar to me."

Feyera crossed his arms. "You must be mistaken." He didn't even recognize himself and now Erika was saying she remembered him, things were getting a little too far out of hand! "…Or spending too much time in la–la land."

"Humph! Fine, enough antics! Inspector, I accept your challenge. Go, my dear flower! Victreebel!"

"Now we're talking!" Feyera adhered to his promise, sliding the gear of his holster with a "Click!" back to front and center and released his first Pokemon, Brucie. Upon the discharge of Charmeleon, a wave of comforting psyonics breezed through Feyera's luscious hair, tingling at his scalp as the mental tether was brought back. "Brucie!"

[Boss!] shouted his Pokemon. [What's happening? We're fighting?!]

"Yes, don't worry though," projected Edge. Maybe he should have given his Pokemon a heads up. It was too late now though! "With such a great type advantage, you'll do great pal."

Brucie excitedly pawed at the ground. [Yikes, that thing is big.]

Seeing the oozing acid drool from Victreebel's gaping mouth, Edge telepathically ordered Brucie to evade the corrosive secretion at all costs. "That liquid acid is no good. We'll have to take it out from a distance!"

[We?!] Brucie exclaimed.

"You and me!" Edge clarified, quickly ordering his Pokemon. "Jump to your left!"

"—Victreebel, use Vine Whip!" Erika said. The oversized pitcher plant let out a horrific shriek as its vine extremities extended like ropes and slashed at Charmeleon's leathery hide with a snapping "crack!".
Brucie sprung out of the way just in time to dodge a full-on assault from Erika's Pokemon. It eagerly spat acid from its fanged mouth to intimidate the Charmeleon.

Erika commanded, "Acid attack!"

"Beeeeel!" shrieked the plant. Bubbling acerbic boiled out of its crockery pot like mouth!

"Watch out! Take a quick turnaround, use your tail as a decoy!"

Brucie seamlessly complied, following Edge's command to the letter. The lizard whirled backwards and flicked his flaming tail directly between the Victreebel's pulsating roots.

"BEL!" it wailed, hobbling backwards. The Victreebel swung its vines about, thrashing about in the garden of singed vegetation. More frothing and bubbling acid slipped out from the massive pitcher plant's mouth.

"Oh no, pull back!"

[Don't need to tell me twice–YEOWCH!] In all the chaos, the Pokemon managed to strike Brucie with one of its many vines, although the attack was unable to capture the deft lizard. The whiplash left a distinct mark on the Pokemon's hide.

"Brucie!"

[Just a scratch, I got this boss!]

"Gah!" Feyera growled. "Time to even our odds a bit!" Trying to exert psionic pressure on the opposing Pokemon much in the way he had done to Brock's Onix, although this time with a lot less desperation.

[Boss? What are you doing?!]

"Hiss! EEEKKK!" Victreebel shrieked bringing its vines down to support its bulky body as Feyera's psyonics put an extra physical damper on the Pokemon's movement. Like a heavy bronze bell, it crashed onto the floor! "BEL!"

Seeing the Victreebel spurt out even more corrosive acid with a howl, Brucie chastised Edge, [Oh great, now you made it mad!]

"No time for blaming!" insisted Feyera. "Use Ember before it tries to eat you!"

Shooting fireballs from his maw, the lizard singed the plant. Setting its leaves aflame stopped it from attacking anymore with those wicked vines. The burning leaves soon engulfed the rest of the plant as it tossed and toiled about to extinguish the fire, it only caused the flames to grow.

"BEL BEL!" The Pokemon's once vibrant cries grew softer with the crackling of timber and gathering of smoke.

"Return!" Erika swiftly drew forth her Pokéball and withdrew Victreebel before the fire completely consumed the plant Pokemon.

"Hah! Way to go Brucie! One down!"

Brucie spun round to give his trainer a thumbs–up.

But their celebration was ephemeral. "Go Tangela!" said Erika.
[Any ideas, boss?] said an out of breath Brucie. [I'm all ears.]

Edge thought he was finished with dealing with living vines, but he was wrong. Erika had called upon Tangela; a beast made of entirely fleshy creeping vines all snarled and twisted into a mess. "Umm…uhh…" The swaying vines were mesmerizing Edge. Losing focus proved detrimental, precious time was being wasted as the creature dug its thick roots into the overly fertile ground. Suddenly it grew larger and larger!

[Um, I think we need a bigger idea!]

"Shoot! That's its Ingrain technique! Brucie, you've gotta stop it before it gains too many nutrients! Get in there and use Slash!"

[Shouldn't be a problem, boss!] The lizard rushed at the tousled muddle of plant life.

Erika quickly countered. "Constrict!"

The Tangela quickly wrapped its bulging vines around Brucie's neck with a suffocating grip.

"No!" Edge could feel his partner's pain through their brittle bond.

[Ack! *Gurgle!*] Feyera's Charmeleon started to gaggle from the thick vines tightening around his neck.

"Slash! You need to cut the vines, Brucie!" Feyera pleaded. Again, he contemplated employing psyonics to give him an edge. Concentrating on his battlefield avatar, he longed for some way to invisibly assist Brucie. "Brucie! Hold on!"

[I–I got this!] Mustering his strength, the young Pokemon pulled his sharp claws across his neck, splitting the vines in half. The fleshy vines once slashed, drooped and dripped out a tick pus which rapidly solidified into new vine extensions for the creature.

"Good, now get out of there before–" "Oh no!" he shouted in dismay, for Tangela had just regrown its lost vines.

[Looks like we've got a bit of a problem!]"How did it regenerate so quickly…?" The ingrained plant continued to lash its numerous vines about trying to grab a hold of Brucie. The vines surged with a supernatural energy, and unparalleled vigor.

[Boss, I can't keep this up forever.] Hacking and slashing at the thrashing vines, Brucie was looking pale from exhaustion! [What do I do?!]

"You have to aim your fireball at the core of it. Hit the roots, they are what's feeding it! Without those, Tangela can't regenerate!"

Obeying, the fire lizard exhaled a thick Ember at the surface, singing the floor vegetation in the process. Erika's Tangela squirmed and staggered, its roots no longer pumping limitless resources into its battering form.

"Okay great, give it a final fiery Slash!"

[Okay!] With a paw raised high, Brucie spat two or three small fireballs onto his rigid nails. The red–hot, glowing nails cut down on Tangela's helpless swaying body, ripping it clear in two.
"The lovely thing about grass Pokemon is that they don't fear death. They will be reborn. When one member of the forest perishes, it makes room for many more to grow out of its remains. That's life, Edge," Erika said making sure to say his pseudo name slowly. Slowly from the quiet lumps of vines, there was much rustling and stirring.

[MORE?] Brucie shouted in horror.

"No fair!" Edge yelled, seeing two smaller Tangela rise out from the patch of severed vines like offspring.

"A battle's a battle, and seems like Tangela still wants to fight!" Erika said.

"You can't give up Brucie!"

Scrambling out of the way of the Tangela, [I know!] Brucie said.

Feyera noticed the two Tangela were indeed smaller than their parent. Not only that, but they were completely synchronized in their motions, like mindless zombies.

[I'm getting cornered!] Brucie warned his trainer.

"Okay, I got an idea: take the right one out with an Ember!"

Brucie had no time to answer Edge with the two Pokemon bearing down quickly on him! With a precise shot, he singed the first Tangela. The second one, reacted in the same way as the first, as if it too had caught on fire. The inexplicable flailing about would have been humorous had this not been a tense battle.

"Seems like they share a single mind!" Feyera thought. "Brucie, quickly, trip the left one with a Tail Whip!"

With his thick leathery tail, Brucie effortlessly tripped the un-singed Tangela causing both of the Tangela to fall down in a unified response. The one which had been burnt was soon roasted by the searing flames of Brucie's initial attack since it fell down to the grass in a compromising position! It was attempting to mimic its twin! Like a seared tumbleweed, its flopping vines generated more intense flames!

[Got it!]

"Look out!" Edge ordered. "Hit the other one with a Mega Punch square between the eyes!"

Brucie wound up a mighty punch, and rolled a deep blow into the fallen Tangela just as it was getting up. The sheer force of the impact sent the Pokemon sailing into the trunk of an old oak tree acting as a support beam for the gym. With the two creatures separated for good, they soon become unresponsive.

"My, it looks like you know how to handle yourself in a tight spot." Erika said, "But remember, the forest always comes back. Go Vileplume!"

"Another one?" […]Again?] Feyera asked at the same time as Brucie, and with just as little breath.

"Oh Inspector!" Erika smiled brightly, waving her long colorful sleeves through the air. "Do you think people are like that too? Do you think we're like flowers that know when to come back to life when the spring arrives?"
Edge didn't know exactly what to say, he was tired of her antics, her Pokemon had not only caused his Pokemon pain, but he too felt the pain. Sighing he responded, "No, I think humans are a lot different than a bunch of dumb flowers."

"So blasé!" She sarcastically chuckled. "I honestly don't know what to think of you Inspector. You're strong, but why do you want to win so desperately? This is just a Pokemon battle after all. You're acting as if your life depends upon it."

"Tell me something: the badges, what powers do they have?"

"None whatsoever, it's purely psychological for the Pokemon. Pokemon are drawn towards power, they respect it. The badge is only a symbol of a trainer's strength. It does not make the trainer any better. The badges service the trainer by making Pokemon and people alike respect the dedication and perseverance imbued within each badge."

"It does?"

"You'll discover it one day. Each one of your badges carries with it a story. All of them are meaningful in one way or another," she glanced at her Vileplume, "I want you to remember this challenge. But… I also want to remember you. Did you always go by the name 'Edge', Inspector?"

"Of course not, you think my mother named me that?" Feyera's eyes narrowed. He hadn't a clue who she was. To him, she was just a Gym Leader. She would remember his surname if anything, but he couldn't resuscitate 'Mister Feyera'. "I told you already, I don't know who you are personally, Miss Erika. My apologizes."

"Let's not rule that out," she said with a friendly flirt.

"I have a number of places I need to inspect after our battle," Edge said. "This is strictly business."

Erika ran her hands down along her narrow dress, "Maybe that's the case, but I still would like to recall where it is I know you from… was it here in Celadon City?"

"I haven't ever been here before, maybe you knew me from Saffron where I studied at the Pokemon University's… um… 'Inspector School'," Feyera joked.

"No, that doesn't sound right to me. It's...your face. Your features... Something is familiar about it all. Maybe it will come back to me, but for now: we battle."

"Fine!" Feyera shrugged. "Okay. Last challenge, Brucie. It looks highly leveled."

By now, Brucie had caught his breath, and was rearing to go. [It's on!]

"Just be careful. Please!" said Feyera. The researcher pulled his arms up and down, antsy since he did not know what Erika's Pokemon was capable of.

"Vileplume! Giga Drain!" yelled Erika.

The large, undead flower drew life-force out of Brucie using the vegetation on the floor beneath him. The plants grew to life as they expanded, almost as if the floor itself was alive and breathing. Sapping the strength out of Brucie, the Pokemon began to rock back and forth, as the living growing organisms clutched at his small legs. They glowed yellow and puckered as their vines greedily brushed into Brucie's leathery hide.

"You gotta keep moving, Brucie! Don't stay in one place, otherwise they'll continue draining energy..."
from you," ordered Feyera.

Too weak to communicate back to Edge, Brucie tried to move. Soon though, one of the outstretched plants from below his feet tripped him. He fell face first into a mossy plant. The plant sprung to life, clutching at his face with its thin animated tendrils. The plant vigorously bulged outwards saturated with Brucie's absorbed stamina.

"Oh shoot! Brucie, get up!"

"Vileplume, use Stun Spore!"

"Flamethrower Brucie! There's no time!" Edge furiously commanded, afraid to lose his Pokemon to the wicked vegetation's embrace.

Coughing and gagging from the disgusting plant attempting to consume his face, Brucie let out a howl before breathing a stream a pure blue fire. The knockback released him from the plant's grip and he was sent flying backwards like a comet.

Erika looked worried. Her curious smile had long since faded. There was something strange about her challenger. It wasn't just that she thought she recognized his face. He wasn't issuing audible commands to his Pokemon. Something wasn't right!

"Let's end this now, Brucie! Hit it with all you've got! Fire Spin!"

Brucie knew exactly what he had to do, as if his trainer was telepathically guiding his actions. He swung his burning tail in front of his mouth, and let out a huge jet stream of blistering hot fire. The effect was amplified by his tail's own flame, and soon fire covered the entire greenhouse floor. Incinerating the plant floor like napalm, Vileplume was helplessly caught in the flaming vortex.

"Enough!" Erika yelled, as the greenhouse sprinklers activated. Water droplets from above began to douse the intense firestorm. But Edge wanted more. He couldn't be finished yet. Feeling the pain his partner went through in a shared experience sent his mind into a frenzy. Feyera was about to issue more orders to his Pokemon. Like a simulated puppet, Charmeleon would do what he commanded infallibly. Brucie was essentially his personal avatar on the battlefield.

"ENOUGH!" screamed Erika. "STAND DOWN INSPECTOR!"

Feyera's heart began to race when he realized just how far he had gone. Recoiling his psyonic control, he felt his head burning from the ordeal. As the smooth tendrils of his mind refolded upon themselves, he felt suddenly vulnerable. The cold water from above ran down his face cooling his temper. His chest shard flickered briefly in radiating waves as the cool water calmed the trainer and his body.

"I'm…sorry," Edge couldn't find the right words to say, so he said the first thing to come to mind. How could he explain what he felt like to Erika? "I didn't know it would have gone this far."

Erika, now in tears blending in with the artificial rain, shouted at Edge while recalling her fainted Pokemon. "It's you!" Her eyes widened in awe.

"Me? You remember me?" he asked. "From where?"

"Take your stupid badge and never come back here again!" She threw the Rainbow Badge across the room and it landed in the damp charred vegetation before his tall boots. Feyera picked it up and felt his hand shaking. The vibration went all the way up from his wrist to his shoulder as he held the Rainbow Badge.
Contemplating what had just happened, Feyera looked up, but Erika had already ran off to the back of the Gym. He thought about following her, but then figured that he should leave her be. Allen Ross approached him from behind. "Please, sir, respect lady Erika's wishes."

Feyera puckered his lips and tasted the sprinkler water. It tasted charged. "Yes, very well. I got what I came here for. I'll go." He turned to leave and Ross followed him to the door, sealing it shut behind him. Neither of the men said a word.

Edge felt horrible, the damage Brucie had been capable of doing was all because of him.

Silently leaving, Christian and Brucie walked out into the evening air. It was less dense outside, but the heavy atmosphere followed them. The happy neon colors on the streets did not make either of them feel any better.

[Boss, what did you do back there? I felt you controlling me,] Brucie quizzically asked Feyera.

"I honestly don't know Brucie. I was just trying to win. That was what was most important. It was the only thing on my mind."

[The only thing?] Brucie said. [Whatever happened in the Pokemon Tower? Last I saw, you were in a world of trouble mister!]

"Brucie…We—I got away."

[You did, but how?]

"It…it just…"

Brucie looked at his trainer's holster and saw the missing Pokéball, but he said nothing. Perhaps he didn't know what to say. There was nothing to say.

"Now I have this Rainbow Badge, but it means nothing since you probably don't respect me anymore."

[Of course I respect you. You saved my life back there. Sure we could have gone a little easier, but at least I'm not plant fertilizer.]

Feyera gave a faux grin, his bright teeth reflected the neon light given off by cyan sign above them. "I wouldn't want that to happen to my friend. I got carried away though. I should have stopped. I was so bent on winning that I forgot to care about anything else in the world."

[If a badge means something to you, Christian, don't deny it. Us Pokemon don't ever deny a meaningful part of our existence. Instead we cherish it.]

"I know, but I'm a trainer. This should be the other way around. I shouldn't be thinking in these terms like I'm a Pokemon simply because I have psyonics!"

[Only you know the answer to that one. But I'll help you out since I like earning badges almost as much as you do.] Brucie rolled his bright blue eyes. […Almost.]

Feyera thought about Lorelei again. She was the one who first suggested the challenge to him. He also sort of…liked her. He wanted to prove to her that he was capable. He felt himself blush. He could feel blood rushing to his cheeks. He stopped mid-thought. "I'll find what I'm looking for one day Brucie. I can feel it."
"Yeah. Right here." He placed his hand over his heart, to the left of the crystalline shard cleaving his narrow chest in two.

[It might not be what you expect though. Then what?] asked the Charmeleon, still disquiet about Feyera's lack of an explanation for what took place in the Pokemon Tower. Brucie was a trusting character, who waited for answers to come to him. Perhaps for that reason, Feyera ironically confided the most in the least intrusive member of the party.

"I'll figure it out. I still have some skeletons in the closet I guess."

[Yeah well, it would be boring if you didn't!]

"I suppose so. Say, hold on! I recognize that place." Feyera pointed to a large casino. "Luxaira." Its massive size and numerous flashing lights were something to be impressed with. The glossy black window panels had flashing neon lighting surrounding them, making colorful rectangles against a silk-like façade. Numerous people were entering and leaving. Many of them had suits and other fancy attire.

Brucie gently massaged the injury Erika's Victreebel had given him. [You...remember something?] "Hey don't act all surprised! That's how amnesia works, sometimes your memories slowly come back."

It seemed too good to be true. [Wait, from where?] asked Brucie.

"I don't know," responded Feyera. "I don't remember ever traveling to Celadon before. Even though I lived next door in Saffron, Celadon was always one of those places that looks nice – from a distance, if you catch my drift. I was planning on making a trip here before I was involved in the Sanctum Robbery two years ago. I never came here though, yet this scene seems so very... memorable."

[Maybe you saw it in a book or something,] Brucie suggested. [You professor types read lots of those!]

"Haha! Brucie, I'm not THAT old yet!" Feyera laughed, imagining himself retiring as a professor one day. "Professor Feyera. Ha!"

[It suits you.]

"You think so? Now the really weird thing is I remember being here in this exact place. In fact... Feels like it was yesterday."

[What do you think it is?]

"A sensation of déjà vu. I was standing right here. On a day like today. It's so strange, Brucie..." Feyera squinted his eyes in contemplation. "So strange..." he repeated.

Brucie grinned. [Let's check it out then, maybe something inside will remind you!]

"Deal. I'll let you know what happens." "Return!"
Chapter 10: Repressed Revelations

Walking past the casino's thick glass doors, Feyera managed to gleam a quick reflection of himself. What he saw was a desperately unwell man, trapped in confusion, battered from exhaustion, corrupted from psyonic exertion. He couldn't do much save hope it would all end soon. The confusion, the psyons, 'Edge' as his increasingly tangible alternate identity; the whole world was bearing down on young Mister Feyera from the inside out.

Feyera had withdrawn his Charmeleon back into the Pokéball. Judging by the large sign reading "No Pokemon", it was customary to do so when entering such an establishment. Luxaira Casino probably had to enforce this policy to prevent bedlam. And being at the epicenter of the Celadon Strip, this particular gambling house saw a fair deal of traffic from a rougher crowd.

Despite the inexplicable déjà vu familiarity with Luxaira, Feyera had never been to a casino before. Granted, he had discriminatory amnesia, but this felt like a part of his life so innate, so intimate, so imbedded; it was impossible to ignore on the grounds of his usual systems of denial. It was all so incredibly odd: he was trying to remember a memory, a memory which eluded his memory. It was distant but present insofar as it seemed to be pertinent to where he was right now. As if it were a lifetime away, he could not recall the details although he tried tremendously hard to recollect such hidden aspects.

Moving past security with a quick stride, he paused and looked around at the familiar yet foreign environment. The building's high, vaulted ceilings of brightly reflective glass made him feel dizzy. There were so many people here, pushing and shoving their way through the narrow corridors packed with illuminated slot machines and bluegrass green blackjack tables!

Granted, Feyera was accustomed to city life, albeit of a different variety. Places like Pallet Town or Saffron City would never see this type of a gathering. Overwhelmed by all of the activity, he drifted casually around the perimeter. Casinos were not his idea of a fun time. Dark, smoky, a temporal suspension of time, this particular casino was no different from what he expected. It was like being locked up in a hole with a bunch of other random people, all living in together in concentrated solidarity. He remembered doing a project back in grade school where he calculated the odds of most games. The conclusion: the house always won in the end. Unless, of course, you could manipulate the odds to work in your favor.

Feyera's face turned pale at the revelation of this. How could he even think in such a way? He was a man of integrity. Not a thief… But then again, he was able to play this Edge character exceedingly well. However, cheating the system seemed like a big step from his initial inclination to search for answers in Luxaira.

"What's the problem?" he asked himself, thinking back. "I've used the power for personal gain plenty of times before!" For instance when he was in danger, or when he longed for the companionship of his Pokemon. Psyonics were there for him to exploit as much as they were there for him to study. They were like an old friend, always willing to lend him a hand. So what made exploiting an exploitable (and exploiting) system so different? "It's the same as before. I need this. Haven't I suffered enough on behalf of psyonics to warrant a little indulgence? If I can wrestle control over people like before… Maybe I can take command over some of the cash flow here and
even the odds. Maybe I can make a little nest money... for research purposes.” Almost mesmerizingly, Feyera told himself over and over that he could do it as a matter of pragmatic procedure; he wanted to be able to ignore the moral implications.

Even if the ethics were not an issue, it did not change the fact the place was littered with cameras everywhere. Anxiously, he glanced about seeing those thick black lenses in every possible location. In the corners, in the walls, and even in the ceilings. Whoever was in charge of this massive complex had made no compromise by insuring that they had a perfect vantage point of the entire establishment's floor. And even if there wasn't a recording of his actions, the human security surveillance making rounds would catch him in no time.

Feyera knew that people would be able to identify him as 'different' in one way or another. For starters, there was a jagged wound flipantly concealed behind his rag–tag necktie! Not only that, but Allen Ross had made note of glowering eyes.

Half expecting the ocular inflammation to be the end result of a late night, Feyera was thrown by the strange unfamiliarity of his reflection. Those eyes were just not the same. Something had changed. Something had been altered. Something was lost. And the fact that he couldn't remember it terrified him.

True, his eyes were a familiar emerald green, but this ring was rimmed with an ominous copper wire lacing. A fenced-in iris was certainly a peculiar side-effect, (and in all likelihood the consequence of continuous psyonic exertion) and yet despite being insignificantly histrionic, it seemed to shake the very foundation of Feyera's identity!

But that's exactly where the physical idiosyncrasies stopped, and their respective sensations superseded! For psyonics were more of a feeling, a state of blissful eudemonia, than anything else. Like looking through a telescope of fantastically warm color, Feyera's visual field gained a radiant, rubicund glow during those psyonic peaks. Come to think of it, it was the same color of the light his chest wound expelled during his confrontation with Haunter in the Pokemon Tower! However, more strange than the optical component was the sensation itself. For when the young man resorted to his psyonics, he experienced the feeling of wearing tightly fitting goggles, made of an immaterial cerise substance. The fuzzy embrace was all too foreign to describe in any manner other than blissfully bizarre; tingling pressure welling within his eye sockets felt tremendous, but it felt equally amazing to fall into. Once it started, the uncontrollable response felt divine.

"If only I can tame that... And control the outcome." Feyera stroked his auburn hair back anxiously and placed his hand on his waist. Nerves were nipping and biting at him like Carvanha! He couldn't possibly expect himself to do this. A single bead of sweat formed on his brow and he nervously rubbed it away. "I can't... I won't. If I get caught, I'm going to be in a world of trouble." Edge swallowed saliva as his palm twitched. Again, his gaze darted about the massive complex. He would have looked incredibly suspicious if it were not for all of the people bustling back and forth around him.

A thought came to mind: "Psyonics can manipulate, but the result is unpredictable on people. I might inadvertently hurt someone. Then again, there's no harm in testing it out on an inanimate object. Why not start out small by swaying the reels on the slots? Who would stop me?"

There was an incredible urge within the inquisitive researcher to try it out. "What could possibly go wrong? If I use a little bit of precognition, I bet I can discern the outcome of the slots." Rationalizing three steps ahead of his actions, he concluded that because he was running low on money, with the enormous revenue brought in by this casino, Feyera doubted they would miss a little of their wealth thanks to a "lucky" gambler. The young man had motive; all Edge needed was purpose.
As the young researcher swept about the rows of machines lit up by countless flashing bulbs, he tried to find a quiet place to sit down. He walked past a large gilded statue of a Pokéball and slipped past a few indoor fountains before finding a less traffic packed section of the casino. Like a circling Fearow, Feyera tactfully observed the people as he looped around the premises. Some were well dressed, others weren't. A few people were waiting in a long line by a gated teller, who was dispensing azure, diamond shaped chips branded with an italicized golden "L" for Luxaira. There were a couple of big security guards riddled around the floor too. They were not conspicuous, dressed in military attire, and armed with various weapons ranging from stun rods to magnum revolvers.

"Take it easy," he told himself, not even realizing that he was conversing with himself. "It's all going to work out." Instead what worried him was that the reason he recognized Luxaira Casino still wasn't coming back to him. Even now as he strolled through the familiar atmosphere, it felt like he was doing the same thing over again; it was the strongest form of déjà vu. He just could not remember where he had done it before.

Sitting down on a worn out, leather covered stool, Feyera sighed as he stared at the illuminated machine in front of him. It seemed to look right back at him, with its flashing bulbs and ringing bells beaconing and taunting. The longer he looked at it, the more his reflection showed in the glass panel separating him from the wheels. Again, the bizarre unfamiliarity with himself made him daydream. "Who am I...? Is this really me...?"

Breaking this trance, Feyera pulled out his wallet and removed a hundred Pokedollar. He placed it into the machine's gaping mouth, which greedily gobbled it up. As it did so, it issued a small recording of: "Good Luck!" The lights flashed more sporadically and the wheels began to rapidly spin. The whirling wheels of the machine in front of him were now drowning out the sound of people in the background. As the three wheels spun faster and faster, Edge raised his palm to the lever on the right of the device. Steadily, he clutched it with his hand.

Feyera trembled slightly, pulling down on the bar fast. "Shink!"

Nothing. The machine responded back to him: "Better luck next time!"

"Dammit. Messed that up," he said blaming his clumsy reflexes. Triggering psyonics sure felt a lot less automatic than he had hoped. "Sigh... Practice make perfect though." He drew another bill from his wallet, falling into the trap so many others around him had succumbed to. The only difference between Feyera and the people nearby was he had the incredible gift of psyonics. That was more than enough!

"I'll win," thought Feyera, "I want to win, I can do this. It's about time things start to work out in my favor."

Shifting into a state of superciliousness, he waited a little longer this time before clamping a fist on the lever. "Shink!" went the machine as Feyera pulled down with all his physical strength, which still wasn't much. Again he was rewarded with nothing besides a few random sequences of symbols.

"Damn!" he whispered. "My reaction time is off!"

Panting, he took another bill out of his wallet, the third to last one. He relinquished it to the machine, which was happy to devour it. "Good Luck!" the machine said, flashing the letters in bright lights. It was taunting him, telling him he couldn't do it.

"I don't need luck, you dumb machine!" Feyera said scowling. "How can I be so helpless now? Psyonics are able to tear open a mental rift in the psychical world! Assist me in battles! And yet, I
can't figure out how to use a marginal amount of mental energy to win a silly game of prediction! What's the secret?!" Menacingly, he stared at the machine and consequently into his reflection's glowering expression. "What's your secret?!"

Little did he know, his eyes began to glow as he grew more frustrated. He could see it in the reflection given off by the slot machine. The few people around him had moved away. As he readied the lever, he stood up, completely focused on all the machine's internal workings. He did not need to understand them; all he needed was to know when the right moment would be. In his mind, the process was simple: figure out the future based on the heightened awareness psyonics endowed him with. That way, he'd be able to react, intuiting exactly what needed to be done and know the precise moment to pull.

"Shink!"

Another miss.

"Dammit!" he belted.

Unfortunately, the obsessed young man aroused some suspicion as people had vacated the area and were talking about him.

"What's wrong with that man's eyes?"

"Is he alright?"

"What's going on here?"

Feyera spun around to greet their confused expressions. "I'm trying to concentrate!" Will you all just kindly shut up?!" he yelled more out of instinct than out of rationality.

"Who the hell do you think you're talking to, red eyes?" responded a large man from in the crowd. Shoving the other casino patrons out of his way he approached the trainer. Wearing a bladed grin on his sculpted face above a sharp angular nose, the man trounced forward. His black leisure suit smelled of a potent alcoholic mixture – as did his breath. With a growl he asked, "You think ya got the whole place to yourself?"

Feyera slowly steadied himself, standing up to not feel as towered-over as he was. Lackadaisically resting his arm on the slot machine's handle, "Look," he answered, "I'm trying to concentrate and all you're doing is talking about me. It's rude!"

"WHAT?" The man roared at him, "I never said a freakin' thing to you, punk. But now if you want to make a big fuss outta this you've picked the wrong man to cross!"

Feyera saw the man's anger radiating off in thick streams of crimson. Outward directed rage with little cause, quickly followed by him rolling up his sleeves. "Shit." Now that was an obvious reaction he managed to see coming! "Look, I don't want to fight you," he stammered, "c'mon, it was an honest misunderstanding. Let's just get back to–"

"SHUT UP!" The gruff man brought his arm to Feyera's side and gripped tightly on his collarbone. "I haven't seen a freakshow like you around these parts before! This is my turf, and you best remember that!"

"C'mon. You don't want to–" Feyera said; heart pounding, adrenaline pumping. Petrified, he could only manage to bring his hands up to grasp at the man's wrist in an effort to diminish the hostility. "–fight me."
Needless to say, that backfired. "Fight you?" Enraged, the bigger man shoved Feyera back.

"Oof!" Pushed down onto the ground, the growing crowd around them "Oohed" and "Ahhed" at the quickly growing scene of hostility.

"No. You're right. I'm not gonna fight you. I'm gonna teach you a lesson, you little shit!" Amid the chaos, Feyera's necktie unfastened, revealing an easy target. "And what do we have here? What the hell is that supposed to be, faggot? Some type of necklace?"

"Hold on! Let's talk this out," Feyera said, backing up to the stool where he was sitting before. But his retreat was of little use.

"Get over here worm!" said the man, tugging firmly on Feyera's loosened tie to lift him up. "We'll talk after I punch your face in!" With a whimsical flick from the backside of his stiff fingers, the gruff man smacked the crystalline substance.

"OUCH!" Feyera twitched, and felt as if he had just been stuck in a delicate location. "You don't understand, that's an injury!"

"A shiny injury, that's for sure!" To be sure, there was a great deal of surprise. The glossy metal did not budge; it was fully anchored into his chest. "A glistening crystal like that must've cost ya a pretty penny, 'specially if you're afraid to part with it so easily!"

"I told you already it's not jewelry!" Feyera said, fruitlessly trying to pry loose from the secure grapple. "Have you ever even seen an amulet that looks like this?"

"No. I haven't. Which is why it looks worth surrendering if you don't want me to bust your face in, pretty-boy!"

"I can't give it to you! It's Electrode shrapnel!"

"Ha! Wonder how much it's worth!" Unwilling to relinquish easy money, the blond-haired man wrapped his fingers around the shard's blade-like rim and tugged fast. "Give it here!"

There was a trembling jolt of energy that pervaded throughout Feyera's body. Culminating in his torso, the burning tightness impeded any yelp from the pain. "Get your hands off me!" he telepathically ordered. Was it even a part of him? It sure felt like it was more than shrapnel for a moment. It was as if the red metal had spoken through him. "Gasp…gasp…"

"What's wrong with you kid?!" exclaimed Feyera, unable to control it. In helpless awe, Feyera watched the amazing spectacle before him continue to unfold. Like magic, a surreal force was able to stun the threatening man, who...
buckled and fell to the ground with a "thud!" There was hardly any time for the young trainer to catch any breath, for Feyera too collapsed to the tile floor with a softer "thud!" along with a flood of exhaustion spreading outwards in unsteady heartbeats, pulsating and resonating throughout his entire body. All of it was coming from his core.

But it – Feyera's wound – wasn't him! He tightly grappled with his fluttered necktie, trying to cover up the mark on his chest. Breezing the frayed merlot garment over the now radiant metal he found himself suddenly very uncomfortable with just how real it felt. Pulsating waves of burgundy, ribbons of mysterious light all glowed forth from his radiating core. "But how?" It was not like him. And yet he had felt every part of the shrapnel, sensing, warming, feeling, as if it were comprised of his own flesh and blood! Similarly to how the cryptic telepathy – a psionic language of its own – was spoken in his own voice! As outlandish as the feeling was, its subtle naturalness greatly perturbed Feyera.

"What happened?"

"Get up!"

"Are you okay?"

Voices from the surrounding crowd were ever-so distant to a groaning Feyera attempting to stand back up. "Ungh…"

"Step aside! Step aside! Security!" Feyera was relieved to hear a security guard approaching the commotion. Feyera felt a stern hand on his shoulder. "Excuse me sir, is there a problem here?"

Feyera shook his head, unsure of what to say. He thought for sure he had been busted.

Holding his head with both of his hands, the other man took a moment to regain his recently shaken footing. "No. No problems," the gruff drunkard said as he slowly walked away, frightened by the supernatural voice he had heard.

"Everyone, party's over! Get back to enjoying yourselves!" shouted the security.

Silently, Feyera watched the procession of people return to normal as the scene mollowed out. It didn't feel like telepathy. It didn't feel like psyonics. Instead it just felt…right.

"Ahem! As for you, sonny…!" The suited concierge looked at him skeptically. Trying to hide his eyes, Feyera raised an arm over his face as if he were rubbing away dirt. This did not stop the guard who questioned him regardless. Edge kept his head low, not wanting the man to see his glowing red eyes. How could he hide those physical abnormalities?

"Yes?" Feyera murmured, eyes slowly rising from the man's shoes to his torso. His thick burgundy uniform had broad shoulder-pads and a glossy texture. His wide tie had a series of checkered spots and a large red rose at the base of its length. Edge could feel the man's suspicion radiating in sporadic frequencies.

"What's your name?" the brown haired man demanded whilst adjusting his belt. He wasn't too much older than Edge but definitely more physically built, and a lot more intimidating with that black revolver at his side.

"My name?" Seeing no reason to lie at this point, he responded, "Name's Feyera."

To his surprise, the man gasped. "Wait…Feyera? You're back? But how on earth? You look so different! What on earth happened to you, buster?"
Feyera tried to read the man's thoughts but they were far too scrambled in confusion and uncertainty. However slipping into psionic bliss prompted the young man to see how far his former identity could take him. Maybe he would find some answers by playing along. It was the best shot he had now. And it verified that he had a history here!

But what to say? He could act like he didn't remember anything, but would that remove the clear advantage he held? "Of course I'm back!" Feyera barked, his tone now adapting to the man's questioning. Back from where? The dead? Did this guy know about what took place in Pewter? How did he know him? Even with psyonics digging at the root of consciousness, Edge couldn't recall who the security guard was. He had a thick facial bone structure, amplified by his tiny brown eyes. Running parallel above his left eyebrow, there was a razor thin scar.

"Listen. I'm sorry doc. I tried to help you…" the man spoke humbly.

Why was this guard suddenly apologetic? Feyera tugged on his sleeve nervously, readjusting his tattered shirt. "Yeah? Why the apologizes now?! Do you see where I am? Do you see what I've become? I'm here at the slots after all! Is it my fault? That other guy could've hurt me!"

"We have rough crowd here, buster. You remember that right?" The man responded slowly, very cautious on how to address Feyera, repeatedly referring to him as 'buster', 'busta', or some derivative. "I did everything I could, busta. I'm sorry. I thought you would be safe. I never realized the danger that you were put in. I could have sworn you lost your mind, buster. The Philosopher's Stone, it was a ruse."

"You, knew me?" It was evident that this man knew him well. But from where? Not only did he know Feyera, but he seemed to want to make amends, as if he had wronged Christian in the past. And the Philosopher's Stone? From the Great War? What was going on? "Tell me everything starting with your name," Feyera said in a most concerned manner.

"Of course, I'm Rallsen. Don't you remember me, busta? Timothy Rallsen. You came with me on your very first mission about two and a half years ago." The man shook his head, acknowledging the blank, forgetful expression on Christian's face. "We met about six years before you went to Evercrest. I helped you out of a jam."

"Wait what?" Edge could not even use his psyonics to determine more information, for in this current state of utter confusion he felt completely powerless. It was like trying to read a paragraph where all the letters had been jumbled into one large blob.

"Here, come with me. Let's go back to H.Q. and talk things over," Timothy Rallsen motioned towards the rear of the casino, "maybe you'll remember when you see it for yourself. I honestly thought you'd moved on. I can't believe you're back!"

This was eye-opening to say the least. Answers! It was about time. Following Rallsen closely, Feyera's mind began to race. Who was he? Was this some sort of past life?

Timothy flicked a small switch obstructed by a large poster and a mechanized trapdoor to their right revealed a stairway leading down underground. It hissed as some smoke emerged from the tracks guiding the metal trapdoor plate. "Hiss!"

Christian closely followed Rallsen into the facility's basement. The steps were rather narrow, but once they had descended down the first story, the underground structure appeared to be even more massive than the upstairs casino. Feyera remained quiet for a while, trying to gather the elusive information. Where was he? This place had been so familiar. The metal walls, the harsh florescent lights, the machines, and the recessed floor lighting.
Timothy looked at his confused guest. He taped his foot anxiously on the steel floor waiting for a response. Yet nothing happened. Therefore, the Rallsen inquired, "Don't you remember Feyera? This is Team Rocket's Kanto Headquarters."

"…!" A massive rush of revelation drowned him. It was as if someone had switched his mind into overload. He felt fear at first. As his mind entered into a frenzy, Edge suddenly realized the undeniable danger he was in. Completely blind to his own actions, he backed up into the massive foyer room's corner. He heard a soft static in the background. It was coming from a large television monitor above the two of them. As the crackling static gave way to a pure white image, another voice was heard.

"Agent Rallsen, how kind of you to bring a guest," spoke another voice. That could only mean one thing: they weren't alone.

"What?!" In a panicked frenzy, Feyera turned to face the new person; he felt his heart shaking violently within him. However, it was only the speakers adjacent to the television communicator. Feyera instinctually reached for his Smith and Salven's Pokéball holster.

"I wouldn't do that," said the invisible voice. "Pokemon won't help you here."

"Huh?"

Rallsen leered, "Busta, we've got more than enough troops here to put you in your place."

"Now, if I may inquire: what is our guest's name? Heh heh," the man on the other side of the panel chuckled.

He could have sworn that he heard Rallsen swear under his breath before addressing the monitor. "This is Christian Feyera, sir." Timothy seemed more nervous than Feyera would have liked him to be.

"Feyera?! Feyera! Ha! Come now, we know the Semblance mission destroyed him. That foul Pokemon from Hoenn altered his mind beyond recognition! A terrible waste, we lost one of our most promising agents and also the one chance we actually had at securing the Philosopher's Stone once and for all!" he shouted. The man's voice was filled with awe and disappointment. All of this was discernible from his tone. Yet Feyera could not see nor remember him. The screen just remained white; while the man's overly excited tone emerged from the speakers. Who was he? Just where was he from? Feyera felt as if the rabbit hole had just gotten much deeper, and it nauseated him to find how useless his psyonics had become.

"Yeah but if he came back here, then he must remember at least some part of the past." Timothy said with hope, "Perhaps he can help us again."

"Eh—hehe, help? HELP? Ta—ha!" The voice on the other side laughed again. Feyera hated that laugh. It was wicked and ruthless. Slowing his laughter, the voice continued, "Agent Rallsen, we both lost our apprentice on that fateful mission."

"What mission?" Feyera demanded.

But the voice refused to acknowledge the question. "Look at him! He's frail and dying. Perhaps you need to be reminded of the serious tumble he took back on Penta Base. It should have killed him. Besides, after that little incident, we just let Feyera go on living life ignorantly, as per your suggestion, Rallsen. Heh heh heh. It was the least we could do to thank him for his…ahem…cooperation. After all, I couldn't possibly turn my back on someone who had been such an integral
"Research?" Feyera looked suspiciously at Rallsen. "I'm a researcher! What am I really a part of? What research is he talking about?"

"Oh, the poor thing. He was wounded and worthless without a mind to call his own." The voice droned on, completely carefree. "As an organization we might have lost the only chance we had at recovering the artifact if not for him."

"An artifact—?" Feyera began to say, but Rallsen quickly hushed him with a "Shh!"

"Ah yes. We had a chance to obtain something that would forever alter the course of history. Ahem! Verily, something that already altered history numerous centuries ago! And now look at what has transpired! You believed he would remain blissfully unaware of any ties he had with us or the suicidal mission he was sent on. If I recall correctly, that mission was yours, Agent Rallsen."

Feyera glanced at Timothy's hallowed expression. Pale-faced, Rallsen shook his head slowly, acknowledging the strange man's words. "I had to make a choice based on the circumstances."

The faceless man continued his speech, "Ah, no need to become sentimental. We are all alive after all we've been through. This is a happy little reunion of sorts. …My, how the odds have favored you!" Feyera wondered if the man was addressing him, Rallsen, or the both of them.

"Rallsen! What was the last report of Feyera's activities? Dying in the Pewter Gym. Pah! Pathetic. The report came in that he perished in a freak accident. Even I was skeptical of the report, but the League did a good job covering things up—they always do. Some things never change… Still, Agent Kelvin neglected to put the pieces together back at Mount Moon. I admired his perseverance and dedication to the Rocket's cause, but he was little more than a highly skilled brute lacking direction. The three of us however…we have a more complex understanding of life. Especially you, Doctor Feyera. It would be truly a shame if you remained in such an ignorant state. You forgot all that you did, all of your achievements. However…" the voice paused, "…However, there still may be a way to reawaken your memories. That would be mutually beneficial."

"Are you serious?" This intrigued the young man. "You could do that?"

"There's little I can't do, my boy."

"I don't get it; how would lost memories…come back?"

"'Non intellegens nil explicas; videre nolens nil capies, et incognita non vides'," replied the mysterious speaker.

"What?" Feyera asked.

"'Lacking understanding, you explain nothing; unwilling to see, you grasp nothing and you do not yet see into the unknown.' *humph* Seems like even those familiar words fall upon deaf ears, doctor."

"I…wait…how do you know about…?" stammered the confused trainer.

"I know a myriad of things, and your particular condition is rising to the top of my list of concerns."

"And just how would regaining my memories help you?" Feyera asked. "Because that's exactly what I'm looking for!"
"Ah, you could help us find a very important piece of history. Yes ha…an artifact. Something more important to evolution than even Progenitor. It has been a dormant force guiding all of life — much like an invisible, ghostly hand — ever since we were mere amoebas drifting about in the vast belly of the oceans. Incredibly powerful for microorganisms, large quantities and concentrations of Mercurius can build the bridge to our future. But forgive me, my antics have little merit without the physical manifestation of Mercurius."

"Mercurius," whispered Feyera.

"Purely amorphous, it is something that words cannot fully describe. Of one thing I am sure, it was something you held in your very hands some two years ago. It was lost. You were the last to witness it, after it was stolen from the Sanctum."

"You mean the Pokemon Sanctum?" Feyera asked, thinking about the debris protruding from his chest. "And the robbery two years ago that caused me to forget?"

"Aha! The very one, I'm proud of you, Christian. That memory must have been a particularly difficult one to recollect. Agent Rallsen, don't you think it's curious how the residue from the Mercury Artifact still remains?"

"Of course I find it odd, sir," Timothy acknowledged. He rubbed his temple and glanced at his jeweled watch.

"Now what if I told you that from my observation satellite I can see the source of the anomaly is standing right next to you?"

"It is?" Rallsen asked, peering at Feyera's partially exposed wound.

"Welcome back, Christian," said the invisible man. "Welcome home."

"This isn't happening! I'm not a part of Team Rocket!" Feyera cried out. "I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Ha, not anymore. Don't be ashamed, you were never a great asset to those thieves." Strangely, the man dissociated himself and Feyera from Team Rocket. "You were like me, more interested in results than petty material goods. As researchers, we both sought to understand the strange and wonderful world we live in. However, Team Rocket and their technologically advanced weaponry from prior generations of humanity seduced you, corrupted you. If only you had stayed under my wing with Cipher, who knows how far we could have pushed Progenitor? Ah, but I digress, Christian Feyera, you are more than a mere cog in the machine I believe. Hah ha ha! You still can help us to ascertain the location of the Mercury Artifact we seek," spoke the now eudemonic man. "Since you're practically radiating with its trace!"

"Never! I'll have nothing to do with you! Any of you!" Feyera projected.

Timothy glared at Feyera sensing Edge's telepathy. "Feyera, what are you doing? What is this all about? Calm down!"

The young man was starting to feel ill from the thought that he was once involved in the crime syndicate. What atrocities could he have been responsible for? And he could not remember any of it! Who was he? The whole world was spinning!

"Tell me something Feyera," hissed the man on the other side of the communicator, "what was it like?"
Feyera's gaze turned unpleasant, "Whatever do you mean?"

"The Reilken Mercurius. Tell me," the invisible face responded. "Did your eyes see it?"

"I…what?" Feyera spoke softly while his body continued to shake like a caged animal. "I have no idea what you mean. Who are you?"

"What? Oh don't you remember me? We have a history! I'm most insulted! After all the research funding and scientific support I gave you via Cipher…bah. Wasted. Terribly wasted! Come now, you truly cannot recall?" pried the shadowed voice.

"No," Feyera said shaking his head in aversion.

"Then to answer your question: I'm Chief Ein. I'm your only rational path to uncovering answers about yourself." Christian Feyera had no idea who 'Ein' was who 'Cipher' was, or even who 'Rallsen' was! But he desperately needed to stay. Something compelled him to remain in this dangerous environment. All of the answers were here. The cognitive dissonance was mind-numbing!

"Now my dear friend, are you going to tell me everything you know about what happened when you placed your hand on the Mercury Relic? That way, I can help you…"

Feyera looked warily at a quiet Rallsen. "Help me?" he asked after Rallsen didn't give any hinting expression.

"Yes… Help you to help yourself."

"I honestly don't remember, I'm sorry." Feyera was being entirely truthful. "If I could remember, I'd tell you!"

"Even though you don't possess it now, somehow I still see readings saying a portion of it resides with you. Furthermore, we've tracked your position and are able to see clear disturbances which once again coincide with the unique signatures given off by the artifact, mmmmm—ha…," Ein was trying not to laugh too much, "you have done well to come here like a moth to the flame."

"You're talking about the artifact that was in the Pokemon Sanctum, correct?"

"Yes the very one that you helped steal. It was a mission you took up in Agent Rallsen's place. One could say that you saved him. How could any of us have known just how dangerous Mercurius was? It hasn't been touched for hundreds of years. The KNRA was exceedingly careful to bury it along with any records of its existence. The material was more volatile than an Electrode ready to burst, and you just ran up and foolishly grasped the damn thing with your vile hands!"

Without a memory to fall back on, Feyera turned to denial, "I did no such thing! I have no memory of ever encountering an artifact like that!"

"Of course you don't," sneered Ein. "I want to know though. I need to know. Something about you changed when you touched it. Reports from that incident suggest that you had lost your sense of self. You even went as far as to kill a number of bystanders, by ordering your squad's Pokemon to detonate. Ruthless behavior really, especially considering it was coming from you, Feyera. A totally unseasoned trainer, you had no real experience with Pokemon outside of the laboratory. Although you were rather skilled with your M-Gauntlet gun. Yes, hehe, you were quite the marksman. You never used to leave too much of a mess. Eh he he!" Ein chuckled again.

"How could this be?" Edge stared blankly at Timothy. "Is this true? Did I really do this?"
Hearing his thoughts, Rallsen nodded discreetly. "Feyera, do you understand what this all means?" he whispered.

"Now I would love to give you both time to catch up, but it seems as though my time is running out. If you were to be so kind and allow your dear associate, Rallsen to take you into custody that would be beneficial. I have unfinished business with you. I would love to understand you more. It seems as if you are not to be considered expendable after all," Ein laughed again.

"Hold on," Feyera addressed the enigmatic Ein, "if you're not with Team Rocket, then who are you…?"

"Ahaha! You've missed out, Christian. Looks like you picked the wrong side. While you were ignorantly working as a barista, so much has happened. Cipher has command over the Rockets, and even the ex-Rockets."

"Feyera, just stay calm," Timothy said while advancing towards Feyera.

"No!" Edge yelled at the man. "Stay back!" Uncontrollable shaking brought him to his knees. This was too much to swallow at once.

"How dare you decline hospitality, Feyera," Ein said, his voice rising. "I'm going to save you. Restore you. I'm your personal guardian angel. Isn't that comforting to hear?"

"No! Stay away from me or else!" Feyera wanted to escape but as Rallsen walked toward him, it looked as though there would be no way to escape. He reached for his belt holster, to engage his Pokemon for combat.

Seeing this, Rallsen removed his pistol from his holster. "Don't. This time, I won't hold back."

"Dammit!" Feyera said.

"Typical," sneered Ein. "You're always a few steps behind. Aren't you, Christian?"

"I've gotten out of tighter jams," he said quickly, "do you want me to show you the way I dealt with your other lackeys?"

"Oh, threatening to use that power as your final gambit?" Ein asked. "Ha! Surprising, I thought it wouldn't come up until you were back here in my protective grasp."

"What power?" Rallsen asked, appearing to be the only one oblivious to the psyonic wells Feyera was referring to.

"Pay it no heed, Rallsen! Feyera is powerless here."

"You're mistaken!" Feyera retorted, feeling himself slip comfortably into the psyonic clasp of what he endearingly called Edge. "I have psyonics!"

"Heh— Allow me to edify you, young man. This entire base is built underneath a massive casino. Do you know what that means? Innocents. Plenty of them. Some of them might even have families. Do you want to kill more of them? I would not be surprised if you eagerly said 'yes' considering your sadistic history. Even I was surprised by your actions in the Sanctum. Such wild, untamed energy—" Ein trailed off in wonder.

Feyera felt his heart pounding wildly. His vision narrowed, and Rallsen's frame became but a blur. Nervously he responded, "No, I won't do any such thing. I've never…"
"—Never killed? Ha! Lies. You've killed and you've done worse. 'Project Progenitor' for instance."

"Progenitor?" snapped Feyera. "What's that?"

"You…you…don't remember any of it do you?" Ein said sarcastically. "'Evercrest' is just a word to you isn't it? Isn't it, Christian Feyera?! Pah! Some doctor you are."

Agent Rallsen was right in front of him now. Feyera needed to buy some time so that he could think of something. Anything. He needed a way out of this pigeonhole, resorting to Pokemon or Edge wasn't going to work! "Then what makes you think I haven't changed?" Feyera threatened, as the crimson aura warmed his eyes. "Maybe I'm not the same person your remember me as!"

"Hah! Feyera, your threats are about as empty as your fragile mind!"

"N—no, my mind…" But Ein was right. There simply wasn't enough at stake, Feyera lacked the will to invoke the psyonics.

"Hmm… It is interesting that you mention change however. You see change is something I've reflected upon a great deal recently. You see, I'm bitter about how quickly you dissented from Cipher after you obtained the artifact. I'm beginning to wonder if Mercurius really did change you. I question if you had always been a lurking traitor, siphoning our limitless resources. Why, as soon as you obtained the Reilken Mercurius, the first thing you did in such a state was retreat back to the southern research lab. OUR research lab! There is something more to the story. Why did you travel back there? Something is missing. As a scientist like yourself, I would like to know all the facts," the voice caricatured. Feyera could just tell he was smiling on the other end of the line. "It's the scientific method, remember?"

Feyera attempted to diminish his own apprehension as he responded, "Our research lab? What do you mean 'our research lab'?"

"Yes, where we worked together for all those months on perfecting the Progenitor Procedure. You were new on board, a recent graduate from the university at a marvelously young age. Eighteen years was it? Impressive. Most impressive. The DBC loved you."

"What about Gideon Group?" Feyera asked. "What about the publishers of my doctorate dissertation?"

"What about it? You lacked a certain deliberation to continue with your studies. The success of experiments Alpha-five, Omega-three, and Delta-two were rather taxing on you. Your psychological stability began to waver. Humph, I blame that red-headed harlot!"

"Who?"

"It doesn't matter," huffed Ein. "You were a mess. Rallsen gave you a chance to help Team Rocket on Cipher's behalf. *Sigh* What a strange turn of events that was. To think Semblance would bring us back together after all those tiresome days at Evercrest."

"Evercrest. What's that?"

"—I grow tired of discussing days of old with you, Feyera. I'm more concerned with the present. For instance, I would like to know exactly how you managed to destroy the Golden Bridge north of Cerulean City. I recently received video footage forwarded from Team Rocket's recently promoted Agent Maxwell. His partner, Agent Engelhart, wasn't so lucky."

"So that's how you know about my psyonics!" exclaimed Feyera.
"Of course, it's obvious the Mercurium did this to you! No human can do this…"

The white screen flashed twice and then an image appeared. It was a deep purple, flat, rotating disk containing what looked like stars, gas, and dust. Its numerous spiral arms extended outwards swirling ceaselessly with their bright lavender highlights. As the image continued to display on screen, a few metal beams and planks pulled into the range of the swirl by an invisible force. As the debris entered into the visual range of the unstatable spiral, they were crushed beyond recognition into granulates of sparkling dust, further accenting the spiral's luminance. Feyera gazed at the object wide-eyed not wanting to believe that it was he who had generated such a horrific force.

"Marvelous work. Simply astounding. Beyond remarkable, doctor." Ein sighed, "Ah, it's beautiful, isn't it? Pristine power, overflowing. But why has it taken so long for such a power to emerge? Why has it been concealed? Questions demand answers!"

Before he could pay the image any more attention, Agent Rallsen grabbed his thin wrist. "Stay still," Timothy ordered. Feyera squirmed, fighting the controlling man. He could hear Ein laughing in the background. Rallsen fastened a tighter grip, "I said stay still, buster!"

"No! Get off! What are you going to do to me?"

"I want to help you, Doctor Feyera. Save you, secure you, study you. You should understand this being a researcher yourself. See, it's incredibly difficult to investigate one's self, even with that fancy degree of yours. Certainly if you are treated as an object rather than a subject, more of your potential uses will become apparent. On that note, I look forward to seeing you again soon, my little angel of death. Click!"

"No!" Feyera shouted. Agent Rallsen pulled him towards a dark room further down the corridor.

Initially Feyera resisted, but soon his strength waned as Rallsen's burly power overtook the weak man's meager struggle. "Rallsen!" "Rallsen!" he barked at his captor who led him further down into the depths of Luxaira. "Please! Don't do this!"

Finally Rallsen answered, "Feyera, you'll be fine. Just listen to me, hear me out, I want to help you!"

"No! I don't trust you! You're a part of a crime syndicate!" Feyera yelled at him. "Let me go free!" he insisted weakly and physically unstable. It would seem that employing psyonics was out of the question, he couldn't imagine the potential consequences of that! There were hundreds of people above in the building.

"So what? So were you at one point!" Timothy retorted throwing him down on a small aluminum chair.

"Ahh," Feyera exhaled unsure of what to say. He couldn't find the words, finding the entire situation impossible to believe.

Rallsen took a small earpiece communicator out of his ear and threw it onto the tile floor. He then proceeded to stomp it on with his shoe. "Listen to me very carefully, busta. This whole place is crawling with Cipher insurgents."

"Cipher? Like Chief Ein?"

"Yes. Cipher is well established in the Orre Region. Their board of directors took command of Team Rocket about year and a half ago."
"That's when the Sanctum Robbery took place…!"

"Exactly. Since Operation Semblance Cipher's operatives have played an integral part in Team Rocket's affairs. The aftermath of Semblance brought the two groups together permanently."

"How?"

"It's a really long story. Funny you should ask, considering your involvement with their research team."

"I…!" Feyera adamantly shook his head. "I didn't! Cipher's just a name to me!"

"Cipher's board of directors has been helping Team Rocket create biological weapons ever since the cloning of Mew. I trust you have no memory of such events though." Rallsen raised a skeptical brow. "Unless you're lying to me."

"N–no!" Feyera pleaded. "I don't remember! Honest!"

"Unfortunately, there isn't enough time to tell you everything. All you need to know is that you helped with Cipher's research at Evercrest. But after Operation Semblance, everything changed," Timothy continued, "that was the first joint Rocket–Cipher mission. It robbed you of your memories."

"No! It can't be! What was Ein talking about?"

"Busta, Semblance was a massive taskforce charged with locating the Mercury Relic, an ancient artifact which Arcturus from the Great War often spoke of."

Feyera's eyes widened. "Mercury Relic?"

"Reilken Mercurius. It wasn't only real, but it was also right under our noses. Kept hidden in the Pokemon Sanctum underneath Saffron! Cipher wanted you to go along with us as their envoy. I hardly thought you were qualified, and against my better judgment I let you come along."

"You're saying I was there?! …A part of the robbery that destroyed my life?"

"I'm afraid so." Rallsen nodded. "When you came across it in the buried crypt… You changed, busta. You weren't the same."

"How? What did the artifact do?!"

"Reilken Mercurius…" Rallsen pressed on his temple in pensive contemplation. "There was something eerie about its history. People were said to have been driven mad by its beaconing call… including Arcturus. I thought those tall tales were concocted to keep pillagers at bay. I never believed in the stories and the legends that human hands were never meant to touch it, until I saw you hold it before me!"

"Describe it to me!"

"I… can't! I never saw it!"

"You just said I had it!"

"No, you don't understand. There was this tremendous light, brighter than the sun, obscuring the artifact from my sight! You had this blank look in your eyes, as if nothing mattered anymore," Rallsen said.
Feyera immediately thought about his current condition, the psyonics, Edge, his eyes, and his body. "But what about now? What's happening to me?!

"I don't know. You weren't able to maintain possession of the relic for very long. You tried to escape, and I chased you down. Trust me, it wasn't easy to do. Eventually, we found you all the way in the southern islands close to Hoenn. You were wandering about aimlessly, and in extreme pain. You had no memory as to who you were. I don't know honestly, you were somehow... distorted, lost... I couldn't let you go on like that."

"You tried to kill me?" barked Feyera.

"No!" Rallsen replied. "I mean, not literally."

"Then what do you mean?!

"I tried to convince the higher ups it was my mistake, that you never were in possession of the Mercury Relic. Unfortunately, Cipher had video footage of your antics in Evercrest after stealing the relic. Though there was no visual of the relic in your possession – save for a bright, unidentifiable blotch of light – they caught you using your personal codes to infiltrate the facility. ...That didn't go over too well, but it kept you alive."

Feyera's jaw dropped. "You lied for me?"

"To get you out of trouble, I tried to," Ralssen said as he shook his head. "I told them you had gone mad. That we couldn't stop you! And it was true. The man who took the relic wasn't you, busta. He couldn't have been! I don't know how else to say it!"

"How would you know what I was like before?!

"Feyera..." Rallsen said quietly, almost paternally. "You... don't remember me, do you?"

"No. I don't. I can't. But if you want to help me, then I need you to tell me everything you know."

"Right," Rallsen said. He sounded sad, but quickly covered that emotion up with pertinent information. "When I found you south of the Hoenn mainland, you had lost the relic. There was no more bright light surrounding your body."

"Bright light?" Feyera repeated. He looked down at his chest, remembering the strange glow of radiance from his confrontation with Haunter. "What color was the light?"

"All colors. Some I don't even have names for. It was stupefying. Terrifying." Rallsen saw Feyera was looking down at the crystal embedded in his chest. "When I found you, you had that red shard protruding out of your chest. Clear as day. You couldn't speak. I didn't know what to say. Cipher would probably have you killed for treason if they knew the truth. I had your back though; it was my mission to steal the Mercury Relic from the Sanctum. You were just the operative, using a prototype electronic gap-generator that cloaked you in light... And Cipher bought it, until now."

"So the Mercury Artifact did or did not do THIS to me?!" Feyera shouted whilst pointing at his chest. "Cause it was either a relic or an Electrode, but not both! And both of those put Team Rocket at fault!" Feyera was infuriated by his predicament, a mysterious quandary thrust upon his chest quite literally.

"I cannot say for sure," Rallsen responded, "but this I do know, you were driven utterly mad by the artifact. Like I said, it was never meant for human hands."
"What did the ancient relic look like? Colored light? Was it a solid?" Feyera tapped a nail on the ridge of the red crystal. "Like this?"

"I couldn't tell you, busta. That's the thing about Reilken Mercurius; the blasted thing has no true form. Elemental Mercurium is pure primal matter. It's completely transmutable by the environment around it and life forms that get close enough to its influence. According to legend, people see it differently and it radically changes based on who possesses it," Rallsen went on, "from stories told, Mercurium's fine particles are capable of nullifying, quelling, even controlling those who oppose its otherworldly influence."

"—What's going on down here?" a voice shouted from down the hallway.

"Shh, Feyera, did you hear that?!"

"It's Cipher, Rallsen," Edge said using some psyonic premonition. "They're coming."

"No, too soon! Tsk! Listen, buster, I'll create a distraction for you. You get yourself out of here. I'll say you resisted and fought me off with shortwave psyonics."

"Wait!" said Feyera. "Why are you doing this? Why are you helping me? What's in it for you?"

Rallsen looked as if he had something incredibly important to say. Feyera didn't need psyonics to tell Rallsen was wrestling with his choice of words. "...If Cipher finds you they'll take you to Ein's lab. You'll wind up dead...or worse," Rallsen said breaking a sweat. Swiftly, the middle-aged man readied his hefty magnum scattershot with a "Click! Chink!"

"Worse?" projected the trainer.

"Feyera..." Strangely, Rallsen did not treat the young trainer's psyonics as bizarre, and instead continued to ready his armaments by removing a second firearm, a burnt silvery pistol, from his coat pocket. "If you thought Progenitor was bad then you have no idea what horrors..."

Voices coming down the corridor interrupted them. "—Agent Rallsen, what happened to your communicator? You went dark. Is everything okay?"

"Hurry up, busta! Go now! I'll escape through the emergency exit. Two doors down from here on your left, past the intersection!" With a strong pull, Rallsen tugged Feyera out of the chair by the hand. "Don't worry about me!"

Feyera felt sick hearing this, but at least he had one person on his side. There could be no such thing as good member of Team Rocket though, Rallsen was playing some kind of game! "Why the hell would I worry about you?" he shouted at the departing man. "You're nothing but a lousy Team Rocket crook!"

"Ah ha!" Rallsen let out a hearty laugh from halfway out the door. "Then hopefully you won't have to! Now, get yourself out of here!"

Speechless, Feyera complied with Agent Rallsen's advice and ran down the hall in the opposite direction. Able to hear the loud agents with attuned psyonics, Edge deftly averted attention. Soon however there was a general but brief alarm ordering evacuation of the facility. "Attention, this is an emergency procedure, all personal evacuate the complex! Attention all personal, please exit the Luxaira Casino immediately!"

"Wow, he really did help me," thought the fleeing man. "But what does that say about me? I was actually with Team Rocket on the day of the Robbery? An enjoy from Cipher? ...No, I refuse to
believe his story. Rallsen's trying to manipulate me. I have no memory to fall back on. I don't even know who or what Cipher is!"

"Gasp…gasp…" Feyera knelt down, pausing to catch his breath in a small alcove opposite of the facility's stairwell. Hooded members of Team Rocket were rushing up them, probably complying with the emergency procedure. Feyera's observant eyes saw a large elevator adjacent to the traffic-filled stairwell. "Hmm…” "This is a perfect opportunity! I can infiltrate Team Rocket's base now. I won't be stopped thanks to that alarm. And I'll be damned if I find myself listening to Team Rocket scum like Rallsen!"

Feyera had a new mission, he wasn't going to escape like a coward. Oh no. Now that he had gotten a taste of what answers awaited him, there was no stopping him from extracting every last secret from this base. Fate had blessed him with the advantage of surprise and subterfuge on behalf of a misguided member of Team Rocket by the name of Timothy Rallsen.

It was all too good to be true.

And it was all going to satiate the young researcher's voracious desire for answers.
Wandering through the catacomb of offices and corridors of Team Rocket's base in Celadon, Feyera moved silently closer to his objective, determination deriving from a force beyond his recognition. Everything looked the same, doors were painted the same colors, there were hardly any signs telling him where to go, but psyons led him to where he wanted to be: deeper. He wouldn't leave until he found answers to all the questions he had!

Despite the labyrinth of doors and passageways, Feyera was able to move forward with impressive efficiency. The young man evaded attention easily thanks to the emergency alarm being set off by a strange person he had met only just recently. Agent Timothy Rallsen had told Feyera that he'd been working alongside Team Rocket's operatives on the very day he had been attacked in Saffron City, a story Feyera found difficult to believe. It just wasn't possible. First of all, he had no recollection of ever joining forces the crime syndicate. Secondly, there were no records of Feyera ever being a part of the criminal organization; he had been researching Pokemon for Gideon Group and the DBC following graduation. Third, a piece of shrapnel was sticking out of his chest, a clear indicator that he was a victim of Team Rocket's robbery. All he had were the words of Timothy Rallsen and the enigmatic Ein of Cipher. Both men had reason to want to use him. Both men seemed more than capable of lying in order to gain his trust.

And still, part of the fabricated story made sense. The Reilken Mercurius, a piece of archival history buried beneath Saffron City that expelled a brilliant light. The Pokemon Sanctum Robbery to steal said artifact, a crucial turning point in his recollection. The crystalline wound on his chest expelling a brilliant light. Something about it all felt…odd.

"What does it all mean? What's the connection?" Feyera asked himself. "Cipher apparently has influence over Team Rocket. Agent Rallsen sounded displeased with that, and wanted me to escape... But from what? From Ein? From the man who promised to restore my lost memories? I can use both of them to my advantage, but how can I trust either of them?!" It seemed too good to be true. How could a member of the very team that was hunting him down have saved him? "It doesn't make any sense! Team Rocket hunted me down on the S. S. Anne. Brad and Laurie were clearly after me and my powers. In fact, they were ordered to find me!"

Forgetting about Cipher, Feyera had to worry about Team Rocket here and now. This was their headquarters. Their lair.

"It could all be deception. If this is an elaborate trick, then I can't take Timothy's advice. That means not escaping the facility, but doing the unexpected and going in deeper into the facility until I get some concrete evidence. And what luck! By Agent Rallsen setting me loose and eliminating the threat of confronting the guards here, I've been granted a miraculous advantage."

Feyera had come to the conclusion that the only way to forge a path to answers would be to go straight for the jugular. He needed to face whoever was leading the group. Sincerely, the young man hoped that psionic powers would not kill him before he reached this tantalizing objective. Or worse, kill any innocents along the way. If he could get the Rockets to disband along the way that would be a nice consolation prize. At the very least he wanted to insure that he wouldn't be pursued by them. All of these objectives had the young Mister Feyera charging straight for the helm.
Exhausted and worn, Feyera's body felt like little more than an animated corpse capable of cognition. Large, emerald eyes were set back in his sallow face, thick, dark shadows belying them. On nerves of steel, the frail vigilante moved ever closer to the base's command suite; his every step driven by more than by the merely physical. This determination, this decision-driven willpower was his greatest asset. Without it, Feyera would have never made it past the Pewter Gym. Unfortunately, Feyera's fate would play a cruel card by turning that very strength into an exploitable weakness. Unaware of the danger he was facing, the researcher continued, going deeper and deeper into the vaults beneath Celadon.

The alarm droned on, a strangely pleasant sound for the young man deftly moving past huge rooms filled with files. The narrow corridors had been emptied, completely free of guards. The floor panels had a built-in recessed light, filling the various archways he passed with a venerate light. Feyera's search led him to a large door at the end of a dim hallway. As he walked past the last few floor lit panels, he saw that the steel-encased wooden door was slightly ajar.

"This is it," he thought. A bright light came from within. It looked like a picturesque scene, but whatever was behind that door would be unlikely to show him any mercy. "I won't use psyonics unless it's do or die. I have my Pokemon." Charmeleon may have been still a little weak from the confrontation with Erika, but he still had a Gyarados and Oddish at his disposal.

Crouching near the door's hinges, he toyed with his Smith and Salven's holster, and silently released Brucie with a flash of light. The Pokemon emitted a soft growl. "Chaaar…"

"Shh!" Feyera ordered with a finger. The alarm had gone quiet. However, the venting system pumping cool air into the hallway provided more than enough muffling white noise. "Brucie, this is it. All the answers are behind this door."

[You serious?] the Pokemon excitedly replied.

Feyera nodded. "They have to be. There's no other way to find out for sure!"

[Well! What are we waiting for?!

"On the count of three, let's kick this door down together. Follow my lead and stay to my left."

[Gotcha.]

"One…Two…Three!" Motioning to Brucie, who gave a silent nod, together they kicked down the huge mahogany door paneled with steel. Its large metal hinges groaned loudly right before the inevitable crashing of the door against the interior wall. Swinging open, the room's brilliant lighting momentarily blinded.

Feyera's pulse rose, unsure of what to expect. As the brightness faded with the predictable dilation of his eyes, he rushed through the doorway along with Brucie at his side. Inside, the room was unprecedentedly large for being built underground. Feyera marveled at how such a structure could have been lurking underneath the casino. And if this was a massive corporate tower, he had just entered into the presidential office.

Bookshelves lined with artifacts, undoubtedly stolen from countless innocents, covered all four walls. The presence of greed was obvious based upon all of the luxurious amenities and effects present in the massive chamber. On the tall bookshelves, treasures were scattered about; some gilded with gold, others jeweled with precious stones, timeworn scrolls and manuscripts had been encased in polished glass.
But the most imposing part of this room was an enormous desk made of pure marble and mahogany at the end of the lofty office. Behind the desk, a menacing black office chair slowly turned. "Ahem. I had a feeling you'd be coming," barked a man seated with his legs crossed. "It's been far too long, Feyera."

"You know of me?"

"Know of you?" he said, drawing back his glossy dark hair with a hand riddled with dark scars and golden rings alike. His paisley maroon tie, securely in place behind the vest he wore suggested he was a part of Team Rocket's executive board. "How are you?"

"You," Feyera pointed a stiff finger at the man in the chair. Too confused to discern anything about this man, the psyonics were once again not working. Worse still, Feyera couldn't recognize him. "You…" he repeated.

"Yes, me. Your expression reveals that you have no idea who I am. Shame." The seated man gave an unpleasant laugh causing Feyera to flinch. "Ah, but do not fret, I will enlighten you, my young amnesiac friend. I am Archer, one of Giovanni's Rocket Generals."

"Giovanni?!" Feyera thought.

Archer grinned. "Seems you've found a fancy new way to mince words, Feyera." Unable to cover his psyonic outburst Feyera felt increasingly vulnerable and Archer seemed to take note. "Yes… Yes… He's the leader of the Rockets, but you knew that already, didn't you?"

"I know nothing of Giovanni," he hesitantly replied.

Archer rose from his chair and smiled. "Hahaha! Surely you jest!"

"I don't, and that's why I'm here. You're going to start answering my questions whether you want to or not."

"Is that a threat?" Archer asked. "Appears you don't know who I am."

"You're all the same to me."

"Wrong, Mister Feyera. I know who you were before the accident."

"What can you do to prove that?"

"Always looking for proof; glad that hasn't changed about you. Pity so much else has! You've been on the receiving end of some nasty changes, eh? Guess you shouldn't have gotten greedy, Feyera," the man paused before softly laughing. "Heh–heh. Serves you right, you arrogant bastard."

"What are you trying to say?" Feyera glanced down at his Charmeleon, who revealed a set of sharp fangs. "Nasty changes…? And psyonics?"

Archer's grin widened. "Oh come on now, Christian! You're Team Rocket's bread and butter. Able to brilliantly handle a gun, able to play envoy for us in Cipher prior to the merger, and…ahh…even able to kill when you had to. That last one is a difficult one you know? Only about forty percent of our operatives actually need to resort to that type of violence. You however, heh heh, you'd kill at the drop of a dime. Puts Agent Kelvin to shame."

"Shut up! I did none of that!" But Feyera could feel his jaw twitch with rattled uncertainty. "Why don't you give me proof that I did!"
"Proof! Proof?! Ha! The proof is right in front of you isn't it? Look at yourself! Were you born that way?"

Feyera thought about his psyonics. He could only gasp in disbelief at how fast his once uncertain world became much more complicated.

The Team Rocket executive nonchalantly answered his awe, "That…crystal projecting out of your chest…it isn't natural. You know that. I could care less how you obtained it; I care about how you can be an asset to us once more."

Feyera put his conviving hand down and stammered, "But it can't be… I don't remember anything you're saying!" Feyera gazed at the reflective red crescent emerging from his sternum bone, he stood in the bright light unsure of what to say. Yet sublimely having no idea how this had all happened, he asked, "Can you tell me more?"

"'Can you tell me more?'' Archer mimicked him sarcastically. "MORE!?! What more is there to tell? You stole from us, and now you'll live with the consequences! You had strict orders. Secure the Mercury Relic from the Pokemon Sanctum. What did you do? You ruined everything. You doomed your squad. You took the relic and fled to the southern islands! To the place where you once worked with Cipher, to Evercrest. And then, you lost it! It was gone! Erased from existence!"

Feyera looked down at his sternum. "Gone…?" he thought.

"—Agent Rallsen found you days later wandering about on a distant beach, completely clueless. Why if it weren't for Rallsen's character reference, I would have gladly executed you myself for incompetence and failure to follow direct orders. Hell, I'm sure Cipher would have had a field day discarding you. Rallsen made a great sacrifice to let you live. I must acknowledge his foresight. I never would have imagined you could make it this far. Not based on your quiet little afterlife serving coffee in Pallet."

"You're wrong, you're so very wrong! How could I have any ties with Team Rocket? I don't even know how to use a firearm! You may be right about this," Feyera pointed to his chest, "this is new. But it was an accident. I was the victim, not the victimizer."

"Oh, is that so?" Archer asked. "What makes you so sure?"

"My mission is to stop you." Feyera clenched a fist, "I'll fight you till the end. I want you to disband Team Rocket — after all the things your organization has done to others, and after all the things your organization has done to me…"

"Incorrect!" Archer interrupted, "Done FOR you, Feyera!"

Those words caused Feyera to feel weak and afraid. "What have you done?"

"Think about it, Feyera… What haven't we done for you?" quipped Archer.

Feyera shook his head in disbelief. "You hunted me down with your dogs, Engelhart, Brad, and Laurie!"

"And who came out on top?" Archer chuckled. "Wasn't it you? Wasn't it your psyonics?"

"This isn't about me!" shouted Feyera. "You let them run free and kill an innocent trainer in Mount Moon!"

"Mount Moon is a source of some very valuable, very volatile resources. I can't be held liable for
every traveling Pokemon trainer risking their life on fool-hearted adventure."

"What about the S. S. Anne?" said Mister Feyera. "What about in Lavender Town!?"

"Team Rocket has operatives who are trained to act on impulse, like you. I can't be blamed for their recklessness. Nor can I be held accountable for your own thoughtlessness, Mister Feyera." That sent a chill down his spine. Archer went on to say, "Face it Feyera, you're in no position to be bargaining for anything. In fact, from where you stand, you should be down on your knees begging for my forgiveness on behalf of Team Rocket. Who knows, maybe you can still be of some use to whatever is left of the Rockets."

"No. Not a chance! You've never had my help, and I'll never give it to you!"

"Willingly or unwillingly, Mister Feyera, you'll help us. You've proven yourself to be far too valuable. Especially with that emerging psionic power of yours. It is something which cannot be ignored. Think of it this way, I can protect you from Ein and Cipher. You of all people should know about the horrendous experiments performed on their hapless test subjects--" Archer leered Feyera with his jet black eyes "--you know all too well."

"I don't want your protection, Archer; I can take care of myself."

"No you can't, fool! You're alone in a dark world. You need support. The world is a dangerous place--" Archer raised his arm up as if he were making some philosophical proclamation "--especially for a psionic. I'll give you the necessary support should you but ask to atone for your wrongdoings to Lord Giovanni."

"No. My support comes from my Pokemon, not from criminal scumbags like you!" Feyera said as defiance echoed in his tone. "So you can take that offer and shove it right up your Rocket-ass!"

Archer looked rather disappointed, but he also appeared angry. "Don't you dare try my patience, Mister Feyera. Even that has its limits, young scientist. You would do well to remember that some limits cannot be pushed. I thought you would have learned that by now."

"No matter! You'll face justice here and now!" Anger building, Feyera continued, "For your crimes and those of this vile organization!"

Archer laughed. "Justice…? JUSTICE!?!" Standing fully upright behind the desk, his height and broad posture were both imposing beyond belief. He rolled his piercing eyes and unclipped a Pokéball from within his vest. "Who are you to demand justice?! You spew such a word as if you knew a fraction of its meaning! You, Christian Feyera, the criminal, the murderer, the bastard, have come here to play hero? You'll rot in the deepest bowels of Hell for your putrid sense of self-righteousness!"

"No, I will bring an end to you, and what you stand for."

"How? Your wish to kill me might as well be a distant dream, if you use your psyonics here, you'll surely cause harm to the entire city of Celadon… You wouldn't want more innocent lives on your bloody hands, would you?!"

Feyera looked up. Although the ceiling was high and expansive like a cathedral, there was definitely discernible foot traffic coming from overhead.

Archer pulled Edge's attention back to earth. "Alternatively, would you risk the lives of hundreds just for the sake of killing one man? One sentient being, not unlike yourself seeking purpose in this wasted world."
It was exactly what Ein had told him before. "Dammit!" He thought of the S. S. Anne catastrophe. It wasn't worth putting anyone else in danger.

"Besides," Archer continued, carefully refining his words, "even with the particular form of psyonics you utilize, I know how to best exploit them. They may be powerful, but alas, they are not limitless. Emotions drive them. You don't control them, they control you. You can be manipulated. You're nothing more than a tool. A crude tool! And all tools need masters."

"No, I am not some tool to be used!" Feyera angrily thought to himself. Unbeknownst to him, he had projected the hate-charged telepathy.

"Oh ho! Looks like I've struck a delicate chord! You should really control your telepathy a little better since it has an awful side effect of giving you away. But then again, I suppose that's what makes you such a reliable tool."

"Shut the hell up!"

"Feyera. I can feel it. I don't need any psyonics to know what's going through your head as we speak. How does that help anyone but those who stand against you? Ha! You're already fighting the urge to use your psionic powers against me. Look at you, battling yourself internally. So apparent, so exposed. It's terribly sad because using your powers would be the only way you could win. I'm the keeper of powerfully modified Pokemon, Giovanni's personal war machines."

"Modified Pokemon?" said an aghast Feyera.

"Correct. They're grown… manufactured really, by a brilliant team of scientists for one purpose, and one purpose only: killing en masse."

"Pokemon aren't tools of war! You shouldn't decide their fate!"

"Every day Pokemon kill each other in the wild, who are you to grow attached to them?" Archer schooled. "And you of all people Feyera! Years of your life devoted to the very same rancor and defilement! The apex of your work is a psionic wrecking ball. Don't you see? You've become exactly that which you seek to destroy! You've no right to spew the words of a vigilante bent on justice. You kill others. You're a weapon!"

"No!"

Archer bowed his head. "...Before psyonics, you were nothing more than expendable. A trigger when it needed pulling. But the times have changed. You have changed, Feyera. You've lost your nerve, but kept your edge. The only thing stopping you from killing me is your own fear. Isn't that awful? You're nothing more than a slave! But not to me, not to the world, but to yourself: you pathetic being!"

"ENOUGH!" Edge bellowed mentally and vocally. "Time to end you, Archer!"

Archer seemed unfazed, though his hair had been blown back by a faint breeze. Brucie jumped into action, getting down on all fours and rushing wildly at Archer, who flung a Pokéball of his own at the charging Pokemon. Archer yelled out, "Rhyhorn crush him underfoot!" After a brilliant flash of light, a grey armor-encased rhinoceros, appeared in front of the gigantic mahogany and marble desk. Winding up its rear legs, Rhyhorn rumbled its heavy, rock-scale plates together.

"Brucie, take the left flank! sear Rhyhorn from the side!"

"Rhyhorn, use Takedown!" With a rush, the giant creature dashed at Brucie.
"Get airborne! Dive to the left and use Ember!" Brucie leapt into the air at the last moment, before the collision, smoothly dodging Rhyhorn. The Pokemon spat balls of scarlet flame at Rhyhorn's lateral armored skirt. The smoldering scent of charred rock filled Feyera's nostrils, Edge felt himself synchronizing more and more with his Pokemon. He feared the consequences. Being too embedded in the synchronization sent the trainer into a reckless trance. In this union with his Pokemon, he himself became his Pokemon as the mental differentiation between them blurred. He wanted to control his actions this time; he hated the idea of losing control, even if it felt marvelous in the moment. Huge amounts of endorphins were released upon mentally joining with his Pokemon, but it was incredibly painful to come down from that high. Not only because of the ephemeral biological chemicals, but also the fact that he would lose himself so much in the process.

"Rhyhorn, get in there, use Horn Drill!" The opponent's Pokemon again charged forward, gaining momentum with each wide step it took. Brucie headed right towards Rhyhorn, but there was no way he could beat the Pokemon should the two of them collide.

"Brucie, it's so fast and strong! You gotta back off since direct contact will knock you out!"

[Rodger that!] Brucie took a sharp turn and evaded the devastating attack, as Rhyhorn sailed past him like a steam locomotive.

"Full speed, Rhyhorn! Go for the trainer!" ordered Archer.

"Oh… shit!" exclaimed Feyera. Archer's Rhyhorn kept charging right at him and was gaining speed by the second. These were feral Pokemon raised by Team Rocket for one mission; they'd kill either human or Pokemon if given the chance!

[Boss!] Brucie swiftly altered his course and leapt into the air and landed on Rhyhorn's back.

"Raaaaooo!" Rhyhorn groaned loudly, tossing and thrashing like a bull!

"Brucie!" Edge could feel the beast desperately trying to shake him off. "Hold on with Metal Claw!"

"Shink! Shink!" Brucie's claws dug into the Pokemon's back, scraping off the thick hide with their broad lacerating strokes. Rhyhorn grunted in pain, turning around to try and shake Brucie.

Both Edge and Brucie were startled by how fast the living bulldozer moved. Despite being a heavy Pokemon, Rhyhorn spun about quickly on his stubby feet, tossing Brucie off. It greeted Brucie with a powerful stomp and slash from the front legs.

[Oof! I'm losing stamina. I can't take this much longer.]

"It's almost over!" Feyera knew all too well not to push his Pokemon beyond their limits, but retreating this close to victory was not an option. "Alright, use Flamethrower!"

"Rhyhorn, use Body Slam!" Archer yelled. "Fight to kill!"

The armor-clad Pokemon dove forward, putting all of his weight on his rear legs as he prepared to crash into Brucie. As this was happening, Brucie exhaled a thick wave of fire from his gaping maw. The scarlet blue flames embraced Rhyhorn dead on. The Pokemon fell backwards, his vulnerable underbelly scorched black.

"You did it, Brucie! Nice work." Just as Edge conveyed this telepathic message, he heard Rhyhorn growl and exhale a thick steam from his pudgy snout.

"Gaaarrrooooooaa!" The Pokemon, though injured, flipped itself over and howled as it charged at
Brucie.

[He's not going down without a fight!] Brucie projected, trying to dodge the onslaught by dashing on all fours. Rhyhorn continued the rushing assault, dashing by the bookshelves in hot pursuit of the weary Charmeleon. As pages and wooden shelves flew about from the blitzing chase, Feyera clicked open the Pokéball and withdrew Brucie. "Come back Brucie!" then called upon his Oddish, "Go, July!"

She sprung out of the second Pokéball, attached on the holster's plate. Feyera knew he only had one shot at taking down Archer's powerful Rhyhorn. July was fragile and slow, two things a panzer of a Pokemon could take advantage of. She'd have to hit it with Mega Drain, but Rhyhorn needed to be still for her to use the potent grass attack.

"July, you only have one chance, get it when it rushes you with Stun Spore. Set a trap for him so when he goes over it, he'll freeze up! Use your roots to spring out of the way!"

[Got it!] July jumped quickly towards Rhyhorn, she ruffled her leaves and released a thick spore. Taking the taunt as bait, Rhyhorn bounded off to hit her with his Tackle attack. Just as he was about to make contact, July lowered her roots to the earth and used them as a spring to leap up into the air to dodge the attack. Rhyhorn kept charging and rolled right into the cloud of yellowish spores. It's movement slowed, its muscles tensed up and began to spasm. July had a rough landing a few feet away, but it was now or never.

"Use Mega Drain!" bellowed Edge.

July jumped onto the paralyzed Rhyhorn and sapped his life energy with her feet-like roots. Rhyhorn fell prey to Oddish's brutal Mega Drain, which split apart the armored rock with a bone chilling "Crack!" July continued to tug and pull until the creature was stilled for good. The massive creature collapsed on the chamber's tile floor, the thunderous sound echoed throughout the office room.

Archer cursed at this loss. "No… No! You won't escape here, Christian. I won't let you win. Giovanni is depending on me to turn you! Go Kangaskhan!"

Archer's final Pokemon, Kangaskhan, was a gigantic monster with a large gapping mouth, huge claws, and a thick brown hide. The creature had an empty pouch, for these Pokemon were part of Giovanni's armada and not expected to play parent, despite being a motherly Pokemon.

"KAAHHHNNN!" roared the Pokemon. The very walls shook. Her size alone was impressive; she took up a good chunk of the vault.

"It's a behemoth! Be careful!" Edge warned July, but she was nowhere to be seen. "July?!" There was a blinding flash of white light as Feyera's Pokemon spontaneously evolved into her specie's next stage. Her bud-shaped body grew slightly bigger, her leafy crown gained pollinating spore beds, and her mouth secreted an oily like substance. "July, is that you?"

[I—I think so.] she said uncertainly looking at her tiny newly sprouted arms. [I'm a Gloom now.]

Feyera smiled at his luck. Things didn't look so bad, but amid the celebration he had underestimated Archer's Pokemon.

"Get it! Fake Out!" Nailing her claws into July with a speedy attack, the oversized monster stunned the newly evolved plant.

[Gaah!] July hollered.
"July, hang in there! Poison Powder!" Edge yelled while desperately trying to maintain both his composure and emotional state. "This is it, please don't miss!"

[O-o-okay sir.] But July was struggling to respond to her trainer's telepathy.

As new purplish spores were ejected from her plant crown, Kangaskhan hoisted a huge fist in front of her. "July! Call it off!" Feyera screamed. "Pull back!"

She tried to turn around, spinning dizzily on her short legs, but Kangaskhan nailed her with a brightly glowing Mega Punch. Although not a direct hit, the knockback of the move was immense. July went sailing across the room smashing shelves and artifacts alike. It was even worse than the direct hit Brucie took. Thankfully, it wasn't fatal since she had retreated slightly before taking the brunt of the Kangaskhan's attack.

One thing was clear, July could not continue without risking death. [I'm done Mister Edge, I just can't bring myself...to...do...anymore...s-s-sorry]

"You got the job done, July." The plate on his Smith and Salven's clicked for a second time.

"Return!" Feyera sighed, he was down to his last Pokemon. Had she not been a Gyarados, he was not sure if he could scrape his way out of this pickle.

"So," Archer laughed, "are you done playing outlaw, Christian?"

"No, Archer. But it's this outlaw who's just getting started! Go, Desperado!"

"GAAAAAROOO!" Feyera was pleased to see her massive sea-serpentine form. It was as if the leviathan had appeared to wage war against the behemoth. Feyera and his Pokemon alike smiled. She was brimming with power, and rearing for action. [Yee-haw! Let's ride 'em cowboy!] Feyera heard Des say before she bellowed another fierce roar. "GAAAAAROOOAAAHHH!"

"Kangaskhan use Comet Punch!"

"Wrap around it!" Edge didn't even need to tell her what to do, Des knew from his thoughts to use her fierce long fangs to bite the opponent Kangaskhan as soon as she had coiled around her. And it pleased her so to act on such primal rage. Dodging the Pokemon's counter attack, Desperado hoisted her head into the air and forced her fangs down through the opponent's thick hide like a guillotine. Kangaskhan struggled and attempted to throw the Gyarados off, but the aquatic Pokemon held on tightly, coiling her body tightly around Kangaskhan, her fangs anchored in deep.

"Use Rage!" ordered a disquieted Archer. Kangaskhan tried to thrash about, scratching and slashing at Feyera's Gyarados with her claws, but the sea monster's tough and scaly hide caused many of the blows to be deflected and useless.

"You've got this now Desperado! Use your tail to get under Kangaskhan and knock it over!"

Coiling ever tighter around Kangaskhan, Des whipped her tailfin across the floor, shifting the Kangaskhan's weight. The hulking monster toppled over with a loud "Crash!" But Kangaskhan did not stop the fight; these Pokemon were trained to kill indiscriminately until their last breath. In a frantic lashing, Kangaskhan continued to vigorously slash at Des' fins, fraying their edges with saw-like nails. [Edgy, think it's 'bout time ta send this ga'loot on-a-packin' down the yellow brick road?] Des asked, trying to avoid the maddened Pokemon's brutal attacks. [She ain't yieldin']!

"Don't leave a mess." Des obeyed Edge's command and bit down fiercely on Kangaskhan's jugular right when the maddened Pokemon was aiming another Mega Punch. Frozen from the attack, the irate Kangaskhan lowered her thrashing neck and closed her eyes for good. Finally she would have
peace from whatever madness Team Rocket had driven into her.

Christian called back his Gyarados instinctively and put both his arms out. "I told you I'd beat you, Archer. Even with your foul-bred Pokemon! And you didn't listen to me. You lost, give it up. Team Rocket needs to end!"

In sheer disbelief, the Rocket Executive looked down at his fallen Pokemon. "You defeated them? The Shadow Pokemon failed me?" His eyes shifted back and forth as sweat formed on his forehead. "I'm afraid I can't do that, Christian. You see, even I don't have that type of power. But I do have this type of power..." Reaching under the large desk, Archer hoisted up a huge metallic weapon. It was Archgun class, being a weapon well over standard size at three quarters Archer's height. The three-foot long rails lined up perfectly parallel down the barrel, their cold steel construction gleaming brightly under the room's overhead florescent lights. From the sides of the rifle's extended barrel, a harsh neon light purred to life from within, the green coils glowing purple as the weapon was activated. Charging up, it let out a loud and high pitched charging noise as its metal plates at its base began to open and widen, revealing more of the purple light.

"What is that?! A RAIL GUN?!" Feyera screamed.

"Time to say bye-bye Christian," Archer said, his finger hovering over the trigger which would generate electric current launching the contained particle beam. He smiled, fully aware of the absolute power he held in his hands. "There's no escape; RAIL weaponry use ions, not bullets. Your powers are useless. Muster all your strength and you can't hope to generate enough of a gravity well to stop the ion beam. Face it, it's over! Submit to Giovanni or die the traitor you are!"

Instinctively, Edge's psychometry kicked in, causing his head to shake in violent pain. It was always like this. Right before he faced death. Accelerated neurological functioning and a chance to change the outcome, but this was an outcome he could not hope to change without sacrifice. "...I'm starting to lose it again. Need to stay in control...neh!" Feyera close his eyes. He knew he would die otherwise. He foresaw it happening to him over and over in his mind. Edge heard the shot. "Click! Bang!" Then he heard two more follow.

There was hushed silence. The foggy unknown behind his lids felt comforting, peaceful even.

Strangely, Feyera was still standing. Gaining the courage to open his eyes, the young man could not believe what he saw before him! In front of him, he saw Agent Archer littered with bullet holes. His blood stained the once unadulterated vest he wore. The Rocket Executive held his chest as he fell to the ground with a blank expression on his cold face. An echo from the relinquished RAIL gun hitting the tile floor resonated piercingly throughout the chamber. It was clear that the gunshots came from another weapon. A more primitive firearm that relied on bullets and gunpowder.

"Who are you?" Edge projected warily, since his lips refused to move. Telepathy would have to do for now. "I..." Wavering back and forth once again, his once defiant stance buckled as he collapsed from exhaustion.

"Guess I ought to ask you the same exact question!" answered a gruff sounding man. "You're a psionic?"

Feyera nodded.

"My name is Officer Fredrick Irving. I lead the Kanto division of the International Police Force. Thank you for paving the way into Team Rocket's hideout, I wouldn't have been able to do it without you." The man slicked his straight hair back as he pulled out the right side of his suit jacket
in order to re-holster his magnum. His piercing eyes were deep brown and his facial features were dark and drawn into his face. The badge he wore above his chest pocket was golden, giant, and commanding. He had a professional air about him, despite the body art littering the base of his neck and the visible parts of his arms. Fredrick reminded him of a professional police officer he had seen once in a movie, but the title escaped his mind. Either way though, Fredrick clearly knew what he was doing. Edge could sense the certaintly to the point where it was nearly palpable.

"I'm Edge Feyera." But he quickly raised a hand in objection, realizing his mistake of telling Fredrick who he was. "Wait, I mean—!

It was no use, Fredrick had already heard him; thankfully, he didn't seem to overreact to it. "Mister Feyera, I need to discuss with you at length the things which have occurred in Kanto recently. Most notably, how you fit into the recent events."

"How did you know I was here?"

"I received an anonymous tip disclosing this facility, it looks mostly vacated especially after that alarm."

"Rallsen…" thought Feyera.

"Excuse me?" Officer Irving's stiff gaze darkened significantly. "You're going to need to cooperate, Mister Feyera."

"It's nothing. Sorry. I'm really confused. In regards to my circumstances, I don't know why I'm even here right now." He almost wished he had taken Rallsen's advice and run away. This was bad, but it could be worse. This man had saved him from Archer. Feyera owed it to him to not lie; after all, he was a part of the Global Police. This guy had to be legitimate, he wore the shield of Kanto regional police division on his breast. "Maybe I can trust you." thought Edge. Brock was trustworthy as well and he's just a member of the Gym trainer League.

"Of course you can, I saved you. And now we're going to work together to bring Team Rocket to justice."

"Wait… have you heard about me?"

"Mmhm." The officer nodded, adjusting the broad collar on the militaristic garb he wore underneath his large coat.

"And you don't want to use me?"

"No. I want to help you, Mister Feyera. You've found yourself in a tricky situation. Psyonics might be rare, but I know enough on the subject to understand you're people too. Don't worry, I'm not gonna lock you up in a cell or anything like that." The International Police agent walked over to Feyera and helped him get up. "Okay, easy does it now, get up slowly." Edge felt the man's rough but warm hand as he helped to steady him on his feet. "It's a good thing that alarm was tripped otherwise I might have not gotten here to save you in time."

He tried to say "thank you" but once again, the overwhelming mental strain had limited his vocal chords. "Thanks."

"So, what do you say?" Fredrick asked. "Will you help out the Kanto Police?"

Not seeing very much of a choice at this point, "Alright. I'll help you out, Officer Irving," Edge responded telepathically.
"Please, call me Fredrick."
Chapter Summary

Narrowly escaping with his life, there is little Mister Feyera can do but graciously accept his savior.

"Here, let me help you out; those wounds look bad, but you're going to be okay," Fredrick said to Feyera as the man supported his frail body.

Edge Feyera leaned against the International Police agent's side, wrapping his arm behind Fredrick's neck. Feyera's knees where still quivering uncontrollably. He couldn't imagine moving anywhere fast on his own. In fact, all he wanted to do was collapse.

*Will I be okay?* Edge asked telepathically. He liked to hear someone else say that he would be fine. Somehow, it made him more comfortable with his circumstance.

"Yes, you'll be better in no time. Just stay with me, can you talk?"

Edge opened his mouth to say something but expelled nothing but air. "…"

Frustrated, he shut his eyes and once again projected telepathically, *No. No I can't.*

"Wait…here; hold on." Fredrick guided Feyera's hand to a nearby shelf. "Grasp on to this shelf for a second…" Fredrick said.

Edge reached out both his arms and vigorously clutched the bookshelf in the Rocket's Executive boardroom. He knocked over a few things with his enthusiastic grab, but he couldn't see what they were since he had shut his eyes to conserve energy. Fredrick left his side and was gone for a few seconds.

*Where did you go?* Edge asked, slightly opening his eyes. As he did so, colors of all magnitudes surged into his vision. They converged and separated rhythmically, ranging from a dark olive to a light cyan. The colors were cool and calming. Edge thought he saw a humanoid figure ahead but it too began to waver and lose its original form. He shut his eyes once more.

Fredrick called over from the other side of the room, "Just collecting some evidence, Mister Feyera. Archer Tevis has been on our hit-list for some time. We'll be out of here in no time, don't you worry!"

*Hit-list?* thought Feyera.

"Yes. Apparently, the Rockets have been in this base for quite some time, according to these records. Strange…until recently we never had much of a problem with them. I suppose they brought in tourists and revenue to Celadon. But that isn't what concerns me. What I want to know is: what is going on in the east? In Lavender Town."

Just the thought of Lavender Town made him shudder. He didn't want to think about the things he
saw there. He didn't want to remember his encounter with Haunter. He took a few deep breaths and squinted his right eyelid open ajar.

Edge could see Fredrick rummaging through the fallen rocket's body. Fredrick picked up the L3-RAIL and promptly swung the taupe leather fabric over his shoulder to strap the RAIL rifle onto his back. The International Police Agent then glided over to Archer's computer and with a few clicks yelled, "Hey! Stick with me! I'm almost done, Mister Feyera, just hold on!"

Edge lost his grip on the bookshelf and collapsed onto the floor, issuing a loud thud. His knees brushed against something sharp. "…!"

Fredrick swiftly ran over to Feyera and helped him up. Edge looked into the man's brown eyes, set back in his face. They were weary but warm. He was nearing forty, his age reflected in his solemn face. He had rough stubble set around the base of his face, giving him a permanent shadow.

"Your…eyes Feyera, they're…"

_Different?_ Edge finished his thought, fully aware of their minute crimson glow. He hated it. It was out of his control and everybody knew. It was becoming more difficult to conceal.

"Yes…did…did the Rockets do this to you?"

Feyera shuddered for a moment unable to respond vocally or mentally.

"Did they?" Insisted Fredrick as he hoisted Edge up and allowed him to lean against his side once more.

Edge felt the RAIL gun's cold metallic barrel as he placed his arm behind the man's back for a second time. _Yes…yes…they did this to me…_

Fredrick swore an obscenity. "Comeon, we gotta get out of here. Pronto. You can tell me everything later. You can walk right?"

_I think I can, provided my shaking knees don't cause me to collapse again._

"Alright, just lean on me. At least you're light. Let's hurry!" said the police agent.

The two of them moved through the Rocket's Kanto Headquarters, going back out the way that Edge had come in. As they speedily fled, Fredrick had to support Feyera a few times when he tripped up. Fredrick was in his mid-forties but still very strong, that or Edge was just very light.

"Come on, it's only a bit further!" Fredrick tried to motivate him on the third time Feyera collapsed.

Angered, Feyera forcefully blew out of his nose and frowned.

"Get up, come on, don't you give up on me."

He struggled to lift his legs and match Fredrick's pace. His Alterieno boots, which came to a blade-like toe, clapped loudly against the floor. They were close to an exit. There was a large ladder leading up to a metal plate. It wasn't the same way that Edge had come in with Agent Rallsen, but he figured this might be the emergency exit mentioned. Perhaps this was how Fredrick Irving infiltrated the Rocket Base. Edge didn't seem to be concerned with the details. He just wanted to be able to normalize himself. Too much had happened in too short of a time.

"Alright now, let's just open this hatch," Fredrick slammed the side of his fist onto a large button.
Edge tried to catch his breath.

"Like so!" he proclaimed.

"Emergency hatch opening, please stand clear," said a computerized voice. The sun's bright light shone into the dark base, illuminating the cold facility with its radiance.

"Halt right there!" yelled a man's voice from down the hallway.

Almost mechanically, Fredrick Irving spun around and pushed Edge onto the ground as the rocket open fired. Fredrick rolled on the ground, reached into his vest, and drew his magnum. "Click, Bang!"

He tried firing but the rocket ducked in cover behind a thick steel-plated barricade. The bullets clanged against the reinforced composite armor and ricocheted back towards Edge and Fredrick.

"Stay down!" Fredrick ordered at Edge. He dropped his magnum to the metal tile.

_Not like I can do anything else._

"Surrender yourself! You have no idea who you are messing with! I'm with the Kanto Police Force!" Fredrick bellowed as he drew the L3-RAIL rifle from his back. He pulled forth the heavy mechanized gun and aimed it at the dense metal plate the rocket was concealed behind.

"You won't get out of here alive!" the rocket agent yelled as he took his gun and blindly fired it in their direction. "I'll make sure of it!"

The unsighted bullets flew about the section of the room that Fredrick and Feyera were in. Edge glanced over at Fredrick who was aiming the RAIL weapon he had obtained from Archer's body; it made a whirling charge up noise. "Whuuurrrrllllllllll" the harmonic humming sound resonated causing the room to fill with a loud pitch.

Fredrick closed his left eye and peered down the gun's sights. As the pitch continued to rise, it sounded as if the gun was whining. Its cries seemed to reverberate as the entire room was filled with the bright noise. Fredrick struggled to keep the weapon balanced as its continued to drone and vibrate. As it hit the pitch and the light flashed twice, the man quickly stroked the trigger with a swift "Clink!".

Everything stopped. There was a brilliant flash of purple light as the beam shot out of the gun's tip, followed by an earsplitting blast, rattling the entire corridor. After the initial shockwave, there was a shrill and distinct hissing sound, as the thermal plating on the RAIL gun zealously fanned outwards to cool the launch mechanism, expelling white steam. "Click, chink—Sssssssssssssssssssssssssssssss!" The ejected steam took on a bright purple hue from the rifle's shimmering interior.

The particle beam had punched straight through the low metal wall. The rocket pursuing them was no more. The awesome piercing power of the RAIL weapon had torn through the reinforced barricade as if it were made of parchment. Edge thought about how incredible these weapons were. They would sell for millions, and the energy cell ammunition wasn't cheap either. To build one, you needed Silph's resources—the kind that are always in high demand.

Fredrick grunted, "Humph, now I see why these things are illegal."

Edge laughed, but it hurt his chest to do so and he clutched the red shard. _Thanks._

"That's a wound too?"
Yeah. From a long time ago. I'll tell you more later.

Fredrick looked skeptical, but his mind was elsewhere for the time being. "Alright, now to get you somewhere safe. Do you think you can climb up this ladder?" he asked, as the rifle continued to expel terrible heat. The paneled flaps slowly closed, their mechanical arms sealing the twin rail launch mechanism within once more.

*Yeah, I think I can*, Edge slowly stood up and clutched the rungs tightly as he pulled himself to the daylight. To his surprise, it didn't take him long to climb out.

The partially cloudy sky was still bright enough to make Feyera pause once he had clambered out of the concealed trapdoor about two blocks away from the casino. He was in an alleyway between two large apartment complexes. He knelt down on the cobblestone path as he waited for Fredrick to emerge out of the trapdoor.

As Fredrick's figure rose from the hole, he vigorously brushed off his suit. Some dirt fell to the earth below him. He then straightened his posture and looked over at Edge, "Alright, listen Mister Feyera; I have an apartment here in Celadon. You're going to come back there with me, and explain everything that's going on, understand?"

Feyera tiredly looked over at Fredrick, *Yeah sure. I kinda owe it to you after you saved my hide back in there.* He couldn't run away now.

"Okay, can you walk on your own now?" the man asked as he reattached the L3 RAIL rifle to his back with the thick worn strap. It had cooled off by now and only a faint glow emerged from the two metal beams at the tip of the barrel.

Edge stood up and stretched. It felt nice to be outdoors again; he felt safe.

*Yeah, I feel a lot better actually.* He wasn't sure why. Maybe all of the nonsensical information disclosed to him had just overwhelmed him. A lot of it didn't matter. He wasn't going to be carted off to some discrete laboratory now that he was out of the lion's den. Most of the information concerning his past was ambiguous and beyond his powers of recollection. One thing was for sure though; he had made it out alive. Edge looked over at the International Police agent and gave a closed-mouth smile.

"Follow me," Fredrick said as he walked to the northern section of the bustling metropolitan area, "and stay close, I don't want you collapsing again!"

*I got this. Don't worry.*

"Yeah but you still can't talk," the pair exited the alleyway and were moving through the wide streets, "that's a pretty big problem don't you think?"

*Yeah, but I've had worse things happen to me.* Cognitive meltdowns were no laughing matter for Feyera.

"Save it, we're almost there," Fredrick said to the distraught trainer.

Edge liked Celadon's Upper East Side. It was totally different than the downtown sector he had been in for his Gym Challenge. The buildings here were newer, the street was cleaner, and the air just smelt... fresher. There were even a few tiny shops on the first floors of the tall apartment buildings.

Fredrick led him towards one of the high-rising structures. Sweeping past the security check-point, Fredrick displayed his golden badge and said to the building guard, "He's with me."
The guard nodded and opened the elevator doors. Feyera was waved inside by Fredrick's outstretched arm. Fredrick then followed Edge inside the small box. He took a small keycard out of his jacket's inside pocket and inserted it into the slot above the screen displaying the floor they were on. After doing so, the elevator buttons illuminated and the International Police Agent pressed firmly on the button saying "42".

The doors quickly shut and the elevator shot up. Feyera almost fell over, but Fredrick grabbed him with his arms, "Hey, easy does it now."

_I didn't know they made these things go so fast._ Feyera thought telepathically as he gasped.

Fredrick laughed, "At least they're more convenient than taking the stairs."

The elevator stopped suddenly on the forty-second floor, making Edge feel like his stomach was going to jump up and out of his open mouth. The young trainer swallowed hard to negate the queasiness.

"And here we are!" Fredrick said as the doors opened revealing a large apartment complex. It was everything Edge imagined a secret base would look like. In addition to the massive foyer, Edge saw the complex had an enormous glass window looking out at the beautiful eastern view of Saffron's golden skyline. The walls were a pristine white. As he entered the room, floor lighting illuminated his path and the lights automatically adjusted to greet the guest.

Feyera walked over to the window in a hasty manner. He could not remember the last time he had been in such a tall building despite having grown up in the Saffron metropolis. He felt so high up in the air; the people below looked like little ants. His gaze went from the streets to the distinct golden city of commerce off in the distance. Saffron City looked much closer from this vantage point in the sky.

"Wow!" Edge's voice cracked as he spoke for the first time. It was painful, but at least he knew that his vocal chords were not permanently altered.

"Ah ha! So you can talk after all," Fredrick said to him half-heartedly.

"Ye—" _Yeah_. It was too strenuous to use his voice. _I can…but it really hurts Fredrick._ It was like having a relentless sore throat, the kind you get when you're sick with a cold.

"Do you think that you can speak to me normally? Right now it looks like I'm talking to myself," Fredrick laughed. "Haha, don't want people thinking I'm crazy now."

No…not yet. _I've been feeling better ever since you brought me out of that wretched Rocket Base. Still, I have to recover a little bit. I don't know why it is this way. I wish I understood. If only I knew all the details, then maybe I could…_Edge was going to say "fix everything" but that seemed out of the question. _Besides, it's a long story. I'm so tired…"

"I'm glad you are feeling better, but you need to hold up your end of the bargain, and tell me everything that has recently transpired. I want to help you. I'll make some coffee for the both of us; do you take cream or sugar?"

Edge started silently laughing. Of all people, he knew how to make the best cup of coffee. He had worked at a coffee shop in Pallet for almost two years after his accident. _Tell you what, I'll make it. I have experience when it comes to making a cup of Joe._

"Right, if you insist Feyera. The kitchen is over there. Just make mine black," Fredrick forced a closed mouth angular smile, "it's going to be a long night."
After a long evening at the apartment, Edge had become exhausted from exerting so much energy to use telepathy rather than words to explain his story to Fredrick. Still, Edge's body was not cooperating and had seemingly turned against him. First his speech was gone, then his sense of self, and finally he was unable to stand without becoming too lethargic. Despite such obstacles, Edge needed to explain everything to his new friend in the International Police Force.

Edge had told Fredrick nearly everything, from how his power had awakened out of dormancy to how his power made him feel. Concerning the Pokemon Sanctum, Feyera stuck to the story told to him two years ago by the police. He was the victim of the Rocket attacks, not the victimizer. It would take more than two or three Rockets to convince him otherwise. And besides he had proof embedded right here in his chest.

Fredrick offered to let Edge stay overnight in his apartment's guest room, and the young trainer was very thankful for this gesture. Feyera had revealed so much to this man, and he felt slightly relieved that there was at least one other person in the world who understood him. Fredrick was a very good listener. He hardly ever interrupted, and only did so to clarify details. Sometimes Fredrick would open his mouth as if he were going to comment, only to take a sip of the coffee Feyera had brewed. The entire conversation took place in the apartment's grand living room on a set of finely furnished couches. After Edge had finished his story, Fredrick got up from his couch and paced about for a few minutes not saying a word.

"Give me a few moments, I need to check something in my study. Why don't you go to the bathroom and wash up, Mister Feyera?" He glanced at the bronze grandfather clock. It was already after midnight.

Walking back to the luxurious apartment's bathroom, Edge studied his reflection in the mirror. He wasn't sure if he liked what he saw. The usual black circle around the green colored part of his eyes was a bright and luminescent gold. The crimson aura had dissipated, but there were still some redder sections imbedded in his green irises. He rubbed his eyes and turned on the faucet. Filling his shaking palms with water, he proceeded to wash his face. He felt his pores absorb the lukewarm water. The water coated his face with its warmth and soothed his soul.

The young trainer removed his shirt and arched his back, looking up at the bathroom's incandescent ceiling bulbs. He was glad to be free of his restrictive shirt's collar even though it wasn't tight around his neck. As he stood up straight once more, he gently massaged the red protrusion splitting out of his body. It stung, but at least it was not debilitating him. He then cleaned off his elbows, still scabbed from Haunter's shadow claw attack. He rubbed the skin vigorously, only to find that when he brushed against it, it lost some of its beige color.

He took off the rest of his clothes and took a long shower. The water was the perfect temperature, and the pressure was as well. How he had forgotten about a lifestyle that included these amenities was beyond him. After he had finished, he put on a bathrobe and walked back to the guestroom where he found a spare set of clothing. Although loose, it was comfortable enough and once he had gotten into bed, he heard Fredrick knocking on the door.

"Come in," said the trainer. Fredrick complied and came into his guest room to speak with Edge.

The expression on Fredrick's face was unusual; Edge couldn't quite attach an emotion to it. Fredrick concluded his findings to Edge, "Mister Feyera, first of all, I would like to thank you for your cooperation on behalf of the International Police Force."

Edge nodded softly.
"I've considered everything that you told me and can only offer my opinion on the matter. I'm no expert on paranormal activities of course. I've just read a fair share about the subject in the past. Mostly human psyonics."

"Go right ahead," Edge weakly said as he sat upright. If he had his memories back from when he was a scholar and researcher than maybe all of this would make sense to him. Still, his untimely amnesia after the Sanctum Robbery had left him very much in the dark.

"Well you see, there are certain elements of life that change ceaselessly. The human mind, as fragile as it is, has the incredible ability to create expectations for the future development of such events. In addition, such expectations, if not immediately satisfied, generate tension. Emotion is thusly experienced in relation to the buildup and eventual release of said tension. The more elaborate the buildup of tension, the more intense the emotions that will be experienced. The interruption of the steady rhythmic flow of temporal causality, depending on one's set of emotional inhibitors, creates a search…no a need…for an explanation. This results from a mismatch between someone's expectation and the actual course of events. Negative emotions will be the result of an extreme mismatch between certain types of expectation and experience pairings. Positive emotions develop if the converse happens. You tread a dangerous line between the two." Pausing to take a sip of what smelled like extra bitter coffee, Fredrick cleared his throat and persisted. "AHEM!"

Feyera tried not to cut him off with telepathy.

"Extraordinarily, your mind will desperately try to correct mismatches in the physical world, succeeding in certain ways and failing miserably in others. It all stems from the phenomenon, which occurs when the emotional tension reaches its pinnacle. The mismatched reality and expectations, however briefly, meld into one and will subsequently sustain an increasing surge of emotions due to a catharsis not being reached. Even minds without manipulative power over nature can testify to this occurrence. The human mind demands symmetry. If something just does not seem right, it is likely to make you upset. You can control the external world, by premonition and power because of those very thoughts which make you upset in the first place! What is simply amazing though is the self-sustaining nature of your abilities. With enough of any emotion, your mind will generate positive feedback to encourage such an emotion. The positive feedback is like an ecstasy to someone who draws power from emotional constructs. If you can master this before it masters you, you'll find yourself with a source of limitless power. You are leaps and bounds ahead of most of us, Mister Feyera, but even you have to admit that this is a convincing theory."

It is. Was it so hard for Fredrick to just be frank with him? How could the problem of control…or lack thereof…be fixed? How could I possibly remember who I am?

Nodding slightly, Fredrick once again resumed, "You can project moods upon others, Feyera. But the crucial thing is that the feelings must be your own. When you do so, your thoughts are also transferred to the other person. This is partially why I am now attempting to be blunt with you. Feyera, your power is based upon your desire to maintain a constant level of certain preferable emotions. As such, through an adjustment in the balance, you will have a greater preference for complex events than your current naïve self does. Why? Because the threshold for experiencing emotion—the source of your psionic power—is higher."

Get to the point please.

"I propose a treatment for you; not to diminish your power but to make it much stronger. I can help you to recover fragments of your memories. Pokemon abilities can draw out repressed memories in the form of dreams. It will involve a potent dosage of Hypnosis," Fredrick said, smiling gently.

Hypnosis? I don't know if I can go through with that.
"It will help you to curb the rather…vicious tendencies you have. Think about it for a minute. You don't really understand what happened to you. When you go into a so-called 'cognitive meltdown' that is when your powers manifest and emotional discrepancy along with insecurity feeds itself. Based on what you told me, when you enter that state you lose touch with reality, and that scares you. Fear is an emotion too, and because that is something from where you draw your powers it can work against you. Giving you power over yourself will not only save you from self-destruction, but provide you with other abilities as well. All this time you've allowed the psyonics to consume you. What if you found out why they manifested in the way that they did? Wouldn't that be helpful to you, Feyera?"

I suppose. I mean, I have been searching for answers this whole time.

Fredrick replied with assurance, "Answers will come. I can promise you that much."

Thinking hard and trying to be as rational as possible, Edge finally stammered out in mental signatures: Fine. I accept your offer.

Fredrick looked down at the bed-ridden young man, "I will make sure than no harm befalls you, but you must promise me to be strong. Your body will be able to recover, no longer trapped in a flux of positive and negative emotions. You will have control. And even when your body is physically unable to move forward, your mind will be able to move it for you. I have faith in this procedure and you should as well."

You do?

Fredrick turned to leave, "We will begin tomorrow."

Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for wanting to help me. Thank you for not just using me.

"Mister Feyera, you have a good heart. And you are my friend. Together, we will make this world a better place," Fredrick said while dimming the overhead fluorescents on his way out.
Despite the late night, Edge had difficulty falling asleep. Perhaps it was because of the caffeine he had consumed. Or perhaps he was just nervous about finding out more about his past. In any event, Fredrick had a procedure lined up for him in the morning. Who was he kidding? He was ridiculously nervous.

Feyera's eyes darted about the dark room focusing on the shadows. The window was open ajar and occasionally a faint night breeze fell upon his face. The soft pillow and sheets were a nice change from the campsites and sleeping bag he had been grown accustomed to sleeping in. Not only was he comfortable, but for once he felt safe. Fredrick was a good man. He was on the same side as Edge. He wanted to bring down the Rockets. It wasn't going to be easy, but perhaps by working with the International Police, Feyera would be able to stop the syndicate from chasing him. It didn't matter what Agent Rallsen, Archer, and Ein had told him. He was being pursued by their organization and he wanted it to end. First, there was the original Sanctum incident two years ago. On his Pokemon journey's first steps, he found the Rockets killed an innocent man in Mount Moon. Following that, he fought Agent Engelhart on the Golden Bridge north of Cerulean. Afterwards he had encountered Braddock and his sadistic partner who had followed him onto the S. S. Anne. When would it end? He thought about Haunter in the Pokemon Tower. Why were the Rockets even there? That was a gravesite! None of this really made any sense. He then thought again about Executive Archer and the mysterious Ein. They were the real threats. Everyone else was just taking orders from superiors.

As he watched the shadows dance in the moonlit room, his eyes slowly closed. He brushed his head against the pillow as he turned on his side. Clasping its feathery softness, he drifted off into a dreamless sleep.

As the sunshine and birds began chirping from outside, Edge woke up to a quiet apartment. Slipping out of bed, he walked about the guest room. He saw the large bronze clock that read "8:15" in analog. There were a few pictures around the room, all of them containing colorful abstract art. As he leisurely explored the confined space, he heard a knock on the door.

"Come in," Edge said, happy to realize that his voice was back.

Fredrick walked into the room already fully suited up, "Morning, I thought I heard you moving about. How are you feeling today?"

"Much better thank you. I'm not as lethargic"

"You're speaking too! Marvelous."

"Yes," Feyera said as he touched his brow, "I can speak without resorting to telepathy."

"That's wonderful to hear. Can I get you some breakfast?"

Food. He hadn't eaten in a long while. He just wasn't that hungry. Still, the more he thought about it, the more he realized just how starving he actually was. "Yeah, what do you have?"

"There's more coffee, cereal, and some pastries in the kitchen. Let me know when you are finished eating, I'll be reading in my study upstairs."
"Thank you," Feyera said as he walked over to the kitchen.

The kitchen was brightly lit and ultra modern. Edge was happy to see food all set up. He quickly ate a few of the bakery-fresh food. His stomach grumbled loudly as he ate. Pouring himself a cup of coffee, he was repulsed by how it tasted. He always made the best, and this was instant.

_Bleh. I wish I could have made the coffee today._ He had a feeling that it was going to be a long day.

After he was finished, he cleaned up and strolled over to the high-rise apartment's second floor. He climbed up the stairs and found a room filled with bookshelves. Ceiling lighting wasn't even necessary, the room had more windows than any other part of the complex. Not only were there windows on two of the walls but the room had a huge glass top. The morning sunlight was pouring in. It reminded Feyera of a greenhouse.

Edge opened the door and stared at Fredrick as he peacefully sat in a black chair reading a thick book encased in leather bounding and trimmed with gold. Fredrick acknowledged his presence and continued to rub his index finger along passage he was in the midst of reading.

"Fredrick," Edge put his arm over his eyes to block the sunlight, "How on earth do you manage to read in here? It's so bright!"

Fredrick laughed, "Hah hah hah, you think so? Suppose that it is a little brighter in here than most people would use for studying."

"Y—yeah I'll say," Edge said. Dark libraries suited him back when he was in school.

Fredrick softly smiled and took a dark navy satin bookmark from his vest pocket and gently inserted it before closing the book. "Here's the thing though, I've always liked the sunshine. It reveals to us everything with its illumination. Truth. Reality. Perhaps that's just me though. I like to know things."

Feyera felt a strange connection. He wanted the same thing out of life. Especially now. The Pokemon trainer nodded.

"I might be a police agent, but I would be dead if I wasn't well read," the man joked in rhyme.

"Yeah, but doesn't it make you want to go outside?" Feyera asked, squinting.

"I have all day to be outside when I'm working for the International Police. Mornings are the only time I ever get to catch a break. They'll have me in Saffron one minute and on a plane for Mahogany the next. I suppose what I'm getting at is that it's nice to have a sanctuary to be able to retreat to."

"This—This is your sanctuary?"

"Yes." Fredrick tapped a small switch on the side of the chair he sat on and the mechanized curtains drew themselves halfway, slightly dimming the room, "In any event, are you ready?"

Edge stared at the International Police agent, "Umm, yeah…But first…can you tell me more about yourself?"

"What would you like to know?" Fredrick asked him.

"Well…For starters, how did you join the IPF?"

"Hah, the Force treated me well from day one. I had to make a few adjustments once I reached my current position of executive of the Kanto branch, but other than that I've always been happy with
"You were a pretty good shot with that L3-RAIL," the young trainer said to Fredrick still in awe considering how well the International Police Agent had fired in the face of adversity. The unwieldy weapon seemed to be handled naturally even amid all the chaos.

"Yes," Fredrick chuckled, "there's a first time for everything."

"I wish I was more useful during our escape. I mean I'm a trainer too."

"You were able to defeat a Rocket General. That's no easy feat. You even infiltrated their base and cleared it out to boot! I might be out of a job soon if you keep that up, son."

"Son? I…thanks. But it wasn't all me. I had my psyonics and my Pokemon."

"How many League Badges do you have Mister Feyera?"

Edge had to pause and think. "Four at the moment." His Pokemon Gym challenge seemed miles away.

Fredrick beamed, "Pokemon are spectacular creatures aren't they? Always adapting, always changing, constantly pushing forward their own existence. Evolution is testament to such malleability."

"We do that too though, don't we? This whole building didn't just spring up on its own right? People constructed it!"

Fredrick opened the book in his lap and fingered the page with a callused finger. "Ahem!" he cleared his throat.

"We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are,—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

"What is that some kind of philosophy?" Feyera asked with a smirk. He thought it sounded silly. Archaic even.

"Humph, it's poetry Mister Feyera." Fredrick snapped the large tome shut, grunting in disapproval as he did so. "Such ways of thinking have long been forgotten."

Feyera fidgeted, "Well yeah I mean with the Terminal War and all…"

"It wasn't just the End War; it was a change in mentality. A—tragic shift in demeanor. People lost their will to be people."

"What is that supposed to mean?" Feyera asked scratching his thick head of hair.

Fredrick smiled. "I suppose you are right about buildings."

Feyera looked over out the window with his emerald green eyes.

"But do try and think about it. Our technology does come from older civilizations. We do more rediscovering than inventing. That's just the problem; we've lost the will to create."
"Silph does have an unparalleled R and D program." Feyera thought about Silph and his father who worked for them. Fredrick was rapidly taking on a father-like role, even calling him things like "son". It might have been an expression, but Edge was reading more into it. Fredrick could pass for his father as far as ages went. But where was his actual father? Still offshore? Or in one of those gleaming towers off to the east?

"Mmm. Yes Silph is quite the corporation." Fredrick rubbed his brow.

"You going to give them back that L3-RAIL that the Rocket Executive had?" Feyera asked. Fredrick worked for Silph after all.

Fredrick smiled. "Eventually. I still need it for evidence and safekeeping."

"Evidence?"

"Yes and for 'safekeeping','" Fredrick emphasized.

Edge scratched his head, "So you're a marksman? That's why?"

"A marksman? Nah. I would say that being a crack shot comes with my profession. As a consequence rather than a requirement."

"That makes sense. It came in handy in the Rocket base."

"I could have used my Pokemon but…as you are undoubtedly aware, most Pokemon cannot stand up to firearms. Even the ones who can either have tremendously strong hides or psychic powers."

"You train Pokemon?" Feyera exclaimed. The respect he had for Fredrick was growing with each and every passing second.

"Trained," Fredrick corrected. "I was a trainer up until the Great War. I was drafted at the age of twenty-three. I…I lost a lot during that war. Not just from being posted in Orre either. Here on the home-front as well…I lost someone very special to me here in Kanto."

"That was a long time ago though, wasn't it?" asked Feyera.

"Some wounds don't heal in time, Mister Feyera. In any event, Silph took me in after the defeat of Arcturus, and I spent some time working as a detective for their cooperate sector. White collar crime mostly. They had a branch at the time called the Kanto Police, but because of the big push to 'globalize' the program was renamed the International Police Force. Sometimes I forget and still refer to it as the Kanto Police."

"Yeah, I noticed, ha" the trained laughed nervously.

"Eventually, with the rise in criminal organizations such as the Rockets, Silph needed operatives who were versed in the legalities and field expertise. I was chosen after a few of my colleagues had gone before me. Funny how I'm the only one left of the original core four."

Feyera looked startled, "They died?"

"Two of them did, one quit, said the stress was too much. Now I'm the one running the show mostly. I have plenty of subordinates, but sometimes the best man for the job is yourself."

"So you don't really use your Pokemon?"

"That's not entirely correct, you see, I use my Pokemon for things I can't do on my own. No need to
push them.” Fredrick sighed. "I've pushed myself just as much as any of them have for me in the past. We're…equals in that sense."

Edge was happy to hear this; Fredrick seemed like a role model. He was mildly idolizing him the more and more he found out about his past. "That's good to hear…I wish I could do that for my Pokemon." Edge thought about Lawrence and Jill. He didn't kill them, but could he have saved them by perhaps pushing himself a little more? This question seemed to eat at him from the inside out. No, it wasn't that easy. He couldn't see the future. Just possibilities. He wasn't even that powerful when you took into account his lack of control.

"But that reminds me, for this procedure, I will be calling upon one of my friends from a long time ago. He's a gentle Pokemon, but he'll be able to help you. He's helped me remember things plenty of times. Even the repressed memories."

"How?"

"It's done by putting you into a deep sleep. Dreams reveal the past. Abstract dreams occur when the mind is forced to conjoin memories with its natural creativity. That creative aspect can be overridden by sedating the mind just enough so that it retains a memory with minimal intangible features. You'll get pure memory at that point. I watered it down a lot but essentially that is the procedure. Does that make sense to you?"

"Yes," Edge said. It made enough sense at least. "I think it does."

"So, my Pokemon will be suppressing your mind. I hope that this is okay with you. Your psyonics…they don't have any immune system constructs do they?"

"Uhhh? What?"

"That means no. Ha ha.” Fredrick chuckled.

Edge thought about how he may have been initially scared if he never had received Brucie and learned that Pokemon could in fact be friendly. How much he had developed over this short amount of time! "Okay. That's fine Fredrick. I can trust whoever you trust…I'm ready to find out more about who I am!"

"Good." Fredrick took out a Poké Ball strapped to his leather magnum holster and released his Hypno—a Psychic Pokemon. The yellow-skinned Pokemon immediately locked eyes with Feyera and studied him intently. His white mane covered his neck and upper torso with its thick hairs. It gave Edge the same look when you think you know somebody. The raised eyebrow, the observant eye, whatever it was, Edge felt it.

"Okay, just lie down on the couch, and get comfortable," Fredrick suggested. There was a short narrow couch to Edge's left. It reminded him of something you would faint in due to the cushiony supports. Edge walked to it and sat his rear on it before laying back. He adjusted himself and fidgeted nervously.

"I'm ready," he said as he saw his chest start to move quickly up and down. Vision quivered as he looked straight ahead at Fredrick. This quickened breathing was exaggerated by the red shard protruding a few inches out of his sternum.

"Calm down, it will be okay don't worry," said Fredrick.

"I—I'll try."
The man then turned to his Pokemon who was now standing next to Edge, "Easy now Hypno we don't want to put him in a coma, but he does have some psionic abilities meaning that you might have to be a little more liberal with your Hypnosis." Fredrick motioned to his Pokemon, which complied and began to saturate Edge with a sleep-inducing blast of mental energy.

It was like being dragged down under. He could fight it only for a few moments. He looked from his red shard to Hypno's swinging silver pendulum and back again at the man sitting in front of him. Edge could feel his eyes closing, the darkness engulfed him, and he felt like was entering another body in another world.

A frigid blast air blew in as a team of masked surgeons swung open two large metal doors across the room. Edge, was unable to speak, and subsequently wheeled out on the mobile bed towards the deepest darkest section of this facility. He pasted countless rooms along the way on either side of him.

He couldn't understand the language of the doctors. But he could read their thoughts. They were taking him somewhere to operate on. He wasn't sure why. Maybe something was wrong with him. Maybe he was sick.

Once inside a small white room, Edge looked around and saw in terror the numerous apparatuses and machinery in the room. There was a huge glass window where more people lurked behind. The people moving him rolled him over onto a large metal plate in the center of the room. He felt incredibly lethargic, the same exact way he felt after experiencing a mental burnout. Then he was bolted down to the freezing steel by the same doctors which had transported him here. First, the metal braces where strapped on his extremities, binding him down on his back. They then put another metal brace around his neck, stilling his head motions. As they did this, Edge desperately tried to look down at his body to see his condition. The struggle was in vein, as he tried to break the iron grip of the plating, it only tightened slightly choking him. He felt a needle puncture his left forearm. Then four small adhesive straps placed in a square on his chest. Panic set in causing him to twitch convulsively.

Sensing his apprehension, a short fat doctor nearby ran some anesthesia through the IV line. The cold liquid serum ran up Edge's left arm and he relaxed a fair deal considering what was occurring around him. A tall bearded doctor gasped as he saw how quickly Edge's pulse fell from sedation. He said something in another language. Panicking, Edge wanted to find out what was happening? What were they doing to him? Why?

He wasn't himself, he felt different. Chained to the operating table he could not look and see his body. But he could feel it. Edge's limbs where thinner and that red shard in his chest was still present and pulsating along with his now less-struggling body. He looked over at the doctors; one of the men looked very similar to him. He wore a pure white coat, had amber hair, and stood next to a group of three other men and one female, all adorned in similar apparel.

This particular man in the lab-coat could have been his twin prior to all the changes he had undergone. Possessing his features and those shimmering green eyes were uncannily similar to his own. But he was here, not there! He was on a table strapped down and helpless. He saw the man who looked like him smile as he glanced at the monitor and said something in another language. He wanted to read his thoughts, and in this dream he could still do that.

"If we administer too much anesthesia it'll pass out before we can inject the Progenitor Serum. Eyes need to stay open. Also, run those vitals again, I have studied this species and I don't feel like those numbers are quite right," said the researcher who looked exactly like Chris' twin.
A tall doctor with thick black hair responded to Edge's doppelganger. "Tsk…always so cautious! Where is your sense of adventure? This species always has a higher heart rate. Has to do with their anatomy being centered around the torso."

The doctor pointed to Edge's chest to prove a point to him.

"Progenitor EX won't graft itself unless we get everything right. Vitals need to be linear. That's what went wrong before. All he saying is that we should be careful" spoke the female researcher at his side. Her thick burgundy hair reminded him of Lorelei's.

"Eventually, we will find a suitable host. Have faith. We're improving them. Doing what evolution takes millions of years to do. There will always be loss. Such loss paves the way for progress. There will always be progress," the first man dryly responded. "We're playing a numbers game."

The green-eyed man brushed his bronze hair in a very similar fashion to how Edge would when he was nervous or apprehensive, "Progress can be attained in unexpected ways, Chief."

"Indeed it can. Mutations occur sometimes, like your green eyes for instance. Oculocutaneous albinism two could have been altered in your eyes for any reason, but we'll never know for sure. Will we?" asked the tall thin man with black hair.

"I don't know. Must have got them from my mother's side," the other man said, lowering his gaze to the floor.

"What does it do? Why does it do what it does? Green eyes don't simply exist for the sake of existing. These are the mysteries we seek to unravel. It is a matter of finding purpose in this world," said the lead researcher.

Still squirming about, Edge tried to escape his prison, but the administered tranquilizers were too potent. He darted his gaze about the rest of the room as the doctors continued their pre-operation dealings.

"I don't want to lose this one. It's...different," responded the green-eyed researcher.

"Falling for your experiments now are you?"

The man's face was shocked, "No, it...said something to me, back when we captured it. With its psychic power. It was something important. I can't explain it though..."

"Humph, you forget that we poached this one right here on Penta, an unnatural environment for their species. It already broke the genetic mold. Keep in mind that it is exceptionally powerful and dangerous by being an anomaly. If it were not for the jamming technology, we would be in trouble. However, there is something peculiar about this specimen. It's more driven than any other we have had the pleasure of operating upon. Almost as if it derives meaning beyond its own existence... Perhaps this aspect will help it endure Progenitor."

The green-eyed young man looked over at a struggling Edge and put the clipboard he was holding down as he donned a surgeon's mask, "Just...please make sure you give enough of the regional anesthesia. Twenty-five C.C.s should be appropriate."

"Yes sir," said the red haired doctor.

The operating room had a huge retractable device hanging over a table filled with a myriad of liquids in vials. The centerpiece was Edge's new home for now. He was on a metal table, three-feet off the floor and not clothed due to the amount of blood intended to be spilled upon it was where he lay.
The metal braces strapped in his forehead, neck, arms, and legs. Even if he could move, there was no way out. The intravenous needle in his arm was bringing him down. Being confined like this was only the tip of the iceberg. As the numbing sensation wiped him out and his eyes began to close, to his surprise, they were pried open by two slender pieces of metal equipment.

_No..._ Edge was terrified. He was ready to pass out when he saw an enormous needle looming ominously over his eyes.

_No. No. No!_ But cruelly enough, he could not pass out. He saw it, and he saw it move closer, he could not move. His powers were suppressed immeasurably by the recent dose of anesthesia. He could do nothing but watch. It inched steadily closer. Suddenly there were no other people in the room. Just him and this sadistic procedure. He wanted it to just stop. He begged to be put out so that he wouldn't have to endure this. When the needle embedded itself in his right eye, if Edge had been capable of screaming, he would have surely destroyed his vocal chords permanently. Its wide spoke-lined rim, once cold grew moist and warm as it buzzed against his eyeball.

Suddenly fever set in. In complete terror, Edge was utterly obstructed in all possible ways—restrained, paralyzed, and emotionally helpless. The feeling of complete incarceration was the driving force of the experience. Imprisoned in his own psychological terror, he felt as though he had no chance of rescue. His body could not take the mental strain any longer; he was certain that it was all going to end!

Edge Feyera screamed as loud as he could upon waking up.

Gasp ing for air, he knew it was over as he thrashed forward out of Fredrick's couch.

A rush of air. A deep inhalation. The world was moving again. Edge knew it. He was alive. Opening his eyes, shapes and figures filled his head, some more opaque than others. The heavy eyelids demanded Edge to blink and clear out his tears.

"Feyera, you're fine! It's alright! Only a dream, you're here now back with me!"

_Who said that? It sounded like Fredrick._

"Are you okay? Feyera talk to me! What happened?" Fredrick demanded, recalling his Hypno.

He felt his heart beating so quickly and uncontrollably. He looked down to make sure he was still himself. He was.

"I…I…I don't know. It was terrible. Was that really my memory?" the young man stammered.

"Tell me about it and I can help you out, please," Fredrick said. "What happened to you?"

"Right, I was in this research lab setting. I was chained to a table. There were men there in lab-coats and clipboards. The sensations during the dream were incredibly extraphysical. I suffered from a painful procedure and a relentless fever. In the terror, I was utterly obstructed in all possible ways—restrained, paralyzed, and emotionally helpless. The feeling of complete incarceration was the driving force of the experience. Imprisoned in my own psychological terror, I had no chance of rescue," Edge sniffed and cleared his eyes of tears.

"What did they do?"

"They injected a fluid into my eyes," Edge shook as if it had actually just happened even though he was clearly safe now in Fredrick's apartment.
"Go on, tell me more, did the researchers say anything?" asked Fredrick.

"No it was all in another language, but I did make out that the serum was called 'Progenitor,'" Edge said.

"Please go on," Fredrick said while nodding vigorously.

"After they injected it, the walls became a dark crimson: peeling, dripping, and drenched, momentarily illuminated by the gradually revolving halo of dim grey light levitating above my head. The room was bone chillingly cold, yet I could not shiver. I heard muted voices of malice, the whispers came from tall shadowy figures, hardly human, amid the dark room, their gaze upon me—even though I could not distinguish them, I intuitively knew they were watching me. I smelled decay; I felt broad lacerations on my back. Amid all these horrors of a dream there was one which dwarfed the others: the agony of my small framed body being pinned down to depths inconceivable was unbearable. Paranormal pressure compressed me, locking me into a vessel where pain became more real than I ever knew possible. All of these crushing aches were of course not real, but the state I was in made them become real to me." Edge began to gasp in convulsions.

"You are fine now, Feyera."

"No Fredrick, I'm not. That dream was a memory you said!" Edge was in panic. It was as if he was suddenly awoken from a dream he wasn't ready to come out of.

"But you are okay! Look around, everything is just the way it was two hours ago. You're fine, you are just the same."

Edge brushed his hand over his chest shard, "I was out for two hours? It felt much longer than that, Fredrick."

The international police agent sighed and clasped Edge's shaking hand, "Time moves differently in dreams, why don't you tell me more about the dream memory?"

"Oh…Okay. Despair set in. It was as if time itself had halted in recognition of my mental confinement. I could not even scream, though I yearned to so very badly. I sought to lash out, kick, wriggle free, and more than anything else relieve the intolerable pressure confining me. The emotions I felt in the dream were amplified to their highest respective levels, consuming me entirely. Emotions, what I traditionally rely upon for support were binding me further down with fear. In a frenzy I wanted to fight the petrifaction; in fact, I needed to, because I was losing not only my mental sanity but also my existence. No waking emotion I have ever felt compares to the terror of being trapped in your own mind. Despite my delirium, I specifically remember exerting all of my psychic energy in an attempt to break the iron grasp on not only my body, but also my entire dissimilar essence. The last thing I remember was a sensation—pure unadulterated exertion, the kind of mental burnout so arduous that it destroys you," Edge sighed.

Fredrick was very still for a few moments, unsure of what to say. He released Edge hand, and proceeded to rub his brow. Finally he spoke, "How is it possible? They used the Progenitor Serum on you? That's…that can't be…"

"That can't be what? Tell me about the serum," Edge requested.

"Of course, I remember learning about a radical treatment given to Pokemon a few years back. It was a…ahem…delicate procedure I might add, but the researchers, surgeons, and scientists in Orre's Cipher organization were able to alter the very nature of Psychic Pokemon by giving them a serum in the eyes allowing them to see certain things. It was extrasensory perception for creatures with
preexisting extrasensory perception," Fredrick said.

\textit{So they tested it on me! I was nothing more than a lab rat? "I'm not a Pokemon, Fredrick! How did they do this to me?"}

"I…I really don't know. If you didn't have Pokemon qualities you would have lost your sight. Progenitor is not exactly a miracle. A man named Ein developed the technology to transfer abilities of Pokemon over into other Pokemon. It all began with Progenitor. Progenitor-EX allows Psychic Pokemon to detect Dark and Ghost types. As you probably are aware, Psychic Pokemon fear such Pokemon. They are natural prey to Dark and Ghost types. This is due to a complex evolutionary genome developed in Dark types. Dark types can 'cloak' themselves to avoid the heightened sensory perception of Psychic Pokemon. Do you know about Dark types? They have a type of naturally occurring virus present in their eyes, harmless of course, that results in the fantastic ability to see things not truly discernible by the unaltered eye. In a sense, it is a symbiotic relationship. Of course, all this means nothing unless you already have a psychic power. Think of it as a grafting process. Taken from one Pokemon and given to another. All in all, the virus—named Progenitor EX—will amplify certain things that are normally concealed."

"Fine, I get it. It doesn't make sense though. I'm not a Pokemon. I have psyonics, but that doesn't mean…""

"Listen, all I am saying is that the procedure was ORIGINALLY only suitable for Pokemon. Who knows what awful advances were made. You might have been a human test subject, although I shiver at the thought of it," Fredrick let out a long exhale.

\textit{So this is how I saw the ghost in the Pokemon Tower,} Edge pointed at his right eye and made a circle motion to point out the ring encapsulating his green iris...\textit{Haunter.}

"It would make sense, wouldn't it?" asked Fredrick. "Well now you understand. From what you tell me it seems as though your fear of the spectral creatures in the Pokemon Tower is because you yourself have begun to tap into Psychic powers. The problem is of course that you were never aware of your ability to see the ghosts. So you saw them when your Pokemon couldn't."

\textit{How is that possible?}

"I do not know how they were able to give a human the Progenitor Serum but it seems as though your eyes have some of the characteristics: the rings of light that encircle the periphery of the iris for instance," said Fredrick. But his eyes were not always this way. He had once had green eyes. Normal eyes. It wasn't until he started using his psyonics that he underwent such changes. Radical changes.

"To be able to inhibit your current fear, that is a dream few could achieve due to the extreme amount of will needed to undergo the treatment. You're able to sense otherworldly creatures and will no longer fear being snuffed out like a candle in the village of Lavender for instance. Now, you won't have to fear as much. Fear is something that drives your emotions to their breaking point. We've removed that limit by unlocking a part of your past so that you will have unprecedented control over your abilities. You have demonstrated an alarming sense of mental resilience and personal determination," Fredrick said.

\textit{No, I do not wish to lose my sense of fear. That would make me less human after all.}

"How human are you to begin with? Not many humans can destroy the things you can with their minds," Fredrick's response made Edge angry.
Humans can, all they need is the right tool to do it. "Psyonics are a tool."

"I'm not going to argue philosophy Feyera. I'm not going to force anything upon you either. I just want to help. Your eyes, they have already lost their human qualities. I noticed it when I approached you after saving you from Archer," said Fredrick.

You are right. My eyes, they have been altered. "But I can control it." A flat out lie. The glowing scarlet aura only appeared when he was exerting psyonics to manipulate the physical world. But the thin bright golden rings encapsulating his green eyes were permanent ever since the Golden Bridge.

As if sensing Edge's deceit, Fredrick continued, "You don't want to live in a world that robs you of control. I want to help you. I also want to help the rest of the world. Word is that the Rockets are up in the Pokemon Tower. I do not know what they are doing, but their objectives have been worsening ever since their merger with Cipher."

"Why?" Isn't it dangerous in the Pokemon Tower? He shuddered as he remembered his encounter with Haunter. What could be up there besides the deceased?

"It's mostly Cipher, they have control over the Rockets," Fredrick sighed while stuffing his hand into his pocket beneath his magnum holster. "Those men and women, hardened by evil, will not be deterred so easily from fulfilling their objectives."

"What objectives?" Edge said with a hint of fear, ominous to both him and Fredrick.

"Brutal objectives, Mr. Feyera. A type of ruthlessness going far beyond the definition of wickedness."

"But I can't fight them. Not all of them." Someone innocent will get hurt. Besides, I cannot fight those…those…things.

Edge could feel his thin frame shutter as he relived the experience of losing Jill to the depraved ghost in Lavender.

"You need confidence, my friend. Confidence comes from being able to tune out fear and face the darkness," Fredrick said bluntly.

"So if I can see into the beyond…then that means..."

"That means you can enter the Pokemon Tower. You can face the mausoleum of deceased and restless spirits. Cipher is there and I have no idea why. However, none can enter the tower without being pulled into the afterlife by the elusive malevolent phantoms. As you said, Haunter resides there. An elusive beast to be sure."

"Yes, but not for me."

"Precisely. You can see Haunter. Maybe that is why it wanted to kill you. In any event, ghosts and criminals, they both are in the tower together. Lavender Town was evacuated a week ago due to this."

Edge rubbed his eyes. "You expect me to see Haunter and defeat it? With what? I cannot rely on my psyonics, they are too untamed."

"You are a Pokemon trainer, aren't you?"

"Yes but..."
"But?" Fredrick asked.

"I lost my Geodude to Haunter's Night Shade attack. I couldn't stop it."

"I'm sorry for your loss Feyera."

"It's my fault."

"No. Don't blame yourself. We're running out of time. You have the opportunity to make sure that your Pokemon's sacrifice was not made in vain."

"You…You really think so, Fredrick?"

"I know you can. You have the necessary gifts to do so."

"A gift?" Edge was able to lift his weak recovering body from the couch using his mind. The psychic strain was not nearly as bad as it had once been. Positive emotions feeding into each other made the motion effortless.

"Progenitor. Cipher and the Rockets must have a similar type of technology at their disposal. What if they tested it on you, in attempts to perfect it? However, it doesn't answer the question as to why they are even there in the first place! The Rockets constitute a terrorist organization; I wonder how they are able to get hold of this Progenitor Serum. Unless, someone from Cipher still had the formula…" Fredrick said.

"Looks like you have your work cut out for you then."

"I certainly do." Smiling softly, Fredrick pulled his hand from his pocket revealing a folded piece of papyrus. Unveiling it, he showed Edge the old chart. It seemed to be torn. He then removed a similar piece of parchment from a storage tube at the corner of his desk and connected the two on a table.

"This, this is a piece of work found in the headquarters of the Rocket base. It once belonged to belligerent of the Great War judging by the signature. R. Arcturus," he said, clearing his voice with a soft cough, "He left this valuable diagram. For the longest time, we figured it was a mere roadmap. We only had half of the document and believed that perhaps it detailed where he was stationing troops. Now with both pieces however, you can see that it is more than that."

Feyera looked at the map. He could clearly see Kanto's landmass, along with the southern islands. Then there was Johto to the west and Hoenn to the south as well. Certain parts of the map were circled with crimson lines. A few had crosses going through the circles as if to signify something. The closest one to them was east of Saffron City on the map, approximately where Lavender Town was situated. All of these circles were dwarfed by a large section of the map completely devoted to the islands south of Kanto. Here there were many markings and lines. A few bold arrows and scribbles signified that to the south something important was hidden.

Fredrick looked down at Feyera's intrigued face. "What do you think it looks like?"

"Treasure? A…treasure map? To what though?" asked Edge.

"Patience, my friend. According to this, it is not buried on land but at sea."

"Do you suspect it to be dangerous? I mean, we are talking about Arcturus the Destroyer right?" Edge wasn't sure where "the Destroyer" fit in, it seemed to be just made up on the spot. Yet there was still a strange familiarity with the surname. Psychometry, he thought.

"Feyera?"
"Yeah. Sorry. Just thinking out loud."

"You have a tendency to literally do that you know."

Edge sheepishly grinned, "I know. But back to the treasure."

"Of course. It is a dormant power, Mister Feyera. Something even Arcturus could not attain. His journal entries indicate that this hidden artifact—a philosopher's stone—would be revolutionary after development of firearms. Thankfully he never found it and was ineffective in his conquest to wrestle command over the nation of Kanto." Fredrick beamed, "I will be in touch with you if I make any leads on the connection between Cipher and the Rockets. I trust you can handle the mausoleum alone? You...do not...I mean, you no longer have fear do you?"

"I will face the fear," said Edge. This was only partially true. Although Edge did not have the sensation of restraining fear preventing him from completing actions, he still did question the unknown. Fredrick was still looking blankly at his progress.

"I'll find this artifact, don't you worry Mister Feyera," Fredrick trailed off as he discovered Edge was reading his mind.

Edge felt a huge surge of sensation and mental stimulus as his world became filled with glistening colors for a fraction of a second. He knew what Fredrick was looking for. He knew his thoughts exactly for that one moment.

*I can help you find it. The Mercury Relic.*

Edge had a history with this item, but he did not want to reveal too much to Fredrick.

Jaw hanging and face contorted, Fredrick wheezed, "Mister Feyera...please don't ever try to enter my mind again." Shaking involuntary he continued, "When you do...what you just did...it pains me. It feels like you are ripping out pieces of my mental essence."

Stunned, Edge could only gasp at what he had accidentally done.

*I-I'm... sorry. But when I project my thoughts and my feelings on to you, does that bring anguish? Like right now? I'm too weak to speak using my body so I need to resort to this in order to communicate. I hope that's alright with you.*

"There is a difference, Mister Feyera. I'm afraid I need to go." Now Fredrick seemed to be in a hurry to leave all of a sudden.

"I—wait..."

Fredrick shook his head. "We should both be heading out on our separate ways," Fredrick handed him a compact round communicator wrapped in a wad of Pokedollars with a rubber band. "Here. Take this, and head east towards Lavender Town. I'll be in touch." He nodded then walked out of the suddenly cold sunlit room.

"Wait. Fredrick. I didn't mean to..." But Fredrick had closed the door behind him already.

Edge sighed. What had he done? He didn't know mind prying was painful. He hardly knew anything about his psyonics. But he did know that he had a way to face Haunter.

*Thank you for saving me from myself.*
In Pitiful Silence

Chapter by Solar

Everything seemed so far away from him now that he was starting to regain fragments of memories. What was true and what was false? Where did the memories stop and the imagination begin? Fredrick wasn't all too clear on the details of his Hypnosis Procedure. Edge was mildly concerned. What if he was not actually dreaming at all. What if it was all real? No. How could someone have the endurance to undergo that operation? It just seemed impossible.

Some details were probably exaggerated, he told himself. He always had a creative side to him after all.

Still, solace was an elusive state of mind. Edge sought to find peace by walking around. Using his limbs without impotence was a pleasant surprise to say the least for the young trainer. He had the strange urge to explore Fredrick's apartment but thought better of it. After everything the International Police Agent had done for him, it would be discourteous to rummage through his personal life. Still, a part of Feyera wanted to find out more about Mister Irving.

Fredrick Irving was just mysterious enough. Judging from the conversations Edge had with him, Fredrick had lived a life involving loss. Edge could see it in his warm but weary eyes. He was strong, but unable to conceal the fact that he had suffered.

The truly amazing thing about Fredrick was that wanted to help Feyera out. Unprecedented kindness usually made Edge wary—he had grown cynical ever since his psyonic powers manifested—but there was a sort of trust he had for Fredrick. A natural feeling of security almost. This is why he felt so terrible about ripping into Fredrick's consciousness with his mind. He had brought pain to someone who genuinely cared about him. He hadn't done it on purpose, all he wanted to do was find out more about his savior.

And what had transpired? Fredrick ran off in search of the Mercury Relic. If only Edge had the courage to tell him everything about the Rockets. But he couldn't. Partially because he didn't know for sure, and partiality because he wasn't sure if he even wanted to know. He refused to admit to anything he was told by Rallsen, Archer, or Ein.

Edge looked around the rooms as he left, but saw no pictures of anyone. There were various paintings and murals of landscapes. Most of them were situated in coastal environments. Feyera saw one picture that reminded him of the beaches south of Pallet Town, but he couldn't be sure.

Although a nice apartment, Feyera couldn't imagine living here alone. It seemed like more of a residence than a home. It lacked any connection with the world below. Walking away from the wide window, Feyera continued to briefly survey the complex on his way outside.

There were no pictures of people meaning no family. Fredrick was a loner like him. As he walked up to the elevator they had come in together on, Edge brushed against a countertop covered in what appeared to be vials of medication. Still guilty about prying, Feyera decided against investigating further, and summoned the elevator with a swift tap. As the doors opened and Edge stepped inside, he spun around and took one last look at the lavish apartment. Smiling softly, he pressed the ground floor button and the doors shut. As the box slid down the shaft, he couldn't help but feel reinvigorated. He was making progress. He would find out who he was for sure in due time.

"Ding!" The doors opened and Feyera looked over at the security guard who nodded back at him.
He walked past the glass walls through the door and outside into the bright daylight.

He looked around at Celadon's upper part of town. Plenty of shops, but he hardly had the money to purchase a new wardrobe. Plus, it would probably be more expensive here than anywhere else in the city. He sighed and reached for his wallet feeling how light it had grown.

Once again Fredrick had been his saving grace. The man gave him about 5000 Pokedollars. It was rather generous all things considered.

He needed to at least replace his jeans and shirt. Maybe even pick up a jacket for the cooler nights. Edge went to a small local market at the base of a nearby apartment complex and walked inside to buy a few clothes and supplies.

Browsing through the selection made him uneasy. He had to buy something that would help to conceal his identity. Especially now that his eyes would subtlety glow on occasion. He tried on a pair of dark sunglasses, however upon looking in the nearby mirror; his eyes still shimmered through their angular lenses. This wasn't going to work well. He figured he'd pick them up regardless and keep them for later.

How would he blend in with the crowd? His thoughts raced with worry.

Finally, he settled on buying a thick black bomber jacket, to make him look less scrawny. His white button-up shirt was pretty beat so he decided to purchase a new one. The collar on the one he bought was looser, but the trainer didn't seem to mind. Finally, he bought a pair of jeans to complete his attire. He still had his black leather adventuring boots, they were quite possibly the best investment he had made to date. They might even outlive him. Amazingly, he still had money left over after purchasing new clothes although not much.

The young trainer then left the market district and headed east, back towards Lavender Town. As he left the city, he looked back at the apartment building he had stayed at one last time before walking under the canopy of trees along the road to Saffron. He took the path labeled "Without Saffron City Permits" and headed due south in order to go around the city walls. Then he released his starting Pokemon: Charmeleon.

A bright flash of light lit up the nearby area on the dirt road. Hey Brucie.

[Master! Is everything okay?] Charmeleon asked.

Yes, I'm fine. We're fine. Don't worry!

[How did you get away from that Rocket?]

Archer is not around anymore. Fredrick Irving of the International Police Division showed up in the nick of time and saved my life.

[Oh. Did you find out anything else about the casino?]

I…yes and no.

Brucie looked rather perplexed at his trainer's indecision. [Care to elaborate?]

There are a few things I was told while in the Rocket Headquarters. A lot of them I suspect to be propaganda. They are trying to manipulate me I would imagine…seeing as I am…well…different from most humans.
Charmeleon shook his small head, [And?]

Feyera brushed his hair back, Have you heard of Hypnosis?

[Isn’t it the Pokemon move that puts you to sleep?]

Yep. The very one. Fredrick had a Hypno which put me into a sleeping state to remember a little bit of my past!

[You trusted him to do that to you Chris!]

I…well yeah I did. It didn’t seem to be like a big deal at the time, but maybe his Charmeleon had a point. He could never be too careful around anyone.

[I just thought you had less credulity.]

I trust Fredrick. He saved me from Archer, Brucie. You weren’t there when he showed up. I was going to be killed if it weren’t for him and his timely intervention! You have to understand. After I got to know him a little better I found out that he actually cares about me. He gave me money and a communicator too.

[So where is he now? I would like to meet this hero of yours.]

He’s…uhh…he left. Feyera nervously fidgeted with his jacket’s zipper.

[Why?]

I did something which frightened him. I read his mind.

[You did what?]

I don’t know how I did it, but I was able to for a brief second see everything that his mind was focusing on. I ascertained that he was looking for an ancient artifact and realized that it was the Mercury Relic from the Pokemon Sanctum.

[And then he ran away from you?]

He felt pain. I didn’t know it would hurt him otherwise I wouldn’t have tried it. It was different from the type of communication being used now. It was one way, I tore out his thoughts. It was…frightening. I didn’t mean to do it. It just happened.

Charmeleon frowned. [That’s really too bad. Things haven’t been working out too well for you recently have they?]

No. But it could always be worse. I didn’t have a meltdown after all.

[Did you tell him about what you know about the Rockets? You were around when it happened after all. Like two years ago when they attacked you.]

The only proof I have is this from the Rockets. Feyera pointed at his chest shard. And besides, I’m sure that he has resources that will give him the details. I don’t even remember six months before or after the incident, so he can’t rely on me to give him crucial information.

[He might know more about the entire occasion than you, Chris. You should see if you can find out anything else.]
I'll try to. Feyera took out the communicator and clicked a small black knob to open the frequency. There was nothing but static from the other end. "Fredrick? Fredrick! It's Feyera, are you there?" Yet no voice responded to his call.

[He isn't picking up?]

No. He must be busy. Edge hoped that Fredrick wasn't ignoring him. But back to the Hypnosis Procedure.

[How did that work?]

I found out about some of my past through a dream-memory. Fredrick said it was a type of way to remember past events by sedating the creative side of dreams.

[Wow.] The Charmeleon opened his mouth in awe.

It wasn't a pleasant experience however. It would seem that my past has a few darker moments that were suppressed for a good reason.

[Such as?]

Progenitor. Some kind of grafting procedure Cipher had worked on. It allows me to see into the beyond by using my psyonics.

[The beyond?]

Feyera gritted his teeth. Ghost Pokemon.

[Like Haunter then?]

Exactly. Remember how you couldn't see where it was? I was watching it the whole time wondering why you weren't able to do anything. I should have known better. I shouldn't have expected you to be able to see what I was seeing.

[Chris, that's a Pokemon skill though. Dark types can see ghost Pokemon with impunity.]

Maybe it is. But the Rockets and Cipher figured out a way to graft it onto humans. I'm living proof of that aren't I? If they did this to me two years ago then who's to say how much the technology has improved since then?

[Chris, I doubt they're churning out individuals like you. They wouldn't have the resources to do that.]

Who knows? What if the Mercury Relic was key to finding a better way to graft? Ein seemed especially interested in it.

[Ein?]

Ein works for the Cipher organization according to Fredrick. They are...I mean they were stationed in Orre at one point. In any event, I heard his voice while in the Rocket Base on the other end of a computer terminal's audio feed.

Charmeleon played with his paws and rubbed his palms together. [That's a lot to take in at once. What's the play now?]

Feyera looked down at his first Pokemon. His eyes said everything. Feyera didn't even need to look
into those angular off-blue eyes. He could see the apprehension radiating off Brucie in chilly cyan waves. *We go east.*

Charmeleon gulped and nodded his head as the two continued eastward. They had made decent progress, traveling outside Saffron's City gated limits to the south. The golden-yellow city glow was comforting for it paved the way with light for Feyera and his Pokemon. The massive buildings beyond the gate spread light for miles. It was easy for Edge to travel on this road. It was always well maintained being so close to the city. With Vermillion Port to the south, the road couldn't afford not to be in good condition. Vermillion was Silph's gateway to the rest of the world.

However, night fell quickly as they reached the outer hills separating Saffron from Lavender. The mountainous region here was less maintained and soon the main paved road became a stone path and then finally a dirt mountain trail. The company climbed a few summits on their way. On the third peak, Edge decided to set up camp. This seemed like a suitable location. Far enough away from Saffron and in a good location providing him with a high vantage point. The elevation had begun to wear on his lungs and he found breathing to be more laborious. Tensely wandering his gaze about and surveying the surrounding hills, he thought about his flight from Lavender Town a few days ago. Funny how he was heading back there so soon. Humorous, yet dangerous.

Edge scavenged a few twigs and branches from the low brush in the mountainside. The wood was dry, excellent for making a fire. He stacked them up neatly in a flat section of the hilltop well off the main trail.

Glancing at his Charmeleon who had been with him most of the day he asked, *Would you mind staying out of the Poké Ball for tonight? I could use some company.* The trainer grinned, happy to have a friend he could ask.

*[Of course not,*] said the Charmeleon, already using his Ember to light a small stack of logs Edge had gathered for the campsite. The group was beyond the sight of Saffron's structures, yet could still see the faint orange glow to the northwest. It was much different compared to where he had been the previous night. He could hear very little if anything pertaining to civilianization. He thought he heard a train whistle from the north but shrugged it off and blamed his imagination.

The mountainside was relatively dark, but the campsite illuminated the rough mountain pass. Edge took out his sleeping bag from his knapsack and rolled it onto the rocky ground. He then took a small fleece blanket out and put it on the ground adjacent to him. His Pokemon, not much larger than two-thirds of his leg, cuddled up on top of the blanket and dipped his flame-lit tail into the gentle fire burning next to them. Feyera smiled at Brucie as he gently rested his body on the ground.

Trying to fall asleep, he kept on trying to lie on his belly but couldn't thanks to the shard in his chest. It was irritating him. He needed his rest and couldn't go to sleep. He attempted counting sheep but became bored after two-hundred and twelve. He tried looking up at the stars, but a small rock formation jetting out above him blocked most of his view. Tossing ceaselessly, he found comfort on his side as he curled up in his sleeping bag.

Eventually, he entered sleep, although it was quite a long and drawn-out struggle. His breathing slowed and his eyelids grew heavy. He folded his hands together with one arm on either side of the crescent protrusion.

He didn't know if he had just begun to dream or was already well along.

"*Funny how sometimes we are stuck in between.*" a voice said as if to answer his inquiry.
The walls around him radiated a warm golden hue. Everything was bright and vibrant. It was like a bright summer day, but without the irksome need to squint in the harsh light. He was in a long hallway, which stretched out into pure white as his eyes trailed down the rows of doors aligning either side. The hallway had no ceiling, only pure white fluffy clouds. Despite this, multiple brightly illuminated chandeliers hung in midair, not connected to any ceiling. As he walked along the path, along with his echoing footsteps, he heard voices. Gentle voices. They were coming from an outsized door on his left. Edge approached the solid bronze door. Peering between the bars bordering the frame of the door, an odd feeling rushed over him. He was being told something, yet could not discern what it was. The feeling was peculiar. It was as if a speaker of a different language he had never once heard, but paradoxically had once spoken was now addressing him directly.

As the images inside the door blurred, he found himself within the room. He looked around anxiously, unaware of how he suddenly had moved inside.

*It's only a dream, Feyera,* he thought pinching his wrist to be sure. No pain. Despite this, the dream felt real. It was experiencing this dream as reality which frightened him.

Candles lit the deep scarlet atmosphere. The air was thick and almost smoky. The walls were draped in heavy burgundy curtains. A fireplace glowed dimly in the corner with half-cooled embers. The marble mantle was riddled with photographs framed in teak wood. Some pictures he was in, but he had no idea regarding the locations they were taken. Others contained people he did not recognize. They were people whose eyes were translucent, faces obscured, and indefinable. However, he was perfectly visible in every single one of them. He knew it was him in those photographs. His green eyes and brownish-amber hair was a giveaway.

He picked up one of the photographs and held it in his hands. Oddly enough, as he looked down, the red shard normally protruding from his sternum was nowhere to be seen. He gasped in alarm and dropped the picture. *Am I in a memory?* He brought both hands to his sternum bone and touched the flat area. *What is this place?*

Looking to find the origin of the voices, he peered at the king sized bed on his right. There were two glasses of champagne still frothing on the bedside table. Next to the glasses, a churning veil of fog covered faces of another picture of Chris and a woman. Walking silently, Chris proceeded further into the dimly lit room, and made his way over to the side of the bed, holding a wooden spindle underneath the canopy for support. No one was inside.

"*Why did you have to leave me?*"

Feyera jumped. Startled, Edge turned around to face the voice.

There was nothing to be seen. *Hello? Who's there?*

"*You said we would never need to part each other...after everything I had given up for you, and you still betrayed my trust!*" the feminine voice was enraged.

*Wait...I don't know who you are!* Edge retorted.

"*You don't know or you don't want to know?*"

*Show yourself!* He demanded.

No answer, only the sound of tears.

*Please, just trust me...* He fell silent. The stillness of the dream grew.
"Hearing your silence…it screams of our goodbye. What have I done?"

If this is about…But Feyera stopped, suddenly unsure of what he was going to even say.

"H-h-how? How can you not remember anything? I thought for sure in time it would become apparent to you…what have I done? We were together…we were one. Wherever you went, I followed. W-we were inseparable…" the girl's voice trailed off. "And now how can I know that you'll ever come back?"

This is all a dream. My dream. Edge said, you are here and I do not know why.

He thought about his sight and how it allowed him to see Ghost Pokemon. You may be something from another person's distant memory. Give me your name and maybe I will remember you...

"You said that you would never forget…no matter how far our journey would take us. You promised me. Remember? You said yourself, 'a world cannot live without love and my world cannot love without you'. You were so sincere…so certain. That was what you said, wasn't it? No, that is what you meant. I know it. Surely, you were…with me. You still are with me, even if I cannot see you, I can still feel you. In silence, I am forced to hold on to the 'you and I' until you can rescue me," She longed for a way to express her desire for him to be with her, however something was holding her back. Something dreadful, Edge could tell.

"...I just cannot believe that...you would...you could...one...this was our home." Her speech suddenly had grown irregular.

Was this his house? How was this memory even possible? He needed to know if this was what she was referring to. He wanted her to let him know everything. He had to understand. Being left in the dark was killing him.

This room is in our home?

"No..." she said calmly.

The room began to fade away. First the pictures on the mantle, one by one. Then the curtains vanished leaving ghostly grey voids behind them. The windowless room was even darker without them. Looking down, Edge noticed a ruby-red carpet beneath him right before its threads grew fainter until they passed right out of existence. Nothing left behind but an ambiguous misty floor. Then he saw them. Two silvery heels adorned with crystal stood supporting a human figure in front of him with her back turned. Her white dress reached down to her thin ankles. Glancing up, she was almost as tall as he was. The light in the room faded as one by one the candles extinguished, extenuating her gracefulness. Edge saw the enormous bed phase out of existence from his eye peripherals.

But it did not matter. It did not bother him that the only object left in this dark void was the fireplace, still radiating a palpable heat on his face. The feminine body separated him from the dim source of radiance. He was positive the warmth came from the beauty standing beside him, rather than the waning ash. She turned around; face still shadowed from the light of the hearth behind her. Drawing closer, her perfectly slender body did not stumble as she slowly treaded the ghostly floor. Edge's heart fluttered skipping a beat. Embracing him, she said one word; the only word he would ever need to hear from her.

"Here."

He had the most blissful interaction, yet knew nothing of its origin. Was it a dream? A memory? Both? He couldn't be sure. As he awoke, he heard a soft tone.
"Chris, open your eyes."

The voice was not from his Charmeleon but rather from a faint, yet soothing whisper in his head.

It's you again isn't it? Edge assumed while his eyes opened.

Seeing clearly once again, the world had taken on a thick red hue, almost as if coated in velvet. He looked around at the comfortable setting. He was still in a dream of sorts, but maybe not a memory. His body was his own. His thoughts raced once more. He looked over at a sleeping Charmeleon. This was reality. An altered reality. His reality.

What happened? What did you do?

"I know that you forgot the sacrifice you made. And what you did. There are two sides to everything. I know that you'll be ready to face the truth soon enough."

Right, but that thing you did...how?

"That. That was something special. It took you some time to remember it, but I'm glad you did. I hope it gives you strength to keep up your journey. For if you succeed, I can assure you that that will not be the last time you experience such a feeling."

Edge thought. He would sacrifice nearly anything to be able to even feel the way he did for those few seconds once again. I can go to you right away.

"Help those that you promised you would aid. That is more important."

I thought you said that you needed me? Shouldn't I be in a hurry?

"I do need you to hurry. That is true. As the time goes by, I am faced with hardship. But you must not lose your integrity. Keep that part of yourself alive no matter what."

Edge was still very confused; I just want to aid the rest of the world. I can do that better by finding you in wherever you might be. If sacrificing a part of me allows for it then I will go through with it without blinking an eye. I want to help you.

She chuckled softly, "Your heart and your mind share a rhythm. But you already have sacrificed far too much. However, my world still remains shattered. I need you to come back as the one I care for; the one who was not afraid to face adversity and remain true to his word, even when his heart told him otherwise. I will endure. And I hope that you will too," the voice in his head continued speaking softly and sweetly.

Of course! He could feel his pressure rising just by thinking about her. I must, somehow. Just tell me how please! You have the answers. I know it!

"I do and I do not. Not everything is as it seems. If you are to come and find me, you will need to travel to Fuchsia City. What did she want you to do?...Ah yes the Gym Badges. That's what she desired? Very well. Obtain the badge in the city of Fuchsia by the Southern Sea. All will be explained in time. Please until then, be strong."

I will, you have no idea, how much pain I have been in recently, Edge was about to nervously run his hand along his feverish center.

"I can help you with that. That's a promise."
But how?

"Just always keep me in mind. I swear, when we meet all your burning desires will be quenched. I'm with you."

Hearing this, Edge perked up with excitement. I know you can do this, I have this feeling though. Were all of these memories reawakened by Fredrick's procedure?

The voice hummed softly before responding as if it were trying to encapsulate Edge's memories, "Tell me Chris, what will you do when they turn their backs on you declaring you to be a monster?"

Chris shook his head in confusion. I am no monster, he replied slightly frightened.

"You need to remember me, Chris Feyera. Seph...Remember who I am. But most importantly, remember who we are. I will do everything in my power to assist you. Alas, our time runs short. Beware of..."

"Feyera!"

The world lost its lustrous shine suddenly as the normal colors returned. The day had not come yet. In the morning air, Edge breathed in and out slowly.

"Feyera, come in, Feyera!" His communicator had Fredrick on the other line. Feyera stumbled to pick up the device in a stupor.

"Yes, I'm here," Edge said rubbing his eyes, "what's going on?"

"You're not going to believe this! I think I've found it. I really did," His voice was ripe with excitement. "It was here after all!"

"Be careful with the Reilken Mercurius!" Edge yelled at the communicator. "You don't know how dangerous it is! I..." Edge held off. He couldn't bring himself to talk about what the artifact may have done to him.

"I will...trust me on this, I'll...figure this out," Fredrick was grunting from the other side of the transmitter. "Go to Lavender Town, I've got things taken care of on my end, but I need your help; your psyonics can stop Cipher and the Rockets in their tracks. Don't worry about me! I'll—" suddenly there was interference on the other end of the communicator as static muffled out Fredrick's voice.

"Fredrick!" Edge yelled at the communicator, but there was no reply, only fuzzy static.

Darn it.

Edge had no idea what kind of twisted power that idol held, but it certainly wasn't good. What if Fredrick got hurt? He had his Pokemon but still what if what Agent Timothy Rallsen had said was true?

Looking at the valley below him, Edge knew that he could at least take on Cipher for Fredrick. Lavender Town would be saved from this cursed madness. He would be one step closer to fulfilling his objective. And as it turned out he would be closer to the path to Fuchsia City by going through Lavender Town. Why the Soul Badge though? It didn't make sense. He still wanted to continue collecting League Badges for the sake of earning them, but now this dream girl had added in a new dimension to his quest. She was in need of his help. So were the people of Lavender Town.
If he could only figure out how he played a role in all of these events before it was too late. He wanted to save her more than anything else. She was…a part of his very existence.

"Forging a bond that cannot be broken and will go on continually into eternity.

This bond is illuminated here.

When souls connect, they only leave fragments of distant half-fulfilled memories in their wake."

I once found myself disabled by fears concerning which course to take.

And now, I see the wheels inside of my head are turning, slowly, silently.

I now find my faith deserting me… I pray that she's still alive…She…she must be real.

"Now your pictures that you left behind

Are just memories of a different life

Some that made us laugh, some that made us cry

One that made you have to say goodbye"
**Predestined Search**

Chapter by **Solar**

*I need to find her. Just who is she?* Feyera was still in a slight trance. His feelings ran ahead. He was completely enthralled by the figure he had met in the dream. She was real. She had to be. It was only a matter of time before her identity was revealed. As he dwelled on her, there was an overwhelming sense of upcoming catharsis. How else would he have heard her voice outside of the dream? It couldn't have just been a memory. He refused to allow himself to think that it was merely remembrance. He wished it would all make sense somehow. He just had to figure out how the origin of these memories forged into reality. But to get there, Edge needed to know where she was from. He had only encountered her after Fredrick's Hypnosis procedure. Did that mean that she was a part of him? Some distant memory?

Edge was also quite fearful of his past. Looking back at the Progenitor procedure, he wasn't sure if he could handle another terrifying memory. It was different to go into the past to relive it. Many people take for granted that memories are simply memories that remain caged in the past. This was not true in Edge's case. For Feyera was experiencing these events over again. They were even more traumatic because he had no idea what they related to; amnesia after the Sanctum Robbery had tarnished his ability to piece together past events. Did something happen after the Robbery itself? Had the Rockets and their Cipher associates captured him in order to conduct their sadistic experiments?

Speaking of the Progenitor EX, now that he could see into the beyond, he was unsure whether or not the figure from his dream was real or a phantom. If she was a part of his past, what would help him to tell the difference between what was real and what was memory? Edge longed for a perfect opportunity to find out if the memory was a part of him...or something more. For he had heard her voice upon waking, although it could have still been a part of the dream. He was only sure that he was fully conscious when Fredrick had radioed in to tell him about Reilken Mercurius.

With Fredrick hunting down the Reilken Mercurius or the Mercury Relic, Edge could not foresee a way out of his current predicament. Edge had obvious connections to Team Rocket, and yet Fredrick was completely oblivious to this crucial fact as far as he knew.

Edge worrisomely grasped his knapsack to fold his sleeping bag into. He scratched his head after stuffing his thick down cocoon into the lightweight bag. It would only be a matter of time before the truth surfaced. How else would Edge had known about Reilken Mercurius? Sure, he had read Fredrick's mind, but didn't he also say that he knew about the artifact already? He could see Fredrick trying to put the pieces together. But that was if and only if Fredrick was in fact safe. From the most recent transmission, nothing was certain.

Fredrick knew how to handle himself. Feyera was sure of that. The International Police Agent had skill and Pokemon. Now he also had a RAIL rifle at his disposal. Would that grossly powerful device even be able to help him confront whatever guarded what Arcturus had been pursuing for the latter half of the Great War? And what if the Rockets were already stationed there in the southern isles?

It seemed odd that his connection with Reilken Mercurius was valued by Ein. He had no clue where the artifact was. Nor had he ever laid eyes on it before. At least if he had, then there was no way for him to remember what it looked like. He couldn't remember anything about the Pokemon Sanctum, but he knew that was where it was stolen from two years ago. According to Fredrick though, the original location of the artifact was on an island south of Kanto's main landmass. Why was it in
multiple locations? Was there more than one Reilken Mercurius? Did it move? How did it find its way back there?

These questions pounded his head almost as vigorously as the figure he had encountered in his dream. Who did she remind him of? She was familiar, yet he couldn't match a name nor a face to her voice.

Fine then. If his sense of hearing wasn't going to provide answers then perhaps sight would be more useful. Chris was an observant male after all. Her body. Who else looked like her? He thought for a few minutes. Some nearby birds chirped as he contemplated. He sighed. The three tiny birds flew off startled. No one he could remember. He realized that during the encounter he was more focused on experience rather than details. Sensory input was heightened, yet his sense of the external was paradoxically diminished. The more he thought about the phenomenon, the more it was dragged away from him.

_Damn it_, Edge swore. He was still in the dark. How he hated the sensation of not knowing anything.

Could he try and use his psyonics to read her mind next time they encountered? No. That would not be appropriate. He wouldn't want to hurt her. Recalling the process of mind melding, Fredrick experienced pain when Edge had delved into his mind. Clearly, this entanglement was not one to take lightly. It was all weighing on him at once. Would there even be a next time for him to encounter her? Feyera imagined himself trying to put himself to sleep over and over until she reappeared. He then realized the foolishness of this half-thought-out idea. If he wanted to see her he'd have to do as she instructed.

Gathering his items and gear, he set out to continue east, for it was only a few more miles until Lavender Town would appear within his sight. The menacing storm clouds rolling in from the east and the ocean seemed to be a natural deterrent, but the determined trainer progressed ever further on his quest. Unwavering faith in the promise of answers gave him strength to move forward.

He felt a slight tug on his jeans. [Are you okay master?] As he had begun walking down the mountain path, he was completely oblivious to Brucie following at his side.

Nervously he ran his hand against the back of his neck absorbing a few droplets of sweat that had formed from his anxiety. _I'm fine. We're running out of time though. I have to get to Lavender Town soon._

[Lavender…] The fire lizard solemnly looked ahead in the direction of the evacuated town, [It isn't too far ahead, but those clouds up ahead look awful.]

His Pokemon was right, the grey clouds were beginning to buckle and merge, becoming blacker and loftier with each minute.

_I won't keep you out of the Poké Ball, don't worry. Rain won't be good for you. You can rest._

[How about you have Desperado accompany you?]

_Not a bad idea._ He reached for her Poké Ball and released her with a brilliant flash of light.

The light formed into an eleven foot-long blue sea serpent. She let out a victorious roar and arched her head back to stretch. [Well howdy there, Edgie. Got something you need me to do?] She had not been summoned since the battle with Rocket General Archer's Kangaskhan.

_Actually I was hoping you could give me some company._
She giggled softly. It was strange when she did that. She looked so ferocious, but her voice was always sweet and endearing proving that looks can be deceiving.

[Well, do ya want me to ferry you 'round or something? Or how 'bout a game?]

Des, I don't have time for fun and games. He looked at her and then back to the rainclouds. We've got a mission.

[Whoa, hey now pardner. Don'tcha think you owe me a tiddy bit of information? You can't expect this 'ol rodeo star to be jumpin' on the first wagon headin' outta town!]

Fine Des, if you insist. I owe you all an explanation. "July go!" Edge said as he released his third and final Pokemon. Gloom stared at him eagerly anticipating whatever was to come. He looked at his Pokemon maintaining a stoic expression all the while. What a difference it was addressing them now. He remembered when Desperado was still a frail little Magikarp struggling to keep up with the rest of the pack. He remembered how July as an Oddish nearly tackled his weakened body on the cape north of Cerulean City. And Brucie. He remembered Brucie best of all as his very first Pokemon friend. As strange as that sounds, for Feyera this was monumental—a revelation even. Pokemon could be friendly. These were his friends now. He had to let them know what was going on in his life. As their trainer, their respective fates were bound to his.

Okay. No judging me.

Des let out a soft chuckle, ['course mister.]

Feyera combed his hair back with his narrow fingers. Okay. He took in a deep breath and exhaled, somewhat unsure of how to describe this. Pausing, he figured that he should just come clean and reveal everything. Last night I had a dream. I met someone. Someone I once knew but forgot. She was familiar to me somehow. At least I think she was. At the very least, she knew who I was. We...Feyera couldn't find the words to describe the hug in the dream. It wasn't just physical. It was everything. How could he even hope to convey it in words? He rotated the ball of his foot in the dirt upon which he stood. He then drew a small line with his boot heel nervously.

Umm...we...we..."ah" She told me to meet her in Fuchsia City after earning the Soul Badge from the Pokemon Gym there when I woke up. She asked me to keep my promise and defeat Haunter as well. The important thing is...she was able to tell me these things, talk to me, in my head while I was conscious.

There was brief silence yearning to be shattered. [You gotta be kidding me, Chris,] said his Charmeleon. July and Des looked just as distraught. Their tranquil faces continued to listen to Edge's telepathic projections in conjecture.

I know it sounds crazy but...

Des swiftly cut him off, [I think crazy is putting it mildly, m'dear.]

[Since when have you been so influenced by dreams?] July responded complacently but worried.

I gotta admit. Now that I'm trying to explain it I do feel a tiny bit insane. But you have to believe what I'm saying. This is the closest I've come as far as understanding why I have these psyonic powers. She has the answers. I sincerely believe she does. I feel it.

Brucie looked up at him, [Weren't you a researcher? Numbers, figures, all that stuff...isn't that what you look for? Real hard evidence is a lot different from dreams and apparitions only you can see. All this seems kinda like something you've taken up on a whim, Chris. And that has me worried for
Brucie…You know that Haunter is real. The ex-Pokemon researcher dipped his head and gazed down at his chest wound. He killed Jill.

[WHAT?] yelled Desperado.

She saved me…she saved us.

[I know Haunter is real! I saw his corporeal presence when he possessed and animated that corpse in the Pokemon Tower. Not only that, but I trust you, Chris!] Brucie shook his head, [Why didn't you tell us? I figured something was wrong!]

I—I'm sorry, I didn't know how to say it, Chris admitted to his Pokemon.

[Take it easy,] Brucie said to Desperado.

But the Pokemon was already very angry at her trainer. [Take it easy? TAKE IT EASY? Lumpy is dead, Brucie!] she shouted and roared thrashing into some nearby bushes.

[It won't bring her back though.]

Brucie, she has every right to be angry. I am too. I saw Jill die. I saw the ghost menace use Night Shade. I saw her last act of valor. She used Rock Throw but it wasn't enough…she could not see.

Des nodded and began to sniffle. For a Gyarados her rage had subsided quite quickly.

Brucie finally broke the silence, [What I want to know is whether or not you think this voice in your head is a good thing?]

Edge hadn't given it much thought. Of course she was a good thing. She could be nothing but. Anything that was able to make him feel that way, that secure, had to be right.

Brucie clenched his teeth almost afraid to tell Feyera what was on his mind. Eventually he worked up the courage to speak, [Have you ever thought about it? I just remember you being in a similar state of peculiar behavior before we went to Lavender Town. The Rock Tunnel pass was a prime example of you losing your composure without even having a meltdown. I don't forget those things, boss. You were frightened and went straight into Haunter's clutches. You…don't think you're being manipulated do you?]

No.

Although the thought did scare him, he used most of his mental will to suppress such fear from being made apparent to his Pokemon companions.

Des looked over at Brucie with a frown as the Charmeleon continued, [What if it was Haunter? It wants you dead remember? Could it be infiltrating your dreams? Is that even a possibility for you to consider? Or are you too sure of everything to even question anymore!]

Edge crossed his arms, underneath the shard. Brucie, I know you're worried. But you cannot be so cynical!

The fire lizard spat an ember on the dirt road causing Feyera to recoil. [Cynical? That monster killed you.]
one of us! It killed Jill! Our friend and partner. I don't know how you made it out of the Pokemon Tower alive the first time, but I'm willing to bet that Haunter will be ready for you this go around!]

The Pokemon trainer remained quiet and allowed his friend to continue. He could see the anguish and frustration being released in hues of violet intertwined with scarlet. The waves of color evaporated off his Pokemon. Feyera blinked a few times, before the bizarre colors dissipated.

[You might not get lucky this time.] Brucie sighed, [Haunter will be expecting you. And Jill isn't going to save you again now that she…she's *sniff* dead.] This must have been especially taxing for Brucie considering he had witnessed the early death of Feyera's Pidgey, Lawrence.

Des looked at Edge before speaking, [If I may chime in, I have a feeling that it won't just be Haunter waitin' for us up there in that accursed tower of terror. We're likely to not only be outmatched, but also outnumbered. Now that there's a hand I'd fold personally.]

[Odds are we won't be able to surprise them either,] said July.

Edge frowned and continued to brush his boots in the dirt while looking down. What advantage did he have? His dedication? No, that had gotten him into trouble far too many times in the past. He did have a different motivator however. Rather than seeking self-preservation, he was operation under the presumption of progress. He was oriented towards a goal—to find the woman in his dreams. This welcome change gave him confidence to face things like Haunter. For if it were up to him alone, he would be right there with his Pokemon disagreeing with the notion to travel back to the Pokemon Tower. But it wasn't only about him anymore. He had gotten a new lease on life. And he had gotten it through a dream of all places too. It's crucial that I do this, everyone.

[And if we don't follow you?] asked July. Des and Brucie looked at the Gloom in shock. How could she say such a thing? True, she was the newest addition to the team, but when a Pokemon turns its back on a trainer then all is lost. They all had their doubts in Feyera. Even he doubted himself. But in the end they would always continue to work together as a team. Until now.

This was the response Feyera dreaded to hear. He clenched a fist with his hand and stomped on the dirt with his foot. When the small plume of dust settled he had his answer. If you don't follow then I'll go alone. There is no way to stop me. I'm going to do as she instructed…or die trying. It's that imperative.

[So you are really passionate about getting to her.] July responded rhetorically. [You want to save the girl from your dreams, even if it means your death?]

Yes, he immediately responded without hesitation.

[I…I believe you Feyera.] Gloom nodded, her flower bud bobbed as she did so, [I just wanted to make sure you were still you. You have changed a lot since I first met you, but your perseverance has been the character trait which has endured through all hardship. The trainer I met on Cerulean Cape wouldn't have ever backed down. That's how you captured me. I was drawn to your willingness to stand up and fight even when you were on death's doorstep. Glad to see that still is part of your character.]

This isn't just about me though. We all lost someone dear to us in the Pokemon Tower. Jill will never be forgotten. To preserve her legacy, we need to make Haunter pay. I'm ready to do that now. I have the required skills; I always have, but now I am able to use them. I hope you will all join me.

The Pokemon all looked at him. Their various heights made their glances and thoughts come from different directions but it was a unanimous [Yes.] Through difference, they found unity.
Des growled, [I can't say I'm too fond of you chasin' after some phantom girl, Edgie. But I will say this. There's one phantom out there with a ticker over its head. The one who killed our Jill. If ya know how to get us to Haunter, I'll be sure to take care of the rest. That's a promise, pardner.]

*I'll make sure we get revenge in her name, Desperado.*

Brucie stared at the female Gyarados and Feyera. They were getting along for now which was good. He jumped in between them grinning, [Say, if there's anything left after you two monsters tear it asunder, you let me know and I'll be sure to pay my respects as well!]

[I'm on your side, Edge.] July was brushing her lengthy orangey-green leafs against his upper calf. [I didn't mean what I said about leaving you. I just had to be sure we didn't lose you.]

*I know. But even if you did, I'm glad you changed your mind.* Edge puffed out a sigh of relief and turned back to face the storm clouds. Are you ready guys?

[Yep,] answered July.

[Right on!] said Brucie.

"I will tear and claw, and bite and slash, and spit my last breath Haunter's vile face," Feyera yelled, his telepathy intertwining with spoke word. "And as long as you are all with me, as long as we stand together as one, you will do the same, is that clear?"

[It is. We'll get him,] Brucie said clenching his fist.

[I'll roll him right outa town, Edgie!] roared Desperado.

[Whatever it takes, you're in charge,] July said with a stern gaze.

Thanks everyone. Feyera smiled, Let's do this.

[For Jill!] they all said in unison.

The four of them journeyed east. The daylight was soon sapped out of the sky by the impending storm. Grey shadows replaced the bright sun. The dark black clouds covered what looked like Lavender Town in the distance. The wind picked up and blew the trainer's hair, his Charmeleon's tail, his Gyarados' barbels, and his Gloom's petals. As the wind whistled through the tree canopies above on the sides of the small dirt path leading to Lavender, Feyera felt paranormally cold once more. It was as he had felt before entering Rock Tunnel all over again. But this time he was prepared for what lay ahead. He knew he could counter Haunter.

He saw the heavens being split open above him by a loud crackle of lightning. Biting his lower lip and tightening his jacket around his neck he awaited the thunder's sound waves to reach him. They did in a moment. That meant the storm was very close. *We'll reconvene when I make it to Lavender. I don't want to put you through this storm. It's gonna be a nasty one and you gotta keep your strength.*

[Okay.]

[Yes siree.] Brucie and Des answered happy to be put into the protective Poké Ball. One was fearful of rain, and the other feared electricity. July on the other hand, didn't mind either, but the rain significantly
slowed her down. Her root feet would become more invested in absorbing rainwater from the wet ground than allowing for expedient travel. For this reason, Edge withdrew her as well.

As soon as he strapped the three Poké Balls to his belt the rain stung his face. Lightning filled the sky, brightly illuminating the world in a flash. Then blackness. Everything disappeared. The dramatic change in environment made Feyera more uneasy. His golden halo rimmed eyes couldn't quite follow the rapid change in luminescence.

We need to keep our faith. It is imperative.

Not speaking to anyone in particular, Edge headed further east towards the dreadful Pokemon Tower. The clouds which poured rain down upon his weary face were dark and thick like miasma. The rain was coming down in sheets. Despite the vile downpour, Edge knew he had a mission to fulfill. His eyes had been altered and that is why he saw things others couldn't. He now saw all too clear; he had the ability to use this gift for some good. His irises flashed a glowing red as he attempted to scan through the dark storm. The world closed around him like an envelope when he tried to stare off into the distance. A landmark would be especially useful right about now. Blankets of rainwater cut his vision to a mere fraction of what he was used to.

This is not normal. The thunder's sound waves shook his very weak body frame as he continued to unwarily project his thoughts. This is not normal at all.

He looked up over the tree canopies as another howl of thunder shook the world. Above with an exploding spark he saw a massive figure in the sky. It looked like an enormous bird of prey. He heard its cry mix with the thunder that followed the burst of light. Zapdos. It was psychometry. Being present here in this storm gave way to knowledge of its creator: a legendary Pokemon—the Thunderbird itself. He knew without even a second thought. This pitch-black sky. The rolling thunder. The dark orange hue of it all. He was not alone. Zapdos' conjured storm pulled at the very fabric of nature.

Feyera was far outside of Saffron's City's gated limits. There was no help out here. Just him and his Pokemon. Edge found himself unusually vulnerable. As he continued to make haste in the storm, he analyzed his feelings to take his mind off the physical hardship brought on by the cold rainwater.

No, he was not afraid. Fear involved a paralyzing component. Something that locks you into place, and prevents movement. He knew the feeling all too well. No, this was different. It was more like the sensation after fear has been acknowledged. He was running at his fear now. Charging it. And now his already frail body was taking additional abuse from the thunderstorm. When would his body finally give out? There was that steady creeping mortality, the thought which racks the brain with feelings of pitiful worthlessness and inadequacy.

I could be dead, but I'm not. Why then? How he desperately wished to hear that soothing voice respond to his telepathic pleas. What happened two years ago?

The thunder above him caused the earth to tremble beneath his feet, and he began to sway as he ran forward. The sound of the crackling heavens made him shiver as his mind rushed on ahead to try and discern their origin. North? East? He could not tell. The black sky was churning with ominous thunderclouds shedding light periodically with their cacophony inducing light. Direction was impossible to determine in this world swathed with rain and darkness. The best thing to do would be to run in one trajectory and hope he was still heading in Lavender's direction.

Suddenly an overwhelming sensation of fright took over. He realized just how saturated in the cold rain he was. For a while, sensations such as these did not make themselves known to the young trainer. What was wrong with him? He was drenched! He couldn't survive this! Why was he running
still? He needed to find shelter from this storm!

*I cannot die here. I have to fight…I need to help my friend, Fredrick…but more importantly…*

His thoughts scattered about as he began to visualize her. He was obsessed. He knew it. His psyonic powers were only a part of the emotional drive he felt now. This was something necessary that he needed to do. There was no way not to focus on her.

He ran under a thick tree coated in moss at its sturdy base, its broad leaves caught some of the downpour giving the shivering man some comfort. He sat his bottom on some of the tree's exposed roots, and curled his legs up to his chest, wrapping his arms around them. He shivered from the cold dampness. Those extremities of his needed to warm up fast. His new black bomber jacket had kept his torso dry, but he was cold and wet everywhere else. He intertwined his fingers with each other playfully as he squat.

His mind continued to race. He longed for clear remembrance. A pure memory.

How long until the storm passed? He knew Zapdos was in need of roosting eventually. The sheer amount of energy required to generate this type of power would have to ultimately be found elsewhere. Feyera's gaze wandered up to the stormy heavens. He felt the electric bird's distraught as it head further east on its broad wings. Soon the sudden storm would be quelled. How did he know this to be so? Could it be possible that he was reading the mind of Zapdos as it flew off into the distance?

Soon, I will find her. Twitching, he remembered the haunting warning of his dreams to find her quickly.

Blood ran down his cheeks and mixed with the rain as it splashed against the muddy soil. He was somewhat oblivious to the fact that his body was slowly destroying itself. He knew something was wrong though. Looking down at the red-stained dirt, Edge continued to hold his head in despair. Maybe he had survived today, but what about tomorrow? The uncertainty of his own future was exacerbated by his own self-destruction.

Gasping for air despite the rich air accompanying the storm's recent passing, Edge sat upright. His nostrils flared as his lungs greedily took in the crisp air.

From his perched position he could see that the sky was a brilliant dark orange. Standing up, he left the cover of the tree, and began to continue on towards the familiar valley setting, only to find himself once more in the rain which had suddenly resumed. It had slowed down significantly, but returned as if to greet and suppress him.

He growled and muttered an obscenity. Things just weren't working out. He needed to think about something else before despair and depression set in. He used his arm to move his slick wet hair from his visual range.

Turning his thoughts away from the storm's cruelty, he could not help but reminisce on the dream. Edge sought to find his destiny…he could not even begin to describe her. Nevertheless, it was overpowering. Whatever it was, he was content if that were his sole reason for existence. And it was beyond exhilarating.

Once again, Edge had been thinking about her. He was obsessing. He was controlled by the very thought of the two of them being together outside of his dream.

These thoughts were consuming him. He lost sight of where he was going and fell into a mud-
spattered puddle left by some huge creature's hooves. He did not care though. His heart was racing. The wind was howling and the sky was a warm crimson mixed with thick orange. Edge felt as if his emotions moved beyond his body. He was ready to allow them to consume him entirely. Whatever they aimed to do, it had to be good. The breaths he took shortened. The visual field in front of him blurred. He could almost picture her, standing there right in front of him. In arm's reach, her elusive form moved beyond his tethers of recollection. But he was determined to recognize her. He channeled all mental energy into the annexes of his mind to recall her from the dream-state. In this recollection, his vision became clear again despite the pouring rain. Suddenly an image formed in front of him, bright and translucent. He was low to the ground, so he needed to look up. Once he did, the radiant white luster beamed through the darkness of the passing storm, like a lighthouse beacon would for a lost ship. She was there. Right there in front of him.

And then nothing.

Edge wailed in pain, holding his chest. NO! He crooked his back and bent his head down to look at the mud beneath him. What...how is she gone? He felt like he had lost her completely in the torrential rain. His memory had failed him yet again. But he had just come so close. He punched the earth softly with a loose fist.

Lifting himself from the earth, he grasped the ground and felt his palm against the uneven mud as he rose. The sky was now less threatening and the storm had completely subsided. He was close to Lavender Town. The sun was setting the trees on the other side on fire against the dark clouds providing a spectacular scene for the suffering man.

In a fit of depressed loneliness, Edge released Brucie from the Poké Ball.

The Pokemon looked at his trainer completely drenched by the deluge of rain. He sighed, [Master... I...]

However, the Charmeleon stopped when looking into his partner's solemn green eyes coated with a shield-like scarlet aura. It meant Feyera was using some type of psyonic power. Though to them both, it was uncertain what type of power it was.

We will win this time, Brucie. There's no reason to fear. I have a vision of us getting through this.

[How though? You can't see the future.]

Feyera smiled. Of course he couldn't see the future. At best he could only extrapolate what might happen based on people's emotions. But his Pokemon didn't know that. He figured he'd use this as a morale booster. I see our success, Brucie.

[You...see?]

Edge nodded his head in acknowledgment. We're going to win. We have the will to do so. And when we oust Haunter...

Edge smiled, gripping his chest shard ever tightly, feeling the agony. He felt his fingernails digging into the projection, unleashing a myriad of sensations. Most of them were unpleasant. However there was one which trumped pain and discomfort. It was a profound sense of connection to what he was. It hurt and it soothed. This was all a part of him. His burden. His gift. Looking at the shard from an angle, its glossy and reflective qualities revealed his glowing eyes.

...I'll obliterate him. He cannot escape. I see everything. His eyes suddenly lost their glowing crimson characteristic. He pinched his nose bridge as ocular tenderness surprised him.
The dusk was dark and ominous. The trainer's lustrous center shard and his Pokemon's flame tail brought the only light into a deserted Lavender Town.
Chapter Summary

Feyera finally faces off with the menacing ghost of Lavender Town. He knows what to expect, but what is to be found atop the dark annexes of the Pokemon Tower remains a mystery.

Feyera grasped the base of his jaw and rubbed it with a bruised hand from falling over in the thunderstorm that had recently passed. He felt the silken smoothness of his skin. It had been a while since he had grown any facial hair. As far as he could remember, it never really grew in. He never had to shave. While this gave him a perpetually young face, his Pokemon journey was beginning to wear that face out. It was all the traveling. And the powers. It was the stress. He did little to alleviate the stress.

Especially now that he stood outside the base of the Pokemon Tower in Lavender for the second time. The night was dark and starless because of the passing storm clouds. This reminded him of the first time he had been here. Back then he didn't know that Lavender was vacated. He fell right into Haunter's trap. Jill paid the price for his mistakes.

If it weren't for his psyonic powers saving him at the last minute, his fate would have been sealed. Haunter—the ghost inhabiting the Pokemon Tower—wanted him dead. This chaotic entity was somehow connected to a group of Team Rocket operatives which had entered the tower. What were their ambitions? Feyera had no idea. He wasn't sure if he even wanted to know. If the two were working in tandem, that could mean nothing but trouble.

He turned to his Pokemon and lowered his head to meet his gaze. The fire lizard looked up at his trainer. His solemn expression was concealing his anxiety.

[I have your back, Chris. I hope that the battle is won, but I will need your help.] Brucie, Feyera's Charmeleon replied over their telepathic bond.

Edge was taken aback by this honest comment by his partner. Usually the Pokemon was more upbeat, but he seemed calm and at peace. Perhaps it was in preparation of what was to come.

I'll show you the way. Progenitor will show me, and I will communicate to you via telepathy.

[We should have a failsafe in case something goes amiss like last time.] Brucie said.

You have a good point. Hmmmm. If our bond is severed or fails for whatever reason, I will point my left hand in the direction of the threat. If I stop issuing orders, then look to where I am pointing at with this hand.

[Will do, boss.] Brucie smiled.

The pair made it to the iron gate surrounding the Pokemon Tower. Its rusted visage was ripe with decaying ivy clinging to the various knots and turns in the metal. Together the two became one gate. Feyera began to push the gate open, recalling how Jill had assisted him with this task the last time he
was here. She wouldn't be able to see him now, but perhaps if there was an afterlife... he could make her proud.

[Chris? If the girl in your dreams turns out to be one and the same with Haunter, what will you do? You cannot go into another meltdown. I've been observant; I know what they do to you. They destroy you.]

Obviously, Charmeleon had no idea what these dreams and memories did to him. Perhaps they were even more dangerous to him than the Rockets themselves. The silent reflection proved demoralizing and soon Edge was trying to halt his thoughts from going in that direction.

*I'll accept it, if I have to.* Maybe it was too good to be true. But then again, maybe this brief doubt was unwarranted. *Whatever awaits us within there, we have to work together to defeat it. That means me too. Even if I'm your trainer; I can't be getting out of line.*

[Happy to hear that,] Brucie said as they entered the ground floor of the tower. It was pitch black inside. It was eerily still. Unlike like last time, Feyera felt nothing drawing him in. He had his own volition. He was here for her. He was here to keep the promise he made to protect others. The wooden floorboards creaked as the light trainer deftly walked towards the first set of stairs. The wood was beginning to rot, something he had not noticed the last time he was here.

There was one familiar aspect. The stench. It had only worsened if that was even possible. For the bodies of several Pokemon graves laid littered about. It sent a chill down Edge's spine. Was this Team Rocket's doing? Why?

He heard something snap behind him and jumped. Both he and Charmeleon wheeled around to face nothing but murky stillness.

Yet the temperature dropped slightly. Far too little for most people to notice, but not Edge. He felt it, and then he saw. Following this slight drop in temperature, a haze of red gas appeared at least to Edge and pointed the way to the malevolent spirit's essence. *Gastly!* Exclaimed Feyera before the blob lobbed its way over to them.

Charmeleon sprinted towards where Edge's telepathy guided, and unleashed a searing blast of Flamethrower. The thick yellow-white flame engulfed the shrouded ghost, and turned the flame red as it made contact. In two seconds the spirit had dissipated. But the bright flash of light from Brucie's attack might draw unwanted attention in this dark tower. *Brucie, we'll have to be more careful as we climb higher. I don't want Haunter to know we're here until I can see him. The only effective attacks you can use against Ghost types are your Fire type moves, but they generate light. Not the best strategy for this dark place. We'll stick out like a sore thumb.*

[That's fine, but then how can we dispatch these spirits?]

Edge smirking replied, *I think I have just the right gal for the job.*

Releasing Desperado, his Gyarados, there was another flash of light. Once the brightness had dissipated, he could see her from the pale light given off by his Charmeleon's tail. It had been awhile since he had seen those brilliant sparkling fangs.

She looked like she was about to roar, and Edge quickly projected, *No! Keep it down girl. Shhh. Stealth. Remember?*

[D'awww, I was jus' kiddin' around, Edgie. I won't make a peep—don't you worry. Unless of course we find Haunter.] She winked, [Then all bets are off sweetie.]
When that happens, I expect you to wake up half of Saffron. In Jill's name of course.

She closed her mouth and smiled with her large lips, [Of course, dearie. She'd want nothin' but.]

We have to work together. I don't want to have to use complete synchronization unless absolutely necessary, so please tolerate my distant telepathy if you can.

[But when push comes to shove, don't leave us in the dark.] said Brucie.

Don't worry. I won't. Remember what I told you outside of Lavender Town. I know what will happen. He didn't. It scared him.

The Charmeleon nodded, now covering the roll of lantern for Edge and his Gyarados as they progressed further up into the Pokemon Tower's reaches.

Desperado coiled around eager to fight [Hey, even if ya think ya got this all figured out, we are still here for you. We've preserved in the past and when we're pushed up against a wall…well, we'll just do it again! Never be forgettin' that, Master. Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway.]

Edge earnestly bobbed his head in agreement. Alright. No mercy. Let's go team!

On the next floor, a similar phenomenon took place. The air chilled slightly and a red blob appeared adjacent to the next stairwell. In the low light, the small blob of red gas—a concealed Gastly—slowly approached. It figured that it was unseen. Not to Edge's eyes though. That Progenitor Procedure may have been a painful memory, but it sure came in handy.

As the ghost Pokemon drew close, Feyera ordered: Des, there! Now, Bite Attack. The thick, black-coated fangs chomped down on the gaseous phantom, scattering its aeriform components about. Feyera and company had just learned something very important: they could deceive the ghosts. A prompt well-aimed bite attack from Gyarados' huge maw solved any encounters with Gastly.

Before, Desperado had no idea where to aim such an attack. Now with Edge's sight and mind connections, there was little effort put forth into such endeavors. They worked as a perfect team, combining sheer strength with flawless precision. If only he could link himself with his Pokemon once more. The feeling was amazing. He wanted to be able to do it without consequence, but the trainer knew better. He would lose more than he gained by exploiting this power. It was far too uncontrollable, much like the small gravity wells he could generate when his life was in danger. He needed to find a way to curb such vicious tendencies. Providentially, the female he had encountered in his dreams, memories, and telepathy seemed to possess answers for him on how do so. It was all just a matter of surviving until that lovely catharsis could be reached.

The team climbed up to the fourth floor of the Pokemon Tower. Here, they found a disturbing sight. It was one thing to smell the rotting remains. But seeing them was different. The remains of Pokemon were dug up from their resting places and scattered about the floor. Their graves dishonored by the Rockets and Cipher. Edge felt an overwhelming sense of primal rage, as if he had been wronged somehow. He was angry about his late partner Jill, but this rage was different. It took him onto another scale of emotional turmoil, one much higher than he was accustomed to unless he was exploiting his power in its crudest form.

Sensing this angst, Desperado decided to speak with her young trainer. [Listen, Edge, I don't mean to disrespect or nothin' but this is real bad. These Rockets, they…they…done gone defiled all that is sacred.]
Edge felt the emotion of fear emanating from his Gyarados as he locked eyes with her.

*Listen girl, we've been through an awful lot. Good times and bad. But we're gonna face these guys together. They're bullies.*

Both trainer and Pokemon's scarlet eyes were close to each other now. Edge felt confidence being restored to his teammate.

[Edge…if you die…we won't know what to do. And even if you don't die…]

Feyera knew exactly what Desperado was talking about—another meltdown. It was what had happened before in Pewter, Cerulean, and in the sea south of Vermillion.

*I do not have control over that. There, I said it. I am not afraid to admit it,* Edge replied sincerely.

[Edgie…?]

He knelt down near a small coffin with its lid pried open. The body was still inside. Feyera shuddered as he collected his thoughts. *It's the truth. But not a truth I'm going to run from and deny any longer.*

[Well now, there's a dose of honesty!] Gyarados frowned, and her brow dropped. [*Your buckle don't shine in the dirt, get up. Thanks for showin' me a pinch o' courage. I'm honored to be your…friend.*]

Edge nodded, slower than usual. He picked himself up and brushed off the dirt on his clothes. He peered down the hallway. The dimly lit corridor was full of ethereal energy eager to sap the very essences of any intruders. However, there were intruders present already, and he could sense them. They were unwelcome. The Rockets had a key influence in this struggle and were undoubtedly holding up on the top floor. He could feel them and the repercussions of their atrocious deeds.

At the end of the hall, a oak ladder stood rising up to yet another level of the Pokemon Tower. Climbing up the wooden ladder, Edge and company reached the top floor of the Pokemon Tower. Not even the stars of the sky could illuminate the uppermost level of the dark tower.

"Okay that is far enough, Pal," a deep voice bellowed. Edge saw the source of the voice even though the pitch-black darkness of the Tower's interior clouded his vision. "Wait, who are you?"

These rockets knew him. Timothy Rallsen had made this apparent. To negotiate, he decided to give his name. "I'm Chris Feyera."

"Feyera? Squad, weapons down," the rocket ordered to his two accomplices on either side of him. He was the shortest of the three, the other was a big-boned woman and the third was a tall Rocket with a black goatee.

"How did you…?"

"…Get here?" the trainer finished for the rocket. Feyera looked over at his Gyarados, who was more than ready to trounce them given the cue, "I have my ways."

"Then you must have been reinstated. Good to have you back on the team, was starting to think that memory loss was permanent." The rocket studied him with his flashlight, "I see that scar was permanent though."

Reinstated? More like manipulated into thinking that. Edge had about enough of this charade, but he
had to maintain the façade until he encountered Haunter. "Tell me, what was in the mission brief? Why are you here?"

"Wait you don't know? That's... odd," said the short man as he scratched his balding head.

The woman studied him with her glance. "I don't like this one bit. How can we trust this is really him?" Her long curly hair dangled down to her shoulders.

"You idiot. I saw Feyera on Penta after Semblance. He had that very same scar. I don't know how you could mimic it. He's one of a kind."

"What's so hard about taking red glass and gluing it to your chest pointing outwards?" she snapped back at him.

"Red glass?" Feyera asked, patting the metal shard.

"Will you both just shut the hell up?" said the tall man with the beard.

They both looked over to the man with dark features amplified by the low light of this burial site.

"You have a plan boss?" grunted the female.

"Are you that dense?" he whispered loudly. "If it's Feyera fine. If it isn't that's fine too. Point is, he found a way past Haunter."

"Ah I see, but he's got that scar still which is encouraging..."

"Can it, Regina," demanded the short man.

"Chris," the tall man stroked his gun handle delicately, "can you kindly lead us out of this accursed tower?"

This was bad. He hadn't expected to have passed Haunter on his way up. He just expected the ghost to eventually appear where he had encountered it before on the upper levels. Unless it was lurking in the buried section of the crypt. Regardless, he had some temporary allies for now by playing the game of deception. "Of course. I'm sure that Rallsen will be pleased to see that I am fulfilling orders," he smoothly replied, happy to drop a name. He thought it made him see more authentic.

"Rallsen?" shouted the female Rocket. "I told you, Jeff! He's not taking his orders from Cipher command!" The three of them drew their firearms in unison. The tall one had a Gauntlet like Agent Engelhart did. The other two had what looked like pistols. Smaller barrels, and probably more that the six bullet capacity that he had dealt with in the past, with less firepower of course as a consequence.

Desperado growled. Charmeleon cowered behind his leg.

"Hey! Easy now," Edge nervously said. "We all want to get out of here in one piece right?"

The taller Rocket was more sensible and lowered his gun first. "Yes." The other two remained with their pistol barrels fixed on Edge and his Pokemon.

"We can do just that. We have you now, don't we?" The woman looked at the tall man in confusion as he continued to speak. He grinned, "You'll be the bait though. We'll follow you. Take care not to run to far ahead or we will open fire. Sound good to you, little lab-rat?"

Feyera nodded. They hadn't gotten word of his powers, otherwise they would probably be a lot more
concerned for their lives considering he could survive bullets if necessary. Despite having the upper hand, he couldn't confront them. Not until Haunter was dealt with. He had to conserve energy. If he battled them and exerted psyonic energy to stop himself from becoming swiss cheese, he'd be easy prey for Haunter. Maybe that's just what Haunter wanted. Well, his diplomacy had worked somewhat. At least the rockets here had stopped excavating corpses. The three of them seemed more bent on fleeing the tower. But why were they unearthing bodies here in the first place?

"Tell ya what," said Feyera, "let me know why you're here and I'll get you down safely."

The short balding man shook the gun he was holding. "Ha nice try, but you're in no position to bargain with us, pal."

"Fine then, what if I lead you straight to Haunter?"

The tall man laughed.

"You're a dead man," growled the woman. "Haunter'll getcha first. He's already gotten two of us. At least with us you got a chance. We're human beings not unlike yourself. We might not kill ya if you cooperate."

"Well isn't that compassionate of you," sneered Edge.

"Don't" *Click* "push your luck," said the tall man as he unleashed the safety of his Gauntlet firearm. "Withdraw that oversized fish of yours too."

Desperado growled, [Why I ought rip your head straight off and use you for spur sharpenin'.]

"Fine." Edge turned around, and ordered his Charmeleon to follow him down the oak ladder while returning Gyarados to her Poké Ball as instructed.

The three Team Rocket members soon followed. They were tiptoeing softly through the maze of corpses and coffins towards the next flight of stairs down, when Edge suddenly paused. He felt a greater chill in the air. It was behind him. He spun around to see two of the rockets aim their guns and point them at Edge.

"Hey! Why'd you stop?" demanded the woman, her pistol aimed at his heart. Edge wasn't looking at her though.

The tall Rocket remained completely still in the rear of the procession.

"I think he broke." The short man anxiously stepped towards Feyera, "What the hell kid? Get a move on! I don't have all day."

"Oh you have much longer than a day to atone for your sins, Jeffery Derrell," said the still figure behind them.

The short man turned around from facing Edge to look at his partner, "What did I tell you about using code, now he knows my identity, you frickin' idiot!"

The tall man swiftly raised his gun and shot the short man in the head at point blank "BANG!" echoed the magnum throughout the tower. "You'll have that name on your tombstone, I might as well call you that from now on."

The female Rocket gasped, appalled beyond measure, and pointed her pistol at the tall Rocket. "Ho—Holy…!" Her jaw dropped and she covered her face with her free hand "…Holy shit! What the
hell did you do that for, Drew!"

But the tall man did not even answer. He just began to laugh. He laughed and laughed. His pitch rose with each new burst of laughter until he kneeled over. He continued to crackle as his body began to contort and twist. His form crumbled to the wooden floor and radiated a dark blood red light. Edge stared in awe at the scene, ready for anything, but not knowing what to expect.

He then heard a familiar voice. A voice he never wanted to hear again. A voice that the world would be better off without. [Boy, the souls of the damned hunger! Your fevered bones will be gnawed on until they deteriorate into dust and ash. Do you even know? Do you even have any idea of the power present in this tower? Prepare to be sent to the deepest pits of darkness and despair,] shouted the adversary, its tone full of malice.

Brucie cried out with a roar, [Telling a man to go to hell and makin' him do it are two very different propositions!]

Shapes and shadows began moving in the dark recesses of the top floor. Edge was suddenly filled with dread. The flowing scarlet waves of energy pooled into a shadowy mass of where the tall Rocket had once been. The threatening darkness caused the female Rocket to back away from the entire scene and back towards the oak ladder. Separating her from him was a mangled brown corpse which arose from a pile of ash and charred bones. The tall Rocket had been transformed into a monster! The wrinkled face had lost most of its features. Its eyes glowed orange and the skinless top of the skull oozed a rancid black pus. Its left arm was a severed stump, discharging a terrible heat. Both legs were comprised of a flowing substance, dripping from the waist to the floorboards.

[Will you walk into this grave with me? Will you leave this empty world soft and wistful? To sink into the dark earth and never reappear would be blissful.]

"Haunter!" Feyera had recognized the awful voice the moment it began to communicate with him, and now there was no doubt of what it was.

[Welcome back, Chris. You're…here…again…mmm…finally. And you have brought friends. I love friends.]

Edge yelled warning the female rocket, "It's Haunter! Get out of here now!"

The woman did not budge; for something had locked her in place. She slowly lowered her firearm to her waist.

Run! You'll die! I'll handle Haunter! Edge mentally bellowed as loud as he could, but to no avail. What was she doing?

Then a swirling red mist originating from the ground near the corpse of the tall Rocket unraveled and coiled about, engulfing the rocket, and her expression went blank.

"No!" Edge cried. "NO! NOT AGAIN!"

[I'm so very trapped Chris,] said Haunter, consuming the woman's body entirely with his gaseous extremity. And obstructing her from visible view due to the density of the fog.

"What are you doing?" the young trainer demanded. Stop! Stop now!

[Chris…I'm so lonely…] The fog was slowly dissipating.

You'll pay for what you've done, Edge said; he could feel himself quiver violently as he remembered
Jill.

Unfazed the spectral ghost continued as it fully processed the rocket. [Ahh…So very lonely…]

His psyonics were shutting down. He felt his emotional stability waning as he witnessed the ghost completely consume the woman and her partner's remains, combining their bodies into one. Neither of them saw it coming. They didn't stand a chance. But Feyera did. He had to. He was just so powerless suddenly.

[Now, I am glad you have come back. Won't you join me? We can be together. As one. I'm willing to give you another chance. Rare are the times when you can cheat death twice. Witness my power and tremble as your inferior species falls before my might,] the vile monster said.

Haunter's new corporeal body's paw groped about the room as if searching for something. Its new sickly humanoid shape was more than Edge could bear to watch. Their bonded bodies were hardly recognizable.

I'm going to banish you. That's a promise I made, and I intend on keeping it! Edge projected.

[Ah, young one, you forget so easily. Your hehe…significant…she really did thrust upon you such an awful fate. I would curse her if I were you; in fact, I would go as far as to question why she only wiped your mind and did not kill you. Unless of course, hehehe…she was trying to end you and failed miserably.]

"Wha—?"

[Putting the pieces back together, solving the mystery, what is the point of asking the questions with no answers? You see, I've learned much about you just from luring the Rockets to this tower. Your history for instance. I could not ignore you. You had defied all things natural.]

"Wait, what? My psyonics?"

Haunter chuckled, [Ta ha…The one without a name grew up to be the hand; to protect you, to shield you, or kill on demand. And the choices made, you can never comprehend. Not in this lifetime.]

"What are you trying to tell me? You are speaking in riddles!"

[*Sigh* So very immature, ripe for the plucking. Twice over.]

"Huh?"

[Feyera…The cursed power gave him life, yet was obeying the relic worth the sinister price?]

"I don't know what you are talking about!"

The monster continued as if he hadn't even heard Edge, […]His soul was tortured by love and by pain, always to be split, a fractured unity, never whole. How…unnatural.

"I don't care what you think about me and my amnesia. You won't win. I'm going to end you. You've already failed."

[Death does not fail. Death only can be delayed.]

"You are not death!" Feyera screamed.

[I'm not? Ha…haha. What would your Pokemon have to say about that? What would these host
bodies have to say about death? What would MERCUIRUS say about death?"

"Mercurius?"

[*Sight* It's not my fault either, you see, you slipped through the cracks.]

"What is it that you want from me?" Edge asked.

[From you...? Muahaha! I just want a world where death meets all with its magnificent embrace! You should understand this better than most! But you've neglected to learn anything. Had you and you would never return here. Now, allow me to show you why you don't face me without learning more about your-SELVES first!] Haunter shouted raising an ethereal tendril from his arm. It snaked outwards rapidly and anchored against Feyera's chest burrowing into the metal shard.

Edge fell to the floor in complete agony. His chest was burning up furiously. He yelped as the throbbing continued relentlessly. The room was spinning; he heard a loud popping noise. His heart was beating furiously as if to ward of some invisible stressor.

[Painful? How does it feel? Do you even know WHY I can do this to you?]

B—Br—Brucie...!

Charmeleon fired off a Flamethrower. The fire stream connected with the specter.

*Guhh...Argh! I'm not afraid of you Haunter! I can see you. You cannot hide from me and my friends!* Edge yelled holding his chest.

[Hide from you? Ahhh...I see you've unlocked yet another portion of your potential, pity it's artificial,] Haunter continued, as the red air spread throughout the room completely entering the essence of the various unearthed bodies in the Tower, joining them with the two merged rocket corpses.

[ARGH! You now know you can see me, but in fact I see more of you than you have ever been able to see! If you could only see the splendid irony of the Progenitor Virus now present in eyes no longer your own!]

The radiating heat from Edge's core was too much to handle, he was growing feverish and felt as though he would pass out. What was Haunter even talking about? Irony? Himself in the dream? Progenitor? What did it mean?

*Oh...no...no...it can't be that...* Edge froze up unsure of whether or not he was even what he thought he was.

But his thoughts were suddenly interrupted, [Boss! I got this one!] Brucie enthusiastically leapt forth ready to encounter the abomination.

*Be careful, it is manipulating the environment around it!* Edge wanted to help his Pokemon, but he felt crippled by something far more powerful than him. He couldn't extend his own psyonic tethers, something was suppressing his mind.

[I have learned much about you, Chris. I envy you and that is why I want to be one with you. The one you derive power from has little influence here in my domain. Pah! Even if you carry with you what you believe to be the power of the protectors,] the ghost laughed, [It is a ruse! Chris Feyera! Know you can never return! All is final. Want to know why you are destined to die? Allow me to show you!]

I will live, for...I have something worth living for! You cannot take that you monster! Brucie, Flamethrower! The Charmeleon blasted an enormous surge of fire from his mouth, augmented by holding his flame-tipped tail in front of his mouth. The merged beast took the brunt of the attack before charging straight out of it towards the two of them. It punched Brucie aside with one of its numerous arms and bellowed a howl, dripping remains from its oral cavity.

[Life is a game fit only for fools. It's a horse that can't win. The race is rigged from the start. Rigged to lose. All live in order to die. Death is FATE!] exclaimed Haunter.

Nehhh…Edge groaned holding his heart. The shard and his heart were both elevating in temperature. The heated pressure caused him to collapse. He looked up and saw his Charmeleon bravely standing ground between him and Haunter's physical manifestation.

[You're not getting to him, not on my watch!] shouted Brucie.

[Gah, such bravery! But no matter, out of my way; I want the abomination, I want Chris and his repulsive little angel!] Haunter replied to Brucie's valiant defiance.

Sooner than expected, Brucie was being pummeled by various bones and other carcass remains. Hundreds of pieces were fired out of the monster's multiple orifices. The barrage was relentless, more than the Charmeleon could handle. His small body soon fell to the earth.

No, get back! Edge shouted at the fused Haunter, which motioned to him by raising its blood red spectral hand, extending out of the beast's arm. The creature, face dark with malice and ill intent faced Edge with its claw raised high into the air. Charmeleon was losing a lot of energy; he grasped the floor with his claws. Pokemon and trainer alike felt completely sapped of all their combined stamina.

[I can't go on anymore Edge, I think…I think…I'm going to die,] Brucie was gasping for air.

Then Edge understood. The blood was from Brucie. Somehow, pain inflicted was fueling the beast. Dripping with fresh blood, the monster's appendage continued to discharge the foul material now coating the dark wooden floorboards with its inky blackness. Feyera released his Gyarados in an act of desperation.

Des, quickly. Get out of the range of the body parts! Edge pointed and hollered, Get behind it!

[I'll kill ya again Haunter!] she said through telepathy. Her eleven-foot long body flew above the beast, momentarily disorienting the direction its opponents were in. It was working; Desperado had moved her scaly body beyond the reach of the lively remains as they tumbled amid the floor. Furthermore, she was able to even launch a Dragon Breath attack inflicting serious burns on the already mangled corporeal body.

Haunter bellowed, [CHRIS! Let me take a page out of your book!]

No…what is it doing? What is this?

[ARGGHHHH! CHRIISSSSSSS!] Howling in anguish, the body recoiled, and began to pull the remains of those around it into it. Edge could feel the tug of the supernatural energy, a forceful suction pulled at his body. He felt his body begin to waver. His arms extended towards the swirling mist of red in front of him. At its center lay the merged and mangled corpses. Tapping into his psyonics, Edge realized the seriousness of the situation at hand. He was being drawn in by the dark creature's power. His muscles ached as he resisted the tugging of the spiritual energy. It was as if the entire plane shifted as gravity redirected itself.
It can't be...how can it? That's my psyonic power...

The mausoleum was the perfect place for such a strategy to be employed. There where countless bodies littered in the shallow-hewn earth, all were now rapidly becoming unwilling components of Haunter's diabolical fusion. The remains of the deceased were pulled, helpless and unable to oppose the tugging. Edge considered himself fortunate that he was alive. However, his muscles, weak from atrophy were only able to oppose the tugging for so long. Soon he had to use his psyonics to counteract the relentless pull. Fortunately, he was able to use his abilities to offset the incredible force. Feyera was exerting so much energy just to keep himself and his Pokemon from feeling the pull of gravity, that he soon felt as if he were ready to give out and submit to the assimilation. But his heart kept his psyonics active and resisting. If it were a battle of attrition, he had more at stake here than Haunter. He had her. What did Haunter have?

The only problem was that the creature did not stop; it greedily gathered all things nearby into itself. Tombstones, wooden caskets, floorboards, wall panels, even parts of the ceiling. Edge heard a cry of agony, felt the Haunter's extreme strain to amass as much matter as possible into itself. [ARRRGGGHHHHH! AHHHHHH!] it yelled in earsplitting frequencies.

Hardly anything else was audible over the vast swirling whirlwind of body fragments joining their new host. Concern drew Edge's attention back towards the core of the creature. For a moment, the utter darkness prevented his eyes from seeing anything. Stinging, his eyes focused, their new power surging through his brain. Unexpectedly, the burning sensation was relatively brief, and soon he was staring at a monstrosity.

Oh, sh...

Before Edge could utter what he thought, the creature slammed its massive newly created arm containing the fused body of the original Rocket and the surrounding entrails of deceased bodies into the floorboards creating a gaping hole amid the wooden planks.

The crushing arm had missed the wounded Charmeleon, but had knocked Edge off balance and he was now hanging on to the side of the hole, where he was desperately trying to scramble up. He tightened his strong arm around the large support beam which was drooping from the impact, using his other arm to issue orders.

Des hit it there! Quick before it—

The monster recognized Feyera's commanding and quickly fired a few small bones out of its numerous orifices nailing Edge in the chest and making him all but lose his grip.

The heat from his chest became worse. He felt like the shard on his chest was about to split in two. His body was slipping. He felt it. No, he knew it. He was going to fall. It was only a matter of time before the physical world caught up with his psychic premonition.

[Edge!] his Gyarados roared, evading the massive arm's upward sweep yet again.

Don't worry about me, Des, finish it off. Whatever it takes, just please...save us. Save us all. For... Jill, DRAGON RAGE!

Gyarados lifted her head high. [This one's for Lumpy, you bastard!] Her veins bulged from her face as her mouth opened wider than ever launching a shaft of pure white light. The blast shook the entire foundation and ripped straight through the solid wall of the top floor. Any matter the beam encountered was completely erased from existence, burning up in blue flame. The mangled corpse shrieked as its flesh melted along with everything contained with it as the superhot draconic flames
incinerated without prejudice.

Then there was nothing but silence. Edge lost his hold on the beam. His body fell backwards in a star-shape freefall.

Falling, he flailed his thin arms helplessly as the stories zipped past him. At the bottom of the tower was the burial crypt embedded in a thick limestone exterior.

The young man shouted, not with his voice, but rather with his mind. It was an incomprehensible language. Something he could not understand. His body slowed its decent. Not nearly enough however. He was still falling too quickly.

He felt his internal blood rush from his center to his head as he stopped falling for a brief moment. The trainer remained suspended for what seemed like minutes to him but was only a fraction of a second. He looked at the now motionless walls on either side of him, completely enthralled by his partial levitation.

Then it stopped as his energy waned. He fell again, but much slower. Hitting the tomb ceiling beneath him, he heard a dull resonating thud as his lean body landed.

If it weren't for his psionic powers slowing his acceleration from fall, he would have been killed from the impact. He coughed once then again. He was so tired. So drained. His eyes began to shut on their own accord. Dizzy from the shockwave of the blast along with the strain from reducing the pull of gravity, Edge soon found himself unconscious.

He had done it. Haunter was no more.
Chapter Summary

His power, a saving grace or an abomination? Only time will tell.

*Warmth...no more death.*

"Son, wake up. You're gonna be fine. Just show me some life please!" a man's voice shouted in disarray.

Feyera was being shaken about furiously by two foreign hands. It felt as if he was in an earthquake.

Edge shifted his luminescent haloed-rimmed green eyes back and forth as his lids opened. He was in a warm room. The walls were painted a rosy pink and the wallpaper bordering the ceiling was white. It felt like an old house. From the ceiling hung a dimly lit lantern. He was laying on an elevated bed or a cot of some sort. In addition, he was able to see a light blondish-grey haired aging man leaning over him. His complexion was wrinkled and tan. He wore a somnolent expression. As Edge opened his eyes wider, the man gasped and opened his sealed lips.

"Oh thank God you're alive! I saw you start to move, so I tried to wake you. How on earth did you manage to stop Haunter and survive that fall young man?"

Edge murmured incomprehensibly at the stranger. It sounded like something he had never heard before.

"What? Can you speak English? What are you trying to say?"

Again Edge muttered in a foreign tongue to the elderly gentleman.

The light haired man shook his head. "Are you okay? Just nod if you can hear me."

Feyera tried to nod his head, but stiffness in his back pierced his nerves. Edge grimaced and bit his lower lip. He tried to figure out what he could possibly do. Unable to speak, he was trapped under the veil of disheveled emotion. His eyes began to water.

The man sought to dispel Feyera’s distress, "Hey, don't be upset. It's going to be okay. You're hurt, but you've been here in my house for the past two nights. You're safe and out of the Pokemon Tower. You're here in my daughter's room."

Feyera nodded again.

His forehead wrinkled. "Listen, you are at my house at the foot of the mountain on the edge of Lavender. I'm Doctor Fuji," the man's hasty high voice did not completely eclipse his sense of compassion.

Doctor Fuji…he was in that magazine oh so long ago. The one that Edge was ripped off with. When he bought Desperado from that Magikarp salesman at the base of Mount Moon. Doctor Fuji was a
Pokemon researcher like himself.

Edge tried to move his arms but they were both lying neatly over his stomach unwilling to budge. He turned his head to look at Fuji, who was standing over him. As he did, pain shot across his chest, over his shoulders and throughout his spine. He winced and squinted his eyes. The tingling began to subside and was followed by a voluminous surge of energy to his head. He felt like it was blood or some type of adrenaline rush. It was surprising but also comforting strangely enough. The shock to his system made his mind feel like it was racing. *How did I survive? What happened to my Pokemon? Is that...that...thing really gone?*

Fuji recoiled from the bedside. He held his head in confusion, hearing Feyera's voice. Slowly he responded to the bed-ridden trainer, "I don't know how you are doing that. Your mind...it can speak telepathically?"

Feyera blinked, realizing he was projecting thoughts onto the nearby old man. *Yes it can.*

"I only know two people, one being a master psyonic who is able to emit her thoughts into the minds of others. Usually that is just a Pokemon ability," Fuji troublesomely admitted, "but it isn't always something of that nature. There are always some exceptions."

Edge's eyes widened. *Wait, more people, like me?* This was phenomenal; if Doctor Fuji spoke the truth then that meant he wasn't alone.

"However," Fuji bent over and looked at Feyera's swollen eyes. He traced a finger in a circle to mimic the golden ring surrounding Edge's forest green irises. "I've never seen someone with eyes like yours though, looks like serious business went into your creation," Fuji explained.

"Creation? Edge tried to laugh but couldn't. *I'm flesh and bone, just like you. I wasn't made. I was born.*

"People aren't born with that type of characteristic. Green eyes are rare as it is, but the narrow band of bioluminescence is something I haven't seen since Cinnabar's Gateway program."

Feyera looked at Fuji and batted his eyes.

"What I'm getting at is your eyes hardly look normal. That faint glow given off by the circles...it's Progenitor, isn't it?"

Yeah, I think it is. I can't remember for sure. My memories are all fragmented. But how did you...?

"I worked on the research behind it in a lab off Cinnabar Island," Fuji sat down on a tall chair next to the bed. "So I know about Progenitor and the procedure behind it. It must have been awful. No wonder you cannot remember it."

*The program. Evercrest?*

"You've heard of it? I only was a member of the program for about a year. Things changed so much since its inception. It started out as a means to help Pokemon. We wanted to assist some of the endangered Pokemon species by giving them a genetic advantage against their predators. Purely for conservation's sake. Namely Psychic types which were being overhunted by Dark types."

Yeah. They're natural predators in the wild. Feyera didn't need a history lesson on the subject.

"Right. But the experiments turned gruesome when a young man showed up. He was more concerned with achieving results than guaranteeing safety. It...eventually caused me to leave."
Edge, surprised, raised a brow. *You got out?*

"The Evercrest Programme's path was paved with good intentions. But I wasn't going to take it to where it led. I left the Evercrest Programme graciously, before they began to focus on total biological reconfiguration."

Edge's eyes opened wide, *Total biological reconfiguration?*

"The kind of stuff like Progenitor. The kind of stuff without safety precautions, where test subjects are expendable—numbers even. The kind of stuff where if the process has a two-and-a-half percent chance of success and a ninety-seven-and-a-half percent chance of death, then by hell do it!" shouted the old man.

Edge stared at the frustrated old doctor. He felt bad for him. The internal struggle was eating him alive.

"I'm sorry. I just got emotional." Fuji tightened his expression, "You need to understand, Project Progenitor was the last straw for me. I was a man first, and a researcher second. I had to adhere to a higher moral code lest I forget how much I myself needed to deal with death."

*How?*

"My daughter. She passed away four years ago. She was sick for a long time. Her time was coming to an end and there was no cure. I…spent more time trying to cure her disease than be with her. I was a fool," Fuji bowed and put his head between his hands.

*You were doing what you could.*

"No. No, I was not. Her illness was terminal. I should have spent those last few precious months with her instead of in a laboratory vigorously searching for a treatment."

Edge sighed.

"When Amber died, I broke down, I had failed. Not as a scientist, but as a father. From this regret I could not escape. I became different. Cold. Vengeful. Angry. Soon after that, my wife left me. I couldn't face anyone. It was then that I was recruited by a young man who was very keen on using my Pokemon research to further a project he called 'Evercrest'. His name was Gideon."

*Gideon?* It didn't ring any bells.


Feyera knew the type. *Was he with the Rockets?*

"The Rockets?" Fuji looked surprised. "Heaven no. He was sovereign, he had one ambition; his own. If others could help him achieve it faster then he would use them. But he never had any loyalty."

*Oh.* Edge strained his neck and began to sit up from the pillow his head rested on by using his arms. They quivered as he did so, but at least his strength was returning.

"It took me nearly a year to realize what had happened. We set out on a mission to help Pokemon. When Gideon laid his grip around the Evercrest Programme's neck, there was no resistance. Things changed to satisfy the man's own objectives. We began to turn into a factory. A processing center."
Feyera tilted his head and arched his back. He heard a slight audible snap.

Fuji pretended not to notice, "I…I couldn't bring death to others, even if they were only Pokemon. They were still…living beings. Vibrant beings. Sure they had weaknesses. Sure they struggled in the wild. But don't we all? Even as human beings. None of us are without flaws. We have a choice on how to overcome our limitations. It didn't have to come to manipulating their genetic structure. We could improve their lives just by living in harmony with them. If we truly wanted to help Pokemon, we should be their friends rather than try and change the way they are. That's what I learned from Evercrest. That's a lesson I'll never forget."

*Right.* Edge nodded. So you managed to leave Evercrest without Gideon chasing you down? Surely he would have wanted you to continue to provide your resources to the projects that the scientists were undertaking.

"I became ill," Fuji dryly responded. "I couldn't work for the program any longer. It took a toll on me physically. Gideon was somewhat bemused by it in fact. If anything, he wanted me out of the organization to begin with. I was one of the only researchers who would confront him on…many things."

Edge looked at him, searching for answers. *Such as?*

"Correct operational procedures, test subject qualifications, safety precautions," Doctor Fuji froze up as he saw Feyera's eyes gain a faint scarlet aura. However, it soon dissipated as the young trainer blinked a few times in nervousness. But the rings of light, only visible to the astute eye, remained present.

"Progenitor. That's a Pokemon type of cellular graft, taken from the eyes of Dark Pokemon and transplanted onto Psychic types. What I am curious about it how a human such as yourself came to process it?" Fuji was confused. "Psyonics?"

Well…Feyera thought about this, he really didn't know why it happened, just that it did based on the dream memory. *You know Cipher and their scientists?*

"I've heard of them…" Fuji's brow shrunk. "But nothing good. Why?"

*They collaborated with the Rockets. I overheard that this was the 'Progenitor EX'. Some green-eyed researcher was talking about it.*

"Ah yes, I remember him. He joined when I was on my way out. Interesting fellow, rather talented. Although he had a rough past."

Yeah…

Fuji still looked distraught, "But how was it able to make the graft? You would need a perfectly harmonic base sequence. Any slight alteration in the nitrogen bases would cause an uncomplimentary sequence. This would result in blindness and eventually death."

Feyera tensely rubbed his eyes. *But they did it. I'm living proof aren't I? I'm not blind. I'm also not…before he could say "dead", he considered the way his body had begun to deteriorate in the past, particularly after exerting high amounts of psionic energy. No…he couldn't be dying. Could he?*

"I'm not saying it isn't possible!" Fuji exclaimed, upset at just how unaware Edge was of the circumstances, "Theoretically anything is possible. I'm just saying that if it were possible you'd need God Himself to come down here and freeze all the potential variables in order to get the right loci to
adhere. The chance of getting full synchronization is one in a trillion times a trillion! It would require a miracle, and nothing less to make the jump from Pokemon to human; the DNA is just not compatible. Somewhere along the line, an allele would get miss-placed, and even the slightest, tiniest shift in arrangement or something would trigger total rejection of the graft. Between Pokemon and Pokemon at least there is chance due to a similar ancestor—even amid various Pokemon Types. The odds are just much higher between Pokemon species."


Fuji gasped, slightly entertained to hear that Feyera's actual voice sounded exactly like his telepathic voice. "Your voice came back!"

"*Cough* Yes," Edge grinned. "You must have scared it out of me, Doc."

"Well, I wasn't kidding around. It was either a stroke of genius or just some serious dumb luck. I don't know of any technology that could possibly harbor such a feat."

Edge had thought about mentioning Reilken Mercurius but decided against it. The less people knew, the better. Besides, Fredrick was probably well on his way to securing the precious artifact. "They must have had others go before me then, Fuji."

"If they were playing an odds game, then we're talking thousands of lives just to make the percent of success hit a tangible number."

"No…" Edge's face expressed his worry. "That's…awful."

"But maybe you were different. Somehow. You used telepathy to speak with me, did you not? Perhaps that was a part of it. You've always had psionic powers, right? Even from a young age?"

No of course not! Edge's mind answered before his lips could move. "I never had any psionic abilities until after I started my Pokemon journey a month or so ago."

"Then how…?" Fuji was even more puzzled now.

"The psyonics, the ring of light encompassing my eyes, they were not a part of me when this all began. It's all relatively new."

"What do you remember about the procedure?" asked the doctor.

"Nothing on my own. A man by the name of Fredrick Irving saved me from myself by using his Hypno's Hypnosis so that I could recall portions of my fragmented past. I…I had an accident with the Rockets two years ago. That's how I got this," Feyera pointed to his chest shard.

"Oh?" said Fuji.

"It was in the Pokemon Sanctum. They were holding the place up to steal some artifacts, and I was in their way. So they detonated their Electrode. I had six months of amnesia pre and post from the incident. Everything I've heard I've been told, not experienced. So I really have no clue whether or not any of it was true. The Rockets might have used me as an experiment by feeding me to Cipher!" exclaimed Edge.

"That does sound likely. Team Rocket isn't the most forgiving crime syndicate out there. But why you? What made you so special? And if that's the case, why did nothing surface in your body involving Progenitor until two years AFTER? Psyonics, Progenitor…It just doesn't add up," Fuji
shook his head frustrated by the facts. "Why the delay?"

"I've been wrestling with the same exact questions since I started on my Pokemon quest. I never asked to be given all of this. All I ever wanted was a peaceful journey with Pokemon."

"Do you have a name boy?"

Yes, "Call me Edge."

Fuji read right through his guise. "A real name son. Your momma wouldn't call you that."

Chris Feyera sighed, "My mother is dead."

Doctor Fuji shook his head, "I…I'm sorry."

"Don't be, you didn't kill her."

"I won't pry then, Edge. I'm only looking to help you. I just would like to know. With your recent obtainment of psyonic abilities…how dangerous were you?"

Edge coughed again, this time louder and more forcefully since his lungs were feeling better. In fact, his entire torso felt more alive. "You found me in the bottom of the Pokemon Tower right?"

"Yes, it was a sight to behold. You were laying face up on the ceiling of the underground crypt. Above you was a five story drop from the tower's top. I heard a huge commotion. Being one of the few citizens who chose against evacuating Lavender, I became a bit of the caretaker for the town. I arrived and you were out cold. Your Pokemon were there too, trying to wake you up. I recalled them so that they could rest. They're over there on the bedside table next to you," Fuji pointed, and Edge saw two of his Poké Balls perched on the nightstand.

"Thanks. I'm appreciative. As you know, there's no way for someone to survive that fall. I did something…I don't know what it was or how I did it, but it happened. I slowed down my decent. It was like stopping acceleration so that I fell at nearly a constant rate."

The doctor's eyes widened at this, "You manipulated gravity? With psyonics!"

"Yes. It isn't one way though. I could reverse it…amplify it. Instead of slowing gravity, I could intensify its effects causing all sorts of mayhem." Feyera thought about what had happened back in Cerulean and off the coast of Vermillion.

"Incredible." At that, Fuji gave a frown. Not a frown of disappointment, but more of a worrisome expression.

"That thing in the tower, the beast you slew…that wasn't just Haunter…was it?" Fuji paused, pulling his straw hair back.

Edge thought about the monster and how it had merged the mangled corpses together in a sickening amalgamation. "No. It was not just Haunter."

He sighed before answering the young trainer, "Young man, the dead inhabit a world we cannot see after all. As mortals, we are blind to it. Some Pokemon aren't however, like Dark types for instance, they can see into the beyond and use their senses to determine the source of such Ghost Pokemon. Strangely enough, there has been an increase in the amount of influence that these spirits can have on our world. You have countered this; you are able to see them. It is a gift for a human being to be able to actually do such things."
Edge squinted to display the confusion he held concerning his host's statement. "A gift?"

"Yes, it is a gift. We all have gifts. Each and every one of us. They may not allow us to see Ghost Pokemon, manipulate gravity, and utilize telepathy, but they do allow us to try and accomplish a similar goal."

*What is he getting at?* thought Feyera.

Fuji smiled, picking up on Edge's telepathy, "I am retired and care for the abandoned Pokemon providing shelter for the weak." He sighed, then continued, "Evil tends to infect if you do not protect the most vulnerable of us. Spirits sense the emotions of worthlessness and hatred, residing in those vessels to manipulate them. I do what I can so the weakest of us all will not be subjected to such a fate. I can protect others with that. You have a more corporeal way of protecting others."

"I…I do?" asked Feyera. He wasn't sure if he'd ever consider himself protector of anyone but himself and his Pokemon partners.

"Yes." The elderly man sat up straight, "never forget: whatever you do is a derivative of the attitude you adopt. You can be the strongest man, but with an impure heart, you will use that strength to persecute others."

"Wise words," said Feyera, unsure if he really wanted any additional responsibility. He had just saved a town from Haunter after all.

Edge lifted himself off the cot he was laying on in Fuji's warm house. He stumbled out of the bed, and was happy to be mobile once more even though he was slightly disoriented. His legs might have fallen asleep, because upon standing, nerves of sensation jolted his brain. Color filled his vision with warm saturated hues. Gazing around, he saw on a modest wooden table behind Doctor Fuji a bowl of steaming broth.

"That's for you, I'd figured you would be hungry," Fuji said smiling and wrinkling as he did so, creating valleys and divots amid his aged face.

That was the weird thing, Feyera was not really hungry. Even though he had not eaten for three days, the power of appetite seemed to be only a faint echo. Still, he thankfully sat down and proceeded to eat the food prepared by his host. The spoon touched his lips, and he felt its warmth. The care that went into this simple meal was more than enough to nourish him.

*If the world is turning into this, how can I stop it?* Edge telepathically projected since his small mouth was full of broth.

Fuji looked surprised, "You have already been doing everything that you can. I can only tell you about what I know. You have the ability to see things most of us can't and that's invaluable. Apply it right and you can help many people out there. You already have by saving this village from Haunter's dark grasp."

*Fuji…why Haunter? What did it have to do with the Rockets?*

"I don't know my boy. These are dark times. But you've shown our little town not to be afraid of the darkness."

Edge tired of praise. He didn't want a medal, he wanted answers. *You mentioned a master of psionics, someone who was a woman, who is she?* Edge wanted to mind-read Fuji so badly so he could see if this was the woman in his dreams, but he could not; he remembered how Fredrick had claimed that mind-reading was painful on the behalf of the one being read.
"Ah yeah, Sabrina, charming girl really. She can freely manipulate things around her and see the future briefly. Her telepathy has made her an imposing Psychic type Gym Leader. She can practically enter the minds of others and manipulate them. Of course, she cannot use such powers during an official league battle, but that doesn't make her much less of a daunting adversary," spoke Fuji.

Feyera dropped his spoon and it made a big splash as it hit the broth, startling him, "I think I remember her from somewhere. Describe to me what she looks like please."

"Well I'll be, it sounds like you have a crush on the maiden," Fuji laughed, taking a beige towel to clean up the spilled broth on the table, "well let me think now, she's not much older than you, her hair is long, thick, and dark, she has amber-red eyes. Got quite the personality too."

Edge looked like he had just won the lottery, somehow he was too scared to even do anything. "Could that really be her?" From the dream I had in Celadon.

Fuji crossed his arms and slumped back into his chair. "Even if that was the case, son, she has been west of Lavender and east of Celadon, in Saffron City. Sometimes she'll travel, but not often. I do not know much about psionic abilities but I do know that even under the best of conditions she would not be able to send a message over such a great distance. In order for her to enter your mind, you would need to be within sight of her. Psionic powers employed by people pale in comparison to most Pokemon. Even though they are rare, they are still very limited…and controlled," Fuji said as he eyed Edge's arms.

Edge Feyera sighed. He needed to obtain the Soul Badge then, since Saffron City was closed off to him. After all, those were the specific instructions given to him in the dream. That meant going to Fuchsia City. Who knows, maybe Sabrina had left town and wanted to meet him there. Rationalization was easy to do for the desperate young man.

Nothing Doctor Fuji said really mattered anymore to Edge; he needed to find her quickly, his own curiosity was already beginning to outpace his thought patterns. It would not be long before the obsession possessed him. "Fuji, I need to depart now. Thank you for your hospitality," Edge said firmly, his wrists shaking as he anxiously tapped his hand on the table.

"Son, you just got up though. You were out for two whole days. How do you know that you'll be okay?"

In his mind, Feyera was already plotting the best route to Fuchsia City. "I have my psyonics and my Pokemon should they fail me. As for physical strength..." he thought about her, "I have my motivators, Fuji."

Fuji studied him, from his feet to his hair, pausing at his eyes. Though the red glow had faded, the rings of light remained. "I...I understand. You want to be in charge of your own destiny. All of us would like to have that to some degree. Keep in mind that there are people out there who would wish otherwise."

"Yes I know. The Rockets and Cipher," Feyera walked over to the nightstand and picked up Brucie's and Des' Poké Balls and put them next to July's on his belt holster. He then sat on the end of the bed. He looked up at Doctor Fuji with a frightened expression. "They both want me. They want to study me."

Fuji put both his arms on Feyera's shoulders after the trainer had put on his trusty adventuring boots and stood up, "Whatever the case, you must not allow them to catch you. They'll make you beg for death before giving it to you."
Feyera shuddered, "I'm not going to let that happen."

He just wanted to leave and find answers. His destiny from his dreams became the most important aspect of himself. Doctor Fuji removed his hands and handed Edge his black bomber jacket which was looking a little worse for the wear. The zipper still worked, and the jacket hadn't torn yet, so it would have to do for now.

"Good," Fuji said. "You'll never be forgotten here. Even if you don't have a name, people will come back to Lavender Town and hear the stories about the brave man who banished Haunter."

"Yeah. I couldn't have done it without my friends though." *And her.*

Fuji led Edge out of the single story house to the front door. He opened it and then elderly man gave Feyera a side-hug, averting the shard in his chest. "Good luck."

"Thanks, Doc."

The misty morning sky was fresh and invigorating. Delicate dewdrops gathered on the equally delicate valley flowers. The sun peered out from over the eastern coast, bringing smiles to Edge and his Pokemon. Feyera's Pokemon were well rested after the ordeal in the Pokemon Tower thanks to Doctor Fuji's hospitality.

They were going to head south. *To obtain the Soul Badge...and then...* Edge did not know what else he had to do besides find the dream or memory girl before it was too late for her. Feyera looked back one last time at the Pokemon Tower in Lavender. The morning light seemed to dispel any darkness once present there. He was that morning sun three nights ago. Haunter was finished, but his actions resonated with Edge. How had the Ghost Pokemon managed to do whatever it was that it did? The thought of an entity capable of harnessing such energy made him worry. It was much more potent than anything Edge had ever witnessed, even putting his own most powerful psyonics to shame in comparison.

The trainer pressed southwards, looking forward to seeing the lights from Fuchsia City. If he kept going at this rate, then maybe he could be there within a day.

Unfortunately, his strength began to wane. He felt as if he was becoming weaker, even though Haunter was no more. Feyera's vigor diminished as the young man pressed southwards. The muscles in his body became sore, and there was little his mind could do to encourage them. Was it from exerting his psyonics? Perhaps he had broke something with his mind. A limit maybe. Something not meant to be broken.

The cold breeze from the west chilled Edge. He tried to shake off all the feelings of remorse and desperateness. He could not however. He was living for only one purpose now. He had kept his promise and helped the people of Lavender Town.

South of Lavender was the place where land met the sea, a beautiful coastal union. In fact, it seemed all too peaceful to the trainer. He had become desensitized by the taste of battle, the anxiety of combat. Pokemon battles had become his battles. Feyera engaged in them nearly as much as his Pokemon through his mental connections to them. The fact that he had weaponized psyonics of his own amplified this association to his Pokemon. He himself felt like an avatar of war. But this was not him. How could it be? Before he had begun his journey, everything was so much different. He was reserved, quiet, and interested in returning to research once he overcame his fear of Pokemon. How very frightful he had been after the Rocket attack. He was a coffee boy at Prevoys for nearly two years for goodness sake! Completely unaware of anything beyond his small backwoods town of
Pallet. None of this was the case anymore.

He walked on the rocky shore, heading further south from Lavender. His boots crunched in the rocky shore beneath him. The light wispy clouds high above lounged about against a brilliantly light blue sky. The sound of rolling waves to his left pulled Edge's gaze down from the sky and back to earth. These shores were vacant. At one time, maybe there were fisheries here but not anymore. The stillness grew as he walked south. The tranquility was only interrupted by the steady overture of the waves.

He continued to walk south, his determination to find her strong in his heart. His feet began to slightly drag. The trainer looked down at the rocks he stepped over and the worn out path ahead of him. It was all so picturesque.

Eventually, he felt himself getting lost in the scenery as the midday sun began to beat down on his fragile form. It felt like a long journey was ahead of him, even though he seemed to be nearing its end. Which made him think: What would he do when he found her? Save her obviously, she was in distress. But what about after that? Could he afford to settle down with the Rockets and Cipher chasing him down? Was a normal life completely out of his reach just because of some stupid “gift” he had been given? It didn't seem to be fair. He never asked for it. He never asked for the abilities he had. But then again he had never asked for her. Yet here he was with both within reach.

"Mister Feyera." That familiar voice. Could it be?
Inner Yearning of the Spirit

Chapter Summary

The plot thickens for Edge (Chris) Feyera and company.

Fredrick? He tried to use telepathy but it didn't seem to work at all. "Fredrick? Is that you?" he called out to the approaching International Police Agent.

The recognizable figure was carrying a metallic silver briefcase. His thick brown overcoat blew behind him in the shore breeze. Under it, he wore his familiar suited attire, complete with a burgundy vest, and a thickly knotted black tie with a paisley pattern.

"Well met, Mister Feyera," said Fredrick.

"And to you as well," Edge replied, slightly perturbed as to how the International Police Agent had found him so quickly.

Shaking hands, Fredrick looked deep into Edge's green haloed eyes. Fredrick was wearing thin black leather gloves. The man paused and released Feyera's hand from his clutch. "I take it that everything is working out well for you? You seem more confident in who you are. I heard the report from Lavender Town; I am so glad you were able to remember the aspect of yourself allowing for you to see the spectral creatures like Haunter," spoke the dark haired man. His slicked gelled hair remained completely motionless in the sea breeze, whilst Feyera's blew about ceaselessly.

"What did you hear exactly?" asked the Pokemon trainer.

Fredrick rubbed the golden badge above his heart with his free hand, using a small handkerchief from within his vest to polish it. "What I heard is that you defeated the Rockets up there."

"There were more than just Rockets in the Pokemon Tower, Fredrick. Haunter was there. He… possessed one of them," Edge's expression drooped as he recalled the maddened man in his last seconds of life. What was his name? Drew? It didn't matter. All of the people in that tower were executed in a most grotesque manner. Be they Rockets or not, no one deserved to be unwillingly turned into…that thing. It was all so very wrong.

"Possession eh?" Fredrick nodded his head. "Sounds grisly."

Fredrick hadn't seen what transpired on that floor of the Pokemon Tower. No one should have had to see it, not even Edge. It was too vile, too unnatural. He wondered if nightmares would haunt him because of it.

Slowly he raised his head to look at Fredrick again. "What happened up there wasn't all me, I relied on my Pokemon to defeat the vengeful spirit," Edge spoke the truth. Desperado, his Gyarados exerted all of her energy to defeat Haunter's corporeal form by using her devastating Dragon Rage attack.

Fredrick laughed at this, "Yes, of course, I nearly forgot that they could see the ghosts all by
themselves."

Edge frowned. Indeed, not only had the advanced vision saved him from certain doom in the mausoleum, he had nearly died by falling to his death in the catacombs. His psyonic manipulation over the physical world was exceptionally useful. "Yes it…helped me but right now…" For some reason it was as if his psyonics had been dampened. Heavily suppressed. He could not even sense the emotions of Fredrick for instance. Was he happy with him? Proud? Excited? Nothing came to mind. This was very peculiar, since usually his psyonics only shut down when he over exerted them or was emotionally burnt out. Yet he had not used them at all recently, and his emotional stability seemed normal.

Feeling awfully mortal and without protection Edge shuddered. Where did they go?

Fredrick smiled softly, "Are you missing something? You look concerned."

Edge couldn't let him know how weak he felt suddenly. Even if he did trust Fredrick, there was something odd about the entire situation. Edge was a difficult person to sneak up on him. And there was no one around for miles. Even if he had been daydreaming, for Fredrick to suddenly appear out of nowhere was uncharacteristic. True, Fredrick was a skilled operative for the International Police, and that knowledge consoled Edge to a degree. Perhaps he was trained in stealth.

"Fine, you win. Your Hypnosis procedure was a radical success. I'm still becoming accustomed to various memories however. And there are things which I cannot comprehend yet," Edge said swallowing hard at the end of his sentence. Talking was difficult since he hadn't relied on speech for a while. He had no telepathy to back him up either.

"That's normal," Fredrick dryly responded, "Feyera, if your mind was truly wiped clean, then Hypnosis will only awaken such memories over a period of time. What could have done that to you though Feyera? Erased all but your most basic memories. It just seems off."

"I have a feeling it was Cipher. How else could they expect me to live after administering Progenitor EX?"

"Feyera, Feyera…That's only the half of it I believe."

Edge tried to project, "What do you mean?" but it was only a thought in his head. Fredrick looked blankly at him. So he asked using his vocal chords, and Fredrick acknowledged him.

"I've been doing some external research of my own. Although it's only dribs and drabs, I think that what Cipher was researching extended far beyond mere genetic grafts."

Edge nervously smiled, truly unsure of whether or not Fredrick knew that his latent powers had been nullified, "Fredrick, there is something Haunter said to me in the Pokemon Tower which resonated with me. Something like 'my eyes are not my own'."

"Well, of course they aren't! Progenitor puts your sight in a whole new category," Fredrick replied. "I thought you knew that already Mister Feyera."

"No, you aren't getting it. There is a piece that is missing…" He could not bring himself to tell Fredrick of his involvements with the Rockets. In that dream, he was a researcher operating on himself? But there were two different bodies. Nothing made sense. Why would in his memory he be the experiment rather than the experimenter—who was clearly him? All was mangled in confusion.

"I know," Fredrick smiled. Edge wasn't sure if he liked it when he grinned like that. "That is why, the International Police have been doing some additional research overseas…" he motioned at the
briefcase he was carrying.

"What's in the case?" Edge asked, still surprised by his minimal perception. "Wait. Whatever happened to the Mercury Relic?"

"Come," Fredrick turned around and began walking towards a distant clearing where a black helicopter had landed. How long had he been there? Was Fredrick waiting for him?

"The Reilken Mercurius," Fredrick sighed, "I trust you've heard of it based on our prior… conversation."

Edge shook his head, nodding slowly. How involved was he? How involved was he supposed to be?

"What exactly do you know about it?" asked Fredrick.

"It was an artifact from the remote past…perhaps even considered an idol by our distant ancestors," Edge said citing some historical text his mind had retained from long ago.

"Correct, but it was also something which Renault desperately wished to obtain during the Great War. While I would normally consider this a myth or fantasy dreamt up by the megalomaniac, I cannot deny that in my procession I have an artifact of immense potential," Fredrick said.

"You brought it here?" Feyera exclaimed loudly, clearly still becoming accustomed to speaking his thoughts.

Fredrick extended his gloved hand and placed it on Edge's shoulder. "Of course. It is with me. I found it after all."

Edge sighed, feeling the weight of Fredrick's arm made him slightly uncomfortable. "And how will that stop the Rockets? We don't need fairytales or history lessons. I need to be able to find out more about myself. Furthermore, I have been rather stressed with my predicament. I can generate a great deal of energy, but it appears as if I am not the only one capable of that. I saw Haunter do something similar in the Pokemon Tower."

"Did you find out why the Rockets were even in the Pokemon Tower?" Fredrick inquired.

"No, but Haunter mentioned that he 'lured' them there to find out more about me," Edge said.

"Fascinating," Fredrick said clearly intrigued, "You seem to be very valuable to some dangerous individuals."

Edge thought about Ein and the rest of the Rockets along with the enigmatic Cipher. Even if Haunter was banished, there would still be those adversaries to contend with.

"Either way, I need to prevent myself from destroying myself. I have some leads but they are only fragmented dreams and…" Edge thought about the feminine voice in his mind coaxing him to Fuchsia City.

"And?" Fredrick asked, his eyebrow raising.

"Err… Things that don't destroy themselves. I'm not just a weapon, I'm a human being. Or at least I was! Not anymore. I don't know what I am exactly! I might be destructive at times but it comes at a price," Edge was frustrated now. He didn't know how else to express his angst. He couldn't project it, and when he spoke about it, everything came out wrong. The young trainer stroked his chest shard
and then sighed. If it had to be this way then he at least deserved to know why. He felt as if it was owed to him.

Fredrick approached the jet-black copter. He quickly spun around, rubbing his forehead with his free index finger. "Feyera, you don't understand, this is a weapon beyond the... primitive guns... some of us possess." He motioned with his eyes and a tilt of the neck to his own silvery RAIL rifle mounted on his back. The one he had taken from the dead body of Archer.

"That's hardly primitive, Fredrick. That's a powerful ion beam. Costing more resources and money than most people would make in three lifetimes." Feyera said, only being a witness to this weapon's might once was enough to make him fear its power. Though Silph was resourceful, the plans for RAIL weapons came from before the ancient Terminal War. It wasn't like they could build a factory to construct them en masse.

Fredrick gave a hearty laugh, "Ha ha ha. It isn't everything, Feyera. You still must be a man to even use a RAIL gun. And it is good for only one thing. Remember that rocket pursuing us in Celadon?"

Feyera nodded gradually, recalling how the rocket chasing them to the emergency hatch had been vaporized from behind two feet of composite steel. Fredrick beamed, and his eyes lit up. "The Reilken Mercurius on the other hand… well its potential is nearly limitless."

"I suppose that's the reason why they call it a Philosopher's Stone, Fredrick," Edge tried to say sarcastically with audible language but had difficulty conveying his sarcasm by using language. He thought of how crude of a communication method this was. Was he always this awkward when conveying a message prior to unlocking his telepathy?

"I've been researching it for quite some time. The potential it has is only limited by its wielder, which consequently means in your hands..." Fredrick trailed off, unsure of Edge's willingness to hear what was on his mind.

Edge shook his head once again, "You cannot expect me to do this. I already have too much at stake. The Rockets want me. Cipher wants me..." she wanted him, but Feyera dared not mention her.

"Perhaps this is for the best then? You cannot control your psyonics effectively yet, so why not rely on something which can at least protect you?" asked Fredrick.

"I have my Pokemon for that," Edge defiantly replied.

"The truly devoted members of Team Rocket are hardened criminals. They will not simply surrender following a battle. In fact, defeating them will only assure that they reach for their firearms. You may have faced their weaker ranks in the past, but you have no idea what they are capable of as a whole," Fredrick raised his thick brown overcoat's right sleeve revealing a series of deep pitch-black scars running from his wrist well past his elbow, their inky blackness twisting and coiling about his exposed arm.

"What is that? What did they do to you?" Edge's thoughts became focused primarily on concern for his friend's wellbeing.

"Corruption, greed, evil, you name it. It has no right to be here on this planet," Fredrick's voice filled with bottomless hatred. "You know that as much as I do."

Then Edge understood. That black body art emerging from Fredrick's torso and running up the base of his neck were not in fact tattoos; rather they were some kind of villainous crime inflicted upon him. Even if Feyera had diverted all of his energy to try to read Fredrick's mind, he couldn't. The
curiosity was killing him: how did his friend become so maimed? How come his psyonics weren't working?

"I need you to help me fight them, Edge. They took more from me than you can imagine. They took so much from me. This was two years back when the Rockets were a syndicate in its golden years of crime. Now, the Rockets are Cipher's puppets, deluded into thinking that they are still an independent organization," Fredrick spoke, his dark voice instilling a sense of dread within Edge. "I want to make them disband. Don't you?"

Now, Edge was absolutely overwhelmed with the desire to know. What did this all mean? Was Fredrick's injury related to the girl who had visited him in the dreams? He had to fight the desires and diverted his attention to the briefcase now lying on the dirt.

"In there?" Feyera asked pointing at the case.

"Yes, I expect you to wear it, considering your own higher mental threshold," said Fredrick. "It will protect you."

Edge was nervous however. If the stories Agent Timothy Rallsen had told him were true, then didn't this artifact make him lose his mind before when he was a rocket? Why was he having such difficulty actually remembering the events which took place at the Sanctum?

"Tell me how to use it."

And just then Fredrick's expression changed. He was smiling, not out of joy, but because of anticipated reprisal. Long-awaited vengeance. A catharsis.

"When one does not know what it is, then it is something; but when one knows what it is, then it is nothing."

Edge scratched his head, "So you're giving me a riddle?"

"Exactly. You are keen Feyera. The relic is everything as much as it is nothing," Fredrick lifted the case from the ground and handed it to Edge, before entering the helicopter. Edge gingerly held the heavy case with both his arms. "This is yours to wear."

"But where are you going?" Asked Edge.

"I will tell you something about Mercurius. It is incredibly dangerous for more than one individual to gaze upon the artifact in its primal form. From my understanding, in its most primordial form it will adapt to the mind of the one gazing upon it. Now if there were more than one individual to look upon it, it would mutate in two different directions for a while, each based upon the individuals thoughts and eventually force a convergence," Fredrick said smoothly.

"A…convergence?" Edge asked, perplexed.

"Yes, something absolutely maddening I would imagine. To be forced to have your viewpoint, perceptions, and even your mind altered to coincide with that of another…It would undoubtedly break you," Fredrick sighed, "Reilken Mercurius will not serve two masters. To wield it, you must make it conform to you rather than become conformant to the power. There can be only one."

"Yes, but you didn't answer my question!" Edge said now rather frustrated. "Where are you off to now? How did you even manage to get a hold of the Mercury Relic?"

"Patience, Mister Feyera, patience," Fredrick didn't even say goodbye as he clambered into the
Edge looked up as the blades of the air fairing vehicle began to rotate. The suited man sat in the pilot's chair, hit a few knobs, and flipped a few switches. Edge backed away from the vehicle as the artificial wind picked up. As the machine began to rise into the air, Feyera looked up to see his friend. He could have swore that he saw what looked a tear in Fredrick's left eye as the dark copter rose into the now cloudless sky.

Once the International Police copter was out of sight, Edge looked over at Brucie, who gave him a rather nervous nod. Slowly his telepathy was coming back. At least he could communicate with his Pokemon and be open to their emotions. Something didn't sit right with him, but his curiousity was killing him.

I'm going to open the case. Feyera shook the heavy case in his hand, and glanced at Brucie. If anything happens to me, if I lose my wits I need you to do me a favor and stop me...no matter what.

The Charmeleon's jaw dropped. [Master, I cannot do that. You're my trainer. I won't attack you. I refuse to.]

Nonsense, we're equals. We have different strengths and weaknesses but we depend on each other to cover them. Edge parted his thick bangs, revealing his sinister eyes contained within the rings of light surrounding the iris.

[We're friends. You wouldn't hurt me, and I won't hurt you. Even if you start to lose your mind, I've recalled times where that has happened before, and you are still here. I've never had to do anything drastic.]

Let me be clear, please. Fredrick claimed that this...was a weapon. As you already know, I myself am already capable of destroying things around me. I need you to stop me if it proves to be too much for me to handle. Pausing and breathing in slowly, Feyera touched his temple. By any means necessary. Charmeleon's head remained motionless. His claws hung behind his back above his fiery tail. You have orders now. I'm commanding you to do so.

[You are suggesting I kill you?] Brucie responded.

If I am going to kill you and the others, then yes you must. Save everyone from me if it comes to that.

[N-No. I can't do that to you, Chris. You're my first friend. You taught me that people can be trusted.]

Feyera laughed and sat down next to his Charmeleon and stroked the skin behind his head. And you taught me that Pokemon aren't all bad. If it weren't for you, I'd still be serving coffee at Prevoy's.

[Yeah, but you wouldn't be in as much danger as you are in now. You wouldn't be telling your first friend to kill you!]

Feyera shook his head and stared deep into Brucie's bright blue irises. Hey, I wouldn't have a first friend like you if I hadn't taken the first steps on my Pokemon journey. Sure, I had no idea that it would lead me here. Sure, I didn't know that there would be loss and sacrifice. But it's suffice to say that we're pals and we understand each other because of the journey we undertook together.

[I...guess.]

Come on. Just promise me you won't let the situation get out of hand. I need you to do that. Okay,
The fire lizard was reluctant to make eye contact with Edge as he stammered an [Okay] ridden with sorrow and discomfort.

*Thanks, I knew I could count on you, Brucie. You'll need to back up.*

The fire lizard stepped back a few paces to be out of the artifact's sight once the case was opened.

Edge smiled, hoping this wouldn't be the last time he would see his friend. He knelt on the soft earth and unlocked the case. To his surprise, upon releasing the metal hatch locks, the case sprung open on its own revealing a thick black bracelet. It was nearly two inches wide and two inches thick. The internal diameter extended enough for Feyera to place his hand through, but the trainer first held the strange device in his hands. It was remarkably light for how clunky it looked. There were slightly darker sections on the exterior of the bracelet making a checkered pattern. This was it? This was the fabled Reilken Mercurius? How?

Studying the dull and seemingly insignificant apparatus, Edge spun it around in his hands. No odd markings or texts. Just an oversized black wristlet. It was smooth. As he fondled the metal, it rubbed against his skin, giving him a faint tingling sensation. He lifted it up to his eyes and looked through the hole, once again it was nothing out of the ordinary.

*Okay. Edge thought. I'm going to put it on. Everything is going to be fine.*

Holding the bracelet with his right hand, he cautiously put the first four fingers of his left hand through it. Nothing. He then inched his palm through. It was snug, but as soon as it hit his wrist, it loosened. There it was just dangling on his arm. Feyera shook his arm a few times and watched the thick metal ring bounce about along his arm. Still nothing. Was Fredrick playing some kind of joke on him? He pulled the bracelet about two thirds up his forearm so that it would stay in place, with his soft beige flesh fully encasing its interior. However as he put the arm down, it slid right down back to his wrist. Odd. He rubbed the interior of the metal device with two fingers from his other hand. It was oiled and incredibly slick, no wonder it didn't stay in place. By making a fist with his hand he kept it from slipping completely off.

Feyera turned and looked at Brucie who was crouching beside a small rock. The Pokemon looked scared. Nothing was happening, ant that made everyone tense.

*Weird how nothi... "ARRRGGGHHHHH!"* Edge bellowed. The dark bracelet had tightened tremendously around his wrist all of a sudden. It felt like his circulation had been cut off. He looked down and saw the oversized band constrict further around his wrist. In the blink of an eye, the strange apparatus was attaching itself to him. He flailed his arm about and hollered obscenities, causing his Pokemon to rush at him.

A wave of energy cascaded from the ancient relic, causing a forceful invisible barrier to separate Edge from his Charmeleon. Edge's pained expression worsened when he saw his Pokemon trying to approach him and being knocked back by the unseen force. The young Pokemon dashed again at the trainer, only to be sent flying back by the barrier extending around him.

The automatic response was to pull the bracelet down and off immediately, but that proved to be impossible. Edge felt his nerves shooting pain signals as the hallow disk filled itself entirely with his wrist's flesh. It had gorged itself with the flesh his body. Edge's mind ordered his free hand to grasp the device, and pull it off. He felt his own skin begin to be tugged with the apparatus. The two were connected. And still its unyielding power gripped tighter around Feyera's wrist; influential piece of equipment possessing a mind of its own.
As if the attachment were not enough, he soon felt a sharp needle of some sort extend through the center of the bracelet, impaling his flesh. The incredible sting was even more excruciating than the bonding tightness. He felt his blood race back into his hand, coursing through the bracelet as if it were a part of his anatomy. Boxed sections glowed a faint green, while the ebony black material remained as dark as night.

Recoiling in pain, Edge sprung back from the briefcase, alas the bangle still remained glowing and pulsating within his grip. He reached for his Poké Ball, perhaps hoping that Desperado his Gyarados could save him. As he looked on his belt, he saw the Poké Balls had disappeared completely. He was trapped.

Yelling, Edge smashed his possessed hand into the gravel and dirt using his free arm. This proved fruitless as the black and green ring began to glow more and more prominently. Slamming the now gorged metallic band to the ground repeatedly, it began to loosen its demonic grip on Edge.

Gasping furiously whilst smashing tissue and metal, Edge felt himself having difficulty breathing. The unusual pain returned. He fought the urge to use his psyonics and amid the disorderly struggle, his eyes began to roll back as his vision became contorted. The images of his surroundings began inexplicitly flowing up. He tried to maintain focus, looking for Brucie while continuously hitting the now surrendering weapon. As he brought his hand down for the last time he could muster, his vision blackened completely.

The sound of distant waves and gulls caused Edge to open his eyes. He was lying on an unpopulated beach. Not the one south of Lavender Town though. This beach was different from the one he had been traveling on. The eastern seaside was rocky. He now lay on a shore covered in fine sand. The tide splashed at his feet, but he did not feel wet. He felt his left wrist, which was still surprisingly intact after being crushed and even taken over. The device had been taken off somehow. Rubbing his eyes, Edge looked out at the thick grey clouds forming around the sandy coast.

"Beautiful day, isn't it?"

Already knowing who was addressing him, Edge had a response ready; *I did as you asked. I rid Lavender of Haunter.*

Her sweet voice acknowledge him, *"You did what you said you would. And you did well. I fear now however, you may be in great danger."*

*How do you know?* Edge said to the invisible figure.

*"I'm able to...know what is happening to you."

*And how is that? Are you reading my mind?*

*"In a way yes. It's long and complicated. I'll have to tell you in person. There is not enough time in a dream."

*Are you kidding me? We have all the time in the world during a dream!*

*"Dreams rarely move linearly, Chris. Usually they are circular. You'll be interested to know that this entire sequence will repeat itself until it is ingrained in your mind enough for you to take it with you back into consciousness."*

Feyera gasped and tried to say something, but only his thoughts made any resonating noise. *Wait what?*
"Don't worry about the details, veh Feyera. Everything is going to be fine. That...that is what you want to hear isn't it?"

Yes, but somehow it doesn't sound like the truth.

"I can be honest with you, or I can console your spirit with comforting lies. The latter will expel me from your world entirely."

Why would I want that? I need to be back with you. You told me you had answers and now you're backing out?

"It is a long and arduous road, Chris. You'll be forfeiting an easy life, and embracing persecution for your power...and me."

Feyera sat up straight and addressed the cloudy sky over the ocean. You only appear to me when I have been in close proximity to Fredrick. You are clearly related to him in some way, aren't you? I didn't get these visions until he had his Hypno use Hypnosis on me to recover my past. The thing is; I honestly still don't know your name. Or why you have a knack for showing up whenever I am going through a difficult time.

Edge paused, wordlessly hoping the voice was still listening.

Uninterrupted he continued, If you truly had something special with him, you would be honest about it. You would tell me. I tried to ask Fredrick about you. Every time I built up the nerve, I just couldn't. And do you know why? Because he won't allow me near his mind. Furthermore, I have learned that the Rockets took more from my friend than I previously thought, but where do you fit in?

There was silence. The wind began to kick up, and the nearby palm leafs began to rustle.

"Chris, I...just thought you would know by now. It isn't your friend. It's you. But you don't understand yet. How could you? What am I even doing! You've given up so much of yourself already, where will it finally end? When does it stop? Can it be stopped? Your life is precious. I...I've wronged you...he wronged you."

Edge's eyes attempted to follow the source of the female's voice. In doing so, he bore witness to her glowing figure far away on a rock-strewn jetty. Springing up from where he sat, he wadded in the shifting tide and began journeying towards her.

"Please...tell me that I can just finish what I've done to you. You don't deserve to be put through all of this," she said.

Listen, I'm not going to let you go away. I'm starting to think of you as more of a guardian angel of sorts instead of a mysterious dream-bound girl.

For the first time he heard her laugh without holding back. Her innocent laugh made him blush. It was lighthearted and refined.

"I assure you, I am here for you. Just not physically. Not yet at least. Well, I suppose that isn't fully accurate, but I don't know how to explain it. Until I am, I can only access you through your dreams and heart..." she replied, her voice softly echoing in his mind.

This is all a dream though, thought Feyera. You said it yourself. This is not real. These are hallucinations.
"I only said the former. Tell me, what of these dreams is not real? These thoughts, they are a part of you, are they not? Isn't that something real? You carry the dream into your life when you awaken. It becomes a part of who you are, and shapes your essence. And you have the audacity to say it isn't real?" she responded; her voice filled with distress.

What I'm dying to know is how you contacted me outside of a dream? Before. I could not see you. Telepathy works that way doesn't it? Fuji even told me.

"You must be within sight of the one you which to communicate in most circumstances. But our connection is different," she replied softly. "It doesn't follow conventional rules."

The water level was rising as he pursued his goal. The storm clouds were now churning the salty waves as the rain began to fall. Edge could no longer keep his feet on the ground and started swimming towards her.

"You mustn't do that though!" she warned, her voice pitching higher at the end of the sentence.

Oh yeah? Then just try and stop me! Edge defiantly yelled at both her and the building coastal storm.

His front stroke was getting him nowhere quickly due to the turbulence of the waves. But it didn't matter, he was close now, he had to be. The water stung at his eyes and he was being helplessly tossed about ruthlessly by the sea. For hours, it felt like he was swimming time seemed to slow down significantly as the water knocked him about.

His right arm felt the jetty's rock. As he attempted to pull himself out of the tumultuous water, a large wave struck him down causing his head to be smashed against the rock. He felt dizzy as the blackness overcame him.

"No!" she screamed, pulling his limp body fully out of the water.

She tried to lift him out of the water, slipping only slightly as the water continued to churn relentlessly against the sharp rocks.

Edge's vision was all disoriented, he thought he saw her shining amber eyes but the dizziness rendered her other features ambiguous. Head spinning, he managed to clasp her hand in his as the rain beat down on his face, obscuring his vision further.

"It's a path you cannot take back. Once you are told the truth, if you abandon me...then your life will end."

He tried to see her he desperately felt for her as the water doused his face, burning him with its saline properties.

I will stay, said Feyera. With you.

Suddenly he felt her lips against his own. She kissed him. He was too stunned to react.

"I promise you. I'll be with you soon. You'll find me by your side when you need me most."

The dream began to fade as a bewildered Edge regained consciousness.

Lifting his eyelids was not the worst part. It was the rush of pain that unexpectedly greeted his body.

His heart ached. There was no question that his body had taken a beating from the ordeal. Not just the vivid dream, but also his encounter with the Reilken Mercurius. He thought he felt the old
familiar pulsating agony originating from his chest protrusion.

[Chris! Are you okay?] Brucie yelled. His Pokemon was by his side again.

*Nuhhh…yeah…I'm alive at least, Brucie.* Edge mentally projected to his loyal Charmeleon. *I don't think anything is broken…*

As his vision returned, he angrily gazed down at his previously imprisoned hand. The bracelet was still there, giving off a very dim forest green glow from certain boxed off sections of its elevated width. Fortunately his hand was fine and fully functional. He played with his fingers and moved his left arm around. Though the band was somewhat cumbersome with its large diameter, it was deceivingly light in weight. If he looked away from it, he didn't even notice it. Curiously, he grasped the thick metal band and softly tugged, feeling his skin pull from underneath it. He then ran his hand about its circumference, feeling for some type of latch or release mechanism. The only thing he felt save for the smoothness was the dull radiating heat from the glowing sections. The Reilken Mercurius was stuck on him for now. He didn't know how it worked or anything really.

Feyera felt somewhat lethargic. The entire ordeal had really taken a toll on him. The gray late afternoon light made it difficult to see.

[Uh wow. That thing…? That's it?] asked Charmeleon, whose his eyes were aglow from the spectacle.

*Yeah, this thing is the Mercury Relic. It attached itself to me.* Feyera thought he felt the band softly hum as he used his telepathy, but it was probably just his imagination.

As far as he knew, it didn't make any sense as to why such a device would be labeled "powerful" it just seemed to be a nuisance. What would Arcturus have wanted with it? What powers did it have? Other than repelling Brucie with that strange barrier, it seemed to be a rather inferior piece of equipment or apparel for that matter. Feyera heard a soft growl next to him. He looked up to see Des giving him a grin.

[Well I'll be! Seems like you're okay after all.] Desperado, Edge's Gyarados smiled at him. Apparently, she had exited her Poké Ball. *Was startin' to get worried that I might have had to intervene and do something messy.]*

Edge smiled again, firmer than usual. *Haha. Yeah. I worried too much about it. Now I guess I need to just figure out why Fredrick wanted to give this to me. What do you think was the intention behind it? How do I even...use something like this?* He shrugged his shoulders. His body had taken enough of a beating. First the red shard sticking out of his sternum from the Rocket's Electrode and now this unsightly piece of equipment.

[Looks can be deceivin', hun. Just look at you for instance. Who'd think you could match me, a Gyarados in power?] She roared, and her hot breath blew across Edge's face. *See what I mean?*

*I guess. I hope I figure out how to use it...if it really is a weapon before it's too late.*

Desperado dropped her brow and pouted her lips. *If somebody outdraws you boy, walk away. There's plenty o' time to look tough when you're outta' sight.* Edge could feel her thoughts radiating the memories of the S.S. Anne catastrophe. But was Reilken Mercurius truly as innocent as it seemed? Where could such phenomenal power be hidden?

July, Edge's Gloom was also out and about. She studied her trainer quizzically. *Umm…master, Brucie told us to try and help you but the artifact wouldn't let us get anywhere near you.*
I figured as much, to my surprise my Poké Balls weren't on my person. I gave them to Brucie in case he needed backup to...

He was going to say "kill me" but that sounded too harsh and he didn't want to make his Pokemon think that he had even considered that as a possibility. The only one who knew was Brucie. He alone held that responsibility.

Save me. Edge finished his telepathic thought with a grin.

[We still going to Fuchsia for that date you have?] teased Des.

Oh. Of course we are.

His thoughts shifted away from the band around his arm and back to the dream. The kiss. It was incredible. He tried to imagine what it would be like to actually be with her in person, but his mind could not take him there. She was too much of a mystery. So was Mercurius. Both were connected to him and he could not fully comprehend it, yet it gave him an anomalous satisfaction. He was beginning to thoroughly enjoy this unraveling mystery.

With a farewell fresh upon my lips, I turn to the moon and walk towards dusk, a twisted road lays ahead, the faith of those who cherish me guide the feet that are lost. The words emotions evoke...I am simply unable to impede them at times.
The sunset's spectacular hues of orange and purple enveloped Edge Feyera's vision as he continued to walk west towards Fuchsia City and the southern sea's reflection of such majesty amplified this picturesque vision.

Gleaming at his side was the Reilken Mercurius, a lightweight metal bangle that had attached itself to the trainer's left wrist. The tessellated emerald blocks along its wide perimeter gave off a subtle glow as the trainer walked along the rocky shoreline.

Edge's psyonic powers had been mildly suppressed from disuse since they saved him during his second visit to Lavender Town's Pokemon Tower. His own confidence in them was beginning to shake.

He turned to his first Pokemon, Brucie the Charmeleon and gave him a small nod. Thankfully, his psyonics still allowed for him to communicate with his Pokemon, especially when they had similar emotional states.

"We are going to get the Soul Badge, Brucie. Then there will be answers, I promise." Feyera had told his Pokemon companions about the dreams he had, yet none of them were really convinced.

"So you're absolutely positive this 'dream girl' isn't deceiving you?" Brucie asked.

"Naw, since when has our little rodeo star been led astray by his ambitions?" Gyarados humorously joked.

"That's not funny! I'm telling you she's real! I heard her voice when I woke up after all!" Feyera retorted. "There's a Gym Leader in Saffron with psyonic abilities as well! Her name is Sabrina. Do you know what that means? It means I'm not alone! Do you have any clue how important that is to me?" Edge mentally exclaimed. It wasn't too difficult to understand, and yet his Pokemon had been resisting his choices. If they had any idea what it was like to be in his position, they would be desperate for answers too.

"Whoa, now, mind yer temper. Every trail has a few puddles in it. Sometimes you get, and sometimes you get got, s'all I'm sayin'," Desperado replied to her trainer's telepathy.

"You're right. I've been very wrong in the past. I shouldn't have gotten ticked off. And I've put you guys—my friends—in much danger because of it. But you must understand how passionately I feel right now about this."

"S'all right Edgie. You've gotta do what you feel is right sometimes. We'll have your back. If we get into any trouble, well let's jus' hope we can have a hearty laugh and say: 'Don't worry – we've been in tighter spots than this'!" Gyarados said as her lengthy serpentine body shook from excitement.

"Thanks Des, I needed to hear that, projected the young trainer. "We're nearing the end. Once we get the Soul Badge, I think that we'll be able to take a nice long reprieve."

"But what about the Rockets?" asked July.
They won't be able to chase us forever. I highly doubt they have many bases off the mainland. If we need to, we can always leave Kanto for good. Feyera didn't like saying that, but it was the truth. True, Kanto had been where he had grown up. It had been where he had gained his education, received his initial Pokemon, and even obtained his first official Pokemon League Badge. However, he had no real attachment to the nation. It wasn't like he had family here. Rather, his family of Pokemon traveled with him.

[Well thanks a bunch for at least asking us first!] stammered Brucie in frustration. He didn't want to hear that plans were being made without his input.

I didn't mean it like that. We'll only leave Kanto for good if there is no other way to evade Team Rocket.

[But Chris, if everything goes according to plan, and you meet this girl from your dreams…tell us please,] Brucie requested. [We can only have each other's backs if we trust one another.]

I know. I'll keep you informed. But as of now, our objective is collecting the Soul Badge. Though I just cannot imagine why…

[Something is fishy about this whole operation.] said July softly. [I can understand clearing out the Pokemon Tower. That makes sense. We were helping people there. But going around hunting for Pokemon Gym Badges?]

It sounds strange, but she promised me in Fuchsia answers would await.

[Feyera,] July muttered, [can you think of anyone at all who would want you to be collecting League Badges?]

I mean it could be Sabrina. She's a Psychic Pokemon trainer and a Gym Leader. That would make sense in my opinion. Fuji said she had psyonic powers not dissimilar to my own.

Brucie crossed his stubby arms, stumped. [What's the connection though?]

Edge shook his head. I haven't a clue partner.

[Someone say my name?] asked his Gyarados.

Edge chuckled exposing his white teeth. No. Sometimes I call other people 'partner', Des.

[Haha, well you'll always be my pardner, pardner. Head 'em up, move 'em out!] Edge laughed at her affection as he walked with his Pokemon along the coast.

They were within sight of Fuchsia by late evening. The lights from the city helped to guide them as they drew closer.

Eventually, they arrived and Edge made it clear to his Pokemon that tomorrow would be the day when he would find out more about himself via the dream-girl's instruction by earning the Soul Badge. He returned them to their Poké Balls upon entering the city's lively nightlife.

The aglow city was built near the Southern Sea and had a few large buildings, but it was nothing compared to Saffron. Edge had remembered it being a more militarized port during the Great War, but now it seemed to be more of a tourist spot. And who could blame the tourists? The weather here was gorgeous! The balmy night and sea breeze made the trainer feel like this was a perfect place to meet up with his destiny.
There were a few signs welcoming the newest attraction to Fuchsia known as the Safari Zone. According to a massive billboard on the main road it was a place to the north where trainers could capture exotic Pokemon. How that ever got past the DBC’s stringent controls was beyond him. He laughed; perhaps if he was still on Oak’s mission to categorize Pokemon then he would have found great interest in this activity. However, now his heart and mind were set on one thing; following the very specific instructions given to him by the dream. To discover who he was and find some answers. That’s what he needed more than anything else.

Fortunately, it did not take long to find a vacant place to spend the night. Probably because it was a weekday. He hid Reilken Mercurius under his long-sleeved jacket and walked into an urban hotel reading vacant on its top floor in pink neon lighting.

The front lobby was crisp and clean. It wasn’t the nicest hotel, but probably all he could afford. The blonde at the reception counter beamed upon his arrival. "Hello there young man, late night?" The lady at the counter might have been referring to his eyes, but he did not care enough to find out.

"Haha, yes. Very. I would like a single room for the remainder of the night please," he grinned softly at the blonde.

"Very well," she turned to her computer terminal and rattled away on the keyboard. Victoriously she turned back to him, "Well we have a balcony suite on the fourth floor."

"I'll take it ma’am." He was feeling a little liberal in his spending now that he knew that answers were close.

"That will be 1400P. How will you be paying sir?" she asked courteously.

"Cash," Edge reached for his wallet and noticed how light it had become. He prayed that he would have enough funds to stay here. He did, just barely though.

"Thank you very much, here is your keycard. Hope that you have a pleasant night!" She handed him a small card which he grasped from her hand.

"Thanks."

"Give those tired eyes some rest!" she exclaimed as he waited for the lift to arrive.

"Haha," Feyera issued a simple laugh prior to entering the small box and clicking his floor number on the instrument panel. Heading up the elevator, Edge had forgotten what urban life was really like. So convenient!

He swiped into his room, did a quick scan of the place to make sure all was satisfactory before bolting the door closed behind him. He took off his clothes down to his undergarments, and collapsed on the made bed near the window. He looked out at the black sea beyond all the city lights. Soon the trainer became more interested in his pillow than the sights. It didn't take him long to become comfortable on this mattress. He felt like royalty!

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Edge jolted in his sleep. The balmy breeze from outside had grown cold.

*Not another dream,* he thought.

There was nothing he could do, the dream had already started and reality seemed miles away now. He was in a room, dimly lit by candles on the floor. A chilly breeze blew through his thick light bronze hair. He could feel his extremities shaking in the cold air. Crossing his arms, he was filled
with uncertainly. He sought to escape the pain, the anxiety. There seemed to be no exit from this
prison however. A prison of the mind was more restraining than any physical prison imaginable.

His thoughts scrambled. His mind, losing focus, embellished itself in the random ambitions only
present in the most sedated forms of consciousness. Edge felt he was losing his grip on reality. How
could he possibly remember who he was when he was so uncertain of who he was becoming?

These thoughts were not his own. He felt manipulated, as if an invisible force was feeding the
uncertainty to him. Full of confusion, his pulled on his hair as he remained levitating in the colorful
scene. Hunched over, and eyes winching, he tilted his head, gazing under his arm at the source of the
magical light. Shimming radiance to rival the most beautiful of sunsets, Edge gazed upon a sight that
took his breath away. Pulling away from the incorporeal tethers supporting his levitating body, he
gently landed on a small plateau of floating rock.

A voice, both soft and delicate seemed concerned about his nervousness.

"You try so hard, but you cannot pinpoint who you are," said the feminine voice, completely
sympathetic to his plight, "Tomorrow you will face an obstacle unlike any other you have faced
previously. I will be with you and you will have to make a choice."

"Wait, I…" Edge called out to the voice, but as soon as he did, he found himself sitting up in the
hotel room alone and in the pitch-black darkness.

"What?" he asked the dark ocean beyond the balcony.

Nodding back off to sleep this time, he entered into a dreamless rest.

The morning light gleamed through the door to the balcony. Edge awoke, rubbed his eyes and
walked towards the light. He swayed slightly upon trying to walk. He had become so weak. His
body had lost much of its original stamina.

However, of the promise of answers made him excited for the day's activities. He stretched and
sighed. The young man took a shower and was delighted to wash away all of the bad experiences he
had recently had. Haunter, Progenitor, the Rockets, they all seemed to spiral down the drain.

It was strange but the soft warm water soothed his very soul. As a scholar, he knew the method had
to do with vasodilatation. His blood pressure had changed to adapt to the warmer water surrounding
him. As the warmed blood spread throughout his body, it causes the blood vessels to expand. This
dilation lessens the resistance to blood flow, and blood pressure drops. By dilating the vessels, this
warm blood has, in effect, created easier flow and increased the body's level of circulation. As this
surge of warm, nourishing blood reached deeper and deeper into his body, more blood vessels
dilated and his sore atrophying muscles began to relax more and more.

He sighed deeply. The warmth not only stimulated activity in the man's bloodstream, it also has an
effect on the nervous system. The shower water's heat caused his central nervous system to become
depressed, which contributed to muscle relaxation as well as temporary pain relief.

After drying off with a heavy hotel towel, he walked towards his backpack still on the chair from last
night's late arrival.

The shard on his chest now fully visible without a shirt looked as if it was infected somehow. Where
it joined his skin was inflamed and warm to the touch. Its brilliant glossiness had not diminished
though. The young trainer sighed. What could he do? It was a part of him. He rummaged through the
first-aid kit he had packed away and took out some antibiotic cream. He gingerly applied it to the
swollen parts of his skin, careful not to brush too hard against the sensitive shard. The coolness of the cream made him shudder slightly.

After his ritual was complete, he then donned his fresh set of clothes.

Gathering his belongings, he went downstairs to eat a complimentary breakfast.

He wasn't too hungry but his stomach was gurgling. He forced himself to eat some eggs and pancakes but felt nauseous afterwards. Was he just nervous?

After barely making it out of the hotel without throwing-up, Edge walked over towards the Fuchsia Gym near the center of town but still within sight of the southern shoreline.

It was a warm morning and the southern sea breeze delicately frolicked through his hair. The sky was a pale blue and the sound of morning activity could be heard throughout the city.

Edge thought about the challenge he was warned of. Would it be in the Gym itself? Or after he received the Soul Badge? Either way, one event had to happen to lead to the other. Feyera considered what Erika had said about the Gym Badges having no real power. He felt a power in them though; it was very peculiar, opening his small Badge-case, he gazed in awe and wonder at his achievements. Four so far and the fifth was within his grasp. He could not obtain it soon enough. His heart rate elevated as he pushed open the Fuchsia Gym doors.

"A challenger approaches, Master Koga," an unseen man spoke.

Edge's scarlet eyes darted about trying to find the origin of the voice. His psyonic powers, being mildly suppressed had little luck finding the man.

"Trainer, this is the Fuchsia City Gym, home to a clan of ninjas. I request only a name," said a different voice.

"E. Feyera," said Mister Feyera.

"Ah, very well. Master Koga the Poison Ninja Gym Leader will accept your challenge. Reveal your first Pokemon, challenger," the original voice spoke once again.

Edge's psyonics were no use; he could not discern where the voices were coming from. Carefully, he reached down and clutched July's Poké Ball. Gloom's natural poison typing should aid him in resisting they Gym Leader's type.

"Go July!" Edge hollered. Gloom appeared before him in a seemingly empty arena.

The back panel of the Gym's wooden boards opened revealing an older man who was garbed in jet-black ninja robes, Edge gasped, how could he have been so unperceptive?

"Fwahahaha! So you are the challenger?"

"I am."

"Your Pokemon will face my Poison types. Challenger, I battle to win. The Soul Badge is special, I would rather not see it in every trainer's clutches."

"Fine, I'm ready to face you!" Edge said.

"Trainer…Poison brings forth steady doom. It is awakens the slumbering death within each of us, the
death that cannot be evaded. Despair to the creeping horror of Poison type Pokemon!"

"Koffing!" yelled the ninja as a floating purple gaseous figure appeared before Edge on the battlefield. It floated about and exhaled a great deal of toxic fumes from its numerous orifices.

The ninja master continued, "I am sad it has to come to this, but I cannot allow for my opponent to resist my poisons, while your intentions were good, you lack the ability to see what is going to happen now."

Feyera told his Gloom via telepathy to use her Mega Drain. The small plant Pokemon drew from the levitating Pokemon with green spores released from her bud. They danced about the creature, who vilely spat sludge forth.

"Koffing I command you to SELF-DESTRUCT!"

Edge could not believe it, his psyonic foresight didn't even warn him of the coming danger. He saw the gaseous Pokemon charge at Gloom, glowing white with power before exploding in close proximity to her.

JULY! NO! Edge tried to reach out to her telepathically.

He saw the Pokemon twitch, [Master, I'm sorry…I cannot go on.]

You're going to be fine, July. Please…just hang in there for me.

The dust from the recent explosion had settled revealing Gloom to be in severe condition. [M-maybe, but I'm done today no more, that attack…it …] their telepathic connection began to fade, as she fell unconscious. Not dead, but still very close. Too close. Edge swore to not let such a terrible thing to happen again.

He put his arms in the air, "What are you doing?" He roared at the ninja master, "You are destroying our Pokemon!"

His opponent softly chuckled. "Pokemon battles are vicious, Mister Feyera. It is the unabated push forward. The willowing of evolution at work. There will be a victor and a loser. The victor grows stronger. Has no other challenge taught you this? Perhaps they have gotten too soft in the other gyms. If you would like to, leave now in forfeit and I can guarantee no further harm to your precious Pokemon. I am a man of my word."

Feyera growled at the Gym Leader. Of course he wasn't going to forfeit. He had come too far. The trainer returned his nearly knocked out partner to her Poké Ball before unveiling his next team member to the master ninja.

"Go, Desperado!" Edge sent out his faithful Gyarados and she was all too eager to fight. Des, he's resorting to using explosive Pokemon to terrible effect. He…he really hurt July.

[Ya hurt lil' July? I'm gonna pump ya' full of lead!] she said telepathically as her blue body uncoiled and the sea serpent let out a loud roar shaking the Gym floor. Fortunately, Feyera could always count on his Gyarados' syntax to make him feel better.

"Muk, we'll end this!" Koga cried out releasing what appeared to be a liquid form of rich purple waste. The smell burned Edge nostrils, so he clenched his nose with his left hand.

Des, hit it with a Twister attack!
The Gyarados nodded and spun her tail about to generate a small vortex which nailed Koga's Muk right in its gooey center. The blob was pushed back by the whirling wind. With it, the smell also dissipated, relieving both Feyera and Desperado.

"Muk, Acid Armor! Show this foolish trainer what it means to lose all hope!" Koga said to his Pokemon, which then began to solidify and harden, losing its liquid properties as its cell structure and chemical composition changed.

Feyera pointed, Des, Twister again!

[You got it, pardner!] Another spiraling vortex blew across the stage. Yet when it made contact the opposing Pokemon hardly even flinched. The attack did very little damage, Muk's now solidified body seemed impervious to Gyarados' attacks. Edge was suddenly much more worried about this.

[Now, ya've done it!] Gyarados was infuriated by the opponent's resistance to her attacks. [Gone and made me angry. Poor choice!]

Then and there, right when his Pokemon began to grow frustrated and angry, Edge found himself falling into his Pokemon's consciousness as he ordered a Dragon Rage attack. Dragon Rage, Des!

The scorching heat from Desperado's breath attack stung his face as Edge felt his Pokemon unleashing all of her strength into this one attack.

Seeing the Gym floor from two perspectives now, his own as a trainer and from Desperado's viewpoint, one thing was sure, Koga's Muk was no longer conscious. The opposing Pokemon had taken a direct hit from the blistering wave of draconic energy. And the armor had cracked causing it to faint.

Both trainer and Pokemon smiled simultaneously as Edge's eyes glowed. A thick aura of burgundy now surrounded those baleful eyes.

"Now that's more like it, trainer! Give me something worth fighting over!" Koga ripe with fury ordered another Koffing to come forth. "Let's even the score a bit now shall we?"

Edge knew what would happen, he felt it. He was too well synchronized with his Pokemon and felt the premonition envelope him. Des, Intimidate it before it gets close enough to use Self-Destruct! He felt like telepathy wasn't even necessary as during these brief moments their minds were unified.

The ten-foot long sea serpent let out a mighty roar, louder than ever before as her fangs dripped warm saliva. Koffing, still floating and rushing at Desperado veered slightly off course and landed a few feet away from the atrocious Pokemon. Upon hitting the Gym floor, Koga's Pokemon exploded, once again leaving a thick cloud of dust and ash. Fortunately, the blast hadn't made direct contact with Desperado, but Edge could feel her weakness. She was pushing her limits by staying in battle. That last Dragon Rage had been exceptionally powerful and draining.

"Trainer, I expected you to falter by this point and yet here you remain. So be it! Behold, my final Pokemon: Weezing!" Koga shouted as he released a large floating lavender-colored Pokemon containing the bodies of two Koffings fused together by some powerful force. Koga continued, "This particular Pokemon won't be easy to defeat. They've been well trained for handling a myriad of circumstances. Even that little blue beast of yours."

[Heh… Gonna try to give me an invite to a necktie party, huh?] Gyarados sighed, knowing she couldn't bear to take another hit from this species of gaseous Pokemon.

Des, return, you're really hurt! Let's have Brucie handle this one! Edge's consciousness flooded back
to him as he recalled his partner back to her Poké Ball.

"Brucie! It's all up to you now!" the trainer called out.

Edge was concerned. What if these dual Koffings were twice as powerful? Weezing seemed extraordinarily dangerous. It was too late now; his first Pokemon was on the line. It was all up to their mental bond. If only this bond would carry them through the rest of this battle.

Charmeleon sprang forward, rushing with his two metal claws raised high, however the gas-filled Pokemon simply levitated out of the fire lizard's reach. It floated up towards the ceiling with impunity.

Feyera shook his head. *Gotta hit them with your distance attacks Brucie! Flamethrower! Nail it right there!*

Taking his tail in his right palm, the Pokemon blew scorching hot fire from his mouth, which was in turn amplified by his already fiery tail. Weezing survived the devastation; the gaseous Pokemon's own expelled fumes were in fact serving to nullify the burn damage.

"Weezing, TOXIC! Teach this Pokemon a lesson it soon won't forget," Koga commanded.

*No!* Edge telepathically paused his assault. But it was already too late.

Weezing expelled the most rancid, vile, and disgusting ooze imaginable at Edge's partner. The thick black poison covered his body completely.

Feyera yelled in agony as he too felt the poison seep into his consciousness. His knees wavered and he felt like he would collapse.

*[Master, help me!]* yelled the Charmeleon, covered in thick poison, as his body went into uncontrollable spasms.

Edge knew what he wanted to do, he wanted to crush Weezing. He wanted to exert all of his negative energy and open a rift. Yet he couldn't, for something held him back. He couldn't risk it. Despite his rage, he had come so close now to unearthing the truth. The prospect of losing it all now and doing what he had done before in Pewter forced the trainer to reflect upon the dream and everything riding on this battle.

*Brucie, I will take control!* Edge's mind spun into his Pokemon's consciousness and guided his motions out of the thick black sludge. The sludge's stickiness was subvert by Feyera's subtle guidance. Seeing its prey escape, Weezing bellowed and prepared to release more of the harsh chemical compound. Charmeleon was nearly out of the inky sludge, when the ninja's Pokemon charged at the fire lizard, eager to push him back into the rancid waste.

When the rushing Weezing expelled more of the horrendous mire, Feyera used some of his psionic energy to lift Brucie clear off the ground. The lizard, jumping into the air with the help of Edge's mind, whipped his fiery tail in Weezing's face stunning it. He then latched onto the hovering mass and slashed at the section where the two Koffings met, tearing open a small hole. Various noxious fumes were expelled from the fissure.

Weezing lurched about in pain, but Brucie was able to maintain enough focus and dug his metal claws into the left and smaller Koffing half of Weezing. The ninja's Pokemon desperately tried to rid itself of Brucie, and expelled even more poisonous fumes. The creature violently shook about.

*Brucie, you know what you have to do.* Their connection was so good that the message Edge sent
him was not even fully relayed by the time Charmeleon acted. The fire lizard stuck his flaming tail into the mouth of the right and larger Koffing half of Weezing. Weezing rolled backwards as he tried to stop his poisonous gases from excreting. It was too late though.

In a desperate last second action, Feyera pulled on Brucie using his psyonics just before Weezing violently exploded from being set off like an airborne bomb.

The sound of the explosion was deafening. Koga stood in awe as he realized his defeat. He spoke solemnly, "Trainer… I… I have been defeated. Your battle techniques are amazing as they are unprecedented. You've done well and earned this Soul Badge."

Koga handed the gleaming pink heart Badge to Edge who felt overwhelmed with a myriad of emotions. "Koga! What did you do? Why did you allow your Pokemon to sacrifice themselves?"

"Humph. You don't understand do you…"

"You're right! I don't understand you! You're sick in the head."

Feyera stopped his rebuke and looked at his poisoned Charmeleon.

"*Gasp!* Koga, I need to heal my Pokemon!" Edge cried out his voice full of worry.

"Humph… you should have brought an antidote boy."

"You gotta help me please! Help my Pokemon! He's in trouble. You did this!"

"You did this Feyera. You chose to continue to battle. Has the journey for Gym Badges taught you nothing?"

"N—No this isn't what I wanted," he clutched his Pokemon's trembling body.

"Your Charmeleon is weak on his own. His immune system won't be able to handle the poison. I've seen it happen before. You erred by challenging me without adequate training."

"This isn't about training! My friend is hurt Koga! Please."

Koga looked at his challenger's worry-filled eyes. "You may have bested me. I can provide you with the antidote."

Feyera smiled, "You can?"

Koga looked down at him. He was tall because of the platform he stood upon. "Yes. Although Weezing's poison isn't one to dissipate even over time. Your Pokemon will always carry it with him. That is the nature of Toxic. The best I can do for you is give you an antidote which will alleviate a few of the symptoms for some while," Koga said.

Edge's heart sunk. His Pokemon, his Brucie was permanently poisoned? What did that even mean? Weezing's Toxic was that potent?

It can't be! Brucie, you're gonna be okay!

[Urf… I don't know master… I feel horrible, *cough*] replied the Charmeleon.

Koga handed Edge a vial and a needle which had been concealed within the ninja's robes, "This will work. I'm sorry. These things happen in Pokemon battles. Administer the needle's capacity weekly."
Edge had become infuriated by the turn of events. Koga didn't care about his Pokemon like he did! Koga had sent two of them off as suicide missions. Quickly administering some of the liquid into Brucie's bloodstream he felt the creature begin to relax as the poison dissipated for now. Edge returned Brucie to the Poké Ball, frowning at Koga.

"I must go. Now," Edge wheeled around, afraid that the emotions would be too much and he might inadvertently hurt Koga out of sheer rage.

"Wait," the ninja master responded, "That antidote. It will inhibit the natural evolutionary process. It is a stalling agent. If you want to keep your Pokemon alive...he'll never be able to further evolve."

The trainer stared at the Gym's floor realizing what he had done. He had doomed his first Pokemon to be debilitated, perhaps permanently. If only he had been a little more careful...if only...

He swore under his breath. The guilt was eating him up from the inside. What had he done? Was it worth all of this? He ran to the door, clutching the lavender Soul Badge in his fist.

The young man exited the Gym; the sky above was still as clear and fresh as ever. Now he would find the truth. His despair serviced as a motivator now. Why did he make all of these sacrifices? He glanced down at the Reilken Mercurius. It still remained motionless on his wrist. The soft glowing pattern was hardly visible in the bright daylight. Where would he go now?

As he walked towards the coastline, he heard a very familiar voice call out his name.

"Mister Feyera!"

"Lorelei!" The trainer was beyond happy to hear her voice.

He saw her in the distance, and she nodded at him.

As he ran up to her she projected, "Come with me, Chris. There isn't much time."

"What! Lorelei! You can use telepathy as well?" Edge was very confused.

She nodded again, slower this time. She had maintained all of the beauty he had remembered her having when he first laid eyes on her after leaving Professor Oak's laboratory. From her soft eyes concealed behind her frameless spectacles, to her luscious hair. He even remembered the scent of her coconut cream perfume. Wait...that smell. Where had he smelled that before? In Pallet yes, but there was another place too.

He scratched his head and tried to focus. He stared at her lipstick. Feyera squinted slightly. Then he remembered. It was as if the olfactory nodes had helped him to recollect who she was. The woman in his dreams, she had the same perfume.

Edge said with surprise, You...You're the girl from the dreams!

Lorelei looked down at herself and sighed, "Yes, and I'm afraid if we don't hurry then it will be all for naught."

"Wait. But why here, why now? If you needed me, then why are we leaving?"

"You've done everything I've asked, now come with me to the Southern Sea. I'll explain everything there."

Edge followed her still perplexed as to how this was all occurring. But how didn't matter. He wanted
to know why.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: It pains me to inform you that this is the second to last chapter in Fractured Unity. With this in mind, Chapter 21: "Answering the Call" shall be released along with Arch 2's prologue. I hope that you continue to enjoy Feyera's adventures.
Chapter Summary

The conclusion to Fractured Unity. Hope you have enjoyed the read thus far.

Arc Two of my series Gift of the Protector is titled Pristine Embrace.

The wind from the southern ocean was beginning to pick up. The palm leaves rustled as the breeze changed in its intensity.

Mister Feyera followed Lorelei Carese, a member of Kanto's Elite Four, who was somehow able to commune with his thoughts. She projected her own form of telepathy. Edge found this to be amazing. For once he did not feel so alone.

_I don't understand. How are you able to do this? Are you the other person with psyonics that Doctor Fuji was talking about? Besides Sabrina of Saffron?_ Feyera questioned. He gulped down, realizing that his obvious attraction to Miss Lorelei was being rapidly realized. Here she was, the one kissing him in his dreams. He never thought fantasies such as these actually came true.

He couldn't quite make out her face because she was quickly running ahead of him. Her long flowing indigo dress was billowing behind her in the shore breeze. Edge wondered how she was able to run so quickly in it.

"No."

"But then how?"

"I promised you I would explain to you everything, right now we need to go to Chrono Island."

"Where is that?" Edge asked.

She let out a deep sigh as she slowed down on the docks, "You still don't remember?"

"Of course I don't, if I did I wouldn't be asking you!" Edge was losing his patience. _Enough with the act! What's really going on?"

"Alright, here this is the…um thing." Her slender finger pointed towards a formidable yacht, easily worth more than his university's tuition.

"The…'THING'? Are you trying to be funny? Seriously?" Edge was confused by his guide's apparent uncertainty. _This is yours?"

"No not exactly, but she'll understand. There isn't much time though!" Lorelei telepathically communed as Edge helped her to untie the docking tethers. She then ran under the cover of the vessel's internal cabin. Edge followed her into the room. Standing over the massive ARMOS control system, she rubbed her hands together softly.
Feyera raised an eyebrow. "Do you even have the keys to this 'thing'?"

Yet she patiently looked down at the instrument panel unaware of his question, deep in concentration. Perhaps she was trying to use psyonics to hack it or something. Feyera had no idea the extent of her powers. If she was able to inject specific dreams into his mind from across a country, anything was possible.

"Oh right!" she said pleased. Her hand reached to her dress' side and retrieved a silver key from a small waistline pocket. Inserting it into the side of the instrument panel and gently turning it, the board illuminated shades of orange and yellow lights. She then ran two of her fingers along the throttle key, sliding the knob and jerking the large ship forward unexpectedly. "Sorry."

Feyera shook his head. There was being eccentric and then there was this. It was almost like he didn't want to even ask. Taking his attention away from the bumbling Elite Four Member, he looked at the stormy Southern Sea above the dash panel, *Are you sure we should be going that way? Looks like a storm's brewing. How about you just talk to me here? I'm listening.* To be honest, he wasn't looking forward to seeing how she operated "her" boat past the harbor.

She glared at him, her reflective glasses showed no emotion whatsoever. "Guess you mean business. Okay. We will go to Chrono Island then," he said softly; the drive for answers stronger than ever. Soon the pair were heading south straight towards the storm at a blistering speed. Edge felt uneasy as the waves slapped against the side of the boat rocking it ceaselessly. He stared across the horizon where a distant island was coming into view. The young trainer wasn't sure what to think of Kanto's Elite Four member taking him all the way out here.

But who was he to argue? Feyera wanted answers. He had been promised them in the dream and now he stood upon that very threshold. Where would he find himself next? Hopefully Lorelei knew how desperately he needed to remember. He thought about Reilken Mercurius. Should he tell her about it? What about Fredrick? Rallsen? How much did she even know? He was pretty sure that she knew about Haunter and definitely sure that she knew about his newly acquired Soul Badge.

Lorelei was staring blankly at the horizon, completely motionless despite the tremendous lurching of the yacht she had "borrowed." Could it be possible that she was the person from his dreams? It seemed all too likely that she was. But if that was the case then was it true that she had kissed him?

Feyera nervously blushed, but Lorelei seemed to not notice. Her unwavering gaze remained fixed on the southern horizon.

"Are you going to tell me anything now?" Edge asked without resorting to telepathic communication. No response.

He walked next to her, but her face was devoid of any type of recognition. Edge waved his arm in front of her gaze, but she continued to stare into the distant ocean, her slender arms not losing their grip on the steering wheel as she navigated forward. *Hey!* he said telepathically.

"I'm sorry; I am doing my best to get you back now." He was surprised by her delayed answer, it was almost as if she had been busy doing something else to the point where she was losing touch with reality.

What do you mean? Edge asked, concern filling his mind.

"I need to show you, it is far more complex than you may realize. There is no way we can do this alone, Feyera." Her telepathic voice was weakening. "I never realized it would be this difficult to maintain control for so long. And to think...AHH!" Lorelei's arms temporarily left the wheel as the
boat swayed hard to port from the wind and waves.

"Be careful!" Edge shouted, his own arms held onto the wheel. She didn't seem to hear him, or if she did, her breathing was too irregular to talk back. She gasped before holding the steering wheel of the boat once more.

"Please bear with me until you arrive on the island." Lorelei requested. "I'll be okay. We'll be okay. Try and stay relaxed, that will help me. Deal?"

Sighing slightly, Edge looked out the yacht's windows at the pouring rain. Okay. Deal. Just please be careful, do you even know how to drive one of these?

He thought he heard her laugh mentally but her face remained completely static. The pair continued as the boat picked up even more speed.

Whoa! What's the hurry all of a sudden? Edge asked as he reached out to clutch one of the handles above the control suite.

Still, she remained very inert. Feyera turned his gaze from her to the large island they were rapidly approaching. The loud hum of the engines and crashing of the waves broke up the silence.

They were now well within the island's wide bay. The shallow waters were still lapping ferociously against the hull as rain and wind buffeted the large vessel. He didn't see a harbor though. Where was she planning on docking? "Umm…Lorelei?" Edge asked, his voice raising in pitch at the end of the sentence. She remained completely stationary. The boat continued at its brisk pace.

"Lorelei! We're going to crash!" he said frantically.

Despite Edge's warnings, the Elite Four Member's expression did not change at all. The yacht was maintaining speed and heading right towards Chrono Island's coastline.

Edge yelled telepathically, LORELEI!

"What is it?" she asked, slightly irritated. And then her eyes widened revealing heavily dilated pupils through the once reflective glasses.

Before she could do anything, the boat slammed into the jetty beneath it and the entire vessel was launched into the air. Feyera instinctively held onto her as the boat ran aground. The tossing of the cabin's interior decorations made Edge feel as if he was in a violently shaking box. Eventually the boat stopped moving as friction from the sand slowed its progress. The raw power of the motors stalled to a stop as ARMOS sensed the boat was no longer in the water.

"Mister Feyera?" Lorelei asked still holding onto him tightly.

Lorelei? Are you alright?

"What are you doing! Get out of my head! Where are we?" She was shaking from the recent impact and was clearly traumatised. His psionic telepathy frightened her.

"Huh, what are you talking about?" Feyera asked, "You told me to come with you!"

"What happened to my boat! Why are we in this storm?" She released him and inched backwards. Her facial expression was now fully animated with worry and a hint of fear. Did she forget everything?
"I…I don't know honestly. You asked me to come with you and then you said we were heading to Chrono Island and time was running out or something," Edge recited what she had told him prior to heading out on the boat.

"Chrono Island? That island is east of my home on Floe Island."

"Yeah, well we're here now; that's where you had ARMOS take us. You seemed really keen about bringing me here a few minutes ago."

"I don't understand what happened, I don't remember. I haven't seen you for so long. It's all a blurry haze."

"What? You don't remember anything?" Feyera felt like he was quoting her previous telepathic frustration.

"I…Did I hit my head or something? Here, let me call for help," Lorelei picked up a small radio and frantically adjusted the frequency in attempt to tune into a rescue station. Unfortunately, the coastal storm was causing a great deal of radio interference. "I can't remember anything," she muttered, gingerly rubbing her head.

Edge shook his head, and his auburn bangs flopped in front of his emerald eyes. How did he wind up in this situation? And just when things were starting to look promising.

There was still nothing but static as both Pokemon trainers waited in the cabin of Lorelei's now grounded yacht. She had sat down across from him.

Breaking the white noise, Edge asked her, "What was the last thing you remember, Lorelei?"

She sighed, "I just don't understand, Feyera. I was in my house on Floe Island. It was the first time that I visited home in two years. But I had to leave for some reason. Let's see…what was it…oh, right. I had to investigate Chrono Island because of an anonymous tip involving criminal activities, but I don't remember what happened after I got there."

"Criminal activities…great." Had the Rockets made their way here too? "Do you think they hurt you?"

"No, I'm fine. Just kinda scared," she said, "I'm not usually like this."

Feyera responded to her worry with an anxious nod. "Wait, you said that there was a reason why I needed to come to Chrono Island so that we would meet here!" Edge said putting the pieces together.

"I don't understand Feyera, you're right here," Lorelei looked very skeptical, and she adjusted her clothing slightly as she sat up. "What do you mean?"

"Never mind. Don't worry about it. I have to go now. Stay here and wait for help to arrive," Edge said to Lorelei as she stared at him from across the cabin's confines.

"Wait, Chris…What happened to you?" she asked.

He looked at his reflection in the cabin's window as the rain continued to pour down. His irises, a rich green, were imprisoned by a ring of light. Their ebony pupils darted around at his opaque reflection. The shard on his chest was no longer pulsating in pain as much as it used to. His thin frame glided towards the door, opening it with a psyonic kick. She sat up in fright as it made a loud "thump!".
The wind and rain stung his face. Once outside, he turned around to face Miss Carese before leaving. “I'm going to find out.”

He closed the door and ran out into the downpour. Something was calling him. There was no going back.

Walking from the yacht, Edge found himself on the sandy beach, trying to find a way to get to his objective. An unseen power drew him inland. The clouds above him were starting to pass over and the rain was not coming down as hard as before. Feyera journeyed past the beach and into the forest. An assortment of jungle vegetation was growing here. The broad-leafed plants blocked some of the now dissipating rain as the storm began to clear. Pushing apart the local fauna, Feyera found himself in a capacious meadow.

The grass was tall and thick, and the surrounding forest was completely quiet. He looked around the perimeter of the clearing, and saw nothing. It was all so very odd. He had memories of being here before. Multiple times as well. They weren't the same memories. Yet Edge couldn't connect any of them.

The rain stopped as he softly stepped into the vast field. The clouds above began to separate. Their splitting open gave the landscape a new and untold beauty. Flowers dotted the undergrowth. Their petals were brilliant amaranth. He gasped at the change of events.

Looking at the center of the open field, he saw a figure in the tall weeds.

Edge, looking out into the wet field cried out, "Just who are you? What did you do to Lorelei? What did you do to me?"

"Chris."

Hearing his name spoken in her unforgettable voice seemed promising. "I have no idea what is happening to me! Can you not understand the frustration? I am a broken man, and my fears are becoming reality faster than ever. I cannot survive this ordeal…” Edge paused. His breathing quickened. Feeling his chest the shard imbedded in his sternum radiated with tremendous warmth.

Edge decided to use his psyonics instead of vocal words. Please, I've waited so long for this. I have been tormented by my past. A past that is as unrecognizable as it is illusive.

Silence.

"Do you know who you are?" the mysterious voice questioned.

Frustrated beyond belief Edge responded, How can I know? I have no idea what I even am! My name is Chris. Chris Feyera. I've been a reasonable person my entire life. I was a Pokemon researcher. I was nearly killed by the Rockets when they robbed the Pokemon Sanctum two years back. When I came to, I had this! He angrily pointed at his chest, directing attention to the strange material jutting out from his clothes, its glossy shine as dazzling as ever in the fresh sunlight.

The questions were drowning his mind. Somehow, there was a force outside of him projecting doubt onto his cognition. It was truly strange; he was being fed his own self-doubts by the figure in the field. He dared not approach.

Was he really unsure of who he was as he destroyed those innocent lives? Oh how he wished he could just wake up from the terrible set of events that had taken place. If only he could just find himself in Pewter's hospital again, finding out that it was all just a dream and Onix had never killed
Lawrence. And then his wicked unwanted powers. Those powers everyone seemed so keen on exploiting. His mind began to focus on the Rockets, and those who used others for the sake of profit or passion.

Even though Edge had fought the Rockets in recent skirmishes, it did not change the past. What if he was one of them? All he needed was hard evidence proving his involvement through both his awakening memory and his interaction with Agent Timothy Rallsen back at Celadon's Luxaira Casino.

The more he thought about it, the more obsessed he became. What if he had gone to the Pokemon Sanctum after all: not to visit, not to pay off a loan at the nearby bank, but to steal from the Sanctum itself. Was his innocence guaranteed? Was anything in this solemn hour guaranteed? He felt depressed. His mind felt overworked.

"Chris, you have to understand that you are not like them!" the voice seemed somehow closer but Feyera had not moved from the outskirts of the meadow and the tranquil field was still ominously empty and devoid of activity other than the figure in its center. Her features were obscured by the refracting mist rising following the storm.

Then, you know me. Because now, not even knowing half the atrocities I may have committed I feel guilt. Pain. Remorse. Why though? The details escape me. But I feel...you know me. Edge wanted to express the connection he had, but mere words, even telepathic ones, could not do the sensation justice.

"Yes," was the reply. "I know. I go through it too. You aren't alone."

Why will you not reveal yourself to me then? Why now? What has changed? he asked, as his body shook from anxiety. Don't you see me on my hands and knees, begging and bleeding?

There was a long pause before she continued, "Because you were not ready to hear what I had to say prior to this very moment. If I had told you at an earlier time, then you would have rejected me all together. I know it. It was a strange predicament. I needed you to help me, yet I just did not know how to tell you these things without losing you."

Why? You have been a prominent member of my dreams. I feel as though you are a part of who I am to be honest, Edge responded.

"You are more correct than you realize."

Delicate? Far from it! Physically, yes he was weak. But mentally he had been so strong. He had confronted his deepest darkest fears in the Pokemon Tower, recollected the terrifying Progenitor Procedure, and even faced death when his psyonic powers took command of him.

What? I don't understand. Please, I cannot beat the Rockets. I know this to be true. Why are things this... Edge pointed to the shard on his chest, ...way?

There was a deep sigh, followed by absolute silence.

"Well?" Edge demanded. He questioned vocally and mentally without even realizing it.

"You believe what you see, however you already received what you were given. *Sigh* You are not who you think you are, veh Feyera," the voice responded more somber than usual.

That phrase goes without saying. Of course, I'm not. Obviously. Tell me something I don't know! I
have…unnatural…powers. Capable of rending apart the fabric of space, Edge smiled, his ego slightly inflating despite all of the uncertainty present.

"You are similar to me…you know about how we communicate…that is just the common path we share. What is the expression you use? 'But that is only the tip of the iceberg,' I think that's it. What I'm getting at is we share much more than mere telepathy," she responded.

Still unsure Edge responded, Yes, I know, you have made your presence to me noticeable. His smile was full of uneasiness. She had kissed him in the dream. That certainly did happen.

"This may sound silly—all things considered—, but do you...forgive me?" she asked him earnestly.

Baffled, Edge answered, Whatever do you mean? What did you do to me? You were in my dreams, but that is no crime. Then he stopped suddenly in a fit of doubt. How do I even know if you are real? Can I be hallucinating here and now? I've waited so long for this moment and here you are. It's all too real though.

"You've seen our power with your own eyes. You know it goes beyond the dreams. However, you are not led astray by the prospect of your gift. That is unusual for you species," she went on but Edge interjected.

Excuse me? My species? Feyera posed at a loss. What are you talking about?

"No. Forgive me. Not your species. I was wrong to say that. You are not one of them—not anymore. You have something differentiating yourself," she seemed to be slightly satisfied as she spoke.

Puzzled, Edge decided to inquire more about who he was addressing exactly, Tell me about you. This whole entire time I have been more concerned with myself than anything else.

There was stillness followed by an unprecedented surge of energy. Edge felt invigorated as the field's only partially colored landscape soon become drenched in all different types of embellished colors. The majesty of the Jacaranda's brilliant lavenders to the gentlest of Delphinium vanillas spun and graced the plant life. The beautiful Caladium petals were set against the luscious spring buds in perfect harmony. The succulent beauty of the meadow's actualization was nearly incomprehensible. In utter rapture, Feyera could hardly stand the immense sensory influx of color.

He stood, his trembling eyes fixated on the source of this gorgeous spectacle in the center of the field. He had no words to describe the amazing manifestation. Huh? I...it's incredible...

His thoughts were in a frenzy now. The field became so flooded with color that Edge had idea if he would even able to name all the fabulous shades and hues present in the new environment in a hundred lifetimes. As more colors continued to be spewed forth, their delectable shades were a true treat for the trainer's eyes. They mixed and blended, swirling in ecstatic pleasure.

There were evermore colors being generated by the figure. The flowers around her burst into bloom. As soon as Feyera thought he had comprehended the new wave of colors, another would cascade originating from their spectacular source.

The wind seemed to pick up only briefly. The young trainer found himself being pulled from the ground he stood upon into the air itself. He felt lifted in his thoughts to a plateau of unseen energy, and there he remained, floating in the sublime stillness and beneath him, all color radiated in faint hues of ever-shifting primordial splendor.

Her figure appeared before him. She was completely motionless. Edge's eyes darted about, while his face remained motionless.
"This is what it is to see emotion. Fully and unadulterated. You've been here before. It took me such a long time to accept that you would be gone, but it took me even longer to accept that you would be back. I made a sacrifice to protect you for as long as I could. I had to do without you," her slender arms gestured towards him. He instinctively grasped one of them with the hand not wearing the Reilken Mercurius. Her soft fingers brushed against his own, as they grappled with each other impulsively.

You're not a person are you? Edge quizzically responded, only realizing the absurdity of this question after it had been mentally blurted out. Of course she wasn't a person. She might have looked like a person from afar; for she wore a white gown, clean of all imperfection. However, up close it was clear that although humanoid, she had milky green hair, large eyes, a narrow frame, and a ruby shard protruding out from in-between her modestly curved chest.

At this she smiled, "Well…neither are you…”

Stumped, Feyera waited for the silence to break again. What are you? I don't remember, but it is all so familiar to me. Edge was still putting the pieces together.

"It's not just me…but you see…” Her hand clutched his tighter. Edge allowed her to pull his hand next to her pale cream-colored face, close the lofty spiked sides of it. Continuing, she finished her explanation, "I'm Gardevoir. Sana, when we were together, you called me…but my full name is Sanaria thas…"

"I knew it! You were a Pokemon!"he shouted at the Gardevoir. I… This never happened, you got it all wrong. I don't have any history with you! I never met you before. I don't have any interest in hearing that you were a Pokemon. I thought you were…"

"You believed I was really Lorelei or some other human girl?" Sana gently smiled at his repelled expression.

Well of course I did! You deceived me. Your little charade in my dreams mimicked them flawlessly.

"That was more you than me, Feyera," she laughed as the colors around them seemed to reverberate.

How do you know so much about who I am? I'm just some backwater researcher who got tied up with the wrong people. No one special. At least not until I started being with Pokemon.

"You weren't always Chris Feyera."

"What?" Befuddled, he responded, My name is Chris! Chris Feyera! Edge defiantly pulled his hand back towards his body, bringing hers with it.

She didn't seem to be taken aback by his swift recoil; reluctantly, she released. "I knew you would say something like that. You really are struggling with the splicing, not only physically but mentally. I wish I could help you but I cannot…not in my current state. I tried to before. And…I failed," Sana concluded. "That's why you're here after all. But it was meant to be. There had to be a reason."

Edge contemplated upon her hope before responding, You have been completely opaque towards me. How could you expect me to just go along with you! How do I know that you are not an evil demon? Feyera felt his blood pressure rising, the thought that she was some evil fiend terrified him. His mind had taken him to Cartesian Doubt.

She chuckled softly and blushed. It was easy to see the rosy hue overtake her face. Especially under her tender scarlet eyes. "I can feel your resistance; however it is crucial that you help me,” said the graceful Gardevoir.
Why? Why do I need to do anything for you?

"You're struggling because of me. A part of me. Inside of you. A piece you've forgotten because of me," The stiletto-thin figure pointed at Edge's chest while exhaling softly.

This was from the Rockets, Edge took her small hand as it pointed at the glossy crimson shrapnel slightly bulging from the center of his chest.

Touching the site with her outstretched slender arm, her three digits ran across its edges playfully. Expecting sensitivity, Feyera tensed up. And yet oddly it didn't hurt. She looked at him before shaking her rounded head. "You're more deluded than I imagined. That or just a master of denial. But you are willing to accept the fact that I have a personal connection to you. That tells me there is something elemental present. I feel you are not able to resist curiosity. Perhaps together…"

Why no. I never…I'm Chris. That is who I am. That is who I've always been…Right? Realizing his vulnerability, Edge decided to remain silent; his hand remained locked in hers.

"I have you here now physically," she took her loose arm and pointed to her heart. "But you've been here the entire time."

Stunned, yet intrigued, Edge continued to listen.

Sighing her head bobbed slightly and her hair bounced with her. "We have a history. Our lives were intertwined. The connection we had…humans have a word. Perhaps love? That's the emotion the sensation derives from. In any event, it was excruciating to be apart from each other."

Feyera now wore an anxious expression, I don't…I didn't love a Pokemon. That's wrong. She shook her head, somewhat upset by his interruption. "There was always the fear of death, but never the reality. Ahh…yet that is why we love, we know that we can lose each other. Love is knowing that anytime you can lose that which is most sacred to you, and still submitting to the ephemeral wholeness it brings. It is an act of purest courage. Such an outstanding concept."

Love's important. Edge didn't feel comfortable being educated by the Gardevoir's explanation on love. It made him wary and nervous, for having some type of Pokemon relationship was not only forbidden, it was illegal. I guess. I mean I love my Pokemon because they're my companions. We're friends, you know.

"I know, veh Feyera. But I'm talking about that type of love for one other being; think of it as true love. Love you don't share with anyone except one special person. Until that fateful day, we denied death, because our love was so passionately strong. Yet death has a way of catching up with those whose hubris rules over them. And on that day, two years ago, we knew that we were going to die. However it was not the first time we faced death."

Edge nodded, trying to keep up with the story, but the thought of him being involved in some past taboo frightened him.

"When the men took you away…I thought for sure that I would never see you again. You saved me from losing faith in the past, and that is how I was able to wait for you. I did not lose hope. And then you returned. However, you were not alone. You had a pursuer bent on destroying you…us. I knew that I could not live without you. My final wish was to be with you no matter what. I wanted to live together with you for the rest of our lives. And somehow that happened. It did not happen the way I expected it to, but it did. I am sure of it as I gaze upon you right now."

I…I…don't… Edge stammered. It wasn't possible.
"Of course you don't... You're not fully on either side. Just because you relate to a certain perspective does not eliminate the possibility that you have ties to the other side of the disc," Sana went on.

So you are saying what exactly? Why do I have these psionic powers over nature, why are they destroying me? Edge asked. He didn't want to acknowledge a past relationship possibly resulting in all of this.

"You are my protector," said Sana. "When we lived together, you fought valiantly to preserve our love. Against all odds. Even now, there is a reason for you being here, it is latent commitment to preserving what we had."

I'm sorry but I cannot recall...You're not you know... Edge was fighting back the urge to escape from this maddening proposition. His eyes stung from tears, but he could not acknowledge that they were his. You aren't a human.

"I had to pretend to be human so that you would find your way here. If I had revealed myself sooner...all would be for naught. That is why I used your friend Lorelei. Like I said before, I imitated her in your dreams as well. How else could I get to you? I knew that you had a romantic interest in her based on what you felt in Pallet, but..." Sana was about to continue before Edge cut her off.

Wait what did you do to her? asked Edge, the real Lorelei still on his mind.

"I briefly took command of her mind so that you would come here. I promise, I meant no harm; I assure you she's safe. I commandeered her consciousness when she arrived here not too long ago. It was incredibly difficult guiding a human yacht through a storm from miles away. Especially with all those...devices; no wonder you need two extra digits on your hands. I wasn't sure if I would succeed since it takes a great deal of emotional synchronization to guide a body that distance; to do it, usually you need to have intense similar higher-level emotions. But I had the thought of you finally being at my side, and I knew that I could do it," she beamed.

Yeah, except you crashed her vessel into the shallow rock bed. And now the real Lorelei has no idea what even happened, Edge had grown concerned and he wasn't sure if Sana was all too pleased.

"Well maybe I was just a bit jealous. Remember what I said about similar higher level emotions? One of those is desire. Besides, I knew you would be fine and I had to give that girl a reason to think she had amnesia." Sana chuckled.

Alright you need to cut it out and come clean. Edge growled, his patience running thin. You say you will provide ease to me and yet I have no clue where you are going with this. Fine, you're Sana the Gardevoir. You...loved me?

"And you loved me," she happily added on.

Yeah...um...Great. I just need answers. Desperately. You don't understand what this is like. I'm trapped. I don't know who I even am anymore, Feyera said.

"I promise you, let me explain everything, and your mind will be put at ease...it is just that I don't know exactly how to explain this to you. Every possible scenario I predict involves you either not accepting it or protesting. You see, I can predict your behavior but not fully. I get glimpses of possible outcomes but never the truth. It always remains obscure, especially with you. Sometimes I feel like something is wrong with me. I...I'm broken. If you could possibly just be open to my story..." Sana was looking tragically upset.
But the trainer was tired of her antics. *Fine. Amuse me. Give it to me straight. It's not like I have anything better to do. All I ever do is wait for answers, Sana! They are not even the ones I want to hear!*

Shrugging slightly, he took his gaze off her momentarily and looked to the vanilla colored clouds floating above in a pale sky. Sensing the harshness of his words, he returned to Gardevoir's sorrowful scarlet eyes and looked at her quizzically.

*That was heartless. I apologize. It's just...how do you expect me to believe you?* Feyera asked, feeling this information was a lot to take in at once. Too much.

She shook her head, *"Where I was going with this was simple. If you don't remember me then you don't remember us."*

*Us? We? You keep on saying things like that but I have no idea what is the deal with that is. I was trying to figure out where I know you from but I just keep drawing blanks. I'm a person after all. At least, I think that I am.*

"Oh...okay...just let me talk. Two years back, you don't remember what happened, but you know something did," Gardevoir asked.

*Yes, obviously. Look at me. I was maimed,* said the trainer while staring down at his chest, looking at the arch of crescent red. His eyes wandered up into hers again, searching for comfort.

Edge stared at her, his eyes swirling with fear and uncertainty. Looking into her eyes, he saw his own irises rapidly shifting between colors, unable to decide between coating themselves in a crimson aura or exposing emerald green. All the while, these multicolor irises were bound by a fantastic golden halo of light separating them from the white of his eyes. Their pluralistic nature had him confused. His head seemed lighter than usual.

"Okay, this may come across as outrageous. You've been conditioned to believe that a certain series of events took place. Perhaps for purposes I'll never fully understand, but the fact remains that you, Chris, were never a victim of any Rocket attack. You were not an innocent bystander during the Pokemon Sanctum robbery," the Gardevoir stated.

*How do you even know for sure?* Edge responded skeptically. He knew she was right. He just was not willing to accept so easily.

She closed her eyes and focused on his mind. Breaking the brief action, she said confidently, *"When Electrode use Self-Destruct, they destroy their entire bodies. There would be no shrapnel to penetrate into your chest. That story you were told...it was a lie. It was told to protect you."*

Edge wasn't sure what to believe anymore. He was perspiring slightly. His heart rate quickened.

*"This,"* she pointed to the crimson arch on his chest, *"Is a part of Gardevoir anatomy."* She then pointed to her own similar protrusion between her small breasts. *"Our species."* Indeed, it was the same size and shape; even the reflective qualities were a carbon copy.

*"You were involved in two different series of events two years ago. I'll try and recount the events to the best of my ability. It was a cold evening ripe with malice. On that fateful day, you were with me after escaping your captors here."* Edge eagerly listened, his head slightly nodding; acknowledge her words. *"I was in the wild, with you of course. Your Gardevoir name was Sephiteos."

*Wait what?* Feyera exclaimed. *Gardevoir name?* Now the story was getting too wild.
"Yes, just let me finish. We were trying to escape this very island. You see, we had lived here for a while after leaving our homeland, but this island retreat was no longer safe for us to inhabit. Back in the land of our origin, you were a prominent member of our civilization; but you chose me over all of the wealth and riches you had at your disposal. That is when I fell in love with you. We traveled far away from that place, and together we created our own lifestyle. Still, such things are not meant to last it seems. You were captured by the men on this island. They did unspeakable things to you in the facility. But you managed to find a way to escape...though I do not believe it worked out in your favor," Sana tightened her lips as if she had just tasted something sour. "We almost made it off the island; we reached a cliff, beyond the edge of this forest, and then realized that we were being followed. There was a young man you see, someone who had pursued both of us, but primarily you..."

Edge gulped as she continued her tale, "...he wanted to capture you, Seph. You were one of his experiments, you see. There was no question about that. The organization he was working for had already gotten hold of you once, but you had managed to escape...but not without scars," The Gardevoir stared into his halo-rimmed eyes.

"That's...not possible...I'm not..." But he could not say anything more on the topic. Was his whole life just a lie? It can't be that I was...

After what seemed like a few minutes Sana blinked and kept going, "The man had other motives however. You see, Gardevoir are able to discern the thoughts of others when they are paired with emotions. But you already knew that. This young man in particular had a deep abiding hatred. Being unaccepted and cast out from those close to him corrupted him terribly, to the point of joining a criminal syndicate at a young age for a human."

And you were able to figure out his entire history just by reading his emotions? The power seemed eerily similar to Edge's own abilities.

"Yes, and in doing so, I was able to also see the awful guilt awoken in him after tormenting Sephiteos. Seph, you...wouldn't forgive him. I don't know why you couldn't. Had you, and maybe all of this wouldn't have happened. Everything could have been averted through forgiveness. I tried to stop you," said the Gardevoir.

Forgiveness? asked Edge.

"Yes and the man would not take his leave until absolution took place, even when faced with death. I know he was wrong, but you shouldn't have used your powers against him. The problem arose when the man did something unexpected. He did not retreat. Grasping his weapon, I anticipated it to be one of those firearms which humans had developed recently." Sana said.

What? RAIL guns?

"Seph, you, tried to kill him. It couldn't have been more wrong though. Perseverance turned into rage, and rage turned into desperation. He had the means for dealing with Psychic Pokemon and our attacks." said the young Gardevoir.

Really? That sounds horrible. Edge considered the thought of losing this gift he had become so accustomed to—these took them for granted, possibly because they differentiated him from the rest of the human race.

"The rocket's extreme anxiety was so solidified that he chose to charge at Seph, raising the silvery device straight at you, before rushing forward at blinding speed. I fired off a Confusion attack, fighting the urge to passively handle the situation, however it proved useless. What he held seemed to
draw forth all energy into it, including Seph's Psychic lash. As the man closed the distance, the object in his hand began to become more and more malleable, losing physical properties and gaining spiritual ones. I still can't quite describe it. It was as if all that I felt was closed off from me. For a Gardevoir, loss of feeling is synonymous with death. Suddenly I felt vulnerable, even though I was at your side," spoke the graceful Gardevoir. The look of pain on her face made it apparent that Sana was reliving the experience through reciting the story.

"Gasping for energy, I felt myself fall to the earth as the man approached in weakness. His heart filled with determination, aflame with anger. He could not force you to forgive him. Risking everything, by the time I realized what he was doing it was already too late. I wanted to escape, yet Seph, you chose to stay. There was no chance of victory; our Psychic powers had been dampened. Consumed even. All in a moment, I considered the possibility that the rocket was indeed hunting us in particular to satisfy some unknown promise or debt he owed. When you denied him, he yelled in pain as he thrust the rapidly morphing silvery weapon through your heart. Unabsolved of guilt… he…ran you through." "*sniff…*" She began to weep.

That's…Edge couldn't find the words, her sadness was covering him like a heavy overcoat.

"...I could not stop screaming. I couldn't watch. All these foreign feelings rushed into me as I felt him helplessly flail his entire human frame into yours. Running the silvery material through your body, he violently yelled something I could not understand. After impaling you, the impact was enough to send you and him off the cliff into the abyss below," she said now with tears in her bright cherry eyes.

But I don't…

"I tried to use all of my power to manipulate gravity, even for a moment just to save you from certain doom, but it was not effective. I could not believe how helpless I was, how lost I would be without you. I could not bear the thought. My emotions relentlessly bled out into the world outside of me," her voice trailed off, as if she was reliving the experience. Edge could tell by her partially closed eyes, fresh with tears.

He stood near her and tried to be there for support. He too had experienced such "spilling-outs" yet referred to them unaffectionately as meltdowns.

She continued, more unsteadily than before, "I saw you both fall. I felt you die; I ran to the bottom of the cliff as quickly as I could. I could not find you. Rather, I only found one body. It was not my consort's. It was the rocket, the man who had killed you. His face was terribly contorted by some unknown power bringing him great agony."

Did Sephiteos die? Edge had to know.

"In a fit of fury I yearned for vengeance and was ready to end the life of the miserable human who had took the only thing I ever cared about: my Seph. What had he done to you? You were seemingly erased from existence. But the human's Psychic barrier was gone now. Forming a powerful Shadow Ball, I aimed at the still breathing Rocket's heart. Watching, I drew the energy ripe with vengeance up to his core. I knew his injuries were fatal, but I wanted to be the one to kill him," she clutched her radiating red core tightly.

Edge was uncertain. He had everything to do with this situation. All of it culminated in this revelation.

"Nevertheless, I stopped. I sensed a familiar feeling. You were back. Even though I could not find your body, you were still right in front of me, Seph. Gardevoir can sense their closest companion's spirits. It is a permanent bonding of spirit made present by our anatomy. If the sensation wasn't
enough evidence for me I saw the core of my mate on the body of the man who tried to kill him. Then I realized what I had done. It was all my wish. When I saw you plummet towards your imminent death, I only had one thing on my mind, preserving you. I knew that my powers were incapable of rescuing you, but what about my love for you? Would that keep you alive? Surely, it had, but not how I anticipated it. You were preserved but at a terrible price," Sana trailed off in reflection.

Edge thought about Reilken Mercurius. What Fredrick had told him about. Convergence. A melding of sorts. Sana, I'm not sure if that is correct. There was something about that ancient artifact which may have done what you claimed to have been responsible for.

Sana was in adamant opposition to this notion however, "Are you that emotionless? Can you really say those things? Don't you see how much sense it makes!" Her head shook back and forth. "Forgive my anger, it has been far too long since these events took place and I have grown bitter. The problem is that you are neither one nor the other. Not human and not Pokemon. Not Rocket and not Gardevoir."

Edge thought about this before issuing his next question, What are you trying to say, that I am a cross between a human and a Pokemon? I was both of these and now I am one? It doesn't make any sense. I can only remember being Chris Feyera.

"Perhaps you are both. The details escape me. The final outcome is beyond any of my knowledge. This I know: your soul was grafted into the human trying to harm us. Your suffering was tremendous, but at least consider what I have gone through. It's cruel really; to look into the eyes of the enemy and see my beloved trapped within..." Looking down at the rock beneath their legs, Sana averted Edge's gaze.

Feyera sucked in air. Then he released the pent up energy. It was all too crazy. I have no recollection of any of those events, Sana. As for Seph, I don't remember him. In fact, my memory is blanked I have my memories as Chris Feyera up until a point. Until recently, that point was when I was still a scholar and researcher. What happened to my memories as a Rocket?

"I knew you would say that. It is my fault that your memories are in shambles," Sana said.

Edge gave her a disapproving look, Like I said, I don't think it was actually you who did this.

"No, I'm not talking about what happened to your body. I'm talking about what happened afterwards. I wiped your mind. When I came to you, you were completely panicked. The pain was horrific I could feel it overflowing from your encapsulated body. It wasn't just the damage from falling. I can only imagine the torture of being splintered to a foreign body. Chris, my powers go beyond sight and extend to the richest forms of empathy. Knowing what I had done, I could not forgive myself for leading you on a path filled with such pain. I didn't know what to do. I had to give you some comfort."

So you cleared my memory? he asked Sana.

"Yes, but you see, your human form was much less resistant to my mind, and I overzealously cleared many of your recent memories at the time. I'm not even sure if all of them were yours. You do have human memories don't you?" Sana was nervous at what his answer might be.

Yes, almost all of them, except for when I was eighteen. A lot of it is a blur, but I remember my schooling, my research, and my background. Now you are telling me that it is all a lie! Because half of my existence is locked away in the annexes of your spouse—this Gardevoir Sephiteos you speak of? Edge asked.
"Don't look at it as a lie, rather see it as just a half-truth; an incomplete facet of your aggregate existence," Sana said as she gripped his hand with her own.

Edge still was not satisfied by this reply, How can I have the soul of a Pokemon, a Gardevoir no less? It just doesn't make any sense.

"You are a witness to the powers of your former self. The psychometry, the psyonics, the brief power over gravity. Those are all triggered by emotions and form the basic skill-set we rely on as Gardevoir. By exhibiting these, you've proven that you are at the very least more than mere human. Now consider your history." She simpered, "If I may ask: when did things begin to change for you?"

Edge searched his brain for an answer. Well I suppose when I was more exposed to other Pokemon it manifested itself. During my first Gym Battle, I nearly destroyed the entire building by tapping into psyonics for the very first time. It even forced me to change my name from Chris to Edge. I now see the significance of what my powers have truly done to me. In their manifestation, I lost being Chris.

"Yes," Sana replied, "It is impossible for me to look upon you and not still sense my partner. It permeates your being. However, there is a different part that has been added. The humanity. It still boggles my mind. Tell me what side can you relate to more?"

Edge wasn't sure what to say exactly. I don't know, Sana. Sometimes I feel like Chris Feyera, and other times—the times I use my psionic powers I feel like something else. It has also changed me physically. I don't understand but it has. I was even able to communicate with them briefly. Emotions did seem to amplify the connections I made with those around me. My Pokemon for instance. I was able to completely empathize with them to the point of a linking of consciousness.

She looked astonished. "You connected with their hearts?"

Their hearts? I…suppose. It felt more like their minds to me. Especially during the Gym Battles.

"How did the battles make you feel?" she asked wide eyed.

Feyera thought back to how he had felt when linking his own mind to those of his Pokemon. It felt really good. When we won, I felt ecstatic. It was as if I needed to win.

"You share the experiences with your Pokemon, being partially one. You must be wary though. For by linking minds, you siphon their ability to improve."

What? Siphoning sounded dangerous to the trainer. He thought the psionic link was a beneficial thing. It let him do so much. Telepathic communication was great, but being able to assume direct command over their bodies allowed for flawless and fluid control. It was enough to help him win battles he had no business in winning without training.

"Unless it is a melding to your mate, you're taking away some of their ambition and consequently they'll develop slower...I thought you would have realized this by now, Chris." Sana dryly said, taking one of her legs and mildly placing it in front of the other to inch slightly closer to him. "Nothing happens without consequence."

I…He thought about how small Desperado was for a Gyarados. He thought about Brucie's weakened immune system prevented him from warding off Koga's Toxic. Then he remembered just how often he had taken control over their bodies in battle. Swamped in remorse, he looked at Sana's eyes, tracing around her facial features. You mean I can't communicate with my Pokemon without consequences? He thought about how sad he would be if this were the case. They were his friends, he loved talking to them. They were like his family. I want to be able to still converse with them.
"I never said that you wouldn't be able to talk with them silly." Sana's beaming smile was impossible to miss. "That is my one of my favorite aspects of Gardevoir abilities. Because we are Psychic types, we pick up on similar emotions that allow for us to communicate to all Pokemon."

Feyera laughed. His grin matching hers began to wane however. There is one problem...the young man started off.

Sana suddenly looked extremely concerned, her careful discernment scanning his worried expression. Her heavy lidded eyes filled with sympathy. Their blossoming cores glistened and reflected dazzling light like prisms.

Edge Feyera gently rubbed his hair, as he did all too often when anxious, It's destroying me. He said as he reflected upon all of the experiences he had undergone throughout his journey. The memories boiled to the forefront of his mind, blurring his vision. However, they were not only memories; they were here present in his current existence. The more he thought about everything, the more he seemed to lose touch with himself. He felt a tear in his eyes as the world became misty.

And then something unexpected happened.

Sanaria embraced him. She held him tightly in her arms. A surreal experience took him past all prior phenomenon. Chris Feyera could do nothing but clasp Sana's hand tightly as their chest shards graced against one another generating heavenly comfort.

All of his fear, all of his worry, and all of his pain faded away for an eternal moment. The most important part of him was here in his arms.

Fin.

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